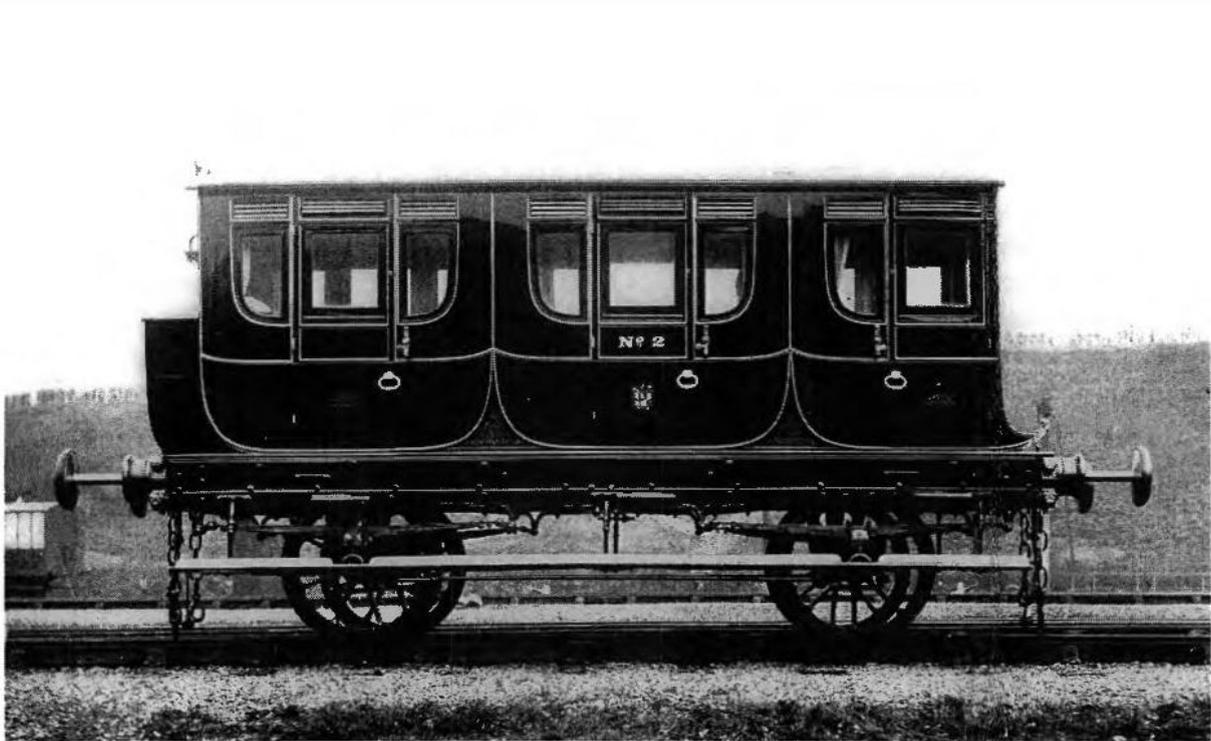


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# Barrowmore Model Railway Journal



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Contributions are welcome:

- (a) as e-mails or e-mail attachments;
  - (b) a hard copy of a computer file;
  - (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 December 2011, and contributions should get to the Editor as soon as possible, but at least before 1 November 2011.

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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 (courtesy of the L.N.W.R. Society) of Queen Adelaide's saloon, built in 1842 and still in use in royal trains when Queen Victoria began her long reign. Apparently the new queen disliked 'new' things, and was reluctant to accept more modern rolling stock, so it was very likely used on the L.N.W.R. part of her journey from Scotland to Anglesey and back to Windsor, as described in John Dixon's article, later in this issue. It is interesting to observe the similarities between this vehicle and the Liverpool & Manchester coach pictured on page 8.

(For the benefit of staunch republicans like the Editor, a brief word of explanation as to 'who the hell was Queen Adelaide?': Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen (1792-1849) married the Duke of Clarence in 1818; he reigned as King William IV for seven years, and died in 1837, to be succeeded by Queen Victoria. Adelaide survived as Queen Dowager until her death in 1849).

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**Forthcoming events**

- 24/25 Sept. 2011:** Scaleforum, Leatherhead.
- 1/2 Oct. 2011:** Manchester show.
- 8 Oct. 2011:** 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).
- 29 Oct. 2011:** 7mm running track (American), Llanbedr (see Editor for details).
- 29/30 Oct. 2011:** Merseyside show.
- 19 Nov. 2011:** 7mm running track, Llanbedr (see Editor for details).
- 26/27 Nov. 2011:** Warley show (NEC).
- 3 Dec. 2011:** 7mm running track (American), Llanbedr (see Editor for details).
- 10/11 Dec. 2011:** Wigan show.

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

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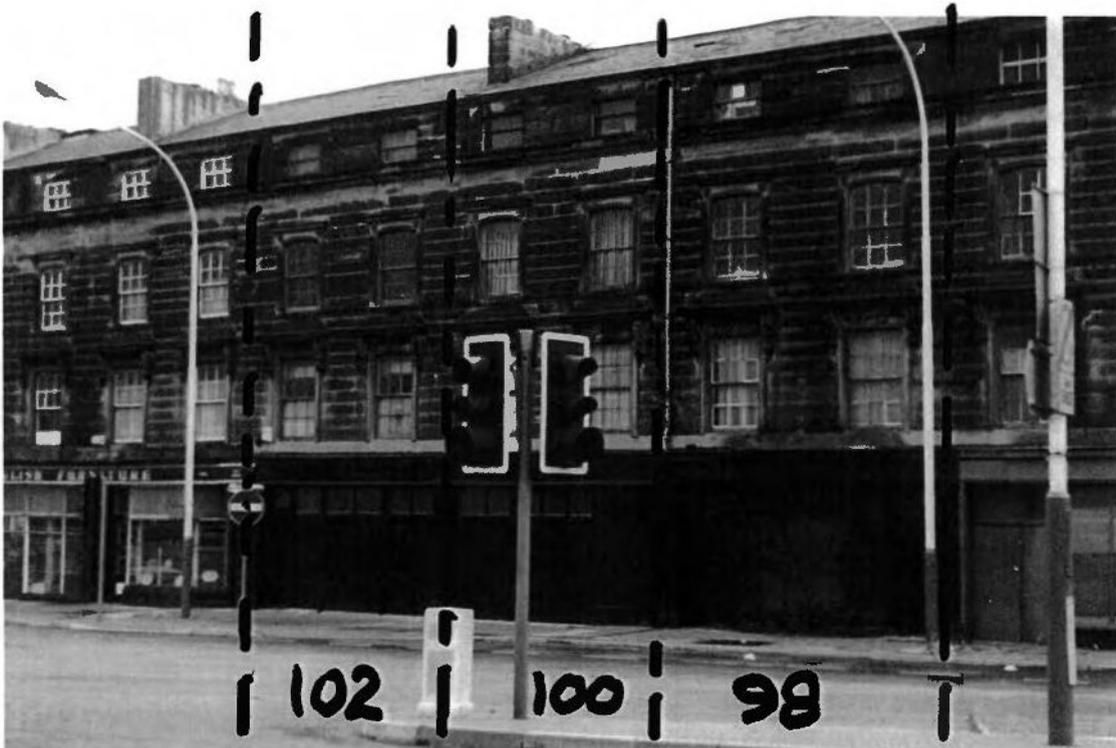
## Merseyside MRS 1966 – 1985

### some memories by former member John Crompton

My first contact with the Merseyside Model Railway Society was through a visit to the Harrogate Show in the summer of 1966. I was moving to a new job on Merseyside in August, so made it my business to speak to the operators at Harrogate of “Seven Mills”, the Merseyside MRS 7mm layout led by Mike Morton-Lloyd and Harry Leadbetter and reflecting their interest in the Welsh borders and the Tanat Valley Railway. At the time I’d been dabbling with 00 with a couple of Keyser kits, and I’d scratch-built just one locomotive, as it happened one of the Tanat Valley’s ex-Cambrian Sharp-Stewart 2-4-0 tanks as rebuilt by the GWR.

#### The EM Group

So I presented myself at Chester Street sometime in August 1966 with my subscription in my hot, sticky hand, and duly opted to join the EM Group, led by such stalwarts as Ricky Worrall



*Merseyside M.R.S. clubrooms in Chester Street, Birkenhead; 27 July 1993. In 1966 when John joined, only the first, second and top floors of no.102 were rented by the club. We later expanded into nos.100 and 98.*

and Tom Walsh. An interesting time to join, with the annual exhibition a very few weeks away! In those days it was held at Liverpool’s Bluecoat Chambers and usually involved all the Club’s own layouts, plus Jack Dugdale’s automatic layout “Ortogo” with the highlight of rabbits which popped back into their holes as the trains approached – the kids loved it! The EM Group’s layout at the time was a more-or-less straight double track run representing New Brighton to Seacombe on the Wirral; five 7ft 6in by 2ft 6in boards end to end, with the track laid about 2½ inches below the top edge of the baseboard frames so that the whole thing was in a cutting. Seacombe was quite nicely modelled – it only needed a couple of tin sheds, a

kiosk and a fence – but New Brighton was bare platforms and the building was never even started. The thing I remember about that first exhibition was that we could really only justify a passenger service, but there weren't any coaches which would stay on the track when shunted over the crossovers at the terminals – so after the first day I went home, dug out three Bulleid Kitmaster coaches, re-wheeled them to EM and in malachite green they stayed on the track and provided a regular service for the rest of the week.

Back at Chester Street, the problem with EM was that you can't erect a 37ft-long layout in a 18ft room, so we began two 90° bends but the locos weren't keen on the radius. Impetus flagged, a couple of members moved away and the group wasn't getting anywhere. I became EM rep on the committee, and became aware of a certain dissatisfaction from the rest of the club with the group's lack of progress, especially as exhibition time approached. One scheme we had cooked up was to build a branch off the existing layout (which was losing its identity as New Brighton – Seacombe), and we'd built a baseboard frame which was 6ft long, 2ft 6in wide at one end and just one foot wide at the other, and in desperation I took it home, built track for a single platform terminus with run-round loop plus a two-road goods yard and a quarry served by two more sidings. Mike Richards was poached from the HO American group (on the same floor in Chester Street) to help with the scenery, and with a mixture of GWR and ex-LNWR stock it appeared at, I think, the 1970 Merseyside Show and acquitted itself with very reasonable honour. It was the first time anyone in MMRS had managed to tame the Alex Jackson coupling, and it may have been the first time the great Merseyside public had been able to watch the mysteries of remote uncoupling. It gave us an edge. A year later we were invited to exhibit at the Manchester Show and by that time, with a new recruit called Will Pavry, we had added a 90° board and a further short board with a GW halt, siding and level crossing with remote-working gates. Apparently we ALMOST came away with the Visitor's Cup, having been pipped by just half a mark through a train arriving at the terminus' home signal when there were already two trains there, so nowhere to go.

### The Manchester Show

In the 1960s the Manchester Show, in early December, was the unchallenged highlight of the model railway year in the north-west. It was held at the old Corn Exchange in Hanging Ditch, not far from Victoria Station, and there was always a Friday-evening contingent from Birkenhead. We used to pack into Joe Halsall's Volvo, rather long in the tooth (the car, not Joe), and trundle along the East Lancs Road as fast as one could, given the number of sets of traffic lights – this was long before the M62! Others went over by train, so there was usually a moderate contingent. In the Corn Exchange there was always a good range of layouts and an even better range of superb models, the highlight for the EM contingent being, of course, the famous "Presson" with its entirely scratch-built locos – that's including wheels and motors - and of course using the Alex Jackson coupling. This was how we got to know such luminaries as John Langan, Sid Stubbs, Norman Whitnall and Jim Whittaker, among others. We kept up with these modellers chiefly through the reciprocal Annual Dinners and the Merseyside MRS Competitions, by inviting them as guests and judges.

When the Show closed we repaired across the street to "The Shambles", which was far more out-of-plumb in the days before it got itself incorporated into the Arndale Centre redevelopment, and where there was good beer and excellent succulent pork pies – except that it was Friday and as a Catholic I was off meat for the day! The great source of amusement was to stand in the bar to the right of the entrance, where the floor sloped quite markedly down to the door of the ladies' loo in the corner; and as the evening became more "unbalanced", it seemed that the whole population slipped slowly down slope .....

A sad sequel to one of these Friday evening expeditions. One of the group on the Friday evening was Alan Eagles, a long-time stalwart member of MMRS who was always active on behalf of the whole Society, managing to avoid the groups and clique interests which were bound to arise from the myriad interests and rooms in the Chester Street club house. On the Saturday Alan was working under his historic car when it slipped off the jack and crushed him. We were all desolate at the loss of so fine a member, and when we extended the clubhouse into next door, the tea bar was named for him and Nancy, his widow, was a regular provider of the evening's tea-break.

#### The 1971 Manchester Show

Back to Hanging Ditch in 1971: setting-up was from Thursday evenings (I think the Show opened about lunchtime on the Friday), so Mike Richards and I went over with the layout on Thursday evening and put it together. Round about 10.00 pm we asked about our accommodation, and were sent off to the Brown Bull in downtown Salford, close by Salford Station. No problems finding the place, a large late-nineteenth century edifice with a huge single-room bar where we asked after our room. There was a certain hesitation – yes, we were expected, but not until the following night. Still, no problem, and with our bags we followed the landlady up a flight of stairs at the end of the bar, feeling the eyes of the whole room upon us. At the end of the upstairs corridor the last door was unlocked – a twin room – and the landlady picked up a suitcase, seized a rather diaphanous nightie from the pillow on one of the beds, and left us to it! We retired, and slept quite well until about 5.30 am when the railway station began to come to life. It turned out that Platform 1 was about three feet from our window and on the same level, and it felt as though the trains were running between the beds every five minutes or so!

