

The Social and Economic Impact of a Rural Railway: the Wensleydale Line¹

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THE impact of the railway on the social and economic life of rural communities has been the subject of much general comment but, apart from D W Howell's study of the influence of the railway on agriculture in Wales, no detailed research appears to have been undertaken.² This paper seeks to redress this omission, in part, by examining the impact which the Wensleydale railway, in facilitating the more rapid movement of goods and people, had on the life of the rural community which it served. In particular, it examines the role of the railway in stimulating the development of both traditional and new industries, and how this contributed to the fuller integration of the social and economic life of the dale into that of its wider region and the nation at large.

Wensleydale is one of the relatively isolated north Yorkshire dales which shoulder the eastern flank of the north central Pennines. It lies at the heart of an extensive area of rural upland situated between the industrial towns of West Yorkshire to the south, Lancashire to the south-east, and the Tees, Wear and Tyne estuaries to the north-east. With its east-west alignment and

broad valley floor, it forms one of the traditional routes through the Pennines. The branch line serving the dale ran from Northallerton to Garsdale Head but this paper is concerned only with the Wensleydale line proper, that is the twenty-two mile stretch between Leyburn and Garsdale Head (see Fig 1).

I

Despite many proposals between the 1840s and 1860s a railway line was not constructed through Wensleydale until the 1870s.³ In 1870 the North Eastern Railway Company (NER), motivated by a desire to protect its interests from encroachment by rival companies, successfully promoted a scheme for the construction of a sixteen-mile line between Leyburn and Hawes. The scheme proposed the continuation of the existing NER Northallerton to Leyburn line, which had been opened to Bedale in 1855 and to Leyburn in 1856. The new line would connect with the Midland Company's proposed six-mile branch line linking Hawes with the Settle-Carlisle line at Garsdale Head.⁴

Construction of the NER Leyburn-Hawes line commenced in 1873 and was completed in late 1876.⁵ The construction had a direct impact on the economy of the dale in terms of land purchase and payment of compensation; the purchase of some

¹ I am indebted to Dr John Chartres for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper, which is part of a wider study of social and economic change in nineteenth century Wensleydale and Swaledale.

² D W Howell, 'The Impact of Railways on Agricultural Development in Nineteenth Century Wales', *The Welsh History Review*, 7, 1974-5. See also H W Parris, 'Railways in the Northern Pennines to 1880', unpublished M A thesis, University of Leeds, 1954, pp 279-81. Parris briefly comments on the fact that the railway in the dales had some small impact but maintains that it was insignificant and that there was no real expansion of economic activity as the result of railway development. N M Mason, 'Unprofitable Railway Companies in England and Wales 1845-1923, with Special Reference to the South Midlands', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1982, pp 330-46, makes passing reference to the impact of a railway on rural communities.

³ A detailed discussion of these proposals can be found in C S Hallas, *The Wensleydale Railway*, Clapham, 1984, pp 4-18.

⁴ Parris, *op cit*, pp 130-76 *passim*, 224-5, 236-7.

⁵ *The Darlington and Stockton Times*, 22 February 1873, stated that the building of the line had not commenced. The *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle*, 1 November 1873, reported that the construction was well under way.

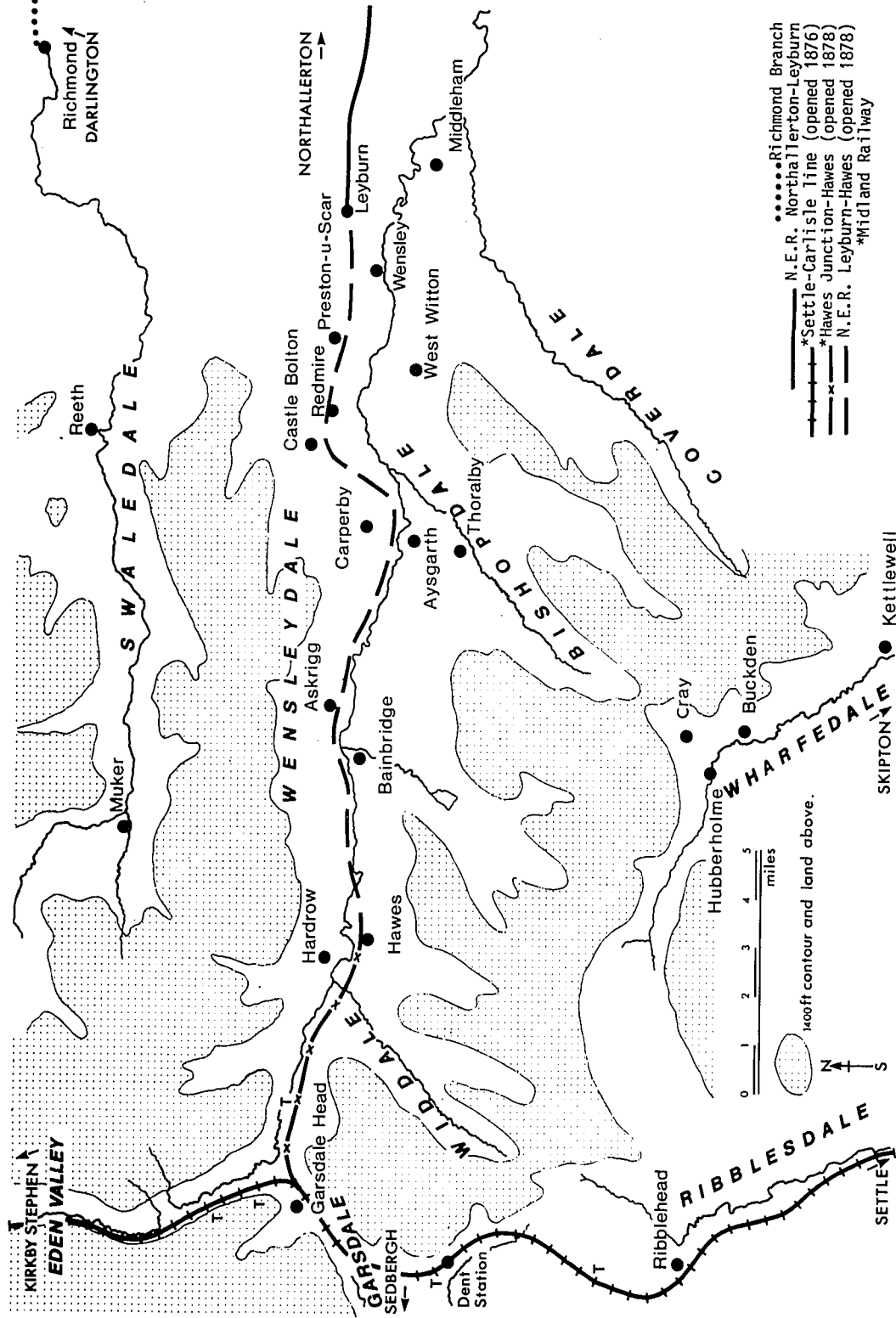


FIGURE 1
Wensleydale and its Railways.

materials locally; employment opportunities for local labour; and the spending power generated by the arrival of a substantial non-indigenous workforce.⁶

