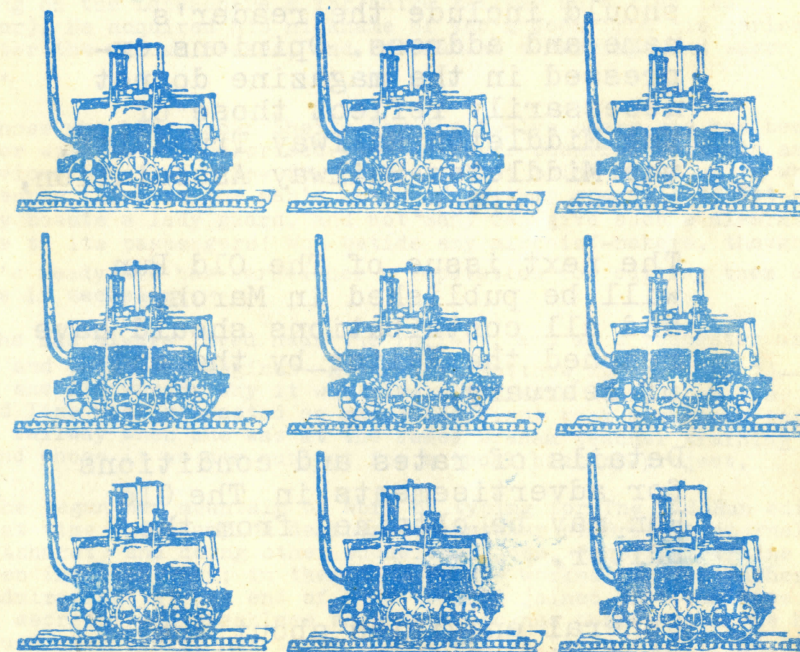


# THE OLD RUN



JOURNAL OF  
THE 1758 MIDDLETON RAILWAY  
LEEDS

WINTER 1975

# THE OLD RUN

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 6 WINTER 1975

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The Editor invites all readers to contribute articles, news items, letters, photographs and drawings on subjects of interest. All contributions should include the reader's name and address. Opinions expressed in the magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Middleton Railway Trust Ltd, the Middleton Railway Association, or the Editor.

The next issue of The Old Run will be published in March, and all contributions should have reached the Editor by the end of February.

Details of rates and conditions for advertisements in The Old Run may be obtained from the Editor.

General enquiries about the Middleton Railway should be addressed to: Mr B W Ashurst, 68 St Davids Rd, Otley, West Yorkshire, LS21 2AW.

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## MIDDLETON GRASSROOTS: 5

### Vac'm Jack's granddaughter

"So I'm to be this month's blade," exclaimed Sheila Young when I broke the news that she was to be written up in Grassroots. Sheila's credentials for joining the Middleton Railway were impeccable. Her father worked for forty-eight years on the railways until his retirement a few years ago, starting as a goods porter and finishing as a working foreman at the Yorkshire Copperworks Sidings. For a time he served at Balm Road Yard. His father had worked for forty-two years, starting on the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway as a 'fat lad' (greaser). He acquired his nickname of Vac'm Jack from his period looking after the vacuum brakes, and retired as a carriage and wagon inspector.

Those who have known Sheila for the twelve years she has been a member will not be surprised that it never occurred to me to ask the obvious question, "How do you feel about being mixed up in what some people think is the man's world of railway operation?" Not every railway boasts a lady guard, and not many can give such a disarming welcome to its passengers! Woe betide any mischief-makers, though—Sheila's ready wit has earned her a reputation for cutting them down to size if necessary.

She has always lived near the railway, and as a youngster used to run and watch the engines—generally 'Matthew Murray' (Mk 1)—though she did wonder why it was always the same loco, when the Midland line nearby boasted so many! She first took a serious interest in the railway when she was at the James Graham teacher training college, and chose it as her subject for a local history project.

She began her mountain of work by typing for The Old Run editor (at that time the champion deliberate-mistaker of British journalism, Brian Ashurst) and doing other occasional jobs. Passenger trains had not been invented then; in them days people worked for fun rather than admiration! At the end of 1970, Sheila joined the Committee as its secretary—a thankless behind-the-scenes chore which she has continued ever since, her terse comments like "Ashurst arrived at this point" and "At this point Ashurst left" adding colour to the formal record.

