

THE PENNINE RAILTOUR - 5TH MAY 1951

Fifty years ago, on 5th May 1951, the Manchester Locomotive Society and the Stephenson Locomotive Society (North Western Area) jointly ran the "Pennine Railtour". It was an important date in MLS history because it was the first to be organised by the two Societies and the 3-coach train carried 140 passengers (of whom 41 were actually MLS members) on its 60 mile journey around the Huddersfield area. The tour train was hauled (and propelled in places) by ex-L&YR 2-4-2T No.50865 which had been built at Horwich Works in January 1901, and it travelled over five branches which had been closed to passenger traffic - those to Meltham, Kirkburton, the Newtown Goods line in Huddersfield, then to Stainland and to Rishworth.

Departure from Huddersfield was scheduled for 2.5pm, the train having arrived empty from Low Moor via Dryclough Junction, Brighouse and Bradley Junction. The first branch to be visited was that to Meltham which was authorised by Act of Parliament on 7th June 1861 to run from Meltham Branch Junction near Lockwood on the Huddersfield-Penistone line. It was single track and climbed south-westwards on a ruling gradient of 1 in 58 through woodland surroundings for a distance of about $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Before it opened, a 33 yard long tunnel at Netherton collapsed, there were problems with a severe landslip about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from Lockwood and there was also subsidence of an embankment. The line eventually opened for freight business on 8th February 1869 and for passengers on 5th July 1869. Stations were at Netherton, Healey House and Meltham with a "Halt" at Meltham Mills which was built for the employees of a local Thread Mill, in return for the sale of land for building the railway. This "Halt" closed in September 1934. There was also a station at Woodfield which was only open for a few weeks in June 1874.

For many years the line was worked by a small loco which was apparently known affectionately as the "Meltham Cuddy" ("little fellow" in Yorkshire dialect). The last passenger train left Meltham at 7.25pm on Saturday 21st May 1949 formed of a 3-car set hauled by 2-6-4T 42406 (Low Moor shed), to the accompaniment of exploding detonators. It was well filled with sightseers and railway enthusiasts and among the passengers was Mr. F.W. Creaser who was 90 years of age and had actually travelled with the first train on the day the branch opened for passenger traffic. Freight traffic continued for a few more years, Healey House ceasing business on 12th June 1961, Netherton on 10th August 1964 and Meltham on 5th April 1965, when the line closed completely.

On leaving Meltham the tour train returned through Huddersfield and went to Kirkburton. The LNWR obtained powers to build this single line by an Act of 28th July 1863; it ran from a junction with the Huddersfield to Mirfield line at a point called Kirkburton Branch Junction (near to the present Deighton station). The branch was 4 miles 27 chains in length and curved sharply southwards from the Colne Valley main line, climbing at 1 in 66 through the outer suburbs of Huddersfield to the more rural surroundings of Kirkburton. It crossed the main road to Wakefield at Waterloo. The line opened on 8th October 1867 for passengers and on 1st January 1868 for freight, but prior to that there were problems when an arch of a viaduct fell into the Ramsden Canal in February 1866. Stations were at Deighton (on the branch and 7 chains from the junction, opened on 30th August 1871), at Kirkheaton, at Fenay Bridge and Lepton (it was just Fenay Bridge until 1 September 1897) and at Kirkburton. There is a print of the first train arriving at Kirkburton, hauled by a 2-4-0T No.37 HAWK.

The branch was worked by motor trains from 1916 but its main drawback was that the villages it served were too far away from the stations; they were up the hillside whilst the railway was in the valley bottom. Passenger traffic ceased from 28th July 1930 but freight business continued for another 35 years although from October 1951 the stations were unstaffed public sidings. The line closed completely on 5 April 1965.

The tour train returned from Kirkburton to the main line and went forward to Hillhouse No.1 where the loco ran round the train and headed east as far as Red Doles Junction. Here the driver picked up the single line token and propelled the train to Newtown Goods Yard

The Midland's line to Huddersfield was authorised by Act of Parliament dated 13 July 1899, but the company had their eyes on the town from 1865. In that year they came up with a scheme to gain access to Huddersfield by promoting a line from Barnsley to join the Kirkburton branch of the LNWR which was then under construction. From Kirkburton, the Midland was to have running powers into Huddersfield from where the LNWR and Midland intended to construct jointly an extension to Halifax. However, the Kirkburton scheme was withdrawn when the L&YR offered running powers over their line, whilst the planned Halifax extension was rejected by Parliament. It was put forward again jointly in the next two Parliamentary sessions but rejected each time. Things then remained in abeyance until 1899 when the Midland obtained its powers for a line from the L&YR at Mirfield into Huddersfield. Here it was intended to have extensive passenger facilities and a station hotel. Later, the Midland planned to have independent access by building a line from Royston to the east end of the branch at Mirfield, but subsequently they accepted running powers over the parallel Calder Valley line of the L&YR.

