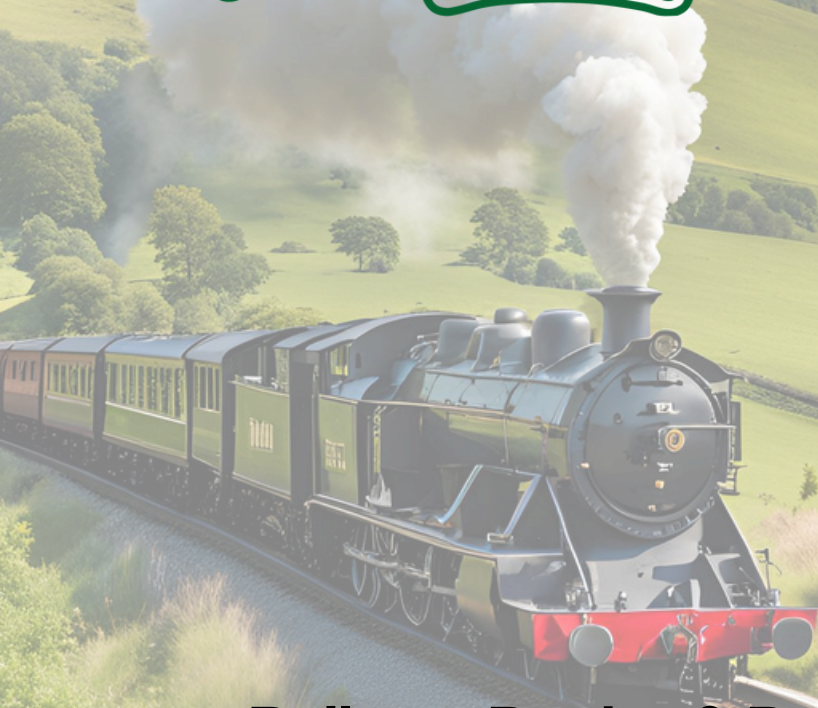


# WATERCRESS LINE



## Railway Poetry & Prose

Celebrating 200 years of Britain's railways

A Watercress Line Heritage Trust community project



WINCHESTER  
POETRY  
FESTIVAL



The 200th anniversary of Britain's railways is a momentous occasion to celebrate the profound impact these iron tracks have had on the nation's landscape, culture, and history.

Railways, often depicted in both poetry and prose, symbolize the unstoppable march of progress and the interconnectedness of distant places. Poets have long found inspiration in the rhythmic clatter of trains, the sweeping vistas glimpsed from carriage windows, and the stations bustling with stories of departure and arrival. Prose writers have captured the transformative power of rail travel, from the industrial revolutions it fueled, to the social changes it sparked by bridging communities and expanding horizons. As the railways mark this bicentennial, they remain a testament to human ingenuity and the enduring romance of the journey, continuing to inspire new stories and verses that celebrate that legacy.

To mark the 200th anniversary working with Winchester Poetry Festival we invited people to create their own works inspired by railway history. We would like to thank everyone who took part

2025 marks the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. A British innovation that's continued its journey across the globe. Through a year-long series of activities and events, Railway 200 will explore how rail shaped Britain and the world. And, as today's railway modernises and gears up for growth, Railway 200 will also look to the future, encouraging more people to take the train and inviting the next generation of pioneering talent to join the railway and become the history-makers of tomorrow.





# Two Centuries of Names

The Stockton & Darlington ushered in:  
the end of isolation, Standard Time,  
Bradshaw's, holidays by the sea,  
the romance and power of steam,  
and a language of love.

Railway names, descriptive of place,  
quickly became personified,  
with praise or maybe frustration.  
GWR: the Great Way Round'  
or God's Wonderful Railway?  
Part of which, the OW&W,  
linked Oxford, Wolverhampton and Worcester –  
popularly the Old Worse and Worse.

And was the Somerset & Dorset line  
Swift & Delightful, or Slow and Dirty?  
Was the erstwhile LNER  
London and Nearly Everywhere  
or Late and Never Early?  
Trains for another age  
on the South Eastern & Chatham:  
Slow, Easy & Comfortable,  
Their guards on duty in Birdcages.

Money caused some nicknames too:  
the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire  
was deemed Money Sunk & Lost  
then grew, reached London and became  
the Great Central – Gone Completely!

Some single lines also had nicknames –  
Watercress and Bluebell with us still –  
and some trains too: colourful Jazzers  
sped commuters to Liverpool Street;  
while Lancastrians boarded  
the Dolly Tub Express.

But best of all, the names bestowed on  
steam engines, by railwaymen and fans alike.  
Some came from wheel arrangements –  
Atlantic, Pacific, Prairie and Mogul –  
while some denoted characteristics:  
South Western expresses had Greyhounds,  
Brighton line stoppers had Terriers,  
Great Central coal trains had Pom-Poms.  
LMS shunters were Jinties,  
and small Lanky saddle-tanks  
Pugs.

The Southern ran Paddlebox locos  
built Spamcans (when spam was our meat).  
The GC Atlantics – such beauty and grace  
they became Jersey Lilies.  
Less graceful, but strong as a battleship,  
the L&Y Dreadnoughts.  
A badge on a splasher? A Cauliflower!  
Overlarge windows? Crystal Palace!  
Huge 'twenties coal-hauler? Ironical Austin 7!

And banking at the back  
from Bromsgrove up to Blackwell,  
the 1 in 37,  
who else but Big Bertha?

Harold Wonham



# Adlestrop revisited\*

(Remembering a famous railway station and Edward Thomas 1878-1917)

I remember Adlestrop – the poem in my head.

I see the unpeopled platforms, the hot Summer afternoon, the storied station sign.

But Adlestrop – the name, is now long gone, along with passengers and commerce and trade and  
no express train will now come along.

Closed by that bastard Beeching, the benches used for scrap, Thomas's England deposed  
consigned to our road-dominated, litter strewn-pinioned, unromantic concrete world.

So: on my imagined visit –

No one cleared his throat  
No one left and no one came.

The lost waiting room and ticket office no longer the same. The platforms gone –  
the stationmaster's residence no longer in evidence. Not the place he wrote about.

And one of the station signs now resides in a bus shelter, the other thoughtlessly destroyed,  
like Thomas's own life that became void in the welter of that faraway First World War.

The willows, willow-herb, and grass – still there –  
The meadowsweet, and haycocks dry –

perhaps just concealing the lines of cars thudding by; the dull new executive homes  
Californicating the once green hillside nearby.

If I were there  
would a blackbird sing?

or would the moment be swallowed up in the din of the drone of suburban mowers, the flash of  
gleaming cars, the mountainside of supermarket trash glinting as the Summer sun lowers

over the grubby lay-bys? Yes, I remember Adlestrop – the poem in my head,  
but its name and melancholy fame don't bring back the vanished dead;

yet though no station remain – I remember Adlestrop.  
For me it lives again and

All the birds of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire will sing and fly...  
No whit less still and lonely fair, than the high cloudlets in the sky.

STEPHEN CHAPPELL

*\*Quotations from Edward Thomas in italics. Of the two station signs, one is indeed in a bus shelter nearby. The other was presented to Thomas's Alma Mater, Lincoln College Oxford. This latter was subsequently destroyed, which strikes me as both thoughtless and incredible. The Cotswold line runs through the abandoned station but no train now stops there.*



# First of its Kind

The heat  
The steam  
The Mechanical torque,

The pressure  
Pushing  
Pistons back and forth...

The transformation  
Into rotational force,

By connecting rod  
And flywheel of course,

Trevithick's steam locomotive  
The very first of its kind,  
Hauls a train along Merthyr's tramway  
Out of an inventor's engineering mind.

Ashley O'Keefe



# Merthyr's Eyes

History in the making!  
Before our very eyes...

Red-rimmed,  
Staring wide,  
A rolling sea  
Of ten thousand eyes,

EYES!

Saucy, winking,  
Bleary, blinking,  
Button bright  
Baby's eyes thinking,

This strange monstrosity  
Menacingly poised,  
With piston arms ready  
Through history's toils,

EYES!

Wicked, wanton  
Shifty, sly,  
Eyes stare in wonder  
Beneath a Merthyr sky,

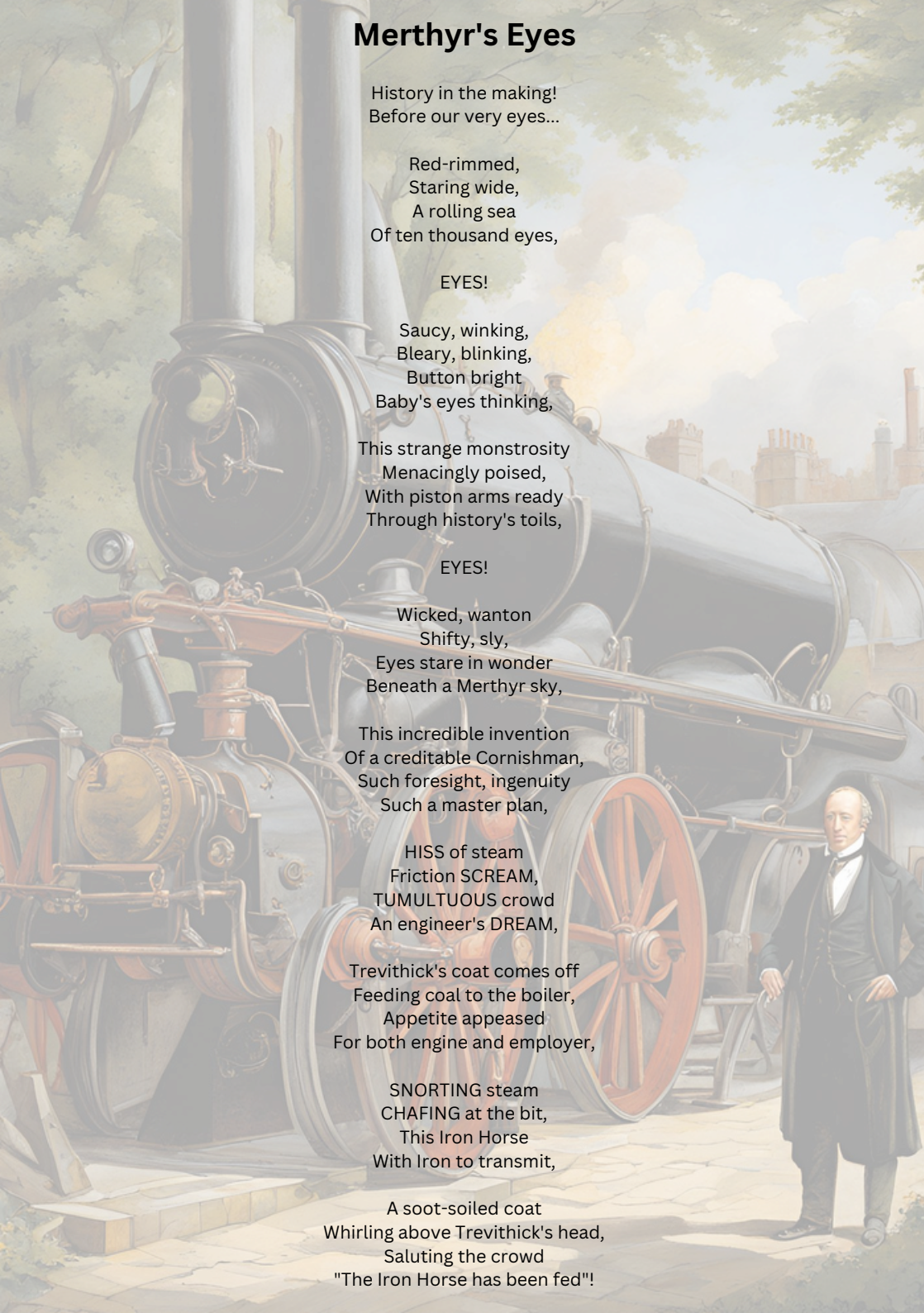
This incredible invention  
Of a creditable Cornishman,  
Such foresight, ingenuity  
Such a master plan,

HISS of steam  
Friction SCREAM,  
TUMULTUOUS crowd  
An engineer's DREAM,

Trevithick's coat comes off  
Feeding coal to the boiler,  
Appetite appeased  
For both engine and employer,

SNORTING steam  
CHAFING at the bit,  
This Iron Horse  
With Iron to transmit,

A soot-soiled coat  
Whirling above Trevithick's head,  
Saluting the crowd  
"The Iron Horse has been fed!"





# First Word

Standing by the French Windows  
on toddler legs  
gazing over the garden  
and the fields beyond  
dotted with black and white cows,  
I'd watch the trains go by.

Two bright green Diesel engines,  
pride of postwar Britain,  
joined the fleet.

It must have been my dad  
who told me all about them,  
repeating the word diesel  
as they rumbled past.

I grasped the word but not the concept;  
that morning, staring out,  
an everyday steam engine trundled past;  
first utterance from my baby mouth —  
Diesel! Diesel!

# GHOST TRAINS

They held a council in the paradise where such souls find  
their rest,  
Breathing peacefully in the warmth of eternally stoked  
fires,  
Fed on an endless supply of fresh spring water and good  
Welsh coal.

And they decided to return, just for one day.  
It's the right of those cut down before their time to  
haunt the living,  
Lest they forget the crime that was committed.

So watch out for them, the fire breathers,  
Back on the old tracks,  
Hurtling through housing estates,  
Reclaiming the ring roads,  
Streaking between the grey piers of long demolished  
bridges.  
Ghost trains. Woo woo!

**Jane Gordon-Cumming**



# I Married an Anorak

'Rocket' science was no mystery to him, nor  
how Robert Stephenson built Locomotion 1.  
The towns of Darlington and Stockton beckoned  
him like shrines. He cursed the name of Beeching  
but could reel off famous engines like a litany –  
Shannon, Mallard, Evening Star.

He knew the purposes  
of slide-bars, feed-pumps, coupling rods, and why  
the shunter's pole saved lives. The codes  
of wheel-configuration were quite obvious to him,  
and he could quote the gauge of English tracks  
and those across the world.

His heroes were  
both Stephensons, Trevithick and Brunel. Given  
this obsession, it's no surprise our children's books  
were usually about trains – Thomas, Gordon, Henry,  
Percy – models of them lay around in almost  
every room.

Five years before he died  
he said he had to visit Venice. But would he fly? Oh no!  
So Eurostar to Paris, the RER beneath the boulevards,  
a TGV to Zurich for a night then onto Trenitalia and  
a journey through the Alps. In Milan we changed  
once more for the last leg to La Serenissima.

Sad to say, our son's desire  
was never followed up: that some fistfuls of his father's ashes  
should be thrown into the firebox of the Flying Scotsman –  
the one he loved the best.

RER – Réseau Express Régional  
TGV – Train à Grande Vitesse

# In Memory of Fred Whitney

Mr Tuff, a man from York,  
Saved tens of thousands of men,  
He invented the shunter's pole ...  
And coupling became safer then.

For when limbs were lost, they were lost,  
And when men were dead, they were dead,  
And their families became destitute ...  
No father ... meant ... no daily bread!

Mr Tuff didn't patent his design but  
Sadly the roll-out came too late,  
To save poor old Fred Whitney from  
The horror of the shunter's fate.

After Fred died, my great  
grandmother, Eleanor, remarried  
and had a 5th child (my grandmother, Daisy).

## Tickets please!

You've prob'ly heard of Thomas Edison,  
And his many lightbulb moments!  
But what about Thomas Edmondson  
And his very important component ...  
Of any trip to anywhere on the train?  
I can still feel the cardboard in my palm,  
And the way, when I thought I'd lost it,  
My heart jolted ... in alarm!

Those days, there was a conductor,  
Who'd arrive with a "Tickets please!"  
Sending us scrabbling through the bag,  
That we clutched tightly on our knees,  
The huge relief of first finding it,  
And it, then, passing his inspection,  
Were up there with the panicky  
Dash to make a tight connection.  
That little rectangle ... was not glossy,  
The surface was slightly rough,  
And the colour of the cheap day return  
Was a rather unattractive buff,  
But, oh the excitement, of buying  
That ticket from the station clerk!  
And scurrying to find our  
Platform, in readiness to embark.

Even better ... if there was a machine  
With those drawers of Nestle Crunch:  
The adventure of a train journey,  
With a chocolate-bar for lunch!



# In Neon Glow

In neon glow, the Watercress Line hums,  
A vivid path where steam once thrummed.  
Bright lights trace the rails, now gleaming with  
pride,  
Where watercress bundles would once softly ride.

Hampshire's hills, bathed in green,  
Through electric flashes, history is seen.  
Engines shine like beacons in night,  
Pulsing in rhythm with each glowing light.

Two hundred years of journeys told,  
In the shimmer of stories, new and old.

Neon sparks the memory clear,  
Of rails and roots that brought us here.

## My Mother in the Brading Station Tea Room

What are you doing here among the souvenirs,  
the maroon ghost signs affixed to these magnolia  
walls,

Freshwater, Bonchurch, Carisbrooke, Calbourn?

You, a 1950s migrant from the Emerald Isle,  
who seldom ventured further than the balcony  
of your highrise flat.

What have you to say to Ray, the last man  
to operate the signal box on the platform's other side,  
or to Josh who brings you this pot of Tetley tea?  
I notice that Sam Spookey, the station mannequin,  
makes you smile. Is this the last leg of your journey  
back  
to your homeland? Are you dropping by to bid me  
farewell?

Listen, the train from Shanklin rumbles the track.

The station clock ticks on. It's time  
for you to be transported to the pier at Ryde  
where the ferry waits for the weightless.

Gogcuire Dia an t-adh ort.

May God put luck on you.

Maggie Sawkins



# A GWR Poem

In the heart of the West, where valleys unfold,  
Through whispers of history, stories are told,  
The GWR trains, with their iron embrace,  
Travel through landscapes, a fast-moving grace.

Their engines a symphony, roaring with might,  
As they cradle our dreams in the soft velvet night,  
From towns steeped in charm, to cities so grand,  
They weave through the heart of this beautiful land.

The valleys of green, where the wildflowers bloom,  
The laughter of children, the echoing zoom,  
Through stations adorned with a vintage allure,  
The GWR gathers, the old and the pure.

