
Hellifield's early railway days

Before Hellifield became an important railway junction in 1880, the first railway to reach here had little impact on the village or its population but it did offer the chance for people to travel out of the village, many for the first time.

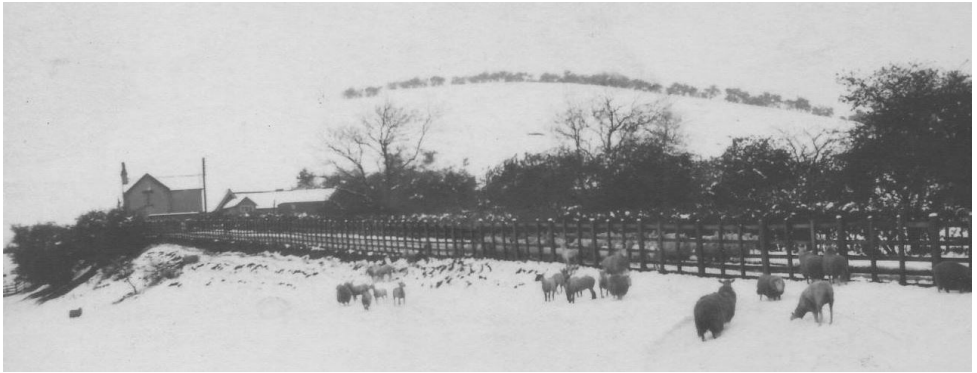


Hellifield's original station

Between 1844 and 1846 Britain was in the grip of "Railway Mania" - over 6,000 miles of railways were built during this period. The first line to reach Hellifield was the newly formed North-Western Railway Company's line, linking Skipton on the Leeds and Bradford extension line to Low Gill on the Lancaster and Carlisle line. The route was surveyed in 1844 and proposed in 1846. In the line's original plan, a junction would be created at Clapham with the line to Low Gill going via Ingleton and a branch line from Clapham going on to connect up with the harbour at Morecambe, which at that time was known as Poulton-Le-Sands. In the end the line reached Ingleton but as the country was now

entering a recession, the company terminated the line here and pushed on with the line from Clapham to Morecambe instead. By January of 1846 construction of the line had begun and by February of 1848 the line had reached Hellifield. The line through Hellifield on the Skipton to Ingleton section opened on 31st July 1849 but it was to be the 2nd May 1850 before the Clapham to Morecambe section was opened.

Hellifield's original station was located by the level crossing on Haw Lane, it was not considered an important station on the line so its station building was a smaller version of the North Western's wooden and plaster mock-



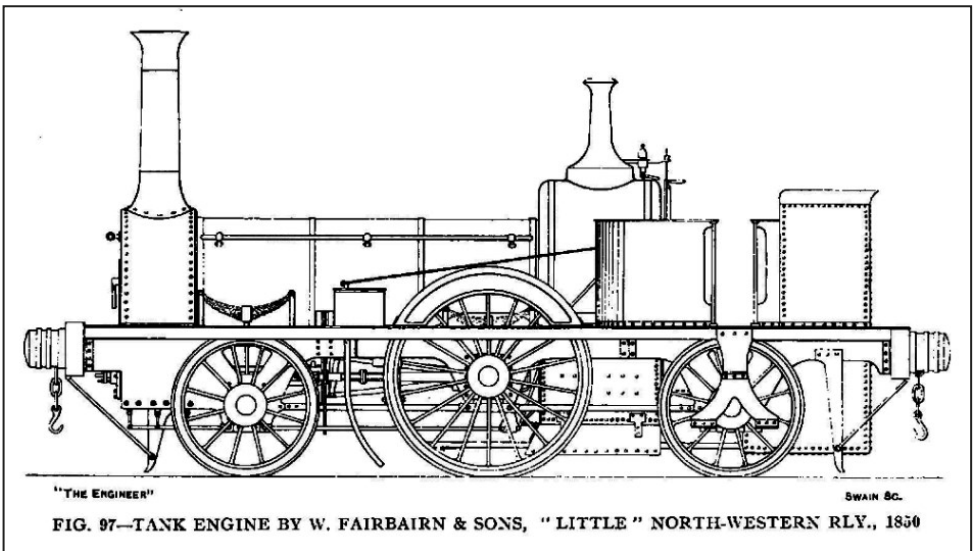
Hellifield's original station in May 1935

Tudor designs although a rather large detached house for the stationmaster was provided.

I can remember this house still standing when I was a youngster, I think the house may have been demolished around the late 1960s. The date of the demolition of the station buildings is unclear but the snowy view shown above clearly shows the buildings in situ and is dated 17th May 1935. At this time my grandmother's sister, Mary Alice Salt, would have been living in the old station house. Her husband, Charles Salt, had been

employed as the crossing keeper. Charles passed away in 1931 but the government's wartime population list, conducted in 1939, shows Mary Alice still living there in that year and giving her occupation as LMS railway crossing keeper.

The other photograph of the station and house may date from the period 1880-1900. The postcard image would be taken some time after the opening of the present station (the Methodist Chapel on the left was opened in 1893) and shows Haw Grove, then known as Old Station Road, with the station



house visible at the top centre of the photograph. The original line was built as a single-track route but in the following years doubling of the track took place in stages, Hellifield to Hornby being doubled in 1850 with the line to Skipton following in 1853. At the time of the line's opening, just two staff were employed at Hellifield, they were: William Ash the first stationmaster, who performed all the station and goods yard duties on his own and Alex McKie who was employed as an assistant guard.

When the line's service commenced, the North-Western Railway had five or six second hand locomotives but in 1850 it added five new tank locomotives built by Fairbairn and sons of Manchester to its fleet; one of these locomotives is shown in the drawing on page 16. The reference to the company as "Little" North Western was to distinguish it from the larger London and North Western Railway Company. The passenger coaches comprised of wooden four-wheeled, four-compartment stock. In 1852 the line

was leased to the Midland Railway Company, so gradually over the next few years the more modern and larger Midland locomotives and rolling stock took over the line's work but some of the Fairbairn tank locomotives were re-numbered into the Midland's fleet. By 1871 the Midland Railway had fully taken over the North-Western Railway Company.

The original station was provided with a small goods yard consisting of three sidings, some cattle pens and coal staites, with a small signal box and ground frame to control shunting movements in the yard. Under Midland Railway ownership the number of railway employees from the village had grown to nine. Around 1903 a connection was made from here to the Hellifield gasworks company on Malham road. Even after the opening of the present station in 1880 the old station goods yard continued to handle local goods traffic, a role it performed well into the 1930s.

John Percy.



Old Station Road - now Haw Grove