



WHEN PLAISTOW 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 Link 112 Roger Butcher wrote about the erroneous omission of Fratton Shed from the Ian Allan shed listings from 1960 to 1967. In this article Roger discusses another steam locomotive shed whose reported demise simply was not true. The opportunity is then taken to update ESS members on the ongoing work of the HSBT team

According to the notebook listing what I saw on a shed-bashing trip to London on May 13th, 1962, I visited the locomotive sheds at Finsbury Park, Stratford, Plaistow and Devons Road. Attempted visits to Hornsey and Stewarts Lane failed but overall I was very pleased with the day whilst it was to be the last time I ever saw steam at King's Cross Station.

The day out was organised by Ian Fairhead who I had met the previous Sunday on an excursion train from Portsmouth to Cardiff – I was en route to my maternal grandparents at Newport whilst Ian was going to Cardiff on a trainspotting trip. We met up again on the return journey to Portsmouth that evening and it was agreed that we would go to London the following Sunday. It was Ian's wish to focus on Eastern Region locomotive sheds and, as my only experience of sheds on that region were two successful visits to King's Cross Shed, I was more than happy to go along with his plans.

THAT'S COMPLETE RUBBISH

To say my knowledge of Eastern Region locomotives and sheds was poor would be an understatement! My previous six London shed-bashing trips had very much focused around Willesden (4 times), Camden and Hither Green (3 times), whilst my visit to Bricklayers' Arms on May 24th, 1959 is still vivid in my mind. That is the only London shed-bashing trip I do not have my notebook for, so please get in touch if, by any remote chance, you were shed-bashing in London on that same Sunday.

Returning to May 13th, 1962, I was elated to successfully negotiate Stratford Shed and to see steam there although just as we completed booking departmental locomotives 32, 33, 44 and 45 (at their own small shed) we were ejected. No matter, as the small corrugated-iron two-road shed building that housed the Stratford Works locomotives was the last of the various shed buildings that we needed to visit.

Next stop on Ian's itinerary was Plaistow and as we got off the No.69 bus at the Northern Outfall Sewer in Upper Road I ventured to ask Ian why were we visiting a shed that was not listed in the locoshed book I had with me. Surely that meant it was closed? Ian's reply was on the lines of "That's complete rubbish – on a Sunday we should see at least 30 locomotives here". His comments were based on previous experience whilst, with the LT&S electrification due to finally displace steam on that line the next month, there were a number of steam locomotives he particularly hoped to see. I have to say I was not convinced as we walked along the sewer so crisply described in my precious January 1960 shed directory by the words "This sewer has the appearance of a railway embankment with the tracks removed, and a broad gravel pathway runs along the top. Walk along the sewer in a westerly direction, and a flight of steps leads to the shed from a gate on the left-hand side just before the railway underbridge." Everything was so quiet and I had little doubt that the locoshed book would be correct and Ian was mistaken. How wrong could I be!

NOVEMBER 2nd, 1959

As I duly booked the 33 locomotives on shed (see lists on page 38) it was apparent that a 19-year old Ian knew rather more than a 15-year old Roger! But, why was Plaistow shed not listed in any locoshed books from 1960 onwards? Quite simply it was an error. An error subsequently explained away by many authors as "the shed officially closed in November 1959". Which begs the inevitable question of who was supposed to be funding the staff and drivers at Plaistow between November 1959 and June 18th 1962 when it really closed?

The reality was that whoever interpreted (for Ian Allan) Plaistow's change of status on November 2nd, 1959 was confused by the different ways it was reported in the magazines and society publications of the day. The correct information was contained in the December 1959 and January 1960 issues of *The Railway Observer*. The December issue referenced Plaistow's 'closure', but then commented that there were still locomotives there in mid-November. The January issue followed with the (correct) information that Plaistow was now a sub-depot of Tilbury. Of the 46 locomotives allocated to Plaistow at its change of status, three were transferred to Shoeburyness, whilst its 10 J39s went directly some months later to Stratford Works for scrapping. So, the 33 locomotives left were the core fleet that remained allocated at Plaistow for just over a further two and a half years.

Hence Ian's comments to me on that Sunday afternoon 53 years ago about how many locomotives I should expect to see on Plaistow Shed!



View of Plaistow Shed, June 30th, 1962, after it had really closed.

Keith Gunner

So, having established that the Spring 1960 *Ian Allan Locoshed Book* had erroneously deleted both Plaistow and Fratton sheds, were there any other changes relating to November 2nd, 1959 that also confused the compiler of the shed listings? Well, his / her next mistake was to show Reading South as becoming a sub-shed of Basingstoke – instead of Guildford – although that error was corrected in the next locoshed book.

YARMOUTH SOUTH TOWN SHED

As regards the continued inclusion of Yarmouth South Town Shed, unlike with Fratton and Plaistow sheds, I have no personal knowledge of the situation as I did not visit that part of East Anglia until September 1966 when Terry, Ian and I were chasing down Norwich-allocated diesel shunters. So, what is written next is from secondary information only and I would very much welcome any input from ESS members that might clarify the issue.

The December 1959 *Railway Observer* recorded the closure of Yarmouth South Town Shed, whilst the January issue amended its initial report to say that it was now a sub-shed of Norwich. As regards the reallocations published at the same time, although the depot's last two steam locomotives 61664/70 were transferred to Lowestoft Central, no reallocation of the depot's three diesel shunters was detailed and so 32D Yarmouth South Town remained in the Ian Allan shed listings. The September 1962 *Railway Observer* recorded the official transfer of D2210/2 and D2571 to Norwich on July 9th, 1962 and, therefore, referenced that date as the official closure date for Yarmouth South Town (as the shed no longer had any locomotives allocated to it). It did, however, also comment that the depot was still in use as a signing-on point for drivers and that the diesel shunters were still left at their respective shunting yards (the text was also referencing Lowestoft and Yarmouth Vauxhall). Additionally, reference was made that refuelling of the Yarmouth South Town diesel shunters would continue to take place at Lowestoft.

