

Working at Water Haigh Colliery

by Steven Oakden

Looking west towards the main part of Water Haigh Colliery on 6 February 1970. As an aid to getting one's bearings the photographer was standing roughly where the letter 'E' (of 'Woodlesford') is on the accompanying OS map. When comparing this view to the OS map, remember that the map dates to 1932 so some aspects of the layout will be different to 1960s and '70s photographs. One example here is the line on the far right of the photograph which, clearly, was not there in 1932. The loco heading off towards the shed is Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0T *Whit No.4*. PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH TAYLORSON; THE TRANSPORT TREASURY

Water Haigh Colliery was situated a little to the east of the village of Oulton in West Yorkshire. It was on the south side of the Aire & Calder Navigation, a little over ½-mile south-east of Woodlesford station on the Midland Railway's Leeds-Sheffield line. The pit was sunk *circa* 1910 and the shafts reached the Silkstone seam that same year and the Beeston seam in 1913. The upcast shaft was 361 yards deep. The owners of the colliery were H. Briggs & Sons (later trading as Briggs Collieries) who also owned Snydale, Savile, Peckfield and Whitwood collieries. By 1947 Water Haigh's production was 333,000 tons per annum; it employed 856 staff underground and 252 on the surface.

During the NCB era, one of the many – literally thousands – of men who worked at Water Haigh at one time or another was Dave Fallowfield, who eventually became an engine driver there. This article is based almost entirely on Dave's reminiscences of railway working at the colliery so it is appropriate to start with a brief introduction to the man himself.

Dave Fallowfield

Dave started working at Water Haigh Colliery in 1954. He had previously worked as a tractor driver at a market garden for £5.10.0d per week, but transferring to the pit gave him a basic wage of £9-£10 per week which, with overtime three days a week, could be boosted to £16.10.0d. Dave started as a utility man, working as a relief wherever one of the surface installations was short-staffed, but he later became a shunter and spent eighteen months or so working with engine driver Bill Jeffries who showed him the ropes. When Bill left, Dave looked forward to taking over the driving job, but the afternoon shift (2pm-10pm) was cut out so the vacancy did not need filling. Dave therefore continued working as a shunter but, in 1959, he at last became a driver. He remained driving at Water Haigh until 1971.

