Robin Hood Line

The Midland Railway

Mansfield to Worksop Line - opened 1875
Part of the Robin Hood Line

Contents

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Front cover photograph is of the Langwith-Whaley Thorns Station 2023

Introduction

The Midland Railway Company (MR) had been formed in 1844 by the merger of three earlier companies: the Midland Counties Railway, the Birmingham & Derby Junction Railway, and the North Midland Railway. It eventually grew to become the third largest railway company in the UK and possibly the most important company to carry coal around the land, which was a significant factor when coal mine owners were deciding to sink their new mines in the second half of the Victorian era.

The railway between Mansfield and Worksop was an extension of the well-established Mansfield to Nottingham route and made a significant impact for both passengers and goods by connecting Nottingham directly with Worksop. For those people and industries using this line it meant that the whole country was now on their doorstep through connecting lines.

Thanks to this new line many new or existing businesses were able to flourish and consequently create thousands of jobs in the area, hence significantly boosting the local economy. Residents were now able to commute to other towns and villages for work and use the rail network for leisure purposes.

This booklet tells the successful story of the Mansfield to Worksop railway. It shows what the MR offered its users, what companies took advantage of those facilities and how the people used it to improve the quality of their lives. The year 2025 will recognise a well-deserved 150 years of prosperity to those communities between Mansfield and Worksop, which couldn't have happened without this railway. Since the 1990s the line has been known as the Robin Hood Line, which keeps its legacy alive.

The Midland Railway Company coat of arms.

The Story of the Railway

The Midland Railway Company in Nottinghamshire

By the time that the Midland Railway Company (MR) had been established in 1844 several companies had noticed that Mansfield had fallen behind times with its connection to the wider rail network and its motive power – they were still using horses to pull trucks into the town along the Mansfield & Pinxton Railway (M&P). The MR were keen to get to Mansfield first with steam engines, to secure their interests in this part of the country, so they negotiated with the M&P to purchase their existing line.

An offer was made by the MR to buy all the shares in the M&P and assent was given to this proposal. On 19 June 1846 George Hudson, representing the MR, at a meeting in Mansfield, agreed to buy the M&P railway and convert it into a locomotive line. After paying just over £21,000 for the line the new company proceeded to spend £275,000 to both upgrade the original Mansfield to Pinxton line and build a new line through the Leen valley from a junction at Kirkby-in-Ashfield, known as The Summit, to Nottingham. A further £40,000 was allocated to purchase stock for the new line between Nottingham and Mansfield.

The Mansfield & Pinxton Railway began operating in 1819 as a horse drawn railway and has continued to provide a commercial service ever since, making it England's oldest continuously running commercial railway.

On this railway you will find the Portland Viaduct, which crosses the river Maun at the northern end of the Kings Mill Reservoir. Its construction was completed in 1817 and is now England's oldest surviving railway viaduct.

Connecting Mansfield to Nottingham

Work commenced on the Leen valley line in 1847 and opened the following year (2 October 1848) between Nottingham and the Summit junction. For the next year passengers from Nottingham had to change from their steam driven trains to horse drawn carriages at The Summit to finish their journey to Mansfield, but the horse drawn carriages failed to provide sufficient transport and many passengers had to walk the final few miles into Mansfield. It wasn't until the next year that the MR had upgraded the old M&P railway to enable steam locomotives to enter Mansfield; the first commercial passenger service took place on the 10 October 1849. By 1850 the entire M&PR line had been upgraded for steam, which now connected Mansfield to the rapidly nation-wide expanding network of rails. Connections were now made available with junctions in both Nottingham and the Erewash Valley, by extending the Pinxton end of the line to join the MR line between Chesterfield and Ironville at Pye Bridge.

One major piece of work along the new Leen Valley line was the construction of the Kirkby Tunnel. It took nearly 12 months of construction to complete the tunnel. Early in July 1848, the subcontractor, Mr. Cockayne, celebrated with his workmen at the Blue Bell Inn, Annesley Woodhouse. This was reported to be an accident-free operation.

The Nottingham newspapers started carrying timetables from 1848, which showed that trains from Kirkby took 40 minutes to Nottingham. Once the trains started running from Mansfield the full journey took 55 minutes.

Therefore, in just under three years of construction Mansfield, Sutton, Kirkby and Pinxton had joined the national network for both freight and passengers, with steam locomotives. Work also included the introduction of Stations for the use of passengers, which were constructed on the new Leen Valley line, at Kirkby, at Sutton Junction, Pinxton and Mansfield; the latter not being alongside the railway but merely acting as a ticket office, about 50 metres from the line, with the passengers still using the goods wharf to board the trains.

Putting Worksop on the Railway Map

The MR didn't have the privilege of connecting Worksop to the rail network, this fell to the 'Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway' company (MS&LR). It all began with the 'Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester Railway' which as early as 1831 devised a plan to connect Manchester to Sheffield, but a final and successful plan wasn't approved by parliament until 1837. However, this was a very difficult route due to crossing the Pennines and it wasn't until 1845 that services between these three towns began.

Extending the line towards the east coast now became a priority, which would include the towns of Worksop and Retford in North Nottinghamshire. This company was not the only one with eyes on this part of the country: The 'Sheffield & Lincolnshire Junction Railway' were also planning to construct a line to connect Sheffield, Worksop and Retford to Gainsborough and received parliamentary approval in 1846 to do so. At the same time the 'Great Grimsby & Sheffield Junction' railway company were planning lines in the same area. After discussions these three companies merged to form the MS&LR in 1847, which then forged ahead with the construction of the line between Sheffield and Gainsborough.

This new line opened on the 18 July 1849, with stations at both Worksop and Retford.

Mansfield to Worksop

It is thought that initially the MS&LR were content with their new line and all the commercial opportunities that it offered in the South Yorkshire region. However, another company was now looking at the commercial opportunities, particularly the emergence of interest in the potential coal mines, along the Notts/Derby's border between Mansfield and Worksop, namely the Great Northern Railway (GNR) company. This interest hadn't escaped the aggressive MR who were keen to protect their patch and get their line laid first between Mansfield and Worksop, taking into consideration the coal industry.

The MR drew up their first plan in 1859 and presented it to parliament the following year but withdrew the application after both the Dukes of Portland & Newcastle lodged their objections to it being too close to their estates. This issue then stirred the MS&LR who, along with the MR, both submitted plans to parliament in 1861 to construct a line to connect the two towns. The GNR hadn't disappeared; they decided to back the MS&LR. Both schemes were withdrawn and after negotiations the two companies decided to work together with the MR promising MS&LR 'running powers' over their line, should they receive permission to build it.

Over the next few years, the MR concentrated their efforts in other parts of the country but were aware of the urgency of the Mansfield to Worksop line due to colliery owners wanting to sink their new mines in this area. The GNR and MS&LR were also back in the race to embrace this part of the country. To prevent these two companies from winning this race the MR started negotiations with the two dukes and were successful in reaching an agreement. Despite the GNR submitting a plan to parliament the MR finally won the race thanks to the support of the dukes and the Mansfield industrialists.

Parliamentary approval was granted on 5 June 1865, which included the full route, a new station in Mansfield and a route to Southwell. Sadly, the new route had to wait a few more years because the MR were already heavily financially committed, and the country (especially Mansfield) was in a recession.

Mansfield to Southwell

The MR also received approval to construct a line from Mansfield to Southwell. Although there appeared to be only a small immediate need for this line their attention was drawn to the fact that there were large reserves of coal under Sherwood Forest, which would be mined in decades to come. A single-track line, with a passing loop, was constructed to Southwell from a junction half a mile south of the Mansfield station and opened for traffic on the 3 April 1871. The line continued through Southwell to join the Nottingham-Lincoln line at Rolleston, thus opening a whole new market for Mansfield's products.

A MR Johnson 0-4-4 locomotive and train at Worksop in 1906. Courtesy Richard Allsopp collection.

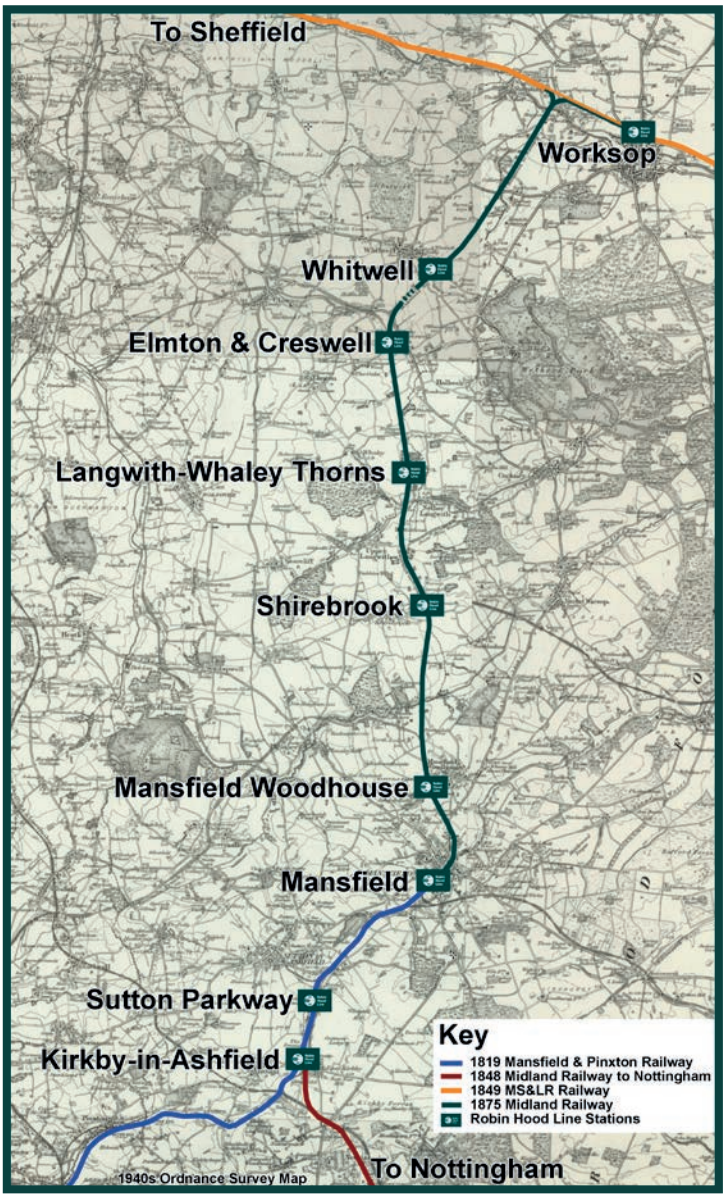
After many years of anticipation tenders for the work on the railway finally went out in January 1869 and the work commenced in June 1870. Along this 15-mile route there were three major engineering feats to be considered:

1. Excavating a 544-yard (497 metres) tunnel under Bakestone Moor near Whitwell.
2. Excavating a large cutting near Langwith.
3. Building a viaduct across Mansfield town centre.

