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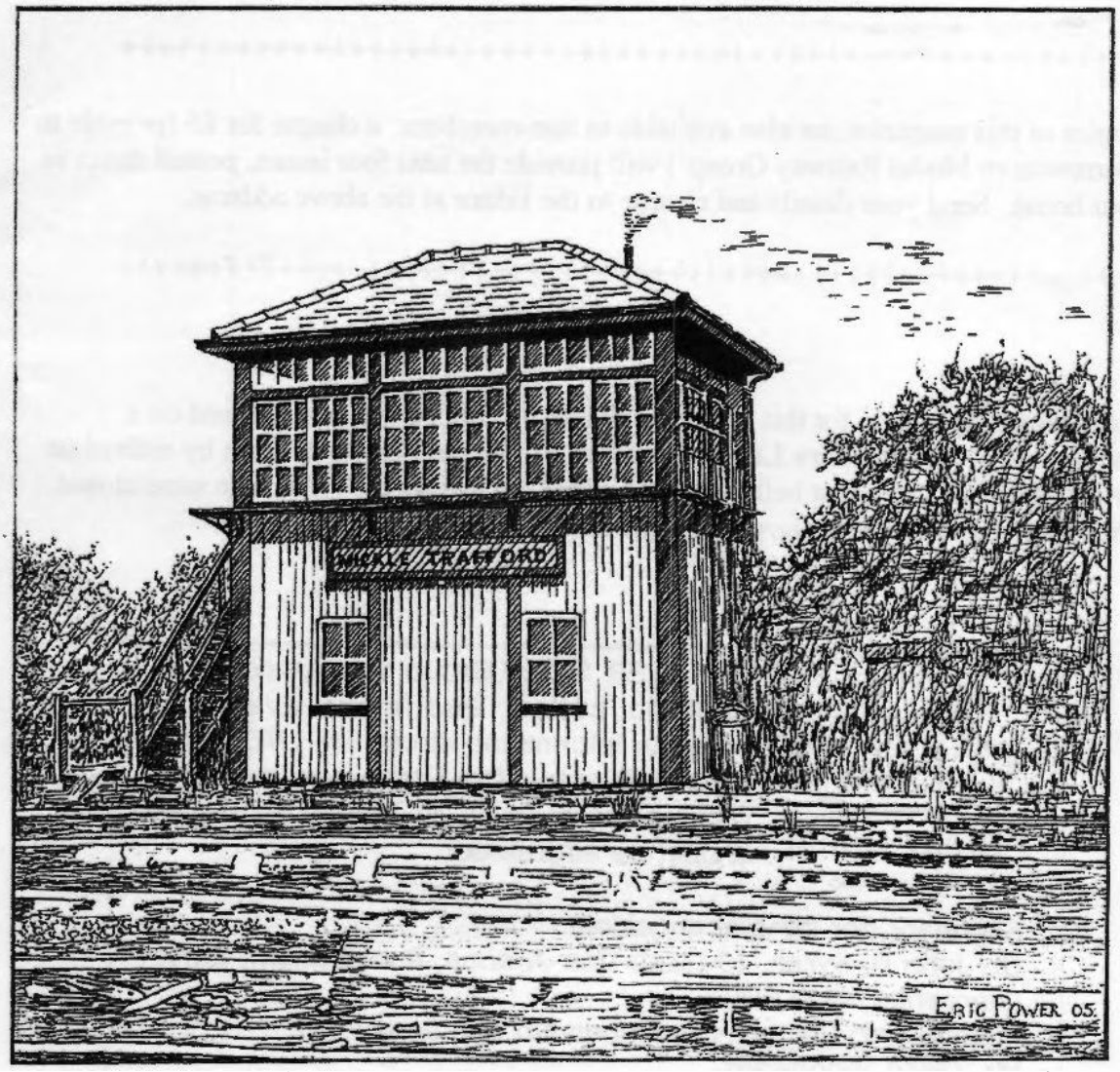
Barrowmore Model Railway Journal



Number 6

March 2006

Published on behalf of Barrowmore Model Railway Group by the Honorary Editor: David Goodwin, "Cromer", Church Road, Saughall, Chester CH1 6EN; tel. 01244 880018. E-mail: david@goodwinrail.co.uk
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.
Any queries to the Editor, please.

The **NEXT ISSUE** will be dated June 2006, and contributions should get to the Editor as soon as possible, but at least before 1 May 2006.

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Copies of this magazine are also available to non-members: a cheque for £5 (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 was drawn by Eric Power, and is based on a photograph of the **Cheshire Lines signal box at Mickle Trafford**, taken by enthusiast Arthur Willis in 1969, just before this cabin and the nearby L.N.W.R. one were closed. The replacement box was shown on page 39 of our December 2005 issue.

The LNER Study Group
Founded 1965

The LNER Study Group was founded in 1965 to collect and make available accurate information about the LNER and its constituents. The Group now has new officers, as follows, to whom enquiries should be addressed:

Secretary (for general enquiries):
Dr. John B. Sykes, 10 Lumb Carr Avenue, Ramsbottom, Bury, Lancashire, BLO 9QG.
Membership Secretary (membership enquiries only):
Mr. David Woodward,
29 The Spinney, Sandal, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF2 6JN.
Please enclose a stamped SAE with all enquiries.

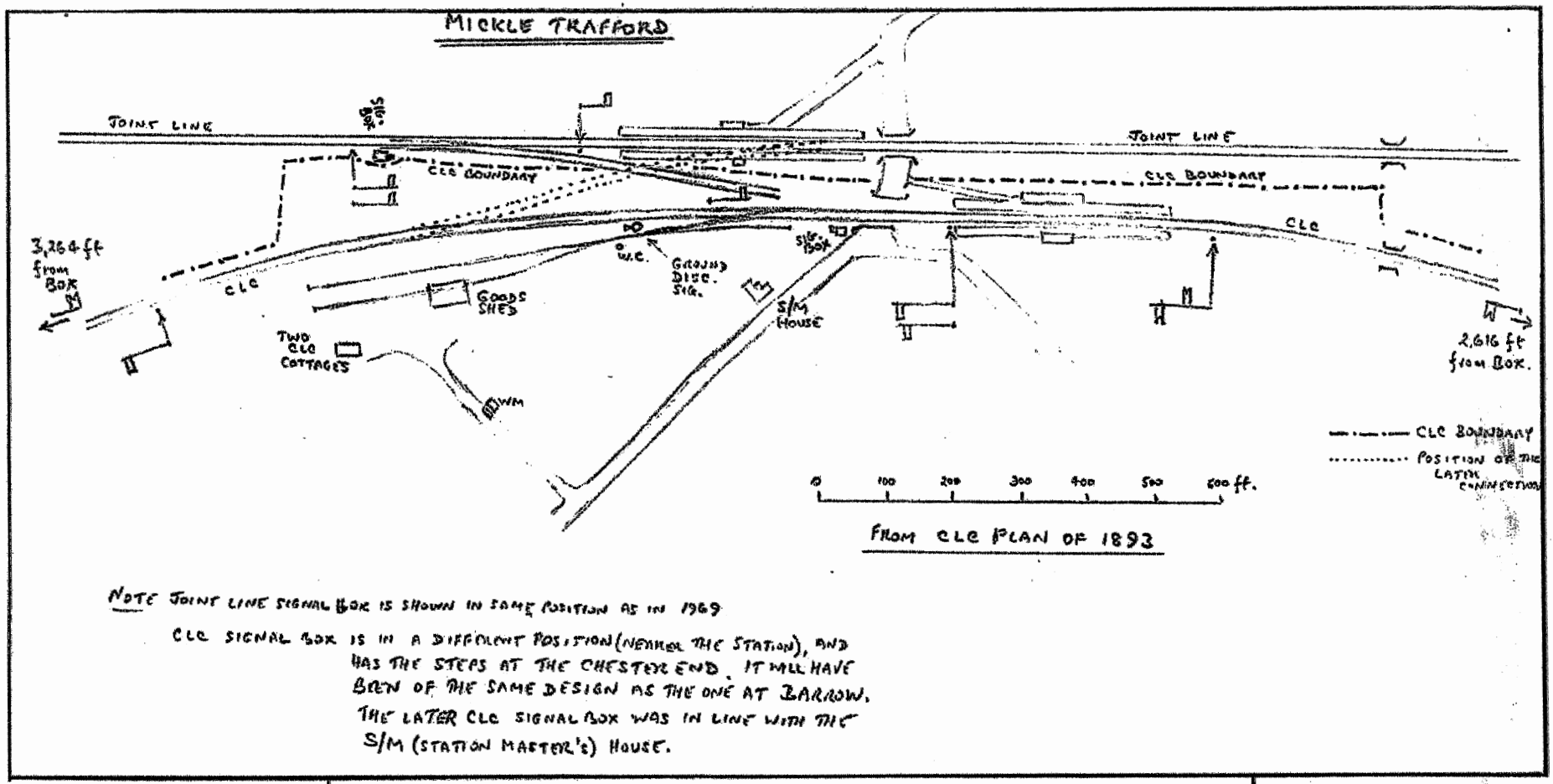
Forthcoming events

(2006)
4 Mar. 2006: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
11/12 Mar. 2006: Kidderminster show (**"Mostyn"** is appearing).
14 Mar. 2006: "Impression of Japanese railways" by Ted Talbot: HMRS meeting at 'The Stork Hotel', Price Street, Birkenhead, 8pm.
18/19 Mar. 2006: Nottingham show.
25/26 Mar. 2006: Macclesfield show (NB new venue: Tytherington High School).
1/2 Apr. 2006: S4 North, Wakefield.
11 Apr. 2006: "TOPS for beginners" by David Millward: HMRS meeting at 'The Stork Hotel", Price Street, Birkenhead, 8pm.
15 Apr. 2006: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
15/17 Apr. 2006: York show
22/23 Apr. 2006: Derby show.
29/30 April 2006: Liverpool show.
13/14 May 2006: ExpoEM, Bletchley.
20 May 2006: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
27/28 May 2006: Railex Aylesbury show
3/4 June 2006: demu show, Burton-on-Trent
1 July 2006: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
5 Aug. 2006: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
9/10 Sept. 2006: ExpoEM North, Slaithwaite.
23/24 Sept. 2006: Halifax show.
16/17 Sept. 2006: Woking show (**"Mostyn"** is appearing).
7 Oct. 2006: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
11/12 Nov. 2006: Hull show
18 Nov. 2006: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
24/26 Nov. 2006: Wakefield show
2/3 Dec. 2006: Warley (NEC) show.
9/10 Dec. 2006: Wigan show (**"Rockingham"** is appearing).

(2007)
20 Jan. 2007: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
27/28 Jan. 2007: Normanton show (**"Mostyn"** is appearing).
17/18 Feb. 2007: Bolton show (extended **"Johnstown Road"** is appearing).
3 Mar. 2007: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
24/25 Mar. 2007: Alexandra Palace (incl. **"Johnstown Road"** & **"Rockingham"**)
7 Apr. 2007: Llanbedr 7mm running track. (See Editor for details).
19/21 Oct. 2007: Blackburn show (**"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



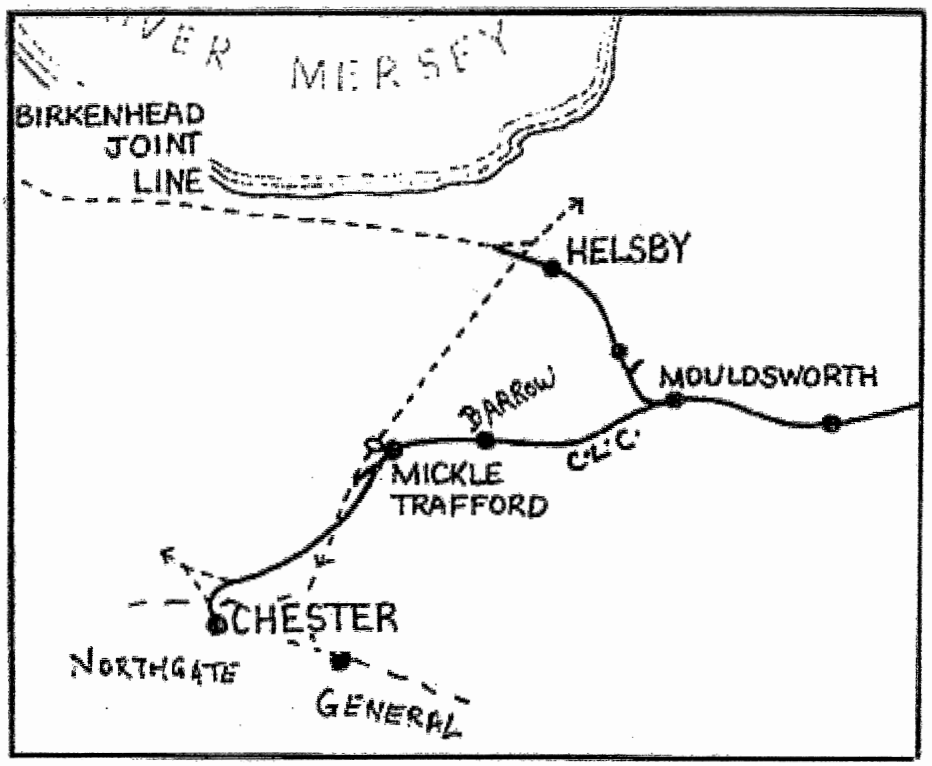
FROM CLC PLAN OF 1893

NOTE JOINT LINE SIGNAL BOX IS SHOWN IN SAME POSITION AS IN 1969

CLC SIGNAL BOX IS IN A DIFFERENT POSITION (NEARER THE STATION), AND HAS THE STEPS AT THE CHESTER END. IT WILL HAVE BEEN OF THE SAME DESIGN AS THE ONE AT BARROW. THE LATER CLC SIGNAL BOX WAS IN LINE WITH THE S/M (STATION MASTER'S) HOUSE.

