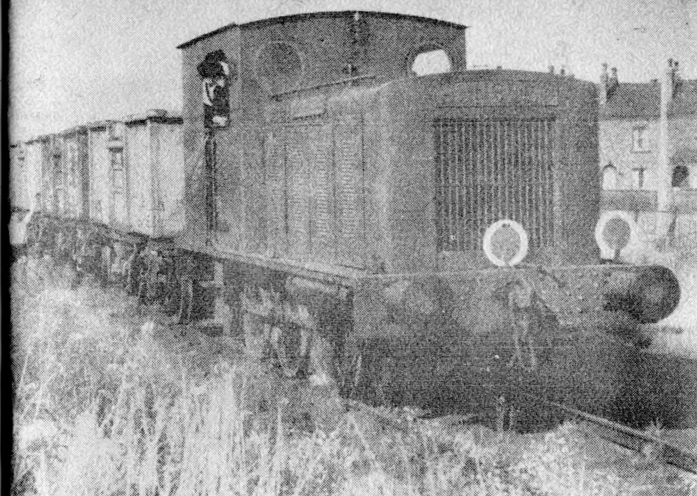


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The Old Run

Journal of the 1738 Middleton Railway Trust, Leeds



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The Old Run

Journal of the 1758 Middleton Railway Trust

Editor: B. W. Ashurst, 18 Inglewood Drive, Otley (Tel. Leeds 23424)

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 46

September/October 1964

DANGER— NO-ONE AT WORK

"Leave it and see how long we last," one is tempted to say about Middleton's trackwork. It would obviously be foolish to say such a thing in seriousness - yet it is precisely this that is happening on the Middleton Railway today!

Nobody is to blame, of course. It is he, Nobody, who is there every day, carefully checking each joint, replacing keys, measuring the gauge at crucial points, and generally making sure that Middleton's lifeblood - freight - may pulse safely up and down each day.

What are we going to do about him, friends? Is he going to be allowed to continue his sabotaging activities undisturbed? Unless we challenge him - and that means hard work from us - all our well-meant efforts in every other direction are going to be utterly wasted.

DROP EVERYTHING AND SEE TO THAT TRACK!

MRT subscriptions are due

Subscriptions to the Middleton Railway Trust will become due in January. All members are asked to help the overworked treasurer by sending in their 1965 payments now, or as soon thereafter as possible.

Rates are 2ls. (full): 7s. 6d. (junior and full-time student): and 3 US dollars or equivalent (overseas).

The treasurer and membership secretary is N. Straker, 82 Hunningley Lane, Stairfoot, Barnsley, Yorkshire.

Don't forget an extra 4s. will bring you the national magazine Forum, for all news of Preservation Schemes.

HOLE FIENDS STRIKE AGAIN!

GPO starts Middleton Mohole 1964!

"Dig first - ask afterwards" is the technique of the Post Office Telephone department of the GPO, and it was demonstrated to perfection in October when a large gratis hole appeared dangerously close to the Middleton Railway at Moor Road level crossing.

Middleton members are only too well aware of the peculiarity of large organisations, particularly national ones, of assuming a Divine Right to dig holes on private property without a by-your-leave.

The Central Electricity Generating Board were the first with their high tension cables parked perilously close to our line in flat defiance of the rule that cables must be at right angles to the rails, with the result that the engine John Alecock and train landed "on the deck".

The Gas Board, Yorkshire Electricity Board, Leeds Corporation Waterworks, and Leeds Main Drainage Department have all tried presenting the MRT with a hole as a fait-accomplis, ignoring its effect on the line's operations. The correct word for it must be Moleomania - an obsession for digging holes.

Bureaucratic vandais

In the latest act of beaurocratic vandalism, the Post Office informed the M.R.T. chairman that they had planned an underground cable and poles across the line, and would he please sign his consent here:.....

We told the GPO that some of the cables were too close to the line to comply with safety requirements for goods lines on which shunting took place, particularly in regard to the projected siding into Mitchell's timber yard.

The Post Office replied that under an 1863 Act they were allowed to stick their poles anywhere, and that they were instructing the contractors to go ahead forthwith.

