



On Shed

The Journal of the 8E Railway Association



£1

Winter 2024

Welcome

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

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Front Cover: Replica Baldwin 2-4-2 tank locomotive E762 'Lyn' seen at Woody Bay station in winter 2022
(Photo: Desi Halliday)

This page: A locomotive very familiar to our members from its many visits to Northwich in the
Association's formative years, BR Jubilee Class 4-6-0 #45690 'Leander,' is seen here on the pit at
Crewe Heritage Centre in July 2023 before working an excursion. (Photo: Robert Meredith)

From the Editor. Mike Lenz

The time has come to put pen to paper, or should I say fingers to keyboard, for another issue of 'On Shed'. I would like to thank Paul Tench and Dennis Flood for their contributions to this issue. If any of you have suitable images and text then I would be pleased to feature them in future issues.

All contributions for the summer issue to reach me by June 21st 2024.

Chairman's Report. Mike Lenz

My final year as your Chairman has seen a full season of meetings thanks to the work of both Jon Penn, who stepped down earlier in the year and Andrew Macfarlane, who has been co-opted onto the committee as the new Fixtures Officer. We have also had two summer outings to Stalybridge and to Chester for the 'Making Tracks III' Exhibition. This latter trip saw an excellent turnout of members and was enjoyed by all who attended.

Your committee has continued to meet a couple of times during the year to ensure the Association's operation continues to run smoothly. It has been my pleasure to serve you these past seven years and whilst I will continue as your journal editor and will, for the time being, maintain our website and Facebook page, I look forward to having more time to pursue my interests outside of the Association.

Membership Report. Brian Burgess

Membership currently stands at 51 overall at the end of November. There are still a small number of renewals overdue.

Fixtures Programme 2024.

Tuesday 9th January - AGM and slide presentation.

Tuesday 13th February - Martin Welch - Steam in the Peak District.

Tuesday 12th March - Mike Corbett - From Northwich to Wolverton - A railway engineering story.

Tuesday 9th April - Bob Barnard - The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway - Then and Now.

Tuesday 14th May - Stephen Gay - East Coast Main Line - Part 2.

Tuesday 11th June - Stalybridge station summer outing.

Tuesday 13th August - Summer visit to be confirmed.

Tuesday 10th September - To be confirmed.

Tuesday 8th October - To be confirmed.

Tuesday 12th November - To be confirmed.

Tuesday 10th December - To be confirmed.

All meetings start at 7.30pm in the Gladstone Club, Station Road, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 5RB. Free refreshments during the break. Meetings close at 9.45pm.

Admission is free to members, non-members pay £3 per visit.

Photo Puzzle.

Can you identify the location in this photograph.

Answer at the bottom of page 14.



News from Crewe Heritage Centre. Mike Lenz

The Heritage Centre recently announced the appointment of four new Trustees and the new Centre manager as seen here from left to right;

Edmea Gori, Centre Manager.

Tara Sundaram, Marketing & Communications Trustee.

Stuart Mackay, Visitor Operations Trustee.

Katey Goodwin, Curatorial Trustee.

Mandy Pritchard, Health & Safety Trustee.

The Centre's part time manager, Mike Lenz, will be stepping down at the end of April 2024 after 17 years in the role. He has seen many changes in that time and the Centre is now very much on the path to becoming a fully accredited museum in the coming years.

(Photo: Mike Lowcock)



By Rail to the four Cardinal Points of Europe.

