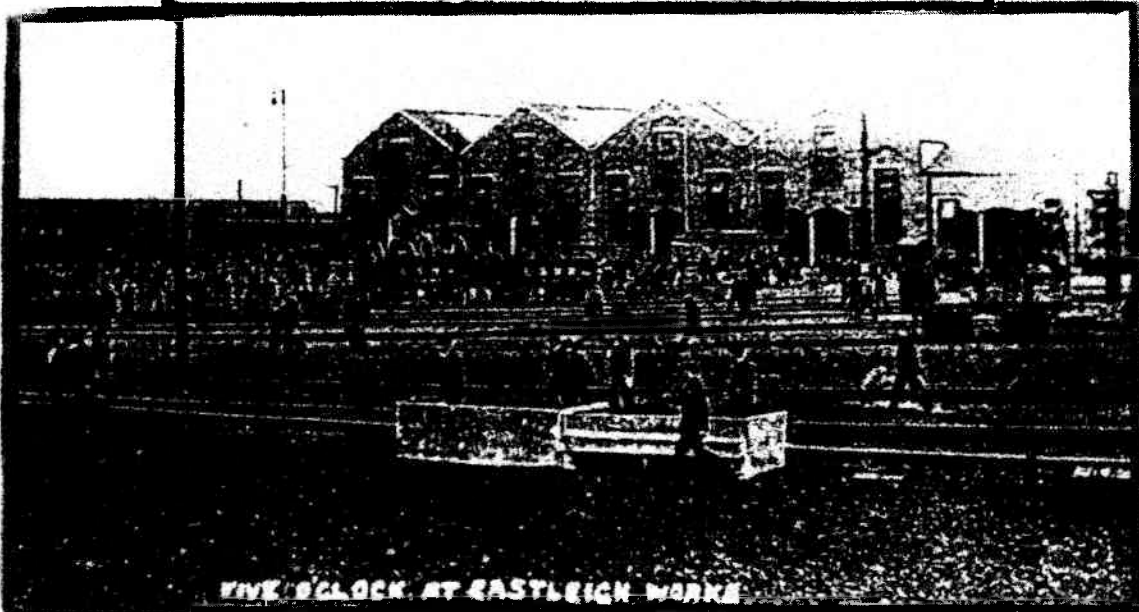
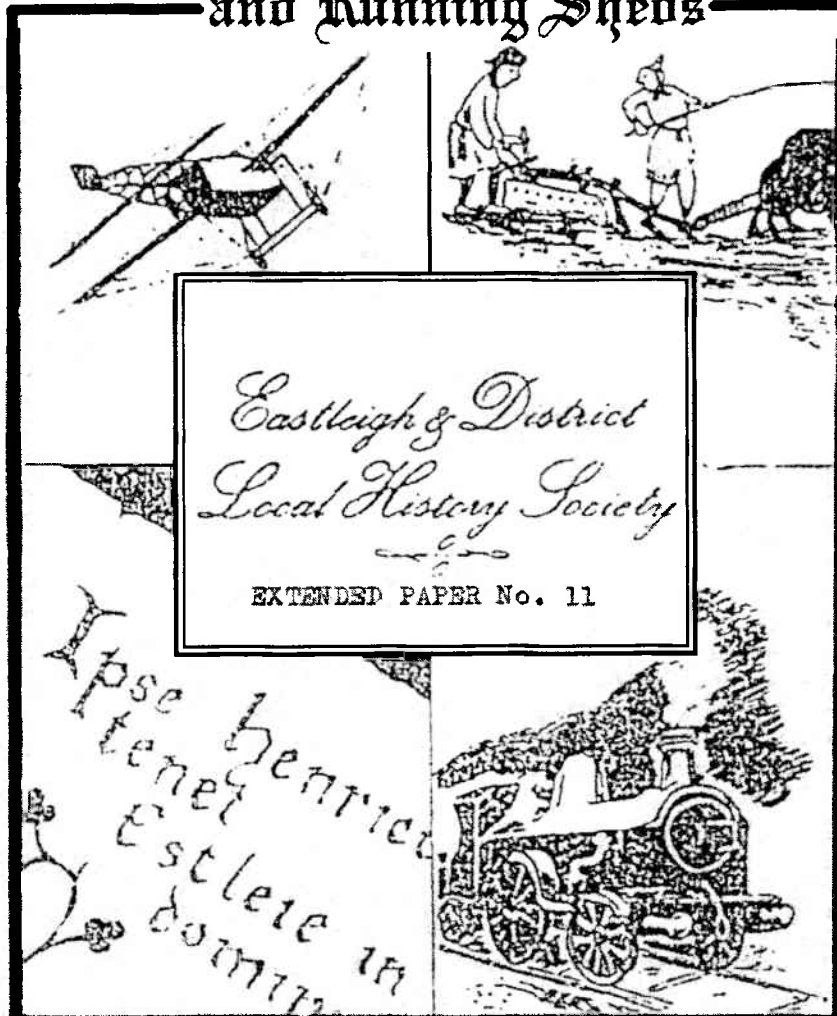
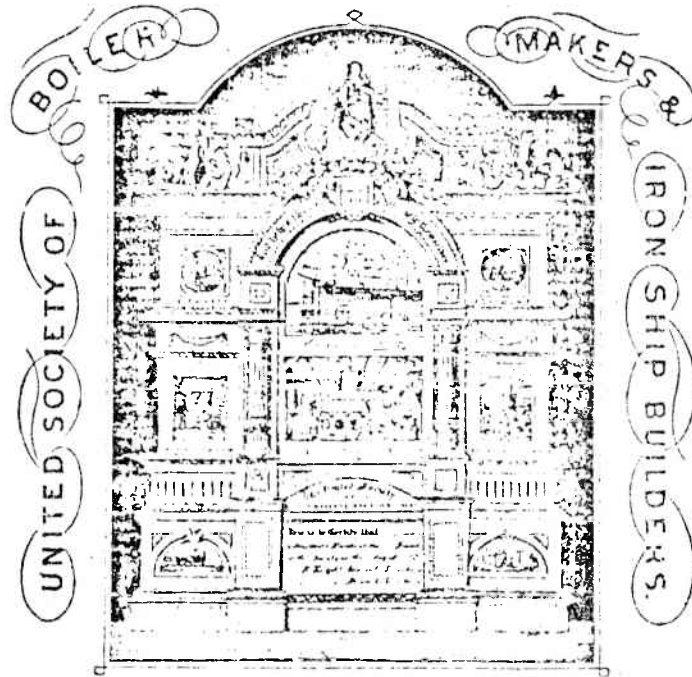


Trialz and Tribulations of Working in Kastleigh Locomotive Works and Running Sheds



This card not to be used to obtain employment.



This is to Certify
that *William J. Bishop* has been
accepted by this Society as an apprentice and he agrees with
his employer *M. Kustner, Railway*
to serve an apprenticeship for the term of five years to
commence on the _____ day of _____ 19____ at the age
of _____ years.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF we have subscribed our names,
and affixed the seal of our branch, *Coyne*
on the _____ day of *February* 19____

Seal

A. Campbell President.
J. L. Ryan Secretary

THE SUM OF 2/- MUST BE CHARGED FOR THIS CARD.

A copy of my Boilermakers Society Card.
(Notice the word Society - not Union.)
I had to be a member to work in the Boiler Shop.

EASTLEIGH LOCO WORKS AND RUNNING SHED 1928-34

I first became associated with Eastleigh in October 1928 when I was transferred from Fratton Loco Running Shed to Eastleigh Works as a Boilersmith's Apprentice. I reported to the Staff Office and was taken to the Boiler Shop where I was to work. I was interviewed by Mr Staples, the Assistant Foreman, who wanted to know the kind of work I had been doing at Fratton. When I told him, he said none of it would be of use to me in the Works as it was classed as semi-skilled work and done by semi-skilled men. As far as boiler making was concerned I knew nothing at all. I had to start at the bottom which was rivetting. The Rivet Gangs were made up of a Rivetter, a Holder-up, an Apprentice and a Fireboy. The latter was a boy between fourteen and sixteen years of age waiting to commence his apprenticeship or a man on a light job. The Rivetter gave me a long shafted hammer and innocently I said: "What do I do with it?" He looked at me in disbelief and disgust and said: "After I hit the rivet, you hit it". This was double-handed rivetting. I had never seen it done before, let alone do it. The Rivetter sent for the Foreman and said: "I have my piece-work to earn and cannot spare the time to teach him to use a hammer". Other apprentices at my age could do a boilermaker's work and I could not even use a hammer. Mr Staples was right; I did not know anything about boilermaking. After he had seen several Chargemen, who all turned me down, one agreed to give me a trial. I think he was told if I could not earn my piece-work it would be made up from the office. The Chargeman was Sid Shipp, who was an easy going quiet man. Maybe that was why he gave me a chance as most Chargemen were strict and hard. There was only three of us on the "Gang", the other being John Lowe, a young boilermaker just out of his time. There were only four gangs in the Works, known as Patchers because they repaired all the fireboxes. I was fortunate to get on one of them as it was as high as an apprentice could get and I remained with my two Mates all the time I was in the Works.

Although working at Eastleigh, I travelled with twelve others from Portsmouth every day. We left Portsmouth on the 6.00 a.m. train and arrived at Eastleigh at 7.00 a.m. This gave us time to call in the Beehive Restaurant on the corner of Southampton and Factory roads. The Proprietor was an Austrian, Bill Fulkner, who always had a cup of tea poured out waiting for us. He was good to us and a friend to us all. Leaving the Restaurant, we usually passed the girls from Campbell Road on their way to the Carriage Works. There was the usual joking and banter between us. As we made our way down the steps through the Works Gates, I thought the following words would be appropriate: "*Abandon Hope, all Ye who enter here*", because that is what I did every time I went through them.

There were no time clocks in the Shops as today. You collected a check from an office at the bottom of the steps with your number on it; mine was 1546. The checks had to be picked up before the Works hooter stopped blowing at 7.30 a.m. or 1.00 p.m. As soon as it stopped all windows were slammed down, on your fingers if you did not get them out of the way quickly enough. Staff were permitted to sign on until 8.00 a.m., but lost half an hour's pay. Any later, you lost the morning's pay. No time was allowed at 1.00 p.m. for being late, you lost a half day's pay.

If we missed the early train from Portsmouth we did not get to Eastleigh until 8.15 a.m. and were permitted to sign on at 8.30 a.m., the only members of the staff to be granted such a privilege. The Foremen walked through the Shop at 7.40 a.m. and everyone had to be working. No time to discuss the morning news or read the newspapers. We had no morning tea or lunch break and had to have any refreshment on our job, keeping our eyes open for the Foreman. Some men boiled a can of water on the rivetter's fire. These were worked by compressed air and the can could be left until the water boiled. The Chief Foreman, Mr Carnie, walking through the Shop one morning, saw a can on one of the fires and stood by it until the water boiled away and the can fell to pieces. The man to whom it belonged would rather lose it than claim it while the Foreman was there.

