**RIP William (Bill) Baxendale BEM – 20th March 1927 – 6th May 2021**

Former Railway Worker, and well-respected ASLEF Branch Secretary, Bill Baxendale, passed away peacefully from natural causes on 6th May2021 in the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary in his hometown of Wigan.

Bill joined the LMR Railway at the Ince 2 Branch in Wigan as an Engine Cleaner, in 1944 aged seventeen and a half. On leaving school at 14 he initially worked as a Parcel Deliverer with Wigan Buses and then for a local Tobacconist, Ashton’s of Wigan, delivering cigarettes and tobacco. Rumour has it that joining the Railway did not go down too well with his father, also called William and who also worked for the Railway who was rumoured to have called young Bill a ‘stupid b...er’.

This obviously didn't deter young Bill who progressed up the footplate ladder becoming a fireman in May 1952 and ultimately passing out as a driver in August 1967.

He was elected Brach Secretary at Ince 2 during the period 1950/52 and subsequently at Wigan Branch from 1955 until 1987.

Bill was well respected by his various Managers, the ASLEF Trade Union and fellow workers due to his level headedness when dealing with fellow workers welfare and general Trade Union activity and/or conflicts.

He was instrumental in founding and running the Wigan Railwaymen’s Welfare Club, timing unknown, and the combination of his work with British Rail, ASLEF Union activity and Welfare effort was recognised in 1987 when he was honoured by Queen Elizabeth II and awarded the British Empire Medal.

During all this time he still managed to find time to serve on the LMR Sectional Council ‘B’ and the Local District Council.

Bill retired on his 65th Birthday in March 1992 but he didn’t stop there. He travelled the country promoting the service of the Transport Hospital Fund and, in conjunction with the British Transport Pensioners Federation he founded, and managed, the Wigan Branch of the BTPF.

At peak the Pensioners, as he called it, had over 200 members from all around Wigan, and the surrounding area, who met up on the 2nd Thursday of every month from its inauguration in 1992 until the COVID-19 Pandemic unfortunately put a hold on proceedings.

Bill was the long-term Secretary of the Branch and organised almost everything from the collection of subs, guest speakers at meetings, arranging Spring to Autumn trips out, holidays in Benidorm, Christmas Dinners etc. Thie list is endless.

It is sad to say that, with Bill’s passing, and the COVID-19 situation it is extremely unlikely that the Wigan group will ever get together again.