

## The History of the Coleorton Railway.

A PAPER READ AT THE COLEORTON RAILWAY OFFICE  
BY CLEMENT E. STRETTON, C. E.

Immediately after the Leicester and Swannington Railway Company had in May, 1830, obtained the Royal assent to its Act, Sir George Beaumont and other gentlemen who were owners of, or interested in, the Coleorton coalfields formed a deputation, and waited upon the directors of that line, at the Bell Hotel, Leicester, to impress upon them the great importance of continuing their railway from the foot of the intended Swannington incline, for three and a half miles, passing through the Coleorton district to the Ashby "Outram-way" at Newbold or Worthington Rough.

Having considered the subject the railway directors replied that their sixteen miles of main line must be made and in use before they entertained any proposals for extensions. George Stephenson, who was present, stated that he had been over the ground at the desire of Sir George Beaumont; he considered it a useful line, and advised the deputation to form a company of its own to make the railway. Some of the directors stated that they were willing to become directors of the proposed company.

This offer was afterwards declined, and as the proposed line was to pass for nearly all its length through the property of Sir George Beaumont, he determined to commence a railway of his own from the Ashby Outram-way to the Pegg's Green Colliery, and he also commenced to lay down a plateway.

All went well with the scheme for a time, until early in the year 1832 Sir George required to make a bridge over one road and to cross several others on the level.

Differences of opinion were found to exist, and instead of negotiations clearing these away, they caused the road authorities to decline to allow any crossing unless sanctioned by Parliament, the result being that Sir George had to fall back upon George Stephenson's original suggestion and form a Coleorton Railway Company, assisted by several of the Leicester and Swannington directors, their solicitors, and Robert Stephenson, their engineer, who prepared the plans for Parliament.

The Coleorton Company's Act was passed on the 10th June, 1833, the company being composed of 23 persons, namely: Sir George Beaumont, Sir George Crewe, S. Alston, W. Burley, H. Chamberlain, W. Forster, H. M. Hawksworth, Isaac Hodgson, E. B. Knight, J. M. Mathew, S. Miles, R. Miles, J. Oldacres, A. Packe, T. Pares, J. Rawson, R. Rawson, T. Rodgers, W. Sherwin, J. Sherwin, R. Smith, B. Walker, and H. Webster.

The Act gave powers to elect a Board of seven Directors, and to raise a capital of £25,000 in 500 shares of £50 each, and to raise a sum of £6,000 on mortgage if necessary.

Sir George Beaumont, as already mentioned, had previously commenced to construct some of the works, the Act therefore provided "That if any person or persons shall have advanced any sums of money for the purposes of this Act, before the sum and sums of money hereby authorized to be raised shall have been so raised, every such person shall be repaid with interest after the rate of five pounds per centum per annum."

Following the passing of the Act a meeting was called in accordance with the notice annexed:—

### COLEORTON RAILWAY COMPANY.

In pursuance of an Act passed in the present Session of Parliament, intituled "An Act for making and maintaining a Railway from the Termination of the Leicester and Swannington Railway, in the Township of Swannington, in the county of Leicester, to the Ashby-de-la-Zouch Railway, in the Township of Worthington, in the said county, and a Branch Railway therefrom."

Notice is hereby given that the Company of Proprietors incorporated by and under the said Act, will meet together at the White Hart Hotel, in Leicester, on Tuesday, the sixteenth day of July, 1833, at the hour of Twelve o'clock at noon, and will then and there proceed to the execution of the said Act.

DEWES & FISHER,  
Solicitors.

The Directors at the above meeting resolved to call up a sum of £20 per share, and the following notice was issued:—

### COLEORTON RAILWAY.

Notice is Hereby Given that at a meeting of the Directors for managing the affairs of the Coleorton Railway Company, held at the White Hart Hotel, in Leicester, on Tuesday, the 16th July, 1833, it was ordered "That the several subscribers to and proprietors of this undertaking shall pay to the treasurer, Sir William Heygate, Bart., at the Bank of Messrs. Pares and Co., in Leicester, twenty pounds per centum upon the amount of their shares, on or before the first day of August next."

DEWES & FISHER.

Clerks to the Company of Proprietors.

Another meeting of the Company was held at the White Hart Hotel on the 12th August, when the Directors issued the annexed notices:—

## COLEORTON RAILWAY.

The Directors will be ready to receive Tenders on Wednesday, the 4th of September next, at the White Hart Hotel, in Leicester, at twelve o'clock, from any persons who may be desirous of contracting with them for the execution of the whole of the works upon the Coleorton Railway. The Directors will engage to supply bricks, iron-work, and timber, at certain prices; all other materials to be found by the contractors.