However, it is in her role as passenger guard that Sheila will be best known to most members. She took this work on almost as soon as passenger trains started, and has enjoyed it ever since, although the work is hard at busy times. She also looks after the ticket stocks, and arranges for their printing. When in October 1972 it was



decided to bid for Peckett 2003 from British Nuclear Fuels, Sheila put up half the purchase price. "I have got my money's worth," she remarked. "I have really enjoyed watching it working." It proved a good investment, being in excellent condition, and for a time there was a plaque in the cab marking the division between 'Sheila's half' and 'MRT's half'!

Her interests are wider than just Middleton, and she is a member of the industrial history section of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society. She has broadcast on this interest on Radio Leeds. Sheila is a teacher at Dewsbury Road school, where she has a class of eight-year-olds. Naturally, her school is always well represented on 'Schools Special' days.

Perhaps this article should have been called 'Sheila in Retro-spect', because she recently announced her engagement to Colin Bye, who operates computers in Dundee. The wedding details had not been fixed at the time of writing, but were expected to be some time in January in Leeds. The couple will live in Dundee. Her many friends will miss her regular presence, and although we shall see her from time to time as she and Colin visit her parents in Longroyd View, the railway will lose that feminine touch which has helped to put so many of our lady passengers at their ease!

I am sure all members will join in wishing Sheila and Colin every happiness for the future.

BRIAN ASHURST

## Miss Blenkinsop calls

Members will remember the contact established with Mrs Seith-Blenkinsop, of Karlsruhe, West Germany, a few years ago. She is a great-great-granddaughter of John Blenkinsop, the patentee of the rack-rail and pinion. Age now prevents her from travelling to visit the line, but we were privileged, on 4th October, to welcome yet another great-great-granddaughter, who made a pilgrimage through Europe and called on us.

Miss Helen Blenkinsop is a Sister at a South African hospital. Her late father was in the textile trade, and his successor in the firm asked for details of the Blenkinsop family history. This stimulated Helen's interest, resulting in a visit to relatives in Karlsruhe, and a search for evidence of the work of the three engineers.

Oswald Blenkinsop was Engineer to the Kiel Canal, and his descendant discovered much evidence of his work, including a fine bridge carrying the railway across at Flensburg. The office that he used is shortly to be demolished as part of a modernisation scheme.

His father, John Stanley Blenkinsop, was Engineer to the Braunschweig Railway, having travelled across from England with a

locomotive, 'Swift', built in Liverpool in 1834. The German Federal Railways gave Miss Blenkinsop a conducted tour of their Braunschweig workshops, which is one of the last to overhaul steam locomotives. There is, alas, no evidence of the pioneer railway or its Engineer's work.

And so Miss Blenkinsop visited England, including Leeds. Derek Plummer and I showed her the railway, the site of Round Foundry, the Murray memorial, and of course the tomb of John Blenkinsop in Rothwell Parish Churchyard. Radio Leeds interviewed our much-travelled visitor. After Leeds came a visit to the National Railway Museum at York, opened a week earlier. The Blenkinsop rack rail and wheels are kept in the open air now, in the yard. It is sad to report that Miss Blenkinsop was refused access to the exhibit she had travelled thousands of miles to see. The excuse was that acts of vandalism had been committed in this display area, but we cannot conceal our disappointment at the inflexible attitude of the museum staff.

We were honoured to welcome such a distinguished visitor. Perhaps in 1981, when we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of John Blenkinsop, it might be possible for a return visit!

JOHN BUSHELL

## Now and then

From The Old Run, Winter 1969:

Though by now the MRT should be accustomed to making radio and television appearances, the experience of Saturday, August 30th, was surely a unique one. It was at lunchtime on that day that the celebrated James Savile arrived to record interviews with MRT members (human and mechanical) for his Radio One programme 'Savile's Travels'. Henry de Lacy II, with an assortment of train crew and others, was ready and waiting at the Burton Road crossing when Jimmy & Co arrived. After everyone had been introduced to everyone else, and Jimmy had kissed the hands of all the ladies present, the recording began with our worthy chairman giving a concise lecture on the history of the line in half a minute flat. Then, Henry having been persuaded to record a few comments for posterity, it was all aboard for the Park Gates with Jimmy at the controls (hopefully under careful supervision!).

