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10 March 1995

NEW STEAM LOCOMOTIVE TO BE ERECTED IN DARLINGTON:

Ceremonial key to new locomotive works handed over to designer's widow

The Project to build the first new mainline steam locomotive in Britain since 1960 took a major step forward today with the announcement of the decision to complete the erection of the locomotive in the Old Carriage Works next to Darlington Railway Centre and Museum. The new Peppercorn Class A1 Pacific, 60163 Tornado, is being built from the original 1940s drawings by The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust, a registered charity.

In a historic agreement with Darlington Borough Council, the owners of the 1853 former Stockton and Darlington Railway Carriage Works, The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust will set up its permanent base in what is to become the new Darlington Steam Locomotive Works early in 1996. The Council will be providing to the Trust exclusive use of the soon to be converted Works on a long term agreement and help with seeking grant funding.

The announcement was followed by a brief ceremony in front of Locomotion No 1, the world's first public railway locomotive, now preserved in Darlington Railway Museum. At this ceremony, Councillor John Williams, Major of Darlington and Leader of Darlington Borough Council, presented the key to the new locomotive works to Mrs Dorothy Mather, widow of Arthur H Peppercorn, the locomotive's original designer.

Commenting on the announcement, Councillor John Williams said:

"Ever since the original Darlington Locomotive Works was closed in 1966, there has been something missing from the town - the sight and sound of a new locomotive under construction. Although it is only 8 weeks since the officers of Darlington Borough Council first met with the Directors of The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust, in that time, we have seen a true meeting of minds.

"Darlington is a town with a great engineering past, yet it is successfully competing in the hi-tech world of the 1990s. This Project, with its combination of traditional skills, first developed in Darlington nearly 175 years ago, and the latest computing and engineering technology, is an ideal symbol for our town."

David Champion, Chairman of The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust added:

"After five years without a permanent home, The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust is delighted to be moving the centre of its operations to Darlington. This agreement with Darlington Borough Council means that the next Peppercorn class A1 will be built in the world's first true railway town. 23 of the original A1s were built here to the orders of the old London and North Eastern Railway in 1948/9 and many were scrapped on this very site in the early 1960s. It is most fitting that Arthur Peppercorn's widow, Dorothy, should accept the key to the new Works on our behalf, as he spent the happiest years of his distinguished career in Darlington."

"Tornado will not be a replica, but the 50th class A1 locomotive, and it and the locomotives that follow it from the new Darlington Steam Locomotive Works over the coming years will help to generate new jobs in the Darlington area and bring Darlington's railway heritage to life."

David Champion concluded:

"This agreement marks another significant milestone for The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust. Thanks to the tremendous support of our covenantors and sponsors, and now Darlington Borough Council, a new Peppercorn Class A1 Pacific, 60163 Tornado, is now taking shape before us, with construction started on the locomotive's frames, five of the six driving wheels cast and the first cylinder pattern completed."

"In order to maintain this impressive rate of progress, more funds are urgently needed. We are now appealing to everyone who want to see new steam locomotive construction succeed, to put their hands in their pockets and sign up to our Covenant scheme. We would be especially pleased to receive Covenants, offers of help and sponsorship from people and companies based in the North East where our support is already very strong."

@SUB-TITLE = Note to Editors

The A1 Class of Pacific locomotives were designed by Arthur H Peppercorn for the London and North Eastern Railway and built in 1948/49. They were the last of the East Coast Mainline's series of thoroughbred express passenger steam locomotives. Examples of many of these Darlington and Doncaster built locomotives have been saved for preservation, although not the Peppercorn A1s which were scrapped, following dieselisation of the railways, in the 1960s, with the last going in 1966. The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust is building a new locomotive, No 60163 <MI>Tornado<D> with the money being raised by Deeds of Covenant, at a cost of only the price of a pint of beer per week, and other donations and sponsorship agreements.

Completion of Tornado is scheduled for 1998 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the completion of the first member of the Class. Great British companies helping the A1 Project include Macreadys, William Cook plc and British Steel.

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