

J R Jennings Local History Volume 03.02

Rev Charles Goshawk of Abthorpe near Towcester originally recounted the following short passage concerning the Stratford upon Avon and Midland Junction Railway to Tim Petchey of The Winchcombe Railway Museum.

I met Rev Goshawk on two occasions in 1972, he was then retired and had a keen interest in the railways of his area. He had spent some time collecting items of local railwayana that he displayed on his garden wall. He explained to me that the demolition contractors would always oblige a retired clergyman and let him have signboards and similar items that were only going to be thrown away! He decided to sell some of his collection to people like Tim Petchey and myself in order to fund a book he was writing on the history of the Book of Common Prayer. I never heard whether Rev Goshawk did complete his book, if any future reader of this knows the answer they might care to lodge it as a postscript to this small essay. The original text was published in the newsletter of the Winchcombe Railway Museum Association in April 1976 (issue 15). It is therefore their copyright and any use for commercial purpose should be referred to them. JRJ 12.2005

A STORY OF THE SMJ

A neighbour of mine in our village of Abthorpe, now like me over “three score years and ten” told me this tale of his youth in the days when the SMJ was just about taking the place of the earlier East and West Junction Railway.

His father was Stationmaster at Towcester – still by the way there, with its dilapidated buildings – and some time before the First War his younger sister was taken ill with some infectious disease and died. When arrangements for the funeral came to be made known the Stationmaster let it be known that the little girl would be buried at Slapton, a hamlet half a mile north of the SMJ track and reached from a farm crossing a mile from Wappenham. Whereon the authorities of the railway decided to put on a special train from the home at Towcester Station as far as the Slapton Crossing, about three miles. Thus the family and mourners were comfortably - and with due dignity – transported by train to the nearest point on the line, whence bearers carried the small coffin to the village church. Meanwhile the special train waited for them; it does not seem to be known if it was able to reverse in the sidings at Wappenham; more likely in view of the sparse traffic on the single line, the return was effected on the “push and pull” system. However this may be, my friend will never forget this courtesy on the part of his family’s employers. It must have made a deep impression on the countryside.

Note. The site of Towcester station is now a supermarket JRJ 4/2013