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J. A. Hickmott

I was born in Highgate London  
on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1889.

Went to Bristol when I was 2 & attended 3 schools  
there where I passed an examination for the  
Q.E.H. School at Clifton for 5 years when I left  
in 1901 I made several applications for jobs  
but was not successful so Dad said I would  
have to go on the Railway (the old Midland)  
I passed an examination in Reading & Bristol &  
Stated working at BITTON Station near Bath  
on June 14<sup>th</sup> 1905.

While I was there I lodged at Mr's Lovell's  
Shop at oldland Common & the Station Master  
was very strict as I only had 6 hours for  
dinner (20 min. there & back) & if you were  
a few minutes late you get a rap on the knuckles  
with his ruler.

I used to issue the tickets for the trains  
which used to run to Clifton Down to St Philips  
Station and collect the tickets from passengers  
coming off the trains.

The tickets were punched on the old press which  
had to be altered every morning.

I also had to weigh the coal across the yard  
(which is now defunct)

While I was at Bitton purchased an old fashioned  
Fixed wheel Bike with solid rubber tyres -  
and it saved me a lot of walking I also used  
to go home to Westbury when it was my  
week's off. I also remember the old Colliers  
Railroad where the coal from the Colliers



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I think it was the old Kingswood Collier  
for the Coal to be taken down to the  
River near Kelston.

I was supplied with a uniform thin in  
the summer + thick in the winter but they did  
not supply Boots which I had to buy + to  
save money I used to have Hobnails put  
on by a chap who made the Forks.

When I went by train home I traveled to  
Mangotsfield + walked up the line to  
Westbury. Sometimes I got a life on a  
train standing at the North Junction, where  
the trains for Bristol + Bath were  
diverted I also remember seeing the  
Pines Express (Mangotsfield to Fourness)

running through the station each day.  
Besides all the local trains of which there  
were plenty to keep you busy in  
addition to keeping the passengers safe  
correctly I used to do the goods in which  
we had a Horse Droy from Wootton Bassett  
to go to the paper Mills for a consignment for  
London also to go to the Polysulfon Works  
at Kingswood for a load for Birmingham.  
There were two shifts 12 hours each

7<sup>am</sup>-7<sup>pm</sup> + 10<sup>am</sup>-10<sup>pm</sup> I used to have the Porter  
on my shift one use to brew some tea.  
I recollect that one day I brewed up  
the tea in the can + while I was swinging  
it up + down the 2 Mrs lab came round the

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Comer & bumped into it & made quite  
a mess the Com did not help  
choke me off for not looking where  
I was going.  
There were two Signalmen & a porter  
Signalman to cover the 24 hours. & I  
still remember one of the names which was  
(PAGINTON) funny sort of fellow  
but they didn't mind me going into the Dive  
where I had to fetch & carry the  
telegraph messages on the single needle  
machine (more of that later)  
I now recollect my standing on the steps  
of the SBR & seeing a very bad  
Thunder storm over at Bath.  
While I was at Bath I went out with a young  
lady from the Comer but when I went back  
some time after I found she had injured  
her spine on falling from a swing so that  
was all over so far as that country was done.  
I was there about 2 years when I was  
transferred to Clifton Down where they had  
a Midland & Western Separate Booking office  
where I lodged with a policeman but not  
for long for I was moved again to  
Nailsworth where the Clerk had to join  
the Army about 1907 & I worked in the Goods



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office also in lodgings at the house  
on the corner of the Bristol & Bath roads  
where I joined the Church Lads Brigade  
Joan Baglar for a time. & where me and  
my mate B Gordon purchased a new  
Bike (a Sunbeam) a piece we went to  
go all over the place on them & it was there  
I purchased my first pipe & tobacco  
I think the pipe was 1/6 the Queen 11 1/2  
they used to weigh it on the scales & wrap  
it in some paper & after 74 years of smoking  
a pipe (not the same one) I had to give it up  
owing to my recent illness I'm not sorry about  
it as it saves me some money.  
While Joan at Nailsworth I practiced learning  
to use the Telegraph Needle instrument &  
which came in use later on when I was  
removed elsewhere. When I was at  
Nailsworth I used to ride home to W. K. Lodge  
some night my lamp failed (it used to be  
the old fashioned Carbine sort of lamp &  
I walked about a mile & when I lit it again I  
biked all the way home & didn't see a soul  
At the lodge Joan at they didn't have a  
Bath Room they used the old tin Bath so that  
me & my mate had to ride to Stroud for a bath.  
I saw miles the other lodge (a W. J. Lodge) had a  
Fish Hatchery up on the Bristol Road.



