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Barrowmore Model Railway Journal



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Published on behalf of Barrowmore Model Railway Group by the Honorary Editor:
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Contributions are welcome:

- (A) as e-mails or e-mail attachments;
- (b) As a 3.5in floppy disk, formatted in any way (as long as you tell me if it's unusual!); disks can be provided on request;
- (c) A typed manuscript;
- (d) A hand-written manuscript, preferably with a contact telephone number so that any queries can be sorted out;
- (e) A CD/DVD;
- (f) A USB storage flash drive.

Any queries to the Editor, please.

The **NEXT ISSUE** will be dated September 2010, and contributions should get to the Editor as soon as possible, but at least before 1 August 2010.

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Copies of this magazine are also available to non-members: a cheque for £8 (payable to 'Barrowmore Model Railway Group') will provide the next four issues, posted direct to your home. Send your details and cheque to the Editor at the above address.

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The **cover illustration** for this issue is a photograph of the waiting shelter on the station at **Hope Village** on the former Wrexham Mold & Connahs Quay Railway, in about 1966. This image was scanned from a 35mm colour transparency – one of a set of six taken on the line "about 1966". I cannot remember now where they came from, and have no idea of the actual date or the photographer's identity. The station is now a shadow of its former self (the common bus-stop style of provision, although in its way, well kept) and this has prompted me to investigate it further: a visit to the Flintshire Record Office is indicated! More later, I hope.

Forthcoming events

(2010)

12/13 Jun. 2010: Chatham show ("Mostyn" is appearing).

26 Jun. 2010: 7mm running track (American), Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

10 Jul. 2010: 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

7 Aug. 2010: 7mm running track (American), Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

21 Aug. 2010: 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

25/26 Sep. 2010: Scaleforum, Leatherhead ("Mostyn" is appearing).

2/3 Oct. 2010: Manchester show at the **Armitage Centre, Fallowfield** (new venue).

9 Oct. 2010: 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).

29/30/31 Oct. 2010: Merseyside show (Pacific Road, Birkenhead).
30 Oct. 2010: 7mm running track (American), Llanbedr (see Editor for details).
20 Nov. 2010: 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).
20/21 Nov. 2010: Warley show (NEC).
26/27/28 Nov. 2010: Wakefield show.
4 Dec. 2010: 7mm running track (American), Llanbedr (see Editor for details).
11/12 Dec. 2010: Wigan show.

(2011)

May 2011: ExpoEM, Bracknell ("Mostyn" is appearing).

(The Editor welcomes details of other events of railway interest for this column)

Our web-site address is: www.barrowmoremrg.org.uk


(Also of interest is: www.mostynhistory.com)

Letters to the Editor

Extract from a letter from *BMRJ* subscriber **Simon Caldwell** of Dewsbury:

"... we have recently taken delivery of our latest [RTR N gauge] wagon ... which is a steel-bodied gunpowder van in the livery of the Great Northern Railway. The vans have quite a distinctive appearance, being white with red-oxide coloured lettering. This is the first vehicle which we have produced in a pre-grouping company livery, and with there being very few RTR models available in pre-grouping liveries in N Gauge (or any other scale for that matter) the extent of the market is something of an unknown quantity. However the reaction so far from our customers has been very positive..."

And here is an appropriate excerpt from the Pennine Wagons website (www.penninewagons.co.uk)

	<p>PENNINE WAGONS LIMITED EDITIONS</p>
	<p>£9.95 each (including P&P within the UK)</p>
	<p>PW008 Great Northern Railway Steel-bodied gunpowder van. White with unshaded red-oxide lettering and white roof.</p>
	<p>IN STOCK NOW</p>

"Back in the golden reign of Queen Victoria, long before governments thought that playing with trains was part of their remit, the railways of Britain were run by a colourful selection of

independent companies. Some were only small but some were mighty, and one of the mightiest of them all was the proud Great Northern Railway. Its visionary chairman Edmund Denison hired engineer William Cubitt to build a main line from London to York, and by 1852 it was up and running. As their network spread, passengers could travel direct from the GNR's new London terminus at Kings Cross to all the main towns and cities of Yorkshire. Denison retired in 1864 to be succeeded by Henry Oakley, who commissioned Patrick Stirling to design a new generation of passenger locomotives, and by the 1870s the GNR's express schedules were amongst the fastest in the world. But like all railways, the passenger trains made the headlines but the goods trains made the profits, and the GNR had a vast fleet of wagons to carry all kinds of freight imaginable. Most of these were humble wooden-bodied coal wagons, making the GNR and its shareholders wealthy by carrying trainloads of black diamonds south from the pits of Yorkshire to the hearths and furnaces of London. But not everything could be carried in a coal truck, and more specialised loads needed special vehicles to transport them. Our model is a gunpowder van, used for carrying explosives and munitions, and it goes without saying that these loads needed to be handled very carefully indeed. In an era where wood was the standard material for passenger coaches as well as goods wagons, these vans were made of steel. Inside they were lined with copper, so that a railwayman's hobnailed boots couldn't strike a spark. Vehicles with hazardous loads were usually painted up in very distinctive colours to make their presence obvious, and the GNR reversed their normal goods livery to paint gunpowder vans white with red-oxide lettering. These wagons would have been a familiar sight across the GNR network, which at its height extended from Liverpool to the Norfolk coast, thanks to joint ventures with neighbouring companies. During the dark days of the First World War they were even run attached to passenger trains, incredible though this may seem in our modern Health and Safety world. In the post-war Grouping of 1923, the GNR was absorbed into the newly-created London and North Eastern Railway, but their wagons would still have carried the old GN colours for a good few years before the LNER got round to repainting them. And of course, on today's heritage railways the liveries of another era run again. Bring some pre-grouping style to your layout with our GNR gunpowder van.

This wagon is produced in association with the Going Loco model shop of Wakefield, and is also available for purchase from their retail premises in Potovens Lane or from their stand at exhibitions [or direct from Pennine Wagons via their website]."

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Scalefour news is the newsletter of the Scalefour Society, and their issue no.167 of May 2010, included the following letter; it is reproduced here courtesy of their Editor, John Bateson:

"from Peter Tyler - "It just looks right"

I was at Ally Pally recently. Two thoughts occur. I was given a great welcome at the Society's stand and learned lots of useful tips and met other people very interested in the wheels and track on display ("it just looks right", said one lady).

It was my first view of Mostyn. What a fantastic layout! And, as I was at pains to point out to several people, gives the lie to Tony Wright's assertion that no P4 exhibition layout runs properly (so the website clip mentioned in *Scalefour News* #166 is apposite). Furthermore, one of the operators who visited our stand invited all of us talking to see the layout 'behind the scenes'. He also gave me some helpful advice on layout building. What a Society! 1800 members and that friendship, would that it happened in our 700 member car club.

Which brings me to my final point. Whoever it was from Mostyn, said "I really would advise you to get in touch with P4 people. You will encounter pain, as I did, and you will need people to help you".

E-mail from Filippo Ricci, an Italian reader of *Rail express*:

-----Original Message-----

From: filipporicci1@tiscali.it [<mailto:filipporicci1@tiscali.it>]

Sent: 08 May 2010 16:41

To: info@barrowmoremrg.co.uk

Subject: virtual Mostyn 1977

"Dear members of the BRMG,

I'm following your great layout since 2004 in the columns of Rail Express and I am astonished of the amount of care you are putting on it to recreate the summer 1977 accurately.

Compliments!

Now I am a virtual modeler using the Trainz 2010 software and I would like to create a virtual version of your layout.

My job would be much easier if you could send me a plan of the layout (scenic section) and /or drawings with measures of the station building, the goods shed and the signal box.

Since I am Italian I will be pleased to answer to any question regarding railways in my country.

I have also to thank you for the wagon diagram books, these enabled me to start commissioning a series of custom-built models for Trainz from Paulz Trainz.

Regards, Filippo."

[Richard has replied to Mr Ricci].

E-mail from Eric Gent (HMRS at Butterley):

"The last edition that you sent to HMRS has gone down really well with the modellers downstairs who were both sympathetic and rocking with laughter at the first article on preparing for Wigan. They said to say they fully empathise with them.

Secondly, regarding the horsebox trains to Northgate they said they could utilise something like that for a more exotic train on a model layout knowing that such a service existed.

What they also wanted to know was 'were the horse boxes ex-LNER?' As I was not interested in wagons /coaching stock then I can say no more to them than as the train came from the Newmarket area they were probably mainly LNER and maybe a few new BR style.

