

# North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society



## NEDIAS Supplementary Newsletter – March 2021 George Stephenson Special

produced in collaboration with



**Brimington and Tapton Local History Group**

and



CHESTERFIELD & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**Price: £5.00**

Whilst the Committee have taken the difficult decision to cancel all remaining meetings for the foreseeable future we thought that our membership may appreciate an occasional supplementary Newsletter based on previously published articles that you may have missed; some of which have been slightly revised and corrected for this newsletter.

### George Stephenson– “Father of the Railways”

First published in NEDIAS Newsletter No 20 - November 2005

*by the late David Wilmot*

Friday 29 October 2005 saw the unveiling of the long-promised statue of George Stephenson at the entrance to Chesterfield Station. It was a modest ceremony without fanfares, procession or ceremony other than speeches by the Mayor of Chesterfield, the Leader of the County Council and the local Member of Parliament, Paul Holmes. The National Railway Museum's *Rocket* replica, mounted with tender and carriage on Heanor Transport's low-loader, managed a puff or two of smoke and the red cloth came off to reveal a powerful bronze image of George, sternly gazing in to the distance, surveyor's dividers in one hand, a model of Locomotion in the outstretched palm of the other.



A great deal has already been written about George Stephenson, both during his lifetime and since and it risks being presumptuous to devote an article in the NEDIAS Newsletter to the man many perceive as a genius while others see him more as an important player during the formative years of railway engineering



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and development. Yet discussion continues to this day on almost every aspect of the innovations attributed to George as to the extent to which they were his own ideas or had been based upon the work of others. Even so, from the time of George's arrival in Chesterfield for construction of the North Midland Railway through to the present day, the local populace has held him in high esteem.

Born at Wylam beside the river Tyne in 1781, George Stephenson pioneered the construction of steam railway locomotives in any quantity and laid down several of the first railways designed for steam traction from the 1820s to the 1840s. George Stephenson was not the first to build a steam locomotive, an honour due to Richard Trevithick with his well-known locomotive for the Pen-y-Darren ironworks in South Wales of 1804 and his lesser-known 'Ironbridge' locomotive of 1803. Others were also involved in this field at that time, particularly Blenkinsop (1812) and William Hedley (*Puffing Billy* of 1813).

The first locomotive attributed to George was the *Blucher* of 1814 for the Killingworth colliery wagonway. Between that and the advent of the more famous *Rocket* of 1829, George built around twenty locomotives, latterly at the works at Forth Street in Newcastle at which the firm Robert Stephenson & Co. had been established in 1823. It was at this works that two locomotives, *Locomotion* and *Hope* were built to haul coal on the Stockton & Darlington Railway upon its opening in 1825. However, by the time of *Rocket*, locomotive design was largely in the hands of George's son, Robert. George was tied up with many demands for his services as a civil engineer defining the large number of separate railway schemes, many of which would go on to form the nucleus of Britain's railway network.

After the Stockton and Darlington line, George was to overcome both technical and professional challenges to succeed as engineer of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, opened in 1830. The next tranche of lines included the London & Birmingham for which his son, Robert, became the engineer. The Grand Junction was planned to continue the railway northwards from Birmingham, via Crewe, to connect with the Liverpool & Manchester near Warrington but on this line George lost out to the budding engineer from Barnsley who had trained under George, Joseph Locke. George did gain the Birmingham & Derby Junction as well as the line which put Chesterfield on the railway network map, the North Midland Railway between Derby and Leeds. Add to that the York & North Midland and the Sheffield & Rotherham lines, to name but a few and one can see that, by the late 1830s with George approaching his sixtieth year, he was putting his name to a heavy workload, even before considering his coal mining and industrial endeavours at Snibston in Leicestershire, plus those around Ambergate and Clay Cross.

The popularity of George owed much to his projected image of the man who, by dint of hard work and despite several hardships, had risen from a humble background to become a national symbol of the prowess of Britain's engineering profession. He became the first President of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers but never held membership of the Institution of Civil Engineers. In later life, while living at Tapton House, he seemed proud of not having membership of the Civils and of having turned down a knighthood on more than one occasion.

George had married Frances 'Fanny' Henderson in 1802 who gave birth to George's only son, Robert, in 1803 but she died as early as 1806. After several years tied up in his business activities, George married Elizabeth Hindmarsh in 1820 but they had no children and Elizabeth died in 1846. The memorial tablet in Chesterfield's Holy Trinity church would have George's name added just two years later. In March 1848 George married for the third time, the somewhat younger bride being his housekeeper at Tapton, Ellen Gregory, from Bakewell.

When George died on 12 August 1848 at the age of 67, his railway activities had long been supplanted by his greenhouse and gardening interests. As the engineer for the Stockton & Darlington Railway of 1825 and the Liverpool & Manchester in 1830, as well as reputedly driving *Rocket* at the latter's opening, George ensured his place in the history of Britain and the World's railways. Yet perhaps his greatest achievement was the engineering of the North Midland Railway, between Derby and Leeds, opened in 1840? In that work George had the assistance of Frederick Swanwick, one of his students from the days of the Liverpool & Manchester, who was to become a long-term resident of this area and one who contributed much to the promotion of local interest in all aspects of engineering.

But it was the work on the North Midland Railway which brought George Stephenson to Chesterfield and to the founding of his north east Derbyshire industrial interests. Sadly, nothing much has survived in Chesterfield from that era; Francis Thompson's original station building has been replaced three times over and a very small building now serves as the sole reminder of the railway's historic arrival in the town. So the statue now in place at Chesterfield station has to be an important reminder of the achievements of one of Britain's pioneering engineers in terms of benefits to our lives today.

The funeral of George Stephenson took place on 17 August 1848. Chesterfield shops closed for the afternoon and a large crowd of local people gathered to pay their respects. Perhaps because of George's long period of semi-retirement, there were few mourners from further afield. As well as Robert, there was Edward Pease, travelling from Darlington although aged 81 to attend the funeral of his long-standing business friend. It was Pease who had been responsible for appointing George as engineer to the Stockton & Darlington, so marking the first major milestone of George's railway engineering career.

George's name was added to the memorial tablet to his wife, Elizabeth, and Robert later donated a window to the chancel of the church in his father's memory. Robert did not maintain a connection with Chesterfield and disposed of his inherited interest in what became the Clay Cross Company soon after George's death. Sadly, Robert died just



eleven years later, in October 1859 and only four weeks after the death of Isambard K Brunel.

There is an imposing statue to George Stephenson at the entrance to Newcastle station and one to Robert in a corner of the bland concrete forecourt at London's Euston station. Unlike the famous 'Doric Arch' the statue of George escaped intact from the 1960s rebuilding of Euston, being removed from the Great Hall when that was demolished and now resides in the National Railway Museum at York. Elsewhere, there are countless Stephenson streets and probably more than one building dedicated to him than Chesterfield's Stephenson Memorial Hall. Yet nothing can prompt us to reflect more upon the achievements of the man than will the statue of George looking solemnly at those about to travel upon 'his railway'.

#### Further Reading:

Hunter Davies, *George Stephenson, a biographical study*, London, 1975.

Derrick Beckett, *Stephenson's Britain*, Newton Abbot, 1984

Adrian Jarvis, in *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, (eds. Jack Simmons & Gordon Biddle) OUP, Oxford, 1997.

Wall, John, *First in the World, the Stockton & Darlington Railway*, Sutton Publishing, 2001

## A Short History of Tapton House

*Philip Riden and Philip Cousins*

### Introduction

**T**his concise history of Tapton House, situated in the former parish of Tapton, now in the borough of Chesterfield, uses text prepared by Philip Riden as part of a 'guest editorial' he contributed to the historical railway publication *Back Track* in 2020. There are some additions by Philip Cousins, who has also contributed a short section of George Stephenson's life at Tapton. Stephenson must be the best remembered resident of Tapton House, though many may have fond memories of its role as a school from 1931 to 1991.

A brief chronology, which appears on page 7, has also been contributed by Philip Cousins.

This is not a full account of Tapton House, nor is it a biography of George Stephenson or a detailed account of his time at Tapton. For these readers are referred to further sources, some of which are outlined towards the end of this article. David Wilmot has also summarised Stephenson's life in this supplement.



*Tapton House as a school in the 1930s, by local photographer F Walker. As detailed in the text, the three right-hand bays were the original part of the house, with the main entrance around the corner. The pedimented entrance seen here is tacked on to the original building, with the four other bays to the left being added presumably at the same time. (Collection Brimington and Tapton Local History Group).*

### Tapton House

Tapton House, the Georgian mansion on the outskirts of Chesterfield in which George Stephenson spent his final years, is (at the time of writing – March 2020) at risk following the closure of a college campus there.

The house was built by Isaac Wilkinson (1749–1831), a Chesterfield lead merchant and banker, in about 1790 and enlarged sometime after 1811. He continued to extend the surrounding estate until his death. Wilkinson and his wife had no children but in 1817 became the guardians of a distant relative, George Yeldham Ricketts (1810–88). When Isaac died in 1831 he left Tapton to George when he reached the age of 24, on condition that he take the name Wilkinson. In 1837, soon after coming into his inheritance, George Wilkinson offered Tapton House and up to 100 acres of parkland to let. Wilkinson had apparently only been living intermittently at Tapton House.

The following year the house and grounds were leased for ten years to George Stephenson (1781–1848), who was then

living near Ashby de la Zouch in Leicestershire. When he moved to Tapton, in 1838, Stephenson was engaged in building the North Midland Railway, which skirted the western edge of the Tapton estate, and had recently established a coal and iron company at Clay Cross, on the North Midland line a few miles south of the town. Stephenson died at Tapton in 1848 and was buried at Holy Trinity church in Chesterfield.

In 1850 Mary Pocock and Grace Walker, formerly of Frome in Somerset, opened a girls' boarding school at Tapton and the following year Robert Stephenson (1803–59) let the mansion and grounds to them. This was done without Wilkinson's consent and a dispute ensued. In 1865 Miss Pocock and Miss Walker closed the school and surrendered their lease.

Tapton House stood empty for a few years until in 1872 the estate was purchased by Charles Markham (1823–88), the chairman of the Staveley Coal & Iron Company. The house remained the family's property until 1925, when Markham's eldest son, Charles Paxton Markham (1866–1926), offered the mansion and about 200 acres of land to Chesterfield Corporation for 'a Museum or Institute or in other ways for the benefit of the inhabitants of Chesterfield'. By this time the Tapton estate included Murray House and its grounds.



*This inconspicuous mound, a scheduled ancient monument, is situated behind a wall opposite the main entrance to Tapton House. It is the site of an early medieval homestead, though much eroded. In the 18th century local antiquary Dr Samuel Pegge promoted this site as being the Roman fort for Chesterfield – a theory often repeated. There is, however, no evidence for this. In the 1970s the fort was located by excavation near to Chesterfield Parish Church, effectively dismissing Pegge's theory. A photograph taken in March 2021. (Philip Cousins).*

The corporation initially planned to create a museum at Tapton but in 1931 adapted and extended the buildings for use as a senior school. The grounds were laid out as a public park and golf course. The latter first opened in 1933 using part of the Murray House estate – the house being used as the club house to this day. Tapton House, which became a small academic secondary school under the 1944 Education Act, closed in 1991. Three years later the premises were reopened as a satellite campus of Chesterfield College. The college left in 2018. Since then the property has remained empty.

Tapton House is a grade II\* listed building, protected for both its historical significance and its architectural quality. It stands in a prominent position, overlooking the Rother valley north of Chesterfield. The mansion is of three storeys, built in brick with a hipped slate roof. Originally it consisted of three by five bays, but was extended to its present form of eight by five bays. This accounts for the south-facing elevation, which appears to include the original entrance (later the headmaster's study). The date of this extension (and of other ancillary buildings adjacent) was either sometime after 1811 or after when George Yeldham Ricketts inherited the property, after 1831.

There is some fine moulded stonework around the doors and windows. Inside, the main rooms are decorated in a late eighteenth-century style, which dates partly from when the house was built and partly from the Markhams' time.

The grounds are planted with some fine trees and shrubs and walks laid out through them. A 'peace garden' was opened in 1947. There are remains of an early medieval homestead in the front garden (on the left, as one enters the garden gates). For many years this feature was supposed to be the site of a Roman fort, but in the 1970s it was located by excavation near to Chesterfield Parish Church. A park was created on all sides of the house, which has particularly fine views to the west. All these features were retained after Tapton became a school. In 1997 an Innovation Centre was opened on the site of the kitchen gardens by the borough council, designed by its architect Andrew Turnbull. A year earlier a 'labyrinth', actually an earth bank feature planted with wildflower mixture, designed by Jim Buchanan and reputed to be the largest of its type in the world, measuring 50 yards in diameter with earth banks 4 ft. high, was laid out in the park immediately to the north-west of the house. The feature used material excavated when the Innovation Centre was built.

At the time of writing (March 2020) Chesterfield Borough Council is still urgently seeking a new use for this historically important and very attractive property. Because of later building on the site, it is difficult to envisage a



return to residential use, but Tapton House could become a prestigious headquarters for a medium-sized service-sector company or a large professional practice, or indeed a school or college.

Given its association with George Stephenson, Tapton House is an important part of Britain's railway heritage and must not be allowed to fall into decay, much less be threatened with demolition.

### George Stephenson at Tapton

George Stephenson came to live at Tapton in 1838 to supervise construction of the North Midland Railway (NMR), opened in 1840, and his local industrial developments, such as the Clay Cross Company and local collieries. However, he also came to lead a more relaxed life, although during his earlier days at Tapton he was still preoccupied with various projected railway surveys in a period of rapid railway expansion. But, as W. O. Skeat has described in his book *George Stephenson: the man and his letters*, by the latter part of 1841 he was beginning, so far as surviving letters indicate, to enjoy a gradual retirement – but still retained an active interest in his local industrial activities.

Stephenson found that the grounds and gardens were in a neglected state when he arrived at Tapton. He spent some time re-cultivating them and began to take an active interest in horticulture and agriculture. The green-houses were extended (their site is now occupied by the Innovation Centre), with Stephenson becoming a pioneer in heating them by hot water. A friendship developed with Joseph Paxton, who was then in charge of the Chatsworth House gardens. Stephenson was in keen competition with Paxton, particularly over pineapples. His interests in bee-keeping and ornithology have also been recorded, as have his attempts to grow straight cucumbers. (Chesterfield Museum has at least one example of an elongated glass funnel. This was placed over the young cucumber at to encourage the fruit to grow straight.)

A sociable man, Stephenson would host his friends at Tapton House and took some time to encourage a younger generation of engineers. One of his biographers, Samuel Smiles, records that Stephenson would particularly like to hold a 'crowdie' at Tapton. This involved mixing together oatmeal, hot water and milk, which was then drunk. According to Smiles 'it was the diet to which he had been accustomed when a working man, and all the dainties with which he had become familiar in recent years had not spoiled his simple tastes'. Stephenson continued to meet friends and travel. He must have been a relatively frequent face at Chesterfield's Midland Railway station, to where he apparently walked and was not averse to racing friends back up the hill to Tapton House.

Smiles and Skeat both describe Stephenson's later life at Tapton in some detail. There have been other biographies, of George's (and his son Robert's) life. Len Thompson has also brought together accounts of Stephenson's life at Tapton in his *History of Tapton House* (2000). The reader is recommended to seek out these for further information on Stephenson's later life. It appears, however, that, apart from 1845 (when his second wife Elizabeth died), his final days at Tapton were happy. As is recounted in a further article in this supplement, he married his housekeeper at Tapton – Ellen Gregory – in January 1848. One presumes he must have been close to her for some time before this.

