

Cornwall's daffodil trains celebrated in new exhibition in Falmouth as organisers hunt floral queen

By [WBgdavies](#) | Posted: March 07, 2017



Who is the flower queen?

As a new exhibition celebrating the partnership between the railway and Cornwall's daffodil growers takes place organisers are trying to identify Falmouth's floral queen in 1954.

The exhibition, [Cornwall's Daffodil Trains](#), offers a snapshot of the partnership which saw stream trains speeding through the night to flower markets all over Britain.

There are archive photographs, classic railway posters, Heath Robinson drawings of the switch from broad to narrow gauge rails, and contemporary reports which reveal that daffodils leaving the Isles of Scilly 'forenoon are in Liverpool and Manchester by six the next morning, Edinburgh and Glasgow by midday, and Aberdeen six in the evening'.



Loading a special flower train at Penzance Station in 1899. Credit: Gibsons, Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance

At the height of Cornwall's daffodil season GWR ran 'Flower Specials' from Penzance, which sometimes took priority over passenger services.

The Railway Magazine in 1899 reported: "These Specials precede the mail train, regulations are arranged for three Specials running with 75 minutes between them over the greater part of the Great Western main line to Covent Garden, Manchester via Bristol and the Severn Tunnel, and Birmingham via Didcot."

The railways capitalised on Cornwall's 'golden harvest', with special excursion trains to our spring flower shows.



Falmouth's Floral Queen promoting holidays by train to Falmouth in Lewis's store, Birmingham, in March 1954.

In the 1930s GWR gave grants to daffodil growers to boost the quality of flowers and bulbs; post-1945 they supported the trade's research, while upcountry city store 'holiday by rail' promotions to Falmouth displayed the best daffodils from the annual flower shows at the Princess Pavilion.

Falmouth Spring Flower Show committee member Jean Carr, who researched the exhibition, said: "Cornwall's first flower shows were primarily commercial, with buyers from UK flower markets and Holland snapping up the best and new daffodil varieties.

"In the 1920s and 1930s fortunes were made – and lost – by a post-war demand for the flowers and a growing market for bulbs which were shipped to America, New Zealand and Australia.

"In the 1960s the commercial section at the Falmouth flower show was so big that the show moved to the Drill Halls for a few years before returning to the Princess Pavilion."

There is even a Cornish-bred daffodil called St Budock, which is one of more than 2,500 varieties grown by Ron Scamp, president of the Falmouth show.



The St Budock daffodil created by Ron Scamp of Falmouth

He said: "I always have a number of new unnamed daffodils on the go. During a visit to our flower fields by the ladies of St Budock Church they asked if they could choose one and picked this trumpet mid - season variety to name after their parish.

"I'm delighted it complements the exhibition's model train. It should be in bloom for this month's show."

One of the highlights of the exhibition is a model train, with its passenger coach painted in the original GWR colours of chocolate and cream, made by the Falmouth Society of Railway Modellers including Ian Cavill, Ted Schofield, and David Curtis who painted the St. Budock backdrop, a view he can see from his own window.

It shows the Great Western Railway Pannier Tank loco standing at St Budock Station about to take on boxes of daffodils delivered by horse drawn carts to the train's freight vans.



The model of the daffodil train created by Falmouth Society of Railway Modellers

Mr Schofield, the society's secretary, said: "We are always happy to take part in events like this as between us we can usually find the right items to make it happen.

"David is our 'artist', Ian supplied the engine and the passenger coach which he handmade from a kit, Barry Pike came up with the freight vans, and I made the boxes of daffodil flowers."

The exhibition is at the Municipal Buildings on The Moor from 9.30am until 5pm Monday to Saturday until March 31.

Falmouth Spring Flower Show takes place at Gyllyngdune Gardens on March 18-19.