"Mickle Trafford junction", by John Dixon, David Goodwin and Bob Miller

Mickle Trafford is about 3kms from Barrowmore as the crow flies, and some 2½kms west of Barrow station on the line towards Chester or Dee Marsh Junction. The sketch-map below shows the whereabouts of Mickle Trafford with some of the local railway



lines as they were between 1942 and 1969. To my mind, it is an interesting location in that it demonstrates the all-pervasive influence of inertia on railway history. Or, indeed, history in general!

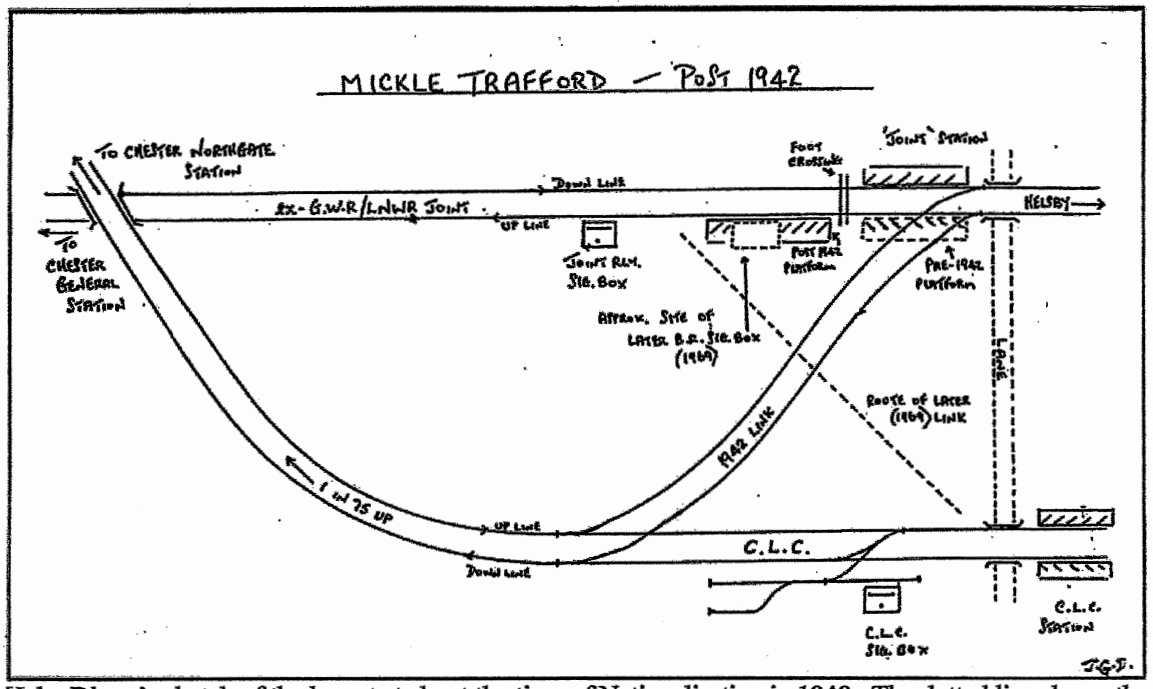
But first: a brief note about the diagrams. The only one here that bears a lot of similarity to real-life topography, is Bob Miller's copy of the Cheshire Lines Committee (C.L.C.) Estates plan of 1893 which is reproduced on the previous page. The rest are to varying degrees just approximations, copied here mostly with 'North' somewhere near to the two-o'clock position on our pages.

The first of Mickle Trafford's stations was opened to passenger traffic on 1 May 1875, on the Cheshire Lines Committee's Manchester to Chester route. The Birkenhead Joint line from Warrington to Chester had been carrying passengers through Mickle Trafford village since 18 December 1850; but it wasn't until 2 December 1889 that the successor to the Birkenhead Joint, the Great Western/London & North Western Joint Railway (G.W./L.N.W.) , opened its own station there (just a short distance, as the crow flies, from the C.L.C. station). A link-line had been laid between the Birkenhead line and the C.L.C. in 1875, but because of a dispute between the two companies, the points were never connected – and so it was never used. The cause of the dispute was (as is common in conflict between businesses) a disagreement about finances.

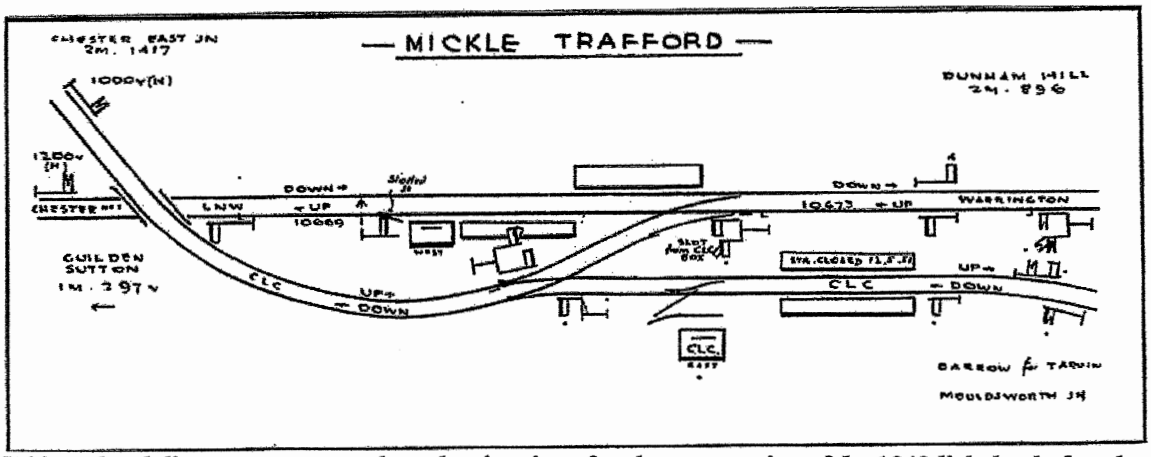
Some time after 1889 (possibly 1897?), the Cheshire Lines replaced their 1875-built signal cabin with a new one, of the company's standard type 1 design. This is the box

illustrated on the cover of this issue, and it lasted through until the major re-signalling in 1969.

Then in 1934, the spread of 'pooling' arrangements (attempts to save money by more co-operation between companies) raised the potential savings of revival of the proposals for a junction between the two lines at Mickle Trafford. But discussions lasting for several months came to naught and the sensible project was (again!) shelved. Eventually, on 4 October 1942 a government-financed double-track link between the two lines was opened – but diagonally opposite to the 1875 proposal. It was obviously promoted as an alternative wartime route (*via* the London & North Eastern Railway's Wirral line) from Birkenhead Docks.



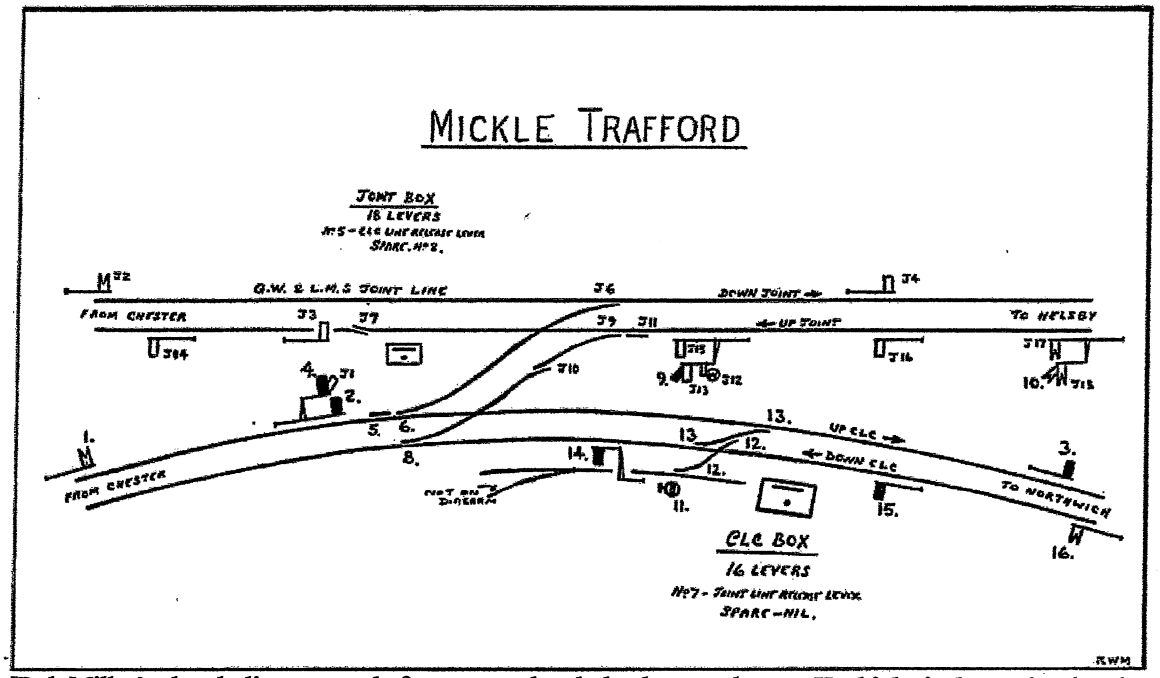
[John Dixon's sketch of the layout at about the time of Nationalisation in 1948. The dotted line shows the approximate position of the proposed (but never operated) 1875 link and also the actual 1969 link].



[This undated diagram appears to show the situation after the construction of the 1942 link, but before the closure of both stations in 1951].

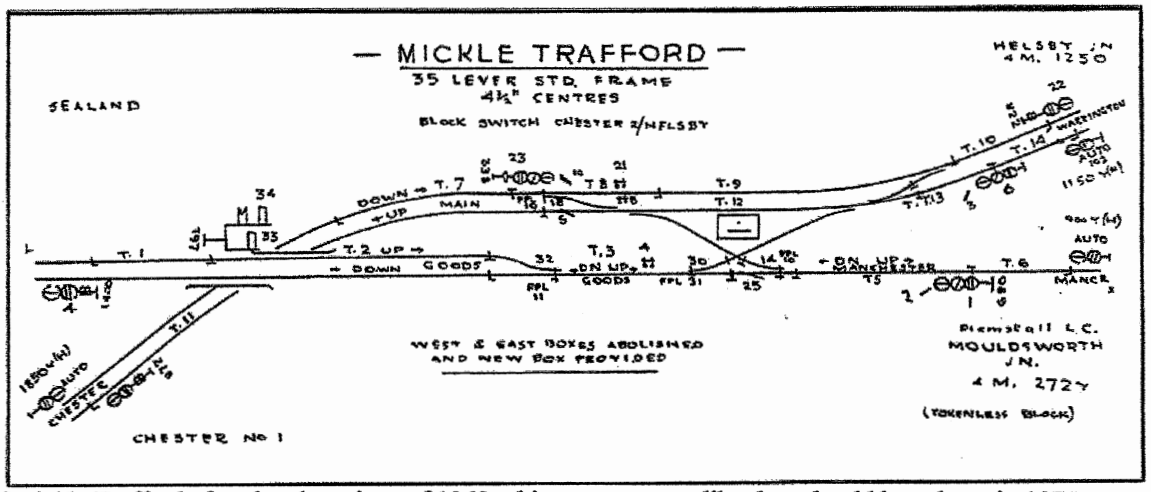
[Note on banking from Mickle Trafford] Retired driver Ralph Hodgkinson remembers banking engines ('Pom-Pom's [J11s] etc.) being stationed at Mickle Trafford in the late 1940s. This was for assisting heavy trains up the gradient towards Chester Northgate/Dee Marsh. They pushed up-hill without being coupled, followed the train to Chester East S.B., and then crossed over to return light engine to Mickle Trafford. There were two turns based on Chester Northgate shed – afternoons and nights.

The C.L.C. station was renamed "Mickle Trafford East" on 5 June 1950, but the name wasn't in use for long: the station closed to passengers on 12 February 1951, and to goods traffic on 1 July 1963.



[Bob Miller's sketch diagram made from an un-dated plan he was shown. He thinks it shows the situation in about 1957: after closure to passengers in 1951 and before closure to goods in 1963. The numbers next to the signals and points are the lever numbers in the signal boxes that control their operation; those numbers prefixed by J are worked from the Joint line (GW & LMS) box whereas those numbers without a prefix are controlled from the CLC box. Note that three of the signals needed the co-operation of both signal boxes to operate their levers before the signals could be changed.]

After the construction of the 1942 link, the most important event in Mickle Trafford's railway history was perhaps the alterations made to the track layout and signalling in 1968/9. These changes were forced by the planned closure of Chester's C.L.C. Northgate station, which meant that Cheshire Lines route trains from Manchester had to terminate in Chester General station. As well as the alterations to the track layout to make the junctions between the two lines, there was the added complication of extra cross-overs on the ex-G.W./L.N.W. line, the singling of the ex-C.L. line between Mickle Trafford and Mouldsworth, and closing of the two existing signal boxes and the provision of one new cabin.



[Mickle Trafford after the alterations of 1969: things were more like they should have been in 1875 (apart from the extra crossover and the singling of the Mouldsworth line) – it just took 94 years!].

The new box at Mickle Trafford Junction was opened on 7 September 1969, and is to the so-called 'LM 15 design, size 5', measuring about 28ft10in x 11ft4in x 10ft, and fitted with windows all round for good vision of the different routes. It has recently been re-furbished, including new windows in the modern '2000' style.

