

Brian Penney the career of a true railwayman

Part 2: 1970 to the present day by Steve Morris of Ty Mawr Publications.
Photos by Brian Penney unless otherwise stated

The first part of my look back at the career of Brian Penney covered the 1950s and '60s. This second and final part covers the period from the 1970s to the present day.

Having moved from Cardiff to Paddington in 1973 as Assistant Traction Engineer within the Regional Mechanical and Electrical Engineer's (RM&EE) department at Western Region HQ, he specialised in monitoring the performance of the Region's Class 47 fleet.

Another re-organisation at the end of 1975 saw Brian transferred back to Cardiff. Some of the specific projects that arose following this included assisting with the introduction of the troublesome Class 56 locomotives to the area as well as modifications such as twin fuel tank conversions on Class 37s and converting

Class 03 shunters to work in multiple - both of which took place at Ebbw Junction shed. October 1981 saw the abolition of the Divisional HQ structure meaning a move back to the RM&EE organisation with the role based initially in Cardiff, and from August 1984 in Swindon, which is where I first met Brian. Our paths crossed again in November 1987 when we both worked at Canton Depot. The RM&EE organisation had now been scaled down with the introduction of Sectorisation and Technical resource being based on depots rather than at Headquarters. Brian took on the role of Technical Support Engineer at the depot, monitoring and improving the performance of Railfreight locomotives such as Class 08/37/47 and 56 as well as the specific monitoring of our experimental Class 37/9 and 47/9 locomotives. The role also included the introduction of Cost Effective Maintenance (CEM) which replaced a proportion of major overhaul work, traditionally carried out at Main Works, with component replacement at depot level.

From September 1989 onwards, Brian

took on the post of Locomotive Engineer Private Owner Locomotives. This involved a move to the Railway Technical Centre in Derby. This enabled him to draw on the experience gained on diesel traction and involved monitoring the safety and performance of GM Class 59 operated by Foster Yeoman and later ARC as well. In addition, there was the fleet of Class 20's owned by Hunslet Barclay and a number of shunting locomotives. He was also involved in the trials of a modified Class 59 used by RFD on Freightliner services during 1991. The post also involved the inspection and certification of heritage diesels to move over BR lines for Depot open days, and with the relaxation of the operational ban on heritage Diesels, the role included the preparation and implementation of the standards that applied in this area as well.

In March 1995 Brian took up the post of Senior Consultant for Halcrow Transmark based in Derby. Using the experience gained in his previous job he helped set up a sub-group 'Heritage Engineering' which was accredited to act as a Certification Body and Vehicle Acceptance Body to certificate various types of rolling stock to operate over



Summer 1983 and 03 145 plus another of the class are seen derailed 'all wheels' on the BPGV line at Coed Bach where there was a junction into the washery. At this time Brian was the South Wales representative for the Paddington Locomotive Engineer. The Landore breakdown gang soon had both locos back on the road and normal service resumed!



ABOVE: Following the introduction of the Cost Effective Maintenance (CEM) regime, Canton took on the role of carrying out bogie overhaul work for a number of Class 47 locomotives. Traditionally this would have been undertaken at Crewe Works but the CEM regime involved moving a lot of the heavy maintenance work from Main Works to what would become 'Level 5' depots, one of which Canton would become. As part of his role as Technical support Engineer at the depot Brian was responsible for co-ordinating this work. In order to commence the overhauls, the depot needed a 'float' of bogies. These were obtained from crash damaged 47 111 which had been involved in a collision with a DMU in Preston station in January 1986. In this view, with the power unit already removed the loco is in the process of being lifted from its bogies outside Canton depot Main Shed on June 4, 1986. The body would eventually be cut up on site by depot staff before October the following year. Steve Morris



ABOVE: At approximately 07:30 on March 24, 1987 at Frome North Junction, 33 032 working the 06:55 Yeovil Pen Mill to Cardiff passenger service collided head-on with 47 202 heading a rake of empty PGA hoppers towards Whatley Quarry as the 6B03 07:08 departure from Westbury. The driver and second man of 33 032 avoided injury by entering the engine room of the loco and the guard from 47 202 had jumped clear. However, the driver of 47 202 suffered serious injuries from which he later recovered. Fourteen passengers from the Cardiff-bound service were taken to hospital, although none were badly injured. Brian was involved in the investigation and arrived on the scene a couple of hours after the collision. The conclusion reached was that the driver of 47 202 had passed a signal at danger, given the condition of both locomotives it was fortunate that no fatalities arose from this incident. Both locomotives were withdrawn from service as a result of this accident. 33 032 was eventually cut up at Eastleigh works in December whilst 47 202 lingered on at Bath Road depot until September 1991.

RIGHT: This loco had been withdrawn from normal service but had been overhauled and repainted as part of a Department of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering (DM&EE), freight apprentice project. The idea was to raise funds for its upkeep by allowing it to appear at Depot open days. Because it was no longer on the stock book it was put in the Private Owner category and Brian was responsible for inspecting it and providing a certificate for it to run over BR lines. D7672 would eventually re-enter service in November 1990, the first time an extinct class had been re-introduced onto the TOPS system. The final revenue earning service for D7672 took place on March 30, 1991 heading 'The Rat Requiem' railtour from Leeds to Holyhead and back before withdrawal the following day. In this view the train can be seen on the approach to Frodsham on the outbound trip looking in fine form! Tamworth Castle then entered preservation and at the time of writing is based on The North Staffordshire Railway at Cheddleton. Steve Morris

Railtrack infrastructure. In June 2000 Heritage Engineering transferred to another Derby based consultancy, The Engineering Link, where he continued the work outlined above.

