

## BIRD'S EYE VIEW - EXHIBITION GUIDE

This guide accompanies our 'Bird's Eye View' photo exhibition, which runs at the Ale Way micro pub in Station Approach, Axminster during its usual opening hours between Saturday 19th and Sunday 27th July 2025. A big thank you to the Ale Way. You can also view the exhibition on our website: <https://fortheLoveofARailway.co.uk>.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the family of Percy Bird for allowing us the privilege of exhibiting these superb photos from his days as a driver on the Axminster to Lyme Regis Line and more widely around Exeter. We additionally need to recognise the digital processing expertise of Percy's grandson, Rob Wheeler who extracted the images from delicate glass slides and enhanced them.

This exhibition has been made possible thanks to support from the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership.



Image 1: Taken between 1940 and 1948. Percy on the footplate of the Adams Radial Tank that was ultimately re-numbered 30582. The livery is the Southern Railway wartime black introduced to make engines look cleaner when there was little time to clean them. This was one of a trio of Adams Radial locos collectively known as 'Lyme Billy' - it was built in 1885 and ran on the line from 1913 until 1961.



Image 2: We think the young man seated on the loco is Percy Bird, so in this case he wasn't the photographer. The photo goes all the way back to 1906 - 13 when the London & South West Railway ran O2 0-4-4 tank engines on the Lyme Regis line. They were too heavy, so ran with half-full water tanks to lighten them, but still suffered extensive damage from the tight curves. The problem was solved in 1913 with the arrival of the Adams Radial engine.



Image 3: A classic shot of Lyme Regis Station in its London & South Western Railway days between 1913 and 1923. The loco is one of the pair of Adams Radial engines then operating on the line.



Image 4: One of the Adams Radial Lyme Billy pairing ready for off (bunker first) at Lyme Regis some time between 1923 and 1940. We date it from the fact that the engine is Southern Railway's lined green. We haven't yet identified the two men on the running board - one train crew and one station staff.



Image 5: The Bulleid Battle of Britain loco 'Sir Edward Leigh-Mallory' drops passengers at Axminster en-route for Exeter between 1961 and 1964. Note the sign advising you to go over the bridge for the Lyme Regis platform.





Image 6: An unidentified Bulleid Pacific loco on the Devon Belle Pullman train in 1947 / 48. The Devon Belle was a luxury express service that operated between Waterloo and Ilfracombe / Plymouth until 1954. While Axminster was a stopping point, we think the location is somewhere west of Exeter.



Image 7: With the signal at 'go', one of the Adams Radial 'Lyme Billy' locos is readied for departure at Lyme Regis. On the basis of the livery, we think the shot dates from between 1940 and 1948.

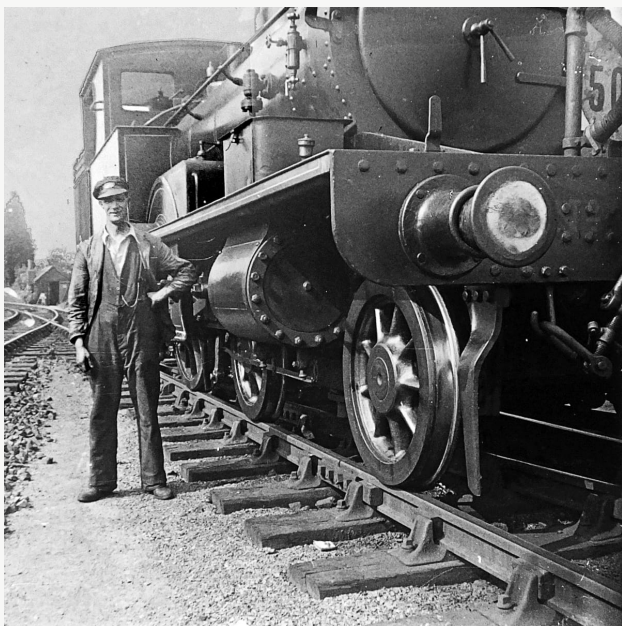


Image 8: An unknown driver with a very smart looking Adams Radial loco that went on to become no 30582 in the yard at Lyme Regis. The lined Southern Railway livery dates it as pre-1939. Can you name the driver for us?



Image 9: Family believe the young man standing proudly on the front of a London & South Western Railway L12 class loco could be Percy himself. The date is pre-1923 and could be as early as 1905. Location unknown but could be Eastleigh.



Image 10: A railtour at Lyme Regis on 10 May 1958. Rail tours were special trains that allowed rail enthusiasts to travel on notable lines, for which the Lyme Regis route definitely qualified! This one man with a BR class 120 DMU from Cheltenham via Gloucester and Yeovil. It was an early sign of things to come because diesel took over on the line in 1963 until closure in 1965.



Image 11: The Lyme Billy era is over, with an Ivatt class 2 tank engine having deposited its passengers at Axminster. The more powerful and modern Ivatts ran the line between 1961 and 1963 before they too were replaced by diesel units.



Image 12: A rare shot that demonstrates the fact that the line at Lyme Regis terminates high above the sea. Passengers had a further half-mile walk or bus / taxi ride into the town centre ... and an even more exhausting haul back up the hill! We reckon the driver could be Tom Woodman, while the loco is the Adams Radial that was ultimately re-numbered 30582.





