

THE LITTLE NORTH WESTERN'S HISTORICAL STATIONS

HALTON STATION

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HALTON STATION

Halton station being on the opposite side of the River Lune to Halton village is partly an accident of geography. When the "Little" North Western Railway constructed its Lune valley line in 1849 it was to serve an iron forge on that bank, freight being more important than people in those early days of railways.

After a fatal ferry accident a toll bridge was built to connect village and station. This was replaced in 1869 and later rebuilt in 1911, using materials recovered from the old Lune Bridge in Lancaster known as the Greyhound Bridge.

Halton station served a busy, self-contained, rural community; today it is much more a commuter/dormitory suburb of the city of Lancaster using road access. The river bridge is now heavily used for journeys to and from the city and M6. It can bear only lightweight traffic, is only one vehicle wide and queueing at either end is a local headache.

The station depended on this toll bridge and a glance at the toll charges indicates that it was serving a rural area. The transport of cattle cost 3d per score, pigs or calves or sheep cost 1d per dozen, a single beast being charged a full penny! A horse-drawn cart was charged 1d but a carriage or car 3d, suggesting that business was favoured above leisure.

The movement of animals and goods earned a significant part of the station's revenue. A siding led into a large goods shed behind and abutting onto the station building itself. The original timber station was destroyed by fire on 3rd April 1907. A spark from the engine of a passing Heysham - St. Pancras boat train set fire to a wagon of oil drums by the goods shed. The fire brigade was unable to cross the narrow bridge and it was left to a special trainload of railway workers from Lancaster to pass up buckets of water from the river. The station was rebuilt in brick and timber.

The buildings closed in 1966 and are still there. They are at present the home of the Lancaster University Rowing Club, very appropriate tenants as the river is adjacent. Halton station also had a weigh bridge and a signal box, of which nothing remains. A car park and cycle way now occupies the trackbed.

In Garnett's railway timetable of 1856 Halton has three weekday trains per day in the Skipton direction at 6.47 a.m., 12.27 p.m. and 6.27 p.m., and in the Morecambe direction at 8.53 a.m., 1.12 p.m. and 8.27 p.m. There were two trains on Sundays, one up and one down a.m. and p.m. Bradshaw records that by 1910 that had increased to eight spread evenly throughout the day, with two still on Sundays and, by 1938, to nine down-trains and eleven up-trains per day including an 11.35 p.m. (Saturdays only!) from Morecambe for late night revellers from the seaside.

Sadly, a careless decision was taken in the wake of Beeching and in 1966 the Lune Valley line was closed and Lancaster rail traffic was re-routed from Wennington via Carnforth.



The original "Little" North Western station at Halton prior to the fire of 1907. Immediately to the rear of the main building was the goods shed. Both building designs were unique to Halton. Courtesy V.R. Anderson collection.



A late 1950s photograph of a westbound 3-coach stopping service to Morecambe Promenade, pulling into Halton, headed by a Fowler 2-6-4 tank locomotive, No. 42359. Courtesy John Robinson collection.



Class 25/2 diesel locomotive, D7587, approaching Halton with a Morecambe Promenade to Leeds service in the early 1960s. The restored list of tolls can be seen adjacent to the level crossing. The toll bridge over the River Lune is out of shot to the right. Courtesy John Robinson collection.



The station building with a bright new coat of paint in March 2014. The track bed now acts as a joint walking and cycling route between Morecambe and Caton. Courtesy Gerald Townson.

