



**Right to left. 'Young' Jim Jarvis, brother Ron, John Adams and Ron's work colleague Frank Carrier pause for lunch in South Wales while on a photographic expedition, Easter 1936.** (The Jarvis Family Collection)

## A SUFFOLK TRAGEDY

After closure in 1929 the 3ft gauge Southwold Railway remained virtually intact for twelve years. **JOHN D. MANN** recalls a visit in 1936 by three notable enthusiasts who were searching out historic locomotives.

During the Southwold Railway's 'dereliction' period, 1929–41, a few adventurers came to inspect the decaying remains. On a sultry July day in 1936, a Standard Swallow rumbled into Halesworth in Suffolk, carrying brothers R. G. and J. M. Jarvis and J. H. L. Adams, who had obtained permission from local councils to open the two locomotive sheds and hopefully push out the stored occupants for photography. To assist them in this exercise a call was made en route from Hertfordshire at St. Albans MPD to borrow a 'pinchbar'.

They found it was possible to move *Blyth*, a 2-4-0T supplied by Sharp Stewart in 1879, at Halesworth, although more than a few anxious moments were encountered negotiating the ash pit where rails had become somewhat

**Having been 'pinchbarred' out of the shed, Southwold Railway No.3 *Blyth* poses for the camera at Halesworth in July 1936.**

(R. G. Jarvis – The Jarvis Family Collection)

precarious. The next three hours were spent cleaning it with car polish until the sun moved round. With photographs duly taken, *Blyth* was gingerly returned to the shed.

The party moved on to Southwold and disappointment. The other two locomotives – *Halesworth*, a 2-4-0T from Sharp Stewart in 1879, and *Wenhaston*, an 0-6-2T supplied by Manning Wardle in 1914 – would not budge; no doubt their cylinders had rusted. After a swim in the sea, our intrepid trio returned to Hertfordshire... But who were they?

**R. G. 'RON' JARVIS**, gained an apprenticeship at Derby Loco Works in 1928 under H. G. Ivatt, a springboard for his fascinating railway career taking him from Sir W. A. Stanier's design team to wartime supervision of Class 8F assembly in Turkey. Ron succeeded O. V. S. Bulleid on the Southern Railway redesigning express classes, before being closely involved with the development of several BR 'Standard' locomotives under Robert Riddles. During his later career he designed mechanical parts for

the prototype High Speed Train.

Retirement to Wales, where he died in 1994, saw Ron actively involved with Festiniog Railway coach renovation. A shared interest in photography with boyhood friend John Adams resulted in many expeditions at home and abroad, seeking out unusual and historic locomotives. By 1936 younger brother Jim frequently joined the party.

**J. M. 'JIM' JARVIS**, just fourteen on the Suffolk trip, also enjoyed a railway career, initially with the LMS and later with BR locomotive design. He spent two years at Illinois University, gaining an MSc. This involved working at the Norfolk and Western Roanoke works. His considerable experience gained in North America enabled Jim to devise a dynamic balancing system for the Class 9Fs, some of which are still in service on our preserved lines. Inspired by brother Ron, Jim travelled the world photographing steam. He died aged 90 in 2012.

**JOHN H. L. ADAMS**, author, photographer, film maker and Ron's lifelong friend, who became an early pioneer on the Tallylyn Railway, where he met Patrick Whitehouse in 1951. A partnership was forged resulting in a prolific output of railway books. Together they filmed and presented 50 TV episodes of 'Railway Roundabout' during the 1950s and '60s, still popular today on DVD. John died in 1997.

The Southwold Railway spent a further five years in limbo before a wartime scrap drive saw rolling stock and locomotives unceremoniously cut up where they stood.

### Acknowledgements

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Richard Stenlake, Oakwood Stenlake Publishing.

### Bibliography

Ron Jarvis – *From Midland Compound to the HST* by J. E. Chacksfield, Oakwood Publishing 2004.

**Ron's Standard Swallow, used for twenty years at home and overseas.**

(R. G. Jarvis – The Jarvis Family Collection)

