

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 8 Number 4 – December 2018



Canada Dock Goods Station

The very last train to from Canada Dock Goods station is seen as it departs for Edge hill on 3 September 1982.

Photo by Alan Robinson

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Contents

1. Editorial
2. Society News
4. News Round Up
9. Memories of Birkenhead Motive Power Depot – Part 6
14. A Journey from Rainford Junction to Garston
17. Early Visits to Cheshire – Chris Lewis
22. From the Archive
23. Events

Editor



Left: Ivatt 2MT locomotive 41237 heads south through Widnes Dock Junction with a short train consisting of one box van and three chemical tanks in the early-1960s. Photo by Ben Brooksbank

Another year draws to a close. Once again we have had some excellent visits,

walks and talks. Hopefully the programme that we put on continues to be of interest to our membership, but suggestions are always welcome. Many of you have made suggestions that have been incorporated into the programme, or will be at some point in the future.

The association is completely reliant upon its members and it will only continue in the way it has through active participation. Since the association was started in 2010 Joe Cowley has been our chair. Joe has done an excellent job as the figurehead of the association, but he will be standing down at this year's AGM. That means we will be looking for a new chair. If you fancy the job please let us know.

As has become my custom in the December editions of On Shed, I will wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. **Paul Wright**

Society News

8D Association 2018 AGM

The 2019 AGM will take place at the Select Security Stadium on Saturday 19 January 2019 at 10.00. The AGM will be followed by a railway quiz and a buffet lunch.

Long standing chair Joe Cowley will be standing down at this year's AGM and will not be seeking re-election, therefore a new chair will have to be found. If there are any members who would like to stand for this, or any of the other committee posts, please send your nomination to the Secretary at the_8d_association@yahoo.co.uk or telephone Paul Wright on 0151 630 5132.

8D Visit to Warrington & District Model Engineering Society



Roy Allen's magnificent class 4 2-6-4T locomotive was a star attraction during the 8D Association visit to the Warrington & District Model Engineering Society at Daresbury on 2 September 2018. Photo by Neil Wilson

Members of the 8D Association enjoyed another visit to the Warrington & District Model Engineering Society at Daresbury on Sunday 2 September 2018. As always we were made to feel very welcome and there were journeys aplenty around the circuit of the groups impressive mixed gauge line.

First Train from Halton Junction to Frodsham Junction in Over two Decades



The mock-up of a class 777 EMU is seen at Liverpool Lime Street station on Saturday 10 November 2018. Photo by Paul Wright

The Merseyrail mock-up of the new Class 777 emu was on display at Liverpool Lime Street station from the 5th to the 18th of November. This had previously

been on display at the Pacific Road workshop of the Merseyside Tram Preservation Society during October

No Halton Curve Service Until May 2019

Transport for Wales have announced that the Liverpool Lime Street - Chester service due to commence on the 9 December 2018 will not now start until the 12 May 2019 due to a lack of suitable rolling stock. Timings, for what would have been the start of the service, had already been released by Network Rail.

Transport for Wales have advised that when the service does commence, at least two trains will be extended to run through to Wrexham General.

New trains for the CLC from December

Northern Rail have confirmed that due to the delay in commencing its regional express services (they will now not start until at least May 2019), the first Class 195 DMUs, which were intended to be introduced on the new Chester to Leeds via Manchester Victoria service (with the December timetable change), will now enter service between Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester Airport via Warrington Central, from December 2018.

The new trains will be a welcome sight for passengers on the CLC route, especially as during the month of October several Newcastle Heaton depot based Class 142 units began operating stopping services. On Wednesday 3 October 142.022 was seen at Liverpool South Parkway on the 12.16 Manchester Oxford Road to Liverpool Lime Street service. On Friday 19 October 142.071 was the rear unit on the 17.16 Manchester Oxford Road to Liverpool Lime Street.

Revenue Earning Freight on the Low level – On a Sunday

On the evening of Sunday 28 October 2018 something which has not occurred for a long time took place, when a revenue earning freight train traversed the low level line between Ditton Junction and Fiddlers Ferry on a Sunday.

The Ditton to Neuss aluminium train on a Sunday runs via Runcorn and Crewe, but on this particular day was diverted to Arpley Yard via the low level line, where it stabled until Monday, when the wagons were attached to that evening's service to Neuss.

Football Specials Run Fast

On Sunday 11 November 2018, for the Premier League football match between Liverpool and Fulham, Virgin Trains provided Pendolino sets to operate two additional trains between London Euston and Liverpool Lime Street. Running as reporting numbers 1T10 and 1Z63, they departed Euston at 08.00 & 08.10 closely followed by 1F10 the 08.15 service train to Lime Street. This meant that there were three trains from Euston to Liverpool in the space of 15 minutes.

The Pendolino set which operated 1T10 returned as empty stock from Lime Street to Manchester Piccadilly at 11.04, operating as 5T41 running via Runcorn and Crewe.

