

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 6 Number 1 – March 2016



Walton-on-the-Hill 1897

Walton-on-the-Hill station looking south-west in 1897. Standing at the platform is an all stations service to Liverpool Central. At the head of the train is a Charles Rebol Sacré design 4-4-0 inside cylinder double framed Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway (MS&LR) locomotive number 359. **Photo from the Gordon Hill collection**

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Editor



The sixth year of the 8D Association has now begun. At the end of last year we had 74 members which is a real achievement. We might even reach 80 in 2016.

We have had a good programme of events over the winter period, all of which were well attended. The quiz night seemed to go down very well, and we had good numbers at the AGM.

It is important that we continue to offer activities that appeal to the membership, as we want to keep the interest that we have built up going. For the Spring, and Summer we have put together an interesting and varied programme, with some real gems including two trips to operational train maintenance depots. Something for everyone we hope?

Paul Wright

Left: Signalman William Hill

resplendent in his CLC uniform. William Hill was born in 1868 and the photo passed to his grandson and 8D Association member Gordon Hill.

Photo from the Gordon Hill collection.

Society News

8D Annual General Meeting 24th January 2016

The 8D Annual General Meeting took place on 24th January 2016 at the Select Security Stadium. Reports were given by the Chair, the Secretary and the Treasurer. The 2015 committee stood down, and a new one was elected. The members are:

Joe Cowley (Chairman)
Doug Birmingham (Secretary)
Les Fifoot (Minute Secretary)
Lee Woods (Treasurer)
Paul Wright (Journal Editor)
Dennis Flood (Committee Member)
Tony Foster (Committee Member)
John Wilson (Committee Member)
Chris Hollins (Committee Member)

Richard Mercer, who had been archivist, stood down from his position and did not seek re-election. He was thanked for his work which has been invaluable to the association over the years. After the official business of the AGM, members were given a slide show by Doug Birmingham featuring local railway scenes from the early 1980s.



Left: The association's members get up to all kinds of interesting things. One of the late Brian Tighes final gestures was to take 8D members Gordon Hill and Colin Turton into Fiddlers Ferry and Arpley Junction signal boxes. Gordons grandfather who features on page 1 was a signalman at Widnes East box during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Gordon was very interested to know about the workings of a manual signal box and Brian Tighe was just the man for that. Brian and Colin are seen in Fiddlers Ferry Box.

New Members

At the 8D Association membership is currently 74. Welcome to our latest members **Stuart Daniels** from Liverpool, **Reg Dobson** from Warrington and **Andrew Young** from Warrington.

Demonstration and Trial Workings

On the 22nd of December 2015, GBRF ran a demonstration intermodal train from Birch Coppice Container Terminal to Seaforth Container Terminal. The train of 8 wagons and containers left Birch Coppice at 20.48 hauled by Class 66 locomotive 66 728 The Institution of Railway Operators. It arrived at Seaforth in the early hours of December 23rd and returned back to Birch Coppice at 03.30 the same morning.

On the 13th Of January 2016 DB Schenker conducted the first of two trial trains between the Thames Estuary and Ellesmere Port. The first train ran from Ripple Lane Yard and terminated at the sidings used presently to unload the Middleton Towers sand train. The second trial working ran on the 18th of January and commenced from DB Schenker's Barking Eurohub. These were run as potential new traffic flows in the future which could include scrap trains between Southampton Bevois Park and Liverpool Docks.

Railtour Visits Local Lines



The Pathfinder Mersey-Weaver rail tour is seen on the Folly Lane branch at Runcorn station on Saturday 30th January 2016. Photo by Doug Birmingham

On Saturday the 30th of January 2016, Pathfinders Mersey-Weaver Railtour visited several freight only lines in the area. The 12 Coach special train was top and tailed by DB Schenker Class 60 diesels 60 039 *Dove Holes* and 60 054.

The tour had started in Derby and visited Latchford Football Field Sidings and Ellesmere Port Manisty Wharf. It then travelled over the Halton Curve from Frodsham Junction to Halton Junction, proceeding then to Runcorn station and traversing the Folly Lane

branch to the Network Rail boundary. The return run to Derby was via the link line from Hartford LNW to Hartford CLC Junctions, the Middlewich branch to Sandbach, Crewe and the West Midlands.

While waiting for the special train to pass Runcorn station an interesting interlude took place over the one hour that I was present. Three freight trains were observed. Freightliner 70 013 had charge of the 12.52 Ditton to Basford Hall via Garston Container train followed by GBRF 92 018 on the 14.04 empty car wagons from Garston to Dagenham Dock. The GBRF electric was painted in Caledonian Sleeper train livery. Finally DB Schenker 66 117 had charge of the 09.28 Southampton

Eastern Docks to Halewood empty car wagons. Three different freight operators with three different types of locomotives and liveries.

