

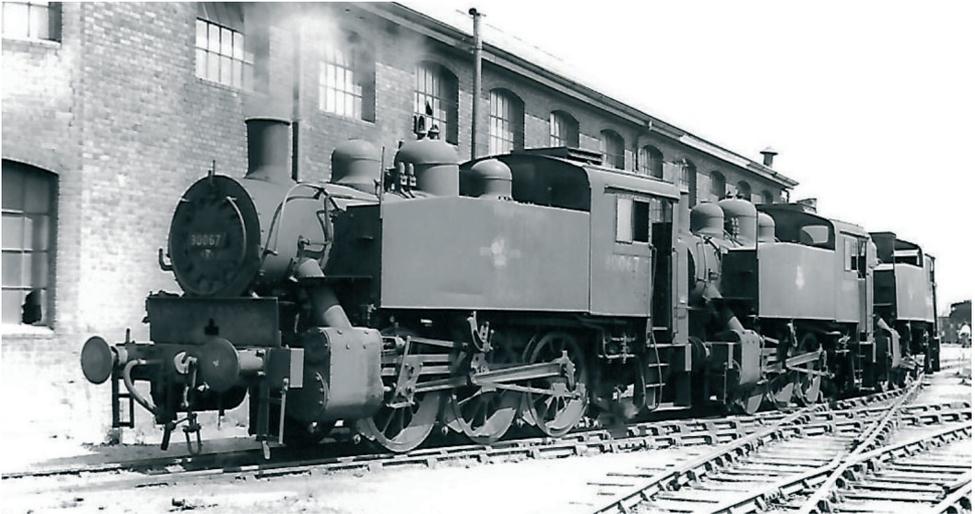


WHEN THE USAs REALLY CEASED WORKING IN SOUTHAMPTON DOCKS

by **ROGER BUTCHER**

If you were to believe the recently-published On Shed book on Southern Region depots, the delivery of the 14 Class 07s to

Southampton Docks in 1962 allowed the USA tanks to be withdrawn and for the three-road shed in the Old Docks to be closed to steam. In this article, Roger Butcher discusses the five USAs that were specifically retained for use in Southampton Docks, four of them being available for work until the final days of steam on the Southern Region. The opportunity is then taken to update ESS members on a number of matters, including the ongoing work of the HSBT team.



USA 0-6-0Ts Nos **30067**, **30069** and **30064** are pictured in Southampton Docks on June 19th, 1965.

RK Blencowe collection

The majority of you reading this article will have certain classes of locomotives they are particularly fond of. Often that view was influenced by first seeing them in the very early days of enjoying this wonderful hobby of ours. In my case, my first encounters with the USAs were in the summers of 1958 and 1959 when my parents and paternal grandparents took me to Chipperfield's Circus in Southampton. The circus was set up in Mayflower Park and was, therefore, immediately adjacent to the connecting line between the Old and New Docks (renamed to Eastern and Western Docks respectively in 1964). On the second visit to Southampton my father took me into the Old Docks and the shed was visited and the only USA not seen on either occasion was 30073.

My appreciation of this class had been born and I have taken a keen interest in them ever since recording 13 of them before I was a teenager. Although it has to be said that their final service in Southampton Docks was not adequately covered, *The Story of the Southern USA Tanks* is a marvellous book with an amazing range of photographs and background information. For myself, to learn that most of the American-built locomotives that came to Britain to help with the war effort came through Newport Docks, and would, therefore, have passed the house I was born in several years later, only served to increase my interest in this class.

STILL REQUIRED

Following the arrival of the 14 275 hp Ruston & Hornsby 0-6-0 diesels in 1962, steam was no longer the prime mover in the docks. As has been well recorded, 30061, 30062, 30065, 30066, 30070 and 30074 were transferred into departmental stock whilst 30063 and 30068 were withdrawn in May 1962 and March 1964 respectively. However, the fact that 30064, 30067, 30069, 30071, 30072 and 30073 were all put through Eastleigh Works between February 1964 and January 1965 was obviously significant as it indicated there was a requirement for them in the remaining years of steam on the Southern Region.

A MYTH

Yet a myth has gathered strength in the last two decades that – with the exception of 30072 which was the shed pilot at Guildford from February 1963 to July 1967 – the other five USAs listed above saw very little use after the arrival of D2985–D2998 in 1962. So, for example, the tables on the USAs in *Southampton's Quayside Steam* show their time in the docks as 1947–1962, accompanied by variations of the description 'transferred for general duties elsewhere in the region'.

