

# ON SHED

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The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 9, Number 1 : March 2019



# 'On Shed' : Journal of the 8D Association

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## From the Editor

Tony Foster



At the recent AGM, my appointment as Editor of the Association's journal was confirmed. Whilst I'm looking forward to producing 'On Shed', I recognise that the post carries a considerable responsibility. I can only

aim to maintain the very high standards set by long-serving Editor, Paul Wright. As the new Chair of 8D, Paul has taken on the task of leading the Association.

In the meantime, although the basic format of 'On Shed' will remain intact - ie. articles illustrated wherever possible with relevant photographs - you would expect me to add

my own touches / preferences as far as layout is concerned.

As I'm almost certainly the least railway knowledgeable member of the 8D committee, if not the Association as a whole, I'm grateful to colleagues who have promised support. Their combined knowledge of the tiniest detail of railway history, and operation, will be of enormous assistance to me.

I'm very grateful also to those authors who have contributed news items, articles, and photographs for this edition of 'On Shed'. Indeed, without that material, the task of the Editor would prove impossible ! I hope that the regular contributors will continue to submit material, and if other members might be persuaded to follow suit, I would be very pleased to hear from them !

I look forward to hearing from you at -  
**tony.r.foster@btinternet.com**

**Cover photograph** : Taken from Horns Bridge, the photograph shows Ivatt 2-6-2T No.41286 standing at the closed Farnworth and Bold station on 12th February 1966. The LCGB 'Last Official Push-Pull on BR Tour' was on the final leg of a 5 hour trip ending at Earlestown.

Now part of the Richard Mercer Collection, the photograph was taken by **Gordon Howarth**

# From the Association's new Chair : Paul Wright



I am privileged to have been part of the 8D Association from the very start, back in 2010. Since then, I have seen the group develop in ways that are well beyond what

we had hoped for when we started. For years now we have maintained a membership of 80+, and in these days that is quite something for any society.

As many of you will know, I have edited the 'On Shed' journal since its first edition which came out in March 2011, and I have very much enjoyed producing what I believe to be one of the key things that acts as a gel for our group. Therefore it came as a big surprise to me when, at the end of a committee meeting in January, I found myself stepping down from the role of journal editor to take up the role of Chair. As those of you who attended the AGM will know already, I am now confirmed as Chair of the 8D Association and Tony Foster is journal editor.

So what for the future ? Well first let me say I have complete confidence in Tony, and I am quite sure that he will continue to produce the journal that we all know and love. I really couldn't be putting it into better hands.

With regards to the position of Chair, I have a hard act to follow. Joe Cowley was an excellent Chair. He laid the foundations on which we have built the Association and he has been a rock ever since. As your new Chair, I wish to see the Association continue in the way that it has done. I regard the Association as a group of like minded friends, and that is how I want it to stay.

As some of you know, I have a bit of a maritime background, having served as an RNLI lifeboatman for 25 years. So I would like to use a maritime term to sum up my approach to being the 8D Chair. I want to be a steady 'hand on the helm' and steer the good ship 8D on a steady course into the future. I want to encourage members to participate as much as they are able - be that through contributing material (articles, photos etc) to the journal, or simply taking part in the events that we run. I believe that the future is bright for the 8D Association. I look forward to seeing you all in 2019.

**Paul Wright**

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## Founder Chair Joe Cowley takes retirement



As a founder member, and Chair of the 8D Association since its creation in 2010, Joe has served not only as leader but also as an ambassador for the group.

My own introduction to him several years ago demonstrated his ability to enthusiastically promote the group. I had contacted him on an unrelated matter

and asked for his advice, expecting perhaps a phone call or an email. What I actually received was an application form to join 8D together with an assurance that I would then be even better positioned to receive his advice ! 10 out of 10 for sales Joe !

Happily, Joe has not ruled out the prospect of a return to the committee at some point in the future.

**Editor**

# Recent 8D Meeting

On 12 February, Paul Wright delivered a talk to 8D members at the Halton Stadium. The subject, 'A History of the Railways of Widnes

1833 to 1890', covered the period that included the opening of the first railway right through to the opening of the last main line.

He explained the often complex history of the various lines as well as the freight relationships between the various competing companies during the mid-part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The talk was well illustrated with old maps and photographs and Paul was able to bring the subject vividly to life.

MERGER WITH THE CANAL COMPANY  
– THE ST HELENS CANAL & RAILWAY COMPANY



A full merger took place on 21 July 1845. The merger improved the financial prospects of both the canal and the railway and allowed the railway to expand in the way its promoters had always hoped.



*Above* : A slide from Paul's talk, during which he explored the merger of the St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway with the Sankey Canal and Navigation Company.

## Warrington Railway Pensioners' Trips

**Wednesday 24 April** : **Haworth** : Visit the Bronte Parsonage Museum, travel on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway where 'The Railway Children' was filmed in 1970.

**Wednesday 15 May** : **Portmeirion** is an enchanting Italian style village created by Welsh architect Clough Williams-Ellis.

**Wednesday 5 June** : **Dumfries** - a scenic area of south-west Scotland.

**Wednesday 26 June** : **Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway**, and Muncaster Castle.

**Wednesday 17 July** : **Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway** at Toddington or Cheltenham.

**Wednesday 14 August** : **Llandudno**, a North Wales favourite resort.

**Wednesday 11 September** : **Leeds** boasts a large variety of markets, and is the birthplace of Marks and Spencer's in 1857.

**Saturday 12 October** : **Pickering** for the 1940's weekend.

For more information, please contact Roy Dixon on 01925 638299

# News Round Up

Chris Hollins

## Hydrogen powered trains

Alstom and Eversholt Rail have announced that they intend to introduce hydrogen powered trains from 2021.

The trains are to be converted from Greater Anglia Class 321 EMU'S which will be coming off lease this year. They are to be reduced from four to three cars and then taken to the Alstom plant in Widnes for conversion. Alstom have named the conversion as 'Project Breeze'.

## Warrington West Station

During closure of the CLC route through Widnes over the Christmas period, work took place at the new Warrington West station. A footbridge and the lift shafts were installed resulting in the likelihood that the station should open on time this summer.

## Re-signalling work diversions

From the end of services on Christmas Eve until the 2nd of January 2019, there were no

trains between Runcorn and Liverpool Lime Street due to the re-signalling work being carried out in the Speke Jct. and Allerton areas. London services were diverted from Crewe via Warrington Bank Quay, while the Birmingham service terminated at Runcorn, with a bus connection to Liverpool South Parkway.

Services on the CLC route through Widnes were also affected. The Liverpool to Norwich service was diverted via Newton-le-Willows to Manchester Oxford Road, while the local service from Manchester Oxford Road ran only as far as Warrington Central, with a bus connection to Liverpool.

## Introduction of Class 195 DMUs

The planned introduction of the Class 195 DMUs on the Liverpool Lime Street to Manchester Airport service at the start of the December timetable changes did not take place. This was due to mechanical difficulties with the units, and lack of crew training. It is now expected that they will start operating the service from April.

No date has been given for the introduction



**Above left** : Class 195 - Unit 110 on crew training duties at Liverpool Lime Street station on Friday 18th January 2019. Photograph by **Brian Browne**.

**Above right** : An earlier photograph of Class 195 - Unit 110 (one of a 3-car set) parked up on a low-loader at Halewood on Tuesday 13th November 2018, en route to Edge Hill carriage sidings.

Photograph by **Doug Birmingham**.

of the Class 331 EMU'S into service although crew training runs are taking place.

### **Delivery of Class 397 EMUs**

Delivery has taken place of the first of the new Trans-Pennine class 397 EMU'S, which are to be employed on the Liverpool and Manchester to Glasgow and Edinburgh services later this year. The units have been placed in temporary storage at Crewe South, along with the Mark 5 carriage rakes. Crew training runs, employing Class 68 diesels, are still taking place between Crewe and Waver-tree Jct.



*175.004 5D15 12.57 Liverpool Lime Street to Chester DMUD, Driver Training (via Halton Curve), passing Liverpool South Parkway Station on 2nd December 2018. Photograph by Doug Birmingham*



*331.102 5Z99 12.40 Carnforth to Edge Hill Depot Test ECS, passing Roby Station on 22nd October 2018. Photograph by Doug Birmingham*

### **Tamping machine failure**

On Sunday 6th of January, a tamping machine failed at 03.00 during a track possession at Hartford due to a computer fault. As the machine could not be moved it blocked the line, resulting in all of the mornings Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston services being diverted via Manchester Piccadilly. Services from Birmingham New Street to Liverpool Lime Street terminated at Crewe. The tamping machine was eventually recovered and the line reopened in the early afternoon.

