

# ON SHED

## The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 7 Number 1 – March 2017



### Near to Farnworth & Bold

On 10 June 1975 the Widnes Hutchinson Street sidings to Farnworth & Bold trip working nears the end of its journey. The train of loaded cement wagons was heading to the Turners Asbestos Company Everite Works which was located on Derby Road in Widnes. In this view it had just passed over the CLC main line. At the head of the train was 08 931 and 08 887. **Photo by Brian Roberts**

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## Volume 7 Number 1

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### Editor



*Left: A track lifting train seen at Childwall on the former CLC North Liverpool Extension Line at Childwall in 1978. Photo by John Ward*

Welcome to the first journal of 2017. This is the twenty-fifth journal and I hope you all enjoy it.

Through the journal we have been able to get into print items of

historical interest from our area of study. At the recent AGM it was suggested that back copies of the journal be made available on our website. The suggestion received wide support and it has now been actioned. All journals from 2011 to 2016 are now available to view on the website. This will bring the historical record to a wider audience.

It is however important that members of the association who pay an annual fee get benefits from that fee and you will continue to receive a hard copy of the journal. Also journals from 2017 year will not go onto the website until 2018.

One of the other benefits of membership is access to our talks and events and once again we have a summer programme that should appeal to everyone. If you haven't been on one of our site visits before do try to make the effort I am quite sure you will find it an interesting and enjoyable experience. **Paul Wright**

## Society News

### The 8D Association AGM 2017

The 2017 AGM took place on Saturday 28 January 2017 at the select Security Stadium. Members heard reports from the committee officers and then the committee stood down. Mr Denis Flood was thanked for being on the committee in 2016. A new committee was then elected for 2017.

The committee is as follows.

Mr Joe Cowley – Chairman  
Mr Doug Birmingham – Secretary  
Mr Les Fifoot – Minute Secretary  
Mr Lee Woods – Treasurer  
Mr Paul Wright – Journal Editor

Mr Tony Foster – Committee Member  
Mr Chris Hollins – Committee Member  
Mr John Wilson – Committee Member

There are places on the committee and if anyone is interested please contact the secretary at [the\\_8d\\_association@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:the_8d_association@yahoo.co.uk)

Members then had an illustrated talk from Doug Birmingham during which he showed views of steam trains in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This was followed by a buffet and a chance to socialise.

### Photograph Competition

The closing date for the photograph competition announced in the December 2016 journal has been extended until 12:00 noon on Saturday 1 April 2017. If you want to submit photos for the competition email them to [tony.r.foster@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.r.foster@btinternet.com)

### New Members

At the 8D Association membership is currently 95. Welcome to our latest members **Paul Wilks** from Runcorn and **Therese Woods** from Widnes.

### **Membership Subscriptions for 2017**

**If you have not yet paid your membership subscription for 2017 it is due. To remain a member of the 8D Association in 2017 we need your subscription payment by no later than 1 April 2017.**

**Please send cheque to Mr Lee Woods, 125 Pit Lane, Widnes, WA8 9HR**

## **News Round Up - by Chris Hollins**

### **Bridge Strike at Runcorn Station**

On the evening of Wednesday 15 February 2017 all services were delayed at Runcorn for a 90 minute period due to a road vehicle striking the bridge at the station. After an inspection had been carried out, normal service was resumed.

### **Merseyrail Awards New Train contract to Stadler but Bombardier make legal challenge**



*A computer generated image showing a Merseyrail Unit that will be built by Stadler.*

It has been announced that Stadler have won the £460 million Merseyrail train replacement order. The new trains which will operate at 750V DC will also have a 25KV AC capability. They should start to enter service during 2019 with all the trains being operational by 2020. Interestingly these trains will not be owned by a train leasing company which has been the usual practice since the 1994 privatisation. These trains will be owned by the six local authorities that constitute Merseytravel.

There will be 52 four car articulated sets replacing the fleet of 59 Class 507/508 units. The new trains will each have a total passenger capacity including standees of 486. During the peak hour, some services will operate as 8 car trains. Both depots at Birkenhead North and Kirkdale will be retained and modernised, while the third rail voltage will be increased to a standard 750 Volts on both sides of the Mersey.

The trains will be Driver only operated, which follows a recommendation made by the Railway Accident Investigation Board after the incident at James Street in 2011, which resulted in a Guard being convicted of Manslaughter.

Stadler have announced that the new fleet of Merseyrail Electrics will be maintained at Kirkdale. A new maintenance building is to be built at the depot. Birkenhead North will continue to function as a servicing depot, and is to receive a new washing plant to replace the one that was burnt down several years ago.

No sooner had Merseytravel announced its award to Stadler when they had to report that Bombardier Transportation have launched a legal challenge in the High Court, over the awarding of the new trains build contract. So far no date has been set for the hearing, and a Merseytravel spokesman has stated that they will defend the case vigorously, and are confident that they will win it. This could however result in the late arrival of new trains, and should Merseytravel lose the case, they would have to retender the contract which could put back introduction into service of the trains by up to an additional two years.

