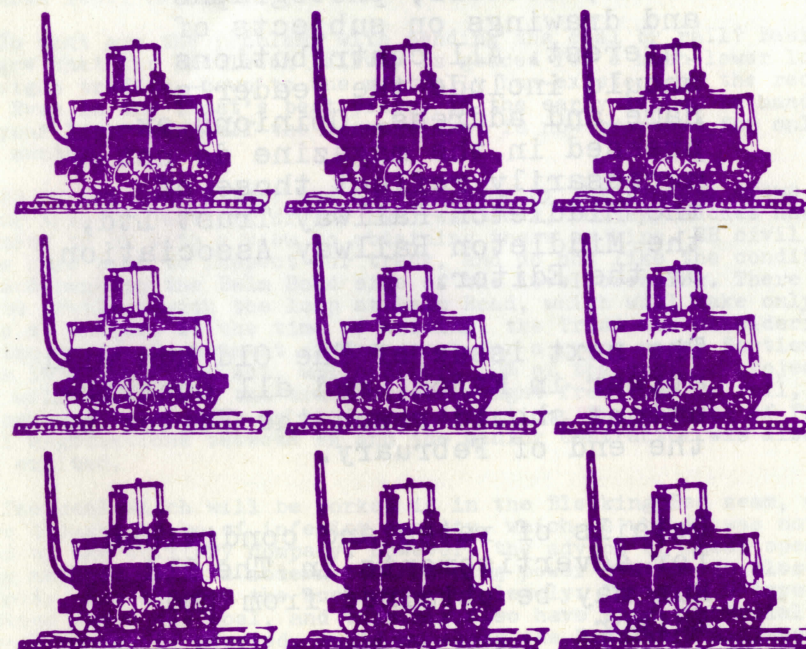


THE OLD RUN



JOURNAL OF
THE 1758 MIDDLETON RAILWAY
LEEDS

WINTER 1976

THE OLD RUN

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 9 WINTER 1976

EDITOR: Mervyn Leah, 134 Frobisher Road, Bilton, Rugby, CV22 7HS.

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

The next issue of The Old Run will appear in March, and all contributions should reach the Editor by the end of February.

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

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

COAL TRAINS AGAIN ?

The exciting possibility that coal trains may once again run over the Middleton Railway is currently occupying members of the Trust's Council, who, headed by the Chairman, Joe Lee, are in negotiation with the National Coal Board, West Yorkshire County Council and mining contractors, Rorkes. The issue is whether the output from the opencast mining sites adjacent to the Railway will be carried to Skelton Grange power station by rail or by road.

Some 30,000 tons of coal will initially be extracted from a site adjacent to the old GN bridge, but it is planned to mine a further 300,000 tons from an area nearer to the old Middleton Broom colliery site, starting in January 1978. At least forty loaded rail wagons a day would be removed in the first phase, which must be completed within three months. If this were translated into an equivalent number of lorry movements, loaded and empty, it would mean about an extra 130 per day, on roads which, especially in the Dewsbury Road area, are totally unsuited to this density of traffic. The rail solution would involve a small amount of extra delay to local road traffic at Moor Road level crossing.

So what are the problems with sending the coal by rail? Basically they are that the Middleton Railway is geared for a much lower level of freight traffic—down to the virtually non-existent in the recent past! Even in the Trust's best years, in the early 1960s, we handled in a year less than half the tonnage that is now proposed for only three months.

We do not have either the motive power or the weekday crews to service this project out of our own resources, but approaches have been made to BR with a view to obtaining these on hire. BR civil engineers have been to inspect our track, and do not like the condition of the S-bend on the Balm Road side of the level crossing. There may also be problems with the loop at Balm Road, which will take only ten wagons at a time. At the time of writing, the Trust was considering applying to the Department of Transport for a grant under Section 8 of the 1974 Transport Act, which offers 50% of the cost of projects which will facilitate the transfer of freight from road to rail, or help prevent a transfer in the other direction. The outcome of financial negotiations between BR and the mining contractor was also being awaited.

