

# Downham's Railway

A History by Elizabeth Howard.

## TOP NEWS

### ENGLISH HERITAGE HAVE LISTED AND SAVED THE SIGNAL BOX AT DOWNHAM AS OF JULY 2013.

As early as 1824 , the dawn of the railway era, a prospectus of the Norfolk and Suffolk Rail Road company was being circulated in the newspapers of the day , in themselves a new form of communication . The railway would take the line from London to Norwich and then divide east to Yarmouth and west to King` s Lynn.

From the very beginning these were speculative enterprises . The basic premise was that Parliament would pass an Act to enable the railway to be built , they would set a cost on the whole project and this was to be raised by the sale of shares . There were to be Boards of Directors and shareholders . Land was to be purchased along the proposed line of the railway . It was open to abuse , corruption and failure from the first day .

But the die was cast and speculators saw any number of opportunities to make money . There was a sudden boom in land sales and the value of ordinary agricultural land rose sharply where it was thought the railways might be built ; shares were sold in tiny segments each £25 share might be divided between 10 or 20 people , and profit was expected on every level



*Figure 1: Rain steam speed , JMWTurner, 1844. Nat. Gallery London.*

The advertisement for the sale of these shares in 1844 read cautiously ” No subscriber liable beyond the amount of subscription .. ” and then more positively ” The object of this undertaking is to construct the most direct and perfect Railway from the important sea port of King` s Lynn to the city of Ely meeting there the Eastern Counties Railway Company` s lines to London, Norwich and Peterborough and thus connecting King` s Lynn and West Norfolk generally with all the North, South , East, West and South West

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parts of England . The project is brought forward with the full sanction and concurrence of the Eastern Counties Railway Company .”

” The proposed line will commence at the town of King` s Lynn, proceed direct to Downham Market and Littleport , and thence to the city of Ely to meet the Northern and Eastern Railway . The precise points of terminus at King` s Lynn and Ely being such as shall upon full consideration be deemed the most desirable.

There will be a branch from the main line to the Harbour of King` s Lynn in order to afford to the extensive shipping interest at that port, the greatest possible facility for lading and unloading .

The main line and branch will together be about 26 miles in length.

This line has been examined and approved by Mr Rastrick whose character and experience will be sufficient guarantee that it is judiciously selected and will be efficiently constructed . The country through which it passes being almost a perfect level is singularly favourable for the construction of a railway and presents no engineering difficulties whatever.

The line does not interfere with a single private residence or park , nor with ornamental grounds of any kind , and there are no buildings except a few cottages to be taken .

The projectors have every reason to believe that the landowners on the line are without exception favourable to the undertaking .

The railway when completed may be worked at a very moderate cost the general nature of the country being most favourable for the transit to and from each terminus , and fuel at the port of King` s Lynn being cheap .

The expense of the earthwork, bridges, masonry , for a double line and a single line of road laid , with stations and all other conveniences has been carefully estimated by Mr Rastrick who is satisfied that the outlay including the purchase of land, costs of the surveys , and Act of Parliament and every other expense need not exceed £200,000 and that responsible contractors can be found to do all the works and deliver the railway in a complete state to the company at that sum .

The plans and sections will be deposited and all necessary notices given in compliance with the standing orders of the House of Commons so as to ensure an application to Parliament in the next session and it is believed that as the line is evidently of great public advantage and free from competition no difficulty will be experienced in obtaining the Act .



A confident opinion has been expressed by Mr Rastrick that the whole line may be finished within nine months after the works are fairly commenced .

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It remains only to observe upon the amount of return which may be fairly expected upon the capital invested , and in so doing the promoters have most carefully guarded against all exaggeration .

The traffic on this line will also be much assisted by the extensive trade in timber , wines, coals , oil-cake, tar, flagstones, slates, pantiles and other general merchandise carried on between the port of King`s Lynn and the towns of Brandon, Thetford, etc, by the large mass of agricultural produce comprising corn, flour , wool, fruit , vegetables brought from those districts to the port of King`s Lynn .....and by the large number of beasts, sheep and pigs, and the quantity of dead meat and poultry which are annually sent from West Norfolk to the London Market .”

“Summary of Traffic: Passengers by coaches and other public conveyances at 2d per mile , ( plus ) local passengers by gigs etc , £9,779. Plus £13,000 worth of goods live, dead and manufactured currently carried by coach and carrier . Add 100% increase in passenger traffic , less 40% for maintenance , management etc. Net annual profit £20,148 . “

The Lynn and Ely Railway company was advertised in the London Times , and in the Cambridge Independent Press of 4th May 1844 . “Lynn and Ely Railway via Downham Market ; Capital £200,000 in 8,000 shares of £25 each deposit £1. 5s per share .” The local solicitor who was clerk to the Board of Guardians of the Union workhouse earned £100 a year . So a £25 share was worth a quarter of a professional man`s annual salary . Lynn to Ely is a distance of about 29 miles which works out at £6,900 per mile construction costs . These are staggeringly large sums of money for a small rural area largely dependent on agriculture .

As to the return on the shares , “A calculation of traffic, showing a net return of upwards of £10 per cent on the capital after deducting £40 per cent for working expenses , has been made by a large Committee of merchants, tradesmen and agriculturalists , conversant with the various departments of business in Lynn and the neighbouring districts .”

The Provisional Committee of the Lynn and Ely Railway were Sir William Folkes, bart, as Chairman , The Earl of Leicester maybe hoping the railways would extend to the Holkham estate , Lord George Bentinck , MP for Lynn, Viscount Jocelyn, also MP for Lynn, Lord William Powlett of Downham Hall, Brandon, the line would surely pass through his land on the way from Ely to Lynn , Lord Sondes , Sir Charles Clarke, bart, Dunham Lodge , maybe on the proposed Lynn to Dereham line, W Bagge , esq, MP for West Norfolk, and a local landowner , W Chote, MP for West Norfolk , J Bowker , Lynn, C Burcham , Lynn , T Carter , Lynn , Francis Cresswell, Lynn , Richard Dewing, Ashwicken , W Everard , Lynn, J Elsdon Everard, Congham Hall, Martin Folkes, Hillington Hall , Anthony Hamond , Westacre High House , F Keppel , Lexham Hall, John Hudson , Castleacre , Colonel Mason , Necton Hall, E R Pratt , Ryston , C Neville Rolfe, Sedgford Hall, J Beachamp St John, Gayton Hall, W Seppings, Lynn, Henry Villebois , Marham Hall, T Wythe, Middleton Hall, T M Wythe, Bilney Lodge ; with power to add to their number “.

There are some notable names missing from this list through whose land the railway would almost certainly pass , the Bells of Wallington, the Plestows of Watlington, and the Hares of Stow Bardolph . Were they not invited by the railway company to join the committee or were they all opposed to the introduction of the railway ? It is also interesting to note that the railway shares could only be bought in London, Liverpool, Hull, Leeds and Manchester .

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In 1841 the population of Downham was 2,900 , of Ely, 6,800 and of King` s Lynn , 16,000 . What number of these local people could have afforded a £25 share was probably very few, which is why the railway company advertised and sold the shares in London and the rich railway successful North .

In addition to their remuneration as directors , the Committee would all make money on their shares, and they would make even more on the sale of some of their land as the railways spread across West Norfolk . Their enthusiasm for success before the railway was even enacted by Parliament and built , was contagious and small towns like Downham became the focus for Yorkshire men and other incomers seeing an opportunity to become involved in the latest technology . They also guessed that Downham would grow and skills and trades of all sorts would be needed to support the railway builders and the growing population .