As David Wilmot records in this supplement, George Stephenson died at Tapton on 12 August 1848, aged 67. This was reputedly in his bedroom overlooking the main entrance. As Smiles has it, this was from 'a sudden effusion of blood from his lungs.' Though Stephenson had been unwell for some time, just a few weeks earlier he had felt well enough to deliver a paper to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers at Birmingham (he was first president of the institute and a leading light in its foundation). He had, though, previously suffered from pleurisy and it is this which appears to have recurred, ultimately leading to his death.

A few days later, on 17 August, Stephenson was laid to rest in Holy Trinity Church, Newbold Road. As David Wilmot mentions, shops and businesses in Chesterfield were closed as a mark of respect. The cortège was followed by his workpeople and residents and was led by Chesterfield corporation. A simple tablet in the chancel floor marks his burial, but his name was added to an earlier wall-mounted tablet to his second wife. His son, Robert, later paid for a large memorial window, which replaced plain glass, at the east end of the church.

The Stephenson Memorial Hall (now the museum and art gallery and Pomegranate theatre) followed in 1879 (extended in 1898), but a niche designed to hold a statue of the great man was never filled. As you will read in this supplement, Chesterfield managed to organise, what was the time a remarkable series of events to mark the centenary of his death in 1948.

Latterly, as David Wilmot records, 'the long-promised statue of George Stephenson' was unveiled at the entrance to Chesterfield railway station on 29 October 2005. The bronze statue was created by Suffolk sculptor Stephen Hickling, funded through a partnership involving Chesterfield Borough Council, Chesterfield Civic Society, Derbyshire County Council, Midland Mainline, Taylor Woodrow and Network Rail. In October 2011 a county council blue plaque in honour of Stephenson was unveiled in the railway station concourse.

RIGHT: Our Chairman, Cliff Lea, and Andrew Lewer, Leader of DCC at the time, MBE jointly unveil the Blue Plaque







LEFT: There is no date for this engraving of Tipton House (not 'Hall' as the caption has it), but it predates the later extensions. Here is the original extent of the house – five bays by three. The original entrance is seen facing south. The stable block to the left was presumably demolished when new stables, which were built next to the house extension, were themselves constructed around the same time that the house was extended and remodelled. (Collection Philip Cousins).



RIGHT: As the ground slopes away from the former south entrance of Tipton House, it is difficult to obtain the same view, shown in the engraving, particularly due to the growth of trees and shrubs. Near to the centre of this early March 2021 photograph, through the trees, is the present entrance and extension to the original house, of a further five bays. The original entrance can be seen, to the right. The hall behind this entrance was converted into a room. This eventually became the headmaster's study when the building was used as an academic secondary school (Philip Cousins).



ABOVE LEFT: The east elevation in 2020. The join between the original and later buildings can be discerned between the third and fourth bays, to the left of the door. A similar join can be discerned on the west elevation, where the entrance pediment has been added to mask the join. (Philip Cousins).



ABOVE RIGHT: Some mystery surrounds why this tree in the adjacent pleasure grounds has railings around it - they were formerly on all four sides. Perhaps the reason might be revealed by Violet Markham in her *Return Passage* autobiography. She recalled how her mother Rosa Paxton and her sister Laura Paxton whilst attending the school of Misses Pocock and Walker at Tipton House, had carved their initials RP and LP on a tree in the garden. Perhaps this is that tree, at one time carefully guarded, but with the initials long since faded and forgotten. (Philip Cousins).



LEFT: The once extensive green-houses in the walled garden at Tipton rapidly fell into disuse after the facility ceased being the central nursery for the borough council. This area would once have been the scene of great competition as Stephenson sought to out-do Joseph Paxton and others in growing produce such as Pineapples and Cucumbers. The green houses and former head gardener's house were cleared in the early 1990s. The Innovation Centre and its car park now fill the space. (A photograph taken in 1992 by Mrs M Hardwick).

## Concise chronology

Building constructed around the 1790s by Isaac Wilkinson. Architect unknown.

1831 – Isaac dies at Tapton House aged 81. No direct descendants. A ward, George Yeldham Ricketts, inherits majority of fortune, Tapton House and estate.

1832 – Yeldham takes control of Tapton, assuming name of George Yeldham Wilkinson – one the conditions of Isaac's will. He lives only sporadically at Tapton House.

1838 – George Stephenson moves into unfurnished Tapton House, probably sometime after August 7th.

1848 – George Stephenson dies. His son, Robert, inherits the lease of the house, possibly intermittently staying there when on local business.

1850 – Misses Pocock and Walker open an establishment for young ladies at Tapton House.

1851 – Dispute concerning the sub-letting of the house by Robert Stephenson to Misses Pocock and Walker.

1865 – School for young ladies closed. Unsuccessful attempt to auction property in 1865 and again in 1867 by its owner – still George Yeldham Wilkinson.

1868 – White's directory shows house as unoccupied.

1872 – House sold to Charles Markham for £10,000. Sale helps pay off some of Wilkinson's debts.

1873 – New Year's Day – Markham family move in from Brimington Hall.

1912 – Rosa, wife of Charles Markham (who died in 1888) dies. Property passes to Charles Paxton Markham. His sister Violet Markham lives there, but moves out in 1919.

1925 – Presented to Chesterfield Corporation by Charles Paxton Markham. He had previously been developing part of the estate for building (Paxton Road).

1927 – Consideration being given to use of the house for a museum. (Had been used for storing some exhibits possibly from 1925).

1929 – Leased to borough education committee for conversion into the town's 'central selective school', as part of Chesterfield-wide progressive educational policy.

1931 – April 13th school opens.

1947 – Peace garden opened.

1991 – School closes under secondary school reorganisation. (Ownership of the building and grounds still with Chesterfield Borough Council, though by this time the school is run by the county council as the local education authority. Hasland Hall school used the building temporarily until 1993).

1992 – Walled garden and former head gardener's house disused and cleared. (The walled garden and its greenhouses were used for many years as the central plant nursery for the borough).

1993-1994 – Conversion into a further education campus (opened in September 1994). Several post-1948 additions removed.

1997 – Innovation centre opens in former walled garden.

2018 – Further education campus closed at the end of the educational year. House empty. Advertised to let.

## Sources

The first part of this article comprises slightly revised text by Philip Riden, originally published as a 'guest editorial' in *BackTrack*, February 2020 and further reproduced in P Riden 'George Stephenson's last home at risk', *North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society Newsletter*, Issue 78, May 2020, pp. 5-6. These articles are themselves based on draft text for the Derbyshire Victoria County History on Tapton.

### Sources have included the following:

Chesterfield College, *Tapton House Campus: a brief historical guide* (1994).

Chesterfield Corporation Education Committee, *Chesterfield Education: the record of four years of reconstruction and experiment* (1932), especially pp. 212-232.

M Craven and M Stanley, *Derbyshire country house, volume II* (2001), pp. 313-314.

C Hartwell, N Pevsner, E Williamson, *Buildings of England: Derbyshire* (2016), p. 270.

VR Markham, *Return passage: the autobiography of Violet R Markham* (1953).

GR Philpott 'Memories of Tapton 1913-1919 and the next two years in the life of George Philpott', (unpublished), in Chesterfield Local Studies Library.

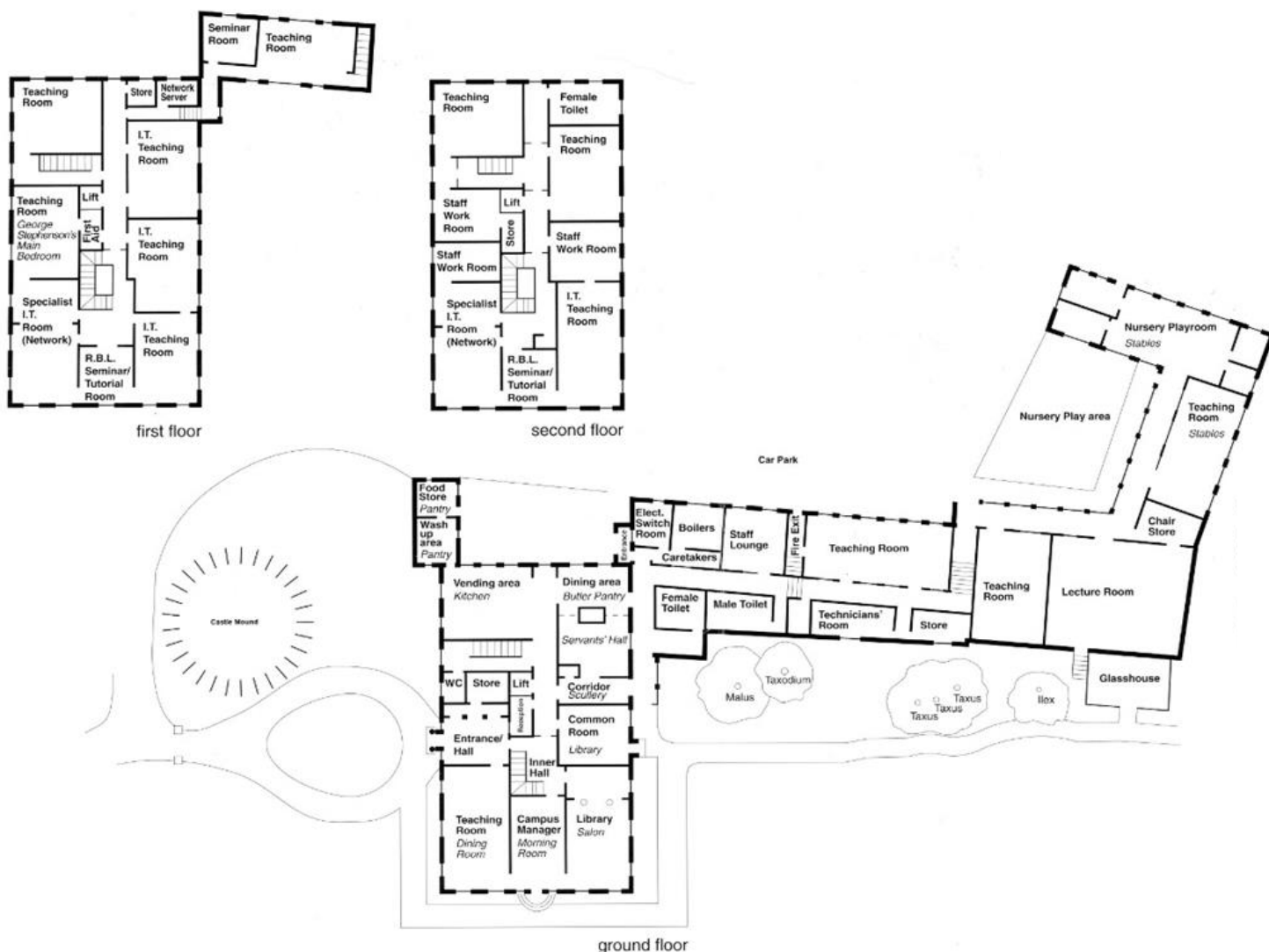
WO Skeat, *George Stephenson: the engineer and his letters* (1973). Stephenson's later years are dealt with from p. 204 onwards.

S Smiles, *Lives of engineers. The locomotive. George and Robert Stephenson* (1879). Especially chapter XVIII, pp. 341-356.

L Thompson, *History of Tapton House* (2000).

L Thompson, *Memories of Tapton House School* (1998).





*It is believed that this plan of Tapton House was prepared by the former borough architect's department. The rooms in bold text were their intended use when the refurbished building reopened in 1994 as a further education campus. Text in italics indicates the believed use in George Stephenson's time. The former 'Morning Room' in his time had latterly been the school headmaster's study. 'Castle Mount' marks the site of the early medieval homestead. (Taken from Tapton House campus: a brief historical guide (1994)).*

## George Stephenson's Third Wife

***Elizabeth Pemberton and Philip Cousins***

***First published in Brimington & Tapton Miscellany No 6 - January 2014***

### Introduction

**G**eorge Stephenson did not invent the steam engine, nor did he invent railways. What he probably did do, however, was bring the two together, along with an understanding of civil and mechanical engineering. His vision on what railways could do and what was needed, so they could accomplish their potential, has given him the generally referred to title of 'father of the railways'.

This short article is not, though, another attempt at a biography of George – there are quite a few of those. What we want to do here is write a little about George Stephenson's third wife, Derbyshire born Ellen Gregory, whom he married a few months before his death.

### George Stephenson

Having said that this is not a biography of George, it is necessary to point out the salient points of his life. He was born in 1781 at Wylam, a coal mining village a few miles west of Newcastle upon Tyne. He had a job at the colliery there, first as a coal picker. He then held a number of jobs, eventually climbing the ladder to become a brakesman – overseeing a steam engine employed in pumping. He married his first wife Frances Henderson in 1802. Their home was a single room in a cottage at Willington Quay – a village on the Tyne's north bank. Robert – George and Fanny's only off-spring – was born in 1803. They moved to Killingworth in the winter of 1804-5, when George secured a job at West Moor Colliery, still as a brakesman. This was owned by the Grand Allies – a conglomerate of coal owners. They allowed him to take up the superintendence of the steam engine at a Mill in Montrose, but he returned to the colliery.



Rising through the ranks, his skill with steam engines was recognised. Eventually his work paid off when a principal partner in the colliery tasked George with building a steam engine to work the local tramroads. This was the start of an illustrious career, beloved of the Victorians who saw the creed of the 'self-made man' at the centre of their beliefs. Chief amongst these was Samuel Smiles, who wrote a biography of Stephenson, the first edition of which appeared only a few years after his death, in 1857<sup>1</sup>. Doubtless George was self made, but it has become clear in recent years that some of the claims attributed to him should have been attributed to others. We would recommend those wanting a short objective biography of him to consult Adrian Jarvis's Shire Book *George Stephenson*<sup>2</sup>.

Suffice to say that George became famous. With his son Robert he helped forge what might be described today as a family brand. He and his son became associated with successful schemes (and some unsuccessful ones) at home and abroad. He was much in demand. He came to Chesterfield ostensibly to oversee construction of the North Midland Railway, but this was mainly overseen by his pupil Francis Swanwick<sup>3</sup>. George rented (this was usual in those days) Tapton House in 1838<sup>4</sup>. In that year he set up a small company at Clay Cross. The following year investment by friends helped establish the 'George Stephenson Company', which was later renamed the Clay Cross Company<sup>5</sup>. In the last few years of his life, he lived at Tapton in semi retirement<sup>6</sup>. It was there he died in 1848.

### George Stephenson's first wife

We know relatively little about George Stephenson's three wives. As mentioned above, he married his first – Fanny Henderson – in 1802; on the 28 November at Newburn parish church. This is about eight miles upstream from Newcastle upon Tyne. She was a farmer's daughter – called Frances but known as Fanny. She was twelve years older than George and was working as a maid in a farm where he was lodging. Robert was born on 16 October 1803. Fanny was 34 at the time and was ill for some time afterwards. At Killingworth Fanny gave birth to a daughter, whom they also named Fanny, but she died after three weeks – her mother's health also deteriorating. The following year George's first wife died of consumption, aged thirty-seven<sup>7</sup>. George was then aged 25.

