

THE 8D ASSOCIATION

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

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Widnes Dock Junction in the mid 1960s

Looking southwest at the flat crossing that was part of Widnes Dock Junction c. mid 1960s. The original St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway runs from the bottom right to the top left of the picture and the locomotive has just joined it. The other line that formed the flat crossing is the route that linked Warrington and Garston which opened to Garston in 1852 and Warrington in 1853.

Photo by Mike Humphries.

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Editor



In the early months of 1968 an 8F Locomotive number 48622 takes a train of empty coal waggons onto the Widnes Deviation. To the left are the lines that led into Hutchinson Street Yard.

Photo by Les Fifoot.

Welcome to the March 2012 edition of On Shed. The 8D Association enters its second year and continues to go from strength to strength. We had our first AGM on the 21st of January 2012 and it was really good to see such a good turnout. The association now has over thirty members.

At the AGM one of our Members Les Fifoot delighted us with a slide show in which he showed us some of his colour pictures of the local rail scene from the late 1960s. Many of Les's pictures had not seen the light of day for decades having been stored in his attic. I will be making no apologies for publishing many of them in this and in future journals as they are most excellent and I know our readers will enjoy them.

Lots of material is now starting to turn up because of the 8D association and long may it continue. **Paul Wright**

Charter Day on the KWVR

Mel Thorley (a retired EWS driver) knows the formula for a good day out! Charter a train, ensure that the locomotive was built prior to 1925, fill it with an interesting assortment of retired railwaymen, ensure that those who want to get a turn at the regulator or on the end of a shovel do so, and then give them a fish and chip lunch! Given that the formula even allows for a few non-railwaymen to participate, I was delighted to pay my way and take up the invitation to join the train at Oxenhope on the Keighley and Worth Valley railway on Tuesday 18th October.

By way of explanation, I enjoy researching local history and I have a particular interest in sound-recording the personal accounts of railwaymen who worked in steam days. Having mentioned this to 8D member John Wilson at the time of the 8D's 'Garston & Warrington Railway Walk' in September, he put me in touch with Mel Thorley. My subsequent conversations with Mel left me in no doubt that the presence of steam day 'celebrities' meant that there were excellent opportunities for sound recording interviews at the KWVR event!

An even greater stroke of good fortune - I discovered that the locomotive booked for the day was the Midland Railway 0-6-0 No.43924. As a very young man, a friend of mine, John Atherton, had been part of the group that purchased the locomotive from Woodham's (Barry) scrapyard in 1968. Along with a fellow group member, John was on the footplate of 43924 as the locomotive was towed from South Wales to Keighley by a Brush diesel. The 22-hour journey (interrupted for a few hours for running repairs to a broken spring) took place on September 10th and 11th of that year. Colleagues will know that the departure of 43924 from the Barry scrapyard marked the start of the steam preservation movement as we now know it. At the time that the group purchased the 4F - the first to leave Barry - there was no sign of the mass exodus to come. I'm pleased to report that John was able to accompany me on the recent KWVR event, and you can imagine his pleasure at being reunited with the locomotive that, along with colleagues, he had purchased and restored, more than 40 years ago.

On the day itself, the KWVR crew of driver Trevor Reeve, fireman Ken Brindley and guard Chris Smyth were wonderful ambassadors for the company. In all respects, they were incredibly helpful. They were quick to recognise the experience and enthusiasm of those who had spent much of their working life on the footplate, and who were now just itching to take control again, albeit briefly, of a 'real' locomotive and train. Trevor and Ken made way for those who knew what they were about, and were equally obliging when it came to dealing with those of us whose experience extended no further than the occasional cab ride as a youngster armed only with a copy of Ian Allan! In the course of the day, four round trips from Oxenhope to Keighley were sufficient to accommodate driving / firing turns for all who wanted that 'footplate experience'.

For my own part, I thoroughly enjoyed the 'crack' on board the train. Retired drivers and fireman swapped tales with signalmen and permanent way staff. Some were dressed in their BR working gear - overalls, jacket and greasy cap - and all were obviously enjoying the camaraderie that exists in the extended railway family. Many had travelled

long distances for the event, and it was good to see a group of ex-Barrow Road (Bristol) staff that had come specifically to have a look at the locomotive that spent its last 3 years in service at the 82E shed. Whilst I have yet to edit several recordings, I was pleased to have the opportunity to talk to ex-driver Dave Court who had been selected for firing duties on 4472 'Flying Scotsman' on its American tour in 1969, and had more recently been at the controls of 'Tornado' on test runs.