Bombardier had offered a modified version of the new London Underground S stock as a 3 Car version. It seems that Merseytravel were not keen on the bench style seating after having done a customer feedback survey. However Bombardier have stated that the seating layout would be in the style of the S Stock used on the Metropolitan line, where some seats are face to face and airline style, as well as bench seats.

### **Liverpool Lime Street new platforms**

Work has commenced on alterations at Liverpool Lime Street station in preparation for the two additional platforms that are to be installed later this year. Demolition has commenced of the former Post office building and conveyer belt that is situated between Platforms 7 and 8, and enabled Mail to be transferred to and from the former Copperas Hill Sorting Office. On the concourse, superstructure has been erected for a new retail outlet, while new premises will shortly be established for the Virgin Trains Lounge and information bureau, which is also to be demolished with several others to make way for the new platforms.

### **Football Specials**

On Tuesday 31 January 2017, for the Liverpool V Chelsea Premier League football match, Virgin Trains ran a special train from London Euston for the travelling fans. Formed of a Pendolino set, the train ran as 1T11 15.34 London Euston to Liverpool Lime Street, returning as 1T13 23.27 Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston where it was due to arrive at 02.17. The only stop in both directions was at Watford Junction, and the return working carried the Chelsea team home as well as the fans.

On Saturday 11th February, a further football special ran carrying Tottenham Hotspur fans to Liverpool for the Premier League match. This time DB Cargo UK provided 2 Class 90 electric locomotives to top and tail a rake of Riviera trains Mark 1 and 2 Stock. The train ran as the 11.52 from London Euston to Liverpool South Parkway, returning at 20.37 and arriving back in Euston at 23.43. The stock was serviced at Crewe Up Refuge Siding between trips.

### **Fiddlers Ferry Power Station Generating Again**

As the National Grid requires additional electricity during the winter months, Fiddlers Ferry Power Station has returned to near full output. As a result a third weekday coal

train has started to run. Using Freightliner Heavy Haul, the service departs Avonmouth at 10.30, arriving Fiddlers Ferry at 19.20. The returning empty southbound working departs Fiddlers Ferry at 21.50, arriving Stoke Gifford Yard at 02.00. This means that at present there are two weekday workings to and from Avonmouth and one from Ferrybridge. All three services will continue to run until the end of March when the situation will then be reviewed.

### **Freightliner Goes Electric**

Freightliner Intermodal have replaced Class 70 diesels, that they have been using on some intermodal workings that pass through Warrington Bank Quay, with pairs of class 90 electrics. The trains affected are 4S44 12.13 Daventry to Coatbridge, 4S45 18.39 Daventry to Coatbridge, 4M49 00.34 Coatbridge to Daventry and 4M34 04.28 Coatbridge to Daventry. The locomotives being used are ones that have been released from hire by GBRF, having been used by them to haul Anglo-Scottish Caledonian Sleeper services.

### **Colas Class 70 Locomotives arrive at Liverpool Docks**

On Wednesday 14 February 2017 the first of an additional seven Class 70 locomotives for Colas, 70812 was due to be unloaded at Liverpool Docks. The remaining six are due to arrive by ship in Liverpool during the summer.

### **Liverpool Loop Line Closed**

#### **What is Wirral loop line track renewal?**



The rail track that runs around the Wirral loop line and forms part of the connection between Wirral and Liverpool sits on a concrete base. The concrete base is 40 years old and so it is time to replace it.

#### **Why is it happening?**

As part of a £340 million investment in the region's railway, Network Rail plan to renew the track in order to maintain long-term efficiency and reliability.

Between January & June 2017, the existing concrete and track between Wirral and Liverpool will be dug out and new concrete and track laid in its place. Once the work is complete, no major renewal work will be needed on the stretch of track for decades to come.



On Tuesday 3 January 2017, the first stage of the Merseyrail Wirral lines shutdown started. The underground Liverpool Loop Line through which all trains pass opened in May 1977. Within the single track Loop Line tunnel rails are laid onto a concrete pavement which has become life expired. The concrete needs to be broken out and then replaced work that will take six months. The only option was to close the line.

A further difficulty faced by the engineers is getting materials to site. It can only be done by train which required the complete closure of the 1886 Mersey Railway tunnel to passenger trains between 3 January and 13 February 2017. Passenger trains have now started to run to and from James Street on weekdays.

At weekends all trains from Chester and Ellesmere Port terminate at Birkenhead Central, New Brighton and West Kirby trains terminate at Birkenhead North. Passengers then transfer to buses for the onward journey to Liverpool. Arriva Merseyside has been contracted to provide the replacement buses, for which they have provided the first of a new fleet

of 51 Volvo Hybrid Double Deckers along with some single deckers.

