

ON SHED

The Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 9, Number 2 : June 2019



'On Shed' : Journal of the 8D Association

Volume 9, Number 2 : June 2019

Page

3	Royal Train Duties : <i>John Wilson</i>
9	The Late Chris Jennings - an Appreciation
10	News Round Up : <i>Chris Hollins</i>
12	Push-and-Pull Workings from Sutton Oak : <i>Rod Dixon</i>
15	'Farewell to Arms' : <i>Chris Hollins</i>
19	More Tales From the Platform : <i>Dennis Flood</i>
23	News Round Up (<i>continued</i>)
24	Recent 8D Meetings
26	Gateacre Line Closure 1972 ('On Shed' March 2019) : <i>A letter from David Thomas</i>
27	Memories of Birkenhead MPD (Part 7) : <i>Dennis Flood</i>
32	Future Events

From the Editor

tony.r.foster@btinternet.com

Tel : 01744 883914

I am grateful to all who have contributed to this edition of 'On Shed'. Already, material from regular contributors is finding its way to the Editor's desk for the next (1st September) edition of the journal, and I hope that new writers / reporters will also consider submit-

ting material for publication. In the meantime, I hope that you find the contents of this edition interesting. In addition to the articles, I draw your attention to the programme of events planned for the summer and autumn - see below and back cover.

National Rail Museum at York

8D Visit to Signalling School on Saturday 26th October

Together with a team of volunteers, 8D member Phil Graham operates the NRM's famous Signalling School at York. The layout used is the 1912 L&Y Railway Gauge 1 model, previously housed at Manchester Victoria Station. The cost of this remarkable 'hands-on' opportunity will be £5 per head, but please note that it will be necessary for you to make your own travel arrangements - meeting at York station at 11.00 on the day.

Further details (including suggested train services) will be available for the September 1st edition of 'On Shed', but in the meantime, if you wish to take part in this private visit to the world famous signalling school, please register your intention **NOW** (numbers may have to be limited) by contacting 8D Committee Member Neil Wilson at :-

neilwilson1560@gmail.com

Cover photograph : BR 'Black 5' No.449xx working 1L05 'Littlewoods Special Raittour' passing Walton Junction and approaching the station on the line to Ormskirk on 7 September 1967.

© 8D Association

Photo : John Gahan

Royal Train duties

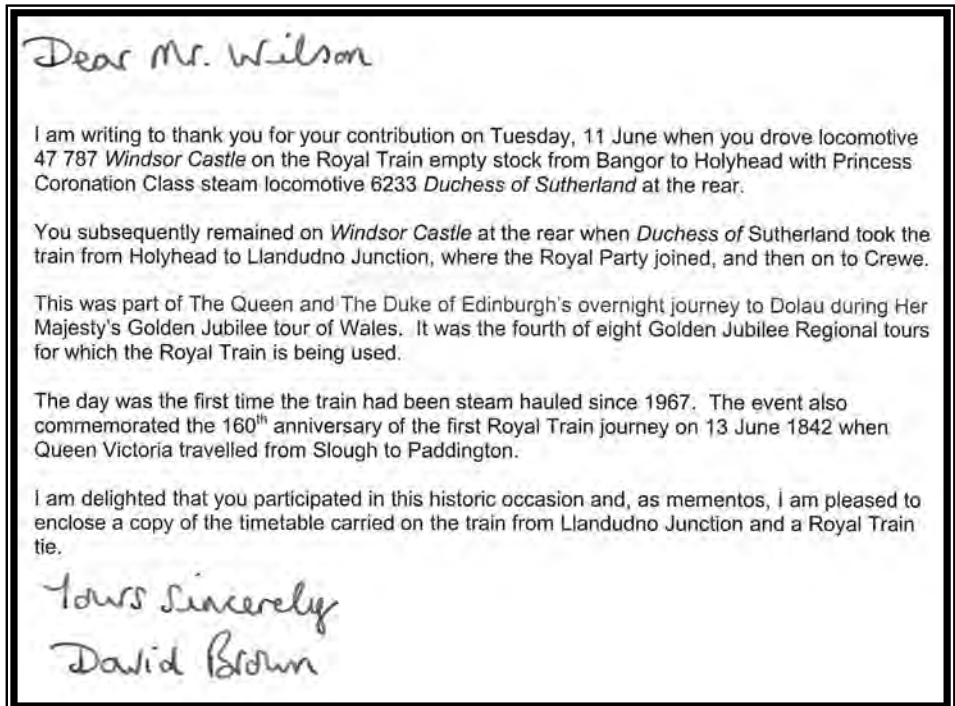
John Wilson

During my time at Warrington train crews, I was fortunate enough to be in the link of drivers that undertook Class 1 passenger workings. These included postal trains, test trains, charter trains and also Royal Train duties.

My first taste of Royal Train involvement was on Tuesday 11th June 2002 - the Queen's Golden Jubilee year. I was rostered on the first Royal Train to be steam hauled since 1967. Alas, I was only driving empty stock from Bangor to Holyhead and then manning the Class 47 on the rear, while the real star of the show was on the front in the shape of Princess Coronation Class 6233 'Duchess of Sutherland'. Nevertheless, it was a start, with

the added bonus that a Royal Train tie was sent to me from David Brown the Business Manager of Special Trains at the EWS headquarters in Doncaster. This was a tradition when you worked your first Royal Train. The event also commemorated the 160th anniversary of the first Royal Train journey which took Queen Victoria from Slough to Paddington on the 13th June 1842.

My first time driving the train with Royalty aboard came on Sunday 4th August 2002, when I was rostered to collect the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh from the rain-drenched closing ceremony of the XVII Commonwealth Games at Manchester. The trip was not without incident as I will explain.



The job cards or drivers' diagrams as they were known for the Royal Train (or 'Special Train' as it was referred to in railway circles), were kept in the safe at Warrington Train Crew Supervisor's office and were handed personally to the driver about a week beforehand so that he could come appropriately dressed and knew what he was doing. This practice was changed a few years later when the TCS forgot to give the driver his diagram and the said driver turned up in the usual freight attire of jeans and tee shirt! Following that incident, diagrams were then sent by post to the individual's home address and had to be signed for.

First outing as Royal Train Driver

My diagram for the day in question was to travel as passenger to Crewe where I would relieve the incoming Crewe driver and work the train empty to Eccles goods loop just outside Manchester. When we got the call that all was on time at the ceremony, we would set off towards Manchester Victoria and await Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh. We would then take the Royal party to stable overnight in Eccles loop. From there, I was to be relieved in the early hours and travel back to Warrington in a taxi.

So on the day, I booked on at 17.52 and caught the 18.17 train to Crewe. After ringing the EWS Duty Manager to inform him that I was at the designated relieving point, I awaited the empty Royal Train. I relieved the Crewe driver and set sail from platform 12 accompanied by Saltley Traction Inspector Nick Chadwick (who eventually became Head of Drivers at Virgin West Coast). The crewing arrangement back then was a Driver (that had to be rostered for the whole time the train was out in case the train had to be moved unexpectedly), a Traction Inspector, a Rolling Stock Inspector - basically a travelling fitter to look after the loco and who carried out the most important job of painting the

leading buffers silver! Every time we stopped they'd be out with the brush giving the buffers another coat of silver! On the train would be a Network Rail Manager who would liaise with the various route controllers and signalers during the journey, although this didn't always go to plan!

"Who are you, and where are you going?"

On one occasion, I was working the train with the Prince of Wales down the North Wales coast when we were stopped outside of Rhyl. When I rang the signaller in Rhyl No.1 box he asked what the train was, and where was I going! I would not wish to have been in his shoes when his local manager found out! Also on the train was the Royal Train Officer who was the link between the operational staff and the Royal Household staff. This was a gentleman named Norman Henry Patten MVO MBE, who was a grand man, big build, big beard and always wore a top hat. He lived in Fort William and would always radio through to us in the front and thank us personally by name at the end of our shift. Norman sadly died a few years into my time working with the train and a few replacements were tried out before the present day incumbent was appointed.

Check the handbrake!

Back to my maiden trip - the job went seamlessly to Eccles goods loop and this is where things started to go awry. I'd shut down the Class 47 as there was about 90 minutes to wait before we were due to head into Manchester. After applying the handbrake on the leading loco (the train was always 'top and tailed' for maximum operational flexibility), I then retired to the mess coach for a brew and chat to the on board crew. Eventually the time came to start up the locos and ready ourselves for the pick-up. The RSI was Jim Ross from Crewe depot, and the Traction Inspector who had relieved Nick was ex Springs Branch man Colin Michinson (now

based at Warrington). When the air pressure had built up, I turned round to release the handbrake but Jim Ross then stated he'd already taken it off. I had no reason to doubt him, so I sat back down in my seat and we set off towards Manchester Victoria. Now, Class 47 handbrakes were never the best until you really wound them on, but the loco did seem a bit sluggish all the way into Manchester. When we arrived into platform 3 (the old platform 11), I just went to the handbrake and sure enough the thing was on, much to Jim's embarrassment. He immediately got a pen like device out that could measure the wheel temperatures for use on hot axle box situations and sure enough the wheels were very hot. He decided it would be sufficiently

overnight in a less than desirable part of Manchester ? Needless to say the train was never stabled there again !

