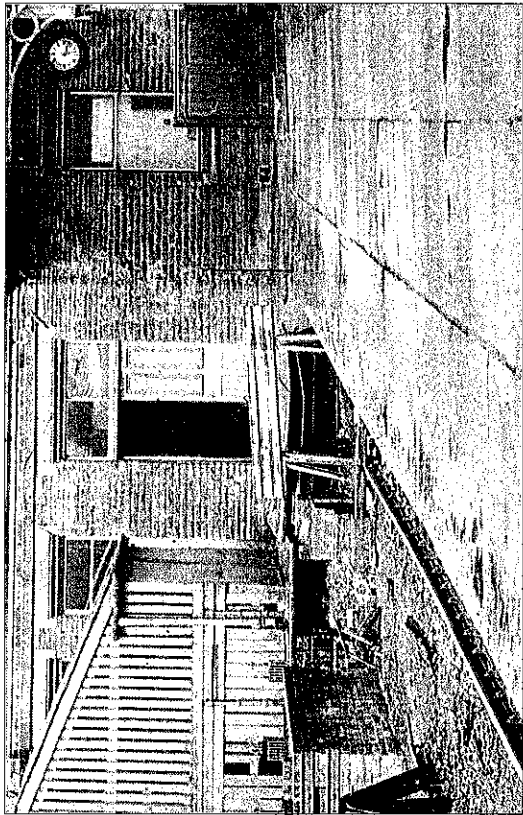
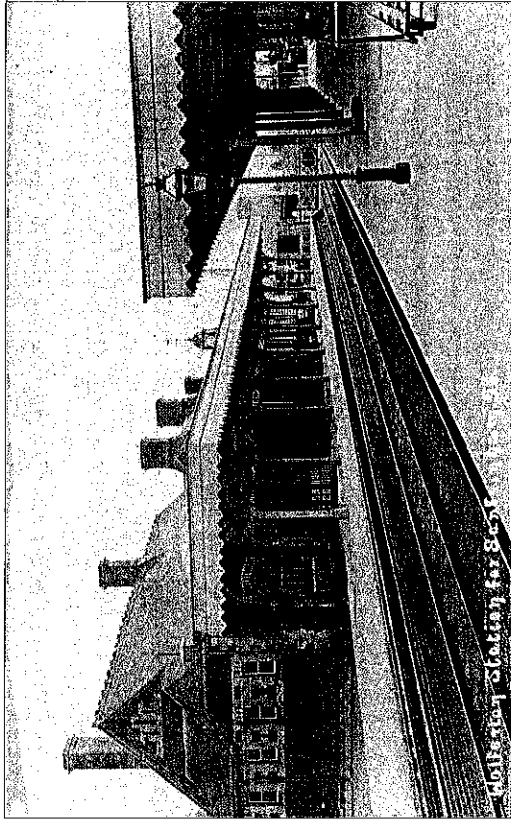


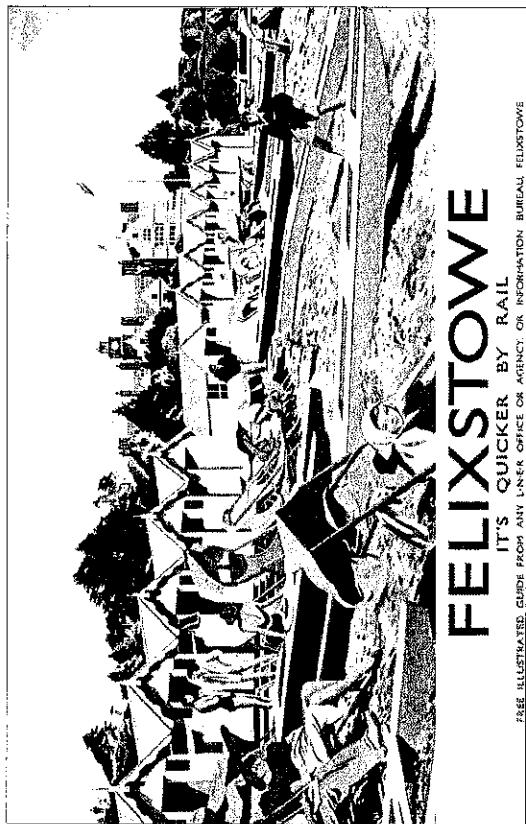
Railway Postcard Collectors Circle



The End of The Line?

Front Cover


The Great Eastern Railway station at Wolferton. See page 84/16 for an article on this Norfolk station that served the royal residence at nearby Sandringham.



Dealers Dates

Specialist railway postcard and photographic dealers are booked to attend the following events. It is always advisable to check with dealers before travelling.

<u>Tony Harden</u> (Tel:- 0118-9762282)	31/5 - Bracknell
5/4 - Burton-on-Trent (formerly held at Stafford)	
29/6 - Reading	
<u>Ian & Lynne Hurst</u> (Tel:- 01263-825053)	4&5/4 - York Racecourse
15/3 - Marks Tey	29/3 - Norwich
3/5 - Nottingham	17/5 - Marks Tey
	24/5 - Bury St. Edmunds

Felix was, for a while, an office block for Fisons Fertilisers, before becoming today homes for elderly people. Many of the great railway hotels built in our major cities are iconic parts of architectural history, but most, such as the three above, are now just colourful illustrations in the book of history - as indeed may the resorts they once served. Sic transit gloria mundi! 

FELIXSTOWE

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Postboxes

British Officials & Commercials (Pre-Nationalisation) and Overseas
John Alsop, Chapelmere, Rodley, Westbury-on-Severn, Glos. GL14 1QZ. 01452-760633.
Post-Nationalisation Commercials and B.R. Officials
Tony Longshaw, 13 Anerley Road, Didsbury, Manchester. M20 2DJ. 0161-445-3211.
Preservation Societies and Museums
Douglas Yelland, 5 Mannings Lane, Woolverstone, Ipswich. IP9 1AW. 01473-780485.
Narrow Gauge, Miniature and Cliff Railways
Ian and Lynne Hurst, 8 Primrose Lane, Sheringham, Norfolk. NR26 8UP. 01263-825053.

*The Newsletter, and associated lists, are published quarterly by
The Railway Postcard Collectors Circle.*

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RG2 9FG.*

Email:- tonyharden@btinternet.com

Comfort by the Sea in Suffolk

Douglas Yelland

The Felix Hotel overlooking the sea at Felixstowe was a very imposing building in its heyday between the wars when it was the undisputed choice for the wealthy visitor during the summer months. It was acquired by the London & North Eastern Railway in 1923 from the Great Eastern Railway, which had bought the building earlier for £150,000 from the Tollemache family, whose name will be for ever remembered in their native county as the brewers of one of East Anglia's native beers. The L&NER lost no time in advertising their new asset in two posters in the 1920s by Frank Newbould and William Walcott, expressly designed to bring it to the public's notice.

