

## **e-mail from Thomas Somers received May 2015**

Hi,

My father and Joseph were at school together and kept in touch. In the early 1980s I visited the railway on a number of occasions staying with Joseph and Mary for a number of days at a time. I was in my late teens and was a good source of free labour helping with various tasks in the run up to open days! Joseph was very trusting and allowed me to drive the steam engines and even issued me with a copy of the Rules dated May 1981 which I still have!

I currently run a sign company in Lancaster and we have done various signs for Mike Cave at the Littledale Light Railway. I have had conversations with Mike over the last few years that I knew the Spinney railway quite well and on his latest visit, collecting some graphics for an Esso oil tanker, he mentioned that he had taken his engine down to the Spinney last autumn. He enquired if I had any old photos of the railway as he would love to see them. After a bit of digging I located a few batches and showed them to Mike who was fascinated by them and said that I should contact you as you would probably like to have copies of them. My father was disabled all his adult life having contracted Polio in India during the second world war so I took quite a lot of photos so that he could see what the railway was like.

The photos are from 1982 and 1983 with the former being of particular interest as they show the building of the 'new' branch line along with a couple of shots of the electronic signal box under construction. The 1983 set start with Joseph testing the Royal Scot at Buckfastleigh (only a few miles from where we lived in Devon, so he often stayed when having work done on his engines) and then a number of the railway in operation.

I have listed what info I have for each photo.

*Image names are to the identity on this website*

### **31 March 1982**

381 - The Branch Line trackbed

382 - The Branch Line track being laid

383 - The Branch Line

384 - Ballast Train at Spinney Station

385 - Track and ballast being laid

386 - Empty Ballast truck returning

387 – Electronic Signalling under construction for Dingly Dell Signal Box

03 April 1982

388 - Getting ready for steam

389 - GWR tank 1101 Outside the engine shed with Joseph

390 - First train of the 82 season - Emily with Joseph coming off shed

391 – Emily, Joe driving, waiting at signal

392 - First train down the branch line

393 - Train up the new branch line

394 - Branch line, main line and new landscaping

395 - Emily going down light to Baytree junction

396 - Emily approaching engine shed

397 - Emily coming out of Dingly Dell with Joseph on track

398 - GWR Tank

399 - Down train from Spinney to Baytree Junction

400 - Rothesay and George V at Bay Tree Junction station

04 April 1982

401 - Engine shed

402 - Rothesay at the Spinney station

403 - Rothesay at Dingly Dell

404 - GWR tank outside engine shed

405 - GWR tank coming off shed

406 - GWR tank at Dingly Dell & Joy in background

407 - GWR tank at Spinney station with Joseph driving

408 - GWR tank at Baytree junction with Joseph driving

409 - GWR tank back at Dingly Dell with Joseph driving

410 - GWR tank about to enter turntable

August 83

411 - Royal Scot at Buckfastleigh with Joseph

412 - Royal Scot at Buckfastleigh with Joseph

413 - Railway in operation

414 - Railway in operation

415 - Railway in operation

416 - Railway in operation

417 - Spinney signal box

418 - Spinney signal box

419 - Royal Scot at Baytree Junction station - possibly with Granddaughter  
Emily driving

420 - Cutting near tunnel

I have sent the photos via WeTransfer as they are too large to attach to this email. I hope they are of some interest to you and it is great to see that the railway is still in operation and being well used and looked after.

Best wishes

Thomas