

STEAMING TO VICTORY

How Britain's Railways Won the War

The long goodbye...

An Army sergeant with wife and baby heading back from leave at a station that is probably Crewe. Note the period features including Nestle chocolate at 1d a bar and the advert for Brylcreem!



Will the train never come?

Travel during wartime was mostly slow and uncomfortable with frequent delays from air raids, troop movements and slow-moving freight. Here the arrivals board shows the Blackpool train is already delayed.



Sitting room only

It's 1944, a peak year for travel, which typifies wartime. The forces accounted for three quarters of passengers on some trains. Here a WRAF reads her magazine in a crowded corridor.



Lifting the spirits – a joke and a fag

A group of officers head back to duty. Many more smoking compartments were added to trains to reflect the needs of service personnel



The Yanks are coming

Many American servicemen were transported by train from the West Coast ports. Here a US sergeant snatches forty winks on a bench at Crewe while changing trains.



Food for the fighters

Soldiers from the Royal Engineers queue for refreshments in a buffet car run by the Naafi. Lashings of Oxo and Bovril are a bargain at 1p or 2p. There are tongue, ham, corned pork and paste sandwiches. ranging in price from 1d to 6d.



We'll meet again

...but let's hope Daddy will come home unharmed. A poignant goodbye from a husband going off to war, while the couple's son looks on.



Here we go — off to the sunny seaside

The great evacuation of children from the big cities in 1939 was a great success. And, scary though it was, many youngsters had a fantastic time. Here a group embark from a Great Western train in Devon.



March of the frogmen...

After the gas terrors of the First world War, the railways were among the first to protect their staff. Here the driver of Castle Class No 5085 'Evesham Abbey' sets off on his journey. As it turned out, the fears of gas were unrealised



Protect and survive!

On the London Tube, special netting is applied to stop train windows being shattered by bomb blasts. But passengers hated it, since they couldn't see where to get off...



Trains carry the weapons that won the war

Without the railway transport of crucial weapons, the war could not have been won. The railway workshops not only built the tanks, but transported them on special trains, too



The mighty Boche Buster

Britain's most powerful railway weapon was the Boche Buster – an 18-inch howitzer on a railway truck. However it was never fired in anger, since its range was insufficient to cross the English Channel.



Women go to war on the railways

The railway unions reluctantly agreed to allow women to take the jobs of men who had gone to fight. But they proved themselves totally – and war work was an important step to liberation. Here a group practise using signal tokens.



Right away, gentlemen

Women were never allowed to become drivers, but they did brilliant duty as guards all over the network. Here the flag is at the ready at London's Waterloo.



