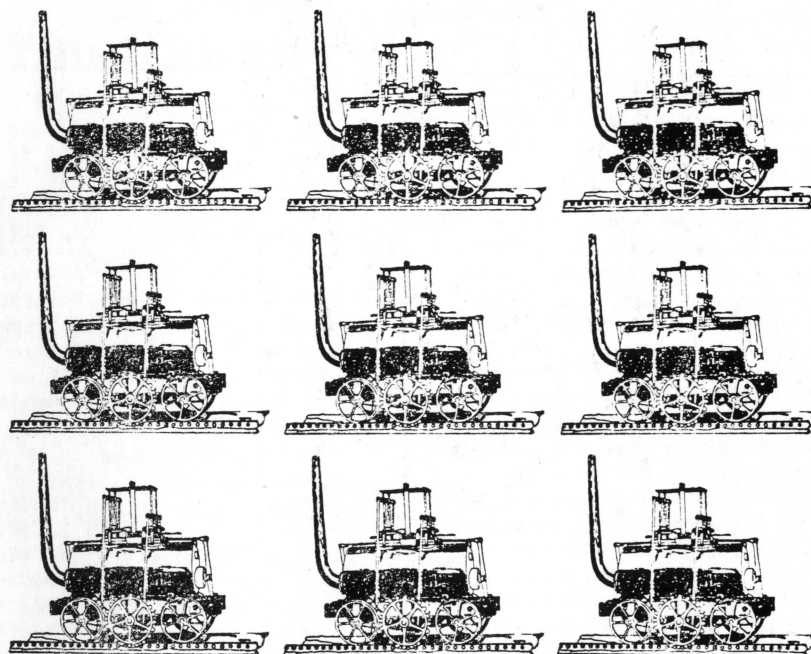


THE OLD RUN

SPRING
1971

5P



JOURNAL OF
THE 1758 MIDDLETON RAILWAY TRUST
LEEDS

THE OLD RUN

Volume 10 Number 1 Spring 1971
Editor: Mervyn Leah,
13 Arden Court, Court Leet; Binley Woods,
Coventry CV3 2NA

The Editor invites all readers to contribute articles, photographs, maps, drawings, news reports and letters. Written items should be written, or if possible typed, on one side of the paper only, and should contain the contributor's name and address. Photographs, maps and drawings should also carry the name and address of the contributor, as well as full caption details, should not normally exceed 6" x 9" and must be on pure-white paper. Photographs should also be on glossy single-weight paper, and it is regretted that, owing to the nature of the production process, those used in the magazine cannot be returned. The Old Run is published in March, June, September and December, and all material, except for short news items, should reach the Editor before the 15th of the preceding month. Opinions expressed by contributors and correspondents do not necessarily reflect those of the Middleton Railway Trust, or of the Editor.

2

EDITORIAL

More vandalism?

The discussion of item 5 on the AGM agenda, concerning the future of unserviceable locomotives at Middleton, gave some interesting insights into the future problems of the railway preservation movement.

The dilemma, simply stated, is this: that there exists in this country a large quantity of railway relics, not all of which are being protected or maintained in an adequate manner, and many of which will cease to be viable either as working items or as museum pieces in the foreseeable future. To say this is not, of course, to belittle the enormous effort put in by enthusiasts and others all over the country, but even the best-established preservation groups will privately admit to having the odd skeleton in their cupboards.

The problem is essentially one of finance. Given enough money, most things are possible - even the return of the SS Great Britain from the Falkland

THE OLD RUN

Islands to Bristol, as last year's events showed - but how many railway preservationists, whether individuals or groups, would claim to have sufficient money and resources to cover all of their responsibilities to all of their stock, especially when there is some sort of train service to keep going? In most cases the funds are simply not available to maintain all of the workable stock to main-line standards, to restore non-working stock to Clapham standards and to protect everything from the British climate and the attentions of intruders.

It is inevitable, therefore, that a proportion of the items so avidly seized upon at the time of their withdrawal, or resurrected afterwards, are sooner or later going to be fit for nothing but scrap, or alternatively restoration at an enormous cost. There are also likely to be many repetitions of our own dilemma over 'Chairman', where an arguably worthwhile object of preservation has to be sacrificed in order to keep another equally worthwhile item in service.

Given these circumstances, therefore, the shrill cry of "Vandalism" which goes up from certain quarters when scrapping is considered (the same cry is to be heard when 'authentic' liveries, numbers, names, mechanical features, locomotive allocations, operating methods and all the rest are not perpetuated by working light railways) is somewhat unhelpful. What is important is to ensure that any destruction which does take place should produce the least possible damage to the national transport heritage as a whole, and here it is essential that societies and individuals should look beyond

3

their own immediate interests and preoccupations, since all are (or should be) in the same railway preservation business.

In this context, we welcome the recent initiative by the Transport Trust, which is summarised elsewhere in this issue. The existence of minimum standards of consultation and publicity in connection with unwanted relics, against which the behaviour of preservation groups can be judged, would, we feel, have gone a long way towards stilling the more hysterical criticisms of the Middleton Railway Trust over the affair of the Swansea and Mumbles car. It would not, however, prevent similarly over-ambitious preservation schemes from being started elsewhere in the future.

New Run

Observant readers will have noticed a number of differences in 'The Old Run' this time. Apart from the obvious changes in the size and design of the pages, there is also a shift of emphasis as far as the contents are concerned, giving what we hope will be a more up-to-date and comprehensive coverage of events at Middleton, as was ordained by last Autumn's SGM.

To assist with this objective, part of the magazine will be devoted to an 'Old Run News' section, produced by the Editor of the former monthly newsletter. 'Old Run News' will continue to have an independent life as a duplicated newsletter when circumstances demand the

urgent communication of information to members, and because of the postal strike the greater part of the news content of this issue will also appear separately in duplicated form.

Another innovation is a centre-page spread which in this issue gives what is intended to be a definitive map of the Middleton Railway, showing all known track alignments, past and present, as well as the future realignments in the Hunslet Moor area resulting from the construction of the motorway extension, which are here published to members for the first time. In future issues it is intended to publish photo-features on the centre pages, possible themes including the Dartmouth Dawdler, motorway construction progress, and the Summer visitors' service. Photographs of all of these subjects, and any others of significance, interest or curiosity, will be extremely welcome.

