

# METROPOLITAN RAILWAY REMINISCENCES

Some 35 years or so ago, it was the intention for the Society to record the memories of some retired London Transport Underground staff and to publish them in the then series of "Underground". Whilst some correspondence did take place in trying to set this up, we believe the recordings were never made. However, some correspondence has recently come to light, written between 1979 and 1981, which is worth sharing with members on how things used to be – it has been edited lightly.

The correspondence came from a former Metropolitan Railway motorman, Harry Tubbs who, with his colleague Arthur Samuels, retired at the same time. Both of them were known by your Editor when he worked at Neasden in 1972-73. They had a combined service length of almost 100 years at retirement! There were other "Met. men" at Neasden, such as motormen Bill Clabon and Ernie Geal, and Running Station Masters Charlie Rogers and Jack Corrie. At Baker Street there was Rest Day Cover Running SM Wally Doye, who started his career as a gateman on the Great Northern & City Railway.

Harry Tubbs was also an enthusiast and he kept up his railway interest by joining the Quainton Railway Society. It is believed that Harry was the last of the original Metropolitan Railway electric loco drivers. He writes –

## QUAINTON RAILWAY SOCIETY

Quainton Railway, being part of the Metropolitan, interests me very much, for as a Guard, I worked trains in the 1930s to Quainton Road and on to Verney Junction, and as you know the Pullman cars were a big part of the Met. service in those days, and I feel that many more LT rail staff, who have an interest in railways, would find Quainton a very worthwhile project, more so as it was once part of London Transport.

## GREAT WESTERN PASSENGER SERVICES OVER THE METROPOLITAN RAILWAY, PRE 1939

The original Metropolitan station at Paddington was known as "Bishops Road" as different to Paddington Praed Street, which was the Inner Circle Line station. Bishops Road, like all Met. stations of the period, had a domed roof (Notting Hill Gate is about the last of these) with a centre track between Up & Down line to allow for loco run-rounds. In the late-1920s the station was handed to the Great Western Company who incorporated it in with the new modern Main Line Station, making "Bishops Road" part of the new suburban line.

As the centre tracks were now part of the new platforms, a special 'spur' was built to take Metropolitan electric locos which had to take GWR 'City' trains to Liverpool Street (Met). The spur is still to be seen, if you look to your right as a Hammersmith train enters the platform from Edgware Road, you have to be sharp to see it – it has an air shaft at the end and is brick built. However, it can only be seen in daylight. The buffers were built into the wall and were still there in 1977 although concealed by P.W. material.

Four electric locos left Neasden depot early morning to Baker Street platform 3, where the leading loco was uncoupled and went on to Liverpool Street. The other three were shunted round to platform 6, and went on to Paddington into the Up platform (as it is today [1981]) and then shunted towards Edgware Road, and thence reversed into the loco spur to await arrival of the GW trains.

The spur was very tight for space, because with the three locos in the spur, the Met. electric loco drivers' usual practice of testing their loco for movement back and forwards, could not be carried out as the derailer and outlet signal was only two feet from the front wheels of the last loco in the spur, and the only way you could see the signal was to hang out of the window – not too nice in mid-winter.

The three trains (in the morning) came from Southall and (I think) Marlow and Reading, and were composed of 'City Stock', which was suitable for operation over Met. tracks and tunnels. They had two Guards, a Head Guard at the rear, in *very* smart GW uniform, loads of gold braid on the cap and uniform, junior Guard at front, and we *had* to take the 'Right' from both men before moving.

These trains, with their old style door handles, the type that had to be closed by turning the handle, contrasted to Metropolitan 'Steam Stock' which had double-locking door catches. This meant that every member of the station staff at all stations between Edgware Road and Moorgate had to be on the platforms to attend these trains.

Furthermore, a problem to electric loco drivers was that there was no jumper line from the train to the loco as on Met. stock, and a start from Baker Street platform 5 was a nightmare to clear the traction current gaps just east of the platform, with a full load of morning rush hour traffic on the train, and a limited amount of room to get any sort of speed on the go – it was with luck that one managed to clear the gaps. I think every loco driver offered up a prayer when starting from platform 5 while his assistant (fireman) sat holding the ‘gap’ leads in case the loco came ‘off juice’.

Another problem with the main line stock was that the Great Western was the only main line that stuck to 23 inches ‘up the pipe’. All the other main lines, along with the Met., used 21 inches, so the electric loco driver had to alter his regulator when GW stock was behind him, and reduce to 21 when he coupled up to Met. stock. If he forgot, he was in dead trouble with the Met. Steam Loco at Rickmansworth, as these locos had sealed 21 inch pipes, and could not start away over 21 inches, and that meant trouble for the electric driver for not reducing his brake pressure at Liverpool Street. While three trains ran from the GW in the mornings, only two ran in the evening rush hour, and two minutes was allowed at Farringdon Street for the purpose of loading newspaper traffic from Fleet Street for the GW line – the sight of five *very* strong newspaper men loading these trains, with the Guard looking on, watch in hand, was a scene not to be forgotten very easy. Although the Guard was given a couple of free copies of papers, he still looked down his nose at the paper men, for HE was a GW GUARD, and this was HIS train!

