



THE RAILWAY — ITS IMPACT ON HERIOT

As the motorist of the 1980s sweeps off Middleton Moor he is hardly aware of the existence of the old railway line running down beside Gala Water. The demolition, in 1982, of the Skew Bridge below Nettlingflat removed yet another trace of the once-great Waverley Line. This was a route of considerable beauty to the traveller, but to the railway enthusiast a line which posed a formidable challenge to the locomotive and its crew as they struggled to haul a heavy train over Falahill and Whitrope summits. These two climbs were so steep that many trains required 'banking', that is, another engine had to push the train from the rear. Because of the severity of these gradients the North British Railway employed their largest locomotives to copy with the Waverley Line. Early in the 20th century these were the famous 'Atlantic' 4 — 4 — 2 engines, the only ones of their type ever used by the old Scottish railway companies and their full and remarkable story can be found in 'The North British Atlantics' by John Thomas (David & Charles 1972).

Our motorist passing the now defunct station at Heriot could be forgiven for thinking that the centre of the village was always in the vicinity of the station. It was not so before the coming of the railway. The older properties are generally situated up by Heriot Water but the presence of the new railway encouraged building close to Heriot Station. This is the one effect of the railway which has outlived the railway itself. It has left the school and church somewhat removed from the population centre of the village and with the Post Office, once situated

beside the station, now located at Hangingshaw it gives every encouragement to those who wish to indulge in the craze of the 1980s — jogging.

Why was the line built in the first place? It was not the prospect of handling commuter traffic because there was no 'commuting' in the 1840s. Neither was it built for the movement of large amounts of goods traffic for there was little industrialisation in the Borders. The real reason had a great deal more to do with railway politics than economics. In the 1840s the North British Railway was in a highly expansive mood even by the standards of that decade. (1845 was the year of 'Railway Mania'). Although the N.B. was the Northern partner in the East Coast route it also wanted a share of the lucrative West Coast traffic and in order to get trains to Carlisle it had to run on the rails of the hated Caledonian. The 'Caley' was suspected of deliberately delaying traffic between the N.B. and its English partner, the Midland. Thus, because of events taking place elsewhere, the little communities down the Gala Water found themselves with a railway; a main line which could take the residents of Heriot directly to the Capital of the British Empire!

Besides offering a mobility hitherto unknown, at least to those locals who could afford it, the farming community found the railway of immense benefit. The old practice of 'droving' quickly ceased when they realised that livestock could be transported to market in just a few hours instead of days. As livestock arrived in better condition it usually fetched higher prices. To facilitate the loading of animals a loading bay was provided in the little goods yards. All the other usual accoutrements of a country station were provided; station house, up and down platforms, signal box, level crossing, goods shed etc. Heriot Station itself was opened on 4th August, 1848 and the line to Hawick on 1st November, 1849, although the Waverley route throughout was not completed until 1862. An extract of the timetable of 1850 is shown below and the surprise is to find trains running on Sundays!

TO EDINBURGH

	MONDAY TO SATURDAY			SUNDAY	
HERIOT	8 .32 a.m.	11 .35 a.m.	7.05 p.m.	9.50 a.m.	6.35 p.m.
EDINBURGH	9 .30 a.m.	12 .35 p.m.	8.00 p.m.	10.45 a.m.	7.35 p.m.