

DAVENPORT AND ITS RAILWAY



A Short History - by Charlie Hulme



Printed to commemorate the 150th anniversary
of the Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge Railway
June 2007



ANNO DECIMO SEPTIMO & DECIMO OCTAVO

VICTORIÆ REGINÆ.

Cap. cc.

An Act for making a Railway from the *London and North-western* Railway near *Stockport* to *Disley* and *Whaley Bridge*, all in the County of *Chester*; and for other Purposes. [31st July 1854.]

WHEREAS the Construction of a Railway from a Point on the *London and North-western* Railway near *Stockport*, and in the Parish of *Cheadle* in the County of *Chester*, to *Disley* and *Whaley Bridge* in the same County, would be of great public Advantage: And whereas the Persons herein-after named, together with other Persons, are willing, at their own Expense, to carry such Undertaking into execution if authorized so to do: And whereas it is expedient that the Company hereby incorporated and the *London and North-western* Railway Company should be empowered to enter, if they shall respectively think fit, into such Arrangements as are herein-after mentioned with respect to the working and Use by such last-mentioned Company of the Railway and Works by this Act authorized to be constructed, but the several Purposes aforesaid cannot be effected without the Authority of Parliament: May it therefore please Your Majesty that it may be

[*Local.*]

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enacted;

The Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge Railway opened for business on 9 June 1857, although, at first, there was no station at Davenport; indeed there was no settlement called 'Davenport' at that time. When the station did open, the area around it took its name and developed slowly into the suburb we know today. June 2007, as the 150th anniversary of the line, is an appropriate time to publish this little history of Davenport and its railways.

Although there was a proposal as early as 1828, led by Thomas Legh of Lyme Park, to build a railway in our area, nothing was begun in earnest until 25 November 1853, when, at the Swann Inn, Disley (the inn we know today as the Swan, Newtown), the first meeting was held of the Committee of Management of the Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge Railway Company. Thomas Legh was appointed chairman and John Lowe, Secretary. J.E. Errington and Joseph Locke were appointed as engineers to survey and build the line. A bill was submitted to Parliament, and met with opposition from some local landowners and existing railway companies including the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway which had purchased the Peak Forest and Macclesfield Canals.

Despite the objections the line's Act of Parliament was passed on 31 July 1854, and construction began on 30 September 1854 with the traditional ceremony of 'cutting the first sod' being performed at Disley by Mrs Legh, the wife of the chairman.

You might wonder why the small village of Whaley Bridge was chosen as the terminus of the line; the answer is that there was already a railway there, in the shape of the Cromford and High Peak Railway, which had been one of the very first few railways to be built, connecting the Peak

Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge with the Cromford Canal at Cromford, over hilly and dry country which was thought to be too difficult for a canal.

Work on the line from Stockport, contracted to John R. Davidson & Co, of London, proceeded without major problems, the main engineering works required being the high embankment which takes the line up from Hazel Grove towards Disley, the tunnel under the Macclesfield Canal at Middlewood, the tunnel under the village of Disley, and the bridge over the turnpike road on the approach to Whaley Bridge. A further Act of Parliament of July 1855 authorised the company to build a link line with the Cromford and High Peak line in Whaley Bridge. In February 1857, it was reported that 1,400 men, 80 horses and two locomotives were employed on the construction work, and on 7 April 1857 it was possible to run an inspection special for the directors.