In anticipation of the new box, two signal boxes closed earlier in the year: Guilden Sutton on the Chester General station line (closed 13 April 1969), and Dunham Hill on the Helsby line (closed 2 September 1969).

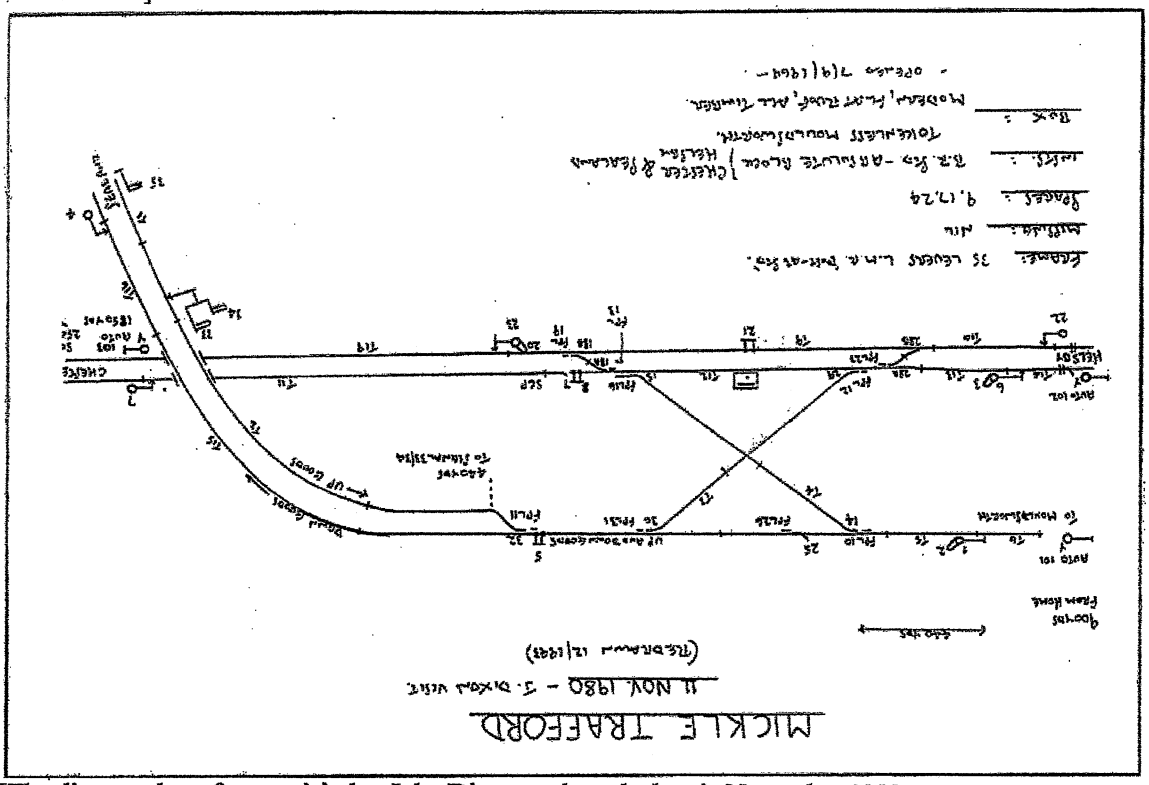
At the time of the opening of the new box, the adjacent boxes on the four lines, were: Mouldsworth Junction (though this is now scheduled for closure in May 2006, when the next box will be Greenbank (Hartford)); Helsby Junction; Chester No.1 on the Chester General line; and Chester East on the former C.L.C. line.

On the Chester General line, Chester No.1 box closed on 16 September 1973, and Chester No.2 then worked to Mickle Trafford until it was replaced by Chester power signal box on 4 May 1984.

On the former C.L.C. line into Northgate station, Chester East box (which formerly controlled the junction) closed on 14 June 1970, leaving Sealand as the next working box. This closed on 14 September 1981 and the block section was lengthened to Dee Marsh Junction box; but this line was closed in 1992 – so that although Dee Marsh Junction box is still working, there is no direct line between it and Mickle Trafford.

Of the redundant Mickle Trafford boxes, the C.L.C. box had a Cheshire Lines pattern 16-lever frame, and the G.W./L.N.W. had a second-hand L.Y.R. pattern frame with 18 levers. The new box has a 35-lever standard BR/LMR frame fitted; when first opened, it had five spares (later reduced to three). After the Dee Marsh rationalisation the working levers totalled 11, and this is the still the case today. The line from Mickle Trafford to Dee Marsh Junction was finally closed in 1992, and after the track was lifted the track-bed was converted into a walkway/cycleway by Cheshire County Council (opened officially in June 2000).

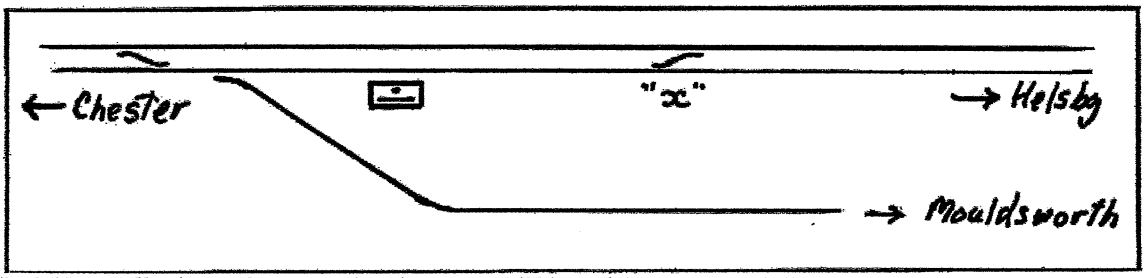
[This next sketch diagram is printed **upside-down** to maintain comparability with the rest of the diagrams in this article].



[The diagram dates from a visit that John Dixon made to the box in November 1980.

John Dixon records a rumour extant at the time of the 1968/9 alterations: some local railwaymen thought that the wrong section of the ex-L.N.E.R. route had been singled: they thought that the Dee Marsh line should have been the line to single as this would, in future, see only sparse goods traffic whereas the Mouldsworth line and its new link to Chester General was needed for regular passenger traffic besides any goods. Had there been a 'cock-up' by someone in Euston, far away from knowing the local demands?? Makes sense!

The track layout today:



[Mickle Trafford Junction, post the closure and lifting of the Dee Marsh line after 1992. The crossover at the Helsby end of the junction (marked "x") is still currently in situ, but not used.]

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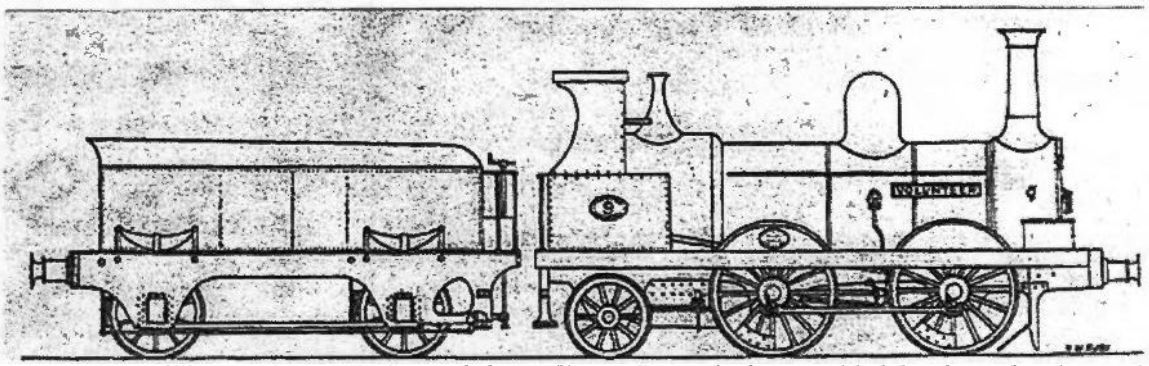
Part 3 of The locomotives of "Johnstown Road", by Emlyn Davies

(continued from the December 2005 issue: Emlyn's models of Cambrian Railways locomotives are described in the chronological order in which he built the models ...)

Cambrian Railways 0-4-2 No.9

Originally named "Volunteer", No.9 was one of a class of six locomotives built by Sharp Stewart for the Llanidloes & Newtown Railway which became part of the Cambrian Railways. They were built between 1859 and 1860. "Volunteer" was Works No.1226 of 1860.



[Note: Glyn Williams – the H.M.R.S. Cambrian Railways Steward – has provided the above drawing, and states "... drawing comes off a Rick Green negative. It was photographed on a skew that I have not been able to correct. The drawing is by R.W.Rush ... The NRM have the Sharp drawings for the Volunteers; in fact there are two drawings, one is a conventional GA and is rather ropey but dimensioned, the other is a very nice side view of the loco as built but is not dimensioned. Mike Lloyd never drew these".]

Originally fitted with weatherboards and having handbrakes on the tender only they were modernised later and fitted with cabs and vacuum brakes.

The model: This was the first of the Cambrian models to be fitted with the Mashima 1833 motor which drives the rear axle, thus allowing daylight to be seen under the boiler and no motor parts protruding into the cab.

For this model I had access to a Myford ML7 lathe so the smokebox door, chimney, safety valve, casing, whistle, lubricator and handbrake column were turned on this. Buffers, tender springs, handrail knobs and couplings were purchased, wheels are by Slater's.

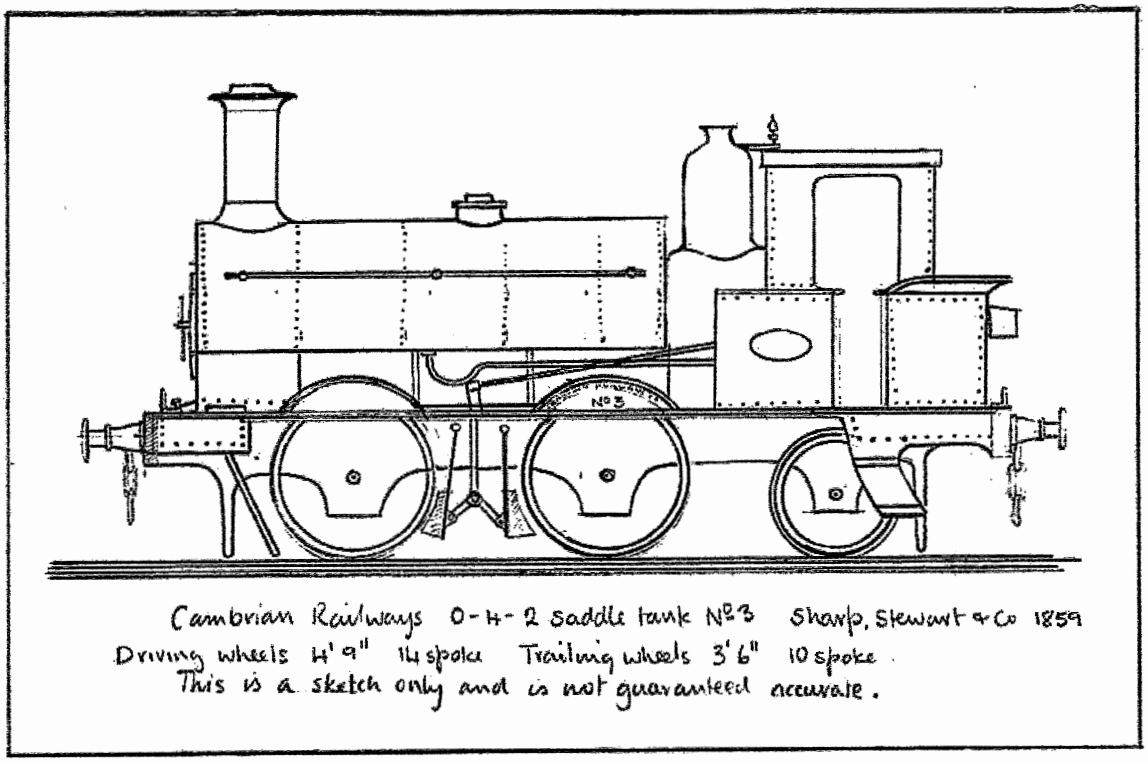
The flared top to the tender sides and back I made by cutting a suitable diameter piece of thin walled brass tube into quarters using a piercing saw blade held in a fret saw frame, beading made from brass wire was soldered around the edge.

A beautiful runner, No.9 is used mostly on passenger trains on "Johnstown Road" but can cope equally well with freight. Model built 1982.

Cambrian Railways 0-4-2 saddle tank No.3

This locomotive built by Sharp Stewart, originally named "Milford", was bought by the contractor David Davies to complete the Llanidloes and Newtown Railway. It arrived on a cart pulled by horses around March 1859. It is said that where it arrived on Saturday night, it stayed until Monday morning, no Sunday working took place in Wales in those days. As delivered it had no cab and water was fed to the boiler by a donkey pump.

The cab was fitted by the Cambrian and the engine seems to have spent most of its life in and around Oswestry and on ballast train work. The full width tool box on the back of the bunker and the shape of the safety valve cover give it a quaint look.



The model: Originally fitted with a Slater's motor/gearbox, for some reason to do with the acoustics of the bodywork the model was extremely noisy. A Mashima motor was fitted and it made virtually no difference to the noise level, but recently it has suddenly quietened down.