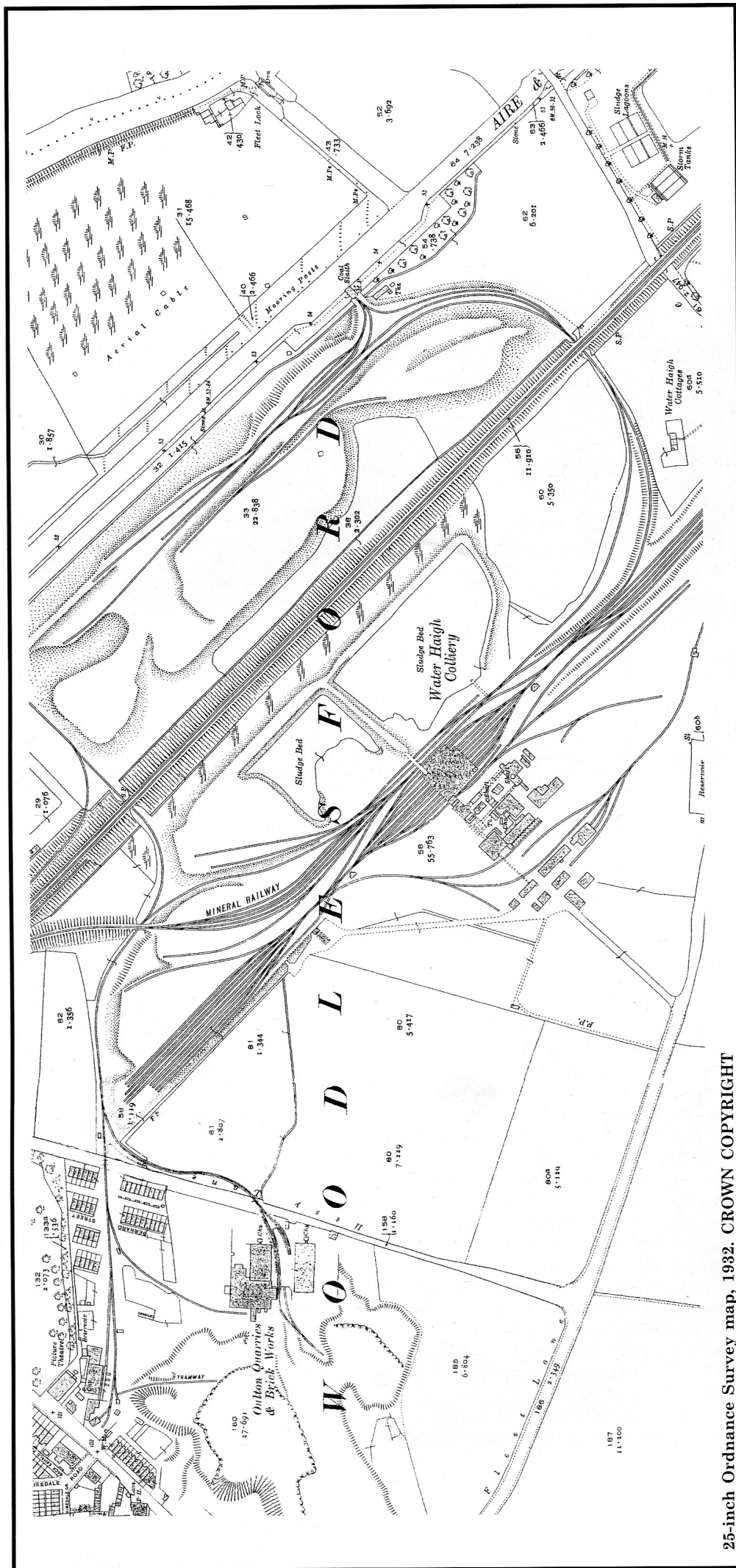
The colliery railway

The railway system at Water Haigh was not particularly lengthy but it was nevertheless complex and the working of it required reversals. Empties arriving via

the BR connection to the north-west of the colliery were pulled out of the sidings and then propelled back uphill to the empties sidings above the screens; from there they gravitated over an empty wagon tare weighbridge on their way to be loaded. Fulls ran down to the south-east over a different weighbridge into a set of sidings. A locomotive collected wagons from these sidings and took them up the yard past the colliery buildings to the exchange sidings. Other traffic such as that for the canal staith was pulled up the yard and then propelled with gusto under the BR line and up around the curve to the canal loader.

Another section of the system was the timber yard. This was served by two long sidings which were parallel to, but at a higher level than, the fulls sidings. Pit props and other timber which had been brought in by rail were unloaded in these sidings.

There was also sludge to be dealt with. The waste water from the washer was full of tiny particles of coal so the water was run out into ponds so that, over a period of time, the coal dust settled. When the



25-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1932. CROWN COPYRIGHT

ponds were drained the sludge dried and was used to make briquettes. These were taken away by conveyor and loaded into railway wagons. A substantial proportion of the dried slurry was exported to Belgium to make briquettes; it is thought that some were later re-imported into this country!

Some of the sidings had been laid for use as through roads or for another specific purpose but were never used as such; instead, they were used to store redundant wagons. One of these sidings was intended to be used to turn locos so as to even out the tyre wear caused by constantly working round to the canal staith. The theory was good but, in practice, the siding was so sharply curved that none of the engines used it. Another siding had originally been intended to allow trains to bypass the screens on the south side but this, too, was only ever used for storing wagons.