### George Stephenson's second wife

George married his second wife on the 29 March 1820, at the same church that he married his first. Hunter Davies in his biography of George says that by this time he would have been quite a catch;

...no longer a poor obscure run-of-the-mill brakesman... He was now an important enginewright, earning over £200 a year, with a large cottage, several hundred pounds in savings and investments, turning down offers and jobs all over Tyneside<sup>8</sup>.

His bride was Elizabeth (Betty) Hindmarsh. George had proposed to her before he turned his attentions to his first wife. In fact Betty had been forbidden to marry George and had vowed never to marry anyone else<sup>9</sup>.

There are no surviving letters from George to his second wife (or to his first). It seems that his increasing activities may well have left his second wife practically a widow herself. As he dashed up and down the country she seems to have been left at home<sup>10</sup>. With him, she came to live at Tapton House in 1838. At first George was busy increasing his considerable mineral rights and associated industries<sup>11</sup>. We know nothing of their relationship, except a story told by Samuel Smiles of an unsuccessful attempt by Elizabeth to keep bees. Her husband studied the situation, concluding that the hives needed moving downhill, as the bees were too tired after feeding on all the flowers at the bottom to make it back up the hill. The hives were moved – the bees thrived!<sup>12</sup> Another of Stephenson's biographers, Thomas Summerside tells another story of Elizabeth's attendance at the Wesleyan Chapel in Chesterfield, where she apparently sometimes attended to hear one Robert Newton preach<sup>13</sup>. Elizabeth died in 1845 whilst she was at Tapton House. She is buried in Holy Trinity Church.

### George Stephenson's third wife

George was to marry Ellen Gregory, his former house keeper, in January 1848<sup>14</sup>. She has been described as 'the daughter of a Bakewell Farmer'.<sup>15</sup> There is some evidence that Stephenson had been concerned for her, when she was ill, in 1847 when he addressed a letter 'My dear Glen' that he sent from London to Tapton House, signing it '... your loving friend Geo. Stephenson'.<sup>16</sup>

1. S. Smiles, *Lives of the engineers: George Stephenson*, (1857). See A. Jarvis, *George Stephenson: an illustrated life of George Stephenson 1781 – 1848*, (2006), p. 36 for an appraisal of Smiles' biography of Stephenson.
2. Jarvis, *ibid*.
3. J. F. Smith, *Frederick Swanwick: a sketch*, (1888), p. 16.
4. W. O. Skeat, *George Stephenson: the engineer and his letters*, (1973), p. 170.
5. C. Williams, *Clay Cross and the Clay Cross Company*, (1995), p. 8.
6. Smiles, *Lives of the engineers: the locomotive. George and Robert Stephenson*, (1879), p. 301.
7. Davies, pp. 6-9.
8. *ibid*. p. 15.
9. *ibid*.
10. *ibid*. p. 68.
11. Jarvis, pp. 30 – 31.
12. Smiles, (1879), p. 344.
13. T. Summerside, *Reminiscences and conversations of and with the late George Stephenson, father of railways*, (1878), pp. 65 – 66.
14. *Derbyshire Courier* (DC), 15 January 1848.
15. Skeat, pp. 231 – 232.
16. *ibid*.

Ellen Gregory was christened in February 1808 at Bakewell.<sup>17</sup> Her father was Richard Gregory, who died in March 1833, aged 69.<sup>18</sup> Her mother was Ellen (sometimes Elin) Staley (d. 1839).<sup>19</sup> Richard's marriage to Ellen Staley (in 1803) appears to have been his second – he had married Ann Allcock in 1795 at Linby, Nottinghamshire.<sup>20</sup>

Ellen Gregory junior appears to have had a sister and two brothers.<sup>21</sup> There is some confusion here over her younger sister that further research might resolve. A search of transcribed baptism registers shows, in date order, Richard baptised on 15 February 1804 at Youlgreave; Ellen at Bakewell on 20 February 1808; 'Harriott' baptised at Bakewell on 29 July 1811; 'Harriet' at Youlgreave on 4 September 1811 and Henry at Youlgreave on 5 August 1813.<sup>22</sup> One brother (possibly Richard) later practiced as a doctor in Youlgreave.<sup>23</sup>

The family appear to be described variously as at Meadow Place, either Youlgreave or Bakewell. Meadow Place was described as '...lying to the north of Youlgrave, near Over-Haddon, in Bakewell...' by Lysons in 1817.<sup>26</sup> In 1846 it was described as 'a large farm' in Youlgreave parish, '1¼ mile N.W. from Youlgreave'.<sup>25</sup> This may account for the confusion between Youlgreave and Bakewell. Today we have Meadow Place Grange Farm.<sup>26</sup> This is a grade II listed building – a traditional farmhouse of mid 18th century.<sup>27</sup> The farm, which is quite extensive, was tenanted. In 1902 it was described as in the Devonshire family hands.<sup>28</sup> It had passed to them by way of the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536.<sup>29</sup> The farm lies approximately equidistant between the centres of Youlgreave and Bakewell. It is marked 'Meadow Place' on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1840<sup>30</sup> and lies in Youlgreave parish.<sup>31</sup> So, this might be Ellen Gregory's birthplace, but is almost certainly her childhood home.



*Meadow Place Grange Farm, Youlgreave, in November 2013. Was this the birthplace of Ellen Gregory, George Stephenson's third wife? (P. Cousins).*

Northwards from Meadow Place Grange, over the river Lathkill, is Over Haddon. The 1841 census shows Ellen living in the township of Haddon, Bakewell – described as of independent means. Her younger sister – Harriet – was living with Ellen.<sup>32</sup>

We do not know how Stephenson came to employ Ellen Gregory, or how he met her, but we do know that he was interested in agriculture. For example in 1841 Stephenson was president of the North Derbyshire Agricultural Society.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps he made contact with the family and intimately her through this association. We know that he made a very successful speech at the society's 1838 show and dinner, where he was chief guest.<sup>34</sup>

17. England, births and Christenings, 1538-1975, index 'family search' [On-line] last visited 31 January 2013 at URL: <https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/NKR7-HFZ>.
18. *Derby Mercury (DM)*, 13 March 1833. DC, 15 January 1848. The DC states he was of Meadow Place, Bakewell.
19. [On-line] last visited 17 October 2013, England & Wales, FreeBMD death index, 1837-1915 at URL: [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). Youlgrave Parish registers: baptisms 1614-1841 transcribed by Valerie Neal [CD-ROM].
20. [On-line] search made November 2013 at URL: [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).
21. [On-line] last visited 17 October 2013, England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975, index, at URL: <https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/NG66-3MR>.
22. Youlgrave parish registers transcribed by Valerie Neal [CD-ROM]. Bakewell parish registers transcribed by Valerie Neal [CD-ROM].
23. Skeat, p. 231; Summerside, p. 48.
24. D. and S. Lysons, *Magna Britannia, volume five, Derbyshire*, (1817), p. 306.
25. Bagshaw, *Directory of Derbyshire*, (1846), p. 561. At this date a Thomas Gregory was described as the farmer there.
26. Philip's, *Street atlas of Derbyshire*, (2008), maps 125 and 109.
27. [On-line] last visited 12 October 2013 at URL: <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-81109-meadow-place-grange-farmhouse-youlgreave->
28. W. P. Stamper, *Youlgrave: a few interesting notes and facts*, (1902), p. 55.
29. Nature Conservancy Council, *Man in Lathkill Dale*, (no date), p. 13.
30. Ordnance Survey, (OS) 1st edition one-inch to one-mile, sheet 81 south-east, published 10 December 1840, republished as Cassini historical maps 'old series' matching Ordnance Survey Landranger sheet 119, (2006).
31. OS, six-inches to one-mile, Derbyshire Sheet XXVIII. N.E. edition of 1923.
32. 1841 Census report [on-line] last accessed 31 January 2013 at URL: [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk). (The National Archives (TNA), HO 107/183/19).
33. L. M. Waud, *A history of the Bakewell Agricultural and Horticultural Society, 1819 – 1989*, (1989), pp. 7 – 9, 94.
34. *ibid.*, p. 7.



Ellen Gregory married George Stephenson on 11 January 1848 at St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury.<sup>35</sup> Robert attended the wedding,<sup>36</sup> with Ellen's sister and brother-in-law.<sup>37</sup> With George born in 1781 and Ellen born in 1808, she was quite a few years younger than him. What were Ellen and George doing in Shrewsbury? The answer is with her sister Harriet, who had married a dissenter. Ellen's brother-in-law (the Rev. William Thorp<sup>38</sup>) was a minister at the Swan Hill Independent Church in Shrewsbury.<sup>39</sup> Harriet had married him in 1833 at Youlgreave.<sup>40</sup> We perhaps should not read too much in the marriage being held at Shrewsbury. Perhaps George, who was then in retirement and not too well, wanted to keep away from the prying eyes and gossip of 19th century Chesterfield.

Returning to Tapton with Ellen, his wife, George carried on for a time as normal 'although for some time [he had] been delicate in health... he appeared to possess a sound constitution' though his hand shook.<sup>41</sup> In October 1847 the council of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, then in its infancy and to which Stephenson was one of its exponents and first president, held a meeting at Tapton. This must have presented something of a challenge to Ellen.<sup>42</sup> It appears that Stephenson had never fully recovered from pleurisy, which he had contracted after an overseas visit. After giving a paper at the Institute of Mechanical Engineers on 26 July 1848, shortly after his return to Tapton he had a feverish attack. Although he seemed to be recovering, as Smiles puts it; '...a sudden effusion of blood from the lungs carried him off, on the 12th August, 1848, in the sixty-seventh year of his age.'<sup>43</sup> The *Derbyshire Courier*, in reporting Stephenson's death mentions that Dr Condell of Baslow had attended to him 'both day and night', though mentions nothing of Ellen.<sup>44</sup> Stephenson is buried at Holy Trinity Church, where his second wife had been buried.

Smiles is almost silent on George's third wife. He records the third marriage in a footnote, without even naming her.<sup>45</sup> Summerside in his *Reminiscences and conversations of and with the late George Stephenson*, was surprised at news of the marriage, remarking that he never remembered seeing Ellen on his frequent visits to Tapton House.<sup>46</sup> She is not mentioned as a chief mourner at his funeral.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps more tellingly it is worth quoting at length from Summerside:

I learnt from her brother, Dr. Gregory of Youlgreave, that which very much surprised me, viz, that after the death of her husband, although the furniture, plate, etc., and £800 per annum were left to her, she found it too little; and even contemplated coming to Matlock to reside, in order to economise. She wrote to her step-son, Mr Robert Stephenson, for an increase of her allowance, but he significantly referred her to his solicitor. I only name the above by way of contrast, knowing that it will strike all the intimate friends of his second wife who would know that her watchword was frugality, economy and saving.<sup>48</sup>

This is a significant observation, and clearly done with some purpose. Noteworthy is the action of Robert Stephenson in what looks like a straight referral to his solicitor – giving his stepmother short shrift. Perhaps the majority of the £140,000 George left to his son had wrangled with her and relations had strained. It has been said that Robert earned £30,000 a year at the height of his career.<sup>49</sup> If relationships with Robert were poor she must have patched them up, as Ellen left her China dinner service to him in her will.<sup>50</sup> He never received it as Robert predeceased her.

George Stephenson's will, dated 4 April 1848, also saw £1,000 to be paid to Ellen within three months of his death. Wines and spirits went to her along with furniture she wanted from Tapton, linen, plate (except a silver tankard that George had had presented to him), china and pictures. He granted £800 a year to Ellen, paid in equal quarterly amounts. But if she remarried or sought to mortgage against this sum it would be reduced to £100. Property at Tapton either leased or owned was not to be Ellen's.<sup>51</sup> Ellen was to be permitted to reside at Tapton, though she had to declare her intention to stay within one month of his death.<sup>52</sup> She did not remarry and did not appear to remain at Tapton for long. Legacy receipts for those in George's will are preserved in the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, but that for Ellen is missing. There were some 15 beneficiaries, who generally received £1,000 for each male, half that for females.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps these other beneficiaries and the amounts they received, the conditions applicable to Ellen's share,

35. M. W. Kirby, 'Stephenson, George (1781–1848)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (DNB), 2004; online edition, Jan 2008. [On-line] last accessed 23 September 2013 at URL: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26397>. Also newspapers such as *Sheffield Independent*, 22 January 1848.

36. Thompson, p. 80.

37. D. Williams, 'Notes on Ellen Stephenson, third wife of George Stephenson,' (no date). Chesterfield Local Studies Library, Stephenson collection.

38. [On-line] last visited 24 September 2013 at URL: <http://www.melocki.org.uk/salop/ShrewsburySwanHill.html>.

39. Skeat, p. 255. According to the marriage certificate Ellen's residence at the time of marriage was St John's Hill.

40. [On-line] resource last visited 29 September 2013 at [Ancestry.co.uk](http://Ancestry.co.uk).

41. Smiles, (1879), p. 353.

42. Skeat, p. 240.

43. Smiles, (1879), p. 353.

44. DC, 19 August 1848, also the DM, 23 August 1848 does not mention George Stephenson's wife.

45. Smiles, (1879), p. 354

46. Summerside, p. 78.

47. *Sheffield Independent*, 19 August 1848; DC, 19 August 1848.

48. Summerside, pp. 78 – 79.

49. Davies, p. 247.

50. Thompson, p. 70.

51. The National Archives, PROB 11/2083/416 (Will of George Stephenson). The will was proved 8 November 1848.

52. Thompson, p. 70.

53. *ibid*.

along with Robert Stephenson's iron grip on matters made her a little resentful. It has been estimated that George was worth £140,000 at his death.<sup>54</sup> Robert had transferred the lease at Tapton House on 25 March 1851 to Misses Pocock and Walker for use as a school, but it appears to have operated as such from October of the previous year.<sup>55</sup>

Ellen appears to have moved to Shrewsbury, where in 1851 she was at Brace Moele.<sup>56</sup> This is not far from where she was married and is known today as Moele Brace, a suburb of Shrewsbury. The census of that year shows her living with her sister Harriet (but lists Ellen as head of the household), at Kingsland House.<sup>57</sup> The household was quite large, comprising the following: Ellen Stevenson (her name is spelt wrongly in the Census) (aged 43); William Thorp 'Independent Minister, Swan Hill Chapel, Shrewsbury', (aged 38); Harriet Thorp (Ellen's sister, aged 38<sup>58</sup>); Fanny Port (a visitor – 31); Sarah Rowson (servant – 31); Mary Silvester (servant – 29); Jane Davies (servant – 31); Ann Wastall (servant – 17); Robert Moore (servant – 14) Robert Oswald (coachman – 33); Elizabeth Oswald (coachman's wife – 37); George Bury (visitor – 3). Ellen is clearly described as 'annuitant'. In 1861 Ellen Stephenson was at Baucharn (or Baucham) House, Franwell, another suburb of Shrewsbury, living with her 14 year-old niece Harriet (whose surname is wrongly given as Stephenson), along with cook Elizabeth Alvey and 'general servant' Elizabeth Worrall.<sup>59</sup>

Ellen Stephenson died on the 6 March 1865 at Minehead, Somerset. She was described as having lived at Kingsland House, Brace Moele. The Executors were Josiah Bradbury Robinson, 'Hosier and Draper' of Chesterfield and Thomas William Gardom of the Yeld, near Baslow, a farmer. Effects were under £3,000.<sup>60</sup> Her death was widely reported locally and elsewhere, including Nottinghamshire, Newcastle, Manchester, Bath, and Exeter. Locally the *Derbyshire Times* and *Derbyshire Courier* carried a brief notice in their deaths columns; 'March 6th, at Minehead, Somersetshire, after a few hours' illness, Ellen, relict of the late George Stephenson Esq., formerly of Tapton House, near Chesterfield'.<sup>62</sup> Her furniture and effects were sold at Shrewsbury in 1865,<sup>63</sup> but there is an interesting survivor – a scrap book of George Stephenson's. This was apparently kept by Ellen and was subsequently purchased in 1900. Some thirty years after it fell to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, who still have it in their keeping.<sup>64</sup> The scrap-book does tell us about George Stephenson's many interests – he collected all sorts of information. It does not tell us anything about Ellen.

