

# Diary of a Loco Spotter

by Eddie Rathmill - 1978

I had visited Doncaster many times in steam days and on a couple of occasions between 1976 and 1978 - what had happened to St Sepulchre Gate?

I needed only one Deltic to clear the class and so on May 13<sup>th</sup> I set off from Manchester Piccadilly in the hope of seeing "BALLYMOSS". Unfortunately, although I saw ten different 55s, I didn't manage to see 018 and I returned home disappointed.

In June and July I visited Doncaster again and copped a few newly named 50's but I still couldn't find "BALLYMOSS". Crewe was also visited three times in this period, in the hope of clearing my 87s, and in this respect I was lucky, seeing them all bar one (87005).

The next major trip I made was to the Derby Works Open Day on August 5th where three of the original Peaks were to be seen: - 44002, 44005 and 44008 - also a rake of APT coaches - and then, a week later I returned to Crewe; this time seeing "City of London" but not much else. Visits to Wath, Doncaster (again) Reddish, Longsight and Newton Heath followed and on the 30<sup>th</sup> of the month I decided to pay my first visit to the London termini. I went round all the main stations and also visited Cricklewood, Finsbury Park and Stratford seeing Eastern Region emus for the first time. - I also recorded an 86, no. 86040, which, to this day, remains a puzzle!

September 9<sup>th</sup>, and my first visit to the new museum at York, followed a week later by a further visit to Crewe Works. HSTs were still being built; the latest (in the paint shop) being 43115 - I still hadn't travelled on a "Banana" though! - This was rectified on September 23<sup>rd</sup> - by accident - Three of us had booked on a Round Robin trip from Manchester to London via Swansea. We left Piccadilly early in the morning, being pulled by 86235 and, after changing engines for 47438 at Birmingham, arrived at Cardiff to be informed that the train was going no further due to an industrial dispute at Swansea. However, we were told that there was an HST due from Paddington in about half an hour that was going to Swansea and we could board it if we wished. - We didn't need asking twice! .....We arrived at Swansea extremely impressed to find that our next leg of the trip was on the HST on which we had just arrived! It didn't need much discussion before we decided to pay the £1 supplement to travel first class and so we rode to London in style - If this was the new age of travel I was all for it.

October 21<sup>st</sup> saw a visit to Toton, Derby, Wath and Doncaster, where behind the Plant I saw the elusive 55018 - my last Deltic. Two days later I saw my last 81 (81021) at Manchester Piccadilly - quite a week.

It was at this point that I read an advertisement in a magazine for a special day trip from Oldham to London (on November 11<sup>th</sup>), picking-up at my local station, Hollinwood. I'd heard so much about Clapham Junction that I decided to take the opportunity to visit this Railway Mecca.

Haulage to Warrington was by 40107, with a change of engine to 86025 for the onward journey to Euston. A quick transfer by tube and SR unit from Waterloo and then it was five hours on Britain's busiest station - and writer's cramp! I returned from the Capital pulled by 85011 and 40171 after an extremely enjoyable, but exhausting day.

Another visit to Crewe Works with NREA on November 18<sup>th</sup> followed, where the HST production was now up to 43126, and the final visit of the year was to Tinsley on December 12<sup>th</sup> where all three class 13s were present.