#### The Model Railway Exhibition (London)

I've already hinted that Merseyside MRS tended to be a bit isolationist, relying on its own layouts for exhibitions and being shy of invitations to other shows. So when a request came from the Model Railway Club to exhibit a static stand at its forthcoming show in the New Horticultural Halls, Westminster (I think it must have been 1968 or 1969), the Committee was minded as usual to decline. But I challenged the attitude – why not blow our Society trumpet as far away as London? In response to the idea that it was too expensive (no expenses for statics and the exhibition lasted the best part of a week) I volunteered to do the whole thing for £25. Petrol was cheap in those days, and I had a brother living in High Wycombe and generous vacations in my teacher-training job. So the Society's competition display stand was commandeered and refreshed with new paint, a duplicate was made so that we had 9 feet of display space, new header boards were painted in spilt milk on crimson, and off I went by car with a goodly selection and variety of the members' best models. Now six days is a long time to guard a static display, so to occupy myself I had knocked up a 4ft long by 9 inches wide board with a single siding and cattle dock, Great Western halt platform with pagoda shelter (which I still have) and working level crossing and signals. With one loco and four good vehicles I spent the entire week, with occasional reliefs when other members came down for the day, demonstrating the Alex Jackson coupling. I remember the Rev W Awdry, he of Thomas the Tank Engine fame, standing mesmerised as wagons were dropped off in the siding exactly where viewers suggested. I stayed with my brother, travelled in by train every day, and at the end of the week packed up and drove back to Birkenhead, presenting a bill to the Treasurer for £23. 16. 0d. A year or two later I was at the London show again, watching "Bembridge" which was one of the first P4 layouts to be exhibited. Suddenly there was a

shout of "It's your fault!" and I was dragged behind the layout to adjust their Alex Jackson couplings!

### The EM layout develops

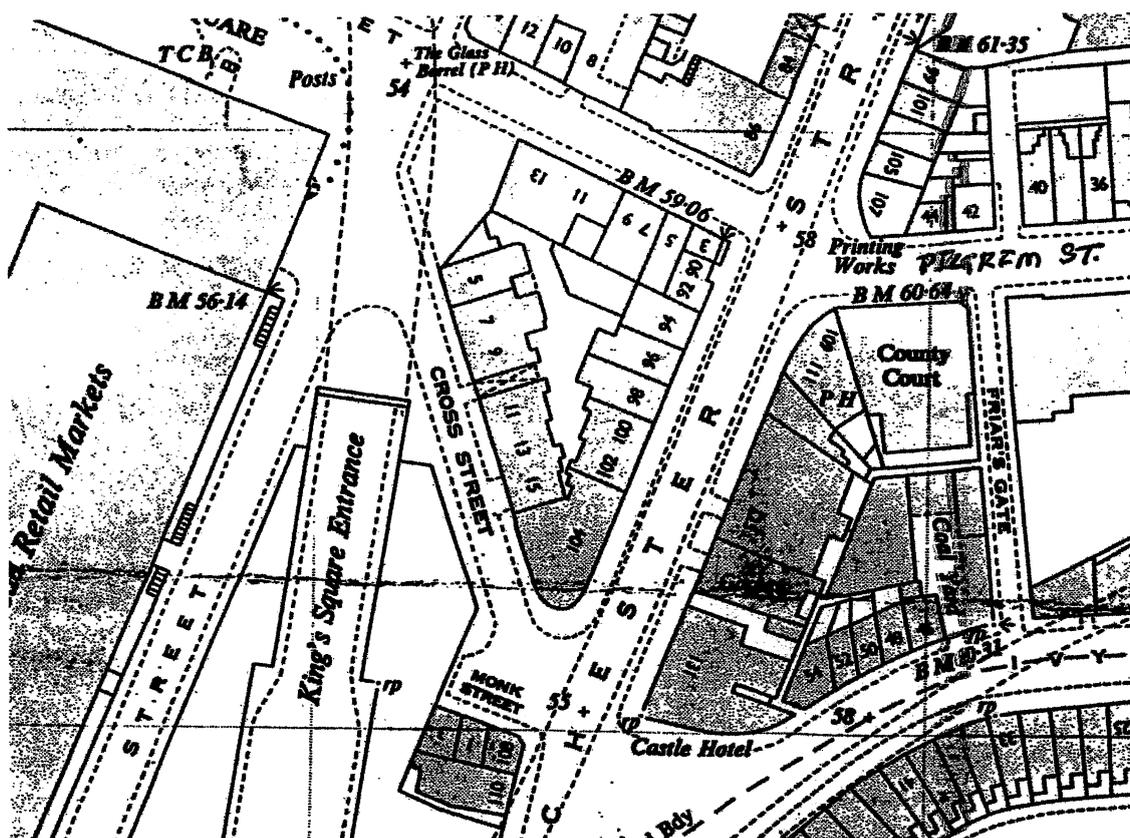
After the 1971 Manchester show it seemed that the EM layout deserved to be developed. I can't remember whether the station had been given a name by 1971, but it was time to find a location which was fictitious yet believable. Group members' interests were with the GWR and LNWR (Paul Rees had joined us), so the Shrewsbury-Hereford Joint line area seemed a good bet, especially since it passed through the much-quarried Wenlock and Aymestry limestone belt. So a possible 'might-have-been' was researched, leaving the Joint line a little to the north of Ludlow and striking westward, as did the real Bishops Castle Railway a little further north, with boundless optimism towards the Welsh border and the potential Irish ferry at Porth Dinllaen. Of course the money ran out, the line got no further than the gorge beneath Downton Castle, but the quarries there kept the line open into the 1930s – we said; some judicious inking and photocopying made it possible for us to show visitors a map of the district with the railway marked on. About 1972, at the Merseyside show we presented "Bromfield" as a layout under construction, operational but with little in the way of buildings and scenery - but it ran well. The layout was designed to include most varieties of pointwork, including a point on the inside of a curve, a y-point, and single and double slips. Later we added the missing bits with a small gasworks, domestic buildings from photographs of the real village of Bromfield, but the station building was modelled on our own measured survey of Llyncllys on the Cambrian line south of Oswestry. It was fully signalled, including a signalman who appeared at the window of his box and waved a green flag to permit certain backing movements. As well as the Merseyside shows it was invited to Blackburn, Manchester, Wolverhampton and the EM Gauge Society exhibition at the Great Western Hotel, Paddington. New boards with a short tunnel and a stretch in the Downton Gorge gave us the flexibility of exhibiting either station on its own or both together, and in the latter form, 41ft long, it paid a third visit to the Manchester Show, now in the UMIST Building in Sackville Street. Downton Road, the original terminus, went to the Wigan Show in the mid-1970s, memorable because it opened on the Friday evening, from 9.00am to 10.00pm on the Saturday and 9.00am to 6.00pm Sunday. Over Friday night it snowed and Saturday was miserable and sleety, so that in 13 hours the exhibition netted no more than 160 visitors! It was a very long day!

That last visit to Manchester convinced us that we needed to extend the facilities at Downton Road which were limited by just having the one run-round loop and no headshunt. So the station and goods yard were transferred to three new boards, with the run-round loop extended and a yard headshunt, and four new storage sidings with run-round were added on the quarry side. But other pressures, including Project 1980 and Mike Richards' move to Wilmslow, slowed progress, and the boards never got beyond the trackwork. When the layout was broken up in 1984/5, these boards went north with Mike to his new stamping ground near Edinburgh, and were destroyed in a house fire in 1996. Some of the buildings, signals and stock survive in my possession.

### Birkenhead Market burns down

In November 1974 I was probably watching the telly when at about 10.00pm the 'phone rang. I was a keyholder for the clubrooms in Chester Street, and would I go down there and rescue anything valuable, as the fire in the adjacent market hall was likely to spread. And it was! From my top windows in Prenton we could see the towering flames, and the children

watched long after their bedtime as I first rang round all the other keyholders and found that I was the only one at home, and then went down to the club.



*MMRS clubrooms, in 98/100/102 Chester Street, Birkenhead: part of an O.S. map from 1953. Birkenhead Market can be seen on the extreme left; the Mersey Tunnel entrance is just to the right of this; the railway tunnel down to Woodside Station ran under Chester Street; and no.36 Pilgrim Street, towards the top right-hand side of the map, was the birthplace of the famous lawyer and politician F.E. Smith (later Lord Birkenhead), and some years later of the engineer and model railway pioneer Henry Greenly. Some readers will be aware that local miller Dave Greenly has Henry as a distant relative.*

The old market hall was a fine iron-framed structure designed by Fox, Henderson & Co. (who later built the Crystal Palace) in 1845, and you wouldn't expect it to burn well, but it did. Apparently the fire had started in a basement soon after the market closed at 5.30, and despite the many fire engines by 10.30 the flames had engulfed the whole building and were leaping 30 to 40 feet up in the air. Sparks and burning fragments were blowing over the club roof and falling into Chester Street, and firemen were keeping watch in the courtyard at the back. I could hardly start dismantling the layouts and stacking them in the street, so there was nothing I could do but watch the roof. About midnight another keyholder turned up, but by this time the firemen were getting the flames under control and we reckoned the danger was past. The clubhouse and its contents had survived unscathed.

### Project 1980

It may be that the Minutes and correspondence of this project survive, or are well represented in MMRS Committee Minutes. It didn't meet with universal enthusiasm, and some might say that it distracted the members who joined the team from their home layout groups, to the detriment of the latter. In the end it was probably too challenging for the Society's time and resources, but there were external reasons too why it was inconclusive.

Project 1980's aim was to build a model of Edge Hill station, Liverpool, as it had been in October 1838, to be housed upstairs in the south station building at Edge Hill itself. The station buildings had been 'rescued' from total demolition in favour of bus stop shelters, by pressure from the Merseyside County Museums and the North West Society for Industrial Archaeology, and BR had demolished the Victorian additions and restored the surviving original (1836) buildings to their original state. This was done in association with celebrations to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, and the south building was leased by the Edge Hill Railway Trust (of which Paul Rees and yours truly were Directors) as an exhibition centre. In the years leading up to 1980 Trust members and others pulled together a lot of research on the railway, and the NW Society excavated the famous remains, whence departed the opening train with the Duke of Wellington on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1830, in the Edge Hill cutting nearby. But general vandalism and eventually the Toxteth Riots made things very difficult and changed priorities for the area, and though the Trust kept the exhibition and tours of the excavations going for a couple of years, the stairs to the upper storey were never installed.

Nevertheless the Project was valuable in some ways. Hours of planning and presentation, much of it by Paul Rees, at last netted a grant of £3,000, which was used to commission a special rail section for the L&M's 1835 75lb rail, and pay for etched components for coaches



*Model of L.&M. coach 'Greyhound', made by Jim Sullivan for Project 1980.*

and the iron parts of wagons. We agreed on a scale of 1 to 48 ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ins to 1ft - American O-gauge), with none of these mixed metric/imperial scales but everything in thousandths of an inch; track gauge was 1.177" and there were conversion tables for prototype to model dimensions. Jim Sullivan took on the rolling stock and issued kits with pre-cut timber sections for the wagons. I developed fold-up etched chairs for the 75lb rail, and filing jigs to reduce Peco Code 80, turned upside down, to represent the original 35lb fish-belly rail. Eric Foulkes did a lot of research on locomotives; we had a target of eight, including examples of Grand Junction Railway 2-2-2s (the GJR had arrived at Earlestown and Edge Hill in July 1837) which Dave Goodwin made a good start on. One board, representing the crossing at Wavertree Lane which was to be the easternmost end of the exhibited model, was completed, and for a time was kept at the clubrooms with some finished coaches and wagons.



*Another of Jim Sullivan's model – this time of a blue-painted second class L&M coach.*



*Grand Junction Railway coach no.3 – rather more primitive conditions for third class travellers!*

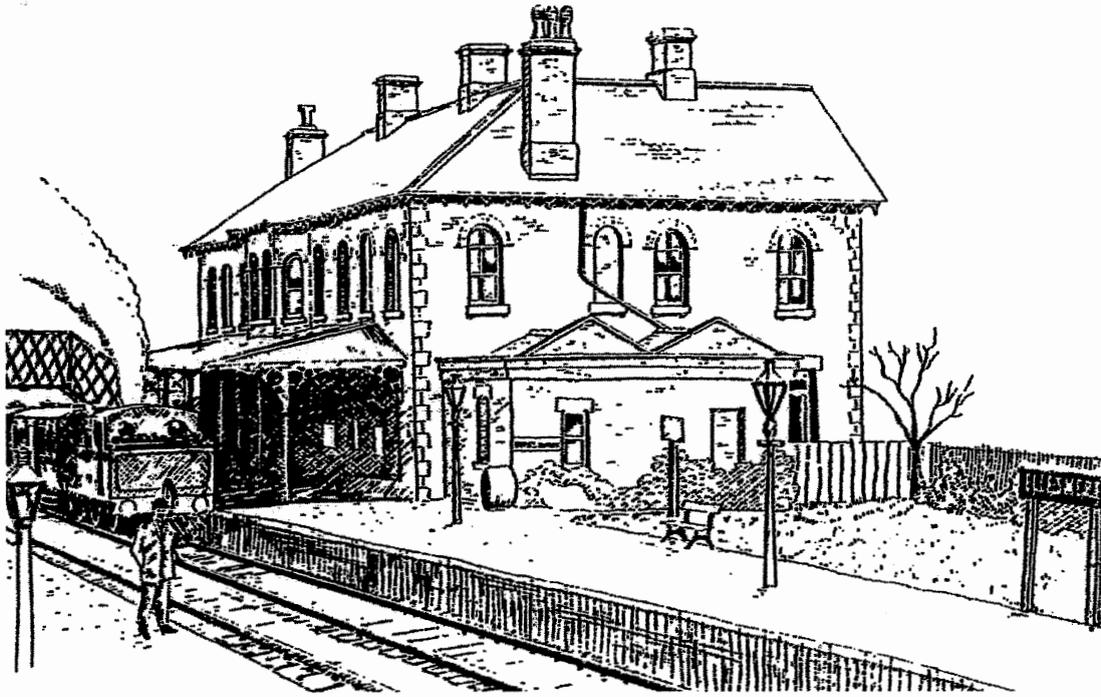
[Postscript: these models were photographed in 1993, but were lost track of some time later – two re-locations of the clubrooms to smaller premises have intervened, and apparently there were no current club members with sufficient feeling of ‘ownership’ (Jim Sullivan had died, and John Crompton had moved from the area) to want to ensure safekeeping].