The usual routine for most of the jobs I worked in the North West was as follows - the loco would be recalled to Home Depot a few days prior to the trip. For Class 47's this was Crewe, and latterly Class 67's went to Bescot. A 'hand body wash' was carried out and the loco was generally spruced up. They then went light engine to Wolverton to pick up the train which was marshalled depending on who was travelling. The Queen and the Duke had separate coaches, and I think Charles may have had one as well. The train then headed south to Euston station and arrived at one of the road-accessible platforms. Here, between 23.00 and midnight, the Royal party would board the train. I've seen the Queen in her dressing gown dart from the car to the train on many occasions.

Keep to 40mph at bath time !

The train would then head up the West Coast mainline at a pre-designated speed worked out by the RTO. That speed would vary dependent on traffic. On one occasion during an early evening trip, a member of the Royal Party wished to have a bath. Consequently, we were ordered to slow down

to 40mph. After about 20 minutes, word came through that the normal running speed could now be resumed ! Quite who worked out that 40mph was the optimum speed for a bath I never found out !

Communications between the footplate and on board crew was by way of back to back radios. The driver was 'Grove 1', the RTO was 'Grove 2'. NetworkRail and the on-board



8D member, and Royal Train Driver John Wilson at the controls of a Class 67 locomotive, regularly employed for Royal Train duties.

cooled down by the time loading up had completed and we were only going about 4 miles anyway back to Eccles loop for the night. A lesson was learnt never to take anybody's word for tasks in the future.

Another incident in relation to my first trip came the very next day and it was a front page headline in the Sun newspaper proclaiming the Queen's train had been stabled

Royal police also had 'Grove' call signs. The footplate radio was always answered by the Traction Inspector who would relay the information to the driver. The train would often be stabled at Hooton run round loop, or occasionally on the Middlewich Chord line. By this time the driver was normally due for relief and this would arrive by taxi to take over duties which frequently involved the pressure part of the trip - ie. the 'drop off'. It always tickled me when I was on the early morning part of a trip and I arrived at Hooton and walked casually down to the train, obviously in full uniform and HV vest, that only on one occasion I can recall I was challenged by the Police presence ? Maybe they knew relief was due or maybe the good old 'yellow vest' was all that was required to get you into the inner circle !

The morning papers would arrive by about 6am, I remember there being a copy of the Racing Post on the list which made me laugh. The 'drop' was normally around about 10am, at wherever the visit was, so we set off in a timetabled move towards the destination.

Looking for Tal-y-Cafn

It was an unwritten challenge that a drop would be plus or minus 15 seconds from the time allotted. I managed it most times, but on one trip it was very challenging. I was dropping the Prince of Wales off on the Conway Valley line at a place called Tal-Y-Cafn. The arrangement was that we would arrive in the station with the crossing gates against us so Charles could walk past the loco across the crossing and into a waiting car to visit some garden centre or something. Anyway, at Llandudno Junction, we

needed a token for the single line up the valley. This was released by the signaller to the station staff on the platform from a token station within the old booking-on point, and they would fetch it to the footplate for us. The station staff were a bit nervy with the train stood in platform 4, so the token was rushed to us and we were away well before the booked time. This caused me two problems - firstly I had an inspector with me from Bescot Depot named Gareth 'The Steam' Jones, an ex-Machynlleth man who performed the role of steam inspector on charter trains but who wasn't that familiar with the route, and secondly this station was only something like 5 miles away ! I explained our predicament to Gareth, to which his reply was "I will leave it up to you John"! Hence a very slow approach ensued, indeed at barely walking pace we eventually arrived right time in Tal-Y-Cafn. As Gareth stood in the doorway of the loco and I looked out of the drivers side window, the Prince of Wales walked past us and jokingly commented "We found it eventually then !". Gareth and I chuckled as the moment was caught by the local press.



Punctuality is everything !. Diver Wilson and the Prince of Wales share the joke regarding the walking pace approach to Tal-y-Cafn.

Red carpets and breakfast

The set-up for drops was that the loco was to be stopped with the yellow flag of a Network Rail handsignalman positioned directly opposite the driver's side window. This was so the principal doors of the train were correctly positioned adjacent to the red carpet on stations. After the drop, the Traction Inspector and RSI would disappear into the train and down to the Royal mess coach for a full English breakfast cooked by the on-board chef. This always irked me that the driver was never given an invite, even when the train had stabled up. On the penultimate occasion I worked the train in May 2013, we dropped Prince Charles off at Stoke-on-Trent station and very quickly the train was berthed up in Cockshute sidings nearby. I made a bee-line for the mess coach as soon as we were stabled up and threw some hints out that I was hungry and did anybody know the whereabouts of a good greasy spoon café. This was greeted with a stony silence. A few minutes later, the radio crackled up and announced that breakfast was being served. They all sidled off and I was left in the coach on my own. After I'd been sulking alone for 5 minutes, the inspector came back and said "There's enough breakfast for you Jockey". With that, I shot back and enjoyed a right royal breakfast, a very rare event indeed.

Sleep tight, but don't forget the driver !

Another little oddity that annoyed me was when the train was berthed up for the night all the on-board staff and the accompanying Traction Inspector had a bunk in the train to get some sleep. None was ever provided for the driver, but I did on one occasion manage to bag a bunk. The train was stabled up on the Middlewich Chord line and there was no move until the next morning. Very kindly, Traction Inspector Gareth Jones informed me there was only him in his compartment and I was welcome to get some sleep in the spare bunk bed. I took up the opportunity as the

alternative was either trying to sleep bolt upright in a lit mess coach or freezing to death on the loco which was always required to be shut down during the night.

No water at Bradford !

Trips didn't always go to plan, and flexibility was the name of the game. On one such occasion, after dropping the Prince of Wales off at Burnley Manchester Road station, we were diagrammed to run over Copy Pit and into Bradford Interchange to water and service the train, and then return later to Burnley to pick up Prince Charles. Upon arrival at Bradford it became apparent that the water had been cut off and it wasn't possible to get any ! It was panic stations and a few phone calls made ! Eventually I was asked did I sign Neville Hill depot outside Leeds ? Luckily I did, and we quickly organised a path via New Pudsey through Leeds station and onto Neville Hill depot inside one of the sheds for servicing. I remember the expression on the face of the Chageman as we dropped onto the depot ! Servicing was successfully carried out and we set off back to Bradford. I still managed to get a curry in the city centre before we left to pick up Prince Charles at Burnley.

Letters of appreciation

Each time we worked the train 'loaded', we received a letter from David Brown thanking us for our work, and a timetable of the trip was attached. On one occasion I received a letter with a difference. In his letter of 28th April 2008, Geoff Griffiths (who had superseded David Brown as the Account Manager) writes :-

"I believe you may have become the first driver to work three different Royal trains on the same day !"

The day in question started from Hooton with the Prince of Wales on board. I dropped him off at Flint where he attended a function.

Later in the morning I picked him up at Llan-dudno Junction with some guests and set off again for Holyhead where we had a quick turnaround. I recall we stopped for about 30 minutes somewhere around Valley while the Prince and his guests had lunch. Quite how they managed to arrange that is still a mystery to me.

Anyway, I eventually dropped the guests off at the Junction and took the Prince of Wales back to Hooton. Now the next trip must have been the shortest Royal Train trip in history ! All I did was draw the train out of Hooton run round sidings into Hooton station to pick yet more guests up, and then dropped back into the sidings while they had dinner ! Later on, I performed the same move to drop the guests off back at the station and then berthed the train for the night. Hence 3 Royal Trains in the same day. The last one was a bit of a fudge, but I suppose they all count.



Royal Train Driver John Wilson (extreme left) standing alongside the locomotive, having received a word of congratulation from Prince Philip after bringing the Royal party to Lime Street in 2011.

On another occasion in, December 2011, I used a Royal Train job to great effect to glean some new uniform which was always in short supply at Warrington as it came directly out of the Area Production Manager's budget. No matter how many uniform request forms we

put in, uniform never seemed to arrive ! Anyway, I was informed about a week out that I was going to drop the Queen and the Duke off at Lime Street. Interestingly, I was relieving the train that came from the usual Hooton overnight stabling point at Helsby station, and was routed via the Halton Curve. By sheer coincidence, an 8D member was in the vicinity and took a picture on the Halton Curve !!

I went down to see my Production Manager at Warrington and informed him I was down on uniform and was there any chance I could get some for the Royal Train Lime Street job. He burst out laughing and said that I would have to make do with what I had. I looked at him and said *"Chris I'm telling you, I will stand by the loco on the blocks at Lime Street in tracksuit bottoms and a Tee shirt as the Queen walks past"*. He laughed again and said *"I wouldn't do that"*. When I then glared

at him and said *"I'm telling you I will do it Chris"*, by now he'd realised I was serious and a uniform request form was pushed under my nose for immediate completion. Within about 3 days, a box arrived with my name on it, and lo and behold I had received everything from uniform trousers, shirts, jackets, to a tie and belt. I did indeed keep to my promise, and I stood by the loco at the blocks of platform 9 at Liverpool Lime street with the Inspector and the RSI. As the Queen walked past with the Duke some 10 metres behind, Her Majesty asked the inspector *"Who's the driver ?"*. The Inspector pointed to me, and the Duke looked me up and down and said *"Very good"* ! Again by pure chance, the Liverpool Echo caught a picture of the Queen accompanied by Dame Lorna Muirhead (the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside), and me grinning contentedly in the background.

In total, I drove the Royal Train on 33 different occasions. Royal passengers included Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince of Wales and the Princess Royal. I also drove the train many times when it was empty. I had some great times,

and it's one of the duties I miss now I'm at Virgin Trains West Coast Liverpool with a daily diet of Pendolinos and Voyagers.