Work commenced on the Langwith cutting. At the same time pre-construction work was taking place in Mansfield, with the compulsory purchase of many town centre properties and their subsequent demolition. The stone extracted at Langwith was then carted into Mansfield to be used in the construction of the 15 arch viaduct that was to effectively cut Mansfield town centre in two, reaching up to 70 feet in height (21 metres).

The minute books of the Mansfield Improvement Commission indicate that they were only passively supportive of the new line and got increasingly frustrated with the MR due to a shortage of communication, poor quality of workmanship and failure to keep promises. The clerk was frequently ordered to write stern letters to the MR.

Once the Southwell line was completed more navvies would have been transferred to the Worksop line. Although the viaduct was completed in 1872 it stood idle until the opening of the line in 1875. The Langwith cuttings were not completed until December 1874. Meanwhile



the Whitwell tunnel and the rest of the work moved forward, including embankments, cuttings, and bridges. Finally, the rails were laid, and the route opened for passenger traffic on 1 June 1875.

There was great excitement amongst Mansfield residents, who were eager to ride over the new viaduct. It was noted that around 100 residents purchased a ticket to Mansfield Woodhouse, on the first ever passenger train, and then walked back to Mansfield in time to go to work. Many residents of the other villages, along the route, also turned out to witness the first passenger train.

The MR commercial trains started running on the line in September, while the MS&LR commercial trains commenced in November.

1872 to 75 Upgrades

The MR took this opportunity to upgrade the line south of Mansfield, to bring it to the same standard. Two main issues affecting all railways during this period were the ever-increasing amount of traffic, both rail and road, and the increasing speed of the trains. This meant, in the case of the line between Mansfield and Nottingham/Pinxton that a sharp curve needed to be bypassed and two level-crossings taken out; these actions helped to speed up the flow of both road and rail traffic.

The curve in question was one close to the viaduct next to the Kings Mill Reservoir. A new viaduct was built to take the line over the river Maun, to straighten out this section of rail, which cut across the middle of the 'Hermitage Mill' pond. Although the MR was spending vast sums of money on this expansion, they appear to have cut corners with this piece of work, as they built the new viaduct out of wood with a stone bridge at one end, which straddled a footpath and is still in situ. This viaduct was replaced in 1924 by building an embankment across the middle of the millpond with two culverts to keep the water flowing (River Maun). The realigned railway opened in 1872 and the old line, over the original viaduct, was kept in service as a siding, with a line running into the Kings Mill yard. This work enabled the trains to maintain speed and therefore reduce journey times.

During the works of 1848-50 level crossings were inserted where the line crossed over Portland Street/Belvidere Street and Sheepbridge Lane, Mansfield. However, as part of these later works it was agreed to take the roads underneath the railway at these two locations and in 1870, permission was granted to close the road for two months, to lower the road and build the bridge; we assume that the Sheepbridge Lane works occurred around the same time. Remains of the Sheepbridge Lane gatekeeper's cottage can still be seen.

Mansfield to Worksop Stations

Mansfield

The construction of the new line to Worksop necessitated the realignment of the existing line and provided an opportunity to replace the earlier 1849 station with a more practical one.

The station was completed in 1872 and acted as a terminus for the original line, and the new Southwell line until the connection to Worksop was opened in 1875 when it became a 'through station'.

This Italianate styled station now included waiting rooms but what added more to the comfort of the passengers was the platforms were now under cover – protecting them from the harsh weather as they waited for their train. It had two platforms with further waiting rooms located on the opposite side, but passenger traffic increased rapidly and in 1891 it was decided to create a third passenger platform, which opened the following year. This was done by turning the Nottingham-bound platform into an 'island platform' and routing another line around it. The Mansfield Reporter noted that "The alteration will come none too soon ... to cope with the larger passenger traffic ... the Saturday passengers number thousands every week and are increasing."

Photographs of Mansfield Station 1872, courtesy of Inspire: Culture, Learning & Libraries.

The 1872 station building has survived but with new platforms that are open to the elements. The third platform and the glass and steel structure that once covered the platforms no longer exist. The station building was used as

a public house in the 1980s but has now been refurbished and much of it is being used for its original purpose, although it wasn't ready for the reopening of passenger services in 1995, in fact it was 2001 before the building reopened for public use.

Mansfield Woodhouse

This station differs from all the others in that it was made of wood, which is rather ironic because it sits in the middle of a former stone quarry, which had supplied stone for many of the town's buildings. The only stone used was in the foundations and chimneys. The Mansfield Advertiser described it as follows: "The building is entirely of wood and is relieved with some very pretty ornamentation. A kind of entrance hall, one side of which is nearly all glass, leads to the ticket office. The ladies' waiting room is a little gem, tastefully furnished and carpeted".

Mansfield Woodhouse Station, courtesy of Inspire: Culture, Learning & Libraries.

Shirebrook

Built in the Gothic style this station, like others along this line, was designed by the MR company architect John Holloway Sanders. Built of local limestone with ornate bargeboards, two steep pitched gable ends facing the railway and ornamentation along the ridge.

Shirebrook Station, Chris Booth collection.

Shirebrook station 2023.

Although passenger services were axed as part of the Beeching cuts, the station building has survived through to the present. Small temporary platforms were provided for the 1987 Worksop and Shirebrook Depot Open Day, to allow participants to travel between the two locations by shuttle trains, but new platforms had to be constructed as part of the reopening of the line in 1998. The station now hosts a small business centre.

Langwith-Whaley Thorns

Langwith c 1910 and was reopened as Langwith-Whaley Thorns c 1998.

Langwith has had three different stations. The first was near the Maltings, opened in 1875 with George Hull as the Station Master, James Pemberton as the Porter, and George Hurle the Signalman. This station was almost identical to the Shirebrook station and remained open until 1964 when it closed as part of the Beeching cuts. The second opened in the early 1890s and served the colliery by dedicated trains known as

Paddy Trains. This station was just south of the footbridge that still stands over the railway at the southern end of Poulter Country Park. Both stations were demolished. The current station situated on a different site, opened in 1998 as part of the Robin Hood Line and is a simple platform with passenger shelters.

Elmton and Creswell

The station was also built in the Gothic style of local limestone and is similar in both shape and features to the Shirebrook station. A smaller building sat on the opposite platform for Worksop bound passengers. Access to the platforms was by steep wooden steps either side of the bridge. The original station building has survived in its entirety, with its two gable ends looking out over the railway; it is currently out of commission but with a hope that it will be brought back into full use in the future. The current provision provides two new platforms with passenger shelters.

Elmton & Creswell Station old, Chris Booth collection, & new 2022.

Whitwell

Although designed by the same architect this station is substantially different to the previous three. It too is built of local stone but fails to provide the ornamentation or the twin gables found on the other stations. Situated just a few hundred yards from the mouth of the tunnel, this station was built to suit the 5th Duke of Portland, as it was the closest to his Welbeck Abbey residence.

After closing for passenger traffic in 1964 the station stood complete until 1981, when it was dismantled and rebuilt at the Midland Railway Centre, Butterley, where it can still be seen. With the reinstatement of passenger services in 1998 from Nottingham to Worksop, Whitwell saw a wholly new structure built on the site of the original station, using simple platforms and shelters.

Whitwell Station, courtesy of Inspire: Culture, Learning & Libraries & the station in 2023.

Worksop

This is the largest and oldest station on the line and was opened on 16 July 1849, designed by Weightman and Hadfield of Sheffield, and built by James Drabble of Carlton in Lindrick as part of the original MS&LR. It is built of Steetley stone in the Elizabethan style (this style was later used extensively by the 5th Duke of Portland on the Welbeck Estate). The characteristics of Steetley stone are its beautiful whiteness and the ease with which it was worked. According to the contemporary

newspapers "Worksop station, seen in sunshine from a short distance, looks like white marble". New Refreshment rooms and the enlarged north platform building were opened in 1901 but the full span roof was removed in 1920-21.

Worksop Station, postcard in Chris Booth collection & the station in 2022.

The station has been in continual use since its opening and all buildings still survive, although some of the rooms are now let out to private enterprise.