Paul Tench

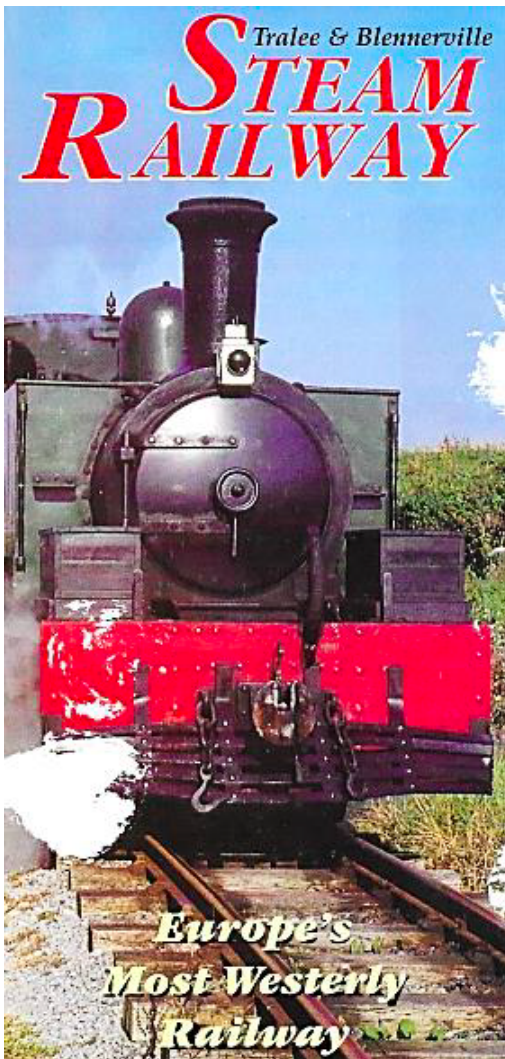


For the most part of the 1990s I worked for an American chemical company and was based in offices in Leuvan, which is about 20Km east of Brussels with inputs into factories in Widnes in the UK, Herentals on the Belgian/Dutch border, Chalon sur Soane in Central France and in Ferentino in Southern Italy. Latterly I also had responsibilities for warehouses in Tarragona in Spain, Dublin in Ireland, Helsingborg in Sweden and Istanbul in Turkey. It was a great job as not only did I get to return home in the UK most weekends, but I also had numerous opportunities to travel extensively across Europe and wherever possible and practical I did this by rail.



Not surprisingly I soon gained an intimate knowledge of the European rail systems, and I persuaded my wife, Gill, that an annual rail holiday would be a great way to see new places (we have broken this tradition only 3 times in 33 years!) Early on, for £69 each we had the freedom of Scotland's railways for a week and the following year it was the 'Jetfoil' to Bologne (2 years too early for the Channel Tunnel!) and then the Train à Grande Vitesse (TGV) from Paris Gare de Lyon to Lyon Part Dieu – the 500Km 2-hour journey was fine, but Gill got a bit bored, and I could see her point that it was a bit like being in an aeroplane, the setting off (take off) and coming into the destination (landing) were fine but the bit in the middle was well, boring. Then it was Norway and Sweden to see the midnight sun (we were north of the Arctic Circle for just two nights, the first night was heavy rain at midnight, but the second night was excellent, and the following year we took the train(s) to Southern Spain.





February 1997, where shall we go this year? Map of Europe on the kitchen table and we suddenly realised that Narvik in Norway was Europe's most northerly station and Algeciras (where we end up on our Spanish wanderings) was Europe's most southerly station so why not do east and west we thought? So that year it was off to Ireland, still troubled times in Belfast but it was a lovely city (Gill flatly refused to stay overnight in the Belfast Hotel Europa, at the time it was Europe's most bombed hotel, but we did get to ride the 'Peace Train' from Belfast to Dublin and the from Dublin it was southwest to Tralee which we thought was Europe's most westerly station, it was only when I went to pose for the photo at the buffer stops that I spotted another railway on the other side of the road heading westwards. Turned out to be the Tralee and Blennerville Steam Railway (the only remaining part of the famous Tralee and Dingle Tramway) and so we took the steam train to Blennerville the next day. We rode in a wonderfully restored wooden carriage behind Loco No.5, the last surviving Tralee & Dingle engine retrieved from a railway museum in the United States. (sadly the Tralee & Blennerville closed completely in 2006)

Our 1998 'East Station Trip' proved to be a bit of a problem.... Quite where is Europe's most easterly station? We figured it was somewhere like Yekaterinburg on the Trans-Siberian line in the Ural Mountains but we were looking for a holiday so we decide that Istanbul would be our 'most easterly station'!