The line from Mirfield was 4 miles 37 chains in length and single track, although the earthworks were built to accommodate double track, and it involved some heavy engineering work. This included a 15 arch viaduct over the River Colne at Bradley. It opened for freight traffic to the Newtown terminal on 1st November 1910 but the passenger plans were held in abeyance and then shelved on the outbreak of WW1, never to be resurrected.

Immediately after grouping, the LMSR built a connection at Hillhouse between the Midland line and the LNWR line at Red Doles Junction which opened in October 1923. This resulted in the line on to Mirfield via the Midland being of little use but it survived until 1937. The section from Red Doles Junction to Newtown Goods continued in use until finally closed on 5th August 1968.

After a fifteen minute stop at Newtown, the tour continued via Bradley Junction and Bradley Wood Junction to Brighouse where there was a stop for water. Then forward again to Greetland No.2 where the train reversed and was propelled along the branch to Stainland. This short branch (about $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles long) from Greetland was authorised by Act of Parliament dated 5 July 1865, but subsequently the powers were extended. It opened for passenger traffic on 1 January 1875 with stations at West Vale and at Stainland, and opening for freight followed on 29th September 1875. It was double track and the main engineering features were a couple of viaducts 179 yards and 230 yards in length. Steam rail cars were introduced by the L&YR on 1 March 1907 in an attempt to combat tramway competition and an additional "Halt" was provided from that date at Rochdale Road.

The trams were those of the 3'6" gauge Halifax system, reputed to be the hilliest in the country which initially ran to West Vale but was extended to Stainland in 1921. In addition, Huddersfield Corporation's tram route No.7, which ran from Almondbury to West Vale, terminated on the opposite side of the road crossing to that from Halifax. As a matter of interest, the gauge of the Huddersfield tram system was 4'7 $\frac{3}{4}$ " , a modification of the standard gauge which was deliberately chosen by some towns where it was intended to operate ordinary railway wagons over the tram routes. The theory was that the $\frac{3}{4}$ " contraction of gauge would make it easier for vehicles with stout flanges to run over narrow grooved rails of the tramway type. Huddersfield tram route 9 also met the Halifax system on the opposite side of a road crossing at Brighouse.

Direct bus competition arrived at West Vale and Stainland in 1927 and this heralded the closure of the branch passenger service on 23rd September 1929. Freight continued for another 30 years, finally ceasing on 14th September 1959.

Speed on the Stainland branch was limited to 10 mph and the guard was responsible for operating the level crossing gates. With the loco leading, the train then headed for Sowerby Bridge where it collected the single line token for the Rishworth line. This was the final branch to be covered and again a 10 mph speed limit was imposed. Authority to build this line was obtained by Act of 5th July 1865 but it took a long time to materialise. It was built to main line standards and was initially intended

to be the first section of a cut-off route which would go through a 1/4 mile long tunnel under Blackstone Edge to Littleborough, shortening the Calder Valley line considerably. As part of the scheme, Sowerby Bridge station was moved about 30 chains to the east and the branch junction faced towards Brighouse. Hence, the branch trains started from a bay platform, went forward to the junction and then had to reverse. Construction was difficult and included a 593 yard long tunnel. There were numerous landslips and on one occasion, 60 tons of shale collapsed and resulted in one fatality. The line eventually opened for goods traffic on 15 July 1878 and for passengers on 5th August 1878. The extension to Rishworth did not take place until 1st March 1881 but the L&Y then decided not to proceed with plans for further extensions.

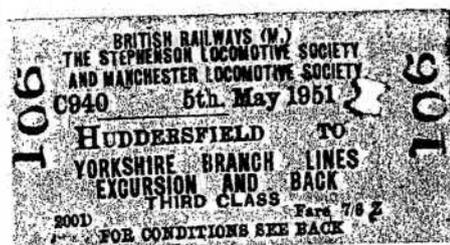
Initially there were stations at Ripponden and Rishworth but on 1st June 1885 another was opened at Triangle, between Sowerby Bridge and Ripponden. Steam rail coaches were introduced on 1st March 1907 when another "Halt" was opened at Watson's Crossing. However, once again competition from the trams and buses caused the withdrawal of passenger trains on 8th July 1929. Freight continued until traffic at Rishworth ceased in February 1953. Ripponden Goods remained open until 5th September 1958 when the rest of the line closed.

