

# BY MET TO ALMOST EVERYWHERE?

by Eric Stuart

The electrification of the Metropolitan and Metropolitan District Railway's surface lines (as we would term them) in 1905 was a considerable upheaval, beyond the technical aspects of electrifying the track, the electrical supply and the new trains. A whole new way of operation was involved. But, besides all that, what to do with the fleets of steam locos and coaches? True, the brave little 4-4-0 tank locos had earned their keep by sheer hard work over the years, but there was still life in many of the old dogs. And there were all the coaches as well. Some were still needed for the Met 'Extension' services out into the Chilterns, but many had no further use in London.

There was obviously the scrap value of the coaches made redundant in 1905, but it is equally obvious that there was more value in selling much of the stock as usable. Records suggest the A and B class locos were for sale for between £600 and £700 and coaches for approx. £60 apiece, although the price varied considerably.

Previous issues of *Underground News* have mentioned what has happened to various items of coaching stock that have left the Metropolitan Line for pastures new, well beyond such exotic outposts as Brill and Verney Junction, and headed to places in Wales, the north of England and even France.

*D'Aldgate a Arès* in a past *Underground News* reviewed the travel of 18 Met. coaches to the south-west of France and their life there, where they existed in service until 1960 – albeit in rather less strenuous circumstances than the Circle or out into Buckinghamshire. Other coaches went to a couple of other lines in France<sup>1</sup>. However, numerous locos and coaches were bought by lines in the UK and these went on to give good service for varying amounts of time.

## SUMMARY OF DISPOSAL OF THE METROPOLITAN 4-4-0Ts

### 'A' CLASS

No.1 was withdrawn in 1897 after accident at Baker Street. It was retained as a stationary engine at Wembley Park to generate electricity for electrification experiments.

Apart from No.1, all the other locomotives were sold variously from 1905, as below:

#### To R. Fraser & Sons

These were scrapped, some at Neasden, in the following years, except for those marked \*, for which see subsequent disposals, below.

4, 5, 6\*, 9, 21, 31, 32, 33, 39, 40, 45 and 47 in 1906.

2, 3, 8, 16, 17 and 30 in 1907.

19 in 1911.

24\*, 25 and 43 in 1913.

7\*, 26\*, 42 and 44\* in 1925.

#### Subsequent onward sales by R. Fraser:

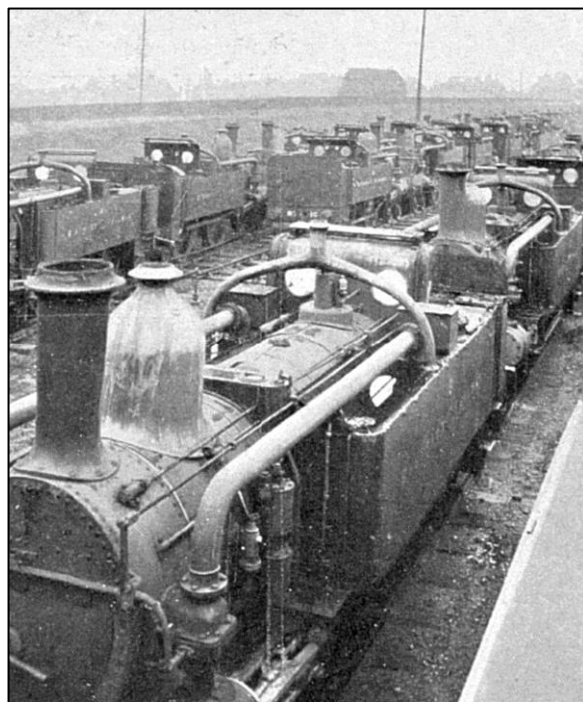
6 – Pelaw Main Colliery in 1926/7? Scrapped in 1932.

7 – Mersey Railway 1925, replacing No.61 (class 'B') which was scrapped. No.7 scrapped in 1943.

24 – Birtley Colliers in 1922.