## Conclusions

There is little information on any of George Stephenson's wives, very little about his third – Ellen Gregory. Due to this it is difficult to see what sort of person she was. She did not come from a particularly under-privileged background. Her father was a farmer of some note; her brother later a doctor. Today the term 'housekeeper' seems a little demeaning. But in Victorian periods this role demanded many skills, looking after many aspects of running a household.

There are some unanswered questions, such as how much time did Ellen spend in Shrewsbury (where she married George), when one might think she should have been in Tapton? We do not think, though, that too much should be read into why the couple were married there and not at Holy Trinity Church, Chesterfield. A marriage in Shrewsbury would have stopped the prying eyes of Chesterfield folk; also Stephenson's second wife had been buried at Holy Trinity only a few years earlier.

Then there is Robert's opinion of Ellen. At best this might be described as distant, at worst did he see her as more interested in George's money and life-style than the man? There's also the curious omission of her from the mourners in local newspapers and Smiles' biography. Did this make her bitter, or was she content to stay in the background? Why did she go back to Robert for more money? If she had a poor relationship with him she does seem to have made some amends in this relationship, marked by leaving her dinner service to Robert. We will probably never know.

There are still some areas warranting further inquiry. In particular Ellen's life in Shrewsbury warrants further research there. Currently the two newspaper titles covering Shrewsbury during the period of Ellen's life there are not available digitally. We have not, therefore, been able to search these for any details of her life and particularly property sales. We hope, however, that this short account has helped fill in some details about Ellen Gregory – George Stephenson's third wife.

## Acknowledgements

Our thanks to Chesterfield Local Studies Library. Thanks also to Shropshire Archives for confirming details regarding newspaper availability and of churches in the district.

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54. Kirby, DNB, [on-line].

55. Thompson, p. 81, p. 90.

56. Bagshaw, *History, Gazetteer & Directory of Shropshire*, (1851), p. 512.

57. [On-line] 1851 all England Census results, Shrewsbury, St. Mary, last visited 30 September 2013 at URL: [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk). (TNA, HO 107/1993).

58. There is a discrepancy here with the transcribed baptism records.

59. [On-line] 1861 all England Census results, last visited 31 January 2013 at URL: [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk). (TNA, RG 9/1874).

60. National probate calendar (index of wills) for 1865, p. 36.

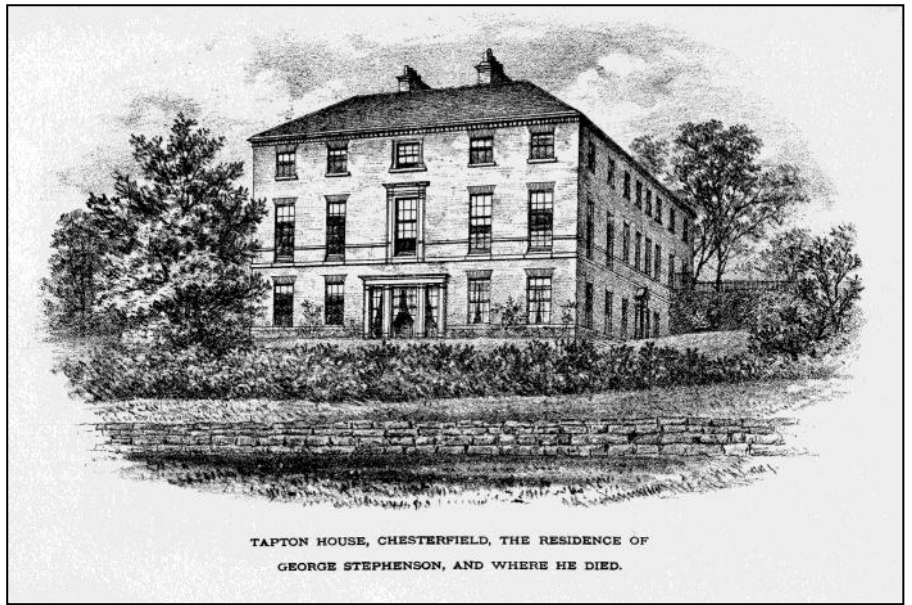
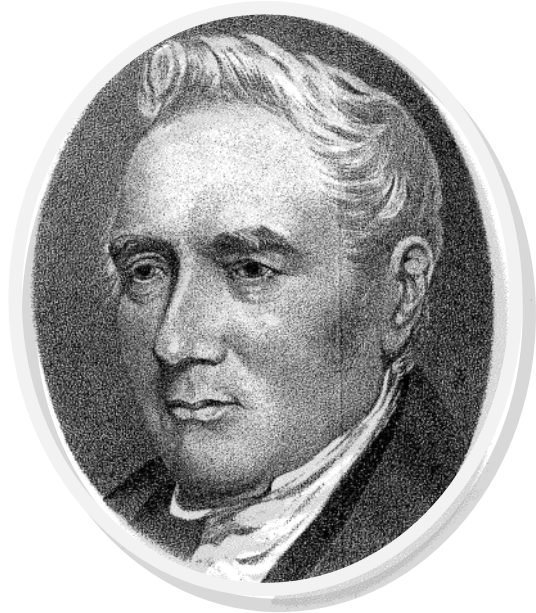
61. *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 28 April 1865, *Newcastle Guardian*, 18 March 1865, *Manchester Courier*, 16 March 1865, *Bath Chronicle*, 16 March 1865, *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 17 March 1865.

62. *Derbyshire Times* and *DC*, 18 March 1865

63. Thompson, pp. 70 – 71.

64. Skeat, p. 255.





LEFT: George Stephenson from Thomas Summerville's biography of him. Summerville has more to say about Ellen Stephenson – his third wife – than any other biographer of Stephenson, but even this does not amount to much and it is not very complimentary. Summerville knew George and worked under him at Tyneside.

RIGHT: Tapton House, around 1881, from a commemorative publication to mark the centenary of his birth.

## Holy Trinity Church in Chesterfield

**Maeve Hawkins**

First published in *The Chesterfield Journal* Issue No 3 (Chesterfield & District Local History Society) - April 2014

During the recent series of his popular series “Great British Railway Journeys” Michael Portillo visited Chesterfield and the burial place of George Stephenson. The edition was shown on BBC2 on Friday 10 January 2014. On Saturday 11 January it was the Derbyshire Archaeology Day at the Pomegranate Theatre. At the beginning of the proceedings it was announced that Trinity Church would be open for visitors that day who may well be interested following the screening of the programme. Quite a number of people took advantage to visit despite its being necessary to do so during the not over-long lunch break.

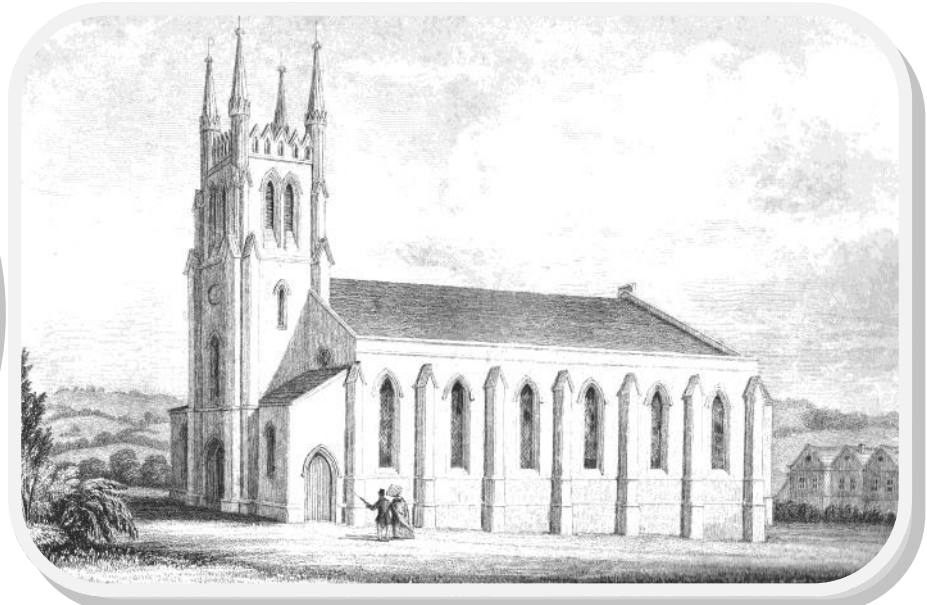
For the same reason it seems opportune to include in this issue of our Journal this very interesting description of Holy Trinity Church, and George Stephenson's connection with it, which appeared in *Old and New Chesterfield*. This book, edited by ‘Tatler’, was published in 1882 by J Toplis *Derbyshire Courier*, Chesterfield. A copy can be seen in the Chesterfield Local Studies Library.

### TRINITY CHURCH – A GREAT MAN'S RESTING-PLACE

The “comfortable Church of Holy Trinity” is hallowed neither by legends, nor the dust of entombed knights. There is no glamour of the mystic past about it; but the neat edifice is closely associated with modern progress-with a more active, useful life than ever mail-clad warrior lived; and it contains the ashes of George Stephenson, the railway pioneer, whose achievements far excel the deeds of the lance-tilters in King Arthur's days. Some forty years since, so many of the inhabitants of Chesterfield believed in the sacred duty of church-going that the old fabric could not accommodate them all, and Trinity Church was built to relieve All Saints' of its surplus worshippers. The site was given by the Most Noble William Spencer, Duke of Devonshire, and the first stone was laid on the 17 May, 1837, in the reign of King William IV. The structure was raised chiefly by subscriptions, and on the day of its foundation, there was much ceremony – a public breakfast, a procession, and considerable eloquence. When the Duke tapped the stone with his mallet, the band played “God save the King” and all the people proclaimed their loyalty and delight with “deafening and protracted cheers.” That cry of God save the King” was not an idle one, for His Majesty died before the year was out\*, and the request may have been to his advantage in eternity. But his predecessor on the throne, George IV, stood in far greater need of such an appeal, for he was utterly unable to save himself from his own follies and vices – otherwise Thackeray would never have said the First Gentleman of Europe reeled into the chapel to get married, hiccupped his vows of fidelity, and thrashed the lady he promised to adore!

The Rev. Alexander Poole, B.A., was the clergyman identified with Trinity Church when it made its religious start in life. He was not distinguished as a pulpit orator, nor was he a “giant in prayer:” but he did his duty faithfully for twenty-nine years, and died, as it were, in illustration of one of his own sermons. On the 7 of April, 1867, he preached from the text, “It is appointed unto all men once to die,” and the next day, as Thomas Carlyle has it he was “congealed

\*William IV died only a month later on 20 June 1837



### **Holy Trinity Church, Chesterfield –**

*LEFT: a mid-19th Century Magic Lantern Slide (Collection Milo Gould)*

*RIGHT: an engraving taken from Ford's 'History of Chesterfield'*

in the frost of death.” On April 14, the following Sabbath, the Ven. Archdeacon Hill preached Mr. Poole’s funeral sermon from the same text, and drew some powerful lessons from the old rector’s guileless life. The Rev Melville Holmes succeeded into the living, but in a few years he exchanged with the Rev F C Morton of Wadsley, and is still vicar of the little village beyond Sheffield, which has recently been the scene of such serio-comic burial difficulties. Mr Morton only lived a few months after removing to Chesterfield, and died on July 26 1875, when the Rev T W Drury, MA, accepted the living, which he has held down to the present day. He is very popular, not only amongst his own people, but with other sects, because he is sincere in his efforts to extend religion and spread education.

The church is young, and has needed neither propping up nor restoration, but a few changes have been made in its internal features. During Dr Melville Holmes’ pastorate, Dr Hart formerly of Holywell Cross presented the church with an organ, which was placed in the gallery over the west entrance.

That entrance was afterwards closed, and a stained glass window erected to the Rev A Poole. The organ was removed downstairs, where it still remains, and since the Rev T W Drury came, a new oak pulpit, and oak reading desk, and a brass lectern have been provided, as well as new altar rails.

In the vault within the Communion rails lies George Stephenson’s remains. The “poor herd-boy, who became the originator of the English railway system,” has no grand monument over his grave to tell the story of his greatness, or the resources of his inventive mind, which throbbed through difficulties as unresistingly as one of his own locomotives. A plain inscription, simple as his own life, indicates his resting place:

### **GEORGE STEPHENSON**

**Newcastle-upon-Tyne,**

**Died at Tapton House,**

**Aug. 12th, 1848,**

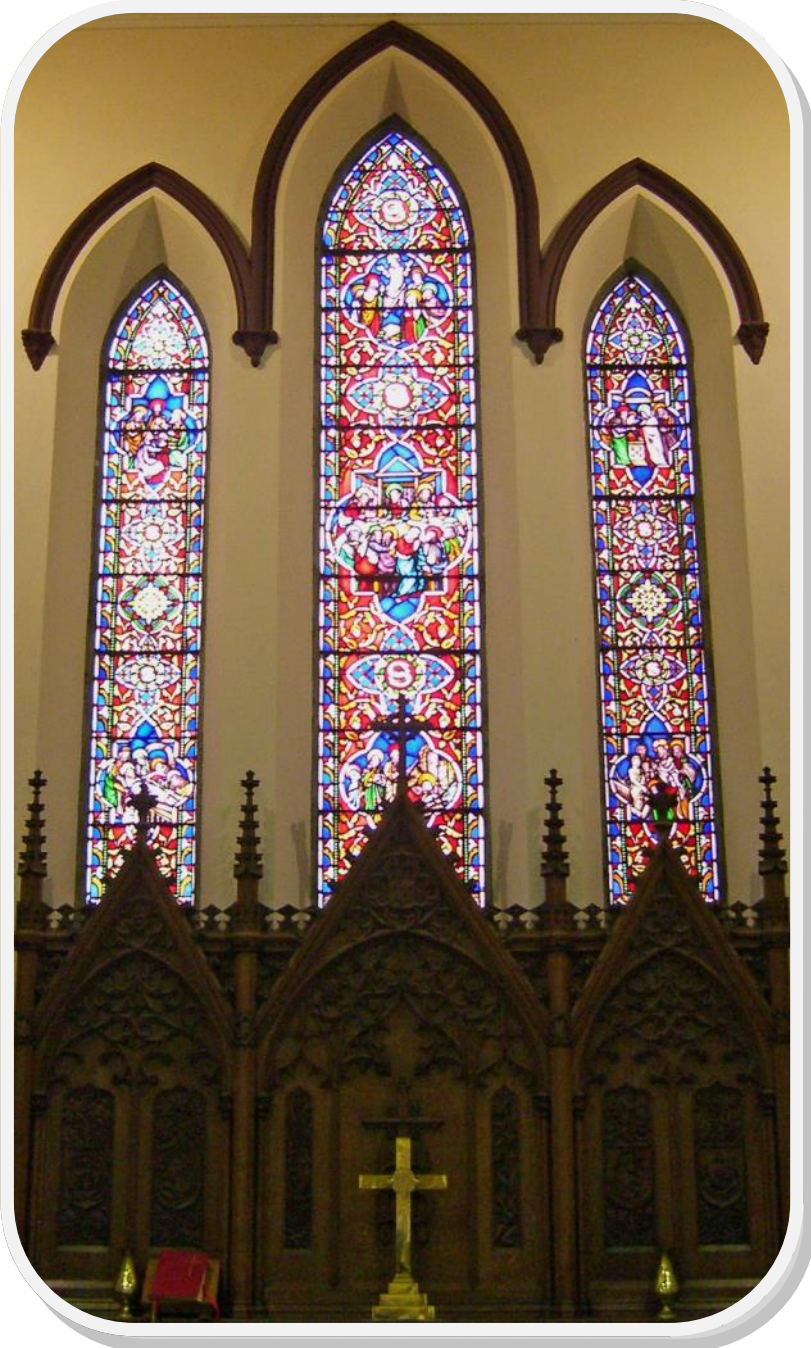
**Aged 68 years.**



*Memorial tablet to George’s second wife, Elizabeth, to which George’s name was added upon his death (Janet Murphy)*

