

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 4 Number 4 – December 2014



Latchford 1966

An unidentified Class 25 diesel approaches the closed Latchford station, with 1M65 the Saturdays only 10.37 Sheffield Midland to Llandudno during the summer of 1966. **Photo from the Chris Hollins Collection**

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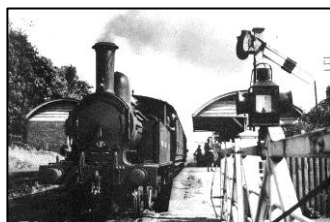
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Editor

Another year is almost over and our association continues to thrive. One of the aims of the group when it was first set up was to record and put into print through the journal and the website the history of the railways within our area of interest. Much of that history is in the heads of members who lived through important periods of our railway history.

The memories of Barry Nolan have become a regular feature. The memories of Rod Dixon, Arthur Turner, Phil Williams and information from the diaries of Colin Turton have been used in a number of the historical features that have appeared. In this edition there is a feature on Brian Tighe who was a signaller between 1959 and 2002 which contains some fascinating details about what it was like to work signal boxes in the 8D area. These personal recollections are really valuable and I want to get as many of them into the journal as I can so please do contact me and share your memories so that I can get them into print and preserve a piece of railway history. The association has also purchased a voice recorder so recording memories will be even easier going forward.

Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year to you all. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in 2015. **Paul Wright**



Crank station on the St Helens – Rainford Junction line looking south in 1949. A St Helens to Rainford Junction service is seen preparing to depart from the station. At the head of the train is an ex-LNWR Webb tank which was equipped to work push and pull. After arrival at Rainford Junction the train would have worked back to St Helens with the engine pushing. The engine was based at Sutton Oak in 1949.

Society News

8D Association AGM

The 8D Association AGM will be held on Saturday 24 January 2015 at 10.00 in the Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes. This will be the groups fourth AGM and as with previous years it will include an illustrated talk and a buffet.

At last year's AGM, after the election of the committee, there was a proposal from Tony Foster that the On Shed journal editor position should be a recognised position on the committee. The matter has been discussed at committee meetings and an email even went out about the subject a few months ago. Having received some feedback the committee decided that the matter would be a recommendation that will go to members for a vote at the 2015 AGM. If agreed at the AGM the committee will be as follows;

Chair

Secretary

Minute Secretary

Treasurer

Journal Editor

Committee Member x 3

Members will also be asked to vote in a committee for 2015 and the cost of the annual subscription will also be discussed.

If anybody wishes to stand for any of the positions please email your nomination to the_8d_association@yahoo.co.uk or telephone it to Paul Wright on 0151 630 5132.

New Members

The 8D Association currently has a membership of 71 an amazing achievement and well beyond what had ever been expected when the group was formed. Welcome to our latest members **Paul Stevenson** from Tasmania, **Colin Greenall** from St Helens and **Brian Mulholland** from Timperley.

BBC Feature on closed stations

8D Association members Les Fifoot and Paul Wright have both recently taken part in a project by the BBC for its Online service. A feature is being developed about closed railway stations and the BBC wanted to include the recollections of individuals who used specific stations. Les Fifoot has shared his memories about the CLC Liverpool Central station in the 1950s and early 1970s. Paul Wright has shared his memories of the LYR Liverpool Exchange station in the late 1960s and in the 1976/77 period.

News Round Up

More Nievenheim trains

As of May 2015, the Ditton to Nievenheim freight train will commence running five days a week. The cargo waggons presently used for the carriage of the aluminium blocks will be replaced by a container train, which will depart from the Stobart terminal, and at the German end will use DB Schenker's container terminal at Neuss. Also from that date, a single Belgian electric will be used to haul the train from Calais Frethun Yard to Neuss, rather than the present arrangement where a change of locomotive is made at Aachen. **Chris Hollins**



On 1 July 2014 class 66 locomotive number 66 013 is seen at the head of train 6M14 the 00.06 Dollands Moor to Ditton Foundry Lane. This was the final leg of a journey that had begun in Nievenheim Germany. Photo by Doug Birmingham

Liverpool Earlestown/Wigan Electrification will not be completed in 2014



Electric train services were supposed to have started on the lines between Edge Hill and Earlestown and between Huyton Junction and Springs Branch in December 2014 but that date will not now be met. Services will now not begin until at least Spring 2015.

Electrification masts had been erected at Whiston station by 18 October 2014 when this view of class 60 number 60 020 on 6Z84 the 15.07 Liverpool Bulk Terminal - Walton Old Junction "empty" coal, train was seen passing through. Photo by Doug Birmingham

A Fireman's Lot - Coal



A BR 2-10-0 class 9F is seen on the approach to St Helens Shaw Street in the mid-1960s working a coal train from the Widnes direction. Duties such as this would have been commonplace for the firemen of depots such as Widnes and Sutton oak. Barry and his colleagues at Widnes did not normally have such a powerful locomotive at the head of one of their trains. Photo by Richard Mercer

In the steam age, the quality of coal supplied to 8D left a lot to be desired. This was because 8D was predominantly a depot that worked freight trains. The better quality coal went to depots that worked important passenger expresses. We envied our cousins in 'Main Line' sheds such as Garston and Edge Hill. They got their coal from Yorkshire collieries. It burned beautifully, leaving little or no ash and made the fireman's job much easier.