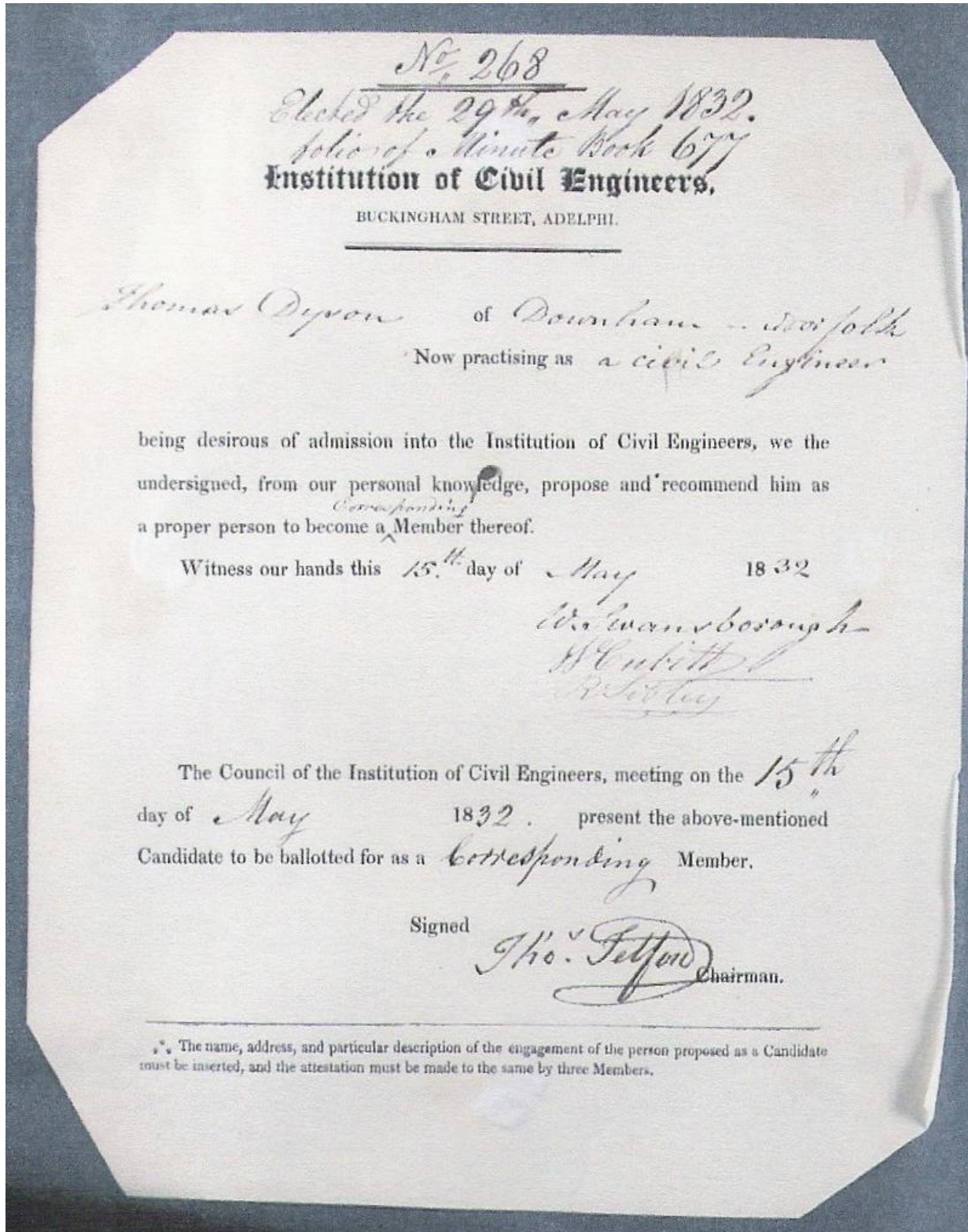
In Bridge St. , Downham , in 1841 there are a number of heads of households , professional people , merchants, and skilled tradesmen , who are enumerated as N indicating that they were not born in the county. And a number of previously unknown names to Downham, John and Thomas Dyson for instance had bought land by the river and houses in the centre of the town . These are civil engineers who have insider knowledge that the railway was coming to Downham and more importantly where .

Thomas Dyson, esq. , a Committee member of the Lynn and Ely Railway , was of Carlton, Pontefract , ( and by 1845 of The Retreat , Lynn Road , Downham ) Joseph Gee, was of Cottingham , Hull, H. C. Lacy , was of Kenyon House, Manchester, Sir William Lowthrop , also Hull . The Yorkshire influence was because of the Stockton to Darlington railway , the great engineer Stephenson and the success of the first public railways around York . Yorkshiremen were regarded as the experts and had all the right contacts . Thomas Dyson may well be the Civil Engineer who was admitted to the Institute of Civil Engineers in 1832 , his successful application being signed by none other than Thomas Telford, the founder of the Institute and maker of many bridges etc, such as the Menai Suspension bridge , and Wm Cubitt a Norfolk born Civil Engineer of great reknown .

Thomas Dyson wrote a restrained letter of correction to the Norfolk Chronicle in July 1845 in which he says that the accident at Brandon Creek Bridge was not his fault . He had been requested to superintend the foundations and abutments and to set out the work for the superstructure of the bridge ” and having done this much I left the contractor to finish the work and it was solely in consequence of this man`s interference with my plans by cutting away the skue back or springing stones in order to fit his work with less trouble that the superstructure gave way ; the original foundations and abutments are still firmly standing and the fact that the superstructure alone having been repaired after its giving way , disproves, at once, that any fault rested with me in this construction .” ” The Contractor of the Brandon Creek Bridge . that person confided the works entirely to his foreman and not above five or six times did he come near nor appear to take the least interest in the proceedings . “

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Locally the great mover in the eastern counties was J. C. Cobbold , landowner, shipowner, lawyer and brewer. Born in Ipswich in 1797 he was a director of the Eastern Union Railway and seemed determined to control the whole of the eastern counties railways . The early 1840s plans were rightly named Railway

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mania , and at one moment in early 1846 Sir Robert Peel told Parliament that there were no fewer than 519 Railway bills before Parliament . Obviously not all could succeed, nor could Parliament agree to more than one railway company building a railway between two particular places . Cobbold`s E.U.R had tried to promote the Norwich to Dereham line until one of his directors defected to the Norwich and West Norfolk line . There was even talk of a second terminus in Norwich for this second line , but it too failed before Parliament . The speculators were running around like headless chickens proposing lines from this village to that , from here to there and somewhere else regardless of cost and profitability .

If Cobbold`s E.U.R did not succeed , the company simply bought out or leased the rival railway company or their lines . It was going to live up to its name the Eastern Union Railway . In the end the Eastern Counties Railway continued to control the western section to and from Cambridge , and the Eastern Union Railway in Cobbold country from Colchester via Ipswich to Norwich . The short lived Lynn and Ely , Lynn and Dereham and Ely and Huntingdon railways merged into the East Anglian railway in the same year of 1846.

