

# Withnell Local Nature Reserve

## WITHNELL

The line went from 339 feet above sea level at Cherry Tree to its summit at 558 feet at Brinscall station in less than four miles. Between Withnell station (close to what is now Abbey Village) and Brinscall there was a spur or siding off to Abbey Village mill, joining the line close to the Bury Lane bridge.



Withnell Station



Withnell Station 1967

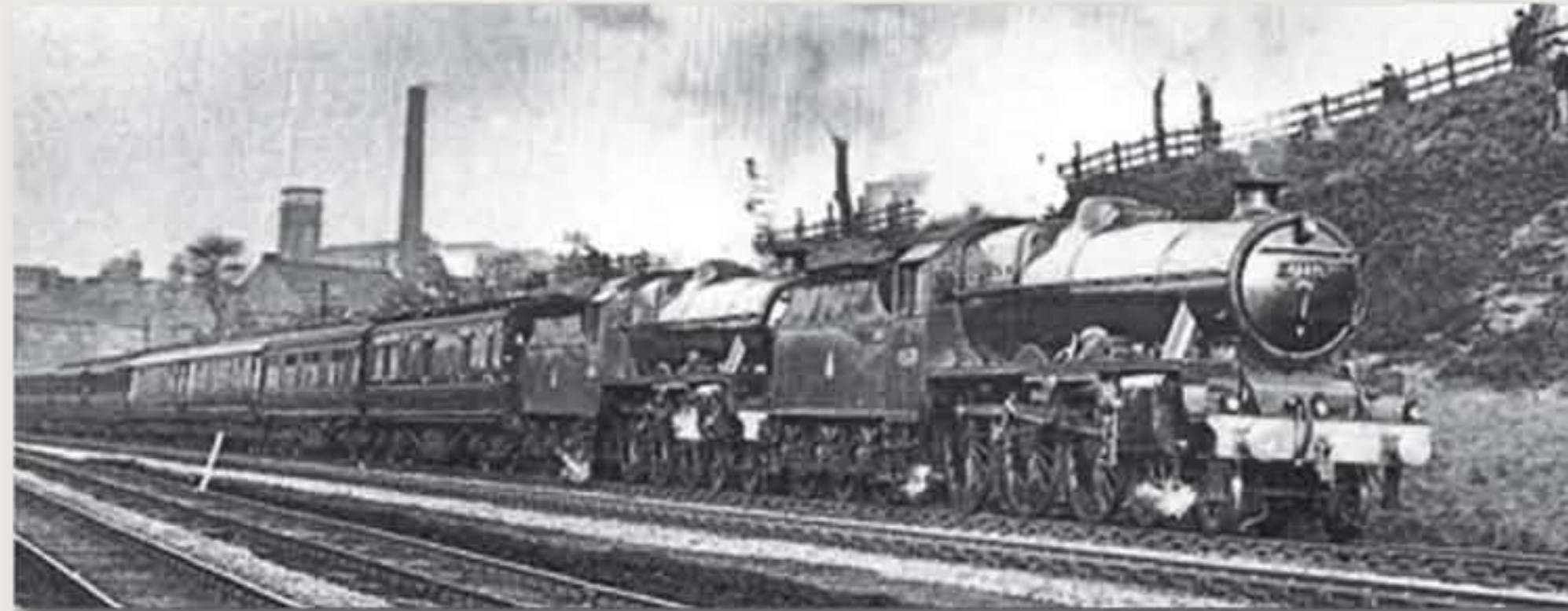


Withnell Station 1972

The Railway line from Cherry Tree to Chorley was 7 miles long. Originally built to transport coal from the Wigan coalfield to the mills of East Lancashire, without the need to go the long way around via Preston.

Work started on the line on the 2nd August 1866 and included major civil engineering works over the River Roddlesworth between Fensicowles and Abbey Village. The line was opened on the 1st November 1869 and was owned and run jointly by the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway and the LNWR (London North Western Railway).

It was built by William Hanson at a cost of £530,000, around £34 million in today's money!



Her Majesty the Queen travelled the line on the Royal Train on the 14th April 1955 during a visit to Lancashire. This picture was taken at the Cherry Tree Junction.

Passenger service was withdrawn in 1960 and the line was eventually dismantled in 1967 with the link to Chorley being severed on the 10th November 1968 with the demolition of the viaduct over the Leeds-Liverpool Canal at Botany Bay. Brinscall Station was demolished and Withnell Station was sold off. The land was acquired by Chorley Borough Council in 1971.



From Bury Lane bridge in 1967, the double track has started to be removed



Site in 1977



Great tit

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The railway cutting provides a valuable bird rich habitat due to the dense cover of the woodland and scrub offering an excellent roosting and nesting territory. Keep a look and listen out for wren, great, blue and long-tailed tits, blackbird, song thrush and chaffinch, all are local to here.

The abundance of the berries and insects allow the birds to forage for food all year round.



Buttercup

*Ranunculus acris* - Meadow buttercup  
Other species of plants in the Ranunculaceae that includes the buttercups, are spearworts and water crowfoots. The name *Ranunculus* is Late Latin for "little frog," from *rana* "frog" and a diminutive ending. This may refer to many species being found near water.

An ecological survey of the site was undertaken in 1990 and reclamation works were carried out by the Borough Council between 1990 and 1991 which included the removal of willow, sycamore and birch scrub combined with wildflower seeding, tree planting, path creation and infrastructure works such as the siting of gates and fencing.

The scheme was funded by the Department of Environment Derelict Land Grant Scheme and the Countryside Commission. The pond towards the centre of the site was created in 1994.

The site has been managed by a regime of coppicing, tree and shrub thinning, mowing and replanting, work which was carried out intensively between 1992 and 1995. The Cherry Tree and Chorley line was given official Local Nature Reserve status in November 1995 becoming the first in the Borough of Chorley.

Since then, management works have become much less intensive and have included meadow cutting during late summer, path maintenance, removal of invasive non native species, wildflower planting, tree thinning and some control of scrub.

**Withnell is a place for people and wildlife.**

**Please follow the visitor's code:**

- Enjoy the Nature Reserve and respect its wildlife.
- Keep to the footpaths.
- Keep all dogs on a lead and under close control at all times.
- Take your litter home and clean up after your dog.
- No shooting, horse riding or motorcycling.



**Chorley Council**

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Chorley Council would like to thank Brindle Historical Society for supplying information to create this interpretation board.