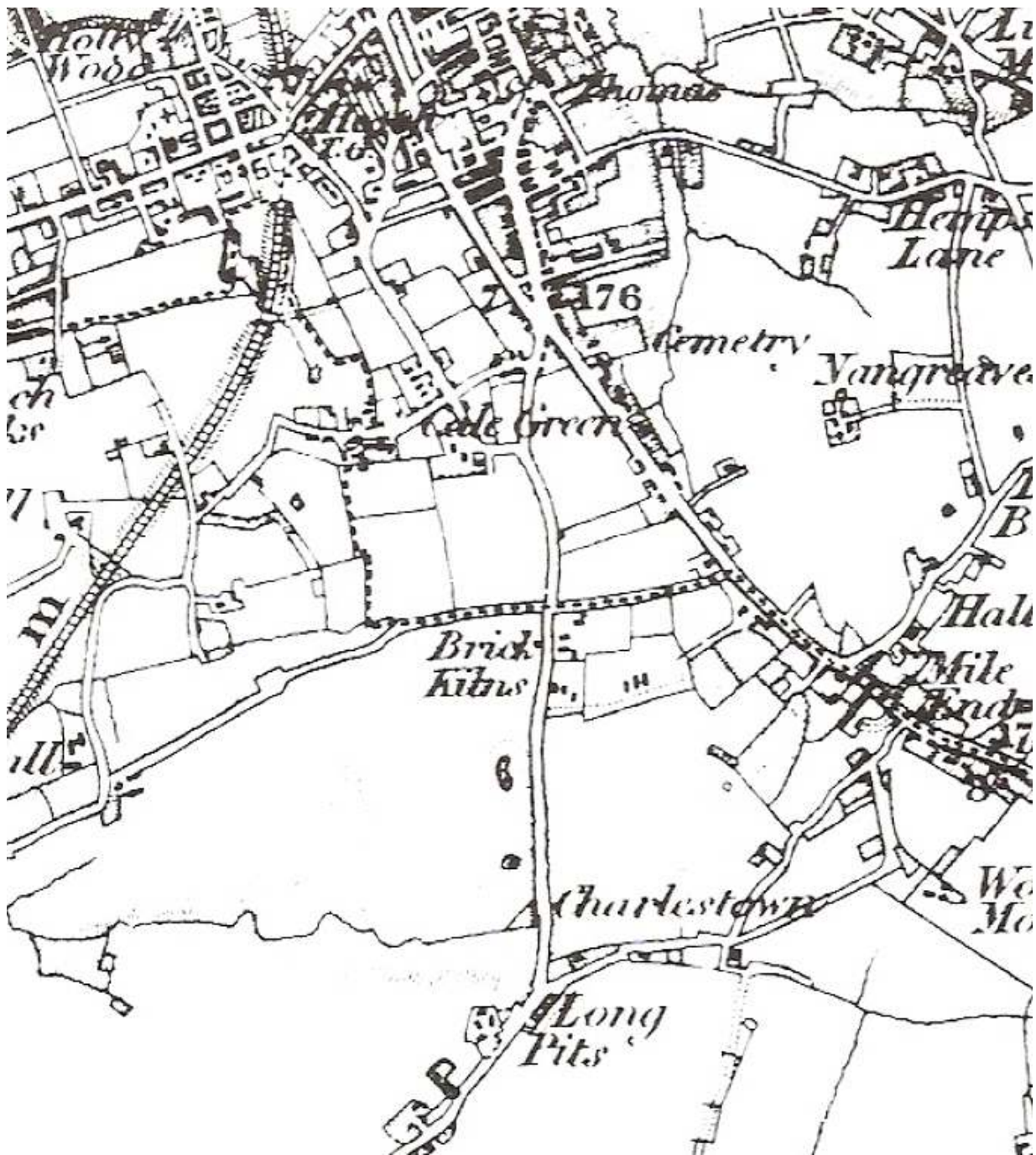
The opening ceremony took place on 28 May 1857, when a special train was run from Stockport to Whaley Bridge, then back to Disley, where a dinner was held in the schoolroom. Sadly, Thomas Legh had died a few weeks earlier, and did not live to see the completion of the project he had supported for so long. The new Chairman, John Chapman, presided over the festivities.

Public passenger service began on 9 June 1857, serving stations at Hazel Grove, Disley, New Mills and Whaley Bridge, goods service following later that year. From the beginning, it had been agreed that the trains would be operated by the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), owners of the connecting main line between Manchester and London, including Stockport station which the Whaley Bridge line joins at Edgeley, trains running into

the LNWR's station at Stockport. The LNWR were shareholders in the company from the beginning; soon it, along with the line to Cromford, became effectively part of their system, and 1866 the Buxton line was officially transferred. The ownership of Davenport station passed from the LNWR to the London, Midland and Scottish Railway in the grouping of railway companies in 1923, and to the nationalised British Railways in 1948; today it is owned by Network Rail and managed by Northern Rail.

The Whaley Bridge to Cromford line had been designed for horse haulage, and built in the style of a canal, with level sections separated by short cable-worked inclined planes which replaced the flights of locks which a canal would have. It was totally unsuited for passenger trains (although some did run in the early days, taking several hours for the journey) and kept clear of the town of Buxton which was an obvious destination for passenger traffic. An obvious step was to extend the Stockport – Whaley Bridge line to Buxton, and a Parliamentary Act for such an extension was passed in July 1857. Work on this line began in 1859 and was completed in 1863, amid much political manoeuvring between rival companies, which resulted in Buxton having two stations, both dead-ends, when it could have been on a through main line to London. The other Buxton station, which lay across the road from the LNWR one, at the end of a branch line from Miller's Dale, lost its passenger service in the 1960s, and the site has since vanished, replaced by a shopping centre car park.

The Stockport to Buxton line settled down as a valuable part of the area's transport system, offering much faster travel than the road carts and coaches used previously, additional stations were opened by the LNWR at Middlewood, Furness Vale and Dove Holes.



A map from the early 1840s: no sign of Davenport, just some 'Brick Kilns.' The Stockport — Bramhall boundary follows Kennerley Road, while the only railway in sight is the Manchester and Birmingham line, opened in 1842, heading for Cheadle Hulme. The Jolly Sailor inn and its adjoining cottages can be made out by the 'C' of Charlestown.

The origins of Davenport

The promoters had promised local landowner Colonel Davenport of Bramall Hall to build a station on his land where the line crossed Bramhall Lane. However it appears

that this agreement was 'forgotten' - not surprising considering the sparse population of the area at the time: a few farms and cottages and the Jolly Sailor Hotel, at the time an old inn of the kind still found today in rural Cheshire (it was replaced in 1895 by the current building.) Bramall Hall itself was some distance away from the Whaley line, and already served by Bramhall station on the Stockport – Macclesfield route, but by the 1850s the Davenport family were losing interest (and money) in running their estate in the traditional manner, and considering the sale of land at the fringes of their estate for residential development. A railway station would be a great selling point, and it is recorded that Colonel Davenport complained to the company, which then built a small station which opened in 1858; for the lack of any other name for the place, they named it Davenport after the family, and the name attached itself to the settlement which developed around the station. The area at the time was part of the township of Bramhall, with the old country lane, Bramhall Lane, running through Isaac Cheetham's farm.

