

**THE 8D ASSOCIATION**

# **ON SHED**

**The Journal of the 8D Association**

**Volume 2 Number 2**

**June 2012**



## **'Lucy'**

'Lucy' stands on the Widnes dock line close to what later became, the Silver Jubilee Bridge approach road in February 1968. The class B3 0-6-0 ST spent its whole life on the Widnes dock estate being introduced in 1909 and making its final runs in February 1971.

**Photo by Les Fifoot.**

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# The Journal of the 8D Association

## Volume 2 Number 2

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#### Editor



*On 2 March 1984 locomotive 37 024 works the Garston Dock to Mansfield train of coal empties. It is seen passing Carterhouse Junction signal box.*

**Photo by John Wilson.**

Welcome to the June 2012 edition of On Shed. Some sad news this month. Former 8D driver Jack Shaw good friend of 8D Association Member and former 8D passed cleaner Colin Turton died suddenly on the 30 April 2012. A piece about Jack appears later in the Journal. Back in October I was asked if I could give a lift to Jack Moores to the event at the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway which featured in the last journal. Jack was an ex driver who had started his career on 12 January 1942. He spent time at Garston and at Warrington Dallam, he was a delight to speak to and full of fascinating information. Sadly Jack Moores passed away on 29 April 2012.

One of the aims of the 8D Association is to study, record and publish historical information about our railway heritage. The news of the two deaths above only goes to show how important it is to carry out this task of recording before valuable information is lost for ever. **Paul Wright**

## The engine 'Lucy' and her sisters.



***'Lucy' at Hutchinson Street sidings in February 1968. This was the location at which the Widnes Dock Estate railway connected to the Garston and Warrington line. Waggons would be marshalled at this point and then taken away by British Railways locomotives.***

**Photo by Les Fifoot.**

Within thirty years of the opening of the St Helens and Runcorn Gap Railway on 21 February 1833 numerous factories and an additional dock (West Bank opened in 1862) had been built at Widnes. To serve them an extensive network of railway lines running off from the main line railways had been laid. Maps of Widnes from the early 1900s show the West Bank area to be a maze of railways. The largest network of lines at Widnes that was not part of the main line network was that of the West Bank Dock Estate which was owned by the Hutchinson family.

From its early days the estate had employed its own engines to move waggons from docks and factories to the various interchange sidings with the main line railway companies. The Dock Estate Railway even had its own engine shed which was located to the west of Dock Road.

In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the dock estate took delivery of three new engines that were built by the Avonside Engine Company of Bristol. The engines were a B3 Class of 0-6-0 Side Tank that had 14" x 22" cylinders and 3' 3" driving wheels. The engines were of a type that was very familiar in the Liverpool Dock estate. They were designed to work easily over very sharp curves which were a feature of the Liverpool Docks and the Widnes Dock Estate systems. The three Avonside engines were named after the daughters of John Hutchinson one of the founders of the Widnes Chemical industry.

The first engine arrived in 1906 and was named 'Gertrude'. The second was 'Lucy' which