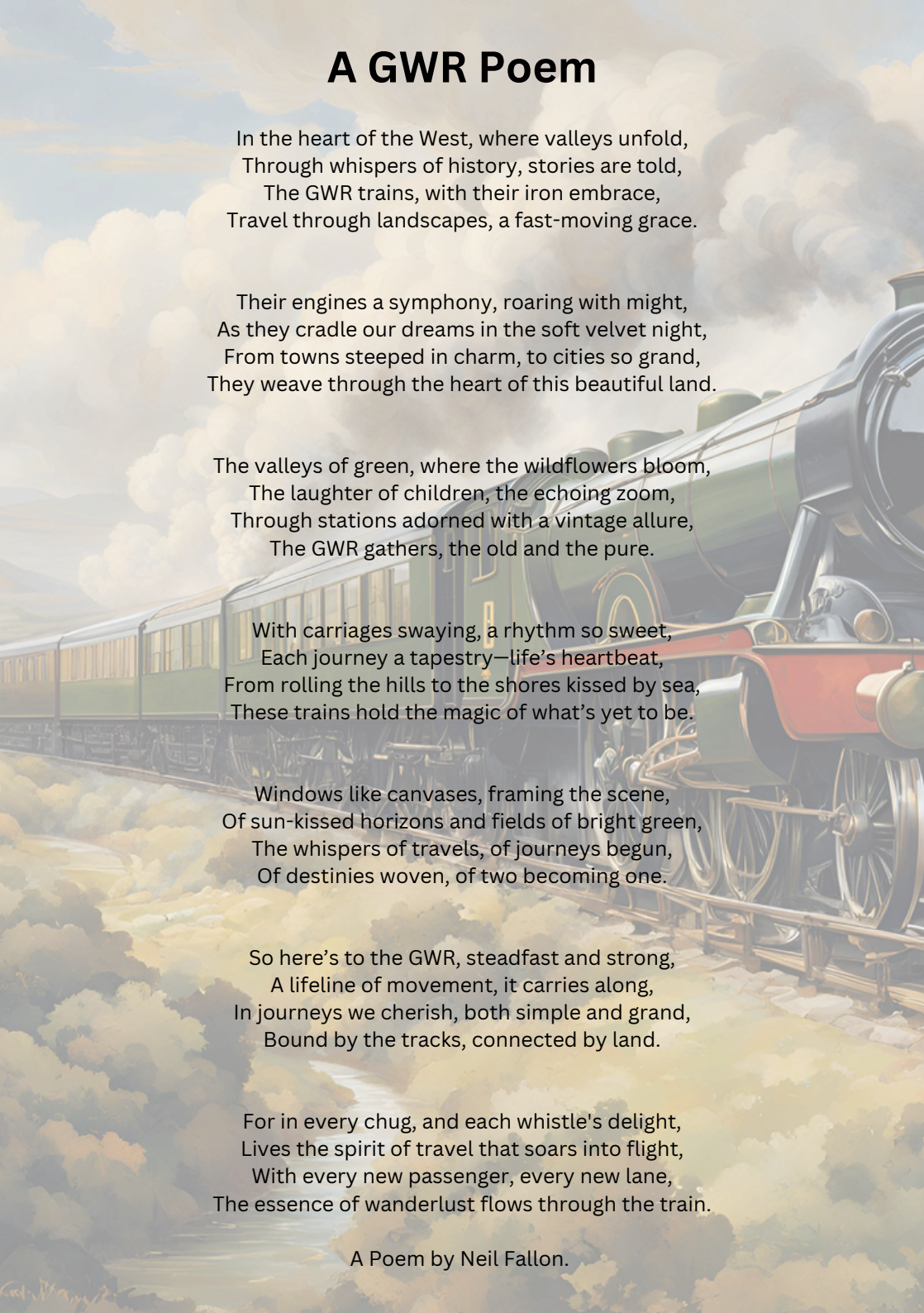
With carriages swaying, a rhythm so sweet,  
Each journey a tapestry—life's heartbeat,  
From rolling the hills to the shores kissed by sea,  
These trains hold the magic of what's yet to be.

Windows like canvases, framing the scene,  
Of sun-kissed horizons and fields of bright green,  
The whispers of travels, of journeys begun,  
Of destinies woven, of two becoming one.

So here's to the GWR, steadfast and strong,  
A lifeline of movement, it carries along,  
In journeys we cherish, both simple and grand,  
Bound by the tracks, connected by land.

For in every chug, and each whistle's delight,  
Lives the spirit of travel that soars into flight,  
With every new passenger, every new lane,  
The essence of wanderlust flows through the train.

A Poem by Neil Fallon.



# The Factory

In Swindon town, where the trains do roam,  
Stands a factory that feels like home.  
Great Western Railway, a place of pride,  
Where locomotives are built with skill and stride.

Iron and steel, hammers clang,  
As workers labour, a resounding bang.  
The engines roar, the whistle blows,  
As they chug along the tracks they know.

Through valleys deep and mountains high,  
The trains of Swindon travel on by.  
The legacy of craftsmanship and care,  
In every wheel and every gear.

In Swindon where men and women work day and night,  
Where trains are born, strong and bright.  
Great Western Railway, a vision come true,  
A testament to the workers, old and new.

A Poem by Neil Fallon.



# GWR



In Swindon town, where steamers rolled,  
The Great Western Railway factory bold,  
A bustling hub of industry and might,  
Where trains were built, oh what a sight.

Men of skill and hardy hands,  
Crafted engines across the lands,  
With steam and sweat and toil,  
They built machines that would never spoil.

The clang of hammers, the roar of fire,  
Echoed through the factory, never to tire,  
In Swindon's heart, the iron horse was born,  
To travel far and blow its steamy horn.

Great Western Railway, pride of the land,  
Built in Swindon by skilled hand,  
The legacy of those who worked with pride,  
In the factory where dreams did ride.

By Neil Fallon

# Our journey

Puffing, whistling and tearing along by us like a rocket.  
From our first thrilling ride aboard the 'Choo-Choo' you've  
transported us to the sea, a walk in the countryside, or that  
special concert or gathering.

On your tracks, we've spent hours commuting, passed  
through endless counties  
and caught glimpses of the unexplored. We might, even,  
have got a senior discount on our travels.

Starting at one point, we've travelled with you to another,  
been through so many stages in-between.

Over 200 years you've brought us; reflecting our changes  
and altering our world.

Still there at the station.

Moving us forward. Taking us on.

by S Forster



# Yellow Dusters

Pa was a signalman.

I would take him Sunday dinner,  
plated and wrapped in tea towels,  
in a battered shopping bag.

He'd sit it on top  
of the cast iron stove  
so it remained piping hot.

Entering the box,  
fragranced by Brasso and Johnson's wax,  
two yellow dusters were placed for  
visitors  
to skid along the spotless oak floor.  
Proud, the men who heaved levers  
buffed up  
everything in sight  
to burnished perfection.

# The Golden Age of Dream

Racing along the steady track of sleep  
my mind explores the packaged past,  
emptying the long forgotten  
into the golden age of dream.

Loading the day into the firebox  
I may stoke, but I never drive,  
furnace-held I sweat and toil -  
an unseen hand pulls the levers.

Amongst abandoned rolling stock  
the engine snorts and chuffs its way,  
reality, now rendered ash,  
drifts off in clouds of sooted smoke.

In carriages float images -  
the known and just invented,  
frozen in their moment, ignoring time  
reincarnated, juxtaposed.

On the luggage racks, the jostled cases  
spill their random, 4D images,  
vivid for their moment, until vapour;  
held by the camera's eye, enlarged..deleted.

Shunted into daybreak's sidings  
the engine takes its dead end loop,  
waiting for the call of sleep  
to take it to the running line.

Jeremy Harwood



# Railway Fever

Railwayman's fever is an affliction indeed  
with Robert Stephenson's 'Rocket' having planted the seed  
Once your heart is ensnared it shall always remain  
tethered to that of all things train.

The beauty of the locos and carriages are a sight to behold  
with the most resplendent by far being the steam engine so I am  
told.

In Brief Encounter and many other iconic films it has starred  
with speed records set in 1934 by the Flying Scotsman and in 1938  
by the Mallard.

Dr Richard Beeching's report in 1963 was no match for the humble  
train  
with some branch lines preserved for the enthusiast's gain.

With lines such as the Bluebell, Watercress, Ffestionniog and  
Severn Valley to that of the miniatures of Romney, Alexandra Park,  
Rhyl and Swanley  
there is much to tempt families out for the day  
to go for an adventure on the railway.

For commuters in London the tube is the best  
with it being the most frequent and greener than all the rest  
But of a weekend or bank holiday  
there can be said to be no greater treat than a ride on the good old  
steam railway.

# Rocket

A Rocket in name only  
huffing along the tracks...

At 12 miles per hour,  
not the most elegant  
nor sophisticated of its ilk  
but got the job done,  
proved its mettle  
with its steaming, locomotive power.

Rocket,  
is making a new history,  
the little Stephenson loco  
beat off the competition,

Huffing along  
huffing along...

She alone completed the Rainhill trials,  
the first intercity railway  
Liverpool to Manchester,  
who knew this method of transport  
would transcend decades,  
travelling for miles and miles.

A Rocket in name only,

Huffing along  
huffing along  
huffing along the tracks...



# Steaming

Chuffing into the future  
and huffing back in time,  
steam runs warmth through the carriages  
as smuts of soot sting our eyes,

Seats to sink deep into  
lulled into slumber with carriage sway,  
headrests to snuggle up cosy  
as we clatter along on our way,

Something about steaming so comforting  
a little nostalgic delight,  
I'd go loco with you forever  
we've gone off the rails tonight!

© Rhiannon Owens

# Rolling Lines, Endless Time

By Phoenix Ford

Two hundred years, the heartbeat hums,  
Through Hampshire's lands, where wild streams run,  
The Watercress Line, spine of steel and bone,  
An endless thread through time and stone.

Steel laid down by roughened hands,  
By souls who shaped these hallowed lands—  
Where shunter's poles marked earth and clay,  
Each strike a promise meant to stay.

In dining cars of velvet deep,  
Fine silver shone, and dreams would keep,  
Celebrities brushed sleeves with kin,  
Shared stories rich as the whistle's spin.

On screens aglow, these trains took flight,  
Their engines bathed in film's dim light,  
From black-and-white to Technicolor's flame,  
This railway forged its legend's name.

Through pastures lush and woodlands high,  
Under autumn's blaze or spring's bright sky,  
The line runs true, a gentle guide,  
Through countryside's breath, rolling wide.

In bed seats soft where travellers sleep,  
Their hearts in sync with the engine's beat,  
Through hours hushed in twilight's veil,  
Each mile a chapter, each turn a tale.

Through mist-wrapped woods and moonlit hills,  
Where evening hums and silence stills,  
The line's old spirit stands its ground,  
In every curve, a truth profound.

To shunters' poles and drivers' hands,  
To coal and steam that bound this land,  
This line—a lifeline fierce and bold,  
Its legacy forged in tales retold.

For two centuries, the tracks remain,  
An iron spine through sun and rain,  
The Watercress Line, no time can sever,  
Rolling on, rolling strong, rolling forever.



# The Upminster Train

We met on the District Line  
from Wimbledon to Upminster.  
Chatted all through Southfields.  
Hands held by Putney Bridge.  
Our first kiss at a sudden lurch  
near Parson's Green. In love  
as we pulled in at Fulham Broadway.

It was all change at Earl's Court  
- Our first holiday on the platform -  
then our first row at South Kensington,  
because I didn't 'Mind the Gap'.  
I saw your reflection like a ghost  
in the dark mirrored windows,  
as sparks ran along the tunnel  
by Sloane Square - The first time  
I thought I could lose you -

I gave up my seat at Victoria.  
Promised never to leave you again  
when I got it back at Westminster.  
We lapsed into the silence of old friends  
by Tower Hill, the sighing wheels  
and banshee brakes tuned out,  
busy with our mobile phones.

You'd dozed off at Whitechapel.  
I nudged you awake, but you said  
the journey was tiring,  
and you may have to leave early:  
'We have travelled so far, I whispered:  
I've never been to Upminster,  
and don't want to go alone'.

I looked away  
as we passed Stepney Green.  
When I turned back,  
your Oyster card  
lay on the empty seat  
beside me

# Kimbridge Bumps and Troop Trains

It was just a thing that we girls did at Kimbridge.  
We'd stand as the train hit the points by the junction.  
The motion the carriage conveyed to our knee joints  
was jiggles and giggles and strangely up lifting.

We'd bounce and we'd sway as the train used to  
shudder.

The judder would move us from left foot to right one;  
A journey to school we would always remember.  
Our brothers would laugh at our jumping and bumping.

But when we grew up we would listen for troop trains,  
we'd gather our aprons and tie them on quickly  
then run to the rails, hear the clickety clacking  
as wagons of young men slowed down at the sidings.

We'd wave through the steam to American soldiers,  
while missing our brothers and husbands and lovers.

The G.I.s would lean from the windows and call us,  
throw sweeties we'd catch in the pockets of pinnies.



# Shunter's Pole

After the railway owners put roofs on third class carriages to prevent the wreck of weather and smuts in the eye,

after the country, and its railways, adopted GMT so that the trains stood a chance of arriving on time,

after a blizzard froze a signal to show the way was clear and three trains crashed, the default was changed to red,

Mr Tuff of York was watching his wife catch loops of wool with a crochet hook, deftly swerving the metal in and out.

I could not find out if Mr Tuff of York was a station master, an engineer or a Victorian gentleman inventor in spare time.

I could not find out if Mr Tuff of York had children, some of whom died in infancy or joined a railway union.

I could not find out if Mr Tuff of York lived to a grand age or lost his father to rolling stock that crushed ribs and hips,

only that he invented the shunter's pole to fit between wagons, to hook and unhook couplings, that he saved thousands.

# Wheel-Turner 200 years

Tunnels, viaducts, arches, soot-black  
As white steam hisses, engines chug Through embankments  
and cuts.

Open carriages and smuts,  
Hot ashes and wooden seats racing  
Faster than a frightened hare in Turner's painting.

The judder of locomotives, like giants  
Waking from their tar-soaked sleepers,  
And sleeping children dream of shining rails,  
Journeys, and holidays, seaside tales.  
When bells and whistles and crossing gates  
Sweep all before them.

And labelled packages of children, Gasmask-ready,  
see a different world Of uniforms in khaki, blue and grey.

Leaving loved ones in dismay  
To fleets of bombers; other engines Of juggernauts in the sky.  
Diesels and electric are today's standard.

No flashing Mallard or Flying Scot  
Pinning timetables, fixing the hour.

The world has shrunk,  
tomorrow's power Is light and wind, sailing ships on land:  
The Temeraire returning full circle



# WATERCRESS LINE/RAILWAY 200

For centuries the daily round  
Confined by speed of man or horse  
Kept most folk close to hearth and home;  
But gradually that hissing sound,  
From coal and fire a captured force,  
Kept Cornish miners dry beneath the foam.

But this great pump that coughed and wheezed  
Was bolted down to granite blocks.  
What if, some eager minds did ask,  
We made the coal men really pleased  
With bold new plans, all bound to shock,  
And moving coal trucks was the task?

So, hauling wagons up a slope  
With static engines' winding gear  
Was first embraced to good effect;  
But Stephenson said "Forget the rope!  
I'll build a mobile engine, never fear,  
T'll pull more tonnage than you'd expect."

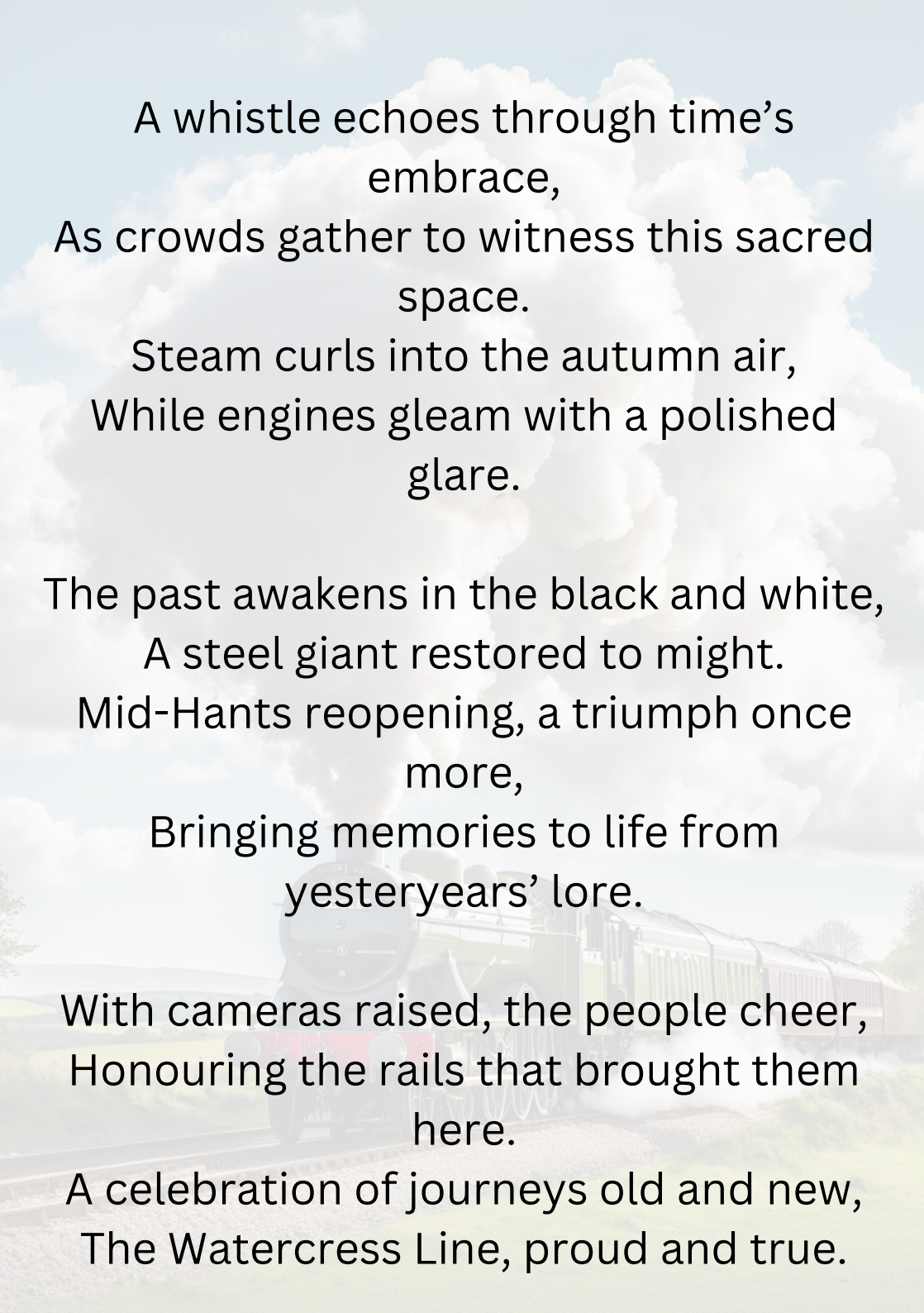
And so the Stockton Darlington  
Took black gold down to the docks  
But on the giddy op'ning day, locals  
Climbed aboard to join the fun;  
Lads in suits and girls in frocks  
Expressing joy were very vocal.

And so a new idea was born;  
Folk would pay to have a ride  
And travel further, faster too,  
Than any horses, coach and horn,  
And open up the countryside  
To townies, yes, more than a few.

Conversely, farmers sold their crops  
In far off markets, newly found,  
And post and parcels quick arrived.  
Day trips upline to visit shops  
For many folk their weekend crowned  
And soon, it seemed, the nation thrived.

More tracks were laid and cities linked  
And coastal hamlets became quite wealthy  
Once connected to the system,  
For quickly as an owl blinked,  
Workers knew the seaside healthy.  
All gave thanks for steam and piston.

John Jansen.



A whistle echoes through time's  
embrace,  
As crowds gather to witness this sacred  
space.

Steam curls into the autumn air,  
While engines gleam with a polished  
glare.

The past awakens in the black and white,  
A steel giant restored to might.  
Mid-Hants reopening, a triumph once  
more,  
Bringing memories to life from  
yesteryears' lore.

With cameras raised, the people cheer,  
Honouring the rails that brought them  
here.

A celebration of journeys old and new,  
The Watercress Line, proud and true.



# Women of the Railway

## Arrivals

Filling the gap, stepping up to the plate,  
Fixing the fractures that the railway makes.

Methodist teas, food for the poor,  
laundered white shirts for chapel and school.

Sewing and stitching, scrubbing the soot.

Chasing the smuts, learning to cook.

Feeding and leading, hauling the coal.

Snuff out the candle and pray for his soul.

## Departures

A one-off payment for a life lost.

What cost, a woman's loss?

She washes the body of her man with tears.

Grasps the reins when widowhood appears.

Gets back on track; fits and falters.

A paltry deodand for death that alters  
her direction and her dreams.

# Locomotion

‘A marvel!’ she said.

Sleek and gleaming monuments of speed, of adventure and opportunities, stand silent in the railway heritage museum. Silent now, but promising power, with thundering beat, hiss, shriek, and rattle.

Record breaking innovations, testaments to giants of engineering, the pioneers who pushed them to their limits, playing their part in the 4-6-2 scientific revolution.

‘A marvel!’ they’d said, the top-hatted politicians, eager entrepreneurs, hopeful investors.

‘Let’s stretch these locomotion lines north, south, east and west.’

The 1800s economy of joining towns with coasts, of emptying hills and valleys to fuel a revolution.

Bringing food and newly-created commuters to cities, returning with gaggles of day-trippers flocking to sand and sea in burgeoning resorts.