### **Chester to Ditton Alstom plant**

Also on the 6th of January, Transport for Wales operated a train from Chester to the Ditton Alstom plant via the Halton Curve.

Formed of a Class 175 DMU, upon arrival it returned to Chester DMU depot. It was operated as a crew training run, as Sunday is the only day of the week that Class 175's are available for such duties under their franchise operation. As the Chester to Liverpool service did not start as scheduled last December, they are still required to operate one train a month over the curve, until such time as the scheduled services start.

### **Liverpool Lime Street to Derby new service**

Commencing on Monday December 10th, a new service between Liverpool Lime Street and Derby started running. The 13.52, Monday to Fridays only Liverpool Lime Street to Norwich, now has a portion for Derby. This is detached at Nottingham, and then departs at 16.49 calling at Beeston, Attenborough and Long Eaton, arriving in Derby at 17.25.

### **Chester and Liverpool Lime Street trials**

On Sunday the 2nd of November, Transport for Wales conducted timing trials between Chester and Liverpool Lime Street, using a 2 car Class 175 DMU.

The trains ran as 5F23 09.57 Chester DMU depot to Liverpool Lime Street, and 5F27 11.57 Chester to Liverpool Lime Street, returning as 5D12 11.03 Liverpool Lime Street

to Chester and 5D15 12.57 Liverpool Lime Street to Chester DMU depot.

This was probably the first time that a Class 175 DMU has operated between Frodsham Jct and Liverpool Lime Street. The Liverpool Lime Street to Warrington Chester service was due to start on the 9th of December, but due to shortages of rolling stock will now commence operating in May 2019.

### **Northern Class 195 DMUs**

Several new Northern Class 195 DMU'S and Class 331 EMU'S were observed outside Allerton depot on the 5th of December. The DMU'S were due to enter service on the Liverpool Lime Street to Manchester Airport service from the 9th of December, but this has now been delayed until Spring 2019 due to crew training issues.

### **Redevelopment of Ditton Sleeper Depot**

On the 5th of December, it was noted that work had commenced on redeveloping the remainder of the Ditton Sleeper Depot site. Vegetation clearance had taken place, while a concrete mixer lorry was on the site making a delivery. Presumably further retail units will be built, in line with what happened when the first part of the site was built on.

### **Transport for Wales crew training**

On Friday the 8th of February, Transport for

Wales commenced the first of a number of crew training runs between Chester and Liverpool Lime Street, in anticipation of the start of the normal passenger train service via Runcorn due to commence with the May timetable change.

Running as 3F50 10.11 Chester to Liverpool Lime Street, the DMU then makes two round trips to Frodsham Jct departing Lime Street at 11.48 & 12.43, returning from the Jct at 12.12 & 13.19. The unit then returns to Chester as 3D52 departing Liverpool Lime Street at 13.58.



*Class 158 Unit 158.830 3D52 Transport for Wales 13.58 Liverpool Lime Street to Chester, crew training run, seen at Runcorn on Friday 8th February 2019. Photograph by Chris Hollins*

*Chris Hollins*

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## **New 'Flickr' site for the Association**

### **Report from Doug Birmingham**

Owing to a variety of circumstances, it has proved necessary to close down the Association's original Flickr site. The site has now been replaced, and Doug Birmingham has taken over the task of managing the new facility. In addition, he will update the Association's main website from time to time. The 2018 journals have now been added to the website, along with a 'New Book' section that may avoid the necessity for members having to search in several different places on the website.

The new Flickr site can be found at

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/156187271@N02/>

# Class 66 - at Liverpool Central ?

Paul Wright

At approximately 14:00 on Thursday 31 January 2019 an MPV (Multi Purpose Vehicle) failed whilst standing at platform 2 at Liverpool Central station.

The MPV was engaged on de-icing duties during a very cold period. Liverpool Central is the busiest station in the city and one of the busiest stations in the UK outside of London. Platform 2 serves the down direction of the link line, and its blockage by the MPV caused serious disruption to Merseyrail Northern Line services.

The MPV was being operated by a GB Railfreight crew and after it became obvious that it could not be restarted driver Steven McGann made a suggestion. The suggestion was that a locomotive could be summoned from Liverpool Docks and brought to Liverpool Central to haul away the crippled MPV. The suggestion was taken up and Steven was taken to the docks to collect locomotive number 66 711 a GBRf engine that was scheduled to haul steel empties away from the docks.

What then followed was an interesting and highly unusual move. The class 66 left the docks shortly after 17:00 and travelled to Bootle Junction. It stopped on the up line just clear of the junction where ground signal 1031 is located. This signal is very rarely used but it allowed 66 711 to reverse and then go onto the Southport line. The engine travelled to Bootle Oriol Road station and stopped at the Southport platform. A further reverse took place and the engine travelled through Bank Hall and Sandhills after which it descended into the link line tunnel. Passing through Moorfields the engine arrived at Liverpool Central at 17:45. A further reverse was required at Liverpool Central so that 66 711 could couple up to the MPV.

Once coupled up, the MPV was hauled to Hunts Cross where the locomotive had to run around it. It was then hauled to Edge Hill and left in a siding until the next day. The locomotive had to return to the docks to collect its train. All in all, some very unusual activity on the Merseyrail system.



**At left** : GB Railfreight class 66 locomotive number 66 711 is seen at Liverpool Central station platform 2 on 31 January 2019. The locomotive is coupled to the failed MPV and is waiting to haul it away from the station 3 hours after it failed. A Class 66 at Liverpool Central is a very rare sight indeed.

Photo by Gary Rigby

# What an achievement - well done Joe !

**Editor's Note** : At my request, John Wilson (8D Committee Member and West Coast Main Line driver) has agreed to share with us the details of his son's recent incredible achievement on passing out as a fully competent train driver - aged 20. Congratulations Joe !

In October 2016, my son, Joseph Thomas Wilson, applied for one of the newly created posts of driver apprentice at Virgin Trains West Coast. The selection process was conducted by OPC, an external recruitment company specialising in psychometric testing of potential employees.

The first 2 tests were conducted online with a password and a number of sections where examples were provided - so that candidates knew what to expect.

After each test an email was received by Joe, informing him if he'd passed or failed. After the 2nd test, he received an email stating (incorrectly) that he'd failed ! However, a second email followed immediately, correcting the error. Luckily, Joe only read the 2 emails together, so was not too disappointed in the end.

The 3rd test was conducted at the Virgin Trains talent academy at Crewe. Again, this was an OPC computer based assessment, followed by a structured interview. The final assessment was also at the talent academy for more tests and finally an interview with the VT's driver team managers (DTMs).

In total 1165 applied for 3 posts ! On the 22nd December of 2016, at the tender age of 18, Joe was informed that he'd been successful pending a medical and drug screening. He would be starting at Liverpool Lime St depot in the New Year (2017).

Joe's first year as an apprentice was spread about across the company. He shadowed onboard crew, train managers and a variety of staff. However, the bulk of that year was spent at the sharp end with the excellent

instructor and mentor drivers at Liverpool.

In April of 2018, Joe commenced his official driver training at Crewe alongside the other 2 apprentices from Manchester and Preston and a mixture of successful internal and external candidates. The 32 week course comprised various modules, including track safety, single line working, working of trains, AWS & TPWS, and 'out of course' situations, together with many others.

In August 2018, Joe commenced his main line driving with an instructor driver in which he had to complete 225 hours driving during daylight and night time hours. Finally, a 3 day assessment was carried out, and Joe successfully passed out as a fully competent train driver on the 21st January 2019 aged 20.

He now has to complete 65 days of route learning. His core route is Liverpool to London Euston via the Trent Valley, West Midlands and Northampton.

Hopefully, he will be driving Class 390 Pendolino 125mph trains solo in April of this year. At barely 21 years of age, that is a very commendable achievement - beating my own record by nearly 12 months. That said, driving a Class 390 Pendolino on the West Coast Main Line is a world apart from driving a Class 507 / 8 on the Wirral circuit of New Brighton, West Kirby and Hooton in 1988 !

An exciting future awaits Joe. By the time of the next West Coast franchise change, HS2 will be a consideration. Joe is almost certain to be involved in the next stage of high speed travel in this country.

**John Wilson**

# Must be something in the genes !



**Above left** : On completion of his passing out run to Euston on 21st January 2019, Driver Joe Wilson met up with Driver (Dad) John Wilson who was waiting for his own return trip to the north-west. The Driver Team Manager standing alongside Joe is Brian Marriott.

**Above right** : A very special 'selfie' taken by a very proud dad after his son's passing out run !

**Right** : The young lad pictured in front of the class 67 nameplate is Joe back in 2008 as a 9 year old.



Photographs by **John Wilson**

## 'On Shed' journal material

Your 8D related articles and photographs invited

The task of gathering in material for the journal is never ending. On that basis, you will not be surprised to learn that before this edition is published, efforts are already under way to secure new feature articles for 'On Shed' due in just 3 months time. A very high standard has been set, and I hope that I'm able to continue producing a similarly interesting mix of news, comment and tales of yesteryear !