Retired driver Ray Moore (from Stockport) was on board the charter train, and was happy to talk about his days on the footplate. I subsequently recorded an interview with Ray at his home in Cheadle during which he recalled the moments immediately prior to the tragic accident in which his colleague, driver John Axon, died in 1957. Ray had been the fireman on a Buxton-bound WD 'Austerity' on banking duty on the Stockport side of Dove Holes Summit when the runaway freight passed in the opposite direction. Ray's recollection of the incident was both detailed and fascinating.

Despite the relatively poor weather, I have no doubt that those who attended the KWVR event thoroughly enjoyed the day. I overheard many asking about arrangements for next year's reunion!

Tony Foster



***A gathering of the railwaymen and guest who attended the event on the 18th of October 2011.
Photo by Tony Foster.***

The Queen travels over the Halton Curve



The Royal Train heads north along the Halton Curve on the 1st of December 2011. The train was on route from Hooton to Liverpool Lime Street and was being driven by 8D association member and DBS Driver John Wilson.

Photo by Paul Wright.

A rare occurrence for the little used Halton Curve was a visit by the Royal Train on the 1st of December 2011. The train was carrying HM the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh to Liverpool Lime Street where they had appointments in the city and over in New Brighton. The train was driven from Hooton to Liverpool Lime Street by 8D Association Member John Wilson. From Hooton it travelled via Ellesmere Port, Helsby Junction and Frodsham Junction where it took the Halton Curve. It passed over the Halton Curve just after 09:30 and headed north to Halton Junction and onwards to Liverpool Lime Street. The Queen was scheduled to arrive at Lime Street by 10:00.

John Wilson started his career on the railways in 1983 as a YTS trainee. He found permanent employment with British Rail as in 1985. John had a period as a second man before becoming a driver at Birkenhead Central after February 1988. John moved back to Warrington in October 1988. He has been based there ever since. John first drove the Royal train in June 2002. Since then he has driven it 27 times and John holds a record for driving the royal train three times in one day.



The Queen Arrives at Liverpool Lime Street and walks into the station concourse after thanking John Wilson (left of picture in white shirt) for a smooth journey.

THE EARLY DIESEL ERA

In the 1960s many railway enthusiasts ignored the diesels that had been introduced as part of the 1955 modernisation plan little realising that they in turn would disappear from the railway scene as completely as the steam engines they replaced have. There is now (thankfully) a nostalgia for these forgotten diesels. Below are a couple of pictures by Les Fifoot showing diesels on what was still a steam age railway.



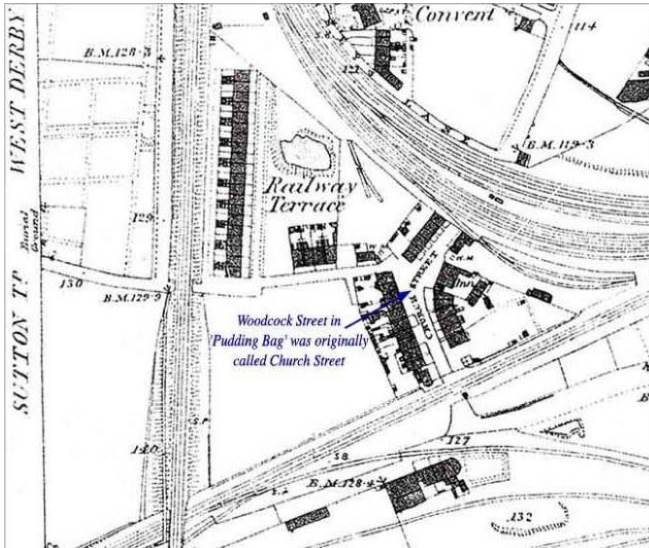
D7836 a Sulzer Type 2 Locomotive comes off the Widnes Deviation at Hutchinson Street Yard on route to Garston in 1968. Les Fifoot.



A Class 108 Derby Built DMU heads towards Runcorn running wrong line on a Liverpool Chester service in the 1960s. Les Fifoot.

The Pudding Bag

The 'Pudding Bag' district by St.Helens Junction was a close-knit, thriving community that's now long-gone. The origin of the name is that puddings, such as jam roly-poly, used to be made in narrow-necked muslin bags and the Pudding Bag houses were enclosed in a triangle composed of two sides of railway lines. It was a cul-de-sac containing **Woodcock Street** and **Railway Terrace** that had a single opening that served both as a means of ingress and exit; like a pudding bag with an opening at just one end.



1881 map of the 'Pudding Bag' district of east Sutton by St.Helens Junction

As many as two hundred people lived within Pudding Bag and their houses were built exclusively for railwaymen and their families. Originally Woodcock Street was known as Church Street, but its name was changed in 1902 to prevent confusion with the St.Helens town centre road of the same name.