26 – Pelaw Main Colliery in 1926/7? This loco probably out of use since 1938 and was cut up at its shed at Birtley, Co Durham during December 1948, having been passed to the National Coal Board on nationalisation.

44 – Pelaw Main Colliery in 1926/7? Probably out of use since 1938. Cut up as 26 (above). It was reported that 44 retained its Met livery until its demise!



**Above:** In the absence of any further information, it is assumed that this view is in the scrapyard of R. Fraser & Sons, as that company took the majority of the 'A' class locos for disposal.

<sup>1</sup> I am still trying to find firm information about these.

**To Sherwood Colliery:**

28 in 1906.

**To Cambrian Railways:**

10, 11, 12, 13 and 15 in 1905.

See below regarding B class No 66.

**To South Hetton Coal Co.:**

14 in 1905. This loco was numbered 6 by its new owner. They then converted it to an 0-6-0T and it ran as such until its demise.

**Scrapped at Neasden:**

29 in 1925.

**Sold to Sir Arthur Elvin:**

18 and 46 in 1928.

**Sold to Bradford Corporation:**

20 in 1905. Became Nidd Valley Light Railway No.1, *Holdsworth*. For sale in 1934, and broken up soon afterwards. Other sources state it was scrapped in 1920. (On balance, I suspect the latter.) See below.

**Sold to District Railway:**

22 in 1925.

**Retained at formation of LPTB:**

27 – withdrawn 1935.

41, 48 and 49 – withdrawn 1936 after closure of the Brill branch.

23 – withdrawn 1948 as L45, but still extant as a museum exhibit at Covent Garden.

**'B' CLASS**

**To R. Fraser & Sons:**

These were scrapped, some at Neasden, in the following years –  
35, 36, 54 and 55 in 1906.

38, 50, 52, 53, 56, 57, 60, 62, 63 and 64 in 1907.

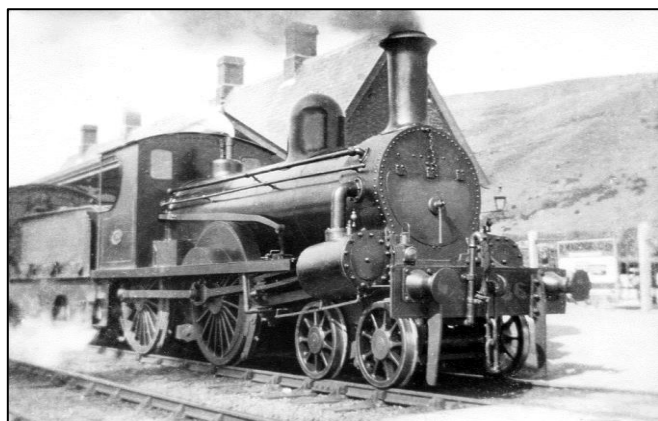
51, 58, 59 and 65 in 1911.

**To Mersey Railway:**

61 in 1907. Scrapped 1925 and replaced by class 'A' No.7.

**To Cambrian Railways (Wales):**

Met. 4-4-0T locomotives 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 (A class) and 66 (B Class) were sold to Cambrian Railways being renumbered 2, 12, 33, 34, 36 and 37 by their new owners. Two of the locos were reconfigured as 4-4-0 tender locomotives. Under the Grouping effective in 1923, Nos.34 and 36 were allocated GWR numbers 1113-1114; others were allocated 1129-1132. 1130 was photographed with its GWR number plate in the loco shed at Oswestry on 6 May 1923 but it seems unlikely it ever worked for its new owner. Possibly the other numbers were never carried, all the locos being scrapped in 1922-23.



*Cambrian Railways (Metropolitan Railway)  
Beyer Peacock (426/1864) 4-4-0 number 36  
(MR 15; later GWR 1114) at Aberdovey station*



*Cambrian Railways Beyer Peacock (426/1864) 4-4-0  
number 36 (formerly Met Rly No.15 "Aurora") on a  
passenger train at Barmouth North junction. Allocated*

with an express passenger train.

GWR number 1114 but it was withdrawn in 1922.