The coal at 8D was often sourced from Bickershaw Colliery or worse still from Maypole Colliery which I think was somewhere near Wigan. Poor quality coal contained a large amount of rock. When heated in the firebox, the stone became a liquid (clinker) which melted onto the fire bars and blocked the supply of air available to the fire. No air meant poor combustion and poor combustion wasn't good for raising steam.

The situation wasn't too serious at the start of a shift, but as time passed, the clinker became thicker. We countered this with the use of a long, iron rod called a pricker. This had a spear shaped tip which we had to dig into the accumulated bed of clinker in an attempt to allow air to flow through the fire, but this only briefly improved the

situation. It was hot, tiring work and an unwelcome addition to the firing duties.

However we weren't as badly affected by poor quality coal as the Fire Dropper. This poor man had the unenviable job of emptying the contents of the firebox when the locomotive returned to the shed. He first had to break up the clinker with a pricker, and then shovel the still burning fire from the firebox using a 2.5 metre long iron paddle. The ash was thrown on to the ground out of the cab door and the fumes which arose from the resulting heap of embers were literally breath taking.

Sometimes, we were unlucky enough to be supplied with briquettes or cobbles. These were made from compressed coal dust which had a bonding agent added to enable it to be formed into a solid.

The briquettes were brick shaped slabs, roughly twice the size of a house brick whilst the cobbles were oval shaped 'eggs' about the size of a peach. These didn't form clinker, but produced a deep bed of ash which also inhibited the supply of air to the fire resulting in a fight for steam. The cobbles had an added disadvantage. Because of their size and shape, they cascaded from the tender onto the footplate which resulted in the fireman standing ankle deep in a layer of coal.

Barry Nolan



BR 2-6-0 standard locomotive number 76023 is seen at Winwick Quay on 5 May 1961. The locomotive crew had obviously spotted the photographer as both the driver and fireman can be seen peering from the locomotive cab. When the photograph was taken this Riddles design locomotive was based at Sutton Oak. It left Sutton Oak on 21 July 1962 and was allocated to Aston. It would remain in service with British Railways until it was withdrawn from Stoke in October 1965. Photo by Harry Arnold

Brian Tighe - My Life as a Signaller



I was born on 11 October 1937 and I grew up in the Newtown area of Widnes. We lived quite close to Widnes Foundry where my mother and aunties worked. I attended St Maries School and had very brief spell at Fishermoor which opened in the September and I left in the December.

The nearest railway station to my home was Ann Street Halt and I remember on one occasion I caught a train from Appleton to Ann Street. I did this for no other reason than wanting to have a ride on the train. The journey would have lasted only a couple of minutes. Longer train journeys when I was a child included trips to Blackpool from Widnes (South) which were organised by the Widnes Foundry for their workers.

When I left school I went to work for the Co-Op for a short period and then I got a job at Ward-Blenkinsopp's. Sometimes if I missed the bus I would catch a train from Widnes to Halebank in order to reach my workplace.

I then went to work for Todd's Drums. They had a lot of rail traffic into and out of the works and I remember it well. During the 1955 railway strike lorries were used to move the produce and I became a second man on them during that period.

When I was 17½ I joined the RAF. I was an 'electrical mechanic ground' which meant that I worked on pretty much anything that didn't fly. My first base was at Padgate but then I went to Melsham in Wiltshire before spending 2 ½ years in Brugen Germany. When I returned to England I was based at Harper Hill near Buxton. Harper Hill was an ammunition facility and it had its own standard and narrow gauge railway systems.

I spent four years in the RAF and I came out in 1959. At that time when you finished you had your leave plus six weeks de-mob leave. That meant that I had money and as far as I was concerned I was in no rush to get another job. I spent quite a bit of my time in the Victoria pub in Ann Street. My Father was a friend of the publican who was Bill Redmond. One day when I was in there Bill said to me 'if you don't get a job soon I am going to refuse to serve you'. Bill produced a copy of the Widnes Weekly News and pointed to a British Railways job advert for signalmen.

I went to Widnes South station where there were offices at that time and I was taken on as a trainee signaller in June 1959.

I was allocated to Tanhouse Lane signal box to do my training. Tanhouse Lane was on the former Great Central & Midland Widnes Branch which tended to be referred to as the loop. There had been a number of boxes on that line originally but when I started there was only Moor Lane and Tanhouse left.

