A Trip to Brighton Works

By "North Western"

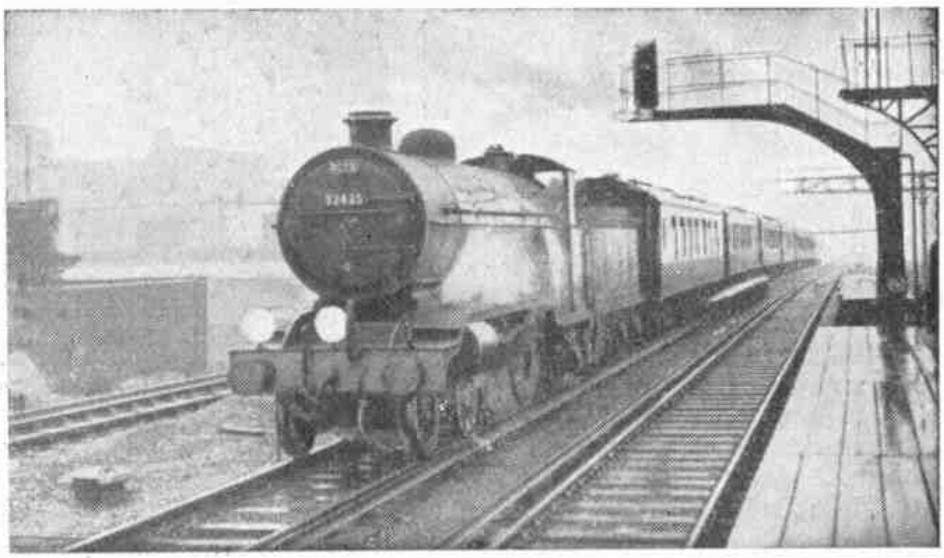
SOMEHOW I have always associated Victoria Station with holiday travels. Possibly this is because the first time I ever went there, about 1912, was the occasion of one of those grand family pilgrimages to the sea. We had crossed London and I remember we had to wait quite a long time before our train was due to leave.

My most recent occasion for a journey from Victoria was somewhat different, for I was due to join my good friend Mr. R. A. H. Weight and other railwayists to take part in a Centenary visit to Brighton Works, where they began to build engines in 1852. I should explain here that two separate trips were run in this way, each on a different Sunday in October last; the trips and the programme generally were organised by the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society, in conjunction with British Railways Southern Region and the Pullman Car Company Ltd.

In order to revive to some extent the atmosphere of earlier times it was arranged that the train should be representative as far as possible of the "Brighton in an hour" service in steam days, the former *Southern Belle*. So a number of more or less vintage Pullmans made up our train; there were 8 of them in all, making a train weight of about 335 tons full. To complete the illusion of L.B.S.C. travel one of the five remaining Brighton Atlantics, No. 32425 *Trevose Head*, provided our motive power. On the first trip in early October the engine had been No. 32424 *Beachey Head* with a Newhaven crew. There were Brighton men on the footplate of our engine, Driver Bourne and Fireman Plaine on the down run and Driver Woods and Fireman Hubbard on the up. Locomotive Inspector McCarthy was in charge on both journeys.

It was a wet morning, but we got away well, crossing the Thames and soon swinging alongside the old L.S.W.R. (now Southern Region, Western Section) main line through Clapham Junction to the typical 12-wheeled rhythm of our Pullman. The recorders in our party got down to the serious, but exciting business of logging the run. Stop watches came into play, and timings were called off and speeds recorded as each strategic point of the journey was reached.

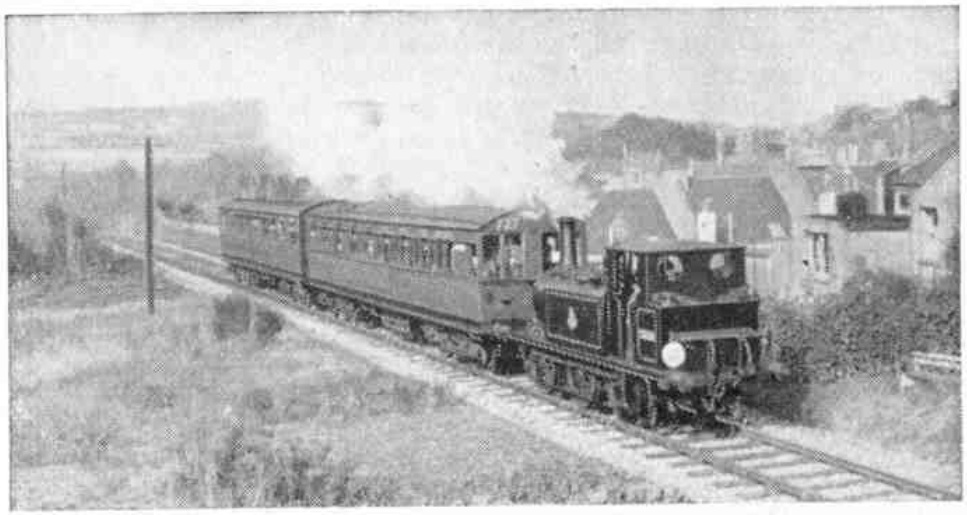
I was able to share the excitement of the brisk running without the necessity for doing any timing myself. This was fine, because it enabled me to follow the gradient profile of the route that was incorporated in the well-prepared programme specially produced for these trips. In addition, in spite of the weather and poor visibility, I was able to see something of the lineside. The Brighton route is well wooded and although this makes it picturesque from the passenger's point of view it can create trouble for locomotives, especially in Autumn. Wet leaves on the track cause slipping, and it was due to this as much as anything else that on both our journeys higher speeds were not reached. Actually the maximum on the run down was 71 m.p.h. and a time of 61 min. net instead of the even hour was recorded.



