

THE OLD RUN

JOURNAL OF THE MIDDLETON RAILWAY TRUST



NO.159

WINTER 1997/8

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Opinions expressed in the magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Middleton Railway Trust Limited, the Middleton Railway Association, or the Editor.

Many thanks indeed to the members who provided articles, reports and a multitude of excellent photos for this issue, and for all the other 1997 issues.

ALL members are invited to contribute to their magazine articles, news items, letters, photographs or drawings on relevant subjects. Could members sending photographs please mention whether they would like them to be returned after use, or put into the Middleton photo archive.

Written contributions can be sent on paper in the normal way, or on computer diskette, or by e-mail (see above). Diskette contributions are best saved as plain text files which can then be changed, as can e-mailed contributions, to the system used for producing The Old Run.

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Cover picture: M.R.T. Chairman Ian Smith with a V.C.T. colleague on board *Sir Berkeley* early in 1997. Photo: Chris Nicholson

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Deadline dates for contributions are the first days of March, June, September, and December.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Ian Smith

This report is tinged with sadness as I have to report the deaths of two members.

Nigel Crowther died in mid-November. A great stalwart at Moor Road, he will best be remembered for all his work in getting *Arthur* ready for a test steaming. We intend to place a plaque to his memory in the engine's cab once it has had the necessary boiler repairs. An obituary appears opposite, and I know I speak for all who knew him when I say that he will be sadly missed.

The second death was also in November, and was that of Hugh Wainwright. Hugh owned *Cockerill* 1625, which came to us a couple of years ago. The engine was overhauled by our engineers, and Hugh was able to see the engine in action on a number of occasions before his recent death. We are deeply grateful to his Executors for donating the locomotive to the MRT, and they can rest assured that the engine will be well looked after.

The season is almost over and, once again, work on replacing the main line is set to continue once "*Thomas*" has finished. As always, help will be required and most definitely well received!



Above: Nigel Crowther seen emerging from No.67's firebox, September 1996. Photo: Graham Smith
Below: *Cockerill* 1625, pictured at Moor Road on 18th May 1996. The Editor believes that the man seated left of picture is Hugh Wainwright. Photo: Keith Hartley



OBITUARY

NIGEL CROWTHER

Members will be saddened to hear of the sudden death of Nigel Fred Crowther, one of our stalwart members. He died suddenly and unexpectedly on Friday, 9th November 1997 at the young age of 44.

Nigel joined the Railway in 1990 and immediately became one of the most active working members, spending almost all of his spare time at the Railway. Although not professionally trained as one, he was a most accomplished practical engineer and would turn his hand to anything connected with a steam locomotive. For a period he took on the position of the Railway's Chief Mechanical Engineer and also served on the Trust Council. However, he preferred a less high profile

role, and eventually reverted to being simply a regular volunteer.

If ever a man had 'steam in the blood', it was Nigel. He lived for steam and was never happier than when he was at the controls of a locomotive. Nigel was a well respected working member who will be sadly missed by his many friends and colleagues at the Railway.

The news of his death came as a shock to his fellow volunteers. As the news spread, flowers appeared on 1601. The inscription simply said 'Bye Nigel'.

Nigel leaves two children by a previous marriage, Melanie and Ben, to whom we extend our condolences. Following the funeral, which was well attended by members of the Railway, he was laid to rest at St Paul's Church, Denholme.

Obituary written by Steve Roberts

LOCO NOTES

Steve Roberts

Not a very good report, this time. The problems with 1601 (see below) may be the precursor of a loco crisis in the next two years, and we are urgently having to rethink our loco strategy.

1601 Love's labours lost. The race to get our Manning Wardle completed and in steam for the Gala failed drastically at the final hurdle. Nigel Crowther laboured long and hard to make it happen, and a steam test was achieved with just over a week to go. All seemed well with only a few minor faults requiring rectification. A proving trip to Middleton Park with the brake van was the culmination of the many hours of hard work, and the smile on Nigel's face stretched from ear to ear. All that remained was the formality of an in steam examination by the insurance company Boiler Inspector. A mere formality, we thought, and 1601 would make its debut at the Gala, as planned. I could not believe it when Nigel phoned me on the evening of the examination to say that it had failed. A steam leak had developed somewhere under the boiler cladding, and it would have to be investigated. This would mean removing the tank and lagging to establish the cause. Any thoughts of a Gala appearance evaporated.

The weekend after the Gala, the tank and lagging were removed to expose the boiler barrel. Initial examination did not reveal the cause and, after consulting with the Boiler Inspector, it was decided to do a steam test. We did not get as far as this. When the boiler was filled with water, a tell-tale drip was seen coming from the underside of the barrel. Not from any

seam or joint, as expected, but from what should have been solid steel plate; effectively a hole in the boiler. This from a boiler barrel that had been examined by both our own Boiler Inspector and the Peak Rail Boiler Inspector without adverse comment, had undergone an ultrasonic thickness test and had been subject to a hydraulic test to 1½ times working pressure without any sign of a leak!

The next step is to establish just what the true state of the boiler is. We knew about the throat plate (see the last *Old Run*) but apart from this, the boiler was supposedly in reasonable condition. The full internal examination had been carried out at Buxton whilst in the care of the Peak Railway, and the written reports showed nothing untoward. These (now worthless) pieces of paper had formed the basis of the boiler certification. As time permits, we will carry out our own thickness test of the whole of the boiler plating on a close examination matrix, rather than the random testing normally carried out. This should provide a reasonable amount of information on which to base further decisions. For now, the loco stands forlorn, minus its tank and lagging.