I would be very grateful for your assistance if you feel able to contribute material for publication. Alternatively, if you don't have the time or inclination to put pen to paper, but might like to suggest an appropriate topic, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Many thanks -

Tony Foster

[tony.r.foster@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.r.foster@btinternet.com)

# Sleepers to Cockermouth

Chris Hollins

## Special working

On the 31st of January 1962, 8D Association member Colin Turton was involved in an unusual special working involving a train of concrete sleepers.

Colin (a fireman at Widnes shed), along with his driver Ken Shaw, was required to take a train from Ditton sleeper depot to Cockermouth in Cumbria. The locomotive involved in the working was Caprotti valve gear Standard Class 5 No.73133, allocated to Patricroft shed code 9H. The locomotive was one of the 30 Riddles designed Class 5s fitted with Caprotti Valve gear, built at Derby Works in 1956. From within the batch, 10 locomotives went to each of the following depots, Derby, Patricroft and Glasgow St Rollox. In the early 1960s, the Derby allocated engines were transferred to Patricroft. 73133 was part of the batch sent new to Patricroft, and remained at the depot until its withdrawal in 1967.

## Mystery source of sleepers ?

The locomotive was prepared on Widnes shed, then headed light engine, tender first, to Ditton Sleeper Yard to pick up its train. A concrete sleeper train was unusual for the Ditton depot as they produced wooden sleepers for the railway network. It is a mystery as to where the concrete ones came from. The nearest place that they could have come from is Fazakerley Permanent Way depot.

Upon departure from Ditton, the train was routed down the the original St Helens Canal and Railway company line to Widnes West Deviation Jct, the tracks of which were closed in 1966. From there, the train proceeded through the closed Widnes South station, taking the St Helens line at Widnes No 7 signal box, then passing Widnes shed to Ann Street Jct. From here a steady climb took place towards Farnworth and Bold which, despite the heavy train and Caprotti Standards reputation for poor hill climbing abilities,

a bank engine up Appleton bank was refused ! The top of the climb was crested in fine style and the train proceeded on to Sutton Oak and St Helens Shaw Street. The climb from St Helens through Gerards Bridge Jct up to Carr Mill is short and sharp, but the locomotive continued along cresting the grade at Garswood before descending to Ince Moss Jct where the train stopped.



*'On shed' at Widnes, Standard Class 5 No.73133, the locomotive used by the 'Sleepers to Cockermouth' crew.*

Now part of the Richard Mercer Collection, the photograph taken by **Ian Holt**

## Bank engine required

A bank engine was attached to the train as it was to be routed over the Whelley line to rejoin the West Coast main line at Standish Jct. The Whelley line was primarily a freight route avoiding the Wigan area. It was steeply graded, including sections of 1 in 55 between Amberswood East Jct and De Trafford Jct.

From Ince Moss Jct, 73133, along with the bank engine, attacked the grades with gusto, passing Fir Tree House Jct, Amberswood West Jct and Amberswood East Jct where there were connections to the ex Great Central Wigan Central to Glazebrook line. These connections were used on summer Saturdays by holiday passenger trains en route to Blackpool from the north Midlands, and south Yorkshire.

As the grades steepened, the locos became more laboured, and stalled near De Trafford Jct. After restarting, and as the line was now descending, the bank engine was detached leaving 73133 to continue past Roundhouse Sidings signal box, which was the only one on the line that didn't control a junction. From there the train passed Whelley Jct where a short climb up to the West Coast main line brought it to Standish Jct. From there, it was a gentle amble along the slow line through Euxton Jct, Leyland and Farrington Jct to Preston where Colin and Ken were relieved by a Carnforth crew.

Departing Preston, the train then proceeded down the West Coast main line via Lancaster to Carnforth, where 73133 took the ex Furness Railway route through Grange-over-sands and Kendal to Dalton Jct. In doing so, it bypassed Barrow-in-Furness by using the freight only line to Park South Jct. The Cumbrian Coast line beckoned from here and, the Standard class 5 passed through Millom, Ravenglass (with a glimpse of the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway), Sellafield where Calder

Hall nuclear power station had been commissioned a few years earlier, and where the train entered the single line stretch to Whitehaven.

After leaving Whitehaven, the train carried on to Workington. At Derwent Jct it joined the former Cockermouth Keswick and Penrith line, passing through Brigham to arrive at Cockermouth for Buttermere station

The line from Workington to Penrith had been proposed for closure on numerous occasions. The section between Derwent Jct and Keswick (including Cockermouth station) closed on the 18th of April 1966, with the Keswick to Penrith section following on the 6th of March 1972

The Cockermouth line shared with Widnes shed the fact that both were haunts of Webb goods 0-6-0 tender engines. Allocated to Carlisle Upperby and Penrith depots, these engines were used on passenger trains between Penrith and Workington up until 1955, only being replaced by the first batch of Derby Lightweight 2 car DMUs, as West Cumbria had been selected as one of the test areas. Widnes shed continued to use its allocation of Webbs until 1955, when 58427 (the last of the class) was withdrawn from service and sent for scrapping.

Cockermouth was one of several interesting destinations for trains from Ditton Sleeper Depot. In later years, apart from supplying London Midland region with sleepers, several Western region yards took wooden sleepers from Ditton until demand dropped and the sleeper depot eventually closed.

### **'On Shed' items**

If you're thinking of submitting material for publication, the Editor would be very pleased to hear from you.

**tony.r.foster@btinternet.com**

# Canada Dock Full Loads Depot – 1978 and 1979

Phil Graham

Opened on 15 October 1866, Canada Dock Goods Station was, by the mid-1970s, the last of the traditional wagon load goods stations that had once been so common along Liverpool's Dock Road. Having come through the 2nd World War battered but still functioning, by 1978 its days were numbered. At that time I was employed by BR and I was to become quite familiar with Canada Dock.



*Canada Dock station looking north from an elevated position in 1977. The passenger station booking office can be seen to the right on Derby Road. The Canada Dock goods station dominates the view.*

**Photo by Derek Knowler**

The Third Grade 'A' Supervisor's post which I was rostered to cover was the Yard Supervisor at Canada Dock. This was a so-called 'Full Loads Depot' (FLD). 'Full Loads' actually meant wagon load. Smalls traffic (less than a full wagon load), known as 'Sundries', had been hived off to National Carriers Limited (NCL) under the provisions of the 1968 Transport Act.

Very quickly, NCL had started moving most of this traffic with their own road fleet, for the

full journey. This left BR with parcels, newspapers, parcels post, and letter mail which were moved by special parcels train, Diesel Parcels Units (DPUs) or in the brakevans of passenger trains. BR also had full wagonload freight. This was carried in largely vacuum braked wagons. There was also (and still is) trainload traffic in largely company trains, and also Freightliner (container) traffic.

Freightliners Limited had also been hived off in the 1968 Transport Act and was then a separate (government owned) company. It was transferred back to BR in 1979.

By law, again the 1968 Transport Act, all road movements of parcels and freight (wagonload) traffic, once consigned to BR had to be made by NCL. Freightliners had its own fleet of road vehicles.

So traffic to and from Canada Dock was either brought / collected from the terminal by the sender / receiver, CBP (carted by public), or was consigned to be brought or taken away by NCL. As the goods yard's connection with the dock estate had been severed in the early 1970s, this cartage arrangement also applied to all shipment traffic.

Canada Dock was open for all traffic and was the last such terminal in the Liverpool Dock area. Alexandra Dock, also with dock rail connection then severed (later re-instated to serve Seaforth Container Terminal) then dealt

solely with GPO 'Ocean Mails' traffic.

Canada Dock was then one of the two FLDs extant in Liverpool. The other, at Spekeland Road, Edge Hill, was to have the distinction of being the last.

The wagonload traffic in Britain at the time passed by timetabled trunk trains (mostly running overnight) between major marshalling yards, where it was shunted and then 'tripped' to its destination or, in some cases, tripped, in sectionalised form, to a smaller

yard where it was segregated into local trips for final destinations.

Canada Dock was serviced by sectionalised trips from Warrington, Arpley to Garston, Speke Sidings, and then by local trip to Canada Dock itself. The process happened in reverse for outward traffic.

Hence inward traffic usually reached Canada Dock in the morning, and outward traffic left in the late afternoon.

