

THE OLD RUN

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THE 1758 MIDDLETON RAILWAY
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SUMMER 1994

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Many thanks indeed to the members who provided articles, reports and photos for this issue. **ALL** members are invited to contribute to their magazine articles, news items, letters, photographs or drawings on relevant subjects. Opinions expressed in the magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Middleton Railway Trust Ltd., the Middleton Railway Association, or the Editor.

Material for the Autumn Issue should reach the Editor by 1st September (1994!), at the latest, please.

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SOME A.G.M. NOTES - The post-A.G.M. Council address list appears on page 23. Noel Brampton, Brian Hall and David Monckton had decided to resign from the Council, and I'm sure all members will wish to thank them for their service on our behalf. Mr. Brampton has been a member of our governing body from time almost-immemorial, and has been a source of much good advice and level-headed wisdom. Fortunately, he has agreed to be co-opted to the Council in an advisory capacity, even though he will no longer be an executive member. Fourteen nominations unfortunately do not fit into thirteen Council places, and a ballot had to be held, with Cedric Wood being the unlucky nominee by a very small margin. (Cedric, incidentally, has recently produced an excellent 'education pack' to supply to teachers enquiring about our Schooltrain Days, including basic information about visiting the railway, and about the railway itself; it also contains good sample worksheets which teachers can photocopy for their classes.) New to the 1994 Council are Peter Nettleton, Chris Rogers and John Wilkinson, all of whom have been Council members in previous years, though not in 1993. It was especially nice to see Chris "back in the fold". He has recently been very ill, and I'm sure all his many Middleton friends, both at the line and away from it, will wish him all the very best, and hope that he will soon be feeling better and stronger.

Sheila Bye

Cover picture: our tiny *Courage*, proving that it's wonderful what a little carefully chosen perspective can achieve, as she appears to almost equal the size of the mighty 92203 *Black Prince*, a fellow attraction at the Mid-Hants (see story on page 9) Photo: *John Elliott*

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Ian Smith

In my last missive, I commented on the lack of working members and the possible effect on our operations. Unfortunately, with the running season upon us, things have got steadily worse and the Middleton Railway now finds itself in trouble.

We are having great difficulty in filling passenger train rosters at all levels, including that of driver. Traffic Manager Martin Plumb has had to work far harder to find crews than ever he or the Trust envisaged when he took the job on. Indeed, on one occasion, the second steam loco rostered for an event was not in fact used, due to lack of a qualified crew.

Quite clearly, this situation is untenable. The strain on the few remaining volunteers is now enormous, and has to be relieved if we are not to lose those people also. To reinforce this point, Geoff Saunders has been a Guard for over 10 years, and has been in the forefront of passenger workings. However, in his own words, he's "not getting any younger", and to have to work a full 7 hours without break due to lack of a relief guard is quite clearly too much to expect him to do. There are other, similar, stories of the strain under which we are putting our volunteers. It should also be remembered that a good many of our workers are needed to help with maintenance and other essential, non-operating jobs. If they have to operate trains, the other jobs don't get done.

In the short term, the railway will probably muddle through this season, but we will now have to make cuts to next year's passenger services in order to marshall our slender resources in the best possible way. Also, the policy of locos visiting other railways will need reviewing, as support crews are a drain on resources. The effect on revenue-earning potential is, of course, unknown, but any cutbacks must have some effect on income. However, at the time of writing there seems to be no other way of alleviating the problems now facing us.

The ultimate solution is to recruit more members, keep them, and then train them to the required standard. Some new recruits have come forward, but it will take time to train them properly, and therefore I appeal to any suitably qualified member to get in touch either with myself or with Martin to offer their services as soon as possible -

Your Railway really does Need YOU if it is to continue to operate successfully in the future.

LOCOMOTIVE NOTES

Steve Roberts

As I write these notes, the longest day is fast approaching and once more we'll be on the downward run to Winter! Doesn't time fly when you're enjoying yourself? It only seems like yesterday that I was writing about the start of the season. So far, touch wood, all has been reasonably satisfactory with our serviceable fleet and we have been able to plan accordingly. In detail, the state of the fleet is as follows:

54 The Sentinel is presently still on the North York Moors Railway, where its major boiler repairs have just been completed. The top ring of the boiler shell has been successfully replaced, and the welds ultra-sonically examined for flaws. A satisfactory hydraulic test has also been carried out. The new superheater, mentioned in the last *OLD RUN*, has been fitted, not without some difficulty, and reassembly of the locomotive is now complete. We had hoped to make and fit a new chimney base casting, but delays with the making of a suitable wooden pattern have meant that the old base has had to be repaired and refitted.

Following a satisfactory steam test, the Sentinel was able to make its appearance at the N.Y.M.R.'s 'Friends of Thomas' event, as planned (this being in return for the boiler work carried out), and it is scheduled to move on to the East Lancs Railway at Bury, before returning to home metals once again. Whilst the steamings on the N.Y.M.R. were not unsuccessful, they have highlighted the fact that further work is necessary to bring the locomotive up to a satisfactory condition for operation at Middleton. The chief problem is that the loco is not steaming satisfactorily, and whilst it is adequate for pottering around in a siding with a couple of wagons, it is not suitable for hauling passenger trains over any sort of distance.

385 continues to be a stalwart performer. Following service over the Easter period, the loco had a boiler washout and was stripped for an examination by the Boiler Inspector. This was successfully concluded, and **385** was back in traffic very soon afterwards. All being well, the loco should see the season out before coming into the workshops for a hydraulic test, minor repairs and a repaint.

1882 MIRVALE The amount of outstanding work on *Mirvale*, coupled with other urgent jobs, meant that it was after Easter before it was ready for traffic again, following a successful hydraulic and steam test. At last, we seem to have cured the leaking regulator valve, after several unsuccessful attempts, and it no longer hisses at everybody as they walk past it!