The 1840 map shows that there were no buildings on the lane between Cale Green and the old Jolly Sailor Inn with its adjacent cottages, and the only road which met the lane over this length was Kennerly Grave Lane, now called Kennerley Road, which at the time made a crossroads with Garners Lane, said to be the site of an old stone cross. The local clay is suitable for brick-making, and small-scale clay pits and kilns were dotted around. The resulting ponds remained on the map for many years, gradually being filled in as houses were built; one survivor can still be seen alongside Egerton Road.

Davenport station



Davenport station in Edwardian days

The history of Davenport station in its first few years is a little vague, despite extensive research in the company minute books at the time of the line's centenary by Davenport's railway chronicler Wallace Sutherland and Stockport librarian William Skillern. (Their article in the *Railway Magazine* of June 1963 was, until recently, the only published history of the line.) It appears that so few people used the new station that the company closed it again in 1859; it is believed that it opened for business again at the beginning of 1862.

The station booking-office at road level that we know today was not part of the station in its original form; maps from around 1870 show a small building on the Manchester-bound platform, which seems to have been incorporated into the expansion of passenger facilities some time in the 1880s.

In the station's heyday, there were two waiting rooms on the Manchester side and one on the Buxton side, plus full ladies' and gents' toilet facilities and canopies to shelter Manchester-bound commuters from the rain. All of this was swept away in the 1970s, when the current platform structures were built. The new building incorporated a glass-fronted waiting room with a heater, but vandalism led to the removal of the front wall sometime around 1990; the twenty-first century has seen waiting room facilities restored, at least on weekday mornings, and train information displays provided for the first time.

As for the Davenports of Bramhall Hall, Colonel William Davenport died in 1869 and the estate passed to his son John William Handley Davenport, who in 1877 sold the hall, and what remained of the estate, to the Freeholders' Company of Manchester, and moved to Clipsham Hall in Rutland which had come down through his mother's side of the family. The Freeholders' Company tried hard to develop Davenport as a residential suburb by selling plots on the newly-laid-out estates of Davenport Park and the Crescent to the east of Bramhall Lane, but development was initially quite slow. The houses built in the early days included some large mansions of the type favoured by businessmen such as Stockport's hat-manufacturing magnates, who would not have travelled by train daily, perhaps making a weekly trip to Manchester. On the west side of the Lane, Stephen Christy, of the famous hat-manufacturing firm, previously a tenant of Bramall Hall, had bought a large area of land to surround a stately home of his own, Highfield, and other development was initially limited to a strip along the roadside, with none of the east side's planned 'private estate' developments inspired by Victoria Park in Manchester.

An interesting little item in the Stockport Advertiser in 1945 offers some interesting reminiscences from the nineteenth century by Mr Arthur White of Devonshire Park Road. According to Mr White, at that time, '50-60 years ago':

'There were just two trains a day. The station master lived across the road: he would go to the station for the train, then go home again. There was a crossing near Cale Green to reach Woodall's farm. Kennerley Road had a ditch either side and was known as Black Lane.'

As the twentieth century began, a new, smaller, type of house began to appear in Davenport, as the farms on the west side of Bramhall Lane succumbed to streets of 'villas', mostly of the semi-detached form. Houses in Kennerley Road, Garner's Lane, Oakfield Road, Beechfield Road and Elmfield Road, as well as Frewland Avenue and Clutha Road all appeared on the map in the period from 1900-1910, and smaller houses filled in the gaps in the existing estates.



Davenport station 1966

Many of these new residents would have found work in Manchester, causing a growth in traffic which by the 1940s made Davenport the busiest station on the whole Buxton branch. Wallace Sutherland noted in autumn 1958 'I have noticed in recent weeks that over 150 passengers get off the 5.45 pm Manchester London Road – Hazel Grove train at Davenport, and another 50 or more off the 5.50 train.'

British Railways, under the management of the famous (or infamous) Dr Beeching, commissioned a survey of the Buxton line's passenger traffic over one week in August 1962 (thus contriving to miss the scholars travelling to local schools, and local residents away on holiday) which showed that on average, 720 people each day joined Manchester-bound trains at Davenport, compared to 686 at Buxton and 596 at Hazel Grove, the next two busiest stations. On the basis of these figures, they proposed to close the line! Fortunately, the Government turned down this proposal.

