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On Shed

Celebrating 40 Years
1981-2021

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Summer 2021

Welcome

to **On Shed**, the official journal of the
8E Railway Association.

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[Front Cover: Newly repaired and repainted, the Crewe Heritage Centre's flagship locomotive and first of the class to be preserved, Class 47 D1842 resplendent in its original livery courtesy of Locomotive Services at Crewe Diesel Depot. (Photo: Mike Lenz)

This page: This year marks the 55th anniversary of the closure of the North Cornwall line. Known by enthusiasts as 'The Withered Arm' here we see a single car DMU on a Padstow working having just crossed the Little Petherick Creek girder bridge. (Photo: Colour Rail)

From the Editor. Mike Lenz

Well what a year this has been with lockdown putting paid to meetings, both monthly and committee, but hopefully the light at the end of the tunnel is now in sight. It is hoped that by the time you read this we will have had our first committee meeting and will have a program of meetings in place for 2021-2022. Hopefully we will find a way to celebrate our 40th Anniversary once 'normality' returns.

All contributions for the winter issue to reach me by December 21st 2021.

Chairman's Report. Mike Lenz

As I write this the lowdown restrictions have been relaxed, however, with the virus still active, and despite the vaccination program, we feel that it is too early to consider meetings at this time as speakers may still be reluctant to travel to venues for some time yet. We therefore feel that we look to restart our indoor fixtures from the AGM in January 2022 and provide a program of meetings through until May. There is always an option to follow some other societies by presenting programs using Zoom, but this may not be suitable for all our members. We would welcome any feedback re this method, and if sufficient support is shown then we could try a trial meeting in the autumn. Please let me know via email if you feel this would be worth trying.

Obviously we had hoped to undertake some event(s) to celebrate our 40th Anniversary but the current uncertainties has meant we have not been able to put anything into place. The likelihood now is that we will hope to do something during the spring/summer 2022.

It was sad to see the recent incident at Northwich Station where a partial collapse of the wall on the platform side above the booking office has substantially damaged the canopy to the extent that the whole area of the booking office has now been demolished along with the adjacent canopy section. Currently the booking office area is fenced off whilst decisions are taken as to what to do with the building. It is hoped that this can be restored to original appearance but somehow I have my doubts. I foresee the likelihood of a modern glass fronted replacement and attendant modern canopy. It all comes down to costs at the end of the day so we will have to wait and see. Although I did go down a couple of hours after the collapse, I was only able to obtain a couple of images from the top of the station steps as the area had been fenced off at that stage. Demolition commenced during the evening and was completed by the next morning. One can only be thankful that no one suffered any injuries from the collapse. (Photo: Mike Lenz)



Membership Report. Brian Burgess

Membership renewals will be due from the 1st September 2021 and the following is the current breakdown of numbers;

Life/Honorary Life Members: 21. Full members: 37.

Fixtures Programme 2020-2021. Jon Penn

At the present time your committee has decided that we will not hold any meetings this year and look to start afresh from January 2022.

Any changes will be shown on the website and Facebook page.

Photo Puzzle.



Can you identify the location of the derelict station in this photograph. (Photo: Mike Lenz)

Answer at the bottom of page 14.

Memories of 8E early years. Photos by Mike Lenz

Seen here in 1986 is the last locomotive to be serviced by 8E members at Northwich, albeit in the goods yard following the closure of the shed in November 1984. Several of our members had a long time association with the locomotive as part of its support crew.



Servicing of locomotives then moved to Chester and included our involvement with the GWR150 Celebrations and locomotives such as the LNWR Coal Tank seen here.



Memories of Birkenhead Mollington Street MPD, the Men and the Area. Part 3.

By Dennis Flood

I will start this article where I left off in Part 2 with a few more comments about driver Jan Quartermaine, who sadly passed away in October 2015.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Liverpool Divisional Civil Engineer was short of permanent way staff and, as a result, he asked for volunteers for able bodied staff from any department to work Saturday night/Sunday shifts on the permanent way. This work was, effectively, shovelling ballast and the rate of pay from 0001 until 2359 on a Sunday was paid at the standard 'time and three quarters' rate. There were a number of Birkenhead Mollington Street drivers who volunteered for this work and continued doing it for many years until it ceased in the late 1970s. They would be paid twelve hours at a railman's rate of pay, earning about as much as they would do for a 'standard' eight hour Sunday driving turn.

