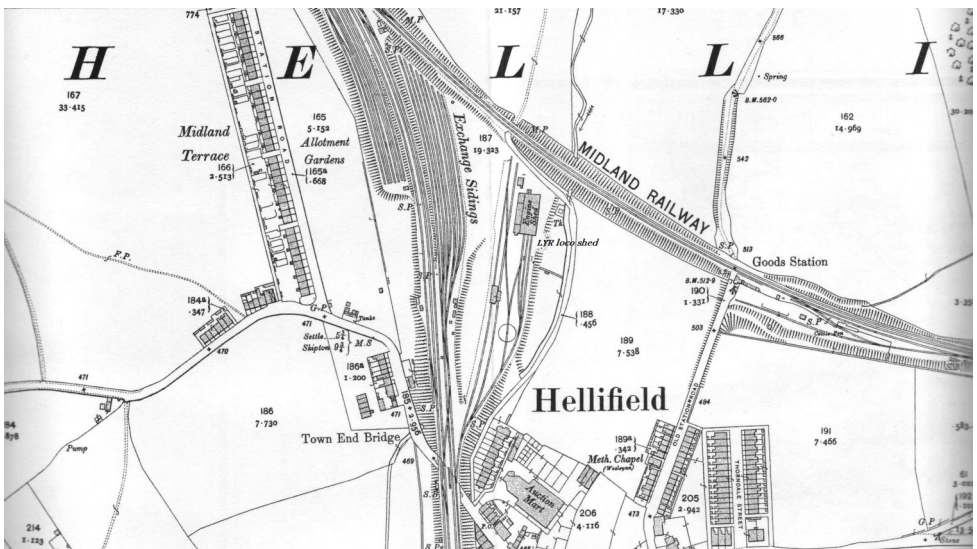


Railway goods traffic at Hellifield

Although Hellifield had little originating goods traffic, with the opening of the junction between the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway (LYR) and the Midland Railway (MR) in 1880 Hellifield became a busy interchange point for freight traffic between the two companies.

To facilitate this increase in goods traffic, large exchange sidings were built on two levels on either side of the LYR line. The high-level sidings were located between the LYR line and Midland Terrace and on the opposite side of the line the low level sidings were located in the land between the junction of the LYR and MR lines. (The site of the low level sidings are now covered by part of the new housing estate). Access to the high-level sidings was controlled by the Midland's south junction signal box (the box that is still in use today) while the low level was controlled by the LYR box which was situated on the main road bridge above the present-day subway. The main road bridge originally carried four sets of tracks, two of these being sidings which extended all the way

down to the bridge which carries the line over the back lane. Up until the late 1920s any local goods traffic was handled at Hellifield's old station yard located by the Haw lane level crossing. The attached old postcard shows a view taken from the slopes of Haw Hill showing a variety of goods wagons and livestock trucks in the old station yard with Thorndale Street and Haw Grove clearly visible and on the left the council houses known by locals as "The Square" can be glimpsed. The card probably dates from the late 1920s. The map extract used here is from an Ordnance Survey map of 1907. It gives a good view of the exchange sidings and the old station goods yard, the site of the LYR locomotive shed which would later become large cattle docks to serve the then busy Hellifield



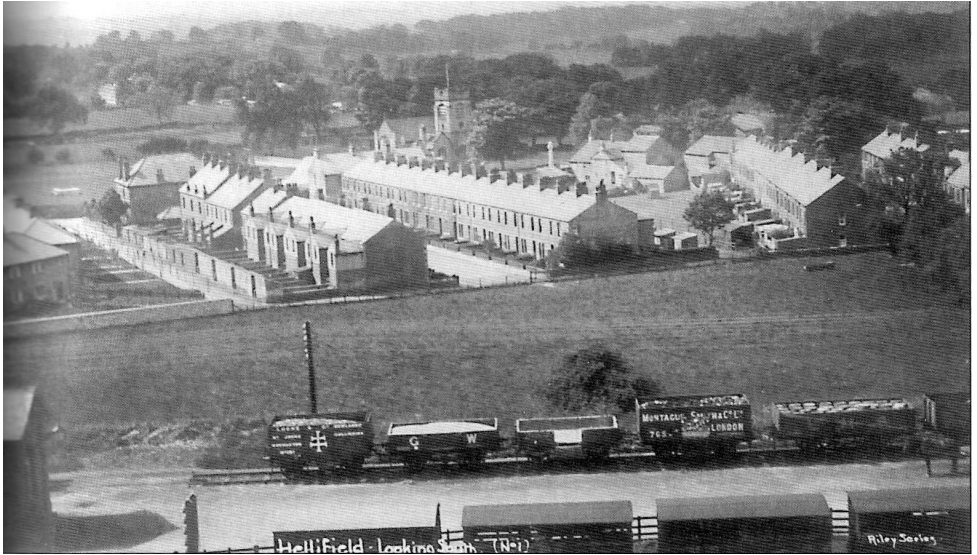


auction mart. Records show that in the year 1907, 1,512 livestock wagons were handled at Hellifield. In 1923 under the government's "Grouping" plan the LYR and MR became part of the London Midland and Scottish railway company (LMS). The LMS decided it no longer required two engine sheds in the village and opted just to use the larger four road Midland shed located at the present-day station. A well-equipped engineering workshop

was added to the rear of the shed containing a locomotive wheel drop and a new larger turntable replaced the smaller Midland version with one capable of turning the largest locomotives in the LMS fleet. By 1927 the LYR shed was out of use and the cattle docks may have been built sometime around this date.

Goods traffic at Hellifield had started to dwindle by the mid 1950s, but even in





the early 1960s, large quantities of wagons could still be seen in the sidings as shown in the attached two photographs dating from around 1962. These photographs were taken from the steps of the south junction signal box and the embankment behind and show the high level and low level yards and the old cattle dock sidings in the far distance. The roofs of L&Y terrace can be seen in the background in both views. These photographs were taken by the late Geoffrey Robinson and are used here with kind permission from his son John Robinson.

remember my mother saying her first impression of Hellifield when she came here in the 1950s was one of the noise of the clanking and banging of goods wagons being shunted and the tooting of locomotive whistles going on all day and all night making it impossible for her to sleep during her first couple of weeks in the village! Today the noise of the railway in Hellifield has now been replaced with the constant sound of motor vehicles racing through on the busy A65 road.

John Percy

Hellifield village is now quiet from the noise of railway shunting activity. I