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The Old Run

Journal of the 1758 Middleton Railway Trust, Leeds

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The Old Run

Journal of the 1758 Middleton Railway Trust, Leeds

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CLAYTON'S WORKS BURNS

The workshop and drawing offices of Goodall, Clayton & Co, a subsidiary of Clayton, Son & Co, owners of that part of the Middleton Railway operated by the MRT, were destroyed in a fire that caused damage running into six figures on January 6th.

The premises destroyed were adjacent to Clayton's Moor End works, into which the MRT had just finished laying a new branch line. Nine fire appliances were called to the outbreak and were able to save the company's commercial offices. Valuable patterns and drawings, however, were lost, as were a number of important orders for the National Coal Board which were on the workshop floor.

At the moment it is not known whether the workshop will be rebuilt.

No traffic from the works had been carried on the Middleton Railway, but the fire may mean that there will be less internal traffic between Moor End and Dartmouth works.

Track appeal meets good response

There has been a good response to Dr. R. Lawrence's appeal for more help with track maintenance, sent out with *The Old Run* last December. Dr. Lawrence is the MRT vice-chairman and is in charge of permanent way matters.

Dr. Lawrence proposed dividing the railway into seven sections, each of which would be maintained by a group of two volunteers. At the end of a year a prize will be awarded for the best kept section. At the time of going to press three groups had started work and fourth was being organised.

In spite of this good start, there is still an urgent need for more volunteers, and anyone who can spare a little time each week should consider joining the scheme. Dr. Lawrence's address is 6, Wedgewood Grove, Leeds, 8. (Tel: Leeds 664756).

Last train from Tadcaster

by Derek Raynor

A peculiarity of one of the first lines to be closed under Dr. Beeching's 1963 plan was that it had only one train a day, in the Down direction. This left Church Fenton at 7.44 a.m. and usually consisted of a four-coach diesel train which worked from Leeds City at 6.46 a.m.

The last day, as there were no Sunday trains, was Saturday January 4th. I arose at 5.30 and caught the first bus into Leeds. City Station was surprisingly busy at the early hour of 6.30, but after spying several people wearing blue and white rosettes, I realised that it was because Leeds United were playing a cup match at Cardiff, and these were their faithful supporters.

Fast timing

I joined the diesel on platform 15, and we covered the 14¾ miles to Church Fenton in two minutes under the allotted time of 28 minutes, with intermediate stops at Cross Gates, Garforth and Micklefield.

On detraining at Church Fenton, there was an exodus to the booking office to purchase tickets for use over the branch. We were balked, however, since the young lady booking clerk had not yet arrived. When she did, she was kept very busy selling singles to Tadcaster (the first station on the branch) and tickets for the journey back to Leeds via Wetherby (6s 6d).

The cheapest ticket which could be issued on to the branch was a Dog Single, and when the booking clerk was asked for two of these she smiled and there was a roar of laughter from the waiting enthusiasts when the purchaser said that 'if required he would bark twice'!

At 7.44 we seated ourselves in the front non-smoking compartment of the train. It was well filled with 15 enthusiasts, leaving only three empty seats. After the guard had had a conversation with the driver on the intercom, we finally set off at 7.48. It was extremely foggy and we had great difficulty in seeing the road ahead.

We arrived at Tadcaster, with its pleasant overall roof, and picked up quite a few passengers. Whether they were going to work, or merely travelling on the last train, I don't know, but at the next station down the line, Newton Kyme, only one person was visible besides the man on duty.

Stationmaster's farewell

Between Newton and Thorp Arch, the site of the well-known circular railway at the former Munitions Factory could be seen, and then we were into Thorp Arch station. Here only the station master was there to greet us.

On leaving Thorp Arch we drew up at a signal. A query as to whether we had caught up with the previous day's train was made. The guard came on the intercom to tell the driver that the signal had failed, so off we set and passed it at DANGER. The driver turned round to us, opened the door and shouted that, as it was the last train, it would be all right! This was greeted with a chorus of cheers and shouts of 'More!' I'm afraid

(continued opposite)

You'll be welcome at Ridings meeting

Speakers at the 1964 Ridings Railway Meeting, to be held at the YMCA, Albion Place, Leeds, 1 on Saturday March 7th, 2.30 - 9.30 p.m., will include Norman McKillop (Torambeg) and driver Barlow of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway. The Middleton Railway Trust will have a stand at the meeting, together with other societies. All will be welcomed, but as the capacity of the hall is limited visitors are urged to come early.

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we were definitely in a jolly mood for such a sombre occasion.

