

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 6 Number 2 – June 2016



Widnes – Runcorn Railway Bridge 1964

A view looking north from the Widnes - Runcorn railway bridge pedestrian footpath on 23rd May 1964. The bridge was opened in 1869 to carry the LNWR Ditton Junction – Weaver Junction line over the River Mersey at the Runcorn Gap.

Photo by Alan Robinson

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Editor



Left: An evocative scene taken at Warrington Dallam shed in April 1964. Photo by Alan Robinson

We are now into our outdoor programme for 2016 and what a programme it has been. The visit to the Ethelfleda bridge was a real highlight and members have also enjoyed a visit to Fiddlers Ferry Power station and a walk along the Winwick Hospital branch. This is

only the begging of the year there is plenty more on offer. The vintage tram trip on the Blackpool system will be going ahead as it has been well supported and we have a number of depot visits scheduled.

When we first started the 8D association we never dreamed that we would be able to organise and put on such a varied and interesting programme. We certainly never thought we would be gaining official access to places like the Wapping tunnel and the Ethelfleda bridge.

Because of our activities, our journal and our website we are coming to the notice of a number of long established societies and organisations. Long may that continue.

Paul Wright

Society News

Sad loss of Stuart Daniels

Sadly one of our newest members has died. Railway Shunter Stuart Daniels passed away on Weds 4th May at his home in Walton Liverpool. His funeral took place at Anfield Crematorium on the 19th May 2016 where it was standing room only as Stu's family, friends and work colleagues packed the place out.

Stuart had been interested in railways all his life spending his childhood spotting years watching Freightliners on the North Mersey Branch around Aintree, or riding on the Trans Pennine expresses between Lime St and St Helens Junction. His great knowledge of trains, especially freight rolling stock, helped him to get a position on the railway training scheme in 1989. This led eventually to a full time job with British Rail. His early career began at Liverpool Rail House, followed by a shunting position at Liverpool Bulk Terminal in the 1990s. Displaced to Warrington Arpley in 1995 Stuart quickly settled in to a Chargeman position taking care of the busy yard now owned by EWS. He tried his hand as a Train Crew Supervisor, but sitting all day in a small office was not for him, and he moved back into the yards at Warrington.



Left: Stu Daniels is seen in the cab of an 08 locomotive at Speke.

The call for a change of scenery in 2014 saw him join GB Railfreight as an Assistant Train Manager, learning to drive Class 08 & 66 locos around

the sidings of Fords at Speke and Ironbridge Power station. He will be missed by all who knew him as Stu was a witty, dry humoured and very knowledgeable railwayman.

New Members

At the 8D Association membership is currently 68. Welcome to our latest members **Edward Sutton** from Newton-le-Willows, **Matthew Ralphs** from Wallasey, **Ann Paulett** from Southport and **Neil Ebsworth** from Liverpool.

Special Workings

Tornado visited Widnes on Saturday but it was not the well-known steam engine. On Saturday 9th of April, East Midlands Trains provided the Meridian set which has the same name to work as a replacement for Class 158's between Nottingham and Liverpool Lime Street on two return trips handling Grand National Race Traffic. Set 222.003 worked 1T62 the 08.47 Nottingham to Liverpool, 1T10 the 11.52 Liverpool to Nottingham, 1T90 the 15.47 Nottingham to Liverpool and 1L17 the 18.52 Liverpool to Nottingham. Also on the CLC route several Arriva Trains North services were running as 4 car units. Units 156.429 and 156.444 (named *Councillor Bill Cameron*), and allocated to Heaton depot, worked 2H48 the 10.27 Liverpool Lime Street to Manchester Oxford Road. Similar Heaton allocated unit 156.469 was deployed with 142.045 on 2F93 the 10.16 Manchester Oxford Road to Liverpool Lime Street service. East Midlands Trains provided 156.405 and 158.857 on 1L09 the 10.52 Liverpool Lime Street to Norwich service.

The Belmond British Pullman also conveyed racegoers to the Grand National. Running as the 08.14 London Victoria to Runcorn, and the 19.25 Liverpool Lime Street to London Victoria the train was top and tailed by DB Cargo Class 67 Loco's 67 005 Queen's Messenger and 67 006 Royal Sovereign. The train ran empty stock from Runcorn to Crewe reversing in Ditton Yard. The train suffered a delay on its return journey due to an earlier service activating a hot axle box detector at Winsford, which caused subsequent services to be delayed between Warrington Bank Quay, Runcorn and Winsford.

