

A Stationmaster on the Settle-Carlisle line, as elsewhere, had an important and recognisable place in the community. "The Country Stationmaster, as a local supervisor, was also the chap who had to make a decision immediately as soon as the circumstances were presented to him. You often had to do it on the spot, and could not go running to someone in higher authority." There were very few dull moments on the Settle-Carlisle. "Every imaginable kind of minor or major mishap took place on this stretch of line. You got things like 'hot axles'. There were fat boxes in those days, but the fat was soon replaced by oil boxes and then by roller bearings. I well remember that right in the middle of the night — at half past two in the morning, to be precise — a wagonload of bullocks from Scotland arrived at Horton-in-Ribblesdale. Hot axle! I had to unload 'em, which was all right; those bullocks came out quickly enough. It was quite a job getting them back in next day! There was only a signaller and me to do it!"

Limestone was the major product of North Ribblesdale. "At Horton, we dealt with a quarter of a million tons a year when the trade was in its heyday in the 1950s. I worked it all out. I was doing monthly statistics of tonnages dealt with. I thought, well, with coal coming in for lime-burning in kilns and mineral traffic going out for various purposes for which limestone was used, the total was just that — a quarter of a million tons! And that was a tidy sum for a small station."

Each working day, after the 5-30 train to Carlisle had departed, Limey pulled out of the sidings at Horton and went on its merry way to Carlisle, bearing limestone for Scotland. Limey originated at Hellifield, and the length of the train depended on details of requirements telephoned through by the Stationmaster of Horton. Limey was so popular at one time not only was a full train invariably requested but an extra train was necessary to carry the limestone. The extra consignment was moved following the departure of a slow train at lunchtime. At first, a locomotive of 0-6-0 type was adequate to haul the lime wagons, but soon more powerful engines, including the celebrated Black 5 — for long a real work-horse on the Settle-Carlisle

— was recruited. Lime was used in Scotland in a variety of industries. It was a flux in steel-making and was used for surfacing roads. Cob lime went to paper mills. Lime was used in the manufacture of paint." Latterly, the demand began to drop off because they found a new flux for the steel furnaces. "Limey was a special goods train run for the benefit of Horton, but if there was room, or if someone urgently wanted to pick up a wagon for the north; if a wagon had been put off a train with a hot-axle and was now ready to go, Limey stopped at other stations."

Banking empty wagons at Horton could be spectacular. "You could bank about 40 to 50 empty wagons up, and you had to give 'em full throttle. The train was drawn out of the station, beyond the starting signal. Then the signalman had to turn the points for going inside, to go round the corner to Settle Limes quarry. There were two roads up — a front road and a back road, and the empties went up the front road. So we had to be absolutely sure that set of points was right. (If you'd gone in the back road, you would have been in terrible trouble). Towards the end of the front road, instead of running on to the stop blocks, there was another set of points that diverted you round the corner. It was the stationmaster's responsibility to make sure those points were pulled.

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EVACUATION

A RAILWAY STATION sees life from a peculiar angle—beginnings and ends, arrivals and departures, happy home-comings and sad good-byes. The vast exodus of children which took place from many of the largest cities of Great Britain in the first four days of September, 1939, was unique among such scenes.

Known as the Evacuation, it was probably the greatest controlled mass movement of human beings within so short a time that the world had ever seen. A page in the nation's history, and at the same time a page in the intimate diary of millions of British homes up and down the land.

Railway plans for the Evacuation were first made in the autumn of 1938, and overhauled in July, 1939. They were drawn up so that they could be quickly set in motion, and in point of fact less than 24 hours sufficed. The decision was taken on August 31st, and next morning tens of thousands of children were being shepherded from school assembly points to the main-line and suburban railway stations.

The L.M.S. handled much of this traffic. It came in a steady flow to 15 of the Company's stations, 1,450 special trains were run, and on the evening of the fourth day the total number of passengers dealt with was returned as approximately half a million. And all without a single casualty, and all interwoven with the extensive ordinary summer services then still running. Even the Company's London electric service was hard at it (one train every eight minutes) taking passengers out of the city to where steam trains waited to move them farther afield.

The children, some accompanied by their mothers, but generally by school officials, ranged from 3 to 13 years of age. Each child carried a gas mask, food, a change of clothing and wore three labels. As they entered the railway stations they marched with a good step, but many of their little faces were hard set trying to be brave. Amongst them there were Jewish children from Berlin, and one child who had arrived from Danzig only a few hours previously.