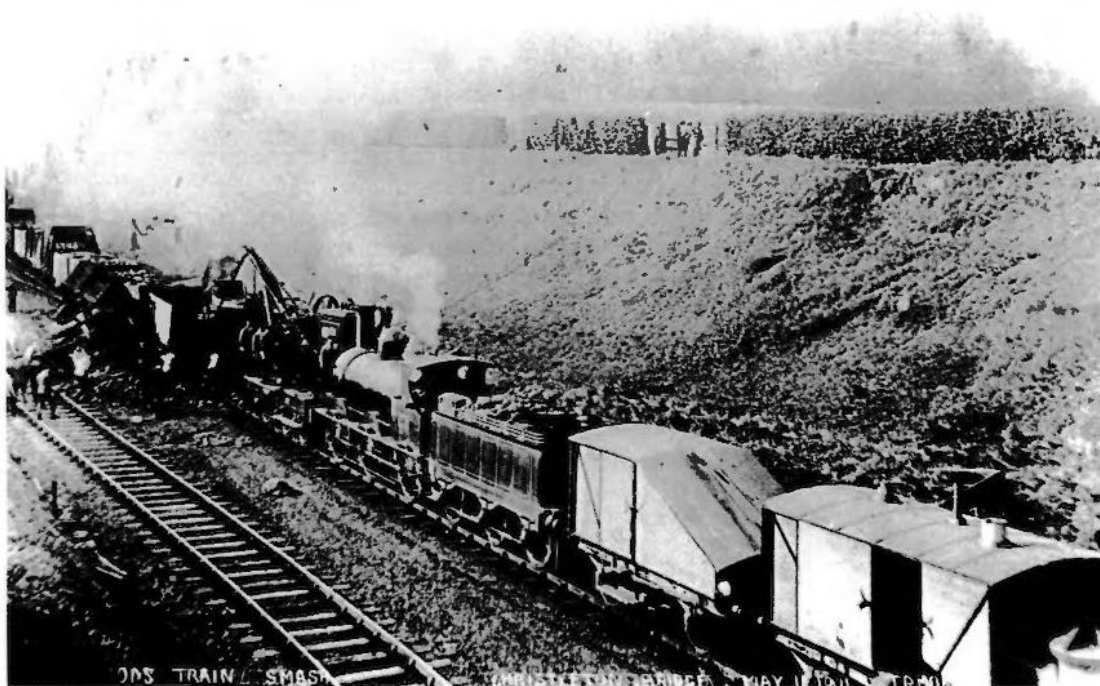
Thirdly. I am about ready to send you part 2. I have 2 old photographs and 2 photocopies of the 1954 timetable which I will post to you via snail mail later this week. Cheers for now - Eric Gent".

Christleton accident update

In our last issue we printed a photograph from John Dixon's collection (*BMRJ* no.22, pages 6/7). It was said to be of 'the Christleton accident' – but with no further details; but our request for more information was answered! - reader Chris Dawson of Little Neston remembered that he had a similar photograph, which was from a copy negative by the late Jim Peden. It is reproduced here, and seems to show the accident from a different viewpoint and with a date quoted. Of course this date has enabled further investigation – in this case, through the pages of the local newspaper, and their reportage is quoted below. Since there were no fatalities or injuries, an official investigation and report would not have been published.

The original copied by Jim Peden looks to be a commercial postcard, taken by a 'T. R. Morgan'; I would think that the same photographer was responsible for the print owned by John Dixon – but who can be sure! Our thanks to Chris Dawson for solving this query.

Norman Lee, our resident L.N.W.R. expert, tells me that the locomotive is a DX 0-6-0 goods engine; the vehicle immediately behind the tender with the sloping roof is a 'runner' for the breakdown crane (used while the crane was travelling to the site of the accident to protect the crane jib, and as a tool-van). The crane has been shunted next to the derailed wagons.



'Goods train smash. Christleton Bridge. May 11 1911. T.R.Mor[gan?]' Jim Peden collection C4547.

[From "The Chester Chronicle", 13 May 1911:]

"Railway Smash near Chester"

"A singular accident occurred on the Whitchurch and Crewe railway line yesterday (Thursday [11 May 1911]) morning. A goods train was running towards Chester, and when near the Christleton signal box, by some unknown means, the axle of one of the trucks parted, and seven trucks were derailed, blocking both the up and down lines and damaging the way considerably. The accident occurred between 4 and 5 a.m. A breakdown gang was immediately dispatched from Chester, and clearing operations were commenced, and at noon the spot was cleared. Much inconvenience was caused, however, owing to the delay, there being a large amount of traffic on this line. The difficulty was overcome by conveyances being arranged between Waverton and Chester, and trains running forward serving local stations as far as Crewe and Whitchurch."

[On another page of the same issue of the paper, is comment on the mishap:]

"The popular version of the railway accident has been a much magnified one. The story that got passed about from one member of the public to another was that the Christleton tunnel had "fallen in" on the railway line. What had actually happened was that somewhere in the vicinity of the tunnel the axle of a privately-owned goods waggon had snapped, and that a number of other waggons had been consequently derailed and their contents scattered in confusion over the permanent way. There was, of course, a considerable dislocation and delay of the passenger traffic, while the lines were cleared of the obstruction. The passengers were conveyed to and from Waverton and city in road vehicles. It was a fortunate thing that the mishap did not occur in the tunnel, or the difficulties of clearing the way for the resumption of traffic would have been much greater and more protracted."

THE CHESTER TO DENBIGH RAILWAY – By Roger Carvell.

A Brief Review by Tony Robinson.

Just over ten years ago there appeared an article in the L.N.W.R. Society *Journal* entitled *Return to Spike Island* written by a Roger Carvell – an author and journalist (late of Flint), unknown to me at the time. The article contained a very interesting interview with an ex-Mold Junction driver and deputy Running Shift Foreman, the late Owen Hughes, along with ex-fireman Cleve Jones. As Owen had some very complimentary remarks to make about the way my father ran the shed I felt it right that I should "stick my head above the ramparts" and make it my business to thank Roger for his efforts via a reply to the article. That reply prompted the start of a friendship that has continued ever since, mainly by e-mail I hasten to add!

Most of us will be aware of the late Bill Rear's Foxline publication on the line dating back to 1992. Whilst that excellent tome dealt mainly with the geography and workings of the line, as indeed all of the "scenes from the past" series did, this new book demonstrates Rogers journalistic approach in the way he has investigated the lines 'raison d'être' and social complexities that followed its construction such as the Mold riots, local industries, sources of freight traffic etc., etc. The author has approached the subject in an incisive and enquiring

way as befits an enthusiast with a Fleet Street background. I must confess to the all too accurate coverage of the 'engineered' run down of the line's freight services, post-cessation of passenger services in April 1962, as being somewhat depressing to put it mildly, but that's the way it happened and the author should be applauded for his accuracy in portraying the events of the day!

The chapter on Mold Junction was to me of paramount interest and it pleases that I was able, in a very small way, to offer some assistance to the author's researches that contain numerous anecdotes, some humorous, some not. Numerous photographs – many unpublished previously, enhance the book and are complemented by some excellent sketch maps and plans produced, I believe, by the author himself.



Broughton & Bretton station in 1951. The station building is still there (but without the tracks), in use these days as a vets surgery. You can see it from the A5104 Chester to Mold road, where there was a level crossing, just to the east of the British Aerospace factory. Although this was the Editor's nearest railway station in his childhood, he never had occasion to use it.

An A4 hardback of 108 pages priced at £17.95 may seem a bit steep but Irwell should be praised for producing (at long last) a book of excellent quality with well reproduced photographs making it a 'must' for local history buffs, enthusiasts and modellers alike.

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Northgate Reflections (2)

by Eric Gent

[Editor's note: Eric Gent is Librarian of the Historical Model Railway Society, and author of the definitive book on *British Railways brakevans & ballast ploughs* (HMRS, 1999. ISBN 0 902835 16 5); this book proved very useful to us when modelling B.R. standard 25 ton brakes and 'Shark' ballast ploughs for our "Mostyn" layout. Eric was born in Blacon in 1939, and it was his home until 1966 – he still regularly visits his sister there.]

Passenger services from Northgate were either by the ex-CLC to Manchester Central, or to Shotton/Wrexham on the ex-GCR line. My earliest memories relate to the second route and particularly to the second station out, namely Blacon. From about 1943 I crossed the road bridge [still there – but now over a cycle-way] over the station every morning to my infant/ junior school which was just beyond the bridge. Most mornings crossing the bridge coincided with the arrival of a train on its way to Chester just before 9.00am with a Wrexham C13, C14 or N5 at the head of it. At

