

**REPORT OF THE
KNARESBOROUGH RAIL-WAY
COMMITTEE**



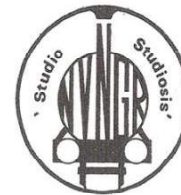


The Knaresborough Railway Report

1819



A Lithographic Reprint with Notes
on the background to the Scheme



INTRODUCTORY NOTES

GENERAL

This edition of the Knaresborough Railway Report is a photolithographic reprint, taken from one of the few remaining original copies. With the exception of the map (referred to on page 12) the whole document has been reproduced as it was when published in 1820. The map however, was printed on varnished linen, which in such surviving copies as the Publishers have been able to trace, is either missing altogether, or in such poor condition that it has not been possible to reprint it.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, Knaresborough was an important centre of the English linen industry, concerned mainly with the dressing and spinning of flax. Development of the trade locally was severely hampered by transport difficulties, namely the despatch of products from the town, and the bringing in of coal needed to drive mill machinery.

In the early 1800's, the cheapest method of bulk transport was by navigable river or canal. The nearest waterway depots for Knaresborough and Nidderdale were Skipton and Leeds (Leeds and Liverpool Canal) or Boroughbridge and Ripon (River Ure Navigation). Transport between Nidderdale and any of these points was over indifferent roads, which might easily become impassable during the Winter. The difficulties imposed by these circuitous lines of communication, resulted in transport costs which exercised a stranglehold over the growth of local industry.

Between 1800 and 1802, local business interests made the first serious attempt to provide Knaresborough with the transport which was so badly needed. A scheme was put forward for the construction of a canal from Ellenthorpe, near Boroughbridge, to Cold Keld near Scriven, about 1½ miles from Knaresborough. The plan failed to attract significant support and was dropped.

The long struggle with Napoleon and the consequent drain on the financial resources of the Country prevented any further schemes being put forward until peace and the economy had been restored.