

CRAVEN'S HISTORICAL COMMUNITY STATIONS

SKIPTON

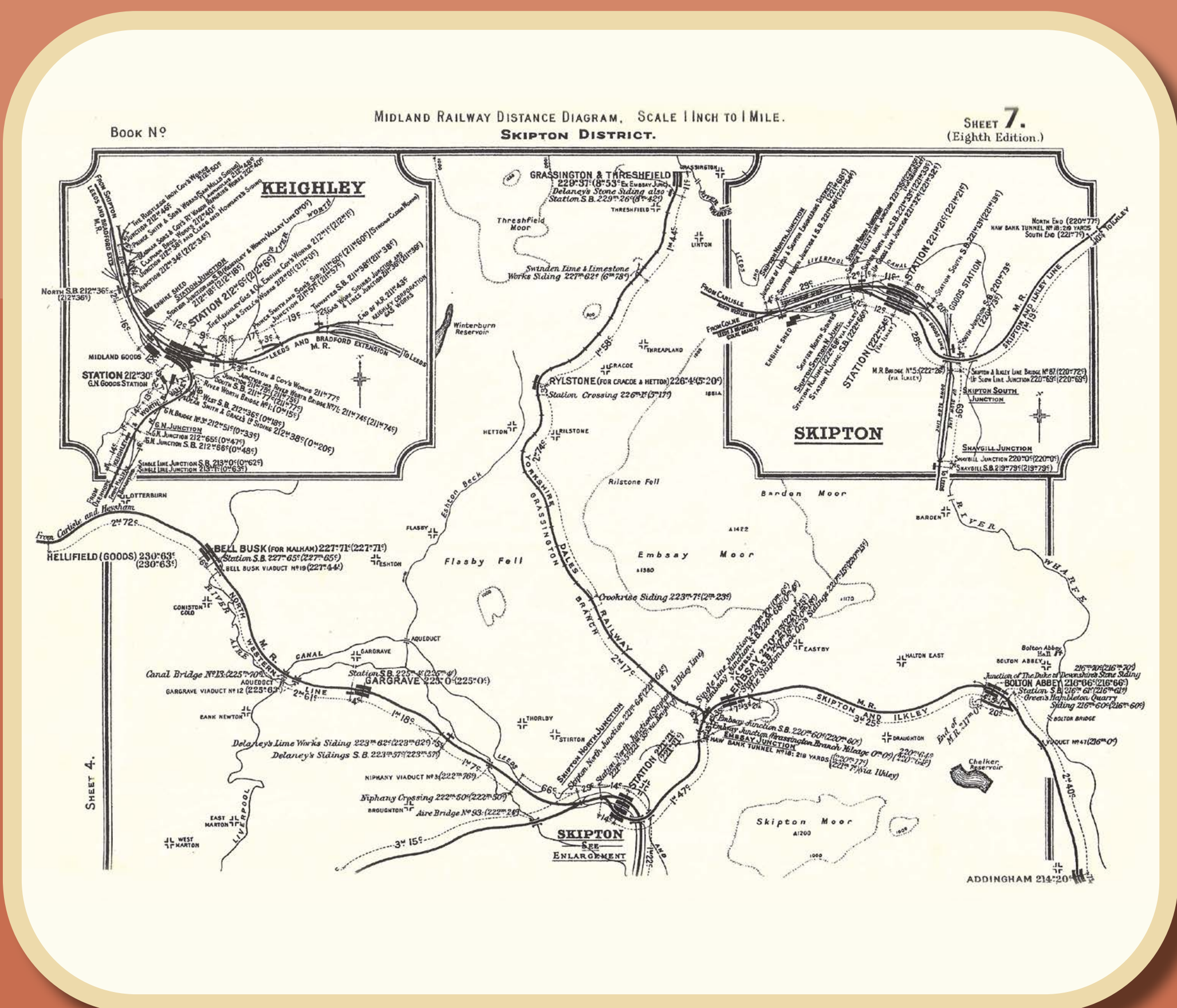
A BRIEF HISTORY OF SKIPTON STATION



A standard 4MT 75019 heads a mineral train through Skipton in the early 1960's.
Photo: John Robinson Collection