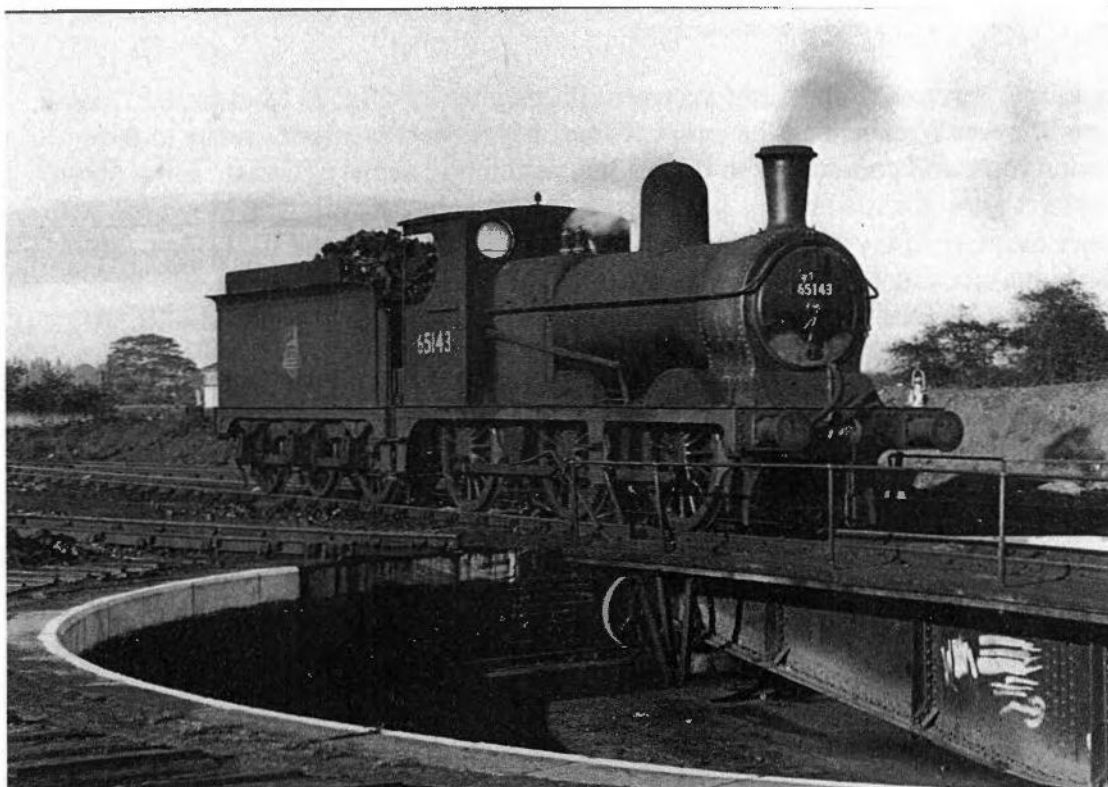


Great Central-built N5 0-6-2T no.69362 leaving Blacon with a Shotton (High level) bound train in August 1955. (Syd Wainwright photo).

other times it was the Northgate to Shotton push-pull train with either of Northgate's 67433 or 67436 [also C13 class 4-4-2Ts].

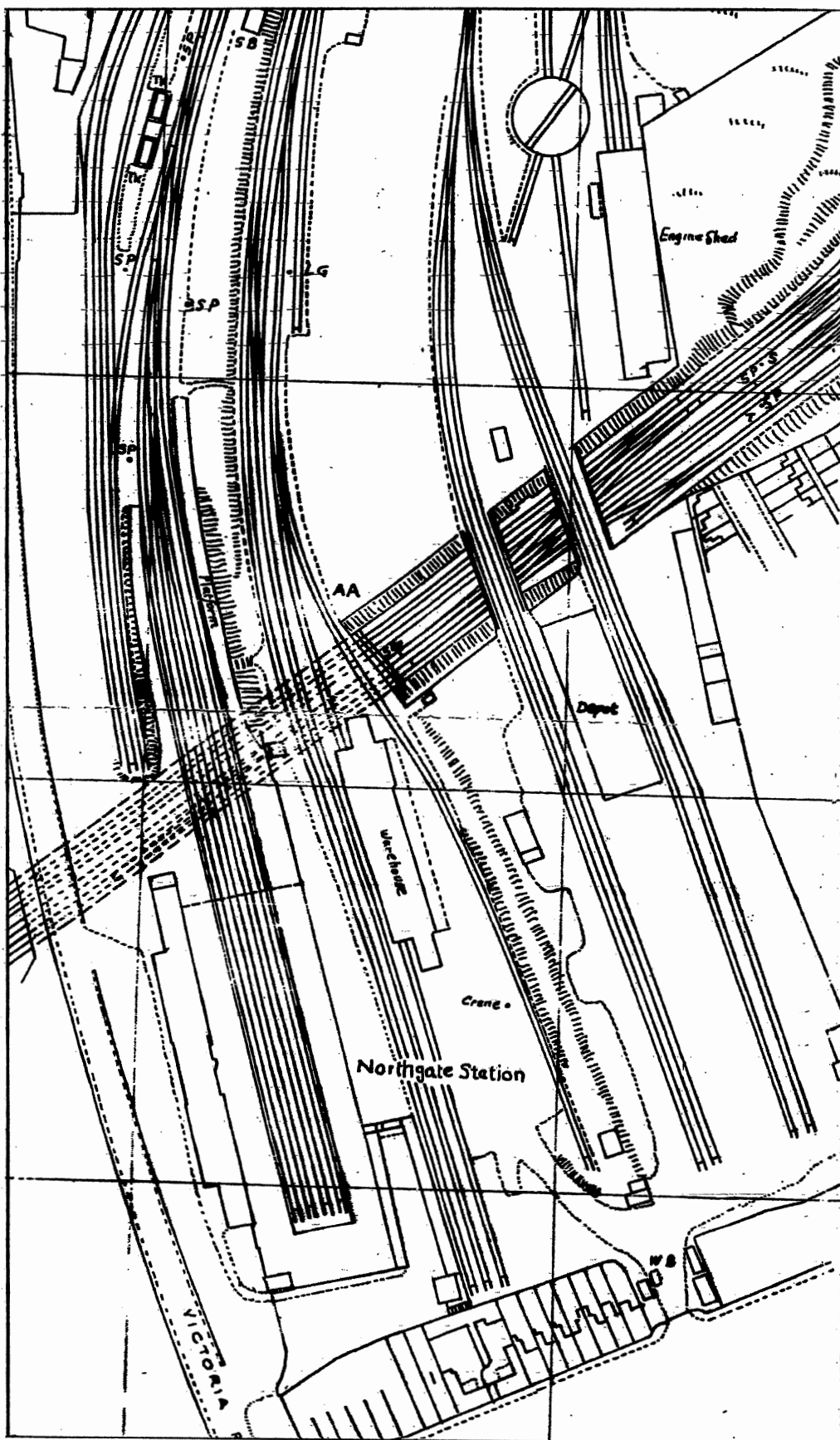
By the age of about nine I was occasionally woken up early and taken down to the station with my father to catch the train about 7.00am into Chester. The return train at 7.27 am was my father's normal train to Birkenhead (change at Hawarden Bridge & Bidston). As a regular passenger he knew the drivers well and for the return from Chester to Blacon I was sometimes allowed to ride back in the cab and be lifted up to pull the whistle as we approached Blacon station (commonsense - not Health & Safety

- ruled then!!). Here I left my father on his way to work and went home for breakfast before setting off to school. At Northgate Station these trains always arrived and left from the eastern side of the station - no platform numbers used. This side had a run round facility which was used by the Wrexham locos, but unnecessary for the Northgate push-pull services.



Perhaps one of the locomotive classes most associated with the Cheshire Lines Committee in pre-Nationalisation days: the 0-6-0 Great Central Railway-built J10. They were used on both passenger and goods trains; no.65143 was photographed by the turntable at Chester Northgate shed by Syd Wainwright on 4 September 1954. This engine was used at the time to bank goods trains from Mickle Trafford (C.L.C.) to Chester East S.C.: BMRJ no.6, page 7 explains. The burnt smokebox door is evidence of hard work!

By 1951 Northgate had been under the LMR control for three years and there was talk of replacing the ageing 67433/36 on the push-pull service. This eventually happened by May 1951 with 46643 [a L.N.W.-built 2-4-2T] being tried out. It seemed strange to have an 1890 design brought in to replace a younger 1903 design, but this has often happened when regional boundaries have been altered and the new control organisation wishes to have locos reflecting its own origins. The LNWR loco was apparently not liked and did not stay long, with the C13s resuming normal duties. The next attempt at change was with the arrival of relatively new Ivatt 2-6-2T 41234 in September 1953. Over the next few years at least 11 of these locos worked from Northgate, with 41215, 41321 and later 84001 being auto-fitted for the Shotton push-pull services. These continued until replaced by railcars. On Northgate shed on 21 February 1954 were 41215/34/35 [L.M.S. 2-6-2Ts] and 67400/33 [C13s] showing that the old and new order still existed together. Meantime Wrexham shed had acquired LMS Stanier 2-6-2Ts, including 40088, 103/26/28 which now worked the Wrexham to Northgate services, followed by BR Standards 82020/21, with 82020 being recorded on 6 January 1955.



Northgate station in about 1950; the Chester-Holyhead line passes underneath in a tunnel.