Park Gates having been reached without a derailment, boiler explosion, or other mishap, Jimmy dismounted to look at the end of the line, and listen to the MRT's future plans. The return journey having been accomplished as safely as the outward one (with Jimmy hanging off the footplate most of the way), there was further chat and interviewing at Burton Road. Goodbyes followed, more hand-kissing for the ladies, and Jimmy & Co tore off to another appointment.

## RESURRECTIONISTS!

So you think horror belongs in the forests and castles of Transylvania, do you? Well, just remember that Middleton too has its wild, wooded hillsides, and a century or more ago—who knows.....?

In 1833, shortly before the Murray-Blenkinsop locomotives ceased operation, one of them was apparently involved in an unfortunate incident with a gruesome conclusion. The Leeds Infirmary surgeon who tended the lad injured in the incident related the details of the case in a letter to Ralph Brandling:

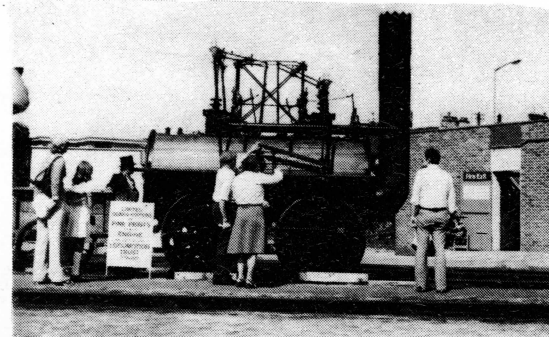
"James Colley, a boy employed in your Colliery at Middleton, was brought into our Infirmary on the 8th day of January. It appeared that one of the wagons belonging to the steam-engine had passed over his heel and so contused and torn it that a sloughing wound was almost the immediate consequence. During the period of his illness he received every attention and had all the skill which it lay in my power to bestow. A smart attack of fever, however, coming on him, and the wounds taking on an unfavourable turn, a locked jaw ensued, which sooner terminated his suffering than is usually found to be the case."

He had subsequently carried out a post mortem examination, and then sewn up the body. However, the relatives of the dead lad somehow discovered that several internal organs were missing, and the surgeon blamed his students. To add to the aura of mystery, the Middleton agent had informed his employer that the boy was driving a horse in the Day-hole mine when the accident occurred, and he made no mention of the steam engine.

The outcome of the affair is yet to be discovered, probably in the local newspapers of the time, as such an event would surely cause a small sensation, happening only four years after the notorious case of Burke and Hare, the Edinburgh body-snatchers. Having found a lucrative market among the Edinburgh surgeons for bodies stolen from newly-filled graves, for use in practising and teaching surgery, Burke and Hare found that demand was greater than supply, and subsequently provided at least fifteen bodies themselves by murdering well-chosen victims.

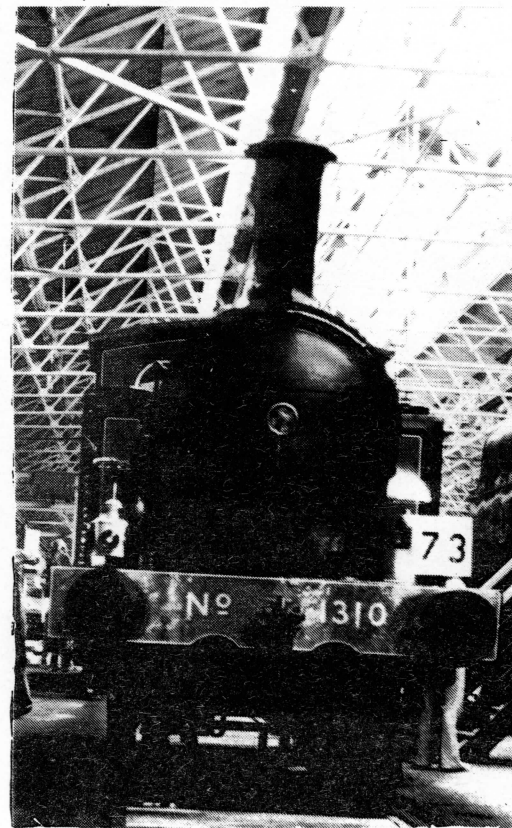
To combat the 'resurrectionists', as the grave-robbers were nicknamed, Grave Clubs were formed to provide constant watches over new graves. Of course, the wherewithal to further anatomical and other knowledge was necessary, and the surgeons fortunately found ways of acquiring subjects in less unsavoury manners. But in 1833, there is little doubt that Middleton must have been outraged by the suspected misappropriation of the poor collier lad's innards.

