

RAILWAY WORKERS AND THE KIRKBY STEPHEN 1861 CENSUS

Margaret Gowling

At the time of this census the South Durham railway, with its station and yards beyond the southern end of town, was almost complete (it opened for passenger traffic August 1861). The number of construction workers had peaked before this census was taken and, although the number of navvies was dwindling, the number of permanent railway employees was beginning to increase.



Podgill Viaduct, date and source unknown

The population of Kirkby Stephen had grown since 1851 from 1339 to 1809, and now 262 people were directly connected with the railway. Where did these extra people live?

Since 1851 36 new houses had been built and 14 of these householders were railway workers of some kind, but it was the lodging house trade that saw the greatest expansion. Householders around Sower Pow included Mary Shaw, a widow, with her 4 children and 3 lodgers, all railway labourers; John Horsefield, a coal dealer with his family and 5 lodgers, 4 of them excavators; Alice Thwaites with her children and 2 families of lodgers, again the men were railway labourers.

In Hastwell's Yard near the Market Place, Richard Buckley, excavator, lived with his wife, 4 children and 11 lodgers, one of whom was married, and his wife lodged there also. Next door lived Jacob Horsfield, a railway labourer, with his wife, son and 7 lodgers, all railway labourers.

Inn keepers were also offering accommodation. Richard Fawcett and his wife, at the Blue Bell, had 8 lodgers, all railway labourers, and another 5 railway labourers were staying with James Thompson at the Jolly Farmers. So parts of Kirkby Stephen were obviously crowded, and the unoccupied houses of the 1851 census had been re-occupied. It is interesting to note that, with the increase in new work opportunities, numbers in the workhouse had halved since 1851.

RAILWAYS AND NAVVIES

from 19th century newspaper reports

Quotes from ***A New Railway to Scotland*** by David Occomore 2020, Hayloft Publishing Ltd – a fascinating collection of stories of the Settle to Carlisle Line. The newspapers usually reported accidents, fatalities, robberies and severe weather conditions but occasionally there were more positive items of news, such as this note from the *Cumberland and Westmorland Advertiser* 28 March 1871. To celebrate **A ROYAL WEDDING** of Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne:

two casks, containing seventy two gallons of sterling home-brewed were, through Sir George Musgrave's orders, conveyed from his own cellars and placed at the disposal of Mr Jones, the travelling ganger, to distribute amongst the navvies [...] Timely acts of thoughtful kindness like this, and emanating from so high a quarter, cannot be too highly commended, and must tend to create a better feeling amongst a class of men who often look upon the wealthy as enemies of the poor.

The Lancaster Gazette 16 July 1870

MIDLAND RAILWAY EXTENSION

The progress of railway works and bustle and activity are inescapable, and in no case is this more apparent when quiet country neighbourhoods are invaded by gangs of labourers, teams of wagons, and their attendant waggoners, joiners, masons, smiths [...] Wooden huts and stabling have been erected, tommy shops are opening, wagons laden with material are constantly passing to and fro, and the shouts of the teamsters and the stroke of the pick are becoming familiar to the ear.

Editor's question: What is a tommy shop? From Wikipedia: *where wages are paid to workmen who are expected to lay out a part of the money for the good of the shop. Tommy means bread or a penny roll, or the food taken by a workman in his handkerchief; it also means goods in lieu of money.*

Sometimes part of a worker's wages would be paid to him in tokens, which could only be exchanged at the tommy shop.

Cumberland and Westmorland Advertiser
22 December 1874

ROBBERY AT CROSBY GARRETT

One night a short time ago a tommy shop at Crosby Garrett was broken into by breaking a pane of glass in a back window, and a box of raisins, three or four bottles of sweets, and some oranges and apples, stolen therefrom [...] The whole of the property has been recovered, having been found by police concealed in an adjoining loft.