Although no record exists of the number of labourers employed in the construction of the NER line, some indication can be gained by a projection based on the numbers employed on the Midland branch. In 1871, 164 railway labourers were based near the Moorcock Inn, Upper Wensleydale and were employed in constructing the six miles of line between Hawes and Garsdale Head. The total length of the Wensleydale line (Leyburn to Garsdale Head) was twenty-two miles, of which the Midland branch, therefore, represented a little over 27 per cent. If it is assumed that the labour employed was in direct proportion to the length of line, approximately 600 workers may have been employed on railway construction in Wensleydale in the mid 1870s.⁷

From the foregoing it is possible to estimate an annual wages bill of £38,520.⁸ Making the conservative assumption that one third of the navvies' wages were spent within Wensleydale, this would have represented an annual injection of £12,840 into the economy of Wensleydale at the peak

of construction in the mid 1870s.⁹ This in turn would have stimulated local production and employment.¹⁰ Assuming an employment multiplier of 1.3, an additional cash flow of £3852 would have been generated which, with a local average annual wage of £18, would have had the potential of creating 214 new jobs in the area.¹¹

Approximately 16 per cent of the navvies at the Moorcock settlement were from Wensleydale. Projecting this percentage to the whole line would give a total of ninety-six local men employed on railway construction in the mid 1870s. Assuming a family size multiplier of 4.7, this would suggest that directly and indirectly the railway construction provided the principal livelihood for some 451 local people. This would represent 5.5 per cent of the 1871 Wensleydale population of 8176 and, therefore, possibly about 10 per cent of the dale's workforce.¹²

The NER line was opened between Leyburn and Askrigg on 1 February 1877 and extended to Hawes on 1 June 1878, after the Midland Company had completed the construction of Hawes Station.¹³ The Midland branch, between Hawes and Hawes Junction at Garsdale Head, opened on 1 October 1878, completing the link between the East Coast route and the Settle-Carlisle line, and establishing for the first time good communication between Wensleydale and the rest of England.¹⁴ The line was served by stations at Leyburn, Wensley, Redmire, Aysgarth, Askrigg and Hawes. Hawes was a joint station, built by the Midland Company and manned by NER

⁶ NER Report of Directors for Half Year ending 31 December 1875, document in the possession of Mrs Yardley. Additional information supplied by M Weatherald, a director of the local building firm which had the contract for maintaining the stations on the line.

⁷ PRO, RG 10/4871, Census Enumerators' Handbooks (hereafter CEB), 1871. Such indications as exist appear to suggest that the sixteen-mile NER Leyburn to Hawes line and the six-mile Midland Hawes to Garsdale Head line took approximately the same time to construct ie two and a half to three years. After making allowance for the clear differences in the rate and cost of construction per mile between the two lines, it is assumed that the labour force at any one point in time would have been more or less in proportion to the lengths of the two lines.

⁸ Based on an 80 per cent unskilled workforce, see T R Gourvish, *Railways and the British Economy 1830-1914*, 1980, p 20; a table of weekly wages, 1843 to 1869, for a major railway contractor's employees and quoted in T Coleman, *The Railway Navvies*, 1967, p 61; and Coleman's subsequent general comments on wage rates on the Settle-Carlisle construction. It is proposed to present further details in a future article.

⁹ It is probable that a higher proportion of the wages of the NER navvies was spent in the locality, as the NER line passed through villages at approximately four-mile intervals and, therefore, local services may well have been used by the navvies.

¹⁰ Local people were not slow to take advantage of the influx and on occasions charged inflated prices. *Bedale and Northallerton Times*, 8 February 1879.

¹¹ This is an employment multiplier drawn from the modern economy. It has been assumed that it is appropriate to a labour intensive occupation such as railway construction.

¹² PRO, RG 10/4868-71, CEB, 1871.

¹³ *Bedale and Northallerton Times*, 10 August 1878.

¹⁴ *Darlington and Richmond Herald*, 5 October 1878.

staff. There was also a small exchange station at Hawes Junction (later renamed Garsdale).

II

When the first railways were constructed in the early nineteenth century their promoters considered that, at best, they would be substitutive, taking over traffic which had formerly moved by road, sea and canal. It was quickly realized, however, that the facility which the railway afforded for the relatively cheap and rapid movement of goods and people could be creative and could lead to substantially increased levels of traffic.¹⁵ Wensleydale was no exception and the arrival of the railway stimulated a major increase in both passenger and goods traffic.

Prior to the opening of the railway in 1878, communications in Wensleydale had been limited to the Richmond and Lancaster Turnpike, which followed the dale for part of its length, and a network of minor roads and tracks. These roads were generally in a poor condition and the Wensleydale Royal

Mail was able to provide a service only during the summer months.¹⁶ Throughout the area there was a lack of a frequent and regular system of public conveyance.

Once the railway opened it served not only the people of Wensleydale but also the neighbouring community in upper Swaledale. The daybooks kept by successive generations of the Garths, a Swaledale farming family, illustrate the importance of the Wensleydale railway to local people and provide a personal glimpse of the greatly increased mobility which rail transport made possible.¹⁷ When the complete line was opened in 1878, Francis Garth, who was the head of the family, travelled extensively, particularly to agricultural shows and markets as far afield as Northallerton, Darlington and Carlisle. Also, he visited London regularly and took his family for holidays to Harrogate, Scarborough, Bridlington, and Lytham St Annes. The Garth family was not alone in using the new mode of transport and the local community quickly took advantage of the railway, as shown in Table 1.

¹⁵ R C O Matthews, *A Study in Trade Cycle History*, Cambridge, 1954, p 108.

¹⁶ *The Wensleydale Advertiser*, 18 November 1845.

¹⁷ Garth Daybooks, 2/5/1-6, 1795-1911. Documents in the possession of J L Barker.

TABLE 1
Passenger Tickets Issued in Wensleydale 1871-1931

Year	Tickets Issued ¹	Population of Wensleydale & Upper Swaledale	Number of Tickets per Head of Population
1871	14,481 ²	16,116	0.9
1881	85,275 ³	15,213	5.6
1891	85,191	12,361	6.9
1901	84,262	10,910	7.7
1911	89,008	11,093	8.0
1921	96,340 ⁴	10,882	8.9
1931	34,034 ⁵	10,951	3.1

Note¹: At all six stations including Midland branch traffic (except 1871).

Note²: Only Leyburn Station open.

Note³: 1880 figure and includes estimates for some NER stations.

Note⁴: Includes estimates for certain stations based on 1920 returns.

Note⁵: Includes estimates for certain stations projected from Leyburn Station returns.

Source: PRO, RAIL 491/671-2, 674-5, Midland Railway Company Traffic and Expenses at Stations, 1880-1919; RAIL 527/2179, 2142, NER Annual Traffic Receipts and Statistics Book, 1885-1931; Census Abstracts, 1871-1931. Pearson MSS, NER Leyburn Station Annual Traffic Returns, 1871-1931.