The engine ran round the train at Rishworth and then returned via Sowerby Bridge, Brighouse and Bradley Wood Junction to Huddersfield where the tour ended about 60 minutes late, due in the main to the enthusiasm of the participants which caused delays at the various terminals.. But everybody enjoyed the outing and the Society gained a lot of press publicity in the "Manchester Guardian", the "Huddersfield Daily Examiner" and the "Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian". Refreshments were available en route, and as a special concession, BR allowed all the passengers to retain the specially printed tickets and provided them with a copy of the working timetable for the tour.

One well known Birmingham member of both Societies was involved in an incident which also gained much publicity; after photographing the train on the Meltham line, he intended to join the train at Huddersfield where it should have stopped from 2.49pm to 2.50pm. Unfortunately, he saw it pass through the station without stopping. It was also reported, though not publicised, that this same member, in an effort to get to Kirkburton before the train, had the misfortune to be "booked for speeding" on the main Kirkburton road.

The final advertisement of the railtour was in the MLS Circular dated 18 April 1951 which said that the trip was nearly fully booked and that the closing date for notifications was Saturday 21st April. And as a matter of interest, the same circular contained a list of members who had recently joined the Society. The names included the following who are still members:-

219	P. Hutchinson
221	F. Consterdine
224	T.K.Widd
224	J.B.Arnold



NB The crew of 50865 on the tour train were J.G.Moore (Driver) and J. Thomas(Fireman), both of Low Moor shed. The guard was J.Wilcock, also from Low Moor

BRITISH RAILWAYS
LONDON MIDLAND OPERATING AREA
(Central Division)

ERO 46108

SPECIAL NOTICE

No: 18/1

This Notice must be kept strictly private
and must not be given to the public.

SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1951.

'B' - SPECIAL BRANCH LINE TOUR - C940

(Stephenson Locomotive Society, North Western Area,
and Manchester Locomotive Society).

Speed not to
exceed

Low Moor	Dep	p m		
Halifax	pass	1 24		
Dryclough Junc	pass	1 28		
Greetland	pass	1 32		
Brighouse	pass	1 43		
		Fast Line		
Bradley Wood Junc.	pass	1 46		
Bradley Junc.	pass	1 50		
		North Line		
Hillhouse No 1	pass	2 0		
		South Line		
Huddersfield	Arr	2 2		
HUDDERSFIELD	DEP	2 5		
		South Line		
Springwood Junc	pass	2 7		
LOCKWOOD No 2.	DEP	2 11		
MELTHAM GOODS YARD	ARR	2 22	Engine run) 20 m.p.h.
" " "	DEP	2 32	round	
LOCKWOOD No 2.	DEP	2 44)
Springwood Junc	pass	2 47		
HUDDERSFIELD PLATFORM	ARR	2 49		
" "	DEP	2 50		
		South Line		
Kirkburton Junc	pass	2 54		
DEIGHTON	DEP	2 55		
KIRKBURTON GOODS YARD	ARR	3 10	Engine run) 20 m.p.h.
" " "	DEP	3 27	round	
DEIGHTON	DEP	3 42)
Kirkburton Junc	pass	3 43		
		South Line		
Hillhouse No 2	pass	3 47		
		North Line		
HILLHOUSE No 1	ARR	3 49	Engine run round) via Huddersfield No 2.
" No 1	DEP	3 57		
RED DOLES JUNC	ARR	3 59		
" " "	DEP	4 11		
HUDDERSFIELD, NEWTOWN	ARR	4 8) 10 m.p.h.
GOODS YARD	DEP	4 23		
RED DOLES JUNC	DEP	4 30		
		North Line		
Bradley Junc	pass	4 34		
Bradley Wood Junc	pass	4 36		
		Fast Line		
BRIGHOUSE	ARR	4 38		
"	DEP	4 43		

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1951 (Cont'd) - 2 -

S.N. No: 18/1

'B' - SPECIAL BRANCH LINE TOUR - C940 (Continued).

		p m		Speed not to exceed
GREETLAND No 2	ARR	4 49		
" No 2	DEP	4*50J)	
		@)	
STAINLAND	ARR	5 2J)	10 m.p.h.
"	DEP	5 12)	
		@)	
GREETLAND No 2	DEP	5*24)	
SOWERBY BRIDGE	ARR	5.29)	
" "	DEP	5*30)	
RIPPONDEN	DEP	5@51)	
RISHWORTH	ARR	5 55)	10 m.p.h.
"	DEP	6 10)	Engine run round
RIPPONDEN	DEP	6@15)	
SOWERBY BRIDGE	ARR	6*35)	
" "	DEP	6 42)	
Brighouse	pass	6 52		
		Fast Line		
Bradley Wood Junc	pass	6 54		
Bradley Junc	pass	6 57		
		North Line		
Hillhouse No 1	pass	7 0		
		South Line		
HUDDERSFIELD	ARR	7 2		
Huddersfield	Dep	7*18		
		South Line		
Heaton Lodge Junc	pass	7 27		
Mirfield No 1	pass	7 30		
		Slow Line		
" No 3	pass	7 33		
Heckmondwike Junc	pass	7 40		
Low Moor	Arr	7*50		

Passengers to be allowed to retain their tickets.

