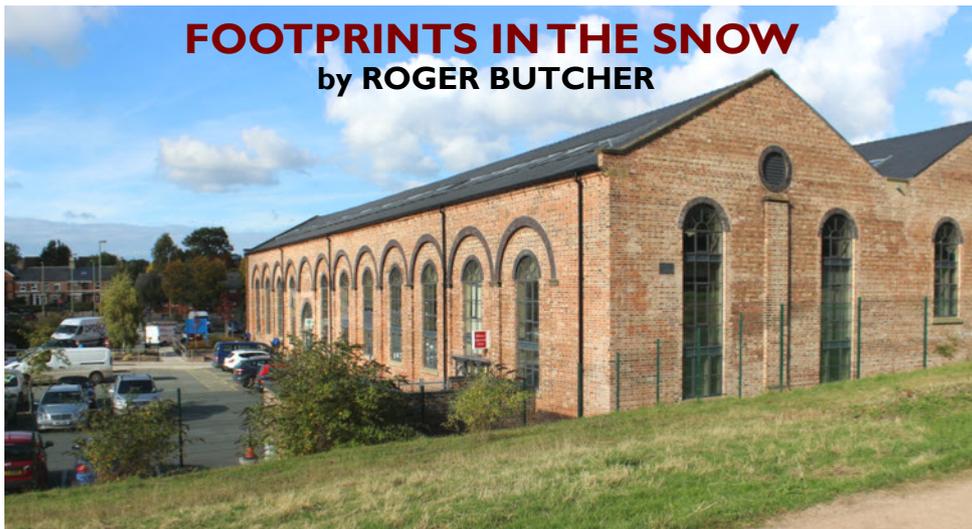


FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

by ROGER BUTCHER



Whilst **Oswestry Works** still stands, the yard described in the text (on Page 82) is now a car park and the wall has gone!
Neil Phillips

In the latest of a series of articles featuring the shed-bashing trips of ESS members Roger Butcher and Terry Hayward, Roger reflects on the trips they made in the first quarter of 1965. The significance (to Roger and Terry) of a ditch on the B5129 at Sandycroft is highlighted, as well as the need for a ladder to exit Oswestry Works!

Nostalgia is described in the Oxford Dictionary of English as a sentimental longing or wishful affection for a period in the past. For everyone of you reading this article there will be events or years that evoke that feeling. For myself my attendance at the World Cup Final in 1966, my marriage in 1970, the birth of my son in 1972, being interviewed on the BBC national news whilst returning from Rotterdam - where Spurs fans had rioted - in 1974, being appointed Senior Accountant at Winchester City Council in 1988, being at Eubank v Benn in 1990, retiring in 1997 to set up my publishing business, the birth of my grandson in 2005, following Spurs all over Europe from 2006 to 2011 (often travelling with the team in their private jet) are special moments / times in my life. But but, if I had the opportunity to revisit a particular year of my life it would be 1965!

1965

At the beginning of 1965 there were still more steam locomotives in stock than diesel and electric locomotives although steam on the Western Region would be all but eliminated by the end of the year. However, it was apparent that such was the momentum of change that was taking place the overall picture would be very different by the end of 1965. And by the end of the year, for the first time, steam would lose the balance of power.

The goal for 1965 was to see as many as possible of the steam locomotive fleet that survived and, at the same time, embrace the new fleet of diesel and electric traction. The strategy of our intensive West Country and South (and West) Wales trips in 1964 would be the template for a series of trips that would take us wherever there was a shed on British Railways. Permits, or a bed for the night, were not on our agenda, and around 10% of the nights of 1965 were spent sleeping, or travelling, in a car! Quite what our total mileage was in 1965 I do not know as Terry used to disconnect the speedometer on our hired cars, but it was many thousands. Much less mileage would have been required if we had lived in the Midlands!

218 CONWAY ROAD

Perhaps inevitably 1965 began with the first weekend being spent at my maternal grandmother's house in Newport. Quite how many locomotives I first saw from the back garden / back bedroom window of 218 Conway Road I do not know - but it was a lot! That memorable period (for me) of our wonderful hobby was drawing to a close but I was determined to make the most of the final period of steam in South Wales. My grandmother, therefore, saw a lot of her favourite grandchild in 1965! Well, I was her only grandchild!