1875 to 1964

Initially just three MR passenger trains ran each way per day between Mansfield and Worksop, however three MS&LR passenger trains left Mansfield heading north but rather than going to Worksop they turned west towards Sheffield at Woodend Junction, near Shireoaks. The various services now enabled passengers to travel south to Nottingham and to both Sheffield and Retford in the north and all stations beyond, hence opening the national network of rails to all those living in the north west of Nottinghamshire and those bordering Derbyshire villages.

Passenger trains flourished but goods traffic, mainly coal, began to dominate the line. It was said that more trains passed through Mansfield station each day than at St Pancras in London.

In fact, by 1892 there were so many trains crossing the main road in Kirkby via two level crossings that complaints were made about the road traffic congestion being caused by the gates being frequently closed. This issue was partially overcome by merging the two lines into one whilst they crossed the centre of Kirkby and then split back into their ongoing routes.

During WW2 the railways had been placed under state control. From 1 January 1948, this railway, like most others in the UK, was Nationalised.

During the 1960s we witnessed the change over from steam locomotion to diesel power. We now accept the diesels but at the same time look back with nostalgia on those wonderful steam engines.

Although services varied over the decades to suit the needs of the changing local demographics and needs, the Beeching cuts axed all passenger services operating between Nottingham and Worksop from the 12 October 1964. This meant that Mansfield became the largest town in the country without any rail passenger services. However, the line continued to flourish with its goods trains supporting local industries.

1994 Onwards – The Robin Hood Line

After years of pressure, plans were finally put into place to reinstate a rail service between Nottingham and Worksop, calling at many stations in between, including Mansfield. Nottinghamshire County Council had submitted an official proposal as early as 1988. This was not as easy as you may think because the line to Nottingham, below Kirkby, had been severed and the Kirkby tunnel filled in. This meant laying new lines, reopening the tunnel, and rebuilding or refurbishing stations, platforms, and other structures.

After years of work the line between Nottingham and Mansfield Woodhouse was officially reopened on 10 November 1995 (it had opened from Nottingham to Newstead in 1994). The line was named the 'Robin Hood Line'. Work continued and the full route to Worksop finally opened on 25 May 1998.

Not only was this a great boon to those who lived within the catchment area of the Robin Hood line, but it also repurposed and revitalised

the route, especially since freight traffic was reducing due to the decline in the need for coal.

Around the same time as the Robin Hood line was opening, British Rail was privatised. Freight services were sold, and passenger services were franchised, with private operators needing to submit tenders to operate for set periods. Since the opening of the Robin Hood line, we have seen several companies operating the passenger services:

1. British Rail from 1995 to 1997
2. Central Trains (National Express) from 1997 to 2007
3. East Midlands Trains (Stagecoach) 2007 to 2019
4. East Midlands Railway (Abellio) from 2019.

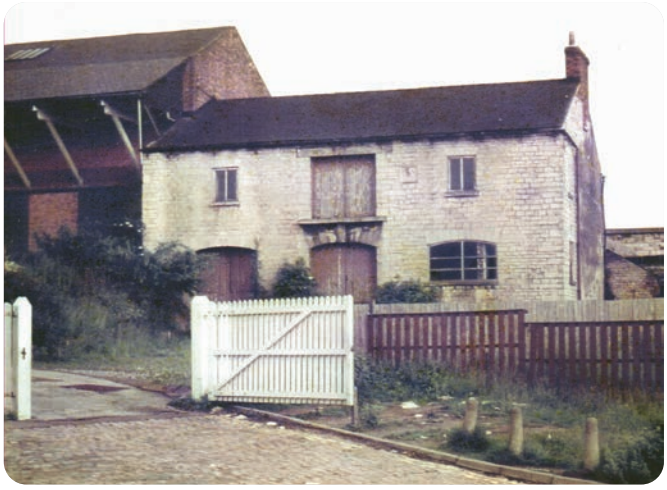
Initially there were no services on Sunday but, after public demand soared, a trial service was introduced in 2008 with 11 trains each way; however, there was a reduction to eight trains each way in 2011, due to a lack of demand. Currently there are 29 trains each way Monday to Friday and 27 on Saturday (these numbers apply to trains stopping at the Mansfield station).

Goods and Rolling Stock Facilities

To operate a railway there is a need for supporting facilities, such as places to store goods or 'stable' rolling stock: sidings and engine sheds etc.

Goods sheds

These were used for loading or off-loading wagons and in some cases acting as a warehouse to hold goods until they were collected. Over time several such goods sheds/warehouses were constructed in the railway yard adjacent to the Mansfield station, the first being built in 1819 and remained in use until the 1970s. In fact, with the rail realignment in 1875 it enabled better goods facilities to be constructed and therefore improved the efficiency of freight handling. Incoming trains would have their freight unloaded and, in some cases, loaded directly onto horse drawn carts and later lorries, while other goods were stored until such time that the recipient could collect them. Each such facility would have its own wharf for loading/unloading.



Original M&P Warehouse courtesy of John Vanags.

Other goods sheds were known to have existed at Mansfield Woodhouse (still surviving and in use as a passenger shelter), Shirebrook, Langwith, Creswell, Whitwell, and Worksop.

Mansfield Woodhouse Goods Shed courtesy of Ash Edwards.

Engine Sheds/Depots

The first known engine shed was built close to the Mansfield station in circa 1849, which would have housed only a small number of locomotives. After the line was opened to Worksop a much larger shed was built about half a mile south of Mansfield station in 1882. This shed was discontinued in 1960, when all locomotives were moved to the Kirkby sheds, which were built in 1907, but even they were made redundant in 1966. The early Mansfield shed, and the Kirkby sheds have been demolished but the 1882 sheds still survive now hosting engineering works.

Other engine sheds were also to be found at Shirebrook and Langwith Junction, although the Shirebrook shed was a late comer, opening in 1965 to replace the Langwith Junction steam

depot and a temporary facility that was housed in the former Shirebrook Goods shed. It had an allocation of diesel shunting locos to work the local yards, and a selection of main line locos to work the many coal trains in the area. It became a Trainload Coal depot in 1988, then Mainline Freight. It closed as a traincrew depot in 1991, and totally in 1996, being turned over to factory use and finally as a furniture storage depot.

These sheds/depots were used to stable locomotives, clean and maintain them. In the days of steam there were extractor flues directly over the loco chimneys because the aim was to keep the fires alight, then about two hours before they were to be taken out of the sheds the fire would be built up to produce the full amount of steam required to provide the necessary motive power.

Wagon Works

Another facility established at Langwith Junction was a 'Wagon Works'. It is interesting to note that this facility still exists under the name of WH Davis Limited. Some wagon works were used for repair and maintenance, but this modern facility concentrates on refurbishment and building new wagons.

Sidings

These were to be found at many locations along the line some of which were dedicated to specific industries, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Some sidings were designed for the general use of the railway companies; those uses could include:

- Stabling of rolling stock: parking them until they are needed, which could be a matter of hours, days, or weeks.
- Marshalling: collating wagons together that have arrived from different sources but going to the same destination or vice-versa.
- Loading or unloading: In some cases, this was more practical than using a wharf.

Staffed Level Crossings

At one time there were several level crossings with gatehouses south of Mansfield on the route to Nottingham, nowadays they are all automatically operated. However, a fine example of an 1849 gate house still survives where the line crosses Coxmoor Road (B6139), Sutton-in-Ashfield; it is now a private residence. Between Mansfield and Worksop one such staffed Level Crossing is still operating, which can be found half a mile north of the Langwith-Whaley Thorns station on Mag Lane.

Coxmoor Road Gatehouse (Google Image) and Mag Lane Level Crossing.

However, from the opening of this railway, in 1875, a Block Post signal box was located at the Norwood Crossing with Joseph Vale as the first and only signalman to work in this box, which was managed by the Langwith Station Master. In those early years there was also a small agricultural siding, managed by this signal box. It was downgraded in 1885 to a simple crossing with a gatekeeper, which included a gatekeeper's cottage.

Upon the downgrade Joseph Vale became a signalman at the Shirebrook Station Signal Box and Benjamin Hardy took on the new position of Gatekeeper at Norwood.

Signaling & Signal Boxes

Following on from the previous section we can easily find several level crossings that today are fully automated; these are one aspect of signaling, which are primarily used to let road users know that a train is approaching the crossing and to prevent them from accessing the crossing until that train has passed. Now we will look at the signals that offer instructions to the train drivers.

Elmton & Creswell Signal Box.