## Train Crash at Runcorn on 4 January 1965 - by Rod Dixon



***Target 92 a trip working from Widnes Deviation Sidings to Runcorn Folly Lane is seen arriving at Runcorn station in the mid-1960s. At the head of the train is 8F locomotive number 48520 of Speke Shed. It was just such a working that was involved in the train crash of 4 January 1965. Photo by Roy Gough***

It was a bitterly cold early winter's morning on 4 January 1965 when I was the fireman on a Target 92 a trip working from Widnes Deviation Sidings to Runcorn Folly Lane.

At that time I was based at Sutton Oak. Target 92 had been a Widnes job until the shed closed on 16 May 1964. It had passed to Speke Junction for a period of about six months, but they had struggled with it and so the work was given to us at Sutton Oak.

On 4 January 1965 I booked on at about 5.30am, and my first task was to prepare the locomotive which on that day was an 8F. When the engine was ready we set off for Widnes running tender first. The reason for going tender first was so that when we could do the run from Ditton Junction to Runcorn smokebox first. We would have arrived at Widnes Deviation Sidings before 7.00am where our train was waiting for us.

The consist of the train was 30 mineral wagons of coal and a brake van at each



end which facilitated a quick run round at Ditton Sidings.

Target 92 was like a conveyor belt of coal from Widnes to Runcorn. It followed a predictable pattern. Away from Widnes Deviation sidings to Ditton sidings tender first then reverse direction for the tough climb up the bank and over the bridge to Runcorn. The train would pass through Runcorn station and then stop on the main line. It would then be propelled down the Folly Lane branch and into the power station at Weston Point.

On that day in 1965 we left Widnes Deviation sidings at 7.00am and made our way to Ditton in the usual way. After running the engine around the train we were kept waiting at Ditton for the up *Merseyside Express* to pass. This was normal, as a slow and heavy freight train such as ours could not be allowed to hold up an important passenger train.

After the *Merseyside Express* had passed Ditton, we were given the signal and we were able to get our train on the move up the steep grade over the viaduct onto the bridge, and by that time the passenger train would have left Runcorn station.

There had been a light dusting of snow and a very heavy frost, so my Driver was having trouble with the locomotive slipping, but he managed to get the train clear of the points in Runcorn cutting, which is just to the south of the station. The train was brought to a stand in the cutting on the up main line.

After receiving a signal from our Guard the Driver started to reverse our train back



**The junction between the Folly Lane branch and the Weaver Junction – Ditton Junction line at Runcorn seen on a cold winters day in 1959. On 4 January 1965 this became a scene of utter devastation. Photo by Roy Gough**



towards the station and the branch for Folly Lane. It did not take long for the rear portion of our train to cross onto the down line, and then onto the Folly Lane branch.

Whilst in this position, moving slowly onto the branch, I was damping down our boiler to stop us blowing off steam. Suddenly I saw an electric locomotive on a mixed freight train coming on the down line towards us. It had clearly passed signals and was going to hit the rear part of our train which was across the junction. My driver was powerless to do anything other than apply our brakes and as we were only going slow we soon stopped. The electric hauled freight sped past us and hit the rear portion of our train.

We had heard the noise of the crash, so I got off our locomotive and ran down the left side of our train to see what damage had been done. I found the Electric had pushed a number of our wagons over onto their sides, and had started to push the rear part of our train towards the branch. The remaining part of the of the mixed freight had piled up on top of some of our wagons.

They had brought down the overhead power lines and blocked the cutting. The electric locomotive did not appear to be badly damaged but I called to the crew to see how they were. They said they were alright but I could not get to them because of all the damage. A later learned that they were uninjured but shaken. This was amazing really considering the severity of the crash. The signalman called to me to say he had told control and had protected the area.



***The location on the Folly Lane branch where the electric locomotive of the down freight train had ended up on 4 January 1965. This view of an up freight working was taken a couple of years earlier but it is how the area would have looked when the crash occurred. The AC electric locomotive involved in the crash could well have been of this type. The goods yard at Runcorn station appears to be very busy with an assortment of wagons stabled in the sidings. Photo by Richard W Mercer***

As there was nothing I could do to help I went back to tell my driver what had happened, and how bad it was. I was asked to look after our locomotive while my driver went to see what we were to do with the front of our train, which was still on the rails on the up main line. My driver thought that we could take the undamaged part of our train to Halton Junction, where we could stable it. He was thinking that we could then take the locomotive home to Sutton Oak via Winsford.

When my mate came back he said we were to wait for an Inspector or a relief crew.

After hanging around the devastation at Runcorn for a couple of hours a locomotive inspector turned up and he interviewed us. There was nothing that we could have done differently we had the road and we were carrying out a routine move.

Eventually we were relieved and we had to pick our way through the wreckage and exit via the station, where we were able to catch a bus to Widnes. From Widnes we had to catch another bus on to St Helens, so that we could return to Sutton Oak. That was it, we were left totally to our own devices after being involved in a train crash. Mind you in those days we wouldn't have expected anything different.

At the inquiry it was found that the driver of the electric train had not reduced speed to descend the grade down to Halton, and also did not allow for the icy rail conditions. So when he did apply the brakes he could not stop at the stop signal, which resulted in the crash at Runcorn. I recall that the line was cleared within a few days and everything went back to normal.