The second Pendolino returned to Euston as 1T54, the 15.21 additional service from Lime Street. Scheduled to run non-stop in 2 hours and 9 minutes, the set completed the journey in 1 hour 54 minutes at an average speed of 101.5 miles per hour, representing possibly the fastest journey ever by train between Liverpool and London.

New Home for Navigation Bell



The navigation fog bell is seen in its new home at the Brindley Theatre on 11 October 2018. Photo by Paul Wright

After spending 150 years exposed to the elements the navigation fog bell which had once been a feature of the Runcorn Railway Bridge (Ethelfleda bridge) was

unveiled to the public at the Brindley Theatre on 10 October 2018. The bell was unveiled on the 150th anniversary of the official opening ceremony of the Runcorn railway bridge. The navigation bell, which used to sound when there was fog to warn approaching ships of the viaduct's location, was removed as part of the £6m restoration of the viaduct (*as reported in On Shed Vol 8 No 2*).

Helena Williams, scheme project manager at Network Rail said: "Given the bell was situated 100ft above the river, we used a helicopter to remove it so it could be safely whisked away for restoration.

"As the bell was no longer in use, it was restored and the put on display in the Brindley Theatre to be mark the vital role it played in helping ships safely navigate the River Mersey.

"The ongoing restoration of the Britannia railway bridge, as part of the Great North Rail Project, will help keep it safe and in use for decades to come."

Halton Junction Signal Box Demolition



The LNWR Type 4 box at Halton Junction being reduced to rubble on 26 August 2018.

During an August Bank Holiday weekend possession Halton Junction signal box was demolished and all traces of the box that dated back to July 1897 were swept away. Halton Junction is now once again bi-directional which will allow a Liverpool lime Street – Chester

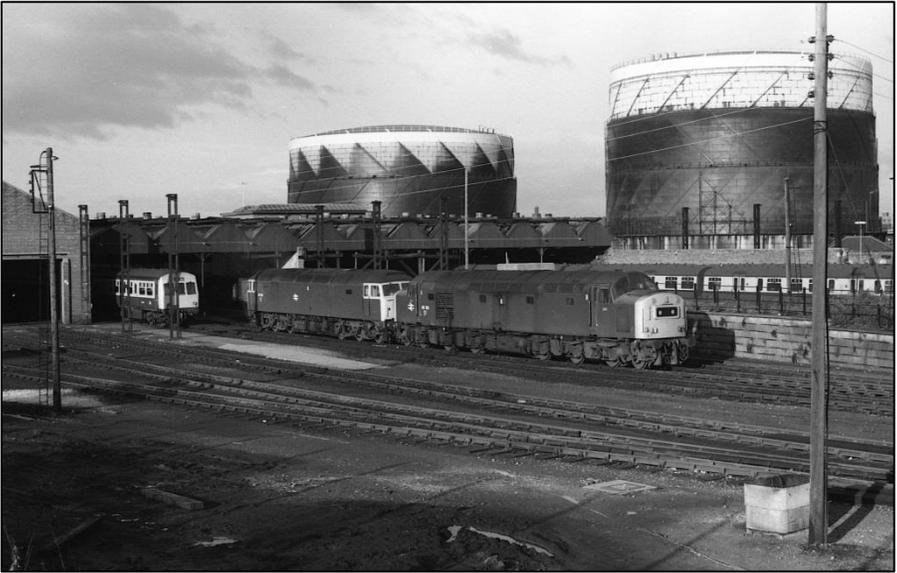
service to commence in May 2019. The last time that trains had been able to travel southbound towards Frodsham Junction before the recent works was in 1994.

'Ruby Vampire' Railtour Derailment

On Sunday 15 October 2018 there was to be a rare visit of a locomotive hauled passenger train to the Merseyrail Wirral and Northern lines. The train was a Branch Line Society rail tour called the 'Ruby Vampire'. Top and tailed by a class 33, and a class 47, the train never made it to the Merseyrail system as it became derailed at Dee Marsh Down sidings.

The train was travelling towards West Kirby when it was derailed. The rear coach was still on the rails so it was disconnected from the rest of the train and used to ferry passengers back to Wrexham.

Memories of Birkenhead Motive Power Depot – Part 6



Birkenhead Mollington Street shed in 1983. DMUs were stationed at the depot for use on the Rock Ferry – Chester/Helsby services.

In Part 5 of these articles I mentioned the `Mersey Ballast` diagram that we had at Mollington Street and what work was carried out, in particular, during the construction of the `Liverpool Loop` line in the mid-1970s.

It is worth mentioning that in my time at Mollington Street there was only one serious incident to occur involving the `Mersey Ballast`, and it occurred in 1976 between Hamilton Square and Liverpool James Street stations. The exact location was on the `up` line (Liverpool direction) between the `River Bed` and James Street station. The ruling gradient on both `up` and `down` lines is 1 in 27.

I cannot now recall who the driver was but the guard was Brian Arkle, of Mollington Street, who is now sadly no longer with us, but who became the most important `player` in this incident. A Class 08 shunting locomotive had arrived on-site with two `Salmon` type bogie vehicles and a brake van. The rear `Salmon` vehicle had a single 60ft track panel on it, and the plan was to use this to replace an `in situ` track panel on the `up` line.