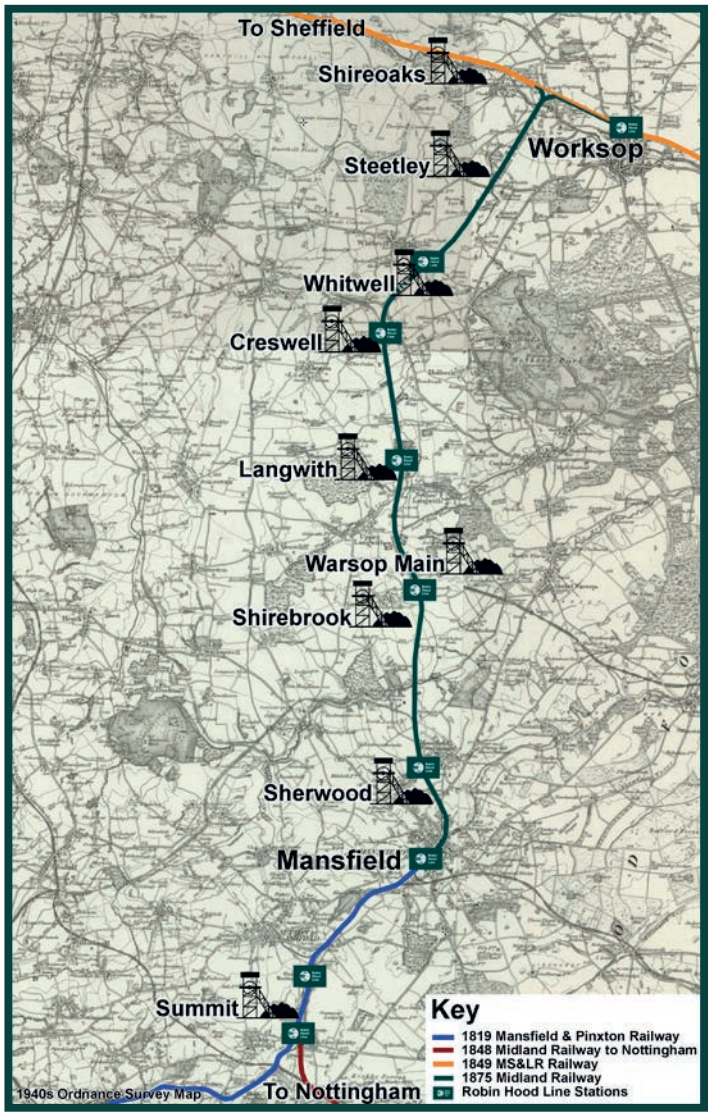
Signal boxes were placed in strategic locations along the railways to operate both signals and points, in other words to control the direction and flow of rail traffic over a given stretch of track.

This meant installing signals along the line to show the train driver whether he could proceed or must stop. Initially signalling was based on the time-interval system. A signalman would put semaphore signals at danger as a train passed and would change them to 'Line Clear' after the passage of a few minutes. Later 'Block' signalling was developed. This required an electric telegraph along the line, which enabled two actions: one was to send verbal messages using Morse Code and the other using a single stroke bell. One signalman pressed a button, and a bell sounded at the next signal box. Bell signals were exchanged when it was necessary to pass a train and the signals were changed to clear. They were returned to 'Danger' after the passage of the train. Points and signals were operated manually by wire for signals and rodding for points.

Signal boxes and their associated signals were already in use south of Mansfield station by 1875 but some new ones were installed along the old M&P route at the same time as they were installed along the Mansfield to Worksop line. Further boxes were installed as new sidings opened into new colliery yards, this also meant the reverse: many signal boxes were taken out of commission towards the end of the twentieth century when sidings and spurs were closed.

Another reason for the removal of signal boxes was that they were being replaced by more centralized modern electronic control systems that were now using colour light signals, like road traffic lights, rather than the earlier mechanical semaphore systems.

Supporting Industry



Coal Mines

In any Victorian mining area coal mines and railways ran hand-in-hand: The mines needed the infrastructure of the rail network to distribute their coal and the railway companies obtained substantial incomes from transporting that coal. As we read in the first chapter, the MR company, like many others, were forward thinkers and anticipated the sinking of coal mines in the North-West Notts and North-East Derbys areas, consequently, battles commenced between these companies to be the first to construct railways for industrial purposes; passenger services were often a secondary thought, but nevertheless still profitable. The Midland Railway won this local battle.

Once news of the construction of the MR railway between Mansfield and Worksop spread, the Sheepbridge Coal & Iron Company purchased over 2,000 acres of land from Earl Bathurst in 1873 for a new deep shaft mine at Langwith. Prior to sinking deep shaft mines, coal had been extracted from the shallower coal seams to the west of this area where open cast extraction and bell mines had been operating for centuries. Thanks to the progression of the Industrial Revolution much more coal was needed than those shallow mines, which were becoming exhausted, could now provide and consequently the need for the coal from deeper coal reserves grew year by year.

By adding a short railway (spur) into the coal mine workings it opened access to the entire country for the distribution of coal via Worksop in the north and Mansfield in the south.

Shireoaks Colliery

This colliery was first envisaged as early as 1839 by the Fifth Duke of Newcastle, Henry Pelham Clinton, but it wasn't until 9 April 1854 that he cut the first sod for the colliery. This marked a turning point in the story of Worksop, a formerly agricultural market town, whose previous industries had been malting and milling.

Shireoaks Colliery, Chris Booth collection.

In 1858 Mr. Charles Tylden-Wright was appointed as the first colliery manager and coal was reached the next year. Production soon started and by 1861 an average of 300 tons (305 tonnes) of coal were produced each day. Although the colliery was adjacent to the main line of the MS&LR, until 1949 some coal was shipped via water along the Chesterfield canal and onto the River Trent at West Stockwith.

The Shireoaks Colliery Company was formally registered in December 1864 and, in due

course, had mining interests throughout the area, including those at Whitwell, Clowne and Steetley.

Known Number of Employees

1894: 863 (682 below, 181 surface)
1896: 871 (690 below, 181 surface)
1923: 933 (717 below, 216 surface)
1933: 710 (560 below, 150 surface)
1947: 749 (589 below, 160 surface)
1954: 996 (791 below, 205 surface)

Acknowledgement:
Most of the colliery employment figures were taken from www.dmm.org.uk

By 1923, the pit was producing 1 million tons of manufacturing and steam coal per year. Modern mining methods ensured that by 1988 output was still producing 17,339 tons per week (17,617 tonnes) (just under 867,000 tons per year). The mine closed in May 1990.

Steetley Colliery

The Shireoaks Colliery Company, who had already been extracting coal from their Shireoaks colliery for around ten years, started their shaft sinking for the Steetley Colliery in May 1873. It was situated at Darfoulds, about a mile away from Shireoaks, and originally named Manor Pits. Coal was reached at a depth of 579 yards (529 metres) in December 1875; at the time this was the deepest shaft in the midland counties. An underground connection with Shireoaks colliery provided the ventilation system and a second means of egress via Shireoaks No.2 shaft. The colliery was only served by the MR line. Steetley Colliery merged with Shireoaks Colliery from 13 March 1983 which resulted in the closure of the surface works at Steetley, and all coal was brought up through the Shireoaks shafts.

Steetley Colliery, Permission of Brian Bates.

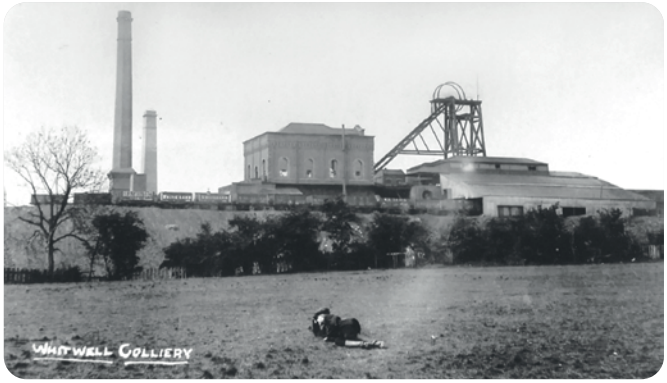
At peak production the colliery workforce produced 380,000 tons (386,100 tonnes) of coal in 1976. Individual coal seams were used for different purposes: the Top Hard Seam was one of the most famous in the world due to its high commercial value, while the High Hazel Seam, mined from 1956 to 1983, supplied good quality domestic fuel. The colliery also produced a hard shale brick, which would have been used in many local building projects.

Known Number of Employees

1896: 410 (340 below, 70 surface)
1933: 530 (460 below, 70 surface)
1940: 520 (440 below, 80 surface)
1947: 486 (403 below, 83 surface)

Whitwell Colliery

Situated on Belph Moor near Whitwell, sinking a shaft for this Colliery began on 24 May 1890. Twenty-two men working as two teams found coal on 23 October 1891, when they reached the Top Hard seam 311 yards (284 m) below Belph Moor. They continued downwards and reached the High Hazel seam 130 yards (119 m) below that. Production started in 1894, before the completion of the No.2 shaft on 15 March 1898. From the lower level, a heading was driven towards Steetley, and the ventilation system was established when the two mines were linked in 1894.



Whitwell Colliery, Chris Booth collection.

The MR was the only line connected to the colliery, giving them a monopoly on coal movement from this colliery.

The announcement to close the colliery was made on the 3 June 1986. Coal traffic continued until 31 March 1987, and the last worker finished in July 1987. The headstocks were demolished

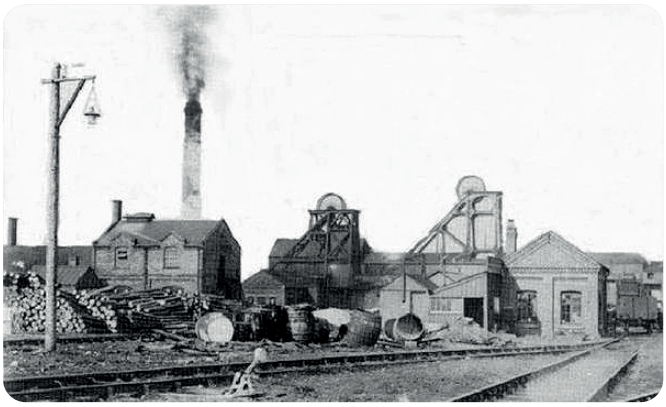
on 20 March & 10 April the same year and the shafts were sealed off.

