

Tenders, Some Background

Railway enthusiasts have generally seen tenders as an integral part of the locomotive to which they are attached. This was the case with early railway companies' tenders and continued to occur with some locomotives and tenders until the 1950s. As a result though some railway records exist on individual tenders there has been relatively little research done by enthusiasts and historians. To address this, the Railway Heritage Register has created a Register of existing steam locomotive tenders providing, where known, information on the type, number and rebuilding for each individual tender. To help people use the Register, and hopefully contribute information to it, a little background is provided below about tenders and how the Register is set up.

Descriptive Names for Tenders

Although enthusiasts use descriptions such as Maunsell 3500 gallon or Collett 4000 gallon to describe a tender, these descriptions do not seem to have been used by the railway companies themselves. Research so far suggests tenders were usually known just by their water capacity though the LNER seemed to use a more descriptive title. Some authors have classified tenders of particular railways (e.g. Yeadon for GCR tenders and Essery for some LMS tenders) but these are purely enthusiast classifications to enable people to categorise different types from the same railway company and to date there is no wide acceptance of these classifications.

A further complication in providing a description for a tender is that the frames and tanks were built as separate units. Tanks were replaced by the railways when necessary, often with an identical design, but sometimes with a completely new design. Furthermore frames were also sometimes replaced.

The Register uses the common enthusiast descriptions for tenders but also has a line describing the chassis type. As a rule of thumb only when there is a substantial change in frame shape is a chassis type separately identified. Alterations in spring hangers, axleboxes and brakes have been ignored.

Tender Numbering Up To 1923

Many railways in the 19th century saw the tender as part of the locomotive and either did not number the tender at all, or gave it the same number as the locomotive to which it was attached. From the late nineteenth century some companies, introduced specific numbering schemes for tenders. In general the transfer of tenders between locomotives in service was not widespread though tenders were sometimes reused after scrapping of the locomotive they were originally attached to. The following companies had, by 1923, instigated tender numbering where the tender retained its own individual number even when transferred to a

different locomotive. GCR, GNR, GWR, LNWR, LYR. All these companies attached the number plates to the rear of the tender.

Tender Numbering 1923-1968

The four post grouping companies all sought to identify the tenders that came under their control with numbers. However some seem to have been better than others. Yeadon's description of LNER tender numbering describes a fairly chaotic system with duplicated numbers, more than one number for the same tender and some tenders with no identification at all. The exchange of tenders became much more widespread in this period though undoubtedly not all changes were recorded on the tender history cards.

The GWR attached the numberplate to the rear of the tender. This was a large brass plate up to June 1917 and a smaller cast iron plate from this date. Examples are seen on the website in the tender records for tender numbers 1982 and 4081.

The SR fitted a small 2.5x1.5 inch brass plate only on the front left hand side of the tender underframe. See picture in record for tender 3113.

The LMS used rectangular cast iron plates fitted to the rear of the tender. See picture in record for tender 9687.

The LNER used both oval and rectangular plates of both cast iron and brass. In most cases these were attached to the rear of the tender though many eight wheel tenders had them at the front. See picture in record for tender 5671.

Tenders Since 1968

Little attention has been paid to tenders in preservation. Some owners and societies provide documentation on restoration and rebuilding of tenders in their newsletters and websites but frequently information is scant.

Although the locomotives at Woodham Brothers' scrap yard have always been identifiable, tenders were not. Preservationists often took the tender which was in the best condition and suitable for the loco they had purchased, not necessarily the tender the loco arrived with at the scrap yard. The situation was further complicated by the sale or scrapping of some tenders by Woodham's in the late 1960's. These factors have made identifying individual tenders more difficult.

Because of the shortage of tenders from Woodham's and the poor condition of many when purchased (particularly the tanks), there has been widespread rebuilding and a degree of mixing and matching of chassis and tanks by preservationists to produce working tenders. To date the following combinations have been identified;

Original chassis and original tank

Original chassis and new tank

Original chassis with an original tank from another tender

New chassis with an original tank

New chassis with a new tank

Not all new tanks are of the correct design for the chassis they are fitted to (e.g. LMS chassis with BR style standard tank)

There has also been the use of welded tanks to replace riveted tanks and changes to water and coal capacity to increase water capacity for mainline running.

