



DID ANY RIs REALLY GET TRANSFERRED TO NINE ELMS?

by **ROSS WOOLLARD**
and **ROGER BUTCHER**

In the lead article, Ross discusses the dispersal and storage of the steam locomotives displaced on June 14th, 1959 by stage one of the Kent Coast Electrification.



The official transfer to Nine Elms of six ancient RI Class 0-6-0Ts must be the most unlikely happening of June 1959. RI No. **31047** is pictured at **Folkestone MPD** on May 26th, 1954. *Colour-Rail 97896*

On the evening of Sunday June 14th, 1959, as a 12 year-old, I joined a number of fellow enthusiasts at the footbridge across the main line to the east of Gillingham Station and locomotive shed to witness the last regular steam-hauled passenger trains to travel through Gillingham to and from the Kent coast - the electrified service to and from Sheerness, Ramsgate and Dover beginning the next day. As darkness fell we went to the footpath next to the locomotive shed, where we saw several of the locomotives on shed depart in the direction of London, or elsewhere. Gillingham, Faversham and Ramsgate lost their steam allocations that night. Little did I know that I would be writing about this 60 years later!

OFFICIAL TRANSFERS

This article is an attempt to throw light on what happened to the displaced locomotives. Despite the availability of official locomotive stock alterations in *Trains Illustrated* (TI) and elsewhere, to find out what really took place is no easy task and there are many pieces of the jigsaw that continue to be (and perhaps will always remain) undiscovered.

Like many others, I relied on TI to update my *Locoshed Book* with data on transfers, etc. Imagine my surprise when the August 1959 TI recorded over 260 Southern Region steam locomotive transfers. There had clearly been a massive reshuffle of motive power, which extended far beyond the three depots that lost their allocations, totalling only 87 locomotives, on June 14th, 1959. What I did not fully appreciate at the time was that the Kent Coast Electrification reduced the need for steam power at other depots, notably Dover, Stewarts Lane and Bricklayers Arms.

Furthermore, something very strange had (apparently) taken place. To quote the August 1959 TI: "the official list of transfers ... credits Nine Elms with a huge fleet of unaccustomed types", but noted that "by June 21st only a handful of Eastern Section locomotives were visible at Nine Elms." So, there

is the immediate suspicion that many of these transfers were paper ones. In theory, Nine Elms gained 104 locomotives, ranging from the three Merchant Navies previously at Stewarts Lane to, amazingly, six elderly R1 0-6-0Ts displaced at Folkestone by Western Region 57XX pannier tanks earlier in the year and two nineteenth century O1 0-6-0s from Stewarts Lane. Incredibly, three L1 4-4-0s were moved from Brighton to Nine Elms at this time.

ASTONISHING

All very odd, or as the August 1959 *Railway Observer* (RO) put it, "astonishing", noting that a huge number of displaced locomotives were "deposited *en masse* upon Nine Elms", remarking that Nine Elms had no room to house so many locomotives.

Were all the locomotives formerly allocated to Gillingham, Faversham and Ramsgate transferred to Nine Elms? By no means. Gillingham's allocation of 23 locomotives was dispersed, in theory, to Nine Elms (15), Tonbridge (3), Brighton and Guildford (2 each), and Three Bridges (1). Faversham's 26 went (allegedly!) to Nine Elms (11), Ashford (8), Stewarts Lane, Feltham and Exmouth Junction (2 each) and Tonbridge (1). Ramsgate's 38 were divided between Nine Elms (20), Bricklayers Arms (9), Ashford (5), Stewarts Lane (3) and Brighton (1).

