

THE OLD RUN

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

Many thanks indeed to the members who provided articles, reports and photos for this issue. 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 them to be returned after use, or put into the Middleton photo archive.

Material for the Winter Issue should reach the Editor by 1st December 1996, at the very latest, please.

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Cover picture: 1310 hauls its train away from Moor Road Station on 18th August 1996, with *William* to the left and *Courage*, a.k.a. *Sweetpea*, watching from the shed entrance. (*Sweetpea* was said to be doing just that in the caption to the lower photo on p.11 of the Summer issue. However, the printers obviously thought the photo looked better with the two main locos centre-picture and poor *Sweetpea* disappeared on to the cutting room floor, as the saying goes.)

Photo: Keith Hartley

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A VERY WARM WELCOME to the following members who have joined or rejoined the Middleton Railway Trust since preparation of the Spring 1996 issue:

Colin and Anne Ward; Trevor England; Tony, Joyce, Ruth & Timothy Bell; Paul, Catherine, Thomas & Nicholas Jenkins; Wayne, Amanda & Richard Dobson; Rosalind, Steven, Bethany & Hannah Pike; Stephen, Alma, Georgina, Suzanne & Robert Barraclough; Janet, Anthony & Andrew Taylor; Paul Coops; Martin Simpson; Stefan Andrusiak; Jordan Lapping; Pat & Aaron Cronin; Janice & Craig Price; Keith Peterson; Christopher Boocock; Terry Sykes; I. Armitage; Alan Hardaker; Peter, Wendy & Joseph Hall; Duncan Young; A.J.C. & B.M. Coops.

Saturday 23rd November
1500hrs

GUARDS' GATHERING

an essential training session for all MRT
Guards, also trainee & prospective Guards.

Training led by Mr. Geoff Saunders

Free buffet tea

Your chance to meet together with other
Guards, brush up on your skills and
discuss the burning issues of the day!

Book your place now by telephoning
Brian Wood on 0113 294 8955

FROM THE CHAIRMAN Ian Smith

The 1996 season came to a spectacular close on 28th & 29th September, with our usual end of season Gala. This event used no less than eight steam locos, seven of which were ours! The eighth was *Lion*, a very nice Peckett 0-4-0ST visiting from the Foxfield Light Railway, Staffordshire.

We also had Radio Leeds broadcasting live from the station on the Saturday, and this certainly improved our visitor figures on that day! Sunday was an absolutely dreadful day, with torrential rain, and this dented what I am sure would have been record visitor numbers. Despite the weather, however, we had an

excellent financial result.

Whilst everyone who took part in the Gala deserves the highest praise, I feel I ought to go out on a limb and congratulate Alan Gilchrist, who not only planned the event but also played responsible officer on both days with commendable efficiency and no loss of hair, despite one or two unexpected hitches here and there.

We now prepare for Santa and *Thomas*, though we are also operating every normal Sunday until the end of the year.

After that, well, it's trackwork again! We have to relay at least another six lengths with concrete sleepers and, bluntly, they ain't going to lay themselves! **If anyone can spare the odd weekend or two in the New Year, we would be very pleased to see them helping to lay track!**



1310 returns across Moor Road after an expedition down the Balm Road Branch. (Note also the fine new station gates, which Howell-Blys Engineering Ltd. have produced nicely in sympathy with the basic design of the original level crossing gates.) Photo: Keith Hartley



Above: Liz Green, from Radio Leeds, alongside 385 at Moor Road Station. Her broadcast went out live via aërials on the coach roof, a receiving aërial at the station entrance, and a large mast on the radio car parked beside the entrance. Below: 385 and 1625 sandwich the old brakevan at Park Halt, during a special Gala Day run. Both photos: Keith Hartley



LOCO NOTES

John Wilkinson

Despite Sheila's comment in the last *Old Run* about the speed at which I delivered the last Loco Notes, I have been unable to deliver on this occasion due to pressure of my own work and the pre-Gala preparations. However there is always a benefit somewhere, and these notes can now reflect all the major events of the summer season.

9599 William has seen further service during the summer and has had one or two running repairs carried out during the season to leaking joints and to cure steam leaks. It has appeared at the Vertical Boilers weekend and also at the recent Gala.

1625 You will remember the up beat comments regarding this loco in the last notes; unfortunately it had a trick up its sleeve for me shortly afterwards!! Whilst in the middle of the Teddy Bears' Picnic weekend, the injector failed again and more work was required.

Due to the efforts of Graham Parkin and Andy McKenna, both of whom are much thinner than me and can get into the water tank, the water system was cleaned and filters installed, so that dirt will not reach the injector and block it up. The loco has recently passed its boiler test, and Nigel Crowther has fitted a Driver's seat! It has performed reliably over the Gala and will see service throughout the Winter.

1882 Mirvale is now back in traffic and performing as reliably as ever.

68153 Following completion of the

boiler test a successful visit was made to the Worth Valley Railway where the Sentinel operated brake van rides and an evening charter train.

1601 Arthur Little further progress due to the summer operating commitments.

67 All tubes have now been removed and the boiler washed out, further work will continue over the Winter.

1310 Running reliably in traffic although approaching its mid term boiler test. A successful visit to the Foxfield Railway was made at the end of July and we have recently seen the Peckett *Lion* on a return visit at our Gala.

7051 Running well and winning many accolades from all quarters for the quality of its restoration.

91 & Rowntree No.3 both in traffic and running reliably.

All other locos are as they were last reported.

