

# THE OLD RUN

JOURNAL OF  
THE 1758 MIDDLETON RAILWAY  
LEEDS



NUMBER 146

SPRING 1994

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

Material for the Summer Issue should reach the Editor by 1st June 1994, at the latest please.

Contents	Page
From the Chairman	3
Locomotive Notes	4
Notes & News	7
A.R.P.S. Sidelines	13
The Rise & Demise of	
Mr. Murray's Round Building	16
Times Past: Spring 1847	22
Contact Addresses	23

Cover picture: Definitely not a job for those suffering from vertigo - fixing roof trusses on the new shed building, 14th January 1994. Photo: Keith Hartley

## A VERY WARM WELCOME . . .

. . . . . to the following members who have joined the Middleton Railway Trust/Association since 1st October 1993: Paul Eade, Alexander Newcombe, Andrew Radford, Ian Bentley, Robert Richardson, Brian Ackroyd, Christopher Kelly, Tony Flanagan, Joanne Flanagan, John Simons, Malcolm Skitt, Matthew Sims, Michael Wood, and Stephen Baldwin.

## VICE-PRESIDENT FRED

Within a day or two of the last issue hitting the doormats, the apparently indestructible Dr. Youell was on the 'phone, wishing to thank members for their good wishes, but assuring them that, in the words of Mark Twain, "The report of my death is an exaggeration".

Even though he had actually suffered another bout of illness after the one on account of which *The Old Run* wished him well, he sounded much the same as he has for the entire thirty years or so of my acquaintanceship with him; long may this be so!

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Ian Smith

Spring is in the air, they say, and the railway begins to emerge from its winter slumbers . . . . .

Nothing could be further from the truth, I fear! This last winter has been one of the busiest in the Trust's history, with the new shed taking the lion's share of the workforce's attention. The result of all the hard work is there for all to see - a skeleton building. The next stage is to start the brickwork, followed by the cladding, which should result in a weather proof building by September if all goes to plan.

However, all this shed work has meant that other areas of the Trust's work have had to take a back seat, due to lack of staff. In particular, the repaint of saloon 1867 has had to be curtailed at just the outside only, and even that has not been lined and numbered as we had hoped.

There are other areas where the lack of working members is making itself felt, permanent way work being one of them. We need to undertake much more PW work in the next year or two if our track is not to deteriorate to the extent that we are unable to run passenger trains on it.

That might seem far-fetched today, but the Balm Road Branch is now in danger of becoming unusable through lack of maintenance, and the main line is certainly not getting all the maintenance it needs, through lack of staff. Rupert Lodge, our new Deputy Civil Engineer, has made plans for a major effort on the track this year. All he needs is the labour to do it . . . . .

It is an absolute fact that, without more active, working members, this society is going to get itself into difficulties. Almost certainly one of the first things to suffer would be the passenger service, which could very well have to be cut back, not because we are not filling trains (we are not doing too badly at all) but because we may not have the staff to run the trains AND maintain locos, track, etc.

The railway must recruit more working members from outside or persuade more of our own members to come forward and help, if we are to move forward into the future with any real confidence.

I appeal to all our members to see if YOU can spare the odd day each month to give a hand in running the World's Oldest Railway.

[Contact names, addresses and 'phone numbers appear, as usual, on the inside back cover of the magazine. If you are not sure who to approach for offering help, or don't know what sort of work you wish to do or would be able to do, have a chat with Ian. Lack of work experience is no problem, as long as you don't wish to drive a steam loco the following weekend: proper training is given for any job needing it.]

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## LOCOMOTIVE NOTES

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S.J. Roberts

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Winter is traditionally the time when we relax and endeavour to catch up on the many major and minor jobs that require doing before it's Easter once more and the trains start running again. This year our 'closed' season is the shortest yet, and it has been 'all hands to the pumps' to try and get everything that has to be done completed in time. Inevitably, priority has had to be given to those jobs that must be done or the Railway cannot run, which has led to some long hours by the dedicated few. As usual, the loco situation, in detail, is given below.

**54** At the time of writing, the Sentinel is currently sitting at the back of the shed at Grosmont, on the North York Moors Railway, awaiting a start on the boiler repairs, the necessary preparatory work of dismantling having being completed.

Agreement in writing has been reached with our insurance company as to the form of repair to be carried out, which will involve cutting out the wasted metal around the top joint ring and welding in a new replacement. This simple-sounding task is not that simple, as great care has to be taken to ensure that the flanges do not warp due to stresses created by the heat of welding, otherwise the joint will become impossible to seal and keep steam tight - leakage being the original reason for the wastage of the flange.

A statement in the Autumn 1992 *Old Run* that we were joining with others to purchase superheaters with a quantity discount was, in the event, premature. However, the negotiations have lately been concluded and this time we definitely are!

**385** After use on the Santa trains and over the New Year, this reliable workhorse has been stopped for winter storage. The mechanical lubrication system has received an overhaul to ensure its continued satisfactory operation and also to cure the various oil leaks that have appeared over the years. A hydraulic test is due later in the year, but is being deferred as long as we are allowed to keep the locomotive in traffic.

**1882 MIRVALE** Like **385**, *Mirvale* successfully performed over the Christmas/New Year period. The locomotive has passed its annual visual boiler exam, but this year requires a hydraulic test before being given the all clear. At the time of writing, everything is ready for this to be carried out, and it is likely that this will be done in the next few days. The locomotive may be ready for Easter but this, as ever, will depend on the availability of labour to

do the work. Other winter work being carried out includes the replacement of the smokebox door, which has reached the end of its useful life. This in itself is not a simple task, as the hinges, baffle and other fittings have to be transferred to the new door and everything has to be made to fit properly, to ensure a satisfactory and airtight joint. The opportunity is also being taken to have yet another go at refacing the regulator valve to try and eliminate leakage through it.