“The admiration of all classes of society for his natural genius, and the unsullied excellence of his private character,” George Stephenson had many mourners. He was buried on August 17, 1848. The shops were closed, the streets were thronged, and amongst those who joined the funeral cortege, were his old pupils, many dear friends, the Mayor and Corporation, and persons of distinction from distant places. Since then his tomb has been visited by pilgrims from many lands, and on 9 June 1881, when the centenary of his birth was celebrated with becoming honour at Chesterfield Trinity Church was again filled with his admirers. The Rev S C Sargeant B A, (who was acting as locum tenes during Mr Drury’s indisposition) delivered a very eloquent address, in the course of which he said: “It is no small distinction of this town that the last days of George Stephenson were spent





Stained glass window installed in the east end of Holy Trinity Church dedicated to George Stephenson and commissioned by his son Robert (Janet Murphy)

which was used by George Stephenson's second wife. It bears the name inside, "Elizabeth Stephenson, 1828." The "National Anthem" was played in the great Engineer's honour by Mr E Slack, and after the service, at which the Rev T C Bradberry assisted, the Mayor planted a holly tree – the gift of Mr W Beard – near the west end of the church, expressing a hope that it would flourish, and become an enduring reminder of George Stephenson's fame."

Trinity Church, although it lacks traditions, and is not very interesting historically, is the centre of a vigorous religious life, and is doing much useful work. Year by year, it becomes of greater utility, and its pews fill well, not merely with the kid-gloved saints who go to church for fashion's sake, but with those who realise the meaning of Christianity, and endeavour to walk by its light.

The rapid development of the town on the Stonegravels side has opened the Church's eyes, moreover to its own responsibility. Professor Teufelsdröckh, the erudite German philosopher, once said that, "Neither in tailoring nor in legislation, does man proceed by mere accident," and the same remark applies to religious effort. It has some good to do, some noble purpose to achieve, and sooner or later the object is accomplished. Trinity Church has looked beyond the old-fashioned cottages in Prospect Place, and the villas of Abercrombie Street. She found lying between St Helen's Street and the hill-top at Stonegravels, a growing colony of houses, with a population that needed another place of worship, and now Stonegravels has its little Church, of which the Rev T C Bradberry is Curate-in-charge, and to which very many people go regularly, with more satisfaction than they formerly derived from grumbling in their chimney-corners at home.

in it, and adds to the interest of this church that it contains his mortal remains. With little internally to appeal to the eye, or to gratify taste, this church has yet a spell which will draw visitors from every part of the world. Men will come hither from all lands to look with reverence upon the simple resting place of him who was father of the locomotive, and the railway system. And perhaps the naked simplicity which marks that spot is keeping with a life, the grandeur of which was due solely to the man himself and not to outward helps and circumstances." At this centenary a white pall was placed upon the great man's grave which was also covered with wreaths.

The pew he occupied in life was adorned with flowers, and it was the only one kept vacant in the crowded church. Citizens of all grades, from the Mayor, in his gold chain, to the Town Crier, with his dazzling mace, worshipped at George Stephenson's shrine, and paid a real tribute to his memory. Only one relative, however, amid this great gathering of strangers, attended the imposing service, and this was Mrs. Ann Rose. A little pamphlet, called "The Stephenson Centenary at Chesterfield" (reprinted from the *Derbyshire Courier* of June 11th), says:

"Amongst those present was a niece of George Stephenson – Mrs. Rose, who lives at Pye Bridge, and his only surviving relative at present residing in Derbyshire. She was the daughter of John Stephenson (brother of George), who was crushed to death by a locomotive engine at the works at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on January 22, 1831. Mrs Rose formerly lived with George Stephenson at Tapton House, and she speaks warmly of his uniform kindness and liberality towards all his relatives. She at one time resided next door to the manufactory at Newcastle, and saw "The Rocket," not only in the course of construction, but witnessed its first start, before it was sent to compete for the prize offered by the promoters of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway. Mrs Rose brought with her to the church the Prayer Book

# The George Stephenson Centenary Commemorative Events in Chesterfield – Part 1

*Philip Cousins*

*First published in NEDIAS Newsletter No 55 - August 2014*

## Foreword

At the David Wilmot Memorial lecture in May (2014) a question was asked from the audience about the Stephenson Centenary railway exhibition at Chesterfield Market Place station. The enquirer wondered what information was available about this event. This series of articles seeks to address that question. As will be explained, the railway exhibition was just one event (though perhaps the most memorable) of a series co-ordinated and largely promoted by a sub-committee of the Chesterfield Corporation. These would be an ambitious series of events for today, let alone in 1948.

## Introduction

In 1948 Chesterfield celebrated the centenary of George Stephenson's death. Most people who either remember or have heard about those celebrations will point to one event – the Market Place Station railway exhibition. But that event was just one part of other celebrations across the town, including three other exhibitions, held from 12th August. These exhibitions were themed around engineering, coal and one devoted directly to George Stephenson. As might be imagined there were other associated events, along with commemorative services and the like.

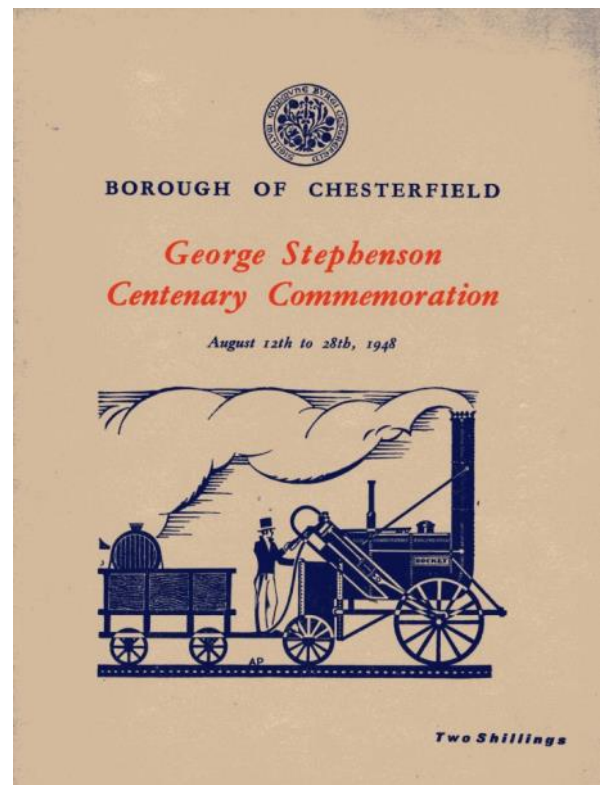
As in 1881 Stephenson was celebrated elsewhere, most notably in the area of his birthplace – the north-east.<sup>1</sup> Taken as a whole, though, the Chesterfield exhibitions must rate as the most ambitious. They *might* also claim to be the greatest collection of Stephenson related exhibits ever especially assembled in one town at one time – and that in the context of a period of great change against a background of post-war austerity.

## Information about the event

There is much information about the event in Chesterfield Library. This includes an album, complete with photographs, which would have been compiled by the then Borough Librarian and his staff, no doubt aided by the Town Clerk's Department.<sup>2</sup> Library staff would have been particularly keen to document the event, not only as for many years a strong local studies collection has been maintained, but also as the library helped considerably in the commemoration event. It may also have been the catalyst for either starting or considerably enhancing the library's own 'Stephenson Collection'.

The Town Clerk, on behalf of the Stephenson Centenary Committee, published a special commemorative brochure for the event. Of 48 pages, with illustrations – two of them in colour – it sold for two shillings. I have used this brochure at length, along with other sources, to tell something of the story of what would, even today, have been a very ambitious commemoration event.

I have also been able to draw on a small collection of photographs and other materials saved by the late Mr C. S. Hollis, who was honorary organising secretary to the Chesterfield and district railway trades unions joint committee.



The cover of the 48 page Stephenson commemoration brochure. 10,000 copies of the brochure were produced at a little over £268 in cost. It included two full colour illustrations, along with a biography of George Stephenson and a short history of Tapton House. The brochure gave details of all the exhibitions staged and the other commemorative events. Maps included locations of the events and the distance of various towns from Chesterfield. Collection P. Cousins.

1. City of Newcastle Upon Tyne, *George Stephenson centenary exhibition, Laing Art Gallery, 12 – 21 August 1948, (1948)*, p. 3.
2. George Stephenson, 1781 – 1848. Record of the Centenary Commemoration, Chesterfield, 1948. (Bound collection of newspaper cuttings, photographs, and others). Chesterfield Local Studies Library (CLS) accession number 44314. (CLS, Stephenson bound volume).



They did much to enhance the commemoration activities particularly by supporting the railway related exhibition and the visit of the country's Railway Queen to Chesterfield.

### **The Centenary Sub-Committee – organising the events**

The series of events held was primarily as the result of a 'Stephenson Centenary Sub-Committee' formed by the Borough Council in late November 1947, with the power to co-opt members.<sup>4</sup> This first met on 4 December 1947.<sup>5</sup> The commemorative brochure lists the members of this sub-committee, at various times. Working together were a group of people, who not only encompassed the civic world, but also that of commerce and industry – particularly those from the railway sector. Local newspapers, clergy, prominent individuals (such as Violet Markham, Sir George Kenning and Theo Pearson) were members, along with representatives from civil and mechanical engineering institutes. An interesting example is George Dow who is listed as British Railways 'press relations officer.' He was later to find much fame as a railway historian in his own right. All were under the chairmanship of Councillor H. C. Martin, with Councillor F. S. Short as Vice-Chairman.

On the 18 December 1947 the committee decided that there should be four main elements to the celebrations – a railway exhibition, one on engineering, potentially coal and a 'Stephenson Exhibition' at Tapton House. 'Pageants and fireworks displays' were ruled out of the celebrations, which it was initially thought would run from Thursday 12 to Sunday 15 August. The Borough Education Officer was asked to consider ways in which schools could be involved. There were further subcommittees formed to arrange the exhibitions.<sup>6</sup> In February, for example, the engineering sub-committee were vacillating on the venue for its exhibition. If the railways exhibition was to be held on Brewery Meadows, adjoining the Central station, the Technical College should be used. If the West Bars Goods Station were used the exhibitions should be in the Boythorpe Road Drill Hall.<sup>7</sup> By 1 March, though, it was clear that the latter venue was to be used.<sup>8</sup>

Mr George S. Whitlam was appointed as 'organiser' for the commemoration arrangements by the time of the centenary committee's meeting on the 9 March (he is listed as of the Town Clerk's Office in the commemorative brochure). This meeting received what became a series of reports from the various exhibition coordinators. For example Mr Brown of the Chesterfield Tube Company gave the engineering exhibition report; representatives of the National Coal Board (NCB) submitted a report for a mining exhibition – which was accepted and the Borough Librarian did likewise for the 'Stephenson Exhibition', still scheduled for Tapton House (though later changed to the Stephenson Memorial Hall). The opening ceremony was set for 12 August at the Town Hall commencing at 2 pm, with the exhibitions being opened at 10 am on that date. Perhaps a little late in the day (and ultimately unsuccessfully) the sub-committee resolved to invite 'H.R.H. the Princess Elizabeth or alternatively H.R.H. The Princess Margaret Rose or General Sir William J. Slim' to perform the opening. Arrangements were also in hand for a church service at Holy Trinity and an organ recital at Chesterfield Parish Church; with the production of a brochure discussed. Admission to each of exhibitions was not to exceed 6d.<sup>9</sup>

A letter from Colonel V. O. Robinson, the chairman of the George Stephenson Memorial fund was tendered. This asked if the Mayor might direct an appeal as part of the celebrations, towards a suitable memorial at Stephenson's grave in Holy Trinity Church. This the mayor eventually did, through an appeal in the centenary brochure.<sup>10</sup> This was related to the pre-war fundraising attempt to build a George Stephenson chancel in the church. In 1937 the cost had been estimated at £3,000, of which £1,000 had been raised by December 1947.<sup>11</sup> Whilst on the subject of memorials; Violet Markham, a sub-committee member, suggested the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey be asked to accept a plaque in honour of George Stephenson, particularly as his son is buried and has a memorial there.<sup>12</sup>

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3. Borough of Chesterfield (publishers), *George Stephenson Centenary commemoration, August 12th to 28th, 1948*, (1948). Unless separately referenced, this is the source used herein.
  4. *Derbyshire Times* (DT), 28 November 1947.
  5. Stephenson Centenary sub-committee minutes, 1947-1948. Chesterfield Local Studies Library, Manuscripts collection LM617, (CLS, LM617).
  6. Stephenson centenary sub-committee meeting, 18 December 1947. (CLS, LM617).
  7. Memorandum of meeting of engineering exhibition sub-Committee, 17 February 1948. (CLS, LM617).
  8. Meeting of engineering exhibition sub-committee, 1 March 1948. (CLS, LM617).
  9. Stephenson centenary sub-committee meeting, 9 March 1948. (CLS, LM617).
  10. This was agreed at the sub-committee meeting on 26 May 1948. (CLS, LM617).
  11. W. O. Skeat, *George Stephenson: the engineer and his letters*, (1973), p. 252 and DT, 5 December 1947.
  12. Stephenson centenary sub-committee meeting, 9 March 1948. (CLS, LM617).