Most of the signalmen at Tanhouse Lane at that time had been CLC men. Interestingly we still came under Liverpool Central not Lime Street which the boxes on the former LNWR came under. I remember working with Gordon Scott and the Downey brothers. I passed out as a temporary signalman after 10 weeks training and I was allocated to Tanhouse Lane box. I became a permanent signalman on my 22nd birthday.

The line was still relatively busy with freight trains at that time but the passenger service was quite limited. I remember the early morning train from Liverpool Central that terminated at Tanhouse Lane. It was laid on for workers in the nearby factories and when I started it was operated by a DMU.

In terms of goods workings we had numerous tank trains for the local factories and the USAC anhydrite trains. Many of the goods trains that came to Tanhouse Lane were worked by Walton-on-the-Hill crews and we got to know some of them quite well. Local trip working and shunting was carried out by Widnes Locomotive Shed crews.

There are all kinds of characters on the railway and I met my fair share of them. At Tanhouse Lane station there was a porter called Harold Douglas who considered himself to be a bit of a practical joker. Tanhouse Lane signal box didn't have its own toilet and we had to use the facility at the station. The wall of the toilet did not go all the way up to the ceiling and Harold Douglas used to find it highly amusing to throw things over when any of us signalmen were in there. He did it to me once on a Saturday and the object hit me on the head and caused a cut. The following Monday I got the signalman at Moor Lane, Gordon Scott, to phone Harold and tell him I was in hospital because of the injury. Obviously that caused him to worry but a later in the day I leaned out of the Tanhouse Lane box when he was on the crossing and shouted hello. As you can imagine he was cursing me and Gordon for winding him up.

There was a crossing keeper's cottage at Johnsons Lane that was staffed. A signalman called Denis Jordon lived there who worked at Sankey. His wife was the crossing keeper. He had a daughter and she used to get lifts off passing trains to Tanhouse Lane. The trains would stop and pick her up and she usually travelled in the brake van.

After a few years I went to Widnes East which was at the point where the loop line had a junction with the CLC main line. I was there at the time when the loop line closed which was in December 1964. I remember that they took out two rails on the loop so that it could not be used. A local farmer spotted this when Tommy Jones was

on duty he ran up to the box one day panicking in case a train became derailed. He hadn't realised that the line was closed.

Around this time a class 2 relief signalman's post came up at Widnes on the former LNWR system. I applied for the job and got it and I was trained in boxes that included Widnes No. 4 (Dock Junction), Widnes No.2 (Ann Street) and Farnworth & Bold. A little later I also trained Runcorn and the Ditton boxes.

I remember being at Widnes No.4 on one occasion near the end of steam. A train coming down from St Helens ran away down the bank and the signalman at Ann Street gave it to me. It would have made more sense if it had been routed towards



Looking south from Widnes No. 4 signal box in the mid-1960s as Ivatt 2-6-0 locomotive number 43053 of Heaton Mersey shed heads a train for the Manchester area. Photo by Richard W Mercer

Widnes No. 7 as the steep climb up to that box would have brought it to a stand. That didn't happen and I had to deal with it. I had two choices open to me. I could route it towards Widnes No. 6 (Waterloo Crossing) or towards Widnes Dock. I decided to route the train towards the dock. I then became aware that there was a tractor parked on the line and workmen were working by it. There was a warning gong at that location and I started swinging on the lever to warn the workmen. They seemed to take no notice. The runaway train ran passed my box and was heading towards the workmen. They saw it and were shocked. It actually managed to stop short of them and a plate layer came running up to me at the box asking why a train had been sent that way. I explained my reasons and I told him I had been ringing the

gong. We went to look and found that the actual gong had been stolen. The train had to be reversed back towards Ann Street and then routed via Widnes No. 6 to continue its journey. On one occasion I worked Widnes No. 4 box when a rail tour visited. They wanted the train to go onto every part of the Dock Junction layout which caused me a lot of work.

Having been a very busy location Dock Junction went into terminal decline and in the end it only saw a handful of trains. I remember all the records being destroyed just before the box was closed. They got a messenger called Alan Lightfoot to burn books and records that must have gone back over a century. It took three days to burn it all. There must have been some real gems in all of that now lost for ever.

Widnes No. 4 closed on 9 February 1969. It had sit on lockers that were quite new. I arranged for two of them to be transferred to Widnes No.2 box. One of them was for me. One of the signalmen there took exception to me having a locker as I was a relief signalman. Forgetting of course that had it not been for me those lockers would never have gone there in the first place.

