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*HL 3860 'No. 6' heads a train towards Park Halt on Saturday 6th April.*

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# **The Old Run**

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## **Our Chairman speaks:**

The 2024 season is now upon us. March was unusually frantic, even by the Trust's standards, because as well as the normal cleaning and restocking, the Café/shop area was redecorated and new display cabinets were installed in what was once termed the red zone (to the left of the entrance) to create a new shop display space. This is a big improvement on the previous shop area and provides both more display space for goods and a more attractive environment for customers. The final stage of this phase of the café and shop redevelopment will be to put some new pictures up in the café. The month of March also saw a small team of volunteers repainting the red walkway in the Display Hall and edging it with yellow tape, cleaning the grey flooring adjacent to the walkway and cleaning the exhibits. For the start of the season the Display hall looked clean, bright and inviting. Thanks go to all the volunteers who put in the hours to accomplish these transformations; hopefully our visitors will appreciate their work. The challenge now is to maintain throughout the running season the standards that were set before re-opening.

Unusually, because Easter was early, the 2024 season started with the Easter weekend which was followed a week later by Community Day, rather than the reverse. Whilst very demanding of our volunteers and not especially lucrative, this event helps build the 'social capital' which ultimately supports our license to continue operating in South Leeds. This year fourteen different groups were represented at Community Day, plus the local fire service, the neighbourhood police and the Park Rangers. The groups covered a wide range of activities and included ones catering for the elderly, sports clubs, local history societies and the Hamara Healthy Living Centre. The day provided an opportunity



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## **Our Chairman speaks, continued**

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for the different groups to talk to each other in an informal setting and to explore ways in which they might help each other – conversations which included the Middleton Railway. The event was graced by the Lord Mayor of Leeds, four of the six local Councillors made appearances and we were joined by the Rt. Hon. Hilary Benn, our local MP and Trust President. The invited guests all enjoyed their time on the Railway and were very complementary about what we do, which goes to build up good will. Because of the presence of the various local dignitaries, the Yorkshire Evening Post ran a piece about the Railway, which should increase awareness of the Railway within the Leeds Metropolitan Area.

Two weeks after Community Day, the Railway hosted the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Industrial Railway Society (IRS). The publications of the Society are becoming the 'go to' works of reference about the lost world of heavy industry, coal mines, iron foundries, breweries, gas works, cement plants, etc. which once formed the commercial backbone of the United Kingdom. Their publications now provide far more than a history of the locomotives that once served these lost or nearly lost industries; they provide histories of the operating companies, the layout of their factories and much other information. It was particularly apt that the IRS should choose the Middleton Railway to host their 75th anniversary AGM, because of the Railway's unique position in the development of the steam locomotive and the development of the Leeds locomotive building industry, and because it was an industrial railway serving local heavy industry. The members of the IRS who came to the Railway all enjoyed their visit and were very appreciative of the efforts the Railway made on their behalf. which means more good 'word of mouth' publicity and hopefully more visitors.

The focus of the IRS is very much on industrial history linked to the railways and locomotives which served industry. This is very much the territory where the Middleton Railway sees opportunities to improve its offering to visitors, by telling both the story of the Middleton Railway and its contribution to the development of the steam locomotive and the local locomotive building industry, and also its story as an Industrial Railway serving local industries. It is its history which differentiates the Middleton Railway from other heritage railways, and it is this history which the Railway aims to capitalise on in future years. This will involve research extending beyond the basic history of the Railway, which is excellently covered in Volume 1 of the history of the Railway written by Sheila Bye (scheduled for publication start 2025), into the histories of the various factories served by the Middleton Railway and the histories of the various artefacts in our collection. There is still much to discover and make accessible to historians, railway enthusiasts and the ordinary visitor with an interest in 'the way things were'.

Whilst the start of the season appears to have gone smoothly in the eyes of visitors, as the Mechanical Engineer's report shows it has been especially challenging on the motive power front. For the first few weeks of the 2024 season the Trust has essentially been dependent on 'No. 6' – a foreigner built in Newcastle. This situation is not a reflection of our maintenance team but rather is a reflection of the challenges of keeping in working order steam and diesel locomotives which have exceeded their design life by a factor of 3 or more. It is salutary to reflect on the fact that our most modern diesel is 56 years old and our most modern steam locomotive is 69 years old. Just think what the world was like



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## **Our Chairman speaks, continued**

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in 1968 or 1955! Whilst it is often invidious to name specific volunteers when all working volunteers contribute so much to the Railway, it would be remiss not to pay particular tribute to the knowledge, skill, expertise and judgement of the Trust's Mechanical Engineer, Steve Roberts. Daily Steve and his team have to keep machinery operating which should have been consigned to the scrapyard half a century ago or more. The Trust is extremely fortunate to have Steve looking after our locomotives and rolling stock and his contribution to the continued survival of the Railway cannot be overstated. In many respects Steve and his team are keeping alive a fragment of that lost world of heavy industry which lies at the heart of the work of the IRS and indeed the work of the Middleton Railway Trust.

**Charles W Milner, Chairman**

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## **A Student at the Middleton**

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Choosing a degree course and the correct University are some of the most important decisions in a young man's life. I had a natural interest in engineering and materials so applied for courses at a number of universities. My first choice was Leeds. I would like to say that it was just the excellence of the course and its teaching that drove me to make this selection, but I was fascinated by trains, and steam trains in particular, so the attraction of working steam locomotives in the Yorkshire coal field was appealing. Moreover, I had discovered that the University Railway Society had links with the Middleton Railway. Here was an opportunity to play trains in something other than OO scale!

Early in 1972 I travelled from my hometown, Gloucester, to Leeds for interview. After this, a quick visit to Bradford allowed me to sample a short ride on one of the last trolleybuses. This was the only time I can remember being on a trolleybus in the UK, so even if I failed the interview, the day would not have been lost! As it happened, I passed and in September that year I started my new life as a student.

I joined the railway society and quickly volunteered to assist with the operation of the freight traffic. This usually happened on a Wednesday afternoon when there were no lectures, but occasionally we would be called out on other evenings in the week. This was usually necessary to avoid demurrage charges being levied. Traffic was relatively light, usually just a couple of 16T mineral wagons. That was just as well, as the University's locomotive, the diminutive Hunslet 1786 *John Courage* – more affectionately known as *Sweet Pea* – had real difficulty with longer loads.