67 Good progress is being made with the overhaul of the Manchester Ship Canal tank. Work continues on several fronts. The frames have now been almost completely cleaned down and primed with red oxide, and the first coats of black undercoat have been applied to some parts. The compensating spring links have been re-bushed, and new pins made to suit. Similarly, the eccentric rods and expansion links have had their holes rebushed and new pins made, as



A popular picture of Nigel, taken on board Cockerill 1625 on 18th May 1996. Photo: Keith Hartley

necessary. It is understood that wear of these components had been the cause of the loco's final withdrawal when on the KWVR.

The weighshaft bearing brackets were both found to be fractured, and had been repaired by the fitting of strengthening straps. The original brackets have now been repaired by welding, but they are a poor fit on the weighshaft and we will have to engineer a suitable repair. A simple statement for a not so simple task, as half of each weighshaft bearing is cast integral with the motion bracket, and will have to be machined in situ.

The cab has had most of the corroded platework cut out, and new plate is presently being cut and welded in, followed by rivetting to the strengthening angles. With luck, and labour, this replating work should be completed by the New Year.

The damaged rear buffer has been repaired and awaits refitting. Many other bits and pieces have been cleaned down and painted with metal primer.

The next major tasks will be the dismantling of the crossheads and their overhaul.

1882 Mirvale Is available for traffic and is the chosen loco for the Santa service. Apart from routine jobs, such as nipping up leaking glands, it has received little, or no, attention.

385 has had a routine boiler washout, and received an annual inspection by the Boiler Inspector. The tube ends are starting to thin in the smokebox, and some of the crown stays are known to be wasted. However, it is still expected that the boiler will see out the remainder of its 10 year 'ticket' before a major overhaul is required. One of the mudhole door fastening screws was

found to be corroded, and a new one has been machined and fitted. It presently awaits an official steam test in the presence of the Boiler Inspector. It may see service over the New Year period, but otherwise will be stored for the winter. No work is planned before next season.

1625 successfully passed its visual and 'in steam' boiler examinations and is available for traffic, if required, but is otherwise drained down and stored for the winter. In the last *Old Run*, comment was made about the problems with the ashpan. In an attempt to improve the situation, the ashpan has been modified to increase the clearance between it and the firebars.

1310 The Y7 suffered from a failed fireman's side injector during October. This was subsequently removed for examination, and the fault was traced to a detached flap in the combining cone. The flap was refitted and a subsequent steam test proved to be satisfactory. The loco is presently drained for the winter but is available at short notice, if required, and will probably be used over the New Year period.

54 No progress has been possible on the Sentinel, primarily due to concentration of manpower on 67.

2387 Brookes No.1 progress on this loco has been slow, of late, due to the owner's work commitments.

91 is still in traffic and used as required, although suffering from fuel dilution of the engine oil. It is generally preferred to the other diesels as it has an enclosed cab!

D631 Carroll The cab interior has now been fully cleaned down and painted,

following completion of the platework repairs. New, rolled steel plate has been obtained for the bonnet top and this is presently being fitted.

It was not originally planned to replace the bonnet but, as the overhaul progressed, it became apparent that corrosion was far worse than thought, and replacement was felt to be the best course. The vacuum brake pipe has been re-routed to take it off the cab floor and reposition it underneath. Many jobs still remain to be done, but the end of this overhaul is now in sight.

138C still sees slow progress, as time permits.

2003 John Blenkinsop has not featured in these pages for some time. However, with the present problems with our Manning Wardle, our trusty Peckett is being considered for a fast track overhaul with the aim of having it returned to service in 1999. It is thought to be in reasonable condition, with major work being confined to re-tubing and replacement of the smokebox.

D577, Rowntree No.3, LMS 7051, and 1786 are serviceable and used as required. All other locos are stored out of use.

NOTES & NEWS

Steve Roberts

PERMANENT WAY

As intimated in the last *Old Run*, 150 concrete sleepers were purchased during October. These again have come from Trackwork Ltd., who seem to have a monopoly in the market for such materials in the quantities that we require. At £19.50 each, they are not cheap, and we would dearly love to find a cheaper source.

In preparation for the winter relaying, 20 foot long panels of rail and sleepers are being made up and stacked, ready for laying once the old track has been lifted. It is planned to start work on our winter relaying programme on the 10th January 1998 on which date a large gang is required to lift out the old track. We now have a well tried system for our track relaying programme and, provided that we can muster a good gang for the rip out, it is relatively easy work.

How about working off some of the many calories put on over the festive period by coming down and lending a hand? We aim to be laying in new track on every Saturday from the 24th January until the job is completed, probably at the end of March. We did try doing P.W. on certain Sundays last year in response to comments in certain quarters that people would like to help but were not available on a Saturday. However, as none of those who voiced complaint turned up to help on these Sundays, we have reverted to Saturdays only, which suits the dedicated few better.

[See the advertisement on the back cover for details of how to offer much-needed help with the 1998 track re-laying work.]

We have recently investigated the replacement of the crossing timbers on the Balm Road top loop point, but without success. It seems that second hand re-layable quality point timbers are in short supply, and obtaining them has proved to be impossible. This is a cause for concern as, in the not too distant future, we will have to consider re-timbering several of our turnouts, and to buy new timber presently costs £6.00 per foot of timber.

CARRIAGE AND WAGON

Some progress has been made on the Norwegian coach over recent weeks, thanks to the efforts of one of our members. The work is slow and laborious, and any help with this would be gratefully received.

The N.R.M. owned 16 ton mineral wagon is now back in the shed, and some progress with its restoration has been possible. Work is still concentrated on needle-gunning the frames and priming the freshly cleaned metal. Although progress is slow, much has been achieved and it should be possible to start on the undercoats and top coats before long. The corroded plate work on the body has yet to be cut away, and the replacement steel has yet to be obtained. As we have little storage space, it is not practical to order this until we are ready to use it.