During those four days the railway staff on duty in the stations acted as guide, philosopher and friend to many bewildered little people. It was a job different from routine. The children were leaving their *homes*, and in spite of many outwardly cheery faces it was a picture pathetically sad. As train after train pulled out to the safe areas some of the staff must have looked wistfully after them, perhaps especially remembering a little girl of ten, who in parting from her mother had said: "Will I ever see you again, Mummy, here or anywhere else?"

No one knew. The war machine of the Hun had been set in motion and perhaps with the advent of the next batch of children that same railway station on which they were standing might be a shambles of twisted girders and broken bodies. The war of nerves was still no idle phrase.

WOMEN DO MEN'S WORK !

Recruitment and the training of staff was always a problem. In normal times the newly joined employee had ample opportunities to become acquainted with his job, spending a period in the lower or starting grades alongside an experienced hand. But under war conditions it soon became clear that there would not be enough suitable men coming along from the starting grades to fill vacancies in the higher. As the months wore on, therefore, only one substantial source of labour was still available—the country's womenfolk—and in due course they were engaged for those beginners' jobs in a really big way, steps being taken to give them every encouragement and assistance to learn the ropes.

But still the demands for qualified man-power were unsatisfied, and with the recruitment of men eventually dropping to small proportions—so again, there was only one solution—that these same women take on ever more and more important jobs. Gradually, then, this too was done until finally they came to be employed in such key posts as passenger guards and signalmen, thus releasing men working in these grades for similar, but more important duties elsewhere.

Training women for employment as ticket collectors, porters, vanmen and so on is not difficult, but it is a very different proposition when it comes to guards and signalmen. Nevertheless, training and tuition were started on specially selected candidates, and so successful did the venture prove, that by the end of 1944 there were on duty with the Company no less than 377 women guards and 623 signalwomen.

It was the same in many other railway departments, and it was this large scale employment of women which unquestionably helped to relieve a very difficult situation. Indeed, they finally worked in nearly 250 different railway grades, including such diverse jobs as concrete workers, sailmakers, assistant architects, fitters, electricians, boiler cleaners, weigh-bridge men, painters, lock-keepers, stablemen and even blacksmiths! At one time the total number employed by the Company amounted to 39,000, some 17 per cent of the whole staff.