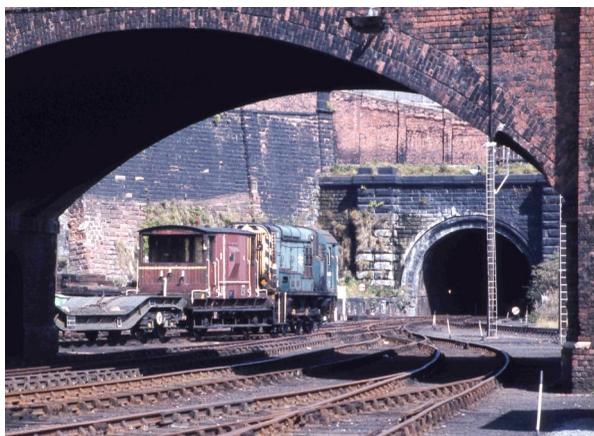
The traffic type was very mixed. I remember steel on bogie bolster wagons, armoured vehicles, van-fits, tubes and pipes, all of now unknown traffic, cable drums on flat wagons and I especially recall an old Austin motor car, destined for Ayr, leaving the yard on a flat wagon one afternoon.

Three trip locomotives were provided at Garston, Speke Sidings, to deal with all the wagonload traffic for the Liverpool area. These were each manned on both early and late turns (SX) by Drivers, Driver's Assistants and Guards from the Liverpool South (Garston) depot.

They were known as 'Targets 1, 2 and 3'. Notionally, Target 1 was a Springs Branch (Wigan) based dual braked Class 40. Target 2 was a Springs Branch based vacuum braked Class 25, and Target 3 was a Longsight (Manchester) based vacuum braked Class 40.

In reality, on the day, any of these workings could be covered by Class 24 /25, 40 or 47 locomotives.

These locomotives were under the control of the Supervisor at Garston, Speke Sidings, in liaison with the Supervisor at Edge Hill, Tuebrook Sidings. Most of the trips



*Class 08 locomotive number 08 289 was on shunting duties on the last day of operations at Canada Dock Goods station 3 September 1982. In the photograph above, Canada Dock tunnel connecting the goods station to Atlantic Dock Junction can be seen in the distance.*

Photographs by **Brian Roberts**



ran as partially (vacuum) fitted or unfitted, Class 9 trains.

They were all shown to 'work as required in the Edge Hill area', but notionally it was T3 which was supposed to service Canada Dock and T2 which was intended to service the Alexandra Dock - in both cases, morning and afternoon.

carried out by Tuebrook Sidings vacuum braked Class 08, Target 23.

Canada Dock itself was provided with a vacuum braked Class 08 (yard pilot) known as Target 49 until May, 1978 and thereafter as Target 4. This locomotive was manned by a Driver from Kirkdale (Merseyrail) Depot, on two shifts, providing shunting power from



*Looking towards the Canada Dock tunnel at Canada Dock Goods Station on 3 September 1982. The heavy engineering features that characterised this station are clearly shown in this view.*

Photograph by **Brian Roberts**

In reality, any of the three trips could service any terminal, and it was quite common for either T2 or T3 to service both Canada and Alexandra Docks, especially in the afternoon, if the combined traffic was within the load limits for a single train.

The trains all ran to and from Garston via Tuebrook Sidings, where the locomotive had to run round. While at Tuebrook Sidings, traffic for the immediate Edge Hill area would be detached from inward trips and added to departing trips. The servicing of these terminals (Spekeland Road etc.) normally being

06.50 (07.00 MO) until 19.25 SX.

Canada Dock yard was comprised of a total of 32 sidings, including two private sidings - one for George Bates (Bootle) Limited, a firm of fruit and vegetable importers who received their traffic in continental ferry vans (or changeable gauge), mostly 'Tranfesa' or 'Interfrigo' owned. The other private siding was leased to William Cory Limited, shipping agents, who discharged aluminium in the only siding remaining in the warehouse.

Other general traffic in the yard was handled

by BR staff, although there were also container trains of 5 Freightliner flat wagons, conveying 'Seawheel' loaded steel coil traffic (which presumably migrated to Seaforth Container Terminal when this opened). These trains were usually despatched twice a week. There were also occasional loaded trains of 'Carflats' or 'Cartic 4's. The cars received on these ad hoc workings were either for local distribution or for export. They were always unloaded by the trader.

Both the Freightliner and car traffic was in theory provided with its own motive power, but in reality was often worked by the trip locomotives.

The staffing at Canada Dock seemed rather excessive. It felt as if time had forgotten the place, and no attempt had been made to make economies. The yard was manned (SX) on early and late turns by a Supervisor 'A' (the post I covered) rostered from 06.45 – 14.21 and from 14.00 – 21.36. Two Senior Railmen and a Leading Railman were each

rostered from 06.45 – 14.45 and from 13.30 - 21.30. There was also a Senior Railman GPR (General Purpose Relief) on the establishment, to provide holiday and sickness relief for these six staff. The Driver for the yard pilot was usually a (health) restricted man. In theory, booking on and off at Kirkdale Depot and walking to and from Canada Dock, two of them provided shunting power from 06.50 until 19.25 SX.

The inward morning trip had usually arrived by 08.00 but the outward afternoon trip was often gone by 17.00. Occasionally, when on late turn and having gone home and had my tea and then gone out, I would glance at my watch between 21.00 and 21.36 and feel a little guilty that I was now getting paid at time and a quarter (for working after 21.00) !

I think the loading and unloading staff were just on one shift. They were supervised by a separate Grade 'B' Supervisor. I am not sure how many staff he had under his control. There were two 10-ton overhead travelling

APPENDIX K1

EXAMPLE OF ACTUAL TRIP WORKING

(MON 14TH MAY, 1979)

<u>TARGET 1</u> 40100	<u>Dep</u>		<u>Out</u>		<u>Traffic</u>	<u>Miles</u>
Speke Sdg.	08.10	Tuebrook Sdg.	09.00	24	535	6
Tuebrook Sdg.	09.55	Canada Dk.	10.30	16	569	6
Canada Dk.	11.20	Tuebrook Sdg.	11.40	15	355	6
Tuebrook Sdg.	12.15	Speke Sdg.	12.15 L	15	355	6
Speke Sdg.	13.15	Tuebrook Sdg.	13.35	42	481	6
Tuebrook Sdg.	14.20	Cronton	14.50	42	481	8
Cronton	15.50	Tuebrook Sdg.	16.10	29	617	8
Tuebrook Sdg.	16.50	Speke Sdg.	17.25	44	577	6

cranes in the goods shed and a similar 40-ton capacity crane outside.

There was also a Grade 'B' Docks Liaison Supervisor with the appropriate name of George Forshaw.

In the offices upstairs, looking out onto the Dock Road, there were a couple of Traffic Clerks, a Traffic Assistant (Supervisor Grade 'C') called Arthur Holding, and the Grade 'D' Station Manager, Dick Auld. They behaved like the staff of Grace Brothers in the then popular television sitcom. *'Are You Being Served ?'*, and when there was anyone there to overhear them, they referred to each other as "Mr Holding" and "Mr Auld", as they potted round watering their window-ledge tomato plants.

It was in this office that I found a cloth Pilot man's armband, in pristine condition, (I don't suppose that they needed it to water the tomatoes !). I admired it and Mr Holding gave it to me. I was to use it for the rest of my career and still have it.

I never saw Mr. Holding or Mr. Auld in the yard. Presumably they did come down under the cranes, but I never saw either of them venture to our end of the yard.

They did call me upstairs one afternoon to ask me to go round to Alexandra Dock with Target 4, acting as Guard, to collect the Ocean Mails and bring them back to Canada Dock. Apparently, the Driver of the only trip locomotive available was on overtime and would only have time to visit one terminal. I said that I did not know the road, so they sent George Forshaw with us, as he had once worked over the line as a Guard. I studied the road (nearly all in tunnel !) and next time (it happened to me just once more) I went on my own.

We were based in what looked like the world's first Portacabin, located in the middle of the yard, about 100 yards from Canada Dock Tunnel mouth. I had first seen this cabin on 28th February, 1969, when I first visited the yard on a DMU railtour (the LCGB's 'Liverpool Docker'.

The yard lines converged into an Up and Down line at the very mouth of the short (circa 150 yard) Canada Dock Tunnel, which led to Atlantic Dock Junction. Here the Bootle Branch ran straight on for Canada Dock, and the main line diverged to the right, to go back into the tunnel to Bootle Balliol Road, where it rose to make a connection



*On 28 February 1969 the Liverpool Docker rail tour visited Canada Dock Goods Station. Two class 108 (Derby) DMUs were used for the rail tour and they are seen looking west in this view. The passengers were free to explore the yard.*

Photograph by **Barry Graham**

with the ex L&Y line at Bootle Junction, on the Liverpool to Southport line, while the main line descended again and plunged into yet another tunnel, leading to Alexandra Dock.