Ethelfleda Bridge Overhaul

Commencing at the start of the New Year, contractors restarted repairs on the Widnes-Runcorn Railway bridge, which was named after the Saxon princess Ethelfleda, and opened to through trains on 1st of February 1869. It allowed the LNWR to speed up its Liverpool – London trains, as they no longer had to run via Warrington. Contractors for Network Rail have set up a compound and erected scaffolding in the West Bank area of Widnes. At present repointing and cleaning of the brickwork is being done.

Remains of Widnes South station demolished



During the month of January 2016 the remains of Widnes South station were demolished.

Widnes South closed to passengers on the 10th of September 1962, and completely from the 31st of March 1969. After that time, the former street level station building served as a car repair facility for many years, before the business closed and the building was

boarded up. It was demolished in the late 1990s. The west end of the westbound platform and the entire length of the eastbound platform, stairways, the subway and a small section of the booking office all survived into the second decade of the 21st century.

Contractors moved in during the first week of January 2016 and, using bulldozers, made quick work in removing the eastbound platform and all the remaining buildings. The subway was filled in, and the area has now been made into embankments on either side of the line which are being covered with top soil enabling grass to be grown. Network Rail has also built a new access road for their staff on the westbound side, while on the eastbound side a car park has been created enabling the car repair business opposite to sell cars from it.

New Franchise Awards

The Northern Rail Franchise will be operated by Arriva Trains North from April 2016. Several new services will be introduced along with a promise to build some new trains amounting to a total of 324 vehicles. The new services which affect our area will operate from Chester to Leeds via Warrington Bank Quay, Manchester Victoria

and the Calder Valley route, along with a service from Liverpool Lime Street to Bradford Interchange via Newton-Le-Willows, Manchester Victoria and the Calder Valley route. The present Southport to Manchester Victoria service will also be extended to Leeds via the Calder Valley route. Together with a new service from Manchester Airport to Bradford Interchange, this will represent a radical shake up of services along the Calder Valley.

On the CLC route through Widnes and Warrington Central, the Trans Pennine service between Liverpool and Scarborough will transfer to the Newton-Le-Willows route, and serve Manchester Victoria rather than Oxford Road and Piccadilly. A replacement express service, known as Northern Connect, will be provided between Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester Airport calling at Liverpool South Parkway, Warrington Central, Birchwood, Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly. One of the present stopping train services along the route, which terminates at Manchester Oxford Road, will also be extended to Manchester Airport. The East Midlands Trains service to Norwich will continue to run via Widnes as at present.

Shortly after the announcement of the new franchise, Arriva Trains North announced that they have ordered some new diesel and electric multiple units from the Spanish Builder CAF. They will build 25 2 Car and 30 3 Car diesel multiple units, and 31 3 Car and 12 4 Car electric multiple units for the new franchise operator with the first trains to be delivered in 2018. This is the first time that the DB Group, the owners of Arriva, have ordered trains from the Spanish builder. The total cost of the order is reputed to be £490 million, and represents the biggest train order to be placed for many years.

First have retained the Trans-Pennine franchise, which includes a new service of three trains a day from Liverpool Lime Street to Glasgow Central. They will commence on a date to be announced. To operate this service, and an electrified Trans Pennine main line, they will be ordering 44 new 4 car trains. At present, details of whether they are to be straight electric multiple or bi-modal units are not known.

Liverpool Lime street – Warrington Bank Quay Goes Electric



Two class 319 EMUs stand under the trainshed roof at Liverpool Lime Street station on 2nd October 2015. Photo by Paul Wright

Class 319 EMU's took over operation of the Liverpool Lime Street to Warrington Bank Quay stopping services from Monday the 14th of December 2015. At times platforms 1 to 4 at Liverpool Lime Street are almost entirely occupied by electric trains, which is

probably the most use the wires over those platforms have seen since they were erected in 1961.

The British Rail YTS Scheme – by John Wilson



On 22 November 1983 John Wilson made a journey from Allerton to the Fazakerley TME sidings in the cab of a class 08 shunter. During his journey he was able to photograph class 40 number 40 160 at the site of Ford station on the ex-LYR North Mersey Branch. This line had been one of the busiest freight arteries in the country 30 years earlier. Photo by John Wilson

In the early 1980s there was mass unemployment in Great Britain, which led to a great deal of unrest, especially in the inner cities. Youth unemployment was particularly problematic. The Conservative government that was in power at the time needed to find ways in which job opportunities could be created. One of the ways in which this was done was through the Youth Training Scheme or YTS, as it was commonly known. The Government encouraged private businesses to take part in the scheme, and the nationalised industries and government agencies were expected to do their bit.

The inaugural BR YTS commenced in September 1983. My good friend Wayne Dixon and I somehow had heard about the scheme, and through a trip to Rail House in Liverpool, we secured ourselves a place on the traffic section of it. The other section was clerical, which was mainly young women and involved all sorts of office-based placements. The traffic section was much more our style, the scheme promised placements in most of BR departments and didn't fail to disappoint.

