

# **A Day in the Life of Wingfield Station**

## **1908 - 1919**



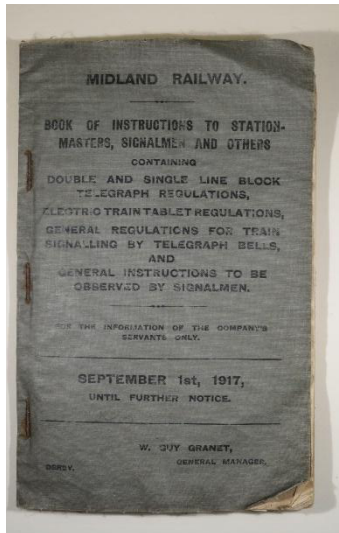
When you visit Wingfield Station today, imagine yourself standing in the station grounds at the time when Thomas Robinson was Stationmaster here from 1908 to 1919. It's the years just before and during the First World War. What is going on around the station? How does it feel to work here at the station? What are the daily sights and sounds and smells?

The on-duty morning Porters, Charles Perry and Thomas Cheetham, are the first people to arrive for work at 4am when they light the station's paraffin lamps and open up the station building. The first "up" train every morning is the 5.06am from Chesterfield towards Derby, which carries the mail and passengers travelling towards London, business people and workers on early shifts in Derby.

Thomas Robinson doesn't have far to walk to work. He lives just a few yards away in the stationhouse that you see to the left of the station building. He rises from bed to check that the Porters are on duty and have lit the coal fires to warm the waiting rooms. Then, the station staff are on the platform to assist passengers and make sure that the 5.06am is away on time.

While the Porters clean and sweep the platforms and waiting rooms, Thomas returns to the stationhouse. He has time to eat his breakfast, prepared by his wife Mary Ann and his unmarried daughter Annie, before the first "down" train of the day stops at 7.09am to pick up passengers travelling towards Chesterfield. After breakfast, Thomas resumes his daily duties, stopping later for his cooked lunch and evening supper back at the stationhouse.

Thomas needs a meticulous attention to detail to make sure that the Rules and Regulations laid down by the Midland Railway are being followed by all staff. He supervises the work of all of the station employees - Booking Clerk, Station Porters, Signalmen, Goods Guards - and he pays out their weekly wages in cash.



*Figure 1* Cover of “Book of Instructions for Stationmasters, Signalmen and others” issued 1st Sept 1917. The Stationmaster is expected to be fully conversant with all 68 pages of these regulations relating to telegraph bells and train signalling. *Image courtesy of the Midland Railway Trust, Butterley.*

The Stationmaster checks that the waiting rooms are clean and warm, that posters and timetables are displayed and up to date and that the station clock is kept to exact time. You may notice the impressive station clock over the main door to the platform entrance.

Around 7am, the Booking Clerk, John Goodwin, arrives to sell tickets and to assist the Stationmaster. Thomas has oversight of all transactions and needs to check that the book-keeping is accurate. Every week, he checks that the Signalmen are keeping accurate daily logs of every passing train.

Thomas works at his desk in the station office. His routine duties involve a great deal of paperwork – signing receipts for the arrival and delivery of goods and parcels, managing lost property, ordering supplies such as paraffin for lamps or cleaning materials, producing wage slips, completing any safety or accident reports, and balancing the station accounts. The Wingfield station office has a

telephone (number 101) which is one of only a few in the area so the station serves as an important place within the community to send and receive messages. The station is also the place for local people to send and receive telegrams.

Thomas is responsible for the smooth running of the passenger service –10 “up” and 6 “down” passenger trains each weekday and including Saturdays.

# LOCAL TIME TABLE

FROM JULY 1st TO SEPTEMBER 30th, 1913.

While great care is taken to ensure the accuracy of these Tables, the Proprietors do not hold themselves responsible for any errors therein.

## Trains between Chesterfield, Belper and Derby (Mid.)

	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	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*Figure 3 Luggage being loaded on to a train on the Midland Railway, 1907. Copyright Science Museum Group, under Creative Commons licence.*

The Stationmaster is also expected to deal robustly with any signs of fare dodging or with abusive behaviour on the station premises and from time to time, he may need to give evidence of alleged wrongdoing in a prosecution case brought by the Midland Railway.

In addition to the passenger trains, there are several through trains that do not stop at Wingfield. Can you imagine the noise and the smoke and the rush of air as each train steams its way past Wingfield on the main line? The station staff must be familiar with the full Working Timetable, so they know when trains are passing in either direction.

In addition to the regular timetable, there are Special Excursion trains chartered for big events or scenic days out during the summer months.

