

**THE 8D ASSOCIATION**

# **ON SHED**

**The Journal of the 8D Association  
Volume 1 Number 4  
December 2011**



**An AL1 Locomotive at Runcorn Station in the early  
1960s**

The line between Liverpool Lime Street and Crewe was electrified between 1959 and 1961. Through running to London Euston began in 1966.

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# **The Journal of the 8D Association**

## **Volume 1 Number 4**

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#### **Editor**

The 8D association is now just over a year old. With over 30 members we are going from strength to strength. We had our first winter season talk on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September at the Kingsway Learning Centre. A large number of members turned out to see a talk about the St Helens and Runcom Gap railway in its early years by Joe Cowley. The second talk given by myself on the 26<sup>th</sup> November was equally well supported. One of the most enjoyable things about the talks is the way in which members are able to share information and memories. We are holding our AGM and social gathering on the 21st January 2011 and I do hope that as many of you as possible can make it. I am sure it will be a most enjoyable gathering.

Also of interest this month is a visit by a raittour to the Ditton and Warrington line on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December. A rare chance to see a passenger train pass along this line which lost its regular passenger services in 1962. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. **Paul Wright**



Tanhouse Lane  
Station as seen in  
1964.

## An 8D Man Returns to the Footplate.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2011 Colin Turton 8D Association Committee Member and a former Passed Cleaner at 8D Shed returned to the footplate for the first time in forty four years. Colin performed a firing turn on a Derby 4F number 43294 on a run between Oxenhope and Oakworth on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway (KWVR).

The opportunity to take to the footplate once again came about when Mel Thorley, a former driver from Longsight depot, contacted the 8D Association to see if he could be put in touch with any former 8D footplate men. Mel explained that he was organising a footplate re-union day at the KWVR and he was hoping to get a good number of ex footplate crew from as many depots as possible. In particular Mel wanted a representative from 8D as when he was young he lived close to a railway line in Stockport along which 8D engines regularly travelled. Mel explained that he had often wondered what the 'exotic' location of Widnes had looked like.



*Colin Turton performs a firing turn for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in 44 years on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2011.  
Photo by Paul Wright.*

Colin Turton was approached and he agreed to attend the event and to take a turn on the footplate. Colin was accompanied by his son James and 'On Shed' editor Paul Wright. As well as taking a turn on the footplate there was plenty of time to explore the KWVR. Highlights of the trip included travelling up and down the line behind 43924, a visit to Haworth Shed, and a visit to the museum at Ingow where a newly restored LNWR Webb Tank was present. Webb Tanks had operated between Ditton Junction and St Helens Shaw Street so it was a welcome sight to the 8D group.

Colin Turton explained that he started on the railway in October 1960, 'I was interested in Railways when I was a child. In fact I wanted to go on the railway straight from school at 15 but my Father wanted me to pursue my education to 17. I did so but the desire to go on the railway remained. I joined the Railway at 19. I was taken on as Cleaner at Widnes Shed. My first job was actually shovelling coal from the floor back into wagons. I went to a school at Garston for training for two weeks. I passed out as passed cleaner in January 1961 and from that point on I carried out footplate duties'.

Colin explained that 'There was a mixture of older, middle aged and youngsters at 8D. I was actually one of the older passed cleaners the others were younger than me. I got on well with them though. The older blokes were fine with us. There was the odd strange one. Mostly the older guys were like Father figures. Mostly I would say the people who had joined the railway hoped to be there for life'

When asked about the motive power at 8D Colin explained that 'The engines were freight classes and shunting engines. We kept our engines in good order even though they were mostly old. The facilities were also in good order. The place was kept as clean and tidy as a steam locomotive depot could be. One interesting thing I remember was when we got two Riddles Class 2s (84xxx) numbers 84023, 84024 from Folkestone. They did not stay long'

When asked what was one of his favourite jobs at 8D Colin explained that he 'liked the 08:00 am start were we travelled to Bolton and brought a freight to Widnes Yard. I recall it had started out from Wakefield. We travelled to Bolton from Widnes North to Manchester Central and then walked over to Victoria to get to Bolton. We liked day jobs really. I liked turns that went a bit further. I liked Crewe runs and Carnforth. I liked passenger turns but I never got many as we lost them in 1962. I did get to go to Helsby on a Ditton to Birkenhead Woodside. I also got to work a Ditton to Warrington Bank Quay and on to Timperley service. Men at 8D did not like the 4.00pm to Bickershaw Colliery. You never stopped for a moment. Lots of shunting back and forward. The main change I remember at 8D was losing passenger work.

