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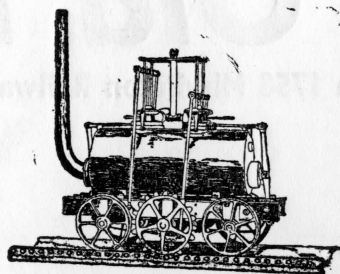
# The Old Run

Journal of the 1758 Middleton Railway Trust, Leeds



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# THE OLD RUN

**Journal of the 1758 Middleton  
Railway Trust, Leeds**

EDITOR: B. W. ASHURST, 18, INGLEWOOD DRIVE, OTLEY.

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**Summer 1968**

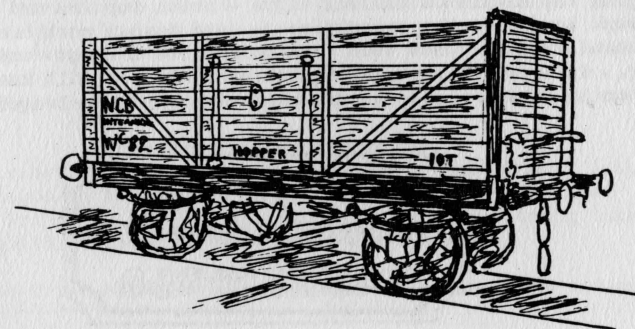
## MRT GETS ORIGINAL MIDDLETON WAGON

The MRT has acquired an original Middleton Railway wagon from the Coal Board's Walton (near Wakefield) Colliery. So far as is known, it is the only surviving relic of the fleet which was kept at Middleton Broom Pit until 1958.

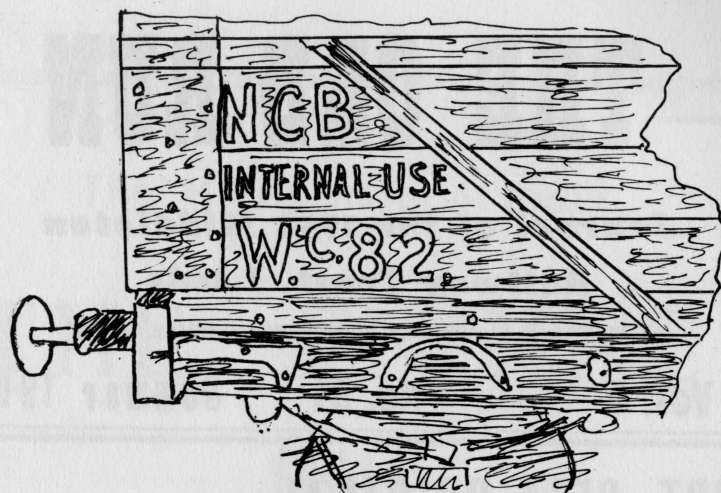
The wagon is a 10-ton hopper and carries its Middleton number 350 on a cast iron plate. It dates back to the 1890s.

The arrival of the wagon at Middleton is a milestone in the history of the Trust, for apart from original stone sleepers built into local walls, there are very few links with the past. There are some authentic pieces of rack and fish-belly rail and early Middleton locomotives at York railway museum, but nothing substantial from the company days for the visitor to Middleton to see.

A letter to the MRT drew attention to the existence of the Middleton Estates and Colliery Co. wagon. In the rearrangement which had preceded the nationalisation of the coal industry, the







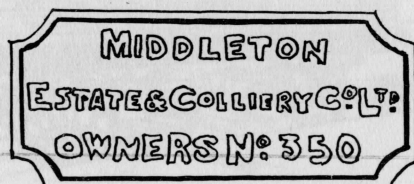
Middleton Estates and Colliery Co. split up into the Middleton Fireclay Company, which continued with the railway and fireclay-brick interests, and the National Coal Board, Middleton Broom Pit.

For ten years after nationalisation the Middleton wagons continued internal traffic, though an increasingly large proportion was through loads in BR wagons.

When the Fireclay Company closed down in 1958, all the Middleton wagons were either scrapped or sent away, and BR dealt with the traffic.

The MRT chairman (Dr R F Youell) had a friendly reception at the colliery when he went to confirm the purchase, and the result is that a "genuine original" will come back to its own line. While not as wonderful as getting an 1812 locomotive back, this is an acquisition of which members can be very proud indeed.

