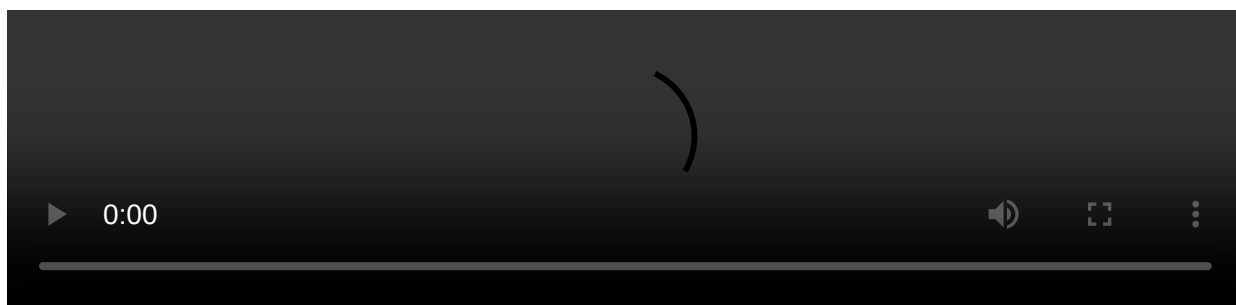


Drax protester trial: Lessons from the Great Train Ambush

The hijack of a coal train by climate protesters and their ensuing trial both played out in a uniquely British manner, writes Martin Wainwright

Martin Wainwright

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It was a lovely sunny morning in perfect English countryside, but somewhere among the fields between the M62 and [Drax](#) in North Yorkshire, something extremely atypical of this tranquil landscape was about to happen.

I wasn't sure exactly what, but on the empty lanes not long after dawn it was easy to guess that the railway line servicing Drax power station might be in the sights of the climate change campaigners' next rumoured protest.

Access isn't easy to the completely rural stretch of track, the sort of winding line which earlier campaigners rhapsodised about when they tried to stop Beeching's 1960s railway cuts. But after several cow-parsley fringed dead ends, I saw a man in a dayglo jacket with a red flag at an isolated level crossing, and in the distance a bridge.

One heavily laden procession of coal hoppers had already trundled past, but Drax devours fossil fuel and there were no doubt more on the way. I parked, got out and checked out the supposed Network Rail employee; and he looked, shall we say, just a bit "alternative".

I didn't need any hints, but scampered off towards the bridge - the [recording I made at the time](#) faithfully reproduces my 58-year-old puffs. Sure enough a second train was creeping up towards the river Aire crossing from the south; and then it stopped.

Just as I reached it, and called up to the driver (these freight trains are massive, and I wouldn't have fancied trying to climb aboard), a [swarm of people appeared on top of the first two coal hoppers](#) and on the girders of