I continued to work Target 92 trains right up until they stopped. Latterly I worked them as a driver based at Speke Junction but by then they were diesel hauled.

## Rod Dixon



*A view from inside Runcorn signal box taken in the early 1960s. The box controlled the junction between the main line and the Folly Lane branch. The track layout as it would have been at the time of the 1965 crash is seen above the levers.*

Photo by  
Richard W  
Mercer

## Travelling Back to my Maternal Roots – by Les Fifoot



***Looking south at Appleton station in 1948. Standing at the up platform is a service for St Helens Shaw Street. This is the station from where Les Fifoot began his journey to Pembroke in 1951. Copyright photo from Stations UK***

I think it's fair to say that most of us from Widnes would not be able to trace our family history back more than several generations, before we have to look elsewhere. In my case, although I was born and bred in the town, all my paternal family arrived in Widnes between the years of 1862 and 1883. However, my mother and all her family were 'foreigners', from the town of Pembroke in South West Wales. This was very advantageous for me, as we took regular visits back to my mother's home town to see the rest of the family, and because my dad never possessed a car, this meant a long journey by rail.

From the age of around five, I remembered many of these trips quite clearly, but I wish my memory had been even better, as in 1951 we commenced our journey from Appleton station. We travelled through Widnes LMS station, as my dad called it, to Ditton, and then we caught the next train to Crewe. Unfortunately this was a journey I have no recollection of, other than what my dad told me.

Apart from my 1951 trip from Appleton, the rest of our journeys started at Ditton or Runcorn, the latter being our favoured starting point after the closure of the St Helens to Widnes branch in 1951. As I have a copy of a 1961 Bradshaw train guide, I will attempt to use information from this, and my memories, to give you a synopsis of the journey, and times for a typical trip from Runcorn to Pembroke. I never remembered any real issues in getting to Pembroke, the fact that it was a long day out was more of an issue to the rest of the family, as I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Perhaps the only challenge was when we were forced to walk across the

Runcorn Railway bridge with all our cases on one occasion, due to a closure of the Transporter Bridge.

It was an early start from our house in Reay Street, and before 1961, the first stage was a ride on a Widnes Corporation bus displaying the "BRIDGE" destination, down to West Bank, where we crossed the Mersey on the old Transporter Bridge. Bearing in mind that we would be catching the 08:24 train to Crewe, and we had to walk from the south bank of the river to Runcorn Station with cases, we would be leaving home not long after 07:00 to achieve our schedule. My parents did not have much money, so luxuries like taxis were out of the question.

Our first train was generally hauled by something like a Black 5. This was usually an uneventful trip taking 41 minutes, and arriving at Crewe at 09:07, but on one occasion I remember our motive power being Royal Scot 46106 "Gordon Highlander". The loco was allocated between Crewe North and Edge Hill MPDs for around nine years until 1957, and was a regular visitor to the area. I would often mistake it for a Britannia while trainspotting, as it carried British Railways standard smoke deflectors.

At Crewe, there was plenty of time to see the huge range of ex LMS motive power that abounded, and the odd ex GW locos, before our next train, the 10:20 to Shrewsbury. Sometimes I would take the opportunity to spend some of my holiday money on the platform vending machines. The big red "Print Your Own Metal Nameplate" machines were always popular. For an old penny, I could make myself an embossed metal nameplate, although it was difficult to get a good result. I



*Scenes like this would have been all too familiar to a young Les Fifoot at Crewe station in the 1950s. In this view from 23 June 1951 a Liverpool Lime Street to Euston express is seen passing through the station. Photo by John Kirwood*

remember some large stations also had coin operated loco models of Stevenson's Rocket in a glass case. I think it was to raise money for some railway charity. Allegedly, inserting a penny would set them in action, but I never saw one turn a wheel.

Motive power from Crewe to Shrewsbury was usually uneventful, and the only trip that sticks in my mind, was when we were hauled by the immaculate looking one-off Riddles 4-6-2, 71000 "Duke of Gloucester". It was only in later years that I realised that 71000 was frequently rostered on running in turns between Crewe and Shrewsbury because of its problematic performance, and few of the loco crews were enamoured with it.



**Left: Ex-GWR diesel railcar number W32 seen at Shrewsbury station on 17 April 1962. Photo by John Ashley**

Arriving at Shrewsbury at around 11:13 was the start of something different for me, which necessitated the use of Part 1 of my Ian Allan British Railways Locomotives Western Region book, to keep

track of all the ex-Great Western Locos that were now evident. It was here that I remember seeing livestock being transferred between trains, boxes of day old chicks were common, and pigeons were very numerous, as the latter were destined for release at one of the stations down the line. I think it was Craven Arms, or possibly Church Stretton. On one occasion I was surprised to see two young calves being loaded into the guards van of our train. Their bodies were wrapped in sacking, with address labels on them. Train guards back then must have had their work cut out.