The Trust's main efforts have been concentrated on the task of keeping the Middleton Railway alive - track repairs and engines that work have been the priorities - and museum work has had to take second place. Now that the collection has got under way, however, it is hoped that the historically-minded will keep their eyes open in likely places to see what else can be salvaged!



## **SLEEPING PARTNERS**

How many sleepers are there on British Railways? You might think no-one knew the answer, and perhaps no-one does: but someone gave the figure of 80,640,300 to the Ministry of Transport as being the number in use at January 1, 1967. Of these, about 10 per cent were concrete.

Ten years ago the total number was 107,109,000, of which only 2,160,160 were concrete.

This, of course, means that nearly 27,000,000 sleepers have disappeared since 1957. Where are they? By no means all of them have found their way to Middleton! The disposal of 8,000 sleepers a day must present some problem.

## **Sentinel comes into its own**

The newly appointed Sentinel engineer, Andrew MacKenna, has come into the limelight soon after taking office. With both diesels being under maintenance, the Sentinel (stalwart loco that it is) has been handling all traffic, usually on a Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday rota. With another load of spare parts from Thos. Hills of Rotherham (dismantlers of Sentinels and dieselisers of Sentinels) this loco seems set fair for long and reliable service to our line.

## **Death of C D E Roper Nunn**

The MRT lost one of its oldest members in June in the death of Mr C D E Roper-Nunn, at the age of 80. Mr Roper-Nunn had been ill for three months.

Mr Roper-Nunn was well known to members of the Trust, and of the Leeds University Railway Society, and to all railway enthusiasts, as a photographer. He and his brother (K A C Roper-Nunn) between them built up a historic collection of pictures dating back to the first years of the century.

For many years he had judged the University Railway Society photography competition. Respected for his expertise, he was nevertheless a very approachable person always happy to give advice.

During the First World War he smuggled his camera into France and managed to obtain many photos of wartime locomotives at work on the Front. He was old enough to remember being taken as a small child to Penzance on a broad gauge express.

The Trust extends deepest sympathy to his widow and children.

# Scrap thieves prevent train movements

The Middleton Railway's unique character of being the only amateur operators concentrating on goods traffic, and being prepared to run daily throughout the year, carries with it some problems of unusual character.

Some are merely tedious and exasperating - we are sure disused bedsteads and refuse do not turn up regularly at Sheffield Park, Abergynolwyn or Dduallt. Others provide an interesting challenge to us to find quick solutions.

The first quarter of 1968 brought its fair quota. Within days of taking office as traffic manager, Joe Lee had to deal with a giant size wagon movement. The vast store of scrap Laporte Acid wagons had been disposed of to a scrap firm at Wadsley Bridge and 25 were extracted from all the sidings they have occupied for months, and the train stretched from Balm Road Junction to Beza Road Level crossing, being finally taken over by the B.R. shunter at 11 p.m. one night.

It was soon discovered that the local thieves had been jacking up wagons and that 2 were minus brass bearings. The brass is worth 2s.8d. a pound and takes quite a bit of jacking to remove - the absence of these bearings on a fast main line train could cause an accident and fatalities.

When the remaining Tankers went off to Wadsley Bridge a week afterwards another wagon had lost its brass - B.R. inspectors just arrived in time to stop a loiterer doing even more damage.

Then the blow struck our own rolling stock. A wagon had been in Moor End Works for loading of scrap for over 3 weeks. Going flat out the Sentinel could only just move it, and it was evident that the brasses had gone. We ended up unable to move

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the wagon back into Moor End, and unable to get it down the main line. The wagon was so heavily loaded that an ordinary jack was useless.

On Saturday March 30th, the Chairman, unable to raise any other support, struggled for 2½ hours with the large traverser jack to lift the axle boxes and drop in replacement bearings. The wagon arrived at its destination 4 days after it had set out!

Owing to the Moor End office not having a key to the railway gate and the works manager being away, it took over 2 hours to get in to Moor End for another wagon of scrap iron. Then the Sentinel was trapped by a collapse of industrial rubble on to the rails, and it took 20 minutes levering and shovelling to get out.