On Sunday 24th of April, Virgin Trains provided an early morning Pendolino service from Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston for people wishing to go to the London Marathon. Running as 1T13 the 05.50 Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston, where it was due to arrive at 08.11, called at Runcorn, Crewe, Stafford, Rugby and Milton Keynes Central. The set provided had worked up the previous evening as empty stock from London Euston to Edge Hill Downhill Carriage sidings.



Left: Empty stock from the previous day's football special heads east through Whistler station on 24th April 2016.
Photo by Doug Birmingham

On Saturday the 23rd of April for the FA Cup Semi Final between Everton and Manchester United, a special football train was run. The 09.41 from Liverpool Lime Street to Wembley Central and 20.51 return were top and

tailed by DB Cargo Class 67's 67 028 and 67 029. Calling at Liverpool South Parkway and Crewe, the train was formed of a 12 coach set of Mark 2 coaches in ex-

Virgin Trains livery. On the return journey, due to engineering works between Weaver Junction and Runcorn, the train was diverted via Warrington Bank Quay, Earlestown and Rainhill. The train arrived back at Liverpool Lime Street in the early hours of Sunday Morning.

The coaches which had arrived empty stock from Burton on Trent, were stabled overnight in Tuebrook sidings, returning to Burton on the Sunday morning.

Narrow Gauge at Liverpool Albert Dock

Trains returned to the Albert Dock for the first time in half a century between the 7th and 9th May 2016. However no MD&HB locomotives could be seen traversing the dockside tramway style lines. The trains were run as part of a City Steam Festival. The Ffestiniog Railway provided locomotive Lilla and two coaches. Also present were the newly restored steam tug Daniel Adamson along with several traction engines and steam lorries.



Left: Locomotive 'Lilla' seen at Albert Dock on Saturday 7th May 2016. Photo by Les Fifoot

A stretch of track was laid at the Albert Dock enabling people to take a short ride on the train. Lilla an 0-4-0 tank engine built in 1891 by the Hunslet Engine Company was acquired by the Ffestiniog in 1993, having been built originally for the Cilgwyn Slate Company Quarry at Nantlle in North Wales, and is mainly used at special events as well as shunting duties at both Porthmadog Harbour station and Boston Lodge Works.

Halton Curve News

The Liverpool City Combined Authority endorsed by the Welsh Government and Cheshire West and Chester council has approved the financing for the reinstatement of Halton Curve to normal two way traffic. Work will commence in June 2017 to reinstate the pointwork at both Halton Junction and Frodsham Junction along with new signalling. This should be completed by May 2018 allowing passenger trains to be reintroduced with the December 2018 timetable change. An hourly service from Liverpool Lime Street to Chester with several services being extended to Bangor will be provided. These will operate as part of the new Wales and Borders franchise which is due to commence in 2018.

The Alan Robinson Photograph Collection

The 8D Association has now taken the extensive Alan Robinson photograph collection into its archives. Alan Robinson who died on 1st August 2015 (see On

Shed Volume 5 Number 3) was a prolific railway photographer who covered the length and breadth of the UK and beyond. There are several thousand photographs



in the collection which have all been digitised and catalogued. Many photographs from the collection appear in this edition of On Shed. They will be used in On Shed, on the 8D Website and on the Disused Stations website.

Above is an example from the collection showing a 9F locomotive on a Shotton iron ore working at Bidston on the 11th July 1964.

Widnes South Station

The final piece of work at Widnes South took place at the end of March when Network Rail contractors came back to put grass seed on the new embankments created after the demolition of the stations buildings and platform.

New Franchises Begin

The new franchises in the area commenced on the 1st of April. First Trans Pennine have turned out at least two units 185.108 and 185.123 in a new Blue/Silver/Black and purple livery. Arriva Trains North for the present are using the previous Northern Rail purple livery, although all the Northern markings have been removed leaving the units unbranded. Widnes station has also had the Northern name and logos taped over on the station signage. Apart from the new diesel and electric trains that Arriva Trains North have ordered from Spanish builder CAF, to eliminate all of the pacer units during the course of the next two years, it will also receive 23 Class 150 units from Great Western and London Midland, 5 Class 156's, 8 Class 158's and 16 Class 170's from Scotrail. It will also get a further 12 Class 319 EMU's from Thameslink, as part replacement for the Class 323's which by 2018 will have all been transferred to London Midland.

Nievenheim Trains – New Wagons

On Wednesday the 6th and Monday the 11th of April 2016, the Aluminium train from Nievenheim to Ditton Foundry Lane has had some new wagons attached on the rear. They are Grey containers mounted 1 to a wagon. Although the train uses ex-bogie ferry wagons, it has always been the intention to containerise the service, in order that the train could be loaded at Ditton Container terminal rather than Foundry Lane, and in Germany the train would terminate at DB's Neuss container terminal. At the British end it would also mean that Stobart's who have the contract to move the blacks between Ditton and the processing factory in Latchford could use ordinary container trailers, rather than keeping a specialist fleet of flat bottomed trailers just for this service.