*Some of the wagon stock – modelled by Dave Fidal, Jim Sullivan and others.*



## THE ELLESMERE RAILWAY ACCIDENT, 1887



At 2.55 a.m. on Sunday, 6 November, 1887, the Cambrian Railways' down mail train from Whitchurch to Oswestry was approaching Ellesmere, its only intermediate stop. It was a mixed train, consisting of locomotive and tender, six loaded goods wagons, eight empty cattle wagons, two passenger coaches, and a brake van.

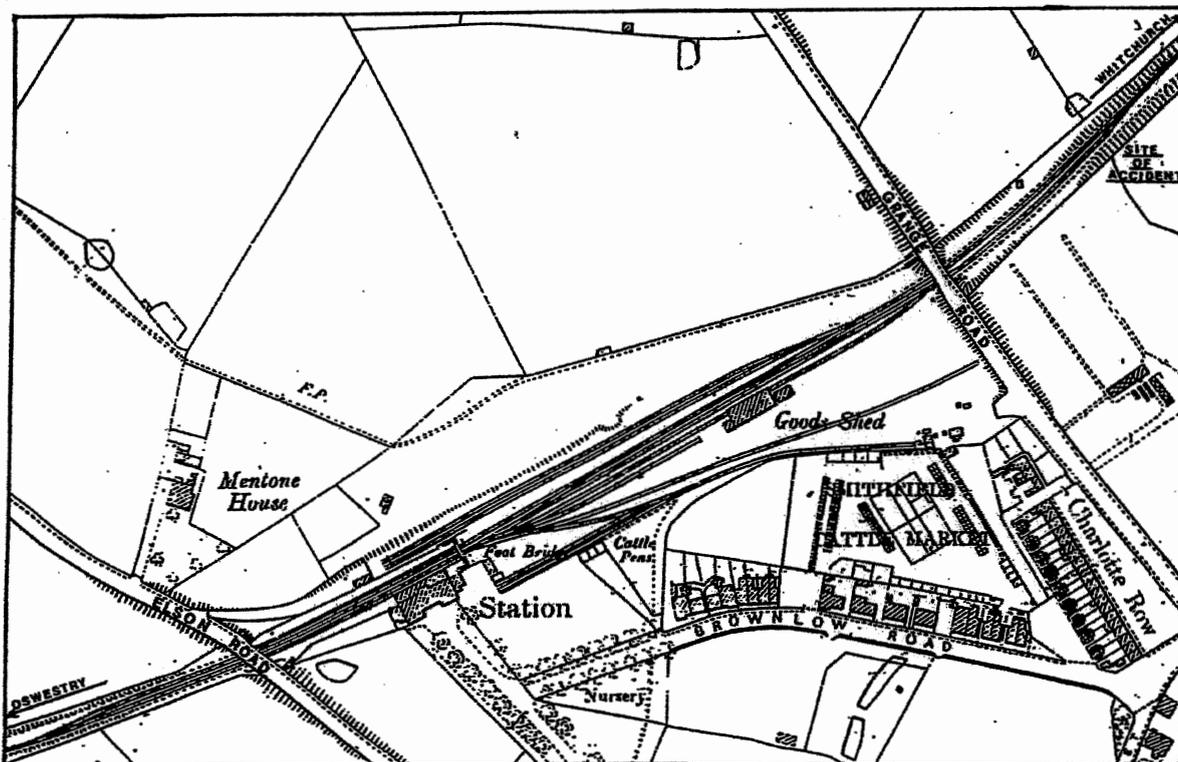
Both the driver of the locomotive and the guard in the brake van observed that the signals showed the road clear for the train to enter the down side of the passing loop at Ellesmere, but at or near the facing points at the entrance to this loop, the locomotive left the rails, running about eighty yards along the ballast and coming to rest across both tracks of the loop. The first two wagons followed, but the coupling to the third broke, and the next four wagons and six of the cattle trucks were scattered to one or other side of the line. The last two cattle trucks and the passenger coaches remained on the line.

Nobody was injured, and the few passengers completed their journey to Oswestry in horse brakes procured from the town of Ellesmere by the stationmaster, Mr John Hood. However, this comparatively trivial accident triggered some five years of political agitation over the hours of labour of railwaymen, which resulted in railwaymen obtaining legal protection against excessive hours of duty. The agitation made a national figure of Mr Hood, but in the end, it cost him his job.

In order to understand how all this happened, it is necessary to know something of the background to the Cambrian Railways Company and its operations at this period.

In 1887, the railway operated a main line from Whitchurch to Aberystwyth and thence up the Welsh coast to Pwllheli. This was the stable residue of forty years or so of overoptimistic railway schemes such as the linking of Manchester and Milford Haven, the promotion of a

new route to Ireland through Porth Dinllaen, and even the development of Ellesmere as a major railway junction. The resulting financial failures were gradually amalgamated into Cambrian Railways, which itself in 1884 went into receivership. The Receiver appointed was John Conacher, who was so successful in restoring the railway's fortunes, that in 1887 he was General Manager at the Company's headquarters at Oswestry.



*Ellesmere Station, about 1890. Based on O.S. 25" maps of 1874 and 1900.*

The Cambrian Railways main line was single throughout, except for a few miles of double track near Oswestry. Signalling was therefore rudimentary, the line being worked on the block and staff system under which a train could enter a 'block' of track only if the driver was physically in possession of the 'staff' relating to that block. At each end of the block were stations with passing loops where trains could pass each other, and where the staff had to be exchanged for that of the next block before the train could proceed. At these stations, the movement of trains was recorded in a log book (the Line Clear Book). By 1887, the electric telegraph allowed block stations to pass information to adjacent stations as trains entered or left the block. Signals were used only to control movements at stations.

In 1868, John Hood left the London & North Western Railway for Cambrian Railways, and in 1870 he was appointed Stationmaster at Criccieth, the penultimate town station before the terminus at Pwllheli. The traffic here must have been largely seasonal, but Hood appears to have done very well, increasing the traffic, and three times winning awards for the best kept station in the system. He did however, show some signs of being his own man, rather than an organisation man, by applying for, and obtaining, leave in a Bank Holiday week, which, in Conacher's words at a later date, "was never normally granted, because the traffic was so very heavy". Despite this, Hood was considered by the then manager, Mr Cattle, to be worthy of promotion to the more important station of Ellesmere. Again, Hood showed his independence of mind by querying whether the proffered wage of twenty-five shillings a week could not be improved. Cattle replied rather tartly that he had any number of men willing to take the job at

the rate offered, and so Hood accepted, and moved to Ellesmere in 1875, leaving Criccieth with a public testimonial and a purse of gold from his customers.

At Ellesmere, Hood had a staff of six, and as the Company's Agent, he again did well, increasing the traffic, and continuing to win awards for the best kept station every year from 1884 to 1888. However, it appears that he ran things as he wanted rather than according to the book. In 1883, a visiting official complained that his standard of discipline was inadequate, and recommended his removal to a lesser station, but this was never carried out, possibly because the official concerned soon afterwards left the Company, but perhaps more probably because he discovered that the practices he complained of were common throughout the Railway.

There can be little doubt that in the aftermath of the 1884 bankruptcy of the Cambrian Railways, in Conacher's receivership, not too many questions would be asked provided that the staff found a way of doing what was required of them for a minimum of labour and other costs. Once the Company became profitable again, there would be no incentive to change things as long as nothing went wrong. In November 1887, with Conacher as General Manager at Cambrian Railways headquarters at Oswestry, and Hood as Stationmaster at Ellesmere - two strong-minded men in a rather lax management structure - things did go wrong. The unwitting agent was John Humphreys, a porter at Ellesmere, who was acting as Nightman on the 6th November.

The Nightman was normally on duty from 7.30 p.m. until 8.00 a.m. but the duties were not onerous. He had to clean the offices, attend to what small passenger and freight traffic used the few night trains, signal the trains into the station, note their passage in the Line Clear Book, and check the points at the ends of the passing loop after each train left. These points were controlled by a weighted lever which held them in position to direct an approaching train to its appropriate side - up or down - of the loop, but which allowed a train leaving the loop to force its way through the points back on to the single line without the need to reset them. The weight of the lever restored the points to their correct position after the train had passed, but it was routine for the station staff to check that the points had closed properly before a train in the reverse direction was signalled into the station. There was no signal box at Ellesmere, but as far as traffic from the Whitchurch direction was concerned, a lever in the station operated signals showing the driver that the way was clear for him to pull into the station. At the time of the accident, a simple interlocking device had recently been fitted in which a steel tongue had to enter a slot in the point mechanism before the signals could be set to all clear. The tongue could do this only when the points were correctly set.

On the night of the accident, Humphreys claimed that he had checked the points after the 11.25 p.m. train to Whitchurch had left, and that he had no difficulty in operating the lever to set the signals to all clear for the 3.00 a.m. from Whitchurch, indicating that the points were correctly set. About two years later, a witness appeared who stated that at the time the train came off the line, Humphreys was playing cards with friends in the station. Provided that he had carried out his duties, this would seem to have little bearing on the matter. Perhaps the most surprising aspect is that he could find friends to play cards at 3 a.m. on a Sunday morning!

In 1887, the line was normally closed after the 3 a.m. train on Sunday until Monday morning, but on this Sunday morning there was much activity at Ellesmere - breakdown gangs cleared the rolling stock, platelayers repaired the track for traffic on the Monday, and the local

sightseers turned out. Conacher came over from Oswestry, and was shown the site of the accident by Hood, who seems to have had decided views on its cause. He told Conacher that the sleepers in the permanent way were rotten, and claimed that several notable witnesses, including the principal landowner, Mr Mainwaring, had observed this. The sleepers in question were loaded into trucks that day and taken to Oswestry.

Colonel Rich of the Board of Trade was instructed to enquire into the accident, and did so on the 13th November, reporting on the 21st. He appears to have made a cursory job of what he no doubt considered a trivial accident, pronouncing that it must have been caused by the points having been partially open when the train reached them. In this, he disregarded the evidence of the driver, who said that he did not feel the locomotive strike the points, and that he examined the points immediately after the accident and found them closed, with the locking tongue in its slot, even if only just, the crank operating it having broken. Rich apparently did not examine the sleepers that had been taken to Oswestry after the accident. Cambrian Railways accepted Rich's report, and dismissed Humphreys for neglect of duty. Thereby they brought into the open the long hours that railwaymen were being required to work, for Humphreys claimed, and was later to repeat on oath, that at the time of the accident, he had been on duty for 44 hours without relief, and that if he had made an error, it had been the result of tiredness due to this excessive period of duty.

The circumstances that led to Humphreys working for such a long period were afterwards disputed, but appear to have been a product of the curious working practices that had developed on Cambrian Railways at that time.

The train of events started when Humphreys came on duty at 7 a.m. on Friday, November 4th. When asked at a later enquiry why he was ahead of his official starting time of 7.30, he replied "We were not to half an hour at Ellesmere", another indication that Hood's management style was not by the book.

During the day, Hood received a telegram from Oswestry ordering him to send his regular Nightman to Welshpool to cover a staff shortage there. He requested a relief from Oswestry, but received a further telegram to the effect that they could not help him, and that he must make the best arrangement that he could. He approached his Warehouseman, who refused on the grounds that his daytime duties were too heavy and that he was tired out. Hood then asked Humphreys, who agreed reluctantly, provided that the Booking Clerk, Robinson, would stop with him for company. Robinson, who lived at Oswestry, had a peculiar life style. On finishing his duty at 7 p.m., he disappeared into Ellesmere, returning to catch the 3 a.m. night mail to Oswestry, whence he would have to return on the first train in the morning, leaving him perhaps three hours at home. Keeping Humphreys company would therefore hardly have disrupted his home life, and presumably the pair intended to share the additional day's pay between them.

Meanwhile, Oswestry had had second thoughts, and had arranged for a Relief Guard, Stokes, to do duty on the Friday night, but not on the Saturday, as there would have been no means of getting him home before Monday. Oswestry claimed that they had telegraphed this decision to Ellesmere and received an acknowledgement. However, when the Oswestry copies of these telegrams were produced five years later before a committee of enquiry, Hood denied that he had seen either the telegram or its acknowledgement. If they had been sent, they must have been dealt with by another member of the station staff who had failed to bring them to his notice. No effort seems to have been made to find the corresponding Ellesmere copies.

Presumably, Stokes went to Ellesmere for night duty on the night of the 4—5<sup>th</sup> November as he was later shown to have made the entries in the Line Clear Book for that night, and his time sheet was certified for payment by the Stationmaster at Oswestry. He did not, however, see Hood, either coming or going.

The next day, Hood, knowing nothing about Stokes presence the night before, was faced with the problem of finding a Nightman for the night of the 5—6<sup>th</sup> November, a short duty that should have ended with the departure of the mail train to Oswestry at 3 a.m. on the Sunday morning. He again approached Humphreys, probably thinking that the previous night's duty with Robinson to share it would have been light. Humphreys agreed in view of the shortness of the duty, thus completing his long spell of work.