What evidence do we have to indicate what really happened, not only to the 87 cleared from the three sheds but also to other locomotives transferred as a result of the Kent Coast Electrification? One might expect that many older locomotives would be withdrawn or placed into store. It is certainly true that the pace of withdrawals speeded up. In the first half of 1959 16 Eastern Section locomotives were withdrawn (including one King Arthur transferred to Eastleigh on June 14th but withdrawn almost at once) - 4 King Arthurs, 5 Cs, 3 Hs, 1 E1, 1 R1, 1 O1 and 1 L. In the second half of 1959 36 were withdrawn, including 18 notionally attached to Nine Elms, made up of 12 Cs, 7 Hs, 6 Ls, 4 R1s, 2 O1s, 2 D1s, 2 L1s and a King Arthur. Not as great a culling as one might have expected.



Two locomotives that did reach Nine Elms in 1959, L Class 4-4-0 No.31770 and L1 Class 4-4-0 No.31787 in this undated view. 31770 was withdrawn later that year, whilst 31787 was stored by February 1960 but not withdrawn until January 1961. *Colour-Rail 17882*

WE DO NOT KNOW

Then, were large numbers of displaced locomotives placed into store? Frustratingly, we do not know. From the end of the 1940s through to October 1957, detailed lists of locomotives placed into (and removed from) store on the Southern Region were published in both the RO and the Stephenson Locomotive Society Journal, no doubt supplied to the magazines by the SR. This information ceased abruptly, and oddly enough nothing was said about this in either publication. If enquiries or representations were made to the SR, nothing appeared in print. This lack of storage data is particularly galling as the pace of storage must have increased, and common sense dictates that many of the locomotives made redundant on the Eastern Section with effect from June 15th, 1959 must have been stored. Some information was published. Tantalisingly, the August 1959 TI stated that "at the end of June a number of ex-Eastern Section engines were stored at Feltham, Guildford and Basingstoke". More specifically, I have been able to find, from sources including the RO and *Railway Locomotives* (the British Locomotive Society monthly magazine), information about only the following 24 locomotives, of which 20 were 4-4-0s:

C 31242; D1 31246, 31247, 31494; E1 31497; D1 31505, 31509; H 31522; D1 31545; H 31552; D1 31727, 31735; L1 31754 and 31759; L 31764, 31765, 31768, 31780, 31782; L1 31785, 31786, 31787, 31788 and 31789. There is published photographic evidence of D1s 31246, 31494, 31509/45 and 31727 stored at Feltham in the open on October 17th, 1959 in *Locomotives Illustrated* No.23 (photograph by E.R. Wethersett).

HOW MANY TRANSFERS REALLY TOOK PLACE?

Did some transfers take place at a later date, or not at all? Definitely. The August 1959 RO reported that by mid-July none of the three Merchant Navies had been transferred to Nine Elms and that only four of the nine Standard Class 5 4-6-0s had been seen; only 23 former Eastern Section locomotives were seen at Nine Elms on 15th July (admittedly a weekday). The September 1959 RO stated that boat trains seen at Folkestone on August 8th were hauled by 73042 and 73086, both theoretically Nine Elms locomotives. In the January 1960 RO it was reported that "although none are now diagrammed, Eastern Section 4-4-0s of all four classes continue to work [to Brighton] on Tonbridge trains fairly frequently, recent examples being 31019, 31487, 31756/62; of these the first is officially allocated to Salisbury and the last two to Nine Elms." Furthermore, 31762 was seen on Tonbridge - Oxted services "working Tonbridge duties." It seems unlikely that R1 31047, supposedly withdrawn from Nine Elms in the week ending April 2nd, 1960, ever got there as it was at Folkestone shed on February 27th, 1960.

