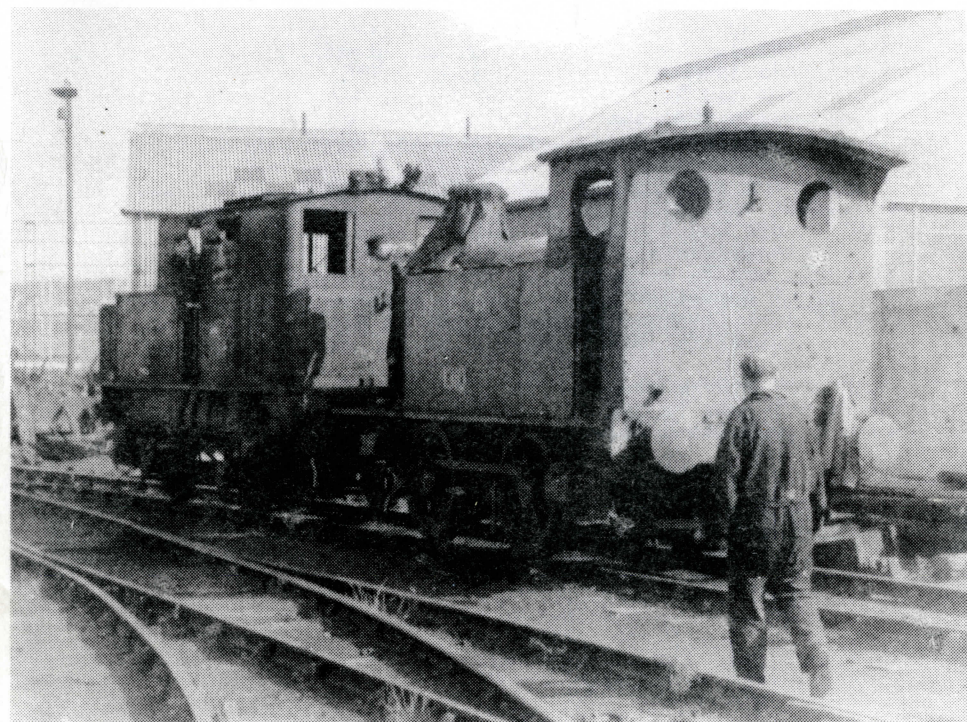


THE OLD RUN



JOURNAL OF
THE 1758 MIDDLETON RAILWAY
LEEDS

FEB. 82.

EDITORIAL

One of the many joys of this job is the power to pick and choose articles for inclusion in each issue. When the time came to decide on the contents for this issue, however, I realised that such 'power' could have its problems. When dealing with something the size of Middleton and its history the problems immediately come to light. What do you include, and more important, what do you leave out? After some deliberation, I made the necessary decisions and present our 'Special Issue' and hope that all members will enjoy the contents and photographs used.

With limited space available, four major articles have been used. John Bushell's article on the enthusiast's tour of 1958 and his account of the first day's operation seems a good starting point.

As freight operations were the major part of our early history, Steve Robert's account of their working was very appropriate, whilst no account of Middleton would be complete without the work of the Master - Fred Youell. His account of the building of the Motorway diversion line is typical of the many articles he wrote for 'Old Run' and the railway press in general over the years. He was in every sense of the word a real "character" and the railway is a duller place in his absence, following his retirement.

The final article was decided upon because of its humorous, if a little jaundiced, outlook on the lot of Middleton footplate crews in the early days of the passenger service. John "Prentice" Cowling's look at life is, to say the least, different!

Doubtless, these articles will set members' minds thinking about the "Good old days" of the railway. If any of you wish to write articles about their early involvement with Middleton, I'd love to receive them here!

Finally, as you read this Old Run, I hope you will all join with me in thanking Professor Kortling's generosity in donating a substantial sum towards the production of this edition.

MATERIAL FOR THE SPRING ISSUE SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR BY
28th FEBRUARY, 1982, AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE

Front Cover. Sentinel 54 shunts the newly arrived Y7 No 1310
into the back road in 1965.

MRT Collection

IN THE BEGINNING

In 1958 I was privileged to ride on the Middleton Railway, on the Bi-centenary Tour arranged jointly by the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society and the Railway & Canal Historical Society.

On this remarkable occasion, the train's departure was delayed for the late arrival of a group of visitors. A gruff railway "purist" muttered something rude about "railway enthusiasts arriving by motor charabanc!"

As the occupants disembarked from the coach, we realised that these unlikely candidates for a railtour were members of a historical society who could at least be credited with a realisation of the historic associations of the world's oldest railway.

Having overcome their initial alarm at travelling in open wagons behind a steam locomotive the plump and elderly ladies were hoisted in a most undignified manner by the gallant menfolk into Middleton's traditional conveyance. One old dear was still expressing concern at the effect of soot and cinders on the daisy decoration of her best hat when, with a jolt, the loose coupled train made a spirited start towards the colliery.

Alarm turned to horror as we shuddered and shook over the decaying tracks. Onboard the passing trams, the shock of seeing passengers on "T'owd pit line" turned to pity for "them rail-maniacs!"

Hudswell Clarke 0-6-OST "BLENKINSOP" (HCI87I/54) blasted its way alongside the piggery beneath the Great Northern Railway line, between the slag heaps and into the colliery yard where we detrained.

As a safety precaution we were followed (but not banked) by a Fowler 0-4-0 Diesel which was on test on the line.

Another steam loco was present in the colliery yard that day, one of Hunslet's "15 inch" class "EDITH" (HE I482/25).

Refreshments were available in the canteen, but the more energetic chose to climb the decaying incline to examine the remains of the winding house in Middleton Town Street. In true rail-tour fashion we travelled over every spur and branch before our return to Hunslet Moor Staithes.

The Bi-centenary Tour was a sad occasion as both railway and tramway were under sentence of death. In the last sad days I acquired a job as a Christmas postman in the area. This pleased me, for I not only had the pleasure of four free tram rides a day, but often had quite long waits for a city bound car at the staithes, where the working of coal trains entertained - and the G.P.O. paid me for the privilege.

In July 1960, Middleton was resurrected as a "resort" for railfans. It was University Rag Week, and I read in the paper of a train service to raise funds for local charities. Whatever would those odd students try next!

On the very first day of operation, I boarded the first public train, which consisted of the double-decked Swansea & Mumbles Railway coach propelled by ex-LMS vintage diesel locomotive No I697 (Built in 1932 and now named "JOHN ALCOCK"). With Dr Youell on the footplate and a peep on the whistle, we cautiously made our way from the flag festooned Moor Road level crossing up as far as the Great Northern Railway overbridge, beyond which we would be "out of gauge" and the track had been partially removed during the reslewing operations to allow a direct connection to the Great Northern Railway at Parkside.

In the Typical Middleton way, I was pressed into service as a guard the same day, and have been a member ever since.

