

THE 8D ASSOCIATION

ON SHED

**The Journal of the 8D Association
Volume 1 Number 1
March 2011**



Widnes Locomotive Shed in 1963

British Railways standard locomotive number 73133 stands outside Widnes Motive Power Depot (8D Shed) on the 12th of October 1963. *I G Holt from the Richard Mercer Collection.*

25p if Sold

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Editor

Welcome to the first edition of the Journal of the 8D Association. It is intended that four journals will be produced each year and that as the association develops they will become a valued source of information for all of our members.

Firstly let me introduce myself. Born in Wallasey in 1964 I lived in Widnes for twenty years from 1965 until 1985. I was interested in railways from as early as I can remember, indeed one of my first memories is standing by the 'unofficial' crossing on the north side of Halton View Bridge (The St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway) with my Mother and baby sister as a steam hauled coal train headed south. I can not have been any more than 3 or 4 years old. As I grew up I developed a fascination for the railways of our region.



Halton Station in 1970 – The John Mann Collection

In 2001 I secured a job with Halton Borough Council and I currently hold the position of Open Space Services – Divisional Manager. I am lucky enough to have responsibility for many sites that were once the railways that I was so interested in. I am one of the main contributors to the 'Disused Stations' website www.disused-stations.org.uk, I produced a booklet about the St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway for Halton Borough Council and a booklet about the Sankey Canal and the Warrington and Garston Railway. In July 2010 my first book 'Lost Termini of North West England' was published.

I became involved with 8D Association following a talk that I gave at The Kingsway Learning Centre (Widnes Library) in October 2010. Phil Williams (ex Signaller) who I have known since 1990 suggested that a railway history group might be formed that would have a special interest in the railways of South Lancashire and North Cheshire. There had at one time been a Widnes Railway History Group of which Richard Mercer had been a member. Richard still retained the archive of the group and so an approach was made to him. The result was the birth of the 8D Association.



Norton Station in 1970

My main hope for the association is that it provides an opportunity for like minded individuals to come together and share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the railways of South Lancashire and North Cheshire. Out of that I hope to see material in the form of booklets and displays produced and I hope that the journal develops into something that is eagerly awaited and much sought after. I also look forward to participating in site visits.

With regards to the journal although I am the editor I hope that other members will make contributions so that there can always be something to interesting to read. In particular I want to include a 'Railway Recollections' page which will contain stories from members about the lines.

For now though enjoy the first Journal.

Paul Wright (Editor)

Membership Report

The 8D Association held its first meeting on the 4th of November 2010. Since that date there have been two further meetings which have established the group. At present there are xxx Members of the group which we hope will expand once we begin to advertise.

A Committee has also been set up.

Chairman – Mr J Cowley
Treasurer – Mr L Woods
Secretary (Acting) – Mr P Wright
Archivist – Mr R Mercer
Journal Editor – M P Wright
Committee Member – David Thomas
Founding Member – Phil Williams

The 8D Association will have a display stand at the Manchester Museum of Transport on the 26th and 27th of March 2011 and on the 14th and 15th of May 2011. At both events the group will be advertising for members.

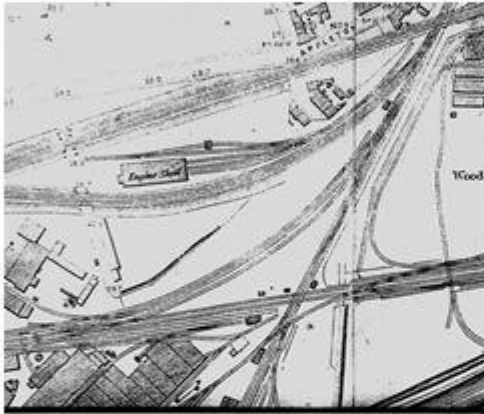
Widnes Motive Power Depot (8D)

In the early years of the St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway it is likely that the locomotives that serviced the southern end of the line were stabled at Sutton. However with the expansion of industry at Widnes from the 1840s onwards there must have been a need to stable engines locally. It is known that local



factories had engines of their own for use on their systems and that these were stabled in simple wooden sheds. By the time that the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) took over what had become the St Helens Canal & Railway company on the 31st of July 1864 Widnes had become a major industrial centre.

