



**The Journal of the
Middleton Railway Trust
No. 251 JULY 2021 £3.00
*CORONAVIRUS - COVID-19 EDITION 6***

This edition will, I hope, bring back happy memories for some of our founder members, as we recall a few of the highlights of the early days of the Middleton Railway, and show our younger members a little of what had to be overcome to get us to where we are today.



**“The Sentinel”, opening our season
on Sunday 23rd May 2021.**

The Old Run

No. 251
JULY 2021

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Grateful thanks are extended to all those who have provided copy and images for this issue.

The Old Run is published quarterly by The Middleton Railway Trust Ltd. Publication dates are 15th January, 15th April, 15th July, and 15th October, with deadlines of 15th December, 15th March, 15th June and 15th September respectively.

The Editor welcomes contributions - photographs, articles, news items and letters - relating to the interests of the Trust and the operation of our and other Railways.

Items for publication, including images, are acceptable in any format and may be sent via email, post, CD or USB stick.

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Our Chairman speaks:

On the 23rd May the Railway finally re-opened for the 2021 season. The first train of the season was waved off by our good friend Cllr. Kim Groves and our visitors were clearly glad to be back, riding with us again. The Railway has operated an hourly service on Sundays (plus Bank Holiday Monday) since then because of the extra demands made on staff by the need for additional cleaning requirements. From the 31st July, subject to the long anticipated elimination of the most of the Covid restrictions, the Railway hopes to resume a 40 minute interval Saturday and Sunday service, plus Wednesday operation during school holidays. For the first time in a year and a half, normal service may be resumed!

The first impression visitors get of the Railway is very important in forming their long term view about us. While the Mezzanine Floor was being built the car park was cluttered with building materials. These are now being cleared away and the surface will shortly be re-gravelled. Much effort is being put into tidying up other areas of the car park, particularly in front of the Picton shelter.

The Broom Pit Memorial stone has been moved to a more suitable location at the south end of the platform and a new, more robust, plaque will be in place very shortly.

The entrance to the Engine house was refashioned during 'Lockdown' to give more of an impression of a station booking hall.

The Commercial team (ticket office, shop and Café staff) have put in a great deal of work to ensure that not only do visitors get a warm and friendly welcome but also that the areas they use such as the toilets and the café are scrupulously clean. We have received many comments expressing delight at the cleanliness of our facilities and the fact that our visitors feel "safe" from Covid thanks to our assiduous efforts. For this we should particularly thank Janet Auckland, Fran Bailey and Denise Winstanley, all of whom have gone above and beyond the call of duty in this regard!!

Our Chairman speaks:

One of the most impressive features of the Railway in the last few years has been the development of the Youth Team which has been led by John Linkins. You will recall the lengthy report by John which was featured in the previous (April) edition of this magazine. Getting a cadre of young volunteers actively involved in the Railway, understanding the historical importance of the Railway and its collection, and being committed to its long term survival, is vital to the Railway's future.

I am pleased to announce that a small part of the 60th anniversary plans has been finished; this is the new Stock Book. This is largely illustrated with previously unpublished photographs and the text has been heavily revised and updated. Producing this was a team effort and particular thanks go to Steve Roberts, Ian Smith and Tony Cowling for their historical and technical input and to those who took on the task of proof reading. At £5.00 a copy it represents stunning value; get a copy while you can!

I hope that you all stay safe and enjoy a summer of near normality after the constraints and problems of the last 18 months. Hopefully you will have the chance to visit the Railway and see the changes that have been made since last year. We will be delighted to see you again.

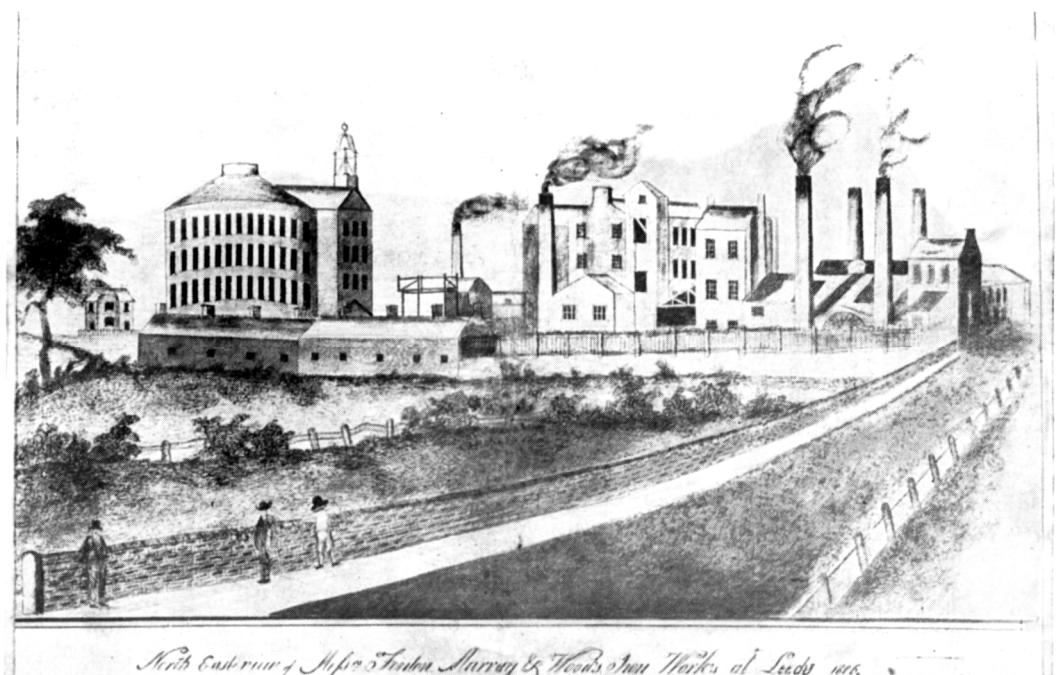
Charles W Milner, Chairman

Matthew Murray's Home - courtesy of Sheila Bye

This photocopy of a circa 1815(?) engraving of the Round Foundry, Water Lane, Holbeck, was 'acquired' by an unknown early MRT member. Thank you SO much, whoever you are or were. So far as I know, it is the only image still existing of Matthew Murray's home and his more or less complete works.

The famous Round Building itself is prominent to the left (i.e. south) of the engraving, and further left, in the shade of a tree, is Murray's own house.

In 1929, a local Murray 'groupie', Edwin Kilburn Scott, published a biography of his hero, in which he included a photo of Murray's famous house known as Steam Hall, but alas it was the wrong house: the Matthew Murray who lived there for a short time was the great Murray's grandson, Matthew Murray Jackson. The real Steam Hall was a far grander residence, as befitted the then prosperous Murray!



Ice Cream above the Snow Line!



Southern Switzerland has an extensive network of metre gauge railways as railways are running through deep valleys and over high mountains. In some places the gradients are so steep that a rack is laid behind cog wheels fitted below the locomotive; these help haul the train up or slow it when coming down.

The most famous train on this network is the Glacier express between Zermatt and St Moritz. When it started running in 1930 part of the route ran over the Furka pass between Oberwald and Realp. This part of the railway was only used between May and October because of the snow that blocked the pass in the winter. The line was initially operated by steam locos but was electrified during World War 2, although the electric catenaries and support poles had to be taken down every winter.

In 1963 an avalanche swept away a snow clearing train; several people lost their lives as a result. As a consequence a new Furka base tunnel was built to bypass the original route. The new tunnel was opened in 1982 and the original line was abandoned. My wife and I saw the abandoned line in 1986.

We returned to Switzerland for a holiday in July 2013. I found that the old railway had been re-opened by a preservation society and we booked a trip on it. It had taken the Society over 10 years to restore the whole section to service. We left our hotel in Brig one morning and joined the normal electric train for the trip up the Rhone valley to Oberwald. There we crossed over to the platform for the steam railway. The whole train and station were immaculate. After looking round we took our seats in one of the vintage carriages and before long the train set off, climbing through a nature reserve. The Railway has installed water sprays beside the track here to dampen the vegetation and prevent fires caused by sparks. This system is fed from water draining off the mountains. The engine was working hard on this stretch. It has two sets of cylinders, one to drive the ordinary wheels and the other the cog wheels.

Ice Cream above the Snow Line!



