



# WHEN WELLINGBOROUGH SHED REALLY CLOSED TO STEAM

by **ROGER BUTCHER**

*Continuing the series of articles on sheds and works whose latter days have not been reported correctly, Roger Butcher discusses a shed*

*whose reported closure to steam on June 20th, 1965 simply was not true. Invaluable assistance on this article has kindly been given by Pete Atkins who began his railway career at Wellingborough Shed at 7.30am on August 14th, 1961. The opportunity is then taken to update ESS members on a number of matters, including the ongoing work of the HSBT team*



This marvellous picture inside No.1 roundhouse at **Wellingborough Shed** on February 10th, 1957 includes 8F No. **48609**, one of the 14 of that class that remained at Wellingborough Shed despite their official transfer to Leicester Shed on June 20th, 1965. 48609 is not a locomotive that Pete Atkins will easily forget! Other locomotives in this view include 92107, 44235 and 47279. *K Fairey/Colour-Rail 22950*

A chance conversation at a Rail Freight Group luncheon some years ago revolved around how a number of authors compile lists of railway-related data but seemingly go to very little trouble to verify whether the data they are publishing is accurate or not. This led to me being introduced to Pete Atkins who was less than happy at what had been published about the latter days of steam at Wellingborough Shed where he had begun his railway career. In particular, the oft-quoted closure to steam date of June 20th, 1965, one publication even going further by stating that the shed subsequently reopened to steam for just two months the following year! As if!

## **WHAT REALLY HAPPENED**

The ESS has always welcomed contributions from railwaymen who actually worked at locomotive depots and the following text in this part of my article reflects Pete's personal memories of his time at Wellingborough Shed and details when the shed really closed to steam.

"I was fortunate enough to start my apprenticeship by working under the best fitter it was possible to have, doing left-hand cylinder atomiser modifications on 92104 (which carried the original tender from 71000 *Duke of Gloucester*). One story that may amuse your members was when myself, one fitter and a fitter's mate probably created a world record for removing, rebuilding and refitting the side rods (connecting rods) on 48609. On that day, staff were coming from Leicester shed and a game of football had been arranged on Pages Road beside No.2 shed. The three of us worked out a foolproof plan to remove the motion, remove the side rods, mic the journal sizes, push out the bushes and have them re-metalled, all in short order. Once done, we refitted the rods and reassembled the motion.

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We were feeling pretty smug as it was just about lunchtime so we could get the game going. The chargehand came round the engine and asked when were we going to start. We laughingly said we had already finished! He looked at us and told us to follow him to the front of the engine. He then pointed out the error of our ways. The worksheet showed 48609 but we had stripped 48690! 48609 stood right beside 48690 on the next pit!"

#### LOST ITS ALLOCATION

"As regards when Wellingborough Shed closed to steam, our 14 8Fs were officially transferred to Leicester on June 20th, 1965. The relevant locomotives were 48082, 48180, 48183, 48285, 48301, 48374, 48376, 48381, 48382, 48492, 48530, 48545, 48609 and 48759. The reallocation of these locomotives was theoretical and not physical. They continued to be ours.

As to your question, did that make us a sub-shed of Leicester? We always did the higher diesel exams and repairs, so I would say not. The 8Fs listed above were used for the Wellingborough to CEGB Goldington coal trains for which we provided the traincrew. These trains continued to be steam worked by 'our' locomotives until Leicester lost its allocation of steam on June 13th, 1966.

Exactly when those trains ceased to be steam-hauled I cannot be sure as I spent most of the second half of 1966 working at Derby Locomotive Works. I returned to Wellingborough Shed in early December and, whilst on nights in the diesel depot in early February 1967, I was asked to nip over to No.2 Shed to fit a set of superheater elements to an 8F. I cannot recall its number but it was in the 484xx block of numbers. A couple of pits away was an Ivatt Class 4 2-6-0. By this time, steam still arrived from the northern depots but was banned south of Wellingborough.

After completing my apprenticeship, I worked at, with, for, or on behalf of around 26 locomotive depots from the South Coast to Glasgow/Edinburgh and from Norwich to Bristol but no depot came near to Wellingborough for quality of work (both steam and diesel) and pride in the product.

Just one final memory. The first diesel locomotive I worked on was D3778. Very much later in my career, whilst I was involved with introducing the Class 57 locomotives to the West Coast Main Line before I retired, I was walking down 16 road at Longsight Depot when a plaque on the cabside of 08611 caught my eye. It basically stated that the locomotive was built in 1959 and was originally numbered D3778. There you go, two Wellingborough veterans together!"

#### DID YOU VISIT WELLINGBOROUGH SHED AFTER JUNE 20TH, 1965?

To complete the picture of the closing stages of steam at Wellingborough Shed, it would be interesting to see if any ESS members visited the shed post-June 20th, 1965 or have access to records of other enthusiasts who did. For my part, a visit on July 4th, 1965 produced D52, D59, D70, D157, D160, D2904, D3791, D5248, D5379, D7597, 92096 and 92101 in the shed yard with D3776, D3790, 44869, 48045, 48082, 48301, 48376, 48382, 48454, 48530, 48545, 48600, 48696, 48759 and 78028 inside No.2 Roundhouse. More steam locomotives than diesel locomotives, none of the steam locomotives being withdrawn or stored!



