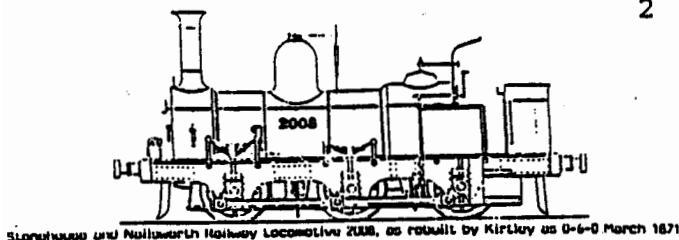


THE STONE HOUSE & NAILSWORTH RAILWAY -



Stonehouse and Nailsworth Railway Locomotive 2008, as rebuilt by Kirtley as 0-6-0 March 1871

& the Midland branch to Stroud

By MICHAEL HOY

Introduction

Few developments in the life of a local community can have been so profoundly influential as the coming of the railway. The story of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway demonstrates this as clearly as any: it fostered the expansion and diversification of manufacturing enterprise and trade, while conversely hastening the demise of the uncompetitive; it brought increased mobility for residents and visitors, facilitating new social, economic and educational opportunities; it promoted leisure travel; and it was a primary factor in the expansion and civic confidence of Nailsworth which resulted eventually in its establishment as an independent Urban District in 1894. In addition to all this, there are two distinctive features of its early history which are especially interesting: first, the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway was wholly promoted, financed and built by local enterprise, and, secondly, it was conceived and planned from the outset as the first short stage of an important trunk route across the mid-Gloucestershire Cotswolds.

The promoters of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway were for the most part industrialists and traders whose main concern was to reduce costs and improve facilities for transportation of coal and heavy goods. In the Nailsworth valley, despite the progressive improvement of turnpike roads from 1780 onwards, goods transportation remained a tedious and costly business necessitating transfer to and from canal barge at Dudbridge or Wallbridge Wharfs, where manufacturers were at the mercy of the proprietors of the Stroudwater Canal and also of their mercurial partners, the Thames & Severn Canal directors, whose well-documented battles with clients and allies alike must have driven many local entrepreneurs to despair.(1) The coming of the first railway to Stroud in 1845, when the Great Western completed the broad gauge Cheltenham & Great Western Union Railway, brought competition and a new service for some industrialists, but obviously for the inhabitants of Nailsworth it was an additional frustration: while cloth manufacturers and other traders in the Chalford and lower Stroud valleys at least had limited access to the new mode of transport, Nailsworth was as isolated as ever, with costs escalating all the time.

The Proposals: Pro and Con.

This is the background against which a series of proposals for a railway line to Nailsworth was brought forward, beginning in 1824 and coming to fruition with the Act of 13 July 1863 for the Incorporation of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway.(2) The promotion did not proceed without opposition and controversy, and the lobbying and manoeuvring which took place locally and in Parliamentary Committee is fascinating. The main opposition came from the proprietors of the Stroudwater Canal and their powerful ally the Great Western Railway. The canal proprietors claimed, rightly of course, that the railway would interfere with a substantial proportion of their traffic, and they stood to lose much business. The Great Western's opposition was based not so much on loss of existing traffic, as they were not conveniently placed to serve the Nailsworth valley, but on the potential threat to their monopoly across the Cotswolds, since the new line was to be firmly anchored to the Midland Railway at Stonehouse and extension plans were openly canvassed by the line's promoters to attract additional support for the project. Less obvious, but perhaps more intriguing, was opposition based on arguments to do with religion, particularly directed against the large Roman Catholic community at Woodchester. Against all this opposition, however, the evidence of manufacturers like Richard Grist of Victoria Mills, Rooksmoor, and Samuel Watkins of the Bristol Colliery firm of Weatherland & Cosham was more effective, for they were able to show that, largely because of poor communications, the price of coal to manufacturers in the Stroud and Nailsworth valleys was twice that in the north of England, with which the mid-Gloucestershire clothiers were in close competition for dwindling markets.

The Board of Directors.

Perhaps more important still, however, was local confidence and support for the proposed line, represented most tangibly by the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway's eight first subscribers. One was William Playne of Avening Court who worked Longford's Mill and who was a most distinguished figure in the history of Nailsworth in the mid-nineteenth century; he was appointed one of the first directors of the railway company. Two other notable first subscribers who also joined the first Board of Directors were Abraham Marsh Flint, who rented The Lawn and who owned Nailsworth Mill (now Chamberlain's), and George Ford, who worked Millbottom Mill high up the Nailsworth Stream. Another first subscriber was Isaac Hillier of Newmarket Court, the area's largest employer and one of the most generous of Nailsworth's benefactors. The remaining four first subscribers were: John Griffith Frith, a London banker and patron of Holy Trinity Church, Amberley, who built a residence at Box; Alfred Self Leonard; J F Barnard, and Charles Payne. In addition to the eight first subscribers, the proposed railway also enjoyed the active support of other notable personalities, including the two largest manufacturers of the whole mid-Gloucestershire cloth industry - Samuel Stephens Marling and John Hunt.

Although the promotion of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway was clearly very much a local affair, it was considered important to establish a 'London connection' and so the first Board of six directors included three outsiders: Joseph Cary (who became the first Chairman), Henry Hawes Fox and Captain

Robert O'Brien Jameson. The 'London connection' was calculated to tempt the general investor nationally in the company's newly-offered shares, but although by 1863 the slump which followed the "railway mania" of the 1840s had largely ended, speculators showed little interest in the project, and so the scheme was largely financed by the first directors and associated subscribers who had devoted so much energy to its promotion.

