

# ON SHED

## The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 4 Number 3 – September 2014



### Widnes Dock Junction 1960

Looking south from the footbridge that linked Croft Street to the Sankey Canal at Widnes Dock Junction. A former War Department 'Austerity' locomotive is seen heading north towards St Helens on a mixed freight. Waiting to join the main line is a 350hp 0-6-0 diesel locomotive on a train of vans. **Photo by Eddie Bellas**

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## Volume 4 Number 4

## September 2014

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### Editor

It's been another excellent summer and the 8D events have been well attended. Feedback has suggested that the site visits have been interesting and enjoyable. We do hope to keep it this way and we welcome suggestions for field trips from members. After all it's your association and we want to cover all areas that are of interest to members. There have already been a few suggestions and they are being looked into but please do keep the suggestions coming.

Our winter season approaches and that means we move to our indoor programme which has much of interest. For the first time we have included some mid-week nights to see how that goes.

This Journal is the first that is 24 pages. Because members have been submitting articles I have had to increase the number of pages. That was always the intention and its very pleasing to see that it has now happened. Keep those articles and news items coming. **Paul Wright**



*A class 108 Derby built DMU is seen departing from Tanhouse Lane station in 1964 on a service for Liverpool Central. Tanhouse Lane closed fifty years ago next month and its site was visited by 8D association members on 5 June 2014. Photo by Eddie Bellas*

### Huyton and Roby Remodelling



***Looking towards Huyton from Roby station in July 2014 as a coal train heads east along the newly commissioned line. Under stage 1 of the remodelling the new line is designated as the 'up' Chat Moss. When phase 2 of the works is complete it will become the 'up' Chat Moss Fast with the fourth line being designated the 'up' Chat Moss Slow. Both Roby and Huyton stations have been extended. Photo by Doug Birmingham***

On 14 July 2014 a third line came into use between Roby and Huyton Junction. The line is part of a quadrupling scheme being undertaken by Network Rail to increase capacity on the Liverpool and Manchester line between Roby and Huyton. The line at this point had been quadrupled in the 1890s but it reverted to being double track in 1971. Both Roby and Huyton stations had four platforms until 1971 and those that were made redundant have been brought back into use. To do so sections of subway have had to be excavated (as at Roby) or rebuilt (as at Huyton).

The reason why only one additional track has been brought into use at this stage of the project is because the new arrangements take up more land than the original quadrupled line had. That has required the purchase of additional land and a Transport and Works Order (TWO). Network Rail now have the required TWO and the fourth line will be brought into use by 2017. Advance works for the fourth track within the Network Rail boundary have already been carried out. Electrification masts and wires will soon be erected as part of the Liverpool and Manchester electrification due to be completed by December 2014. **Paul Wright**

### **A class 319 Electric Multiple Unit travels along the Low Level**

On 20th June 2014 the Low Level line saw an interesting working with the passage of 5X19 the 02.30 Bedford to Allerton TMD conveying the first of the class 319 units which will go into service on the Liverpool to Manchester line when electrification is completed. Network Rail's 57 306 was in charge of the train crewed by GBRf drivers the unit in question being 319 361. Much interest had been stirred by this working which had run up the West Coast main line to Warrington before reversing at Latchford sidings. The train could not run via the more direct route through Runcorn due to the unit not being cleared to pass through there because of gauging issues.

The original batch of 60 319/0 units were built at BREL York for the Thameslink project and introduced in 1987. The unit in question here was the first of the follow on order and designated 319/1 and introduced in 1990 numbered 319 161. Only slight differences existed between the two sub classes with the newer units having first class accommodation situated in one of the driving trailers and a Royal Mail area in the opposite driving trailer. The Royal Mail area included tip up bench seating and a lockable door for security whilst transporting mail. Between 1997 and 1999 the units were refurbished by Alstom at Eastleigh with the Royal Mail area and the first class accommodation being removed. Upon release from the works they were reclassified as 319/3 with 319 361 being the first of the new sub class.

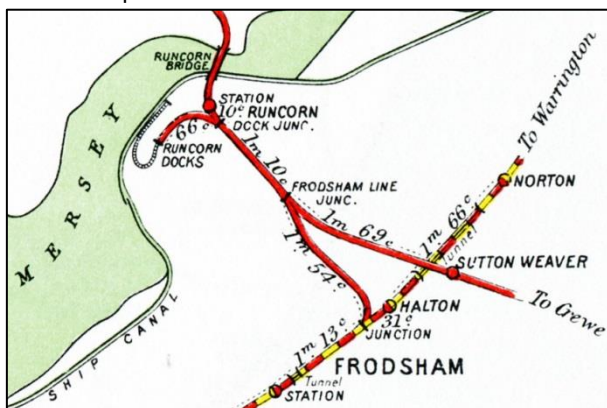


***The class 319 EMU is seen passing Carterhouse Junction on 20 June 2014 hauled by class 57 locomotive number 57 306. Photo by Terry Callaghan***