When 8D was closed in 1964 Colin left the railway for a brief period but he returned in 1966 to work at Warrington Dallam. Colin enjoyed his time at Dallam which was a busy shed. Colin regularly got to work to Carlisle which was a lodging turn. Dallam lost its steam engines on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1967. Colin, who had a love of steam, left the railway at Christmas 1967 having witnessed the final acts in the story of steam. Although asked to return to the railway in the early 1970s Colin could not be tempted. He enjoyed a long career as a driving instructor. He remains very interested in railways and has been in the 8D Association since it was formed. – Paul Wright



*Colin Turton on the footplate of 4F number 43924 at Oxenhope on the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2011. Photo by Paul Wright*

## The 'Rail' Ale Trail

My favourite hobbies at this time are railways, history and Real Ale, so when my son suggested going by train to visit historical pubs serving Real Ale I was more than intrigued. We decided that a Saturday would be the most suitable day to embark on this journey. But, as I work full time Monday to Friday, and my son, working as a self-employed sub-contractor, frequently works weekends we would have to find a suitable date to suit us both. We finally decided on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November as the best availability for us both, so on that day my son arrived at my house to begin our quest.



We walked the short distance from my house to Thatto Heath Station and got onto a very crowded train bound for Liverpool. We boarded the Trans-Pennine for Manchester Victoria Station and proceeded along the line from Liverpool to Manchester via Widnes and Warrington, a line that I had not travelled before, as all my previous journey's had been via Sutton Junction and Newton-le Willows. This was a delight for me as I had seen so much of that line from the road but this offered a completely different perspective.

We transferred at Manchester Victoria to another Trans-Pennine train to Batley in West Yorkshire, just having time to grab a sandwich. When we arrived at Batley we crossed the car park and immediately saw the Cellar Bar just across the road. We entered and were followed by other people from the train, preceded to the bar and bought our first pint. My son and I almost always buy different beers so we can sample each others beer and compare tastes. We finished our drinks and after a few photographs we went back to the station to start our journey back home. Shortly after the train arrived, and we boarded for a short journey to Dewsbury.

As I had taken my copy of CAMRA's Good Beer Guide 2012 we consulted this and decided to make our way up the road to a pub called The Shepherds Boy only to find a Christening party in full swing. We bought a couple of pints and went into the beer garden to sit in the Sun and admire the scenery. We then walked back to the Station to find that the Station Pub is just that! It is on the station! It had a sign on the wall which stated that last week the customers had drunk 2180 pints of Real Ale. We then bought a pint each and waited on the Station Platform to finish them and wait for the next train.

This duly arrived and we went on to the next Station which was Mirfield. This pretty little village had a delightful Pub called The Navigation, bursting with character and selling good Beer. Having drunk up and moved on to the Station Platform, which was little more than a halt, we got into conversation with some people who we had seen previously and were obviously on the same trail. They suggested that we give Huddersfield a miss and carry on to Slaithwaite. This seemed like a good idea so we stayed in our seats until the train started off. The disturbing thing was that the train went backwards not forwards, and when the conductor came along he looked at our tickets and remarked that we were going the wrong way.

We explained that we had just worked that out for ourselves but it was not a problem as we had bought any station tickets so we would have to get off at Brighouse and wait for the next westbound train which would take us to Wigan Wallgate. As it was now getting dark this seemed like a good idea so we set off for the local Weatherspoon's to have something to eat and a pint. This turned out to be a marvellous Happy Accident as the Weatherspoon's pub is an old converted Methodist Church, with an inaccessible mezzanine floor full of original pews, a full pipe organ, painted clouds on the ceiling and lots of information on the walls. What a Gem!