With an authorised capital of £66,000, borrowing powers for a further £22,000, and a stipulated timetable of four years for completion, the Board of Directors of the new railway held an enthusiastic and confident First Meeting in the Nailsworth Subscription Rooms on Monday, 19 October 1863.(3) From the outset they planned a much larger railway than that authorised between Stonehouse (on the Midland's Bristol-Gloucester line) and Nailsworth, seeking an extension from Dudbridge to Stroud and, more ambitiously, a route from Nailsworth south-east across the Cotswolds. These plans were aired and generally supported by all the main speakers at the colourful celebrations on the Occasion of the Turning of the First Sod in a meadow belonging to Charles and Peter Playne near Egypt Mill on Monday 22 February 1864. The ceremony was performed by the Rt. Hon. Edward Horsman, MP for Stroud, and despite poor weather the day's celebrations were carried out with great enthusiasm, as recorded in the Gloucester Journal:

'At noon all the places of business were closed, and soon after one o'clock a gay procession had formed inside the Subscription Rooms. The procession was headed by the band of the 5th and 6th Gloucestershire Rifle Corps. Immediately after the musicians came a large number of the local gentry, all having rosettes on their breasts. Having paused for a few moments to have the mass photographed, the whole moved slowly in the direction of the field where the sod was to be turned. A somewhat considerable enclosure had been erected, and over this flags of various descriptions were suspended. As the procession entered the enclosure volleys of cannon resounded far and wide, and this added to the enthusiasm of the spectators ... Mr Horsman proceeded to unloosen several clods and throw them to some distance down the field, where they were caught and, we suppose, preserved as momentoes of the occasion.'(4)

Among the speeches which followed, the most auspicious was clearly that of William Price of Tibberton Court, Gloucester, who was the Midland Railway's representative at the ceremony and who pledged the Midland's continued support, not least in the actual operation of the line, which was authorised by the Bill of Incorporation. In the evening there were further celebrations, with children's games, illuminations and a torchlight procession, summed up in the Gloucester Journal as

'the gayest day ever known in Nailsworth'.

Then the Slow Haul of Actual Construction.

Local enthusiasm for the railway, together with the substantial support promised by the Midland, encouraged the directors to proceed confidently. As construction began, two other figures

moved into prominence in the story. One was George Birt Smith, who lived at High Beeches, a distinguished local solicitor who was appointed Secretary to the railway company, and who was also Clerk to the Horsley & Nailsworth Magistrates, to the local Land Commissioners, and to the Nailsworth, Woodchester & Dudbridge Turnpike Trust; he was the brother of William Smith, styled the "honest lawyer", who established the Nailsworth firm of solicitors still practising as A E Smith. The other was the railway company's engineer, George Barclay Bruce, who had surveyed the line and was to direct its construction.

At first Bruce was optimistic about the project and its cost, and with land purchase already in hand, the contractor's plans well advanced and no major technical difficulties envisaged, his assessment must have seemed reasonable. This was born out by the apparent ease of construction by contractor Thomas Overend during the first twelve months, but gradually difficulties accumulated. There is an amusing story of a large landslip above the cut at Frogmarsh, which caused the foundations of a house to creep so that the occupier had to retire to bed each night with all the necessary tools to prise open his bedroom door in the morning. There were also difficulties with culverts caused by unusually wet weather. The main problem, however, was the bridging of the Stroudwater Canal at Ryeford. Although the 56 ft span bridge, designed by local engineer James Ferrabee, is set on a complicated alignment necessitating a triangular cast-iron buttress at the north end, its construction should not have presented real difficulty, but unfortunately for the railway directors, water supply and subsidence problems occurred which severely disrupted canal traffic. This became the subject of protracted litigation which was not satisfactorily resolved until 1878 when, after the Midland had taken over the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway, £1,060 was paid in compensation to the canal proprietors.

Construction of the railway took three and a half years, nearly double George Bruce's initial estimate and a surprisingly lengthy period for a railway just 5 miles and 58½ chains long. Appearances, however, are deceptive: Col. Yolland's Board of Trade Inspection Report (5) lists 6 overbridges and 14 underbridges, and quite substantial earthworks are in evidence for the whole length of the railway from Dudbridge to Nailsworth. Whatever the reasons, far too long had passed with no return on the company's capital investment and borrowing, and it was already in a parlous state when the line opened for goods on 1 February, and for passengers on 4 February, 1867. The directors were in no position to lay on such expansive and costly celebrations as had accompanied the Turning of the First Sod, but the people of Nailsworth marked the inaugural journey with enthusiastic festivities, recorded in the Stroud Journal:

'A large number of passengers travelled by the first train which left Nailsworth at 9.40 a.m., the engine being gaily decorated with flags, colours and evergreens. Considerable crowds had collected at the Nailsworth station and at various places along the line of route, and welcomed the train as it passed with enthusiastic acclamations. Cannon were fired from High Beeches and the Subscription Rooms at intervals during the day, and in the evening a band paraded the streets.'(6)

So Nailsworth won its railway, and began to benefit in many ways from the service it provided both to passengers and to industry.

Fig 1. Course of the Stonehouse-Nailsworth Railway.

