

Diary of a Loco Spotter

Eddie Rathmill - 1979

1978 had been a good year - but this year I decided that I would try and visit some new places - how about Newcastle, Norwich, The Barry Scrapyard? -

First though I headed for Dinting on January 13th. "Bittern", "Blue Peter", "Bahamas", "Leander" and "Scots Guardsman" were all there and gave me an incredible nostalgic feeling.....

Ah well, back to modern traction and a visit once again to Crewe on the 20th of the month to see the recently out shopped Scottish push-pull 47 "Saint Andrew" but not before I'd copped my last 85 (85028) at Piccadilly on June 19th.

On the 27th I went on a Midlands tour with The Lancashire Locomotive Society - Buxton, Toton, Derby Works, Bescot and Tyseley were all visited and everything was noted down. My book was filling rapidly but I hadn't yet reached the stage where I was searching for any particular loco from any of the larger classes (although my 40s were getting pretty near the end). I did however, need only one electric engine and I made a point of trying to find 86019 - it was a further two months before I was successful.

On February 3rd I went to York and it was here that I decided to start collecting HST stock, noting down my first thirty or forty numbers - this was easy, I'd soon clear them! - That is unless they started to renumber them?..... - little was I to know.

Eleven days later and I headed for Glasgow and rode on the old-fashioned push-pull system for the first time, 27107 pulling - 27205 pushing. An hour in Edinburgh, and then back to Glasgow - to have a look at Eastfield.

Another Midlands trip followed on the 24th and this time I went to Tinsley, Shirebrook, Westhouses and Barrow Hill; the latter reminding me of the old days at Holbeck!

A short journey to Liverpool on March 10th to spot some old 502s and some new 507s and then yet another visit to Crewe on the 17th where the HST production was now up to 43136. London followed on the 21st and at last I saw 86019, clearing my electrics.

My first visit to Knottingley took place on April 7th - what a lot of locos for such a small place! - although they had to be viewed from the hill even in those days.

- Then, the first of my ambitions realised -... *Newcastle* - I'd dreamt about going there in steam days (to get my Streaks and A2s) but I could never afford it. Now I was travelling there in luxury aboard an HST. Several Gateshead 40s were copped and I was left needing only one whistler to clear the class - from Haymarket. - I decided to make another trip to Edinburgh.

Ten days later I boarded the early morning train at platform 11 on Manchester Victoria Station and set out on my quest - but to no avail - 40062 was nowhere to be seen. It was to be nearly another month before I had the pleasure - at Crewe Works on the 19th of May - and Doncaster, Derby, Toton and London had been visited in those four weeks!

I had always been one for open days and so when Toton Depot held an event on June 9th I made sure I didn't miss it, also visiting Tinsley, Shirebrook, Westhouses and Barrow Hill. I was now getting quite use to these places!

Then on June 16th I did something new, spending the day by the side of the Lickey Incline with The Lancashire Locomotive Society. - Not a single banker showed up in 6 hours!

In consolation we went to Birmingham where the highlight was a packed out Sallay. London, June 27th and I saw my first Waterloo and City Cars - one more visit should clear them! Then

it was Crewe on July 21st, Leeds on August 8th and then ten days to look forward to the outing of the year in totally new territory.....

My first overnight trip - East Anglia: Lancashire Loco was certainly proving to be a good organisation. I'll never forget that August Saturday night. We'd been travelling several hours when we were all woken up with the usual, "Right lads, we're here", - "Where's here", I thought, - it was pitch black outside! Chesterton Junction at 2.30 in the morning is not the best of places to start searching for locos, but that's exactly what we did, and it was only after walking for about half a mile that we started to wonder whether the leader of the party was out of his mind. Half of us had torches and we could just about see where we were going when suddenly it seemed like daylight! Several floodlights were all switched on at once and a voice boomed out "Who's down there?" - In unison, we all shouted back - "We're just looking for the 08" and then, in the welcome light we found that we were stood right next to it! - "Get out" shouted the voice from above... - We were happy to oblige.

The following Wednesday I decided to go to Scotland again, this time visiting Motherwell - there wasn't much there but the foreman allowed me round the shed and so several 08s were copped. The best sighting of the day however, (although I wasn't to realise it until sometime later) was that of emu no. 314001, which very quickly had its number changed to 314201.

September 12th and a day I had been looking forward to for several months. I set off from Manchester Piccadilly pulled by 85022 and headed for Birmingham. A change of engine to 47080 "TITAN" and then on to Cardiff where I had a 'field day' with DMUs, copping no less than 112. Then it was a quick trip to Barry to visit the steam graveyard and depression set in!

I just couldn't believe it - 111 rotting hulks, which had once been proud engines. I walked round noting the numbers and later on found that I had copped 75! Other cops that day included 27 BR locos, 3 HST Power Cars, 6 HST trailers and 3 emus!

Crewe Open Day followed on the 22nd with visits to Northwich, Arpley, Springs Branch and Guide Bridge included in the itinerary and then a few days rest before a very hectic October.

I made six trips during the month - two to Blackpool (where I saw over half the trams), one to Middlesbrough, copping my first Tyne & Wear Metro car at York Museum, en route, and three times to London; the first via Reading, the second direct and the third via Leeds..

November 3rd and my first visit to Allerton Depot. "Can I have a look around, please" I asked the foreman. "Yes if you buy a badge" he replied. I looked up at a card behind the door which stated "*badges 30p each - all proceeds to charity*" - I bought one and joined several other people walking round the depot - all wearing badges!

A week later and it was time to revisit Crewe Works where the HST production was now up to 43152 (although 43124 was still to be seen).

Doncaster again on the 17th, and then nothing for three weeks.

Two more trips followed before Christmas; the first to Bristol and the second to Crewe and Derby, and then I began to plan for 1980. There was still one more trip in 1979 though - an impromptu visit on the 29th to Liverpool where, on the return journey, I had the fortune to be hauled between Lime Street and Manchester Victoria by Deltic 55019 "ROYAL HIGHLAND FUSILIER".