For the handsome sum of £25 per week, we were allotted a gentleman by the name of Will Roby, an ex-Area Manager and not a man to be messed about with, as our head honcho.

The traffic group was a mixture of out and out spotters, down to the lads who had literally just fell into the scheme, as if you didn't join a YTS your dole money was greatly reduced.

The first day was at Rail House Liverpool and we were all issued every rail enthusiasts dream ticket; it was a duty pass with the words '*All stations Liverpool Divisional Managers Area*'. It might as have said 'valid all lines in Great Britain', as the pass was flashed in all corners of the railway system and usually accepted. The one exception was a couple of lads decided to sample some Class 31 haulage, and made the mistake of exiting Sheffield Midland station. On their return, the pass was scrutinised and confiscated by some overzealous ticket collector. They were severely dealt with by Will the following week, and were lucky to remain on the scheme.

When the placements started in earnest we were split up individually, or sometimes in pairs. This depended on the location and the staffing levels that were available, to keep an eye on 16 year olds inquisitive natures.



The BR YTS scheme eventually led to John Wilson securing a job as a 'Railman' at Warrington Arpley where he is seen in this view with class 31 locomotive number 31 165 on 3 April 1987.

My first placement was Runcorn station, which involved helping out the platform staff with their day to day duties, mainly train dispatch, parcel carrying and of course that important railway task of brewing up.

Next up was Runcorn Folly Lane, this time aiding the shunting staff with marshalling the caustic soda trains and trips up to Runcorn station with the yard pilot to service the warehouse next to Runcorn station. Any Class 40's that appeared on trippers

were duly cabbed, and the odd run out to a local yard was gratefully accepted by crews from Northwich, Garston and the like.

Allerton stores was next up, not the most glamorous of placements, but access to the depots TOPS machine was sourced and plenty of local Class 40 passenger workings was gleaned.

Staying at Allerton, the next placement was excellent. It was based with the depot shunters, who were located in a brick building next to the reception road onto the depot. Incoming loco/unit drivers were relieved by the depot based drivers, but shunting staff were also trusted to drive from that point, onto the depot for fuel or water, and berthing up in the shed or carriage sidings. The incoming footplate staff usually disappeared into the local CLC club, or away back to their home depot. This is where I was allowed to drive anything from a class 08 through to an 87, or a class 108 DMU to a 304 EMU, truly an amazing experience for a 16 year old to be driving such trains, all under the supervision of the shunter (well sometimes!).



Left: A stone train on the original Garston & Warrington line on the 9th March 1984. At this time this part of the line was a truncated siding accessed from Carterhouse Junction which can be seen in the distance. Photo by John Wilson

Carterhouse Junction signal

box was another location I was allotted to, not my cup of tea was box work, and I found myself wondering down to the Stone Terminal to watch the unloading of the stone trains from the Peak District, or worse still stopping the local trippers and bagging a ride to Warrington or Garston.

Another placement I wasn't too keen on was in the booking office at Cressington station on the Merseyrail system. Dispatching tickets to passengers wasn't really my scene, and a few days away from the YTS chasing Class 40's with my duty pass was in order. The station staff really weren't too fussed about sharing the booking office with a spotty youth, so they didn't care. However Will Roby wasn't daft, as Cressington was his local station my continued absence was noted, and I was called back to Rail House for a dressing down.

I recall another great placement was travelling with the Lime Street Guards on their various jobs to London Euston, York and Birmingham to name a few. Harry Crossland was a guard myself and another YTS placement were paired with. Like most young people, I discovered drinking. I would come into work after a heavy

nights drinking and I would end up having to sleep it off. This didn't go down well with Harry, and once again I found myself being drilled by Will Roby.

I really did push my luck and I was very lucky to stay on the scheme. One time I decided to sample the delights of a Class 81 on a Flower Show special which was none stop to Crewe from Lime Street. The guard questioned my validity with the duty pass, and Will informed me that was my last chance.

There was even a residential element to the scheme. We went to Neath, where we had a great laugh indulging in shooting, orienteering, canoeing and other outdoor pursuits.

At various points on the scheme lads were lucky enough to secure permanent jobs with BR, my mate Wayne was fortunate to bag a box lads job at Winsford Junction on the WCML, a couple of lads got secondmens jobs at Warrington. However I was not so lucky, even after application bombing every train crew depot on BR with traction trainee forms, I found no joy.

The YTS scheme was 12 months in duration. All too soon it was over, and we were cast over to the ever increasing dole queue. To be fair a lot of lads gained employment with BR in various jobs, I did eventually secure a position as a Railman at Arpley Yard, Warrington.



