

## HOLMES CHAPEL RAILWAY STATION .

### September 14th 1941. Rail Accident at Holmes Chapel Railway Station.

The accident occurred at 1.23 am in the blackout on the 14th September 1941 at Holmes Chapel Railway Station on the Crewe to Manchester line of (what was at the time) the London, Midland & Scottish Railway (The L.M.S. ). The 12.35 am express passenger train (Crewe to Leeds) was just starting away from the platform when the Crewe to Manchester express train, travelling at 30-35 mph ran into the back of the first train.

Six passengers were killed during the collision and three more died later. Twenty one passengers were detained in hospital. Twenty four other people were treated for their injuries but not detained.

The Station Master and the Sergeant in charge of the local Police Station summoned medical assistance and ambulances. The first doctor arrived at 1.40 am and the first ambulance about 2 am. All hospital cases were removed from the scene by 3.15am.

First aid equipment was available on both trains and at the Railway Station. The local Home Guard and A.R.P. provided 'valuable assistance' The A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions) Wardens were local volunteers during World War Two and nationally 1.4 million men and women served as wardens throughout the war.

The Leeds train was pulled by engine No 5514, type 4-6-0 with a six wheel tender, weighing 123 tons. Overall length of the train was 421 feet. The 5514 named 'Holyhead' was built at the Crewe works and completed on the 21st September 1932. It was designed by Sir Henry Fowler (1870 to 1938) who was the Chief Mechanical Engineer to the Midland Railway and later the L.M.S (London, Midland & Scottish Railway). The locomotive was of the Patriot Class (one of 52 built at Crewe (40) and Derby Works (12)). 5514 was withdrawn and scrapped in 1961 and had a working life of 28 years, 8 months and 6 days. Its final allocation being to the Sheffield Millhouses Shed in 1960 (prior to that the Bushbury & Camden sheds).

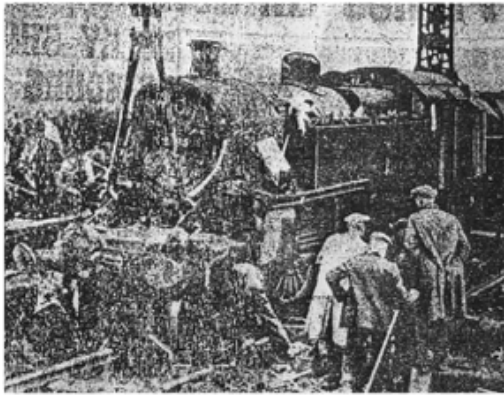


No. 5514 'Holyhead' (7th May 1938 - source: WarwickshireRailways.com)



The Manchester train was drawn by the locomotive engine No. 2395, a type 2-6-4 tank, weighing 86 tons. Overall length of the train was 571 feet. Also designed by Fowler. It was a 4P Class. 125 locomotives were built in Derby from December 1927. The last one left service in September 1966. None have been preserved.

This example image of an LMS Fowler 2-6-4T (built in 1933) is from the BR Database.



Contemporary images of the crash.

The Newspaper reports highlighted the following: Pilot Officer William Evans shone a torch on his injured leg saying to those around him "I am in a mess". He declined the offer of tea "there must be others more badly wounded who need it" He later died in hospital. Twenty of the injured were taken to Arclid Hospital. One Sergeant William Northgrave (31) was

taken to Winsford Hospital where his left leg was amputated.

The noise of the crash awakened the villagers, who turned out with hot water bottles and blankets and helped the Home Guard who worked by the light of a searchlight, removing the dead and injured from the wreckage. Initially those first at the scene only had pocket torches.

The nine dead; **Aircraftman J. Williams**, Aberbechan, Montgomery; **Private J.H.Lennox**, Stanmore, Middlesex; **George Christelow** (35) Oswestry; **Private Claude Sowden**, Fenay Bridge, Huddersfield; **Reginald Gregory**, Wednesfield, Staffordshire; **Pilot-Officer William Evans**, Ynysddu, Newport, Monmouthshire; **R.A.F Sergeant John McCrae**, Westburne, Emsworth, Hampshire; a baby girl about two years of age believed to be **the daughter of Mrs Pritchard and Stoker Joseph Foster**, Grimsby.

The Station has had two visits that we know of - from someone in their 90s who helped the crash victims and from a descendant of one of the nine who died in the crash.

The 80th Anniversary of the rail crash will be on September 14th 2021 of this year and Northern Rail has kindly provided funding to install a bench and a memorial plaque for the victims of this war time disaster.

The plaque is shown to the right. A brief commemoration will be held at 11am on the 14th September and lay preacher Mr. Fryer will say a few words. **Tony Wright.**

