



WHEN FRATTON SHED REALLY CLOSED

The ESS continues to act as one of the main channels of communication in the attempt of the HSBT team to bring an end to the constant recycling of erroneous and fabricated information on the allocation, storage and disposal of steam locomotives. In this article **Roger Butcher** discusses one of the most repeated myths in the history of steam locomotive sheds. The opportunity is then taken to update ESS members on the ongoing work of the HSBT team.

Quite why our local steam locomotive shed was not listed in the Spring 1960 *Ian Allan Locoshed Book* was a complete mystery to enthusiasts in the Portsmouth area. Why on earth were other sheds in Hampshire such as Winchester City (room for one locomotive) and Southampton Terminus (not even a shed building) listed, but not our local shed. It simply defied logic as Fratton Shed had a foreman, drivers, firemen, coaling facilities, its own coaling crane DS200 and even a hoist/crane for minor repairs.

HIVE OF ACTIVITY

As anyone who visited Fratton Shed between November 1959 and July 1967 – when it really closed – will tell you, this so-called 'closed' shed was a hive of activity, particularly before the closure of the Hayling Island Branch in November 1963. Up to that date the shed serviced, and stabled overnight, the AIX locomotives operating the branch. In addition to the five AIXs normally kept at Fratton for that work, Fratton Shed serviced the steam locomotives working to and from the area.

Whilst how many locomotives you would see on shed obviously varied as to which day, and time of day, you visited, the two visits I made in 1963 (see lists on Page 14) showed 23 locomotives on each occasion! Whilst these figures are inflated by the presence in the roundhouse of seven (and eight on my second visit) steam locomotives earmarked for potential preservation, it was still a complete mystery to me why the shed was not included in the shed listings in the various 1963 Ian Allan books. Winchester and Southampton Terminus still were!

WHY?

Whilst the omission of Fratton Shed from the Ian Allan shed listings is, quite simply, an error, it has been explained away by many authors as 'the shed officially closed in November 1959' as if the staff and facilities at Fratton were somehow subsequently being funded by some unofficial source not known to the Southern Region headquarters!

As to how the error came about, the magazines and society publications of the day that reported the change of status of Fratton Shed in November 1959 did it in different ways, no doubt misleading whoever was responsible for preparing the Ian Allan shed listings to decide to delete Fratton.

The reality was that with the commencement of the winter service on November 2nd, 1959, Fratton Shed reverted back from the Nine Elms district (where it was coded 70F) to the Eastleigh district where until July 1954 it was coded 71D. However, it did not revert to its former shed code but instead became a sub-shed of Eastleigh, hence the AIXs based at Fratton being shown as allocated to Eastleigh. So, the sub-sheds listed under Eastleigh in my Spring 1960 *Ian Allan Locoshed Book* should have been Andover Junction, **Fratton**, Lympington, Southampton Terminus and Winchester!

ARE THERE ANY OTHER SIMILAR EXAMPLES?

Writing this article has made me wonder whether there are any other examples of the Ian Allan shed listings containing errors and omissions. The only other one I am aware of was first drawn to my attention in Link 105 when Roy Hennefer's letter pointed out that page 283 of the October 1962 issue of *Modern Railways* said "At the beginning of July, Ferndale Shed was made a sub-depot of Radyr, which has taken over nine (sic) 56XX Class 0-6-0Ts in consequence". As Roy commented "It is interesting to note that this change of responsibility was missed by the compiler of the Ian Allan Locoshed Books who continued to show Ferndale as a sub-shed of Treherbert as, seemingly, did every other follower of shed codes."

Following Roy's letter I looked up my notebook to see the allocation of the two steam locomotives I noted at Ferndale on my visit to the shed on April 6th, 1964. The locomotives present were 6614 and 6672 and both were, of course, allocated to Radyr at that time! So, are Fratton and Ferndale the only two omissions / errors in the shed listings or are there others?

DIESEL LOCOMOTIVE DISPOSAL FABRICATIONS

My revelations in Link 111 that Zulu also fabricated diesel locomotive disposals came as a big shock to many railway publishers and enthusiasts.

It did not though come as a surprise to ESS members Peter Hall and John Hall who – quite separately from the evidence I possessed in the Zulu files – had become convinced that a significant number of diesel locomotive disposals simply were not correct. The obvious question is how many and, whilst not on the astonishing scale of steam locomotives, an early estimate would be up to 50. My initial analysis, following discussions with Peter and John, is that Zulu drip-fed his fabricated 'information' into a variety of publishers, eventually facilitating the complete listing every publisher craves. And the sad but



BR Class 4 2-6-0 No.76009 awaiting coaling by Steam Crane DS200 at Fratton MPD in the mid-1960s.

Michael G Harvey collection

seemingly inevitable copycat recycling of subsequent authors, websites, etc meant that fabrications/lies became fact.

