

NORTH LANCASHIRE'S HISTORICAL COMMUNITY STATIONS

LANCASTER CASTLE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LANCASTER CASTLE STATION



One of the early Midland Railway electric units stands awaiting departure from Lancaster Castle Station



Trainspotters talk to the driver of an Eastern Region Cass B1 as it awaits departure from Lancaster Castle Station in the 1960s. Photograph courtesy of Ken Roberts



One of the later class of British Railways electric units glides up the gradient from Lancaster Green Ayre and approaches Lancaster Castle Station in the early 1960s. Photograph courtesy of Ken Roberts



A Class 31 Diesel departs Lancaster Castle with a Leeds Service in the early 1980s. Photograph courtesy of Noel Machell



One of the first 'Pendolino' units to be covered in Avanti West Coast livery, 390156 stands at the platform at Lancaster Castle Station awaiting departure with a Glasgow service, in December 2019. Photograph courtesy of Brian Haworth



An outside view of Sir William Tite's fine station building at Lancaster Castle. The turret with its internal stone spiral staircase housed the office of the line engineer and locomotive superintendent. Photograph courtesy of Brian Haworth 2020

Lancaster's main railway station was opened on the present site on 21st September 1846, originally built as the southern terminus of the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway. The company's engineer, Joseph Locke, is commemorated by a plaque on platform 3. The architect, Sir William Tite, located the main station buildings on the western side of the running lines. A dressed sandstone Tudor-revival style was used to blend in with the city's Georgian elegance. An extension southwards was constructed in 1852-1855 designed by S. Barton Worthington. These fine buildings survive in use to the present day.

This was the city's second station, as the Lancaster and Preston Junction Railway built an attractive terminus in 1840 on Penny Street adjacent to what is now the Royal Lancaster Infirmary. In 1849, it was agreed that the companies should merge and that passenger services from both lines should use the Castle station, with the Penny Street station site being retained for goods traffic. The city's third station at Green Ayre, ('Little' North Western Railway, later the Midland Railway) followed in 1849 and was linked to Castle station by a line from the eastern side of the station, which is now a footpath and cycle way.

In 1859 the London and North Western Railway took over the operation of Castle station, along with the whole of the West Coast Main Line from London to Carlisle, until 1879, on a leased basis. The LNWR constructed railway links to Morecambe and Glasson Dock.

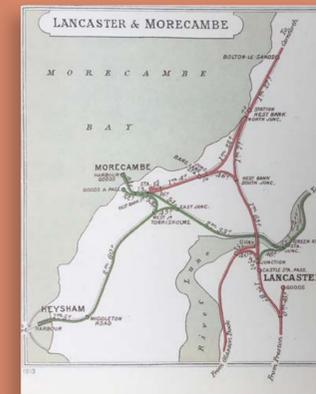
Between 1900 and 1906, as a result of traffic growth, the station and its track layout were developed and improved by local architects Austin and Paley. Additional lines and platforms were added and a new station entrance constructed on the city side of the station with a new booking hall, which is still in use. The new buildings by Austin and Paley were again designed in mock-Tudor style to complement both the original station buildings and the adjacent castle. A wide footbridge spanned the station segregated into two passageways, one for luggage, mail and parcels and one for passengers. In 1908, overhead electrical wiring appeared on the eastern side of the station, (platforms 5 and 6), and on the link line from Lancaster Green Ayre, when the Midland Railway introduced its pioneering electric train service to Morecambe and Heysham. The First World War saw many troop movements from the station as a result of the city's regimental connections.

The London, Midland and Scottish Railway took over running all services from the station in 1923. In 1930, passenger services to Glasson Dock ceased but long distance and holiday services grew during the inter-war years. This continued to be the case for a time following nationalisation in 1948. The 1960s saw the



closure of the link to Green Ayre for passenger services and withdrawal of some local stopping services from the station. Steam trains through the station were replaced by diesel and, in May 1969, the Castle station was renamed as simply Lancaster. The birth of Lancaster University in 1964 was a pointer to a future source of passenger traffic and the closure of the main line platforms at Carnforth in 1970 gave the station an increased connectional role for Furness Line for passengers and mail.

The decision was taken to resignal the West Coast Main Line which was completed in 1973. Lancaster's large and distinctive LNWR manual signal boxes and semaphore signals were replaced by colour light signals controlled from Preston Power Signal Box. Although the track layout was rationalised and platform 6 remained out of use, the station retained 5 platforms and two through fast lines which remain an important feature, carrying express freight, mail and passenger trains. Electrification of the main line followed and Inter-City electric trains ran from 7th May 1974 - the 'Electric Scots'. However, the local freight services had petered out through the 1960s and 70s and the station's parcels, newspaper distribution and mail handling services were withdrawn in the early 1990s, including the nightly visits of travelling post offices.



Privatisation saw the station operated by Virgin Trains from 1997 until 2019, and the introduction of new Pendolino and Super Voyager tilting trains from 2001 brought about enhancements in the speed and frequency of main line trains. Gradual electrification of other routes in the North of England since 2010 has seen TransPennine Express electric trains to and from Manchester and Liverpool introduced, whilst local services continue to be operated by Northern's new and newly refurbished diesel multiple units. A resurgence of passenger traffic this century has seen more trains calling at the station. Since December 2019, Avanti West Coast, a joint First and TrenItalia franchise, has been responsible for running the station and the West Coast Main Line passenger services.

Despite alterations to some and removal of other platform awnings in the 1960s and 1970s, an LNWR employee returning now would essentially recognise today's station which has served the city well. Lancaster remains a busy and friendly station with good facilities, handling over two million passengers per year. There is a taxi rank at the western entrance and bus stops nearby.



The station is fully accessible from each entrance, the booking office is supplemented by several ticket machines and there are numerous cycle racks and a large car park. The station also houses a British Transport Police office. Proposals exist to enhance the appearance of the Grade II-listed station and bring even more of the unused areas back into use.