Jan Quartermaine was one such driver who volunteered for permanent way work when he was not driving trains on a Sunday. He was nicknamed 'Time and Three Quartermaine'! Jan lived in Ainsdale and a lot of the permanent way maintenance and renewal work took place in the Halton/Frodsham and Wirral areas, with the former Great Central line between Bidston and Shotwick/Dee Marsh also being a location which required maintenance and renewal. This was as a result of the constant 'wear and tear' of the permanent way by the Bidston Dock (North Side) to Shotwick iron ore services using this route. These services had a gross laden weight of some 1000 tonnes and were all loose-coupled. Jan would be given his instructions on a Friday, along with any other driver who volunteered to work, for the coming Sunday. Whilst a few drivers had motor cars, Jan did not drive and would often ride his bicycle from Ainsdale to the site of work, which could be anywhere from West Kirby to Halton Tunnel and most places in between!

As I said in Part two, he rode his bicycle on one occasion from Ainsdale to Halton Tunnel only to find that the job he had volunteered to work on was cancelled! He then rode back to Ainsdale, a round trip distance of some 60 miles. Fortunately for Jan, the 'Assistant Permanent Way Inspector' of the volunteer drivers, Alan Corfield, would ensure he was paid eight hours for making the effort. Quite right! The furthest he rode his bike, to the best of my knowledge, was from Ainsdale to Guilden Sutton, just outside Chester, on the Chester to Mickle Trafford and Helsby line. Jan was a 'gentle giant' who was as strong as the proverbial Ox, hardly surprising given all that mileage he rode on his bike! He was a real character and news of his sudden passing at the age of 66 in October 2015 was a shock to all who knew him.

The 'Assistant Permanent Way Inspector' Alan Corfield was a remarkable individual and a great friend of over 40 years. Alan was one of the first driver volunteers to work on the permanent way from Birkenhead Mollington Street and worked almost every Sunday for nearly ten years. As a result of this he became indispensable to the Hooton Permanent Way Inspector Jimmy Davies, who gave him the honorary title of 'Assistant Permanent Way Inspector'! Alan would arrange the number of volunteer drivers required for the various permanent way jobs on a Friday prior to the Sunday required and then make all the arrangements with Jimmy Davies. He was a truly superb organiser.

Alan Corfield's pedigree as a footplateman was second to none. He started his railway career in 1944 at Edge Hill, as a labourer and engine cleaner at the Shed but volunteering as a labourer working on the foundations of the current Lime Street Signal Box for a few weeks because a labourer earned 6d more than an engine cleaner, which is two and a half pence in today's money, he was always frugal! He worked his way through the links at Edge Hill and was firing in the Top Link on all the 'double trip' jobs at the Shed. He would work to London from Lime Street with a Stanier 'Duchess' or 'Princess Royal' Pacific, 'Royal Scot' or 'Jubilee' on the top named expresses of the day from Lime Street, such as The Red Rose, The Merseyside Express and the Manxman, The Shamrock and Empress Voyager. The latter would depart from Liverpool Riverside Station and the 'big engine' would attach at Edge Hill for the journey to London Euston. Upon arrival at Camden 'barracks', where he would lodge with his driver until working back to Liverpool the following day, he would wash and clean up and then go train spotting. The two 'local' depots he would visit were Willesden and Old Oak Common, all this after shovelling seven tons of coal on a three and a half hour journey from Liverpool! Both of these depots were, effectively, connected by a short walk along the Grand Union Canal.

Alan came to Birkenhead Mollington Street for his job as a driver in 1964. It was there that I met him and he became a life-long friend and the finest railwayman I have ever had to pleasure to work with. He gave me one piece of advice which I never forgot. He told me to always try and make an hour's overtime a day and this would pay the full tax on the weekly earnings and thus be able to pick up the full basic rate of pay – I always did my best with that advice! He became a Footplate Inspector in 1982 and continued in that role until retirement in 1994, after fifty years of sterling railway service.

