

Appropriations from January 1 1879 - Great Eastern Railway Society's Collection
Essex Record Office reference D/Z 346/1499

Introduction by John Watling

I was first made aware of the existence of this book from an article by Peter Proud published in the *Railway Observer*, the Journal of the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society, in early 1969.

In it he described a document entitled 'Appropriations from Jan 1879' which he had consulted many years earlier in the Stratford Works drawing office. It was the source of a considerable amount of important information relating to GER locomotives and used in the preparation of the series *Locomotives of the LNER* published between 1963 and 1994. Peter Proud was a principal author and although the research was carried out in the name of the RCTS the book was later given to Peter.

It is a lined hand written book recording in manuscript all locomotive, rolling stock and road vehicle orders placed from 1879 to the end of building at Stratford in 1924 as well as listing details of other work carried out in the Works.

Its contents are very important in that it is now the only comprehensive source of order numbers for new stock now known for the 1879 to 1924 period. While the very detailed GER half yearly statements of work carried out at Stratford Works deposited at The National Archives, under reference RAIL 227/398 to 402, include these order numbers they cover the shorter period of 1885 to 1910.

By the mid 1970's my own carriage and wagon stock research was well advanced but I realised that access to the Appropriations book could fill many important gaps. Through Eric Fry, who coordinated the production of the LNER locomotives series, I made contact with Peter. I met him one evening in his rather dingy chambers in Grays Inn; despite his apparently brusque manner he quickly appreciated how the document could assist me and most willingly loaned the document to me on a long term basis. Its contents did indeed enable me to quantify all rolling stock orders from 1879 onwards and much else besides.

The system of order numbers was fundamental to the financial control of the Works output but remarkably it is the only document located which gives this information. I believe that this book was maintained as a readily accessible record for use in the drawing office and that the definitive record of every order undertaken in the Works was maintained by the Locomotive Accountants Department. These traditionally would have taken the form of substantial leather bound ledgers which were probably disposed of many years earlier as being of no further use or value.

Peter became a member of the GERS soon after its formation in 1973 and later appointed a Vice President. He contributed several articles to the GE Journal, many based on his travel experiences in the Great Eastern area in pre War days.

Peter died in February 1994 and I contacted Eric Fry with a view to passing the book on to the RCTS. However, he generously donated it to the GERS, considering that it would be of most value to the Society, recognising that the Society was already forming an extensive archival collection.

The book is unpretentious being in foolscap format with card covers and with frequent use over many decades was in very poor condition with broken binding and many loose and decayed pages, but nonetheless complete. In view of its importance the Society decided that it required conservation and thanks to Dennis West's professional contacts it became the first of many of the Society's artefacts to undergo comprehensive conservation. The whole book was dismantled, each page detached, cleaned and repaired where necessary and rebound. Finally a special box was made in which it is housed.

Peter's article in the *Railway Observer* explained the order number system used at Stratford Works and the purpose of the two other order number series. In this Ken Nunn, who worked in Stratford Accountants Department, was able to impart first-hand information.

The main order numbers comprise a number preceded by a letter, starting with A1 to Z1, followed by A2 to Z2, and so on. The letters J and Q were not normally used to avoid possible confusion with I and O. The system was probably initiated in 1856 with the arrival of Robert Sinclair from the Caledonian Railway. The first order entered in the Appropriations book is G11 but unfortunately few of the earlier numbers are now known; C90 was the last order in the series issued in February 1924 for 40 LNER 40 designed ventilated refrigerator vans.

Order numbers for machinery, plant, replacement boilers, brake work and other equipment were prefixed LM, for Locomotive Machinery, and were introduced in 1888. The other numerical series was prefixed D&P, standing for the Departmental and Personal account. These orders were issued for work carried out for other GER departments or outside organisations and minor railways. Every individual item was costed as each job was separately charged for whereas on normal orders a certain amount of cost averaging was done.

It remains for me to express my thanks to the unknown employee in the Stratford Works drawing office who entrusted the book into Peter's care; to Peter for loaning it to me to help my research, to Eric Fry for his generosity in passing it into the ownership of the Great Eastern Railway Society and to Dennis West whose contacts enabled it to be professionally conserved for the benefit of future researchers.

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