Y7 ON TOUR, 1996

John Wilkinson

Earlier this year, we received an approach from the Foxfield Railway to borrow the **Y7** for their Gala, on the basis that they could disguise the loco as **NCB 64**. This was for two main reasons, firstly the railway has always been industrial and no main line locos have run on it and, secondly, it would attract many photographers gaining both railways free publicity. The move was finally agreed and, after a repaired spring had been re-fitted, the loco left Moor Road on a low loader on July 22nd, bound for the Foxfield Railway

near Stoke-on-Trent.

The **Y7** was built in Gateshead in 1891 and worked for the North Eastern and London & North Eastern Railways until 1929, when it was sold into industrial service at the Pelaw Main collieries in the North East, Watergate in particular. During this period, which lasted until 1965 when the loco was acquired for preservation by the Steam Power Trust, the **Y7** was known as **NCB 64** - although it never lost the identity of **1310** because this number was also carried on the tank sides.

In preparation for the visit, Alan Gilchrist - who arranges the loco moves - and I visited Foxfield to "learn the road". The passenger services run from Blythe Bridge, Caverswall Road, to Dilhorne Park with a freight only line running into the old Foxfield Colliery from Dilhorne Park and a freight only branch to the exchange sidings at Blythe Bridge (BR). The railway was constructed in 1893 to carry coal to the main line from Foxfield Colliery. The line undulates with quite steep gradients, 1 in 18 out of Foxfield Colliery is the maximum gradient, so the freight guards are kept busy pinning down the wagon brakes for the descent to the colliery and also to the exchange sidings, where there are some similarly steep gradients also.

In terms of performance, the **Y7** was obviously an unknown quantity: we do not ask very much of it when operating our passenger service. From the Foxfield perspective, a loco with 14 inch diameter cylinders is regarded as small, with 16 or 18 inch cylinders being regarded as the norm.

1310 performed very well,

surprising everyone with the power available; most of the heavier work was done with lever in full gear and regulator just nudged into the main valve. Elsewhere, the small valve of the regulator sufficed when not coasting. Much to the relief of all, the bearings and axleboxes stayed cool despite the extra effort asked of the locomotive.

On Friday 26th July, the **Y7** was steamed and prepared, following which the engine was given a test run with Nigel Brasier from Foxfield. The engine steamed well, and when we got to the colliery we did some shunting in the small yard there. I was joined by Alan Gilchrist and Andy McKenna later in the day, and the duties on the loco were shared over the weekend with Foxfield providing a pilot driver.

Over the weekend of July 27/28 the Gala took place and nine locomotives were in steam including a huge 52 ton Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn 0-6-0T. The **Y7** was double-headed with Robert Heath locomotive No.6, which was built in 1886, for the weekend.

The working timetable was quite a document, and we were kept very busy both days, finishing between 7 and 8 p.m. each evening. On Friday 2nd August the **Y7** worked a freight charter for photographers and was photographed a million times, mainly on Foxfield Bank handling a freight train made up of between four and six 16 ton wagons and brake van single handed. The loco acquitted itself very well on the steep gradients, being sure footed even when it rained.

The reception we received was very warm and friendly, and our thanks

go to all at Foxfield for their hospitality; we have a new group of friends for the railway. Chairman Dave Scragg and Chief Engineer Dave Donkin, along with many others, made sure that we always had everything we needed to do the job. Thanks are also due to haulier Duncan Milner and his mate Bill Parton, both Foxfield members, for their care and attention in ensuring the **Y7**'s road journey was successful.

For those who haven't yet visited Foxfield, I recommend a visit; you will see industrial locos working hard in a lovely setting. Make sure you go on a day when the Foxfield catering

corps is at work, because they serve a Staffordshire delicacy called oatcakes, which come with a variety of fillings and should not be missed. There is also a bar car on the train, which serves a variety of beers and soft drinks.

By the time you read this article we should have received many photos of the **Y7**, and you will have probably seen it in the railway magazines in its disguise. I've tried to keep the article reasonably short to allow plenty of room for photos and I'm sure that the editor will publish as many as possible.

The loco is now safely back at Middleton and in NER livery!



1310 pictured at Dilhorne Park, double-heading a demonstration freight train with the Robert Heath 0-4-0ST No.6, which was built in 1886. The photographer's father mentioned that "Rumour has it that the locos were coupled the opposite way round at first but, with No.6 being so much smaller than 1310, the crew of the latter felt a bit uncomfortable with its exhaust whistling past their ears!" Photo: Andrew Plumb



Coaling-up 1310 at Foxfield, against a backdrop of the colliery. Photo: Robin Stewart-Smith [How many members can recall a visit long ago to the then very newly preserved Foxfield line, arranged by the Chairman of our railway's junior members, young Ian Smith? Despite the delay when our d.m.u. fell foul of the 'wrong sort of ice' on its way across the Pennines, necessitating a high speed dash across Manchester to 'the other station', it really was a most enjoyable visit to a railway quite like our own was at that time, with a colliery landscape at one end of the line. -Editor]



Robert Heath 0-4-0ST No.6 and 1310 haul a demonstration goods train northwards up the bank towards Blythe Bridge during a brief but heavy downpour. Photo: Martin Plumb

In Search Of The Middleton Railway ~ A SOUTH LEEDS SAFARI Phil Durrell

Then suddenly I felt very alone. Rather like the usual number of votes for the Norway entry into the Eurovision Song Contest (Une Pouit) or the person who **could** tell Stork from butter in the supermarket challenge (old advert) I found that I was the only one among many, and frankly I wasn't really too keen about it.

So, while I sat, wallowing in the strange feeling of solitary confinement yet surrounded by so many people who only a few minutes previously had been my friends I wondered why, like Poland, I had been so annexed. After all, all I had said was that I had become a member of the Middleton Railway. And then I thought why? Yes, why? Why should I feel so put out when, in my mind at least, and more importantly, as far as I was concerned, I had made a jolly good move.