Davenport has continued to be a desirable place to live; over the years, most of the old mansions from the first phases of development have either been converted to flats or demolished and replaced by new flats and houses. Davenport station still lies at the centre of the community, although increased car ownership has reduced its passenger figures, especially since employment is no longer concentrated in the city centre. The development of Hazel Grove station as a 'park and ride' interchange in the 1980s and the opening of the new station at Woodsmoor in 1990 have also altered the pattern of traffic somewhat. Train services reached an all-time peak in frequency around 1990, when for a short time there were four trains per hour to and from Manchester during the day, plus peak hour extras. This was soon cut back to three an hour, and now just two an hour in the off-peak, which we are told is to make room at

Stockport for additional Inter-City services; it is to be hoped that this frequency at least will be maintained, as it compares poorly with those places which now find themselves on Metrolink routes.

Davenport: the suburb

Tracing the history of a 'village' such as Davenport is rather difficult, because of its fairly recent creation: detailed census records are not made available to the public until 100 years have passed, so the latest we have is 1901, at which time the population was still quite small, and concentrated mostly in the large mansions by the station and the partly-developed private estates.

As mentioned above, much of the development occurred in the following decade, and since then there has been much recycling of land space. A notable example of this is the Bracadale Drive area to the west of Garners Lane. The 1850 tithe map shows this as part of the estate of the Bamford Hesketh family, and being farmed by Newton Unsworth of Bates Ley Farm, the farmstead being where Adswold Library is today. By the end of the century, the good quality clay of the area had led to the development of clay pits and brickworks, and the 1901 map shows the Davenport Terra Cotta Brick and Tile Company, taking over much of the farm site with its clay pits, kilns and chimney.

This seems to have been a short-lived enterprise, however, as around the time of World War I, the Davenport Golf Club came into being, originally formed by a group of friends who called themselves 'The Niblicks' and developed its course on the site where the brickworks had been. According to the Club's official history, they continued to play golf happily in Davenport until 1966 when their land

was threatened by road proposals. These proposals, presumably for a by-pass, never came to fruition, but the Club sold their land and purchased Worth Hall Farm in Poynton which they developed into an 18-hole course. Opened in October 1973, it still flourishes today as Davenport Golf Club.

The original course then came into the hands of the Wimpey company, which built the current pleasant housing estate with its quaint street names taken from places on the Isle of Skye.

The same sort of pattern occurs on the Davenport Estate lands around Bramhall Lane. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, for example was built in the early 1960s on the site of Beaconsfield, a large mansion created in the 1870s for Edward Carrington Howard, cotton manufacturer and magistrate, the son of Cephas Howard of Brinnington Hall. Two schools have come and gone: the private girls' school Oriel Bank, founded in the 1880s, and later expanded into a group of houses in Davenport Park, and Davenport School, a modern-style structure built in 1964 for Stockport Education Committee. The houses which formed Oriel Bank, have been saved from demolition and being returned to their original use; Davenport School, however, after a period of use as an annexe to Stockport College, has been eradicated and replaced by new housing, thus depriving Davenport of a chance to have a much-needed community centre.

House-building has continued to the present, using spare land which becomes available: it was many years before all available plots in the Crescent and Davenport Park were filled: The press advertisement from the 1930s gives an idea of the house prices of the day.

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SITUATED IN
THE CRESCENT, DAVENPORT

The changing view from the station

The buildings - now shops and take-aways - opposite the station date back to the origins of Davenport. There were no planners to provide shopping accommodation in the 1870s;

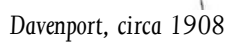
all were originally built as houses, the group being known as 'Lyme View' – a good name since part of Lyme Park, with the summit of Black Hill looming behind, can be seen by looking along the line of the railway. They had front gardens, and very extensive back gardens, the size of which can be judged from the row of garages in Oakfield Road, and the mews houses in Garners Lane.

When the railway was first built, no bridge was provided for Garners Lane, which continued straight across from Kennerley Road past Bramall Mount (itself one of Davenport's oldest houses) and people had to cross the line on the level. In order to facilitate the building of houses on Garners Lane, about 1900, a new length of road was built, starting opposite the station and squeezing past the first house in Lyme View, which had become the home of Davenport's stationmaster.



Bramhall Lane, looking north to the station, ca. 1880

Some widening of Bramhall Lane took place in the late 1920s, and in 1933 major engineering work was undertaken to replace the bridge over the railway, and make a better junction to Garners Lane, which had become a busy route to Cheadle.



The bridge was completely replaced: a short film clip of this activity, taken by a local family, survives in the North West Film Archive. The old stationmaster's house was demolished, no mean feat in itself since it was one of a semi-detached pair; its partner remains today as the corner newsagent and general store; over the years all the houses became business premises, as they have been ever since. A list of all the businesses which have operated from here would be very long and varied.

The main shopping area of Davenport has developed on the other side of Kennerley Road, along Bramhall Lane, in an area which was not part of the original Davenport; these shops also appear to have mostly been converted from houses.

One business operating opposite the station in the 1920s was a garage, which was to transform the pair of houses at the Bramhall end of this row into a new, modern garage business with a large storage garage, fronting on to Oakfield Road, a road had been created alongside in the 1890s. This structure, which remains in altered form today, had additional parking space on its flat roof, and was linked to the adjacent pair of houses, whose brick frontages were given a white rendering to match the new concrete extension around the corner.