Mirvale's coupling and connecting rod bearings have also come in for some attention. These have all been reworked to take up wear and eliminate the 'knocking', which was rapidly becoming more pronounced. However, a hot coupling rod bearing occurred shortly after this work was completed and this has also required some attention.

1310 has generally operated satisfactorily throughout the season. Following its period of winter storage, it was disheartening to discover that one of the safety valves had suffered ingress of water, and had split due to freezing. Both valves had suffered from this in the past, but had remained serviceable. However, this time, the split is considered to be too severe to repair and a replacement casting (or complete valve) will have to be made. It is presently operating with one of our spare valves fitted which, although of a different design, is not noticeable because it is hidden by the brass safety valve bonnet. The 'Wakefield' mechanical lubricator had been tending to fill up with water when the loco was in steam, due to a non-return valve on the feed to the steam chest leaking, allowing steam to find its way back up the pipe and into the lubricator. The valve has now had its seat reground and this has, hopefully, cured the problem.

1601 ARTHUR has continued to make progress as time and manpower permit. The new washout plugs have arrived and been fitted. The small patch on the side of the firebox has been made and fitted, but requires seal-welding in place; this job being delayed, awaiting completion of the necessary paperwork with the Insurance Company. Much new pipework has been bent up and trial fitted. In the absence of a whistle being forthcoming following the plea in the last *OLD RUN*, the Bagnall's whistle has been acquired for use on *Arthur*.

Completion of *Arthur* is relatively close. Besides the carrying out of a hydraulic test, the major outstanding works are: completion of the pipework, manufacture and fitting of new boiler cladding, and manufacture of a new set of coupling rod brasses.

91 returned to service in time for the start of the passenger service. The water pump leak was found to be due to a rather worn bush and seals. A new bush has been made, and the seals replaced.

1786 COURAGE As prophesied in the last *OLD RUN*, this diminutive loco made the journey from Leeds to Hampshire for the second time in its life, at the beginning of May. *Courage* was taken by low loader to Alresford on the Mid-Hants Railway, from where it made its way under its own power to the other end of the line at Alton. There it spent the weekend as a celebrity engine, shunting a couple of wagons in and out of the station. [See article, page 9.]

The loco returned to Middleton the next week, but not without mystery. A phone call to the Mid-Hants to enquire as to when it was being returned

elicited the reply that it had already left the day before. Further investigation found the loco safe inside the Moor Road depot site. No regular volunteer will admit to offloading the loco, or even opening the gates and driving it in! No doubt the low loader driver could explain 'how', but exactly what happened is probably best left a mystery! One consequence of *Courage's* visit to the Mid-Hants is that it no longer faces north.

Since the loco's return, the drive to the fuel pump has been stripped down for examination. Considerable play was found in the drive coupling, and this has now been rectified with the result that the engine is much smoother running and the audible 'ticking' noise, that has been present for as long as anyone can remember, is no more.

ROWNTREE NO. 3 is available for traffic, and used when necessary. The air receiver of the engine air start system is due for a hydraulic test shortly.

7401 JOHN ALCOCK (which was accidentally omitted from the last loco notes as being serviceable) is available for traffic, and used regularly on the passenger service. The paintwork is starting to look somewhat shabby, and plans are being formulated to rectify this in the foreseeable future. Some minor bodywork repairs will also be necessary at this time.

D577 and 138C are available for traffic and used as required. All other locos are stored awaiting repair.

NOTES & NEWS

Steve Roberts

SHED EXTENSION This progresses slowly but surely. As reported in the last *OLD RUN*, the tracks through the shed were laid in before Easter. These have now been concreted in, and the running shed side is usable if required. After some slight realignment of the steelwork, the stanchion bases have now been grouted in position.

The bricks (some 7500) and blocks arrived on site shortly after Easter, and work has commenced on laying these. We are having some assistance from a community project gang with this aspect of the work, but we are still having to do some of the bricklaying ourselves. As none of our regular volunteers have admitted to ever laying any brickwork before, we are very much at the beginning of the learning curve. However, we are learning fast and, with lots of helpful advice, progress is steady, if not spectacular, and completion of this phase is likely some time during July, weather and other crises permitting!



Above: bricklaying in progress, viewed from inside the new shed.

Below: M.R.T. members slowly and carefully check out the line into the shed, using TH138c.

Both photos: Keith Hartley



Another necessary task started, but still far from completion, is that of painting the steelwork. This has generally been done up to head height, but much remains to be done to complete the task, which must be finished before the cladding can be fixed in place. The chosen colour for the steelwork is signal red. Once the brickwork is complete, we shall be turning our attention to the major task of cladding. This is not a job to be undertaken lightly, involving work on the roof, some twenty feet above ground, and a safe system of work will have to be arrived at and agreed before any such work commences.

PLANT & MACHINERY We have just acquired, through the good offices of one of our regular volunteers, a small battery-powered fork lift truck. The machine, which came from a workshop in Barnsley, was made by Allis Chalmers in, we think, 1979. It is of just over one ton capacity, with a lift of 12 foot, and should prove very useful in and about the workshops. Collection of the truck was a saga in itself as, to reduce costs, we borrowed a small box van in which to transport it. Perhaps inevitably, the truck was too tall to fit in the van and the fork mast had to be removed before it could be loaded.

The fork lift truck had become available because it had developed a fault. This had not deterred us, as such things are generally regarded as a challenge. However, when we opened the control box we were somewhat dismayed to be confronted with a rather vast array of electronics, something that we weren't expecting. Following much head-scratching, circuit testing, rigorous cleaning of contacts, and judicious poking with a screwdriver, we appear to have cured the fault and we now have a fully operational fork lift! It would be nice to know just what the actual cause of the fault was, though!

