

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 11, Number 1 : March 2021



'On Shed' : Journal of the 8D Association

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From the Editor

Greetings ! This will be the fourth edition of 'On Shed' compiled and published since the start of the pandemic - a whole year's worth of journal ! Support from those who are able to contribute material has been phenomenal, and occasional feedback from those who have simply enjoyed receiving the 3-monthly editions has been greatly appreciated by this Editor ! In short, it's good to know that there's someone out there. Thank you for getting in touch.

In amongst the occasional complimentary comments that are received, I usually find a selection of tactfully worded notes, politely correcting my major gaffes ! My response is always to thank the correspondent, and to assure them that all steps will be taken (without guarantee) to ensure that the errors are not repeated. The December 'On Shed' was, I fear, noteworthy for the number of mistakes made in a single edition ! Sadly, they were not the type of error that would be

picked up in routine proof reading, and I have endeavoured to right the wrong(s) in a few paragraphs on page 16 of this edition. (Note to self - must do better !)

One exciting item of news has certainly slipped through the net ! By chance, I've discovered, since the December edition was published, that 8D member (and contributor to 'On Shed') Phil Graham was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 2020. The full story can be found on page 22 of this edition. I know that colleagues will wish to join with me in congratulating Phil on receiving such a prestigious award.

As always, I thank those colleagues who have contributed material for this edition, and I hope that others may decide to submit material for future editions of the Association's journal.

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Cover photograph : M28394 stands at New Brighton with the joint LCGB and RCTS 'Class 503 Farewell Tour' on April 13th 1985. Standing at the cab door is Driver (Bob) Driver ! He and the Second Man 'Marty' Wilde were based at Mollington Street. I am grateful to Dennis Flood for identifying the train crew.
Photo : 8D (Alan Robinson) Collection

News Round Up

Chris Hollins

Given that *'On Shed'* is published quarterly, many of the items referred to in this *'News Round Up'* can only be of historical interest. Nevertheless, every effort has been made to record also those changes, developments and items of interest that have occurred within the 8D area since the date that the last publication was prepared for the printer.

End of the Pacers

Northern retired the last of its Class 142 Pacer units from service for a second time on the evening of Friday the 27th of November.

142.004 coupled with Class 150 unit 150.225 was the last unit to be removed from service, which ended with them forming 2J30 the 16.36 Kirkby to Manchester Victoria. A short ceremony was carried out after arrival in Manchester, after which the units departed as 5J30 the 17.48 empty stock working to Newton Heath Depot.

First Breeze Unit Arrives at Alstom

On Monday 23rd November, the First former Greater Anglia Class 321 EMU 321.437 arrived at the Alstom plant in Widnes, for conversion to a Class 600 'Breeze' Hydrogen Multiple unit.

The Electric Multiple Unit - formerly a four car unit had been reduced to a three car unit by removal of the Trailer Second car which had been sent for scrap - was brought by road from Ilford Depot to the Edge Hill Downhill Sidings, where the three cars were unloaded earlier in the month. They were then taken by GBRF to the Widnes Alstom facility on the morning of the 23rd, with 66747 'Made in Sheffield' and 66723 'Chinook' top and tailing the train with barrier wagons at each end.

Special Trains

On Saturday 12th December, several special trains operated in the 8D area. One train

scheduled to operate but was cancelled, involved 60103 'Flying Scotsman' which was due to run from Liverpool Lime Street to Carlisle.

Belmond operated its Northern Belle on a circular 'Christmas Luncheon Special' from Crewe to Blackburn and return. The outward journey was via Chester, Runcorn, Liverpool Lime Street and St Helens. The return from Blackburn to Liverpool was via Hellifield, Carnforth, Preston, Crewe, Chester and Runcorn. West Coast Railways Class 57's 57314 & 57316 top and tailed the train. When observed passing Runcorn, the Sleeping and Kitchen cars were missing from the normal train formation, replaced by several former BR East Coast Metro Cammell built non air conditioned Pullman cars.

Locomotive Services Limited operated two specials. The first 1W45 the 07.12 London Euston to Glasgow Central called 'The Royal Scot' used Electric Locomotive 90001 named 'Royal Scot'. The return journey included a two hour stop-over in Carlisle.

Their second train was the inaugural run of the beautifully recreated Midland Pullman HST. Operating as 1W46 the 09.10 from London St Pancras to Crewe via the Midland Main Line, the Hope Valley route, Guide Bridge and Stockport. Power cars M43055 & M43046 arrived at Crewe over half an hour early and were held outside the station in the Down Salop Goods loop, before being allowed to enter Platform 5. Departure from Crewe, back to St Pancras as 1W49 via

Nuneaton, Leicester, Melton Mowbray and Corby was five minutes late.

Freight Workings

A new GBRF operated intermodal freight working has commenced. Running on week-days as 4D62, the 05.16 from Seaforth to the recently opened East Midlands Gateway Intermodal Terminal, returning as 4F62 the 13.04 from the East Midlands Terminal. The routing from Seaforth is via the Bootle Branch, Olive Mount curve, Earlestown, Winwick Jct, the West Coast Main line to Lichfield Trent Valley and then via Alrewas to Burton-upon-Trent and Stenson Jct, accessing the Terminal from the Castle Donnington line.

The well known Aluminium train from Neuss to Ditton Foundry Lane, has resumed running over the Low Level line from Warrington Arpley Jct to Ditton Jct on Mondays only. Since the early part of the year, both the north and southbound services have been running via Runcorn. With the closure of Fiddlers Ferry Power Station, this is the only revenue earning train on the Low Level line.

Merseyrail

From Monday 26th October, changes were made to the timetables on the Northern line.

The Southport to Hunts Cross services now terminate at Liverpool Central, with the Ormskirk services extended to Hunts Cross. This is the first time that Ormskirk services have run past Liverpool Central on a regular basis.

It is likely that even when all of the new Class 777 EMU'S are delivered, a small fleet of Class 507/508 units will be retained for peak hour use on the Southport line. This is because of a problem involving signal sighting at both Southport and Hunts Cross when two of the new units are coupled together. It will require Network Rail to re-position several signals, which may

take up to 18 months to complete.

Deliveries of the new trains are proceeding slowly. Unfortunately, two further units 777012 / 14 suffered graffiti attacks at Bletchley en route from the Channel Tunnel Sidings at Dollands Moor to Kirkdale. They were being brought north behind GBRF celebrity Class 66 66779 'Evening Star' on 14th October. Unfortunately, neither the driver nor his replacement at Willesden Jct signed for the route from Kensington Olympia to Willesden, resulting in an extensive delay until a conductor was found. The train then proceeded to Kirkdale many hours late. However, one of the barrier wagons developed a hot axle box, and the decision was taken to stable the train in the sidings at Bletchley, where in the early hours of the morning of 15th October the graffiti vandals struck. Both units were then taken to Crewe LNWR depot for the graffiti to be removed, with them eventually reaching Kirkdale over a fortnight after leaving Dollands Moor.

Carterhouse Junction

In the September 2020 Issue of 'On Shed', I reported about the Carterhouse Junction foot crossing work that had been left uncompleted due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. A further visit on Saturday 19th December revealed that the work had been completed and the crossing is now fully operational. Similar work has also been carried out on the crossing at Fiddlers Ferry.



Carterhouse Junction foot crossing.

Photo : Chris Hollins

Manchester Recovery Task Force

This group is consulting until 10th March on ways to improve the reliability of train services through the area from Castlefield Jct in Deansgate to Manchester Piccadilly.

At present, three scenarios have been drawn up, one of which recommends the diversion of the North Wales to Manchester Airport via Warrington Bank Quay service to Manchester Victoria and terminating at Stalybridge. A second scenario has the service being re-routed from Chester along the former Cheshire Lines route through Northwich, terminating at Manchester Piccadilly. As compensation for the loss of this service, a second hourly service would operate between Leeds and Chester, maintaining the present two trains per hour from Manchester to Chester via Newton-le-Willows. Under this proposal, Chester would have four trains per hour to Manchester, two to Piccadilly on the former CLC route and two on the former LNWR route to Manchester Victoria.