‘They are our heritage marvel,’ our 1960s youth said.

‘Let’s stop the disappearance, decay and destruction.

We’ll rejuvenate, renew, refurbish and repurpose, reclaim these engines, this line, the landmarks and sounds, revive the days of travel past.’

Let’s marvel, for future progress and improvements extend the advancements of two hundred years.

And celebrate the railway engineers, technicians, staff, and volunteers, making it possible for work and leisure, to travel north, south, east, and west.

Railway200



# The Watercress Line

The steam train chug chugs along the track  
People are smiling and waiting for it to come back.

The puffs of steam flow into the sky  
Like cotton clouds flying by.

The watercress line is over 200 years old  
With many a story yet to be told.

Whether diesel or steam  
The train runs like a dream.

The train is staffed by volunteers  
Who maintain the train with all the proper gear.

There are coal men, drivers and technicians  
They work so hard, they are like magicians.

Every day they turn up smiling a welcome  
But every day is different and never humdrum

With hundreds of people passing through  
You can always meet the wonderful crew

The train runs from Alresford to Alton  
Alan the gardener is its patron.

The train is filled with people every day  
Even though they have to pay.

Visitors both young and old  
They even turn up when the weather is cold.

Winter, autumn, summer or spring  
The train runs regularly, such joy it does bring.

There are parties, experiences and treats galore  
It is suitable for all both rich and poor.

Every trip is cheerful and fun  
Including hot coffee and a big sticky bun.

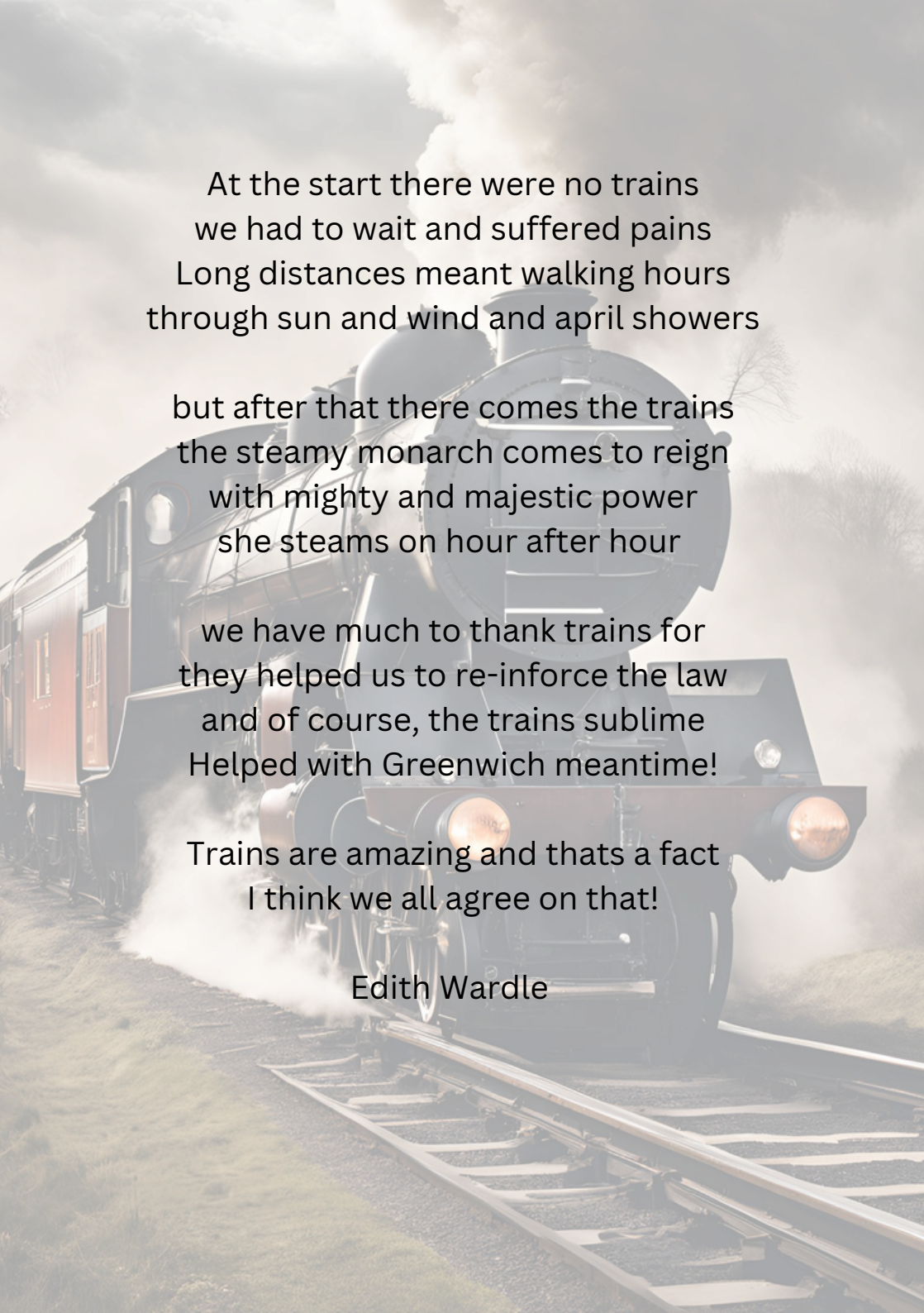
You can have afternoon tea, breakfast or supper  
Or just nice biscuits and a large hot cuppa.

You can come alone or with your dog  
Or come with family and friends and go the whole hog.

Please come and see the watercress line  
You'll be really pleased you took the time.

To visit this ancient and lovely railway line.

By  
Alyson Stainer

A steam locomotive is pulling a train through a hazy, misty landscape. The locomotive is dark-colored with a large smokestack emitting a thick plume of white steam that rises into the sky. The train is moving along a set of tracks that recede into the distance. The overall atmosphere is soft and nostalgic, with a muted color palette dominated by greys, whites, and dark tones.

At the start there were no trains  
we had to wait and suffered pains  
Long distances meant walking hours  
through sun and wind and april showers

but after that there comes the trains  
the steamy monarch comes to reign  
with mighty and majestic power  
she steams on hour after hour

we have much to thank trains for  
they helped us to re-inforce the law  
and of course, the trains sublime  
Helped with Greenwich meantime!

Trains are amazing and thats a fact  
I think we all agree on that!

Edith Wardle



## Southampton 1965

Coming from the swimming baths,  
Two children running free through  
town.

Such a glorious summer day.  
We shout, “There’s a train in the  
station!”

A last spurt up that steep hill  
to stand victorious on the top of  
the tunnel.

The past chugs towards us  
and, laughing deliriously, we are  
engulfed in steam  
that hides the future from us,  
and the train disappears beneath  
our feet.

Sue Moore

# Railway Time

In order to synchronize differing local times, in 1847 the railway implemented a single, standard time (Greenwich Mean Time) for the whole country.

This was initially known as ‘railway time’.

We’re on a train. While somewhere unseen  
our proper lives go on, we’re on railway time,  
each cocooned at the point of our own stillness,  
suspended, safe, released from shackle or constraint.

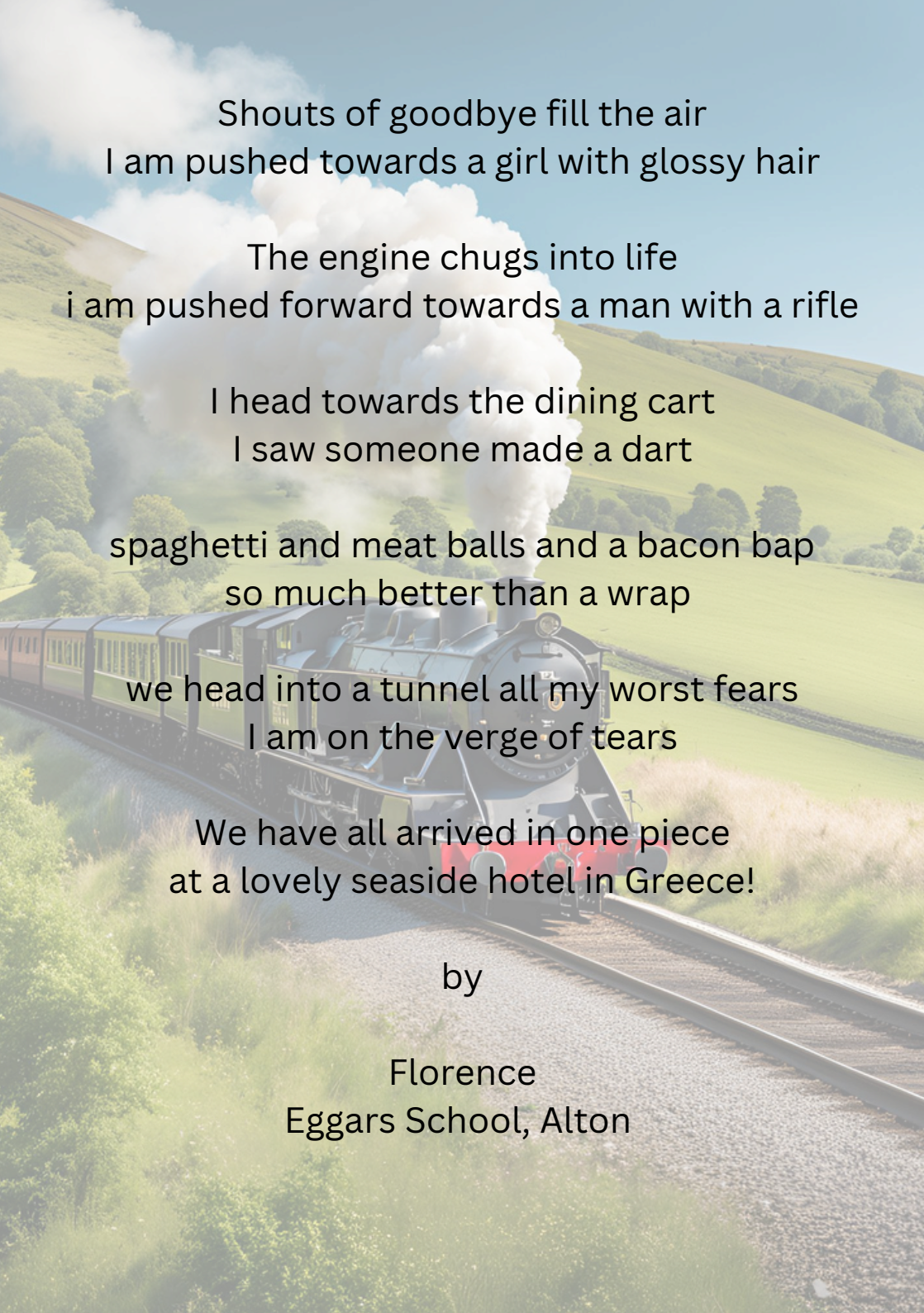
Racing the road as it gallops down to Winchester,  
the train swallows trees, hamlets, pylons, fields.  
Beside the track silver birch thrust out pale arms,  
beseech the train for something they can’t name.

Mesmerized by the thunk-against-thunk of wheel  
on track we take comfort in the notion of  
designated seats, learn to speak train: mind the gap!/  
don’t leave parcels unattended/See it, say it, sorted.

The guard appears, touting his trade: tickets please/  
next stop Alton and a trolley trundles past  
with its sad selection. In buffet-land it’s always  
time to eat but, suspended in aspic, no-one moves.  
At dusk an albatross of cloud drifts down from  
the north, steam lifts from the razor-cut fields  
and streetlights appear, like friends. Time to get off,  
to break the fourth wall, look life in the eye.

Hilary Hares





Shouts of goodbye fill the air  
I am pushed towards a girl with glossy hair

The engine chugs into life  
i am pushed forward towards a man with a rifle

I head towards the dining cart  
I saw someone made a dart

spaghetti and meat balls and a bacon bap  
so much better than a wrap

we head into a tunnel all my worst fears  
I am on the verge of tears

We have all arrived in one piece  
at a lovely seaside hotel in Greece!

by

Florence  
Eggars School, Alton

# All Aboard!

All aboard said the man with a glossly thick  
moustache

I heard a brass of damp snow ahead  
And if we go through the hills and far away look  
A bird who is curved and on the other side I see  
a dolphin with perfect flips down to the tips of  
the ocean with the salty smell.

This horrible fancy women next to me has a  
large suitcase full of party clothes and a tick  
sparkly dress with a crown with a frown of  
sound

Oh no! into the tunnel I go!  
Ew! Delicite thin spiders webs!  
Yuck! Gross, ugly green liquid  
Finally I am in the city of Canada  
What a beautiful place I cried  
And for the rest of the day I drink coffee

By Marley  
Eggars School



# The train with a message

All aboard shouts the captain  
All everyone smiles, laughs and grins  
Now hold on tight and board the train  
The journey there shall be insane!  
This is amazing I'm living the dream  
A blow of the whistle the first puff of steam  
As it sails above our heads way  
Up high, a message of hope will luck in the sky  
Then a bird will fly past and will steal this speech and will take it to whales who sit by the beach.  
And the whales to jellyfish shake in the sea  
To sting rays to bathers who's friends with a bee  
So the bee to some cows who lived in the field.  
To horses to camels to scorpions too this message is not  
easily concealed.  
through sandstorms, through snow storms, through rain and through sun  
this text is available for everyone

This has gone all around the whole wide world, it has passed through the greatest seas, and finally it has  
come to me

A little birdy has told me his journey from afar  
And told me the message which I told a star  
And I wished upon that every star  
To spread the message near and far  
The next morning I woke up here with ever such a brilliant idea.  
To write something that can make it all the way past the sun,  
I am going to tell you what this message is just as long as you'll pass this along ready....3.....2.....1!

The message is the chorus, the chorus of a song, a very old song that in your heart you knew all along. You  
ready?

Well then here we go!  
The enemy of my enemy is my friend  
All good times come to an end  
Absence makes the heart grow fonder  
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder  
A picture is worth a thousand words  
Hope for the best, prepare for the worst  
Don't judge a book by its cover  
Don't put too many irons in the fire  
This shall be passed down through time, it flows in our blood so we remember this rhyme  
A message like this comes with every new train  
And anyone can find a message like this in the tiniest of sand grains

By  
Jess  
Eggars School, Alton

# All Aboard!

All aboard the steamy train

Hissing and slamming is all I can hear

All I smell is steamy and old wonder when I will be at my icy  
destination

Sitting in the carriage all I can see is a lot of tall bodies with fancy  
clothes

