

**NATIONAL
RAILWAY
MUSEUM**

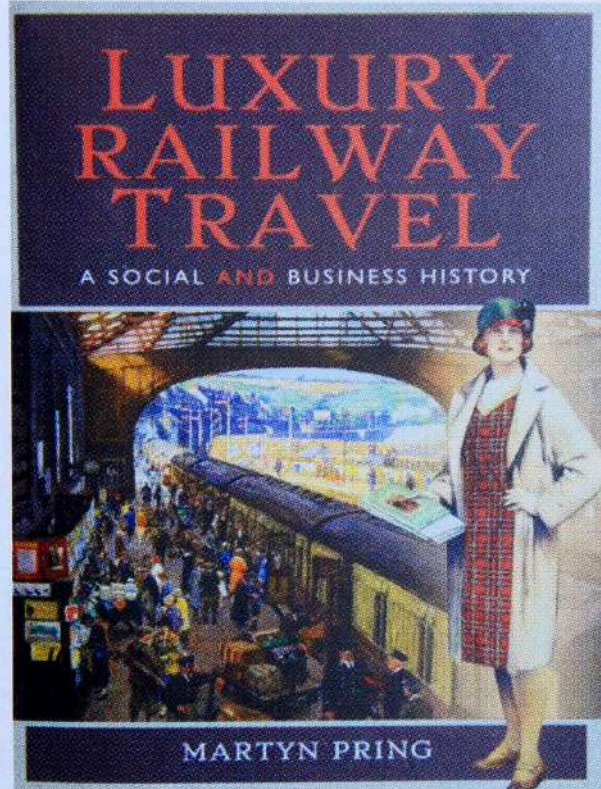
REVIEW

The Journal of the Friends of the National Railway Museum
No 171 ISSN 2043-8400 Spring 2020



VE Day 75th commemoration edition

by Martyn Pring
Pen and Sword
366pages Hardback
ISBN 978 1 5267132 4 7 £35.00



Luxury train travel, with glamorous overtones and attractive publicity, has always attracted more attention than the travelling conditions of, say, the London commuter or colliers' work trains. The author has plenty of material to draw on.

He notes difficulties in defining luxury and differentiates this from business or simply first-class travel. He drifts into theories of brand management, which lead to sentences such as "These narratives can take the form of a dynamic circular system of ongoing processes, whose actions cause a series of reactions generating a fundamental basis of luxury brand

meaning". The rest of the book is less pretentious.

He points out that steamships were in advance of the railways in offering passenger comfort. Royalty were principal innovators, and in Britain that pioneer of luxury travel, James Allport on the Midland Railway, learned much from the USA and Pullman cars.

Britain had a larger leisure class than continental countries and Anglo-Scottish routes were important for them. Railway publicity developed from the 1870s onwards and in the Edwardian age but it was the 1921 to 1945 period when luxury rail travel blossomed. The author notes marketing wasn't always done well and comments on problems with the *Coronation Scot*. The LMS railway didn't consider where that train's clientele would originate, affecting loadings and profits. Likewise the LNER could have improved *Coronation* loadings by extending down services to Glasgow to pick up business traffic, as Glasgow was a business rather than a tourist destination, unlike Edinburgh.

Air competition reduced the demand for top end travel. The Manchester Pullman of 1983 lacked any mystique or luxury, it was aimed solely at the business market. Nevertheless luxury rail travel has re-emerged with specialist operators ranging from the *Royal Scotsman*, the *Majestic Emperor* train in Austria, and the *Kyushu Seven Stars* in Japan, specialist holidays in their own right rather than luxury travel as such.

Appendices examine services to Bournemouth, the West Country and Scotland, with information about the recent reintroduction of the *Caledonian Sleeper* with some luxury rooms. Another describes the Brighton services and the role of the British Pullman Company in their development. Did you know that Pullman car *Beatrice* was the first railway carriage in the world to be electrically lit?

This survey of the luxury train deserves a place in the library. Perhaps more could have been said about the realities of passenger experience of rail travel, something that is easily overlooked. However, this remains a distinctive book.