

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 5 Number 1 – March 2015



Ditton Junction 4 May 1957

Ditton Junction station seen before modernisation. This was during the period when the station still served as an interchange point. A Liverpool Lime street Service is seen at platform 3. Standing at Platform 1 is a Manchester London Road train.

Photo by J C W Halliday

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Editor

Welcome to the first issue of volume 5 of the On Shed journal. They seem to come around so fast and I can hardly believe that we are entering our fifth year as an association.

One of the successes of the 8D Association has been our programme of events. In the summer months we have our site visits and during the winter our illustrated talks programme. The latter are now held at the Select Security Stadium a venue that has proved to be hospitable and very suitable. The numbers attending events were excellent throughout 2014 and the introduction of winter events on Thursday evenings seems to have been well received.

We have over the years delivered some real gems in terms of site visits. Visits to Fiddlers Ferry Power Station and to Allerton Depot are examples of visits that we might not have thought possible when we first started. In 2015 we have two real gems that should appeal to members. In June we will be the guests of the Friends of Williamsons Tunnels on a visit to the Wapping tunnel which was completed in 1829 and we are invited to the Warrington & District Model Engineering Society track at Daresbury. Details of both trips are shown on page 23.

We will continue to deliver a varied and interesting programme but remember as members you are free to contribute with your own ideas and perhaps you might even like to lead a guided walk. If so please get in touch. **Paul Wright**

Membership Subscriptions

For those who have not yet paid their annual membership it is now time to do so if you want to remain a member of the association in 2015. The cost of membership for year is now £12.00 as endorsed by members at the AGM on 24 January 2015. We rely on membership subscriptions to cover the cost of the journal and our events programme. Please send cheques to Mr Lee Woods – 125 Pit Lane, Widnes, WA8 9HR

Society News

8D Committee for 2015

The 8D Association AGM was held on Saturday 24 January 2015 at 10.00 in the Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes. The committee for 2015 will be;

Chair – **Joe Cowley**

Secretary – **Doug Birmingham**

Minute Secretary – **Les Fifoot**

Treasurer – **Lee Woods**

Journal Editor – **Paul Wright**

Committee Member – **Dennis Flood**

Committee Member – **Tony Foster**

Committee Member – **Chris Hollins**

Committee Member – **John Wilson**

The chairman thanked Peter Murray and Colin Turton who did not seek re-election to the committee in 2015 for their hard work and commitment over a number of years.

New Members

At the 8D Association AGM the membership stood at 70. Welcome to our latest member **Roger Kilshaw** from St Helens.

News Round Up

Halton Curve

Behind the scenes work continues to bring the Halton Curve back into use as strategic section of railway. The main task will be to restore it to bi-directional working (at present trains can only travel in one direction from Frodsham Junction to Halton Junction) and funding is now secure for that. The other task currently under discussion is to determine what passenger services will run. There are two options the first being a Liverpool – Chester service. The second option favoured by the Welsh Assembly Government is for a Liverpool – Llandudno service. Both services would require subsidy and the Welsh Assembly Government has intimated that it would contribute towards the Llandudno option.

As previously reported in On Shed a passenger train service operates over the Halton Curve during the Summer. Since September 2014 the train has continued to run on Saturday's only as an empty stock movement. Running as 5F26, the 07.14 Helsby to Liverpool Lime Street via Chester passes through Runcorn at 08.08. The

curve is also used by charter trains and occasional diverted freight. The Halton Curve is due to have a special train running over it on 25 May 2015. Pathfinder Tours have organised a special from Salisbury to Liverpool Lime Street, coinciding with the appearance of all three Cunard 'Queen' ships at the Pier Head celebrating Samuel Cunard's 175th Anniversary. **Chris Hollins**

Electrification Switch-on delayed



Despite delays with the Liverpool & Manchester line electrification driver training continues on the class 319 EMUs that will provide the initial services. On 1 February 2015 unit number 319 362 is seen approaching Halewood on 5Z24 a Crewe to Liverpool South Parkway driver training run. Photo by Doug Birmingham

It was reported in the December edition (Vol 4 Number 4) of On-Shed that the lines between Edge Hill and Earlestown along with the Huyton to Wigan branch were to be energised on 14 February 2015. That deadline was not met due to works over running. Extra weekend line closures have had to be implemented at weekends so that the work can be completed Revenue earning passenger services are now unlikely to start before May. **Paul Wright**

