THE ROUTE OF THE S&DR 1825:

SHILDON TO HEIGHINGTON

STOCKTON & DARLINGTON RAILWAY WALK BOOKLET No.4

Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.
WWW.SDR1825.co.uk

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The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway were formed in 2013 to bring together all those with an interest in the S&DR to ensure that by the bicentenary in 2025, the 1825 Stockton and Darlington Railway line will have received the recognition and the protection it deserves as the birthplace of the modern railway. This booklet is part of a series along the 26-mile stretch of line from Witton Park to Stockton and represents the first stage in improving the interpretation and access to the line. We also aim to ensure that the standing remains are conserved and have proper legal protection including pursuing a case for inscribing the line as a World Heritage Site by 2025. **WWW.SDR1825.co.uk**

Other booklets in the series include:

- S&DR Walk No.1 Witton Park to West Auckland
- S&DR Walk No.2 West Auckland to Shildon
- S&DR Walk No.3 The Shildon Circular
- S&DR Walk No.5 The Darlington Circular
- S&DR Walk No.6 Darlington to Goosepool via Fighting Cocks
- S&DR Walk No.7 Preston Park to Stockton

Front Cover. The former Heighington Station, now Locomotion No.1 Public House.

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THE ROUTE OF THE S&DR 1825: SHILDON TO HEIGHINGTON SELF GUIDED WALK LEAFLET:

This self-guided walk recreates the 1825 route of the Stockton & Darlington Railway from Shildon to Heighington Station. It starts from Car Park B (stop 1 on the map below) at Locomotion and Shildon Station.

Ordnance Survey 'Explorer' Map 305 is a very useful resource for exploring the remains of this part of the S&DR. Ordnance Survey Grid References are used in this book

Walking or skating, cycling or taking the train:

Choices for continuing your journey through railway history

Walk, cycle or skate: the path as far as Aycliffe Station has a smooth surface, and is popular with walkers, cyclists and even people on roller skates. Between Aycliffe and Heighington Stations you will need to use pavements or the wide grass verge along busy roads, and then take a short cut through an industrial estate.

Train: The railway line is still in use, and so you can walk in one direction, and get the train in the other. Trains run approximately every two hours, the journey between Shildon and Heighington takes eight minutes and single fares are about £2.50. If you prefer, you can take the train all the way to Darlington, Eaglescliffe or Thornaby – all with access to the 1825 route.

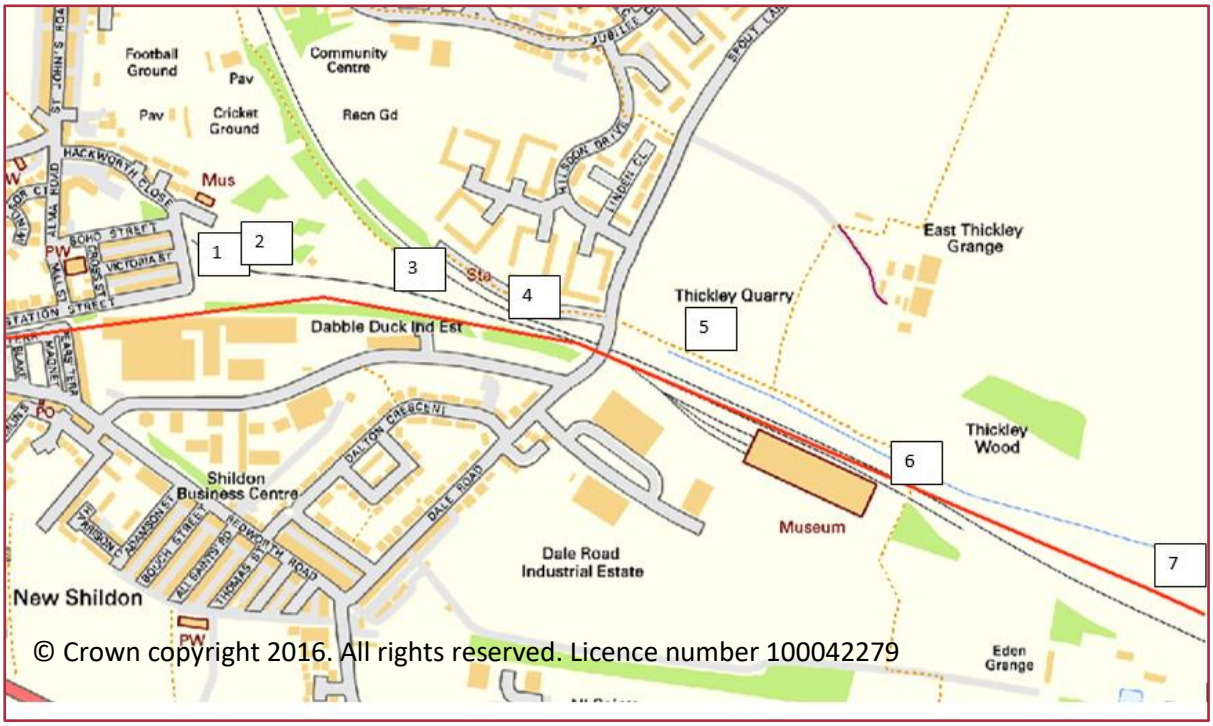

Figure 1. The first stage of the walk, leaving Shildon, heading east

The Walk Route

This walk starts at Locomotion: The National Railway Museum at Shildon where there is ample free parking, and finishes at what was the S&DR Tavern, Station and Coal Depot, now known as 'Locomotion One' public house. Car Park B (NZ 23255 25733) close to the Welcome Building at the National Railway Museum, is a good place to start this walk.

Setting the Scene: Shildon and Aycliffe in September 1825

In the latter part of the summer of 1825, frantic preparations were underway for the grand opening, on the 27th September, of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.

On the 16th September, Locomotion No. 1 arrived from Newcastle on a trolley, where it had been made by George Stephenson's firm. It was placed on an area of level track near Aycliffe where it could be tested for the first time on the railway. The whole population of the village turned out to see "'t' iron hoss", but were disappointed to find that it didn't resemble a horse at all, but was simply a steam engine. Contemporary accounts suggest that she came off the rails on a number of occasions, and there were concerns about her braking ability.

On the 20th September, the passenger coach 'Experiment' arrived at Shildon, also from Newcastle, and was coupled to 'No.1'. The passenger coach was described by a reporter at the time as being fitted like a long coach with passengers sitting face to face along its sides. It was designed to carry 16 or 18 passengers inside and, from the start, was intended to travel daily between Darlington and Stockton.

On the evening of the 26th September, several members of the Committee travelled down from Shildon to Darlington, thereby travelling in the first locomotive-powered passenger carriage ever to run on a public railway. Those S&DR committee members were Edward Pease senior, Edward Pease junior, Joseph Pease, Henry Pease, Thomas Richardson, William Kitching and George Stephenson. James Stephenson, George's younger brother, drove the engine (Heavisides 1912, 55).

