

Class 47

Of all the types of Diesel locomotive to work in North Wales, the class 47 has had the longest continuous association with the area. They provided almost 40 years of regular service and continue to visit on charter services and other special workings.

Sightings commenced in the mid 1960's, mainly on excursions to Llandudno and Rhyl, an example being D1628 (47046/601/901) which was noted at Llandudno on August 29th 1966 on day trip from Crewe. D1806 (47325) was also active in early 1967, noted heading a freight train at Llandudno Junction on March 11th.

Interestingly, the same locomotive was used for brake testing new designs of Freightliner wagons in North Wales in May of the same year.

Passenger duties on summer dated workings from Sheffield to Llandudno were rostered for the class in 1967. Other regular visitors at the time were D1801/1803/1805 (47320/322/324) with most sightings being in the Llandudno Junction area. The opening of Holyhead Freightliner terminal in January 1968 and the need for air braked locomotives to work these trains resulted in more frequent visits to North Wales although the majority of passenger services remained in the hands of class 40's until the late 1960's. Three examples were stranded on Anglesey following the Britannia Bridge fire of May 1970, 1724 (47549), 1851 (47201) and 1940 (47497/717), all of which were moved to the mainland by boat to Barrow the following month. From the mid 1970's, class 47's took over more passenger workings in North Wales, particularly those to and from Euston with the introduction of more modern coaching stock requiring locomotives with air brakes and an electric train heating supply. The continued use on Freightliner services and several other longer distance freight duties established the class, alongside the class 40's, as the prime motive power in the area by the early 1970's.

The "final" locomotive hauled Euston working was headed out of Holyhead by 47509 on September 29th 1991 to make way for HST operation. The occasional class 47 hauled rake of coaches stood in for a HST during this time, particularly at weekends. In addition, other passenger services remained in the hands of the class, as in fact did Euston workings following the end of HST operation in the summer of 2004, and then on an occasional basis right up until late 2005. The final duty fell to 47810 "Porterbrook" working 1A53 the 16.07 from Holyhead on Sunday September 4th 2005. This ended the use of the class on timetabled passenger services in North Wales. Secondary passenger workings also continued in the hands of class 47's up until February 2005. Delays in getting the new class 175 DMU's into service and ongoing reliability issues with the fleet resulted in First North Western utilising the class on several North Wales coast diagrams taking in Manchester and Birmingham. The FNW loco hauled service commenced on June 2nd 2002 utilising EWS owned 47757. The final diagram was worked by 47750 on March 31st 2004 on the morning Bangor to Manchester service before the franchise was taken over by Arriva. ATW started a diagram covering two return trips to Manchester in August of the same



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July 23rd 1973 and two tone green liveried 1851 (47201) seen on Holyhead shed waiting its next turn of duty. This particular locomotive had been one of three class 47's marooned on Anglesey following the Britannia Bridge fire in May 1970. On the day of this photograph 1851 was sharing the shed with class 40's 211/214/276/313/327/351/371, class 47 1856 (47206) and class 24 5052 (24052). **Photo Pat Webb.**

Above

1624 (47043/566/724) pictured at Deganwy heading the 15.10 Llandudno to Euston service during running in following overhaul at Crewe works. May 4th 1970. **Photo S Morris collection.**

year, 47847 finished the ATW workings off at the head of 1H52 the 13.35 Holyhead to Manchester Piccadilly on February 19th 2005. Further ATW DMU replacement services started again in December 2005 but this time they were worked by Class 57's hired in from Virgin Trains. However, one of the small pool of Riviera Trains class 47/8's was used on a weekly basis on a "stock swap" diagram between Crewe and Holyhead, the final one worked by 47853/D1733 on August 1st 2006. This effectively ended the regular association of the class 47 with the North Wales coast.

Closure of the Holyhead Freightliner terminal in March 1991 led to a reduction in class 47 freight workings in the area. However, they were still used on duties such as the petroleum coke in and out of Anglesey Aluminium, Associated Ocel trains to Amlwch, Penmaenmawr ballast trains and even trip workings off Llandudno Junction until the late 1990's. Finally, now that DRS operate several of the class, they occasionally turn up on nuclear flask workings out of Valley, an example being 47501 with 20315 on September 19th 2006.

Until later in their career, the class 47 was never a particular favourite amongst the enthusiast community. They did however provide many years of excellent service to the North Wales coast railway across a wide range of duties and continue to do so in the guise of the class 57, more of which to come later.