

# WIRRAL TRANSPORT USER

## Introduction

Apologies for the delay in getting this issue out to you. Angus's wife Ena sadly passed away earlier this year and a lot of his time was taken up caring for her. He takes on the task of preparing our Wirral Transport User on his computer and producing a disc for the printer.

This also affected the number of excursions were able to run last year as he also runs our excursions. We need to train others to stand in. We are also still in need of a secretary. Will all volunteers please contact our chairman, John Ryan!

**EXCURSIONS** On 24th June we had an excellent excursion on the Welsh Highland Railway from Caernarfon to Porthmadog. The sun shone most of the time. A stop was made at Betws y Coed and Rhos on Sea as we travelled home via Beddgelert and the Conwy Valley. As usual we had full coach load. Our next excursion is on Saturday 25th July to the Lake district and will include a sail.

We have separate mailing list for those who have expressed an interest in excursions. From now on we will circulate everyone where we have the email address.



THE DAZZLE FERRY 'SNOWDROP'S' LIVERY IS CHANGED FOR THE LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL. DESIGNED BY SIR PETER BLAKE.

## AGM

Publication of this issue should coincide with our AGM at the Birkenhead YMCA on Monday 25th JULY. Paul Salveson MBE will be our speaker. He has been a rail campaigner of many years standing and is well respected in railway management circles. As far as our own association is concerned, we are still short of a secretary and have been for about 3 years. We would appreciate a volunteer for this position in order to help the committee with its

administration. New general committee members are more than welcome..

### MERSEYRAIL

The new managing director takes office this month. He is Jan Chaudry who we welcome to his new position. He has already been on the board of Merseyrail for 3 years so knows the set up well. At the moment he is deputy Managing Director of Abellio UK - the Dutch part of the business.



CUNARD 175. FIREWORK DISPLAY ON 25TH MAY. THIS YEAR THERE ARE A NUMBER OF 175S: CHESHIRE'S RAILWAYS, THE RLPO & LLANGOLLEN STATION.



CUNARD 175. AS PART OF CUNARD'S 175 YEAR CELEBRATIONS QM 2 IS MOORED AT THE LANDING STAGE ON 25TH MAY.



THE LOGO DEPICTING 175 YEARS OF CHESHIRE'S RAILWAYS. IN OCTOBER BIRKENHEAD - CHESTER & CHESTER - CREWE ARE 175 YEARS OLD. SPECIAL EVENTS ARE PLANNED. LOOK OUT FOR DETAILS.

## Liverpool John Lennon Airport

by Angus Tilston

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It is good to see Liverpool Airport's passenger numbers increase significantly. Almost 400,000 passengers flew in June month. This is an increase of 9% compared with same period last year. The increase over the first 6 months of the year is 6% compared with 2014. A number of new routes have or are being added by new airlines to Liverpool.

You can now fly to Prague twice a week by Czech Airlines. Timings give scope for 3 or 4 day breaks in the Czech capital.

Flybe start up in September with flight 3 times daily to Amsterdam with connections to the rest of the world via Schipol as a hub. These flights are in addition to Easyjet's daily services. Amsterdam is also good hub for trains to North Germany and the Rhineland area. I used it recently to go to Bonn and can confirm it works very well.

Aer Lingus now fly to Dublin up to 3 times daily giving connection to the USA. The advantage with Dublin is that you can go through USA immigration there which will save you a lot of time and hassle when arriving in the USA. It is the only

European Airport that can provide these facilities. I know people who have gone via Dublin in the past and they would go no other way.  
Liverpool - New York £215

Another airline that started recently is the Hungarian Airline Blue Air that flies to Bucharest & Bacau thrice weekly.

The airport has one of the best punctuality records in the UK with 90% of arrivals and departures being 'on time'.

✳ Queen Mary 2 berthed at the Pier Head - taken from a Mersey Ferry Cruise.