**Photos: Kidderminster Railway Museum Trust (Both Above and Opposite, Top Left)**



*Cambrian Railways Beyer Peacock 4-4-0T number 12 (former Metropolitan Railway number 11 and subsequently GWR number 1130) with a passenger train at an unknown location. Behind the engine is a six wheel passenger brake coach.*

**To West Somerset Mineral Railway via A. King & Co.:**  
37 in 1907.



lowered roof height. The line came under the influence of Col. Stephens who oversaw a number of light railways in the early part of the 20th Century. Col. Stephens advised the line to buy some Met. coaches that were stated to be in store. These were ten ridged wheelbase 8-wheelers, but their roof level must have been already low enough to avoid the indignity of being trimmed down.



*Met. coaches on the Burry Port & Gwendraeth Railway in South Wales, headed by No.8 Pioneer.*

**Sold to Bradford Corporation:**

34 in 1905. Became Nidd Valley Light Railway No.2 *Milner*. Saw limited use, and its name was erased in 1909. Resold in 1914 to Welsh Granite Co.

The dates of the withdrawal and scrapping of many of these locos is unknown, quite a number having been sold on to industrial enterprises. However, the longevity of some of them is surely a tribute to their sturdy construction. They had worked intensively in the sub-surface lines, then further out into the suburbs and even out as far as Verney Junction for 25-40 years before starting their second careers.

Some more details of some of the A and B class locos and older Metropolitan coaches are as follows:

**Burry Port and Gwendraeth Railway (BP&GR) (South Wales):**

Like many lines in the area, this was built to aid extraction of minerals from the land. For much of its length, it was built on the bed of a canal, which had been the original means of transporting the minerals. This resulted in some locos and passenger rolling stock that came to be used on the line having to have a

Passenger trains had been operated on a fairly unofficial basis from earlier times, but, trains were operated rather more normal basis from 1909, under the supervision of Colonel H.F. Stevens. Four of the coaches were used for 'ordinary passengers' and the rest for colliers. Although not specified, the latter use might well have included workers travelling in work clothes, which may have meant that the upholstered seats being replaced by wooden ones, as happened elsewhere on miners' trains. By co-incidence, the coaches that supplemented the Met ones and then replaced them were GWR four-

wheelers, formerly used in London suburban service, including the through trains to and from the City along the north side of the Inner Circle. These four-wheelers were replaced in London by the City and Suburban coaches, some of which later ended up in miners' service in South Wales (see *Aldgate to Glyncothrog* in an earlier issue of *Underground News*).

### **The Nidd Valley Light Railway (Yorkshire):**

This line ran from the terminus of the North Eastern Railway branch terminus at Pately Bridge (near Harrogate) up the valley to Lofthouse and beyond to worksites. Despite its short length, the line possessed about ten 4-wheeled passenger coaches<sup>2</sup>, most or all being obtained from the Metropolitan. Many of the passengers were workmen building reservoirs for Bradford, which extended over a number of years, the reservoirs coming 'on stream' about 1935; but a service for ordinary passengers also operated over part of the line.



**Left:** *Met. loco and coaches at Lofthouse, Nidd Valley line.*

The Nidd Valley went even better than the BP&G and bought two Metropolitan 4-4-0Ts, Nos 20 and 36, details are as follows:

- No. 1 *Holdsworth*, Beyer Peacock no 707 of 1866. Ex-A Class.
- No. 2 *Milner*, Beyer Peacock no 1878 of 1879. Ex-B Class.

Each loco had a covered cab added before delivery to the new owners. Photographic evidence shows the cabs to be a good-looking asset,

rather than just 'tacked on'. The Met. coaches were reported to be internally refurbished about 1921, but the line faced competition from buses from the late 1920s. Passenger service was reduced, the last being operated at the end of 1931.

### **Weston-Super-Mare-Clevedon and Portishead Railway:**



*Met. coaches on the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway.*

These were formed into close-coupled pairs, plus a single vehicle. The three pairs had a side corridor cut through the compartment walls, with a footway consisting of fallplates between the two vehicles to allow the guard to collect fares and collect tickets. It is reported that the interconnecting corridor was 5ft high, 18ins wide and crudely built. The seventh coach was rebuilt as an open saloon layout.