As pioneer in standard gauge railway preservation, Middleton has naturally made many mistakes. The present Committee would be very hesitant about running loose coupled trains on an unfenced line today! The limitations of the Middleton scheme should be appreciated by Committee and Members. We have little scenic beauty, just slag heaps, no panoramic vistas, just vandals. Yet we have a railway which does a real job, running all the year round freight service with an interesting collection of industrial and main line locomotives admirably suited to their new purpose.

With a small membership and thus a limited labour force, and limited financial resources, we are tackling a challenging and interesting job. If you are not yet a member, why not join us?

John Bushell 1968

FREIGHT TRAIN, FREIGHT TRAIN

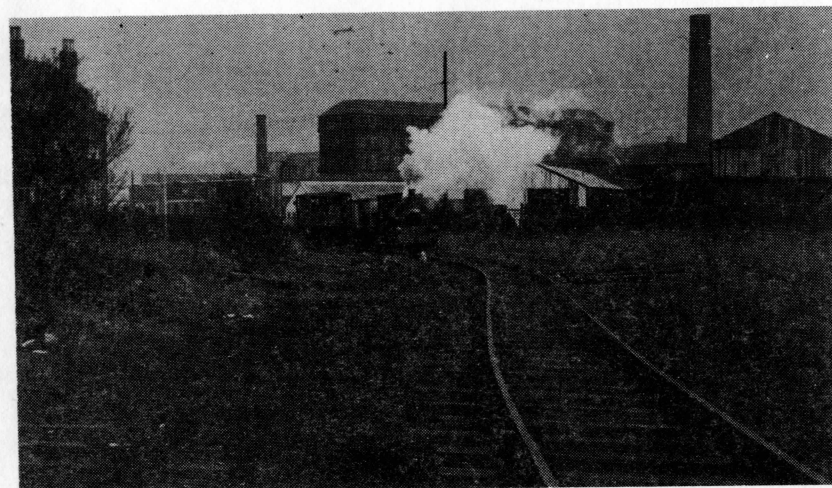
The trouble with operating passenger trains is that it can be a relatively boring business. Whilst many would argue that being on any steam loco could never be boring, the very fact that you are traversing the same stretch of line with the same train every time can be very monotonous.

Things are very different when it comes to operating freight traffic. Unfortunately, freight traffic these days is rather spasmodic, but back in the early sixties when I first became involved with Middleton, they were operated daily and everyone was an adventure.

When you turned up for duty, you had no idea of what work was to be done and one of the first tasks was to ascertain what wagons were where, and to plan the various movements to get the job done as quickly and efficiently as possible. The general traffic flow was :- loaded traffic for Claytons and empties for Robinson & Birdsell (Robbies) inwards, with Claytons' empties and Robbies loaded outwards although the occasional shipping contract for Claytons would reverse their traffic flow. Whilst traffic for Robbies was always I6 or 21 ton mineral wagons, that for Claytons always provided quite a variety. There were always plate wagons, bogie bolsters and often such objects as trestles, tubes, trestle wagons and all the other types associated with steel traffic at that time.

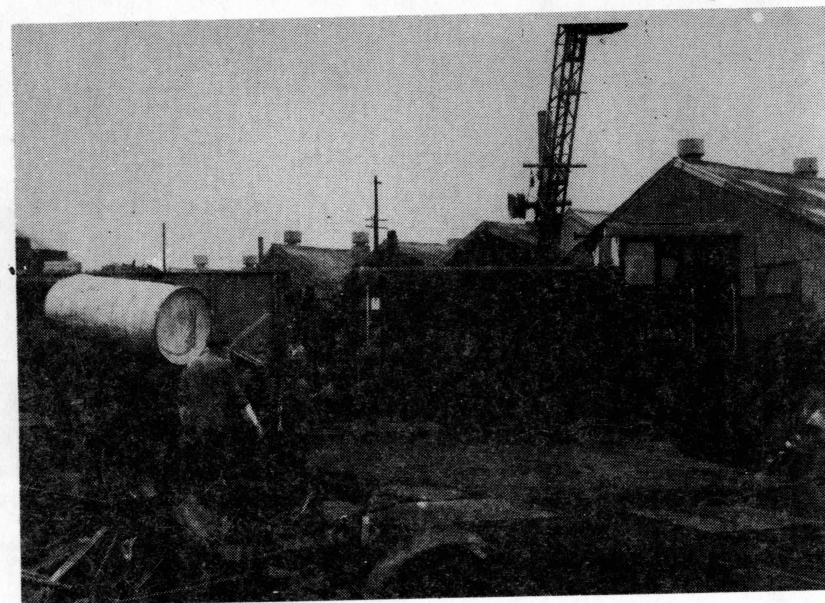
Those who think that freight train operation was merely a case of taking outgoing traffic to BR and returning with the loaded wagons as we do today would be way off the mark! Frequently, the amount of incoming traffic would be more than could be managed in one go, and two or three runs would be needed to clear this. Outgoing traffic was generally no problem in this respect since at that time (before the advent of the Motorway and the 'top point') it was downhill all the way and all that was required was the pinning down of a few brakes. However, if more than one journey was required to clear the incoming traffic, then the outgoing wagons would be split for convenience. Another problem would arise occasionally, which was if the incoming traffic blocked both ends of the loop, as some of this had to be moved before anything could be sent out. The fun really started when the wagons fouling the top of the loop were for Robbies and there was a full rake of wagons already in Robbies waiting to go out. When this happened, Acme's siding (How many remember where that was?) was used as a refuge for this surfeit of wagons.

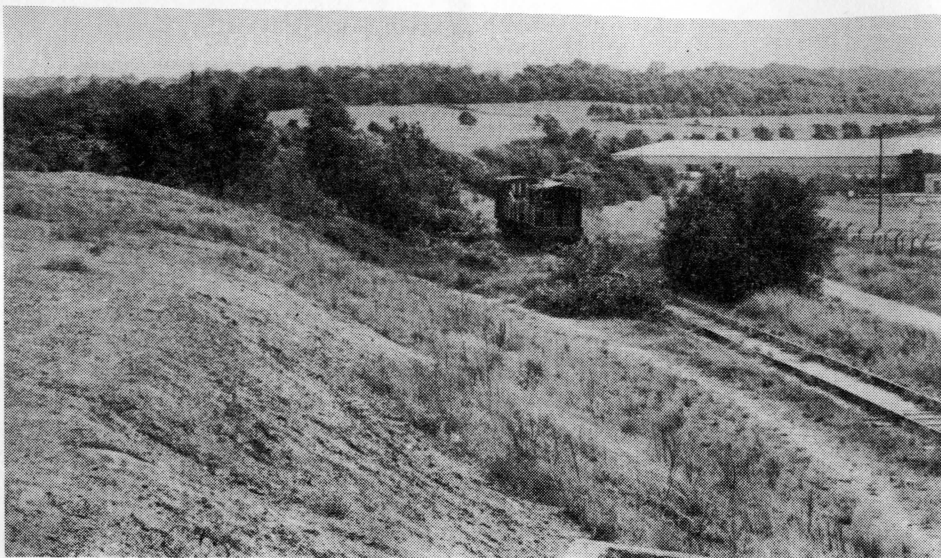
When making up the outgoing train, Clayton's wagons would generally be marshalled next to the loco as the driver had better visibility over the low sided steel carrying wagons. The headshunt was only long enough for six plate wagons and a loco so longer trains were taken down to the bottom of Clayton's curve in sections and made up on the straight by Parkside Rugby ground. Clayton's empties were always left in the back road (It wasn't full of locos then!) by Ben, Clayton's crane driver. Robbies generally left their outgoing traffic below the gate but we occasionally had to go into the yard to collect them. Steel turnings was the usual traffic and this was loaded in a dock on the right side of the yard adjacent to the remains of an old G.W.R. steam railcar that had finished its life on the Nidd Valley Railway.