The 319 are a 4 car dual voltage EMU and comprise of a Driving Trailer Second Open A (DTSOA), Motor Second Open (MSO), Trailer Second Open (TSO) and a Driving Trailer Second Open B (DTSOB). They are capable of operating on overhead 25Kv and 750V DC third rail which brings some interesting possibilities in the future operation within our area. The initial project is on course to be operational by December 2014 with full electric services to be introduced from the May 2015 timetable change. Exciting times for the railways with some welcome investment and expansion of services following on from what seemed to be a terminal decline in the 1980's. **Terry Callaghan**

### **Haltom Curve Awarded £10.4 Million**

On 3 July 2014 the CHANCELLOR George Osborne announced that £10.4m of funding would be made available to redevelop the Haltom Curve (Haltom Junction - Frodsham Junction). The grant was unveiled as part of a package aimed at creating a 'northern powerhouse'. The North Cheshire Rail Users Group have been



campaigning for the line to be restored to a bi-directional route (since 1994 trains can only travel in one direction from Frodsham Junction to Haltom Junction) and for a regular passenger service to be restored to it. Presently the only passenger service on the line is the 07.53 summer Saturday only Chester to

Runcorn train. It is also occasionally used by freight trains and for empty stock moves. In recent years the Royal train has passed over the line twice.

In 2012 Network Rail reported that restoring the Haltom curve to a bi-directional railway would create up to £1.90 in wealth for every £1 spent on it and last autumn Welsh MPs joined forces with Haltom's Derek Twigg in calling for funding. In July 2013, East Runcorn MP Graham Evans urged the Government to back the project, calling the estimated £12m fee 'small fry' compared to other infrastructure works.

The project has the support of local business, councils, including Haltom and MP's on a cross party basis. It is not known at this stage if the line will be restored to double track or be a bi-directional single track railway. In either case remodelling of Haltom and Frodsham junctions will be required. The passenger service would most likely link Liverpool Lime Street and Chester but could run further into Wales. Regular passenger services over the curve ceased on 5 May 1975. After that there were only summer services and they dwindled to the present situation over next two decades.

**Paul Wright**

## **Nievenheim Trains Diverted**

Due to engineering works at Watford every weekend in August, the continental freight service from Ditton Foundry Lane to Nievenheim has used a variety of diversionary routes to avoid the area in order to keep the service operating.

On Saturday the 9 and 16 August the northbound service used it's normal routing from Dollands Moor to Mitre Bridge Jct, but from there it went via Acton Wells Jct, Acton Main Line, Slough, Reading, Didcot, Oxford, Banbury, Leamington Spa, Coventry and regaining the West Coast Main Line at Nuneaton for onward travel to Ditton via Stafford and Crewe.

Sunday 10th August had the southbound train taking it's normal route to Nuneaton, but from there it went via Hinkley, Wigston South Junction and then down the Midland main line to Brent Curve Junction. It then proceeded via Dudding Hill Jct, Neasden Jct, Acton Wells Jct then on to the North London line to Bollo Lane Jct, Kew East Jct, Barnes, Clapham Junction, Latchmere Jct, Brixton, Herne Hill, Bromley South, Swanley, Otford, Maidstone East and finally getting back to it's original route at Ashford International.

On Sunday the 17 August, the southbound train followed the same routing to Hinkley, but then went via Leicester, Melton Mowbray, Oakham, Stamford and Peterborough from where it went down the East Coast mainline to York Way Jct which is a mile ou from Kings Cross station. From there it went on to the North London line, going via Willesden Juction High Level and then the West London Line through Kensington Olympia to Clapham Junction. It then proceeded down the Brighton Main Line through East Croydon to Stoats Nest Jct then Redhill before proceeding along the line to Tonbridge via Edenbridge and Godstone. At Tonbridge the train was back on its scheduled route.

As a result of all these detours, the class 92 electrics which normally haul the train were not used, being replaced on all of them by class 66 diesels. The normal Sunday afternoon shunt engine from Arpley to Ditton being used as the train engine on both occasions. **Chris Hollins**

## **End of Electric Haulage on Ditton – Felixstowe Trains**

The 14.03 Freightliner service from Ditton to Felixstowe which has run for many years hauled by pairs of Class 86 electrics, is no more. The service was cancelled two weeks ago and has been replaced by a new one departing at 18.03 from Ditton which is diesel hauled all the way to Felixstowe using the cross country route from Nuneaton via Leicester, Peterborough, March, Ely and Stowmarket. From there it has become the first of the Merseyside Freightliner services to traverse the new "Bacon Factory" curve at Ipswich enabling it to run direct to Felixstowe Port, without having to reverse in Ipswich yard. **Chris Hollins**