On the former CLC route through Warrington Central, it is proposed to withdraw the present half hourly stopping service from Manchester Oxford Road to Liverpool Lime Street, as well as the express service from Manchester Airport to Liverpool Lime Street. To replace these services, an hourly 'all stations' service (with additional peak hour journeys) would operate between Manchester Oxford Road and Warrington Central only. A separate stopping service would run between Warrington Central and Liverpool Lime Street.

To replace the Airport Express trains, it is proposed that the present Trans-Pennine Express operated service from Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport will be diverted to run through to Liverpool Lime Street calling at Birchwood, Warrington Central, Warrington West and Liverpool South Parkway. This would bring TPE back on to the Warrington

Central route, years after the transfer of the Scarborough service to the former LNWR Newton-le-Willows line. If implemented, this could prove to be an incentive for TPE to take over the running of the Liverpool Lime Street to Nottingham service at a later date, should that be split from the Norwich service as proposed by the Department for Transport.

It is expected that recommendations made as a result of the consultation will be implemented with the December 2021 and May 2022 timetable changes.

Midland Pullman : Archive Item

A recent edition of the Rail Magazine carried an item that members may be interested in.

The Midland Pullman diesel trains started operating between Manchester Central and London St Pancras on 4th July 1960. Two sets were built for the service but only one was required for the Monday to Friday service. In November 1962, London Midland region management proposed using the second set for a London St Pancras to Liverpool Central service via Manchester Central, commencing with the 1963 winter timetable. The service would have left St Pancras at 07.45 arriving in Liverpool Central at 11.45. The return from Liverpool Central was timed to depart at 16.25 arriving in London at 20.25. The train would have used the Warrington Central avoiding line from Padgate Jct to Sankey Jct and the Unit would have been serviced at Allerton depot between trips.

The proposal was never carried out. A later one that involved just an 'out and back' service from London in the morning, returning from Manchester in the evening, was also rejected and both ideas were eventually dropped, but what a sight it would have provided on the CLC route.

The Blue Pullmans did visit the 8D area on several occasions. In May 1964, a Midland Pullman set passed through Warrington Bank



Lime Street carrying Coventry City Supporters for an FA cup match against Everton. On at least one occasion, another Western Region set (which was used on the South Wales Pullman) traversed the Bootle Branch and the North Mersey line on a Swansea to Aintree 'Grand National Special'.

Above : The new 'Midland Pullman' : On Saturday 12 December 2020 Power car M43055 leads the Midland Pullman HST into Platform 5 at Crewe, forming 1W49 - the 13.59 to London St Pancras. **Photo : Chris Hollins**

Quay on a Preston to Wembley Hill football special carrying Preston North End Supporters to see their team lose the 1964 Cup final to West Ham United. On Saturday March 5th 1966, a Western Region set normally used on the Birmingham Pullman arrived at Liverpool

The Midland Pullman ceased running at the end of the Winter 1965-66 timetable, when it was replaced by the electrically hauled Manchester Pullman on the West Coast main line. At the same time, Liverpool received its own Pullman when the Merseyside Pullman started running from Lime Street to London Euston.



Website provides a superb research facility

The 8D Association website (maintained by 8D Secretary Doug Birmingham) provides an excellent resource for railway historians, researchers and enthusiasts alike.

Recent additions to the 8D website include photographs taken by local rail photographer David Pool.

Members may also wish to visit the 8D Flickr site at :-

<https://www.flickr.com/groups/the-8d-association/>

The Flickr site includes a huge collection of images taken within the 8D area over the years by various photographers.

Plans to rebuild and relocate the 8D website are now at an advanced stage. Further information awaited.

Memories of Birkenhead Mollington Street MPD

The Men and The Area : Part 10 (Final)

Dennis J Flood

The first *'Mollington Street Memories'* appeared in the December 2015 edition of *'On Shed'*. Since that date, Dennis Flood has been a regular contributor to the journal, and has provided many fascinating stories of local interest. In this, his final *'Mollington Street'* text, he tells us more about his railway career. Despite being made redundant as a Driver in 1976, Dennis' career as a railwayman continued for a further 37 years ! Now in retirement, he is still called upon from time to time to act in an advisory / consultative role for Network Rail. I feel sure that members would wish to join with me in thanking Dennis for his various contributions over an extended period. *Editor*

Freight diminishing

Like all depots, Birkenhead Mollington Street was not immune to a loss of freight work. Loss of work at depots, and then gaining new work, always formed part of the natural cycle of events on British Railways in the 1960s and 1970s and this was the case at Mollington Street.

During this time the depot had regular work involving iron ore services from Bidston Dock to Shotwick Sidings and numerous oil and gas trains from Stanlow Oil Refinery at Ellesmere Port to all parts. The future of the British Steel Corporation works at Shotton on Dee-side (the former John Summers steel works) was by no means certain. Rationalisation was in the air and the appointment by the then government of the day of Sir Ian McGregor as BSC Chairman in the late 1970s would see the closure of Shotton steel works in 1980.

There was talk of Stanlow Oil Refinery delivering fuel and oil by pipe line to distribution depots instead of using bulk train services. Change was very much in the air at that time and I recognised it.

Driver redundancies

This was confirmed to me by being made redundant, along with five other drivers at

Mollington Street from 3 May 1976. However, it was not unexpected. Work had been lost at the depot. We received our redundancy notices dated 6 May 1976, advising us that we would become redundant in our present grade on 3 May 1976 – *three days earlier !*

British Railways was always a considerate employer and was very fair to staff who were made redundant and / or displaced. This was certainly so, insofar as I was concerned personally, and it really did not feel as if I was being made redundant at that time.

However, unlike the majority of companies outside the railway industry, being made redundant with British Railways was not all it seemed. Thank goodness.

Transfer opportunities

British Railways always did their utmost to find other positions within the industry for any member of staff who was redundant or who became displaced. The footplate grade was different in the sense that redundant staff at one depot were given the opportunity to transfer to another within the industry if they so wished.

In the case of myself and the five other drivers who were being made redundant because

L.M.
 BRITISH RAILWAYS REGION
 Birkenhead ... Station or Depot
 6 May 1976 Date

Full Name **D.J.Flood** Present Grade Driver
 Present Station or Depot **Mollington Street, Birkenhead**

REDUNDANCY NOTIFICATION

In consequence of a reduction in the Footplate Staff requirements at your Depot you have become redundant in your present grade *as from the 3. 5. 76.*

In accordance with Clause 12 of the Scheme of Promotion, Transfer and Redundancy for Footplate Staff, you are required (1) to indicate your willingness or otherwise to transfer within your grade to another Depot within this Region or within the promotional area which is the whole of British Railways in order to retain your grade and staff list rate of pay, or (2*) under the amplified Redundancy Agreement operative from 2nd September, 1957, to indicate whether you are prepared to transfer to a vacancy within your grade at a Depot within a reasonable distance (either in your Region or in the promotional area) in order to retain your staff list rate of pay.

Above : Part of the Redundancy Notice received by 7 drivers at Mollington Street on 6 May 1976. Note that the redundancy was effective from the 3 May.

Below : Formal notice that the status of each of the named drivers would be recorded as 'Driver (Put Back)' from 24 May. (See body of text for explanation of 'Put Back')

<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">YOUR REF.</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">DATED</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td> </tr> </table>	YOUR REF.		DATED		BRITISH RAILWAYS REGION	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">OUR REF.</td> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">AMB1/-</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">DATE</td> <td style="width: 50px; text-align: center;">20.5.76</td> </tr> </table>	OUR REF.	AMB1/-	DATE	20.5.76
YOUR REF.										
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OUR REF.	AMB1/-									
DATE	20.5.76									
<p>TO → Mr. J. Myles, Driver, Mr. D. J. Flood, Driver. Mr. G. Roscoe, Driver, Mr. J. M. McMurray (Centre No.) Driver,</p>	<p>FROM Area Manager, BIRKENHEAD. (Central Station). Extn..... (Centre No.)</p>									
<p>Mr. P. W. T. Crebbin, Driver Mr. J. I. Orr, Driver, BIRKENHEAD</p>	<p>Mr. J. Quartermaine, Driver. MOLLINGTON STREET.</p>									
<p>Dear Mr. Myles/Flood/Roscoe/McMurray/Crebbin/Quartermaine/Orr,</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>TRAIN CREW COMPLEMENT, BIRKENHEAD DIESEL DEPOT</u></p> <p>With reference to Redundancy Notice issued to you on the 6th May 1976 and your Option from which it is observed you are willing to transfer to any Station/Depot in your present region within a reasonable distance of your present Station/Depot.</p> <p>Kindly note you will as from the 24th May 1976 be recorded as Driver "Put Back". You will, of course, be entitled to retain your present Staff List Rate of Pay.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yours sincerely,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">for J. BARRON <i>[Signature]</i> Acting Area Manager.</p>										

of a loss of work at the depot we were given a remarkably fair option.