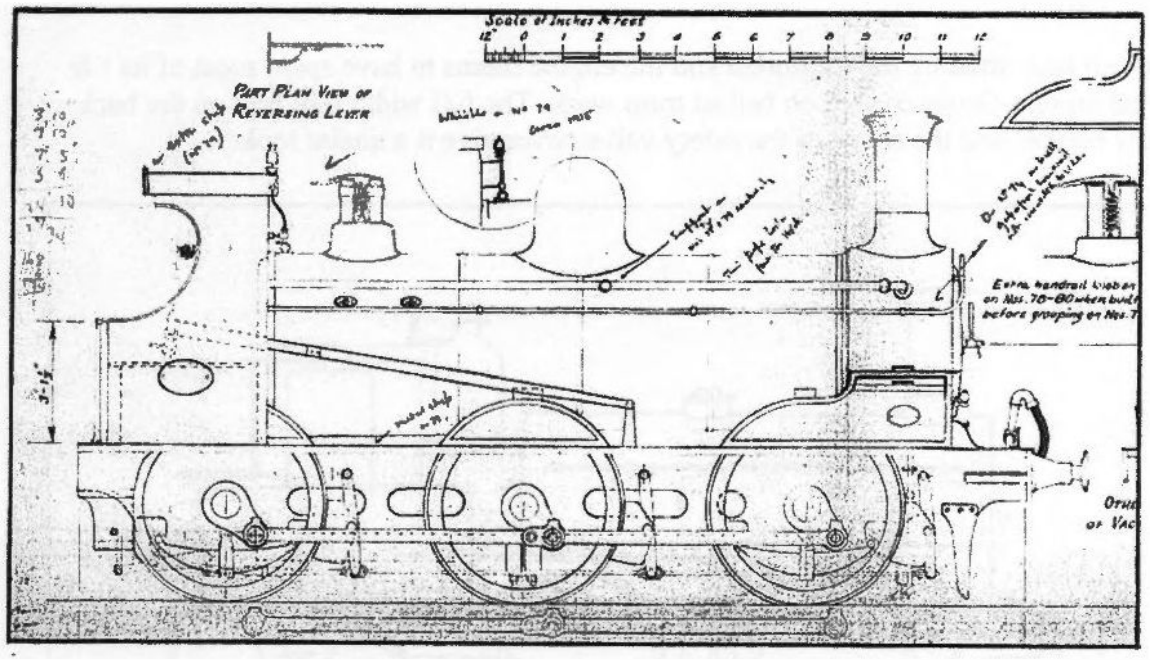
The chassis on this one has never been a good runner, check it though I might, I can't find a reason for it so maybe I had better start again and build a new one.

The body was built after I was given a riveting tool so it is well covered in rivets. A quaint and unusual prototype, at the moment it doesn't get much use - when it does, it is

strictly freight only for it has no vacuum pipes. The toolbox does open and there is a set of tools inside. Model built 1983.

Cambrian Railways 0-6-0 No.80

For this series of locomotives the Cambrian changed manufacturers. No.80 was built by Vulcan Foundry Works as No.1447 in 1897. Neilson built some of the class, these were distinguished by their smaller sandboxes incorporated into the front splasher. No.80 became G.W.R. No.883 and was eventually scrapped in October 1928.



The model: This is also powered by a Mashima 1833 motor with C.C.W. gears. Pick-up is from all wheels on loco and tender. Wheels are by Slater's. Most of the fittings on this loco are commercially available although the very tall whistle was shaped and turned in the electric drill. The loco and tender bodies are of nickel silver, the chassis of brass. The tender wheels run in inside bearings, the tender axle boxes being merely cosmetic. The flared top to the tender was once again made by cutting thin walled brass into sections. The lettering on the tender is dry print with shading and the Prince of Wales feathers painted by hand with oil paints. Cambrian Railways transfers for locomotives, coaches and wagons are now available from Dragon Models and make life much easier.

Like most Cambrian 0-6-0s the loco is used on passenger and freight trains although to be accurate it is too heavy for the "Johnstown Road" branch.

The model was built in 1984.

[To be continued]

[Dave Greenly of Mold took his layout "Manafon Mills" to expoEM North 2005 at Slaithwaite, as a replacement for another layout which had been withdrawn ...; this brief description appeared in the E.M.G.S. Newsletter:]

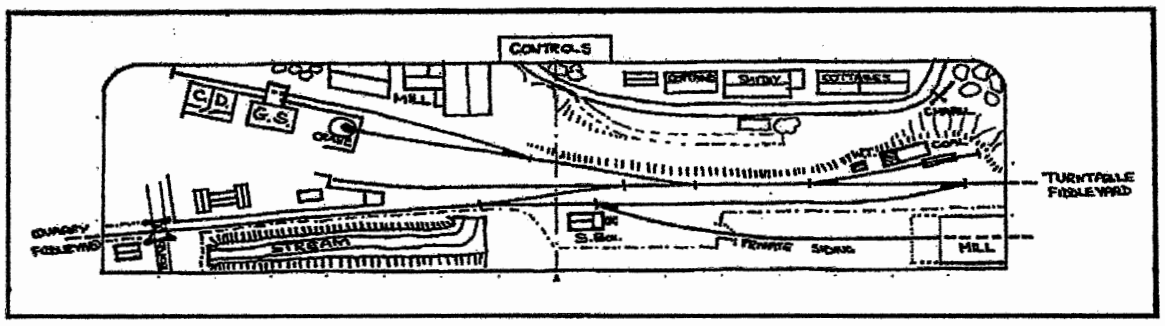
"Headlines ... last minute stand-in scoops prize!!

"MANAFON MILLS"

We were very pleased that Dave was able to come along to expoEM North as a last minute stand-in. We are sure that members would like to know something of this layout, having been started in 1999 and actually won Best Layout at expoEM Bletchley in that year. The layout has been widely exhibited and received a Layout Award at Stockport in 2004.

Dave has provided us with some details .....:
The layout represents a might-have-been branch-line that left the Oswestry & Newtown Railway at Forden and followed the valley of the River Rhiw to a couple of quarries and a lead mine, passing the Welsh Woollen Mills at Manafon on the way.

A passenger service was run as far as Manafon Mills, with the line continuing as minerals only. The layout is operated as it would have been in the late 1920s, when the Great Western had absorbed the branch from the Cambrian, but occasional reminders of the previous owners are still likely to be seen.



Construction: Built in 1999 by the Dymock Group (Reg How, Malcolm Genner and myself, with locos supplied by fourth member Frank Davies.) Originally intended as a 'quickie' while we built a replacement for "Dymock", and a layout that I could use at home. There are two scenic baseboards of 6mm ply, size 48" x 22" plus a 36" turntable fiddle-yard. Trackwork by SMP with points by the E.M. Society rivet and ply method operated by ex-MOD solenoids. Scenery using traditional plaster-on- polystyrene methods with grass using dyed surgical lint. Buildings are all scratch-built (except the Will's chapel) mostly using card. The stucco finishes on the cottages is tile-cement textured with an old toothbrush.

Rolling Stock: Wagons are a mixture of modified r-t-r and scratch-built, currently with three-link couplings, but we intend going automatic using the Lincs magnet-operated method. Coaching stock is mostly Malcolm's rebuilds of Ratio 4-wheelers, some barely recognisable as such!

Operation: At exhibitions we operate an intensive sequence and try always to have something moving - if we don't do this we find the viewers drift away!"
(Dave Greenly)

Letters to the Editor

"Dear Mr Goodwin - I'm sure you will recall our correspondence of earlier in the year, when you were kind enough to assist me in my search for information on liveries of private owner wagons from the pre-war era.
My business partner & I finally made a choice of three wagons, which we commissioned Dapol to produce for us in N Gauge. These were delivered over the past couple of weeks, and our limited edition mail-order wagon business 'Pennine Wagons' is now up and running. Your help was invaluable to us, and I would like to say how much we appreciate the time and effort you gave to do this.
You can see the wagons on our website www.penninewagons.co.uk , if you are interested.
Many thanks again. Regards - Simon Caldwell"

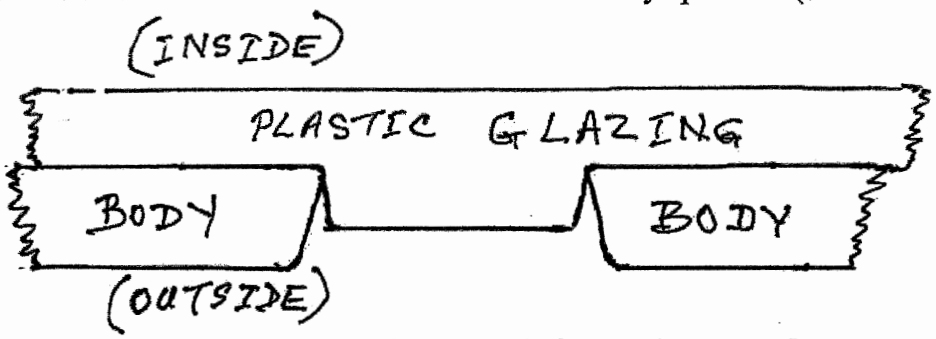
[The wagons chosen for this first run are: two 7-plank end-door coal wagons (Chapman Fletcher & Cawood Ltd. of Sheffield; and Lancashire Foundry Coke Co. Ltd. of Accrington); and a steel-bodied blue gunpowder van lettered 'GWR salvage save for victory'.]

Workshop notes, no.7: flush-glazing

The glazing on most r-t-r rolling stock models has always been second-rate at best - recent introductions show some improvement, but there are still many 4mm scale models on the market that leave a lot to be desired. Perhaps the biggest fault is that the 'glass' is usually recessed below the side by far too much – indeed, on most modern steel-panelled stock the windows are only just below the plane of the side panelling, rather than the scale two or three inches seen on some models. The next drawback which must be mentioned is the gap around the periphery of the window. And the last grumble I have is the uniformity of the recessing of windows in opening and non-opening lights.

An improvement can sometimes be made by using the replacement vacuum-formed windows marketed for a lot of models by South Eastern Models – you can find this 'flush glaze' advertised in magazines, and it is listed in Mainly Trains catalogues [1]. There is still a small gap between window and body, but it can be disguised cosmetically. A more unsightly defect is the slight uneven surface caused by the thinness of the plastic causing slight buckling.

Luckily, the way in which the bodies of r-t-r models are moulded suggests an alternative. To facilitate removal of the plastic body moulding from its metal mould, there has to be a built-in chamfer on the outside of any apertures (see sketch diagram);



[Enlarged diagrammatic section through body at window aperture]

And the glazing is normally applied from inside the vehicle body. So, if you abandon the r-t-r glazing and fit the replacements from outside the model, it is then possible to tailor individual pieces of transparent plastic exactly to fit the apertures. But not a quick job, it must be admitted!

The raw material used is important: it must have at least two qualities. The first and most important one is that it must be easily workable with simple hand-tools – and it must be said that this immediately rules out glass. Then it must not be affected by the sorts of solvents commonly used by modellers – and this rules out transparent polystyrene (Slater's 'plastiglaze', etc.).

In a lot of ways, the most 'friendly' material is acrylic ('Perspex' is a well-known brand); but it does have drawbacks – it is expensive, and difficult to find in the sorts of thicknesses and quantities that modellers require. It is also relatively brittle. But it does file nicely!

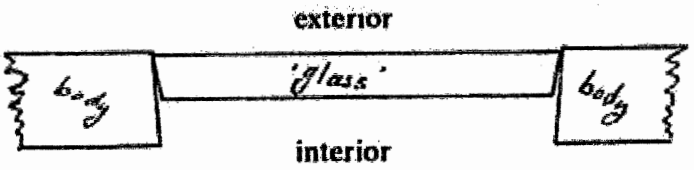
Which brings me to my favoured glazing material. Twenty years ago or so, I was talking to a professional sign-maker who also happened to be a P4 modeller and a member of the group that runs "Adavoyle Junction", and asked him if he knew of a source of thin Perspex. He told me that instead of Perspex he mostly used a transparent grade of a polycarbonate plastic with the trade name "Lexan". And he gave me several square feet of it, in several thicknesses from 0.020" up (some, I suspect, of other manufacturers), from his bin of 'off-cuts'! So I experimented with it, and discovered that if you made the window a press-fit in the opening, then the 'glass' did not need any other fixing. As insurance, I brush Plastic Weld around the periphery of the window: I think it very slightly softens the paint that is there, and so reinforces the joint when it dries. But do remember to finish painting before adding the glazing.

Lexan is the trade name for a highly durable polycarbonate resin thermoplastic, discovered in 1953 by a General Electric Company chemist. It now has many uses in industry, from aircraft canopies and bus shelters to CDs. It is also marketed in sheet form (both clear and coloured) – and here the drawback for modellers, is that a 'sheet' is 8ft x 4ft (or 3m x 2m): so a sheet would last even a large model club for decades. So, as I (accidentally) did, you have to find a friendly industrial user and buy a piece from his scrap bin. A small commercial sign-maker is the sort of firm to try. Lexan sheet itself is made in thicknesses from 0.75mm (0.030in) up to 12mm (½in). There are several other similar brands on the market: e.g. Makrolon and Tuffak, but what thicknesses these are made in, I haven't investigated. You will very likely find that Lexan which has come out of a scrap box is scratched to some extent (unless it is of a

scratch-resistant grade); in practice, this is irrelevant: blemishes become invisible after even a light coat of weathering.

How to go about making windows:

Start with something simple, like a Lima B.R. Mk.1 GUV – no small lights, and none with complex shaped corners; and a few tips: add ½mm or so to all your measurements of apertures to allow for filing, etc. Cut more blanks than you think you will need: the reject rate is far higher initially than you expect. Make the largest windows first – any wastage from these can be cut down for the next smaller size. Remember to file a taper on the edges, so that the blank will fit securely into the aperture: see the next diagram:-



With some model manufacturers it is safe to assume that seemingly identical window apertures are actually the same size, but not with all – so check! One minor defect of polycarbonate is that it tends to develop 'whiskers' along filed edges; they can be avoided to some extent by using second-cut (or finer grade) files, by filing along the axis of the blank, and finally by using your thumb-nail drawn along the edge, as a scraper. These methods should work – if there are some left, you have to use fine wet-and-dry abrasive paper. Light finger pressure should be all that is needed to position the window if the fit is correct.

