

## WHEN WORCESTER WORKS REALLY CLOSED by ROGER BUTCHER



Preserved locomotives Nos **4555** and **6435** at Worcester Works.

*Colour-Rail 324092*

*Following the articles in Link 112, 113 and 114 on Fratton, Plaistow and Gillingham sheds respectively, in this issue Roger Butcher discusses another location whose latter days have not been reported correctly. The opportunity is then taken to update ESS members on a number of matters, including the ongoing work of the HSBT team.*

Located within the land between the main lines and goods lines north – west of Worcester Shrub Hill Station, Worcester Locomotive Works seems to have been rarely visited by enthusiasts. Its alleged closure was reported in the January 1965 issue of *The Railway Observer* which stated that “The works were (*sic*) closed down from 2nd November when all repairs ceased. Over the past six years repairs have been carried out only to locomotives in the Worcester Area which has now been reduced to two depots.”

It was this report that was the source of the reference in Rosterboard in Link 111 to Worcester Works closing in October 1964. However, it is apparent from both my own observations, and those of ESS member Rob Pritchard, that the Works survived for around another 12 months. When Terry and I visited the Works on November 29th, 1964, it contained 6169, 6435, 6856, 6877, 48309 and D2240. Of the six locomotives, 6435 was withdrawn and earmarked for preservation whilst all the other locomotives were allocated to Worcester except for 48309 which was allocated to Bath Green Park. Our other visit was in the early hours of April 16th, 1965 when 4664, 5971 and 6813 – all allocated to Worcester – were noted under repair.

Rob Pritchard’s notes indicate that the Works closed around October 1965 and that in its final months it was almost exclusively preserved locomotives 1420, 4555, 6435, 7029 and 7808 that were receiving attention there. A note in Issue 84 of the *Great Western Railway Journal* (GWRJ) states that “When Worcester Works closed, it was purchased by the Dart Valley Railway” but the article does not give a specific date or what the logistical arrangements were in the final period of the Works’ existence. It would be very interesting to know, for example, which, and when, was the last non-preserved British Railways locomotive to receive attention at the Works.

What is known is that Rob saw War Department 143 receiving attention at the Works on September 19th, 1965 whilst on transfer from MoD Long Marston to the NCB’s Allerton Bywater Workshops at Castleford, Yorkshire.

### PHOTOGRAPHS

As regards photographs of the Works, there is a marvellous range of photographs in the article (referred to above) in GWRJ Issue 84 (ESS member Richard Parker was one of the co-authors). As for the excellent photograph of Worcester Works in the February 2016 Issue of *Steam World*, it is utterly

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beyond my comprehension that the photographer believes it to be Oswestry Works. There is virtually no resemblance at all between the two Works and it is errors such as this that explain the increasing distrust between those of us who grew up in the steam locomotive era and the publishers who produce magazines and books on that period. Of course there is not a magazine anywhere that has never made a mistake (mine included) but it should be every editor's responsibility to take seriously the 'duty of care' he/she has been entrusted with.

There are, of course, railway publishers who do take their responsibilities very seriously – such as Lightmoor Press and the publishers of GWRJ – but for too many one is left with the inescapable feeling that accuracy and proper research come a very distant second to profit in the order of priorities. And those of us, including many ESS members it seems, who dare challenge the nonsense that is being published are labelled as 'religious zealots'! Unfortunately it seems that railway magazines are extremely reluctant to publish corrections, but hopefully *Steam World* will.

#### **WORCESTER DIESEL DEPOT**

The existence of two roads in the wagon shop at the north end of the Worcester Works complex for the maintenance and servicing of GWR diesel railcars was extensively covered in the centre pages of Link 101, whilst three photographs of the facilities in the diesel era between 1960 and 1965 were published in Link 114. The subject of this depot was initially raised by myself in Issue 100 to which the editor added a photograph from the Allan Sommerfield collection titled "Worcester Temporary Diesel Depot." It is the use of the word 'temporary' that Rob Pritchard, who has been kindly advising me on a variety of Worcester-related issues, is querying. Rob feels that the word 'temporary' is inappropriate as the facility "was never a temporary depot by design or practice." I have to say I agree with Rob's views as I simply record it in my records as Worcester Diesel Depot. So, bearing in mind there was a replacement diesel depot established in 1966 in the steam shed building generally referred to as the "passenger engine depot", what should the first diesel depot be called? Worcester Works Diesel Depot perhaps?