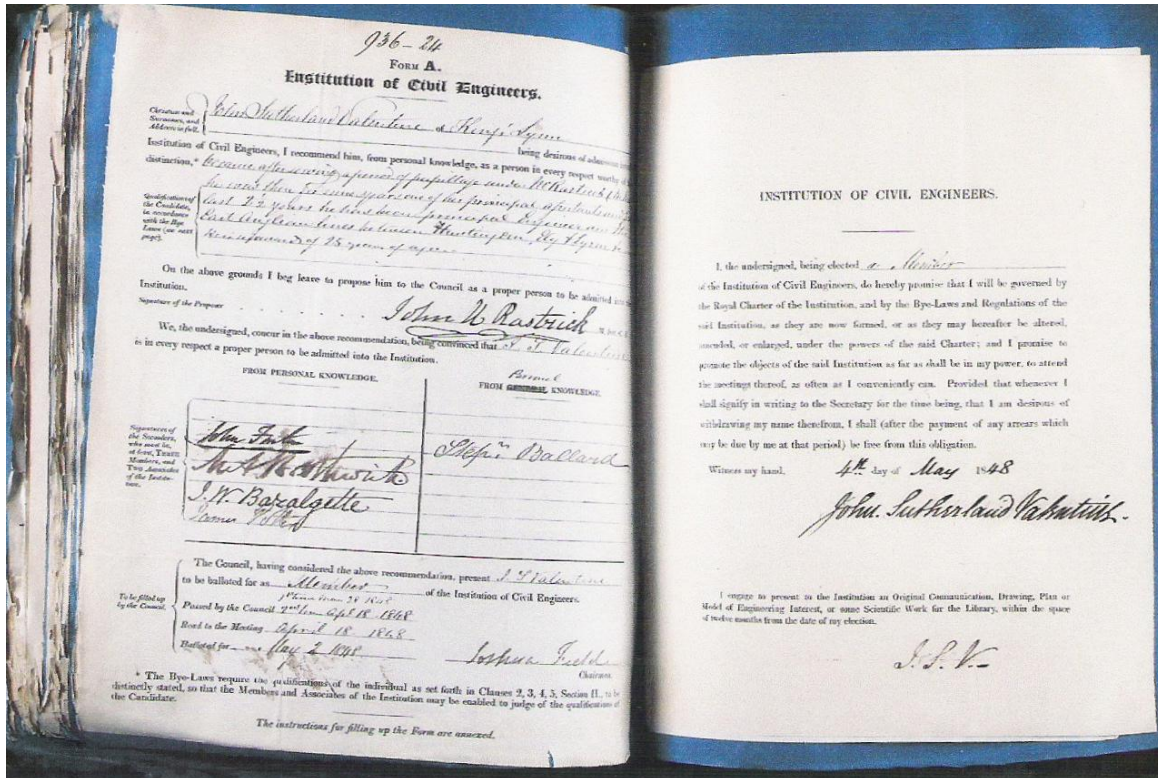


So who built the railway that we use today . The overarching engineer was John Urpeth Rastrick 1780-1856 , born in Northumberland and a pioneer steam locomotive engineer . He was one of the judges at the Rainhill trials in 1829 which proved that Stephenson`s Rocket steam locomotive was the superior means of transport over rope haulage . He later developed ,in partnership, all forms of engineering to do with railways . He retired in 1847 and many other engineers having learned their new trade from him and Stephenson and Brunel , spread across the country to develop the railways .

In the case of the Lynn and Ely railway , the engineer was John Sutherland Valentine , born in 1813 in Derbyshire and the son of an organist also called John Sutherland Valentine . In 1841 John Valentine was in Brighton and living in a household with James Potter , engineer, though the head of the household appeared to be Mary Penfold . He married in Kent in 1845 Clara Tristram and in 1851 they were living in Goodwin`s fields South Lynn , with their new born son . His inclusion as a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers did not occur until 1848 but it was a document worth waiting for with the signatures of JW Bazalgette and John U Rastrick attached . The men who actually dug and laid the railway line were within the time of building it , protected by a recent and urgently needed piece of legislation . In July 1846 the Report of the Select Committee on the Railway labourers was published with almost 250 pages of evidence of truly cruel working practices and treatment of the navvies . But Parliament had for the most part put a stop to the most killing of these practices and the railway owners and the contractors would from now on have to take a little more care of their men.

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The system was that the navy , or navigator , was part of a gang, the leader was called a ganger, he in turn contracted his gang to the best paying contractor or subcontractor , because the contracts given by the railway companies to the engineering firms were cut down again into component parts , and the actual labourers were at the bottom of this pile .

The evidence given to the Select Committee was detailed and was given by the navvies themselves as well as clergymen, engineers and contractors . Samuel Morton Peto a railway builder said he had 9,000 men under his direct control including 3,700 working on the Ely to Peterborough railway .

” Chairman ( to Samuel Morton Peto, esq ) You are a Contractor .-. I am . Do you know what number of men you have in your employment ? - . About 9,000 at the present time . How are they disposed ? - I will mention the works : the line from Ely to Peterborough , from Wymondham to Dereham , from Reedham to Lowestoft , the construction of Lowestoft Harbour ..... Do you employ those men yourself ? - Not in all instances ; I have now in my employment 3,700 directly from Ely to Peterborough and the rest indirectly .”

If the population of Downham was 2,900 and Ely 6,800 , this army of navvies must have been very intimidating . 3,700 men , of no fixed abode to all intents, camped in your parish , in your town , building a railway . And at times when not paid this army was angry to a point of riot .

Chairman (to the Rev Robert Wilson ) : You are a clergyman and magistrate in Norfolk I believe ? - I am . Is there any railway constructing in your neighbourhood ? - The Swaffham and Dereham line is now constructing . Do you know at all what number of men are employed in that district ? - A great many . Have you had many complaints brought before you as a magistrate from the railway ? - I have had a great many complaints both on the Swaffham and Dereham line and the Norwich and Brandon which has lately been constructed . What is the nature of those complaints ? - Generally a difficulty in obtaining their wages .

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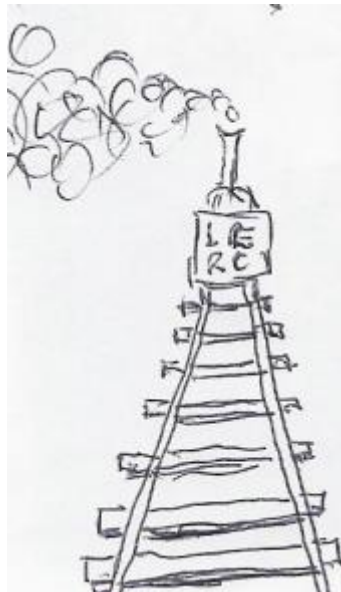
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Complaints from the men against their employers ? – Yes. Their complaint is against the gangers if I understand rightly ? – The chief complaint is against the gangers . What is the specific complaint ? – Non-payment of wages.

The Select Committee reported, " The rapid growth of the railway system of communication will be necessarily accompanied , for several years to come, by a vast expenditure of capital in mere construction , giving employment probably to not much less than 200,000 of the effective labouring population of the country . The great amount of outlay already thus made, its suddenness , and its temporary concentration at particular localities , often spots before but thinly inhabited, have created or developed evils . It does not seem altogether unreasonable to expect , that the steady employment , and the high wages obtained by the men engaged on Railway works ....should serve in effecting a valuable and permanent improvement of their state . Good wages , or at least such wages as secure those dependent thereon from constantly balancing on the verge of destitution , seem to be one element essential to the improvement of the labouring classes .

(The men ) are brought hastily together in large bodies ; no time is given for the gradual growth of accommodation which would naturally accompany the growth of numbers ; they are therefore crowded into unwholesome dwellings , while scarcely any provision is made for their comfort or decency of living ; they are hard worked ; they are exposed to great risk of life and limb ; they are too often hardly treated ; and many inducements are presented to them to be thoughtless, thriftless and improvident ....and they cannot wonder at the feelings of dislike and dismay with which the permanent inhabitants of a neighbourhood often view the arrival of these strangers among them .

The evils seem mainly to consist in the mode and time of payment of the men, and their consequent discontent , disorder and irregularity ; in the want of proper lodging for them ; in their careless exposure to risk ; in the defective provision for maintaining peace and good order among them ; and in the imperfections or absence of provision for their religious instruction and the education of their children . "



And the Select Committee offered the first of many remedies the most important of which was that the men were paid regularly , once a month at least, and in cash . The previous system was to pay them by ticket and by receipt for loans from their employers . These were to enable the men to obtain goods usually

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from a `tommy shop` operated by the contractor which sold cheap goods at high prices in exchange for a ticket or token.. At the end of the month the men could find themselves still in debt to the contractor so at times were effectively working for nothing .