The western platform at Northgate was used by the services to Northwich/ Manchester Central. Chester used C13s 67400/13/14 for these duties whilst from the Manchester end Trafford Park (9E) ex-GCR 4-4-0 D9s and D10s and also sometimes a former GER 'Claud Hamilton' D16. I have memories of seeing these on my early morning trips with my father. The only loco number I can recollect was D9 62307 because it was named 'Queen Mary'. At Chester these tender locos were turned on the freight avoiding line down to Liverpool Road station where they also topped their water supply for their return journey. Change began on this service with the Ivatt 2-6-2Ts referred to above in 1953/54, followed by LMS 2P 4-4-0s 40580, 40675/79 on depot (all ex-6A) on 25 March 1956, but by 12 May 1956 they had in turn handed over to LMS Fowler 2-6-2Ts 40002/04/69/70. These continued to operate the service until by 25 May 1958, 42303/08 and 42415/17 2-6-4Ts (displaced by railcars



L.M.S.-built 2-6-4T no.42393 in Chester Northgate station on 18 May 1959, on a Manchester train.

elsewhere) were provided for these services. From the Manchester end GCR D11s (Directors) had replaced the D10s and the occasional LMS Compound all from Trafford Park Depot. Once again the 2-6-4Ts did not stay long on the service as by 23 June 1959 new diesel multiple units M50948/54 +56231/37 [Class 108s] had



*Class 108 dmu
At Mouldsworth
Junction, about 1959;
Norman Jones photo.*

started to work the service to Manchester and steam had finished on this route for passenger trains. These twin cars 50939-961 were based at Manchester, and Northgate depot no longer provided the stock for the Manchester services. So after many years of C13 and D10/11 domination of the Manchester service, the last five years of steam had seen first Ivatt 2-6-2Ts, LMS 4-4-0 2Ps, LMS Fowler 2-6-2Ts and finally LMS Fowler 2-6-4Ts.

To return to the services to Wrexham and Shotton: these continued with the BR/Ivatt 2-6-2Ts until January 1960 when twin powered diesel multiple units [the Derby L.W. Class 108 power-twin sets] entered service (twin powered to cope with the steep incline from Shotton up to Hawarden). The service was recast with some trains from Northgate now running to New Brighton using the eastern side of the Dee Marsh triangle. On the 8 January 1960 the following were seen - Blacon M50926/30/33 + M 51563/67/70, Sealand M50929 + M 51566, Heswall M50927 + M 51566, Bidston M50924 + M51561 and Northgate M50928 + M51565. One of the vehicles [M51562, now preserved at the NRM] had boards on the side proclaiming that it was the 1000th DMU from Derby Works. This pattern of services lasted until 9 September 1968 when the passenger service from Northgate to Shotton was closed down.

[Editor's note: Chester's Northgate station was opened by the Cheshire Lines Committee on 1 May 1875 and finally closed on 6 October 1969. The site has been re-developed to include the Northgate Arena sports and exhibition centre.

Please see also Peter York's interesting letter below, and the photograph of Rhosddu shed on page 19].

Letters to the Editor continued from page 6:

Letter from **P.E. York** of Chester:

"Have just been loaned your excellent Journal from Mr J Dixon.

I am writing to you about the excellent article by Mr Eric Gent, about Chester 'Northgate reflections', which brings back memories of a young train spotter. The Northgate was not too often visited by us spotters owing to there being not so much train activity as Chester General, unless we wanted to go round the shed. But I remember seeing my first 'Director' there (62655 'The Earl of Kerry'), of course there were more visits then and I managed to see all of the D10 and D11 class that worked on the Cheshire Lines Railway.

If my memories serve me correctly (it's such a long time ago): steam engines were banned through the new Woodhead tunnel which opened to electric traction in June 1954. Steam was banned from working through the tunnel for fear of damaging the concrete linings and all steam locos had to be hauled through by those wonderful BO BO locos.

Well, unbeknown to us spotters who turned up to witness the departure of a Chester Cup Day return special in May 1954 it would be the last time that through loco workings would apply. If I remember correctly the special left the Northgate for somewhere on the Eastern Region at approximately 6.30pm with 8 to 10 Gresley coaches and hauled by 61247 'Lord Burghley' of 36A Doncaster shed. I can still hear it climbing the Newton Hollows. As Mr Gent stated it was the last year of through loco workings. After 1954 the only Horse Box specials would have an engine change at Godley Junction, which was not too far from Heaton Mersey shed and ties in with

him seeing 44407 and 42932 on 6D. Any specials that ran after 1957 would have no doubt changed locos at Sheffield, and not South Manchester as he suggests. Hope this letter has been of some help and good luck with your Mostyn layout – it brings back many happy memories of a very busy yard. Yours sincerely, P.E. York”.

[Editor's note: I have memories of picking Mr York's brains in the early years of our "Mostyn" project (ten or twenty years ago!), when he provided very useful information about loading of various diesel classes with coal from Point of Ayr.]

**Excerpt from *Birkenhead and its surroundings* by Henry
Kelsall Aspinall, published in 1903,
Submitted by Eric Power.**

IN the 'fifties [1850s] , a presentation was made to Thomas Brassey. A banquet at the London Coffee House, Ludgate Hill, was given to him by his agents; who numbered about two hundred. The presentation consisted of his portrait in oils, and a costly shield, emblematic of his undertakings, covered with beautiful figures and other exquisite designs. Mr. Brassey invited me to attend the banquet; and to witness the presentation. It was quite a brilliant spectacle.

One of the principal guests was Mr. Brassey's agent for Birkenhead, George Meakin: whom I knew very well. It fell to his lot to propose the toast of Mr. Brassey's health. George was no speech-maker; but he rose to his feet; and addressed the gathering in these words : "Gentlemen, as a leading agent in Mr. Brassey's employ, I have to propose to you the toast of his health. Gentlemen, I am sorry to say I cannot give Mr. Brassey a character." (Roars of laughter; in which Thomas Brassey heartily joined.) George again repeated that he was sorry he couldn't give Mr. Brassey a character; and was evidently stuck; when a friend whispered: "Say, 'no words of yours can adequately express the great esteem you have for Mr. Brassey either as a man or an employer.'" George was glad to jump at any loophole out of his difficulty; so he took the hint; but his speech was a joke against him for many a day.

George Meakin was a stonemason by trade. He it was who carved the figureheads round the upper outside wall of Holy Trinity Church, together with some rather pretty heads inside. It was said the demons were placed outside, and the angels inside, the sacred edifice.

Poor fellow! he met with a sad end. He had undertaken on his own account a contract for widening a thirty miles section on the London and North-Western Railway between Rugby and Willesden. One day, he was superintending the work; and, being rather deaf, was unaware of the approach of one of his own locomotive engines. It came upon him suddenly; knocked him down; and took off his head; this painful accident was a severe shock to his many friends.

Samuel Holme, of Liverpool, engaged in some gigantic building and contracting undertakings. I well remember his firm as a boy, "Samuel & James Holme". Samuel was an intimate friend of Thomas Brassey's; indeed, he was trustee in a settlement made by Mr. Brassey in favour of his wife. One of Mr. Holme's largest schemes, for

which he made all calculations and financial arrangements, was to build a great sea-wall, with an esplanade at the top: to commence from the site of the old Wallasey Pool; and to extend *via* Seacombe, Egremont, New Brighton, Leasowe, Meols, Hoylake, and across the Dee to the Point of Ayr; with a ship canal up the centre of the Dee to Chester; in order that navigation might be kept up. However, the authorities connected with the navigation of the Mersey strenuously opposed Mr. Holme; with the result that he found it impossible to put his views into practical effect. Possibly, some such huge scheme may yet be carried through; though it is far from probable.

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"The Railway Industry in the Wrexham Area"
based on a draft article by Harold Forster, O.B.E.,
written in 1968 when he was B.R.'s Area Manager at
Wrexham

It is not difficult to imagine that Wrexham could so easily have become a railway junction of major importance - rivalling such places as Crewe, for unlike Crewe, Wrexham was the centre of a thriving industrial community long before the railways arrived.

The idea of a railway, to afford improved transportation, was borne by a man imported from Scotland, to revitalise the Brymbo Steelworks, and it is impossible to consider the Wrexham railways without first taking a closer look at this remarkable character - Henry Robertson, described as a 'Pioneer of Railways'. He was only twenty-six when in the year 1842, he made the long journey from Banff to Wrexham. At that time Wrexham was in a most distressed state. The iron works, which he had been deputed to examine, stopped and the population starving. He decided immediately that if the coal and iron trade of the area was to be revived and expanded the first essential was improved transport, so circumstances decreed that he should spend most of his time 'bringing the railway to Wales'. He was referred to as the 'Railway King' at a time when George and Robert Stephenson, not to mention Brunel, were very much alive and active in the field of railway pioneering!

It was in the year 1839, that a railway line from Chester to Wrexham was first considered - promoted by certain gentlemen of the City of Chester, who were able to appreciate the value of such a project, and who obtained the services of no less a person than George Stephenson himself. Alas, a commercial depression, which lasted until 1842, caused the idea to be shelved.