We returned to the station and caught the train back to Wigan Wallgate crossed the road to Wigan North Western and so returned to St Helens, very satisfied with a great day out.



It has been suggested that the 8D Association holds a trip on similar lines in 2012 so watch this space.

**Joe Cowley**

## The Ethelfleda Bridge Footpath

The Ethelfleda Railway Bridge pedestrian footpath was situated on the 8.5 mile Ditton Junction to Weaver Junction line that was built by the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) and opened in its entirety on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1869. The Bridge was located on the River Mersey at Runcorn Gap, which separated the Counties of Cheshire and Lancashire.

The most formidable obstacle along the route of the Ditton Junction to Weaver Junction line was the River Mersey. The shortest crossing point was at Runcorn Gap, which lay between Widnes in Lancashire and Runcorn in Cheshire. A further complication was the fact that the admiralty insisted on a 75 feet clearance beneath any bridge structure so that the largest naval vessels of the day could pass underneath.

Powers had been granted to Grand Junction Railway as early as 1846 to construct a line from Ditton to the Grand Junction's Warrington and Birmingham Railway at a point just north of the River Weaver in Cheshire. The powers granted had included the construction of a bridge at Runcorn Gap. The reason for constructing the line was to cut journey times between London and Liverpool. To access Liverpool trains had to cross the Mersey at Warrington via the original 1830 Liverpool and Manchester Railway which added considerable time to journeys. The Grand Junction Railway was given seven years to build the Ditton to Weaver Junction Line. A timetable that it did not meet.

By 1861 the Grand Junction Railway had become part of the LNWR and the new company resurrected the original proposal. They secured Parliamentary approval in 1861.



Preparatory works began in 1863 and the first stone for the bridge at Runcorn Gap was laid on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1864. The bridge, which was designed by William Baker, chief engineer of the London & North Western Railway who had succeeded the famous railway engineer Robert Stephenson in October 1859, consisted of three main spans of lattice girders, there being two to each span. Each girder contained 700 tons of iron and was fastened by 48,115 rivets. The spans sat on stone abutments that towered above the river. From the north side of the river the bridge is approached by a viaduct of 49 arches, then a short piece of embankment, followed by 16 more arches. From the south it is approached by a viaduct of 33 arches. When completed, the bridge was the longest in the world. The bridge carried two tracks and was provided with a footpath on its eastern side. The footpath was provided so that pedestrian traffic could cross the bridge, for a toll. Previously person's wishing to cross the river at this point had to use a ferry that was little more than a small rowing boat.

The bridge was named after Ethelfleda the Queen of the Mercians (870s to 918) who had associations with Runcorn where her kingdom's most northerly border was at Runcorn. Indeed it was a visit to Runcorn by Ethelfleda that gives the town its first recorded mention. Fortifications dating to the time of Ethelfleda were discovered at Runcorn and this gave the LNWR the idea of building the bridges sandstone support pillars in a castellated style. The LNWR also decorated the bridge with the City of London Coat of Arms, a shield bearing an image of Britannia, their own LNWR crest and a shield bearing an image of the Liverpool Liver Bird. Because of the image of Britannia the bridge is sometimes called the Britannia Bridge.

By November 1866 the abutments were completed and the first two girders had been set into position on the Cheshire side. The sixth and final girder was put into place on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1868. A test train passed over the bridge on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1868. It was a great occasion and 500 people travelled on the train. The bridge opened officially to goods trains on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1869 and to passenger train services on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1869. It is likely that the footpath opened to pedestrians on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1869.

