
Newsholme - a country station during the 1950s

If you travel along the A682 road from Hellifield towards Gisburn you may notice the house standing by the railway bridge at Newsholme (this bridge carries the Blackburn to Hellifield line over the road). This was the station master's house for the small country station located here that served this small hamlet (the station house has had extensions added to it in recent years). A surprising location for a station, perhaps the railway company hoped to generate some trade from the scattered farms around the area, possibly milk may have been sent on from here to the dairies in the station's early years.



*Newsholme station in 1939
(Photo L&Y railway society)*

The station was built by the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway company (LYR) and was opened in 1880, when the company extended its line from Gisburn to form a junction at Hellifield with the Midland Railway's Settle to Carlisle line. The main station building was constructed of wood with a wooden canopy and contained a waiting room and booking office with another small office for the Station Master; a station clock was also provided. A small wooden platform shelter was located on the opposite platform and a brick-built signal box with a slate roof controlled the signals and the station's two sidings. The platforms were lit by paraffin lamps right up until its closure, access

between the platforms was by way of a sleeper crossing. The original LYR Station nameboards were replaced by the London Midland and Scottish railway company (LMS) in 1938 with its "Hawkseye" style signs, originally painted yellow, they were later painted maroon and white. One of the LMS Newsholme signs turned up in a railwayana auction in 2018 and sold for £520.

My father and mother both worked at



*Elsie Burton (Pearcy) outside
Newsholme station booking office*



*Elsie Burton (Pearcy) and colleagues
Newsholme platform*

Newsholme in the 1950s. In fact this is where they met and as the saying goes 'the rest is history'! My mother worked at Gisburn station and at that time Gisburn staff manned Newsholme station on a part time basis. My father was a member of the permanent way gang, whose length ran from the junction at Hellifield to Newsholme station. My Mother would arrive at Newsholme in the early morning to open-up and sell tickets to the pupils who were heading to the grammar schools in Clitheroe and the farmers wives going shopping to Clitheroe market. Very few of the passenger trains on the line stopped at Newsholme - the timetable for 1947 shows the first departure towards Clitheroe was 7.47am, with the last being 6.27pm. In the Hellifield direction the first departure was 9.05am and the last at 6.25pm. No trains stopped on Sundays. During my mother's time at Newsholme, parcels still arrived on the local stopping trains - later they were offloaded at Hellifield station and delivered by road transport. The sidings saw little use at this time, an

occasional wagon of coal or a box van containing supplies for local farms were the only goods traffic. My mother said at times she would have to order horse boxes to transport racehorses to Aintree but I think this may have been at Gisburn station as there were racing stables at Gisburn at that time. The signal box was manned during the week but was usually "switched out" over the weekends.

A regular traveller on the line, who my mother met several times on both Gisburn and Newsholme stations, was Clitheroe born author Jessica Lofthouse who in the 1940s through to the 1960s wrote many books on her walks around the Ribbles Valley, Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District. I inherited several of her books from my mother and father and really enjoy her quirky writing style and eye for historical detail, and always accompanied by a selection of her own drawings. One of Jessica's books "West Pennine Highway" (1954) contains an observation of Newsholme station which in her own inimitable style describes the station as it was at that time:

"Newsholme station on the Hellifield line was always more remarkable for the trains that did not stop there than for those that did, it is likely it will eventually fall asleep completely. At present the paint peels, the fence palings are missing, grass grows between the sleepers, and when the odd train draws up, protesting, the signaller leaves his box to collect tickets. when I sat on the platform steps to draw the curving high road and the houses not a soul appeared to wonder why. It is half-way to being a ghost station."



Permanent way gang Newsholme station. John Pearcy on left.

Newsholme always seems to have been the station that time forgot. When my father started on the railway in 1948 he was issued with a brass pay check and whistle, both marked Lancashire and Yorkshire railway. That company ceased to exist in 1923. The end came for Newsholme in 1957 when the station was closed followed by the closure of Rimington station in 1958. My mother locked the station up on the final day at Newsholme and her workmate issued her with the last ticket - that ticket was a London Midland and Scottish (LMS) "Edmondson" card ticket. The LMS became part of British Railways in 1948, so the small amount of ticket sales can clearly be judged

from that! I still have that ticket in my possession today. The rest of the stations on the line were closed in 1962 and my father and the permanent way gang were made redundant a few years later, the track maintenance being carried out by gangs coming by road from the Blackburn area from then on. The line itself still remains very much in use today, and reopened for passengers from Clitheroe to Blackburn and Manchester a few years ago. Regular freight workings, occasional steam specials and ramblers' trains still run through to Hellifield and beyond. A survey is being carried out at the moment to see if a connecting service from Hellifield could be linked to the Manchester trains that run from Clitheroe onwards and the possibility of connections at Hellifield with trains to Carlisle and Leeds for the Lancashire services. A similar service was trialed a few years back but sadly met with little support so we will have to wait and see what the outcome of this latest survey brings.

John Pearcy



A Hellifield bound stopping train passes Newsholme's signal box