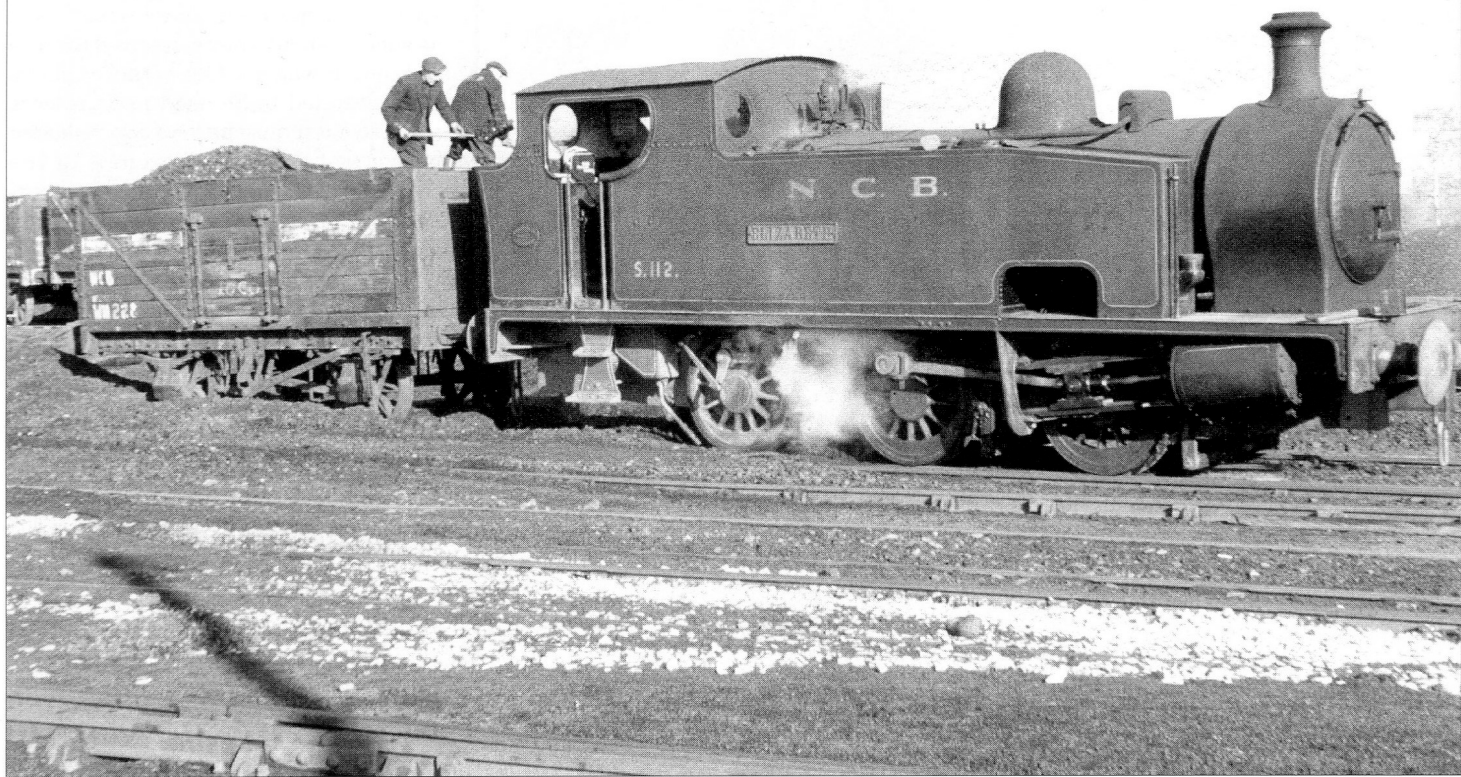
These sidings were, however, pressed into a different sort of use in the mid-1960s. Following the elimination of BR steam in the area, the lack of orders for large coal resulted in every available siding being used to store wagons loaded with coal. Part of the old canal staith road, the line to the old wagon shops, the sidings by the sludge beds and even some of the fulls sidings and part of the tip road were also similarly used.

Loco duties

The colliery yard itself was laid out on a steady falling gradient. All movement of empties to the screens and loaded wagons out to the weighbridge and to the despatch sidings could be done by gravity. However, two locos were still required at Water Haigh each day – one working in the colliery yard and the other to the canal staith.

The first loco started its day by taking coal to the landsale sidings which were on the south side of the engine shed. The next job was to attend to the smalls bunker – eight or nine wagon-loads would fill it. Another job was to shunt a siding on the west side of the pit which was used for miners' concession coal; this siding was known to the staff as Strawberry Road, but the reason for that name seems to have been lost in the mists of time. Then there might be a run down to the exchange sidings to collect empties for the top of the pit. The empties had been brought by BR in trains of forty wagons but had been divided into two lots of twenty for taking on to the empties sidings. The engine's next job was to take loaded wagons from the screens to the exchange sidings – there might be two such trips – then it was a break at 11am.

