

## A SHORT GUIDE TO THE MIDDLETON RAILWAY

### BEFORE YOUR RIDE

From 1758 until 1875 the line from Middleton Colliery to Leeds ran to the left of the present route, past 'The Engine' public house at the foot of the Old Run Road and coming in from the left to join the present alignment just south of the present Halt. From 1812 to about 1833, the Murray-Blenkinsop rack locomotives hauled trains between Leeds and 'The Engine' originally named 'The Locomotive Engine'. Between Belle Isle and the inn was a rope-hauled incline which is now Old Run Road. Engine drivers changing wagons patronised the inn whilst they waited, and according to the inquest evidence of George Stephenson liquor consumed here was responsible for a fatal accident in 1818 when an engine driver was killed and a number of children scalded as an engine boiler exploded. One story is that the driver screwed down the safety valve to increase pressure before moving off!

At the Halt, the Saxby and Farmer level crossing gates were installed at the turn of the century (dates can be seen on the gateposts).

The branch line on the left leads to the interchange sidings with British Rail at Balm Road, used for the Trust's freight traffic conveyed from local firms.

Construction work taking place at the present platform is the first stage in building a new, more substantial platform to house a larger shop building with more amenities. It is hoped that the land at present used as a car park will, in the not too distant future, house a depot building to preserve our collection of locomotives. Current estimates for building and track are in excess of £20,000 a great deal of money for a small society to acquire.

### DURING YOUR RIDE

Before approaching the tunnel, carrying the M.1. motorway to the South, you will observe modern factory premises on the left the descendent of the firm which cast the first rails for the rack system used by the Murray-Blenkinsop locomotives in 1811. The pedestrian tunnel to the right follows the alignment of the old branch-line to the works served by the railway. The footpath can be followed to Middleton Woods. Emerging through the tunnel, the new branch-line going away to the right, was necessitated by the construction of the Motorway 1971-2. This new branch-line to Messrs. Robinson & Birdsell's scrap metal yard, the Trust's freight customer, and Messrs. Clayton's Dartmouth Works yard, where the Trust's locomotives and rolling stock are kept, replaces a sharp curve and headshunt-features of the original branch alignment.

The remains of Hunslet Rugby ground are evident by the row of tall Poplar trees which formed the eastern boundary, a landmark which it is hoped will not disappear.

For about half a mile from Tunstall Road Halt, the railway adjoins the former course of the Middleton Light Railway - a reserved tram track which was in use from 1925 until 1959. The route leaves the railway through the remains of the bridge which carried the Great Northern railway to Beeston junction.

On the left, just passed the bridge is the site of the exchange sidings between the colliery line and the Great Northern. Until 1967, British Rail locomotives ran over this section to the terminus, including W.D. 2-8-0s.

Further on the left is the site of the New Pit closed after the 1926 General Strike. About 300 yards from the bridge the route of the 1758 alignment is joined, evidence of stone sleepers can be seen in the wall, boundary to the Old Run Road.

The spoil on the right covers the old village of Belle Isle, the roofs of cottages being at rail level and it is said that mischievous boys jumped from track to roof to place slates on chimney tops to smoke out inhabitants.

At the end of the line is MIDDLETON PARK freely accessible to everyone. There is a small boating lake, children's play area, golf course, rose garden and cafe' about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile up the Park road (entrance through the three white posts)

Beyond the Halt, which incidentally will be replaced by a better station nearer the park entrance, is the remains of Middleton Broom colliery and the Middleton Fireclay Works. The site of the colliery having been cleared and the shafts capped.

The whole of this area is scheduled for controlled tipping, after which, it will be graded and landscaped to be pleasing on the eye for years to come.

FINALLY We hope that you as a visitor or railway enthusiast to the line have enjoyed your short stay with us, resting in the knowledge that you have helped support the World's Oldest Railway which played a very important part in developing the engineering industries of the City of Leeds.

PLEASE DO VISIT US AGAIN - THANKYOU FOR YOUR INTEREST.

## SOME FIRSTS IN OUR HISTORY

- 1758 The Middleton Colliery Railway was built by authorisation of the first railway Act of Parliament, to convey coal in horse-drawn wagons from the pits at Belle Isle and Middleton to Leeds. The colliery owner, Charles Brandling, was enabled to undercut his rivals' coal prices as his transport was now cheaper.
- 1812 The world's first commercially successful steam locomotives, designed by John Blenkinsop and Matthew Murray, commenced working on the line. They were named 'Salamanca' and 'Prince Regent' employing the rack and pinion method of adhesion. Amongst the many people who came to observe them at work were George Stephenson (who copied some of their features in his own first locomotive in 1814) and the Grand-Duke Nicholas, later Tsar of Russia.
- 1960 The line became the first standard (4' 8½") gauge to be preserved by amateurs. Dr. R.F. Youell of Leeds University was one of the first names to be associated with attempts to preserve the line. During Bag Week a Diesel locomotive built by Hunslet Engine Company drawing an ex-Wansea & Mumbles railcar gave pleasure rides to hundreds of people.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE MIDDLETON RAILWAY TRUST

Until a few years ago the preserved line operated freight traffic only when the weekend visitors service began. This service operates all weekends and Bank Holidays from Easter to the end of October. It has increased in popularity and undoubtedly will be even more popular when the landscaping is completed along the whole length of the line. Freight traffic however still continues weekdays to suit customer requirements. Whenever possible steam engines are used at weekends between 14.00 and 17.00. The Railway is operated by the Middleton Railway Trust Limited, which is a registered charity. It has a membership comprising representatives of all sections of the Community. Work on the track, locomotive maintenance, train operation and all the attendant administrative and sales duties are carried out entirely by volunteers aided by members of the Middleton Railway Association which caters for those members under the age of 18 years. New members are always welcome to help run the railway in any way which appeals to them most. All members receive a copy of the 3-a year Old Run magazine which keeps members informed of current affairs. The locomotives are stabled in private factory premises in Messrs. Clayton's yard, Garnett Road, where admission is generally limited to members. This generosity has existed for many years for which the Trust is extremely grateful. Two vintage steam engines, owned by the Steam Power Trust are amongst the collection, one an ex-Danish locomotive recently acquired.

The Trust hopes very shortly to have its own Depot providing covered accommodation for the whole stock - your small donation for this information sheet will go towards the Appeal Fund for such premises.

### IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WISH TO JOIN THE TRUST:

Please ask the guard on the train or write to: The Middleton Railway Trust Ltd  
Garnett Road, Leeds LS 11 5JY.

### FOR INFORMATION ABOUT OUR HISTORY AND STOCK:

Publications may be obtained very reasonably at Tunstall Road Halt.

ONCE AGAIN, THANKYOU FOR YOUR INTEREST, HOPING YOU WILL CONSIDER MAKING  
A FUTURE CONTRIBUTION IN ANY WAY AT ALL.

The Membership Secretary's address is:

Mr. B.W. Ashurst,  
68, St. David's Road  
OTLEY LS 21 2AW