By road and rail:
A brief history of Tickhill’s transportation

By Philip L Scowcroft
Acknowledgements

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Introduction

In medieval times, Tickhill, with its castle and market, was one of the most important localities in what we now know as South Yorkshire and it played a not insignificant part in the Civil War of the 1640s. By the 19th Century, however, it had declined in importance relative to Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield to be scarcely more than a large village, albeit one with proud historical traditions. During the 20th Century its character changed again, becoming a considerable dormitory town for Doncaster and perhaps also Rotherham. Much of its importance, at whatever period of its history, derives from the fact that it stands at the crossing of significant north-south and east-west roads – like Bawtry in fact though the north-south road there is a different one. Tickhill’s two major roads existed in some form or other in medieval times, though little is known about the traffic each then carried; neither was on one of the better known packhorse routes, though it may be there was some wagon and cart traffic.

Certainly Tickhill was no stranger to wheeled vehicles in the 17th Century, as we read, in a 1649 parliamentary survey, of tolls on ‘wagons, carts and all other carriages’ in Sunderland Street. These tolls were among the manorial perquisites of the Honour of Tickhill. The Parish Register, which for a while included in the baptism section the occupations of many fathers, lists the names of those who worked conveying goods and people in the 1650s: Godfrey Ward was a packman, so called because packmen carried packs of goods, while George Cummins was a coachman. However, whether on foot, on horseback or in a wheeled vehicle, travelling could be hazardous in those days because of the state of the roads.

In spite of the inconveniences of potholes on roads today, by and large roads provide us with a comparatively smooth journey. How different the post-Roman roads were. From Elizabethan times local property owners had to provide materials and labour for up to six days a year repairing roads. This time and effort was given rather grudgingly because it benefited travellers passing through their communities as much as locals. Two phrases describing road repairs before the mid 18th Century give an idea of the roads’ condition and their maintenance: ‘hacking the ruts’ was an attempt to even out the rutted surface, while ‘brushing the road’ referred to placing bundles of brushwood in the worst holes.

Turnpike trusts set up by Acts of Parliament, largely from the mid 18th Century, changed the way main roads were maintained. Travellers on roads controlled by the trusts paid tolls which helped to pay for repairs and resurfacing, including macadamised surfaces, originally a mixture of lime and water before tar was used. Repairing side roads still depended on local parishes’ sporadic efforts. By the early 19th Century, Tickhill’s north-south route had become the Balby-Worksop turnpike, whose trust meetings were normally held at the Red Lion close to the Market Place, a building which still exists albeit as a Chinese restaurant. The Balby-Worksop turnpike tolls were let in 1807-8 for £190 above the expenses of collection and in 1808-9 for £228. The east-west route through Tickhill became part of the Bawtry-Tinsley Turnpike Trust, which also met at the Red Lion.
A survival from this era of Tickhill’s road transport history is the milestone opposite The Millstone, at the junction of Westgate and Castlegate, shown left. The distances indicated – to Bawtry, Tinsley, Rotherham and Sheffield reflect the Bawtry-Tinsley turnpike route. The Balby-Worksop route overlapped the Bawtry-Tinsley route through Castlegate and Westgate. The milestone is made from cast iron plates bolted on to a stone base.

A second survival of the Bawtry-Tinsley Turnpike Trust is the former toll house at the eastern end of Sunderland Street on the Bawtry-Tinsley turnpike route. Shown left, it is much renovated after being in a dilapidated state in the 1970s. The small window facing the Bawtry direction enabled the toll keeper to see approaching traffic, go out to collect the tolls and remove the barrier which would have been either a gate or a chain across the road.

TURNPIKE ROAD
FROM
BAWTRY TO TINSLEY
Notice is hereby given,
That the adjourned Meeting of the Trustees of the said Road is fixed to be held at the house of Mr Gardiner, the Red Lion Inn, in Tickhill, in the County of York, on Friday the 16th day of January instant, at Eleven o’clock in the Forenoon.

