

A History of the Hull Railways

by G. G. MacTurk

revised by Ken Hoole



25s

INTRODUCTION

When a boy I attended school in Hull, and because my home was at Bridlington, thirty-one miles away, I had to have my lunch at school. There were no school dinners in those days and we had to eat our sandwiches in a spare class room provided with bare wooden tables. Fortunately there was no restriction on our leaving the school premises during the lunch break, and three or four of us found that it was possible to visit all but two of the Hull docks in the ninety minutes available.

Where there were docks, there were railways, and the daily sixty-two miles rail journey to school and back served to increase my interest in this form of transport. Consequently, for more than three years, in all but the worst weather, our lunch-time visits took us down river to the Victoria Dock, where the scent of the timber from the Baltic ports contrasted strongly with the fishy smell at our western limit—St. Andrew's Dock. In between were the William Wright, Albert, Humber, Prince's, Queen's, and Railway docks, not forgetting the Riverside Quay, where a fascinating path ran along the top of the sheds, giving an excellent view of the ships bringing in soft fruit and vegetables.

Our sandwiches were usually eaten sitting on some convenient bollard from where we could watch the loading and unloading operations. Little did I think then that one day this lunchtime exploration of the railways and docks of Hull would lead to an invitation to write this introduction to MacTurk's work which, I must admit, at that time I had never even heard of!

George Gladstone MacTurk was born in 1831 and even in his childhood he must have heard much about transport and the early days of railways, for his father, Thomas MacTurk, was connected with the Market Weighton Canal, taken over by the York and North Midland Railway in 1847. It was his father who approached George Hudson in 1844 regarding the take-over of the Hull and Selby Railway. G. G. MacTurk was for many years a solicitor in Bradford though he later took over the family business of Thomas MacTurk & Co., woollen merchants, of Hull. He was for several years chairman of the South Cave and Wallingfen Local Board and active in promoting a scheme for road improvements: he was also the owner of South Cave waterworks and responsible for a plan to supply householders with fresh spring water. He died in 1911.

His attempt at presenting the story of the Hull railways was, no doubt, dictated by his great personal interest in the subject and if he was alive today he would certainly deplore the wholesale closures of lines and stations. The disappearance of the Hull and Barnsley Railway—Hull's long-awaited answer to the monopolistic North Eastern Railway—would have broken his heart.