

FROM OVER HERE TO OVER THERE – FRANCE

Andrew Jacques

You may recall I was part of the engineering team in York whilst studying at University in Wales! Having moved to France to continue my studies I've started working with a Heritage Rail group restoring a steam locomotive over here.

The group is AAATV and they're restoring a 4-8-2 241P class locomotive, 241-P-9, at the SNCF steam locomotive workshop at Matabiau in Toulouse.

The 241-P was the last series of steam engine built for the SNCF by the Schneider factories in Le Creusot, between 1946 and 1952, on the basis of the PLM 241-C-1 of 1930. The latter was the first French locomotive to be fitted with four driving axles with 2 metre driving wheels. Very powerful, though it was less so, comparatively, than the Pacific Chapelon.

The 241-P repeats the characteristics of the 241-C-1, but with improvements developed by the famous engineer André Chapelon, aimed at: increasing the efficiency of the pistons, superheat the steam, increase the longevity of the hearth, motorize the coal supply, optimize lubrication, and make the machine compatible with standardized components.

Their website (<http://241p9.fr>) is well worth a visit even if you don't have French language skills as you can use Google Translate in your Browser, simply cutting and pasting the text for further information.

I hope you enjoy the images included and kindly supplied by the working volunteers.

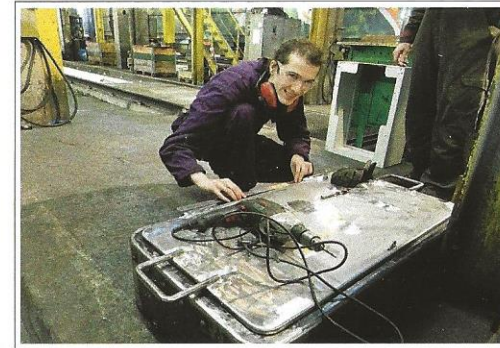


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Based on the 241-C-1 from 1930, the 241-P was not equipped with the latest technical innovations. This is easily explained since their construction began during the Second World War.

These machines were distributed over the Southeast and North regions. The electrification of Paris-Lyon will push them back to Lyon-Marseille, then cause their transfer to Nevers, and finally their distribution in the East as well as in the West where they provided heavy trains to Brittany. The last machine in operation was reformed in the West region in September 1969. Thus the 241-P Class will have been the last steam engines built in France.



They remain the most impressive series of machines built in our country, and among the most powerful alongside the 240-P (which did not survive).

They are also the last that have aroused the admiration of the public for large steam engines, both among amateurs and children, as well as the railway workers themselves who admired with pride those they called, in their jargon, the "2P".



Août 1957, la 241 P 9 est en tête du Mistral vers Marseille, au départ de Lyon-Perrache. (PHOTO: JACQUES HARDEL/COLLECTION: JEAN-PAUL MATHIAUD)