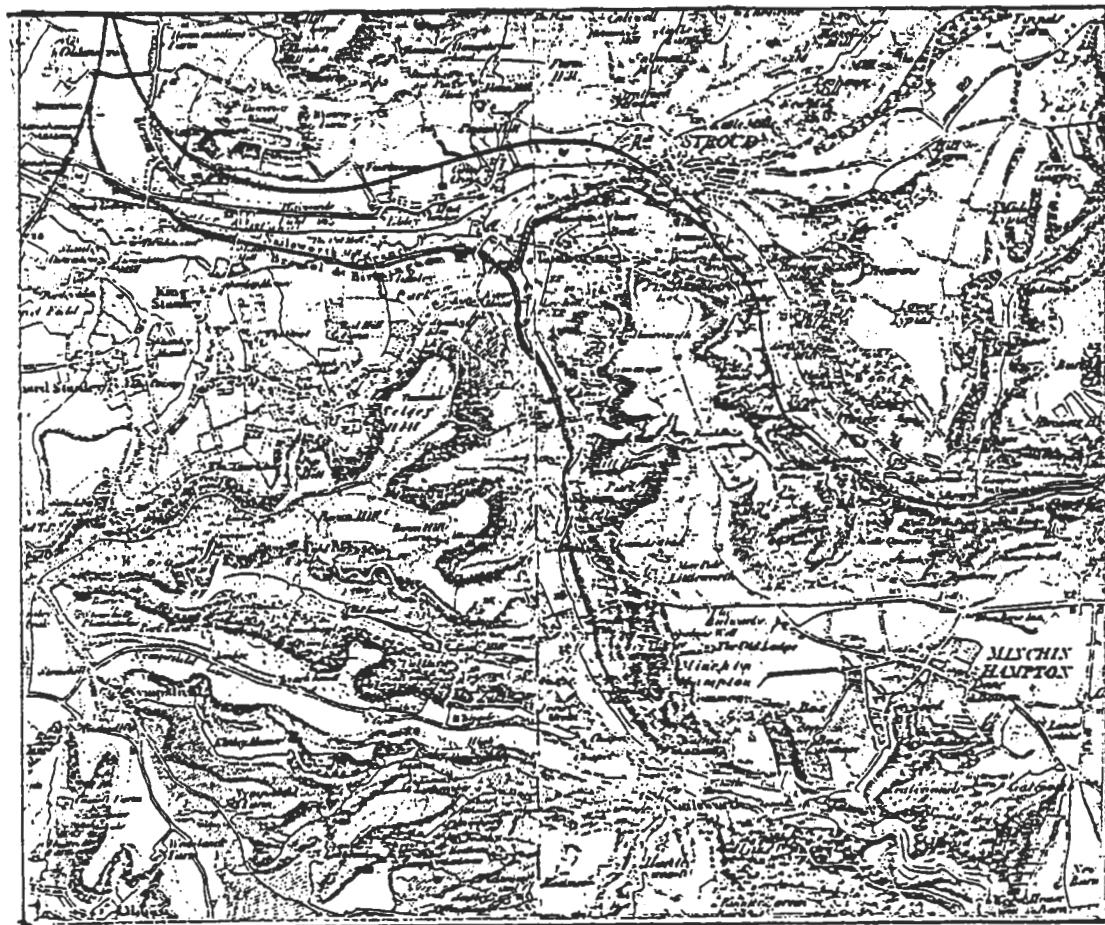
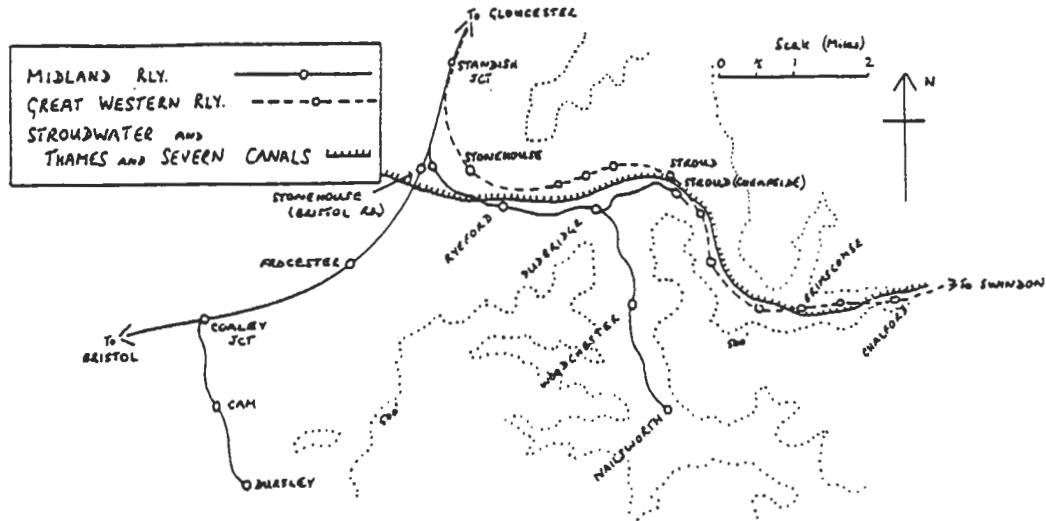


Fig 2. The two railways: from OS 1" map.

The Line is Open!