By Order
JOHN CARTWRIGHT
Clerk to the Trustees

Transcript of an advertisement for a meeting of the Bawtry-Tinsley Turnpike Trustees, 
_Doncaster, Nottingham and Lincoln Gazette_, January, 1824
Toll Charges on the Balby-Worksop Turnpike Road

1. For every horse or beast drawing any coach, stage coach, barouch, sociable, caravan, chaise, curricle, calash, phaeton, chair, gig, tax cart or other such like carriage, the sum of 6d.

2. For every horse, mule or ass laden or unladen and not drawing, the sum of 1½d.

3. For every horse or beast drawing any wagon, wain, cart or other such like carriage with wheels of less breadth than 4½ inches the sum of 6d.

4. For every horse or beast drawing any wagon, wain, cart or other such like carriage with wheels of the breadth of 4½ inches and less than 6 inches – 5d but if the axeltree bushes and wheels of any such last mentioned wagon are made perfectly cylindrical so that wheels thereof roll on a flat surface – 4d.

5. For every horse or beast etc. with wheels of the breadth of 6 inches or upwards, 4d, but if axeltree bushes etc., 3d.

6. For every drove of oxen or neat cattle, 10d per score and so on in proportion for any greater or lesser quantity.

7. For every drove of calves, swine, sheep or lambs, 5d.

8. For every coach, chariot, chaise or other carriage with 4 wheels and being empty and fixed to any wagon, wain, cart or other carriage, 1/-.

9. For every coach, chariot, chaise or other carriage with 4 wheels and being laden and fixed as aforesaid 2/-.

10. For every chair, cart or other carriage with two wheels only and being empty, and fixed as aforesaid 6d.

11. For every chair, cart or other carriage with two wheels only and being laden and fixed as aforesaid 1/-.

12. For every carriage of whatever kind, not drawn by any horse or other beast, but propelled or moved by steam or machinery or otherwise than by animal power, the sum of 1/- for each wheel.

[12d (12 old pence) = 1/- (one shilling) now 5p]

These charges were allowed in the renewed Act of Parliament of 28 June 1858, for the Balby-Worksop Turnpike Trust, turnpike trusts periodically having to renew their authorisation by special Act. The tolls paid particular attention to the width of wheels because the wider the wheel the slower the vehicle was likely to travel and the less damage it was likely to do to the road’s surface. In addition to the various stipulations above, some exceptions were listed such as no toll should be charged for empty carts...
employed earlier or later the same day in carrying lime for manuring land. The toll charges, which are thought to be representative of England as a whole, give a useful insight into the range of vehicles used to convey people and goods. These particular tolls were collected at the farm just north of the present railway bridge between Tickhill and Wadworth. The toll collecting point to the south of Tickhill was at Malpas Hill. Even though turnpike roads took responsibility for repairs away from local inhabitants, in some places, notably Leeds in the 1750s, opposition to paying tolls became violent and had to be repressed by armed force. This extreme reaction by local people did not occur in Tickhill.

The end of the turnpike trusts came in the 1870s; various local authorities then became responsible for the maintenance of roads. Following the Local Government Act of 1888 the West Riding County Council (WRCC) became responsible for local main roads. The WRCC in turn delegated this work to the local authority (in Tickhill’s case the Local Board until the Urban District Council was formed in 1894) who were directed to keep the roads in good repair. The WRCC was at times critical of the state of the two main roads (the former turnpikes) complaining on one occasion that the Tickhill-Rotherham road was ‘worn and rutted in some parts’. The Local Board, mindful of its financial accountability, in turn enquired who would pay for such work. The WRCC reassured Board members that once road work was completed to its satisfaction the bill could be sent to the WRCC. The Urban District Council minutes focus on obtaining the materials and employing the manpower needed to maintain the roads. In the early years limestone boulders were obtained from the Board’s quarry at the Little Friars Hill Close and other local sources. The WRCC, on the advice of its surveyor, then agreed, somewhat reluctantly initially because of the cost, to the use of granite from further afield, and from the early 1900s also slag from Stavely Ironworks for the maintenance of the main roads. The Local Board was also responsible for the equipment used for road repairs. In 1889 a Board member said that the stone roller was ‘unusable and useless’ and there was a lengthy and inconclusive discussion about its replacement. It was later decided to apply to have a share in Doncaster Rural District Council’s steamroller and its tools. If it was not available, one was hired from another District Council. As agricultural machinery became heavier, especially with the use of traction engines, for example, to help with harvesting crops, the WRCC wrote to the Urban District Council in 1899 requiring the local council’s surveyor to check all local bridges and to provide details of routes where traction engines should be prohibited.