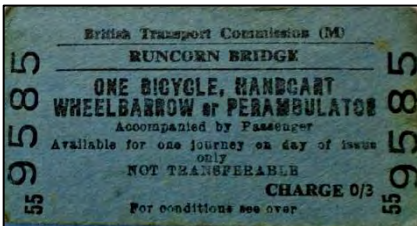
The Widnes – Runcorn Railway Bridge (AKA The Old Bridge)



Looking south along the pedestrian path on 16th April 2016. Photo by Les Fifoot

The railway bridge across the River Mersey at Widnes was built by the London and North Western Railway Company, at the narrowest point of the river, in order to cut travel times between London and Liverpool. Prior to its opening in 1869, trains to Liverpool had to cross the Mersey at Warrington via the original 1830 Liverpool and Manchester Railway which added considerable time to journeys.

The idea of a bridge at this point was first put forward in 1846 by the Grand Junction Railway Company, in order to reduce travel times between the two cities, and an Act of Parliament was obtained to build it. A time limit of 7 years was imposed to complete the project, but the company was soon to amalgamate with others to form the London and North Western Railway, and other projects took precedence. The 7 years' time limit passed, and the powers to build the bridge lapsed.



In 1861 Parliamentary approval was again obtained by the LNWR to construct a new line to finally achieve this aim. The new railway was to be constructed from Aston, to the south east of Runcorn, where it joined the line from Crewe to Warrington at Weaver Junction. After crossing the River Mersey at Runcorn, it was to join up with the existing line from Warrington to

Garston at Ditton, just west of Widnes. The new line was to be 8.5 miles long and it would reduce the distance between Liverpool Lime Street and stations south of the River Weaver by more than 8 miles. Initial work commenced in 1863, the first stone was laid in 1864, and the bridge was completed by 1868. On 21 May there was an



Members of the 8D Association on the steps that led down to the Runcorn entrance to the pedestrian footpath seen during the visit of 16th April 201. After the path had been closed to the public a ramp that led up to the steps was demolished. After that the path could only be accessed from the Widnes side of the bridge. Photo by Les Fifoot.

introductory opening when the contractor's locomotive Cheshire drew 20 wagons over the bridge, and it was formally opened for traffic on 10 October. The first goods traffic crossed it on 1 February 1869 and the first passenger train crossed on 1 April of that year.

The bridge was constructed with a pedestrian footpath from Viaduct Street on the Widnes side to Lord Street on the Runcorn side, and a toll was collected at one of two toll booths on the bridge, later to be reduced to one, at the Widnes end.

My first memories of the bridge were from the early 1950s. Although I was born and bred in Widnes, I am of mixed heritage, as my mother was from Pembrokeshire in South Wales. It was a regular pilgrimage for us to travel to my grandparents for visits and holidays, and we would always go by rail. The journey would take all day, and we would go via Crewe, Shrewsbury, the Central Wales line, Llandeilo to Carmarthen, and then down to South West Wales.

We lived in Reay Street, so the easiest route was to get to Ditton Junction, and then travel south. This option was fine until Appleton Station closed in 1951. Of course, I never remember us travelling from there, as I was only three when passenger services were withdrawn from the line.

After the sad closure of Appleton, we tended to catch a bus to the "BRIDGE", take the Transporter Bridge to Runcorn, and then walk to Runcorn Station, although we did occasionally travel to Ditton, but this was less convenient. During the crossing to Runcorn I was always fascinated by the railway bridge, which was so vast and high,

and the thunderous rumblings as rail traffic hurried across it.

It wasn't until around 1953 that I remember walking the railway bridge. My dad had purchased the pilgrimage tickets to Pembroke, and we were travelling from Runcorn Station, but the old Transporter Bridge was now showing its age, and had broken down. We alighted from the "BRIDGE" bus at Church Street instead of the end of Mersey Road, and proceeded in a westerly direction towards the bridge footpath entrance in Viaduct Street. It seemed a long way to walk from here to Runcorn station. My dad was carrying two cases; my mother was panicking because she thought that we would miss our train, and I was a little concerned myself. After paying the toll fees at the turnstile, half way up the slope to the bridge, we were on our way.