Acquiring a fork lift truck is one thing, operating it is another. Such machines can be very dangerous in the wrong hands, and its use will have to be strictly controlled. We are arranging for some instruction in safe operation of these machines, and anybody who wishes to operate it will have to provide proof of their competence.

EXTENSION TRACK Members may remember that some 1300 metres of track was obtained from Askern Colliery, for the proposed extension into Middleton Park. Whilst complicated and somewhat delicate discussions continue with Leeds City Council over the extension, this track has been stored in the back of the works of Samuel Denison. However, following sale of Denison's works, and its subsequent redevelopment, we received notice to quit.

A possible crisis over this has, however, been averted thanks to Leeds City Council making storage space available for the track, at no charge to us. The rails have moved much closer to their proposed site for laying, and are now kept in the old baled waste compound adjacent to our Middleton Park terminus. The sleepers didn't make this site, and are being kept at the nearby horse riding centre until such time as they are required.

SWEET-PEA TAKES A HOLIDAY

Ian Smith

The weekend of 14th/15th May saw our tiny Hunslet diesel, 'Sweet Pea' operate at Alton on the Mid Hants Railway.

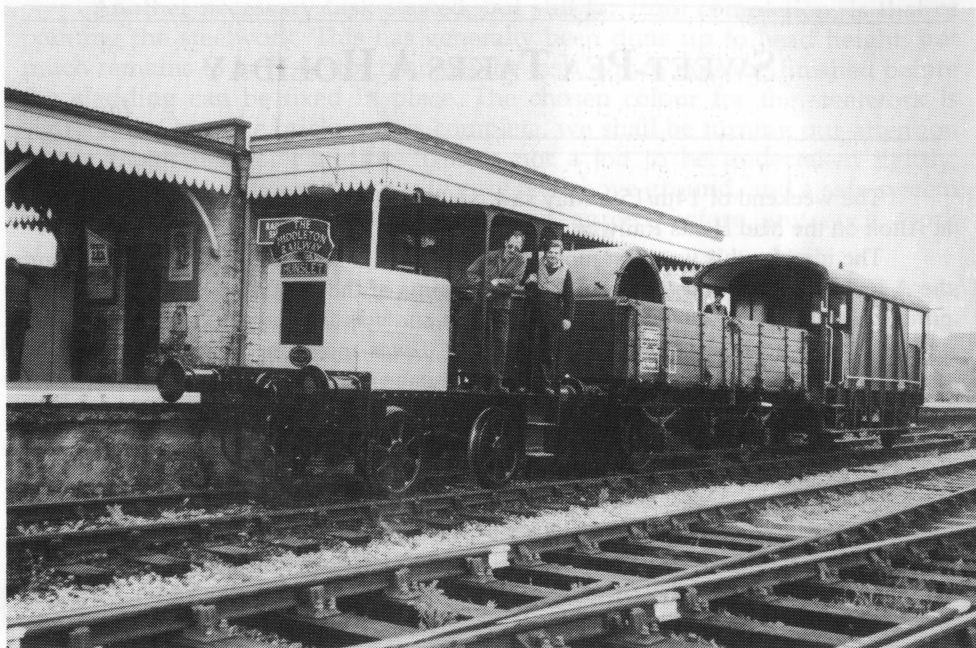
The idea for this was first mooted over a year ago, through my connections with the A.R.P.S. Publications Competition. The Editor of the 'Mid Hants News', Jim Pitt, printed a couple of photos of 'Sweet Pea' when she was first at Alton Brewery, in the edition he placed in the A.R.P.S. competition. I was most impressed, and borrowed them for *The Old Run*, where they appeared on page 6 of the last issue. One thing led to another, and it was agreed that the loco would be loaned to Mid Hants for a weekend in May 1994.

Graham Parkin repainted the loco in grey livery with red wheels, and most splendid she looks, too! On Friday 6th May, an Alleley's low-loader appeared, to transport our loco to Hampshire. On seeing 'Pea', the driver asked "Are you moving that little 'un so I can load the diesel?", pointing to *John Alcock*! He roared with laughter when informed that 'Pea' was the engine he was taking away with him. 'Pea' was exhibited at Alton, outside the hostelry which bears her painting on the pub sign, before being off-loaded at Alresford to await a journey to Alton, 11 miles away.

The following Friday, Graham and myself drove to Alresford ready to work the loco to Alton. On arrival, having made the usual introductions, we inspected our engine, only to discover that shunting manouevres had left the loco attached to a mark one coach with coupling fully extended. This meant the loco had to be shunt released by a larger cousin - an ex-B.R. Class 27 diesel, weighing a massive 80 tons! That done, and a minor fuel contamination problem dealt with, it was time to run the loco to Ropley, the first stage of her journey to Alton, our pilotman, Phil, having arrived on the Class 27. At this point, 'Oakwood Video' arrived to take shots of the loco whilst our main hosts for the weekend, Editor Jim Pitt and Alton Area Group Chairman Gerald Davies went ahead to take photos of the historic event.

Arrival at Ropley was an experience, since we stopped alongside the Mid Hants' largest diesel loco, the 136 ton Peak, 45.132! From Ropley, we pattered up to Medstead & Four Marks, a gradient of around 1 in 80. This section was particularly beautiful to see from the footplate of 'Pea' at the breakneck speed of 7 m.p.h. A wandering fox just stood and looked, no doubt in astonishment, as we passed. From Medstead, the line turns a corner, then descends to Alton at a gradient of 1 in 60 - it looks like the side of a house from 'Pea'!

Once in Alton, the 'Peak' came from Ropley with our freight train for the weekend and, having shunted, took us back to Alresford and the car, in the back cab - somewhat faster than 'Pea'. Friday evening was spent giving a slideshow about the railway to our new friends at Alton.