To facilitate this task, the brake van was detached and secured about 25 yards to the rear of the train. This was done to make the `lift` easier for the driver/operator of a Twin-Jib Tracklayer, which had been brought in earlier by a Class 47 locomotive on the `down` line. The tracklayer was to work under its own power for the `lift`, with the Class 47 locomotive left stabled in James Street station's `down` platform.



DMUs at Chester depot. It was from here that a Birkenhead Mollington Street driver collected the Park Royal DMU that would be destined to lose its door at Ledsham. When this view was taken, from a diverted Liverpool Lime Street – Paignton train in August 1978, there was a proliferation of Metro Cammell DMUs. Photo by Paul Wright

The Twin-Jib Tracklayer was to work independently on the `down` line and would lift out the redundant track panel on the `up` line, between the brake van and the rearmost `Salmon` vehicle (*the one with the replacement track panel on it*), and then lift this panel over the replacement panel, and place it on the other `Salmon` vehicle nearest to James Street Station and the Class 08 locomotive.

The lift went well but as the Twin-Jib Tracklayer lifted out the redundant track panel from the ballast on the `up` line, it suddenly started to move towards the `River Bed` on the `down` line – complete with the track panel secured to both the out swung jibs and in the air, about 12ft above the ballast. It ran out of control towards the `River Bed`, and what happened next was quite dramatic, to say the least...

The Hamilton Square end of the out swung track panel struck the stabled brake van on the `up` line and, in doing so, the momentum of the out of control Twin-Jib Tracklayer caused the rails on the out swung jibs to pass through the windows of the brake van *quite literally* from one side of it to the other – *causing the sleepers to be piled up on the brake van veranda at the James Street end.*

The force of this impact caused the track panel to be completely detached from the

out swung jibs of the Tracklayer. The Twin-Jib Tracklayer eventually came to a stand at the `River-Bed` after `see-sawing` back and forth a few times!

The brake van itself now resembled a Sedan Chair, with sleepers piled up on the veranda – amazingly the brake van was not derailed by the force of the this violent impact .

The concern after the incident was the whereabouts of guard Brian Arkle, because had he been inside the brake van and sat down in a seat near the side window `blisters`, as they were called, then it is likely he would have been decapitated. Thankfully, after the initial panic of the incident, Brian was found quite safely sat with the signalman in James Street signal box – having a cup of tea and wondering what all the fuss was about!

The brake van was eventually removed from the tunnel section complete with the track panel rails *still inside it* and stabled at Birkenhead Duke Street for an internal investigation to be carried out. Brian Arkle took a photograph of this brake van at Duke Street, and gave it to me a few years later. I was hoping to find it for inclusion with this article but to no avail, at the moment. When I eventually find it, I shall share it with 8D Association members in the 8D Journal. There will never be a photograph quite like the one Brian took of his `Sedan Chair` brake van – I just hope I can find it as it is certainly worth sharing with members!

This was a major incident, but thankfully, nothing quite like this occurred in my time at Mollington Street.

Derailments occurred to wagons and, occasionally, locomotives, but this was no surprise given the condition of the permanent way in sidings and yards at that time. The surprise was that there was not a lot more.

Some of the derailments which occurred were `self-inflicted`.

An example of this would be during a shunting movements at Birkenhead Duke Street when propelling a long train into `Klondyke` sidings, and the controlling shunter would tell the driver to stop when `you feel the block`. When the `block was felt` this usually resulted in flattening it with the leading vehicle, which would then be derailed, and the stop block was then shattered into several pieces! The stop blocks in `Klondyke` sidings were made from pieces of redundant bull head rail – they were not designed to withstand the impact of a very slow moving train, to say the least. However, when this occurred, the `offending` wagon which had become derailed was simply detached from the rest of the train and left where it stood. A red tail lamp was placed in rear of it and the rest of the train stabled close by. The breakdown gang from Mollington Street were then advised and they dealt with it when they could. The shunter and driver both submitted reports and that was about it...

The Mechanical Foreman in my time at Mollington Street was a man of the highest calibre – Harry Williams. Harry was a real gentleman who could fix anything, and



was A Park Royal
and a Derby
Lightweight DMU at
Birkenhead
Mollington Street
Shed on 14
September 1982.
Photo by Reggie
Lion

always unfailingly
polite when he
spoke to anyone.
However, he was
always more than a
little concerned if a
class of locomotive
not normally seen

at Mollington Street during my time there turned up at the depot, such as a Class 37 or even a Class 20, as he was never conversant with those types.

I remember being on night duty as the Deputy Train Crew Supervisor once, and he came into the office at about 0700 to enquire of any locomotive repairs, or of 'A' or 'B' examinations which needed to be carried out, and I told him that there was a Class 37 on the depot which had failed, and required his attention at the depot almost immediately.

Poor Harry looked very concerned indeed at this news.....

'Blimey, that's all I need, where is it?', enquired Harry.

'It's on my desk', I replied.

'What?' said Harry, looking more than a bit puzzled.