At Gletsch, near the base of the Rhone glacier, the train stopped to allow the engine to take water. Leaving Gletsch the railway crosses a busy main road and the rack over the road is retractable, actuated to raise at the same time as the level crossing barriers come down. After this the train climbed through a rocky landscape and we could see the road to the summit of the pass zig-zagging up the mountain past the Hotel Belvedere. Eventually the train entered the old Furka tunnel and we emerged at Berghaus Furka where there was another stop for refreshment of the loco, crew and passengers. Snow was lying on the ground which is not surprising as this is the second highest railway pass in Europe, over 7000 feet above sea level. We took the opportunity to eat ice cream, hence the title

of this article.

After the break the train descended towards Realp. Part way down the railway crosses the Steffanbach Bridge. Every winter this bridge has to be folded away. The original fixed bridge was destroyed by an avalanche the year after the line was opened. The bridge was replaced with a stronger one but within another year this too had fallen victim to an avalanche. Consequently the unique folding bridge was installed which is dismantled each autumn and re-erected in spring.

The main depot is located at Realp, where repairs and restoration are carried out. There are several steam locomotives, including some of the original ones which were sold to Vietnam in the 1940s and then repatriated for the preserved line. From Realp we travelled back through the Furka base tunnel to Brig. We had enjoyed a wonderful experience and reflected on the huge amount of work that the volunteers of the Dampfbahn Furka Bergstrecke had carried out to bring this line back to life. I had first read about the railway in a book called "On the Narrow Gauge" when I was a boy and travelling on it had fulfilled a long held ambition. I think that this is the most ambitious preserved railway in the world.

Richard Linkins

Wow! And we think we hit a few snags? Ed.

Ian Smith - in his youth

Following on from the April edition of this magazine and announcement of his **Lifetime Achievement Award**, I thought it would be good to reminisce about the origins of our hero **IAN SMITH**. Consequently, here follows a copy of an article which appeared in the Summer edition of 1972 which will enlighten you further.

IAN SMITH: It will come as a shock to many to learn that our hero this month has only been a member of the Middleton Railway Trust for three years. "What?" they will exclaim, "Do you mean to tell me that there was a time in the Middleton Railway's history - and so recently at that - when it did not enjoy the ubiquitous services of Ian Smith?"

"When I first joined I used to think Middleton was perfect." Ian confides. "Now I have discovered our many weaknesses. But in the three years since I joined, the railway has really made some great strides forward - real improvements."

"I like to think," he added modestly, "that this was not entirely coincidence."

No indeed. A characteristic of Ian is his tremendous zeal - he has energetically thrown himself into practically every job the line offers. At present he concentrates on being a passenger train guard and relief shunter, with occasional turns as trainee fireman. "I hope, eventually, to be a qualified driver," he confesses. He also concentrates on the construction of the two model railways for exhibition purposes and on publicity matters (he is a member of the publicity committee).

But his range of activities has not always been so limited. Formerly he has done track work and odd jobs. Even now he does his bit on the loco maintenance side when his 'official' jobs permit.



Ian was born 18 years ago (1954) on Gasholder Street, and so grew up in sight of the Middleton Railway. His introduction to the Trust did not come until 1969 however, after he had moved to Belle Isle. One day he was cycling down Moor Road when he saw "Sweet Pea" stuck on the level crossing. That convinced him. "These people need me." he decided, and not long afterwards he persuaded an indulgent Granny to pay his first subscription. "Since then I have paid it myself." he added.

At the time of our interview, Ian was changing jobs from Yorkshire Chemicals to - he hoped - the signals and telegraph department of BR at York. (Actually, instead he signed up with the Royal Navy and did a 12 year stint with them, but that was yet to come.)

A firm advocate of improving the passenger service, Ian would like to see someone appointed to be passenger manager, to supervise all aspects of the service and whip up support and enthusiasm. "Let's show the public something really worth seeing. We need a depot to show our locomotives at their best and keep them in good condition. Eventually I want to see us big enough to handle a real passenger train, perhaps using a converted diesel m.u. trailer behind No. 6. I know that means a lot of work, but I am convinced we can do it if we can provide the facilities for members." he declared.

Ian's current project is a sheet of questions handed to passengers to tell the Trust the weak points about its service and provide information about the sources of traffic. No doubt the results of the survey will make interesting reading in a forthcoming issue of The Old

Ian in his youth

Run.

The article ended with the following STOP PRESS announcement:-

“With the formation of the Middleton Railway Association for those under 18, Ian has been elected its first secretary.”

Brian Ashurst

For those of you who wonder, below is a picture of Ian in his youthful heyday:



Well, many of us expand a little as the years go by!

Otherwise, Ian hasn't changed a bit.

MOOR ROAD HAPPENINGS

We are back to running a train service once more and with that comes the usual crop of problems that we have to deal with. These do require sorting out as they arise and do cause some distraction to the carefully planned workload. However, in general, we have been able to keep on top of everything and things are generally on track.

LOCO NOTES

1601 MATTHEW MURRAY

After a period on display in the Engine House, Matthew Murray was put back into service during June. However, on its first day out the shut off valve controlling the steam supply to the vacuum ejector failed to shut off due to a stripped thread on the valve stem. In the short term this was just an inconvenience and the loco was able to complete its day's work. We didn't have a suitable spare valve in stock so one had to be quickly ordered. This has now been fitted and the loco is available for traffic once more, being used again on the 4th July. It is planned that the loco will be used for the next few weeks until a boiler water change becomes due. Unless anything unexpected happens, the loco will be available until October this year, after which it will be retired from service.

No. 6

It would have been good to say that No.6 was now in regular service but this is not the case, although the locomotive is usable if we needed it. Finish painting and lining out has been a somewhat protracted job, largely being undertaken by one volunteer as his time has permitted. This is now finished apart from adding the 'No.6' to the tank sides.

It was decided that the original injector overflow pipes, although serviceable, were rather bent and battered and would be replaced. These have now been made and fitted. Another outstanding job which had been left in abeyance is the provision of a formed endplate to the boiler lagging over the firebox shoulder. One of our volunteers has taken on the challenge of making this and is currently busy cutting and shaping the necessary steel sheet panelling.

Other minor finishing off work has included the concreting of the smokebox floor and the fitting of the Works plates and the donation plate, which records the fact that the loco was donated by the Blue Circle group of companies. This latter plate is on the rear of the cab and, when fitted at Swanscombe back in 1971, was not fitted exactly in the middle. This has now been corrected with the drilling of two new holes.

1210 SIR BERKELEY

The axles have now been non-destructively tested to check for fatigue cracking and given a clean bill of health. This has allowed the axleboxes to be fitted to the journals ready for the time when the frames can be lowered back onto the wheels. Recent work has been concentrated on the crosshead slipper blocks, which were quite worn. The left hand two had previously been given a white metal lining and these were simply re-white metalled and machined back to be a correct fit between the slidebars. The right hand pair, however, had not previously been white metalled and this has now been done and the slippers also machined to be a correct fit between the slidebars. Although there was no wear to the slidebars, it was necessary to remove them to gain access to the slipper blocks and this also required the removal of the valve guide rod support bracket. All this has now been refitted.

The big end bearings have been measured for wear. There is some wear but it is only slight and this is going to be taken up by machining a small amount (about 0.015") from

Loco Notes

the mating faces of the bearing halves.

The mechanical lubricator has been removed for cleaning and checking. It was found to be in satisfactory condition and will be refitted once cleaning and painting has been done.

Work has now started on the boiler overhaul which, hopefully, should not be a long job. The tube holes in the smokebox tubeplate have been cleaned down and greased and the same is ongoing with those in the firebox. Requests for quotations for the supply of boiler tubes have gone out although, at the time of writing, only one has been received. Arrangements are being made for the fusible plug pads in the firebox to be replaced, as requested by the boiler inspector and it is hoped that this work will be done during August.

The loco's owners, The Vintage Carriages Trust, have asked that the loco be painted as near as possible in the livery of its original owners, Logan and Hemingway, and we are endeavouring to do this although some of it will inevitably be a best guess as we only have black and white photographs on which to base things.

No.11

Still nothing to positive to report..

