SHEFFIELD NUNNERY CURVE, MIDLAND RAILWAY

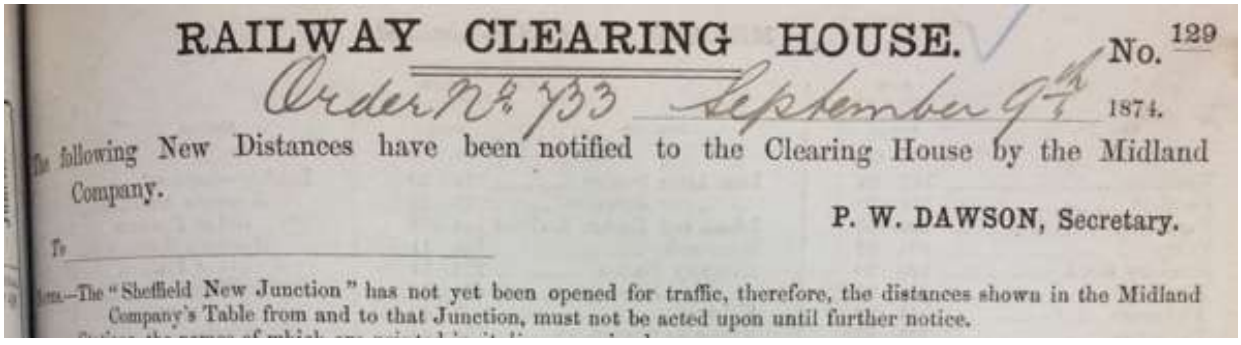
compiled by Richard Maund

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The assertion in Joy's *Regional History…vol. 8*, (1975 edn. pp. 171-172 and second item on p.267) that the Midland, in 1870, opened a connection from what later became Nunnery Main Line Junction (just north of their Sheffield station) to join the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway's line east of their Sheffield station is an unfortunate error – and the information about it having closed some 28 years later is therefore equally spurious.

The Midland had obtained running powers between Beighton Junction and Penistone Junction for all traffic over the MS&L by an agreement of 22 March 1866, as well as powers from there right through to Huddersfield station, and they certainly had an aspiration for a Sheffield ⇔ Huddersfield passenger service. Indeed, they did build the curve in question – albeit without a junction at the MS&L end. This is proven by contemporary mapping but the statement that the "curve was ready for inspection in July 1870" is misleading because, although on 4 June 1870 the Midland gave a 'first notice' for an inspection, this was never followed through – so there was never any Board of Trade approval for passenger use (TNA file MT29/31 confirms there was no BoT inspection and hence no approval given). Despite this, the Midland continued negotiations with the MS&L, to the extent that on 27 July 1870 the MS&L board (Minute 1296) gave *their* approval to the Midland's proposed junction. It seems, therefore, that two "Boards" may have been conflated by the author. Nevertheless, in the end, nothing came of the Midland's scheme.

Despite this, they did add "**SHEFFIELD**, New junction with MS&L" (to distinguish it from the existing junction near Wicker) when amending their data for inclusion in the January 1871 edition of the RCH Distance Tables (a copy of which is to be found at TNA RAIL 1089/17). The distance tables showed distances between stations on a given railway's system and all the junction or interchange points with other railways, to serve in calculating the division of receipts for through traffic movements between railways. This was a commercial document and sat alongside the RCH junction diagrams and Official Railway Maps. However, no RCH Circular was ever issued to state the junction was actually opened, and – somewhat belatedly - Circular no. 129 appeared dated 9 September 1874 to confirm that, indeed, the new junction "has not yet been opened for traffic":



RAILWAY CLEARING HOUSE. No. 129

Order No. 733 September 9th 1874.

The following New Distances have been notified to the Clearing House by the Midland Company.

