

CRAVEN'S HISTORICAL COMMUNITY STATIONS

HELLIFIELD

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HELLIFIELD STATION



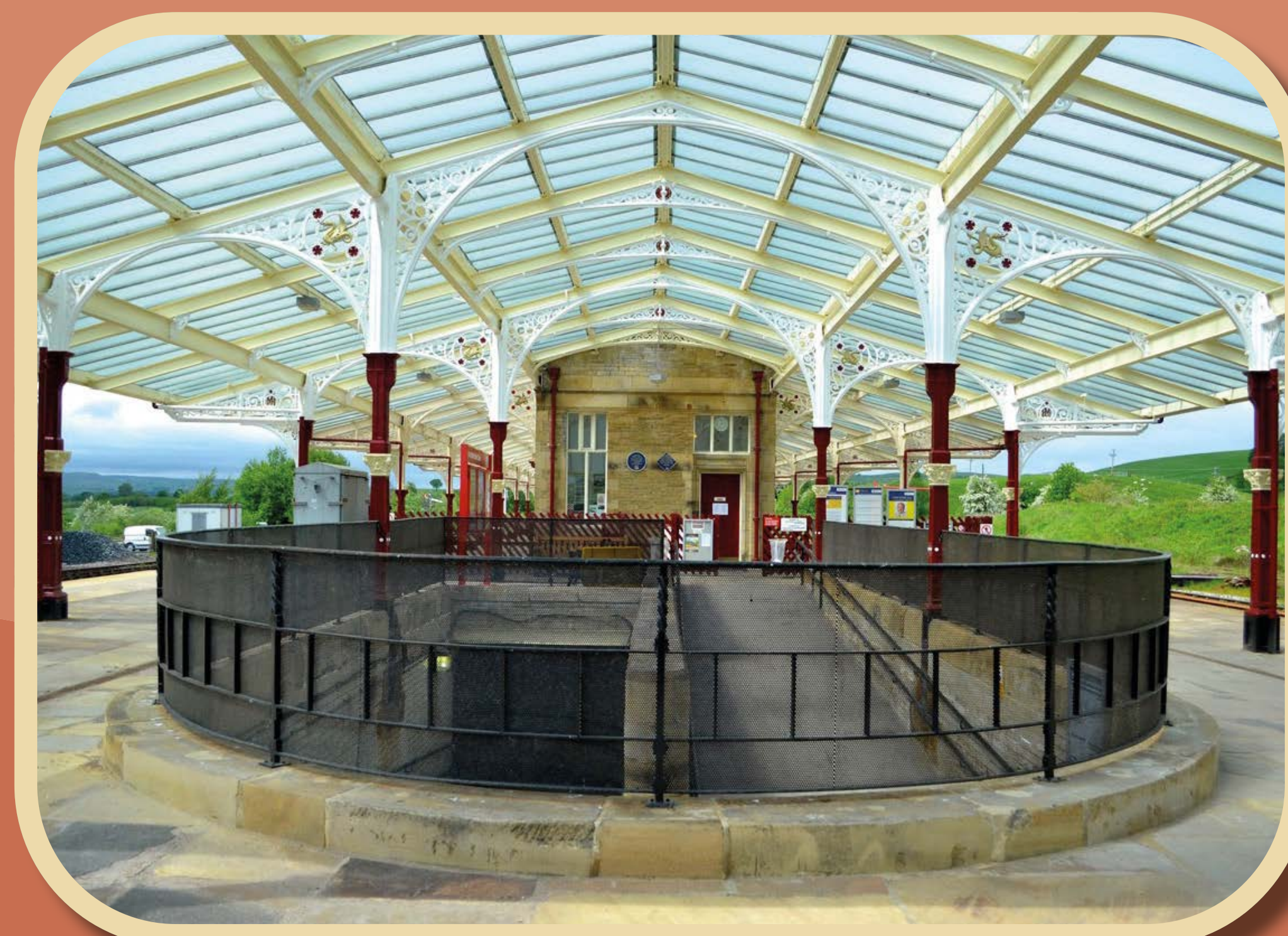
An early photograph of Hellifield station with the station staff in attendance. The Midland engine shed can be made out just beyond the impressive semaphore signals. Photo: D. Binns Collection



Photograph taken in August 2019 from the old goods yard area. The old station accommodation can be clearly seen above the canopy. Photo: Brian Haworth



A 2-6-2 Fairburn Tank 42051 a Hellifield engine stands in the bay platform awaiting departure for Blackburn in the early 1960's. The inclined line to the right of the locomotive led up to the coaling stage. Photo: D. Binns Collection



The station canopy looks splendid after restoration work by Network Rail with both the Midland Wyverns and MR lettering picked out to good effect. Photo: Gerald Townson

The first railway company to arrive at Hellifield was the Little North Western whose single-track line opened on the 30th July 1849. The first station built by the Little North Western was constructed of timber and plaster in the company's 'mock-Tudor' style and was located about one quarter of a mile east of the present station. The line had been doubled as early as June 1852.



On 1st June 1880 the Midland Railway (MR) opened its grand new passenger station at Hellifield which replaced the earlier Little North Western structure and at the same time the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway's branch from Blackburn via the Ribble Valley to Hellifield opened. The new station

was uniquely constructed as an island platform with a bay platform at each end of the station. The east bay platform served the Ribble Valley line to Blackburn and the west bay services to Hawes and Carlisle.

The substantial station opened with waiting rooms, refreshment rooms, bookstall and offices. The ornate station canopy had the letters MR incorporated into the canopy as well as the Midland's famous wyvern crest.



The refreshment room attracted female workers into what was then a male-oriented railway. The first recorded women workers in the refreshment rooms were Ruth Sharp from Derby, Jenny Haydock from Ely and a very young thirteen-years-old Mary Anne Emma Green from Westminster, London. By 1891 the station refreshment rooms were doing well and the Midland Railway had taken on a Refreshment Room Page Boy, seventeen years old Sydney James Dunning from Swansea.

The Midland four-road stone-built engine shed situated at the western end of the station adjacent to Hellifield North Junction signal box was also opened in 1880. Other new facilities introduced were a turntable, locomotive lifting apparatus, a small workshop, a sand-drying facility and a large water tank. An unusual wooden coaling stage adjacent to the shed was an interesting feature. The Midland shed was one of the sheds responsible for keeping the Settle and Carlisle route clear of snow and, to this end, several large snow ploughs were kept at the shed. An unusual wooden coaling stage adjacent to the shed was an interesting feature. The shed closed in 1963 but was used to house locomotives which were destined to be preserved as part of the national collection, once these locomotives were found a home the shed was demolished in 1972.

The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway's engine shed was situated in the fork of the Blackburn branch and the line to Skipton and opened in 1881. This shed was built in the classic Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway style with a stone bay-windowed foreman's office built on the side. The three-road shed which also had an adjacent 50ft turntable closed on the 7th November 1927.

Both the Midland and the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway built houses for their workers. Midland Terrace comprising of 40 well-built 3-bedroom properties and Lancashire and Yorkshire Terrace which was a much smaller development. Station Villas situated across from the station subway entrance were built by the Midland railway to house the station master and shed foreman.

Today all of the station buildings are in private ownership and the station refreshment room located in the former ticket office is worth a visit. Hellifield South Junction signal box still stands in use controlling among other things the graceful semaphore signals still in use. The station and signal box now lie within a conservation area.