NOTES

- J - Propel.
- W - Engine takes water.
- * - Stop for Single Line Staff.
- @ - Guard to Operate Level Crossing Gates.
- / - Empty Stock.
- E.P. - Engine Prepared.

Meltham Goods Yard S.B. to open.
 Deighton S.B. to remain open.
 Red Doles Junc S.B. to open.

Portable steps to be provided.

Stock:- BTO, TO, BTO, 90 tons

LOW MOOR P 12 40pm E.P. Class 2P Tank (LY 2-4-2) Engine No: 50865.

LOW MOOR G

I M P O R T A N T

ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT IMMEDIATELY BY WIRE TO

TRAINS 'O' MANCHESTER, USING THE CODE 'ARNO SN 18/1'

MANCHESTER,
 25 April 1951

E. O. BANISTER
 DIVISIONAL OPERATING SUPERINTENDENT

(FROM THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN)
(7th May 1951)

FORTY YEARS ON—AND THE FIRST PASSENGER TRAIN ARRIVES

Railway Pilgrims' Exploration

From our Special Correspondent

HUDDERSFIELD, SATURDAY.

The branch line to Huddersfield Newtown, which was opened by the Midland Railway in 1910 as part of a scheme to win from competing companies the Huddersfield-London traffic, has had to wait until to-day for its first passenger train. The passengers, moreover, were not those that the directors would have hoped for; they were, in a way, railway archaeologists, exploring several "dead" passenger lines in this district of the Pennines.

Similar historical pilgrimages over disused loops and branches have already been arranged from London and Birmingham and in Scotland. In America, too, "railfan excursions" are no new idea. But to-day's expedition was the first in the North of England. It was the result of six months' co-operation

Pancras was never built, and Huddersfield people still arrive in London at King's Cross or Euston.

To increase our sense of antiquity the organisers of the pilgrimage had very properly harnessed to our train a tank engine built fifty years ago. She was, one was told, "one of the 2-4-2 side-tank engines of the one-time Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway," designed by Sir John Aspinall and of the same type as the first engine turned out at the new Horwich works in 1889. To one not steeped in railway lore she had a still more venerable air, although she is still in use; the funnel and dome on the long slender boiler looked rather like a top hat and a tall bowler as they might have been worn at the Great Exhibition.

It was difficult to get used to the idea that the country we were travelling through was not as desolate and derelict as the stations we stopped at. It did not seem fitting that we should see through the windows the same scenery as from the most up-to-date express—the sewage works, the fields and sheep, the lonely textile mills, the old bedsteads in the allotments, and the telegraph wires dipping and rising. It was surprising to find people still living in Ripponden.

EXPERTS AND ENTHUSIASTS

We seem to be living in the past and the present simultaneously. But in fact we were not the pioneers we were inclined to think ourselves when we heard branches brushing or beating against the sides of our coaches, or waited for the guard to open the level-crossing gates. Goods trains still use all the lines regularly, and our own, nosing its way through the overgrown cuttings, was in no danger of having the tracks collapse under it.

My fellow-travellers were both experts and enthusiasts. It is not entirely a metaphor to call the expedition a pilgrimage (a merry one, it is true, like Chaucer's); the pilgrims felt towards the railways something of the disinterested devotion of hierophants (or "expounders of sacred mysteries"). Their conversation was sprinkled liberally with technical terms, and when the talk did stray from railways it did not get farther than, for instance, the gauge of tramlines in various cities.

Their knowledge was useful towards the end of the six-hour run, for the train was about an hour late, and much valuable advice could be given about connections home (some of the passengers had come from as far as Swindon and Sevenoaks, although most were from the North). One railway official shamelessly consulted a bus time-table, and so gave one more tiny stir to the poison that had already killed off those decaying lines from whose post-mortem he was returning.



between the Manchester Locomotive Society, the Stephenson Locomotive Society, and British Railways. The engine, three coaches, and the crew were provided by British Railways; the societies provided some hundred and forty passengers. In effect the three bodies melted into one, for the engine driver belonged to the Stephenson Society, and many members of the societies were railway servants.