The LNWR set about improving the railway at Widnes. The story of the improvements is worthy of an article in its own right and will be covered in a later edition of the journal. However the improvements which included the building of a new line, the Widnes Deviation, were important with regards to the history of the shed because it was built at the same time. The LNWR allocated the code 35W to Widnes Shed.



Widnes Shed Circa 1879

The LNWR opened the deviation line to goods services on the 1st of April 1869. The new shed was located on the south side of the Widnes Deviation Line and to the south of it was a spur that connected the St Helens line to the Deviation thereby allowing passenger services to run into the 'new' Widnes Station which opened on the 1st of March 1870. The shed had three roads and in 1873 it was approved to accommodate six locomotives. Careful study of the above 1870's map shows that in its early form there was no turntable and only basic facilities. By 1879 there were 26 locomotives allocated to Widnes so some additional external storage lines must have been added. Certainly by 1890 the shed had developed into a six road shed that had a turntable and a coaling facility. Also to the south of the St Helens line spur additional sidings had been laid that were used for locomotive stabling. It was in this form that the shed would remain up until closure.

The duties performed by the Widnes based locomotives in the later part of the 19th Century would have been in the main goods turns but there were also

passenger turns.

On the 1st of January 1923 the Widnes Motive Power Depot was taken over by the London, Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS). They allocated it the code 8D. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the shed employed over 100 men and had a typical allocation of 30 locomotives. As in the later part of the 19th Century the turns were mostly goods. The few passenger turns that there were included runs to Liverpool, Acton Bridge and to Manchester London Road.

During the Second World War the shed was extremely busy and the loco crews found themselves travelling further afield than the previously had done. On the 1st of January 1948 the shed became part of the nationalised British Railways (London Midland Region). British Railways kept the LMS shed codes and so Widnes remained as 8D. Little changed in terms of the duties



A view looking north at 8D on the 6th of January 1961. In the foreground can be seen the sidings on which locomotives were often stabled. Beyond the St Helens line spur is the shed itself - Photo by E Bellass

that Widnes based locomotives performed. In the 1950s there was a great deal of local trip working and runs to Gorton, Wigan Springs Branch and Liverpool. The decline set in during the early 1960s. Gradually the numbers of Locomotives declined and the shed closed on the 16th of May 1964. Locomotive crews were transferred to other sheds in the area such as Speke and Warrington. There will be future articles on the shed looking in detail at specifics such as locomotive allocations and duties.

The Swing Bridge at Widnes



Picture from the Railway & Canal Historical Society Collection.

A view looking north at the site of Runcorn Gap station seen from the barge 'LEO' which was carrying members of the Railway & Canal Historical Society on a cruise along the Sankey Canal to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Authorising Act of Parliament that allowed the original section of the canal to be built. The station site was on the north side of the canal just beyond the 'home' signal. An extension of the Sankey Canal from Fiddlers Ferry to Runcorn Gap (Widnes) opened on the 24th of July 1833. The St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway which had opened on the 21st of February 1833 passed over the canal by means of a swing bridge so that it could reach Widnes Dock. The swing bridge can be seen in the open position. Local children had been afforded a 'ride' on the swing bridge. Passenger services did not cross the bridge as they terminated at the Runcorn Gap Station.



Where is this competition? (Answers to ptwright@wallasey79.fsnet)
(Picture by Bevan Price)

Events Programme

10:00 - Saturday 19th of March 2011 – Guided walk around Halewood Triangle. Meet at Halewood Park Car Park – Okell Drive, Halewood.

19:00 – Thursday 14th of April 2011 – Guided walk around Spike Island. Meet at the car park by the Spike Island Visitor Centre.

19:00 – Thursday 2nd of June 2011 – Guided walk along St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway from Farnworth and Bold to Clock Face.

10:00 – Saturday 9th of July 2011 – Guided walk along the Cronton Colliery Branch. Meet at Halsnead Park.

19:00 – Thursday 18th of August 2011 – Guided walk along the St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway from Peasley Cross to Sutton Oak. Meet TBC.

10:00 – Saturday 17th of September 2011 – Guided walk looking at the Garston and Warrington Railway. Meet at Tan House Lane by Moss Bank Park.

Promotional Activities

Sat 26th and Sun 27th of March 2011 – Manchester Museum of Transport.

Sat 14th and Sunday 15th of May 2011 – Manchester Museum of Transport.



Farnworth & Bold Station as seen in 1983 - P Wright.