Other railway duties included servicing the boiler house. At one time there had been 12-14 boilers in use but



Driver Dave Fallowfield (left) and his shunter Bill Hardwick (right) load the bunker of the popular Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0T *Elizabeth* on 6 February 1970. The drive to the mechanical lubricator from the rear crank pin can be seen. PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH TAYLORSON; THE TRANSPORT TREASURY

latterly only four were used. This required two or three wagon-loads per shift.

Meanwhile, the other engine, which had started work at 9am, was engaged on trips to the canal staith. Trains to the staith could occasionally comprise more than twenty wagons but, usually, nine or ten was the maximum.

Until the mid-1950s a second set of men started work at 9am and undertook general work in the colliery yard until about 10.30am when they relieved the crew of the first loco. When that job finished they relieved the crew of the staith loco and continued until 6pm, the last part of their day being on overtime. However, by the time Dave Fallowfield had become a driver, the afternoon shift for the staith loco had been cut and the engine's duties now finished at 2pm. Nevertheless, the actual loading at the staith (which did not require an engine) continued until about 9pm.

The canal

Mention has been made of the traffic to the canal staith. This formed a substantial part of the railway work at the colliery. Seven or eight barges could be loaded during the morning shift at the staith and in the afternoon there were 'Tom Puddings' (square-shaped containers) to

attend to. The Tom Puddings were used to convey singles and doubles to Goole Docks for transfer to sea-going ships. The barges – many of which belonged to the rival companies of Cawoods or Hargreaves – were used to take dry smalls to Ferrybridge and Skelton Grange power stations. Skelton Grange also took washed smalls; these were conveyed by a pair of CEGB-owned barges – one was powered and towed the other – which came to Water Haigh every day.

A company by the name of Wilby's came with two barges at a time; again, the larger one towed the smaller one. The larger one needed ten or twelve wagon-loads to fill it. They carried house coal destined for York and Leeds Co-operative Societies or other coal such as singles and slack for the power plants of mills and a sugar factory at Selby. Most of the other barges were a little smaller and could be fully loaded with five or six wagon-loads, but the very biggest could take 200 tons of coal.

As for the railway set-up at the staith, each wagon ran on to a table which had two huge hoops to hold the front axle as the wagon was tipped. The table had balance weights so that, once the wagon had discharged, it automatically lowered again. The only control was a brake which

the operator could turn to stop a wagon discharging too quickly. In earlier times the coal was loaded on to the barges by means of two chutes but, in later years, the wagons were side-tipped into a bunker which fed the coal on to a conveyor. This method offered a greater degree of control when loading into the barges.

After each wagon had been discharged at the staith it rolled away towards the west and, when there were four empties, they had the brakes released and were left to run by gravity to a loop parallel to the main running line. At the loop the first four wagons had their handbrakes pinned down hard but the following sets of four were simply left to roll into these. When a train of empties had been assembled it was taken back to the colliery.

For many years the wagons used on the staith traffic at Water Haigh were wooden-bodied mineral wagons with side and end doors painted black. However, in later years 21-ton steel hopper wagons were introduced.

Spoil disposal

About 80% of the spoil from Water Haigh was taken out by an aerial ropeway, much of it being dumped in Swillington Park on the north side of the canal. The remainder was taken away by rail. The colliery only

had about 12 'Jubilee' wagons (known as 'muck cans') for this work but, as they were very easy to tip, they could be quickly unloaded and returned to the pit. The unloading road on the tip was short and could take only about six wagons at a time, but a second tip line was put in during the last eighteen months of the colliery's life. As the profile of the tip changed, the sidings were repositioned as and when required. Usually, the aerial ropeway could cope with most of the spoil from the washer so shunts to the tip were required only two or three times a week. However, if new roadways were being driven underground this produced larger lumps of stone and so additional trips to the tip were required.

The actual emptying of the wagons at the tip was undertaken by the loco crews who used a bulldozer to level the spoil. On one occasion the 'machine man' (as the bulldozer operator was referred to) had driven the bulldozer right up to the edge of the sleepers and this had resulted in the ground level dropping by a few feet. This caused a bit of a problem... At the time, the colliery management had decreed that that the Jubilee wagons had

to be clamped to the rails while being tipped (there had been a spate of wagons overturning while tipping and the clamping was intended to overcome this) but, on the day on question, a wagon which had just been clamped went over and took the track on which it was standing – and several other wagons as well – with it. This was entirely due to the track having been de-stabilised by the bulldozer.