The distinctive building was never absent in the background from many other later posters that appeared during the thirties and forties, though perhaps the finest painting of the hotel to appear on a postcard came from a visit by the Salmon artist A.R. Quinton in the 1920s, when visitors to it enjoyed the privacy of a private beach as well as all the other amenities. It is No. 2869 in the catalogue of the firm's hugely popular publications.

The Felix was one of three hotels the L&NER owned in the Eastern Counties, the other two being the Great Eastern at Harwich, designed to exploit the Victorian popularity of the shipping routes to Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and the Sandringham Hotel

which came with the absorption of the King's Lynn and Hunstanton Railway.

In its hey-day the Felix was the home of comfort and entertainment for those who could afford to enjoy them, but as elsewhere the post-war contraction of our railway network and the lure of foreign sunshine sealed the fate of all three hotels. Beeching's axe fell on Hunstanton station in 1969 and Felixstowe is now only a branch line that owes its survival to the flourishing container port. But there were other insidious causes of decline busy at work even in the thirties. A post-war comment in the Norfolk press that stated bluntly "*Undoubtedly due to the changing class of the public attracted to Hunstanton no real demand exists for a first class hotel in Hunstanton*" echoes a much earlier piece written in 1931 in the local Felixstowe paper. "*There are*", claimed the editor, "*indications that the Town will, in a few years, become a people's resort, not because it has been the policy to make it so - indeed, efforts have been directed, perhaps unwisely, in the opposite direction - but because the people have taken possession of it by sheer force of numbers*". History was on the march!

The Sandringham never reopened after 1945 and the Felix and its neighbour across the Stour in Essex were disposed of by the Hotels Executive of the British Transport Commission. The

Editorial

This could well be the last issue of our Newsletter. It's not an easy decision but, after 21 years, I feel the time has come to step down from producing the Newsletter. As this publication is the only tangible product of the Circle it will probably mean the end of our group. I have spoken to a few members who I thought might consider taking on the role of editor but, unfortunately, feels they would like to take over I would be delighted to hear from them.

I have thoroughly enjoyed editing the Newsletter and meeting many of you over the years and I know that several friendships have been forged from collectors among our group with similar interests.

The Newsletters has always relied on a steady input of articles from members but over the last couple of years there has been a significant decline in these submissions, despite regular requests for articles, particularly in the last couple of issues. As membership renewals would now be due I feel the time is right to end on a high rather than see the Newsletter run down during the next year.

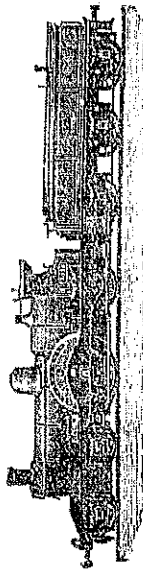
I would like to thank all of you for your support over the years, particularly those who have contributed to the Newsletter, and I look forward to seeing many of you at various fairs in the years to come. ☺

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THE LOCOMOTIVE PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED,
3, Amen Corner, Feternoster Row, London, E.C.

Barking Park Light Railway

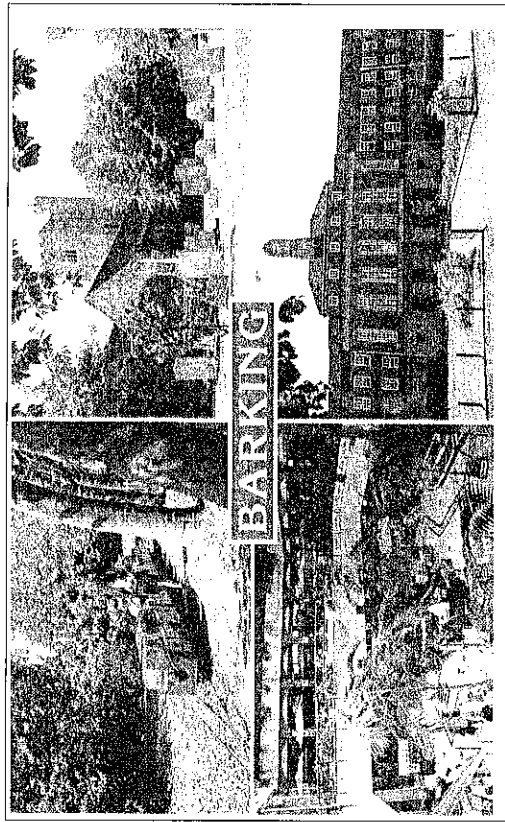
Ian & Lynne Hurst

This line is situated in Barking Park and is a 7/4 inch gauge diesel operated line. It runs 1/4 mile from Park Gates Station to Lakeside Halt. There are two battery driven and one diesel locomotive hauling up to four open carriages. It was opened in 2009 and replaced a previous line at the site about which there is a singular lack of information.

The earlier line is believed to have opened in 1938 on land adjacent to the Lake and to have moved to the (now reopened) route possibly in the 1950's. It was of 9 1/2 inch gauge and used the Bullock steam locomotive *Express*;

DENNIS & SONS LTD, Scarborough
Continental size coloured photographic card with white border. Title on front.

B123002L Barking [Multiview 1/4]



New Cards

North Norfolk Railway

Two cards both from Charles Stenner Cards. Firstly, a vertical coloured card of a platform view at Sheringham. Secondly, a landscape format black and white card showing L&NER No. 7564.

West Hill Cliff Lift, Hastings

Two art cards by Tracey Brown. Both are from watercolour paintings, one horizontal, the other vertical.

Dartmouth Rail & River Company

Two cards from different publishers. From Celtic Scene, a multiview card including a view of the railway; and from Europa Cards (No. C36449/B206, produced in co-operation with Judges) No. 7827 at Broadlands Viaduct.

Artists Studio, Abersoch

Three cards published 2012/3 of modern retro-GWR posters by local artist Neil Hopkins promoting Abersoch, Criccieth and Porth Dimllaen. Copies and further details are available from malcolmluty@gmail.com.

Photographic Heritage

Four cards, of the Great Central Railway (LE-0325/5/7 and LO-0048).

The following individual new postcards have also been notified:-

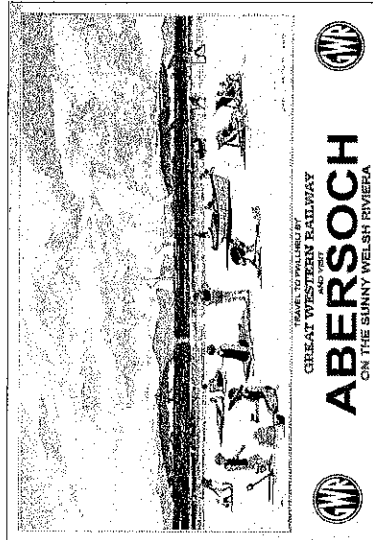
'The Welsh Borders Steam Special crossing Chirk Viaduct' by Sheila Hall.

'LNER 4-6-2 Flying Scotsman' on card No. 31786 from the NRM.

'Saffron Walden Station' on an art card from the Tourist Information Centre in the town.

'GWR Brittany via Plymouth & Brest' poster reproduction and SR 'Dieppe by Direct Steamer From Newhaven', another poster reproduction. Both have been issued by French museums.