Atlantic Dock Junction was a misnomer ! When Alexandra Dock was under construction, it was to have been called Atlantic Dock. The junction to serve it was named accordingly, while the name of the dock itself was changed before opening - nobody ever changed the name of the signal box or the junction. Heavily vandalised and twice destroyed in arson attacks, the signalbox and junction it controlled survived as Atlantic Dock Junction until abolished when Canada Dock FLD officially closed on 12th September, 1982.

When I was at Canada Dock, the Liverpool Lime Street to Southport DMU service still ran to connect with certain London to Liverpool trains. These DMUs could clearly be viewed from my office, through the tunnel. As they approached they were seemingly going to come into the yard, but then veered off at the last moment, as if they had (sensibly) changed their minds !

I recall once cleaning the window at this end of the cabin - probably for the first time in years. Having cleaned it, and presumably because of a defect in the glass, when I looked out through it, the reflection of one of my eyes eerily filled the whole tunnel mouth and stared back at me. I didn't clean it again and the apparition slowly faded away over the next few weeks.

One of the two regular Yard Supervisor's posts was occupied by Bill Rigby. Bill was then in his 60s and had come there from a similar post at Brunswick. He had been made redundant there when general freight traffic was withdrawn from Brunswick and a Chageman was all that was necessary to supervise the operation of the remaining block oil trains.

Before I took charge, I trained with Bill and can remember following him onto the front platform of the moving 08 one day, and then following him again as he stepped sprightly off near the cabin. The loco was hauling a load of bogie bolster wagons and was running at about 5 – 10mph. It was to draw them into the tunnel, for the ground frame operated points to be reversed so that it could propel them back into another part of the yard. I felt nervous about my ability to step off but was also embarrassed to stay on the platform and to go into the tunnel and back out again. I made a split second decision which nearly cost me my life - I jumped. I can recall stumbling three times and only just, somehow, keeping my balance. I thought I was going under the wheels of the leading bogie-bolster. As I saved myself, Bill grabbed me and said *"You don't get off buses like that !"*

I had learnt a lesson ! The Rule Book prohibited getting off moving vehicles. This should have been my advice to other new staff, but instead, recounting my near miss, my advice to others was the more pragmatic (but incorrect) advice not to do anything they were not happy with.

The other Supervisor's post was vacant, so if either I or George Bent (the other GPR 'A' Supervisor) was not required at Lime Street or Downhill, one of us would be rostered to cover the vacancy. If we were required, Bill Rigby would be rostered to work 12 hours (from 06.45 – 18.45) which would adequately cover the actual traffic hours.

Before the trip arrived each morning, one of the young lads from Bates would come to my office with a list of the order in which they wanted the two or three ferry vans to be shunted for unloading. We used to do this, taking all of 10 minutes extra shunting time. Bates used to reward us with as many oranges and onions as we wanted.

One of the Senior Railmen, an Irishman called

Frank Fox, would not take part in this (or take the free fruit and vegetables). Frank was a Sectional Council (Regional) Staff Representative (and so was not usually there, but away at union meetings). He told me that Bates' agreement was only for the wagons to be berthed as they arrived, and not to be shunted into a different order. Apparently Bates would have had to pay more to BR to have this facility, so were quite prepared to pay us in oranges and onions instead !

Interestingly, while I don't doubt what Frank said, there was no instruction to us not to oblige the customer in this way, and neither had it been mentioned in my training.

Frank was a man of principle and, in his position, felt that he could not do this. He was however quite content to turn a blind eye to what the rest of us did. I thought about it and decided it better to keep the customer satisfied rather than stand on ceremony. After all, if the 08 had an hour's shunting per shift, it would have been a busy day. And my mother liked the free Spanish oranges and onions !



*The Canada Dock goods station sign that was located at the entrance on the dock road could still be seen in 1983 when this view was taken.*

Photograph by **Robert Forsythe**

The Canada Dock passenger station had been closed by enemy action on 05<sup>th</sup> May, 1941 (saving BR the trouble later on). It was never reopened.

The building and the single platform still survived, the latter complete with a station name board, slightly damaged, presumably by the bomb, but with all its metal letters still nailed to the white wooden board.

The main station building stood against the road bridge that crossed the yard on a series of brick arches. The main station building was at street level and still had steps coming down to the platform end. Presumably these had been retained as a fire escape, for the building was now in use as a rather dodgy looking restaurant.

The only surviving building on the platform was the former gents toilet. This had been retained to serve as our toilet, although it was only used for number twos - urination was always performed in the yard. The toilet was built of strong brick, just like the proverbial ! The wooden door was fitted with a strong steel plate. There were no windows, and the door had three mortice locks, top, middle and bottom - the latter quite difficult to turn with a key, so close was it to the ground. Each of the locks had separate keys, and no-one had ever thought to label them. So by the time you got in, the urge had usually gone away !

What a contrast this was with our modern 'Portacabin', where a light kick on the door would have opened it for sure !

The accommodation in our building comprised the Supervisor's office at the tunnel end, then the locker room and kitchen area. At the other end of the building was a messroom where the 3 yard staff and the driver played

seemingly continuous card games for money. I sat in my office and read the 'Daily Telegraph, together with 3 railway periodicals that existed at that time, the Rule Book and similar publications, all from cover to cover – it was a boring place to work !

One of our regular 'green carded' Drivers was called Jack Waterhouse, a slight man in his 60s, who had been taken off main line duties following a heart attack. I now forget the other regular man's name, but we regularly got fit men (Motormen – EMU Drivers) from Kirkdale Depot, including the Staff Representative, Eddie Lyons, who was a very reasonable character and fully fell into the ways of working at Canada Dock.

One morning I had been advised that there would be no traffic arriving that day. I told Jack Waterhouse this when he arrived and told him not to bother starting the 08 up as it was unlikely we would need it that morning.

I was sitting in my end of the cabin, when I heard the 08 start up. I thought that Jack may have wanted to check it over, and so thought no more about it. Then I heard it move off. I got up and went outside, the locomotive was disappearing under the arches of the bridge, heading towards the Dock Road. I went into the messroom and there was Jack Waterhouse and the two Senior Railmen, all with a full hand of cards, while coins lay in piles on the table. I asked *"Where has the Tankie (as we used to call the 08) gone ?"* Jack replied *"Oh Barney has just gone to put the bets on. He'll be back in five minutes. You don't want it do you ?"* Barney Murphy (another Irishman) was the early turn Leading Railman and, rather than walk to the betting shop, took the 08. **'It's quicker by rail'** as they used to say !

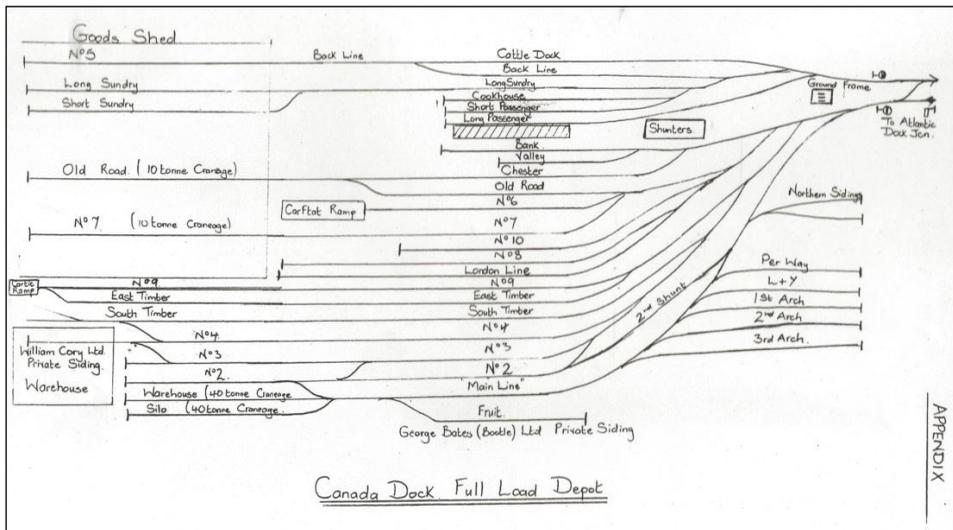
Another morning, just after I arrived, a lad in his 20s (about my age I suppose – I was 23 then) came into my office. He was wearing a tee shirt, demin jacket and jeans. I thought he must be a new lad from Bates who I hadn't

seen before. I asked him what he wanted and he said *"I'm your Tankie Driver"*. He must have been one of Kirkdale's youngest Motormen and one who didn't like wearing his uniform !