It is certain that the wagon brass bearings were stolen while the wagon was behind a glass-and-barbed-wire topped wall in Moor End works. It is understood that Clayton Son and Company are helping the Police in their enquiries.

British Railways have suffered major pilfering of brass bearings over a long time. The normal problems of running a line like Middleton are sufficient without headaches of this sort. Every effort is being made to keep wagons in places difficult of access from outside, and where they are under surveillance from either adequate lighting or factory guards visits.

If either we, Robinson and Birdsell or B.R. catch the thieves there may be some justifiable homicide en route to the Police station. Faced with an impossible situation, the local Leeds police at Dewsbury Road are looking into the matter.

# If at first you don't succeed...

The best of us slip up at times, and it will take a good deal of Freightliner publicity to restore the image of B.R. efficiency to a Kent farmer who recently wrote to Farmers Weekly.

"I had a new sprayer pump, urgently needed," he wrote, "put on a passenger train at Ashford for Minster in Thanet - 20 miles of direct line.

"It was put on a train at 10 a.m. but the guard forgot to put it off at Minster, so it went through to the terminus at Ramsgate.

"It was put on the next train at Ramsgate, but the guard forgot to put it off at Minster, so it went through to Ashford. There there was no delay as it was put on the next train for Minster but the guard forgot to put it off and it arrived at Ramsgate.

"There it missed the next train back but it was getting homesick, so it finally arrived at Minster between 5 and 6 p.m."



## EAST LONDON JUNCTION TAKES SHAPE

For a very long time, urgent and necessary track repairs have been carried on by one or two faithful members, while the others pass on the other side. We have the doubtful asset of having taken over permanent way in worse condition than any other Society.

Nearly 3 years ago we acquired some serviceable permanent way to deal with our worst cases of completely worn out material. And there it stood month after month as a testimony to our failure to get on with essential work. Whereas a patching up of old track, though done carefully and strictly according to the book, leaves just old track which may need constant and painstaking attention, a completely relaid section can be relied on, and needs no more than regular inspection than a check of gauge alignment and level.

The event which at last galvanised us into action was the final dismantling of the junction near the Balm Road connection with B.R. The turnout was a bastard junction, with fragments of variable origin, poor even by mineral line standards, and the City Drainage engineer dealt the final blow by digging a hole right under the timber with the A chair without so much as a "by your leave". We have known this as the "Bottom Loop" Junction, but in search of a more inspiring name, the writer hit on East London Junction, because the namesake was the turnout for Croydon, and this was right outside Croydon Works.

In June 1967, a team of workers led by Patrick McAskie and Richard Syms started what has been our most carefully planned

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relaying. 30 serviceable secondhand timbers were assembled after careful inspection as to their soundness. Salvaged parts were assembled and laid out according to the book diagram for an LNER A and 6 turnout. On such a sharp curve a wrong selection would have been useless, but this turnout has the curve a shade under 5 chains radius. The pre-fabricated junction was completed by the Chairman during the Summer vacation, and all was ready for a good start in the new University term. After an illustrated lecture on track maintenance and construction, a team of between 8 and 10 students assembled, led by Messrs. McAskie, Syms and Lee, and set to work.

Every Wednesday and Saturday really hard work was carried out. Section by section, starting from the B.R. Connection, every piece of track was lifted and replaced if faulty. Excessive superelevation was removed, mud and weeds cleared away, and the replacement track properly ballasted. Starting at B.R. a 60 feet length of track went in, deliberately a little wide to gauge and with 2 inch check flangeway clearance because of the curvature.

Then we started laying in the A and 6. We differ from other Societies in having to be prepared to have track operational at not more than a day's notice. Section by section, the new work went in. The benefit of pre-fabrication was shown as the heavier parts were lowered into position by the hand crane and the holes were ready for the coach screws to go in, in no case with more than a half inch of adjustment.

The finished job is capable of taking the heaviest loads and B.R.'s shunting locomotive safely and reliably. What was in the old days a series of dog-leg curves, rotted woodwork and highly non-standard components is now a smoothly laid out job to text book standards. The levelling out has given a gradient free section for about 60 yards from B.R., thus eliminating accidental running away. Spring loaded operation of the switch lever throws the junction across from straight to curve with a healthy slap as the switch rail sits tight on the stock rail.