Practice makes perfect!

[1] Mainly Trains, Unit C, South Road Workshops, South Road, Watchet, Somerset TA20 0HF; tel. 01684 634543. **www.mainlytrains.com**

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MS1

Book review: ***Scottish diesels, a colour portfolio***, by David Cross
Published by Ian Allan, 2005, price: £14.99. ISBN 0 7110 3082 0

It's always interesting to combine one's interests and in presenting a brief review of this book, that is what I'm doing. Having had a closet interest in the workings of diesels in Scotland for some years, it was a very nice surprise to see a collection of images like this being published.

The book essentially is made up of the images of Derek Cross, the father of the author. The years covered are from 1967 to 1982 and are very much in the style of 'the train in the landscape'. It is worth noting that Derek Cross was commissioned by the PR department of the old Scottish Region of British Rail to record events and happenings; hence some of the images are taken from places only accessible to the lucky few.

The technical quality of the images is excellent, especially when one considers exactly what colour film was available back then. Many of the images were taken on Kodachrome One, a film with a speed of only 25 ISO. This was considered "high-speed" for those days, rather a contrast with our modern digital image speeds. As images, many of the scenes are wonderful compositions which allow a lot of detail to be discerned for the modeller. They work both as images and historical records.

The title page of the book is a case in point, showing a North British Type 2 [Class 29] No D6107 leaving Crianlarich, bound for Glasgow. The engine is of a type which was decidedly unsuccessful, this one being in the Rail Blue livery. The interest of this image is even greater with the ageing full brake behind it - this being in maroon livery.

Another example of failed design can be found on page 50. I should re-phrase that by saying 'examples', as the image is of a group of Clayton Type 1s [Class 17] in storage at Millerhill yard, just outside of Edinburgh. One of those locomotives is in Rail Blue livery - a rarity for this ill-fated class. Many of the more visually stimulating images are from the Highlands of Scotland and feature locomotives associated with these lines. A wonderful example is on page 22: two Sulzer Type 2s [Class 24] skirting the shores of Loch Carron on the Kyle of Lochalsh line in the Northern Highlands. The Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon Co. Type 2 [Class 26 & 27] locomotives, soon to be the subject of a new model by Heljan, are pictured everywhere in this book – from Edinburgh and Glasgow to the far northern lines to Wick and Thurso. These workhorses seemed to be used for everything and worked in Scotland for most of their useful lives.

A publication like this not only records bygone locomotives and stock; it can also provide a record of how the landscape itself has changed. The images on pages 77 and 78 illustrate this perfectly, showing the West Coast mainline crossing the old A74 trunk road at Harthope. Today the view is totally different due to the construction of the M74.

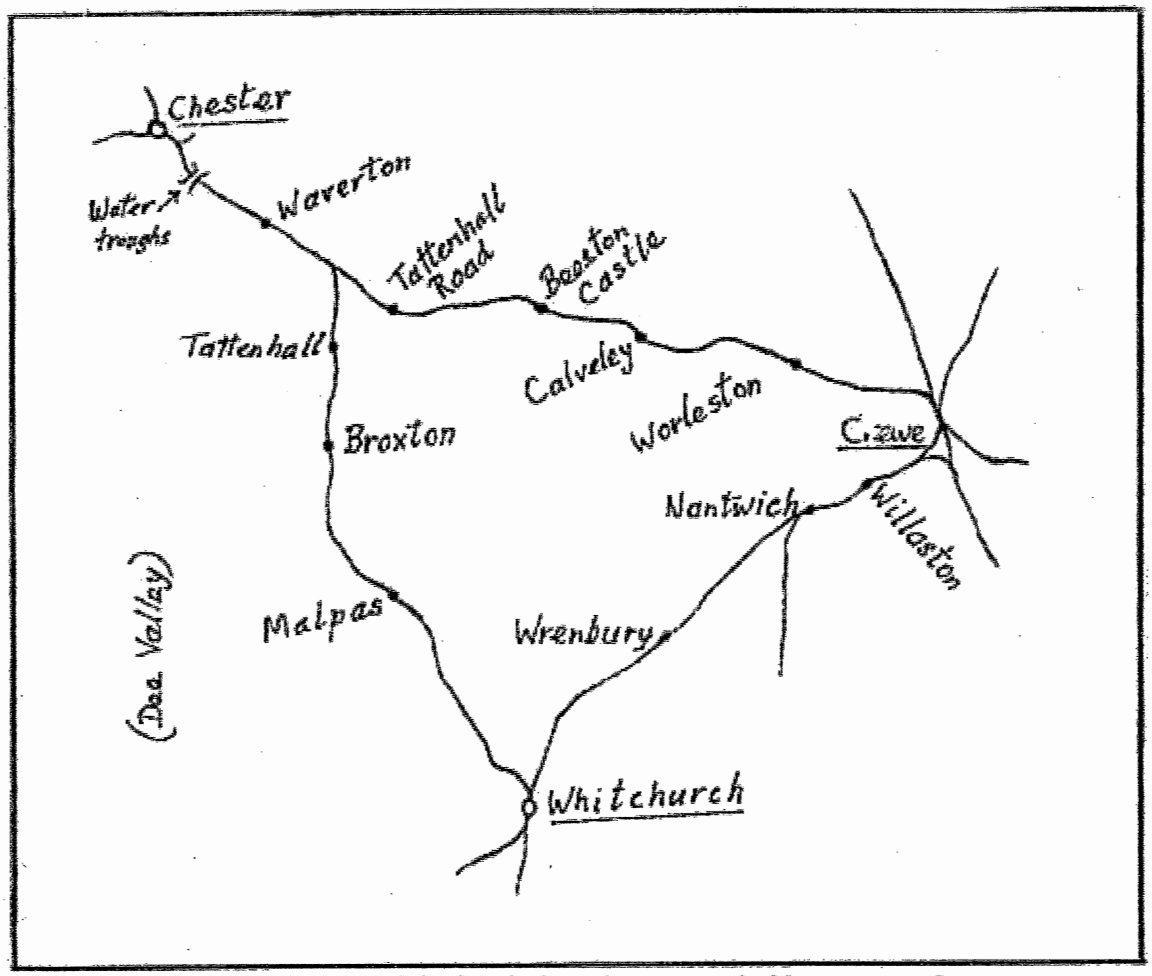
All in all this is good publication which has a good insight into the locomotives used in Scotland and the lines they worked. Highly recommended.

(Reviewed by Iain Kirk)

[Remember that Harry Wilson, next door in Unit 7, can supply the great majority of your book requirements: tel. 0782 176 4048; 01829 742599; or 01829 740693. E-mail: **hwrailwaybooks@aol.com**]

CHESTER TO WHITCHURCH – A Forgotten L.N.W.R. Shortcut.

by Tony Robinson



[A reminder of the geography of the line before closure nearly fifty years ago]

PREAMBLE

Being something of a 'Cinderella' of a country branch line, that today few local people remember or even for that matter realise existed, closed to passengers in 1957 and to all services at the beginning of 1963 with track lifted a couple of years later, this fourteen mile long route built to mainline standards ran through some of the prettiest parts of South Cheshire. A latecomer, it was opened in October 1872 with the intention of 'grabbing' the lion's share of the coal traffic from South Wales bound for the Mersey docks at Birkenhead. Whilst traffic originating from the Abergavenny – Merthyr line was routed this way for sure, as it was under complete LNWR control, it became clear that most of the coal traffic bound for Birkenhead (mainly marine bunker coal) was drawn for obvious reasons from the nearby North Wales coalfields around Wrexham and therefore became GWR traffic. In his reminiscences G. P. Neele described it as "A direct line of our own from Ireland to Hereford and South Wales". Photographs, especially ones taken in pre-grouping days are exceedingly rare, so it will be unsurprising that with the exception of one, many of the photographs that have surfaced were taken at or near the end of the line's existence.

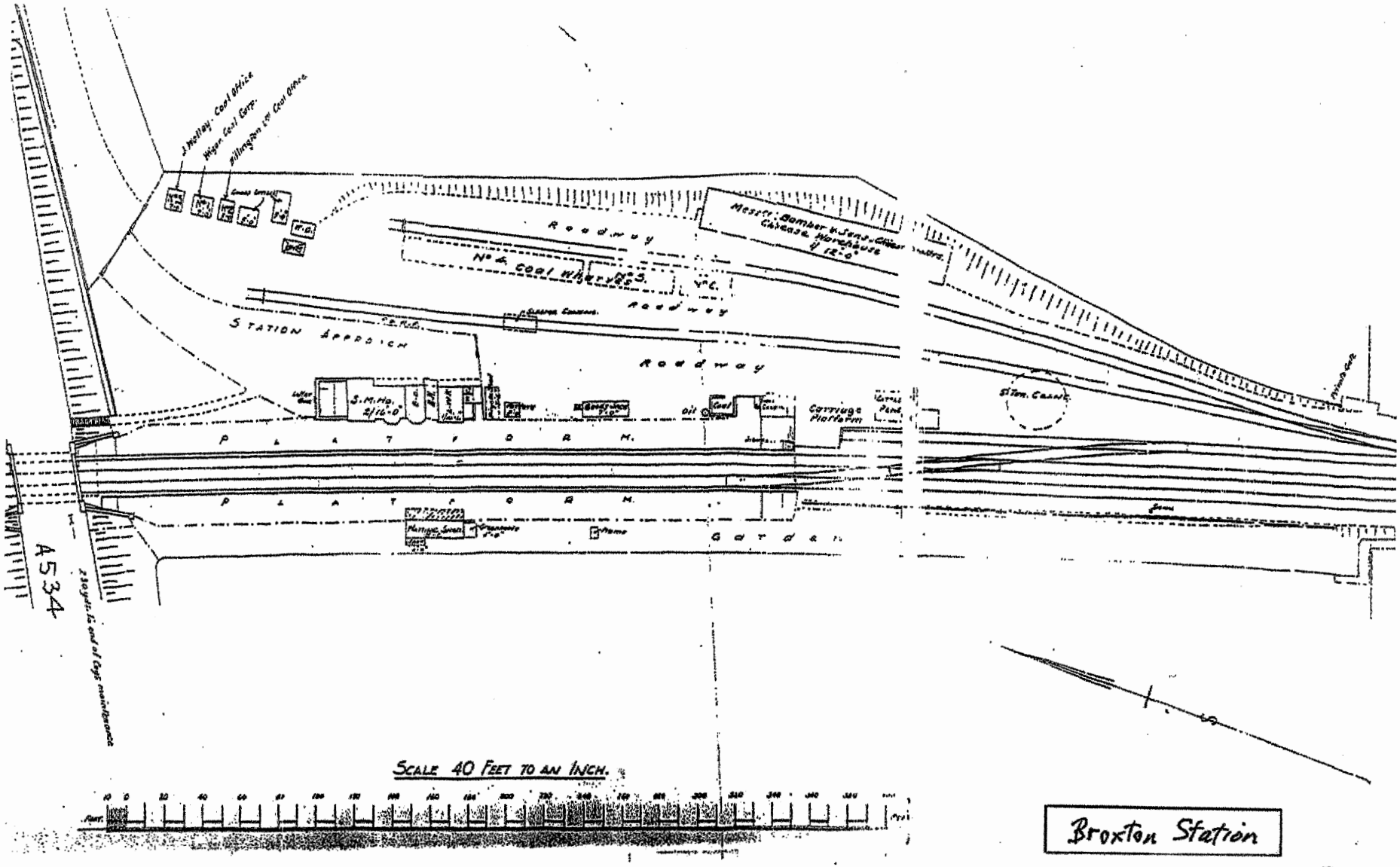
THE ROUTE DESCRIBED

The branch commenced some five miles east of Chester at Tattenhall Junction where it branched off due south from the Crewe line. Taking the form of a double track main line throughout its entirety, it left across a flat plain with a 50 wagon spur siding on the 'down' side. This siding was known to sometimes house the royal train overnight, probably used when royalty was visiting the nearby Eaton Hall or prior to a visit to Chester and North Wales. The Duke of Westminster had special facilities built at Waverton station to ease his passage on his many trips to and from the capital, also there was a private approach road direct to Eaton Hall from outside the village of Saighton near Waverton. Long after the branch was lifted the spur remained, mainly for departmental use, the adjacent junction signal box being switched in at busy periods to break the long section between Beeston Castle and Chester No.1. Today no trace remains of either the junction or the box. For passengers travelling between Crewe and Chester a lone farmer's over-bridge marks out the route of the branch near where it departs from the main line. The line undulated slightly for the next two miles, before coming to Tattenhall station seven miles from Chester; today there still stands the station house (now a

[Tattenhall station, photographed by Don Rowland on 16 July 1965, seven years after closure]

private residence) of pleasant red Cheshire sandstone construction along with the down platform (see Photo), the adjoining ticket office and waiting room having been demolished in 2003. In all but minor details and handing this building would be repeated at both Broxton and Malpas. Tattenhall would be one of the very few villages in England that could boast of two LNWR stations both on differing routes! Unhappily as was often the case neither were conveniently near to the village itself. There were no goods facilities here, the yard at Tattenhall Road station on the main (Chester – Crewe) line serving the village despite its greater distance from it! The over-bridge on the minor road between nearby Milton Green and Tattenhall village served to join both platforms. This bridge like several others on the line was constructed using multiple Crewe Foundry I–beams, now shored up along with its remaining siblings to prevent collapse under modern road traffic loadings.

