

1: Haltwhistle to Alston Railway - Heddon-on-the-Wall Local History Society

The Alston line was a mile (km) standard-gauge branch line railway that operated in the counties of Northumberland and Cumberland in England. Starting at its junction with the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway line at Haltwhistle, the line ran to the town of Alston.

Alston station was 13 miles 12ch from Haltwhistle. The layout comprised a single yd passenger platform east of the running line, a carriage siding to the west, and several sidings either side of the platform. Unusually the southern end of the platform had steps, rather than a ramp. At the terminus a turntable was provided, but was disused by The station building Grade II listed is an imposing Tudoresque structure of the East Coast main line type, with random stone courses instead of the more urbane ashlar, mullioned windows, moulded door and window hoods, ball finials, and lofty coupled chimney stacks. Unfortunately its appearance was marred by the rendering of three sides. In a single-storey extension was added. A trainshed was supported by the station building, and covered the platform and two tracks. The trainshed roof was originally curved but was extended and rebuilt with a mansard profile in Wooden end screens on the trainshed continued to the platform with a glazed section, offering more protection against the elements for the passengers. The engine shed was closed on 27th September and was demolished when the trainshed was dismantled in the mids. Goods installations were extensive, including a three-ton crane and facilities for handling livestock, furniture, coal, lime, and ore. Private sidings served Alston Quarry to the north of the station , Alston Limeworks and a gas works, one of the sidings running through a tunnel under Hexham Road. The goods shed dating from also Grade II survives. Goods services ceased on 6th September and the station was unstaffed from 6th January Although removal of the trainshed and sidings left the station somewhat bleak, it retained some delightful fixtures at closure: After closure the site, stripped of its tracks, was forlorn, but restoration of the building and the introduction of narrow-gauge trains have revitalised Alston station. It is a delightful place to visit! Its longevity reflected the inadequacy of local roads in winter weather, rather than economic health: Since at least the fifteenth century, lead had been mined, and by , mines operated in Alston parish. Isolation from markets was a handicap. National economic problems delayed construction. When building began, the five-mile section beyond Alston was not proceeded with. The junction at Haltwhistle was adjusted to face Carlisle the county town of Cumberland, in which Alston was situated rather than Newcastle. The revised plans received the Royal Assent on 13 July The branch required substantial earthworks and structures. There were no watersheds to cross, nor tunnels to bore, but the mile route climbed from ft to ft above sea level and involved three crossings of the South Tyne and viaducts over tributaries. Most structures were designed for double track and sturdily built of sandstone. A mile-long cutting was needed between Haltwhistle and Featherstone Park. Construction began in from both ends. When the magnificent Lambley Viaduct was complete standing ft above the River South Tyne passenger and goods services began in began in November No sooner had the branch been completed that lead mining began a rapid and continuous decline. Depopulation accompanied this recession; the population in Alston, Garrigill, and Nenthead peaked at 6, in and fell almost continuously to only 1, in Some cheer was brought by limited development of coal and zinc mining. In the late s two weekday return passenger trains called at all stations. By there were three. Trains took a leisurely 40 minutes in each direction. The service increased to four, with an extra Saturday evening return trip, and a five-minute faster journey. In summer Alston enjoyed eight weekday return trains, the first departure at 5. Since the early days, the first advertised service of the day left Alston, where the branch locomotive was stabled. This practice continued until November when a 6: British Rail censuses in found no passengers using the first Haltwhistle-Alston train of the day. By its final timetable there were six weekday and seven Saturday returns, taking 34 minutes from Haltwhistle to Alston, and 32 back to Haltwhistle. The advertised passenger train service concealed interesting eccentricities. Plenmeller Halt, near Haltwhistle, at first served a colliery, then a Ministry of Supplies depot and finally a factory. Although omitted from public timetables, it possessed a platform for part of its life. Elsewhere unscheduled stops enabled passengers to join and leave trains. Trains regularly stopped at Park Village and occasionally at Burnstones and at various other points, including locations close to Softley and