Although the population of the area decreased steadily in the decades following the opening of the railway, passenger traffic on the combined NER/Midland Wensleydale line was maintained at a consistently high level, rising to a peak, estimated at 96,340, in 1921 and thereafter, due to the increased use of motor transport, declining rapidly in line with the national trend. The contribution of the Midland branch to the overall passenger traffic levels was always subordinate, averaging about 7500 passengers per annum in the decades up to 1920 and never rising above 10,000 in any year.¹⁸

Detailed returns available for Leyburn Station between 1871 and 1931 illustrate the changing trends in numbers of passenger tickets issued. Leyburn was the market town of the lower dale and handled approximately one third of all the NER Wensleydale passenger traffic and one quarter of the combined NER-Midland traffic on the Wensleydale line.¹⁹

The peak year for passenger traffic at Leyburn was 1915, when 29,160 tickets were issued, but this figure was inflated by the inclusion of over 4500 tickets issued to forces personnel from the nearby army camp. The peak for peacetime traffic followed the national trend, occurring in 1920 when 27,081 tickets were issued.²⁰ By 1926 the number of tickets issued at Leyburn was down to 17,737 and by 1938 it had fallen further to 5056, a decline of 81 per cent from the 1920 peak. Nationally, passenger traffic quadrupled between 1870 and 1912 and over the same period traffic on the NER system tripled.²¹ Although passenger traffic at

Leyburn increased between 1870 and 1912, it did so by little more than 50 per cent.²² This considerably lower rate of increase may be attributable largely to the continuing outward migration which resulted in the population of the area falling by over 30 per cent between 1871 and 1911.

The Wensleydale line was apparently very popular for travel within the dale, to neighbouring villages, to local markets, to school and, more occasionally, for travel beyond the dale for business trips, visits to district agricultural shows, day excursions, and holidays.²³ This is consistent with the view of earlier historians that travel on branch lines tended to be predominantly local.²⁴

III

Wensleydale was not wholly inaccessible to the visitor prior to the arrival of the railway. In 1844 the daily summer service of the Wensleydale Royal Mail between Bedale and Sedbergh was extended on three days a week to run a return journey from Northallerton Station through Wensleydale to Kendal, thereby considerably improving access to the dale from both east and west.²⁵ Following the opening of Leyburn Station in 1856 the opportunities for exploring Wensleydale improved. There was a substantial increase in the number of visitors to the dale, a fact supported by evidence of the growth of a significant tourist trade. From the 1860s, tourist guidebooks of the area proliferated, carrying many advertisements for hotels, boarding houses and conveyances to local beauty spots.²⁶ From 1856 many excursion trains were run into the dale from the North East. For example, on 14 August 1858 two

¹⁸ PRO, RAIL 491/671-2, 674-5, Midland Railway Company, Traffic and Expenses at Stations, 1877-1919.

¹⁹ PRO, RAIL 527/2179, NER Annual Traffic Receipts, 1885-1914; RAIL 527/2142, NER Statistics Book, 1915-35; RAIL 491/671-2, 674-5, *op cit*. NER Leyburn Station Annual Traffic Returns, 1871-1931. Documents in the possession of H W Pearson (hereafter Pearson MSS, Annual).

²⁰ Pearson MSS, Annual, *op cit*; H J Dyos and D H Aldcroft, *British Transport*, Leicester, 1971, p 303.

²¹ *Ibid*, p 148; R J Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914*, Leicester, 1976, pp 295-6.

²² Pearson MSS, Annual, *op cit*, 1870-1912.

²³ Garth Daybooks, *op cit*, 2/5/4-6, and local oral tradition.

²⁴ D Thomas, *The Country Railway*, 1976, p 79; D Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-80', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1971, p 341. Brooke notes that NER traffic in the 1870s was confined almost entirely to the Company's own network.

²⁵ *The Wensleydale Advertiser*, 7 May 1844.

²⁶ For a detailed list see Hallas, *op cit*, p 72.

TABLE 2

Tickets Collected at Leyburn and All Wensleydale Stations

Year	Leyburn	NER Wensleydale ¹	Midland branch ²
1912	41,839	144,272	12,970
1920	45,073	150,243	12,620
1930	15,559	40,945	4,357
1939	10,706	28,174	2,998

Note¹: Estimates based on tickets issued at Leyburn as a percentage of tickets issued for the whole of the NER line, including Leyburn.

Note²: Estimates based on the proportion of tickets issued at Hawes to those issued at Leyburn.

Source: Pearson MSS, *op cit*, 1912-39.

special excursion trains arrived carrying a total of 300 visitors and in August 1860 450 railway clerks and officials from Tyneside arrived in Leyburn for the day.²⁷

When the Wensleydale line was completed in 1878, substantial numbers of visitors arrived for the first time in the upper dale. The Midland Company immediately announced plans to provide 'frequent and cheap' opportunities for the 'operative classes' in the commercial centres of the West Riding to travel to the dale.²⁸ In late August 1879 the Company ran two cheap excursion trains from the West Riding to Hawes carrying about 1000 visitors.²⁹

In 1884 one guidebook noted that travel in Wensleydale had been greatly improved with the arrival of the railway and that the journey time between Leyburn and the industrial areas of Tyneside, Manchester, York and the West Riding was only between two and a half and three and a half hours.³⁰ By the 1890s the NER was advertising cheap circular tours from Leeds to be run in conjunction with the Midland Company.³¹ Other railway connections were listed in an attempt to attract visitors from further afield. Interest in active outdoor recreation was growing nationally in the late nineteenth century and, in step with this new trend,

cyclists and walkers were encouraged to visit the dale.³²

Returns of tickets collected at Leyburn commenced in 1912 and provide some indication of incoming traffic. An estimate of total incoming passenger traffic for Wensleydale can be derived from these returns.

In 1912, 10,960 return tickets were issued at Leyburn and, therefore, approximately one quarter of the 41,839 tickets collected at Leyburn in that year may have been these return tickets. Of the remaining 30,879 tickets collected, some will have been single tickets handed in by local people who had departed from Leyburn (travelling on single tickets). Even assuming that all the 12,489 who purchased single tickets at Leyburn in 1912 subsequently returned to Leyburn on single tickets, this still implies that 18,390 visitors arrived at Leyburn Station.³³ If this figure is projected to the rest of the Wensleydale railway, including the Midland

²⁷ *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle*, 14 August 1858 and 18 August 1860.

²⁸ J Routh, *A Railway Guide Through Wensleydale*, Hawes, 1880, p 1.

²⁹ *Bedale and Northallerton Times*, 6 September 1879.

³⁰ Late G Hardcastle, *Wanderings in Wensleydale*, revised C Horner, 1884, p 54.

³¹ J Leyland, *Wensleydale and Swaledale*, 1896, p 1.

³² A E Harrison, 'The Competitiveness of the British Cycle Industry 1890-1914', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, 22, 1969, p 288. The cycle industry enjoyed a boom in the mid 1890s and, because of the railway, Wensleydale was able to gain a greater advantage from this than would otherwise have been the case. A local newspaper, in 1895, reported that many cyclists and pedestrians had visited Wensleydale during the Easter holidays. *Darlington and Stockton Times*, 13 April 1895.

³³ Pearson MSS, Annual, *op cit*. Some of these will have been from other stations in the dale but for the purposes of the present exercise all are regarded as visitors from outside the dale. The basis of this calculation is not unreasonable because the resultant over-estimate of visitor numbers will, to a large extent, be compensated for by the assumption that all persons purchasing single tickets at Leyburn subsequently returned to Leyburn by rail.

branch, an estimated 69,000 visitors arrived in the dale by train in 1912.³⁴

If the modest assumption is made that these visitors spent 1s per head in the dale in 1912, this would have generated a revenue from tourism in Wensleydale of £3000–£4000 per annum.³⁵ As many visitors spent several days in the area, the total revenue from tourism is likely to have been much higher. Although such a calculation can provide only an approximate guide, it does give an indication of the financial importance of the tourist trade in Wensleydale. Substantial indirect benefits will also have accrued from tourism through improved productivity and employment opportunities due to increased demand for accommodation, provisions, road transport to beauty spots and the souvenir trade. Due to Wensleydale's isolation, it would not have been possible for this tourist industry to develop to any significant degree without the advent of the railway.