John Wilson : April 2019

The Late Chris Jennings

Chris Jennings, who was an 8D Association member for two years, and who passed away on the 25th February 2019, became a good friend after I first met him in April 1992 on the platform at Harrow-on-the-Hill station while attending a 'Steam on the Met' event. At that time he was living in Paddock Wood, Kent.

Being a southerner myself, it was good to have a railway enthusiast friend also from the south, as Chris was born in Wandsworth. He also knew the late Alan Robinson, and given that Chris was more interested in steam rather than the modern railway scene, he made numerous trips to Warrington from where he and Alan would chase steam on the Settle to Carlisle and Shap routes, taking photographs and making sound recordings.

Several years ago, Chris decided to move north and took up residence in Latchford. Unfortunately, it was at this time he was diagnosed with cancer, which he fought bravely to the end.

Chris had various jobs over the years, being employed in a commercial photography post for many years. He also worked as a carer, and as a dog walker.

Apart from his interest in steam, Chris also developed a passion for seeking out old railway sites and would travel and photograph them extensively. He also enjoyed cycling and had several bikes. Most days he would cycle from Latchford to Widnes or St Helens.

Chris was one of the nicest people you could meet, I always had a lot of time for him and it is such a shame that he has passed away at the early age of 57. He really enjoyed being a member of the 8D Association and went on several of our walks. He is survived by two sisters who live in Eastbourne and Hawaii.

A memorial service took place for him on the Bluebell Railway on 19th May. Very generously, Chris has bequeathed his photographic collection to the 8D Association. I imagine that, from time to time, examples of his work will appear in the 'On Shed' journal.

Chris Hollins

Warrington Railway Pensioners' Trips

Wednesday 5 June : Dumfries - a scenic area of south-west Scotland.

Wednesday 26 June : Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway, and Muncaster Castle.

Wednesday 17 July : Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway at Toddlington or Cheltenham.

Wednesday 14 August : Llandudno, a North Wales favourite resort.

Wednesday 11 September : Leeds boasts a large variety of markets, and is the birthplace of Marks and Spencer's in 1857.

Saturday 12 October : Pickering for the 1940's weekend.

For more information, please contact Roy Dixon on 01925 638299

News Round Up

Chris Hollins

Military trains

On Tuesday 19th March, for the first time in many years, a military train passed through Runcorn. The train, hauled by a GBRF Class 66, ran from Garston Car Terminal to Warminster, this being the nearest station to the Army's tank firing range on Salisbury plain. It is believed that the military equipment was transported to the Garston Car Terminal for loading from the Port of Liverpool. The locomotive hauling the train had earlier run light from the Longtown Ministry of Defence site in Cumbria.

Further MOD trains are scheduled to run on Monday 8th April from Bicester to Garston, returning in the early hours of the following day from Garston to the secretive MOD facility at Glen Douglas on the West Highland line in Scotland.

Grand National traffic

For the first time in more than 30 years, the Orient Express set of Pullman cars was not used for a Grand National special train from London Victoria on Saturday 6th April. The only special train that ran was the Northern Belle. Top and tailed by West Coast Railways Class 57 57313 and 57601 Windsor Castle, it formed 1Z59 06.47 London Euston to Liverpool South Parkway. The train was serviced at Edge Hill Downhill Sidings before forming 5Z61 the 17.02 Edge Hill Downhill to Chester. Upon arrival at Chester, it was then used on 1Z61 18.05 passenger train from Chester to Liverpool Lime Street. The train returned to London Euston at 19.25 running as 1Z62.

In the morning of race day, several London North Western services from Birmingham ran with 2 Class 350s forming 8 car trains to cater for the additional passengers.

East Midlands Trains used a 6 car DMU rake on 1R62, the 05.50 Norwich to Liverpool Lime Street. Due to short length platforms and the DMUs not being fitted with selective door opening controls, it meant that the service operated non-stop from Manchester Oxford Road missing out Warrington Central, Widnes and Liverpool South Parkway calls.

Upon arrival at Liverpool Lime Street, the units returned East forming 1L10 the 11.52 to Norwich again running non-stop to Manchester Oxford Road. However, 2 passengers boarded the train at Lime Street thinking it was stopping at Widnes resulting in the train having to make a special stop to let them off.

Franchise awarded to Abellio

The Dept for Transport announced on 10th April, that the East Midlands Trains franchise has been awarded to Abellio, a subsidiary of the Netherlands Railways. The franchise to be known as East Midlands Railway will commence in August 2019 and run for 8 years. At some point during the new franchise operation, the Liverpool Lime Street to Norwich service will be discontinued and, replaced with services operating between Derby and Norwich, and Liverpool Lime Street to Nottingham which will be provided by another train operating company, most likely to be either Northern or Trans-Pennine Express.

New summer timetable

The new summer passenger timetable is due to commence on Sunday the 18th of May. Several new train services will operate in our area.

London North Western will commence running from Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston, by extending one of the presently

terminating services at Birmingham New Street through to the Capital via Rugby and Northampton. The service will run hourly from 06.10 to 20.04 in the evening. Journey time is approximately 4 hours, although the last train of the day takes half an hour longer due to making additional stops between Milton Keynes Central and London Euston.

In the reverse direction, due to weekday evening peak hour restrictions at Euston, LNWR cannot operate the Liverpool service resulting in the last through service being in the late afternoon.

Other Liverpool Lime Street to Birmingham New Street trains will also operate throughout to Euston, but will not be advertised as such. On arrival at New Street from Liverpool, the unit will be attached to one which will arrive from Crewe via Stoke-on-Trent, to form an 8 car train through to London Euston via Northampton.

The LNWR service from Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston will only operate on Mondays to Saturdays.

Virgin Trains seek to run additional trains

Virgin Trains have applied to the Office of Rail Regulation to operate an additional 5 trains a day (Mondays to Fridays), between Liverpool Lime Street and London Euston. If authorised, it is expected that the additional services will commence on 10th June.

Chester to Leeds hourly service

Northern are to introduce an hourly service from Chester to Leeds via Warrington Bank Quay and Manchester Victoria. Running via the Calder Valley through Rochdale, Halifax and Bradford, several services will call at Runcorn East.

Due to pathing problems, one train each way will start and finish at Ellesmere Port. These are 1E52 the 07.15 to Leeds, with the return working being 1D72 the 15.38 from Leeds. I

believe that this is possibly the first ever through scheduled passenger service to operate from Ellesmere Port to West Yorkshire.

Liverpool - Glasgow start date delayed

Trans-Pennine Express, who were due to start running the new Liverpool Lime Street to Glasgow Central service from May, have delayed its introduction until December. As the new Class, 397 EMUs being built for the service are not available at present, it was expected that Class 185 DMUs would initially be used on the service of 3 trains each way, plus an early morning service from Carlisle to Liverpool, with an evening return service from Liverpool to Oxenholme Lake District. However due to diagramming difficulties, the 185s cannot be released to operate the services, although it is expected that 1C81 the 20.12 Liverpool Lime Street to Oxenholme may operate from the start of the new timetable, using a unit detached from an inbound Newcastle or Scarborough service.

Transport for Wales plans

Transport for Wales will introduce the new hourly Liverpool Lime Street to Chester via Runcorn and the Halton Curve service. This runs hourly seven days a week with two trains running through from Wrexham General at 06.35 & 19.09, with a return service from Liverpool at 17.37. Over the next few years, Transport for Wales are looking to extend the service from Chester to Cardiff via Shrewsbury and Hereford, once new trains that are on order have been delivered.

(Continued on page 23)

'Push-and-Pull' workings from Sutton Oak

Rod Dixon

Coincidentally, at the same time as the cover photograph of the March edition of 'On Shed' was showing the 'push-and-pull' train (see below), I was writing about my memories of the same train workings.



Cover photograph March edition. Ivatt 2-6-2T No.41286 standing at the closed Farnworth and Bold station on 12th February 1966.

Photo : Gordon Howarth

I started work as an engine cleaner at Sutton Oak loco shed in August of 1954. At that time, Sutton Oak had mixed work - mostly freight with about one third passenger. The latter consisted of loco hauled trains from St Helens Shaw Street to Chester, Liverpool, and a Saturday only service to Manchester. A small fleet of 'push-and-pull' trains provided services between St Helens - Warrington, and St Helens - Liverpool.

The 'push-and-pull' trains had an adapted Ivatt 2-6-2 Class 2 tank loco with two modified coaches. The loco was fitted with two vacuum controlled valves fitted either side of the smoke box to control steam from the

main steam pipe to the cylinders. These were fitted to enable the loco to be controlled by an extra vacuum pipe fitted throughout the train from a cab in the guards compartment. That arrangement ensured that the train could be driven from either end. The driver would be in his normal place on the loco footplate going 'engine first', then change ends to work the train by vacuum and a bell control from the coach. The cab in the coach end had three forward facing windows (with wipers), a horn, vacuum brake valve, vacuum regulator valve, a bell with a push button and a handbrake wheel.

When the train was being driven from the loco footplate, the driver would use the main regulator and brake valve as normal. When the train was to go 'coach first', before leaving the loco cab the driver would apply the handbrake, make sure the main regulator was closed, open cylinder drain cocks, and put the reverser into the 'back' position. When the driver had taken his place in the coach end driving cab, he would close the vacuum brake and regulator valves, making sure the handbrake in the coach was released and then give two short rings on the bell requesting the fireman to release the handbrake on the loco and be prepared to start.