We were also not permitted to stop in the Workshops during the dinner meal break and the Manager often walked through them to make sure everyone was out. We had no facilities for cleaning ourselves, or washing our hands. My job was to get a bucket of water and heat a large piece of iron in one of the Rivetter's fires and drop it in the bucket. One day when the iron was getting hot for our midday break, I saw the Foreman approaching. He had noticed the air to one of the fires was still on. I quickly took the iron out and dropped it into the pit behind me, at the same time shutting the air off at the main tap on the wall. The Foreman looked in the fire, saw nothing and walked on. I was fortunate, because had there been paper or inflammable material in the pit he would have seen plenty and I would have been in dire trouble.

We were not permitted to leave our Shop until the hooter blew at 12.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. and then it was everyone for himself as we rushed across the yard to drop our checks in the boxes at the time office. The only time we were granted five minutes was Fridays when we were paid. We lined up outside the office and received a tin with our number on it and our wages inside. If we were not in our right place, we missed our turn and had to wait until last. The empty tins we threw into a large basket at the bottom of the Shop to be collected for the next week.

At the bottom of the steps were two buildings like sentry boxes. In one was the Works policeman, who had authority to search anyone leaving the Works. On two occasions, I was stopped and searched, including my food box. He found nothing as I did not want anything to remind me of Eastleigh Works; I wanted to forget it but I had to carry on as my father and myself signed credentials that I would serve five years as a Boilersmith's Apprentice but I did not know that included going to Eastleigh Works or paying part of my railway fare between Portsmouth and Eastleigh. This was deducted from my wages each week.

The Boiler Shop was in No.1 bay alongside the Eastleigh-Portsmouth railway line. The next two bays were the Erecting Shops where locos were dismantled, repaired and rebuilt. Bay No.4 was where new locos were built. At the bottom of the Boiler Shop was the weigh table where repaired locos were weighed and springs adjusted. The man who did this was known as "Elmo" as he was so strong he could lift loco springs on his own. I never did know his surname. Next to the weigh table was the lower part of the Boiler Shop where the tenders were repaired and then the boilers. Two overhead cranes ran the length of the Shop, lifting boilers and turning them on their sides or backs. They did not lift boilers off the loco frames as this was fitter's work and done in the Erecting Shop by their cranes. The boilers were then loaded onto a trolley on rails and pushed through into the Boiler Shop.

Most of our work was repairing fireboxes which at this time were all copper. We did not repair the steel boilers or smoke boxes; this was Plater's work and the copper stays were Semi-Skilled Stayer's work. All work was done with hand tools as we did not have any machines; only Drillers and Stayers had pneumatic air drills. Fortunately I could use a hand hammer as we did not have any machines at Fratton. However, I was not so good with a large hammer as my Mate found out one day when I dropped it on his head. This necessitated him visiting the Ambulance Room. Fortunately, it was not the Chageman, otherwise I might have been on the move again. My Mates were very patient with me and I soon earned my own piece-work.

After years of fires, the bottom of the sides of the fireboxes became burnt and worn. To save the cost of new fireboxes new plates were fitted to them. First, the Drillers drilled the stays and rivets out of the outer steel plate and then it was our work. The two sides were between six and eight feet long and $\frac{5}{8}$ " thick. Having no machines, they had to be cut with hand cross cut chisels and a hand hammer. I was left on my own to do this; maybe my Mates remembered the large hammer incident. The only one I could injure was myself if I missed the chisel and hit my hand.

I must have hit that chisel many thousands of times before the plates were down. When they were, we took them across the yard on a hand trolley (no such things as mechanical trucks) to the forge. Our new plates were marked off from the old plates, which were then cut up on the forge heavy shears for scrap. The new plates were brought back to the Drillers who drilled them for the smallest size stay 1". Many holes in the outer steel plate were larger than this and they had to be reduced in size. We first opened them up and screwed in steel bushes which were then drilled for the smallest size stay. It was slow hard work as it had to be done with hand ratchets. Our Chargeman decided to make the work easier for us. He borrowed one of the Stayer's powerful air machines which speeded the work up. The Chargeman kept a look out for the Foreman as we were paid for doing it by hand but he caught us with the machines. He said in future the work would be done by machines and paid machine price. He cut the price of each hole from one shilling and eleven pence, (9½p) to one shilling (5p). This was one of the best paid jobs as there were two or three hundred bushes in some fireboxes and to have the price cut by nearly 100% did not please the other Patchers. The new plates were fastened to the old plates with steel studs which were rivetted and caulked. All work was inspected by the Foreman and if he saw any hammer marks on the new plate he would say, "What are you doing putting your names and address on it?"

During 1929 the Chief Foreman, Mr Carnie, retired and Joe Staples, who should have taken his place, passed away before doing so. The man appointed as Chief Foreman was Charlie Soar and his Assistant was Plater Jimmie Hayes. Coming from the working grades they knew all the tricks of the trade as we soon found out. The Works Manager also retired and Mr E.A. Turbett was appointed Works Manager. He was a live wire; no one knew where or when he would turn up. He looked in fireboxes and boilers, thus keeping us all on our toes. It was not long before I had a letter from him wanting to know why I was not attending evening classes at Southampton College? If I did not, it was unlikely that I would continue to be employed on the railway after I had completed my apprenticeship. As most apprentices were dismissed after five years, this did not worry me and I still did not attend evening classes.

Our new Foreman appointed a Checker to check all work as Chargemen had been booking their own work. He marked all work with chalk which sometimes got rubbed off and was booked again. The Foreman stopped this by giving the Checker white paint which did not rub off.

Some locos only came to the Works for light repairs and in most cases the boilers were not taken off their frames, the work being done in the Erecting Shop. This was the only time their Foreman permitted us in his Shop. If he found us in there any other time we were reported to our own Foreman.

A Drummond T.9. class loco came into the Works for the renewal of the large super tubes. My Mate did the firebox end whilst I did them in the smoke box. I was working with a long tool outside the smoke box when I slipped and fell to the ground. I was badly shaken but did not go to the ambulance room as I should have done. After this, I was scared to work in front of the loco and when it was tested in steam several of my tubes leaked. When the Foreman, Mr. Soar, saw them he said "Whoever did this work deserves to be dismissed". Being an Apprentice he could not do this as my Mate was responsible for my work. This was one of the last locos to come to the Works for the renewal of super tubes as it became normal practice to renew them in Running Sheds.

Working in a firebox, I slipped and injured my arm on a sharp stay. This time I had no choice but to go to the Ambulance Room. The Attendant was only a First Aider as I was myself. The injury was too bad for him to deal with so he sent me to the Doctor who was, in those days, Doctor Garrett. No one came with me and it took me some time to find his surgery as I did not know Eastleigh. After having the wound stitched, I returned to the Works, signed off and went home for two weeks. You did not receive any pay from the railway when off sick and I had to exist, as I remember, on fifteen shillings (75p) a week. There were trained Aiders in most shops but in general the treatment of injuries was very poor. A meeting was held of all members of the staff and all agreed to contribute one penny a week to buy an ambulance for use of the Works staff. I never saw the ambulance as I had left the Works before they had enough money to buy one.

It was October 8th, 1930, that I completed my five years as an Apprentice but was not a boilermaker as I still had to serve another two years as an Improver before receiving top boilermaker's rate. I was fortunate not to be dismissed or transferred to other work but as I could now do a boilermaker's work my Mate kept me with him. My average wage with piece-work and bonus was £3.50 a week, quite a good wage for my age of twenty one. This helped to compensate me for the long hours I was away from home.

We worked no overtime, Saturday morning being part of our normal week. On the other hand, we were not on short time as were many other railway workshops. The Works were closed every Bank and Public holiday and we were shut out from Friday to Tuesday without pay, also Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday. We did not have any annual holiday with pay.

As stated, the Boiler Shop was in No.1 bay alongside the Portsmouth - Eastleigh railway line on an outside wall. Half way along the wall were two openings which were the toilets. There were about twenty, which were separated by thin wood partitions with half doors so that anyone in them could be seen from outside. There were no toilet seats as we knew them, only a long four inch wide plank which went from one end of the toilet to the other and no such thing as toilet paper or facilities for washing hands. You just took your own paper with you. It was not an ideal place to “nod off” as you could fall backwards with unfortunate consequences. At regular intervals the trough was flushed by running water. If the toilet at the end was empty someone with a sense of humour would wait until the water started running and light newspapers which floated on the water under the men in the other toilets. By the time they got off their seats and opened the door the culprit was far away.

Saturday morning was the time to pay all club and union dues. This was usually done in the toilets, not an ideal place, but the only one where you could have a quiet smoke, as smoking was banned in the Works. One Saturday our boiler was opposite the toilets with the firebox facing them. Looking out through the fire hole, I saw the two Foremen making their way towards the toilets. They were too near for me to warn anyone and one stood at each door. As the men came out their checks were taken and they were booked off at 10.30 a.m., losing one and a half hours pay. Coming from the working grades, the Foremen knew about the Saturday meetings in the toilets. They never caught anyone again as someone always kept a look out.

Late 1930 or early 1931, the Southern Railway began to run Brighton Works down. Most machines were moved to Ashford or Eastleigh Works with many of the staff. Many Brighton boilermakers came to Eastleigh with their pneumatic air drilling and rivetting machines and acetylene cutting and welding equipment. The Boiler Shop was 100% union. Everyone had to be a member of the Boilermakers Society (never called Union); even Apprentices had to be members. Some Brighton Boilermakers were members of the N.U.A. and were only permitted to work on semi-skilled jobs until they became members of the Boilermakers Society. Brighton locos came to the Works for repair and they also had an order to build twenty of Maunsell's U.I. Class 2-6-0 locos, so the increase in staff did not effect us until later.

The Boiler Shop was noted for its noise and, with the introduction of pneumatic rivetting, it became almost unbearable. There was no such thing as ear protectors; we just had to accept it.

In the Erecting Shop were two thirty ton overhead cranes for lifting locos, but as these became heavier two sixty ton cranes were ordered for No 2 bay. Before they could be used the overhead girders had to be strengthened. This was done by rivetting steel plates to them. Semi-skilled riveters were not permitted to do the work; it had to be done by skilled Boilermakers. This employed quite a few for many months.

On September 23rd, 1931, I was told to report to the office. Having a clear conscience, I made my way there, thinking I was to be informed about my increase in wages which was due the following week. In the office were five others standing in front of Mr Soar's desk. He handed each of us a sealed letter and said: "*If I can be of help to any of you in the future I will*". Even then I did not have any idea what was in the letter until I opened it. It was short and sharp saying that my services would no longer be required after September 30th, just seven days notice.

There had not been any warning of cuts in staff, not even the Boilermakers Society was informed. Twenty-four of us received discharge notices that day. During the next eighteen months, over one hundred Boilermakers were discharged, one being my mate John Lowe, who encouraged me to keep going when I was on the point of giving up. I was fortunate to have been employed twelve months after completing my Apprenticeship, especially as Mr Turbett said it was unlikely I would be employed as I had not attended evening classes. Attending them was no guarantee you would continue to be employed after completing your Apprenticeship and some who did were dismissed a few weeks after completion.

As I had nothing to lose I wrote to the Work's Manager, Mr Turbett, objecting to the word Rivetter on my discharge notice, since I had agreed to serve five years Apprenticeship as a Boilersmith. There was no such grade in the Boiler Shop but he enclosed a Certificate of Character with his reply, showing that I had completed five years as an apprenticeship Boilermaker. I accepted this but found it did not mean a thing when looking for employment.