There is a book, now long out of print, by Model and Allied Publications Limited, published in 1973 entitled 'The LMS Duchesses'. A run is tabulated in that publication of a 0755 London Euston to Liverpool Lime Street service in 1957 with Stanier 'Duchess' Pacific No.46229 'Duchess of Hamilton' with Edge Hill driver Bert Aitchison and Fireman Alan Corfield in charge. This was an astonishing run and when I first read about this I asked Alan what he remembered about it. His reply was quite typical of him 'A truly magnificent locomotive, a magnificent driver...a magnificent fireman, oh, and the coal wasn't too bad either! Alan Corfield was indeed a remarkable character and a great railwayman. It was a privilege for me to have known him and to have worked with him.

There were several other 'Top Link' Edge Hill men who transferred to Birkenhead Mollington Street for their jobs as drivers in 1964 as well. There was John Kay, Tommy Roberts, Syd Lomax, Ken Davies and Don Buckley. All of these men were top class railwaymen and brought a wealth of route knowledge to Birkenhead which included Carlisle, Leeds and London. There was one job, in particular, at Birkenhead which became a good job because of these men. It was the Hooton to Bathgate car train from the nearby Vauxhall car plant. Birkenhead men only normally worked this train from Hooton to Warrington and were then relieved and travelled back. However, the arrival of the ex-Edge Hill men changed all that and this train was then worked to Carlisle. When this train ran the depot Roster Clerk would inevitably roster an ex-Edge Hill driver so it could be worked forward to Carlisle. A big increase in productivity. There was a code used by Control Offices in the 1960s and 1970s to indicate that relief was required by both driver and guard at a specific location and this was known as 'Eager and Alert'. 'Eager' for the driver as he was just that for his relief (but only if he didn't want to work any overtime!) and 'Alert' for the Guard, because he certainly wasn't! The Train Crew Supervisor at Mollington Street took great delight in advising the Lime Street Control Office that both driver and guard on the Hooton to Bathgate car train were NOT 'Eager and Alert' at Warrington but

were 'Eager and Alert' at Carlisle! I was with driver Ken Davies one Saturday morning in 1971 and we had to take a locomotive 'light engine' to Crewe and await the arrival of an empty tank train from Salfords (near Gatwick Airport) for Stanlow. We stood in the loop at Crewe South for about an hour, awaiting the arrival of the tank train when the signalman told us that the train was being left at Willesden as there was no forward locomotive available to work it forward to Crewe. Driver Davies promptly told the Crewe South Junction signalman that he knew the road to Willesden so off we went, via Crewe Station, to Willesden 'light engine' and worked the train back to Stanlow. We were on duty for 13 hours, a nice little earner! I often thought afterwards about the Crewe South Junction signalman, he must have wondered just how a Birkenhead Mollington Street driver knew the route from Crewe to Willesden, particularly since Birkenhead men did not work south of Crewe, only towards Etruria and Stoke on Trent! Ken, of course, was an ex-Edge Hill man.

When drivers were being trained on diesel traction at Mollington Street, the 'basic' locomotive was the English Electric Type 4, later known as the Class 40. Basic training on this type of locomotive was undertaken at Wigan Springs Branch diesel training school, which I myself attended. We were trained by maintenance staff at Wigan, which I thought was excellent. Once this training was completed and a driver was 'passed as competent' to drive it by the depot Footplate Inspector, further training on traction such as a Brush Sulzer Type 4 (Class 47), Brush Type 2 (Class 24/25) and 350hp shunting locomotive (Class 08) was then undertaken. With the exception of the 350hp shunting locomotive, a 'conversion' course was given from the basic traction, the English Electric Type 4 (Class 40) to the other types and it usually involved a week's training on each type. A driver was then 'passed as competent' to drive these types as well by the depot Footplate Inspector.