An 8F of Speke shed is seen heading towards Runcorn in 1967. Photo by Les Fifoot



A Liverpool to Chester DMU is seen running wrong line towards Runcorn in 1967. The wrong line working had been introduced due to engineering works. The pedestrian footpath was closed at this time but that does not appear to have stopped local children from gaining access. Photo by Les Fifoot

Once on the bridge I started to enjoy the walk, seeing the bridge close up for the first time, and a couple of trains at close quarters. Fortunately, we arrived at the station just in time to catch our train, and the beginning of another enjoyable holiday.



A London Euston to Liverpool Lime Street Virgin Pendolino heads onto the bridge on 16 April 2016. Photo by Les Fifoot

The Bridge was always referred to as the “Old Bridge” by locals, after the opening of the Transporter Bridge in 1905. It became a regular venue for me and my mates in the 1950s, as I became interested in railways and train spotting, and it was from here that I often viewed the prototype Deltic in 1957, and the formidable looking Stanier Pacifics on the Liverpool to Euston expresses. If only I had possessed a camera back then.



Looking towards Runcorn from the pedestrian footpath as an 8F locomotive heads towards Runcorn with Target 92 in 1967. Photo by Les Fifoot.

Apart from carrying pedestrians and trains, the bridge also carried high voltage electricity cables, and a pipe main to transfer brine from

mid Cheshire to the ICI facility at Pilkington Sullivans in Widnes. We would always stand on the main, which was on the west side of the footpath, as it gave us a better vantage point to view the trains.

Unfortunately, when the high level road bridge opened in 1961, it wasn't long before a decision was made to close the bridge to the public, although I did manage to get access to take photos in the late 1960s.

By the time the footpath finally closed in the 1960s, I had crossed the bridge numerous times, and was sad to see it closed and sealed off. By chance, I became aware that a local person was organising a private visit to the bridge in 2015, so I immediately contacted him and secured a place on the walk. What a fantastic experience it was for me nearly fifty years after I last walked it, so much so that I was keen to organise a further event for our members this year. Network Rail were very helpful, and thanks to Paul Banner of Network Rail, twenty four of our members enjoyed the experience of accessing this unique, historic railway structure on foot, in April. Hopefully we will be able to do this again in the future. **Les Fifoot**

The Winwick Hospital Branch



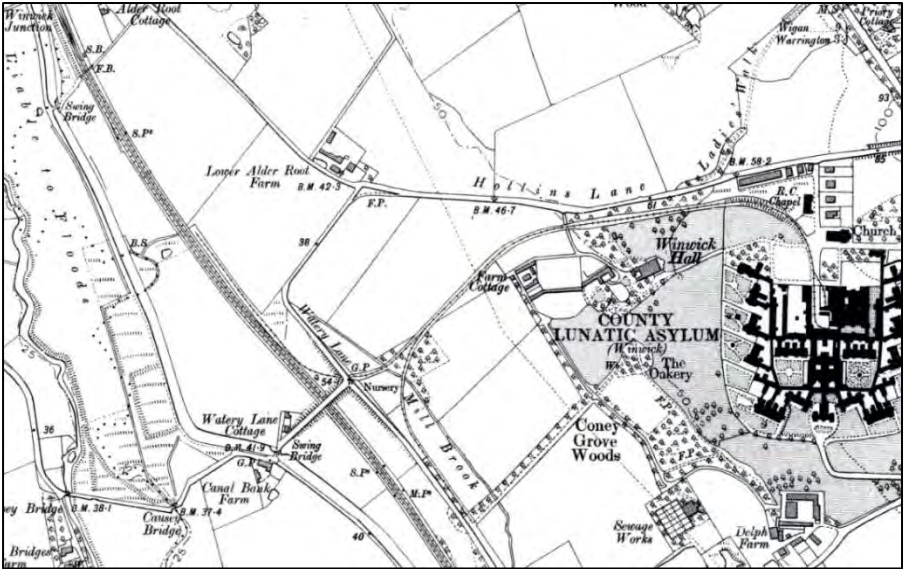
A short train consisting of one 16 ton mineral wagon and a brake van is seen on the Winwick hospital branch in the early 1960s. Providing motive power for the train is ex-LMS 2-6-2 2MT locomotive number 41212 of Sutton Oak shed. Photo by Gerry Drought

Care of the mentally ill had in pre-industrial times been carried out by individual families, by the church prior to the Reformation, and by small scale hospitals. The first public hospital for the mentally ill had opened in Manchester in 1766. By the mid-nineteenth century, three public asylums had been built in Lancashire. They were located at Lancaster, Rainhill and Prestwich.