In the best railway tradition, I started off cleaning, shunting and generally helping out. At that time there was no formal training – it was all on the job learning. For the last 20 years I have been earning a living assessing railway safety, and with my professional hat on I look back aghast at those times. It isn't that we did things in an unsafe manner (apart from sticking the brake stick in the hole in the axlebox and using this as a seat while propelling wagons down the gradient through the tunnel) but the modern concepts of safety management systems were not applied anywhere – including by British Rail – at that time.



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## A Student at the Middleton, continued

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Getting *Sweet Pea* started on a frosty winter's afternoon was a real art. Starting is always a two man job. One person swings the starting handle and when sufficient speed is attained, the second releases the decompressors so that the valves work. If lucky, there will be a cough, cough, cough-cough-cough and then a chunk -chunk-chunk as the two cylinders spring into life. If unlucky a backfire will remind you why it is a good idea to be clear of the starting handle at this time! "Easy start" was a useful addition in cold times, but on at least one occasion I can remember the driver resorting to wrapping a burning paraffin soaked rag around the air inlet.

Fortunately, most trips were entirely uneventful. Take wagons to the exchange sidings, let the BR staff know that they were there, and drag the incoming wagons to the yard. One trip was not so easy. I had graduated to driver by now and had charge of *Sweet Pea* on a day when she seemed decidedly off-colour. The drag up from the exchange sidings to Moor Road crossing was very slow going. Then, horror of horrors! We failed in the middle of the crossing! Impossible to go forward, but fortunately just enough oomph to go back and clear the crossing, much to the relief of the road traffic that had now formed long queues in both directions.

We had to call out the cavalry, which arrived in the form of Pete Nettleton and the Hudswell Clark D631, *Carroll*. Pete, the resident diesel expert, was able to diagnose that the injector timing had become wrong and showed how to reset this. This was a valuable lesson for me. Moreover, there was an added bonus. Rather than run the risk of being called out again, Pete taught me how to drive *Carroll*! After a few turns under supervision, I was duly passed out. What a luxury! Electric starter, enclosed cab and an air brake!

I enjoyed the railway so much and wanted to be on the steam locomotives, so weekends were also spent on the railway. First as a guard and then – joy of joys – firing the steam locos. Firing was usually uneventful, as one would hope. The only loco to make life difficult for the crew was the Borrow's well tank *Windle*. Crewing a steam locomotive always demands getting the best balance between fire, water and steam. On most locos with a properly prepared fire, you could do almost all of the firing at Moor Road station and have enough steam and water to get to the park with enough steam to do a quick water top up. *Windle*, on the other hand, was unwilling to make steam and didn't make best use of what she had. Worse though was the behaviour of the single lifting injector. She was designed for single man operation, so the injector controls and firehole door were conveniently placed for the driver. I was firing for Dave 'Boots' Hebden one day and as we got to the station for the first trip, Dave tried to get water into the boiler. Ten minutes later he decided that we were close to having to drop the fire, but fortunately between us we learnt the knack and managed to coax the injector to life. I regret that I had the indignity of having to stop for a blow-up on at least one of the trips to the park.

Most of the other locomotives were well behaved. I particularly like the Peckett 2003 *John Blenkinsop*. This locomotive was a joy to fire and drive. I discovered that a reliable way to get the injector to pick up quickly was to open the water and steam valves fully, then quickly completely close and reopen half-way the water valve. There would be a loud hiss of escaping steam followed by the beautiful



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## A Student at the Middleton, continued

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melody of a singing injector. I did this once at the Moor Road station while Jim, the CMEE at the time, was resting on a bench. "Very professional" he opined. "Don't do it again!"

University life was going well so when the opportunity came to stay on for another three years I gladly took it. The extra time also meant that I could become a driver. Most drivers would let their fireman have a turn during the afternoon and this is how we learned. Eventually I was passed out and was overjoyed when my first turn was rostered.

I was particularly happy that it should be with the Peckett. The passenger trips were as uneventful as hoped for and I remember returning to Claytons' yard feeling very pleased with myself that the day had gone so well. Pride, they say, comes before a fall and it came back to bite in a most unwelcome fashion. There was a reverse curve in the yard formed between two turnouts. As we traversed this – on my honour at no more than walking pace – there was a lurch and a sinking feeling as the driver's side suddenly – but yet in slow motion – became lower than the fireman's side. The look of horror on my fireman's face – a young man named Ian Smith – is something I can recall to this day. The sleepers in the turnout were rotten and we had spread the track. The driver's side wheels were in the dirt while the fireman's side were still on the rail. At this point I learnt how to re-rail a loco!

The issue of competence was becoming more important. The railway had its own set of traditions for assessing that operating staff knew sufficiently what they were doing, but it was clear that a degree of independence would be a good thing. The railway therefore arranged for a traction inspector from Holbeck to come to the railway to assess every driver. I remember it well. I turned up at the allotted time to discover, to my horror, that *Windle* was on duty. I had driven the Peckett, *Henry De Lacy*, and the Bagnall, but of the operational fleet never number 6, the Sentinel or *Windle*.

I introduced myself to the inspector with a casual 'I've never driven this one before comment' as I made a point of checking the water level in the glass, the handbrake and pressure gauge. 'No problem, lad, they're all the same' came the reply. This was of course the standard BR position in regard to steam locos. None of the traction specific competence that we have nowadays. Anyway, first time on a left-hand drive loco and fortunately enough steam and water to get us up and back again. A few operational and technical questions later and I had passed!

Some time later we learned that the Railway Inspectorate were going to visit together with the local representative from the Health and Safety Executive: respectively Major Peter Olver and Alan Cooksey. The latter name caused some trepidation as he had some reputation for strictness. The day of the inspection happened to coincide with one of my days as rostered driver, so I anticipated being stood down in favour of a more experienced driver. However, railway management took the view that if they thought I was competent to drive then I could drive for anybody. However, as insurance they decided that the fireman should be replaced by a wiser head, and Dave Hebden was assigned the job.



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## **A Student at the Middleton, continued**

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Peter and Alan were polite, competent and to a degree predictable. In later life, working for BR and its privatised children, I had several dealings with Alan when he was technical director of HMRI, and he was a pleasure to work with. Major Olver, who was on the footplate with us, advised that at some point on the downhill journey he would request that I make an emergency stop. It did not take a genius to work out where this would happen: by the GN bridge, where the gradient is at its worst. To this day I am amazed by how quickly we stopped that time! The day went well, and we could continue operating. I think that the major change that followed was in relation to train braking.