Thanks to Rod Holcombe, Ian & Lynne Hurst, Malcolm Luty and Douglas Yetland for details of these cards. 📧



84/24

Unusual Locomotive Publishing Company Card

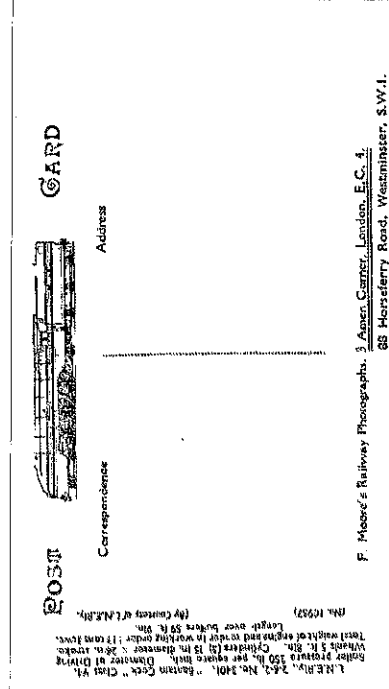
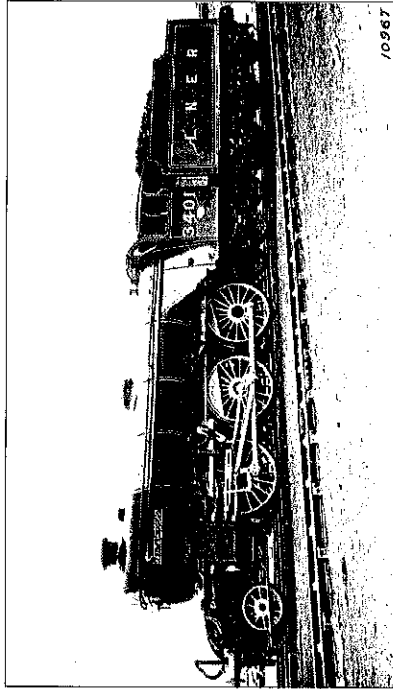
Neil Bettleley

I recently bought this postcard and wondered if it was unusual.

It looks like an ordinary L.P.C. postcard from the front but the back of the card has a printed description similar to those in John Alsop's checklist 12.

I have not seen any others that seem to have a foot in both camps as it were. If anyone knows of similar cards could they let me know.

Neil can be contacted at neil.bettleley@btinternet.com 📧



F. Moore's Railway Photographs, 3 Aspen Corner, London, E.C. 4.
86 Horseferry Road, Westminster, S.W.1.

84/5

A Lancashire & Yorkshire Oddity

Donald Stoneman

On my annual buying spree at the York postcard fair last year I picked up a card which looked as if it should be listed in John Alsop's checklist No. 13 but in fact does not. Turning it over showed an equally interesting side.

The picture is a black and white collocation depiction of the Lancashire and Yorkshire rail motor No. 8, seemingly produced from the same negative as the more attractive coloured official card, Alsop No. LY-085. The title is impressed in scarlet as is the legend at the bottom of the card, 'Published by The Halifax Photo. Co., Victoria Terrace, Halifax, Eng.'. (*This wording doesn't show up very well on the black & white image below - Ed.*)

The other side is an advertisement which gives the publisher as The Halifax Photographic Co., "Lilywhite" Works, Halifax.

It seems that this company was founded in 1910 by Arthur Sergeant and ended abruptly in 1931 when the building and all of its contents were destroyed in a fire. I have seen Lilywhite cards but not like this and I wonder if any keen railway photographers took up the offer to publish their own cards. I was also puzzled by the different addresses on back and front. 📷

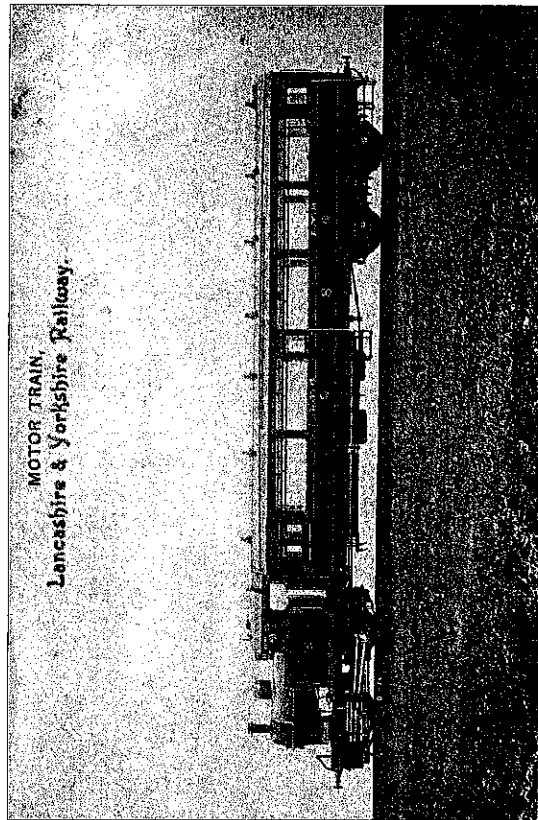
Yorkshire can be proud". Hard working it certainly was, serving the farming population with a much needed outlet for its produce and proving invaluable during the war years both as a diversionary line and to serve the host of bases that sprang up in that part of the country, especially between 1939 and 1945. One of the peculiarities that was said to enhance its value then was its semi-invisibility to the Luftwaffe, whose aerial reconnaissance was foiled by the lack of track maintenance causing the line to be seriously overgrown by weeds.

The heydays were sadly over, however, when peace returned. In the thirties the DVLr had been affectionately nicknamed 'The Blackberry Line' because of the blackberry-picking specials which once ran from Layerthorpe to Shipworth, but now reality dealt a fatal blow with the closure by BR of its line from Duffield to Selby, totally severing its southern link to the national network and beginning a shrinkage of the track northwards, first to Wheldrake, then to Elvington, until approximately only four miles, between Layerthorpe and Donnington at the edge of York, remained. The years that followed are the story of a heroic fight for survival - and a grasping at straws. Following the opening of the National Railway Museum the owners made an imaginative attempt to exploit the public's growing interest in its railway heritage by operating steam train rides between its two terminals during the summer months, using 0-6-0T *Joem* to provide the main motive

power, with L&NWR 'Precedent' class 2-4-0 *Hardwicke* and the Duke of Sutherland's saloon as a visitor in 1976.

'Santa Specials' ran in 1977 and 1978 - but all to no avail and the experiment came to an end. Shortly afterwards, when the grain driers at Donnington were closed, the railway's last source of income disappeared with them. Perhaps not before time closure had to be accepted as a reality, for by then the line, whose infrastructure was still mainly of 1913 vintage, was desperately in need of overhaul. The last train ran in 1981 as a 'Farewell Special' before the shrivelled northern end of the trackbed and part of the Foss Islands branch into York followed a not unusual pattern for those days and were converted into a foot and cycle path by Sustrans.