Pudding Baggers had their own pub, the **Golden Cross**, which was originally known as the Golden Ball (*also possibly Church Inn*). The first landlord was **William Woodcock** and the street was later said to have been re-named after him. It's also claimed that the derivation of the pub's name was that it was the first port of call for worshippers after leaving the morning mass at St.Anne's Church nearby.

Also close by was the Providence Foundry and many workers would quench their thirsts with a pint at the pub, which in the late nineteenth century would cost them a tanner (2.5p). On 28/6/1889 in the St.Helens Lantern a correspondent referred to the Golden Cross as:

'...the home of sixpenny for the isolated denizens of Pudding Bag'



The Golden Cross pub in Woodcock Street, 'Pudding Bag', Sutton - contributed by Sutton Historic Society

In its early years with much railway traffic, life in Pudding Bag could be quite chaotic. Getting in and out meant lengthy waits at a level crossing by the Golden Cross and often residents would have to thread their way between heavy wagons to get to their homes. **William Crooks** (1795 - 1861) was a gateman at the level crossing and on May 20th, 1861 was killed whilst attempting to move some wagons off the line. An engine was shunting some other wagons into a siding and a collision took place and Crooks was knocked down and killed.

His inquest took place at the Golden Cross pub on the following day which was reported in the St.Helens Weekly News of 25th May 1861:

'On view of the body and after hearing the evidence several members of the jury expressed an opinion that the crossing was extremely dangerous and that at least an over footbridge ought to be constructed for the safety and convenience of the public, frequently the crossing was blocked up with wagons'

As a result of these recommendations, a bridge was built over the track from Woodcock Street into Penlake Lane by the Sheeting Sheds, creating a second route into Pudding Bag. The main means of access was under an arched railway bridge which was locked nightly at 11pm and all day Sunday.



The bridge that led from Woodcock Street into Penlake Lane - contributed by Geoffrey Moore

The above photograph was taken from Pudding Bag and shows the footbridge into Penlake Lane. In the background is Penlake House which used to be the home of **John Perry** who writes:

I spent all my early life from 1942 living in Penlake House with my grandparents, Mr & Mrs Doorbar, until just before its demolition. I knew nearly all the people in Woodcock Street and Railway Terrace such as the Longs, Williams, Roberts, Marsh's, Billingtons and many more. My grandfather was a foreman at the Sheeting Sheds and my father and mother also worked there. My other grandparents lived in Pavilion Cottage at the other end of Penlake Lane. If you were not known, walking through Pudding Bag felt like an ambush in the early days!

There were at least two shops in Pudding Bag. During the early years of the twentieth century years a **Mrs Caulfield** ran a grocer's shop and a **Mrs Chisnall** sold clothing, workmen's shirts, towels etc. Many of the 45 or so houses were occupied by families and each evening the field in front of Railway Terrace was full of children enjoying themselves playing hop-scotch, piggy, rounders, top-and-whip or happily skipping.

It's said that you could always tell when the coalman had been. The rear cobbled entries in Pudding Bag were so narrow that it was impossible to get a horse and cart to the coal-holes in the back yards of houses. So the coal man had to carry his sacks from the front door to the back, leaving black dust all over the furniture, carpets and kitchen shelves. Some houses shared one small brick wash-house and there was a washing rota between neighbours.

There were many characters in Pudding Bag with one known as '**Piggy**' **Brown**, because he kept pigs on the bit of land behind his house. The houses, owned by the railway company, were maintained by local builder (and undertaker) **Albert Hawley**, who could often be seen in his overalls undertaking repairs. The houses were demolished in the 1960s and the Golden Cross pub closed on September 30th, 1963.

Article Courtesy of the Sutton Beauty & Heritage Website.

THE FESTIVE JINGLE JANGLE TOUR



Class 60 Locomotive Number 60 011 in DB Schenker Red Livery runs around the Festive Jingle Jangle Railtour at the historic location of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway Moorish Arch, Edge Hill on Saturday 17th of December 2011. Photo by Paul Wright.

On Saturday 17th December 2011 I got to travel along the former St Helens Canal & Railway Companies Warrington and Garston Railway, the Low Level Line as it is now referred to, from Warrington Arpley to Ditton Junction. Along with the Widnes and St Helens line, now sadly just a memory, the Low Level line was an important part of my childhood years. I spent many hours adjacent to it at Johnsons Lane, Carterhouse Junction and Widnes South. As I watched trains pass along the line I dreamed of travelling on it but I am of a generation that missed that chance as regular passenger services had ceased nearly two years before I was born. Even in my adult years I have still had a yearning to travel on the Low Level.

