

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

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'On Shed' : Journal of the 8D Association

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From the Editor

tony.r.foster@btinternet.com

Tel : 01744 883914

If you feel that this edition lacks a little sparkle or variety, then I can only apologise in advance. By way of explanation, for two of the three months since the last edition of 'On Shed', I have had serious dealings with the NHS - a scheme that I cannot praise sufficiently highly, but an involvement that I would have preferred not to have had ! Of necessity, I have been unable to devote the usual amount of time to preparing this edition of the journal. Again, my apologies.

I am grateful to those who have contributed to this edition of 'On Shed', and I remain hopeful that others might be persuaded to share their stories and memories with the 8D membership. If you have a tale to tell, a photograph or memory to share, I hope that you wouldn't hesitate to get in touch. Whilst it's nice to receive material in digital form, it isn't essential that the article arrives 'gift

wrapped' - bare notes of an incident would be sufficient to enable an article to be prepared. Relevant photographs are always welcomed.

When sifting material for publication, I'm conscious of the fact that, with a membership of about 75, the 8D Association is not a large organisation. However, from within its ranks there is an incredible mix of authors, photographers, historians, railway employees (past and present) including drivers, firemen, signalmen etc, and knowledgeable enthusiasts. In short, a fantastically informed body !

I hope you find that the mix of experience, knowledge and attention to detail is reflected in the contents of this edition. For my own part, I have enjoyed immensely dealing with the various contributions.

Tony

Cover photograph : On 1st September 1967, BR 7P Standard 70045 ('Lord Rowallan') waits in the centre road between Platforms 6 and 7 at Liverpool Exchange station. Footplate crew members wait patiently for the arrival of empty stock to form their train - the 13.27 Liverpool Exchange to Glasgow Central.

© 8D Association

Photographer : Paul Gerald

Talking steam

Tony Foster recalls a conversation with Driver Edwin Bowlas



Above left : Edwin Bowlas, photographed at the time of the Mel Thorley 'Longsight Steaming Away Day' in October 2011 at Keighley. **Above right** : Edgeley shed in the early 1960s. **Photographer unknown**

Introduction

Most of the lads that I knew who were born between 1940 and 1950 will, at some point in their childhood / youth, have hoped that one day they could wear the greasy cap and take the controls of a steam locomotive - ideally at the head of a crack passenger express. It may be that the same thoughts entered the heads of girls at that time, but if that was the case then I confess that I was blissfully ignorant of the situation.

In my own case, alternating between living on a branch line in Northumberland, and in a town on the Midland line to St Pancras, I had constant access to railways, and (in Northumberland at least) the footplate ! Perhaps unsurprisingly, I had ideas on leaving school and taking that first step towards becoming an engine driver. For me, it remains a matter of regret that my parents, well-meaning but determined, put their parental feet down and insisted that higher education was the way forward, and that in time these rose-tinted views of driving a locomotive for a living would pass. They didn't !

Mel Thorley 'Longsight Steaming Away Day'

Fast forward some 65 years, and imagine my delight in finding myself amongst a group of men who did precisely what I had hoped to do all those years ago, and all of whom were now happy to talk about their respective footplate careers. That was the situation on Tuesday 18th October 2011 when I participated in one of Mel Thorleys 'Away Days' on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway. I would like to think that all colleagues will find the following account of my conversation with ex-driver Edwin Bowlas interesting. For those members of a certain age, I hope that Ed's recollections serve to stir very happy memories.

Starting a career

On 2 May 1949, Ed began his railway career as a cleaner at Stockport Edgeley. He remained at Edgeley until moving to Guide Bridge in 1966 to become a driver - primarily on the Woodhead line.

For lads keen to get on to the footplate, 1949 was a very good year to start working on the

relatively recently nationalised railway - there was a great shortage of firemen ! In fact, the situation at Edgeley was so desperate that Edwin had worked for only 1 month before he was handed a shovel and assigned his first firing duty ! During our conversation, he even recalled the shunt job at Edgeley sidings with his driver Harold Bennett (himself a passed fireman) and the Edgeley loco number 47289 (0-6-0T).



'Jinty' 47289 - Edwin's first firing turn in 1949. The locomotive remained in service until December 1967. Location and photographer unknown

During the 14 years that Ed was a passed cleaner at Edgeley, he worked with many drivers. He recalled his first mainline firing turn with Sid Forbett. The intention was to go to Crewe with Black 5 No. 45041, but they finished up in Shrewsbury - his first 14-hour turn ! Edwin held in high regard those drivers who went out of their way to help young passed cleaners to develop their footplate skills. He remembered with affection working with a driver who simply allowed Ed to take on full driving responsibilities on alternate days - regardless of whether those duties involved express passenger, local goods or a sidings shunt - marvellous !

Having been made a passed fireman in 1963, it was then a fairly lean period as far as driving turns were concerned, until he moved to Guide Bridge as a regular driver in 1966.

Anybody found a shovel ?

Describing an incident on 8D territory in 1964, Ed recalled that he was firing on a York (Dringhouses) to Birkenhead train. He and the driver had worked the train from Stockport and had been brought to a standstill by a signal against them at Halton. The driver - a keen gardener - decided that the primrose plants on the embankment were just what he needed to complete a corner in his garden. He took Ed's shovel and set off up the embankment. Not to be outdone, Ed followed, and plants were carefully removed and placed to one side. Ed continued the story -

"The signal cleared and we dashed back to the footplate and set off. It was only when we got to Frodsham Junction that I thought I'd put some coal on, and realised that the shovel was still up the embankment at Halton station ! I found a baffle plate that fits in a firehole door and managed to feed some coal in and spread it round. When we got to Hooton, I found a platelayer's shovel and used that to fire for the rest of the journey. The problem came when I got to Birkenhead and had to hand my tools in. My driver agreed to keep the storeman talking while I went and rattled the shovel rack. The illusion worked, we got away with it !"

During his time at Edgeley, Ed worked on one of the 3 'experimentally painted' Black Fives. Apparently, shortly after nationalisation, a decision was taken to paint 3 of the locomotives in different shades of pre-nationalisation green livery, as follows : -

- M4762 - Southern Malachite Green
- M4763 - LNER Apple Green
- M4764 - GWR Brunswick Green

Ed fired M4763 on a train to Leeds. With a wry grin he told me that it steamed much better because it was green !