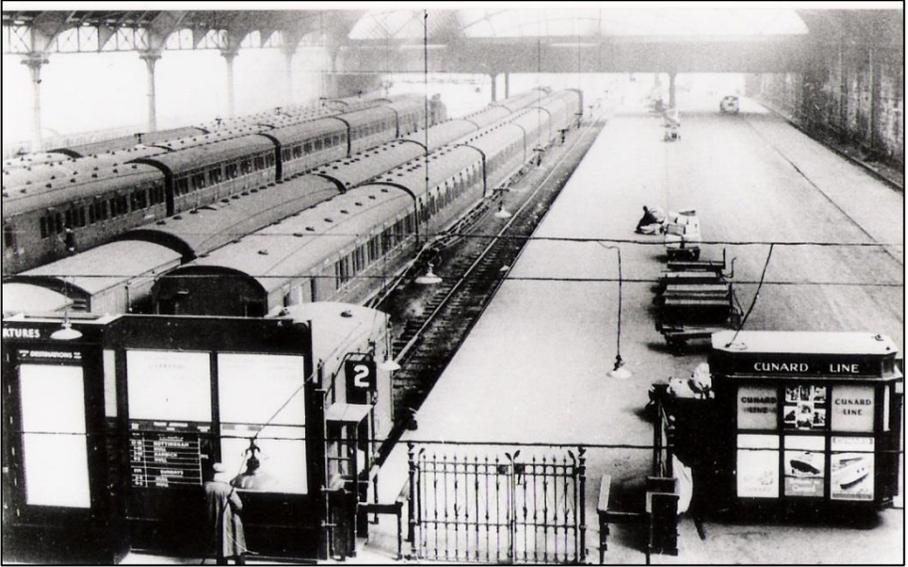
GWR Steam through Runcorn

A special train run by Vintage Trains is due to pass through Runcorn on 25 April, bringing Castle class locomotive 5043 Earl of Mount Edgecombe from Tyseley to Liverpool Lime Street. The return run back to Tyseley will be via Rainhill and Manchester Victoria. **Chris Hollins**

Manchester Airport

From the May timetable change, Helsby, Frodsham, Runcorn East and Warrington Bank Quay will have an hourly service to Manchester Airport when the the North Wales to Manchester Piccadilly services are extended to run there. The service has been made possible because of the construction of a new platform at the Airport station. **Chris Hollins**

My Memories of Liverpool Central – Les Fifoot



Liverpool Central when it was still a busy terminus in 1953.

When I grew up in Widnes during the 1950's, my family lived approximately half a mile from the local station of "Farnworth for Widnes". This was on the Liverpool Central to Manchester Central railway line, formerly the Cheshire Lines. We regularly visited Liverpool, and the most direct route was by rail from our local station, which was a journey of just over 12 miles. The line had one of the fastest suburban passenger services in the UK, with steam trains regularly achieving speeds in excess of 80 mph. for parts of the journey. So a trip to the city centre could be completed in just over a quarter of an hour, much faster than can be achieved today into Liverpool Lime Street.

The railway system was not in the best of condition after WW2, stations were generally rundown, rolling stock was seldom clean, and all the trains were steam hauled until around 1958. As a young boy, I was always very excited at the thought of travelling to Liverpool behind one of the Stanier class 4 tank engines which dominated passenger service haulage at the time.

After leaving Widnes, it wasn't much more than 10 minutes later that the train would be plunging into a dirty, smoky tunnel on the outskirts of the city. The tunnel soon opened out to give a brief view of the docks, and bustling freight facilities at Brunswick, before passing the grimy environs of Brunswick motive power depot, which looked little more than a ruin to me, as it had no roof. Sometimes, one of the Liverpool Overhead Railway trains could be seen making its way over the line at this point, although it finally closed down in 1956.

The dock view was short lived, and the train was soon swallowed up by a further dark, filthy tunnel. It was a three track tunnel, which was always fairly busy; consequently it always seemed to be full of smoke. It soon opened out to give a brief view of the long closed St.James Station, before plunging back into darkness and smoke for a final time. Now proceeding at a slow pace, our train would shortly arrive at its destination.

Quite often we would arrive into platform one, which was right against a dirty sandstone block wall. The platform was very wide, as it also accommodated road vehicles as well, and was usually bustling with parcels and mail vehicles, taxis and station trolleys as trains were loaded and unloaded.

The station buildings never looked in their prime and the general appearance was that the station had seen better days. After handing in tickets at the end of the platform, the concourse was reached. At the platform end of the concourse was the entrance to the underground railway terminus for the Wirral electric trains. There was always a unique smell of the underground railway in this area, as you approached the staircase to descend to the lower platforms.

Across the concourse I remember the large book stall, which was a familiar site on most large stations. We generally departed the station through the entrance at the east side of the building, the cafeteria and toilets were situated in this area.