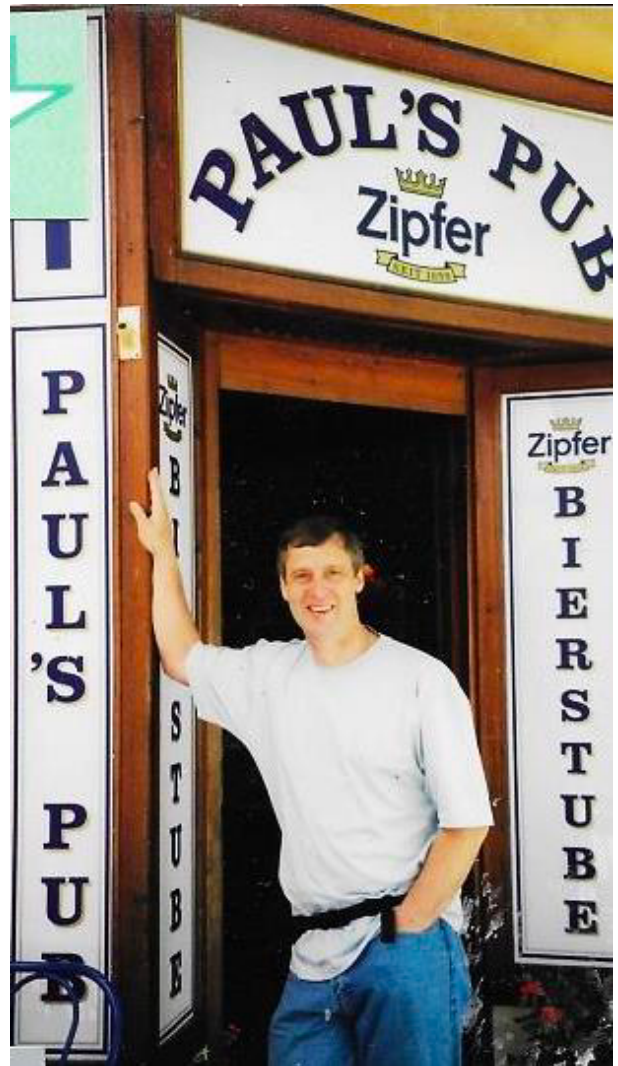
22nd May, early afternoon, Crewe Railway Station Travel Centre – "Two single tickets to Istanbul please" I requested to the clerk behind the counter... somewhat bemused, she smiled so I continued "We believe you have an envelope from Knutsford Travel/Ultima Travel with our reservations." and so armed with a fist full of tickets and reservations we headed for platform 5 for the first leg of our journey down to London and then on to Folkestone for an overnight stay. Although it would have been great to cross the Channel using the newly opened Channel Tunnel, we decided to use the soon to be discontinued SeaCat ferry service from Folkestone to Boulogne and the connecting 'boat train' to Paris and, once again, take a leisurely stroll around the tourist spots in central Paris. 115 years after it was first created, we were actually going to travel on the Orient Express! The two city names most prominently associated with the Orient Express are Paris and Istanbul and Istanbul was exactly where we were heading but sadly, over the years, the start points, end points, routes and rolling stock changed significantly. Yes, there is the luxurious VSOE (Venice - Simplon Orient Express) and until 1977 there was Direct Orient Express from Paris to Istanbul via Venice and Belgrade and the Arlberg Orient Express



to Athens but in 1998 we were on the nightly scheduled service ÖBB EN 262/263 Orient-Express from Paris to Budapest, not quite the fabled luxury of the more famous versions but a perfectly acceptable 'EuroNight' sleeper service. The next day saw us on the banks of the Danube in the capital city of Hungary, Budapest. Communism in the country crumbled in the early/mid '90's as the Russian army's departed eastward and by 1998 western style democracy was starting to flourish which indirectly resulted in easy travel for us as we no longer required visa's. Buda on the west bank of the Danube is connected to Pest on the east by a series of modern bridges (all the original bridges were blown up by the Germans in 1944) but almost all of the magnificent historical buildings remained intact in this beautiful city many of which we saw from the top of the Buda Castle Funicular Railway. Paul's Pub, by the way, was just across the road from the funicular railway station.

