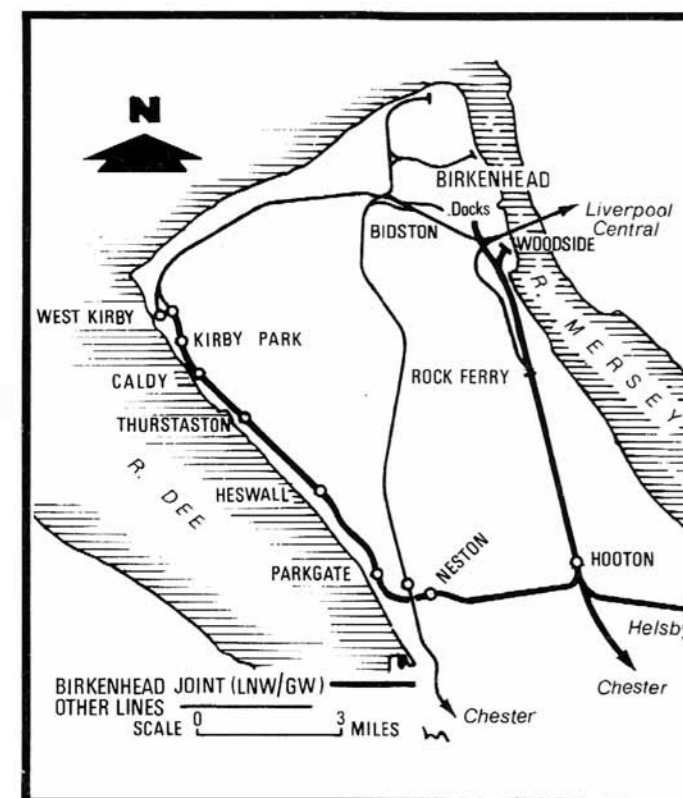


# HOOTON - WEST KIRBY RAILWAY LINE "THE JOINT"



The Wirral Railway reached West Kirby from Hoylake in 1878. The Chester and Birkenhead Railway opened in 1886: a rural single track railway from Hooton with stations at Parkgate, Heswall, Thurston and West Kirby. The stations at Kirby Park (1894) and Caldby (1909) were added later. The line was run by the London and North Western and Great Western Railways (hence the nickname "The Joint") and operated by them till nationalisation in 1948.

The park, opened in 1901, was built round the railway and a footbridge constructed to link the Upper and Lower Park. The existing footbridge dates from 1924.



Early view towards St Bridget's Church and School and Church Road bridge

The West Kirby Joint station was separate from the Wirral Railway station but trains could run through to Wirral Railway tracks. The station had a single platform, a simple brick station building, a loop for engines to change ends, a turntable and goods yard. The stations at Caldby and Kirby Park were even more basic with a single wooden platform and a wooden shelter.

Services were limited: 14 per day in 1921. Usage was low and passenger services were withdrawn in 1956 but freight trains and occasional specials continued until the line was closed for all traffic in May 1962 - one of the pre-Beeching closures. Specials included trains of servicemen to RAF West Kirby, a Royal train in July 1957, (carrying the Queen and Prince Philip) trains of guests to the Cadbury's Moreton Factory and electric trains for maintenance at Horwich Works.

After closure in 1962, a campaign to save the line as a preserved railway failed and Cheshire County Council opened Wirral Country Park (Wirral Way) in 1973. This was the UK's first Country Park.

*Dedicated to the Memory of Colin Mutch*



G.W.R. loco No 4124 enters Kirby Park Station in August 1954



GWR 2-6-2 Prairie loco at West Kirby Joint Station in 1954. Today's railway station lies behind.