I then produced an 'OO' gauge model of a Class 37 locomotive which I had hidden beneath a few sheets of paper. *'It's got an earth fault on number two traction motor Harry, can you sort it out in time for it to leave the shed at 0730?'* (This was about the time I was to be relieved by the day turn Train Crew Supervisor).

Harry, ever the gentleman, said *'It will be ready to go at 0725'*.

Harry was well respected by everyone who knew him and this respect was magnified even more so when we found out that he was a Lancaster bomber pilot in the Second World War. He survived numerous bombing missions and was awarded a DFC and Bar. We only found this out because a driver who was a keen aircraft enthusiast saw a photograph in a book of Harry and his crew standing next to his Lancaster bomber. When he showed this to Harry, in the privacy of the Mechanical

Foreman`s office, and asked if it was him, Harry`s reply was a very humble and simple `I think so`. What a special man Harry Williams really was.....

Harry had some first class maintenance staff working with him at Mollington Street. There was Alan Daniels, Les Williams and Des Moye, to name but three, and also fitter`s mate Gerry O`Leary, who was once a fireman at Mollington Street.

I had an event with Des Moye one Saturday afternoon at Mollington Street, that was quite both remarkable and hilarious at the same time. I was carrying out duties as a Deputy Train Crew Supervisor and, in the early afternoon, I sent two drivers to Chester depot to bring back a two-car Derby lightweight diesel multiple unit (DMU), coupled up to another two-car Park Royal DMU, to Mollington Street after repair, for use on the Helsby and Chester services on the Sunday.

The drivers travelled to Chester, and reported to the Mechanical Foreman at Chester depot for instructions. They were told that the two-car Park Royal DMU was not yet ready to release from maintenance, but the two-car Derby lightweight DMU was ready to take back to Mollington Street. They decided that one would take the Derby lightweight set to Mollington Street, and the other would wait for the Park Royal set to be released. So far so good!

The driver who was to return the two-car Derby lightweight set to Mollington Street duly carried out his preparation duties, and departed Chester depot empty coaching stock (ECS) for Birkenhead, leaving the other driver to wait for the two-car Park Royal DMU. However, his preparation duties were not quite as they should have been on this occasion, and I will not name him here as he is still, thankfully, very much with us.

The other driver was Brian Henshaw, a DMU driver instructor, who had spent many years in the DMU link at Mollington Street and knew as much as anyone there about DMUs. Brian sadly passed away earlier this year.

I was waiting the arrival of the first two-car DMU to arrive at Mollington Street, having been advised by Operations Control at Lime Street what was happening. I left the office and set the route from the Green Lane end of the Shed towards No.14 road on the former Great Western steam shed, and then awaited developments back in the office. The former Great Western steam shed at Mollington Street was always used to stable DMUs in my time there.

I received a telephone call shortly afterwards from the signalman at Green Lane Junction that the first of the two-car DMUs would arrive shortly. I asked him to stop and tell the driver that the route was set, and to come straight into the former Great Western steam shed. This the driver duly did and disposed of the DMU upon arrival in the time-honoured manner, by stopping the engines, applying the handbrake, switching off all lights and removing his control key. Battery isolation switches were never switched off on DMUs.



At 11.35 on 22 May 1979 Metro Cammell (Class 101) DMU number M56333 is seen at Rock Ferry prior to its departure for Helsby. At this time services to both Helsby and Chester were worked by crews from Birkenhead Mollington Street. Photo by Martyn Hilbert

The driver was now required to walk to the office, and advise me of the unit numbers for the depot traction sheet, which was always kept on the Train Crew Supervisor's desk, and was a true record of what traction was actually stabled on the shed at any one time. It was a simple clipboard with a sheet of paper on it, and it had replaced the *'Engine & Train Arrangements Board'*, which was a feature of all Motive Power Depots in steam days. I will write more about the *'Engine & Train Arrangements Board'* we had at Mollington Street in the next article.

The driver came to the office, but had forgotten to note the two vehicle numbers, so I said *'put the kettle on'* and I'll have a walk outside and get them myself. The exercise will do me good. I walked out to the *'Western'* shed, as it was always known, and noted the first vehicle number, which was M50927 (the power car), and then noted number M52040 next to it (the trailer vehicle).

It was then I noticed something was missing.....

The secondman side of the leading vehicle, M52040, just had two leather straps hanging from where the door should be – with a couple of screws still secured to the leather straps.

The only problem was that the whole door was missing.....