When I first started we operated the trains with no continuous automatic brake. This may well have been in contravention of the 1889 Regulation of Railways Act. Jim, the CMEE, had devised an air brake that was powered by a chain driven compressor on the brake van. It did work but the vacuum brake that replaced it was a much better solution.

In 1978 I joined British Rail Research in Derby. Traffic wasn't so bad then and I could drive home after a day at the railway in about an hour. But family and work commitments took over life and it became impossible to remain as an active working member, though my membership has continued unbroken since then. I have had an active career in the railway industry in many countries, including Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Korea and Turkey. I always feel that the lessons I learned from the Middleton have helped me enormously in my professional life.

**David Hill**

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## **Memories Of Sweet Pea — A Request**

Over the past few months, I have been working to document the history of our beloved diminutive diesel loco Hunslet No.1786, otherwise known as *Courage* or *Sweet Pea*. This is in preparation for next year, which will mark 90 years since it was built. Having spent 33 years working at the Courage brewery in Alton, it joined the Middleton fleet in 1968. Since then it has seen intermittent use, leaving it in near original condition.

I would be very appreciative if people could take a moment to send me any memories, stories or pictures which they may have of this delightful loco. I can be contacted through email at [Geordie.brown@outlook.com](mailto:Geordie.brown@outlook.com) or can be found at the railway most weekends.

**Geordie Brown**

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## Shop Notes

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We are once again open for business! We have had the Easter weekend, our Community Day, our first Birthday and our first Education Day. But before that, let me describe the great improvements to the shop / cafe area that were made over the winter. First, the whole area was redecorated, This entailed, of course, moving everything that was movable out of the room and then bringing it all back in again - all the tables, chairs, cupboards and more. Since the floor of the display hall was being repainted as well, there was a certain amount of traffic in both directions (notably of the replica Blenkinsop rack-wheel, which has some weight in it.) The walls of the cafe / shop area also had to be stripped of their photographs, memorials and framed certificates. These naturally then required reinstating once the paint had dried.

A further development was the arrival of some rather wonderful shelving (three walls of it) for the display of shop stock - toys, souvenirs and of course books. Selecting the books for display from our extensive stock required a process of vetting. Not every book made it!

Our Community Day brought in many local organisations - a choir, a bowling club, uniformed organisations and others - and many visitors. We have had our first Birthday Party as well. The first of the year always involves a bit more work than usual, as the normal pattern is to leave many of the decorations in place between bookings to save work. Naturally everything is taken down for the closed season, with the result that the first of the year involves starting from scratch with putting decorations up again.

Another first-of-the-year was the recent Education Day, which is a visit lasting several hours, and usually including one or more train trips. In this case the school party included about sixty children. It is a privilege and a pleasure on these occasions to tell them of the of the great events here of 1812.

**Richard Stead**



*The new shop area, with shelving and display units.*

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2024

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## Museum Notes

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January's museum notes ended with the arrival last summer at Moor Road of the railway's archive material, which had been moved (at their request) from Sheila and Colin Bye's house, and the comment that "then we had to decide how to organise them - but that is another story." But before that story can be told there is a certain amount of background to fill in, not least because a museum is expected to have procedures already in place to handle such situations. At which point you might be wondering "who expects that?", and the answer to this involves some explanation of the process of museum accreditation.

The basic idea of this emerged in the mid-1980s, when the body that was then in charge of museums in the UK (the Museums & Galleries Commission) started to respond to concerns that there was no kind of control on what kinds of organisations could call themselves museums. Specifically, these concerns were that some not very satisfactory organisations were describing themselves as museums, with the risk that members of the public might be fooled into donating valuable objects to them when they were at least not well equipped to look after these objects and display them properly, and at worst might simply sell them off to help cover costs. These concerns led to the setting up of a national museum registration scheme in 1988, and the process of registering museums started in August of that year. There were just five requirements for becoming registered, where a key one was that a museum had to have a clear policy for how it would manage its collection, so as to specify what objects the museum would try to acquire, and how it would handle any situations where it needed to dispose of an object.

At that time the MRT did not have anything that would be recognised as a museum, but once the major extension of the workshop had been opened in November 1994, an idea that began to emerge was that part of the original workshop building should be designated as a museum space. This in turn led to the idea that the MRT should try to register the museum that it was creating, and encouragement to this idea came from the perception that such status should help to convince the Heritage Lottery Fund (as it then was) to fund our bid to develop the Moor Road site through the construction of what is now the Engine House. Museum registration was achieved in September 2003, and our bid to the HLF was submitted in November 2004, and the grant for the development of the site awarded in March 2005.

The next few years were spent on developing the facilities, including the museum, but by this time a new and more comprehensive quality management scheme for museums had been put in place, and this was (and is) known as accreditation. It covered significantly more than the registration scheme had: indeed, the current accreditation standard has nine major requirements, which then split into 21 sections. Given this additional complexity, there was at first considerable discussion within our Council as to whether our museum should aim at becoming accredited, or try to remain simply as a registered museum. Eventually this was answered by an announcement that the status of registered museum would disappear at the end of 2009, so that if we wanted to maintain any formal recognition of the status of our museum we would need to aim at applying for accreditation by the end of that year. This we managed to do (by just a few days!), and the accreditation of our museum was formally confirmed in July 2010.



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## Museum Notes, continued

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By this time the link between the status of our museum and the possibility of grant funding had become much clearer, in that we were becoming aware of various funding programmes that were only open to accredited museums. In particular, one of these was the PRISM fund, for the Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material, which has now closed, but at that time provided grants for the purchase and conservation of significant objects. In 2011 and 2012 we had been planning a project to acquire the two locomotives that had originally been purchased by David Monckton (viz *Brookes No. 1* and *Picton*), and to overhaul or conserve them respectively, and we had initially proposed to apply for a PRISM grant to help fund this. In the event it turned out that HLF were willing to fund the whole of this project, subject to us providing suitable input in the form of volunteer labour, and so the PRISM fund was not involved. This project then ran from 2013 until 2017, and by that time two further developments were coming rapidly over the horizon.

One of these developments was that the requirements for accreditation were being revised, and in particular the new version (which was published in November 2018) included much more emphasis on the need for a museum to have at least basic documentation for all the objects in its collection, rather than just most of them. As described in January's museum notes, for items that were not yet included in the proper catalogue this would require producing inventories, which would at least list them. This mechanism also provided the answer to the question about how to organise all the archive material that had arrived at Moor Road, which was that we should produce a separate inventory for each of the boxes or folders of archive material: all 22 of them. Constructing each of these inventories turned out to require about one afternoon's work, so this exercise started during September 2023 and continued until roughly the end of January.