Our next train, the 12:00, would be heading for Swansea, with Llandilo being our next intermediate destination along the Central Wales line, which left the main line at Craven Arms. Standard Class 5 73036, was a loco I remember heading our train on one occasion. Very early in its history, the Central Wales line was absorbed into the LNWR, and I don't believe it was ever under the control of the GWR. Motive power I remember along the line was generally of LMS or Standard origin, and some ex LNWR freight locos.

I remember the Central Wales line being double track as a child, but during my teens, in the 1960s it was singled, with passing loops. Getting to Llandilo took just over three hours, arriving at 15:12. It was a pleasant journey with some interesting features such as the castellated Knucklas Viaduct, a spectacular 13-arch span completed in 1865 and the 1,001-yard (915 m) Sugar Loaf tunnel, 820 feet (250 m) above sea level and approached by gradients as steep as 1 in 60 on each side. The railway also crossed the Newtown to Brecon line at Builth Road (built in 1864 by the Mid Wales Railway, and later part of the Cambrian Railway). Down below, at Builth Road Low Level station, it was common to see another train waiting to connect with our train. This would often be hauled by an ex GW loco.



There were three platforms at Llandilo station – numbers one and two served the up and down lines on the Swansea to Shrewsbury route, and the third was for the Carmarthen branch, until this line was closed completely in 1963. To me, it looked a substantial structure, and also had decent refreshment facilities. We had a short wait at Llandilo before our first GWR journey commenced, at 15:23 for Carmarthen.



The Llandilo (see photo above) to Carmarthen line had originally been opened by the Llanelly Railway Company in 1865. The journey was scheduled to take 37 minutes, and our motive power was normally an 0-6-0 ex GW pannier loco hauling two coaches, and sometimes a van. On one occasion, we departed from the platform at the south end of the station, hauled by Collett pannier 9645, a Carmarthen allocated loco at the time, crossing the river Towy and then swinging west to run south of the river towards Carmarthen. There seemed to be a lot of stations along the branch, Llandilo Bridge, Golden Grove, Drysllwyn, Llanarthney Halt, Nantgaredig, and Abergwili. It was a distance of 15.2 miles from Llandilo to Carmarthen. I don't remember anything of real interest on this journey apart from the imposing sight of Drysllwyn Castle. I was usually aware of the constant ticking of the crosshead pump from the loco as we proceeded along the line. LMS locos weren't fitted with them, so the additional sound made by this equipment always caught my ears, and because the train was short you were always close to the loco, and could hear it. It was apparent to me that GW locos were always cleaner than ours, and more locos were painted green than in the North West.

Table 7

**THE PEMBROKE COAST EXPRESS**  
 RESTAURANT CAR SERVICE (†)  
 LONDON, NEWPORT, CARDIFF,  
 SWANSEA, TENBY and PEMBROKE DOCK

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WEEK DAYS

Approaching Carmarthen we arrive at the junction with the line to Aberystwyth, which also had branches to Newcastle Emlyn, and Aberayron at one time, then cross the River Towy on a long iron bridge, before entering Carmarthen

station. There was generally plenty to see at this station, including the loco shed, which was just south of the platforms.

Next, we would be catching the Pembroke Coast Express at 17:20, for the final leg of our journey. Our train would arrive at the station from the south, and depart the same way, as both the Swansea and Fishguard lines entered the station from the same direction. Motive power for our train could be quite mixed, sometimes a Manor, a Hall, or even a 2-6-0. On one occasion, we were in the charge of 7825 "Lechlade Manor". An incident that sticks in my mind about this station was that I missed the potential for my first cabbing experience here. Pannier tank 7402 was simmering at one of the platforms, when we passed, on the way to our next train. I briefly stopped to marvel at the inviting cab, and the thought of driving one of these beasts, when the driver invited me onto the footplate. My mother snapped back at me "Come on Leslie, we'll miss our train!", so it was a lost opportunity. A black mood prevailed for a while after that, but I soon got over it. It would be a couple of years later before I made it to the footplate, on 40137 at 8D.

The line from Carmarthen was double track towards Fishguard, and there were two stations I remember before we arrived at Whitland; Sarnau, and St. Clears, but both closed in 1964. Until 1962, trains for Cardigan also left Whitland, but passenger trains were withdrawn in that year, and the line closed completely in 1963.



***The 11.35am Carmarthen to Llandelilo local service is seen departing from Carmarthen station in August 1962. From here Les Fifoot and his parents would catch the Pembroke Coast Express at 5.20pm for the final leg of his long journey from Widnes.***  
**Photo by Gerald T Robinson**

The next gem in my railway memories was the sight of an immaculately turned out Britannia pacific, simmering outside Whitland MPD. 70027 "Rising Star" was allocated to Canton MPD at the time, and fitted with modified smoke deflectors (handholds instead of handrails). Originally all Britannia smoke deflectors incorporated full handrails, but they were implicated as a cause of restricted visibility,



which may have led to a crash involving 70026 at Milton near Didcot, on 20th November 1955. 11 people lost their lives, with many more injured, when 70026 left the rails and ended up on her left side. The nine Canton locos were fitted with six handhold deflectors after that, and 29 from other depots were fitted with two handholds.