It is planned to bring the passenger guards van into the works for some much needed repairs and repaint once passenger services cease after New Year. Keeping our passenger rolling stock serviceable and in good condition generally requires us to carry out such work on one of the coaches each winter.

NIGEL CROWTHER, A PERSONAL APPRECIATION by Steve Roberts

I first met Nigel one day in the summer of 1990. I had dropped in to the Railway on a short visit, and it was mentioned to me that we had a new volunteer who had taken upon himself the task of removing the boiler tubes from the Y7. Somewhat concerned that a new volunteer should be doing such work unsupervised, I hurried along to the boiler. I need not have been

concerned. It was immediately obvious that this person knew exactly what he was doing.

Over the coming weeks Nigel became a regular volunteer, and amazed us with his loco knowledge and appetite for work. It was plain to all that Nigel had done much locomotive work in the past, and it transpired that he had been a regular volunteer and driver on the KWVR until a few years ago. Within weeks, Nigel had taken on the job of Assistant Mechanical Engineer with responsibility for the steam locos. He was the answer to all our problems in this sphere, and rapid progress began to be made. Later, when I was struggling to do both the Mechanical Engineer's job and that of Shop Manager, I suggested to Nigel that, despite not having an engineering background, he was amply competent to take on the task of the Railway's Mechanical Engineer and, after thinking it over, he agreed. Things went smoothly for several weeks; then Nigel simply disappeared without trace and without any warning. Consternation. Then, after several weeks, Nigel turned up again as if nothing had happened and effectively carried on where he had left off. This became a regular happening, and we were to learn later that Nigel suffered from nervous problems and, if things became too much for him for any reason, he would just simply disappear into another world. At first I, and others, found it hard to come to accept this situation, but once I appreciated that what he was suffering from was effectively just an illness, I came to terms with it.

Thus Nigel carried on, spending virtually every day at the Railway for periods of perhaps up to three months, then disappearing. When he was

around, so many things happened. When he was absent, he was sorely missed. Whatever the problem, Nigel would find a solution to it. He would often telephone me in the evening with the opening words "I've been thinking. . ." and wanted to know whether I agreed. I invariably did.

It was obvious that Nigel was a very intellectual person, but he kept his past shrouded in mystery. Over the years that I knew him, I gradually managed to build up an albeit hazy picture of him. In some of our many long conversations it transpired that he had studied Zoology at Sheffield University, but it was only at his funeral that I learnt that he had gone on to take a Ph.D. It was typical of Nigel not to tell anyone of this.

He loved to take on projects, and would work tenaciously until a successful conclusion was reached. The Cockerill, No.1625, benefitted from his expertise. When it arrived it was a total disaster of a loco. Within weeks it was transformed. Latterly, he had laboured long and hard to get 1601 back into steam in time for our gala. He effectively succeeded, and it was obviously too much for him when the loco failed its official steam test. His telephone call to tell me that it had failed were the last words he spoke to me. I never saw him again.

I will miss you, Nigel. I am certain that I am not alone.

THE 1997 OPEN DAY Cedric Wood

AIM The aim of the day was to recruit new membership and convert old and new members into working members.

INVITATIONS Regional Railways, British Transport Police, Railtrack and the National Railway Museum were invited to provide an input to the day. British Transport Police and Railtrack work together in attending events, and provided 200 Railtrack safety booklets, the National Railway Museum declined a visit due to budgetary constraints.

THE DAY The date - 22nd June - did not clash with any other event in Leeds as far as the writer is aware. The weather was the biggest drawback.

NUMBERS There were 99 adult visitors and 45 child visitors. The numbers were very quiet whilst the rain fell, but picked up as soon as the rain stopped. At the end of the conducted tour, visitors were invited to become members of the Trust. Virtually the railway's entire stock of membership forms were issued.

OTHER INTEREST A 12 question quiz had been prepared. 7 entries were returned. Nine painted resin railway plates were provided for children to make 'brass rubbings', but this created more interest with parents.

OUTCOME This day created a lot of work for a lot of people. There were some positive results. Vegetation has been pruned, the track in front of the station is now in the cleanest state for a long time, and seemingly acres of floor space have been uncovered in the shed. Although no membership forms were returned on the day, the day created a lot of interest amongst the public.

In future, instead of having a specific recruiting day, it might be better to include in the timetable a note that a guide is available on the first Saturday in the month, or some other day to be agreed.

NEWS FROM THE VCT

Bellerophon has been used in the filming of a new BBC TV adaptation of Wilkie Collins' novel *The Woman in White*, as has the VCT's 1888 railway carriage. The drama is scheduled to be shown late in December, unfortunately before this issue is to be sent out. VCT's three Metropolitan Railway coaches, meanwhile, have had their own filming assignment, for Granada Television's series *The Grand*. This will be the 33rd film/tv production to feature VCT stock!

At the end of November, the VCT manoeuvred its 6-wheeled Midland Railway 1st and 3rd Class composite coach into covered accommodation at their Ingrow museum, along with their rare c.1890 wooden-framed Midland oil tank wagon. Work has started on restoring the 1898 Great Northern wooden-bodied coach which was damaged by an arson attack in 1996.

The Railway Heritage Register Carriage Survey Project Under its 'Innovation in the use of Information Technology' initiative featuring Independent Museums, the Carnegie UK Trust has grant-aided a project to survey all railway carriages currently located at Heritage Railways, Steam Centres, and Museums in the UK. The £16,000 grant allows the project to be completed over the next two years.