On my last day, I said farewell to my Chageman without whose help I would never have become a Boilermaker and to all the others I had worked with and to the Restaurant Proprietor who looked after us so well. As the train drew out of the station, I was not sorry to leave Eastleigh for the last time as I thought. Fortunately, we do not know what fate has in store for us - I had not expected to be back in Eastleigh within six months. I was still living in Portsmouth and had to report to that Employment Exchange, where I was told there was no hope of a job at my trade or any other work.



SOUTHERN RAILWAY.

R. E. L. MAUNSELL,
CHIEF MECHANICAL ENGINEER,
WATERLOO, S.E. 1.

E. A. W. TURBETT,
MANAGER,
LOCOMOTIVE, CARRIAGE &
WAGON WORKS, EASTLEIGH.
TELEPHONE NO. 58.

EGR/LC
WORKS MANAGER'S OFFICE,
EASTLEIGH, HANTS.

REFERENCE:
BY L/465

YOUR

29th September 1931.

Mr. W. G. S. Bishop,
Check No. 1546,
Boiler Shop.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter received
this morning, the contents of which I note;
I enclose herewith a certificate of character
showing that you served your apprenticeship
as a Boilermaker, which will put the matter
in order.

Yours truly,

Copy of the letter of reply from Mr. Turbett, the Works Manager,
when I objected to the word 'Rivetter' on my discharge notice.

(25)

Stock
1321A

SOUTHERN RAILWAY.

CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER.

No. of Certificate 71

Reference LS/465



DEPARTMENT.

STATION.

30th September 1931

I hereby Certify that William George Sydney Bishop was
 in the service of THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY from the eighth day of
October 1925 until the thirtieth day of September 1931.
 During which period he was employed as Apprentice & Boilermaker
 His general conduct was satisfactory and timekeeping good. He is leaving
 our service owing to reduction of staff.

(Signed) [Signature]
 (Head of Department)

(NOTE.—This Certificate is given without alteration or erasure of any kind, and under the conditions printed on the back.)

I knew the Locomotive Running Department employed their own Apprentices where possible and I enquired if they had a vacancy for a boilersmith (they were not Boilermakers in the Sheds). The Chief Locomotive Superintendent offered me a job as a Shed Labourer at my old Shed, Fratton, until a vacancy occurred at my trade. This I gladly accepted and started work six weeks after leaving the Loco Works, very lucky indeed.

This explains how I came to return to Eastleigh.

After working four months in Fratton Shed, I was requested to go to Eastleigh Loco Shed in March 1932, to cover a Boilersmith who was off sick. Even though it was temporary, I had to accept or lose all chance of returning to my trade. The Foreman at Eastleigh was not pleased to see me as he had a skilled Boilermaker working as a semi-skilled man who could have been upgraded temporarily as a Boilersmith. The Boilermakers Society also said this should have been done as Boilermakers were still being dismissed from the Works. As the Loco Running Department was independent of the Works, there was nothing they or the Foreman could do as I had been sent there by the Chief Loco Superintendent, Waterloo. Another sore point with the Foreman was, as Fratton was my "Home" Depot, he had either to pay me lodging allowance or grant me a travelling pass from Portsmouth. As the Shed hours were the same as the Works, I chose to travel. It was back to the long hours away from home again but, as I was being paid top Boilermaker's rate, which I would not have got until October had I remained in the Works and did not have to pay my railway fare, I was well off.

The Shed Chargehand took me in hand and I met the other Boilersmiths who had no objection to me working with them. They did not want to know if I was a member of the Boilermakers Society, which I was not; officially my grade was Shed Labourer which was not recognised by the Society. The Chargehand and two Boilersmiths worked on day shift and one on nights. The Foreman said I could not work the night shift as he considered I did not have enough experience to cover the Shed on my own. He was probably right as the only Shed experience I had was during my Apprenticeship days at Fratton. In Loco Sheds, a Boilersmith was also a Blacksmith, hence the name Boilersmith. Locos were examined every fourteen days and the Chargehand allocated work to us. We each had our own Mates; I was twenty two years of age and my Mate sixty. We worked together and I helped him with the heavy work. In return, being an old railwayman, he taught me many tricks of the trade, especially about Blacksmith's work.

Eastleigh Shed was built in 1903, a few years before the Loco Works moved from Nine Elms, and was originally at Northam. It was a large Shed, being approximately one hundred yards long with fifteen through roads and Repair Shop with two hand operated lifting hoists and machines driven by overhead shafting and belts. It employed a staff of over five hundred and fifty, four hundred being drivers and firemen. Loco Sheds were noted for their bad working conditions and Eastleigh was no exception. It faced North and was open to North winds. The doors that should have protected it had been knocked down so many times that it was a waste of time and money for the Engineer's Department to repair them. Unlike the Works, Loco Sheds were open all holidays, including Good Friday.

We were paid double time for working Good Friday but did not get any extra as the Foreman booked us to work from 7.30 a.m. to 11.45 a.m., just making our normal eight and half hour day. As a Sunday train service operated, I could not get to Eastleigh by 7.30 a.m., so had to leave home at 5.30 a.m. and cycle to Eastleigh to be there by 7.30 a.m. Fortunately, there was a train to bring myself and cycle home. I had no trouble Easter Monday as there was a normal train service. We got no extra for working Bank Holidays, nor did we get a day off later in lieu. If we did not work we lost a day's pay.

One morning the Chargehand sent for me. In his office was Mr Soar, the Boiler Shop Foreman. They explained that a driver had booked leaks in the firebox of a loco just released from Workshops after general repairs. The Boiler Shop Inspector examined it and found splits at the top of the firebox tube plate. The loco was still the responsibility of the Works and would have to return there as the work required special tools and materials. If it did, the Works Manager, Mr Turbett, would want to know why the work was missed and there would be trouble for quite a few of the staff, including the Foreman. My Chargehand asked me if I would do the work if Mr Soar supplied the tools and materials. I agreed but had to do the work with hand tools as we had no compressed air in the Shed. I completed the work and the loco returned to its Depot. Only the three of us knew where I had been working because if our Foreman knew I had been working on a Works loco, he would have wanted them to pay my wages and I would have had trouble with the Boilermakers Society if they knew I had been doing their member's work, even though it saved some of them being reprimanded. I knew I would not get any extra for the work but I was pleased that I was able to help some of my late Mates in the Boiler Shop.

I remembered Mr Soar's words as he handed me my discharge notice: "*If at any time I can help you I will*". Little did either of us know it would be the other way round and I would be able to help him. I never knew if anyone else knew about it as I returned to Fratton at the end of the week.

I was pleased to be back as I was able to go home to lunch every day and my hours were 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. but my wages dropped from £3.50 to £2.05 a week.

In October, 1932, I was back at Eastleigh again. As before, neither the Foreman nor the Boilermaker's Society were pleased to see me. They rightly said that the semi-skilled man should have been upgraded temporarily as a Boilersmith, especially as he was one of their members. As before, I was sent there by the Chief Loco Superintendent, Waterloo, and I had to carry out his orders as he was my Chief. That was the main reason why there was tension between the Foreman and myself because he could not dismiss or discipline me; only my Foreman at Fratton could do that. As before, he had to supply me with a travelling pass, another sore point with him. Since the time I had left the Shed, in April, the Boilersmiths had lost their night work and were now on days. There were three of us and we took it in turn to work Saturday afternoons, the only overtime we worked.

The Foreman was a hard, strict man and if he spoke to you, you had to address him as "Sir" or "Mr". As in the Works we had no tea or lunch break. The Foreman arrived at 9 o'clock and we made sure we had our lunch before then. As he entered the Shed premises in Campbell Road, he had to pass the Turntable Attendant's hut. Once he passed it, the Turntable Attendant phoned across to the Shed the following message, "*He's on his way*". In seconds, everyone knew and kept out of his way. The Indians with their smoke signals had nothing on the Shed Grape Vine. It was ludicrous that in a Shed filled with locos in steam and most of the staff worked with smokey oil lamps, as far as the Foreman was concerned, the most serious rule to break was the one, "No Smoking". Even drivers on locos leaving the Shed were not permitted to break the rule. The rule did not worry me as I considered I was getting enough smoke in my lungs working in fireboxes with the dirty smokey oil lamps.

This time I found out just how bad conditions were during the winter. It was not unusual to arrive in the morning and find the wash-out hydrants frozen and then had to be thawed out before they could be used. In the Works, we did have fires in the Shops and doors were kept closed but in the Shed, nothing. We still had to wash up in a bucket of water which we made hot on our Blacksmith's fire or from an engine in steam if we could get a driver or fireman to fill it with hot water from his engine. We had no cabin or anywhere to go out of the cold but being on the far side of the Shed, fifteen roads away from the Foreman's office, we always had a large fire in our Blacksmith's forge. It took at least two of us to work it as one had to turn a handle to pump air into it. If the Foreman caught us, which was very rare as we could see him coming, we always had tools on the fire which required repairing. We were more fortunate than the Fitters as we also had warm or hot fireboxes to go into.

After six months, I returned to Fratton where working conditions were much better as there was only one opening each end of the Shed to let locos run through. Discipline was also non-existent, even the "No Smoking" rule was not enforced. I reported to the Foreman and was surprised to find he had retired and had been replaced by a younger man. When I told him who I was he said he did not know one of his Shed Labourers was away and my job had been filled. (I found this hard to believe). He approached the Chargehand Fitter to know if he could use me as one of his Mates. So I began to learn another trade. The Foreman approached the Chief Locomotive Superintendent, Waterloo, to know if he could find me work at my trade as I was surplus to requirements. He did; he sent me to Guildford to cover a Boilersmith who was away sick. After four months I returned to Fratton, where a Boilersmith was required. During December 1933, the Chief Clerk asked me if I would accept a permanent position as a Boilersmith at Eastleigh.

I would have preferred Guildford but I had to accept because if I did not I would never have another chance of returning to my trade. I knew that once Eastleigh was my Depot, things would not be easy for me. From now on, I would be under the control of the Eastleigh Foreman. I would also have to pay my railway fare from Portsmouth as I had no intention of moving to Eastleigh and I would have to be a member of the Boilermakers Society. Thus I was registered as a Boilersmith at Eastleigh on January 1st, 1934. I remained there until the Depot closed on July 8th, 1967.

My experiences during these thirty three years were many and varied and would fill a book on their own.

W. G. Bishop.
October 1990

© Eastleigh & District Local History Society

BRITISH RAILWAYS : SOUTHERN REGION

Doc ref: 25/293

Date: 195.67


To: Mr. W.C.S. Bishop,
Boilersmith,
EASTLEIGH.

From: Divisional Traction Engineer,
(South Western),
Southern House, CROYDON.