When the guard gave the 'ready to go' signal to the driver, he would partly release the vacuum brakes, open the vacuum regulator valve, then give three long rings for the fireman to open the main steam regulator on the loco. On opening the regulator, the fireman would close the cylinder drain cocks and make sure that the train moved off without wheel slip - applying sand as required - then notch up the reverser to maintain the right speed. To stop, the driver closed the



'Push-and-pull' service with Ivatt 2-6-2T No.41285 standing at Earlestown. Note the vacuum valves fitted to the sides of the smokebox.

Photographer : Unknown

vacuum regulator fully and then applied the vacuum brakes as required.

That was the official way of working !!

In practice, the vacuum valves fitted to the smoke box were so unreliable that the drivers told the firemen to watch the vacuum regulator gauge on the loco and when it goes down to close the main regulator. The driver would give three rings on the bell when he required the regulator opening again. This way of working meant that the fireman was handling the loco. This should not have represented a problem because the fireman should have been passed to act as driver. That said, there was such a shortage of firemen at Sutton Oak that 18-year olds were assessed and passed competent to work 'push-and-pull'. In the twelve years that I was a fireman, I was never aware of any incidents.

Some of the older drivers and firemen talked of the 'push-and-pull' services that ran from St Helens to Ditton via Widnes, and St Helens to Rainford Junction. Although these services had been withdrawn before I started work, most of the station platforms were still in

place - as can be seen in the earlier cover photograph of Farnworth station.

Most of the 'push-and-pull' services in our area were two coaches, but there was a summer time service in North Wales with three coaches that ran between Rhyl and Llandudno that was called the Welsh Dragon. Our local services were not so exotic. They ran between St Helens and Warrington to give connections at Earlestown for Manchester, Leeds, York, Newcastle, and connections at Warrington for North Wales, Crewe, Birmingham and London. There was one 'push-and-pull' service to Lime St, but most of the

trains on these services were loco hauled.

One of the Sutton Oak turns of duty meant getting up at silly o'clock in the morning to get the loco ready, and then go with it to St Helens Junction at 03.45 to meet the newspaper train from Manchester. This would stop at the Junction to detach a bogie parcel van with newspapers for St Helens. The paper train would then go on to Lime Street. We would cross over with the loco and attach the van and take it to St Helens station to be unloaded.

Once the van was emptied, we shunted it onto coaching stock that made the first morning train to Lime Street' The van could then be returned, with the rest of the empty vans at Lime Street, to Manchester. After making the shunt with the van, we would go onto the next line to attach our 'push-and-pull' set to take it into the bay platform, ready to make the first service to Warrington departing coach first at about 06.00 and stopping at all stations, including Vulcan Halt.

From Warrington, we went to Acton Bridge, and then made a connecting service through



Depicted is a former LMS driving brake second carriage, part of a two coach push-pull set as used on certain local services.

Photographer : Unknown

to Runcorn, returning empty stock to Acton Bridge to work back from there 'all stations' to St Helens Shaw Street. We detached the loco to take it onto Sutton Oak shed arriving about 11.00 where the loco was coaled and watered. The driver and fireman booked off and a fresh crew took over to do the afternoon work.

With the modernisation plans, all the local services were taken over by DMUs, although the units that were provided were underpowered and unreliable ! Given also that the staff at the maintenance depot were working to rule, there were a lot of failures. Even though all steam passenger services had been withdrawn, there was a short period when a special steam 'push-and-pull' ran between Lime Street and Wigan North West starting from St Helens Shaw Street at about 06.00. The train ran 'loco first' to Liverpool (all stops), then 'coach first' (all stops) to Wigan, operating a shuttle service throughout the day.

By arriving 'coach first' at Wigan, it allowed the loco to stop alongside a water column. This meant that the fireman could fill the

water tanks as the passengers were getting on and off and the driver was changing ends. This routine gave us a turnaround time similar to a DMU. It was only at Wigan that we could get water. By this time, Lime St had been fully electrified and all water facilities had been withdrawn. Fortunately, we could just make Wigan - Lime St and back to Wigan on one filling of our tanks.

The small Ivatt locos had a good turn of speed and with only two coaches we could keep similar running times

to DMU's. The steam service was necessary because the DMUs were single power cars, underpowered for the gradients between Wigan and Lime St. They were slow starting off from Bryn, Garswood, St Helens and Thatto Heath stations. However, the steam 'push-and-pull' service only lasted about a month before the industrial dispute was resolved and more powerful double DMU power cars were introduced. Shortly after this episode, most of the tank engines and coaching stock were withdrawn for scrap. I think there are 3 Ivatt tank locos in preservation - none of which have the vacuum control regulator fittings.

'On Shed' : Next Edition

Volume 9, No.3 is due to be published on

September 1st 2019

Please submit any items for publication to the Editor (Tony Foster) by August 1st.

tony.r.foster@btinternet.com

Tel : 01744 883914

'Farewell to Arms'

A look back at the passing of semaphore signalling in north Lincolnshire by **Chris Hollins**

Semaphore signalling has always held a fascination for me, especially as my father started his Railway career as a box boy in Southport St Lukes Signalbox, finishing it as a signalman at Ditton Jct No 2 Signalbox.

Over the years, the number of places retaining large semaphore signalled layouts has dwindled. Today the largest installation of them nearest to the 8D Association area is Shrewsbury, but back in 2015 Barnetby and Wrawby Jct were fully semaphore signalled. During that year, Network Rail announced the North Lincolnshire resignalling scheme covering the lines from Scunthorpe to Cleethorpes along with the Barton-on-Humber branch and the lines to Immingham. The whole area would be converted to colour light signalling over the Christmas and New Year period,

with control then passing to the York Railway Operating Centre. All of the mechanical signal boxes would be closed and disposed of.

Fellow 8D member Reg Dobson and I decided to go to Barnetby to observe the semaphores in action on what was to be the last weekend of operation. On Saturday 19th December, I arrived at Widnes station to catch 1107 08.52 Liverpool Lime Street to Norwich. Because it was a Saturday, the train was only a 2 car Class 158, 158 864. On Monday to Friday, this service has 4 cars on it, but on Saturdays the second unit is required to strengthen services between Nottingham and Lincoln. At Warrington Central, Reg joined me and after an uneventful journey via Manchester and over the Hope Valley line, we arrived in Sheffield on time.



170307 & 170308 - 1879 12.26hrs Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport 'Trans Pennine'. Approaching Wrawby Signal Box. 11th December 2015. **Photo : Doug Birmingham**



A low winter sun further enhances this atmospheric shot taken from Barnetby Station on 11 December 2015 showing signals galore and 185123 - 1876 11.55hrs Manchester Airport - Cleethorpes Trans Pennine at Wrawby Junction.
Photo : Doug Birmingham

As we had some time between changing trains, we went outside for a quick look at the Sheffield supertrams before returning to the station to await the arrival of 1872 09.55 Manchester Airport to Cleethorpes, only to be joined by about 50 raucous Sheffield United supporters some of whom were already the worse for wear with drink. They were on the way to Glanford Park in Scunthorpe for the League one Football match against Scunthorpe United which they subsequently won 1-0. The train arrived formed of Class 185 185.114. The football fans got in the front carriage while I and Reg got in the

middle car. Upon departure, calls were made at Meadowhall Interchange, Doncaster and Scunthorpe where the British Transport Police were waiting in force for the Sheffield United fans. Approaching Barnetby, we passed Wrawby Jct as well as DB Cargo 66046 on an Immingham to Drax power station loaded bio-mass train, and with the semaphores set for Barnetby station we arrived to be met by a cold wind blowing across the fields and station area, but this didn't distract from the fact that we were not the only people there to witness the end of the semaphores - another 12 people were present.



60092 - 6T24 11.38hrs Immingham BSC Ore Terminal to Santon FOT 'Ore'. Barnetby East Signal Box. 11th December 2015.
Photo : Doug Birmingham

Barnetby or to give it its full name of Barnetby-le-Wold, was a small hamlet when the Railway arrived in 1848. The Great Grimsby and Sheffield Junction Railway built there line via Retford, Torksey, Lincoln and Market Rasen, to be followed a year later in 1849 by a line from Gainsborough via Brigg. In 1866 the Trent, Ancholme and Grimsby Railway built its line from Scunthorpe to link up with the other two at what is now Wrawby Jct. Both of these Railways merged with several others to become the Manchester Sheffield and



170308 & 170307 - 1B79 12.26hrs Cleethorpes - Manchester Airport Trans Pennine. Barnetby East. 11th December 2015. **Photo : Doug Birmingham**

Lincolnshire Railway, changing its name again in 1899 to the Great Central Railway.

The Great Central also owned the port of Grimsby from where they ran their own steamships from the Alexandra Dock across the North Sea to Antwerp, Hamburg and Rotterdam. Through boat trains were run from London Marylebone and Liverpool Central to Alexandra Dock Pier to connect with sailings.

The Great Central Railway wanted to expand its freight business in the area which it achieved by building the port of Immingham opened in 1912. Consequently the railway from Wrawby Jct became a bottleneck. It was therefore decided to quadruple the line from there to Brocklesby where the Immingham line diverges from the Grimsby and Cleethorpes route. A new 72 lever frame signal box was provided at Barnetby East opening in 1914. The original Barnetby signal box was renamed Barnetby West, with new station buildings brought into use in 1915. A new signal box was built at Wrawby Jct opening on the 7th of May 1916, along with the quadruple track. The box was a typical Great

Central Railway design with a 132 lever frame, which subsequently had an additional five levers added before lever number 1. They were therefore given the letters A to E making 137 levers in total. Up until its closure, it was the world's largest Railway signal box manned by a single member of staff.