First trip to London

Ed's first trip to London as a passed cleaner

was not one that brought back happy memories ! He had booked on at 10pm, expecting to be involved with *'moving stuff around the shed yard'*. Instead, the foreman approached him and said *"Come on, you're going down to London"*. Taken completely by surprise, Ed recalls saying *"Me ? - I'm only 17"*. The foreman's response was clear enough - *"What's that got to do wi' it ?"*. Having declared that he had not been to London before, Ed braced himself for the task. He was introduced to the driver, Ernie Hibbert, who Ed described as *"looking like a real old crank"*.



Waiting for platform space at Stalybridge on 10th April 1982, Driver Ed Bowlas (centre), Fireman Bill Gaskin (right) and Inspector Arthur Bread on the footplate of 5690 'Leander'.

Churnet Valley line

The recently matched pair picked up their Huddersfield to Camden train at Stockport and set off. Ed recalls -

"We went over a line that's gone now, the Churnet Valley line, and when we got to Tisbury the driver said "We clean the fire here". I looked into the firebox and it was absolutely full ! The driver said "You've not let it burn down"! I said I didn't know I had to, you never told me. We eventually got to London one hour and fifty six minutes late, through shortage of steam and water in the boiler."

In steam days, Edwin fired and drove as a passed fireman on the West Coast mainline. Once promoted to driver, his driving turns on that line were confined to diesels.

Describing his last outing as a driver in steam days, Ed recalls acting as 'spare' driver and conducting Newton Heath men with an 8F freight to Dewsnap sidings at Guide Bridge - all very much an anti-climax !

Jubilee Class 5690 'Leander'

Occasionally, Edwin says, drivers from 'steam days' were marked up to work a preservation

special train. He recalled a 1982 outing when he was rostered to drive a Birmingham to Scarborough train between Northwich and Stalybridge. Together with his fireman (Bill Gaskin), he travelled down to Northwich to collect Jubilee class No. 45690 'Leander'. He remembers that, as he walked towards the engine simmering in the yard at the Northwich shed, *"I was a bag of nerves - it had been 14 years since I last drove a steam loco"*. He continued - *"We climbed up, and when I got on that footplate, it was as though I had only stepped off it yesterday"*.

He recalls that his train was apparently supposed to wait at Stockport, to allow the Stockport to Stalybridge 'Dodger' to go ahead of him. However, all signals were 'off' for him, so he says *"I just kept going"* - hence the wait at Stalybridge for platform space !

Engineer and Model Maker

Ed retired on health grounds aged 60 in 1993. In retirement, his great talent as an engineer and model maker has enabled him to build



This superb model of Black 5 No.44763 (in LNER green) was made by Ed Bowlas. As a member of Urmston & District Model Engineering Society, he enjoys driving the loco in Abbotsfield Park, Flixton.

and continue driving steam locomotives - albeit of a somewhat smaller size than that to which he was accustomed in his career as a railwayman.



The first loco out of the Barry scrapyard was 43924. Here, it heads up Mel Thorley's Longsight 'Steaming Away Day' on the Keighley and Worth Valley line in October 2011.

It was my great pleasure to have spent time talking to Ed Bowlas. The fact that the conversation took place on board that slow train to Keighley behind 4F No.49324 made it that little bit more special ! Thanks Ed.

Tony Foster

Where is it ?

Not a lot to go on here ! Photographed from a station platform, the curve, the cutting and the distinctive bridge may help you to identify this Merseyside location. Any answers to : - tony.r.foster@btinternet.com



News Round Up

Chris Hollins

Given that 'On Shed' is published quarterly, many of the items referred to in this 'News Round Up' can only be of historical interest. Nevertheless, every effort has been made to record those changes, developments and items of interest that have occurred within the 8D area since the date that the last publication was prepared for the printer.

Chris Hollins

New Transport for Wales service

On Sunday 19th May, the new Transport for Wales service commenced between Chester and Liverpool Lime Street. The first service, 1B04 08.31 from Chester, was worked by newly refurbished Class 158 158.822. For the first week the services were worked by Class 158s and Class 150s. The following week a 3-car Class 175 was used to operate some services but since then 150s have dominated the services.

New London Northwestern Railway service

On Monday 20th May, London Northwestern Railway started their new Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston service, with all former Birmingham services now extended to Euston apart from an early morning service that terminates at Rugeley Trent Valley, and two evening services that terminate at Northampton. In the reverse direction there is only an hourly service from Euston. The second service from Birmingham to Liverpool now starts from Birmingham International rather than New Street with just a few exceptions. The Sunday service continues to run hourly from Liverpool Lime Street to Birmingham New Street with one morning train starting at Rugby, and a late evening service starting from Liverpool Lime Street, terminating at Walsall.

Since the service started, timekeeping has been very good, although due to various incidents on the southern part of the West Coast main line, there have been days when some trains have been terminated at Milton Keynes

Central, and the return service to Liverpool has started from there. One noticeable thing that happens now, is that some morning trains from Liverpool are operated with 8-car rakes of Class 350 EMUs.

New Northern service

Also commencing on May 20th was Northern's new Chester to Leeds service. This seems to have suffered from timekeeping and rolling stock problems. This service was due to be the first to receive the new Class 195 DMUs. Since the service started it has been worked by anything from Class 142 to Class 158 sets. On the first day of the service, I observed an ex Scotrail Class 158 158.870 in use, as well as refurbished Class 156 units. There was also a 3-car set in use formed of a 158 & 153 combination. The first through Leeds to Ellesmere Port service produced 150.108. Since then Class 142 'Pacers' have put in regular appearances, although the most unusual formations seen have been a 142 & 153 combination, and 3 Class 153s coupled together.

Bank Holiday engineering works

Over the late May bank holiday, the West Coast main line was closed south of Wigan for engineering works. As a result some Glasgow Central to London Euston services were diverted through Manchester Piccadilly in order to reach Crewe. However the Glasgow and Edinburgh to London Euston services via the West Midlands were mostly cancelled, apart from a couple that were diverted to Liverpool Lime Street.

Edinburgh Waverley to Liverpool Lime Street



On Saturday May 25th, Virgin Trains Pendolino 390.020 is seen after arrival at Liverpool Lime Street, having formed 1Z54 10.52 Edinburgh Waverley to Liverpool Lime Street, the first ever Pendolino operated service between the two cities.

Photo by Chris Hollins

On Saturday 25th May, Virgin Trains operated 1Z54 10.52 Edinburgh Waverley to Liverpool Lime Street using Pendolino set 390.020. On

the same day a further service operated from Carlisle as 1Z19 19.49 Carlisle to Liverpool Lime Street.