If we agreed to transfer to another depot within reasonable travelling distance on the London Midland Region or elsewhere on British Railways we would retain our rate of pay as drivers. If we did not wish to transfer to another depot we would then be classified as Driver `put-back`, whilst remaining at Birkenhead Mollington Street.

As a redundant driver, preference would always be given to any one of us over any other individual driver who was senior to us in the grade and who may have wished to transfer to a particular depot under normal circumstances.

However, if none of us agreed to transfer to another depot, then all we would lose from our rate of pay was 50p (!), and we would still be referred to as Driver `put-back`. Even this reduction was negotiable due to standing national railway industry agreements.

Not really redundant !

We would remain at Birkenhead until further driver vacancies occurred and we would only be re-appointed if additional work was sourced to the depot. This depended entirely on commercial considerations. Therefore, being made redundant under these circumstances meant that we were not really being made redundant at all.

The depot driver establishment figure was the economic factor for the local BR Area Management team at that time. It always was.

Little did I realise in those days that I would become a depot manager in the future and would become heavily involved in depot establishments – but from a much different perspective.

From a management point of view, it could

be said that six drivers were redundant because they were no longer included within the depot establishment figure. The number of drivers employed was reduced by six – the fact that they were still there but each was shown as Driver `put-back` meant that they were no longer drivers !

In steam days this would mean being put back as a fireman and, following the introduction of diesel traction, it would mean being put back as a second man. However, a Driver `put back` could be utilised for second man duties, when required.

If a vacancy occurred under the circumstances which I have outlined then the senior man of the five redundant drivers would have to transfer or, should one of the others wish to transfer in his place instead, then this was allowed. Individual personal circumstances were taken into consideration.

In the event, the only one of the six of us who did eventually transfer away from Birkenhead Mollington Street was driver Jan Quartermaine, who went to work at Southport. Jan lived in Ainsdale so the move was a sensible one for him.

The rest of us chose to remain at Birkenhead Mollington Street and maintain our rate of pay as drivers. We would each be classified as Driver `put-back`. The local ASLE&F Branch Secretary at Mollington Street was Albert Riley, who was a thorough gentleman, and he was aware of vacancies at all depots within British Railways.

Reinstated at Mollington Street

Apart from Jan, Albert was confident that we would all eventually be re-instated as drivers at Mollington Street before being faced with a potential move elsewhere. He was right.

In fact, we continued as drivers since we were never officially recorded as Driver `put back` as we would cover sickness, leave and

→ Mr. J. Wyles, Driver, Mr. D. J. Flood, Driver, Mr. G. Roscoe, Driver, Mr. J. M. McMurray, Driver, Mr. P. W. T. Crebbin, Driver, Mr. J. I. Orr, Driver, Birkenhead Mollington Street.	from Area Manager, Birkenhead, Central Station. ext. y/r date	o/r AME1/- date 11.10.76
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Dear Mr. ~~Wyles/Flood, Roscoe, McMurray, Crebbin, Orr,~~

Train Crew Complement, Birkenhead Diesel Depot

With reference to my letter of the 20th May, 1976 advising you that you would as from the 24th May, 1976, be recorded as Driver "Put Back" and retain your present staff list rate of pay.

Following a meeting held on the 28th June, 1976, with Sectional Council representatives at which your L.D.C. were present, it was discovered that, in fact, you had not been put back but remained as Drivers on the roster.

In the circumstances and consequent upon an increase in the Drivers Establishment of six from the 4th October, 1976, you have been recorded back in your Link position as from that date.

Yours sincerely,

for C. S. Newell.



Above : *Back in the Link ! Reinstatement for the 'redundant' Mollington Street drivers.*

work at Mollington Street, Birkenhead Central and Birkenhead North on the Mersey and Wirral lines in the normal manner as regular drivers. *I never once acted in the capacity as a second man during the entire time I was designated Driver 'put-back.* If that was called being made 'redundant' then it was a very satisfactory redundancy I must say !

Albert Riley made the case for official reinstatement of all of us during a meeting between Management and Sectional Council some months later at which he was present in his capacity as the Birkenhead Mollington Street Branch Secretary of the Local Departmental Committee (LDC).

Albert was a very rotund character who resembled 'Mr Pickwick' without the sideburns and he was always singing when he came to work (and during it). Given Albert's rotund figure and his constant singing he became affectionately known as 'The Singing Dumplin' !

Albert's claim to fame was that he was the fireman on the last passenger train from West Kirby to Hooton via Parkgate before the line closed in 1956. He was a gentleman.

I have attached the paperwork to this article that all six of us each received when were made redundant and the correspondence

which followed. It confirms that none of us became Driver `put-back`.

Time to move on ?

It was interesting being made `redundant` in those days – the only time it was to happen to me in my entire railway career ! However, it started me thinking about a future away from the driving grade but not necessarily completely away from the footplate. The prospect of moving on started to occupy my mind.

I was a Deputy Train Crew Supervisor and a locomotive boiler / steam generator Instructor in those days. These roles were of minor significance in the pecking order of the railway at the time but it was the first step for an opportunity of doing other things away from a footplate career at that time.

Numerous diesel locomotives were fitted with steam heating boilers / steam generators in those days and quite a few second men were trained to operate them, even at freight depots, because they could be utilised on a passenger train if there was no suitable second man trained in their use at a nearby passenger depot.

Second Man to Leeds

When I was a driver at Mollington Street, I recall on two occasions in 1977 I was asked to `second man` a Lime Street driver on a Liverpool to Leeds passenger service because there was no one available to operate the boiler / steam generator on a Class 46 and a Class 47 locomotive. This equipment was provided for train steam heating purposes.

A Class 46 locomotive was utilised on the outward journey from Lime Street to Leeds and a Class 47 locomotive on the return journey from Leeds back to Lime Street.

It made a nice change from working Class 503 EMUs several times between Rock Ferry and

Liverpool Central during a shift, that was for certain !

Boiler / steam generator

There were several different types of boiler/ steam generator fitted to diesel locomotives in those days. They tended to be known by the name of the manufacturer. rather than by specific type.

There were Spanner boilers of which there were two common types. One was the `upright` Spanner boiler and this was fitted to the likes of Class 31 locomotives due to the constraints on space within the boiler compartment. It was an impressive piece of engineering to fit the boiler into such a tightly confined space within the designated boiler compartment of the locomotive.

If anyone has ever seen flames leaping vertically from the roof of a Class 31 locomotive at any time then it is a safe bet that it was fitted with an `upright` Spanner boiler and too much fuel was being injected by the boiler fuel pump during what was known as the `High-Fire` stage – *not, I may add literally*, but during the phase that the boiler is producing the maximum amount of steam for the train. The `Low-Fire` phase was when the boiler was `cycling` during its maximum steam output. This is a bit like a Combi-boiler of today but without the sophisticated electronic control systems.

There was nothing sophisticated about an `upright` Spanner boiler. They were very efficient and reliable steam heating boilers.

The other type of Spanner boiler was just a slightly smaller *longitudinal* version of the `upright` Spanner boiler and it was also fitted to the likes of Class 46, 47 and Class 52 locomotives.

‘Soot Blowing’ !

The most important thing to remember with

any boiler/steam generator was to make sure it was always shut down before carrying out a 'soot-blowing' operation. This was an important operation and needed carrying out correctly.

'Soot-blowing' was a simple but effective way of using the steam left within the boiler to 'cleanse' the inside of the boiler and rid it of any excess soot which had gathered in the area of the boiler water coils.