Returning to catch a train home is also worthy of note, particularly in winter months. Station lighting was not the best, and we would often get on our home train in almost complete darkness, due to the carriage lights being off until our loco arrived, and the staff switched them on. Even this was sometimes a problem due to flat lighting batteries. If this was the case, only when the train departed from the station would the light bulbs start to show a dim glow, as the dynamo underneath each coach lurched into action when we crawled into the smoky tunnel at the end of the platform.

Another potential problem in winter months, if the loco was not at the front end of the train, was no heating.

I also remember my mother frequently reminding me not to touch, or lean against the carriage windows, as they were often dirty from ingress of loco smoke.

Perhaps some of these memories are more generic to rail transport in the 1950's but they were experiences that I remember from Liverpool Central.

My final visit to the station was in 1971, when I took a number of photos, By then it was in terminal decline as most of the train services had than been diverted to Liverpool Lime Street, most of the tracks lifted, and some of the disused platforms were being used for car parking. A sad end for a once busy train terminus. **Les**

Fifoot

Long hours at 8D – By Dave Littler



Ex- LNWR 0-8-0 locomotive number 49416 seen at Widnes Locomotive Shed on 10 August 1958. This class of Bowden-Cooke designed locomotives was introduced between 1912 and 1921.

In 1960 I was in my early 20s and I was a fireman at Widnes Locomotive Shed. Working on the railway was the best job that I ever had even though it was hard and dirty work with unsocial hours. The hours for locomotive crews were strictly limited for safety reasons as in the early years of railways there had been many accidents that had been caused by fatigue. However even in the 1960s there could be events that could lead to you doing far more hours than you should have done.

One of my close mates at Widnes was Jack Shaw. When Jack married on 24 September 1960 he asked me to be his best man something that I was delighted to do. As was the custom in those days we went out the night before the wedding for a stag night. In those days things were much simpler than now and Jacks stag night was in The Albert. At 6.30pm on Friday 23 September 1960 before we went out I received a message from the shed they wanted me to come in at 4.30pm to work an engineers train onto the Runcorn bridge in association with the electrification that was then underway.

I felt that there was no way that I could do this as I was the best man at Jacks wedding and so I refused it. I mentioned it to Jack and he pointed out that I could easily take the job as the wedding was in the morning and the lunch was at 12.00 noon. I would easily be able to go into work for 4.30pm. I needed the money so I agreed to do the job. Our night out consisted of drinking pints and playing dominoes with some older men who were in there. It was a good night and we drank quite a lot.

So after a late night on the Friday and being the best man at a wedding on the Saturday morning I signed on at Widnes at 4.30pm on 24 September 1960.

My driver was Jimmy Birchall and we were given a class 8 locomotive for the job. After preparing the engine we left the shed running engine first at 5.30pm and ran the short distance to Ann Street where we reversed and followed the route to Widnes goods (Hutchinson Street) running tender first via the Waterloo Crossing. Waiting for us there were twenty-two 5 plank goods wagons and 2 brake vans. There were ten labourers, a guard and an inspector with the train. We coupled up to the train and took it to Ditton Junction where we arrived at 6.45pm. We ran around the train at Ditton which meant that the locomotive was now facing Runcorn engine first for the run up the bank onto the bridge.

We were positioned on the bridge by 7.00pm. After we had arrived and secured the train in place the line was taken up behind us as part of the works. One of the jobs was to dig holes for the overhead line gantry. It proved to be much more difficult than expected as the workers were digging into solid brick. That meant that the work quickly started to overrun. I must have looked very tired as Jim Birchall asked me if I was all right.



Left – An ex-LMS 2-8-0 8F locomotive number 48493 seen on the Widnes side of the Ethelfleda railway bridge in 1967. This is the type of locomotive that Dave Littler was on for 22 hours during Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 September 1960. One of the overhead gantries that had proved so difficult to erect is seen above the locomotive. Photo by Les Fifoot

As we were on the Widnes side of the bridge where there is an embankment Jim said that he was going for a pint in the Roundhouse a pub in West Bank. That left me with the engine. My mother lived at 82 St Mary's Road so when Jim returned at 10.00pm I went down the bank to her house where she made me a much needed bacon sandwich. I then returned to the engine and tried to get some sleep on the footplate.

At 6.30am on the Sunday morning

Jim was getting restless and he wanted to go home. He was an older man than I and did not need the money as much as I did. The train could not return to Widnes as the track was up behind us. I went to my mothers house and got bacon and egg sandwiches for both of us. Despite the welcome nutrition by 8.30am Jim was insistent that he be relieved. The thing was we couldn't just leave the locomotive and let the fire go out. So I suggested to the inspector that if the locomotive could be taken to Runcorn station and put into the sidings, and if Jim agreed, I would stay with it and keep the fire up. I would be off the main line and therefore not contravening any regulations in terms of hours worked. There was agreement that this was a good idea and we secured the wagons on the bridge and took the engine to Runcorn station sidings. Jim went home and I stayed with the engine.