After 60 feet of curve and 67 feet  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches of A and 6 turnout, we are now going to relay the loop with 5 60 feet rails each side and then reconnect the C and 8 turnout at the top eliminating in the process the very nasty gradient put in when our knowledge was less great than now. The final job will give about a wagon length more each side than in the old days. We are also hoping to persuade the drainage engineer of Leeds City to improve the situation caused by the removal of a drain at the bottom of the slopes down from B.R. and our main line.

All this work is being supervised by the new Civil Engineering Sub Committee, who are certainly making up for lost time. There is room for all members in the track repair teams. What is a tiresome soul destroying job for one man is a straightforward and rewarding job for a properly trained gang sticking to the rule book as though the inspector were about to descend on them at any moment.

Continued

It should be mentioned that a f r e e z e - u p and snow fall occurred in the middle of this job. No-one in his senses starts track relaying in snow, but having started we had to finish it, even though we had to chip off 4 inches of frozen ground before getting down to ash ballast that could be shovelled! The thaw produced a squelchy mess - a "Middleton Special" - but the track remained firm after a well done job.

Right under a 14 feet timber on the junction was a solid mass of concrete put there by the City Drainage Engineer, about 2 feet wide by 20 feet parallel to the timbers and at least 8 feet deep. Brute force with sledge-hammers had a small but hardly inspiring result, and the surface remained just that little bit too high. Bearing in mind that a timber resting on a solid level concrete foundation is strong enough to stand the hammering of a turnout, we solved this by paring off between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and 2 i n c h e s under the timber, which then sat down in the right place and to the relief of the surveyor gave a rail level throughout less than a quarter of an inch out of datum.

When the loop is relaid, we shall realign the Moor End Curve to get rid of a bit of 1.8 chains radius. Then we shall look into a new siding for Robinson and Birdsell's, and relaying the old King's siding to replace the Tram Siding that has to be given up for the Motorway work.

Our progress will be marked by the disappearance of replacement material from the stack, and the growth of piles of firewood from the worn out track. This will be a better advertisement for a hard working team than any amount of writing or talking.

The only pity is that the best months of the year for this work, June to September coincide with the University members being away or busy with examinations. So what about some volunteers to bridge the gap?

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## Middleton trip was success

On March 9th, 17 members took part in an interesting and varied trip by train to Blackpool. We left Leeds City on time and our first part of the journey to Rose Grove was uneventful - except for the fact that around Halifax we ran into typical Pennine mist.

Rose Grove shed was shrouded in mist but this did not stop us from admiring two highly polished 8F's and also a rather rusty Stanier 0-8-0! which must have collided with a very large object and was spending its last days in the scrap line minus its front bogie.

Gradually the mist cleared as we travelled f u r t h e r into Lancashire and by Lostock Hall - our next place of visit - the sun was beginning to shine. Unfortunately Lostock was not expecting us but the shedmaster a l l o w e d us round as soon as he saw our permits, but the two lady members of our party had to remain on the platform.

Lostock had become a dumping ground for several classes of engines, so an interesting, if somewhat sad, variety of engines confronted us. One of the two steam locos that was working on the shed, however, arrived with a dead diesel shunter - a sight that was greeted by some with much amusement.

From Lostock Hall we journeyed to Preston - where the 12.44 to Blackpool disappointingly turned out to be a diesel - but this gave us an opportunity to rest awhile before the most interesting part of the tour.

A short walk along the front brought us to Rigby Road Tram Depot and workshops where we spent a very enjoyable hour and three quarters - clambering in and out, under and on top of trams! We asked numerous questions and were shown the new electrical sub station and all the repair stages of the trams and buses; as well as the cutting up of Coronation 313.

However the most interesting sight was the rebuilding of the English Electric Rail coach 271 to accommodate 10 more passengers by extending the length of the body at each of the cab ends. If this experiment is a success several more of the class will be similarly modified, thus helping to prolong the life of the fleet.

The very interesting tour finished with a tram ride on 291 out of the depot to Talbot Square, where we walked to the station in time to catch the diesel to Preston, Manchester and Leeds.

This was a very enjoyable and successful first Mini tour. I hope many more Middleton members will take advantage of these Mini tours which it is hoped to arrange during the year.





