

50 years after Beeching's axe, steam lines still survive



The Whitby to Pickering line reopened in 1973 and has become a successful tourist attraction Anna Gowthorpe/FA

Home Staff

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This month marks the 50th anniversary of an infamous report that gave the English language a new phrase: "Beeching-style cuts".

The man behind the phrase was Richard Beeching, who had taken over as British Railways chairman in 1961. On March 27, 1963, as the country recovered from one of its worst winters of the 20th century, Dr Beeching, aged 49 at the time, released a bombshell report.

Entitled *The Reshaping of British Railways*, it had been expected to contain some cuts on the loss-making nationalised railways. But the scale of the report was devastating. In an effort to move the railways into profitability he proposed taking an axe to the network. To the consternation of rail lovers, more than 2,000 stations were closed, thousands of miles of track were shut down and 67,000 jobs were lost. The uproar was loudest in rural areas, where trains were a lifeline.

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway reopened the Whitby to Pickering line in 1973 after it had been closed in 1965 as a result of the Beeching report. It is now a successful tourist attraction. Other lines are also due to reopen.

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Frank Spence

4 days ago

I have a very good friend of over 50 years whose name is Beeching, I do not know if they are related but she gets very hot under the collar when headlines like this appears. She makes the very good point that actually Dr Beeching did not axe anything. He was commissioned to produce a report on the state of Britain's Railways which he did, and at the end he

provided options for action. The Government of the day implemented the cuts, all Beeching did was write the report.

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