Late afternoon and we were boarding our final eastbound train at Budapest Keleti station. Tickets in hand we found our carriage and as we were looking for our compartment three men barged down the corridor making a big commotion as they squeezed passed us. After they had gone, we settled into our very nice compartment and as the train was leaving the station, I suggested to Gill to get our passports out of her bum-bag ready for inspection. The commotion in the corridor was a diversion to

steal our passports (and one credit card), arrggghhhh! So, the situation is we are on a train for which the next stop is in Romania with no passports and, equally importantly, no visa (this was in our passports), and no way initially of getting help! Nobody could speak English and life was getting difficult, really difficult! So, I walked down the train asking if anybody could speak English and I met István, not only was his English better than mine he also had a mobile phone, our hero, István told us not to worry, he had a friend in the Budapest police force and he would sort something out, and he let Gill use his mobile phone to cancel her credit card, phew! And so, for the next hour, we sat looking out of the window and wondering what would happen next, and what happened next was that our 'non-stop' train stopped at Szolnok, a provincial town some 120Km east of Budapest, adjacent to a deserted platform except for the seven police cars and a dozen armed police guarding the train. 'The police will look after you now' said István with a cheery wave from the train as it departed the station. We are in the back of a police car, frightened and Gill is close to tears, and the policemen in the front cannot speak English but can see we are worried, so they decide to switch on the radio, and playing on Hungarian radio at 7:36 that night was Bobby McFerrin's 'Don't Worry – Be Happy' which from that day forward will always be known to me and Gill as the 'Szolnek Song.' The police car passed through the electronic gates into a concrete police compound and as we emerged from the car the gates closed with an ominous clang, we were then ushered into the police station where the desk sergeant, in very broken English invited us to sit down, use the tea/coffee machine, and let us know that an interpreter will be with us soon. Three hours later, after Gill had signed our 'confession' we paid US\$50, and we were driven to a local B&B and the next morning taken back to Szolnek station and given train tickets back to Budapest.



First stop, the United Kingdom embassy for new passports. After the form filling, we were told to come back in a couple of hours, next stop the 'travel' centre' at Keleti station where we were able to get berths on that night's sleeper. Then back to the embassy for our passports, then onto the Romanian embassy and Bulgarian embassy for new visas. Oh what a fun day we had! We knew the catering on Eastern European trains was poor, so we stocked up on food and drink (plenty of gin!), before once again venturing onto the platform at Keleti station with our tickets firmly grasped and our passports down Gilly's knickers!

Nearly 40 hours after finally leaving Budapest we eventually arrived at our most easterly station, Marmaray, Istanbul. We felt dirty (very unpredictable water supplies on the train and we were loath to use our reserves of bottled water to wash with), we were hot and very hungry as we disembarked the train onto a very crowded, and hotter still platform. At the exit to the platform, we pulled to the side to let the crowds pass and, by chance, stood next to a chap advertising 'quality accommodation' less than 2Km from the city. After explaining we were very hungry, he offered to drive us there for a full English breakfast and then we could decide on the accommodation. So, in a big American Cadillac(!), we went under the Bosphorus in the Avrasya Tunnel to Harem in the Asia quarter of Istanbul. The breakfast was excellent, but the accommodation was less so, so we paid for our breakfast and headed back to the city (and Europe) via the Sirkeci ferry. A couple of tram stops up the road from the ferry terminal we found a nice 'western style' hotel. Very bedraggled and with rucksacks on our backs we approached the reception desk in a rather upmarket and plush lobby. I enquired if they had a room available for a couple of nights, and the concierge pointed to the tariff board and suggested we might be more comfortable in a back-packers hostel about a kilometre along the road. After he had checked my company gold credit card and my (newly issued) passport his demeanour rapidly changed, and we settled into a very nice suite on the top floor of the hotel, time to relax! Time for the touristy stuff, mosques everywhere and we were reminded of them 5 times a day when the ezan (call to prayer) is recited by the muezzin through loudspeakers mounted on the top of each mosque. We did see the Blue Mosque, the Spice Market, took another look at the Bosphorus, and sampled some great Turkish food and that was it, 36 hours in Istanbul, now to get home!