IV

From the time of the first railway proposals in the 1840s, residents and other observers had recognized the potential which a railway would release in the economy of the area. The editor of a local newspaper commented in 1845 that, in addition to the stimulation of

the tourist trade, dairy products would be sold quickly to the industrial West Riding; manufacturers would establish businesses in the dale, providing work for local people; and the mineral wealth of the area would be exploited.³⁶ This point was reiterated in the *Darlington and Stockton Times* immediately prior to the opening of the line.³⁷

In 1877, in anticipation of the arrival of the railway, Hawes established a market for dairy produce and, in September 1878, following the construction of pens to accommodate 10,000 sheep, the market committee instituted a new sheep and lamb market.³⁸ Later in the nineteenth century, Farmers' Auction Marts were established at Leyburn and Hawes, a factor which was not unrelated to the continuing decline of local fairs.³⁹ Prior to the arrival of the railway, livestock had been moved laboriously on the hoof with an attendant loss of quality.⁴⁰ The new railway facilitated the swift and efficient movement of fat cattle and sheep to the industrial areas, where they arrived in prime condition. Returns for Leyburn Station demonstrate the importance of the railway for the movement of livestock.

³⁶ *The Wensleydale Advertiser*, 24 June 1845.

³⁷ *Darlington and Stockton Times*, 22 July 1876.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1877. *Bedale and Northallerton Times*, 7 September 1878.

³⁹ Information supplied by M Hartley and J Ingilby.

⁴⁰ HLRO, Minutes of Evidence, HC, 1846, Vol 70, Liverpool Manchester and Newcastle Junction Railway Bill (hereafter LMNJ), evidence of Col Wood; HC, 1865, Vol 57, Skipton, Wharfedale and Leyburn Railway Bill (hereafter SWL), evidence of CE Coleridge. See also R Perren 'The Meat and Livestock Trade in Britain 1850–70', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, 28, 1975, p 386.

TABLE 3
Cattle Handled at Leyburn Station 1871–1931

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
<i>Cattle</i>							
Forwarded	3,715	4,153	6,098	3,183	3,894	3,253	2,001
Received	983	1,354	3,992	1,748	2,705	1,473	918
<i>Calves F & R</i>	19	299	609	214	430	180	232
Total	4,717	5,806	10,699	5,145	7,029	4,906	3,151

Source: Pearson MSS, *op cit*, 1871–1931.

TABLE 4

Total Cattle in Wensleydale 1874-7 to 1934-7¹

	1874-7	1884-7	1894-7	1904-7	1914-17	1924-7	1934-7
A Cows & heifers in milk or calf	4,330	4,653	4,410	4,575	5,120	5,698	6,349
B Total cattle	12,207	11,464	11,406	11,707	11,723	11,119	11,246
A as a % of B	35.5	40.6	38.7	39.1	43.7	51.2	56.5

Note¹: Average of four years in each decade.

Source: PRO, MAF 68/382, 439, 496, 553, 952, 1009, 1066, 1123, 1522, 1579, 1636, 1693, 2092, 2149, 2206, 2263, 2662, 2719, 2776, 2833, 3214, 3268, 3322, 3376, 3744, 3780, 3816, 3852.

Figures for 1874-7 and 1934-7 supplied by R Fieldhouse.

The numbers of cattle received at Leyburn (often in excess of 50 per cent of those forwarded) reflect its position as the lower dale market centre and will have included animals sent short distances from within the dale as well as incoming cattle for fattening in the area. Cattle handled at Leyburn reached a peak of 10,699 in 1891. Thereafter, a steady decline in numbers ensued, interrupted by a slight recovery in the early twentieth century, reaching a low point of 1897 in 1934 when the freight returns available for Leyburn end. The decline in cattle movement by rail was established, therefore, prior to the First World War and before the full impact of motor transport was felt.

The decline in numbers of cattle handled at Leyburn, a fall of 82 per cent from the peak in 1891 to 1934, reflected a general decline of cattle numbers in the dale, of about 8 per cent between the mid 1870s and the mid 1930s. This was against the national trend and was due partly to a shift from cattle fattening into more intensive dairy farming.⁴¹ In the mid

1870s an average of 35.5 per cent of all cattle were cows and heifers in milk or calf, a proportion which had risen to 43.7 per cent in the period 1914-17 and to 56.5 per cent in the mid 1930s. Further, after the 1920s, cattle were moved increasingly by road, a factor which helps to explain the decline of 61 per cent in the number of cattle handled at Leyburn Station between 1921 and 1934.

Another factor in the overall decline of cattle in the dale was that there was a shift in the type of pastoral farming in Wensleydale. The number of sheep in the dale increased by 14 per cent from an average of 77,682 per annum in 1874-7 to an average of 90,284 per annum in 1934-7.⁴² Table 5 shows the numbers of sheep handled at Leyburn.

The number climbed erratically from 5044 in 1868 to reach a peak of 29,240 in 1907, followed by an equally erratic decline. The peak and the establishment of the subsequent decline occurred, therefore, as with cattle, before the arrival of motor transport.

⁴¹ MAFF, *A Century of Agricultural Statistics, Great Britain 1866-1966*, 1968, pp 51, 123.

⁴² PRO, MAF, 68/382, 439, 496, 553, 3744, 3780, 3816, 3852, Ministry of Agriculture, Parish Summaries of the June Returns, 1874-77, 1934-37.

TABLE 5

Sheep Handled at Leyburn Station 1871-1931

Sheep	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
Forwarded	9,751	12,643	16,177	18,668	18,756	18,398	15,258
Received	550	2,128	5,332	3,741	4,243	2,073	2,088
Total	10,301	14,771	21,509	22,409	22,999	20,471	17,346

Source: Pearson MSS, *op cit*, 1871-1931.

However, it was only after 1931, with the increasing use of motor lorries, that the numbers of sheep handled at Leyburn collapsed from 17,346 in 1931 to 4347 in 1934.