Persons using the bridge would have accessed it from Viaduct Street on the Widnes side or Lord Street on the Runcorn side. Originally a ticket booth was located on both sides of the River Mersey. On the Widnes side of the bridge it was adjacent to Viaduct Street and it consisted of a simple wooden structure that provided basic shelter for the ticket seller. On the Runcorn side the booth was located in Lord Street at the bottom of the access steps that led up to the bridge. It was also a wooden structure. In later years tickets were only sold on the Widnes side. Persons wishing to cross from Widnes to Runcorn purchased their tickets before they went onto the footpath but people coming in the other direction paid their fare after they had already crossed the bridge.



On the Widnes side the footpath climbed up to the same level as the railway line by means of a slope set into an embankment. At the top of the embankment the footpath moved onto a supported walkway paved in stone, which was attached to the approach viaduct on its east side. A wall divided the footpath from the railway tracks. The supported footway led onto the actual bridge. It passed through each of the support pillars via a castle style doorway. The footpath was on the outside of the girder spans again on the east side of the bridge. At this point the footpath surface was of timber construction. From the Runcorn side the footpath climbed up to the same level as the railway line by means of stone steps located on four archways from the start of the girder spans.

From the first day of opening the footpath was used by hundreds of people every day who each paid one penny. This seriously affected the ferry service, which by this time was also owned by the LNWR. After the opening the bridge was mostly used for local goods and the movement of livestock. During the early 1890s the ferry was disrupted by the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. The LNWR stopped operating services, which led to complaints from the Widnes Corporation. In 1893 the Manchester Ship Canal opened. It passed through Runcorn Gap and was separated from the river by a huge stone wall. This meant that there would have to be two ferries. One for the river and one for the canal. Passengers would have to climb over the wall to change between the canal and river ferries. By January 1895 the LNWR had still not re-introduced the ferry and it took legal action by the Widnes Corporation, supported by Runcorn Urban District Council to get it reinstated. All of this drove even more foot traffic onto the railway bridge.

In 1905 a transporter bridge was opened on the east side of the Ethelfleda Bridge. The Transporter bridge, which consisted of a mobile platform slung under an iron girder structure that spanned the river, was constructed so that road traffic and pedestrians could cross the river. Initially the LNWR had opposed the Transporter Bridge but when they got an agreement that would allow them to discontinue the ferry service they withdrew their objection. Although the Transporter Bridge proved to be most convenient for road vehicles it was quite slow and pedestrians continued to favour the Ethelfleda footpath as a means of crossing the river.

In 1923 the Ethelfleda Bridge became part of the London Midland Scottish Railway company. During the Second World War a sentry was posted on each side of the bridge. The sentries checked each person who crossed the bridge to ensure that no saboteurs accessed the bridge which carried such a vitally important railway link between Liverpool and the South. In 1948 the bridge passed into the ownership of British Railways (London Midland Region).

By the 1950s increases in road traffic had resulted in lengthy queues to use the Transporter Bridge becoming commonplace. A better solution had to be found.

The Lancashire and Cheshire County Council's drew up plans for a road fixed bridge. Work commenced on a new suspension bridge on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1956, it was of a type similar to that built across Sydney Harbour in Australia. During the construction of the road bridge the Ethelfleda Bridge footpath became busier than ever as many people used it as a vantage point to view the construction site.

The new road bridge was provided with pedestrian footpaths that would be free to use. The new bridge opened on the 21st July 1961. Because of this tolls for using the footpath were withdrawn in 1962 and staff, who manned the booth, were taken away from the bridge. Even though the new road bridge was available for the public to use people continued to use the railway bridge footpath. A census taken in July 1962, only one year after the opening of the road bridge, between 9.00 am and 9.30 pm recorded 152 pedestrians using the railway bridge footpath from Widnes to Runcom and 70 in the reverse direction.

The Transporter Bridge closed on the day after the new road bridge opened on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1961 and was demolished shortly after, to the dismay of local people.

Without a staff presence problems occurred on the Ethelfleda Bridge footpath including the throwing of stones and bottles by youths which caused a great deal of annoyance to householders in the West Bank district of Widnes. British Railways were very keen to close the footpath and they did this through legal process which was contained in the British Railways Act of 1965.