Whitwham; there were no platforms at these stopping places. With equal informality, if no one wished to join or alight, trains sometimes coasted through the stations, even when booked to call! Jenkins The Alston Branch, assumes that motive power was provided in the mid 19th Century by former main line engines. At first one engine was based at Alston. By then there were two, one for passenger and the other for goods trains. Two elliptical-roof bogie coaches carried passengers in the early 20th Century, with a spare stabled at Alston. Goods were hauled by J21 and J39 tender engines. Passenger services were progressively taken over by dms generally Metro-Cammell Class from autumn 1962, which operated until closure. However, German seat railbuses were trialled on the branch in 1963. They gave a rough ride and were mechanically unreliable. Consequently they were not adopted, although they worked some East Anglian branches. Towards closure - and beyond The Alston Branch outlived many lines whose passenger carrying potential was greater. Blyth and Ashington, towns of some 30,000 people, lost their service in 1963; Featherstone Park, serving several hundred, survived until 1964. As a cost-cutting measure Featherstone Park and Slaggyford became unstaffed in 1964, and Coanwood in 1965. Beeching March noted that closure of the branch was already under consideration, but that summer Ernest Marples, Minister of Transport, announced that the service would continue; the sole criterion was hardship that closure would cause. Further economies were made. Lambley, and Alston became unstaffed in 1966 and 1967 respectively. Crossing gates at Featherstone Park and Coanwood were removed, trains giving way to road traffic. Most signals were dismantled, although some fixed distant semaphores were retained, set at caution; one was south of Featherstone Park. At Alston, for some time, a run-round facility remained. Alston was not included. In November 1967 BR again proposed closure. Following TUCC deliberations, in January 1968 it was announced that services would be withdrawn, subject to an improved Haltwhistle-Alston road link. Lord Ridley, Chairman of Northumberland County Council, offered a suggestion that might save the railway. Sadly the government was not impressed, and closure took place in May 1968, when the new road was ready. In its last months Alston was, belatedly, publicised by British Rail, who extolled the charms of the line, and offered trips by scheduled services from London. On the last day of service, Saturday 1 May 1968, some 5,000 passengers travelled on scheduled services on the branch, with yet more on special trains. The final train left Alston at 10.30. On 3 May rail services officially ended. In January 1969 South Tynedale communities were isolated; roads were blocked by snow. This time the railway could not come to the rescue. BR would not permit the society operate trains on the branch to help raise money to buy the line. Track dismantling began in winter 1969. Once again the price proved too high. Demolition continued, and all rails were lifted by June 1970. Happily, this is not the end of the story. Cumbria County Council bought Alston station and the Cumbrian section of trackbed in 1970, enabling the station to be used as a tourist information centre. In 1971 the STRPS opened a 2ft gauge tourist railway at Alston, its trains hauled by Phoenix, a forty year-old 4-wheeled Hibberd 40hp diesel locomotive. The South Tynedale Railway intends to reach Slaggyford, having obtained planning permission for this project in 1971, and ultimately Haltwhistle. Reinstatement of the branch has been aided by the English Tourist Board, the local authorities, and the Manpower Services Commission. Today the South Tyne Way footpath and cycleway follows the course of the Alston branch for much of its length. STRPS now have a lease for the trackbed from Kirkhaugh to Slaggyford, including the station building at Slaggyford where some remedial work has started to ensure no further deterioration of the listed station building. A further extension of the line from Lintley to Slaggyford is planned to open in 1972. Stations Available evidence suggests that the architect of the Alston branch stations was Benjamin Green, who also designed a series of handsome stations between Newcastle and Berwick, such as the surviving Acklington, Warkworth and Chathill to which Alston station bears a strong resemblance. All were built of local stone. Until closure the rural charm of the stations was enhanced by their retention of elderly oil lanterns with gas lighting at Alston. Whilst Alston retained its sturdy LNER wooden nameboard, still painted in BR NE tangerine, with raised white-painted metal letters, the other stations were regrettably! In the name of Coanwood station was not displayed anywhere along the platform. Although all of the intermediate stations were de-staffed by 1968, none of them had Halt added to their name, even though the suffix was applied widely by British Rail until 1962. However the four intermediates were so named in an Eastern Region handbill of 1962. At Featherstone Park a sign near the entrance informed passengers that the station was an Unstaffed Halt, and the implications for ticket purchase. The other stations possibly carried such signs too.

2: Alston | Locations

The mystery about the Alston branch wasn't that the line closed, it was that it survived as late as Alston can barely sustain a bus service- just two off-peak return trips a day to Haltwhistle, with positioning moves from Hexham also run in service- so a train wouldn't stand a hope.

