**AMBERLEY SOCIAL HISTORY**

**Notes of meeting with Ted Cook, former signalman at Amberley Station**

22 November 2017

Prepared by Malcolm Pheasey: read in conjunction with the files of information he supplied.

Started as platform staff (porter) at Arundel Aug 65 on £4.4s a week; Mar 66 box lad Hayward’s Heath; mid 67, Amberley, grade 4 - lowest grade, so no one else wanted the jobs. Ted and Paul Gainsbury. Couldn’t work after 10pm until 18 so was just checking the booking office. He was youngest ever signalman on BR – cannot be beaten as cannot work that young now.

2 shift, early & late; 0630 (first train 0646) to 1400 and 1400 to 2245 (last train 2236 – supposed to stop for that)

When he first came to Amberley there was a senior porter/railman, Bill Wakelin, who did half hour between the shifts. He was supposed to be there for the post office. The post office went at the end of 67, as did the camping coaches and at that time Bill, who ‘was over his time anyway’ was paid off. He was an old sailor with interesting language.

Paul got promotion and was replaced by Malcolm Locke – lots of Lockes in Amberley area apparently. In Ted’s time there were the Philbys, Lockes, Emmetts, Meades.

Malcolm’s family: Wally Locke the ganger, Jim Locke the sub-ganger, Bob Locke train driver, Linda Locke. Linda used to come down the box for a cup of tea etc with Ted. Fred the S&T technician found a pair of knickers in the machinery and brought them out when Mr Carter and Linda’s dad were in the box with Ted. Ted persuaded them that the bank holiday services brought to a halt in the platform and the knickers were thrown out of the window and blown into the machinery.

Malcolm Locke was a bit of a lad and did part time shepherding. On one occasion he came in for late turn with a sheep due to lamb and it stayed in the box and was still there the next morning

The boss man was Mr Carter, the Station Master at Pulborough, who was also the Postmaster for which he was paid £5 per week – but the signalmen got nothing. Note the post office was designated Houghton Bridge Post Office. Stationmaster came down every day for the money

Station was open on a Sunday but not the Post Office. However as the office was open they would bend the rule and sell stamps on a Sunday to the day trippers (train London to Arundel then walk back along river to Amberley to get train back).

Cold Wednesday night when pension day was Thursday. 8pm request to pay out the pension as had to have had the money already. He did so and the pensioner then went down to the Bridge Hotel and told others who turned up wanting the same to avoid coming out the next morning.

Last train had people overcarried from Pulborough. He sometimes got them back by stopping the de-icing train

Worked 6 days a week. When engineering work switched to 12 hour shifts

1968 closed the station on Sundays so also closed the box – no Sundays for Ted. Wanted to open again for a bank holiday but no one told the drivers so no customers.

Big American complained as unable to get a train on a Sunday so they were reinstated

American also had a friend in America called Amberley so bought a station sign off Ted (it had ‘come away in his hand’). When Mr Carter found the sign missing Ted said it was because the station was unstaffed. They subsequently got a Sunday afternoon shift back.

Camping coaches were kept in a siding but by late 60s were in such a bad condition BR set fire to them and just took the bogies away.

Last group in the camping coaches was a group from Eastbourne unmarried mothers. Kids running across the track and climbing the cliff face. One kid got stuck. Local policeman got a rope to abseil down and then pushed the kid down to the bottom

1969 when there were floods Amberley became a terminal station for a day. Flooding was to the north. Bus service brought in. But also service buses diverted and these sometimes turned up as a double decker. Brian Sandbach the policeman, drinking tea just managed to stop it.

Left Amberley to Goring, met wife from Leicester and they moved to Leicester.

Photo selling tickets was Jack Lusher, Jack the Judge – magistrate and mason.

One evening a couple arrived and they said they were sleeping in the open by the tunnel and asked to kip in the waiting room on the London platform. Ted pointed out there was no one there after last train. They did so but on one occasion they didn’t get up early enough and a passenger complained and asked Ted to sort it out. Turns out they had eloped and she was underage! Came to court and West Sussex Gazette reported ‘Couple have underage sex at Amberley Station’.

No fire in booking hall so when cold they were allowed into the booking office where the signalman had a fire.

Used to phone the people meeting the trains if the train was late

Man asked for a return – Where to? Back here you bloody fool

Another man bought a single to Bognor and then a bus back as didn’t know which the front of the train was having been told to get in the front of the train on the way back

Mr Giles, 3 month season ticket – persuaded him to change his season ticket early as season ticket rates were about to go up in price.

Mr G once missed his train. Ted stopped the following express to caution the driver for ‘sheep on line’.