

The Railway

Introduction

The railways were in their heyday in Victorian times. Malton station must have been a busy place since not only was it on the York to Scarborough line, but also the point of interchange for Drifffield, Whitby,

and Thirsk branches. Malton was served by 3 lines: York & Scarborough Malton & Drifffield Malton & Whitby

Planning the York to Scarborough Line

George Stephenson (1781-1848), built the first public railway to use steam locomotives and is widely described as the 'father of railways.' He became the engineer of the York and North Midland Railway whose chairman was George Hudson. Hudson controlled over 1,000 miles of railway in 1844. He was once a millionaire but had questionable business practices, including the payment of dividends to shareholders 'out of capital'. he died leaving less than £200. Early in 1840 the necessary parliamentary notices were being published 'for the projected railway from Scarboro' to this city' [1]

published early in 1844 [3]. An Act for enabling the York and North Midland Railway Co. to make a railway from York to Scarborough with a branch to Pickering' received the Royal Assent in July 1844 [4]. However, it was 4th July 1844 before work commenced.

Further evidence that a line might be built came in the summer of 1840 - at the half yearly meeting of the York and North Midland Railway a sum of £500 was requested to survey the line for a railway to Scarborough [2]. A description of the route was

There was mixed feeling among people in the town about the desirability of the railway based on fears that the railway would damage the coal trade, the Navigation and Earl Fitzwilliam's interests, in fact, a public meeting had considered opposing the railway 'in toto' [5]. A letter to the editor of the Yorkshire Gazette late in 1844 suggests the nature of Earl Fitzwilliam's interest as 'for every ton of goods conveyed from the river Ouse up the Derwent to the town of New Malton a tariff of 8s per ton may be charged as dues' [6].

Station Location

There was strong feeling about a report that the station was to be in Norton rather than Malton, and a public meeting was held in Malton to explain the outcome of a meeting between Earl Fitzwilliam, Mr. Copperthwaite (town bailiff) and Mr. Hudson of the railway company, in London [7]. Three options had been looked at, station in Malton, station in Norton by the bridge, station across the river in a field and with bridge and approaches erected to link to the town at Earl Fitzwilliam's expense (£4000). A station in the town was rejected as being too expensive and would occasion delay. It was reported that Earl Fitzwilliam had chosen the Norton option.

Mr. Sewell spoke at the meeting and made a case that with the station in Norton, it would prosper at the expense of Malton, and therefore it would be to Earl Fitzwilliam's benefit to have the station in the field across the river and invest in the bridge and approaches, and that investment in warehouses would more than compensate for the costs of the bridge. The meeting concluded to re-approach Earl Fitzwilliam and to raise £1,000 by subscription.

The matter was not easily decided, and on Thursday, the 25th of July, Mr. Alderman Hudson

attended at Malton, and had an interview with several of the gentry of the town and neighbourhood, at which we understand it was agreed that the Station should be in the bone mill and brick-yard field, in the occupation of Jonathan Booth, and Co., and belonging to Robert Bower, Esq., of Welham, with a bridge over the Derwent, and a communication thence into Yorkersgate, the centre of the town of Malton. This arrangement appears the best calculated to please all parties, though, as it happens always in such cases, some persons are dissatisfied with it. Preliminary

operations have already commenced, and in a short time we expect a start in earnest will take place [8] it would appear that there was still uncertainty, and in late September 1844, Earl Fitzwilliam came to Malton to see the progress of the railway construction and examine the options for the station for himself [9]. I have not found reference to when the final decision was made, nor how the costs were met - but we do know that it was built in the field across the river and that a new bridge and street were constructed!



Opening the Line

The railway took just 1 year and 3 days to build. It was opened on Monday 7th July 1845 and widely reported in newspapers published in the north. 'The railway from York to Scarbro', that "queen of watering places," was publicly opened on Monday last ... within a year of the time when the original act of parliament, authorising its construction, was obtained." ... above two hundred and fifty persons sat down to a sumptuous breakfast ... on the Guildhall. ... After breakfast, the company formed themselves into a procession, and walked to the railway station (York) At the station a monster train was formed, consisting of about thirty-five first class carriages ... and the train started for Scarbro' drawn by two powerful engines ... the city walls and every eminence where a view of it could be obtained, being crowded with spectators ... The line next passes across the Derwent over a bridge four hundred feet long direct to Malton, where a capacious station has been built in the meadows. An

excellent approach to the station has been formed by constructing a new street from Yorkersgate to the river, and throwing a bridge across it. The view of Malton, as seen from the railway, is very pleasing, the line running parallel with "the browse", a beautiful public walk, the slopes of which are cultivated and planted with shrubs, and over which Kimberley's hotel and many other public buildings, are prominently seen. At Malton, the arrival of the train was greeted by hundreds of spectators, by bands of music, by the ringing of the church bells and other demonstrations of rejoicing, the day apparently being observed as a general holiday, and flags flying from the tower of St. Leonard's church, and other lofty edifices. 'a considerable number of persons were taken up at Malton' [10]. On return to York, a dinner was held in the Guildhall, where George Stephenson remarked 'that it was on the subject of the railway from York to Scarborough that he first met Mr. Hudson' [11]. Another report of the

opening of the line states 'At present the Scarbro' railway only consists of a single line of rails, but it is intended ultimately to lay down an additional line'

