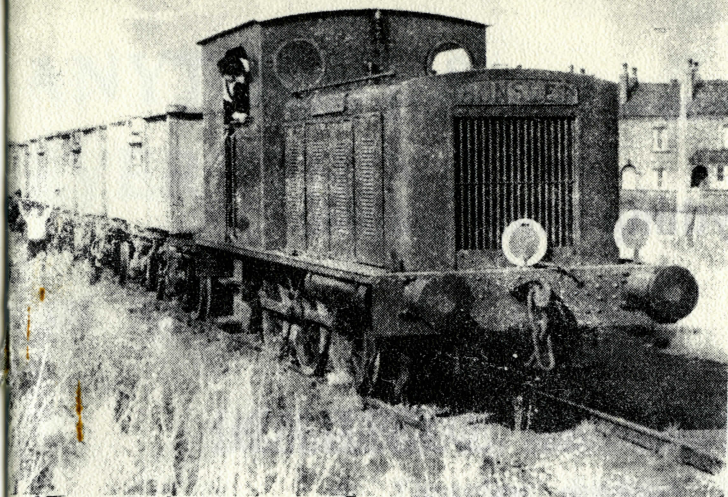


MARCH
1964



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The Old Run

Journal of the 1758 Middleton Railway Trust, Leeds



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HOLE-SINKERS STRIKE AGAIN! Now it's the Gas Board's turn

There has been a further outbreak of the Dreaded Hole at Middleton. It occurred during the last week of January when contractors for the North Eastern Gas Board dug a large hole five feet from the tracks of the Middleton Railway.

Immediately, the MRT's emergency Operation Hole plan came into action. The owners of the Hole were traced and warned of the danger that, if the Hole caused the track to subside, the Hole might be seriously damaged by a falling railway engine. As an additional bonus the MRT chairman, Dr. R.F. Youell, informed the Gas Board that the outer edge of the Hole was within 6 inches of the 132,000 volts cable which the Electricity Board had laid (illegally) near the railway.

Hastily consulting its records, the Gas Board found that the contractors should not have been digging in that spot. Apparently they had been misdirected. They undertook to have the Hole filled as quickly as possible.

The Gas Board owns the site of the Middleton Railway from Great George Street to Whittaker's Staithes.

The last time an unauthorised Hole appeared under the Railway was in October, when the Central Electricity Generating Board wanted to inspect its cable. Details of this appeared in the October *Old Run*.

SALES MUST STILL INCREASE

Several societies and one or two individuals have offered to sell Old Runs, for which we are very grateful. There is still a great need for this however, as it is essential that The Old Run should pay its way for quality to be maintained and improved. Societies may sell Old Runs at 25% discount.

Old Runs sell particularly well on rail tours and at exhibitions, and any member of the Trust who is willing to help in this way is urgently requested to get in touch with the editor.

How I prepare Middleton's steam crane for the day's work

After an uncomfortable seventy minute journey on that rival transport, the motor bus, and a brisk five minute walk, I arrived in Clayton's Yard and make my way to the brake van. Here I quickly put on my boiler-suit and am ready to start work.

Over by the steam crane I can see wisps of smoke appearing from the chimney. Thank goodness Derek has beaten me to it this morning and has lit the fire!

I go and collect my oil can and start the dirtiest job, that of preparing the crane ready for work. Carefully I go over all the oiling points,

John H. Charlesworth, the steam crane engineer on the Middleton Railway, describes how he and Derek Rayner prepare the steam crane for its day's work. The crane referred to is the only working survivor of the old Great Western Railway broad gauge of 7ft. 0¼ins.

of which there must be over fifty, and then fill up the big end and eccentric oil cups. A couple of turns on each of the grease cup lids, and the job is done.

By this time the pressure gauge needle is on the five lbs. per square inch mark, and after a quick look round to make sure everything is OK, we retire to the brake van for a warm and a discussion on the day's job. Fifteen minutes later there is a slight sizzling at the safety valve and the gauge needle comes up to the red mark. I test the safety valve by allowing it to blow off. Then, to pull the pressure down a bit I fill up the boiler, using the injector, and blow through the water gauge glass to ensure it is working correctly.