After the accident, Hood faced problems with time sheets. Robinson, for some reason, did not want a private arrangement with Humphreys, but wished to be paid separately. Hood could not admit to having both Robinson and Humphreys on duty on the 4—5<sup>th</sup> November. Moreover, with an eye on the impending Board of Trade enquiry into the accident, he felt that the Company would not welcome disclosure that Humphreys had been on duty for 44 hours. He solved the problem by showing that Robinson had been on duty the first night, and Humphreys on the second. Evidence at subsequent enquiries showed that such adjustments were not uncommon on Cambrian Railways to conceal excessive hours of work, but in this case, the consequences were to be disastrous for Hood. Somewhere in the Company's paperwork were two time sheets, signed by different stationmasters, showing that both Stokes and Robinson had been paid for the same night duty at Ellesmere, and that for Robinson precluded documentary verification that Humphreys had been on duty for 44 hours.

Much was later made of the fact that Hood had signed a time sheet for Robinson, claiming payment for a duty he did not do, it being assumed by higher management that Stokes had done it. Given that Hood was unaware of Stokes visit, there seems to be no reason to suppose that he should doubt that Robinson and Humphreys had done the duty as ordered. What actually happened on that night remains obscure. Stokes said later that Robinson was not there, and that Humphreys left at 10 p.m., and did not return until 7 a.m., but if Robinson had not done the duty he would have returned for the 3 a.m. train, and Stokes could hardly have missed him. Humphreys said that Stokes was not there. The only proof of Stokes' presence was provided by the Line Clear Book, in which the relevant entries were in his handwriting, but this fact was not established until 1892, previously to which, the book had been 'lost'. At that time, it appears that the authenticity of Stokes' time sheet was never questioned, even though it was made out a fortnight after the night in question, and signed not by him, but by his wife! There is no evidence that Robinson was ever questioned as to whether he was on duty that night, and if so who was with him, but it would seem unlikely that Robinson would argue with Hood over payment had he not, in reality, done the job. Later, the most rational explanation would seem to be that all three men were there. Humphreys and Robinson, having been told to do the duty by Hood would have done it. The arrival of Stokes for a shorter spell of duty from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. as detailed by Oswestry would be regarded as official bungling. The three men would have shared the duties between them. Stokes, who had done duty at Ellesmere on only two or three previous occasions, was probably given the most easily defined job - keeping the Line Clear Book - with unfortunate consequences for Hood. Hood would have found this book in order the next morning and signed it without paying too much attention to the handwriting, all of which, at that time would have been very similar as 'copperplate script' was rigorously taught in schools.

There the matter might have ended, and the time sheets for Stokes and Robinson might never have come together but for the effects of the accident. The setting up of a House of Commons Select Committee to enquire into the hours of labour of railway servants may have suggested to Humphreys and Robinson that some matters were best not examined too closely, while Stokes, subject to the same feelings may have had added pressure put on his memory by an Oswestry administration by then hostile to Hood. All this, together with the fact that four years elapsed between the night in question and the deliberations of the Select Committee could well explain the conflicting statements then given in evidence.

Following Humphreys' dismissal, there was a public outcry in Ellesmere, and a petition was raised requesting Cambrian Railways to reinstate him. Conacher later complained in evidence that this was an almost inevitable consequence of any dismissal, the local public evidently regarding their railwaymen more highly than they did the Company. However, this was a major petition, signed by over 200 people, including many of influence in the town. Hood himself was so incensed by the treatment of Humphreys that he also, unwisely, signed it. The petition was of no avail, and Humphreys was not reinstated.

The management of Cambrian Railways did not officially blame Hood for the accident, but they disapproved of his signing the petition regarding Humphreys, and thereafter they appeared to turn against him. Their immediate action was to inform him, on the 23rd December, that he would be suspended for a fortnight for signing the Humphreys petition. They then resurrected the vague complaint that had been made against him in 1883, and coupling it with the fact that the accident had occurred at his station, but without attributing any specific blame, announced that he would be transferred to a lesser station.

Hood wished to keep the suspension a secret, and was allowed by Conacher to work the fortnight normally, but without pay. He could not, of course, conceal the loss of pay from his wife, who eventually gave way to her feelings and confided in some friends, through whom the matter became public knowledge. This was later to have unfortunate consequences. Hood tried to counter the threat of down-grading by saying that he would prefer to leave the railway and take up farming. Cambrian Railways seemed to prefer this possibility and did not press Hood's removal, but eventually the idea fell through. Hood asked to remain in the service, and in 1889 he was removed to the small new station at Montgomery. Ellesmere people obviously thought well of him as he was presented with a purse of gold and a fine cruet.

Hood did well at Montgomery, increasing the traffic and again winning prizes for the best kept station, but he had become unsettled and applied for posts outside the railway, for which Conacher appeared to have given him good references. He would probably have left the service peacefully but for the political agitation that had been started by the dismissal of Humphreys. Oswestry appeared to be a centre of this unrest, largely stirred up by Mr F. Bather, a miller at Oswestry who was a major customer of Cambrian Railways. Bather's ostensible complaint was that the staff at Oswestry station was insufficient, and generally too tired, to handle his traffic in the Grain Warehouse, which consequently he had to do himself. There appeared, however, to be another complaint. He considered the volume of his traffic (£1000 a year) to merit his having a free pass over the railway, which Conacher refused to give him. Eventually, he transferred his business to the Great Western station at Oswestry, but from the vantage point of his office overlooking the Cambrian station, he continued to watch and to foment trouble. He wrote on one occasion to Hood requesting information on the Humphreys affair. Hood quite properly ignored this, but as the Cambrian

management built up its case against him, he was accused of concealing the letter from Conacher.

Once the matter of long hours had reached the press, cases of overwork on other railway systems were exposed, and public concern over the safety of railway travel grew. Eventually, the staff on Caledonian Railways went on strike over the question, and Union and public pressure caused the government to set up, in March 1891, a Select Committee on Railway Servants Hours of Labour "to enquire whether, and if so in what way, the hours worked by railway servants should be restricted by legislation".

The management of Cambrian Railways, in some fear of what they termed "hearsay" evidence which might be presented by such as Bather of Oswestry, felt that it would be preferable to have direct evidence given by their own employees, and issued a memorandum promising 'ample facilities' for any employee wishing to give evidence before the Committee. Hood at Montgomery was to find this promise hollow.

Bather gave evidence before the committee on the 16th April, accusing Cambrian Railways of grossly overworking their employees. He produced affidavits from about a dozen Cambrian employees showing regular working weeks of seventy to eighty hours with frequent spells of duty of thirty six hours without rest. He also presented a petition from the Oswestry district, backed by over five hundred signatures, calling for legislation to reduce railway servants' hours of work.

Conacher gave evidence on the 18th and 23rd of June. Most of this was directed to refuting the allegations made by Bather, and he attempted to show that the Cambrian management was kind and considerate to its employees, or, at any rate statistically no worse than that of other railways. He touched only briefly on the Hood affair, but what he said was crucial. In the course of evidence, he stated that Hood had been fined, censured, and demoted as a consequence of his responsibility for the Ellesmere accident.

The first that Hood learned of this was when he saw it reported in the "Salopian" newspaper. He not only believed the statements to be untrue, but knowing that the fact of his suspension had leaked out and that it was understood to have been imposed solely for his signing the Humphreys testimonial, he was most concerned that people would now believe that he had been hiding his guilt. He wrote immediately, on the 27th July, to Conacher, asking for permission to write to the "Salopian" to put his case, and for permission to give evidence in his defence before the Select Committee. Conacher replied that he had given the facts, there was nothing to correct, and as far as the Select Committee went, it was up to them to select their witnesses. He refused Hood permission to write to the press.

Hood made three further requests to Conacher for permission to go before the Select Committee without receiving a reply, then turned to two of the local Members of Parliament, and through their offices he was subpoenaed by telegram at 5.35 p.m. on the 14th July to attend the Committee at noon on the 16th July. Hood immediately telegraphed to Conacher for leave to attend, and for the necessary free pass. He followed this with a further telegram and a letter by the 8.35 a.m. train on the 15th but did not receive a reply until 9.30 a.m. Conacher grudgingly allowed him leave to go, but only provided a pass to the limit of the Cambrian system at Welshpool, about six miles, saying that time did not permit of his obtaining a pass over other railways to London, but that he would apply for a refund on Hood's return. Hood by now had little faith in the 'ample facilities' promised by Cambrian

Railways, and took a ticket from Montgomery to London, claiming his fare from the Select Committee.

Hood's evidence to the Select Committee on the 16th July was brief, but damaging to the Company. He refuted Conacher's evidence that he had been blamed for the accident, and returned to his original assertion that the accident had resulted from rotten sleepers in the permanent way, and Humphreys had not been in any way to blame. He also drew attention to the difficulty he had had in coming before the Committee.

Meanwhile, at Oswestry, Conacher, although he did not know what Hood would say to the Committee, had decided that the time had come to be rid of him. As he said later in evidence, he decided "to get to the bottom of the Humphreys matter". He ordered a search for the Line Clear Book from Ellesmere for 1887, which up to that time had been lost. When it was found, he compared the handwriting of all those qualified to act as Nightman at Ellesmere with the entries in the book, and claimed to have identified Stokes' handwriting. He then discovered Stokes' time sheet for the night in question certified by the Stationmaster at Oswestry. Significantly, he did not appear to take his researches any further in order to find out what really happened on that night - what he had would damn Hood. He also delved into an administrative wrangle which started in January 1891, when Hood sent a hamper to his son who was then working at Stirchley Station on the LNWR. Mrs Hood appeared with the hamper just as the 8.58 a.m. to Whitchurch was about to leave Ellesmere, and Hood put the hamper on the train with a waybill indicating "particulars to follow". The same day, he made out a waybill showing the nominal charge of one shilling and seven pence, for which in any case he would not be liable, as Stationmasters were allowed to send parcels free of charge. Stirchley denied receiving the amended waybill, and Hood's son, obviously scenting that trouble was brewing, offered cash payment, but this was refused. The correspondence continued until the end of March, eventually elevating to the level of the Superintendent at Stirchley, and Conacher. The matter was eventually settled by Hood sending, under duress, the charge in question. He claimed that it was the only parcel he ever paid for. The real facts behind this wrangle are not preserved, but one shilling and seven pence, three quarters of a day's wage for a porter at the time, could hardly have merited extensive consideration by senior management of two railway companies unless there was an ulterior motive. In July, 1891 Conacher sent to the Superintendent at Stirchley for this correspondence, which was supplied to him.

With this, and Stokes' time sheet, Conacher felt that he could move against Hood. Hood was summoned to Oswestry in July, and confronted with Stokes' time sheet, and his entries in the Line Clear Book for 1887. Never having had any inkling of the role of Stokes, Hood was, not unnaturally, unable to give any explanation. Hood returned to Montgomery, and Conacher took his evidence to a meeting of the directors of Cambrian Railways in London on the 7th August. In later examination by the Select Committee he claimed that he had presented his evidence impartially, but under cross examination, he eventually admitted that he had recommended the Board to dismiss Hood.

The first that Hood knew of this was when a relief clerk got out of the 11.37 a.m. train at Montgomery on the 10th. August, and handed him a letter from Conacher dismissing him instantly with a month's pay in lieu of notice, and a month's notice to vacate the station house. No reason was given to Hood for his dismissal.

Hood personally approached one of the Directors who lived near Montgomery, and a petition for his reinstatement was raised by the inhabitants of Montgomery. Eventually, the Board acceded to Hood's request to see him and explain his dismissal. The meeting took place at Crewe on the 30th September, but so far from providing him with grounds for his dismissal, the Board merely browbeat him on the trouble that had been caused by his statements about the permanent way, the fact that he had claimed expenses from the Select Committee, his attempts to protect Humphreys, Stokes' time sheet, and the Stirchley hamper affair. No reason for his dismissal was ever clearly stated.

Despite the petition, and his appeal to the Board, Hood was not reinstated, and left the railway forever after twenty-two years' service. As a stopgap, he was given a position of trust in the warehouse of a businessman in Newtown.

The Select Committee on Railway Servants Hours of Labour meanwhile completed its enquiries and in 1891, published its recommendations. These were hardly far reaching, being confined mainly to recommending that the Board of Trade be empowered to demand schedules of the hours worked by railway staff in particular companies, which, if found unsatisfactory, would be referred to the Railway Commissioners for action. These and other powers were consolidated in the Railway Servants (Hours of Labour) Act, 1893, which gave railway workers legal protection against excessive hours of work. The Committee congratulated itself on the substantial reduction in hours of labour that had resulted from public pressure arising from its activities.

All, however, was not over. Serious public disquiet had arisen over allegations of victimisation among the witnesses to the Select Committee, and the increasingly powerful Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants took up the case of Hood and others, stating that unless something was done to protect its members, it would forbid them to attend subsequent Committees. The Select Committee was therefore reconvened in February, 1892, to consider these allegations.

As far as Cambrian Railways was concerned, Hood, Humphreys, and two other employees were called, and were opposed by a formidable defence team of the Chairman, Mr J. Buckley, and Conacher. Humphreys gave evidence before Hood, and caused something of a stir by saying that Hood had told him to lie to the Board of Trade Inspector, Rich, about the time he had been on duty. Hood later indignantly denied this, and indeed, it seems out of character with the man. Given his expressed concern at the time to prevent the long hours worked by Humphreys becoming public knowledge, it would seem more likely that he instructed Humphreys to say that his spell of duty started at 7 a.m. on the 5th November, which was strictly accurate, but ignored the day and night he had already worked. The supply of information to the Board of Trade Inspector did not seem to be encouraged, and Hood himself had not mentioned the rotten sleepers because Rich had not specifically asked about them.

Eventually, the other employees of the Cambrian and of other railway companies were found to have no substantial cases for their victimisation, and the Committee concentrated on the case of Hood.