No.1310 (NER H)

The loco had a formal steam test towards the end of March and is available for traffic. It was selected to be the service loco for the start of the season and duly completed its stint of seven steamings before a water change was required. Water changes are necessary from time to time because, with boiler treatment, the amount of suspended solids in the boiler slowly increases. Once this amount of suspended solids reaches a certain level the locomotive starts to prime. Priming is a situation when water droplets start to be carried over with the steam and find their way into the cylinders and then are ejected up the chimney. This can be quite detrimental for the locomotive so is very much to be avoided. We know from experience that this is likely to start occurring after seven steamings so this effectively sets the limits between water changes. After this stint, the boiler and tanks were drained and the loco was put on display in the Engine House. However, its replacement, Matthew Murray, then failed on its first day in traffic so 1310 was quickly refilled and brought back into service until repairs could be completed on Matthew Murray.

1544 SLOUGH ESTATES No 3

As mentioned in the last Old Run, the loco was put into steam for the last time on the 17th April prior to the end of its boiler 'ticket'. We had hoped that the loco's owners, the Slough & Windsor Railway Society, could visit the railway for this last day but the limitations imposed by Covid made this impractical. Following this last day in steam the boiler was drained and washed out and the firebox and smokebox thoroughly cleaned and oiled up, along with emptying the coal bunker and other necessary work to minimise deterioration in storage. It is currently on display in the Engine House and will remain so until workshop space can be found for an overhaul to start.

SENTINEL No.54

The last Old Run reported that it was hoped to try the loco on some test trains before the start of services on the 23rd May. This duly happened and it would have been great to report that these were successful. Alas, they weren't. Initial problems centred around the

Loco Notes

loco being unable to maintain sufficient steam pressure on the run to Middleton Park. This was a problem that initially surfaced when the loco was last in steam in the 1980s and was traced to air leakage around the boiler top plate. The top of the boiler was therefore stripped off and the joints all re-sealed. A subsequent test run did not produce any better results and it was obvious that the fire was not getting hot enough. The Sentinel handbook suggested that it might be due to misalignment of the blastpipe nozzles so these were checked and re-aligned slightly to match Sentinels recommendations. There was some slight improvement and the loco did work one test train to Middleton Park without stopping but it is a feat that is yet to be repeated. Some thoughts are now being given to the coal quality, which does have a significant amount of fines (small coal particles) in it. Unlike conventional locos, where you can place the coal where it is required, with the Sentinel, all that you can do is pour coal down the stoking chute, which drops it in the middle of the firegrate. The intention is that coal fed in this way forms a conical fire, thickest in the middle and thinnest on the outside. You can only see the middle of it when looking down the coal chute and it is obvious that this part is not getting hot and burning properly, remaining fairly black even when the loco is working hard. The current thought is that the coal fines are not rolling to the edges of the fire and are forming a solid mass which will not let combustion air through. The next step will be to try with coal that is effectively 'hand picked' to minimise the amount of fines and see if this produces any improvement.

Lack of steam is not the only problem, however. The vacuum ejector is not producing sufficient vacuum to correctly operate the train brakes. The regulations require that 21" of vacuum has to be created and, although this was initially achieved, we are now only achieving 18" at best and, quite often this will start to drop of its own accord. When this happens, the train brakes come on and the train grinds to a halt. Without doing anything, the vacuum will then start to rise again back up to 18" and the train will start to move once more. Various investigations have been carried out but no fault has been identified so far.

Leakage from glands has also been a problem but we are slowly sorting these out and we will persevere with sorting out the various problems. At least there is no urgency to do so as we have sufficient locos available for the train service.

HE 2387 BROOKES No.1

Available for traffic but has not been used and is currently on display in the Engine House.

Fowler 42200033 HARRY

The loco has been moved back into covered accommodation in the old workshops but time has not yet been found to carry out the required repairs.

Peckett 5003 AUSTINS 1

Has been kept in working order and used as required.

D2999

Has been kept in working order and used as required. The loco's air tanks recently underwent a thorough examination by the boiler inspector.

D577 MARY

On display in the Engine House in working order.

Loco Notes

HE 6981

Work has continued on fitting the vacuum/air proportional valve and associated pipework. Cleaning and painting progress as time and manpower allow.

D631 CARROLL

The loco has been in storage in the Engine House and has not been used although it was recently started up so that the boiler inspector could carry out a working inspection of the air receivers, as required by the Written Scheme of Examination.

L.M.S. 7051

The loco was shunted into the workshops during May and a start was made on removing the heads from No.5 and No.6 cylinders so that the head gaskets could be replaced. It has since been decided that we will do all six head gaskets as there is slight evidence of oil leakage on No.1 and No.2 cylinders. New gaskets are being made for us by Dobson Gaskets. The delivery time for these is about five weeks.

D1373 MD&HB No.45

Has been kept in working order but has not been used as there is an ongoing problem with the forward/reverse gear change. Changing from forward to reverse is satisfactory but the loco is not going into forward gear without ‘crunching’ of the dog clutches. This is thought to be due to the air supply to the gear change cylinder not exhausting properly.

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

CARRIAGE & WAGON NOTES

COACH No.1074

This coach suffered an (accidentally) broken droplight window whilst in service at the start of operations. As replacement of the glass would involve dismantling the door and the coach is presently needed in service due to the reduced seating capacity, this is being deferred until such time as it can be spared. The droplight is in the guards compartment so does not affect members of the public and, with removal of the glass, its condition is not unsafe, so there is no real problem in doing this. The only detriment is if it rains whilst the coach is being used.

PMV 2223

Work has been proceeding apace on this vehicle, which is presently in the compound. The intention is to do all the heavy and dirty work on the chassis outside. The solebars and headstocks have all been needle-gunned to remove corrosion on the top flanges where the old floor had been sitting. Some of the corrosion was quite significant and this has had to be built up with weld where necessary. The headstocks have also had a 70 x 6 mm steel strip welded to them to give them extra strength. Some of the steelwork structure which supports the sides and roof also needs modifying for its new role as a coach and this has been done.

The vacuum brake cylinder has been removed and stripped down for servicing. When stripped the cylinder was found to be in good condition internally; however, new rolling rings and seals have been fitted so it should be good for several years before needing any further attention. Following testing and a coat of paint, the cylinder has been refitted. The north end brake operating linkages have all been removed for cleaning, inspection and

Carriage & Wagon and Plant

the various bits have all been refitted and attention then turned to the south end brake linkages. Intriguingly, the gear at this end is in much better condition, something unexpected, as the expectation is that the whole gear would be similarly worn. In its guise as a PMV, the van had been unusually fitted with a high level vacuum brake pipe and swan neck which, if left, would have interfered with the gangway connections which our coaches have, so we have found it necessary to modify the pipework to the more usual low level connection. On removing the pipework to make this modification, it was discovered that the full length of pipe, which is made up of several pieces, had had all the screwed joints welded up at some time. All this has now been undone and the vacuum train pipe has been reverted to the more normal arrangement.

Once all the dirty work has been done the van will be moved into the old workshop for the coach build to start in earnest.

LMS BRAKE VAN No. 158760

The awaited stove has now arrived and has been placed in the van. A chimney is still required for it, however, as is the necessary hole in the roof to accommodate it.

PALVAN

This still requires a vacuum brake cylinder overhaul, which will be carried out when time permits.

PLANT AND MACHINERY

Space in the old workshops has been found for the Permaquip trolley and work has been ongoing on it. This is mainly of a cosmetic nature to tidy it up and give it paint protection. Some thought has been given to what to do with the machine when it is not required for use as it can practically only be moved under its own power. It is probable that we will provide what is effectively a small siding at right angles to another line. This will allow the trolley to be moved off and onto the other line and then turned through 90° and dropped onto the track. The machine is provided with an inbuilt system to allow it to be lifted and turned especially for this purpose. A lean-to shelter will be provided to protect the trolley from the elements when not in use.

Steve Roberts, Mechanical Engineer



Is it time for a holiday ?

All being well, by the time you receive this magazine, you will be able to sit on the beach, 2 metres from a neighbour, wearing a mask, and not feeling guilty about it!

Enjoy!!!

Another of Darryl Foxwell's exquisite models.

1904-1963 East Coast Mainline Electrification

Few railway historians and authors appear to be aware that part of the East Coast Main Line was electrified from 1904-1963 at 600 volts DC, third rail.

The up and down east coast lines being energised were from Newcastle Central Station, Manors, Heaton, Benton Bank, Little Benton and Benton Quarry, with additionally the SW double track curves from Benton Quarry to Benton and also the SE double track curves from Benton Quarry to Backworth (now de-electrified, but still used by freight services from Bedlington, Morpeth and Tynemouth}.

