

## The Acid Bath

After leaving home at a young age and still in my teens, and having been brought up in a restricted environment I was rather wild and ignorant. When I got away from home and into the real world, it had to be a fast learning curve which I was not entirely equipped to deal with. I was also a bit of a show off and often I did silly things.



One that I vaguely remember after John recounted it to me was the story of the acid bath; I had been underneath an engine via way of an inspection pit perhaps to empty the ash pan or maybe some other task. I was not wearing a cap and really got my hair in a mess with oil and grease. There was an acid bath nearby which the fitters used to clean scale and deposits from various copper fittings. I decided that the best course of action to clear my hair of the mess was to place it in this bath of murky brown liquid; I knew this was a cleaning agent.

*Picture Left: 32544 standing near the fitter's inspection pit and overhead gantry at Redhill. Picture John Bradby.*

But in my ignorance I did not know the damage that acid could cause to a mere mortal like me. Fortunately somebody must have seen me because John and another were quite alarmed and insisted on washing my hair. This was in the large sink in the cleaner's room; they made a good job cleaning thoroughly with soap and cold water. I am not sure I was grateful to them at the time, but I am now as I still have a crop of hair and a scalp, for which I am most grateful to John and the others that came to help me on that day.

## First Aid

Remove patient from exposure.

- Carry out decontamination in a well-ventilated area, preferably with its own ventilation system.
- The patient should remove soiled clothing and wash him/herself if possible (including all hair and contaminated skin) with copious amounts of water for at least 10-15 minutes (or until pH of skin is normal).
- Pay special attention to skin folds, fingernails and ears.

Sunday April 13<sup>th</sup> Merstham Surrey

Quite unknown to me was the fact that John Bradby had some years ago made a short note in his papers about the incident. When I visited him on April 13<sup>th</sup> 2008 he loaned me his writings and kindly gave me permission to reproduce the entry concerning the acid bath, the note below is exactly as written.

There were two brothers\* who started, one tall with a good build whilst the other was quite small in comparison. ( he was a bit crackers). One day we caught him washing his hair in the acid bath which the fitters put the dirty brass fittings in to remove the scale. We dragged him into the lobby and washed his hair again this time with cold water.

\*My twin brother Charles