However, it appears that this venture was not a success, no doubt due to the state of the national economy: pictures taken for the 1933 alterations show that by this time the corner shop had become 'Baccasweet', a self-explanatory name which the shop still used as late as the 1990s, perhaps something of a record. The garages round the corner now house a variety of businesses, some still involved with motor

vehicles, and the block is known officially as Lindsay's Industrial Estate, perhaps a clue to its original owners.

In order to electrify the Stockport – Hazel Grove line, it was necessary to provide more height under the bridge, and in cooperation with the highway authority it was decided to further widen the road junction as well. The bridge span was demolished, and the current re-inforced concrete structure installed. Even so, the 25,000 volt wires pass under the bridge with little more than the minimum permitted clearance, as it was not possible to raise the level of the road. The brick-clad side-walls of the new bridge have a reinforced concrete core, which caused a problem in 2006 when the new gateway to the Manchester-bound platform was being created.



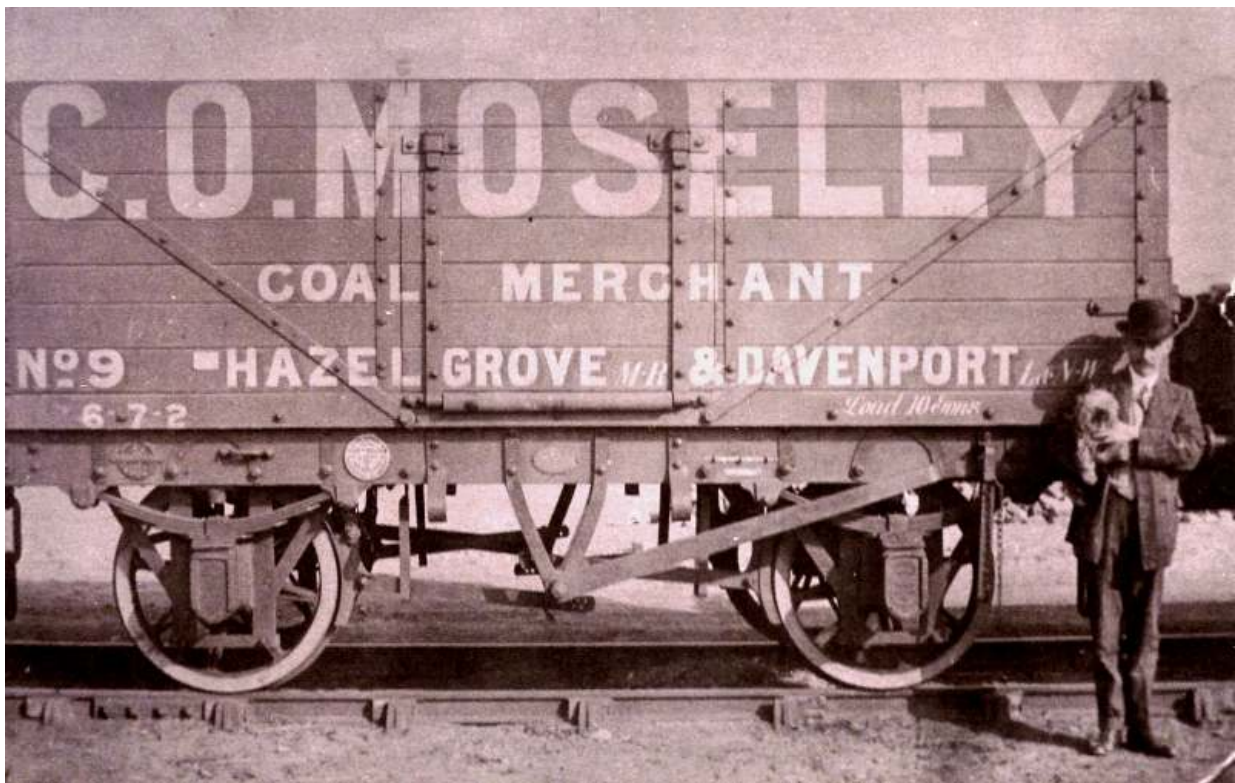
Bridge replacement under way, 1980

Ironically, after all this widening work, recent changes to the road layout have focused on narrowing the road in

various ways by painting no-go areas and blocking part of Bramhall Lane with a traffic island on which many rail passengers have to spend time waiting for the 'green man.' Gone for ever are the days of the old postcard views in which people saunter and cycle down the middle of the road.

Davenport Junction

Davenport station has never had much in the way of freight facilities, but there was a siding for the delivery of domestic coal supplies, which was laid in by the LNWR in the 1880s, and served the community until the early 1960s; on the site today is the station car park.



Charles Oswald Moseley, coal merchant, stands proudly with his latest wagon, ca. 1910

The entrance to this siding was controlled from a signalbox, Davenport Junction, which also controlled the junction to the short connecting line, opened in 1883, to Cheadle Village Junction on the Stockport – Altrincham line.



An excursion made up of two Buxton-based DMUs turns left at Davenport Junction, 1965

The original signalbox was replaced by a new one in 1904; the line to Cheadle Village Junction latterly became just a siding to the Co-operative Society's depot, and was finally closed and demolished early in 1970. Today, it is very difficult to find any trace of the junction, or the connecting line, as the area has been covered in new houses, and the bridge which carried the line over the Manchester – Crewe route has been taken down and the ground level lowered.