Following their storage in Darlington Works paint shop, the EB1 freight locomotives, on the N.E.R. Shildon to Newport 1935 cessation of electric haulage, were in 1947 moved north to South Gosforth Electric car sheds, for covered storage by what would, in 2021, be termed 'Q' light engine movements, hauled by steam traction, followed later by LNER EB1, No. 6496 (or NER No. 11) ex Doncaster Works rebuilt to become BR 226570, being transferred from South Gosforth to Ilford in August 1949, becoming "Departmental Locomotive No. 100" in 1959 when "No. 100" became redundant following voltage changes out of Liverpool Street Station.

For a brief three year period it was thus possible from 1947 to 1949 to see all thirteen of the ex NER electric locomotives on Tyneside when, as occasionally occurred, the two E31, Newcastle Quayside locomotives were also present. Are there any other 'oldies' like me, who managed this sight?

As the E51, two Newcastle Quayside locomotives were allocated to South Gosforth, with one usually sub-shedded to Heaton MPD. These two locomotives used their three rail pickups to proceed from Heaton to Benton Quarry and thence via the SW curve to gain access to Benton and thence South Gosforth EMU Depot. Thus, at least once in their lifetimes, every NER Electric Locomotive had travelled the ECML in both up and down directions north of Newcastle!

Both the up and down lines to Benton Quarry remained energised and in regular use by EMUs till 7th January 1963 when services were taken over by diesel rail cars. The final stock to use the ECML third rail was the Eastleigh built 1954/55 EMUs of 1951 design - with the Eastleigh designed two coach sets no inter-communication was provided between cars, which necessitated the Eastleigh stock running to Gosforth Car Sheds via the East Coast Main line and the Benton SW curve, so that drivers did not have to change ends. The Eastleigh built EMUs were returned for further service on the Southern Region on 10th August 1963. On the same day, the Eastleigh built luggage van no. E68000 was transferred to the London Midland Region.

"I have a dream"! In view of the current builds of extinct steam locomotive classes, this is to build a "No. 14" (modernised No. 13) 4-6-4. Initially this would be as a "mobile shell" in NER passenger green livery, for 2025 railway S & D bi-centenary, using modern traction technology motors in the lead and trailing bogies (the central 0-6-0 being 6 ft 8

1904-1963 East Coast Mainline Electrification

ins (standard pacific wheel size) on plain (no crank shafts), roller-bearing, non motorised axles.

No “heavy” forging needs, no boiler high pressure maintenance/construction needs, no coal or water sourcing needs, no need for warm ups or fire and ash disposal facilities. Just flick a switch to start revenue earning and “switch off” at the days end, plus usable by modern traction mainline drivers, on ECML, WCML. GWR and East Anglian lines. NRM at York have detailed drawings of No. 13 shell et al.

If we can build replica steam locomotives an electric historic locomotive should be simpler and a great revenue earner!

Dr F W Hampson

Today and Yesterday

By Peter Barry, from the Old Run, Autumn 1969

I hardly slept the night before. Catching the 7.30 Leeds to Kings Cross train! Memories of “White Knight” beating down the rails. Memories of other journeys south in the steam hauled journeys of my boyhood - all excited me beyond sleep.

Next morning, with deliberate restraint and struggling to look un-excited, I took my seat in a gleaming Mk II coach and waited for the entertainment to begin. I was still waiting at Grantham and disappointed at Kings Cross!

What was missing? The coach was very comfortable. The cooked breakfast, sumptuous! The train was even bang on time. So what was wrong? There was no character, that’s what! No splendour! No STEAM!!!

Two hundred miles of steady running. How boring! Hurtling past the ghosts of passengers long passed. Waiting at closed wayside stations. Damp, lonely, deserted stations, with windows broken and staring, waiting for the trains that rushed past. No more the bright paint and flower beds - only the buildings remain as tombstones to past glories.

Modernisation murdered the past! British Rail, who swept away jewels of the railway age, may not be without blame! So where do the enthusiasts gather now? Not at Kings Cross! “There’s nothing to see now!” But with us, the preservationists! In our hands lies all that remains. All that is worth keeping may be ours with effort. Personalities should not interfere with our task, so please let’s pull together before the future steals our past away.

On my ride to London a ray of light shone out alone in the train. A sugar bowl, stamped LNER - a piece of our history! Rare in itself - a rose in a garden of weeds. To me that sugar bowl was worth preserving. How much more so is our line worth our efforts - for it too will be a garden of weeds in the 1970s. The hills of south Leeds can echo to the exhaust bark of a steam engine straining at the Old Run again - if we try!

Coming out of Traffic

A Temporary Farewell in 2021 to three stalwarts

This season sees the withdrawal from service of three steam locomotives which have served the trust well over the past 10 years or so.

First to retire, back in May, was Hudswell Clarke **“SLOUGH ESTATES No 3”**. The loco was built in 1924 as works no 1544 and served at Slough until retirement in 1973. It first went to Mid Hants Rly before being purchased by Slough & Windsor Railway Society and being based at Swindon & Cricklade Rly. However, the engine came on long term loan to the railway in 2010 and has been a regular performer ever since. Our Slough & Windsor Rly Society friends have visited Middleton many times and we are very grateful to them for the loan of this wonderful locomotive and we hope to see her working once again in the near future following overhaul. **Figure 1** shows the loco at Middleton Park.

The longest serving of the trio is by far **No 1310**, which has been at Middleton since 1965. Built in 1890 to Worsdell's class H design, this loco was sold to Pelaw Main Collieries near Newcastle back in 1929 and had a hard life with them and successor NCB before being preserved by the Steam Power Trust '65 and moving to Middleton that year. It was gradually repainted and restored to as near original condition as possible, being repainted in its original Worsdell NER livery. In 1975 it represented Middleton in the Stephenson 150th anniversary celebrations at Shildon in County Durham and then entered service on passenger trains for a brief while. It was fully overhauled in time for its centenary in 1991 and has had two further overhauls since then, making it the most used loco in the fleet. Due to retire at the end of this season, the loco may be stored for a while as the overhaul of **“SLOUGH”** is likely to take place first. **Figure 2** shows the newly painted loco in steam at Dartmouth Yard in 1967, and **Figure 3** shows her running round her train earlier this year.

Last but not least is Manning Wardle **“MATTHEW MURRAY”**, again due to retire at the end of the season. This class L locomotive is one of only two of its type in the UK, both of which are here at Middleton, the other, of course, being **“SIR BERKELEY”**, owned by VCT and under overhaul in our workshops. Built in 1903 as works number 1601, the loco went to Gravesend to build a cement works, the owners of which bought it for further use. It stayed there, named **“ARTHUR”**, until preserved at the KESR in 1967. It moved to Peak Rail before being bought by MRT in 1990. Its subsequent restoration gained it the Heritage Railway Association's **“John Coiley Award for Locomotive Restoration”** in 2004. **“MATTHEW MURRAY”** has performed regularly at the railway in addition to visiting a number of other railways, it's greatest moment perhaps being the operation of the passenger service at Railfest 2004 in York. However, it is now coming to the end of its operating life for the time being as it does need substantial repairs, and perhaps major surgery to the cylinder block, so the intention is to rest the engine for a while. **Figure 4** shows the loco at Moor Road station last year.

Ian Smith



Coming out of Traffic

Figure 1



Figure 2



Coming out of Traffic

Figure 3



Figure 4



SWANSCOMBE NO. 6

SWANSCOMBE NO. 6 being much in the news this year, I thought a bit of background information might be of interest. The following article, with photographs (unfortunately they are too dark to reproduce) appeared in the Summer 1971 edition (actually Volume 10 Number 2 - the editor was kept much busier in those days, but then things could happen very fast!).

“By some happy coincidence, the Middleton Railway has a long tradition of associations with “firsts”. It was no surprise, therefore, to find that our latest acquisition, Hawthorn Leslie 0-4-0ST No. 6, from the Swanscombe Works of the Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd. (APCM) was coming from the works where J B White made the first commercially available Portland Cement. However, interesting as the history of Portland Cement may be, the purpose of this article is to introduce No. 6.

Built as Works Number 3860, No. 6 was the newest of six identical locomotives at Swanscombe, five being delivered in 1928/9, and the last, No. 6, in 1935. These locomotives replaced an interesting clutch of earlier engines, comprising three Falcon Engine & Car Works (later absorbed by Brush Traction) 0-4-0's, a Chapman & Furneaux 0-4-0, and a Manning Wardle 0-4-0. A 3'6" gauge system was abandoned also at about this time. In 1948 No. 7, a similar though slightly larger locomotive from Hawthorn Leslie's successors, Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns appeared to complete the stud. This fleet worked trains of chalk from the nearby quarries to the works through two single line tunnels worked, unusually for a purely industrial line, on the token system.