A little insight is given into the added complications of the time by a request at a meeting of the engineering exhibition sub-committee held in late May. Engineering exhibitors were to make known their requirements for the supply of direct or alternating current to the exhibition. That the event was very much a home grown event is perhaps emphasised by the sub-committee recording its thanks to the Borough Surveyor 'for providing material for name boards, and to...the Chesterfield School of Arts and Crafts, for arranging the necessary lettering.' Proof copies for the engineering part of the brochure were available and approved, it being agreed that advertisements would not be carried. The insertion of a colour block of a 5,000 ton press at Chesterfield Tube Works was also agreed.<sup>13</sup>

A meeting of the full commemoration sub-committee was held the day after.<sup>14</sup> This agreed the tender from Messrs Broomhead Bros., Ltd., of Chesterfield, of £268. 10s. 0d, for printing 10,000 copies of the commemorative brochure. News of an offer from the Archdeacon of Chesterfield for a commemoration service in Chesterfield Parish Church was accepted, 'but that no formal procession be arranged on such occasion.' Things were obviously progressing quickly as it was agreed that an 'executive committee' should be formed to take decisions quickly. Arrangements had been made for the Railway Queen to attend, whilst it was agreed that 'provision be made for the issue of a combined ticket to all exhibitions' in addition to single tickets – the final decision on prices, etc. to be left to the newly formed executive committee. This ticketing arrangement was subsequently found to present too many difficulties and was abandoned.<sup>15</sup> At the same 26 May meeting was also a request from the fund set-up to buy the cottage at Wylam, where George Stephenson had been born. It was determined that if there was a surplus of funds from the Chesterfield event, the request would receive consideration. The sub-committee chairman and the town clerk were empowered to make detailed arrangements with the authorities at Westminster Abbey for some form of memorial there, after what looked like positive discussions over the matter. The minutes mention 'inclusion of a suitable memorial...in the existing memorial to Robert Stephenson'.<sup>16</sup> In September the full subcommittee approved £25 for a design 'incorporating the larger sketch of 'The Rocket', at £25, in the Robert Stephenson Memorial Window.<sup>17</sup> So, one must assume that there is a little bit of Chesterfield in Westminster Abbey as a result of the commemoration events!

The 28 June executive sub-committee meeting decided that the engineering and Stephenson exhibitions were not to be opened on Sundays.<sup>18</sup> In the event neither was the coal mining exhibition, but the shorter duration railway one was. Later there was some disappointment voiced that the exhibitions were closed on Sundays.<sup>19</sup>

At the Executive Committee Meeting on 12 July it was reported that arrangements had been made to obtain special dies for use in Neopost franking machines. Users of these machines in the Borough were invited to install these at their own expense (some £2. 10s 0d per die). The executive committee were also prepared to overprint envelopes supplied by the Philatelic Society and interested firms. It was later declared that the dies had been installed in some 23 machines, which could well see approximately 58,900 parcels, letters, etc., passed through the machines during the period of their use, destined for 17 countries!<sup>20</sup> Some more details on likely exhibition costs were reported at the 18 July meeting. The total value of exhibits known about at the time was £35,775, excluding the NCB (who were to cover insurance themselves). The council would need to cover insurance of the non-NCB items. There was some hint of disharmony over the railway exhibition. The Railway Executive was planning an opening ceremony at the Market Place Station on the 12 August at 10.30 am. It was thought this would likely detract from the official commemoration opening in the afternoon. Never-the-less, Mr Ernest Rudge of Victoria Enterprises Ltd. was requested to arrange 'for a documentary film of the Commemoration to be made and that a copy be provided for inclusion in the Town's records.'<sup>21</sup>

The final minutes pasted in the minute book in Chesterfield Local Studies appear to be from the 22

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13. Stephenson centenary engineering exhibition sub-committee meeting, 25 May 1948. (CLS, LM617).

14. Stephenson centenary sub-committee meeting, 26 May 1948. (CLS, LM617).

15. At the executive committee meeting held 28 June 1948. (CLS, LM617).

16. Stephenson centenary sub-committee meeting, 26 May 1948. (CLS, LM617).

17. Stephenson centenary sub-committee meeting, 22 September 1948. (CLS, LM617). DT, 13 August 1948.

18. Stephenson centenary executive committee meeting, 28 June 1948. (CLS, LM617).

19. DT, 20 August 1948.

20. Stephenson centenary, engineering exhibition sub-committee meeting, 17 September 1948. (CLS, LM617).

21. Stephenson centenary executive committee meeting, 12 July 1948. (CLS, LM617).

September 1948. Thanks were expressed to all those who took part. The Borough Treasurer submitted a report showing that the cost of the event stood at £2,004. 6s 5d. 3,015 brochures were unsold – these being offered to school children and members of the public at sixpence per copy.<sup>22</sup>

The committee and those associated with the commemoration delivered an event of which Chesterfield could be proud. There had been four exhibitions – all related to Stephenson and developments since his time. The railway exhibition, perhaps the most memorable with 38,000 odd visitors, was alone in opening on Sunday and lasted four days. The other three exhibitions which lasted until the 28 August had seen around 33,600 paying visitors – the second most successful, attendance wise, being the engineering exhibition.<sup>23</sup> The NCB claimed that 30,000 attended the free mining exhibition.<sup>24</sup> Never-the-less a loss of £995 was reported on the committee's events, after income had been taken into account,<sup>25</sup> though it was later hoped that this might be reduced.<sup>26</sup> Reporting that loss to the Town Council in October a number of councillors paid tribute to Cllr Martin (the committee chairman) explaining; 'He had no need to apologise for the loss sustained, which was small compared with the great good done for Chesterfield by the exhibition.'<sup>27</sup>

There was extensive local newspaper and some extended regional coverage of the event. It did also gain some national column space. The *London Times* carried a number of articles on the commemoration, the *News Chronicle* a photograph at the railway exhibition. The *Illustrated London News* carried two photographs of the interiors of the royal saloons on display at the railway exhibition. *Home and Country* magazine carried a feature, whilst there were short paragraphs in the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Herald*. The specialist press also covered the events with *Engineering* and *The Engineer* amongst them. The *Railway Gazette* ran a one page feature, with the *Model Engineer* covering the commemoration, particularly the modelling aspects of the exhibitions, in a well illustrated feature, over two editions.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the exhibition there had been a full programme of commemoration events. The committee had brought together many different people, companies and organizations, including the newly nationalized railways. When it began its deliberations in December 1947 the committee included representatives of two of the four private railway companies, due to be nationalized on the 1 January 1948. It also included the National Coal Board, nationalized only 11 months earlier. The event also saw much joint working between the railway trades unions over the visit of the Railway Queen and associated activities. The whole can only be described as a fantastic effort on behalf of the people of Chesterfield.



This letter heading was used by the Borough's Centenary Commemoration organiser George S. Whitelam. The attractive 'Rocket' block was used elsewhere on commemoration publications, such as the commemoration brochure. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.

22. Stephenson centenary sub-committee meeting, 22 September 1948. (CLS, LM617).
23. DT, 3 September 1948.
24. DT, 24 September 1948.
25. DT, 24 September 1948. The DT of 8 October 1948 gives the loss as £990.
26. DT, 8 October 1948.
27. DT, 8 October 1948.
28. All these are pasted in the centenary commemoration book in CLS
29. *Railway Gazette*, 20 August 1948.
30. W.J. Hughes, 'The George Stephenson centenary commemoration', *The Model Engineer*, Volume 99, Number 2470, 23 September 1948 pp. 315 – 318; Volume 99, number 2471, 30 September 1948, pp. 354 – 358.



# The George Stephenson Centenary Commemorative Events in Chesterfield – Part 2

*Philip Cousins*

First published in NEDIAS Newsletter No 56 - November 2014

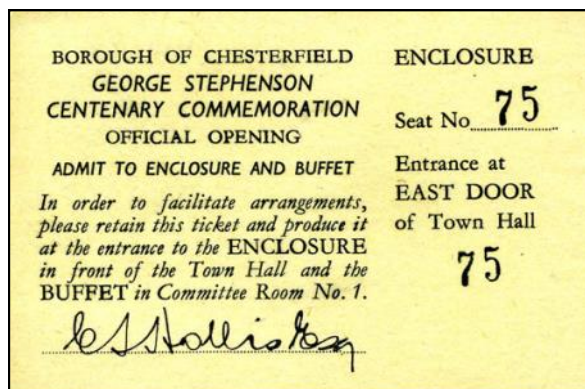
## Introduction

In part one we looked at the background and organisation of the Stephenson Centenary Commemoration events in Chesterfield. In this part we look at the commemorative event's official opening and the visit of the Railway Queen, before looking at the first of the four exhibitions – that relating to engineering.

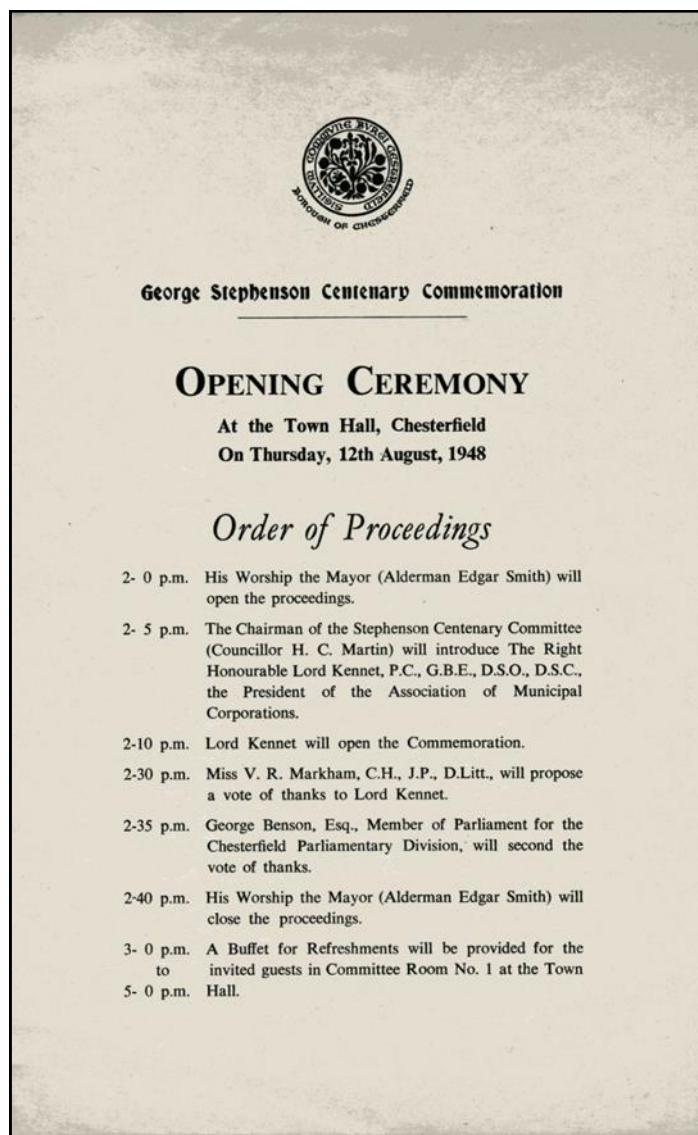
## Opening the commemoration event

As might be expected there was a full opening ceremony – actually a full afternoon – which directly coincided with the day on which Stephenson had died 100 years earlier.

On Thursday 12 August a 'large crowd' gathered in front of the Chesterfield Town Hall to hear the ceremony officially opened by Lord Kennet, President of the Association of Municipal Corporations.<sup>1</sup> Also present was the area's MP George Benson, Violet Markham, the Mayor Alderman Edgar Smith and Mr J. J. B. Rose of Ulverston, who was 'the oldest known living relative of George Stephenson'.<sup>2</sup> The crowd had been entertained by the Sheepbridge Prize Band, who later gave a concert in the Peace Gardens at Tapton House.<sup>3</sup> After the opening ceremony, the official party went on a 'private visit' to Holy Trinity Church. Here the Mayor laid a wreath on Stephenson's tomb, before the party visited Tapton House. After tea back at the Town Hall the four exhibitions were visited, commencing with the NCB's at the Ashgate Road Drill Hall, then the engineering exhibition at Boythorpe Road Drill Hall, thirdly to the railway exhibition, lastly to the Stephenson relics and documents exhibition at the Stephenson Memorial Hall.<sup>4</sup> 'Chesterfield's railway stations and public and business premises in the town were gaily decorated with flags and bunting for the occasion, and there were many early visitors to the four attractive exhibitions'.<sup>5</sup> There were some complaints afterwards about the catering at the opening event for the guests,<sup>6</sup> but otherwise the day went with great success.



Charles S. Hollis's admission ticket to the Official Centenary Opening Ceremony on Thursday 12 August 1948. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.



The Order of Proceedings for the opening ceremony. An inside page to the brochure details the private visit that the official party made to Holy Trinity Church and Tapton House, after the opening. Following tea for the party at 4.15pm they visited each of the exhibitions, where speeches were made. According to the commemoration sub-committee minutes a single-decker Corporation bus was made available to the party to enable these visits to take place. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.

1. DT, 13 August 1948.
2. DT, 6 August 1948 (advertisement of the commemoration events).
3. DT, 13 August 1948.
4. Borough of Chesterfield, *George Stephenson Centenary Commemoration, opening ceremony, 12 August 1948, order of proceedings.*
5. DT, 13 August 1948.
6. DT, 24 September 1948.

Those wanting more information about the opening day are referred to the *Derbyshire Times* of 13 August, which carried a full report on the opening ceremony and the first day. That newspaper reports that the event was also covered by another media:

At the opening ceremony was a BBC recording van which during the morning had toured the exhibitions with Stanley Williamson as commentator. The recordings were rushed to Manchester, and an edited version was broadcast in the North Region programme between 6.45 and 7 p.m.

This coverage has its roots in a request made by the commemoration sub-committee some months earlier.<sup>7</sup>

### Other commemorative events

The four exhibitions apart, other events were held during the period of the commemoration. On Sunday 15 August a special service was held at Holy Trinity Church (Stephenson's burial place), at 3 pm. Here were civic dignitaries, the religious community and many ordinary people.

The Mayor processed along with other guests (about 250 people) from the Town Hall to the Church. The church was full to its capacity of around 500, with arrangements made to broadcast the service outside to the 200 or so assembled there. The Bishop of Derby gave the address.<sup>8</sup>

Religious tributes continued with evensong later the same day at Chesterfield Parish Church, which saw a performance of organist and master of choristers Charles Bryars' anthem 'Let us now praise famous men'. The words had been arranged by the Archdeacon of Chesterfield the Ven. T. Dilworth-Harrison.<sup>9</sup> On the Friday Bryars had performed an organ recital of well-known pieces, also in the parish church.

A then celebrated visitor to the event was Britain's Railway Queen, Miss Janet Taylor, from Leeds. She attended a series of events over three days organised by a joint committee of Chesterfield and district railway trades unions.<sup>10</sup> Miss Taylor '...stepped from her special coach on to the crimson carpeted platform at 2.40 p.m., on Friday 13 August' at Chesterfield Midland station. Here she was greeted by the station master Mr O. B. Nicholls 'and a guard of honour comprising 22 Railway Executive and railway trade union representatives.'<sup>11</sup> Her visit was described in a touching account by 'C.S.H.' (who was actually local National Union of Railwaymen Branch Secretary Charles S. Hollis) in the NUR's newspaper *Railway Review*, of 27 August 1948. Hollis was Honorary Secretary of the joint trades union committee and introduced the Railway Queen at her arrival.<sup>12</sup> It appears this organisation had separate committee meetings, with finances separate to the council's commemoration sub-committee. The final meeting of the railwaymen's committee was held on 21 November 1948.<sup>13</sup>



The 'Railway Queen' Miss Janet Taylor from Leeds inspects the 'This is Chesterfield: the centre of industrial England' sign as she is welcomed by railway and trades unions officials to Chesterfield Midland Station at the start of her visit on Friday 13 August 1948. The centenary celebrations looked not only back to Stephenson but also to the present and future, when Chesterfield routinely claimed to be the 'centre of industrial England'. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.

The station had been newly painted and was 'festooned with flags and bunting, and platform pillars entwined in national colours.' During her stay the Railway Queen attended a civic reception, a special railwayman's commemoration meeting at which Violet Markham spoke, a special dance in her honour and appeared before 'wildly cheering children' at the Odeon Theatre, where she addressed them and 'stayed to witness with them the film of the

7. Stephenson Centenary sub-committee meeting, 4 December 1947.

8. *DT*, 13 August 1948; *ST*, 16 August 1948.