Samuel Morton Peto the contractor was already paying his men once a week on Saturday afternoon in cash .and he had ” found during the last 18 years I have always paid the sum in money and have found the good effect of it in the moral character of the men , in their steady attention to the work . “

The Select Committee report is dated July 1846 and later in the same year , flying in the face of the purple prose of the Share Prospectus, was a small entry in the London Gazette of 14th November , “Eastern Counties Railway (Lynn and Ely Railway : Ely and Huntingdon Railway : Lynn and Dereham Railway). Purchase or Lease . Notice is hereby given that application is intended to be made to Parliament in the next session for an Act to authorise the sale or lease by the Lynn and Ely Railway Company, upon such terms and conditions as have been or may be agreed upon , to the Eastern Counties Railway Company of the Lynn and Ely Railway , and also the Ely and Huntingdon Railway and the Lynn and Dereham Railway Company . “

The small railway`s sale of shares had been much less than anticipated and the giant ECRC was ready to swallow them up but on condition that the railway between Lynn and Ely was completed.

Henry J Hillen`s book , History of the Borough of King`s Lynn, vol 2 , confirms this ” at a public meeting on 6th Oct 1845 , additional capital was needed of £151,000 as the appeal only brought in less than half ( of the money needed ) . The company applied to Parliament for power to take over several other lines ( but had still ) to construct the docks adjoining the Harbour . The Lynn and Ely Railway augmented their indebtedness by constructing a line to Wisbech via Watlington , opened in February 1848 ( Contractors Simpson Walker & Bennett ) . A through journey to Lynn was provided by the Eastern Counties Railway from Ely. The affairs of the company drifted and it was absorbed into the Great Eastern Railway system . The shareholders of the Lynn and Ely , the Lynn and Dereham , the Ely and Huntingdon railways met at the London Tavern in Bishopsgate and agreed to accept an offer by the ECRC to lease the line for 999 years on condition that the lines were completed . Parliament refused but passed a portion of the bill which amalgamated the small companies under the East Anglian Company in June 1847 . The directors unable to pay the dividend applied for an increase in capital of £375,562 which again was refused . “

The Lynn Advertiser and West Norfolk Herald , itself only in its 5th year of publication , published this good news .

Feb 26th , 1846 . ” The Secretary laid before the full meeting ( at the London Tavern , a report from Mr Valentine , that ) the iron rails, chairs and sleepers for the whole line and branches have been purchased and are in the course of delivery to Lynn. The consequent outlay has entailed upon the directors the necessity of making a second call of £5 per share on the proprietors ..... In consequence of the extreme demand during autumn last year for engineering draughtsmen and assistants , I was unable until after 30th November to form a sufficient staff for properly commencing operations . Since that time however I have been more successful . The whole of the main line and the branch to the harbour are staked out . The contract for the portion of the line from Lynn to Denver being a distance of 12 ½ miles and for the harbour branch is let to Mr William Smith Simpson for a sum under my estimate”.

“Oct 17th , 1846 . On Saturday the Eagle and on Tuesday the Vulture arrived at the Downham Station house via Brandon for the Lynn and Ely Railway ( No picture has been found of either of these steam engines ) .

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This looks like business. On Wednesday , two navvies of the names of James Gooderham and John James ( as written) were brought before John Richardson Fryer esq., charged with stealing £9 the property of John Morley of Outwell . Jones ( as written) was discharged but Gooderham was remanded until Monday . “

And on a truly bright note the paper also reports, “Oct 24th , 1846. On Friday 2 troops of the 6th Dragoon Guards passed through the town on their way to Dublin and on Saturday one troop arrived with the staff officers, band, etc, and stayed until Sunday .”



Although the actual opening of the railway was announced in various newspapers , it was just as a small paragraph of rural news . The Lynn Advertiser of 31st October 1846 however went to town and really sold the railway to its readers .

Opening of the East Anglian Railways from Lynn to Downham and from Lynn to Narborough .

“An addition has this week been made in “the iron net work of England ” – another link has been added to the great chain of railway communication which is now fast intersecting every part of Great Britain . That these railways will be of great benefit to our good old borough , we have great reason both to hope and believe , but , at the same time , injuries of a minor character must necessarily arise from their introduction . The shrill whistle of the locomotive on Monday last might be considered as the death knell of the various coaches and vehicles which have for so long a period conveyed the visitor and the man of business to the town of Lynn . We should think that a profitable speculation might now be made by transferring the “thorough bred” , which have horsed them to some other quiet and secluded spot where no steam competition exists . How little did our Unions- Rising Suns – Hopes – Victorias and other vehicles of a like description when moving along some years ago at the rate of six or seven miles an hour, imagine that their course would so soon be run , and that in October 1846 in their place a monster train would whisk along with its hundreds of passengers , steaming , puffing and roaring out the announcement of its approach.

Monday last was the day appointed for a formal opening of the line by the directors , on which occasion invitations were issued for an excursion trip to Downham and Narbro` to about 160 ladies and gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood . Amongst the company present we observed , Sir W B Folkes, Bart. and Lady Folkes, and Miss Folkes, W Everard, esq and the Misses Everard – W Seppings, esq and the Misses Seppings – C Goodwin esq, , Mrs and Miss Goodwin – F Partridge, esq, Mrs Partridge and Miss Rippinghall – J C Williams, esq and Mrs Williams – F Ingle , esq – J S Valentine, esq Mrs Valentine and Miss Valentine – W W Williams, esq – A Bowker , esq – L Self , esq – E Eyre , esq , and the Misses Eyre – Miss Parrot – Mrs Wilson and the Misses Wilson – Miss Self – J B Whiting esq – The Rev J F Francklin – The Rev J Bransby – R Pitcher, esq – Dr de Mierre – W Shipp, esq – G Sayle esq – E Self esq – J Marsters esq – F B Wilson , esq – C Burcham esq – J E Jeffrey esq – W Blencowe esq – A Swatman esq – W W Jeffery esq – J Kendle esq etc etc etc

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Flags were hoisted on the terminus in honor of the event and with a display of which also the engine selected to draw the train was decorated . There were nine carriages of first, second and third class , the whole of which were filled . Eleven o` clock in the forenoon was the hour appointed for starting and a more favourable day could not have occurred for the morning opened with a thick fog , which continued throughout the day , so that it was not possible to see more than a few hundred yards in advance . . Fortunately we had been up the lines on the previous Friday with an excursion party , when the atmosphere was most propitious , so that we are able to describe the course , and the different objects that arrest the attention . We may here state that on the occasion of the opening the arrangements on the lines were under the able superintendence of Mr Carrington the station master , and Mr Platt the inspector of locomotives , acted as engine driver , both gentlemen being well versed in the detail of locomotion . We commend the company in having selected two such experienced men for their service – a circumstance truly congratulatory and of the utmost importance for the safety and comfort of those who travel on the East Anglian lines of railway. We now proceed at once to lay before our readers a description of the line. To begin at the beginning , we must start from the station at Lynn which though only intended as a temporary building is nevertheless substantial and ornamental in the appearance . The terminus is situate about the centre of the High Hills , or which , perhaps is better know to some as the Echo Road, having ingress into the town by way of Norfolk street North Clough lane , and St James street. It consists of a ladies and gentlemans waiting room – booking offices – clerks room and a spacious platform extending 200 ft on each side , the whole occupying an area of 170ft x 73 ft , which is enclosed by 1000 ft of fencing . The whole of these buildings together with a spacious engine house 100ft x 27ft , hard by , with tanks etc., have all been erected in the last two months by Mr Sagars, builder , of this town and we must say they are creditable to his perseverance and workman like ability . The whole appearance on entering the station yard shews repleteness in comfort and convenience , and both from one end to the other of the East Anglian Railways there is a character in the shape of finish that is rarely to be met with on any other line .