All my shed / scrapyard visits were by train, except for the bus ride out to Bird, Risca. Haulage over the two days included D867, D1014, D7036, D7093 and, from Salisbury to Cosham on Sunday, January 3rd, 34005 *Barnstaple*. The significance of that locomotive for me is a story for another day!

TRANSPORT

Whilst Terry had agreed that the focus for the first three months in 1965 would be on chasing down my last 30 Western Region steam locomotives, the first problem that needed addressing was the reliability of Terry's car, a Ford 100E. In simple terms the engine was worn out and it was highly unlikely that it could manage even a small proportion of the ambitious plans we had devised for 1965. In fact, it could not even manage our first day out on January 17th, a continuous oil warning light soon after Terry left home precluding his car being used. The only other car available for use was Dave Farmer's c1948 Morris 8 saloon. With no power steering, a wooden floor with holes for the chain-operated clutch linkage, and rod-operated linkage for the brakes, it was not exactly ideal for one of our 19-20 hour days out!

However, needs must although Terry recalls the look on my face when I was picked up at Horndean. Apparently I told my mother to expect me back earlier than usual! Oh Roger, ye of little faith! As it transpired the full day out to Eastleigh Works and Shed, Salisbury, Westbury, Swindon Works and Shed, the Bristol and Bath sheds with sub-shed Radstock (Jinties 47276 and 47544 were present) being the final shed for the day.

Not that all went smoothly, a radiator leak meaning that the water needed constant replenishment. Even muddy water from the roadside was utilised, the mud helping to seal the leak! In addition, late at night the windscreen was freezing over (no heater obviously) whilst Terry could scarcely feel his legs or feet because of the cold coming in through the holes in the floor. Self-apparently this car could not be used again, but the sighting of 3669 on Westbury Shed meant that (for me) the priority of the day had been achieved. 29 to go!

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The first weekend trip of 1965 was a return trip to South Wales, although this time we had beds for the night, courtesy of my grandmother. Another first was a hire car from Swan International. The main purpose of the trip was to visit the sheds we had to omit on our epic trip in November (see Link 110) and to revisit all the scrapyards in the hope of catching up - before it was too late - with steam locomotives we had not previously seen. On this particular trip my specific hope was to see 4120, its withdrawal from Leamington having been reported in the February issue of *The Railway Magazine*. Fortunately, 4120 was duly seen at Bird, Morriston, being one of over one hundred locomotives (excluding Barry) either seen at scrapyards or awaiting the very final stage of their transit to a scrapyard.

On this visit there was no need to revisit West Wales, so the sub-sheds at Pantyffynnon, Upper Bank and Gurnos were visited as were the closed shed at Cardiff Cathays and the depots we missed previously when time ran out - Newport (Pill), Aberbeeg and Pontypool Road. Whilst Upper Bank and Gurnos were empty, it was pleasing to see D3760, D6906, D6911, D6912 and D6951 at Pantyffynnon. I was particularly pleased to see - at long last - D4180 on Newport (Pill) Shed, the one Newport-based diesel shunter that had always eluded me despite the majority of the 'local' fleet shunting at some point at East Usk Yard and stabling, between duties, next to the signal box directly opposite my grandmother's house!

Another first is that we started to visit goods yards if it was apparent there were a significant number of locomotives to be seen inside, Severn Tunnel Junction and Rogerstone being the first two we ventured into. It was though a practice that would cause us a number of problems in the following two years! As for the numbers of locomotives seen compared to our November trip 15 weekends earlier the totals seen on sheds were generally similar, although steam had completely disappeared from Abercynon, Dowlais (Cae Harris) and Llantrisant, whilst the only steam locomotive at Aberbeeg was stationary boiler 8417. The other significant difference from our November trip was that Neath (Court Sart) only contained 19 locomotives whilst this time Cardiff (Canton) was successfully visited, 70 diesel locomotives being present.

