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**The Kirkby Lonsdale Railway** *by Alan Cox*

Following the opening of the Liverpool-Manchester railway in 1830 there was an outbreak of ‘Railway Fever’ and many people envisaged a railway line from London to Scotland. As far as Lancaster this was relatively simple, but then the Westmorland Fells got in the way.

George Stephenson, cautious as ever, suggested following the coastline, but Joseph Locke had more confidence in improvements to the steam locomotive and planned a route up the Lune valley, through Tebay and then over Shap Fell to Carlisle. This would have run up the eastern bank of the Lune with a station for Kirkby Lonsdale in what is now Low Casterton. The present Carnforth-Leeds line would also have made a junction just south of Kirkby and a big engine shed would have been needed. A further line (never built), which followed the line of the A65 to Crooklands and Heversham, would have connected with the Cumbrian coastline and turned Kirkby Lonsdale into a major railway centre, just as Carnforth became in real life. Kirkby Lonsdale could have become an important junction on the west coast mainline, attracted

industry and investment and grown around the station to become another, larger Victorian town.

In reality the Underley estate would not permit a railway to be built on their land and they had sufficient ‘clout’ to make it prohibitively expensive to try and force the issue. Furthermore, Kendal businessmen wanted a railway so the line went near to Kendal.

The next attempt to build a railway through Kirkby Lonsdale was the Northwest Railway, which planned a route from Skipton through Ingleton to Tebay, with a branch line that would run through Clapham, Melling and Hornby to Lancaster. Once again opposition from landowners deterred investors; the branch line was built to Lancaster but the money ran out and the mainline reached only as far as Ingleton.

Next it was the turn of the Midland and Furness Railways. Jointly they built a line from Carnforth through Arkholme to Melling. It by-passed Kirkby Lonsdale. Finally the London and Northwest Railway agreed to complete the line from Ingleton to Tebay. To oppose the local NIMBYs (although the term hadn’t yet been invented -*Ed.*) it was run through High rather than Low Casterton and the station for Kirkby, which opened in 1868, was carefully sited just across the border in Lancashire - not as convenient but much harder to object to! Even before the line was complete the L&NWR had fallen out with the old NWR and refused to run through trains on the route, so that all trains terminated at Ingleton. To make matters worse the trains



from Tebay to Ingleton did not connect with the trains from Clapham to Ingleton and passengers faced an enormous wait, and sometimes had to walk across the Ingleton viaduct to continue their journey.

Thus it was that a combination of politics and pride ensured that while Kirkby had a railway it was as inconvenient as possible for anyone who might wish to use it. Not only was the station two miles from the town with a terrible train service, but it was actually in the next county! This was unique in, England, although stations at Coldstream in Scotland and another on the Welsh border also served communities in the neighbouring country.

Kirkby had another claim to fame in that the station name was spelt differently from the town name. The mighty L&NWR spelled it as “Kirby”, as the people at Euston felt they knew better than the locals, and the name sign was not corrected until the 1920s.

The railway was a classic example of a line that went from nowhere to nowhere, via nowhere much. It was planned to take expensive express trains from northern manufacturing towns to Scotland, and deprived of that purpose by railway politics, it never really found another use. A small colliery at Ingleton, some quarrying and the Barbon creamery comprised all the industry. The schools at Casterton and Sedbergh sometimes ran Hogwarts-like special trains and the rest of the trains served such local traffic as had no alternative.

My grandmother, who lived near the old National School on Kearstwick Road, told me about a visit to Kendal market. She first walked into Kirkby, then took Wilman’s horse-drawn tram to the station. Next came a train to Tebay, a wait, then a train to Oxenholme, then another wait and finally a train to Kendal. A couple of hours in Kendal was possible before three trains, a bus and a walk got her home again. Not surprisingly when a motor bus service was started to Kendal it took most of the traffic and the railway faced closure. World War 2 was a temporary lifeline as the Lune valley route was a valuable diversionary line, relieving congestion between Lancaster and Tebay, and providing an alternative to the main line in case of damage. Even trade picked up a little, as the new A65 made it possible to move coal to Kirkby station (Arkholme, 3 miles away, has previously handled most of the coal traffic) and there was a ready market as domestic fires typically used 8-10 tonnes per house per year.

After the war, up until about 1950, petrol was rationed and private vehicles were practically unobtainable, so the railway had a last brief period of usefulness, but as conditions eased and prosperity increased the writing was on the wall. The end came sooner than at most country stations. Even before Dr Beeching, the passenger service was withdrawn.