In 1894 Lancashire Asylums Board commissioned a new asylum to be built on the 207 acre Winwick Rectory Estate north of Warrington. Work started in 1896, and pending its completion it was agreed to convert Old Winwick Hall, which had previously been home to the Rector of Winwick, into a home for accommodation of about 50 'idiot boys'. Winwick Hall opened in 1897 and Winwick Asylum (later to be renamed Winwick Hospital) opened in 1902 at a cost of £383,000.

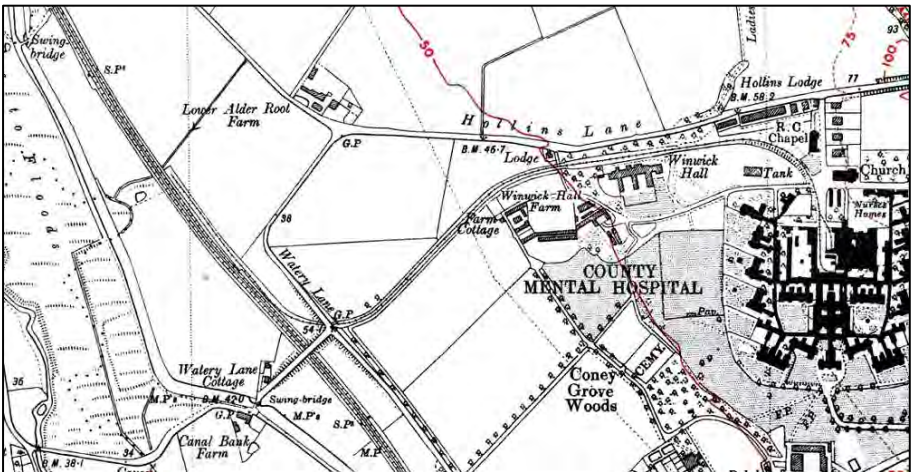
As the hospital lay just to the east of the LNWR main line between Warrington and Wigan (The present day West Coast Main Line) a half mile long branch was opened in 1896 to serve the hospital. It had a south facing connection to the main line at Watery Lane and ran eastwards into the centre of the hospital. A ground frame controlled the connection with the up goods line which was released by lever number 20 at Winwick Junction signal box.

At the time of opening the railway would have carried a variety of goods into the hospital. Shunting at the hospital yard was done by horses.



The Winwick Hospital Branch and surrounding area shown on a six-inch scale map from 1906. In the top left corner of the map is Winwick Junction signal box which controlled the ground frame that gave access to the hospital branch. Lever number 20 at Winwick Junction unlocked the ground frame.

The hospital was powered by coal fired boilers and lines connected directly to the boiler house so that coal could be taken right up to the point where it was needed. During both World Wars the hospital was used to treat wounded soldiers and hospital trains ran straight into the hospital.



The hospital branch shown on a six-inch scale map from 1938. Alterations had taken place at the Watery Lane end of the line a south leading spur having been removed. The Mill Brook had also disappeared having been buried in a culvert.



An aerial view showing the western end of the Winwick Hospital Branch as it was in 1947. The main line can be seen to the left with the branch curving off to the right where it passes under Watery Lane.

From 1950 horse shunting was discontinued and an agricultural tractor was used. In 1955/6 the branch was re-laid and curves were eased so larger locomotives could run.

By the late 1950s only coal was delivered by rail. Trains usually consisted of a single 16 ton mineral wagon and a brake van. In the early 1960s Ivatt 2-6-2 Tank engines from Sutton Oak or Dallam shed were typical motive power. The line had closed by 1963 and it was disconnected from the main line on 10th March 1963. Track along the branch was lifted by some of the able bodied hospital patients. The hospital closed in 1997. **Paul Wright**



On 5th May 2016 the 8D Association visited the Winwick Hospital Branch. In this view they are standing on the track bed. Photo by Tony Foster

A Day Trip to Holyhead by Chris Hollins



Left to right: Alan Robinson, David Warner and Chris Hollins at Warrington Bank Quay station on 18th June 2015. Photo by Ann Warner

On Thursday the 18th of June, I had the great pleasure of welcoming my good friend and fellow "Railfan" David Warner and his wife Ann to the UK as part of their holiday which included several railway journeys in the Republic of Ireland.

I have known David for 36 years, first meeting him in America 1979 on board Amtrak's long discontinued *North Coast Hiawatha* train from Seattle to Chicago. At that time he was a submariner in the United States Navy, eventually rising to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander, before retiring and beginning a Railroad career. He has worked twice for Amtrak but is now the chief engineer for the South Eastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority dealing with the servicing and maintaining of both main line trains as well as Philadelphia's Street cars. Along with his friend El Simon, he has co-authored the definitive guide to Amtrak's rolling stock called "Amtrak by the numbers". The book is a complete listing and history of every piece of equipment that the company has ever owned.