For the next 70 years there were very little alterations to the track and signalling in the area, although Barnetby West box closed in 1973 the same year that British Rail commissioned the new Scunthorpe power signal box. Change was afoot in the 1980's when BR started rationalising layouts and decided that the 1916 quadrupling could be reduced to double track from Barnetby station to Brocklesby. This proved impractical with delays occurring daily resulting in the reinstatement of the up goods line, which network rail now calls the Down Cleethorpes goods line giving a three track route which is the layout today.

Wrawby Jct maintained a link with Widnes for over 15 years. During the mid 1990's, most of the tank wagons used on the British Oxygen Company services from Widnes to Sheffield Broughton Lane, Wembley and Wolverhampton had been withdrawn, and were taken to Wrawby Jct for storage in the Sidings on the North side of the line near the signal box, and there they remained for a very long time until the tank barrels were removed and refurbished before being sold to a Romanian company. The frames and bogies went for scrap.

Even though it was a Saturday, we saw numerous freight and passenger trains during our two and a half hours stop. DB Cargo was still the operator of the main freight flow from Immingham to the Scunthorpe steel works, observing 60059 & 60074 on iron ore trains, along with 60092 hauling loaded oil tanks from Lindsey refinery to Kingsbury, with 60054 on the return empties. Colas provided 60056 on the empty Colwick Rectory Jct to Lindsey empty oil tanks.

Passenger services were mainly in the hands of Class 185's to and from Manchester, although 170.308 & 170.306 worked the 12.55 from Manchester Airport to Cleethorpes. East Midlands Trains services from Newark Northgate to Grimsby were formed of 2 Class 153's coupled together 153.311 & 153.321 on one train with 153.357 & 153.379 on another. The other passenger train that appeared was the Northern "Parliamentary" one from Cleethorpes to Sheffield that operates three times each way via Brigg but only on Saturdays. This was formed of 144.006 & 153.304. The 153 having worked the Barton-on-Humber branch all week being returned to Sheffield having been replaced by another 153 brought out on the inbound working.

The iron ore train hauled by 60074 was driven by a young woman who on seeing the photographers on the platform, decided to play to the gallery by repeatedly blowing the horn on the class 60. Just before we left she returned with her now empty train from Scunthorpe, and did exactly the same thing accompanied by her waving to us out of the cab window. I remarked to Reg that she was certainly the best looking engine driver I had seen in a long time !

Before departing back to Widnes, I took a walk into the village noting that the only pub, *'The Whistle and Flute'*, had long been closed. A pub sign still hung outside depicting a Stanier Class 5 on it.

We left the Semaphores behind departing

Barnetby on 185.139 forming 1B85 the 15.26 Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport, returning to Sheffield as per the outward route. After a quick cup of tea in one of the station buffets, we boarded 1R94 the 13.57 Norwich to Liverpool Lime Street worked by 158.783 & 158.788, which despite a signal stop at Hazel Grove, got Reg and I back on time at Warrington Central and Widnes respectively.

Both Wrawby Jct and Barnetby East boxes closed on the 24th of December and are still standing, although plans to turn Wrawby Jct into a visitors centre have so far not come to fruition.

One big change that did occur in the area in early 2016, was Freightliner Heavy Haul taking over the DB Cargo contract for the Iron ore trains from Immingham to Scunthorpe. Due to the loss of this traffic, DB Cargo closed the depot at Immingham, while Freightliner opened a new fueling facility at Barnetby station. I do wonder whether the young woman driving 60074 is still working the same duties, but with Freightliner and driving Class 66's.

It was a sad occasion but a great day trip as a piece of railway history would be no more in five days time. However it does live on for posterity, so if you want to watch what I and Reg saw and learn more about Wrawby Jct and Barnetby East boxes and how they operated, I can thoroughly recommend Locomaster Profiles 'Farewell to Arms' DVD which has it all.

National Rail Museum at York : Signalling School

Private visit for 8D members on Saturday 26th October

8D member Phil Graham leads a team of volunteers who man the fully operational signalling training layout. Phil has offered to open the school for demonstrations and 'hands on' opportunities for 8D members. This is a superb opportunity, not to be missed ! See also details on inside front cover.



More tales from the platform !

Text and all photographs by Dennis Flood

In this second article about some of the staff at Edge Hill station, I want to focus on the station porters I knew as a trainspotter in the early 1960s, before I became a British Railways employee myself.

I've documented some of the antics of Edge Hill station foremen Bill Harrison and Syd Wightwick, and now it's time to remember the three station porters, Price ('Charlie') Foulkes, Jim McManus and Sam Leventhal, who worked at Edge Hill station during my train spotting days there.

Charlie was the most easy going individual with a friendly personality. It was thanks to him that I have an excellent collection of Edmundson railway tickets, collected when my friend and I used to check the tickets in the ticket sack each Sunday afternoon before the sack was sent to Derby for checking.

When Charlie was on duty, and providing the station foremen weren't around, he allowed us to roam all over the station. I recall one occasion we went into the former L&NWR luggage lift bridge between platforms 3 and 4 and I found a *London Midland & Scottish Railway Rule Book* (dated 1932) in mint con-

dition. When I showed this to Charlie, he simply said *'Well, as you found it, you can have it'*. I still have that LM&SR Rule Book, still in mint condition.

Charlie also gave us copies of the British Railways Weekly Operating Notices - documents that I became very familiar with when I became a railway employee. I found details about signalling alterations and planned engineering works fascinating. It was those publications that made me appreciate just what an amazing industry the railway really was.

As trainspotters, my friend and I had privileged 'inside' information, only normally available to railway staff. Thanks to Charlie Foulkes, we knew what was going on, not just in the Liverpool area, but all over the London Midland Region.

As he was sorting out his locker one Sunday afternoon, we saw that it was full of all sorts of bits and pieces, including BR Rule Book amendments, national fares manuals, working timetables and ancient looking cigarettes and matches. He told us that if there was anything we wanted in his locker (except his cigarettes and matches) we could have it.



Two Class Type 2 locomotives in the Southport Bay at Edge Hill Station. Nos. D5263 (leading) and D5253. Dated 18 May 1968.



Class AL6 25kv A/c electric locomotive No.E3164 with an express from Lime Street to London Euston. Dated 18 May 1968.

As a result of that invitation, I still have a copy of the September 1960 publication - *'Transposition of Lines'* BR LMR Weekly Operating Notice advising drivers, guards, signalmen and other authorised staff of a change to the signalling and line direction in the Edge Hill area, following the commissioning of a new Power Signal Box at Edge Hill after the closure of Edge Hill No.2 and Edge Hill No.3 Signal Boxes. This publication was remarkable for the signalling diagrams and explanations it contained within it, and for me it started a life-long interest in railway signalling.

At this time, Platform 2 at Edge Hill became the down slow line, when it was originally for the up fast line, and Platform 3 which was



A view of the large parcels depot at Edge Hill, looking across Waterloo Sidings. The Southport Bay is in the foreground. Photo taken on 3 February 1968.



A view of the former L&NWR luggage lift bridge looking towards Lime Street Station at Edge Hill. The two lift towers can be seen. It was as I was walking across the luggage bridge that I found the LM&SR 1932 Rule Book. The Southport Bay can be seen at the right of the photograph.

originally for the down fast line became the up fast line.

Whilst I now understand how all railway signalling works, at the time that I first saw those diagrams and read about how the line direction was to be altered by the introduction of a new Power Signal Box at Edge Hill, I thought that the material was the stuff of organisational and technical genius.

It was Charlie who was responsible for me, eventually, having a long and very happy career within the British Railways. He provided me with more interest about the railway industry in those days than a train spotter like myself could possibly have expected. Ultimately, I worked in such diverse places within the railway industry as Liverpool and Birkenhead before starting to climb the greasy pole to numerous management positions at Bristol, Cardiff (twice), Swansea, Swindon, Rugby and finally finishing my railway career 49 years later at Crewe.

Jim McManus was a very different character. It took us a while to get to know Jim, but he was a decent person – when he wasn't drunk, that is ! Jim was one of those individuals who did just enough in his job – and less if he could get away with it.



Class 5 No.45156 'Ayrshire Yeomanry' passing through Edge Hill station on the up slow line, with a special from Lime Street. Photograph taken on 20 April 1968.



Above : The approach to Edge Hill station entrance, showing the pavement (at left) where station porter Jim McManus fell over after a visit to the Durning Arms and his top set of false teeth fell out and were broken. It was a crack in this pavement that he wanted me to photograph, so that he could claim for a new set of false teeth !

Below : A closer view of the station entrance. The open door at the left was used as the access to the ticket hall. The middle doors were not used.



He liked a few beers and he was a regular in the Durning Arms pub, which was just a few minutes walk from Edge Hill station in Wavertree Road. Unfortunately, such visits occurred when he was actually on duty ! In those days, the Durning Arms was a 'Walkers Warrington Ales' pub. Jim would ask us to come and tell him at the pub if either Bill Harrison or Sid Wightwick was looking for him at the station ! They often used to ask us if we had seen him and we would tell them he had gone to the chip shop in Wavertree Road !