The coal which will be worked is in the Blocking Bed seam, and was always thought to be of inferior quality, which is why it was not worked by the colliery company. However, the advent of cheap opencast mining methods, with a modern coal-burning power station in close proximity, has altered the economics completely. There is a layer of sandstone above the coal, and this may also have some commercial value. The rail route, if adopted, would be along the Middleton Railway to Balm Road yard; a BR journey roughly $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles southwards along the Midland main line, to Rothwell Colliery sidings; then behind a CEGB diesel over the River Aire to Skelton Grange power station.

Meanwhile, down at the line, work has started in and around the prospective sites. A temporary concrete level crossing has been laid across the line south of the GN line, and further obliteration of the GN line earthworks, including demolition of the bridge over the Middleton Railway and the footbridge over the site of Parkside Junction, took place in October.

Work in the Belle Isle valley so far has included the demolition of the old fireclay works, built by the colliery company and originally using clay extracted with the coal. In recent years it has been used by Messrs Babbingtons for scrapping old motor vehicles. The Broom colliery slag heap is being moved to below the Manor Farms. The valley is to be filled with baled waste, and then covered with slag, before being landscaped.

(This article was compiled from notes supplied by John Bushell, Joe Lee and Derek Plummer. EDITOR.)

Someday, maybe...

Depressing. Neglected. Unkempt. A picture of desolation, where uncultivated vegetation thrives without undue encouragement.

The winding path of the long steel permanent way ventures through a variety of discarded rubbish, junk and domestic waste to terminate, when it rains, in a sea of mud.

Young Middleton cowboys practice their shooting on unsuspecting passengers, whilst children of itinerants enjoy the thrill of an attempted free ride.

Litter blows hither and thither. Sometimes a black pall of acrid smoke from burning rubber drifts across the track, causing the unwary to cover eyes and nose.

Now a change of scenery! Greenery, trees and and gentle undulating slopes transform the slag to sweet-smelling grass. Gone are the days of neglect!

The white plumes of the locomotive exhaust resemble cotton wool hanging from a Christmas tree as the weekend visitors' train conveys yet another party to wander in peace through the woods only two miles from the heart of Leeds.

A leisurely weekend stroll complete, the return train gives an opportunity to view an urban panorama like a miniature New York, with its heart of multi-storey offices and flats.

At the new Park terminus alongside the newly-built reservoir, the visitor can watch the fish enjoying life in water void of glass, old tyres and mattresses. A small station cafe will refresh the weary traveller or troublesome youngster.

Towards evening, the rays of the setting sun shine through the trees, casting a peaceful shadow over the once-grimy colliery and its once-grimy railway now adding to its two centuries of history in its new guise as a recreational amenity.

All this will happen. Some day. Maybe.

Joe Lee

NORTH OF HUNSLLET MOOR

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

I should like, if I may, to make some observations on passenger vehicles for the Railway, as it seems quite likely, with this traffic steadily increasing and, with reasonable luck, likely to continue to do so, that extra coaching stock may fairly soon be required (and much else besides). I have read in The Old Run of proposals to buy an ex-BR dmu trailer coach, and even a Pullman coach, to give more 'passenger comfort' and, of course, to provide extra accommodation.

As I see this matter, there are several reasons why this may not be a very wise move. In the first place, the Middleton Railway is, for various reasons, unlikely to become Yorkshire's Bluebell Line, or to rival the Torbay Steam Railway, either in scenic attraction or in length of run. But it will, because of its long history, unusual location (actually, a pretty handy one to get to), wide selection of motive power, and rolling stock which, at present, is much more 'in character' than bogie coaches would be, have its own particular brand of appeal, more especially, perhaps, if this is a little off-beat, and not found elsewhere.

The actual journey time from Tunstall Road to Park Gates is no more than ten minutes, and the scenery—for several years, probably—will not be a major attraction. I suggest that these facts alone do not warrant the spending of considerable money (always in short supply!) on what might, with some truth, be termed 'prestige' vehicles. After all, anyone who wishes (and can still afford BR fares!) can ride in a dmu any day of the week, and quite frequently enjoy(?) a rougher ride than he would get in our ballast brake, which vehicle is, I consider, a credit to all those who contributed to its present fine condition and appearance.