The opening timetable provided three passenger trains a day in each direction, the first beginning from the Nailsworth end at 0940; with two intermediate stops, at Dudbridge and Ryeford, each train was timed to cover the route in twenty minutes, with the exception of the last train from Nailsworth, which was allowed an extra 5 minutes. The average speed for most passenger trains over the 5½ mile route was therefore a leisurely 17 mph, but this was not unreasonable in view of the sharp curves and gradients on the line, the short distances between stations, and the limited traction capacity of early light locomotives. When the line opened there was no station at Woodchester. This had been a very surprising omission from the original plans, and when it became obvious that a serious error had been made, the cost of providing additional passenger facilities at Woodchester was to prove a further burden. In the event, the small wooden building had nothing of the grand style of carved Cotswold stone which characterised the stations at Dudbridge and Ryeford and the impressive Company Headquarters at Nailsworth, and it compared unfavourably even with the modest brick Crossing Keeper's house on the south side of the adjacent level crossing. With the addition of Woodchester to the service on 1 July 1867 the company provided an extra train in each direction, with a first departure from Nailsworth at 0740. By 1869 the service had been modified again, with four re-timed passenger trains from Nailsworth but five from Stonehouse, two of which also carried goods. Twenty minutes was still allowed for the passenger trains in general, while the two composite trains were each allowed thirty minutes. There were also two goods trains in each direction, with the heaviest traffic carried from Stonehouse to Nailsworth, of which the 1535 afternoon down goods was such a busy working train that it was allowed 66 minutes to reach Nailsworth.

- And Difficulties over Money.

Although the timings were slow, they appear to have provided an acceptable service to the community and despite the absence of the link to Stroud with its much larger traffic potential, there was a steady if modest rise in traffic. But from the day the first train ran it had been obvious that the company's finances were in a sorry state. After urgent appeals to the Midland to provide financial support during the first few months, less than a year after the inaugural service, on 21 December 1867 a receiver was appointed to manage the company's affairs. With a re-constituted Board of Directors from which the 'London connection' had disappeared, the receiver and directors struggled to keep the company going. The Midland became more and more involved in its affairs, there were some improvements especially in the provision of goods-handling facilities, and traffic continued to increase steadily, with a corresponding rise in income: by the second half of 1872, for example, the total income to the company on traffic accounts had risen to £1,376, more than double the earnings of the company's first half-year in 1867. If the company had not been burdened with so much debt incurred in the line's construction there is reason to suppose that it could have enjoyed some success, but attention focused more and more on the Stroud link, and since it was obvious that the extension

could only be undertaken with direct Midland financing, the company sought a full merger with the Midland. Formal negotiations for this began in 1872, but it was not until 1878 that these were complete and the Midland's Incorporation Bill passed through Parliament.

So the Stonehouse' Nailsworth Railway lost its independence after eleven years of service, although in reality it had enjoyed only ten months of operation during which the directors were fully in control of affairs. What had been achieved was, of course, the financing and construction of a railway which was a considerable asset to the Nailsworth valley, especially in its service to freight, bringing lower costs to manufacturers and consumers and many other social benefits. In one important respect, however, the railway arrived too late: it had been planned from the outset to serve the clothiers of the Nailsworth valley, but by 1867 cloth manufacture in Gloucestershire had declined considerably, a change reflected in the line's traffic statistics, which show the heaviest loadings on incoming goods trains.

Plans to extend the Line.

Construction of the Stroud link had to wait for the resources of the Midland, and it was not until 1880 that Parliamentary powers were granted for its construction. Long before this date the independent Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway had been at the centre of numerous extension plans promoted with a great deal of fascinating intrigue and lobbying, many of which proceeded well into the surveying stage.

The first scheme of real significance was the Gloucestershire & Wiltshire Railway,(7) proposed in 1863 by influential residents of Tetbury and Malmesbury who viewed with alarm the impending isolation of their market towns following the Act of Incorporation of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway which authorised the Midland-linked railway only as far as Nailsworth. This plan, which won the support of the directors of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway, was for a narrow gauge through-route from Stroud to Chippenham, incorporating the authorised line between Dudbridge and Nailsworth and linked at each end to the Great Western. Plans for the 16-mile extension south-east from Nailsworth were drawn up by the surveyor Charles Cheffins and the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway Company's engineer George Bruce: it involved a tunnel 242 yards long at Longford's Mill, sharp reverse curves and ruling gradients of 1 in 56 in the lower and upper Avon valleys before reaching the summit at Chavenage; it then fell on a much easier alignment to Tetbury and Malmesbury to join the Great Western's main Bristol line at Christian Malford 4 miles east of Chippenham. The Stroud link from Dudbridge, an integral part of the scheme, was promoted by the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway directors,(8), again engineered by George Bruce: it would have been a difficult line to work, involving gradients of 1 in 48, minimum curves of 12 chains and a tunnel 200 yards long through the lower part of Dudbridge Hill (later amended to a cutting), before swinging out across the Stroudwater Canal towards the Marling School's playing fields. The Gloucestershire & Wiltshire Rail-

way was an attractive prospect for the directors of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway despite the obvious problems of its close ties not with the Midland, their own sponsors, but with the Great Western. They saw Nailsworth as the hub of a busy trunk route with considerable potential profit from through workings, and evidence to demonstrate how committed they were to the scheme still survives clearly at Nailsworth, where the passenger station was elevated much higher than the adjacent goods yard, on a rising gradient which would have led on up into the Avening valley for the through extension.