Carriages have long been the Cinderella of railway preservation. They represent an important aspect of the history of our country, and this project will help allow them to take their rightful place within our industrial and transport heritage. Over 150 of the 2,400 carriages 'preserved' within the UK are over 100 years old: the survey will allow them (and others, younger -

but still of importance) to be identified and recognised. Anyone wishing to join the survey team, or otherwise to assist in the project, is invited to contact:

Michael Cope, Vintage Carriages Trust, c/o The Railway Station, Haworth, Keighley, Yorkshire, BD22 8NJ.

Tel./fax (home): 01535 646472.

Email: cope.oxenhope@zetnet.co.uk

THE EARLY RAILWAYS-Origins, development & growth to 1840

This is the title of an international conference on early railways, to be held at the University of Durham, on the 11th to 13th of September, 1998.

The Conference will centre on the development of railways, from their earliest days to 1840. Recent research projects have led to important discoveries about this experimental period. They suggest that a significant reassessment is due, and our own Railway is expected to feature in at least one of the papers to be given.

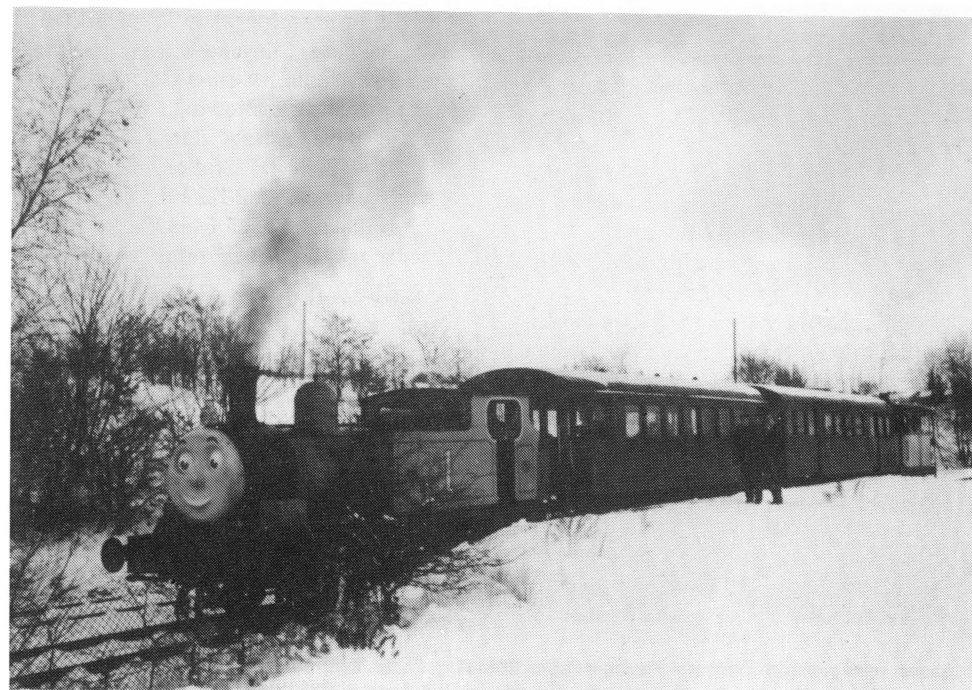
The Conference will encourage the exchange and discussion of ideas on all aspects of the early railways - social, technical and economic. It is expected to be followed by a series of conferences on railway studies.

The City of Durham is an ideal venue, being within a half hour journey of Causey Arch, Wylam, Killingworth, Hetton, Shildon and Darlington (not to mention Beamish). Trips will be arranged to sites of interest.

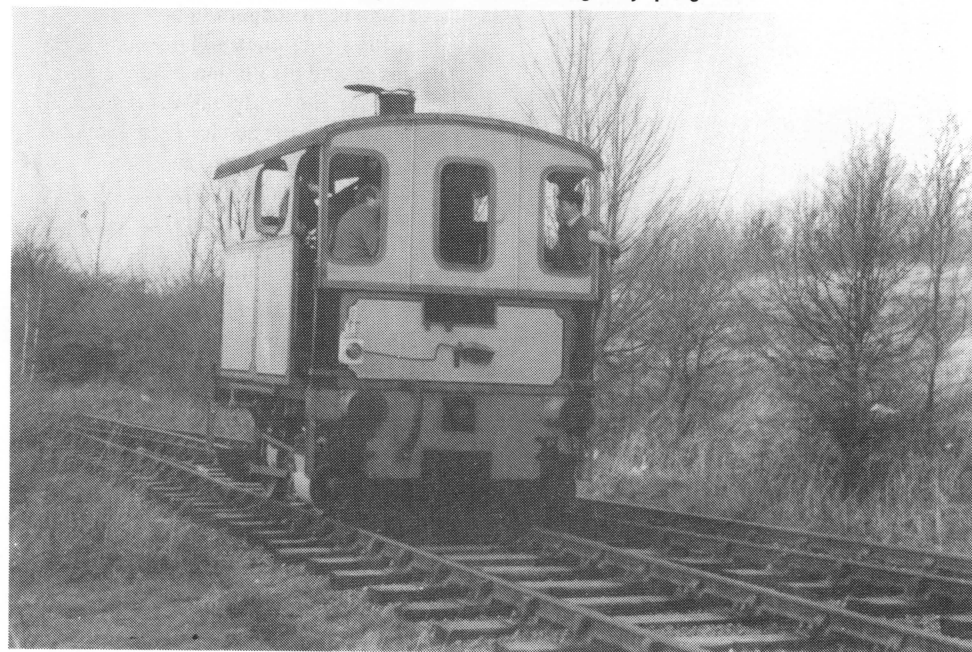
General enquiries about the Conference should be addressed to: Susan Ketelaar (Early Railways Conference), NEEHI, University of Durham, 43 North Bailey, City of Durham, DH1 3EX, England.

