

## A Main Line Bypassed Selby to York

*Railway of East Yorkshire Vol II  
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The southbound 'Flying Scotsman', the 10a.m. Edinburgh Waverley to Kings Cross takes the Selby line at Chaloners Whin Junction on 18 May 1959 behind Class A4 4-6-2 No. 60032 'Gannet'. (G.W. Morrison)

There is one stretch of abandoned railway whose closure produced no opposition from travellers. This was not because the route was ill used. On the contrary it was part of the East Coast Main Line.

Closure in October 1983 of the route between Barby Junction, Selby and Chaloners Whin, two miles south of York did not even merit the ritual of consideration by the Transport Users Consultative Committee. Abandonment had been provided for in the Act which authorised the 14½ mile replacement route.

Development of the Selby coalfield posed a threat to the Main Line. Even if the then National Coal Board had left a mile wide belt of coal under the Selby to York line, there might still have been problems with subsidence. Instead the Coal Board decided to free the coal reserves by contributing to the cost of a new main line a few miles to the west of the affected area. BR welcomed the opportunity of a purpose built 12½ mph new line so sealing the fate of the old route north of Selby.

The line from Selby to York included swing bridges over the Ouse at both Selby and Naburn. Historically it did not date back far enough to have been part of the original East Coast Main Line. It would have done so had the Great Northern Railway reached York as authorised by its Act of 1846.

Promoted originally under the title of the London & York Railway, the Great Northern posed a challenge to the monopoly of the existing railways which were dominated by the 'Empire' of George Hudson. The established route from London to York was from Euston to Rugby then over Hudson metals via Derby and Normanton.

Hudson failed to stop the Great Northern but the latter had been forced to spend a fortune getting its Bill through Parliament. It was time to compromise. Instead of continuing its own line through Selby to York, the Great Northern contented itself by ending 'in a ploughed field four miles north of Doncaster' - a description of Askern Junction attributed to the

GN Chairman, Edmund Denison.

From here Great Northern traffic passed over a branch of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway to Knottingley then over a short section of the York & North Midland, promoted by Hudson for this very purpose, before reaching the Y & NM main line at Burton Salmon.

By the end of 1852, it was possible to travel from Kings Cross to York in a creditable 4 hours 50 minutes following the present East Coast Main Line to Doncaster then the route just described via Knottingley and Burton Salmon.

In March 1864, the North Eastern Railway obtained powers to build a direct line south from York to Doncaster more or less following the route which the GN had decided not to build in 1850.

Opened on 2 January 1871, the new route was in two parts: from Chaloners Whin Junction, two miles south of York, to Barby Junction, near Selby and from just south of Selby station to Shaftholme Junction which is close to Askern Junction, north of Doncaster.

Selby was thus placed on the East Coast Main Line which used the same tracks as the Leeds to Hull line through the station and swing bridge.

There were three intermediate stations between York and Selby, none of which were major sources of traffic. The number of passenger tickets issued in 1911 was:

Naburn	7,105
Escrick	8,050
Riccall	10,848

and for comparison:

York	647,264
Selby	125,804

As might be expected, the principal goods traffic was agricultural with the following despatches in 1913:

	tons of potatoes	wagons of livestock
Naburn	4,218	7
Escrick	1,332	30
Riccall	3,543	31

'Bradshaw' for April 1910 shows the York to Selby service as part of the Great Northern main line rather than North Eastern. There are eight stopping trains leaving York at:

- 6.38 am semi fast to Kings Cross
- 8.17 all stations to Doncaster
- 9.27 all stations to Harrogate via Selby and Church Fenton
- 10.28 all stations to Selby (auto train)
- 11.45 all stations to Selby
- 2.48 pm all stations to Doncaster
- 4.54 all stations to Selby
- 7.35 all stations to Doncaster

In addition, the 12.15pm from York, the 7.45am 'Through Breakfast and Luncheon C. Express'

from Edinburgh Waverley to Kings Cross made a request stop at Escrick 'to take up first class London passengers'.

On Sundays there was just one stopping train, at 12.25pm from York which was a 'Through Luncheon Car Express' from Newcastle to Kings Cross.

Naburn and Escrick closed to passengers on 6 June 1953. Riccall, which had always been the busiest of the three, survived with a service of only three trains each way until 13 September 1958 when it was swept away, along with many small stations elsewhere on the East Coast Main Line because they were considered too much of an operating nuisance.

Riccall has subsequently grown in population and might now justify an hourly service if there were a regular local service passing through.

The point is academic because in 1979 BR obtained Parliamentary powers for the 14½ mile diversion between Temple Hurst and Colton Junction. This included south to west and east to north curves where the route passes under the Leeds to Hull line at Hambleton. Some York to Hull dmus began to use the new line from 16 May 1983. Transfer of Inter City trains followed on 3 October when the old route was closed between Selby and Chaloners Whin.