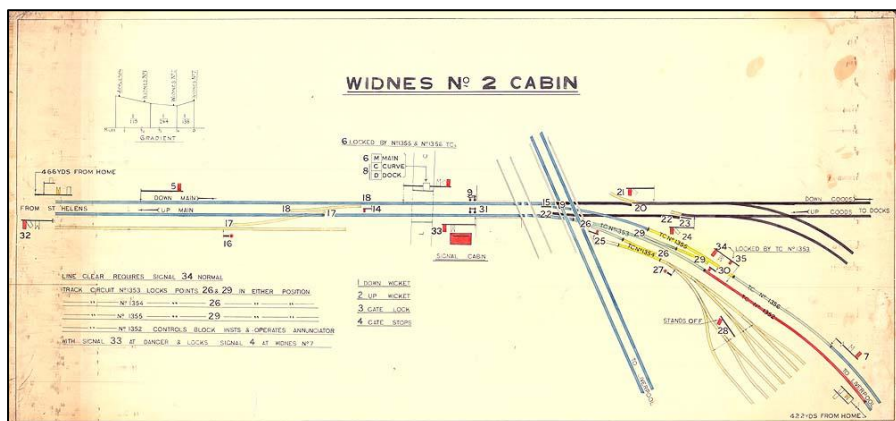
Widnes No.2 controlled Ann Street crossing. Ann Street crossing originally had the traditional wooden crossing gates operated by a wheel in the box. They were replaced by automatic barriers in the early 1970s. No. 2 didn't control those barriers for long and on 13 January 1974 the control of them was handed over to Widnes No.1. I remember being at Widnes No. 1 box when it took control of the crossing. There was TV screen linked to a camera so that the signalmen could observe the crossing.

There was a lot of change going on during that period and a few years earlier I remember being at Farnworth & Bold when single line working was introduced between that box and Sutton Oak Junction. I was on the night turn and not long before I came off duty we discovered that we didn't have communication with Sutton Oak because cables had been stolen. Widnes 1 and 2 were closed at the time so I had to go onto Derby Road to use a public telephone box so that I could report the incident.

For a few years between 14 December 1969 and 9 November 1973 Farnworth & Bold was the token exchange point for the single line section to Sutton Oak. We would go out of the box and hold up the token in a bag with a loop on it so that the driver or second man could collect it. Going south the train crew would hold the token out of the window of the locomotive so that we could collect it off them. Some jokers would hold it out for you and when you took hold of it they would not let go and would try to pull you off your feet. This was very dangerous with a moving train inches away from you. You got wise to it though and you would just let the token drop.

I was at Fiddlers Ferry Power Station box when it opened for traffic on 30 July 1967. I had seen the box be commissioned which was an interesting experience. There were a number of teething troubles some of which concerned the counter weights

which had been set in the wrong position. As the duty signalman it fell to me to sign to say the box was commissioned. I pointed out that there were a number of issues and the commissioning crew complained that they wanted to go home. They said that if I signed they would come back the following day and sort out the problems. So I signed but they didn't come back the next day and we had to live with problems for weeks.



A signalbox diagram from Widnes No.2 showing the track layout as it was in the period when all of the lines were still in situ and Widnes Locomotive Shed was still in use. With through freight trains and light engine movements into and out of the shed Widnes No. 2 was a busy location in the early 1960s. By the time it closed as a working signal box in December 1973 (it continued to control the level crossing until 13 January 1974) it was handling only a fraction of the traffic that it had been a decade earlier. From the Brian Tighe Collection.

Over the years I worked my way up to being a class 7 Flexible Premium signalman which gave me a better rate of pay. I worked many boxes all around the region. I got to work some interesting boxes such as the CLC box at Liverpool Central. When I worked there though it was after the station had lost its main line traffic and there was only the Gateacre service. Basically once you had signalled the train out you simply reset the line for the return journey and then had an hour of doing nothing. Some of the men used to go off for a wander into the shopping area. It was sad really as Liverpool Central signal box had once been a very busy box. It was even busier than Lime Street at one time because at Central there were a lot of empty stock movements owing to the stations cramped nature.

I worked boxes along the electrified Liverpool and Crew line. I was involved in a number of incidents that involved power failures or other electrical issues. My RAF training gave me a good understand of electrics which I found helpful.

I worked in the new Ditton box when it opened on 10 December 2000. I did a number of shifts there. My last day as a signalman was in that box on 7 October 2002. My last day was actually a rest day but I decided to work it. **Brian Tighe**

The Wigan Junction Railway



Hindley South station looking north in the early 1960s as a Wigan Central to Manchester Central passenger service arrives. Six coaches were far too generous for the number of passengers who were using the line at the time.

The Wigan Junction Railway (WJR) was the line that ran between Glazebrook West Junction and Wigan Central and it closed to passenger services 50 years ago on 2 November 1964 a victim of the Beeching cuts.

The line was originally authorised as the WJR on 16 July 1874 and the first sod was cut in October 1876. Glazebrook was located on the Cheshire Lines Committee (CLC) Liverpool and Manchester line. The CLC was a joint company of three partners the Great Northern Railway, the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway (MS&LR) and the Midland Railway (MR) and the partners were interested in tapping into the lucrative coalfields in the Wigan area. However only the MS&LR was willing to invest in the route when extra capital was needed, and when it opened to goods services on 16 October 1879 they worked it.