**Liverpool Corporation Tramways 'Baby Grand' car number 245 seen at the Wirral Transport Museum on 10 August 2014 during a visit by the 8D Association. To the right is a line of cars from the Birkenhead, Wallasey, Liverpool and Hong Kong systems. Photo by Paul Wright**

On 10 August 2014 the 8D Association visited the Wirral Tramway and Wirral Transport museum in Birkenhead. Unfortunately no trams were running at the time of the visit due to an incident that had taken place which had resulted in the loss of the overhead power supply within the museum building where the trams are kept. Despite the fact that no trams were running there was much to see of interest during the visit. Birkenhead has a rich railway and tramway heritage and members were able to view the remains of the former Birkenhead Woodside station, the Mersey Railway Hamilton Square station, the Cheshire Lines Railway goods station at Shore Road, the site of the Woodside terminus of Europe's first street tramway, the terminus of the Hoylake Railway street tramway and the present day Wirral Tramway.

The first railway to reach Birkenhead was the Chester & Birkenhead Railway (CBR) which opened on 23 September 1840. Originally the line had terminated at Grange Lane but a new riverside terminus was opened at Monks Ferry on 23 October 1844. In turn that station was replaced by Birkenhead Woodside on 31 March 1878 by which time the CBR had become part of the Birkenhead Joint Railway a joint concern of the Great Western and the London & North Western Railway. Woodside was a main line station that had express services to both London Euston and London Paddington as well as many other long distance and local trains. It closed completely

on 5 November 1967. Chris Hollins who was present at the visit described a journey that he made from Woodside in the period after express services had ceased in March 1967. Chris explained that upon entering the station 'I saw a large terminus station with only a solitary DMU under its roof. The DMU was working a Chester service and I travelled on it. It was the only time I ever travelled from Woodside'.



***8D Association members pose by car number 245 during the 10 August 2014 visit to the Wirral Tramway and Wirral Transport Museum. Photo by Paul Wright***

On 30 August 1860 Europe's first street tramway was opened in Birkenhead. It was a horse worked tramway that ran between Woodside and Birkenhead park. The tramway was promoted by an American called George Francis Train. The US had street tramways and George Train introduced the idea to Great Britain. The idea

caught on and tramways opened up throughout the country. In Birkenhead George Trains tramway became part of the Birkenhead Tramway Company which was later taken over by the Birkenhead Corporation. Electrification came to the Birkenhead system from 1901.

On 6 September 1873 another tramway opened at Birkenhead Woodside. It was the street tramway of the Hoylake & Birkenhead Rail and Tramway Company. With such a long company name the trams were branded simply Hoylake Railway. This street tramway connected the former Hoylake Railway which originally connected Birkenhead Dock to Hoylake. Birkenhead Dock was just over 3 miles from Woodside and as a result the railway which had opened on 2 July 1866 struggled financially and it went into receivership on 13 February 1869. Creating a street tramway between the line and Woodside would it was hoped make it more likely to succeed financially a hope that was to be proved to be correct. The tramway and railway had a direct cross platform interchange at Birkenhead Dock which was probably the world's first tram to train interchange facility. The tramway passed into municipal ownership in 1890 and closed in 1901. It had lost its usefulness after 2 January 1888 when the railway was extended to Birkenhead Park where it made a connection with the Mersey Railway that connected Liverpool to Birkenhead via an under river tunnel (Opened in 1886).

The Cheshire Lines Committee (CLC) reached Birkenhead on 7 July 1871 but for goods services only. The CLC did not have a line of its own to Birkenhead it had to rely on running powers over the Birkenhead Joint Railway between West Cheshire



Junction (near Helsby) and Brook Street Junction (Birkenhead). From Brook Street Junction the CLC had a 26 chain branch that ran to Birkenhead Shore Road Goods station. The station was one of the busiest on the CLC network and remained open until 5 June 1961. Even after closure some the sidings within the yard area continued to be used right up until the late 1980s.



***Looking towards the Shore Road CLC goods station from Canning Street North junction in the summer of 1988. The lines branching off to the left led to Shore Road and those to the right ran to Blackpool Street where they joined the main line to Chester. Photo by Paul Wright***

In the 1990s Shore Road was refurbished and became the Cheshire Lines Building which is the current home of Wirral Borough Council. Members were able to examine the goods station and see many original CLC features.