Tel:0191 374 2013. Fax:0191 374 4754.

e-mail: susan.ketelaar@durham.ac.uk

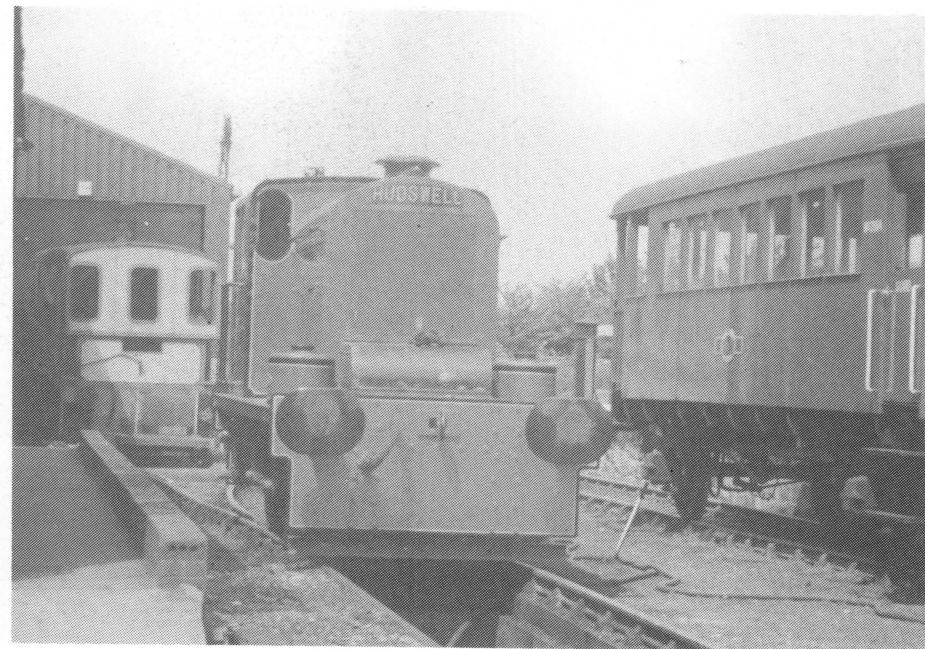


Above: last New Year's *Thomas* event with some seasonal snow. Photo: Keith Wear
Below: 1625, pictured by Paul Holroyd near Park Halt during early spring





Above: some young visitors meet Postman Pat on 26th May. Photo: Keith Hartley
Below: Mike Scargill fries his bacon the traditional way on Schoolday 19th June. Photo: Keith Hartley

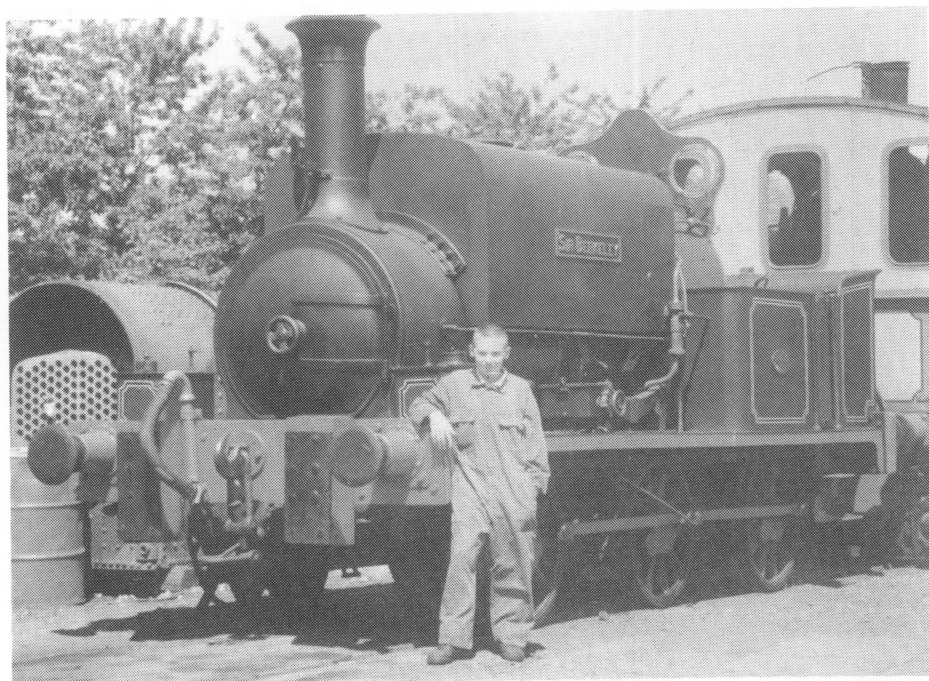


Above: *Mary* poses outside the Fred Youell Building on 5th July. Photo: Keith Hartley
Below: Brian Hall and *Rowntree* No.3, taking a break at Park Halt on 12th July. Photo: Ian Dobson





Above: *Mirvale* returns from a trip to Dewsbury Gala, 12th July. Photo: Ian Dobson
Below: David Hart and *Sir Berkeley*, caught on camera by Keith Hartley, 19th July



Above: President Egan brought his pocket Teddy to the Picnic on 3rd August. Photo: Keith Hartley



Luke Paul Dacre, surrounded by his own extensive collection of teddies, was so tired out that he really couldn't care less that his Mum was being hugged by a strange bear. Upper photo: Keith Hartley, Lower photo: Ann Dacre