So when I learned that a railtour would be passing over it I simply had to book a place on it. As bonus the railtour would also pass over a number of other lines that interest me and over which I had never passed but firstly let me talk you through the day.

The Festive Jingle Jangle Railtour was organised by Pathfinder Tours and started its journey at Westbury at 06.27. The last pick up point for passengers was Birmingham New Street at 09.21. So to fulfil my dream of travelling over the Low Level line I had to be at Birmingham New Street by 09.21 on a Saturday morning, and to make matters



The Festive Jingle Jangle Railtour heads west along the Widnes Deviation in the gloom of a late winters afternoon on the 17th of December 2011. Photo by Les Fifoot.

worse it was the morning after my works Christmas night out. So I set off from my home in New Brighton at 06.15. I caught my local Merseyrail service to Lime Street Low Level and then took a London Midland Service to Birmingham. At Runcorn I was joined by 8D Association treasurer Lee Woods.

At Birmingham New Street there was time for a coffee and a bite to eat before we had to go to the platform to pick up the Jingle Jangle. On time the Jingle Jangle arrived at its head a class 66 locomotive number 66 098. Our seats were in a British Railways Mark 1 coach which I always enjoy travelling in. We ran out to Birmingham International where a reversal was required. A new locomotive was attached to the railtour, this time it was an electric loco a class 92 number 92 037. The 92s are capable of running through the Channel Tunnel and into France.

After leaving International we travelled over the Birmingham avoiding lines that run from Stetchford through to Bushby Junction which is just to the north of Wolverhampton. Sections of this route are mostly used by freight services with only occasional passenger diversions. The northern section is also the original route of the Grand Junction Railway that ran from Warrington to Birmingham and which opened only seven years after the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

Our train then ran up to Crewe where it travelled over the Crewe Independent lines which bypass the passenger station and are used by freight services. A further locomotive change was made at Crewe and class 60 number 60 011 resplendent in DB Schenker livery (Red) joined our train.

We then had a run up the West Coast main line through Warrington and up towards Wigan but we took the route through Earlestown and Newton-le-Willows, over the

Liverpool and Manchester Railway rather than the direct route. Again this provided the opportunity for us to travel over the freight only line that runs from the Liverpool and Manchester line north to the West Coast Main line via the closed Lowton Station the platforms of which could clearly be seen.

Before reaching Wigan the Jingle Jangle took the Ince Curve, yet another freight line, which put us on the line to Liverpool via St Helens Central (Previously Shaw Street). At Edge Hill we went along the route of the original line to the site of the Moorish Arch, now known as the Wapping Branch. This was of great interest and many pictures were taken. Lunch was taken at this location, and very nice it was too, as was a pint of very fine independent real ale.

After leaving Edge Hill the tour ran along the Liverpool and Manchester line through Rainhill to Earlestown where it took the curve that led down to Winwick Junction. On route to Warrington the train ran through the Dallam Royal Mail terminal.

The next part of the tour was the real highlight for me. After passing through Warrington Bank Quay we ran into the Walton Old Sidings. A Class 31 number 31 601 was attached to our rear. It then hauled us to Arpley and onto the Low Level line. We ran up to the easternmost reaches of the line at Latchford. From here we could see the disused tracks of the line heading off to Skelton Junction, if only it was still in use today. The 31 was taken off and after a short wait, and well ahead of schedule we set off for Ditton Junction. I got to see all of the local landmarks that I am so familiar with but from a viewpoint that I had never experienced before. The only down side was that the light was fading fast and I was not able to get good pictures. All too soon we were at Ditton Junction but I was happy to have made the trip. In darkness we travelled back to Birmingham only to then have to retrace our steps back again on a London Midland service. So much did we enjoy the trip that we are booked on another in April.



***The tour departs from
Warrington Arpley and
heads to Ditton Junction.
Photo by Paul Wright***

The Very Last Locomotive to Travel between Widnes & St Helens



The former St Helens and Runcorn Gap Railway officially closed as a through route on the 1st of November 1981 when the section of line from Widnes No 1 to Clock Face was taken out of use. It has been suggested in a number of published works that the last movement over the line had been a few days previously. Now thanks to a picture we know the date of the last movement over the line, even more amazingly we know the exact loco that travelled over it and where it was going to. This is all thanks to a picture that was taken at Sutton Oak Junction signalbox on the 31st of October 1981. The picture shown below shows 'Signalman Eric Coffey accepting the single line token from a Wigan driver at Sutton Oak Junction. The signalbox can be seen in the background. This was the last time that this act, which had been performed since 1969 when the line was singled from Farnworth & Bold to Sutton Oak Junction, would ever be performed. The engine had travelled from Widnes (it is not known where it originated from – yet) and was heading to Wigan. It was an English Electric Class 40 number 40 124. Built at Stephenson & Hawthorns Darlington and introduced to service in June 1961 as D324 (Became 40 124 in Feb 1974). It was initially allocated to Crewe North Depot and spent much of its working life in the northwest its last home depot being Longsight. It was withdrawn in January 1984 and cut up at Doncaster in March.