9. *Sheffield Telegraph ST*, 8 July 1948.

10. *DT*, 13 August, 1948.

11. 'George Stephenson Centenary commemoration – visit of the railway queen to Chesterfield', *Railways Review*, 27 August, 1948, on which the majority of this paragraph is based. The commemorative brochure has a page on her attendance and the events she was expected to attend.

12. *DT*, 20 August 1948. He is also pictured with her and other dignitaries at the railway exhibition.

13. Letter to C. S. Hollis from S. Knightley, Hasland Branch of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, 4 November 1948. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.

latest railway wonder – “Diesel Locomotive 10,000” – loaned specially by British Railways.’ She also attended the exhibitions – officially opening the railway one on Sunday 15 August. Later that Sunday she attended the commemorative service at Holy Trinity Church – laying a wreath on Stephenson’s tomb on behalf of the Railway Executive and the Railway trades unions.<sup>14</sup>

The visit of the Railway Queen was the highlight of the event and represented her last public appearance. The *Derbyshire Times* devotes an article to it alone.<sup>15</sup>

The railwaymen’s commemorative meeting was presided over by Violet Markham on the Sunday at the Co-operative Hall. This attracted various railway trades union national figures along with railway and civic representatives.<sup>16</sup> According to a contemporary newspaper report Miss Markham was to preside over the event in a chair owned and used by George Stephenson, whilst he was engaged on building the Liverpool and Manchester railway, especially lent for the occasion by British Railways.<sup>17</sup> Violet Markham later reflected on the Railway Queen’s ‘simplicity and grace’ in thanking the joint committee for their invitation to preside at the Cooperative Hall event.<sup>18</sup>

So this was an event for the whole of Chesterfield and beyond – children included. The commemorative brochure also makes this clear – with a contribution from the Borough’s Education Officer on how schools were marking the centenary. As an example Hasland Hall School produced a pageant of George Stephenson’s life and constructed a model of *The Rocket*.<sup>19</sup> The latter also featured in the commemoration opening ceremony.<sup>20</sup>

This was a time too when the railways employed thousands of people in the Chesterfield area, when coal was king along with its associated industries; when Chesterfield was the ‘centre of industrial England.’ The celebrations were seen as a time to celebrate not only George Stephenson, but of the contribution the Chesterfield area had and might make to the well-being of the country.

### The exhibitions - Engineering

Boythorpe Road Drill Hall was given over to an ‘engineering exhibition.’ The list of exhibitors gives an insight into when Chesterfield styled itself the ‘Centre of Industrial England’. Bryan Donkin exhibited 13 models, plus full size engineering exhibits (such as a retort house governor, centrifugal fan and pump), along with special castings and ‘old and new’ engineering drawings. Models also featured in the Chesterfield Tube Company’s (CTC) stand. Here were locomotive, ship, tube drawing machine, power house and steel making plant models, loaned by a variety of iron and steel trades manufacturers, along with products produced by the company itself. Also at the CTC’s stand British Thompson Houston were exhibiting a model of the Staythorpe Power Station, which was then under construction for the Derby and Notts. Electric Power Company.

As might be expected the Clay Cross Company were strongly represented with drawings and engines, including a single cylinder one ‘made by George Stephenson’, in daily use from 1841 to 1946 raising a lowering a cage at Ambergate Lime Kilns. A drawing of this engine is included in the borough’s commemorative brochure. Markham Company exhibits included models of coal handling and winding machines, whilst Plowright Brothers of ‘Brampton Ironworks’ continued the mining theme with displays of components, illustrations of coal preparation and handling plants and equipment. The Sheepbridge Coal and Iron Company’s exhibits ranged from the old (a steam engine of c. 1825-1850) to the new (a Bristol aero engine for which the company made centrifugally cast cylinder liners). A haulage gear model was also included along with portable haulage gears and tub retarders. The Staveley Coal and Iron Company had examples of pig, iron, cast iron pipes, special castings and flexible pipe joints. Chemical, salt, lime and tar products are also listed as being on display. The Chesterfield and District Technical College had exhibits on electrical and mechanical engineering with an additional section ‘dealing with some facets of engineering at the time of George Stephenson.’ Finally the Chesterfield and District Model Engineering Society, then only recently formed in September 1947, were represented. The Society were able to announce that they had a permanent home in the Hartington Room at the Bradbury Hall. This was by permission of Robinsons who had also given permission for ‘the sailing of model boat and aeroplane flying... at Walton Dam and the adjacent Sports Ground respectively...’ The commemorative book in Chesterfield Local Studies Library contains photographs of this and the other exhibitions. From these photographs we get a glimpse of the future – Roy Smith was exhibiting the latest radiograms!<sup>21</sup>

An added attraction was a ‘passenger carrying miniature railway’ courtesy of the Sheffield and District Society of Model and Experimental Engineers and the Worthing and District Society of Model Engineers.<sup>22</sup>

This exhibition was open from 10 am until 9 pm in the first week, from 2 pm until 9 pm from 16 – 28 August, closed on Sundays. Admission was 6d adults and 3d children.<sup>23</sup> 17,093 visits were made.<sup>24</sup>

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14. *Railways Review*, 27 August, 1948

15. *DT*, 20 August 1948.

16. *ibid* and *Railways Review*, 27 August, 1948.

17. *DT*, 6 August 1948.

18. Letter Violet Markham to C. S. Hollis, 21 August 1948. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.

19. *The Star*, 14 July 1948; *DT*, 16 July 1948 and *ST*, 14 July 1948.

20. *ST*, 13 August 1948.

21. CLS, Stephenson bound volume.

22. *DT*, 6 August 1948 (advertisement).

23. *Ibid*.

24. *DT*, 3 September 1948.



# The George Stephenson Centenary Commemorative Events in Chesterfield – Part 3

*Philip Cousins*

First published in NEDIAS Newsletter No 57 - February 2015

## Introduction

Our third part of this series – looking at Chesterfield's George Stephenson Centenary Commemoration events of August 1948, looks at two further exhibitions.

The coal mining exhibition, held at Ashgate Road Drill Hall (later the Goldwell Rooms – now demolished) appears to have been an ambitious attempt at both commemorating the links the mining industry had with Stephenson and also promoting the modern face of mining.

The Stephenson relicts exhibition, first pencilled in to be held at Tapton House, but actually staged in the Stephenson Memorial Hall, was perhaps the least successful in visitor numbers. Never-the-less it appears to have assembled a good collection of Stephenson's personal possessions and related artefacts.

## The exhibitions - Coal

The Ashgate Road Drill Hall was completely given over to the National Coal Board exhibition. This featured a section on George Stephenson's connection with the coal industry, including his attempt at designing a miners' safety lamp. There were models of mining equipment, but the main feature of the exhibition was 'a realistic representation of a coal mine'. This included, according to the commemorative brochure, a ride in a cage down to the bottom of the 'shaft'. Visitors were then guided around the workings to an air-lock, 'from where they continue into the loader end.' Here coal was being loaded from a conveyor into tubs. The conveyor led to the coal face:

...where the process of cutting, drilling and firing the coal preparatory to loading is explained by an experienced miner. After a visit to the face, the road leads them back to another air-lock, and thence to the bottom of the upcast shaft for the ride back to the surface.

The exhibition must have involved some preparation. As late as a couple of days before opening 'a team of 14 experts from London...were putting finishing touches...' to it.<sup>1</sup> Eight local miners acted as guides and lecturers in the 'underground workings'.<sup>2</sup> A special feature was a large book telling of Stephenson's involvement with the coal mining industry. Of 16 pages, they automatically turned.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to what sounds like a wonderful exhibition, the National Coal Board were showing 'cinematograph shows' of mining films, with a supportive programme from 'the British Railways, engineering, iron, steel and other industries', at the Market Hall Assembly Rooms.

This exhibition was open from 10 am until 8 pm from 12 – 28 August, closed on Sundays. Admission was free to the mining exhibition, but was 6d adults and 3d children for the 'coal mine'. Admission was free to the Assembly Rooms films shows, which commenced at 11 am, 1, 3, 5 and 7 pm (not Sundays).<sup>4</sup> It was estimated 12,754 visits were made to the 'model coal mine', with 7,500 seeing the film shows.<sup>5</sup> An estimated 30,000 people had attended the free admission mining exhibition.<sup>6</sup>

## The exhibitions – Stephenson relicts and documents

The third exhibition was of 'Stephenson relicts and documents' at the Central Library within the Stephenson Memorial Hall. Here was 'a representative collection of documents, illustrations, plans and other material including many personal possessions of George Stephenson.' These were drawn from the Borough's own collection along with those from the Science Museum, the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IME), other institutions and from private collections. In his contribution to the commemorative brochure Borough Librarian G. R. Micklewright announced that the Library and Museum Committee 'is also forming a "Stephenson Collection" in readiness for the proposed new Central Library'. This might mark the start of the current local studies library 'Stephenson Collection', or a significant argumentation of it. This collection contains a valuable assembly of not only Stephenson but other railway related publications.

Science Museum artefacts on display included Stephenson's gold watch, measuring tape, four foot rule and drawing instruments, amongst others. There was also the 'Geordie' lamp – Stephenson's miners' safety lamp – drawings and other artefacts. The IME loaned the famous portrait by John Lucas of Stephenson at Chat Moss – which was featured

1. *Sheffield Telegraph ST*, 11 August 1948
2. *DT*, 13 August 1948.
3. *DT*, 13 August 1948.
4. *DT*, 6 August 1948 (advertisement).
5. *DT*, 3 September 1948.
6. *DT*, 24 September 1948.

in the commemorative brochure as one of the full colour plates. Along with another oil painting of Stephenson seated with a drawing of Weaver Viaduct, a 'very large collection of Stephenson relicts and documents' was on display, including many original letters. Stephenson, of course, helped found the IME, his letters in the Institute's collection being the subject of a book by W. O. Skeat published in 1973.<sup>7</sup>

The Clay Cross Company 'lent all the original documents in its possession', including ledgers, bill heads and a share transfer register. As might already have been gathered, the exhibition also included artefacts. One could gaze on Stephenson's grandfather clock and dining table, courtesy of Mrs M. Fishwick of Ulverston – her great-grandfather was George's brother John. Mrs Fishwick also 'promised a fine copy of the Chat Moss Portrait which is to be hung permanently in the Stephenson Memorial Hall.' The North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers lent another 'Geordie' lamp – this one presented by George Stephenson to a Tristram (Kit) Heppell of West Moor Colliery in 1818 as a mark of appreciation for services rendered in testing the safety lamp. The now famous glass device (at least locally) said to have been invented by Stephenson for growing straight cucumbers also made an appearance.<sup>8</sup>

Alderman E. D. Swanwick of Old Whittington loaned a number of letters written by Stephenson to Frederick Swanwick – who had worked with and for Stephenson for many years. Swanwick was in practical terms the resident engineer on the North Midland Railway.<sup>9</sup> One letter appeared to give an eye-witness account of the Rainhill Trials.

This exhibition was organised by G. R. Micklewright, who also produced a bibliography of George Stephenson in association with the exhibition.<sup>10</sup> Open from 10 am until 9 pm from 12 – 28 August, like the other two above, it was closed on Sundays. Admission was the usual 6d adults and 3d children. 'Lantern lectures on the life and work of George Stephenson' were also given. 3,779 visits were made to the exhibition.<sup>11</sup> It was said that there were six relatives present when Violet Markham officially opened it.<sup>12</sup>

Micklewright reported that although the exhibition had not had the same popular appeal as the others the library 'now possessed one of the finest collection of books, pamphlets and documents on the subject in the country'. It was hoped that there was to be Stephenson room when the town 'ultimately had a museum.'<sup>13</sup>

The three exhibitions co-ordinated directly by the commemoration sub-committee are photographically documented in the centenary cuttings book in Chesterfield Local Studies Library, with what look like specially commissioned photographs.

7. W. O. Skeat, *George Stephenson: the engineer and his letters*, (1973).
8. CLS, Stephenson bound volume.
9. J. Marshall, *Bibliographical dictionary of railway engineers*, (1978), p. 211.
10. G. R. Micklewright, *Stephenson Centenary commemoration – bibliography*, (1948).
11. DT, 3 September 1948.
12. ST, 13 August 1948.
13. DT, 24 September 1948.

## The George Stephenson Centenary Commemorative Events in Chesterfield – Part 4

*Philip Cousins*

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### Introduction

In this part (the final of four) we look at the railway exhibition. This was the shortest lived but undoubtedly the most successful and memorable of the four exhibitions held, during August 1948 in Chesterfield, to commemorate the centenary of George Stephenson's death. It is this exhibition that prompted the original audience question at the May 2014 David Wilmot Memorial lecture, referred to in part one.

### The exhibitions - railway

The railway exhibition was organised ostensibly by the then newly formed Railway Executive of the British Transport Commission, though there was much railway employee involvement. It should be remembered that this was a time of great transition for the railways. Held at the former Lancashire, Derbyshire and East Coast Railway's Market Place Station, only seven months previously those premises would have been controlled by the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) before nationalisation in January of 1948.

The exhibition itself fell into two basic sections – historical and modern. Perhaps surprisingly, given most people's memories of how successful the exhibition was, the commemoration brochure contains something of an apology for the latter not being more extensive; '[this] is due to the centenary falling at a time of peak demand for passenger railway travel and British Railways have had to reconcile the duty to which they owe the public with their desire to do credit to the occasion.' This was the era when almost entire towns would shut-down for annual holidays and the consequent demand for summer holiday traffic.