150 years of trains

The first locomotives to work trains through Davenport were some very small tank engines built by the LNWR's works at Crewe. Our picture shows one of the type. When first built they did not have any cab sides or roof, the engine crew having to brave whatever the elements threw at them.



Coaches were four-wheeled vehicles, with bodies still very much based on stagecoach practice; these would have had wooden bench seats, and no method of braking. Each train had just one 'brake van' at each end, manned by a brakeman who would work levers which pushed wooden brake blocks against the wheels, while the engine crew worked a similar system on the engine. How they controlled their trains on the hill down from Disley is hard to imagine.

Over the years, more powerful locomotives and better coaches appeared, and after the LNWR became part of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway in 1923, a brand-new type of loco appeared on the scene in 1927, the 2-6-4 tank engine built under the direction of Sir Henry Fowler, which came to be the line's staple power until the diesels took over in the 1950s, although larger engines were used on some trains. There was some development of the coaches too, with construction in steel rather than wood, electric lighting, and even a few toilets, but the basic design

of the non-corridor compartment coach lasted until the end of steam.



Manchester train at Buxton, 1955. Fowler 2-6-4 tank engine

The first Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs - so-called because they can be coupled together to make a longer train as needed) appeared in 1956: the writer remembers well his first journey at the age of 6, being amazed by the view out of the front of the train behind the driver. How clean and modern they seemed, compared to the dusty and smoky steam trains – and everyone had access to a toilet! The first DMUs were of a variety of the early types, but the three-coach units built at the Birmingham Carriage and Wagon Works (many years later to be called Class 104), first built in 1957, came to be virtually the only type of train to be seen on the line through Davenport for nearly 20 years. Many will recall these trains, with their high-backed seats, with some nostalgia. The staff at Buxton depot, which had

been built specially to maintain them, took a pride in them, and embellished their green colour scheme with a white cab roof, which, it was said, helped to keep the driver cool. Mechanically, these trains were quite powerful, having four 150 HP diesel engines (derived from a bus design) per three-coach unit, although they were never quite up to the task of climbing the hills on the Buxton line at anything other than a slow speed.

By the mid-1980s, the Birmingham units were becoming old and unreliable, and while they decided what to do next, British Rail replaced them with some similar, slightly newer trains, built at Derby to a slightly different design. Then in 1989, a drastic change came in the shape of 'Sprinter' units which had been built at British Rail Engineering's York works a couple of years before, and been used on Trans Pennine Expresses. These class 150s were not universally welcomed, especially as their interiors already seemed worn out when they arrived. They have only two coaches in place of the three of the old trains, and initially there were not enough of them to double-up on rush-hour services. Furthermore, there is no view out of the front to excite the younger passengers, who even have to stand up to see out of the windows in the sides. Their appearance signalled the end of passenger train maintenance at Buxton, the depot there being handed over to the freight operators (who have since closed it down). Since then, the only DMU depot in our area has been at Newton Heath in north Manchester. The Windsor Link line, opened in 1988, allowed trains to run through between Stockport and Bolton, and since 1989 many trains from Buxton have travelled this way, mostly to Blackpool, but with some through trains to and from Southport. For some years, the last train of the day to Buxton on weekdays has started its journey at Clitheroe.

The Class 150 Sprinters are still used on the Buxton services in 2007, along with some of the rather more luxurious Class 156, which have wide windows and tables to the seats and must surely be the best-appointed trains to have served Davenport in living memory. There are currently no plans to replace these hard-working trains, which will certainly continue to ply the line for at least another decade. They are now with their fourth operator, having passed in 1997 from British Rail to the private company North Western Trains, which soon sold out to FirstGroup to become First North Western. The franchise expired in 2004, and it was decided by to create a new franchise covering local trains all over northern England; this is currently let to Northern Rail, a partnership of Serco and the Netherlands State Railway.

Electrification to Hazel Grove in 1981 brought some variety to the Davenport train scene. The first trains to be used (Class 304) were of a type built in 1960 to more or less the same body design as the old steam coaches. They were notorious among regular users for their springing, which at speed caused passengers to bounce up and down rather amusingly. They were supplemented by more modern stock transferred from the London area (Class 310) and the Glasgow area (Class 303) before eventually being replaced by some Class 305s from London, which were almost the same as the original 304s but had seen some modernisation. Eventually, all these vanished, replaced in 1993/94 by brand-new trains (Class 323) with powered doors and electronic control systems, which have served us well ever since. They did have some teething troubles in their first winter, though: if there was frost on the overhead wires, causing sparking, the programming of the electronic system decided this was a fault and closed down the whole train. Thankfully, it proved possible to re-program the system. The

323s are kept and maintained at Longsight depot, which our trains pass on the way to Manchester.



Passengers board the first public electric train, an excursion to Coventry, the day before normal electric service began, 1981. Two Class 310 units.