Locomotive No. 42396 (driven by Jack Bird) took the last Tebay train out of Ingleton at 6.52pm on January 31<sup>st</sup> 1954; when it returned to Ingleton, serenaded by Kirkby Lonsdale brass band, it was all over. The line was kept open for freight traffic until 1963 and as a diversionary route for a few more years, until finally closing in 1967.

Many relics remain. The station is now a private house, and an industrial estate occupies the old goods yard. Fibre-optic cables are slowly spreading along the old trackbed offering a communications revolution George Stephenson could never have imagined.

Starting with Underley’s recalcitrance, resulting ultimately in the mainline by-passing Kirkby, the world was changed. Industry was stifled, feudalism was prolonged into the next century, wages remained low, whilst the price of manufactured goods was kept high.

### **Planning Matters**

**SL/2015/0905 - Installation of Illuminated lettering on the gable end of Lunesdale Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale.** We objected to the previous application (SL/2015/0347), which was subsequently withdrawn. This application is very similar, so a similar objection was made. The application was refused by SLDC.

**SL/2015/1105 - Alterations to The Garden House, Rigmaden.** The proposed changes to this listed building work well in the location, but some suggestions were made about specific design details.

### **Extension of Yorkshire Dales National Park**

The extension on of the YDNP is to take effect from August 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. The whole of the parishes of Barbon, Casterton, Middleton and Mansergh will be included, and a small part of Kirkby Parish, including Kearstwick. Map details can be found at: [www.yorkshiredales.org/about-the-dales/boundary-extension](http://www.yorkshiredales.org/about-the-dales/boundary-extension)

The Chief Executive said that the National Park Authority is “thrilled that these stunning landscapes have been recognised as worthy of national park status”. He cautioned that “the addition of a further 161 square miles does present challenges..... but extending the boundaries of these beautiful and internationally iconic areas should provide a boost to tourism in the area, supporting rural businesses and potentially adding millions more to the £4 billion already generated by visitors to the National Parks each year”.

### **A Local of Distinction** by *Pat France*

At precisely midnight on November 7<sup>th</sup> 1920, Brigadier-General L.J. Wyatt, General Officer Commanding British troops in France and Flanders, went into a small hut near the village of St. Pol, Ypres, in northern France.

Earlier that afternoon four bodies had been disinterred from four unmarked graves in the battlefields of Arras, Ypres, the Somme and the Aisne and these bodies now lay, each covered by a union flag, in the hut in St. Pol. The bodies chosen were all casualties from the early part of the war, and were all received by a British clergyman and two British undertakers, Mr Nodes and Mr Sourbutts, and they were examined to make certain there were no distinguishing marks which could have identified them. By the light of a lantern Brigadier Wyatt chose one body, and this was to go into the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. The remaining three bodies were re-interred in St. Pol churchyard with full military honours, with Brigadier Wyatt attending the funerals.

The idea of a Tomb of the Unknown Warrior had originated in the mind of the Rev. David Railton in 1916 when he saw a grave marked by a rough wooden cross which bore the legend ‘an unknown British soldier of the Black Watch’. Following the cessation of hostilities in November 1918, he wrote to Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in charge of British Forces, but no answer was forthcoming. He then contacted the Dean of Westminster, who in turn contacted King George V, David Lloyd-George the Prime Minister, and the War Office. The Cenotaph in Whitehall was due to be unveiled on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1920, and eventually King George was persuaded that an unknown body should be brought to England.

After the brigadier made his choice, the body was placed inside a coffin made of English oak, and sealed with wrought-iron straps and a seal stating ‘A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918’. A sword, a gift from the King, was attached to the seal. On November 10<sup>th</sup> the coffin was taken to Boulogne with six barrels of earth from Flanders. The coffin was carried aboard HMS Verdun, and on arrival at Dover was placed inside a South Eastern Railways van to be taken to Victoria station, the very same van that had carried the body of Nurse Edith Cavell in May 1919.

On the morning of November 11<sup>th</sup> the coffin was placed on a gun carriage, and pulled by six horses and followed by the Heads of the Armed Forces and 400 servicemen, made its way to the Cenotaph. There the King placed his own wreath on top, before the gun carriage arrived at Westminster Abbey; after the coffin was put into the ground the six barrels of Flanders earth were poured over it. For the service the aisle was lined with 100 recipients of the Victoria Cross; the congregation was made up of a thousand widows and mothers of the fallen. By nightfall over 200,000 people had visited the tomb. And within five days more than a million people had paid their respects.