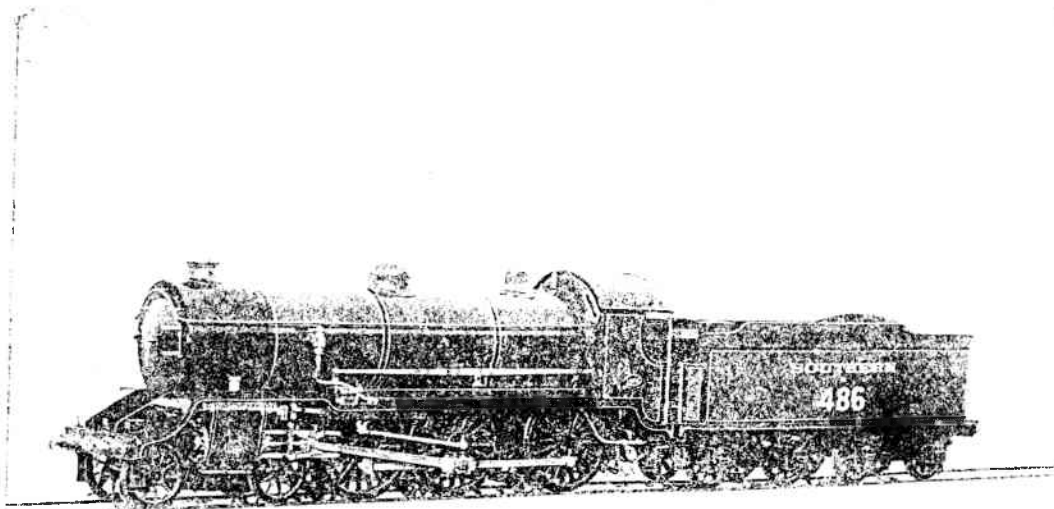
Redundancy Notice.

I have to inform you that in consequence of the forthcoming change of traction, the position you hold will become redundant on 10th July, 1967.

Unless, therefore, you have already been selected for alternative employment, or in the interim it is possible to allocate you to an extant vacancy elsewhere, I very much regret that it will be necessary to terminate your services on 8th July, 1967.


Divisional Traction Engineer.

My second discharge notice. (The first was in 1931.)

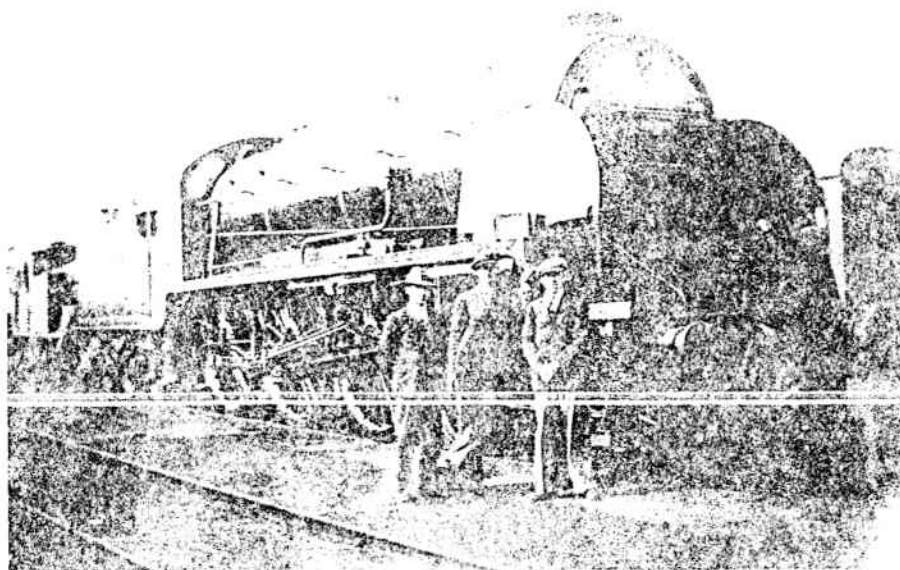


Eastleigh Miniature Railway Model of Southern Railway Engine

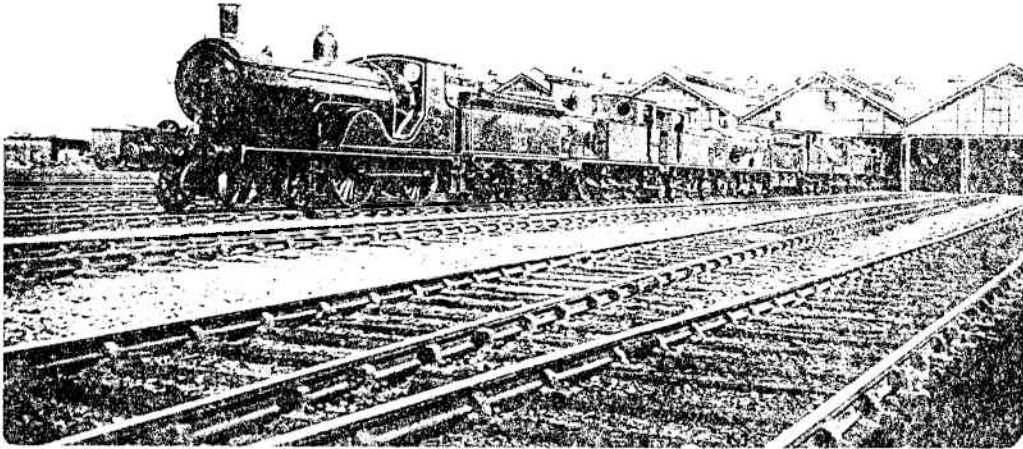
BUILT BY E. COOPER

Many people will remember the miniature locomotive built by E. Cooper which gave rides to passengers in Eastleigh's Recreation ground in the 1930s and raised funds for the Southern Railway Orphanage at Woking.

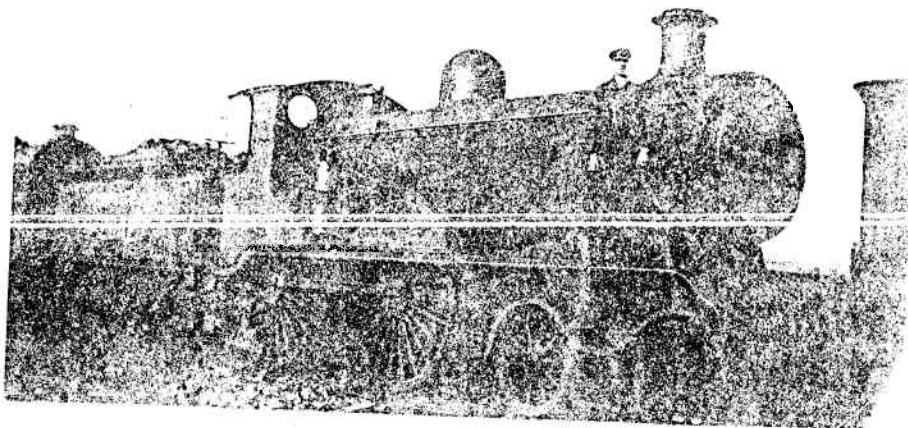
Photo by
A. Major.



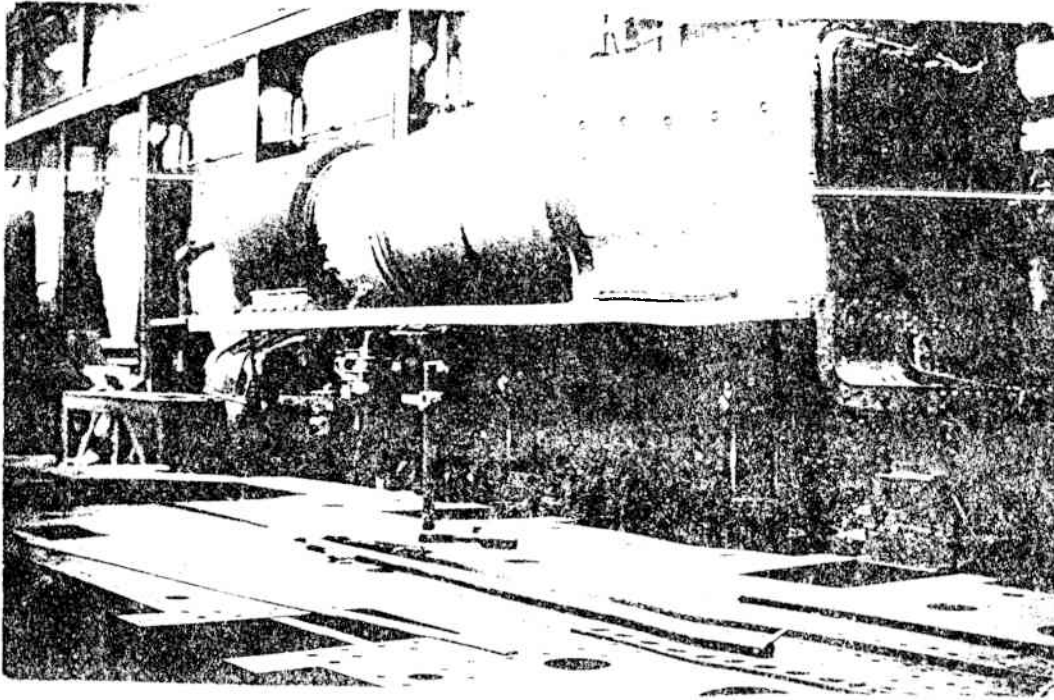
My three fitter mates who accompanied me from Portsmouth to work in the Eastleigh Locomotive Shop standing in front of the King Arthur Class No. 794, 'Sir Ector de Merrts'. All three were dismissed after the building of Class U.I. locomotives was completed.



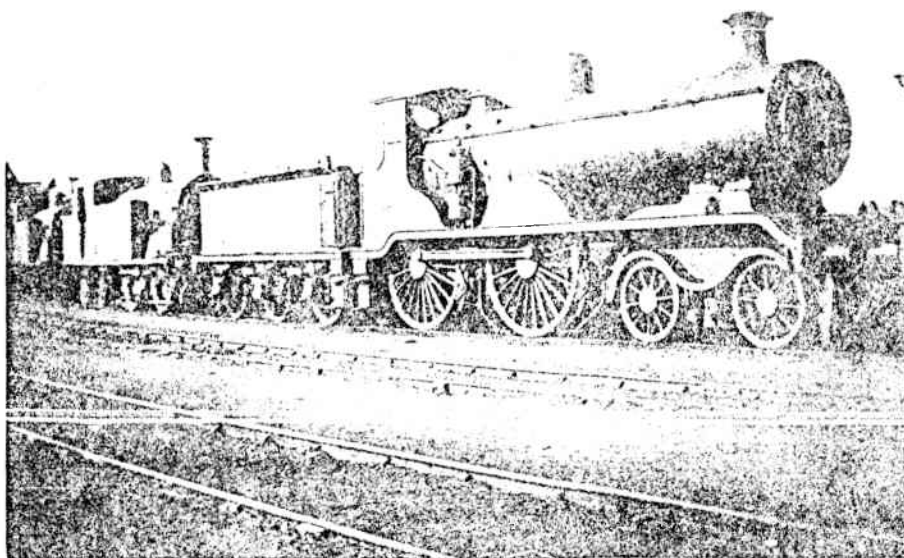
Eastleigh Running Shed and Yard in the 1930s.
Loco No. 313 just released from the Workshops.



Myself on transfer to Eastleigh in 1934.