This was another line that came into the Col. Stephens' empire. More information is available on the Met acquisitions, as follows:

"For the Portishead extension in 1907, the railway made an excellent bargain by buying some fairly new Metropolitan Railway 4-wheelers. These had originated in the Metropolitan's new, and in truth, unsatisfactory, attempt to provide comfort on the longer distance services they were putting on in 1887. In honour of their introduction, they were called Jubilee carriages<sup>3</sup>".

The WCPR obtained a 2nd class brake, three brake 3rd Class and three First

<sup>2</sup> I have seen the numbers quoted as 10, 11 and 12!

<sup>3</sup> Col. Stephens Museum website.

Remarkably, a First Class carriage is still with us and took a prominent place at the Met. 150 celebrations in 2013.

### **British Military Railways:**

Some Met coaches seem to have been disposed of to these lines, although those noticed may be of the similar District (MDR) vehicles. One such vehicle was photographed at Shoeburyness on 23 August 1955<sup>4</sup>. The disposal of some Met. and Hammersmith and City Joint vehicles, in some cases only the bodies, has been mentioned in *Underground News* in the past.

### **Isle of Wight Railway:**

Details of these, with photographs, were given in *Underground News* for October 2020, pp 637-641 with a follow-up note in a subsequent issue.

### **Rhymney Railway (Wales):**

This railway had some Met. coaches, but further information has eluded me to date.

Apart from the above, there were disposals of other Met. locos:

#### **‘C’ CLASS 0-4-4T**

These four were the first ‘main Line’ locomotives built for the Met. They were needed because the A and B types were not really suitable for the services out into the Chilterns, especially with the increasing weight of trains brought about from the improved rolling stock introduced to replace the 4-wheeled and ridged 8-wheelers that were in use at the beginning. On disposal, one was sold to the Ministry of Munitions in 1917 and three to a machinery merchant in 1923. These last three ended up in South Wales (one being sold on to a colliery), which seems to have been a common destination for old Met. locos.

#### **‘D’ CLASS 2-4-0T**

These six locos seem also to have been a less-successful acquisition of the Met. They were delivered in 1894 and 1895 and mainly worked at the north end of the line. Despite having condensing apparatus, they were prohibited from working between Finchley Road and Baker Street! In the later part of their Met. careers, they were mainly used on freight trains, although a couple did work the Brill line for a time. One was sold to the Ministry of Munitions in 1916, but the others also headed in 1923 to the same machinery merchant as took the Cs and, again, appear to have ended their lives in South Wales, at least two being sold on for further use there.

#### **‘E’ 0-4-4T AND ‘F’ 0-6-2T**

These were good investments on the part of the Met. Railway, serving the line for what they were originally intended (longer distance passenger and general freight work respectively) for many years. Even in the 1950s, in E class loco was used from time to time to haul Aylesbury trains north of Rickmansworth and there are reports one could be found in the bay platform at Rickmansworth from time to time on ‘stand-by’ duties, in case of a loco failure, especially in the rush hours. After a long and useful life, they simply wore out. London Transport tried out possible replacements, including a 350hp diesel shunter, but the solid and much newer GWR-pattern Pannier Tanks were finally chosen to see out steam working on what work remained, the Engineers’ or ‘Ballast’ Trains, until 1971. ‘E’ class No 1 (L44) is now preserved at the Buckingham Railway Centre (see below).