Malton Festivities

A committee at Malton was granted their wish of a 'free train' by George Hudson for the purposes of a free trip to Scarborough. Tickets were distributed to the innkeepers who gave them to those who would dine at their houses and in all nearly 1,000 inhabitants took the trip on Tuesday 8th July 1845 (the day after the opening). Before the train left, a procession was formed at The Talbot Hotel, which

Railway Crossing

The road leaving Malton for Norton was known as the Scarborough turnpike road. The railway crossed this and it is probable that there were gates and a crossing here from the earliest days of the railway, together with a gate-keeper. The earliest evidence we have of this is a report of a suicide on Christmas Eve 1849. [14] A young man named Skelton, engaged in some conversation with the gate-keeper and then jumped in front of the train, 'which passed over him, severing his limbs, and scattering them

[12]. How quickly the additional line was built I have not been able to establish.

proceeded down the new street over the railway bridge to the station. The street was christened 'New Bridge Street.' Such was the celebration that most of the shops were closed and business suspended. After the trip the Committee and chosen others dined at The Talbot, followed by dancing, a boat race and at 11pm a firework display. The dancing continued until 5a.m! [13]

about the line in various directions.' The question of delays at the crossing was discussed at a meeting of Norton Urban District Council in July 1900 and the possibility of a footbridge hinted at [15] The new iron bridge over the Derwent at Malton was opened for foot passengers on Thursday. In a week the footbridge is expected to be ready for general traffic. The whole of the old wooden bridge has now been removed [16]



The Malton to Driffield Line

There were two railway schemes: Thirsk to Malton, and the Malton to Driffield. There was consensus that each presented challenges to their promoters, directors and shareholders and further that there

was some interdependency between the two lines. Both had their formal roots in Acts passed in 1846, just prior to the 'railway panic' caused by high

expectations of railway scheme promoters and their investors.

The prospectus of the Malton and Driffield Railway was advertised in the York Herald in October 1845 [17] and in November 1845 a meeting of the provisional committee and directors was held in the Malton Town Hall. In May 1846 a 'special meeting' was held at the New Corn Exchange, following Sir Robert Peel's resolution requiring reconsideration of all new railway schemes - the decision to go ahead however was fairly unanimous [18]. The 1st General Meeting took place in August 1846 at the Corn Exchange in Malton and promoted the objective of constructing the line simultaneously with the Thirsk to Malton line [19].

In January 1847, the directors proposed 'to proceed in the execution of the works with as much vigour and dispatch as ... they intend for the present to confine their operations in a great measure to the tunnel.' [20] The biggest challenges on the line were stabilising a heavy clay soil and constructing the Burdale Tunnel (14 yards short of 1 mile in length). In March 1847, the contract for constructing the railway was let to a Mr Gow. He later took the contract for constructing the Thirsk to Malton line, where work did not commence until the autumn of 1851.

In mid-1847 the half yearly meeting of the shareholders considered the report of the directors. After delays due to considering deviations in the planned line to accommodate landowners, the works for the main line were now contracted and 'upwards of 1200 men are now engaged on the works.' This prompted discussion and approval of £50 for the 'religious instruction of the labourers who are collected on the line.' The report is extensive and revealing [21]

In January 1848 it was reported that fencing had been fixed throughout the line, and nearly the whole of the line was formed between the tunnel and Driffield and that a single line of railway had been laid for upwards of 8 miles. Further, it was deemed prudent to reduce expenditure from £8,000 a month to £1,500 per month by stopping execution of some of the least important portions [22]. Later that year it was reported at the half

yearly meeting that there was 'despondency that works on the Thirsk to Malton line had not yet commenced' [23]

At the half yearly meeting, in January 1849, the directors recorded that they 'cannot omit to acknowledge the continued confidence and support they have received from the great body of shareholders during a period of unprecedented commercial depression and extraordinary emergency in railway affairs'. They announced a further postponement of the Malton and Thirsk branch and made direct communication with Mr. Hudson to determine his intentions and advice. His response was that they should 'suspend works during winter months'. [24]

There was perhaps worse to come, when at the half yearly meeting in July 1849 a statement 'with a view of reducing the outlay of capital ... the directors have come to the determination to recommend to the shareholders the completion of a single line of rail only' was made [25] Evidently the directors were doing their best, and at the half yearly meeting of January 1850 they were able to report that 'after Midsummer next, the only works of consequence remaining to be executed will be the tunnel' [26].