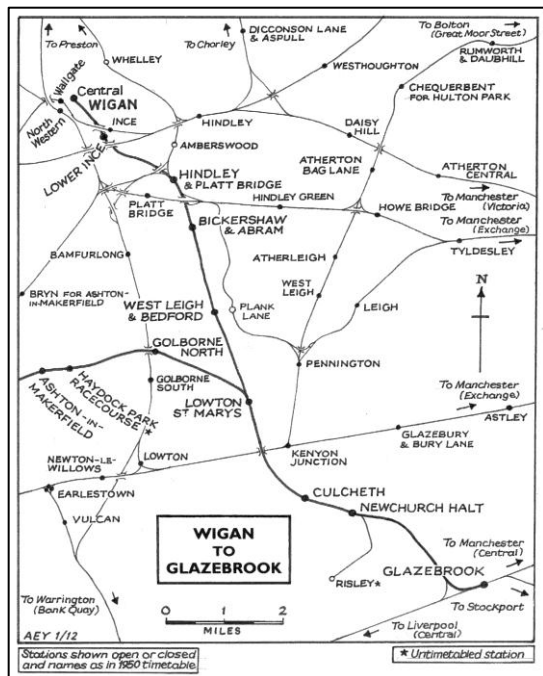
On 1 April 1884 passenger services were introduced and eight stations were opened including one at Wigan Darlington Street. Darlington Street was not very well situated for the town centre so on 30 October 1892 a half-mile extension was opened, and Wigan Central became the northern terminus. The passenger trains ran between Wigan Central and Manchester Central. In 1895 there were 8 passenger trains in each direction over the line Monday-to-Friday and 10 on Saturdays. On Sundays there were 3 trains each way. In 1899 the line carried 136,970 passengers and

17,517 tons of goods. Despite this the WJR only made a small profit.

A line was opened from the WJR to St Helens by the Liverpool, St Helens & South Lancashire Railway (LSH&SLR) on 1 January 1895 for goods only. It had its junction with the WJR line at Lowton St Mary's. As with the WJR the MS&LR worked the line.

In 1897 the MS&LR changed its name to the Great Central Railway (GCR).

On 3 January 1900 passenger services were introduced onto the St Helens line.



The WJR connection with the CLC was east facing which meant that direct trains could only run to or from the Manchester direction. On 1 July 1900 a new west facing curve was opened at Glazebrook forming a triangle at that location. The northern point of the triangle on the WJR was Dam Lane Junction. The western point of the triangle on the CLC was Glazebrook Moss Junction. The new curve allowed trains to run direct to and from the Liverpool direction. By 1903 there were six trains in each direction between Wigan Central and Warrington Central as well as eight that ran between Wigan

and Manchester Central. The Warrington trains were not competitive with the services of other companies and they ceased in 1909.

The GCR absorbed the WJR company on 1 January 1906.

On 1 January 1923 the WJR became part of the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER). During the 1920s there were through trains between Wigan Central, St Helens and Manchester but there were also shorter workings with Lowton St Marys, Glazebrook and Irlam being locations that saw service commence or terminate.

In 1932 LNER steam railcars were used on services that ran between Wigan Central and Partington and on St Helens line services. They were not used on Saturdays when there must have been greater passenger numbers.

The line enjoyed a good level of passenger service in the 1930s and it was popular



Bickershaw and Abram station looking north in 1959.

with workmen who were able to travel to the various factories or pits along the route.

Unlike most lines during the Second World War scheduled passenger services to and from Wigan Central actually increased. This was because a large munitions facility was opened at Risley, and a branch from the LNER line was built to serve it. The branch came into use in 1942 but didn't appear in timetables until 1943. On 1 February 1943 Newchurch Halt opened just to the north of the junction of the munitions branch. It was an interesting facility having two old Great Eastern Railway passenger coaches as its booking office and waiting room. Passenger trains ran between St Helens or Wigan Central and the munitions works calling at all intermediate stations. So busy were the trains that the LNER transferred articulated suburban coaches from London Kings Cross. They still showed destinations including Moorgate and Finsbury Park whilst working in South Lancashire.

The Risley branch closed to passenger services on 7 July 1945 and was only used as required after that date. It was completely out of use by 1951. The articulated sets were still on the WJR in 1947.

On 1 January 1948 the line from Glazebrook to Wigan Central, as part of the LNER network, was allocated to British Railways (BR) Eastern Region. From 30 November 1948 various adjustments were made to BR regional boundaries, and Glazebrook to Wigan Central were transferred to the London Midland Region, as they had, along with the branch to St Helens Central, been entirely detached from the rest of the BR(ER) system.

