

TIMES CITY

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Here, past comes chugging to you

Arun Janardhanan | TNN

Chennai: It's a 10-year-old house full of 100-year-old things. The regional railway museum at the Integral Coach Factory in Chennai may not have been maintained in the best way, but the 10th birthday has brought along some well-deserved attention to the place that resembles a colonial railway shop.

It showcases the rail history of south India. Among the collections are a steaming beauty made in 1909 and a kit wagon of 1925. Coaches of pre-Independent Madras suburban trains line a side.

Museum curator V Kalyanasundaram, who was busily making arrangements to receive guests for the museum's 10th anniversary celebrations on Thursday, said the models of engines and coaches built during the British era have found home in the museum. "Steam engines made in 1909 by North British Locomotive Company, England is one of the major treasures we have. She was operational till 1994," he said. A senior railway em-



WORLD'S OLDEST LOCOMOTIVE: (top) This 155-year-old locomotive express, used by East Indian Railway till 1909, was restored at Loco Works Perambur; (right) An old wooden coach used to move British troops restored and put up for display



ployee couldn't help but remark: "You could hear her heartbeat when she ran."

The museum, which is popular among rail enthusiasts, tells several interesting

stories. The first steam engine, built in 1895, is one of the major attractions here.

The locomotives remind of a man's arm set to move back and forth, pulling the train forward. Structures of curated coaches with cramped seating give a glimpse into train journeys of yore. "Some of these coaches would have carried 14 people with seats in the front and back. Luxury coaches had a spacious design with white bed sheets and curtains and attached toilets," says a senior staff of the museum.

Lack of publicity has kept the museum and its vintage pieces unfamiliar to many Chennaites. Among them is an unusual wooden model of a double-decker train that ran between Bombay and Baroda during the British era. Double-decker coaches were first made in 1863. Model of a hospital on wheels with an operation theatre and emergency care facilities, an electric train that was a backbone of Madras's public transport system in the 1930s and early models of the famous 'Ooty trains' all take place of pride on the lawns of the museum campus.

stories. The first steam engine was used for the flower farms, not for transport. A live model of a flower steam plough en-