May I point out also that in some Continental countries, eg Austria and Yugoslavia, passengers—even British ones!—using local trains often have to travel in four-wheelers, on plain wooden seats, or maybe standing on the open (but railed) end platforms of the coaches, and often for much longer than a mere ten minutes! The accommodation is 3rd Class, of course.

Again, looking back to 1930 and the Liverpool & Manchester Railway Centenary celebrations, there appeared to be no lack of passengers for either the seatless, 'open truck' style, 3rd Class carriages, or the upholstered, enclosed confines of the 1st Class vehicles which formed the 1830 replica train, hauled, on a specially-laid circular track, by the Leeds-built veteran 0-4-2, 'Lion'. An example of each type of coach can now be seen in the National Railway Museum at York.

The two types of bogie vehicle proposed for the Middleton Railway would, unless housed in some vandal-proof building, be a source of much delight to those sub-human creatures who love to smash large areas of glass, slash upholstery and destroy expensive fittings, as has been made all too evident by what has happened to recent football specials. In these cases, the very heavy cost of making good the damage has, as

a 'benefit' of nationalisation, been paid collectively by the British taxpayer (you and me). But similar damage on the Middleton Railway could only be paid for by the MRT, placing great strain on already slender financial resources, and delaying indefinitely various hoped-for improvements, even rendering regular weekend operation of the railway itself very difficult.

Furthermore, and ignoring the vandal aspect, bogie passenger stock is very much more expensive to buy, maintain and repair, as compared with the simpler four-wheelers. Goods vehicles are built to withstand a pretty rough deal, and even vandals, unless very determined, cannot cause damage to them comparable to that inflicted on coaching stock.

The old light and minor railways of pre-1939 days, which appeal(ed) so strongly to many of us because of their often second-hand, small locomotives, ex-main line four- or six-wheeled carriages, and many other off-beat features, as well as their friendly staff, were not built to be quaint, endearing lines. They were built for economy reasons, and were often short of money, having to buy not, perhaps, what they would have liked, but what they could just about manage to afford. In fact, just like the Middleton Railway has to do!



How many of our passengers complain of hard seats in obviously ex-goods vehicles, or of the lack of windows in the vans, or of uneven riding—what little there may be?? Rather do I get the impression that the novelty of riding in an open wagon, with a clear view all round, or riding on the brake van verandas, in close proximity to the aroma and sounds of live steam, outweighs any slight lack of 'amenity'.

Brake vans used as coaches were not uncommon on various standard gauge minor lines. The former Lancashire County Asylum at Whittingham was connected to the LMS, at Grimsargh, by a line about two miles long, and was worked originally by a Barclay 0-4-OST of 1888 (later joined by a neat Barclay 0-4-2T), with ex-main line four-wheel (and six-wheel?) coaches. In later years, in addition to motive power changes, the old carriages were replaced by a rake of goods brakes, with the sides modified to accommodate windows, and presumably seats were also fitted. Passengers could hardly grumble, for they were carried free of charge! Such alterations could be carried out relatively easily and cheaply, if desired, on the Middleton line.

Personally, although doubtless there will be many who disagree with the above views, I like the current MRT Passenger Set! It is sensible, in view of the circumstances prevailing at present (and likely to continue), perfectly serviceable, and comparatively cheap in initial and maintenance costs. The livery of bright yellow for 'open', and blue for 'closed' stock is somewhat unusual and quite attractive, and goes well with maroon or green locomotives. It would look equally good, indeed, with clean black ones!

Selby

KENNETH HARTLEY

NORTH OF HUNSLET MOOR

John Bushell

In these days of motorway objectors, read how Leeds folk objected to an extension of the Middleton Railway, 167 years ago.