This group, dominated by the Pease family, was not to gather together again for the opening. On the 27th September; Edward Pease's son, Isaac, aged twenty-two, died at home in Darlington after a long illness. No members of the Pease family attended the opening of the line, despite being pivotal in the creation of the railway. However, the passenger coach 'Experiment' was retained for other Committee members to use on the grand opening day.

1. The Goods Shed and Parcel Collection Hut

The older building in front of you is the Goods Shed. From 1857 the Goods Shed was the centre of local freight distribution in Shildon operated by the railway. If you look closely at the building, you will see that it is made from a number of early stone sleepers split in half. Around the back is a ramp up which laden waggons were hauled to tip their contents, usually coal, into bins below ready to be sold locally. Over to your left, the small wooden shed is a parcel collection hut from *c*.1923.

Plate1. The Goods Shed

2. Soho Shed

On the other side of the line, you will see a stone building with a chimney. This is the oldest surviving industrial building in New Shildon. It was built as an iron merchant's warehouse in 1826 by Messrs Kilburn of Bishop Auckland; they were presumably attracted to this site because it was next to the new railway line. It was purchased by Timothy Hackworth (see box below) for his Soho Works sometime after 1833 and possibly used as a pattern shop and for storage (Young 1975, 313), and was later reused by the NER from 1863 as a paint shop for locomotives. Under floor heating, modelled on a Roman hypocaust, helped the paint dry, and, during the 1870's, two locomotives a week were painted here. The chimney would have been linked to a boiler which provided the heat for the underfloor heating. In the twentieth century it was used as a practice room for the Shildon Works Silver Band and as a boxing gym where it turned out a number of boxing champions.[1]

Plate 2. The Soho Shed

If you look carefully through the trees you will see the red pantiled roof of Timothy Hackworth's House, where he lived from 1831 until his death in 1850. He lived in one side

[1] Information from Simon Smalley, Locomotion and Jane Hackworth-Young, Friends of the NRM

of the larger house, while his brother, Thomas, lived in the other. Beyond this were his Soho Works, including a foundry, machine shop, blacksmith's shop, coal-drying ovens and an adjacent gas works – all now gone.

Taking you further…Timothy Hackworth

Timothy Hackworth was master of ceremonies at the opening and also acted as the first guard during the momentous journey on the 27th September 1825. He was born in Wylam near the River Tyne in 1786 and at fourteen left school to take an apprenticeship before following his father (who died in 1804) as foreman of the smiths at the nearby colliery in 1810. Whilst at Wylam, he worked with Hedley and Forster on the design and construction of a number of steam engines including Puffing Billy and Wylam Dilly, and was responsible for all maintenance and improvement work. In 1815 he left Wylam, having refused to work on the Sabbath, and in 1816, became foreman of Walbottle Colliery. Eight years later, in 1824, George Stephenson invited Hackworth to oversee his newly built locomotive works at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where Locomotion was in the process of construction. During his time at the Newcastle Works, Hackworth had considerable influence on the design of Locomotion (he subsequently rebuilt the engine three times with a succession of modifications and improvements, including the system of coupling the wheels with outside rods and a return crank rather than chains). Hackworth was appointed as the Superintendent of Permanent and Locomotive Engines for the Stockton & Darlington Railway in May 1825. New Shildon was the obvious place for Hackworth to live and develop his engineering work as it marked the point where waggons changed from stationary locomotive powered inclines and mobile locomotives. It fell to Hackworth to keep all the locomotives, whether stationary or mobile, running, which, given the embryonic nature of these machines, was no mean feat.

"Locomotive engineering owes more to Timothy Hackworth, after George Stephenson, than to any other man." (Jeans 1875 (1974)269)

Later he designed the first reliable engine to withstand the rigours of everyday of commercial use, the Royal George (1827), a powerful six-coupled locomotive which was seen as the first in the world to establish steam power as a viable and economic alternative to horse power. The Royal George was a far superior machine, and the first engine in which the cylinders drove directly onto the wheels and employed a correctly aligned and valved steam blastpipe which ensured that boiler pressure was always maintained; thus curing the lack of steam found in Stephenson's earlier engines. The concept was used on all later engine designs, including Robert Stephenson's Rocket. Other improvements conceived by Hackworth included the characteristic plug wheel and the prototype 0-6-0 mineral engine which was to became the standard wheel arrangement for goods and mixed traffic engines right up until the last days of the steam locomotive in the late 1960s (Walton, pers.com). In 1829, another of Hackworth's engines, the Sans Pareil competed against the Rocket in the Liverpool to Manchester Rainhill railway trials. This was a six-day trial during which the engines had to run ten trips over a length of track at Rainhill in order to assess whether they were fast and reliable enough to make regularly the return journey between Liverpool and Manchester. Five engines competed for the £500 prize; however, the Sans Pareil burst a cylinder and lost out to Stephenson's Rocket. Local feeling has it that the cracked cylinder, which was cast and bored at Stephenson's works, had been deliberately sabotaged by the rival company.

Continue along the path towards the right away, from the Goods Shed and car park and towards the modern station. You will see large arched stone structures on your left.

3. The Coal Drops

These stone arched structures on the left are coal drops dating from 1846/7 and are thought to be the largest surviving examples left in the country. They were used for fuelling the tenders of railway locomotives. Waggons loaded with coal were shunted up the ramp on the far side and along the top of the coal drops where the coal would be released into a wooden hopper and then an iron chute which directed the coal into a waiting tender below.[2] There was enough capacity to load four tenders at once because this was an extremely busy loading area; once the loading was complete, the empty waggons were shunted backwards and replaced with the next set of laden waggons. There were four coal drops in the rectangular spaces, but one was subsequently adapted as an office space. Other narrower arches, some of which are blocked, are engineering arches designed to strengthen the structure and minimise the use of materials. If you look carefully you will see that some of the materials were old four-hole stone sleepers used from the 1830s by the S&DR, but here split and reused. The pale coloured bricks were a mixture of local bricks including Bolckow Vaughan Company bricks.

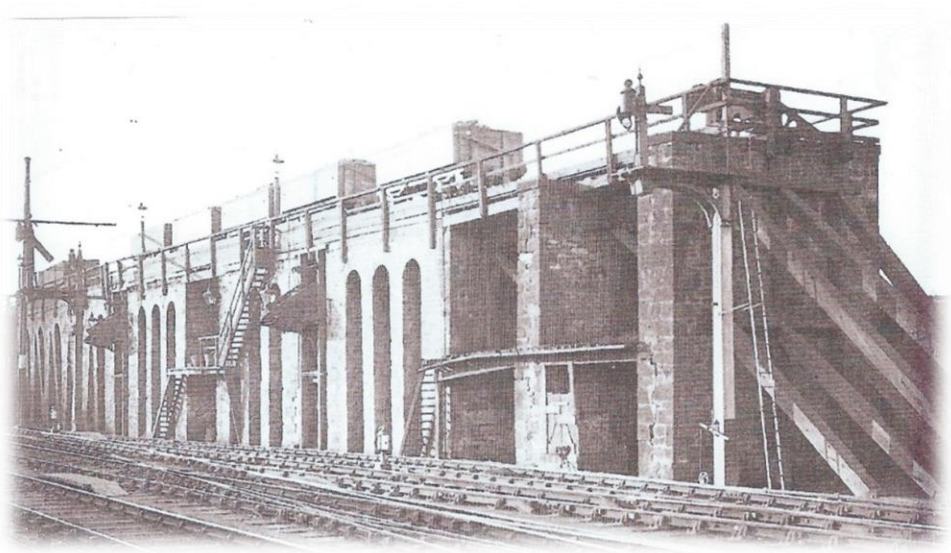

Plate 3. Undated photograph, possibly dating from the1920s, of the coal drops (photo copyright Friends of the S&DR/John Proud collection)

You will see a sign to the left into the modern station (the old station of 1842 was demolished). This requires you to cross a museum railway line – this is only used for special events, but you should still take care and look both ways. Once you are on the platform, use the bridge to your left to cross the live line and then take the path out of the station and head to your right towards Spout Lane.