Travel to work at Allerton depot for the young Mr Wilson was of course by train. On one of his journeys he recorded this view looking west towards Liverpool of a Sulzer Type 4 (Peak) on a Trans-Pennine working. Photo by John Wilson

The YTS scheme continued for at least another ten years, and I still speak to lots of Railwaymen who started out on the scheme. All in all it was an excellent taster for life on the Railway and many of today's Drivers, Signalmen, Managers etc have the YTS to thank for their career. I went on to become a driver in August 1988. **John Wilson**

Memories of Birkenhead Mollington Street Motive Power Depot, The Men and The Area – Part 2 – by Dennis Flood



A classic diesel era line up at Birkenhead Mollington Street Motive Power Depot that would have been typical of the time that Dennis Flood worked there. Class 25s, a 47 and a DMU are seen outside the shed. Inside is a class 40. Photo by Doug Birmingham

The second part of this article must start with two quite individual characters who I had the good fortune to work with, as a driver, during my time at Birkenhead Mollington Street.

The first one was Bill Symonds, otherwise known as `Wobble-Gobble` because of the way he rapidly moved his mouth as he spoke.

Bill was a Chargeman at Stanlow Ground Frame and was in day-to-day charge of fuel train movements out of Stanlow Refinery, near a location called `The Fuel Rack`.

`The Fuel Rack` was where railway tank vehicles were berthed and filled with fuel before onward movement to various parts of the country. Trains went from Stanlow to such diverse places as Salford's near Gatwick Airport (aviation fuel), Rowley Regis and Bilston in the West Midlands, Padiham, Preston Dock, Ulverston in Lancashire, Whittington near Shrewsbury, Aberystwyth, Ravenhead and Cowley Hill (to serve the large Pilkington's glass making plant in St.Helens) and many more locations. There will be more about those services in later articles.

Bill Symonds lived in Bebington and when he was working a night shift at Stanlow Ground Frame, usually one week in three, the regular comical saga would take place...

Bill would ring up the Train Crew Supervisor (TCS) at Mollington Street at about 2100 hours each weekday evening when he was on `nights` and enquire about having a lift on a `light` locomotive bound for Ellesmere Port or Stanlow to take him into work.

There was a regular `light` locomotive movement off Mollington Street depot at about 2115 each night during the week and this locomotive worked a return empty coal train from Ellesmere Port to Bestwood Park, in the Nottinghamshire coalfield. The driver was advised by the TCS to stop and pick Bill up at Bebington and give him a lift to work. I was the driver on many occasions over the years working this particular job and had the hilarious good fortune to pick Bill up at Bebington on several occasions.

After departure from Mollington Street and then passing through Rock Ferry there is a small cutting between Rock and Bebington and at this point a gentle `toot` on the locomotive horn was sounded to let Bill know of the approach of the locomotive towards Bebington Station.

The locomotive `marker lights` at the front end were quite dim and could not be easily seen, hence the gentle `toot` on the locomotive horn. At this point Bill could be seen standing on the `up` platform at Bebington in the dim lights of the station – *ready and waiting...*

However, to ensure that the driver saw him, and didn't forget to stop (which did happen occasionally!) Bill would set fire to his copy of the `Liverpool Echo` or `Bebington News` and wave it up and down like a demented firelighter..... He preferred the `Liverpool Echo` because it had more pages to burn. At this point the burning newspaper would go up like a tinder box as the locomotive approached the platform... Bill would then be seen dancing around on the platform stamping the blazing newspaper out with his boots, like a manic Morris dancer!

The resultant `fireball` was always a sight to see...

Even though all drivers confirmed with him that they were on the same job all week and would stop at Bebington to pick him up, it made no difference as this pyrotechnic display always took place with Bill, what passengers waiting on the `down` platform at Bebington made of this is anybody's guess.!

On one occasion a driver stopped at Bebington and blasted Bill and his blazing `Liverpool Echo` with a CO2 fire extinguisher and chased him around the platform, just for the fun of it...there was CO2 gas everywhere, and Bill was not at all impressed.!

The next individual to mention is guard Arthur Dane... Arthur was a regular DMU guard during my time at Mollington Street and he had one of the most remarkable story-telling imaginations that could be imagined – and he believed most of them himself.

He used to tell anyone who would listen that he was a karate black belt – and that his hands were *`lethal weapons`*... and if a passenger upset him, he would have to advise them of this fact – before he *`chopped them up`* .!

The number of occasions I worked with Arthur and witnessed the altercations he became involved in with passengers I have lost count...

The last train from Chester to Rock Ferry on a Saturday night, the 22:45 departure from Chester, was a case in point.

There was always those on this train who were a little *`worse for wear`*, shall we say, and it would be only a matter of time before Arthur would be involved in a row with several of them who refused to pay their fare.

He would always quote Railway By-Laws at them and their replies usually doubted his parentage... At this point Arthur would start to quote his karate black belt prowess and how it would be wise of them to pay their fare...he never did anything, because he knew he couldn't – the only black belt Arthur had was holding up his trousers.!