Known Number of Employees

1894: 195 (135 below, 60 surface)
1896: 353 (275 below, 78 surface)
1923: 998 (853 below, 145 surface)
1933: 1,510 (1,280 below, 230 surface)
1940: 1,585 (1,325 below, 260 surface)
1947: 745 (549 below, 196 surface)

Creswell Colliery

The Bolsover Colliery Co. Ltd was formed in 1889 and secured a lease on land at Creswell from the Duke of Portland. The sinking of the two 18 feet (5.49 metres) diameter shafts began in 1894 and the first coal reached at 329 yards (301 metres). The shaft continued down to the Top Hard Seam at 440 yards (402 metres) and production commenced in 1897. Weekly output in 1950 was just over 14,000 tons (14,225 tonnes).



Creswell Colliery, Chris Booth collection.

On 26 September 1950 at 3.45am a notorious disaster occurred when a conveyor belt system caught fire. It had been noticed the previous day that there was damage to the belt, but its cause couldn't be ascertained. Nevertheless, it was decided to replace the damaged parts of the belt, but the accident occurred before the repairs could be actioned. Just before the disaster the condition of the belt had become substantially worse, and it was stopped. Sadly, it was too late as it had already caught fire and subsequently caused the deaths of 80 men from Carbon Monoxide poisoning.

A Rapid Loading Bunker was commissioned in 1977. Production ceased with the loss of 700 jobs in September 1991.

Known Number of Employees

1894: 207 (61 below, 146 surface)
1896: 283 (155 below, 128 surface)
1923: 2,015 (1,628 below, 387 surface)
1933: 1,499 (1,240 below, 259 surface)
1937: 1,480 (1,196 below, 284 surface)
1940: 1,516 (1,195 below, 321 surface)
1947: 1,556 (1,193 below, 363 surface)
1950: 1,493 (1,144 below, 349 surface)

Langwith Colliery

The Sheepbridge Iron & Steel Company began sinking the shafts in 1876 with a ground breaking ceremony on 14 March. Coal was reached in February 1878, but production didn't start until 1880. Langwith coal was held in high regard for its good quality. Much of its coal was sent to power stations. Even the Duke of Newcastle had a regular supply sent to his house on the Clumber estate.

Langwith Colliery, Permission of Neil Baker.

Although the MR already had a line and sidings at Langwith the LD&ECR opened a branch line into the colliery in 1896 and this connection lasted until its closure, enabling easier coal distribution into different parts of the country.

By the 1970s the local coal reserves were depleting to such an extent that the National Coal Board decided to operate a gradual closing of Langwith Colliery. Men were transferred to other local mines, such as Shirebrook and Warsop (400 employees moved to these two collieries), commencing in May 1976. In the last full financial year of operation (1977-78) the colliery produced 398,762 tons (405,161 tonnes) of coal with a workforce of 580 men.

The final closing date of Langwith Colliery was 4 August 1978 after which the entire site was cleared, apart from the spoil heaps and the Pithead Baths, which were across the road.

Known Number of Employees

1894: 1,327 (1,076 below, 251 surface)
1896: 1,284 (1,044 below, 240 surface)
1923: 1,940
1933: 2,000
1940: 1,700
1947: 1,650 (1,200 below, 450 surface)
1978: 580 (Year of closure)

Warsop Main Colliery

The Staveley Coal & Iron Co. started producing coal at this colliery in 1895. By 1935 it was one of the most proficient mines in the country, employing some 2,500 and producing a weekly output of 21,000 tons (21,337 tonnes) of saleable coal.

Postcard in Chris Booth collection.

By 1960 the colliery had installed new tower mounted, electrically powered winding systems, and continued updating the colliery to maintain its high production status. 1985 saw a cost cutting exercise which resulted in the loss of 200 jobs. By 1989 the colliery was believed to be losing £200,000 a week, which meant an inevitable closure. The last shifts were worked in August 1989, demolition commencing in September with the second headstock being toppled on 28 November 1989.

Known Number of Employees

1894: 170 (90 below, 80 surface)
1896: 259 (132 below, 127 surface)
1923: 2,687 (2,289 below, 398 surface)
1933: 2,700 (2,200 below, 500 surface)
1940: 2,500 (2,000 below, 500 surface)
1947: 1,720 (1,270 below, 450 surface)

Shirebrook Colliery

The Shirebrook Colliery Company began sinking twin 19-foot (5.79 metres) diameter shafts in 1895, and coal was reached at a depth of 600 yards (549 metres). The Colliery exported coal to France, Russia, Italy, Spain, Germany, Norway, and Sweden.

Postcard in Chris Booth collection.

Pithead baths opened in 1932 and new steel lattice headgear replaced the wooden ones in 1933. A 2,500-ton (2,540 tonne) capacity Rapid Loading Bunker was built in 1968.

Shirebrook was a high output colliery and achieved an output of over one-million tons of coal in a year on 17 occasions. The colliery merged underground with Pleasley Colliery in 1983. This colliery was the scene of much intense picketing during the 1984-85 Miners Strike. The colliery closed on 7 May 1993.

Known Number of Employees

1896: 400 (140 below, 260 surface)
1908: 1,627 (1,345 below, 282 surface)
1923: 1,832 (1,432 below, 400 surface)
1933: 2,050 (1,700 below, 350 surface)
1940: 1,450 (1,100 below, 350 surface)
1947: 1,450 (1,100 below, 350 surface)

Sherwood Colliery

The Sherwood Colliery Company began sinking their two 20-foot (6.1 metres) diameter, brick lined shafts with a formal ceremony on 10 February 1902. Coal was first reached in September 1902, but profitable coal wasn't reached until 1903 at a depth of 430 yards (393 metres); these seams were more than five feet in depth. A flag was flown from the headstocks to mark the occasion.

Steam power was used to operate the cages until 1982, when electric winders were installed. The pithead baths, canteen and swimming baths were opened in 1934 and having been renamed the 'Rebecca Adlington Swimming Centre' they remain open for public use. A brick manufacturing plant, using waste shale, averaged 7.75 million bricks annually during the 1930s. They were sold worldwide and were renowned for their strength and durability.

Sherwood Colliery, courtesy Ash Edwards.

During the 1970s the miners set three records: In 1975 they set a world speed record for tunnelling underground and then in 1978 a British coal production record, by producing 27,027 tons (27,461 tonnes) of coal in five days, the highest tonnage ever produced from a single face in a British coal mine. Sherwood Colliery then smashed the European production record for thin seam mining just a month after Mansfield Colliery set it. The miners produced 20,405 tons (20,732 tonnes) from one conventional coal face in a seam just one metre high.

In April 1991 British Coal announced that the colliery would close within the next two years. However, it closed much earlier than expected at the end of January 1992.

Known Number of Employees

1923: 2,058 (1,675 below, 383 surface)
1933: 1,990 (1,630 below, 360 surface)
1940: 2,040 (1,660 below, 380 surface)
1947: 1,428 (1,171 below, 257 surface)

Kirkby (Summit) Colliery

The Butterley Company sank two shafts in 1890, with a third one being sunk in 1912, the deepest being 641 yards (586 metres). The colliery was known as 'Summit', being situated at the highest point of the Mansfield to Pinxton railway.

Summit Colliery, courtesy of Inspire: Culture, Learning & Libraries.

When it closed in 1968 the whole community were shocked. Upon reflection one ex-miner said, "I shall never forget when they said, "Your future is secure" at the Kirkby Colliery and then after six weeks we'd gone all of us". £4,000,000 had just been spent on the colliery, linking it up underground with Langton and Brookhill Collieries, a new one-mile-long drift was driven, and a new Coal Preparation Plant installed. It was planned to become one of the biggest producing collieries in Europe. However, it started experiencing geological problems and this was followed by the rejection of planning permission for a new spoil heap and closure followed.

Output for the last full financial year was 1,088, 264 tons (1,105,727 tonnes) of coal. It was one of the biggest collieries in the Nottinghamshire Coalfield. The last coal producing shift was on the 12 July 1968.

Known Number of Employees

1923: 2,961 (2,356 below, 605 surface)
1933: 2,037 (1,640 below, 397 surface)
1937: 1,575 (1,273 below, 302 surface)
1940: 2,140 (1,672 below, 468 surface)
1947: 1,572 (1,189 below, 383 surface)
1968: 2,258 (year of closure)

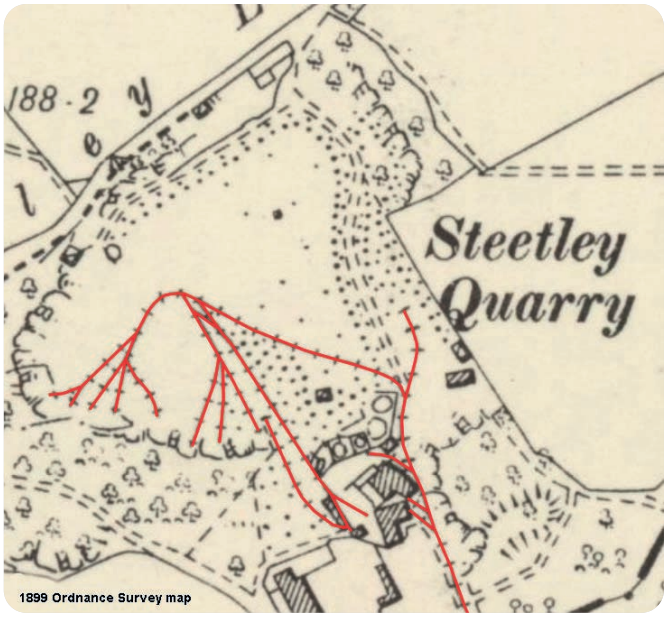
Quarries

The new railway ran straight through the middle of a limestone quarry at Mansfield Woodhouse; in fact, the station was built in this quarry. During the Victorian era stone was still in use as a building material, although the need was waning and giving way to brick. The quarries along this line, both stone and sand, slowly closed but one company invested heavily and opened a new quarry, which is still thriving in 2023.

