



The Old Run

Journal of the Middleton Railway Preservation Society

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The Journal.

We felt optimistic in running off 60 copies of the first issue of this Journal. We are happy to tell our members that to meet the needs of members, intending members, and friends of the Society, a total of 100 had to be run off eventually. The first printing of this issue is 110.

After this issue, the Editorship will pass into the capable hands of Mr. Brian Ashurst, who has produced a Journal of very high quality for the Leeds University Railway Society and is well qualified to take over the reins for M.R.P.S. Mr. Ashurst and Mr. Worsfold were jointly responsible for the block of the original Middleton Locomotive which heads the Journal. We have a similar but larger block which, it is hoped, will feature in a Middleton Christmas Card later this year.

In each month's issue, we shall, in future, report the Society's progress for that month. Press day will accordingly be the first day of the succeeding month, and we hope to have the issue delivered about a week after the end of the month of issue.

Inevitably, our first issues must be a very skeleton news-sheet, outlining our activities. We expect to enlarge the Journal to include articles on the various aspects of the Middleton Railway and the Society's other interests. The Editor accordingly invites submission of any matter coming under this description.

Naming a new periodical is not easy: the banal, the pretentious and the cumbersome so readily appear in titles. The name "The Old Run" was suggested by Mr. Philip Worsfold, Secretary, Leeds University Railway Society, 1959-60, and is surely concise, euphonious and appropriate: the Old Run was the route of the M.R. from 1758 to about 1877 between Hunslet Moor and Belle Isle, before the building of the new line avoiding the incline, the latter now being a concrete road named "Old Run Road".

Progress Report.

The Leeds City Engineer, Mr. D. Currie, discussed with the Acting Chairman the Society's proposals in a two hour meeting at the Civic Hall. The City Engineer, despite his very busy position in our City, went into great detail in his examination of the prospects of the M.R. Your Acting Chairman had a most courteous and pleasant hearing, and whatever the outcome of our application for approval of our scheme by the City of Leeds, it will have been reached after a full investigation of all aspects of it. Quite naturally, things that can be done in rural surroundings with impunity cannot likewise be done in a City of half a million people, owing to the effects on the Community in a densely built up area. In having to go very carefully here, we are at a small disadvantage compared with the Preservation Societies at work at Talylyn, Ffestiniog and Cricke - this is more than balanced by having our potential site of operations on the doorstep of a large reservoir of railway enthusiasts.

The old works of Wagon Repairs Ltd., which has been derelict for some time, has been taken over by Acme Engineering Company of Holbeck, Leeds. They are likely to need a siding for rail access to their works. The old works had 16 tracks by virtue of their business, reached from four sidings by a traverser. It may be possible to salvage the rails or chairs for re-use. Heavy lorries entering the works for rebuilding have turned the "level crossing" into a quagmire during the wet weather, and for about 10 yards, the rails are no longer visible. This state of affairs is however easily remediable when a more permanent crossing is made.

Any outdoor installation left derelict for some time attracts the attention of certain people who leave their mark behind them, and the M.R. is no exception. In certain places earth and stones have been tipped across the line with no obvious purpose. Fortunately a railway is fairly robust against depredation.

The pavement at Burton Road has been extended over the M.R. in tarmac, covering the rails by an inch or so.

The Society's four Leeds Trams, 1,6,160 and 517 were given a wash down outside and a vacuum cleaning inside during the first half of February. £85 worth of spares were loaded up before the scrapping of other cars rendered them unobtainable. To all but the hardened 'bus-fiend, the Swinegate Depot has presented a sad spectacle as car after car was cut, torn, burnt or hacked apart. They were, like a former Monarch, an unconscionable time a-dying. The London "Feltham" cars were built like battleships. Gradually the lines of cars shrank, the piles of broken glass and splinters grew, until none remained but the three single deck railcars "Showboat" no. 202 (to be preserved by Leeds City Museum) and "Feltham" 526 (Now on its way to the United States). Fate chose a day which froze and snowed as we trundled our cars out of the back of Swinegate depot. British Railways had not, as we had hoped, been able to hire us temporary accommodation in Swinegate Arches, but Messrs Wilkinson, Dickinson's manager very kindly allowed us to use their back yard between B.R.'s arches and the depot as a haven. In the biting cold, we did well to get all four cars out at all. Our plan to derail the cars to fit them all in the limited space had to be abandoned, and one tram pushed into the Railway Arch, leaving three in the Yard. The doors of Swinegate closed behind us, and we felt rather like the Victorian Drama heroine turned out in the snow and bidden never to darken her father's doorstep again. We might call this the black Thirteenth of February, but perhaps white would be a better adjective. On subsequent Wednesday and Saturday meetings, we rearranged the trams and two boddy trucks along the sides of the Yard, leaving a clear path between them to B.R.'s arches. They are for the time being secure and protected by a padlocked gate. The manœuvring off the rails of 16 ton trams was neither as easy as we hoped nor as difficult as we feared. At the end, we felt quite confident to shift anything with a block and tackle and pinchbars! Those wheels which were off the cobblestones were jacked up and lowered on to steel plates to stop their sinking into the ground.

