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### **News about STEAM TRAINS at the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway** **“The Railway Children’s Railway”**

*Patron: H.R.H. The Duke of Kent*

One of Britain's 10 Best Train Trips" - The Sunday Times  
"Best Tourist Attraction" - Yorkshire in Bloom 2009  
Joint Winner "Best Large Groups" 2009 - Heritage Railway Association

## **MORE TRAINS THAN EVER FOR 2010 AS KWVR COPES WITH UPSURGE IN TRAFFIC**

More heritage steam and diesel trains than ever are to be run in 2010 through West Yorkshire's Brontë Country by “The Railway Children’s Railway”, the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, as it attempts to cope with rising demand for its services in what will be the 40<sup>th</sup> year since the iconic film was shot on location on the line.

For the first time since the five miles of branch line from Keighley to Oakworth, Haworth and Oxenhope was reopened by volunteers in 1968, there will be a two-train service operating on every Sunday, opening up many more travel opportunities.

Visit Yorkshire, the organisation promoting tourism in the region, has worked with the Railway to suggest that it should do more to encourage visitors to explore the surrounding countryside and make it easier for people to reach the top of Haworth village, home of the Brontë Sisters, where the Parsonage is a major literary shrine. A new service of open top and vintage buses, combined with a free meal at a medieval pub in Haworth, introduced as a result by the Railway during its summer 2009 season, has proved so popular that it is to be expanded during 2010.

The details of the extra services and new timetable will be given to the volunteers in the Winter issue of their magazine *Push and Pull* this month (November 2009).

In it, Traffic Manager Sam MacDougall says: “Significant improvements to our timetable and what we offer the public are on their way for 2010. The Summer Gala reverts to the autumn; there's more Cream Teas, Sunday Lunch, Wine and Dine, Guided Tours, Vintage Train Days and Days Out services. We plan to reintroduce Footplate Experience Days, where a day's instruction and driving on a steam locomotive, under supervision, can be bought.

“And talks continue on the reintroduction of a daily commuter service, though that is some way off, it must be emphasised. Most significant in the new timetable is the decision to introduce a two train service every Sunday throughout the year, in which some services at off-peak times will be worked by heritage diesel trains. They're actually very popular with passengers and especially children, because of the unrivalled view of the countryside and the line ahead which they offer but the great majority of our services will continue to be operated by steam trains”.

The Railway will again hold its popular Diesel Gala in June, it will operate Vintage Trains with wooden-bodied rolling stock on many Summer Sundays and expects its annual mobile Christmas Carol Services and the Santa Specials to be as popular as ever. *(Many of the most popular dates for the 2009 Santa Specials are already fully booked and all places on the 2009 Christmas Carol train have been sold).*

Through tickets to the KWVLR offering reduced price travel can now be purchased at every railway station on the national network and Northern, the train operator serving Keighley, has a specially decorated Class 158 diesel train running on its services advertising the attractions of Keighley, Brontë Country and the Railway. The Service 500 bus operated by Keighley & District Travel has been timed to connect with trains from Manchester and the Blackpool and Preston line with services on the award-winning heritage line.

The Railway was concerned that the recession would hit passenger levels in 2009 with unemployment, rising household costs and house repossessions affecting people's ability to visit the line.

In the end, traffic levels increased, though Sam MacDougall has reminded supporters that so have the Railway's costs, not only of coal and other power, but also of essential replacements for the track, locomotives and carriages – and that action has to be taken to address these.

He explained: "We think the increasing popularity of the Railway is due to a mixture of people choosing to do more local day trips out rather than travel abroad for the weekend (the weakness of the pound has helped) but also due to the Railway developing its activities and creating a more and more attractive day out. Our biggest ever Steam Gala with main line steam running broke our records; Guided Tours have been hugely expanded, and our Days Out tickets in summer (including a vintage bus service) have proved very popular. Other events that have been more popular than ever this year include Cream Teas on board trains, corporate dining train functions and Vintage Train Days.

"So we are planning much more for next year. Footplate Experiences are to be re-introduced and we've been carrying out trial runs with them to get the formula right. Guided Tours and corporate events are going to be expanded further. Sunday Lunch and evening Pullman Dining Trains will operate on more dates than ever before".

Winter services will run later in the light of increasing demand in recent years. A two train service will run on every Sunday throughout the year (up to now only a single train service has operated in winter). This will provide a more frequent service on the line; passengers do not have to wait as long for a train and it is much easier to explore the whole Railway, including the museums etc. at the various stations, as there are far more trains to hop on and off".

The main line summer gala was a huge success but it's felt on the Railway that in many ways, was only so successful because it was a "one off". Sam MacDougall pointed out: "The risks in terms of cost were very high. It is something we may well repeat, but is probably better to wait a few years before doing so. In the summer, it is harder to get visiting locos because they are already in use elsewhere. Our autumn gala has always been very successful so we are reverting back to this format for the time being.

"We are looking to build on the success of this year's trial with the summer midweek Days Out tickets. We will again be running a vintage bus to supplement our midweek steam train service in the summer, which will give scenic rides over the moors above Haworth and Oxenhope and also link the Museums at Ingrow with Haworth and Oxenhope. This will allow visitors to make the most of the day and see all the different parts of the Railway, as well as to enjoy a heritage bus ride up to Haworth main street".

Meanwhile with 2010 being the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the location on the line (especially at Oakworth) of the iconic EMI film, *The Railway Children*, a group of members is planning events and activities to celebrate – as not only did the film prove to be the most extraordinary catalyst in the development of the Railway, but also of the wider heritage railway movement across the UK which now operates more miles of track than the London Underground!

**2009 Passenger Figures:**

***The projected passenger figures for 2009 are around 110,000 - up 5% on last year. Passenger figures for July and August midweek services were up by around 15% and special events such the Steam Galas and the Beer & Music Festival also saw significant increases.***

*Ends*

*Issued November 2009*

## **KEIGHLEY & WORTH VALLEY RAILWAY**

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*Keighley – Ingrow – Damems – Oakworth – Haworth – Oxenhope*

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