

Historic Tram Restored

Written by Alison Grange

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The historic Kington Tram or Plateway Wagon, discovered in the 1960s at Burlingjobb Quarry, close to Kington, has now been safely returned to its new home in Hereford.

Dating from between 1820 and 1830, the window of opportunity to conserve the tram occurred just before work started on a a £1.83m extension to the new Museum Resource and Learning Centre.

During the building work, only internal access was possible to the wheeled vehicle storage area, so the tram left the site just before work started.

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The third and final stage of the extension, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, is now complete and the newly-restored tram has been moved to its new home in the building's entrance where it will be on show until Easter.

Kate Andrew, Herefordshire Council's principal heritage officer, said:" A restoration had been planned many years ago, with replica wheel cast, but for some reason, had not proceeded and the tram was in a very poor state of repair.

"It really is a relic of the county's industrial heritage and is one of the oldest such trams in the country.

"It proved quite difficult to get the tram back into the new museum resource and learning centre but it is wonderful it has finally finished and the restoration work looks fantastic," she added.

Mr Dave Potter of Bromstead Services, based in Newport, Shropshire, has spent the past year restoring the tram, which was in a very fragile state, consisting solely of the ribs, one end and very rusted base plate.

A new strengthened bottom, side and door have been added to the tram to show how it would have looked when it was in use. The other two sides have been left in their original state to show how the tram would have looked when it first was discovered.

Drawn by horses, the tram was originally used to transport coal to Kington from the collieries of South Wales. The first sections opened in 1811, reaching Kington in 1820. The Kington tramway then exported finished iron goods and limestone or agricultural lime.

Engineer James Watt, who had a country house near Kington, was a shareholder who helped to fund the Kington tramway.

Mr Cyril Wright Meredith of Kington, a descendant of the firm of ironmasters who built the

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original tramway, found the tram in 1963 in a waste tip at Burlingjobb limestone quarry in Kington and recovered it and it has been part of the museum collection since then.

The restoration work has been funded by the Prism Foundation, a fund for conserving important scientific items, with help from Herefordshire Council, the Friends of Hereford Museum and the Arts while Tarmac plc provided the limestone blocks from Dolyhir Quarry, one of the quarries originally served by the plate way.