I well remember him trying to stop an argument between a husband and wife, who were shouting and bawling at each other, and Arthur decided to intervene. This was definitely not one of his best decisions as these pair were *`regulars`* who travelled on the 2245 from Chester General to Upton-by-Chester, shouted and bawled at each other constantly - and then alighted at Upton Station and walked away hand in hand as if nothing had happened. He intervened – with the result that the woman set about Arthur with her handbag, bashing him over the head with it, as he tried in vain to *`chop it up`* with his karate skill..! This was a sight to see – especially as other passengers on the train who were also *`worse for wear`*, encouraged her. When we arrived back at Rock Ferry, I reminded him that those *`lethal weapon`* hands of his didn't do him much good and his reply was *`If she'd have carried on much longer I'd have definitely chopped up that handbag..!`*.

There was never a dull moment working with Arthur...

Those of a certain age reading this article may be able to remember a programme on the television called *`Kung Fu`*, shown in the 1970s, and the leading actor played the role of an individual called *`Kwai Chang Cane`*. As a result of this programme, Arthur was given the immortal nickname of *`Kwai Chang Dane`*..!!

Now, a word about the Train Crew Supervisors at Mollington Street during my time there – Tom Bainbridge, George Siddorns, Alec *`Angus`* McDonald and Alec Allen. These four individuals were in charge of the day-to-day running of the depot and reported to Mr. Jack Barford the Depot Shedmaster, or to give him his full title of Assistant Area Manager (Traincrews).



Cavendish Sidings at Birkenhead Docks seen in the early 1980s. This was a location familiar to the train crews of Birkenhead Mollington Street. Photo by Doug Birmingham

Tom Bainbridge was an ex-Edge Hill man and he stood in, as the boss, for Jack Barford when he was away. Tom was a superb railwayman and achieved something at Edge Hill MPD that was unheard of in steam days – he was appointed as a Deputy TCS, whilst he was still a fireman there. A position such as this was normally only given to a driver.

This grade would be similar to what was called an `Outside Foreman` at a Steam MPD. There was also an `Inside Foreman`, who would be in charge on a daily basis, the `Outside Foreman` being effectively the `junior` man. Towards the end of the steam era the titles were dropped in favour of the term Train Crew Supervisor or Inspector (TCS or TCI). At Birkenhead the regular Supervisors were called TCIs.

Tom`s nickname at both Edge Hill and Mollington Street was `*Pencil and Paper*` because he was always constantly making notes or writing items down.!

This was a man who spent some 20 years as a fireman in the `Top Link` at Edge Hill and worked all the `*double-home*` jobs there. Tom was an out and out Stanier Pacific man – he loved working on those magnificent machines.

I have the good fortune to be in possession of his `double-home` box, which he took on every trip he lodged away from home on, and gave it to me after he had retired from the railway – I often wonder just how many of the wonderful Stanier Pacifics it has been on...if only it could talk.!

There is a slight dent in it – Tom told me it was caused by him dropping it off the

footplate of 46229 `Duchess of Hamilton` (an ex-Edge Hill locomotive) when he and his driver took 46229 back to Camden Shed, from Euston, after working the `up` Red Rose express from Lime Street.

Tom`s management style at Mollington Street was of the direct, no-nonsense type, and you always knew just where you stood with him. I liked that style because what you saw with him is exactly what you got – he was a first class railwayman, who was always firm, but also very fair.

George Siddorns was another good railwayman, who loved ballroom dancing. George was a Birkenhead man through and through – starting his career on the GWR at Birkenhead and finishing it under BR, also at Birkenhead.

His nickname was the `Road Runner`, because he could never sit still – he was always on the go.! I`ve seen George dash around outside the shed at Mollington Street with his ever-faithful clipboard – even though there was nothing at all on the shed – the shed was totally empty and even the breakdown vans had gone off to deal with a derailment at Birkenhead Docks...



Looking north towards Birkenhead in the 1970s. The lines to the left led into Birkenhead Mollington Street. The mixed goods train seen heading south is on the dock line. The extensive area of bare earth seen to the right of the train had once been the location of lines that led into the Cammel Laid shipyard.

I was convinced that George would pass his shadow one day at Mollington Street – he never just walked...he always moved around at a brisk pace.!

He was a very good TCI – if a driver asked him if he could go home from duty early, the response from George was always the same *‘did you book on duty before me?’*.

If the answer from the driver was *‘no’* then George’s response was *‘you can go home when I’ve gone!’*.

I well remember when I was on duty as the 15:00-23:00 shed driver, or Bank Head driver as it was called, at Mollington Street one Saturday afternoon and he rang me at home to say don’t come in until 18:00.

I did this and when I arrived at Mollington Street at 1800 there was George dressed up in his best ballroom dancing suit – ready to go ballroom dancing!

‘You’re in charge of the shed, Dennis – I’m off to do some ‘jigging’ at the ballroom in Bebington, Frank will help you out, he knows what it’s all about!’.

