

OLD RUN NEWS  
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Newsletter of the Middleton Railway Trust.

Number 33 February 1968.

MATTHEW MURRAY BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS. It is appropriate to record the story of what has been an unexpectedly successful and enjoyable effort to put our pioneer engineer in the limelight. Those members who are far from Leeds ought to be put in the picture as regards the exhibition and the background to it. Our first attempt to have a "true" bicentenary exhibition in 1965 in the Leeds City Museum foundered because the Museum was "fully booked up for months ahead", and then demolished! Then, last November, the Fine Arts Department of the University and the Bursar very kindly gave permission for a fortnight's display in the Parkinson Court, the "Clapham Junction" of the University, jointly by Middleton and University Societies. 3 months is not long for planning such a thing which needs a lot of historical research, but your Secretary (how-she-has-time-to-sleep-we-don't-know), David Jones (a Professional Archivist), Robin Sellers (representing our University members) and Graham Smith (Leeds College of Art) got cracking to good effect.

Public Image. The Exhibition was publicised in the Railway Journals and the University Forthcoming Events. An outstandingly good poster in black and white on gold paper gave us a first class start from which we never looked back. The Yorkshire Post gave us a good display and leading article in morning and evening papers, together with some of the National Dailies. The Guardian made Mancuniocentric noises in a guarded "is-this-really-the-first-steam-powered-railway" article with a good Matthew Murray locomotive illustration. B.B.C. "Look North" showed Susan Youell in a live interview with Mike Nally of the "are-you-sure-about-your-facts" type, in which she stuck to her guns, our guns, and Matthew Murray's guns and carried the day. We don't believe her story about being frightened the whole time.

The Exhibition. The Railway experts were tactfully silenced in any attempt to load up the (very large) display space with too much Non-Matthew-Murray Bric-a-Brac, the Chairman having to be satisfied with a 1901 GER chair and a picture of Shoreditch terminus in 1847. The expert - Graham Smith - presented a balanced display of documents, drawings, illustrations and models in a manner which should have demolished the idea that railway enthusiasts are merely small boys collecting engine numbers. Graham produced a most effective "Middleton Yesterday and Today" section, by collecting all the Chief Civil Engineer's permanent way tools and piling them round chairs and rails of all ages back to about 1790.

The centre pieces were the Leeds City Museum locomotive models, and the Gold Medal for flax-hackling and the water colour painting loaned by Mr. March, Murray's present living descendent, who came up from Hawkhurst, Kent, where he is active in agriculture. Leeds Libraries, the N.C.B., Hunslet Engine Co., Hudswell Clarke, and Crabtrees dug into their records to produce material for the historic section. The sales stand was the reverse of ostentatious but publications about the exhibition and general Middleton matters were in demand all the time. School parties descended on us for conducted tours, and 4 in one day reduced the Chairman (unexpectedly) almost to speechlessness. The stand was manned by a combined effort of University and other members throughout.

A GOOD FINISH. We were honoured to have that excellent railway historian Charles E. Lee, for the Memorial Lecture on the last Friday of the Fortnight. In a detailed and most

enjoyable account, Mr. Lee made it clear beyond all reasonable doubt that Murray was the Pioneer in the development of the steam locomotive, the first to make a commercial success of it, and the first to standardise on flanged wheels & edge rails. What became abundantly clear was that Murray was generously showing others his inventions and techniques, even when his competitors worked behind locked doors. It was clear that Boulton and Watt did behave in a grossly unfair manner to Murray, but that Stephenson, though he did benefit from Murray's work in the way that one engineer does from another, was not guilty of "industrial espionage". 3 Murray descendants were present in a packed lecture theatre and in an evening memorable in all respects.

On the Saturday Morning, St Matthew's Church Holbeck had a special service. This involved much assistance from the Vicar, Mr. O'Connor, from whom we heard that the Church was rebuilt on a different site 3 years after Murray's death, and that the name of the Church was changed at the same time, so the present name is no mere coincidence. It was very clear that something had to be done about the Murray, March and Thompson graves, dirty, rusty and weed-ridden, with demolition ad lib by local vandals. Tombstone Renovations Incorporated, i.e. the ladies of the Morley Local History Society and the Middleton Permanent Way Team, moved in with spanners, crowbars, etc. & brought the cwts. of displaced tombstones to the correct gauge alignment and level. Meanwhile 100 yards North the silence was broken by the rumble of wheels on steel rails along the L.& N.W.R. New Line viaduct. When our Civil Engineers went to the Domestic Street Handyman's Shop for some consecrated paint for tombstone renovations, they found that to cap the situation, the Sykes family who ran it had been for something like 15 years the last tenants of Murrays steam house. Wire brushes got the rust off the Murray obelisk, anti-rust paint, red lead and a glossy top coat went on, the last brushfull (despite a very wet week) going on 5 minutes before dark the evening before the service. Emery cloth and gilt paint brought the March and Thompson tombstones up to a presentable condition, and some precarious ladder work took place on the top of the obelisk. The commemorative service had a quiet dignity. The combined choirs of St Matthew and of St Matthias, Burley were backed up by a special effort of local bellringers and the University Campanological Society members. The vicar of St Matthews officiated, the Chairman read the Lesson, and the Rev Cook of St Matthias preached the sermon in which he paid tribute to the part played by Matthew Murray in the development of the City and its engineering industry, on the theme of service to God and one's fellow men. Early sleet gave way to a sunny spell as the entire congregation marched out in procession lead by the choirs. Mr. March laid a special wreath at the railings of the Murray obelisk, with the Thompson grave beside his feet, and the March tombstone shining in marble and new gilt lettering.

