

## Chapter 10

# Manton: A ‘Town on a Rock’

Manton Millennium Group with  
Robert Ovens and Sheila Sleath

Manton, from the Old English *maen* and *tun*, meaning ‘town on a rock’, is not recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, but it is probable that it was one of seven berewicks of the King’s Manor of Hameldune Cherchesoch [Hambleton Churchsoke].

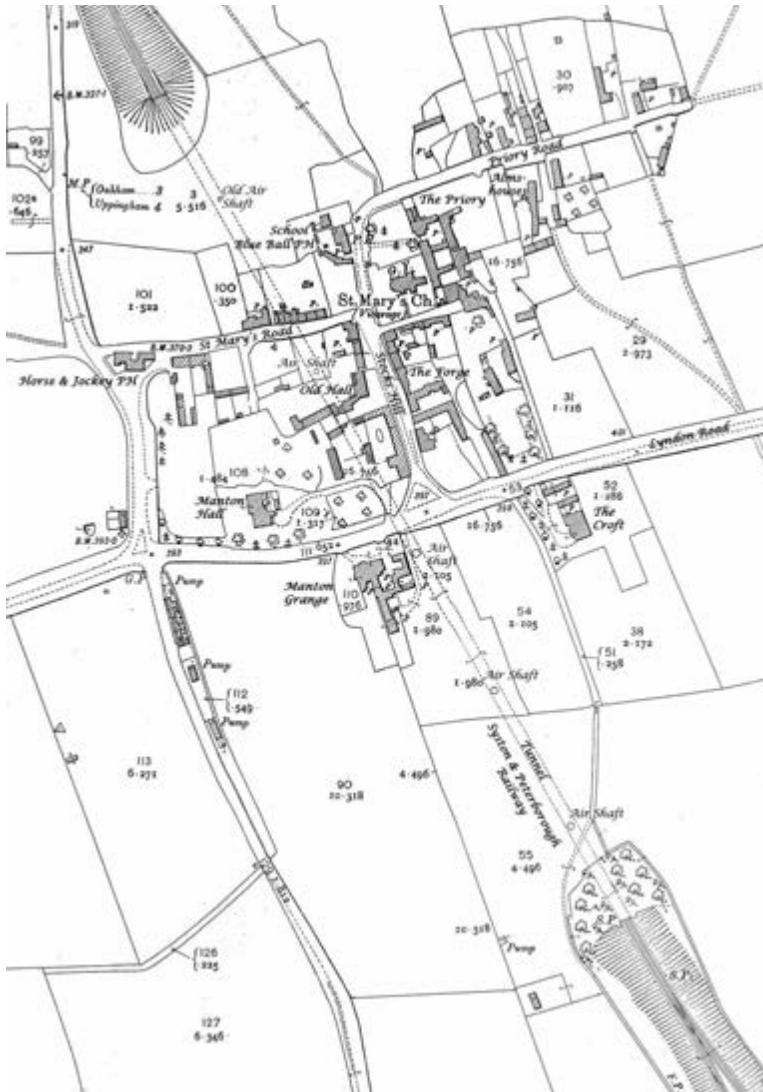
One of the earliest mentions of the manor in Manton occurs during the reign of Henry I, and for the next few centuries it was to be the dominating feature in the life and development of the village. The manor changed hands many times between the Abbots of Cluny, the English Kings, and those they rewarded, until it eventually ceased to exist in the early twentieth century.

The village of Manton stands on high ground with an underground water source running along the northern slope, where a line of wells still exists in the gardens of properties in St Mary’s Road and Priory Road. Through the centuries, villagers have been able to observe on all sides rolling scenery of pastures grazed mainly by sheep, some cattle and a few horses, as well as fields cultivated for grass, wheat and other crops. Dramatic changes have occurred in more modern times, with the advance of road transport, the coming of the railways and the construction of Rutland Water. The central point of the village is still the tiny triangular village green with its three mature lime trees which were planted to commemorate the coronation of King George V in 1911.



*The village green with its lime trees planted to commemorate the Coronation of King George V in 1911 (RO)*

*Manton railway tunnel passes directly below the village as shown on this OS 2nd ed 25" map 1904*



*Below: From Owen & Bowen's 1720 map of Rutland showing that the London road to Oakham (highlighted in red) then passed through Glaston, Wing and Manton*

Owen & Bowen's 1720 map of Rutland, and other maps of this period, show that the main route from London to Oakham and beyond entered the county near Harringworth, Northamptonshire, and passed through Glaston, Wing and Manton. The constant flow of traffic, including pedestrians, those on horse-back, pack horses and horse-drawn carriages, must have been an interesting sight. Manton's location on such an important route probably contributed to the prosperity of the village. Evidence of this can be seen in the many well-built houses constructed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Nottingham to Kettering Turnpike Act, passed





on 6th April 1754, resulted in a new route through Rutland, with new roads between Caldecott and Uppingham, and between Preston and Manton. From then on Manton would have enjoyed the added spectacle of fast stage coaches, and later, mail coaches, all of which came to an end with the railway era.