I kept the fire going and snatched what sleep I could and was eventually relived at 2.30pm. I then had to walk back to Widnes Locomotive Shed and I eventually signed off 23 hours after coming on duty. That being after the stag night and the wedding. I was glad to get home to my bed but also very happy to have earned the extra money.

By June 1962 I was a 'Passed Fireman'. That meant that I could drive certain types of train. On one Thursday night during that year I was supposed to be the fireman on a Widnes to Leeds train. There were two of these trains a morning and a night working. Widnes crews took them as far as Stockport Edgeley. The engines were already prepared for this job so the job of the locomotive crew once we had booked on was to read the notices. I booked on at 8.15pm and read through the notices. Just after 8.30pm I was approached by one of the shed foremen Gilbert Draper who



Looking east at Lymm station on 29 March 1968 as a westbound freight passes through.
Photo by Bevan Price

informed me that the driver, Arthur Ford, had rang in sick. He told me would get me the next available fireman and that I would take the train as the driver.

Billy Delaney was the next available fireman. He came on duty at 10.00 expecting to do a shift within the confines of the shed turning engines and preparing them. As

soon as he arrived he was allocated to me as fireman. He was my cousin and two members from the same family were not supposed to be on the footplate together. The fact that we were cousins was not widely known and we said nothing so we were allocated to the train. We took our locomotive, a class 8, down to Marsh sidings and picked up the train.

The train consisted of thirty-seven wagons and a brake. Our guard was Stan Vale.

We didn't leave the Marsh sidings until 11.00pm and we travelled via Widnes Dock Junction and Carterhouse Junction to Warrington Arpley. At Warrington we dropped off 7 wagons and picked up 4. That took some time to do and at midnight we set off towards Latchford.

After making the climb up to the Latchford bridge and then the descent towards Thelwall I noticed that the Lymm distant signal was on and we were brought to a stop at the station. The signalman beckoned and I went up to speak to him. There had been a derailment at Northenden Junction and nothing was moving. There were sidings at Lymm and I was backed into them. There was nothing to do other than



Lymm signal box seen in 1972. It was at this location in the early hours of a Friday morning in 1963 that Dave Littler was informed that a derailment at Northenden had stopped his progress towards Stockport Edgeley. Photo by David Ingram

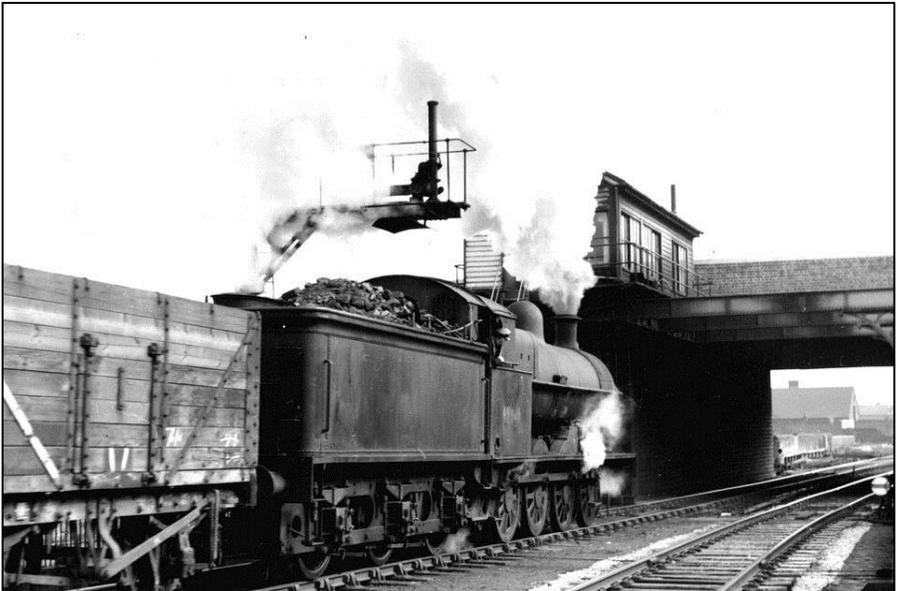
have a brew which we did.

At 3.00am the line was still not cleared. It took them until after 6.00am to get it cleared. At 7.00am a passenger train was due to pass through Lymm so we had to wait for it. We finally got moving only to be held at Northenden junction for another half hour. Such was the disruption that we didn't get to Edgeley until noon.