Similarly, *The Story of the Southern USA Tanks* makes a series of claims that are completely wrong:

- a) 'Suitable available work was limited, however, and they were noted to be spending long periods stored out of use' (at Eastleigh).
- b) 'On June 3rd 1967 the former dock shed (by now officially closed) still contained 30064 and 30069 in addition to several diesels. A possible explanation is that if a use were to be found for the engines, it would inevitably be in the docks, so it would make sense to store them there.'
- c) There are also references to 'still notionally in stock' and 'By the beginning of 1967 nine of the class were still theoretically active, with five of them surviving long enough to be withdrawn with the remaining Southern Region steam fleet on July 9th 1967.'
- d) Any reported sightings of USAs in the docks were explained away by 'The remaining engines were now concentrated at Eastleigh, still with the occasional visit to the Docks for shunting, presumably to cover for the non-availability of a diesel.'

Southern Rails on Southampton Docks

It was, therefore, with a mixture of relief and pleasure that I read a different narrative on the final years of the USAs that went through Eastleigh Works in 1964/65 in Ian Drummond's superb book *Southern Rails on Southampton Docks*. The caption to the photograph on page 47 states 'By this time all the USA class locomotives were supposedly based elsewhere'. Note the word 'supposedly' as Ian had clearly established in the research for his book that anyone who actually visited Southampton Docks in the period from the arrival of the 07s until the end of Southern Region steam on July 9th, 1967 would always see several USAs. As part of the *What Really Happened to Steam* project, countless shed visits have been studied and not one comprehensive visit to Southampton Docks up to the end of steam on the Southern Region did not contain at least one sighting of a USA! My own visit to Southampton Docks with Terry Hayward on July 12th, 1964 found 30071 present in the shed yard in the Old Docks whilst Terry's visit on June 28th, 1965 found 30069 and 30073 on the shed with 30064, 30067 and 30071 in the shed yard!



Pictured from left to right in this photograph of the three-road shed in **Southampton Eastern Docks** on September 9th, 1965 are USA 0-6-0Ts Nos **30071**, **30073** (just visible) and Ruston & Hornsby 0-6-0DE No.**D2989**.

JF Hyde Steam Archive

So, a comprehensive analysis of all the visits to Southampton Docks during the period under review found the number of USAs present ranged from one to five. The norm though was either two or three. It is, therefore, clear that there were certain duties within Southampton Docks where steam power was preferred to diesels. It is known that banana traffic during this period required protecting on its onward journey from the docks and was, therefore, packed in straw with the vans needing to be steam heated. So, whilst that was a major reason for the retention of five USAs for use in Southampton Docks, the variation in the numbers to actually be found in the docks suggest there must have been other duties where they were the preferred option.

THE 07s

In previous issues of *Link I* have written about the sheds at Fratton, Gillingham and Plaistow and how they were erroneously recorded as being 'officially closed' when in reality it was only their status that had been changed. The same situation has occurred with the shed at Southampton Docks which, although for steam purposes became a sub-shed of Eastleigh in June 1963, the shed retained its independent status of 70I (previously 71I) until January 1966 when it became a sub-shed of Eastleigh.

So, to those of us who actually visited the shed in Southampton Old Docks and the stabling point in the New Docks during the 1960s and early 1970s we shake our heads in despair when the *On Shed* book on Southern Region depots states 'D2985/91/92/98 were both (*sic*) withdrawn in July 1964 and the rest were transferred to Eastleigh in January 1966 as the Diesel Depot at Southampton was closed. The locomotives still visited the Depot from time to time until January 1967 after which time it was demolished.'

To get so much wrong in a couple of sentences is ridiculous. The reality is, of course, that the first batch of 07s to be withdrawn was not until May 1973. The timing of their withdrawal was as a consequence of the development of the container berths at Southampton Docks in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result of that change in working practice British Rail announced its intention on August 4th, 1972 to discontinue freight working in Southampton Docks and what had been a gradual decline in the number of 07s working in the docks quickly accelerated. So, for example, on my visit to the docks on January 22nd, 1972 (in search of departmental stock and to see the Dock Engineer's Motor Rail 5355), the Eastern Docks Shed housed three 07s with the stabling point in the Western Docks having six 07s present. My final visit of this era was on January 19th, 1974 (in search of internal user stock) and the only occupant of the locomotive shed in the Eastern Docks was 07013 whilst the stabling point in the Western Docks held three 07s. By this date there were only four 07 diagrams in the docks and the end for the locomotive shed was close. Its demise came in 1975 and there is a photographic evidence which shows that the demolition process began in the July of that year.