Sheep movements on the Wensleydale railway fluctuated according to the time of year. The most important period was early autumn when the annual sheep fairs took place. In 1868, for example, of the 4392 sheep forwarded from Leyburn, 889 were sent in September and a further 2084 in October, 68 per cent of the annual sheep movement within two months. Other years reflect the same pattern.⁴³

Cattle movements exhibited a similar seasonality. The main cattle fairs took place in October and November. In 1868, when 3369 cattle were forwarded from Leyburn, 666 were moved in October and 1722 in November, 71 per cent of the annual total within two months.⁴⁴

Sheep were normally shorn in July and the number of fleeces sent by rail would have been substantial as the new transport system facilitated the removal of this bulky commodity. Formerly, wool (like livestock) had been transported by road due south via Wharfedale to the West Riding.⁴⁵ After 1878, the railway transported the wool either eastwards along the NER line or westwards by the Midland branch to reach the West Riding via the trunk systems. As soon as the NER line opened to Askrigg in 1877, Francis Garth of Swaledale forwarded his wool by rail. He recorded sending annually about 200 fleeces which, with each fleece weighing an average of four pounds, will have totalled some 57 stones. In 1873 he recorded receiving 1s per pound for the wool but by 1896 the price had fallen to 5¼d per pound.⁴⁶

An estimate of the number of fleeces forwarded from Wensleydale alone in the period 1874-7 can be made from the numbers of sheep above one year old. Based on present-day local practice one fifth of the sheep above one year old (the previous year's lambs retained as flock replacements) would have been unshorn. For the period 1874-7 this would have left an average of 34,180 fleeces per annum, which would have produced wool weighing approximately 9766 stone. At 1s per pound this would have yielded an income of £6836 to Wensleydale farmers. In the period 1894-7 the average number of fleeces per annum had risen slightly to 35,120, which would have produced wool weighing approximately 10,034 stone.⁴⁷ At the reduced price of 5¼d per pound which prevailed at this time, the income which Wensleydale farmers would have received from wool would have fallen to £3073. As noted earlier, however, wool had been a traditional export from the dale and, although the railway greatly facilitated its movement, the revenue which Wensleydale farmers received from this traffic cannot be attributed to the railway.

Pigs and geese figured to a lesser extent in the agriculture of the dale and the movement by rail of these animals was never great.

Individual categories of livestock are not available for the Wensleydale stations apart from Leyburn but total livestock figures for the NER stations demonstrate a similar overall trend to that of Leyburn. From 1885, the earliest available return, numbers rose rapidly from 37,610 to a peak of 75,933 in 1909 and thereafter declined, steadily at first, and then dramatically in the 1930s with the more widespread use of the motor lorry.⁴⁸ Livestock movements on the Midland branch rose steadily from an estimated 10,000 head in 1879 to a peak of 25,898 in 1919.⁴⁹ The peak for this traffic is later than that on the NER line, and reflects the fact that

⁴³ NER Leyburn Station Summary of Monthly Totals, 1868-1932. Documents in the possession of H W Pearson (hereafter Pearson MSS, Monthly).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ HLRO, Minutes of Evidence, HC, 1866, Vol 30, Midland Railway (Settle-Carlisle) Bill (hereafter S-C), evidence of C Other, SWL, *op cit*, evidence of C E Coleridge; Garth Daybooks, *op cit*, 2/5/4.

⁴⁶ Garth Daybooks, *op cit*, 2/5/3-5.

⁴⁷ PRO, MAF 68/382, 439, 496, 553, 1522, 1579, 1636, 1693, *op cit*.

⁴⁸ PRO, RAIL 527/2146, 2179, NER Station Traffic Index and *op cit*.

⁴⁹ PRO, RAIL 491/671-2, 674-5, *op cit*.

Hawes was the market town for the upper dale and sent the greater proportion of its livestock westwards by the Midland network. The market at Hellifield, situated on the Midland line to the south of Settle, became increasingly popular with the dale's farmers as it was easily accessible, was well attended by dealers from the industrial West Riding and Lancashire, and was a good centre for purchasing stock from other areas for fattening in Wensleydale.⁵⁰

Horses and dogs were carried by rail but numbers were generally small, except at Leyburn Station which served nearby Middleham, an important centre for race-horse training.⁵¹ The total number of horses forwarded and received at Leyburn Station rose from 1251 in 1868 to 1539 in 1900 and, contrary to other livestock numbers, continued to rise until the late 1930s when the records end.⁵² This traffic, of course, cannot be classed as agricultural.

V

The opening of the railway directly induced one major change in farming practice in Wensleydale which the speculators of the pre-railway days had not anticipated. Prior to 1878 most of the milk produced in the dale was converted into butter and cheese with only a little liquid milk retained for local consumption. With the advent of a rapid transport system, fresh milk could be sent from the Wensleydale farm to the urban consumer and, henceforth, other dairy produce played a supporting and not a dominant role. The timely arrival of the railway provided the dale's farmer with the means for survival when foreign competition was threatening traditional markets. The arrival of refrigerated ships carrying meat from New Zealand and North America in the 1880s and the increased imports of

continental dairy produce were adversely affecting pastoral farmers by the late nineteenth century.⁵³ The liquid milk market remained immune from foreign competition and the dale's farmer was quick to capitalize on the natural protection which this market enjoyed. Wensleydale was not alone in this respect and many rural areas moved into large-scale liquid milk production at this time. Henry Rew in 1892 commented 'every traveller by rail has noted the outward and visible signs of the expansion of this trade in the battalions of cans . . . which daily come and go along all the country lines of railway'.⁵⁴

The earliest reference to the movement of fresh milk from Wensleydale occurs in 1894, although probably milk had been sent by rail to the cities prior to this date. In 1894 milk was sent from Wensleydale via Northallerton to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sunderland, Darlington, Hull, York, and Leeds.⁵⁵ By the turn of the century it was being forwarded also to other West Riding towns, to Lancashire and to the large depot at Finsbury Park for supply to London.⁵⁶ The freight charge to farmers for the Lancashire traffic was 1s 11½d per 17-gallon can.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ C S Orwin and E H Whetham, *History of British Agriculture 1846-1914*, 1964, pp 259-60.

⁵¹ R H Rew, 'An inquiry into the statistics of the production and consumption of milk and milk products in Great Britain', *JRSS*, LV, 1892, p 262.

⁵² PRO, RAIL 527/290, *NER Minutes and Reports on Milk Traffic*, 1905.

⁵³ *NER Rate Book for perishable merchandise by passenger train or other similar service*, Askrigg, 1892, used with updates until the early twentieth century (hereafter Bell MSS, Askrigg Rate Book); letter re milk traffic from Askrigg to Liverpool, 1899. Documents in the possession of K A Bell. The growth of rail-borne milk to London has been discussed elsewhere, though with no mention of Wensleydale milk. See E H Whetham, 'The London Milk Trade 1860-1900', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, 17, 1964-5, pp 369-80, and *The London Milk Trade 1900-1930*, Reading, 1970; D Taylor, 'London's Milk Supply, 1850-1900: A Reinterpretation', *Agricultural History*, 45, 1971, pp 33-8, and 'The English Dairy Industry 1860-1930: The need for a reassessment', *Ag Hist Rev*, 22, 1974, pp 153-9. Taylor makes the point that the years 1890-1910 were not characterized by any marked increase in milk production nationally, p 155. Clearly, this was not the case in Wensleydale. P J Atkins, 'The Growth of London's Railway Milk Trade, c 1845-1914', *Journal of Transport History*, IV, 1975, notes that in the 1890s the GNR with its Finsbury Park depot was one of only two companies to provide a special milk terminal, p 213.

⁵⁷ Bell MSS, Askrigg Rate Book, *op cit*.

⁵⁰ Local oral tradition.

⁵¹ For example, in 1899 only 492 Horses, Carriages and Dogs were forwarded on the NER line excluding Leyburn. PRO, RAIL 527/2166, *NER Traffic Receipts*.

⁵² Pearson MSS, Annual, *op cit*, 1868-1934.