The R.C.T.S. Brighton Special of 19th October. No. 32425 is pressing on through London suburbs in this photograph by H. Gordon Tidey.

On arrival at Brighton, groups were formed for touring the Works and subsequently the running sheds. As it was

Sunday the Works were deserted. There were engines about of course, plenty of them, some under repair, some complete but just "dead," and others being built. In spite of this evidence of activity interrupted for the weekend, it was not difficult to imagine that the ghosts of past Locomotive Engineers who had ruled at Brighton were lurking about somewhere. There was John Craven, for instance, who built scarcely any two locomotives alike, followed by the immortal Stroudley, who brought to Brighton locomotive building an order and precision unknown before, that has been maintained ever since. In the matter of externals, many of his engines wore his yellow livery, officially termed "improved engine green." We were able to see a specimen of this striking turn-out, for the Works shunting locomotive is a Stroudley Terrier 0–6–0 tank finished in this style and it still sports a copper-capped chimney.



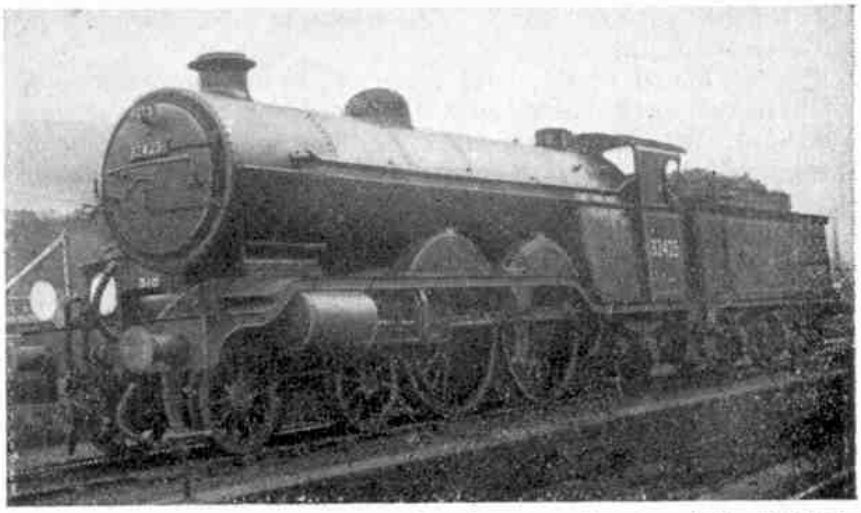
A cheerful view of one of the Kemp Town special trips. The diminutive 80-year-old Terrier is dwarfed even by the low-roofed coaches that were used. Photograph by S. C. Nash.

Locomotive construction ceased at Brighton when the Southern Railway was formed, and the Works were practically closed. Under wartime pressure it became necessary to re-establish Brighton for locomotive building, and since this took place in 1942 some 284 new locomotives have been built. At the time of our visit a series of B.R. standard 2–6–4 tanks was in hand; tough looking engines these, quite unlike the traditional Brighton designs, but capable of giving a good account of themselves.

At Brighton Motive Power Depot an interesting collection of engines was on view. A special feature was the display in line of various engines that have at one time or another carried the name *Brighton*. These were respectively a Terrier No. 32640 built in 1878, one of the large Billinton 0–6–2 tanks No. 32587 of 1903, and the present owner of the title, an Eastleigh product of 30 years later, No. 30915 of the Schools Class.

An additional special exhibit was the last remaining 4–4–2 tank of class I3, No. 32091, now withdrawn from service. It seemed hard to realise now that these by no means big engines shared in the working even of the *Southern Belle* years ago.

A trip behind another Terrier to Kemp Town and back, over a line which has had no passenger service for 20 years, was to prove that even at 80 years of age a Stroudley engine can do useful work. The normal duties of this engine, which used to be numbered 72 and named *Fenchurch*, are shunting at Newhaven. Our return run to Victoria was made in just under the hour. A signal delay at Haywards Heath encouraged a grand recovery, with a maximum of 75 at Horley.



Trevose Head waiting at Brighton for the return journey of the R.C.T.S. Special. The characteristic features of later Brighton locomotive practice are well portrayed in this photograph by W. J. Reynolds.