Between Mansfield and Worksop, the Midland Railway ran spurs directly into four quarries at: Mansfield Woodhouse, Whitwell (Steetley old & new) and Worksop. Between Mansfield and Kirkby-in-Ashfield there was a further spur into a sand quarry at Kirkby Hardwick. Despite the Mansfield Woodhouse Station being built in the middle of a limestone quarry a line was never put into the actual quarry, which operated as a lime-burning business, providing its products into the construction and farming industries.

Worksop: The town sits on Bunter Sandstone, a deep stratum with a shallow overburden, which allowed three grades of sand to be quarried: medium or red sand, inferior and fine sand. Sidings were put in to sand quarries about a quarter of a mile west of the station and, also east of the station. Sandy Lane Quarry provided for the building trade as well as the steel industry.

Whitwell Old Steetley Quarry: This limestone quarry was known as 'Southfield Lane Quarry' and provided both building stone and a lime burning operation. It is known that stone from this quarry was used in the construction of the entrances to the fifth Duke of Portland's tunnels. This 1899 map shows the extent of the rails that were laid within the quarry. This site was accessed via a spur just north of Steetley colliery.



Whitwell New Steetley Quarry: Situated to the east of Whitwell station this new limestone quarry replaced the old one in 1958. It provides stone for the adjoining lime works, producing a product known as 'dolime', this being used in refractory industries and in the production of stainless steel. This quarry is the largest producer of this material in the UK, with half of its production being exported.

Diesel train leaving the new Steetley Quarry, Chris Booth collection.

The quarry provides 600,000 tonnes of dolomitic limestone directly into the dolime plant each year and is set to be running until around 2040, and perhaps beyond.

Warsop: The Warsop Junction spur served Warsop Main Colliery and a siding was also provided into a sand quarry close to Church Warsop.

Mansfield Woodhouse: Just south of the main Pleasley Junction a spur ran into the Pleasley Junction Lime Works, which as the name suggests was another operation focusing

on burnt lime. Prior to Mansfield to Worksop line being constructed at least one quarry in Mansfield Woodhouse provided limestone blocks used in the construction of the lower levels of the Houses of Parliament.

Kirkby Hardwick: A spur ran into a sand quarry to the east of Low Moor Road, which operated throughout the Victorian era. The spur was installed while that section of the railway was still operating with horse-drawn trucks.

Lindley's Stone Works: Although not a quarry, the Lindley family did own several quarries between Kirkby and Mansfield Woodhouse. Just to the east of Mansfield station the family established a saw mill to cut their stone blocks into the sizes required by the building industry. An unusual rail connection was made into this saw mill: A small turntable was situated in the sidings at Mansfield station; however, it was only big enough for rail trucks. Consequently, one truck at a time would go onto the turn table and moved to and from the works by horse power. It is thought that the stone for the magnificent 1872 MR Mansfield town centre viaduct was cut here, after being quarried from the Langwith cuttings.

Other Industries served by the railway.

Worksop Woodyard & Sawmills Chris Booth collection.

Sawmills and the wood industry: Worksop operated a large wood industry, which grew substantially after the opening of the Chesterfield Canal and the railways, when it became an important source of employment. In 1897 there were eight large timber firms in Worksop, some specialising as timber merchants, others as turners or chairmakers, this latter trade ceasing in the 1930s. Benjamin Garside's premises was contracted to supply railway sleepers to the North Midland Railway in 1840, and Oates Timber Merchants, specialising in turning tool handles and making bread platters, also had a rail connection.

Malt: There were large malt businesses operating at both Worksop and Langwith, which required the need for rails to be laid directly into their works. With the local soil being excellent for growing barley, malting had been the most important trade in Worksop since medieval times but grew rapidly with the coming of the Chesterfield canal in 1777, and by 1831 there were 40 maltsters. The trade increased again with the arrival of the railway in 1849 but by 1950 there were only four maltings left in operation. By 1970 all had closed.

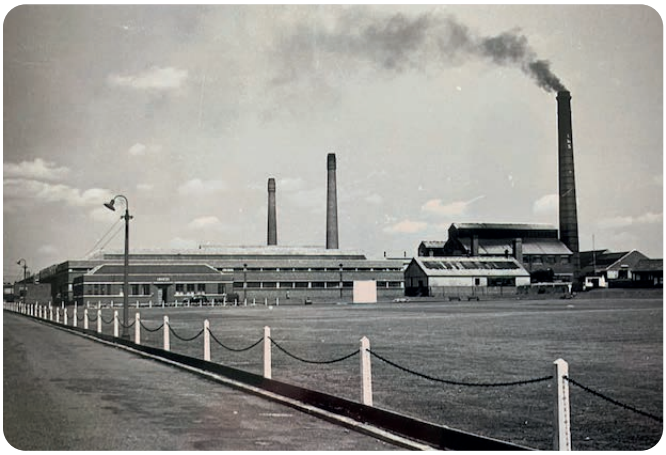
Worksop Maltings Chris Booth collection.

The Langwith maltings were opened around 1876 on land adjacent to the original Midland Railway station. Built by William Burkett of Chesterfield it was served by rail from its beginning. For quite a few years Welsh Anthracite was used to heat the drying kilns as this was deemed cleaner than the locally produced coal. Peach & Co. of Burton-on-Trent started to lease the Maltings in 1923, before finally purchasing it in 1935. It closed in 1991 and was demolished in 1997.

Langwith Maltings.

Brickworks: As mentioned previously, some of the collieries produced a hard brick from the waste shale that was excavated in the search for coal, however, just south of Mansfield station a spur line ran into the dedicated Victoria Steam Brick Works. The bricks were in effect a by-product of the quarries that lay adjacent to the railway along Quarry Lane. The quarrying process meant that the overburden that lay above the limestone had to be removed first to gain access, as most of this was clay that sat on top of the stone, it was a logical process to utilise that clay to make bricks that were required in the area.

Chemicals & Glassworks: West of Worksop station we see that a spur line ran into a 'Chemical Works'. Information about this company is sparse but we do know that it was run by a company called 'Shirley Aldred' who produced charcoal activated carbons, case hardening compounds and solvents.



CWS Glassworks, Worksop, courtesy Richard Allsopp.

Later the Cooperative Wholesale Society took over a small 'glassworks' in Worksop in 1933 and expanded it to produce milk bottles, jam jars glass food containers, employing over 500 persons. Silica sand suitable for glass making arrived by rail from Middleton Towers near Kings Lynn on a regular basis.

Bone Mills were to be found at both Worksop and Sutton-in-Ashfield; both being fed by spur lines directly from the railway. Bones would be obtained from both slaughter houses and the 'rag & bone' man and then processed into either fertiliser or glue.

Gas Works at Shirebrook were fed coal by a spur line into their works from circa 1900 and stood just south of Shirebrook station. They

began supplying gas to Nether Langwith, Pleasley, Scarcliffe, Shirebrook, Upper Langwith, Sookholme and Warsop. The limits of supply were extended to include Bilsthorpe, Bolsover, Boughton, Caunton, Eakring, Edwinstowe, Kersall, Kirton, Kneesall, Laxton, Maplebeck, Ollerton, Ompton, Perlethorpe, Rufford, Walesby and Wellow. The company was Nationalised in 1949.

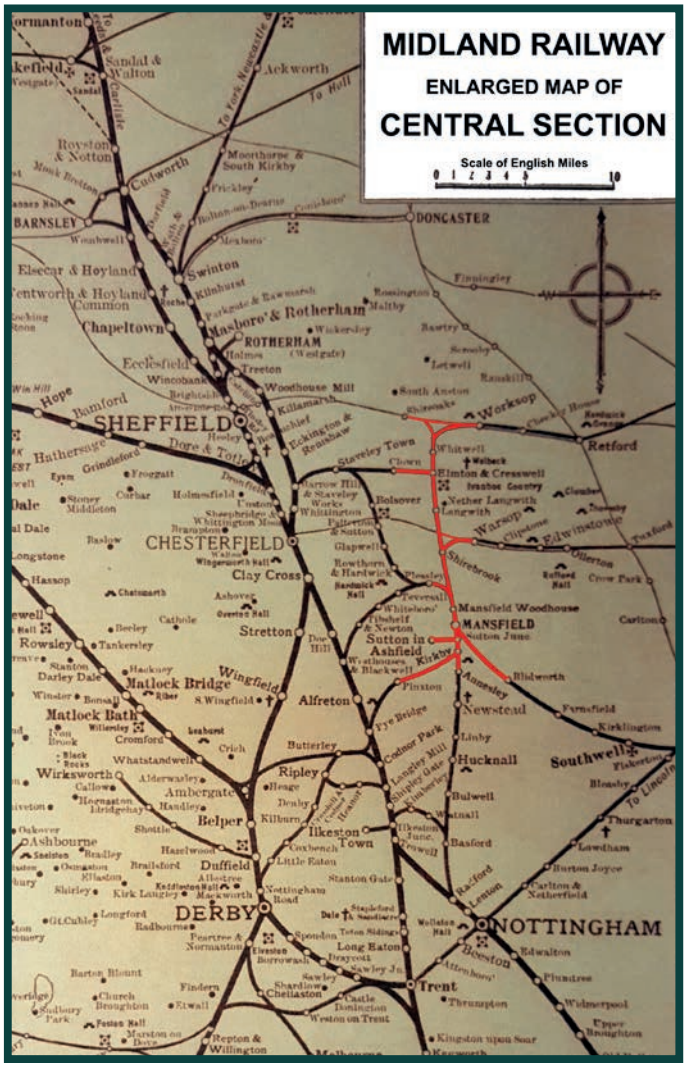
Textile Mills: The Hollins mills at Pleasley and the Hermitage mill in Mansfield were both known to have had lines directly into their works. Perhaps Hollins are the most well-known due to their size and their invention of the Viyella material, which is widely used for hard-wearing clothes such as shirts and socks. They are also thought to be the first factory to take in raw materials at one end and send out ready to wear items at the other end. Hermitage mill started its life as a cotton doubler, supplying the knitting, lace, and weaving industries. One of its original owners, James Heygate, was one of the investors and main driving forces in the Mansfield & Pinxton railway.