Since the opening of the 'chord line' at Hazel Grove in 1986, Davenport has seen a variety of trains passing through without stopping, on their way to and from Sheffield. For a while, these were hauled by diesel locomotives, and included some full-length expresses to and from such places as Harwich Parkeston Quay. Some connected with ferries to the continent and had names such as 'The European' and 'The North West Dane.' By the 1990s, though, DMUs had taken over, although in 2003-4, while engineering work was disrupting the main line to Euston, a Manchester – St Pancras service worked by InterCity 125 Trains ran through Davenport and via the Hope Valley line

The regular pattern of expresses today is an hourly Liverpool – Sheffield – Nottingham (and beyond) service alternating with a Manchester Airport – Sheffield – Cleethorpes train.

The Cleethorpes trains are worked in 2007 by the newest type of trains on the network, the German-built Class 185 'Pennine' class, easily spotted by their very bright headlights.

Woodsmoor



Woodsmoor Crossing, 1965

Woodsmoor is an area to the south and east of Davenport, which had originally been a 'moor' used for the digging of peat as fuel, and for farming, but developed into a residential suburb centred on the old road, Woodsmoor Lane, which joins Bramhall Lane to the main Buxton Road. The Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge line crossed the moor, running almost straight, with a level crossing at Woodsmoor Lane. Early in the twentieth century, additional lines were laid on each side between the level crossing and Hazel Grove, to allow slow goods trains to run into these 'loops' and be overtaken by passenger trains. In more recent times, as many will remember, the loops were used to store long lines of coaches which were only used to run trains to

holiday resorts at summer weekends, but in the late 1960s they were removed, except for sidings at Hazel Grove station.

Woodsmoor station is very much a latecomer to the scene, having opened in 1990 after much controversy and discussion. A number of new stations had been planned and built in the Greater Manchester area in the 1970s and 1980s, and it was intended to provide stations on our line at Woodsmoor and at Stepping Hill Hospital. Woodsmoor passengers had found their way to Davenport station in the past, but it was felt that residents there would benefit from a station of their own, even though it would be only a short distance from Davenport.

There was opposition to the new station proposal from some local residents. There had already been a dispute in the early 1980s over a footbridge erected by British Rail to replace the level crossing at Woodsmoor Lane when the line was electrified; the residents won, the offending bridge was removed and the level crossing reinstated.

The Passenger Transport Executive was determined to build the new station, the platforms of which were to be built on the track bed of the old loops at the point where Moorland Road crosses the line by a bridge. After considerable delay, and discussion, it finally opened in December 1990. There is no car parking provided, the station being intended purely for local residents, and the platforms have high fences to block the view of nearby gardens; the railway also had to promise not to provide a public address system so as not to disturb the neighbours.

The station has proved useful to many, although some of the fears of the residents have been realised, as it has at times

been a haunt of vandals. Unlike Davenport, wheelchair access is possible to the booking office and Manchester-bound platform, although unfortunately there are steep steps to the platform at the other side.

As for the station at Stepping Hill Hospital, it seems unlikely this will ever be built, due to cost and the delay to trains caused by a further station stop. It has been suggested, that a shorter route from Woodsmoor station to the hospital might be provided by creating a path on part of the old track bed, but in the current railway climate this seems doubtful.

Davenport's other railway

The line through Davenport station is not the only railway still running in the Davenport district, although the other, which passes under Bramhall Lane nearer to Bramhall, is a shadow of its former self. The origins of the New Mills – Cheadle Heath route, of which this formed part, lie in the competition between railway companies in Victorian times. The Midland Railway's express trains, coming from London, Derby and Sheffield, had to share with other companies the line through New Mills Central station, Marple and Stockport Tiviot Dale into Manchester, and this was leading to congestion and slow running. It was therefore decided to build a new, shorter, route, for use by Midland Railway trains only, from a junction south of New Mills, through a long tunnel at Disley, and over the LNWR route near Hazel Grove station, by-passing Stockport to join the existing line to Manchester Central at Heaton Mersey.

This new line, which received its Act of Parliament in 1897, and was opened for traffic in 1902, cut across the farmland to the south of the settlement of Davenport, with very few crossings to be provided, and it was agreed that for

convenience the administrative boundary between Stockport and the newly-formed Hazel Grove and Bramhall Urban District should be relocated from the Kennerley Road axis to the new railway line. Thus, by an Order of 1901, Davenport and its station became part of Stockport.

The new line was well-used by express passenger and goods trains, although no consideration was given to providing a station for Davenport; one was opened at Hazel Grove, but even this closed after a few years. For many years, express trains between Manchester and London passed this way, in competition with the LNWR route to Euston and the Great Central company's route to Marylebone via the Woodhead line and Sheffield. After the Midland and LNWR were merged, the route continued in use for some expresses, a situation which continued after British Railways came into being in 1948. When the LNWR route was being electrified in the 1950s and 1960s, causing disruption to traffic, the Midland route became the best way to London, and the route of the 'Blue Pullman' first class diesel trains which were much-used by local businessmen who could board at Cheadle Heath station.