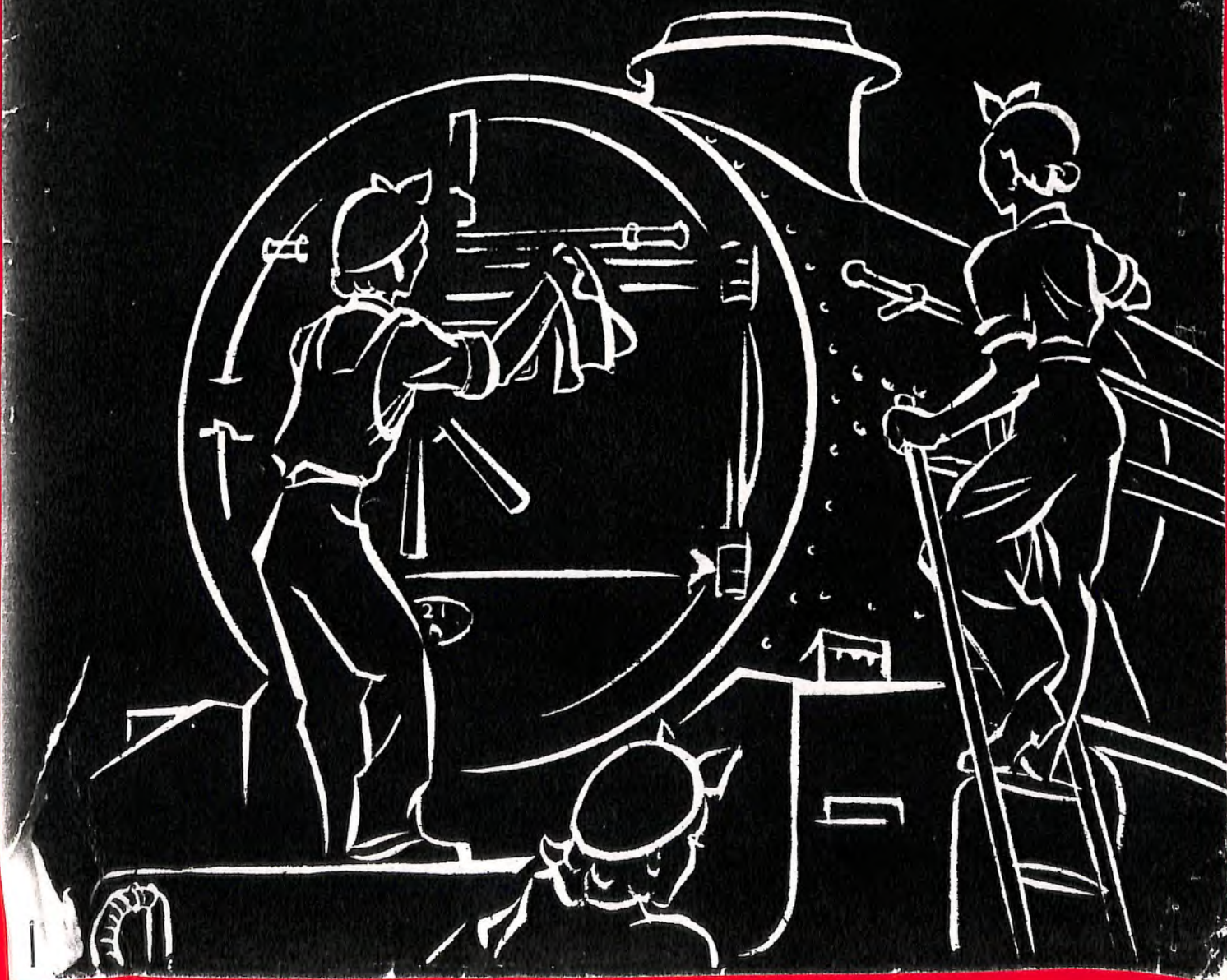
It was all a very remarkable achievement and perhaps one of the happiest features of the new set-up was the readiness with which the regular staff adopted the newcomers, cheerfully helping them over their initial hurdles and displaying a fatherly care in their development. Without such human interest so freely given, the task of training entirely inexperienced individuals—and this applies to men as well as women—would have been impracticable.

Outside their regular jobs the staff undertook many other duties; the Home Guard, for example—whose fine record is characteristic of much that was done elsewhere. The appeal by the Prime Minister—the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill—in the early summer of 1940, "to fight on the beaches, on the landing-grounds, in the fields, in the streets and in the hills," might well have included the railways, for the railwaymen's response was immediate and exceeded all expectations.

At that time the L.M.S. was being tried as never before, in coping with the immense difficulties of evacuating the B.E.F. from Dunkirk. Nevertheless, 46,000 of the Company's staff offered themselves for service and were enrolled.

The country was in a fix and the railwayman knew it. No one was better acquainted with the general layout of the permanent way and railway structures than he was, and no one could better appreciate the havoc which sabotage might inflict on bridges, telephone exchanges, tunnels and signal cabins.

THE LMS AT WAR



Winnie Sunter remembers, in the latter part of the war, seeing ambulance trains travelling northwards for hospital treatment. Sometimes the trains would run out of steam and stop by the signal box. While the fireman stoked the boiler, the nurses and doctors came to the box for water for the wounded. Winnie was horrified at the sight of the appalling wounds that the men had suffered.

The Settle-Carlisle line played an important strategic part in winning the war. The viaducts were particularly vulnerable to enemy air attack and sabotage. The protection of Ribbleshead viaduct was an important job for Horton Home Guard, who also had the job of protecting the crossings and bridges when the Royal train went through. On one occasion the Germans dropped a land mine at Hawes junction, which it was thought might have been aimed at Ribbleshead viaduct.

Trains came through continuously. Each section of line in both directions almost always had a train in it. Many of the trains were goods trains, with the goods often in containers or sheeted wagons so that it was impossible to know what was in them. Sometimes a train of tanks came past, with the tanks carried on flat bogies. There were also troop trains and trains carrying prisoners of war, in addition to normal passenger services.

Annie Sunter, Winnie Sunter, Cissie Eccleston (Hunt), Bessie Short, Annie Briggs and Edith Sedgwick were women who worked on the railway in Horton and Selside. There were also two others who came up by train each day to work as booking clerks at Horton Station.