Armitage's Brick Works

Prior to Dave Fallowfield's days as a driver at Water Haigh, the colliery railway had had another task to perform. This was for George Armitage & Sons' brickworks – known as Oulton Brickworks – which were to the north-west of the colliery. Every so often one of the colliery locos positioned some wagons on a spur which connected the colliery to Armitage's own internal railway system. Armitage's railway extended from the works to clay pits and was worked by their own Hudswell Clarke 0-4-0ST W/No.603 of 1902 which had been transferred from another of Armitage's sites, Thorpe Brickworks at Ardsley, *circa* 1918. The brickworks railway at Oulton

closed *circa* 1955, road vehicles having taken over the duties at the clay pits.

The locomotives

As will be seen in the accompanying table, eight different locomotives were used at Water Haigh during the NCB period. Of those, two were scrapped in 1955 and two others (*Whitwood No.1* and *Bawtry*) were at Water Haigh only temporarily, covering while one of the regular engines was away for repair. *Bawtry* was actually at Water Haigh when Dave Fallowfield started work there. He remembers it as a good little engine, even though it required a bit of thrashing to take nine wagons to the canal staith.

So, ignoring the two loaned engines and the two early departures, during Dave Fallowfield's time as a driver at Water Haigh (1959-1971) the engines used were Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0Ts *S112 Elizabeth*, *Whitwood No.6* and *Whit No.4* and Hunslet 0-6-0ST *S101*. Dave's favourite of those was *Elizabeth*. It was the biggest, most powerful and the best steamer, with a 7-foot firebox. It could take up to 24 loaded wagons to the canal staith and still have steam to spare. The other Hudswell



Loading at the canal staith, 6 February 1970. By this time the old method of loading had been superseded by a conveyor belt. In the distance is the aerial ropeway to the tip on the north side of the canal at Swillington Park. Driver Dave Fallowfield considered that the line to the staith was in need of repair but the engineers seemed to turn a deaf ear to his comments. However, on one occasion one of the engineers needed to inspect the staith and he cadged a lift on Dave's engine. Dave made sure that the trip was much faster than usual – the ride was rough enough to frighten the living daylight out of the engineer and the track was attended to very shortly afterwards! PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH TAYLORSON; THE TRANSPORT TREASURY

WATER HAIGH COLLIERY – locomotives used by the NCB

Makers abbreviated thus: HC – Hudswell Clarke; HE – Hunslet Engine Co; MW – Manning Wardle; RS – Robert Stephenson & Co

Name; number	Type	Maker; W/No.	Built	To Water Haigh	Left Water Haigh
HENRY BRIGGS	0-6-0ST (l)	MW 462	1873	with site (ex-Briggs Collieries) 1.1.47	Scrapped 1955
No.6	0-6-0ST (l)	RS 2249	1875	with site (ex-Briggs Collieries) 1.1.47	Scrapped 1955
S112 ELIZABETH	0-6-0T (o)	HC 1600	1927	with site (ex-Briggs Collieries) 1.1.47	to Savile Colliery 4.1970
BAWTRY	0-6-0ST (l)	HE 1698	1932	on loan from Wheldale Colliery c.1954	return to Wheldale Colliery c.1954
WHITWOOD No.1	0-6-0T (o)	HC 1822	1949	ex-Whitwood Colliery 1955	to Whitwood Colliery 1957
WHITWOOD No.6	0-6-0T (o)	HC 1864	1952	ex-Whitwood Colliery c.1953/54	to Allerton Bywater Workshops 1963
WHIT No.4	0-6-0T (o)	HC 1844	1951	ex-Whitwood Colliery c.1958/59	to Prince of Wales Colliery 5.1971
S101	0-6-0ST (l)	HE 1094	1912	ex-Allerton Bywater Workshops 5.1960	Scrapped on site 1.1969

Clarke 0-6-0Ts were good engines but, having only 16-inch cylinders, they were not quite in the same league as *Elizabeth* which had 17-inch cylinders.