P. W. DAWSON, Secretary.

To _____

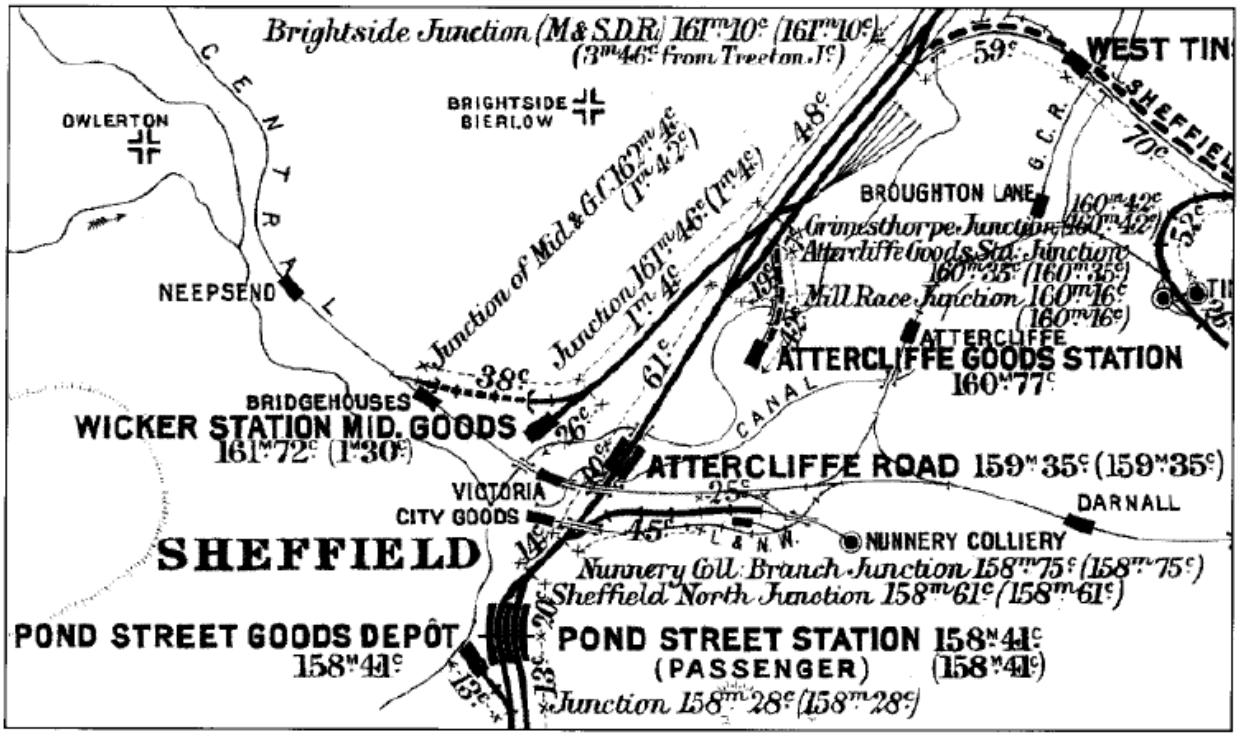
Note.—The "Sheffield New Junction" has not yet been opened for traffic, therefore, the distances shown in the Midland Company's Table from and to that Junction, must not be acted upon until further notice.

(This circular can also be found bound into RAIL 1089/17).

Ultimately, with the next re-issue of the Midland's distance tables, in June 1879 (RAIL 1089/21), the "ghost" junction disappeared. The fact that no equivalent entry was ever made in the MS&L tables proves that the junction was never "consummated" for revenue traffic – neither as a running junction nor "via sidings".

Despite this, the mythical "MS&L East Jn" continued to appear on Midland Railway Distance Diagrams, even after the line was amended by the 1887 map to extend to Nunnery Colliery – thus (at last!) giving the curve some revenue use. Eventually, in 1898 the map was amended to (more

correctly) show both the MS&L and Midland approaching Nunnery Colliery, with the only way of passing from one railway to the other being through the colliery's private siding layout. The diagrams can be consulted at https://rchsimagearchive.org.uk/index.php?album=Railways-Tramroads/LMSR-Group/Midland-Railway/Distance-Diagrams while a 25" OS plan revised 1903 is at https://maps.nls.uk/view/125651209



Extract from a 1909 Midland Railway Diagram

The curve (or branch) continued to be the Midland's access to Nunnery colliery and eventually – with the Sheffield area layout upheavals and reorganisations of the 1960s – did at last find a role as a passenger link between the two former railways from 4 October 1965.

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