Starting at its junction with the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway line at Haltwhistle, the line ran to the town of Alston. An Parliamentary Act authorised a line as far as Nenthead, providing an outlet for the lead mines in the Alston area, and plans were made to connect with railways further south. When the decision was made to terminate the branch at Alston, a further act was needed in Initially the line opened in stages: The full opening of the line awaited the construction of Lambley Viaduct, and was achieved later in Photo A Curtis In the s freight services were withdrawn from Coanwood and all the intermediate stations were unstaffed. Although the line was marked for closure in the Beeching plan, the lack of an all-weather road kept it open. A link between local roads, including a temporary level crossing over the branch, was built in the Lambley area. This enabled Ribble Motor Services to run a replacement bus service. The line closed officially on the 3rd of May with the last train working two days earlier. Despite efforts by the South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society to take over the line, the track was lifted soon after the closure. In a narrow gauge railway opened between Alston and Gilderdale, and has since been extended northwards. Known as the South Tynedale Railway , this 2-foot 0. The journey includes a viaduct over the River South Tyne. Construction of the next section of track, a mile stretch from Lintley to Slaggyford, is under consideration and funding is being sought with hopes of completion by With this, the STR will be around 4 miles in length. The track bed has been severed at two points close to the Haltwhistle junction by the A69 Haltwhistle Bypass and the removal of a former bridge on a minor road nearby. Click individual photos for further details. Explore the surviving route of the Alston Branch Line using photographs on Geograph.

Up to closure in , Alston's was the last remaining branch from the Newcastle and Carlisle route. Originally built for the traffic from mining of various minerals, as well as for passengers.

Early settlements[edit] The earliest evidence of population in the area comes from pottery fragments, a gold basket-earring and flint tools found in one of two barrows excavated in 2 miles 3. Evidence of Roman activity in the area comes from the earth remains of Whitley Castle , thought to be the Roman fort Castra of Epiacum [6] built and rebuilt by the Sixth and Twentieth Legions between the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The name of the town is recorded in as Aldeneby and in as Aldeneston, [7] and seems to mean "the settlement or farmstead belonging to [a Viking man named] Halfdan ". This section does not cite any sources. Please help improve this section by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. November Learn how and when to remove this template message In the 10th century, Alston Moor was part of the Liberty of Tynedale , which was an estate of the Scottish Kings within England, a situation that resulted in many years of confusion over the sovereignty of the area. In , the Barons de Veteriponte became the first recorded Lords of the Manor ; they held the moor on behalf of the kings of Scotland while the kings of England retained the mineral rights. This was confirmed in a hearing during that concluded that the miners of the area were distinct from the local population, thus paying their dues to the English crown instead of to Scotland. As a result, the miners lived in their own self-regulated communities under English protection. In John de Balliol , the king of Scotland, invaded the North of England ; as a result Edward I moved to reclaim the Scottish estates and Tynedale, which included Alston Moor, was taken under direct control of the English crown where it remains. Despite the town being on the Tyne and being historically part of Tynedale, the area has never been part of either Hexhamshire or Northumberland but part of Cumberland and later Cumbria. This was probably because the mines in the area were at one time administered from Carlisle. Mining[edit] Historically the area has been mined for lead, silver, zinc , coal and fluorspar. The nearby Roman fort of Whitley Castle Epiacum may in part have been sited to control and protect the lead mines there. In the 13th century, the area was known as the silver mines of Carlisle "silver was found in a high proportion up to 40 troy ounces per long ton or 1. Most mining was very small scale until the midth century, The biggest mine owner in the area was the London Lead Company ; this Religious Society of Friends Quakers organisation with enlightened employment policies established an interest in the area during the early 18th century. Many of the last mines closed in the s. A small drift coal mine Ayle Colliery was still active in Modern economy[edit] The area is no longer actively mined for precious metals although the mining history has been exploited for tourism purposes. There are few jobs in the immediate area, hence the fall in population from 6, in to around 1, today. Farming[edit] The surrounding moorland is mainly used for sheep farming; however many farmers also have other enterprises, such as bed and breakfast accommodation. During winter months farming can be tough, due to the severe weather in the area. Tourism[edit] Tourism is now an important source of income for the area. The largest attraction is a narrow gauge railway and heritage centre South Tynedale Railway. Nenthead Mines, at the nearby village of Nenthead , is a Scheduled Monument managed by volunteers. The Nenthead Mines Conservation Society hold regular open days where visitors can learn about the history of lead mining and take an underground tour of Carrs Mine. Shops and facilities[edit] Shops include a whole foods shop, a Co-op supermarket , a Spar convenience store, a butcher , a shop selling hardware , a post office, an outdoor clothing shop, an organic bakery , a charity shop and a number of craft , gift and antique shops. There are a four remaining public houses in Alston: The last remaining bank, Barclays , announced that it was going to close in December , leaving the town with no bank. I am particularly hostile to closing the last bank in town. Metal working[edit] For much of the 20th century, between and its closure in , a foundry employed around people. The closure of this foundry increased unemployment in the area from 8. Precision Products was started in by William Bilbo Ball. Bonds Precision Casting Ltd. Population[edit] The population census figures show that at its peak during the population of the parish of Alston Moor was 6, people. Today that figure is about 1, The population of the town of Alston was 1, according to the Census.