By the summer of 1948 there were only four trains in each direction over the St

Helens line Monday-to-Friday. On Saturdays there were only three trains to St Helens and the service was withdrawn completely on 3 March 1952.



A delightful scene taken at Culcheth station in 1963 showing a totem sign and an oil powered lamp.

From the earliest days excursion trains ran over the WJR and they continued to do so throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. The excursion trains included race day specials that ran to Haydock Park on the St Helens line. Some of the race day trains came onto the line via the 1900 west curve at Glazebrook and they included trains from Liverpool and Warrington.

Freight had always been the mainstay of the line and it continued to be into the 1960s. Substantial quantities of coal continued to come off the St Helens line even though it had closed to passengers.

Although diesel multiple units (DMUs) were introduced onto the CLC main line and many of the local routes in 1960 the Wigan Central service remained steam-hauled.

In 1962 there were 11 up (Glazebrook direction) trains and 13 down (Wigan Central direction) trains Monday-to-Friday with extra workings on Saturdays.

The Reshaping of British Railways ('Beeching') report of March 1963 recommended the withdrawal of passenger services between Glazebrook and Wigan Central and the closure of all stations. The official closure proposal was published a short time later, on 11 July 1963. There was opposition to the closure and it was pointed out to British Railways that the line could be run more efficiently if DMUs were used. British Railways reported that there were not sufficient DMUs to cover the timetable.



A rail tour at Wigan Central on 21 September 1963. The WJR was popular route for rail tours. The station was looking very run down by this time. When it opened it had four platform faces but by 1963 it had been reduced to just a single platform which was more than adequate for the services that ran. Photo by Bevan Price

The Transport Users' Consultative Committee hearing ended on 8 January 1964, As soon as Ernest Marples, Secretary of State for Transport, had given his approval on 23 July 1964 to close the line, DMUs did make an appearance.

The last services ran on 31 October 1964 and Wigan Central closed to passengers on 2 November 1964. It continued in use for goods until 5 April 1965.

By this time freight was also in terminal decline and on Saturday 2 January 1965 the section of line from Hindley South to Lowton St Marys saw its last traffic. For a few months afterwards empty vans were stored on the line. They were shunted onto the line from the Lowton end. After March 1965 the line from Hindley to Wigan was singled and was worked on the one engine in steam principle for about 18 months before it was closed completely. The brake van rail tour ran along the surviving northern section of the WJR on 13 August 1966.

In May 1965 the line between Dam Lane Junction and Glazebrook Moss Junction was taken out of use although it had not seen any traffic since Saturday 31 October 1964.

The southern end of the line between Glazebrook and Lowton St Marys lingered on for goods services that ran to Haydock on the St Helens branch until 1968. In that year a new chord opened between the St Helens Central line and the West Coast Main Line which allowed the last section of the former WJR to close. **Paul Wright**

The Garston and Liverpool Railway

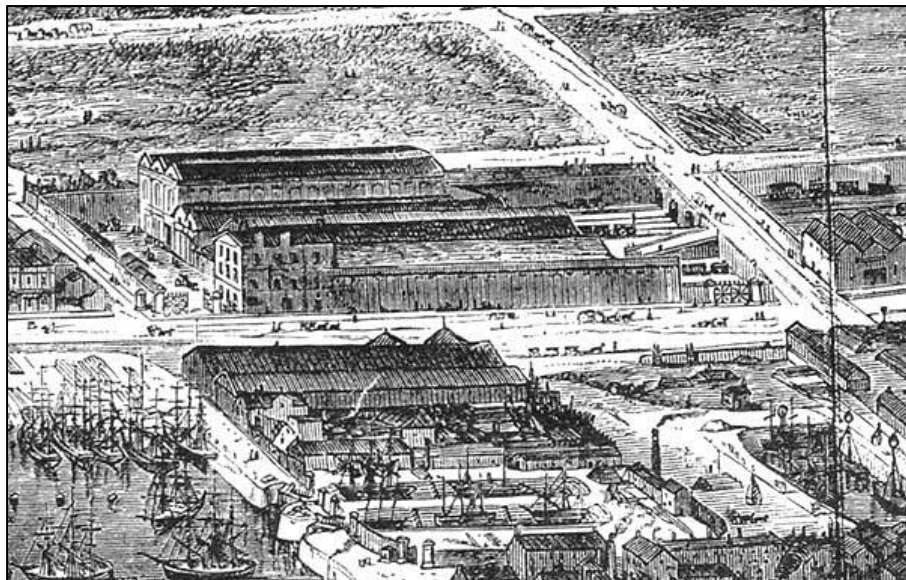


An oil train for Brunswick passes through St Michael's station in June 1968. At the head of the train is a Brush Type 4 locomotive (later class 47) carrying the green livery of British Railways but with a full yellow front. At this time the former Garston and Liverpool Railway had lost its main line services and St Michaels was only served by an hourly DMU service in each direction that ran between Liverpool Central and Gateacre. St Michaels was one of the original Garston & Liverpool stations. Photo by Norman Daley

The Garston and Liverpool Railway (G&LR) was a 3 mile 73 chain line that connected Garston Dock to Brunswick. The line was authorised on 17 May 1861 and was effectively an extension of the St Helens Canal & Railway Company (SHC&RC) Garston and Warrington line taking it closer to the centre of Liverpool.

