



World's last daily main line steam to stage comeback?

Supporters across the globe campaign for Wolsztyn revival

BY TONY STREETER

The world's last daily main line passenger steam services could stage a comeback from the start of June, campaigners believe. A storm of protests met the demise of the unique operation from Wolsztyn, Poland, on March 31. Funding for the daily services ended amid an impasse between politicians and the country's national railway PKP on a way forward (SR427).

However, Steam Railway understands that a potential breakthrough was made in April, when it was agreed that Wolsztyn should transfer to a new charitable foundation. A meeting intended to finalise the details is to take place in late May.

"There's been a lot of support from all over the world, all of which has been positive," said Howard Jones from the Wolsztyn Experience, which offers footplate holidays based in the Polish town.

"I think it's going to be alright in the end," Mr Jones added, though he cautioned "nothing is certain in politics."

If steam does return, it's believed likely to do so under the aegis of previous operator PKP Cargo until the proposed charitable foundation is established. The new organisation is likely to be supported by PKP, as well as the regional and local authorities, and Wolsztyn's chamber of commerce.

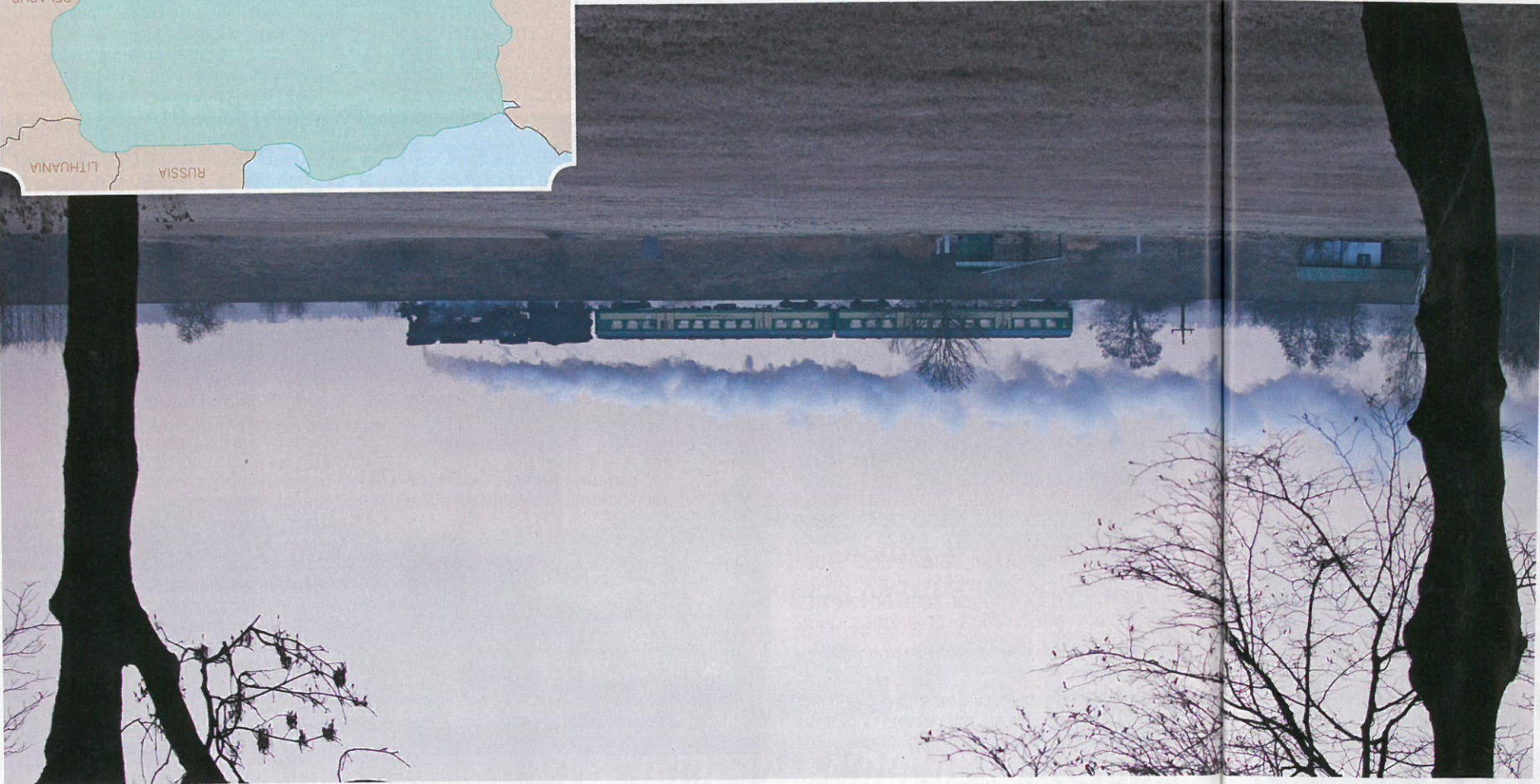


Above: New dawn for Wolsztyn? The sun has yet to appear as Polish 2-6-2 No. 0149.69 heads for Leszno on February 28. Its train, the daily 6.7am Wolsztyn-Leszno, has just left Boszkowo. TONY STREETER

Left: Could this return? The world's last daily main line passenger steam still had a month of life as Polish 2-6-2 No. 0149.69 hustled its regular passenger service towards Wolsztyn on February 28. Pulling away from Wroniawy, the 9.46am from Leszno has just one more stop before reaching its destination. TONY STREETER

Diesel railcars are currently running the service to the same times as the steam-hauled trains. Under the latest timetable that came in from December, steam had two daily return trips over the 29-mile line to Leszno, leaving Wolsztyn at 6.7am and 1.16pm. Regular motive power has most recently been a pair of '0149' 2-6-2s, Nos. 59 and 69, with generally one in steam per day. Although describing himself as "optimistic" for the shorter term, Mr Jones exhorted people to continue to show support if steam is reinstated: "We don't know what the longer term future holds and if things do work out we'd love people to come this year. "Come and ride... buy tickets, do anything, but demonstrate to everyone why this is so important."