The idea was to literally 'blow' the soot down and away from the boiler water coils to help them maintain their thermal efficiency during normal boiler operation.

I was once travelling in the cab of a Class 47 locomotive, which was fitted with a Spanner boiler, with Holyhead men between Chester and Crewe and the Holyhead second man failed to observe the golden rule when shutting down a Spanner boiler – with dramatic results upon arrival at platform 6 at Crewe station.

The second man went back into the locomotive engine compartment passing Crewe Works, about two miles from Crewe station, to shut the boiler down. It was obvious to me that he couldn't properly dispose of the boiler in that short time. I waited with great interest.

The boiler pressure gauge in the locomotive driving cab was showing about 60psi – about the maximum steam pressure which could be achieved with 10 coaches behind the locomotive. The first thing which needs to be done is to close the main steam manifold valve on the boiler to cut off the steam supply to the train and then isolate it at the main switch. When this is done two Mowbray Float Valves are turned inwards in a controlled and precise manner to close them and reduce the steam pressure in the boiler. When this has been satisfactorily completed it is then that the 'Soot-Blower' handle below the boiler

barrel (the lowest point of the boiler) can be pulled through an angle of about 45 degrees to carry out the 'soot-blowing' operation. Once this has been done then the boiler has been disposed of correctly

..... not on this occasion though !

I noticed the steam pressure gauge fall only slightly passing by Crewe North Junction Signal Box as we approached Crewe so the main steam manifold valve had been closed but the boiler 'on' indicator was still illuminated on the driving cab desk.

The second man had still not operated the Mowbray Float Valves – he was running out of time to dispose of the boiler properly. I sat and waited for the inevitable to happen.

As the train was moving along the platform there was an almighty 'vroom' from the engine compartment and the locomotive pitched and rolled sideways – and staff and passengers on the platform all ran in different directions – there was a storm of soot, smoke and steam heading their way – *and fast!*

Soot and steam was everywhere – and just then the engine compartment door burst open to reveal the second man looking like a giant Panda – he was covered in soot – with even more steam and soot following him into the driving cab. It was hilarious

There were several passengers on the platform covered in black soot spots and a member of the station staff came over to the driving cab to complain. It was at that point it was time for me to beat a hasty retreat as there would be more than one person gathering outside the locomotive cab complaining shortly. They would not be too happy either. I looked at the second man cleaning his face with a cloth and spitting out soot from his mouth and I couldn't resist saying it
'You should have shut the boiler down and operated the Mowbray Float Valves first

before 'soot-blowing' the boiler, matey – that's the golden rule . I left both the driver and second man to face the annoyance of passengers and staff alike – it was time for me to go !

I remember after that event, which was purely co-incidental, that it was about the time I started to take a bit more interest in the Salaried Staff vacancy lists - out of curiosity more than anything else.

Vacancies - Salaried Staff and Wages Staff

British Railways published two vacancy lists for staff each month. One was for Salaried Staff and the other for Wages Staff. The likes of drivers, guards, signalmen and permanent way staff were 'Wages Grade' and Supervisors, Inspectors and Managers were 'Salaried Grade'. What was significant about these two types of grading was that a member of 'Wages Staff' could apply for a position in either a wages or salaried position but an application for a salaried position could only be made within the Region that the individual was working in.

Therefore, from my own perspective, I could only apply for a salaried position within the London Midland Region.

Birkenhead was within the Liverpool Division, and the Division was within the London Midland Region (LMR), so my options were very much limited. I always looked at the Salaried Staff vacancy list thereafter but the positions I may well have wished to apply for were usually earmarked for someone else who had found favour with the local Area Manager, or who may well have been doing the job on a temporary basis until it became permanent. The advertised position nearly always favoured someone who had been carrying out the role temporarily. I understood and accepted that.

However, that perception I had of thinking I could only apply for salaried positions within my own Region changed completely after a

chance encounter with Liverpool Divisional Traction Inspector Harold Hale at Birkenhead Mollington Street one afternoon in early 1979. Harold, or 'H' as we always called him, was an ex Edge Hill man who had spent 20 years working on 'double trip' jobs from Lime Street to London Euston. He was a thoroughly decent man who had the respect of all those who knew him, and was very approachable.

After having a chat with him in the 'Blue Room' at Mollington Street, I came away from there with a different view. The 'Blue Room' was inside the former 'Western' shed and this was the office of the Liverpool Divisional Traction Inspectors when they visited the depot. It was only called the 'Blue Room' because the outside of the office door was painted blue !

Sound advice from 'H'

Harold told me to apply for a 'salaried' position which I liked the look of outside the London Midland Region because it was not a 'hard and fast rule'. It all depended on the Interviewing Manager and if he wanted to interview a 'Wages Grade' candidate from another Region then that was his decision to make. That advice from 'H' turned out to be quite momentous for me personally and, although I was not to know it at the time, it set me on my way to becoming the Western Region Chief Traction Inspector 12 years later !

A vacancy for a West of England Divisional Traction Inspector located in Bristol was advertised shortly after my conversation with 'H' and I applied for it. I did this for the 'interview experience', more than anything else but not knowing if my application would even be acknowledged. It was acknowledged. I was to have an interview, at the very least.

Successful Interview at Bristol

I had my interview at Bristol in the Bristol & Exeter building (always known by railwaymen

BRITISH RAILWAYS

B.R. 6637

..... *MM* REGION

Your Ref.	
Dated	

Our Ref.	<i>AMB 111</i>
Dated	<i>20-4-79</i>

To:—
DRIVER D. J. FLOOD
MOLLINGTON ST.

From:—
AREA MANAGER
CENTRAL STATION
BIRKENHEAD

- * PROMOTION AND REDUNDANCY ARRANGEMENTS
- * ADVERTISING OF SALARIED/WAGES VACANCIES

Vacancy No. *N 265* List No. *11*
 Vacancy for *DIV. TRACTION* at *DMO BRISTOL*
INSPECTOR C

Will you please arrange for the undermentioned applicant(s) for this vacancy to attend for interview at:—

100 APPROX YARDS FROM BRISTOL (TEMPLE MEADS) EXIT *Room 205*
BRISTOL & EXETER BUILDING
BRISTOL
 on *FRI. 4.5.79* at *11.20 hrs* at the time(s) shown.

- * This confirms telephone conversation between our representatives.
- * Please send *copy* copies of service history/histories.
- ✓ * A free ticket is enclosed for the journey.

Above : Notification of Interview details for post of Divisional Traction Inspector based at Bristol.

in Bristol as the 'B&E') and I somehow survived a very gruelling experience being interviewed by the Divisional Traction & Traincrew Officer and the Divisional Chief Traction Inspector. The experience of that interview was something I have never forgotten.

I left Bristol on the 1259 Bristol TM to Liverpool Lime Street service, relieved that I had not made a fool of myself but convinced that with seven other candidates to be interviewed, I would not be successful. It was some weeks later that I was informed that I

Mr.D. J. Flood,
Driver,
Birkenhead Mollington St.

Area Manager,
Birkenhead,
Central Station.
ALB/SFF.
21.5.79.

ADVERTISING OF SALARIED VACANCIES. LIST 11. VACANCY NO. W.265
DIVISIONAL TRACTION INSPECTOR, GRADE 'C', BRISTOL.

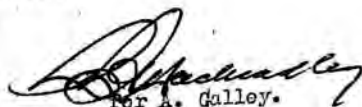
I am pleased to inform you that you have been selected for appointment to the above mentioned vacancy with an allocation date of 4.4.79 and at a salary of £4,305 p.a. plus £209 N.E.S.

Please arrange to transfer to your new position on Monday, 4th June, 1979, travelling by the first available train and reporting on arrival to :-

Chief Divisional Traction Inspector,
Room 304,
Bristol and Exeter Building,
BRISTOL (Temple Meads) Station.

I trust you will be happy and successful in your new post.

Free ticket for your journey is enclosed.


For R. Galley.

Above : *Success ! Confirmation of appointment at Bristol.*

had been appointed as a West of England Divisional Traction Inspector at Bristol. I was surprised and delighted when I received my letter of appointment.

The first man to offer his congratulations to me was Harold 'H' Hale himself. It was thanks to him that I applied for the position at Bristol in the first instance.