Today the Derwent Valley Light Railway Society proudly keeps alive this unique working line's name and its memory on the site of the Yorkshire Museum of Farming at Murton Park on the east side of York. The small group of volunteers who maintain and operate short rides between February and October are slowly recreating something of the unique atmosphere of the original days. By good fortune their ranks have been swelled by members from two other groups whose own plans elsewhere met with frustration and failure. These are the Great Yorkshire Railway Preservation Society, refugees from their base at Starbeck, near Harrogate, who once harboured

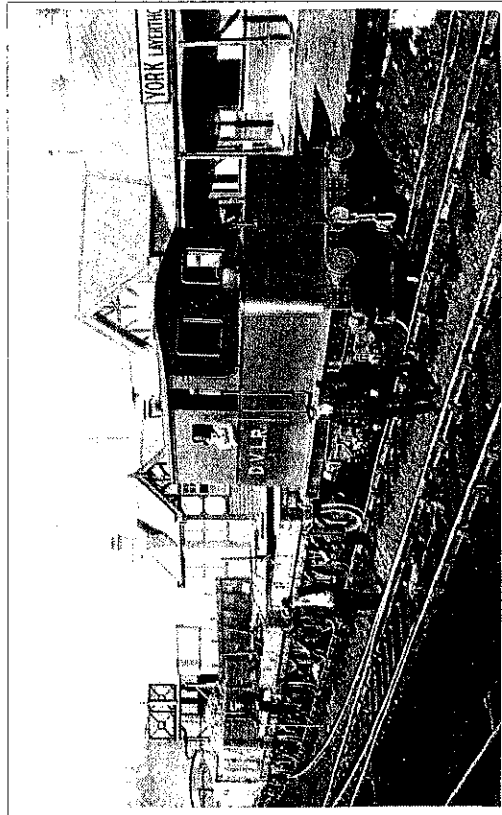


ambitious plans to reopen the railway to Ripon, and the Hull Locomotion Preservation Group whose original schemes met with equal frustration.

Happily the Hull Group brought with them their Barclay 0-4-0ST No.5 of 1955 vintage to add a whiff of steam and smoke to the scene, which otherwise depends at the moment on diesels. These reinforcements brought with them also the remains of Murston signal box which has been re-erected on the site. To the purist this will seem something of an anachronism as there was only ever one signal on the old DVLR line, erected at Wheeldrake, where a sharp bend just before the station obscured the view of a level crossing and whose operation was controlled by the opening and shutting of

the crossing gates. Most of the station buildings along the old route have inevitably been lost and their sites absorbed by the development of industrial estates, but the station at Whel-drake has very skilfully been rescued and lovingly transported northwards to be carefully restored as the centrepiece of the headquarters, and now houses a shop and visitor centre. Elsewhere along the old route there are two other station buildings still standing, both privately owned. The one at Thorngaby is in a sad state of neglect (though its owner plans to restore it), but its near neighbour at Shipworth has been carefully converted into a delightful home.

Postcards of what today greets visitors at Murton Park seem sadly to be in short supply, though a thorough search



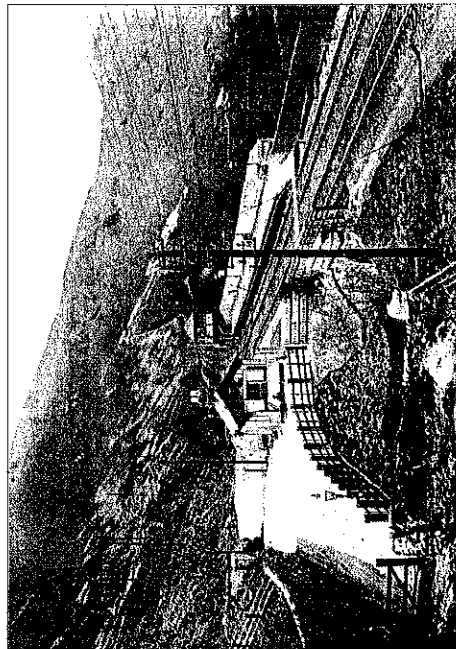
Sentinel No. 6076, presumably soon after delivery in 1925, on an anonymously published postcard.

you blasted its rocks away, heaped thousands of tons of shale into its lovely stream. The valley is gone and the Gods with it, and now, every fool in Buxton can be at Bakewell in half-an-hour, and every fool in Bakewell at Buxton, which you think a lucrative process of exchange - you fools everywhere". One can imagine his views on the present HS2 project. We must be left to speculate also on his apopleptic reaction had a scheme by the Lancashire, Derby and East Coast Railway to construct a second viaduct across the valley 300 ft above the present one been granted permission.

Today the viaduct's elegant 40ft high structure is a landmark in the Peak District and forms part of the Monsal Trail. Technically its correct name is the Headstone Viaduct as the trackbed of the railway emerged onto it from the Headstone Tunnel, now open to walkers and cyclists as are the Cressbrook and Luton tunnels further ahead into Miller Dale. This 20km stretch will provide Peak Rail with its sternest test if it is to fulfil its ambitious plans.

Monsal Dale railway station built nearby in 1866 to serve

the small community of Upperdale was hailed more enthusiastically in its day. Someone wrote: "There is not in the whole range of Peak scenery such a lovely landscape in so small a space as can be viewed from the platform of this singular and romantically situated station". Its overgrown down platform still edges the grassy trackbed, but nothing now remains of the single brick structure built on it that once served as ticket office and waiting room. Not surprisingly the up platform which hung over the hillside supported by wooden trestles has vanished into history. The station was never profitable to maintain in its Midland Railway days or when it passed to the LMS, though ramblers must have blessed its existence. It was closed in 1959 by British Railways, luckily escaping the era of 'Health and Safety', who would have had a field day condemning its every inch.



The Monsal Dale Viaduct

Douglas Yelland

The railway network which was created by the Victorians in the 19th century has studded our land with a host of monuments to their skill and enterprise. The works they left us are as revered today as they were often revered when they were constructed and stand alongside the treasures of earlier centuries, at times holding viewers in awe and wonder. Often they are icons of their location. What would West Yorkshire be without the Ribbleshead Viaduct or the Tamar Valley minus Brunel's great bridge. Such engineering wonders are as embedded in our landscape as Hadrian's Wall or our great cathedrals.