All of a sudden I get an icy shiver down my spine

Must be nearly there I thought

At last I am at the café

All I smell is the strong smell

All of a sudden it got really dark

I must be in a tunnel I thought

Finally out of the rich black tunnel

All I can see is ice crystals

Now I can hear is hissing and a whistle firing at the iciest place  
Iceland

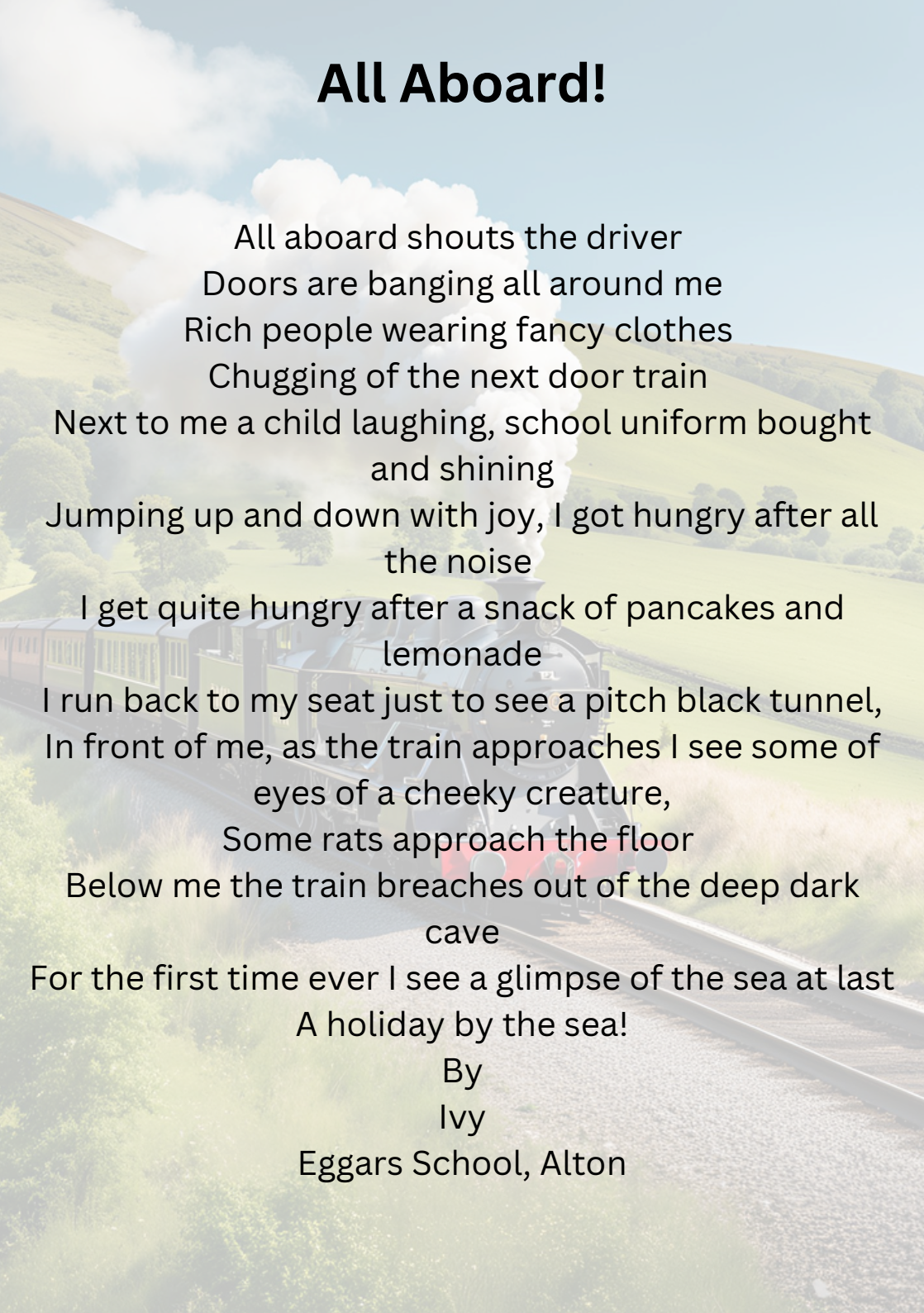
By

Matilda

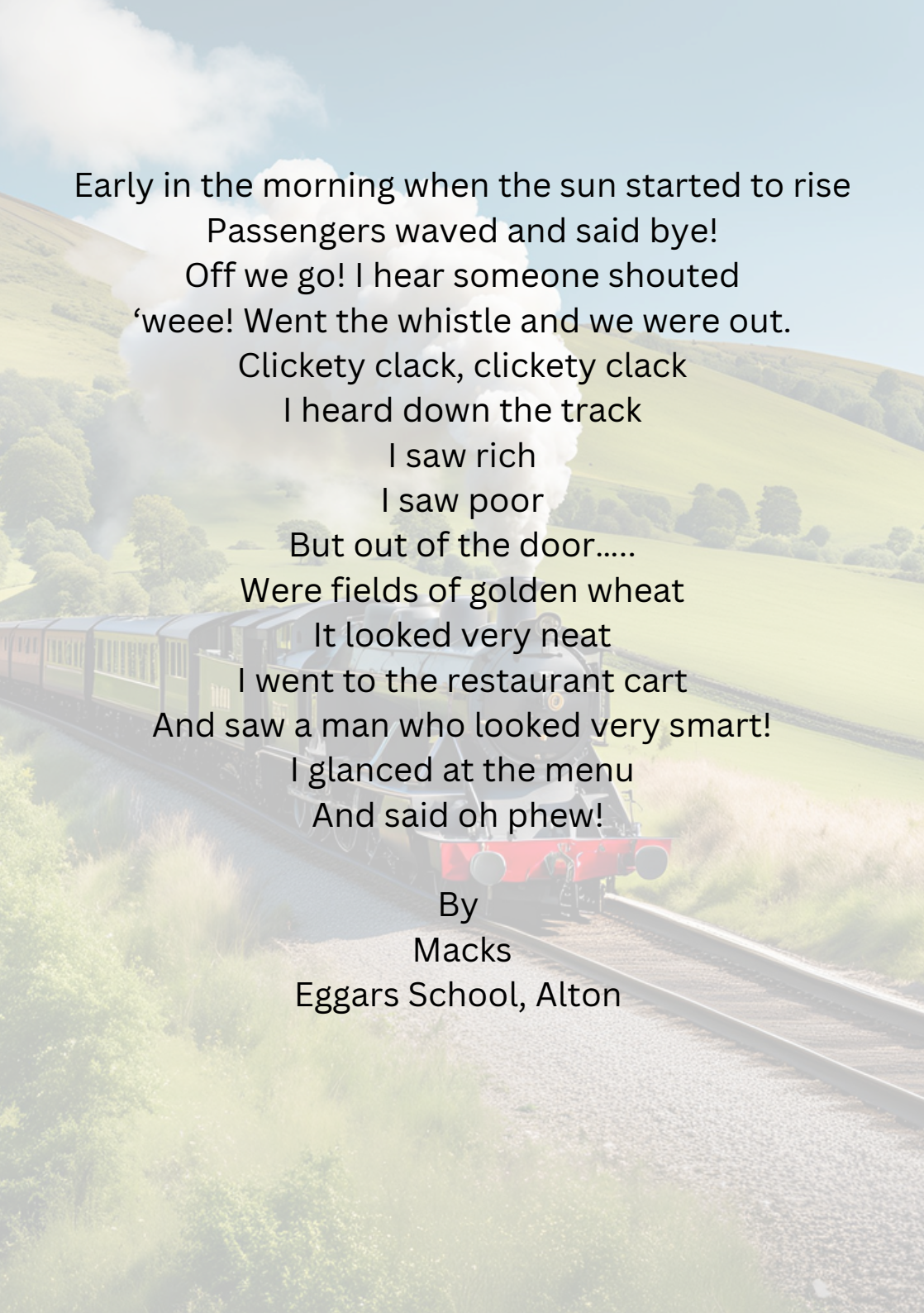
Eggars School, Alton



# All Aboard!



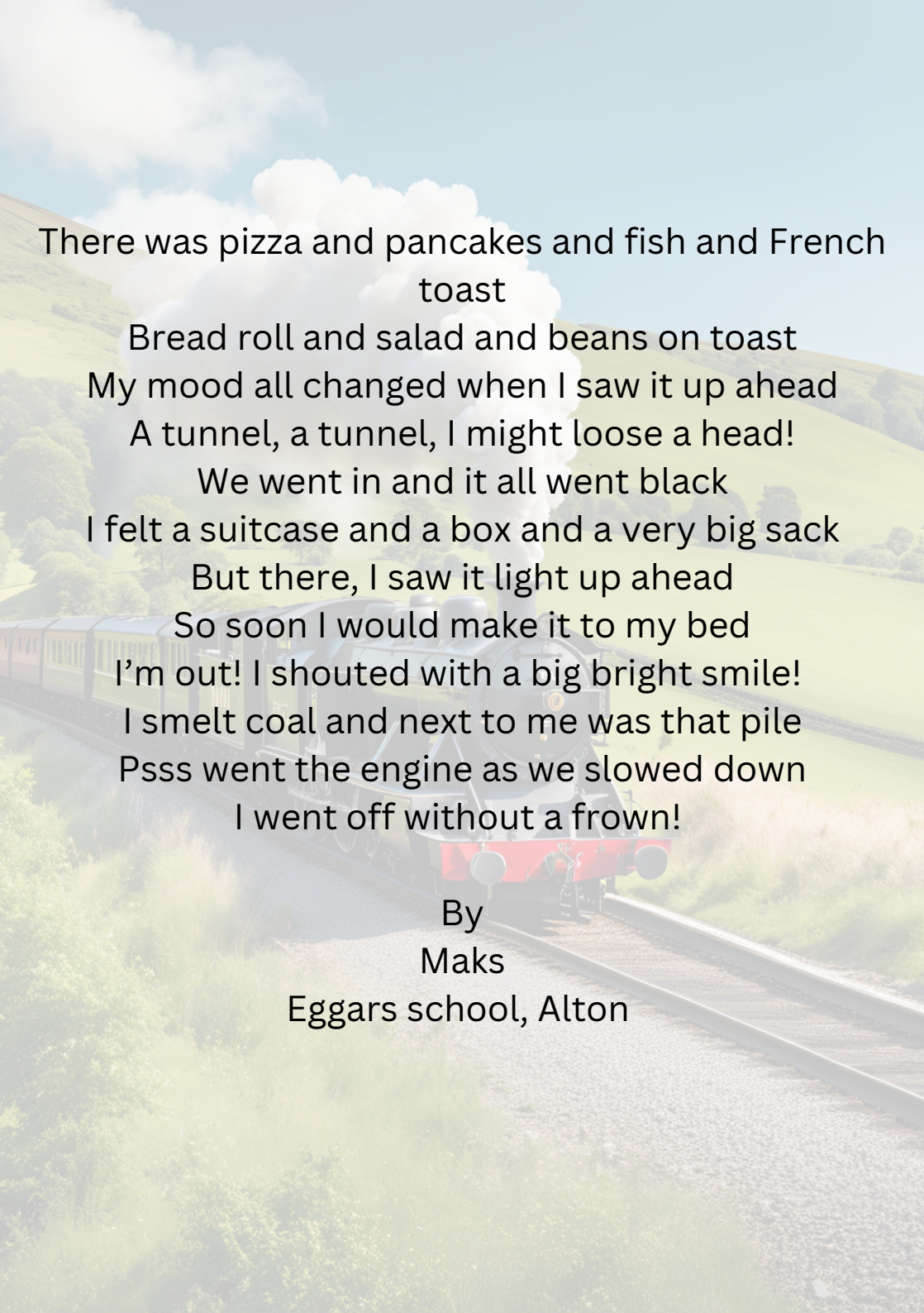
All aboard shouts the driver  
Doors are banging all around me  
Rich people wearing fancy clothes  
Chugging of the next door train  
Next to me a child laughing, school uniform bought  
and shining  
Jumping up and down with joy, I got hungry after all  
the noise  
I get quite hungry after a snack of pancakes and  
lemonade  
I run back to my seat just to see a pitch black tunnel,  
In front of me, as the train approaches I see some of  
eyes of a cheeky creature,  
Some rats approach the floor  
Below me the train breaches out of the deep dark  
cave  
For the first time ever I see a glimpse of the sea at last  
A holiday by the sea!  
By  
Ivy  
Eggars School, Alton

A steam train is shown from a side-on perspective, moving along a track that curves through a lush green landscape. The train has a black locomotive with a white smokestack emitting a large plume of white steam. It is pulling several green and yellow passenger cars. The background features rolling green hills under a blue sky with soft white clouds. The overall scene is bright and cheerful.

Early in the morning when the sun started to rise  
Passengers waved and said bye!  
Off we go! I hear someone shouted  
‘weee! Went the whistle and we were out.  
Clickety clack, clickety clack  
I heard down the track  
I saw rich  
I saw poor  
But out of the door.....  
Were fields of golden wheat  
It looked very neat  
I went to the restaurant cart  
And saw a man who looked very smart!  
I glanced at the menu  
And said oh phew!

By  
Macks  
Eggars School, Alton





There was pizza and pancakes and fish and French  
toast

Bread roll and salad and beans on toast  
My mood all changed when I saw it up ahead  
A tunnel, a tunnel, I might loose a head!

We went in and it all went black  
I felt a suitcase and a box and a very big sack

But there, I saw it light up ahead  
So soon I would make it to my bed  
I'm out! I shouted with a big bright smile!

I smelt coal and next to me was that pile  
Psss went the engine as we slowed down  
I went off without a frown!

By  
Maks  
Eggars school, Alton

# Wrecker

Craneman winds his busy jib,  
prises panels of old track  
from cold ashy whispers  
of long-lost locomotives.

It's just another job,  
the irony of ripping out  
lifelines to his own village  
lost on his Cheviot mind.

Wagon springs creak  
as rust, wood and muck  
pile teetering on bolsters.  
He hooks on another load.

At sunset, the wheezing engine  
snorts through purple hills,  
its own end soon inevitable  
in hot acetylene sparks.

Craneman lowers his jib  
in a silent bow to fate.  
It's a changing world.  
The bus service never ran.

By  
Phillip Binding



# The Shunter

Stone, steel and wood are his friends.

He watches trade sliding past  
its own reflection in soggy potholes,  
deftly flicks an ash pole, breaks links,  
pins down brakes with his own weight.

He rides down a century of track,  
master of splitting and reforming,  
quick eyes clocking clipped cards  
reading Cambridge, Cardiff, Carlisle,  
cucumbers, coal, commodities, coke.

He beckons the grumbling loco,  
lamp switched green to red,  
scrambles under buffer and wheel,  
sometimes rides coupling chains  
like a risky rollercoaster.

Rolls ready rubbed in greasy rizzlas,  
drinks crap coffee from chipped cups,  
yellow hat, gloves, vest and flags  
so filthy his nickname is “lo viz”.  
He’s obsolete and he knows it.

By  
Phillip Binding



## Game

The Kindertransport was arranged in 1938 – 1939, before the outbreak of WW2, by Nicholas Winton. 10,000 children were saved from the Nazi regime.

Tagged with numbers, not names  
the Kinder boarded The Winton Trains  
from: Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt,  
Duisseldorf, Vienna, Prague, Danzig.  
Some clutched dolls, bears, hankies;  
each carried a suitcase that contained  
drawings of home, photos of mothers  
and fathers who most, never saw again ...

Steaming through alien landscapes,  
they came to Liverpool Street Station;  
landing safely in the Monopoly of war,  
finding comfort in other mothers' arms.

By  
Denise Bennett



# All Aboard!

The train instructor shouts 'All Aboard!'  
As I'm beginning to head abroad

I can hear the whistle  
And the wind is very bristle

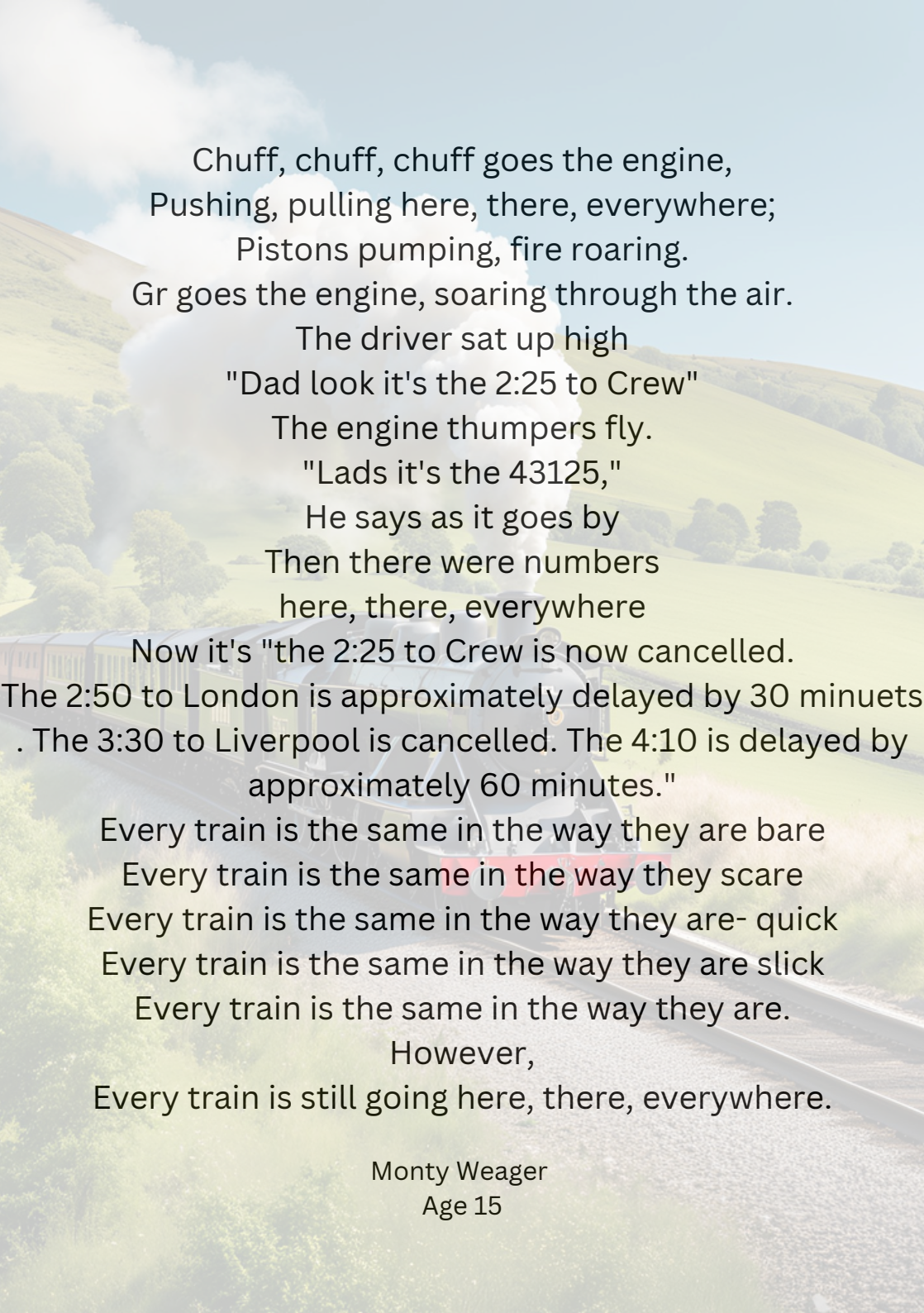
In the diner car, fish, chips and bread  
With a little bit of tasty spread

The big city stretches out of my window  
As I'm keeping up my streak on Duolingo

As I head into the tunnel, I see lots of bats  
On the other side, I hope to see lots of cats

Finally, I made it home  
Where I can a bath with lots of foam.

By Jack C  
Eggars School, Alton



Chuff, chuff, chuff goes the engine,  
Pushing, pulling here, there, everywhere;  
Pistons pumping, fire roaring.  
Gr goes the engine, soaring through the air.

The driver sat up high  
"Dad look it's the 2:25 to Crew"  
The engine thumpers fly.

"Lads it's the 43125,"

He says as it goes by  
Then there were numbers  
here, there, everywhere

Now it's "the 2:25 to Crew is now cancelled.

The 2:50 to London is approximately delayed by 30 minuets  
. The 3:30 to Liverpool is cancelled. The 4:10 is delayed by  
approximately 60 minutes."

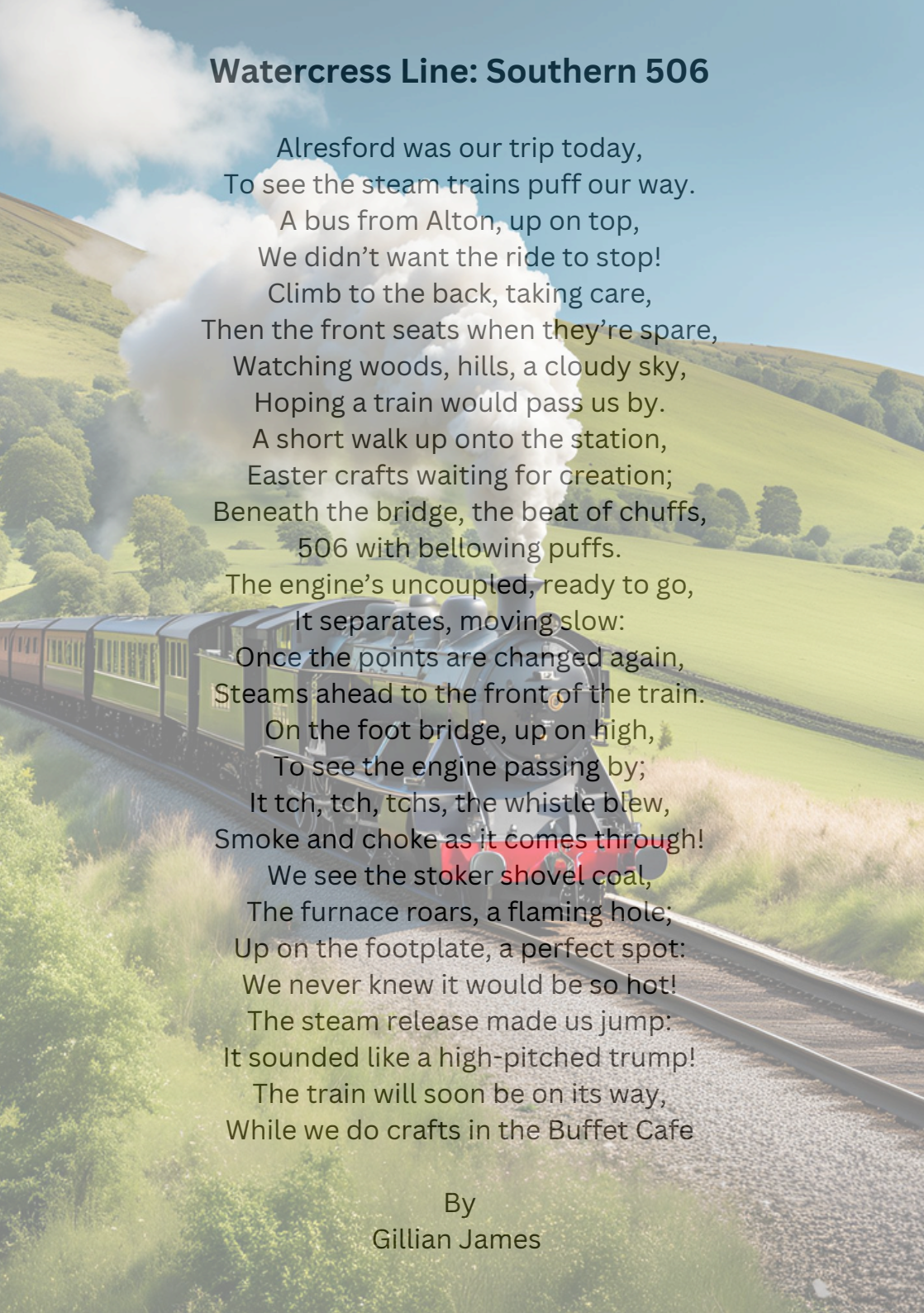
Every train is the same in the way they are bare  
Every train is the same in the way they scare  
Every train is the same in the way they are- quick  
Every train is the same in the way they are slick  
Every train is the same in the way they are.

However,  
Every train is still going here, there, everywhere.

Monty Weager  
Age 15



## Watercress Line: Southern 506

A steam locomotive, Southern 506, is pulling a train through a lush green valley. The train is moving along a track that curves through the landscape. The locomotive is emitting a large plume of white smoke. The background shows rolling green hills under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The train consists of several green and brown passenger cars.

Alresford was our trip today,  
To see the steam trains puff our way.  
A bus from Alton, up on top,  
We didn't want the ride to stop!  
Climb to the back, taking care,  
Then the front seats when they're spare,  
Watching woods, hills, a cloudy sky,  
Hoping a train would pass us by.  
A short walk up onto the station,  
Easter crafts waiting for creation;  
Beneath the bridge, the beat of chuffs,  
506 with bellowing puffs.  
The engine's uncoupled, ready to go,  
It separates, moving slow:  
Once the points are changed again,  
Stems ahead to the front of the train.  
On the foot bridge, up on high,  
To see the engine passing by;  
It tch, tch, tchs, the whistle blew,  
Smoke and choke as it comes through!  
We see the stoker shovel coal,  
The furnace roars, a flaming hole;  
Up on the footplate, a perfect spot:  
We never knew it would be so hot!  
The steam release made us jump:  
It sounded like a high-pitched trump!  
The train will soon be on its way,  
While we do crafts in the Buffet Cafe

By  
Gillian James

# Railway Station

Trains arriving  
Trains departing

People waiting  
People rushing

Mothers fussing  
Children crying

Pigeons flying  
People sighing

People missing  
Lovers kissing

People eating  
People reading

Trains arriving  
Trains departing

Samantha Jayne Hunt Stacey



# Heritage Lines

Enchanted, he watched the clockwork engine  
wind round and round and round the simple track.  
Enthralled, he listened to the stories of Thomas and Gordon, blue,  
Henry, green, and James, red, before he went to bed.