The character of the area at the northern end of the Middleton Railway has changed very dramatically in the last decade, with the demolition of Christ Church, Meadow Lane, and the bridge over the Midland Railway, the closure and redevelopment of Hunslet Lane and Cassons Close, and the widening of Great Wilson Street. Possible developments on the gasworks site could produce even more radical changes, and so this is possibly an opportune time to recollect.

The 1758 Act of Parliament specifically laid down that coals were to be delivered to a repository called Cassons Close, to the south of the Great Bridge at Leeds. However, as readers of 'The World's Oldest Railway' are aware, the Middleton colliery continued to despatch some coal to the staith at Hunslet, which provided a water transport link with Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire, and a substantial proportion of the coals were carried on this waggonway up to 1807. Additionally, it seems that the 1758 route resulted in the growth of industry around the line; for example, Leeds Pottery was in part under the ownership of the Colliery Agent, Mr Humble, and opened two years after the railway, in 1760. Thus, while the colliery company was bound by Acts of Parliament to supply the city with coal, it had a variety of alternative outlets, when market prices so demanded.

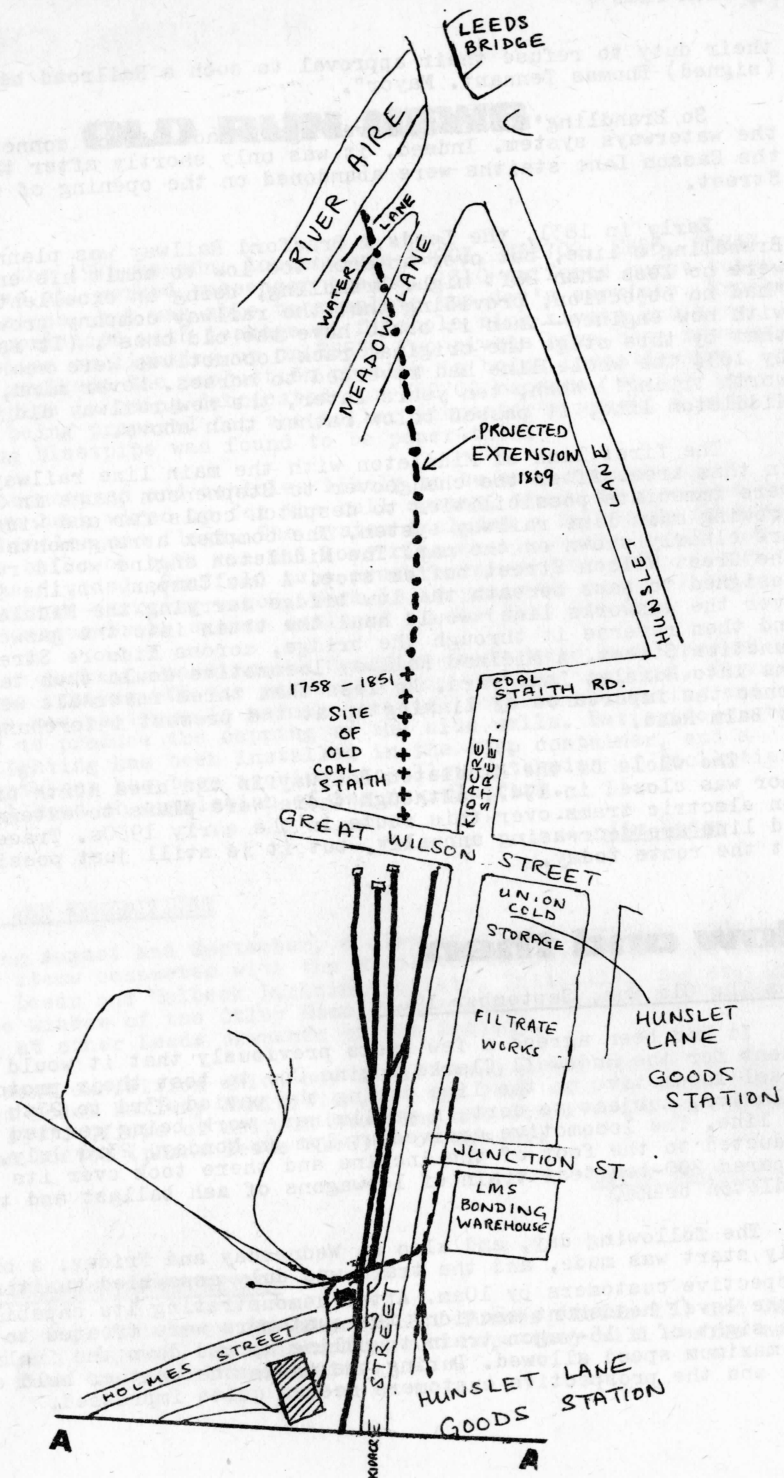
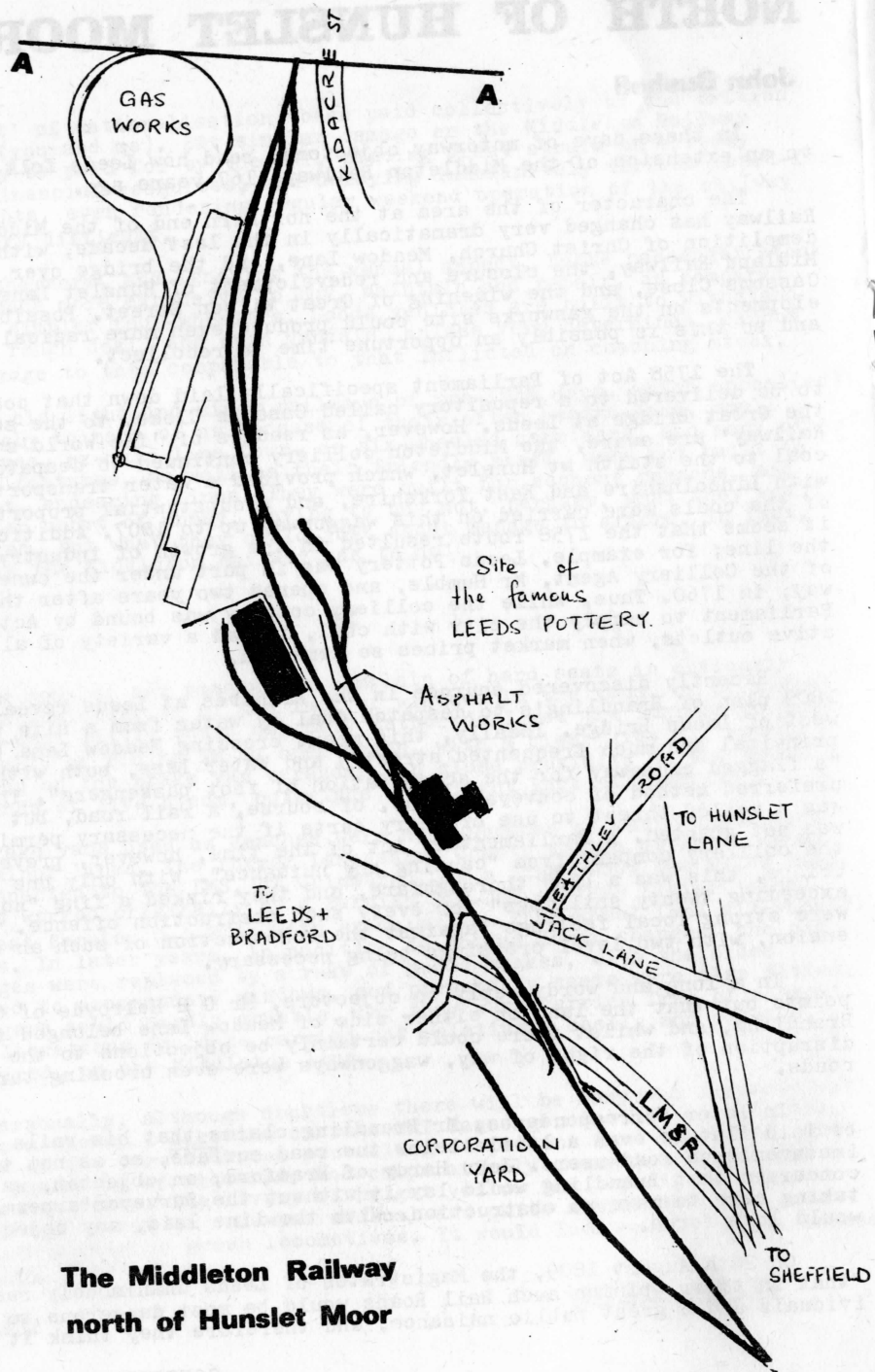
Recently discovered sources in the Archives at Leeds reveal an 1809 plan of Brandling's to despatch coal by water from a site to the west of Leeds Bridge. Ideally, this meant crossing Meadow Lane ("a principal and much frequented street") and Water Lane, both with "a flagged causeway for the accommodation of foot passengers". The preferred method of conveyance was, of course, a rail road, but there was a veiled threat to use ordinary carts if the necessary permission was not granted. A Parliamentary Act of the time, however, prevented the colliery company from "causing any nuisance". With only one river bridge, this was a busy thoroughfare, and they risked a fine "not exceeding twenty shillings" for every such obstruction offence. There were strong local feelings against the construction of such an extension, with two level crossings being necessary.

