



Class H 0-4-4T No.31548 and Class C 0-6-0 No.31692
 pictured at Gillingham Shed on June 14th, 1959.
 GH Hunt/Colour-Rail BRSI 190

WHEN GILLINGHAM 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. Following the articles in Link 112 and 113 on Fratton and Plaistow sheds respectively, in this issue Roger Butcher discusses another steam locomotive shed whose latter days have often been misreported. The opportunity is then taken to respond - in a question and answer format - to the many questions that have been posed since the RCTS publicly apologised in the May 2015 issue of The Railway Magazine for attempting to defend the seriously flawed information it copied from the What Happened to Steam series of booklets.

According to the 'oldest' notebook I still retain, I passed Gillingham Shed on both August 18th, 1959 and August 28th, 1959. On both occasions steam was still present, Class C 31588 being identified on the first date and Class H 31319 and Class Q1 33011 on the latter date. To a 12-year old on an 11-day school trip to Belgium, none of these sightings was particularly significant at the time except for the fact they were part of memorable journeys from Victoria Station to Dover Marine Station (and back). In truth I remember more about those two train journeys than the so-called educational trip to Belgium! If I am honest the main reason for asking my parents if I could go on Portsmouth Grammar School's summer trip for its first-year pupils was the opportunity to travel on the South-Eastern Division of the Southern Region for the first time! I had though visited Bricklayers Arms Shed on my first London shed-bashing trip and Tonbridge Shed (travelling by train from Brighton) in the preceding months.

So, why do some books record Gillingham Shed as being closed to steam in June 1959 when quite clearly it was not? The reality is once one author misinterprets 'lost its independent status' for being closure, others simply copy that 'information' without doing any basic research/checking. The correct information was contained in the June 1959 issue of *The Railway Observer* which stated that Gillingham Shed would "continue to service and stable steam engines from other sheds. Gillingham's engines will be supplied mainly from Tonbridge and will comprise Q1s for the Sheerness Branch parcels and freight workings and Hs for the Allhallows Branch passenger service." The September 1959 issue further reported that Gillingham Shed was stabling four Q1s and three Hs - supplied by Tonbridge - during the summer of 1959.

IAN ALLAN BOOKS

Unfortunately (again), as with Fratton and Plaistow, whoever at this time was responsible for the shed listings in the Ian Allan books misinterpreted the situation and three subsequent locoshed book shed listings showed Gillingham as a sub-shed of Ashford instead of its actual parent shed Tonbridge. This error continued into many of the various Ian Allan shed listings during 1961 despite Gillingham Shed finally closing on June 13th, 1960 following the dieselisation of the Sheerness Branch freight workings.

ALLOCATION

As regards the 24 steam locomotives allocated to Gillingham Shed when it lost its independent status, 31683 was withdrawn 1W June 13th, 1959, whilst the others were transferred the following day to Brighton, Guildford, Nine Elms, Three Bridges and Tonbridge. ESS member Ross Woollard, who has helped greatly with this article, was amongst the enthusiasts who congregated on the footpath which ran parallel to the shed and yard on June 14th to see the locomotives leaving the shed.

However, whilst Gillingham became a sub-shed of Tonbridge on June 14th, 1959, with the Kent Coast electric (KCe) services being implemented at the commencement of the summer timetable, many authors persist in giving May 1959 as not only the date of the transfer away of the Gillingham steam locomotive allocation, but all the associated KCe steam locomotive transfers. Utter nonsense obviously, but why has it occurred?

The answer lies in the widespread practice of dumbing down locomotive allocation and transfer information. For some reason many railway authors remain convinced that the railway enthusiast reading public prefers calendar months to the actual date of the transfers. So, for example, when the Southern Region published details of the reallocations relating to the newly-electrified lines in Kent being cleared of steam it was included in the list relating to the period ending June 14th, 1959. However, despite that date being the final day of steam, the 'formula' for dating by calendar months used by many authors comes up with May as the period referred to covers most of May but only just under half of June. Hence the nonsense of sheds - such as Gillingham - being shown as closed to steam (albeit erroneously anyway) in June 1959 yet supposedly having lost its complete allocation the month before!

