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3½" gauge Peppercorn A1

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No.60162 on shed at Holbeck , Leeds in 1962

In the last 'Newsletter' Dereck introduced a new series entitled 'On our Members Benches'. He had previously mentioned this to me and asked me about my A1 I am building. In the caption below the photo, Dereck was kind enough to say he was hoping I would write in with a few more details of this project.

Well. One must obey orders, so let's try.

Believe it or not the seeds of this job were sown as long ago as the mid-1950s. Between 1955-1957 I was a National Serviceman in the Royal Air Force. At the end of the first three months where we learnt to march, salute, fire a gun, anything as long as it did not involve aeroplanes, and after the Passing Out Parade we were given our postings. Having been told verbally that I was to go to a Trade Training Camp at Weeton, Nr. Blackpool, I was surprised to find in my envelope a ticket from King's Cross to York, and to report to 60MU RAF RUFFORTH, YORK.

Thus began 21 months of a very happy period in my life. I was the replacement for a lad in the machine shop who was just finishing his time.

Rufforth was just four miles from the City of York, and was a small Maintenance unit. It was a flying station where the Officers learnt to fly on Chipmunks. The 'machine shop' consisted of an 8" Denham lathe, a pillar drill, the tool grinder, a bench with a vice, and me. Me, all alone. I couldn't believe my luck. First question was: Had I got a bike? No. Then get yourself over to the bike stores and book one out. Being an airfield it was a long way from the working area to the domestic sites so a bike was essential. Second question. Are you going home at the weekend? We finish at 10-30 On Saturdays. Thus began a period of travelling the mighty East Coast main line every weekend and 100% steam.

Although I had seen these various Pacifics at King's Cross many times, here I was riding behind them, and everything I had heard was true.

Years earlier as a teenager (my 'call-up' had been deferred as I was an apprentice), I had begun to make parts for a 3½" 'Britannia' following LBSC's new series in ME. *But now*, I started to think ahead to the days of, 'What shall I do after 'Britannia'. As it turned out many years away.

My first love was the Gresley A4 Streamliners. Truly one of the 'greats' of all time. At this time the A3, and the V2 2-6-2's were still suffering from years of over use and poor maintenance during the war. Gresley's successor, Edward Thompson had proceeded to take apart all of Gresley's work and produced some dreadful creations. I had written a very nice letter to Doncaster, and was rewarded with a general arrangement drawing of an A4 and the tender. Now, I served my time as a Turner, not a sheet metal worker, and the more I looked at the A4 drawings the more forbidding it seemed to be.

Arthur Peppercorn had succeeded Thompson and produced his A1 Pacific. The biggest of them all. Powerful, fast and, good to look at. When the end of WW2 was at last in sight LBSC found himself with requests for a really impressive loco for 3 1/2" gauge by way of celebration. The hint was for a 'Flying Scotsman'. LBSC's reply was 'HIELAN LASSIE.'

Sometime before this Thompson against strong opposition and pleadings to reconsider, all of which fell on deaf ears, he selected Gresley's pioneer Pacific 'Great Northern' to rebuild to his own ideas. When this abomination was unveiled one high ranking LNER official was heard to say, 'If ever a loco was conceived on the wrong side of the blanket, this is surely the one!'

Sadly, LBSC chose this one for his Lassie offering. I say sadly, because thankfully 'Great Northern' was destined to be a one-off. It was the *ONLY PACIFIC THOMPSON EVER BUILT OR REBUILT WITH 6'-8" dia. coupled wheels*. All the others were 6'-2". Over the years this has led to a lot of confusion. I think even the late and great J.N. MASKYLENE was caught out on occasion. I have seen Hielan Lassies gain some quite high awards at exhibitions carrying completely wrong names. The most common was often No 500 Edward Thompson. To put it in context If somebody modelled a Great Western 'Castle' class, and gave it a number and name for a GWR 'King' can you imagine the uproar at an exhibition. The St. John Ambulance first-aid volunteers would never keep up with all the bodies.

Sadly, too, with this offering LBSC made some errors in the basic dimensions which resulted in the engine being too tall and the tender too low. Using my A4 drawings as a guide and adjusting the dimensions where the wheel spacing differed, the frames are pretty conventional although I did copy faithfully one feature which even the good folk who built 'Tornado' did not. In the odd collections of bits and pieces that mount up over the years I found I had some bogie wheel castings, and the trailing ones under the cab already.

One of the not so well known ME advertisers years ago was Dave Goodwin who marketed castings for a 3 1/2" 'Flying Scotsman'. I bought the driving wheels from him. The cleanest castings I have ever seen. I used Lassie's cylinders, slide valve ones. I had been asked by a friend whether I intended to use piston valves or slide valves? Over a cup of coffee one evening, I said I had decided on slide valve. We finished the coffee then he said 'come with me my friend'. Out to his workshop from under the bench he produced a set of Lassie cylinder castings going spare!



Right from the outset I made up my mind to have the boiler made for this one. I do not have any big brazing equipment of my own, plus with all the fuss with boilers these days and if you do have a slip up it's darned expensive. The full size 'Britannias' and the A1's had a common barrel length of 17 feet. Out came the drawing board and I copied LBSC's Britannia barrel and tube arrangement and married it to a Lassie firebox. Swindon Copper Boilers made an excellent job of it. I was determined to get the tender right although it was a surprising amount of work, but worth it in the end. The standard LNER eight wheeled tenders had very large wheels, namely 4'-2" dia. Nine out of ten people use smaller than scale wheels. Otherwise, you have to cut holes in the soleplate and fit splashers inside the tender. It's a surprising amount of work, but worth it.



What's in a name? The LNER had a thing about Racehorse names. The result was that there were imposing looking Pacifics with odd sounding names like 'Blink Bonny' and 'Pretty Polly'. My choice of 60149 'Amadis' is simple. I went on it once!

Incidentally I chose a Darlington built one to model. For the first time Peppercorn introduced Doncaster to the delights of round head rivets. Having done so there are about ten times more to the yard than you will find on any Great Western job. There are millions of the things. Darlington were having none of that, and on their half of the order theirs are all plain with flush rivets.



I should have mentioned that I was able to use the inside valve gear specified for Lassie in its entirety. It also gave me a good start for the outside gear which is a bit more stretched out. At least it seems to do all the right things. I'm no Mike Wheelwright so I have to rely on a bit of practical application, and I hope common sense.



Well, that's about it. Geoff our exhibition manager has seen it and promptly earmarked it for the 'work in progress' table at our exhibition in April.

One final footnote on the four legged 'Amadis' --Owned by Lord Falmouth, and won the 1909 Doncaster Cup.