Tarmacking Northgate, a slow, labour-intensive process
Stagecoach services

At the end of the 18th Century mail coach services running between London and Doncaster came via Newark, Ollerton, Worksop and Tickhill then continued through Wadworth and Balby to Doncaster. It cost 10d (4p) to send a letter to London, but only 1d if the letter was a single sheet destined for soldiers or sailors.

Directories give us much information about long-distance coach services in the 19th Century. Baines’ Directory for 1822 lists three coach services passing through Tickhill and calling in each direction at the Red Lion: the Glasgow Mail, daily except Sundays; and two thrice-weekly Doncaster-Nottingham services, the Royal Forester Post Coach, which was apparently established in 1806, and a light post coach. Between them the latter two enterprises afforded a daily (Sundays excepted) service Doncaster-Tickhill-Worksop-Mansfield-Nottingham. In addition to all these, but not listed in Baines’ Directory, the Union light coach had begun in 1821, a thrice weekly Bawtry-Sheffield service via Tickhill, which presumably called at the Red Lion and aimed to connect with the north-south workings.

By 1834 and according to Pigot’s Directory of that year, these services had expanded and developed further, with two Doncaster-Nottingham services listed, the Union, daily except Sundays, and the Royal Forester, still thrice weekly, also the Amity (Doncaster-Stamford, daily except Sundays) and the Pelham from Sheffield to Gainsborough, daily, Sundays excepted, all of course in both directions. (Some sources suggest Doncaster, not Sheffield, was the terminal of the Pelham, at least for a time; Sheffield-Gainsborough coach services had apparently begun in 1824, though the Pelham was new in 1833.) In addition there were daily mail coach services to Sheffield and Louth and to London and Glasgow, making 66 coaches weekly calling at Tickhill’s Red Lion. The Red Lion serviced all long distance coach services though not all carrier services. Pigot says that all services went ‘via Rotherham &c’ but this is unlikely as it would entail an unacceptably roundabout route as compared with the Balby-Worksop turnpike route, more direct and probably with a better road surface provided by this long established turnpike trust. In 1837 ‘new’ Doncaster-Nottingham services were advertised (though these may have been replacement, rather than additional, services) and there were shorter shuttles to Doncaster (on Saturdays, only, but by two different operators) and to Rotherham on Mondays. This pattern is illustrated by the 1831 advertisement from the Doncaster, Nottingham and Lincoln Gazette shown on page 9.

By the 1840s the great days of the stagecoach era were ending, countrywide. Nonetheless Tickhill remained busy. Doncaster-Nottingham coaches survived as long as most, into the 1850s; from east to west, a Gainsborough-Rotherham service, still sporting the long-established Pelham name, now connected with railway trains at Masborough (Rotherham) Station on the North Midland Railway, opened in 1840. In fact a Tickhill (though Bawtry was its usual terminal) to Masborough coach (though called ‘omnibus’ by the end of the century) service operated from 1840 throughout the 19th Century and into the 20th, sometimes on four days a week, sometimes on three. A Mr Ellis was the owner of this facility in January 1855 when the coach had an accident, actually in Tickhill, though fortunately a not too serious one.
Throughout the 19th Century an omnibus continued to operate to Doncaster on Saturdays only, this being in the nature of a ‘market’ bus. In the very last years of that Century and into the 20th, Saxton’s bus was involved with the Tickhill-Doncaster link but Saxton deserves separate treatment in this paper. Tickhill’s coach/omnibus services, long distance and (fairly) short, held up well during the 19th Century and especially its latter half because it had no railway station until 1910 and even that was over a mile distant and on the South Yorkshire Joint Railway, hardly a major passenger route. Tickhill’s main passenger railhead at that period was Masborough, and, after that, Doncaster and Bawtry. The road passenger services to Masborough were therefore in the nature of rail feeders.

