



[Photo by
Bob
Warwick]

OBITUARY

Alan Atkinson

Ulverston is a small market town formerly in Lancashire, now Cumbria, and renowned for its present day fayres and festivals. There are, however, two important dates in its recent history, for on 16th June 1890, Arthur Stanley Jefferson made the first of many appearances, and on 12th June 1948, Alan Atkinson also made his first appearance. Everyone knows the achievements of Arthur Jefferson, but only a handful those of Alan Atkinson. But Alan's achievements *should* be recorded, for his life from the time of University entrance was filled with activity, and one must admire his tenacity in every task he undertook.

During his early years, Alan lived at Millom, formerly in Cumberland, now Cumbria. His father, who was a master model engineer specialising in 5" gauge steam locomotives, probably set the 'railway seed' in Alan which manifested itself throughout his life.

After attending local schools, Alan obtained a place at Liverpool University to study Physics, with the desire of becoming a teacher in that subject. During his time at University, he met Steve Poole (long-serving SVR Pway volunteer) and in 1966 both became members of the University Public Transport Society, Alan eventually becoming President from 1973 to 1985. Throughout the period after University, Alan maintained contact with Steve, arranging outings with Society members and other functions.

After gaining his degree, Alan took up various teaching posts, and in 1973 married Jean. They moved to the Midlands in 1985, when he was appointed Deputy Head Teacher at Britannia High School, Rowley Regis, and the year when SVR really started to flow through his veins.

Steve operated annual charter specials on the SVR, and Alan was coerced into helping with organising these, which he did enthusiastically. Both were proud to wear their bespoke T-shirts emblazoned with 'The Wulfrunian', which was the adopted name of their annual special. These trains operated until 2001, and left Alan with many SVR contacts and friends.

In 1998, Alan was appointed Head Teacher at his school and although educational tasks were of monumental importance, he still found time for recreation. He was Editor of the Cumbrian Railways Association newsletter 'Lakes Express', Secretary of Hagley Historical and Field Society, ran Rowley Regis Railway Society and, to pass away the evenings, wrote and published 'Millom, A Cumberland Iron Town And its Railways'. I asked him if a Booker Prize was on his agenda, to which he responded 'Yes, with VLO support'.

Eventually, the time arrived for Alan to hang up his gown and mortar board, and after a period of reflection, joined the SVR as a volunteer in 2005.

Barry Moreton

Mel Cook now takes up the story . . .

In 2005, Alan was with his family dining on the SVR. Head of TTI section Richard Hill was working the dining train, and struck up a very productive conversation which resulted in Alan volunteering and passing his TTI examination in June of that year, and becoming a regular on train duties.

When Richard decided to retire as head TTI in 2008, Alan was the natural successor. Subsequently, when I became the Train Crew Manager in succession to John Howell, Alan was very supportive. He became one of my two deputies, representing TTIs whilst Rob Starkey represented Guards. Both became excellent working colleagues, with wise words on serious policy issues, but punctuated by a certain amount of humour, at our regular Department meetings.

Although ill, Alan died unexpectedly on 31st August this year. I miss him greatly, for he was a real asset to the Department who has left a significant legacy in the way the TTI section was administered. His funeral was very well attended at Stourbridge on 23rd September.

And finally . . .

For anyone interested, Arthur Stanley Jefferson was in fact Stan. Laurel, of the lauded comedy duo Laurel and Hardy.

THE SVR REUNION GROUP meet and travel on the SVR every year. Here is the gathering at Kidderminster on Sunday, 14th July 2013.

[Chris George]