With that, George disappeared through the office door to do some *‘Jigging’* at the *‘Golden Primrose’* ballrooms in Bebington.!

Frank Bunting, whom George referred to, was a lovely man to work with – as I found out when I myself became a Deputy TCI at Mollington Street.

The first thing he told me, when I was standing in for George on that Saturday (I was only a driver, it must be appreciated, so I did not have much of an idea about TCI duties, if any.!) was that if anyone rang to speak to George, such as a Controller at Lime Street or the Signaller at Green Lane Junction, then tell them he’s at the top of the shed... *‘feeding the fox!’*.

I did this at about 2100, when the Power Controller Jim Holt rang from Rail House, to confirm the locomotive allocation for the Saturday and Sunday Mollington Street ballast/freight turns. It was not a good start...

When I told Jim that he was at the top of the shed... *‘feeding the fox’*, I was unaware that Frank had told him the same thing earlier at about 1930... Jim’s reply to me was *‘that must be the fattest fox in Birkenhead – you’ll be telling me it’s about to be launched into the Mersey at Cammel Laird’s next!’*.

He knew what was going on with George and when I was a regular Deputy TCI at Mollington Street he used to refer to George as *‘Victor’*, after Victor Sylvester, who was well known in the 1960s as a ballroom dancer and musician.

Frank Bunting was a treat to work with because he knew everyone at Birkenhead, and he also knew all of the best, and worst, of the men there. More importantly, he could predict who was going to ring in *‘sick’* after a bout of beer drinking on a Saturday night prior to booking on duty for an early Sunday morning turn... thus giving me plenty of time to cover the job.

Frank was an amazing character – and he was respected by all who knew him because of his help...and joviality!

There was always a tea pot filled in the office at Mollington Street, it was a large brown enamel pot which would hold about a gallon of water – enough for about 20 cups of tea.

When the pot was empty, Frank's `musical` skills would come to the fore – with a bit of prompting from me.

He would pick up this rather large tea pot, clasp both hands around the spout, and then blow down it to make the lid rise and emit different sounds as it quivered on top of the tea pot - the lid never fell off, that was the remarkable thing.!

His best piece playing the tea pot was `*onward Christian soldiers*`...I'd sing it whilst he played the tea pot – the laughs that we had I shall never forget.!

Alec Allen, as a TCI, was never the most popular of individuals because it was not in his nature to be popular. He had a job to do and did it – very well. Alec's nickname was `*Laughing Boy*` because that is just what he did not do. He was a very serious individual and was never a driver or fireman. Not that this was a qualification for the role of TCI but it certainly made life much easier if you were a driver or fireman at one time.

Alec originally came from Barrow and was seconded in the early 1970s to become part of a railway wide team to introduce the TOPS system on the BR network –which is still in use to this very day.

It was thanks to this move involving Alec that I was given plenty of experience working in the office at Mollington Street as a Deputy TCI. I always found him to be a fair enough chap in my dealings with him as a driver.

Alec lived for many years in the Station House at Hunt's Cross in Liverpool.

The last, but by no means least, of the TCIs at Mollington Street was Alec `Angus` McDonald – a truly remarkable character, who was known to all.

I shall call him Angus, even though his name was Alec, as it was by this name he was universally known.

He started his railway career at Bank Hall MPD in Liverpool, on the LMS, as a fitter's mate and worked his way up to eventually become Shedmaster at Southport, Oldham, Speke Junction and Bangor.

Angus was a steam man `*par excellence*` .!

I remained friends with him for over 40 years and he was a true railwayman, relic



Looking north from Rock Ferry station on 17 August 1975 as 6L42 an MGR working heads south. Photo by Keith Holt

collector and model railway enthusiast who had a remarkable collection of 'live' steam locomotives and just about everything else...

When he was Shedmaster at Bangor he would often have a trip out with Bangor men on the North Wales coast line – and have a drive himself. He also did this when he was Foreman Fitter at Bank Hall – he would often have a trip out with Bank Hall men to Carlisle on a Liverpool Exchange to Glasgow service – arranging a 'test' run so he could have a drive over Shap Summit.!

It usually involved one of his favourite Bank Hall Class 5XP 'Jubilee' locomotives No.45698 'Mars' or No. 45627 'Sierra Leone' .

At Mollington Street, Angus was quite eccentric in his ways but he was a thoroughly decent man. If he rang to ask you to book on earlier, or later, as the case may be, he always started the conversation with the word 'Greetings.!' .

That became his universal 'catchphrase' .

He had the chimney of an ex. LMS Class 4F locomotive in his front garden – with a small tree growing out of it.!

Angus was among a group of eight who became the first to purchase a withdrawn steam locomotive from Barry Scrapyard in 1968 for £2000 – Class 4F No.43924.

He was the only TCI at Mollington Street to have First Class free travel facilities –

gained from his previous status as a Locomotive Shedmaster.