As much as possible of the

BOOK REVIEW

Steamtown story

The Man from Steamtown. James Adair. Moody Press (paper back) 45p Illustrated.

Steamtown, USA, is the world's largest repository of steam locomotives, with over 100 on display. The Museum is at Riverside, Vermont, and visitors can also travel 13 miles to Chester behind steam along tracks formerly owned by the now defunct Rutland Railroad.

The "Monadnock Northern", as it is now called, does not actually own the line. Ownership is vested in another company, the "Green Mountain RR", which operates a flourishing freight service with occasional mixed trains.

Steamtown features many famous exhibits, pride of place being taken by a "Big Boy" ex-Union Pacific 4-8-8-4. Locomotives from many countries rub shoulders with their American and Canadian cousins.

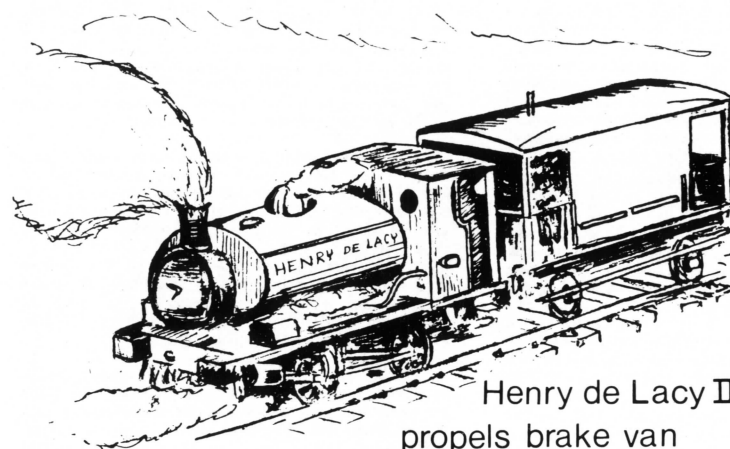
The museum will eventually feature a whole town built in the 1890 style, with electric streetcars and other attractions.

THE OLD RUN

remainder of the magazine will be given over to articles and features on Middleton matters, or topics of wider interest to members. Here, as ever, we depend entirely upon voluntary assistance, and we hope that 'The Old Run' will in future be written by a wider selection of the membership than has sometimes been the case in the past. We shall, of course, be making constant suggestions to individuals about topics they might like to write on, but we are in no position to hear of everything that is happening on and around the line, and we are confident that most members have learned to read and write!

Certainly, when the future of the magazine is reviewed at the end of the year, we shall be unwilling to accept criticisms of poor coverage from those who have themselves offered no positive contribution in the meantime.

THE OLD RUN



Henry de Lacy II
propels brake van

WHAT FUTURE FOR MIDDLETON?

BRIAN ASHURST

It is characteristic of optimists to see that behind every problem, however shattering there lies a grand, simple solution eagerly awaiting the dramatic moment when some visionary pronounces "Eureka". The pessimists, on the other hand, see that every problem, no matter how deceptively simple, conceals hidden ramifications of great complexity and is ultimately insoluble.

So it is with the Middleton Railway. There are those who see the way forward in terms of great construction projects designed to capture the imagination of wealthy donors; and there are others who see no hope of any progress at all after the end of the colliery project. Perhaps it is fair to say that most active members, at any rate, are too busy improving present assets to give much thought to long-term plans.

My own view is that we are quite capable of keeping the railway alive, but that great care must be taken to account for all likely events. Virtually certain is the eventual loss of the existing line south of Parkside Bridge; although this will not happen for a number of years and the continued use of this line will allow us respite to raise funds for any alternative plans.

In the long term any decisions must take into account the overall planning envisaged by Leeds Corporation. This includes the completion of Parkside industrial estate; the landscaping and turning into an extended park of the land south of the old Great Northern line; and the

probable recreational use of land south of the industrial estate.

The Middleton railway will enjoy the prestige of being at the very centre of the country's motorway network, and should therefore be easily accessible from all parts.

Priority should be given to developing freight traffic, I feel. Whatever other plans are made, the carriage of freight is the bread-and-butter which makes everything else possible. It has made the service for visitors possible; it has made restoration work possible; it has built up a tremendous fund of know-how and experience; and on it depends our future security.

This thinking is behind such projects as bringing the bottom loop up to B R freight standards to improve the efficiency of exchanging traffic. The easier and quicker we can make the job for B R, the less likely they are to write us off as not worth their while.

At the other end, the provision of service is what counts to our customers. There has been some increase in numbers of diesel drivers and shunters, but we must not rest until crews are complaining that they have to wait too long between taking their turns at operating!

The present traffic with Robinson & Birdsell's is rewarding for all parties concerned but more is still needed to make the best use of our assets

BWA

and to provide the better service which increased frequency could give. Middleton is constantly on the lookout for customers new, old and temporary, but is hampered of course by the comparative inflexibility of rail compared with road. Nevertheless we are on the edge of an expanding industrial estate, and anyone with any promising ideas can be assured that they will not be "laughed out of court" without serious consideration.

The result of the first full season of regular passenger traffic has been encouraging. Although costs were only exceeded by a small margin much was learnt by members in dealing with the public every weekend and the exercise was worth it in terms of goodwill and morale. An added bonus was the recruiting of a number of new members, some of whom have since become active workers on the line.

Towards the end of operation better business was experienced following the display of the large colourful new banner proclaiming "Trains now running". Some of the visitors came in parties under the direction of members who had invited them to see the line. This idea of showing your friends the line could be a good money-spinner — members please note!

An increasing number of special parties was catered for, particularly from local schools, and it is to be hoped that all members at school will try to persuade a member of staff to take a party down during the week, perhaps as part of a local history project. It really is time we cashed in on the large population which has always been on our doorstep but so rarely crossed the threshold! Inquiries should be sent to the Middleton Railway Visits Co-ordinators, the University Union, Leeds 2.

Visiting railway enthusiasts have continued to support us steadily; but it would be impossible to run a passenger service on their support alone.

The three vital aspects of the passenger service are safety, reliability and friendliness. Grippers, malingerers, non-cooperators and the easily offended should confine their attentions to inanimate objects. A proper sense of priorities and a friendly manner are absolutely essential.

Some sort of smart, preferably demountable shelter for use on the platform is one need.