The other development during the period from about 2018 onwards was that it was becoming increasingly apparent that some of the funding programmes operated by Arts Council England (ACE) were more relevant to the MRT than had initially appeared. In particular, one of their major programmes is called their National Portfolio, and this provides grants to support the general running of arts organisations: a category which includes museums. This NPO funding is awarded nominally for 3 year periods, and up until the period beginning in 2018 there had been a fairly strong impression given was that this kind of funding was intended just for large organisations. For 2018, however, at least one relatively local museum which was not particularly large was successful in gaining funding through this NPO route, and this prompted the thought that perhaps MRT should try to apply for this kind of funding in the next round.

Due to CoVid, the opportunity to apply for such funding did not actually arrive until 2022, when applications were invited for NPO funding for the period 2023 to 2026. By this time a lot of other arts organisations had become aware of the National Portfolio, and so the competition for this funding turned out to be fierce, with the bids totalling nearly 1.5 times the available funds. Different arts disciplines solved this problem in different ways, and in the museum sector the solution that was adopted was to not fund any of the bids from smaller museums, such as ours. This was a pity, to say the least, as £50,000 in grant funding for

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## **Museum Notes, continued**

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each of three years would have made a huge difference to what we could do to develop our museum activities.

In preparing this application for NPO status we had done a lot of work in thinking about the developments at which we wanted to aim, so we were pleased to find that this effort had not been wasted. Specifically, our colleagues in the organisation Museum Development Yorkshire encouraged us to look at other programmes which might fund some of these activities. In particular they drew our attention to a programme that ACE had launched in 2021, entitled “Unlocking Collections”, and it became apparent that this would align very closely with two of the activities that had been in our NPO bid. So, our Council agreed in January 2023 that we should apply for a grant from this programme.

In the event, this application was not successful, although it came sufficiently close to it that the question immediately arose as to whether it would be appropriate to re-apply, particularly since we had received quite a lot of feedback that gave clear indications as to how we could improve the application. A standard part of ACE’s procedures is that any re-application for a grant can only be made if it is approved by one of their officers, and so we fixed an interview via Teams with their museum officer for the Yorkshire region. She was very encouraging, although of course she could not actually make any promises as to what the outcome of a re-application might be. She also pointed out that the application form was being revised with effect from November, and that the questions which the new version of the form would be asking were likely to make it easier for us to emphasise the strong points of our proposed project.

We therefore revised the application, incorporating the feedback that we had been given on the previous version, but without actually making any changes to the underlying project, apart from shifting the proposed timescale back by ten months to cover the time taken for revising the application and re-applying. The revised application was submitted early in January of this year, and we were informed at the end of March that it had been successful, and that ACE were offering us a grant worth £47,212 towards the costs of running this project.

This offer did, of course have to be accepted formally by our Council, but they decided instead that the offered grant should be declined. Readers will be able to imagine how upset I was at this decision, after all the work that had gone into the application: so much so that I would not trust myself to try to write any explanation of why the Council chose to make this decision. It will therefore be up to others to try to justify declining this grant that was being offered.

**Tony Cowling**

## **Council’s Response**

In order to understand the Council’s decision to decline the offer from Arts Council England (ACE) of a grant towards the project ‘Unlocking our Collection’, it is important to review the history of this project from the perspective of Council. The project and the possibility of securing ACE funding to support it was first brought to Council in January 2023. It was recognised that it would help further

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## Council's Response, continued

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the Trust's charitable and educational objectives, but would impose additional demands on the Trust's managerial and financial resources through the need to recruit and supervise a paid employee. Council agreed that the Trust should go forward with an application, and a draft of it was accepted by Council in March. In November, in response to a question from a member of Council at a Museum Group meeting, Dr Cowling advised that a decision had been delayed by ACE and was not likely until at least early in the New Year.

Subsequently, the Council had the impression that the project had died, until 23rd March, when Dr Cowling informed it that while the original application for the ACE Grant had been rejected, he had re-applied and that the re-application had now been accepted. It is unfortunate that Council had not been consulted about continuing with the project, because a number of changes had occurred during 2023 which significantly impacted on Council's appetite for it. In 2024 the Trust is facing a potential cash outflow largely due to essential maintenance expenditure carried forward from 2023, plus increased costs and so expenditure which will not improve the commercial resilience of the Trust is not welcomed. More critically, the Trust's regulators, the Office of Rail & Road, are asking the Trust to undertake urgent reviews of the railway's footpath and road crossings, and to update those parts of the Trust's Safety Management System which do not comply with their recently published guidance. These two tasks will absorb a lot of the Trust's limited management resource, which has been depleted by recent resignations, and means that Council is not able to properly support this project, leading to a strong probability of failure.

These factors weighed heavily with the Council when they considered on the 11th April whether or not to go forward with the project, and they led to the conclusion that proceeding with it would not be in the best long term interest of the Trust. Council wish to make it clear that Dr Cowling acted in good faith throughout and that this decision was made on the basis of information to which he was not privy.

**Charles W Milner, Chairman**

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## The Dark Arches

The railway and Middleton Park feature on the new artwork, shown here, which has been installed in the "Dark Arches", under Leeds station on Neville Street.

**Kris Ward**





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## The MRT Youth Team

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The past few months have been relatively quiet for the youth team with members generally down singly under supervision rather than as a group. Through the early months of the year the team helped with winter trackwork, including the installation of new crossing footboards and signage. Unfortunately, much of the work completed was subsequently damaged or destroyed, and particularly the signs, leaving it having to be redone.

The weekend before the railway reopened a full line litter pick was completed. Although not necessarily instantly noticeable, this important job helps maintain the lineside keeping it relatively presentable. The lowmac wagon was used to collect the larger items which had been discarded along the line.

On community day, Colm led a small group formed of Peter and Oliver to give MD&HB No.45 a deep clean both inside and out. Despite being the railways most frequently used locomotive it rarely gets cleaned, so this was well overdue.



*Peter and  
Oliver  
cleaning  
MD&HB  
45.*

*© Colm  
Connolly-  
Taylor,  
2024*

Since the start of the season most of the team have also started their operational roles once again as ticket inspectors, locomotive cleaners and firemen. Also, some have had distractions looming in the form of examinations, as well as in some cases forthcoming assessments for roles at the railway. Hopefully I shall be able to provide a more comprehensive update on what the team have been up to.