Even the official records show that there was a fairly substantial, if gradual, trickle back of what

amounted to a total of 28 locomotives to depots on the Eastern Section, mostly by spring 1960. All were moved in theory from Nine Elms apart from E1s 31019/67, 31497, 31507 from Salisbury and N 31816 from Guildford. They were:

C 31004 to Dover in the 6 weeks ending 6th February 1960; E1s 31019/67 to Stewarts Lane in the 4 weeks ending 30th April 1960; O1 31048 to Dover and C 31061 to Tonbridge in the 6 weeks ending 6th February 1960; C 31112 to Dover in the 4 weeks ending 15th August 1959; Cs 31229 to Stewarts Lane and 31268 to Hither Green in the 4 weeks ending 6th February 1960; C 31271 to Bricklayers Arms on 16th October 1961; C 31298 to Hither Green and H 31324 to Tonbridge in the 6 weeks ending 6th February 1960; H 31326 to Dover in the 4 weeks ending 15th August 1959, O1 31370 to Dover in the 6 weeks ending 6th February 1960; C 31481 to Dover in the 4 weeks ending 15th August 1959; E1s



Rusting away beside **Redhill MPD**, DI Class 4-4-0 No. **31247** is one locomotive that NEVER went to Nine Elms. *Colour-Rail*

31497 and 31507 to Bricklayers Arms in the 4 weeks ending 30th April 1960; H 31500 to Tonbridge in the 5 weeks ending 21st November 1959; C 31510 to Bricklayers Arms on 16th October 1961; H 31552 to Ashford in the 4 weeks ending 5th March 1960; H 31553 and C 31592 to Tonbridge in the 6 weeks ending 6th February 1960; C 31579 to Hither Green in the 4 weeks ending 5th March 1960 and C 31682 also to Hither Green in the 6 weeks ending 6th February 1960; C 31684 to Tonbridge and C 31720 to Dover in the 9 weeks ending 17th October 1959; L1s 31756/83 to Tonbridge in the 6 weeks ending 6th February 1960 (but 31783 was seen stored at Ashford on 28th November 1959); N 31816 to Hither Green in the 9 weeks ending 17th October 1959.

WHERE DID THEY GO?

To conclude, there are large gaps in our knowledge. Clearly Nine Elms did not require or receive the majority of the locomotives allegedly transferred there in June 1959, so where did they go? One assumes that (most of?) the transfers to other depots, both within and beyond the Eastern Section, did take place. Did more engines go into store than the 24 listed above? Probably, but evidence is lacking. Did some or most of the 28 'returnees' remain on the Eastern Section throughout? Quite possibly.

Needless to say, further information from Engine Shed Society members on this subject would be most welcome. Please consult your observations for 1959-61 and let us know if you can help.

*Following on from Ross' article, **Roger Butcher** takes the opportunity to update ESS members on a number of matters, including the ongoing work of the HSBT team.*

At last! An article that addresses the quite astonishing official locomotive reallocations that the Southern Region published following the completion of stage one of the Kent Coast Electrification on June 14th, 1959. Quite simply, I believe it to be, by far, the largest set of 'paper' transfers to take place since the nationalisation of our steam locomotive fleet in 1948. And yet in an era when it seems almost every facet of steam locomotive history has been covered again and again, I have never seen an article published on the subject. Until now!

'PAPER' TRANSFERS

A 'paper' transfer is, of course, a posh way of describing an official reallocation of a locomotive that never took place. It is a subject that was touched upon in *Link 102* when the story of 9707's supposed reallocation from Southall to Taunton in August 1964 was told. Yet, for reasons I have never understood, the reallocation (for example) of 104 steam locomotives to Nine Elms on June 15th, 1959 is referenced as if it really took place. Which, of course, it could not have. The latest example was in the May 2019 issue of *Steam World* which lists the 179 steam locomotives allocated to Nine Elms on June 15th, 1959. Not a hint that it includes steam locomotives that never got anywhere near Nine Elms!

R1s

The most obvious class that never came to Nine Elms, whatever the official allocation records state, are the six elderly R1 0-6-0Ts displaced at Folkestone by Western Region 57XX pannier tanks earlier in 1959. And yet if you read the article you would have no idea whatsoever that the allocation of this class to Nine Elms was, in effect, fictional.