At Whitland, our train left the main line for the single-track branch to Pembroke Dock, originally built as the Pembroke and Tenby Railway.

I remember eight main stations along the line before Pembroke, these were Templeton, which closed in 1964, Kilgetty, Narbeth, Saundersfoot, Tenby, Penally, Manorbier, and Lamphey. They were mostly English sounding names, as Welsh had never been spoken in this area for hundreds of years. None of my family had any command of the language, although one of my uncles had learnt some as his work took him to North Pembrokeshire.

To me, the only town of any note along the line was Tenby, as I would often return there for a day out by rail, while staying at my grandparents' house in Pembroke.

Our final destination would be reached at 19:09, where my grandad would meet us with a taxi to take us to their house. A long day out, but very interesting for me, and something that I never got bored with, even when I last travelled the route in the mid-1960s. By then the branch between Llandilo and Carmarthen was no more, and our route would take us via Llanelli to Carmarthen, a significantly extended journey.

## Les Fifoot



*Looking along the platform at Pembroke station in the 1960s. This was a familiar scene for Les Fifoot at the end of a long journey from Widnes. Photo by Les Fifoot*

## The CLC Warrington Avoiding Line



**A coal train seen on the CLC Warrington avoiding line on 19 August 1961. At the head of the train is ex-LNER 4-6-0 locomotive number 61002 'Impala'. Photo by Harry Arnold**

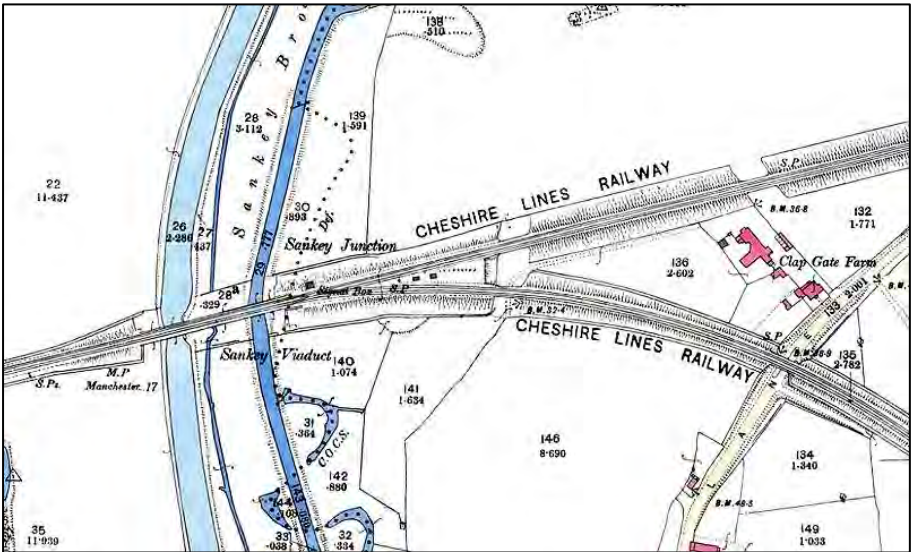
When the Cheshire Lines Railway (CLC) was planning its Liverpool and Manchester main line in the late 1860s, they wanted a straight and fast route that could compete with rival companies. As planned the main line passed to the north of Warrington which was an important commercial and industrial centre. The solution was to take the line south from its arrow straight course so that it could pass through Warrington where a passenger station and goods facilities were provided in the central area of the town. The CLC main line opened through Warrington for goods on 1 March 1873 and for passengers on 1 August 1873. The passenger station was called Warrington Central.

So instead of an arrow straight line, the CLC ended up with a curving slower line through Warrington, but the company still had the desire to have a fast main line between Liverpool and Manchester. The solution was to build a straight route that ran to the north of Warrington, along a course that had originally been envisaged. The line had actually been authorised at the same time as the route through Warrington on 6 July 1865.

Known as the Warrington Avoiding Line the direct route opened for goods on 13 August 1883 and for passenger services on 7 September 1883. It diverged from the original line at Sankey Junction which was to the north-west of Warrington town centre. It then ran for 2 miles and 17 chains to Padgate Junction where it joined the 1873 route again. The avoiding line was dead straight and allowed for high speed running.