Coming to life

With reversing lever in mid-gear and the drain cocks open, I blow through the cylinders to warm them by opening the regulator. I shut it, put her in forward gear, check that everything else is out of gear, and open up again, allowing the engine to turn over slowly to permit the cylinder walls to be oiled. Water spurts out of the cylinder drains, but that is soon replaced by billowing clouds of steam. We are ready to go.

With the crane in travelling gear and the reversing lever in reverse, we chuff slowly down the back road, over the points, and back up the other road to the tap to fill the tank with water. A quick look at the level of the water in the boiler and at the pressure, and we are off to wherever we are required.

Non-members of the Middleton Railway Trust may obtain The Old Run post free for an annual subscription of 12s. 0d. Postal Orders, please, to the editor.

A subscription to The Old Run does not, of course, include membership of the Middleton Railway Trust. Full membership of the Trust is 21s. 0d. with an additional 4s. 0d. for free delivery of the magazine of the railway preservation societies, 'Forum'. Members of the Trust receive The Old Run free of charge. Junior and student membership of the Trust is 7s. 6d., plus the 4s. 0d. if desired.

MUMBLES MYSTERY

By Lyndon Shearman

While the Middleton Railway Trust is proud of the fact that its locomotive *Swansea* was the last steam engine to run on the world's first passenger railway, the exact history of the locomotive stock of the Swansea & Mumbles Railway is shrouded in mystery. Extensive research has not clarified the matter to any great degree, and no writers seem to venture deeply into it. Certain points are repeated frequently, however, and these have led me to several theories concerning the Avonsides which ran on the S&M.

It seems definite that the S&M had on loan c. 1918-19 an Avonside 0-6-0ST called *Hampshire*. A photograph shows her with vacuum brake, screw couplings, a plate similar to a works plate on the bunker instead of the cab side, and a handrail over the top of the tank. The Railway also had an 0-6-0T called *Crumlin*, of doubtful origin; it appears that she came from the GWR in exchange for an Avonside 0-6-0ST called *Swansea*.

There are no records of Middleton's *Swansea* being under GWR ownership. To my knowledge, she was delivered to Bynea Steel Works, on April 26, 1910, and remained under their ownership until she came to Middleton on April 12, 1962, having been on loan to the S&M in the 1920's until March, 1929. There is, however, a reference to an Avonside 0-6-0ST of 1906 called *Swansea*.

Only the previous two paragraphs are known fact, but consideration suggests the MRT's *Swansea* had a double on the S&M, and that is it was the double which went to the GWR in return for *Crumlin*, while Middleton's engine ran on the S&M at a later date.

Unfortunately, a search through lists of GWR engines has revealed neither a *Crumlin* nor a *Swansea*. It is possible that the presence of three Avonsides on the same short railway (and two of them with the same name) led to confusion in contemporary records, but on the other hand, it appears that the two *Swanses*, *Crumlin* and *Hampshire* were all on the S&M at different times.

If anyone can clarify the situation, I should be very grateful to hear from them through the *Old Run*.

Computers pin-point hot-boxes on US railroad

The use of electronic computers on railways is finding ever wider applications. Computers have long been used on the administrative side of railways, but in recent years have been applied more extensively on the operating side.

Two recent innovations in the field of railway electronics have been introduced in America by the Southern Pacific RR. One is an automatic hot-box detector which indicates to the train crew the location of any overheated bearings on the train, and the other is a level-crossing controller which takes into account 'casual' train movements, such as shunting, which may not result in a train using the crossing.

The hot-box detector is fixed by the side of the track and is linked with a signal indicator on which the letter 'H' appears if the detector has found any hot-boxes on the train. When the letter H appears, the driver stops the train and a member of the crew unlocks a small trackside hut in which a panel shows him the location of the trouble. The offending car is placed in an adjacent siding.

The detector is a heat-sensitive scanning device, and can locate trouble before it reaches the stage of smoking - in a mile-long freight train it used to be a familiar sight to see streams of blue smoke pouring from an overheated bearing. Continued friction could even result in cars catching fire.

