

THE RAILWAY PAINTINGS OF WRENFORD J. THATCHER

CAUGHT ON CANVAS

"Very soon there will no longer be anyone alive who actually grew up in the time when steam engines were the norm on our railways. Of course we thought that steam would go on for ever. With our ABC spotters' books we would see a frequently viewed locomotive and shout 'scrap it'. Well...they did.

The paintings in this book represent my attempt to relive the years before that fateful day in 1968 which saw the end of working steam on our British railways."

Wrenford Thatcher

Here, in over 100 superb paintings, Wren Thatcher has literally Caught on Canvas the last days of the Age of Steam. His inherited knowledge and passion for the subject (both his grandfathers were engine drivers), is revealed in every picture, from the classic image of 'The Princess Royal' climbing Shap Bank in snow to the workaday 7F hauling coal trucks on the Somerset & Dorset line. Every locomotive appears to be alive as though the artist's brushes were primed not with paint, but with steam and smoke.

And here too, in a welcome departure from traditional railway paintings, the artist has recreated panoramic scenes at some of the most famous of our railways stations, capturing the realism of smoke-blackened brick and stone; paintings in which we hear the echoes of slamming of carriage doors, the cries of porters – images in which the everyday clamour of a busy terminus is captured 'warts and all'.

Filled with stories of the artist's own railway memories and with detailed descriptions of locomotives and scenes he paints, *The Railway Paintings of Wrenford J. Thatcher* breathes fresh life into the genre of railway paintings. It is a book that will delight and entertain all fellow enthusiasts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

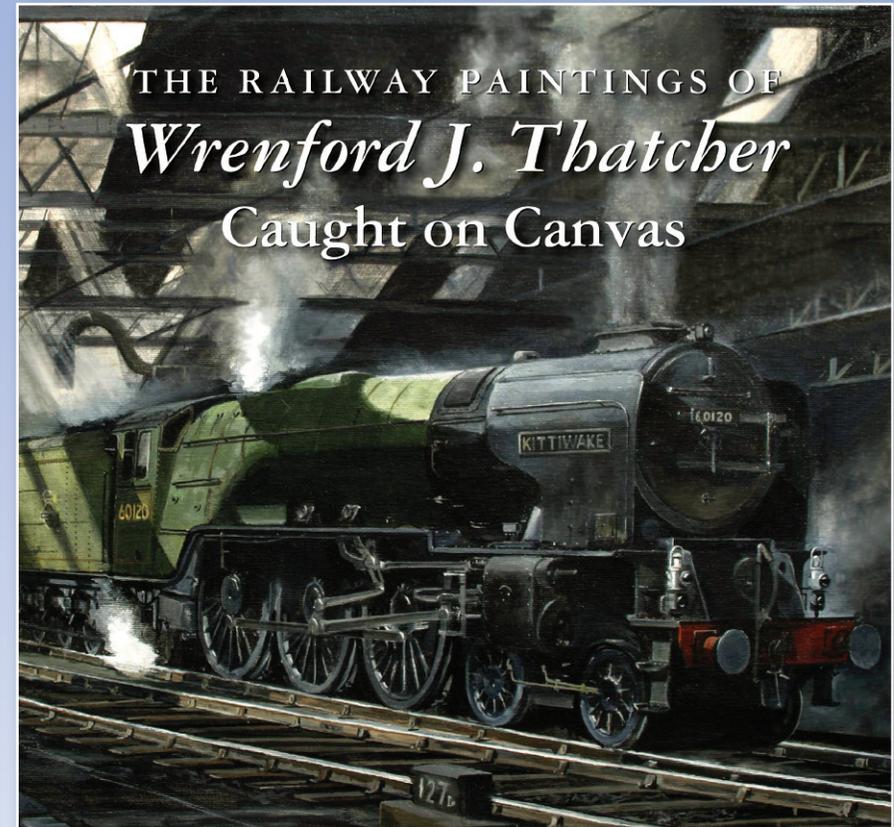
Wrenford John Thatcher was born in Hertford England in 1944. Both his grandfathers were engine drivers, working on the former GER then LNER and finally for BR. As a consequence a very happy childhood was spent on the footplate especially with grandfather Ernest Henry Thatcher who was based in Bishops Stortford. From the war years onwards Wrenford lived in Hatfield and spent most of his spare time at the lineside sketching trains, until he was able to buy a box brownie camera which was used to amass a considerable number of photographs. Educated at St Albans Grammar School he won a number of awards for art, and his art teacher was furious when he elected to study mathematics and physics at University. Graduating with a BSc from London in 1963, and later with an MSc and PhD from Aston in Birmingham resulted in employment as an Isaac Wolfson fellow at Liverpool University followed by a lectureship at St Andrews University in Scotland. Wrenford left university for industry in 1975 and was subsequently employed in the USA and UK inventing instruments and materials related to the micro electronics industries. Now retired, he is still an industrial consultant but has found time to publish a book Lines into London through the History Press and to spend more time painting steam railway scenes as he remembers them.

This volume is one of a series of art books published by Halstar in association with Picturecraft Gallery. See www.halsgrove.com for the complete list.

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Together Again

Liverpool Street station was bombed several times during the war. Fortunately the elegant Great Eastern Hotel was not hit and survived its original state well protected by the modernisation of the station complex in the 1970s. The painting shows a soldier from the airborne division (red beret) being greeted by his lady. The clock of number 1 in Liverpool Street were even saved during the blitz, and the couple are highlighted in one, with a K9 in a dispirited state of cleanliness (could be the left being through the soldier home on leave). The atmosphere of Liverpool Street Station remained the same until modernisation and continued as my favourite of all the London stations because of the wonderful display of light and shade, and the cathedral-like architecture.



The Merseyside Express



The view towards Manchester from Edge Hill station just before hostilities began in 1939. It is a view which would have been impossible to photograph without a modern telephoto or some similar device, but the painter always has freedom of choice when it comes to imagination! From this imaginary elevated vantage point we can see the Merseyside Express heading towards Liverpool & Preston Pacific, in its original red livery as we see in front of the shed, and a Jinty sits cold and unmoving in the yard waiting for a fire and its next rate of duty. Hardly any of this remains today.



Example of a double-page spread.

Right: The Lamp Store

Below: Hornsey



Top right: All red and gold

Centre right: Black 5 at Night

Bottom right: The Jacobite