**1310** as noted in the last *Old Run*, **1310** has been stored for the winter. As it is relatively fresh from its overhaul, little work has been necessary in the last few months, other than tightening glands and attending to the odd leak here and there. It is rostered for service over the Easter period.

**1309 HENRY de LACY II** The need to vacate the shed to enable one of the coaches to come in for repairs hastened the repainting of *Henry*. However, the job has been one of protection rather than restoration, and much remains to be done to tidy it up and make it thoroughly presentable again.

**1601 ARTHUR** Our resident Manning Wardle continues to make progress, though it is almost entirely due to the efforts of one person. The boiler is now almost ready for a hydraulic test, only awaiting the welding into place of the small patch on the side of the firebox and the fitting of the remaining washout plugs, which are now made and awaiting collection. The various pipes and fittings have all been examined and the vast majority have been condemned! Only one piece of pipework was found to be acceptable and many of the fittings were either worn out or had been subject to unacceptable bodgery. A new manifold block has been machined up to supply the steam brake, vacuum ejector and whistle.

The two injectors are reckoned to be serviceable, but have required some new union nuts machining to suit. One of the injector 'clack' valves will require new insides machining as these were non-existent! A new vacuum ejector and associated pipework has been made up and fitted. The gauge glass valves are in poor condition and it is likely that these will be replaced rather than repaired. Alas, we will have to spend some money here, as we have nothing suitable in stock. Finally, we are short of a whistle. Whilst we can use one off one of our existing locomotives, it would be nice if *Arthur* could have his own! Does anybody have one that they would donate or sell for use on the locomotive?

**91** This ex Steel Co. of South Wales diesel has been in regular use for some time now, and has generally performed very satisfactorily. It has, however, had to be taken out of service since Christmas, due to a bad leak on the water pump. At the moment it is still not available due, more than anything, to lack of available time to carry out the repairs.

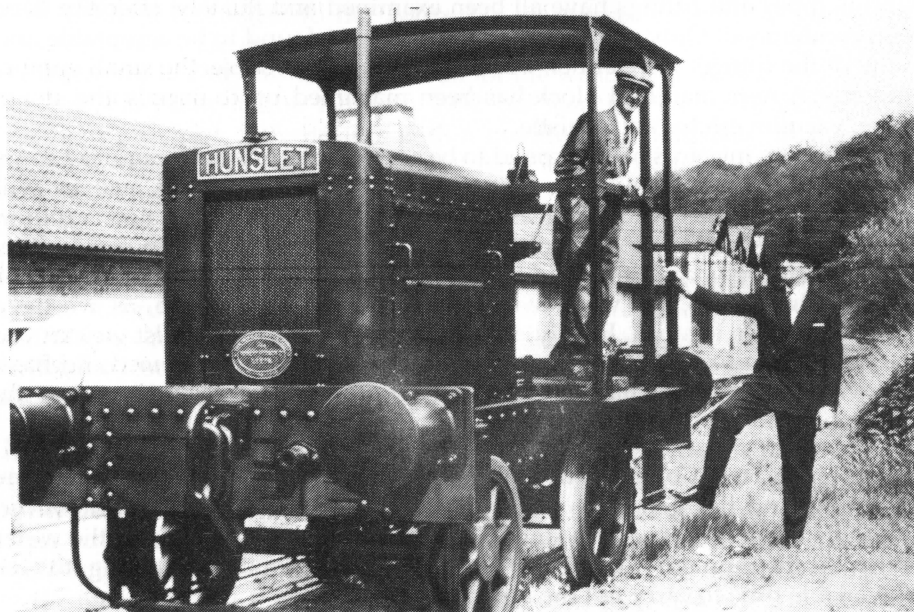




Two unusual pictures of 1786 *Courage*.

Left: the old Station pub sign at Alton (currently being replaced). On 7th/8th May, *Courage* will be on display opposite this pub. The loco will then make a journey from Ropley to Alton, and will spend the following weekend shunting wagons at Alton.

Below: *Courage* at work at the Alton Brewery. Both photos courtesy of the Mid-Hants Railway.



## 1786 *COURAGE*

With the removal of the recent incumbents of the workshops (1601 & 1309) to enable the coach to be brought in for repairs, there was just sufficient space to squeeze in our diminutive Hunslet diesel. Work has progressed, as an 'after hours job', on the repaint and overhaul of the loco. This is now almost complete, and the loco is resplendent in light grey bodywork with red wheels, as originally painted. This loco is still earmarked for a visit to the Mid-Hants Railway later in the year, if all goes according to plan.

ROWNTREE No.3, D577 and 138C are all available for traffic and used as required. All other locos are stored awaiting repair.

## NOTES & NEWS

*S.J. Roberts*

### SHED EXTENSION

By burning much of the renowned 'midnight oil', we were able to get the concreting of the foundations complete by Christmas - but only just. Even so, it was necessary to hire in some sub-contract labour to help with part of the concreting to ensure its completion on time. This completion of the concreting enabled the steelwork erectors (Henry Brook, who had supplied the steelwork) to start work immediately after the New Year break.