#### **WORCESTER 1959**

All of you reading this article will have their favourite railway locations and their own personal reasons for regarding a particular location as special. For myself, Worcester holds special memories and not just because of the night of April 15th/16th, 1965 (see pages 37-42)! My affection for Worcester began in August 1959 when I was invited to spend a week's holiday with my cousins Julian and Philip Hodge. The thinking was that Julian and I (who were both 12 years-old) might be good company for each other. Not so as within 24 hours it was apparent that we had very little in common and it had all the makings of a very long week!

And then I discovered that their bungalow was about five minutes walk from (the now legendary) Railway Walk! And what a joy it was to watch from that vantage point all the comings and goings at Worcester Shed as well as traffic on the Worcester – Birmingham line and the Hereford – Birmingham line (which avoided Worcester Shrub Hill Station). And that's where my time was spent and it suited everybody! As the week progressed I thought it might be a change to spend an afternoon on Worcester Shrub Hill Station and my uncle and aunt kindly dropped me off at the station. Unfortunately – or so it seemed to me – the station was relatively quiet compared to Railway Walk and I resolved to go a little further afield! Stourbridge Junction was my chosen destination and off I set. I had never attempted a Western Region shed by myself before and despite not having a shed directory, and a long walk, I found the shed. I was elated to get round without being stopped and, flushed with success, I caught a train to Birmingham Snow Hill, and then on to Wolverhampton Low Level. My mind was set on attempting to get round Wolverhampton (Stafford Road) Shed but an over-enthusiastic 12 year-old was about to receive a reality check!

In simple terms I had completely lost track of time and the Wolverhampton Low Level Station clock was showing that it was nearly 6.00 pm, the time my uncle and aunt were due to pick me up at Worcester (Shrub Hill) Station! As I had no way of letting them know where I was, all I could do was to get back to Worcester as quickly as possible, so I immediately boarded a train back to Birmingham Snow Hill and then a connection to Worcester, arriving back at Worcester Shrub Hill Station around 7.40 pm. Nearly 57 years later I can still vividly recall the look of relief (and anger) on my aunt and uncle's faces as I came through the station barrier. Apparently, following discussions between my uncle and aunt and the station staff, if I failed to appear by 8.00 pm my 'disappearance' was due to be reported to the police. So, I had just got back in time to avoid that. You will not be surprised to learn I was never invited to stay with them again!

#### **WHEN SHEDS/WORKS REALLY CLOSED**

Returning to the main theme of this article, I was interested to see the correspondence generated (by my previous articles) in Rosterboard. As was pointed out, Basingstoke was another example of a shed whose sub-shed status went unrecorded in the various Ian Allan books.

It is, however, relevant to clarify an important difference between the examples I have given in my articles (on Fratton, Plaistow and Gillingham) to depots such as Weymouth, Consett, Tonbridge (in 1968) where diesel locomotives were being stabled at former steam locomotive sheds. There are around

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150 steam sheds that fit that category and an excellent four-part series covering those sheds was published in Link 89, 90, 91 and 92.

#### **THE DIESEL FABRICATIONS**

Many thanks to John Hall for his two excellent articles on diesel locomotive disposal fabrications. Thanks too to those ESS members who have responded with information. Various leads are now being followed up but a 1973 observation of the locomotive persistently recorded as being D2232 (in Italy) has been confirmed (via its works -plate) as being D2231. John had always believed that the photographic evidence of D2232 awaiting entry into the scrapyards of Cohen, South Bank, Middlesbrough was conclusive as the company simply scrapped what it acquired.

However, D2231 was sold to RE Trem and was moved to the Chesterfield yard of Steelbreaking and Dismantling. This company was one of those contracted to break and store locomotives on behalf of RE Trem. The last observation of D2231 at Chesterfield was June 14th, 1970 and any observations in the UK after that date would be particularly appreciated.

#### **HSBT PROJECT**

As regards the steam element of the HSBT Project, I am pleased to say that Terry Hayward has completed the initial draft of the Southern Region book and expects to start on the Western Region book in the summer. As for the Standards and WD book (of which Terry is the editor), a revised draft will be circulated amongst the project team during the summer. And finally, I would like to pay tribute to Terry for the extraordinary amount of work he is also putting in to support Keith Gunner and myself on the books we are responsible for editing (Southern and Western respectively).



Former BR Class 04 0-6-0DM **D2231** at Lissone, Lombardy, Italy on June 29th, 1973. Owned by Attilio Rossi, it was used for shunting track materials in connection with the relaying of the Milano to Como line.  
*Alberto Perego*