

## Albany's Watch



My grandfather, Albany Braund, spent his childhood in the village of Cargreen, on the Cornish bank of the River Tamar. At the age of nineteen, Albany applied to join nearly twenty five thousand others as an employee of London South Western Railway, perhaps inspired by stories of his great uncle, who had left Cargreen and his work as a mine labourer, to become a railway guard in Plymouth, several decades previously. Albany was duly accepted to join the cleaning staff at Clapham Junction, one of London's busiest stations.

After six months of working as a cleaner, earning fifteen shillings a week, Albany was promoted to the role of goods' porter, accompanied by a two shilling a week pay rise. This coincided with him being sent back to the west country to work in Exeter and then Plymouth. Within three months though, Albany was back in London, once again as a carriage cleaner. It seems likely that this was because he wanted to be back in London, rather than the result of any dissatisfaction with the role of porter, as the following year, he moved to Barnes station, firstly as a cleaner but then as porter once again. By 1912, Albany was working at Wimbledon station, where he remained until the end of the First World War; his reserved occupation, keeping him from serving in the armed forces.

During his time on the railways, Albany witnessed the electrification of the line, a serious accident at Wimbledon in 1920, the amalgamation of the

railways into the 'Big Four' companies, which saw LSWR become part of British Rail Southern Region, the opening of the refurbished Waterloo station by Queen Mary and finally, nationalisation of the railways in 1947.

From its reopening in 1922, Albany worked at Waterloo. Albany's employment record shows that he took part in the General Strike of 1926. The haemorrhaging of employees to the armed forces in the Second World War saw Albany promoted to Foreman, a role that did not sit easily with him and he returned to his previous job as soon as he could. When Albany was presented with a gold pocket watch for forty-five years' service, presumably on his retirement in 1953, five percent of the population were deriving their living from British Rail.