We produced the National Trust Protective Covenant with its declaration that no work or alterations (except for maintenance and repair of the railway) should be carried out on the railway property.

Gaseous politeness

Despite this legal and moral victory, the contractors had already started digging at a point where the GPO had not even sought permission to dig, on the level crossing. The traffic was held up for two days.

Three days later, by contrast, the Gas Board behaved in a creditably polite manner by asking the MRT's permission an hour before they actually started digging on the other side

of the level crossing to get at a faulty gas main which was unearthed during the GPO excavations.

Fortunately the 60ft. rail across the road was set in concrete and the two holes did not cause any major subsidence. After four worrying days train operation was resumed when the gauge and firmness of the level crossing had been carefully checked.

Meanwhile, Dr Youell is waiting on the edge of his seat for the track subsidence which turns out to be due to an excavation for the Victoria line of the L.P.T.B. "It was cheaper to tunnel under Leeds," says London Transport.....

Murray's bicentenary approaches

The bicentenary of Matthew Murray's birth is approaching - Murray, whose memorial is in Holbeck cemetery, Leeds, was the designer of Salamanca, the Middleton Railway's - and the world's - first successful steam locomotive, which ran in 1812.

Just as a double first class degree is regarded as an outstanding achievement, so Murray had the equivalent in engineering design. To design much new textile machinery - the principles of which are still in use - and then to design and build the first locomotive is pretty good in the statutory three score years and ten!

Naturally, the Middleton Railway Trust would like to honour his memory during 1965. Are there any members with bright ideas for a celebration?



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RAILWAY GENESIS

W B STOCKS

The study of early wagonways and tramroads is the most neglected aspect of the railway hobby. Of course, I am open to correction in making this statement, but it is certainly true that if people are working in this field, we see little fruit for their labour.

Two points seem relevant to me in this connection:

(A) For practical purposes most enthusiasts date railway history as commencing at a certain time. All that went before is subconsciously ignored as "prehistoric". For many this key year will be 1830 with the Rocket. Middleton Railway enthusiasts may prefer 1812, and so on.

(B) Oddly enough this prehistoric period has more relevant relics than the immediate post - 1830 years when railways might be considered to have arrived in the inter - city sense. I agree that many of these relics do not actually date back into the very early days, but they are examples of railway prehistory still being used long after later developments had become commonplace. Indeed, an observant student of railway antiquity might quite easily detect traces of every stage in railway development still in the ground today. The subject resembles the clean-cut trunk of a tree with all the stages of its growth clear to see.

The seed of the railway idea started when someone had the notion of laying down parallel baulks of timber for cart wheels in a muddy road. To this day some of the oldest cobbled West Riding streets illustrate this device with long smooth stones set in two lines at an approximate "gauge". I never see these without the thought that here lies the seed of the railway idea.

Elementary guidance

Next would come the stage when an element of guidance was added to that of a smooth running surface. This would be the direct outcome of our ancestors discovering that they were little better off if their cart wheels ran off the timber baulks into the mud at either side. This, coupled with the fact that the timber quickly showed signs of wear, led naturally to iron angle plates being fastened to the wood timbers. Hence our modern word "platelayer", and the true platelay had been born.

This type of primitive track can still be seen in various

This type of primitive track can still be seen in various locations, notably in the approaches of certain West Riding factories. Another good example is on the drawbridge of Edinburgh Castle. Near the old brickworks site, in Huddersfield, where I removed the historic Fieldhouse steam winding engine for preservation (described in The Old Run some time ago) was an excellent example of this kind of track along with a still discernable notice threatening teamers with trouble if they did not lead their horse drawn carts along the "iron-road".

The prehistoric stage can be said to have ended when the edge rail came into being and the flange was transferred from the rail to the wheel. This was about the significant "Murray" year of 1812. For many years after, typical track was the fish - bellied cast iron rail mounted on stone block sleepers and actual relics of these exist in comparative profusion. An excellent example is to be found along a rural pathway near Silkstone church, and there are others of great interest at Churwell, near Morley.

Nowadays, when one reads of the urgent need in certain city traffic conditions for "bus only" lanes, I wonder how long it will be before history has moved full circle. It only needs someone to discover that there is little real need to completely surface such a road, and add raised guiding curbs, and wagonways will be back renamed "bus-ways"!