***The CLC Shore Road goods station seen on 10 February 2014. Photo by Paul Wright***

The Wirral Tramway opened in 1995 initially from Woodside to Pacific Road. It was later extended to the current home of the Wirral Transport Museum. The Wirral tramway was promoted by the Merseyside Tramway Preservation Society and Wirral Borough

Council. As Birkenhead was the birthplace of street tramways in Britain it seemed appropriate that there should be a heritage tramway in the town. There is an interesting collection of trams at the Wirral Transport Museum including running exhibits from the Birkenhead, Liverpool, Wallasey and Hong Kong systems. There are also exhibits under restoration including a Warrington Corporation Tram. During the 8D visit a real highlight was Liverpool Corporation Baby Grand number 245. This tram which entered service with Liverpool on 3 July 1938 has recently been restored to running condition and will soon take to the rails of the Wirral Tramway. During the 8D visit members were allowed to pass into a restricted area of the museum and board number 245. The tram remained in service until 14 September 1957 and took part in the parade of trams that marked the end of services in Liverpool. It passed to the Liverpool Museum who are still the owners. The museum recognised that the Merseyside Tramway Preservation Society was the perfect group to restore the tram and supported by Heritage Lottery Fund money they have made a magnificent job of restoring the tram to its original condition.

Members who have not been to the Wirral Tramway and Transport Museum are recommended to do so. As well as trams it has a collection of buses, cars and motorcycles. There are also a number of railway artefacts and a model railway.

**Paul Wright**



**Wallasey Corporation Tramways car number 78 at Birkenhead Woodside on 5 October 2008. Car 78 was built by Brush in 1920 and served for only 13 years as Wallasey switched to bus only operation in 1933. For more than 50 years, the saloon of Wallasey 78 was used for storage purposes in a North Wales farmyard. It was handed over to the Merseyside Tramway Preservation Society in 1986 and was restored to its original 1920s appearance of lime green and cream livery and joined the operational fleet of the Wirral Tramway in August 2002. Photo by Paul Wright**

## A Fireman's Lot

Each 'On Shed' issue whisks me back to the 1950's and '60s and my time on the footplate based at Widnes Locomotive Shed. Despite the terribly unsociable hours we worked, I thoroughly enjoyed the job and felt lucky to have been able to live every schoolboy's dream. However it has occurred to me that by modern standards the Fireman's job was often quite hard and so I thought I'd share some of the details with readers.



***British Railways standard class 2MT locomotive number 78034 on shed at Widnes on 20 August 1961. Number 78034 entered service in October 1954 being allocated to Rhyl. She came to Widnes on 19 May 1955 and remained there until 9 September 1961. After spending time at Nuneaton, Bangor, Watford and Willesden 78034 was withdrawn from Crewe South in January 1966. Photo from the Richard Mercer Collection***

As I mentioned in the first paragraph our working hours involved starting and finishing work at any time during the day or night. Indeed, I recall that only one of our assigned jobs started at 8.00am and finished at 5.00pm with the rest being spread over a 24 hour period.

The last Widnes Corporation buses ran at 10.30pm and the first did not start until 6.00am so those living a long way from the shed had to either walk (from memory, only 2 of our drivers owned cars) or cycle. This made it difficult for those starting work at 3.00am or 4.00am in the morning but it was even worse for those finishing their shift during this time as they could be faced with a long walk or cycle home through the dimly lit (often by gas lamp) dark streets. I was lucky as I lived in Major Cross Street which was only a few minute walk from the shed. However

despite being so close to my place of work I vividly recall the many occasions when I stumbled to the shed at 3.00 am, numb with tiredness.

Our first duty involved signing in by entering our details on a huge register. Although we didn't clock in, we were closely monitored by the Shed Foreman who had an office window which looked out on to the passage at the entrance to the shed. Not much got past these men (Jack Witter and Dusher Draper) who even raised their eyebrows if we were a minute late! We were allowed (I think) 35 minutes to prepare the engine for work and the first job involved drawing our operating tools from the store man. These included two very heavy Running Lamps (paraffin) a Coal Pick, Shovel and a heavy steel bucket which contained a Gauge Lamp (to illuminate the water gauge) a Canister of 12 Detonators, (to be used in the event of a derailment) and 3 huge, heavy, but almost entirely useless, spanners. The latter were supposed to fit most of the nuts and couplings but the jaws were often so badly rounded that they were unfit for purpose.

We used to carry the bucket by threading the shovel through the handle and the lamps by doing the same with the Coal Pick. The resulting load was both heavy and awkward and resulted in a bow - legged walk along the shed to the locomotive. Since the footplate was above head height, getting the equipment (minus the running lamps) on board was also a challenge which sometimes resulted in being showered with tools as they spilled from the bucket.



**Ex-LMS 3P locomotive number 40134 is seen coming off the turntable at Widnes shed in 1955. The locomotive entered service with the LMS on 4 October 1935. She came to Widnes from Llandudno Junction on 6 October 1951 for the purpose of working local passenger services. The engine was withdrawn from Widnes on 6 October 1961. Photo from the Richard Mercer Collection**

The first priority was raising a head of steam to allow the day's work to begin. This was often difficult as the fire was kept deliberately small whilst the loco was stabled to prevent 'blowing off' (venting of steam through the safety valves). As a result, the steam pressure could be so low that the 'Jet,' a control which created a draught through the firebox, was inoperable. We had to spread the available fire with the use of a long, metal implement called a Pricker and carefully add coal to encourage it to spread.