Despite my regular visits to South Wales, and the fact I did not need any South Wales-based steam locomotives, I still copped 51 locomotives, such were the numbers of new diesel locomotives still being allocated to the area and the increasing number of London Midland Region steam locomotives working through to South Wales at this time. As for Terry, he copped 52 steam locomotives (including 37 of GWR origin) and 143 diesel locomotives, so a worthwhile trip despite the comprehensive coverage achieved in our November trip.

HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT

Having successfully completed my six months' probation at Havant & Waterlooville Urban District Council, I was now for the first time entitled to some annual leave - but it had to be taken before the end of the Council's financial year on March 31st. So, no prizes for guessing that I was straight back to South Wales (for a whole week) less than a fortnight after my trip there with Terry and Ian. Quite simply I knew that, come April, I was heading for (mainly) pastures new to me and I wanted to see as much as possible of the final stages of the transition from steam to diesel in South Wales.

In particular, I wanted to spend a whole day watching and recording every movement past my grandmother's house in Newport. She very kindly indulged me by bringing my meals (and refreshments) to my vantage point in the back bedroom. Even the frosted bathroom window was left open,

when appropriate, so absolutely nothing was missed between 6.45 am and 6.30 pm. Absolutely nothing!

My notebook for Tuesday, March 9th shows no less than 193 passenger and freight movements in that (almost) 12-hour period whilst, in addition, D4012, D4125 and D4181 busied themselves either shunting East Usk Yard or undertaking local workings on the Uskmouth Branch. If time ever permits, I would like to obtain the relevant passenger and freight working timetables to match them against my notes which consist of locomotive number (or type of dmu), time of sighting, whether eastbound or westbound and whether light engine, passenger or freight. Of the 107 different locomotives noted, 21 were steam, the most memorable being 7022 *Hereford Castle* crawling past very slowly at 9.13 am on an eastbound freight. It was a sight I knew I would probably never see again and I could not help but reflect on how many different Castle Class locomotives I had seen from the back window (or back garden) of 218 Conway Road since I fell in love with our hobby in August 1957.

THE LAST 28

With the weekend of March 20th and 21st earmarked for a major effort to chase down the remaining 28 Western Region locomotives on my wants list, the other priority in the first quarter of 1965 had been to see the remaining Southern Region-based Ivatt and Standard class locomotives Terry and I needed. For myself, 80138 was seen in Eastleigh Works Yard on January 17th with 41295 and 41316 seen on Bournemouth Shed on February 28th. For Terry, 76031 was seen on Eastleigh Shed on January 10th with 41295 and 41314 on Bournemouth Shed on February 28th.

It was difficult to concentrate at work on Friday, March 19th as I wondered how many of the 28 Western Region steam locomotives on my wants list would be seen over the coming weekend. Although the itinerary I had devised included every shed where there was a Western Region locomotive on my wants list, the most accessible sheds for a follow-up trip were left to last. Just as well as it turned out!

HEREFORD STATION CAR PARK

Our night's sleep in our hire car was in Hereford Station car park. Breakfast was taken in the station buffet - tomato soup for me and mushroom soup for Terry! Much of the day was spent visiting 13 of the sub-sheds listed in my *Ian Allan Winter 1958 Combined Volume* under Shrewsbury, Croes Newydd, Oswestry and Machynlleth. My normal practice was to always walk to the back of the shed (even if it was empty - as most of the above were) so that I could underline the shed in my precious shed directory. The reality of this period is that almost all the closed sheds we visited were still standing so it came as a surprise to see that Clew Hill had been demolished.

Although I was particularly pleased to visit Machynlleth Shed for the first time, I was disappointed that none of the four Shrewsbury-allocated Manors I needed were stabled there for the weekend. More of a concern though was the absence of Vale of Rheidol No.9 from Aberystwyth. I had not anticipated that and whilst we were told it was away at Oswestry Works for attention, it was also pointed out (politely) to us that the Works would be inaccessible on a Sunday. Not exactly what I wanted to hear!