In the late evening sun Queen Mary 2 prepares to depart on 4th JULY 2015



## THE VISIT OF THE 3 QUEENS



ON Cunard's Celebration Day 25th May the 3 Queens line up prior to the departure of QM2 (centre). It is claimed 1.3 million people witnessed the event.



The cruise liner turns in front of the original Cunard Headquarters at the Pier Head.

— Urna Semper, Ipsum

### LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY

We travelled on the railway when the new extension to Corwen opened last November. The railway now has a 'Destination'. The new service has proved to be very popular. Well worth a visit is the new museum in the town. Although small, it gives quite a comprehensive coverage of the railway.

Also renewed is the Chain Bridge at Berwyn. Closed for about 20 years you can now cross the Dee again on foot.



## 1. Chester Railway Station

The east car park was relocated last year because of the Chester Business Quarter development which is due for completion in September including the office building.

## 2. Timetable Changes

Two Class 319 (ex. Thameslink) electric trains were introduced on the Liverpool - Manchester Airport services via Newton-le-Willows on March 5th (should have been Dec. '14), enough only for Mondays to Fridays. Further units enabled extension of electric services to the weekend from April 18th. However ten were available from the May timetable change (17th) covering most services from Liverpool to Manchester Airport and also to Victoria and Wigan but disappointingly still on diesel schedules. Another ten similar electric units are in the pipeline for introduction this year.

At least the fast Liverpool to Newcastle via Manchester Victoria ran from May last year permitting faster journeys across the Pennines.

The expected daytime and much desired North Wales Coast - Chester - Manchester Airport did not come to fruition as the proposal by Arriva Trains Wales were rejected by Network Rail. It has been reported paths are reserved for Calder Valley trains via Manchester Victoria on completion of the Ordsall Chord..

As last year Merseyrail Wirral Line services to Chester are unchanged with no improvements to early Sunday onward connections. Merseyrail trains are slowly being refurbished again and we still await decisions about new trains. Lack of parking at Bache and Spital is still a deterrent to increased patronage.

Minor changes have been made to Chester - Shrewsbury line services have been made but no general speed up or change to frequency.

Virgin London services from Chester and North Wales continue to run hourly as previously and Arriva Trains Wales services are largely unchanged. It is a matter of concern the last train at 22.00 from London to Crewe still misses the last train from Crewe to Chester by 14 minutes.

Chester Bus Exchange is still in operation whilst the former Odeon cinema is converted under the 'Renew' scheme and foundation work on the extension is proceeding at the back on the site of the former County Planning Dept. Hopefully bus services will be largely maintained after Council elections which changed to Labour but with an overall majority of one.

Also Stephen Moseley (Con.) who ran an online petition for electrification of some lines from Chester is no longer our MP and we now have Chris Matheson (Lab.) by a mere 93 votes. Cllr. Bob Thompson (Lib. Dem.) campaigned for trams in Chester but only got 2870 votes.

## 3. Train fares

Controlled fares were limited to inflation in January throughout the country including Merseyrail which announced a 2.2% increase.

## 4. Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC)

A The Transport Strategy report (by AECOM) was commissioned to look in detail at all the transport needs of Chester's historic core in the light of the developments that form part of the 'One City Plan'. These included :-

1. Chester Business Quarter (near rail station) - Mentioned above.
2. Chester Northgate Development - Under a separate scheme work continues on new Library and Performing Arts Centre now known as Renew due to open in Autumn 2016. No further announcement about this but awaiting detailed scheme of new bus exchange at Gorse Stacks.
3. The Transport Strategy was approved last year. It is considering new stations such as at Daresbury on the North Cheshire line between Runcorn East and Warrington which has become a major employment location.

## 5. Halton Curve never renamed - single or double track reinstatement ?

Precise train services, Liverpool, South Parkway to N Wales Coast or Wrexham or maybe just to Chester, over this route are being studied and then the business case will determine whether a bidirectional single or double track will suit the outcome. The Outline Business Case scores Liverpool to Wrexham the highest but likely just to Chester initially. Electrification is not part of the study but was given a boost with Chester - Acton Grange (West Coast Main Line) being in Tier 1 of Network Rail's ranking list. Such a short link should surely be considered when planning infrastructure work on the Liverpool - Runcorn - Weaver Junction route to be done before 2017 along with the Halton Curve works. Services may be introduced in late 2017.