Back to Marmarey station in time for our overnight sleeper train to Sophia, pausing quickly for a photo outside the Orient Express buffet bar on platform 1. The simple way home would be a taxi to Istanbul airport and a direct flight to Manchester, but where's the fun in that when you are on a train 'adventure'? I had plenty of air-miles to use up and there was a daily flight from Sophia in Bulgaria to Gatwick and also an overnight train from Istanbul to Sophia, so our return journey was for the bargain price of just £35.91 (£31.61 for a first-class sleeping berth and £4.30 tax on our flight). The guard showed us to our 2-berth cabin and was very insistent (by sign language) that our rucksacks should be on the top bunk away from the door, we did not understand why but we did it anyway. Just after midnight and we were just entering slumberland when the train stopped at the border town of Kapikule and everybody had to get off the train and walk through passport control (and pay US\$20 for an exit visa, never thought of that when we sorted our bargain return train/plane!). Then back on the train and back to sleep. Clickety click, clickety click, clickety click, click! It was 5:30 in the morning and the extra 'click' was somebody opening the lock on our door! I jumped out of bed and jammed my foot against the door and thankfully no further attempt was made to break-in to our cabin, phew! We found out afterwards that the night trains in Bulgaria are known as 'bandit trains' where unsuspecting tourists are systematically robbed of their possessions, which was why the guard told us to put our rucksacks away from the door! And so, lunch in Sofia, taxi to the airport, and a BA flight to back to Gatwick and a train home (another expense forgotten about on our bargain return journey!).



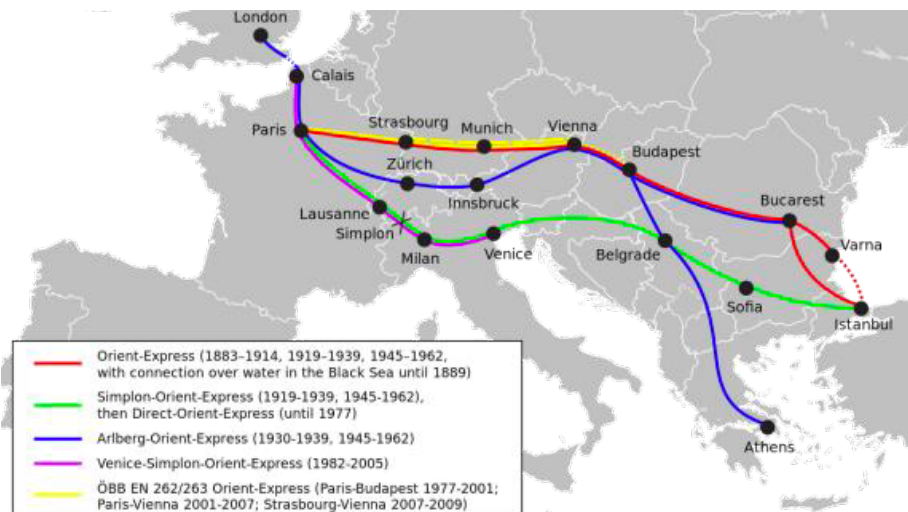


And that was it, the four railway cardinal points of Europe done and for a short while we were slightly reluctant to take another foreign rail journey so, for 1999, we decided to take the Great Western Railway advice from a 1920s advert and see our own country first and we travelled every line in Cornwall. As the memories of Budapest faded, we decided for 2000 to check out the famous luxury South African Blue Train, watch this space in the next issue of On Shed for further railway adventures in South Africa.