Above: *Courage* (a.k.a. *Sweet Pea*) with her train at the Mid-Hants Railway, crewed by Graham Parkin and Ian Smith.

Below: a rather more accurate representation of comparative sizes than that on the cover!
Both photos: John Elliott



The plan for 'Pea' over the weekend, was to shunt in and out of a siding at Alton, between trains, a very successful idea indeed. Throughout the weekend we were regaled with stories of the loco during its career shunting at the old Courage brewery, whilst one gentleman told of her removal from the brewery to Alton ready for her journey to Leeds. As this was done at dead of night and by the well-known Chairman Mao of Headingley, a discreet veil should perhaps be drawn over the tale at this point!

Perhaps one of the more amusing incidents during our weekend at Alton was our meeting with 92203 *Black Prince*. As the accompanying photo shows, there is just a small difference in size between the two locos!

The visit was a huge success, and we made many new friends whilst we were there. The hospitality we were shown was second to none, and the loco herself not only performed impeccably, but gave many people a lot of happy memories. Perhaps we may do the same again some other time.

LOCOMOTIVE 'JOLLIES'

Martin Plumb (:-)

Many members will already know that some of our locomotives have been awarded holidays to other railways and events during the 1994 running season. Such visits provide opportunities for our members to see the locos in different surroundings and for our footplate crews to establish friendships and dialogues with their counterparts at other railways. At the same time, the interest shown in such visits by the Railway Press ought to provide the Middleton Railway with some useful publicity. However, at a time when we are experiencing difficulties in finding sufficient members of staff to operate our own trains, it seems that an 'all hands to the pumps' effort will be needed to fill the vacancies. Apart from the need for crews to operate the locos during visits, we will also need pairs of hands to help with the associated loading and unloading operations. Visits which have already been arranged for this year are as follows:-

- 54: North Yorkshire Moors Railway (11-12 June), East Lancashire Railway (18-19 June)
- 1310: East Lancashire Railway (10-14 August), Harewood House Traction Engine Rally (27-29 August), East Lancashire Railway (17-18 September)
- 1697 J. Alcock: Midland Railway Centre (23-24 July)

More detailed information about the manpower requirements can be found on the notice board in the shed and, as usual, I will be grateful for any help which members can provide.

HUNSLET SOUTH JUNCTION

Letter to the Editor:

For a possible future *Old Run* article, I am following up the lurid tale of a Pullman car fire on the Midland Railway at Hunslet in October 1882. The Board of Trade official accident report refers to "Hunslet south junction", and I would welcome confirmation that it was where I think it was.

A 1911 Railway Clearing House map of the Leeds area shows the next junction southeast of Hunslet station (the later, 1873 one) as that of the Midland branch to "Balm Lane Goods". David Joy's *David and Charles Regional History* (Volume 8, South & West Yorkshire) has the entry: "Branch to Hunslet (Midland Goods), opened for goods, c1854. Goods depot given suffix 'Balm Lane' c1904". This is not, of course, the branch to Hunslet Lane Goods, the site of the original North Midland station of 1840, which took off northwest of Hunslet station.

Neither the RCH map or David Joy indicate a "Hunslet south junction", nor do any other railway maps of the Leeds area which I possess. However, the RCH map shows the junction for Balm Lane Goods as 45 chains (= 990 yards) southeast of Hunslet station. The official accident report notes "the northmost signal-box at Hunslet station is 1,054 yards north of Hunslet south junction signal-box". I therefore put "Hunslet south junction" as that for the Balm Lane Goods Branch.

Am I right, and did the Midland box there also control traffic to and from the Middleton?

Henry Gunston (6 Clement Close, Charlton, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7ED)

NEW HISTORY!

Sheila Bye

The Seventh Edition of our History is now on sale at Moor Road Station, and so far it has been very well-received (in fact, the amount of praise has made the Historian quite swollen-headed).

At 64 pages (covers included) it is a massive 20 pages longer than its predecessor, and contains a great deal of new information as well as new thoughts on old information. It also is much better illustrated than its predecessor, with photos of several of the Middleton Estate and Colliery Company engines and National Coal Board engines, for instance. Cover photo this time is of Dennis Caton's beautiful and imaginative painting of a Murray-Blenkinsop locomotive with coal train. As with the Sixth Edition, there is an extensive bibliography, and lists of locomotives at Middleton during both the pre-preservation and preservation eras.

All this for only £2! For those members who are unable to visit the Railway regularly, Shop Manager Vicky Hirst is willing to deal with postal sales of the new History, which will cost £2.50p, including postage and packing. (Vicky's address is on page 23. Please make cheques payable to The Middleton Railway Trust Ltd.)

a.k.a. MIDLAND RAILWAY

or THE CABLE COMETH

Sheila Bye

Last autumn, Bradford gained the benefits of cable television and, cheesed off by all the dug-up roads and pavements which accompanied its birth, we decided to take something back by accepting the company's offer of a free month's trial (albeit a free month after a paid-for month). Thus, a whole new world opened up to us, and it had a surprising number of railway programmes.

The French TV5 channel occasionally features hill or mountain railways in its *Montagne* programme, screened on Saturday mornings.

The German 3Sat channel has occasional good railway programmes - recent examples have centred on a day in the life of Leipzig Hauptbahnhof, and on the epic story of a Swiss group reclaiming three of its line's old steam rack locos from the backwoods of Vietnam, whence they had been banished decades earlier when the Swiss railway thought it no longer needed them. The rack line had afterwards closed down, but in 1990 the rise of steam railway tourism led to it being restored, and its locos, by now disused in Vietnam also, were reclaimed and transported around the edge of the Arctic ocean to Hamburg, and thence to eastern Germany for restoration.