For decades the SHC&RC had wanted to extend into Liverpool but it had always been prevented from doing so by the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) who it had enjoyed a good relationship with generally. That relationship soured in the second half of the 1850s when the SHC&RC entered into negotiations with the Great Northern Railway (GNR) and the Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway (MS&LR) who also wanted access to Liverpool. The GNR and MS&LR obtained running rights over the Garston and Warrington line and were backers of the G&LR scheme

The G&LR line opened on 1 June 1864. There were three intermediate stations (Mersey Road & Aigburth, Otterspool and St Michaels) and a northern terminus at Brunswick in south Liverpool docks area. Much of the route was in cuttings and there were four tunnels (at Grassendale, Fulwood, St Michaels and Dingle). Train services were operated by the GNR and the MS&LR.



The northern terminus of the Garston & Liverpool Railway was at Brunswick Dock. The passenger station and goods facilities are shown in this drawing that was made from a balloon in 1865. Just how busy the docks were at that time is clearly illustrated.

On 29 July 1864 the LNWR absorbed the SHC&RC. Although the LNWR had to observe the running rights of the GNR and MS&LR they were anything but co-operative and to reach Brunswick trains of the latter two companies had to travel many miles over LNWR metals. To strengthen their position on the 5 July 1865 the GNR and MS&LR formed the Cheshire Lines Committee (CLC) a joint company that gained a third partner, the Midland Railway (MR) in 1866. The G&LR became part of the CLC at the time of its creation.

At the time of the formation of the CLC an Act had been passed allowing the company to build a direct main line of its own between Liverpool and Manchester. The line diverged from the former G&LR just to the north of Garston Dock at Cressington Junction and ran via Warrington to Manchester. There was also a connection from Glazebrook to the CLC Stockport line at Skelton Junction which not only gave direct access to that town but allowed the MR to run services between London and Liverpool. The CLC Manchester line opened on 1 September 1873 (the section between Cressington Junction and Skelton Junction having opened a month earlier on 1 August 1873). On 2 March 1874 a northern extension of the G&LR was opened from Brunswick to Liverpool Central giving the CLC a main line station in the centre of Liverpool. These developments made the former G&LR a part of a main line railway of the CLC.

A new station had opened on the former G&LR at Cressington & Grassendale in April 1872, although it did not appear in the public timetable until the following year when the CLC main line opened.

With the opening of the CLC main line the southern end of the G&LR route (between Cressington Junction and Garston Dock) lost its passenger services. The CLC opened their own Garston station on the new line on 1 April 1874. Garston Dock station reverted to being a terminus station served by the LNWR. CLC goods services continued to run towards Garston Dock as there was a goods station there that had been part of the G&LR.



Looking north at Garston Dock station in 1949. At the far end of the station can be seen a level crossing. The G&LR commenced at the crossing Garston Dock having been a terminus station between 1852 and 1864. When the CLC main line between Cressington Junction and Manchester had opened in 1873 the station reverted to being a terminus. It served LNWR (and later LMS) trains that ran between Garston Dock and Liverpool Lime Street until 16 June 1947. Copyright photo from stations UK

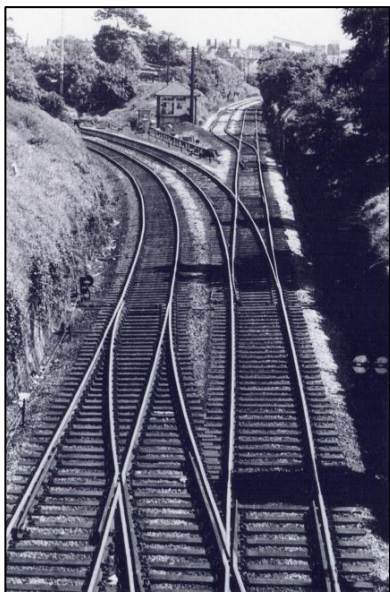
Both express, local passenger and goods services passed over the former G&LR line in the latter part of the 19th century. From 1 December 1879 these included trains that ran to north Liverpool over the CLC North Liverpool Extension Line. Local services and Manchester expresses were operated by the CLC who had rolling stock but no locomotives. The locomotives were all provided by the MS&LR under an agreement that had been reached when the CLC was formed. Long distance trains, both passenger and goods, were operated by the constituent parts of the CLC.