THE OLD RUN

If it can be removed each night it would not have to be too solidly built to deter vandals. If one member or a group of members not otherwise occupied feel they would like to help with this project (which might be suitable for a school, for instance), please contact the vice-chairman (Mr John Bushell, 12 Trelawn Crescent, Leeds 6 — Telephone 54282).

Another obvious need is less easily met. This is the provision of covered accommodation for use as storage, workshops, museum and members' facilities. It seems unlikely that we will be fortunate enough to obtain another colliery type bargain. Land will have to be bought, buildings erected and track laid in at our own expense. A sub-committee of the MRT committee is working towards acquiring some suitable land near the railway. Price is an unknown factor, but it is not likely to be cheap.

The completion of this necessary stage may take years, but if the land is bought we shall at least be secure. Of course it is hoped that the museum will one day be a useful source of revenue.

One idea is to extend the railway along the line of the old Great Northern Railway as far as Beeston. While not ruling this out completely it does seem to me to be well beyond our present capabilities. Our resources are going to be so stretched during the coming years that I can see little prospect of embarking on such a major project.

These then are the main features of Middleton's future as they are emerging at the beginning of 1971. Freight, reliable service leading hopefully to a steady growth. Passengers, improved facilities encouraging more weekend visitors and special parties. Museum and restoration work, the search for land and funds absorbing an increasing amount of effort.

Needless to say, the success of all these aspects depends on an enlarged active membership. Please do your best to promote Middleton among your friends and among visitors to the railway.

I should add that the views expressed in this article are my own and do not necessarily reflect official committee policy.

PAINTING & DECORATING?
For interior and exterior work contact:
William Holliday & Co
27 High Ridge Park, Rothwell,
Leeds, LS26 0NL.
PHONE ROTHWELL 6701 after 6pm

HOLE IN THE GROUND

R F YOUELL

The sensation of the month, in December 1970, was actually catching Moleomaniacs before they started digging a hole.

Early in December we saw an excavator digging away near Beza Street and getting nearer... and nearer...and nearer. It was that of a contractor laying in a 15-inch high pressure and a 12-inch low pressure gas pipe for the N E Gas Coard. Considering that Middleton Railway has housed pipes to carry gas between Middleton cokeovens and Leeds, or vice-versa, we at once showed interest. The pipes were to go in a straight line, crossing over the C E G B 400kV oil immersed cable right where the latter needed a new Motorway avoiding line Junction pit, bounce off the (illicitly constructed) GPO telephones junction box, turn left and then dig its way through several feet of concrete under our level crossing, some 240 volt Y E B cables, our level crossing operating machinery, and some old street lighting Department gas pipes. This would not do.

I read the Riot Act, the 1846 Railway Regulations Act, the National Trust (Protective Covenants) Act, the Ministry of Transport Regulations for the operation of Goods lines, and the 1758 Act, followed by the 1879 Moor Road Level Crossing Private Act. I paused for second wind, and corrected their statement (from the Civic Hall) that "The line was out of use", that we "were the Middleton Light Railway" (this was a tram route), told them that the M R T Committee would not approve (this is a safe statement, as the Committee never approve of anything) and that they would get an unpleasant letter from the Secretary (this is also a safe statement). The Gas Board and Contractors were visibly impressed.

We had a conference on the spot, and I advised the persons concerned how to sort the matter out and to get the pipe under my P.W. at right angles, without damaging us, or demolishing electricity or telephone wires.

Then the High Level Officers of the respective Boards heard of the problem. Everything came to a standstill, including the contractor, for a day and a half. 18 V.I.P.'s carrying C E G B, N E G B, Highways Department and City Engineer's Department Briefcases descended on us. For an hour or two they perused maps and diagrams, and poked about, finding that the bits and pieces were precisely where I had told them they were. The C E G B wanted so much clearance above their cables "just in case". The Gas Board couldn't curve the pipes more than a limited amount and couldn't put a sharp bend in the high pressure pipe at all. We sorted all this out, while I looked helpful and carried a Permanent Way Manual and flags to lend an air of verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative. The train rumbled past at the right time to confirm my statement that we were still going strong after 212 years.

With the plan of campaign agreed, I went over to the National Trust to get permission to disturb N.T. Protected Property, to the Ground Landlord to get his approval (under some ridiculous Act you can't prevent a gas pipe being laid but

you can make things difficult if you wish.). Then a quick visit to the Yardmaster at Hunslet Down to get enough empties up to keep traffic moving even through a Stop Order. Messages to the Traffic Manager, University Traffic Assistant, Train Crews, Robinson and Birdsells, and we were ready for off.

I gave complete possession for the Monday and Tuesday, but the excavator worked so well that traffic could have run on Tuesday evening had we wished. The petrol operated rams packed the ballast in the hole between 3 sleepers far tighter and quicker than I could have done it with a shovel, and the first train over the replaced earthworks made the rail sink barely an eighth of an inch.