Freight proved the bread and butter of our early years. The view of the Balm Road branch (above) shows Bagnall 2702 (unnamed) forging up the branch from Acme's crossing towards the road with a typical load for Robbies circa 1966. The lower view shows hired Drewry class 04 0-6-ODM No D2323 busy shunting in Robbies prior to working a loaded train back to BR in 1962.

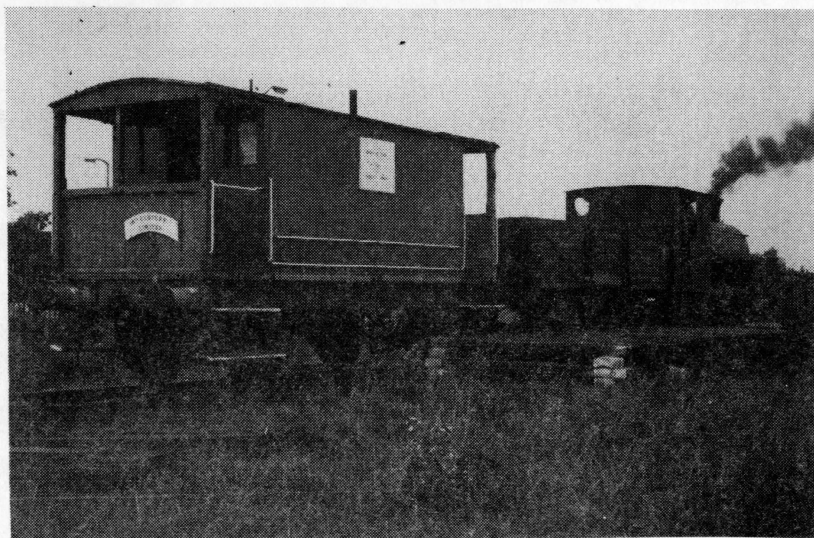
Both photos MRT Collection





Who says the MRT has no attractive scenery? Sentinel 59 climbs towards Parkside Junction amid suprisingly rural scenery 12th June 1976. The loco failed in traffic shortly after this and awaits repairs.

Mervyn Leah



The first passenger trains from Burton Road used a small sleeper built platform as seen here in 1970. Loco is "HENRY DE LACY II" prior to being overhauled and turned.

MRT Collection

All down trains had to halt above Moor Road to enable the brakes on every third wagon to be pinned down, a very necessary requirement. Sometimes this was not enough and the driver would whistle furiously for more brakes to be pinned down. It is a very unnerving experience to be driving a train that you suddenly realise you can't stop because of lack of brake power - believe me, I know! It's something you only ever let happen once. You may be accused of being over cautious but you'll never let it happen again.

Having succesfully propelled the outgoing wagons to BR the hard work now started. Robbies usually ordered their wagons in batches of six and these would generally be pushed into the loop by BR in one set coupled together, but not always. Inevitably, they would be in the middle of wagons for Claytons and would require sorting. However, the wise driver would avoid doing this in the loop as it's on a stiff gradient, making shunting here hard work. Any sorting was generally done on the headshunt at Parkside where it was generally flat.

Once you'd decided how many wagons to take (sometimes by mental calculations involving the many and varied wagon weights involved, but more often by inspired(?) guesswork!). the driver would ease back to slacken the couplings and give himself a chance of getting the train on the move first time. Incoming traffic was generally left in the left hand side of the loop (looking towards BR) and this added to the fun as a reverse curve had to be negotiated out of it. Getting your train on the move was always an interesting battle for the train crew, especially the driver. Once he had got the loco above the top points, he knew he was winning and every yard forward after that, the easier it would become and one the train was clear of the points the rest was easy. But not quite! The section up to Moor Road crossing was relatively easy going providing you didn't slip to a stand in the quagmire that was Acme's Crossing. With anything but the shortest train you took a run at Moor Road - and hoped for the best! It could be most embarassing to slowly grind to a halt with all but the last wagon over the crossing and then have to go back to try again, all in front of an ever increasing queue of increasingly irate motorists! Working sanders were a real boon in those days.

The short run from Whittakers Junction to Parkside was about as level as anywhere at Middleton and was certainly the really only easy bit of the whole line. Nothing much could go wrong provided you had your fingers crossed! I mentioned earlier that any sorting was done at Parkside and as the train clattered over the infamous tram crossing, the driver would shout something like "Take two" to his shunter meaning that he only wanted to take the first two wagons up the I in 33 of Clayton's Curve. The rest would be left for later. The shunter, armed with his shunting pole, would drop off the moving train and the driver would make a slight brake application to slacken the couplings. A quick flick with the pole and the rest of the train would be left behind to come to rest in the dip just before the headshunt.

Claytons incoming traffic would generally be put straight into the Middle Road where they could be offloaded by 'Ben the Crane' but occasionally would be pushed into the various sidings first. The empties for Robbies were usually left below their gate unless Wally, the Yard Foreman, saw you coming in which case he'd invariably ask you to "weigh 'em off". This involved propelling them, one by one, over the weighbridge - not too difficult with 16 tonners but 21 tonners only just fitted the weighbridge and required fairly accurate positioning. Shunting in Robbies was always hazardous as you never knew which lump of metal you were going to hit next!

Splittings trains at Parkside (and elsewhere for that matter) held another trap for the unwary - the overhanging load. This was a regular occurrence with Claytons steel traffic. Overhanging loads always had a barrier wagon with them, but if they were in groups from a common originating point only the end wagon was so protected and the loads overhung adjacent loaded wagons. Dents in the Bagnall's cab and Sentinel's bunker were the inevitable result of splitting these trains.

Shunting in Clayton's yard was not without its problems (What's new! - Ed), the double point being the biggest trap for the unwary. Short wheelbase wagons went round fairly easily but the plates would bufferlock if you weren't careful, whilst bogie-bolsters always did so. These last had to be uncoupled into the bargain. A lump of wood was held between the buffers (don't tell anyone!) to prevent bufferlocking and a special C-link was used to couple up for hauling movements. Once you had finished all this, you could finally put the loco to bed for the night. In the case of "JOHN ALCOCK" this simply meant switching off the engine, but with Sentinel 54 or Bagnall 2702 you had to go through the whole rigmarole of dropping the fire and ensuring there was enough coal and water for the next crew to light the loco up - it was quite likely to be the same crew anyway! Yes, operating freight trains at that time could definately be interesting - those were the days!