SHEILA YOUNG



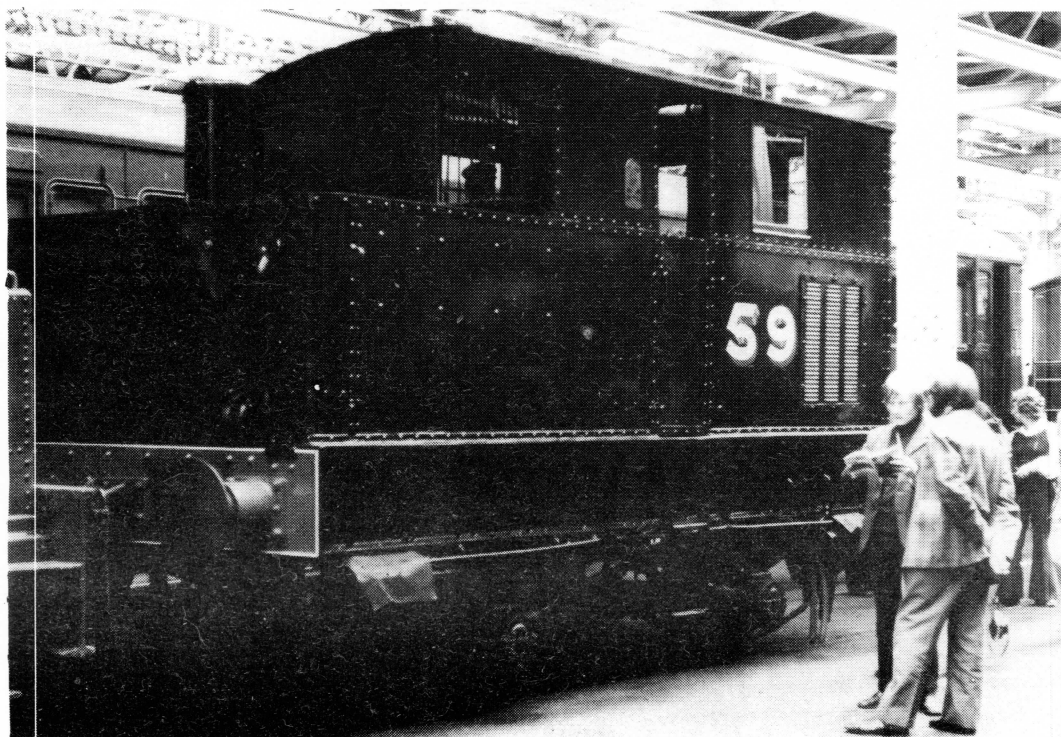
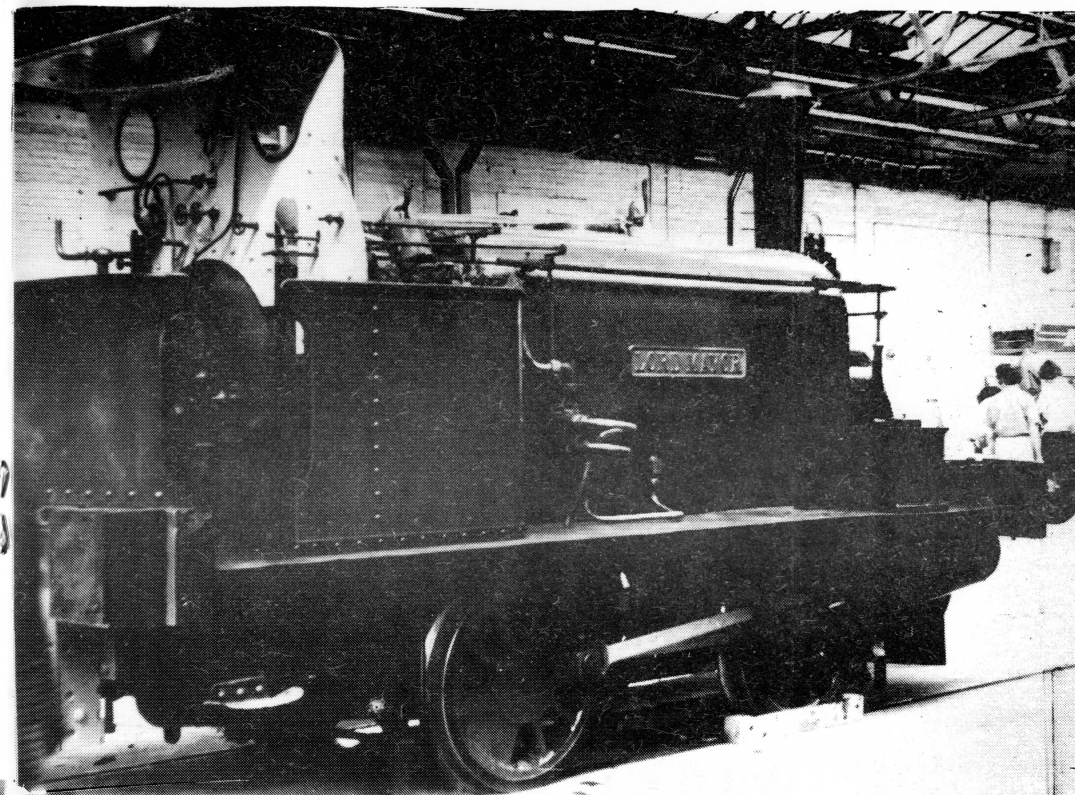