## **6. Hooton - Helsby**

Work is taking place at last to reinstate the freight connection to Ince marshes, formerly to the fertiliser plant but now primarily to carry the sand traffic coming from Middleton Towers near Kings Lynn. This is presently being offloaded from the train on to a convoy of lorries at Ellesmere Port Docks for Quinn Glass but this arrangement is expected to cease before the end of the year. The coal traffic to Fiddlers Ferry from here has already ceased along with the associated shipping from the Clyde. Studies are being undertaken at the behest of Cheshire West and Chester Council to establish a regular passenger service rather than the four irregular trains that run at present from Helsby to Ellesmere Port only. Encouragement comes from extra housing at near Ince and Elton and the Chester University outpost at Thornton Science Park (near Stanlow and Thornton station). Hopefully consideration will be given to going beyond Helsby as well as to Hooton where better connections are available to Merseyrail. Work is planned for Overpool and Little Sutton buildings similar to work finished at Ellesmere Port railway station.

## **7. Chester - Wrexham redoubling**

Doubling of approx. 6 miles of track south of Saltney Junction has been completed except for two level crossings. As a result single track operation remains awaiting further work. The revised scheme costed at £44m includes resignalling/level crossing upgrades and work on Anglesey. The whole work will allow an additional Holyhead - Cardiff service every two hours making it hourly and saving 16 mins. on present timings should have been in Summer 2015 but delayed by wrangling over level crossing work. This scheme limits the provision of extra services due to the remaining single track. Wrexham North station was not part of the scheme but planned on the presently single track part of the route. It is planned to be seriously delayed but is desperately needed to serve a new prison amongst other users. This would need to be double track but likely to omit the A483 overbridge area. The Welsh Route Study strongly supports the provision of direct rail services from Wrexham over this route via the Mersey - Dee link (Halton Curve) and to Manchester.

## **8. Mid-Cheshire Line**

The Manchester via Stockport, Altrincham, Knutsford and Northwich to Chester line is still seeing a 5% p.a. rise in passengers. Overcrowding occurs on the northern section of the line at peak times. The bidders for the new Northern franchise have been asked to provide hourly services on Sundays plus on off-peak weekdays an extra hourly semi-fast service serving principal stations from Northwich to Manchester (this is a min. service specification). The Mid-Cheshire Line, which has a good score, as Chester-Warrington is in Tier 1 of Network Rail's electrification proposals but only the north end of the line as far as Northwich.

## **9. The Northern Hub/ NW Electrification / Rolling Stock**

The NW electrification is now due to be complete in 2019. This includes Stalybridge (Dec. 2016 ?) but further work east of there is seriously delayed now due to reassessment of scheme and lack of resources finishing maybe towards the end of this decade.

The approved Ordsall Chord in Manchester, now subject to a legal challenge due to severing of the rail link to the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, will allow trains approaching from Manchester Victoria from the east to go to Manchester Airport. This will prompt a major recast of services possibly including running some Chester trains going via Manchester Victoria to the Calder Valley according to a new franchise document in Dec. 2017. Arriva Trains Wales are expected to run Chester - Manchester services till October 2018 under a two year extension to their franchise so these may be additional. We need electrification to Warrington allowing through running to the Airport and Calder Valley (also a candidate) !

CWAC's Chester Transport Strategy supports electrification of the North Wales Coast Line with connections to the main line.

**10. Other Welsh Route Study/NE Wales Integrated Task Force** - include proposals for stations at Airbus/old Mold Junction site, Queensferry and creation of Shotton Interchange which would combine Low and High Level stations. Also modernisation of North Wales Coast Line etc.