OASIS OF STEAM

And now a question for ESS members to consider. As the accompanying tables show there was not a single diesel locomotive on our visit to the sheds at Holyhead, Bangor and Llandudno Junction. Local shunting was still done by Jinties and not even one diesel shunter had invaded this oasis of steam. Quite remarkable considering the complete demise of steam was less than three and a half years away. So the question is - were there any other similar areas that completely escaped the introduction of the diesel shunter fleet in the 1950s and early 1960s?

Much as we appreciated visiting the above three sheds, my hopes of seeing all the Western Region locomotives I needed were about to receive a setback. I will leave Terry to relate what happened next!

IF YOU DON'T GO AWAY, YOU'LL END UP HEAD FIRST IN YOUR OWN DITCH

"Saturday March 20th was a miserable day with rain for most of the day. Due to rain ingress it was necessary to close both the car windows completely in order to attempt a dry night's sleep outside Llandudno Junction Shed.

We woke on the Sunday morning to find the car and our surroundings covered in snow after a heavy overnight snowfall. After successfully completing our visit to Llandudno Junction Shed in bitterly cold conditions we set off for Rhyl and Chester. The snow was some nine inches deep in the vicinity of Sandycroft and at that early hour on a Sunday morning it was evident that only one vehicle - probably a lorry from the width of track - had negotiated the B5129. As we proceeded I noticed a slight deviation in the snow away from and back on to the main track. The snow was so deep that I decided to follow in his tracks. All of a sudden our Austin 1100 spun 180 degrees and landed in a ditch on the opposite side of the road at an angle of 45 degrees and was slowly filling with water. A quick check showed that thankfully none of us was injured apart from a few bruises.

There were no other vehicles on the road until an Esso tanker lorry stopped and attempted to pull our car out of the ditch with a chain but, with his back wheels spinning, the driver gave up for fear of himself sliding into the ditch on top of us!

Eventually a recovery vehicle from Chester arrived and having sized up the situation the driver said he would have a go at pulling our car out of the ditch but advised that it could result in our car sliding

sideways and being dragged along the ditch rather than climbing the bank out of it, and we may need a crane to lift it clear vertically. We decided on a pull (as the quickest remedy) and having re-entered the vehicle lying at 45 degrees with a lot of water in the nearside I was advised to apply just a little lock on the steering so as to gently climb the bank.

It worked like magic and having turned the car in the right direction, and passing Mold Junction Shed on the way, it was towed to a garage in Chester. Upon arrival we were all invited to warm ourselves and dry any wet clothing around a stove while the mechanic checked over the underside of the car. I did explain that during the tow I could hear a rubbing noise and this was caused by the damaged nearside front wing coming into contact with that tyre. With nothing more technical than a garden spade, the mechanic levered the wing away from the tyre and spun the wheel to prove it was free.

The mechanic, upon hearing we were from Portsmouth, advised us to head home immediately due to limited daylight and the fact that our nearside front headlamp was smashed. As if!"

OSWESTRY WORKS

What Terry failed to mention in his recollections of our incident at Sandycroft was that - whilst we were waiting for a recovery vehicle to arrive from Chester - a local farmer arrived on his tractor. His sole concern was who was going to pay for the damage to 'his' ditch. The heading of the paragraphs written above by Terry are what Terry said to him, although perhaps it was slightly ruder! The farmer duly went on his way and we never saw him again!

Returning to our trip, having completely ignored the wise advice of the mechanic from the garage, we did the four Chester area sheds. The decision was taken to leave the sheds at Tyseley, Oxley and Worcester to a follow-up trip and concentrate on the 14 Western Region locomotives I needed in North Wales, including 9 at Oswestry Works!

1660, 1663, 1668, 3789, 9630, 9639 and 9669 were duly seen at Croes Newydd, 1663 and 1668 having been withdrawn the previous January. Seeing 9 was not going to prove so straightforward! We arrived at Oswestry Works and, just as we had been warned, it was securely locked up with no one around to speak to. We then walked around the perimeter of the Works to see if there was any way we could gain access. At the back we found a bank that dropped down to a wall overlooking a small yard adjacent to the west side of the workshops. Although the back wall was itself quite low, the drop into the yard below was around 12-15 feet.