3Sat also has an excellent series of short programmes called *Eisenbahnromantik*, screened every week or two. They usually consist of short films, often taken decades ago, about a particular line, station, locomotive, railway job, etc.

The Travel Channel, a fairly recent addition to our choice, provides two railway programmes. The better, by far, is *Swiss Railway Journeys*, currently screened at 21.00 on Mondays. The programme lasts for an hour, and combines a beautifully filmed journey along each line with an authoritative commentary by one Malcolm Brown. As a Travel Channel programme, of course, it makes short diversions off-track to museums, cable cars, picturesque towns, and other tourist attractions, but it also has plenty of details about the locomotives - modern and old-timers, and about the working of the line in question, as well as about its major civil engineering works, with short sequences of old photos of its tunnels and viaducts taken during construction. The route is filmed from the train (often from the cab), from the trackside, and from the air, and *Swiss Railway Journeys* is a programme definitely worth watching.

The other Travel Channel railway programme is screened from 17.00-17.30 every weekday, and is entitled *Railway Adventures Across Europe*, "Europe" consisting of England, Scotland, Wales and Switzerland! The programme appears to have been made by someone casually turning up at each line with a not-very-good 'home movie' type of camera, and taking what can most kindly be described as bad-to-mediocre 'home movie' type of film. Introduction and commentaries are performed by one Martin Roberts, whose "playful, light-hearted" style may, I suppose, be aimed at the tea-time "kiddy trade". There is a certain amount of fun to be had from listening for the mistakes in the commentary though - like the reference to a "Beaver-Peacock" loco during a visit to the Manchester Science & Industry Museum.

A few weeks ago, the programme 'did' the North East of England, with a detour to the Foxfield Railway. Also included were the Bowes Railway and working rope-hauled incline, the N.R.M. at York, railway exhibits at the Beverley Museum of Army Transport, and the Midland Railway. Midland Railway? Well, that is what Mr. Roberts called it, though I would swear that I was looking at Moor Road Station at the time. Most of the programmes' films appear to have been taken around 1989, and in this programme's Middleton (or Midland) sequence, the train was being pulled by *Harry*. The 3 minute section opens with *Harry* and train at the platform, ready to go. (The opening shot also includes a fuzzy view of what appears to be our present Chairman, leaning against the platform fence, chatting.) I say "what appears to be" because only very close-range static objects appear on the films with anything approaching clarity!

The accompanying quick *resumé* of the line's history tells us that the Midland (or Middleton) Railway was first built in 1788, when its Act of Parliament made it the first legislated railway. The scriptwriter gets through the Murray-Blenkinsop story with no obvious errors, but then proceeds to inform viewers that in 1964, the railway became one of the first standard gauge lines to be operated by enthusiasts. As the train passes through the tunnel, we learn that "the railway line branches off to the locomotive yard after it passes under the M1 motorway, but our train will continue to Middleton Park" - which is just as well, as the only place it would get to via the other line is Robinson & Birsdel's scrapyard.

No prizes are offered for spotting the other errors in the above; if you cannot find any, you, like the scriptwriter, obviously need a copy of the new Middleton History (see previous article).

Meanwhile, *Harry* ploughs on southwards to Park Halt, and there is a glimpse of Keith Hartley and First Chairman Fred marshalling visitors on the platform. There is also what looks like Geoff Saunders (off-duty Guard) and his wife Clarice, striding off towards the Park with their dog, but again the film is so blurred that it is not quite 100% certain, even though they *were* only about twenty feet from the camera.

And so we say farewell to the Middleton (or Midland) Railway; to be fair, that is not quite how the script ended, but it is that sort of programme. Having said that, it was after all a bit of unexpected free publicity, and probably not a lot of potential visitors would notice or even care about the gaffes in the script, but I do wish the perpetrators would bring a decent camera if they ever come again!



Above: 385 makes sure that her taller-than-the-average chimney will pass under the top of the new shed's entrance, whilst her S.P.T.'65 comrade, 1310, prepares to pass by *en route* around the train. Below: the Hunslet Riviera. The 'lawn' alongside the shop at Moor Road has been enhanced by the addition of a patio set, where visitors can enjoy a picnic, or a cup of tea from the shop, with a few signal and points relics to add interest. Both photos: Keith Hartley



TIMES PAST - SUMMER 1802

Sheila Bye

James Watt Junior, writing to Matthew Robinson Boulton, 19th June 1802:

..... I therefore propose to leave Upton (a solicitor) a Commission to purchase 1½ acre of the land immediately contiguous to Murray.....

This quarter's Times Past concerns an incident mentioned in the last issue's extra history article - 'The Rise and Demise of Mr. Murray's Round Building'; namely, the visit to Leeds of James Watt Junior, son of the famous engineer and inventor.

Back in 1773, James Watt (b.1736-d.1819) had gone to work in partnership with Matthew Boulton (b.1728-d.1809) at his Soho Manufactory in Birmingham. Boulton, initially a maker of watch chains, buckles, silver plate etc., encouraged Watt in the development of his improvements to the stationary steam engine. These were well covered by voluminous patents, one of which had its lifetime more than doubled to last until 1800, and Watt's patents effectively enabled him to dominate steam engine development and production for three decades. During the last few years of the century, however, Matthew Murray and his partners had quickly become established as Boulton & Watt's greatest rivals. In 1800, Boulton and Watt retired from business, leaving the running of the firm to their sons, Matthew Robinson Boulton and James Watt Junior, and around this time a series of underhand tricks began.

Early in January 1799, William Murdock and Abraham Storey had returned to Birmingham from Holbeck "highly delighted" with their visit to Fenton, Murray & Wood's Steam Engine Manufactory. Murray had received them as fellow engineers, taking great pleasure in showing them around the Water Lane works, and even presenting Murdock with a sample of forge work which M.R. Boulton subsequently described in a letter to Watt Jnr. as being "the most beautiful and perfect piece of work I ever beheld". When Murray returned the visit, as he had been invited to do, he was peremptorily refused admittance to the Boulton & Watt foundry. Meanwhile, the Soho workmen were working 'flat out' to improve their own processes in order to equal the perfection of Murray's forgework sample.