This photograph of **Wellingborough Shed Yard** on February 7th, 1960 shows six of the seven Crosti-boilered 9Fs in store prior to their conversion at Crewe Works to a conventional boiler. Three can be identified as 92021, 92022 and 92029. *Colour-Rail 100698*

*Following on from Pete's memories of Wellingborough Shed, Roger Butcher takes the opportunity to update ESS members on a number of matters including the ongoing work of the HSBT team.*

Firstly, Ross Woollard has had a positive response to his article in *Link* 130 regarding the steam locomotives displaced by stage one of the Kent Coast Electrification on June 14th, 1959. Following Ross' request for further information from ESS members who made observation notes in 1959-1961, a considerable amount of data has been sent to him by Chris Coates, which he is working his way through. Another ESS member and avid enthusiast Dennis Dey spent much time over the Christmas period



No. **34099** *Lynmouth* is pictured at Waterloo Station on September 16th, 1964. Withdrawn on November 1st, 1964, it is now known - thanks to the STNs gifted by ESS member Bob Masterman to the WRHTS project - that 34099's final journey was from Swansea East Dock Shed Yard to Bird, Bynea and not to Bird, Morriston as stated in the WHTS booklets. *Colour-Rail 70983*

putting together relevant extracts from his extensive observation notes for which he (Ross) is very grateful. Thanks are also due to John Aitchison and Richard Strange for information received. Approaches have also been made to *Southern Way* and *Steam World* and a follow-up article on this subject will be published in *Link 134*.

### **SCHOOLBOYS AND TEENAGERS**

One aspect that has become apparent as the HSBT team continues to gather data on the storage and disposal of the steam locomotive fleet is that there are two main sources of information on this subject. Generally, most of our scrapyards observations come from enthusiasts who were either schoolboys or teenagers during the demise of steam. And were not shy of slipping into a scrapyards at a weekend when all was quiet!

And it is their observations and photographs that helped to expose the serious flaws in the 'What Happened to Steam' (WHTS) booklets. Perhaps the most famous example is the photograph taken by ESS member Trevor Ermel of ex-LMS Jubilee class 4-6-0 No.45608 *Gibraltar* in the yard of Clayton & Davie on the banks of the River Tyne in November 1965. This locomotive was one of many entries in the WHTS books given as scrapped at Cashmore, Great Bridge that were not. An isolated mistake perhaps? 'You cannot be serious', as John McEnroe used to say!

### **BOB MASTERMAN**

The other main source of information is official documentation 'saved' by retired or former railwaymen. In *Link 130 I* referenced the box full of Special Traffic Notices (STNs) kindly donated to the What Really Happened to Steam (WRHTS) project by Bob Masterman. The STNs cover the period from 1964 to 1969 and contain the dates and other details of locomotive movements to breakers in South Wales.

It was my hope that Bob's gift would solve some of the outstanding queries we still had and I am delighted to report that has proved to be the case! For example, there were 12 Southern Region West Country and Battle of Britain locomotives where there was conflicting information about which South Wales scrapyards they ended their days in. What was not in doubt was that all 12 were sold to the Bird Group, the sale documentation stating that the sale was to Bird, Morriston for all 12 and was widely reported at the time.

However, it became apparent that the very rarely visited scrapyards at Bird, Bynea had scrapped a number of these twelve locomotives, but how many and which ones appeared to be anyone's guess.

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And so it was not surprising that whatever book you picked up that referenced the disposal of these 12 Light Pacifics, all gave a different version! The facts were further muddled by the WHTS books stating, for example, that 34106 and 34107 spent three months at Bird, Morriston awaiting scrapping. Utter nonsense as anyone who visited that scrapyards (as I did four times) will tell you as there was relatively little track at this site and so locomotives for both the Bird and Cohen scrapyards were held in the shed yard at Swansea East Dock until there was room at the scrapyards.

Thanks to Bob's STNs, we now know that 34020, 34030, 34054, 34065, 34078, 34080, 34096, 34099, 34106 and 34107 all ended their days at Bird, Bynea, whilst only 34050 and 34109 were scrapped at Bird, Morriston. The Southern Region WRHTS book, for which ESS Deputy Editor Keith Gunner is the editor, will track the movements of all of the above from their withdrawal date to the scrapyards and give the last sighting (if there is one) at that scrapyards.

The hope/intention is to give an as complete as possible picture of what really happened to a steam locomotive from the date it was withdrawn, where it was stored and the time it spent there, its transition to the scrapyards and staging points if known, its arrival at the scrapyards and the last known date it was seen at the scrapyards. No guesswork, no formulas, no speculation. Facts, not the fiction that has tainted and plagued this aspect of steam locomotive history.

#### FINAL INITIATIVE

As discussed, following Roy Dart's question to me at the ESS AGM, a final initiative is under way with John Aitchison and Keith Gunner approaching railway societies who may be able to help to source the information we are still missing. At this point, I would like to thank Roy for his kind words about Terry Hayward's passing. Roy's words, and those of other ESS members at the AGM, meant a lot to me and were very much appreciated. And finally, by the time I write the next update on the WRHTS project for *Link 134*, I am hoping that our work with various local newspapers (where there was a scrapyards) will have had some success.

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ESS member Trevor Ermel is pictured inside the cab of LMS Jubilee class 4-6-0 No. **45608** *Gibraltar* in the yard of Clayton & Davie in November 1965. Just 15 years old at the time, Trevor could not have imagined how historically significant his photographs of 45608 at this scrapyards would turn out to be!

*T Ermel 641e*