By the summer of 1970, diesels had appeared on the scene and, although the original intention had been to retain one steam loco as spare, the entire steam fleet was made redundant. Thus it appeared that the all too typical story of the elimination of steam from a picturesque industrial system was to be repeated. However, at Swanscombe, the timely intervention of the Association of Railway Preservation Societies (ARPS) ensured that at least two of the locomotives have escaped the breaker's torch.

Hearing that the Swanscombe fleet was to be disposed of, the ARPS included an announcement in one of its regular newsletters that APCM were willing to consider offers for the purchase of the locomotives for preservation, and invited Societies to make their interest known to ARPS who would act as a “clearing house” in the negotiations. Meanwhile, the ARPS had asked Mr V J Dallimore of the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway to give the locomotives a thorough inspection, so that detailed reports were available for circulation to all the nine Societies originally expressing interest. Having considered the reports, the MRT Committee decided that if one of these locomotives were to come to Middleton it would be a very useful supplement to Henry De Lacy II, being slightly larger and more powerful. An interim offer was therefore made, and everyone sat back to await the outcome.

A week or two later, Captain Peter Manisty, Chairman of the ARPS, contacted John Carr, MRT Treasurer, with the news that only two Societies were seriously interested in the locomotives, the MRT and the Quanton Railway Society. He also invited the MRT to lead the negotiations on behalf of the ARPS. Obviously the next step was to make a thorough inspection and discuss which locomotives best suited the Societies' respective needs, and so Jim Lodge, Middleton's Chief Mechanical Engineer, and Roy Miller, Secretary of Quanton, went to inspect the fleet. Their report confirmed Mr Dallimore's impressions and it was decided that Middleton would make an offer for No. 6 and Quanton an offer for No. 3.

SWANSCOMBE NO. 6

Normally steam locomotives are purchased at or near scrap prices which, because of the quantity of brass and copper involved, tend to be very high. With the Swanscombe locomotives there were problems; transport costs would be high, both Societies were far from rich, and we knew that the scrap merchants beady eyes had already gleamed covetously over the locomotives. Reluctantly we committed our best offers to paper, and very nominal they looked too! However, we had not reckoned with the generosity of the APCM who were very keen to see the locomotives preserved, and took the extremely generous course of presenting us with locomotive No. 6 free of charge and accepting our offer for No. 3. As the negotiations had been conducted from start to finish in a spirit of inter-Society co-operation, both Societies agreed to share the acquisition costs and to acquire from APCM stocks of spares and patterns which either Society will be able to draw from as and when the necessity arises.

Thursday May 20th 1971 was a bright, sunny day, and provided a perfect setting for the presentation of a splendidly turned out No. 6 to the Societies. The preservation movement was represented by Mr Ian MacDougall, an MRT Trustee, Captain Peter Manisty, Roy Miller and John Carr, and APCM officials present included Mr Bryant, Southern Area Manager, Mr Workman, Mr Brown and Mr Palmer, Works Manager, Deputy Works Manager and Engineer at Swanscombe, and Mr Greer from the Publicity Department. Mr MacDougall formally accepted the locomotive on behalf of the MRT from Mr Bryant, following which the usual assortment of group photographs were taken by press and APCM cameramen whilst the party admired No. 6 as she stood glinting in her fresh green livery. After the ceremony the party adjourned for a magnificent lunch laid on by the APCM canteen, at which some of the history of the Swanscombe Cement Works and the Portland Cement Industry initiated by John Bazley White was unfolded.

The afternoon was devoted to sorting out much needed spares from the locomotive shed, with the enthusiastic help of the APCM locomotive foreman, who provided a mine of useful information and ensured that the MRT Treasurer came away knowing considerably more about the intricacies of steam locomotives than when he arrived.

No. 6 having been safely tucked away to await transportation to Middleton on 3rd June, No. 3 was undergoing a thorough steam clean outside. However, this is not quite the end of steam at Swanscombe. The fine cement dust does not agree with the finer senses of Rolls Royce diesel engines, and on the very day of the handover, it was pleasing to find an externally dilapidated, but still very capable, No. 4 coping with rail traffic in place of a troublesome Sentinel diesel. Spurred by the interest shown in their system, APCM hope to arrange a final steam tour over the Swanscombe line behind either No. 7 or No. 4, before the fire drops for the last time and diesels rule on this picturesque little system. Even then, it may be that the last steam loco to work at Swanscombe will be preserved by APCM as a static reminder of the days of steam from 3'6" gauge through steam lorries to the seven Hawthorns.

We must be very grateful to all who have helped to make this joint preservation project such a success, especially Mr Workman, Mr Palmer and their staff at Swanscombe for their helpfulness throughout the negotiations and inspections, to APCM as a whole for their extreme generosity, and to Captain Manisty and Mr Dallimore for starting the ball rolling. We hope that, with our assistance, No. 6 will reward them all with many years of continued activity at Middleton.

John Carr, in 1971

Middleton Plans for Electric Locomotive

A high proportion of the amateur national effort in railway preservation has gone into steam locomotives and genuine relics in other spheres of railway history can get left out. A London Transport ballast train locomotive, ex GWR, can easily have a queue waiting to buy it the moment it is retired. Black Fives and Terriers have been snapped up in quantity, and for quite understandable reasons. On the other hand, the diesel, whether or not it is historic, is all too often bought merely as a stop gap for shunting or to run trains when a steam locomotive is not available. At Middleton we probably have more justification for using diesels for our traffic than most amateur lines, as we could easily spend two hours preparing a steam locomotive for one hour's train operation.

At the other end of the scale is electric traction. True, there are specialised enthusiasts dealing in trams and trolley buses but what of the electric railway? How many tears were shed when whole trains of pre-war SR or LSWR and LBSCR electric stock were cut up? Very few, I suspect. But the history of electric traction is a proud one. True, it is a very young enterprise dating from the early experiments of the Germans, the Swiss on low frequency AC, and Magnus Volk's Brighton line which is still going strong. We have kept our end up electrically speaking, in Britain, though it is a pity the 25 cycle overhead wire HT Brighton system succumbed to the low tension DC third rail of the LSWR, if one may be wise 45 years after the event.

The new Middleton recruit is old as electric locos go, in fact there are not all that number of 1912 steam locos going strong! Our electric locomotive, a four wheel, centre cab, two motor 500 volts DC model, was built at Attercliffe Common Works of Metropolitan Vickers, Sheffield. She has been at York Foss Power Station bringing in coal trains all her life, and her sister engine of 1942 is very similar except that it has a Metro Vick instead of a Siemens controller. Very heavily built for her size, with sheet steel instead of tinplate, she has survived the perils of grime and rust very well, in fact right up to retirement she was painted up in a most tidy fashion.

The advantage of electric traction on goods traffic is not always realised. The diesel engine drops in power as it slows down, making it necessary to have gear change or electric or hydraulic transmission. The steam locomotive can compensate by opening the regulator or extending the cut-off, the steady power being dependent on the rate at which water is boiled. The electric locomotive however, increases its tractive effort more and more as the speed drops, so much so in fact, that one cannot connect full voltage to a stationary locomotive without all of the contents being whirled out of the back in a sharp jerk! Our locomotive, like most DC equipment, has motors which can be connected in series or parallel, with variable resistances to build up the voltage steadily. There are four notches in series giving 90 hp at 1.7 mph, dropping to 16 hp at 4.7 mph. This means that after a mammoth heave to start the train, the locomotive will rapidly settle down to a steady speed. After three transition notches to get the motors in parallel, the power jumps to 64 hp at 4.7 mph, rising to 180 hp at 4.9 mph in top notch with motors running on full voltage. Even so, this drops to a mere 10 hp at 16 mph, the normal maximum

Middleton Plans for Electric Locomotive

speed. No use is made of “Weak Field” to give higher speeds for passenger train working.