**Geordie Brown**



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## Lord Mayor's Visit

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On Saturday 6th April, the railway was visited by the Lord Mayor of Leeds, Councillor Al Garthwaite and her Lady Mayoress, Councillor Angela Gabriel. They were also joined by society President, Hilary Benn, MP.

The Lord Mayor chatted with the emergency services personnel who were present at our annual "Community Day", in addition to other community groups who attended this event. The main reason for her visit was to look at "Little Moor Park", the joint project between the railway and Hunslet Councillors Paul Wray and Mohammed Iqbal. This former part of Hunslet Moor was isolated from the rest of Hunslet Moor some years ago and has been somewhat neglected in recent years. The joint project has seen the railway provide information and photos for a number of interpretation boards depicting life in this area of Hunslet and of course featuring the railway. The council are tidying up the park and providing new benches and tables, the main feature being a "Middleton Railway Bench". Similar in design to the one on the platform at Moor Road, this bench will feature a modern steam train rather than "Salamanca". In the future it is hoped we may be able to provide a life sized statue of "Salamanca" on the edge of the park as a major feature.

The Lord Mayor and our other guests all enjoyed their visit and the railway has renewed our links with the council, a major part of our future plans.

**Ian Smith**



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## Sir Berkeley at Beamish

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*Right:*

*Preparing to leave the colliery site, with a train of chauldron wagons.*

© Kris Ward, 2024



*Below: leaving the colliery site, with a train of chauldron wagons.*

© Matt Berry, 2024





## Sir Berkeley at Beamish, continued



*Above: the train in the countryside of the museum.*

*Below: the locomotive with a steam lorry at the station site*

© Kris Ward, 2024





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## Sir Berkeley at Beamish, continued

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*Above: Running round at the station.*

© Kris Ward, 2024

*Below: In the locomotive shed*

© Geordie Brown, 2024





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# **MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS**

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The winter shutdown period soon came and went and we are back to running passenger trains once more. It would be good to say that we are well on top of things but the truth is somewhat different. Volunteer numbers over the winter period have been relatively low, meaning that not all of our planned work has been carried out. Hopefully things will pick up over the coming weeks but the pressure of running a train service means that this has to be given priority over other non-essential work.

## **LOCO NOTES**

### **HL 3860**

Apart from the annual boiler inspection, work on No.6 has been limited to the repairs to the sanding gear and re-setting the valve gear, as mentioned in the last Old Run.

The left hand front sandbox was removed from the loco to enable it to be repaired and the broken sand ejector removed. Dismantling the ejector was not the easiest of tasks, as it probably hasn't been done since the locomotive was built, and it had to be dismantled to get it out of the sandbox. Despite being careful, and using a judicious amount of heat to free off seized components, we managed to break yet another bit. However, once this had happened it was possible to remove the assembly and look at the practicality of a repair. The damaged bits were cut off and new parts were made from bronze bar. These were then brazed onto the remaining part of the casting to effect a (hopefully) permanent repair, and everything re-assembled. Finally, the sand pipe was shortened somewhat to try to avoid a similar incident in the future.

As described in a separate article, the slide valves have been reset, which was a fairly easy, if time consuming, task. Since it has been done, the locomotive has had a much more even exhaust 'beat' when in service.

The locomotive had its annual boiler inspection during March. The inspector did comment on wastage of some of the stay heads and crown stays, but the locomotive remains serviceable for now. We will just have to keep our eye on them. For various reasons it is currently the only operational steam locomotive and has been in regular use.

### **1210 SIR BERKELEY**

Work on 'Sir B' over the winter has been minimal. The locomotive had its annual boiler inspection during March and was found to be satisfactory, although the Inspector did request that the washout plug holes in the throatplate and smokebox be cleaned up with a tap, which was easily done. The locomotive was



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## **Moor Road Happenings, continued**

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used over the Easter period with no problem, other than for the crew when it rained. Its owners, the Vintage Carriages Trust, had received a request from Beamish museum for the loco to go to their gala on the 6th & 7th April and for it to stay there and be used for the rest of the month, so it was duly loaded up onto road transport and moved to Beamish immediately after Easter. It has been used to shunt chaldron wagons at the colliery. These wagons are fitted with dumb buffers and as Sir B is one of the very few locos that is also fitted with dumb buffers, so it made a good match. We weren't aware that this would be the case beforehand and our only concern normally when examining the loco is that they have not come loose, so it was fortunate that the locomotive's dumb buffers were in a satisfactory condition!

At the time of writing, the locomotive is still at Beamish, with an expected return at the end of April.

### **No. 11**

Still no progress to report.

### **SENTINEL No.54**

The Sentinel has continued to remain in the relative warmth of the Engine House and has seen no use. However, it was recently removed from there and given a boiler washout prior to its annual boiler inspection. The first part of this has now been carried out. It has also had a steam test for our benefit, but its formal steam test is still to take place.

### **HE 2387 BROOKES No.1**

Apart from a few minor routine tasks, little work has been done on the locomotive over the winter period and it has remained serviceable in case of need. Once the work on HL 3860 was complete and this locomotive became available for traffic, Brookes's boiler was stripped down in preparation for a washout and examination by the boiler inspector. In anticipation of this, the washout plug holes in the smokebox tubeplate were tapped out to restore a satisfactory screw thread. Unfortunately, some of the plug holes had to be significantly enlarged and, as a result, new plugs have had to be made out of SAE 660 bronze. All should have now been ready for the formal steam test but, on carrying out our own preparatory test, it was found that three of the seven smokebox plugs were leaking slightly when under steam. As a result, we have had to postpone the formal test until this problem can be rectified.

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## Moor Road Happenings, continued

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*Washout plugs: on the left a new one waiting to have the screw thread cut, on the right one of the old ones.*



*Malcolm Johnson using the lathe to cut the screw thread on one of the new washout plugs.*

*Both pictures © Tony Cowling, 2024*

### HC 1544 SLOUGH ESTATES No.3

As mentioned in the last Old Run, work was ongoing to machine some new crosshead slipper blocks. Once this was complete we were able to fit them to the crossheads and then set the slidebars true to the cylinder bores and at the correct spacing to accept the crossheads. This involved quite a bit of careful measuring and checking by our small team working on the locomotive, but the crossheads are now fitted, hopefully for the last time.