Milk forwarded from NER Wensleydale stations grew from 27,000 gallons in 1899 to 118,584 gallons in 1901 and to 454,562 gallons in 1905.⁵⁸ Because of the increase in demand, and the consequent need to process and distribute Wensleydale milk quickly and efficiently, a bottling depot was erected by the NER at Northallerton. This was let to the newly-formed Wensleydale Pure Milk Society (WPMS).⁵⁹ Unlike their Welsh counterparts, the dale's farmers accepted the need to work through co-operatives to realize the potential which the railway offered for the export of both liquid milk and other dairy produce.⁶⁰

Within its first few years of operation the WPMS depot was sending milk to Tyneside, Teesside, the West Riding and London.⁶¹ Despite certain early financial problems the Society thrived and by 1907 the WPMS milk accounted for over £1800 of the total NER milk traffic revenue of £15,000.⁶² In 1911, with the encouragement of the NER, the Wensleydale Farmers' Association was established at Redmire and a dairy was constructed adjacent to the railway at Redmire Station.⁶³

Following the establishment of the WPMS, milk traffic from the stations on the

Wensleydale line rose dramatically and by 1911 759,763 gallons were being forwarded annually from Wensleydale to the WPMS depot at Northallerton.⁶⁴ In addition substantial quantities of Wensleydale milk were being forwarded direct to urban markets.⁶⁵ The Redmire co-operative, which had fifty members in 1911, was run in conjunction with the WPMS until it ceased trading in 1931. The following year the WPMS depot and the Redmire dairy were sold to Cow and Gate Company.⁶⁶ The Northallerton depot continued to operate, although less milk was sent from Wensleydale.⁶⁷

Accounts for milk sent from Askrigg between 1925 and 1932 illustrate the scale of this traffic. In the mid 1920s thirteen farmers and two local dairies were forwarding their milk daily and paying on a monthly account. Table 6 shows the numbers of farmers with monthly accounts in the early 1930s and the destination of the milk.

It is interesting to note that in the early 1930s an average of 82.5 per cent of all milk forwarded from Askrigg was destined for London, some 250 miles distant. During September 1932 the last consignments of milk passed through the upper dale stations. On 1 October the milk lorries arrived in the

⁵⁸ PRO, RAIL 527/1273, miscellaneous documents relating to the WPMS Depot, includes *Report on the WPMS Depot*, 1908.

⁵⁹ PRO, RAIL 527/290, *op cit*.

⁶⁰ Howell, *op cit*, pp 55-7.

⁶¹ PRO, RAIL 527/1273, *Report on the WPMS Depot*, c1906.

⁶² *Ibid*, *Report on the WPMS Depot*, 1908. Total milk from Wensleydale in 1907 accounted for £3117 of NER milk traffic revenue.

⁶³ PRO, RAIL 527/745, *Agreement between NER and Wensleydale Farmers' Association Ltd*, 26 October 1911.

⁶⁴ PRO, RAIL 527/391, NER Goods Dept District Officers Report, 1911.

⁶⁵ T C Calvert, *Wensleydale Cheese*, Clapham, 1977, pp 14-15.

⁶⁶ PRO, RAIL 527/1273, *Sale notice of WPMS Depot and Redmire Dairy*, 1932; K Hooile, *Railways in the Yorkshire Dales*, Clapham, 1975, p 33.

⁶⁷ PRO, RAIL 527/1273, *Milk Traffic Forwarded from Northallerton*, 1936-7.

TABLE 6
Milk Freight from Askrigg Station (in gallons) 1930-2

Year	Farmers	Destinations			Total
		Leeds	Appleby	Finsbury Park	
1930	22 + 1 ¹	21,683	—	228,189	249,872
1931	22 + 1 ¹	15,614	17,985	240,038	273,637
1932 ²	not recorded	9,120	71,940	172,964	254,024

Note¹: Mason's Dairy, Askrigg.

Note²: For the sake of comparison figures are projected for the whole year, although from 1 October all milk was sent by road to Appleby.

Source: Bell MSS, LNER Milk Accounts Ex Askrigg, 1925-33.

TABLE 7

Milk Freight at Leyburn Station (in gallons) 1909-39

	1909	1914 ¹	1919 ²	1924	1929	1934	1939
Non-WPMS	13,484	37,100	174,470	259,233	345,875	38,865 ³	3,227,215
WPMS		Not recorded			41,094	102,275	139,936
					386,969	141,140	3,367,151

Note¹: Estimated.

Note²: 1920 figure.

Note³: This exceptionally low figure may be due to an incorrect return (1935 = 162,981 Non WPMS milk and 101,402 WPMS = total of 264,383 gallons).

Source: Pearson MSS, *op cit*, 1909-39.

dale and, with the exception of some farms in the Hawes area which served the local cheese factory, the milk was taken direct from the farm to the Express Dairy at Appleby.⁶⁸

A consideration of the milk traffic at Leyburn between 1909 and 1939 provides further indication of the importance of liquid milk as part of the agricultural economy of the dale.

The amazing increase in milk traffic at Leyburn in 1939 was due mainly to the diversion of most of the upper dale milk from Appleby to the new Express Dairy at Leyburn (opened 1937). Initially this cooling dairy handled 4000 gallons of milk daily which was sent forward to the Express Dairy's bottling plant at Cricklewood.⁶⁹ For much of the life of the line a substantial volume of milk was forwarded westwards by the Midland branch but detailed information is not available to quantify this traffic.⁷⁰

The new liquid milk industry had an important impact on the economy of the dale. The price of milk fluctuated greatly in the early twentieth century and, on occasions, farmers were able to command high prices for their milk, particularly from

city buyers who bought direct from the farm. However, the sale of milk on the open market involved a certain amount of risk and many farmers preferred the comparative security of contracts with the WPMS and other local outlets.⁷¹ In 1907 the WPMS was paying 7½d per gallon. In that year 570,241 gallons were forwarded from Wensleydale on the NER line, of which 370,882 gallons were destined for the WPMS. Based on the WPMS price, the total milk forwarded would have produced revenue of £17,820.⁷²

By 1932, after much fluctuation, farmers supplying the cheese dairy at Hawes were receiving an average of 6½d per gallon for milk.⁷³ By this date, at a conservative estimate, some two million gallons of milk were forwarded annually from the dale, which would have yielded a revenue of £54,167 to local farmers.⁷⁴ This was followed by a decline in both milk output and prices during the depths of the depression but by 1939 over three million gallons of liquid milk were forwarded from the dale (see Table 7), which even at 1932 price levels would have yielded a substantial revenue.

⁶⁸ M Hartley and J Ingilby, *Yorkshire Village*, 1953, p 252.

⁶⁹ By the 1950s, thirty people were employed to handle the milk and an average of 33,000 gallons per day were forwarded by rail until the closure of the line to passenger traffic in 1954. This traffic was then diverted to road going mainly to destinations in the North East. Details supplied by A V Slack, former manager of the Express Dairy, Leyburn.

⁷⁰ Bell MSS, Askrigg Rate Book, *op cit*; Hoole, *op cit*, p 30. Additional information supplied by the late T C Calvert.

⁷¹ Calvert, *op cit*, 1977, p 15. Additional information supplied by the late T C Calvert.

⁷² PRO, RAIL 527/1273, *Report on the WPMS Depot*, 1908.

⁷³ T C Calvert, *Kit Calvert of Wensleydale*, Clapham, 1981, p 15. 5d per gallon in summer and 8d per gallon in winter. Calvert notes also the impact of the Milk Marketing Board (established October 1933) on the dairy industry of the dale, p 17, and Calvert *op cit*, 1977, pp 24-30.