'GREAT MARQUESS' SHONE ON ICE CREAM SPECIAL

As part of the prizes awarded for a Lyons Ice Cream competition, 400 youngsters were given a train ride from Manchester or Liverpool to York with a River Ouse trip and visit to the Railway Museum thrown in for good measure. Four days before the special run, Mr. Lyons found out that "The Great Marquess" was available and promptly ordered it from Leeds to York and back.

A trial run to check fitness was followed by a mammoth cleaning session by members and friends of the MRT with the boiler in steam to make life slightly warm. A good but not perfect cleanliness resulted - there is no known method of putting cold Brasso on to hot whistles and safety valves.

Just before midday on Sunday September 6, 3442 and MRT President Lord Garnock set off downhill to Leeds City where the special arrived behind a clean and polished LMSR Black 5 with outside Stephenson gear - quite a rare sight. The double-headed train was limited (as on the Glasgow - Fort William express service) to 50 mph. 39 minutes for the 25½

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miles allowed the Marquess to keep her maximum speed down to this limit.

The 2-6-0 type has always been fairly rough riding, and from the Class 5 we could see her bouncing at every junction as she slogged away, the 4-6-0 with larger driving wheels running noticeably more smoothly.

Snappy start

A really snappy start with a long train from Leeds brought us through Garforth a little early, and at Micklefield we shut a reluctant regulator to run to the Church Fenton curve on gravitation. A steady run on the level brought us to York within a few seconds of the booked time.

After running to the water tower and turntable, the Marquess ran to the Museum large exhibits section for mass admiration. A newspaper photograph shows the chimney of 3442, the head of the President, and masses of juniors swamping the front buffer beam.

On the return journey, a typically smart start brought the train up to the top speed by Chandlers Wynn Junction, and we had to shut off at Bolton Percy to avoid too high a speed. Even so a multiple-unit stinkpot took quite a time to overtake us accompanied by Stanier noises from the Class 5 and clank-clonk 3 cylinder noises from 3442.

After a good climb up Micklefield bank we saw a wave from the inspector on the Marquess, and the vacuum gauge dropped to zero as we ground to an out-of-course stop at the signal box. We racked our brains as to what could be wrong. Hot Box? No sign of steam in the wrong place. Fusible Plug? Leaking tube? Hot middle big end? Firebox crown dropped? Run out of water?

Brains racked

After an agonising wait, the inspector boarded the Marquess and we started again. But what was this? No limping hero this, but a zealous, tugging Highlander was in front. We were whisked away almost before we could galvanise Stanier into activity. Chifferty-chafferty and clank-clonk sounded like a healthy K4 in front. Down the hill we ran. Cross Gates....Neville Hill....brakes on for the Marsh Lane slack, and we were into Leeds in the 39 minutes booked despite the emergency stop.

As the Marquess was uncoupled, we ran to ask the bad news. Oh, no! Nothing wrong with the Marquess at all - just a large number of people, farm dogs and gamekeepers straying on the line halfway up the bank, serious enough to report to higher authorities!

So the Marquess ran into the shed and left the train to go back to Liverpool. Another worth-while effort!

Were plateways underestimated?

In another article in this month's Old Run, W.B.Stocks refers to the early development of plateways. As railway enthusiasts, it is true that we tend to dismiss plateways as being "the ancestors of railways" and nothing more.

Yet plateways are in their own right a mode of transport. More flexible than railways, they can nevertheless offer many of the railway's advantages over roads, and it is very much a pity that their potential value was never fully realised at a time when it might have made great contributions to the development of industry and towns.

Plateways could offer a smooth passage to more types of vehicle in the days of unsophisticated road surfaces than could the more complicated and expensive tram rail. Without the inner flange, they would offer no resistance to normal road traffic: with the flange, they could pursue an independent course in the same way as the railway.

In Salford art gallery there is an illustration of the most advanced application of the plateway ever reached in this country. Using flangeless plates, a Salford company operated a horse 'bus service in the late nineteenth century along a 2-mile route that passed in front of the art gallery.