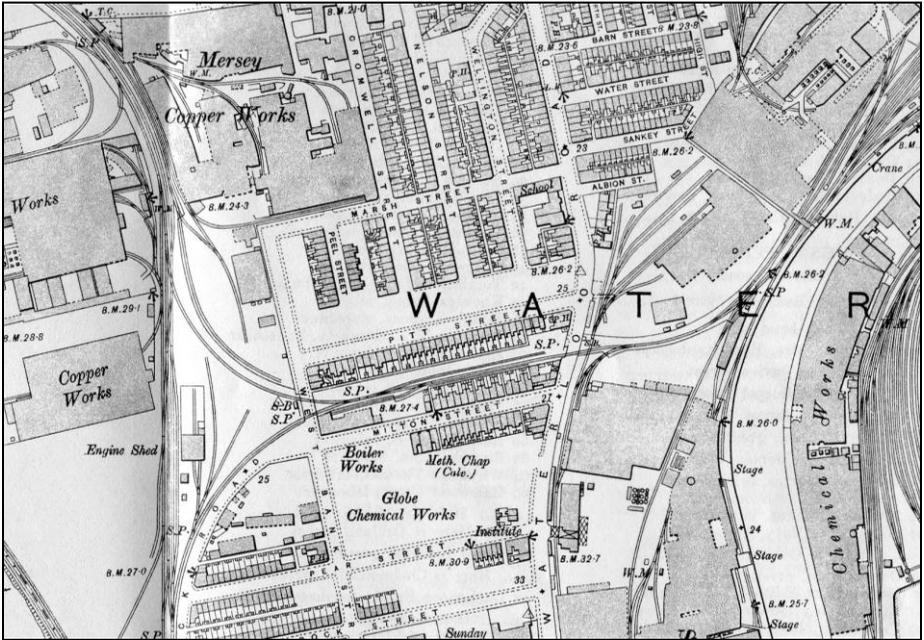
arrived in 1909. Finally came 'Mary' in 1913. Engines of the dock estate were employed to move waggons from West Bank Dock and from numerous factories to the interchange sidings with the main line railway companies. When 'Lucy' arrived in 1909 the dock estate lines had physical connections with the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) at Hutchinson Street Yard and adjacent to the Sankey Canal at what is now Spike Island. There was also a connection to the Great Central and Midland Railway Joint Line (The Widnes Loop) which had its own branch into the dock estate. The West Bank Power Station at West Bank Dock was a major user of the dock railway requiring regular supplies of coal.

In August 1952 'Lucy' was dismantled and sent to the Hunslet Engine Company for overhaul. She returned to Widnes a year later painted green with yellow lining. By the 1960s industrial diesels were being used on the dock estate and 'Lucy' became a stand-by engine and spent most of her time in the engine shed. In February 1968 the Hutchinson diesel had to undergo maintenance and 'Lucy' was pressed into use. She was in poor condition at the time but thankfully the occasion was captured on film by Les Fifoot. Les even managed to look inside the smokebox and found the flue tubes to be so fouled that he was surprised the veteran engine would still steam. She did have to stop to 'blow up' on a trip to the West Bank Power Station with loaded coal waggons.

By the late 1960s the railway network at Widnes was in serious decline and the Dock Estate Railway had become a shadow of its former self. Although parts of it remained in use well into the 1970s 'Lucy' was retired in January 1971 (outlasting BR steam engines by three and half years).



***Lucy rests near Dock Road at West Bank in February 1968 after working coal waggons to the West Bank Power Station. She had been pressed into service due to a diesel shunter being out of action. Photo by Les Fifoot.***



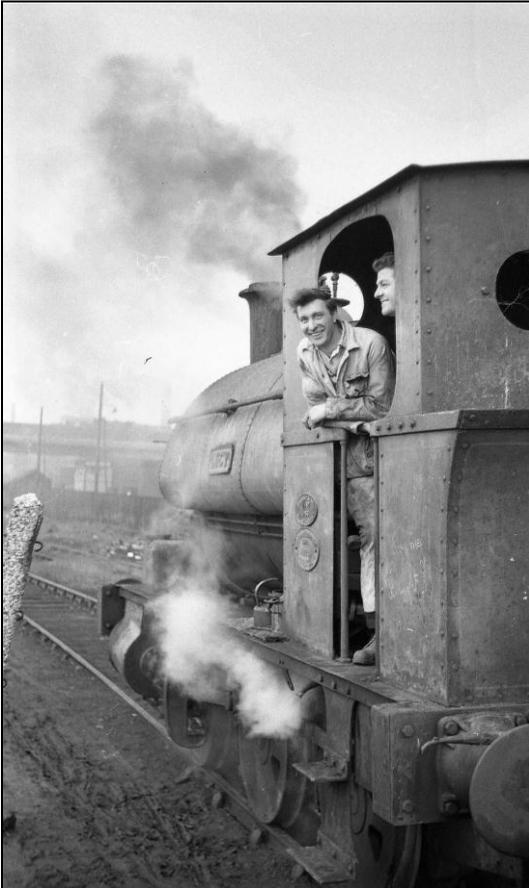
**An extract from a 1905 OS Map showing a section of the dock estate railway at Widnes. To the right can be seen the Sankey Canal and the extensive area of sidings at Widnes Dock. Running across the middle is a single track line of the dock estate system that provided a link from Widnes Dock Junction to the West Bank Dock. Towards the left can be seen an engine shed. This was where the dock estate engines, including Lucy were based.**

After retirement 'Lucy' was purchased by the Liverpool Locomotive Preservation Group in February 1972 and stored together with another industrial locomotive 'Efficient' in a dockside engine shed at Seacombe. She was transferred to the Steamport Museum at Southport on 1st August 1973, but briefly returned to the Wallasey and Birkenhead dock system in July 1978 to take charge of the 'Birkenhead Docker No.4 Rail Tour'. Doing what she did best 'Lucy' hauled brake vans round the industrial dock system travelling over sharp curves and going onto quayside lines.