In 1966, the electrification of the route to London Euston was completed, and an electric Pullman train began on that line, replacing the 'Midland Pullman.' In 1969, passenger trains ceased to run over the 'New Mills and Heaton Mersey' route, the remaining trains to St Pancras reverting to the old route through New Mills Central before vanishing altogether. Since then, the section along the Davenport border, now just a single track, has seen just a few goods trains each day, mostly limestone trains heading for the chemical factories at Northwich. The portion from Hazel Grove through Disley Tunnel to New Mills has become very busy again after the chord line was built in 1986, whilst the

line beyond the old Cheadle Heath station has been removed altogether, and its site is now lost under the Morrison's store.

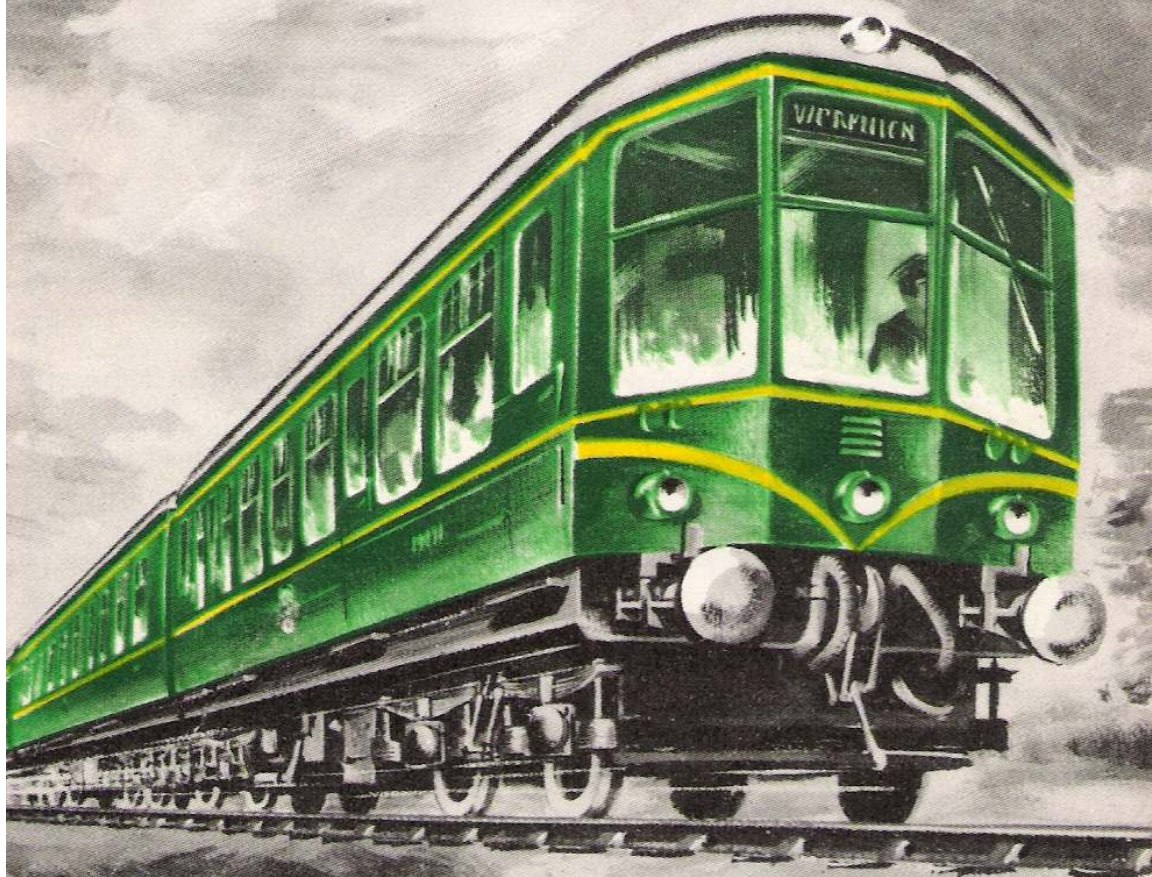
Present and Future

The first years of the 21st century have seen some positive developments at Davenport station. Thanks to support from local politicians and the newly-formed Friends of Davenport Station group, a new entrance to the Manchester-bound side of the station was opened in 2006, removing the need to walk a long way round via many steps when the booking office is closed, and we are promised security cameras soon. The station staff provide an excellent service, and the trains mostly run well and on time, engineering work permitting. (Ironically, there is a bus replacement service in operation on the actual day of the 150th anniversary.) It is to be hoped that there will be no further cuts in train frequency.

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who has helped with the creation of this book, and encouraged my interest. Special thanks are due to Graham Neve, Trevor Moseley, Peter Wadsworth, John Wadsworth, the staff of Stockport Local History Library, Greg Fox who has recently published two excellent volumes on the Buxton line in his 'Scenes from the Past' series, including many pictures taken by the late Wallace Sutherland, and most important of all, the staff of the Buxton railway line.

If you are interested in the history of Davenport, I'd be glad to hear from you via www.davenportstation.org.uk. - Charlie Hulme

DIESEL TRAINS



MANCHESTER·BUXTON
Macclesfield and Wilmslow lines

Leaflet issued to publicise the diesel services, 1957