In a long and wordy reply to objectors, Mr G H Holroyde of Carlisle points out that the land on either side of Meadow Lane belonged to Brandling, and whilst there could certainly be objections to the regular disruption of the right of way, waggonways were even crossing turnpike roads.

In later correspondence, Mr Brandling claims that his rails will be laid flat or even a little below the road surface, so as not to inconvenience road users. John Hardy of Bradford, an objector, was concerned that Brandling would lay it without the Surveyor's permission, taking care to make no obstruction. With the line laid, any objections would lose force.

On 28th August 1809, the Magistrates of Leeds unanimously resolved "that in their opinion such Rail Roads would be most dangerous to individuals and a great public nuisance, and therefore they think it is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



their duty to refuse their approval to such a Railroad being made. (signed) Thomas Tennant. Mayor".

So Brandling's railway never again made direct connection with the waterways system. Indeed, it was only shortly after this time that the Casson Lane staiths were abandoned on the opening of Great Wilson Street.

Early in 1831, the Leeds & Bradford Railway was planning to cross Brandling's line, but over an arch too low to admit his engines, which were no less than 28ft high. Brandling, being an excellent businessman, "had no objection, providing that the railway company provided him with new engines—then it could have the old ones". (It is well known that by this stage the original rack locomotives were wearing out, for by 1834 the whole line had reverted to horses. Never mind, it was worth trying!) When, ten years later, the new railway did cross the Middleton line, it passed below rather than above.

The first link of Middleton with the main line railway system was in this area. After the changeover to Stephenson gauge in 1881, there were immediate possibilities to despatch coals far and wide on the growing main line railway system. The complex arrangements necessary are clearly shown on the map. The Middleton engine would run up to the Great Wilson Street buffer stop. A Gas Company engine (specially designed to pass beneath the low bridge carrying the Middleton Railway over the gasworks line) would haul the train into the gasworks line, and then reverse it through the bridge, across Kidacre Street and across Junction Street. A Midland Railway locomotive could then take the wagons into Hunslet Lane yard. No less than three reversals were necessary, hence the importance of linking up at the present interchange sidings at Balm Road.

The whole of the Middleton Railway in the area north of Hunslet Moor was closed in 1947, although there were plans to extend the Middleton electric trams over this route in the early 1950s. Traces of the old line are decreasing annually, but it is still just possible to pick out the route today.

Now and then

From The Old Run, September 1962:

It had been agreed a few weeks previously that it would be convenient for the Hudswell Clarke Engine Co. to test their prototype diesel locomotive on the line during the period 23rd to 27th July inclusive, subject to certain preliminary work being carried out on the line. The locomotive arrived at 1pm on Monday, 23rd July. It was conducted to the foot of the incline and there took over its specially prepared 200-ton test train of 14 wagons of ash ballast and the Middleton brake.