The next job involved making sure the Sander Boxes contained enough sand. There were usually 2 of these on each side of the loco and situated on the 'Main Framing' (the platform which ran above the driving wheels). The designer of the special sand buckets must have been a giant as they could hold a huge amount of sand and were, therefore, incredibly heavy. Despite this it was common practice to carry a bucket in each hand as it balanced the load on the trip from the sand drying facility near the office to the locomotive. This entailed yet another bow-legged stagger, but the real fun came when lifting the buckets onto the Main Framing. Yet another shower, but this time - a sand shower! It was normal to have to make 2 trips to complete the sanding operation so the process was universally detested by firemen.



***A Ditton Junction to Manchester Oxford Road service is seen at Warrington Bank Quay 'Low Level' in May 1961. At the head of the train is Ivatt 2MT locomotive number 41213 of Warrington Dallam shed. The engine entered service with British Railways on 4 September 1948 and was withdrawn from Barnstable Junction on 6 April 1963. Number 41213 left Warrington Dallam on 14 June 1958. Photo by Harry Arnold***

Back onto the footplate to check on the fire raising progress and desperately hoping that the steam pressure would be increasing. Trim and light the Gauge Lamp which was also fuelled by paraffin. (This was a serious design flaw as the heat from the



boiler often caused the fuel in the lamp to vaporise and catch fire, rendering the lamp useless and the crew to wonder how much water there was in the boiler).

The footplate was usually littered with a deep layer of coal caused by the coaling process. This had to be cleaned up and the coal in the Tender trimmed to ensure that none could fall off during the journey. Most engine crews were fastidious about cleanliness and appearance so the 'Front' or Instrument Panel had to be hosed off to remove the soot which had accumulated during the night, then polished by wiping oil over the panel.

The final step was topping up the water in the tender. There was a water column near the entrance to the shed which consisted of a huge leather tube (about 400mm in diameter) which was placed in an aperture at the top rear of the tender. It was really important to ensure that there were no kinks in the tube (we called it 'the bag') or it would flick out of the aperture and act like a giant hose under pressure soaking everything and everybody in close proximity.



***Stanier Jubilee class locomotive number 45731 'Perseverance' stands outside Warrington Dallam shed on 22 October 1961. The locomotive entered service with the LMS as number 5731 on 21 October 1936. When British Railways was formed the locomotive was at Carlisle Kingmoor depot. She had a brief spell at Carlisle Upperby from 2 September 1961 until 7 July 1962 when she returned to Kingmoor. Later that month on 21 July 1962 she went to Blackpool Central where she remained until withdrawal on 20 October 1962. Photo by Harry Arnold***

It would have been nice to have had the luxury of relaxing after the hard preparation work, but this was just the opening shot in the battle to maintain steam for the next 8 hours. **Barry Nolan**

## Municipal Tramways in the 8D Area



*Liverpool Corporation Tramways Bogie car number 950 is seen heading east past Knotty Ash station on a 10B service to Page Moss in the 1950s. The section of line on which the tram is seen was once part of the Liverpool & Prescot Light Railway which had opened between Knotty Ash and Prescot on 24 June 1902. It was originally a single track line through a very rural area but on 1 October 1919 Liverpool Corporation purchased it for £18,000. Under Liverpool ownership the line was doubled and placed onto a central reservation.*

The recent visit to the Wirral Tramway and Transport Museum got me thinking about the street tramways of the area and in particular those that operated within the 8D area of interest. I have had a fascination with trams for almost as long as I have been interested in railways despite the fact I was born after the Liverpool system had closed in 1957. What I do remember well though was seeing tram track in that city in many locations during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Seeing that track and trips to Blackpool put trams firmly on my interest radar. Interestingly I have found that most people who have an interest in railways also have an interest in tramways. Perhaps that is not surprising as tramways are basically street railways. So thought an article giving some background about the tram systems that did operate in the 8D area would be of interest to members. Each system is worthy of an article in its own right so expect more on our forgotten tramways in future editions of On-Shed.

### Liverpool

Liverpool's first tramway was the Liverpool Old Swan Tramway a 1.3 mile line opened on 2 July 1861 that ran from Old Swan to the edge of the city. Horse worked the line was not successful and closed in May 1862. Despite the failure of this line on 1 November 1869 the Liverpool Tramway Company opened its first horse worked

line between Dingle and Renshaw Street. The line was successful and by the time the Liverpool Tramway Company was taken over by Liverpool Corporation Tramways on 1 January 1897 the network had expanded to 42.78 miles.

It was the Liverpool Corporation who introduced electrification the first line (the Dingle route) going live on 16 November 1898. Progress was very quick and by October 1901 there was only one horse tram left which worked a shuttle between Linacre Lane to Litherland until the final section of line went live on 25 August 1903.