The Cambrian management team raised the matters of the complaint of Hood's discipline in 1883, the 'falsified' time sheet for Robinson, Hood's remarks on the state of the permanent way, his signature of the Humphreys petition, and the Stirchley hamper affair as reasons that,

collectively, had led to Hood's dismissal. Fortunately for Hood, he found an ally on the Select Committee in the form of Sir George Trevelyan. Under Trevelyan's relentless examination, Buckley was shown to have a woeful ignorance of the day-to-day running of his railway. He was forced to admit that Hood's guarantee money had been refunded to him in full on dismissal, showing that the railway held no claim against him regarding the 'falsified' time sheet, that Hood had done nothing that was not normal practice on Cambrian Railways, thus disposing finally of the time sheet and also of the Stirchley hamper affair, that his signature of the Humphreys petition was not grounds for dismissal, and that no effort had been made to prove or disprove Hood's views on the rottenness of the permanent way. Further, he was forced to admit that, although Hood had been granted a hearing by the Board in September, there was never any possibility of his being reinstated, the decision to dismiss him having been taken at the earlier Board meeting in August. In turn, Trevelyan forced Conacher to admit that it was he who had recommended Hood's dismissal to that meeting. Neither Buckley nor Conacher could produce a single valid reason for Hood's dismissal, and the Committee was forced to conclude that this had taken place as a result of Hood's determination to give evidence before the Committee.

The Committee reported that, on the evidence laid before the Cambrian Railways Board by Conacher, the directors — J.F. Buckley (Chairman), J.W. McLure (M.P.), and W.B. Hawkins had dismissed Hood in consequence of the evidence given by him before the Select Committee, and that, furthermore, these had, at the meeting in September, called Hood to account and censured him for this evidence in a manner calculated to deter other railway servants from giving such evidence. They did not, however, express an opinion on how far the conduct of Hood, and the evidence he gave, might have forfeited the confidence of the Directors.

Faced with this affront to the Select Committee, the House of Commons invoked its Standing Order "That if it shall appear that any person hath been tampering with any witness in respect of his evidence to be given to this House, or to any Committee thereof, or directly or indirectly hath endeavoured to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence, the same is declared to be a high crime or misdemeanour, and this House shall proceed with the utmost severity against such offender".

Accordingly, on the 7th April 1892, McLure, as M.P., was ordered to attend the House of Commons, and the remaining three directors to present themselves at the Bar of the House. The Speaker told them what was alleged against them, then all four withdrew while the House debated the matter for eight hours. Some suggested fining the Directors, some sending them to the Clock Tower (for imprisonment), but finally the House decided for an admonition by the Speaker.

At midnight, the four were brought back by the Serjeant at Arms ( Fig. 2 ), and formally admonished by the Speaker. "A great principle has been infringed, the principle that evidence given before this House shall be free and unrestrained ---". As the Speaker continued, the four Directors, according to the press, wilted visibly under the weight of his attack, which he concluded by saying, "I seriously admonish you, and express the hope that your example will serve as a deterrent to others, and as a warning to yourselves never again to presume to commit the offence against the character, the dignity and the purity of this House".

AT THE BAR OF THE HOUSE.

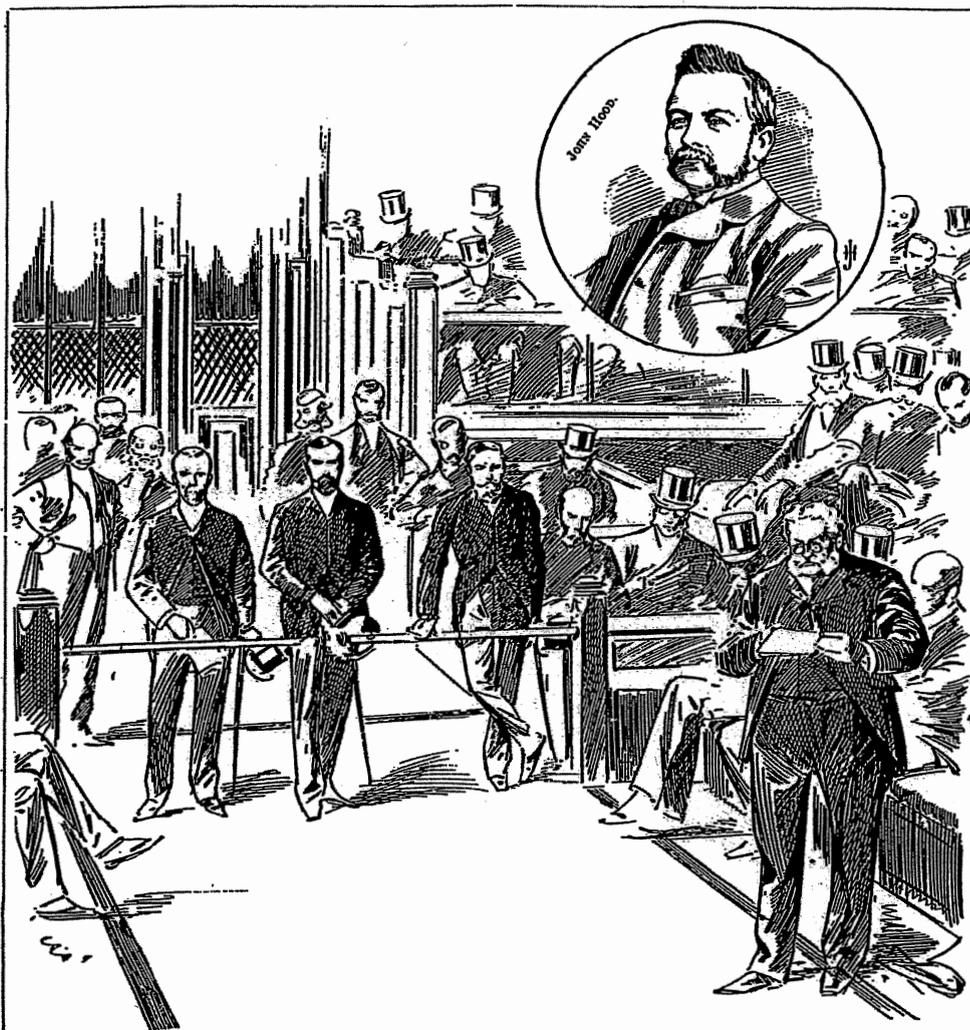


Figure 2. MR. MACLURE, M.P. , APOLOGISING FOR HIMSELF AND HIS CO- DIRECTORS OF THE CAMBRIAN RAILWAY AT THE BAR OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. ( Graphic and Daily Graphic Sketches, 1892 )

Although the future of Hood had been touched upon in the debate, the dignity and purity of the House did not extend to ordering his reinstatement, and he was left to fend for himself — almost, but not quite. A group of M.Ps. from both sides of the House, feeling that justice had been rather less than done, organised a Public Subscription for Hood ( Fig. 3 ). This raised just over £212 — equivalent to four years' salary for Hood at that time.

With this money, Hood was able to buy himself a house in Ellesmere, where he established himself in business, becoming a popular and respected member of the town. He took a great interest in local government, becoming a member of Ellesmere Urban District and Ellesmere Rural District Councils, and sitting on the Board of Guardians, and on the Joint Burial Committee.

THE

## Dismissal of Stationmaster Hood.

OFFICES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS,  
19, BUCKINGHAM STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.,

March 8th, 1892.

DEAR SIR—

As you are aware, the dismissal of Mr. Hood, late Stationmaster in the employ of the Cambrian Railways Company, was the subject of a long and important debate in the House of Commons on Thursday, April 7th, the result of which was that a number of the directors and the late general manager were admonished by the Speaker for their action in discharging an employé because of evidence he had tendered before the Select Committee on Railway Servants (Hours of Labour). Many hon. members were of opinion that Mr. Hood should have been either reinstated or compensated by the Cambrian Company, and even amongst those who could not support this proposal a feeling exists that something should be done for Mr. Hood beyond the censure which has been passed upon his late employers. As an evidence of this desire, it may be mentioned that several Members of both sides of the House have intimated their willingness to subscribe to a fund to be offered as some compensation to Mr. Hood and his family.

With this object in view, an appeal is being made on his behalf, and we take the liberty of asking for your co-operation. As a rumour has been circulated to the effect that Mr. Hood is not in need of any pecuniary assistance, we append an excerpt from a private letter he addressed to Mr. Harford, general secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, on April 3rd:—

I have lost everything, home, position, salary, garden, and everything that made life happy, my prospects blighted, and at my age what can I do? I appeal to you to lay these facts before the Government. I have no feeling of revenge against the directors or the late manager, and no wish to rejoice at their position, and, as far as I am personally concerned, I have no desire to see them suffer by being called before the bar of the House or committed to the tower. That will do me no good. What I want is justice for the sake of my wife and family.

The sentiments expressed in the foregoing extract show at once the loss incurred by Mr. Hood and the kindly disposition evinced towards those who have caused it. This man has suffered intensely, and, though in the minds of many hon. members the difficulties in the way of Parliament proceeding further in the matter were great, we believe that a large number of gentlemen, both inside and outside of Parliament, will be glad to have an opportunity afforded them of contributing to a fund for providing some reparation to a man and his family who have suffered by the acts of those whom the Speaker of the House of Commons so solemnly admonished, declaring that "their offence was a very serious one, for it was no less an offence than that of trying, however unintentional it may be in certain circumstances, to deter witnesses from giving evidence before Committees of the House, and thus to disturb and taint the very source of truth." We base our appeal on the action taken by Parliament, which needs to be supplemented by private efforts.

The undersigned have expressed their willingness to receive subscriptions.

Your obedient Servants,

W. ABRAHAM (Rhondda),	GEORGE HOWELL,
THOS. BURT,	B. PICKARD,
HENRY BROADHURST,	JAMES ROWLANDS,
W. RANDALL CREMER,	JOHN WILSON.
CHARLES FENWICK,	

*Cheques or P.O.O.'s may be made payable to Mr. C. Fenwick M.P. at the above address*

Figure 3. SUBSCRIPTION APPEAL FOR JOHN HOOD.

John Conacher left Cambrian Railways in 1895. A later Manager, Mr S. Williamson is reported to have made a full and formal reconciliation between Hood and the Railway, although nothing is preserved regarding the manner of this. Certainly, the General Manager of Cambrian Railways was formally represented at Mr Hood's funeral.

Unfortunately, it seems that apart from the staunch support of Hood, John Humphreys had no recompense for his dismissal, and when he died in 1900, his obituary described him merely as an ex-railwayman. Had not Hood had the courage to stand by him, railwaymen might have

had to wait much longer for legal protection against overwork, the trigger for which might have been an accident much more serious than that at Ellesmere. Even so, the effort expended to make this advance was prodigious. Hood, writing to the "Daily News" on the 3rd April, 1894, said that the number of public meetings held had exceeded three hundred, while the sittings of the Select Committee had extended for five weeks.

John Hood died in 1920, much mourned by the people of Ellesmere. The deep impression made by his fight for justice is shown on his memorial in Ellesmere Cemetery, where, twenty nine years after he left the railway, he was commemorated as "Ex-Stationmaster".



*Ellesmere station in March 1978  
Photo by Alan Young*

*Ellesmere station building, thirteen years after closure, in use as offices for Ellesmere Electronics Ltd.*



## Octel

(While looking for something else, the Editor came across a photocopy of a British Railways booklet entitled *Instructions for handling and loading specified traffics*, issued in May 1957, and marked 'Private and not for publication'. Chapter 13 covers 'EXPLOSIVES AND OTHER DANGEROUS GOODS' and paragraph 'C (vii)' will be of interest to us, in view of our long term plans to model the traffic from Amlwch.)

**(vii) "Octel" Anti-knock Compound containing Tetra Ethyl Lead.**

This traffic is not normally handled by railway staff. The material is neither explosive nor inflammable at ordinary temperatures, but it is poisonous and it may enter the body either by absorption through the skin or by breathing the vapour. The compound is coloured orange or blue so that any leakage can be seen immediately. Furthermore it has a distinctive and rather sweet smell. If it can be smelled there is a dangerous concentration of the compound.

During transport the compound can only get into the body if leakage occurs from the containers. These are either tank wagons or specially constructed steel drums. The drums which are of great strength are sealed with an inner and outer bung. Rolling hoops are fitted as an added protection for the shell. The drums weigh approximately 1½ cwts. and 8 cwts. respectively.

Drums must be loaded "gunshot" on their rolling hoops, bungs uppermost and securely chocked. Stowage on ends is not permitted and no other commodity should be loaded in the same wagon. Irrespective of weight, drums must be conveyed through to destination in three plank drop-sided wagons, which must not be sheeted.

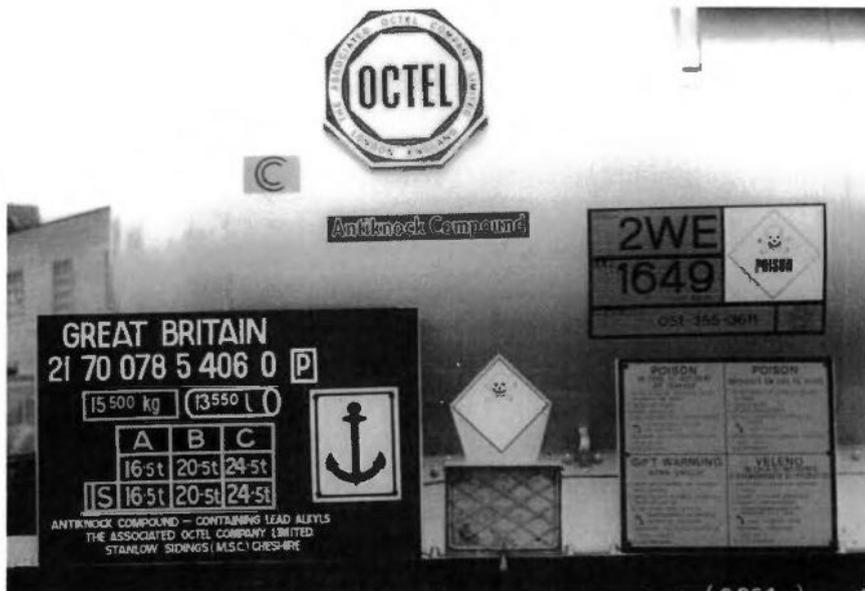
The tank wagons are also specially strongly constructed, the inner tank having thick covering of granulated cork with exterior sheeting of thick steel plate. The tank wagons do not have bottom outlet.