Pramnibus

The "5-wheeled perambulating omnibuses", as they were splendidly christened, were held on the plates by a small wheel which ran along a central guiding-slot between the two lines of plates. The wheel was attached by means of an arm to the swivelling front axle. Thus, when a turn in the road approached, the guide wheel cleverly anticipated the amount of turn so that the coach wheels remained on the track.

When the end of the plateway was reached, the driver operated a windlass which retracted the guide wheel, rather in the same way as an aircraft undercarriage (there is very little new under the sun!) and the bus proceeded normally along the road - with the addition of an extra horse!

There were no turnouts on the plateway, but these could presumably have been quite optional in view of this flexible arrangement.

Before we laugh the Salford perambulators off as being another lovable Victorian extravaganza to be classed with clockwork trams, steam zeppelins and see-over-the-hedges penny-farthings, we would do well to admire the good sense behind the venture. Not blinded by the universal edge-rail, here was a company willing to learn from the past, seeing through current trends and choosing one form of transport that was ideally suited to a growing and muddy metropolis.

New light on the Hull & Barnsley ⁸

★ Two proposed branch lines would have changed the face of Yorkshire

The Hull and Barnsley, in full the Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway & Dock Company, was one of the small but gallant companies of pre-grouping days which held their own even when surrounded by much larger rivals.

The North Staffordshire Railway was another good example of this, although there is a long list of those that fell by the wayside, ranging from the Potteries Shrewsbury and North Wales, and the Lancashire, Derbyshire and East Coast, to the extreme case of the Manchester and Milford.

The H&BR was about the only substantial invader of the North Eastern monopoly. A certain amount of friction between Hull Corporation and the NER over service to the docks was behind the foundation of the H&BR.

Although it never reached Barnsley, it did enjoy through running to there from Cudworth (two miles away) and to Sheffield, over the Midland, who, of course, had a useful through route to the docks in exchange. The H&BR had an excellent route to the port from the industrial West Riding without going near the traffic jams of Selby or Doncaster.