This allowed people with little or no education access to online courses and training. Nicholas Ridley , politician and government minister. Landmarks and buildings of note[edit] Town hall[edit] The town hall is a focal point for the community, being a venue for many local social events. It also contains the tourist information centre , the public library and some local administration offices. Until the late s the town hall also contained a branch of the Trustee Savings Bank. The bank closed down but the library moved to premises in the Market Place, then moved back to the town hall in September Construction of the neo-gothic building started in when Hugh Lee Pattinson laid the foundation stone. The architecture was designed by A. The market cross , which acts as a focal point in the centre of town, was constructed in to replace one which was demolished by a wagon in January That earlier cross had itself replaced a cross of which was knocked down by a lorry in A unique item in the church is a clock which belonged to James Radclyffe, 3rd Earl of Derwentwater , who was beheaded for treason. It is believed to be of 16th-century origin, and was restored in One of the church bells which was cast in also belonged to the Earl of Derwentwater. It was installed in the previous church of Four of the bells were installed in memory of Andrew Graham Stewart Steele, churchwarden from until his murder in the Midland Bank on 13 September The bells cannot be pealed as the tower is not strong enough, but they are struck by a clapper. In the s mine manager and engineer said that it could be visited "in boats 30 feet in length, which are propelled in four feet of water by means of sticks projecting from the sides of the level; and thus may be enjoyed the singular novelty of sailing a few miles underground". The amount of ore found was disappointing, though not insignificant. Access to the Nent Force Level is currently extremely difficult although efforts have been made to develop a heritage centre to make this extraordinary piece of engineering accessible to the public. Alston Moor has a second small primary school at Nenthead. More than two years later, the Guardian reported that Alston shared first position with Bere Alston in Devon in the top 10 list of places in Britain where the imbalance was at its worst. Alston railway station was formerly the terminus of a branch line from Haltwhistle. The closure of the line was decided in the Beeching Report in , but closure was rejected due to lack of a direct road link. After a road was built, closure was again proposed in and the line closed on 1 May It was the last enacted closures of the Beeching Report another being the Bridport branch line from Bridport to Maiden Newton in Dorset which closed in Part of the route, between Alston and Slaggyford, five miles in length, is now operated as the narrow gauge South Tynedale Railway. The railway is particularly popular with tourists and passenger trains operate between April and October, with Santa Special trains operating on certain dates in December each year. There are term-time bus services to Carlisle primarily for college students. A summary of local bus services can be found on this Cumbria County Council page.

