

The commemorative train was hauled by a pannier tank, number 9600, built at Swindon in February 1945, during the last years of G.W.R.'s separate existence, before nationalisation on 1st January 1948. These locomotives, intended for freight and shunting work, were so-called because they carried their water in two tanks slung on each side of their boilers, like panniers on a donkey. In fact they could and did frequently operate passenger trains, as the 65-year-old aptly demonstrated on that memorable sunny day. One unusual feature was that on the outward journey we travelled in the "up" (i.e. south-bound) direction between Bicester and Princes Risborough on the "down" (or "wrong") line and were overtaken by a solitary class 47 diesel locomotive (itself quite a veteran) running on the up line. Whether this probably unique example of two trains running in parallel on this line was for operational reasons, or just a contribution to the general jollity of the occasion, was never explained, but we were told not to put our heads out of the windows. On the return journey the train paused at Bicester North station for a greeting by the Town Mayor and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque.

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