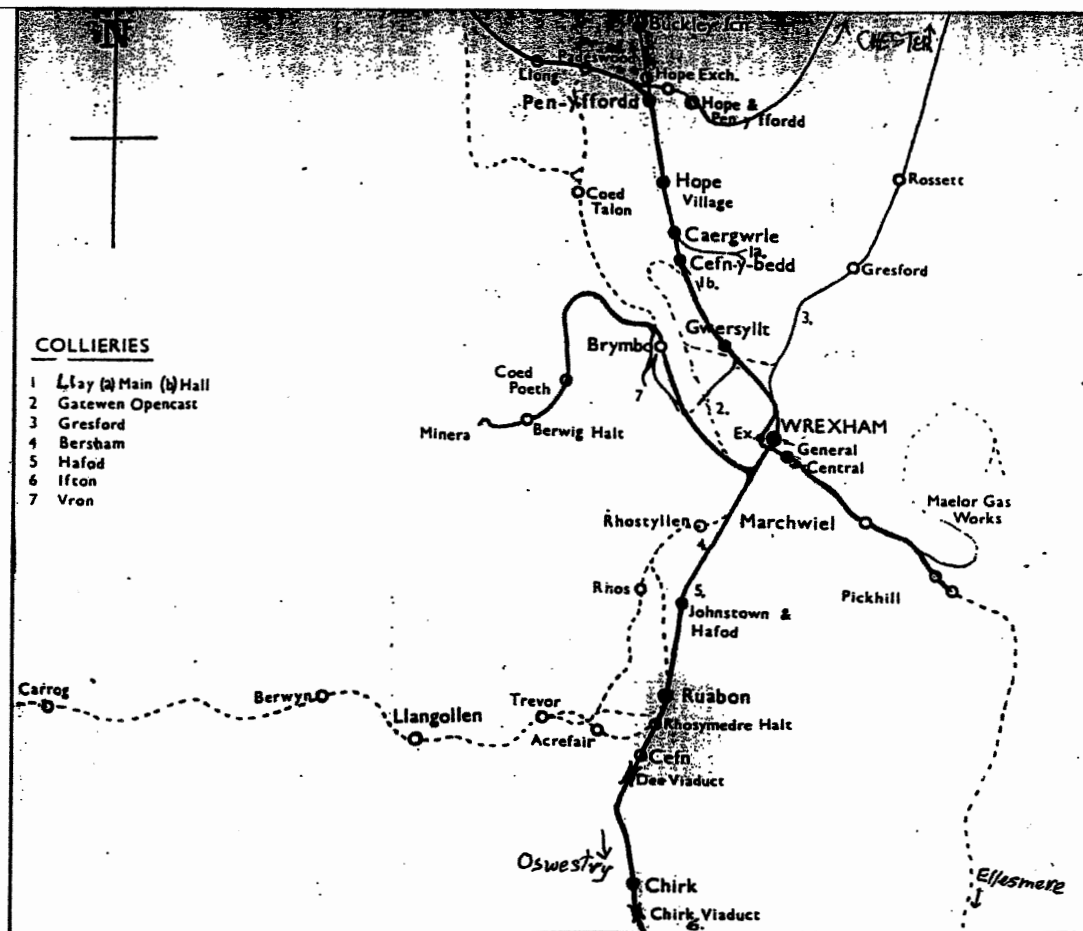
In 1842, however, the progenitors again pressed forward with their scheme and plans were deposited before Parliament. These proposed a line from Wrexham through Moss Valley, on to Caergwrle Castle thence via Kinnerton to Chester, where it would link with the Chester - Crewe and Chester Birkenhead Railway, running for the last three miles alongside the Chester-Holyhead Railway.

As with many other railway projects, strong opposition came from the landowners likely to be affected, and this proved an obstacle too great to overcome. Once again the pioneers had to abandon their scheme.

Very quickly, these indomitable men reformed, now strengthened by the presence of Henry Robertson, who we have already mentioned. He suggested an alternative route commencing on the Chester and Holyhead Railway near to the River Dee at Chester and terminating in Wrexham at the mansion of Brynffynon. Despite repeated opposition, possibly by the same landowners, the scheme received the approval of Parliament in 1844, and it was recorded as the 'North Wales Mineral Railway Act'. Two other men attributed to the success of this project, Mr Robert Roy and Mr JB Ross who became directors of the new company. Henry Robertson was appointed Engineer.

It should be understood that this was the age of the 'Railway Mania' and in 1845, just twenty years after the first railway had been opened between Stockton and Darlington for passenger traffic, no less than 1,265 railway schemes had been launched, many of them projected with boundless enthusiasm lacked the financial capital necessary for their health and development, and numerous promoters had to face financial ruin because of their over zealous ideas; but Henry Robertson was not one of these and the North Wales Mineral Line flourished.

Prior to it becoming functional, coal from the collieries in the Wrexham area, destined for Chester some twelve miles away, was conveyed by barge from Pontcysyllte Wharf on the Ellesmere Canal via Ellesmere, Whitchurch and Nantwich to Chester - some 58 miles! Small wonder that the railway was, at least, welcomed by the colliery owners!



Despite its title, however, the North Wales Mineral Line, by terminating at Wrexham, the tracks did not actually reach the ironworks or the coalfields, but this was soon to be corrected. Regardless of protests from the people of Wrexham the line was

extended in 1845 to Ruabon and another branch from Wheatsheaf Junction to Brymbo and Minera was authorised. This was the time of rapid railway development and rival companies were casting envious eyes on the mineral wealth of the Wrexham area and considering in their various boardrooms the possibility of laying tracks between Shrewsbury and Chester. Amongst these were the 'London and Birmingham' and the 'Chester and Holyhead Companies'.

Henry Robertson and his colleagues, however, were already in the field with their line to Ruabon, and it was they who formed another company under the title of 'The Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Chester Junction Railway' to continue the line from Ruabon to Shrewsbury. This project received Royal Assent on 30 June 1845, and in the following year the North Wales Mineral Line and 'The Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Chester Junction Railway' combined to form 'The Shrewsbury and Chester Railway Company'. The line from Wrexham to Ruabon was opened to the public on the 4 November 1846, and simultaneously at the other end of the line, that portion of the Chester and Holyhead Railway line between Saltney and Chester was used under agreement by the Shrewsbury and Chester Company's trains.

Beyond Ruabon, however, Robertson faced problems even greater than the landowners who had provided the opposition to date. Somehow he had to get his railway across the valley of the Dee at Cefn and over the Ceiriog Valley at Chirk, enough to frighten most engineers but not Robertson! He completed his plans for the Cefn Viaduct and entrusted its construction to Thomas Brassey. It took two years to complete and cost £72,346. Some 1,508 feet long and 147 feet high with 19 stone arches, each with a span of 60 feet, the viaduct remains today as a worthy memorial to the energy, determination and fortitude of these redoubtable pioneers. The ceremony of keying the last stone was performed by Mr W Ormsby-Gore on 14 August 1848.

The other viaduct at Chirk, consists of 12 arches. Two were originally of wood but were replaced by masonry in 1858-59. It is 849 feet long and is 100 feet high. The line through to Shrewsbury was opened to traffic on 14 October 1848, being the first railway to enter this Shropshire town. The line linking the Country towns of Cheshire and Shropshire is 54 miles 58 chains in length and despite its title (Shrewsbury Oswestry and Chester Junction Railway), Oswestry was left some two miles from the line - (again it can be assumed due to local opposition), but on 23 December 1848, a branch from Gobowen to Oswestry was opened. The Chester and Shrewsbury line was merged with the Great Western Railway in 1854.

The Wrexham & Ellesmere Railway

The Wrexham and Ellesmere Railway was, from the outset, run by the Cambrian Railways for 55% of the profits. At Wrexham the line was linked, head on, with the Wrexham Mold and Connahs Quay Railway at Wrexham Central Station. The line was authorised on 31 July 1885, and opened on 2 November 1895, its 12¾ route miles connecting not only Wrexham and Ellesmere, but also providing a route by which express trains were run, in summer months, from Manchester Central to Aberystwyth, in conjunction with the Cheshire Lines Railway. Coal trains from South Wales to Merseyside also used this route.

At Wrexham Central the Wrexham and Ellesmere Railway Company erected a signal box (Wrexham Central - South Box), to control the connection with the WM & CQ Railway, and shortly after the Wrexham and Ellesmere

line was opened an engine shed was erected, remaining in use until 1922.

The value of the line fell drastically after the War years of 1914-1918, during which period, traffic originally routed via Wrexham and Ellesmere was diverted via Crewe and Whitchurch. Although operated by the Cambrian Railways, the Wrexham and Ellesmere remained an independent Company until 1913, after which date, of course, railways went under Government Control for the War years followed by the 'Grouping' which saw the Wrexham and Ellesmere together with the other four independent lines, leased or worked by the Cambrian, being absorbed into the Great Western Railway Company (1/1/23). After grouping the line actually saw several improvements with 'halts' opened at Hightown (Wrexham) 1923; Cloy 1932; Elson 1937 and Pickhill 1938. The War of 1939-45 brought the line into great prominence due to the ROF at Marchwiel and a War Department store at Elson, and freight traffic was so intense that the regular passenger services had to be withdrawn. Workmen's trains, however, still ran to the Elson Depot. This situation existed only between 1940 and 1946, but by 1962 the line had resumed its rural tranquillity with passenger trains carrying no more than 300 passengers a day and freight traffic almost vanished. The line was closed to passenger traffic on 10 September 1962, and by 1965 the freight service too, was discontinued and the tracks beyond Marchwiel lifted.