The Liverpool system continued to expand right up until the last new section was opened on 12 April 1944. By that time Liverpool had 97.37 miles of track.



***A Liverpool bogie steamliner is seen passing under the CLC Halewood – Aintree line at Clubmoor in the late 1940s. At this location passengers could change between tram and train. There were two types of steamliner the bogie version seen in this view and a four wheel version known as the 'Baby Grand'.***

The Liverpool system reached deep into the 8D Association area of interest with eastern termini being located at Garston, Bowring Park and Prescot. The Prescot route was of particular interest as it connected to the St Helens system which in turn connected to south Lancashire systems that linked all the way to Bolton. In theory trams could run from Liverpool to Bolton but they never did. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a plan to run freight trams between Liverpool and Bolton but it was never realised.

The Liverpool system was arguably the best in the country and it had many innovations such as grass track central reservations. In the 1930s many municipal systems went over to buses or trolley buses but not Liverpool who continued to expand and modernise. Unfortunately the Second World War put pressures on the system that left it worn out in certain places particularly within the central city areas.

In 1948 a decision was taken to go over to bus operation and the first lines closed in that year. The last trams ran on 14 September 1957.

## St Helens

***A St Helens horse tram seen in Ormskirk Street in the 1880s. The tram was operating on the Prescott route.***

Trams came to St Helens on 5 November 1881 when the St Helens & District Tramway Company opened a 3 ½ mile line from St Helens town centre to the Kings Arms in Prescott. In June 1882 another route was opened from the town centre to Peasley Cross.

The trams of St Helens were horse worked at first but it was not an immediate success. On 1 January 1890 a new company the St Helens & District Tramway Company Ltd bought the system for £39,750 and in February they experimented with steam haulage. On 4 April 1890 steam haulage was introduced onto the system which had expanded since 1881 and included routes to Haydock and to Sutton. The steam services were hauled by 'Green Ltd' tramway locomotives. Initially there were 6 locomotives but within a few years the number increased to 10.

In March 1897 the St Helens Corporation bought the tramways for £23,000. At the time of the purchase there were 9 ½ miles of single track line and in April 1897 the corporation leased the system back to the company which became the 'New' St Helens & District Tramways Company Ltd. In the same year the corporation obtained an act that authorised it to double the size of the system and to electrify it. They entered into a 21 year lease with the company to operate it.

Electric trams began operation on 20 July 1899 on the Dentons Green route and on part of the line to Prescott. The system was fully electrified by 8 January 1901. On 4 April 1902 a connection was made at Haydock with the South Lancashire Tramways and on 25 June 1902 a connection was made with the Liverpool & Prescott Light Railway which in turn connected with the Liverpool system. Theoretically trams could run from Liverpool to Bolton but they never did.



***A St Helens steam hauled tram seen in 1895. Motive power is in the form of tramway engine number 8.***

Relations between the company and the corporation were never good and the latter took over the system at the end of the lease on 1 October 1919. On 1 April 1921 Liverpool Corporation started running through services to the Kings arms in Prescot (they had taken over the Liverpool & Prescot Light railway in 1919). By this time the St Helens system had reached its peak of 21.96 miles.

St Helens Corporation began operating trolley buses in 1923 and over the next decade they began to replace the trams. The last trams ran on 31 March 1936.

### Warrington

Trams came to Warrington on 21 April 1902. It was an electric system and municipally owned from the start. The first line to open was the 1 ½ route from Rylands Street to Latchford. The line was double track throughout. A few days later on 23 April 1902 a line opened from Rylands Street to Sankey Bridges. It was also 1 ½ miles in length but much of it was single track. Trams operated along both lines as a through route.



***Warrington tram number 2 at the Latchford terminus circa 1930. Towering above the tram is the Warrington Arpley – Broadheath line. Tram number 2 is currently being restored at the Wirral Transport Museum.***

On 4 October 1902 another double track line opened to Wilderspool. It ran along Wilderspool Causway and terminated at Stafford Road. This route was extended to pass over the Manchester Ship canal and terminate at Stockton Heath on 7 July 1905.

On 29 October 1902 lines opened to the Warrington Cemetery and northwards to Longford passing by Warrington Central station and giving the system 6.84 route miles of track.

The Warrington system did not enjoy a long life the first route closing on 17 September 1931. The last trams ran on 28 August 1935. **Paul Wright**



## Rugby League Specials 1964

On Sunday the 10th of August, Widnes Vikings failed in their bid to reach the Rugby League Challenge Cup Final at Wembley for the first time since 1993. If they had done so, what if any would the Cup Final specials have been like. The west coast main line was closed at the southern end on the day of the final so Pendolino's would not have been of any use. Perhaps stock would have been chartered from West Coast Rail. Perhaps there would have been no specials at all.