BOLGER, LONGWORTH, RCTS, et al

So, for example, Paul Bolger's book on Southern Region Steam Motive Power Depots states that "Gillingham lost its allocation in May 1959 to Brighton, Dover, Hither Green and Nine Elms. From this date it became a sub-shed of Ashford yet curiously operated with locomotives from Tonbridge". Four separate individual mistakes in two sentences as you can see from the table accompanying this article!

As for the latest in a seemingly endless number of books/CDs/websites etc to detail steam locomotive shed allocations, Hugh Longworth's *BR Steam Locomotives: Complete Allocation History 1948-1968* also includes the dating errors detailed above but, to be fair, it does state in the preface "It is best to assume that the dates are accurate to plus or minus one month."

Despite that admission the back cover proclaims that it is "a masterly and definitive guide to the complete allocation history of every BR steam locomotive." The use of the word 'definitive' is, quite obviously, a blatant contradiction to the honest admission in the preface.

Other authors, such as Tony Walmsley, fell into the same trap regarding Gillingham, but one likes to think they would acknowledge their error if/when it was pointed out to them. Not so, where the RCTS was concerned, John Walford, the author of the final three books in the RCTS series of *British Railways Standard Steam Locomotives*, responding to Ross Woollard's advice with pages of utter nonsense in an annoying/embarrassing attempt to justify the incorrect data he was publishing.

One of John's 'rationale' was that, where there was conflicting information, he would base his decision on what was correct on which 'fact' had the most support from 'independent' sources. An utterly simplistic argument which totally ignores the fact that the so-called independent sources (invariably secondary) had, more often than not, simply copied from each other! Quite how Gillingham was meant to have covered its train services in June prior to the electric services beginning on June 14th/15th, 1959 was glossed over as were Ross Woollard's personal observations of Gillingham Shed's locomotives being removed on June 14th.

Returning briefly to my first-ever train journeys on the South-Eastern Division of the Southern Region, they are recorded in an *Ian Allan Locolog Book* (priced at nine (old) pence) and the 'remarks' column shows that 84023 at Dover Priory Station was regarded as the best cop of the journeys - it was the first of the class I had ever seen. As for the diesel and electric locomotives noted, I was clearly very pleased to have copped E5000/2/3/5/7 having only previously seen E5004/8 (at Eastleigh Works).

As regards the educational elements of the school trip, I can only recall (inevitably) the Manneken Pis statue in Brussels, what an attractive town Bruges was, some (relatively fast) pedal car racing on the beach at Middelkerke and playing - for the very first time - table (or bar) football. A 'sport' that in later years I was subsequently to take very seriously and play all over the country. Not sure that sport is quite the right description but at least I have a significant collection of trophies to show for my efforts. It is, however, seeing steam locomotives on Gillingham Shed in August 1959 that remains an abiding memory of that 11-day summer school trip!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The 'waving of the white flag' by the RCTS is a key, and most welcome, landmark in the efforts 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. The apology, which was printed in the May 2015 issue of *The Railway Magazine*, has prompted a flurry of questions relating to the HSBT Project and it is thought best to answer them, and a number of questions from the Editor of Link, in a question and answer format.

Q/ Now that the RCTS has apologised so publicly will you be rejoining the society?

A/ Firstly, I don't think I would be welcomed back! More importantly, I have no wish whatsoever to rejoin the society. Quite simply, the culture of some of the key figures in the current RCTS hierarchy is totally unrecognisable from the members who founded the society and made it a society I was proud to belong to for four decades.

Q/ Can you confirm that you are (now) not going ahead with the 'RCTS-Gate' link on your What Really Happened To Steam website?

A/ Yes, that was part of the agreement I struck with Peter Fortune, the RCTS Publicity Officer.

Q/ It has been suggested that the reason why the Milton Keynes Branch of the RCTS was so openly dismissive of the work of the HSBT project was because the branch could have been associated (in some way) with Zulu, the RCTS member responsible for providing Peter Hands with some 2,500 fabricated disposals.

A/ I have no proof nor evidence of that, although Zulu's home address is only some 20 miles from Milton Keynes!

Q/ Could you now publicly say a little more about Zulu? Do you know his real name? Why is no action being taken against him? Why did he do it?