The photograph shows the frontage of the Red Lion. Visible on the left is part of the archway giving access to the courtyard and stables. Further to the left, a building was once also part of the Red Lion. The ground floor on each side of the entrance passage had guest bedrooms while attic rooms housed maids and staff who looked after the horses. The courtyard area, still with its cobbled floor, has now been developed to provide modern shops, offices and a restaurant. Sitting at the outside tables, away from the flow of modern traffic, it is difficult to imagine the bustle, noise and smells as all the horses, coaches and passengers, arrived, left or paused on their journeys.

An excursion about to depart in carriages from outside the Red Lion (KK)
Advertisement for a new Tickhill-Rotherham (Mondays) and Tickhill-Doncaster (Saturdays) stagecoach service, Doncaster, Nottingham and Lincoln Gazette, February 1831. Doncaster’s Ram Inn was on the site of the present Danum Hotel. This advertisement exemplifies the vital part innkeepers like Mr Gardiner of Tickhill’s Red Lion played in inaugurating and maintaining most stagecoach services countrywide.
Carrier and Stage-wagon Services

Tickhill’s freight services by road are not dissimilar in many ways to the passenger services, especially in the 19th Century. The difference between carrier and stage-wagon operators is largely one of distance, though the former were rather more informal in their operation. Carrier services were of great value to the economies of the mainly small places they served; not enough is known about them, particularly the details of their operations, and the financial viability of those operations. Much of our knowledge has, as in this Paper, to be dug out of newspapers and directories.

In 1822 twelve different carrier or stage-wagon services ran from Tickhill to Bawtry, Doncaster, Nottingham, Louth, Sheffield, Worksop and York, worked by seven different operators. Mostly they were once a week. All carried passengers when space allowed at much lower fares than those charged by stagecoaches. By 1834 these services had expanded, Doncaster and Nottingham being served daily by Deacon & Co; Doncaster was also served thrice weekly by James Weston; Gainsborough and Sheffield thrice weekly by James Ibbotson; Sheffield was also served, thrice weekly, by George Malkin, who also worked, twice weekly, to Retford. A similar pattern obtained in 1837, with stage-wagon services listed even to London and York, run by W. & J. Pettifor (possibly called Pettiford) twice a week.

By mid-century all the longer distance stage-wagon services had disappeared but shorter-haul carriers continued to prosper – as they did elsewhere in the country – with workings to Bawtry railway station (Tickhill’s freight railhead for many decades) operated by Isaac Lockwood in the 1860s and by R. Whinfrey from the 1870s, to Doncaster, two or three times a week, to Rotherham, twice weekly, Worksop, once a week, and sometimes Sheffield.

Apart from the carriers offering regular services, other local businesses helped to bring goods into Tickhill. For example, Fanny Cutler was employed to bring coal to Tickhill from Denaby Main Colliery for use in St Mary’s Church boiler. For the year Easter 1900 - Easter 1901 she was paid £1 for carting coal which had cost £11/18/6. Fanny is shown in the photograph below with her wagon full of costumed youngsters who took part in a procession, likely to have been part of the celebrations for the Coronation of Edward VII on 9 August 1902.
This old carrier cart, shown above (KK), belonged to Vernon and Fred Green and at one time was one of the ways of getting goods to Doncaster. It sometimes took three hours to travel the eight miles between Tickhill and Doncaster because the driver drove round Tickhill collecting any messages. Up to ten passengers could be carried.

Among the businesses which had their own transport, shown above (KK), was the firm of Jarvis ‘The modern stores’. One Jarvis shop near the Buttercross was a grocers, while their shop on Sunderland Street sold clothing and some household goods.
Saxton Family

The tale is told that Tickhill cropped up in a conversation in a railway compartment of an East Coast Main Line train maybe a century ago. One passenger, momentarily aroused from slumber, murmured, ‘Tickhill, Saxton’s bus’, before he nodded off again. This sounds a little like a story invented by Tickhill people, but it reflects the Saxton family’s considerable contribution to transport in Tickhill.