Liverpool Lime Street to Glasgow Central

On the following Monday, Virgin operated 3 Pendolino services from Liverpool Lime Street to Glasgow Central. They were 1Z37, 1Z39 & 1Z47 departing Lime Street at 06.59, 07.39 & 09.42. These were the first Virgin services to operate from Liverpool to Scotland since cross country services were ended from the city in 2004. Direct services are due to resume from Liverpool to Glasgow commencing on Sunday 15th September, but operated by Trans-Pennine Express.

Railtours visiting the area

Saturday 1st June saw the first of a number of railtours to visit the area. UK Railtours 'Curvey Weaver' ran from London Euston to Garston Freightliner Terminal. It traversed the Low Level line from Warrington Arpley to Ditton Jct and the curve from Allerton Jct to Garston Church Road Jct. On its return from Garston to London Euston, the train travelled over the Halton Curve and, after reversal at Chester, reached Crewe via the Middlewich line. The



On Saturday 1st June, DB Cargo Class 66's 66078 and 66083 top-and-tail UK Railtours 06.49 London Euston to Garston Freightliner Terminal - 'Curvey Weaver' railtour past the site of Widnes South station.

Photo by Chris Hollins



Taken on Sunday 21st July, the photo shows Jubilee class locomotive 45690 Leander arriving at Runcorn on 1276 10.55 Liverpool Lime Street to Holyhead 'North Wales Coast Express'. Leander hauled the train throughout.

Photograph by Chris Hollins

motive power was provided by DB Cargo Class 66's 66078 & 66083 which top-and-tailed the 12 coach train.

On Sunday 9th June, the Branch Line Society operated 'The Sunday Yicker' tour. Starting at Crewe, the 4 coach train top-and-tailed by Class 31 31128 and a West Coast Railways Class 37 visited several lines in Staffordshire before heading to the North West, where it traversed the Ashton-in-Makerfield branch to the new aggregate terminal. From there it made its way to Liverpool Lime Street before going to Hunts Cross where it stopped in the bay platform normally used by Merseyrail electric services. After travelling back to Lime Street it then made its way back to Crewe via Allerton Jct, Garston Church Road, Speke Jct and Ditton West Jct. It traversed the lines through Ditton Yard en route to Runcorn.

On Thursday 13th June, the Branch Line Society operated 'The Cheshire Cat' railtour utilising DRS Class 68 diesels top-and-tailing a set of carriages which were later to be employed on the 'Three Peaks Challenge' train.

'The Cheshire Cat' railtour was due to start from Crewe to Liverpool Lime Street, traversing the Ditton Yard lines, returning from Lime Street to Hooton via the Jaguar Sidings at Halewood and the Halton Curve to Frodsham and Helsby. From there the train was scheduled to pass through Ellesmere Port to Hooton long siding. However, overnight there was considerable rainfall which caused flooding on the Chester to Crewe line as well as on the Chester to Hooton line. A decision was taken to cancel the railtour going to Liverpool. It eventually departed from

Crewe over two hours late for Hooton via Chester as the floodwater had reduced to allow some trains to operate. The rest of the trip to Holyhead went ahead without any problems.

Steam specials

Steam made an appearance at Runcorn on two occasions over the weekend of 20th and 21st July. On the Saturday, Stanier Pacific 6201 Princess Elizabeth hauled 1224 05.30 Crewe to Carlisle 'Cumbrian Mountain Express' which picked up passengers at Runcorn, from Liverpool Lime Street. The train operated in top-and-tailed mode between Crewe and Liverpool and return, with West Coast Railways providing a Class 37 as haulage for this part of the journey, with 6201 on the rear.

The following day, it was the turn of Jubilee Class 45690 Leander to haul 1276 10.55 Liverpool Lime Street to Holyhead 'North Wales Coast Express', returning as 1277 18.00 Holyhead to Liverpool Lime Street by itself. Once

again the train stopped at Runcorn to pick up passengers, as the stock for the service which came from Crewe was like the previous day hauled by a West Coast Railways Class 37, with Leander on the rear. This was the first steam train over the Halton Curve since 60009 Union of South Africa traversed it a number of years ago with a special bound for Liverpool Lime Street.

Virgin : 'Open Access' service

Virgin trains have announced that they intend to operate an open access service from Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston commencing in May 2021. The service would consist of 13 northbound and 11 Southbound services and would utilise redundant Class 91 electrics and Mark 4 carriages leased having been replaced on the East Coast main line. The journey time will be two and a half hours, with trains calling at Liverpool South Parkway, Lichfield Trent Valley, Tamworth Low Level and Nuneaton. No tickets would be sold at stations for these services, as all bookings will be made online. Virgin claim that by doing it this way there should be no standing passengers.

Northern Class 195s

From the beginning of July, Northern placed it's new Class 195 in service. Several sets are now working Liverpool Lime Street to Manchester Airport trains through Widnes. Not all train crews have been fully trained on the units which has resulted in a number of cancellations, when an untrained crew has been rostered to work one of the units.

Disruption to services

The hot weather of the week commencing 22nd July caused havoc with services on the West Coast main line. The

LNWR services between Liverpool Lime Street and London Euston were severely curtailed. Those trains that were running terminated at Northampton, while on 23rd and 24th damage to the overhead wires in the Birmingham area meant that services terminated at either Stafford or Wolverhampton.

Virgin trains fared no better, with various train cancellations and late running due to speed restrictions being imposed. On 22nd July, 1F27 20.07 London Euston to Liverpool Lime Street departed Euston at 21.48 arriving in Lime Street at 00.43 - 140 minutes late. This delay was surpassed by 1F28 21.07 London Euston to Liverpool Lime Street, which departed at 23.23 and arrived in Lime Street 185 minutes late at 02.38. The train arrived in Runcorn at 02.22 requiring the station to be kept open until it's arrival, several hours after it has normally closed for the day.

1F28 was involved in more late running on 25th July, when it departed at 22.59 from London Euston, reaching Runcorn at 01.11 eventually arriving in Lime Street at 01.29, 116 minutes late.

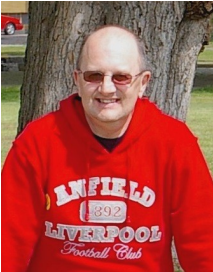


Northern Class 195 number 195.114 arriving at Widnes on Saturday 13th of July, forming the late running 1042 07.09 Liverpool Lime Street to Manchester Oxford Road service.

