

# Wingfield Station – Project Background



Wingfield Station is an early railway station, built in 1839-40 as one of a series of picturesque stations along the new North Midland Railway line. It is no longer in operation as a station, having been closed in 1967, but sits alongside the fully operational Midland Main Line between Derby and Leeds.

The building fell into substantial disrepair under its private owner. In 2012, the Victorian Society declared the station as a 'maimed beauty deserving better' and one of the ten most important 'buildings at risk' in the country. Local groups, in particular the South Wingfield Local History Group, campaigned for the building to be upgraded to Grade II\*. This was achieved in 2015.

A viability study was undertaken in 2017 on behalf of Amber Valley Borough Council (AVBC), funded by the Architectural Heritage Fund, to support the Council in their efforts to secure the long-term future of the station. It identified commercial office space as the preferred long-term use for the building.

In 2019, AVBC obtained the building through compulsory purchase with Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust (DHBT) as the back-to-back partner and with support from Historic England.

The North Midland Railway line was constructed between 1836 and 1840, forming part of the first boom in railway investment. It was envisaged and surveyed by George Stephenson, working with assistant engineer Frederick Swanwick, later bringing on board his son Robert Stephenson, who became joint and eventually the sole chief engineer on the project.

Robert Stephenson commissioned Francis Thompson to design a sequence of picturesque station buildings, including Wingfield Station. Thompson was a British born architect who had worked in Canada. Thompson also worked on engine sheds, goods sheds and other buildings along the line and so set his stamp on the character of the North Midland Railway as much as the Stephenson and Swanwick.

Whilst Wingfield Station is not the earliest pioneer railway station to survive, it is one of the least altered surviving examples worldwide.

The DHBT have identified five key phases in the station's history:

- Phase 1: The pioneer phase (1835-1841) - putting the construction of the line and station in context
- Phase 2: The post-pioneer phase (1841-1856)
- Phase 3: The industrial phase (1856-1900)
- Phase 4: The 20th century station (1900-1967)
- Phase 5: Post closure (1967 onwards).

The DHBT was awarded development funding for ‘The Repair and Restoration of Wingfield Station Buildings’ under the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Heritage Enterprise programme in March 2018 and commenced the project in Autumn 2019.



Alongside the development phase of the Heritage Enterprise project, a grant from Historic England was secured in May 2020 to undertake work to the roof and trackside elevations. Following the appointment of ASBC Heritage & Conservation Specialists, urgent works started on site on the 16th October 2021. Specially designed scaffolding was erected during night-time 'possessions' of the line. This phase of the project concluded in June 2022.

The DHBT applied for the second stage of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in the winter of 2021 and were successful in securing £667,000 in May 2022. Ackroyd Construction started on site on 13th February 2023 to complete the capital works.



The aims of the project were to both protect the rarity (the special architectural, aesthetic, and cultural significance) of Wingfield Station, to facilitate the provision of interpretation and document the changing fortunes of the building and changes to its setting.



*Figure 1* Wingfield Station in October 2020



*Figure 2 Wingfield Station in June 2022*

The unusual survival of the building as a largely unaltered example of an early station made a strong case for the authentic restoration of Francis Thompson's very refined design and removal of some of the later unsympathetic alterations or short-term repairs.

As the building has been revealed, the team established a clear understanding of the original and later alterations. There were numerous practical constraints imposed by its proximity to Network Rail's Midland Main Line. Balance was needed to ensure its long-term preservation and maintenance. Thankfully, these challenges were fully addressed during the first phase of urgent works.