

Some Curious Industrial Remains

12 April 2020

To GSIA Members

When GSIA had announce the postponement of our activities last month we said we would send out, from time to time, items relating to Gloucestershire industrial heritage which we hope will be of interest.

This first one has been prompted by someone enquiring about the curious concrete and steel remains alongside the former Stroud Branch of the Stonehouse and Nailsworth Railway. They related to a long forgotten ingenious 'coal-tip' by which coal was transferred from the railway to Stroud Gas Works below.

The site is at SO 8400 0477 and may be seen on the 1900 25 inch map. [NB this is just for location purposes only as the structures are of a later date.] Apologies I find I do not have a photograph to include here but it is definitely on the list for when things hopefully get back to (near) normal again.

A full explanation of the remains appears in Colin Maggs excellent book "The Nailsworth and the Stroud Branch" (Oakwood Press 2000). This is a very detailed account of the enterprise with fine maps and photographs.

"Near the summit was the Stroud Gas Works siding situated between Gas Works West ground frame at 104 m. 37 ch. and the East ground frame at 104 m. 56 ch. Although the Stroud Gas Light & Coke Company was established in 1833, coal arrived solely by canal until 1924, the last boat to use the Stroudwater Canal unloading 10 tons in 1941, An agreement for the siding was signed on 5th July, 1924, the gas company at its own cost and to the satisfaction of the LMS Engineer, constructing and maintaining the turntable, coal hopper and chutes. On 31st December each year the gas company was required to pay £1 for use of LMS land, the first payment being due on 31st December, 1925. The gas company undertook during the continuance of the agreement, to consign all its traffic for places served by the LMS, over that company's lines and also to use that railway for inwards traffic as far as it was possible to influence it. The siding laid by the LMS required the shifting of the main line to create enough room, The siding opened on 11th November, 1924. The Stroud Journal of 7th May, 1926 gave details of working:

The trucks are run on to the top of a specially constructed chute, and instead of men being employed with shovels to unload the coal, the truck itself is slowly lifted at one end and the coal tipped into a large hopper, which is built on the edge of the railway embankment. The coal is then released through openings at the base of the chute into a series of small trucks attached to a miniature petrol engine, and run on rails direct to the furnaces underneath the gas retorts. By the arrangement, which was conceived and carried out by T.H.. Woodcock (manager), a large amount of time and labour is saved. A very few minutes are required to empty a full 10 ton truck, and the whole of the work of unloading and transporting the coal is done by about three men.

A 2 ft-gauge railway was installed to convey coal from a loading chute of concrete served by the Stroud branch. The first engine was a petrol driven four-wheeler, replaced by a Ruston & Hornsby Ltd No. 183725 of 1937, bought second-hand from Joseph Pugsley & Sons, having previously been used by the contractor Edmund Nuttall Sons & Co. Ltd. Ruston & Hornsby No. 244564 of 1947 was bought new. The gas works closed on 31st May, 1956 and coal deliveries would have ceased a little before in order to run down coal stocks. Both Rustons were sold for scrap in 1959. The LMS branch was at a higher level than the gasworks and a standard gauge wagon was turned on a table, run a short distance and hydraulically lifted so its contents were tipped out the end into a hopper which could then be released into a narrow gauge hopper wagon to go across the River Frome to the works. An electrically turned capstan moved standard gauge wagons along the siding. An average of seven to eight truck loads of coal were dealt with daily, or about 3,000 tons of coal per month.

Although the works closed in 1956, the Sectional Appendix to the Working Timetable published in October 1960 gave rules for operating the siding situated on a gradient. It stated that vehicles must not be allowed to stand on the main line at the siding without an engine being attached; wagons to be uncoupled at the siding were required to be marshalled next to the brake van, and this had to be placed in the siding built for this purpose. Points on the main line had to remain open for the sidings during the time trains were attaching or detaching."

An account of railway by Michael Hoy appeared the [The GSIA Journal for 1987 pp 2-16](#) and can be downloaded here.

Ray Wilson

[Image on next page]



Stroud gas works: the coal tippler 1926.