Once again in the early 1980's, 'Lucy' took retirement, and became a static exhibit.

The Steamport Museum was bought out by a supermarket and its collection moved to what became the Ribble Steam Railway within the dock estate at Preston. Very apt for an engine that had spent her working life on a similar system. Lucy arrived in Preston on 27th February 1999. The Ribble Steam Railway has a large collection of industrial locomotives most of which are kept under cover. Lucy was housed in one of the indoor exhibition halls.

Recently 'Lucy' has been given a new coat of paint for exhibition in the museum. The long term plan of the Ribble Steam Railway is to return Lucy to working condition once again, when time and materials become available. **Les Fifoot and Paul Wright**



**LEFT - Looking west towards Widnes West Deviation Junction in February 1968. The engine 'Lucy' is seen standing on the line that connected from the dock estate railway to the British Railways yard at Hutchinson Street. The signal box at West Deviation can be seen in the distance.**

**Photo by Les Fifoot**

**BOTTOM LEFT – Lucy at Hutchinson Street in February 1968.**

**Photo by Les Fifoot.**

**BOTTOM – Lucy at the Ribble Steam Railway on 14 April 2012 during a visit by the Olive Branch 2 Rail Tour. Since the early 1980s Lucy has been a static exhibit but there are plans to return her to steam at some point in the future.**

**Photo by Paul Wright**



## Stan Hollins and Ditton Junction Number 2 Signal Box

To the right is a picture taken from the inside of Ditton Number 2 Signal Box in the early 1960s. Standing in the foreground is my Father, signalman Stan Hollins. Stan was born William Stanley Hollins in Manchester in 1921 and he lived close to the Newton Heath Motive Power Depot. His unemployed Father took him to live in Southport in 1935. He quit school and joined the LMS as a box boy at the Southport St Lukes Signal Box. He also spent a short time at Pool Hey Junction performing the same task.

Stan was called up for military service after 1939 and saw action in Italy. After the Italian surrender in 1943 he had the task of escorting POWs from southern Italy to Dunkerque and Calais for onward movement to the UK.

After the War Stan became a bus conductor for the North Western Road Car Company of Stockport but after 1953 he re-joined the railway. He qualified as a signalman and due to



*Stan Hollins at Widnes West Deviation Box c1960.*



*Ditton Junction Number 2 Signal Box. Photo by Ken Booth.*

shortage of staff in the London area of the British Railways – London Midland Region, he was posted to Brent Sidings in Cricklewood. A brief spell at Silkstream Junction in Hendon was followed by a period of service at St Albans between 1957 and 1960.

In 1960 Stan moved back to the north and was posted to Widnes West Deviation where he

served between 1960 and 1962. Between 1962 and 1963 Stan was posted to Halton Junction before moving to Ditton Junction Number 2 Signal Box . Ditton Junction Number 2 box was by that time a British Railways LMR type 15 box that had replaced an earlier structure on Monday 7 November 1960. The box had 55 levers and was flat roofed with a wooden top on a brick base. It controlled the main line to the west of Ditton station and the western end of the Ditton sidings. When the Ford factory opened in 1965 it also controlled the access to the plant.

I spent many happy hours visiting my Father at Ditton Junction Number 2 Box where he would allow me to operate the levers. We had a well-rehearsed script for occasions when visiting inspectors might arrive and find me in the box. My Father would say that he had a headache and had asked me to bring him some tablets. We had to enact this scene on at least one occasion. Mostly though nobody ever really bothered us.

One of the problems that Ditton Junction Number 2 signal box suffered with was rats in the control room. They would chew through the cables causing the signals to fail. The box had its own cat called Tibby as a means of trying to control the problem.

My Father remained at Ditton Junction Number 2 until 1979 when he was forced to retire due to ill health. My Father died in May 1991.