Older, he upgraded to electric and 00.

Then off to school. Slam door compartments,  
first, second and third classes. A penalty if the alarm  
wrongly pulled; and do not clean soot off the window.

Newcomen and Watt built up steam and Stephenson's dream  
designed the first, "Rocket". Fortunes made, some out of pocket.

Differences of gauge finally assuaged.

Configurations grew, 2-4-2, 2-6-2; 2-6-4, 4-6-4 and many more  
painted in livery colours, LNER, LMS, Southern and GWR,  
with the Mallard, blue, and The Flying Scotsman, green,  
proudly serving the nation before nationalisation.

Cuttings, embankments, tunnels, long bridges and viaducts spanning  
the landscape, carrying passengers and goods across the land  
delivering the mail, the coal, luggage in advance, the pheasant brace,  
spring flowers, the morning milk and watercress, all in good haste.

Commuters, once in bowlers, rushed to the office.

The overnight sleeper and intercity ran on steel lines  
while on poetic lines, views from windows flashing before eyes,  
past moorland boulder, "white steam over shoulder",  
and stations whistling by.

New lands opened up overseas; iron horses railroaded the west;  
India's network fast became its largest employer.

Now diesel, electric and magnetic levitation,

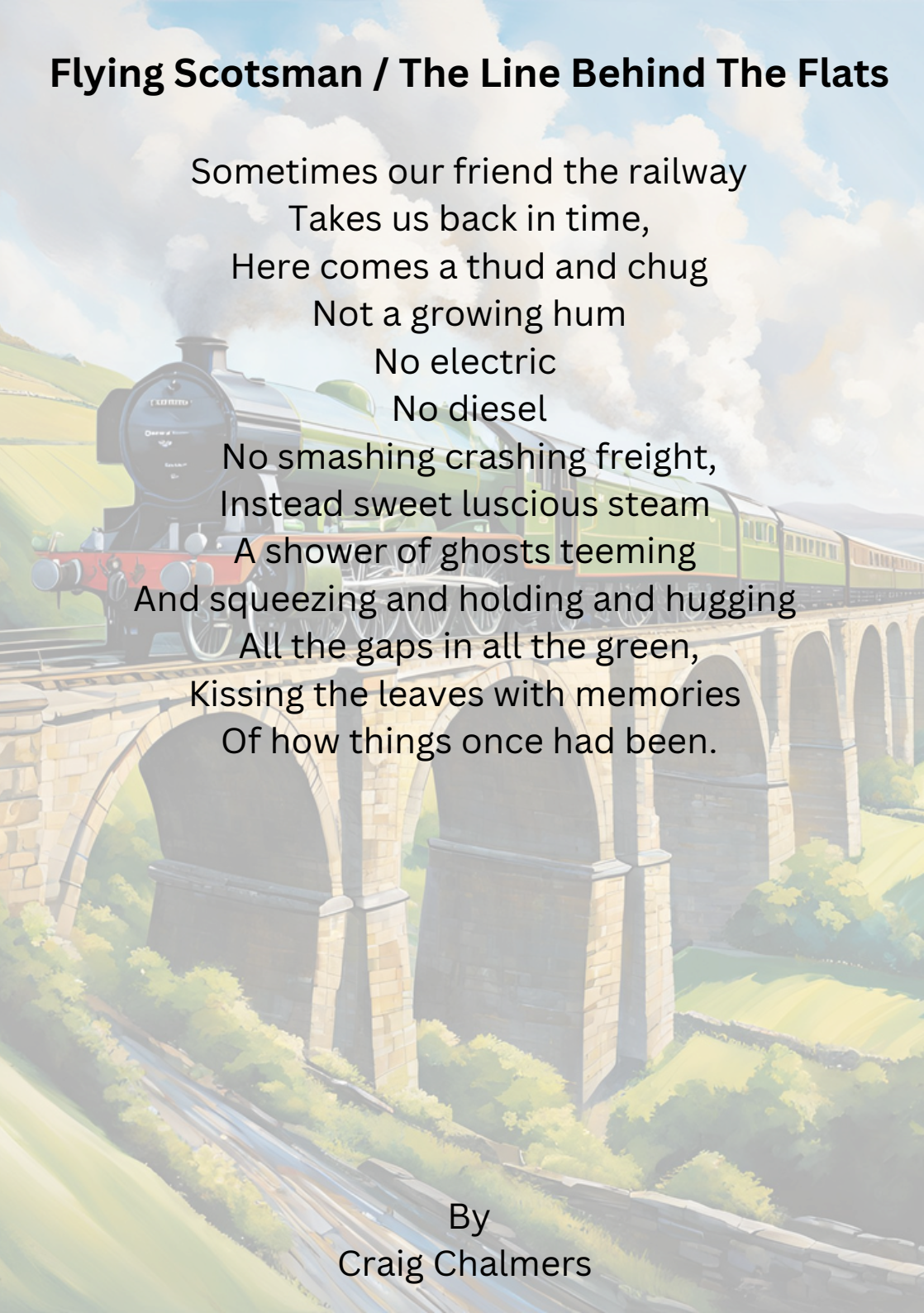
The pride of each brother nation  
as bullets and arrows outspeed each other.

Is the next stop, Adelstrop? Not since Beeching's axe  
left lines forgotten and forlorn awaiting another dawn.

Thankfully, local enthusiasts assembled in teams,  
reconditioned the engines, rerolled the stock,  
polished the brass, recreated the past,  
to relive their childhood dreams.

By  
Jeremy Addison

# Flying Scotsman / The Line Behind The Flats

A detailed illustration of a steam locomotive, the Flying Scotsman, crossing a large stone viaduct. The locomotive is black with red and white accents, emitting a plume of white steam. It is pulling a green passenger train. The viaduct is made of light-colored stone and has several large arches. The surrounding landscape is a lush green valley with rolling hills and some trees. The sky is blue with soft white clouds.

Sometimes our friend the railway  
Takes us back in time,  
Here comes a thud and chug  
Not a growing hum  
No electric  
No diesel  
No smashing crashing freight,  
Instead sweet luscious steam  
A shower of ghosts teeming  
And squeezing and holding and hugging  
All the gaps in all the green,  
Kissing the leaves with memories  
Of how things once had been.

By  
Craig Chalmers



## SEPTEMBER 1939 - OPERATION PIED PIPER EVACUATION DAY

Mum said we had to go. We asked her, why?  
‘Because Hitler’s on the warpath’ was her reply.  
We packed a small case with undies, socks and vest.

A change of clothes, a coat and the rest,  
pyjamas, a toothbrush, a comb, and a hankie.  
‘Here’s a gas mask, in case of Hitler’s hanky-panky’.

We cried - we didn’t want to go. But mum said,  
‘you have to, ‘cos the authorities and me, said so.’

She packed us a sandwich of bread and jam:  
‘it’s all I’ve got, I ‘aint got ‘am.’

But the bombs? What will you do at night?

Mum said, ‘don’t worry, I’ll be all right.

I’ll camp out down the Underground,  
I’ll be okay, all safe and sound.

I’ve got the neighbours, we’ve got each other,  
Aunty Vi, and then there’s me mother!

We won’t let Hitler get us down.

We’re tough, us lot, from London town.’

We went to the station to get on a train.

We didn’t know when we’d be home again.

Some got on trains to the West, and Wales.

Some went North to the Yorkshire dales.

Off to wherever there were places to be sent.

We were off from Victoria, to somewhere in Kent.

Mothers were soothing their girls and boys  
crying, snotty and hugging their toys.

‘Dry your tears, it’ll be all right.

And don’t forget your prayers each night.’

My tummy was turning. I tried not to cry.

I pretended the train smoke had got in my eye.

Mum knew, but she said ‘you behave, all right?’

Be good for these people, be polite.’

I nodded and sniffed. We were taken away.

We waved as we left on the trains that day.

Off to people we’d never met.

Some were much loved; some we’d rather forget.

# FROM THE DING DONG MINE (CORNWALL)

## I GIVE YOU RICHARD TREVITHICK

In the year one thousand, eight hundred and eight,  
from the Ding Dong mine there came, of late,  
an engineer, with a penchant for steam.

He constructed an engine, for people, his dream.

In Euston Square on a circular track  
he hauled paying folk with a puff and a clack,  
on his steam locomotive 'Catch-me-who-can'.

But although some saw a remarkable man,  
and the demonstration was quite sensational,  
performance issues made it in-operational.

And despite his intentions to impress rich men,  
they were not quite ready to invest back then.

Richard Trevithick, ahead of his time,  
brought steam to the world and the railway line,

but driven by dreams and reckless by name  
he played an unfortunate business game.

Without investors, his luck doomed to fail,

lured by new fortune, to Peru he set sail,  
to work in the mines building engines galore,  
but, again, he was thwarted, this time by war.

So, facing the end of his overseas adventures,  
he returned home quite poor, to face new inventors.

Yet nothing could stop this man and his mind.

The first storage heater, he invented, you'll find.

But, 'branded with folly' for his impossible feats.

Reviled by James Watt, he faced more defeats.

And all who, in some ways, had stolen his glory,  
created their side of that unfortunate story.

Trevithick, died, forgotten and poor.

But, 'a use to his country,' he valued far more.

Then, in eighteen hundred and eighty-eight,  
a stained-glass window to commemorate

the 'Father of the Locomotive' was unveiled  
by the Institute of Engineers, who latterly hailed  
and held him, at last, in much high esteem.

In Westminster Abbey, he fulfilled his dream.



# Grandads Trains

It was my turn to climb the ladder up to the loft where grandad seemed to hide, every time we turned up to visit him and Granny. I had, had my eight birthday, just last week and Grandad had decreed, that at this magical age I could come up and look and drive his model train engines which we were forbidden to play with until we were eight but never alone. As I poked my head above the loft stairs, I was surprised at how noisy it was in the confined space, as model steam engines raced around and around the most elaborate train set I had ever seen. I could see from Grandads face, that my face had the right reaction, as he beamed from ear to ear as my eyes adjusted to what was before them.

Grandad ushered me to climb under the set and join him in the middle of the tracks and then asked me what train would I like to drive first. My eyes were on stalks as I surveyed what lay before me but the big black brooding steam train with its all-black coaches, that stood mysteriously in one of the sidings caught my eye and I nervously pointed at that one.

After a moment, my Grandad instructed that, that train was actually his favourite, but, as it was my birthday he would allow me to drive it, but I must be careful when I was controlling it. I felt my hands go sweaty, as I slowly turned the control knob to start the engine up and send it on its way. 'Carefully boy' I heard my grandad say. I stood mesmerised as the big black beast began pulling away and out of the siding.

We both stood silently until Granddad spoke and hesitantly told me the tale behind my choice. 'Lad that is a replica model of the train I travelled on with my father from London to Budapest, after the Second World War, when he took up his position back with the government there, which he had worked in before the war' 'There are bars on the windows, were you a prisoner Grandad?' 'No lad I was with my dad and the bars were to keep German prisoner of war and children jumping on the train to try and escape across the border with us' I stared as the train rattled around the track through the different landscapes that made up Granddads life. 'Actually, Ivan it was on that train that I was arrested as a child' I stood and stared at my Grandad 'why' I hesitantly asked.' I had some chocolate, a real luxury back then lad and when I saw the starving children I gave them some of my chocolate and the US troops frogmarched me off the train' my eyes open in amazement before I whispered 'what happened Grandad' grandad smiled and ruffled my hair 'don't worry lad your great Grandad used his diplomatic pass and saved me from the gallows' we both stared in silence as I brought the train into rest at the station. Before I could ask my next question Grandad happily changed subject to the next loco he brought onto the track 'This train took us across Africa as we set off for a new life, when Hungary fell to the communists and before he could elaborate Nanny voice bellowed up towards us 'Supper boys' 'Next time Ivan I will tell all about my African adventure, now go wash your hands'

# The train, my country and me

The journeys that I best remember, as a child of the 1970's,  
Are those by the train, for they not only made memories,  
But helped me peep, into the vast, diverse landscape,  
Of a land called India, as the colourful, concrete cities melted,  
The raw, rural panorama just took over, the green, lush fields,  
With scattered mud huts, animals milling around,  
The smoke escaping from the chimneys, pausing for sometime,  
Making me imagine the shapes, probably a reflection,  
Of the thoughts playing in my mind, or my dreams,  
The semi-naked children standing by the tracks, waving happy  
goodbyes,  
Making me learn many lessons: of happiness and satisfaction,  
The delicate- looking women carrying multiple earthen pots on their  
head,  
Amazingly strong for a burden that was heavy, pausing as the train  
passed,  
Their faces covered with the veil, yet lifting to smile shyly at strangers,  
It was sights like these, that I wanted to capture and seal in my heart,  
Which earned me my mother's wrath, for I refused to close the window,  
As the train chugged and puffed, I saw my country in its various hues,  
Each rendezvous left an unforgettable experience, the vendors selling  
wares,  
With catchy songs and a spring in the step, the guard chasing boys sans  
tickets,  
Each journey gave me time to peep inwards, offering me solitude,  
To think and ponder, helping me evolve as a traveller,  
On the journey filled with many surprises called life

By  
Dr. Kanwalpreet Baidwan  
India

The British introduced trains in India and helped connect India.  
After 1947, the train network has expanded, leading to connection  
between people and regions. The trains are indeed a gift.



# Voices Of The Past

By A.H. Brazier

Voices of the past  
Never forgotten.  
First right to the last,  
Never forgotten.

The rails that we lay,  
Though last they might never,  
We'll remember to this day,  
Forever and ever.

Horses, the parents of it all.  
Steam, the child who succeeded.  
Diesel, efficient without fall.  
Electric, the power most needed.

Each in their turn  
Gave way to the other,  
Yet together as one,  
Like sister and brother,

March into history  
Through hills and through dales.  
The creators of mystery.  
The writers of tales.

Though disasters beset them,

And destruction fate urged,  
From the ashes of danger,  
Heroes emerged.

The future that lasts,  
Forever unfolding,  
These icons of the past  
And present are molding.

Voices of the past,  
Never forgotten.  
First right to the last,

A black and white photograph of railroad workers in the background, with one worker in the foreground using a tool on a rail. The image is faded and serves as a backdrop for the poem.

# I Am Beside You

By A.H. Brazier

I am beside you  
And you beside me.  
We're siblings together,  
And rails bind we.

Oppressed were we all  
For many a long year.  
Mistreated, misjudged,  
For all we held dear.

Fights fought overseas,  
Though damning they've been,  
Are nothing like those  
At home that we've seen.

Yet when our chance came,  
Like a bolt from the blue,  
We fought and we struggled  
Until our dreams came true.

We come from all over,  
And all walks of life,  
From lives full of peace  
To those torn with strife.

Our bodies are different,


Hearts and abilities too.  
Tongues and genders vary,  
But one thing holds true.

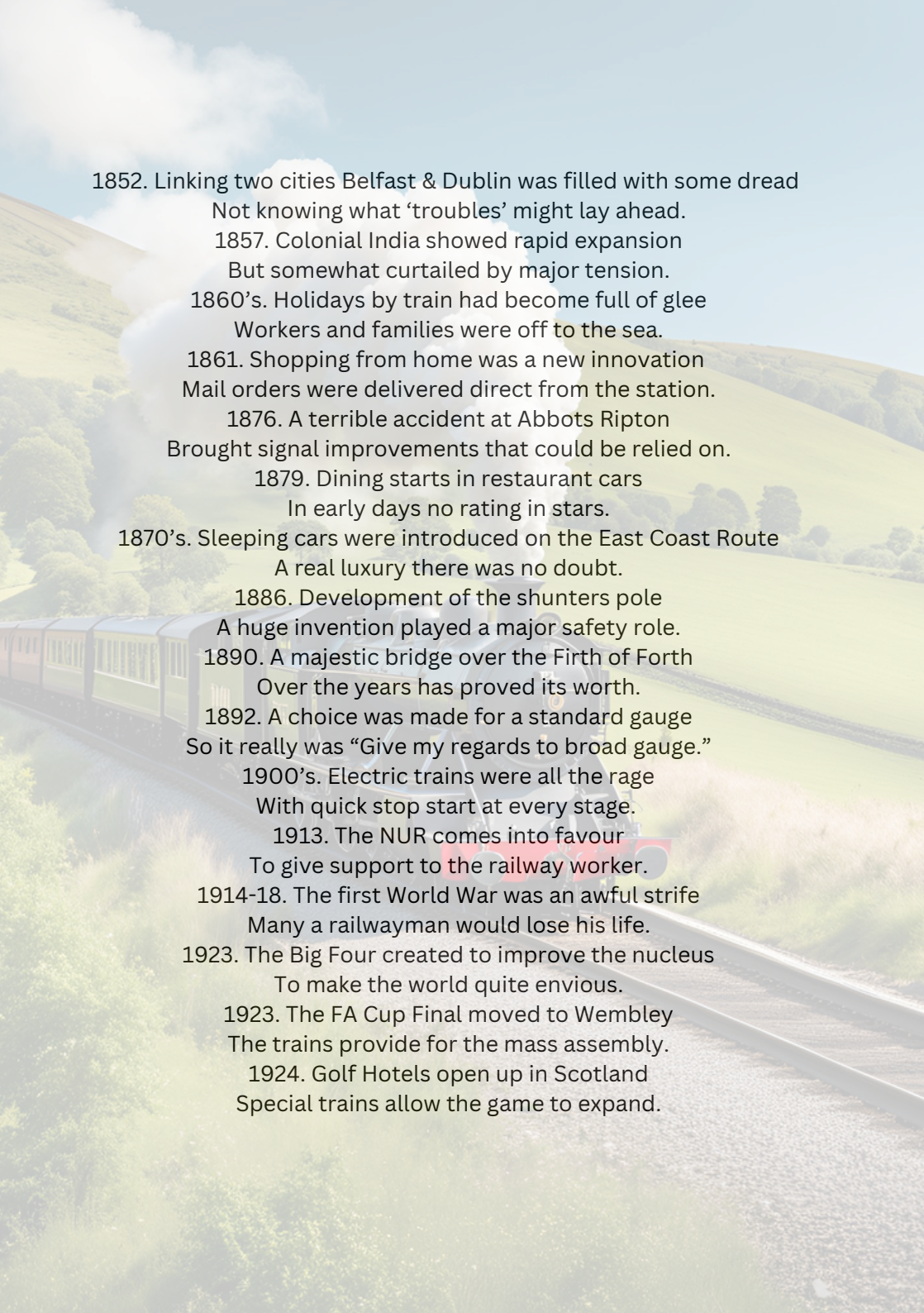
I am beside you,  
And you beside me.  
We're siblings together,  
And rails bind we.



## RAILWAY RHYME 200

Dedicated to my Grandfather Thomas Adams, my Father Vivian Thomas Adams, both lifetime railwaymen, Doreen, Valerie & Norman Adams (railway children), my fellow railway apprentices from the 60's wherever they may be, Bob Parfett, Watercress Line Volunteer and not forgetting The Fat Controller (he knows who he is).