A/ Yes, we know his real name and where he lives. If he had benefitted financially, legal action would, almost certainly, have been taken against him. But he was adamant - in talking to me - that he received no financial payment from Peter Hands, nor anyone else. As to his motive, he is a fantasist and whilst a psychiatrist has contacted the HSBT team with some suggestions as to Zulu's motives our focus has to be on sorting out, as best we can, the historical mess his input and the *What Happened to Steam* books have caused.

Q/ But you did say that you had received significant support from the RCTS membership. Should you not take that support into account when deciding whether or not to rejoin the Society?

A/ Whilst I fully understand the point you are making, the reality is that Bernie Holland, the person who was most vocal in highlighting the absolute nonsense the RCTS Management Committee was peddling, has himself now resigned. Bernie was the secretary of the Watford Branch of the RCTS and is widely credited with making Watford one of the most thriving RCTS branches. As I understand it, the protracted dispute with the HSBT team was only one of a number of issues that caused Bernie to resign, the principal reason being the general conduct of the RCTS Management Committee.

Q/ How many of the HSBT team are members of the RCTS?

A/ Whilst all ten of the team are ESS members, only four are RCTS members. And that figure is likely to drop, a lack of transparency in reporting membership numbers being an irritation for two of them. To be more specific, the reporting of the 2015 AGM in *The Railway Observer* trumpets how many new members the society has attracted but fails to give details of either the members who have resigned/lapsed or the actual total membership! I personally do not know of any other society that is so disingenuous. For the record, the current membership was reported (verbally only) at the 2015 AGM as 2,395 of which 280 are life members. No less than 156 members did not renew, a significant figure by any yardstick. Quite different figures from those the society claimed in the March and April issues of *The Railway Magazine*!

"APPROXIMATE". YOU CANNOT BE SERIOUS!

Q/ There has been some criticism of your decision not to support those purchasers of the *What Happened to Steam* (WHTS) books published by Peter Hands who would like to take legal action against Peter to recover their money. Now that you have won the 'battle' with the RCTS, will you reconsider your decision?

A/ Whilst I have the utmost sympathy with those purchasers of the WHTS books who feel totally betrayed by Peter because of what the HSBT team has established I simply see no purpose at all in anyone pursuing Peter through the legal system. We have made our evidence public of how he compiled his books and everyone must make their own judgement. Some years ago Peter complained to me that at the Great Central Railway, Loughborough he personally heard at a sales stand one of the staff "in an almost sneering manner, running my WHTS books down to one of his customers". Peter's fear was that this "is not an isolated case and could be happening countrywide". The reality is Peter's fears are well-founded and, even as I write this article, I have been informed of similar incidents at the Severn Valley Railway in recent months which may (or may not) have been within Peter's earshot. No one wants to be laughed at (openly or behind their backs) and that is something Peter will now always have to contend with. It is now time to move on.

Q/ Whilst you obviously want to put the negative issues you have had to deal with behind you, once and for all, it is noticeable you have not specifically reacted to Peter's comment in the May 2013 issue of *The Railway Magazine*, and repeated on his website when it was launched, that "With hindsight - a wonderful thing - I should have mentioned in my books that all the dates were approximate"

A/ Firstly, it was a frank admission that the dates were not factual and confirmed exactly what our research had established. Such a great shame that so many authors and websites copied them as if they were accurate. Secondly, it was so obviously self-serving as anyone who possesses the books could see for themselves that every WHTS book has entries where a symbol (normally an asterisk) indicates that the dates of that particular entry was - yes - approximate! Nothing wrong in that, of course, but implicitly it clearly means the other dates are not approximate! It is blatant contradictions such as this that have alienated so many purchasers of the WHTS books and greatly embarrass the very few people

who still defend the books.

Q/ Turning to the next stage of the HSBT Project, are you in a position yet to announce the proposed publication date for your first book?

A/ Ideally the answer to that question would be yes but it is not. When we set out in 2009 to start from scratch on this subject I was warned by Peter Trushell I would be "opening a can of worms" and so it has proved! I was also warned by Nick Pigott that I would meet a lot of resistance along the way, and not just from Peter Hands, by many publishers who would not like what we were claiming publicly as it would take away the source of reference they had become accustomed to using.