4. The Signal Box and Signalman's Cottage

Just before you get to Spout Lane, you will see the back of a railway signal box on your right. This dates to 1887 but was modified in 1928 and 1984 – various alterations are apparent in the brickwork. This was built for the Central Division (covering the former

[2] Information from Simon Smalley, Locomotion

S&DR routes) of the North-Eastern Railway Co. Ltd., possibly designed by Thomas Prosser, architect to the NER. This box is a variant of the Division's Type C2 signal box. The interior retains its McKenzie & Holland pattern 16 frame lever system installed in 1928, reduced from 55 levers to 42 levers in 1984. There are two other railway buildings here, one of which was the signalman's cottage. The other may have been a weigh house, but probably not the original weigh house that was home to Joseph Anderson and his wife. He was appointed, on the 14th May 1827, as the first railway accountant, and also had responsibility for timekeeping at Shildon works as well as dealing with tickets for trains passing over Brusselton bank (Holmes 1975, 18 and Slack and O'Neill 2015, 25). Anderson was listed as a weighing machine keeper in the local trade directory for East Thickley in 1828.[3]

Plate 4. The 1887 signal box from the rear (left) and from the railway line (right)

When you get to Spout Lane, carefully cross the road and you will see that the path continues along the edge of the track straight ahead.

The path continues passed the modern engine sheds of the National Railway Museum (on your right) and if you are lucky, you will spot a number of locomotives, and possibly some will be in steam.

Plate 5. The signal box and cottages with the coal drops in the distance in British Railway days.

[3] White's Directory 1828

5. You might notice rough ground high up on the left. This was **Thickley Quarry** which produced limestone that was transported by the new railway from 1825.

6. Continue under **Thickley Bridge** (NZ2412425493). There was no bridge here in 1825, but one was built in 1857, by Harris of Stockton, to provide access for the farmer between fields. It has since been much lengthened southwards, by the late 19th Century, to accommodate the many sidings that ran along here. The bridge was a technological achievement, as the span was made of a single casting. You can also see the remains of electric overhead wiring, complete with insulator blocks, introduced in 1914 and still attached to the bridge and electricity transmission poles lying in the grass (see box below).

Figure 2. George Stephenson's proposed route for the S&DR in red, including the Black Boy branch that was opened in 1827 and the earlier superseded route by George Overton in blue, which would require a tunnel at School Aycliffe. At this time only one limestone quarry existed, at Needless, but the introduction of the railway presented more opportunities to extract the limestone from the area, and send it off to other places on the route, or to Stockton for export. (The letters '-ONE' on the map are part of an area marked as LIMESTONE – clearly an important reason for the railway company to provide a means of transport here). (DRO Q/D/P8).

In 1825 the line was only single track, but it was doubled in 1831 (Semmens 1975, 17). It is noticeable that the fenced area here is much wider than the live line or the path. That is because, by the late 19th century, there were many railway sidings here. The original line was quite straight between Shildon and Aycliffe, but here there is a slight curve where the through running tracks avoided the extensive Shildon Yards, which occupied much of this empty space (Semmens 1975, 20).

Plate 6. Thickley Bridge. The 1825 track ran beneath the older section of bridge, between the two stone abutments.

Taking your further…

The area next to Locomotion, and onwards, forms only part of what was, at one time, reputedly the largest marshalling yard in the world, before the construction, in 1927, of the Chicago marshalling yard in the USA. Some 27 miles of sidings, full of loaded and empty coal waggons, must have been an impressive sight.

The line also provides the route of the pioneering NER Shildon to Newport overhead 1500 DC electrification scheme devised by Sir Vincent Raven, the NER's Chief Mechanical Engineer in order to haul more efficiently the many trains from these yards to the coast. This ran from Shildon to further yards next to the River Tees, along the Clarence Railway, whose branch left the route of the S&DR at Simpasture Junction (near the site of the newest station on the line – Newton Aycliffe built in 1978).

The electric railway ran from 1915 to 1935, using a fleet of 10 powerful electric engines shedded at Shildon (a further two smaller pioneering locomotives were allocated to Tyneside, one of which can still be seen at the NRM Locomotion). In addition, Locomotive No. 13 was trialled on the Shildon-Newport line hauling a dozen or more passenger carriages with the Dynamometer Car. However, the engine remained largely unused due to the shelving of the electrification scheme after the integration, in 1923, of the NER with the new London and North Eastern Railway. No.13 was scrapped in 1950, but did manage to appear in the S&DR centenary procession of 1925 when it was repainted from a workshop grey livery to LNER's green livery.

(Source: Charlie Walton, Chairman of the Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership and George Smith).