The Wrexham, Mold & Connahs Quay Railway

We have already mentioned the renowned Henry Robertson and it was this son of Scotland, together with a Welshman - Benjamin Piercy who were the progenitors of the Wrexham, Mold & Connahs Quay Railway. It was on 7 August 1862, that this particular Company was brought into being despite opposition from the powerful Great Western and other interested parties. The Act empowered the proposers to lay a track from Wrexham to Buckley (some 12½ miles) where a physical connection would be made with the tracks of the 'Buckley Railway' (which ran from Buckley to Connahs Quay). The Wrexham Mold and Connahs Quay Railway was opened on 1 May 1866, and almost immediately (23 July 1866), a working arrangement between the Wrexham Mold and Connahs Quay and the Buckley Railway made them to all intents and purposes one railway.

It is interesting to note that like so many other railway companies the Wrexham Mold and Connahs Quay failed to make track connection to all the place names in its title, for the nearest it got to connecting the township of Mold was by an omnibus, operated on behalf of the railway, between 1866 and 1867. This particular service was apparently withdrawn because of acute lack of finance, which also crippled the line in general, and difficulties existed until 1873, when the coal mining industry of Flintshire flourished. This was reflected in the traffic conveyed by the railway. Benjamin Piercy had left the Welsh railway scene in 1868, to seek fortune abroad. He was primarily responsible for the building of the Royal Sardinian Railway. However, in 1881, he returned to Wrexham and began the association with Henry Robertson.

Piercy obtained more than half of the railway's share capital and was thus able to dictate its policy. He it was who planned and projected the extension from Wrexham Exchange to Wrexham Central. Although Parliamentary permission was granted for this work in 1882, work on the scheme did not commence until January 1887, and trains commenced to run into the new station at Wrexham Central in November of the same year. Whilst this would appear important to the inhabitants of

Wrexham even greater things were being conceived for the other end of the line. On 29 June 1883, permission was obtained to provide a double line from one mile south of Buckley Station through Hawarden to Shotton. This necessitated the building of a new station, known as Buckley Junction. At this time, also, the directors of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway were persuaded by Piercy and Robertson to promote a railway from Chester (where the M S & L had connected with the Cheshire Lines Railway), to connect with the Wrexham Mold and Connahs Quay south of the River Dee. The M S & L were more than interested and obtained Parliamentary permission on 28 July 1884, and the through route from Wrexham to Chester (Northgate), was opened on 22 March 1888.

This association between the Wrexham, Mold and Connahs Quay and the M S & L was destined to turn sour on the former smaller company in the years ahead and was certainly the cause of its liquidation. It came about in this fashion. By an Act of 12 August 1889, the two Companies had jointly taken over the uncompleted railways of the Wirral Railway Company - being the North Wales & Liverpool line from Hawarden Bridge to Bidston Dee Junction. The Wrexham Mold and Connahs Quay forever struggling for financial backing, were unable to meet their commitment regarding their half share in this venture, which was eventually open to traffic on 16 March 1896. The M S & L had now become the Great Central Railway Company and as this Company had loaned to the Wrexham, Mold & Connahs Quay money for its half share of the North Wales & Liverpool Company it now demanded this back, and took the poor, struggling Wrexham Mold & Connahs Quay to Court in 1897, and obtained judgement in their favour to the tune of £59,129. The days of independence for the Wrexham Company were finished and the Great Central Railway took over from 22 July 1904, until even the Great Central Railway lost its identity to the L.N.E.R on 1 January 1923. For the following 25 years the L.N.E.R were no doubt, delighted to operate a branch which encroached so blatantly into an area dominated chiefly by the G.W.R. But the mighty too, are fallen, all becoming part of British Railways on 1 January 1948!



Rhosddu shed, Wrexham, photographed by Syd Wainwright on 21 June 1959. Left to right: 6610 (ex-GW 0-6-2T of 5600 class), 40126 (ex-LMS 2-6-2T of 3P class), 1669 (ex-GW pannier tank), 82037 (BR Standard), 1618 (ex-GW pannier), 82021 (BR standard).

Despite its continual embarrassment for finance the W M & C Q was, during its years of independence, and even during the domination by the G C and L N E R a proud and purposeful company. Even though it was forced to purchase its locomotives, rolling stock (and even Rule Books for the staff) second-hand, at bargain prices, what it did with its locomotives was nothing short of miraculous. Its workshop and locomotive shed at Rhosddu (Wrexham) worked wonders with the eighteen locomotives that bore the initials W M & C Q and elsewhere these locos have rightly been referred to as 'characters'. One had no less than five conversions in its life span of 77 years! The Rhosddu shed is now no more - new buildings remain the only memorial to the valiant work performed by the many who worked for the railway Wrexham could rightly call its own - but the nearby road still bears the name 'Railway Road'. Maybe this too will serve as a reminder to those, who, in the years ahead, search for traces of the 'main works' and running shed of the W M & C Q Railway.



Wrexham Central in about 1966; more photos, from 2008 and 1959 appeared in BMRJ nos.18 and 19.

Finally, a word on the main station of the line, Wrexham Central. What great plans Benjamin Piercy had for this terminus! A plan, still in existence indicates that the proposed buildings included Administration Office, First and Second Class Waiting Rooms, Ladies Waiting Rooms and even First and Second Class Refreshment Rooms; but these wonderful ideas got no further than the drawing boards.

Henry Robertson's great life came to an end on 22 March 1888, and his partner Piercy lived only a few days longer; with them died the energy, drive and determination that had dominated the Wrexham industrial and railway scene for so long. Piercy's intention was to form a close relationship between the W M & C Q Railway and the L N W Railway. Had this developed the effect could have been to ensure the importance of Wrexham, for one of its main connections would have been with the Chester & Holyhead section of the L N W R. Piercy's death killed this possibility, and Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway, through the unfortunate situation created by the Wirral Railway take-over, moved in for the final humiliation of the W M & C Q.

In this short examination we have been chiefly concerned with the railway industry in and around Wrexham, but we appear to have strayed somewhat from this seat of industry.

Mention has been made of the three railway systems serving the town, but the coalfields, ironworks and stone quarries were scattered like confetti around this centre, consequently the various railway companies found it essential to lay down branch lines to effect efficient connections with these industries. Amongst these were the following:-

1. Branch from the W M & C Q main line to Brymbo

A triangular junction north of Wrexham commenced the branch that followed the Moss and Brymbo Valleys to Brymbo, a distance of some 3½ miles. The line was constructed in easy stages over the years 1882 to 1887. It rose steeply - at one point being 1 in 38. Stations and Halts existed at Highfield Road, Moss and Pentre, New Broughton Road and Plas Power. Passenger trains from Wrexham to Brymbo ran over the branch from 1889 to 1917.

2. Wrexham Minera & Moss Valley Branch (G.W.R)

The section from Wrexham to Brymbo was first opened for mineral traffic in 1862 and for passenger traffic some twenty years later. The line extension from Brymbo to Minera was available for mineral traffic in 1847. Passenger traffic over this section as far as Coed Poeth commenced in 1897 and as far as Berwig in 1905. Three 'off-shoots' from this branch were laid in the following order:-

a. Moss Valley Junction to Ross Halt (and Bryn Malley Colliery).

Both Passenger and freight trains used this branch. The junction with the Wrexham end Brymbo Branch was situated some 70 chains from Croes Newydd North Fork Box, and the full distance of the branch was 2 miles 68 chains. Halts existed at Gatewen, Pentre Broughton, Gwersyllt Hill and Moss. Passenger trains were withdrawn in 1926, and the branch

was subsequently closed to all traffic.

b. Brymbo to Coed Talon This was known as the Wrexham and Minera Extension Joint Railway and was available for mineral traffic in 1872 and for passenger trains in 1898. The line was jointly owned by the G W Railway and L & N W Railway Companies, its total length being just under 3 miles. (Beyond Coed Talon the line eventually continued to Mold). Stations on the Joint Section were Ffith and Llanfynydd.

c. Brymbo to Vron Junction This short branch from Brymbo West Halt to the Brymbo Steel Works also served the Vron Colliery, but competition from the G C R Company resulted in the coal output being routed primarily over the latter company's system.

Approximately a mile beyond Wrexham a branch line left the main Chester-Shrewsbury route at Rhos Junction running to Rhos Village, which in 1924 had a population of some 12,000 people. Although the branch line continued to Wynn Hall and thence to Ruabon, where it rejoined the main line, passenger trains travelled only to Rhos, following the 1914-18 War during which period the passenger service to Wynn Hall Halt was discontinued. The branch line has been closed and the tracks have now been removed.

Although not immediately in the Wrexham neighbourhood a brief mention of Ruabon as a rail junction of some importance may not be out of place in these notes. From Ruabon the branch line to Llangollen, Corwen, Bala, Dolgellau, the Cambrian Coast and Blaenau Festiniog swung away to the west from the Chester-Shrewsbury main line, and a much smaller branch known as the 'Ponkey Branch' also made its

connection with the main line at Ruabon. Alas, these delightful rail routes are no more - the line to Llangollen and beyond having been removed in 1968-69. Ruabon is, therefore, stripped of its importance as a junction, but consider what existed at this station in 1925, and what went on in its railway heyday! No less than five signal boxes, thirty sidings, with accommodation for over 700 wagons, stables for six horses, 1st and 3rd class Ladies and Gentlemen's Waiting Rooms, two Refreshment Rooms and Telegraph Office. Revenue in 1924, from passenger and freight traffic exceeded £64,000, and the staff complement was sixty-two!