PRIMARY SOURCES

So, it has to be Back to Basics – in other words official documentation and reliable personal observations. When I reflect on the many hundreds of hours I spent doing just that for my various departmental books I find it quite incredible how the locomotive disposal books relating to the 1960s and 1970s are seemingly bereft of any primary sources and are, therefore, wide open to the exploitation of a fantasist like Zulu.

As to how this issue is going to be handled, I am delighted to say that the matter is now going to be taken forward by ESS members Peter Hall, John Hall and Ashley Butlin. Peter – whose contact details are peter@hall59.freeserve.co.uk – will take the lead on writing articles in Link and elsewhere, appeals for information, etc, whilst John Hall will focus on identifying what disposals are clearly fabricated, which are suspect, etc. In due course all the corrected information that becomes available will be published in Ashley Butlin's next book on diesel and electric locomotive disposals.

CAN YOU HELP?

For my own part I will now solely focus on the 'What Really Happened To Steam' project and step aside from any direct involvement. All the relevant diesel locomotive disposal 'information' in the Zulu files has been extracted, scanned and passed to Peter. Also, whilst Terry Hayward and I visited for withdrawn steam locomotives just short of 30 different private contractors' scrapyards – some of them many times – by the time the massive diesel shunter cull was under way in 1967/68, Terry and I had seen every diesel shunter that was in stock when I first met him in July 1964 on Eastleigh Shed.

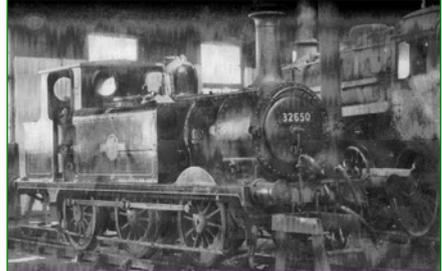
So there was never a need for Terry and I to keenly chase diesel shunters to scrapyards and, therefore, I do not have any significant personal primary source information/observations to offer, although (for me) D2441 – which I found out later was literally only days away from departing for scrap to Slag Reduction Company at Steel, Peech & Tozer, Ickles, Rotherham – was a 'just in time' observation' being seen in St Rollox Works Yard on August 4th, 1967 (access through a gap in the fence between the works yard and an adjoining 'private' premises containing local authority dustcarts). However, there must be enthusiasts out there who did chase down diesel shunters and whose notes/observations could now prove invaluable. So, if you can help please do contact Peter – you may just have that elusive missing item of information. Whilst more specific requests will follow from Peter Hall in due course, it is observations of diesel shunting locomotives either in, *en route*, or awaiting entry to scrapyards in the late 1960s and early 1970s that are very much wanted.

FRATTON MPD IN THE 1960s

These four photographs, from the Michael G Harvey collection, illustrate some of the locomotives and activities at the depot after it became a sub-shed to Eastleigh.



BR Class 4 2-6-0 No. **76011** leaving the roundhouse in April 1963.



Ex-LB&SCR Class A1X 0-6-0T No. **32650**, with 71A shedplate, inside the roundhouse in the early 1960s.



Ex-SR MN Class 4-6-2 No. **35007** Aberdeen Commonwealth on a running-in turn from Eastleigh Works awaiting coaling by steam crane **DS200** in the summer of 1964.



The Foreman's office with the coaling crane operator "Jumbo" Collis in the mid 1960s.

THE RCTS MEMBERSHIP

In Link 110 I published some of the emails and letters I have received from members who were clearly very concerned at their Society's refusal to acknowledge/accept/apologise for the fabricated information in its 9F book. Whilst we are not there yet I am pleased to say that on January 8th I met the recently-appointed RCTS Publicity Officer, Peter Fortune at the Celtic Manor Resort, Newport, to discuss and agree the statement I need to bring closure to this issue.

Very good progress was made and it is anticipated that a statement from the RCTS will be published in the next issue of Link, as well as the other magazines that have taken an interest in this issue. I really am most grateful to the RCTS members and branches who have worked so hard to try and bring closure to this issue. And, whilst we are not there yet, I would firstly like to thank Peter Fortune and the South Wales Branch. In addition I must mention the efforts of Bernie Holland, Geoff Plumb and Derek Plumb of the Watford Branch who have shown their determination to ensure that the proud traditions and integrity of the RCTS are upheld by an honest acceptance that a mistake was made by including fabricated material in its 9F book.

FRATTON SHED

July 18th, 1963:

D3666 D3667 5050 **30245-W 30586-W 30587-W 30777-W 30850-W 30925-W 30926-W 30952-W**
31613 31618 32636 32662 32670 33018 33020 33021 33031 73116 76058 76062

December 31st, 1963:

D3013 **30245-W 30538-W 30587-W 30777-W 30850-W 30925-W 30926-W 30952-W** 31793 31804
31808 32636-W 32662-W 33017 33023 33029 34019 73087 76018 76029 76063 76068

W = withdrawn

An article dealing with the last days of steam at Fratton MPD by Michael G Harvey appeared on Page 53 in Link 94. Michael's book "Fratton Locomotive Depot A brief history 1891 to 1967" was republished last year by Kingfisher Productions.