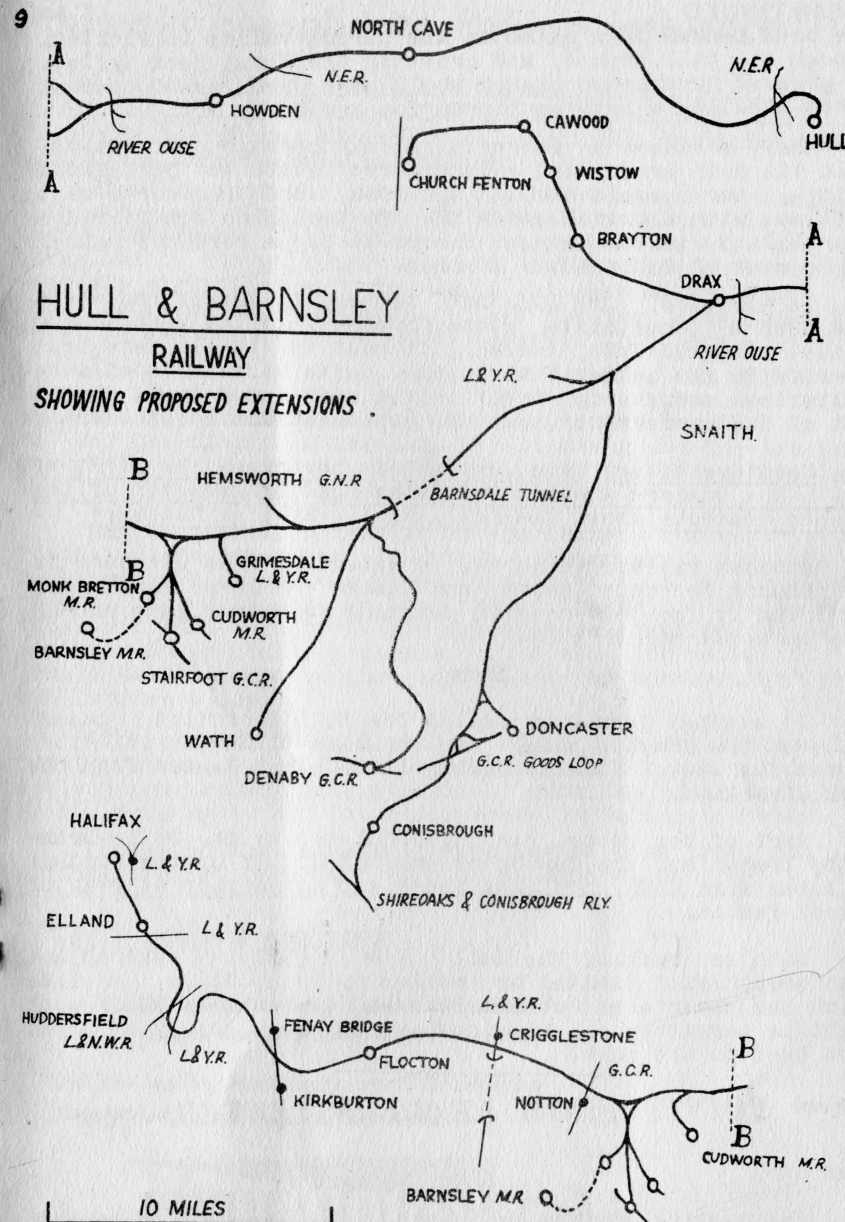
Short Snaith loop

From the main line near Snaith there was a short loop to the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway and a long branch to a terminus at Doncaster and the Conisbrough line. West of Barnsdale tunnel, a long branch served Wath, and also from the same junction at Wrangbrook was a long circuitous mineral line to Denaby on the Great Central.

Short connections joined up with the Great Northern West Riding main line near Hemsworth, the L & Y line near Grimesthorpe, the GCR at Stairfoot, and the Midland at both Monk Bretton and Cudworth. Colliery connections abounded.

The main line was fairly direct, running slightly south of west before a sharp turn to the south 2 miles north of Cudworth. There was plenty of traffic to keep the H&B happy, but they were clearly casting their eyes further afield.

At the turn of the century, one finds a H&BR extension sufficiently far planned to appear in maps. Just as the Midland planned a Royston-Huddersfield-Bradford extension which was never completed, so the H&BR proposed an extension to Huddersfield and Halifax.



The extension was to start with a triangular junction near Royston, cross the GCR at their Notton station, and the L&Y just at the north end of their Crigglestone tunnel.

From then on heavy gradients and heavy earthworks would
CONTINUED OVER ▶▶

▶▶ CONTINUED

have been needed in a climb up the narrow valley to Flocton, through the hill beyond, and crossing the Fenay Beck valley. The present Kirkburton branch would have been passed over at a very skew angle between Kirkburton and Fenay Bridge.

There followed a rather difficult passage of Huddersfield via Mold Green and a long curve south to Springwood sidings, north again through the town, and then north-west to Elland with a tunnel under the 725 feet high summit ridge. After Elland a climb brought the route to a terminus rather to the west of Halifax L&Y station.

In distance, the line was reasonably direct and would have been a competitive route from Hull to the West Riding cities. In gradients, however, it must inevitably have been inferior to the Calder Valley line. The attraction of more collieries and through traffic from more large towns to the port of Hull presumably made the extension worth considering.

Needless to say this extension never saw the light of day. One wonders whether this idea was the genesis of the classic anecdote about the Hull, Hell & Halifax Railway!

Another railway which was a potential H&BR offshoot is the Church Fenton, Cawood and Wistow Railway, which was sufficiently far advanced in planning to appear as a non-NE line on a NER map of 1883.

Drax!

It started from Drax facing the Hull direction, passed Selby on the Brayton side, ran to Wistow and Cawood, then almost due west, finally coming into Church Fenton from the York direction.

Part of the route was covered later by the Goole-Drax-Selby branch and the Cawood branch, though of course neither of these were H&BR, nor was there any connection at Drax or Church Fenton.

With so much of the Hull & Barmby railway now abandoned, lying disused or pulled up completely, a fate which has overtaken others like the GCR and the MaGN, one might be permitted a whimsical speculation of what might have been on the H&BR.

== POINTS FROM READERS' LETTERS ==

Dear Sir,

The quality of your production is superb. I love it madly. It would be churlish of me to complain, but it is three months late.

Member No. 18.