For those uninitiated in the complexities of electric traction and such shibboleths as Lenz’s Laws and back-EMF’s, we should point out the main safety factor of electric braking. If the wheels skid on a wet rail, the braking stops almost immediately, the wheels begin to revolve again, and the braking effect builds up to hold the train under control. This automatic correction of skids is just the thing for goods trains on wet rails, in fact it is a God send on steep gradients like Penistone-Wath and Namur-Luxembourg DC lines, apart from saving in brake blocks due to the conversion of all the kinetic energy of the train into electric energy rather than heat in the braking. The regenerated current can, in some cases, be used to pull the next train up the hill!

According to the Electricity Generating Board people (who should know), these early locomotives have a very wide safety margin. Even when they have been grossly overloaded and things have (literally) got a bit warm, the insulation is so generous that no faults have developed. On ordinary loads, the two locos, with similar performance, have romped away on sharp curves and steep gradients with 110 ton coal trains.

The simplicity of the design is such that the cab has nothing but the electrical controls, hand brake and circuit breaker. No meters or auxiliaries of any kind! Lighting is equally simple - 2 x 250 volt lamps in series straight on the mains.

The number plates were unfortunately given away to an enthusiast, but we are having copies made. The Coat of Arms of the City of York was carried until the York City Electricity Department became part of the Central Electricity Generating Board.

The CEGB, brimful of enthusiasm for the loco, have handed over spare buffer springs, carbon brushes, bearings and overhead collectors, none having been needed as spares in 58 years! They have also salvaged the overhead wire and insulators for re-use on our line. The most embarrassing spare parts to bring to Leeds were the two 19 ft long bamboo poles used to recover the pick-up if it slips off the live wire and goes into orbit.

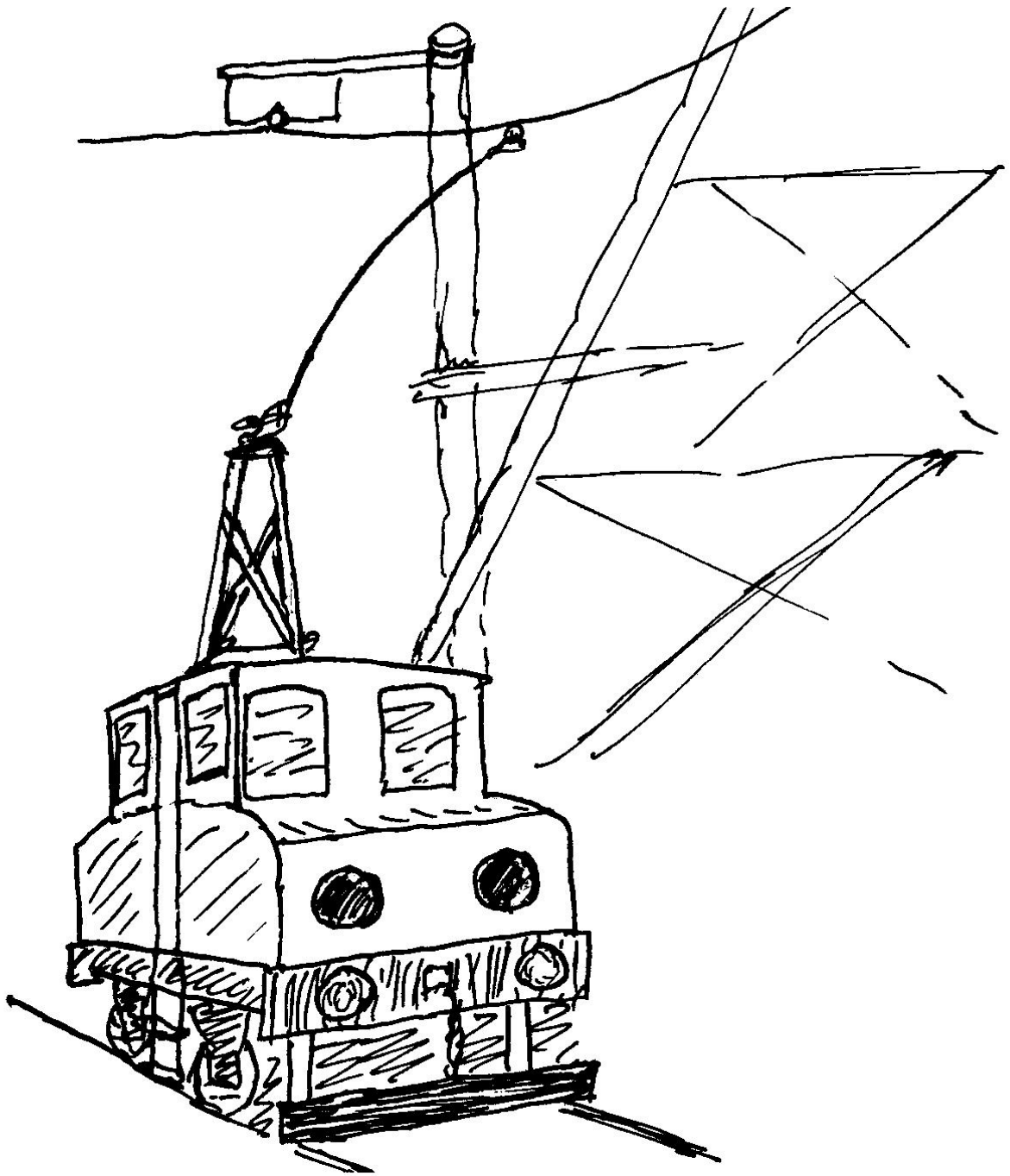
Though we have no intention of running near a public place with live wires, we are at least reassured to find that the contact surface on the live wire is higher above the road surface than the roofs of No. 74 buses. We remember the difficulties of Metropolitan locomotives that could get caught on dead sections at level crossings, and had to pick up from collector shoes on the following passenger coach. Then there was the Heath Robinson case of the Barking trams, which at one time had to get over the bridge across the River Roding on the Beckton route in open country by rushing it, pulling the pole off the wire and letting it back when across the bridge, as there was no live wire above the bridge.

Every effort is being made to build a vandal-proof shed for the loco, so that we can overhaul and repaint her when she arrives in Leeds. Then we expect to have a formal handing over ceremony at which the CEGB North Eastern Area, and MetroVick’s successors will be present.

This Good-little-un will take her place alongside the bigger diesels and steam locomotives. In fact we may end up as the only amateurs running goods traffic regularly with all three forms of motive power. (Unfortunately this never came to fruition!)

Attrib. unknown but probably R F Youell!

Middleton Plans for Electric Locomotive



This is the sketch which accompanied the article on the previous pages, probably drawn by Dr Youell.

RAINHILL REVENGE!

It was Saturday 24th May 1980. The crowds sat in the sunshine awaiting the opening of the Rainhill Celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway, led by the replica of George Stephenson's most famous locomotive, **ROCKET**.

The re-creation of the trials was to include replicas of the ill-fated **NOVELTY** (built by Braithwaite & Ericsson) and **SANS PAREIL**, which was the work of Timothy Hackworth. As Engineer of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, he had built most of the loco at Shildon. The cylinders, however, were cast by Stephenson, and were found to be faulty on the day of the trial. With **NOVELTY** being something of a failure from the start, this left **ROCKET** the clear winner. Within a year, however, she was in need of a complete re-build, whereas **SANS PAREIL** worked effectively on the Kenyon Junction to Bolton Railway until 1844.

But back to 1980. The crowds sat waiting anxiously for the **ROCKET** to make an appearance

By the mid 1830s, the Liverpool and Manchester sought new and better locos. Where could they find the necessary expertise? The City that built the world's first commercially successful steam locomotive was the obvious choice, but Matthew Murray had died in 1826 and his design for an articulated 'mechanical stoker' engine for use on the Stockton and Darlington Railway lay in some dusty drawer. The Round Foundry was no longer a great centre of inventive creativity, having been taken over by a sort of "workers co-operative" known locally as "the 40 thieves"!

However, one of Murray's more promising young students named Todd, had left the railway foundry and set up the rival "Airedale Foundry", and it was to this firm that the L & M turned in 1838 for its new locos. Thus was **LION** created. **LION** was an 0-4-2 tender loco and worked successfully for many years.

But, in 1980, the crowd sat waiting for the **ROCKET** Embarrassed loud-speaker announcements spoke of "delays" and eventually apologised for a "mishap". The poor **ROCKET** had been de-railed so many times that her wheels had collapsed. There were also difficulties with the other replicas, resulting in **NOVELTY** being unable to run at all, and **SANS PAREIL** having to be assisted by a BR shunter. Who came to the rescue? Why, the same folk who did so in 1838!