When Jim returned to the station after about an hour, smelling like a brewery, Bill and Sid would turn a blind eye, just to keep the

peace. I recall that one day he came back from the Durning Arms and fell over on the pavement leading to the station. Fortunately, he was so drunk, he didn't hurt himself, but his top set of false teeth fell out and broke in half ! He asked me to take as many photographs as I could of the offending pavement, so he could claim for his false teeth ! I took only one for him (film, developing and printing, was expensive for a train spotter in those days !) and he then included the photograph with a written claim to Sid Wightwick - the foreman who was on duty when Jim he fell over. Jim really thought he had a chance of a successful claim !! Sid wrote across the claim '**Declined - Porter drunk !**'. Jim never did replace his top set of false teeth after that and Charlie Foulkes used to say that he never actually ate his food - he just sucked it and spat it out !

When Winsford became an overspill town for Liverpool in the 1960s, the last train from Lime Street to Crewe from Lime Street on a Saturday was the 22.34, calling at Edge Hill at 22.39 and departing at 2240. This train was always busy from Edge Hill, with people returning home to Winsford after visiting family and friends in Liverpool after a day out.

When passengers for that train required tickets, Jim was nowhere to be seen, except of course in the Durning Arms pub having his



The photograph shows Class 8F locomotive number 48045 on the down fast line at Edge Hill station, about to reverse and travel 'light engine' to Edge Hill Motive Power Depot.

customary Saturday night pint of beer (more likely three !). The passengers would be banging on the small drop-leaf booking office window demanding tickets – unaware of Jim’s absence or whereabouts.

One passenger said he was going to report him for “*never being there to sell tickets*”. Another said he was “*a drunk who doesn’t know what day it is*”. I remember one woman saying that she was going to report him to her local Member of Parliament ! As far as I’m aware, nothing ever came of the complaints, because the passengers had a free train journey back to Winsford !

When we told Jim about this, he said if BR let people travel free on a Saturday night, he could have a ‘stay-behind’ at the Durning Arms after closing time and his job would be even better ! Looking back, it’s remarkable that he was not sacked. Then again, if he ever attended a staff disciplinary hearing, the Manager holding it would likely have been overcome by beer fumes as soon as Jim opened his mouth !

The last time I saw Jim McManus was in 1985 , by which time he was retired. As I was driving towards the M62, I saw Jim stagger out of the Lister Arms pub in Kensington. Nothing had changed. Jim must have had a liver like a piece of hardboard by that time !

Sam Leventhall was the quietest of the three Edge Hill station porters in the days I was train spotting there. He was a thoroughly decent man who always seemed to be the butt of jokes from Jim McManus in particular. Sam was of the Jewish faith and would abstain from having bacon on a Friday. In a bid to ‘tempt’ Sam, Jim McManus would always fry bacon in the station messroom on Friday. Sam always politely declined a bacon butty and Jim used to tell him that the local Rabbi would never find out because he was never seen at Edge Hill – not even as a passenger.



AL6 class a/c electric locomotive No.E3140 passing through Edge Hill station on the way to Lime Street with a service from London Euston. Taken on 4 May 1968.

Jim always made a bacon butty for my friend and I as our reward for telling him if a foreman was looking for him when he was at the Durning Arms. We were in the station messroom one summer Friday afternoon, enjoying a bacon butty with Jim McManus, Charlie Foulkes and Bill Harrison, when Sam came in for his regular cup of tea.

Jim offered him a bacon butty, which Sam very politely declined. However, the rest of the staff convinced him that the Rabbi would never find out, and that “*one wouldn’t hurt him on a Friday*”. The smell of the bacon in the mess room was too much for Sam, and he accepted a bacon butty, which he tucked into, enjoying it with a large mug of tea in hand. Jim went outside for a smoke and then suddenly opened the door and shouted to Sam “*Look out Sam, here comes the Rabbi, he wants to see you !*”. Poor Sam stood up and spun around in several different directions at once and didn’t know what to do so he put the remainder of his half-eaten bacon butty straight into his mouth. His cheeks widened and he looked like a bulldog chewing a wasp – his eyes bulging with the effort to eat the bacon butty before the Rabbi arrived.

Jim looked along the platform again and shouted “*False alarm, Sam – I was only kidding !*”. Sam couldn’t speak for a few seconds

because his mouth was so full. He gulped some of his tea to help digest his bacon butty, but the tea went down the wrong way and he spat everything out of his mouth straight across the mess room as all of us ducked out of the way. Sam just looked at Jim McManus and said simply *"I don't think that was very funny at all, I could have choked myself !"*. Jim replied *"That was the funniest few slices of Danish off-cuts I've ever spent 3/6d on !"*. All the staff I knew at Edge Hill when I was a

trainspotter all those years ago have now all passed on. However, each time I pass through the station on my way to or from Lime Street, I still recall all of them in my memory. It's impossible for me not to.

They were great days, and I have wonderful memories of train spotting at Edge Hill.

Dennis Flood

News Round Up *(continued from page 11)*

Freight train workings

GBRF have started assigning Class 60 Locomotives to the Liverpool Bulk Terminal to Drax power station bio mass trains. These Locomotives have a greater tractive effort than Class 66's, and are able to haul the trains unassisted over the Bootle branch. As a result, the trains can run direct from the docks to Olive Mount Jct, without the need to go to Tuebrook Sidings to reverse and detach the assistant Locomotive.

Due to several shipping lines transferring their services from the Port of Felixstowe to the new London Container terminal on the River Thames, one Freightliner train each way from Garston and Ditton to Felixstowe have been diverted to serve the facility at the London Gateway Freightliner terminal.

Runcorn Station

On 1st April, Runcorn station celebrated the 150th anniversary of its opening. Prince Richard, the Duke of Gloucester, paid a visit to Runcorn to celebrate the occasion, and unveiled a commemorative plaque at the Brindley theatre.

The station was opened as part of the Grand Junction Railway's line from Weaver Junction to Ditton Junction, creating a shorter route

into Liverpool for its trains from London and Birmingham.

It went through a major change in 1960, when the original platforms and buildings were demolished and replaced with new longer platforms, Clasp type buildings and a concrete footbridge as part of the Liverpool to Crewe Electrification project. Apart from the removal of the ticket collectors box from the concourse entrance onto platform 1 when British Rail converted it into an open station, not much changed until the early 2000's, when the footbridge was condemned due to suffering from "concrete cancer" and was replaced by the present structure.

In 2007, Virgin trains realising that the facilities offered at the station were not in line with what they expected, committed funds along with Halton Council and Network Rail to refurbish the station to what it is today. This was completed and on the 22nd of February 2008, a commemorative plaque was unveiled at the station by Derek Twigg MP for Halton to celebrate this.

Runcorn station continues to be a major stop for services to Birmingham and London, and in May will have a direct service to Chester and Wrexham for the first time in many years.

Recent 8D Meetings



Taken at Lime Street in 1986, the photograph shows a splendid array of hardware. The slide formed part of an interesting presentation by long-standing rail enthusiast and photographer Geoff Morris.

Photo : Geoff Morris

Merseyside & North Wales

On Tuesday 12 March, Geoff Morris presented an illustrated talk on 'Merseyside and North Wales'. Geoff originally hails from Llanelli (in South Wales) but has lived in Chester since the end of September 1986.

The talk featured photos taken between 1977 and 1996 - ie. in the pre-privatisation era. The aim was to show the variety of regular motive power and traffic that operated in North Wales and Merseyside during this period, with a particular emphasis on activities and stock that no longer exist and the regular steam-hauled charters that operated in North Wales from 1989 onwards.

The geographical area covered included the North Wales Coast main line between Chester and Holyhead, plus the branches to Amlwch, Llandudno and Blaenau Ffestiniog. In addition, Chester (including the CLC routes towards Dee Marsh and Mouldsworth) plus the Warrington line as far as Helsby, Merseyside including the City Lines towards Earlestown and St Helens as well as the electrified

networks to Southport, Kirkby, Hunts Cross and the Wirral (including the extensions to Hooton, Ellesmere Port and Chester).

Tour of the CLC Garston & Liverpool Railway

On Saturday 6 April 2019, Paul Wright led a guided tour of the Merseyrail Northern Line between Liverpool South Parkway and Liverpool Central.

This was the second 8D Association tour by train that has looked at the history of a line that now forms a key part of the present day Merseyrail network. Whilst the Merseyrail network that we are all familiar with appears to be a well-integrated network of lines with easy connections between the various routes, that was not always so. In fact the Merseyrail network has been spliced together out of a number of completely different railways that once offered services of a very different pattern to today. The line that was visited on 6 April 2019 was a typical example of this.

In the main, the route covered was that of the Garston & Liverpool Railway (G&L) that

had opened on 1 June 1864. Also included in the tour was a section of the CLC main line that had opened 1 August 1873 and the Liverpool Central railway which had opened on 2 March 1874. The history of all of these lines has been covered in detail in previous editions of 'On shed'.

The tour started at Liverpool South Parkway station a new facility opened on 10 June 2006. Paul explained the history of this section of line (the CLC main line) and how the new station had replaced two separate facilities, one being Garston on the CLC and the other Allerton on the LNWR, to create better interchange opportunities. The tour then moved on to Cressington station one of the most attractive on the line.



Tour leader Paul Wright deals with a query regarding the origins of the CLC line at Cressington.