So, a jump down was manageable but how did one get back up? I noticed a long ladder lying flat on the floor of the yard and decided that it was almost certainly long enough to provide our exit strategy. As the person obsessed with seeing as many Western Region locomotives as possible it obviously fell to me to make the jump down! I did, and the snow we had cursed earlier in the day was now an advantage in softening my landing. I put the ladder up against the wall and Terry and Ian joined me in the yard. We entered the main workshops and the sight of 9, along with 48011, 75038 and 80105 is a moment I will never forget! I duly took a (very poor) photograph of 9 and we then left the way we had come in. Once safely back outside, I pushed the ladder away from the wall and down into the snow. Quite what the staff would have made of it all the next morning when they saw the footprints in the snow I can only imagine!

822 and 823 were duly seen at Llanfair and now I had my fingers crossed that the four Manors I needed would all be on their home shed on this snowy Sunday (late) afternoon. As we all know it is never that simple and whilst 7819, 7822 and 7827 were all seen on Shrewsbury Shed, there was no sign of 7801. I asked the foreman as to its whereabouts and he very kindly told me it was at Leaton. Seeing my puzzled look he smiled and explained it was on p.way work and would be very near to the level crossing at Leaton and that, thankfully, Leaton was less than five miles north of Shrewsbury. The feeling as we first saw steam in the distance, and then the locomotive itself stationary and only about 100 yards away from the level crossing, is one of the most cherished memories the hobby has ever given me, particularly after the eventful day we had experienced. No one had any issues with us walking up the track to take a photograph of 7801 *Anthony Manor* and another personal landmark had been reached.

AND FINALLY

I have commented in previous articles on Terry's extraordinary ability to drive for long periods and now, as daylight began to fade, he was faced with (probably) a six-hour drive back to Portsmouth and driving a car that only had one functioning headlight! That did not faze him at all and it was no surprise to me that, following a very successful career as a Merchant Navy engineer, Terry later became a professional chauffeur.

And finally, when Terry and I were reminiscing about this particular trip, Terry reminded me that - possibly because of the weight of our bodies - contact between the nearside front wing and tyre reoccurred at some point on our return journey. As a result, upon arrival back in Portsmouth the tyre was so badly damaged it is a wonder it had remained inflated. Perhaps now was the time to switch our allegiance to a different hire car company!

LOCOMOTIVES NOTED

My thanks to Terry for providing the details of our weekend trip in March 1965. Whilst we both booked everything we saw, Terry differentiates between shed / shed yards / workshops, etc, whilst my records

do not. All our observations will, though, appear in due course on the WRHTS website (www.wrhts.co.uk).

Also visited were the closed sheds and sub-sheds at **Bala, Builtb Road, Builtb Wells, Clee Hill, Chester Northgate, Gloucester Barnwood, Knighton, Ledbury, Leominster, Llanidloes, Moat Lane, Oswestry, Penmaenpool, Portmadoc, Rhyl, Trawsfynydd** and **Wrexham (Rhosddu)**. With the exception of Clee Hill, all the shed buildings, or structures in the case of Ledbury, were still standing.

FRIDAY, MARCH 19th, 1965

TRAMWAY CROSSING GLOUCESTER: D112 D1744 92227

GLOUCESTER HORTON ROAD SHED YARD: D1647 D2138 D7004 2287 3616 3675 **5063** 6872 8436 44123 44560 45263 48149 78006 90369

GLOUCESTER HORTON ROAD SHED: D3992 D7002 **1420** 2242 3643 3677 4100 **4929*** 6113 6816 7022 7034 7808 8745 44422 44981 73031 78001 78004 92007 (*Withdrawn on this day)