- 
- C1700. In early days goods moved like snails  
Then someone said let's use some rails.  
1804. Time then came to replace the horses  
Steam locomotion proved the best of courses.  
1807. Thought then came for moving people  
From town to town and steeple to steeple.  
1808. Trevithick runs a circular track  
No mention yet of pinion and rack.  
1825. Stockton & Darlington became the first.  
Future railways would quench the thirst.  
1829. Stephenson's Rocket was the pick of designs  
All future loco's would be on similar lines.  
1840/50's. Railway towns just grew and grew  
How big they'd get nobody knew.  
1841. A Royal carriage was commissioned  
With the finest drapes and luxuriously cushioned.  
1840's. First class passengers sat aloof  
But now 2nd & 3rd class passengers had a roof.  
1840's. Investment fever swept the land  
Many invested several grand.  
1842. The classic rail ticket was first unfurled  
And set the standard around the world.  
1844. A painting by Turner called Rail, Steam & Speed  
A hit at the RA, the public agreed.  
1845. A murder suspect escaping the scene  
Was caught by using Telegraphy, a brand-new machine.  
1847. Clocks in the country were all out of line  
And gradually adjusted to meet 'Railway Time'.  
1848. Irish Mail trains ran day and night  
From Euston to Dublin on a schedule so tight.



1852. Linking two cities Belfast & Dublin was filled with some dread  
Not knowing what 'troubles' might lay ahead.

1857. Colonial India showed rapid expansion  
But somewhat curtailed by major tension.

1860's. Holidays by train had become full of glee  
Workers and families were off to the sea.

1861. Shopping from home was a new innovation  
Mail orders were delivered direct from the station.

1876. A terrible accident at Abbots Ripton  
Brought signal improvements that could be relied on.

1879. Dining starts in restaurant cars  
In early days no rating in stars.

1870's. Sleeping cars were introduced on the East Coast Route  
A real luxury there was no doubt.

1886. Development of the shunters pole  
A huge invention played a major safety role.

1890. A majestic bridge over the Firth of Forth  
Over the years has proved its worth.

1892. A choice was made for a standard gauge  
So it really was "Give my regards to broad gauge."

1900's. Electric trains were all the rage  
With quick stop start at every stage.

1913. The NUR comes into favour  
To give support to the railway worker.

1914-18. The first World War was an awful strife  
Many a railwayman would lose his life.

1923. The Big Four created to improve the nucleus  
To make the world quite envious.

1923. The FA Cup Final moved to Wembley  
The trains provide for the mass assembly.

1924. Golf Hotels open up in Scotland  
Special trains allow the game to expand.



1925. At the Stockton & Darlington Centenary the Duke and Duchess of York were  
seen

Not knowing that in the future they'd become our King and Queen.

1930's. Trains appeared on the silver screens

The 39 Steps showed some epic scenes.

1930's. Famous artists created romance and adventure in railway art

Especially the GWR with Cornwall and the River Dart.

1938. War on the horizon caused concern and worry.

Kindertransport brought children from Europe in a hurry.

1938. Mallard set a record for speed by steam

Never to be beaten and still a dream.

1939-45. The Second World War, our darkest days

For the work on the Railways nothing but praise.

1946. The war was over, time to be frank

The Reverend H Awdry gave us Thomas the Tank.

1948. The railways were Nationalised on New Years Day

Sweeping changes were coming their way.

1950's. Failed modernisation plans to change and alter

Increased costs caused them to falter.

1950's. Delivering goods became the priority

To give the Nation a healthier variety.

1950's. Steam power now was very old

Modern diesels gave a cleaner transport mode.

1957. Driver John Axon was awarded the George Cross Medal

For his bravery he remained a mortal.

1960. Evening Star was one of the last in production

Now kept in museums for preservation.

1963. Sir Richard Beeching who ruled supreme

Cut all the railways with no love for steam

Tore up the tracks, knocked down the stations

Signals removed, no thought of rationalisations

Thousands lost jobs, it wasn't much fun

I know for a fact, my father was one.

1965. The BR Double Arrow was a unique design

Appears the same at all speeds on the line.

1966. Racism raised some issues for people of colour

But proved unnecessary as they all worked with honour.

A steam locomotive pulling a passenger train through a green, hilly landscape. The train is moving along a track that curves through the hills. The locomotive is black with a white smokestack, and the passenger cars are green and white. The background shows rolling green hills under a blue sky with some clouds.

1970's. Railway preservation came into being, which really was quite fine  
One of the favourites is The Watercress Line.  
1975. A commemorative stamp of Stevenson's Rocket  
Celebrated 150 years with a fanfare of trumpet.  
1979. Female drivers first appear, though usually father to son  
But one of the very first was a certain Ms Harrison.  
1986. Time had come to update the old Intercity brand  
The exclusive new livery now travelled the land.  
1990. The Channel Tunnel built by the French and the English  
Met under the sea as it now neared its finish.  
1994. The railways were privatised, oh what a mistake  
No one foresaw the errors that they'd make.  
2003 The speed record set by Eurostar  
Made journeys to Europe seem not to be far.  
2003. Wi-Fi appears on passenger trains to assist the business client  
But over the years has become more compliant.  
2009. Crossrail construction begins a tunnel so fine  
This will become the Elizabeth Line.  
2013. Digital ticketing causes quite a big stir  
Suddenly the world has become our Oyster.  
2020. A global pandemic brings the world to a stop  
But railways keep running to bring goods to the shop.  
2020. Construction begins on the new HS2  
But doubters' concerns, will they ever see it through  
2021. Greener travel is now being sought  
To bring Net Zero closer to nought.  
2022. The Elizabeth Line was opened by our beloved Queen  
A project so good, a joy to be seen.  
2024. The Labour Government plans to nationalise our trains  
Let's hope the sun shines and never rains.  
2025. Two events that must combine  
Take place this year on The Watercress Line  
The first in March will be terrific  
The Merchant Navy 'Canadian Pacific'  
To follow on loco No 563 is now restored  
In April's Steam Gala for us all to laud.

By  
Norman Adams.



# HARRY POTTER AND THE MAGIC OF STEAM

You start at Platform 9 and three-quarters  
at King's Cross the Larkin plaque  
is somewhere else take a photo  
by the luggage trolley embedded in the wall  
the Harry Potter shop next door  
JK Rowling's parents met on a train  
to Scotland the romance of it all  
alternatively, alight at Alnmouth  
make your way to the castle  
scene of sieges and surrenders  
down the centuries  
sign up for broomstick lessons in the courtyard  
where Harry learned to fly  
with the magic of CGI  
lovely lolly from the film companies  
the aristocracy will always find a way  
look back in nostalgia not anger  
sent off by train to public school  
wizard larks in the dorm  
abra cadabra! magic spell  
or weird rhyme scheme?  
mind those fossil fuels  
smoke gets in your eyes

By  
Greg Freeman

# THE ENTHUSIAST

No hope of returning to the old station  
now, not after they built the by-pass.

The books were cooked  
to ensure the line closed.

Where the platform once ended  
folk wander supermarket aisles,  
rummage through lucky dip jumbled sales.

Afternoon tea on the train?  
No, it's not the same as the days  
that only a few still remember.

And yes, a new little halt  
only halfway along the line  
wasn't part of the plan,  
but it makes a journey of it.

Why do we do it? The engine's woof,  
the whiff of a time when coal was king.

Soot, smuts, steam, smoke.

A chunky tank engine  
that shunted colliery trucks  
snorts, alive and faithful  
as a sturdy pit pony.

We lurk behind an industrial estate  
instead of our grand old home,  
but good of the duke to put his hand  
in his pocket, some lumps in the firebox.

Halloween, model railway weekends,  
Santa Specials. We'll get back  
to Alnmouth, you can be sure of that.

Know what? Kids today still warm  
to the rhythm of steam,  
almost as if they can't help it.

Push trains along wooden tracks,  
linger over monochrome photos  
in books. Chuff-chuff! Chuff-chuff!  
The insistence of a beating heart.

By

Greg Freeman



# Delivering The Goods

For two centuries the trains have delivered -  
People, livestock, produce each day and night,  
Always striving to run right on 'railway time'.

In the 1860s businessman Pryce Pryce-Jones  
Started selling woollen goods by mail order -  
Trains shuttled them across the Welsh border.

Soon Pryce-Jones had over 100,000 customers,  
Including Florence Nightingale and Queen Victoria,  
He promised next-day delivery on all UK orders.

In the 1800s and 1900s holidaymakers took the train  
To seaside towns, and factories closed in summer  
So that workers could take a break to recover.

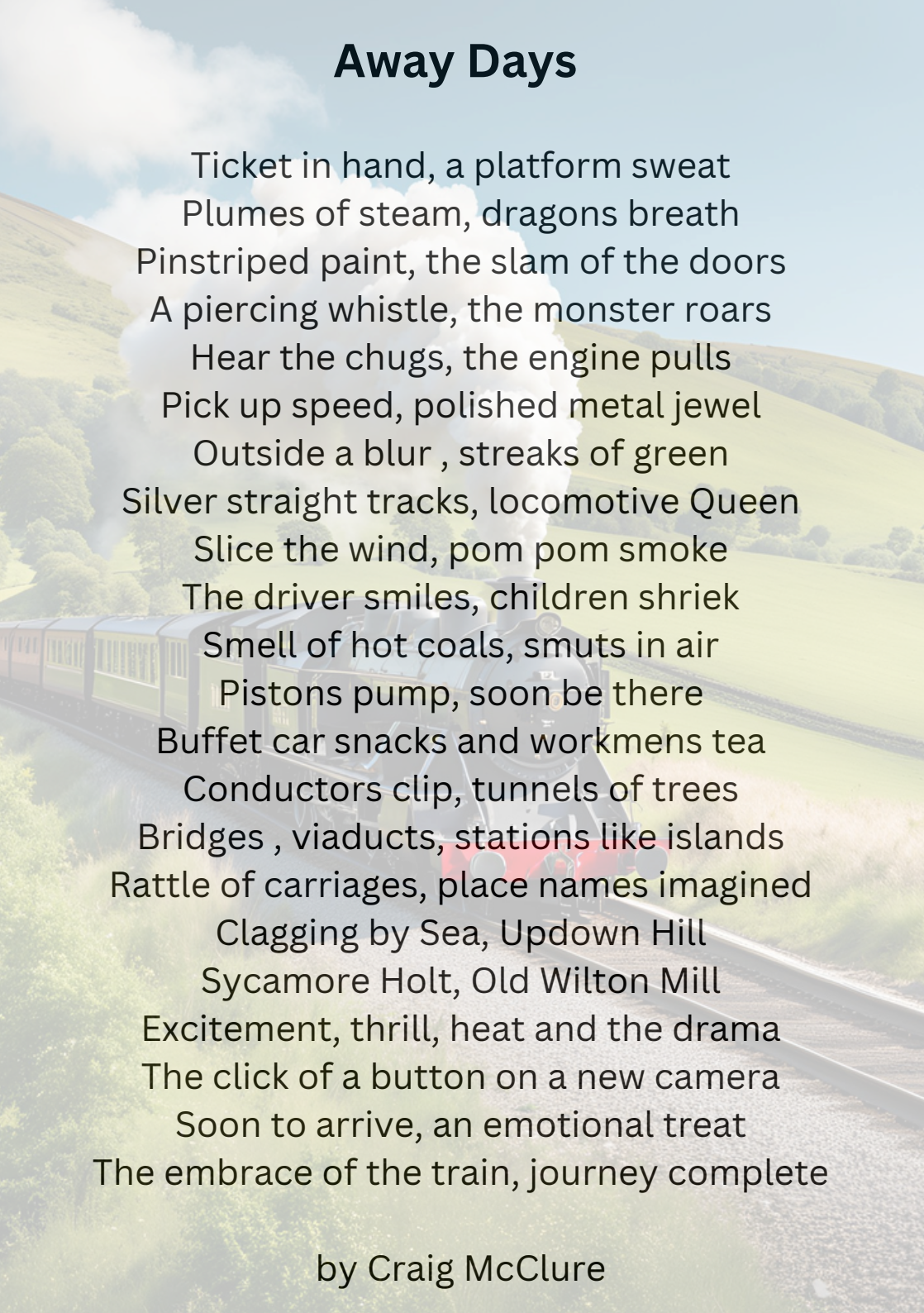
Trains ran steadfastly in times of feast or famine,  
The two world wars saw thousands of soldiers  
Transported to and from bases and harbours.

By the Fifties freight was the key railway income -  
Milk, cheese, meat and fish were packed onboard,  
As well as fresh watercress picked at Alresford.

Trains will keep running into the next century  
With sterling servitude. Carrying vital consignments  
Through cities, towns, farmland and onward again.

By  
Kate Young

# Away Days

A steam locomotive pulling a train through a green valley. The locomotive is black with a red stripe and is emitting a large plume of white steam. The train is moving along a track that curves through a lush green landscape with rolling hills and trees. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

Ticket in hand, a platform sweat  
Plumes of steam, dragons breath  
Pinstriped paint, the slam of the doors  
A piercing whistle, the monster roars  
Hear the chugs, the engine pulls  
Pick up speed, polished metal jewel  
Outside a blur , streaks of green  
Silver straight tracks, locomotive Queen  
Slice the wind, pom pom smoke  
The driver smiles, children shriek  
Smell of hot coals, smuts in air  
Pistons pump, soon be there  
Buffet car snacks and workmens tea  
Conductors clip, tunnels of trees  
Bridges , viaducts, stations like islands  
Rattle of carriages, place names imagined  
Clagging by Sea, Updown Hill  
Sycamore Holt, Old Wilton Mill  
Excitement, thrill, heat and the drama  
The click of a button on a new camera  
Soon to arrive, an emotional treat  
The embrace of the train, journey complete

by Craig McClure



# Kilmersdon

Clickety-clack, in twenty-nine  
The little train without a name  
Did hit the line - Our Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, called for the mine  
Forty-four years, coal sweat and tears  
He worked his time, did Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, bustle and noise  
Pleased to work hard, bruised and scarred,  
One of the boys was Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, Coal Wagons Ho!  
Hark to the call as shadows fall  
Ready to go is Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, with heavy heart  
They closed the pit, he'd done his bit  
They all depart from Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, what now to do?  
There's no more coal, time takes its toll  
No-one wants you, oh Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, barely a sound,  
Left all alone, ev'ryone's gone.  
Silence all round at Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, saved in a way.  
Polished and clean - almost pristine.  
Put on display was Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, painted in green,  
And out on lend as Thomas' friend,  
Proud to be seen was Kilmersdon.

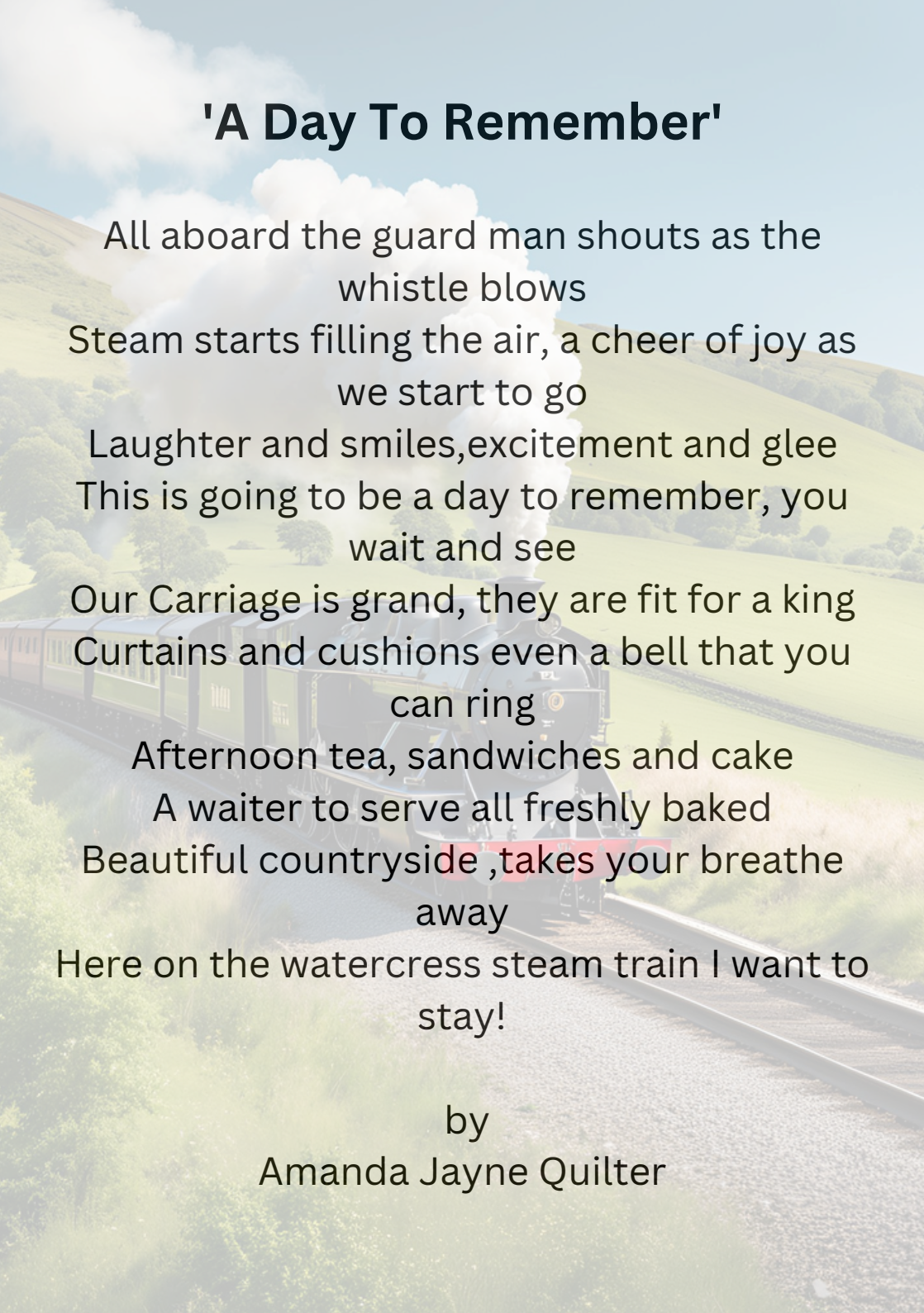
Clickety-clack, museum piece.  
Now Prussian blue liveried hue,  
He'll never cease, will Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack - heritage rail  
Preserving for all to adore,  
Our holy grail for Kilmersdon.

Clickety-clack, still going strong  
A hundred year, well very near,  
The humble one. Our Kilmersdon.

By Martin Ryan

# 'A Day To Remember'



All aboard the guard man shouts as the  
whistle blows  
Steam starts filling the air, a cheer of joy as  
we start to go  
Laughter and smiles, excitement and glee  
This is going to be a day to remember, you  
wait and see  
Our Carriage is grand, they are fit for a king  
Curtains and cushions even a bell that you  
can ring  
Afternoon tea, sandwiches and cake  
A waiter to serve all freshly baked  
Beautiful countryside, takes your breathe  
away  
Here on the watercress steam train I want to  
stay!

by  
Amanda Jayne Quilter



# The Axe

When a garden is overgrown  
what should the groundskeeper do?

When the rails are outdated  
what should the government do?

It's October 1963  
and the last train leaves Lydford  
like an old, faithful, hound.

"The Number of Stations and Halts which will be closed is 2,363, including 435 under  
consideration" p. 97

London pays for itself.  
Beating heart of Britain.  
Best get to the weeding elsewhere.  
Best for everyone. You'll thank me.

The motorways are coming.  
Great strips of asphalt  
rolled out like a red carpet.

"It would be folly to suggest that widespread closure of stopping train services will  
cause no hardship anywhere or to anybody." p.19

Sometimes the oak tree  
must lose branches in autumn  
to thrive in the spring.  
Of course, this may seem harsh  
but somebody had to hold the axe.

An axe has torn through the country.  
An axe slick with engine oil.

"If the whole plan is implemented with vigour, most (though not all) of the Railways'  
deficit should be eliminated by 1970" p. 60

By  
Casper Wort

# Great Western Railway.

## LONDON TO MAIDENHEAD.

On and after the 1st of May, the SOUTHALL STATION will be opened  
For Passengers and Parcels.

