

# Diary of a Loco Spotter

## Eddie Rathmill - Introduction

Living only a few hundred yards from the main Newcastle - Liverpool line I was bound to take an interest in railways and so it was in 1956, at the age of eleven, that I noted down my first number - 45519 "Lady Godiva".

My enthusiasm progressed rapidly and within a couple of months I was visiting places such as Leeds (climbing the stone wall at the back of Holbeck), York, where on my first visit I saw four "Streaks", Bushbury - for those elusive "Jubs" and Doncaster where a trip to the canal bank, behind "The Plant", was "a must".

Like many other spotters at the time, my prime interest was to see all the "namers" and for five years I went everywhere that my pocket-money would allow with the aim of clearing all the London Midland and Eastern Regions. I made regular visits to all the local sheds on my bike: - Newton Heath, Longsight and Trafford Park were visited every Sunday. (I recall vividly the day when the ex Southern Region "Brits" were transferred north).

Then in 1962, having seen all the named engines on the LMS (with the exception of four Scottish Jubilees), and only needing a handful of Eastern namers (including two A4s) - plus two Britannias, I suddenly lost interest.

- I took up watching football as a hobby and it was fourteen years before I even travelled on a train again!

On August 28<sup>th</sup> 1976 my team, Bury, were playing at York and Derrick Armstrong, my mate, who had also lost interest in railways several years before, suggested we to go to the match by train. I was reluctant at first but eventually he persuaded me and so off we drove to Huddersfield Station.

First stop Leeds - Oh, how times had changed - no steam whatsoever; just tin boxes on wheels ..... I had seen several diesels being built, and recorded quite a few numbers in my Ian Allan combined in 1962, but I had never quite taken to them. I was certainly not impressed by the "new age" at the old City station.

And then suddenly I heard a noise - an incredible noise - and I looked out of the window to see a massive engine getting ready to pull out. I watched in fascination. The loco was reminiscent of DELTIC which I had seen years before at Doncaster; but surely it hadn't made that din! I noted the number on a piece of paper - 55007 "PINZA".

A week later I bought the latest Ian Allan Combined Volume!

For two years I revisited my old spotting haunts underlining all my sightings - there weren't many named engines but it didn't really matter. I'd got the bug again! The only regret I have is that, after recording my numbers each trip, I destroyed the original jottings.

In 1978 I realised my error and on May 13<sup>th</sup> I started to create what was to become a massive database of information.