Photo by Chris Hollins

Double success for 8D author and photographer

Doug Birmingham's work published



At the same time as his second book of photographs was being published ('**Llangollen Railway In The Late Twentieth Century**'), one of Doug Birmingham's local photographs was selected as a

front cover shot for the national rail magazine '**Rail Express**'.

Taken at Widnes station on 8 July, Doug's photograph shows the long-awaited Class 195 now in service.



Commenting on the publisher's selection of the photograph, Doug said *"It's just a matter of being in the right place at the right time."*

Doug has had a particular interest in rail photography for almost 40 years and has had

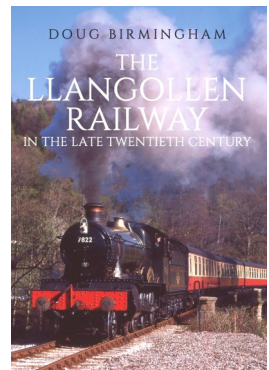
many of his photographs published in rail magazines and books.

Over a period of years, Doug has used various cameras including a Chinon CE4, a Pentax P30 and a Mamiya 645. He now uses a Nikon D90 camera body with a Nikon AF-S 18-105mm lens, and concentrates his effort on recording the current freight scene, photographing various movements at locations in and around Merseyside and North Cheshire.

Nowadays, he is more generally known by other enthusiasts as '8A Rail' - 8A being the shed code for Edge Hill MPD in steam days. He hosts a website www.8arail.uk and maintains a Flickr photo account (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/8arail/>) where his large collection of rail images can be seen. The Flickr site was viewed by the Commissioning Editor at Amberley Publishing Ltd who contacted Doug to see if he would be interested in compiling a book entitled '**Merseyside Traction**'. The book was eventually published in April 2018 and has been generally well received. Doug's second book '**The Llangollen Railway in the late Twentieth Century**' was released in July 2019. Details of this latest book can be viewed at <https://www.amberley-books.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=llangollen>

I feel sure that colleagues will join with me in congratulating Doug on his most recent success.

Editor



Members' Collections

Photographs from the collection of 8D member Richard Mercer



Left : In September 1967, 9F 92110 is seen leaving the Tanhouse Sidings for Long Meg.

Below : Locos on shed at Widnes (8D) on 5th August 1957.

Top Right : Sutton Oak Standard 4MT 76077, at Ann Street crossing on 5th August 1967 with LCGB brake van tour.

Bottom Right : 9F 92027 (originally Crosti boilered) with a train of mineral wagons crossing Appleton Street Viaduct.





8D Visit to Churnet Valley Railway on 10.8.19

Report by Chris Hollins

On Saturday 10th August, 8D members made a second attempt to pay a visit to the Churnet Valley Railway. The first attempt on 9th June last year ended at the Mersey Gateway bridge approach, when an errant motorist collided with preserved Warrington Corporation Bristol RE bus number 71, which the Association was using.



Transport for 8D members to / from the preserved line was by way of Ashcrofts Yutong TC9 coach AT66 ASH, seen here in the Kingsley and Froghall station car park.

Photo : Chris Hollins

This time around, efforts to obtain a heritage bus were unsuccessful. It proved necessary to hire an ordinary coach, and Ashcrofts of Widnes were chosen.

Nine members of the Association were waiting at Victoria Square when the coach arrived - a 35 seat Chinese built Yutong TC9 vehicle (still quite a rarity in the UK). After a short journey to Warrington Bank Quay station to pick up the remainder of the party, we set out for Kingsley and Froghall station with 25 people aboard. It started to rain soon after reaching the M6, and continued for several hours ! Once off the motorway and through Stoke-on-Trent, the coach driver appeared to be in some doubt as to how to reach Kingsley

and Froghall ! A stop was made in Fenton, and a three point turn was executed in Cellarhead. Despite the slight delay, we arrived at the Churnet Valley Railway precisely 100 minutes after leaving Widnes.

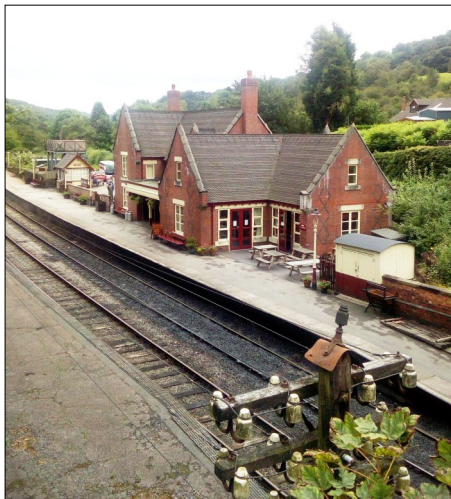
Association members had been booked to travel on the 12.35 departure from Kingsley and Froghall, but as we had arrived so early, it was agreed that we could travel on the 11.00 service to Cheddleton and spend some time there before picking up the train we were originally scheduled to travel on. Unfortunately, due to a mechanical failure of the Lima built American 2-8-0 Austerity locomotive 5197, all services on the day would be diesel hauled using Class 33 33021 Eastleigh with 5 Mark 1 carriages. We departed Kingsley and Froghall on time and, after running up to Leek Brook Junction to run round, we arrived at Cheddleton.

The shed and works area were open for people to look round. Inside the works were the frames of Stanier 8F 48173 undergoing long term overhaul, while outside were Class 20 D8057 and Class 25 25322 Tamworth Castle. Coincidentally, 8D member John Wilson had driven both of the locomotives when they were in British Rail service.



Class 25 25322 Tamworth Castle. The locomotive is stabled at Cheddleton.

Photo : Chris Hollins



Kingsley and Froghall railway station is a former station of the North Staffordshire Railway (NSR) and is now a preserved station on the Churnet Valley Railway.
Photo : Chris Hollins

For the run from Cheddleton to the present end of the line at Ipstones, the train had been increased to 7 carriages as 2 more vehicles

had been added to cater for the first class 'Moorlander' luncheon passengers.

To comply with the Light Rail Order, the line from Leek Brook Junction to Ipstones is only used on 11 days of the year. The 8D visit coincided with one of those days. Due to the 1 in 57 grade, the class 33 had to work hard. After running round the loop at Ipstones, the train returned at 13.30 to Kingsley and Froghall, arriving at 14.41. This allowed members an opportunity to look around the station area or retire to the Railway Inn public house for some liquid refreshments.