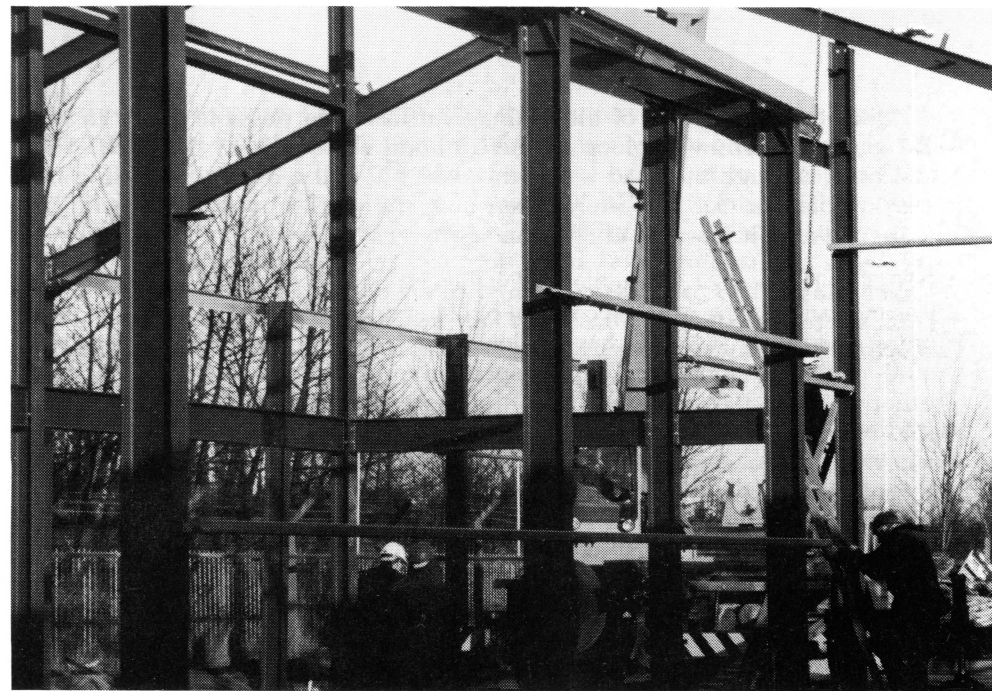
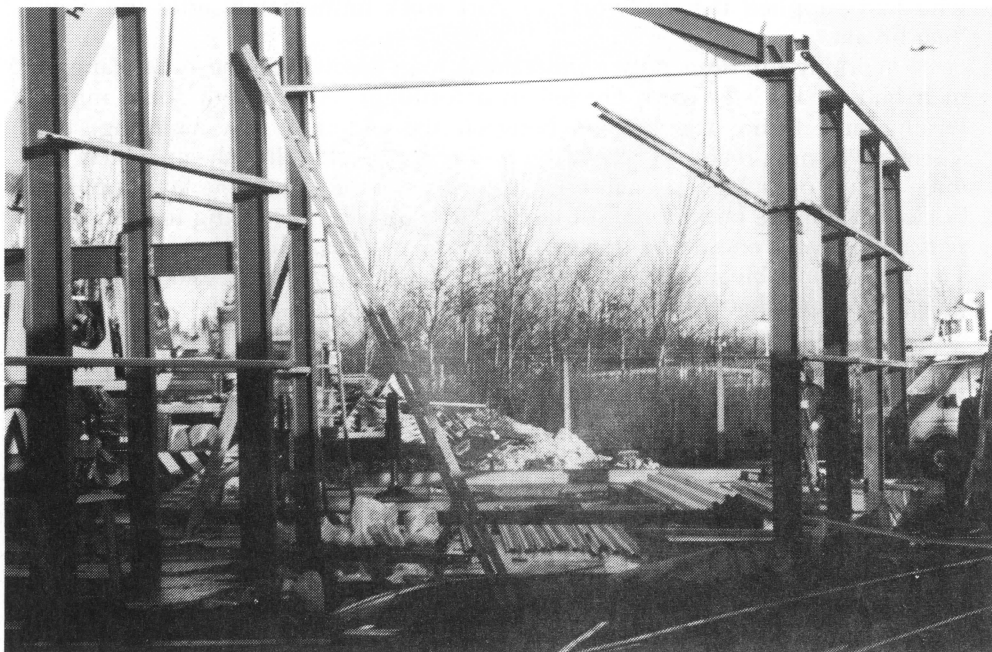
Working full time, with a short break to go elsewhere, the small gang of men had all the steelwork erected in a fortnight. Apart from some minor fettling and fitting the purlins between the old and new building, the steelwork is now ready to accept the roof and side cladding sheets which we intend to fit ourselves, later in the year. More immediate is the laying of the brickwork for the bottom half of the walls. If all goes according to plan, this part of the work should be done with the aid of a community project group. The bricks and blockwork are on order, and it is expected that work will commence on this towards the end of April.

Another major task completed (well almost!) on the shed project, has been laying in the drainage for the rainwater. This has necessitated digging a trench to connect all the downpipes together and to the new soakaway in the car park. Once the trench had been excavated, mainly with a mini-excavator but a considerable amount by hand, a 4" layer of concrete was laid in to bed the drainage pipes on. The whole lot was then covered in concrete before back-filling the trench to restore something approaching normality to the surrounding ground! The actual connection to the soakaway (about five yards) remains to be done but, as this involves burrowing under the fence, it has been left for the time being.





Work on the new shed early this year. Above: 12th January - a quick perusal of the plans before the next support goes in place. Below: 14th January, and the framework is already taking on shape. Photos: Keith Hartley



Two more pictures of progress taking place on 14th January. Photos: Keith Hartley



With the completion of the drainage, it has been possible to lay in the track connection from the loop to the 'running shed' side of the shed. The actual track through the shed is now in place but still requires concreting in, this being planned for just after Easter, once the workshop track is installed and aligned and, it too, is ready for concreting.