#### **‘G’ 0-6-4T, ‘H’ 4-4-4T AND ‘K’ 2-6-4T**

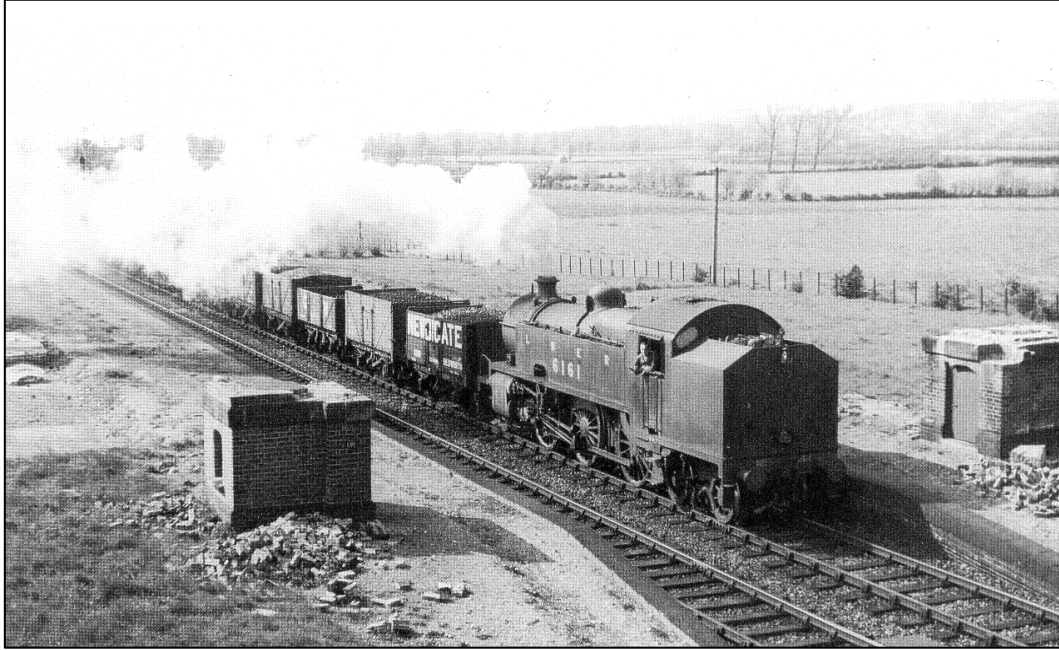
These gave good service to the Met. over the years. However, in 1937 London Transport decided that steam traction was not part of ‘core working’ and arranged with the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) to work all passenger and freight trains on the Metropolitan Line, passing on these three classes to the LNER, becoming their M2, H2 and L2 classes respectively.

The locos moved initially from the Underground depot at Neasden to the LNER shed ‘across the tracks’ and continued to work the same trains. However, as time passed, the locos were moved around the LNER system, Nottingham being one centre for them. Some modifications were made to the cabs and chimneys of the H class to make them less restricted in their movements around the system. One irony was that, just after the last war, a G class loco was recorded shunting at Liverpool Street LNER station, having never been able to visit the Underground station ‘downstairs’!

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<sup>4</sup> *Railway Bylines* September 2005, p.505.

Being 'non-standard' to the LNER, they had a comparatively short life after transfer, particularly in the post-war purges by their new Chief Mechanical Engineer, Edward Thompson, and all had been scrapped by 1948.



**Left:** Ex-Metropolitan Railway 'K' class 2-6-4T loco 114, which was renumbered 6161 on transfer to the LNER in 1937 and based at Neasden (LNER). It is seen hauling an Up freight passing the closed (in July 1936) and derelict Waddesdon Road station, between Quainton Road and Aylesbury. Only two of the class of six locomotives survived into British Railways days but both were

scrapped in October 1948, the other four. This one, 114 / 6161, was scrapped in May 1943.

## **PRESERVATION**

Thankfully, some examples of old Met. vehicles survive. Details can be found in the review in *Underground News* 706, October 2020, pp.620-8.

I am grateful to the following for various items of the above information:

Frank Goudie's book *Metropolitan Steam Locomotives*, the Col. Stephens Railway Museum (especially Brian Danes), Brian Hardy for details of many of the locomotives and initial disposals, Cambrian Heritage Railways (especially Roger Date) and Kidderminster Railway Museum (especially David Postle) for certain photographs.

Other information and photographs have come from various sources, occasionally conflicting, but any details to add to, confirm or contradict the above would be welcome.