

The Brusselton Incline.



An 1827 lithograph showing a stylised Brusselton Incline engine house with waggons being hauled to the top by the stationary engine while Locomotion No.1 waits on the level ground at New Shildon to the east to haul them to Stockton.

Once you have arrived at Brusselton your journey starts at the bottom of the bank where the road to Brusselton joins the main road (Brusselton Lane). On the far side of the main road, there are some steps leading to the top of a bridge. Climb them; you are now on top of **Brusselton Accommodation Bridge**.

Brusselton
Accommodation Bridge



What is an accommodation bridge?

This accommodation bridge was built to allow the farmer access to the land on either side of the incline. Once on top of the bridge look to the west beyond West Auckland, this is where the coal was mined in the grounds of Witton Park Castle.

Why did the locomotives start hauling coal at Shildon and not Witton Park?

Looking beyond West Auckland, can you see the height and slope of the land? Early locomotives needed flat land to travel over, and this started at Shildon. From Witton Park the coal was brought over Etherley Incline on rails to West Auckland and then horses were used to pull the waggons to the bottom of Brusselton Incline. The waggons were attached to ropes and hauled to the top of the incline by a stationary engine.

Climb back down the steps and cross the main road with care.

On your right you will see the remains of a road bridge which was demolished in 1954. At the beginning of the lane leading to Brusselton, you will see a small square boundary stone with the initials S and R.

Climb the steps to the top of the incline and look towards Brusselton.

Road leading to Brusselton with stone sleepers on top of the Incline.



What are the two rows of stones set into the ground?

These are stone sleepers. The rails, along which the waggons were drawn, were fastened to these by railway chairs. If you look closely at the stones, you will see holes where railway chairs were fastened to the sleepers. The rail fits into the chair.



Railway chair seen from above.

Note the four holes for attachment to the stone sleeper and the centre depression which held the rail.

Walk up the incline towards Brusselton.

Brusselton Incline was built by the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) together with a building for the stationary engine and houses for its workers to live in. Thomas Storey was the civil engineer responsible for the line and bridges; he took up his post in 1822. Timothy Hackworth was appointed Superintendent Engineer of the S&DR in May 1825. He was responsible for building and repairing the locomotives and redesigning the workings of the stationary engine and winding house at the top of Brusselton. Timothy had previously built locomotives at Wylam in Northumberland and was employed by George Stephenson in 1824 to help build Locomotion No. 1. (He was awarded the contract to run the whole of the S&DR in 1833).

Continue up the incline until you see two semi-detached houses on the right.

These houses were built for the engineman and the blacksmith. Timothy Hackworth lived in the engineman's house for several months in 1825. The first engineman, who was called William Moutrey, then moved into the house. In 1827, Robert Young took over as the engineman and lived in this house until his death in 1848. His only son married Jane, Timothy Hackworth's youngest and ninth child.

On the wall you will see a black and white ceramic plaque with H1 on it?

Why was the H1 plaque attached to the wall?

In 1857 all houses and terraces where S&DR workers lived were given a letter and number set on a black and white ceramic plaque with the logo S&DR.

The last building on the right is the original engine house. This marks the top of Brusselton Incline. The houses on the left-hand side of the incline have been demolished.



The old engine house is on the left with the winding house and drums in the centre.



Back of the engine house as it is today, now a private house. The winding house has been demolished.

What was the purpose of the engine house?

The engine house contained a stationary engine which turned the large drums in the winding house. Rope was wound round each drum. One drum and rope hauled coal up the incline from West Auckland to Brusselton and the other drum and rope lowered the coal down the incline into Shildon. The engine house has now been converted into a private dwelling.

Beyond the engine house take the rough track that leads round to the back of the house. Here you will see a reservoir.

Brusselton reservoir and engine house.



What was the purpose of the reservoir?

The water from this reservoir was used to make steam which made the stationary engine go. The engine turned the drums which hauled the waggons up and down the incline.

Return to the front of the engine house. With your back to the engine house look to the right.

You will see a path leading away from Brusselton. This is the east incline down which the coal was lowered towards the waiting locomotives at Shildon.

If you have time to walk down the east side of the incline until you see stonework on the right. This used to be a bridge and was known as the Milk Bridge.

Why do you think it was called the Milk Bridge?

This bridge was used by the farmer to take his cattle across the incline allowing them to return to the farm to be milked.

Continue to follow the footpath which leads to a concrete subway allowing safe crossing under a busy road. Where the path forks, turn right and you will find yourself in the Hackworth Industrial Park.

This Industrial Park was named after Timothy Hackworth. This area was once the S&DR Locomotive Works, building engines until 1870. It then became Shildon Waggon Works employing many Shildon residents. The Works sold railway waggons all over the world. It closed in 1984.

Continue along the path to what was the Mason's Arms Public House.



The former Mason's Arms as it is now with sleeper blocks and types of early rail. Note the railway signal.



The Mason's Arms as it was during the 1970's.

Before you cross the main road look at the board giving information about the rails and railway signal. Locomotion No. 1 set off from the Mason's Arms on 27th September 1825 carrying coal, goods and passengers to Stockton.

Then you can carry on to Hackworth's House and other restored railway buildings, which are now part of the Locomotion Museum.

Continue along the path to Locomotion Museum. Entry is free.

This journey you have taken along the Brusselton Incline is only a small part of the bigger story of coal and the Stockton and Darlington Railway.

For more information visit Friends of the S&DR website <https://www.sdr1825.org.uk>