Selside had the only main line signalbox manned round the clock by signalwomen. "There was no cross-over road, nothing of any intricacy about it; there were only two levers one way and two levers t'other way. Selside broke up the block section. For the acceptance of trains, it counted as a block section. So there was Horton to Selside, Selside to Ribblehead, then Ribblehead to Blea Moor. That evened out the length of the sections and it saved a lot of delays, especially in bad weather."

A porter who worked at Settle for seven years when the Stationmaster was Mr. J. Banks, recalls that "He was strict but fair; he was always clean and smart in appearance and he expected the same of his staff." The Stationmaster at Horton-in-Ribblesdale, in a part of the valley occupied by some large quarries, had the supervision of a staff spread over several miles of country. "We had three signalmen and a relief signalman at Helwith Bridge; three signalmen and a relief at Horton station; three signalwomen — yes, women — at Selside; then we had two porters and a relief porter and about a dozen platelayers. Mind you, the platelayers came under the engineering department. So even at a little place like Horton-in-Ribblesdale there were twenty-odd of a staff."

Wartime traffic was too much for the Settle-Carlisle. "You used to stand outside Carlisle for one and a-half to two hours, regular away. You couldn't get into the sidings; they were absolutely full." A freight train from Hellifield to Carlisle was on the main line for 17½ hours. The guard recalls that "we joined the queue at Settle Junction, and at Armathwaite the signalman said we'd be waiting for two hours. So I walked into the village for some sandwiches. At the pub, they said they would let me have some — if I made them up at dominoes. We played sixpence a corner. They enjoyed my company so much they asked me when I would come again! I was there at least an hour before I got my sandwiches. I was really hungry. But just fancy — having a game of dominoes while working between Settle and Carlisle!"

There were many reminders of war conditions. "What was in many of t'wagons, we nivver knew. Then you'd git a load o' cannons — or summat like — going by, or a few tanks. Men told of trains consisting of jeeps, each with its lights on and a driver at the wheel, hurtling through the night. "When the Americans first came over the line, they used to ride on the tanks, and that practice had to be stopped. It seems that in America there are level crossings, and few bridges. The Midland line's all bridges and tunnels. It's a wonder that some of the Americans weren't killed." Of the Americans, it was said: "You never

Reluctant Prisoners. In 1947, prisoners of war were brought up in ballast trains to clear snow out of Ribbleshead station; the snow was emptied over the parapets of the viaduct.

“I remember one lot of prisoners arriving; they wouldn't get out of the train to clear snow. When eventually the inspector got them out and got the wagons filled and took them to t'viaduct, they wouldn't empty t'wagons. That inspector was a very religious man; and they 'turned' him. I never heard a man swear as much in all my life! He said: 'If my wife could hear me now, she'd drop down dead!'”

When the limestone quarry at Ribblehead was re-opened during the

1939-45 war, machinery arrived and the railwaymen unloaded it, at overtime rates, at night. Mrs. Towler looked after the quarrymen – tidying up their quarters and cooking their food – for five shillings a week per person.”

In wartime, two sidings at Blea Moor were replaced by loops, theoretically to ease the traffic flow at a time when it was heavy. “Those loops caused a lot of bother.” There were runaways – wagons containing iron ore, sugar beet, once even explosives. Fortunately, the trucks remained on the tracks and came to a halt between Settle and Long Preston.

Also during the war, the Home Guard mounted guard over Ribblehead viaduct, which would be a prime target for enemy aircraft. “One of them told me of the man who, demonstrating to a friend that there was no bullet in the rifle, pointed it upwards, pulled the trigger and sent a bullet through the ceiling and slates into the wide blue yonder.”

TWO BOMBS fell in a pasture a mile or so from Garsdale station. The big bangs came early one Sunday morning. There was no damage, except to the sleep of local people. "I could feel the tremors. Those bombs seemed to shake the district. They wakened me up, though I didn't realise for a while what the noise was. Two big craters were left in the field." A signalman recalls that they fell "just beyond Garsdale signal box, going down Hawes road. I went to have a look. There were two fair 'oles." There was "a bit of a scare" at Hellifield, a rumour that someone planned to blow the railway up, putting some explosives under a little bridge near the station. Police were around for quite a while afterwards; then it fizzled out . . ."