***Ex-LMS 5MT 'Black 5' number 45429 on a passenger train at Warrington Bank Quay on 26 August 1961. Photo by Harry Arnold***

For Widnes Rugby League fans, special trains have been provided to get them to the Wembley showpiece since the 1930 final when Widnes caused an upset by beating St Helens 10-3. My late Mother told me many years ago that several members of her family travelled to the 1937 final when Widnes beat Keighley 18-5, on a LMS special train from Widnes South to London Euston which reversed at Ditton Junction.

The earliest British Railways Specials were provided for the 1950 final where the Chemics lost 19-0 to arch rivals Warrington. My late Uncle George who lived in West Street in West Bank, travelled to the final on a special that ran from Widnes South to London St Pancras. It was routed along the Low Level line via Warrington Bank Quay Low Level, Skelton Jct, Cheadle Jct to Cheadle Heath where it then followed the Midland Main Line through the Peak District to Derby then Leicester, Bedford and Luton to London St Pancras. He took a different route on the return journey, choosing to come back to Widnes on the overnight mail and passenger train from London Marylebone to Farnworth.

Over the coming years Widnes endured a barren run in the Challenge Cup but that was about to change. In 1964 the Chemics embarked on a journey that is now in the

Guinness book of records for the most number of games required to reach the Wembley final. It all started in the first round away to Leigh where the match ended in a 2-2 draw. In the replay at Naughton Park again the match ended in a draw but this time 11-11. Therefore, a second replay was required and this took place at St Helens Knowsley Road ground, a game which Widnes won 14-2. This pitted them with Liverpool City at home in the second round. I went to this game, and in a tight match the Chemics prevailed by 16 points to 6 enabling us to be drawn at home to Swinton in the third round. This was another marathon, as the first game at Naughton Park was a 5-5 draw and, in the replay at Station Road, no points were scored resulting in a 0-0 draw. So on to the second replay which took place at Wigan's Central Park ground, which saw the Chemics triumph 15-3.

In the Semi Final, Widnes were drawn to play Castleford at Swinton's Station Road ground. Played in front of an attendance of 25,602 the result was yet another draw 7-7. The replay took place the following week and Wakefield Trinity's Belle Vue ground was selected to host it, with an afternoon kick off. Thousands of Widnes fans made their way over the Pennines by car, coach and train. My father went to the match but I was denied the privilege as John Wilcox the headmaster at West Bank Primary School refused to let me have the day off, although a fellow pupil in my class, Alan Helps went to the game by just ringing the school to say he was ill!

A special train from Widnes Central to Wakefield Kirkgate was hurriedly arranged to take some fans to the game. It was formed of six coaches hauled by a Stanier Class 5 4-6-0. The routeing was via Widnes East Jct, the Warrington Central avoiding line, Glazebrook Jct, Partington, Skelton Jct, Northenden Jct, Stockport, Stalybridge, Huddersfield, Thornhill Jct and Horbury Jct. Due to some very tardy running, the train arrived at Wakefield Kirkgate late whereupon the fans were ushered very quickly by some porters to the ground, getting there just as the second half of the game was starting. They needn't have worried as there was no score in the First Half. As part of the 28,732 attendance, the fans saw Widnes win the match 7-5 to take them to the Challenge Cup Final, and no doubt returned happy on board the special train which on the return journey terminated at Widnes North.

My Father, upon returning to work at Ditton Jct No 2 Signal Box suggested to his fellow signallers Teddy Lewis, Ernie Miller and Stan Owens, along with shunters George Davis and Ernie Shakeshaft that they arrange a special train for the Ditton railway staff and friends. After speaking to the area manager at Garston the plan was approved and a charter fee agreed.

All was set for the 9th of May 1964 the Challenge Cup Final Widnes versus Hull Kingston Rovers. My Father's train reporting number 1X40 although starting at Ditton Junction did not call at Runcorn on the outward journey, but other special trains for the fans did stop as recalled by Les Fifoot, who travelled on one to London Euston hauled by Jubilee class 45627 '*Sierra Leone*' of Bank Hall shed.

My recollection of the start of the big day, is that we nearly missed our special due to leaving home late, resulting in us missing the Widnes Corporation Halebank bus from one of the Ditton Road stops. I and my father were lucky in that a passing motorist driving a Bedford van saw us, and gave us a lift to Ditton Junction station where upon our arrival, the train was ready to depart. Formed of 15 coaches including a Kitchen car for meal service, Coronation class Pacific 46248 City of Leeds of Crewe North hauled the train to Crewe. As Coronation Pacifics were at

that time banned south of Crewe she was replaced by another Crewe North pacific, Britannia 70052 Firth of Tay. Unfortunately the Britannia ran short of steam by the time we reached Bletchley, and a special stop was made there for Jubilee 45617 Mauritius of Camden shed to be attached to assist us through to Wembley Hill. The route we took from Bletchley would make a great railtour today as we accessed the Cambridge to Oxford line to go via Winslow, Verney Junction, Claydon LNE Jct from where we took the spur on to the Great Central main line at Calvert Junction, Grendon Underwood Jct, Ashendon Jct, Princes Risborough, High Wycombe, Northolt Jct to arrive at Wembley Hill in time for the Final's kick off played in front of 84,488 fans.

