



GCR STAGES BIGGEST EVER STEAM GALA FOUR STAR ENGINES MAKE 'MAIN LINE MAGIC' (10TH/11TH/12TH OCTOBER)

Last chance to see “Tornado”, Britain's brand new steam engine in action at the Great Central Railway

Thousands of visitors expected in Leicestershire over three days.

It's going to be the Great Central Railway's biggest ever steam gala. The award winning Leicestershire heritage line has put together a star bill of famous steam engines. It's the first time these engines have been together.

As a climax to the year of express engines, four of Britain's finest locomotives will be working passenger trains, over three days. (10th, 11th, 12th October 2008). "Leander", "Oliver Cromwell", "Lord Nelson" and Britain's brand new steam engine "Tornado" will transform the GCR into an enthusiast's paradise.

The railway's president, Bill Ford said, **"Back in 1969 when a group of people came together to save part of the Great Central Railway from closure, they dreamed of big engines at home on a double track main line. Well on the eve of our 40th anniversary I think this could be our ultimate show fulfilling the vision perfectly. It will be a taste of main line magic. There won't be a line up like this again anywhere in the country anytime soon, so don't miss it!"**

The event starts this Friday when Tornado, Oliver Cromwell and Leander work a passenger service. On Friday night the big name engines will be posed around Loughborough shed for photographers.

On Saturday and Sunday Lord Nelson will join in the action along with three members of the railways 'home fleet' making seven engines in steam in total. There will be postal drop demonstration trains and freight services in addition to the passenger trains. On Saturday night there will be a narrated twilight steam show.

During the weekend the beer tent will be open at Quorn station and there will also be a chance to meet the team from Steam Railway magazine. This event takes place in partnership with the magazine.

Each of the big engines in the gala has a reason to be a star.

Lord Nelson is the sole surviving member of the Southern Railways 'LN' Class. It is part of the national collection.

Oliver Cromwell hauled Britain's last main line steam train in 1968. It was restored to working order this year to mark the 40th anniversary of the event and is also part of the national collection.

Leander is a prime example of the London Midland and Scottish Railway's express 'Jubilee' class engines.

Tornado is the first main line steam engine to be built in Britain in almost 50 years and the gala is the last chance to see it in action at the GCR before it moves to the National Railway Museum.

However, they've never been in the same line up before. The GCR believes the 'strictly one off' nature of the event will bring thousands of visitors in Leicestershire and could possibly be a record breaking weekend.

Bill Ford has a personal reason to feel emotional. "I used to co-own Leander" he explained "but to be reunited with it as it makes a first ever visit to the GCR is fantastic. I'm really looking forward to this weekend. It's enough to evoke school boy train spotting memories!"

For press facilities on Friday, Saturday or Sunday please contact Lynn Hill on the numbers above as soon as possible.