Sections and specifications are prepared, and may be seen at the office of Mr. Thomas Miles, in Leicester, of whom also any further information may be obtained.

DEWES and FISHER,

Clerks to the Company of Proprietors.  
Ashby-de-la-Zouch, August 12th, 1833.

## COLEORTON RAILWAY.

The Directors will be ready to receive Tenders from any persons willing to supply them with Patent Malleable Iron Rails of 35lbs. to the lineal yard; also for suitable Cast Iron Pedestals. To be delivered at Shardlow.

Specifications may be seen at the office of Mr. Thomas Miles, in Leicester, where, or at our office, in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, sealed tenders must be sent on or before the 2nd of September next.

DEWES and FISHER.

Clerks to the Company of Proprietors.  
Ashby-de-la-Zouch, August 12th, 1833.

At the conclusion of the meeting on Monday, 12th August, the directors and their friends travelled over the Leicester and Swannington Railway to their own line, and at the foot of the Swannington incline they placed some stones in position to mark the commencement of their property, and having turned the first sod they walked on about half a mile, where there was a tent and refreshments, and the usual speeches on such occasions took place, after which the first stone was laid of the company's station, which included the weighing machine office, manager's office, directors' room, and private house for the manager. This building, although no longer used for railway purposes, is now occupied as a private house.

Mr. Robert Stephenson designed a fine stone bridge to cross the previously mentioned road, and the whole of the works, including two tunnels, were carried out under the direction of Mr. Samuel Smith Harris, the company's resident engineer, who was also a surveyor of Leicester, and a joint owner of the Whitwick Colliery.

The original idea, adopted by Sir George Beaumont, of laying the line with Outram-plates was of course abandoned, and fifteen feet wrought iron rails were used in order to convey traffic through to the Leicester and Swannington Railway, and this brought about a break of system at Worthington Rough, where the Coleorton edge-rails could not be joined up to the Ashby Company's Outram-plates.

To enable Messrs. Bostock and Co. to send their waggons of lime through from Cloud Hill to Leicester, the Ashby Canal Company in 1833 decided to re-lay that portion of its line from the Coleorton Junction, near Newbold, with a "double rail," having a high and a low side capable of carrying either the flat or flanged wheels.

In the year 1833 the firm of R. Stephenson and Co. built an engine named "Beaumont," and it was placed upon the Coleorton Railway, and soon afterwards Sir George Beaumont caused one of his four-in-hand coaches to be taken off its wheels and fixed upon flanged wheels and a railway frame. In this vehicle he travelled not only over the Coleorton Railway but also through to Leicester whenever he desired to have his carriage attached to the Swannington Company's trains.

The Coleorton Company's railway was an important link, and placed the Leicester and Swannington, Coleorton, and Ashby lines, also the Ashby Canal, in direct communication; it also had a branch to the Pegg's Green Colliery, and a steep incline up to the California Colliery. Two portions of the line at the extreme ends of the railway were brought into use in December, 1833.

For a period of thirty years this company conveyed a large coal and lime traffic to Swannington *en route* to Leicester, but although the Act gave the company power to carry passengers at the rate of threepence per mile, the directors did not consider that it would pay to carry passengers regularly, but on a few occasions parties of excursionists from Leicester were specially conveyed in Leicester and Swannington railway carriages over this line, and also forward to Breedon Hill over the Ashby Company's line.

In the year 1845 and again in 1864 the question of selling the Coleorton Railway to the Midland Railway Co. was under contemplation, in which case a very direct route would have been formed between Coalville and Derby.

Unfortunately for the Coleorton Company it failed to come to terms, with the result that the Midland Company improved its own Ashby Tramroad and converted it into the Ashby and Worthington Railway, which seriously injured the traffic over the Coleorton Railway.

First one colliery, and then another, became worked out and disused, until in 1880 there was not a single waggon of mineral passed over the line.

In 1886 part of the tunnel near Swannington fell in, and in due time the Clause 150 of the original Act of 1833 began to come into force, which enacts "That if the said railway, or any part thereof, shall at anytime hereafter be abandoned and given up by the said Company" . . . "then and in such cases the lands . . . shall vest in the owner or owners of the land adjoining that which shall be so abandoned or given up." About the year 1890 the whole of the rails and chairs on this railway were taken up and sold for old iron, and the course of this once prosperous line remains a useless waste, and so it must for ever remain unless the now disused coal pits on the route should again be opened, or a deeper seam of coal be discovered and worked.