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Stainless Steel Nameplates

The decision by InterCity 125 operator First Great Western to re-engineer their HST fleet sounded the death knell for stainless steel nameplates, or 'tin plates', as they were dubbed. As power cars were sent through the Brush Works for extensive overhauls so the last of the stainless steel nameplates were consigned to history. The nameplates were hugely controversial, derided by some as being cheap and tacky but admired by others for being sleek and stylish, whatever your view, there is no denying that they defined not only the InterCity era but the pinnacle of modern British Rail operations.

The new InterCity Swallow livery designed by Roudel Design Group and launched in 1987 was revolutionary in a number of respects, firstly, it would be the first time since 1948 that a standard BR livery would involve the rolling stock not carrying the British Rail logo, instead, InterCity would have a separate corporate identity in the shape of a swallow. Secondly, traditional cast nameplates would be replaced by stainless steel ones to match the new silver style swallow logo.

The first 'tin plate' was unveiled on the 6th October 1987 when HRH, The Princess Royal unveiled the name 'The Worshipful Company of Carmen' on 43132 at London Paddington station. The original intention was that the nameplates would be glued on to the Power Car but concerns over safety at Old Oak Common Depot saw them, quite sensibly, riveted on in the time honoured fashion. The nameplates and swallows were produced by London based company Doric Signs who also produced significant other amounts of general signage for BR. The first batch of nameplates were constructed from two sheets of stainless steel, 1.5mm thick, bonded together with the face engraved leaving the name and border standing slightly proud of the background. The background was then painted a dark grey leaving the letters and borders in polished stainless steel (illustrated below).



Twenty two of this style were made and fitted to HST power cars, class 90s and the sole class 89, however, concern was raised over the finish and weathering of the nameplates with the large area of dark grey paint suffering from peeling especially around the boltholes. As a result of this the design was changed so that the letters and border would be engraved in to the face and painted black whilst the background would remain polished steel - effectively a reverse of the originals. This design, illustrated below, proved to be both more aesthetically pleasing and more robust at resisting the elements. The first few nameplates of this type were still made from two pieces of sheet steel but the majority were made of a much more substantial single 4mm thick single plate.



The provision of stainless steel for the crests above the nameplates also allowed for much more detailed designs. Simple crest designs were engraved in the same way as the nameplate lettering but complex crests such as coats of arms could be screen printed given impressive detail unobtainable on a cast nameplate.

From the end of 1987 InterCity were keen to present a corporate image on front line traction and large numbers of traditional cast nameplates were removed from HST power cars during repaints in to the new livery with new stainless steel ones progressively fitted as they became available from the manufacturers. There were, however, a few notable exceptions. Neville Hill depot staff refused point blank for 43049 to have the original nameplates replaced and despite stainless steel ones being commissioned, made and sent to the depot, they were never fitted and 43049 continues to carry the original nameplates to this day over twenty years later!

The appointment of Chris Green as Director of InterCity in 1992 marked the beginning of the end for tin plates. Chris Green was very much a traditional railwayman and nothing other than traditional cast nameplates would do for his sector. The final set of Doric nameplates were fitted to 43125 during June 1994 as replacements for the cast aluminium 'Merchant Venturer' nameplates removed some years earlier. There was, however, to be no mass removals of nameplates as previous and the existing ones remained, on the whole, fitted until privatisation took hold. GNER removed all of their nameplates when the HST power cars and class 91s were repainted in to the new corporate livery. Likewise Midland Mainline did the same with their power cars. However both Virgin and Great Western (later First Great Western) retained them. With the demise of HSTs on Virgin Cross Country and loco haulage on West Coast only those on Great Western power cars remained. The final vehicle carrying a stainless steel nameplate was 43134 'County of Somerset' which made the move to Brush Loughborough on 29th October 2007 having the nameplates removed shortly afterwards more than 15 years after they were fitted and twelve years after the demise of InterCity.

The following tables list all those names carried in stainless steel form. Style 1 is the original with polished letters and dark grey background whilst style 2 is the later black letters with polished background.

Class 47

<i>Name</i>	<i>Loco</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Crest</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Derby & Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry	47844	2	N	The only class 47 to carry a stainless steel nameplate.

Class 86

<i>Name</i>	<i>Loco</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Crest</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Norwich Festival	86232	2	N	The only class 86 to carry a stainless steel nameplate.

Class 89

<i>Name</i>	<i>Loco</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Crest</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Avocet	89001	1	Y	Only one loco in class.

Class 90

<i>Name</i>	<i>Loco</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Crest</i>	<i>Notes</i>
275 Railway Squadron (Volunteers)	90010	2	Y	
BBC Midlands Today	90001	2	Y	
BBC North West	90015	2	Y	
Financial Times	90005	1	N	The last original style nameplate carried in service.
Glasgow 1990 Cultural Capital of Europe	90012	2	Y	
High Sheriff	90006	2	Y	
Lord Stamp	90007	2	N	
Royal Show	90009	1	Y	
The Birmingham Royal Ballet	90008	2	N	
The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company	90004	2	Y	
The Liverpool Phil'	90014	2	Y	Second style plate but of early style laminated construction
The Chartered Institute of Transport	90011	1	Y	

