

Humphrey Davies

On most Monday evenings, whilst he was chairman, Humphrey telephoned. Sometimes it was just a catch up but often there were important matters of West Somerset Railway Association and Company policy to discuss. That regular contact between Company and Association contributed substantially to the continuous growth in prosperity and success of our Railway whilst he was Association chairman. Topics ranged from the quality of coal and mechanical condition of the locomotives for Humphrey was an enthusiastic and competent steam driver, to more complex matters as to how the Association could best support the Railway financially. I learnt many lessons from him, especially that much as we both loved our trains the WSR could only survive if business like in its approach. I learnt that “cash is king” and “turnover is vanity and profit sanity.” We considered how to raise the money to pay for improvements and considered which projects would appeal best to WSRA members. I am sorry to say we didn’t always remember to consider whether the Charity Commissioners might approve.

In meetings Humphrey was focussed and efficient. He read the papers beforehand and delved into the detail. His contributions to the discussions were pertinent and positive. In later years, he became Company Chairman and the WSR’s prosperity continued.

Once business and administration matters were settled Humphrey was able to indulge his real passion, steam driving. Others are probably better qualified than me to comment on his technical engineman ship but I do know he had an exemplary record, turned up for rostered turns faithfully and kept pretty well to time without upsetting the fitters by abusing their locomotives.

Away from the Railway, Humphrey managed Cerdic foundries in Chard. He was able to give us a fair price for scrap rail chairs, but more importantly for the wider heritage railway industry, the Foundry became the go to supplier of one off heritage railway castings, gaining a reputation with the National Railway Museum for being able to provide unique solutions. He was also immensely proud of a Cerdic Foundries contract for work to restore the wonderful roof of York Railway Station.

We first met in the Bishops Lydeard Goods Shed at a Volunteer Recruitment day, and in the years that followed, we developed sound working relationship and friendship. I think we all have our special memories of a special man, and mine is of someone who could be trusted to listen, to think and to offer sound advice. I know I speak for all my Railway colleagues in offering Pat and all those who are missing Humphrey including me, our very sincere condolences.

Mark Smith

Managing Director West Somerset Railway plc (retired)

8th November 2020