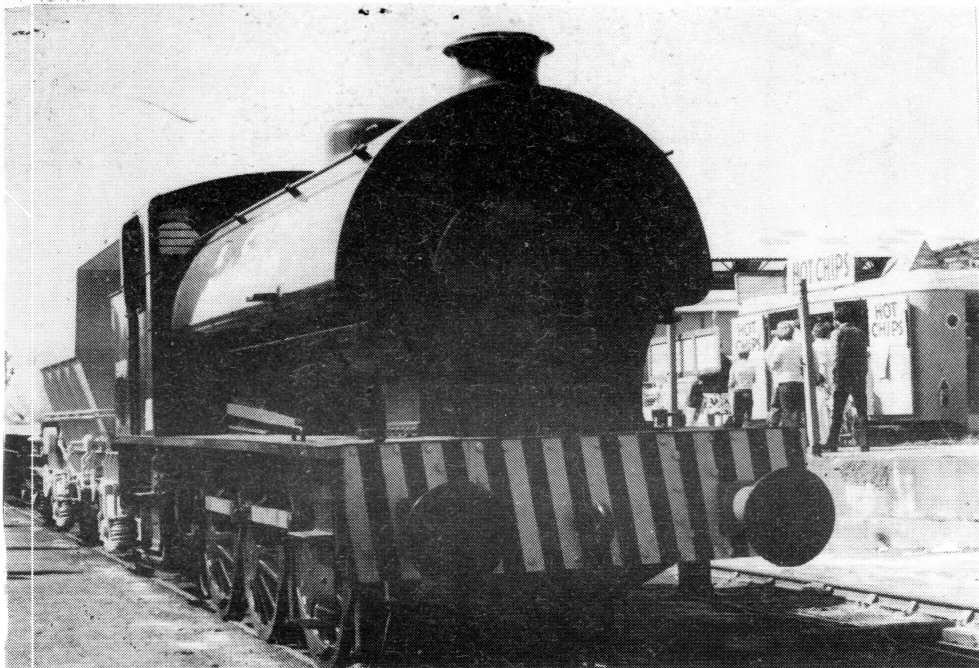
## SHILDON WEEK