Angus was well known as an organiser of the Woodvale Rally for many years, near his home at Ainsdale – something which he enjoyed immensely. He was the last Shedmaster at what he called his `local` depot in Southport, which he was always very proud of. A true railwayman...

To conclude Part 2 of this article about Mollington Street and some of its men, I must make mention of another remarkable character. His name is Jan Quartermaine, late of Ainsdale. Jan passed away in October 2015 so it is very appropriate to mention him in this article.

Jan was a driver in the Extra Link at Mollington Street, as I was, apart from when I spent about two years in the depot DMU Link. However we were as different as `chalk and cheese` when it came to working through the link – remember that in the Extra Link, as I pointed out in Part 1, all drivers were marked to `spare` turns such as 1830 Spl, 1900 Spl and 1930 Spl for example. I worked through the Extra Link week by week by doing whatever job was required at the time I was to book on duty. As a driver it was possible to swap turns with another driver and I did this when necessary. Jan on the other hand would regularly swap for night turns because it suited his lifestyle. More importantly working nights between 2200 and 0600 was paid at an enhanced rate of pay. In other words he made no secret of the fact that he wanted the extra money and swapped turns on a regular basis to achieve it.

However, he lived in Ainsdale and did not drive a car. How did he travel to work when he was on nights or early morning turns such as 01:00?

Jan didn't like spending money if he didn't have to – he enjoyed earning it but not spending it. If he could save a penny he certainly would, believe me. He had a bicycle which made a `Penny Farthing` look modern by comparison and he would ride this from Ainsdale to Liverpool when no trains were running. This was a distance of some 20 miles. He would then ride his `boneshaker` of a bike, because that's what it really was, through the Queensway Mersey Tunnel to Birkenhead and then book on duty at the appointed time.!

Jan was a gentle giant – and as strong as the proverbial Ox.!

The Mersey Tunnel Police would turn a `blind eye` to this as normally it is not allowed to cycle through either of the Queensway or Kingsway Mersey Tunnels. The Toll Booth operators on the Birkenhead side would just waive him through. They probably thought he was an unemployed vagrant – because he could have been mistaken for one.!

One of the funniest things which happened to him occurred on the special cycle path adjacent to the main Liverpool to Southport Road, near Ainsdale, in the early hours of one morning, as he was cycling home. Jan had been on duty 12 hours previously

and he was rather tired. While riding along the cycle path near his home he fell asleep and went straight into an adjacent hedge – head first. That soon woke him up but he found he couldn't get himself out of the hedge. Jan was about 6ft 2ins tall and he weighed about 15 stones so his problem can be appreciated. He was stuck fast, head first in the bushes, with his size 12 boots sticking out – and wriggling. Imagine what a sight that must have been to a passer-by.!

Luckily for Jan he hadn't been stuck in the bushes for too long when a police car went past and the police officer driving the vehicle saw him and stopped to help. There were two policemen in the police car and it took them both about 10 minutes to pull Jan out from the bushes – both of them were falling about laughing as they helped him out. When he was freed from his predicament he explained to them what had actually happened. I suspect that both of them dined out on that story for a



An MGR working from Birkenhead Docks to Fiddlers Ferry is seen passing through Bebington in the 1980s. Photo by Doug Birmingham

long-time afterwards. I very much doubt if they believed that he had actually ridden his bike from Birkenhead to Ainsdale via Liverpool. One of the police officers examined his bicycle and found it had only one brake shoe on it – on the front wheel. Jan was told by one of the police officers, jokingly, that if there was an `MOT' issued for a bicycle then he would get 6 months in prison for riding a piece of scrap iron.!

There will be a few more stories about Jan Quartermaine in Part 3 of these articles – starting with the time he rode his bike from Ainsdale to Halton Tunnel, between Frodsham and Warrington...only to be told that the job he was going to do was cancelled – and to make his way back home again – a round trip of some 60 miles!

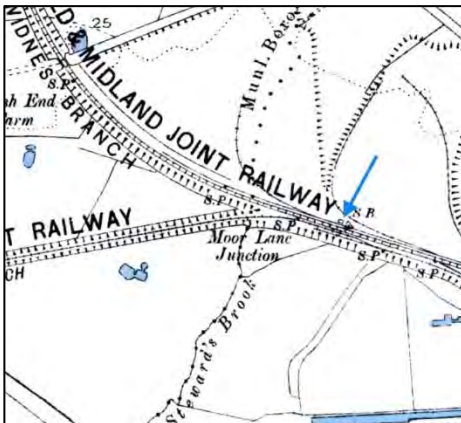
Dennis Flood

Moor Lane Signal Box



Moor Lane signal box seen shortly before closure in 1964. Photo by Gordon Howarth

Moor Lane signal box was located on the Great Central & Midland Joint Railway Widnes Branch and opened in 1907. The line had opened as the Sheffield & Midland Joint Railway on 1 August 1879 the joint partners being the Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway and the Midland Railway.