The locomotive has now been dropped back onto its wheels. Once this was done the wheel centres were carefully checked to ensure that all was satisfactory, which it was. This enabled us to refit the coupling rods on both sides, another job that entailed much measuring and checking. The left hand side went on with no adjustment but it was necessary to slightly alter some of the shims in the bearings on the right hand side to get a satisfactory result. It would have been good to fit the connecting rods as well but we need to ascertain where the bumping marks are before we can do this. The bumping marks are marks put on the slidebars to ascertain the limits between which the crossheads can work and are found by moving the piston to the extreme ends of the cylinder until they touch, or bump, the cylinder covers. It is very critical that this does not happen in service, as this would result in a fractured cylinder cover or bent piston rod and possibly even a smashed cylinder. Until we can install the pistons in the cylinders this work can not be done.

We had hoped to have done this by now but, when we enquired about having some piston rings made, we were astounded to be quoted £325 per ring. For this

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## Moor Road Happenings, continued

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reason we have decided to revert to our previous practice of making our own piston rings. This is not a difficult job but it is time consuming. We don't have a suitable pattern for 15" rings, so one has had to be made. It now awaits delivery to the foundry to have a pot cast, from which we can make the new rings.

Painting has continued and has been making steady progress. Work in recent times has been concentrated on cleaning of the frames and painting in a 'signal red' colour. This work is now largely complete, with only the front axle still to receive the painter's attention.

At long last we have been able to place an order for the fabrication of a new frame stretcher to go between the cylinder blocks. We had struggled to find a contractor willing and able to undertake this work to meet our time constraints. In the end, the order has been placed with Northern Steam Engineering on Teesside with a planned delivery by the end of May.

The saddle tank has now been lifted down from storage and inverted so that we can assess its condition at the bottom, which is the usual place for corrosion to be at its worst. As expected, a few taps with a hammer produced some holes. As a result, we have decided to remove the bottom of the tank so that fresh plate can be welded in. The existing tank is riveted, so we needed to think carefully about this as we don't want to have to resort to more riveting, or have to make a whole new tank. A method of repair has been decided upon and work has started on this. In essence, the tank will be cut away up to the riveted joints, but the joints themselves will not be disturbed. We will then carefully weld in new platework, but hopefully without disturbing the existing riveted joints.



*Two of the holes in the tank bottom, showing some of the riveted joints.*

© Andrew Parsley, 2024

### Fowler 42200033 HARRY

Available for service, although again it has only been used for the occasional shunt.

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## **Moor Road Happenings, continued**

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### **Peckett 5003 AUSTIN'S No.1**

Available for service. It is planned to bring the locomotive into the workshops for a much needed repaint and other minor work. The timing if this will, however, be dependent on manpower and workshop space being available.

### **D2999**

Currently still out of service and sat in the workshops. We are still trying to ascertain what is wrong with it. Our latest thoughts are that the auxiliary generator was not working as it wasn't generating any electricity for charging the batteries, so this was removed and sent away for assessment. However, it came back as being in a satisfactory condition, so we are now looking at the wiring associated with the field windings.

### **HE 6981**

The new cab floor has now been fitted and attention has turned to the manufacture of the battery boxes.

### **D577 MARY**

Currently on display in the Engine House, but it is available for use if required.

### **D631 CARROLL**

Currently on display in the Engine House. Also available for use if required.

### **L.M.S. 7051**

Currently on display in the Engine House. It too is available for use if required.

### **D1373 MD&HB No.45**

In service and running satisfactorily. It recently had a good internal and external clean, which has much improved its appearance.

All other locomotives are stored, either on display in the Engine House or awaiting overhaul.



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# Moor Road Happenings, continued

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## CARRIAGE & WAGON NOTES

The three coaches have had their annual inspections, with no fault found. Each coach has also been fitted with an alarm system so that passengers can alert the guard in case of emergency. In principle this is a legal requirement under the Railway Safety Regulations 1997, which state that *“The operator of a vehicle which is being used for the carriage of fare paying passengers shall ensure that there is provided and maintained on such a vehicle suitable and sufficient means whereby passengers can communicate with a person who is in a position to take appropriate action in the event of an emergency.”* In practice we currently have an exemption from this, but we considered it sensible to comply as modern technology has made it much easier to do so. The system that we have installed is a variation on an ordinary wireless doorbell system. There is an alarm push button in each coach, which when pressed sounds an alarm in each of the guards’ compartments. The alarm sound is slightly different depending on from which coach the alarm has been activated. A light also flashes when the alarm sounds and the colour of the light also varies depending on the coach..

### Coach 2223

The paintwork on this coach was starting to get a bit shabby and the opportunity has been taken to give it a fresh coat of paint on the outside. What was pleasantly surprising was to find only one small piece of rot in the timber when we sanded it down. This is not bad when you consider that it is eight years since the coach entered service, and the bodywork has received no attention since. In times past we used to paint a coach every two years and always had some rotten timber to repair. This improvement is largely thanks to having the carriage shed in which to keep the coaches. Unfortunately, in all this work we did not also manage to find the time to replace the broken droplight window in the guard’s compartment, and so it is still fitted with a piece of Perspex as a temporary measure.

### Coach 2223

Progress on the new coach has been good in recent weeks and the majority of the bodywork is now complete, so that it is no longer appropriate to continue referring to it as a PMV. The major outstanding tasks are completion of the doors and installation of the windows. The doors are all actually fitted but still require finishing off which, again, requires the installation of the droplight windows. The wooden beading, which covers all the various joints in the exterior panels, has also been fitted and painted in red oxide primer.

The roof covering has also had the beading and lighting patresses fitted and the

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# Moor Road Happenings, continued

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lights are operational. There are still several coats of varnish to apply before we can think about installing the seats. The various parts for the seats have all been made and just require assembling and varnishing.

## AROUND AND ABOUT RUNNING SHED

Scaffolding has now been erected to allow safe access to the roof to enable the installation of the new smoke vents. However, we have hit a slight problem with working on the inside. We had intended to use our scaffold access tower for this, but when assembled to the correct height it will just not fit under the smoke trough, and at the next lower height it is too low to enable the top of the smoke trough to be reached. We are currently looking at alternative arrangements. We cannot scaffold up using conventional scaffolding as this would prevent the running shed from being used, which would present problems.



*The scaffolding to access the running shed roof.*

*Both © Tony Cowling, 2024*



*The running shed roof, showing (from far to near) one of the new smoke vents ready for fitting, the hole where one of the old vents has been removed, and another of the old vents still in position.*

## SURFACE GRINDER

Our surface grinder recently decided that it didn't want to work, and the problem was found to be with the spindle motor. Removing this proved to be a bit of a challenge as it weighs a fair bit, but could only be lifted down manually from the machine. It has currently gone away for rewinding and refurbishment.