It may have been during Murray's visit to Soho that he persuaded a few Boulton & Watt men to go and work for him; certainly, one of James Watt Jnr.'s aims when he visited Leeds in summer 1802 was to try and lure them back to Birmingham - steam engine manufacture was a growing young industry, and good fully-trained workmen were much sought after and hard to replace.

The story of Watt Jnr.'s sojourn in Leeds is fully described in his long letters to his partner, M.R. Boulton, which are preserved as part of the Boulton & Watt Collection at Birmingham. It has often been rumoured that he came to Leeds *incognito*, but he was obviously well known to the former Boulton & Watt men to whom he spoke, as was the old and trusted Boulton & Watt man who accompanied

him, William Murdock. Murdock had already, as mentioned above, visited the Steam Engine Manufactory, and might easily be recognised by the men there.

Watt Jnr. and Murdock arrived in Leeds on Saturday morning, 12th June 1802, and immediately made contact with the millowner, Benjamin Gott, who detailed one of his workmen to seek out Halligan, an ex-Boulton & Watt man who now worked for Fenton, Murray & Wood, and to discover his address. Once this was known, Murdock went to Halligan's house and chatted to his wife about her discontentment with their new life in Leeds. He next made contact with her husband, and was confident of having persuaded him to return to Soho. Another ex-Boulton & Watt man, Hughes, lodged with the Halligans but seemed determined to stay with Fenton, Murray & Wood. He had hinted to the Halligans that, following a visit to Birmingham by a Murray man named Dixon, more Soho men might shortly be heading for Holbeck.

Watt Jnr. and Murdock visited Halligan's wife again on Monday the 14th, and were shown Hughes' bedroom, where Watt Jnr. conveniently found that one of his own keys would open Hughes' trunk. With no further ado, they proceeded to ransack the contents of the trunk, discovering "a roll of drawings of various parts of our Machinery & Engines", as well as c.4½ guineas in cash (i.e. £4.20p), which they assumed was his reward from Murray for bringing the drawings, though why the drawings were still in the trunk if Hughes had sold them to Murray was not explained.

When they left Leeds, c.20th June, they had been unable to persuade any others of their own former employees or Murray's own men to go to Birmingham. Only Halligan signed a Boulton & Watt agreement, but (no doubt to his wife's great annoyance) he was left at Water Lane to spy for Watt.

A second reason for Watt Jnr.'s journey to Leeds was to try and discover the secrets of Murray's greensand casting process, which allowed him to produce the "beautiful and perfect piece" of forgework which had so excited and intrigued the Soho men. The sand itself had to be of a particular quality well-suited to the process, and each manufacturer using the process had his own list of secret ingredients which he added to the sand to produce the finest possible smooth castings, which would not require extensive filing before they could be used. The list of ingredients often included such things as manure, and 'size' (the solution used for sealing new plaster). Boulton & Watt added coal dust to their sand, and Halligan told Watt Jnr. that he now realised that they added too much. Watt Jnr. visited the source of Murray's greensand, and wrote asking Boulton Jnr. to order "40 to 50 ton or say a barge load" from the same supplier, at Castleford. He also sent Boulton Jnr. extensive details of the Fenton, Murray & Wood foundries, the numbers of men and boys working at each process, and the wages paid to various categories of worker, all these details having been extracted from Halligan.

The third task which Watt Jnr. had set himself was to purchase some property. The first letter he sent from Leeds to Boulton Jnr. was written in the evening of the day he arrived, Saturday 12th June, and amongst many other items he mentions that:

I have been surveying the environs of this rival Establishment & making enquiries respecting the property & tenure of the neighbouring lands, with a view to seeing whether we could purchase any thing under their very nose that might materially annoy them & eventually

benefit ourselves. I find there are about 2 acres of Land next field to Murrays works, which may be purchased, but the price probably will be £5 to 600 per acre. I shall learn the exact terms. There is a Malthouse which projects into their premises, which they have in vain endeavoured to purchase at a moderate rate. It is in the possession of a Widow, who is aware that it would be of some advantage to them & therefore asks a high price. This would enable us to overlook their whole Yard & holding if we might dictate our own terms.

Two days later, he wrote:

I am in treaty for the Malthouse through the medium of a maltster & if it can be had, shall certainly make the purchase without waiting for farther communication, as I am pretty confident that the possession of it must enable us to dictate terms. I also expect an answer respecting two other plots of land immediately contiguous, which I think we ought to have, as they seem eligible speculations independent of the *ignoble* motives which dictate their purchase.

However, it transpired that "The woman who has the malthouse will not sell at any price, she has set her mind on keeping it", but by this time (19th June) he found that "All our friends are of opinion that there is sufficient opening here for another works, and it does not appear that any of the present ones would be eligible connections: they are men without character & without means", and he now considered that "The only effectual way to harass them [i.e. **Fenton, Murray & Wood**] seems to be by destroying the basis of their illgot fame and setting up a competition which will diminish their orders". Two days earlier, they had "also inspected the situation of an old furnace called Seacroft about 4 miles from hence upon the road to Tadcaster, but do not think it offers any advantages".

There seemed to be no immediate prospect of the Soho partners going into business themselves in Leeds, but Watt Jnr. was determined to pursue his "*ignoble* motives" and harass Murray and his partners in any way possible. He had made contact with the local law firm of Nicholson & Upton, the Brandling family's Leeds solicitors, and decided to commission Thomas Everard Upton to purchase for him "1½ acre of the ground immediately contiguous to Murray and fronting the road at such price as he can agree. . . .". Upton performed his task in a stealthy manner which must have delighted his client.