I decided to take the 09.26 service from Warrington Bank Quay but to enable me to ensure that the return 13.01 from Holyhead was the Mark 3 coaches and loco set I took an early Arriva North West 110 bus from Irwell Street arriving in Warrington at 08.00.

DB Schenker Class 67 67022 was on the 07.38 Chester to Manchester Piccadilly pushing it's 4 Mark 3's and Driving Van Trailer towards Winwick Jct. Class 90 number 90 028 was stabled in the south end bay platform and, as I had an hour to spare, I sat down to see what trains turned up.

DRS provided 66 434 and 66 425 double heading the 06.15 Daventry to Mossend "Stobart Train", while the 04.28 Coatbridge to Daventry produced DRS 66 430. GBRF entered into the fray with 66 744 hauling the 08.00 Liverpool Docks to Ironbridge loaded Biomass train. On the passenger front Virgin Pendolino 390 044 *Virgin Lionheart* was on the 08.20 to Euston. This being one of the sets that has had one of its first class carriages rebuilt into a standard class one. The following 08.39 to Euston via Birmingham consisted of a single 5 car Voyager number 221 115 of Polmadie Depot which departed with standees in the standard class.



Left: A Manchester Piccadilly to Holyhead train is seen passing over the River weaver Navigation at Frodsham on 20th April 2016. Photo by Doug Birmingham

The 09.26 from

Warrington Bank Quay, train reporting number 1D33 is the 08.50 from Manchester Piccadilly and is a two portioned train that splits at Chester. The front portion to Holyhead consisted of 158.823 while the rear portion for Llandudno was provided by 150.279. Both portions where lightly loaded with even less passengers in the Holyhead portion from Chester. The reason for this might have had something to do with the fact that the train only calls at Llandudno Junction and Bangor, before reaching Holyhead. For the track gricers, this service traverses the middle roads at both Rhyl and Abergele & Pensarn.

Despite a leisurely approach to Holyhead I arrived on time, David and Anne where waiting having arrived on the Irish Ferries Catamaran "Jonathan Swift" . While Ann explored Holyhead town centre, David and I looked over Holyhead's railway facilities some of which looked a little run down. Before our return to Warrington, we watched the departure of two trains, Arriva Trains Wales unit 175.112 which was on 1V96 the 12.32 to Maesteg. Virgin providing a 5 car Voyager for 1A43 the 12.43 to London

Euston. 67 022 pulled in on time with the 09.50 from Manchester Piccadilly and was quickly prepared to become 1H89 the 13.01 back to Manchester.

David, Ann and I boarded the train and after stowing their luggage we took up seats round a table on the coast side, so that they could get some good glimpses of the North Wales Coast and the Dee estuary in all its finery. Our arrival back at Warrington Bank Quay was 6 minutes late due to two signal stops at Valley and Llandudno Junction.

On arriving at Bank Quay my good friend Alan Robinson, who also knows David, met up with us. As David and Ann had an hour to wait for their onward connection to Glasgow, which as it turned out was slightly longer due to signalling problems between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, we took David to Arpley to view the junction and signal box. We also walked down to the DB Schenker depot in the Yard. We were lucky that on the way back from the depot, a Freightliner Class 70 appeared on the Low Level line hauling empty coal hoppers, on the then soon to be discontinued Fiddlers Ferry to Ellesmere Port working. I explained to David about what happens at Latchford Sidings and fifteen minutes after seeing it for the first time the Class 70 appeared again proceeding on its way to Ellesmere Port.



Left: An Ellesmere Port to Fiddlers Ferry coal train seen at Ince & Elton station on 10th June 2015. Photo by Doug Birmingham

It was now time to return to Bank Quay station and see David and Ann off for the rest of their vacation in

Scotland and the Hebrides. The late running 13.43 Euston to Glasgow Central duly pulled in and they found their reserved seats in Coach B of Voyager unit 221.111 which had lost its *Roald Amundsen* nameplate. The remainder of the train was provided by 221.107 *Sir Martin Frobisher*. Departure was 13 minutes late which had grown to 20 minutes late at Carlisle, but due to recovery time arrival at Glasgow Central was only 8 minutes late. Dave later emailed me about this and asked the question as to whether an 8 minute late arrival counted as on time.

So ended an interesting day, a few hours with good friends, a nice return journey with Arriva Trains Wales and with sunny weather as well. What more could one ask for. **Chris Hollins**

Fiddlers Ferry Power Station Visit – Saturday 7th May 2016



8D Association members pose for the camera at Fiddlers Ferry Power Station.