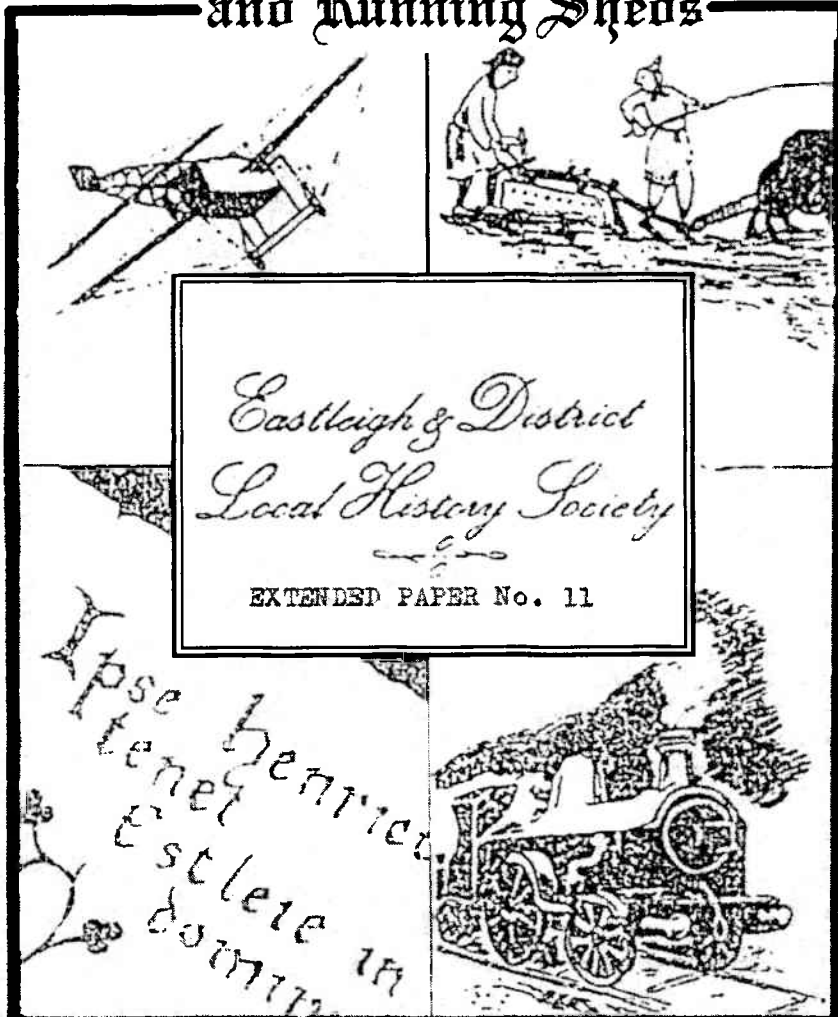


No. 4 Bay, Loco Works, 1931, with the first of Maunsells three cylinder locomotives under construction with frames for others being marked off and drilled. This work kept a lot of the staff employed for twelve months.

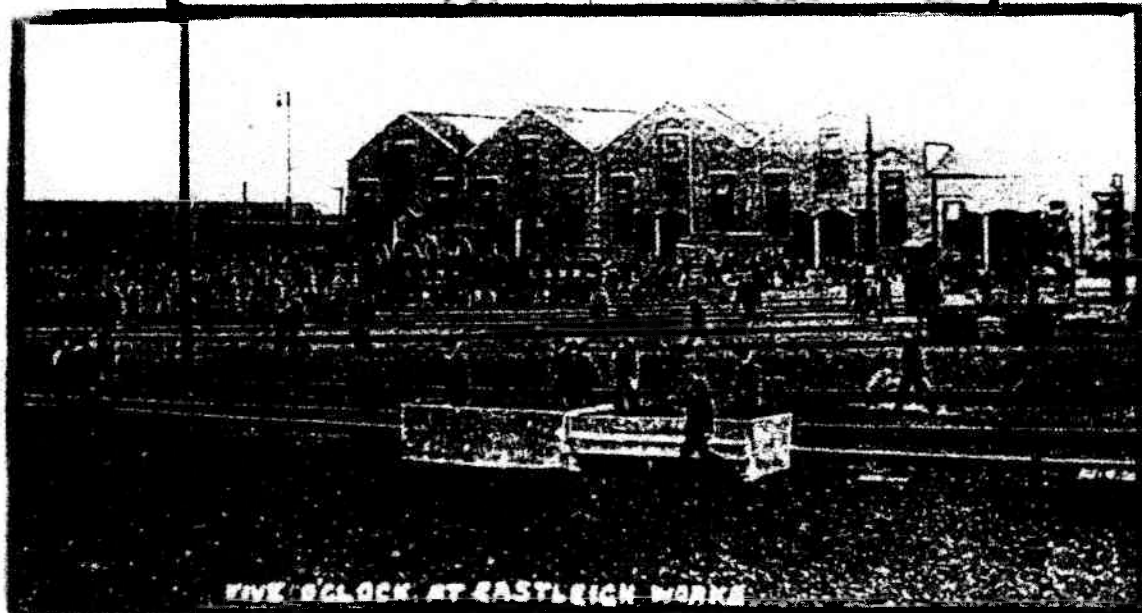


One of the first Brighton locomotives, Class B.4. - No. 54 - at Eastleigh for repairs in 1931. These also gave the staff plenty of work.

Trialz and Tribulations of Working in Castleigh Locomotive Works and Running Sheds

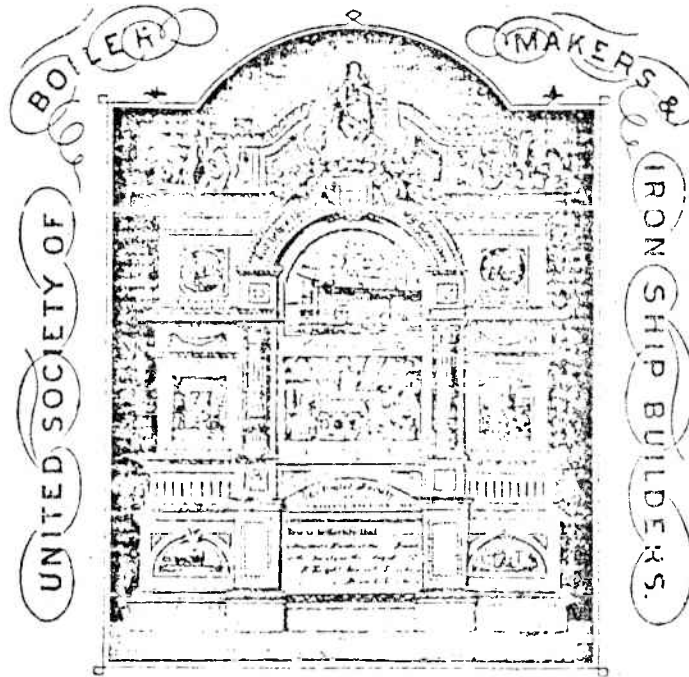


Castleigh & District
Local History Society
EXTENDED PAPER No. 11



FIVE O'CLOCK AT CASTLEIGH WORKS

This card not to be used to obtain employment.



This is to Certify
that *William J. L. Bushak* has been
accepted by this Society as an apprentice and he agrees with
his employer *M. Kuskonmiski Railway*
to serve an apprenticeship for the term of five years to
commence on the _____ day of _____ 19____ at the age
of _____ years.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF we have subscribed our names,
and affixed the seal of our branch, *Castroville*
on the _____ day of *February*, 19____

Seal

A. Campbell President.
G. J. Ryan Secretary

THE SUM OF 2/ MUST BE CHARGED FOR THIS CARD.

A copy of my Boilermakers Society Card.
(Notice the word Society - not Union.)
I had to be a member to work in the Boiler Shop.

EASTLEIGH LOCO WORKS AND RUNNING SHED 1928-34

I first became associated with Eastleigh in October 1928 when I was transferred from Fratton Loco Running Shed to Eastleigh Works as a Boilersmith's Apprentice. I reported to the Staff Office and was taken to the Boiler Shop where I was to work. I was interviewed by Mr Staples, the Assistant Foreman, who wanted to know the kind of work I had been doing at Fratton. When I told him, he said none of it would be of use to me in the Works as it was classed as semi-skilled work and done by semi-skilled men. As far as boiler making was concerned I knew nothing at all. I had to start at the bottom which was rivetting. The Rivet Gangs were made up of a Rivetter, a Holder-up, an Apprentice and a Fireboy. The latter was a boy between fourteen and sixteen years of age waiting to commence his apprenticeship or a man on a light job. The Rivetter gave me a long shafted hammer and innocently I said: "What do I do with it?" He looked at me in disbelief and disgust and said: "After I hit the rivet, you hit it". This was double-handed rivetting. I had never seen it done before, let alone do it. The Rivetter sent for the Foreman and said: "I have my piece-work to earn and cannot spare the time to teach him to use a hammer". Other apprentices at my age could do a boilermaker's work and I could not even use a hammer. Mr Staples was right; I did not know anything about boilermaking. After he had seen several Chargemen, who all turned me down, one agreed to give me a trial. I think he was told if I could not earn my piece-work it would be made up from the office. The Chargeman was Sid Shipp, who was an easy going quiet man. Maybe that was why he gave me a chance as most Chargemen were strict and hard. There was only three of us on the "Gang", the other being John Lowe, a young boilermaker just out of his time. There were only four gangs in the Works, known as Patchers because they repaired all the fireboxes. I was fortunate to get on one of them as it was as high as an apprentice could get and I remained with my two Mates all the time I was in the Works.

Although working at Eastleigh, I travelled with twelve others from Portsmouth every day. We left Portsmouth on the 6.00 a.m. train and arrived at Eastleigh at 7.00 a.m. This gave us time to call in the Beehive Restaurant on the corner of Southampton and Factory roads. The Proprietor was an Austrian, Bill Fulkner, who always had a cup of tea poured out waiting for us. He was good to us and a friend to us all. Leaving the Restaurant, we usually passed the girls from Campbell Road on their way to the Carriage Works. There was the usual joking and banter between us. As we made our way down the steps through the Works Gates, I thought the following words would be appropriate: "*Abandon Hope, all Ye who enter here*", because that is what I did every time I went through them.

There were no time clocks in the Shops as today. You collected a check from an office at the bottom of the steps with your number on it; mine was 1546. The checks had to be picked up before the Works hooter stopped blowing at 7.30 a.m. or 1.00 p.m. As soon as it stopped all windows were slammed down, on your fingers if you did not get them out of the way quickly enough. Staff were permitted to sign on until 8.00 a.m., but lost half an hour's pay. Any later, you lost the morning's pay. No time was allowed at 1.00 p.m. for being late, you lost a half day's pay.

If we missed the early train from Portsmouth we did not get to Eastleigh until 8.15 a.m. and were permitted to sign on at 8.30 a.m., the only members of the staff to be granted such a privilege. The Foremen walked through the Shop at 7.40 a.m. and everyone had to be working. No time to discuss the morning news or read the newspapers. We had no morning tea or lunch break and had to have any refreshment on our job, keeping our eyes open for the Foreman. Some men boiled a can of water on the rivetter's fire. These were worked by compressed air and the can could be left until the water boiled. The Chief Foreman, Mr Carnie, walking through the Shop one morning, saw a can on one of the fires and stood by it until the water boiled away and the can fell to pieces. The man to whom it belonged would rather lose it than claim it while the Foreman was there.