## O AND P STOCK

It is said that the departure of the CO/CP Stock (in 1981) was a tearful one. If I had been there it would have been one of joy – to us Met. men, who had the ‘honour’ of breaking these ‘salmon tins’ in, they were a curse to one and all, and that includes car examiners in their early days.

Starting life as the Metadyne Stock, they were in two-car units, three units coupled, and ran on the Hammersmith & City Line under the official name as ‘O’ Stock, the Metadyne being a device that made starting gradual and smooth, which was the only good thing about them. But in the event of failure, the motorman had a nightmare in trying to trace a fault, due to the complicated set up of the Metadyne machine, which could only be accessed from underneath – how about of having a go at a failure in a tunnel in the rush hour?

Due to the high power of the Metadyne, the two-car units were made into three cars by the purchase of extra trailer cars. The O Stock was devised to have the Guard ride and operate the doors from the back cab, and by a device of locking the back cab doors, it was possible to make a door operative circuit to the front cab, so that the driver could operate the doors .... and that was in 1937, so, nothing that runs around today is very new is it? The driver door control was never used, as the Great Western would not allow it over the H&C line due to lock-and-block working at Royal Oak, Latimer Road, and Addison Road (now Olympia) junctions. The West London Railway operating people at Addison Road were very firm on this issue.

So was born the P Stock in 1938, with the guard on the gangway in with the passengers, and no door device for driver/door control, but still with Metadyne motors. These trains were made up of two three-car units (six-car) and had as well a number of two-car units, to make up eight-car trains for the Uxbridge – Barking service. At a much later date, a two-car and a three-car made up Circle Line trains but it wasn’t until the late-1950s that Circles were made into six-car trains.

So, why did the Met crews hate these trains? One word – cold! The very small cab heater was recessed into the far side of the cab, and it took two years of Union fight to get the heater brought out into the cab proper, and a further two years to get an extra heater under the driver’s seat, but even then, when driving, you dare not get too near the cab window, or your breath would freeze on the window and you couldn’t wipe it off. Most drivers carried a wallpaper scraper in their bag to scrape their breath of the window, should they breathe on the window by accident.

The guard, in with the passengers, fared no better. The one recessed heater at his position was hopeless. Each time he opened his door at a station, the cold air rushed in, and ‘killed’ any heat that might be around. The same applied to the passengers. I have seen passengers at Uxbridge fill an empty milk bottle with water (done in front of the guard and myself), place the milk bottle in front of a heater, and at Baker Street, present you and the Station Master with a bottle of frozen water! Passengers’ breathing also froze on the windows, so that they could not see out through frosted windows – and *they* paid good money for this horror.

No regrets from me (and many other crew men on the Met.) at hearing the last of these horrors have gone. Fancy an eight hour stint on one of these things in mid-winter, for the sum of £4/13/0d (£4.65) a week, drivers rate.

## **HAMMERSMITH & CITY**

Referring to the Hammersmith & City Railway, this operated up to 1949 when the Government took over the Railways, and the London Transport Executive was granted sole rights to operate the line, subject to GW operations at Paddington (Suburban). Later on, of course, the LTE took over the former London, Tilbury & Southend Railway from Bow Road to Barking and Upminster.

Met. men never had anything to do with GW drivers. The only time we saw them was the brief glimpse as they took their engine past the electric loco spur at Paddington, and reversed to go back to the steam spur at the other end of the station, to do some shunting of coaches, or take empty trains away from the main station.

## **ELECTRIC LOCOS**

Met. men had nothing to do with the District Line electric locos – they were nothing like the Met. locos. The position of staff at the formation of the London Passenger Transport Board in July 1933 was that all staff remained on their parent line, and took promotion on that line. This was agreed by the LTPB as it suited them as well as the staff, but the one exception was the District & Piccadilly when the Cockfosters extension was taking place, and District trains were to be withdrawn from the Uxbridge Line, to be replaced by Piccadilly Line trains. Here, an agreement was made for some DR men to transfer to the Piccadilly, as the Piccadilly Line was to run over part of the District. The same agreement was reached in 1940 when the Bakerloo burst through at Finchley Road to operate over the Metropolitan Railway to Stanmore, which would have lost 20 Met. crews. Agreement was made to transfer some Met. crews to the Bakerloo on a voluntary basis. However, all staff who joined the LTPB after 1933 became 'Common Line Employees' and had to go where there were vacancies, on any line, and this applies today.