In 1732 a severe fire swept through the village and caused such damage that a national appeal was set up. In spite of this disaster many of the earlier houses survived, particularly in Priory Road. These included Stonefield Farm, Manor Farm and The Hollies farmhouse, The Yews, Northfield, Blue Ball Inn and The Priory.



*Above: Manton Priory (Hart)*



*Left: The Blue Ball Inn in 1905, now a private dwelling (Hart)*

The arrival of the railway in 1848, with a station at Manton, offered rapid travel to London and other cities. This encouraged the nobility to build hunting lodges with stabling locally so that they could enjoy the fox-hunting that Rutland was so well known for. In Manton these included Manton Lodge Farm, The Grange and The Croft. The largest property was the Old Hall on Stocks Hill which, as well as stabling, had a coach house, an apple store, maltings and several cottages. It was built by the Heathcote family, and all these estate buildings are today much sought after residences.

*Stocks Hill in 1908. Old Hall is seen right of centre behind railway cottages which were later demolished (Hart)*



*Left: The Croft in Lyndon Road in 1910 (Hart)*



*Manton Grange  
about 1910  
(Hart)*

These farms and hunting lodges set in Manton's 1,181 acres of land all generated employment for the villagers, either directly or in allied trades and occupations. The following are examples from nineteenth and early twentieth century directories:

Auctioneer	Chauffeur	Groom
Baker	Coachman	Mason
Blacksmith	Corn miller	Postmistress
Boot and shoe maker	Draper	Schoolmistress
Butcher	Gardener	Servant
Cake agent	General storekeeper	Victualler
Carpenter	Grazier	Wheelwright

The picture is very different today as, like the farmhouses and farm buildings, most of the premises of the tradespeople are now private dwellings. Other dwellings include the Thomas Fryer Almshouses (*see below*), the council houses, the first eight of which were built in 1934 on the south side of Lyndon Road, and modern detached and terraced houses built on infill sites.



*The Horse and  
Jockey public  
house (RO)*



The only surviving non-domestic dwellings are St Mary's Church, the Horse and Jockey public house, the Village Hall adapted from the old school, a residential home converted from Manton Hall on Lyndon Road, and an antiques shop, formerly cottages, on St Mary's Road.

Today, approximately 120 men, 130 women and some 35 children live in the 140 houses. The affairs and the needs of the village and its residents are currently looked after by St Mary's Church, the Parish Council established in 1894, the Parochial Church Council established in 1919, and the Village Hall Management Committee established in 1952.

With the coming of Rutland Water in the early 1970s the loss of some beautiful countryside to the north of the village was compensated for by new and splendid views over the water and the creation of the Lyndon Hill Nature Reserve. This western end of the reservoir is known as Manton Bay.

*St Mary's  
Church and  
Rutland Water  
from the roof of  
Old Hall*  
(Tony Melia)



Rutland Water was originally known as Empingham Reservoir and, until being granted Parliamentary approval in 1970, it was part of a scheme which included two new pumped storage reservoirs, the other being Manton Reservoir. This was to be in the Chater valley which is immediately south of Manton. The dam was to be constructed along the line of the Manton to Preston road (A6003), with the reservoir to the west of this line. In the event, two reservoirs so close together in Rutland was considered to be a step too far, and the Empingham Reservoir scheme was chosen because it was more cost effective (*see* Chapter 14 – Rutland Waters).

One hundred and sixty years earlier, in 1810, Thomas Telford proposed a new canal to link Oakham with Stamford, which would pass through Manton parish. It was to be called the Stamford Junction Canal, and the aim was to provide a link between the Melton Mowbray to Oakham canal and the Welland and Nene navigations beyond Stamford. The new canal was to follow a southerly route from Oakham to Martinthorpe, and then turn eastwards through Manton parish to follow the Chater valley to Stamford. The scheme was considered again in 1815 and 1828 but never adopted.

## Manton and the World Wars

The young men of Manton who gave their lives during the two World Wars are remembered on a memorial in the churchyard. It is in the form of a Celtic cross of rough-hewn Cornish granite. A Crusader's sword is carved on the cross, representing the old Crusader custom of striking the point of a sword into the ground and kneeling before it as if before a cross. The memorial was dedicated by the Archdeacon of Oakham, Canon Whittingham, on 11th April 1920. The men who lost their lives in the First World War were:

Captain William Stewart B Blackett	Leicestershire Yeomanry
Private W A Elliott	18th Yorkshire Regiment
Private Raymond Milner Bourne	29th Durham Light Infantry
Private Sidney Charles Corston	15th Sherwood Foresters
Private William Edward Taylor	Army Service Corps
Lance Corporal Robert Reeve	1st Canadian Division

(Information from *Rutland and the Great War* by G Phillips)

The men who lost their lives in the Second World War were:

F A E Lock	Royal Navy
J W Alexander	Royal Navy

Twenty other men from the village also served in the First World War, and a further three served as Special Constables. Unfortunately, a complete list of those from Manton who served their country in the Second World War is not available. There were a few bomb scares in and around the village and the Oakham sirens could be heard when raids were imminent. One large bomb was observed by the local Home Guard to fall on Lax Hill just to the north of the village, but it did not explode. People who lived nearby remember it being found and disarmed many years later. Anti-aircraft fire was audible during the bombing of Coventry.

