

The Last train Episodes

aka Cruel earth

#	Title	Director	UK Airdate
01	"Episode One"	Stuart Orme	April 7, 1999
<p>On a train heading for Sheffield only Harriet Ambrose knows what is about to happen; an impending collision by an asteroid. A canister of cryogenic material is dislodged from her rucksack and spills its contents into the train carriage, causing all the passengers to be cryogenically frozen. Revived some time later, the passengers emerge from the tunnel in which their train had previously crashed, and begin to explore a very different world. Also their new environment begins to show its true nature; two of the group are lost to rabid dogs, and acid rain forces the other survivors to take shelter. The last shot of this episode is that of a gravestone dated 2012, our first sign that the survivors were frozen for longer than their current estimate of 'weeks'; at least 13 years longer.</p>			
02	"Episode Two"	Stuart Orme	April 8, 1999
<p>The group heads into the city to find a government bunker where Harriet hopes to find Jonathan and essential supplies, but all the supplies are gone, as is Jonathan, leaving behind a cryptic message for Harriet divulging the location of <i>Ark</i>. Roe, realising the futility of their survival, attempts to abort her unborn child in the church rather than have it brought into such a harsh world, but is startled by the appearance of Hild, who disappears before she can speak with her. Several of the passengers see a young pregnant survivor, as well as a less-peaceful male. Also, unbalanced businessman Colin uncovers a grave dated 2013, and informs the group that maybe their freezing wasn't a matter of weeks.</p>			
03	"Episode Three"	Alex Pillai	April 15, 1999
<p>The group heads north seeking the mysterious <i>Ark</i>, but is side-tracked when the group see what they believe to be a signal from other survivors but, alas, it just leads to a long-abandoned farmhouse. Finding a fresh water supply, the group wishes to stay, but a sabotage attempt by Harriet forces them to move on. Whilst chasing a wild boar, the van crashes, and several of the men follow the boar's squeals into an old refinery. Meanwhile, the pregnant survivor from the end of last episode makes contact, speaking almost exclusively in sign language to Anita, and identifies herself as Hild. During the pursuit of the boar, a panther attacks, but is ultimately defeated. Whilst feasting on their first meal in the harsh new world, Jandra and Iain share an intimate moment witnessed by her son. In a misguided display of rage, a shocked Leo watches distraught as his mum falls into darkness.</p>			
04	"Episode Four"	Alex Pillai	April 22, 1999

Jandra is in a critical condition after falling from the refinery, and the group (minus Leo) are forced to take cover by her side when the acid rain begins again. We discover that Hild is able to speak perfect English, and feigns choking in order to persuade a still deeply upset Leo to rescue the others, and succeed in un-sticking the van. The journey is again upset by the greatly-swollen banks of the [river Tees](#), although Hild shows them a deserted holiday camp where they find a boat, guarded by three strangers. The group is fired upon, and Harriet is forced to kill a man, and they successfully commandeer the boat. Upon arrival back at the van, they discover Jandra has died, but their mourning is interrupted by the arrival of more men on horseback, who open fire. The group is forced to flee, although no-one further is injured thanks to the actions of Hild (whom the survivors seem reluctant to fire upon), who now joins the group on their quest to find *Ark*.

05	" Episode Five "	Alex Pillai	April 29, 1999
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The survivors, still fleeing from the armed horsemen, cross the boundaries warning of plague to take refuge in a seemingly deserted, 'though well-maintained, village. However, they soon discover the village is inhabited by two peaceful survivors; a man and his daughter, who survived the apocalypse by hiding down a mine shaft, and who set a definitive date for the meteor impact: 51 years ago! Harriet convinces them that her group is from the south and survived by staying underground, and whilst everyone celebrates with the alcohol and amenities offered by the local pub, she and Hild uncover the true nature of the villagers, as she is knocked unconscious and the van burnt. Meanwhile, Mick and a pregnant Roe make love, observed by Colin, who later becomes disillusioned and attempts to rape her. The group discover the burning van just as the gunmen on horseback return, held at bay by Mick and Colin until everyone is safely in the church. Once everyone has retreated inside, it is discovered to be a shrine to babies, as everyone in the village was left sterile 16 years after the strike. The riders demand the return of Hild, who leaves willingly, but Anita runs out also, and is taken by the riders. Leo continues his sister's diary as the group leave the village, on foot now, with the dual purpose of finding *Ark*, and reuniting with Anita.