We were soon passing the site of the now demolished Racecourse Station, and just before Wetherby East Box, we saw, on what should have been the Up line, an unfitted bogie bolster, one of many hundreds which once graced the Up track along with single bolsters and other redundant steel carrying vehicles, most of which had now been removed. The branch had been singled and the Up line was used to store these vehicles. In order to run from Wetherby to Church Fenton, two reversals had to be made before the Down line could be reached at Wetherby East. It followed that no train regularly went that way.

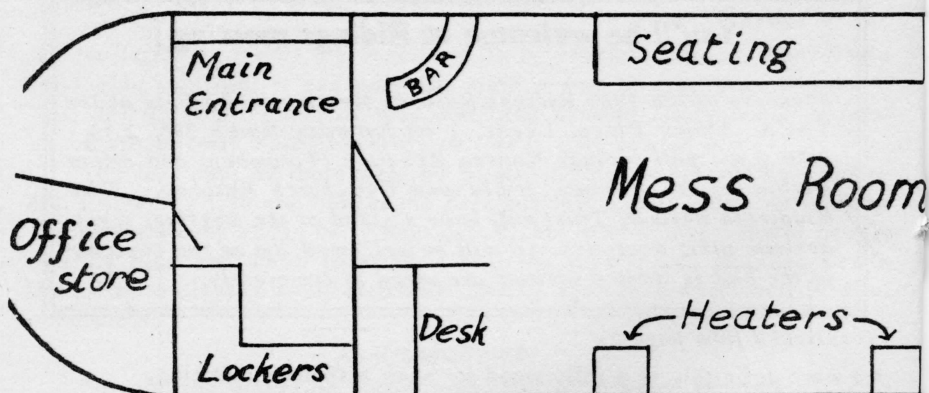
A severed triangle

On passing the original Wetherby station at what is now Wetherby East, we swung round to the left, leaving what had been the north side of the Wetherby triangle, but which in latter years had been cut so that trains could no longer run direct from Church Fenton to Harrogate. Round the curve we went and were surprised to see a three-car Birmingham Railway Carriage & Wagon diesel set on the Up line, just before Wetherby station. This must have been the 7.24 Leeds City-Wetherby, which reversed at Wetherby and departed at 8.40.

We crossed the junction with the Harrogate-Wetherby line and arrived in the deserted station at 8.16, four minutes late. Several passengers got off, but none got on, it was easy to see why the line had received an early notice of closure!

At Wetherby, the train formed the 8.14 to Leeds City via Collingham Bridge, Bardsey, Thorner, Scholes and Penda's Way, joining the York-Leeds line at Cross Gates. This line was to close later in the day, the last train being the 6.13 p.m. from Harrogate to Leeds.

It was with regret that we saw the train leave Wetherby, knowing that never again would a passenger train travel from Church Fenton to Leeds via Wetherby, and that the stations at Tadcaster, Newton Kyme and Thorp Arch would no more deal with passengers, and after April, when the pick-up goods train ceases, with parcels and freight, as they had done, a little uneconomically perhaps, in the past.



The provisional plan for the conversion of the coach No.2 is shown here. The emergency exit in coach is 44ft. 6ins. and the width is 7ft. 6ins. suggestions for incorporation in the plan.

SWANSEA COACH

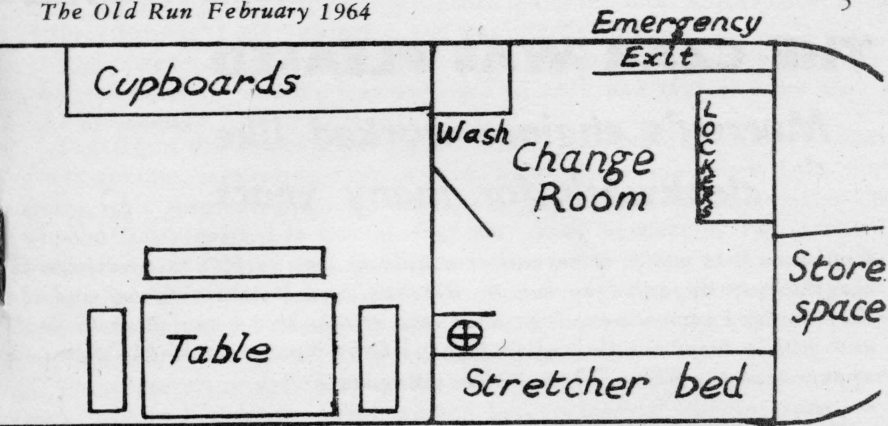
The Swansea & Mumbles Railway coach No.2 which has been stored on the Middleton Railway since its arrival in 1960, is to be repaired with a view to its eventual restoration. This decision was taken at a recent MRT committee meeting, when it was stated that the scheme would be put into effect at no cost to the Trust.