A year later they were reporting that due to arrears on the calls made on shares progress in completing the Burdale tunnel had been impacted [27] and that there were still some 1,100 yards of tunnelling to complete. At this same meeting it was publicly aired that in July of 1850 some provisions of the original Act permitting the construction of the Malton and Thirsk Railway would expire, including that of compulsory land purchase. By August 1851, 866 yards of the tunnel remained to be constructed. However moves had been made to arrange some influence over the construction of the Thirsk to Malton line and come to arrangements with local landowners and the York, Newcastle and Berwick Railway Company [28].

Finally, 'The first sod of the Thirsk and Malton Railway, designed to form a junction with the Malton and Driffield Railway now in course of formation, was raised in the Orchard Field, Malton, on Thursday week by W. Allen, Esq., steward to Earl Fitzwilliam' [29].

The opening trip was on Thursday 19th May 1853 when 12 carriages left Malton for Pilmoor junction where trains from York and Newcastle 'conveying gentlemen who had arranged to join the party there' boarded the train. At 12 o'clock the train commenced a trip to cover the whole distance

Accidents

Not surprisingly with such a new phenomenon, there were accidents. In February 1854, a seven year old boy was crossing the railway at Norton Bridge when he was knocked down and the carriages passed over him. 'One of his arms became crushed ... and his head frightfully fractured.' The newspaper report concluded with an observation 'We trust that the railway authorities will adopt some further precautions by which parties may be effectually prevented from being on the line at the time when trains are approaching this dangerous crossing.' [31]

In August 1854 a porter at Malton Station was in a serious accident which sadly left him crippled for life. On Aug 25th last month, Edward Harrison was on the platform when the evening 9.10 train arrived from Drifffield. For some unknown reason, Harrison the porter decided to get onto the tender of the engine whilst it as still in motion. He missed the step and his foot was caught between the wheel and the edge of the platform crushing and tearing his foot. He was attended at home by Messers. Jones and Mennell, surgeons and Dr Wright but unfortunately amputation of his foot was necessary. A man in his prime disabled for life! [32]

Replacing the Wooden Bridge

The original bridge carrying the railway over the river at Malton was wooden. in January 1871 the Drifffield Times reports that 'an iron bridge over the Derwent at Malton was opened for foot passengers on Thursday. In a week the footbridge is expected to be ready for general traffic. The whole of the old wooden bridge has now been removed' [36]. The

between Thirsk Junction and Drifffield. On the return of the train, at Malton nearly a hundred gentlemen celebrated with dinner at the Talbot Hotel 'embracing almost every variety and delicacy of the season; the wines were equally profuse and various ...' [30]

In 1865, Mr. Thomas Sturdy, a well known cattle dealer and drover, when crossing the line to go to some sheep, was knocked down and killed. Both legs and one hand were cut off. 'The deceased seems to have been so intent on his business that he did not notice the approaching engine in front of which he stepped.' [33]

Albert Henry Evans, railway clerk, 15, attempted to board a train when in motion. To save himself trouble of walking a few hundred yards jumped on a train passing through Malton station but missed his footing and fell under the carriages. His left leg was broken in three places. Had his leg amputated by Dr Hartley but died from shock [34]

A Bradford gentleman attempted crossing from one platform to the other and was unaware of the approach of the Scarborough express. He was stepping up to the platform when he missed his footing. One of his feet was cut off and his ribs crushed in, and was dragged on the line some distance. He lived for 15 minutes and was removed to the refreshment rooms to await an inquest [35].

foundation stone had been laid on 7 September 1870 and the bridge was 30 feet wide and carried the road, 2 footpaths and a tramway for one of the Malton mills. A number of Roman and Saxon relics were found during the construction (this newspaper report also gives technical details about the bridge) [37]

References

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- [2] Yorkshire Gazette 25 July 1840
- [3] Yorkshire Gazette 6 January 1844
- [4] London Gazette, Issue 20360 published 5 July 1844
- [5] Yorkshire Gazette 30 March 1844
- [6] Yorkshire Gazette 28 December 1844
- [7] Yorkshire Gazette, 30 March 1844
- [8] Yorkshire Gazette, 3 August 1844
- [9] Yorkshire Gazette, 5 October 1844
- [10] York Herald, 12 July 1845
- [11] Newcastle Journal 12 July 1845
- [12] Leeds Intelligencer 12 July 1845
- [13] York Herald, 19th July 1845
- [14] Bradford Observer, 3 January 1850
- [15] York Herald 25 July 1900
- [16] Drifffield Times, 28 January 1871
- [17] York Herald, 11 Oct 1845
- [18] Yorkshire Gazette, 16 May 1846
- [19] Yorkshire Gazette, 29 Aug 1846
- [20] Yorkshire Gazette, 23 Jan 1847
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- [22] Yorkshire Gazette, 5 February 1848
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- [24] Yorkshire Gazette, 27 January 1849
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- [26] Yorkshire Gazette, 12 January 1850
- [27] York Herald, 11 January 1851
- [28] York Herald, 2 August 1851
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- [31] Yorkshire Gazette, 18 February 1854
- [32] Malton Messenger, 2 September 1854
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- [36] Drifffield Times, 28 January 1871
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