It seems strange then to read of the

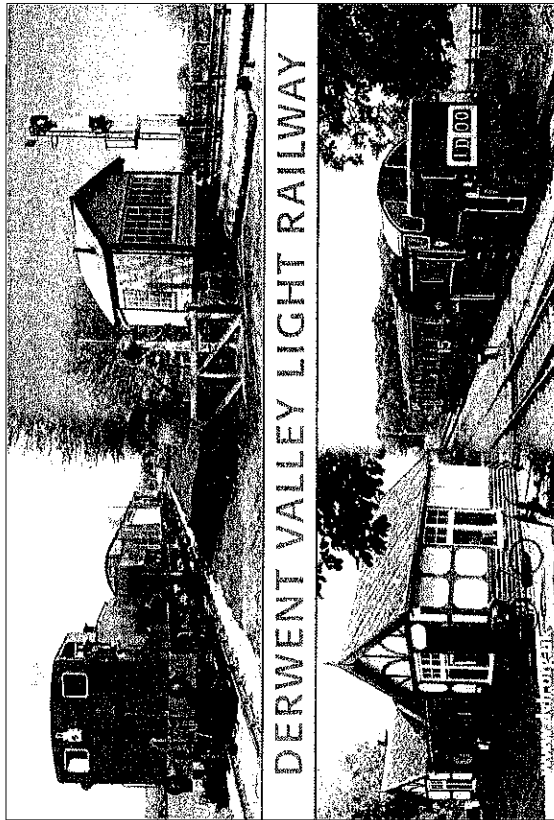
future that the Monsal Dale viaduct gave rise to when it was built by the Midland Railway in 1863 as the company pushed forward its line from the Amber Valley towards Buxton and Manchester. Today its five slender arches spanning the 300ft width above the River Wye are considered an elegant monument and have had the protection of a preservation order since 1970. There was a chorus of protest, however, at the time of its construction, led by John Ruskin, the celebrated Victorian writer and arbiter of all things aesthetic, who scathingly wrote: *"There was a valley between Buxton and Bakewell, once upon a time as divine as the vale of Tempe. You entered a railway through the valley -*



84/20

of York and its surrounds may well offer more than the three that are all to be found on the site. These are continental size multiviews and their contents give a comprehensive idea of all the items and stock to be seen on a visit. The year 2013 marked the centenary of the opening of the old DVLRL and perhaps ghosts clustering around this infant memorial to it were remembering its opening all those years ago by Lady Deramore, wife of the chairman, in 1913 and the first train setting off along the line at 10.30 am - a locomotive, two coaches, two decorated wagons containing seats and canvas awnings, and a brake van. To mark the passage of the exciting and eventful century that followed on from

that first journey and the DVLRL's dogged hold on life the society's archivist and Ian Drummond, a noted railway historian, have written a detailed account of its life, titled 'Rails along the Derwent', which is now on sale. This is liberally illustrated, graphically bringing the railway and those who operated it vividly to life throughout the full length of its colourful existence. Postcards of its days now as a comfortable museum exhibit may be scarce at the moment, but there was no shortage of them in earlier years when it was working hard for its living. I wonder if any of my readers has made a collection and can offer either a listing or glimpse to supplement what I have written above. 📷



One of the three recently published multiview cards issued by the DVLRL group.

84/9

The Rhondda & Swansea Bay Railway

Alfred W. Arthurton - *The Railway Magazine*, March 1914

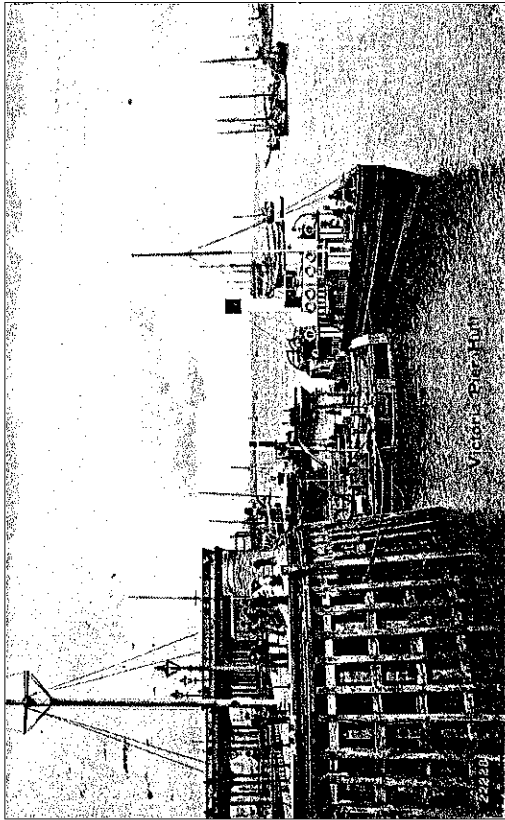
The early history of the Rhondda and Swansea Bay railway was characterised by a constant struggle against the opposition of various interests and lack of support from the public, the difficulty in obtaining subscriptions during the earlier years of the venture being in no small measure responsible for the slowness of construction.

For some years those interested in the development of a Port of Swansea and the natural resources and trade of the district had cast longing eyes at the rich deposits of coal lying to the north west, but separated from the western seaboard by a high ridge of hills. The

opening of the Prince of Wales dock by King Edward VII (then Prince of Wales) in October 1881, provided accommodation for the reception of steamers of the largest dimensions, and with these greatly increased facilities for coal shipping, it was thought that a portion, at all events, of the mineral wealth of the Rhondda Valley could be diverted to Swansea, which was situated some 40 miles nearer the open sea than its sister port of Cardiff. The only hope of accomplishing this was to build a line which would tap the coalfield at the upper end and convey the coal westward for shipping instead of to the eastern port.

Empress, crossed it, and finally joined the Ferryby Sluice boat by means of an open wooden gangplank. I wonder whether, at this time in 1900, the railway owned ticket office had a reciprocal arrangement to sell tickets for the GUSP ferris to Gainsborough and Ferryby Sluice as well and, if not, where was the GUSP ticket office in Hull? This when GUSP ran steamers, including the *Empress* from Hull to Goole, until many years after the railway had been built from

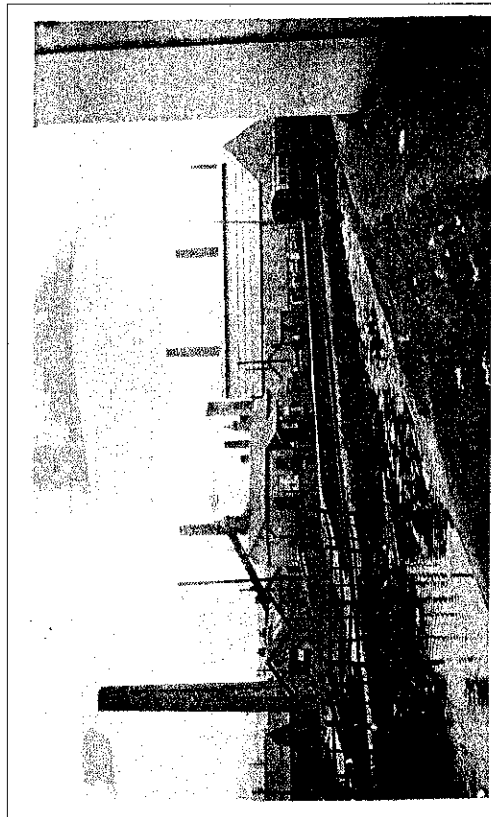
Leeds to Selby in 1834 and extended to Hull in 1840. In 1842 some twenty five passenger paddle steamers were still trading on the Humber from Hull to Grimsby, New Holland, Barton, Gainsborough, Briggs, Goole, Selby, Thome and York. In addition a smaller boat operated from Barton to Hessle and other places in Lincolnshire plus long distance boats to Hamburg, London, and Kings Lynn. 📍



Who, What, Where, When, Why?