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once a month I used to go to Minchinhampton  
across the Common to collect an account from  
Philip de Gower & it was not very nice work.  
I used to go home once a month by train to  
~~Reading~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~train~~ to walk the road home.  
Well so much for Nailsworth when they moved  
me to Fishponds to Bristol where I worked in the  
Goods office & it was my job to receive & send  
the different messages from the Staff at the  
Station I being the only one who could  
read the telegrams without looking at sense  
as there were two pieces of tin screws on each  
side one high one low.  
There was also the Pottery & the Avonside Engine  
Works where one of our Engineers at Botton  
Comes from. I will tell you about that  
later on.

Well they moved me from Fishponds to  
Montpelier in 1941 where I got married in  
the September & where there were two  
Booking racks one Midland & one Western  
I didn't work some Booking all over the  
place. I remember seeing the special train  
taking the Troops to Southampton in France  
I remember it so well as some of my Pals went  
while I was at Montpelier I had to pass an  
exam for 60 for annum I passed in  
the passenger side but failed on the Goods side  
so they sent me to Tisbury to learn the  
Goods work.



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I lived in Gravel Walk & afterwards moved to Cottwood Garden where I took my eldest son who was born in Gravel Walk on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1915.

In those days the trains came & went via Ashchurch to Tewkesbury & Malvern through Ripper Junction on Severn which alas is now all closed. I remember the horses used to go down to the Healings Mill & Rice Martin to fetch the vans up to the Station. Whilst I was at Tewkesbury there were two Booking clerks & 3 Goods clerks as it was very busy on those days. I remember going in a boat with some friends up the River Avon (more about Tewkesbury later on)

I used to do my work in the machine house in addition to weighing the coal for the Coal Merchants. Otherwise I didn't get about a lot as I had the family to see to. While I was there they wanted a clerk at Defford <sup>1916</sup> in place of J. Brooks who had to go into the army so I moved against his time to Eckenham as I couldn't find a house at Defford where I worked for 31 years up & down on my bike all winter & weather of course it was not long but the Company would not release me so I stayed and worked for 31 years during which time I joined the R.B.C.B. in 1926 and was Secretary for 18 years & was still an R.B.C.B.



It was while I was at <sup>(7)</sup> Defford that they made the change in Jan 1923 to form the 4 Regions (Lind Linc Southon + Weston)

I was a very busy station the Carting Agent Messias then handling the produce from both the Corp + Central Markets and when the 2nd war broke out they constructed some Hangers on Defford Common as the RAAF flew the planes from there. We had a bit of a job as we only had the new sidings + had to cope with this in addition to all the Fruit + Vegetables from the markets.

The traffic was all Horse Drawn on those days but Messias took to the Motor Poweries + that made it a bit easier. But we thought of nothing up to 12 hrs per day on abt 7-30am + off when finished as there was no use leaving anything till the next day. Every other week I had to come on duty on Sundays with four or five trains to attend to on my own as the Signal Box was shut + the Boss was away. I remember being on my own on one snow day I used to warm myself at the fire by the crane + nearly missed my Dinner. Pretty hard work having to do the two jobs (Booking + Goods) but after a while they let me have a lady clerk to ease matters + it was when she was efficient that they wanted some



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assistance in the Goods Office at Evesham so they sent me there along with 3 others as their accounts were behind but between us we put it right and while I was at Evesham in that cold winter of 1947 then I heard of a job at Tewkesbury with a rise to class 4 + 9 in my dicty book it travelling by train to go from Evesham to Tewkesbury Well I had a busy time there as Chief clerk in the Goods office along with 3 more clerks one of whom I contacted during my stay in hospital Recently. He is still working at Gloucester Well all things come to an end so when I heard of the Western taking over from the London Southern Section I decided that after nearly 45 years it was time to pack it in on Dec 1949 + I missed my watch by about 5 months but I received a very nice letter from the Goods Manager, and I am also still drawing my pension about £11 per month So what with my OAP pension I ain't doing too bad Well in 1965 I lost my wife + have been living with my daughter here at Westmencote for the past 18 years If you want anything more just let me know I shall be glad to see you anytime I wish