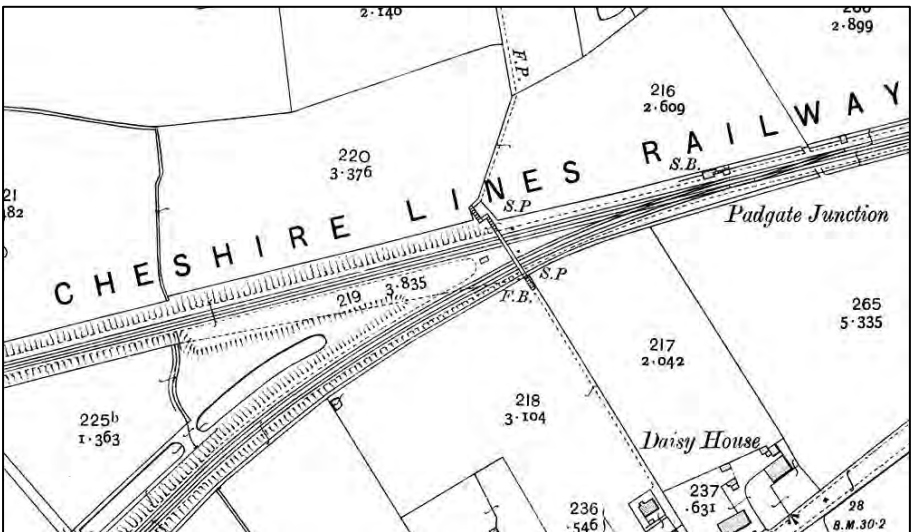
At the time of opening Sankey Junction was controlled by a signal box which was located on the up side (Manchester direction) of the line. The box had opened on 1

January 1883 by which time work on the avoiding line would have been well progressed. The 1883 box was replaced just over ten years later on 9 December 1894. The new box was located on the down side (Liverpool direction).



**Sankey Junction shown on a 25-inch scale map from 1891. The avoiding line is seen running straight in a north-easterly direction whilst the line for Warrington Central curves towards the south-east. The original signal box which was located on the up side of the line is shown on this map.**

Padgate Junction was controlled by a St/CLC1 type box which had also opened on 1 January 1883. It was located on the up side of the line and was equipped with an 18 lever frame.



**Padgate Junction shown on a 25-inch scale map from 1905.**

Between Sankey Junction and Padgate Junction the line ran mostly on embankments passing over a number of important thoroughfares. The avoiding line also passed over the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) Crewe and Winwick Junction route at Dallam. At Dallam it passed to the south of the LNWR locomotive depot.



***Sankey Junction ARP signal box looking east sometime after 20 May 1968. The signal to the left had controlled Sankey Junction. The signal arms on the right were for the Warrington Central line. The arms for the avoiding line had been to the left but they had been removed when this view was taken as it had gone out of use by this time. Photo by David Lennon***

From the start the avoiding line was used by through freight trains and non-stop passenger expresses. Express services of all three of the CLC owning companies ran express trains over the line. The Great Northern Railway (GNR) and the Midland Railway (MR) ran trains to London (the GNR to Kings Cross and the MR to St Pancras) and after 1899 so too did the Great Central Railway (to Marylebone).

By 1900 the CLC had introduced its hourly expresses. Although many of them called at Warrington Central a number did the run non-stop and they used the avoiding line. A CLC timetable from 1907 showed a 40 minute journey time between Liverpool Central and Manchester Central via the avoiding line (the journey via Warrington took 45 minutes). The CLC expresses provided the fastest journey times between Liverpool and Manchester over a route that was slightly longer than the LNWR Liverpool and Manchester line.

The avoiding line continued to be used by passenger expresses after the grouping of 1923 when the CLC remained independent (two thirds passing to the LNER and a third to the LMS). In the period after 1923 it was LNER engines that provided the motive power for the hourly expresses but the avoiding line would also have seen LMS engines on trains that ran to and from the former MR main line.



*Left: Padgate Junction looking east in the 1930s. Passing onto the avoiding line is a down direction mixed good trains. At its head is ex-GCR B7 class locomotive number 5037.*

On 21 November 1943 the signal box at Sankey Junction was replaced once again. The new box was still located on the down side of the line it was an LM13 ARP standard type box. It

was 293 yards to the west of the 1894 box. The new signal box controlled a new junction that had been put in to serve the Burtonwood Air Base. It was provided with a 45 lever frame.

The CLC ceased to exist when the railways were nationalised on 1 January 1948. Its network passed to British Railways (London Midland Region) but interestingly many eastern region services still ran over the main line. Also for many years ex-LNER engines continued to dominate.

What did change under BR was that the hourly express services were all routed via Warrington and most also called at Farnworth (Widnes).



*Left: Looking south down Winwick Road towards Warrington in the late 1960s. The Warrington avoiding line is seen passing over the road. Photo from Neil Wilson*

Regular passenger services over the avoiding line ceased from 9 September 1963 but passenger specials used it until 3 July 1967. Regular

traffic ceased on 20 May 1968 and official closure came on 22 July 1968.

Sankey Junction signal box closed on 3 March 1969 with Padgate Junction box following on 12 March 1969. After closure of the line iron bridge spans were removed and in the years following most of its course was swept away. In 2017 there is little to show that this line ever existed. **Paul Wright**



## A Day at the Races – By Dave Littler



*A busy scene at Chester General in the early 1960s.*

One of the advantages of working for the railway was the cheap fares that were available to us. During my time on the railway we could travel in our own time for a quarter of the normal fare. In the early 1960s I was a fireman based at Widnes Locomotive Shed. On Friday 21 July 1961 my friend Jack Shaw, who also worked at the shed, and I had a day off from our duties. So we decided to have a day out at the Chester Races. This was the day on which the Silver Jubilee Bridge opened but it wasn't known by that name in those days.