We were also not permitted to stop in the Workshops during the dinner meal break and the Manager often walked through them to make sure everyone was out. We had no facilities for cleaning ourselves, or washing our hands. My job was to get a bucket of water and heat a large piece of iron in one of the Rivetter's fires and drop it in the bucket. One day when the iron was getting hot for our midday break, I saw the Foreman approaching. He had noticed the air to one of the fires was still on. I quickly took the iron out and dropped it into the pit behind me, at the same time shutting the air off at the main tap on the wall. The Foreman looked in the fire, saw nothing and walked on. I was fortunate, because had there been paper or inflammable material in the pit he would have seen plenty and I would have been in dire trouble.

We were not permitted to leave our Shop until the hooter blew at 12.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. and then it was everyone for himself as we rushed across the yard to drop our checks in the boxes at the time office. The only time we were granted five minutes was Fridays when we were paid. We lined up outside the office and received a tin with our number on it and our wages inside. If we were not in our right place, we missed our turn and had to wait until last. The empty tins we threw into a large basket at the bottom of the Shop to be collected for the next week.

At the bottom of the steps were two buildings like sentry boxes. In one was the Works policeman, who had authority to search anyone leaving the Works. On two occasions, I was stopped and searched, including my food box. He found nothing as I did not want anything to remind me of Eastleigh Works; I wanted to forget it but I had to carry on as my father and myself signed credentials that I would serve five years as a Boilersmith's Apprentice but I did not know that included going to Eastleigh Works or paying part of my railway fare between Portsmouth and Eastleigh. This was deducted from my wages each week.

The Boiler Shop was in No.1 bay alongside the Eastleigh-Portsmouth railway line. The next two bays were the Erecting Shops where locos were dismantled, repaired and rebuilt. Bay No.4 was where new locos were built. At the bottom of the Boiler Shop was the weigh table where repaired locos were weighed and springs adjusted. The man who did this was known as "Elmo" as he was so strong he could lift loco springs on his own. I never did know his surname. Next to the weigh table was the lower part of the Boiler Shop where the tenders were repaired and then the boilers. Two overhead cranes ran the length of the Shop, lifting boilers and turning them on their sides or backs. They did not lift boilers off the loco frames as this was fitter's work and done in the Erecting Shop by their cranes. The boilers were then loaded onto a trolley on rails and pushed through into the Boiler Shop.

Most of our work was repairing fireboxes which at this time were all copper. We did not repair the steel boilers or smoke boxes; this was Plater's work and the copper stays were Semi-Skilled Stayer's work. All work was done with hand tools as we did not have any machines; only Drillers and Stayers had pneumatic air drills. Fortunately I could use a hand hammer as we did not have any machines at Fratton. However, I was not so good with a large hammer as my Mate found out one day when I dropped it on his head. This necessitated him visiting the Ambulance Room. Fortunately, it was not the Chargeman, otherwise I might have been on the move again. My Mates were very patient with me and I soon earned my own piece-work.

After years of fires, the bottom of the sides of the fireboxes became burnt and worn. To save the cost of new fireboxes new plates were fitted to them. First, the Drillers drilled the stays and rivets out of the outer steel plate and then it was our work. The two sides were between six and eight feet long and $\frac{5}{8}$ " thick. Having no machines, they had to be cut with hand cross cut chisels and a hand hammer. I was left on my own to do this; maybe my Mates remembered the large hammer incident. The only one I could injure was myself if I missed the chisel and hit my hand.

I must have hit that chisel many thousands of times before the plates were down. When they were, we took them across the yard on a hand trolley (no such things as mechanical trucks) to the forge. Our new plates were marked off from the old plates, which were then cut up on the forge heavy shears for scrap. The new plates were brought back to the Drillers who drilled them for the smallest size stay 1". Many holes in the outer steel plate were larger than this and they had to be reduced in size. We first opened them up and screwed in steel bushes which were then drilled for the smallest size stay. It was slow hard work as it had to be done with hand ratchets. Our Chargeman decided to make the work easier for us. He borrowed one of the Stayer's powerful air machines which speeded the work up. The Chargeman kept a look out for the Foreman as we were paid for doing it by hand but he caught us with the machines. He said in future the work would be done by machines and paid machine price. He cut the price of each hole from one shilling and eleven pence, (9½p) to one shilling (5p). This was one of the best paid jobs as there were two or three hundred bushes in some fireboxes and to have the price cut by nearly 100% did not please the other Patchers. The new plates were fastened to the old plates with steel studs which were rivetted and caulked. All work was inspected by the Foreman and if he saw any hammer marks on the new plate he would say, "What are you doing putting your names and address on it?"

During 1929 the Chief Foreman, Mr Carnie, retired and Joe Staples, who should have taken his place, passed away before doing so. The man appointed as Chief Foreman was Charlie Soar and his Assistant was Plater Jimmie Hayes. Coming from the working grades they knew all the tricks of the trade as we soon found out. The Works Manager also retired and Mr E.A. Turbett was appointed Works Manager. He was a live wire; no one knew where or when he would turn up. He looked in fireboxes and boilers, thus keeping us all on our toes. It was not long before I had a letter from him wanting to know why I was not attending evening classes at Southampton College? If I did not, it was unlikely that I would continue to be employed on the railway after I had completed my apprenticeship. As most apprentices were dismissed after five years, this did not worry me and I still did not attend evening classes.

Our new Foreman appointed a Checker to check all work as Chargemen had been booking their own work. He marked all work with chalk which sometimes got rubbed off and was booked again. The Foreman stopped this by giving the Checker white paint which did not rub off.

Some locos only came to the Works for light repairs and in most cases the boilers were not taken off their frames, the work being done in the Erecting Shop. This was the only time their Foreman permitted us in his Shop. If he found us in there any other time we were reported to our own Foreman.

A Drummond T.9. class loco came into the Works for the renewal of the large super tubes. My Mate did the firebox end whilst I did them in the smoke box. I was working with a long tool outside the smoke box when I slipped and fell to the ground. I was badly shaken but did not go to the ambulance room as I should have done. After this, I was scared to work in front of the loco and when it was tested in steam several of my tubes leaked. When the Foreman, Mr. Soar, saw them he said "Whoever did this work deserves to be dismissed". Being an Apprentice he could not do this as my Mate was responsible for my work. This was one of the last locos to come to the Works for the renewal of super tubes as it became normal practice to renew them in Running Sheds.

Working in a firebox, I slipped and injured my arm on a sharp stay. This time I had no choice but to go to the Ambulance Room. The Attendant was only a First Aider as I was myself. The injury was too bad for him to deal with so he sent me to the Doctor who was, in those days, Doctor Garrett. No one came with me and it took me some time to find his surgery as I did not know Eastleigh. After having the wound stitched, I returned to the Works, signed off and went home for two weeks. You did not receive any pay from the railway when off sick and I had to exist, as I remember, on fifteen shillings (75p) a week. There were trained Aiders in most shops but in general the treatment of injuries was very poor. A meeting was held of all members of the staff and all agreed to contribute one penny a week to buy an ambulance for use of the Works staff. I never saw the ambulance as I had left the Works before they had enough money to buy one.

It was October 8th, 1930, that I completed my five years as an Apprentice but was not a boilermaker as I still had to serve another two years as an Improver before receiving top boilermaker's rate. I was fortunate not to be dismissed or transferred to other work but as I could now do a boilermaker's work my Mate kept me with him. My average wage with piece-work and bonus was £3.50 a week, quite a good wage for my age of twenty one. This helped to compensate me for the long hours I was away from home.

We worked no overtime, Saturday morning being part of our normal week. On the other hand, we were not on short time as were many other railway workshops. The Works were closed every Bank and Public holiday and we were shut out from Friday to Tuesday without pay, also Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday. We did not have any annual holiday with pay.

As stated, the Boiler Shop was in No.1 bay alongside the Portsmouth - Eastleigh railway line on an outside wall. Half way along the wall were two openings which were the toilets. There were about twenty, which were separated by thin wood partitions with half doors so that anyone in them could be seen from outside. There were no toilet seats as we knew them, only a long four inch wide plank which went from one end of the toilet to the other and no such thing as toilet paper or facilities for washing hands. You just took your own paper with you. It was not an ideal place to "nod off" as you could fall backwards with unfortunate consequences. At regular intervals the trough was flushed by running water. If the toilet at the end was empty someone with a sense of humour would wait until the water started running and light newspapers which floated on the water under the men in the other toilets. By the time they got off their seats and opened the door the culprit was far away.

Saturday morning was the time to pay all club and union dues. This was usually done in the toilets, not an ideal place, but the only one where you could have a quiet smoke, as smoking was banned in the Works. One Saturday our boiler was opposite the toilets with the firebox facing them. Looking out through the fire hole, I saw the two Foremen making their way towards the toilets. They were too near for me to warn anyone and one stood at each door. As the men came out their checks were taken and they were booked off at 10.30 a.m., losing one and a half hours pay. Coming from the working grades, the Foremen knew about the Saturday meetings in the toilets. They never caught anyone again as someone always kept a look out.

Late 1930 or early 1931, the Southern Railway began to run Brighton Works down. Most machines were moved to Ashford or Eastleigh Works with many of the staff. Many Brighton boilermakers came to Eastleigh with their pneumatic air drilling and rivetting machines and acetylene cutting and welding equipment. The Boiler Shop was 100% union. Everyone had to be a member of the Boilermakers Society (never called Union); even Apprentices had to be members. Some Brighton Boilermakers were members of the N.U.A. and were only permitted to work on semi-skilled jobs until they became members of the Boilermakers Society. Brighton locos came to the Works for repair and they also had an order to build twenty of Maunsell's U.I. Class 2-6-0 locos, so the increase in staff did not effect us until later.

The Boiler Shop was noted for its noise and, with the introduction of pneumatic rivetting, it became almost unbearable. There was no such thing as ear protectors; we just had to accept it.

In the Erecting Shop were two thirty ton overhead cranes for lifting locos, but as these became heavier two sixty ton cranes were ordered for No 2 bay. Before they could be used the overhead girders had to be strengthened. This was done by rivetting steel plates to them. Semi-skilled riveters were not permitted to do the work; it had to be done by skilled Boilermakers. This employed quite a few for many months.

On September 23rd, 1931, I was told to report to the office. Having a clear conscience, I made my way there, thinking I was to be informed about my increase in wages which was due the following week. In the office were five others standing in front of Mr Soar's desk. He handed each of us a sealed letter and said: "*If I can be of help to any of you in the future I will*". Even then I did not have any idea what was in the letter until I opened it. It was short and sharp saying that my services would no longer be required after September 30th, just seven days notice.

There had not been any warning of cuts in staff, not even the Boilermakers Society was informed. Twenty-four of us received discharge notices that day. During the next eighteen months, over one hundred Boilermakers were discharged, one being my mate John Lowe, who encouraged me to keep going when I was on the point of giving up. I was fortunate to have been employed twelve months after completing my Apprenticeship, especially as Mr Turbett said it was unlikely I would be employed as I had not attended evening classes. Attending them was no guarantee you would continue to be employed after completing your Apprenticeship and some who did were dismissed a few weeks after completion.

As I had nothing to lose I wrote to the Work's Manager, Mr Turbett, objecting to the word Rivetter on my discharge notice, since I had agreed to serve five years Apprenticeship as a Boilersmith. There was no such grade in the Boiler Shop but he enclosed a Certificate of Character with his reply, showing that I had completed five years as an apprenticeship Boilermaker. I accepted this but found it did not mean a thing when looking for employment.