Responses to previous queries.

The only response to the pictures in the last issue came from David Patrick, who wrote the following:- The top photograph on page 83/5 is, I think, Wolverhampton High Level taken from the north end and showing the entrance to the goods yard on the right. Not many views exist of the L&NWR station pre-modernisation but it was, architecturally, an attractive building; but being right on the edge of the Black Country probably did it no favours. There appears to be some work in progress on the left and the little hut on the left looks fairly modern. I would hazard a guess that the date is within the BR era. 📍



Neath Canal-side station clearly showing the industrial nature of the area. A Locomotive Publishing Postcard, courtesy John Alsop.

Victoria Pier, Hull

David Wrottesley

The pier was given this name by Queen Victoria, when she paid a visit in 1854. The Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire, predecessor to the Great Central Railway, eventually had running powers over the North Eastern Railway into Hull and had a goods station there. They also planned a tunnel from Lincolnshire, under the River Humber, to access Hull but originally ran railway owned paddle steamers, to a landing stage, or small pier/quay/wharf, on the west side entrance to the River Humber. The steamer *Magna Carta* operated to New Holland Pier from about 1842 in competition with an older established ferry from Hull to Barton. New Holland Pier had, from 1848, become an important terminus station as it was now connected into the MS&L line at Brocklesby.

During low tide at Hull until 1856, you always had to alight to and from a rowing boat, to join the New Holland ferry, which had to stay in the river, opposite the river side facilities. This was because no access agreement had been made for a permanent berth for this particular Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway ferry in Hull. It would seem that at no time did this ferry service enter any of the original 'Town' dock facilities in Hull.

Passengers from Hull for the ferry and connecting train from New Holland bought their tickets as from 1849, from 7 Nelson Street in Hull. This was enlarged in both 1854 and 1880 to become a proper railway station/ticket

office and was across the road from the pier. You had to buy tickets three minutes before the departure time of the ferry. This building saw only people, and later trams, and had no trains or railway tracks. The pier was expanded in 1933, to have an improved pontoon system and also the ability to run cars towards the New Holland Ferry, which were 'craned' aboard. The building in Nelson Street was known, and had a notice on the building, and was shown in the GCR/L&NER/ER timetable, as 'Hull Corporation Pier Station'. The reason for this, was that it was not until 1856 that the MS&L entered into an access agreement to pay Hull Corporation, who owned the piers, an annual payment of £40 to berth their ferry there. Passengers, with the aid of ladders and wooden pontoons, could then board at all stages of the tide.

The postcard, illustrated right (courtesy of John Alsop), shows the Great Central Railway's *Liverpool* ferry working to New Holland, and is against a pontoon adjacent to the pier. The two smaller steamers beyond are not railway owned. The boat adjacent to the pier is believed to be the Gainsborough United Steam Packet Co. *Empress* providing a river service from Hull to Gainsborough including various intermediate stopping points in Lincolnshire. The smaller boat alongside; *GUSP Her Majesty* working from Hull to Ferryby Sluice. It will be noted, that even in 1900, due to certain tidal conditions and lack of suitable berths in the pier area to board the *Her Majesty*, you first boarded the

The chief of engineering features of the line are the Rhondda Tunnel, between Blaengwynfy and Treherbert, and the Neath River Bridge, both to which deserve special mention. The former, the longest tunnel in Wales, is 3443 yards in length (just under 2 miles) and occupied a little over three years in construction. It is lined for the most part with native stone, but the difficult-ty of construction were accentuated owing to the boring as having to be made from the two ends only, the height of the mountain which is pierced prohibiting intermediate shafts from being made from which additional headings could be driven. In spite of this, and the fact that the tunnel has a curve at one end, the borings met in the centre with the utmost accuracy, both in level and in alignment, a striking tribute to the ability and care of Mr. Yockney, the engineer. Boring was accomplished by means of machine drills worked by compressed air, the latter being subsequently released in the workings for the purpose of ventilation. At one time upwards of 1100 men, consisting of navvies, miners, masons etc., were engaged on the work, and it is satisfactory to record that during the whole course of construction there was scarcely an accident of a serious nature. The line through the tunnel was opened for traffic on July 2 1890.

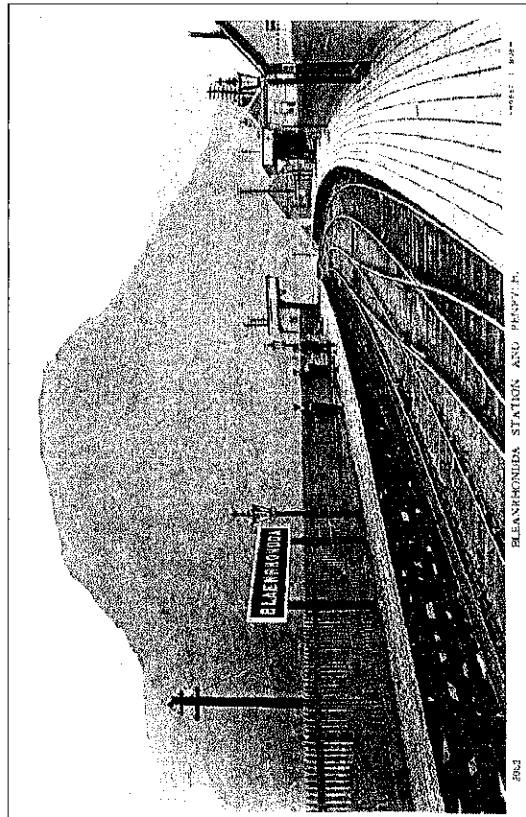
The Neath River Bridge is a further tribute to the skill of its engineer, Mr. Yockney. It is the only swing bridge in the kingdom both on the skew and on a curve and, when first suggested, was

derided by many, but successful completion silenced all such critics. The work of construction was commenced in November 1892. The bridge has a total length of 388 ft., the swing portion being 167 ft. long, while the width of the centre of the girders is 27 ft. There are five fixed spans of 60 ft. each, the whole resting on 6 ft. and 7 ft. steel cylinders sunk 40 ft. into the bed of the river and filled with cement. The total weight of ironwork was 1400 tons and over a quarter of a million rivets were used.