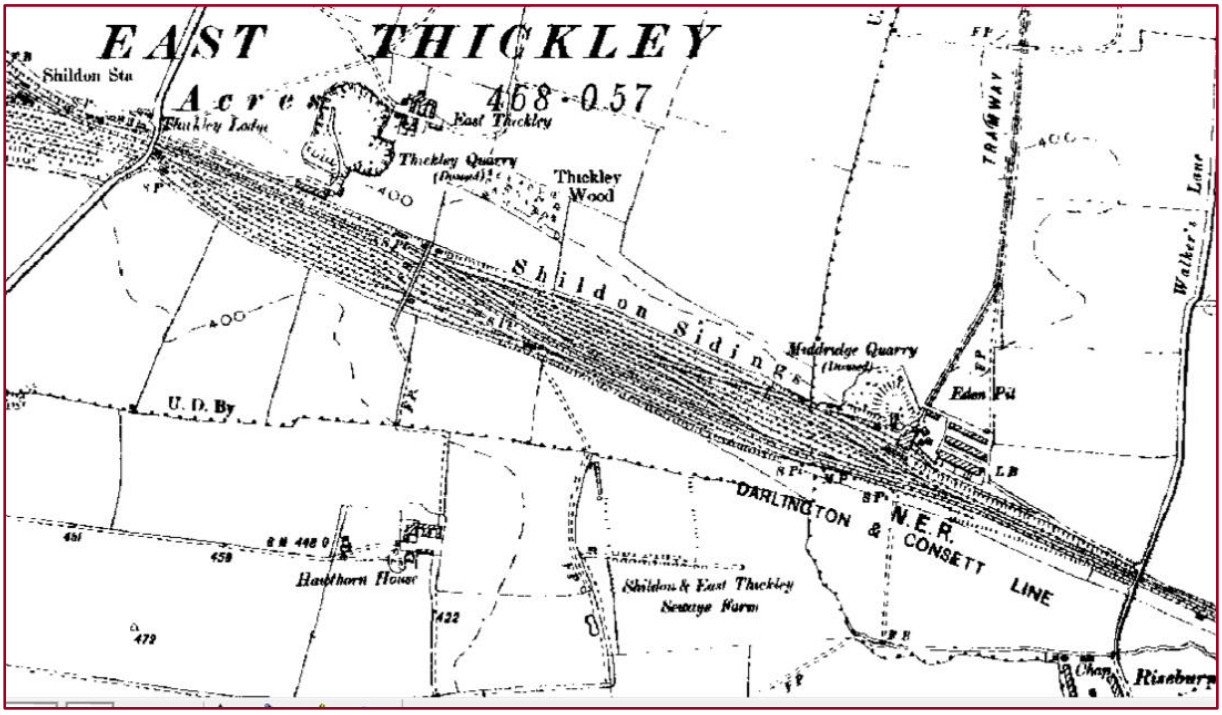

Figure 3. The 2nd edition OS map dating to 1897 showing the extent of the railway sidings after 70 years of growth

7. Keep a look out on your left for **stone walling,** partly hidden by trees. A high stone wall, with triangular copes, separated the railway line from Middridge Quarry, and may have supported sidings which extended out from the quarry to join the main line (see figure 3). The presence of the Stockton & Darlington Railway line made the export of materials from quarries and mines more practical, and so quarries such as this opened up along the way. This quarry was disused by the end of the 19th century. At the foot of this wall are a number of early stone sleepers. These are four hole sleepers, which were introduced in about 1834, to improve the stability of the rails.

"Suddenly one of the waggons – that containing the surveyors and engineers – began to jolt violently, and the jolting increasing instead of diminishing, word was passed up to the engine, and the train was brought to a standstill. On examination it was found that the waggon had slipped off the rails through some defect in one of the wheels. It was replaced on the line and the train proceeded on the way. It had not run many minutes before the jolting recommenced, the wheel had again left the rails, and it was determined to uncouple the faulty waggon, to shunt it on to a siding, and proceed without it."

(An account of the journey on the 27th September 1825 after the procession left Shildon, by M. Heavisides 1912, 63-4)

Plate 7. The wall next to Thickley limestone quarry with four hole sleepers scattered at its base

8. When you reach a point where a footpath crosses the live railway line, you will see a sign to a footpath to your left, and a flight of steps up the railway cutting edge. You can quickly go up the steps, where you will see the remains of another disused quarry – **Middridge Quarry**. This also supplied limestone. Between the quarry and Walker's Lane, just ahead (to your right), was a coal mine, called Eden Pit, with rows of terraced houses. A tramway running north linked to another pit – Charles Pit. Both belonged to the Weardale Iron and Coal Company, and operated from the 1870s.

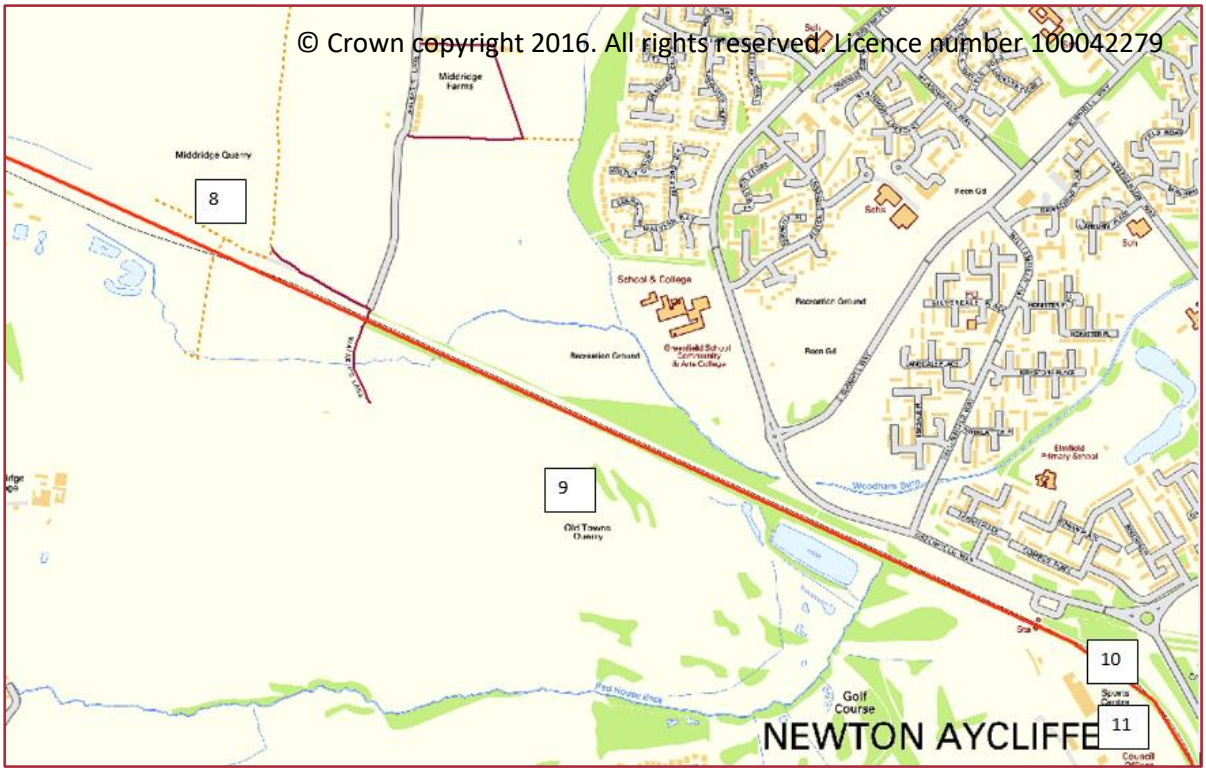

Figure 4. The second part of the route

Plate 8. Middridge Quarry today

Plate 9. Houses, now demolished, from Eden Pit at Middridge. (photo courtesy of Chris Sowerby)

On the south side of the railway line, behind you, there was another village; Riseburn, where in the early part of the 20th Century, the pits closed and the houses were demolished.

Return down the steps and continue along the line towards Aycliffe, and under a bridge that carries Walker's Lane over it. This bridge served the quarries on both sides of the line and is later than 1825.

9. After you have passed two fields, you will notice that the ground on both sides of the track consists of grass covered mounds and undulations. These are more disused quarries. To the south (your right) is **Old Town Quarry**, named after the ruins still visible on maps dating to 1855 (see figure 5). You will notice the remains of a retaining wall on the opposite side of the live line – this must be where loading took place from the quarry on to the line.