So it was that **LION** led the parade. To the cheers of the crowd, and an extra loud cheer from your archivist, Britain's oldest working steam locomotive steamed proudly but gently past the crowded stands towards Liverpool. And I for one was glad!

Leeds has always led in the field of locomotive building, so our **MATTHEW MURRAY** tradition was deservedly at the front of the display. **ROCKET** replicas may have sufficed for Sunday and Monday, but it was surely poetic justice that the folk from the "oldest firm in the business" should again have led the way.

John Bushell

John Bushell was, as the article indicates, at that time (1980) the Railway's Archivist, having previously been the Membership Secretary for a significant period.

The Country Branch Line

Those of us who were born before 1940, as youngsters enjoyed simple holidays at the seaside or local countryside. Before 1950 an “overseas” tour was a day trip to the Isle of Mann.

Many country branch lines were still extant, in Northumberland, County Durham, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and the then Yorkshire East and West Ridings. For example, Rothbury, Pately Bridge, Hornsea, and from Penrith to Bassenthwaite Lake (behind a vintage ex LNWR “Cauliflower” 0-6-0).

These were epitomised by Edmund Blunden in his “The Branch Line”, viz:

“Professing loud energy, out of the Junction station, departed
Our branch line engine. Its small train rounded the bend.
Watched by us pilgrims of summer, and most of all by me!
I had known this picture since first my travelling started,
And knew it as sadly pleasant; the usual end
Of singing returns to beloved simplicity.
The small train went from my view behind the plantation.
Monotonous - but there’s a grace in this monotony!
I feel its journey. I watch in imagination.
Its brown smoke spun with sunshine, wandering free.
Past the great weir, with its round flood-mirror beneath,
And where the grouse rise from heather shadows.
And among the bracken and like a rosy wreath
Mimicking children’s flower play on the moorland heights.
A thing so easy, so daily, so friendly and of so small a stature.
Gave me another picture; of time’s warped face.
Where still the sun and the leaf and the lark praise nature.
But now no little engine bustles from place to place
When summer succeeds summer, yet only ghosts
Or tomorrow’s ghosts will venture hand or foot
In the lineless old track between the telegraph posts.
The end of all things, but now no local train.
So easy it was; Oh that it would come back again!

As remembered by Dr F W Hampson



The Leeds Railway Scene in the 1950s

In a recent Old Run I mentioned the abundance of railway interest in the Leeds area in the early 1950s. For those born in the 21st century (and latter 20th) I should stress that the city boundaries then were the historic City of Leeds (“Half a Million People Ahead”, the boundary signs said), not the much larger Metropolitan District we have now. Even that had grown in earlier years, neighbouring townships such as Headingley becoming suburbs.

Subsequent discussion and research have slightly modified my original list, but these are the 1950s B.R. passenger stations and halts referred to:

Leeds (City), Leeds (Central), Marsh Lane, Osmondthorpe, Crossgates, Holbeck High Level & Low Level (count as one or two as you prefer!), Hunslet, Beeston, Farnley & Wortley, Armley Moor, Bramley, Armley Canal Road, Kirkstall, Newlay & Horsforth, Headingley and Horsforth.

There were several close to the city boundary where geography played tricks. Penda’s Way, for example, although built for the Leeds housing estate at Stanks, was a hair’s breadth outside Leeds, as the city boundary was the railway fence. Similarly Stanningley and Calverley & Rodley were just outside, in Pudsey and Horsforth respectively. Conversely, Newlay & Horsforth and Horsforth stations were both in Leeds, although the latter actually straddled the boundary, which followed Moseley Beck, running culverted between the goods yard and the passenger platforms (but Horsforth UDC took responsibility for the whole site).

Goods Stations & Depots (other than goods facilities at passenger stations) were Marsh Lane Goods, Hunslet (or Hunslet Lane), Hunslet East, Wellington Street, Wellington Bridge, Whitehall Road and Cardigan Road. Kirkstall Forge was shown as a Goods Station on the Ordnance Survey map but had no road access, as was the case with Balm Road sidings. Hunslet East was served by branches from both Neville Hill and Beeston, but curiously the layout appears not to have enabled through running as an avoiding line.

There were four Motive Power Depots (not three) - Neville Hill, Holbeck, Copley Hill and Farnley Junction.

The MPD and Goods Yard at Stourton were outside the city boundary.

Non-B.R. systems included Middleton Colliery Railway (of course!), Waterloo Main Colliery Railway, Kirkstall Power Station, Skelton Grange Power Station, Leeds Highways Dept. siding (electrified tram-style), Leeds Fireclay Works (standard and narrow gauge), Middleton Fireclay Works (narrow gauge, rope hauled), Knostrop Sewage Works (narrow gauge), Headingley Filter Beds (narrow gauge, hand worked), Cohen’s steel stockholders at Stanningley and Monk Bridge Iron & Steel Works.

There are also the “lost” stations – those which closed before the era in question. Two termini – Marsh Lane (Leeds & Selby) and Hunslet Lane (North Midland) - became goods stations, listed above. A third was Leeds (Wellington Street), the temporary

The Leeds Railway Scene in the 1950s

terminus of the Leeds Northern and Leeds & Bradford whose exact location is unclear (Wellington Street Goods?) and which was soon superseded by Leeds (Central). Leeds (New) and Leeds (Wellington) were combined in the 1930s as Leeds (City). There had been a passenger station at Kirkstall Forge, and for the Headingley Botanical Gardens there was Royal Park Halt, its location again unclear but somewhere near to the modern day Burley Park. It is said that there was an earlier Hunslet station, next to Balm Road bridge but superseded when the North Midland was widened to four lines. And we mustn't forget Lakeside, Woodview and Woodend stations on the Golden Acre Park miniature line!

Stations to appear more recently are Burley Park and the new Kirkstall Forge, the temporary Leeds (Whitehall) on the site of Whitehall Road Goods and, of course, Moor Road and Park Halt!

Maybe readers can add to these?

Malcolm Hindes

WITNESS

George Hutchinson. I was witness to the death of George Hutchinson. I suppose that his death was his own fault. You can't ignore the rules and expect to get away with it for ever. What makes it sadder for me is that he was like a son. I had known him since he started work with us and I had taken him under my wing. We worked closely together. His death is still raw with me and I don't really like to talk about it.

I suppose I ought to start at the beginning. In the year 1805 Napoléon's rampage across Europe was in full swing. A lot of my workmates left to join the army as volunteers attracted by the large bounty, worth more than a miner's wage and there was the smart uniform to show off in. You would be surprised how many were influenced by the red coats. The army also contained a large contingent of riff-raff recruited when men were given the choice of prison or the army. Many of Wellington's army were foreigners, particularly Portuguese.

We could tolerate the drain on manpower. What we could not tolerate was the drain on horses and feed as the war effort drew in supplies from all over the country. At times you could not get hold of horses at any price. The cost of feed had become prohibitive.

By 'we' I mean Middleton Colliery Railway. In 1805 I had joined the colliery as a foreman surface worker. I did not fancy working underground for the few pence extra it would give me.

Middleton Colliery Railway was the first railway in the land and required an Act of Parliament to entrench, in law, the rights-of-way negotiated across other owner's property. This was in 1758, long before my time, when the demand for coal in Leeds was increasing dramatically. In those days, horses hauled tubs of coal, one at a time, along the new railway

WITNESS continued

for the four miles into Leeds at which point it was dropped down chutes into carts or into bags for further distribution.

In 1805 I worked on the colliery railway marshalling the horse drawn tubs. The railway solved a long-standing problem. The cost of getting coal into the town was more than the cost of digging it out of the ground. The railway was an integral part of the colliery and the Napoléonic war was threatening its very existence. The shortage of horses and feed was a problem nationally but it could have closed the colliery because we used hundreds of horses at that time and tons of feed. The chief engineer at the colliery was a man from the North East called John Blenkinsop, so the problem was his. He thought the answer could be steam engines. He already had steam engines running at the colliery pumping water out of the mine and there were others in the town running belt-shafts in factories but not one engine in the country had been successfully applied to a railway as a mobile engine doing useful work. The reason was simple enough though surprisingly difficult to resolve, and there were several abandoned attempts to overcome the problem. The weight of an engine needed to haul a useful load was greater than cast iron rails could withstand and pioneering efforts always came to nought with broken rails.