Apart from being used in the middle of the desert, where it would otherwise be impossible or very difficult to take a check, the detectors are used in connexion with large freight termini and marshalling yards. A detector five miles out from the terminal signals a picture of the relative heat of the train's bearings, and this appears as a graph in the car inspectors' office.

The inspector analyzes the tape and, if any attention is needed, radios the carmen in the yard, who are equipped with small jeeps and equipment to deal with hot-boxes without removing the car from the train. As the train enters the reception road, the jeeps race along to the hot-box deal with it, and within minutes the train is on its way again.

On those sections of remote track where automatic train control (American CTC) applies, the train dispatcher is automatically notified when a train has to stop for hot-boxes.

Train crews report that, although the detectors are not perfect and judgment is still needed to make use of their findings, they have saved a considerable amount of delay.

Movements of approaching trains are analyzed by the level-crossing controller. The computer can predict whether and when a train will reach the crossing and activate signals and gates in time to give motorists ample warning.

(continued opposite)

Basically the crossing controller is similar to automatic lifting barriers installed on some model railways. Low voltage AC current is introduced into the rails by converting current from trackside batteries.

A moving train sets up a moving short circuit on the line, creating electrical resistance. By measuring changes in the resistance caused by the moving train, the predictor can tell the distance to the 'short' and by determining the rate of change it can calculate how fast the train is moving and how soon it will arrive at the crossing.

A train can start the predictor working and yet the gates will not close if the train stops within a certain distance of the road. This is because when the train stops, the change in the resistance rate stops, and this registered by the computer and cancels previous 'instructions'.

The same rails that carry the current for the crossing controller also carry a DC current for the block signalling without any interference between the two systems.

The computer provides its own safeguard against failure. Every five seconds the device simulates the approach of an high speed train and predicts when it would hypothetically reach the crossing! If any component fails to perform properly, causing the system to miss a completed check cycle, the warning signals and gates are automatically activated.

This system is a great simplification of conventional crossing control devices which require timing and control circuits with numerous relays and insulated rail joints to detect train movements.

Still going strong

Middleton Railway's steam crane was built

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THE DAY MIDDLETON 'LOST' ITS DIESEL

Ever since my first visit to Middleton I have held the view that the Middleton Railway was the only railway in the world where ANYTHING could happen; but one Saturday last year there occurred an event which I would have thought highly improbable even at Middleton.

That Saturday started just like any other Saturday, but as I was walking down Burton Road towards the crossing, I heard the unmistakable whistle of 'John Alcock'. As I enjoy helping in the working of traffic I broke into a run, but when I arrived in Clayton's Yard there was no sign of the engine - nor anyone else for that matter.

Thinking that 'J.A.' and those already present had set off down to British Railways, I let myself into the brake van and got my overalls on, and was just about to set off in pursuit when I saw 'Y' arriving. I explained the position, and 'Y' put his overcoat and bag into the van and we set off together.

Nothing happened until we arrived at Evan's Crossing, where we saw that the loop was empty of wagons and 'J.A.'!

We put forward all sorts of fantastic explanations for this occurrence, not the least being that 'J.A.' had proceeded (legally or otherwise) on to Stourton. We hastened down to B.R. and round into Balm Road Yard, but there was no 'John Alcock' so we decided to ask in the yard office.

Talks with British Railways

After much knocking at the hatch, the following unlikely conversation took place:

'Have you seen our engine anywhere?'

'Who are you?'

'Middleton. We've lost our engine. Have you seen it?'

'No'

Outside the office we discussed the situation seriously, coming to no conclusion other than that it is not much fun to lose an engine. Suddenly, however it clicked.

'Robinson and Birdsell's!' exploded 'Y'.

The rest was an anticlimax. We wandered back up the line, amiably cursing each other for not having thought of the 'obvious' solution. As we approached the tram crossing we heard once more the whistle of 'John Alcock', and looking across the football field we saw 'it' fussing about in the yard, none the worse for its fictitious escapade!

JOIN THE MRT NOW!

The Middleton Railway needs an expanding membership! The new membership secretary is N. Straker, 82, Hunningley Lane, Stairfoot, Barnsley.