How right the advice from 'H' had turned out to be. *'Another railway career awaits you far away from Birkenhead, well done Matey'*, he told me.

Pastures new !

My footplate career, which started on steam locomotives in 1963 (and which I shall be writing about in the future) was about to close and another chapter in my railway career was about to start which was to take me to Bristol, Cardiff (twice), Swansea, Swindon, Rugby, Birmingham, Newport and finally Crewe, where my railway career was to end in retirement in 2013. However, I have not finished entirely with the railway industry as I still carry out 'consultancy' work for Network Rail, when required.

Old railwaymen don't fade away – they just stay around to annoy the next generation !

A lifelong railway colleague and friend of mine summed up my `consultancy` work with a very humbling comment. *`You are still able to influence the future of the railway in some way, because you are from its past`*. I could have not chosen a better career – or people to have worked with – and for that I am very thankful.

My railway career encompassed working on steam, diesel and electric traction, both a/c and d/c types, and in three years working on the newly privatised railway from 1997 until 2000 I was directly involved with On-Track Plant as Plant Engineering Operations Manager with Central Track Renewals at Rugby. It was there that I learnt a great deal about the engineering of the Permanent Way. Quite fascinating.

There is no one individual that I can thank more than Harold `H` Hale. He charted a different course for me during the chat we had in the `Blue Room` at Mollington Street after my chance meeting with him in 1979.

Harold passed away in 1984 and I am pleased that I kept in touch with him on a regular basis after I had left Birkenhead.

How fortunate I have been to have had such an interesting and varied railway career.

Dennis J. Flood



Above : Taken in 1987, immediately prior to the demolition of the MPD, this photograph shows the particularly unimposing entrance to the depot.

Photo from Colin Woodside Collection

Errors, Corrections and Apologies !

From the Editor

At the outset, I'm grateful to those members who have contacted me to point out any errors when attributing photographs used in *'On Shed'*.

Beginning with the September 2020 edition (Vol.10, No.3), the photograph shown on page 15 should have been attributed to **David Allen**.

In the December 2020 edition (Vol.10, No.4) the photographs shown on pages

11 and 12 should have been attributed to **John Dyer**. In that same edition, the shot of Fiddlers Ferry signal box (back cover) should have been attributed to **Graham Earle**. Similarly, the wonderful shot on the front cover of that edition shows a demolition train at Cwm y Glo on the Llanberis to Caernafon branch in 1966. This should have been attributed to **E M Kneale**.

To all, I offer my sincere apologies. *Editor*

Mollington Street MPD in 1987, prior to demolition

Photo from Colin Woodside Collection



Mollington Street MPD in 1987, during demolition

Photo from Colin Woodside Collection



Demise of the CLC around Liverpool : (Part 2)

Phil Graham

Liverpool Central (continued)

30 Aug 1970 At Liverpool Central, all non-essential infrastructure was removed and all points were secured out of use and all signals taken away except :-

(i) the facing points in the Up Main at the end of the platform 4 connection from the Down Main,

(ii) the Up Main Starting Signal (/ Brunswick Distant),

(iii) the platform 4 to Up Main Home (with lower subsidiary),

(iv) the Down Main Home 1 (Fireman's call plunger removed),

(v) the Down Main Home 2,

(vi) the Down Main Distant (/ Brunswick Starting Signal).

The shunting klaxons were also removed from Central Tunnel.

A reconditioned frame of six levers was provided to operate the remaining infrastructure, replacing the frame which had been shortened to 56 levers in 1934. The rest of the floor was boarded over where the larger frame had been.

With platform 3 removed, all services now used the remaining platform 4. To facilitate this, the DMU that arrived at 09.09 SX on the 08.50 SX from Hunts Cross, now went ECS from Liverpool Central to Allerton TMD at 09+15, and a 16+54 from Allerton Depot was introduced. This train was optimistically timed to arrive at Liverpool Central at 17+12 and then to load and turn round in 3 minutes. The ECS usually stood a few minutes at the Down Home signal waiting for the platform to be vacated by the 17.10 departure to

Gateacre. As a result, the 17.15 departure to Hunts Cross invariably left two or three minutes late. On Saturdays, with Otterspool Signalbox switched out on late shift, this train would also usually be delayed for a couple of minutes at Brunswick's Up IB (just beyond St. Michael's Station), until Cressington was able to send train out of section for the 17.10 service and accept the 17.15.

Dec 1970 – BR published a further closure proposal, inviting objections (as legally required) to be submitted to the Transport User Consultative Committee (TUCC) by 25th January, 1971. If there had been no objections (something that never happened!), BR was to withdraw the service on 1st March, 1971.

20 Jan 1971 – a national postal strike required BR to postpone the date for receipt of objections until "14 days after the end of the present Postal Dispute". The dispute ended on 4th March, 1971, thereby extending the deadline for receipt of objections until 18th March. Objections were, of course received (including one from the author!) and a public hearing was convened. The TUCC then submitted its findings (that there would be no hardship caused by the withdrawal) to the Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment, for a final decision.

July 1971 – a temporary wooden booking office with staff messing facilities, and a public waiting area were provided by the buffer stop on the former platform 3, to enable the remaining staff to vacate the main station building ready for its demolition.

19 Jul 1971 – demolition contractors moved onto site: the temporary car park and the bookstall were closed, the main station con-

course was boarded off, and the main station building was vacated; with the staff moving into the temporary building. The Lyceum entrance and the Refreshment Room remained open, and a thoroughfare was available, outside the hoardings, from the Lyceum entrance, and the Ranelagh Street entrance to the Gateacre platform and to the Wirral lines / Messrs Lewis's Store.

The demolition of the substantial, three story station building (long the headquarters of the Cheshire Lines Committee) took most of the rest of 1971 to complete.

Feb 1972 – a fenced pathway was constructed from Fairclough Street, at the back of Lewis's, along the former horse dock and across to the former platforms 5 and 6 in readiness to connect with the extreme south end of platform 4, under Newington Road bridge.

This area of platform 4 was tarmaced and a fence was provided between it and former platform 3, keeping a minimum width available at platform 4.



Moving Liverpool closer to Gateacre - the 30 yard platform is fully occupied in early April 1972.

20 Feb 1972 – platform 4 was shortened by 130 yards at the buffer stop end. A new buffer stop was provided, making the operative length of the platform about 30 yards (just sufficient to accommodate a two car DMU).

A pedestrian bridge was built between for-

mer platform 5 and platform 4 behind the new buffer stop.

A small 'passimeter' type booking office was brought to site together with some seating and a workman's tin hut, to act as a waiting room. These facilities were sited underneath Newington, and were gated from the demolition site, through which the station staff walked to and from their mess room, which was still in the original hut.

All other accesses to the station were closed, and the new temporary Fairclough Street entrance now became the only access to the Gateacre trains.

The Refreshment Room was also closed and was soon demolished.

These arrangements were to last until the station closed, eight weeks' later, but were intended to be a temporary measure, while contractors removed the main station train shed. This work started straightway and was only half complete by the time the station was closed, with the main girders still standing, but all the glasswork, woodwork and glazing bars having been removed. Once the train shed had been removed, the plan had been to make the access into the station from the Lyceum entrance again and, presumably, along former platform 1. It would then have been necessary to close the Gateacre service for 18 – 24 months, from summer 1974, while work took place on the underground station (assuming that this work did obtain financial approval). However the Department of the Environment was still considering the TUCC report into BR's latest closure proposal.

17 Mar 1972 – the Secretary of State gave his unconditional consent to the closure, and BR then decided to enact this after the last train had left on 15th April, 1972.

Late Mar 1972 – before closure could be enacted, the 08.00 from Hunts Cross was to



The waiting facilities and boeing office provided at Liverpool Central in April 1972.

fail once again on arrival. The following train (the 08.15 from Gateacre) stood at Brunswick for a few minutes and then again at the Outer Home Signal at St. James', presumably while a clear understanding was reached by all concerned as to how the train was (or was not) to be accommodated. As the train



Relief Signalman Len Finch in the 6 lever Liverpool Central Signalbox – March 1972.

moved off, the Guard walked through to advise the passengers that they would have to alight via the leading passenger door. Slowly the 08.15 from Gateacre drew into the station and almost buffered up to the failed train. The leading third of the leading car was on the platform and the passengers (including the author) all filed out through the leading door.