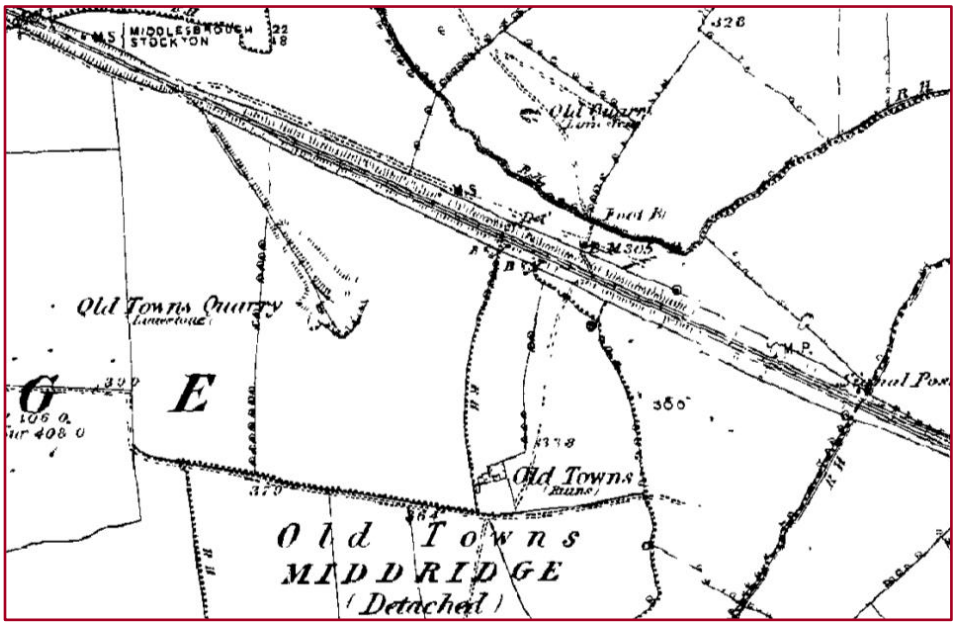

Figure 5. OS 1st ed. map dated 1855 showing Old Towns Quarry linked to the railway line by a branch line.

As you walk along this stretch, you might notice some wooden sleepers lying amongst the vegetation. These are from the railway line's later period of use during the mid-20th century. When you reach Aycliffe Station, which serves Newton Aycliffe, you might be able to see a set of stone sleepers on the opposite side of the track, close to the platform. Unfortunately, no access is permitted to see these sleepers, and so they can only be viewed from the path or the opposite platform. These sleepers are not in their original position, but were placed here as part of an earlier celebration of the S&DR.

10. From the station, the original S&DR route curved south towards Heighington and then to Darlington. Take the path up to the main road and turn right towards the signs for the sports centre. As you climb up away from the line, look at the elevation of the **stone bridge** ahead. It has recently been replaced with new decking but, prior to that, the bridge was supported by a steel girder. This was a repair carried out following an accident in 1949.

Taking you further…

You are at the location of a collision on 16th November 1949 at 5.43am. A passenger train, travelling from Crook to Darlington, ran into a brake van and fourteen waggons. The passenger train was carrying about 120 passengers, but none were seriously injured. Four complained of shock and were taken away in an ambulance, but the remainder continued, on foot, to Heighington, where they caught another train. Five members of the railway staff were slightly injured. The goods waggons were thrown on top of each other and hit the underside of the stone accommodation bridge ahead, which collapsed and blocked the line. The passenger train's tender was derailed, and hit the bridge abutment, causing damage. The inquiry which followed found that two different signalmen failed to notice that the freight train had no brake van or tail light (source: official report by Col. D. McMullen).

11. When you get to the bridge over the railway line, do not cross it, but head left along the path across the grassy area. Before you do however, the sports centre is roughly on the site of a farm, called **Sim Pasture**, which existed here in 1825. This was where Locomotion

No.1 had to stop for a while, during the opening ceremony, because oakum had got into the feed pump (Heavisides 1912, 64):

> 'It was intended to try the speed of the engine on the straight run south to Darlington; but before this intention could be carried out, the passengers were once more startled by the Train coming to a sudden stop at Simpasture. Everybody left the train. The directors hurried to the engine. What was the matter? Stephenson was fortunately able to give them a reassuring answer. Nothing serious. "Some oakum had got into the feed pump, that was all; it would soon be all right."
> At last Stephenson got things put to rights, and Hackworth was told to get the passengers into the waggons. Timothy, with stentorian voice, shouted out, as he passed down the train, "Every man to take his own convoy!" The earliest form, we suppose, of the now familiar "Take your seats" of the railway guard.'
> (An account of the journey on the 27th September 1825 after the procession left Shildon by M. Heavisides 1912, 63-4)

With the bridge to the sports centre on your right, you can now walk across the foot and cycle path left across the grassy area, towards a stone bridge (NZ 26841 24336), now filled in. This was where a later line, known as the Clarence Railway, left the S&DR. It is now a rail trail which can be followed, although it will take you away from the 1825 S&DR.

12. The Clarence Railway. Parliamentary approval was given, in May, 1828, for a rival railway company to create a direct route between the South Durham coal-field and the banks of the River Tees at Stockton. This company started hauling coal along the line in August, 1833 and because the route was shorter and bypassed Darlington, it was expected to be more popular than the S&DR (and was later the one used by the NER electrification). This branch line left the S&DR at Sim Pasture, between the 17 ¼ and 17 ½ mileposts from Stockton, and terminated beyond Stockton, at Haverton Hill. The Act for this new Clarence branch line also made provision to carry passengers. The S&DR fought back by placing difficulties in its way; the Clarence could not reach the coalfield without using part of the S&DR and so by levying a duty of 2 ¼ d per ton per mile, the S&DR was able to impose a crippling 2s 6d surcharge on each chaldron waggon of 53 cwt. Consequently, the financial position of the Clarence Railway was never healthy (Hoole 1986, 131).