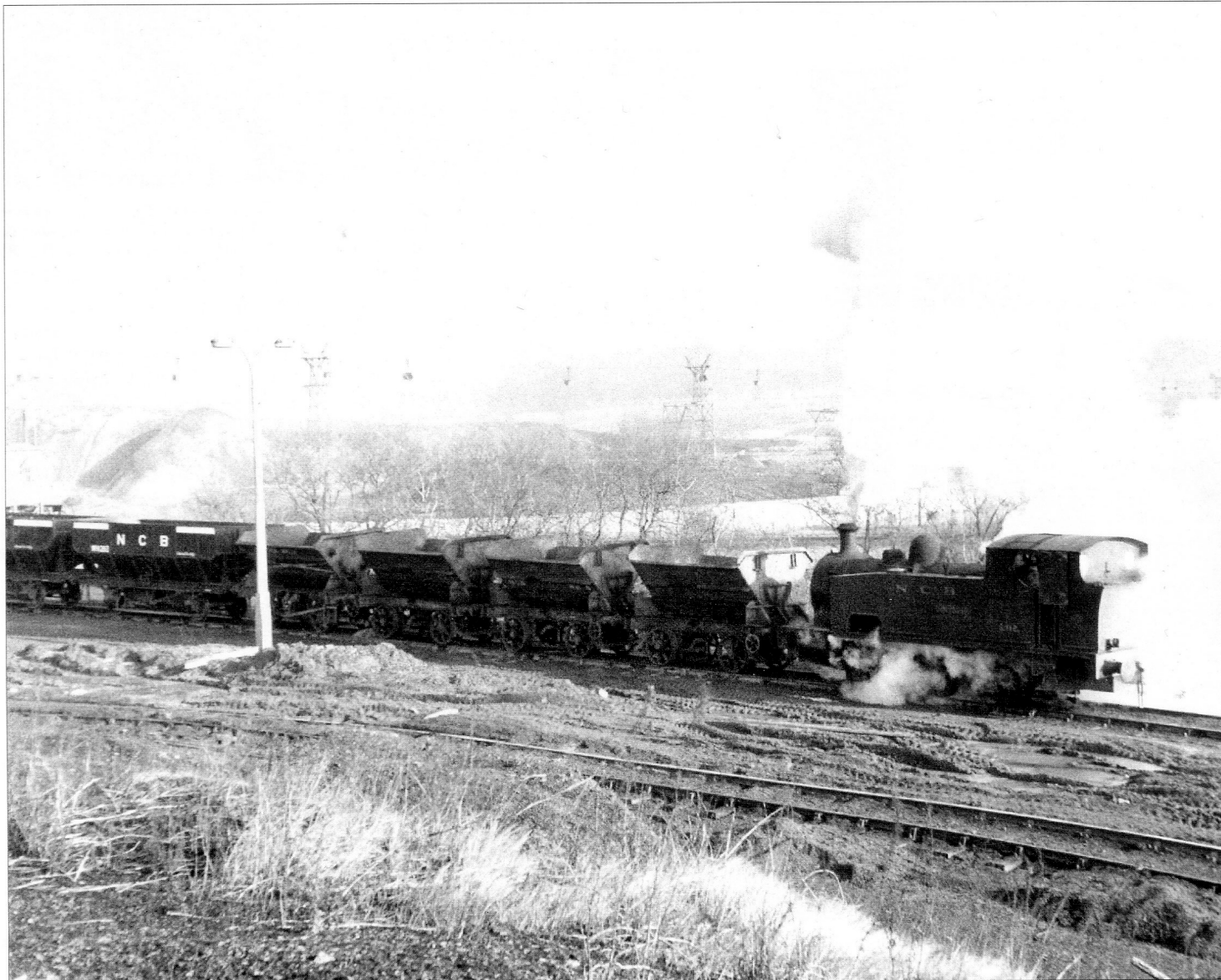
Elizabeth had a mechanical lubricator which was operated by a crank from the left-hand coupling rod; the device lubricated the cylinders and the axleboxes. Dave was impressed by the lubricator and found that *Elizabeth* would run really freely if the lubricator were kept topped up. He used to put some tallow in the oil

and he had a hand crank fitted to the lubricator so that he could prime the lubrication system if it had run dry or if the engine had been out of use for a while.

During an overhaul at Allerton Bywater Workshops in the early 1960s, *Elizabeth* had seats fitted in the cab; the shunter's seat was positioned so that his back was against the tank which, on that side of the loco (the left-hand side), extended into the cab. Another modification to the cab enabled the loco to be driven from either

side; this involved the regulator being converted to a double-handle type and the brake wheel being duplicated on the left-hand side.