On my last day, I said farewell to my Chageman without whose help I would never have become a Boilermaker and to all the others I had worked with and to the Restaurant Proprietor who looked after us so well. As the train drew out of the station, I was not sorry to leave Eastleigh for the last time as I thought. Fortunately, we do not know what fate has in store for us - I had not expected to be back in Eastleigh within six months. I was still living in Portsmouth and had to report to that Employment Exchange, where I was told there was no hope of a job at my trade or any other work.



SOUTHERN RAILWAY.

R. E. L. MAUNSELL,
CHIEF MECHANICAL ENGINEER,
WATERLOO, S. E. 1.

E. A. W. TURBETT,
MANAGER,
LOCOMOTIVE, CARRIAGE &
WAGON WORKS, EASTLEIGH.
TELEPHONE NO. 68.

BGR/10
WORKS MANAGER'S OFFICE,
EASTLEIGH, HANTS.

REFERENCE:
MY L/465

YOUR

29th September 1931.

Mr. W. G. S. Bishop,
Check No. 1546,
Boiler Shop.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter received
this morning, the contents of which I note;
I enclose herewith a certificate of character
showing that you served your apprenticeship
as a Boilermaker, which will put the matter
in order.

Yours truly,

Copy of the letter of reply from Mr. Turbett, the Works Manager,
when I objected to the word 'Rivetter' on my discharge notice.

(E)
(25)

Stock
(321A)

SOUTHERN RAILWAY.

CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER.



No. of Certificate 71

Reference LS/465

DEPARTMENT.

STATION.

30th September 1931

I hereby Certify that William George Sydney Bishop was
in the service of THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY from the eight day of
October 19 25 until the thirtieth day of September 19 31.

During which period he was employed as Apprentice & Boilermaker

His general conduct was satisfactory and timekeeping good. He is leaving
our service owing to reduction of staff.

(Signed)

[Signature]
(Head of Department).

(NOTE.—This Certificate is given without alteration or erasure of any kind, and under the conditions printed on the back.)

I knew the Locomotive Running Department employed their own Apprentices where possible and I enquired if they had a vacancy for a boilersmith (they were not Boilermakers in the Sheds). The Chief Locomotive Superintendent offered me a job as a Shed Labourer at my old Shed, Fratton, until a vacancy occurred at my trade. This I gladly accepted and started work six weeks after leaving the Loco Works, very lucky indeed.

This explains how I came to return to Eastleigh.

After working four months in Fratton Shed, I was requested to go to Eastleigh Loco Shed in March 1932, to cover a Boilersmith who was off sick. Even though it was temporary, I had to accept or lose all chance of returning to my trade. The Foreman at Eastleigh was not pleased to see me as he had a skilled Boilermaker working as a semi-skilled man who could have been upgraded temporarily as a Boilersmith. The Boilermakers Society also said this should have been done as Boilermakers were still being dismissed from the Works. As the Loco Running Department was independent of the Works, there was nothing they or the Foreman could do as I had been sent there by the Chief Loco Superintendent, Waterloo. Another sore point with the Foreman was, as Fratton was my "Home" Depot, he had either to pay me lodging allowance or grant me a travelling pass from Portsmouth. As the Shed hours were the same as the Works, I chose to travel. It was back to the long hours away from home again but, as I was being paid top Boilermaker's rate, which I would not have got until October had I remained in the Works and did not have to pay my railway fare, I was well off.

The Shed Chargehand took me in hand and I met the other Boilersmiths who had no objection to me working with them. They did not want to know if I was a member of the Boilermakers Society, which I was not; officially my grade was Shed Labourer which was not recognised by the Society. The Chargehand and two Boilersmiths worked on day shift and one on nights. The Foreman said I could not work the night shift as he considered I did not have enough experience to cover the Shed on my own. He was probably right as the only Shed experience I had was during my Apprenticeship days at Fratton. In Loco Sheds, a Boilersmith was also a Blacksmith, hence the name Boilersmith. Locos were examined every fourteen days and the Chargehand allocated work to us. We each had our own Mates; I was twenty two years of age and my Mate sixty. We worked together and I helped him with the heavy work. In return, being an old railwayman, he taught me many tricks of the trade, especially about Blacksmith's work.

Eastleigh Shed was built in 1903, a few years before the Loco Works moved from Nine Elms, and was originally at Northam. It was a large Shed, being approximately one hundred yards long with fifteen through roads and Repair Shop with two hand operated lifting hoists and machines driven by overhead shafting and belts. It employed a staff of over five hundred and fifty, four hundred being drivers and firemen. Loco Sheds were noted for their bad working conditions and Eastleigh was no exception. It faced North and was open to North winds. The doors that should have protected it had been knocked down so many times that it was a waste of time and money for the Engineer's Department to repair them. Unlike the Works, Loco Sheds were open all holidays, including Good Friday.

We were paid double time for working Good Friday but did not get any extra as the Foreman booked us to work from 7.30 a.m. to 11.45 a.m., just making our normal eight and half hour day. As a Sunday train service operated, I could not get to Eastleigh by 7.30 a.m., so had to leave home at 5.30 a.m. and cycle to Eastleigh to be there by 7.30 a.m. Fortunately, there was a train to bring myself and cycle home. I had no trouble Easter Monday as there was a normal train service. We got no extra for working Bank Holidays, nor did we get a day off later in lieu. If we did not work we lost a day's pay.

One morning the Chargehand sent for me. In his office was Mr Soar, the Boiler Shop Foreman. They explained that a driver had booked leaks in the firebox of a loco just released from Workshops after general repairs. The Boiler Shop Inspector examined it and found splits at the top of the firebox tube plate. The loco was still the responsibility of the Works and would have to return there as the work required special tools and materials. If it did, the Works Manager, Mr Turbett, would want to know why the work was missed and there would be trouble for quite a few of the staff, including the Foreman. My Chargehand asked me if I would do the work if Mr Soar supplied the tools and materials. I agreed but had to do the work with hand tools as we had no compressed air in the Shed. I completed the work and the loco returned to its Depot. Only the three of us knew where I had been working because if our Foreman knew I had been working on a Works loco, he would have wanted them to pay my wages and I would have had trouble with the Boilermakers Society if they knew I had been doing their member's work, even though it saved some of them being reprimanded. I knew I would not get any extra for the work but I was pleased that I was able to help some of my late Mates in the Boiler Shop.

I remembered Mr Soar's words as he handed me my discharge notice: "*If at any time I can help you I will*". Little did either of us know it would be the other way round and I would be able to help him. I never knew if anyone else knew about it as I returned to Fratton at the end of the week.

I was pleased to be back as I was able to go home to lunch every day and my hours were 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. but my wages dropped from £3.50 to £2.05 a week.

In October, 1932, I was back at Eastleigh again. As before, neither the Foreman nor the Boilermaker's Society were pleased to see me. They rightly said that the semi-skilled man should have been upgraded temporarily as a Boilersmith, especially as he was one of their members. As before, I was sent there by the Chief Loco Superintendent, Waterloo, and I had to carry out his orders as he was my Chief. That was the main reason why there was tension between the Foreman and myself because he could not dismiss or discipline me; only my Foreman at Fratton could do that. As before, he had to supply me with a travelling pass, another sore point with him. Since the time I had left the Shed, in April, the Boilersmiths had lost their night work and were now on days. There were three of us and we took it in turn to work Saturday afternoons, the only overtime we worked.

The Foreman was a hard, strict man and if he spoke to you, you had to address him as "Sir" or "Mr". As in the Works we had no tea or lunch break. The Foreman arrived at 9 o'clock and we made sure we had our lunch before then. As he entered the Shed premises in Campbell Road, he had to pass the Turntable Attendant's hut. Once he passed it, the Turntable Attendant phoned across to the Shed the following message, "*He's on his way*". In seconds, everyone knew and kept out of his way. The Indians with their smoke signals had nothing on the Shed Grape Vine. It was ludicrous that in a Shed filled with locos in steam and most of the staff worked with smokey oil lamps, as far as the Foreman was concerned, the most serious rule to break was the one, "No Smoking". Even drivers on locos leaving the Shed were not permitted to break the rule. The rule did not worry me as I considered I was getting enough smoke in my lungs working in fireboxes with the dirty smokey oil lamps.

This time I found out just how bad conditions were during the winter. It was not unusual to arrive in the morning and find the wash-out hydrants frozen and then had to be thawed out before they could be used. In the Works, we did have fires in the Shops and doors were kept closed but in the Shed, nothing. We still had to wash up in a bucket of water which we made hot on our Blacksmith's fire or from an engine in steam if we could get a driver or fireman to fill it with hot water from his engine. We had no cabin or anywhere to go out of the cold but being on the far side of the Shed, fifteen roads away from the Foreman's office, we always had a large fire in our Blacksmith's forge. It took at least two of us to work it as one had to turn a handle to pump air into it. If the Foreman caught us, which was very rare as we could see him coming, we always had tools on the fire which required repairing. We were more fortunate than the Fitters as we also had warm or hot fireboxes to go into.

After six months, I returned to Fratton where working conditions were much better as there was only one opening each end of the Shed to let locos run through. Discipline was also non-existent, even the "No Smoking" rule was not enforced. I reported to the Foreman and was surprised to find he had retired and had been replaced by a younger man. When I told him who I was he said he did not know one of his Shed Labourers was away and my job had been filled. (I found this hard to believe). He approached the Chargehand Fitter to know if he could use me as one of his Mates. So I began to learn another trade. The Foreman approached the Chief Locomotive Superintendent, Waterloo, to know if he could find me work at my trade as I was surplus to requirements. He did; he sent me to Guildford to cover a Boilersmith who was away sick. After four months I returned to Fratton, where a Boilersmith was required. During December 1933, the Chief Clerk asked me if I would accept a permanent position as a Boilersmith at Eastleigh.

I would have preferred Guildford but I had to accept because if I did not I would never have another chance of returning to my trade. I knew that once Eastleigh was my Depot, things would not be easy for me. From now on, I would be under the control of the Eastleigh Foreman. I would also have to pay my railway fare from Portsmouth as I had no intention of moving to Eastleigh and I would have to be a member of the Boilermakers Society. Thus I was registered as a Boilersmith at Eastleigh on January 1st, 1934. I remained there until the Depot closed on July 8th, 1967.

My experiences during these thirty three years were many and varied and would fill a book on their own.

W. G. Bishop.
October 1990

© Eastleigh & District Local History Society

BRITISH RAILWAYS : SOUTHERN REGION

Doc ref: 25/293

Date: 195.67

To: Mr. W.C.S. Bishop,
Boilersmith,
EASTLEIGH.

From: Divisional Traction Engineer,
(South Western),
Southern House, CROYDON.

