

WHEN NEWPORT EBBW JUNCTION SHED WAS REALLY DEMOLISHED

by ROGER BUTCHER



This photograph, dated August 28th, 1965, shows that construction of the diesel depot at Ebbw Junction has just begun. In the background the repair shop of the steam shed is still in use and an English Electric type 3 locomotive can be seen in the lifting bay.

GWR Paddington Collection

Continuing the series of articles on sheds and works whose latter days have not been reported correctly, Roger Butcher discusses the need for an accurate list of when sheds were demolished and which steam locomotive sheds saw further use as diesel locomotive stabling points.

The opportunity is then taken to update ESS members on a number of matters, including the ongoing work of the HSBT team.

Thanks in no small part to ESS members such as Paul Smith, Roger Griffiths and Eddie Lyons, a wealth of accurate and properly researched information has been published on steam locomotive sheds. Whether it be the design of the building, its opening and closure dates or its OS reference, those of us who love engine sheds can count themselves very lucky that such marvellous reference books have been published.

Coupled with the books written by Chris Hawkins, George Reeve and John Hooper, my library is well-stocked with reference material I can trust. As regards the post-closure history of locomotive sheds/sites, the 121 issues of *Link* are an essential reference source for anyone writing about this aspect of locomotive shed history. Whilst many ESS members have contributed valuable information over the thirty plus years of the Society's existence, it is Philip Stuart's contribution that should be highlighted. Quite simply what Philip has achieved in the last three decades is remarkable.

MIND THE GAP

There is, however, one period/aspect of steam locomotive shed history where the quality of published reference material leaves me visibly cringing. Naively, I had anticipated that Roger Harris' shed code section in his recently-published *The Allocation History of BR Diesels & Electrics. Third & Final Edition* would reflect – at a minimum – the wealth of relevant material published in *Link* on demolition dates and where steam locomotive sheds saw further use as diesel locomotive stabling points. Within moments of glancing through that section of Roger Harris' book I realised that there was a definite need for an accurate list (as far as possible) to be published somewhere.

If not, it will only be a matter of time before Roger Harris' listing is copied by someone on an internet site and becomes 'fact' because 'it's on the internet'! So, volunteers please to organise a simple listing on the ESS website that reflects this gap in railway locomotive shed history.

NEWPORT EBBW JUNCTION SHED

So, for example, where Roger Harris' listing says for Swansea (Paxton Street) Shed that it was demolished between December 1962 to January 1966, the entry would be amended to 'between 11/64 to 1/66' as it is known that the shed building still stood when I visited it on November 7th, 1964 ([Link 110](#)).

And before anyone suggests that was an isolated error, I need to point out I could write a series of articles on the errors on South Wales alone. ESS member Rowland Pittard, I am quite sure, with his incredible knowledge of South Wales sheds from the 1960s, could provide an almost complete picture regarding approximate or precise demolition dates and which sheds continued in use as stabling points for months or years afterwards.

As regards the context of this article, let me highlight the locomotive shed that gave its name to my publishing company *NPT Publishing* – Newport Ebbw Junction, formerly Great Western Railway code NPT. According to Roger Harris' book, the shed was demolished in February 1966. That date immediately looks suspicious because it is only some four months after the shed was closed. And the simple reality is that most steam locomotive sheds survived for at least 18 months to two years after they were closed, even if they did not become a diesel locomotive stabling point.

In simple terms, once a steam locomotive shed was closed, a decision needed to be taken as to whether it was required for other purposes such as a wagon repair depot or for engineers' use. Once that process was completed and if there was no further requirement for the structure, and it could/should be demolished, competitive tenders needed to be sent out to suitable contractors to bid for the contract to demolish the shed. Then a company needed to be selected and a timescale agreed for when the work was to be carried out.

Once one understands the basic process detailed above, it is easy to understand why there was almost always a significant time lapse between a shed closure date and its subsequent demolition. Whilst the above also explains why the vast majority of closed sheds (from recent years) that Terry Hayward and I visited during our relentless shed-bashing between July 1964 and January 1967 were still standing when we visited them.