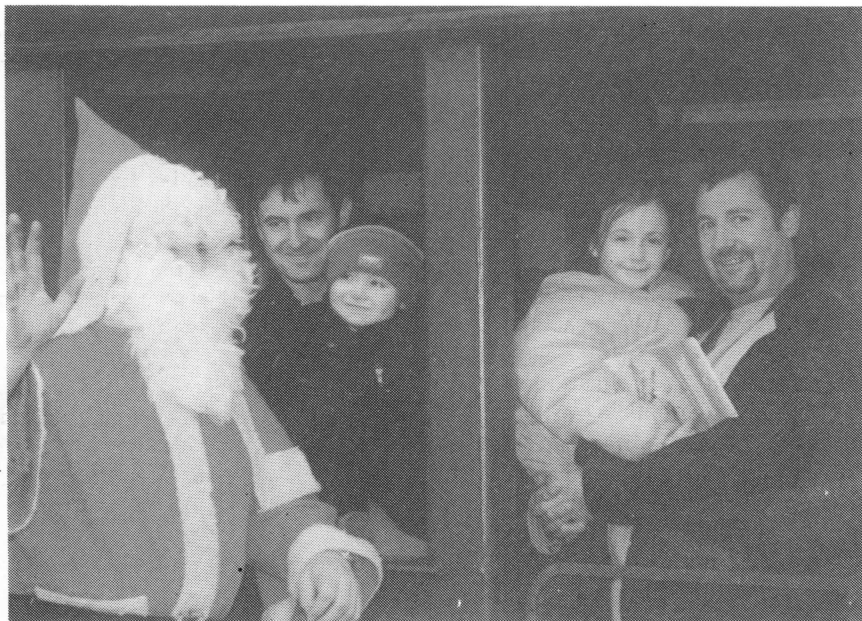


Above: 385 poses alongside a large party of children (and bears) of the Queens Hotel staff.
Below: Terry Faulkner and Ken Dean brought their fine classic cars to the Picnic. Photos: K. Hartley



Above: another of Ian Dobson's impressive night-time scenes of *Sir Berkeley* at the September Gala
Below: *Bellerophon* leads *Sir Berkeley* and train off to the Park, 29th September. Photo: Ian Dobson





... and, hot off the press, Santa meets some hopeful fans on 6th December. Photo: Keith Hartley (who, incidentally, heard a lady on a Radio Leeds phone-in show telling about her family's visit to our Santa event that day, and saying how very much they had enjoyed the Christmassy atmosphere etc.)

THE LEEDS FORGE CO. LTD., JOSEPH WHITLEY & PARTNERS, & THE (ALMOST) FORGOTTEN INVENTOR OF MOVING PICTURES

Sheila Bye

During the past year or so, articles have appeared in *The Old Run* about the origins of our recently acquired Leeds Forge tank wagon, and also about the Railway Works, which was situated on Hunslet Lane and was owned by Joseph Whitley and Partners.

During the British Association Science Festival at Leeds early in September, I went to an excellent, though abysmally attended, lecture on Louis Aimé Augustin Le Prince - the pioneer of moving pictures mentioned in Henry Gunston's article about Joseph Whitley and Partners, and the Railway Works. Le Prince was Whitley's son-in-law, and one of the few surviving sequences of film taken by him was of the Whitley family posing in the garden of their home in Roundhay, north Leeds. Le Prince worked for his father-in-law for some time, for part of which he was one of the 'Partners', and he also designed one of the Whitley company's catalogues, filling it with his own meticulous drawings of the firm's products.

The lecture was arranged by the Leeds Philosophic and Literary Society, and was given by Christopher Rawlence, author of a book about Le Prince and maker of a Channel Four television programme about the inventor and his mysterious disappearance from a train to Paris.

Strangely, Henry's article on Whitley & Partners proves to have had a connection with the Leeds Forge Company article since, in 1882, Joseph Whitley made an agreement with Samson Fox of the Leeds Forge Company, to enable the latter to use the former's patented centrifugal casting process.

Samson Fox had already had some success with his corrugated boiler tube, and Whitley thought his own centrifugal casting machine, which he called the 'Spinner', would ideally suit production of these, and also of shell castings - another part of Fox's trade.

A 'gentleman's agreement' was made, pending a proper contract, and Whitley celebrated the new connection of the illustrious Leeds Forge Company with his own much more modestly sized concern, by writing a three verse eulogy about Fox and his Company!

However, the connection never came to fruition. Fox failed to use the process, telling Whitley somewhat belatedly - in 1886 - that the brass-spinning process was no longer of any use in his trade. Whitley was considerably aggravated, to say the least, particularly as he had recently come across, in the *Engineering Journal*, a report of his 'Spinner' which credited Fox with its invention.

Source: *The Missing Reel - The Untold Story of the Lost Inventor of Moving Pictures*, by Christopher Rawlence.

FROM THE EDITOR - Sheila Bye

The Editor is extremely sorry, once again, for the lateness of the last issue of *The Old Run*, once again. Some items urgently needing inclusion were late arriving and the text had to be readjusted to accommodate them, and even when the magazine is printed, it still has to be collected and then packaged for the post, last time including the raffle tickets. Production of the material which goes to the printer was delayed also, as the Editor had to divert at short notice to produce a lecture on recently discovered information about the Railway, for the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's Industrial History Section. This (and a written follow-up for their Newsletter) helped raise a lot of interest in the Railway, will most likely lead to some extra visitors coming, and sold several copies of the Railway's *History*; but it did make the magazine a bit later than it might otherwise have been.