Members and guests retired to a Strictly-no-speeches lunch at the Griffin Hotel, where the Secretary thanked all those who had helped us. At 2.30 p.m., our Vice-President, the Rt. Rev. Eric Treacy and Mr. G.F. Fiennes, formerly head of B.R. Eastern Region named our Bagnall Matthew Murray. Both of them had their driver's passes handed over, the Union Jack came off the shining brass plates pulled by two distinguished hands, and the Bagnall tank locomotive steamed off under their control to bring to a close a most memorial and worth-while fortnight. Hudswell Clarke's had provided the nameplates, cast by George Dance's of Hunslet. A 4th Matthew Murray descendant arrived just in time for this finale. The kind co-operation of Mr. Verity, Clayton's Engineer, had provided replacement main steam pipes for "Matthew Murray" fitted only a few days before the naming.

For so long we have realised that an industrial goods railway is not a public attraction. But this wonderful fortnight has made our 8 years of hard work and the 210 years of railway history on our line something really worthwhile that will stay proudly in our memories.

Visitors On October 2nd M Guy Chessagnard, a French journalist for Reuter, spent a day photographing our activities, stock and relics for an article on railway preservation to be published in France.

During the weekend 30/31st October members of the Dowty RPS, the Midlands RPS and the Great Eastern Railway Society visited the line while up here to attend the ARPS meeting.

Velocipede Our thanks go to a kind member who has lent us, for an indefinite period, a velocipede - a species of platelayers' three-wheeled trolley as per 'The Titfield Thunderbolt', and is propelled by a rowing motion with hands and feet. The wheels have been unseized, the main gear wheel repaired and new cranks made.

The Bagnall Tank As mentioned previously it is hoped that the MRT might purchase a Bagnall O-4-OT of war-time vintage. Ben Wade has spent a considerable time inside the engine stopping leaks and putting it in working order with the result that it has now passed its hydraulic test. It is anticipated that after further preparatory work negotiations will proceed for purchase. Our thanks go to Ben for his unstinting efforts.

Great Marquess outing On August 24th the Marquess travelled light engine to Birmingham on a journey full of incident as the Eastern Region seemed unaware of the existence of this special and tended to put it in sidings and yards until they had solved the problem. On reaching Mr Cowell's area (Derby-Birmingham) however, there was a clear road, but the Marquess arrived two hours late on a seven hour timing, accompanied by Viscount Garnock. Dr Youell travelled somewhat faster but not on 4' 8½" gauge! The delighted staff of Tyseley MPD descended upon her to adjust a faulty tender-brake and restore her to the immaculate condition she enjoyed before Clay Cross Tunnel.

The next morning the Marquess headed 2 buffet cars to Kidderminster, where a group of worried looking railwaymen were gathered round a sick looking diesel shunter. With barely compressed delight the crew of the Marquess shunted the remains of the shunter into a siding and assembled her own train of the two buffet cars and three Carpet Trades Ltd exhibition coaches and moved into the platform before time.

The train travelled to Snow Hill. The WR driver was surprised at the power of the engine as she accelerated up the steep climb to Oldbury Tunnel, until it was pointed out that Kings were the only WR engines with greater tractive effort. At Snow Hill the exhibition was on show for several hours, and afterwards our President and Chairman returned rather more quickly than they went. But the Marquess remained at Tyseley for about a month, helping to haul an enthusiasts' excursion, being replaced at Worcester by Churchward 2-6-2T 4555 and Collett O-4-2T 1420.

Inspector Wilson and Dr Youell accompanied the engine back to Leeds on September 22nd. A depressing start of standing behind a goods train at the junction of the GW main line and the Midland avoiding line for nearly an hour was followed by good progress despite sidetracking to let expresses pass. Pilots were changed on reaching the Eastern Region at Chesterfield and again at Masborough.

On the Midland line at Renishaw a SR electric train passed, headed by a steam loco with a brake van at the rear, on route from its builders to the nearest live rails. At Eckington and Chesterfield subsidence was such that even with correct cross levels there was nearly a foot drop in a rail length. Leeds was reached an hour late with the engine in good condition. Incidentally grease, especially Vaseline, smeared over worn handrails saves much time and rust.

LUURS On November 12, in the Holdsworth School, Clarendon Rd, there will be a joint meeting with the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway. November 26 DW Gibson will talk at same time and place on the BRB report on development of trunk routes. December 10 A Blowers will talk on tunnels.

This issue was edited by Susan Youell.