The token was donated to the Sutton Historic Society. Tokens were used as part of the signalling system for single lines. As long as a driver had a token, the equipment at either end of the line would not release another token. This prevented more than one train occupying the same section of track thereby eliminating the risk of a collision. The historic line between Widnes and St Helens and Widnes had officially opened in February 1833. **Paul Wright**

Warrington Bank Quay Low Level



In 1962 a Manchester Oxford Road to Ditton Junction train arrives at Warrington Bank Quay. By this date there was only one more intermediate station to call at for this train before it reached Ditton Junction and that was Widnes South. Photo by Bevan Price.

In 1868 the LNWR lifted the elevation of their Newton to Birmingham line so that it crossed the former St. Helens Railway Garston line on a bridge. In order to best serve both lines they built a new station, Warrington Bank Quay on two levels with platforms serving both lines. This new station was called Warrington Bank Quay. The platforms on the Garston line were numbered 5, 6 and 7. The first two were through platforms whilst number 7 was a bay platform facing towards Manchester. Very early on platforms 5, 6 and 7 became known as Bank Quay Low Level but interestingly the name was not the stations official title with 'Low Level' used solely for identification purposes (the line is even known today as the Low Level Line).

Although some longer distance trains served Warrington Bank Quay Low Level the majority were local services. By the 1950's services had settled into a routine which saw services from Liverpool Lime Street to Warrington Bank Quay and services from Bank Quay to Manchester Oxford Road. Some trains did run from Liverpool Lime Street to Manchester but they were not very frequent. The most common service on the line was the Ditton Junction to Manchester Oxford Road Service provided by a tank engine and push/pull sets of coaches. There was a brief interlude when DMU's were tried in the late 1950's but the service reverted to the Push/Pull sets by the early 1960's. Regular passenger services on the line finished on 10th September 1962 but a York Mail train continued to serve the Low Level platforms until 14th July 1965 after which the Low Level station closed. It was demolished and no trace now remains. **Paul Wright**

The First 8D Association AGM.

The 8D Association held its first AGM on Saturday the 21st of January 2012. The event was held at the Kingsway Learning Centre (Widnes Library) and was well attended by members.

Reports were given by the various officers of the Committee and a committee for 2012 was agreed.

The 8D Association Committee for 2012

Mr Joe Cowley – Chairman
Mr Richard Mercer – Archivist
Mr Lee Woods – Treasurer
Mr Paul Wright – Acting Secretary and Journal Editor

Mr Mark Aldred – Committee Member
Mr Peter Murray – Committee Member
Mr David Thomas – Committee Member
Mr Colin Turton – Committee Member

After the business was completed members were treated to a slide show by Les Fifoot who showed a number of his colour slides that were taken locally in the 1960s including many during the last year of steam operation. The slide show was very well received. A further slide show was given by Paul Wright in the absence of the guest speaker, who was ill, on the bridges at Runcorn Gap.

Members then enjoyed a buffet lunch and were able to share stories and information. All agreed that 2012 would be a good year for the 8D Association.



On the 20th of September 1963 ex LMS Stanier 8F Locomotive number 48045 stands outside Widnes Shed. Photo by Brian Swinn.

Events Programme

10.00 - Saturday 21st April 2012 – Warrington Littons Mill and Arpley –
Meet by Littons Mill Crossing, Warrington.

10.00 – Saturday 19th May 2012 – Clock Face Colliery lines – Meet at 10:00 at the Clock Face Colliery Country Park Car Park approximately ¼ mile beyond the 50 M.P.H. limit starts on Gorsey Lane which is off Clock Face Road.

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

19:00 – Thursday 19th July 2012 – Spike Island (site of 8D and Widnes Dock) – Meet in the Spike Island Car Park.

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

10.00 - Saturday 22nd September 2012 – Sutton Oak Junction. Including junction, Robins Lane Halt and the intersection bridge - Meet at St Anne's Club Car Park, Monastery Lane, Sutton, St Helens.



'Where is this' competition? (Answers to pwright964@btinternet.com)