GLOUCESTER HORTON ROAD SHOPS: 3775

LEDBURY STATION: D7071

HEREFORD SHED: D1751 D2139

SATURDAY, MARCH 20th, 1965

HEREFORD AVOIDING LINE: D1738 73013 73030

HEREFORD STATION: D2238 D7071 80102

HEREFORD BARRS COURT UP SIDINGS: D2143

HEREFORD SHED YARD: D2240

KINGTON JUNCTION: D1589

LUDLOW: D1732

CRAVEN ARMS: D1751 D6819

CRAVEN ARMS SHED YARD: 3717

CRAVEN ARMS SHED: 48760

ABERYSTWYTH SHED YARD: 75053

ABERYSTWYTH VoR SHED: 7 8

MACHYNLLETH SHED YARD: 2236 80098 80101 82000
82006 82020 82021

MACHYNLLETH SHED: 46521 75002 82005 82009

TOWYN PENDRE (TALYLLYN RAILWAY) SHED: **3* 4***

(*Former Corris Railway locomotives)

MORFA MAWDDACH STATION: 80104

BUTLIN, PWLLHELI: **46203**

PWLLHELI STATION: 80098

PWLLHELI SHED YARD: 80099

PWLLHELI SHED: 75004 80097

HOLYHEAD STATION: 47321

HOLYHEAD SHED YARD: 45130 47266

HOLYHEAD SHED: 44711 45132 45353 45395 47410 47439 70042 70045 70047 70053 78032

BANGOR SHED YARD: 41200 41233 41234 44821 45223 47361 48255 78058 80131 82032

BANGOR SHED: 42074 42251 42267 42283 42606 44913 45145 45247 45654 78003 **80050** 80132 82031 82033

SUNDAY, MARCH 21st, 1965

LLANDUDNO JUNCTION SHED YARD: 3208 6604 41201 41202 41220 41232 41272 44860 45045 45091 45143 45348 **45567 45595 45689** 47598 73127 84009

LLANDUDNO JUNCTION SHED: 45000 45004 45277 45285 47507 73025 78059 80079 84003

CHESTER (MIDLAND) STATION: D1715 47389

CHESTER (MIDLAND) SHED YARD: 42252 45198 **47669** 47674 73130 73144

CHESTER (MIDLAND) SHED: D2220 D2375 42202 42212 42213 42247 42597 42936 44971 45031 45231 45237 45344 45403 47350 47371 47659 48269 48771 73053 75010

CHESTER (WEST) SHED YARD: D3176 D3764 D7589 12036 12057

CHESTER (WEST) SHED: D3832 D3833 12020 12048

MOLD JUNCTION SHED YARD: D4105 6906 42765 45116 45275 48175 48253

MOLD JUNCTION SHED: 12054 43039 44842 44917 45094 47673 48173 48191 48259 48458 48667 48749 73125 75021

CROES NEWYDD SERVICE: D1592

CROES NEWYDD SHED YARD: 1628 1660 **1668** 2268 3749 3813 4645 6651 9639 46503 80080

CROES NEWYDD SHED: 1632 1638 **1663** 3789 3865* 4683 5667 5676 6611 6625 6626 6665 9610 9630 9669 41204 41241 48665 75009 75029 75071 80078 80096 84000 84004 (*Withdrawn 1W 27/3/65)

OSWESTRY WORKS: 9 48011 75038 80105

LLANFAIR (W&LLR) SHED: **822 823**

SHREWSBURY SERVICE: D1696

SHREWSBURY STATION: D6903

SHREWSBURY SHED YARD: 3709 6932 7822 9657 41207 41304 45427 45429 45447 46446 46510 46511 48354 48373 73097 75014

SHREWSBURY SHED: 3754 7803 7819 7827 7828 41209 46519 **46524 46525** 48418 48436 73035 73036 73070 73167 75053 **80048** 80100 80135 90139

SHREWSBURY DIESEL SHED: D1668 D3193 D3194 D3970 D6873 D6906

LEATON: 7801

NB. "Service" is Terry's indication of a locomotive(s) booked passing the named location. Locomotives marked in **RED** were withdrawn (see also * notes).



0-6-0PT No.9669 ON CROES NEWYDD MPD



Ex-GWR 5700 Class 0-6-0PT No.**9669** on **Croes Newydd MPD** on March 21st, 1965. "One more off the list!"
Roger Butcher