There was, however, a powerful lobby in Stroud, involving among others the influential clothier Samuel Stephens Marling, which supported a rival scheme, the Wiltshire & Gloucestershire Railway.(9) This proposed a similar route to that of the Gloucestershire & Wiltshire Railway, but broad gauge from the Great Western at Christian Malford to Nailsworth, and then mixed gauge from Nailsworth along the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway's authorised route to Dudbridge, with a mixed gauge link to Stroud via the Great Western line at Upper Gannicox. These two rival schemes reflected the continuing antagonism between the Midland and the Great Western, and despite a series of manoeuvres in and out of Parliament, some of it at a high level between Richard Potter of Gloucester (Chairman of the Great Western and father of the Beatrice Potter who married Sydney Webb) and William Price (Chairman of the Midland), both these and associated amended schemes proved too complicated and too expensive, and with the Stroud & Nailsworth Railway directors busily involved in the construction of their line, momentum was lost,(10) and it was to be some years before proposals for an extension from Nailsworth were again put forward.

Desire outrunning Performance?

Among other projects which involved the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway were two remarkable schemes by the Thames & Severn Canal to turn itself into a railway, the first in 1865 from the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway's authorised Stroud extension to Oxford via the newly-authorised East Gloucestershire Railway at Fairford,(11), and the second as late as 1881 on a similar but shorter route to Siddington on the Great Western's Kemble-Cirencester branch.(12) There was also a grand scheme originating in Southampton in 1871 called the South Midland Railway,(13) which was to connect Southampton with the Forest of Dean coalfields by a through route across the Cotswolds south of Tetbury, with an extension to Stroud via the Nailsworth line. Last of the most significant major trunk schemes was the South Wales & Southampton Railway of 1879,(14) which again would have incorporated the Nailsworth line in a Cotswold through-route. All these plans reflected dramatically the aspirations of the principal speakers at the inaugural dinner of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway Company in 1864, but only one passed even a short stage beyond the stage of ambitious lines drawn on the surveyors' maps, and Nailsworth, planned so boldly to be the hub of a busy through route for passenger and freight traffic to rival the Great Western's line, remained instead a quiet terminus, deep in its shady valley at the end of a five-mile Midland branch.

In the end, of course, one short extensions was built: the link from Dudbridge to Stroud. The Midland's route was quite different from the independent Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway's earlier proposal of 1863 to join the Great Western at Upper Gannicox. The company surveyor, John Underwood, now planned to follow the west slopes of Rodborough Hill, with a terminus south of Wallbridge Mill to be linked to the town by a new road and bridges across the Stroudwater Canal and the Frome. This route was duly authorised in 1880,(15) but by this time the manufacturers and traders of Stroud had voiced their dissatisfaction with the Midland's proposals which offered little improvement on the existing cramped freight facilities of the Great Western, squeezed in between their station and Capel's Mill viaduct. The Midland clearly saw that they stood to capitalise considerably if they could offer much better freight capacity, and so John Underwood submitted a Deviation Amendment which would carry the line across the Frome and terminate in a station and large freight yard on Upper Canal Wharf. This final plan was authorised in 1882(16) and construction under contractor Thomas Oliver began in November.

The Link with Stroud - At Last!

The short link to Stroud was reputed to be the most expensive mile of railway every built by the Midland anywhere on its system. Track doubling at Dudbridge extending through to the new junction required rebuilding of Selsley Hill bridge; the curved, steeply rising embankment swinging northwards to the line's highest elevation of 200 ft required three occupation bridges and major earthworks, while the deep cuttings below Rodborough Hill required three overbridges; most costly of all was the construction of the 9-arch viaduct to carry the line from Rodborough Hill across the Frome at Wallbridge to the new terminus on Upper Canal Wharf. It was to take more than three years for the extension to be completed and its enormous cost of well over £50,000 and protracted engineering dismayed the Midland. The line eventually opened for goods in November 1885, but it was not fully completed until March 1886, and even then there was a further delay to await completion of Col. Rich's Board of Trade Inspection Report.(17) Eventually the Stroud extension opened for passenger traffic on 1 July 1886, twenty-four years after it was first planned as part of the original Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway. The Midland now provided a much more comprehensive passenger service on the line, with seven trains in each direction serving both Nailsworth and Stroud, the Stroud link being provided by a separate train from Dudbridge; there were also two trains in each direction between Stroud and Stonehouse with no link to Nailsworth.

Passengers & Goods

The passenger service during the next thirty years was well patronised, especially on the new Stroud extension, both for local and through journeys. It cost 1s. 6d. ($7\frac{1}{2}$ p) to travel 3rd Class from Nailsworth to Gloucester, and 1s. 3d. ($6\frac{1}{2}$ p) from Stroud to Gloucester in 1887; from Nailsworth, Bristol could be reached in a little over $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, and Birmingham in about $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours; at its peak in 1889 passenger patronage of the

Stroud extension alone reached 83,102. By 1914 the passenger service had been improved still further with eight trains in each direction serving both Stroud and Nailsworth, two trains between Stroud and Nailsworth, and two between Stonehouse and Stroud.

It was as a freight line, however, that the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway, with its Stroud extension, made its really important contribution. Statistics show that within a short time of the opening of the Midland Yard at Stroud Cheapside, Midland goods haulage had eclipsed that of the Great Western, and the Midland Yard became a major asset to manufacturers and traders. By 1893 there were 18 goods trains a day, making a total with passenger workings of 32 trains daily on the line. To cope with the rapid expansion of its goods traffic, the Midland provided improved freight handling facilities at all the intermediate yards and there were additionally a large number of sidings serving mills and factories along the route, demonstrating the continuing importance of the line as originally planned to serve the industry of the district. Three of these deserve special mention.