The following day, and also on Wednesday and Friday, a bright and early start was made, and the train was duly assembled awaiting the prospective customers by 10am. After demonstrating its capabilities on the level headshunt section, the customers were treated to the rare sight of a 15-wagon train trundling up and down the incline at the maximum speed allowed. During the tests the weather held out very well and the prospective customers seemed quite impressed.

OLD RUN NEWS

ON THE LINE

During the 1976 season, locomotives P2003, WB2702, EB53, S8837 and 1310 have all worked passenger trains. 1310 suffered burst tubes on two occasions, but was able to complete the day's services. Trouble has been experienced with leakage of firehole ring rivets and very poor combustion on lighting up on EB53. Two rivets have been renewed, and others caulked; the combustion problem is being investigated. A new blastpipe is being fabricated for WB2702 because, whilst the engine was being prepared for the boiler inspector's annual visit, the existing blastpipe was found to be paper-thin.

All locomotives and vehicles likely to be used in passenger service have been wired up for the bell system, which is now used in place of whistles and flags. The system includes a fail-safe feature, whereby the bells on both van and loco ring continuously should the train become divided. Scaffold tube crush barriers have been fitted in the passenger-carrying wagon. Work is in progress on the fitting of the continuous brake system outlined in the last Old Run.

Further jacking, packing and drainage works have been carried out on the curve leading off the passenger line towards the yard. Current work on the new platform is mainly directed towards shuttering and concreting to produce the capping to the side walls. Battery-operated electric lighting has been installed in the shop container, and a further container has been acquired to allow extension of facilities at Tunstall Road on completion of the new platform.

Jim Lodge

PUBLICITY AND EXHIBITIONS

During August and September, a display of photographs, models and other items connected with the Middleton Railway Trust was put on by the Leeds and Holbeck Building Society. Initially, the display was in the window of the Otley Road, Headingley, branch, but later it was shown at other Leeds branches of the Society.

The next exhibition which our sales stand might attend is the Pontefract Model Railway Exhibition, at the Town Hall on March 5th and 6th, 1977. Offers of help in staffing the stand would be welcomed by Stephen Dufton (phone Leeds 816033) or myself.

Derek Plummer

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome Ian Terry (Dewsbury), R J Turner (Leeds 13) and Crys-telle Mills (Leeds 15) to membership, and hope they will derive much pleasure from their work and visits.

SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL MEMBERS

Members whose subscriptions expire at the end of 1976 will find a renewal form with this Old Run. Please use it and return to me as soon as you can. With the cost of postage, it is too expensive to expect the Society you are supposed to be supporting to have to send reminders, yet this happens every time! Those who renew by banker's order are reminded that the correct subscription is now £2. Please make the necessary amendment NOW! Incidentally, payment in this way does involve delay for the member, as it is usually about two months before I receive the bank statement showing who has paid what.

Efficiency is growing on the Middleton Railway. It must be, because we are continuing to operate with fewer members! However, if you want to see more help for the Railway in 1977, you will be keeping an eye out for likely recruits. Nothing sells membership like a happy member, so share our hopes with your friends, bring them to the line, and get them to fill in a membership form. It's really the only way!

Brian Ashurst

DISAPPOINTING GALAS

Two Galas in the area around the line during September did not result in the additional passenger traffic anticipated. On September 4th, Hunslet Gala was held in the Lake Recreation Ground. There was a procession in which Bill Holliday drove a 'Middleton float' (alias his van!). We advertised in the programme, offering half-price train rides, but, judging by the level of traffic, seem to have been almost ignored, for all the interest centred on the 'Lake'.

On the following Saturday, an augmented train service was planned to Middleton Park for Middleton Gala. Owing to torrential rain, it was cancelled, and it was hoped to try again the following Saturday. We had anticipated a sales and display stand attending on the 11th, but as it was already booked on the 18th for the Yeadon Model Railway Exhibition, and we were unable to participate. There was, unfortunately, a very low attendance at both events on the 18th.

