
A Hellifield railway worker from the past

This portrait of a Midland Railway station inspector came from the collection of photographs I inherited from my grandmother several years ago. On the reverse of the photo is written "Mr. Straw". Using this name I decided to search through the Census and other records to see if I could build up a picture of this gentleman's life.

Albert Straw was born in Belper, Derbyshire on the 5th March 1863, the family were living in Ripley, Derbyshire at that time. By 1881 the family are living in Blackwell in Derbyshire, where Albert (then aged 18), his father and two of his brothers are employed as coal miners for the Blackwell Colliery Company. In 1882 Albert is shown in the Midland Railway staff records as beginning his railway career at Derby; sadly I was unable to decipher from the documents what his first role with the company was.



Albert Straw 1863 - 1940

Albert's next move was to Carlisle, where in 1891 he is shown as living in lodgings; his employment is listed as railway clerk. The 1901 census shows Albert employed as a passenger guard still living in Carlisle but by this time he is married with twin daughters and living in the Botchergate area of the city. Albert must have worked trains over the Settle to Carlisle line and to Hellifield during his time as a guard and perhaps this is how he met his wife, Lavinia Beecroft, as she came from Long Preston, her occupation being given as dressmaker. Their marriage was registered in Settle in July 1893. Albert and his family must have moved to Long Preston when he took up a new position at Hellifield sometime between 1901 and 1911. In the census of 1911 the family are living in "Greengate", Long Preston with Albert shown as a Foreman porter at Hellifield, where he eventually attained the position of Station Inspector. The Midland Railway records for salaried staff for 1914 shows Albert as a Station Inspector at Hellifield on a salary of £100.

The last records I can find for Albert are the 1939 register showing Albert as a retired railway inspector aged 76 living in "Thornccliffe" Long Preston and sadly his death certificate for the 23 December 1940 registered in Settle.

While doing this research I came across the other photograph included here which shows Albert Straw on the



Albert Straw on Hellifield Station

platform at Hellifield station. This photo is from the Rowley Ellwood Collection and is held by Skipton Library and is used here by kind permission of the families of Mr K. Ellwood, Mrs V.

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John Percy - March 2022