

Class 31

A relatively late starter in terms of operation in North Wales, class 31's did not work regularly in the area until the early 1980's.

However, the early 1960's saw several passenger workings as far as Rhyl and Llandudno. What was probably the first of these took place on May 27th 1962 when two separate excursions from Grimesthorpe to Rhyl were worked by Darnall based D5805 (31275) and D5825 (31292) respectively. Later, on June 9th 1963, D5824 (31415) worked a Chesterfield to Llandudno special. An early 1980's working is reported to have taken place on February 16th 1984 with 31228



visiting Bangor on a Manchester parcels service. October 1st 1984 saw 31120 head a rake of empty ballast wagons from Hope Street to Penmaenmawr before returning light engine to Newton Heath. A few days later on October 9th, this was followed by the first North Wales passenger working for over 20 years with 31280 replacing a failed class 45 at Manchester Victoria on the 08.15 Newcastle to Bangor service. Unfortunately, the 31 managed to fail itself on the return working, only making it as far as Helsby! The first example to visit Holyhead is thought to have been 31144 that headed a special freight working into the town on November 15th 1984 before heading back east light engine. There then followed a number of years during which the class established itself in the area. Their use was, as would be expected, on local freight diagrams with regular visits to Llandudno Junction, Amlwch, Trawsfynydd and Valley/Holyhead. However, they could often be seen at the head of other freight services such as in and out of Penmaenmawr and even Freightliner trains in and out of Holyhead on the odd occasion. The first such working was when 31101 was provided for a 16.30 special Liner to Willesden on April 1st 1985. Passenger workings also became more frequent in the 1990's with class 31's often deputising for unavailable class 37's and even working Euston services, such as 31555 heading 1A03 the 01.00 from Holyhead on August 28th 1990. They also spent a time diagrammed to work the 20.20 TPO working out of Holyhead, sometimes in pairs, an example being 31416/31458 on July 10th 1988. Despite their poor power to weight ratio the class 31's proved to be reliable workhorses during their association with the area and remained regular visitors right up until their withdrawal towards the end of the 1990's with even the odd working of Private Owner examples continuing to this day.

Above

Class 31's were used to rescue failed class 37's on the Petroleum Coke working from Anglesey Aluminium to Immingham on several occasions. In this view taken on July 21st 1994, 31155 is seen on top of failed 37694 at Conway Morfa heading 6E36 the empties back to Humberside.

Photo Colin Webb.

Right

Several railtours ran down the branch to Trawsfynydd before the section from Blaenau Ffestiniog was closed in 1998.

One of these, the "Trawsfynydd Trekker" is seen passing Maentwrog Road near the end of its journey behind 31190 on August 27th 1994. It is passing the disused siding that had been used to load explosives manufactured at Penrhyndeudraeth for onward movement by rail and the Speedlink service up until the late 1980's. In 1989 it was decided to extend the Conwy Valley Sunday shuttle passenger services to a new platform at Maentwrog Road. This was built on top of the disused siding and the service ran for 8 weeks in the summer and again in 1990. The final train to Trawsfynydd was worked by 37426 on April 22nd 1997 heading a single nuclear flask for loading which was collected later that week

Photo Dave Sallery.