In 1811, Blenkinsop designed and patented a cog system that would enable a light-weight engine to haul 90 tons of coal tubs. He then persuaded the mine owner, Charles Brandling, to upgrade the horse railway to run with steam. He collaborated with Mathew Murray, another North East engineer who had set up in Leeds, to build a steam engine. The track was re-laid with special rails with cog teeth on the side of one of the rails engaging a driven cogwheel on the engine. In order to retain the possibility of using horses the cog system had to be on one rail and one side of the engine only. It looked a bit clumsy but four engines were built in Leeds by Mathew Murray and they ran successfully without serious problem for six years.

I was witness to the delivery of the first engine in 1812. There were civic officials and a festival atmosphere. Quickly the engine became known as Salamanca as a snub to Napoléon as news came in of his defeat at the battle of that name, in Spain. I was witness to the inaugural coal run into Leeds when 90 tons were delivered into the town in one go. The steam railway was a noisy success from the very beginning and it was a wonderful sight to see the engines running backwards and forwards on the elevated track up to the staithes at the Leeds end.

I was so impressed by these wonderful machines that I asked to be transferred to work on the new railway and I got a job on the incline. The engines could only work on the flat and a rope hauled incline was installed between the flat section out of Leeds and the second flat section up at Middleton. At the incline, the full tubs were attached to the rope and their weight going down the incline pulled up the empty tubs. I eventually became foreman in charge of coupling the tubs. It was hard work but the railway became part of me. I really liked the job. Few could say that about their work.

Middleton Colliery Railway attracted national and, later, international interest. I was

WITNESS continued

privileged to witness a visit from the Tsar of Russia when he came to inspect the incline. He had it in mind to set up similar operations. Then I witnessed visitors from Germany with similar intentions. They built a copy back in Germany but theirs never worked. There was a continual stream of visitors from other collieries and the Middleton owner himself was so impressed with his own railway in Middleton that he installed another railway at a colliery he owned in the North East.

There is a down-side to Blenkinsop's design. The engine has a tendency to move crab-wise because of the unbalanced pull on one side. As a concession to the continued use of horses the rails are mounted on separate stone blocks, about eighteen inches square, set in the muck. This allowed them to walk down the middle. If any of the blocks get displaced a little it puts a kink in the rail and a team of men is continually on hand lining the blocks up. These two factors cause a very bumpy ride which ultimately was the root cause of the death of my boy George Hutchinson.

Last year, 1818, I will remember it for ever. I witnessed a tragedy. I had just decoupled a string of empty tubs from the incline. My lovely lad had coupled them up to the engine and was ready to take them to the mine. Then he went for his break whilst he waited in the cabin for the time to take them up. He had only just been promoted to driver a few months ago and he was loving it. It is easy to ignore the rules if things have run smoothly for years. It was the crab-wise motion coupled with a kinky track that tempted all the drivers to break a golden rule. The engines were fitted with safety valves to blow off if the steam pressure rose above a safe level of 55 pounds per square inch. In normal running the safety valve bounced up and down, due to the state of the track, releasing very irritating and noisy puffs of steam along the whole journey. The drivers were in the habit of tying down the valves whilst they were running normally but never, of course, when they were stationary. This had become standard practice, with springs even being provided for holding the valves down, but only when the engine was in motion and expending steam. On several occasions George was seen to have allowed excess pressure to build up with steam leaking out from cocks and joints on the engine.

It was lunch time and we were in the cabin having our bread and cheese. The brakes were tight on the incline rope drum and on the steam engine, which happened to be Salamanca. It waited for the next trip to the colliery. Ten minutes were all that we were allowed then we trooped out to continue our work. With a wave George jumped on to the engine and started it moving up the line. He went to the firebox and shovelled in more coal. I witnessed and heard the deafening explosion that blew out the firebox end of the engine. The whole of Leeds heard the explosion. George had left the safety valve tied down whilst he had his snap, as he had done before. He was blown 100 yards into a field. There was barely enough of him left to bury.

A true story from Middleton's past, told by

David Cook

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Jenny,

Just a few thoughts after reading Sheila Bye's fascinating article on the Thwaite Gate swing bridge. (Jan, 2021).

I remember once reading that there was only one reported sighting of a passenger train on the G.N. goods line. This, presumably, was it! I would imagine the main thoroughfare of Leeds central passenger lines in 1939 would have been very congested with war imminent, so I dare say outlying goods lines like the G.N. line would have been deployed for such as this evacuation train to Lincolnshire.

The oil painting I did of the bridge was based on a British Rail civil engineering photograph I obtained from their Aire Street Eastern Region (Leeds) HQ; in fact the painting I also did, 'Bridge 143, Stilton Fen', was also based on a 1950s BR engineers photo. The photo of the Thwaite Gate bridge was undated, but did have a black saloon car on the roadway by the river, which looked like it could have been from the late 50s/early 60s. I included the car in my painting. As the photo was black and white, it was necessary to do some further investigation with colour film to ascertain the colour and patina of the stonework walls and piers to which Sheila refers - necessary for getting the authentic pigments mixed!

I remember seeing the swing bridge back in 1973, which seems to have been the period when it and the other bridges further up the line were demolished, one straddling the Midland main line BR (between Wakefield Road and Hunslet South signal boxes), and of course the two bridges at Parkside (not forgetting the legendary Cuckoo Steps) over the MR and tramway.

There was another bridge just north of Hunslet station, crossing the Midland (the demolition of which Sheila documented in 1974) at the northernmost extremity of the MR leading across Jack Lane and Kidacre Street. The bridge carried a large gas pipe alongside the track.

My mother lived in a shop just next to The Blooming Rose pub (Hunslet Moor) as a girl. She recalls her father taking her to the front door to see a red sky beyond St Peter's church spire; the aftermath of a bombing raid on Leeds (presumably Holbeck or Kirkstall). Her father said "look at this Mary, you'll never forget it" before being ushered back in to the cellar. She never did forget. My mother was evacuated to her aunts at Preston. Ironically, as with Sheila's experience, in Lincolnshire it was probably not much safer there and she was brought back eventually; Luftwaffe bombers were a regular sight at Preston as they veered towards Liverpool a few miles south. Although not untouched, for some reason Leeds was relatively unscathed when compared with cities like Hull, Sheffield and Liverpool.

Thanks for a most interesting article, Sheila. I think it is so important that such vivid memories and details are documented to obtain an accurate picture of our local and regional history.

Best regards,

John Roberts

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

“Dear Editor,

A suggestion/request I would make of the membership is for any photographs of the Midland line in steam days – specifically the area from Balm road sidings up towards Hunslet Station. This was an old haunt in my short trouser days! Apart from a few photos in Peter Rose’s book I haven’t seen many photos of BR engines at work on this section of the main line. There must be more out there

Richard Pollard”

That’s an interesting suggestion Richard, thank you. Anyone willing to search through their archives and send us anything appropriate that they find?

Following publication of our April edition of this magazine, I received the following, very nice, letter, containing a significant donation. It is lovely to hear how friendships are formed, and one cannot underestimate the power of a warm smile and a friendly manner. I expect several of our more ‘senior’ members will remember Keith with pleasure and will echo the ‘best wishes and thanks’ which I have already sent to Keith on behalf of the railway.

“Dear Jenny,

I read the very worthy record of the service of Stan Holdsworth and am very sad to read of his death. In the early 1990s I visited Middleton Railway for the first time when a volunteer gave me a friendly welcome. That person was Stan.

I was a working member at KWVR and on a ‘day out’. After all there are no better places to visit than Heritage Steam Railways! Living in Pudsey, Middleton was quite close and so a short while later I came again. Stan and I recognised each other and had a good chat between journeys on the line. It was then that he invited me to join up as a Life Member! For many years I came to the Railway, sometimes met Stan and, of course, saw the extensive and significant improvements at the Middleton.

I ask you to accept the enclosed donation in support of the Railway and in memory of Stan Holdsworth.

Kind regards

Keith Wear”

(In case you’re thinking of dropping in to see Keith, he no longer lives in Pudsey.)





The Middleton Railway Trust Limited

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Registered Office: The Station, Moor Road, Leeds LS10 2JQ

Registered Company No. 1165589 Registered Charity No. 230387

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Don't fret - help is at hand!



Never say we don't cater for all needs at the Middleton Railway. Faced with a blind driver (?), Zeus, a four year old working Guide Dog who happened to visit us on his holidays, took on the responsibility of showing the locomotive (and driver) where to go.

He did a grand job!