

Ted Dyer Railwayman

Ted joined the London Midland Region of British Rail on 22nd September 1958 aged 17, but he was a steam enthusiast from an early age and a train spotter all of his life. He was an anorak before the term anorak was invented.

He was also a great rail traveller and in the early 60s he visited extensively railway lines he knew Beeching would be closing, photographing them, which we are very keen to preserve for posterity.

He was also a keen football follower and played for the railway team at Euston drawing upon his agricultural background he just had to play right back. Ted's wholehearted approach to everything he did came out on the field. His idea of stopping the flying wing was to despatch him into the next field and if you got in the way you went too!

In 1978 as a result of British Rail's interminable reorganisations I found myself sitting opposite him in the General Manager's Personnel office at Euston. Two things we learnt very quickly about Ted – firstly he was his own man, honest and straightforward. In the words of the advert 'You get what it says on the tin' and secondly that he smiled all the time. Our job was to negotiate change with the trade unions, no easy task in the turbulent seventies. Ted would return from jousting with the unions and when you asked him 'How did it go?' he would smile, say OK, write his report and go home to his beloved steam roller and allotment. Nothing fazed him.

In 1985 our office moved to Birmingham. The boss needed an Office Manager for the new building. Ted was ideal for this job, he helped everybody who needed it, but like all office managers he was not an easy touch. How about a new chair, bit of carpet, phone even, he would give you his famous smile as he passed by. No chance.

In 1992 Ted went to Watford as Personnel Manager to the engineering department. This meant a lot less travelling and helped his family life at home. He was back locally at the coal face dealing with the everyday problems of the staff. He could also put some time in working on his allotment in the early evening and as the trains raced past he could tell you what class of engine it was without looking up from his spade.

In 1997 after 39 years service Ted retired and like so many other railwaymen promptly immersed himself in various societies. He went to Railway Pension fund meetings, kept up his friendships he started as Office Manager at Birmingham, meeting them every month.

In 1997 Ted, myself and Alan Keitch formed what became the Express Club. It quickly grew and met monthly. He also joined the Euston Travel Club who are represented here today. In both cases he would arrive first at 12 sharp order an orange juice, he did not drink alcohol and peruse the menu. He also insisted on putting money in the kitty although he did not drink. Buying him a reciprocal meal proved quite difficult as ours and Dave Gurney's travel club will tell you.

In December 1999 our group had an unusual meeting. Instead of starting at 12 we met at 4.30 in Berkhamsted High Street where we assembled to see Ted in his element running his steam roller up and down the High Street as part of the celebrations for switching on the Christmas lights.

In July 2003 our club went to Oxford for the day to a pub that specialised in steak pudding rather than pie. To the astonishment of the bar staff Ted devoured two puddings and then spied apple pie and custard. Two dinner Ted was confirmed forever.

Ted played an important role in our society as he got involved with everybody moving from table to table welcoming newcomers even if they were from the Western Region! Without us realising at the time he made our society tick and for that we are forever in his debt.

Finally I went to a Model Railway Exhibition where on a stand selling books I noted one by R H N Hardy one of the most revered railwaymen of the steam era. I said to the person serving I am interested in Hardy's book. He said I can do better than that, you can come round the back of the stand and have a word with him. We had a chat for half an hour and at the end he said, 'I love the railways. I loved the job and all the railway family that forms the brotherhood that binds us all together.'

Ted was the epitome of those sentiments and we are missing him monumentally.

Andy Long