Meeting People.

As one of the Guests at the R.C.T.S. (W.R.)-L.U.R.S. Annual Dinner, we had Mr. Mitchell, Director of Leeds City Museum. In his after dinner speech, he expressed interest in the Middleton Preservation Scheme, and hoped that one day we should have in Leeds a fitting Museum setting out the part Leeds has played in the development of transport.

The M.R.P.S. Acting Committee entertained to Lunch Mr. E.E. Cowell, Traffic Manager, B.R., West Riding. He discussed with us many points at which the M.R. and B.R. would meet if and when our plans bear fruit. He was very helpful and encouraging, and we felt we had acquired a friend and advisor of the Society of great value. Without close relations with B.R., our future would be a very uncertain future: we certainly seem to have made a good start in this direction.

Mr. R.J. Hunter from the Railway Museum at York also came to meet our Committee. He is well known for his work for the Ffestiniog Railway Preservation Society: the historical importance of the M.R. was naturally of great interest to him, and he has already given the M.R.P.S. Committee much valuable help and advice.

Among new members of the Society is Councillor J. Goodchild, of Wakefield. He is an active member of the Railway and Canal Historical Society, and was one of those responsible for producing the excellent publication of the M.R. produced for the 1958 Bi-centenary celebrations. We are very glad to have a contact with the R.C.H.S. which has obviously common interest with us in the M.R., especially someone like Coun. Goodchild with his own expert knowledge of the line. Coun. Goodchild has, very kindly, offered to loan the Society many valuable archives and documents relating to the M.R. if we succeed in setting up a building as a Museum.

The Railway Correspondence and Travel Society (West Riding Branch) has designed a plaque which will be paid for by members and fixed somewhere on the M.R. to commemorate the Bi-centenary of the line. Mr. John Halliday who will be known to many members of M.R.P.S. has told us that any surplus left over from the plaque fund will be devoted to the Preservation of the M.R., a gesture which will, we are sure, be very much appreciated.

Professor G.W. Carter, Vice-President of L.U.R.S. and head of the Dept. of Electrical Engineering at the University of Leeds has offered us a home for the Automatic Point-Operator equipment, a set of which has been acquired from Leeds City Transport. Mr. J.R. Blakeborough, of that organisation, has been very helpful to us in picking out a very good specimen of this ingenious labour saving device. A former head of Electrical Engineering Mr. Aspinall-Parr designed a similar machine, but we have not yet traced whether these machines were actually in use in Leeds, or the places where they were installed.

Messrs. Ward's of Sheffield who were engaged on scrapping the Swansea and Mumbles Railway which closed early this year after operating since 1804 (the world's oldest passenger carrying railway) advertised for any Society who was interested in preserving specimens of the Railway to apply to them. As a result of this, the M.R.P.S. was offered S and M coach No. 2 at a very generous price. It is most appropriate that our 1758 Middleton Railway should feature a coach from the world's oldest passenger railway. We are now putting our thinking caps on as to how to get this 28 ton vehicle up to Leeds without damaging it or bankrupting the Society. It is too high to travel by rail, but fortunately the top deck is demountable and the trucks are detachable, and it will probably come to Leeds in two or more pieces. The South Wales Transport Company, a 'bus concern, have been helpful in offering us spares and circuit diagrams etc. A Swansea local paper and the Yorkshire Evening News have given us valuable publicity about the S and M car.

Mr. S.H.Higgins, of Liverpool College, author of the book on the Wantage Tramway, has offered us an 0-4-0 well tank loco built by Borrow's, now at work at Pilkington's of St. Helens, Lancashire. We have gratefully accepted his offer to loan us this loco. which is light enough to run on the M.R. track even in its present state, and short enough in its wheel-base to negotiate the very nasty curve on Clayton's siding, (3 chains).

On Tuesday 23rd. February, the Yorkshire Area Group of the Ffestiniog (one F or two??) Railway Preservation Society held a meeting in the University to which we were invited. Immediate cordial relations were entered into at once by the Societies: there is a prospect of our being able to provide "local training" for Ffestiniog members who cannot spare time to go to North Wales. We saw a cine film of the F.R. progress, and this naturally started ideas in the minds of our own photographically minded members. The T.R. and F.R. are examples of how to overcome initial difficulties of restoring a derelict historic railway: examples which should encourage us in coping with our early organisation.

There will be a Railway Week in Leeds 23rd-30th. April, 1960, with the title Salute to Steam, organised by R.C.T.S., and including exhibits and lectures. Our members are invited to help and to turn up at sessions. Your Acting Chairman, Dr. Youell, will give the last lecture on the 30th. April on "The Middleton Railway, past, present and future."

Our Inaugural A.G.M. is fixed for Saturday 7th. May at 3 p.m. in the Physics Department, University of Leeds (by kind permission of Professor Stoner). Agenda in the next Journal. During the University Vacation, informal meetings of Committee will be held Wednesdays at 3 p.m., and of the Society Saturdays at 1 p.m. Meet at Dr. Youell's Room in the University.