At the Rhondda Valley end of the line, the Taff Vale Railway station at Treherbert is used as a terminus and 20 chains of that company's line has to be traversed before the Rhondda and Swansea Bay Railway proper is reached. The first station is Blaenrhondda whence there is a stiff climb to the mouth of the tunnel, the summit being reached as the train emerges from the other end at Bleangwynfy station. From Blaengwynfy the line rapidly descends passing through a short tunnel en route to Cymmer, where there is a junction with the Llynvi and Ogmoor section of the Great Western Railway. Cymmer is one of the largest stations on the line and serves many quarries and a populous mining district. Soon after leaving the station, the steel viaduct carrying the Great Western Railway across the Afon River is seen on the right, and from this point the line virtually follows the course of a mountain stream nearly to its mouth. Dyffryn Rhondda Halt serves the Dyffryn Rhondda Col-

liery, one of the many large pits scattered throughout Afon Valley and producing large quantities of coal which pass over the railway for shipment at Port Talbot, Briton Ferry and Swansea. Passing Cynonville and Ponirhydyfen at the foot of the Afon Valley, whence a branch line to Cwmauon, Aberavon and Port Talbot was among the original proposals of the Act of 1882, the Cwmauon Railway, an older line connecting with some of the oldest steel-works in South Wales is reached. A short run brings us to Aberavon station at the end of the main street of Port Talbot which is crossed on the level. Aberavon Seaside attracts a great many visitors from the Rhondda and Afon Valleys during the summer months. A short distance beyond is Briton Ferry, at the mouth of the Neath river. At Port

Talbot connection is made with the Port Talbot company's lines into the docks, and at Briton Ferry junctions are made with the Great Western Railway dock lines, where a large tonnage of coal is dealt with, the tips at both places being almost continuously in use. At Court Sart, there is the junction with the Great Western main line and a branch to the town of Neath, with which a good service and connections with all mainline trains are maintained. The Cape Copper Works are situated between Court Sart and Jersey Marine, near which latter station excellent golf links have been laid out. From here the line runs almost parallel with the Great Western lower level lines to Swansea East Dock station and, after passing Danygraig, forms a connection with the Swansea Harbour Trust lines in




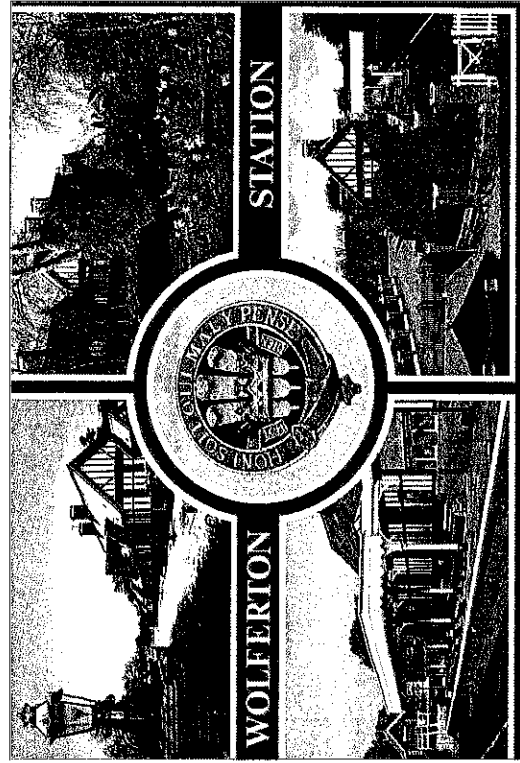
Blaenrhondda, the first station out from the northern terminus at Treherbert.

All this lasted until 1969, by which time the royal waiting rooms were beginning to prove expensive to maintain. BR offered them for royal purchase and when this was declined the line was closed, the Queen agreeing that from then on King's Lynn should be the royal railhead for future visits to her Norfolk retreat.

Wolferton station was bought by Eric Walker, a retired railwayman, who reopened the royal waiting room in 1970 as a museum to display his 6,000 item collection of royal and historical memorabilia. His son took over the museum on his death in 1985 and soon put it up for sale, claiming that 18,000 annual visitors were insufficient to meet his running costs. He offered the Grade 2 listed signal box for sale in 1989 and a year later auctioned the station's contents for £100,000 asking

£250,000 for the station buildings themselves. One item - 400 original LNER posters collected by his father in the 1920s and 1930s - reached £98,000. The station is now owned by Richard Brown and since 2001 the downside has been refurbished, along with the crossing gate and the signal box - which has been restored and retains its original lever frame and gate wheel.

Postcards and souvenir tickets are available at the station to add to a small collection that can be built up from earlier and more colourful times. Much of the trackbed of the old line is still untouched, but any ideas of restoring the short line must be pipe dreams as all the intermediate stations are privately owned and Hunstanton station, along with its neighbouring hotel, has passed into history. 



England's Most Famous Rural Station

Douglas Yelland

Being built to serve a sparse rural population on a 25 mile long single line track that owed its construction to the late Victorian boom in seaside holidays is hardly a guarantee of fame. However Wolferton station has achieved just that for over a century thanks to its close proximity to the Royal Sandringham Estate. Queen Victoria bought Sandringham in 1862 for her eldest son, later King Edward VII, the same year the King's Lynn to Hunstanton Railway was constructed to provide a link to the country's growing network. As a result 'Sunny Hunny', as the Norfolk resort was to be fondly known, flourished for a century, its charms advertised in many posters, the proud possessor of Norfolk's only railway hotel, and uniquely able to boast that as it looked out over the Wash it was the only seaside attraction in the East of England that looked west.

Meantime Wolferton station, only five miles from Kings Lynn was achieving another sort of fame. The first Royal Train to stop at its platform conveyed the future king and his wife, Princess Alexandra, on their honeymoon to Sandringham after their marriage in the chapel of Windsor Castle. Since then no fewer than 645 Royal Trains have steamed into and out of its platforms before the last one ran in 1969. Normally Wolferton was not a busy station, but during the occasions of royal house parties its platforms have been alive with the great and famous of

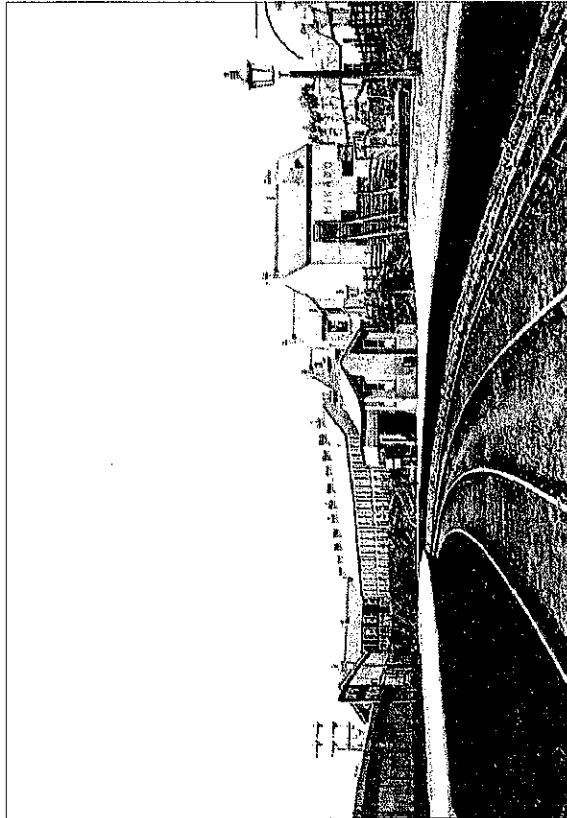
England and the wider world, crowded then with the colour and bustle of uniforms and liveries, carriages and cars. The 21st birthday of Prince Albert in 1886 saw Sayers Circus unload its menagerie onto the sidings and witnessed the destructive power of an elephant at one point. Its saddest moments came when it played a role in the funeral processions of Queen Alexandra, King George V and King George VI.