EDITOR: Too right it's superb! As for the lateness, it wouldn't be too late if people like you would send me some interesting items. Thank you, churl.

Railways consolidate Peking influence

The political motives behind the building of China's railways - the new and the old - are the subject of a paper by R. Graham Mitchell, published in issue No. 10 of the Leeds University Railway Society Journal.

Starting with the European-dominated system of the late 19th and early 20th century, Mr Mitchell develops his thesis that, in effect, all Chinese railways were built, and are being built, for political reasons whatever their subsequent economic significance. The early railways sliced China up into "spheres of influence", while the new main lines are built as rapidly as possible to unstable frontiers.

Whatever the other manifestations of the Split, in January 1964 (when this paper was written), there still appeared to be active co-operation with the Russians in new railway building. A new link via Sinkiang and the Ala Shan pass between the two countries was known to be near completion, if not already in operation.

Handling similar traffic to the Chinese railways is the North Eastern division of British Waterways, and this is dealt with in an article by M.J.H. Collett. 800 ton loads of coal at a time move in long "block trains" of Tom Pudding tubs, and more industrial and agricultural traffic passes up and down in specialised barges. The sluggish waters of the Aire & Calder churn to the equivalent of thousands of ten-ton lorries a day.

Other articles deal with a night on City Station ("a faint crunch....."): some Great Northern branch lines: railway and tramway interworking: memories of LBSC engines of 60 years ago: and the steam scene in Northern France.

Copies of the Journal, price 1s. 9d post free, may be obtained from: John Carr, c/o 62 St Anne's Road, Leeds 6.

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The Retreat from Mons

12

The original Retreat from Mons was 50 years ago after the first shot fired by the British army in the 1914-18 war.

It is now possible to retrace this route on the new electric service from Paris to Bruxelles, which normally makes its last stop at Mons on the north-bound journey. The normal limit on Belgian Railways is 140 km (87½mph) but part of the new route is allowed up to 160km, or almost 100mph.

On one run, with a French dual-voltage locomotive in charge, the acceleration, aided by a generally falling gradient, was phenomenal. The speed rose rapidly to about 96mph, where it stayed. Careful checking of timings at the kilometre posts left no doubt of this. The first 20 miles were run start to pass in 16 minutes almost to the second - an average of 75mph.

Outstanding service

The gathering gloom made it impossible to think of any accurate timings all the way to Bruxelles, but it is clear that the new service is outstandingly good. The Belgian services from Bruxelles to Quevy and St Ghislain Hornu along the same route to Mons are also inspiringly rapid.

The only late run in hundreds of miles in Belgium was on a Charleroi - Bruxelles multiple unit electric, non-stop from Braine l'Alleud. We stuck at Braine for several minutes during which the message came through that a goods train in front had a hot box and was having to crawl along.

Faced by red and double yellow signals all the way, we stopped at every block section. When the goods train cripple could be shunted into a relief line on a 4-track section, we got the green signal and used it to full advantage. Even so an 18 minutes late arrival resulted.

MRT will be at Harrogate 65

The Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway is arranging a comprehensive railway and model exhibition to be held next Easter at Harrogate in the great Pavilion of the Sun. It is a joint effort with Harrogate Corporation.

The size of the Pavilion indicates an exhibition on a similar scale to the famous annual Leeds Corn Exchange show held in late October.

The Middleton Railway Trust will be represented, and it is hoped that as many members as possible will set aside a day during the exhibition to come and help staff the stand. Further details will be announced later.

13

Proposed Leeds relief line
would have cut out
tortuous operations
of today

Rationalisation - 1847 style

One of the major tasks facing British Railways in the West Riding and other busy railway areas is correlation of independent companies' routes where these run largely parallel to each other, and facilitating access from one to another for through traffic.

The replacement of two separate stations in Barnsley with a new through service is one good illustration of progress made already. Leeds City and Central amalgamation is another. At times correlation takes the form of almost complete extinction of a duplicate line, as in the case of the Great Central.

It comes as something of a shock to find that even in the days of the Railway Mania genuine efforts were made along exactly the same principles. We notice today that it is still very difficult to get from the Midland to the G.N. line in the Leeds area without rather tortuous routes through Leeds City Station. Well before the G.N. had arrived in Yorkshire, however, Parliamentary consent was obtained for a loop line connecting the separate companies serving Leeds.