The plan means that the top deck of the car will be removed, made weatherproof, and stored in a safe place until complete restoration is possible. Removing the top deck is virtually a matter of lifting it off, since the vehicle was constructed to allow transport in two pieces. It was, in fact, moved to Leeds in this way, minus the bogies, which travelled separately.

Top deck for storage

Inside the top deck will be kept most of the seats and other fittings not required for the second stage of the plan. This involves using the lower deck, on its wheels, as a mess room, office and first aid depot for members of the MRT working on the railway. The roof of the lower deck will be made weatherproof by fitting the staircase entrances at each end with temporary wooden covers, and covering the whole deck with roofing felt.

The damage caused by a collision with a crane in 1961 will be repaired, broken windows replaced, and the interior fitted up as shown in the sketch. The layout illustrated is, however, a flexible one. As the work proceeds any alterations found advisable will be made. At this



ver deck of the Swansea & Mumbles Railway
a legal requirement, The overall length of the
Dr. Laurence would be glad to receive any

WILL BE RESTORED

stage, Dr. Lawrence would welcome suggestions for incorporation in the plan.

The coach will be moved to King's Siding, alongside Clayton's yard, and will be made immobile. Although work is to begin soon, no date for completion can be given, as it will not have priority over more essential projects such as track work. Many items will be needed to make the office and mess room useable, and offers of suitable pieces of furniture or equipment would be welcomed by Dr. Lawrence.

No.2 is the only preserved coach from the Swansea & Mumbles Railway in existence, and was used in Leeds to give rides in aid of the University Rag Week in 1960. In the week in which it ran along the Middleton Railway 7,500 passengers were carried. The Middleton Railway also owns the last steam locomotive to run on the S&M.

MRT 1963 traffic receipts rose

MRT traffic receipts in 1963 were £100 higher than in 1962, despite the lower tonnage carried. The total carried during the year was 6,500 tons, and the higher revenue was attributable to a temporary increase in freight charges.

Traffic over the Christmas holiday period had been very light. The railway's service had continued adequately during the University vacation. It reflects credit on all concerned with the day-to-day operation of the railway that the service has continued without a break since September, 1960. All trains are worked by volunteers.

THE CZAR WAS PLEASED

Murray's engines worked like clockwork for many years

Reference was made, in an earlier article in this series, to an article in the Railway Magazine by R.E.M. Bleasdale on Matthew Murray and the Blenkinsop Locomotives. It is with this article that I now wish to deal, and with a brief article called 'The First Rack Locomotive' which appeared in the March, 1925, Railway Magazine.

Matthew Murray was born in 1765 at Stockton-on-Tees, 24 years before coming to Leeds where he started work with a firm of flax spinners. Progress was rapid mainly due no doubt to Murray's inventiveness, for patents were taken out in 1790 and 1793 for textile equipment. In 1795 he branched out into his own business at the Round Foundry, Leeds, with two partners, James Fenton and David Wood. Flax spinning machinery was produced initially but by 1799 he had become interested in steam engines (as opposed to locomotives) for in this year, and in 1801 and 1802 he took out patents for various improvements in them. Murray's firm acquired a good reputation and by 1804 there was strong competition with the well-known firm of Boulton and Watt, and also with Trevithick.

Business continued, and in 1811 a certain John Blenkinsop had the idea of replacing horse traction on the Middleton Railway with 'some form of steam power'. With the aid of Mr. Straker, plans were drawn up regarding a steam locomotive and they were submitted to Murray. He was prepared to assist in the experiment and a locomotive with a toothed wheel (for operation in conjunction with a toothed rack rail system - for it was generally thought then that adhesion with smooth wheels and rails was extremely limited) was duly designed and constructed.

Historic ashtrays

It is usually recorded that two locomotives were built in 1812 but there is a possibility that one at least may have been completed by the end of 1811 - a number of porcelain ashtrays made by the fireclay part of the Middleton Estates were made at about that time and upon them is inscribed 'Salamanca' and '1811' with a crude representation of the actual locomotive.

The two locomotives were supplied for £400 each! Salamanca was tested out on June 24, 1812, and an account subsequently appeared in the Leeds Mercury (June 27). Mr. Bleasdale continues by saying that regular commercial use of these locomotives began on August 6, though it is generally accepted that it began on August 12. Two further locomotives

(continued opposite)

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were supplied in 1813, the following then being the total stock: Salamanca, Prince Regent, Lord Wellington and Marquis Wellington.

Other records are not so definite, however, and it may be the case that only one locomotive was supplied in 1813 and that at some time it it was renamed.