4: Alston branch and north western scenes, - andrewstransport

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Former line[edit] The narrow gauge railway line is built on the track bed of the southern section former Alston Line , a standard gauge branch line between Haltwhistle and Alston which was closed by British Rail in May Operations[edit] The railway is operated by a charity, The South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society, which was registered in Although no Santa trains ran in as volunteer efforts were put into completing the extension to Lintley in time for the season, they ran again in on two successive weekends, 15â€”16 and 22â€”23 December. In Santa trains ran on 14â€”15 and 21â€”22 December. At Alston station there is a cafe and gift shop both operated by the railway company. The present line is now currently 5 miles 8. The popular South Tyne Trail shares the trackbed with the railway, fenced off for safety. It is a walking and cycle trail that provides a cut-off for part of its length for the Pennine Way national trail. The standard gauge branch line was closed by British Rail on 1 May The track bed is mostly intact, except at Lambley , where the station house and garden are in private ownership, and near Haltwhistle, where construction of the A69 Haltwhistle by-pass road severed the trackbed on the bypass itself and on an adjoining secondary road. The Society has in its principal aims a hope to completely reopen a branch line railway all the way to Haltwhistle. Signalling Infrastructure[edit] The signal box was dismantled when British Rail closed the branch so a new box had to be sought and erected. The replacement signal box at Alston formerly stood at Ainderby, on the branch line to Redmire, it being acquired from British Rail and re-erected on a new brick base. The level crossing barriers and mechanism came from the now-closed How Mill station on the Newcastle and Carlisle line. The signal box houses a 21 lever frame, made by McKenzie and Holland. In addition there is a manually operated gate machine to operate the level crossing barriers - this combination of manual gate wheel and lifting barriers rather than gates being somewhat rare in the UK. It was removed in when a replacement level crossing mechanism was installed in an emergency. The frame had developed a crack and had to be sent to England to be repaired by Westinghouse who had taken over McKenzie and Holland in The frame was then installed on the North Staffordshire Section of the LMS when a road at a level crossing was realigned to cross the railway. The old frame with the gate mechanism at this box was inadequate because of worn bearings so the repaired spare frame from Kingussie was installed by Westinghouse. It remained in service until the NS signal box closed. The frame was sold to the South Tyndale railway and installed at its present location. The signals are standard BR ones using a former LMS design but the signal to the carriage sidings is unusual. It is a semaphore ground signal mounted onto a conventional signal post. The extended line from Kirkhaugh to Lintley Halt was officially opened in Saturday 12 May by Lord Inglewood , a long-time friend of the railway society. Work to gain a similar status in Northumberland is ongoing with Northumberland County Council. In September the Heritage Lottery Fund made an award that allows development work on a full bid for the Slaggyford extension to proceed. The final outcome of the bid is anticipated in January In December a serious wash-out of a retaining wall about 50 metres north of Alston Station threatened to stop the popular Santa trains. The STR is left with a significant fund-raising issue to fully repair the year-old wall, restore the lineside footpath and return the line to use. Temporary repairs were completed by mid-January whilst fundraising efforts continue to effect a long term and full repair. The main line was moved back to its proper alignment before the season began. British Railways Board Residuary Ltd. The land runs parallel to the Alston bay platform at Haltwhistle mainline station and provides sufficient space for proper station and run-round facilities for narrow gauge trains. This important step allows the society to approach Network Rail for agreement to use its land alongside the platform and the platform itself. Additionally a small parcel of land that allows access to the station area from the Alston Arches Viaduct will be made available to the railway society. The one-year project is in partnership with the North of England Civic Trust backed by a bursary and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The scheme is specifically aimed at overcoming skills shortages in traditional engineering crafts. The opening of the new extension was delayed, and finally opened in June They

were formerly owned by the now defunct North Pennine Heritage Trust. Thomas Edmondson Henschel T No. Diesel Hunslet DM No. Diesel Cumbria Hunslet 4wd No. There are four all-steel open-ended gallery coaches built by a contractor in Alston, two wooden-bodied coaches and two brake vans constructed in the railway workshops. Additions to the fleet in were an all-steel buffet coach, originally built by Gloucester Carriage and Wagon for Sierra Leone Railways, and re-gauged from mm to mm for use at Alston, and a re-gauged former Romanian steel coach now converted to be fully accessible for disabled passengers. Outward trains leave from Alston at , and hours. Return trains leave Slaggyford 55 minutes later. All trains stop at Kirkhaugh reduced to a wayside halt and Lintley. Trains run from late March until mid November but not every day. There are a series of special events spread over the year when special timetables may apply source STRPS website.

5: The Alston Branch | RailUK Forums

Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.

6: Disused Stations:Alston Station

Haltwhistle, looking east, 28 February A Newcastle - Carlisle DMU is on the main line, alongside the Alston branch train. NB the staggered platforms, and that the connection from the branch onto the main line has already been severed.

7: Alston line - Wikipedia

The Alston Moor branch is an active and lively group for all members in this remote community, and plays a full part in the CLP. The Alston Labour Party Branch Facebook Group is here.

8: RAILSCOT | Newcastle and Carlisle Railway | Alston Branch

The South Tynedale Railway is a preserved, 2 ft (mm) narrow gauge heritage railway in Northern England and is England's highest narrow gauge www.enganchecubano.com 2 ft (mm) line runs from Alston in Cumbria, up the South Tyne Valley, via Gilderdale, Kirkhaugh and Lintley, across the South Tyne, Gilderdale and Whitley Viaducts to Slaggyford in Northumberland.

9: Alston Branch - The LNER Encyclopedia

Hi I was browsing on Flickr and I came across a s map of David MacBrayne ferry services in Scotland. The map also shows railway lines. Towards the bottom of the map, the Alston branch seems to diverge into two branches to reach the Newcastle - Carlisle main line.

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