Today the Ethelfleda Bridge is still doing the main job that it was constructed to do, carrying trains between Liverpool and the South.

The footpath is still extant but is now only used for maintenance access purposes. In 2004 Network Rail restored the section of footpath on the Widnes side that runs adjacent to the approach viaduct and in 2009 they cleaned and repainted the bridge restoring it to its former splendour.



**Paul Wright**

## Railtour to Visit the Ditton and Warrington Line.



*In the early months of 1968 a railtour can be seen approaching Carterhouse Junction with a railtour. A British Railways Standard 9F is at the head of the train. It was a locomotive more typically seen on heavy goods services and many of the class could be seen on operating along the line at this time.*

Photo by Les Fifoot

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2011 a rare event will take place when a passenger train will travel from Warrington Arpley to Ditton Junction. The train in question will be the Festive Jingle Jangle Railtour which will originate from the Birmingham area and will travel along a number of freight branches and loops in the north west. The service provides a rare chance to travel along the Ditton and Warrington line. It will also provide an interesting photographic opportunity.

Regular passenger services over the line ceased with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1962 although a weekly York service did continue to operate over it until 1965. In the period leading up to the end of steam in August 1968 many railtours used the route. There have been railtours over the line over the last twenty years but they have been few and far between. In 2011 the line was mostly used by coal trains and automotive services. There are also frequent light engine movements.

The 8D Association will be out in force along the line on the 17<sup>th</sup> December with cameras at the ready.

**Widnes West Deviation – 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1968**



*An 8F Locomotive hauls a coal train along the Widnes Deviation towards Widnes West Deviation Junction in 1968. The 1960s signalbox which replaced an earlier structure can be seen to the left of the picture. In the foreground are the lines of the original route of the St Helens Canal and Railway Companies 1852 line through Widnes. Photo by Les Fifoot.*



*Another 8F this time on a train of vans heads west towards Widnes West Deviation Junction. To the left can be seen a 350hp Shunter (Later class 08) which would have been one of the trip locomotives that was based at Hutchinson Street Yard. – Photo by Les Fifoot.*

## Widnes South Station



*Widnes  
(South)  
Station in the  
early 20<sup>th</sup>  
Century.*

Widnes South station opened as Widnes on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1870. The station was situated on the Widnes Deviation line, which was built by the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) as part of a £100,000 package of improvements designed to make traffic movements at Widnes flow more easily.

The Deviation line which opened to goods traffic on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1869 branched off from the original Garston to Warrington railway at a point slightly to the west of the 1852 Widnes Station and it ran for just under 1.5 miles to the north of the original line before rejoining it at Carterhouse bridge which became known as Carterhouse Junction. The Deviation line passed over the 1833 St Helens and Runcom Gap Railway, which ran between St. Helens and Widnes on a bridge. The original Garston and Warrington line crossed the St Helens line on the level causing much congestion. As well as passing over the St. Helens line the Deviation was provided with a spur connection to it which allowed the new station to serve both lines.

Upon opening of the new Widnes Station the original station at Waterloo Crossing closed. The 1870 station was situated on an embankment on the east side of the bridge that carried the line over Victoria Road. A street level single storey brick built building, situated on the south side of the line, provided staff accommodation, the booking office and a parcels office. Two platforms were provided. The westbound platform was connected to the booking office by a set of steps. The eastbound platform connected down to Victoria Road by a set of steps. Each platform had a single storey timber built building with canopy, which provided waiting facilities for passengers. There was also a shed on each platform

that was used by station staff for storage. At the east end of the westbound platform there was a wooden built signalbox designated Widnes No. 7. The signalbox controlled the junction between the main line and the spur that ran down to the St Helens line.

When the original lines to Garston and Warrington had been built in 1852 and 1853 by the St Helens and Runcorn Gap Railway Company, who by 1845 had become the St Helens Canal and Railway Company, the intention was that it would become a main line railway connecting Liverpool and Manchester that would rival the LNWR's line that connected the two cities via Chat Moss. Once the LNWR became the owners of the Garston and Warrington line they had other ideas. The LNWR decided that the Chat Moss route would remain as the premier main line and that the route through Widnes would be for freight and local passenger services.