06	" Episode Six "	Stuart Orme	May 5, 1999
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Some time has passed since episode five. The group finally arrive at the fabled *Ark*, but Hild's people have been following, and in the ensuing fight Austin is taken, and a jealous Colin seals the door, leaving Mick trapped outside. The other survivors, claiming they need medical supplies for the delivery of Hild's baby (she is now having contractions), crucify Mick and Austin as the group watches horrified, and Roe suspects Colin for Mick's capture, and threatens to kill him. Meanwhile Harriet sets off alone to finally reunite with Jonathan, although the man she meets wasn't the same one she left behind. A distraught Roe hurries to Mick's rescue, spared by Anita's cries of "*Don't shoot, she's got a baby!*", and the survivors justify their harsh justice. Ian comforts a distraught Harriet as the shocking truth about the '*Children of Ark*' is revealed, and all the survivors come together as Hild gives birth to a healthy baby girl.

Inspirations

The Last Train is often likened to several other British television series, most notably [Survivors](#), [The Changes](#) and [Threads](#), although this is largely due to

the fact that they all revolve around post-apocalyptic Britain, rather than any deeper thematic similarities. Also of similar note is *The Death Of Grass* - filmed as *No Blade of Grass* - by British-born writer [John Christopher](#).

Production

The series' working title was *Cruel Earth*, under which it aired in [Canada](#) and [America](#). Although the railway station shown in the programme that is said to be [Sheffield railway station](#) is in fact the derelict [Manchester Mayfield railway station](#) in [Manchester](#). The camp featured in episode 4 is an old [Pontin's](#) holiday camp in Rhyl, North Wales (Tower Beach Holiday Camp), while the village in episode 5 is [Wardle](#), a small pennine village near to [Littleborough](#) in [Rochdale](#), Greater Manchester. The series was written by [Matthew Graham](#), who went on to co-create and write *Life on Mars*, its spin-off *Ashes to Ashes*, and also wrote the episode *Fear Her* for the 2006 series of *Doctor Who*.

SF From England On The Way To Sheffield?

I had the [Scifi UK Channel](#) turned on in the background as I was doing something else, and caught the third and fourth episode of *The Last Train*. I'd noticed the trailer the prior week, but sadly missed the first and second episodes. I'll need to check out an episode guide.

Anyway, what intrigued me as I watched it, is that it's set in Britain, and actually originates in a train going to Sheffield (where some of the first episode is set). I used to live in Sheffield, so this kind of thing is 'close to home' so to speak. It's not science fiction based on some fictional place (either in this time, or a future time; another continent or another planet), but science fiction set somewhere which is accessible and realistic.

It's a bleak story of a band of survivors who have woken up after a third world war (or something - I am not 100% sure, maybe it's chemical leaks or something). But basically, they were on a train to Sheffield when it all went bad. They froze for about forty years or so and woke up, and everyone (or so it seems) have gone. And (at the moment) they are still orientating themselves, and really 'getting used to each other', working each other out.

The episodes I saw were a good example of (if anything) a pictorial view of the British landscape. I understand that in either episode one or two a railway station is shown as Sheffield, but in reality it appears to have been filmed at King's Cross St. Pancras. This is what makes it fun, spotting the places you recognise. So, as the band of survivors travel across the British countryside, they travel through a good brochure for Britain.

The thing that sticks in my mind after seeing the two episodes is that it looks like today, even though it is set at 40 years in the future. This obviously makes filming easier, but it also shows that we ourselves are indeed living in the future. They wear the same 'commuter clothes' that they wore when they left for work that fateful day. Ties, suits. Even though we haven't gone through armageddon or an apocalypse (though some would probably beg to differ), we are living in what conceivably is someone's future.

It reminds me distinctly of another film which was based and filmed in Sheffield called *Threads*. It is basically the story of a build up to Nuclear War, and thus because Sheffield at the time was a big industrial area producing mainly steel, it was one of the main targets of the aggressor. Sheffield was nuked, in which the film makers showed the annihilation in loving detail. Showing areas which I lived in at the time, places I shopped at, places I knew, just simply getting blown away.

(Trivia: one of my friends from Sheffield has said that either I was auditioned for it, or a class in my school was. He thinks it was for the main detonation scene, where there's a crowd of shoppers running down The Moor, and a nuke is exploded. You see the everyday shoppers glued to their spot, looking up. You even see one person pee themselves at the sight of the mushroom cloud (before getting crisped in a white light). Which I guess shows one aspect of reality. But I have no memory of any possible audition, although he swears that it happened - I was only about 10 or 11 at the time. I also remember a scene where someone complains or just mentions the price of a can of beans. I would love to get *Threads* on DVD and just see how much those cans of beans were in that future.. Addendum: *Threads* is apparently out of production, and is £99.99 used!)..

It was an eye opening and a particular heart wrencher to see places you knew to be real, blown away on the television; for entertainment.

This, to some extent was how I felt when I was watching *The Last Train*. I will definitely be tuning in to follow their story. I found it gripping, and worth a watch, but hey, maybe I'm a bit biased