Here are three pages of photographs commemorating that memorable week at the end of August, when Shildon works contained one of the finest collections of locomotives and rolling stock ever gathered together in this country, and culminating in the Cavalcade on 31st August. Although no Middleton locomotives took part in the cavalcade, we were well represented at the exhibition, with the immaculate Y7, No 1310, shown in the lower photograph, attracting much attention. At the head of the page, inevitably, is the star of the Shildon show, the 1975 working replica of Stephenson's 'Locomotion'.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MERVYN LEAH AND RICHARD SYMS





TOP LEFT: The NCB's exhibit was this Hunslet Austerity O-6-OST (actually built by Bagnalls) from their North East Region. Specially overhauled for the occasion, it was a fine representative of the dwindling number of active steam locomotives still at work in British industry.

TOP RIGHT: Our exiled Hudswell Clarke O-4-OST, 'Lord Mayor', was one of the exhibits from the Worth Valley line.

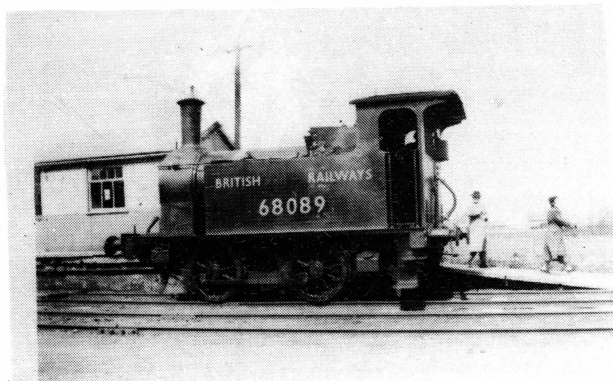
LEFT: Our very own Sentinel sported a new coat of black paint, and a return to its original LNER number, 59. Confusingly, all the catalogues had it as 54!

BELOW: After it all was over. On the evening of August 31st, three of the MRT locomotives, 59, 385 and 1310, stand in the yard of Shildon works in the company of an O3 diesel shunter and the Head Wrightson vertical-boilered O-4-OT.



BR Class Y7 O-4-OT No 68089 at Seahouses, on the North Sunderland Railway, on 14th May 1951.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNETH HARTLEY



## THE WAKEY-WAKEY TRAIN

**Kenneth Hartley**

Twenty four years have now passed since the 'Wakey-Wakey Train' ran its last trip over a 4½-mile long, North-country light railway (the genuine article). Both the train and the line are now but memories, and very few remains, other than the track bed, are to be seen today, but the last locomotive used on the light railway was a younger brother of No 1310.

I have always been more attracted by the minor railways, their small engines, old rolling stock and general quaintness, though this does not necessarily mean that some of the 'big stuff' does not appeal to me, especially if it originates from a certain town in Wiltshire. This interest in the little lines goes back to the 1914-18 period when, in the Railway Magazine, I read of the Garstang & Knott End, Easingwold, Southwold, Tal-y-llyn, Rye & Camber and other railways, and it was decidedly increased in 1918, when I made my first journey ever on one of these lines, the Easingwold.

Since these now-distant days, I eventually became aware of various other similar railways, but was never able to visit many of them when they were actively in use. One such line was the North Sunderland Railway, about which little ever appeared in the railway press, and there seemed to be little hope of visiting it. Early one morning in 1943, however, "with assistance from the WD", I was passing through

Chathill station, when I caught sight of the NSR Company's Armstrong-Whitworth O-4-ODE, 'The Lady Armstrong', standing in the bay platform with a short passenger train. Judging from the early hour, this must have been the first arrival of the day, from Seahouses. My interest received a boost!

After the war, however, prospects of visiting Northumberland seemed no brighter than in earlier years until, most unexpectedly (and very fortunately!), in May 1951, I was able to make the journey to Seahouses—by road—arriving there around midday on a Sunday. Digs were soon found, at the home of a local 'bus driver, and I set out to make an exploratory visit to the station areas at both Seahouses and North Sunderland. The NSR no longer ran any Sunday trains by this time, of course, and there was no-one at the first station, but at North Sunderland, the only intermediate halt, the station building was actually the home of the keeper of the adjacent level crossing, and I was told that the line was now worked by "an ordinary BR shunting engine", for both the A-W diesel and the original Manning Wardle O-6-OST, 'Bamburgh', had been sold for scrap two years earlier.

In the course of conversation about the railway with my host, he said, "We call the first train to Chathill in the morning 'The Wakey-Wakey Train'. The driver always gives a long blast on the whistle as he passes the houses, so that everybody knows it's time to get up! You'll hear him tomorrow morning, soon after half-past seven!"

\*

I had neither watch nor alarm clock, but, right enough, as the 7.35am train from Seahouses set out to join the main line, there came the prolonged whistling from the engine. I got up quietly and, taking my camera, walked along to North Sunderland station, which I had decided was a good place to get a snap of the train. After a few minutes, I heard the engine whistling again, as it was returning. Unluckily, the morning was grey, very dull and windy, and there was not a single person in sight—so the train carried straight on, non-stop, at probably 15-16mph. The resulting shot, though recognisable, was not exactly a prize-winner!