Plate 10. The disused and backfilled bridge, which served the Clarence Railway

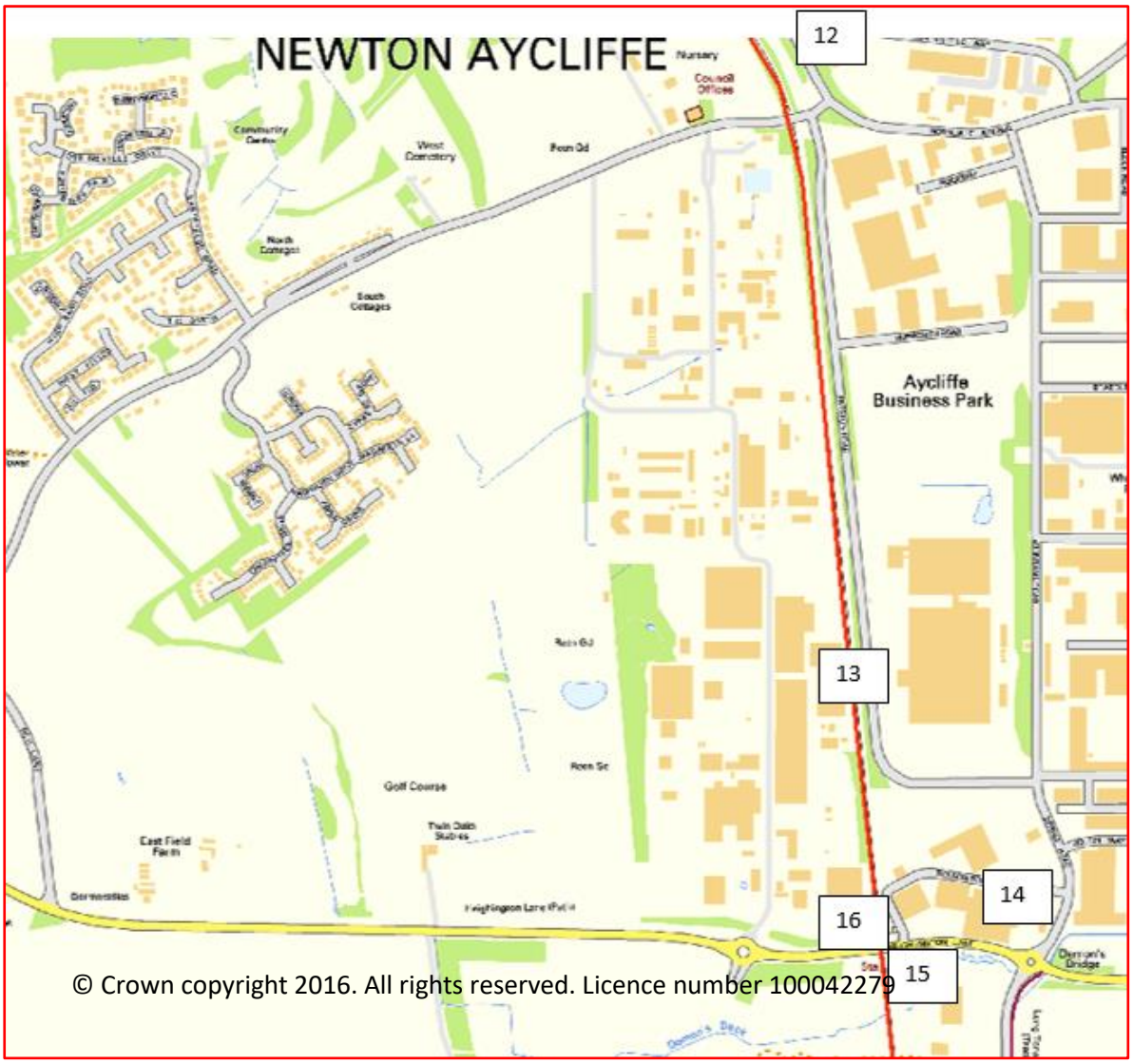

Figure 6. The final stretch of the walk route

Bear right across the grassy area towards the busy roundabout, and turn down Horndale Avenue, which has a pavement and wide grassy verge, and runs parallel with the live S&DR line.

Taking you further….
Newton Aycliffe was founded in 1947, under the New Towns Act of 1946. It was chosen to exemplify Beveridge's vision for a post- war Britain, with a massive new town on the site of a former munitions factory, where workers from the industrial estate could live in the, mostly social, housing. Beveridge himself, often referred to as the founder of the country's Welfare State, chose to live in Newton Aycliffe for a short time. It was originally designed for 10,000 people, but the target population was doubled in 1957, and doubled again in 1966 to 45,000 (Pevsner and Williams 1990, 368). The new town has since had its population targets reduced, but the industrial estates have continued to expand (Archaeo-Environment 2015).

Horndale Avenue follows the line until it reaches a roundabout, at which point take Preston Road, which also follows the line heading south. There is a sloping grassy verge from which you can look down on to the live line, which passes through an original S&DR cutting.

13. Aycliffe Wood House Bridge (**NZ 27050 23254)**

About 758m south on Preston Road, to your right, you might see the remains of a stone bridge crossing the live line. Here, the verge is flanked by an embankment, and the bridge is on the high ground, and is not immediately obvious. You can, however, walk up from the verge and look at the bridge. You will see that it is an attractive and well-constructed structure, of dressed sandstone. The scale of the bridge suggests that it served a major crossing point, but it appears simply to have been built to give access to fields, on both sides of the line, for Aycliffe Wood House. A bridge is shown here on a map dating to 1828 and so it may be original to the 1825 line, although its style appears to be mid-19th century. [4]

> 'At Aycliffe a crowd was gathered to see it pass, and the young Robinsons ran down the line with the train to Darlington, and afterwards as far as Fighting Cocks' (Heavisides 1912, 64).

Where Preston Road meets the industrial estate, it goes to the left around it. At this point you leave the 1825 route, to detour through the industrial estate. This long straight stretch of line was where, on the launch day, the Directors decided to test the speed of the engines. They reached a speed of fifteen miles an hour (Heavisides 1912, 65).

Plate 11. Aycliffe Wood House bridge

[4] DCD/ E/AF/7/1-2 (John Davison plan of Great Aycliffe for Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral, with book of survey, 1828, plan 1.5m x 2.5m) CCD 13607 (plan)).

Figure 7. The Great Aycliffe Township map of 1828 showing Aycliffe Wood Farm Bridge. Note that the line has passing places to the north and south

14. The Second World War Munitions Factory

At the T-junction, turn right down Spring Road, and then right into Station Road, which cuts through the industrial estate. Follow this and, as it curves round to the left towards Heighington Station, you will pass some brick- built wartime buildings.

Taking you further:

This industrial estate was built on the site of a Second World War munitions manufacturing base, much of which consisted of huge grass-covered buildings, designed to withstand any accidental explosions in weapons assembly, and serviced by the nearby railway lines. The factories were largely staffed by women who were dubbed the '*Aycliffe Angels*'. The regular layout and massive scale of the Munitions Factory lent itself to post war use as an industrial estate, and new industries and businesses moved in, with the encouragement of the government's English Industrial Estates Corporation. Some used the existing buildings whilst others demolished the wartime buildings and built their own (Archaeo-Environment 2015).

At the end of Station Road, you will be facing the 'Locomotion One' pub and Heighington Station, with the signal box to your right. The station was originally named *Aycliffe Lane and* was subsequently renamed three times: first to *Aycliffe and Heighington*, later, on 1 July 1871, it became *Aycliffe*, although this name lasted for just over three years, because on 1 September 1874 it gained the present name of *Heighington*.[5] However the history of the building began before the concept of a railway station was invented!