Apologia pro via ferra

Earthenware point levers with heavy counterweights gleaming white in the long grass marked the course of the Old Railway. Rusty brown rails ran with a rigidity that was not of this earth, invincible among the upstart foxgloves, noble among the opportunist cowslip.

Once these rails had rung a singing metal psalm of gladness as wagon after wagon swung ponderously down from the pitheads. If you put your ear to the rail you could still hear them, the bass notes of prosperity, vibrating like the sea in a shell.

At the junction with the main line was the gas works. A long derelict place, as unlikely looking as industrial site as a Norman castle is a dwelling. A spur led off the Old Railway into the works, which must have had a daily supply of freshly cut coal. One night a spectacular blaze laid waste the retort house and holders, thus carbonising the carbonisers. No-one interfered with the ruins, and now nature had assimilated them into an acceptable curiosity.

Distinguished LNWR station

The station was also near the junction. It was a functional LNWR type small station, with brown tiles, brown glass windows, a brown pendulum clock and modern red fire buckets swinging immodestly round its brown petticoats. Its most distinguished features were the two amazing supportless awnings which sheltered the platforms outside the waiting rooms each side of the track. By crossing the footbridge, which passed through the middle of one, you could actually see that they had no means of support. This is an architectural achievement by the railways that is often underestimated.

Vicious iron war-spears held in check only by two horizontal bars kept inviolate the sacred LNWR land, while lawful admission was obtained via an elegantly curved and sloping drive which also served the station-masters house. Another, less elegant, entrance on the other side of the railway gave tradesmen access to the goods siding, carefully screened from the station by trees.

The whole property was tastefully lit by soft gas lamps, which it was the head porters pleasure to pull on each evening at dusk.

Passenger service

Trains from Manchester and Stoke arrived at fixed irregular intervals. They were usually hauled by various LMS 2-6-4 tanks, but occasionally a class 4P 4-4-0 would clank its connecting rod against its shapely spinning wheels, and one train had the honour of an irreproachable Patriot. The evening milk train, an eccentric institution that always perched right on the very end of the platform, was in charge of a black five.

Goods trains were infrequent. They made their most colourful and

(continued overleaf)

memorable appearances behind 'Super D' class LNWR 0-8-0's. These splendid engines were never in any doubt: their song was always, 'I KNOW I can, I KNOW can'.

Poised on the horizon the express train stood. Shoulders hunched the Royal Scot punched and swayed at the yielding rails. The air began to hum and the stones danced as the thunderer swooped on and sliced exultantly along the curved platform. Dusty red carriages sighed along behind, obedient to the last and themselves no mean retainers of the mighty one.

More of the same fare was available at Stockport. There the awnings were more extensive and supported by iron pillars. The expresses stopped and the goods trains slipped humbly by round the back of the station.

At night all stations are the same. Steam is blown about by the bitterly cold wind, and mingles with oil and fish in an intangible odour swept round the iron pillars. You wander up and down past the parcels and the piles of newspapers, while from the gas-lit platforms lost trains leave for unknown destinations far away.

'RAILWAY YEAR BOOK' WAS FAIR TO MRT

The claims of the Middleton Railway have *not* been ignored by the *Directory of Railway Officials and Year Book*, writes the editor, Charles E. Lee, in a letter to the secretary of the Middleton Railway Trust, Mrs. S.M. Youell.

Earlier, proofs for the 1964 edition of the Year Book had been returned to the editor with a request that Middleton be included in the table showing the development of the world's railway mileage, which indicated that the first steam railway in Britain opened in 1825. (Middleton, of course, was steam-operated from 1812).

Mr. Lee replied that the table referred to public railways. His letter continued:

'As I think you know, I am very well aware of the legitimate claims of the Middleton Railway, and, over the years, have done something towards making this more widely known. In another page of our directory we have included for many years a statement about the Middleton Railway which uses the phrase 'the first commercial use of steam locomotives'.

Readers will recall that Mr. Lee has written many articles outlining the claims of the Middleton Railway to be the world's first railway authorised by Act of Parliament (in 1758) and the world's first steam railway. Quotations from some of these have, in fact, appeared in *The Old Run*, from time to time.

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