The line from Grendon Underwood Jct to Ashendon Jct was busy that day as nearly all of the specials carrying the Hull Kingston Rovers fans made use of the Great Central Main line from the Sheffield suburbs via Nottingham Victoria, Leicester Central, Rugby Central, Woodford Halse and Brackley Central to Calvert Junction. Unlike our train which was steam hauled throughout, all of the Hull trains used Brush Mirlees type 2's and English Electric type 3's later Classes 31 and 37's. An interesting fact about this line was that it had no regular passenger service over it. A few freight trains traversed it and continued to do so up until 1983 when the Akeman Street to Ince and Elton UKF fertiliser train ceased to run. It was however a useful diversionary route, and when the West Coast Main Line was being electrified south of Bletchley, nearly all overnight sleeping car, mail and parcels trains were diverted into Marylebone using this link. It was also used on Summer Saturdays by holiday trains from Derby Friargate, Nottingham Victoria and Sheffield Victoria to Ramsgate and Hastings using the Great Central main line.

As most Widnes fans who can remember back to the 1964 final, the Chemics won 13-5 with the late Frank Collier winning the Lance Todd trophy for his man of the match performance. For the return journey of our special, a Kingmoor Britannia 70038 Robin Hood was provided to take us back to Crewe returning the same way as the outward journey except that we traversed the Bletchley flyover. At Crewe, the Britannia was replaced by 46248 which took us to Runcorn, where we detrained at the end of a very happy day.

The Monday after the final, my Father received a telephone call at the Signal Box from Garston control, wanting to know why the shunter at Ford's Sidings had not reported for work. Lee was his name and he had travelled in our compartment on the special, but decided to go and celebrate in London after the game and make his own way home. It transpired later that Lee had gone into Central London got rather drunk, and had then fallen down the escalator at Paddington Underground station resulting in him being taken to hospital with a broken leg.

In 1997 Online Video produced a tape now available on DVD called "London's Lost Steam Trains". which features our special. Shots of 70038 arriving at Wembley Hill with the empty stock of the return working, joyous Widnes Fans boarding the train and finally Robin Hood departing Wembley Hill for Ditton Junction, are shown on it.

It would be another eleven years before Challenge Cup specials would run again from Ditton Junction, but that's for another time. **Chris Hollins**

## From the Archive



*A busy scene at Hough Green station in the mid-1960s. By this time DMUs were the dominant form of passenger train on the ex-CLC Liverpool and Manchester line. DMUs had been introduced onto many of the services that ran out of Liverpool Central as early as 1958 but it was the introduction of Derby built machines from 1960 onwards that really started to change things. In this view examples of what later became the class 108 DMU are seen. There are*

*two types of 108 in the photograph the large headcode version to the left and the small two digit headcode version to the right. These DMUs would have been based at Allerton. Photo by Gordon Howarth*



*On 26 August 1961 an ex-LMS 3F 0-6-0 'Jinty' locomotive is seen performing shunting duties at Warrington Bank Quay station. These versatile locomotives could be seen all over the former LMS network. As well as shunting duties the engines were used for local trip working and could often be seen at main line stations as pilots. Photo by Harry Arnold*

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## Events Programme

**13.00 – Saturday 20th September 2014 – Fiddlers Ferry Visit** – Another chance to visit Fiddlers Ferry Power Station. This time we will be going out to the lagoons from where the Garston and Warrington line (the Low Level) can be observed. Numbers are left but there are a few places left.. If you would like to take part in the visit contact Richard Mercer on 0151 378 9908.

**10.00 – Saturday 18th October 2014 – Visit to Brunswick** – A guided walk led by Paul Wright looking at what survives of the railways of Brunswick in Liverpool. **Meet by the entrance to Brunswick station.**

**10.00 – Saturday 8th November 2014 –12.00 – The CLC Liverpool & Manchester line** – Paul Wright presents a journey in photos looking at the CLC main line past and present. **Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

**Saturday 29th November 2014 – Rail Ale Tour Wallasey & Birkenhead -**

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

**10.00 – Saturday 24th January 2015 – The 8D Association AGM.**

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

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



**'Where is this' competition?** A busy railway location until relatively recent times? (Answers to [pwright964@btinternet.com](mailto:pwright964@btinternet.com))  
**Photo by David Lennon**

The March competition winner was Arthur Turner. The location was the Sankey Canal at Widnes.