The rear car of the 08.15 from Gateacre was still on the points from the Down Main, and the units when coupled up exited (ECS) over the Down line as far as Brunswick. (The 09.00 to Gateacre was cancelled)

15 Apr 1972 – during the day, Liverpool Central was to see one last excursion, which was to make one final non-stop run from Liverpool Central to Manchester (Oxford Road) over the CLC main line. This train, running as 1L28, visited Gateacre before running non-stop to Liverpool Central, where it was accommodated between the 11.00 departure and the arrival of 11.30 from Gateacre. Essentially formed of a two car DMU, this train then passed the 11.30 from Gateacre at St. Michael's Station, as the latter performed its station duties (at 11.48). The special train was chartered by the Wirral Railway Circle.

The final train was 2F98, 18.20 Liverpool Central to Gateacre, formed of two car DMU with MBS 51417 leading a DTCL. It was well filled, with many passengers standing. It left 3 minutes late, as many people photographed the sad end from the track and platform. So just under two years from its centenary, the first of Liverpool's three termini to close (and the last to be built) slipped away.

10 Dec 1972 – the signalbox was (officially) abolished.

St. James' Station

25 Feb 1874 – St. James' Signalbox was commissioned. It had 17 levers.

2 Mar 1874 – St. James' Station opened to passengers.



The remains of St. James' Station in 1968. Taken from a Down train, the view shows the out of use middle road from Liverpool Central to Brunswick, the Up line and former platform and the rear of Brunswick's Up Outer Home signal (No. 51).

15 Oct 1913 – St. James' was the scene of the only passenger fatality, occasioned by a train accident anywhere on the lines under review. 6 passengers and a Guard were killed and 63

other persons were injured, some seriously, when the 14.35 Midland Railway train from Liverpool Central to Stockport Tiviot Dale was in collision with the stationary 14.30 Cheshire Lines train from Liverpool Central to Manchester Central.

Neither train was booked to call at St. James', but the 14.30 service was brought to a stand there with its brakes dragging – thought to be the result of a passenger operating the communication cord. The box lad at Liverpool Central had been unofficially helping the Signalman by operating the Block Instruments, and the Signalman, thinking that the box lad had received train out of section from St. James' for the 14.30 and had had the 14.35 service accepted, cleared the signals for this train to depart.

31 Dec 1916 – St. James' Station closed to passengers as a wartime economy measure, but it never re-opened.

Sep 1934 – the signalbox was abolished and replaced by Intermediate Block Home signals.

(..... to be continued)

'On Shed' material Contributions invited

The task of gathering in material for the journal is never ending. Contributions by way of news items, comments, photographs and tales of yesteryear are always most welcome. I look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks -
tony.r.foster@btinternet.com

St Helens 'Push - Pull' Information wanted

Rail author Eric Stuart is seeking assistance from anyone who can help with information on how 'Push - Pull' trains were operated in the St Helens area. In the first instance, please contact the 8D Secretary at the email address below.

Many thanks -
the_8d_association@yahoo.co.uk

8D Member in Queen's Birthday Honours List

Phil Graham MBE

A Knaresborough man says he was convinced he had been subject to a practical joke after appearing in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

Philip Nesbitt Graham has worked in the rail industry for 47 years and has run signalling classes on a voluntary basis for 34 of those.

Mr Graham, a resident of Knaresborough since 1989, could not believe his eyes when an email came through five weeks beforehand to notify him about the award. He said: "I thought it was a joke. Thankfully, I read the full email before telling people that someone was pranking me. I was sat with a friend at the time and almost shouted "Look at this wind up".

Mr Graham's award pays tribute to his tireless work throughout the pandemic and eagerness to provide lessons to those hoping to break into the industry. More than 170 people signed up to his classes this year, a rise in numbers since his teaching was forced to move online due to Covid 19.

Mr Graham kept the news to himself until last Friday when the list was published, leaving him with weeks to anticipate his friends' and family's reactions. "I didn't even tell my wife. I knew if I told one person, I would be tempted to spread the news to everyone. It was well worth the wait." he said.

Mr Graham was a key worker during lockdown, making daily trips from Knaresborough to ensure the smooth running of rail services. He added: "I would always leave the house with my Network Rail paperwork. It looked like I was off on holiday with my briefcase, so I thought someone would end up stopping me".

"It has been sad seeing the trains so bare. Back in the day, you would often leave passengers behind on the Knaresborough to Leeds route. Now, it is near enough empty."

Mr Graham began working for British Rail in 1973, working his way through the grades before becoming a senior manager in York. Upon his retirement, he continued to run voluntary classes in railway operating and rules and regulations.

"Network Rail have been wonderful in allowing me to continue running lessons after my retirement," Mr Graham said. "After all, this training has resulted in me being nominated for an MBE, so I am very happy."

(Text by Damian Shepherd, Harrogate Advertiser)



Birkenhead (Volunteer) Steam Cleaning Gang !

Chris Magner

“Many local enthusiasts possessed the drive and guts to transform filthy locomotives. The extraordinary sight of steam enthusiasts clearing away encrusted grime and grease from dirty, filthy, neglected locomotives in order to ensure that last final working days were spent looking as though someone cared for them”. (Robert Adley MP).

“BR cleaners had a bucket of paraffin, cotton waste, scraper and bare hands”.
(Norman Warburton : Mollington Street Driver)

Groups of people not employed by the railway industry would enter private railway property to clean up one of their assets for nothing at their own expense. Today Health and Safety would not allow this. This was something that esteemed train timers such as Cecil J Allen and O S Nock did not have to do in order to achieve a fast run. Neither men had for example had to go to Old Oak Common Shed and clean the ‘Castle’ class locomotive diagrammed for ‘*The Bristolian*’ to ensure having a good run. Unlike the gang, they knew steam at its zenith.

First Assignment : 42727

The first assignment for the ‘Unofficial Volun-

teer Birkenhead Steam Cleaning Gang’ was to go to Chester MPD (6A) on Saturday 26th March 1966 and clean ‘Crab’ No.42727 which at the time was then rated by Birkenhead MPD staff as the best of the surviving members of the class. No. 42727 was required for a SLS (Midland Area) Rail Tour special from Birmingham Snow Hill to Llandudno Junction and back on Sunday 27th March with No.42727 working the Chester to Llandudno Junction and return section.

The SLS, through their Hon Secretary ‘Cam’ Camwell arranged for the locomotive to be cleaned at Chester shed to ensure No.42727 was in a presentable condition. The locomotive still had the old style

crest on the tender. Because the weather was so bad, the initial plan to clean the locomotive in the open was abandoned and Stanier 2-6-4 tank engine No.42613 was used to push the ‘Crab’ under cover into the dark murk of the shed, bringing it out later. Richard Thomson, one of the cleaning gang, recalled reporting at the stores just after breakfast to obtain a supply of oil and cotton waste. “After four hours toil and graft



Above : ‘Crab’ No.42942 photographed on shed at Birkenhead. Date unknown.
Photograph : John Atherton

the locomotive was transformed from a rather grubby condition to one fit to grace the Railtour. Although the first, it was one of the best cleaning jobs the gang ever did. No.42727 absolutely shone as it came though Chester Station on the Sunday and we all felt proud of our efforts. The cleaning gang including Peter Smith, Steve Senior, Chris Magner and other hard working enthusiasts who didn't realise how dirty they became and needed a good scrub down themselves before walking through the streets of Chester for the train home to Birkenhead."

Encouraged by their efforts on 26th March, the cleaners worked hard at Mollington Street MPD on Friday 22nd April to ensure No.42727 was again in pristine condition for the RCTS 'St George' Rail Tour on the following day. It absolutely shone, but there were no free tickets for the cleaners who had to pay the normal fare for the trip.