Just west of the Ryeford Canal bridge there was a siding for transfer from the Stroudwater Canal to the railway, which was heavily used in the line's early days; at Dudbridge the north siding adjacent to the down platform was linked directly to a narrow gauge "aerial tramway" which spanned the Nailsworth stream to enter Kimmmins' Mill through a door high up on the second floor; and on the Stroud extension the link between the Gasworks siding up on the railway embankment down to the Gasworks involved a steep inclined truck-chute and then a narrow-gauge tramway crossing the two arms of the Frome on two girder bridges to reach the main Gasworks. Remains of this last system can still be seen, as can the blocked-up door for the tramway at Kimmmins' Mill; but all trace of the Canal siding has gone.

When the line opened it is likely that the first trains were hauled by Jenny Lind type 2-2-2 single-wheelers, and by early Kirtley locomotives. Kirtley's were certainly operating in the 1870s, with No. 2008 frequently in evidence during its often rebuilt life. From 1880, after the Midland had fully taken over the line, Kirtley 0-6-0 goods engines (series 2400) worked the line, while the passenger services were worked by Johnson Class 1 and 2 x 0-4-4 tanks and the common Johnson 3F 0-6-0 tanks. The formation of the LMS in 1923 had little effect on the line's motive power, except that later Aspinall 0-6-0 goods locomotives from the former Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway were used on some goods trains. Passenger coaches were standard 6-wheelers in the early days, and trains of six coaches were generally in use on the Nailsworth line. With the introduction much later of bogie stock, the Stonehouse-Nailsworth service usually had a 3-coach train, while the Stroud branch was normally a push-pull with 1 coach and a tank engine. A large number of privately owned wagons worked on the line, and there is an interesting set of photographs of some of these from the archives of the old Gloucester Wagon Company.

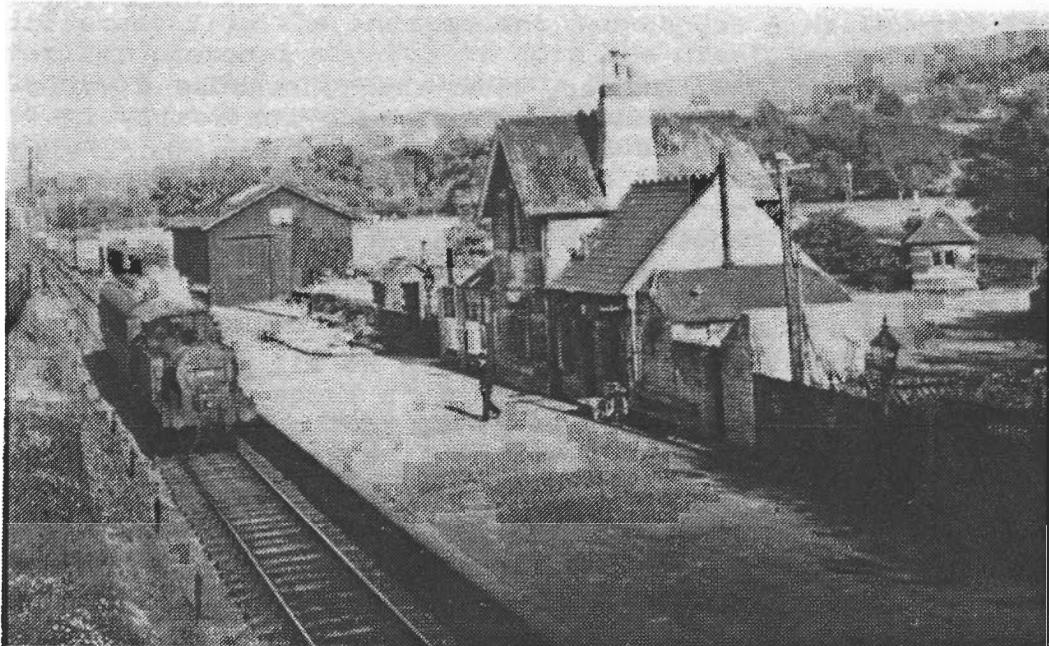


Photo 1 (by Maurice Deane)

LMS 0-4-4 T No. 1330 pulls into Ryeford with the single coach passenger working to Stonehouse, on 28 May 1947, two weeks before the service was suspended.



Photo 2. (by David Lyall)

BR Class 2, 2-6-0, No. 78001 shunts the regular freight working at Dudbridge on the down platform line, on 2 June 1965.

(A photo of Nailsworth Station can be seen on page 59.)

Decline -

In common with so many other similar lines, the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway with its Stroud branch suffered increasingly from road haulage competition in the '30s and '40s, and by the time of the Second World War the whole system was in serious decline. In the last few years of passenger services, there was no separate unit on the Stroud branch, but trains to and from Nailsworth worked down to Stroud and back from Dudbridge in each direction before proceeding. The resulting increase in journey times for through passengers cannot have helped patronage and a single coach push-pull was all that was necessary in the last years of passenger working. On 14 June 1947 the last passenger train ran. The passenger service was a very early casualty of changing patterns of travel and consequently its demise attracted relatively little attention in protest. During the ensuing years, however, interest in the line grew, and while it was still open to goods traffic there was a series of excursions. The last of these was on 7 July 1963, when a special 3-coach excursion train was hauled by a small Redditch-based LMS Class 3F 0-6-0 tank, the type which had worked the line out of Gloucester Shed so often in earlier years.

And Demise.

The goods service lasted nearly twenty years after the closure of passenger traffic, but over the last few years the BR Class 2 x 2-6-0 tender locomotive seemed ridiculously large for the few truck loads conveyed on the branch. In 1966 the last goods train ran and the line closed on 1 June, just 1 year short of its 100th birthday.

What Remains?