Everybody was back on board the coach by 16.05 and, despite a comfort stop at Knutsford Services, we arrived back at Warrington Bank Quay station barely 75 minutes after leaving Kingsley and Froghall. The remainder of the party were set down at Widnes Victoria Square some 15 minutes later. Despite the poor weather, and no steam, it was another successful 8D trip - one that I am sure everybody enjoyed.

From the archives



A view looking south from The Bongs in Widnes on 13 May 1979. Heading north along the former St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway is the diverted 09.40 Liverpool – Glasgow Central service. Scheduled passenger services over this line had ceased in 1951.
Photo by Brian Roberts

Sudbrook Pumping Station and the Severn Tunnel Emergency Train

Dennis J Flood

Editor's Note : Now resident in South Wales, 8D member Dennis Flood continues to act in a consultative role for Network Rail and is a regular contributor to 'On Shed'. Here he recalls his time at Swindon and his involvement with the Severn Tunnel and its Emergency Train.

Sudbrook Pumping Station

The building is located on the east side of the River Severn and is the main pumping station for the removal of water from the Severn Tunnel.



Above : Sudbrook No.1 Pumping Station housed 3 Cornish beam engines when opened in 1887. Access to the main shaft is via a lift in this building.

Photo by Dennis Flood

Work commenced on sinking a 15 feet diameter shaft at Sudbrook on March 18th 1873. Main contractor for the works was Thomas Walker and the civil engineer in overall charge of the work was Sir John Hawkshaw - at that time consulting engineer to the Great Western Railway during the building of the Severn Tunnel.

A culvert carrying a continuous drainage of water between the up and down main lines within the Severn Tunnel passes the water through the lowest point of the tunnel from

where it is pumped out into the River Severn via Sudbrook Pumping Station.

The 'Big Spring'

Fresh water pumped out of what was known as the 'Big Spring' was used by a large paper mill between Sudbrook and Caldicot level crossing. The paper mill closed in 2005. Fresh water from the 'Big Spring' is still pumped to a nearby brewery at Magor where it is used for making beer.

When Sudbrook No.1 Pumping Station was first opened in 1887, 3 Cornish beam engines were used to pump water from the Severn Tunnel.

Cornish Beam Engines

The Cornish beam engines were installed at Sudbrook in 1887 and were built by Harvey and Company of Hayle in Cornwall. This was a much respected engineering company which specialised in supplying beam engines for the Cornish tin mining industry. They were the ideal choice to supply beam engines for use at Sudbrook Pumping Station. These beam engines worked unceasingly for nearly 75 years from 1887 until 1961 when they were replaced by modern electrical equipment. They were removed from Sudbrook Severn Tunnel No.1 Pumping Station and were scrapped by British Railways in 1968. When I visited the building in 1987, there were several large photographs of the beam engines displayed on the walls of the building. One engine survived and is on display at Swansea in the Wales National Waterways Museum.

There were two other sites where water was pumped out of the Severn Tunnel but Sudbrook was the key site. It remains so to this day.

Severn Tunnel Emergency Train

When Severn Tunnel Junction depot closed in 1987, a decision had to be made where to stable the Severn Tunnel Junction Emergency Train. Based at Swindon, working at the Western Region Headquarters in 125 House, I became involved in this project politics and all !

At that time, the Severn Tunnel Junction Emergency Train was stabled in a short siding adjacent to the up main line at Severn Tunnel Junction Station. It was therefore always ready for immediate use in the event of an emergency in the Severn Tunnel. A driver, second-man and guard would always be available to work the train immediately should this be required. However, with the closure of Severn Tunnel Junction Depot, this presented us with a major problem at that time - where best to stable the Severn Tunnel Emergency Train and keep it in a secure location ?

We had numerous management discussions on this and decided that, since the branch line was open between Caldicot level crossing and Sudbrook on the Gloucester to Newport main line, Sudbrook Pumping Station was the logical place to stable the train. It would require the construction of a purpose built shed at Sudbrook to house the Class 08 (later Class 09) shunting locomotive. In the event of an emergency requiring the train to enter the tunnel, the British Transport Police or South Wales Police said they would transport the train crew to Sudbrook.

The police guaranteed that they would get the train crew from Newport to Sudbrook (a distance of about 12 miles via the M4 motorway) within 15 minutes. So far so good

However, travelling over the Sudbrook branch line between Caldicot level crossing and Sudbrook Pumping Station, it was clear to me that there were still major problems to overcome in the event of an emergency in the tunnel.

Multi Crossings

In particular, there were three user-worked gated level crossings on the Sudbrook branch.



Above : Post Office No.1 user-worked level crossing. Note the Pumping Station at top left of the photo. **Below** : Post Office No.2 user-worked level crossing. **Photos by : Dennis Flood**



Post Office No.1 level crossing was nearest to Sudbrook Pumping Station, with nearby Post Office No.2, and finally Paper Mill level crossing located near to the Caldicot level crossing. It would be all very well the police getting the train crew to Sudbrook Pumping Station in a police car with flashing blue lights and sirens blaring, but it would take quite a lot of time

to mobilise the locomotive, move the train and then have to stop to open the three level crossing gates allowing access to the main line at Caldicot level crossing ! This was a problem which had to be solved as planning for stabling the train at Sudbrook and constructing the necessary shed was already at an advanced stage. At a further management meeting at 125 House in Swindon I referred to these problems. I recall that the Sudbrook Depot Engineer had been invited to this

an emergency occurring in the tunnel. We expected him to dismiss this out of hand but he thought it was a wonderful idea and that a number of his staff would jump at the chance to be both driver and guard if needed. This was excellent news. The next step was to convince the NUR, ASLEF and railway engineering trade unions of the benefits of this proposal. I recall thinking that this would not be at all easy. I was right !

Union Negotiations

We had numerous 'interesting' meetings with the NUR and ASLEF, in which matters became a little heated to say the least. The railway engineering union representing the electrical and mechanical staff at Sudbrook raised no objections to our proposal. Eventually, the NUR were happy with the proposal, since it was made clear to both trade unions that Sudbrook staff would be relieved by a regular driver and guard at Caldicot level crossing and it would involve no route knowledge at all, other than stopping at a ground signal at

Caldicot for relief to be effected. Sudbrook staff would not take the train back to Sudbrook from Caldicot level crossing at any time. This would be undertaken by a driver and guard from Newport depot.