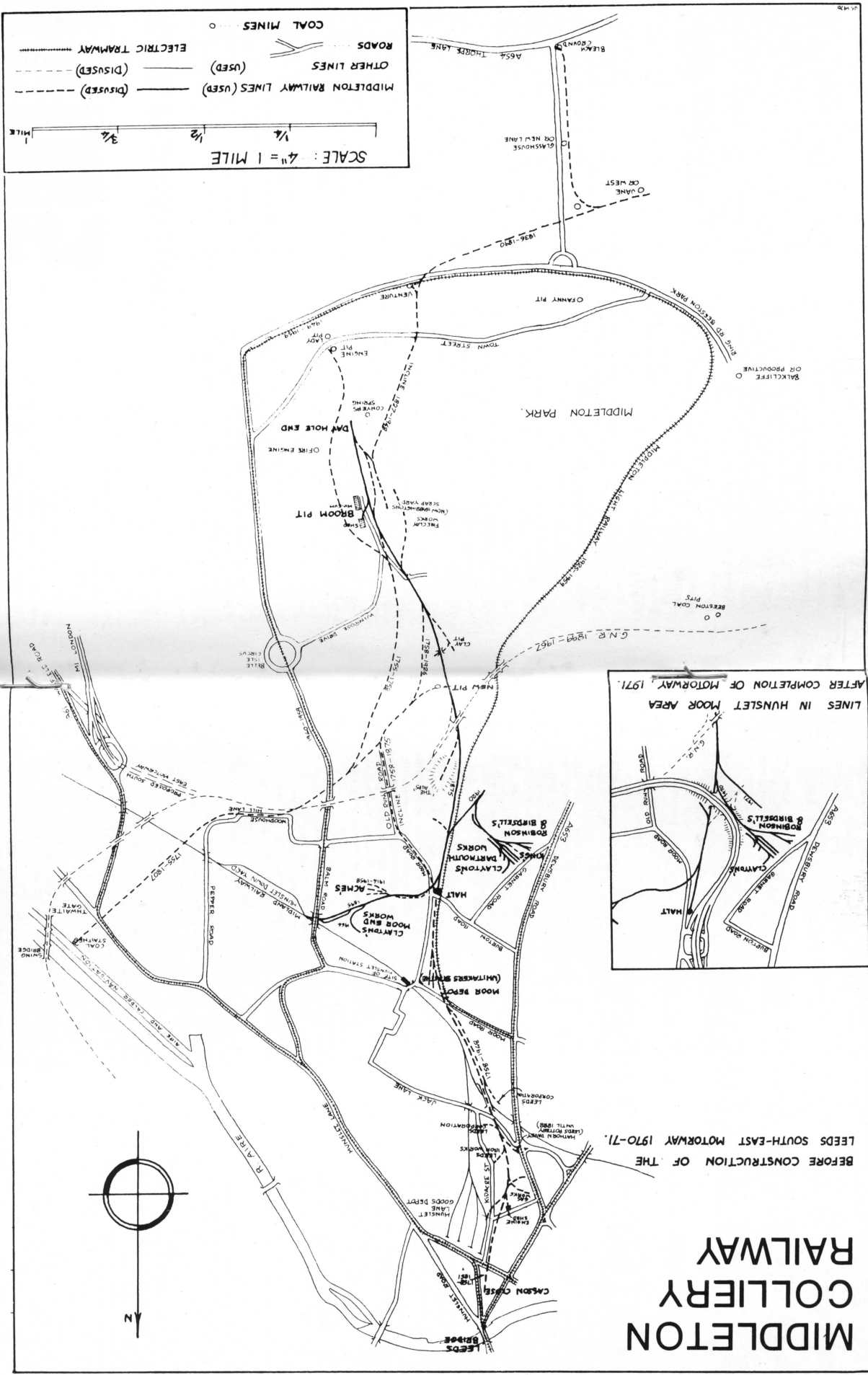
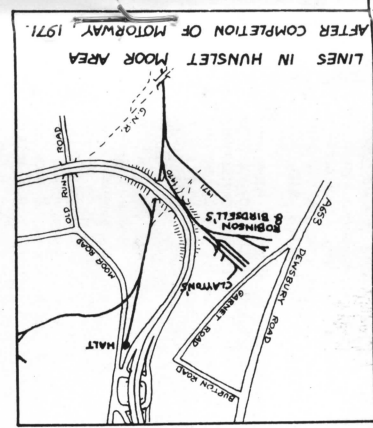
The gas mains went through without damaging the Vicarage brick wall, and without digging up the Moor Road as was originally intended. Our idea had speeded up the job by several days and minimised the upheaval considerably. We found that the level crossing gate was in such a position that it could either stay put, or in coming out it would demolish either our track (which was unthinkable) or the new Gas Mains (which would be a pity). We decided to lift the gate out for restoration and Museum Purposes. The Contractor got a crane down, straightened the gate out, lowered it gently away from rail and roadway, then lifted out the solid iron vertical gateposts, and then the baseplates. This monster was 12 feet wide one way and 9 feet the other, with 4 giant holes to keep the post on the base and 4 more to fix the base to the underlying concrete. This gate would have stopped a battleship in full steam!

The contractors did the work at the same time as "Operation Tidy", and it was coincidence, rather than any deliberate intent of the writer to show off, that my contractors crane did so much clearing so quickly. Moreover the excavator, using old timbers parallel to the rails managed to get across the track without the slightest damage anywhere. The excavator was working in a confined space and at times in danger of falling down his own hole, like the legendary Ooflum Bird. There was not a slip or risk taken, however, and remembering the holocaust left by some contractors on our line, we must allot full marks to the contractors men. As we had saved them much time and costs, they responded by clearing away the heap of rubble near the gates that I had been trying (in vain) for 10 years to get M R T members to shift.

The job was finished, and traffic ran normally. It shows how easy the task is if a little forethought is given to it. We are delighted to tell readers that the C E G B, Gas Board, and City Corporation Officers all left happy and contented. Without prior consultation, the worst menace would have been Low Speed Gas, but possibly Worse Things Were Electric. At any rate we have another hole to our credit, and a satisfied mole, in the person of Abraham Graham and Company of Huddersfield. I only hope that there is still space left for the operating mechanism of the level crossing gates when we get them replaced.

MIDDLETON COLLIERY RAILWAY

BEFORE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LEEDS SOUTH-EAST MOTORWAY 1970-71.



SCALE: 1" = 1 MILE

1/4 1/2 3/4 MILE

COAL MINES

ROADS

OTHER LINES (USED) (DISUSED)

MIDDLETON RAILWAY LINES (USED) (DISUSED)

ELECTRIC TRAMWAY

CENTREPIECE

OLD RUN NEWS

Track marathon

It is a fact of (railway) life that you cannot repair track by passing resolutions at it. After there had been no major track-laying for some months ex-Chairman Mao came out of his hole with gauge bar, spirit-level and drawing paper and began to potter about. We have a tough timetable to keep up with for the Motorway preparation work, and the old Tram-siding had to be replaced to make way for the M1 embankment.

A few weeks preparation work enabled us to get the first 30 feet North of Burton Road L.C. cleared of rubble and obstructions, and good track down in its place.

Then we had a wonderful week — the most productive since the massive main line reopening in June 1969. At 2.30 p.m. on Wednesday 27th January, the last wagons were pulled out of the Tram-siding — by rope as the permanent way adviser had prohibited the use of locomotives owing to the condition of the track. The rails salvaged on dismantling were sorted into re-usable or scrap. Some of the good sleepers were in use within a few days in relaying at Burton Road. The Tram-siding was put in about 10 years ago, and appeared to be a very bad piece of work. It was, naturally, the best we could do at the time with the pitifully small resources and materials we had then. Our standards of work have risen so much that we could write a list of all the things we had done wrong 10 years ago. The curve down to the headshunt was replaced by plain track instead of a junction, cutting down the risk of derailment.