Steve Roberts

THE SINGED EYEBROWS SAGA

I think that I can lay claim to being one of the founder members of that small but devoted band of worthy men, the top-link locomotive crew of the Middleton Railway passenger service. Yes, I was the fireman on that far off summer's day when JAL (to his friends, J Arthur) had a rush of blood to the head and set the first regular passenger service in motion. The day was blazing hot, Hunsley feast was in full swing in the open space behind the rugby ground.

I well remember the queues of people waiting for the privilege of riding up to Miggy Park propelled by HENRY DE LACY II freshly converted from oil to coal firing (vandalism!) Thus it was that, as well as having to chat up potential customers at the old tram crossing, the two soot, sweat and grease begrimed entrepreneurs had also to learn how to handle their charge.

I must now take a swig from my bottle of tepid, discoloured water, taken from the engine's tank, and pass on to the first winter. If that first day was the honeymoon, this was married bliss setting in in deadly earnest (who asked him?). Or should I say the wolves came down from the hills and howled at the door. Anyway, more often than not it was a case of a loco crew of one for part of the day at least, and I well remember being promoted to driver in spite of my age. One of my first firemen, good old (One lump or two?) Phillips sheared off after only a couple of hours on the job. Well, it was snowing into the cab at the time!

Now we move the clock forward through the arrival of the passenger wagon (this is progress already?) and another locomotive, and several minor mishaps - tubes leaking, the saga of the amazing vanishing side-rod bearing etc, up to the end of last season (1971) with seedy commercialism well established in the brake van, along with what at first sight appears to be a rather portly milkman.

However, we digress. I must now come to the point and explain why it is that I go in for this particular form of insidious masochism which is a big word for this time of day. I suppose the best thing would be to give a diary of a typical day's events. The first thing that happens on the great day is that you wake up at about 8-30, and decide to get up. As the cold lino soaks through your feet and congeals the cockles of your heart, you get dressed. Wondering whether or not to end it all, or tell the Traffic Manager and the CME what they can do with THEIR passenger service, you burn your fingers while making breakfast, a meal which is supposed to shrink your tongue, put the top back on your head and kill those rampant trolls in your eardrums. Then you drive down to the railway.

You arrive at 10.00 am. There are two reasons for this. On average it takes roughly three hours to raise steam, and its as well to allow time to deal with the inevitable "surprises" which occur.

And you have to light up - if your fireman is keen enough to be down at this time, he will be too inexperienced to manage it on his own.

So you check the water level and clean out the firegrate which sometimes must be done from inside the firebox, thereby silting up your nose and throat. Next you scout around, find some paper and some wood, and attempt to light a fire, which goes out. Then you open the damper and, remembering how the boy scouts did it with one match, pour on some used sump oil. This time the fire goes, as too do your eyebrows, in spite of your remembering to remove the chimney cover.

Then, with the fire going satisfactorily - and hoping that the smoke doesn't attract that invariably irate gent from Garnet Road, whose wife only hangs out the washing when there's an engine in steam - you put on your soggy overalls (who used them to block that broken window), pick up the oilcan and crawl under the engine.

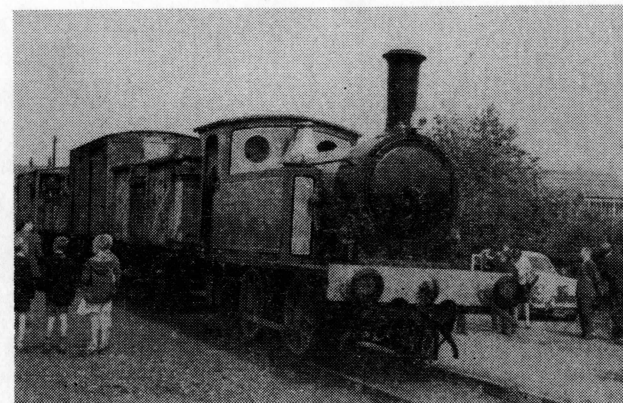
You can either do this by crawling along the ground, filling your boiler suit with cinders, or between the running plate and the boiler which is awkward because spring hangars, grab irons and oilcups tend to snag on tender regions of your anatomy. When you're underneath, you realise your oilcan is empty and crawl out again.

Back under once more, you pour some oil up your left sleeve, some into your boots, some on your head and about six drops into each oilcup!

A little later, you think that maybe some dinner would kill those trolls, so you go out and buy two pork pies. The first one you eat immediatly, but it is cold, having just come out of a fridge and it makes your fillings ache. So you put the other one near the fire for a few minutes, which chars the crust but leaves the innards as cold as ever. This one tastes even worse, and the last half gets thrown over King's wall.

Sometime just after one, there is sufficient steam for you to move down to the coal pile, but first you must pour some cylinder oil into the oiling points on the cylinder fronts. Then you open the little tap, and it fires oil over your glasses. You may have opened the drain cocks, but you still get showered with a hot, sooty solution when you move off, which is why you don't clean the paintwork before you've moved about a bit. At the coal pile you curse the man who didn't fill the bunker the previous evening, and miss death by inches (well a few feet anyway) when the inherent instability of twelve tons of coal on a stage fit for about twelve hundredweight is displayed to fine advantage.

By now some of the ancillary staff have turned up. These include one or two people regarded as "good blokes" - a term which may include ladies - and also the guard (alias the milkman, ice-cream man and several less printable names) complete with about two cubic yards of assorted paraphernalia. As there is a fued in progress between him and you, you mock him in a thoroughly petty and childish manner, which helps to pass the time. Then you tear up the yard in order to wake up these good people - after all, the Sales Manager may be a "good bloke", but he gets a bit mercenary when it comes to giving free pop to loco drivers. You also want to put some water in the tank.



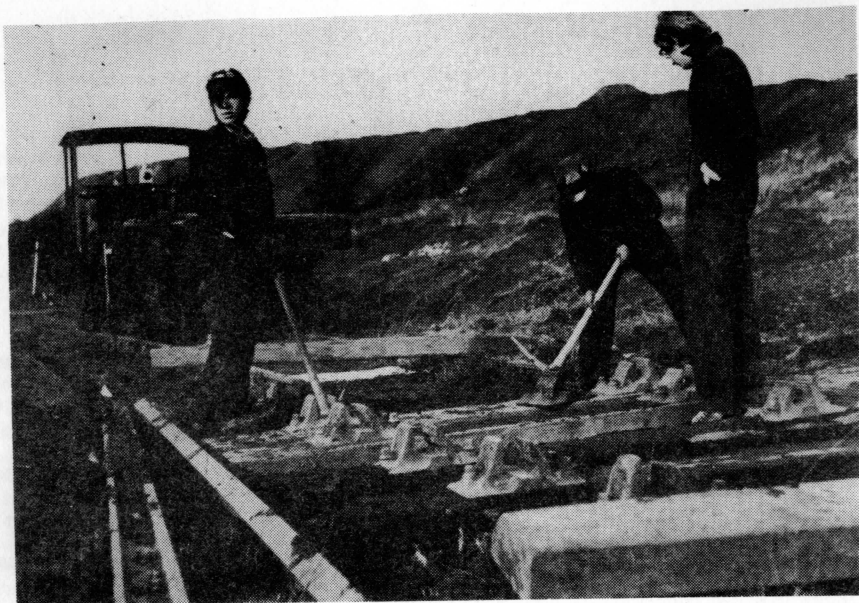
Seen at Parkside (above) after restoration is Y7 No I310, making an interesting comparison with the cover photo. The date is 2nd July 1966.