At Edgeley there was a return working waiting for us. We went into the shed and spoke to control. We had not eaten or had any rest since coming on duty and there was no way that we could take that train back to Widnes. We therefore returned as passengers. That involved travelling to Manchester London Road (Piccadilly) and then walking over to Manchester Central to catch the train to Farnworth (Widnes North). We finally got back to Widnes shed at 3.30pm. I had been on duty for over 19 hours. Because we had to be given 10 hours rest they had to pay me for the Friday shift.

I left the railway three months before Widnes Locomotive Shed closed.

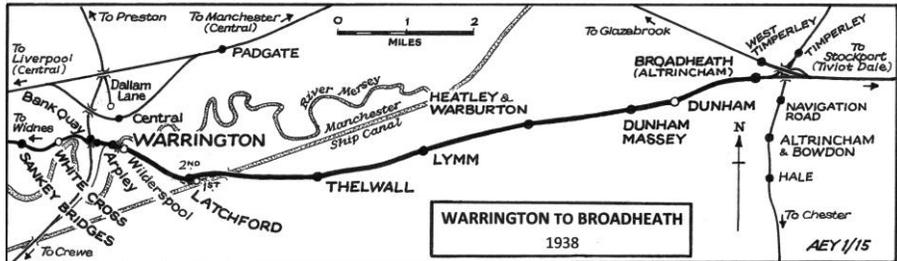
I got a job at the Marsh Works but I never really liked it. In 1966 I emigrated to Australia. I spent 29 days on a boat to Freemantle arriving there on Christmas Day. We then had to travel to Melbourne and finally arrived there at 12.00 noon on 29 December 1966. That was the longest holiday I ever had. **Dave Littler**



Looking east at Warrington Wilderspool in 1958 as an eastbound freight train heads towards the Wilderspool Causeway bridge which had only opened on 16 May 1957. Previously there had been a level crossing at this location. The Widnes Marsh Sidings to Leeds trains would have passed this way. When Dave Littler took his train under this bridge in 1962 he was already running late. Photo by Peter Norton

The Warrington & Stockport Railway

On 8 July 2015 it will be the 30th anniversary of the closure of the former Warrington & Stockport Railway (the Low Level line) between Latchford Sidings and Skelton Junction. The principal reason given for the closure was to avoid the expense of carrying out major repairs to the Latchford Bridge crossing the Manchester Ship Canal. A lot of the traffic associated with the route mainly coal from the Yorkshire pits to Fiddlers Ferry Power Station, had been re-routed as a result of the Woodhead line closure in July 1981 and BR considered that they could do without it.



The Warrington & Stockport Railway (W&S) was authorised on 3 July 1851 as a line of the Warrington and Altrincham Railway (W&A) that would run to Warrington from a connection with the Manchester South Junction & Altrincham Railway (MSJAR) at Timperley Junction. At Warrington the W&A was authorised to make an end-on connection with the St Helens Canal & Railway Company (SHC&RC) Garston and Warrington line and with the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) and the Birkenhead Joint Railway (BJR) at Walton Junction. On 4 August 1853 the W&A changed its name to the W&S.

At the time of opening the W&S ran from a temporary station at Warrington Wilderspool to Broadheath. There were intermediate stations at Latchford, Thelwall, Lymm, Heatley & Warburton (called Heatley at the time of opening), Dunham Massey (called Warburton at the time of opening) and Dunham. Broadheath was over a mile from Altrincham and was nowhere near Stockport. A comment made at the time was that the W&S went “from nowhere to nowhere”.

It had not been the intention of the W&S to have an isolated line. The purpose of the W&S had been to create a route from Warrington to Manchester via the MSJAR railway. In doing so the SHC&RC would be able to reach Manchester from Garston and the BJR would have a link to the city from its network. The problem was that the MSJAR was under the joint ownership of the London North Western Railway (LNWR) & the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway (MS&LR). The LNWR was hostile to the idea of trains running between the BJR and the SHC&RC lines and Manchester as they saw this as creating routes to its own. For that reason the LNWR obstructed the W&S, putting it in a precarious financial position.

A bridge over the Mersey was completed in the early months of 1854 and the W&S opened to Warrington Arpley on 1 May 1854. On the same day the line was also extended to Timperley Junction where it connected to the MSJAR.

The station at Arpley was a substantial facility on the north side of the line to the south of the town. It was a dignified brick structure of ample proportions under a hipped roof, looking not unlike a stately home. So generous was its size that the local newspaper commented that one end of the building "might well be let off to the Corporation as baths, baths as large as St Georges Pier Head, Liverpool". The station building accommodated the headquarters of the W&S company as well as the needs of passengers.