Above : No. 42727 running round its train at Llandudno Junction on Sunday 27th March 1966. **Photograph 8D (John Ashley) Collection**

42942 Replaces 42727

After the 'St George' Rail Tour, No.42727 was not considered good enough for passenger work, so class member No.42942 was used on special occasions. No.42942 was diagrammed for the Whit Monday excursion to

North Wales and was then cleaned for the BLS / LCGB 'Hundred of Wirral' Rail Tour on 6th August from Birkenhead Woodside to Mold Junction and return via Bidston. The train was formed of brake vans and reached over 60mph after Capenhurst on the outward journey. Croes Newydd MPD 16XX pannier locomotive No.1638 was diagrammed for the Chester to Mold Junction triangle section of the route (possibly the first 'passenger' train to traverse the triangle) but was in such appalling condition both externally and internally that it failed after traversing the triangle.

Final Polish for Veteran Locomotive

On Sunday 28th August 1968, many Wirral enthusiasts went to Birkenhead MPD to clean 'Crab' No.42942 diagrammed to work the Rock Ferry (dep 10.06) Bank Holiday Monday excursion to Llandudno. The cleaning gang

included Peter Smith, Paul Boot, Stephen Senior, Roger Jermy, Richard Moon, Chris Magner (all from Bebington) and Roger Golder (Wallasey). They were joined by those from Liverpool (Tony Wardle), Prestatyn (John Hobbs and Chris Scott now owner of narrow gauge loco *Alice*), Mick Pope, David Banks, Steve Mulholland, and others from Birmingham, Chester and Oxford. The gang had reported for an all-day duty complete with overalls, rags and cleaning equipment. According to the Birkenhead News "The

boilers and tenders were cleaned until faces were mirrored in them". This was the best job the cleaning gang did. Roger Golder's photographs of the occasion adorn the *Railway Reflections* magazine. He said the cleaners did a credible job. Locomotive

cleaner Richard Thomson said, *"I was so filthy after the cleaning session that I was forced to walk the three miles home, being certain that I would be turned off any Corporation bus at first sight. I shall always treasure my memories of being an unofficial locomotive cleaner and witnessing the last days of steam on the Wirral."*

No.45627 'Sierra Leone'

Members of the gang also cleaned Liverpool Bank Hall MPD's last Jubilee Class No.45627 *Sierra Leone* for one of its final service train runs, the 12.27 from Liverpool Exchange Station to Blackpool on 2nd September 1966. Keith Widdowson in his 2019 book *'Confessions of a Steam Age Ferroequinologist'* gave credit for their efforts in making No.45627 presentable. Photographer Brian Taylor joined the cleaners. *The Liverpool Daily Post* kindly photographed and recorded the occasion for the outward run.

Higher BR Divisional Management were not pleased with Bank Hall MPD for allowing volunteers to come into the shed and clean one of their locomotives (this being mid-week rather than on a Sunday when things were usually quieter). Neither were they happy about footplate rides given to some of the cleaners on the outward journey thanks to the kindness of Driver Gristock and his fireman. Driver Sewell from Bank Hall MPD did his best to give No.45627 a good send off on the return journey. Unfortunately, a six minute signal stop at Moss Lane Junction robbed impetus. Driver Sewell was not deterred and raced away (average 73mph between Croston and Rufford) with speed reaching the 80mph mark before the Burscough Bridge stop. The run into Liverpool was severely checked as well but 72mph was reached at Maghull.

Specials Galore !

The Liverpool University Public Transport Society ran a *'Wirral & Mersey Special'* on

Saturday 22nd October 1966 using No.42942 from Green Lane Junction to Liverpool Central Station. Because of MDHB regulations at Birkenhead Docks, a man with a red flag had to walk in front of the train as it passed through the Docks. LUPTS members cleaned No.42942 the previous day at Mollington Street depot. As a tribute to the class, No.42942 was diagrammed for the 2.45pm Woodside to Paddington service on New Year's Eve, 1966. It was specially cleaned that morning at Birkenhead MPD thanks to the support and co-operation of the shed staff. Not knowing those involved, the LCGB Bulletin praised BR's Birkenhead MPD staff for their efforts in cleaning No.42942 !

Sometimes the cleaners went down to Birkenhead Shed on a Sunday morning and cleaned the Stanier 2-6-4 tank locomotive diagrammed for the afternoon Birkenhead to Paddington train in the hope that the crew would work harder than they normally would and try for 75mph through Mollington. Just before the Paddington's finished on Sunday 26th February 1967, the local enthusiasts thought it important that the Birkenhead Stanier tank No.42613 was in pristine condition for the 15.25 Woodside to Paddington train as No.7029 *Clun Castle* was in Chester on an LCGB Railtour when the 15.25 was due. No scruffy tanks next to *Clun Castle* ! Also the cleaners hoped when the crew came on duty they would 'have a go' down through Mollington.

Work started in the morning as soon as No.42613 had returned from Chester having worked the 08.35 service from Birkenhead Woodside to London Paddington despite the locomotive still being in steam. Luckily, Driver Welsh and his Fireman did not let us down, particularly the Fireman who worked far harder than he would have done and in the words of Roger Golder *"The 15.25 left Rock Ferry in a vigorous fashion and they*

achieved the required 75mph en route to Chester. The crew must have been proud when their pristine Birkenhead tank locomotive passed 'Clun Castle' just outside Chester".



Above : Great Western No. 7029 'Clun Castle' is turned. (Thought to be at Tyseley shed).

Photograph 8D (John Kirwood) Collection

Stanier 2-6-4 tanks Nos 42587, 42613 and 42616 were the main beneficiaries of the cleaning work and locomotives used at the final weekend of steam 4th and 5th March 1967 including Class 9Fs Nos 92203 / 92234. The penultimate task of the gang at Birkenhead was to clean Nos 42616 and 42647 for the RCTS 'Wrexham Mold & Connaughts Quay' Rail Tour on Saturday April 1967.

Final Cleaning Sessions

Final cleaning session at Birkenhead was for No.92203 on the final 'Summers Ore' to be



Above : The final clean up ! 9F No.92203, here seen at Crewe Works.

Photograph 8D (Alan Robinson) Collection

steam hauled on Monday 6th November 1967. Steam cleaner Richard Thompspon said, "During all the proceedings, the understanding co-operation and appropriate 'turning of the blind eye' of Birkenhead MPD shed staff must be acknowledged." The other volunteers who worked in a number of parts of the country up to August 1968 were the last locomotive cleaners on BR. Peter Smith joined their ranks on 3rd / 4th August 1968 when he helped clean Black 5 No.45156 at Lostock Hall MPD on the final weekend of BR steam operation. Writing in the February 2020 edition of 'Steam Days' magazine about No.42587 on Sunday 5th March 1967, Kenn Pearce said "The external condition of the 2-6-4T can be attributed to the unofficial cleaning gang at Birkenhead who pulled out all the stops so the shed could diagram four resplendent locomotives for the symbolic weekend of main line passenger work".

Maurice Burns once stated, "The cleaners possessed neither overalls, safety boots and no-one showed them the correct methods for climbing onto boilers, even when the locomotive was lit up. Nor on to the tops of tenders but despite this, as far as is known, no-one ever got hurt. The cleaners generally had no idea of what was supposed to be the proper method to clean locomotives but somehow they managed it and managed it very well. However, the cleaners realised that just because the locomotive was in clean condition thanks to their best efforts it did not always guarantee a good run. This depended to a large extent on the crew." In conclusion David Bryant and John Bannon in their 2015 book 'Steam on Merseyside and beyond' summed up locomotive cleaning as follows. "Looking back almost fifty years we have to be grateful for the efforts of volunteer cleaners to make the locomotives presentable and often gleaming on rail tours."

Chris Magner

Race Day at Aintree !

Rod Dixon

On seeing the photograph of the old Aintree station featured in the December edition of 'On Shed', I was reminded of a Grand National Race Day back in 1978 (actually on 1st April of that year) when I was a Driver at Garston.

Booking On at 0730

A Secondman and I were rostered on duty at Garston at 7.30am to get loco 40026 ready to take to Lime Street to work an excursion for Edinburgh.



Above : A Class 40 (40020) seen here on freight duty passing the site of the disused Union Bank Farm Halt on the St Helens and Runcorn Gap line. Date unknown.