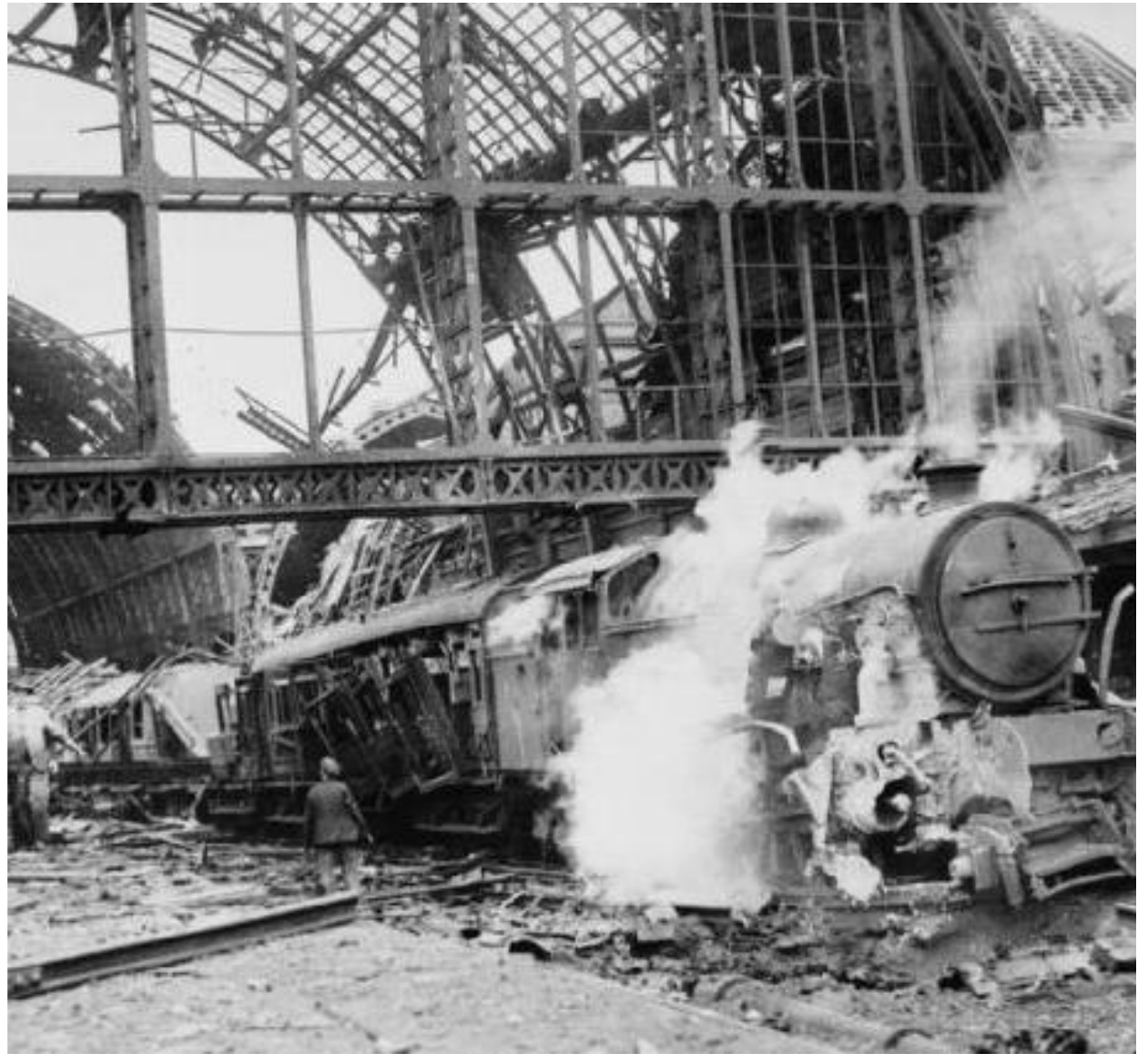
An historic railway terminus blitzed

The historic London termini took a terrible hit during the war. Hardly any was spared. Here Liverpool Street gapes open after a German bomb in January 1941.



More heritage destroyed

The historic overall roof at Middlesbrough was also destroyed during the Blitz. The funds were never there to rebuild it. But, astonishingly, the locomotive was repaired and put back into service.



Devastation at York

York, as an historic city, was specially targeted by Germany during the so-called 'Baedeker raids' of 1942. The Luftwaffe destroyed one of the LNER's fastest and most modern locomotives – A4 class No. 4469. Poignantly, it bore the name of Sir Ralph Wedgwood, the chairman of the Railway Executive Committee and the chief general manager of the LNER.



Railways to the rescue

Wherever there were serious casualties or wounded troops from the front, the railway ambulance trains were on call, staffed with doctors and nurses who provided vital relief in emergencies.



The tiny train that went to war

The miniature Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway in Kent played its own plucky part with an armoured train, complete with gun, that patrolled the vulnerable local coastline.



Transporting the enemy

There were few wartime duties the railway did not undertake – including the transportation of German prisoners-of-war. These men, escorted along the platform at London's Euston, were captured from German U-boats.



Blitz on the Tube

The spirit of the Blitz is often defined through the Londoners who defied the bombs by sheltering in Tube stations. This picture, by Bill Brandt, one of the 20th century's greatest photographers, shows an engaged couple asleep on the tracks at London's Liverpool Street.



Underneath the arches

It wasn't just Tube stations that provided shelter. Here nine members of the O'Rourke family sleep under the same blanket underneath a railway arch in Bermindsey



The most famous poster of all

Publicity and propaganda was at the heart of the railway effort. This poster by Bert Thomas entered the national language, and there are few who don't remember the words today.



The soft sell...

The message about the role of the wartime railways went into the heart of the nation. This poster sends the message about the importance of the railway system in sustaining family life.



The final salute

Battle of Britain class No. 34051 prepares to depart from Waterloo for the final journey with Sir Winston Churchill's funeral train on 10 January 1965. How appropriate that the locomotive bearing the great war leader's name should be in charge, since Churchill believed that the role of the railways was crucial to Britain winning the war.



Steaming to Victory

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Michael
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Preface.
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