[55] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heighington_railway_station [accessed 220415]

Plate 12. Aerial photograph dating to 1945 showing the military use of the area and the growing industrial complex

Plate 13. Former military buildings dating to the Second World War

15. Heighington Station, Tavern, Coal and Lime Depot[6]

This now-elongated and much extended building started its existence in 1826 when the S&DR Company began building three public houses along the line: at Stockton and Darlington and a more modest, slightly later inn here, which was referred to in the Company minutes as '…a Cottage and other conveniences to be built at Aycliffe Lane..' It was to be designed by John Carter like the S&DR inns at Darlington and Stockton, the masonry work by Storey & Sons and the joinery by Michael Windale.[7] The three inns (all of which still

[6] Grateful thanks to Brendan Boyle for information on the tavern and cottages
[7] National Archives, RAIL 667/31, Minutes of SDR Sub Committee held on 29 Sept 1826 (courtesy of Brendan Doyle)

stand, in one form or another) are the earliest S&DR buildings surviving on the line (only some bridges are older).

The original part of the building is the highest part, closest to the tracks, but the Township map of 1828 also shows where the later 1840s extensions would be proposed. It is T-shaped in plan, with the bar of the 'T' parallel with the road. It was completed by May 1827.[8]

Alongside the track is a small cobbled area situated at rail level; by tradition this is referred to as the original Stockton & Darlington Railway platform (Semmens 1975, 17). You can see this from the present day railway platform.

Plate 14 Heighington Station, possibly around 1900 showing the low, very early platform against the railway line.

The Stockton inn opened in late 1826 but this, and the one at Darlington, were continually refused licences by the local magistrates (Darlington's magistrates covered both locations). It wasn't until October 1829 that a change in the law allowed the Company to appeal to the Durham Quarter Sessions: they won both cases conclusively (Durham County Advertiser 24.10.1829, p3).

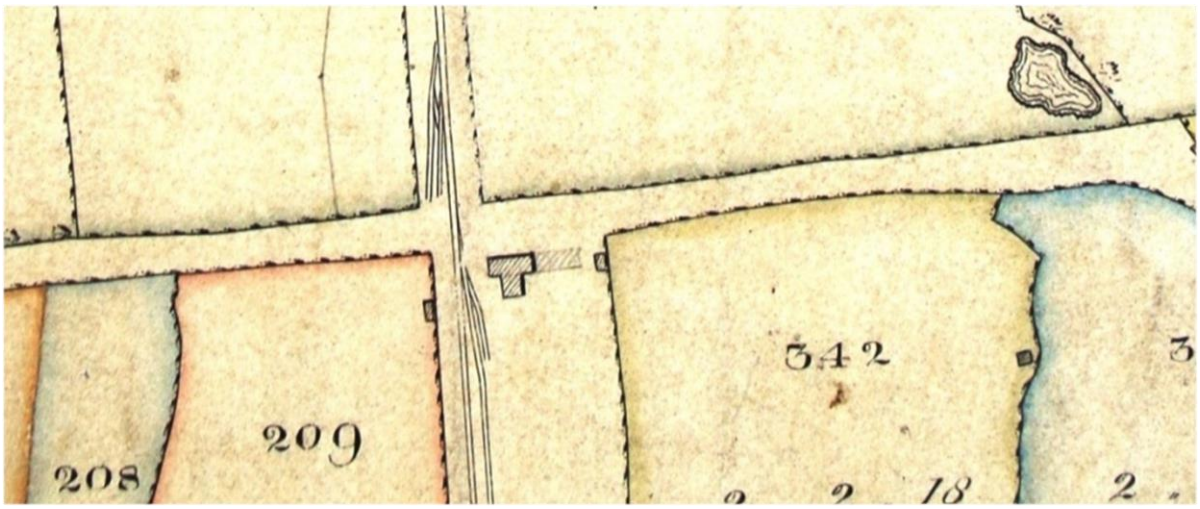

Figure 8. Aycliffe Township Map of 1828 showing the Inn and the sidings to the coal depot to the rear. The building to the east of the inn was probably a weigh house for checking coal or lime in and out. Note also the extension that was to take place in the 1840s has already been outlined. The building on the left of the track could be a waiting room, but on the 1st ed OS map of 1855 there is a signal box marked, presumably to control traffic in and out of the coal depot.

[8] DCD/ E/AF/7/1-2 (John Davison plan of Great Aycliffe for Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral, with book of survey, 1828, plan 1.5m x 2.5m) CCD 13607 (plan)).

The S&DR's intention was that the landlord of the Aycliffe Lane inn, a Matthew Turnbull, would not only provide shelter and refreshments to coach passengers on the line, and to people using the adjacent coal depot, but would help local people securely send and receive parcels. All of which would benefit the business of the railway at no running cost to the Company - with Mr Turnbull's rent paying off the cost of the building.

The Company's hopes for the inn - which a trade directory of 1834 recorded as 'The King's Arms' - were clearly over-ambitious as Mr Turnbull had left by 1841, and it was certainly no longer in pub use by 1848. Poor trade should not have been a major surprise: one speaker at the licensing appeal had described its location, remote as it was from the villages of both Aycliffe and Heighington, as ‘bleak’. Its present urbanised surroundings are very much a modern phenomenon!

Eventually the Company used the building to house a station master and his family, and to provide a booking office (and, no doubt, somewhere to receive and distribute parcels which it had done since 1826). It is not clear when this was but it was many years after the original construction. A trade directory of 1848 referred to a 'station' here; a station master (one Thomas Wilson) was first mentioned in 1851.

The first major extension of the original building, alongside the road, took place sometime between 1841 and 1851 when two additional cottages for railway employees were built. (The wing at the eastern - Aycliffe - end is a much more recent pub extension, circa 1980.) Sometime between 1871 and 1881 a short terrace of four more houses was erected 140 yards south of the station building, at the south end of the coal depot yard. They were named as 'Railway Cottages' in the 1881 Census and 'Station Cottages' on Ordnance Survey maps. As all the households were headed by railway employees, the Railway Company must have built and owned them.

> ‘I am in the habit of travelling along the railway two or three times a week. I live at Black Boy, about three miles from Mr Turnbull’s house [the S&DR Railway Tavern at Heighington]. I consider him to be a respectable man in his line of life. I think it is a very unlikely place for any profligate or immoral conduct to occur in. I think the Company would not allow it. I know that any person behaving disorderly is dismissed by the Company’
> (Testimony of Archibald Knox at the appeal against the refusal of a licence to run Heighington Station as a public house. Reported in Durham Advertiser 24.10.1829, p3. This shows that commuting by railway was already regularly taking place by 1829!)

Plate 15. The Locomotion One public house today

Each residential property was labelled by the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 1857 by the addition of a ceramic plaque, with a unique identifying number. The Station House (the original building) was G2 (the original ceramic plaque is now in the Head of Steam Museum in Darlington – it was removed before 1975 when the station buildings fell into disuse, and demolition was threatened (Semmens 1975, 17)). Another larger cottage was added to the row between 1897 and 1919 (OS 3rd ed. 25 inch). Each cottage had a back yard and an outside WC. The cottages have since been demolished (they were still there in the 1970s), although the ground levels here are high and littered with demolition debris, including a four panel door (a typical Victorian design), suggesting that they may survive as foundations.