Class 91

<i>Name</i>	<i>Loco</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Crest</i>	<i>Notes</i>
BBC Radio 1 FM	91025	2	N	
Guide Dog	91028	2	Y	
Michael Faraday	91013	2	N	
Northern Electric	91014	2	N	
Palace of Holyroodhouse	91030	2	N	
Queen Elizabeth II	91029	2	N	
Royal Air Force Regiment	91005	2	Y	
Scottish Enterprise	91019	2	N	
Sir Henry Royce	91031	2	Y	
Swallow	91001	2	N	
Terence Cuneo	91011	2	N	
The Red Arrows	91004	2	Y	
Thomas Cook	91008	2	N	

High Speed Train Power Cars

<i>Name</i>	<i>Loco</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Crest</i>	<i>Notes</i>
BBC East Midlands Today	43076	2	Y	
BBC Look North	43155	2	Y	
BBC Wales Today	43149	1	N	
BBC Wales Today	43149	2	N	
Borough of Stevenage	43162	2	Y	
Bounds Green	43057	2	N	
Bristol Evening Post	43150	1	N	
Bristol Evening Post	43150	2	N	
Charles Wesley	43118	1	Y	
Charles Wesley	43118	2	Y	
City of Bradford	43085	2	Y	
City of Bristol	43126	2	Y	Stainless steel crest retained above replacement aluminium nameplate
City of Discovery	43041	2	Y	
City of Kingston Upon Hull	43116	2	Y	
City of Lincoln	43061	1	Y	
City of Lincoln	43061	2	Y	
City of Newcastle Upon Tyne	43113	2	N	
City of Peterborough	43052	2	Y	
City of Plymouth	43188	2	Y	
City of Swansea / Dinas Abertawe	43019	2	N	
City of Truro	43192	1	N	
City of Truro	43192	2	N	
City of Westminster	43026	2	Y	
City of York	43064	2	Y x2	
County of Cleveland	43104	2	N	
County of Cornwall	43023	2	N	
Edinburgh International Festival	43101	2	N	
Edinburgh Military Tattoo	43091	2	N	
Granite City	43040	2	Y	
Great Western	43185	2	Y	
Gwyl Gerddi Cymru 1992 Garden Festival Wales 1992	43016	2	N	Nameplates were so heavy that they caused distortion to power car body
Hartlepool	43105	2	N	
County of Humberside	43053	2	Y	
County of Leicestershire	43060	2	Y	
County of Nottingham	43077	2	N	
County of Somerset	43134	2	Y	Last set of stainless steel nameplates to be carried in service
Craigeninny	43100	2	N	
Darlington	43110	2	N	
Highland Chieftan	43092	2	N	Removed after only a few weeks due to spelling mistake
John Wesley	43103	1	Y	The only early style nameplate not replaced on a power car
Merchant Venturer	43125	2	N	
National Garden Festival Gateshead 1990	43114	1	N	
National Garden Festival Gateshead 1990	43114	2	N	

National Railway Museum The First Ten Years 1975-1985	43038	2	Y	One nameplate at the National Railway Museum
Pride of Laira	43179	2	Y	
Reader 125	43011	2	Y	Power car and nameplates destroyed in Ladbroke Grove collision
Reading Evening Post	43161	2	Y	
Red Cross	43147	1	N	Replacement stainless steel, later style, nameplates worded 'The Red Cross'
Rotherham Enterprise	43047	2	Y	
Seahawk	43191	2	N	
Shildon County Durham	43078	2	Y	
Sir Felix Pole	43131	2	N	Railway Heritage Committee listed
Sir Francis Drake	43186	1	N	
Sir Francis Drake	43186	2	N	
Songs on Praise	43106	1	N	
Songs of Praise	43106	2	N	
South Yorkshire Metropolitan County	43122	2	Y	Both nameplates stolen whilst power car stored at MOD Bicester
St Marys Hospital Paddington	43142	2	N	
St Peters School York AD627	43152	2	Y	
Storm Force	43160	2	Y	
Sulis Minerva	43130	2	Y x2	
Swan Hunter	43004	2	Y	
The Duke and Duchess of York	43051	2	Y	
The Grammar School Doncaster AD1350	43045	2	Y	
The National Trust	43169	1	N	
The National Trust	43169	2	Y	
The Newspaper Society Founded 1836	43196	2	Y	
The Queens Own Hussars	43096	2	N	
The Red Cross	43147 43018	2	N	Replacements for 'Red Cross' of earlier style
The Royal Regiment of Wales	43032	1	N	
The Royal Regiment of Wales	43032	2	N	
Top of the Pops	43002	2	N	
TSW Today	43010	2	Y	
University of Bradford	43056	2	Y	
University of Durham	43153	2	Y	
West Yorkshire Metropolitan County	43121	2	N	
Worshipful Company of Carmen	43132	1	Y	The first stainless steel plate fitted
Worshipful Company of Carmen	43132	2	Y	
XIII Commonwealth Games Scotland 1986	43088	1	N	
XIII Commonwealth Games Scotland 1986	43088	2	N	
York Festival '88	43093	1	N	
York Festival '88	43093	2	N	
Yorkshire Cricket Academy	43115	1	Y	
Yorkshire Cricket Academy	43115	2	Y	
Yorkshire Evening Post	43157	2	Y	
Yorkshire Evening Press	43109	1	N	
Yorkshire Evening Press	43109	2	N	

Nameplates made but never fitted

<i>Name</i>	<i>Loco</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Crest</i>	<i>Notes</i>
City of Wakefield		2	N	Nameplates delivered to Neville Hill Depot for fitting to 43102 but never used
Neville Hill		2	N	Nameplates delivered to Neville Hill for fitting to 43049 but depot staff insisted that the power car retained cast aluminium nameplates.
Royal Signals		2	N	Nameplates made for 43194 but never used