⁷⁴ The estimate is based on a projection of the LNER Milk Accounts, Askrigg, 1925-33. Document in the possession of K A Bell.

Although liquid milk became of primary importance to the dale's dairy farmer, other dairy produce was not totally eclipsed. The production and forwarding of cheese and butter continued to be substantial.⁷⁵ The impact of the Wensleydale railway on dairy production in the area was, therefore, considerable, not only in enabling a liquid milk industry to be established but also in assisting the transportation of other dairy produce.

VI

The Wensleydale railway had a major influence on the rapid development of stone quarrying within the dale. Demand for stone was high in the expanding industrial areas and the potential which the railway offered for exporting stone, a factor which had been recognized in the early days of promotion, was quickly realized.⁷⁶ Large deposits of good quality sandstone for use as flags and slates were quarried in the upper dale. Two quarries at Burtersett, near Hawes, were particularly productive, causing a writer to comment in 1884 that since the 1820s 'the village has deteriorated in prosperity . . . but I am happy to think it is again flourishing, since the introduction of a railroad . . . its

flags, stones and mines are becoming valuable'.⁷⁷ Output at Burtersett rose, with fluctuations, from 5750 tons in 1882 to a peak of 12,950 tons in 1886. Three other quarries in the Hawes area produced a further 3861 tons in that year.⁷⁸

Returns available for the Midland branch demonstrate the rapid growth in the export of stone from Hawes. Stone exports rose from 2664 tons in 1879 to 13,170 tons at the peak in 1889 (see Table 8). There followed a rapid decline leading to the virtual extinction of the industry in the period immediately following the First World War, when the most accessible seams of stone were exhausted and demand for building stone diminished.⁷⁹

Smaller quantities of stone were also sent eastwards over the NER network but detailed information is not available.⁸⁰

In 1882 three quarries in the upper dale employed a total of eighty workers, of which seventy-five were employed at the two Burtersett quarries.⁸¹ It is estimated on the basis of output that the number of workers employed in the upper dale quarries had risen to approximately 200 at the peak in 1886. Numbers then declined but even at the turn of the century the two Burtersett quarries alone still employed about 100 workers.⁸² In the late nineteenth century the wage for skilled quarry workers in the upper dale was about 16s per week and the starting wage for

⁷⁵ NER Telegraphs to Askrigg, complaints from Stockton and elsewhere re consignments of cheese, 1881. Documents in the possession of E Daykin. NER Aysgarth Invoices, April 1877 (hereafter, Bell MSS, Aysgarth Invoices). Substantial numbers of empty butter boxes were received from Bradford Station. Document in possession of K A Bell. NER Traffic Details, c1905. The train due to depart Hawes at 3.25 pm on Tuesdays (market day) was instructed to wait until the butter was ready. Document in the possession of P Moore.

⁷⁶ HLRO, Minutes of Evidence, HC, 1846, Yorkshire and Glasgow Union Bill, evidence of P Buck; S-C, *op cit*, evidence of C Other. *The Wensleydale Advertiser*, 8 July 1845. *Darlington and Stockton Times*, 22 July 1876.

⁷⁷ J Chapman, *Burtersett Sixty Years Ago*, Hawes, 1884, p 12.

⁷⁸ PRO, ZHC1/4688, 4622, *Reports of the Inspectors of Mines*, 1882-3; RAIL 1060/18-21, *Mineral Statistics*, 1884-7.

⁷⁹ PRO, RAIL 491/671-2, 674-5, *op cit*. Calvert, *Burtersett Seventy Years Ago*, Hawes, 1974, p 7.

⁸⁰ Pearson MSS, Monthly, *op cit*.

⁸¹ PRO, RAIL ZHC1/4688, *op cit*.

⁸² Calvert, *op cit*, 1974, p 2.

TABLE 8
Stone Freight Forwarded on the Midland Branch from Hawes (in tons) 1881-1916¹

1881	1886	1891	1896	1901	1906	1911	1916
4541	6005	10,883	6654	3640	2279	2400	779

Note¹: Three year moving average.

Source: PRO, RAIL 491/671-2, 674-5, *op cit*.

unskilled workers was about 6s.⁸³ On this basis the average wage bill for all quarries in the upper dale in 1886 would have been approximately £110 per week or £5720 per year.⁸⁴

In enabling this upper dale industry to flourish, albeit for a short period, the railway directly influenced the employment prospects for a significant number of local people (possibly totalling about 940, including dependants, in the late 1880s) who may otherwise have had to leave the area to find work.⁸⁵

The quarries of the lower dale were primarily limestone and, therefore, supplied a different market from that of the upper dale: The Carboniferous limestone was quarried mainly for aggregate and for flux for use in the steel industry. Limestone quarrying had developed on a significant scale as early as 1856 when a siding was constructed to serve Harmby Quarry, immediately east of Leyburn, when the new Bedale and Leyburn Railway was built.⁸⁶ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries other quarry sidings were constructed at West Quarry, Leyburn, at Wensley and at Redmire. Production at the lower dale limestone quarries appears to have expanded rapidly in the 1920s. At Redmire, for example, production rose from 11,478 tons in 1921 to over 33,000 tons in 1923.⁸⁷ So, as with the tourist trade and milk production, the railway had a creative impact on the quarrying industry rather than a merely substitutive role.

VII

Miscellaneous goods traffic on the Wensleydale line increased dramatically in the years following the opening of the line. Total goods traffic for the whole line rose to a

peak of 26,732 tons in 1898 before settling to an average of about 21,000 tons per annum prior to the First World War.⁸⁸ In addition to greatly facilitating the export of dales produce the railway served a vital role in assisting the import of essential commodities, thereby improving the quality of dales life and enabling the area to compete more effectively with other parts of the country.

The facility which the railway afforded to the farming community for the import of fodder and other farm requisites was invaluable in enabling the agricultural economy to respond to change. Invoices of goods received at Aysgarth in April 1877, shortly after the line opened, illustrate the quantity and type of goods imported.⁸⁹ A variety of agricultural products, including corn, feedcake, hay, straw, manure, bones and phosphate soda were received.⁹⁰ Apart from agricultural products arriving at Aysgarth in April 1877, the railway facilitated the import of building materials, such as bricks and Welsh slates which hitherto had not been used to any great extent in the dales. Domestic provisions and manufactured goods were more easily accessible.

Commodities were received in Wensleydale from the furthest parts of the British Isles and also from abroad via the ports of the north. For example, cider was sent from Leominster, salt from Northwich, Welsh slates from Bangor, Llangollen and Dolgellau, Westmorland slates from Windermere, concrete blocks from Lancashire, cement from the Midlands, sanitary pipes from Castleton, soot from Glasgow and Edinburgh, basic slag from Middlesbrough, iron and steel from Teesside, and

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ The figures are derived by estimating a nominal 100 workers at 16s per week and 100 at 6s per week.

⁸⁵ Using a multiplier of 4.7.

⁸⁶ Ordnance Survey, Sheet 68, Leyburn Area, 6 inches to a mile, 1856.