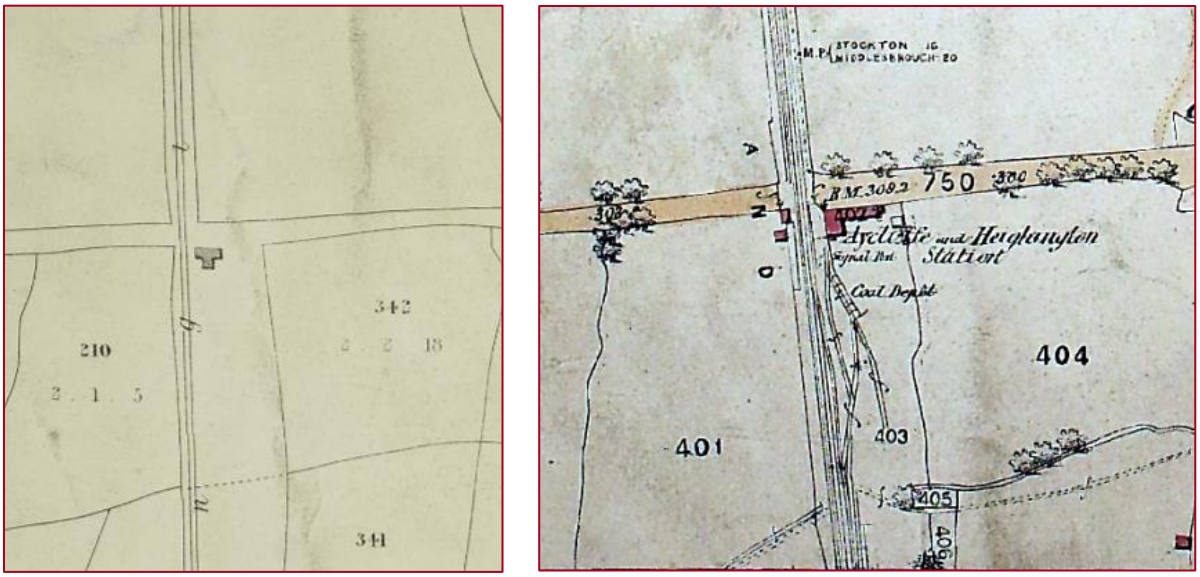

Figure 9. Left: Tithe map of Great Aycliffe, dating from 1838, showing the Railway Inn public house and cottage next to the new railway line (DDR/EA/TTH/1/5). Right, OS map dating from 1857, showing the building having been extended, and the coal depot, complete with sidings. Two additional buildings were located on the opposite side of the track, and an early signal box south of the station.

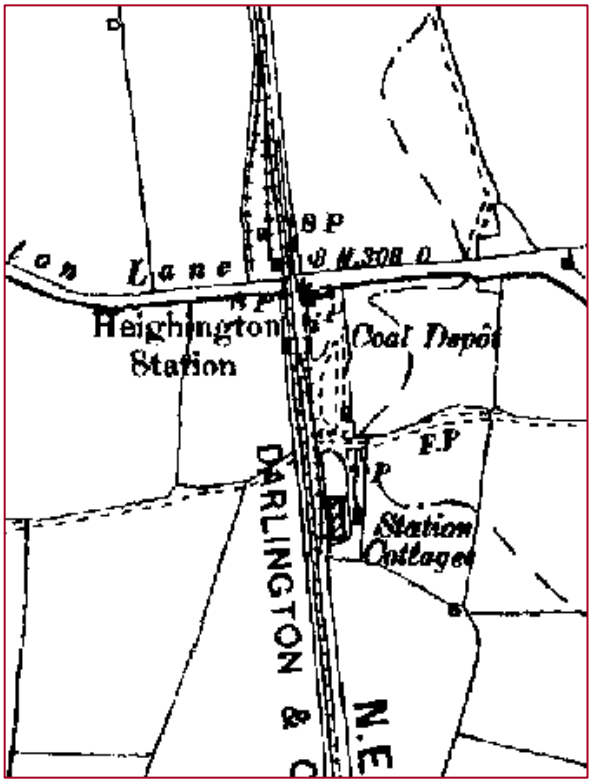

Figure 10. The 2nd ed OS map dating to 1897 shows the addition of cottages south of the depot.

The historic maps from 1828 onwards show a **coal depot** to the south of the station complete with its own sidings; this is now part of the pub's car park. The S&DR set out to ensure that workers and merchants, using the coal depots, had access to refreshments. So, consistently, we see a link between taverns and coal depots along the 1825 route. The coal depot (they usually also handled lime) was furnished with sidings which would enter the site at a high level and tip the loads from waggons into individual coal drops where coal merchants could approach by cart from the road and take the coal away for further sale, having paid at the weigh house. If you walk along the railway platform alongside the inn, you

will see a stone wall running parallel with the railway line, south of the former station, which appears to be the remains of the coal depot drops.

16. Heighington signal box. This is a good surviving early example, although still much later than 1825. It follows the earliest standard design of the Central Division of the North Eastern Railway (which superseded the Stockton and Darlington Railway), featuring a ridgeline that was parallel with the track to allow easy future extension. This approach was widely adopted nationally and Heighington, which was extended in circa 1912, is a good illustration of the merits of the design. The signal box is well preserved, and retains an increasingly rare pre-First World War lever frame (listed building description).

Plate 16. Heighington signal box. The bricks are noticeably different where it was extended c1912.

This marks the end of the route of your walk.

On the 27th September 1825 the journey from Shildon to Darlington took two hours, including the stops outside Shildon and at Simpasture. Without the stops it would have taken 55 minutes.

It is not currently possible to walk the next part of the line to Darlington, but you do have a number of options:

- Return to Shildon or Aycliffe by train
- Continue your journey by train to Darlington, Dinsdale, Eaglescliffe or Thornaby; all with access to other parts of the 1825 S&DR line.

This guided walk leaflet was compiled using the following sources of information:

- Archaeo-Environment Ltd 2015. *Desk Based Assessment of the Heritage Interest at the Proposed South Durham UTC Buildings at Long Tens Lane, Newton Aycliffe*
- Brendan Boyle, Friends of the S&DR for information on Heighington Station and Tavern.
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- Ordnance Survey historic mapping 1855-1974
- Jeans, J.S 1875. *Jubilee Memorial to the Railway System – A History of the Stockton & Darlington Railway and a Record of its Results*
- Proud, John – photographic collection made available via Win Proud by Jane Hackworth-Young and Susan Nixon, Friends of the NRM and the 1825 S&DR
- Quarter Sessions maps of the proposed railway held at Durham Records Office (Q/D/P8)
- Semmens, P.W.B 1975. *Exploring the Stockton & Darlington Railway*
- Slack, G and O'Neill 2015. *The First Five Miles*
- Tracey Gillette of Network Rail, for additional information on the signal box
- Township Map of 1828, Durham University Special Collections (DUSC E/AF/7/1-2)
- Caroline Hardie, Archaeo-Environment, original text
- Fieldwork by the Friends of the 1825 S&DR and the Friends of the NRM
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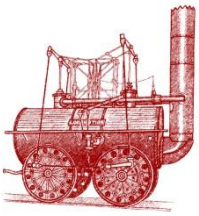
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