

# John Yellowlees: Movement to save Britain's transport heritage builds up a head of steam



Carolyn Swift, Transport Trust trustee Jerry Swift, and John Yellowlees, as an honorary Rail Ambassador, attend the unveiling of Wheels plaque at historic Canal Station in Paisley, Renfrewshire. Picture: John Devlin

By  
**JOHN YELLOWLEES**

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**It is important to celebrate our transport heritage because learning from the past helps us to do better in the future.**

Transport preservation in Britain has seen some notable successes: from the unique Charabus convertible single-decker bus built as a show exhibit for the Olympia Commercial Motor Show in 1921 to a Bristol Scout aeroplane of First World War vintage, from the lowland canals of Scotland to the return of the Flying Scotsman, the preservation movement in Britain has much to be proud of.



John Yellowlees, chair CILT Scotland.

Britain's place in the history and development of transport is demonstrably second to none. This country's growth and prosperity has been inextricably linked with the movement of people and cargo. But the risks remain to preserve this heritage for future generations.

If transport heritage is to be of value, we need to make sure people know about it. If those that have given so much to preservation have no one to pass their skills and enthusiasm on to, these will be lost. The Transport Trust is a national charity established to promote and encourage the preservation and restoration of Britain's unique transport heritage.

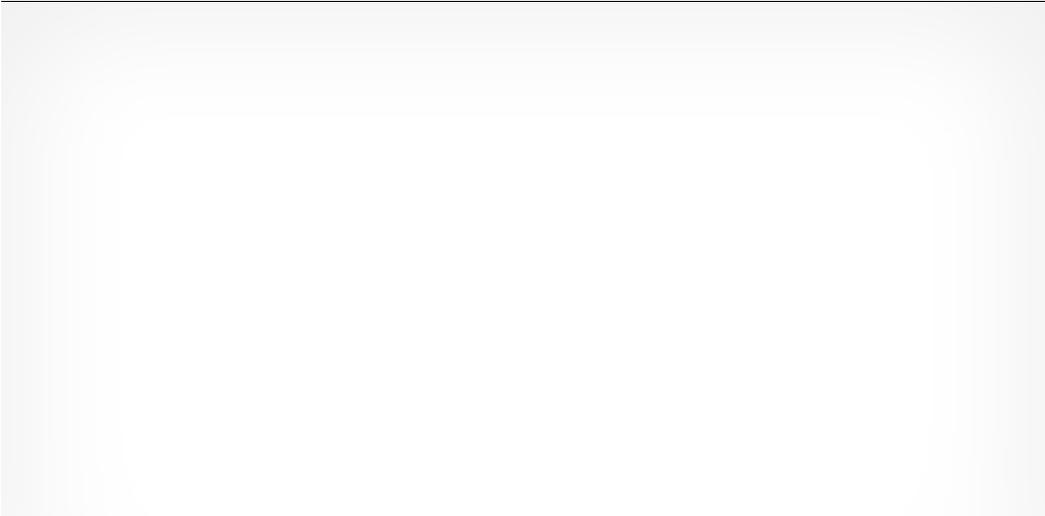
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For more than half a century the Trust has campaigned for Britain's immensely important transport heritage in all its forms - land, air and water - to ensure that the story of our heritage does not slip into oblivion. Its role is to spotlight past successes (including transport's role in the development of the Industrial Revolution and British Empire), current activities and the future needs of transport preservation.

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The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) was proud to attend the unveiling on 16 August at Paisley Canal by Transport Scotland's rail director Bill Reeve of the Trust's first Red Wheels plaque, commemorating a transport heritage site north of the border.

Paisley Canal has quite a heritage – built by Thomas Telford, it boasted the longest arch of the Canal Age across White Cart (now Britain's oldest operational railway bridge) and was the scene of its worst disaster, in November 1825 when 85 people drowned in the Canal Basin as excited passengers trying to board the pleasure-boat Countess Eglinton surged forward, starting a panic which led to its capsize.

The drama continued in 1885 when the canal was turned into a railway providing the Glasgow & South Western an alternative to the congested main line through Paisley Gilmour Street. That alternative route closed in 1983, converted by Sustrans beyond Paisley Canal into an active travel route that takes walkers and cyclists deep into serene Renfrewshire countryside – while the station building became a popular restaurant and bar.



However, in 1990 the railway reopened to a new terminus at Paisley Canal, and in 2012 it was electrified in a low-cost innovative scheme that holds lessons at a time when further mainline electrification has been called into question as too expensive by the UK Department of Transport.

The Transport Trust has ambitious plans to unveil further Red Wheels plaques across Scotland, catching up on a long-established programme south of the border. Indeed, the second one was inaugurated on 18 August by Laura McAlpine in celebration of the iconic Glenfinnan Viaduct.

As well as the Red Wheels locations, the Transport Trust website has a searchable database of more than 800 interesting heritage sites which can be readily visited and inspected. Many represent an extraordinary technical

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value. Scotland has a rich heritage of achievement across road, rail, water and air travel, and it is right that this be celebrated as an important dimension to our tourist industry. However, why should CILT as a professional body be dedicated to helping develop the next generation of excellence in order that this country may remain competitive in the global marketplace? Because the competition is fierce for the attention of the young talent that might otherwise prefer the safer world of, say, software development.



What the Trust is doing is to create a virtual itinerary of world-class achievement in transport and logistics here in the United Kingdom that young people can explore on line and warm to the story that unfolds before their eyes. Achievements of our times such as the Queensferry Crossing and the proposed space-port in Sutherland are with the traditions developed by the likes of Telford. By taking viewers back in time, the Transport Trust can help us inspire the next generation of transport specialists and logisticians.

[Picture gallery: Oscar Marzaroli's...](#)



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You can find the Transport Trust website at [www.transporttrust.com](http://www.transporttrust.com)

*John Yellowlees, chair, CILT Scotland.*

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