



drain the thick oil out at the bottom.

Each train takes an average of six hours to unload, but is often delayed for longer especially in very cold weather when the oil has a tendency to solidify, when it resembles something more like tar. In such instances individual wagons (and sometimes even the whole train) are left inside the compound overnight to complete the unloading.

The much-depleted Anglesea Sidings can be found to the east of the depot, but this somewhat grand title now refers to a single siding used for parking up to eight cripple wagons clear of the main line. Two old buffer stops and three floodlight masts are the only reminders of busier times.

### Locomotives and wagons

The train was usually brought from Humberside by one of Loadhaul's Immingham-based Class 60s (pool FDIAT), although before that it was handled by pairs of Class 20s or 31s.

The formation of the three regional freight companies (Loadhaul, Mainline and Transrail) brought the pooling of traction resources, and the use of Class 56s from Immingham's FDBI and FDBK pools.

There have been other exceptions, with 47s and 37s appearing, but since the train has been operating from the South East, traction has usually been former Mainline Class 60s and occasional pairs of Stratford or Toton Class 37s.

The wagons employed on the trip were built by Charles Roberts and Co. of Wakefield in 1966/7 and are four-wheeled, black-liveried

**Left: The first Class 60 to carry Loadhaul's black and orange livery, No. 60059 Swinden Dalesman waits inside the compound at Brownhills on April 2 1996.**

petroleum tanks. In this case they are mainly used for the transportation of the heavy, class B fuel oils. These wagons are classified as TTA, TUA and TUB. Although the train has now ceased, the depot also used to receive occasional deliveries from the refinery at Milford Haven, when a Cardiff-based Class 47 was used to haul larger bogie tankers for carrying the lighter gas oil. A second set of pipes was therefore required to unload these tanks. These pipes have not however been rendered redundant since the end of this service, but instead, gas oil consignments are now attached to the present train when required.

The wagons can be distinguished from the rest by their grey livery and red solebars. They also do not need the steam equipment for unloading.

### Oil train movements

In the days when the Class 31s were in charge, the locomotives would deliver the tanks in the morning and then return light engine to a siding at Lichfield City station for the crew's break. The empties were then collected in the afternoon.

Now the locomotives wait inside the compound at Brownhills and the train crew is taken back to Bescot by road. One reason for the change was the rationalisation of the trackwork in Lichfield City station in 1992 as part of the Cross-City electrification.

This cleared many of the former sidings, leaving only two - one for the civil engineer and the other for the stabling of the new Class 323 units.

The signalbox at Lichfield City was also demolished as part of the project, which means train movements on the branch are now controlled from the power signalbox at Aston near Birmingham which monitors all

**Above: Passing under Bridge 85 on the approach to Fosseyway level crossing is No. 60026 William Caxton on February 6 1994. Here the train is using the former down track for a short distance following the slewing-over of the line early in 1994.**

movements on the northern section of the Cross-City line.

At about the same time as the Cross-City electrification, part of the former down line was lifted between Fosseyway level crossing and Lichfield after single-line working was introduced to the branch in late 1992. The short section of disused track through this road crossing was taken up and the automatic half-barriers were replaced.

Surprisingly the old signalbox here survived and is still extant, despite being disused for many years. The original levers remain inside the box, but these days it is only occasionally used when engineers have possession of the branch.

About a year later, in January 1994, the rusting remains of the down line to the other side of the crossing was put back into use for a short distance after the track was slewed across in two places. A 20mph speed limit was also introduced on the branch at about the same time.

In the afternoon when the train has finished unloading, a train crew arrives by road from Bescot to take 7Z70 back home. After marshalling the train together and shunting any cripple wagons, the crew has to 'phone Aston before departing, and again on reaching the signal at Lichfield City Junction when it normally has to wait for a path between the Cross-City line trains.

Departure times from Brownhills vary greatly due to the unloading process, but on weekdays it is timetabled to leave at 1435, ▶