

Afternoon Out With No. 41748

Derelict Stations Spring To Life



THE FAMOUS DURSLEY "DONKEY" had the honour of pulling the special train back to Coaley Junction.

THERE exists in Britain an organisation little-known to most of the populace yet strong in numbers. Calling themselves the Stephenson Locomotive Society its members take an active interest in all sides of railway life in this country and their one dislike is being classed as 'train spotters'!

A large group of these people invaded the Stroud district on Saturday when, as part of the centenary of the Coaley-Dursley branch line, they commanded the passenger train which must have puzzled many when it went puffing into Nailsworth Station at 4.5 p.m. And no wonder, for it was the first passenger train, excepting odd excursions, which has come to that station since June 16, 1947.

ROUND TRIP

The visit to this locality was part of a round trip made by the Society, which included a tour of exactly 86.24 miles from Eastgate Station, Gloucester, through Stroud, Dudbridge, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Dursley, Coaley, Yate and Thornbury.

Promptly at 3.35 p.m. on Saturday the engine No. 41748 which, for the past 30 or so years, has pulled the carriages between Coaley and Dursley, drew the three carriages full of railway enthusiasts into the old L.M.S. station at Stroud.

They were due for a five-minute stop and almost before the train halted were all over the station. Aged from 16 upwards, the members of the party were from all walks of life. Company

directors mingled with grammar school boys and everyday workmen, and there were even a few women and a solitary soldier in uniform.

Hardly anybody seemed to be without a camera of some sort or other and every feature of the now decrepit, but once busy station was recorded on film, as well as shots of the engine from every conceivable angle.

HURRIED SEARCH

A whistle, a hurried search for any stragglers by the bowler-hatted railway official, and they were on their way again with all in the brake van admiring affectionately the performance of 41748.

'She was built about 1875 you know', said one gentleman who seemed loathe to take his eyes off the engine. A 0-6-0 Johnson tank type. The one at the back (there were two engines) is a more modern closed-back type built to replace the old ones.'

To those who regard rail travel as a bore or who always seem to find themselves in a carriage with people who are of that opinion, this journey would have been an 'eye-opener'.

The points, the engines, the stations and fittings all provide talking points and each member has his or her own speciality.

The gentleman already mentioned specialised in signals. Like the rest he carried his small notebook and specially-prepared historical notes concerning the stations and lines on the route. Another gentleman, hob-nail

booted and with a beard, was making notes of every station and mill or factory siding passed through.

Most of them were members of the Midland Area of the Society, but they were joined by others from all over the country. In charge was Mr. W. A. Camwell, secretary, of Birmingham, which has a large contingent of the members.

LITTLE MISSED

Outings such as Saturday's are held once a month during the summer along old branch lines, which have either been closed to passenger traffic or have never had a passenger train on them.

Nothing escaped their eye, except perhaps the developments, temporarily at a halt at Frogmarsh, which concern the railway in a big way.

Word of their coming must have got round for at Nailsworth, the bowler-hatted railway inspector was eagerly awaited by a resident who wished to know why excursions had been stopped from Nailsworth.

'Absolutely crazy isn't it?' asked a member of our reporter, as Nailsworth Station, deserted for so long, was suddenly given over to a seething mass of "hungry" camera-wielding railway enthusiasts.

On the contrary, however, it seemed to be not only an interesting but a profitable and valuable pastime. In future years many people may learn from the information gathered on trips made by members of the Stephenson Locomotive Society.