Class 40 #394 seen here with a train of oil tanks. (Photo: Mark Coyle)

The 350hp shunting locomotive training was given `on the job`, which meant that a Mollington Street driver who was training on this type went with a regular Ellesmere Port driver for one week and familiarised himself with the locomotive. I was with one particular driver who was quite useless, when I opened up the side doors on the bodyside to have a look in the engine compartment he was very surprised to see it had an engine! There were three regular shunt drivers at Ellesmere Port during my time at Mollington Street. These drivers were restricted to local shunt working only, normally because of a medical restriction and they only worked within the Ellesmere Port area. They were paid exactly the same rate as a main line driver, which I always thought was fair because the biggest fear of any driver, at that time, was having a yearly medical and then being found with an ailment which could lead to a loss of his job, such as failing eyesight or deafness. These men were known as `green card` men, which got the name from placing a green card on a railway wagon when a defect was found that didn't stop it from remaining in service but needed attention as soon as possible! We had one chap at Mollington Street, Arthur Downes, who was totally deaf, and wore a hearing aid the size of an old transistor radio, long before hearing aids were allowed! Arthur was confined to shed duties at Mollington Street and had been since 1954, when he came off the main line, until he retired in 1982. How this was never picked up managerially was quite amazing, our depot boss Jack Barford turned a `blind eye` to this so Arthur was very lucky to have such a boss as Jack. Not to mention our sympathetic ASLE&F trade union branch secretary as well, Albert Riley, who was also part of the `cunning arrangements`!



Class 03 #03189 seen here at Mollington Street TMD. (Photo: Wikipedia)

When I became a deputy Train Crew Supervisor at Mollington Street in 1975 one of the funniest things I did with Arthur was to keep him away from the depot for a day whilst the London Midland Region General Manager paid us a `royal` visit. I told him to stay at home and I did any shed shunting that was required. The General Manager never asked me why

I was always disappearing from the office when he was there! Arthur used to play chess against himself very regularly in what was known as the `Bank Head` cabin, opposite

Number 5 road, at Mollington Street, and regularly lost to himself! He was the depot's watch and clock repairer, he had plenty of time to carry out this work and was very good indeed. Everybody at Mollington Street brought their watches and clocks to Arthur, he couldn't understand a word that was being spoken so it was easier to write down the problem with the watch or clock and leave it with him. That was fine until he started to mix up the written repair instructions! Arthur came from a railway family, his Father being a driver at Knighton, on the Central Wales Line. He himself lived in lodgings near Mollington Street during the week and returned home to Knighton at weekends. I used to shout loudly when I spoke to him, until I realised he could lip read!

As I said in Part 1 of these articles, the work we then had at Birkenhead was not spectacular but regular. An interesting job, operationally, was the Whittington tanks from Stanlow. The booking on time for this job was 1300 and the departure from Stanlow Oil Refinery Fuel Rack was 1415. What made it special was the shunting which had to be done before finally marshalling the train at Whittington Sidings. Whittington is located between Gobowen and Shrewsbury on the former Birkenhead Woodside to Paddington main line. The fuel terminal remains open today but is no longer rail served. The fuel now arrives by pipeline. Upon departure from Stanlow, the train would proceed to Hooton where it would `reverse` and then depart for Whittington via Mollington, Chester and Wrexham. The train would travel over Gresford Bank, near Wrexham, and then make a special stop at Gobowen South to pick up the signalman, who had `switched out` Gobowen South Signal Box prior to the arrival of the train. The signalman would travel in the cab with the driver until arrival of the train at Houghton Sidings, between Gobowen and Shrewsbury. The train would be brought to a stand by the driver at the Houghton Sidings up home signal and the signalman would alight and `switch in` Haughton Sidings signal box. Special signal box instructions allowed this to take place with a train already `in the section`. Once this was done, the signal for the up loop at Haughton Sidings was `cleared` and the train would then proceed into the up loop and the locomotive was then detached and went forward out onto the up main line. With the signalman's permission, the locomotive was then driven `wrong line` in the down direction over the up main until it was standing at the up home signal once again. The signalman then authorised the locomotive to move forward back into the up loop and recouple to the train. When this was done, a brake continuity test was carried out and the locomotive propelled the train out from the up loop to the up main line and then through a crossover between the up main line and the down main line and then stop outside Haughton Sidings Signal Box. The signalman would then `switch out` Haughton Sidings Signal Box, as per his special signal box instructions, and with the down section signal having been cleared as part of this special arrangement the train would then proceed forward to Whittington Sidings. Upon arrival at Whittington Sidings, the travelling Gobowen South signalman would then alight from the locomotive and operate the small Ground Frame at Whittington to allow the train to set back into the siding, the `release` for the Whittington Ground Frame being given by the signalman at Whittington Low Level Signal Box. Once the points were set for the movement by the operation of Whittington Ground Frame the guard would then take over and oversee the shunting movement into the sidings. The loaded train was then berthed in Whittington Sidings. Any discharged tank wagons were then picked up by carrying out another shunting movement and, following a brake continuity test, the empty train then departed for Weston Rhyn, dropping off the Gobowen South signalman at Gobowen South Signal Box, who would then `switch in` again, after departure of the tank train and continue with his duties. The train would then be signalled into the down loop at Weston Rhyn for the driver to have his personal needs break (PNB) for twenty minutes. Upon completion of this the driver would then take the train forward to Hooton via Wrexham, Chester and Mollington and following a `reverse` movement at Hooton, then return to Stanlow, some six