Details of the locomotives are as follows: cylindrical boilers of oval cross-section, measuring 37in. x 32in. x 9ft. 7in.; flue tubes 14in. diameter, fire grate at one end, chimney at the other; boiler resting on wooden frame carried in turn on four 3in. diameter wheels. Two vertical cylinders 9in. x 22in. were immersed in the steam space of the boiler for more than half their length and the pistons, working in vertical guide stays, conducted the motion by connecting rods to the spur wheels, which in their turn, were geared to the 3ft. 2in. cog driving wheels.

There are many varied opinions on this point; some suggest that the rack was on both rails, being worked by two toothed wheels; some say there was only one rack rail, on the right hand side of the locomotive, and others claim it was on the left. The model of the rails now in York Museum has racks on both rails; the model of Salamanca in the Leeds Museum has a single toothed wheel on the right hand side of the locomotive and numerous diagrams and etchings show Salamanca with a single toothed wheel on the left hand side. The author is of the opinion that this latter arrangement is the one adopted.

94 tons at 3½ mph!

Steam was distributed to the cylinders alternately by oscillating plug cocks of the type used by Trevithick and the exhaust steam passed by a pipe midway between the cylinders into the atmosphere. The cranks were so arranged that they were always at right angles. A tank was carried in front of the engine, from which the water was pumped by means of valve gear. The consumption per hour was 75 lbs of coal evaporating 6½ lbs of water. Each engine weighed 5 tons and was capable of drawing 27 loaded wagons weighing 94 tons on the level at a speed of 3½ m.p.h. With a light load it is stated that a speed as high as 10 m.p.h. could be attained!

At this point Mr. Bleasdale says 'the plateway was relaid to a gauge of 4ft. 1½in. with cast iron edge rails, 3ft. long.' In a later article he mentions the gauge was made 4ft. 2in. It is nowadays thought, however, that the gauge was, in fact, 4ft. 1in.

The Middleton locomotives were fitted with spring loaded safety valves in 1815 and one engine worked right up to 1835. The locomotives were indeed successful for it is noted that the future Czar of Russia 'had witnessed with great pleasure the running of Blenkinsop's engines on the colliery line from Middleton to Leeds,' in 1816! Promoters of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway visited the line in 1825 to see the locomotives and another party visited the line in 1828.

It appears that the loco s had, at some stage, been rebuilt and the following dimensions were given by Mr. Bleasdale for the rebuilt versions: Boiler, 4ft. 2in. in diameter and 10ft. 6in. long; flue and chimney dia-

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BR officers take up appointment

Inspector A. Smith, the British Railways permanent way adviser in the Leeds area, who retired recently, has been succeeded by Mr. Watson, who has been posted to Leeds from York. Mr. J.A. Lewis has been promoted to the post of district engineer, West Riding Division. Mr. Lewis's friends at Middleton send their best wishes.

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meter 22in., cylinders 8in. x 24in.

The article goes on to say that Murray built, during his time in Leeds, a number of boats; a steamboat built in 1813 is recorded as having exploded after four years, a fate similar to one of the locomotives supplied to the Coxlodge Collieries (Newcastle) in 1813 too. It is not known with any certainty whether Murray built any other locomotives on the line of Salamanca apart from one which was apparently sent to Russia some time after the prototype had been built.

Matthew Murray died at Holbeck on February 20, 1826 aged 62, and is buried in Holbeck churchyard. His memorial there has recently been restored.

The 'First Rack Locomotive' article differs in one or two respects from the above in relation to details of the locomotives built by Murray. It states that the cylinder dimensions were 8in. x 20in. Rather surprising is the statement that the Middleton Colliery Railway near Leeds, is 13½ miles long; though perhaps this is a printer's error!

Old Run contributor praises amenity value of rail travel

Why should railways be perpetually fated to fight constant rearguard action when they have so much to offer?' This question was asked by Mr. W.B. Stocks, a well-known contributor to *The Old Run*, in a letter to the *Yorkshire Post* wishing the North Eastern Region of BR a happy New Year.

Mr. Stocks confessed that he was unable to understand the deep-seated bias in the public mind against rail travel. Was this a hang-over from the war-time days, he asked?

More use of trains as a truly pleasurable, restful and exciting way of travelling would not mean that fewer people would buy cars; but it could mean that fewer people would use them all at the same time.

Now that there is so much talk about the desecration of Britain by the unplanned use of the car, Mr. Stocks' final comments are particularly relevant. Unless we can popularise rail travel, he says, we shall not be able to pass on to our descendants much of the still lovely and solitary parts of our land, which will be desecrated by the excessive use of motor cars and the facilities they require.

Here is one field in which the railway enthusiast can make a real contribution to the country's future environment.

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