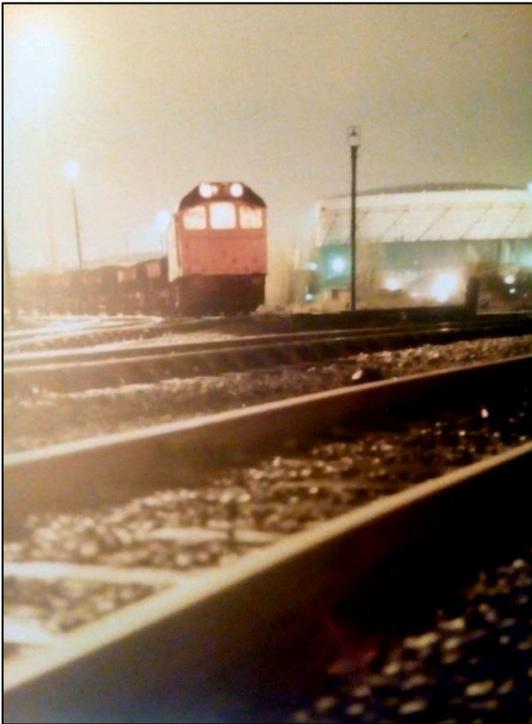
It had clearly been knocked off after it had somehow opened en-route between

Chester to Birkenhead. I quickly returned to the office and told the driver to follow me back to the DMU, which he did. I then pointed up from the ground and asked him where the door was, with some incredulity, it must be said.....

His reply?

Well, it was definitely there when I left Chester shed!

My response was less than that expected of a Deputy Train Crew Supervisor and I will leave the reader to use his own imagination what I said but it went something like *well it isn't now, is it!*, or something similar to that.



In the late evening of 21 December 1983 a ballast train is seen coming off Birkenhead Mollington Street shed with a Class 25 locomotive at its head. Photo by Reggie Lion

I returned to the office much quicker than I had sauntered out from it earlier and rang Chester depot to see if my second driver had left with the two-car Park Royal DMU, for Mollington Street. Fortunately, he had not.

I told him what had happened and asked him to keep a good look out for a DMU door somewhere on the line between Chester and Mollington Street and, if he were to spot it, stop and pick it up as it's needed at Mollington Street.

The driver, Brian Henshaw, was highly amused at this turn of events and said he would *keep a sharp lookout* for it.

After about an hour, or so, Brian turned up with the offending door in the cab of the two-car Park Royal DMU. *Here it is.*, he proudly announced. *I found it just beyond the overbridge near the site of Ledsham station, that's where it must have been knocked off.. It doesn't look too well at all.* It certainly didn't, that was for certain. Now was the time to speak to Mollington Street fitter Des Moye and use his expertise.

I called Des out of his cabin (fitters did not have offices) and let him have a look at the offending door, telling him what had happened as he did so. He couldn't contain his laughter and said it wasn't a fitter that was wanted to fix the door but a glazier and a panel beater. *Leave it with me, I'll see what I can do*, said Des.

After about two hours of banging and hammering in the diesel depot workshop, Des had not only knocked out most of the dents in the door panel but had replaced the 'drop leaf' window with a spare he had found on top of his locker. It's best not to ask what it was doing there. He refitted the door back on the vehicle and had also found some BR corporate blue paint to cover up most of the dents he had hammered out. Des was a fitter (panel beater) par excellence.

For those 8D members who travelled by DMU in those days, you may recall seeing a two-car Derby lightweight set occasionally at Liverpool Lime Street, as this particular DMU was based at Allerton Depot, but was often at Chester, for use between there, Rock Ferry, and Helsby, and what made it stand out was where Des Moye had carried out his 'panel beating' job, as he had placed over the slightly visible 'ripple' dents on the door a small white BR 'double-arrow' corporate transfer to further hide the dents.

This DMU was in service for many years with the 'double arrow' transfer on just that one door, and when I went to work on the Western Region some years later I saw it at Swansea Landore Traction Maintenance Depot, as it was then being used in West Wales and on the Central Wales Line, having been transferred from the London Midland Region. The legacy of Des Moye lived on long after he carried out that excellent piece of work – and I was the only Western Region Manager who had any idea how it came to be there.

My link with Birkenhead Mollington Street was always there every time I saw it in service in West Wales. This incident was never reported to Operations Control at Lime Street because of Des Moye's skill in repairing a door which would have been 'written off', under normal circumstances. As far as the driver was concerned, I had a 'suitable conversation' with him at the time, and I left it at that. The door was clearly 'on the catch' when he left Chester, and he had failed to notice it for the simple reason that he had not walked around the DMU during his preparation of it at Chester.

A lesson learned – but with grateful thanks to Des Moye.

I'll have another escapade to inform readers about involving Des and another DMU arriving on the former Great Western steam shed at Mollington Street – only on this occasion, concealing it from the Shedmaster (Assistant Area Manager Train Crews) did not work out as planned. **To be Continued**

Dennis Flood

A Journey from Rainford Junction to Garston – Rod Dixon



Looking north along the Rainford branch at the site of Old Mill Lane halt in the late 1950s. A diverted passenger service is seen heading south.

At a recent Farmers Market in Rainford I saw some old photos of Rainford Junction and Rainford Village stations and it reminded me of some of the work we had from Sutton Oak Depot in the late 1950s to the early 1960s.

I was a Fireman at the time at Sutton Oak, and we had a roster that required my Driver and I to book on at about 5.30am. The Driver would obtain some bus tokens from the Depot Foreman, and then we would walk from Sutton Oak to St Helens town centre. We were allowed half an hour to complete the walk which was 1¼ miles.