Having taken our seats in the train , the whistle sounds and we are off . The Lynn and Ely line which we traversed for about a mile, brought us up on the handsome bridge on the Hardwick road , and from its great extent this may be considered a work of no ordinary magnitude and was erected by the company at a great cost and labour . Proceeding onwards the first thing that arrests the attention is the beautiful view on the

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left ...of excellent grass lands..., in between which are seen the busy mill of Mr Fayers , and the tower of the church at West Winch .

We next crossed the bridge over the river Nar which is a sound piece of work . Passing on we arrive at the Station house at St Germans which is a small but neatly erected building . The station is about a mile from the village which may be clearly distinguished from its great extent whilst above the other objects stands the parish church .

The whole of the route along this part of the line is flat , and wheeling along at a brisk pace , we pass the Polver Drain over which the company have thrown a well constructed bridge . Just before reaching the Watlington Station , the land on the extreme right , is low and marshy , but this is beautifully contrasted by the fine woods in the locality of Watlington . We now arrive at the Watlington Station , which is both commodious and extensive , and is built on the same sound and ornamental style which characterises the other works of the company . Steaming it along the village of Magdalen is very distinctly seen , surrounded by fertile lands , abounding with stock of various descriptions cropping the herbage .

In a few minutes you are at the station at Stow , which is pleasantly situated and on the extreme left of which stands the church . A short distance from Stow , is seen peeping through the trees , the little village of Wimbotsham . Steaming and puffing along , a few minutes brought us to the Downham Station , and a neat and beautiful station it is . The landing stage here ( as well as at all the other stations ) is level with the doors of the carriages – a very great convenience and one which we hope will soon be imitated at Ely . The station is commodious and well adapted for the purposes to which it is to be applied , The front is extremely handsome – indeed it is altogether a chaste erection . These station houses along the line have been erected by Messrs Candler and Whitby ( who were in these instances jointly concerned ) , builders , of Lynn and we must say the execution of the work reflects on them considerable credit – nor can we withhold our mead of praise to Messrs Dobson and Tribe , the architects on the line , whose professional skill and ability must be apparent to everyone who enters carefully into the detail of their labours – indeed the whole staff of engineers including Messrs Harrison , F.Cruso and their co-adjutors , are entitled to our commendations for the indefatigability and arduous exertions manifested in their several departments . We cannot here refrain from remarking on the onerous duties which must have devolved on the secretary Mr W W Williams , esq, and his staff , for although their labours have not been so apparent to the public eye , yet they must have had their full share in bringing the lines to so favourable a termination . To Mr W.W.Williams then we would offer our tribute of praise – also to Messres Neame and Snell , and the junior members of the staff acting with them , all of whom have so laudably distinguished themselves in these great works .

We have now traversed the whole distance , 11 miles ( in 35 minutes ) . A gentleman of the party has kindly handed to us the following note of arrivals which he took at the time . Left Lynn, 11.13, Arrived at first Lodge, 11.15 , Arrived Viaduct , 11.18, Arrived Junction Branch line , 11.19, Arrived Nar Bridge , 11. 25, Arrived St Germans, 11.26, Arrived Watlington , 11.32 ½ , Left Watlington 11.34 , Arrived at Magdalen , 11.37, Arrived at Stow , 11.40. Arrived at Downham, 11.48.

The party alighted at the station and after perambulating the locality of the railway for about 20 minutes – the whistle sounded and we were all once again snugly ensconced in the carriages on the return expedition. The whole distance as again run over in about 32 minutes , and we must say that on a more comfortable easy line we never travelled . It is alike creditable to the company – the engineer – the contractor Mr Simpson. We have on former occasions given our mead of praise to J S Valentine, esq , the

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engineer but we cannot at this period lose the opportunity of again paying a passing tribute of commendation to that gentleman for his labour and skill , as well as to Mr Symonds , the resident engineer , acting under him for the share he bore in this extensive and well approved undertaking . Arriving at the terminus at Lynn , a brass band in attendance played that beautiful air " See the conquering hero comes " . The company once more emerged from their carriages and proceeded to the waiting room and to the upper end of the platform , where tables had been erected , containing a choice , delicate and abundant supply of refreshments , together with wines of superior quality , provided by Mr M` Pherson of the Globe Hotel , the whole repast being got up in that excellent style for which that house is celebrated . The company seemed to enjoy this little interval of mingled society .

Sir W B Folkes , the chairman of the Lynn and Ely Railway spoke as follows . He said this was a most important day for the town of Lynn . The works which had been completed were executed in a most satisfactory manner , and would he trusted be beneficial to the borough . He would beg leave to confine his observations simply to the toast which he was about to give them which was – Success and Prosperity to the East Anglian Railways (Three times three , loud long cheers followed this announcement ) Three cheers were also given for Sir Wm Folkes , the Directors, and three cheers for Lady Folkes , when the whistle shrieked aloud and the party were once more in their carriages , and proceeding onwards along the Lynn and Dereham rail to Narbro` which is the extreme point to which the line is at present opened ."



The Ipswich Journal reported on 16th Oct 1846 , "Lynn and Ely Railway . Last week some of the directors made an experimental excursion on this line from Lynn to Ely to which place the line will be open to the public in about a fortnight , thus opening a communication by railway from Swaffham by way of Lynn to London . "

Later that same month the London Daily News, 26th Oct 1846, " Opening of the Lynn and Ely Railway . This line was opened yesterday and 29 first and second class carriages started from the Lynn Station at ½ past 10 o` clock filled with ladies and gentlemen comprising many of the principal inhabitants to pay a visit to Ely . The carriages which are painted chocolate certainly present a gay and handsome appearance ( there was ) a profusion of union jacks and a band of music . At ½ past 12 the train reached Ely . The visitors proceeded to the Bell Inn where the directors had ordered a substantial luncheon . At ½ past 3 the train started from Ely and at a little after 6 a sumptuous entertainment was given at the Town Hall . "

The Standard of the next day , 27th October 1846 , " The remaining portion of the Lynn and Ely Railway viz, that from Downham to Lynn was opened on Monday . The completion of the East Anglian system of railways of which that from Lynn to Ely forms the most important section , will bring a very valuable district of the eastern part of the country into railway communication not only with the metropolis but with the northern and western parts of the kingdom which will add most materially to the value of the low lands traversed by the various lines . It is unnecessary to point out the advantages which must be derived by the proprietors of land lying within the drainage jurisdiction of the Bedford Level , the Middle Level and the drainage corporations , from the construction of the railroads through the district . Within the memory of man the large tracts of land alluded to have , by drainage , been increased by five fold in value . The locality

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is in many parts impassable for heavy vehicles in winter and the materials for road making can be obtained only from a great distance and consequently at a very heavy cost.

And yet ...the East Anglian Company have met with a most annoying , most expensive and it is believed most absurd opposition from the drainage corporations and have had to submit to almost extortionate exactions from the very landowners , the value of whose estates will be materially enhanced by this system of railways .

The length of the Lynn to Ely line is 26 ½ miles and runs through a perfectly level country . At Watlington station about six miles from Lynn, a branch to Wisbeach, ten miles long , is in the course of construction . This branch is expected to be opened in November . Of the Lynn and Dereham line 17 miles have been opened to the public for some time past . The remaining 8 miles are under construct and will in all probability be ready for traffic in the spring of next year .

The Lynn and Ely line and Wisbeach branch were according to the prospectus to be cheaply and expeditiously constructed ; and but for the opposition of the drainage corporations there is no doubt the lines would have been economically made , and long since completed The bridges proposed to be built by the railway company offered much better " way " for navigation and drainage than those that have been recently erected by corporations themselves. There is not , we believe, a single bridge between Ely and the sea with a wider opening than 40ft yet the drainage people compelled the company to build one 121ft 6ins over the Ouse with side openings to the extent of 30 yards on either side with spans of 30 ft each .

