

“Gobblers” [LNER Class F4 2-4-2T] in Scotland

By Peter Sheppard

There has been some discussion at the Club about the use of LNER Class F4 2-4-2 tank engines in Scotland. On investigation I have found that eight such locomotives were used in Scotland.

General: Class F4 was numerous consisting of 160 locomotives. The first batch built by Worsdell between 1884 and 1887. Further locomotives were built by James Holden between 1903 and 1909. Their history is complex. 32 were upgraded by S.D. Holden from 1911 onwards and designated Class F5. Class F4 gained the nickname “gobblers” because of their heavy coal consumption.

In 1931 three of the class were transferred to the Scotland and were allocated to St. Margaret’s. In Apr 1933 all three were transferred to Kittybrewster for use on the St. Combs branch (Fraserburgh to St. Combs). The St. Combs branch was not well fenced and this meant that locomotives had to be fitted with cowcatchers front and back. The branch was also exposed to NE winds blowing sand off the coast so locomotive cabs were fitted with sliding shutters. Operation was such that two locomotives fitted with cowcatchers would be based at Fraserburgh with the spare with cowcatchers removed would be based at Kittybrewster and used for other purposes until required to deputise at Fraserburgh whereupon cowcatchers would have to be fitted.

The three locomotives were 7176, 7222 and 7236 details of each are below. They were all fitted with wooden cab roofs and a large wooden tool box on top of the right hand tank.

7176 Allocated to St. Margaret’s 15 Jul 1931; transferred to Kittybrewster 26 Apr 1933. Condemned Apr 1943. This locomotive was fitted with additional coal rails on the bunker in Jan 1929. It had been fitted with destination board brackets and condensing apparatus for use in the London area. These were not required in Scotland and the latter was removed in Jul 1933 but the brackets were never removed. The locomotive was fitted with vacuum control for push pull operation on 31 Jan 1941. It differed from the other two transferred in 1931 as it was fitted with Ross pop safety valves.

7222 – renumbered **7164** on 29 September 1946 and **67164** 28 August 1948.

This locomotive was allocated to St. Margaret’s 8 Sep 1931; transferred to Kittybrewster 26 Apr 1933 and condemned 27 Aug 1951. Additional coal rails were fitted on the bunker in Sep 1926. It had been fitted with destination board brackets and condensing apparatus for use in the London area. These were not required in Scotland and the latter was removed in Feb 1935 but the brackets were never removed. Ramsbottom safety valves were fitted with a large cover. In BR days these were replaced with Ross pop valves but misleadingly they remained within the Ramsbottom 4 valve cover. From 28 Aug 1948 the locomotive was fitted with a correct Gil sans numberplate No. **67164** but the side tanks were lettered “LNER” above the number 7164. In its final form from Jun 1950 the side tanks bore the lettering “BRITISH RAILWAYS” and incorrect numerals were placed on the bunker sides. These were not aligned with the lettering being in a somewhat higher position.

7236 – renumbered **7151** on 29 March 1946 and **67151** on 19 June 1948

This locomotive was allocated to St. Margaret’s 10 Sep 1931; transferred to Kittybrewster 20 Apr 1933 and condemned 28 Aug 1951. Additional coal rails were fitted on the bunker in Mar 1927. Westinghouse pumps were also fitted that year. Prior to transfer to Scotland it had been fitted with

destination board brackets and condensing apparatus for use in the London area. These were not required in Scotland and both were removed but dates are not recorded. However Yeadon states that no locomotives were observed with condensing apparatus after the war (1945). Ramsbottom safety valves were fitted with a large cover. The locomotive was fitted with vacuum control for push pull operation on 4 Oct 1941. In BR days the locomotive was observed with a rectangular safety valve cover as used by Inverurie. The only F4 so fitted.

7157 (ex 7581) – renumbered **67157** 24 Jun 1950 withdrawn 8 Jun 1956, scrapped Aug 1956.

Following the second world war a replacement for the scrapped 7176 (see above) was needed. No. 7157 was transferred direct to Kittybrewster from Yarmouth Beach on 25 Jan 1948. Additional coal rails had been added to the bunker in June 1931. It had been fitted with condensing apparatus and destination board brackets. The former was removed in Jan 1938 but the latter remained until withdrawal. During the war 36 class F4 including No. 7157 were modified for possible running on the Metropolitan and District underground lines. In fact they were never so used. The most noticeable modification was a much shorter unlippped chimney. It was also fitted with a higher, steel cab roof. It retained both these features until withdrawal. Cowcatchers were fitted on 5 Feb 1948. By Jun 1949 it had a bunker step. From 24 Jun 1950 the locomotive had a correct Gil Sans smokebox door numberplate, correct numerals on the side tanks with the lion and wheel emblem above. Then from 17 Jul 1953 to withdrawal the lion and wheel emblem was central on the side tanks with the number in line on the bunker. This was the last F4 in service lasting about 2 years longer than any other.

Four further Class F4 locomotives were used in Scotland in rather unusual circumstances. 11 Class F4 were fitted with armour plating on the cabs so that they could be used on mobile gun trains. Further armour plating surrounded the safety valves and brake pump. For these duties the trains and locomotives were given a War Department letter (A to L). Four further locomotives were similarly armour plated but were spare engines and not allocated a letter. The eleven locomotives were given a camouflage livery. Three locomotives and one spare were allocated to the WD Home Guard in Scotland. All four returned to Stratford after the war. Those operating in Scotland were:

J (ex 7180) Armour plated and lettered 3 Jul 1940. Allocated to the WD in Stirling from 3 Jul 1940 to 9 Jan 1945. (16 Feb 1945 armour plating removed and returned to original number 7180. Renumbered 7174 on 5 Dec 1946 and renumbered No. 67174. Condemned 13 Dec 1954).

K (ex 7573) armour plated and lettered 5 Jul 1940. Allocated to the WD in Longniddry from 5 Jul 1940 to 8 Jan 1945. (21 Feb 1945 armour plating removed and returned to original number 7573 then numbered 7153 on 5 Jan 1947. Condemned 30 Jul 1951, never received BR number)

L (ex 7173) armour plated and lettered 3 Jul 1940 Allocated to the WD in Aberdeen from 3 Jul 1940 to 13 Jan 1945. (7 Apr 1945 armour plating removed and returned to original number 7173 then renumbered 7169 on 21 Oct 1946. Condemned 24 Apr 1948, never received BR number)

The spare engine was No. **7174** armour plated and allocated to the WD 3 Jul 1940 to 13 Jan 1945. (Armour plating removed and returned to original number 7174 on 29 Mar 1945. Renumbered 7170 on 30 Aug 1946. Condemned 24 Apr 1948, never received BR number)

N.B. Loco number 7161 which was allocated BR number **67161** never received that number as it was condemned on 23 Apr 1948.