One of the Senior Railmen - Bill, a Cockney in his 60s, was an alcoholic. When on early turn, he used to knock on my door about 11.25 and say *"I'm just going to check down 5 side Inspector"*. He used to say the same as soon as he took duty on afternoons. No. 5 was the extreme right hand siding, looking from the tunnel to the Dock Road, and right at the end of it, on a street corner, was a Higson's pub. We didn't usually see Bill again on early turn and when on late turn he would stagger back about 15.30. It didn't matter - there was no work for him to do anyway. The drinking culture was rife in the railway then - from top to bottom.

The nomenclature of the sidings was very strange. The arrival siding was known as 'main' line. From left to right, coming into the yard, the sidings were known as :-

Fruit (a trailing connection off 'Main' line.  
Silo (a facing connection off 'Main' line)  
Warehouse – a continuation of 'Main' line.  
No.2.  
No. 3.  
No. 4.  
South Timber.  
East Timber.  
No. 9.  
London Line.  
No.8.  
No. 10.  
No. 7.  
No. 6.  
Old Road.  
Chester.  
Valley.  
Bank.  
Long Passenger.  
Short Passenger.



Cookhouse.  
Short Sundry.  
Long Sundry.  
Back line.

Cattle Dock leading to No. 5.

Trailing connections from 'Main' line were :-

Northern Siding 1.

Northern Siding 2.

L&Y.

1<sup>st</sup> Arch.

2<sup>nd</sup> Arch.

3<sup>rd</sup> Arch.

Some car trains were formed of Carflats. These were old coaches, I think of Stanier design, that had their bodies removed and flat wooden decking provided. Hinged metal plates were provided over the buffers to enable cars to be driven along the whole length of the train. The vehicles were vacuum braked and screw coupled. They lacked weight and were notorious for becoming buffer-locked when they were propelled around curves. They had normal wagon, pin down lever handbrakes.

Other cars arrived in trains of Cartic 4s. These were newer and purpose built. These vehicles

were in articulated sets of four permanently coupled wagons. They had two decks, with the lower deck going down between the bogies and the upper deck following the same contour. They had wheel operated screw handbrakes.

I remember meeting a train of Carflats in one morning. It had been stopped, as I had instructed, at our ground frame operated signal on the Down line, just inside the tunnel. From there I shouted up to the Secondman of the throbbing Class 40, instructing him to tell his Driver to draw just far enough into the yard (along 'main' line) to release his engine and I would then do the rest of the shunting with the Tankie.

For whatever reason, my message was not received. I should have climbed onto the engine, spoken directly with the Driver and then ridden with him as far as I wanted him to proceed.

Instead, with my message clearly misunderstood, when Barney Murphy cleared the signal, the Driver took the whole train as far as he could along 'main' line into the yard, blocking the 08 in as a result.

The unloaders were waiting to drive the cars off. Should I send for another engine to safely draw the train back, or should I risk buffer-locking and propel the train back around the curvaceous 'main' line with the Class 40 that had brought it in ?

Sending for another engine would have delayed the unloading operation by at least two hours. Buffer-locking on the other hand would have almost certainly led to derailment. Even without derailment, I would have needed technical staff and another engine to sort the problem out. If we had a derailment, you could add in summoning the Allerton Breakdown Train.

I chose to propel. I got on the locomotive and instructed the Driver to set his train back very gingerly. I stayed on the engine looking out and had my three staff and the Tankie driver stationed on the ground alongside the train, with instructions to hand signal me to stop as soon as they saw anything untoward.

We got away with it, but when we brought the train to a stand, several buffers were close to overlapping !

The cars were all unloaded on time, and nobody was any the wiser, but when Bill Rigby relieved me and I told him what we had done, he was staggered. I'm glad that he wasn't around for me to seek advice and that my staff had been happy to take my lead. I had been very lucky !

On another day I came to work on late turn to find my staff happily loose shunting empty Cartic 4s. Both Carflats and Cartics were clearly stencilled "**Not to be loose shunted**". Cartics had wheel-operated handbrakes. I can still see Barney Murphy running alongside the moving wagons, trying in vain to turn passing handbrake wheels. The 4 set got away and I was expecting it to clout the buffers and perhaps end up on the Dock Road, but I think the gradient must have risen before the stop blocks because the 4 set stopped without

damage. We used to have a saying with runaway wagons, "*God will guide them*" – and perhaps he did !

If we could, we used to like to keep a brakevan from the morning trip so that we could marshal the evening train on this brake and have it all ready for the afternoon trip engine to just drop on to it, couple up and be away, but it was not always possible for us to keep a van.

One Friday afternoon we had a full train even with AWB. (We could take extra tonnage if the Driver stopped before reaching specified falling gradients for the Guard to apply wagon brakes. The train had to be stopped again after descending the gradient for the Guard to pick up the brakes).

We had not been able to keep a brakevan. Target 2 had to do its own work before returning to Canada Dock, engine and brake to collect our train as Target 3 was uncovered.

The procedure when an engine and brake came to collect a train was as follows. The locomotive would draw its van towards a set of facing points and be uncoupled on the move with the locomotive running to one siding, the Guard then applying the handbrake in his van, the points would be turned and the van run onto another siding. This process was known as fly-shunting. The Tankie would then draw the train forward and then set it back onto the brakevan. The Tankie would then be detached and the train locomotive would back up and couple up.

The shunting of the train could of course be performed by the train engine itself, but you could hardly expect the train crew to do this when shunting power was provided for the purpose. On this day they would have been even less likely to have obliged, as their extra workload was stopping them getting an early finish (it was Friday), and they would have to comply with the time consuming and very unpopular AWB procedure.

I told the staff that at least one of the Senior Railmen and the Tankie Driver, Jack Waterhouse, would have to stay to make this shunt. Jack went ballistic, saying that he was going out that evening - (he was being paid to man the engine until 19.25). I told him that if he left before the trip engine had arrived and before this time, I would do my best to get Target 2's crew to make the shunt themselves, but if they would not, and the train was left in the yard all weekend, I would have to report that I could not find Target 4 Driver when I needed him.

Jack stayed, in stony silence, made the shunt and Target 2 left with the train a little after 18.30.

This was the latest I had ever been at Canada Dock, but I still left about three hours before

my rostered time. Jack was off the Tankie over an hour before he was due to be and, as he always drove straight home instead of walking to Kirkdale to book off, he would have been home about two hours earlier than he should have been (albeit two hours later than he normally was).

Early in 1979, I was promoted to a Grade 'B' Yard Supervisor's post at Downhill Sidings and I only returned to Canada Dock in connection with my trip working report. I did not therefore witness the final death throes of the yard.

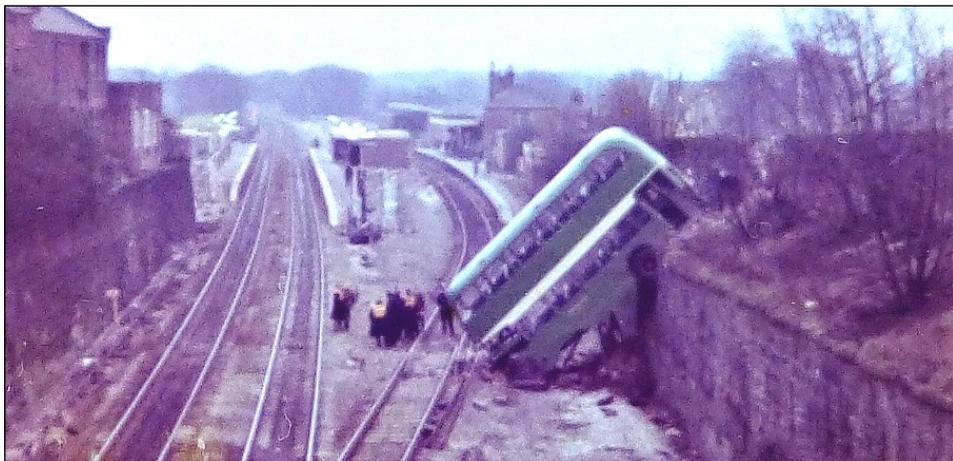
The very last train departed from Canada Dock on 3rd September 1982, by which time the Seaforth Container Terminal was open.

*Phil Graham*

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## 'Crosville bus skids down railway embankment'

Reported in Liverpool Echo : Thursday March 23rd 1972



*Looking east towards Broad green station on 23 March 1972 the Crosville bus can be seen on the trackbed of the former slow lines. The line at this point had been quadrupled in the 1880s but it reverted to double track in 1970. Interestingly as this photograph shows a loop had remained at Broad Green. The construction of the M62 motorway narrowed the course of the railway at this point leaving space for only two tracks. The original station building of Broad Green station (seen in this view) was demolished to make way for a slip road.*

**Notes by Paul Wright**

**Photograph by Ray Knapman**

# Tales from the platform !

Dennis J Flood

My railway career started in 1963, but in the early 1960s a friend and I spent many happy hours trainspotting at Edge Hill station. The history of the station has been thoroughly documented and its place in British railway history is well known. It remains the oldest working railway station in the world.

within the industry and played their part in making it such a great and fascinating organisation. This article deals specifically with two such individuals who worked at Edge Hill station, both of whom are no longer with us, but they are most certainly not forgotten as far as I am concerned !