The story of Watt Junior buying a strip of land to prevent further expansion of Murray's works is well-known but, some time ago, I discovered that what really happened was far more deceitful than the legend suggests. With a little time to spare during a day's researching among the land transaction 'Memorials' at West Yorkshire Archives, Wakefield, I searched for documentation of the sale to Watt and failed to find it - as such. The land and property 'Memorials' are not verbatim copies of deeds; they give only certain details of the transaction - names, dates, and some description of the property concerned, all usually surrounded by a lot of 'legalise'. It is often rather difficult to locate the information required, among all the "heretofores" and "aforesaid", and I have no training in law or in 'legalise', so the following is the result of many hours' pondering over document photocopies and large-scale maps of the Water Lane area, and is as full and accurate as I can currently make it.

The land, in fact, appears to have been purchased by a merchant named Robert Pickering, with Thomas Everard Upton and his partner, Lucas Nicholson, acting as

intermediaries (Upton no doubt providing Watt Jnr.'s money to pay for the purchase). The other two parties to the deal were probably connected with the vendor, Peter Garforth the younger, of Embsay Kirk, Skipton. The Garforths owned a great deal of land around Water Lane, and had sold plots to John Marshall and to Murray and Wood. The land being sold in summer 1802 was c.2½ acres in size, not 1½ acres as originally authorised by Watt Jnr., and it extended along both the eastern and southern boundaries of the Fenton, Murray & Wood works. Negotiations over the change of size, coupled with the complicated conveyancing to conceal what was actually happening, perhaps was responsible for the fact that the land did not actually change hands until the 1st and 2nd September (ref: West Yorkshire Archives land registry Volume EN page 139 no.191).

Some time later, 'ownership' was transferred to Upton himself, and remained his until eleven months after the death of Matthew Murray when, on 22nd/23rd January 1827, Thomas Everard Upton officially 'sold' the land to James Watt Esquire of Aston Hall, near Birmingham (ref: W.Y.A. Vol. IU pp.710/1 no.654). In this way, for almost a quarter of a century, Matthew Murray would have remained unaware of the true ownership of the adjoining land, and of Watt Jnr.'s deceitful plan, and was never able to publicly expose this particular example of underhand dealing by the rival firm.

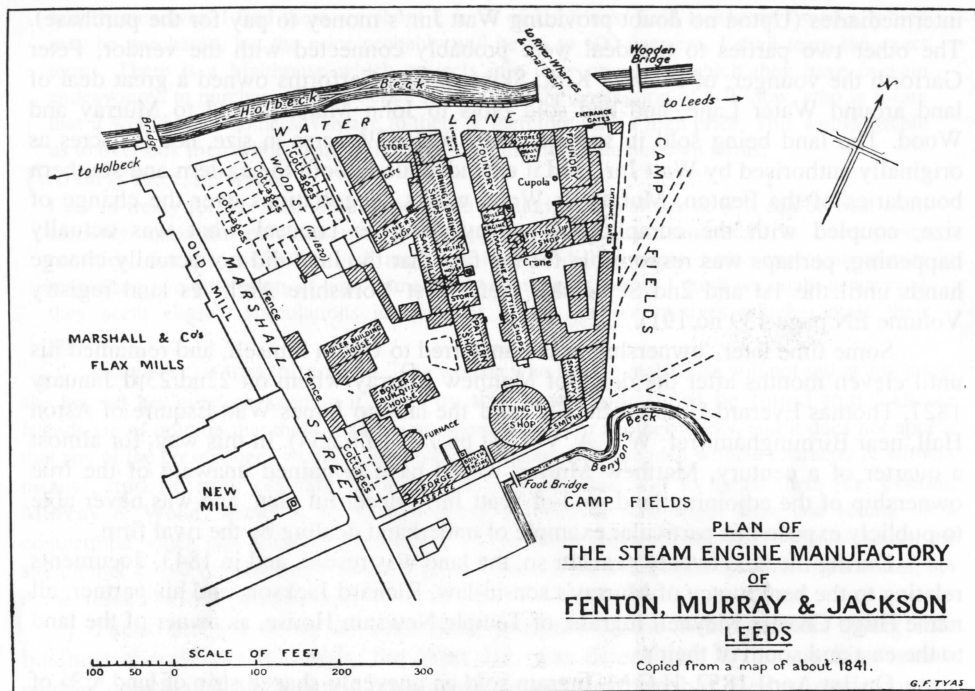
During the next twenty years or so, the land was resold, and in 1843, documents relating to the bankruptcy of Murray's son-in-law, Richard Jackson, and his partner, all name Hugo Charles Meynell Ingram, of Temple Newsam House, as owner of the land to the east and south of their's.

On 1st April 1857, H.C.M. Ingram sold an unevenly-shaped strip of land, c.¾ of an acre in all, to Messrs. Smith, Beacock & Tannett, who had taken over the old Steam Engine Manufactory c.10 years previously. The strip lay along the east side of the old works, and on its own eastern boundary it extended to halfway across the site of the new road about to be built there, David Street (ref: W.Y.A. Vol. TR p.337 no.380).