Photo : Tony Foster

At Cressington members observed the site of the former Cressington Junction which had closed in 1977. The junction was the point at which the CLC met the original G&L line. It was then on to Aigburth to look at an original G&L station and the site of the Fulwood Loop. A number of members had memories of the line in the 1950s and 1960s and it was fascinating to hear their recollections.

The group then moved on to Brunswick to see the site of the extensive CLC goods facilities and the location of the original G&L passenger terminus. The final stop was an extremely busy Liverpool Central station (it was Grand National day). Paul showed the members the only surviving section of building from the original station and talked about its history. The tour concluded at that point and all agreed that they would like to do more of this type of event in the future.

The Blackbrook Branch Visit – 30 April 2019

On 30 April 2019 the 8D Association carried out its first organised visit to a section of the Blackbrook Branch in St Helens. Sections of the branch date back to the earliest days of the St Helens & Runcorn Gap Railway. The

section walked on 30 April was part of the through route (between Carr Mill Junction and Sutton Oak Junction) that had opened on 1 November 1869. The line had closed as a through route on 6 April 1964. It was created to allow freight trains to avoid the busy St Helens station area. During its 95 years of life the Blackbrook Branch had been a busy freight railway with a constant flow of through coal trains between the Wigan coalfield and Garston Dock. It also carried other through freight and had connections to many local industries including the Haydock Colliery to which it was connected by the Haydock Colliery Branch.

The walk on 30 April covered the section of line between the Chain Lane Level Crossing and the site of the Broad Oak Road overbridge. The Blackbrook branch is a typical example of one of those railways that has

The walk on 30 April covered the section of line between the Chain Lane Level Crossing and the site of the Broad Oak Road overbridge. The Blackbrook branch is a typical example of one of those railways that has



Above : 8D members and guests explored a section of the once busy Blackbrook Branch that carried coal from local collieries, and other freight, to Garston bypassing the busy St Helens station. **Below** : Although the line was closed as a through route in 1964, tangible evidence of its existence can still be found. This bridge abutment is clearly visible where the line once crossed the Sankey Brook. **Photos** : Tony Foster



almost completely disappeared from the landscape, but amazingly during the walk remnants of it were found. They included abutments from the bridge which carried the

line over the Sankey Brook, an upturned sleeper from a sleeper fence and other fence features. The course of the line could also be determined in many places because of the way the geography of the area has developed since 1964. Other points of interest included locating the junction of the Haydock Colliery branch and the GCR St Helens – Lowton St Mary line. Members with local knowledge from the time of the railway made the walk all the more interesting as they were able to explain how the line had worked.

A full history of this line will be a feature of a future ‘On Shed’.

Paul Wright

Gateacre line closure in 1972 (‘On Shed’ - March 2019)

As MPTE’s Chief Schedules Officer in the South Division at that time, I had to find a bus to replace the little used train service. This was achieved by utilising a peak hour 82C ‘extra’ starting from the Adelphi at 17.15hrs and running as far as Woodend Avenue, Speke. Several Adelphi peak hour ‘extras’ were provided to facilitate an enhanced 82C

service (Pier Head to Speke, Eastern Avenue), as scheduled service buses commencing at the Pier Head were often fully loaded. These fully laden buses were routed via Duke Street, avoiding the heavily used Adelphi stop.

8D Member - David Thomas

Memories of Birkenhead MPD (Part 7)

Dennis J Flood

In Part 6 of these articles, I mentioned how a Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) came to lose a driving cab door near the site of the closed Ledsham Station, just south of Hooton, and how Mollington Street fitter par excellence Des Moye did a wonderful panel beating job on it to make it almost as good as new. He even applied a BR `double arrow` transfer to the door, just below the window, to hide a few ripple marks in the metal.

However, the next incident, involving a DMU could not be kept hidden from Shedmaster Jack Barford (Assistant Area Manager Train Crews).

The DMU service in the early / mid 1970s from Rock Ferry to Chester and Helsby was hourly, except during the early evening `peak` times when additional services ran. The Chester services left Rock Ferry at 10 minutes past the hour and the Helsby services at 40 minutes past the hour.

The last DMU movement of the day was booked to arrive at Mollington Street depot at 23.54. This was the 22.40 from Rock Ferry to Helsby, arriving at Helsby at 23.17. Departure from Helsby as empty coaching stock (ECS) was at 23.22.

The ECS service then ran to Mollington Street and upon arrival it was stabled on No.14 or No.15 road in the former Great Western steam shed. During my time as a driver at Mollington Street, DMUs were always stabled within the `Western` shed, as it was known.

The incident which occurred involving the 23.22 ECS movement from Helsby to Mollington Street was a 2-car Park Royal DMU. Power Car No.M50401 was leading into the

depot. It was to be stabled on No.14 road and the night shed driver Jack Baker had set the route for the train to travel straight down into the depot upon arrival from Green Lane. This was a movement which was done every weekday without mishap – but not on this occasion in 1973 !

Nice and steady does it !

The driver (who is still with us, so I will not name him) said that he drove the DMU *“nice and steady”* into the `Western` shed at about 5 miles per hour, and trundled along towards the end of the line on No.14 road.

There were no stop blocks fitted at the end of No.14 road - just `curved lugs` - and the driver didn't quite stop the DMU where he should have done. Will Hay would have been proud about what happened next

The reader should know that great care had to be taken at Mollington Street when berthing DMUs or locomotives in either the `Western` shed or the `LMS` shed because of the falling gradient from Green Lane ! On this occasion, the driver failed to brake in time to stop short of the `curved lugs` and the leading bogie of M50401 rode over them with a very loud bang and ended up with the unit's buffers almost touching the night Train Crew Clerk's office window sill. Prior to the incident, the Clerk, Bill Huckle, had been sleeping peacefully in his office chair !

Bill woke to see the driving cab of the power car immediately outside of his office window, and a very surprised driver peering down at him from the now land-locked cab!

The Clerk's exit from his chair was at a pace never before (or since) achieved by Bill ! The

resultant loud `bang` heard around the depot brought the duty Train Crew Supervisor (Alec McDonald) quickly onto the scene, along with fitter Des Moye, to see what had happened. The driver was shaken (but not stirred – to quote Des !) and a cunning plan was hatched to return the DMU to where it should have been stabled in the first place.

Retrieving the situation

Alec had been a breakdown supervisor in the past and Des had also re-railed his fair share of rolling stock. The second wheelset of the leading bogie of M50401 was just in front of the now somewhat sorry looking `curved lugs`, and the plan was to `set back` and drive the errant DMU bogie back onto the rails of No.14 road. The driver was a very willing participant in this of course as he had caused the problem !

Acting on the instructions from TCS Alec McDonald, and under the watchful eye of Des Moye, the driver `set back` the DMU and with another loud bang resonating around the depot it was safely back on the rails. By now, the `curved lugs` resembled a pair of very loose and bent teeth. Des checked the bogie and gauged the wheelsets of M50401 and declared it was `in good order`. No damage found. The 06.15 Rock Ferry to Chester will run *as booked* in the morning, Alec proudly announced to all !

Removing the evidence

However, there was one residual problem with all this. The flanges of the leading two wheelsets of M50401 had left two very straight gouge marks on the concrete floor of about one inch deep beyond the `curved lugs` – leading straight up to the window sill of Bill Huckle's office. Oh, dear !

Another cunning plan was hatched between Alec McDonald and Des Moye – fill the gouge marks with sand from the nearby de-

pot, and mix it with a `bit of oil` so it doesn't look `too obvious` !

This sand was for use in the sandboxes of locomotives to improve rail adhesion when required, and was kept dry in the depot sand-house.

The cunning plan was executed by Alec and Des with able assistance provided by the driver and Bill Huckle. Des told me later that it was like making a sandcastle from treacle ! The concoction of oil and sand was brushed into the gouge marks in the concrete to give it a final `professional` look.

A flaw in the plan

However, all participants in this saga failed to appreciate one thing in their efforts to cover up the error made by the driver. The depot lighting in that part of the `Western` shed near to Bill Huckle's office was useless. There was more light given out by a candle. It was a typical former steam shed, and was always very gloomy inside.

The inadequate lighting was their undoing. When the Shedmaster, Jack Barford (Assistant Area Manager Train Crews), arrived for work in his office at the back of the `Western` shed at 07.30, it was broad daylight !

He could clearly see the two (filled-in) tram-lines leading directly towards the Train Crew Clerk's office. The makeshift fillings, and the sorry looking `curved lugs`, now depressed and loose at the end of No.14 road, rather gave the game away.

Jack arranged for the local permanent way gang to carry out repairs to the `curved lugs` and being the thoroughly decent man he was, simply left a `Please explain` letter to Alec McDonald. Although I'm sure he knew exactly what had happened, Jack asked how the `curved lugs` had been damaged and what were the `tram lines` leading to the Train

Crew Clerk's office window.

When Alec came back into work the following evening, he responded by being completely honest about the incident.

Confessions all round

About a week later, Jack Barford spoke to Alec McDonald about the incident. He praised Alec and Des Moye for their resourcefulness, and told Alec that if he had looked at the back of the sandhouse he would have found a bag of quick drying cement. He added *"Now if you had used that cement to fill in the `tram lines` and put oil on it later, I'd have been none the wiser !".* Alec asked him what a bag of quick drying cement was doing in the depot sandhouse as this material was quite a rare, and expensive, commodity in the 1970s. Jack's reply was typical of the man himself. He said *"I bought it myself from a builder's merchant so I could fix part of the brickwork in the depot car park when I backed my car into it – so the Area Manager wouldn't see it !".*

Jack had carried out his own repairs at Mollington Street on a Sunday when it was always very quiet, so no one would see him doing it.