**ASHPIT** The lack of a suitable pit for the last part of 1993 had proved to be a nuisance and, as the original concept of using one of the new shed roads as a running shed now seems to have fallen from favour, it was decided that we should construct an ashpit cum inspection pit. After considering various alternative sites, it was agreed that the most practical and useful position would be on the loop, immediately outside the existing shed building. As this work would necessitate severing the run round loop it could only be practically carried out whilst there were no trains running. A schedule of work was drawn up, and it was considered that it could be achieved in the short period between New Year and Easter, provided that we did not lose too many days to the weather. To maximise utilisation of assets and minimise expenditure, this work was timed to coincide, where necessary, with the drainage work being carried out, and a mini-excavator was hired for a weekend to do most of the digging on the two projects. In true Middleton tradition, the dig unearthed the unexpected in the shape of a gas main, about 9" diameter. The strong smell of gas that first appeared was worrying. However, the smell was not one of modern natural gas, but the old long-gone coal gas. We had knocked the cap off an old joint in the main but, fortunately, it was no longer live and the smell was merely the residue in the pipe. The pipe ran parallel to the running line then, half way along the pit, made a right angle bend in the direction of Moor Road. Where the main originated, or went to, we do not know. Whilst we were relieved that the main was dead, some wag commented that we could have had free heating for life if it had been a live one! Fortunately, the gas pipe was just below our required depth of excavation, so we did not have to dig it out.

Whilst we had originally intended to construct the pit out of concrete blocks, our newly-gained expertise in reinforced concrete construction tipped the balance in favour of this form of construction, and the pit has been formed in this way. Timber way-beams have been fitted to the top of the pit walls and 'M1' bridge chairs, ex-bridge 14 on the North York Moors Railway, have been fitted to carry the rails.

The construction of this pit has gone very well, and only one weekend was lost on the original programme, largely due to the weather conditions.

**CARRIAGE NOTES** Immediately after the last of the Thomas trains had been operated, the saloon coach, No. 1874, was taken into the workshop for repainting and maintenance. Close examination revealed that one or two of the smaller panels had started to rot or break up, and these have been

replaced as necessary. One of the seats had suffered from water damage, but fortunately not sufficiently to require much in the way of remedial work. Most of the work necessary, apart from repainting, has been to arrest any early signs of dampness and rot in the woodwork before it gets to the point of needing renewal. Some work has been necessary on the doors to improve their fit and closing. Repainting has taken up many hours to ensure a satisfactory job, and the few who have laboured on this work are to be congratulated on the standard achieved. One aspect that is pleasing to note is that no repairs have been necessary to the roof this year. Hopefully we have found the solution to this problem at last.

**THEFTS** Since Christmas we have suffered regular thieving of our coal stocks, not large amounts but enough to be noticeable. Inevitably, in the event we have suffered damage to the fence each time. We normally keep the majority of our spare coal out of sight in the tipper wagon but, because of all the digging, it has been in use for carting spoil around. Not only that, but the excavations on site made it impossible to get access with the tractor to move the coal.

**TRACKWORK** The track lifted from Askern Colliery in 1991, ostensibly for the extension, has been stored in Denison's Yard pending work commencing (whenever that may be!). However, with the sale of Denison's land to a property developer, we have been given notice to quit. The problem of storing all this track at Moor Road, and the logistics of moving it, have caused us much head scratching. We could just about accommodate it on our site, but it would create many problems to do so and the fact that, although it is presently only a short distance away from our depot as the crow flies, to move it onto site would require a crane to load the rails onto flatbed lorries in order to transport them to our car park where another road crane would have to load them onto rail wagons so that we could shunt them to a storage place where our crane could unload them just 50 yards from their starting point! The sleepers would be marginally easier! Faced with this nightmare we were relieved to hear that, following delicate negotiations, Leeds City Council would store them on one of their sites within the City until such time as the extension proceeds.

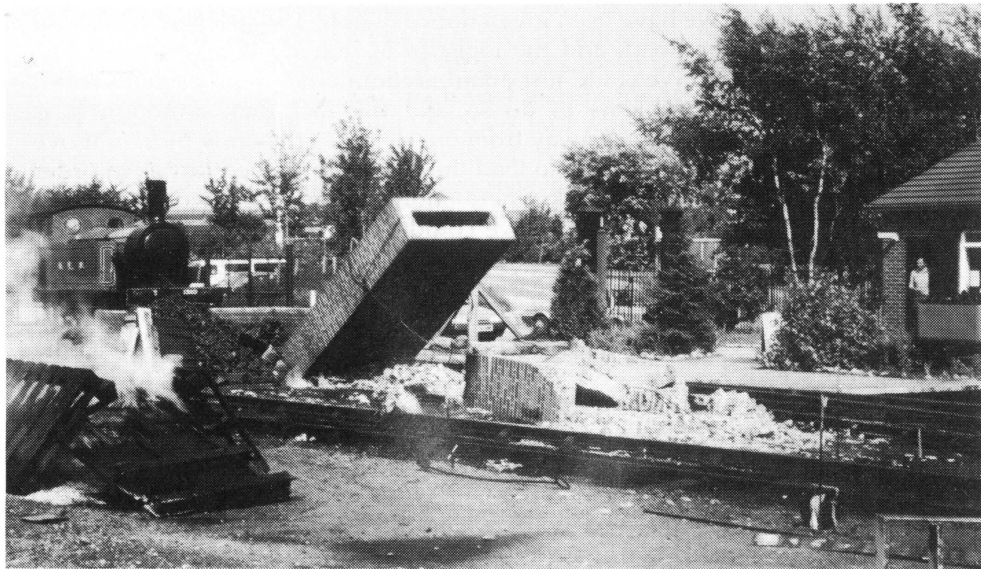
On a different note, the trackwork weekends organised by Rupert Lodge have been dogged with problems this winter, and only one has seen much accomplished on running line maintenance. However, much tidying up of track components has been carried out, and our P.W. spares area is much the better for it. Planning for next winter, it is intended to relay six complete panels in the G.N. bridge area, and Council in February authorised the purchase of 150 concrete sleepers to enable this work to be carried out. A further 50 timber sleepers have also been purchased for spot re-sleeping on



the running line, and these have all now been delivered to the line. Expenditure for this work has come to almost £3,000.