The Saxton family were high in profile in Tickhill at one time and owned much of the land locally which was not owned by the Earl of Scarbrough. Saxtons still live in Tickhill, though they have no connection with local transport as the family did, for perhaps three quarters of a century from the 1870s to the 1950s. During the last quarter of the 19th Century at least three were active in Tickhill transport: Henry, described in Directories as potato merchant and omnibus proprietor; Robert, carrier and cab proprietor; and Joseph, said to be a carrier and cab proprietor but actually the one who ran ‘Saxton’s bus’. All had different addresses in Tickhill. Around 1900 and after some of the Saxtons had provided eight carriages and pairs for the use of the Earl of Scarbrough’s seat, Sandbeck Hall. The family firm also had specialist conveyances including a coach used at weddings and a hearse.

Joan Saxton, a Tickhill resident, writes: ‘Joseph Saxton (1843-1925), my great Granddad, was a carrier of goods to Doncaster at least at the time of his wedding in May 1877. He went to Doncaster Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday arriving at 11 a.m. and left at 4p.m. from outside the Black Bull Inn, Market Place. He charged 2d per journey to Tickhill from the railway station. He took parcels for 1d each parcel. His daughter-in-law Florence drove the coach from about 1910.’

Saxton’s bus operated the direct Tickhill-Doncaster route, via Wadworth, from well before 1914 and was a double decker seating eighteen passengers. The fare was 9d(4p) outside on the top deck and 1/- (5p) ‘inside’. There is a story that second class (‘outside’) passengers on the way from Doncaster to Tickhill had to get out at the bottom of Wadworth Hill (much steeper before the road was altered after the construction of the nearby motorway) and walk up if the bus was full. (At least they did not have to push!) The Tickhill terminus was presumably the Buttercross, still the principal bus stop in the town, albeit a wayside one; it seems probable that the Doncaster terminus was the Market Place, the Doncaster terminal for carrier services from Tickhill and many other places.
We hear of a horse-bus which linked Tickhill with its railway station on the South Yorkshire Joint Railway, opened for passenger traffic in 1910. That station was almost equidistant between Tickhill and Wadworth and, at nearly two miles, equally inconvenient for both. That service suffered a fatal accident on 4 May 1914; it is possible this was a Saxton vehicle, though the *Doncaster Chronicle* report is not specific as to its ownership.

![Saxton’s horse bus outside Tickhill and Wadworth station](image)

Saxton’s horse bus was superseded by motor-buses in the 1920s and certainly by 1927, although in a Directory of that year, Alfred Saxton, son of Joseph, was listed as a carrier, one of three then surviving in Tickhill, all of whom were probably horsedrawn at that time. Alfred (1880-1965) married Florence Shaw in 1906. Among his many memories he recalled that the biggest trouble on journeys was getting ladies’ bustles through the carriage doors. He retired in 1956 and until then was in business, if only just, as a horsedrawn carrier, with one surviving horse, Paddy, then 27 years old, hauling occasional loads of furniture and other articles: a remarkable, if marginal, survival of horsedrawn transport. Alfred, pictured left, told the *Doncaster Chronicle* that he had never been tempted to diversify into motors.

![Alfred Saxton](image)

Alfred’s son Joe continued the family tradition of being a carrier, but in his case it was as a postman from 1939-72. For most of that time he was the only full time postman in Tickhill and he cycled 16 miles each morning delivering the mail, then did a second delivery in the afternoon when he cycled another 12 miles. In the best carrier tradition he also took daily newspapers to a few outlying farms and brought home vegetables from the farms. Eventually Joe Saxton did his deliveries in a van. Both Alfred and Joe were known for their sense of humour.
Motor Bus Services

There may have been the odd motor bus to be seen in Tickhill’s streets before the Great War, as there were in Rossington and Maltby before that time. The first known Tickhill bus service is that by Mr Preece who in October 1920 was operating a Tickhill-Doncaster motor bus and charged 8d (between 3p and 4p) for the fare each way. How long Preece remained in business as such is not clear - he also owned the garage in Castlegate - though late in 1921 a Doncaster firm, Messer & Blythe, was running buses to various places around Doncaster including Tickhill and Harworth; it diversified into car and lorry dealing, removal contracting and operating excursions. Its base at this period was the Aerodrome Garage, Doncaster, but soon it ran into financial difficulties, unsurprisingly perhaps with so many irons in the fire, and its bus routes were taken over by W. T. Underwood of Clowne, Derbyshire, early in 1922. It was Underwood who by 1927 was operating the Tickhill-Rotherham service which, as we have seen, was long a feature of the 19th Century horse-bus era, this service was extended to Sheffield on two days a week.

