

Bletchley MPD 1E

I arrived at Bletchley in 1953 on loan from Workington for firing duties I reported to the shed master who gave me details of what link I would be in and where I was staying, I was lucky I stayed at Manor House hostel in it's Own grounds at Little Brickel, others stayed in camping coaches near the down Fast line and some stayed in small rooms under the water tank on the shed, and Had to look after your self, in Manor house we had people to cook and clean for Us and a railway bus that ran as required twenty four hours a day from the mpd to the hostel. For the first few weeks I fired for Frank Wright in the shunt link In the yard near the Up fast line between Bletchley No3 box at the North end and Bletchley No2 at the South end near the pick up and drop off nets for the Mail often walk over on nights when he was due and talk to the postman, and dream of

The days that some time in the future I would be on that Duchess, or Lizzie, in the Mean time I had to make do with 47288, or 47298. Some times I shunted in the station Or the Pway yard with Driver Jack Misseden we always had a LNW super d goods Engine like 49287 the yard was where the Unit Repair Depo is now on the left hand Side going towards Bedford also some times on nights we would stop shunting and Go down to Bletchley No7 box I think on the Bedford line and bank a loaded brick Train up to the station , he started from Millbrook with a class 8 on or a Super d I did notice it was all way a class 8 that could not take the load not a Super d.

After awhile I was marked into a freight link one of my first turns was from Rugby relieving Nuneaton men with a Super D 49115 with a cab on the tender nice warm For winter we had 43 wagons of coal and 3 fitted brake, we took the train as far as Watford and backed them into the yard, near the motive power depo of which is now The car park and a short branch line to Saint Albans Abbey Street Station. We left Rugby after getting water, down the goods line and started the climb to The arm chair bridge near a place called Watford Lodge, we would be down hill To Northampton Castle station it was my first trip on a Super D and things were not Going very well they have a flat fire box and very awkward to fire, after getting a Shovel full of coal from the tender one has to pull your elbows into your hip, then turn and place the coal in the proper place keeping the fire level according to the Book little and ofton, even good experience fireman have trouble with the D if you did not do all that you soon knocked your knuckles after a few times one soon got the message .

We got to Watford Lodge tunnel box where he put us inside for Faster trains to pass, so that was a stroke of luck after a short spell in there the Signalman let us out we were not quite rosy, only about 110 psi of steam and full Glass of water but as the arm chair bridge was only four hundred yards away we Will soon be over the top, one thing about a super d they are very strong, the problem now is trying to hold the train on the falling grade, you want steam to stop and has the Super d has a vacuum brake of which starts to leak on when the steam pressure drops From 175psi at around 135psi the drivers use to take, what we call the rose out, they Was many a panicky to find it quick and put it back and re-create the brake and then applied the brake especial in the dark one would have got the sack if things went Wrong if you lived to tell the tail the things we did to keep run down engines going. Any how we got down the falling grade ok and stopped at Northampton for water As my diver filled the tank I put a mixture of polish coal and brickets the size of Building bricks with Cardiff stamped on them (the bricks are made of coal dust and Cement pressed together that should be broken into small bits useless stuff) the D was blowing her head off, and I

got a bit carried away and put more in than I should have done. When my driver, Stan Kenny got back on the footplate, he had a fit he said Les, you have buggered that we won't get far, you should have broken the bricks up they will still be like that at Tring, so off we went with forty three of loaded coal.

We got as far as the Hill tunnel near the M1, the reverser was full head gear water about three quarters up the glass and steam pressure down to one hundred and forty and me with the dart (a long poker) in my hands trying to get some life in the fire steam dropping slowly hoping to reach Rhode Cutting Signal box where it shortly levels out we were now going through the long deep cutting (the fast line from Rugby Is on your right and joins up into four near the signal box) we were doing about five miles per hour (hope we don't run over a snail, or we will stall to a stand) the steam pressure by now was down to a staggering seventy psi full regulator, full head gear. What a loco as long as we don't stop the driver said and joke run ahead Les tell the Bobby (Signalman) we are on our way, it was a hard night's work one soon learned fast and tried to do better.

Shortly after a fireman friend of mine who came from Workington depot (lived at Maryport, near Workington) a lot older hand, and been here some time wanted to swap me for his passenger work of which I did he could not get on with some of the drivers there was work to Oxford then back and some Times back to Cambridge with a NE engine a four, four oh a Claude Hamilton class. They rolled like a ship in a gale. On a trip to Banbury one morning we had one of the New Brighton tanks 80034 they were not very good steamers at first until the fitters did some mod's on them, they were ok after that, any how we had just left Buckingham

When there was a loud bang the engine lurched to one side and the banging kept going on looking out my side I called to the driver to stop, who was braking hard the right hand side rear connecting rod was bent like a dog's hind leg and every time it reached a certain place there was a bang and the engine lifted when we stopped and examined we found the big pin holding the brake block to the brake block arm sticking out two inches, having lost the little split pin, I knocked the pin backing and made our way to Banbury Forster Square station I then went over to the GWR motive power depot and brought two fitters back to take both sides of the rear rods off (you have to do that to balance the tractive effort) they put both rods onto the foot plate we went back light engine to Bletchley, and what a different two rods make, full regulator and plenty of cut off to get going. I think Banbury for me was unlucky for later on with the first passenger we had a freight engine on a class 4 number 44447 (short of tank locos as some had gone back to the works) George Marr was my mate who was not in the best of health, had a lot of time off, as we were approaching the station stop block with four coaches I was standing between the up rights (tender hand brake and the engine cab) the train picked it, wheels up (it skidded) and we were only going walking speed, well we hit the buffers of which were not telescopic rather hard the fire irons flew over my head by inches and had my ribs nipped good job I was not fat, poor old George banged his head he went off sick for good, he was still of when I left to go in the army later on. Another lesson learned make certain all iron are secure even when engine is made ready for you of which I all way did, and checked the smoke box door and hung the front coupling onto the hook out of the way one would see trains speeding passed some times the coupling full extended just missing points well after a few months at Bletchley the dreaded letter arrived at the hostel from the Government to inform me to go to Saint Albans for an army medex, then later on to Report to Kempston Barracks, Bedford for my enforced National Service in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regt. For two years when the time

was up I then had to report back to Workington MPD as I was now a booked regular fireman. I missed Bletchley as it was good grounding for main line work later on when I left

Workington to go to Crewe North (which is on another chapter)

Les Jackson Driver