

Happy Hols!

by Tony Ross

I was a keen railway watcher coming up to the age of fourteen when my family moved from the West Riding town of Dewsbury to the East Riding resort of Bridlington during the Easter holidays of 1951. I found that the nature of the winter train service to and from Bridlington was very routine compared to the variety of railway operations with which I was familiar around Dewsbury. But the summer season at Bridlington changed all that! On the station concourse at Bridlington, the roller-blind train departure indicator and the chalkboard showing trains that were additional to the timetable revealed the far-flung destinations provided on Saturdays Only for holidaymakers travelling back home from the Yorkshire coast. Where, for example, were the towns or villages of Belper, King's Norton, Seaham, Summer Lane, Ollerton, Bulwell Common, Luddendenfoot, Heywood, Bamber Bridge, Blythe Bridge and other Bridges? From and to these places the bucket-and-spade passengers could travel directly, without changing trains, to Bridlington and back home on summer Saturdays. It was a railway geography lesson. Recognisable major destinations and starting points included York, Leeds, Bradford, Newcastle, Rotherham, Sheffield, Derby, Leicester, Birmingham, Gloucester, Manchester, Liverpool and London (Kings Cross) plus the usual Hull, Filey Holiday Camp (Butlin's), Filey and Scarborough. The attached list of trains departing from Bridlington on Saturday, 21st July, 1956 is based on the actual station working plan for the day and illustrates the wide range of destinations.

By August 1953, I'd saved enough to buy my first 'proper' camera, which I used initially to record the weekend railway scene at Bridlington. Seeking a different location and higher railway speed action, I went on my bike out to Carnaby, a small village served by the first station south of Bridlington. The signal box, at the Driffield end of the northbound platform, operated a level crossing with a minor road leading to the village. Next to the southbound platform were railway cottages, the booking office and the station house. Beyond the crossing on the southbound side was a single siding.

Although I was just a teenager with a camera who was not going to buy a ticket, I was made very welcome by the signaller on duty, Arthur Godfrey. The full job title was in fact porter-signaller because the two shifts worked by Arthur and his colleague Norman Cooper involved running the station as well as the signal box, under the supervision of a stationmaster based at Burton Agnes.

The last passenger services called at Carnaby (and at neighbouring Burton Agnes and Lowthorpe) on 3rd January, 1970. Arthur was able to keep the final ticket issued at Carnaby, a privilege return to Bridlington (fare 6d.). Arthur retired in September 1980, but sadly died a few years later following a period of ill health. Remarkably, the signal box continued in use and was not closed until 22nd July, 1990, following the opening of a new crossing, controlled by automatic half barriers on a new road from the A166 Driffild – Bridlington route, bypassing the village. The box was quickly demolished, but an arched window frame that naturally illuminated the signaller's desk and train register book was rescued and incorporated into the outside wall of one of the nearby railway cottages.

Recollections of going by train on holiday in the 1950s include many features which have now vanished from the railway scene – such as telegraph poles and wires, semaphore signalling, neat and tidy stations with a stationmaster and staff, well maintained track and track ballast, lineside vegetation and shrubs well cut back (no weeds in the track!) and of course the sights, sounds and smells of steam locomotives. Happy hols!

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