hours after departure earlier in the day. I always enjoyed doing this job because of the amount of very interesting train work which was involved in it. The job itself was subsequently lost at Mollington Street and for a short time the train for Whittington came from the BP Oil Refinery at Llandarcy near Swansea in South Wales, until that itself ceased. Llandarcy oil refinery itself has now been closed and the site cleared. The service to Whittington Sidings from Stanlow ran three days a week on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On a Tuesday and Thursday the train ran to Aberystwyth and Birkenhead Mollington Street men worked it to Shrewsbury.

To be continued...

Gone but not forgotten.

The now demolished signal box at Mouldsworth seen here in January 2006. (Photo: Mike Lenz)



Travelling to 8E: A Continuing Journey. Alan Ashurst

The advent of the 1980s was, as we mentioned last time, set to see a significant revival of steam on the national network, assisted significantly by the redoubtable BR Chairman Sir Peter Parker whose assurance that "Steam warms the market for railways" provided something of a spur to those in the industry who for long had known this to be so.

Thus it was that, in the aftermath of the Rocket 150 celebrations at Bold/Rainhill and the Great Exposition at Manchester Liverpool Road, more trips and excursions were being promoted than could ever have been dreamed of just a few years earlier. This though required servicing and maintenance facilities to be provided for locomotives which might have to start and finish their outings at locations at some distance from their home depots in the independent sector such as Carnforth, Bridgnorth, Haworth, Didcot etc. Northwich found itself very well positioned in this respect, being convenient for access to the North & West route at Chester, the Trans Pennine route via Stalybridge & Leeds (and onwards to the Settle & Carlisle) and the Hope Valley line to Sheffield. With an enthusiastic local Area Management team at Northwich and a ready made depot at 8E where steam era infrastructure still remained (plus the ability to turn engines on the Middlewich and Greenbank triangles) it was hardly surprising that the depot was chosen as the base for locomotives involved in the Steam 150 excursions between Manchester Victoria and Liverpool Lime Street through the summer and early autumn of 1980. This proved very successful, especially so as local AM David MacIntosh was able to recruit a small ad-hoc band of local enthusiasts to do some of the more mundane donkey work on and around 8E shed, with the by now significantly reduced number of professional staff that a wholly dieselised railway offered no longer being able to do so themselves. The effectiveness of this was such that more special excursion steam trains were promoted throughout the winter of 1980/81 and into the following spring and summer, with steam traction being booked either on or off the trains at Northwich or nearby locations.