From St Helens town centre we would catch a bus to Rainford Village, which would take about another half hour. At Rainford Village there was a station and a signal box, but by this time the station was closed (it last saw passenger services in 1951). We walked from Rainford Village to Randle Junction signal box which was about half way between Rainford Junction and the Rainford Village signal boxes. By the time we got to Randle Junction it was about 7.15 to 7.30. We had been on duty for two hours and we hadn't been near to a train.

We waited in Randle Junction box for the train that we would be relieving. This would be a coal train that came from Mirfield or Healy Mills, and went to Garston. The train consisted of a Super "D" class locomotive, or if we were lucky a W.D Austerity class 8, with a train of 35 or 40 unfitted coal wagons. With this type of train the driver had to be very skilled with starting away and more importantly stopping.



Rainford Village station in 1949. A goods train is seen passing south. It would have just come off the single line section and the signalman is seen waiting to collect the staff. The Healey Mills – Garston train worked by Rod Dixon would have handed over the Randle Junction – Rainford Junction staff in exactly this way. Photo from Stations UK

When the train eventually arrived, we would relieve the Manchester crew then we started on our way. It was a single line from Randle to Rainford Village worked with a staff which we gave up at the Village signal box. From Rainford Village it was a normal double line to Gerard's Bridge signal box where the branch joined the main line into St Helens.

The branch line was level from Rainford to St Helens so it gave me a chance, as a fireman, to clean some clinker out of the fire and pull some coal forward in the tender.

In St Helens Shaw Street station, if we had time between trains, we would take on water. Then I had to get the fire up because it was a steady climb up to Sutton Oak Junction. On that part of our journey we passed Sutton Oak shed where we had set out from hours earlier. After Sutton oak Junction it was a very steep climb up to Clock Face, sometimes trains would not reach the top and would need the resident bank engine to assist by pushing them from the rear.

If we had 35 wagons or less, we would be put into the sidings at Clock Face to make our train up to 40. If we had missed getting water at St Helens we would get it at Clock face.

We would then make our way to Farnworth & Bold signal box, where we had to stop because we had an unbraked train. There was a big warning sign at Farnworth & Bold which instructed crews to pin down wagon brakes owing to a very steep descent towards Widnes. The fireman or guard had to pin down brakes on about 10

or more wagons to descend that bank down to Widnes Ann Street signal box where the side brakes would be lifted.

By the time we had taken off the wagon brakes at Ann Street it would be 11.00 or 11 30. From Ann Street we travelled on towards Ditton Junction and then via the slow lines we went on to Garston. At this time there were other trains both from Warrington and Crewe going to Garston or Edge Hill so we would be in a queue and it was usually about 12.00 or 12.30 pm by the time we would get into the sidings at Speke Junction.

Once in the sidings we uncoupled our locomotive so that we could take it onto Speke Shed. This involved us taking the loco round a triangle to turn it for its return work. Once on the shed we would leave it to be coaled and the fire cleaned.

My Driver and I reported to the depot Forman to make our way home as passengers, which meant walking from the depot to Garston station. From there we had a 20 minute train journey to Liverpool Central station. A short walk from Central to Lime Street station was followed by another train journey as passengers this time to either St Helens Shaw Street or St Helens Junction which ever was the first to be served. It was then a half an hour's walk from either station back to Sutton Oak shed getting back there about 4.30 or 5 pm. In all we had been away for 11 to 11½ hours and we had covered only about 40 miles. That journey today by road would be about one hour. **Rod Dixon**



Ann Street looking south in 1966. A train has just crossed the level crossing and is about to take the connection to the deviation. It is at this point where Rod Dixon would have taken the brakes off that had been pinned down at Farnworth & Bold. There had been a halt at this location which closed in June 1951. Photo by Richard Mercer

Early Visits to Cheshire – Chris Lewis



A British Railways 9F locomotive is seen passing through Chester on a fitted tank train in 1967. Oil trains, similar in appearance to this, would have been a common sight during Chris Lewis's visits to his brother's house at Ince. Photo by Les Fifoot

I was born in India and brought up in Portsmouth. My brother was twenty years older than me. He left Cambridge University in about 1954 and moved his family to work for Shell at its Stanlow Oil Refinery. He lived in Aureol Gardens in Ince. This was a Shell private housing estate, within the site boundary but a little distance from the operational area. Unusually I can find nothing about this on the Internet. From then on all my family holidays were spent there.

My father was a "track basher" before his time, but for the first three years we used the Bournemouth to Birkenhead train from Southampton to Chester. This was a Bulleid Pacific as far as Oxford, there giving the train over to an inferior locomotive, a Castle shedded at Oxford or Chester. I remember getting off this train at Gobowen to say I had been to Wales and being shouted at to get back on by a porter. It was only later I found that it was not in Wales, but it sounded as if it was. My brother would wait at Chester General station to drive us to Aureol Gardens. He was never on the platform but my father knew he would be in the bar. I remember two of the Castles which hauled our trains, 5012 Berry Pomeroy Castle shedded at Oxford and 5033 Broughton Castle from Chester shed. 5033 appears to have had a long stay at Chester West Shed, as it was there in 1948 (according to records), and still there in the late 50s. In 1957 there were four Castles shedded there out of a total of over 50 Great Western Locomotives. In addition Birkenhead had an allocation including

Granges. Impossible to believe now.