Underwood was regarded by Doncaster Corporation, which acquired powers to operate motor buses in 1922 and which wished to operate some of his routes themselves (though more particularly around Askern and Stainforth, on the far side of Doncaster), as little better than a ‘pirate’ bus operator. But, as happened in many places, pirates of the 1920s were transformed into elder statesmen of the bus industry by the 1930s. Underwood may be viewed as a notable example of this and in the late 1920s he re-christened himself East Midland, long reckoned a highly respected and important operator. The Corporation was in the end happy to leave the Bawtry/ Harworth/Tickhill area to Underwood/East Midland. The latter’s route from Tickhill to Rotherham/Sheffield became less important relative to its Worksop-Doncaster route (via Wadworth) which is to this day the principal bus route through Tickhill on a more or less half hour schedule during the day in each direction, though buses also run, if relatively infrequently, to Bawtry and to Doncaster via Rossington. East Midland no longer exists having become part of the National Bus Company in the 1970s and more recently been swallowed up by the Stagecoach empire. Bus services (and other factors) have tended to tie Tickhill more to Doncaster then to Rotherham, as was at one time the case.

Mr Preece’s bus outside his garage in Castlegate, Tickhill (KK)
He sold petrol at the garage from 1923. Previously the chemist sold petrol in two-gallon tins.
Railway Services

Tickhill and the railway is a story largely a matter of what might have been. The earliest railway scheme affecting the town dates from the 1840s when the Manchester, Midland and Great Grimsby Junction Railway was floated by the North Midland Railway (Midland Railway from 1844 and entrenched, as we have seen, at Rotherham), a scheme which failed because a way round Tickhill Castle and agricultural land to the north of the town could not be found. In the railways’ early days landowners did not like the new form of transport and Tickhill was no exception.

In 1881 the Rotherham and Bawtry Railway was proposed, to pass just south of Tickhill but this, too, failed, apparently because the Earl of Scarbrough objected to it. The scheme foundered in 1886. Another scheme linking Rotherham, Blyth and Sutton via Tickhill also failed as did a Rotherham-Tickhill Light Railway scheme in 1894.

In 1899 a Tickhill Light Railway was proposed, using the Light Railways Act 1896, under which more lightly trafficked lines need not have to have an expensive, time-consuming Act of their own but could proceed under a less complicated and theoretically quicker Light Railway Order. This one was planned to run from the Dearne Valley Railway (Wakefield-Edlington), linking up with other railways just east of Edlington at a point near St Catherine’s Junction and passing through Tickhill, Bawtry and Misson to Haxey on the Doncaster-Lincoln line. The top end of this was pruned and the proposal became one for a line between Misson and Tickhill with a terminal station in ‘Tickhill’s main street’ (presumably Sunderland Street). A Light Railway Order was sanctioned in 1901, but the line ran out of money and, be it said, interest. So did two other schemes, one of 1900 also proposing a line from Haxey to Misson, Bawtry and Tickhill and from thence to Dinnington, and another of 1900-1, styled the Rotherham, Tinsley and Tickhill Light Railway, which was withdrawn but revived in 1902 as the Sheffield, Rotherham & Bawtry before being finally thrown out.

The scheme which did succeed, the South Yorkshire Joint Railway (SYJR), was one of a series of lines in South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire authorised around 1900, which sought to tap the products of the concealed coalfield as its workings moved steadily eastwards. The line was ‘joint’ between five major railways, which in other respects did not always see eye to eye, but here made a virtue of necessity: Great Northern, Great Central, North Eastern, Midland and Lancashire & Yorkshire – not, surprisingly, the Hull & Barnsley Railway, which was also interested in tapping South Yorkshire’s coal and was involved in several other local lines to that end.