It is fascinating (to those with a technological interest) to see the prominent effect of a heavily used line running steeply downhill on a curve. The stock rails of the turnout being bolted to the chairs were fixed. The rest of the track had "walked downhill" as the pull of trains running uphill under power or down hill under brakes took its effect against the resistance of the keys holding the rails in place. All the joints above the junction had the rails tight up against each other as they moved to the bolted stock rails. All the rails below the junction had had their joints opened out — in one case to over an inch instead of the usual quarter-inch, showing how the "walking-downhill" had pulled every fishplate out to the limit.

In the same short space of time, the old main line back towards Hunslet Moor Coal Sraiths was relaid as far as the Motorway work

permits and the old Headshunt buffer-stops put in to make a tidy finish to the job. An Irishman who happened to be passing by with an excavator joined in and cleared the earthworks down to a good level for us, and Robinson and Birdsell's crane put the buffer stops in for us in just 30 seconds start to finish.

The next weekend was spent in completely clearing the rails between Burton Road and the next junction, and relaying with rails of standard lengths — 3 feet closure rails are not allowed, are a danger to traffic and a menace to the plate-layer to keep tight. The condition of the old track was more alarming after we had dismantled it — one 30 feet rail had 8 long holes in the web, and 6 chairs out of 10 were found to be broken even though seeming safe on casual inspection. "If in doubt replace it" is a good principle.

The junction where the goods trains turn off the main line for the long drop to Balm Road has always been non-standard and unsatisfactory, a hangover from the Fireclay Company days. It reached a state where in the interests of safety it could no longer be allowed to stay in.

"Make do and mend" would not do. We therefore added together some ex-LNER bits and some ex-LMSR pieces, and produced a very good C & 9 right hand turnout from two originally left hand components. The LMSR and LNER type junctions differ only by a sixteenth of an inch, so the mating to produce a kind of "M & G N Joint" effort was legitimate.

Long and careful pre-fabrication to exact measurements produced a complete assembly ready to drop in place as a unit. This was preferable to building up the work piecemeal with trains running over it as we did years ago with the Bottom Loop A & 6 junction.

The P.W.Planners thank all members who helped. In particular, Committee members who came down from Valhalla, got their coats off, and got dirty with as much apparent enjoyment as the P.W. "Regulars". Also thanks to the steam crane crew lead by Jim Lodge who whisked several tons of switches and common crossings about like magic.

We cannot rest on our Laurels — in fact we have to keep up this excellent pace for a long time to put our line in a state where we may safely consider regular carriage of passengers. This is no criticism of our pace in the past — it

THE OLD RUN

is a grim reminder of the state of track the Fireclay Company left behind them when they abandoned the line. We have the unenviable heritage of having taken over track in worse condition than any other 4' 8½" gauge Preservationists! There is a long list of jobs as large as the ones reported here.

Those of us who had spent 8 days continuously on the job (naming no names) looked at the finished job. To the unenlightened old and new track looks much the same, but Oh! how wrong they are. Along with Sir Christopher Wren, the Permanent Way Engineer can say, "If you require a monument to me, just look around!"

Historians please note that we still have in the permanent way text book a last relic of the 1758–1881 age when 4'1" was the Standard Gauge. On double track railways, the space between the tracks is the "Six Foot" (actually 6'5½" between running edges) and the space inside the rails is the "FOUR FOOT" NOT the "Four Eight and a Half". Another piece of ancient history awaits the observant, in that for miles of the Exeter and Bristol main line the "Six Foot" is more like 8 feet wide. This is because when the Broad Gauge was abandoned, in 1892, a standard "Six Foot" would have left a large hole between the carriages and the platforms, and it was easier to leave the tracks wider apart than to build the platforms inwards. Yet how many travellers can say they have actually noticed this obvious discrepancy?

RFY

'Prototype' Sentinel

Prototype Models of Rugby recently introduced to the model market a 4mm scale kit of the LNER Sentinel shunter, similar to our own beloved No. 54. This type of 'bodyline' kit employs a new idea in construction, and to model such an unusual (some would say unattractive) prototype with relatively little apparent sales potential would at first sight seem a rather risky venture by a new firm. However, the kit, along with several other LNER-based kits by the same firm, seems to be proving popular among the modelling fraternity. The Sentinel was the subject of a lengthy article in the December 1970 issue of Airfix Magazine, in which the manufacturer was commended for showing "a high degree of initiative".

The body of the Sentinel is made

up from parts which are cut from preprinted sheets of plastic, and cemented together. The standard of accuracy is extremely high, and the model is available in either black or green LNER livery.

The most suitable commercial chassis available is from the Triang X3121 diesel multiple-unit power car. The Sentinel body fits over this useful motor bogie like a glove. Raised details such as grilles also come on plastic sheet for attachment to the body structure, and cast white-metal buffers, handrail wire and knobs are all included.

Because the model is of some significance to Middleton, Tim White has obtained a supply of the kits for sale at exhibitions and to members. (Tim's address, for orders by post, is 66 Weetwood Lane, Leeds, LS16 5NH). The recommended price is 93p, and of course the cement and chassis must be obtained separately.

In a letter to the Trust, Mr. Ian Wilson of Prototype models, who designed the kit, said that he did not know of the existence of our Sentinel until a few months ago, and he would very much like to come and see it working this season. We look forward to his visit to our line, and dare we also look forward to more Middleton prototypes appearing in the model form?

TSW

No Metrics

At a recent meeting of the Permanent Way team, it was agreed that we should stay on Imperial Units and not go Metric. (Sounds of "Land of Hope and Glory" and "Long Live Queen Victoria" in the background). There is method in our madness, however, and this apparent unwillingness to move with the times has a logical explanation. Because of its lighter weight, its easier bending, and simplicity for manipulation in amateur hands, we are sticking to the use of Bullhead rails. All the diagrams and plans for Bullhead track use Imperial Units, as regards

sleeper spacings, check clearances and other vital dimensions. Although Flat Bottom plans are likely to go metric. Bullhead is now old-fashioned and unlikely to have all its plans modernised. In any case neither Stephenson's 4'8½" nor 4'1" 1758 Standard Gauge, nor Brunel's Broad Gauge give coherent metric dimensions. B.R. are, we hear, going metric with the rails vertical instead of being inclined at 1 in 20 as of yore, and the gauge will be nearer 4'8¾" with modern flat-bottom track. Our Mile-posts, when we have time to put them in, will naturally be every 440 yards starting from zero at Casson Close! In a way it is a pity we haven't had 4'8½" taken as the new Standard International Unit of distance. It is far more international than the yard or the metre both of which are arbitrary standards.