My association with the Middleton started donkeys years ago, when steam hadn't long stopped blackening Wight, when memories of *Madras* at Farnley Junction didn't mean a hot curry, and when the numbers 4-4-2 weren't automatically associated with the latest formation of the England football squad. Early on, one late Autumn day, armed with more good intent than any useful real directions, I set out

on a mysterious quest to visit a very just developing Middleton Railway. A trip made all the more interesting because I really hadn't a clue as to where to go.

True, I had seen some grainy photographs in some magazines, the primitive nature of the subject matter being very apparent, and the odd, infrequent report about steaming days and even some very Spartan details of a rare enthusiast passenger service, but other than that the most I had to go on regarding its location was "around Leeds". But that was enough. With the kind of blind faith and determination that I would find it somehow, no matter what, and a pioneering spirit that Dr. Livingstone would be proud of, I set sail (or rather, set DMU!) from my home in York to boldly go where no man had been before (or so it felt), and arrived in Leeds to turn up at a bus stop near the Corn Exchange. Here I made my first real effort to go further by asking some of the more friendly natives around me (no doubt taking time off from walking their whippets, eating tripe, tending their racing pigeons and looking for new flat caps) the way to what was essentially a steam railway.

The responses I got were far from encouraging. "A steam railway . . . round here . . . don't know owt about that" . . . or "I know there's a museum in York" or "Yer sure it's Leeds you want?" were typical efforts to help, and I even got from a better-informed individual "There's summat at 'owarth - that's near Keighley yer know" . . . and they were the best. One couple I asked disagreed so ardently not only as to where it was I should go but which bus I would be better catching (to nowhere in particular it would appear!) that they became so animated that passers-by on the footpath stopped to watch, no doubt in the hope a fight would break out. Eventually, it was a kindly bus driver (remember when they existed?) who gave me the best advice. Catch a bus to Middleton, he said. So I did.

Disturbingly, this gave cause to a new kind of problem. It's one thing being lost when you know where you are (the centre of Leeds, for instance) but it's a different thing altogether to be lost on board a bus where you don't know where you are (or going, for that matter) and you're moving about as well. After a few minutes of trundling past reasonably familiar landmarks, we moved into some very residential areas I hadn't a clue about, and further questions about the Middleton Railway and its whereabouts to my fellow passengers (and the driver) got no positive response, rather like Scott of the Antarctic asking his huskies the best way to the South Pole (turn right at the next iceberg, then straight on for three thousand mile) as all I got were even more confusing messages. So I decided the best thing to do was keep a hard look-out from upstairs front windows, rather like a whaler of old keeping watch from the crow's nest of his sailing ship, ready to shout "There she blows" at the first tell-tale giveaway clouds of steam and then jump off at the next stop.

Trouble was, clouds of steam aren't a particularly unique landmark, I found to my cost, and it was only after a fruitless visit to a chip shop in full fry and a rather smoky backyard bonfire, that I realised there was a flaw to my argument and I (hypothetically speaking, as it were) needed to go back to the drawing board. I must have walked miles, and just to make sure I didn't enjoy too much the prospect of an endless walk round never-ending streets, it began to rain. The kind of rain unique to Yorkshire, which seeps through waterproof clothing as if it wasn't there, and even

penetrates upwards from your socks. It would have got any lesser person down. I admit to being a lesser person.

In fact, it was very near the point of my theoretical keeping going becoming a very near an actual sod this for a lark, give it up as a bad job and go home when, blessed with the sense of direction of a headless chicken, I stumbled down a black back street and came face to face with a very alien (and Dutch looking) little 0-4-0 WT, made to look all the more diminutive by its huge chimney. When I say face to face, it was actually trapped behind a high wall of railings (in case it escaped, no doubt) but it was as good as. To its rear was a further collection of worse-for-wear looking locomotives and wagons, but more importantly, beyond them, the steamy shape of a peppy-whistled, shuffley little 4 wheeled saddle tank, pushing an open wagon and a brake van around. I had arrived.

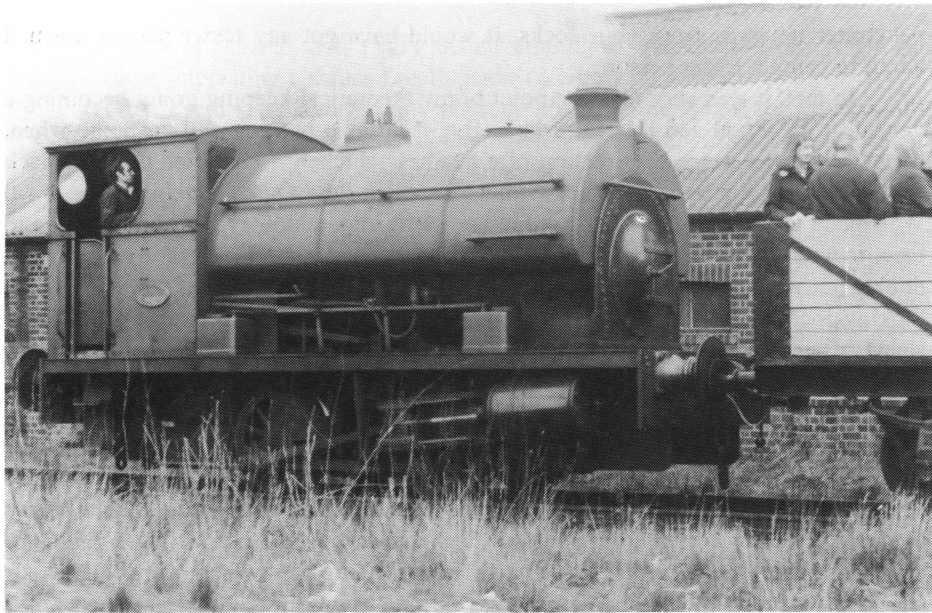
And, indeed, so I stayed, until the day's proceedings drew too soon to a close, drinking in the drizzle and smoke smuts as we charged uphill and rattled and clattered down, either from the *al fresco* accommodation of the open wagon or basic comfort of the brake van (where at least the glowing stove gave you a chance to dry out before the next outward assault). Given that in my state of arrival I felt more depressed than the weather, I was also surprised to hear the strange sounds of laughter and people enjoying themselves - some of which strangely seemed to be coming from me. I even had sympathy offered from some of the staff working the train about the lengths I had to go to to get there, which prompted one or two to say that they could do with some signs up couldn't they. A bit like the captain of the Titanic saying "Swimming Pool's open" I thought . . . but even so, the good intent was there.