Wagons loaded with drums and tank wagons, containing "Octel", will bear wagon labels indicating the action to be taken in the event of leakage or spillage: the following are the measures which should be taken:—

- (1) Immediately notify and obtain advice from Associated Ethyl Co. Ltd. by telephone (Ellesmere Port 2381) or telegram (Ethylport, Ellesmere Port).
- (2) If the compound can be smelled, it is necessary to keep up wind unless respirator protection is available.
- (3) If the compound gets on the skin, wash immediately with paraffin; remove clothes if contaminated, then wash skin with soap and water. Contaminated clothes should be burnt.



*Octel Anti-knock Compound ferry tank no. 21 70 078 5 406 0, 27 July 1978.*



*Detail of the same tanker, same date.*

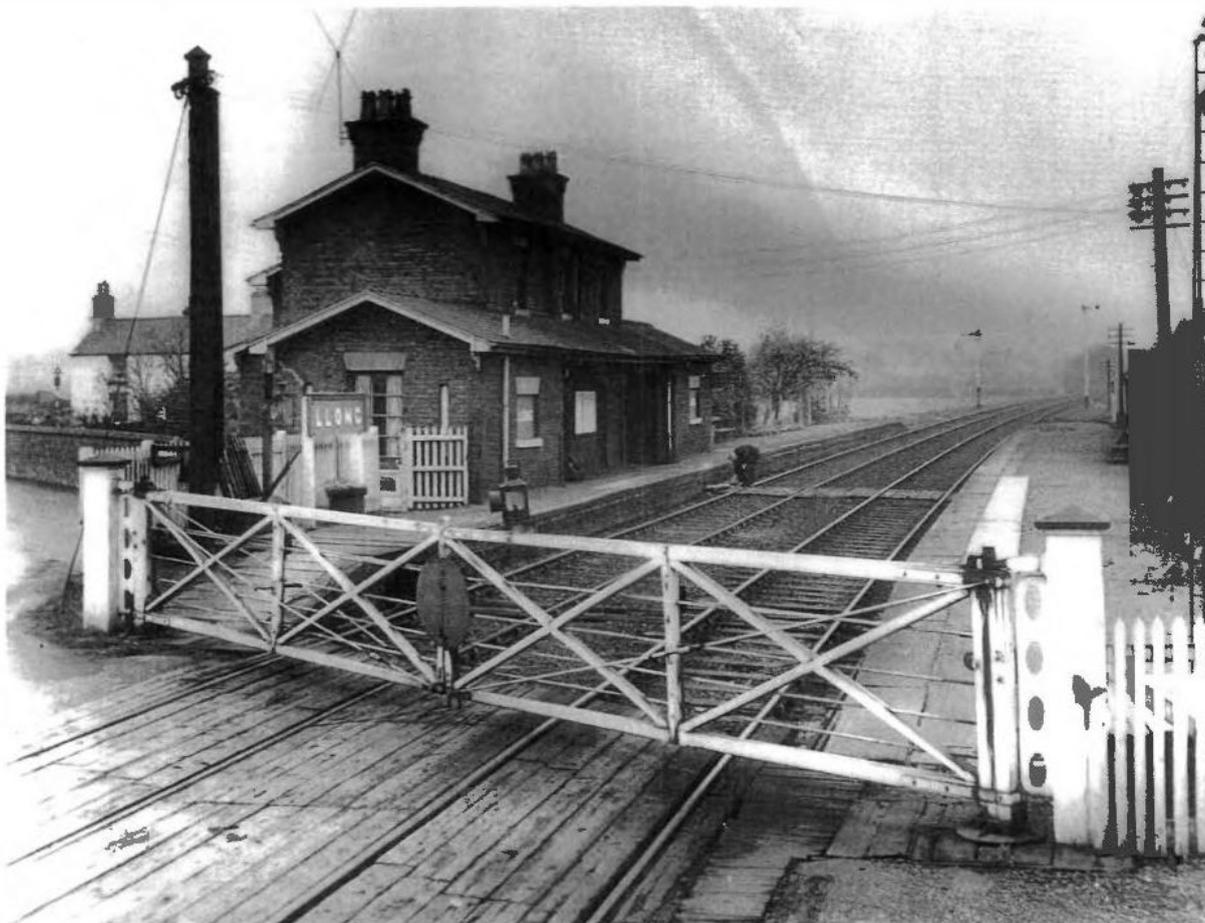
## Long station

These photographs of Llong station on the L.N.W.R. line from Mold Junction to Mold are from the collection of Tom Bagley. (See Tony Robinson's article about architect Francis Thompson in the last issue of *BMRJ*). Llong opened on 14 August 1849 and closed first on 1 January 1917; re-opened on 5 May 1917 and finally closed on 30 April 1962. The line then remained open for through traffic for some time.

Tom, with Chris Dawson and others in their local 3mm scale modelling group, built a layout entitled "Llong and Padeswood Sidings". This 22ft long end-to-end featured Llong station (which had no goods facilities) allied with the goods sidings from the next station.



*Llong station, before 1938 when the signal-box was abolished (Chris Dawson collection).*



*Part of a W.A. Camwell photograph from 1957. The crossing gates were hand-operated, and signals were controlled from a ten lever frame on the platform (visible behind the station name board).*



*After the station was closed by B.R. in 1962, it was sold and converted into a private dwelling. This photo from 1976 shows the single remaining track for the little passing freight traffic; the track was eventually lifted in the 1980s.*



*A Hunts Cross bound train about to descend the Moor Street incline on Merseyrail, 27 June 2011. (Photographed by Tony Robinson).*

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## Letters to the Editor

E-mail from Tony Robinson giving details of a recent book on **the Stephensons**:

“....The title is *George & Robert Stephenson : A Passion for Success* by David Ross  
ISBN 978 07524 52777 £20, hardback. The History Press, The Mil, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Glos.  
GL5 2QG.....”

The Editor as yet to see this book, but has it on order – it is available post free from Amazon for £14.

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(Reader Tim Easter is building a **model of Mold Junction Shed** and has been searching for a photograph of Mold Junction No.2 signal box which shows the layout of the windows at the front ....; See *BMRJ25* and 27)....

From: [nick.allso@signalman.org](mailto:nick.allso@signalman.org)  
To: [davemillward5@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:davemillward5@hotmail.co.uk)  
Subject: Fwd:  
Date: Sun, 21 Aug 2011 11:42:34 +0100

“Here we are, **Mold Jet No2**. I think this was the one he was after?  
Nick.”



.... And a note from John Dixon: “ Nice pic. But it’s the FRONT of the box we need ! John”

+++++

# Royal party shunted at Saltney Junction

by John Dixon

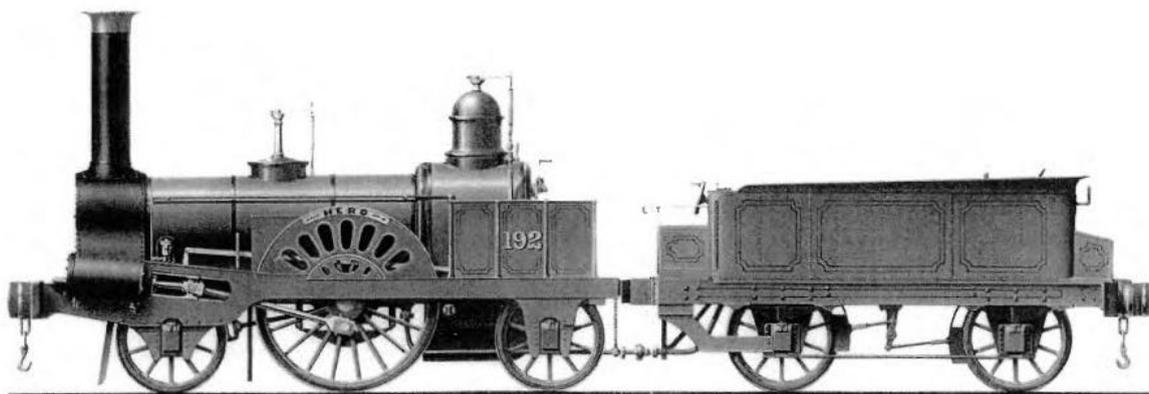
In October 1852 the L&NWR company's Northern Division engineer, Mr Norris, informed the Shrewsbury & Chester Railway company's secretary that Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, was desirous of returning from her sojourn at Balmoral via the Shrewsbury lines. The *Chester Courant* of the time gave an extensive account of the journey with descriptions of the arrangements made at many of the stations en route attended by huge crowds of people all hoping to get a glimpse of the queen and her party but these extracted notes concentrate on the railway aspects of the journey, in particular with the Chester area. Extra information has come from the S&CR minutes.

The railway journey started on Tuesday morning 12 October 1852, from Stonehaven (in Kincardine in north east Scotland) station on the Caledonian Railway and finished at the GWR's Windsor station on the evening of Thursday the fourteenth, encountering no less than eight separate railway company lines. The LNWR provided a "magnificent" saloon carriage for her majesty and close family (*see cover picture*) and other carriages for the rest of the royal retinue and these were to be used for the greater part of the journey as far as the changeover to the GWR broad gauge at Camp Hill, Birmingham. The journey from Stonehaven was via Perth, Stirling and Larbert to Edinburgh where an overnight stay was made at Holyrood. On the following Wednesday morning at 08.30 the royal train set off for Wales but in preparation for this, the train on the previous evening had to make a detour of about 70 miles from St Margaret's station to reach Edinburgh's Lothian Road terminus of the Caledonian Railway. Two engines were provided from Edinburgh but what these were is not mentioned in the *Courant*. The average speed to Carlisle is given as 40mph but there is no mention of a stop at this station although it was likely a change of engines or water top-up took place.

Refreshments were taken at Preston and the train "swept through Wigan, a first class station whose buildings were beautifully decorated presenting a gay and animated appearance", before a stop was made at Preston Junction station, Parkside at 3.12 pm "for the engine to take in a new supply of water" (Note the mention of just one engine here, so is it one of the two from Edinburgh or has an engine change or more been made, possibly at Carlisle or Preston?). The station here was "in a cutting in a remote and pretty spot" where the Leigh/Newton le Willows high road passed overhead and the line diverged west and east to reach the Liverpool & Manchester line. The west line was taken to Warrington Junction (Earlestown) and then a southerly direction along the former Grand Junction line, now LNWR, to reach Warrington station which was passed at a slow speed and after  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile the diversion was taken at Walton Junction onto the Cheshire Junction line (BL&C Jc). Superintendent Norris had joined the engine at Preston which continued to Chester without stopping at the intermediate stations, Moore, Norton, Runcorn Road, Helsby and Dunham, all handsomely decorated with flags and evergreens and with groups of people crowding the platforms and bridges. Guards and engine drivers had joined the train at Preston Junction station as it was not stopping until Chester.

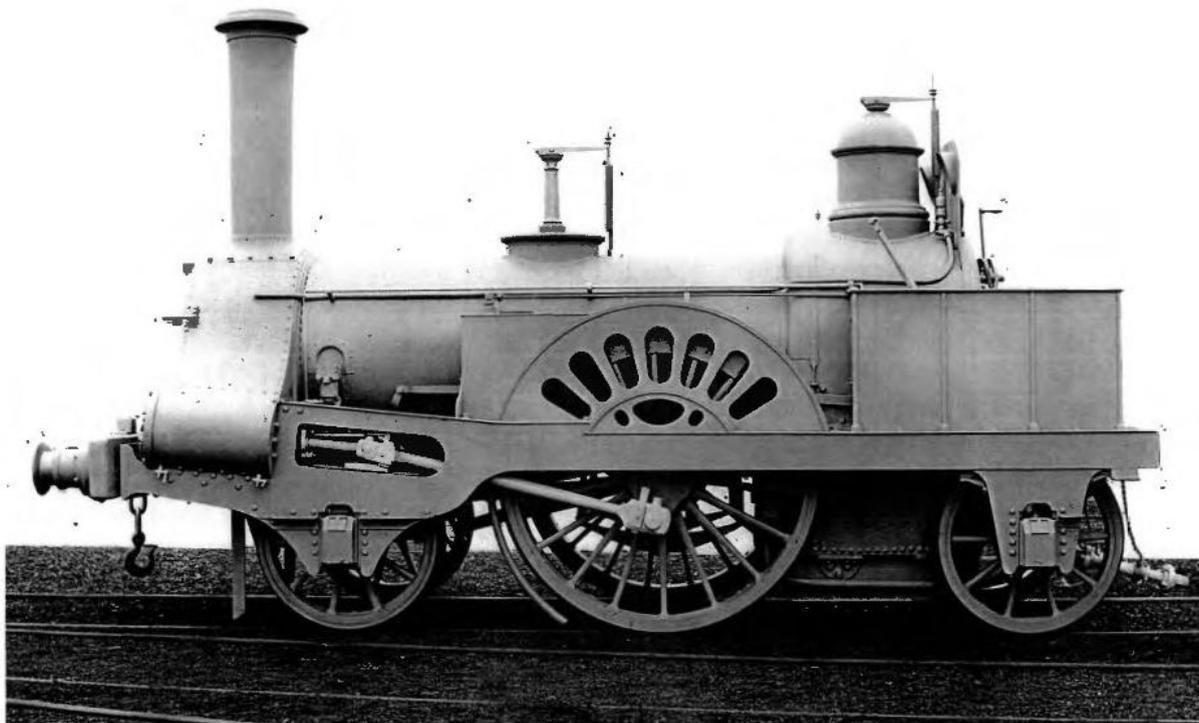
Arriving at Chester station two minutes after 4pm, Victoria coming to the carriage window to acknowledge the crowds, the train departed from the one long through platform of the time at 4.15pm, after speeches had been made, towards the racecourse viaduct, hauled now by a new engine "The Prince of Wales" and driven by Mr. Trevithick [Francis, son of

the more famous Richard Trevithick], destination Bangor. As we can imagine, this engine had been beautifully decorated for the occasion. A short stop for boiler water was made at Prestatyn station but otherwise the train didn't stop at any of the other decorated and thronged stations until Bangor was reached at 5.50pm.



