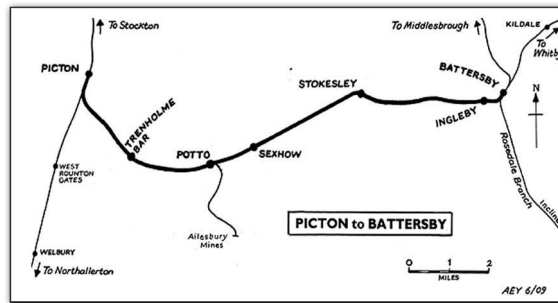


STOKESLEY - RAILWAYS

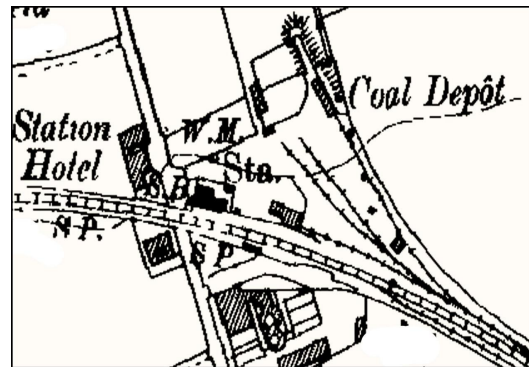


STOKESLEY'S RAILWAY PROJECT 1833 – A FALSE START

Middlesbrough reference library holds a document dated 1833 which records that Victorian railway mania reached Stokesley in that year. Under the Chairmanship of Sir William Foulis of Ingleby Manor, twenty-six local dignitaries and businessmen raised a stated capital of £38,000 and produced a prospectus for the Stokesley and Tees Railway. The proposed route would be a branch from the Stockton and Darlington railway near Eaglescliff, crossing the River Tees close to where it is joined by the Leven, then traversing in an almost straight line to Cold Pool Beck (Low Fields Seamer) to How Hill where it turned at an undecided point in Back Lane Stokesley. A branch on to Kildale and Whitby is also shown, but contained no details. Passengers were to be carried and the train drawn by horses or locomotion. It was proposed to place a railway station at either West Green or Rectory Field.

However the plan was defeated due to opposition from numerous inn keepers and posting house proprietors who feared for the continuation of their businesses. This took the form of a counter petition to Parliament headed by Mr Pratt, printer and publisher of Oakland House (Now Carricks Corner), which, it is understood, was a factor influencing the later station to be located within Kirby parish. It would be twenty one years before the matter of a railway at Stokesley was again raised.

STOKESLEY RAILWAY STATION 1857 – 1965



10th July 1854 a Royal Assent was granted to the North Yorkshire and Cleveland Railway Company to construct a railway line between Picton and Battersby. Work commenced in the following year and the first eight and a half mile section between Picton and Stokesley, with intermediate stations at Trenholme Bar, Potto and Sexhow, was completed in 1857.

2nd March 1857 marked with the official opening of Stokesley station, which, because of reasons indicated above, was just over a mile from the town and actually located in Kirby parish. A two mile mineral only branch between Swainby and Potto became operational on the same day and this was used to transfer output from the Ailesbury iron ore mine near Swainby.

1st February 1858 the section between Stokesley and Ingleby was opened on and this was further extended to Ingleby Junction (now Battersby) on 6 April 1858, where it joined with the private narrow gauge line from the Ingleby Manor mine and then continued as far as Kildale.

1st April 1861 marked the opening of Kildale to Castleton

2nd October 1865 marked the opening of , the final link from Castleton to Grosmont. The now extended Picton to Battersby line was part of the Esk Valley route which connected Northallerton and Stockton to the Leeds Northern Railway and Picton to Grosmont where it joined with the Malton to Whitby line already in existence.

AMALGAMATIONS AND PURCHASES

31st July 1854 had witnessed the Leeds Northern Railway becoming a constituent company of the amalgamation forming the North Eastern Railway which had taken full control of the North Yorkshire and Cleveland Railway in 1859. In 1921 the North Eastern became part of the London and North Eastern Railway, which in turn, in 1947, came under the umbrella of British Railways which under various titles exists today.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS



The North Yorkshire and Cleveland Railway had planned a branch from Ingleby Junction to the ironstone mines at West Rosedale and had agreed to upgrade the narrow gauge railway as part of the route. The North Eastern Railway took over the project and completed the line for its opening on 27th March 1861, which included a double track rope operated incline 1430 yards long. From the opening of the North Yorkshire and Cleveland, an enormous amount of iron ore travelled along the line to furnaces on Teesside and various destinations in County Durham and beyond.