Refreshments were available in the canteen, but the energetic chose to climb the decaying incline to examine the remains of the winding house in Liddleton Town Street.

In true rail-tour fashion we travelled over every spur and branch before our return to Hunslet Moor Staithes.

The Bi-centenary Tour was a sad occasion for both railway and tramway were under sentence of death. In the sad last days, I acquired a job as a Christmas postman in the area. This pleased me, for I had not only the pleasure of four free tram rides a day, but often had quite long waits for a city-bound car at the Staithes, where the working of coal trains entertained - and the G.P.O. paid me for the privilege.

In July 1960, Middleton was resurrected as a "resort for rail fans". It was University Rag Week, and I read in the paper of a train service to raise funds for local charities. Whatever would those odd students try next!

On the very first day of operation, I boarded the first public train, which consisted of the double-deck, Swansea and Lumbles Railway Coach, propelled by an ex-LMS vintage diesel locomotive built by Hunslet in 1932 - No. 1697 (now named John Alcock). With Dr. Youell on the footplate, and a peep on the whistle, we cautiously made our way from the flag-festooned Moor Road Level Crossing (Ah yes! How many of us remember the flags! - Ed.) to the Great Northern Railway overbridge, beyond which we would be "out of gauge". My ticket - in exchange for a donation to Rag - was No. 9. The Liddleton Railway had been born again!

In the typical Middleton way, I was pressed into service as a guard the same day, and have been a member of Middleton ever since.

As pioneer in standard gauge railway preservation, Middleton has naturally made many mistakes. The present Committee (and the Insurers) would today be very hesitant about running a double-decker-loose-coupled-passenger train on an unfenced line!

The limitations of the Middleton Scheme must be appreciated, by Committee and members. We have no scenic beauty, just slag heaps, no panoramic vistas - just vandals. Yet we have a railway which does a real job, running an all-the-year-round freight service with an interesting collection of industrial and main line tank locomotives admirably suited to their new purpose.

We have National Trust protection, and soon, we hope, an attractive museum to tell the story of the oldest Railway in the World.

With a small membership, and thus a limited labour force, and limited financial resources we are tackling a challenging and interesting job. If you are not yet a member, why not join us?

Those interested should write to the membership secretary, Mr. John Bushell, 12, Trelawn Crescent, Leeds 6. The annual subscription is 21s.0d. and half price for students and pensioners.

## the scheme that FAILED

The news in September 1967 that the Kent & East Sussex Railway Preservation Society was not to be granted a Light Railway Order came as a shock to railway enthusiasts everywhere. Here was a society composed of energetic and hard-working, and evidently practical and knowledgeable people, who had built up a nucleus of interesting and worthwhile historic vehicles and had done much maintenance and restoration work on track and associated works; and yet it seemed that all their efforts and hopes had been felled at a blow of bureaucracy.

What really happened?

### Was bureaucracy to blame for Kent & East Sussex flop?

Such was the keenness of those concerned in the project that the subject was debated in the House of Commons on November 7, and from this we may learn that the burden of responsibility did not rest only on one side.

Mr William F. Deedes, the Conservative member for Ashford, took up the cudgels on behalf of the enthusiasts. He briefly described the history of the line, which ran for 12½ miles between Robertsbridge and Tenterden. Passenger services finished in 1954 and goods operation in 1961. Since then the Preservation Society, with 1,200 members, had been working to reopen it and in 1966 paid a deposit to British Railways on the agreed purchase price of £36,000. Application was then made to the Ministry of Transport for a Light Railway Order.

At the public inquiry to hear objections to this in March '67 the Ministry inspector recommended, with certain reservations, that the line might be reopened and in April the full price of the line had been raised, continued Mr Deedes. It was the intention of the Society to operate the line partly as a public service, partly as a freight service, and partly as a joy ride for enthusiasts.

When the Minister refused the application, she had done so on three grounds. First, she doubted whether sufficient financial reserves existed to meet possible emergencies; secondly she feared that the level crossings would hinder traffic; and thirdly, the weight of traffic might in the future require dual carriageways,



thus involving overbridges and costing thousands of pounds to the taxpayer. In a nutshell, she felt the inconvenience would outweigh the advantages.

Referring to the forthcoming debate on a Bill on leisure in the countryside, Mr Deedes asked what sense it made to talk about providing amenities such as this railway provided and at the same time to destroy one of the amenities?