So, whilst I knew it would take a significant amount of time to get to where we are now, I did not anticipate that misplaced pride would result in some of the participants digging such big holes for themselves it is a wonder they didn't find Captain Kidd's treasure!

Fortunately, whilst the negative aspect of this issue has been incredibly time-consuming, so many enthusiasts and retired railwaymen have come forward to help it has been so, so worthwhile. Even this week (as I write) an 82-year old enthusiast from Rotherham has just sent me his precious logbooks of observations for the project to work on, along with a supportive message.

Q/ The revelations in Link 111 that Zulu also fabricated diesel locomotive disposals came as a big shock to many railway publishers and enthusiasts. You mentioned in Link 112 that ESS members John Hall and Peter Hall would be taking the lead on this issue. What is the latest position?

A/ The first article on the subject was written by Peter Hall and published in the April 2015 issue of *The Railway Magazine*. That article can be found on our wrhts website. As regards the number of disposals that are fabricated/incorrect, it would seem that the initial estimate of 'up to 50' was an under-estimate and until John Hall has completed his forensic examination that estimate should be revised to 'between 100 to 200'.

Q/ How can ESS members help?

A/ Specific requests from Peter Hall will be published in due course but 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. In addition, Peter has asked me to draw particular attention to the issue of which diesel locomotives found their way to Queenborough. It is now clear that what has previously been published is only part of the story and certain points do not stand up to scrutiny.

So, if any ESS members have knowledge of the 1960s-1980s history of the companies involved at Queenborough, and the Italian connection, or if any one ever visited Queenborough in that period any observations, notes or photographs would be extremely useful even if they are a little vague. Peter can be contacted at peter@hall59.freerve.co.uk

Q/ As referenced earlier, you encountered significant resistance from some of the publishers who were relying on the WHTS books. Do you anticipate the same problem regarding publishers attempting to recycle fabricated material on diesel locomotive disposals?

A/ Not at all. If my faith in the integrity of the (likely) publishers turns out to be misplaced they can be assured I will draw attention to what they have done at every opportunity in every medium possible!

THANKS

In addition to the comprehensive thank you that was published in my article on Plaistow in Link 113, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the HSBT team for its support of the WRHTS project and its objectives. Whilst I am the public face of the project, the hard work is being done by individual members, all committed to eliminating (as far as possible) the corrupted material that has tainted our wonderful hobby.

In particular, I must thank Keith Gunner whose personal support, and incredible eye for detail, was critical to the landmark recently achieved. I must also reference Steam Railway Research Society – and ESS – members Richard Strange and Ross Woollard who had battled with the RCTS for more years than myself to try to prevent, amongst other issues, the recycling of erroneous and poorly-researched information. Your stance has been publicly vindicated and – at long last – our sole focus can be on completing what we all set out to do.

REALLOCATION OF LOCOMOTIVES WHEN GILLINGHAM LOST ITS OWN ALLOCATION ON JUNE 14th, 1959

To Brighton;	31308 31548
To Guildford;	31815 31816
To Nine Elms;	31037 31112 31227 31229 31297
	31495 31510 31576 31579 31682
	31684 31720 31785 31786 31787
To Three Bridges;	31161
To Tonbridge;	31322 31512 31518

GILLINGHAM MPD



Class H 0-4-4T No. **31308** is pictured at **Gillingham MPD** on an unrecorded date. P Hughes/Colour-Rail 97494
Roger Butcher's article "When Gillingham shed really closed" can be found on Page 66

D2551 AT PARKESTON MPD



Hunslet 0-6-0DM Shunter No. **D2551** pictured at **Parkeston Shed** in December 1959. Sale documentation and dispatch advice confirm D2551 was disposed of to Hughes Bolckow, Blyth and sent to that scrapyard from Speke Junction on April 29th, 1968. The subsequent reported disposal in *The Railway Observer* and elsewhere to Booth, Rotherham followed the alleged discovery of 'missing' records that had been located by the company. This is one of a series of diesel locomotive disposal fabrications that has been revealed by the work of the HSBT Project. ...

K Nuttall/Colour-Rail 200330