**PLANT & MACHINERY** The opportunity has been taken to obtain some more machine tools from British Coal, once more at a favourable price. This equipment, which has come from the now closed Grimethorpe Colliery, consists of a vertical milling machine and a screw cutting machine, both of which are in satisfactory condition. Because of the lack of space in the existing workshop, these items are being stored until such time as the new workshop is complete. The acquisition of these two pieces of equipment more or less completes our list of requirements for the workshop and, once everything is operational, we will have workshop facilities better than most of the private railways. Mind you, there are mutterings about other equipment becoming available . . . . .!

A while ago we acquired a petrol driven portable railsaw which was non operational, principally because it didn't have a carburettor! With a need to cut several rail lengths during the work at Moor Road, and the knowledge of the effort required to cut them with the hand operated railsaw, our lawnmower has lost its carburettor and cutting rails has become an easy task! The situation will, however, have to be temporary as, come the spring, the lawnmower will be needed once again.



Above: a nice action shot of the northernmost support tower of the water tank dropping, on Saturday 14th August 1993. Photo: Bob Cooper. As Bob remarks, the towers were not quite tall enough to need Fred Dibnah's attentions (but, in retrospect, it might have been a good publicity stunt!).

**SHOP REPORT** The Santa season and Thomas's New Year party gave a very welcome boost to the shop's income at the end of the year. Although the Santa visitors were somewhat down on our expected numbers, the success of Thomas more than made up for it. Shop sales for the season exceeded £10,000 for the first time ever, and income for the first few days of 1994 is almost at the £2,000 mark.

Over the closed season, various minor improvements have been carried out. New shelving has been fitted under the counter, and the life-expired water boiler has been replaced.

As ever, help is required to staff the shop during 1994. All the regular shop staff should have received a letter and roster to complete, but newcomers are more than welcome. If you are interested in helping please get in touch with Vicky Hirst (tel. [0532] 748503) who will be only too pleased to hear from you.

**SANTA TIME** Our initial expectations for a good Santa season were somewhat dashed by the poor weather, and the final visitor numbers were considerably down on 1992 which, admittedly, was our second best, ever. We have, in the past few years, generally had good weather for these trains and our luck had to run out eventually. Traffic Income was some 25% down on our perhaps optimistic budget of £10,000.

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## A.R.P.S. SIDELINES

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*from John Crane*

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**OPERATING OR WRECKING?** This seminar, held on 8th/9th January, was well attended, and delegates were made well aware of "the need to consider carefully, the management of objects within their care".

**DATABASE OF ARTEFACTS** As a result of discussion at the above seminar, it is hoped to set up a database of artefacts, locomotives, carriages and wagons, "to identify the "greater National Collection" of objects to facilitate ways of ensuring good management of all the artefacts in the care of the RAILWAY PRESERVATION MOVEMENT as a whole". Members were asked to consider making a list of items which should be included. Such a list could be used to find someone willing to restore items, or make use of them at another site if their present owners have no plans to restore them to use.

**SCHOOL PARTIES - EDUCATION OR 'BUNFIGHT'?** A seminar on how to improve the educational value of school visits will be held on Saturday 23rd



April at the London Transport Museum. Further information from Peter Ovenstone (tel./fax 031 225 1486).

FEDECRAIL INAUGURAL MEETING, will be held in Brussels on 15th to 18th April.

A.R.P.S. SPRING MEETING This will be held on 6th to 8th May at the Midland Railway and the National Tramway Museum, including the opportunity to visit Peak Rail.

A.R.P.S. ANNUAL AWARD FOR 1993 was presented to the East Lancs Railway, for its Gala to mark the 25th anniversary of the end of steam on British Rail.

V.A.T. As a result of the Great Central Railway's challenge to the V.A.T. commissioners, the charging policy is now:

platform tickets and separate admission to museums etc. - standard rated  
all train fares - zero rated

S.P.R.A.G. (Small Preserved Railways Action Group) The group was formed to provide better communication between small railway organisations, and enable them to discover and utilise the many benefits of A.R.P.S. membership. Our own Ian Smith has been appointed SPRAG Liaison Officer.



Middleton Railway's visit to the East Lancs. Railway's award-winning Gala.

Above: No.54 and 1310 parading at Bury Station.

Opposite page, top: our Sentinel, with coach, beautifully silhouetted on the viaduct near Summerseat. Opposite page, bottom: No.54 adds to the Gala attractions by starting an impromptu bonfire at Ramsbottom Station. Photos: *Graham Smith*



## THE RISE AND DEMISE OF MR. MURRAY'S ROUND BUILDING

Sheila Bye

Matthew Murray was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1765, apprenticed to a blacksmith, and in 1788 walked from Stockton-on-Tees to Leeds, seeking work. He was immediately employed by the progressive flax mill owner John Marshall, and set about the improvement of flax-working machinery and stationary steam engines. At Marshall's he met David Wood, and they eventually decided to set up in business together. On Saturday 15.8.1795, they advertised in *The Leeds Mercury*:

### MECHANICS WANTED.

WANTED, A Number of WHITESMITHS, JOINERS, WOOD-TURNERS, and IRON-TURNERS, who will meet with constant Employment, by applying to Messrs. MURRAY and WOOD, Machine-Makers, at Holbeck.

