



*The young Princess Elizabeth sounds the whistle of a Garratt during the 1947 royal tour of South Africa.*

The railway associations of Queen Elizabeth II's reign began with sad journeys of the LNER royal train from Sandringham to Kings Cross (with newly-built *Britannia* taking the main leg of the journey) and over the established funeral route from Paddington to Windsor (with *Bristol Castle* having changed its identity to *Windsor Castle* at the head).

The East Coast royal saloons remained in use for some time – one was a popular choice for the annual trip to the Epsom Derby – but the LMS/L&NWR train covered most of the longer trips, such as those to Balmoral (these were curtailed after 1965 due to

closure of the Ballater branch).

Although some new vehicles were built earlier in the Queen's reign, she did not get a new saloon for her own use until Silver Jubilee Year, when conversion of a prototype Mk 3 bodyshell provided a saloon which could convey Her Majesty at the 100 mph speeds which her subjects could already enjoy. For her Golden Jubilee in 2002, the royal train was memorably returned to steam haulage behind 6233.

Among the slightly more unusual royal workings might be counted one in 1956 for a royal visit to Abingdon, which was headed on the branch by 1420 (still with us) and 1426. It used to be the custom to stable the royal train overnight on quieter branches to afford the royal family a more relaxed night's rest: lines so used include those to Faringdon and Ashburton.

The Queen also officiated at some notable railway milestones, including inauguration of West Coast electrification in 1974 and the Channel Tunnel in 1994. She officially reopened the Borders railway (and rode on it behind 60009) on 9 September 2015, the day on which she became the longest-serving monarch in British history.

She first travelled on the London Underground in 1939, with her sister and nanny. Thirty years later, she formally opened the Victoria Line, and it seems particularly apt that one of her last engagements was the opening ceremony for the Elizabeth Line at Paddington, soon after meeting the station's ursine namesake.



As a young boy, the new King is said to have been fascinated by the way in which the royal train stopped with the red carpet perfectly aligned. As Prince of Wales, he had form as a steam footplate rider – on the Talylyn Railway, and on *Tornado* so we may hope for further interesting interactions between royalty and railways.

*Royal train locomotive 67 005 Queen's Messenger leads a special through Hinksey earlier this year*