ASLEF still refused to discuss it, citing 'demarcation' issues, although the proposal had nothing to do with 'demarcation'. It was simply about how best the train could be brought into emergency service if needed. The General Manager invited ASLEF to provide an alternative to our proposals to get the train to Caldicot level crossing in an emergency. When no such alternative was forthcoming, the General Manager declared that the plan would go ahead, and he asked me to work out a training programme.



The former Sudbrook infirmary built by the Great Western Railway for the welfare of their staff who lived and worked at Sudbrook Pumping Station
Photo by Dennis Flood

meeting, and it was then that we proposed a revolutionary method of utilising the Severn Tunnel Emergency Train. If it came off, it would be the first time on British Railways ! The proposal was discussed with the Regional Electrical & Mechanical Engineer who felt that it was a 'hot potato' and that the Sudbrook Depot Engineer should make the final decision. This was sensible as the proposal affected the Depot Engineer's staff.

Volunteers required !

It was proposed that volunteers from his staff of electrical engineers and mechanics at Sudbrook would be trained to act as drivers and guards to work the Severn Tunnel Emergency Train to Caldicot level crossing in the event of



Photograph showing the Severn Tunnel Emergency Train shunting on the Sudbrook Branch.

Photo courtesy of Carl Brunnox

I decided to keep ASLEF apprised of what was happening since I knew that this was a sore point with them. The last thing I wanted was for them to 'black' the train. Thankfully, I had a good working relationship with the Severn Tunnel ASLEF Branch Secretary and Chairman, as well as ASLEF District Secretary. Having a few beers amongst ourselves did the trick !

Mechanical and electrical staff working at Sudbrook Pumping Station volunteered to carry out the dual roles of driver and guard when needed. I put together a training programme and asked a local Inspector to deal with the training. I personally certified 11 out of the 12 volunteers. The only person who failed the course was the son of the Sudbrook Depot Engineer. His father was not at all happy !

Practising Response Times

Once the staff had been certified as driver and guard, I wanted to carry out exercises to see how quickly the Emergency Train could be taken to Caldicot level crossing. My plan

was to have the staff involved at their normal work stations within the Sudbrook Pumping Station, and then declare a full emergency within the tunnel, whilst also carrying out a timing exercise.

Those who were 'rostered' as driver and guard for that particular day (they were 'rostered' for a week at a time) would prepare the locomotive and train

at Sudbrook, whilst others would ensure that the three level crossing gates on the Sudbrook branch were opened. I conducted three separate exercises and the timings to reach Caldicot level crossing were 18, 19 and 21 minutes respectively. Therefore, 20 minutes was adopted as the time it would take to mobilise the train and get it to Caldicot level crossing in the event of an emergency within the Severn Tunnel. I remember being very satisfied with that 20 minute time.

The police conducted their exercises in conjunction with mine at 'peak' M4 road traffic periods. Their earlier assurances regarding a 15 minute dash were borne out. On each occasion the relief train crew was waiting for us at Caldicot. I remember one driver telling me that the police car he was travelling in reached 120mph on the M4 motorway at one point ! This is a little faster than the 15 mph maximum speed allowed on a Class 08 shunting locomotive !

Train Composition

The Emergency Train was made up of several

vehicles. The locomotive (later a Class 09 with a maximum speed of 27 mph) was attached to a former BR Mk.1 coach specially fitted internally with racks to carry up to 32 casualties, a 45 tonne tank vehicle to carry 7,000 gallons of water for fire brigade use, and a flat 'Weltrol' type vehicle with an emergency brake valve fitted to allow the guard to apply the train brake as it was being propelled into the tunnel from Severn Tunnel Junction. It could also carry up to twelve firemen. There was also a former BR breakdown tool van to carry their equipment and other items.

Following the collision that occurred in the Severn Tunnel in 1991 between an HST and a

them to be used never arose, and both were sold off after a period of storage at Cardiff.

Current Provision

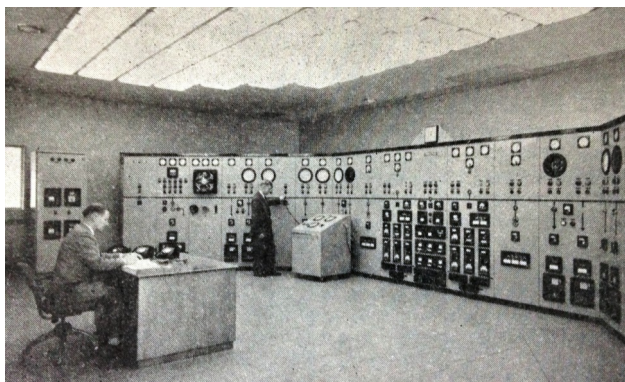
An access road was built on the Bristol side of the Severn Tunnel allowing access for a specialist road / rail emergency vehicle. On the Newport side, rail access is provided by the building of a concrete apron on the up side near to Severn Tunnel Junction station. Avon and South Wales fire brigades (in conjunction with Network Rail) now have special vehicles. The vehicles are of the road / rail type and are able to carry specialist equipment and firemen directly into the Severn Tunnel in the event of an emergency occurring. The vehicles also serve as mobile fire tenders.

It is now nearly 34 years since my involvement with the Severn Tunnel Emergency Train and the relocation of it to Sudbrook. I recall clearly my participation in the politics of the project, together with the training and certifying of the Sudbrook staff involved. The Sudbrook branch is now closed and overgrown. Houses have been built on the site of the Paper Mill. Level crossing gates Post Office No.1 and

No.2 are still there, but are permanently open across the railway.

I was pleased to be involved with such a project - the first time on British Railways that BR electrical and mechanical staff were certified to drive and act as guard on a locomotive hauling a train on a running line. A little bit of railway history

Dennis J Flood



Sudbrook Pumping Station control room in November 1961 after the Cornish beam engines were taken out of service after working continuously for nearly 75 years.

Photo courtesy of BR Western Region

Class 155 'Super Sprinter' unit, a debriefing session was held with emergency services. That incident, plus a further exercise within the tunnel, revealed that the Emergency Train was inadequate. It was subsequently replaced by two single power car Class 121 diesel multiple units. They were stabled in a very secure compound near to the old Bristol Yard at Severn Tunnel Junction. The need for

The last steam service from Ditton Jct to Birkenhead Woodside

Colin Turton

The recent reopening of the Halton Curve to regular passenger trains has rekindled my memory of when I was involved in the last steam working of the 06.05 Ditton Junction to Birkenhead Woodside service.