Photo by Doug Birmingham

Our third outdoor visit this year, organised by Richard Mercer was another visit to our local Fiddlers Ferry Power Station, owned and operated by Southern Scottish Electric plc. The opportunity was taken to explore more of the operating site unlike previous visits concentrated on the rail operations in and out of the power station. Our guide for the tour was Merrill Cummerson who had been working at the power station for over 28 years and her knowledge along with the information she provided was very much appreciated by our small group of 8 members who provided her with many questions about the site.

After we had got kitted up and watched a short induction safety course we headed toward the west set of cooling towers. We were given of an explanation of the purpose of the towers, while streaming amounts of water was running down inside the being supplied from the nearby River Mersey, including an explanation of the filtration system. We continued to the coal bunkers and control room were up to recently, both DBC and Freightliner were delivering coal by train. The coal stockpiles had been significantly reduced over recent times but there was still two small stockpiles of coal, spilt between Russian and Columbian coal, with the former being less in sulphur content. Between the main power station area and the coal stockpile site is amazing a long crop field which is farmed by a local farmer.

However, it transpired, that nothing could be built of this stretch of land as it was on top of an underground aqueduct, with the main entrance stemming from the River

Mersey! Most members never knew that particular fact!



Left: A lack of trains had left the tracks at Fiddlers Ferry Power Station looking rusty when this view was taken on 7th May 2016. Photo by Doug Birmingham

We moved on to the inside of the control room for the coal bunkers and distribution

site were two members of staff explained the functions of the control room including how the coal finally ends up feeding the generators after initial arrival by train. While there, we took the opportunity of a better look of the coal bunkers while there were no trains on site.

With the assistance of one of the control room staff and Merrill, we took the opportunity to walk the rail lines heading towards Fiddlers Ferry Signal Box and also take a look at the limestone / gypsum loading bunker which has been additional facility built with in the last 10 years. During this time many explanations were given about the use of the lagoons and other parts of the power station, with interestingly both parties were learning something new about the power station. We then headed slowly back to the main power station complex with the intention of visiting the main control room and the four main generating units but we had been there already three hours. We decided to do this on another 'must do' visit sometime in the future. While walking back to the main gates, we passed the Gas Turbine House and the Limestone Plant Buildings where we were given full explanations of their uses within the power station with the latter ultimately produces a by-product, namely gypsum.

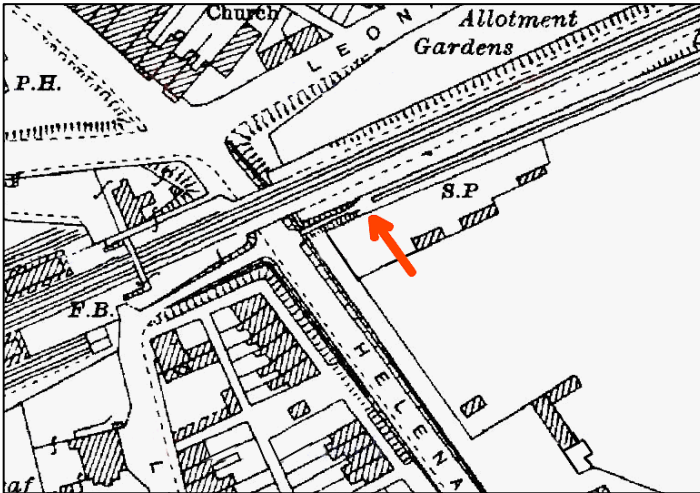
During our tour, it was confirmed that the four generating units will continue to be maintained and overhauled every three years with one being due to be done in the near future which means a complete strip down and rebuild. Although the power station is now operating on reduced capacity it is still required for back up supplies of our electricity over the next two/three years and therefore there are provisional plans to receive further coal from another coal power station which is being closed and this is expected to be rail although no firm plans in place.

All in all this was an excellent visit again to this location and our grateful thanks to Merrill and her colleagues in making us very welcome and guiding us around this amazing facility. **Doug Birmingham**

The Forgotten St Helens Junction Station

The present day St Helens Junction station once had a narrow gauge counterpart that has long been forgotten. It never appeared in the public timetable but it was used by passengers.

Following initial difficulties in sinking two shafts at Bold Colliery the mine had become very productive by the early 1900's and was employing greater numbers of local men. The pit-head lay some distance from the nearest conurbation, St Helens Junction, and miners faces a circuitous walk along Helena Road and Bold Road to get both to and from work.