Jack and I walked to Runcorn via the railway bridge public footpath. From Runcorn we took a direct train to Chester General. There was a good service to Chester from Runcorn in those days and the journey time was only 30 minutes. The route was via the Halton Curve, Frodsham and Helsby. This was a route known to us as we had jobs over that route from Widnes, including a passenger turn from Ditton Junction to Helsby.

When we got to Chester it was straight to the pub for a few drinks. Whilst we were having a drink there was a bit of a commotion outside and when we looked we saw the royal car go by. It was the Princes Alexandra on her way to Runcorn to open the new bridge.

We carried on with our day and went to races. We lost our money on every bet we placed. What could we do, the only option left was to go back to the pub. Eventually we ran out of money so there was no option other than to return to our homes in Widnes.

When we arrived back at Runcorn station we realised that we didn't have any money



**Left: The toll booth which was located on the Widnes side of the Widnes – Runcorn Railway Bridge.**

for the railway footbridge toll. The toll booth was on the Widnes side of the bridge so we walked over to the Widnes side. When we had crossed the River Mersey we went onto the railway line and crossed over to the other side. We did this to avoid the toll booth at the bottom of the path. Once we had crossed the main line we were able to scramble down the embankment down towards West Bank Dock. From there we were easily able to walk home having got away without having to pay. A day out that I have never forgot.

On the following day the Transporter bridge ran for the last time and within the year it was gone. **Dave Littler**

### **Warrington Railway Pensioners**

8D Association Members are welcome to sign up for trips that are organised by the Warrington Railway Pensioners group. The trips are by coach and run from Warrington and if you are interested in going on any of the ones listed below just contact Roy Dixon on 01925 638299. All trips are on Wednesdays.

Wednesday 10 May 2017 – Eden Camp and Scarborough

Wednesday 7 June 2017 – Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway and Muncaster Castle

Wednesday 5 July 2017 – York

Wednesday 2 August 2017 – Aberystwyth

Wednesday 20 September 2017 – Manchester Ship Canal



**From the Archive**



*Looking west from the footbridge at Widnes North station on Saturday 2 July 1966 as a rail tour passes through. Copyright photo from the Alan Turton collection*



*The Widnes Number 5 permanent way gang at Widnes South station in 1978. At that time the gang were based at the former passenger station. Photo by Dave Hughes*

## Events Programme

**19.00 – Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017 – An 8D Area Rail Review for 2016** – An Illustrated talk by Doug Birmingham in which he will highlight the 2016 rail scene in the 8D area of interest. **Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

**19.00 – Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017 – The CLC Main Line through Widnes** - An Illustrated talk by Richard Mercer. **Select Security Stadium, Lowerhouse Lane, Widnes.**

**10.00 – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2017 – Liverpool Exchange Walk** – A guided walk led by Paul Wright looking at the remains of the former LYR Liverpool terminus. **Meet outside the main entrance of the Liverpool Exchange office complex (the former station hotel) on Tithebarn Street. A short walk from Liverpool Moorfields station.**

**10.00 – Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017 – Visit to the Mersey Gateway Bridge** – Although the Mersey Gateway is a road bridge the engineering project is never-the-less fascinating. This is a one off opportunity to visit the bridge site during its construction. The visit is limited to 15 so booking is essential. Please contact Paul Wright on 0151 630 5132 or email [pwright964@btinternet.com](mailto:pwright964@btinternet.com)

**19.00 – Thursday 25 May 2017 – Visit to the CLC North Liverpool Extension Line Gateacre to Halewood** – A guided walk along the former CLC North Liverpool Extension Line between the Gateacre station site and Halewood North Junction. **Meet at the former station entrance gateway on Belle Vale Road, Gateacre (next to the railway bridge).**

**10.00 – Saturday 10 June 2017 – Visit to the Wigan Junction Railway at Culcheth** – A guided walk along the former Wigan Junction Railway from Culcheth to the site of Newchurch Halt. **Meet at the Culcheth Linear Park car park off Wigshaw Lane (the site of Culcheth station).**

**10.00 – Saturday 24 June 2017 – Visit to North Liverpool Docks** – An opportunity to see the present day railway operations within the north Liverpool Docks and some surviving remnants of the once extensive MDHB system. The visit is limited to 20 so booking is required. Please contact Paul Wright on 0151 630 5132 or email [pwright964@btinternet.com](mailto:pwright964@btinternet.com)

## Where is This Competition



'Where is this' competition? (Answers to [pwright964@btinternet.com](mailto:pwright964@btinternet.com))  
Photo by Dave Hughes.

The December competition was correctly guessed by Michael Delamar. The location was Widnes Dock Junction.

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