Post-script

During the 1990s we also travelled by rail to four cardinal points of the UK (Thurso in the North; Penzance in the South; Arisaig in the West and Lowestoft in the East) and in 2013 I eventually travelled, by rail, to Yekaterinburg on the 'Trans-Mongolian' train (but that's another story), so finally completing the 'set'! On my travels I have met other nutters with 'cardinal point' obsessions, for example I once met a retired headmaster from Wiltshire who played the local church organ, but his claim to fame was not only he had played the organ in the UK's cardinal cathedrals, but he had also played the organ in the world's most northerly cathedral (Tromso in Norway) and most southerly cathedral (Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands). And, just in case you are wondering, the highest public toilet in Europe is at the top of the Jungfrauoch in Switzerland (11,332 feet) and the lowest is level 3 in Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands (-42 feet), and I've been to both!

Images from Wikipedia



Memories of Birkenhead Mollington Street MPD, the Men and the Area. Part 7. Dennis 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 and applying a BR 'double arrow' transfer to the door just below the window to hide a few 'ripple' marks in the metal.

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 2354. This was the 2240 from Rock Ferry to Helsby arriving at Helsby at 2317. Departure from Helsby as empty coaching stock (ECS) was at 2322. 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 always called. The incident which occurred involving the 2322 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 particular occasion in 1973! The driver (who is still with us so I will not name him) drove the DMU, in his own words '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 but just 'curved lugs' and the driver did not quite stop the DMU where he should have done. Will Hay would have been proud about what happened next...

Great care had always 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 buffers almost touching the window sill of the office of the night Train Crew Clerk Bill Huckle, who was fast asleep in his office chair! Bill awoke to see the driving cab of the power car looking at him through his office window, along with a very surprised driver doing very much the same! Bill moved out of his chair rather rapidly to say the least. This was probably the fastest move he ever made during his entire railway career! The resultant loud 'bang' heard around the depot brought the duty Train Crew Supervisor (TCS) Alec McDonald quickly on 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. Alec had been a breakdown supervisor in the past and Des had re-railed his fair share of rolling stock as well. 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!

Upon 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, the 'curved lugs' by now resembling 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 0615 Rock Ferry to Chester will run as booked in the morning Alec proudly announced to all!

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', and 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 depot sand house 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 carried out by Alec and Des with able assistance provided by the driver and Bill Huckle. Des told me it was like making a 'sandcastle from treacle'! This concoction of oil and sand was brushed into the gouge marks in the concrete to give it a final 'professional' look. However all participants in this saga failed to appreciate one thing in their efforts to cover up the error made by the driver and this was the depot lighting in that part of the 'Western' shed and in the area near Bill Huckle's office. It was useless, there was more light given out from a candle. It was a typical former steam shed and was always very gloomy inside. This inadequate lighting gave the 'game' away when the Shedmaster Jack Barford (Assistant Area Manager Train Crews) arrived for work at 0730 and walked along to his office at the back of the 'Western' shed in daylight. He could clearly see the two filled-in 'tram lines' leading directly towards the Train Crew Clerks office, the attempts to fill them in, and the sorry looking 'curved lugs' depressed and loose at the end of No.14 road. The game was up! 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 asking how the 'curved lugs' had been damaged and what were the 'tram lines' leading to the Train Crew Clerk's office window. He knew exactly what had happened. When Alec came back into work the following evening he responded by being completely honest about the incident. Jack Barford eventually spoke to Alec McDonald about the incident a week later. He praised him and Des Moye for their 'resourcefulness' and said to him that if he had looked at the back of the sand house he would have found a bag of quick drying cement. 'Now if you had used that cement to fill in the 'tram lines' and put oil on it later I would have been none the wiser!' he said. Alec asked him what a bag of quick drying cement was doing in the depot sand house as this material was quite a rare, and expensive, commodity in the 1970s. Jack's reply was typical of the man himself. 'I bought it myself from a builder's merchant in West Kirby (where he lived) 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!'. He had carried out the work on a Sunday when it was always very quiet at Mollington Street – so no one would see him doing it. There was no better railway 'Boss' than Jack Barford in the Liverpool Division in those days and how very fortunate we were having him in charge at Mollington Street.