INCIDENTS AND RISKS

One major factor which contributed to railway development in Cleveland was reliable transportation of ore from the numerous Ironstone mines which proliferated in this area in order to meet the demands of Teesside. The nineteenth century had witnessed the rapid expansion of industry and an influx of workers from many parts of the UK. Working conditions were poor with long hours and hard physical labour. Health and safety was an unheard of and accidents, some fatal, always a constant risk. The Rosedale mine situated on the moor top some 1370 feet above sea level used an exceptionally dangerous method of transporting ore to the nearest connection of the railway known as the Ingleby Incline. Twin rail tracks stretched down a gradient, which averaged 1 in 5.5 and 1 in 5 at its steepest and some 1430 yards long. From the drum house on the summit a heavy duty wire cable formed a constant link up and down the incline to the rail junction at the base. Ore laden wagons were coupled to this cable at the top then lowered, their weight pulled empty wagons from the base to summit. Not infrequently descending wagons became disconnected from the cable running off the rails and sometimes causing injury. An especially graphic report of a fatal accident in November 1890 is detailed at: <http://www.rosedalerailway.org.uk>

When freight from the mines ceased, the passenger services along the Picton to Battersby and Esk Valley lines still remained important to the region, despite competition along the coast lines, with seven weekday trains along the line between Teesside and Whitby in 1900. The North Eastern Railway issued a leaflet in 1911 covering all their stations, giving an estimate of the persons served by each station. Stokesley's estimate was 2716. The number of tickets issued in 1911 was 16541.

ITEMS CARRIED

It must always be remembered that before the motor age everything that moved more than a mile or two moved by rail. Although sparse, the passenger trains would carry all sorts of parcels for local shops and would often have a tail load of a van or two of perishable goods, livestock, horseboxes or even a van of foxhounds, which would be shunted off or attached as necessary at stations. Goods traffic at Stokesley was of a general nature with no particular speciality. Inwards would be coal, farm implements, building materials, seed corn, road stone, livestock and the general necessities required by a small market town. Outward traffic was again not specialised, perhaps the main traffic being hay, 482 tons of hay being loaded in 1911. Also in that year 674 wagons of livestock were dispatched. All the while though, seemingly endless trains of ore were rumbling through towards Teesside and empty wagons returning, keeping the signalmen busy. Covered by Stokesley station staff was a siding at a brickyard situated near where the site of the line crosses the Stokesley to Thirsk road.



During its working life the station formed its own small centre of population with cottages for rail workers, and the Station Hotel meeting the needs of travellers and the local community. The coal staves, in addition to supplying coal for the railway, also supplied local residents, a weigh-bridge being in operation. A cattle market known as the Station Mart was located adjacent to the station, with the pens enabling easy transportation of livestock. A second cattle market, known as the Town Mart had existed for many years on the site now occupied by The Mill Pub and Restaurant.

Both markets operated successfully for many years operating on alternate Mondays.

THE DEMISE

By 1922 the number of passenger services had dropped to four and by 1954 it was only two, and in this year the passenger service west of Battersby was withdrawn and all trains to and from Teesside worked by way of Nunthorpe with trains from the Grosmont direction reversing at Battersby. However, all stations except Ingleby remained open for freight traffic, but eventually freight traffic was ended west of Stokesley in 1958, and between Stokesley and Battersby in 1965, when the line dropped completely out of use. As a result, the track between Stokesley and Picton was lifted and Stokesley, the last of the original stations was completely closed without ceremony on 31 July 1965.



RESTORATION OF BUILDINGS



The Station master's house and the station building still survive. Externally little different, with the exception of the platform, the whole complex has been restored by a firm of architects and is currently in use as offices. The signal box has been dismantled, moved across the road and reassembled next to the home of an enthusiast. Although the interior is now used as a workshop and store, externally it has been carefully restored to its original appearance.

FARMER MOVING SOUTH

In 1952 Stokesley station found fame in the annals of film making when British Transport Films produced a superb black and white film covering a farmer's move from Skutterskelf Hall Farm, near Stokesley to Perry Hill Farm, Hartfield, Sussex on 31st December 1950 - a date that was recorded as the coldest night of the year.

One of the finest examples of the early British Transport Films, sponsored by the British Transport Commission Railway Executive, it is outstanding black and white cinematography accompanied by a touching narration by one of the most famous broadcasters and authors of the day, A.G. Street.

The farmer, a member of the Ropner family who owned the Skutterskelf estate, decided to sell his farm and move the entire stock - cattle, pigs and poultry, machinery, ploughs and tractors - south to Sussex by rail. Imagine the scene, early morning, Stokesley railway yard teeming with livestock and machinery, a heavy overnight frost creating many loading problems. But all was overcome and with night setting in, the train finally departed from Stokesley station. Eighteen and a half hours later, it arrived at Hartfield. The unloading began and as it was getting dark there was no time to lose in getting the animals into warm and dry accommodation. This technically excellent film describes a complicated railway transport operation, made all the more difficult by the small capacity of the rural stations.

RAILWAY MEMORIES

DAVID SMITH

One of David Smith's earliest memories was his mother seating him in a railway carriage at Stokesley station with strict instructions to sit still until his Aunt collected him at Danby station, where he stayed on holiday. A little later, his older brother undertook the same journey, entrusted to leave the train at Danby and walk to the Aunt's, but the boy discovered on arrival at the station that he was unable to

open the carriage door and enjoyed a far longer journey via Whitby. Clearly adventures which will never to be experienced by modern children!