John Bushell

HAVE YOU GOT A COACH TO SPARE?

I am looking around yards, sidings, shunts and sheds for a not too dilapidated coach, to renovate and place on site at Whittakers as a museum, waiting room, and perhaps a home for a Portaloos for the 'convenience' of visitors to the railway. There is at present little in the way of facilities at the World's Oldest Railway, as we are all too well aware. A final thought-- perhaps willing members residing away from the city may be interested in a working weekend if a portion of the coach could be adapted for overnight sleepers.

Joe Lee

MIDDLETON ON THE MAP

The old 1" Ordnance Survey maps marked the Middleton Railway as a "Tramway, Mineral Line or Siding". This, in the older editions, was confusing, as the Corporation electric tramway was marked by the same symbol, and ran parallel from the old coal staith on Hunslet Moor to the Great Northern bridge.

The new 1:50,000 edition shows clearly the post-motorway layout, but the railway has altered status. It is marked in the standard single-track railway symbol, from the BR junction at Balm Road to the present Middleton terminus, with the Moor End branch unmarked, but the new Dartmouth branch marked as a siding. No passenger halts are included, but the line is clearly named 'Middleton Railway', and should prove to be useful to visitors unfamiliar with the area.

John Bushell

AN LMS HUNSLET IS SCRAPPED

One of the three diesel locomotives supplied to the LMS by Hunslet after the success of 'John Alcock' in 1932 survived until the last couple of years in NCB service, but is now known to have been scrapped. Works number 1724 was built in 1934, becoming No 7054 in LMS stock, and had a 180hp Paxman engine and a David Brown gearbox. It was rebuilt as a diesel-hydraulic in 1964, and was last used at Hickleton colliery, near Doncaster.

BRIEFLY...

For those who like vintage fire engines and things, the Yorkshire Fire Museum is now open in Bradford Road, Batley. Visitors are welcome from 2pm onwards on Sundays.

Thanks to Roger Bareham for his recent donation to the MRT archives a large number of papers, photographs, etc., dating back to 1960.

A certificate was recently presented to the Trust in recognition of our assistance with the Stockton & Darlington 150th Anniversary celebrations last year. We were delighted, of course--after all, wasn't Murray called in to assist with the difficulties with Locomotion No 1?!

A party of blind people visited the line during August, being brought by the University's Department of Liberal Studies, as part of a Summer School for the blind. They appreciated their visit very much, through the senses of touch and smell.

Schöne Welt, the house journal of the German Federal Railways, has published a full-page illustrated article on the history of the Middleton Railway. The magazine is widely distributed throughout West Germany, copies being available in most trains.

John Bushell

ASSOCIATION ADVERTISER

JOURNAL OF THE MIDDLETON RAILWAY ASSOCIATION

TRIPS

Due to lack of support, the two trips planned for this summer had to be cancelled. They were to the Severn Valley Railway and Quainton Road. We hope you will support future trips, as it will be a pity if they stop. They are well worth the usually small amount of money they cost. If you have any ideas for future trips, please tell me or any other Committee member, and they will be seriously considered.

Phillip Morgan

MEMBERS NEEDED

Since I took over the position of Middleton Railway Association Membership Secretary in August of this year, no new members have joined. I think my predecessor, Stephen Dufton, will agree that there have not been any for some time now. Neither has there been a tremendous reply from the renewals that have been sent out, and it is true to say that the number of members in the MRA is at its lowest for a long time.

What we need, therefore, is more members. It is up to you, as an MRA member, as well as myself to recruit as many as possible. Remember they must be over ten years of age, unless supervised by an MRT member who is willing to take full responsibility for him whilst down at the line.

So please do your best to get new recruits. Tell your friends, neighbours, relations about the railway. Without members, work can't go on.

Christopher Townend

Contributions for the next Association Advertiser should be sent by mid-February to: Phillip Morgan, 21 Moor Flatts Road, Leeds LS10 3SW.

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