In reply to the Ministry objections the Society had suggested an Order for a limited period of ten years. In its own traffic census at level crossings the Society reached different figures from the Ministry and measured the delay in seconds rather than in minutes.

An anonymous member of the Society had offered to stand surety against emergencies of the sort envisaged by the Minister: assets of the Society were not negligible and failure would not result in the penalty which the Minister seemed to fear.

The most important issue raised was, Mr Deedes contended, that the principal objections raised by the Minister had been raised after the public inquiry and not at it. What to the Ministry had seemed weighty arguments about dual carriageways, bridges and the financial liability of the company, were not matters raised at the inquiry, and the Ministry had not been willing to discuss them since.

Mr Deedes said the Minister could have made an Order subject to conditions or could have persuaded BR to accept a lease.

It came to this, concluded Mr Deedes. Of the three main objections raised by the Ministry, two were irregular and one was not even discussed. The Ministry had behaved shabbily and he hoped it would think again.

Replying, Mr John Morris (Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport) said the debate was the climax of a two month campaign by the Society to get the Minister's decision reversed. He outlined the many ways in which the enthusiasts had set about this and added: "However, in our admiration for the pluck and determination of the right hon. Gentleman's (Mr Deedes') constituents, we must be careful not to get the basic issues out of perspective."

The Light Railways Act (1896) laid upon the Minister the duty of deciding whether a light railway should be allowed to operate. She was to do this after finding out all the facts "both by local inquiry and such other means as she thinks necessary" and after taking the best advice available on the operational, financial and safety aspects of the proposals.

The Minister was not opposed to light railways on principle. Many existing ones had been given considerable technical and legal

help by the Ministry. Nevertheless, running a light railway was not a basic constitutional right. The case for being allowed to do so had to be established.

Authorising a light railway was a serious step. An Order could not be revoked or amended except on request.

## **'Company chose to ignore objections warning'**

Mr Morris then outlined the problems faced by the Kent & East Sussex Railway. It crossed seven roads on the level, including four major roads, and numerous waterways, drainage being of great importance in the lowlying agricultural land.

As early as May 1966 the light railway company, which had approached the Ministry for preliminary guidance, had been warned in writing that any proposal to reopen level crossings over the busy main roads would be bound to raise grave objections.

Opening such a line could only be justified if there was a clearly defined public transport need sufficient in scale to outweigh the disadvantage to road users and the risks to the landowners and drainage authorities if the company was to prove unable to meet its heavy financial obligations.

"The company chose to ignore these warnings," went on Mr Morris.

"Indeed, I doubt whether the ordinary members of the Society, who went on contributing their voluntary labour and their cash,

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were told of the risk that their efforts might be abortive. There was this clear warning."

The evidence presented at the inquiry had been exhaustively assessed by the Ministry's technical experts including railway inspectors, highway engineers, and legal advisers, and last of all the whole case had been thoroughly examined by Mr Morris himself.

Mr Morris continued by scotching some false rumours about the Ministry's doings which had been put out by the Society. On the "personal guarantee" offer, he said this did not constitute a satisfactory permanent answer to the financial doubts.

The Society's own census had shown 12,000 vehicles a day over one level crossing.

The inspector at the inquiry had not made a firm recommendation but said that "there is a public demand, slenderly amounting to evidence of a public need, but of a strength which could not prevail against serious objections on wider public grounds to the railway being reopened."

A temporary order was not possible because of the difficulty of dealing with the statutory responsibilities when such an order expired. BR was not prepared to lease the line and had entered into a contract to sell it. Thirdly, and most important, the traffic problem was not remote but actual.

The Minister did not intend to change her mind, concluded Mr Morris.

In commenting on this sad story, it would be easy to blame officials of the Society for not holding a special general meeting on receipt of the Ministry's warning in May 1966. One does not know their position but presumably they acted on the best advice they had and decided that they had a good chance of success.

The debate clearly shows one thing, however: that the claims and interests of one group, however vociferous and well-intentioned, cannot be allowed to override the wider interest of the public at large, no matter how difficult this may be to ascertain nor how dull and uninspired it may seem by comparison. As both speakers in the debate pointed out, this is what democracy is all about.

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