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# **Moor Road Happenings, continued**

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## **BOILER INSPECTOR**

Chris Shuttleworth, our boiler inspector for the last few years, sadly passed away recently following a short illness. Chris was a regular face at Moor Road as he came to do various inspections several times a year. He always enjoyed coming to Middleton and enjoying the chat. He will be missed by all those who knew him.

## **PERMAQUIP BALLAST PACKER SHELTER**

The steelwork for this shelter has now been erected and the timbers that support the cladding have been fitted. The cladding has also been obtained but remains to be fitted. It would be good to get this shelter finished and in use but it is one of those jobs that is always on the back burner due to pressure of work elsewhere.

## **VISIT FROM THE OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD**

The last Old Run mentioned that we had had a visit from the ORR. They have since requested a second visit to discuss what we have done and this was arranged for the 24th April. In the meantime we had been working to improve our two pedestrian crossings on the running line from Moor Road up to Middleton Park. One of the recommendations by the ORR was that we should have signage on these two crossings. They also mentioned that the prescribed signage would be changing shortly and, although not yet a legal requirement, we should use the new signage, which we have done.

This led to the first problem, in that we were first told that we required just one sign with a pictogram for 'Stop, look and listen' which we duly had made and installed at both crossings. After having done this we were then told that there should also be a second sign with written instructions below! The new signs were of the usual composite aluminium construction, as often used for notices. However, the second problem then arose, in that all four signs were vandalised so we were rapidly back to square one. A revised signpost was then designed which had a full sized steel backing plate, which we hope will protect the signs from being broken. The new signs have now been installed at Bannister's crossing (the one immediately outside Moor Road yard), but as yet remain to be done at the crossing for footpath 201 (the one at the point that is known as GN curve, as it is close to where the bridge had been that carried the former GN Hunslet branch over our line).

Other work on the crossings has included the replacement of the missing section of fence at Bannister's crossing and the installation of a purpose built crossing over the line at footpath 201. It is planned to install fencing at footpath 201 but,



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## Moor Road Happenings, continued

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although the fencing has been obtained, this has yet to be installed. Whistle boards have also been installed on either side of the two crossings as a reminder for drivers to whistle as they approach the crossings.



*Bannisters crossing, showing (left) the new signs and (right) John Blakeley breaking out concrete for the new section of fence.*

© Steve Roberts, 2024

The ORR duly came on the 24th April and had a close look at our risk assessments and what we had done. They had a few comments to make but were generally happy with the footpath crossings. Attention then turned to our road crossings, which is where the main problems lie. The use of the traditional red flag is no longer acceptable and, with traffic levels on Moor Road being anything between 400 and 600 cars/hour, simple 'give way' signs and an open crossing were not considered to be acceptable.

We have been considering the use of temporary traffic lights when we wish to use the crossing, as a relatively cheap solution to the problem. However, the ORR were not sure that this would be acceptable, and so would be discussing this approach with their colleagues in highways. If this is not an acceptable solution, the only alternative would seem to be 'wig-wag' lights, which will be an expensive installation and one we are unlikely to be able to undertake ourselves.

**Steve Roberts**



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# Thwaite Mills

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We were sorry to learn that after the Easter weekend Thwaite Mills closed to the public, due to budget cuts at Leeds City Council who operated the museum. Being another industrial heritage site quite close to us at the railway, there have been a few joint events organised over the years, particularly with vintage buses between sites and with traction engines from the Leeds & District Traction Engine Club (whose demise we have also had to report in recent years).

Thwaite Mills was established by the Aire & Calder Navigation in 1823 on the site of an earlier Fulling Mill, which dated back to 1641. The mill was leased to many different companies over the years and produced many different materials. It is particularly noted for its production of pottery glaze from ground flint, and later putty from ground chalk. The mill was water powered and remained so for over 150 years of operation. It would have had a steam engine as a standby for times of low water pressure at one time, but in later years a couple of diesel engines (one of which was made by the local firm J.&H.McLaren) provided additional power. This provided a backup to the water wheels, which drove everything from the crushing mills to the workshop machinery via line shafts across the site. The mill was used with little modernisation until 1975, when storm damage to the weir put it out of action.

The museum will be opened occasionally to fulfil remaining group bookings, but the lease of the site will then be returned to the Canal & River Trust, the successor to the canal company that built it.

**Kris Ward**



*Left: The mill building seen from above the weir. Right: A waterwheel and line shafting that drove machinery across the site.*

© Kris Ward, 2024



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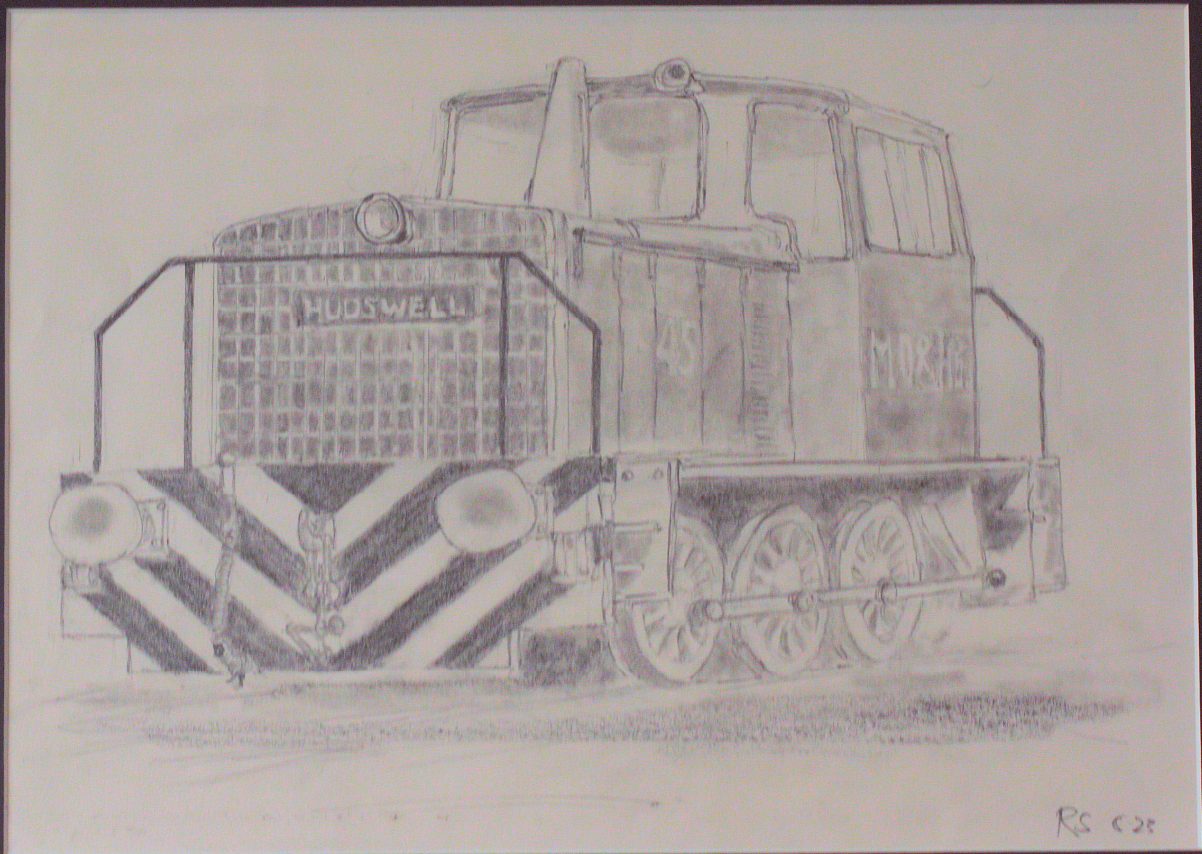
## Long Service Award