David was brought up at Kirby Bridge farm, well outside of Stokesley, beyond a REME army depot (now the Terry Dicken Trading Estate) which at the time were the last buildings in Stokesley. The land from thereon (now the Industrial Estate) was the family's farm, which was dissected by the railway line. Consequently he has many childhood memories of trains and tracks. In addition to using the normal railway facilities, a regular task was harnessing the horse into the cart to collect family coal from the coal staiths located alongside the station.

The branch line carried little traffic and train times were so punctual that nobody thought anything about local children using the railway as a short cut. On school mornings, from the top of the bridge, David could see the school bus approaching from Great Broughton and would run along the railway tracks to catch it at the bus stop by Stokesley station. He knew the line intimately, every crossing and junction, and even in the dark he could judge the pace of his running to perfection. Although walking to everywhere was an everyday occurrence, David was envious of his closest friend who, because his father worked for the railway, enjoyed free rail travel to school at Yarm, whilst David had to run to and from the bus stop.

A not infrequent occurrence was sparks from the fire boxes of engines causing fires to buildings, hedges and crops. During harvest time it was not unusual for stooks of corn in the field by the track to be set alight, resulting in David's father battling with the Railway company in claims for compensation on many occasions. On one early evening David noticed smoke and flames on the wooden roof of the Tank House, a large high level metal water tank used to supply water to engines via heavy duty canvas trunking, so named as it resembled an elephants' trunk. As he was aware that the roof of the tank was constructed of heavily creosoted sleepers recycled for the task, which would quickly burst into flames, and as no one else was in sight, the lad ran to the station where the only person on duty was an employee working overtime filling coal sacks. The workman courageously climbed onto the roof and used buckets of water from the tank itself to extinguish the flames.

As one of David's friends was the Station Master's son, after departure of the last train of the evening, he and a group of friends enjoyed the unique privilege of using the Station platform as a cricket pitch. He refuses to comment on such matters of cricket balls and window panes!

A further memory was an extra, and strictly unofficial service, offered by Sammy Moreton the Signalman. For the princely sum of sixpence (2½ pence) he would cut a boy's hair. Seated on a stool, surrounded by a bewildering array of levers, each with a highly polished handle, the amateur barber would wield his scissors, frequently stopping when a clanging bell required him to pull and push one of the many handles. The signal box, now rescued from falling into decay, remains in existence across the road from its former location.

ALAN SWALES

Alan lived in the centre of Stokesley and in most cases found local bus services to be more convenient than the railway, especially when attending Yarm Grammar school. The main line went through Yarm and over the viaduct, which gave the boys an opportunity to see the modern streamlined trains as well as the small locomotives using the local line.

The railway was used for family holidays, mostly to Whitby and occasionally Scarborough, which entailed changing at Whitby, carrying suitcases from the harbour station to the Westcliffe station, followed by an exciting ride along the coast to Scarborough. During the years of food rationing the family had one case for clothes and a second for food, which was cooked by the landlady of their holiday lodgings.

As a small boy Alan attended the Methodist Sunday school, with the annual summer outing a major delight. His earliest recollection was an excursion to Redcar where they were fed and entertained by members of a local chapel. Transport on the first year was by horse and cart; a farm wagon equipped with benches. In later years a motor bus was utilised. As a teenager this outing was changed to Whitby by rail. The carriages were always of the non-corridor type with strict segregation of boys and girls. When the train stopped at Battersby, the braver boys made rapid changes to the girls compartments, with the reverse operation on the return journey!

BOB EXELBY

Another former member of the Methodist Sunday school who enjoyed the summer outing to Whitby. However being younger than Alan Swales, his recollection is that the journeys were undertaken in carriages with a side corridor, allowing easier supervision for the accompanying adults, no doubt to the chagrin of the boys!

Bob who's Grandparents lived at Beggar-my-Neighbour Farm next to Bense Bridge (that in itself a fascinating story) mainly remembers Stokesley station as an interesting stop on his morning milk round. In 1961, as a youth of thirteen, he secured a preschool job with local milkman Fred Hallworth, a well known local figure and one time captain of Stokesley Town cricket team. Each school morning Bob reported to Fred's North Road dairy at 6.15 am (a lay in until 6.45 on Saturday and Sunday) to work with Fred and Tony, the latter the highly trained horse, the cart already fully loaded with crates of milk. On reaching the station, Bob would be dropped off to deliver milk to the station managers house and surrounding cottages, whilst Fred continued on to Kirby. As passenger traffic had ceased, this gave Bob fifteen minutes to explore the station yard and sheds, intrigued with the range of equipment and machinery. The arrival of the milk float signalled a return to deliveries. Bob was always fascinated that Tony knew the route perfectly, for, as the man and boy collected bottles from the cart and delivered them, on a couple of clicks from Fred, Tony would plod precisely on to the next stopping point. No engine noise, nor the stopping and starting of engines, or damage to the environment, apart from Tony's occasional burst of methane!

Bob also recalled a less well known character of the time. Bobby Walker of Allens Grove would be seen daily making countless journeys to and from the Station yard collecting and delivering single sacks of coal in an old pram. This was achieved at breakneck speed, whether full or empty.

AC 20/01/14