

News about **STEAM TRAINS** at the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway

“The Railway Children’s Railway”

"One of Britain's Ten Best Train Trips" - The Sunday Times

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN'S RAILWAY PAYS TRIBUTE TO LIONEL JEFFRIES



(ABOVE) Lionel Jeffries and film crew at Oakworth Station during the filming of *The Railway Children* in 1970 – Photo: Robin Higgins

One of the great British character actors and film directors of the last century, Lionel Jeffries, who adapted E. Nesbit's novel *The Railway Children* and directed its filming on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, has died at the age of 83.

His work was instrumental in turning the five mile long branch line through West Yorkshire's Brontë Country into an internationally acclaimed success and showed communities and groups throughout the British Isles (and the world) that if they wanted to re-open and run their local railway – then they could do so.

Chairman of the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway Preservation Society, Paul Brown, paid tribute to him, saying, “There have been many richly deserved tributes to Lionel Jeffries from the world of stage and screen, but we must remember that it was his work with our Railway 40 years ago that made our success possible. We were the first complete standard gauge branch line to be reopened by volunteers and 40 years ago no-one knew really whether or not the project had a long term future”.

“Thanks to the huge number of extra passengers the film brought - numbers trebled - we had to install an extra track (a passing loop at Damems Junction) to cope with them. The interest today is if anything, more intense than ever. The success of the Railway thanks to the film made people realise that we were not just a group of eccentric amateurs doomed to inevitable failure, but that we had shown, at a time when local railways were being closed everywhere, that communities could take them over and run them successfully”.

Paul added: “We are now planning the celebrations to mark the filming of *The Railway Children* over the forthcoming May Day Bank Holiday and we will take time to remember Lionel Jeffries and all that he and his cast of Jenny Agutter, Bernard Cribbins, Dinah Sheridan, Sally Thomsett and the others did for the future of the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway. Thanks to Lionel, people throughout the world come to ride on our steam trains to see Oakworth station where 'Mr Perks the Porter' befriended the children while their father was wrongly imprisoned and where after many adventures, including saving the train from a landslide outside Mytholmes Tunnel between Oakworth and Haworth, they were so memorably reunited with him”.

Recently some of the cast and local extras have been interviewed for a digitally remastered version of the film which is to be released to coincide with its 40th Anniversary – appropriately, much of this filming was done at Oakworth Station.

The Railway's spokesman, Jim Shipley, an acknowledged expert on the film whose book “*The Making of The Railway Children*” is to be published by the Railway on 28th March, said: “We have stayed in touch with many of those connected with the film in the 40 years since it was made here and everyone connected with the Railway is deeply saddened by Lionel Jeffries' death. I doubt we can ever adequately repay the debt we owe him and we send our sympathy and condolences to his wife, Eileen Mary Walsh, and their three children”.

Lionel Jeffries was born on 10 June 1926 in London, served in the Army in Burma during World War II, trained at RADA and in addition to his work as an accomplished character actor, made more than 70 films ranging from Alfred Hitchcock's *Stage Fright* to *The Railway Children*.

Ends

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Notes To Editors

The Keighley & Worth Valley Railway is operated almost entirely by unpaid volunteers running steam and diesel trains at weekends throughout the year and daily at holiday times for nearly five miles through 'Bronte Country' from Keighley to Oakworth, Haworth and Oxenhope. It was the first complete standard gauge branch line to be re-opened by enthusiasts in the UK and has been the location for *The Railway Children* and many more films and television series.

KEIGHLEY & WORTH VALLEY RAILWAY

The Railway Station, Haworth, Keighley, West Yorkshire, BD22 8NJ

Keighley – Ingrow – Damems – Oakworth – Haworth – Oxenhope

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