Since that day, probably made all the more memorable by the desperate lengths I went to to reach my goal, I have returned many times. Now with a wife and family, and the knowledge of how to get there without going via the pretty route involving an additional twelve miles, we have had some excellent times and, with the phenomenal good value which Membership of the Railway constitutes, visited as frequently as possible, making many friends on the way other than the inevitable Postman Pat and Fat Controller.

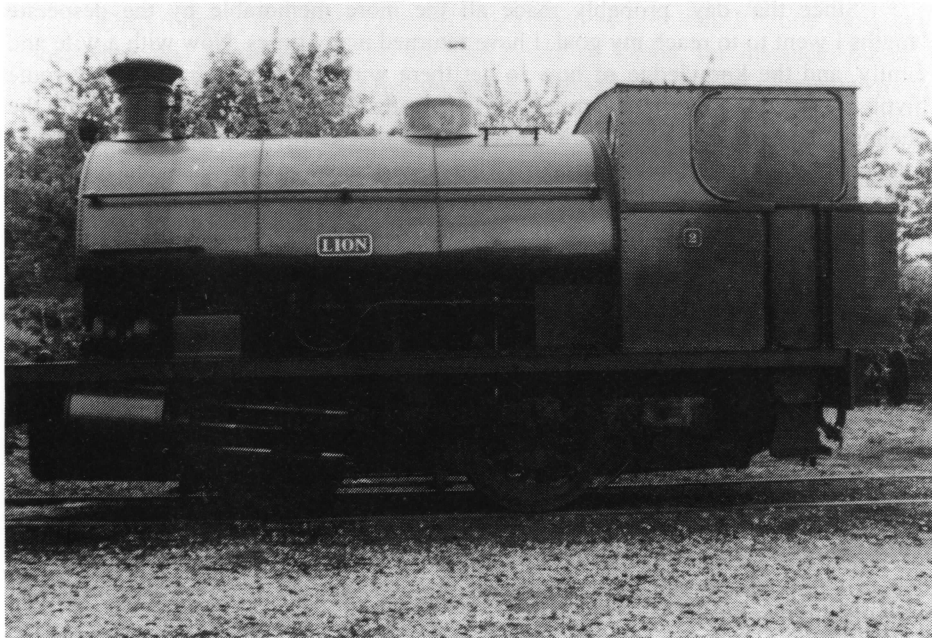
So, perhaps the Middleton doesn't have the near hospital cleanliness of the Severn Valley, or the rugged splendour of the North Yorkshire Moors, or engines with top link status like the East Lancs. What it does have is lots of hope, enormous enthusiasm from too few people, and a friendly atmosphere second to none. Why, I can even remember having seen the Publicity Officer and the Chairman occasionally smile . . . though it was some time ago, now I think about it.

So, there we are. Fact is, that it's those people who are not either members or regular visitors who are losing out on a railway which, whatever it may lack in operation distance, it certainly makes up with on darned good, old fashioned friendship and hospitality.

One final point, since the day I was laughed at for becoming a member, at least one of those who found it so amusing has had the good sense to join, and I'm working on the others



Above: perhaps Phil will correct me if I'm wrong, but during the period about which he seems to be writing, the "peppy-whistled, shuffley little 4 wheeled saddle tank" would surely be P2003, *John Blenkinsop*, which is a good excuse to remind members what this popular little loco looked like when in steam! (Seen here c.1974.) Below: Foxfield's Peckett *Lion*, seen at Moor Road whilst on its exchange visit to the Middleton Railway. Both photos: Sheila Bye



. . . and, to complete 'Peckett corner', P2103 is seen above, shortly after its return to Moor Road this summer. This locomotive, a younger sister of *John Blenkinsop*, spent some time with us during the 1980's before being moved elsewhere. Photo: Keith Hartley

THE 'RAILWAY WORKS' BUTTERLEY STREET, LOCOMOTIVE BRASSWORK, CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE, and THE BIRTH OF THE MOVIES

Henry Gunston

Firstly, my thanks to Dave Johnson for his full response in the last *Old Run* to my article titled 'Newcomen, Newts, Tramscapes and Telford Terrace'. I myself only started exploring Hunslet and Holbeck on the ground in the early 1970's, so I always read the memories of long-term Leeds residents with great interest.

In my article I asked about the "Railway Works (Engineering)" which was shown on the 1906 O.S. map on the south side of Hunslet Road and the east side of Butterley Street. Thanks to records in the Leeds Local History Library, including a fascinating book titled *The Missing Reel: The Untold Story of the Lost Inventor of Moving Pictures* by Christopher Rawlence, I can now offer the first results of my research.