The same situation applied to the Trams and buses, West Ham Tramways employees remained at their own depots, as did LCC crews, Croydon Corporation Tramways, North Metropolitan Tramways, London United Tramways, Barking Corporation Tramways, etc. As with the buses, the independent bus operators (and there were many) agreed to work from the nearest LGOC garages, as did Thomas Tilling and the British Bus Co., all of whom were dragged into the LTPB's net.

I was very glad to hear one of my [electric] locos is being looked after. I was very annoyed when No.1 was broken up before my very eyes at Neasden – this was because some blundering fool at Broadway said they "badly needed money as LT was in the red". What few pounds they got from the scrap metal dealer just about paid for one lunch for the big wigs at Broadway!

I spent half my (Railway) working life on those locos, starting as an Assistant Fireman in the 1930s with the Pullman Cars behind, a spell as driver on the 'Red Horrors' (the O and P stock) before becoming a Loco Driver at the end of the war, up to last day of running (9 September 1961), so it's nice to hear that some effort is made to keep one running.

## **METROPOLITAN HORSES**

Metropolitan Horses? Yes, indeed, and well looked after they were too, winning prizes each year at the Regent's Park Van Show. In my day at Baker Street Parcel Office (now Cinema 10), horse-drawn delivery vans were used each day (Monday to Saturday) from seven in the morning (early turn) and from three in the afternoon on the late turn. Each horse and driver worked eight hours only (unless fog crept up) and this included the 20-minute run from Kilburn Stables, which were situated under Kilburn arches (now a repair station for cars). If you think of the 20-minute run from the stables to Baker Street station in that period (1920s/1930s) with no traffic lights the length of Kilburn High Road and Maida Vale, to the contrast today over the same route, the distance covered within the time was very good, and horses were only allowed to trot downhill. The Met. Directors were very hot on this, and any carman caught not carrying out the regulations could expect to go 'on the mat'. But each carman thought a lot of the horse allocated to him – the carmen were in the main ex-army (1914/18) horse drivers, and each man kept his own horse.

Deliveries by horse and cart were, in the main, in the West End of London – think of taking a horse and cart through the heart of London today. There were no doors on the back of the carts and parcels were

left wide open in the cart while the carman was away on a delivery to a flat or shop. Anyone could, if they wanted to, get onto the van, and help themselves, which shows life in the 1920s/1930s was generally very different to today.

Moorgate parcels depot for the City had ten horse/cart but these were stabled in City Road. Here again, the same situation applied. The horse was ideal for City work in the narrow streets and lanes (before bombing).

All horses had a holiday on a farm at Amersham, and were taken to Willesden Green station to a cattle spur, which is still there today, although the tracks have gone. As the Met. Down 'fast' line was only a track away, the horse box could be collected very easily by any passenger train, and taken to Amersham cattle sidings (we must bear in mind that the Met. Down fast line, is now the Jubilee southbound line. The Met. followed the main line practice of Up and Down lines being side by side.

### **'MEAT TRAINS' PRE-1938**

There may be some people around my age group who can remember the Great Western Fish Convoy that used to leave Paddington every weekday around 2.30am, composed of two horse drays, with one driver stuck up on a high seat, some 40 of these drays loaded with boxes of fish from the West Country that had arrived by train.

The convoy plodded along Marylebone Road at a steady four miles an hour, in all weathers, the drivers well wrapped up in old ex-army (First World War) coats, and well wrapped up they need be, stuck up on the high seats with no cover whatsoever, like the tram driver of the 1920s. To me they were real heroes to take the severe type of weather that prevailed in the 1920/30 period.

As a junior parcel porter at the Baker Street parcel depot (now cinema), on the night shift I used to watch the seemingly never ending convoy pass along outside the station entrance. There were no traffic lights in the Marylebone Road in those days, and night taxi drivers, mail and newspaper van drivers gave right of way to the plodding horses, as once a dray was stopped, it wanted great effort on the part of the horse to get going again. I wonder if today's motor drivers would show such an amount of consideration?

Similar but smaller convoys would leave Euston LNWR and Kings Cross Great Northern, heading for Billingsgate, which gave the City Police night staff plenty to do to get the drays moving in the narrow City Streets (pre-bombing days) and due to the cobbled streets which the City had plenty of, horses tended to slip if any hold up occurred.

The Great Western drays, loaded with empty fish boxes (all of which carried a deposit of 2/6d [12½p] on each) would start to head back around 06.00, not in convoy, due to the build-up of London traffic and the time taken to get unloaded at Billingsgate, this was the only trip the drivers and horses made in their duty time, as their working day started at 01.00 in the stables, getting to Paddington and loading up etc., worked out to around an eight-hour day for men and horses, and all Railway horses (including the Metropolitan's) were *never* allowed to work more than eight hours per shift, unless bad weather (fog, snow etc.) caused delays.

And, all Railway horses got two weeks annual holiday, drivers ONE!