So, what exactly had changed to cause the official transfer away to Norwich of the diesel shunters allocated to Yarmouth South Town? I would suggest absolutely nothing and that may well have been the point the contributor to the above notes in the *Railway Observer* was making. I would further suggest that it was a 'tidying up' of official records and that it had been noticed that a sub-depot still had locomotives allocated to it, rather than its parent shed (as they should have been). Whether my theory is right or wrong, one fact is certain – the 32D Yarmouth South Town Shed entry should not have survived in the *Ian Allan Locoshed Book* shed listings until 1967!

A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

The public acceptance by the RCTS (see statement on page 38) that the Society now accepted that it had, after all, used the discredited *What Happened to Steam* series of books as a source of 'information' for its recent publications has been widely welcomed. It brings to an end a time-consuming and unpleasant aspect of the journey the HSBT team has been making in its determination to eliminate (as much as possible) the constant recycling of erroneous and fabricated information on the allocation, storage and disposal of steam locomotives. It was a journey though that had to be made to ensure that the credibility of our work was widely recognised and fully accepted. That element of our journey is now successfully completed. My thanks to all of you reading this article who have made the above words possible.

REFLECTIONS

Whilst I have no intention on revisiting the points I have made in previous issues of Link, and my series of articles in *The Railway Magazine*, there are a number of final comments I would like to make.

It was embarrassing (for Gordon Davies) to see that his attempted sleight of hand in trying in the April 2015 *Railway Observer* to water down the words of the agreed statement was noticed by so many. Clearly, he forgot how many RCTS members read *The Railway Magazine* where the correct statement was published! As one RCTS Branch Secretary said to me "Gordon couldn't help himself!"

In fairness to Gordon, I should publicly mention that the quite shocking piece he wrote in the June 2013 *Railway Observer* about myself and the HSBT project was, allegedly, I am told written for him by David Kelso, the former publicity officer for the RCTS. If so, I can understand why some RCTS members mischievously refer to David as the 'Officer responsible for Bad Publicity'. Whoever wrote it, the article was clearly libellous and left me no alternative but to pursue this issue as vigorously as I have.

THANKS

There are so many people I need to thank, but it is appropriate to start with the ESS committee and in particular, Paul Smith, the editor of Link. Paul's support and that of the ESS membership has contributed hugely to what has been achieved so far. Thanks are also due to *The Railway Magazine* and, in particular, Nick Pigott, Chris Milner and Phil Marsh, all of whom have supported our work from the very beginning. I must also thank the significant support received from the RCTS membership as there was scarcely a RCTS Branch where there wasn't someone battling on our behalf. The one inglorious exception was the Milton Keynes Branch who were responsible for around three quarters of the emails we received trying (unsuccessfully) to deter myself and my team from our efforts to obtain the statement we now have from the RCTS Management Committee.

Ironically, the neighbouring RCTS Watford Branch was at the forefront of resolving this issue in a way that was compatible with the proud traditions and integrity that the RCTS built its reputation on. My thanks again to Bernie Holland, Geoff Plumb and Derek Plumb. Another branch that has been particularly supportive is the South Wales Branch and special thanks are due to Peter Fortune, the society's publicity officer, for his determination to reach this agreement. I have no doubt that everyone involved in this long-running saga only wishes Peter had replaced David Kelso earlier. Still on RCTS-related issues, I was very pleased that in relation to this dispute the phrases "many errors" and "apologies for any inconvenience caused" were contained in the advertisement placed by the Society in the May 2015 issue of *The Railway Magazine*. We really all can move on now!

Locomotives noted on Plaistow Shed

Sunday, January 3rd, 1960 (Steam Railway Research Society)

41981 42221 42223 42224 42254 42513 42516 42533 42536 47262 47312 47328 47351
47484 47555 64951 64952 64953 64954 64956 64957 64958 64962 64965 64968 80070
80073 80077 80098 80102 80103 80133 80134 90494

Friday, April 7th, 1961 (Steam Railway Research Society)

41981 42254 42501 42503 42507 42511 42516 42527 47328 47351 47555 80075 80078
80080 80096 80097 80098 80105 80131 80135 90653

Sunday, May 13th, 1962 (Roger)

41981 42075 42219 42223 42254 42257 42282 42511 42513 42519 42520 42681 42684
47328 47351 47555 80070 80072 80078 80079 80096 80098 80102 80103 80105 80131
80135 90023 90034 90093 90196 90244 90256

Statement in the April 2015 issue of *The Railway Magazine*.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE RCTS AND "WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO STEAM"

Agreement has been reached between the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society and 'What Really Happened to Steam', the HSBT team attempting to verify the disposals of steam locomotives in the 1960s.

In a statement the RCTS's management committee says it has been clear for some time that some of the information available on the disposal of steam locomotives, primarily listed in the many volumes of *What Happened to Steam* was seriously flawed and that, as a respected publisher, it accepts full responsibility for mistakes that subsequently found their way into some of its own publications.

"We are working with the HSBT team to agree how best to correct and publish any errors which the society might have unintentionally perpetrated. We will publish the corrected information in a future edition of *The Railway Observer*."

In addition to the above, the May 2015 issue of *The Railway Magazine* contains an apology from the RCTS.