The Great Eastern Railway had absorbed the line by the time the royal era began, it then passing into the L&NER in 1923 before finally becoming part of British Railways. In the late 1890s the five miles of track to Wolferton was doubled to ensure safety and it was then that extra sidings were built to house the royal carriages and a new downside building was erected to accommodate royal visitors and their guests. These were designed in a timber Tudor style. The royal waiting rooms were fitted out with oak paneling, couches and easy chairs. On the up platform the buildings are equally impressive and even include a small clocktower. Standard Great Eastern canopies cover both platforms and the station is lit by ornate lamps, each topped with a gilded crown. There is a brick and sandstone signal box at the northern edge of the doubled section of track close by the station's approach, in itself a charming structure that blends skilfully into the cottage that stands alongside it.

order to obtain access to the Prince of Wales Dock. A few chains beyond the junction is the Swansea terminus, near the road entrance of the last named dock, on the eastern side of the River Tawe.

The line is for the most part double, but portions including the Rhondda Tunnel, are single and, although the banks are necessarily heavy on some portions of the route, the gradient is mainly 'with the load' from the summit at Blaengwynfy throughout the Afon Valley. The steepest rise is 1 in 39, and the sharpest curve eleven chains radius.

When the part of the Rhondda and Swansea Bay Railway over the Neath River was authorised, the Great Western Railway Company obtained running powers so as to connect their South Wales and Swansea and Neath lines, but since that time these are being extended under agreement. The portion between Cardommel Junction, on the Vale of Neath section, and Court Sart Junction, between Neath and Briton Ferry, will now form an important link in the scheme of the Great Western Railway for a shortened and less congested route between Fishguard and London, by avoiding a busy



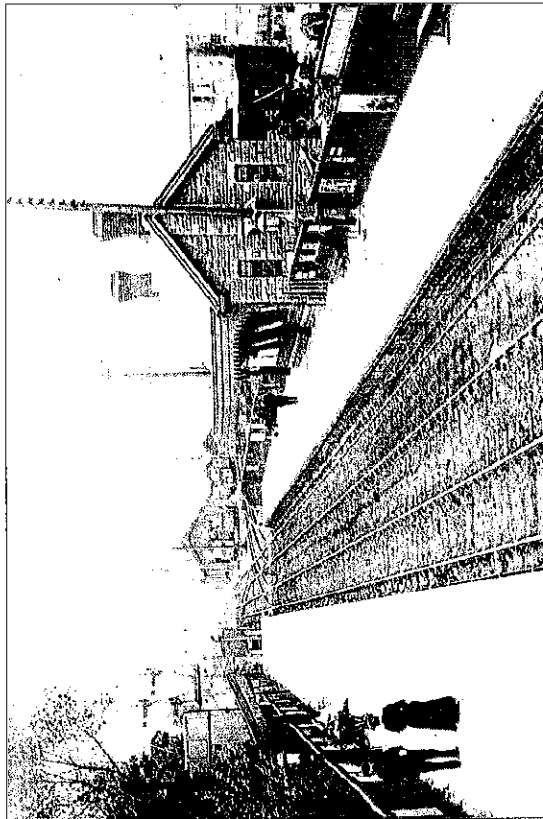
Court Sart station, just north of where the Rhondda & Swansea Bay line met the Great Western Railway main line. This station closed in 1935 after which trains continued to the main line station.

area lying between Llanelly and Briton Ferry.

The scheme is both extensive and interesting as with the assistance of the Rhondda and Swansea Bay Railway the Great Western company will have an additional fast route through what is probably one of the most congested portions of South Wales. Extensive works in connection with the junctions are still being carried out. The approaches to the Neath River Bridge are being widened and curves at other points flattened, while at Court Sart, the present junction will form a con-

nection with the down Great Western main line and the portion through Court Sart station a flying junction with the up line.

In 1891, when the line was opened to Aberavon only, there were eight passenger trains from the latter station each weekday, and six arrivals, with two trains in each direction on Sundays. On the opening of the line throughout to Swansea in 1895 a similar service was maintained, while at the present time there are eight passenger trains each way, with additional ones all or part of the way on Saturdays, and



Aberavon Town station before being renamed Port Talbot (Aberavon) in 1924. Looking north with the engine shed in the fork of the junction formed by the main line to Duffryn Rhondda and Treherbert (straight ahead) and the spur to the Port Talbot Railway's line Port Talbot (to the right).

two each way on Sundays.

As evidence of the important part played by the Rhondda and Swansea Bay Railway and the convenience it affords to the public, it may be mentioned that connections are maintained by several other railways at various points. With the Taff Vale Railway, for instance, there is a through service to Cardiff via Treherbert; at Cymmer access to the Llynvi and Ogmore valleys is obtained over the Great Western Railway; at Port Talbot connections are made with the Port Talbot Railway, and both there and at Briton Ferry with the Great Western Railway to places west and to the south of Ireland via Fishguard.

At the commencement the company possessed fifteen locomotives built by Beyer, Peacock & Co., of Manchester, and Kitson & Co., of Leeds. They are all fitted with side tanks and are six-coupled and four-coupled for goods and passenger work respectively. The number of engines has since been increased to 29, while the passenger carriages, which numbered 50 at the outset, now total 81, and were built by Meers. Brown, Marshall & Co., of Birmingham, and the Ashbury Railway Carriage & Wagon Company. They are mainly composite first and second, and third class coaches and are painted chocolate colour and lettered R. & S. B. Railway, with the number of class and monogram painted on each side. The goods wagons have increased from 500 to 856, and supplied by the Oldbury Wagon and other firms.

As might be expected from the genesis of the line, the major portion of the traffic is mineral, chiefly coal. This, with the merchandise, forms about two-thirds of the total, the remaining one-third representing passenger and parcels traffic. Huge quantities of coal, drawn from the Rhondda and Afon Valleys, are poured into the docks at Port Talbot, Briton Ferry and Swansea, and the anticipations of the promoters that a considerable portion of the output of the western end of the Rhondda Valley, intended for shipment, would be diverted by way of these ports, has been realised.

The Rhondda and Swansea Bay Railway has extensive accommodation for the shipment of coal at the Prince of Wales Dock, Swansea. Three hydraulic tips, each capable of loading 600 tons per hour, with the necessary loaded and empty roads, are owned by them on the eastern side of the dock, where steamers of large capacity ship to all parts of the world. Further tips are being erected at the new King's Dock and will soon be brought into use.

Serving a populous mining district and passing through various towns, the passenger traffic on this line is somewhat peculiar in that a train will be filled and emptied several times on its journey, especially on market days and Saturdays. At holiday times and during the summer months there is, as already mentioned, a considerable traffic to Aberavon Seaside requiring special trains to convey the crowds of excursionists. ☺