Despite the lack of daily steam, Wolsztyn's traditional annual parade took place as planned, on May 3.



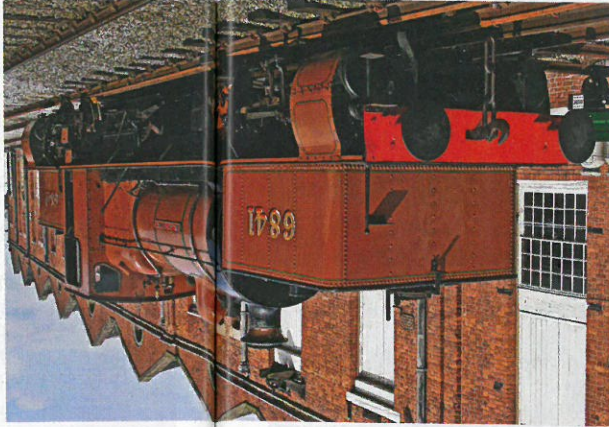
Bressingham is gifted 'Garrett' William Francis

example of the breed in the country. Withdrawn at NCB Badesley Colliery in 1965 – by which time it was also the last 'Garrett' at work in Britain – it was purchased by J. R. Price and put on display at Bressingham, the first standard gauge locomotive to arrive there in 1968 before more famous engines such as BR 'Britannia' No. 70013 Oliver Cromwell.

Following Mr Price's death last year, the Garrett was bequeathed to his son Stewart Price, while

Gifts don't often come much bigger than an articulated locomotive with a tractive effort of 27,200lb – but that's what Bressingham Steam Museum has received with the presentation of unique Beyer-Garratt William Francis.

The change of ownership opens up the enticing possibility of a return to steam for the 1937-built 0-4-0+0-4-0, the sole survivor of just four 'Garatts' built for industrial service in Britain, and now the last standard gauge



Left: Making a rare trip away from Bressingham, William Francis was displayed at Manchester Museum of Science & Industry in August 2009 to mark the centenary of the Garrett design. NIGEL VALENTINE

A 'Brunel' is set to restore King's Cross goods shed

Isambard Kingdom Brunel's great-great granddaughter has been appointed to mastermind the sympathetic redevelopment of part of London's King's Cross station. Morwenna Wilson (31), who is a graduate of the University of Bristol, is leading a team of architects whose work includes establishing a Waitrose

The South Devon Railway has unveiled a brass plaque to honour long-time South Devon Railway volunteer Brian Thomas, who died in December. A former general manager of the Lavender Line, Brian spent many years as an SDR fireman, and was a regular stationmaster and porter at Buckfastleigh station.

NEWS IN BRIEF