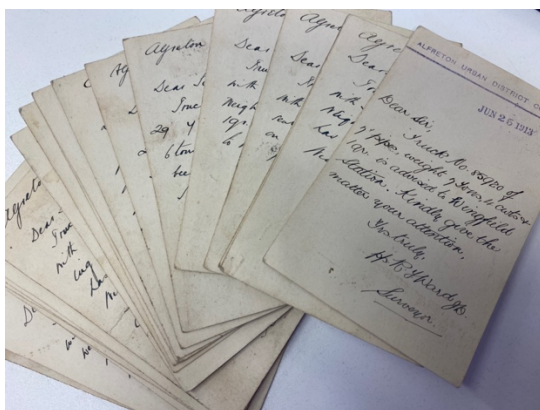


The station is the local point of delivery and collection for parcels and all manner of goods, ranging from farm animals and agricultural produce to coal, clay and finished goods. The smells and sounds of cattle waiting to be transported often permeate the air, along with the clanks and groans of the waggons being shunted in the siding, the shouts of the Goods Guard and Porters as they load and unload goods from waggon to cart using the station crane or the smells and sounds of the early steam powered motor vehicles fetching and bringing materials.



*Figure 6 Image of cattle pans in a railway yard similar to those provided at Wingfield Station.*

*Copyright Science Museum Group, Derby Works Collection, under Creative Commons licence.*



*Figure 7 Postcards dated 1913 from Alferton Urban District Council to Mr Noble, carrier, about carriage of pipes. Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office.*



The goods yard is a hive of activity with heavily laden carts coming and going throughout the day and the smell and noise of the horses that pull the carts. The goods yard and shed stores materials waiting for collection or to be loaded into freight waggons. The station crane must be operated safely to transfer materials between waggons and the goods platform.



*Figure 8 Midland Railway dray 1909. Copyright Science Museum Group, Derby Works Collection, under Creative Commons licence.*



*Figure 9 Station crane operating in a goods yard 1920s and similar to the one used at Wingfield. Copyright Science Museum Group, LMS Collection, under Creative Commons licence.*



*Figure 10 Over-loaded Midland Railway steam motor taken around 1916. Copyright Science Museum Group, Derby Works Collection, under Creative Commons licence.*



*Figure 11 Fully loaded Midland Railway waggon around 1903. Copyright Science Museum Group, Derby Works Collection, under Creative Commons licence.*

Working in the goods yard, platelaying on the rail line or shunting waggons can be hazardous work. Thomas is responsible for reporting any accidents or injuries that occur in or around the station locality. In Sept 1915, railway labourer Walter Bowley fractures his wrist when he falls from the brake van at Wingfield and cannot work for two months. In December 1915, Germain Lamb sprains an ankle when he slips on a piece of coal in the goods yard and is unable to work for 4 weeks. Accident reports must be sent to the District Office to be recorded in the Midland Railway Accident Book and injured men might receive a small compensation payment from the Casualty Fund.



The last passenger train of the evening is the 10.25pm “up” train after which the station building will be locked up for the night by Herbert Wheetman, the on-duty Porter covering the late shift, and the station lamps will be extinguished. Thomas checks that all station duties have been completed before he can rest and go home to bed.

Sundays are quieter because there are few passenger trains in either direction, although the early 5.06am “up” train still stops to collect mail and passengers. On Sundays, the last passenger train is the 7.16pm “down” train so the staff on duty get an earlier finish.

When Thomas takes a holiday or has a day out with his family, the Midland Railway District Office is responsible for providing Relief Staff to cover the Stationmaster’s role in his absence as well as for any other staffing shortfalls.

It is a busy working life at the station. Working hours are long with shifts of over 12 hours and expectations are high for providing a good service to the travelling public and for the transport of goods. Day in day out, the railway staff ensure that the station runs efficiently and smoothly and fulfils its important role for South Wingfield and its wider community.

Kathy Farr



### **Further recommended reading:**

*The Life and Times of the Stationmaster* David Holmes (2007) Silver Links Publishing (Heritage collection)

[www.midlandrailwaystudycentre.org.uk](http://www.midlandrailwaystudycentre.org.uk) for selected photographs of Midland Railway staff in their uniforms including an image of the impressive Mr Grundy, Stationmaster at Ambergate (taken from the lithograph made around 1895 that is stored in the Midland Railway Society archives)

*The Midland Railway: Through the eyes of a collector* Roy F Burrows (2017) Midland Railway Society, Amberley Publishing

*Station Master on the Settle to Carlisle Railway Line* Tom Smith (2022) Hayloft Publishing, for a personal account of 45 years of working for the Midland Railway Company

Grateful thanks for their time and assistance with accessing archive materials to:

Dave Harris (Midland Railway Study Centre, Derby) and Chris & Ann Deeth (Midland Railway Society Trust, Butterley).