Sir Watkin Williams Wynn had the right to cause any train to stop to set down or pick up passengers. The same gentleman had a combined saloon and vans for hounds located at Ruabon throughout the hunting season. Through carriages from Birkenhead, Manchester and Paddington were transferred to and from the main and branch line trains here. Shades of yesteryear!

What of the Present and the Future

The decline in the coal mining industry has had a very marked affect on the railway systems in the Wrexham area. At one time it is said, no less than 200 collieries existed in the area, now [1968] there are only two [and both Gresford and Bersham have now gone]. Coal traffic was traditionally rail

borne, and with its cessation the railways have felt the cold economic draught of departed revenue. Happily, the industry which really brought the railway to Wrexham - the Brymbo Steel Industry - still thrives and wagon loads of raw material, scrap iron ore and limestone still pass through the busy marshalling yard that is Wrexham, but which is known as Croes Newydd (New Cross). Finished steel from the factory on the hill - Bryn-y-bwa - Hill of the Bow - Brymbo - is still conveyed, as it has been for years over the railway system. [But of course this industry has now also ceased].

Other industries, new to the area, encouraged to sink their roots in the soil of industrial Wrexham - are also finding that railway transport is second to none. It is in the field of freight-traffics that the future of Wrexham railways must surely lie - conveyed either by express parcels service or freight train. Gone forever, it would appear, is the sight of the mighty 'Kings' and 'Castles' roaring up the Gresford bank at the head of express passenger trains from Birkenhead to Paddington. Now only diesel multiple units are to be seen, plying between Chester and Wolverhampton - where it is true connections are made with the 'Modern Age Electrics'. But quick as a flash today the railway scene changes - no more the placid era of flower bedecked country stations, where trains called: almost apologetically disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the apparently unchanging scene. The altar now is economic viability upon which many railway dreams must, of necessity, be sacrificed!

Wrexham could so easily have been the important junction in North Wales. Somehow the chance was lost. Despite this, however, with the roads snarled up with the ever increasing road transport it is certain the remaining railway system in the area, where Robertson made his name, will continue to serve those who require its services. Who knows, quietly but effectively the pendulum may swing, if only by force of circumstances, and the ideals of all the pioneers of the iron road will once again come to the fore!

Wherever railwaymen (or should it be railmen?) foregather, what used to be will be discussed, and what is to be, surmised. Wrexham's men of the rail are no exception to this rule and although they may deplore departed glories, they will accept the challenge of the 'winds of change and the spirit that made the rough places plain and the crooked straight' between Chester's ancient city and Shropshire's proud County Town, will live on to prove that the railways have a part to play in the pattern of modern-day living. Rhosddu locomotive shed is now no more, where the iron horses were cherished - polished - repaired, and prepared for the road. Croes Newydd shed will no doubt follow suit in the not too distant future - for Type 2 and Type 4 Diesels obtain their lifeblood not from the red hot coals but from tanks of oil, filled and refilled at the depot at Chester. No more shall we see piles of burnt ashes - no more polished brasswork - but the men remain loyal to their home depot, and to the industry that gets into their very being - may they be permitted, by those in whose hands lies their destiny - to take the pride of Wrexham to wherever the plans allow. Here in this town men who claim even today to be ex-G W, ex-G C (and very occasionally ex-L M S), mix together in harmony. May they continue to do so for many years to come!

[Mr Forster's draft was supplied by reader Tony Robinson of Whitchurch].

Paragraph noticed (while I was looking for something else!) in the 'Chester Chronicle' for 28 April 1848:

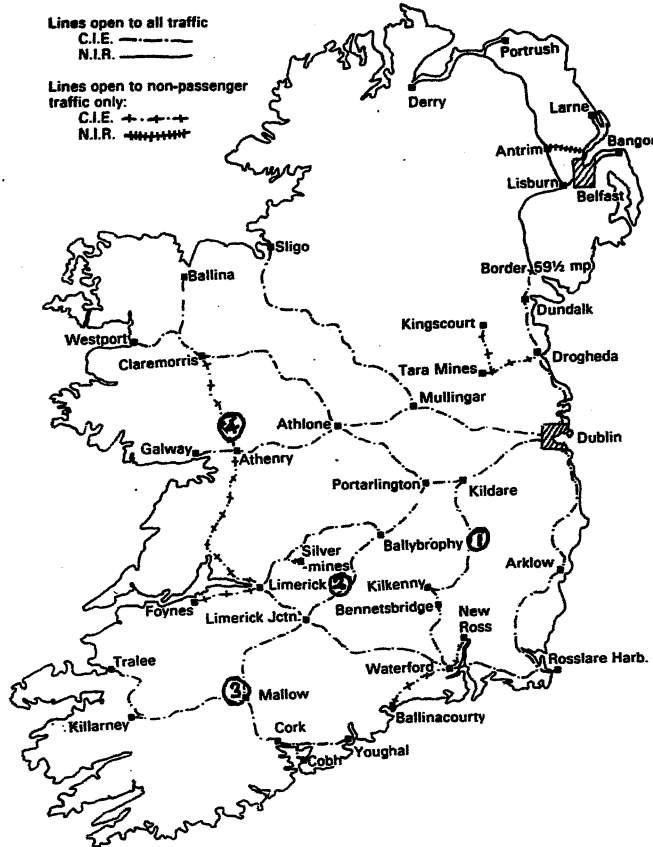
"CHESTER & HOLYHEAD RAILWAY.-

Excursion trains are running this week between Chester and Conway, to give the holiday folks an opportunity of admiring the splendid marine and mountain scenery along the line, and that great wonder of engineering science, the iron tubular bridge at Conway".



End-door 12-ton coal wagon built for Llay Main colliery; see pages 15/23 of this issue. This was the work-place of a neighbour when the Editor lived in East Saltney in the 1940s/1950s.

THE SUGAR-BEET TRAFFIC ON C.I.E. [= Coras Iompair Eireann, or Irish Railways]



Sugar is such a commonplace commodity in every household that it rarely brings to mind the annual transport problem known as the 'beet campaign'. Yet the period from mid-October to December each year sees a traffic peak as important as the August Bank holiday week-end. This year [i.e. 1957] the total area under sugar beet was almost 69,000 acres, an increase of 10,000 acres on the 1956 season. The beet is produced by some 27,500 growers scattered throughout the length and breadth of the twenty six counties, although, as is to be expected, certain areas for various reasons have a better yield than others. A large proportion of the yield is transported by rail from the growing areas to the sugar

factories at Carlow (marked 1 on the map here), Thurles (marked 2), Mallow (marked 3) and Tuam (marked 4) and thus one can appreciate that the services operated must be rather ramified. Let us take a glance at the handling of a head of beet from the time it is unearthed. First the beet is "topped" [the leaves/stems cut off using a 'beet knife'] and then loaded into lorry or farm cart for transport to the railway station where it is reloaded into coal trucks.



A later type of beet wagon: 28650 was photographed at Limerick Junction on 24 September 2004. It was one of a batch (nos.28501-28665) which were a combination of the underframes of redundant 4-wheel container flat wagons (from nos.25436-25983) with the sides and ends of two scrapped open wagons welded on top. These conversions dated from 1985 and were mostly used between a concentration depot at Wellington Bridge and the Thurles sugar factory. Waste not, want not!

No haphazard business either, for each station has an allotted daily quota of laden wagons which may be despatched to the factory to enable Comlucht Siuicre Eireann - the Irish Sugar Company - to keep a regular constant supply of beet each day. The wagon with our beet is therefore attached to the appropriate beet special or, where there are few wagons, to the regular goods train. The laden beet specials travel, where possible, to arrive at the factory at hourly intervals throughout the night. They can then be unloaded and the wagons turned round for the return specials of empty wagons to the growing centres. The CIE loco leaves the laden wagons in the marshalling yard alongside the main line to be shunted to the weigh-bridge as required by the C.S.E. locos. The wagon is weighed both into and out of the factory by the sugar company to arrive at the net weight of beet and at the same time, a sample is taken from each wagon to test for sugar content. Unloading is carried out by the powerful water guns which wash the beet from the wagons into a central trough leading into the factory where the sugar is extracted. The pulp remaining after processing is returned to growers for use as feeding-stuff. A few of the wagons are unloaded by crane as, although this method can only deal with about four wagons per hour against the 12-14 wagons per hour cleared by water, some beet is thus accumulated for use on Sundays when no supplies are delivered. During the harvesting period the factories work a 24 hour day including Sundays.

Each factory receives its supplies from a given area and as the Mallow area embraces two highly prolific beet growing centres - West and East Cork - it has the heaviest traffic. Mallow is supplied by stations West to Listowel and East to Dungarvan on each of which lines there is a nightly special train serving these and intermediate stations. It is, however, the C.B. & S.C. [Cork Bandon & South Coast Railway - a company which formed part of CIE] Section which comes into its own during the campaign. Every day five empty 19 wagon trains leave Albert Quay, three to Clonakilty and two to Ballinascorthy. In return a similar number of up trains work the laden wagons into Cork, across the city railway and into Glanmire for forwarding to Mallow.