The St Helens Junction narrow gauge station shown on a 1:2,500 scale map from 1928. The better known St Helens Junction station can be seen to the left.

It was in July 1920 that the owners, the Collins Green Colliery

Company, purchased 1ft 10in gauge petrol driven locomotive and carriages from Motor Rail Limited of Bedford. A small rudimentary station was constructed to the east of Helena Road running parallel with the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. Access was provided from Helena Road through an aperture cut through the retaining wall of the bridge embankment. The railway was almost a mile in length and ran alongside the L & M line for most of its length on a small embankment, turning south to run alongside the colliery sidings before terminating near the pit-head where a small engine shed was provided.

The line would have certainly been a welcome feature for the miners as it would

have drastically reduced their travelling time to, and probably more importantly, from work. By 1938 the line has been drastically reduced in length and no longer ran to the Helena Road station instead it looks to have been used for the transportation of waste to a small tip.

The construction of Bold A power station in the 1950's and its connection to the main Liverpool to Manchester line wiped virtually all trace of the line away, the disused



Looking across Helena Road at the bricked up aperture which formed the station entrance. A welcome addition for the weary miner travelling home from work. Photo by Terry Callaghan

Helena Road station area became the power station headshunt. Just by chance, whilst photographing a working through St Helens Junction, I noticed a bricked up entrance directly of Helena Road early in 2016; following some research I realised that it could only be the entrance to the mine railway station. **Terry Callaghan**



Class 47 locomotive number 47 434 'Pride In Huddersfield' passes 47 520 at St Helens Junction in early 1989. The narrow gauge station was located to the right of the arriving train in the approximate location of the buffer stops. The railway would have run, for at least half its length, alongside the main line. Photo by Terry Callaghan

From the Archive



Looking north-east from the pedestrian footbridge at Widnes Dock Junction in August 1967. This location had been a very busy railway location but it was in decline when this view was taken. In the distance a coal train can be seen heading west towards Garston on the Widnes Deviation line. To the left is the Deviation St Helens line spur and to the right the original route to Garston. The car most likely belongs to the signalman who would have been on duty at Widnes Number 4 box. Photo by Alan Robinson



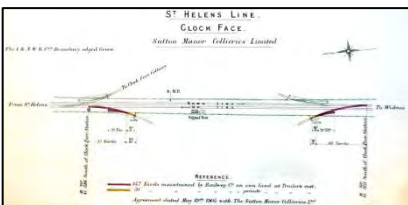
A view looking east towards Padgate Junction from a Manchester Central train taken on the 9th of April 1964. Padgate Junction was on the CLC Liverpool and Manchester line. It was the point where the direct line and the Warrington Central lines converged. Photo by Alan Robinson

Where is This Competition



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

The December competition was correctly guessed by Tony Cook, Dennis Flood and Arthur Turner. The location was Hunts Cross East Junction on the CLC main line.



Left: This diagram recently came up for auction. It shows the connections to Sutton Manor Colliery from the Widnes – St Helens line. The drawing gives a date for the agreement to install the connection of 19 May 1905.

Events Programme

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 – For those who have booked onto this tour meet outside the Blackpool Transport Rigby Road depot on Hopton Road, Blackpool at 10.45. Contact Terry Callaghan on 0121 240 5991 for further information.

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 – Saturday 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 Warrington's first railway station. Join us and find out more. **Meet at the entrance to Warrington Central station.**

10.00 – Saturday 13th August 2016 – Merseyside Transport Trust Visit. A visit to the Merseyside Transport Trust at Burscough where the class 502 ex-LMS EMU is being restored. We are looking at doing car sharing to get to the venue. If you are interested in doing the visit and you would need a lift, or if you are able to offer spaces in your car call Paul Wright on 0151 630 5132.

19.00 – Thursday 18th 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.**

08.30 – Tuesday 20th September 2016 – Visit to Ribble Steam Railway – The Association will be visiting the Ribble Steam Railway and having a trips on the Waggon Maschinenbau rail bus of Donauworth, Germany which was built for British Railways in 1958. There will be a cost which will depend on how many members attend. If twenty members go the cost will be £5.00. A bargain for unlimited rides on the railbus. Contact Paul Wright on Email pwright964@btinternet.com or telephone 0151 630 5132.

13:00 – Thursday 15th and 22nd September 2016 – Visit to Alstom Train Care Depot at Edge Hill (*Provisional Dates*). There will be two tours of the Alstom facility at Edge Hill for 8D Members. Each visit is limited to 10 people so booking is essential. **Contact Richard Mercer on 0151 378 9908.**

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