Pleasley Vale Mills, postcard in Chris Booth collection.

Adlington's Flour Mill: This magnificent eight story, six sailed windmill, believed to be the tallest in Nottinghamshire, stood opposite the Sutton Junction station, which can just be seen behind the mill in the following photograph. It was used for grinding corn and had its own rail spur. Next door to the mill a steam driven flock mill was later built and took advantage of the spur. After the 'rag & bone' man dropped his bones off at the bone-mill he would have taken his rags to the flock mill which would have shredded them in readiness to stuff such things as pillows.

Adlington's Flour Mill & Berridge's Flock Mill.

People & Leisure



The opening of the railway brought both direct and indirect benefits to the local population, for instance transportation opportunities were immediately and vastly improved and the attraction of industry brought with it both employment and associated recreational activities. This chapter will show how much the communities benefited.

Straight away the passenger services opened a whole new world for those living close to the line. Someone living in Langwith would have only a short walk to the station from whence they could board trains that were going direct to Nottingham, Sheffield or Worksop and stopping at all stations in between. From those main stations, connecting trains could take them anywhere in the country, something that was previously out of reach for most people due to the time taken for such distances by walking, using horses or stage coaches. Even visiting friends and family in the next town or village became much more convenient.

Older residents living in the villages recall using the trains as school children each day to travel to such places as Mansfield, Shirebrook or Worksop for secondary education. Workers had new job opportunities open to them by commuting to other towns without having to move home.

How many people were employed at a typical station on this line?

Here is a snapshot of employees at the Langwith Station, taken on the 1 September 1880:

Station Master: John Whitaker
Assistant Porter: John Caffrey
Porter 1: Arthur Livett
Porter 2: Frank Carpenter
Signalman 1: Thomas Perry
Signalman 2: James Pembleton
Signalman 3: Daniel Veysey
Norwood Crossing: Joseph Vale
Number Taker: (New position created 18 November 1880): John Caffrey

The railway itself provided many new job opportunities, employing hundreds of people, staffing the stations and goods depots, working on the trains or in the construction/ maintenance of the line. Some rail workers were lucky enough to have a tied cottage provided for them. Workers were trained in First Aid to ensure that any injured person was able to receive quick medical attention.

Elmton & Creswell Midland Railway Ambulance Class of 1905.

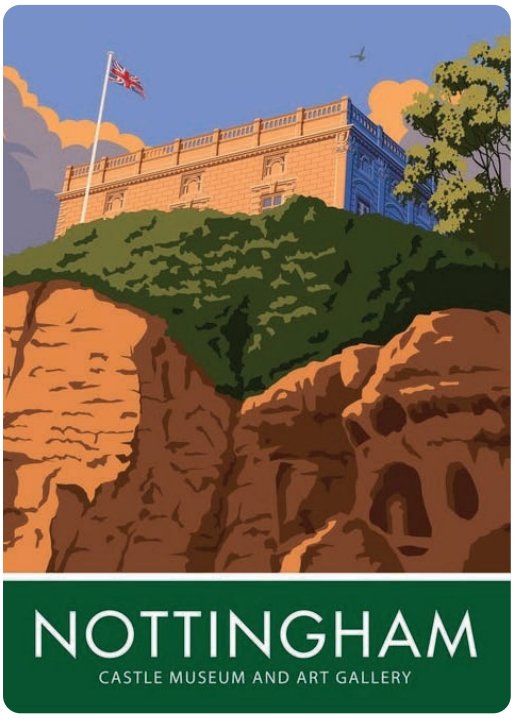
When the MR started work on the line it purchased Broom House, a former private residence and lunatic asylum, next to the

Mansfield station and converted it to a hotel to house many of the construction workers, known as navvies. The property was renamed The Midland Hotel and remains as such today. The MR built many other hotels to accommodate those travelling on their lines, such as the one at Creswell.

Midland Hotel, Mansfield.

What about a day at Scarborough or Blackpool?

Apart from work, school and visiting friends & family, the trains enabled more people to enjoy a day at the seaside or other tourist attractions. In fact, a day could be extended into a weeklong family holiday, especially on the east coast, where seaside towns, such as Skegness, Cleethorpes and Mablethorpe, were growing rapidly to accommodate the influx of visitors, brought to them along the rails. On the other end of the entertainment scale evening entertainment in a nearby town became more accessible, such as the theatre or later, the cinema.



Or a family outing to Nottingham Castle or a Pantomime in London?

The MR often provided special excursion trains to the seaside, grand exhibitions, and football matches. Sometimes they would be provided to coincide with local colliery holidays, when they knew that there would be large eager groups of families looking forward to a day at the seaside. For some football matches several trains had to be laid on. Occasionally one of the local employers, such


CIRCULAR FOR EMPLOYÉS ONLY.

Messrs. Carey's (Ltd.) and Rhodes' Bros.' Excursion

TO

LONDON

FOR

"Venice in London" and the Pantomimes,

BY MIDLAND RAILWAY ON

Saturday, Jan. 23rd, 1892.

The train will leave Hucknall, 6.0 a.m.; Bulwell, 6.5 a.m.; Basford, 6.10 a.m.; Leaton 6.18 a.m.; and

Nottingham (Midland) at 6.30 a.m.

One Day Passengers will return from St. Pancras at 12.10, midnight.

Return Fare, 4/-

Children under 14 Half fare.

A small extra charge will be made for expenses.

Passengers can return by any ordinary train on Sunday, January 24th, on presenting the return halves of their excursion tickets at the booking office, St. Pancras, and paying 1/- extra.

Also by any ordinary train up to and including the 12.0, midnight, train on Saturday, January 30th, on payment of 2/- extra at the booking office, St. Pancras.

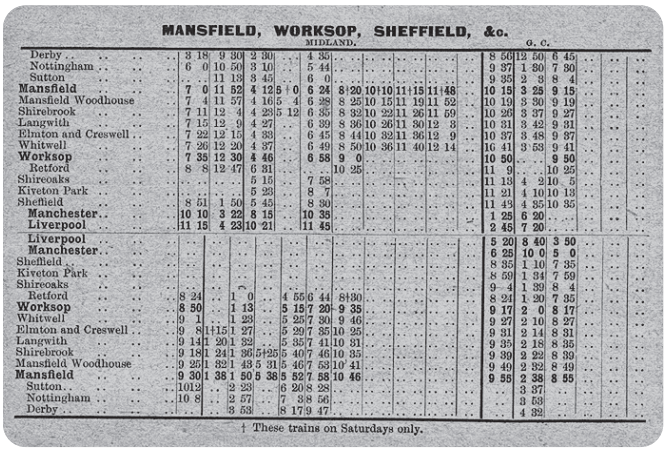
The number of Saloons being limited, application for them must be made at once.

Tickets should be purchased not later than Wednesday, January 20th, at the Works.

☞ No Tickets will be sold at the Stations.

AMUSEMENTS.

as a colliery, would charter a whole train to take their workforce on an excursion.



MANSFIELD, WORKSOP, SHEFFIELD, &c.

MIDLAND. G. C.