Over the new drain made by the " Middle Level " corporation , Mr James Walker erected for the convenience of the public and the private occupation roads, 14 bridges of three spans each , the centre span not exceeding 40 ft ; yet this corporation obliged the railway company to consent to erect within 100 yards of one of these 40ft span bridges , a bridge of 110 ft on the square with 132 ft on the skew . The parliamentary estimate for building two bridges on the Wisbeach line was £10,000. The corporation objected to the bridges and as a consequence a temporary bridge was constructed for £7,000 and a permanent one at £30,000 .

The landowners have driven very hard bargains with the railway company The estimated cost of the Lynn and Ely railway with the Wisbeach branch was £300,000 but the corporations opposition and requirements have added £100,000 . As an illustration of the griping character of the men , a proprietor near the Ouse Bridge made a claim of £1,900 for damage done to his property , a windmill which was 150 yards from the railway . It went to arbitration and he was awarded £1,000 for " loss of wind " .

When Captain Wynne the railway inspector inspected the railway between Ely and Denver the Ouse bridge was tested by placing on it four engines and four tenders laden with coke and water and five waggons laden with six tons of iron each . The weight may fairly be taken as follows . Four engines and tenders at 26 tons each , 104 tons, five loaded waggons , 9 tons each , 45 tons, men and other things, say , one ton . Total 150 tons .

With this weight the bridge sank 5/16ths of an inch only ; and it is more than probable , that when this bridge has come to its proper bearing it will not sink more than one eighth of an inch under all the weight the bridge can hold .

The excursion train taken from Ely to Lynn in the afternoon consisted of 31 carriages . Two engines were attached . The train was taken at a moderate rate of speed over the new portion of the line which appears to

# Downham's Railway

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have been formed with very great care by Mr Valentine The dinner in celebration of the event took place in the Town Hall with the Mayor Mr Carter presiding . About 150 gentlemen sat down to a very substantial repast but to very execrable wines .

Mr Armes proposed the toast to Mr Lacy , MP , and the Directors of the East Anglian Railways . Mr Lacy replied by saying that the spirit of railway speculation against which so much was now charged , had not been fostered by the old companies , but had been encouraged by a certain great man ( Sir Robert Peel) who one day took a spade in his hand and declared that direct lines were the thing . All the world were immediately up in arms for direct lines ; bubbles swarmed and he believed that direct as the Lynn and Ely Railway was , that if a " direct" Lynn to Ely line had been brought forward in 1845 the very name of it would have secured patronage and support .


Mr Armes now proposed the health of Mr J C Williams, the solicitor of the company . That gentleman was, he said, the originator of the Lynn and Ely line and it was mainly owing to his talent and perseverance that the Bill for it had been obtained and the undertaking carried to a successful issue . The health of Mr Valentine the engineer of the railway was next proposed and returned with thanks , Several other toasts were drunk , and the company separated shortly before 12 o` clock . " This London newspaper did its best to be pleased about the opening but this was one of many railways , and so it gave a rather more muted and resentful report on the railway , perhaps the writer was a disappointed shareholder .

Thus despite all the difficulties , financial and physical the line was opened and is still open today . The Sharp Bros of Manchester , 2-2-2 engine and its carriages steamed into the future. The woodcut illustration in the newspapers of the engine and carriages in motion , is not a cartoon or simple cutesy image, it was to advertise to the paying passengers and business men just what a cutting edge, white heat of technology means of transport this was . It was not then as now, a faultless service and alongside the article on the opening of the railway line, are three small paragraphs which describe delays on the line from Chelmsford, a fatality on the line from Cambridge and vandalism of the line . Worse was to come , the following year , 1847, the railway company put up the fares .

So next time you travel between Downham and Lynn or Ely , imagine the crowds of excited people lining the route of the inaugural journey on that cool misty autumn day in 1846..

# Downham's Railway

A History by Elizabeth Howard.



## Advertisement

# Advert

### AND WEST NORFOLK HERALD.

---

Y. ATTLEBORO', DOWNHAM, SWAFFHAM, DEREHAM, WELLS, AND FAKENHAM I

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1846.** Price

**Contractors, Farmers, and others.**

**BY AUCTION, BY**

**Cruso,**

nth of November, 1846, pre-  
clock, at the Stables, near the  
g's Lynn.

**ing Cart Horses and  
Mares,**

er-old well-bred BAY NAG  
year-old IRON GREY NAG  
arkably quiet to ride or drive:  
ld GREY PONY,  
Mr. JAMES WALKER.

ence of his having finished his  
on the Lynn and Dereham

an advantageous opportunity  
the Horses are in good con-  
quality, and would form se-  
etched teams.

had on application at Mr.  
ndon Road, or, at the Auc-  
Cooduit-street, Lynn.

**ed, near Lynn.**

**D BY AUCTION, BY**

**Cruso.**

King's Lynn, on Thursday  
November, 1846, at Six o'clock  
(subject to such conditions as  
there produced,) the following

**LD & COPYHOLD  
TATES,**

re of the Parish of Gaywood,  
ollowing lots, viz.—

se 5 Freehold COTTAGES  
(6 Tenements) with the Yards,  
urtenances to the same belong-  
Northside of the Turpike  
Parish, and now in the several  
& Ewen the elder, Susan Fysh,  
ilson, Henry Fysh, and Mark  
at a Rental of £34 per annum.

3 Copyhold COTTAGES or  
ith the Gardens and Appurte-  
-belonging, adjoining Lot 1,  
eral occupations of Robert Med-  
n, and William Wakefield, at  
of £16 16s. Copyhold of the  
l. Fine Arbitrary.

particulars apply to Mr. Ed-  
man, Solicitor, Saint James'-

**near Hunstanton.**

**LD BY AUCTION, BY**

**Cruso,**

af Inn, Heacham, Norfolk, on  
th of November, 1846, at Three  
fternoon,

piece of **Arable Land**, con-  
reing 5 Acres, in Ringstead, near

## EAST ANGLIAN RAILWAYS.


### TIME AND FARE TABLE.

ON AND AFTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH OF OCTOBER, 1846.

NOTICE.—Three minutes before the time fixed for the departure of each Train the Booking Offices will be closed, after which no person can be admitted.

**LYNN, HULL, & GAI**

The Favourite Steam



**LORD NELSON**

CAPTAIN R. WIS

Will leave the above ports as  
LYNN to HULL BU  
Friday, Nov. 13. 1 After. | Tuesday.  
Rates of Freight and other particu-  
on application to the Agent  
H. H. COOK, Lynn.  
RICHARD FURLEY & Co.  
The Antwerp, Leith, Aberdeen  
Steamers leave Hull every Satu-  
Trains every day to all parts of Y-  
shire, Lancashire, &c.

COPY OF CIRCUL

Lynn.

Madam,  
We beg to send you a List of *Ann's*  
*Illustrated Works*, and other *Publications*  
which we solicit the favour of your patronage.  
We are, Madam, your obed-

THE KEEPSAKE  
For 1847:  
With Twelve highly finished En-  
by the CORNISH or BLESSING  
bound in crimson silk, 21s.

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Edited by the Hon. Mrs  
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Splendidly Bound.

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With brilliant Pictorial Illustrat  
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For 1847:  
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A LARGE ASSORTMENT  
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Your attention is also particu-  
most splendid assortment in the  
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with Gold Rims—richly Gilt,  
Edges; or in Cases and other  
first rate and elegant style.