The premises are now the Torbay Works of Medasil (Surgical) Ltd., silicone and hospital surgical product manufacturers, and they lie between the Crown Point Printing Works ("Alf Cooke's") and the Crown Point Retail Park. Above the main entrance door can be seen the intertwined (although slightly damaged) initials "W P". These indicate earlier owners, Whitley Partners, who were engineers and brass founders. The firm had its origins in a business started by Joseph Whitley in 1844, which developed to supply all manner of brass components to the fast developing locomotive building and other engineering industries of Hunslet. Although Joseph had earlier premises elsewhere, the first entry I have so far found in Leeds street directories for "Whitley Partners, brassfounders" with a Hunslet Road address was in 1872. In the 1880 directory, the premises were titled as the "Railway Works".

Moving right forward, the 1961 directory carried an entry "Whitley Partners Ltd., Engineers, Valve Makers, Railway Works, Butterley Street", and there was a similar entry in telephone directories up to 1969, after which I could find no entry for Whitley Partners. Mike Scargill remembers that E.J. Arnold & Son, Ltd., the educational suppliers, took over the premises, and this is confirmed from telephone directories. Arnold's had a Butterley Street address from 1969, which was later listed as their Head Office. In the early 1980's, however, their main address was in Warneford Avenue, Ossett. The "Torbay Works, Hunslet Road, Butterley Street" address for Medasil (Surgical) Ltd. first appeared in the 1981 telephone directory. Their address in 1980 was in Grant Avenue, Leeds 7, so it seems that Medasil took over the "Railway Works" premises from Arnold's in 1981.

Christopher Rawlence's book also revealed two fascinating personal connections with the "Railway Works". Firstly, Joseph Whitley was actively involved in the project to erect Cleopatra's Needle on the Embankment beside the Thames in London in the late 1870's. Secondly, his son-in-law (at one stage active in the brass fittings business) was none other than Louis Aimé Augustin Le Prince, the pioneer of moving pictures. In 1888 he patented a one-lens camera with which he first filmed his family in Oakwood and then - Rawlence suggests in 1889 - the traffic on Leeds Bridge from what is now the British Waterways office building. As the Civic Trust blue plaque at the southeast corner of the bridge records: "These were probably the world's first successful moving pictures."

I hope to add further details on my researches into Joseph Whitley, Augustin Le Prince and the one-time "Railway Works" in a later issue of *The Old Run*. My thanks to Colin Price and Jennifer Horne of the Leeds Local History Library. Part of the pleasure of researching there is to climb the amazing staircase within the Municipal Buildings which leads up to the Reference Library floor. All around are wrought iron screens, marble pillars and brightly coloured tiles. The balustrades are populated with fearsome wild beasts, which fortunately seem more intent on attacking each other than mauling innocent library users.

[Despite living in Oxfordshire, Henry is adept at rooting out interesting Leeds local history items! His letter accompanying this article mentioned as an epilogue to the Tetley Saga (see Spring issue), that at the end of August came news of the merging of the Tetley combo with another brewery giant. As Henry put it "A pint of Bass-Carling-Carlsberg-Tetley's, please!"]



A unique view of *Mirvale* and train, taken from about 60 feet up, aboard a hot air balloon, during a Heart Foundation event near Park Halt on 15th September! Photos: Keith Hartley





Above: *Sir Berkeley* getting up steam at Moor Road Station on 2nd June, minus the safety valve cover which is a prominent feature of the photo below. Photo: C. Nicholson
 Below: *Sir Berkeley* on 13th October, with the city skyline in the background and Membership Secretary Mike Scargill in the centre foreground. Photo: Keith Hartley



TIMES PAST - AUTUMN 1813

Sheila Bye

Kenton, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2nd September 1813:

On the date named above we wend our way towards the "Old Engine" Pit just below Kenton Village; and whilst walking there along the waggon-way we come across some men who are working upon the left-hand rail. This rail is different from that on the other side, because it has teeth, or peg-like projections, standing well out on its outside edge. On inquiry, we are informed by one of the workmen that these pegs, or racks, are for the new travelling engine's driving cog-wheel to grip into and so push it along the rails. Until, however, we see the engine, we do not grasp fully what all this means. There are crowds of people, all in their "Hopping Day" garb, converging upon this one spot. We wonder if we will get a view at all of the iron horse even when we arrive at the pithead.

However, we do manage, after a great deal of pushing to crowd down the narrow lane, in which the waggon-way lies, and so find ourselves in the colliery yard . . . But of Blenkinsop's engine we at present can see little other than its tall narrow chimney, out of which is pouring clouds of black smoke, and a great cloud of white steam which, as it leaves the safety valve, creates a deafening roar. As this noise increases, the people, who were crowding in, gradually draw further away. Evidently they are afraid of the boiler bursting. This is good for us because we now find ourselves quite in the front row, as it were.

Here before us is the engine. Its boiler, of wrought iron plates riveted together, is resting upon an oaken frame, which is in its turn carried upon five wheels. [See footnote, p.21] Standing on the wooden frame - which is really the "bed-plate" of the engine - is the driver. He is on the right side doing something to the cylinders. At the rear of the engine is the stoker, who is standing on the waggon with the water butt. At this moment he is "firing up" and in so doing is trying to outdo the pumping engine's furnace in the blackness of its smoke. From a collier standing by we learn that the driver is tightening up the throttle or starting lever.

Away behind the "tender" stretch a matter of 16 heavy chaldron coal wagons full of superb black diamonds - Kenton coal. "To haul this load is equal to dragging a weight of 70 odd tons," says a man quite close to us.

We are getting impatient: we want to see the engine do something other than belch smoke and blow off steam; and there are evidently others even less patient, because one collier has just called out: "Hey marrar, when are ye gannin'?" and he is quickly followed by: "How way man, Jack, git her started!"