Ditton Junction Number 2 signal box closed at 12:00 on Saturday 9 December 2000. It was replaced by a new 'Railtrack' built power signal box called Ditton. **Chris Hollins**



*A historic occasion witnessed from Ditton Junction Number 2 Signal Box in the middle part of 1965 was the passing of a trial run of a freightliner container train. Now a familiar part of the railway scene. Photo by Arthur Sheffield.*

## Site Visit to Warrington 21 April 2012



***A group of 8D Association members pose for a picture at the foot of the historic 'Grand Junction Railway' River Mersey bridge on 21 April 2012. Photo by Paul Wright.***

The first 8D Association site visit of 2012 took place on 21 April 2012. Ten members met at Littons Mill for an interesting walk, looking at some significant pieces of Warrington's railway history.

At Littons Mill the LNWR signalbox, which will soon close, was observed. The box controls the crossing at Littons Mill. Less than 50 metres to the east of Littons Mill is the Crossfields Crossing and signal box. The box at Crossfields Crossing is also due to close in the near future and the 8D party took plenty of pictures of it, as once it has closed it will most likely be quickly demolished.

From Crossfields the banks of the River Mersey were followed. The transporter bridge that carried railway waggons across the river was an interesting feature of the walk. Not used since the 1970s it is a listed structure and attempts have been made to secure funding to return it to working order. There are very few transporter bridges left in the world and only three survive in the UK.

After looking at the transporter bridge the group continued along the river bank to the site where the West Coast Main Line passes over the Mersey. The first bridge reached dated from the early 1890s. It carries the present day main line and was built as part of a deviation that was required to allow the railway to gain enough height to pass over the Manchester Ship Canal which opened in 1893.

To the east of the 1893 bridge is a much older structure, the original Grand Junction Railway (GJR) River Mersey Bridge, which was part of Britain's first trunk line opening from Newton to Birmingham on 4 July 1837. The GJR linked Liverpool and Manchester with Birmingham via the Liverpool and Manchester line of 1830.

Work on the Mersey bridge did not start until mid-1835. The resident engineer for the line was Joseph Locke who had worked under George Stephenson on the Liverpool and Manchester route. Interestingly when the GJR project started Stephenson had been the chief engineer but he was often absent from the project, much to the frustration of the board, and by 1835 Locke had equal status to him and in reality had overall control. The contractors for the northern section of the GJR including the bridge were William MacKenzie, James Crompton and James Dalziel. The engineer selected by Locke to oversee the Warrington section of the line was Alfred Stanistreet Jee who was only 19 years old. His youthful ability was outstanding and he excelled at mathematics.

The GCR Mersey bridge linked the Lancashire township of Warrington on the north bank of the Mersey to the Cheshire township of Walton on the south side. Built of sandstone it carried a double track line over the river by means of six arches, two large arched spans and a smaller arched span. The two larger arched spans crossed the river resting on stone piers the middle one being in the centre of the river. On the north side there were three arches between the river spans and an embankment that carried the line onwards to Warrington. On the south bank three arches stood between the larger river spans and the Latchford Canal which was crossed by the third shorter span. Beyond that there was a further arch and then an embankment.



***The Warrington site visit included the 1837 'Grand Junction Railway' River Mersey Bridge. In this view 8D Association members take the opportunity to photograph a Freightliner Class 66 as it crosses the bridge on route to Ellesmere Port. Photo by Paul Wright.***



**Looking east towards the site of Warrington Arpley station on 21 April 2012 as a DBS Class 60 heads west towards Fiddlers Ferry Power Station with a loaded coal train. Photo by Paul Wright.**

Although overshadowed by its 1890s neighbour the GJR Mersey bridge still carries a railway although now mostly used by a steady procession of freight trains and a few local passenger services. It is now effectively on a loop of the West Coast Main Line that also connects, on the north side of the river, with the line to Warrington Arpley. A public footpath is located on the bridge itself on the east side. It is an excellent vantage point and an excellent place to watch trains which pass within an arm's length of the path. Three freight trains passed over the bridge during the short time that the 8D group were present.

The group then headed towards Arpley walking along a footpath that gave very good views of the busy sidings and yard. At Slutchers Lane bridge more train movements were observed including a coal train bound for Fiddlers Ferry.