The MS&LR became the Great Central Railway (GCR) in 1897 and after their direct line to London had opened in 1899 the G&LR saw London express trains to London Kings Cross (operated by the GNR), to London St Pancras (operated by the MR) and to London Marylebone (operated by the GCR). By that time a large locomotive depot had been developed at Brunswick which serviced the engines of all three companies.

In the early years of the 20th century the CLC was running express services between Liverpool and Manchester in only 40 minutes. They also operated an hourly express service in each direction that departed from each city on the hour.

On 4 September 1912 a new loop was opened between Otterspool and Mersey Road & Aigburth. The loop facilitated workings along what had become a very busy double track section of line.

Even after the grouping in 1923, when the CLC remained independent but its owning companies became the LNER (two thirds) and the LMS (one third), trains continued to serve the three London termini previously mentioned.



The line remained busy throughout the inter-war years and into the nationalisation period although Otterspool station was closed on 5 March 1951 as it was in a fairly isolated position and didn't generate the levels of ticket revenue that the other stations did.

In the late 1950s DMUs were introduced onto many of the local services and in 1960 special four car units were allocated to the line to run the hourly Manchester services which still ran.

Brunswick locomotive shed closed in 1961 and Speke became responsible for the lines motive power.

Left – Cressington Junction looking south-east in the mid-1960s. The alignment of the G&LR continues straight on whilst the CLC route of 1873 curves left.

In September 1966 all main line services were diverted away from the former G&LR to run into Liverpool Lime Street via a connecting curve from the former CLC line to the former LNWR line at Allerton. This left only the Liverpool and Gateacre service which ran hourly in each direction. It ceased to run after Saturday 15 April 1972 and the stations on the former G&LR closed completely. Goods trains continued to run to the Brunswick goods station until April 1971 and to oil facilities at Dingle until the mid-1970s.

Freightliner and brick trains used a short section of the G&LR between Cressington Junction and Garston Dock until 4 September 1977 when that section of line closed completely.

A conundrum of the 1960s was that whilst British Railways saw reduction and retrenchment as the future local authority planners were already beginning to see



The Liverpool Docker rail tour at Brunswick in February 1968. Photo by Norman Daley

that mass car ownership was causing problems and that simply building more roads within cities was not sustainable. The local authorities produced the Merseyside Area Land Use Study (called the MALTS report) in 1966 that recommended modernisation and expansion of the rail network in the Liverpool city region. The former G&LR was identified a route that should be electrified and connected to the former LYR lines in the north of the city via an underground city centre link line. In 1969 the Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority was created and it adopted many of the ideas from the MALTS plan. A Transport and Works Order was secured in 1971 for the creation of new underground lines in Liverpool City centre and the electrification of routes including the G&LR.

The line reopened as part of a route between Liverpool Central and Garston on 3 January 1978. Electric services ran between Garston and Kirkby via the underground link line. The former G&LR stations at St Michaels and Mersey Road & Aigburth (renamed as simply Aigburth) and the later CLC station at Cressington reopened and were served by a 20 minute interval service in each direction. On 16 May 1983 the electrification was extended to Hunts Cross and a 15 minute interval service was introduced that ran between Hunts Cross and Southport.

Other than the short sections between Cressington Junction and Garston Dock and between the site of Brunswick Locomotive Shed and the goods station the G&LR has survived into the 21st century as a very busy part of the Merseyrail network.

A new station was even opened at Brunswick (south of the original on 9 March 1998.

Paul Wright



Old Mill Lane Halt on the St Helens – Rainford Junction line in 1927. The halt had originally opened on 1 August 1906 but it saw a period of closure between 1907 and 1 October 1911 when it reopened to serve a newly introduced railmotor. In this view an ex LYR railmotor with an additional coach is seen on a northbound working to Rainford Junction.



A class 20 diesel electric locomotive is seen at St Helens on 3 December 1985. The engine has behind it a bogie tank wagon of the type that used to work to Hayes chemical works. Behind the wagon is a standard BR brake van. Photo by John Wilson

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Events Programme

10.00 – Saturday 6th December 2014 – Steam in China – An illustrated talk by Geoff Coward. **Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

10.00 – Saturday 24th January 2015 – The 8D Association AGM – The society's annual general meeting which will include a guest speaker and a buffet. **Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

19.00 – Thursday 12th February 2015 – A Journey on the Trans-Siberian Railway – An illustrated talk by Chris Lewis. Chris returns by popular request as his Steam in South America talk was so well received last year. **Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

19.00 – Thursday 12th March 2015 – Railway scenes from the 1960s to the 1990s – Les Fifoot will show some of the excellent photographs that he took over a 40 year period. **Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**



'Where is this' competition? (Answers to pwright964@btinternet.com) **Photo by Eddie Bellas**

The March competition was correctly guessed by David Douglas and James Mackenzie. The location was Garston Church Road.

NEXT JOURNAL PUBLISHED 1 March 2015