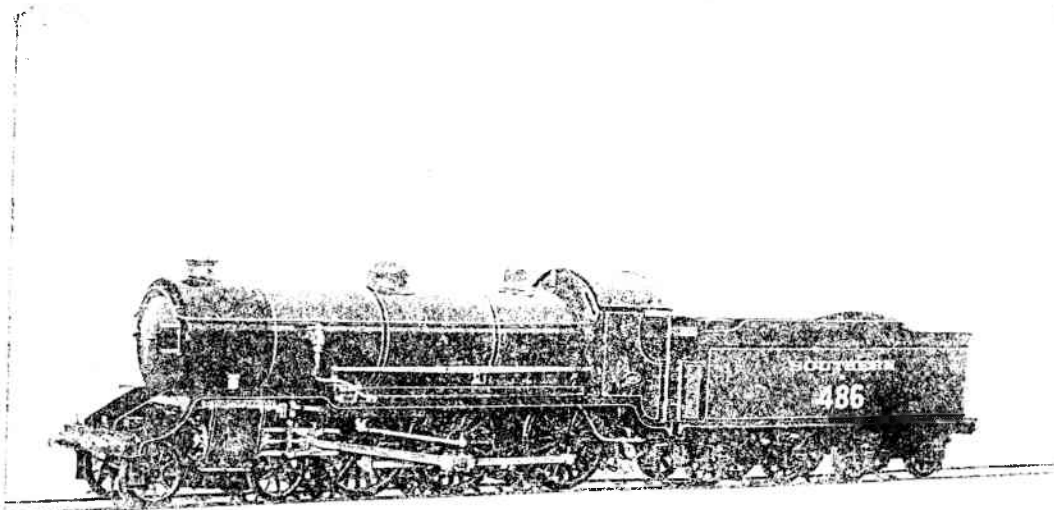
Redundancy Notice.

I have to inform you that in consequence of the forthcoming change of traction, the position you hold will become redundant on 10th July, 1967.

Unless, therefore, you have already been selected for alternative employment, or in the interim it is possible to allocate you to an extant vacancy elsewhere, I very much regret that it will be necessary to terminate your services on 8th July, 1967.

W. Collins
Divisional Traction Engineer.

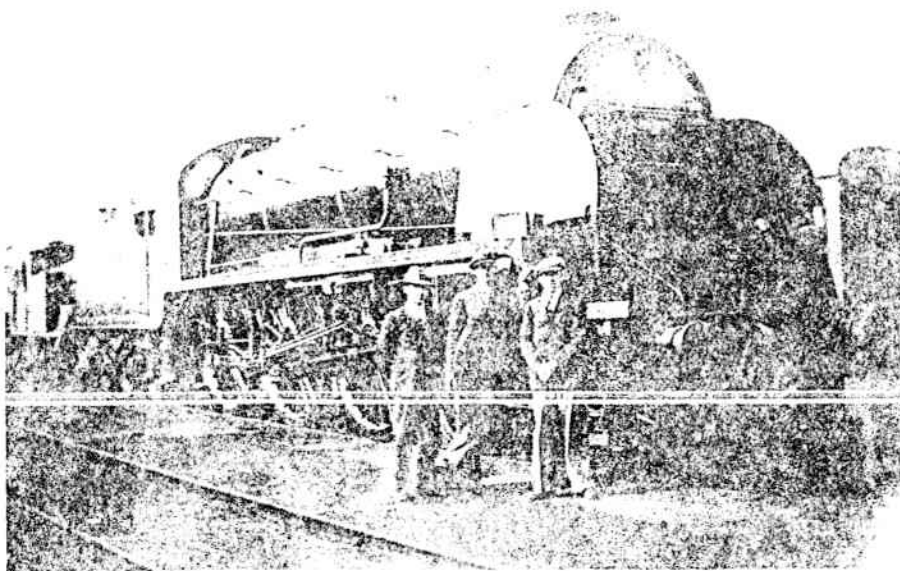
My second discharge notice. (The first was in 1931.)



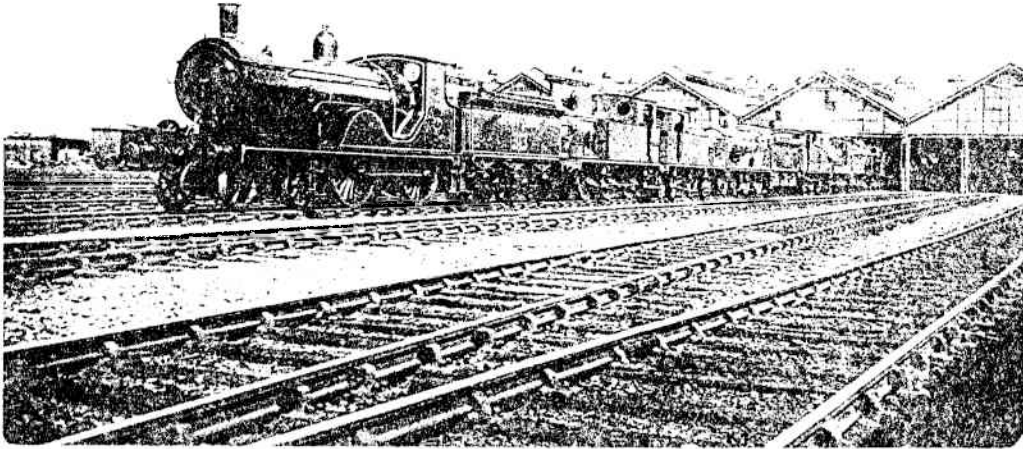
Eastleigh Miniature Railway Model of Southern Railway Engine
Built by E. COOPER

Many people will remember the miniature locomotive built by E. Cooper which gave rides to passengers in Eastleigh's Recreation ground in the 1930s and raised funds for the Southern Railway Orphanage at Woking.

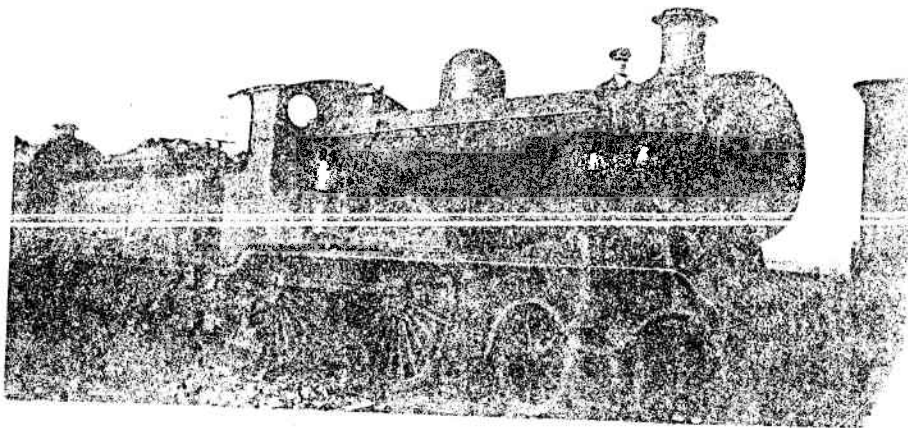
Photo by
A. Major.



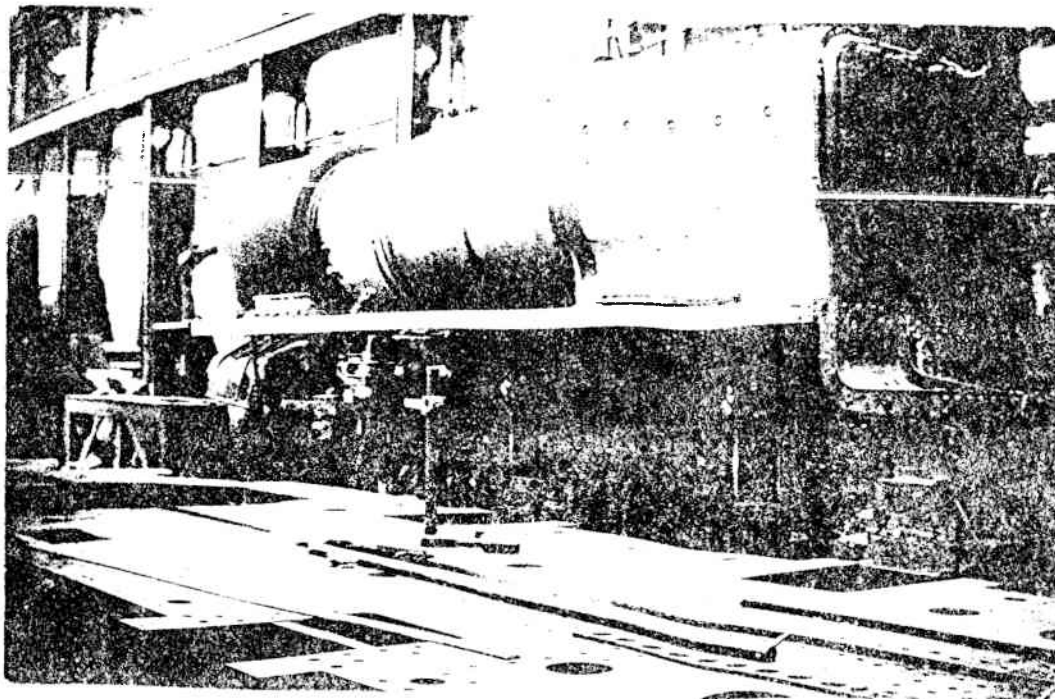
My three fitter mates who accompanied me from Portsmouth to work in the Eastleigh Locomotive Shop standing in front of the King Arthur Class No. 794, 'Sir Ector de Merrts'. All three were dismissed after the building of Class U.I. locomotives was completed.



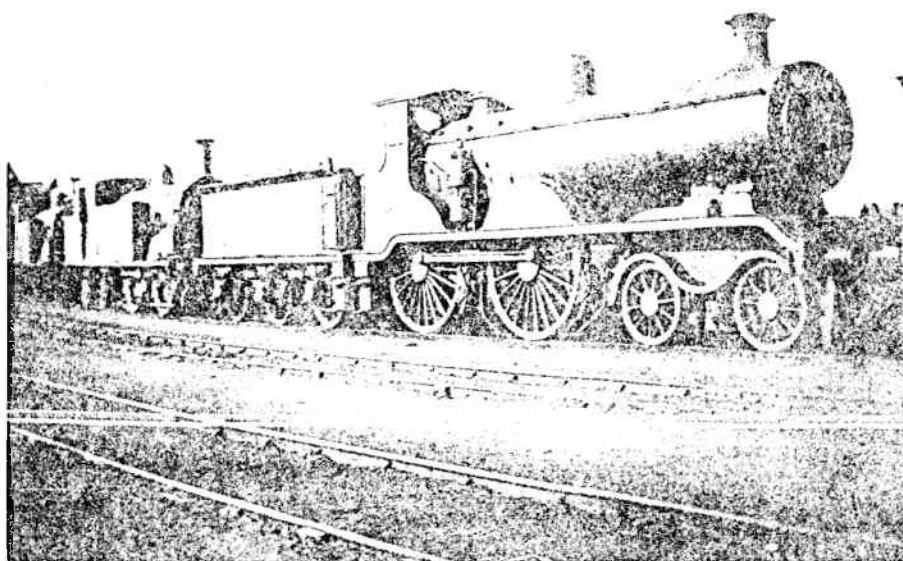
Eastleigh Running Shed and Yard in the 1930s.
Loco No. 313 just released from the Workshops.



Myself on transfer to Eastleigh in 1934.



No. 4 Bay, Loco Works, 1931, with the first of Maunsells three cylinder locomotives under construction with frames for others being marked off and drilled. This work kept a lot of the staff employed for twelve months.



One of the first Brighton locomotives, Class B.4. - No. 54 - at Eastleigh for repairs in 1931. These also gave the staff plenty of work.