But the engineman is waiting for his signal to move . . . At last it is given by the firing of a horse pistol, and the driver pulls the throttle open. There is an even greater roar of steam than before, but this time it is from the exhaust pipe up between the cylinders. One of the horizontal beams suddenly rises and another just as suddenly goes down, and the long steel connecting rods seem to be suddenly convulsed; they wobble and change position in an amusing fashion. Here the waggonway runs down the side of the cartroad to Coxlodge. The engine, with a continuous grinding, groaning, screeching, and snorting, continues its slow journey up the hill until it comes to the dip down to Coxlodge, and here it increases its speed with a corresponding lessening of discordant sounds, such as the grinding of the engine's cogwheel on the rack-rail and the screeching of the engine's carriage wheels. This latter awful sound is, we find, upon inquiry, caused by the "back-lash" of the tyres of the engine's carriage wheels against the rails. This is due to the left bias of the driving cogwheel and not, as we thought, to the lack of grease on the bearings.

We judge the speed of the engine uphill to be about 3 miles per hour, but downhill it is doing quite twice that amount: six to seven easily. The roar of escaping steam, the rattle and bang of the wheels and the coupling chains, and the deep throated cheering of the spectators

all help to make the scene a memorable one indeed for all concerned. It is unfortunately, however, noticeable that the horsemen - the men who drive the coal waggons - are not enthusiastic, but rather the reverse.

The engine is now well down the waggon-way, the last of the great waggons, now all crowded with colliers, girls and lads, as well as coals, is just rattling and swinging past us, when suddenly we see her swing over to the left as if leaving the track altogether. Then we remember that here the way swings round rather sharply to Coxlodge and we breathe freely once again. At this juncture, she is almost broadside on, when the September sun strikes upon her, creating an ever-to-be-remembered picture. And then the train gradually disappears, being slowly swallowed up by the trees and hedges which here enshroud the road. And our last and never-to-be-forgotten impression of this day, and its history making experiment, is the sight of the sturdy little engine and its long train of crowded waggons as they disappear round the curve in the road. As we turn to leave the scene we hear some rather adverse criticism coming from a small group of workmen, one of whom we recognise as George Stephenson. He is saying to his friend Heppel: "I think I could make a better engine than that to go on legs." We naturally wonder if he has heard, as we have done, of Brunton's patent "Mechanical Traveller." The event we have just witnessed together was the trial of the first engine supplied by Fenton and Murray to the Kenton way.

The horsemen and their boys, so it is alleged, used to place stones between the teeth of the rack-rail with sometimes disastrous results to the teeth of both the rackrail and the driving wheel of the engine when it passed over. The "creasers" (plate-layers) often forgot (?) to replace the sunken or uprooted stone sleepers - squared stone blocks.

This sinking, or uprooting, was caused by the terrific strain exerted by the locomotive's cogged driving wheel in its uphill pull upon the rack-rail. Such sabotage caused the company heavy financial losses through delays in the transit of their coals. Indeed, they were so heavy that they bowed to public (?) opinion as expressed by intimidation, and so scrapped the rack and pinion system of locomotion.

This quarter's 'Times Past' quote forms a large part of an article written for a Tyneside newspaper by R.N. Appleby Miller, and published c.January 1928. Mr. Miller was a senior librarian in the area, and a much respected man who was something of an expert on local early railways. Having decided to use his colourfully evocative account of the impact upon the community which must have been made by the advent of the steam locomotive, I was intrigued to come across another of Mr. Miller's works during an early railways Workshop at the N.R.M. Three delegates from the Beamish Museum, as well as giving extremely interesting presentations about their recent researches, had brought along "handouts" - copies of a selection of documentary evidence about early railways and locomotives, among which was an article written by R.N.A. Miller for the Heaton Works Journal, of December 1936.

The article was based on what purported to be an eye-witness account from the (now disappeared) diary of Thomas Paisley, of Fotherley, Minsteracres, near Riding Mill, County Durham, and it bears a remarkable resemblance in style and content to the article quoted above, except that it is an account of the first trial of William Chapman's chain-driven locomotive. The Beamish researchers already had profound suspicions of the 'diary' account, but the truth of the matter is not certain - Mr. Miller may actually have had access to such a diary and might have based his 1928 account of the Kenton locomotive on the diarist's style of writing (though this does not seem genuinely old), or both accounts might be entirely of his own creation.

According to Mr. Miller, the first mention of a colliery at Kenton was in 1577. By 1707, perhaps even in 1688, Kenton Colliery had a waggonway to the River Tyne at Scotswood, c.4 miles upriver from Newcastle. In 1715, the colliery was flooded and the waggonway was curtailed to serve only a pit lying nearer to the river. Eighty one years later, Kenton Colliery was revived by the driving of a three miles long tunnel to drain the pit and also to act as a waggonway route directly from the coal-face. The tunnel was devised by the viewer, Christopher Bedlington, and was known as 'Kitty's Drift', presumably from 'Kit' - the old diminutive of Christopher.

A long description of Kitty's Drift by a tourist who visited it in 1807 is quoted in full on p.p.324-6 of Mike Lewis's excellent *Early Wooden Railways*. The tourist's trip started at the river staith, where he took up position in one of:

a set of small empty coalwaggons, capable of containing two persons each, seven of which are drawn along a railway by one horse. As soon as you are placed, with your candles lighted, you set off at full speed, with a boy in the first waggon, for your charioteer, into a tunnel, or subterraneous passage six feet high, about the same breadth, and three miles in length.