An Extra Train to Slough will leave Paddington on Monday Mornings, at half-past 6 o'clock, calling at Ealing, Hanwell, Southall, and West Drayton.

## A Brief History of Railway Time



01:00	The lantern moon begins to fall. The engine sleeps
02:00	like a cat, waits for the sun to rise. <u>The sun</u> , conquered
03:00	by the spreadsheet. Railway timetable. Much neater.
04:00	4am: early birds catch worms. Early worms get eaten.
05:00	5am: knocker-uppers are waking <u>lver</u> -inners.
06:00	6am: kettles whistle on hobs like steam engines
07:00	as the train leaves Alton, all aboard in droves
08:00	at 8am precisely, precisely as a horologist
09:00	marvelling at gears and springs, a masterpiece
10:00	of <u>swiss</u> -made watch timings bringing order.
11:00	We shall discuss further over elevenses (tea & crumpets)
12:00	while the sun settles, lamp above the tracks.
13:00	Lunch is served at 1pm precisely, picnic in the meadow,
14:00	but be careful with the soup; it's hot. Blow gently.
15:00	Next station call! There is tea and cake,
16:00	just after 4pm, perfect time to refresh before home,
17:00	as the evening sky glows golden. Tourist poster imagery.
18:00	Dinner is served, steaming, at 6pm
19:00	or 7pm as evening stalks like a fox
20:00	on the farm, strutting by the rails. A low whistle.
21:00	Here comes the late train through the villages
22:00	(the next train does not stop here;
23:00	the last train leaves at 11pm) and the engine sleeps
00:00	as over the rails, the lantern moon hovers.

By

Casper Wort

To Ealing .....	1 6	1 0	0 3	To Slough .....	2 0	1 6	1 0
Hanwell ...	2 0	1 6	1 0	West Drayton	3 0	2 6	2 0
Southall ....	2 6	1 9	1 3	Southall ....	4 0	3 0	2 6
West Drayton	3 6	2 0	1 6	Hanwell ...	4 6	3 0	3 0
Slough .....	4 6	3 0	2 6	Ealing .....	5 0	4 0	3 6
Maidenhead.	5 6	4 0	3 6	Paddington.	5 6	4 0	3 6



## Early Morning at the Old Railway Walk

Finding no solace in sleep I ascend a steep path; commuters silent and chatty  
children once took. My mysterious cares cling, a melancholic morning mud.

I step unsteadily, walking pole supported, the handrail surety gripped by  
generations

past has long gone with the track bed ballast. Cresting the summit, I puff heavily,  
pausing at the embankment's overgrown slab-edged platform, glimpsing ticketed  
ghosts floating amongst swaying nettles.

The corrugated sheets of its rust-streaked shelters, fallen, part reclaimed by  
nature,

mimic ridge and furrow fields I once viewed from the seven fifty. Totem  
nameboards

and semaphore signals are absent, victims of the real sixties Hammer Horrors;  
“Demolition Crew”, and “The Auctioneer Despatches”.

Looking up, I count vapour trails smudged in a clearing sky, stirring distant steam  
memories of train-spotted departures. Walking on, I approach the old level  
crossing.

Its once firm command sign is now redundant, for an instinctive whistle joins a  
joyful  
dawn chorus.

I catch a return home on-time for breakfast, taste buds salivating at a new day's  
sizzle, fried up on a fireman's shovel.

By  
Alan Mansell

This reflects on the Beeching Report. Sadly many lines were lost in the 1960's, and  
it laments this, but parts of some lifted routes now still serve their communities,  
though in a different way, having become important recreational areas for the  
physical and mental health of walkers, cyclists etc.

# Wakes Week

Blackpool, here we come! I've never see sea afore.  
I only started at mill five months' gone. All that water!  
I can hardly imagine it. Ma reckons we can paddle in it  
and that there's boats and ice-creams, proper sweet  
and cold. Mmmm. Ma says I'll get fat, but I don't care.

Good, I say! I'll scoff ten a day, just you watch.

I'll be right plump time I get back to frame.

We're getting the train. I shall enjoy me sen.

Da swears I'm fair loopy; but, I've got me own wage packet  
now, so I shall do with it as I please. Donald tells me there's  
funny mirrors to make you wobble and shrink and grow tall  
as beans in allotment. Train's at 5 this morning. I'm used to  
getting up with birds, so it don't cause no bother. And, I'm  
sitting by window. I want to be first to see the sea. Oh, and  
all them seagulls. Ma says they'll steal me chips. I ask you.

Cheek of 'em. Ma 's done packing. I bought a new frock for  
parading promenade. Bright mustard, it is. Just right for sand  
and sun. I'll fair disappear along mile! Lights and donkeys  
all the way. Fancy. We'll be there for dinner. Da's promised  
fish and chips. I've promised Billy a stick of rock. It'll have  
Blackie all the way through it. It's fair magic how they do it.

I'll be in waves. I'll be in water and salt; washing all that soot  
and grime out of me lungs. I'm taking sandals. There's shingle,  
too. And, I shall go dancing at the Tower. Billy had better watch  
out, I might meet a new beau. Hey up. I can see steam. Hurry up  
you lot. Train's nearly here. That's right, climb in and tuck up nice  
and cosy and tight. Ta ta. Ta ra. See you lot in mill next Monday

By  
Sally Taylor

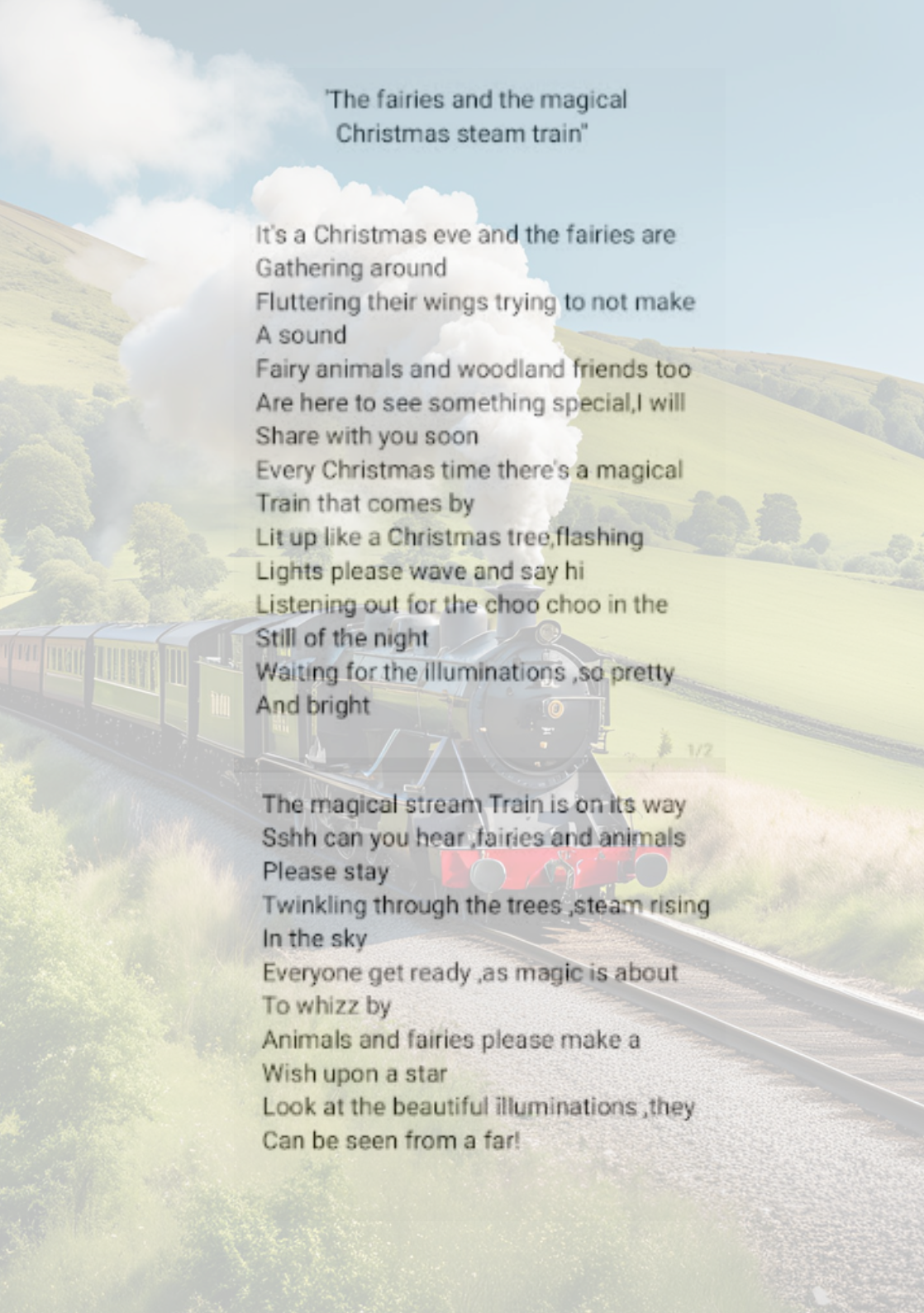


# Devil's Dust

1876: the snow was heavy. Great fat goose  
down flakes streaming through  
the January cold. It made you dizzy - that  
with the steam and smoke. You'd have thought  
that it would have made that night white, but it  
didn't. It was black. Black as a stoke hole with  
no fire in it and that's never a good thing.  
None of us could see on that wretched night.  
It swallowed us up, one month from the  
shortest day. God help us all. Blizzard was  
thick. Thick as a thief that night. Signals said,  
'Go on', and so we went on - hurtling our little  
ways to a merry Hell. Thirteen is the Devil's  
number and He had his number that night.  
He's had the rest of us, since; injured or not.  
Damn Demon. Us, carrying coal to make folks  
warm. But, its black spilled out onto the white  
of that night. Snow is damnable stuff on a line,  
however innocent it might appear. There's talk  
of standing a monument to those that perished  
in that mess of freezing air and crumpled metal.  
Iron and wood. Ice and fire. Black and white.  
I don't want to remember. I want to forget. I can  
still hear their cries. Lord help us. Lord help me.  
I cry. But, we couldn't see. The signals said, 'On',  
and so we went. I hate the cold; I hate the ice;  
but, I have to go on. I have to go on.

By  
Sally Taylor

"The fairies and the magical  
Christmas steam train"



It's a Christmas eve and the fairies are  
Gathering around  
Fluttering their wings trying to not make  
A sound  
Fairy animals and woodland friends too  
Are here to see something special,I will  
Share with you soon  
Every Christmas time there's a magical  
Train that comes by  
Lit up like a Christmas tree,flashing  
Lights please wave and say hi  
Listening out for the choo choo in the  
Still of the night  
Waiting for the illuminations ,so pretty  
And bright

The magical steam Train is on its way  
Sshh can you hear ,fairies and animals  
Please stay  
Twinkling through the trees ,steam rising  
In the sky  
Everyone get ready ,as magic is about  
To whizz by  
Animals and fairies please make a  
Wish upon a star  
Look at the beautiful illuminations ,they  
Can be seen from a far!



# RAILWAY 200

It comes like the rains of summer, Tearing through  
the future vague,  
Creating its own unique rhythm, smooth Chanting  
humorously, with a gentle, playful touch It speeds,  
connecting lives Like a seamstress's needle's eye,  
Running through woods and vast lands,  
Bonding destinies like the lines on our palms  
The dictated path, rocky and rough, Lies ahead, with  
challenges to overcome,  
Leading to glorious destinations, sweet and true,  
A place where destinies meet, and journeys renew  
The prime of luxury transportation, Giving class, age,  
and timeless glorification, Noble for Buckingham's  
queen, and all who roam,  
Offering breathtaking landscapes, and thrilling  
experiences to call home  
Spanning through mountains and valleys, with ease,  
With immersive experiences, **that touch** the heart and  
soul with peace,  
Showing a world of romance, and connection so fine,  
A haven to find soul ties, and bonds that forever  
shine  
Railway 200, creating a vast network, For continents,  
integrating

by  
Victor Ukachukwa

## THE WATERCRESS LINE

SO GREEN! THE WATERCRESS BEDS  
ARE STRIPPED QUITE BARE,  
AWAITING THE TRAIN TO  
TRANSPORT THEM TO WHERE?

LONDON MAYBE?

OR IS IT TO PLYMOUTH  
BRAD AND BUTTER WAITING FOR  
WATERCRESS TO FILL IT.

SANDWICHES FIT FOR A

KING OR A QUEEN OR

ALL OF THEIR SUBJECTS

NO CLASS DISTINCTION THERE!!

SHIRLEY DENNAY

24.2.2025



# Time-Travelling by Train : a lady's recollections

Its 1825 and i've been on a Great Adventure! It was a bit terrifying - my parasol got blown inside out, but i'm keeping it as a souvenir.

all the way from Darlington to Stockton by steam power! Mr Stephenson himself was there in his frock coat and top hat, and we all cheered at the end of the line.

Twenty years later, railways were booming. Father invested heavily in the shares and then they collapsed and he lost a lot of money: we had to let the maid go.

Imagine – the railways have now influenced the very time of day! Inspired by the timetables, the whole country has a standard time, fixed in Greenwich.

On a more romantic note, I've been to see Mr Turner's stunning painting in the National Gallery, which looks as revolutionary and exciting as the trains themselves.

Our finances did get better eventually and then we took the train to the seaside for a holiday. Mother's crinoline nearly got caught in the carriage doors!

We're in the new century but a dreadful war is engulfing the whole of Europe, with trains transporting thousands of young men to fight for our country.

But now, just as the horrors of the Great War are coming to an end, there is violent bloodshed in Russia, the Bolsheviks revolution being spread across the country in a way that would have been impossible without the trains.

The railways have a cultural impact too. There's a poem by W H Auden called 'Night Mail', which pulsates with haste and excitement, and Agatha Christie has written a thriller about a murder on a train. We imagine ourselves, all elegant clothes and long cigarette holders, rushing through the Alps with the brilliant detective.

There's a new train called 'Mallard', which is strikingly modern and streamlined – quite beautiful really. But we are all a bit preoccupied with whats going on in Germany and spend a lot of time listening to the radio for news.

Suddenly 1939 and the impossible is happening – we're at war again! I join all the other women at stations across the land, waving goodbye to our men, praying that they'll come back safely. I've joined the WRVS to help people cope after the air raids.

At last its over. I try to channel my inner Celia Johnson, looking slender and smart in a tweed suit and cloche hat when I meet my husband at the station. But its dark and dirty and not as romantic as I'd imagined. And times are still tough; everything is rationed and I've had to sell my good furs and make do with rabbit. But there are good things too.

There's a series of children's books about an Engine called Thomas – the children love them and that's cheered us all up.

However, its not all plain sailing for the railways, Someone called Dr Beeching has now decreed that they are too wasteful for the modern 1960s. Hundreds of miles of track and dozens of stations are to be closed. My father says the country will come to regret it.

But here we are towards the end of the century and there is a tunnel bored under the English Channel – we can soon go to France by train! But back home, it seems we all rather nostalgic for the great days of steam: heritage railways are being restored by devoted volunteers everywhere!

Rushing through the 2000's, I'm on a beautifully illuminated train steaming through the Hampshire countryside in a romantic haze of colour. And as we pull into the station, I glimpse a shadowy figure on the platform, top hat raised in salute.

The End

By

Valerie Powell



# An Early Spring Walk at Highley

The arrival of early spring warmth signals a seasonal boiler has at last been lit. I steam through our pit village centre passing the converted former Methodist Chapel and the miners' memorial clock, then ease the steep descent of a high banked narrow lane; tree-shadowed shaft to a riverside past. Here, the resonant hallowed stones of Worcester Cathedral were hewn. Today, geometric harmony of a curving platform echoes Sabrina's siren call. Its name is proclaimed boldly by raised wooden white on black; "Highley", home of a deep hidden dark, that summoned sweat rivers of navvies to lay rolled-iron rails.

Today, I find no service. No timetable A, B or C. No smoking-grey curling from the signal box chimney. No working hands to be warmed for gripping cloth to pull polished levers. Opposite platform's end, next to a sprung gate, an iron plate casts its stern message. "Stop. Look. Listen. Beware of Trains". I open and cross night-rusted rails.

Red platform scales lie bench adjacent, a Derby interloper in Great Western land. Amidst croci, primula and budding daffodils, I bathe in birdsong and await the first cuckoo. A bright yellow stoneblower rests in a siding, migrating modernity on hire. Smiling, I ponder what melody it sings, levelling track blowing ballast chippings. "Easter Monday to Eyton's point to point". The sun-faded poster announces the excursion. I check my pocket for the florin fare though I've missed the train by decades. Enamelled signs with rusting chipped edges laud a long-lost laundry blue world, of Rajah Cigars for two pennies and Wills Gold Flake Cigarettes. A corner huddle of shining milk churns stands ready for the new season's roll out, to pierce again the full cream of foil-top bottled memories.

Spring afternoon fades and I head home. Though no gate, barrier, or flashing lights, a muntjac ventures on evening express, its shadow scurrying across the lane. Soon, a veteran choir of full-steam whistles will resound once more in the valley.

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## Notes:

Highley is one of the UK's wonderfully atmospheric, preserved stations. It is on the Severn Valley

Railway heritage line. Here, the route hugs the river.

Heritage lines tend to be quite highly seasonal activities. They may have a variety of scheduled

timetables to meet the varied demands.

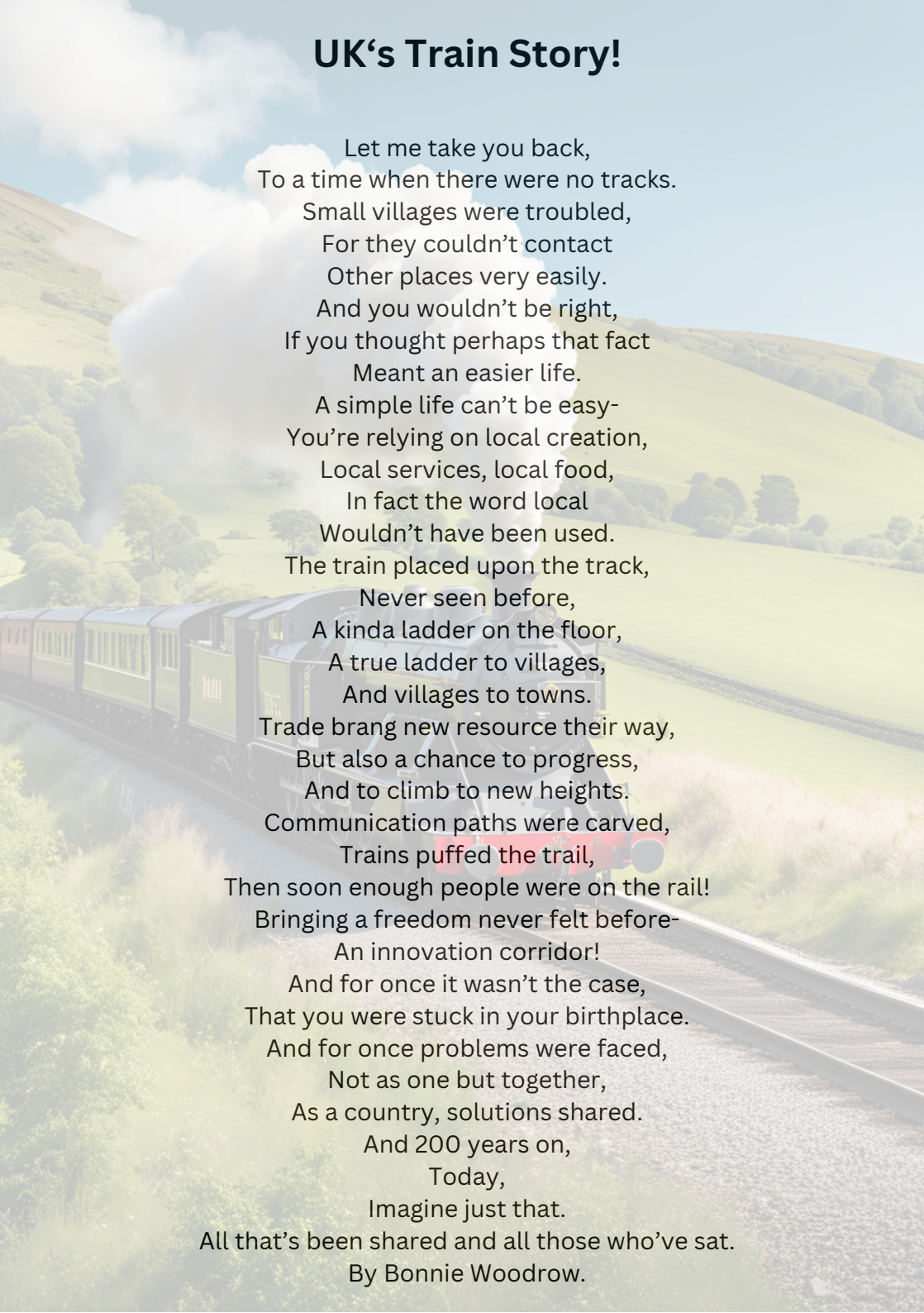
At Highley, to help re-create a lost platform scene, vintage ex-Midland Railway platform scales have

"strayed" to this ex-Great Western Railway (GWR) station.