MRT Collection

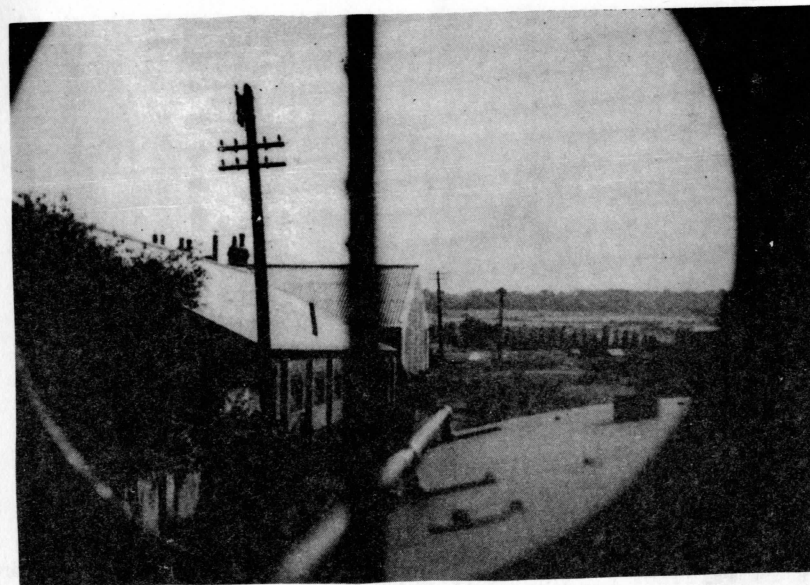
Another veteran loco operated at Middleton until recently is our Hudswell Clarke loco "HENRY DE LACY II". This 1969 view shows the loco in original condition crossing Moor Road with Driver John Cowling looking out, and fireman John Dunn hanging on the steps.

MRT Collection

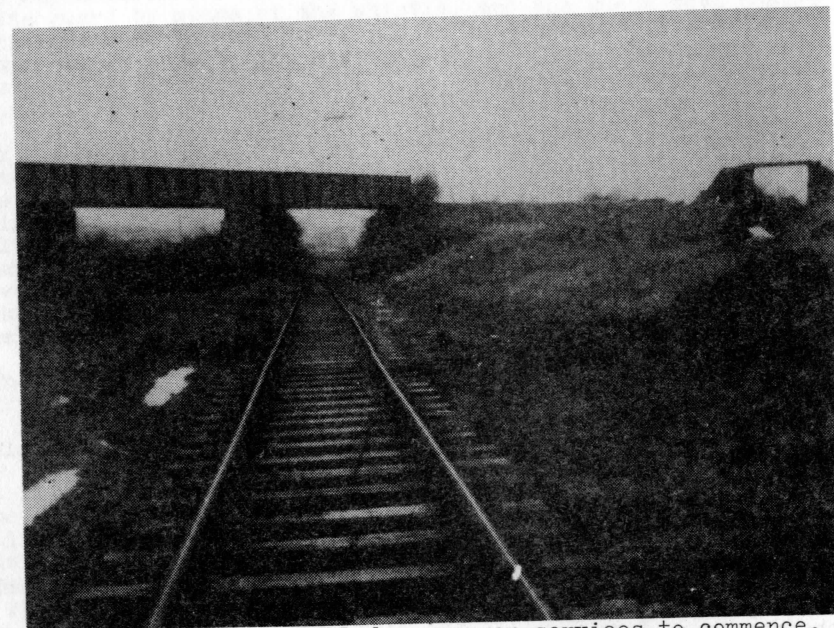




Two views showing the laying of the ill fated colliery extension in 1970. The upper view shows John Dunn, Malcolm Phillips and Richard Roberts preparing sleepers for rail laying. HE I786/35 (then unnamed) was often used on this job and is seen in the back background. The lower view shows another stage in the same job. Both photos courtesy MRT Collection.



A 1964 view (above) from the cab of "JOHN ALCOCK" showing the site of the motorway tunnel. How things change! Mervyn Leah

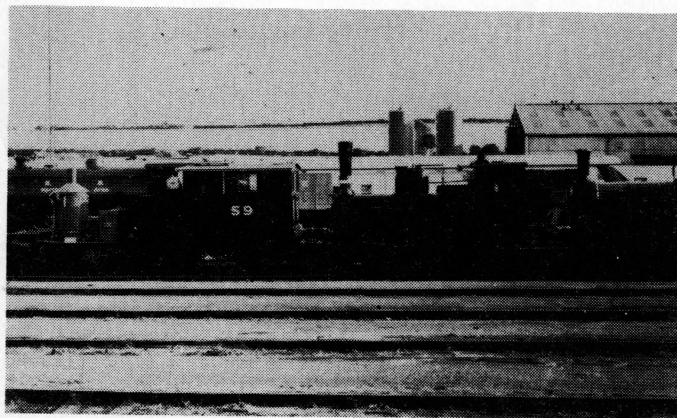


The piece of track that enabled passenger services to commence. This view shows the newly connected main line at Parkside Junction, the layout of which is quite visible on the right. Regular passenger services commenced in July the same year, the date being June 1969.



Swanscombe No 6 arrives at Middleton on 5th June 1971. Motorway work in evidence in the background.

J D EDWARDS



Middleton locos at Shildon 31/8/75. Sentinel 59, DSB 385 and NER I310 all together. The first two locos returned to the railway shortly afterwards but I310 lingered a little while under the auspices of Steam Power Trust, bringing more publicity for the line whilst in the North East.

K J MILLS

By now, zero hour approaches, and you thunder down to the platform. The next part of the day is perhaps the most boring, and the following are some of the things which make time pass more quickly:

Baiting the guard by asking for his Shunter's Certificate, but making sure first that you've got your driving pass.

Talking to an old gaffer who remembers your engine when it was (a) Powering Joe Blogg's three abreast gallopers (b) working underground at some colliery; (c) operating the Southend Pier Railway; or (d) just a baby engine.

Posing for photographs with a glassy look on your face, bearing the escutcheon of the two digits rampant.

Assuring potential passengers that if you met a loco driver with a hangover like yours, you'd go by submarine.

Tearing a strip off the fireman

Blowing the whistle at a passing dolly bird

Running a train.

The procedure for this latter diversion is complex, and merits some explanation for the benefit of the layman. First you signal to the guard by means of the whistle, and the guard then checks the barriers and so on, and waves you on in a peremptory fashion.

This annoys you, so you wait a little before setting off in order to demonstrate to the guard that he is the lowest form of human life.