Alec McDonald, Des Moye and Jack Barford were all from the same mould. Vastly experienced railwaymen from different backgrounds but all three had the railway at heart.

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 mess room. The train was a regular Class 503 Mersey-Wirral electric multiple unit (EMU) with air operated electro-pneumatic doors. The train was stood in the Liverpool bound platform at Birkenhead Central and the relieving guard was still in the station mess room 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 was standing on the platform. This driver then went into the station mess room.

The relieving driver then drove the train out of Birkenhead Central Station en-route to Hamilton Square, with all the train doors 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 mess room and 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 very nearly choked on his tea. Sam immediately rang

his counterpart at Hamilton Square, Ron Williams, to tell him. 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 said to him 'All right Ron, how are you mate?'. 'What is up? Ron said to the driver 'I am fine driver, is this train fully air conditioned then?' The driver was a little perplexed, 'What do you mean?' he said. 'You have just come down from BC (as Birkenhead Central was always called) with all the doors open you bloody idiot!' The driver was mortified. Ron quickly went along the train which was a 3-car set, to check that no one had fallen out. Thankfully there were only several passengers travelling and no one had fallen out of the train. 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. 'You want to get some heat in that 'effin train, it's bloody freezing in there!'. Sammy Holland was already 'on the case' at Birkenhead Central. He was transporting the guard who had been left behind to Hamilton Square in his own car to 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?' Jack Barford was calmness personified. When he was told no one had, 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 has learnt a harsh lesson' he said. 'Every other driver will learn from his mistake'. The driver involved, who is still with us today, was the subject of jokes galore over the succeeding weeks following the incident. 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 is no heat in this train, where is the guard'! Jack Barford was right, a harsh lesson was indeed learnt!

It is worth giving an explanation as to how this incident could and did occur involving a Class 503 EMU. The train door control 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 the driver thinking he had heard the doors close behind his driving cab and receiving the bell signal to start because of the repetitive nature of the work it is easy to appreciate how it happened. There was one job at Birkenhead Central where seven round trips were undertaken continuously by the driver between Rock Ferry and Liverpool Central 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 be it Hamilton Square or James Street! I can assure the reader that this is very true, I have been the driver on that particular job several times! The Birkenhead Central drivers used to refer to that job as being the one where you had to do 'Seven Rocks before you're scoff.' In other words several round trips had to be completed before a break was taken. I recall the first round trip between Rock Ferry and Liverpool Central started about 0715 and the final round trip was completed about 1110. 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.

8E 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 (it only needs one) into a slight lateral movement and this causes the door micro-switch to 'sense' that the offending door is not fully closed somewhere in the train causing the train brakes to apply via the brake control wire. In my day when I was working the Class 503 Mersey-Wirral EMUs at Birkenhead had no such luxury!

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, which is a totally independent brake used to brake the locomotive individually, and 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 and become what is known as being 'buffer locked' with the tank wagon being subsequently derailed. If this occurred today there would be a full internal investigation with causal factors highlighted and several recommendations made to avoid a further repetition. Given that a vehicle loaded with diesel fuel was involved it would also be classed as a 'Rail Dangerous Goods Emergency'. I have provided 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 more simple and straight forward it was to deal with minor incidents as they were then compared with what actually takes place today!

Local Rail News. Andrew Macfarlane

NORTHWICH STATION BUILDING TO BE HANDED OVER AT THE END OF JANUARY

The rebuilt station building at Northwich is due to be handed over from Network Rail to Northern at the end of January. The rebuilt booking hall incorporates the date stone "CLC 1897", which was salvaged from the building which collapsed without warning on 18th May 2021.

FIRST 323 MOVES FROM WEST MIDLANDS TO NORTHERN

The first of 17 class 323 EMUs to transfer from West Midlands Trains to Northern, 323208, headed north under its own power from Soho to Allerton on 28th October. This will strengthen Northern's fleet ahead of the 319s being stored (the first, 319375, has already been withdrawn). The next WMT 323 is due to transfer to Allerton in February.