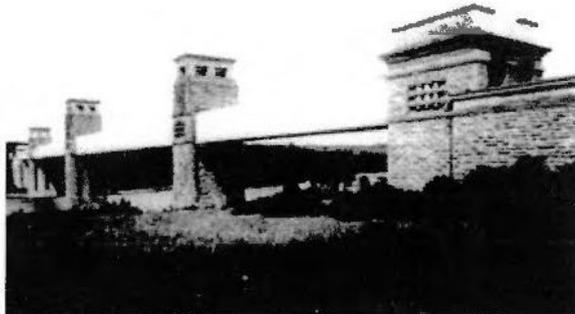
L.N.W.R. no.192 'Hero', thought to be what 'Prince of Wales' would have looked like when new in 1852 (drawing from *Locomotives in profile*, vol.2; 1972.)

A firework display was laid on in the evening before the royal party retired for the night at Bangor's Penrhyn Hotel, taking up 50 rooms! On the Thursday morning the royal party left the hotel by road carriages for Telford's Menai suspension bridge over which the party travelled slowly to admire the views, and then on to Llanfair station on the Anglesea side to

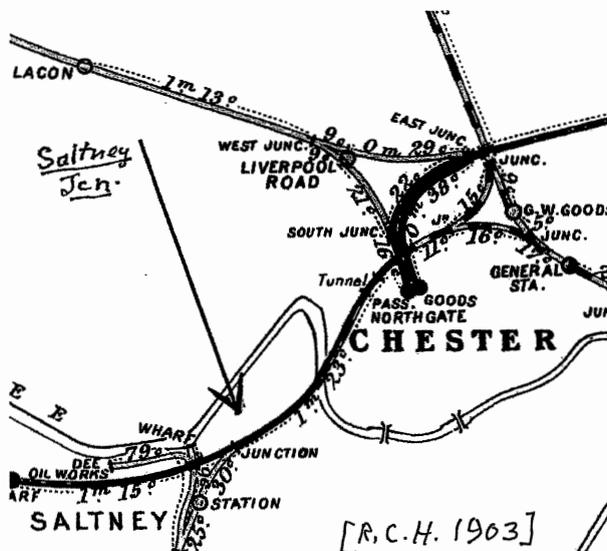


This Crewe official photograph of a Trevithick 6ft single dates from 1875, but it represents another engine of the large class, very much like 'Prince of Wales'. Painted in works grey.

join the royal train waiting there. Among the notables awaiting her majesty was Robert Stephenson, designer of the tubular railway bridge. On the return journey from Llanfair the Queen's saloon was detached from the train and hand-drawn through the tube by many men, while Prince Albert together with some members of his suite and railway officers ascended to the roof of the tube and walked across the top to the Caernarfon side. (It's worth speculating on just how and exactly where the detachment and reattachment of the royal saloon took place, especially as it was situated in the middle of the train, initially at least); the party also descended to the water edge and a considerable time was spent examining the bridge and its surroundings; it had been just two years since its opening and thereby joining Anglesea to the mainland. The train eventually moved off on the return route towards Chester stopping (only?) at Conway for an address.



Between Bangor and Chester 'signalmen' were placed in sight of one another and "not the least untoward circumstance or accident occurred".



#### SALTNEY JUNCTION [A note for people

who don't live near Chester: this locality is a short distance from Chester on the Holyhead line, where the Wrexham and Shrewsbury line diverts from the main line; there is no station here.]

On arrival here, giving onlookers a second and better chance to view the proceedings, the royal train was "shunted from one line of rails to another and the officers of the C&HR resigned their royal charge in favour of officers of the S&CR company".

Two engines had been selected from the Shrewsbury & Chester Railway Company stock total of 29 at the time. These were numbers 13 and 21 which were both double-framed 2-2-2 locomotives built by Sharp Brothers of Manchester and just five and four years old respectively. No. 13 was named 'Prince of Wales' and No. 21 'Victoria and Albert' (presumably for the occasion?). They were beautifully painted and embellished and on the recommendation of Edward Jeffreys, the S&CR loco' superintendent, the drivers of these engines on the day were the company's oldest, Henry Boone and Henry Whittaker, supervised on the footplate (not surprisingly) by Jeffreys and the chief engineer, Henry Robertson. Directors of the company also travelled with the train.

Vast crowds had assembled near the junction which afforded an excellent position to view the slowly moving carriages and "there were neither sheds nor walls to throw their shadows upon the Queen's gracious countenance, which, all smiles and courtesy, beamed with evident delight upon the loyal manifestations of her subjects". During the temporary stoppage at the junction the queen was presented with a beautiful, pictorial panorama of the

entire line, executed by Mr McLure of Liverpool. Two copies were prepared, one on satin in a red Morocco case and another on drawing paper for use during the journey.

The railway establishments at Saltney, the Iron Works (Messrs Wood Bros.' Chain & Anchor Works) and other buildings in the vicinity displayed a great variety of flags and other decorations. The S&CR Board of Directors had made the decision to give the employees at the Saltney Works the day off, except they were expected to help out by keeping order at the stations en-route to Shrewsbury. The company also ordered the raising of the Royal Standard at the junction.

At 12.50 the train started for Shrewsbury amidst hearty cheers. However, because of the extended time spent admiring the Britannia bridge and the detention at Conway earlier, the train was ordered to accelerate the journey time to Shrewsbury by ten minutes. This was unfortunate for the great many bystanders along the route including, just after the Iron Works, children from the church schools of the area and the Chester Blue Coat School boys with their band and banners in the same field when the train "whizzed by before the Queen had opportunity to give the juvenile loyalists a look of recognition". The newspaper describes the decorated appearance of all the stations between Saltney and Shrewsbury although the train did not halt at any of them until Shrewsbury was reached and where refreshments were laid on for the royal party. Arrival time was 2pm (not bad for a journey of 40 miles in 1852 and probably slowing down to admire the views from such as the Cefn and Chirk viaducts). Mention was made of the engine shed above Coton Hill at which a handsome, triumphal arch was thrown across the line with its centre motif of 'God Save The Queen'. Along the whole route from Saltney to Shrewsbury platelayers with white flags had been placed within sight of each other, (most likely there had also been use of platelayers on the C&HR to supplement the small number of signalmen: 'pointsmen' was a more usual term, in these early times).

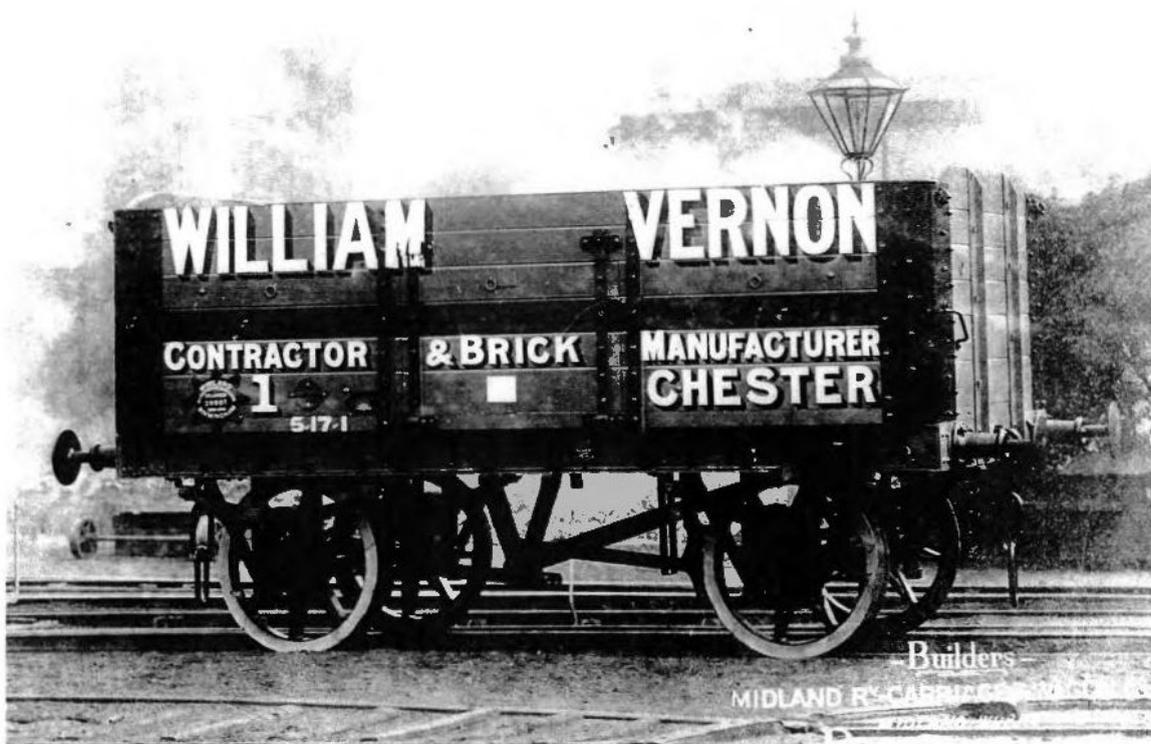
There is no mention in the *Courant* as to a change of locomotives at Shrewsbury and as there was a close link with the Shrewsbury and Birmingham company it's likely the same two engines continued as far as Wolverhampton where the LNWR officials again took charge until the break of gauge was reached at Camp Hill and the newly opened Birmingham and Oxford line of the GWR was utilised, the driver now being Mr Brunel himself. (Engine??). Altogether over 600 miles were travelled by the royal party, involving the lines of no less than six companies according to the *Courant* (though I make it eight companies viz. (1) Caledonian & North British Railway to Edinburgh; (2) Caledonian Railway to Carlisle; (3) London & North Western Railway to Warrington (West); (4) Birkenhead, Lancashire & Cheshire Jct Railway from Walton Jct to Chester; (5) Chester & Holyhead Railway to Bangor and return to Saltney Jct; (6) Shrewsbury & Chester railway to Shrewsbury; (7) Shrewsbury & Birmingham Railway to Wolverhampton; (8) GWR to Windsor.

So, on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1852, Saltney Junction presented a splendid scene of three beautifully painted and decorated steam engines together with the carriages of the royal train, this occasion being the first time the latter had visited this spot. Also notable is the fact that three Princes of Wales met at the Junction, one of them being a member of the royal party.

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**Notes:** John Dixon has been researching the Shrewsbury & Chester Railway for some time, using both published (newspaper reports) and unpublished (the manuscript of Board minutes, etc.) sources . The railway was formed by the amalgamation of two smaller companies in 1846, and then went on to become an important constituent of the Great Western Railway in 1854. The L.N.W.R. Society kindly supplied the majority of the illustrations through their member Norman Lee, who also pointed out that G.P.Neele in Chapter 16 (“Queen Victoria’s railway journeys”), of his *Railway reminiscences* (McCorquodale, 1904) covers this particular journey.

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## William Vernon, Chester David Goodwin

This previously unknown photo came to light several years back in the offices of a local builder. It is thought to date from about 1890 and shows a rather unusual wagon: both the underframe and end stanchions are of steel section (not all that common in P.O. wagons of that era), and the tarpaulin-securing rings on the third plank suggest that it was used for carrying loads other than coal - though of course brick manufacture does imply the burning of a lot of fuel.

The builders were the Birmingham works of the Midland Railway Carriage & Wagon Co. Ltd., and the ownership plate on the side suggests that the wagon has been leased or hired to William Vernon.

As far as livery is concerned, I would think a pale to mid-grey (including solebars and headstocks) with one red plank on the sides, black ironwork (except end stanchions), and black-shaded white lettering; this seems to be a common style for this time.

A railway company registration plate had not yet been fitted when the photograph was taken, so there is no clue as to the routes the wagon would have run on. One can just guess that it would not normally travel more than 20 or 30 miles at the most from Chester.

I would estimate the running period for this wagon to be from the 1890s to perhaps the 1920s. The William Vernon firm was established in about 1870 with premises in Upper Northgate Street in Chester. They are still in business as building contractors, but a change of name occurred in about 1973, to Vernon Pritchard Ltd.

Further information will be welcomed.

(Acknowledgements: Mary and Peter Higson, Bob Cockcroft for photography, Val Green (Chester Library) for background information; this is a revised version of a similar article, first published in the in December 1985).