Two years later the last 07 diagram in Southampton Docks ceased and the last 07s were withdrawn from service. By a fortunate coincidence, my visit with Terry Hayward to Southampton Docks on July 12th, 1964 was the last time that it was possible to see all 14 07s in the docks at one time. Noted on that memorable day (to me) when I first met Terry were D2985, D2992, D2993, D2994, D2996, D2997 and D2998 inside the three-road shed with 30071 in the shed yard. Elsewhere in the Old Docks were D2986 and D2990 whilst the stabling point in the New Docks adjacent to the carriage shed contained D2987, D2988, D2989, D2991 and D2995. I had never previously seen a 07 (as they were later known)! Within days D2985 and D2998 were transferred to Eastleigh for carriage shunting in the Eastleigh Station area and possibly the Carriage Works if required, although there is no photographic evidence to support that. This transfer followed some trials the previous month.

OTHER DUTIES FOR THE USAs

During the final four and a half years of Southern Region steam, the five USAs primarily retained for use in Southampton Docks also carried out other duties. 30064 deputised for 30072 as the Guildford Shed pilot whilst the latter was in Eastleigh Works during the summer of 1964. Subsequently 30064 spent a couple of months in the summer of 1966 deputising for DS234 at Meldon Quarry.

Although *The Story of the Southern USA Tanks* suggests that 30073 was mainly employed on shunting the Locomotive and Carriage Works at Eastleigh I can find no evidence to suggest that is correct. Based on the shed and Works visits data we have consulted, there are regular sightings of 30073 in Southampton Docks including a marvellous colour photograph taken by Barry J Eagles on March 28th, 1966 that was published in *Southern Steam Finale*. Not one observation or photograph of 30073 shunting either the Locomotive or the Carriage Works has been traced so any advice from ESS members on 30073, or indeed any of the USAs discussed in this article, would be most welcome.

EASTLEIGH SHED PILOT

As was mentioned earlier in this article, there were normally two or three USAs at work in Southampton Docks during the last four and a half years of steam on the Southern Region. It, therefore, follows that there were two or three USAs at Eastleigh Shed awaiting their tour of duty in the docks. A study of logs of visits to Eastleigh Shed during this period shows that, in addition to the various railtours that were widely reported, they were also often used on shed pilot duties.

Those same logs reveal that a USA could spend between one to six weeks in the docks before returning to Eastleigh. The changeover was normally on a Saturday and there are a number of

USA 0-6-0T No.30067 is pictured in **Eastleigh Locomotive Works Yard** on February 9th, 1966. It is believed that, during the period of time this article covers, the Eastleigh Shed pilot undertook any shunting that was required at the Works. This photograph is taken from the iconic Campbell Road Bridge where Roger (and many others) spent countless happy hours in 1958 and 1959 watching steam on the Western Section. In the summer of 1959, after the Western Section received a large influx of displaced steam locomotives from the Eastern Section, it was sometimes possible to see literally hundreds of enthusiasts at this vantage point. Were you one of them?
Colour-Rail 313375

photographs showing two USAs at the Eastleigh coaling stage on a Saturday. As to the timing of that changeover, there is a reference in the October 1963 *The Railway Observer* to '30064 and 30071 were noted passing St Denys coupled together *en route* from Eastleigh Shed to Southampton Docks'. The date of that observation was Saturday August 10th.

And, finally, my thanks to past and present ESS members Richard Day, Terry Hayward, Roy Hennefer, Robert Humm and Dave Hunt whose personal observations were fundamental to ensuring that the vital role the USAs played in Southampton Docks in the final years of Southern Region steam could be told.

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

Firstly, can I also pay tribute to the two ESS members whose obituaries were published in *Link* 134. Rowland Pittard's eye for detail and accuracy was legendary and his contribution to the WRHTS project was immense. In the final weeks of his life he endeavoured to ensure (with the help of John Aitchison) that his extensive records, notes and books went to people who shared his values and both myself and Peter Hall are extremely grateful for the items he arranged to be passed to us.

Although I never met Brian Green I had a number of lovely conversations with him over the years as he endeavoured to help me with my collecting of GWR/WR locomotive photographs. Despite being born in North London, Manchester City was his team. Brian loved shed-bashing and was always very kind to me about my articles in *Link* detailing the trips I did with Terry Hayward. I count myself very fortunate to have copies of so many of the excellent photographs he took of GWR/WR locomotives.

COVID-19

Whilst the continuing success of the vaccination programme is rightly being described as a decisive turning point in the battle with the pandemic, there will be few people reading this article whose lives have not been disrupted by Covid-19. Hopefully, life will be returning to some sort of normality in the late Spring/early Summer and the final stages of research for the WRHTS project can be completed. In the meantime, I will be considering how best to incorporate the offers of help we have had from a number of ESS members – for which very many thanks.