I really do mean to co-ordinate things better in 1998, but the magazine drops on your doormat as the result of the combined efforts of quite a number of people, most of whom have a lot more vital Middleton Railway commitments than I have, and I hope out-of-town members will continue to have patience with any future tardiness or irregularity in the arrival of their *Old Run*.

With the help of Steve Waldenberg at the printers', I have tried to improve the clarity of the text in this issue, and also saved us a little money by producing the text in A5 size instead of the printer reducing it from A4 as has been done for many years, due to us not having the necessary technology until recently. I hope members will like the magazine's new look, and find it easier to read - please let me know if you don't!

I WISH A HAPPY, HEALTHY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS!

From Issue No.1 of *The Old Run*, published January 1960

"With a membership not confined to the University of Leeds, this Society clearly needs a news-sheet to keep members informed of progress and future activities. While this first issue is, of necessity, a bare outline of our progress in the first six weeks of our existence, it is hoped that future issues will be made into a complete record of the Society's activities. It will be circulated to all paid-up members and to certain other interested people.

Chairman's Message

So much has happened since December when the Society came into existence, that it seems impossible to review it briefly. We still do not own a single yard of track, but we have opened negotiations for either the purchase or use of the Middleton Railway.

It is very appropriate that the Leeds University Railway Society should take the lead in forming a Society to preserve a railway which has been going since 1758 and was the first to make a commercial success of steam locomotives in 1812. The University Society is relatively small in numbers, and it is clear that we must invite the collaboration of members of other railway societies and individuals, if we are to tackle so large a project successfully. Even so, L.U.R.S. forms the nucleus of the organisation, and has provided the ad hoc Committee to bring the Society into being.

The outstanding feature of the early stages of the Society to me as acting Chairman has been the kindness and cooperation shown by almost every person and organisation with whom negotiations have brought me in contact. Not everyone is likely to be wildly enthusiastic about a collection of railway enthusiasts intent on restoring a derelict line, however important historically, but the response has been most encouraging. Businessmen who might reasonably have politely shown me the way out have offered sympathy and encouragement; nationalised industries have replied by return of post; and people with no interest in railways have wished us success. Public reaction so far has been favourable and the idea of turning the M.R. into a working museum appears to be accepted as worthwhile. We have a vast amount of work before us. Our needs are members, money and manpower: members to widen the base of the Society, money (as Subscriptions and Donations) to buy essential tools, stock and materials, and manpower to turn our present ideas into future achievements. In 6 weeks we have made a good beginning. May we keep up the pace until we have made the M.R. into the Railway Showpiece of Leeds.

My best wishes to all members,

R.F. Youell, Acting Chairman

PROGRESS REPORT

In the middle of December 1959, the LURS Committee felt that there was a great risk of the M.R. being irretrievably split up and that someone ought to take the initiative in an effort to keep the line going as a monument to the part played by Leeds

in the development of railways. The obvious corollary was the establishment somewhere on the line of a Museum where relics and documents of the 202 year old line could be collected and preserved.

Quite naturally, our first task has been to investigate the feasibility of acquiring the remains of the MR cheaply, of restoring it and running it economically, and then to commence negotiations. Every firm or organisation on the line was approached; all received our scheme sympathetically, especially Messrs. Clayton's, the Gas Engineers, who are themselves interested in reopening the line for their own traffic. It is not every railway that has a coal merchant's at one end and a coal mine at the other, but we must not be too optimistic about the prospects here as British Railways have an operating monopoly at present over the Colliery section of the line.

The section from Gt. Wilson St. to Jack Lane is now owned by the N.E. Gas Board who have built over part of the site. The bridge near Jack Lane over the Midland Rly. is intact and carries gas mains as well as the rails which have not been pulled up. To the south, the end of the line beyond Town St., Middleton, is now a housing estate. None of those parts appear capable of restoration, at least for a long time.

Between Hunslet Moor and Middleton Town St., the prospects are much brighter: the track remains, though in poor repair, from the Moor to Parkside Gt. Northern Junction, and also on the double line branch to the Midland line at Balm Rd. From Parkside to Middleton Pit has been relaid by the Coal Board for their outgoing coal, but there is ample room beside it for an independent line. The sidings at the fireclay works at Middleton are disconnected from the main line and in a bad state. The Middleton Fireclay Co. is in voluntary liquidation and the works are for sale. The incline from the works to Middleton Town St. has had the track lifted recently, but the sleepers and a vintage semaphore signal remain. A short section at the lower end is owned by the Colliery for explosives stores.

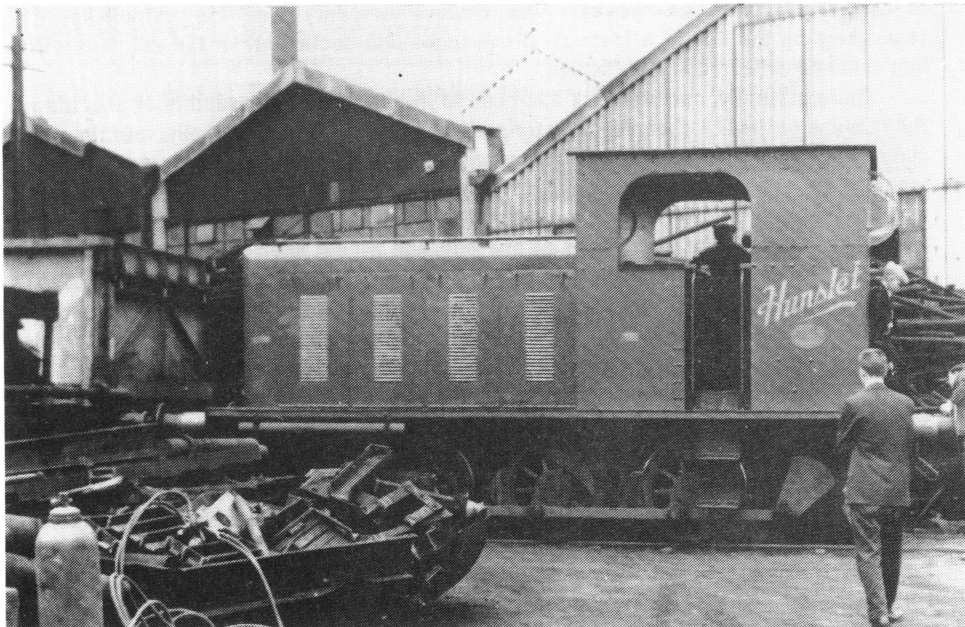
There is obviously plenty of scope for restoration on the line, limited only by financial resources and manpower. The line of the railway is hardly of scenic beauty, but even slag heaps and quarries can be disguised or covered, and Middleton Park is a bare 100 paces from the line.

