MALLARD.RAILWAYS.IM

How fast, exactly?

A claimed 125, a later 126, a German steam record, and a faster electric car from 1903.

Typographic only. No photographs inside. Official wording kept unblended.

Story	Official wording
Claimed 125	After 120 mph for five miles, “there was a small window before the crew needed to slow down for the curve at Essendine, so they accelerated even more reaching a peak speed of 125 mph.” The claimed 125 mph “had beaten the world record for steam locomotives established in Germany in May 1935 (a top speed of 124.5 mph).”
Suggested 126	“Subsequent examination of the dynamometer car record suggested a peak speed of 126 mph, but Gresley declined to mention this as the distance was for less than a mile.” “The plaque on the side of Mallard showing the peak speed as 126 mph was fitted to the locomotive after the war.”
Public 126	The same Mallard 75 page opens: on 3 July 1938 Mallard “raced down Stoke Bank at 126mph.” The star-object page: “rocketed to 126mph in 1938, a steam speed record that was never surpassed.”
Steam only	A Science Museum Group copy, saved 16 November 2026, says “the speed record only applies to steam locomotives,” because a German experimental electric railcar “had achieved 130mph in 1903.”

A short quiz

1. What claimed peak came before the Essendine curve?
2. When was the 126 mph plaque fitted?
3. Is Mallard’s record the overall railway record?

Answers. 125 mph. After the war. No: it is a steam record; a 1903 electric railcar had reached 130 mph.

Wording from the National Railway Museum’s Mallard 75 and star-object pages, re-opened 18 November 2026, and from a Science Museum Group copy saved 16 November 2026. mallard.railways.im is independent of those institutions. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.