The venture, in premises at Mill Green, was so successful that they purchased land at Water Lane, Holbeck, the following February, at the same time advertising for, immediately, "TWO Sober, Steady and Active Men, as GREEN SAND MOULDERS."

Within less than 5 months, sufficient buildings were raised to enable Murray and Wood to proudly announce in *The Leeds Mercury* of 9.7.1796 that they:

DESIRE to inform their Friends and the Public in general, That they have erected and Opened a FOUNDRY, in Water-Lane, Leeds, for the Purpose of CASTING IRON, viz.

Engine Work of all Kinds, Ballance Wheels, Joints, Bosses and Steps, Crank and Octagon Wheels, Grate Bars, Bearers, Frames and Doors, Steam and Injection Boxes, Wheels, Segments, Tumbling-Shafts, Plummer Blocks, Coupling Boxes and Mill Work in general. - Tapet and Waggon Wheels, Waggon Rails and Tram Wheels, Rasp Barrels and Paper Rolls, Chip Plates, Oil Presses and Blocks, Callender Wheels and Plates, Tenter Posts, Press Tops and Bottoms, Press Ovens, Press and Singeing Plates, Cotton Spinning Plates, Cotton and Worsted Weights, Carding and Scribbling Engine Rims, Chain Wheels and Strap Pulleys, Malt Rollers, Pallisadoes, Weights, Clock and Sash Weights, &c.

Those who please to favour them with their Commands, may depend upon them being well executed and on the lowest Terms.

N.B. As they cast Twice each Day, any Gentleman may be accommodated with Castings on the shortest Notice, in Cases of Emergency.

When the business needed to expand, two further partners were taken; James Fenton, on 10.8.1799, and William Lister, on 1.1.1804. Later in 1804, the firm appear to have helped one William Horsfield, boilermaker, to buy a piece of land in Peter Street (later Mill Street, much later Marshall Street), adjoining their own Steam Engine Manufactory. The fact that they seemingly sponsored his purchase implies that they may have been setting him up to supply their own works with boilers. (This has nothing to do with the stated subject, but I am rather proud of the fact that my great-

great-great-great grandfather, William Horsfield, probably made boilers for Matthew Murray's engines!) In 1812, Fenton, Murray & Wood built for the Middleton Railway the world's first commercially successful steam locomotives. Matthew Murray died on 20.2.1826, and his son-in-law, Richard Jackson, took charge of the firm. Renamed Fenton, Murray & Jackson, they built locomotives for the Leeds & Selby Railway, and for many other British and European lines. In the mid-1830's, a protracted strike lost the firm custom as well as several key workers, some of whom are believed to have started up in business as part of the partnership Smith, Beacock & Tannett, in the Victoria Foundry - situated at the south-west corner of New Lane, between Victoria Road and Meadow Lane. In 1844, Fenton, Murray & Jackson went bankrupt. The works remained empty for some time until 1847, when Smith, Beacock & Tannett moved their machine tool business there, together with their old works' name, Victoria Foundry. Under its new owners, the works became famous again.

But what of the round building? Work on this was in progress in June 1802, when James Watt junior came to Leeds in the hope of discovering the secrets of Murray's green sand casting technique, and also in the hope of coaxing back to Birmingham some of the workmen whom Murray had coaxed up to Holbeck. On 12.6.1802, in a letter to Matthew Boulton, he wrote of "... the new *Rotundo*, for such it appeared to me to be, but I shall get a nearer aspect of it to-morrow." Two days later, he again wrote to Boulton:

Fame has not outdone the magnitude of Murray's new Edifice, it is a rotundo of about 100 feet in diameter with a magnificent Entrance. The Engine is to stand in the middle and the lower rooms to serve as deposits for Engines & other finished goods. The Upper rooms to be for fitting. It is an excellent building & will not look amiss. It is up to the top of the 2nd storey. I will make a better sketch of it before I leave Leeds than this, but am now much pressed for time.

He made a sketch on the letter, but unfortunately E. Kilburn Scott, from whose Murray biography I gleaned the Watt letter quotes, did not reproduce the drawing. Scott did record some discussion regarding the arrangement of shafting etc. in the building. It had been suggested that polygonal shafting had been used, and Scott replied that Murray would have had no difficulty in doing so. Another of the company, at the 1926 dinner marking the centenary of Murray's death, was A.E. Forward, curator of the Science Museum. He pointed out that as Watt had written that the engine was to be placed in the centre, this would suggest radial shafting.

The building was 81 feet in diameter, and grew to four stories in height. Scott wrote that it was supposed to resemble an engine cylinder, with the large entrance porch as its valve chest. Built against the southern boundary wall of the works, alongside the ancient passageway which still borders the site, the round building and its entrance faced proudly up Foundry Street - then the main works entrance - towards Water Lane. It was a magnificent statement of Murray's pride in his work and also of the artistic flair which often made his machinery beautiful as well as functionally good. It became famous, and because of it the whole works was popularly known as 'the Round Foundry', even though the round building itself was not a foundry.





Left: from a portrait of the man himself, Matthew Murray (1765-1826), inventor, builder and improver of textile machinery, machine tools, and steam engines (both stationary and locomotive).

Below: Mrs. Diane Dryden (left) and Mrs. Daphne Watson (right) pose alongside the Holbeck churchyard cast iron memorial to Matthew Murray, their great-great-grandfather.