Image 13: Always dapper, Percy catches up with Tom Woodman who followed him into a driver role and continued until the line closed in 1965. Like Percy, Tom was a popular local character as well as a skilled driver who knew the quirks of the line intimately.



Image 14: Station and footplate staff at Lyme Regis in 1949. Back row: S Bird, R Huckle, HA Frewins, T Woodman, J Bull. Front row: P Everleigh, J Venton, WK Rooks, H Blanchard, T Edworthy. While British rail has been formed with nationalisation the previous year, Southern Railway uniforms are still in evidence. (We think maybe T Edworthy had been asked to pose for too long!)



Image 15: Taken from a rare glass plate, this photo is thought to date from 1910 when the Axminster to Lyme Regis Line was still in its infancy.



Image 16: The scene at Lyme Regis on a typical day in the late 1930s. The locomotive in a very dusty looking Adams Radial no 30584 still wearing its Southern Railway livery with no 3520. In the coming war it would be painted all black.



Image 17: Lyme Regis station didn't have a strong street presence. In this undated image only the rear of the WH Smith stall advertises its presence. Newspapers were available not just to passengers but to locals who lived along the route and had them delivered tossed from the engine.

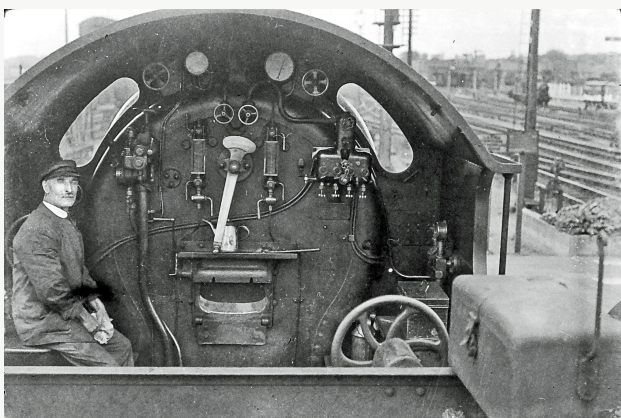


Image 18: We don't know the identity of the crew member or the location but the loco looks very much like a London & South Western Railway S15 4-6-0, which was built from 1920 and was such a big success that its successor Southern Railway was still building them in 1936.





Image 19: we have no date for this image. While Waterloo Station is not as busy as today, it does still carry a certain urgency and vibrancy.



Image 20: An unusual scene in which the Adams Radial no 30582 has a Terrier loco no 32662 'Martello' tucked in behind. The Terrier had been in the area as a celebrity loco for a rail tour on the branch in June 1953, and we think this photo shows that it stayed around for a while to help out.

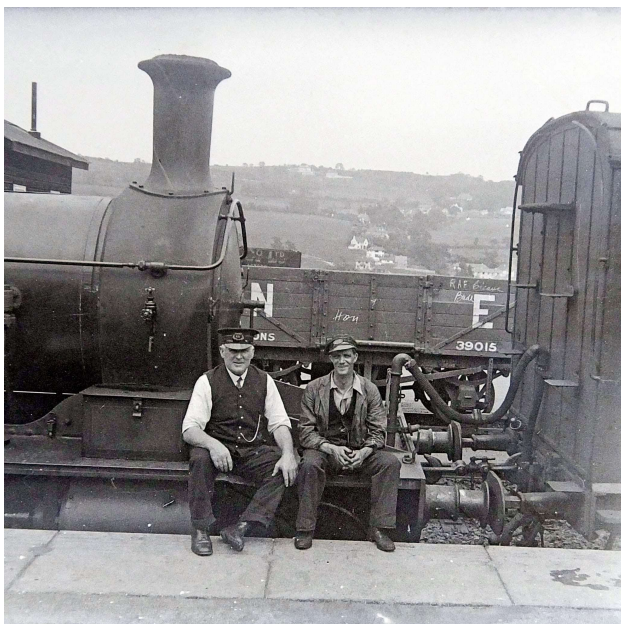


Image 21: Percy and an unidentified colleague (maybe his fireman) with one of the Adams Radials in a grubby Southern Railway livery, which suggests it was the mid 1930s.



Image 22: We think the man on the left is Bill Bird, son of Percy. But we can only guess that maybe they were having a discussion about pay. And just look at that workwear!

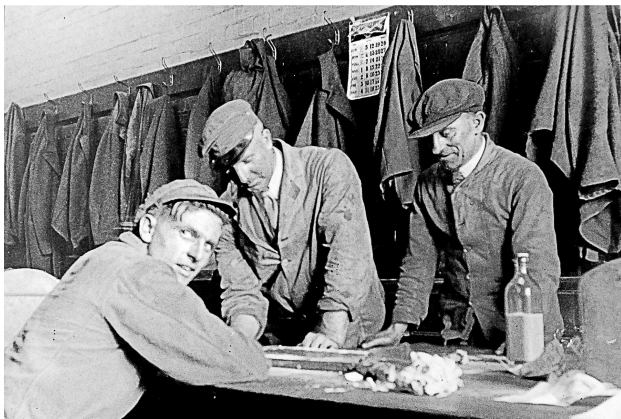


Image 23: We like this photo purely for the characters of the time. Can anyone tell us who they were?