

OLD RUN NEWS

Newsletter of the Middleton Railway Trust

Number 36, September, October and November 1968

Middleton Colliery Railway - a Turning Point in our History

It is unusual for us to delay a newsletter for so long but we have been waiting for the conclusion of our negotiations with the N.C.B. These started when rail traffic ceased in June 1967 and the situation has now been reached when we have the prospect of obtaining the whole remaining part of the Railway and plenty of depot and museum space. All depends on how much money we can raise and full details are set out on a separate appeal sheet. March 1969 may be as vital a turning point at Middleton as were 1758, 1812 and 1960. Read carefully and reach for your wallets !

Autumn exhibitions etc. The Steam Gala in September broke all our modest records. At least 1500 people paid to come in- and in view of the many loopholes in our fencing we know that several more came in without paying ! The weather was kind to us, a splendid show was provided by both railway and road engines, music was magnificently provided by three steam organs and a pleasingly large number of members turned up to act as guides etc. Our particular thanks go to non-members who so cheerfully gave their services and donations.

We had the honour of a visit from a German Group of Railway Historians. Although we had only our usual grimy industrial scenery (and in this respect compared unfavourably with other amateur lines) they were delighted with the unusual character and historical nature of the line and the organised historical itinerary prepared for them. We perhaps forget that a ride in the brake van of a goods train is more unusual than any passenger train ride.

The Harrogate Bank Holiday Exhibition was a usual most successful- pressure on space by the many active Societies was very noticeable. The exhibitors visited the Railway on the Sunday in a near non-stop downpour of rain. Your sodden Publicity Officer was seen gesticulating wildly at the Level Crossing as she tried to stop the driver of the coach bringing the party- only to find that the visitors were intentionally driving away from the line as they wanted to visit further History up at Middleton! Enormous puddles in Clayton's yard failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the visitors however.

Operating matters The Fowler, after being back in service several weeks has been temporarily rested to trace faults in the gear box. The Sentinel's bearings have been overhauled and the engine is again operational. Both 'Windle' and 'Matthew Murray' have had boiler tests and will have hydraulic tests when further maintenance work has been carried out.

After a prolonged effort lasting nearly a year, the 22 h.p. Hunslet diesel from Courage's Alton Brewery has arrived. The story of its acquisition and transport will appear in the next Old Run. The engineer in charge of her is Tim Leech. Within a week of arrival the engine was handling traffic while the Fowler was under repair. Despite the small size and the laughter at the apparent lack of power, the loco. has shifted all our usual traffic without difficulty and will be invaluable for both Civil Engineering and regular traffic.

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The bridge over the line We have had our own Tay Bridge disaster !. The Beza Road footbridge has collapsed and will become as famous as the bridge over the River Kwai ! This footbridge was little used but carried a public right of way. (These tend to be sacrosanct) There seemed to be a complete lack of agreement as to whether the owners of the bridge or the Leeds Highways Dept, were responsible for the safe upkeep, certainly neither responded to our pleas for urgent repair work. One end of the bridge was turned through a right angle when Beza Road was built in 1962. The top part remained in its late- Victorian splendour. On a windy day in September the side railing collapsed, and we spent a day cutting the steel to avert risk to safety. Then the other side collapsed and vandals began to remove parts of the supports and it became obvious that it was unsafe to run trains under it. So finally on the first Saturday in October we took the Fowler, the steam crane and the brake van down there and removed the dangerous parts. To our surprise the concrete bridge contained many interesting strengthening materials including what appeared to be old narrow gauge wagon way rails.

Another Colliery Closure The N.C.B. nationally and understandably has stuck to steam locomotives in many places and a last ditch defence still goes on at Waterloo Colliery Leeds- with certain resemblances to our line. The closing of local pits appears to affect Waterloo thus leaving Leeds without its own coal for the first time in centuries. A farewell to this nationalised steam in Leeds has been organised - see separate sheet.

Welcome to new members T.Carr, Leeds; R.P.Thomlinson, Cheshire; J.Kitchen, Stockport; H.Partridge, Warwickshire; The Phillips family, Hyde; C.Stothard, Harrogate; L.Roper, Bradford; I.Pike, Chesterfield; T.Ronlinson, St.Albans; Mrs.D.Hebden, Leeds; Mrs.E.Lonsdale, Leeds; L.Addy, Leeds; G.Mann, Leeds; Mrs.M.Lander, Ilkley and Mr.C.Watkinson of Barwick in Elmet.

New Sales Items

Fourth edition of the Middleton Colliery Railway- the 20th.Century part completely rewritten. Price 1/6d plus 4d.postage

Middleton Railway Stock Book fully illustrated . Price 2/- plus 4d. postage.

Current Edition of Railway Forum Journal of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies .Price 2/- plus 4d. postage.

All obtainable from 34 Templegate Road, Leeds 15, LE15 0HE.

Postal Codes please let us know your new postal code so that the plates can be altered accordingly and don't forget to let us know when you move- sometimes I think we are supposed to have second sight because many of you just don't tell us.

FINALLY

Whether the purchase of the Colliery line is successful or fails depends on YOU We must raise this money. Never again will anything so historic come our way. If we fail, in all probability the site will become a ski-run ! And we shall have lost the opportunity to establish a home of our own. If we are successful we shall in all probability have a park built round us and the interest of the City Authorities in us. We don't expect you to find all the money but we do hope that you will try to raise funds amongst relations, friends, neighbours, workmates etc. We have only got until Mid-March- please, please don't let us fail.