This was a Widnes shed duty, and I was allocated to it on Tuesday June 6th and Friday June 9th 1961 - the last day of steam working on the service. My driver, Lol Beswick, was born in 1900 and started work for the London and North Western Railway at Widnes shed in 1914 - eventually working for the London Midland and Scottish Railway and British Railways. He retired when Widnes Shed closed.

On that last day of steam working on the service, Lol and I booked on at 04.10 and went to find our engine. We were allocated Stanier 2-6-4T 42459 of 8A Edge Hill shed. After preparing the fire, we set off bunker first to Ditton Junction to collect our train of 3 ex-LMS non-corridor carriages. At Widnes West Deviation Jct, we were routed along the long since abandoned fast lines to Ditton. On a point of interest, it's possible that we were signalled that way by Stan Hollins, the late father of 8D Association member Chris Hollins. Stan had just started his signalling career in the Widnes area, having been recently transferred from

St Albans South signal box.

After coupling up to the carriages at Ditton Junction, the train departed from Platform 1, calling at Runcorn, and then proceeding over the Halton Curve to Frodsham Jct before stopping at Frodsham and Helsby where we handed over our train to a Chester crew who brought the 06.25 service from Chester to Liverpool Lime Street service as far as Helsby. The Chester crew then took the Ditton train through to Birkenhead Woodside. The engine that Lol and I took over from the Chester crew was also a Stanier tank (No.42606 of 8B



Not the Stanier 2-6-4T that Colin and his driver worked, but a similar locomotive (Ivatt 2P No.41286) preparing to leave from Platform 1 at Ditton Junction.

Photo by Bevan Price

Warrington Dallam shed). We worked the Chester train of 4 fully loaded non-corridor carriages through to Liverpool calling at all stations. When released from the buffer stops at Lime Street, we took 42606, light

engine, back to Widnes shed, where later in the day it worked the 14.10 trip freight to Farnworth and Bold.

On the Friday - the very last day of steam working that service - the same routine was followed. On this occasion however the locomotive provided to work the service from

train. We then worked that train to Lime Street, before again returning light engine to Widnes shed.

From the following Monday, a DMU from Allerton depot was allocated to the train, thus ending Widnes shed's involvement in the service. Steam continued to operate passenger trains over the Halton Curve until 1965 on summer Saturday trains from Liverpool Lime Street to Llandudno and Penychain.



A tank engine and its train at Frodsham Junction in March 1955. The train is heading for Helsby.

Photo by John Kirwood

Ditton Junction was certainly not a 'local'. Although it had been allocated to Edge Hill shed in the early 1950's, the Stanier 2-6-4T 42658 was now an Aston (21D) based engine. Again, Lol and I worked the train to Helsby, being replaced by a Chester crew who had brought 42459 into Helsby on the Liverpool

The closure of the line from Caernarfon to Afon Wen meant that the Penychain service was cut back to Bangor, resulting in the summer Saturday services being DMU operated from 1966. Steam continued to operate freight trains from Edge Hill and Garston to Mold Jct, along with the oil tank trains from Brunswick to Holywell Jct and Shotwick Sidings which went over to diesel operation upon closure of Speke Jct shed in January 1968. Widnes shed continued to provide locomotives for freight and local trip workings until its closure on the 13th of April 1964. At that time, many drivers and fireman either left the railway or transferred to Speke Jct or Warrington Dallam sheds.

Warrington Railway Pensioners' Trips

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

Recent 8D Meetings and Events

Paul Wright

As always, the summer walks programme has been well received, with 8D members exploring the southern section of the Winsford & Over branch (from Whitegate station to the site of Winsford & Over station) and the southern section of the Blackbrook branch.

Winsford & Over Branch

The Winsford & Over branch was visited on Saturday 15 June 2019 and, as with the northern section of the route which was visited last year, there were some interesting finds including rails that had been left in situ at a level crossing site. The walk was quite a long one by 8D standards, but thankfully the weather stayed dry for all but the last half mile of the return leg.



Above : 8D Members examine a section of track that escaped the lifting gangs when the Winsford & Over branch was taken up. Members visited the southern section of the line on 15 June 2019.

Photo by Paul Wright

Blackbrook Branch (Southern Section)

On Tuesday 9 July 2019, the southernmost section of the Blackbrook Branch was visited. This line has been obliterated from the landscape but amazingly a few artefacts from the railway were found during the walk. These



Above : Members of the 8D Association on the Blackbrook Branch on Tuesday 9 July 2019.

Photo by Paul Wright

Below : The level crossing at Fleet Lane on the Blackbrook branch looking north on 25 September 1965. The branch had closed as a through route on 6 April 1964 and as this photograph illustrates the rails had been cut back to a point just to the south of Fleet Lane. Standing at the furthest extent of the line is a rail tour that explored the St Helens area.

Photo from the Michael Delamar collection



included sleepers that had been left in situ south of Fleet Lane. Working out the exact location of the triangle of lines between Fleet Lane and Broad Oak Junction proved challenging but at the same time it provoked interesting debate and conversation. Members with local knowledge proved to be very helpful.

Mersey Railway Guided Tour

The tour began at the present day Liverpool Central station where Paul explained the complex history of the original Mersey Railway low level platforms which now form part of the Merseyrail Northern line. The group then moved on to James Street via the 1977 Loop Line. At James Street the group had entered the infrastructure of the original railway and a trip was made to the surface where the Liverpool side pumping facilities could be viewed. At was at this location where Paul gave a detailed background history of the Mersey Railway paying particular attention to the under river tunnelling that had to be carried out.



An electric train at Birkenhead Park on the Mersey Railway (post 1903)

Road was also visited. A further train journey took the group to Birkenhead Central. This location had been the hub of the system as it was the site of the locomotive sheds, carriage sheds (later the electric car sheds) and the

company's headquarters. Rock Ferry was then visited and the importance of the interchange facilities that were created there with the Birkenhead Joint Railway were discussed.

After Rock Ferry the group retraced their steps back to Hamilton square from where a journey was made up the other branch of the Mersey Railway to Birkenhead Park. This station had been an interchange point between the Mersey Railway and the Wirral Railway Company and Paul gave a detailed



8D members photographed at Rock Ferry, one of the stops on the Mersey Railway guided tour led by Paul Wright

Photo by John Wilson

It was then back onto the train for the quick journey under the River Mersey to Hamilton Square. At Hamilton Square another trip was made to the surface where the original street level station building could be observed. The Birkenhead side pumping station at Shore

tailed account of the history behind the joint station and how it had operated in the past. The tour ended at Birkenhead Park and members went home with their knowledge of the Mersey Railway being considerably improved.