The SYJR’s line ran from Kirk Sandall Junction on the Doncaster-Hull line, past the sites of the eventual Markham Main and Firbeck Colliery to Maltby, Dinnington and finally Shireoaks (or strictly, Brancliffe Junction on the Sheffield-Worksop Great Central line). Work began in 1905 and the line was officially opened in January 1909, though (unofficially) some trains ran before this. In the period 1912-14 the branch to Harworth Colliery was suggested to be extended to Tickhill town centre, but in the event the extension was eventually made to Firbeck Colliery instead.

The SYJR proved to be a highly effective instrument for opening up collieries among its almost 20 mile route – Dinnington, Maltby, Firbeck and Markham Main – though
the latter two did not begin producing coal until the 1920s. In the 1920s this railway line also helped local farms to transport their produce. Frank W. Newborn recalls sugar beet and grain grown at Eastfield Farm, where his father was the farmer and whose fields were close to the station, being taken by train from Tickhill and Wadworth station in the mid to late 1920s. The railway provided, at a charge, very strong sacks for the grain. Some cattle were also sent by train in special wagons.

Navvies working on the Tickhill section of the SYJR

View of Tickhill Station as it neared completion

The site of a railway station at Tickhill had exercised the Urban District Council for some years as successive schemes were proposed from the 1890s. The desirability of having at least sidings near Tickhill was made clear by Councillors when the Light Railway Commissioners met at Doncaster in July 1907.
Passenger traffic was a different matter altogether compared to the freight traffic on the SYJR which, in its heyday, and even up to and after mid-century was very busy. Before the railway Grouping of 1923 all five of its joint owners operated coal trains. Passenger services on the SYJR did not appear until 20 June 1910 and at first they were excursions, including Sunday School trips to the seaside. The photograph below shows a train standing in Tickhill station, but it is dated 1908 and assuming the date can be relied upon, the train is presumably a test train.

On 1 December 1910 a regular service was instituted, four trains a day in each direction between Doncaster and Shireoaks, operated jointly by the Great Northern (which soon dropped out of what it viewed as a chore) and the Great Central Railways. In 1911 the service was reduced to three daily trains in each direction; briefly, passenger trains along the line were supplemented by workings primarily for miners at Maltby, three times daily from Doncaster, four times daily from Maltby. That was in 1913 but these workings disappeared after the outbreak of war in 1914. Passenger trains were suspended altogether on account of national coal strikes in 1912, 1914 and of course in 1926 and, apart from three trains on Saturdays in each direction, as a wartime economy measure from 1917; the service was not subsequently restored until 1920, to two trains a day each way between Doncaster and Worksop, with three on Saturdays.
Passenger services on the SYJR were always a marginal operation and they became
time inconvenient for Doncaster commuters and for
children going to school as was Tickhill station (renamed Tickhill and Wadworth in
1911 as it was equidistant between both places). At first Doncaster Race Week
brought a modest surge in passengers, at least from Tickhill, but normally passengers
in each direction rarely exceeded 30, even on Saturdays. Yet the station, initially at
any rate, had a staff of seven.

Tickhill and Wadworth station staff with Charles English, Station Master, in the centre

The inevitable came on 2 December 1929 when regular passenger trains were
discontinued, though excursions continued throughout the 1930s and were well
patronised. Even ‘regular’ Saturday services were revived for a time and there were a
few post-1945 excursions along the line. The excursion traffic perhaps ensured that
Tickhill and Wadworth’s station buildings remained in reasonably good order for
longer than might otherwise have been the case.

The Station Master’s house is the last-surviving building of Tickhill and Wadworth station.
Into the present

We read in history books about the decline of places which, once important, were bypassed by the railway or were otherwise not connected to it. We may reckon Tickhill to be of their number. Perhaps the town’s most prestigious transport era may be seen as the 1830s when those 66 stagecoaches a week stopped at the Red Lion. When the coaches went, Tickhill, railwayless for more than half a century and virtually so for twenty more years, lapsed into being a semi-agricultural large village. Only when the motor revolution gathered pace did Tickhill’s fortunes revive though this revolution is more a matter of private than public transportation. Tickhill residents who once could catch long distance trains at Rotherham or Bawtry now normally go by road to Doncaster to catch inter-city services. Those travelling by bus to Doncaster now have a modern interchange enabling easy access from the bus station to the railway station. The SYJR is, rather surprisingly, still open for coal transit, though much less so than at one time; how much longer it will remain with the steep decline of the coal industry is anyone’s guess.