4-6-0T engines of the 463 class were reported engaged on these specials initially but two of the C class B.B. [Diesel] locos have since come into service on the line. On the Courtmacsherry branch there are no less than three specials each way per *day*. Loco 552 is working between Ballinascorthy and Courtmacsherry this year and is shedded at the latter point. On the other side of the county the East Cork stations also hum with beet-loading activity. Three specials per day are required although of ten these trains are of 30 wagons or more hauled by a J 15 class loco. Locos 140 & 262 have been *seen* on these workings. To lift these trains over the bank from Cork heavier motive power is required and here 402 with, occasionally, 801 and a couple of Woolwich 2-6-0s - 380 and 388 - are in use. Rear end assistance is given to the five trains per night ex Cork and another Woolwich 2-6-0 is usually employed as banker. As the Mallow factory is sited on the Tralee line all these trains must reverse at Mallow station for the 1½ mile run to the beet yard. C.S.E. has one diesel and three steam locos at Mallow factory but one of the steam locos is seldom used.

Thurles is fed from the heavy beet-growing area on the South Wexford line, from New Ross and stations to Thurles via both Limerick Junction and Fethard. This pattern of longer hauls is worked into Waterford by steam loco whence it usually goes forward to Thurles behind a D/E. Waterford shed, with as many as 10 locos in steam, thus presents an animated scene from 17.00 onwards. Most of them are J15 class 0-6-0s - 102, 116, 118, 224 - but there are also a few D class 4-4-0s - 304, 314 - in use. Specials also run from Birr and from Mountmellick - 138 was on the latter in November - to the Thurles factory which is located on the down side of the main line at Thurles Junction. A spur exists permitting trains from Clonmel via Fethard to run direct into the marshalling yard without fouling the Dublin-Cork main line. C.S.E. has a diesel and three steam locos at this factory although normally only two steam locos are in service.

Carlow factory is at M.P.55, just 1 mile North of Carlow station. Beet from Dublin, off the G.N.R., and from Kildare is worked in from the North; the Kildare special in addition to clearing the intermediate stations, works wagons from Grangemellon siding (M.P.47¾) and roughly twice a week from the Ballylinan branch which is, apart from this traffic, dormant.

Into Carlow from the South beet comes across the Palace East-Muine Bheag line - another line dormant except for occasional passenger specials and the beet, amounting to three specials daily, during the season. These trains load at stations on the D.& S.E. [Dublin & South Eastern Railway] Section and also at Ballywilliam, Ballyling siding and Borris on the branch. Locos 149, 200 and 354 have been reported working beet specials in the area. Although the smallest of the four factories, Tuam has not only the widest collection area but also the two heaviest beet-loading stations on the system - Ardrahan and Tullamore. Each of these accounts for over 30 wagons per day, but, even so, can not match West or East Cork or South Wexford in bulk. Specials for Tuam come from as far South as Ennis and East as Liffey Junction and Portarlinton. During the 1957 campaign the G class D/H loco has been withdrawn from the Banagher branch and replaced by a steam engine working the combined beet and goods train. While insufficient to justify a special train, we learn that the beet railed off the West Clare section on the daily goods shows a great increase on last season's loadings. This increase is, in fact, generally the case as it is in the Tuam area that the greatest increase has been evident this year. Among the steam locos involved in the area were 168, 187, 198, 592, 597 & 613. At the factory C.S.E. have two steam and one diesel locos, although in practice the diesel - delivered in September 1956 - handles most of the traffic. Loco No.1 is stored while a third steam loco, No.3, is partially dismantled. As we write the 1957 beet campaign - probably the last in which steam will predominate - has drawn to a close and it is now certain that it has been a record year. It is to be hoped that CIE will continue to foster this very important traffic and that we can look forward to many similarly successful seasons in the future.

[Editor's note: this little article first appeared, anonymously, in *Irish railfans' news*, vol.4 no.1, January 1958, to which acknowledgement is made. The traffic disappeared quite suddenly, victim of the European Community's rationalisation of agricultural subsidy rules. After decades of growing it for sugar, beet became a minor crop used for cattle feed; gone are all the sugar factories and associated rail 'specials' - the last 'campaign' was in 2005/6.]

Editor's page

It had been intended that Part 6 of the **Dee Bridge accident** series would be included in this issue, but pressure of time has foiled this plan: having established the date that the fallen span of the bridge was brought back into use (23 April 1848), I have so far been unable to get a copy of the relevant newspaper report. As far as the much later rebuilding is concerned, I have so far only a rather vague "1870-1872" time frame, so that is going to prove even more time consuming!

Former Group member **Simon Curness** now works as an HGV driver for a transport and warehousing firm, R. Swain & Co., in Chessington, Surrey. No doubt a big difference when compared with his previous job, making steel railway sleepers, on Merseyside!

Royal Mail postal rates were increased with effect from April 2010, and this has a 'knock-on' affect on the subscription rates to *BMRJ*. Much as I regret this increase, I reckon that it still represents good value: try getting a quote from any courier service!



PRESS RELEASE

Lincolnshire-based specialist magazine publishers Mortons Media Group Ltd, has purchased *RAIL EXPRESS* magazine from Foursight Publications Limited.

RAIL EXPRESS, launched 14 years ago by owner Philip Sutton, has set a new benchmark as the quality magazine for the rail enthusiast who has an interest in the present-day scene, preservation and nostalgia, as well as the latest in modelling.

Mortons are one of the largest independently owned specialist magazine publishers in the UK and *RAIL EXPRESS* will fit perfectly with their growing portfolio of titles which already includes 'Heritage Railway' magazine.

Brian Hill, Managing Director of Mortons Media Group Ltd, said he was looking forward to further developing *RAIL EXPRESS*. 'Philip has done an excellent job in establishing an extremely strong brand and we aim to build on his success,' commented Mr Hill.

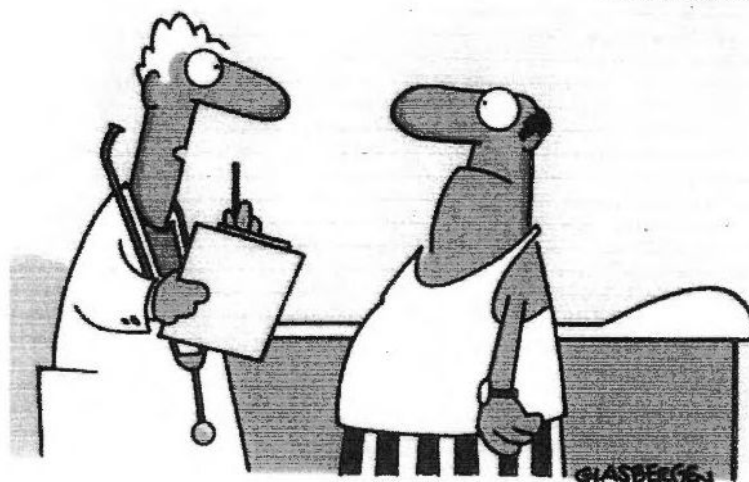
RAIL EXPRESS has become recognised for its innovation and pushing the boundaries within the railway publishing sector, commented Mr Sutton. 'I am confident that Mortons will further develop the title and provide the investment in both time and money to make *RAIL EXPRESS* the definitive magazine for today's rail enthusiast,' he said.

Assistant Editor Gareth Bayer will be moving to the role of Editor. Production of the title will transfer to Mortons Horncastle offices. Philip Sutton will continue to develop other business interests, including the existing limited edition model commissions, from his offices in King's Cliffe, near Peterborough.

Tuesday 24th May, 2010

Some readers will be aware that the first owner/editor of *Rail Express*, **Phil Sutton**, is a member of Barrowmore Model Railway Group and an enthusiastic modeller of the 1970s scene. *Rail Express* has had a monthly column describing the trials and tribulations (as well as the successes!) of "Mostyn" for the past several years. This has generated welcome revenue which has been re-invested in our layouts; we have to thank mostly Richard Oldfield and Dave Faulkner for working on this.

A modelling friend from Anglesey, John Stockton-Wood, has the habit of forwarding to me and other friends, jokes he has received as e-mails; they are not often railway-oriented, but as someone who suffered a **heart attack** a couple of years back, and who has consequently had to alter his personal life-style, this one seemed to strike a chord!



"What fits your busy schedule better, exercising one hour a day or being dead 24 hours a day?"

Merseyside Model Railway Society's former extensive clubrooms in an old school in Brassey Street in Birkenhead is destined for demolition and redevelopment by the Wirral Borough Council. The Council have assisted the club to relocate to a site not too far away, near to the church/roundabout at the top of Laird Street.

Recent books (and C.D.s/DVDs):

Great Western way compiled by John Lewis and ... the Historical Model Railway Society. Rev. ed., H.M.R.S., 2009. ISBN 978 0 902835 27 6.

Wagons of the final British Rail era: a pictorial study of the 1983-1995 period by David Larkin. Kestrel, 2010. £14.00p. ISBN 978 1 905505 17 3.

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