⁸⁷ PRO, RAIL 527/2142, 2146, *op cit.*

⁸⁸ PRO, RAIL 527/2179, 2142; 491/671-2, 674-5, *op cit.*

⁸⁹ Bell MSS, Aysgarth Invoices, *op cit.*

⁹⁰ The movement of hay and straw into the dale during the winter months was often substantial. For example, between January and May 1886, fifty-eight tons of hay and twenty-two tons of straw were received at Askrigg Station. NER Goods Weighing Book, Askrigg, 1 January-29 May, 1886. Document in the possession of D Brown.

deals, battens and boards from Hartlepool.⁹¹ The wide availability of imported goods was not an unequivocal advantage. The numbers of craftsmen in the area declined towards the end of the century and some local industry suffered.⁹² However, the advantages of the railway decisively outweighed its disadvantages for the majority of the dales people.

Before the railway era, Durham and other quality coal had been transported into the dale, first by packhorse and later by wagon.⁹³ This foreign coal was expensive but was of much better quality than local Wensleydale coal.⁹⁴ Prior to 1 August 1878, good quality coal was sold at Hawes at 9d per hundredweight, but within days of the opening of the rail service increased competition led to a marked fall in prices and St John's Normanton coal was being offered at 6½d per hundredweight including delivery within Hawes.⁹⁵ In 1879, when 1847 tons of coal were imported into Hawes via the Midland Railway, this would have represented an immediate saving to the local population of £385.⁹⁶ It is likely that other settlements along the Wensleydale line enjoyed similar savings.

Coal freight on the Wensleydale line was substantial in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and detailed returns for

Leyburn, set out in Table 9, provide an indication of the scale of this traffic.

Between 1881 and 1931 there was a fall of 39 per cent in the tonnage of coal arriving at Leyburn Station. Coal received on the whole of the NER Wensleydale line followed a similar trend. From 13,184 tons received in 1885 this traffic declined to 10,923 tons in 1901, recovered to 12,719 tons in 1911 and subsequently underwent a sustained decline.⁹⁷ This trend is contrary to that on the rest of the NER network where coal freight more than doubled between 1871 and 1912.⁹⁸ Coal was received at Hawes over both the NER and Midland networks. In the late nineteenth century an average of about 1900 tons per annum was received at Hawes via the Midland network. This traffic fluctuated at a somewhat lower level in the early part of the twentieth century before undergoing the same sustained decline as was experienced on the NER network. As most of the coal arriving in Wensleydale was for domestic use it is probable that the downward trend reflects the decline in population as much as the adoption of other forms of fuel.⁹⁹

VIII

It is not possible to quantify precisely the impact which the railway had on the economy and society of Wensleydale and upper Swaledale. However, an indication of the benefits which the railway brought can be gained from the foregoing analysis. In general terms the railway opened up the dale to the mainstream influences of Victorian England and, conversely, gave the dalesman and his produce greatly improved access to the nation at large. Specifically, the railway laid the foundations for the modern tourist industry, assisted agriculture to adapt to changed circumstances and markets thereby enabling it to survive periods of depression,

TABLE 9
Coal Received at Leyburn (in tons)
1871-1931¹

1871 ²	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
12,194	6016	5493	5009	5661	4120	3671

Note ¹: Three year moving average.

Note ²: Leyburn handled coal for the upper dale before 1877.

Source: Pearson MSS, *op cit*, 1871-1931.

⁹¹ NER Rate Book for Merchandise, Askrigg, 1895, and updated to 1908. Document in the possession of K A Bell.

⁹² PRO, HO 107/1252, 1254, 2379-80, RG9/3667-71, RG10/4868-71, RG11/4873-6, CEB, 1841-81.

⁹³ E Pontefract and M Hartley, *Wensleydale*, 1936, p 171.

⁹⁴ HLRO, Minutes of Evidence, LMNJ, *op cit*, evidence of R C Allen and W Lodge.

⁹⁵ *Bedale and Northallerton Times*, 24 and 31 August 1878.

⁹⁶ PRO, RAIL 491/672, *op cit*. Some coal was also transported over the NER network but 1885 is the earliest NER extant record.

⁹⁷ PRO, RAIL 527/2179, *op cit*.

⁹⁸ Irving, *op cit*, p 293.

⁹⁹ Pearson MSS, Monthly, *op cit*, 1868-1932.

and provided essential support to other traditional and new industries. It is clear that the railway did not achieve its peak impact on all sectors of the economy at the same time. Indeed, passenger traffic and the various categories of freight traffic reached their peak levels at markedly different times as is demonstrated in Table 10.

TABLE 10
Peak Usage of the Wensleydale Railway by
Passengers and Freight

1877-1900	1900-1925	1926-1954 ¹
Cattle	Sheep	Milk
Upper dale stone	Passengers	Lower dale stone
Coal		Leyburn
Goods		Race-horses

Note ¹: Although the documentary details of the Wensleydale railway summarized in Table 10 end in the 1930s, oral sources confirm that the same pattern of peak usage exhibited in the 1930s continued until the closure of the line to passenger traffic in 1954.

Unfortunately, despite the considerable boost which the railway gave to the dale's economy and the improvement which it brought to the quality of life of the dale's inhabitants, its impact was not sufficient to reverse the sustained decline in population which set in after 1861. In fact, the railway had the paradoxical effect of assisting the dale's economy whilst at the same time, by increasing mobility and extending

awareness of the outside world, facilitating depopulation.

To what extent was the Wensleydale line commercially viable and profitable to the NER and Midland Companies? In the absence of complete details of all capital costs and all revenue receipts and expenditure, and without carrying out a full financial appraisal, it is not possible to answer this question with any precision. It would appear, however, that certain classes of traffic, such as passengers, minerals and milk, far exceeded expectations and at times may have rendered the line profitable. Bearing in mind that protection of territory rather than profitability was the prime motive for construction of the line it would certainly seem that, overall, the line performed rather better than anticipated. Nevertheless, as a branch line in a relatively remote rural area, the line cannot have been more than occasionally profitable and, over its full lifespan, cannot have provided an acceptable return on the capital invested.

In the end the railway could not withstand the competition from the motor car and motor lorry and by the early 1950s it was estimated that the line was losing £14,000 per annum.¹⁰⁰ The line was largely closed to passengers in 1954 and to goods traffic west of Redmire in 1964, marking the end of an era in the life of Wensleydale.

¹⁰⁰ *Darlington and Stockton Times*, 24 April 1954.

(continued from page 11)

Medieval England', and Dr C Holmes on 'The Development of Agricultural Advisory Services in England and Wales, c.1900-1950'. Thereafter the conference will concentrate on the early modern period with a round-table discussion of *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* Volume V on Tuesday evening and papers on Wednesday morning by Dr M Mylechreest on 'Thomas Andrew Knight, FRS, FLS (1759-1838) — from Gentleman Farmer to Scientific Gardener', Dr P Edwards on 'Horses in the Economy of Tudor and Stuart Britain' and Dr P Glennie on 'Agrarian Change in an early modern "Metropolitan

County": Hertfordshire c.1550-1700'. Booking forms should be inserted with this issue of the *Review* and further copies can be obtained from the Secretary of the Society.

The 1987 Annual Conference will be held at the University of Ulster, Magee College Campus Londonderry and is being organized by Dr P Roebuck, Department of History, University of Ulster, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, Northern Ireland BT52 1SA. Offers of papers should be sent to the Secretary of the Society as soon as possible.

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