RFY

Trust initiative

The Transport Trust recently circulated to its affiliates a suggested procedure to be adopted before unwanted preserved items are disposed of. Under this procedure, owners would be requested to notify their intentions to the Trust, who would pass on the information to their affiliates, for publication to their members, and to the transport enthusiast press. The owner concerned would meanwhile be asked to take no action for six months after notifying the Trust.

Mech Eng news

We can too easily take for granted the fact that there is a locomotive available for moving traffic. Just think, members please, of the immense amount of hard work involved in producing the Better-than-ever condition of our Sentinel. Members will have heard briefly of the work in transferring an ex-Clayton's firebox and boiler to the ex-mixed gauge crane presented by Clyde Crane and Booth's of Rodley, as a replacement of the worn out old Clayton's boiler on it. Steam cranes need careful handling and the rebuilt crane's baptism in active service helping track repair work saved hours of manual labour.

All the spare parts for the ex-Midland Hand Crane have been made up to make it safe for operation on the smaller jobs. The simplicity of a crane which can raise or lower one click at a time is very helpful for jobs needing care and slow precision. Joe Lee is taking in hand

THE OLD RUN

the rebuilding of the rotten woodwork on the runner truck of this crane and repainting it. A bright shining crane is not only very useful, it is an excellent advertisement to the passing public.

We have found that merely by parking some wagons at Burton Road L.C., the public stay to watch and ask questions. Painting expert member Holliday has advised us on the easiest way to restore our Middleton coal wagon to the old style livery with a bright "MIDDLETON" painted each side.

RFY

ABC entry

When we saw the Keighley and Worth Valley timetable included in the B R official timetable we naturally asked for our visitors trains timetable to be included. The Eastern Region timetables are now compiled at York, not Liverpool Street, and we were not included. The quite understandable reason was that Worth Valley connect at a B R station, and we don't, also that B R had been deluged with enquiries wanting details of the Worth Valley, and this was the obvious way out for them.

It occurred to us that a famous Agatha Christie thriller dealt with a murderer who left an A B C Railway Timetable next to each body, starting with one at Andover, the next at Bexhill, then Churston Junction, finally being caught at Doncaster.

A letter to the publishers of the present day A B C produced a favourable response, and we shall appear in A B C monthly in future.

RFY

Briefly...

1 cwt. of fishplate bolts salvaged from the scrap pile were de-rusted, re-threaded and greased ready for use. New material is expensive when it runs to dozens! The average workshop time was about 5 minutes per bolt and nut.

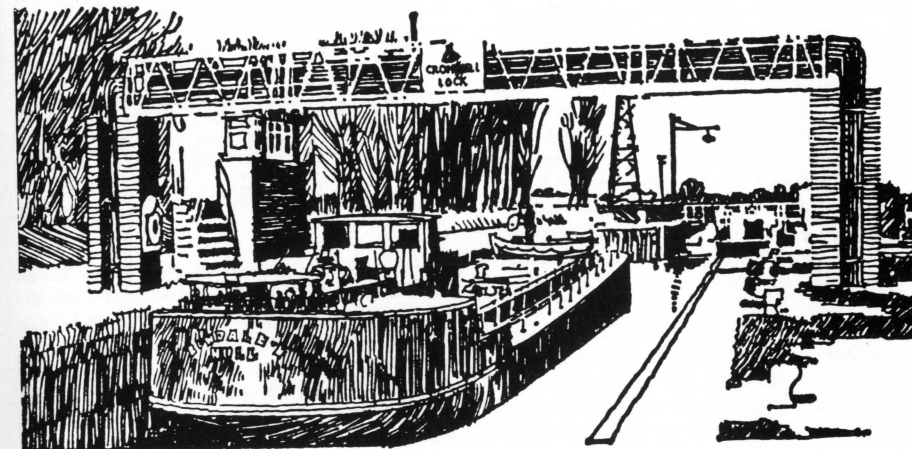
We have salvaged for preservation the Signal Box Nameboard from Hunslet Station Junction, a typical Midland type.

Leeds City Highways Department have kindly preserved the name signs of the streets to be demolished near our railway. So GASHOLDER STREET and PROSPECT TERRACE will go down to posterity.

After a very small start, the suggestion by a member that we collect waste paper for fund-raising is at last being taken seriously. Our Anglia Estate car entered the paper works recently with half a ton of paper packed inside and on the roof. Members please notify any Committee member, and have your waste newspaper tied up with string in bundles of (say) half a hundredweight.

RFY

THE OLD RUN



WATER ROADS

RAY GOSLING

In England when autumn comes cold and the chip shop smells inviting, think of how the fish are caught and brought in icy trawlers across a dark North Sea, making tracks, to the Humber Ports of Grimsby and Hull.

Last year, I discovered, and it was a real discovery, a waterway running inland from the Humber to Leeds, Wakefield, Sheffield and Nottingham. And in winter that path of water will be cold, and the ice have to be broken at four and five o'clock in the morning. It is a proper canal system like the Rhine is the Aire and Calder, Calder and Hebble, South Yorkshire and Trent Navigation. They are so totally different to the cruiseways of the Grand Union, narrow canals. These in Yorkshire are broad water roads. It's not a ship canal. Cargo does have to be taken out of ships in Hull and put into barges, but the barges are wide: 300, 400, 500 ton affairs. They are ten times larger than the narrow monkey boats. The navigation is straight.

There are few locks, and—biggest surprise—they have a lot of traffic: commercial.

To make my trip on the boats I first went to the British Waterways Board fleet headquarters at Hull—a big stone building opposite Corporation Pier—where I was interviewed, fixed up, and insurance checked. I was shown through to a Mr Pickbourne, in his shirt sleeves: the head man, gruff, lean, lined face. Been in water all his life.