UTTERLY DEFEATED

Nothing—not Stonehenge nor Pompeii nor Ur of the Chaldees—can look more utterly defeated by time than a derelict railway station, with grass and willow-herb pushing through the flagstones, booking offices in which birds have nested, gorse bushes flowering between rusty rails, and rotting sleepers lying about. Yet each of the stations we visited—Meltham, Kirkburton, Stainland, Ripponden, and Rishworth—was served by at least eleven passenger trains a day until 1929 or 1930. The Meltham line was closed as recently as 1949. Huddersfield Newtown never had a station; the terminus from which travellers were to have been conveyed to St

HALIFAX DAILY COURIER AND GUARDIAN

They broke regulations with impunity

RAIL ENTHUSIASTS HAD A PENNINE TOUR

Sixty-mile trip over disused passenger branch routes

A party of 140 railwaymen, embracing students and officials, together with a number of other people keenly interested in the operation of railways, enjoyed a special Pennine rail tour on Saturday afternoon.

The 60-mile journey included a run to Rishworth, Stainland, Newtown, Meltham and Kirkburton. It was the first tour of its kind to be organised in the North of England, and was arranged jointly by the Stephenson Locomotive Society and the Manchester Locomotive Society.

The purpose of the trip was to provide an opportunity for study of rail conditions and track working on branch lines which have ceased to function as passenger-carrying routes. Many West Riding and Lancashire people joined the "special" at Huddersfield, and others came from Tyneside, Swindon, Birmingham and the Midlands.

At the many stops made during the afternoon the visitors, breaking all normal railway regulations, clambered on to the track and took hundreds of photographs. In addition to talking about railways, the visitors were armed with maps and time tables, sketch books and note books.

Many points of interest

The train consisted of corridor stock with observation windows, and was drawn by a side tank engine built at Horwich 50 years ago. Driver Moore and Guard Wilcock entered into the spirit of the outing, stopping at every point of interest.

Owing to keen road transport competition, the Rishworth, Stainland and Kirkburton lines were closed for passenger trains in 1929-30, and the Meltham line was closed two years ago as an economy move. The "special" on Saturday was the first passenger train to run to Newtown. This centre, used for goods traffic, was constructed in 1910 with the intention of being the northern terminus for the Huddersfield-St. Pancras run, but the first world war put a stop to the project.

Because of the present state of the Stainland track the train had to crawl up and down the steep gradient—in fact, the train was pushed by the engine to its destination.

Trees growing between the metals!

At Sowerby Bridge, the train was shunted from the main line on to the Ripponden branch where, from the derelict platform, it was boarded by additional passengers. The track up Ryburn Valley has had little attention during the past 20 years, and is now in poor running condition. By steady driving, however, and never exceeding a ten miles per hour speed, the train arrived at Rishworth.

Several unexpected stops were made, and the train crew met with difficulty in operating the ground signals.

The up line, on which used to be stored excursion train stock during the "off" season, is now more or less dead, with trees growing between the metals, and as the train travelled on the other track tree branches rattled against the coaches.

The visitors enjoyed the run to Rishworth and described it as one of the highlights of the trip.

Specially-printed tickets had been provided for the occasion, and the passengers were allowed to retain them as mementoes.

THE MIDLAND LINE

RAILWAY history was made in Huddersfield on Saturday, when members of the Stephenson and Manchester Locomotive Societies gathered here for their "Pennine Tour"—a survey of branch lines closed for passenger traffic, and the first tour of the kind made in the North of England.

The "high light" was, perhaps, the visit to Huddersfield's "ghost" station. In the first decade of this century Huddersfield had high hopes of becoming a terminal station of the old Midland Railway, and the line was constructed to what is now known as Newtown Goods Yard, where the station should have been built. Saturday's train was the first and only passenger train ever to run on that line. The travellers noticed indicators at the side of the track which showed the mileage from St. Pancras. The station would have been just beyond the 194th mile.

The intervention of war and amalgamation unfortunately dashed Huddersfield's hope of a Midland terminus.

GENESIS OF THE IDEA

ALTHOUGH Saturday's excursion was the first of the kind in the North of England, I was told that the idea is not new. Many railway passengers "collect" unusual routes, and the traversing of closed lines is a development of the "theme." It seems to have begun in the United States, but in the last year or two the British Railways Executive have had their interest awakened, and have entered into the spirit of these historical railway "pilgrimages" over their metals. Saturday's excursion took six months to arrange, and much discussion and planning had to go into the timing and operation of that unusual "special."