Accuracy of Original Records

Like all railway documentation tender records are only as accurate as the information that was collected and transcribed at the time. Very few records list when tanks or frames were replaced and not all records show every locomotive that the tender was allocated to.

Furthermore record keeping seriously declined towards the end of steam operations; for example there are few alterations in London Midland Region records after 1961/1962.

Therefore, though a large number of tender records do exist for tenders taken into British Railways stock, absolute accuracy of these records cannot be guaranteed.

Using the Register

At present the Register covers the following tenders:

Standard gauge locomotives in the UK that were owned by British Railways, the Big Four companies and their predecessors (Though for completeness the two LNER A4 class 4-6-2's that are preserved abroad are also included).

War Department and USATC locomotives in the UK.

Irish 5'3" gauge locomotives

GWR 7'0" gauge locomotives

Foreign mainline locomotives of various gauges in the UK

A number of narrow gauge locomotives down to fifteen inch gauge have been added but many are not included at present as there is very little information on them available.

Searches of the Register can be made by railway company, type, tender number, locomotive number or class and build date.

Type refers to the outline that the tender conforms to. There may have been changes in water and coal capacity for some tenders but these are documented separately and the original design water capacity is used in the type description.

Unless mentioned in the notes it is assumed that any replacement tank is of the same construction as the original tank. For example a riveted tank is replaced with another riveted tank rather than a welded one.

Although a water scoop may be listed as in place it does not imply that it is operational or even attached to the equipment on the footplate used to raise and lower it.

Where a tank and chassis have been put together by preservationists in a combination never used prior to 1968 the term 'hybrid' has been added to the description

The accuracy of tender numbers should be viewed with some scepticism particularly regarding tenders that passed through Woodham's scrapyards at Barry. When tenders were purchased from the yard it was usually known which locomotive they were last coupled to and many preserved tenders carry the number of the last known tender coupled to this locomotive. However because of the decline in record keeping in the 1960s it is likely that not all locos arrived in the yard with the tender listed in official records and, with tender number plates stripped off long before the tenders were preserved, accurate identification is difficult.

Not all tenders carry a number plate, even when the correct number is known, so the number quoted in the present number category is either the number physically carried or one the tender is presently known by even if there is no number plate attached.

Some preserved tenders carry the wrong number on their number plates and this is listed as their present number. Notes within the individual tender records highlight when the wrong number is carried and list the correct one where known.

The terms 'unnumbered' and 'unknown' are used instead of the number in the following circumstances;

Unnumbered: The tender has either never been allocated a number by a railway company or the current livery it is restored to is when it did not carry a number. For example Midland Railway tenders.

Unknown: This is used where the identity is not known because either that piece of information has not been collected or the identity has been lost in the mists of time and is never likely to be discovered. As more information is collected the total of tender numbers marked as 'unknown' should diminish.

Updating the Register

At present information in the Register is incomplete. Most tenders are included but for some information was so sparse a record has not yet been created. The records that have been created do in some cases have missing information. Any information from owners, restorers, operators and enthusiasts would be appreciated. Information is also needed on which locomotives have been coupled to which individual tenders since preservation (ideally with dates as well). This additional information will be included in the notes section when available.

All that is asked is that the source of any information is included. Accurate information on tenders can be hard to come by and knowing the source makes it a little easier to sort out problems when conflicting information is received. This does not preclude providing hazy memories of events but it is important to know that this is what they are.

Photos for posting in the Register are welcome.

Missing Records

At present there are no records for the following locomotives which are known to have tenders:

Historic Replicas

Elephant; Puffing Billy; Locomotion; Sans Pareil

UK Mainline Locomotives

GWR

7'0" Gauge Locomotives

Firefly, Iron Duke

Foreign Mainline Locomotives

South African Railways

The following locomotives do not have tenders

Historic Locomotives

Agenoria, Invicta, Rocket

UK Mainline Locomotives

GWR

2859, 2873, 2874, 3845

SR

30841, 34010, 34058, 34073, 35009, 35011, 35022

LMS

44901, 46428

BR

76077, 92207, 92219, 92245

Irish Mainline Locomotives

GSWR

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