*Taken on 11 August 2018 (50th anniversary of end of BR steam) the photograph shows the station exit / entrance where the ticket barrier and train describer used to be in the 1960s.*

**Photograph by Dennis Flood**

However, the purpose of this article is not to repeat that history, but to remember some of the staff who worked at Edge Hill station in the mid-1960s, and who I got to know well, before and after I joined British Railways in the Motive Power Department.

There are numerous articles and publications concerning railway locomotives, signal boxes, stations and associated infrastructure, but it is only in recent years that similar attention has been given to those who actually worked

Two station foremen that I remember particularly at Edge Hill in the mid-1960s were Bill Harrison and Sid Wightwick. These two individuals were as different as could be imagined in the way they went about their duties. Bill Harrison was one of those 'steady' characters who carried out his duties on the station at only one pace – dead slow ! Sid Wightwick on the other hand patrolled the station platforms as if they were his own personal 'fiefdom' and was hardly ever still for more than a few minutes at a time. He was always extremely smart in appearance and had an air

of authority about him. Sid was an ex-army NCO, so this was no surprise at all. His shoes were always immaculately polished, so much so that we used to think he used them as a mirror to shave in.

I was at Edge Hill station one afternoon in the Summer of 1962, taking engine numbers with a fellow trainspotter, when we witnessed a hilarious event involving Sid Wightwick - and *a rat* !

We were sitting on a bench on platform 3 and we saw Sid come through the ticket barrier on platform 2, directly from the booking office, and start walking along the platform towards the subway. He was heading for his office on platform 3 via the subway, next to where we were sitting, when he spotted a large rat running across the platform and heading for platform 1 through a small alley between the main station buildings and the station staff messroom. The messroom was

nicknamed him. He shouted 'Now - rat, stop there - immediately!'. Unsurprisingly, the rat ignored this order from the 'Sergeant Major', and disappeared very quickly towards the alley. Moving at the double, and with both arms swinging in the fashion of a soldier on parade, Sid was rapidly closing on the fleeing rat. What happened next is firmly etched on my memory. The rat didn't head towards platform 1 to escape the fast approaching Sid, but decided instead to make a run for a



*The poorly maintained doors (note the two-toned paintwork) at the left of the photograph mark the position of the Edge Hill station foreman's office in the 1960s. Used by foremen Bill Harrison and Sid Wightwick, the office also contained a train describer.*  
Photograph by **Dennis Flood**

situated directly opposite the buffer stop at the Lime Street end of the Southport bay platform – (the remains of the bay exist to this day). Sid hadn't noticed us sitting there and immediately increased his walking pace in the direction of the scurrying rat. He now looked like the 'Sergeant Major' that we had

small hole at platform level, at the base of the station building wall. The hole was a cast iron damp course vent about the size of a conventional brick, and had been broken at one end for many years. It provided the perfect escape route for the fleeing rat, and my friend and I saw it disappear into the hole.

However, it became wedged in the hole so that just a portion of the rat's backside and its tail were visible as it struggled to get through the hole.

'Sergeant Major' Sid Wightwick was now fast approaching. Look out rat ! He saw that the rat had not completely disappeared and that a small portion of it was still visible. He went straight over and kicked what he could see of the rat's backside. In it went - through the hole rather faster than it had bargained for.



*Now in need of its own restoration, the platform wall plate records the 1979 refurbishment of Edge Hill station.*

Photograph by **Dennis Flood**

Two trainspotters were crying with laughter as this unfolded. Unfortunately for Sid, his right shoe was stuck in the hole and no amount of heaving would remove it - he was not a happy man. He bent down and untied the shoe lace, took his foot out of the shoe and literally yanked the shoe out of the hole. He examined his shoe, now badly scuffed and we thought he was about to explode. After going down on his knees and with his nose almost touching the hole, he shouted 'Come out and surrender immediately, rat ! I'll give you a quick death if you do, or I'll hunt you down !'. Given the effort he'd put in to kick

the backside of the rat when it was stuck in the hole, it was probably travelling rapidly towards Lime Street even faster than a down 'Red Rose' express.

Sid got up quickly, still clutching his shoe, and stormed into the nearby station staff mess-room. He reappeared with the regulation mop. He still hadn't seen us sitting on the bench on platform 3. By now we were convulsed with laughter. He got on his knees again, and put the mop handle in the hole and poked it around like a man possessed. By now, he was using such choice language that even the rat would have reported him for it if it was still lurking around. He stood up, turned around and saw us on platform.

'How long have you boys been there ?', he shouted. 'Oh, er, just a few minutes Mr Wightwick', we replied nervously. 'Right', he said, 'If you see a bloody rat come out of this hole, with my footprint right across its arse', let me know immediately !' With that, he stormed off back along platform 2 towards the booking office, still clutching the mop, his right shoe tucked under his left armpit, and with one leg slightly longer than the other ! We decided to nickname Sid the 'Field Marshall'

after that. I don't think I have ever laughed so much from that day to this.

Bill Harrison was very different from Sid Wightwick in both appearance and demeanour. Whereas Sid was immaculate in his appearance and very well groomed, Bill looked like a 1960s 'Gasman' on his collecting round - on a bad day ! In the summer months he was quite happy to tend his small garden at the Picton Road end of platform 1 and let the station staff just get on with carrying out their own duties. He was a man of habit and had a very regular routine when on late turn

(14.00 to 22.00). At 17.50, he would put his overcoat on, walk up to Tunnel Road, cross to Wavertree Road, and buy his usual fish and chips from the local chip shop. He would then return to his office on platform 3, make himself a cup of tea, butter some bread and have his dinner until 18.30. He was not to be disturbed under any circumstances. I doubted if he would open his office door even if a train became derailed outside it. Nothing would disturb Bill and his fish and chips.

I remember an occasion when he visited the station toilet, situated between platforms 3 and 4, and a relief booking clerk decided to have some fun at his expense. Bill was occupying a cubicle when the relief clerk crept into the toilet and lit two 'London Terror' firework 'bangers' (these were 2d each, as opposed to the regular 1d 'banger', and had twice the explosive 'bang'). After throwing them under the door of the cubicle next to the one Bill was using, the relief clerk disappeared like a greyhound. Two blue flashes were followed very quickly by two almighty bangs which I'm sure could have been heard at Lime Street station. It was perhaps fortunate that Bill didn't have a heart attack. My abiding memory of him was dashing out of the toilet, ashen faced with blue firework smoke following him, with his braces almost around his ankles, and pulling his trousers up from around his knees, with his copy of the Liverpool Echo still in his hand. It was not, however, the 'echo' he had been expecting.

I don't think he told anyone off for doing this to him, or even asked who did it. If he did, the station staff kept it very quiet from us trainspotters. I like to think he knew who did it and was just happy to 'let the youngsters have their fun'. He always called the relief clerk 'the boy'. Bill Harrison was an easy going person even in the most 'explosive' of circumstances. No-one ever dreamt of doing that to Sid Wightwick, though!

Both Bill and Sid tolerated us trainspotting at

Edge Hill station and didn't really say much to us in those days, but when we got to know them a little better they would let us sit in the foreman's office on platform 3 when it was cold, or even be allowed to sit in the booking office - that was indeed an honour! There was an electro-mechanical train describer in the station foreman's office and there was also one located in the ticket collector's booth at the barrier on platform 3, near to the current entrance / exit. This was marvellous for us trainspotters, because we could see what train had left Lime Street and that it was on the way up to Edge Hill. Two train reporting descriptions have remained in my mind from that day to this. One was 2F50, which was a Lime Street to Wigan service, and the other was 2K73, a Lime Street to Crewe service.

Bill Harrison gave us access to the BR Working Timetables, and we could see what was really happening - this was marvellous! He was a gentle soul and occasionally gave us a chip butty each when he was having his dinner at his regular time. That's when we knew that we had been accepted as trainspotters at the station, rather than being just a nuisance.

A leading porter named Charlie Foulkes also worked at Edge Hill. He was a really nice chap who did a lot for myself and friend when we were trainspotting there. Charlie worked most Sundays and one of his jobs on a Sunday evening was to ensure that a leather bag (known simply as 'The Bag') containing all of the tickets collected at Edge Hill over the past month, was sent to Derby on the last Sunday train from Lime Street to Crewe. The tickets were required for auditing purposes. If, during the audit, any discrepancies were found, each station foreman would receive a sharp letter demanding an immediate improvement - or else!