# Arriva: buses & trains

A Division of German Railways (DB)

by Angus Tilston

Sophomore

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ARRIVA IS A DIVISION OF DEUTSCHE BAHN (GERMAN STATE RAILWAYS) WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR BUSES AND TRAINS NOT PART OF THE MAINLAND OF GERMANY. THEY RUN BUSES AND TRAINS IN THE UK - EG: ARRIVA BUSES ON MERSEYSIDE AND ARRIVA TRAINS WALES EG OUR BIDSTON TO WREXHAM LINE..

The company had modest roots starting as a secondhand motor cycle dealer in Sunderland (T. Cowie Ltd) in 1938 growing to its present size of over 50,000 employees and running transport services throughout the Europe.

It became Arriva in November 1997. Its first overseas acquisition was Unibus in Denmark. In 2000 they bought MTL Holdings which included its first rail franchise Merseyrail Electrics which they ran until 2003.

Deutsche Bahn made a take over bid of £1.58 billion. The European Commission laid down a condition that DB had to dispose of Arriva transport interests in Germany. For example they ran some rail services. It has since made other acquisitions in GB & Europe.

Arriva now operates in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden as well as the UK.

DEUTSCHE BAHN  
RELATIONSHIP.

ARRIVA is one of DB's Divisions. the others are DB Schenker, DB Bahn & DB Netz. Subsidiaries are DB Fernverkehr, DB Regio, DB Schenker Rail & Schenker AG.

Deutsche Bahn has only existed since January 1994 when it took over the railways of East & West Germany after reunification. Its Head Office is in Berlin.

After its latest reorganisation in 2007 all German passenger services operate in the DB Bahn Division, logistics are operated by DB Schenker with infrastructure and operation run by DB Netz.

All UK services that were operated by DB Regio are now under subdivision of the company known as Arriva UK Trains. This includes Arriva Trains Wales, Chiltern Railways, Cross Country, Grand Central and Tyne & Wear Metro.

The DB timetable is well respected. From it you can obtain train times of any rail journey in Europe including the UK. Many people in this country use its facilities.

Arriva on Merseyside is investing £10 million on new double deck buses. These are new state of the art buses and will be used mostly on the very busy route 10 in Liverpool.

# Stagecoach plc

Stagecoach is the other major bus operator on Wirral. It was formed in 1980 and is based in Perth and operates in the USA & Canada as well as the UK. It has over 30,000 employees. As well as operating bus services in various parts of the UK, it has significant rail operations.

These cover South West Trains, Island Line Trains on the Isle of Wight, East Midlands Trains, Virgin Trains west coast (49% stake, Virgin Trains East Coast in which it has a 90% stake with Richard Branson's company only having 10% although it uses the Virgin Brand name. It also has the concession for running Sheffield Supertram.

Wirral is part of their South Lancashire and Merseyside Bus Division - Glenvale Transport Ltd which was taken over on 12th July 2005.

Stagecoach's passenger numbers have grown extremely well recently. Rock Ferry depot has seen a 20% rise in the last 12 months. Overall growth in the division has reached 6% giving over 42 million journeys in the year.

The Wirral Growth is largely due to the success of Route 1 to Chester and recently extended route 38 which now runs from Croft Retail Park via a large part of Wirral to Heswall. Stagecoach has also invested about £10 million in new buses throughout the region.

# What will life be like in 30 years time?

The 30 year rail plan..

At our AGM last year, Liam Robinson Chair of the Transport Authority gave us a presentation on the 30 Year Plan for improving and enhancing our local railways. This is a good opportunity to remind ourselves of some of the details. It is a long term plan that will be completed long after many of us are here. Merseyrail is a very successful system that needs to be built on. It is good to see some of the ideas that were to be carried out post 1977 when Loop & Link were completed are included. Government cuts prevented them from happening then. Let us hope there will not be a repeat of this. It took a further 15 years to reach Chester with electrification. Many of the other proposals were not carried out. We now look forward to their completion.