Echoing the railway age’s decision not to have a branch line into Tickhill, the coming of motorways also did not have a direct link to Tickhill. The A1(M), whose construction along the Tickhill stretch began in the summer of 1959, although passing close to the centre of Tickhill, has no access roads locally. This has saved Tickhill’s roads from heavy traffic destined for the motorway, but has involved local people travelling to Warmsworth or Blyth to join the motorway network. A fascinating scheme, which has not materialised, is the possibility of extending Sheffield’s tram service through Rotherham and Tickhill to reach the new Robin Hood Airport at Finningley.
Local residents, Dennis Stables and Janet Sully, when at College in 1942 and 1957 respectively, undertook assignments part of which, in both cases, involved traffic surveys in the centre of Tickhill. The first survey shows the comparative reliance on bicycles, some used to deliver goods such as meat and milk to householders. The bicycle, left, now used to advertise a local furniture restorer’s business is of the style used by butcher delivery boys both before and after the Second World War.

The second survey shows how much the use of lorries and vans increased after the war as well as private cars. The great majority of lorries came from bases in Yorkshire. The lorries now come not only from the local region, but even from abroad bringing goods, for example, flowers from the Netherlands to the Sunderland Street florist and a range of stock, such as that imported in containers via Felixstowe from China, for sale in the Garden Centre. Even without motorway access, the east-west road route, in particular, is used frequently by commercial vehicles conveying goods.

It could be said that the tradition of having local carriers has survived. Tickhill residents are fortunate that their purchases of, for example, fruit and vegetables, groceries and meat from several local shops can be delivered, enabling local businesses to compete with large supermarkets beyond Tickhill which offer, at a charge, to deliver shopping. Some of the larger farms also provide carrier services. One example is Eastfield Farm whose lorry collects wheat, barley and oil seed rape from Eastfield and some other local farms and then transports the produce to mills and the docks. Even with the 20th Century’s additional routes and means of transport and with the expansion in trade far beyond the immediate region, the centuries old routes through Tickhill are still important to the local economy and the convenience of individual travellers.

The van used by Taylors, The Grocers, about to set off on its deliveries

Eastfield Farm’s lorry used for the transport of grain. The wording on the cab says Brittain (Tickhill) Haulage

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Further reading

*Balby-Worksop Turnpike Trust Act 1858* (Doncaster Archives Ref. AB9/TC2/2/11)


*Doncaster Chronicle*

*Doncaster, Nottingham and Lincoln Gazette*

Elliott, B. J., *South Yorkshire Joint Railway and the Coalfield*, Oakwood Press, 2002

Ellis, N., *South Yorkshire Railway Stations*, Reflections of a Bygone Age, 1994


Lindsay, M. A., ‘The growth of transport and early evidence of commuting’ in *Collections for the history of Tickhill 4*, edited by Beastall, T.W., The University of Sheffield and the Workers’ Educational Association, 1980


Tickhill Local Board and Urban District Council Minutes (Doncaster Archives Ref. UD/TICK/1-2)

Wylam, A. M. B., ‘Transport from the late 18th Century to the early 20th Century with special reference to Tickhill and the surrounding district in mid Victorian times’, in *Collections for the history of Tickhill 2*, edited by Beastall, T.W., The Department of Extramural Studies, University of Sheffield, 1973

Websites

http://www.tickhillhistorysociety.org.uk

In the Living Memories section of our Society’s website there is an interview with Mrs Betty Franks, daughter of Charles English, Tickhill and Wadworth Station Master. Among her memories are details of life at the railway station. The Gallery section of the website has many photographs related to the themes in this Paper, with additional commentary in the Phototopics part of the Local History section.

http://www.turnpikes.org.uk

Although drawing its examples from the south of England, this website has some useful commentary and illustrations about turnpikes and milestones.

http://www.nrm.org.uk

The National Railway Museum’s website provides an introduction to its collections and extensive archive and library collection, some of which relates to the South Yorkshire Joint Railway.