A fact I am very grateful for as it enabled me to stand inside closed sheds (such as Neyland on November 7th, 1964) and imagine what I would have seen if I had visited the shed before it closed. As regards that shed, ESS member Richard Parker's excellent book on Neyland states the demolition gang arrived in 1965, and so provides additional evidence to disprove the "demolished by 1964" reference in Roger Harris' book.

There were, of course, a number of sheds where demolition did follow very quickly after closure, one example being Eastbourne, which was probably the most derelict (active) shed on BR at the time.



This post-April 1966 photograph shows the diesel depot now open with the steam shed still in the background.

Mike McCleure

MONMOUTHSHIRE RAILWAY SOCIETY

Returning to Newport Ebbw Junction Shed, I am very grateful to Ray Viney, Editor of the *Monmouthshire Railway Society Journal*, for detailing below when the shed was really demolished. In his own words Ray, a new ESS member, explains what happened after the steam shed closed on October 4th, 1965.

"My family home was on Cardiff Road opposite the Ebbw Bridge Club and I made many a visit to the nearby shed in my youth. When the shed closed it was around six months before the replacement diesel shed was opened at the top end of the steam locomotive shed yard. During that transition period, English Electric type 3 diesel locomotives were kept in the steam shed repair shop.

However, as the approach lines had been lifted, access could only be made by entering on the western side of the shed on to the turntable, across to the (other) east turntable and out of the shed to a single line adjacent to the repair shop and then on to the traverser. Quite a journey!

As regards when the steam shed was demolished, I wandered through the derelict shed until the summer of 1967 and I would estimate demolition took place late 1967, early 1968. It was I believe demolished by the summer of 1968 as I am aware of a visit report to the diesel shed in September 1968 which stated the steam shed was gone."

THE DIESEL DISPOSAL FABRICATIONS

ESS member John Hall's article in Link 116 revealed the extent of the diesel disposal fabrications that have found their way into railway history. The amount of diligent and hard work John has put into this subject, along with Peter Hall, is remarkable. It was, therefore, the height of discourtesy to see the information copied out in Roger Harris' new book without even a proper acknowledgement to John and Peter's work or the Engine Shed Society - our society being the main regular communication channel for exposing the fantasies of the notorious ex-RCTS member from Northampton.

Even more disappointing was that it is highly likely that some of the purchasers of Roger's book may have information that could have been of value to John and Peter in their efforts to unravel the deceit that has tainted this aspect of railway history. A simple request for anyone who has any information at all on the listed locomotives to get in contact with John or Peter (and their email addresses) was all that was needed.

LONDON'S ENGINE SHEDS

Whilst the lack of acknowledgement referenced above is unlikely to have caused the publisher to have lost any sales, that certainly cannot be said of the acknowledgement to Peter Hands in Booklaw's *London's Engine Sheds - Volumes 1 and 2*. Quite why the authors chose to alienate potential purchasers by publicly listing the discredited *What Happened to Steam* books amongst their acknowledgments is beyond my comprehension. If they really believe that the so-called revised version can be trusted, it is really quite sad that two well-respected authors on locomotive shed history should open themselves to ridicule by including disposal information fabricated in a terraced house in Northampton.

So, for example, page six of Volume 2 has a photograph of 68542 at Stratford with a caption which includes the words "No.68542 finished its career with a two-year residency at 30A. It was condemned 16th September 1962, aged 70 years, and cut up at Stratford where it had all begun in 1892". Really! The accompanying extract from the file of Zulu's letters we possess shows the origin of the information!

Turning to page ten, a photograph of 65445 on Stratford Shed includes the words "No.65445 was scrapped here at Stratford, its place of birth." Really! The photograph on the following page tells a different story!

The reality is that scrapping at Stratford Works ceased whilst the adjacent locomotive shed still had steam locomotives awaiting disposal. It is believed that up to fifteen locomotives from Stratford Shed were instead scrapped at King, Brunswick Junction, Poplar but only Departmental 33 and 65445 have so far been positively identified. What is certain though is that those locomotives listed by Zulu as being scrapped at Stratford Works between November 1962 and January 1963 were not, the works scrapyards having already closed!