From Tattenhall the line progressed southwards into some of the most attractive scenery in Cheshire. Crossing the A41 (Chester – Whitchurch) road near Handley views for passengers would take in the Peckforton hills and the craggy pine covered Rawhead sandstone escarpment



Broxton Station

on the left with uninterrupted views across the Cheshire plain to the hills of North East Wales to the right. Broxton at 10 miles from Chester was reached after the line had started climbing a gradient of 1 in 112 some two miles after Tattenhall, from here there would be an adverse gradient for the next five miles. Broxton station sat at the western foot of Bickerton Hill and was again some distance from the nearest villages that it was to serve, the most significant structure in the vicinity being an unusually large (for the local population that is) police station and courthouse. This edifice still stands today alongside the nearby roundabout on the A41, but

[Stanier 2-6-4T no.42594 on a stopping train for Chester, at Broxton station on 18 May 1957, in the final year of passenger services. Viewed from the A534 road over-bridge. From a photograph by N.R.Knight.]

is now a private residence. Approaching Broxton, catch points were passed 431 yards in the 'rear' (description in the 'Appendix' to the 1937 LMS Rule book – it probable means 'before' the signal) of the home signal, there was a goods yard, yard crane, cattle dock, and a cheese warehouse. A small Saxby & Farmer Type 2 signal box stood guard at the up side of the station near the yard throat. The adjacent A534 (Nantwich – Wrexham) road-bridge doubled up as a station footbridge. It seems that in LMS days the Stationmaster was something of a horticulturist and gained many prizes for garden display at the Whitchurch end of the down platform. Also of note, research has revealed that the ancestral home of Thomas Brassey was at nearby Bulkeley Old Hall.

Continuing on a gradient of 1 in 112/115 for the next 3½ miles, over and under a number of still extant brick-built bridges carrying minor roads, the line reaches Malpas station, perhaps the most important station on the line serving a considerable village over a mile to the west! Unlike Broxton this station boasted not only a goods yard, cattle dock and crane but a sizeable goods shed as well. The station buildings, this time on the down (village) side were blessed with a short platform canopy. The signal box here was a small standard LNWR brick-based unit of about 20 levers. The Appendix to the LMS rule book gives a siding capacity of 32 wagons on the down side. The road over-bridge at the Whitchurch end of the station was provided with a stairway down to the up platform only, barrow crossings seemed to be the main means of access between the platforms.

About a mile beyond Malpas station the line reached a summit of just over 300 feet above sea level, the point marked by a short cutting before descending through a number of switchbacks

of varying gradients for the next four miles. Crossing the Shropshire border at Grindley Brook, where the LMS opened an un-staffed halt in July 1938, the line ran along a high embankment over the Shropshire Union canal before approaching Whitchurch on a rising gradient of 1 in 140 along a 2 mile straight. A sharp right hand curve of 12 chains radius brought it to the junction with the Crewe – Shrewsbury main-line some 500 yards north of the station. Whilst a single road bay platform sandwiched between the Crewe bound platform and a high wall served as the starting point for Chester bound passenger services, the final destination for the local passenger traffic off the branch was either platform 2 or 3 of the island platform at Whitchurch.

TRAFFIC AND WORKING THE LINE

Passenger traffic ceased well before the Beeching era, on the 16th September 1957 and the last freight (an oil train from Stanlow to Rowley Regis) was worked up the line by a Stanier 8F in January 1963. In LNWR days motive power was doubtless provided both by Whitchurch and Chester sheds, Jumbos appear to have been the staple passenger locos for many years, probably working out their days on the branch. However when my father was in charge of Rhyl shed (1945-48), they had a number of daily passenger diagrams from Rhyl to Whitchurch and return, worked, if I'm not mistaken, by LMS 4-4-0 Class 2P locos. Few photographs were taken on the branch in LNWR days of trains running, most that have come to light show activity at either end of the line where there was obviously more traffic to attract the contemporary photographer.

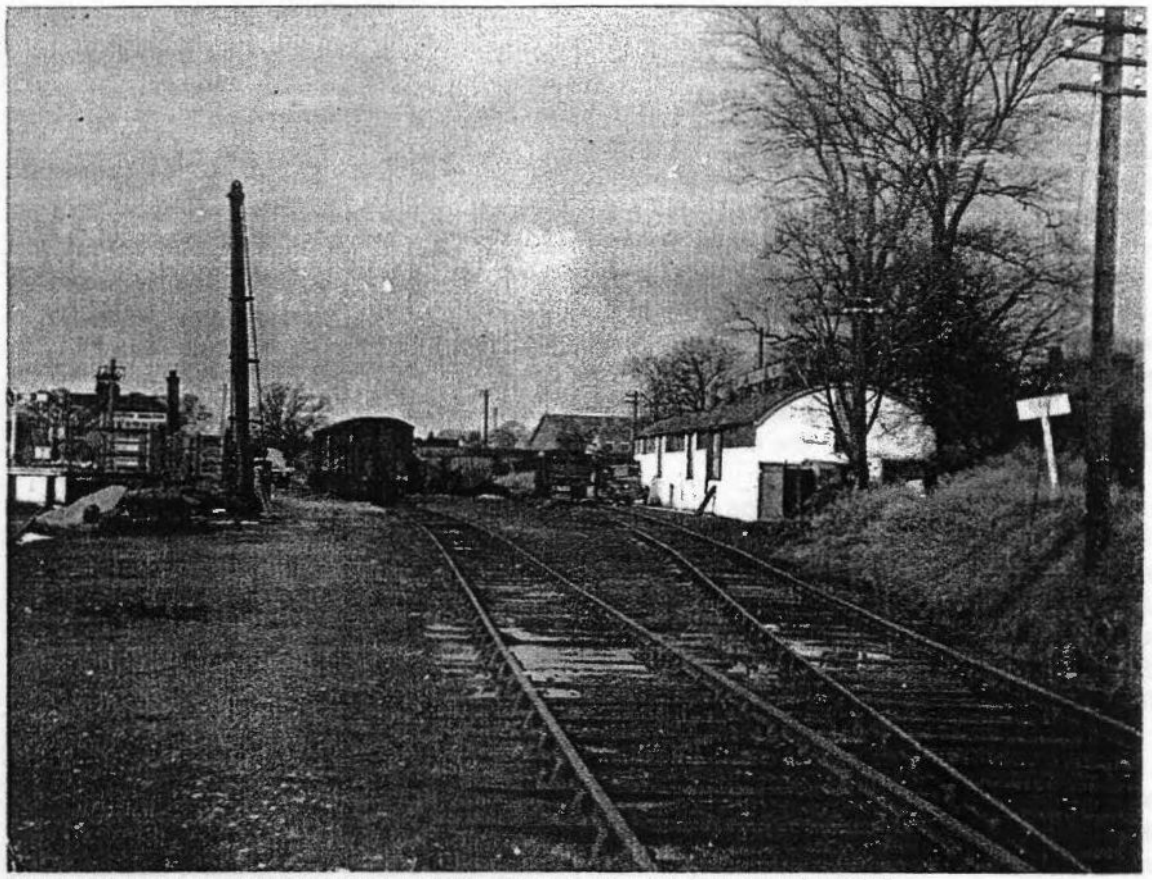
Originally passenger services were planned for through running between Chester and Hereford but these were short lived and were cut back to local services between Whitchurch and Chester or Rhyl. There were through carriages to and from Shrewsbury on some trains, attached to trains from Crewe and engines were kept at Whitchurch shed for the service. In the early years of the twentieth century the now preserved single "Cornwall" was shedded there for the Tattenhall route. Coal traffic from South Wales formed the bulk of early freight workings, probably passing over the branch at night en route for Birkenhead. However apart from competition from the GWR route from the Wrexham coalfield, there was also stiff competition from coastal shipping from the 1890's and the traffic declined after the First World War. From the late 19th century Broxton became a focal point for transhipment of the seasonal fruit traffic that originated around Holt and Farndon on the River Dee some four miles to the west on the Welsh border.

This outlet was not popular with the local growers around the banks of the Dee at Holt and Farndon. One well known contemporary grower, Edwin Bellis, complained to the Welsh Land commission in London in 1895, "that as all produce had to travel five or six miles by road, to be loaded into a train causing loss and damage to soft fruit, plus extra time and cost in transit, that serious consideration should be given to providing Holt with its own railway connection". He went on to explain that he and many of his neighbouring colleagues were so hampered by the lack of a railway that they had given up growing vegetables altogether! A plan was mooted for a new railway that entailed passing northwards towards Chester through 3½ miles of the Duke of Westminster's estate, this plan being given some impetus by another local land owner, Mr George Barbour of Bolesworth Castle who unsurprisingly was an LNWR director! Furthermore it was promoted as a possible through route, by joining it at the southern end to the Cambrian's Wrexham - Ellesmere line at Cross Lanes near Marchwiel. The Duke, understandably was not too keen to relinquish parts of his land and so put forward a plan to run a narrow gauge tramway between Holt and Broxton alongside the road. This idea was deemed to be quite useless by the fruit farmers who maintained that for the scheme to be successful there should be no further loading/unloading once the cargo was put aboard a train.

Well, despite the complaints about the distance of road travel to the nearest railhead at Broxton, it is clear that right up until closure that station and its adjacent goods yards served the area for the purpose of fruit and vegetable transhipment. Early BR(M) notices give details of special passenger rated Class 'C' trains running as required with arrivals at 5.15 am departing at 7.35 pm after loading. These trains to have a brake van at each end, originating from Wigan and travelling up the branch from Chester and departing to Whitchurch with reversal for Crewe. It is known that the bulk of the fruit traffic went either to Manchester or London. Another 'as required' working ran as a circular from Gresty Lane, Crewe – Whitchurch – Broxton (arr 4.50pm, dep 8.50pm) - Chester and back to Crewe. Another specific traffic was that of Spring Cabbages, from Broxton to Manchester London Road, this being freight rated. Cheshire cheese was also an important perishable traffic, there being a cheese warehouse at Broxton. The warehouse was the property of Messrs Bamber & Son who had their cheese making factory at Balderton on the G.W. mainline some three miles south of Chester. Apparently the cheeses were sent to the warehouse for maturation prior to shipping to the main markets in London & Manchester. There is a mystery here! Why send cheeses all the way from Balderton, where the G.W. had ample siding facilities? My guess is that the Broxton warehouse was an outpost that was supplied by the local cheese producing farms under the auspices of Bambers – maybe one of our members has more information on this! (See the excellent picture of the 'Drivers Cheese Special' – Who were Drivers? Were they a marketing outlet or distributor?) It is known that 'Cheese Fairs' were held at Whitchurch.

[18in Goods no.1717 at Broxton, probably about 1909/1910]

(Since the article was first published in the September 2004 "LNWRS Journal", information has come to light that the 'Drivers' company 'ran' the trains to Bradford, one interesting photo – to be seen in the Nantwich museum - depicts a 'Drivers Cheeses Christmas Special' departing Broxton behind a DX goods).



[Broxton station yard, probably in the 1950s. The cheese warehouse on the right]

Passenger traffic was sparse towards the end of the line's existence, there being about a half dozen workings in either direction each weekday. There is little if any evidence of through working during the latter years. Freight used it more as a corridor, latterly with oil trains from the Stanlow refinery on the joint Hooton – Helsby line accessing the West Midlands without the need to use the GWR route over Gresford Bank. These trains were not popular with the engine men of Birkenhead and Mold Junction, it being considered a 'long drag' up to and beyond Broxton with the difficulties of working unfitted oil trains over the 'switch backs' between Malpas and Whitchurch not easing their opinion! Anecdotes exist of a daily late afternoon freight working from Saltney yard to Coton Hill (Salop) yard by a GW 28xx, this probably being for pathing purposes. (I have tales of GW engines having grievous problems on Christleton troughs!). However it is highly unlikely that such movements existed in LNW days anyway.

On approaching Tattenhall Junction from Chester, drivers of Whitchurch trains would whistle the 'Bobby' to confirm their intention to take the branch with three 'shorts' and a 'crow', if the branch 'board' (visible for several hundred yards) came off they could negotiate the junction without losing too much speed given the relatively mild 40 chain curve off to the right. At the other end of the branch speeds were curtailed considerably by the sharp right hand curve as the line joined the main Crewe – Salop line ["Salop" was the name that generations of railwaymen gave for Shrewsbury].

King George V and Queen Mary travelled over the branch in the Royal train en route from Holyhead to Swansea (Holyhead – Rhyl – Denbigh – Mold – Chester – Whitchurch – Craven Arms – Swansea) on their Royal tour, July 16th & 17th 1920.

THE SCENE TODAY

There are few worthwhile remains to see today save for the nice external restoration of Malpas station building (now offices for an adjacent company) and to a lesser extent the one at Tattenhall. Bridges are few in number and in several cases somewhat spoiled by the highly necessary reinforcements. Cuttings and embankments, apart from the ones at Grindley Brook are full of undergrowth or bulldozed away respectively in most cases. In many areas it is hard to tell whether a railway ever existed on the site at all. Around Broxton today no trace remains of the station or its yard, the site having been flattened along with the road bridge to make way for a Department of Transport picnic area with toilets and mobile shop etc. No trace that is, save for the 'king post' of the yard crane which has stood fast in its original position serving as a marker for anyone wishing to work out what went where on the site today! Either side of the site flat fields abound and the line of the track-bed is only marked by a hedge.