We have received good wishes for the success of the scheme from the officers of the N.C.B., who own Middleton Pit, but major reconstruction there will make it difficult for them to give us much active help. The many BR officers whom we have seen or written to have been very helpful and most interested in our efforts. We might particularly mention Mr. A. Blower, Assistant to the Chief Civil Engineer, Leeds, BR, who has walked the line with our Chairman, and reported on the condition of the permanent way and works. The latter include some unique iron level crossing gates dating from 1901.

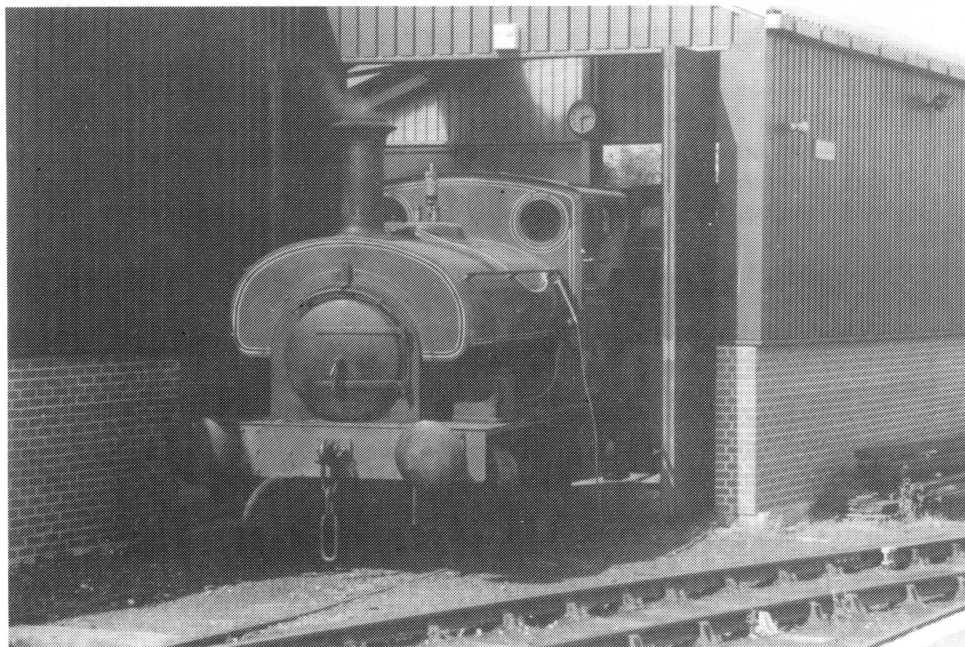
The Leeds City Engineer has given very careful Consideration to our proposals to restore the line, and the Town Planning Committee will be giving its verdict shortly.

Mr. M.T. Kendrick, of Messrs. J.C. Kirk and Son, liquidators to the Middleton Fireclay Co., who own the railway, has been kindness itself. He has been connected with the firm for a long time and is himself very interested in railways.

Mr. John Alcock, MA, Managing Director of Hunslet Engine Co., visited us, expressed his wholehearted support, and gave us a most generous personal donation to our funds."



Above: 7051 *John Alcock* among the piles of scrap in Dartmouth Yard, during the very early 1960's
Below: *Mirvale* takes on water in the doorway of the Fred Youell Building, August 1997



THE MIDDLETON RAILWAY TRUST LIMITED

(Limited by guarantee and not having a share capital)

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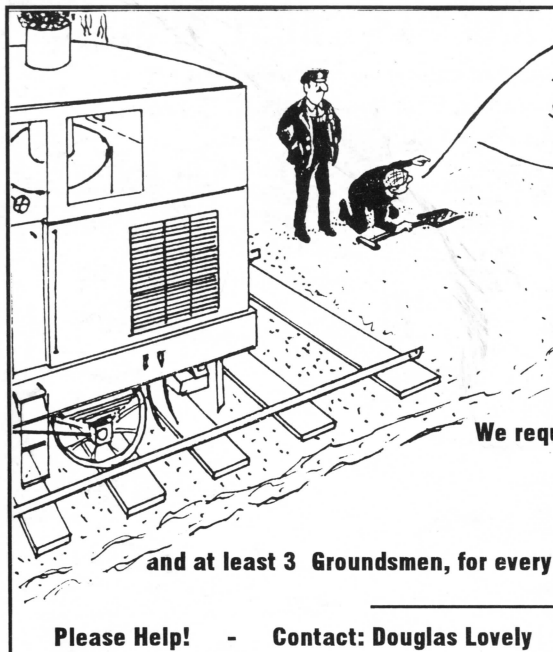
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