On the positive side, I am very much hoping that *Steam World* will support an initiative by Ross, and ESS Deputy Editor Keith Gunner, to create an awareness of this major historical inaccuracy and encourage contributions to establish what really took place. Key to achieving this will be details of shed visits during the post-June 14th, 1959 period for the sheds referenced in Ross' excellent article. Any suggestions on which internet sites, societies, etc, that Ross and Keith should contact for advice would be very much appreciated. Or perhaps has someone already written on this subject and it has escaped our attention?

NINE ELMS SHED, SEPTEMBER 18TH, 1960

For my own part, the only contribution I can make is my visit to Nine Elms Shed on September 18th, 1960. I was only 13 years old and my mother had no idea I had gone to London for the day! I went by myself and the four sheds I attempted (Camden, Hither Green, Norwood Junction and Nine Elms) were successfully bunked. This was, I believe, the day, more than any other, that I decided that obtaining permits was something that need not concern me!

The reason for three Southern Region sheds being chosen was that the number of cops I was achieving on my regular trips to Eastleigh was rapidly declining and it was now time to try and see those Southern Region steam locomotives that were unlikely to find their way to Eastleigh. My notebook at the time - a school music exercise book - shows that 19 former Eastern Section steam locomotives were all situated in the fifteen-road 'old' shed. On that Sunday afternoon visit none were in steam and some may not have worked since they arrived. Relevant to this article were 31145, 31271, 31326, 31328, 31481, 31495, 31505, 31510, 31753, 31754, 31756, 31760, 31766, 31768, 31771, 31783, 31786, 31787 and 31789.

TERRY HAYWARD

Firstly, can I say how much I appreciated the sympathetic and kind words I have received from ESS members regarding the obituary on Terry Hayward that was published in the last issue of *Link*. Not only will I miss Terry greatly, but his passing will have an impact on the timescale for publishing the WRHTS books he has prepared in draft form. Fortunately, Terry's niece Sarah is ensuring that all the paperwork Terry had on the WRHTS project is safely returned to the project team and that process will be completed shortly. Sarah has also kindly ensured that Terry's amazing ledgers of his railway and London bus observations have been passed to me.

BOB MASTERMAN

As regards new information for the WRHTS project, it continues to arrive, the latest contribution to our work being the donation by Bob Masterman of a box full of BR Special Traffic Notices (STNs)! They cover the period from 1964 to 1969 for South Wales and contain the dates and other details of locomotive movements to breakers.

So, for example, the file on Bird, Risca begins with Notice No.TF457/50 of March 9th, 1964 which states that:

5626 and 9618 will on Wednesday, 11th March leave R&M Merthyr at 9.00am. They will be 'Dead Own Wheels' and hauled by another engine via Quaker LL & HL, Hengoed HL, Sirhowy Junction and Tredegar Jct Lower to Birds Ltd, Pontymister Steel Works, Risca. As for the file on Cashmore, Newport it is nearly three inches thick! Whilst we already had a significant amount of data from STNs for South Wales, the concern was that - as sometimes planned movements did not take place - we could be quoting from a STN that was superseded by a subsequent one. However, the files that Bob has so kindly donated were acquired by him when he worked on the Western Region in Cardiff, with each scrapyard having its own dedicated file with every relevant STN placed on it. The timing of Bob's gift could not have come at a better time as we endeavour to complete the books Terry worked so hard on.

WESTERN REGION

The files referenced above originate, of course, from the Western Region. Their acquisition continues a trend in which the amount of official information the WRHTS project has acquired from either former Western Region staff or enthusiasts now exceeds the other regions put together!

As someone who was born next to the GWML at Newport, and as the editor of the WRHTS book on Western Region steam locomotives, I, of course, very much welcome the astonishing amount of information that has been made available on the storage and disposal of the Western Region steam locomotive fleet. A final initiative by John Aitchison and Keith Gunner to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge on the other regions is now well under way and I will report in more detail in a future issue of *Link*.