"You leave according to the tides. That's the difference between us and the train and truck—the tides. You'll be going to Leeds. Your boat's the Gladys Lillian. Skipper'll be Colin Johnson—meet him in a minute. You're to be at the lockhead, Alexandra Dock, 3.45. I hope the fog lifts. I hope you get away and have a good trip."

He was a busy man, barking and wooing into the phone, concerning men and loads, screwing his eyes into tide charts. From the office the organisation of upriver barges

looked exciting, turning them round, loading them up and sending them back, inside, to the towns. Did he enjoy his work, I asked him? "Yes," he said, "if you can't stand heat you get out of the kitchen, don't you?" Was he happy with his industry? "Yes, canals is good and nothing cheaper, but not used enough. There's a great future, great potential. We had a container, you know, we were first in the container business. It was a very good advert on the dockside at Antwerp or Bergen—a British Waterways fibreglass container—from the heart of England—"The Waterway to the Continent"—but they never put capital in to develop it like the railways get today. When the containers got old, the board wouldn't pay for new ones ... sometimes we could be canals on Mars for all ... don't quote me ..."

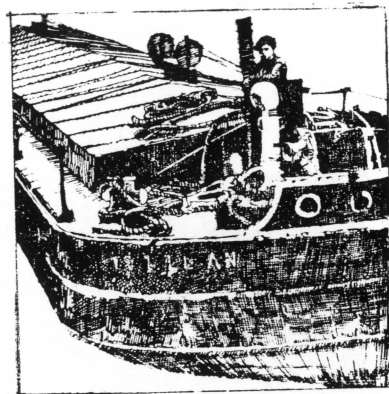
In fact, since I was there, advances have been made. There is now a proper standardised container berth at Leeds, opened this year. But then, August 1969, there was a certain bitterness, a wry shrug. I made a quick introductory handshake with the captain. "See you at 3.45" and that was that.

A great adventure. I called a taxi. It was a white Mercedes. We bounced across clean-washed Hull, no dust between the cobbles until the cabby said, "That's lockhead," just as matter of fact as the bus conductor says "Piccadilly." I was much too early.

The scene was like a location for a film about the resistance in occupied France. In a stone hut the other side of the lock of deep water, uniformed men played cards, drank tea, occasionally looked up. Violent orange lights on poles floodlit the area. A ship. A hooter. Railway trucks clatter and so still that sometimes the noise from my shoes walking on flags seemed unbearably loud. In a pool lay scores of barges: working boats, all asleep.

After some time old men in cloth caps arrive on bicycles. Why always is it the old who turn up early? Old women cleaning offices? Old men lumber from boat to boat, starting engines. My boat, Gladys Lillian, is the cleanest boat, parked neat, green canvas stretched tight over her load. No one comes for her. I get worried. "Aah," says a neighbour and he picks up a crowbar, comes onto Gladys Lillian and hits a hatch that's shaped like the fume extractor over a cooker in a restaurant. "Weyheywooaah" "Tha do," and he goes back with his stick.

THE OLD RUN



"Morning," says a head lifting the hatch. It's Captain Johnson. He goes to the wheelhouse, and simple and certain Gladys Lillian comes to life. I go down through the hatch—tiny hole, tiny steps, tiny cabin and there's a young fellow asleep in a bunk: half asleep.

Sharp face, the lad, he speaks with a gibber, blink-eyed, deft fingers. Mashed tea and we drank it in the wheelhouse all three of us from nice ordinary mugs. I discovered later that the captain, his Dad, is also a skipper and his father's brother, and his father's brother's son. But that was later. I think it was Geoffrey Moorhouse who once remarked about British Waterways Board being the most secretive people he'd ever come across. I got news. It's the same on the waterway.

Four o'clock as we slugged into the vast lock with many other boats, like sild in a tin one layer deep. Our lad, the mate, uses an old tyre on a rope to stop the boat grazing the stone lockside. A lot of animation as the water level changes. I wish I'd listened when the teacher told us how things float.

"Where they going—all these boats?"

"Most are just shunting, working the port: some Spillers, BOCM, maybe Selby."

It is very dark. We have a light up on a pole which is as much use as the light in a petrol gauge in your car. We must be in the Humber. I can see nothing, but can smell the timber and then fish. That would be St Andrews Fish Dock, Hull. There is a metal walk, a few inches wide, from the wheelhouse at the back of the boat some 120 feet either side of the cargo right up to the cabin at the front.

The walk—I suppose in fact it is the deck of the barge—is only a finger above the level of the Humber, tidal. We have lifejackets but

THE OLD RUN

no lifeboats. On the big 500 ton oil tankers that ply to and from Immingham, owned privately, they have lifeboat. Not us.

I was frit, cold and bored. It was the same for four o'clock into five o'clock. "That's Trent leaving us," and I could see nothing, into six o'clock. "Once a dozen boats a week to Nottingham in Fleet—British Waterways—but now is only one."

"What do they carry?"

"Wool and wire and food and paper. Stringless green beans from Red China. Lager from Copenhagen," into seven o'clock.

Seamen call canal barges "ditch crawlers."

The brown Humber at dawn is a mighty wide ditch.

Seven thirty. Goole.

By Pullman train from Hull to Goole is 29 minutes. It has taken us three and a half hours to Goole, what Hull folk call Sleepy Hollow. Goole: the Venice of Yorkshire. The only British town to have been built because of a canal by a canal company for the canal. And so late because Puffing Billy was on the rails when Goole opened in 1826 our most inland port, 50 miles from the sea. And successful. It's a canal town like Crewe is a railway town. See the church—very churchy because the Aire and Calder Navigation, as owners of the Port of Goole, were a very Anglican company. It's nice. We enter the locks with a huge German freighter: could easily crush us. Our lad skips off Gladys Lillian and runs into the streets of Sleepy Hollow for a bottle of milk and the morning paper. There is a Russian ship flying both the Hammer and Sickle and the Union Jack, side by side, unloading timber.