Because the Shell Estate was away from normal bus routes Shell provided an hourly free bus service to Ellesmere Port and to Chester, the latter on three afternoons a week. These buses used the Refinery Service Road and passed the numerous sidings serving the vast industrial estate, mainly Shell. British Railways used diesel shunters, 12036 and 12037 there, and the Manchester Ship Canal Company used two steam tanks, but the numbers escape me. I remember lying in bed in Aureol Gardens and hear the strange hooter sounds from freight locomotives working throughout the night.

Each year we used the Shell bus to get to Ellesmere Port for a day out. I remember at least once catching a push pull train at Ellesmere Port, before the level crossing was replaced by the road bridge (1961). We went to Rock Ferry maybe changing at Hooton. Obviously we then went under the Mersey to Liverpool Central Low Level. Unfortunately, I was not really interested in Central High Level, as it only had tank engines in my experience, and surprisingly I don't recall visiting Lime Street station. During the visit we went into Lewis's to ride on its escalator, a novelty then. The return was on the Mersey Ferry to Woodside. I remember catching a tram from near Lewis's down to the Pier Head. I also remember one year the train from Woodside was a Western Pannier Tank and we always passed Great Western steam hauled freight trains on the Hooton to Birkenhead stretch. One year, my father and I made an additional journey to Liverpool to ride on the Overhead Railway. I think this was the last year it operated so 1956. I remember waiting at the Pier Head station, going into the tunnel to Dingle and then seeing a motorised electric Baggage Car M28496M at Seaforth station. I can just about remember looking at the ships in the docks.



Birkenhead Woodside station seen in 1962. By this time DMUs had taken over most of the local services.

My favourite spot to watch trains was the City Walls in Chester. My mother would leave me there for the afternoon

until she saw a man beckoning me to come to talk to him. She shouted at him, reported it to the police and banned me from going there. Until then it was an ideal spot for train spotting with one of the four tracks always having trains signalled.

70048 went through on the summer afternoon Irish Mail. A lady with a pram told me its name but I said it did not have a name. Later I found it had recently been named. This dates the occasion as summer 1958. Apologies to that lady.

For our next journey north my father decided we would take a different route, via London. This must have been in 1958 or 1959 as our train, the Midday Scot stopped at both Rugby and Crewe where we changed to be hauled by a Britannia to Chester. I remember going into the Great Hall in Euston and then found Duke of Gloucester waiting on the Scot. It did not do much over 60 mph but still arrived in Crewe on time. A Coronation replaced it at Crewe. After our holiday we returned via the Emerald Isle Express, about 09.50 off Chester. It was hauled by 46127, The Old Contemptibles, a Holyhead locomotive. The following train using the same platform went to Manchester a few minutes later. The platform had a calling on signal so as the Emerald Isle pulled out it followed a few yards behind it. I thought this surprising even then.

In 1960 my brother worked a few days in London. So it was arranged for my father to take me to London and he and I travelled on the Emerald Isle Express to Chester. The empty stock was brought in by 70044, Earl Haigh. It banked us out but we were hauled by a Peak. Perhaps the diesel was not trusted! It is a good quiz question on which route were the Peaks first based?

My next visit to Chester with my father was a more roundabout route, probably again in 1960. We came via London, but this time out of St Pancras with a Peak via Leicester to Trent. We changed here onto a St Pancras to Manchester Central train taking longer as it came via Melton Mowbrey. From Manchester we travelled to Liverpool Central (a DMU). Little did I know when we stopped at Widnes (North) how much of my life I would live there.

In 1961 my father bought us Welsh Roundabout tickets. (I still have one of the tickets.) We took two days to get from Portsmouth to Chester, and two days to get back, starting the return journey by Great Western locomotive to Ruabon, then train to Barmouth Junction. We covered many closed lines such as Crumin Viaduct. Another year yet another route, the midday Sheffield Pullman out of Kings Cross. The experimental D0280 Falcon had just taken over from steam so it must have been 1962. Obviously we then went from Sheffield Victoria to Manchester Piccadilly and then on the CLC line to Chester Northgate.

What else can I remember about this area in the late 50s and 60s. Going from Chester to Llandudno Junction then to Blaenau Ffestiniog. Bus to Tan-y-Bwlch then Ffestiniog Railway to Portmadoc, train to Afonwen, Bangor and return to Chester. A class 5 pulled us from Llandudno Junction to Chester. We were in the first compartment with the window open and we were very wet when the locomotive picked up water from water troughs. This would have been 1958 or 1959.

Telling my sister-in-law that my mother would let me go by myself to Manchester



With a grubby 'black 5' at its head a Paddington to Birkenhead Woodside service is seen pulling away from Rock Ferry in 1967. Photo by Chris Coulter

Exchange/Victoria when I was about 11 (knowing she would not) and spending an afternoon there. Delightful for a Southern trainspotter!