In conclusion it must be said that one of the main challenges of writing about this particular line is the lack of information, photographs and remaining artefacts. These points coupled with vague and distant personal memories of both the author and his associates make it a fascinating subject. When in enthusiast circles, one's enquiries are met with a sharp intake of breath accompanied a shaking of heads, the challenge starts to take hold! The author would be delighted if this article stimulates the 'memory glands' of a few readers so that more information can be added to enhance and improve a possible future edition.

Thanks are due to the following:- Norman Lee, Greg Fox, Neville Knight, Paul Shannon, Don Rowland, Richard Casserley and Roger Bellis. Not to mention the hallowed memories of some of the surviving 'lads' from 6B! For the early Broxton photographs thanks are especially due to Helen Bate of the 'Peckforton Hills Local Heritage Project', The Whitchurch History & Archaeology Group and The Whitchurch Heritage Centre.

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[This is a revised version of the article first published in the September 2004 issue of the "London & North Western Society Journal". Comments, additions and corrections are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor in the first place: contact details on page 2]

"Henry Robertson: pioneer of Welsh railways"

by Emlyn Davies

Originally intended for the Church, Henry Robertson was born in Banff in 1816, gained a scholarship to Aberdeen University and graduated before he was twenty years old. The family moved to Glasgow after his father died when Henry was about sixteen. After university he took up engineering, particularly railways and became a pupil of Robert Stephenson and Locke. Robertson did the work of levelling and setting out the part of the West Coast line from England to Scotland which passes over Shap Fell. A little later he branched out on his own and tendered successfully for an overhead bridge contract on the Glasgow & Greenock Railway: it was this contract which gave him valuable experience in dealing with contractors on the larger works he carried out.

Robertson first came to Brymbo in 1842. He had been sent there to write an independent report on the feasibility of developing the area. The Scottish bank which had requested the report advanced him money so that he could take part in the development of the area. Another Scot who came to North Wales at this time, Robert Roy bought John Wilkinson's Brymbo works and estate out of Chancery in 1841.

Roy and Robertson discussed the best possible way of developing the property, and Robertson suggested a tramway to Connahs Quay on the River Dee. At this time coal was carted from the pits to Chester (16 miles) by road, or on a tramway to Pontcysyllte wharf, near the aqueduct over the Dee. It then travelled by canal via Ellesmere, Whitchurch and Nantwich to Chester – 58 miles!

On 20th September 1842, Robert Roy, Henry Robertson, William Betts and Alexander Mackenzie Ross formed the Brymbo Mineral & Railway Company and they began work on the 3rd October the same year. The company sank new shafts and developed the iron works. This early company foundered because of disagreements and the case came to court. The decision was that the company be dissolved and that one of the partners should take possession of the works and buy the others out, but who should it be? The people of Brymbo believed that it was to be a race between the two parties, the first to reach the works to take possession. Being unanimously in favour of Mr Robertson the locals decided to barricade every road leading to the works and only let Mr Robertson in. These barricades were manned 24hrs a day and lit by torches at night. Late one night the men at one of the barricades heard the sound of a horse coming rapidly towards them. One of the men jumped up and held the horse and asked who the rider was. When the horseman replied "Robertson", up went a great cheer. A procession was formed and Mr Robertson, on horseback was led triumphantly to the works where, on the lawn in front of the offices, he told the assembled crowd his plans for the future of the works.

It was at this time that he met William Henry, and Charles Edward Darby and succeeded in getting them to join him and to take over the management of the iron works, so that he could devote himself to constructing the railways he was promoting.

After being involved in the formation of the North Wales Railway Company, Henry Robertson for the next two or three years devoted most of his time in preparing railway schemes to link the district with Chester and later the Midlands and the rest of the country. Earlier schemes for railways to link the area with Chester had failed because of a commercial depression, the opposition of local landowners and general apathy.

Mr Robertson proposed a scheme for a line which would join the Chester & Holyhead line about two miles from what is now Chester station, and terminate in Wrexham. The line to be single track, but all bridges and embankments wide enough for double track later. The scheme, despite opposition, was carried through Parliament by the persistence of Mr J.B.Ross and Mr Roy and Mr Robinson, all directors of the company.

Opposition did not come from the people of Wrexham who decided to support the scheme, but only because they thought the railway would terminate there. When an extension to Ruabon was proposed there was an outcry and it was only an impassioned

speech by Henry Robertson at a public meeting about the alleviation of the plight of the unemployed of Ruabon that the dissenters were shamed into agreeing to the extension. The Bill itself was passed on 6 August 1844. The North Wales Mineral Railway asked Parliament to authorise the extension of the line to Cefn Mawr (near Ruabon) with a branch to Christionydd and a branch or branches from Rhosrobin through Gwersyllt, Stansty, Broughton and Brymbo to the lime rocks of Minera (to the north and west of Wrexham).

The North Wales Mineral Extension Bill was considered by parliamentary committee in 1845 and in due course was approved. The decision to apply for an extension from Ruabon to Shrewsbury caused frantic activity. Instructions for the notices and plans were only given on 7 November, and everything had to be deposited with the Clerk of the Peace by the 30th of the month. Owing to the hostility of some landowners, Robertson had to carry out some of the land surveys at night, keeping a watchful eye out for gamekeepers. One irate squire is said to have expressed a wish that "someone would throw Robertson and his damned theodolite into the canal" (the Llangollen Canal parallels the railway between Cefn and Chirk). The scheme passed Parliament unopposed (Mr R.M.Biddulph of Chirk Castle had opposed the scheme on the grounds that it was uncalled on public grounds and would wantonly deface his lands. He was confident that the House of Lords and the Commons would reject the Bill – but his confidence was misplaced).

Mr Robertson told the Parliamentary committee of the advantage to the district and its people, with the valuable coalfields of Ruabon and Wrexham being open to Chester, Birkenhead and Liverpool on one side and to Shrewsbury and Shropshire on the other. The Parliamentary committee endorsed the view and the Bill received Royal Assent on 30 June 1845. In 1846 the title of the railway was changed to the Shrewsbury & Chester Railway Company.

During 1846/47 construction of the main line and some branches began but the bridging of the Dee valley at Cefn was looming ever closer. Robertson had completed his plans for a viaduct but he had to find a contractor to carry them out. The story is told that while waiting at Wrexham station he noticed a stranger getting into the train; he asked the Station Master who the person was and he replied "Thomas Brassey, the railway contractor". Robertson asked for the train to be held while he bought a ticket. He joined Brassey on the train and on the journey to Chester outlined his plans for the viaduct at Cefn: Brassey was persuaded to build it. [But in the meantime, a disaster occurred in 1847 when the Stephenson-designed bridge over the River Dee at Chester collapsed and a Chester-Ruabon train fell into the river with five fatalities.]

The viaduct took two years to build, cost £72,346 – a vast sum in those days. It is 1508ft long, 147ft high, and has 19 stone arches, each with a span of 60ft: it was opened with great ceremony on 14 August 1848.

The line from Ruabon to Shrewsbury was completed by August 1848. In addition to the previously mentioned Dee crossing, a viaduct had to be erected over the Ceiriog valley at Chirk: this was 283yds long, 100ft high and originally had 12 arches – ten of stone and two of wood – but the latter were replaced by masonry in 1858/59. The opening of the whole line took place on 16 October 1848; the dignitaries enjoyed spectacular

views of the Dee valley by the light of a full moon, as their train stalled on the viaduct because it was too heavy for the locomotive – but they did not complain.

With the completion of the Shrewsbury & Chester Railway, Robertson soon appeared in the Shropshire capital as a resident, having previously lived in Chester.

About 1850 he became engineer for the Shrewsbury & Birmingham Railway. He also originated and completed the Shrewsbury & Hereford line, the Central Wales line from Craven Arms to Llandovery and the Vale of Llangollen Railway to Dolgellau (with the branch to Ffestiniog). During these years Robertson became so well known as a witness before Parliamentary committees. David Davies of Llandinam ('Davies the Ocean') spoke of him as the best witness of the time; he was even used by the Great Western to advocate some of their lines in Wales and the border counties.

While much of his time was still devoted to railway enterprises he was also very active in the fields of coal and iron. He also became a partner in the firm of Beyer Peacock of Manchester. As well as all this, Henry Robertson sat as a Liberal M.P. for Shrewsbury on three occasions, and once for Merioneth. In 1866 he seceded from the Liberal Party over the Irish question and retired from Parliament. While he was M.P. for Shrewsbury his son (Henry Beyer Robertson [1862-1948]) came of age, and such was the popularity of Henry Robertson that gifts were presented by the Brymbo Company, the Broughton & Plas Power Coal Company, the Minera Company and the Brymbo Water Company – but Henry was a Director of most of these! However, illuminated addresses were sent by the people of Wrexham, Llandrillo, Llanderfel, Gwyddelwern, Corwen and Bala: each address paid tribute to Robertson's work in developing the railways and promoting the interests dependent upon the mineral resources of the area.

Henry Robertson – a Scot – fell in love with Wales: he first settled in Crogen and later built a house called Palé at Llanderfel near Bala. He enjoyed country sports and could often be seen fishing the Dee for salmon from a coracle. At the time of his death on 22 August 1888 he was Chairman of the Vale of Llangollen Railway, the Broughton & Plas Power Coal Company, Brymbo Steel Company, Minera Lime Works, the Wirral Railway Company, the Corwen & Bala Railway, the Llangollen & Corwen Railway and the Brymbo Water Company.

He was a remarkable man, who, without the aid of inherited wealth or the help of powerful friends, won himself a great reputation as an engineer and ironmaster.

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Book review: ***Death by chance: the Abergele train disaster, 1868,*** by Robert Hume.

Published by Gwasg Carreg Gwalch (Llanrwst), 2004. ISBN: 0 86381 900 1.
100pp, card covers, 210mm x 150mm, £4.50. **Reviewed by Norman Lee.**

The book records the wrecking of the LNWR's Down Irish Mail near Abergele on Thursday 20th August 1868 when some wagons laden with paraffin ran out of a siding into the path of the express. The engine was overturned in the collision and the leading vehicles - a mail van and three carriages - were showered with paraffin and caught fire. Perhaps 33 people were killed although it was difficult to be certain. The engine driver escaped but died three months later, probably because of his injuries.

Mr Hume's book is written for general readers and is based on the coroner's inquest, the resulting police inquiry and trial, the Board of Trade report and on contemporary reports in newspapers and magazines. Unlike more recent years, the official proceedings took place very soon after the accidents.

The accident was a spectacular one and was reported in melodramatic and gory details, as could be expected in mid-Victorian days. Victims included titled gentry, servants, tradesmen and railway employees and a similar cross section of society gave witness. Mr Hume quotes contemporary sources about the causes of the collision and what could be done to prevent its recurrence.

Although two railwaymen were sent to trial, they were acquitted of man-slaughter and the LNWR was generally held at fault for having unclear or impractical rules and procedures.

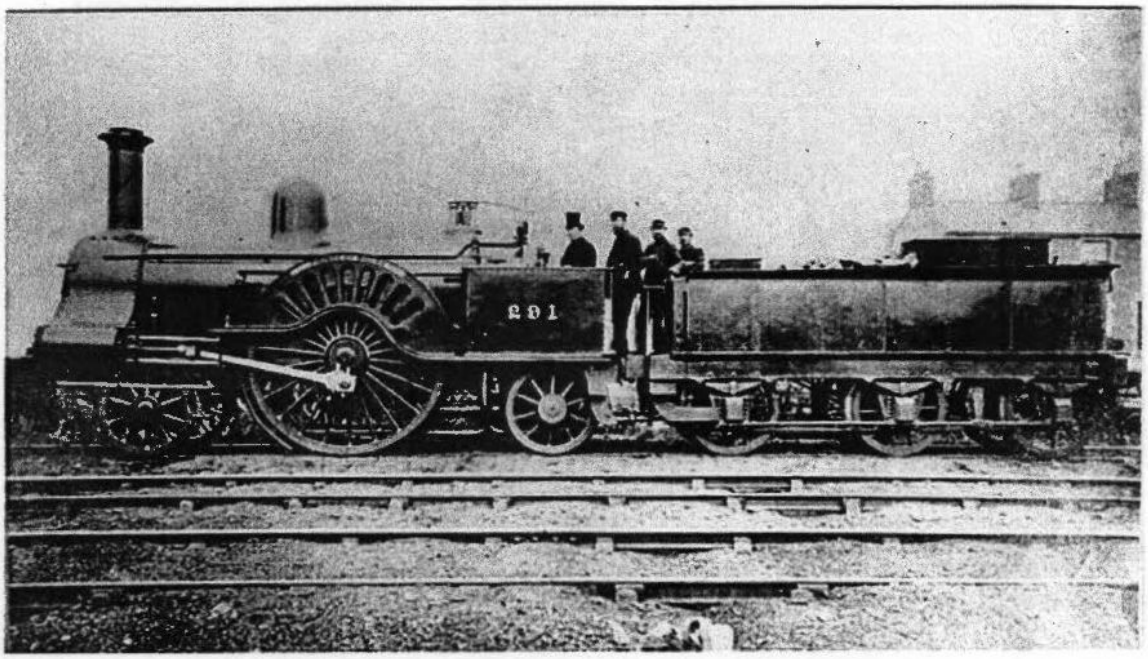
After the accident, a stone was erected at the side of the track to mark the spot. Photograph by J.M.Dunn (LNWR Soc.neg. JMD 80).

The author does not speculate on the cost of the accident but says that, in the previous year, the LNWR had paid £142,283 in compensation for accidents and losses.

There are sixteen pages of photographs in the middle of the book. They show some interesting topics but are not very well reproduced and, in some cases, are poorly chosen - for example, a GWR pocket watch is pictured with a note that "... a guard on the L&NWR would have carried a similar one.". Better photographs do exist and some better illustrations are shown here.