In July 2002, the four members of Heritage Engineering retired, their duties being transferred to The Engineering Link but initially they were retained as consultants by the company. Brian also became a consultant for the National Railway Museum and Resco Railways Ltd., giving specialist advice on steam locomotive matters.

So ends a summary of one Railwayman's career. Given the nature of today's railway, it would be difficult for Railway Engineers to gain the wide range of experience that Brian managed. However 'The Railway' remains a dynamic and rewarding environment in which to work and I hope that this article gives anybody out there considering making it a career the impetus to take the next step in that direction.



LEFT: Chipmans had a contract to run weed killing services over all major and many secondary lines. Initially the trains were hauled by BR locomotives but after negotiation the firm persuaded BR that using their own dedicated locomotives, would be more efficient. They contracted Hunslet Barclay to supply the power, six ex-BR Class 20 locomotives that had been overhauled at the Kilmarnock works, re-painted in the firm's livery and re-numbered in the 20/9 series as 20 901 to 20 906 during 1989. As part of the operating agreement the locomotives had to be inspected and re-certificated every six months and given a 'Fitness to Run' inspection every two days. The six-monthly re-certification was by Brian and his team at Kilmarnock and the 'Fitness to Run' inspection would be carried out by an inspector from a depot near to where the trains would be stabled between duties. This photo of 20 904 Janis was taken at Fort William on June 18, 1990. The train ran in fixed formation with a Class 20/9 at each end and through connections permitted the trailing loco to be controlled remotely from the leading loco. A Hunslet-Barclay technician accompanied the train to deal with any problems. 20 904 was renumbered from 20 041 in March 1989 and remain in service until November 1994, currently found in the ownership of HNRC.





LEFT: In August 1990 Brian went to the EMD works in London Ontario to monitor progress in the construction and testing of the four Class 59/1 locomotives then being built for ARC Southern. In this view 59 102 is seen alongside a diesel electric locomotive being supplied to the Government of Ontario Railroad. Both locos are in shop primer and it clearly shows the difference in loading gauge between Britain and the North American railroads. Delivered to the UK two months later, 59 102 remains in active service with Mendip Rail Ltd operating out of Whately quarry in Somerset.

RIGHT: The four Canadian built 59/1 locomotives were acquired to operate the ARC fleet of bogie wagons that were limited to a maximum speed of 60 mph and so this was the top speed specified for the locomotives. BR's Railfreight Distribution Business was considering its future traction requirements and requested the loan of a Class 59/1 and, for comparison purposes, one of Trainload Freight's own Class 60, to carry out performance trials with a Freightliner type train. As Freightliners ran to a maximum speed of 75 mph 59 104 was subjected to 80 mph trials between Derby and Cricklewood, closely monitored by Railway Technical Centre Test Engineers, resulting in additional dampers being fitted to both bogies to permit it to run at 75 mph.

The trials with the two locomotives took place between July 29, 1991 and August 9, 1991 over selected RFD routes. The Class 60 involved was 60 006. The photo shows 59 104 on July 30, 1991, about to depart with the 09:26 Mossend to Temple Mills, comprising 25 FFA/FGA Freightliner vehicles, loaded with steel slabs and aluminium ingots giving a trailing load of 1,778 tonnes. The use of similar traction on what is now Freightliner Ltd is now commonplace with the introduction of the Class 66 in 1999.



LEFT: When withdrawn from BR service this locomotive was used by the Derby Research Department as a test bed for various projects, and when no longer required was bought by Pete Waterman, the music impresario, who hoped to run it over BR lines. This was in the early 1994, in the final months of BR's existence, when privately owned 'heritage' diesel locos were only permitted to be hauled 'dead' over BR's metals. Waterman had to convince BR that the locomotive was in a safe and reliable condition to meet all their requirements. To help him present a case, he obtained the services of two of BR's senior Locomotive Engineers, David Russell and Tony Broughton, recently retired from Derby HQ. He had also contracted Tinsley TMD to overhaul the locomotive. With their experience, David and Tony drew up a comprehensive overhaul and ongoing maintenance schedule and had meetings with their erstwhile BR engineering colleagues to present their proposals. It was finally agreed that, subject to a thorough inspection and static tests at Tinsley by Brian and his team, Ixion would be given a loaded trial run around the Derby - Sheffield circuit and a decision would be made after that.

The photo shows Ixion at Tinsley on January 31, 1994. David Russell is standing by the cab door. Following further trial runs including one with 47 834 as 'insurance' plus a rake of coaches, from Crewe to Holyhead and back in August 1994 the loco became the first preserved Diesel to run on Railtrack infrastructure under its own power. Following Privatisation and the 'open access' policy being introduced, privately owned heritage diesels soon became a regular sight on Railtrack lines.