As regards the specific content of these two books, I would highly recommend that anyone who was fortunate to visit some, most or all of these sheds buys both books. The books will bring back many marvellous memories! For myself, I was fortunate enough to see steam at 15 of the 18 sheds featured, only Devons Road, Hornsey and Stewarts Lane having lost their steam allocation before my first visit. I was particularly impressed with the format which included a potted history of each shed, an excellent range of photographs with

68499	Stratford works	1/63
68542	" "	1/63
68600	" "	1/63
68609	" "	1/63
68621	" "	1/63
68665	" "	1/63
Dept 32 ex	68270 S.W.	11/62
Dept 45 ex	68543 S.W.	11/62
Dept 44 ex	68490 S.W.	11/62

Stratford steam disposals - the Zulu version. An extract from one of the infamous letters from the fantasist from Northampton.
Roger Butcher Collection



J15 0-6-0 No. **65445** and Y4 0-4-0T Departmental No. **33** at the virtually unknown scrapyard at Brunswick Junction, Poplar, on March 9th, 1964. It is here that up to 15 of the last Stratford steam locomotives are believed to have been scrapped.
Peter Groom

interesting captions, as well as a number of 'seen on shed' listings for each depot. To my mind this is a winning format and I will repeat my offer published in the October 2010 issue of *The Railway Magazine* "the team will consider assisting publishers and other providers of information with specific data to ensure its accuracy".

In the case of the above two books, where the number of locomotives with disposal details needing verifying was in single figures, it was comfortably within the parameters we are currently able to help on.

STEAM WORLD

In both *Link* 117 and 118 I expressed the hope that *Steam World* would publish a correction to the alleged photograph of Oswestry Works that it published in its February 2016 issue. I am very pleased to say that – thanks to ESS member Keith Gunner – a correction was published in the January 2017 issue. The photograph of Oswestry Works published in *Link* 115 was also included with the correction and due acknowledgement given to the Engine Shed Society. Such publicity in the main railway magazines always helps the Society and will no doubt have contributed to our recent influx of new members.

Bizarrely, the photographer concerned complained to the ESS editor about the tone of my comments and stated "it is apparent that readers generally accept the odd mistake and move on".

Fortunately, the editor of *Steam World* took a different view, Andrew Roden distancing himself from the photographer's stated position above. And making it clear that the photographer had never subsequently briefed him that the photograph of Oswestry Works was, in reality, Worcester Works.

LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY

One can speculate as to why a small clique of railway authors and photographers are so desperate to conceal their mistakes. For my own part, it was drummed into me at Portsmouth Grammar School that in life you must take responsibility for your mistakes and apologise when appropriate.

I, therefore, have no problem with apologising for the error in *Link* 118 when the storage of 30067 from 24-2-68 to 1-3-68 was listed as Bath Green Park instead of Bath Westmoreland Road Yard. Although I noticed the error before the magazine left the printers, it was not practicable to delay sending out the magazine because of the printer's summer holidays and the need to give sufficient notice of the Society's AGM. Hence a note to myself to publish a correction in my next *What Really* article and I have!

HSBT PROJECT

Firstly, very many thanks to everyone who responded to my appeal in *Link* 118 for the loan of their notebooks. Or, in the case of ESS member Alan Inder, his father's notebooks! We are now approaching the final phase of chasing for information and the location (and timespan) of where a locomotive was stored after withdrawal continues to be a prime focus of our work, so wretched is the information already published.

As to the order of publication of our books, it is almost certain that the Southern Region will be the first book to be published, the second draft having just been returned to Terry Hayward for checking. Terry continues to work on the Western Region book and, as he said to me when I saw him recently, it is hard to find two consecutive entries that are the same as in the *What Happened to Steam* (WHTS) booklets! But maybe Terry's exact words were not as polite as that!

Terry is, of course, the H in HSBT and I regard my chance meeting with him on Eastleigh Shed on July 12th, 1964 as quite the luckiest occurrence of my 60 years of trainspotting. Not only do Terry and I have the same DNA where our wonderful hobby is concerned but it was Terry whose meticulous analysis of the Cashmore records was the inspiration for the formation of the 'What Really Happened to Steam' Project. And it will be Terry whose name is in the title of my next shed-bashing article for *Link*!