As explained Broadheath was an inconvenient location and had not been the intended eastern terminus of the line. Legal wrangling followed, and an arbitrator gave the W&S the right to run its trains over the MSJAR line to Manchester Oxford Road but at a financial cost that the W&S considered to be too high. The W&S had no choice but to pay, and their trains started to run between Warrington Arpley and



Looking east at Arpley Junction in March 1965. A westbound coal train is seen passing over the junction which was the point at which the W&S and the SHC&RC lines met end on. The line curving to the right provided a connection to the BJR line to Chester. Warrington Arpley station can be seen in the distance. Photo by Eddie Bellas

Manchester Oxford Road on 31 October 1854.

Things went from bad to worse for the W&S. Companies such as the BJR had obtained running rights over the line and the W&S had anticipated healthy receipts from them. The Great Western Railway (GWR) was a partner in the BJR and it intended to run services to Manchester via the W&S. In spring 1855 the line from Warrington Arpley to Walton Junction opened (the junction being just to the west of



A view looking east towards Lymm taken on 25 June 1985. Class 31 locomotive number 31 302 is seen heading west with an Arpley bound freight train. The line was still relatively busy at this time but within two weeks it would be closed . Photo by Andrew Salmon

Warrington Arpley station) making the GWR plan feasible. The problem was that the GWR and the LNWR were hostile to each other and the LNWR would not allow the GWR to use the MSJAR. The W&S had obtained an Act to build a line to Stockport at the time of its name change, but because of the turn of events it did not have the funds to proceed and the powers lapsed. The W&S company was never to reach Stockport.

In May 1855 the station at Dunham was closed leaving Dunham Massey to serve the small settlement.

In 1856 agreement was reached with the LNWR to extend some of the MSJAR trains to Warrington Arpley and effectively use the W&S as an extension of that line. The arrangement made for a better passenger service and one that delivered an operating surplus. Operation of the service began on 1 October 1856 and it was an improvement for passengers.

In 1857 the working relationship between the MS&LR and LNWR fractured and the companies became enemies. A railway war ensued and the MS&LR began to negotiate with the GWR. The MS&LR was now more than happy to allow the GWR to reach Manchester via the MSJAR line, which would have put the W&S on a more sound financial footing. The LNWR was quick to act, however, and it opened up negotiations with the GWR, agreeing in November 1858 to allow them to reach Manchester via LNWR lines.

The MS&LR began operating passenger services between Manchester and Garston, where an onward connection to Liverpool could be made by omnibus. They also introduced a service between Manchester and Chester via Warrington Arpley. This was in direct competition with the LNWR and gave the W&S perhaps the most diverse passenger service it ever had. Fares were reduced to attract passengers and the LNWR responded in kind.

From June 1858 the Great Northern Railway (GNR), at that time allied to the MS&LR, introduced a passenger service between London Kings Cross and Garston that ran over the W&S and served Warrington Arpley giving it a direct connection to the capital.

In April 1858 an interesting feature was unveiled at Warrington Arpley station. It was a Crimean War memorial unveiled opposite the main entrance. The memorial included Russian guns that had been taken at the siege of Sebastopol on 8 September 1855.

For a brief period during the railway war the W&S line had taken on a role of importance just as its promoters had anticipated. During 1858 the SHC&RC and the MS&LR considered leasing the W&S but in autumn 1858 the railway war ended. It had cost all of the companies a great deal of money as they had cut fares and put on services in competition to each other. The ending of the railway war saw the withdrawal of the GNR London Kings Cross service. In November 1858 Warrington Arpley lost the MS&LR services between Manchester and Garston/Chester.

To counter any future threats the LNWR took out a lease of the W&S on 13 August 1859 and absorbed it fully on 1 January 1861. A lease was taken out by the LNWR on the SHC&RC Warrington & Garston line on 1 September 1860.

On 15 February 1864 a line was opened from Speke Junction (to the east of Garston) to Edge Hill (Liverpool) which allowed the LNWR to run trains via the W&S



The original Latchford station seen in 1889. The station closed on 10 July 1893 when all traffic was switched to the Latchford viaduct line which had been brought into use for goods services in February 1893.

to and from Liverpool. On 1 September 1864 the LNWR absorbed the SHC&RC. SHC&RC. The LNWR operated mostly local trains from Warrington Arpley but it did use the line between Garston and Timperley Junction extensively for goods services.

On 1 December 1865 the former W&S was finally connected to Stockport when the Cheshire Lines Committee (CLC) opened a line from Broadheath (Deansgate Junction) to Stockport Tiviot Dale. The CLC was a joint railway of the MS&LR, the GNR and the Midland Railway (MR). The CLC had obtained running rights over the line between Garston and Broadheath, and they had taken over the Garston & Liverpool Railway (opened 1 May 1864) giving them a route between Stockport and Liverpool. One of the CLC partners was the MS&LR, so a route was also available between Manchester and Liverpool via Warrington Arpley and the CLC introduced passenger services onto the lines; consequently Warrington Arpley was served by trains of the LNWR and the CLC partners. Passengers could travel either to Liverpool Lime Street by LNWR or Liverpool Brunswick by CLC. Journeys could be made to Manchester Oxford Road by LNWR or CLC. They could also reach Stockport by CLC. Trains to more distant locations were operated by the GNR, the MS&LR and the MR.