What really amazed me, however, was the engine. It was not the expected ex-NER O-6-OT of either Class J71 or J72 (the little J79 O-6-OTs had all gone by 1951), but one of the Y7 O-4-OTs (ex-NER Class H), now BR No 68089. Was I pleased!! She was hauling the usual train set, comprising a four-wheel fish van, the old ex-NER four-wheel saloon, and an ex-GER tri-composite six-wheeler. Closer examination, later in the morning, revealed that No 68089 had been specially fitted with vacuum brake gear, and a top half to the back sheet of the cab, as well as screw couplings and oval-headed buffers. She was smart and well-kept, too, in shining black, with 'BRITISH RAILWAYS 68089' in yellow, and of course red 'beams and buffers. The coaches, three in all, did not match up to the motive power, for they were pretty tatty, and their brown livery, lettered in yellow, had become weathered to a shade akin to cinnamon. All the buildings on the railway (of corrugated iron) were painted in a two-tone grey finish, and the simple layout of Seahouses yard was an object lesson in economy—just the 'main line' (which ended in the locoshed, so saving the cost of an



extra turnout), a long loop, and two sidings, one of which served the goods shed, while the other flanked the fish dock. The whole set-up was an ideal prototype for the impecunious modeller!

After my early morning visit to North Sunderland, and allowing time to enjoy a good breakfast, it was not feasible to catch the 9.15am departure, but the next departure, at 10.10am, gave me the opportunity to again walk to the intermediate station, and return by train to Seahouses, ere departing, with a BR 3rd Class 'Chathill, Return' ticket (1/8d), to the junction. For the short journey from North Sunderland, and the privilege of travelling in the Saloon (2nd Class), I paid 2d—and received a genuine NSR 1st Class ticket!

So I tried the ex-GER six-wheeler for the outward journey (there was only one other passenger), and saw as much of the NSR as I could manage, on both sides. After arrival at the main line, the train was backed out to the loop, where the engine ran round, and presently returned to the bay. There were no goods vehicles to pick up, nor did I see any passengers, although there were two or three men, perhaps employees, in the van portion of the Saloon with the Guard, who invited me to join them. The van had a stove, but the passenger accommodation, in all three coaches, had neither heating nor lighting!

Back at Seahouses again, I took more photographs and chatted with the engine crew, who spoke well of No 68089, but were not enthusiastic about a Sentinel which had at times acted as substitute for 'Bamburgh'. But I had shortly to commence my long ride home, and after some talk with the Station Master (who gave me a large timetable sheet, BR and NSR), I departed, wondering how much longer the little railway would survive.

Barely five months later, some of the national newspapers were giving the 'Wakey-Wakey Train' an unprecedented amount of publicity, for—alas!—it was very nearly 'the end of the line' for the NSR. The last train ran on October 27th, 1951, and No 68089 returned to Gateshead, after shunting the coaches back into the NSR platform at Chathill. The loco did not remain much longer with BR, for she was sold to a firm of contractors, Harbour & General Works, who fitted her with a bunker, named her 'Meg', and used her on a sea wall (?) project at Morecambe. On the completion of this, sad to relate, No 68089 was cut up.

For many years rather favourites of mine, the NER O-4-OTs of Classes K and H (later Y8 and Y7), and the rather similar H2 O-6-OTs (J79) were neat little engines, and although built mainly for docks and depot use, examples of one or more of the three classes have, at various times, worked on the rural tracks of the Selby-Cawood branch, the Easingwold Railway, the Spurn Head Railway (where a Y8 acted as Royal Train engine when HRH The Princess Royal visited the coastal defence batteries there, circa 1940-41), as well as on the North Sunderland Railway. As they were sold out of service, some of them worked in the less pleasant surroundings of collieries, etc., and indeed the J79 O-6-OT (NER No 407), which for a number of years was the Cawood engine, is known to have been at Middleton Broom pit for a short period around 1947-48.

Although, for various reasons, I did not become acquainted with the Middleton Railway Trust until 1967, it was the arrival of 1310 in Leeds that inspired my initial visit, and, for me, any how, this engine is still one of the main attractions. Long may this continue to be so!