The site of Warrington Bank Quay Low Level was looked at although there is little to show that there were ever platforms at the location. The Low Level platforms survived until 1965 despite the withdrawal of regular passenger services in September 1962. The reason for their retention was to serve a single passenger train, the 'Sunday's Only' Liverpool to York Mail.

The only down side to the day was finding, upon the return to Littons Mill, that several members had been given parking tickets by some overzealous official. **Paul Wright**

## **The Very Last Locomotive to Travel between Widnes & St Helens – Driver Identified.**



***Driver George Vernon hands signalman Eric Coffey the single line token for Widnes Number 1 to Sutton Oak for the very last time.***

Following the article in March 2012 On Shed about the last locomotive to travel over the Widnes and St Helens line two members were able to report the name of the driver. The driver was Wigan Springs Branch based George Vernon. Both Tony Graham and John Wilson came up with the name after showing the picture to contacts of theirs who had a connection to the Wigan depot. Thanks to the emergence of the picture another name has now been put to the historic event. Sadly driver Vernon died young in his early 50s.

## **Jack Shaw 1936 - 2012**

Another link with the railway past of Widnes has now gone following the sad death of Jack Shaw aged 76 on 30 April 2012. Born as John Jack Shaw on 29 September 1936 Jack started his railway career at Widnes Shed (8D) in 1951 when he was 15 years old. Jack had a break of two years from 1954 to 1956 as he was called up for National Service. Returning to the railway Jack worked his way up through the ranks to become a passed fireman at 8D.

In 1961 Colin Turton met Jack when he started at 8D and the two remained close friends right up until Jack's death. After 8D closed in 1964, Jack went to Garston where he became a driver on diesels and electrics.

Richard Mercer explained how Jack had a wealth of knowledge about the railways and he was always the first person that Richard would ask if he had a query that he could not find an answer to during his research into the Widnes railway scene.

Jack Shaw's funeral took place on Thursday 10 May 2012 and he was buried at Widnes Cemetery. Members of the 8D Association including Richard Mercer and Colin Turton were in attendance.

## A Day at Moore in the early 1980s.



On 3 May 1983 a mixed goods train heads north towards Warrington hauled by a Class 25 locomotive. Scenes such as this which had been part of the railway since the 1830s are now just a part of history. **Photo by John Wilson.**



A Class 56 locomotive heads south through Moore with empty oil tanks on route to Stanlow on 3 May 1983. This type of train was a regular feature of the line until the 1990s. The construction and opening of pipelines led to their demise. **Photo by John Wilson.**

## The Push Pull Farewell Rail Tours of 1966.



***On the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2012 the LCGB 'The Push and Pull Farewell Rail Tour' passes through Warrington Arpley on route to Ditton Junction. Photo by Bevan Price.***

Push and Pull trains were a feature of our local railways for over forty years. A Push and Pull train consisted of a locomotive and coaches. In the rear coach there was a cab from which the train could be driven, making it the front coach when going in that direction. The locomotive provided the power and was connected to the coach cab by a series of pulleys and levers. Locomotives had to be adapted for this purpose and tank engines were the most suitable for the job.

When the Push and Pull train was being driven from the cab in the coach the driver would operate the controls that linked back to the locomotive. The fireman would operate the controls in the locomotive as well as performing his usual duties. When the locomotive was leading the train would operate in the usual way.

The purpose of Push and Pull trains was to eliminate the need for engines to have to run around their coaches at terminus locations thereby speeding up the operation of the service.

Locally the Ditton Junction and St Helens service had been a push pull train from at least 1919. Originally the 'Ditton Dodger', as it was known, had been a Railmotor but the service became so popular that a locomotive and coaches was required and push and Pull operation was the best option. On this service LNWR Webb Tank Locomotives were used until it ceased in 1951. Other local services that used Push and Pull trains included the Ditton Junction to Manchester London Road, St Helens Shaw Street to St Helens Junction (and the services that continued to Warrington Bank Quay), Ditton Junction to Helsby, Acton Bridge to Crewe, via Middlewich and St Helens Shaw Street to Rainford Junction.

