



High Peak and Hope Valley
COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP



'I am George Stephenson'

A presentation about the Graves
Youth Theatre production
Part of Railway 200 celebrations



About the Production

- Created by the young people of Graves Youth Theatre (GYT)
- Developed with writer Paul Whitfield and director Gertie Whitfield
- A humorous and imaginative look at the life of George Stephenson
- Based on letters, newspapers and historical research
- GYT approached the HPHVCRP to be involved



Our role

- Wrote funding applications for the project
- Helped organise and promote local performances
- Connected the project to railway locations and communities
- Supported heritage interpretation linked to railways
- Enabled youth and community engagement

Overall, our role was to facilitate, fund and connect the project to the railway and local communities



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Theatre style and performance

- Used physical theatre and ensemble storytelling
- Inspired by 'platform theatre' techniques
- Actors created scenes using movement, mime and sound
- Young performers played multiple roles throughout the production

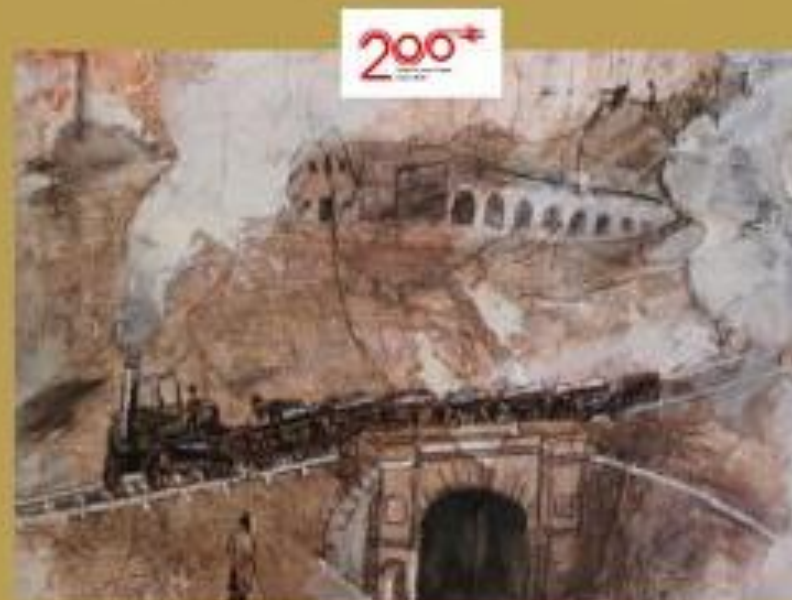


Premiere and performances

- Premiered at Barrow Hill Roundhouse, Derbyshire
- Part of celebrations marking 200 years of the railways
- Performances toured across Sheffield and Derbyshire
- Over 350 people watched the performance over five venues

Graves Youth Theatre
Proudly present world premiere of:
am George Stephenson

Created by the young people of GYT and Paul Whitfield



A humorous look at the life and achievements of railway pioneer, George Stephenson.



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Why the production matters

- Brings local history to life for new audiences
- Gives young people opportunities in drama and heritage
- Combines creativity with historical storytelling
- Celebrates the importance of railways in British history



Community Rail Awards performance

- Graves Youth Theatre performed extracts from 'I am George Stephenson' at the Community Rail Awards
- The performance highlighted railway history and young people's creativity
- Helped showcase the importance of arts, heritage and community rail partnerships





Prestigious Achievement

GYT won a major award at the 2025 Sheffield Youth Awards

Recognised Excellence

Celebrated for outstanding youth-led creative and educational work

Community Impact

Demonstrates strong positive impact on young people and local communities

Credibility & Celebration

Boosts GYT's reputation and highlights its role in youth development

Judges praised GYT for addressing complex histories with sensitivity and passion in their performances.

Inclusivity and representation

GYT provides a platform for marginalized voices, highlighting inclusivity and social justice.

Credibility and Impact

Judges' comments externally validate GYT's cultural significance and ethical approach.

Performers' quotes

- *“My awareness of the railways has increased enormously. Being involved in GYT has not impacted how I view railways in general but I do have a better understanding and appreciation of its history.”*
- *“I learnt far more about railways during this project than I probably will for the rest of my life!”*
- *“I’ve definitely learnt a lot about the railways and its history with people like Trevithick who aren’t as high in celebrity status compared to George Stephenson.”*





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Audience response, learning outcomes and youth impact

- Audience engagement
- Audiences praised the production's energy, humour and clear communication of complex history without elaborate props.
- Historical learning
- The production offered a nuanced understanding of George Stephenson, revealing his human complexities and railway impacts.
- Youth development
- Young performers gained confidence, skills in collaboration, directing and a lasting appreciation of history through theatre.



Audience feedback

'New information about the development of the railway and his personal life.'

'How he started off from small beginnings to become a well-known engineer who influenced the future of the railways.'

'How influential George was in this part of the world.'

'We didn't know how much competition there was – we thought he was a sole pioneer.'

'It was fun and lively. The actors were enthusiastic. The choreography kept it moving and interesting.'

Our learning

- **Creative engagement:** Theatre and storytelling attracted new and younger audiences
- **Youth involvement:** Co-creation with young people increased relevance and impact
- **Strong partnerships:** Collaboration unlocked funding and delivery capacity
- **Touring format:** Reaching multiple locations improved accessibility and inclusion
- **Heritage focus:** Effectively connected local communities to railway history
- **Audience feedback:** for each performance



What we would do differently

- **Create a longer legacy:** Develop resources (digital, schools, exhibits) beyond the event
- **Improve evaluation:** Capture rail use impact
- **Broaden participation:** Involve more local groups, volunteers and communities

"I am George Stephenson"

Tour Dates 2025

October:

Sat 11th & Sun 12th
Performances at 2pm & 3pm

Barrow Hill Roundhouse
Railway 200 Gala
Campbell Drive, S43 2PR
Tickets available from:
www.barrowhill.org/events/railway-200-gala/

Sat 18th
Doors open 5.30 - last entry 6pm
Event close 9pm

Rose Garden Café
Graves Park
Tickets: £5 on the door in aid of Café restoration. Play will be followed by a set of original acoustic pop songs and some great cover songs.

November:

Sat 15th
Performance and Talkback, 2.30pm

Holy Trinity Church
31 Newbold Road
Chesterfield, S41 7PG
Tickets: **FREE** - donations accepted

Sat 22nd
Performance and Talkback, 2pm

Hathersage Memorial Hall,
Oddfellows Road
Hathersage, S32 1DU
Tickets: **FREE** available from
whitfieldgertie@gmail.com

Sat 29th
Performance & Celebration, 2.30pm

Edale Village Hall
Hope Valley, S33 7ZA
Tickets: **FREE** available from
whitfieldgertie@gmail.com

 Go green and ride the train - parking is limited for these two shows.