## OLD RUN NEWS

### AN END-OF-SEASON TREAT

At exactly 2pm on Saturday 25th October, the last day of the season for visitors' trains, the beautifully restored No 1310 made her first ever trip on the visitors' service. Since the Steam Power Trust brought this Gateshead-built, North Eastern Railway O-4-OT to the line, she has showed her paces to visitors at Steam Galas, and has worked freight trains. Before the introduction of the present-style regular weekend visitors' service, and before the 1971 realignment of the Dartmouth branch, the Y7 was withdrawn from service for a major overhaul.

Earlier this year, she was passed again for traffic, but left by road with our Sentinel and the Danish loco, to take part in the Shildon celebrations. Whilst the latter returned shortly after the exhibition, the Y7 remained in the Northeast to represent us at the Stockton celebrations at the end of September.

So it was that the loco, resplendent in the green livery of the North Eastern Railway, stood at Tunstall Road Halt. Member Paul Barrett was passing on the motorway with his family. "I couldn't believe it," said Paul. "I just had to leave the motorway to make the trip." By chance, member Bill Stocks (author of 'Pennine Journey' and well-known local transport lecturer and historian) was at the line with the Chief Photographer of the Huddersfield Examiner. So, well recorded by an admiring public, the 84-year-old locomotive made her first public trip to Middleton Park Gates. We hope to see her in regular employment next season.

JOHN BUSHELL

### AN OLD CUSTOMER CLOSES

Meadow Lane gasworks was closed by the North Eastern Region of the British Gas Corporation earlier this year. Opened in 1835 by the Leeds New Gas Company, the works was for many years a customer of Middleton colliery, until the closure of the railway north of Hunslet Moor in 1947. Its 1835 output of 10 million cu. ft. grew to a maximum of 25,000 million cu. ft. in 1972, after which production dropped rapidly with the spread of natural gas. Meadow Lane was a pioneer, in the early 1960s, of the oil reforming process which has virtually eliminated the traditional coal-based plant in the country's few remaining gasworks.

### AN EARLY RAILWAY PICTURE

Whilst Derek Plummer was manning the stand at the Skipton exhibition, a visitor told him about his copy of George Walker's 'Costumes of Yorkshire'. He expressed interest, and shortly afterwards a copy of the 1814 edition, valued at £450-£650, was there for his inspection. Plate III depicts the Yorkshire Collier, and in the background the Murray-Blenkinsop locomotive. It is the first published colour illustration.

ration of a locomotive, having been coloured by hand. The original is with the Yorkshire Archaeological Society in Clarendon Road, and some readers may remember that a black and white version was used for many years on the cover of The Old Run.

JOHN BUSHELL

#### FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Since the Summer 'Old Run' appeared, the Middleton Railway has succeeded in attracting two new members, and has failed to retain the interest of fifteen former members. We extend a warm welcome to Mr Kenneth Hartley, Selby; and Mr David Leng, Elland.

Defaulting members have in a number of cases written explaining why they have not renewed, always for personal reasons and not at all critical of the MRT. Nevertheless, it shows that we need to do all we can to retain the interest of all members, and especially to involve them in active help if at all possible.

I hope that next year things will begin to look up, as much of our trouble stems from the difficult times everyone is experiencing. Middleton is not alone in feeling the pinch when people look at ways of cutting their expenditure. Introduce your friends to Middleton. Since George Stephenson and Tsar Nicholas, visitors to the line have often gone on to do great things!

BRIAN ASHURST

#### A LITTLE MORE GOODS

A small amount of goods traffic was carried on the railway in mid-October, the first for several months. Hopefully, this heralds a more regular traffic flow in the coming months.

#### ...AND A LOT MORE SALES

'The World's Oldest Railway', the paperback history of the Middleton Railway published by Turntable Publications earlier this year, is reported to have sold nearly a thousand copies within the first six months of issue.

#### AUTUMN VISITORS

As well as Miss Helen Blenkinsop, whose visit to Middleton is recorded in a separate article, we were recently visited by Mr J L Brown, of Bromborough, Cheshire. Mr Brown is the owner of the Blenkinsop duelling pistols mentioned in The Old Run, Spring 1975, and he visited the line with his son (and the pistols!) in September. He was given a conducted tour of the line, and went to see the Blenkinsop tomb in Rothwell Parish Churchyard.

JOHN BUSHELL

# FOR SALE

#### MIDDLETON SOUVENIRS

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