Today most of the route has been incorporated in the Stroud Valleys Cycle Trail, and much of interest survives along this attractive path. Unfortunately most of the lineside buildings have gone, but at Nailsworth the fine station building with its handsome Ionic pillars (copied from the Victorian re-built of St Lawrence's Parish Church in Stroud) survives as a private dwelling, and on the west side of the goods yard adjacent to newly-renovated Egypt Mill, Jones' Warehouse remains, a building which local interest in Nailsworth hopes to preserve. Most of the line's bridges between Stonehouse and Nailsworth remain, the most impressive being the troublesome span over the Stroudwater Canal at Ryeford, while the smaller girder bridges over a branch of the Frome near Ebley Oil Mill and over the Nailsworth stream north of Woodchester station site are also interesting. Less of the Stroud branch can now be followed: at Lightpill the extensive earthworks across the valley from Dudbridge Junction to Dudbridge Hill have been removed, and at Stroud most of the viaduct and the whole of the station and goods area on Upper Canal Wharf have been cleared to make way for Stroud's east-west by-pass, but a short section of Cycleway has been retained between Dudbridge Hill and Rodborough Hill.

Ideas have recently been canvassed in Stroud for the establishment of an Industrial Heritage Museum & Display, either as part

of the Cowle Museum or on a new open-air site incorporated in a Canal Marina at Upper Canal Wharf. If Stroud is fortunate enough to be able to develop this, I hope that the story of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway and the Midland's operations into Stroud Cheapside will be included.

Michael Hoy ©1987.

A personal note.

This short historical sketch is part of a research project which has interested me for many years. Official source material on the line is limited: only a few fragments of the independent company's Minutes survive, and much of the rest of the detail of the line's working lies buried in the Midland's records. I am therefore indebted to many experts on local history and railway technology for information in this article, especially to: Mr A S Apperley, the Rev. W V Awdry, Miss Eileen Halliday, Mrs Betty Mills, Mr Alan Morley, Mr Ken Ofield (last Dudbridge Stationmaster), Mr Lionel Padin and Mr C H Townley, and to Mr Howard Beard who has discovered some remarkable old photographs of the line.

I should be very pleased to hear from anyone who has information or photographs about the line and its history, especially about people who worked or travelled on the line.

MH

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Note to Fig 2

The OS 1" map of the Bristol & Birmingham Railway branch from Stonehouse to Stroud is the old 1" map with amendments. The map has omissions and errors: e.g. part of the Dudbridge-Stroud link is now given (but inserted here for clarity); there is a section of road from Dudbridge NE (but omitted here for clarity); and the link of the two railways SE of Stroud did not in fact exist, though its course is more or less that of the current construction of the relief road.

Gannicox (mentioned in the text as another possible junction) was an important site for Pleistocene fossils in a gravel pit, and is roughly south of the GW line, about 2/3 of the way from Cainscross to Stroud.

CC

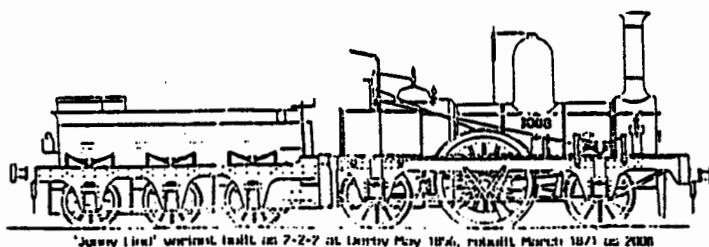
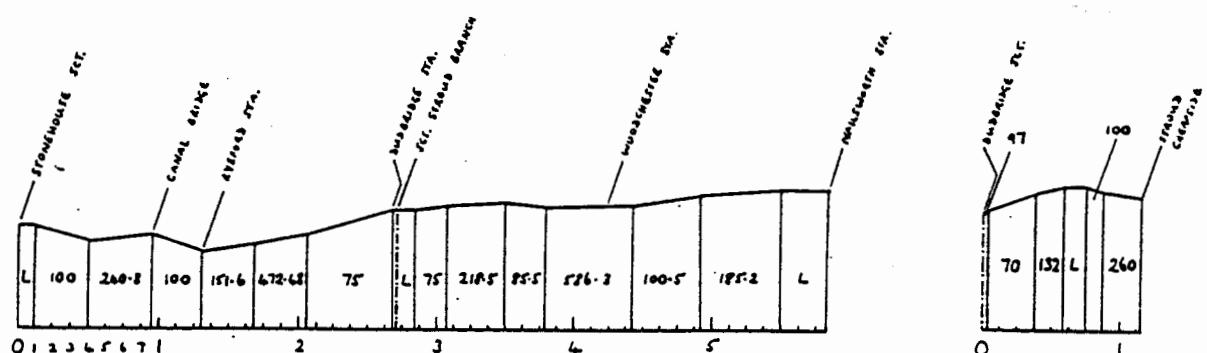


Fig. 3. Gradient Profile.