## THERE ARE 12 KEY STRANDS

### 1. Improving National Passenger and Freight Connections.

Long distance services to many areas of the country do not exist

### 2. Enabling Growth on Merseyrail Network

There is plenty of scope here for natural extensions. Neston, Skelmersdale, Wigan and Warrington were to be carried out post 1977. Rolling stock fleet size at the time allowed for this. Excess units were eventually transferred to London.

### 3. Increasing Capacity in Liverpool City Centre

Forecasts show that passenger usage at City Centre stations will double in 30 years. Capacity needs to be increased. This will be done by widening the island platform at Liverpool Central and slewing the Hunts Cross line further to the east. Trains will run through to perhaps Liverpool south Parkway before reversal to alleviate congestion. Capacity of the line will be increased to take 18 trains an hour

### 4. Improving Connectivity on the City Line

City Line trains will vacate Lime Street and join the Northern Line at Liverpool Central via a new junction (partially constructed during Loop & Link construction) using Wapping tunnel to Edge Hill. This may involve a new station serving the cathedrals & university.

### 5. Facilitating a High Quality Service on Cheshire Lines

This may mean electrifying to Warrington on the Cheshire lines route from Hunts Cross as an extension of Merseyrail as planned in 1977

## 6. Connecting via Halton Curve

Money partially allocated. New services from Chester and North Wales connecting with the airport at South Parkway. Longer term a line from here to the airport, Speke & beyond may be built.

## 7. Improving connections from Chester and Ellesmere Port

When HS2 is complete people from south and east Wirral may find it more convenient to join HS2 at Crewe. Eventually the Liverpool - Chester Merseyrail Service may continue on to Crewe.

## 8 Serving New Developments on the Ormskirk - Preston Line.

## 9. Connecting Skelmersdale and New Development in Wigan

Planned to be constructed post 1977 but never done. Relatively easy to complete.

## 10. Enhancing the Borderlands Line.

Eventually planned to be part of the Merseyrail Wirral line. In the short term service to be increased in frequency

## 11. Converting Freight Lines to Passenger Usage

## 12. Selected New Stations.

One City Centre station to be reopened is St James near the Higsons Brewery site and Anglican Cathedral. It is in a cutting similar to the new Conway Park station on Wirral. The frame work of the station already exists. It could be done reasonably quickly compared with a completely new underground station. There is a lot of new industry and employment in the area. There is currently no easy access to the railway which runs through.

Another station improvement will be at James Street Station on the Wirral Line where a new Entrance/Exit will be constructed to emerge on the docks & museums side of The Strand to give direct access to the Pier Head, Museums & Albert Dock area.

The above is just a summary of some of the main points. The City Region in 30 years time will be a much easier place for travelling around. Perhaps as good as London!

# 30 YEARS

INTO THE FUTURE

SOME OF THE THINGS  
WE MAY EXPECT



1977 ITEMS PLANNED  
TO BE CARRIED OUT  
AFTER 'LOOP & LINK'  
BUT CANCELLED AT  
THE TIME.

Electrification to  
Skelmersdale

Electrification to Wigan

Electrification to Warrington

City Lines to be joined to  
the Northern Line at  
Liverpool Central via  
Wapping Tunnel link with a  
station near the Cathedrals  
& University.

MORE USEFUL  
DEVELOPMENTS WE CAN  
LOOK FORWARD TO

New Entrance/Exit to James  
Street Station from the Pier  
Head area.

Linking City Line with  
Northern Line at Central  
Station

Much more region wide  
electrification.

New Trains on Merseyrail  
Electrics.

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## Ferries & Shipping



The Isle of Man catamaran departs on 4th July having  
moored behind QM2 in Liverpool. Taken from the ferry

### COMMITTEE

We are sorry to lose the services of Paul Byrne who has been on the committee for many years. We thank him for the time he was with us. He continues as a WTUA member

**Editorial Team: Angus Tilston MBE.**