

TRANSPORTS of DELIGHT!

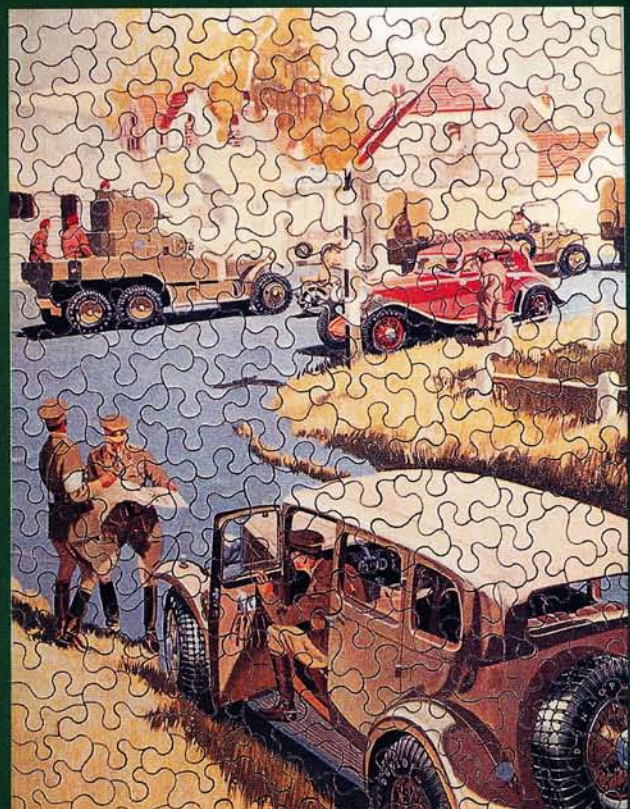
Dick Henrywood looks at transport-related publicity jigsaws of the 1930s

Marketing is not a modern phenomenon. When Josiah Wedgwood decided in 1772 that all his pottery should be marked, it must have been one of the earliest marketing decisions. The great exhibitions held around the world during the 19th century were major marketing events. In more recent times we have seen great marketing campaigns from firms like Guinness and Pirelli but these owe more to sales than marketing. Between the wars marketing was much lower key, although several well-known firms appreciated its potential, one of the most enthusiastic being the Great Western Railway.

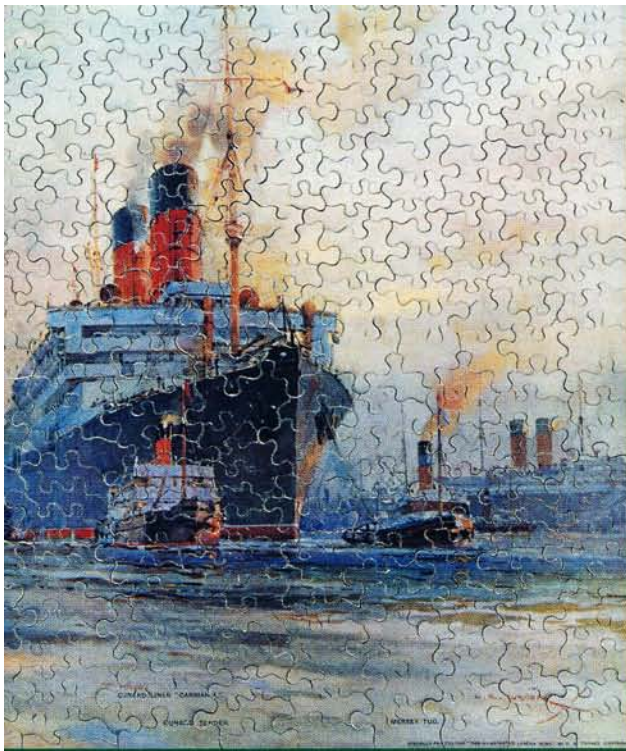
The GWR issued many promotional products ranging from the usual posters, handbills and leaflets to bookmarks, postcards, guide books, and also some games. These included a series of wooden jigsaws, often available on the railway bookstalls. The company clearly recognised the value of what today we would call merchandising.

Their jigsaws were produced by the

Chad Valley toy firm, and packaged in clearly marked GWR boxes. The first appeared in 1924, depicting the locomotive "Caerphilly Castle", and a total of 43 different designs were eventually issued. Even simple scenic views such as "Glorious Devon", "Fingle Bridge" or "The Mountains of Killarney" are worth around £25-30, while those showing locomotives or trains such as "The Cheltenham Flyer", "The Torbay Express", "The Royal Route to the West" or "The Night Mail" tend to be worth £50 or more. One of the most sought after, issued in 1936, shows "GWR Locomotives in the Making" inside the Swindon works, which normally fetches at least £200. The rarest is a small cardboard puzzle called "Lost in Transit", issued only to GWR employees, which should command in excess of £500, and a good copy would be a bargain at that figure. However, prices do tend to fluctuate quite widely, and despite the fact that these GWR puzzles have featured in railwayana auctions for some years, a stable auction market has yet to emerge elsewhere. There are bargains