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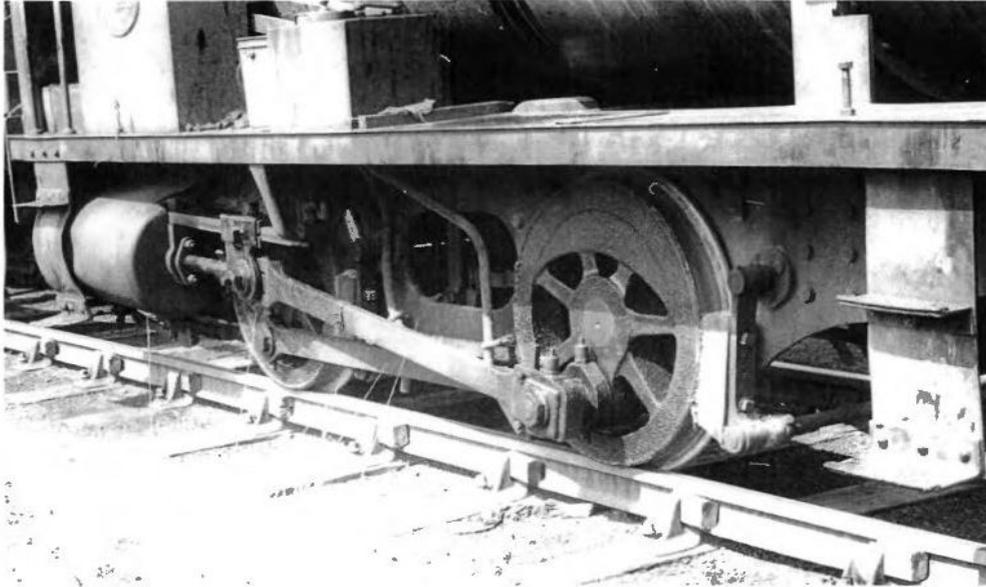
## **“Lobitos”**

**by Bob Miller**

The photographs of the fireless locomotive with this name were all taken at what was probably the smallest of the oil refineries in the Ellesmere Port and Stanlow area. Such engines were considered much safer at refineries (as were non-smoking drivers).



There is no firebox, or smokebox for that matter. As there is no smokebox the cylinders can be placed at the cab end. What looks like a boiler is called the receiver and holds steam that is produced and charged from a separate plant. It also holds water, the amount of which is increased as the steam is used for traction; this is to retain the remaining steam at a reasonable pressure. Generally fireless engines can work for two to three hours before requiring a fresh charge of steam.

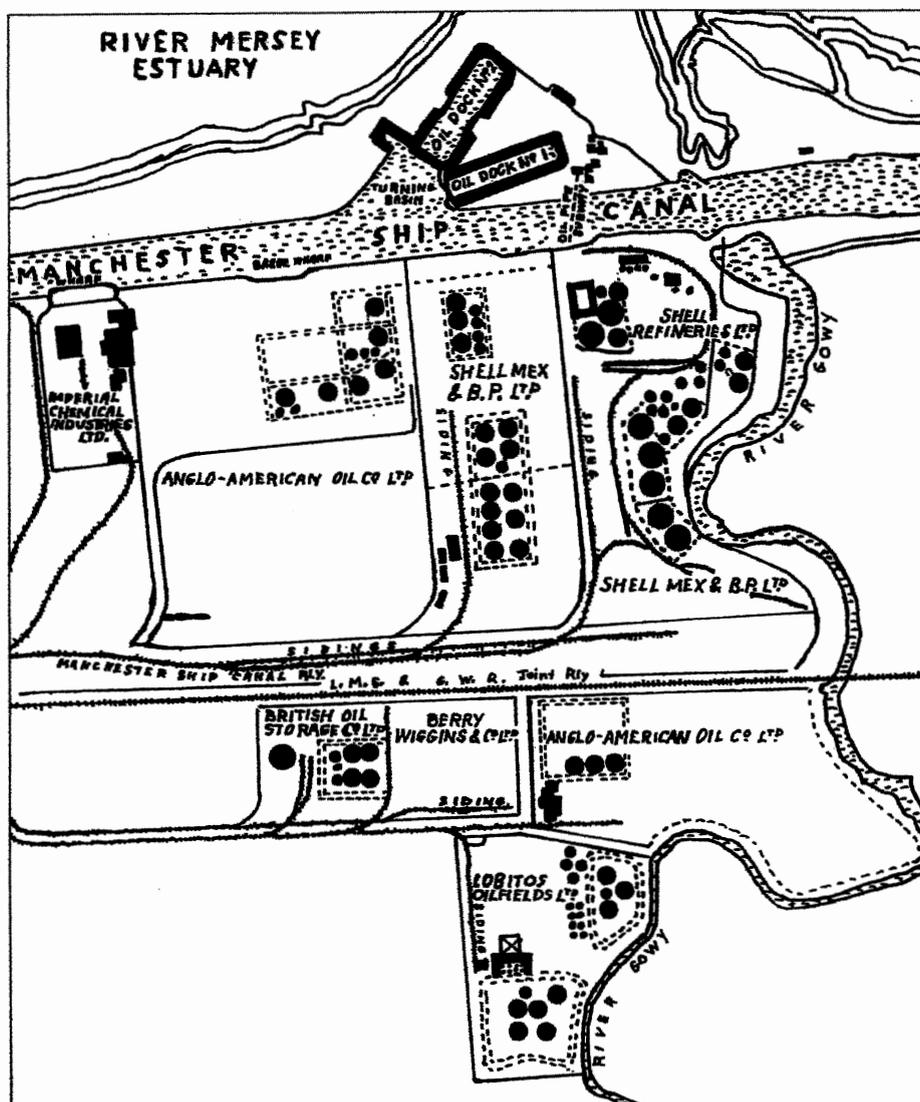


*The photographs of "Lobitos" reproduced here are the best of a dozen or so, taken (I estimate), in the mid- 1960s, at Stanlow.*

Lobitos is the name of a small town on the Pacific coast in northern Peru, some 550 miles north of Lima. Its chief claim to fame would seem to be that it was the first place in the whole of South America to have a cinema. The Peruvian Petroleum Syndicate, of which the Scottish



firm Balfour Williamson & Co was the principal partner, was formed in 1901; and oil was discovered by them near the then village of Lobitos in January 1904. To develop the new oilfield and attract new capital the Syndicate set up, on 13 March 1908, a public company called Lobitos Oilfields Limited, with shares floated on the London Stock Exchange. For many years this was a comparatively small oil company and the oil was despatched to California for refining. However in July 1934 Lobitos started to refine the oil itself in the UK. The refinery was on both banks of the River Gowy immediately south of the



Birkenhead Joint Line midway between Ellesmere Port and Stanlow, although all the railway sidings were on the west bank. These were not connected to the Joint Line, but to a branch of the Manchester Ship Canal Railway which passed underneath the Joint Line.

With the expansion of motoring Lobitos eventually owned over 200 roadside petrol stations, mostly in north-west England and Northern Ireland. In 1962 the company was acquired by the Burmah Oil Co

Ltd although it was a few years (I think 1966) before the name on the petrol stations was changed to Burmah. The Peruvian oilfields were nationalised in 1968 and Burmah was taken over by BP. They closed the refinery about 1987 (I regret I do not have the exact date).

For the opening of the refinery in July 1934 a suitable fireless locomotive was purchased from the second-hand dealer George Cohen, Sons & Co of Stanningley, Leeds and was given the name *LOBITOS*. A four wheeler with 14" by 18" cylinders, she had been built in July 1917 by the Kilmarnock firm of Andrew Barclay, Sons & Co Ltd (their number 1548) as one of a pair (the other was 1547) for British Dyes Ltd in Huddersfield, formerly Reid Holliday



until 1915. This became the British Dyestuffs Corporation in 1919 and from 1926 was one of the constituents of the Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd, for whom the loco worked before its sale to Cohen's in 1934. At Stanlow the engine continued to work for Lobitos Oilfields and for Burmah Oil until late in April 1969 when BP decided to replace her with a former British Rail diesel

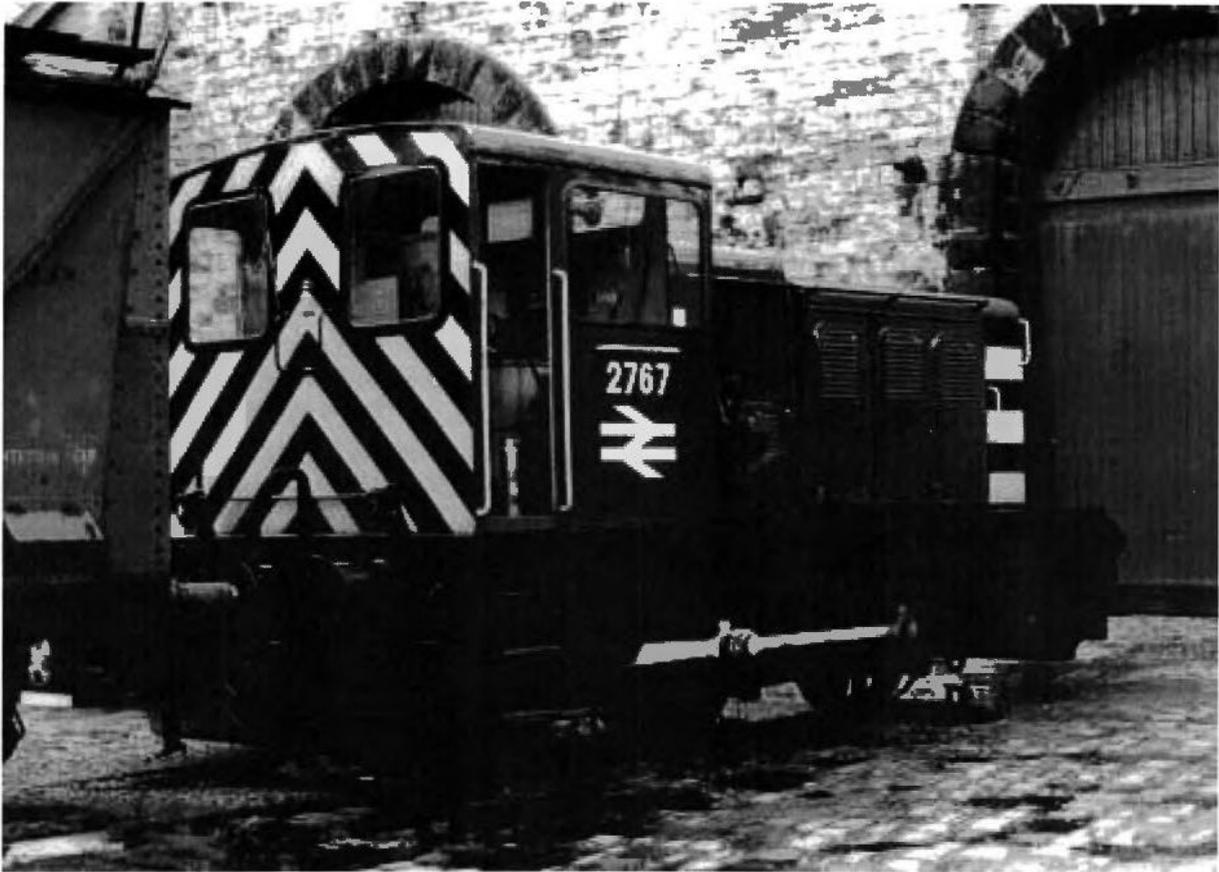
hydraulic 0-4-0. The little fireless loco probably did not work again after this and was scrapped in 1971.

The diesel was D2767, built by the North British Loco Co (works number 28020) in 1960, and which spent its seven year working life under B.R. allocated to Eastfield depot in Scotland. Sold to and overhauled by Andrew Barclay before coming to Stanlow in April 1969. After 12 years working for Burmah, the engine was sold in 1981 to a group at the East Lancs railway at Bury, who restored it to original condition.



After repainting into blue livery in the 1990s, the engine suffered a broken crankshaft. Fitted with a spare engine it was then sold to the Scottish Railway Preservation Society and housed at their Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway, just west of the Forth Bridge.





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## Editor's page

Postscript: 'Tionnsca Abhainn Einne' (last issue) can be loosely translated as 'Enda River Industries'

### Recent books:

*Lost railways of Co. Down and Co. Armagh* by Stephen Johnson. Stenlake, 2002. £7.50. ISBN 1 84033 176 3.

*The allocation history of BR diesel multiple units, vol.1: 50000-51828*, by Roger Harris. Harris, 2011. £21.50.

*George & Robert Stephenson: a passion for success* by David Ross. History Press, 2010. ISBN 978 0 7524 5277 7. £20. (this book, mentioned by Tony Robinson on page 27, has now arrived. It seems like a very fair and unbiased account of the Dee Bridge disaster. The design was obviously faulty, and Stephenson was lucky to get away with his reputation almost unsullied).

### The Dee Bridge accident 1847, part 8

At last I have found another mention of the rebuilding of the bridge in the 1870s! The Cheshire Observer of 30 October 1869 contains the following, within a report of the General Purposes Committee of the city council:

## **“THE RAILWAY VIADUCT OVER THE DEE**

A letter was read from the Engineer of the London and North Western Railway Company, stating that the directors had determined to substitute wrought iron girders in the railway bridge near the River Dee instead of cast iron, and for that purpose it would be necessary to put up a temporary stage in the river, as shown in the plan sent. He wished to know to whom was the proper party to apply.

The CLERK said the application would have to be made to the River Dee Commissioners. He thought the Council might make a suggestion which the directors would not refuse, and that was in making the alteration they should extend the width of the bridge so as to form a footpath, and form a communication between that part of the city and Curzon and Queen’s Park.

Major FRENCH said he thought this was one of the most important suggestions which ever came before a Town Council of the City of Chester. They would recollect the disaster that occurred 22 years ago. That bridge was constructed on false principles; there could be no doubt about that because it gave way, and a sad disaster occurred. The bridge was then propped up by beams, and there it had remained to the present day. If any alteration took place in it he thought it was incumbent on the Town Council to see that it was constructed on the most improved engineering principles, as otherwise they did not know what consequences might ensue, and the Council ought therefore to employ an eminent engineer to see that it was properly constructed.

Alderman LITTLER suggested that the matter should be referred to the River Dee Commissioners, for them to recommend what was necessary.”

The search continues ...

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