Media release
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Dressed for Departure: Fashion in the Age of Rail
(27 September 2025 - 01 February 2026)

Unknown maker, *Guards Coat,* (c.1856) © The Bowes Museum, County Durham. Photography by Claire Collinson.

To commemorate the bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the world's first public railway to use steam locomotives, The Bowes Museum unveils a new display, exploring the transformational impact of rail on the everyday. ***Dressed for Departure: Fashion in the Age of Rail*, opens on 27 September 2025 and is part of the regional S&DR200 celebrations marking the first railway journey in 1825 on the Stockton and Darlington Railway.**

Dressed for Departure brings together historic fashion, artworks and objects that reflect on how engineering advances reshaped lives and culture, especially in the North East. Set within the Fashion & Textiles gallery at the museum, **the display journeys from the early 19th century, when the railway arrived, to the end of the 20th century, a time when rail travel had become an everyday reality.** Visitors can explore how the beginning of the railway transformed not just transportation, but also personal style, artistic expression and social habits.

Edward Pease (1767-1858), often referred to as the father of the railway, played a pivotal role in founding the Stockton and Darlington Railway. In *Dressed for Departure,* visitors will be able to see items worn and used by members of his family. **These include a train and track from the 1840s, which almost certainly belonged to his grand-daughters, and together form one of the first ever toy train sets**. The display also features a court suit (c.1860) belonging to his son Henry Pease (1807-1881), who served as a director of the Stockton and Darlington Railway and was instrumental in bringing the line to Barnard Castle and beyond.

Marking a significant moment in local railway history, **a guard's coat donated by Mr Thomas Atkinson, who was the guard on the first train from Barnard Castle to Redcar on 8 July 1856,** is on show. Another regional highlight on display is a commemorative medallion from 1893 which marks the start of construction of the Wear Valley Extension Railway whilst also recognising the role of Sir Joseph Whitwell Pease (1828–1903), who opened The Bowes Museum to the public in 1892.

The display highlights how the railway shaped art and culture, showcasing scenic train journeys through the picturesque landscapes of Teesdale and the rise of popular seaside holidays promoted by railway companies. Throughout the display, visitors see posters advertising the railway, a copy of the painting of *Opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway* (1871) with Locomotion no. 1 crossing Skerne Bridge painted by John Dobbin (1815-1888), and a map of County Durham from 1843 showing railway routes. The display also explores how railway travel influenced leisure and fashion, particularly the development of bathing costumes and swimwear designed for seaside holidays.

Rachel Whitworth, Curator of Fashion and Textiles at The Bowes Museum, comments: "*Dressed for Departure* captures the excitement and transformation that railways brought to society, reflected in the garments people wore, the toys they played with and the places they visited. We hope visitors leave with an appreciation of how railway innovation has influenced all aspects of life, from the past to the present."

The museum is proud to be a part of the wider programme of celebrations run by the S&DR200, a nine-month international festival taking place across County Durham and Tees Valley in 2025, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the first journey on the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR).

Visitors can plan their trip and find further details about the display at thebowesmuseum.org.uk

Dressed for Departure: Fashion in the Age of Rail opens 10:00, Saturday, 27 September 2025, in the Fashion & Textiles Gallery at The Bowes Museum, County Durham.

-ENDS-

Note to editors:
Pictures of objects featured in *Dressed for Departure: Fashion in the Age of Rail* can be found here.

We will be holding a media preview on Thursday 25th March from 9:30am. Please get in touch to arrange/register your interest in this, or to arrange a bespoke visit.

For film and photography requests and more information, please contact Marketing & Communications Coordinator:

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About The Bowes Museum

The Bowes Museum is a charity managing a Grade 1 listed accredited Museum and Grade 2 listed parkland in Barnard Castle. Founded by Joséphine & John Bowes 150+ years ago, this purpose-built museum brings together an extraordinary, designated collection of European fine and

decorative art as a cultural resource for the people of Northern England, where today we celebrate artists, designers and makers.

The Bowes Museum receives funding from Durham County Council and, as a National Portfolio Organisation, receives support from Arts Council England. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. artscouncil.org.uk

The Bowes Museum is a member of the Discover Durham partnership of attractions, whose commitment is to promote Durham as an exciting and vibrant group travel destination and to provide the travel trade with a professional and knowledgeable service. discoverdurham.co.uk

Admission to The Bowes Museum is £17.70 for local members (residents of County Durham and Darlington), £20.00 for members (residents elsewhere), £19.50 for a day ticket, £21.45 for a day ticket including gift aid. Under 18s, full time students and carers are free.

As a registered charity (number 1079639) The Bowes Museum needs to generate more than half of its income each year to care for the historic collection, buildings and parkland. Your donations are vital to that work. Visit thebowesmuseum.org.uk/support/ for more information.

About S&DR200

For information about S&DR200, including ticketing details for the launch event, visit sdr200.co.uk