As the train lurches its way up to the park, you keep a supply of fist-sized pieces of coal handy, in case of attack by injuns (or, in more orthodox terminology, the offspring of the locals). As the train nears the final curve, about 300 yards from the halt, pressure will start to fall alarmingly, showing that you have failed to berate your fireman sufficiently before setting off. So you are careful about stopping at the top as the efficacy of the steam brake is impaired at low pressures, as certain deformities in the level crossing gates at Burton Road mutely testify.

On the return journey, you may slow down almost to a crawl by the Parkside Rugby ground if a game is in progress. It has been known for the visitors to score three tries and convert two of them whilst the train was passing.

A little later it is time for the ancillary staff to pack up and go home, but you still have to "put the engine to bed", which means filling it with coal and water, and raking most of the fire and clink into the ashpan. You can then go home, bath, have tea and then reflect to yourself that you wouldn't half write an article for Old Run if you had the time.

John Cowling 1972

THE MIDDLETON DEVIATION

One of the secrets of first-class engineering work is to plan it well ahead and to worry away at the plans until one has the best solution to the problem. My first plan of a diversion line from Dartmouth Works to the main line was drawn in 1960 and is not all that different from the one I passed as fit for traffic recently.

About four years ago the first planning of the Motorway diversion started. I stuck to the principle of not asking for any ornamentation or frills of any kind, but instead a strict adherence to the rule book, replacement track up to standard, and a safe layout. I am glad to say that I have achieved the greater part of what I asked for.

The hard bargaining with the Leeds City Corporation has produced a fair solution with only one or two weak links. The original plan of a sharp drop from Dartmouth to the allotments and an equally sharp rise to the main line, has become an almost dead level route on the grounds that a few hundred cubic yards of earthworks were a drop in the ocean. The City Corporation must be sick and tired of the sight of me with my Permanent Way Institute manual and MoT Rule Book in hand as my Old and New Testaments. As part of the final agreement with the City, the contractor was to relay the main line from outside Bannisters, under the Motorway and up towards Parkside and also from Dartmouth Works to the main line, skirting the Motorway.

The tunnel under the motorway had to be a special one with at least seven feet clearance for the shunters to walk safely beside the trains.

The old Dartmouth curve was steeply graded and sharper than five chains radius. I asked for nothing sharper than ten chains radius, thus avoiding the use of check rails, and we arrived at the compromise of about eight chains, with nothing sharper than seven at the most.

The agreement included a requirement that we should tidy up the Dartmouth end of the new line and first priority in this was the replacement of the old turnout. This was a typical mineral line mixture with short switches, sleepers rotten to powder in places, and very little that agreed with any known diagram. There was no room to prefabricate the new junction, so I marked out every component ready to go in. All the stock rail holes were drilled ready, the closure rails bent to the exact curvature, and the common crossing dismantled, overhauled and reassembled to perfection. Regrettably, this complete common crossing assembled with timbers ready for use, was picked up by a contractor's crane and crashed down onto uneven ground, splitting the timber under the A chair beyond repair, and breaking the X, B and C special chairs. The cost of repairing this damage, in materials and (my) man-hours, was substantial.

The major realignment work was planned to start on Wednesday 16th June and to be completed a fortnight later. Late on the Tuesday, when all traffic had been cleared and the Courage loco stored away at Moor End, we set to work. With fishbolts at about 10p each, we cannot afford to have contractors burning them off, so we worked through the night until we had salvaged valuable fishplates and nuts & bolts, plus all the keys back to the headshunt. I was assisted by the Civil Engineer and a university student.

On the next day, my student p.w. squad dismantled up to the top of the Dartmouth Curve. I'm very relieved to see that my first relaying job, dating from July 1960, of the ninety feet outside Dartmouth loading guage, is still serviceable, though far from standard. It took me many weeks to do these three thirty foot lengths. We now work faster and to higher standards.

The old junction to Robinson and Birdsell's was partly on a curve and was approached on a steep gradient so that locomotives easily stalled. The whole of the old junction therefore came out and was replaced by an A & 6 turnout to LNER standard pattern. Queen Victoria didn't sleep here, but the Queen of Scots did run over part of this turnout en route to Leeds Central! Piece by piece, the jigsaw fitted together and it was textbook. Some inspired lunatic whom it would be improper to refer to by name, 'used a computer' on the layout, and the resulting mess was about three inches out of true, so I had to unscrew the numerous chairs affected, and relay them to the pre-computer 1938 LNER plan! Moor end works kindly put the I in 23 kink in the curved stock rail so that the switch rail went in to a perfect fit. I got more than one 45 foot rail in singlehanded with jack and crowbar. The junction was finally completed and Chairman Joe Lee and Traffic Manager Gordon Crapper helped me level the whole thing off, aided by engineers level, jack, bricks and ballast. Although stone ballast is not as easy to pack as ash, it really looks 'Proper Railway'. We had the junction in dead level a day or so before the contractors were ready to begin work on the new line, starting from our joints as a datum.

The firm of Henry Boot, of Dronfield, did the job and made a first class job of it. Their engineer was a Fellow of the Permanent Way Institute and told me that only too often he has had to educate local authorities or industrialists into what is the proper way to lay in railway track. No praise can be too high for the 'Inspector' and his eight men who in a fortnight laid about half a mile of track and a junction. This bears out what my voice in the wilderness has been saying for years, that given adequate support, I too could lay track at quite a rate of knots. Quite a number of funny remarks came from MRT members when they found that the new junction and the King's junction were about two feet out of alignment. I am, however, glad to say that I had all the plans ready tucked away in my desk at home! The old junction was another mineral freak, with short switches and nothing in the right place and needing replacement anyway. I decided that it was easiest to leave the timbers where they were and move the chairs. On Sunday 27th June, I had the assistance of about half a dozen members, including Secretary John Edwards, on the task of replacing old chairs by new, and ro rotten timbers by good ones. Within the limits of material available, the junction was transformed to a near equivalent of an LNER A & 7. I had got rid of the worst bits of the old junction, and left a safe gap between the two junctions. Those who had come to scoff remained to cheer, though I can make no claim other than that the new Seven Kings Junction is the best we could do in the circumstances.

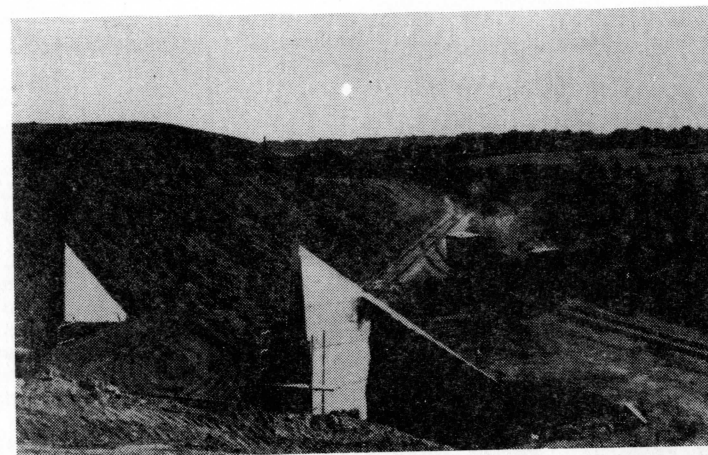
With rather a childish giggle, one of our members (obviously thinking he had caught me with my pants down) said that the new line the contractors had laid in was some two feet higher than the main line. This was all to a plan I had made three years before, when the line had been surveyed by Bill Barraclough and John Sugden.