TWO STOCKPORT BRIDGES TO BE REPLACED

The Greek Street and Stockholm Road road overbridges in Stockport are to be replaced over a nine-month period starting in January 2025. The Greek Street bridge crosses the cutting south of Stockport station and the Stockholm Road bridge crosses over the Chester and Crewe lines. Provision is to be made for two possible additional tracks at Greek Street and one additional track at Stockholm Road (adjacent to the Chester line) for a possible future Stockport to Manchester Airport tram-train service.

HS2 PHASE TWO SCRAPPED

On 4th October the Prime Minister announced that the Government would be scrapping Phase 2A (Lichfield to Crewe) and Phase 2B (Crewe to Manchester) of HS2. The high speed line from Euston will now end at Handsacre Junction north of Lichfield and HS2 trains from Euston will use existing tracks to get from there to Manchester Piccadilly. There is also still doubt over the HS2 station at Euston in terms of the number of platforms to be provided and the likely need for private sector funding to build the station.

DB CARGO TO WITHDRAW CLASS 60s

DB Cargo are to withdraw their remaining class 60 diesel locos. The Tunstead to Lostock limestone hoppers will switch to class 66 haulage with shorter trains. As a result there will be one extra loaded train per week. Four class 60s are being retained until April. Ten class 66s are being re-gearred to effectively make them into class 66/6s to replace the class 60s.

TICKET OFFICES SAVED

In a welcome move, the Government announced on 31st October that they would not be proceeding with the plan to close most ticket offices in England. 750,000 comments on the proposals had been received by Transport Focus and London Travelwatch.

ALTRINCHAM PLATFORM 4 WAITING ROOM NOW OPEN

The new waiting room on platform four at Altrincham opened on 23rd October. The room is much bigger than the previous waiting room and is heated. There is a bookcase containing books and leaflets which can be borrowed or taken free of charge.

TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS SERVICE REDUCTION

There was a reduction from four to three TPE trains each way between Manchester and Leeds in the off-peak from the start of the new timetable on 10th December. TPE withdrew their class 68 and Mark 5a locomotive-hauled trains at the December timetable change.

WIRES TO GO LIVE TO STALYBRIDGE

The overhead wires between Manchester Victoria and Stalybridge and between Guide Bridge and Stalybridge will go live as from 1st January 2024.

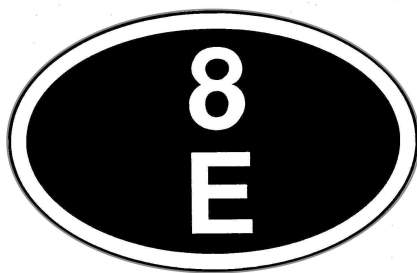
METROLINK SERVICE CHANGES

There were changes to Metrolink services as from 25th September. The Media City to Etihad Campus service was reinstated and Eccles trams now avoid Media City during the day on Monday to Saturday. Late night trams were reinstated on Friday and Saturday nights running every 24 minutes from 23.30 to 01.00. Sunday services were reduced from every 12 minutes to every 15 minutes but some Sunday services are now operated by double trams. Sunday trams now leave Altrincham at 06.50 and then at 05, 20, 35 and 50 minutes past each hour until 23.35.



Metrolink Tram 3010 approaches St. Werburgh's Road station in July 2011. (Photo: Mike Lenz)

Photo Puzzle: The photo shows BR King Class locomotive #6000 'King George V' alongside Chester No.6 signal box during a visit to Chester in the early 1980s. (Photo: Garry Brookes)



The 8E Railway Association

Founded 1981

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On Shed Journal

Contributions for future issues are welcomed.
Please submit these by email to the address below.

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[Rear Cover: Recently returned to original InterCity Swallow livery is Europhoenix owned Class 91 #91120 currently on long term loan to Crewe Heritage Centre as seen here shortly after completion of its repaint. (Photo: Mike Lenz.)

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