

Halsgrove Railway Series

THE SPA VALLEY RAILWAY

David Staines

In 1985 one of the last major railway closures in the United Kingdom saw British Rail abandon the line between Eridge in Sussex and Tunbridge Wells in Kent. Whilst closed railways metamorphosing into successful heritage lines are now common, the battle to return life to this line, the Spa Valley Railway, was long and hard fought.

In comparison to other heritage railways the Spa Valley is a 'late arrival'. However such youthfulness pays dividends. The railway's volunteer base is on average younger and more dynamic than many and its use of both steam and heritage diesel traction appeals to visitors across the generations.

Through top quality photography David Staines takes you on a pictorial journey, initially back to the struggle to save the line and later along the length of today's railway. He showcases the contrasting scenes, beautiful landscape and variety of locomotives and rolling stock which make the Spa Valley one of the most diverse and ground-breaking heritage railways in the country.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Staines first photographed the line that would become the Spa Valley Railway in the 1970s and joined the preservation society in its earliest days. He currently serves as the Spa Valley's press officer. This involvement with the heritage railway movement is in contrast to his wider and more renowned ongoing role as a nationally established railway journalist and feature writer, generally concentrating on current industry developments. His detailed coverage of the building of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link featured widely in the media. With his wife and daughter he lives in Kent, close to the Spa Valley Railway.

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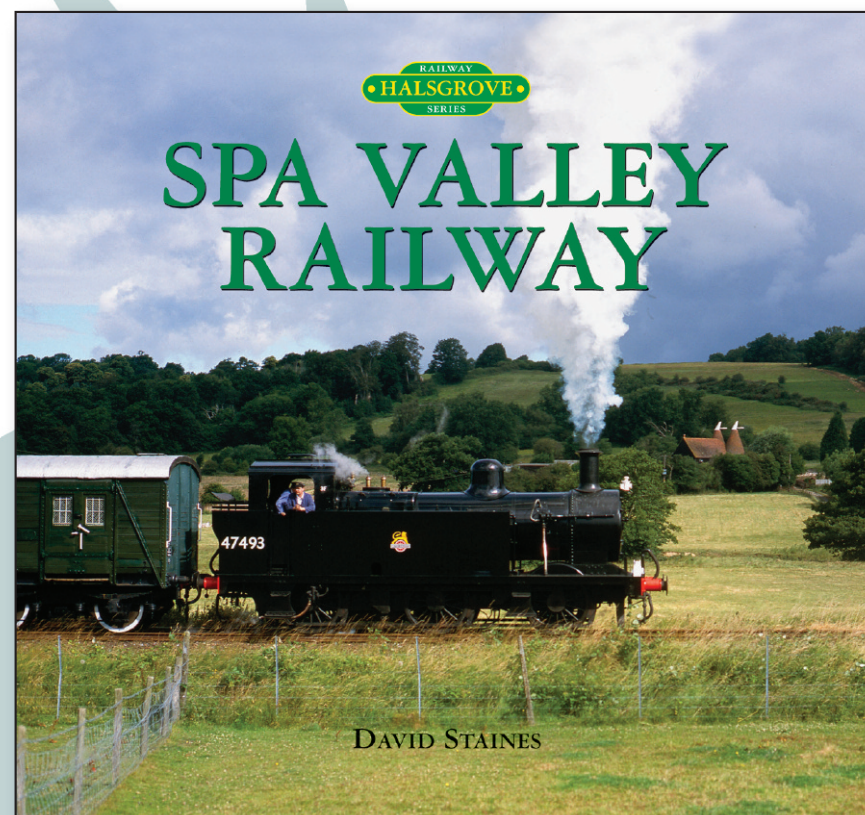
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All in a day's work – the patient task of oiling around, preparing 'Lady Ingrid' for a day's duty on the railway.



One of a handful of industrial shunters occasionally used on the railway, 'Princess Margaret', built by Barclay in 1949, ticks over in the yard. Behind it 'Topham' has had its boiler removed for overhaul.



A Great Western double. GW-built 'Taffy Tank' 6695 is banked by GW-designed 9466 through Friezland Woods.



Working hard 'Fonmon' leaves a volcanic trail of steam over the valley. The traditional farmhouse glimpsed through the steam has since been demolished and replaced by a modern structure.



1875 built LB&SCR 'Terrier' 662 'Martello' has plenty of steam to spare as it passes beneath Station Road Bridge into the new platform. Reinforcement of this bridge was undertaken by BR as part of the transfer of the railway to the preservation society.



One of the most unusual visitors to the railway was Aveling & Porter 'Blue Circle'.

Example of a double-page spread.



Also in Spring 1996, the arrival of rolling stock was greatly accelerated by the decision of the North Devon Steam Railway to relocate from Seaton near Dartford to the Spa Valley. Most of their assets were transported to Yardbridge Wells. This necessitated rapid construction of the track in the locomotive shed and yard. New arrivals are seen on 26th April.

Right
21st December saw a moment of crowning glory – the first public trains. The railway impromptu granted permission for the first three quarter mile of line to be reopened as far as Giffhams Bridge. Despite the best attempts of the weather, eight days over the Christmas and New Year period saw 2,500 passengers carried. 26th December was the only decent day for photography and 'Nord Dore', built in 1955 by Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn is seen pounding up the last few yards into Yardbridge Wells West.