The survey revealed a gradient profile varying from I in 65 to I in 27 between Denisons and Parkside Junction. I had therefore planned a uniform gradient of I in 47.7 from the Motorway to Parkside. Both drainage and ballast are improved by lifting the track a foot or two, and as part of the Motorway work I had a promise to clear away the pit shale alongside the line to make things easy for us. Taking the job 60ft at a time, we can produce an evenly graded line all the way. We have to deal at the same time with the work of the vandals who smashed or stole over 60 chairs from the track during the fortnight it was out of use.

The contractors were held up by another contractor (Tarmac), who had not got out of the tunnel in time to allow the permanent way engineers in, and the timetable was over-run by three days. A further day was lost because the scaffolding up the concrete walls alongside the tunnel was within the loading gauge. One could hardly remove this obstruction without risking a Niagara of concrete on the ballast. By Friday July 2nd, however, my work was complete except for a final inspection, and a 14ft rail to replace one that had cracked. I had put in 140 hours of hard physical work in a fortnight, and was just about exhausted. As there was nothing I could do until the contractors had finished, I went home for a quiet weekend, the first time for many months that my children have seen me at home on a Saturday!

Monday 5th July - a fine day with cloudless sunshine. Deckchair weather rather than engineering weather, but just right for a grand finale to years of planning and days of work. At 1230 the last closure rail was laid in by the contractors, and I ran over the line with the Whickham trolley, checking every last piece of the new line. It is normal practice for this last check to be done by the Permanent Way Advisor, and no one else, and his word is law. All new track must have time to settle down and have the packing and levelling checked. I was able to give a go-ahead for 5mph for all trains, except at the south tunnel mouth where an alarmingly steep embankment side will need dead slow running until it has been packed up to a better standard. All the new switches have to be traversed at caution until they have settled down.

At 1345, a visitors train headed by "COURAGE" was the first to use the new line except for my inspection trolley. With me walking in front with the single-line token, the train, accompanied by Chairman Joe Lee and Traffic Manager Gordon Crapper, ran steadily and faultlessly over the new line. We were open for business again!

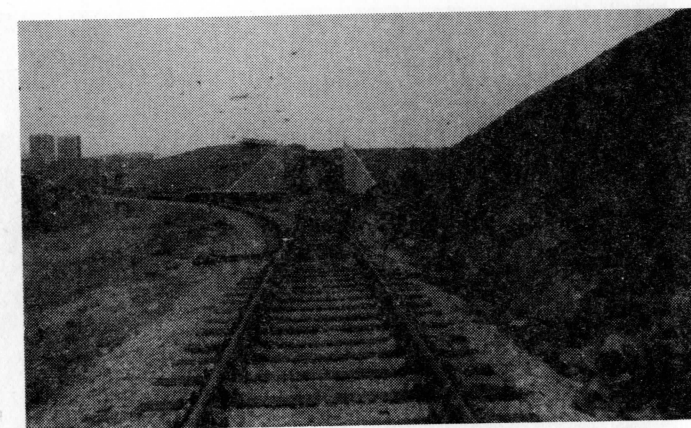


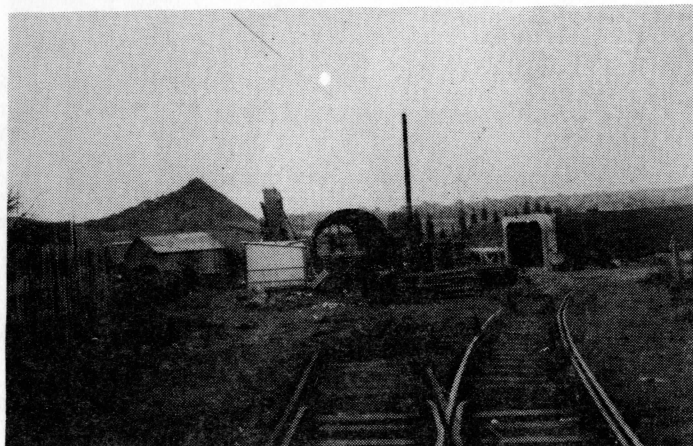
Two views of the completed works. The top view shows the new line as seen from the top of the motorway embankment on 4th September 1971. A visitor's train is seen leaving the top point for Dartmouth Yard behind HL 3860/35 "SWANSCOMBE No 6".

J D EDWARDS

The lower view shows the new line as seen from the top point, looking through the tunnel. The sidewalls of the tunnel have been erected, and just visible by the right hand abutment is the very severe embankment mentioned by Dr Youell in his article.

J C SIMONSON

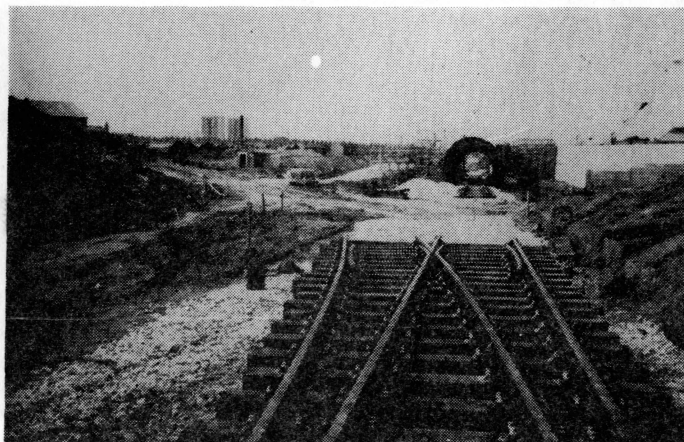




Motorway construction, 1971. The view above shows the new tunnel being built, with the pedestrian tunnel to its right. The line diverging to the right was the old Parkside line, leading to the headshunt and thence to Dartmouth works. It was left in situ as long as possible to allow freight operations to continue. The date is 31st May 1971.

The lower view shows the other end of the tunnel on 27th June. The "new" main line is in the process of being laid, and the route of the new diversion line to Dartmouth can clearly be seen diverging to the left. Retaining wall for the motorway being erected on the right.

Both photos by J D EDWARDS



Later on the opening day, we restarted goods traffic. "COURAGE" assembled and weighed thirteen loaded 16 tonners - over a fortnight's output from Robbies. The movement of goods traffic "for the benefit of the citizens of Leeds", as prescribed in the 1758 act, was back to normal. But with a difference - no struggling round Dartmouth curve with spinning wheels and a nice level run on an easy curve. In fact "COURAGE" cheerfully propelled four loaded wagons into Dartmouth as part of the assembly of our thirteen wagon train, something that loco had never been able to do before. We started at 1700 and were ready for Peter Nettleton to take over with "JOHN ALCOCK" for the journey to Balm Road by 1830.