My brother driving us to the newly opened Widnes Runcorn Bridge in 1961 and parking on the Bridge and walking round on the pavement. I think the redundant Transporter Bridge would still be there but I cannot remember crossing the road and seeing it. What a shame!

Walking to Ince station, catching a train to Helsby on a summer Saturday and seeing 70045 Lord Rowallan go through with a Manchester to Penychain train. I assume it changed locomotive in Bangor. I followed it to Chester for an hour, then Crewe and going around the sheds and works there. I have somewhere a graph I drew with the trains' schedules from Chester to North Wales on a Summer Saturday.

Spending an afternoon in Dunham Hill (No 1) Signal Box with a friend of my brother who worked for British Railways.

I remember, probably in 1961, travelling from Chester to Crewe, seeing a Coronation go straight through on the Red Rose to Liverpool. Then catching the following electric hauled train and taking Weaver Junction at 60mph. That was the first time I had been on the diverging route using a (relatively for then) high speed points.

Having a North-West Railover and most days starting off to Rock Ferry and Liverpool Exchange usually to Preston. We then went to various places often first travelling via Carlisle. A class 40 would grind over Shap at under 30 mph. The usual

return was on the early evening train from Scotland that split at Preston (hailed again by a class 40) but the Liverpool section had a class 5 from Preston and belted through Ormskirk to Exchange. On the last day of the week we had aimed to travel north to Lancaster and then the coast line to Carlisle. However the electric train in front of us broke down in Birkenhead and we missed the train from Liverpool. So we went to Southport and then steam direct from there to Preston, then Morecambe to ride on its old electric trains. Despite several attempts over the years I only finally did the Coast line about ten years ago!!

In 1963 the Western region lost its lines north of Banbury to the London Midland Region. It had dieselised the Paddington to Birkenhead trains with Western class diesels but these reverted to steam north of Shrewsbury (Black 5s) and had the last 60 mph steam train between Gobowen and Chester until mid-1967. I was on the last one, the day two steam specials operated from Paddington to Birkenhead on the last day this was a regular route for trains. I came north often to travel on it and the 16.35? Fridays only steam train from Manchester Victoria to Leeds which probably finished about the same time.



When Chris Lewis travelled over the CLC en-route for Ince in 1960 DMUs had already made their presence felt. In this view dating from 1964 Derby built DMUs are seen at Hough green station. Photo by Gordon Howarth

I have just led a tour for Railtrail mainly visiting the canals of Cheshire and around Llangollen. We stayed in the Queen Hotel opposite Chester (not General anymore!).

I was surprised to see the old bar is still a bar. There is only one bay left where my train from Southampton reversed many years before. I looked at the house my brother bought in Hoole before he moved to Norway for Shell. Visiting the Boat Museum in Ellesmere Port brought back memories of using the station and the Shell bus. Aeriol Gardens was demolished many years ago to make room for more oil tanks. We travelled to Birkenhead and looked at the site of Woodside Station and then the Ferry to the Pier Head giving one of the best views in the World. We returned by Merseyrail to Chester from James Street. Another day we travelled on the Llangollen to Corwen line and back remembering when I did it from Ruabon to Barmouth. I don't know whether those in my Group liked so much nostalgia but they certainly got it!!

From the Archive



On a cold and snowy winters day class 25 locomotive number 25 277 is seen at Green Lane Junction. All is not as it seems as the locomotive was sitting on the ballast having become derailed when leaving Birkenhead Mollington Street depot.



Road users are inconvenienced at Ann Street in 1961 as Ivatt 2MT locomotive number 41244 propels some insulated wagons over the level crossing. At that time the locomotive was allocated to Widnes Locomotive Shed (8D). It had entered service with British Railways at Rhyl Shed (7D) on 11 August 1951 and

was withdrawn from Aintree Shed (8L) on 22 October 1966. Photo by Gordon Howarth

Events Programme

19.00 – Tuesday 11 December 2018 – The Vulcan Works - An illustrated talk by Keith Naylor. - **Halton Stadium (Widnes Rugby Ground), Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

19.00 – Tuesday 8 January 2018 – Australia and New Zealand by rail – An illustrated talk by Chris Lewis looking at the railways of Australia and New Zealand. Chris's talks are always very interesting and popular with 8D members. **Halton Stadium (Widnes Rugby Ground), Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes**

10.00 – Saturday 19 January 2019 – The 8D AGM –The 8D Association AGM will take place. After the formal proceedings there will be a railway quiz and a members buffet.. - **Halton Stadium (Widnes Rugby Ground), Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

19.00 – Tuesday 12 February 2019 – An Illustrated history of the railways of Widnes – an illustrated talk by Paul Wright - **Halton Stadium (Widnes Rugby Ground), Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

19.00 – Tuesday 12 March 2019 – Merseyside & North Wales - An illustrated talk by Geoff Morris. - **Halton Stadium (Widnes Rugby Ground), Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**



'Where is this' competition? (Answers to pwright964@btinternet.com) The September competition was correctly guessed by Doug Birmingham and Rod Dixon. The location was Edge Lane Junction.

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