Photo: Keith Hartley



According to Scott, Murray's foundry "patterns", correspondence, technical drawings, etc. were still stored in the building during Smith, Beacock & Tannett's ownership, but I have not yet found contemporary mention of this, and no longer trust Scott's uncorroborated stories. (Though his book, published in 1928, has provided the basis for most of the subsequent written accounts of the Middleton Railway and Murray's locomotives, I have found many statements in it which appear to have no earlier mention elsewhere, and a few which I have proved to be downright wrong.)

On Wednesday 29.9.1875, *The Yorkshire Post* described the demise of Mr. Murray's round building as follows:

#### FIRE AT THE ROUND FOUNDRY, LEEDS.

A building memorable in the annals of Leeds was partially destroyed last night. Whilst the railway world was celebrating the jubilee of the opening of the first railway at Darlington, the Round Foundry, so intimately connected with the manufacture of some of the earliest locomotives, caught fire, and had it not been for the exertions of the various brigades it would this morning have been completely demolished. The Round Foundry, known to all the engineering world as the place in which Matthew Murray, one of the best mechanical engineers of his time, so successfully competed with Messrs. Bolton & Watt in the manufacture of stationary engines, was also the cradle of the general tool-making and machine trade, which has assumed so important a position in Leeds within the last few years. After passing out of the hands of the firm with which Murray was connected, the works remained idle for a number of years; but, under the management of Messrs. Smith, Beacock, & Tannett, the fame of the old building was more than maintained. The business of tool-making is now carried on upon the same premises, which, however, have been added to until they have grown to enormous proportions, by Mr Tannett, Mr Craven, and Mr Lucas. The Round Foundry stands in the centre of a dense mass of sheds and workshops, which extend from Water Lane to Camp Field, on the south side of the River Aire. Twenty-seven yards in diameter, it rises to a height of four storeys, and is principally used for the manufacture of light tools, the heavier machinery being made on the ground floor of an adjoining building. The top storey was exclusively set apart for models, many of which were of great value, and it was in this storey that the fire broke out. Two boys passing in the neighbourhood a little after seven o'clock in the evening saw smoke issuing from the building, and gave the alarm. The night watchman, George Wright, had a little time before visited the third storey, in which was the mechanics' shop, and in which the men stopped work at half-past five o'clock, but he perceived nothing unusual. On going upstairs, however, along with the number of men whom the boys' cries had drawn to the place, he found what he describes as a "bonfire" on the top landing. The flames were confined within so comparatively insignificant a compass at that time that all who saw them were confident that they might have been extinguished by a few buckets of water had they been at hand. The hose on the works was affixed at once, and carried partly up the staircase, but the supply of water at that time was not adequate. In the meantime an alarm was given by the ringing of the foundry bell, and the buzzer at the Globe Foundry conveyed to the whole of the Borough the news of the outbreak. The fire engines of the various brigades were immediately harnessed up, and on the arrival of the Sun engine, under the superintendence of Mr Nelson, it was run into the yard, and at once set to work. The fire was at that time confined to the Victoria Road side of the top storey. There was a copious supply of water, and the hose was taken on to the landing, but the dense volumes of smoke drove the firemen back, and they were compelled to play from the exterior. The Corporation and the Liverpool and London and Globe brigades were also got to work, the last-mentioned engine being stationed at the entrance of the Camp Field Passage, at the Victoria Road end, and the men playing upon the



burning building from the roof of the neighbouring workshops. The members of the Corporation brigade laid down several sets of hose, and acted under the direction of the Chief Constable. Streams of water were thus poured upon the flames from every point, and the most energetic efforts were made on the part of all to check the progress of the fire. The top storey was heated with water in order to keep the models with which it was stored completely dry; and, being thus in a most inflammable condition, fed the flames, which the energies of the firemen could not prevent from descending into the third and second storeys. Whilst the roof and floors were falling in, and beams and machinery were cracking and breaking up in all directions, two of the Sun brigade, Arthur Nelson and Charles Richardson, ascended a ladder affixed in the yard, and, despite the intense heat, stationed themselves in turn at a third storey window, and from thence played with considerable effect upon the flames. After playing upon the building for several hours, the brigades gradually got the upper hand; but they had to continue at work until past midnight. The damage by the loss of the models is incalculable, and it is also impossible to compute the damage done to the machinery and the building; but there is every reason to believe that the latter will be covered by Insurance. Of the 450 men employed throughout the establishment, about 120 will be temporarily out of work, but the resources of the firm are such that the disaster will not materially impede the completion of the contracts on hand. The reflection of the flames was visible for a great distance, and the fire occurring so early in the evening brought such immense crowds from all parts of the borough that Camp Field and all the thoroughfares from whence a near view could be obtained were densely thronged.

The report is an interesting record of mid-Victorian fire-fighting techniques at a time when insurance company brigades were still in use alongside the corporation brigades.

*The Leeds Mercury* report was shorter, but included a few other important details. The lower floors apparently were little damaged by the fire itself, but when the top floor burnt badly enough for the great crane to fall through, it crashed through the floors below, doing most of the damage there. Another interesting detail in the *Mercury* was of the earliest attempt to fight the infant fire:

"The building is four stories high and circular in shape, and the hose being brought to the top by the winding staircase became so twisted that there was little or no pressure of water."