A stoneblower is a piece of modern railway track maintenance equipment.



# UK's Train Story!

A steam train with a black locomotive and several green and blue passenger cars is chugging through a lush green valley. The train is moving from left to right, leaving a trail of white steam behind it. The background features rolling green hills under a blue sky with soft white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and nostalgic.

Let me take you back,  
To a time when there were no tracks.  
Small villages were troubled,  
For they couldn't contact  
Other places very easily.  
And you wouldn't be right,  
If you thought perhaps that fact  
Meant an easier life.  
A simple life can't be easy-  
You're relying on local creation,  
Local services, local food,  
In fact the word local  
Wouldn't have been used.  
The train placed upon the track,  
Never seen before,  
A kinda ladder on the floor,  
A true ladder to villages,  
And villages to towns.  
Trade brang new resource their way,  
But also a chance to progress,  
And to climb to new heights.  
Communication paths were carved,  
Trains puffed the trail,  
Then soon enough people were on the rail!  
Bringing a freedom never felt before-  
An innovation corridor!  
And for once it wasn't the case,  
That you were stuck in your birthplace.  
And for once problems were faced,  
Not as one but together,  
As a country, solutions shared.  
And 200 years on,  
Today,  
Imagine just that.  
All that's been shared and all those who've sat.  
By Bonnie Woodrow.

# Hauling the Country by Train

Watercress-sausages-and-Mexican-  
oranges,  
Boxes-of-baked-beans-and-rowing-  
machines,  
Flippers-and-kippers-and-Motörhead-  
slippers.

Hauling essential goods by train.  
Berets-for-kittens-and-waterproof-  
mittens,

Badminton-racquets-and-faux-leather-  
jackets,

Parakeet-perches-and-organs-for-  
churches,

Hauling useful goods by train.

Traffic-cones-xylophones-garden-gnomes,  
Rubber-ducks-dumper-trucks-hockey-  
pucks,

Jet-fighters-fire-lighters-poem-writers.

Hauling vital goods by train.

Rowan Softley



# A Return Trip

It's an unusual day on the train,  
Clutching my return ticket,  
The station begins to roll away.  
With a chug and a grunt and steam  
In plumes that hang in the sky.

Watercress growing  
In chalk stream beds.

Rows of commuters  
In suits and dress.

Fields of sheep  
Through the window.

The guard comes and goes  
"All change!"

The return journey takes an odd direction.

All change...

The guard comes and goes  
Through the window.

Fields of sheep

In suits and dress.

Rows of commuters  
In chalk stream beds.

Watercress growing

In plumes that hang in the sky.  
With a chug and a grunt and steam,  
The station begins to roll away.  
Clutching my return ticket,  
It's an unusual day on the train.

Rowan Softley

## Something is Happening at Alton Station

Somebody somewhere is being born. Somebody somewhere is waking at dawn.  
But here in Hampshire at Alton Station, a huge black steam train is coming to life.  
Coal is shovelled and water is piped, brasses are polished and brows are wiped.  
Heat is zig-zagging through the boiler; furnace is orange and spitting out sparks.

Pistons are ready and carriages coupled; guards' flags dangle; on your marks!  
Children in China are strolling to school now; children in Chile are settling to sleep.  
Here, the driver is checking the pressure of steam building up, as the gauge needle creeps.

Curious families loiter by cab-side; passengers hurry and doors are slammed shut.  
Guards check their watches are ready, in pockets; photos are taken and tickets are cut.

A serious sky ahead hints at dusk falling; then 'whoooooop  
whooooooooooooooooooooooooooooop!'

Victorious sounds make us suddenly leap but children sit thrilled, looking out of the  
glass.

The Canadian Pacific is ready for departure; guardsmen in caps give their whistles a  
blast.

Inch by inch, the massive front wheels roll and cover the aching track.  
A hundred tons of steel and woodwork edge smoothly forwards, front pulling the back.  
Driver releases the brakes, peering up-track; pistons push 'til every spoke is a blur.  
We start waving, the steam billows skyward; pigeons and magpies take off in a stir.  
Footsteps behind us run fast down a staircase. "Look!" goes a cry, "it's going; it's off!"  
Handrails & name-plate glide gracefully by. I dream of a curtsey and top hat to doff.  
Footplate slides past us, cab, then tender. We glance at the sharp wheels churning  
below.

Carriages move, decorated with faces; moments of joy, shared and lost, as they go.  
Something is happening at Alton Station: the old train is leaving the platform behind.  
Steam fills the air like a flag ever-growing; smokebox and steel rip the air down the line.

Shuddering shoes feel the need to run but we stand still staring & shake our hands  
warm.  
Red lights grow dimmer, the train heaving hillwards, clattering & chuffing along like a  
storm.

...A massive emptiness at Alton Station. Quietly, pigeons and magpies return.

By  
Angela Williams



# Rocket Science

By June Webber

In eighteen hundred and twenty-five, George  
Stephenson

Created the first railway, the Stockton and Darlington.

The first train was pulled by Locomotion.

This new form of transport was a revolution.

From Rocket to Kings, Castles, Manors, Granges,  
Flying Scotsman, Mallard, we've seen many changes.

In river valleys, over moors, along the coast,

It's quicker by train was the proud boast.

A network of railway lines spread throughout the land,  
Folk from smoky cities could enjoy the sea and sand.

Cattle in the fields would watch the trains go by,

As a cloud of steam rose up to the sky.

Commuters to the city and troops to the war,

Mass transportation as never seen before.

To be a train driver was every young boy's dream,

So let us now cherish the magic which is steam.

# On the trains

Written by residents at Dashwood Manor Care Home, Basingstoke

We boarded the train  
To school we travelled  
Before the modern cars  
And regular buses  
On the trains we went

From Guildford to Bournemouth  
We travelled, a holiday  
The annual treat  
We waited all year for  
On the trains we went

A respectful way to travel  
As the king sadly passed  
From London to Windsor  
We paid our tribute  
On the trains they travelled

A royal way to travel  
A celebrated couple  
Charles and Diana  
From Waterloo to Romsey  
On the trains they went

On a spring day  
The steam I view from afar  
From my abode where I reside  
I see the steam clouds rise  
On the trains they travel

The transport of goods  
Our local watercress  
Taken to London markets  
A profit they seek  
On the trains it travels  
Dr Beeching made a move  
To shut the lines  
Cut off train access  
To reduce train travel  
Of the trains we travelled



## On the trains (continued)....

To aid on the foot plate  
To be mucky and blackened  
As we understand the skill  
On the trains we travel

We educate our children  
A new generation  
Of the lifeline we needed  
To escape from the war  
On the trains we travel

The peaceful rhythm  
White noise, background  
To live in the sound of trains  
A gift, a privilege  
Of the trains we travelled

The peace of Steam trains  
A dying industry, lost to time  
Lack of use, lack of need  
Some closed for good  
On trains we travelled

I used to watch the trains  
Watch the patterns emerge  
Pretty images a memory  
A lost time  
I used to travel on trains

Now I see the trains,  
Rattling as they go  
No patterns to see  
Different rhythm  
On the trains we travel

**The following poems have been created by pupils  
from Medstead Primary School**

A haiku by Martha Henderson

Lights are bright on me  
People come to watch me glow  
See me at Yule Tide

**A haiku by Gemma Starr**

**Busy people there  
Waiting for the superstars  
Trains burst through proudly**



**Waiting  
At  
The  
Edge.  
Railway  
Carriages  
Roaring.  
Engines  
Steaming at the  
Stations.  
Lines of smoke  
In the air.  
No other like it.  
Exceptional Asset.**

**By Lucy Henderson and Gemma Starr**



Water is useful to put out fire  
All the people watch the lights  
Time to go the whistle  
blows we see the engine  
driver climbs the rusty  
old stairs.

End of the day time to  
go we have had so much fun  
Run to the train it is time  
to go to Ropley.

Come to the railway  
Ready on the platform  
Engines chattering  
Steam puffing out

Sounds of the station  
By Elizabeth Isaac





A Hair by Fella  
come to visit in the year  
Great Water Cress Line

The water cress line

I like the steam train.  
excited people get on steam train.  
people get in their seats and look out the window  
at the pretty site. Rabbits and deers run across  
the hedge line. mums dads and their kids like to play  
a little game and laugh  
By Alexa



Seats are nice and a <sup>very</sup> soft.



The train is a old muddy bus.



Everyone needs a train



at train Christmas the



Mostly it goes to  
Four marks



By Dokie-maz  
Stevens







STEAM TRAIN  
pussig along the  
track.



Trains stoping and  
going all day Long.  
Excited To go, on the  
glowing TRAIN.



All day having so  
much sun in the  
big glowing TRAIN.



Muddy TRAIN going  
all day Long.



By Bertie Hood.



Train haiku by skye



Trains on the Station

Lots of noise in the station

Steam is in the air

Trains are so steamy

The wheels on the train are loud

The coaches are cozy

by casper pouter





 When you get on it is 

A <sup>huge</sup> lot of coaches and carriages

 Tickets are sold to get on the 

Everyone loves seeing the

 <sup>country side</sup> Running past the trees 

Customers enjoy the trip

 Rusty in places 

Every day people visit

 Station masters make sure 

Everyone gets on safely

 So lots of people love this 

train

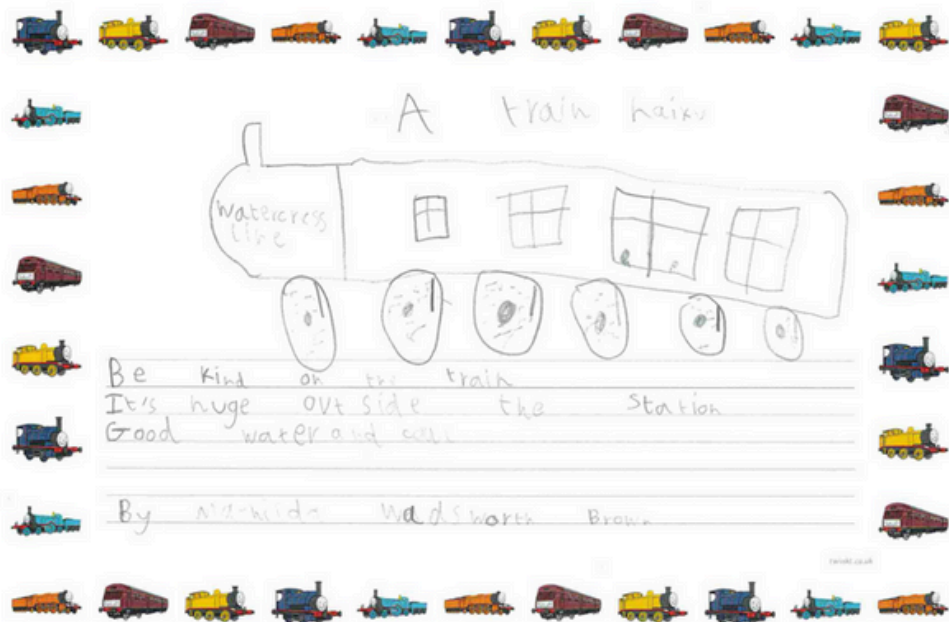
 

By Maria Wadworth Brown





Smelly smoke coming from the  
The time is running past and the tra  
is still moving  
Engines of the train's are very loud  
At christmas the train's are decorated  
Many people looked at the train






So much grey smoke  
Running in the air  
Through the huge tunnel  
Everybody absolutely loves  
the train trip  
A lot of busy loud people  
Waiting around  
Many people sitting in  
the noisy train


By Ruby Gradwell






 Smelly smoke coming  
from the train




 The time is running past  
and the train is still moving




 Engine's of the train's  
are very loud



 At christmas the train's  
are decorated




 Many people looked at  
the train



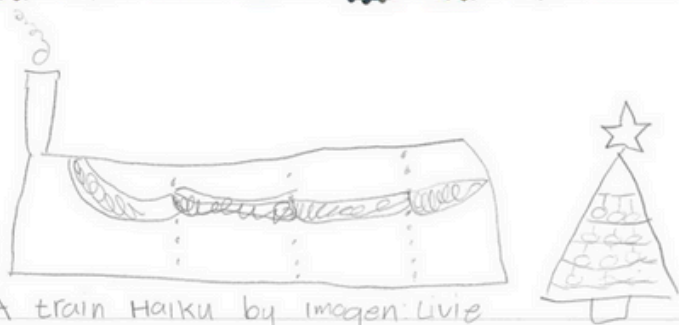
 By Kalysta ofori-Doudu



 By Kalysta ofori-Doudu



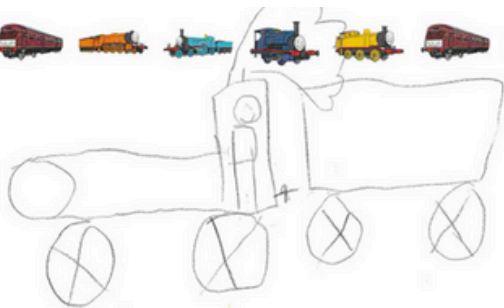




A train Haiku by Imogen Livie

Christmas it is bright  
 Tickets for the train  
 It makes everyone happy

twinkl.co.uk



A Haiku by Felix  
 Thousands of people  
 Come to visit in the year  
 Great Watercress Line

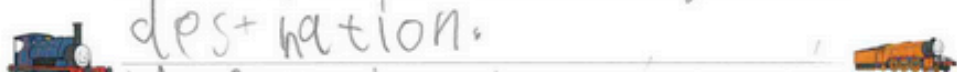
twinkl.co.uk



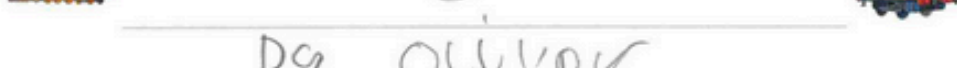
Steam puffs  
out the huge train  
trains are hard  
at work.



Exacting nothing all day  
Aiming to get to  
every amazing



destination.  
Meeting new people  
at the huge station  
every day



By Oliver  
Sharland



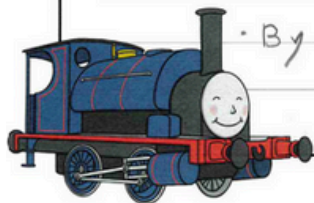


Smory;

The steam goes through things on the top,  
enormous train.

a steam train lights up the night,  
misty steam goes through the air.

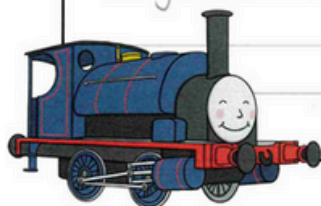
By Rosie Froszok



Steamy engines

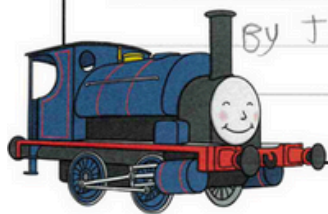
the hoots you can hear  
enormous trains in the station  
at Christmas the trains glow up  
Magical mist.

By Isla Bush



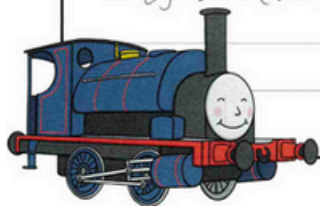
The train is noisy and loud.  
Rail tracks are really dusty.  
Railways go on a sunny day.  
\* Like the steam because it comes out  
soft. Nearly time to catch my train.

By Jasper Smith



So much smoke coming out of the train.  
The train runs for so long.  
Enormous train  
At Christmas there is a train that has Santa on it.  
Many trains go through Ropley.

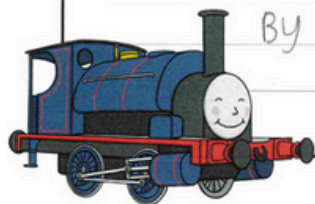
\* By James Shenton.





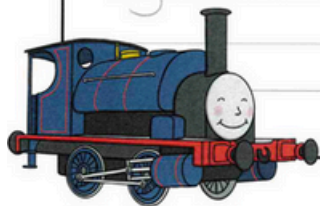
steam running out the tops of trains.  
the train runs from the station to station.  
Engine is very noisy.  
Around us smoke covers everything.  
magic lights glowing beautiful  
brightening the sky.

By Holly - May Sheppard



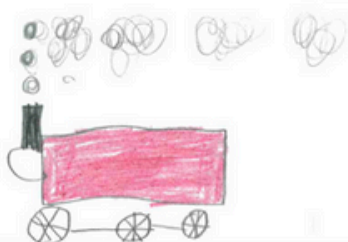
Steam coming out  
tick-tock  
Entered the station  
the light train  
Memories being made

By Ellie-Rose Bostred





# Train haiku be skye



Trains chug on the line

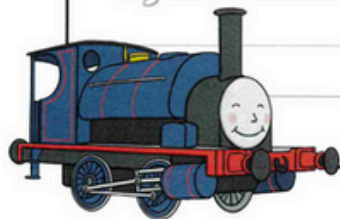
Steam is everywhere

comfy seats inside it.



The train has dirty smoke.  
Rail tracks are really dusty.  
Always a good dog out.  
I like the exciting ride.  
Now is time to go home.

By Prudence Humphreys.







silver and a black coal



Trains are everywhere



Everyone loves Thomas



Any one want to  
ride a light up train



Men are helping  
put the coal in  
the train.



by Penelope Hunt.



Train track

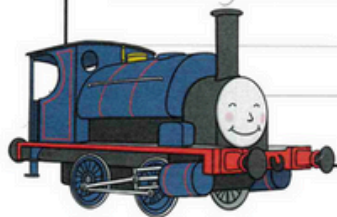
Kills are really dirty

Always busy

I love the trains they make me happy

Now the day is over

By Hepe messenger



Stinky Smelly Steam.

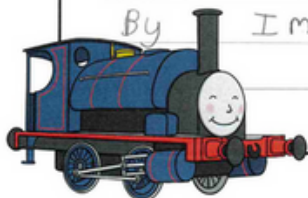
The Steam makes you cough a lot.

Engine is noisy in people's ears

All is very cozy inside the train

Music is playing in the front  
of the train

By Imogen Silver





The train puffs the smoke

Rusty train

Always the same

Interesting experience

Now to go on the train

By Theo Carpenter



The train goes choo choo.

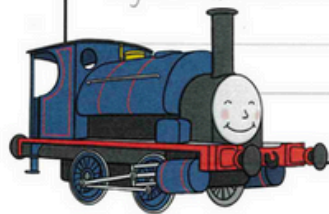
Rails are very silty.

A day out when you see Thomas.

I love a day seeing tank engines.

Now it's time to go to Ropley.

By Edward Cross.





So much smoke in the air.

The steam engine is very loud.

Everybody enjoys the ride.

A lot of kind people on the train.

Many seats to sit on.

By Chloe Lever.