The book gives a brief but interesting background to railway working before the introduction of block signalling and is without any modern speculation. At £4.50 it is a good buy.

The Irish Mail was pulled by a 'Problem' 2-2-2, No. 291 PRINCE OF WALES which entered service in February 1862. The 'Problem' class was introduced in 1859 by Mr Ramsbottom, the LNWR's Locomotive Superintendent. The first engine, named PROBLEM, appeared shortly after Mr F W Webb took charge of the Crewe drawing



office. A contemporary Crewe engine (a 'DX' 0-6-0) was named THEOREM and both names are 'mathematical' - the class didn't really cause 'problems' although it was sometimes known as 'Lady of the Lake' instead. The photograph, taken at Stafford, shows No. 291 with much the same appearance as it had at the time of the accident and has a large tender - smaller ones were used after the LNWR had installed water troughs around their network. The 'Problems' seem to have been favourites of Mr Webb and they were kept up to date over the next 40 years - after Webb succeeded Ramsbottom the engines were all given Webb fittings such as plain chimneys (Ramsbottom versions had an unusual castellated cap which is just visible here), cab roofs, new boilers, closed splashers etc. In the 1890s they received larger boilers with circular smokebox doors - until then, the door had a horizontal hinge and dropped down to cover the front of the smokebox. PRINCE OF WALES lasted until September 1906. (LNWR Society Neg LNWRS 1845)

[As this photograph is, as you can see, a bit 'iffy', Norman has supplied an alternative - contemporary line drawing – which should reproduce reasonably well ...]:

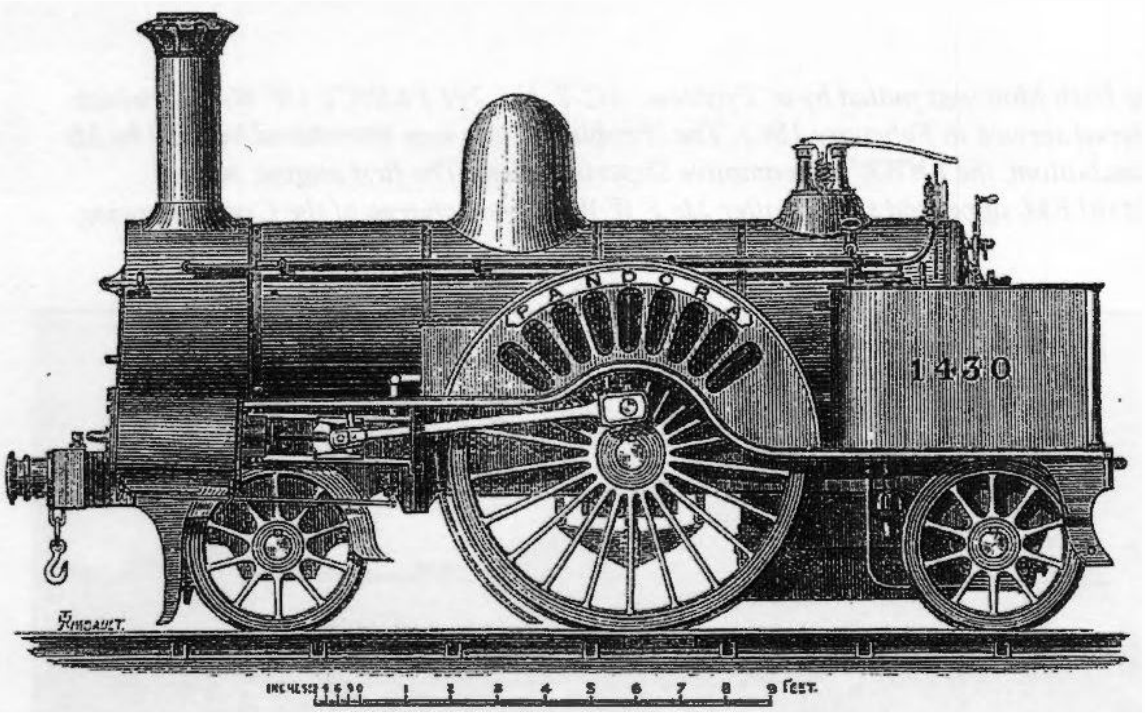


Fig. 6*e*.—"PANDORA," an Express Engine, designed and constructed at Crewe, by JOHN RAMSBOTTOM, Esq., late Locomotive Superintendent L. & N. W. Railway.

A Victorian drawing of PANDORA, a 'Problem' class 2-2-2, with its contemporary Ramsbottom fittings, similar to the engine in the Abergele disaster.

[Editor's note: see the note on the bottom of page 18.]

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LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY

Excerpt from the February 2006 Newsletter of the Great Western Locomotive Group of the Llangollen Railway

1 **PLANS to reach Corwen.** As reported at the [Llangollen] Railway AGM, it may be about 4 years before the railway reaches Corwen. A new station will have to be built on the eastern side of Corwen. The ground will need to be levelled and maybe some embankments need building. The site is on the flood plain of the River Dee; major flood controls will need to be put in place. A major grant application will be needed and it seems this application may made in 2007. A rough cost would be about £2 million for the 2 miles and station involved. Railway volunteers have built the track a further third of a mile from Carrog station in preparation, and the track-bed is being levelled.

2 **RUABON:** The present railway has **no plans to go to RUABON.** It has never been part of their remit anyway. Ruabon is more than 5 miles away and a line would cost £20 million and would involve anyone who thought of it in many years planning and legal challenges as much of the track bed at the Llangollen end and elsewhere is built

on. There is no prospect that the Railway could fund this: it still hasn't paid the £300,000 for work on Berwyn Viaduct. There are no prospects that tourists would choose to travel to Ruabon, when the views are all in the other direction.
It's a fantasy to think it would ever happen

Editor's page

As a 'follow-up' to his article on Thomas Brassey which appeared in "BMRJ" no.4, Emlyn has drawn my attention to a seemingly garbled account ["Wirral News Group" free paper dated 23 November 2005] of the discovery of a copy of contract dating back to 1829, with Thomas Brassey as one of the principals. It involved the building of a stone bridge in Saughall Massie – thought to be the first such structure that Brassey was party to – and the local Conservation Society hopes to get the bridge listed as an ancient monument. The bridge is on Saughall Massie Road. (Photo by Simon Starr):

We have to report two recent exhibition appearances: Warley (at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre) on 3/4 December 2005, which featured both "Mostyn" and "Johnstown Road"; and St.Albans which had "Johnstown Road" and "Rockingham". The Editor didn't get to either – whether as an 'operator' or visitor – since an extended bout of combined shingles and a chest infection laid him low over the Christmas months, but favourable responses to all three layouts are reported. Indeed, at the St.Albans show, "Rockingham" was awarded the Dennis Moore Trophy for the Best

Scenic Layout – a very gratifying reward for Ian's first outing with this revised and enlarged version of the former "Rockingham Pottery". The big, full-size trophy will be engraved with the winning layout's name, but kept in the possession of the organising club; Ian has a smaller 'replica' which he keeps (and will have to polish!).

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"Who are you? --- (Bob Miller)"

My parents were living in Glasgow when I was due to come into this world but, just in time, my mother was despatched to stay with her sister in Port Sunlight so that I would not have the stigma of being born Scottish. Both parents came from Birkenhead and, back in 1929, there were plenty of relatives in the Wirral whereas no close friendships had been made in Glasgow. Most of my early years were actually spent in the south-west (Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall) and it was not until 1938 that my family moved back north. After a short spell in Rhyl (where I was taught, but promptly forgot, Welsh) we moved to Prestwich, then to Leeds a few days before war broke out. It was not long before I was evacuated, to the little village of Scatsworth, Lincolnshire – on the A631 some 9 miles SE of Doncaster. However, with there being little danger in Leeds in the early part of the war I was back home by the time the city suffered its only heavy air raid (Winter of 1940/41). [Editor's note: The reason for the Miller family's frequent re-locations was that his father was a salesman (specialising in electric light bulbs) who had to move on when a particular location was saturated with bulbs! The trade was chosen by Bob and his father when they went into business together after the war – but with a more settled base in the North West.]

My travels were by no means over. After a second spell in Glasgow, I moved to the Alexandra Park area of Manchester, then to Cheadle Hulme. By this time my father had been called up into the army and, towards the end of the war, got a posting to the Records Office at the Western Command Headquarters on the south bank of the Dee at Chester. So we rented a house in Chester and father was able to 'commute' daily to the HQ. Chester was my last school, which I left in October 1946 when the family moved to Parbold and I started work in Manchester. Six months later travel became easier when we moved yet again to Victoria Park in Manchester and I journeyed to work daily by electric tram (the Nº 40 route). We had just moved, this time again to Cheadle Hulme, when I got my calling up papers in September 1947 immediately after my 18th birthday and I did my initial six-weeks training at The Dale in Chester, where I was able to renew old friendships.

Army service was spent in the Royal Engineers and I became a Surveyor (Class III). Postings successively were to Newark, Barton Stacey (4 miles SE of Andover), Longleat, Barton Stacey again, then twelve months in the Suez Canal Zone, Egypt before my demobilisation (as we used to call it) and return to 'Civvy Street' (another old term) in October 1949. By that time the railways had been Nationalised and

everything had changed – including my parents address which was now Moss Side in Manchester. Marriage followed early in 1956 (yes, I do know that is over 50 years ago!) and homes in Swinton, Whitefield, Egerton (on the north side of Bolton) and lastly in Entwistle, which is even further north of Bolton. I have been in this present house for more than 20 years now so perhaps I have finally ceased wandering.

Regarding railway interests, during my time in Chester I used regularly to visit the Great Western engine shed, only a few hundred yards from home, every Sunday morning; sometimes I would go on to the CLC shed at Northgate as well but I very seldom visited the LMS shed as I was not particularly keen on LMS engines. I had a cycle and would sometimes ride to Wrexham (both sheds) and became fascinated with the little branch lines in the area, such as those to Rhos and Minera. Other times I would continue on to Oswestry which was a living museum of ancient but still working GWR locomotives and this generated my interest in the Cambrian. I particularly recall with pleasure my acquaintance with the little 2-4-0Ts 1196 and 1197 (also "Lady Margaret") and the Sharpie goods N^{os} 898 and 900, so I have been keenly following the articles on his models by Emlyn Davies (yes, Emlyn, I remember them well!). Coming back to Chester GWR, the most important train on those Sundays was the Birkenhead to Dover (about 10.0 am from Chester) which was crowded with troops returning to Germany from leave. It always came into Chester into the northernmost platform as with 11 corridors it was too long for the bays. I presume it must have started at Woodside with the front three coaches (and the engine ready attached) in the tunnel. Birkenhead shed always used their best engine on this train, which was GWR 2-6-2T N^{o} 3169 – built as long ago as 1907 and still going well – she was a much stronger loco than the more modern 41XX tanks. Chester shed always used one of two engines on this train, I never saw anything else, their best engines which were 5966 "Ashford Hall" and 2930 "Saint Vincent". The engine, and men, worked right through to Oxford where the Southern took over. I have always had a soft spot for the "Saints", considering them as my favourite locomotives.

My first introduction to railways had been from the safety of my pram by the level crossing at West Moors, to where my Mother had wheeled me despite the infrequent service. However I was weaned on the GWR 45xx tanks, which I got to know well when I lived in Newquay and can remember with satisfaction rides on the footplate in the station area. I also remember a journey, at the age of seven, on the "Pines" from Bournemouth to Lime Street including the funny goings-on at Templecombe.

When stationed at Longleat (in the grounds of the stately home), where I spent about eight months of my army career, I used to spend Saturdays in Bath, a city I knew quite well as I lived there for a time as a small boy. Here I would watch the station horse skilfully attach a van to a passenger train (he had obviously been doing it for years and needed no instruction) or observe (just the trains) in Sydney Gardens. I soon found that Somerset played many of their home county cricket games in Bath and remember seeing the great Harold Gimblett make 99 not out by close of play. I also watched Somerset once at Frome, which was quite near Longleat, but when I went to the little colliery at Mells to see the ex-Cambrian engine (GWR 820) I found I was too late – she had been scrapped some months previously.

During my twelve months stay in Egypt (at his Majesty's expense) I got to know the Egyptian State Railway quite well, the narrow gauge Delta lines less so unfortunately. It was an interesting time, pre- Diesels, with two new classes of 4-6-0 - by North British and by Montreal Loco - having just replaced the Atlantics on the best expresses. I formed the opinion that the Canadian engines were the more successful; however I did manage a couple of runs behind Atlantics on semi-fasts. I thought the Egyptian Atlantics were splendid machines. To save me from getting homesick there were plenty of ex-LNER 'O4' and LMS type '8F' 2-8-0 locos around, also some American 0-6-0Ts which were identical to the ones on Southampton Docks, by coincidence the last class I saw in Britain and the first class I saw in Africa!

Talking of coincidences, I first met Rex Christiansen (my co-author for our Cambrian and North Staffordshire histories and a native of Wallasey) because our wives were friendly and found out to their lasting regret that their husbands were both railway nuts and arranged a meeting. We still keep in touch with the Christiansens, who now live in Chelford, and meet up about eight times a year, quite often for a meal out at a suitable hostelry. And continuing on with the coincidence theme, my wife – who is interested in genealogy – found out that my paternal grandfather lived at 59 Eldon Street, Birkenhead as a young unmarried man of 21 years. Now I reckon that means he could well have used the "Stork Hotel" as his local and whenever I visit that noble establishment and walk on that beautifully restored mosaic floor I feel I must be treading in Grandad's footsteps.

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