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The January issue of the Old Run included an article about the presentation of long service awards that had been made at the volunteers' forum the previous October. One of these awards was to Chris Nicholson, for 50 years service, and (like all of these awards) it consisted of a framed pencil drawing of a scene at the railway, made by Richard Stead: in this case showing MD&HB No. 45,

Unfortunately, the need to use flash in the forum meeting meant that the actual drawing did not show up in the photograph, but Chris was very impressed by the amount of detail in the drawing. He has therefore photographed it (without needing to use flash), and this photograph is reproduced below for the benefit of readers.

Thanks Chris!



Presented to Chris Nicholson  
In recognition of Fifty Years Service  
To The Middleton Railway

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## Resetting the Valve Gear on HL3860

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When HL 3860 (No.6) returned to service it was quite obvious that the valve settings were not good. This could be heard when the loco was working hard, as the 'beats' when the steam was exhausted up the chimney were not evenly spaced. It could also be felt on the train, as the locomotive tended to set up a jerking movement.

The reasons for this were largely historical. When a locomotive is first built the builders will take care to optimise the valve settings and doing so was a skilled task. However, we know that much had happened to this locomotive since it was built in 1935. For a start, it probably isn't HL 3860, at least as far as the frames are concerned. These are thought to be originally from HL3717 but we cannot be certain, as there are parts from other Swanscombe locomotives on it. What is certain is that the valve gear is not original to either locomotive, being a replacement set which was presumably supplied by Robert Stephenson and Hawthorns (the successor to Hawthorn Leslie). As a result, the valve gear had never been optimised.

We also know that, when restored, the valve rods were hitting the motion bracket when in full forward gear, so things were definitely far from right as far as the valve gear was concerned. The first thing that we did back in 2023 was to look at why the valve rod was hitting the motion bracket. On examination, it was fairly obvious that the expansion links were not in their correct position and were too low relative to the valve centre line. Measurement showed that they needed lifting by about half an inch to bring them to something like their correct position in mid gear.

There were two ways of achieving this. One was to shorten the lifting links by that amount. The other, and a far easier one for us, was to shorten the reach rod to the reversing lever. It was an easier option as the rod was 'J' shaped and it was an easy task to increase the amount of the curvature, essentially shortening it in the process. This was done during February 2023, and solved the problem of the valve rod hitting the motion bracket.

However, the exhaust beats were still poor and it was obvious that more work was required, so this winter we took the valve chest covers off and had a careful look at what was actually happening with the valves. With the locomotive in full forward gear it was pinch-barred forwards and the port openings carefully measured at the point of maximum opening. The same exercise was then repeated with the loco in reverse gear and being pinch-barred backwards.

The results obtained were as follows:

	<b>Forward Gear</b>		
Left hand side		Right hand side	
Front port opening	16.0mm	Front port opening	17.7mm
Rear port opening	27.5mm	Rear port opening	25.0mm
Total	43.5mm	Total	42.7mm
Adjustment needed	remove 5.75mm	Adjustment needed	remove 3.65mm



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## Resetting the Valve Gear on HL3860, continued

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### Reverse Gear

Left hand side		Right hand side	
Front port opening	25.0mm	Front port opening	15.0mm
Rear port opening	24.0mm	Rear port opening	32.0mm
Total	49.0mm	Total	47.0mm
Adjustment needed	leave	Adjustment needed	remove 8.5mm

From these results, it can be seen that in reverse gear the valves are moving further than in forward gear, due to the expansion links not being set perfectly after our adjustments the previous year. There is also a slight discrepancy between the total movement on the left hand side compared with the right. This is due to either a slight difference between the lengths of the lifting links or a slight difference between the two lifting arms. After some consideration it was decided that the amount of work necessary to correct these slight errors between forward and reverse would not be warranted, and so we would simply concentrate on equalising the port openings on each side for forward and reverse gear.

Given this objective of equalising the port openings, in principle the adjustment needed in each case was half the difference between the two. In practice, the left hand valve in reverse gear did not need any adjustment, but for the others the considerable discrepancies meant that the eccentric rods needed shortening. It was fortunate that all the valve rods were fitted with shims where they were fastened to the eccentric straps, and so shortening them would be relatively easy.

Removing the necessary shims to achieve this shortening was indeed a relatively easy job, and so we were soon able to check the results of our alterations by pinch-barring the locomotive backwards and forwards and measuring everything again. The results weren't perfect but were far better than when we started the exercise.

The proof of the pudding is in how the locomotive actually performed, and on a test run it was pleasing to note that the valve beats were even and that there was little sign of the jerking movement when hauling a train.

**Steve Roberts**

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### Solar Panels

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The solar panels originally installed on the Engine House roof only supplied one phase, but had been sufficiently successful that the decision was taken to extend them to power all three phases. This picture shows one of the technicians on the roof, adjusting one of the additional panels.





## **The Middleton Railway Trust Limited**

(Limited by Guarantee and not having a share capital)

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Senior Membership (OT).....£25.00

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Family Associates of Trust Members (in same household) £7.00 per person

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### **Other Useful Email Addresses**

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# Community Day



*Stalls in the Engine House for local organisations*

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