At the time of opening Widnes Station was served by trains that ran between Liverpool and Manchester and shorter workings along the route. Some trains from Liverpool terminated at Widnes station. St Helens line trains also served the station running between Ditton Junction and St Helens.

Before a decade had passed Widnes Station became subject to competition when a new line was opened by the Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway and the Midland Railway (MSLR/MR Joint) only a few hundred metres away to the north. A passenger station was provided on the western side of Victoria Road. It was called Widnes Central and opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1879. The MSLR/MR station was also served by trains running between Liverpool and Manchester but on a different route.

In 1911 a railmotor service was introduced on the St Helens line which became known locally as the 'Ditton Dodger'. Twelve trains ran on weekdays in each direction and additional stations were opened. Local traffic running along the main line continued to be buoyant even with the competition from the nearby Widnes Central.

In 1923 Widnes Station became part of the London Midland Scottish Railway (LMS). Very little changed and passenger service patterns continued as they had done previously.

During the Second World War services on the St Helens line were reduced to only three trains in the morning peak and three in the afternoon on weekdays only. After the war was over the service remained at this level but some mid-day services for shoppers did run on Saturdays.

In 1948 Widnes Station became part of the British Railways (London Midland Region). So too did Widnes Central. The new nationalised railway company operated more Liverpool to Manchester trains via Widnes Central than it did via Widnes. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1951 the 'Ditton Dodger' service was withdrawn despite much local opposition. It had never been restored to its pre war levels and no effort had been made to make the best of potential connections with other services.

In the 1950s most of the services at Widnes Station ran on a Ditton Junction to Manchester Oxford Road axis with only a few connecting through to Liverpool. Some of the few Liverpool services that did operate only went as far as Warrington Bank Quay Low Level. At this time a Saturdays only long distance train, the 'York Mail' called at Widnes giving local people a travel opportunity not usually available. Many special train services ran from Widnes Station in the 1950s including works outings and Rugby League Supporters trains. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1959 Widnes Station was renamed as 'Widnes South'. At the same time Farnworth Station on the former CLC main line a few miles to the north was renamed as Widnes North. For a brief period in the late 1950s Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) were introduced to the Ditton to Manchester Oxford Road Service but they were short lived as by 1960 steam hauled 'push and pull' sets, which had operated previously were the norm.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> September 1962 the Ditton and Manchester Oxford Road Service was withdrawn and Widnes South Station closed to passengers. Widnes passengers could still travel to Liverpool, Warrington and Manchester from the nearby Widnes Central station, which lasted until October 1964. The York Mail continued to pass through until 1965 but it did not stop. Rugby League specials operated from Widnes South up until 1965. The station closed completely on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1969. **Paul Wright**



**Where is this competition? (Answers to [ptw64@fsmail.net](mailto:ptw64@fsmail.net) )**

September Edition Winner was John Wilson. The picture was of Littons Mill Crossing and Box.

## Events Programme

**No time yet – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2011** – Jingle Jangle Raitour travels from Warrington Arpley to Ditton Junction. 8D Association will have as many photographers out as possible.

**10:00 – Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2012** – The 8D association AGM Followed by a Buffet Lunch and a Guest Speaker. Kingsway Learning Centre (Widnes Library)

**10:00 – Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2012** - Signalboxes – A talk by Richard Mercer - Kingsway Learning Centre (Widnes Library)

**10:00 – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2012** - A morning of recollections – discussions between members provoked by slide show - Kingsway Learning Centre (Widnes Library)

**Events are open to non members at a cost of £2.00 per person.**



*A picture taken inside Vulcan Works in c1960. English Electric Type 4 Locomotive (later class 40) D278 looks resplendent in its straight off the production line green livery. The reason for the picture is not known but it is thought that the event was a visit by officials from an overseas railway company. Over a period of more than 100 years hundreds of locomotives were built at the Vulcan Works near Newton-le-Willows.*