



The *Dunrobin* at Fort Steele in British Columbia. Picture: R Whetham

# Full steam ahead for return of 'Dunrobin' to UK

A 115-year-old steam locomotive, built for the 4th Duke of Sutherland and later sold to a Canadian businessman, is to return permanently to the UK.

The historic *Dunrobin* and its four-wheel private saloon have been bought for £110,000 by the North of England open-air museum at Beamish in County Durham.

The purchase was confirmed on Tuesday by the museum's curator of transport, Paul Jarman, who said: "We're delighted to announce that after over 12 months of work and discussion we have agreed to purchase *Dunrobin*."

Built by Sharp, Stewart and Company in 1895, the 0-4-4T class *Dunrobin* and its four-wheel carriage or day saloon No. 58A have a fascinating history.

The 4th Duke of Sutherland, a director of the Highland Railway company,

used it to travel across the North.

The locomotive and coach were housed for years in a shed at the private *Dunrobin* station, set up in 1874 by the 3rd Duke of Sutherland who paid to have the public railway line extended for 20 miles.

The station was eventually closed and fell into disrepair but was restored in the 1990s and reopened as a "request stop" for passengers.

Numerous dignitaries, including Winston Churchill and at least four monarchs – Edward VII, George V, King Alfonso of Spain and Kaiser Wilhelm II – are known to have ridden in *Dunrobin's* cab.

But the train seems to have fallen out of use around 1920.

In March 1950 the engine undertook a marathon journey, running under its own steam along 745 miles of British Rail track

to be placed on static display at the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway. It remained there for 15 years until it was sold along with the coach to a Canadian businessman.

But, explained Mr Jarman, once the locomotive and carriage were across the Atlantic, they were sold to the government in British Columbia for \$15,000 and put on display at an open-air museum in Fort Steele which featured a working railway.

"*Dunrobin* was used intermittently, also visiting other fairs and events, including Sacramento in 1990. It was last steamed in 2005," he said.

Engineers in Canada made some adjustments to *Dunrobin*, fitting it out with an air pump, steam generator and buckeye coupling.

Hearing that it had become surplus to requirements in

Canada, Beamish Museum began negotiating with the Friends of Fort Steele more than 12 months ago and in early December heard that their offer for both vehicles had been accepted.

Museum staff will now go out to Fort Steele and prepare *Dunrobin* and the day saloon for shipping. Asbestos and the attachments added to the engine will be removed.

The locomotive and saloon are expected to arrive at the museum in the spring where they will be overhauled for use on Beamish's North Eastern Railway (NER)-style branch line.

Mr Jarman said: "While it is not of North Eastern origin, it will fit in well with its high Victorian appearance."

The Strathspey Railway has already expressed an interest in hosting a visit by the *Dunrobin*.

If any *Northern Times* reader has information about *Dunrobin's* history then Mr Jarman would appreciate being contacted at [museum@beamish.org.uk](mailto:museum@beamish.org.uk)

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