Derby	..	..	..	3 18	9 30	2 30	..	..	4 35	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8 50	12 50	6 45	..	..	..
Nottingham	..	..	..	6 0	10 50	3 10	..	..	5 44	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 37	1 30	7 30	..	..	..
Sutton	..	..	..	..	11 13	3 45	..	..	6 0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 35	2 3	8 4	..	..	..
Mansfield	..	..	..	**7 0**	**11 52**	**4 12**	**5 †0**	**6 24**	**8 20**	**10 10**	**11 15**	**11 48**	..	..	..	..	..	**10 15**	**3 25**	**9 15**	..	..	..
Mansfield Woodhouse	..	..	..	7 4	11 57	4 16	5 4	6 28	8 25	10 15	11 19	11 52	..	..	..	..	..	10 19	3 30	9 19	..	..	..
Shirebrook	..	..	..	7 11	12 4	4 28	5 12	6 35	8 32	10 22	11 26	11 59	..	..	..	..	..	10 26	3 37	9 27	..	..	..
Langwith	..	..	..	7 15	12 9	4 27	..	6 39	8 36	10 26	11 30	12 3	..	..	..	..	..	10 31	3 42	9 31	..	..	..
Elmton and Creswell	..	..	..	7 22	12 15	4 33	..	6 45	8 44	10 32	11 36	12 9	..	..	..	..	..	10 37	3 48	9 37	..	..	..
Whitwell	..	..	..	7 26	12 20	4 37	..	6 49	8 50	10 36	11 40	12 14	..	..	..	..	..	10 41	3 53	9 41	..	..	..
Worksop	..	..	..	**7 35**	**12 30**	**4 46**	..	**6 58**	**9 0**	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	**10 50**	..	**9 50**	..	..	..
Retford	..	..	..	8 8	12 47	6 31	..	..	10 25	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11 9	..	10 25	..	..	..
Shireoaks	..	..	..	..	..	5 15	..	7 58	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11 13	4 2	10 5	..	..	..
Kiveton Park	..	..	..	..	..	5 23	..	8 7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11 21	4 10	10 13	..	..	..
Sheffield	..	..	..	8 51	1 50	5 45	..	8 30	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11 43	4 35	10 35	..	..	..
Manchester	..	..	..	**10 10**	**3 22**	**8 15**	..	**10 35**	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	**1 25**	**6 20**	..	..	..	..
Liverpool	..	..	..	**11 15**	**4 23**	**10 21**	..	**11 45**	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	**2 45**	**7 20**	..	..	..	..
Liverpool	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	**5 20**	**8 40**	**3 50**	..	..	..
Manchester	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	**6 25**	**10 0**	**5 0**	..	..	..
Sheffield	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8 35	1 10	7 35	..	..	..
Kiveton Park	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8 59	1 34	7 59	..	..	..
Shireoaks	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 4	1 39	8 4	..	..	..
Retford	..	..	..	8 24	..	1 0	..	4 55	6 44	8 30	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8 24	1 30	7 35	..	..	..
Worksop	..	..	..	**8 50**	..	**1 13**	..	**5 15**	**7 20**	**9 35**	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	**9 17**	**2 0**	**8 17**	..	..	..
Whitwell	..	..	..	9 1	..	1 23	..	5 25	7 30	9 46	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 27	2 10	8 27	..	..	..
Elmton and Creswell	..	..	..	9 8	1 15	1 27	..	5 29	7 35	10 25	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 31	2 14	8 31	..	..	..
Langwith	..	..	..	9 14	1 20	1 32	..	5 35	7 41	10 31	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 35	2 18	8 35	..	..	..
Shirebrook	..	..	..	9 18	1 24	1 36	5 †25	5 40	7 46	10 35	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 39	2 22	8 39	..	..	..
Mansfield Woodhouse	..	..	..	9 25	1 32	1 43	5 31	5 46	7 53	10 41	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9 49	2 32	8 49	..	..	..
Mansfield	..	..	..	**9 30**	**1 38**	**1 50**	**5 38**	**5 52**	**7 58**	**10 46**	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	**9 55**	**2 38**	**8 55**	..	..	..
Sutton	..	..	..	10 12	..	2 28	..	6 20	8 28	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3 37	..	..	..	..
Nottingham	..	..	..	10 8	..	2 57	..	7 3	8 56	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3 53	..	..	..	..
Derby	..	..	..	..	..	3 53	..	8 17	9 47	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4 32	..	..	..	..

† These trains on Saturdays only.

A 1902 timetable showing that you could travel direct to Liverpool or Manchester.

Group heading for Cleethorpes pose for the photographer at Worksop station.

Although most Victorian communities had fresh foods from their local farms the one item that now became more readily available was fresh fish. Thanks to the railways large amounts of fish could be brought inland from such places as Grimsby, within just a few hours. Special railway fish waggons were devised especially for this purpose. Consequently, the fish industry increased, and local diets became more varied.

Twentieth century Fish Truck.

During times of war the railways were able to move both men and munitions around the country at a fast and efficient pace. Locally we know that many men used the railways to enlist in the armed forces or to come home for short breaks during their service. Whilst the men were away fighting in the war, the women and youth would need to fill their roles on the railways. Thirty percent (22,941) of the MR staff enlisted during WWI, which then required the women and youth to fill those positions.

Two women and two young men working at the Elmton & Creswell station during WWI.

The railways enabled the production of weapons and ammunition to be produced in secluded locations, away from known industrial centres where the enemy couldn't find them; one such place was at Langwith, known as 'His Majesty's Factory Langwith'.

His Majesty's Factory, Langwith.

This substantial chemical works was built on land to the west of the colliery to manufacture Perchlorates which was used in the manufacture of sea mines in the First World War. Construction began in late 1915 and sporadic production began in October 1916. It wasn't until June 1917 that the factory was producing at full capacity. A total of 2,173 tons of Perchlorate powder was produced between June 1917 and November 1918.

This was transported to an explosives factory in Wales via the Midland Railway which had provided a siding into the works at Langwith. This enabled local people, mostly women, to be involved in the war effort and help win the wars.

Lowestoft evacuees, living in Creswell, on a school outing.

Young children from the larger cities were evacuated into the countryside, away from enemy action during the Second World War. The Government Evacuation Scheme was developed during the summer of 1938, with the aim of ensuring the safety of millions of children from the east coast and South. When the German Luftwaffe began their air attacks on Britain, the safety of those in the areas being bombed was a priority. In June 1940 children and teachers were evacuated some 200 miles from Lowestoft to Worksop, and on to Clowne where buses then took them to the villages. The trains to Clowne would have also passed through Whitwell and Creswell Stations where they were welcomed with open arms.

Fond memories were made with these children, and their local foster parents, who were taught in the local schools and played with local children before returning home after the end of the war.

Coal Mines and Social Benefits

In chapter two we saw how the MR enabled many businesses to grow, but the overwhelming industry that prospered thanks to the MR was that of coal mining. Between Worksop and Kirkby there were nine mines which, during the 1930s, employed around 17,000 people between them. This meant that the local population grew rapidly with many new housing estates being constructed to accommodate these workers and their families. These estates were often known as 'Model Villages' and adjoined established villages along the line. We even saw one new village being created especially for the miners and their families, the village of Rhodesia. It sits near the Woodend junction, west of Worksop and was named after Mr. G. Preston Rhodes, the chairman of Shireoaks Colliery Company. These new housing estates were one of the ways used to attract people into the mines, by offering modern homes to their employees.

Creswell Model Village (Google Image June 2009).

Mine owners not only provided housing for their employees but provided social and recreational facilities, which included such things as social clubs and sports grounds. These were often operated by a new organisation known as CISWO (Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation). The employees would pay a small fee, taken out of their wages each week, to support this new organisation.

Through CISWO the workers and their families had their social lives opened to:

- Social clubs
- Darts
- Dominos
- Football
- Cricket
- Lawn Tennis
- Table Tennis
- Excursions
- Bowls
- Swimming
- Youth Clubs
- Carnivals
- Music
- Drama

They also supported the provision of further education. Caring for those who became disabled, including the provision of dedicated recovery facilities, or who were otherwise disadvantaged, including widows and their children. Even today, after the closure of the coal mines, CISWO still look after those in-need who were employed within the coal industry.

The Sherwood Colliery provided a 'Lads' Club', which was established in 1921 and provided physical training and recreational activities for about 80 boys. They also provided a sun ray clinic, opening in 1927, which included treatment and consulting rooms, equipped with health lamps.

The year 1934 saw the opening of the colliery swimming baths and a new youth centre in 1963 where activities included drama, table tennis, dancing, and judo. Those swimming baths have twice been refurbished and modernised and have now been renamed the 'Rebecca Adlington Swimming Centre' in honour of Mansfield's Olympic gold medallist.

Most collieries supported their own Brass Band and those along this route were no exception. For example, the Creswell and Whitwell bands frequently entered local, regional, and national competitions and fared very well.

The Creswell Brass Band was formed in 1899 and were called the 'Creswell Colliery and District Band', holding their rehearsals in the Colliery office until the Creswell Miners Welfare building was opened in 1908.

1925 saw them winning the British Open Championship competition and in 1945 their Trombone Quartet became world champions. The band has recorded several records and have frequently performed on both television and radio. They have played in front of Royalty including King Edward VII, King George V and Queen Elizabeth II. Nowadays, this thriving band concentrates on performing in concerts. (For a more detailed insight to the band please visit https://creswellband.co.uk)

There is a website dedicated to brass band results; use this link to see around 300 competitions entered by the Creswell band: https://brassbandresults.co.uk/bands/creswell-colliery-band/

Creswell Colliery Brass Band 1954.

For the rail enthusiasts: The line has witnessed many well-known trains steaming along its tracks: Here is a memory of the Flying Scotsman stopping at Creswell in 1969 and being appreciated by scores of enthusiasts and admirers.

The Flying Scotsman Copyright Robin Webster (CC BY-SA 2.0).

2023 and beyond

The railway brought with it prosperity to the existing communities, but at a cost, with many people saying that the coal mines left a 'blot on the landscape'. The Worksop Guardian commented as early as 1899 'The rusticity of the place has now clean gone – the hammer of industry has ousted it' (re: Manton colliery). In 1911 someone said, 'Boring started in September and the country estate changed forever' (1911, re: Firbeck colliery). Perhaps that was the case, but since the closure of the mines, measures have been taken to restore many areas back to nature, even if there is now a large hill where a valley once stood, while other former colliery sites have been used for housing or light industry.

Langwith-Whaley Thorns Station.

Today, the Robin Hood Railway links a network of country walks, leading to exciting places of interest. In some cases, those walks can be accessed right next to the stations, such as the Archaeological Way and Poulter Country Park at the Langwith-Whaley Thorns station. Whilst in Langwith, don't forget to pay a visit to the Heritage Centre, which sits at the entry to the station carpark (check opening times first).

The east Derbyshire/west Nottinghamshire countryside is as good as anywhere in our green and pleasant land and local people need not travel far to experience spectacular scenery. We also invite visitors to experience our local beauty spots and imagine our heritage as you walk along exciting country walks, one of which will take you to the world-renowned Creswell Crags.

Mansfield station as it is today, complete with a much smaller canopy compared to the original overall roof. Chris Booth collection.

A MR Johnson 0-4-4 locomotive and train at Worksop in 1906.
Courtesy Richard Allsopp collection.

For further information visit robinhoodline.com

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