City split

The present Leeds City is still visibly two parts, the Wellington (Leeds and Bradford) terminus, and the New (North Eastern and L.N.W.R.) through station. The Leeds and Thirsk ran into Wellington from Whitehall Junction instead of having a terminus of its own. The later Central Station was used by the traffic from the G.N.R., the L. & Y., the G.C.R. (from Sheffield, via Royston) and the L.N.W.R. goods traffic to their depot outside, the L.N.W.R. passenger traffic running to the New station, built to relieve the Wellington of overloading. The New Station took over what became the North Eastern Railway traffic, from the Leeds Northern (Leeds and Thirsk), Leeds and Selby, and York and North Midland routes. The Leeds and Selby had a cramped terminus at Marsh Lane, and the New Station involved building a connection passing (as reported here before) through a cemetery.

It is at this stage appropriate to mention other railway names and places that are no longer familiar. Alternative spellings abound, like Horseforth, Battley, and Stanningley. The Leeds and Thirsk had two separate stations at Headingley and Kirkstall instead of one, the one no longer visible appearing to be at Cardigan Road Goods Depot. As this only appears in a local map it may not be authentic.

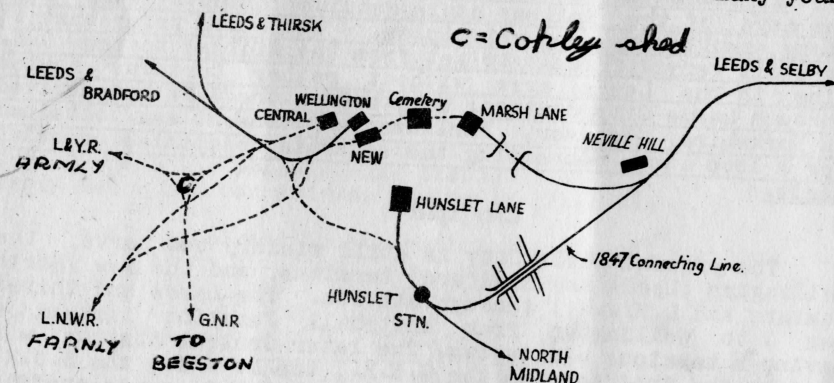
Old Headingley appears near Monk Bridge Road. Meanwood,

the present Headingley village being a blank. Haigh appears as a station on the North Midland, but this may merely be at Stourton yard which is in the right place near Haigh Park Rd. and not a station per se

The Leeds and Selby boasts a Hatton rather near the present Osmondthorpe, and a Brown Moor Junction for an Aberford branch near the Barn Bow ordnance depot and the Brown Moor Farm. One station with a good service on the public timetable appearing as late as 1869 was Kirkstall Forge.

The 1847 plan may be described now, having set the picture of the early routes into Leeds. A line 2 miles long was to leave the Leeds and Selby at Osmondthorpe Lane, run straight across to Hunslet Church Lane and follow that road on a $1\frac{1}{2}$ chain curve to the North Midland line near Hunslet station. The N.M. terminus was the present Hunslet Lane goods station, and the Holbeck loop later permitted through running to the Leeds and Bradford line.

The 1847 connection therefore would allow running into the old or later North Midland passenger termini, or on to the Bradford or Thirsk lines without running into a terminus. One cannot but think of this as superior to the "cemetery" line of later construction. For many years



through traffic from York or the Selby lines had to run via Barton Salmon, Castleford and the North Midland line into Leeds, as it could get no further than Marsh Lane.

The proposed connection was only at 1 in 133 down, a sharp contrast to the 1 in 74 and tight curve on the much later N.E.R. goods line to Hunslet East. By 1899, of course, through running avoiding the City was possible via the G.N.R. Hunslet East line, but only to the G.N., not to the Midland. There was at one time an idea of a loop between the Midland and the G.N. lines between Wakefield Road and Pepper Road, but nothing came of it.

At any rate, it is clear that the planners of 1847 did have the right idea of coordination of routes. Had it come to fruition, it would no doubt still be a very busy goods line today.

