

THE LITTLE NORTH WESTERN'S HISTORICAL STATIONS

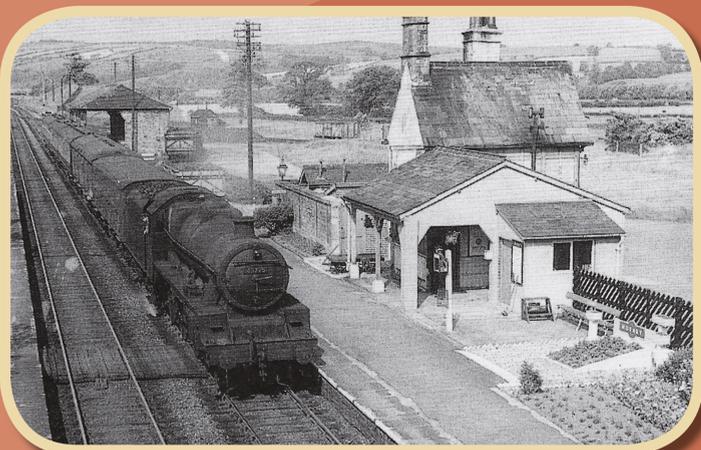
HORNBY STATION

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HORNBY STATION



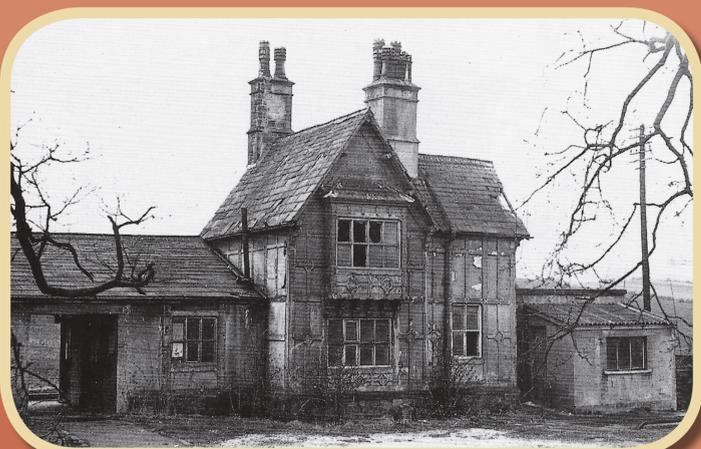
The original Tudor-style "Little" North Western station at Hornby c.1900.
Courtesy V.R. Anderson collection.

Hornby station and the area it served was in many ways similar to the other two stations on the Lune Valley line between Wennington and Lancaster Green Ayre. Like Caton and Halton it had a siding to a goods shed with the narrow, curved-topped windows favoured by the "Little" North Western Railway in its sheds and crossing-keepers' cottages, such as the one still extant as a private dwelling at Claughton. All three stations had signal boxes, of course, and all had weigh bridges. Caton had a small cattle pen but Hornby had a much larger one served by lines on two sides. This increased loading capacity suggests the greater movement of livestock one might expect from the extensive farming community served by this station.



The re-styled station, c.1950.
Courtesy J.R. Porter.

Indeed, it seems clear that from its construction in 1849 the station was intended to be more significant than its neighbours. Pudsey Dawson of Hornby Castle was one of the founder shareholders of the "Little" North Western Railway and clearly wanted to have "his" village on the new railway map. Although the passenger service enjoyed by Hornby from 1850 to the First World War was not greatly different from that provided at Halton and Caton, it was visited by extra trains that did not stop at its neighbours. Many excursions in the 1880s, for example, from Hawes to Morecambe and from Bradford to Morecambe called only at Hornby after Bentham. A Morecambe to St. Pancras 'Special Express' and a Pantomime train from Morecambe to Leeds, (returning at 11.20 p.m. from Leeds and arriving back in Hornby at 1.41 a.m.) graced only Hornby with a stop as did a number of others "for staff purposes only".



Hornby station closed and decaying.
Courtesy F.W. Shuttleworth.

The original station building was another version of the mock-Tudor style, executed in timber and plaster, favoured by the "Little" NWR. Later in its career in the mid-twentieth century it underwent a good deal of modification, which involved the loss of half of the original house and a modern re-styling of the 'office' and waiting building and the loss of the cattle pens and sidings. Nevertheless what remained was in good repair and had neat gardens. Perhaps this scaling down was a portent of what was to come. Reduced usage resulted in Hornby's closure to passenger traffic in 1957, before the Beeching axe fell. Freight traffic ceased in April 1964 and the line closed in 1966.

The station buildings had already fallen into an advanced state of decay and it was not long before the area was cleared and redeveloped as a small industrial-cum-housing estate. Unlike its sisters, Caton and Halton, no trace of Hornby station survives except the name of one of the streets (Station Court) and the ghost of the trackbed to the east towards Wennington. However, on the Green Ayre site in Lancaster where trains from Hornby used to enter the station, the remains of the yard crane from Hornby goods depot stand - to the puzzlement of the young, no doubt - as a sad quasi-sculptural reminder of our industrial past and of the Lune valley line that might, if still with us, have been easing Lancaster's fearful rush-hour gridlock.



The yard crane from Hornby station on the sight of Lancaster Green Ayre station.
Courtesy Gerald Townson.



The old track bed, looking eastwards from Hornby station bridge towards Wennington. Courtesy Gerald Townson.