Brigadier General Louis J. Wyatt DSO, DL, Chevalier Legion d’Honneur, Grands Officier Ordre, de d’Aviz, lived here in Kirkby Lonsdale at 5 Fairbank, which they rented from Underley Estate. He (1874-1955) and his wife Marion Jessie, but always known as Gypsy (1879-1965) moved here in the early 1930’s and were here until their respective deaths. They were accompanied for some of the time by their daughters Patricia and Laetitia.



The first stage of the journey of the chosen ‘Unknown Warrior’ from France to England, and eventual interment in Westminster Abbey, under the watchful eye of Brigadier-General Wyatt.

## Windfarm Update

### Caton

Community Wind Power in recent years have submitted 3 lots of plans for additional turbines near Caton (all rejected by Lancaster City council), lost one public enquiry and withdrawn from a second, have now announced their withdrawal from all their schemes in England due what they saw as ‘...adverse planning conditions’.

Not far away, a single large turbine to the south-west of Arkholme was refused by LCC, went to appeal and was refused by the Planning Inspector.

### Killington

This controversial scheme next to Killington Lake has been the subject of intense resistance over the past few years. SLDC’s approval, against their officer’s recommendation, resulted in the plans being called in by the secretary of state, who ordered a public enquiry. The developer withdrew from this at a very late stage which eventually resulted in FELLs being awarded costs against them. Banks have now notified the landowners that they will not be renewing their land option agreement, so it seems the idea of a windfarm here is finally at an end.

### Kirkby Moor

RWE submitted an application to remove the 12 existing small turbines and replace them with 6 very large ones. The planning officer recommended refusal, and permission was refused by SLDC at their Nov 2015 planning meeting by 9 votes to 2.

Friends of Eden Lakeland and Lune Valley (FELLs), who have done so much to defeat these and so many other windfarm proposals, now believe that the threat to the Forest of Bowland AONB and the lower Lune Valley is past. Good news indeed for all those who treasure this lovely environment.

### Next Edition

The Spring 2016 Newsletter will be an expanded edition in order to accommodate an article entitled ‘Geology and Landscape of the Rainbow Parish’ which will attempt to describe how the former gives rise to the latter. If any member could provide an insight or a photograph which might fit with the title in any way, the Editor would love to hear from them.

### Forthcoming Winter Talks

**Monday January 11<sup>th</sup> - ‘Drove Roads of the Yorkshire Dales’** - by David Johnson. Before the railways, the movement of meat on the hoof over long distances was a major industry, and David will explain the importance of the drove roads used to life in the Yorkshire Dales.

**Monday February 8<sup>th</sup> - ‘The Thirlmere Hundreds’** - by John Butcher. More than 120 years ago, a water pipeline was built from Thirlmere to Manchester. United Utilities manager John Butcher will describe this massive project, that still carries 220 million litres of water each day without the use of pumps.

**Monday March 14<sup>th</sup> - ‘Lakeland Architecture through the Centuries’** - by Andy Lowe. A welcome return to Kirkby Lonsdale for this acknowledged expert on so many facets of Lake District history and tradition. Andy will guide us through the many architectural styles starting from mediaeval times. To be preceded by the AGM and followed by wine and nibbles.



### Regional Heritage Centre, Lancaster University

Dr Alan Crosby will be presenting all four sessions on **Early Industry in the North West**, to be held on Lancaster University’s campus on **Saturday 16 January**. This dayschool will explore the medieval origins of a range of industries which came to have a profound effect on the economic and social development of this region. For full details visit: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/rhc/event/5435>

<b>Editor:</b> Dr Ken Humphris The views expressed are those of the Editor and do not necessarily reflect those of the Civic Society Committee as a whole. The Editor would be delighted to receive comments or articles from members of the Society for inclusion in the newsletter. Registered Charity No. 502315	<b>Committee</b>  <b>Chairman</b> Dr Ken Humphris Tel: 015242 71983  <b>Secretary</b> Mrs Sue Pelter Tel: 015242 73824  <b>Treasurer</b> Mr David Dalgoutte Tel: 015242 71890	<b>Membership Secretary</b> Mrs Judith Manifold Tel: 015242 73457  Mrs Audrey Phillips Tel: 015242 72514  Ms Margaret Bunch Tel: 015242 76494  Mr Peter Stockdale Tel: 015242 76443	Mr Tom Felix Tel: 015242 72248  Miss Pat France Tel: 015242 71740  Mr Peter Yorke Tel: 015242 76420
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