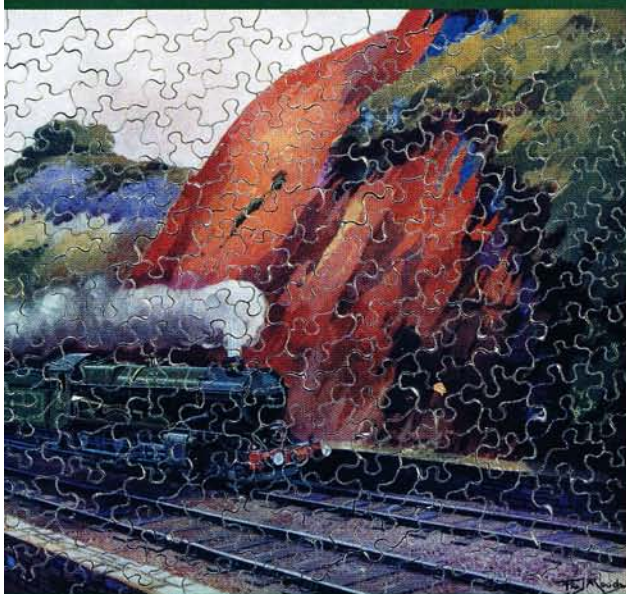
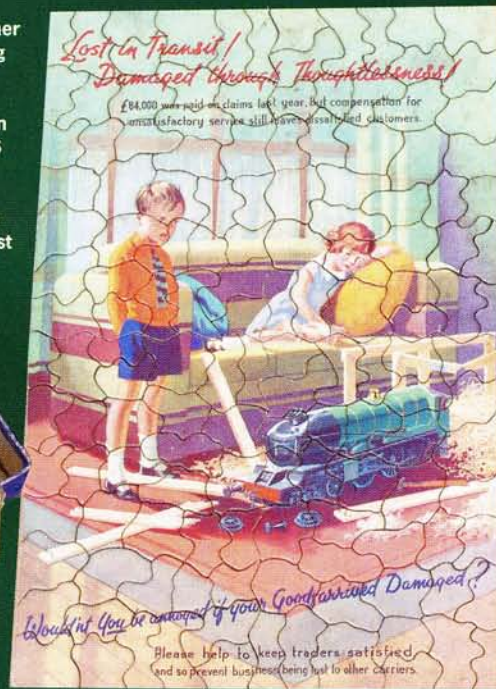


A charming Great Western Railway jigsaw, "The Model Railway"



Left: a fine view of the "Cunard liner Carmania leaving Liverpool landing stage". One of the popular train pictures, this one is "The Torbay Express" and two of the uncommon Dunlop jigsaws, these titled "OHMS Army" and "OHMS Navy"

Right: perhaps the rarest of all the Great Western Railway jigsaws "Lost in Transit" together with its original box



to be found!

The GWR was not the only transport concern to issue promotional jigsaws. The Cunard and British India shipping lines both produced similar series, also made by Chad Valley, depicting a range of their ocean liners. The most common Cunard puzzles show "RMS Queen Mary" but they issued at least 36 different subjects, mostly wooden although some were also made in cardboard. The most interesting are an imaginary view of the Queen Mary positioned in Trafalgar Square, to demonstrate its huge size, and two sectioned side views of their ships Aquitania and Queen Mary. Although not strictly a jigsaw puzzle, Chad Valley also produced a three-dimensional model of the Queen Mary, assembled with 12 decks and separate masts. Most of the Cunard puzzles would be valued at £50 or more.

The British India puzzles also depict their ships, the first apparently produced in 1928. They are relatively uncommon and only four appear to have been recorded to date, although others may yet turn up. The untitled example shown here shows the ship Talamba. Prices are erratic, but again £50 or more would seem reasonable.

Another transport-related firm to commission jigsaws from Chad Valley was Dunlop. They issued a series of twelve jigsaws, mostly showing cars with very prominent Dunlop tyres. They appeared in a Chad Valley catalogue of 1935, although it is possible that the earliest appeared back in 1928. The examples shown here are "OHMS Army" and "OHMS Navy", and being very difficult to find could well fetch in excess of £100 each.

To be collectable these wooden jigsaws must be complete and in good condition. Remember that they were individually cut and that every piece is unique. There is no point in hunting for another incomplete copy of the same puzzle hoping to salvage any required piece. It will not fit! Some attempts were made to cut the puzzles in stacks, but these were not successful and some strangely mixed puzzles are occasionally found as a result. It is also worth noting that, being individually cut, the number of pieces will vary slightly. The box might state 200 pieces, but counting only 196 might not mean an incomplete puzzle, and conversely, counting to 200 might not mean it is complete! The only true check is to assemble it. The presence of a box is important, although its condition is not as crucial to collectors in other fields. For diecast toys such as Dinky or Corgi, for example, the box really needs to be excellent.

These transport related jigsaws are both fascinating and desirable. The wider range of jigsaws available to the collector is vast, and interested readers might care to refer to Tom Tyler's excellent reference book *British Jigsaw Puzzles of the 20th Century*. Jigsaws are attractive, interesting, collectable and fun to assemble, and being individually cut, every example is a fresh challenge. And you can still watch TV while you are doing them!

Dick Henrywood is a specialist consultant in collectors' items and blue and white printed pottery. We are grateful to the auctioneers Dreweatt Neate for the images reproduced here, all of which have been sold in their collectors' sales at either Donnington Priory (near Newbury) or Bristol.