This was undoubtedly the most successful of all the exhibitions. It opened on Thursday 12 August at 10.30 am, (despite the misgivings of the Centenary sub-committee), closing at 7.30 pm – a pattern for the four days of the exhibition. It was the only one of the four exhibitions to be open on Sunday. The official opening was performed by the Mayor, Alderman Edgar Smith on the Thursday at 6.45 pm, with the Sunday opening by the Railway Queen at 10.30 am. Admission was 6d for adults, 3d for children. A specially produced programme would cost an additional 2d.<sup>1</sup> The Railway Executive was expecting some 30,000 people to attend.<sup>2</sup>

During this short period 38,221 people did, indeed, attend (nearly 13,000 of them children), with more than £900 raised from admission and programme sales.<sup>3</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* reported that 1,000 people visited in the first hour alone, with a 100 yard queue on the street outside by early afternoon.<sup>4</sup> Friday had the lowest attendance – 7,100 but had the highest proportion of young visitors at about 42 per cent.<sup>5</sup> On the Sunday a 230 yard queue had formed for the opening by the Railway Queen for the exhibition's final day.<sup>6</sup> Here the Queen was met by Mr A.H. Peppercorn, chief mechanical engineer of the Eastern and North Eastern Regions of British Railways. Other railway staff were also in attendance, including Mr C. S. Hollis who, as previously described, was the honorary organising secretary to the Chesterfield and district railway trades unions joint committee.<sup>7</sup> Presiding over the event was Mr W. B. Carter (District Goods and Passenger Manager, Sheffield), who praised his staff for the railway input, including the Railway Queen's visit and stewarding of the exhibition – all undertaken voluntarily.<sup>8</sup> Later in August this contribution was duly acknowledged by British Railways in a letter to principal station masters and yard masters, for forwarding to staff concerned.<sup>9</sup> Profits from the exhibition, after costs were deducted, were destined for 'selected funds and charities.'<sup>10</sup> On the last day railwaymen celebrated with their Queen at the commemorative meeting at the Cooperative Hall described earlier in this series of articles.<sup>11</sup>

Everything appears to have gone well except for a slip-up over additional Sunday bus services for those wishing to attend the exhibition. The *Derbyshire Times* had reported that Chesterfield Corporation were to lay on special morning bus services from Bolsover, Clay Cross, Danesmoor and Staveley from 9.30 am and from all other termini at 9.45 am on the Sunday.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately this proved incorrect, an error explained by the rather embarrassed commemoration organiser (Mr G. S. Whitelam), who had given incorrect information to the newspaper. What actually happened was that the Transport Department would run one bus (with duplicate if necessary) 'at 9.30 am from Bolsover, Clay Cross via North Wingfield, Danesmoor, Unstone and Staveley, and at 9.45 am from Brampton, New Whittington, Walton Road top and Newbold via Whittington.' The newspaper reported that many readers were disappointed that the bus services had not been as expected.<sup>13</sup>

Historical exhibits are recorded in the commemorative brochure as a full scale replica of 'Rocket'; The 'Lion' (built in 1838 for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway and now in the Museum of Liverpool); Midland Railway 'single'; locomotive 118 and a Great Central Railway Director class locomotive. Queen Victoria's London and North Western Railway saloon; and Queen Adelaide's saloon coach of the London and Birmingham Railway were the historical coaching exhibits. Also displayed was the 'beaver-tail' observation coach from the LNER's 'Coronation stream-line train' along with 'signalling instruction and exhibition vans.' Modern locomotive wise an ex London Midland and Scottish Railway 'Patriot' class express locomotive 'named in honour of George Stephenson' and an ex LNER class B1 were displayed. Historical documents – 'many signed by George Stephenson' – along with old photographs and engravings also featured at this exhibition, including some items from the York Railway Museum. Large scale locomotive models were also exhibited with a model of an early Liverpool and Manchester Railway passenger coach.

The separate railway exhibition programme listed 24 major exhibits over its eight pages.<sup>14</sup> Two parcels bogie vans contained small exhibits such as plans and reproductions of Stephenson related items, timetables, photographs and models. The signalling exhibitions van contained equipment used in railway control, such as an electric point motor, block instruments, relays and the like. Modern rolling stock was also exhibited, such as a Wolverton built corridor

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1. The Railway Executive, *George Stephenson Centenary Commemoration, British Railways Exhibition, Chesterfield Market Place Station, 12 to 15 August, 1948: programme, (1948).*
  2. *ST*, 30 July 1948.
  3. *DT*, 27 August 1948.
  4. *Manchester Guardian*, 13 August 1948
  5. *The Star*, 16 August 1948.
  6. *ST*, 16 August 1948.
  7. *DT*, 20 August 1948.
  8. *ST*, 16 August 1948 and information from Mr G. C. Hollis, Hasland, May 2014.
  9. Copy letter dated 23 August 1948 from Assistant District Superintendent, District Superintendent's Office, British Railways Eastern Region, Nottingham Victoria Station. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.
  10. *DT*, 27 August 1948 and 24 September 1948.
  11. In part 2.
  12. *DT*, 13 August 1948
  13. *DT*, 20 August 1948.
  14. The Railway Executive, *George Stephenson Centenary Commemoration, British Railways Exhibition, Chesterfield Market Place Station, 12 to 15 August, 1948: programme, (1948),* from which the majority of this paragraph is sourced.



coach 'just completed' and a Doncaster built carriage of 1947. A modern 16 ton steel bodied mineral wagon, as an example of present day freight rolling stock, was present. This was part of batch of 1,000 then being made at New Whittington by the Derbyshire Carriage and Wagon Co. Ltd.; 'one of the new type recently adopted by the Railway Executive.'<sup>15</sup> A milk wagon, a 'Conflat' (a pre-Second World War form of containerised transport) and others were also present, along with a buffet lounge car from the 'Flying Scotsman' coaching set.

One sideline to the research carried out for the historical part of this exhibition was the discovery and identification of the now widely reproduced photograph of a Derby built 'Jenny Lind' 2-2-2 class steam locomotive, with the former North Midland Railway Station at Chesterfield in the background. This discovery received some publicity including an appearance in the *Railway Magazine* for September and October 1948<sup>16</sup> and the *Railway Gazette* in August.<sup>17</sup>

Roger Brettell tells the story of how some of this rolling stock came to be at the former LD&EC Market Place Station, in his May 1954 *Trains Illustrated* article 'The Junctions at Shirebrook'. Connections at Shirebrook Junction (taken out in 1951) enabled a special from Crewe with London Midland Region stock to be brought to the exhibition:

The Train arrived at Shirebrook (West) headed by the newly rebuilt "Patriot" No. 45529, its freshly fitted *Stephenson* nameplates covered by wood, and hauling, amongst an assorted load, the Johnson single M.R. No. 118, the M.R. 2-4-0 No. 158A (later L.M.S. No. 20002), LNWR No. 3020 *Cornwall*, LNWR No. 790 *Hardwicke*, a replica of *Rocket*, with tender, and *Lion*. However, someone had blundered, so it was decided that *Cornwall* and *Hardwicke* were unwanted guests; they were removed and spent the period of the Exhibition in a coal siding at Mansfield shed. Langwith "B.1" No. 61085 was substituted for the "Patriot" and the remainder of this remarkable cavalcade then pounded up the gradient to Langwith Junction on its way to Chesterfield.<sup>19</sup>

Reports were carried in local newspapers about the arrival of the train in Chesterfield. On 9 August *The Star* reports of 'hooters sounding a welcome all around Chesterfield Market Place Station' as the consist entered the station. However 'there was a disappointment for the crowd which lined the barriers, for the model of the famous "Rocket", Queen Adelaide's saloon...and other ancient and well-known railway museum pieces, were all heavily tarpaulined at the rear of the train'. Other material for the exhibitions had already arrived and more were expected.<sup>20</sup> The next day *The Sheffield Telegraph* told how 'hundreds of schoolboy engine spotters along the line were up at dawn yesterday to see the train' as it made its way to arrive to the 'mid-day hooters' welcome at Market Place Station.<sup>21</sup>

As noted, also attending was D10 steam locomotive 62658 *Prince George*. The D10 ('Director' class) was introduced in 1913 by the former Great Central Railway,<sup>22</sup> so can hardly be said to have at the fore-front of locomotive design. The B1 was more recent, having been introduced in 1942 by the LNER.<sup>23</sup> The locomotives must have been selected as they had been 'freshly-outshopped... resplendent in lined out black livery.'<sup>24</sup> It is evident from illustrations of the event that this livery was also applied to the 'Patriot'. This was the then new British Railways livery, although the sometimes described 'cycling lion' emblem on tenders was yet to come – they were simply lettered British Railways in uppercase Gill Sands font. The three lined up together, with the B1 leading followed by the Director and the Patriot must have made a fascinating display and also a practical example of the effect that the new British Railways, publically owned, might bring. It also appears that the Patriot locomotive was officially named 'Stephenson' at the event on Thursday, though curiously newspaper reports do not identify who carried this out.<sup>25</sup> One might assume it was the Railway Queen.

Dr J. W. B. Worsley, writing in a series of contemporary articles on George Stephenson, in the *Sheffield Telegraph*,<sup>26</sup> was somewhat critical of the assemblage of rolling stock from the British Railways point of view. The Patriot he thought, 'as common as cowslips' locally; the B1 equally as common and the Director 'a trifle passé'. Though pointing out that an exhibition at Darlington had possibly the plumb pick of exhibits, he did think that BR should have grasped the opportunity slightly more.

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15. DT, 13 August 1948.

16. *The Railway Magazine*, September and October 1948, frontispiece and p. 283. The magazine thought the photograph dated from between September 1867 and September 1868.

17. *Railway Gazette*, 6 August 1948.

18. R. Brettell, 'The junctions at Shirebrook', *Trains Illustrated*, May 1954, p. 193 – 195.

19. *ibid.* p. 195. Another account has the B1 hauling a separate train consisting of the Director, Lion and the Rocket replica, the latter two on flat wagons: L. Little, 'The Stephenson centenary exhibition, 1948', *Great Central Link*, number 25, April 2000, p. 3.

20. *The Star*, 9 August 1948.

21. *ST*, 10 August 1948.

22. A. F. Cook, *ABC British Railways locomotives – combined volume 1950*, (reprinted 2005), p. 138.

23. *ibid.* p. 135.

24. L. Little, *Langwith Junction: the life and times of a railway village*, (1995), p. 14.

25. DT, 13 August 1948. *Railways*, October 1948, p. 159.

26. *ST*, 12 August 1948.

Accounts generally convey how the rather sleepy Market Place station was transformed for those few days of the commemoration event. Lawson Little wrote about how the normal passenger platforms of 1 and 2 were used to house the rolling stock display, which included the 'beaver-tail' ex Coronation set coach and 'several full brakes with displays of models of LNER equipment – I remember being fascinated by a large scale model of a roll-on train ferry.'<sup>27</sup> Little also wrote about how those not paying were denied a free look by a set of coaches being parked in the centre road in the station area, whilst platforms 4 and 5 were used for service trains. 'The occasion was however in every sense the swan-song of the Market Place Station. Three years later passenger services were summarily discontinued...'. The station finally closed with the withdrawal of goods facilities in March 1957.<sup>28</sup>

## Overall conclusions

The committee formed to plan the event comprised a collection of civic and religious leaders, the business community and well-known local worthies. It worked together to plan a comprehensive event, in a surprisingly short space of time. Local railway trades unions also worked to produce an event worthy of the centenary of the death of one of the town's most famous, albeit adopted, sons.

However, despite the tremendous efforts put in by all those concerned there was, it is believed, some disappointment that the commemoration events did not receive the national recognition they deserved. The events, particularly the exhibitions were very popular and did receive some national coverage. Though, perhaps with the exception of *The Times*, that coverage was generally relatively small or confined to more specialist publications. Perhaps this is why, today, the commemoration remains largely forgotten, even by most in the Chesterfield area.

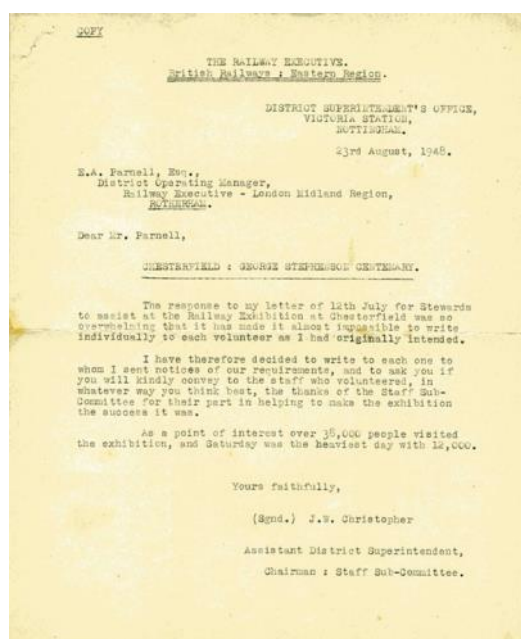
There is a telling comment in the *Railway Magazine* for September and October 1948 when the magazine congratulated Chesterfield on having 'lived up to its duty to its famous adopted son' by the town's 'comprehensive programme' of events. The magazine, however countered; 'Tribute to his [Stephenson's] greatness is being paid by the press of the world, and it is peculiar (even if typically English) that this country alone is regarding the commemoration as a matter of local interest.'<sup>29</sup>

Despite this, those involved must have recognised their efforts had been successful. It is perhaps a salient point that even by today's standards the whole event must have brought together one of the largest collections of Stephenson related exhibits at any one time. It must have been an event of which Chesterfield could be justifiably proud. So to the railway exhibition

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Chesterfield Local Studies Library for research facilities. At the time this account was originally written (2015) it was noteworthy that the majority of the non-pamphlet part of the Stephenson Collection had been placed on display in the library. This must be the first time this very useful research facility had been made openly visible, if not accessible, without asking library staff. This is understandable given the age and rarity of some of the collection.

I am particularly indebted to the late Chris Hollis, the son of Charles Hollis (the honorary secretary of the Chesterfield and district joint railway trades unions' efforts to celebrate the event) for access to his late father's papers. Unfortunately no financial records or minutes survive of the unions' activities for the event.

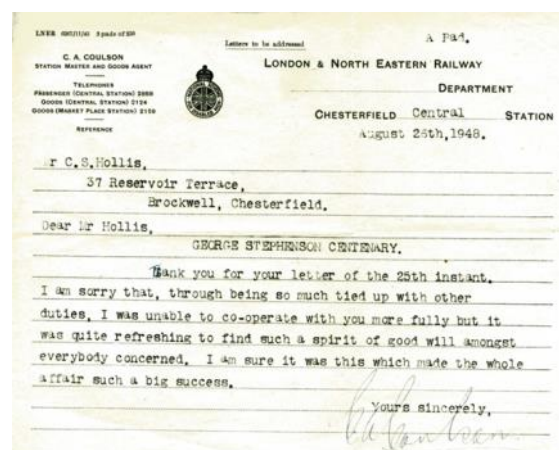


LEFT: This letter was circulated to both station and yard masters in the district following a successful appeal for stewards at the railway exhibition.

Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.

RIGHT: Giving some indication of the considerable pull on resources at the time is this letter from the station master at Chesterfield Central Station, apologizing to Charles Hollis of the joint trades union committee for being 'tied up with other duties'. Note also that old LNER note paper was still being used some eight months after nationalization.

Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.



27. Little, (1995), p. 14.

28. L. Little, Lancashire, Derbyshire & East Coast Railway, part IV. A personal perspective, *Forward*, number 135, spring 2003, p. 17.

29. *Railway Magazine*, September and October 1948, p. 283.



LEFT: Mr. A. H. Peppercorn (Chief Mechanical Engineer, Eastern and North Eastern Regions, Doncaster), presents an antique trinket box to the Railway Queen at the Market Place Railways exhibition, which she had opened. Mr Carter (District Goods and Passenger Manager, Sheffield) is to the right of the Railway Queen, with Mr. Hollis next to him. Hollis was honorary organising secretary to the Chesterfield and district railway trades unions joint committee, who did much to support the exhibition and the Railway Queen's visit. This photograph appeared in the Derbyshire Times on 20 August 1948, but is believed not to be a newspaper photograph. Unfortunately we do not know the name of the person to the extreme left. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.



LEFT: The Railway Queen and dignitaries pose, with the platform canopies of the Market Place Station in the background, together with exhibit number 17 'Model Rocket'. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.



RIGHT: The Railway Queen and other dignitaries pose in front of newly rebuilt and named 'Patriot' class No. 45529. Along with the three other main-line locomotives 45529 was painted in the then new British Railways lined black livery. Despite criticisms in some quarters about the lack of 'cutting edge' locomotives at the exhibition, the three shining, lined black, locomotives, which were positioned together, must have looked impressive. Collection C. Hollis/P. Cousins.

**Brimington and Tapton Local History Group**  
[brimingtonandtaptonhistory.org.uk](http://brimingtonandtaptonhistory.org.uk) – [batslhg@gmail.com](mailto:batslhg@gmail.com)

**Chesterfield & District Local History Society**  
[www.cadlhs.org.uk](http://www.cadlhs.org.uk)

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 or e-mail: [editor@nedias.co.uk](mailto:editor@nedias.co.uk)

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