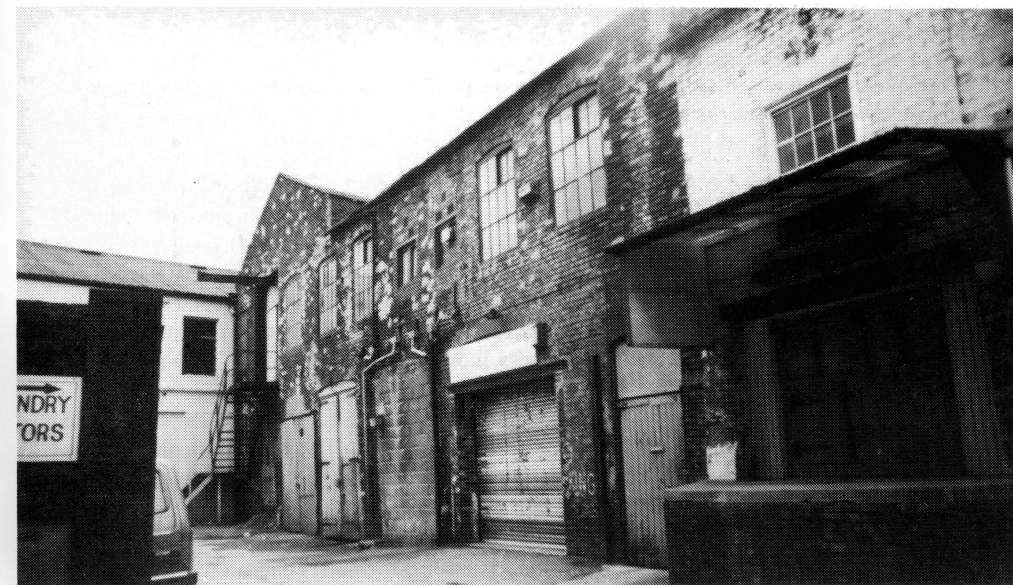
In this way, Matthew Murray's eye for beauty in industrial design apparently brought about the destruction of his beloved round building. Despite the stated hopes that it could be repaired, Smith, Beacock & Tannett were still prospering and expanding at that time, and the round building was probably far too small for their needs. Though I've found no mention yet of the complete demolition of this venerable building, by October 1895, when Smith, Beacock & Tannett sold the works, the whole south-west portion of the site was covered by an immense complex of "fitting shop" and "fitting shed", parts of which can still be seen.

Sources: *The Leeds Mercury* and *The Yorkshire Post* newspapers (available on microfilm in Leeds and Bradford Reference Libraries, though runs may vary), E. Kilburn Scott's *Matthew Murray - Pioneer Engineer* published in 1928 and including extracts from the Watt papers - owned by Birmingham libraries, and the registered "memorials" of land and partnership transactions mentioned - kept in the Deeds Room at West Yorkshire Archives, Wakefield.

[This article was first published in the Newsletter of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's Industrial History Section.]



Above: Foundry Street, from Water Lane. The building across the far end was not there in the early 1800's, and attention would be drawn towards the famous round building, placed in much the same way as 'Capability Brown' might have placed a pavilion in one of his landscape gardens. The ancient brickwork of part of the foundry building left of picture, and of the gabled building centre of the picture below, a foundry 'pattern (work)shop' in 1840, suggests they might date back to Murray's time. Photos: Sheila Bye



## TIMES PAST

### SPRING 1847

Sheila Bye

Saturday 20th March 1847, *The Leeds Mercury*, page 16:

MAGISTRATES' ROOM,

TUESDAY, March 16.

[Before Mr. Sergeant MURPHY.]

HIGHWAY ROBBERY AT LEEDS.

JOSHUA EXLEY and JOSHUA BROOKE were charged with having at Leeds, on the 26th February, violently assaulted and robbed James Heald.

Mr. HALL and Mr. BOOTHBY were for the prosecution; Mr. OVEREND defended the prisoners.

We recently stated the particulars of this case in the *Mercury*. It will be remembered that the prosecutor in this case is 69 years of age, and is a labourer employed at the Brandling colliery, Middleton, near Leeds. It was his duty to go to the staith belonging to the colliery to fetch the money required for payment of the wages of the colliers. On Friday, the 26th of February last, he went as usual, when Mr. Wright, the cashier, gave him £117 10s. in gold, ten £5 notes, £5 1s. in silver, and 2½d in copper. About three o'clock in the afternoon he set off with the money in his pocket, for the purpose of going to Middleton. When he had arrived about half-way, he heard a rustling noise, and he turned round and saw the prisoner Exley, who struck him on the head with a hedge-stake, and knocked him down. Some parties then got on the prosecutor, rifled his pockets of the money in question, and ran away. The prosecutor called out for assistance, when several parties saw the two prisoners running in company with two other men - three going towards Beeston-lodge, and the fourth man taking the direction of Beeston town. Exley ran into a house at Beeston-lodge, where he was taken into custody. Brooke was also apprehended, but the other parties are still at large.

The jury found both the prisoners Guilty; to be transported for fifteen years.

The "highway" where the robbery took place, was of course the Middleton railway (the first news item quoted in the last issue of *The Old Run* mentioned Mr. Heald being on "the waggon road near Hunslet" when he was attacked). As has been mentioned previously in these pages, the Middleton railway was extensively used as a footpath by the local populace, and was the most convenient and direct route from Leeds to Belle Isle and Middleton. 'Waggon road' was only one of many terms applied to our railway during its long history: others included 'iron-rail-way', 'iron-rail-road', 'waggonway', 'Newcastle-road', and 'coal road'.

The robbery seems to have been a 'crime waiting to happen', with an unaccompanied 69 years old man being allowed to convey the colliery wages along the track, which passed through some lonely areas at that time, as indeed it does on the present, 1875, alignment. As mentioned in the last issue, William Pinder and Thomas Robinson were later arrested also, but their case was set for the Summer Assize. Perhaps a little more in the next issue, if there is any further information to be gained.

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