I write this story on the evening of the same day, while the glory is still fresh. I am happy to know that every junction on our main running line is now up to textbook standards. Having had a hand in every one of them, I know that each job has been done better than the one before and at last the need for high-class permanent way is being realised. The effort of the last few years, in the planning and execution of this job has been worth it. At least I can say that my last job for Middleton has been my largest - and my best.

Dr R F Youell, 1971

Editor's note: Dr Youell retired as Permanent Way Advisor to the Trust shortly after this job was completed. The Trust owes him a great deal for his unstinting efforts to put the embryo MRPS on its feet, both legally and track-wise.

NOTES & NEWS

Membership Matters

May we welcome the following new members:- Mr M McFarlane; Mrs R Wiseman; Messrs D A Magill, G Tonks, P Whitely and K Crowther.

"May I remind members that DECEMBER subscriptions are now due for renewal? Also, we need more members if we are to continue to preserve the World's Oldest Railway so if you know of anyone who may be interested in helping with the running of the line, why not bring them down to the railway to see for themselves how we operate."

After five years in the Membership Secretary's Job, Elizabeth Lee finds herself unable to continue due to other commitments, and therefore intends to resign as from the next Annual General Meeting.

A successor is therefore required and anyone interested in taking on such a position should contact Elizabeth on Leeds 645424.

CCT into Coach

Work is proceeding with the conversion of S.R. PMV S2084 into the MRT's new passenger vehicle. The work is being carried out by Peter Nettleton and involves considerable structural alterations to the bodywork, plus the fitting of handbrake and guard operated vacuum brakes. Already the "Driver's" (Right side looking towards motorway) side of the vehicle has been made ready for recladding.

The general layout of the new coach will be:- Verandahs at each end (Uphill for use of guard only), two-a-side seating using bus seats, and windows. The body will be double skinned, and thought is being given to using some form of insulating material in the cavity. Whatever the decision, one thing is already clear. Peter is making a first class job of the conversion, and the result will be a coach the railway can be proud to own.

1982 The Year of the Diesel!

Perhaps an odd item for a steam railway, but true nonetheless.

As two of the Trust's diesel locos are 50 years old in 1982, the intention is to publicise this fact to the full. Hunslet 0-6-ODM "JOHN ALCOCK" is currently in store at the NRM, but is poised to go on display with a suitable exhibition to commemorate the fact that the loco was the FIRST purpose built standard gauge loco to enter service with a main line railway. The Hunslet Engine Company have expressed interest in assisting with any celebrations planned and full details will appear in the next Old Run.

The other 50yr old veteran is "MARY", built the the firm across the road. As "MARY" is at Middleton, most of the 'on site' celebrations will revolve around her, culminating in the "Fifty years of the Diesel" celebrations on 11th September next year.

Diminutive "COURAGE" also has a part to play too, as it is hoped to display her in the Lord Mayor's Parade next June.

Publicity Officer Tony Bell is also involved in organising a commercial vehicles rally sometime next year, which should be very interesting comparing vintage road diesel vehicles with our railborne locos.

Fame at last

Chairman Joe Lee has been awarded a Bursary of £250 by the Leeds Civic Trust to complete a year's study of the Middleton Railway, Past, Present and Future.

The Playcoach now Standing.....

An application has been made to the Queen's Silver Jubilee Trust to support the idea of establishing a playcoach at Middleton.

This, if successful, would result in a redundant BR coach being modified with play areas and toilets and placed at Tunstall Road where playgroups and school parties visiting the line could either simply "play trains" or be able to participate in school projects about the line. When not in use for this purpose, the coach could be used for those members who live away from the line who spend the odd weekend at the line and stay overnight.

STEPing out again

It is encouraging to report that a new MSC scheme may well be commencing in the near future, subject to Union clearance. This scheme is tasked to do several jobs in connection with the general development of the Tunstall Road end of the railway.

This will include the construction of our new ticket office, laying in the foundations of the new depot, and preparing the ground for (but not the laying of) the whole depot complex of sidings. Some clearing up work below Moor Road will also take place.

Help Required

Whilst it is encouraging to report on the new STEP scheme, members should perhaps think about helping themselves. Following the disastrous season last year, the Council agreed to the restoration of Saturday services. Unfortunately, these services are NOT GUARANTEED! Whilst on paper, the railway has plenty of qualified staff available to run the service, in practice very few people actually turn up, and the whole operation is left to the same few people each week. The Council appeals to ALL members to please try to give a hand with train operation this year otherwise some operating days will have to be cancelled at short notice, with all the resultant bad publicity that this entails. Anyone wishing to volunteer services, or for training as Driver, Fireman or Guard should in the first instance contact CME Steve Roberts either at the line or by telephoning him at Leeds 861092.

Bingo!

Following previous successes, member Joyce Bell is preparing another tombola stall for our coming events next year. She writes "If any member has anything which could be used as a prize, and would be willing to donate it, I would be most grateful. Small items are mainly needed, toys, books, even unwanted bottles of aftershave etc left over from Christmas!" The more items Joyce can get, the better the chances of a good return. The last tombola raised over £120 so let's all get rummaging for those unwanted gifts etc. All items can either be left at the line, or you can contact Joyce on Wakefield 825658 if you want to assist further with the Tombola stand itself.

LOCO NEWS

Progress with our loco stud has been steady, if a little slow at times. A visit by our boiler inspector on Thursday 3rd December was most rewarding as will be seen below. Once again, any help would be most welcome with loco maintenance.

P2003. This loco was prepared for visual inspection which took place on December 3. The loco was passed for further service subject to some cosmetic work around one of the mudhole doors, and satisfactory steam test.

EB 53. Has had the new injector fitted, and, following the boiler inspector's visit, is to be prepared for full hydraulic test.

DSB 385. Once again, the last report proved a little optimistic! During a society hydraulic test another firebox stay was found to be leaking, and another was suspect. The decision was then taken to renew these, plus others which also showed signs of failure. With the overhaul of the lathe now complete, stays can be manufactured on site which will speed up the entry into service of this loco.

WB2702 Remains in service as spare loco should she be required.

P2103 Little has been done to the loco since the last report although work continues behind the scenes towards acquiring the necessary parts required before the loco can be reassembled.

HCD577 Was lowered onto her wheels again in October after the outer frames had also been repainted, and also fully lined out. The loco was then tested on 14th October, including a trip up the line to test the axlebox repairs which appeared satisfactory. The air tanks were successfully hydrauliced on 3rd December, and work now proceeds towards installing the air-starting system. Painting has been suspended due to the inclement weather.

HEI786 Has appeared in a temporary livery of blue to protect her from the winter weather. She will be painted green in the summer.

JF3900002 The good news here is that a valve for the engine has now been acquired, and the loco will be reassembled in due course. The loco is also to be fully repainted, livery to be decided.

A comprehensive "Loco News" in the next issue will list all our locos and their expected situations for 1982.

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