BR(M) Class 8P locomotive #46229 'Duchess of Hamilton' on shed at Northwich on its only visit following attention to a hot axle box on the tender during its return from Crewe Works to York, which resulted in the short stay at Northwich where it received the attention of the formative members of the Association and left in the state which became known as "8E Clean". This earned much praise from David Jenkinson who was the NRM's representative with the locomotive. (Photo: 8E Archive collection)

Although notionally aware of all this, it was only a random chat with my friend Pat Mullee which was to set me onto an intimate involvement with this great adventure. He happened to call into Bank Quay Travel Centre one afternoon and we struck up a conversation about these matters after he had admired my photo displays advocating travel by train to such places as the Severn Valley and Worth Valley railways, and thus began my introduction to steam servicing. Although I had known Pat for some time as one of the local railfans around Bank Quay, we were only casual acquaintances as such. Anyway, on asking me to guess where he had been a few days earlier cleaning 'The Duchess' (46229) I was surprised to find him telling me all about the little band of like-minded souls who had been recruited at Northwich for this purpose.

Further advising that Alf Draper's Black Five (4)5305 was to be an imminent follow up visitor to Northwich, he issued an invitation to join the group at an impending planning meeting for this at the Greenbank Hotel. I drove down there with Phil Creaghan on the night in question and we were warmly welcomed by those attending. We were impressed by the level of detail being gone into with the impending Black Five visit and so we both registered to offer our assistance too. I will never forget the evening a couple of weeks later, walking down the little path on the south side of the shed to be met by that unmistakable, inspirational aroma of steam and hot oil, then to make that abrupt left turn at the end of the shed wall and witness 5305 quietly simmering away with a collection of class 25 and class 40 locos as stablemates. What true magic was this? A working Stanier loco, at a working BR depot, in a seemingly time-warp situation from over a dozen years before, yet unfolding before my very eyes in the dusky evening glow. I knew almost immediately that I had been captured and that there could never be any going back!



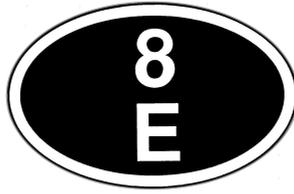
LMS 'Black Five' 5305 following attention by members of the Association, awaiting its turn on the Trans Pennine Pullman excursion from Northwich. (Photo: Mark Roughsedge)

The rest I guess is pretty well known to most of you, so no need to go into much detail here. The 8E Association was formally constituted as a fully fledged support group and many more adventures were to follow, with many enduring friendships made. Meanwhile I joined the LMR HQ Train Planning team at Crewe in October 1981 (almost 40 years ago...how did that happen?), which of course made me something of a link for 'insider information' on loco movements and suchlike. Many lengthy, tiring but extremely happy days (and nights) were to follow in an escapade I could only have dreamed of as those fires were being damped down at Lostock Hall and elsewhere in the North West in August 1968. What a roller coaster it has been ever since!

8E Loco servicing - continuing the tradition.

It is rewarding to think that 40 years on, the 8E tradition of servicing main line steam continues to this day, all be it now based at Crewe Heritage Centre, where a number of 8E members remain actively involved as volunteers. Here we see former 8E Fixtures Officer and committee member Bob Meredith assisting with the cleaning and preparation of BR(M) Jubilee Class locomotive number 45690 'Leander' (a regular visitor to Northwich in the early 1980s when it was in LMS Maroon livery) at Crewe Heritage Centre on Saturday July 17th 2021 in preparation for its run to Holyhead the next day. Bob was also a long time support crew member for Paddy Smith's LMS 'Black Five' 5407. (Photo: Gordon Heddon)





The 8E Railway Association

Founded 1981

President	Graham Roughsedge
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Vice President	Colin Worrall

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Vice Chairman	Dennis Flood
Vice Chairman	Roger Morris
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On Shed Journal

Contributions for future issues are welcomed.
Please submit these to the editor at the monthly meeting or by email to the address below.

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[Rear Cover: As a number of our members are also bus enthusiasts, here is a North Western Bristol RE with Eastern Coach Works body seen at Crewe Bus Depot during a Heritage Centre Bus running event in 2010. (Photo: Mike Lenz)]

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