

**AN OBJECT OF INTEREST FROM HUNSTANTON
HERITAGE CENTRE**

March 2022

A “Britannia” comes to town!

**H&DCS member Roger Dix tells us
about the largest steam locomotive
to visit Hunstanton.**

I had been a keen “train-spotter”, so as I cycled to my summer vacation job on the Fairground in July 1962, I knew something special was standing at the buffers in Hunstanton station. I parked my cycle next to Thomas’s Bingo Arcade, and there, just across the road, stood a member of the majestic B.R. “Britannia” class of express passenger steam locomotives. This was No 70011 and named “Hotspur”.

**HUNSTANTON &
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“Hotspur” photographed from the footbridge showing the massive tender and much of the railway infrastructure at Hunstanton. On the right is the turntable, water tower and engine shed. In the distance are the sidings where excursion trains were held until the return journey in the evening.



B.R. Britannia No 70011 “Hotspur” sets off back to King’s Lynn under the long footbridge and past the Great Eastern signal box. The carrstone end wall belongs to a house that is still in-situ.

Apart from one experimental loco (“Duke of Gloucester”) the Britannias were the largest express passenger engine built by British Railways! Quite a few powerful locos came on summer excursions, but I’m in no doubt “Hotspur” was the largest steam engine to ever visit Hunstanton – unless, of course, you know better!

The “Brits” – as they were known – were big! They were 70ft long and weighed over 100 tons. The driving wheels were 6’ 2” in diameter and the tender carried 7 tons of

coal and 4,000 gallons of water. They were designed by B.R. Mechanical Engineers Sir Robert Riddles and Mr R C Bond and their team. Fifty five were built at Crewe works and entered service in 1951. They carried the names of national heroes – my favourites are “Hereward the Wake” and “Sir Christopher Wren”

The Brits were built to haul 10-coach trains at 75mph+ and 7 were immediately allocated to Norwich. Their power and speed transformed services to London Liverpool Street.

“Hotspur” was one of these, why it arrived in Hunstanton, we shall never know. Presumably, King’s Lynn Loco Shed ran out of serviceable local engines and so used 70011 off a London train.

By now – July 1962- diesels were rapidly replacing steam engines, many of which looked very neglected. However, 70011 looked in good condition with nameplates still in place. It was last seen in storage sidings in Carlisle in August 1967 and met its fate with the scrapyards torches in December the same year.



B.R. Britannia “Oliver Cromwell” travels through Diss at 75 mph
July 2012

All was not lost, though! Two Britannias – No 70000 “Britannia” and No 70013 “Oliver Cromwell” – have been preserved and restored to work again on the mainline, hauling



B.R. Britannia “Oliver Cromwell” at Norwich
2012

excursions all over the UK. (Details on the Web) Oliver Cromwell has run to Norwich several times and Diss station is a great place to watch. However, if you take children to watch, be warned, as a Britannia storming by at 75mph with 12 coaches in tow is a noisy, exciting and impressive sight!

Best wishes to you all,

Roger Dix