Once again the rivalry between companies had an impact on the W&S line. The LNWR did all that it could to inconvenience the CLC trains. This resulted in the CLC

building its own line between Garston and Manchester, with a branch to Stockport. The line opened in two stages on 1 August and 2 September 1873 and the former W&S lost its CLC services.

Under the LNWR the line settled down to being an important freight artery and a secondary passenger route. Passenger services ran between Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester London Road with some shorter workings that started or ended at Warrington Bank Quay (the second station with that name which had opened on 16 November 1868).

In 1885 the Manchester Ship Canal Company (MSCC) obtained an Act to create a major transport artery which would cut through the course of the railway at Latchford. The canal required a clearance of 75ft above the water line and the railway companies, who had lobbied hard to prevent the canal from being built, did not want swing bridges which would interfere with the operation of their trains. The solution at Latchford (and elsewhere) was to build a deviation to the line and a high level bridge at the canal's expense. The deviation commenced at Wilderspool and took the line up to the required 75ft above the canal. As the original Latchford station was bypassed a new facility was built on the deviation.

The deviation was completed by February 1893 and the LNWR commenced running goods trains over it. They continued to use the original line for a few weeks so as to be sure that all was well with the deviation. On 10 July 1893 passenger services



On a cold 3 January 1979 train 8Z46 is seen heading east towards the Latchford viaduct (also known as the high level bridge). At the head of the train was class 47 locomotive number 47 193. Photo by Arnie Furniss

were switched to the deviation line and the original Latchford station was closed. The line was then cut a short distance to the east of the station and the canal was excavated. The Manchester Ship Canal opened in 1894.

The December 1895 timetable showed 14 up and 15 down passenger trains Monday-to-Friday over the former W&S. There was an extra train in each direction on Saturdays and 3 trains each way on Sundays. Compared to the numbers of freight trains running over the line at this time the number of passenger services was tiny.

On 1 January 1923 the former W&S became part of the London Midland & Scottish Railway (LMS).

During the Second World War passenger services were reduced to allow more freight trains and other war traffic to run. After the war the number of passenger services did not return to pre-war levels.

On 1 January Latchford became part of British Railways London Midland Region. The summer 1948 timetable showed only 9 trains in each direction on weekdays



Broadheath Junction looking east in 2 February 1956. The original W&S route was the line seen branching off to the left. It connected to the MSAJR line at Timperley Junction. The line seen continuing eastwards had opened on 1 December 1865 and connected the W&S line to the CLC at Skelton Junction. Photo from the Signalling Records Society

with a couple of extra workings on Saturdays. By 1953 there were still 9 trains each way Monday-to-Friday. On Saturdays there were retimed workings but still only 9 trains each way.

In the late 1950s diesel multiple units were tried on the line but their presence was short-lived and steam was responsible for all workings by 1960. The September 1960 time table showed only 6 up and 6 down workings Monday-to-Friday. On Saturdays there was an extra down train.

None of the stations from Warrington Arpley to Broadheath were significantly modernised by British Railways, and enamel totems were never installed. Most of them remained gas-lit. This absence of investment was perhaps justified when in 1959 British Railways proposed the withdrawal of the local passenger services between Ditton Junction and Broadheath, and this eventually took place on 10 September 1962. Passenger trains continued to pass through in the form of a nightly Liverpool to York Mail train and summer Saturday holiday trains between Yorkshire and North Wales. The mail was diverted to another route in 1965 and the holiday trains had ceased by the end of the 1960s.

Despite the withdrawal of passenger services the line continued to be very busy. In the 1970s there were numerous coal trains from Yorkshire that ran to both Garston Dock and to Fiddlers Ferry along with their corresponding empties workings. In the eastbound direction there were many oil trains that came from Stanlow. Other traffic included cement and a wide variety of mixed goods.



Thelwall station looking east in the early 1970s. An MGR coal train train for Fiddlers Ferry Power Station is seen heading west towards its destination.

In 1980 motorway works near to Stockport Tiviot Dale damaged a tunnel leading to a temporary closure that ended up becoming permanent. Much of the former W&S traffic, including the Fiddlers Ferry trains, used the line through Tiviot Dale when travelling to or from the Woodhead route. These trains had to be diverted to run via Stockport Edgeley.

On 17 July 1981 the Woodhead line itself was closed and services were diverted away to other routes which did lessen the importance of the W&S line. It did however remain relatively busy despite the closures and diversions.