Lineside at Rainhill in 1980 !

Tony Foster

As a police officer based at Prescot in 1980, I recall being required to attend the Rainhill 150 'Cavalcade' and being assigned lineside duties which involved nothing more than ensuring that spectators didn't stray onto the tracks, and (I assume) that locomotives weren't stolen from under the noses of the various owners ! Joy of joys - I was allowed to take my camera with me ! Given that we are now approaching the 40th anniversary of that occasion, and that Rainhill had its own 'Rocket 190' celebrations earlier this year, I take this opportunity to air some of the photographs that I took in 1980.



At left : No.673 'Maude' was built in Glasgow in 1891 for the North British Railway Company. Between 1888 and 1900, 168 locomotives of this type were built and used for long distance freight trains. These were reliable and hard worked locomotives. Rebuilding of the class became necessary after about 20 years of service. This was carried out at the railway's own Cowdairs Works in Glasgow, and the basic design required little improvement. The original scanty cab was replaced by a more effective weather-shield, but even this was effective only when running chimney first. This locomotive seldom operated on lines equipped with turntables, and so for roughly half of its time ran tender-first, conditions in which the cab offered no protection at all from the weather !

At right : Also numbered No. 673 (see above), this is the sole survivor of its class. With huge single driving wheels, the Midland Railway 4-2-2 Class 115 steam locomotives were nicknamed "Spinners". They were designed by Samuel W. Johnson and a total of 15 were built between 1896 and 1899. Last steamed in 1980 when it took part in the Rainhill Trials 150th Cavalcade, MR No.673 is currently a static exhibit in the National Railway Museum in York.



Lineside at Rainhill in 1980 ! *(continued)*

Tony Foster



Top left : Steam locomotive and tender, London & North Western Railway, 2-4-0 No 790 'Hardwicke' is the sole surviving example of the LNWR Improved Precedent class, also known as the Renewed Precedent class. Designed by F W Webb, Hardwicke was built at Crewe Works in 1873.

In 1895 the major Anglo-Scottish firms raced between London and Aberdeen in a contest that became known as the Races to the North. Hardwicke took part in those races and on 22 August set a record by running at an average of 67mph over the 141 miles between Crewe and Carlisle.

Hardwicke was withdrawn from service in 1932.



Lower left : 'Lion' was ordered by the Liverpool & Manchester Railway in October 1837; one of an order of six locomotives from Todd, Kitson & Laird of Leeds. 'Lion' was rebuilt at Edge Hill by the LMR in 1842-1843 with an 8 feet 6 inches long boiler which necessitated the building of new, longer, frames; new cylinders 12 x 18 inches; new valves and valve chests; and new valve gear. 'Lion's' present cylinders measure 14 1/8 inches x 18 inches suggesting they have been changed at a later date.

The locomotive was overhauled at Ruston Diesels (Vulcan) in 1979 in preparation for the Rainhill 150 event.

Known to cinema audiences as 'The Titfield Thunderbolt', the locomotive is now housed at the new Liverpool Museum.

Lineside at Rainhill in 1980 ! *(continued)*

Tony Foster



At left : *The LNWR 'Coal Tank' is owned by the National Trust and is in the care of the Bahamas Locomotive Society.*

As engine No.1054, it was built at the Crewe works of the London & North Western Railway in September 1888. It was the 250th example of a total of 300 '6-wheel coupled side tank coal engines' or, as they were more popularly known, Coal Tanks.

The engine is understood to have worked from Aston in 1911 and Edge Hill during 1919, from where it moved to Abergavenny in South Wales.

'On Shed' journal material

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 the next 'On Shed' due in just 3 months time. Over the years, a very high standard has been set, and I hope that I'm able to continue producing an 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

The late Tony Cook (1930 - 2019)

One time member of the 8D Association, Tony Cook died aged 88 years on 23rd March 2019. He was born at Stamford, Lincolnshire, on 9th September 1930. In addition to family and friends, his funeral service held at Carleton Crematorium, Blackpool, at 2pm on 10th April 2019 was attended by many former workmates. He was a signaller for all of his working life, and members will recall that he produced a book - "Journey of a Railway Signaller".

8D Events Programme

10:00 Saturday 21 September 2019 : The Wirral Railway Company : A Guided Tour

This guided tour led by Paul Wright leads on from where the Mersey Railway tour finished off. If you didn't attend the Mersey Railway tour, don't worry about that as Paul will fill in any missing gaps in your knowledge. The surviving lines of the former Wirral Railway (Birkenhead Park to West Kirby and New Brighton) will be explored by train, and some of the closed sections will be explored on foot through short walks from stations. The tour will start at Birkenhead Park and conclude at New Brighton where members wanting to take refreshment can do so. **Meet on the Platform at Birkenhead Park station.**

Saturday 26 October 2019 : 8D Visit to the Signalling School in the National Railway Museum at York - (see separate advertisement below)

Suggested trains : From Widnes / Warrington : 08.05 Norwich train from Widnes (08.13 from Warrington Central) to Manchester Piccadilly, and then get the 09.05 Middlesbrough train. This service arrives in York at 10.35.

From St Helens : Lea Green 09.08 Scarborough service (direct to York) arriving at 10.43

19:00 Tuesday 29 October 2019 : The CLC North Liverpool Extension Line

An updated and illustrated talk by Paul Wright looking at the history of the CLC North Liverpool Extension Line

Venue - Halton Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.

19:00 Tuesday 19 November 2019 : An illustrated talk by Les Fifoot - further details to be announced.

19:00 Tuesday 17 December 2019 – 'My Railway Journey'

An illustrated talk by John Wilson. John started taking photographs as a young spotter and continued after he became a railway employee. This talk will include many of those photos and John will explain the stories behind them.

Venue - Halton Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.

National Rail Museum at York

8D Visit to Signalling School on Saturday 26th October

Together with a team of volunteers, 8D member Phil Graham operates the NRM's famous Signalling School at York. The layout used is the 1912 L&Y Railway Gauge 1 model, previously housed at Manchester Victoria Station. The cost of this remarkable 'hands-on' opportunity will be £5 per head, but please note that it will be necessary for you to make your own travel arrangements - meeting at York station at 11.00 on the day.

If you wish to take part in this private visit to the famous Signalling School at NRM York, please register your intention **NOW** by contacting 8D Committee Member Neil Wilson at : -

neilwilson1560@gmail.com