STANDARD & BEAUTIF  
OF WORK  
Well suited for Christmas I  
Year's Gifts

**LYNN and Ely Line.**

LYNN to DOWNHAM.	Week Days.					Sundays.		Fares.		
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	1st	2nd	3rd
	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	class	class	class
STATIONS.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
LYNN	7 15	10 15	11 50	5 0	6 40	9 0	6 0	—	—	—
Saint Germans	7 28	10 28	12 3	5 12	6 53	9 13	6 13	0 10	0 8	0 5
Wattlington	7 36	10 36	12 11	5 21	7 3	9 21	6 21	1 0	0 10	0 6
Stow	7 45	10 45	12 18	5 28	7 8	9 28	6 28	1 6	1 2	0 8
DOWNHAM	7 50	10 50	12 25	5 35	7 15	9 35	6 35	2 0	1 6	0 11

**Downham to Lynn.**

Downham to LYNN.	Week Days.					Sundays.		Fares.		
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	1st	2nd	3rd
	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	class	class	class
STATIONS.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
DOWNHAM	8 5	11 0	12 35	5 50	7 30	9 45	6 45	—	—	—
Stow	8 12	11 7	12 42	5 57	7 37	9 52	6 52	0 6	0 4	0 3
Wattlington	8 19	11 14	12 49	6 4	7 44	9 59	6 59	1 0	0 8	0 5
Saint Germans	8 27	11 22	12 57	6 12	7 52	10 7	7 7	1 2	0 11	0 7
LYNN	8 40	11 35	1 10	6 25	8 0	10 20	7 20	2 0	1 6	0 11

**Lynn and Dereham Line.**

LYNN to NARBOROUGH.	Week Days.				Sundays.			Fares.		
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1st	2nd	3rd
	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	class	class	class
STATIONS.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
LYNN	8 50	11 45	4 45	6 30	9 5	2 5	6 5	—	—	—
Middleton	9 0	11 55	4 55	6 40	9 15	2 15	6 15	0 8	0 6	0 4
East Winch	9 7	12 2	5 2	6 47	9 22	2 22	6 22	1 0	0 9	0 6
Penney and Bilney	9 14	12 9	5 9	6 54	9 29	2 29	6 29	1 2	0 11	0 7
NARBOROUGH	9 20	12 15	5 15	7 0	9 35	2 35	6 35	1 6	1 2	0 9

**NARBOROUGH to LYNN.**

NARBOROUGH to LYNN.	Week Days.				Sundays.			Fares.		
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	1st	2nd	3rd
	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	class	class	class
STATIONS.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
NARBOROUGH	9 30	12 30	5 30	8 30	9 45	3 0	6 45	—	—	—
Penney and Bilney	9 36	12 36	5 36	8 36	9 51	3 6	6 51	0 6	0 4	0 2
East Winch	9 43	12 43	5 43	8 43	9 58	3 13	6 58	0 8	0 6	0 4
Middleton	9 50	12 50	5 50	8 50	10 5	3 20	7 5	1 0	0 9	0 6
LYNN	10 0	1 0	6 0	9 0	10 15	3 30	7 15	1 6	1 2	0 9

**Third Class Carriages will accompany every Train.**

The Company will not be answerable for any Luggage unless Booked and Paid for; and, for better security, Passengers are recommended to take small packages inside the Carriages. Passengers are particularly requested to have their addresses written on all their Luggage in full. Children under ten years of age Half price; Children in arms, unable to walk, pass free.

N.B. The Servants of the Company are prohibited from demanding or receiving any Gratuity from Passengers, who, it is hoped, will assist the Directors in enforcing this regulation. Immediate dismissal follows the discovery of any Servant of the Company receiving any gratuity. Smoking in the Carriages and at the Stations is forbidden, under a Penalty, by Act of Parliament.

# Downham's Railway

A History by Elizabeth Howard.

## **References:**

House of Commons : Report of the Select Committee on Railway Labourers, 1846

[British Newspaper archives](#)

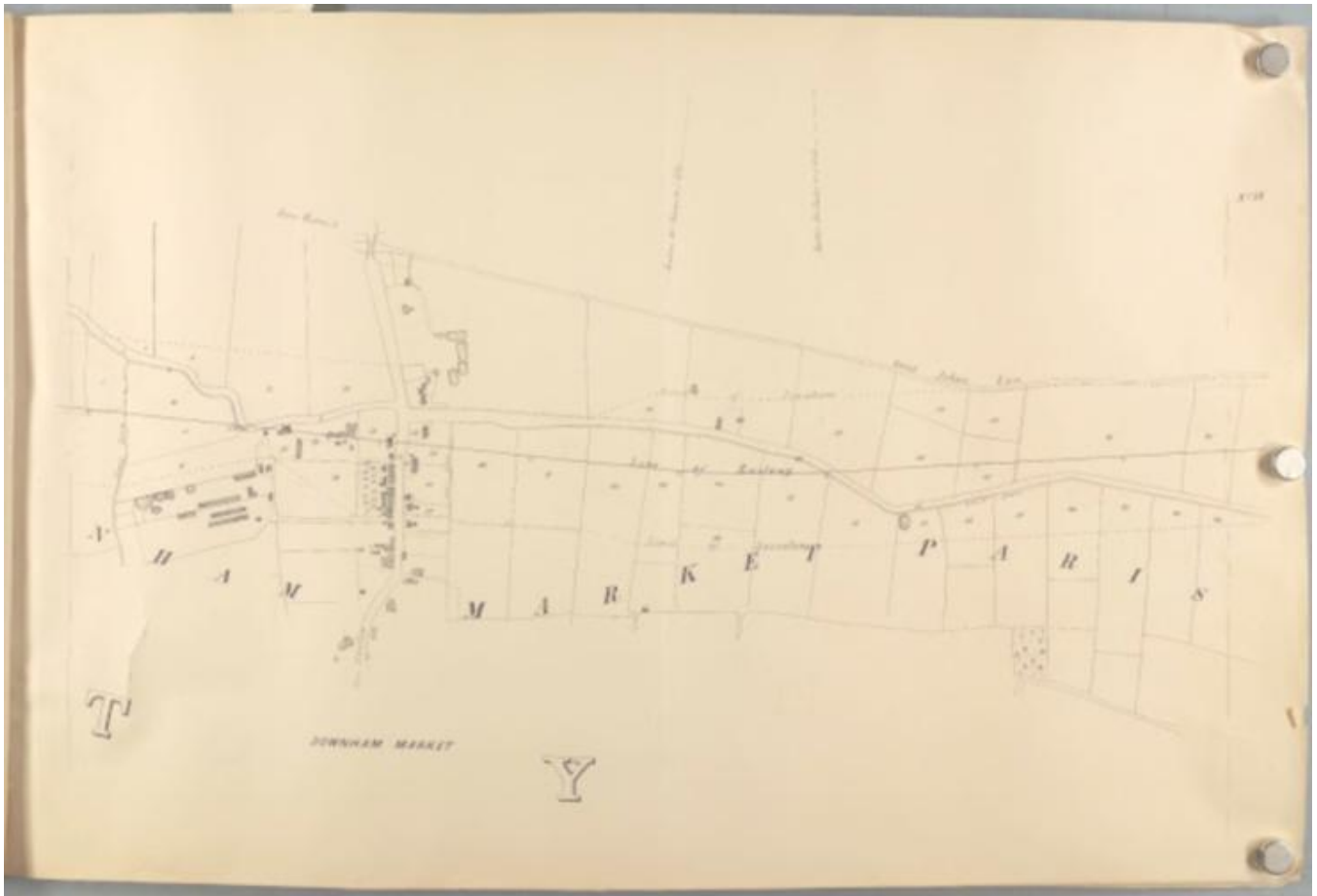
The Railway Navvies by Terry Coleman

East Anglia`s First Railways by Hugh Moffat .

Norfolk Record Office.( for permission to reproduce the map of the proposed line C/scf 1/250) .

King`s Lynn Library .

Map of the proposed line of railway at Downham 1844



Schedule of owners and occupiers of land within the proposed railway line and lines of deviation .

Book of Reference to the Plan of the Lynn and Ely Railway With a branch to the Harbour of Lynn and a branch from the Main line to Wisbeach . ( see the Map of the proposed railway line).

*Deposited in my office at 9 ½ at night on 30th November 1844. Parmeter.*

# Downham's Railway

A History by Elizabeth Howard.