Edge Hill Railway

had no trains

for 30 years!

THE LINE THAT FAILED

by MU LEAH

There is, as everyone knows, a Right Way and a Wrong Way of doing things. We on the Middleton have a number of experts to show us the Right Way, which means that things generally go quite smoothly: but when the experts themselves make mistakes the results can be quite disastrous, as this anecdote shows.

The Edge Hill Light Railway was a child of war and bankruptcy. The war was the 1914-18, and the bankruptcy that facing the Stratford on Avon and Midland Junction Railway, a sprawling country branch from Ravenstone Wood in the East through Towcester and Woodford Halse to Stratford on Avon and Broom Junction in the West. The country needed the local iron ore, the company needed the mineral receipts, so the conclusion was obvious.

Trouble was, the railway was down on the plain, while the ore was 300 feet above it on a steep ridge known as Edge Hill. (Historians will find the name familiar as the spot where one side solidly thraped the other during the Civil War.)

No luck at Ministry

But in 1917 the SMJ proposed to construct a line up to the orefields, the hillside being scaled by a rope worked incline. The Ministry of Munitions, however, was not impressed by the scheme, and though it needed the ore, refused a subsidy. The company, now desperate, enlisted the aid of a Staffordshire steel firm, who promoted an independent light railway company - whose chairman just happened to be the chairman of the SMJ! The engineer was a certain Mr. H.F. Stephens, who later became famous as a colonel. 11½ miles of standard gauge track were proposed, from a junction with the SMJ at Burton Dassett, but local opposition (the area is of scenic as well as historic interest) caused the scheme to be cut back to 5½ miles. Permission was obtained to operate passenger trains, though this was never used.

With the ending of the war a sharp slump in the demand for iron and steel could have been foreseen, but the Edge Hill project went on undaunted. Construction began in 1919, but was halted because of financial difficulties just after it had reached the top of the incline.

Still not facing the economic facts of life, the company decided to exploit the ore in the immediate area, fully

intending to complete the line at a later date. (To this day there stands a bridge with its parapets at field level, only partly excavated underneath.) Locomotives - two Stroudley 'Terriers' and an ancient Manning Wardle saddle tank - and wagons were bought second hand, and production began in 1922.

Panicular inclines are notoriously expensive toys, however, and money was the one commodity the railway lacked. To reduce costs, therefore, part of the incline was built as three-rail, and ordinary main-line wagons were used on it though highly unsuitable for such a specialised job. In one of the resultant breakaways the Company Engineer, the successor to Colonel Stephens, was knocked down and killed, while on another occasion 'Sankey', the high level Manning Wardle, almost followed a downward load.

Suspended animation

High operating costs, plus the inevitable postwar drop in demand, caused temporary closures of the quarries, the last of which came early in 1925, little over two years after the opening. The ever-optimistic company, fully expecting a re-opening in the near future, then left the equipment where it was, and there it remained in a state of suspended animation for over 20 years.

'Sankey' found some shelter under a large overbridge, but the 'Terriers' and the rest of the stock were left to rot away in the open air at the foot of the incline. The desolate spot became a regular haunt for railway enthusiasts who were so pleased at seeing Brighton engines so far north that they took away numerous souvenirs from them. Oxford undergraduates would also visit the line, but they came to have late - night barbecues in the steam shovel up in the quarries!

The Second World War might have brought prosperity, but instead it brought the Army, who took up the low-level section and built an ammunition depot on the site. This prompted the company into action, and all the stock on the now-useless line was cut up in 1946.

The company remained in existence, however, and in 1949 there began a long legal struggle with the War Department over compensation. When in 1956, the decision was in favor of the latter, the Edge Hill Light Rly. Co. decided to go into voluntary liquidation.

Thus ended the career of the remarkable company which had run no trains for over thirty years, and possessed no railway for over ten!

The incline today is very overgrown, but very popular with amateur botanists, who find all manner of plants among the rotted sleepers and rusty cable. 'Sankey's' bridge and another bridge in the incline were damaged by frost early in 1963, and both were demolished immediately. And in the quarries, now sold back to the farmer, cows and sheep feed as if nothing had ever disturbed their calm. In fact, for nearly 40 years very little has!

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