At that time in the Liverpool Division, there was no better railway `Boss` than Jack Barford. We were very fortunate to have him in charge at Mollington Street.

Alec McDonald, DesMoye and Jack Barford were all from the same mould. They were vastly experienced railwaymen from different backgrounds but all had the railway at heart.

When you've got to go

Another bizarre event occurred at Birkenhead Central in 1976 which could have been taken straight out of a Will Hay film. A train had just arrived at Birkenhead Central from Rock

Ferry and both the driver and guard were booked relief there. The guard requiring relief had left the train and had gone to the station messroom. The train was a regular Class 503 Mersey-Wirral electric multiple unit (EMU) with air operated electro-pneumatic doors. The train stood in the Liverpool bound platform at Birkenhead Central and the relieving guard was still in the station messroom talking to the guard who he was to relieve.

The relieving driver was in the driving cab and was talking to the driver he had just relieved who, by now, was standing on the platform before he then went to the station messroom.

The relieving driver then drove the train out of Birkenhead Central Station en route to Hamilton Square with all the train doors still open !

He was completely unaware of this, having convinced himself that he had heard the doors being closed behind him and had been given `two on the bell` to start. Given the repetitive nature of these services, it was not too difficult to appreciate how this could happen, but that was not a mitigating factor for the driver involved.

The relieving guard came dashing out of the station messroom and was swinging his arms around like a demented windmill. Too late – his train had left without him !

He immediately told the Birkenhead Central Station Supervisor, Sammy Holland, what had happened and he (Sammy) very nearly choked on his tea. Sam promptly rang Ron Williams, his counterpart at Hamilton Square, to tell him what had happened. Ron was waiting on the platform for the train to arrive at Hamilton Square, just a few minutes journey time from Birkenhead Central. As the train came to a stop with the driver's cab almost opposite where Ron was standing, the

driver dropped the window and casually said to him *“Alright Ron, how are you mate ? What’s up ?”*. Ron replied *“I’m fine driver. Is this train fully air conditioned then ?”* The driver was a little perplexed. *“What do you mean ?”*, he said. *“You’ve just come down from BC (as Birkenhead Central was always called) with all the doors open you blood idiot !”* The driver was mortified. Ron quickly went along the 3-car set to check that no one had fallen out. Thankfully, there was only a handful of passengers travelling, and no one had left the train between stations !

Mersey humour !

The driver was looking out of the drop leaf window, along the platform, thinking about what he had just done, when an elderly chap, who had just alighted from the train, pointed his walking stick at him and said *“You want to get some heat in that `effin train, it’s bloody freezing in there !”*.

In the meantime, Sammy Holland was already on the case at Birkenhead Central. Using his own car, he was transporting the guard who had been left behind to Hamilton Square, so that he could pick the train up from there. The delay to the service was about 15 minutes and when Jack Barford was told about it his first question was *“Did anyone fall out of the train ?”*. He was calmness personified. When he was told that no one had fallen out, he said *“Thank god for that, we don’t want to lose any more passengers to the Mersey ferries !”*

He gave the driver a full `ear blasting` in his office afterwards, but didn’t discipline him. *“He’s learnt a harsh lesson”*, he said. *“Every other driver will learn from his mistake”*.

The driver involved was the subject of jokes galore over the succeeding weeks. He would enter a mess room and a voice would be heard from somewhere *“Close the door mate, it’s cold in here !”* or *“There’s no heat in this*

train – where’s the guard ?”. Jack Barford was right – a harsh lesson was indeed learned !

It’s worth giving an explanation as to how this incident could have occurred with the Class 503 EMU.

The train door operation was electro-pneumatic, under the control of the train guard, from a small switch panel in his brake compartment. There was no door interlocking arrangement built into Class 503 EMUs, so power and brake release was still available to the driver even with the train doors fully open.

With this in mind, and given that the driver thought he had heard the doors close behind his driving cab, and thinking that he had received the bell signal to start because of the repetitive nature of the work it is easy to appreciate how it happened.

“Seven Rocks before scoff !”

There was one job at Birkenhead Central where seven round trips between Rock Ferry and Liverpool Central were undertaken by the driver before having a break.

Given the similar gradient profile between Hamilton Square and Liverpool James Street stations, after about the fourth completed trip it was possible to forget in which direction you were heading until approaching the `river bed` signal between Hamilton Square and James Street. The driver could then see which station he was heading towards. I can assure the reader that this is true – I have been the driver on that particular job many times !

The Birkenhead Central drivers used to refer to that job as being the one where you had to do *“Seven Rocks before your scoff !”*. In other words, several round trips before a break was taken. I recall the first round trip between Rock Ferry and Liverpool Central started

about 07.15 and the final round trip was completed by about 11.10.

The Class 503 EMU was brought off Birkenhead Central Carriage Shed before entering service by the same driver. There was a 20-minute train preparation time given to the driver before entering service.

Modern build electric multiple units with sliding doors are fitted with door micro-switch and brake interlock systems which do not permit a train to be moved with a door open or allow the brakes to be released under normal circumstances.

8D Association members may have travelled on a Class 14x or Class 15x 'Pacer' or 'Sprinter' Unit in the past when the train has entered a tunnel or another train has passed it at speed and a brake application has occurred.

This is caused by air compression literally 'rocking' a train door into a slight lateral movement. In turn, this causes the door micro-switch to 'sense' that the offending door is not fully closed. When that happens, the train brakes are applied via the brake control wire. In my day, when I was working the Class 503 Mersey-Wirral EMUs at Birkenhead, we had no such luxury !

Buffer-locked tank wagon

When I was a Deputy Train Crew Supervisor at Mollington Street, there was one occasion when a four-wheel tank wagon became buffer-locked when being berthed by a driver in Hinderton Field siding located just above the depot fuelling point.

The contents of this tank were to be discharged into the depot static fuel tank to fuel locomotives arriving at the depot. This movement was made about once per week.

The driver was driving a Class 08 shunting locomotive No.08665 and instead of using

the automatic brake on the locomotive (which would apply the brake on the locomotive and tank vehicle simultaneously via the brake pipe) he used the locomotive straight air brake only. This is a totally independent system used to brake the locomotive individually. The weight of the loaded tank wagon directly behind the locomotive caused the buffer faces of the tank wagon to rise above and beyond those on the locomotive. When this occurs, it is known as buffer locking. The tank wagon became derailed.

If this occurred today there would be a full internal investigation with causal factors highlighted and several recommendations made to avoid any repetition. Given also that a vehicle loaded with diesel fuel was involved, it would also be classed as a '*Rail Dangerous Goods Emergency*'.

I still have copies of the original paperwork from that incident which occurred at Mollington Street on the 24 August 1976.

The tank wagon was subsequently jacked up to allow the buffer faces of the wagon and locomotive to clear each other and it was then lowered back onto the rail and the shunting movement was then completed. The re-railing of the tank wagon took about an hour.

The reader will not fail to appreciate how much simpler and straightforward it was to deal with minor incidents as they were then, compared with what actually takes place today.

To be continued...
Dennis J.Flood.

Churnet Valley Railway

8D Coach Visit to Preserved Line on Saturday 10th August

The coach will depart from Victoria Square, Widnes at 08.30, picking up at Warrington Bank Quay Station at 08.50. Our reserved CVR train journey starts from Froghall at 12.35, arriving back at Froghall at 14.38. The return coach will leave at 16.00.

In addition to those 8D members who have already booked for this event, a limited number of additional places have become available. Any member now wishing to take part in this trip, is asked to contact Committee Member Neil Wilson at the email address shown below. The cost for members will be £5, which includes coach and rail travel. If seats are available, non-members may travel on the coach for £5, but must pay their own CVR fare.

neilwilson1560@gmail.com

8D Events Programme

10.00 - Saturday 15 June 2019 : The Winsford & Over Branch, Whitehouse to Winsford

A guided walk led by Paul Wright

Meet at Whitehouse station, Clay Lane Nr Cuddington

Saturday 29 June 2019 : Halton Curve and Rail Ale Trip to Chester

An opportunity to travel over the Halton Curve and then enjoy an afternoon sampling the fine beers of Chester whilst discussing all things railway with like-minded individuals. Meet at Runcorn station at 11.45 for the 11.57 train to Chester, or outside the main entrance to Chester station at 12.30.

19.00 – Tuesday 9 July 2019 : The Blackbrook Branch Part 2

A guided walk led by Paul Wright along another section of the Blackbrook Branch. This walk will follow on from where the last one left off. Meet at the Boardmans Lane/Chancery Lane road junction.

10.00 – Saturday 3 August 2019 : The Mersey Railway a Guided Tour

A guided tour of the routes of the historic Mersey Railway. The tour will involve travelling by train between Liverpool Central, Rock Ferry and Birkenhead Park. Points of interest will be visited along the way. Meet by the ticket barriers at Liverpool Central station.



Where was it ? (March edition of 'On Shed')

Again, Arthur Turner was first to correctly identify the location. The tail lamp and a cunning logic involving head-code and clues that I hadn't even realised were there, convinced Arthur that this was the west curve at Earlstown - he was right ! At the front end of this 'North Wales Coast Express' in 2010 was 6201 'Princess Elizabeth'.