Apparently, *Elizabeth* had always worked in the colliery yard but, in the 1950s, the management had other plans for her. It was decreed that *Elizabeth* was to do trips to the canal staith – a job she had never previously undertaken on account of her longer wheelbase – but this did not go down well with the men as it



Elizabeth is collecting assorted empties on 6 February 1970. The four Jubilee wagons next to the engine had been to the tip and back, and on the return trip to the colliery the other empties had been collected from the staith siding. PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH TAYLORSON; THE TRANSPORT TREASURY



Elizabeth propels four side-tipping hoppers up to the spoil tip while platelayers are at work on the lower level track. The aerial ropeway can be seen in the distance. The date is 11 June 1969. PHOTOGRAPH: PETER STAMPER

meant slogging round a 180° bend which would, of course, result in intense wear on the wheels and motion on one side. One of the drivers was so unhappy with the management's edict that he went home in protest and didn't return to work for two days!

Another of the other regular performers in the 1960s was the veteran Hunslet 0-6-0ST *S101* which had been named *Beeston* at its previous place of work, Allerton Bywater Colliery. Nicknamed 'Dreadnought' by the Water Haigh men, it had an inherent problem: it had a cover instead of a bridge for the mud doors and, following a washout, steam tended to leak or, at worst, the gasket blew completely. It also used to knock badly. Despite this, 'Dreadnought' was regarded as a fairly good engine, though not as good as the Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0Ts. It had originally carried its coal in side pockets in the cab but a rear bunker had been fitted prior to it coming to Water Haigh.

The engines were fired on doubles. They were meant to burn what was termed 'kitchen coal' but, at one time, the men took to swapping labels on loaded coal

wagons so that best steam coal from the Beeston seam was delivered to the shed instead of the kitchen coal. When making a surprise visit to the shed the colliery manager discovered the 'swap' and immediately put a stop to it.

The crews used to wash out the engines and sweep the tubes on alternate weekends so each of the two sets of men had overtime every other weekend.

Although major repairs and overhauls were done at the Area Central Workshops at Allerton Bywater, routine and minor repairs were carried out at the colliery. When repairs were needed, a report was made to the night shift men whose job it was to carry out the maintenance. Dave Fallowfield wasn't very impressed by the standard of maintenance at the colliery; for example, a regular problem was that brasses were not taken up properly while, overall, things usually had to get to a very bad state before repairs were done. Dave recalls one particular episode. When working with one of the Hudswell Clarke 0-6-0Ts one day he noticed that the front wheel was cracked on three spokes – probably a result of excessive play in the

motion. A fitter was sent for and he in turn sent for the engineer who discovered that the wheel was, in fact, cracked on both sides. The engineer's response was that the engine crew should take fewer wagons! A replacement wheel was, however, subsequently ordered.

Wagons

A sizeable fleet of internal-user wagons was required to work traffic to the staith and to the landsales sidings, boilers and tip. Originally there was a small shed for wagon repairs on the line leading eastwards away from the engine shed. Later, wagon repairs were done in the joiners' shop which was at the pithead. This was served by a single siding which could accommodate a couple of wagons. Much of the work went on outside but, if necessary, a wagon could be placed inside the shop.

Closure and after

Water Haigh Closed on 28 April 1970 but the clearance of ground stocks continued until the following year. Much of the ground

stock had come in by road from Kellingley Colliery near Knottingley for re-washing. The ground stocks were dispatched by canal and by rail. This work required only one engine, *Whit No.4*, so *Elizabeth* was sent to nearby Savile Colliery to deputise when one of their locos was under repair.

The Water Haigh crew – Dave Fallowfield and his shunter Bill Hardwick – were also required to look after the unloading of the wagons at the canal staith. On arrival at the staith the engine had its fire banked up and was left simmering while the crew attended to the wagons. Any other shunting requirements at the colliery were fitted in between trips to the staith.