To one side of the waggonway was a channel for the water which was being pumped out of the workings; there were occasional wider sections with passing-loops. The writer records that at the time the waggonway's terminus, East Kenton Pit, was quite a minor tourist attraction, even among ladies (normally excluded from mines), a visit usually being facilitated by the distribution of a few shillings to the waggon boy and any other helpful worker. The account relates that the waggons went "**very smoothly and pleasantly up the tunnel, on an inclined plane . . . at the rate of ten miles an hour, making a reverberatory noise resembling thunder**" because of the speed and the clanking of the coupling chains. The waggonway ended at the coal-face.

Kitty's Drift, alas, was comparatively short-lived, being superceded in 1808, only a year after the tourist's visit, by the construction of the iron-railed Kenton and Coxlodge Railway. The Coxlodge Colliery, north of Kenton, had not previously had railed transport to the river. The new railway ran from the pits in the opposite direction to that of Kitty's Drift, westwards to staiths at Wallsend, downriver from Newcastle. Presumably this would enable the coal owners to avoid paying river tolls at Newcastle, and the Drift was henceforth almost entirely used for drainage, completely so after a roof-fall in 1810. It was on the Coxlodge to Wallsend line that the Murray-Blenkinsop locomotive began work in September 1813.

John Blenkinsop put a lot of penwork into the cause of spreading 'the word' about steam locomotion. It might be said cynically that he had an eye to his patent fees, but his letters reveal a truly evangelistic zeal for his subject, especially so those written to John Watson, the viewer in charge of Kenton and Coxlodge Collieries.

Blenkinsop began to persuade Watson as early as 2nd August 1812, when his own first locomotive had only been at work for c.6 weeks. His letter to Watson is packed with details: the 'Patent Steam Carriage' moved 20 3/2 ton coal waggons, c.74 tons including the machine, at c.3 1/2 miles per hour, taking 50 minutes per return journey (1 1/2 miles each way). In 12 hours, it consumed 10 cwt. of inferior coal costing altogether c.2/9d (c.14p). It used 55 gallons of water per hour: at the moment cold water, though Blenkinsop realised this was wasting fuel and water, and planned

to build an elevated cistern, from which to feed the locomotive with hot water.

Early in November, Blenkinsop sent detailed comparative estimates of 'leading' the Kenton And Coxlodge coals by horse and by locomotive. These amounted to, respectively, £9,453.13.1d and £1,458.4.0d (for 5 locomotives). This was a powerful argument. Watson was hooked, and there began a several months long polite battle of wits between him and Blenkinsop and Matthew Murray.

Once persuaded, Watson was keen to have his first engine and, anxious to keep his patent customer, Blenkinsop offered him the third Middleton engine which was currently being made. This did not please Murray, as he intended to 'custom build' each locomotive, particularly calculating the size of its boiler to the length of the railway - and the Kenton line was considerably longer than the Hunslet Moor to Leeds route covered by the first Middleton locomotives. Murray also pressed for a central rack, grumbling that the side rack was all very well for a trial of the system, but that a central rack would be much more stable and cause less wear on the side rails. In addition to this, locomotives were an experimental side-line to his main business of building stationary engines, and he was kept busy enough with that.

Further letters from him continued to give excuses for not yet having sent Watson his engine, and in April 1813, Blenkinsop wrote to Watson "I hope you have wrote to Murray respecting your engine, as he would rather make an entirely new engine for you, but now it will be necessary to urge him to proceed with despatch." By June, Blenkinsop appears to be suspecting that Murray is avoiding him, as he informs Watson that "Mr. Murray was visible yesterday for the first time." However, his appearance had only been to inform Blenkinsop "that it was impossible for them to execute the steam carriage in two months having such a large order in hand for Russia which they are bound to execute very shortly". Eventually the engine, after being erected and tested on a short length of track in the Round Foundry yard, was dismantled, packed up, and sent off to Tyneside perhaps via one of the regular road waggon services. The newspapers in early September mentioned the "vast concourse of spectators", including "a large party of gentlemen connected with coal-mining" who "partook of an excellent dinner provided at the Grand Stand for the occasion, when the afternoon was spent in the most agreeable and convivial manner".

Blenkinsop, meanwhile, had another problem. Once the locomotive was finished and despatched, Murray sent out the bill for its construction and, as originally it had been ordered in Mr. Brandling's name, he pedantically made out the bill to Mr. Brandling. Blenkinsop, doubtless to avoid problems with Murray -who still had two locomotives to make for Middleton, paid the bill and then set about trying to extract the money from Watson. "Murray has charged Willington to Mr. Brandling and I shall feel obliged to you if you can make it convenient to pay me before Xmas as at that time the books are closed for Mr. Brandling's inspection. I should not like Mr. B. to say he had paid for an engine which had gone elsewhere." (Apparently, Watson had named the engine after his home village, Willington.) He did not pay immediately, naturally preferring to test *Willington* before parting with good money. A fortnight later, Blenkinsop wrote to him that "If you can manage to pay for the engine by February it will be equally suitable to me as Xmas as Mr. Brandling generally examines my Books the latter part of that month." It would not be wise to harass a patent customer too much

when one expected him to be placing a further order!

Despite Watson almost immediately placing an order for two more engines, the euphoria of the agreeable and convivial inauguration of *Willington* was shortlived. The Kenton and Coxlodge Railway used one part of its track in conjunction with the Fawdon Colliery, the owners of which persisted in using horse traction. There were accusations that their men moved Watson's engines to inconvenient parts of the waggonway, or sent out horse-drawn trains in front of them to delay them: in May 1815, the harassment grew so great as to warrant temporary withdrawal of the engines. Two years later, Watson claimed £2,100 compensation for the "loss in laying off the travelling engines from May, 1815 to Lady Day, 1817". Though the engines probably went back to work, changes were afoot. According to the Newcastle University teaching pack *Railways in the Making*, the Kenton Colliery finally closed in 1817, and in the following year an inclined plane system was built to take the Fawdon coals eastwards to the river at Scotswood, near to Kitty's Drift.