An Ivatt 4MT 2-6-0 locomotive approaches Skipton during the early 1960's.
Photo: John Robinson Collection



Midland Railway Distance Map for Skipton and District.
Image: Gerald Townson Collection



Class 150 150205 runs into Skipton on 1st August 2019 at 13:56 heading a Morecambe (12-32) Leeds (14-37) working. Photo: Brian Haworth

The railway arrived at Skipton courtesy of the Leeds and Bradford Railway Company, as part of its extension from Keighley to Skipton which opened on 7th September 1847. Just over a year later the line had been extended through to Colne. The Company had a fine ornate station built by Sugden, Simpson, and Clarke which was completed in time for the line opening at a cost of £2,330. Skipton is a market town with a long and varied history in agriculture, politics, religion and communications. The Leeds to Liverpool canal passes through the town and has a large basin close to the railway station.

On 30th June 1849 the Little North Western Railway arrived at Skipton as part of their Skipton to Ingleton route and which by 1850 had extended to Lancaster and Morecambe. At this point the original Skipton station was closed and a new station built a quarter of a mile north west of the original. The old station continued to be used for various railway purposes and was finally demolished in 1967. Both railway companies were eventually incorporated into the Midland Railway Company.

The new station opened as the Settle-Carlisle route came into use which gave Skipton a place on the Midland Main Line from London St. Pancras to Glasgow. The new station was built by Kirk & Evans and opened on the 1st May 1876, cost £15,000 to build and consisted of four platforms; bay platform 1, through platform 2 and island platforms 3 and 4. The main buildings were located on the up side, (towards London), and were of typical Midland design for the period with wyvern emblems incorporated into the steelwork. In October 1888 platforms 5 & 6 were added to accommodate the Ilkley services and the short Grassington branch. The Midland Hotel was opened facing the main station entrance, known today as Herriots. A station master's house was provided but was demolished to make way for the adjoining fire station.

The 1904 Railway Clearing House Handbook of stations lists Skipton as having facilities to deal with passenger traffic, goods traffic, furniture vans, livestock, prize cattle and horse boxes. The goods yard also sported a 10-ton crane.

Regular passenger services to Grassington ceased during 1930 and services to Ilkley were withdrawn in 1965. Shortly after this platforms 5 & 6 were closed. The line through platform 5 is now used for stone traffic from Swinden Quarry. The line through to Colne closed on 2nd February 1970, however, thanks to the efforts of a local pressure group there is hope that this line could reopen in the future. In 1994 major renewal work took place at Skipton, as part of the Aire Valley electrification project. Both signal boxes were demolished and the old goods yard converted to accommodate a cleaning and washing depot for the new electric fleet. This area is also used for stabling units overnight. The station which is Grade-II listed was renovated in 1998; its fine stonework and platform canopy are well worthy of a second glance.

The station was served by a nearby engine shed which came into use around 1850. In March 1876 a three-road wooden engine shed was erected and the adjacent roadway named Engine Shed Lane. This shed was extended in 1892 and rebuilt in 1952. The shed closed on the 3rd April 1967.

Currently, the staffed station boasts a small refreshment room and a booking office along with staff office accommodation. The subway to the closed platforms still exists and there have been recent proposals to open an entrance on the south side of the station. Skipton is still a very important station and train crew depot, the electrified route to Leeds is a very busy commuter line; the electric stock being very popular with passengers.

The name Skipton means Sheep Town in Old English. It is the main town in the Craven District and has a thriving shopping centre, traditional street market and a Medieval castle. The Leeds-Liverpool Canal, across the road from the station, offers boating and walking opportunities. The Embay Railway which operates heritage steam services, is nearby and well worth a visit.