Edge Hill station was very busy in those days, and with only one member of staff on the barrier, it meant that passengers tickets were

not always checked very carefully - a situation that some passengers took advantage of. An interesting assortment of tickets, including bus tickets, theatre tickets or old receipts, would find their way back to Derby via 'The Bag'. It must have been clear to those who checked 'The Bag' at Derby that the staff at Edge Hill station were not doing their job correctly. Something had to be done ! Bill Harrison, who had received several letters from Derby demanding an improvement, was worried he would be disciplined so he had an idea which, for us, eventually turned into a real treasure trove.

He asked myself and my friend if we would check the 'The Bag' on a Sunday evening and remove any ticket that should not be there. We readily agreed. The instructions were clear - *'If you find any ticket in 'The Bag' that doesn't have Edge Hill or Lime Street printed on it, chuck it away'*. Every Sunday, my friend and I checked the contents of 'The Bag' and threw away any items that shouldn't have been there. Eventually, Bill Harrison and Sid Wightwick each received a glowing letter from the Chief Ticket Auditor at Derby, congratulating them on a most wonderful improvement in the standards of ticket

checks at Edge Hill station. Syd Wightwick couldn't believe just how much things had improved.

We had saved Charlie Foulkes a considerable amount of time and effort, and he told us that, if we wished to, we could keep any non-Edge Hill or Lime Street tickets we found. We didn't need telling twice. It's thanks to Charlie that I still have a large collection of Edmondson railway tickets - his memory lives on each time I look at them. By far the most surprising ticket that I found in 'The Bag' in 1962 was an LMS second class Forces leave single from Pantyffynnon to Pontarddulais in South Wales. I wonder where that ticket had been since 1948 - the very year British Railways came into existence. Charlie reckoned that Bill would have been court martialled if the Derby auditors had found that ticket in 'The Bag'.

In a future article, I'll tell some stories about Edge Hill station porters Charlie Foulkes, Sam Leventhall and Jimmy McManus. All three of them were railway characters in their own right, but most certainly very different from each other.

Dennis J Flood

February 2019

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## Gateacre line closes on April 15

Reported in Liverpool Echo : Thursday March 23rd 1972

By coincidence, the same front page that carried the Crosville bus crash at Broad Green story (see page 23) also reported the announcement by British Rail that the Liverpool Central to Gateacre line was to close. It was reported that *"Central High Level, St Michaels, Mersey Road Aigburth, Cressington and Grassendale, Garston and Gateacre stations are to be closed down"*.

The item further records *"In a communication to British Railways Board, the Department of*

*Environment say all the places served by the rail service are also served by alternative bus services at a greater frequency than the present rail service"*.

Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority considered that *"there was no need for extra buses to cater for displaced passengers, but were prepared to run an additional bus from Liverpool to the Garston area in the evening peak for an experimental period"*. Unconditional consent was given for the closure.

# Rainhill Trials 1829 - 2019

## Rainhill Rocket is Coming Home!



The Rocket 190 Group are excited to announce that the replica Rocket will be on display in Rainhill 25th - 27th May 2019.

Saturday 25th will host a model railway exhibition, a sports tournament and themed theatrical and musical performances. The Rocket will take pride of place in a parade along Warrington Road on Sunday 26th, joined by floats, dancing groups and bands, culminating in a village tea party. The festival will continue on Monday 27th with the acclaimed Rainhill Gala.

Throughout the weekend the village will be alive with activities including a flower festival, exhibition of Railway memorabilia, vintage vehicles, street performers and much more.

*Join us for the celebrations and mark Rainhill's unique place in world transport history.*

*If you want to play your part, please contact the Parish Clerk*

*on [rainhillpc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rainhillpc@hotmail.co.uk) or tel. 07565 524414,*

*or visit the Council news page at [www.rainhillparish.org.uk](http://www.rainhillparish.org.uk).*



# Rocket 190 Timetable Services to Rainhill

<i>Service</i>	<i>Arriving At</i>
<i>Saturday Only Service (25.5.19)</i>	
<i>Model Railway Exhibition</i>	<i>Village Hall</i>
<i>Football Tournament</i>	<i>Holt Lane Playing Fields</i>
<i>Display of Classic &amp; Vintage Motorcycles</i>	<i>Dane Court</i>
<i>Evening of Musical Entertainment</i>	<i>Village Hall</i>
<i>Sunday Only Service (26.5.19)</i>	
<i>Parade - including floats and walking participants, Band, Locomotives, Vintage Vehicles</i>	<i>From Ship Inn to Village Centre</i>
<i>Tea Party with Entertainment</i>	<i>Village Hall</i>
<i>Exhibition of Steam &amp; Traction Engines</i>	<i>Around Village</i>
<i>Performance by Rainhill Music Festival</i>	<i>St. Ann's Church</i>
<i>Monday Only Service (27.5.19)</i>	
<i>Rainhill Gala</i>	<i>St. Ann's Field</i>
<i>Weekend Service (25.5.19-27.5.19)</i>	
<i>Replica Rocket on Display</i>	<i>In Exchange Place</i>
<i>Guided Tours by Costumed Actors</i>	<i>Around Village</i>
<i>Period Costume</i>	<i>Around Village</i>
<i>Re-enactments of Historical Events (Saturday &amp; Monday)</i>	<i>Around Village</i>
<i>Exhibition of Rainhill Heritage and 150th Trials Celebrations (Saturday &amp; Sunday)</i>	<i>Millennium Centre</i>
<i>Exhibition of Railway Memorabilia</i>	<i>Railway Station waiting room</i>
<i>Flower Festival</i>	<i>St. Ann's Church</i>
<i>Exhibitions at Railway Museum</i>	<i>Rainhill Library</i>
<i>Gallery of Railway Heritage Photographs</i>	<i>Rainhill Library</i>
<i>Park &amp; Ride with transfer by Vintage Bus</i>	<i>From local areas</i>
<i>Special Services</i>	
<i>Performance of "Ghost Train"</i>	<i>Village Hall - 18-20 May 2019</i>
<i>Service of Commemoration for Rainhill Trials</i>	<i>St. James Church - October 2019</i>

# From the Archive

Two magnificent photographs from the Michael Delamar collection



**Above** : The LCGB 'Glazier Brake Van Tour' of 25 September 1965 is seen on the Blackbrook Branch at Fleet Lane, St Helens. The Blackbrook branch acted as a by-pass line allowing goods services to avoid St Helens station. It also had connections to a number of local industrial concerns including the Haydock Colliery. The line closed as a through route on 6 April 1964 when the section from Fleet Lane to Carr Mill was taken out of use. A section of line was retained between Sutton Oak and Fleet Lane and the brake van tour is seen at the northernmost point of that line.

Commentary by **Paul Wright**



**Above** : The 'Glazier Brake Van Tour' visited many lines in the St Helens area. In this view it is seen at Old Mill Lane on the Rainford branch. The Rainford branch had closed as a through route on 6 July 1964 and Old Mill Lane was as far as the tour could go on 25 September 1965. The train is standing next to the site of the Old Mill Lane station 'up' platform. That station, in reality a small halt, had closed on 18 June 1951.

Commentary by **Paul Wright**

## 8D Events Programme

### **19.00 - Tuesday 12 March 2019 : 'Merseyside & North Wales'**

An illustrated talk by Geoff Morris at the Halton Stadium (Widnes Rugby Ground) Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.

### **10.00 - Saturday 6 April 2019 : 'The CLC between Garston and Liverpool Central'**

A guided tour by train, led by Paul Wright.

Meet at Liverpool South Parkway station main entrance foyer.

### **19.00 - Tuesday 30 April 2019 : 'The Route of the Blackbrook Branch'**

A guided walk led by Paul Wright

Meet on Chain Lane, St Helens by the entrance to Blackbrook St Marys Catholic School

### **19.00 - Tuesday 28 May 2019 : 'The Walton Triangle'**

A guided walk led by Paul Wright

Meet on Blackthorne Road near to the junction with Walton Hall Avenue.

### **10.00 - Saturday 15 June 2019 : The Winsford & Over Branch, Whitehouse to Winsford**

A guided walk led by Paul Wright

Meet at Whitehouse station, Clay Lane Nr Cuddington

**NB.** For those awaiting news of the re-arranged **Churnet Valley Railway** visit, the CVR timetable has not yet been published. Further details to follow.



Are there sufficient clues for you to be able to identify where (and possibly even 'when') this photograph was taken? Any answers to [tony.r.foster@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.r.foster@btinternet.com)  
The December location (Frodsham Jct) was correctly identified by Rod Dixon and Arthur Turner