After this work had finished at Water Haigh, *Whit No.4* was transferred to Prince of Wales Colliery near Pontefract. The transfer turned out to be quite a saga. The trip was arranged for 4 May 1971; by that time Dave Fallowfield had moved to Peckfield Colliery but he was asked to return to Water Haigh to prepare *Whit No.4* for the journey. This he did. *Whit No.4* was to be towed by a diesel but was to be in light steam. The master plan was for *Whit No.4* to have its connecting rods taken off so that it would run more easily, but the big ends could not be removed so the journey had to be cancelled. The trip was rescheduled for the following day, this

time with *Whit No.4's* connecting rods still in place. The ensemble – a diesel, *Whit No.4* and a brake van – set off for Leeds so that the engine could be turned before making its way to Pontefract. However, by the time they got to Stourton Sidings the brasses in the rods were red hot – the cotters had been rammed home tight and the bearings were gripping the crank pins. Nevertheless, the train struggled along towards Leeds and *Whit No.4* was deposited on a siding near Holbeck shed. A fitter from the shed came across and managed to slacken off the bearings, but by the time this was done it was getting very late in the day so it was decided to leave the engine on the siding overnight and resume the trip the following morning. Fortunately, things went fairly smoothly the following day and the engine eventually completed its transfer to Prince of Wales Colliery.

Dave Fallowfield's driving career eventually finished at Ledston Luck Colliery where he worked on narrow gauge diesels. As for his former charges at Water Haigh, *Whitwood No.6* left Water Haigh in 1963 and eventually finished its NCB days at Newmarket Colliery in 1979, after which it went to Steamtown at Carnforth for preservation. It is now with RMS Locotec at Dewsbury and it is understood that it is earmarked for use on the

Okehampton-Meldon Quarry line in Devon. *Whitwood No.1*, which had a brief stint at Water Haigh in the mid-1950s, is also still with us. After finishing work at Peckfield Colliery in 1973 it was saved for preservation and is now with the Chasewater Light Railway at Brownhills. At one stage it seemed that *Whit No.4* might be also destined for preservation as, in 1976, it was acquired by the Nene Valley Railway. However, the new owners wanted it only for its boiler and, after this had been removed and the tanks used for other purposes, the remains were cut up.

Below. Whit No.4 and Elizabeth at work on 6 February 1970. Elizabeth is taking empties back to the west side of the screens while Whit No.4 is meandering back to the shed. The colliery was nearing closure and, with less work to do, Whit No.4 was probably on the skive! But even though the workload had by this time diminished, the cleanliness of the engines was a credit to the crews who used to look after the engines themselves. PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH TAYLORSON; THE TRANSPORT TREASURY





Elizabeth pauses at the east side of the screens while between duties on 11 June 1969. In the background, BR 21-ton and NCB side-tipping (Jubilee) wagons are being loaded at the screens. The Jubilees were usually loaded at the washery, so their presence at the screens indicates that they were about to be loaded with muck and stone which had been excavated while driving headings and roadways underground. The screen roads were (from left to right): 1 - cobbles; 2 - Beeston seam best coal; 3-6 - 'kitchen coal'. 7 and 8 were never used. Note the ropes and pulleys on the front of the screens - these were used to counterbalance the conveyor belts from which the wagons were loaded. PHOTOGRAPH: PETER STAMPER

Elizabeth shunts internal-user wagons which were used for taking coal to the landsale sidings. PHOTOGRAPH: PETER STAMPER





A fine portrait of the impressively-clean *Elizabeth* at Water Haigh on 27 August 1965. As can be seen the engine had top feed – this was a very unusual fitment for an industrial loco. PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER MONK

The delightful old Hunslet 0-6-0ST *S101* adjacent to the weighbridge on 25 August 1965. The engine had been delivered new to Allerton Bywater Colliery in 1912 and had been named *Beeston* after one of the coal seams in the area. It was taken into Allerton Bywater Central Workshops for overhaul *circa* 1960 and, apparently, came close to being laid aside for scrapping. However, its good copper firebox earned it a reprieve so it was repaired, after which it was dispatched to Water Haigh where it was to see out its days. The NCB fleet number *S101* appears to have been applied while the loco was at the central workshops in 1960; it seems that this coincided with the name *Beeston* being removed. PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER MONK



FORUM - DIESEL DELIGHTS

Photographs by Leslie Sandler



Quiet days at a once busy colliery - this was the herbaceous scene at Water Haigh on 6 February 1970, only a couple of months before it ceased production. PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH TAYLORSON; THE TRANSPORT TREASURY

Maintenance at Water Haigh Colliery, 6 February 1970. PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH TAYLORSON; THE TRANSPORT TREASURY