8D (Brian Roberts) Collection

We were to work to Wigan, where an electric loco would take the train forward. We were booked to stop at Huyton and St Helens Junction, then via Parkside to join the main line to the north at Golborne Jct. After leaving the train to be worked forward from Wigan, we took our loco to Warrington Bank Quay and waited there to pick up a race train that had been hauled north by an electric loco.

The Route to Aintree

After attaching, we worked this train via Earlstown and Olive Mount Junction onto the

branch to Bootle Junction, where we crossed the electrified Southport line onto the goods lines. These lines ran past Bootle Oriol Road and New Strand stations, onward to Marsh Lane Junction signal box. In the past, this signal box had connections to the main line to Southport, but at this time the goods line became the North Mersey Branch which climbed an embankment to cross a bridge over the Southport main line, on to Sefton Junction. A single line branch from Sefton Junction had been retained to give access to Aintree Sefton Arms Station, where one of the old platforms had been cleaned of weeds, the platform edged painted, and temporary fencing erected up to the Park Lane overbridge to guide and keep the passengers safe. Large crowds were expected !

This single line formed a loop before the station, one line giving access to the platform, the other line to enable a 'run round'.

The Movement Inspector

With this line being only a temporary facility, a Movement Inspector had been arranged, and who was in charge of the line from Sefton Junction signal box. The Movement Inspector was also responsible for a small team of railtrack workers who, at his direction, worked the points leading into the platform line or the 'run round' line. At this period in time, all points at Aintree and crossings not connected to a signal box that were to be used by passenger trains had to have a clamp fitted to prevent them moving as the train went over them. This was the case at Aintree. The lines here were classed as freight sidings, but were cleared to be used by race day passenger trains.

I think there were five trains timed to arrive within a short time. They were coming from

all parts of the country. Some were going into Edge Hill station to be reversed to go onto the Bootle branch. Trains that came from the south, similar to the one I was working approaching Olive Mount Junction could go directly onto the Bootle branch. I think this was the reason my train was routed via Warrington - it was a little further round but there was no need for a reversal at Edge Hill.

Juggling Trains at Aintree

To speed up the turn around at Aintree, a loco was sent earlier and put onto the run-round line. When the first train arrived on the platform, this loco was coupled to the rear, the incoming loco was uncoupled and then put onto the run-round line. Meanwhile, after unloading all ten coaches, the first loco took the train to Edge Hill via the Bootle branch. When the second train arrived the loco on the run-round line was coupled on to the rear, the train loco uncoupled and put onto the runround line to wait for the third train which was mine.

On the arrival of my train, my secondman uncoupled our loco and then we ran onto the run-round line to wait the arrival of the next train - currently waiting at Sefton Junction for my train to be emptied of passengers then taken to Edge Hill. When the fourth train arrived at the platform, I was instructed to couple to it. When all the passengers had been cleared, I had permission to take the empty train to Edge Hill sidings where we again ran around the train, coupled to it and then waited there until the races had ended. All of the trains would return to Aintree in the order of their arrival, where we would repeat the procedure of the morning so we would have the trains we arrived with !

When we arrived with the empty train at Aintree station, station staff supervised the boarding having first checked that passengers were for the correct train ! As soon as we had uncoupled, the loco that had been wait-

ing was coupled, brakes were checked and the train was dispatched. We put our loco onto the run-round and coupled onto the next empty stock to arrive. After loading, we departed for Warrington via the Bootle branch to Olive Mount and Earlestown.

On our arrival at Warrington we detached to allow an electric loco to work the train forward. We returned, light loco, to Garston via Arpley to Ditton low level line. We put our loco away on the holding sidings, to book off at 19.30. Meanwhile the train crew on the loco booked to work the last empty stock from Edge Hill to Aintree were relieved earlier in the afternoon. When this fresh crew had worked the last stock to Aintree and after the loaded train had left, they were booked to take the loco to Wigan North West station to attach to the returning Edinburgh excursion train that I had worked out in the morning. They were booked to return the same route via Golbourn and Parkside making stops at St Helens Junction and Huyton to Lime Street then light loco to Garston holding sidings.

Venice Simplon Orient Express

I do not know when the sidings were last used for race trains, but I do remember that the Venice Simplon Orient Express was used for a race train. It was damaged by vandals throwing stones and breaking some windows as it travelled over the Bootle branch. Needless to say this train was never used on the branch again, even though I do remember the V.S.O.E going into Lime Street station and the racegoers being transferred by coach to Aintree and back.

As a point of interest, the line between Bootle Junction and Aintree was made into a single line with a token released by Bootle to give access to small trains of up to six vans going to the Metal Box sidings. We had a short term contract at Garston at about this time.

Bridge Works Over the Alt

Engineering and ballast trains going onto the Ormskirk line at Aintree would also use this branch, so that they would not have to be reversed to Sandhills to go onto Ormskirk

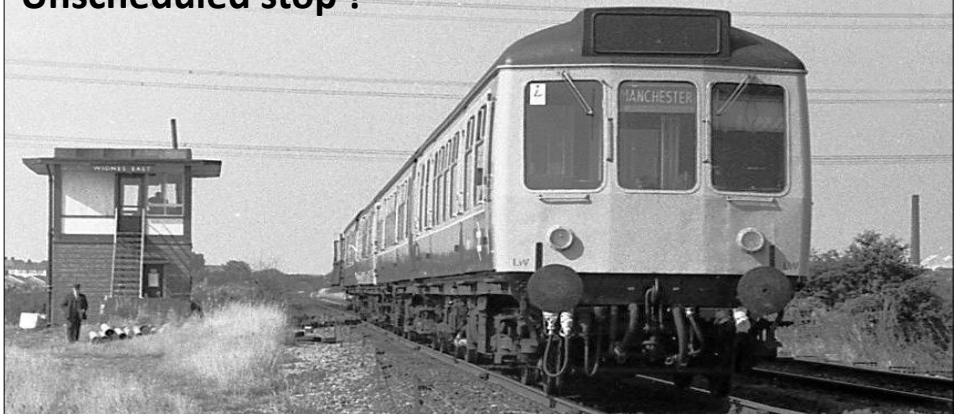
line. I recorded doing this manoeuvre on 13 January 1980 to run-round a steam crane and propel onto a worksite situated on bridge No.18 over the river Alt.

Rod Dixon



Above : Coincidentally, Driver Rod Dixon and the Editor were in the same place at the same time on 13th January 1980. The Editor's interest was in the 2 steam cranes brought in to handle the replacement of bridge No.18 over the River Alt at Maghull. Both cranes were subsequently acquired by the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway.
Photograph : Tony Foster

Unscheduled stop !



From the 8D Graham Earle Collection, the driver of this Manchester - Liverpool DMU returns to his cab after reporting an incident to the signalman at the Widnes East box. Date unknown.

Photographs in the 8D Collections



8D (Brian Roberts) Collection

Above : This superb study in black and white was taken at Gateacre (date unknown). Staff on the platform are sporting a mix of formal attire and regulation braces ! **Below** : Taken from the Derby Road bridge at Farnworth, the photograph shows Farnworth and Bold station in the late 1960s or early 1970s - ie. prior to the line being 'singled' through to Sutton Oak. **Opposite (Top)** : 'Duchess of Hamilton (46229) waits at Manchester Victoria with 'The Red Rose' Tour, which it hauled from Carnforth to Chester on 24 June 1981 . **Opposite (Bottom)** : Springs Branch Black 5 No.45425 photographed just south of Stafford on the WCML, with the Broughton to London Maiden Lane meat train (date unknown). This 'high priority' freight was often hauled from Carlisle Uppery by Princess Royal or Coronation Class Pacifics.



8D (Gordon Howarth) Collection

8D (Alan Robinson) Collection



8D (John Ashley) Collection





On the Bridge !

Two atmospheric photographs from the 8D (Roy Gough) Rail Collection.

Above : Date unknown. Jubilee Class No.45583 'Assam' crosses the Britannia Bridge en route to Liverpool Lime Street. There was a time when a working knowledge of Jubilee Class engine names used to come in handy in geography lessons at school ! That all changed as the names disappeared - Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Northern / Southern Rhodesia etc

At Left : Date unknown. A grimy looking Stanier 5F No.45240 is seen leaving the Britannia Bridge at the Runcorn end.