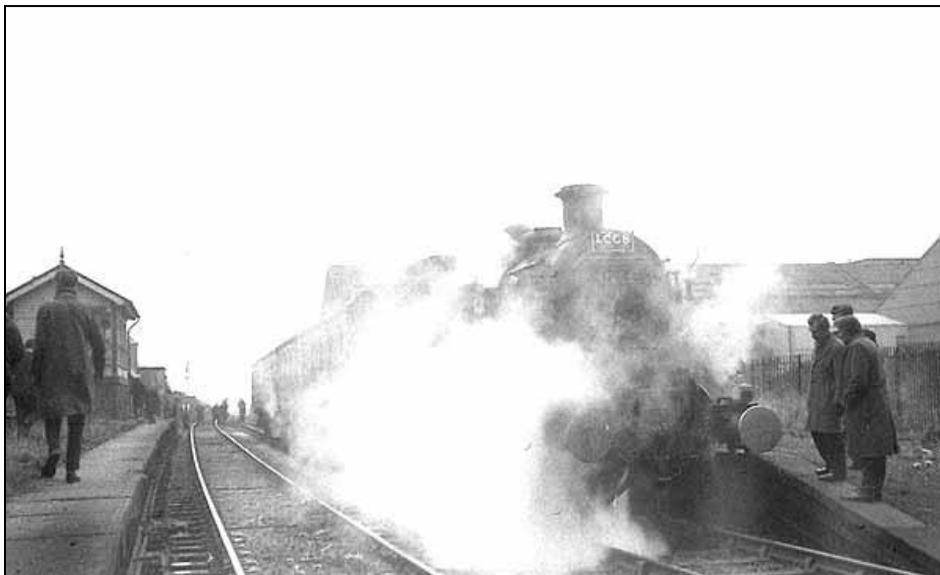
The introduction of Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) from the mid-1950s onwards spelled the end for Push and Pull trains. By the mid-1960s there were very few left. Interestingly although DMUs had been trialled on the Ditton and Manchester route in the late 1950s the service remained in the hands of steam, and mostly using Push and Pull sets until it ended on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1962.

To mark the demise of Push and Pull trains in the North West the Locomotive Club of Great Britain (LCGB) organised the 'Push and Pull Farewell Rail Tour' for 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1966. The tour scheduled to start from Earlestown, proved so popular that an extra date was added on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1966.

Both tours followed the same route. From Earlestown they ran to Sandbach via Warrington Bank Quay and Middlewich. They then ran back through Middlewich and via Knutsford and Altrincham to Skelton Junction. From there they ran to Ditton Junction via Warrington Arpley and Widnes South. At Ditton the railtours ran into platform 1 at Ditton Junction station and then reversed and ran to St Helens Shaw Street making a call at Farnworth and Bold station for photographs. The tours were scheduled to stop at Farnworth and Bold at 15.07 and depart at 15.17.

From St Helens Shaw Street the tour returned to Earlestown via St Helens Junction passing back through Sutton Oak.

The rail tours both ran with the reporting number 2Z22 and used Ivatt 2-MT Class locomotive number 41286 coupled to coaches 17924M and 24449M. **Paul Wright**



*The LCGB 'The Push and Pull Farewell Railtour' stands at Farnworth & Bold Station on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1966.*

**Photo by Bevan Price.**

## Events Programme

**19:00 – Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012 – Moss Bank Area (Tanhouse Yard) –**  
Meet in Tanhouse Lane by entrance to Moss Bank Park (Site of the Tanhouse Yard)

**19.00 – Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012 – Spike Island (site of 8D and Widnes Dock) –** Meet in the Spike Island Car Park.

**Time TBC – Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012 – Fiddlers Ferry Power Station Visit**  
– Booking essential and PPE required. Some places still left phone Paul Wright on 0151 630 5132 for details.

**15:00 - Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2012 – Rail Journey Helsby to Ellesmere Port & Return** – A journey on what could be described as a ghost train as it runs so infrequently. Meet at Helsby Station Car Park.

**10.00 - Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2012 – Sutton Oak Junction. Including junction, Robins Lane Halt and the intersection bridge -** Meet at St Annes Club car park, Monastery Road, Sutton, St Helens.



'Where is this' competition? (Answers to [pwright964@btinternet.com](mailto:pwright964@btinternet.com)) - Picture by John Wilson

- The March competition winner was C S Hollins.