<b>Lot Number</b>	<b>Land</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Occupier</b>
1	Land & Drains	William Wilson, Lee Warnes	George Wood
2	Field	William Wilson, Lee Warnes	George Wood
3	Field	William Wilson, Lee Warnes	George Wood
4	Field	William Wilson, Lee Warnes	George Wood
5	Drove	William Wilson, Lee Warnes, Edmund Beeton, Mary Barton	George Wood
6	Field & Drains	Edmund Beeton	John Garner
7	Field & Drains	George Wood	In hand
8	Field & Drains	Edmund Beeton	In hand
9	Sewers & Drains	Dikereeves of the parish	Dikereeves
10	Field & Drains	Mary Barton	William Barton
11	Field & Drains	Mary Barton	William Barton
12	Cottages, sheds, gardens and premises	Samuel Rawligns, Henry Walker, Matthew Atkins, Thos Atkins	Samuel Rawligns, Henry Walker, Matthew Atkins, Thos Atkins
13	Field		Mary Wenn
14	Field	Edmund Beeton	Thomas Page

# Downham's Railway

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15	Brickyard, shed, garden, premises	Samuel Rawlings	In hand
16	Field	Barnes Merrington	George Mann
17	Cottages, barn, yard, premises	Barnes Merrington	Francis Hunt, Harry Newman
18	Field	Robert Andrews	Thomas Rose
19	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Maurice Crawley
20	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Daniel Benstead
21	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Robert Dodd
22	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	William Lang
23	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Thomas Killingworth
24	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Francis Green
25	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Jonah Weston

# Downham's Railway

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26	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Sauel Rawlings
27	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	William Webster
28	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Samuel Lavender
29	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	John Eagleton
30	House, shed, garden, premises	Robert Andrews	Elizabeth Palgrave
31	House, shed, yard	Robert Andrews	Mary Barton
32	House, shed, yard, garden	Robert Andrews	Thomas Rose
33	Turnpike Road	Trustees of the Turnpike	
34	Cottage, sheds, garden and premises	William Bennett	Wm Walker, Wm Barrack
35	Cottage, yard	Thomas Wright	Robert Laws
36	Orchard	Thomas Wright	John Shin
37	Cottages, gardens,	Thomas Wright	Mary Rawson, John Shin

# Downham's Railway

A History by Elizabeth Howard.

	sheds, premises		
38	Orchard	Thomas Wright	James Rawson
39	Cottages, sheds, garden	John Johnson	Elizabeth Watts, Henry Filby
40	Field	Henry Winter	John Watts
41	Field	Henry Winter	William Brown
42	Field	John Dixon	In hand
43	Field	John Dixon	In hand
44	Field	George Scarnell	In hand
45	Field	James King	Thomas Page
46	Field	James King	Thomas Page
47	Field	Rev. Charles Mann	William Allcock
48	Sewers, Drains	Dikereeves of the parish	Dikereeves
49	Brickyard, sheds, premises	William Bennett	In hand
50	Field	Rev. Sam Colby Smith	William Horne
51	Field	Rev. Charles Mann	William Allcock
52	Field	John Vipon	Dyson Savage

# Downham's Railway

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53	Private Road	Thomas Wright, James King, William Weston, John Dixon, William Bennett, John Vipon, Rev. Sam Colby Smith, Rev. Charles Mann, William Chapman, George Brown, Robert Taylor, Henry Winter, George Weston, Henry Juler, Thomas Page, George Scarnell	
54	Field	Rev. Sam Colby Smith	William Horne
55	Field	Rev. Sam Colby Smith	William Horne
56	Field	George Weston	William Weston
57	Field	George Weston	William Weston
58	Field	Henry Juler	In hand
59	Field	William Weston	William Brown
60	Field	George Brown	William Chapman
61	Field	John Dixon	In hand
62	Field	Henry Winter	Bennett Brown
63	Field	Robert Taylor	Thomas Harris
64	Field	Robert Taylor	Thomas Harris
65	Field	William Chapman	In hand
66	Field	William Chapman	In hand
67	Fields, Drains	George Brown	In hand
68	Fields, Drains	George Brown	In hand

# Downham's Railway

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69	Fields, Drains	George Brown	In hand
70	Sewers, Drains	Dikereeves of the parish	Dikereeves

NRO ref C /Scf 1 /85 .



Finally ...it seemed important to try to follow the careers /lives of some of the main players involved in the building of the railway and so I have finished off the railway blog with a postscript.

Our breathless guide who reported on the first 11 mile journey of the train from Lynn to Downham for the Lynn Advertiser , rightly mentioned the names of some of the workforce behind the making of the railway .

The " originator of the Lynn and Ely line " ,Mr J.C. Williams was a solicitor born in London but who had been in partnership with Goodwin ( Partridge) of Lynn attorneys, when Thomas Greenfield was articled to a solicitor in London in 1840 . J.C. , John Charles later married a Mary Sarah Greenfield . Mr W.W. Williams the railway company secretary may well have been a brother to John Charles Williams .

John Sutherland Valentine the engineer has already been mentioned. The builders Candler and Whitby of Lynn were both Lynn born and middle aged by the time the railway came . William Candler was a master carpenter born in 1790 and Thomas Whitby was a builder born a few years earlier in 1787 and lived in Whitby Yard off the High Street in Lynn with his son James .. The contractor William Smith Simpson was born in 1803 and lived in Park Farm ,Little Downham , Cambs , and also had a London address in Islington . A month before the opening of the Lynn and Ely railway he dissolved his partnership with Chas Briggs of "Ferry " both being described as railway contractors . He later dissolved his partnerships with James Walker the Middle Level builder of 14 bridges , and Chas. Bennett in 1847 and 1849 . In 1851 he is living in Lt. Downham with his wife Julia and his daughter Eliza who was born in Wisbech. He died in 1868.

One of the subcontractors was James Bailey . In the 1851 census he was living in Railway Road, Lynn , aged 43 described as subcontractor to public works , and born Westminster . His wife Elizabeth is 29 and born Ashford , Kent , for certain not his first wife as his son, another James, is aged 21 and an assistant to his

# Downham's Railway

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father , and born in the railway central town of Stockton in Durham . If anything gives James Bailey his credentials as a railway builder it is the birthplace of his son in 1830 at the pinnacle of the Stephenson era of very early railway building .

In the same house but not as the enumerator is clear to mention, are 8 navvies , ” these persons do not occupy separate apartments “. But it is rare to find the names of the navvies. John Ibbinson, 22, b Yorks, Jonas Rolfe, 35, b Lowestoft, he later became a coal porter , James Bollowes, 26 , b Kirby Prior, John Corsey, 26, b Norfolk , William Pearman , 18, b Suffolk, William King, 25 , b Warwickshire , William Simpson , 22, b Lincs, and Charles Osborne, 29, b Boston . The last Charles became a labourer in a fish office in Lowestoft . Although by 1851 the Lynn to Ely railway was fully opened , it is possible that James Bailey and his gang of navvies were needed at the development of Lynn Harbour, on the doomed Watlington to Wisbech branch line or to complete the Lynn to Dereham line.

Also in the 1851 census in Railway Road, Lynn is Richard Collar, described as unmarried, 21, stationmaster E.A.Railway, Lynn , born Chippenham , Wilts, so maybe a young man with Great Western Railway experience . Later he is found as a coal merchant in Norwich . Also with him is William Belshar Stanley , unmarried, 25, stationmaster in Downham , born in Margate , Kent . He was born in 1824 on the Isle of Thanet , and in later census becomes a mercantile clerk .

Of the others mentioned by name Dobson , Tribe, Neame and Snell all seem to have moved away from the Lynn area but Frederic Cruso in 1851 is a 27 year old civil engineer and son of Robinson Cruso the auctioneer and it is name known today in Lynn.