The signal box at Moor Lane was provided to control the junction between the Widnes Branch, the Landowners Branch and the Ditton Marsh branch the latter two being purely freight railways.

The box was an all timber Great Central Type 5 structure that was equipped with a 24 lever frame.

Although the Landowners and the Ditton Marsh branches were out of use by 1961 the box survived until the

closure of the Widnes Branch on 6th December 1964.



'Where is this' competition? (Answers to pwright964@btinternet.com) Photo by Jim Peden.

The December competition was correctly guessed by Tony Cook and David Hull. The location was Lowton station.

British Transport Pensioners Federation (BTPF) Warrington Branch Trips for 2016

8D Association Members are welcome to go on any of the trips listed below. If you are interested contact Roy Dixon on 01925 638299.

Wednesday 23rd March 2016 – Skipton & the Yorkshire Dales.

Wednesday 20th April 2016 – Oswestry Market and Llangollen.

Wednesday 18th May 2016 – Llandudno Theatre – To see Pricilla Queen of the Desert Musical.

Wednesday 22nd June 2016 – Black Country Living Museum, Dudley.

Wednesday 20th July 2016 – Visit to the Cheltenham or the Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway. Broadway village on return journey.

Wednesday 17th August 2016 – Bridlington

Wednesday 14th September 2016 – Llandudno

Saturday 15th October/ or Sunday 16th October 2016 – 1940s Weekend at Pickering

From the Archive



The 16:25 Birkenhead Woodside to Paddington train is seen arriving at Rock Ferry in 1965. Photo by Chris Coulter



A Gateacre to Liverpool Central service is seen at St Michaels station in 1971. A number of passengers have just alighted and they can be seen making their way to the exit. The service was popular by BR had wanted to axe it since 1964. They succeeded in doing so with effect from 15 April 1972. Photo by Keith Rose

Events Programme

10.00 – Saturday 16th April 2016 – Visit to the Widnes – Runcorn Railway Bridge - A chance to walk across the Ethelfleda bridge and see its magnificent structure close up. Numbers are limited to 20 so booking is essential. Contact Paul Wright on Email pwright964@btinternet.com or telephone 0151 630 5132.

19.00 – Thursday 5th May 2016 – The Winwick Hospital Branch - A guided walk along this little known branch that was used to supply the large hospital complex. **Meet at the hospital entrance at Hollins Lane. There is a car park there that should be empty in the evening.**

10.00 – Saturday 7th May 2016 – Fiddlers Ferry Power Station Visit – Another opportunity to visit Fiddlers Ferry Power Station in the company of our good friends there. You can be assured of a good welcome and a very interesting experience. Numbers are limited to 20 so booking is essential. Contact Richard Mercer on 0151 378 9908. **Meeting point will be given at time of booking.**

10.00 – Saturday 11th June 2016 – Visit to Kirkdale TMD – A rare opportunity to visit the Merseyrail Electrics depot at Kirkdale. Numbers are limited to 20 so booking is essential. Contact Paul Wright on Email pwright964@btinternet.com or telephone 0151 630 5132. **Meet at the entrance to Kirkdale station. There is no parking available at the depot but there on street parking in the area. Alternatively take the train to Kirkdale station.**

10.00 – Saturday 18th June 2016 – Visit to Birkenhead North TMD – A rare opportunity to visit the Merseyrail Electrics depot at Birkenhead North. Numbers are limited to 20 so booking is essential. Contact Paul Wright on Email pwright964@btinternet.com or telephone 0151 630 5132. **Meet at the entrance to the Birkenhead North station car park. There is plenty of secure parking available at Birkenhead North station as it is a park and ride facility. Alternatively take the train to Birkenhead North station.**

Saturday 2nd July 2016 – Blackpool Tramways Vintage Tram Trip – If there is enough interest we intend to hire a vintage tram and have a tour of the Blackpool system. We will consider non-members if there is space. We need at least 40 people to make the hire of the tram affordable. If you are interested please contact Terry Callaghan on 0121 240 5991.

19.00 – Thursday 14th July 2016 – The Rainford branch – A guided walk along another section of this long lost branch line. **Meet at Cross Pit Lane at its junction with The Spinney**

12.00 – 6th August 2016 – Rail Ale Visit Warrington – Our annual pub and rail interest tour will visit Warrington this year. One of the pubs that we visit was Warringtons first railway station. Join us and find out more. **Meet at the entrance to Warrington Central station.**

10.00 – 13th August 2016 – The Railways of West Kirby – A guided walk looking at the railways, past and present, of West Kirby. The walk will include a section of the Hooton – West Kirby line now part of the Wirral Way. **Meet at the West Kirby station entrance.**

We are also in the process of organising a trip Merseyside Transport Trust at Burscough where the class 502 ex-LMS EMU is being restored. Details in next journal.

NEXT JOURNAL PUBLISHED 1 June 2016