5 miles, 6 furlongs, 5 chains

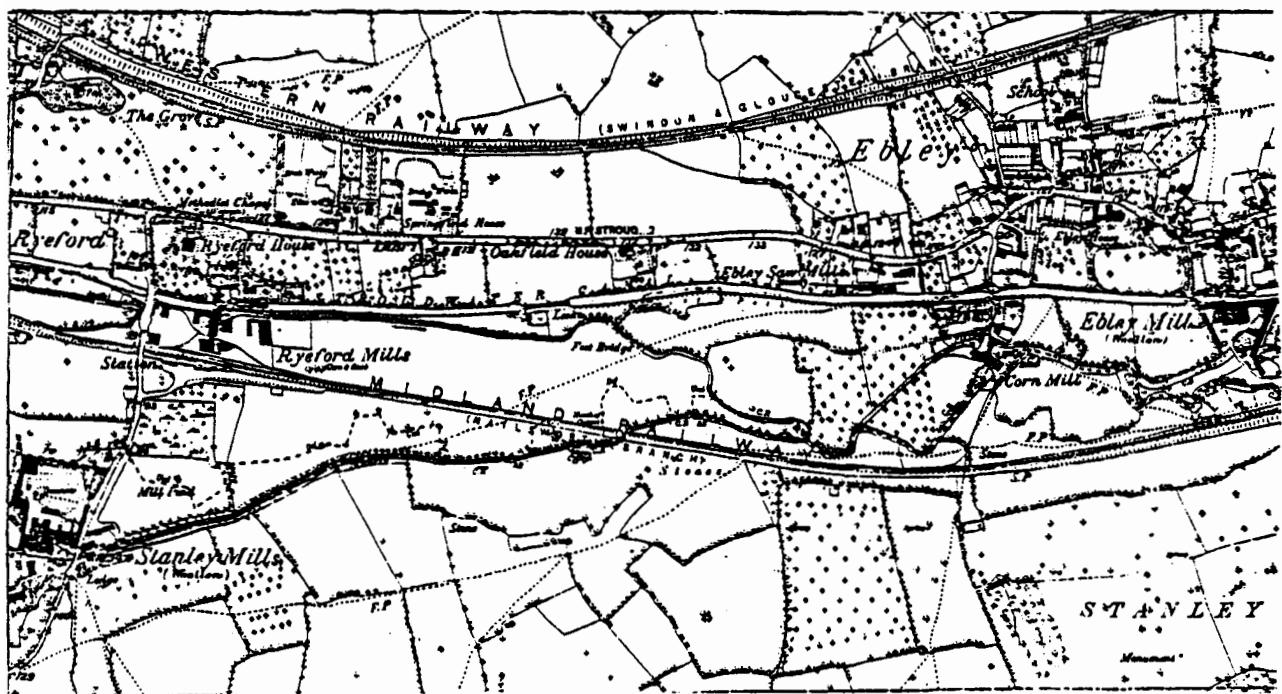
1 m, 1 fur, 1 ch.

The Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway.

Opened for Goods 1 Feb 1867; opened for Passengers 4 Feb 1867. The Stroud Extension opened for Goods 16 Nov 1886, for Passengers 1 July 1886.

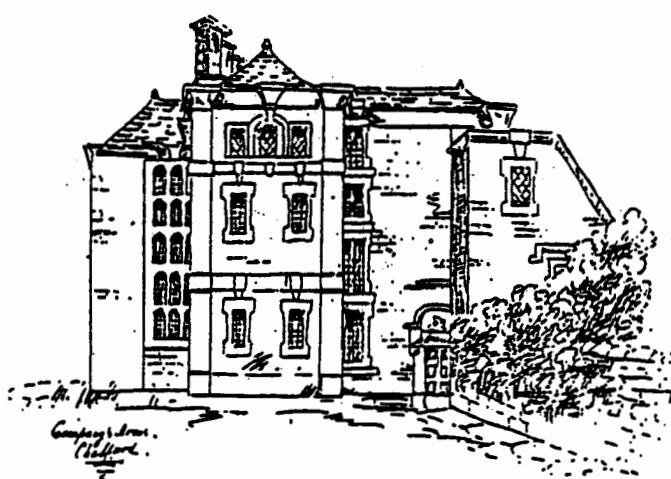
Closed for Passengers 14 June 1947. Services suspended 8 June 1949. Officially closed Goods 1 June 1966.

Fig. 4 Part of the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway, between Ryeford and Ebley, from OS map 6" 1st edition, Sheet XLIX NW.



References

- 1 See Charles Hadfield, The Canals of South & South East England, 1969; and Humphrey Household, The Thames & Severn Canal, 1969.
 - 2 GRO Q/Rum 304.
 - 3 Robert Raikes Reference Library (Glos. City Library) JF/14/91.
 - 4 Gloucester Journal, 27 Feb 1864.
 - 5 Board of Trade Report, 8 Dec 1866, Col. Yolland.
 - 6 Stroud Journal, 9 Feb 1867.
 - 7 GRO Q/Rum 311, and 324 (Amendment).
 - 8 GRO Q/Rum 306, and 333 (Amendment).
 - 9 GRO Q/Rum 316.
 - 10 The Wiltshire & Gloucestershire Railway was one of the proposals on which work actually began: a ceremonial Cutting the First Sod took place at Malmesbury on 1 July 1865 and work commenced on the line's earthworks. See D M Fenton, The Malmesbury Railway, 1977.
 - 11 GRO Q/Rum 349.
 - 12 GRO Q/Rum 443.
 - 13 GRO Q/Rum 382.
 - 14 GRO Q/Rum 429.
 - 15 GRO Q/Rum 428.
 - 16 GRO Q/Rum 439.
 - 17 Board of Trade Report 12 March 1886 Col. Rich.
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My grateful thanks to all who have contributed articles to the Journal during my spell of office.
Please continue to send them in to the new Editress:

Miss Amber Patrick,
4 Gratton Road,
Cheltenham, Glos.

CC

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The former Company's Arms (East India Co!) stands between the Chalford Round House and the Frome. It is now a private residence: this side faces the river.