In the early 1980s structural problems were discovered with the high level bridge and rather than spend the money British Rail decided to close the line between Latchford and Skelton Junction and divert its traffic to other routes. The last scheduled services ran on 7 July 1985.

The W&S remained in situ for a few years after closure but in the summer of 1988 track- lifting trains began their sad task. A short section of the line survived the closure. It is the section between Warrington Arpley and Latchford which was retained to allow freight trains to perform a reverse move. **Paul Wright**



The 'end of the line'. The only section of the former W&S line that still survives is the section between Warrington Arpley and a point a few hundred metres from Latchford on both the original and the Latchford viaduct lines. This view shows the eastern end of the line on the viaduct route in March 2011. The W&S has been retained at this location to facilitate running round of freight trains. A move made necessary because of the closure of the line as a through route in July 1985. Photo by John Wilson

Book Review - Sojourn's of a Railway Signalman by Tony Cook

Sojourn's of a Railway Signalman



Anthony John Cook

8D member and ex railway signalman Tony Cook has recently self-published a book. The book is called '*Sojourn's of a Signalman*' and in it Tony recalls his signalling career.

Tony started his working life in 1947 at Edge Hill No 13 box as a booking lad. He went on to work in eight of the north-west's signal boxes before retirement in the mid 1990's.

Tony was the last signalman to work the British Alkali box, between Carterhouse and Fidlers Ferry. He also worked in Ditton Junction No1 and Widnes West Deviation to name but a few.

The book details not only the operation of many mechanical signal boxes within the 8D area, but also the rich history associated with them. Colleagues and characters feature heavily within the pages with many amusing anecdotes along with some unusual situations faced during the working day. The decline of mechanical signalling within the region is evident throughout the book with the switch to Power Signal Boxes.

The 8D Association were proud to supply many of the 200 photographs reproduced within the book, and to compliment these Tony has included over 50 signalling diagrams. Tony has supplied the Association with several copies of the book and they can be purchased at our indoor meetings or by contacting Lee Woods; they are available at a reduced price of £17.00 instead of the usual £19.99 and a hardback version will be available in the near future.

Tony has also passed on some important information for any budding authors out there on the publishing of books, and if anyone is thinking of doing so it would be well worth a read and could save you a lot of time and money. If anyone would like a copy of the information please contact me through the 8dassociation@sky.com email address. **Terry Callaghan**

From the Archive

Two gems this month from Clock Face Down Sidings a location that the editor believes has not been seen as an image before in print. The photos were taken by Dave Hughes a BR signalman who lived in St Helens. They were donated to the 8D Association by his widow.



Looking north from Clock Face Down Sidings signal box in the early 1960s when the former St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway was still a thriving freight artery. By the end of the decade there would only be a single track at this location. Photo by Dave Hughes



Another view at Clock Face Down Sidings most likely in the mid-1960s. A train of Ford Anglia cars is seen heading north while a BR Standard locomotive shunts wagons in the sidings. Photo by Dave Hughes

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Events Programme

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.**

10.00- Saturday 11th April 2015 – Visit to the Warrington & Stockport Railway – A walk along the former Warrington & Stockport Railway in the Lymm area. **Meet at the Ranger Station (Site of the Lymm station), Statham Avenue (off Whitbarrow Road) Lymm, Cheshire.**

19.00 – Thursday 21 May 2015 – Rainford Branch site visit – A guided walk looking at what survives of the St Helens and Rainford Junction line. **Meet at Rainford Junction station.**

13.00 - Sunday 7 June 2015 – Visit to the Warrington & District Model Engineering Society – An opportunity to see scale model real steam locomotives in action on a purpose built track in Daresbury. **Meet by Ring a Bells pub on the old Chester Road in Daresbury village.**

Saturday 13 June 2015 – Visit to the Wapping Tunnel – As guests of the Friends of Williamsons Tunnels we are able to go into the world's oldest main line railway tunnel. The tunnel was part of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway and was completed in 1829. Members need to book onto this trip. Contact Paul Wright on 0151 630 5132.

12.00 – Saturday 18 July – Rail Ale Trip to Chester – A tour of some of Chester's finest pubs with some railway interest thrown in. These events are an excellent opportunity for members to socialise and share interests. **Meet at Chester (General) station by W H Smiths.**



At the time of going to press we are trying to organise a trip to the former Warrington Dallam Locomotive Shed. Should we succeed we will notify members by email or telephone and we will post details on the website.

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

The December competition was correctly guessed by Rod Dixon, Arthur Turner and Brian Tighe. The location was looking north away from Farnworth and Bold.

NEXT JOURNAL PUBLISHED 1 June 2015