The pack's booklet also relates that in that same year, 1818, the Brandlings, who by then owned Coxlodge Colliery, employed George Stephenson to adapt the Kenton and Coxlodge Railway for use by his own locomotives and inclined planes. The early Stephenson locomotives had only one third of the haulage capacity of a Blenkinsop rack locomotive; if the information is true, it must have been a cruel blow for Blenkinsop for his own employer to have suggested replacing his system with Stephenson's less efficient adhesion system.

Bibliography: *Early Wooden Railways* - M.J.T. Lewis, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970

The Watson Papers - owned by the Library of the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, now believed to be in the care of the Northumberland County Record Office. Most of the relevant letters were quoted and discussed in *The Engineer* magazine, 1930, pp 94/5 and 128/9

Unknown Newcastle newspaper, January 1928

Footnote: the Kenton cogged wheels problem - one or two? - is an oft debated puzzle, due to the Tyneside wheelset displayed at the National Railway Museum having two cogged wheels. However, two would be highly impractical at even the most gentle of curves. Photocopied pages of a London & North Eastern Railway Magazine of 1929, supplied by Vice President Fred, give a clue to some possible solutions. The magazine records the recent donating of the wheels and rails to the old York Railway Museum by Thomas William Ward's, of Sheffield, who had discovered them whilst demolishing the Newburn Steel Works near Newcastle. The writer remarks on the lack of wear on the wheels, and suggests they might be those said to have been cast from the original moulds at the Tyne Iron Works - a works dismantled many years previously by the owners of the Newburn Works. A photograph adjoining the article shows the rack rails and the wheels set up on display outside the works, just as they are now at the NRM: simply two pairs of flanged carriage wheels and one pair of cogged wheels, on axles, standing on a pair of rack rails. If these wheels were indeed cast apocryphally, for display purposes only, then there are at least two possible reasons for there being two cogged wheels on the Museum display, even though the Tyneside engines probably only had one:

1. that the foundrymen did not know that the Blenkinsop engines had only one cogged wheel, and worked on the common-sense assumption that vehicle wheels always come in pairs.
2. that they cast a pair of cogged wheels because, quite simply, if only *one* cogged wheel had been displayed, it would have kept falling over!

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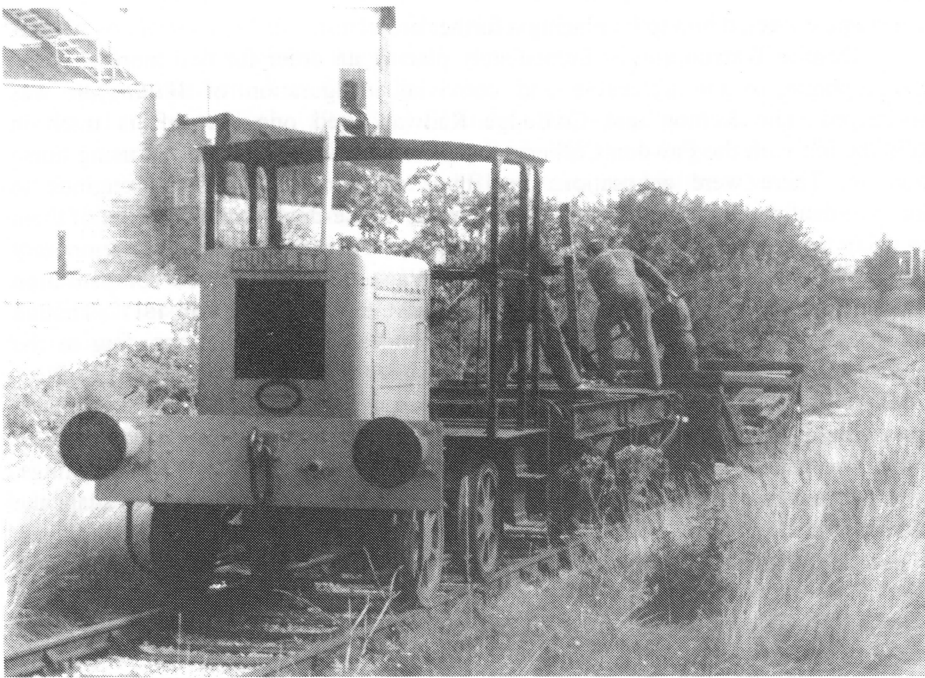
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Above: preparing Balm Road Branch for the Gala Weekend all-line-tours. Below: 91 escorts *Courage* across Moor Road, aided by Peter Nettleton. Both photos: Keith Hartley



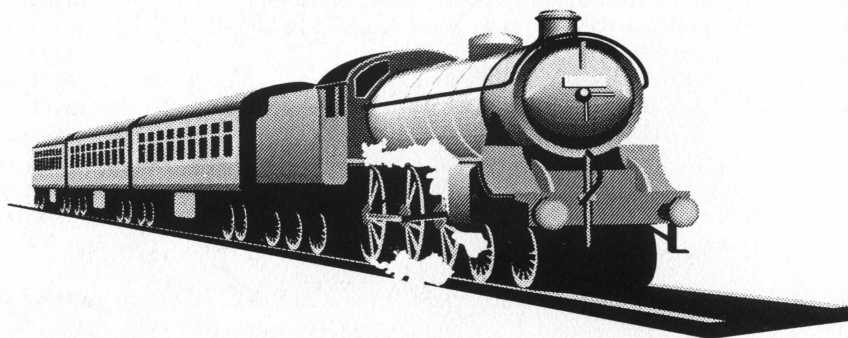
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