We're in the canal system now. Wharfingers and coal hoists and boatyards and the surprise is, for me, how busy. True, there are few British Waterways craft. Nearly everything we pass or passes us is privately owned by Harker, Hunt, Hargreaves, or Cawoods; Vic Waddington of Swinton near Sheffield, or Whitaker of Hull or Knottingley men. Most of them carry just one product and are specially built for their route and cargo—oil, grain, petrol, coal, tar. Some are new with radio phones. Some are old and grisly, driven hard by grim-faced old men who look neither right nor left in collar detached, waistcoat and braces. Some craft are so low in the water, they are all awash: it belied me how they stayed up. Some are as high in the water as a single decker bus.

Our first lock inside the Navigation was a surprise again to me because there were traffic lights. You rode in on a green into the lock with two or three others. All electric. You never have to leave the barge and you're up in five to ten minutes. Most locks are like that in Yorkshire. The Waterways Board began an electrification programme in 1958 and now it's done.

No hump bridge. No weeds. The banks are secured with steel plating. Surely, in the fields, folk are cutting cabbage and you can see dames' violet and ragwort. The mate fires with his air gun at birds. "No two agreements are the same on water except the signature at the end," Transport and General told me in Hull. Skipper's average wage will be £27 10s from a basic of around £17: the mate something less. No gaffer. Fresh air, and think of all the hundreds who sail on canals for pleasure. Even on the Aire and Calder I noticed just west of where we went under the main Kings Cross railway line there was a side cut for pleasure craft called Heck Basin—but this is primarily a working canal. I lie on the canvas in the sunshine. There is always another boat in sight. You are never far from industry.

"But you see they're daft. They've got none of that at Immingham. Coal Board have built a five and a half million pound terminal for shipping coal to the south and abroad and it's to be fed by merry-go-round trains. Why not use the canals? They've no brains, it's so cheap. And on a tom pudding you get just as much as on a merry-go-round."

A tom pudding? A tom pudding is the invention of the Victorian driving force behind the Aire and Calder—Mr Bartholomew. You have a tug and the tug pulls a jebus (towing piece) and behind that are 17 steel compartments interlocked. They are fed from colliery staithes and travel to Goole, where the puddings or pans or compartments, each holding more than 30 tons of coal are unlocked, and a hoist lifts them out of the water, and tips their content, via an anti-breakage device, into the hold of a South East Gas Board coaster that will carry the coal to the Thames, and Shoreham and Poole.

"Daft, the men in Leeds. They ordered new compartments and they designed them with square ends. Ever heard of square ends on water? Everything's round at the end on water. Even the streets in Goole have round ends."

We pass several tom puddings. In their way they are as unique as the Ironbridge coracle or the sailing wherry on a Norfolk broad, or the leggers of Blisworth. If you haven't seen a chain of tom puddings then you've missed one of the sights of England.

Anyway, Immingham apart, there are new power stations all along the Trent and Aire. At Ferrybridge "c," the colliery and the water are so close it's obvious. So for that job they designed a special pan, a super pudding of 100 tons. You have three of these and a tug pushes. But who gets the contract? Not British Waterways. In the old days, would Aire and Calder have let that go? But no, it's nationalisation now, and that little plum goes to a private firm—Cawoods-Hargreaves. I would think they do nicely.

"What's that—rugby league ground?"

"No, it's illuminated slag heap."

Although we are in rugby league country. Knottingley boat building. Ferrybridge. Brotherton. Castleford. Pigeon lofts and rose bay willow. Junctions, congested moorings, signposts and sophisticated "beam of light" traffic control. Kids throw bricks at you as you pass back yards. Girls whistle as they eat their fish and chips. It's lunch time.

The water changes from a muddy brown to a sour and filthy black. No one told me you could smell electricity but you can at Ferrybridge and the water seems to be boiling.

A small stretch of country, but the air has got thick and soon we're with the grablines of Leeds. Posh kids like locospotters gather at Woodlesford Lock and the water's like treacle. Texaco. Skelton Grange Power Station. The sewage plant for Leeds. Yorkshire Tar Distillery. We're there at Knostrop Depot. Leeds, a huge galvanised shed, where dockers can unload our 250 tons of plaster board. It is 3.50 and for 13 hours our diesel motor has chugged without stop. Now we can exercise our legs, and run for the bus through Hunslet to the station and the train back home. It's an hour and a half back to Hull. It is quicker. That's why the invention of the railway caught on.

Most railway companies bought up their competition and the canals they bought died. The Weaver in Cheshire and the Aire and Calder system were two the railway companies didn't buy and they flourished. The northern headquarters of British Waterways is still the grubby building on Dock Street, Leeds, bearing the legend, Aire and Calder.

Inside is a plaque to the navigation men who gave their lives in the war. It's a proud building inside: clean mosaic and polished brass, care and caution and some sourness about the men from Watford.

"They introduced a pleasure boat once. It wasn't quite the Lady Dolphin champagne cruise on the Yonne; took five days to do Nottingham and Lincoln and back. It proved a great success. It was popular with colonials. We still get bookings from the colonies, but it was stopped because they would not pay £1,000 for a new bottom to the boat."

And then I talked about tom puddings and they really warmed, beamed, and smiled and called in a man with rosy cheeks—"Show gentleman your model," and model came out of the tom puddings.

I said wasn't it a shame that the contract for super puddings went to Cawoods Hargreaves at Ferrybridge. No, they were not feeling like that. It was good. And after all we have the Rotherham pusher. Three pans pushed by a tug, general cargo. There is a prototype, being tested. It's going to succeed, and I think it will.

But what about when, in 1967, a proposal was put from people in British Waterways to the board for widening the locks on the Sheffield and South Yorkshire? It would have cost two and a half million pounds, and then craft of 400 to 500 tons could have used that canal instead of the present limitation of 250 tons. And that proposal was turned down by the board who did not even take it to the Minister of Transport.

Ah—but the Rotherham pusher can be extended. You could have barges, dumb boats, puddings—that actually were containers. A tug would push them to a ship and a hoist would stack them as they were on a ship like a container ship. Containers is puddings. But the Transport and General have not yet given their blessing. There are negotiations. It would be true to say, I think, that the Yorkshire canals, like the Yorkshire mines, have their bitterness: their regret that the nationalisation did not bring a new order. They have much the same hopes, and fears. But when miners say how coal could really be used I always think, is it right that men should dig like moles underground? You see on the canals you do get fresh air, and that filthy water at Leeds.

This article first appeared in the weekly social science journal "New Society", and is reprinted by kind permission of the publishers.