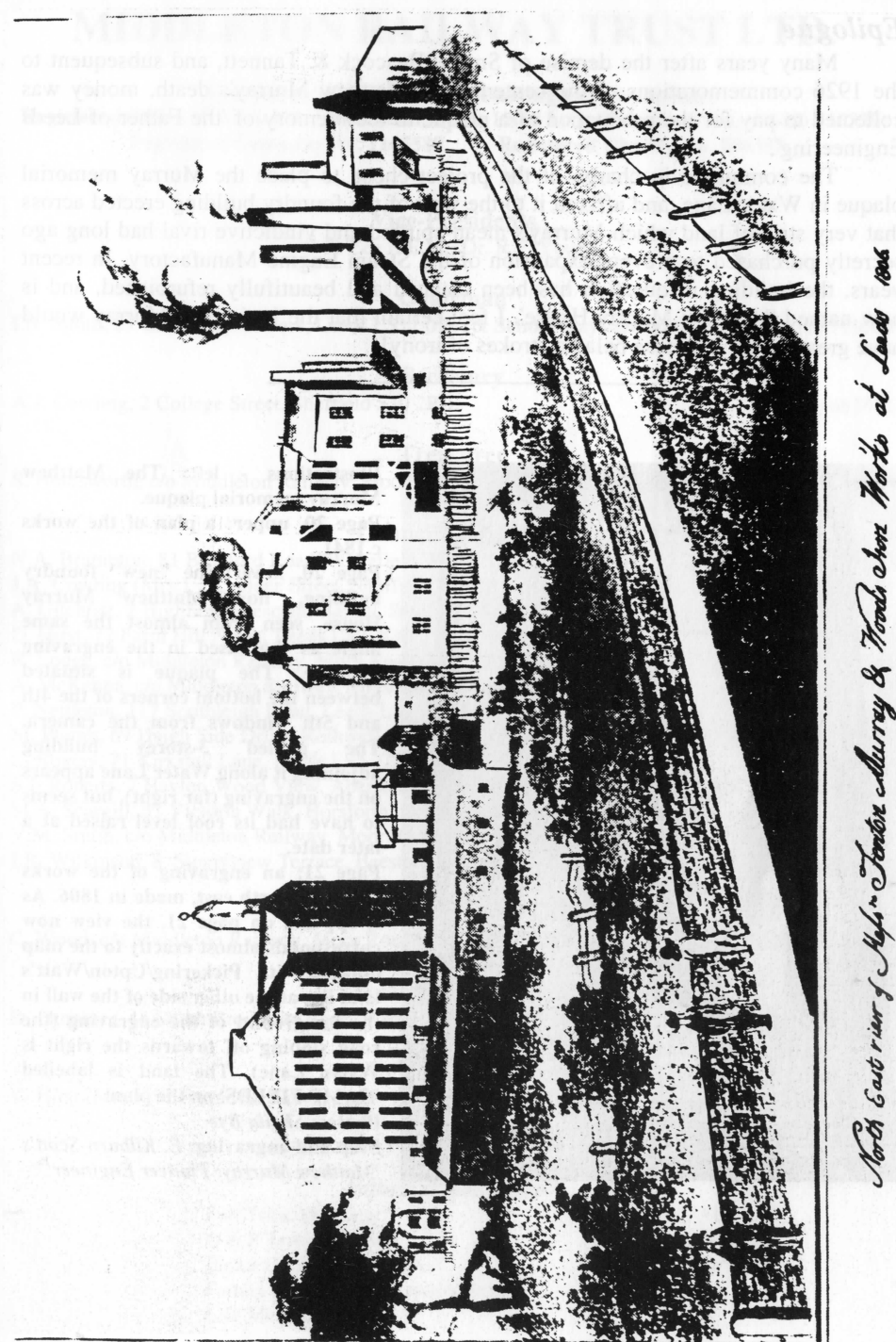
The remaining portions of the 2½ acres originally owned by Pickering/Upton/Watt - those on the east side of David Street and those to the south of the former Murray works - remained as waste ground for some time, but eventually were purchased piecemeal, by a builder and by the Leeds Industrial Co-operative Society.

However, at last, the old Steam Engine Manufactory could be extended, though the planned building of David Street severely limited the extension, and a fine new foundry building was erected on the new eastern boundary of the estate. The old Murray works had grown gradually over a long period, and by the 1840's it was a complicated, labyrinthine patchwork of buildings and small yards. The purchase of the vacant strip of land no doubt helped Smith, Beacock & Tannett in their ensuing 'rationalisation' of the site, in which many of the hotch-potch of small buildings were replaced by, or became part of, fewer but larger ones, with additional yardspace to give easier movement around the site.

[Concluded on page 22.]



[For descriptions of these illustrations, please turn to page 22]



Epilogue

Many years after the demise of Smith, Beacock & Tannett, and subsequent to the 1926 commemorations of the centenary of Matthew Murray's death, money was collected to pay for the production of a plaque to the memory of 'the Father of Leeds Engineering'.

The committee in charge of the project chose to place the Murray memorial plaque in Water Lane, and affixed it to the wall of the foundry building erected across that very strip of land which Murray's mean-spirited and vindictive rival had long ago secretly purchased to prevent expansion of the Steam Engine Manufactory. In recent years, the building in question has been cleaned and beautifully refurbished, and is now named 'Matthew Murray House'. I feel certain that the jovial Mr. Murray would have greatly enjoyed these belated strokes of irony!



Illustrations - left: The Matthew Murray memorial plaque.

Page 20, upper: a plan of the works c.1841.

Page 20, lower: the "new" foundry building, now Matthew Murray House, seen from almost the same angle as that used in the engraving opposite. The plaque is situated between the bottom corners of the 4th and 5th windows from the camera. The gabled 3-storey building adjoining it along Water Lane appears on the engraving (far right), but seems to have had its roof level raised at a later date.

Page 21: an engraving of the works from the north east, made in 1806. As it appears on page 21, the view now corresponds almost exactly to the map opposite it. Pickering/Upton/Watt's land lies at the other side of the wall in the foreground of the engraving (the road sloping off towards the right is Water Lane). The land is labelled 'CAMP FIELDS' on the plan.

Photos: Sheila Bye

Map and engraving: E. Kilburn Scott's 'Matthew Murray: Pioneer Engineer'

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