## The Church of St Mary

The picturesque church of St Mary stands in the centre of the old village on [Manton War Memorial \(RO\)](#) the site of a Saxon church. The present church is of Norman origin and has been extended throughout the centuries, resulting in the rather unusual appearance we observe today. Over the eastern end of the nave is a medieval Sanctus bellcote, one of only two surviving in Rutland. The bell has been missing for over 200 years.

The porch with the little room above it and the south doorway were added in the fourteenth century. The room above the porch is separated from the main building, and the gap between the two is part of the distinctive look of the church.



*St Mary's  
Church (RO)*



The west front was rebuilt in the early thirteenth century. The small lancet windows, the two buttresses surmounted by unusual upright pillars and the double bellcote above give it a somewhat solid appearance. The double bellcote is a local characteristic, there being five others in Rutland. It holds two bells which were recast in 1920 by John Taylor of Loughborough, Leicestershire. Both bells retain earlier inscriptions. That on the treble reads 'CUM VOCO AD ECCLESIAM VENITE [When I call come to church] 1610 T.S.' [T S are probably the initials of Thomas Smythe who was Churchwarden at this time]. The tenor bell replaces a bell of *circa* 1550 and is inscribed 'ABCDEFGHI' (Ovens & Sleath 2002, 228).

The gravestones in the grassy churchyard are mainly of local limestone and slate. They are very weathered and lean at every angle, presenting a charming picture. A small area on the west side of the churchyard has several gravestones of people who lived in the nearby hamlet of Martinthorpe. There is a more recent cemetery in Cemetery Lane on the west side of the village.

*St Mary's  
Church and  
churchyard in  
1908 (Hart)*





The nave has typical late Norman pillars. The clerestory above it was added in the fourteenth century to give more light to the building. The nave houses a plain Norman drum-shaped font and an alms box dated 1637. The archway into the chancel is thirteenth century and bears the royal coat of arms probably dating from 1796 and restored in 1975. There is a small organ in the north transept.

The registers are lodged in the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland. Baptisms are recorded from 1573, marriages from 1574 and burials from 1601. A complete list of 'Rectors and Vicars of Manton and of other Ministers to the Parish' is displayed in the church. The earliest is Helias de Berchampstead who was presented by Queen Eleanor in 1223.



*Headstones in St Mary's churchyard in memory of Henry and Mary Green and their sons, John, Thomas and Bartin, who lived at Martinsthorpe in the eighteenth century (RO)*

There are several interesting features in the development of Manton Church and the religious life of the parish, in particular its association with the Manton College of Chantry Priests. This college was founded within the parish church by Sir William Wade and others in 1356. Sir William, who is buried in the north transept, represented Rutland in Parliament. In 1548, around the time of the dissolution of the college and the appropriation of church income and property into secular hands, the commissioners pleaded that a vicar was necessary as there were 100 communicants in Manton. This recommendation does not seem to have had any effect, and from this time onwards Manton was without a vicar for long periods and permanently lost its vicarage.

In 1931 the parishes of Manton and Martinsthorpe were added to the parish of Lyndon and shared its Rector. The small civil parish of Gunthorpe was added in 1960, and joined by North Luffenham and Edith Weston in 1977. Today, although there are far fewer regular communicants than in the nineteenth century, the Church of St Mary Manton is still very well cared for.

## Penelope Smith (1670-1727), an Extraordinary Woman

Little is known of this paragon, Penelope Smith, whose memorial tablet is in the north aisle of Manton Church. Penelope was buried on 13th September 1727, aged 57, and the monument to her memory states that she 'died exceedingly lamented . . . HER extraordinary Success in Physick and her *extensive* CHARITY to *thousands* of poor People, make her Loss universal to the BRITISH Nation'. However it is known that she married Henry Smith Esq who was Sheriff of Rutland in 1708. Three of their children were baptized at Manton between 1689 and 1692, but the first-born did not survive infancy.



Above:  
Penelope  
Smith's  
memorial tablet  
in Manton  
Church (RO)

Despite a diligent search, no record of Penelope Smith's 'extraordinary Success in Physick' or her 'CHARITY to thousands of poor People' has been found.

James Wright, author of *The History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland* (1684), acquired the manor of Manton in 1683. The *Victoria County History of Rutland* suggests that the manor then passed to the Smith family, as Wright's heirs. Henry Smith died on 20th September 1716 and his body was interred two days later in the north aisle of Manton Church. His memorial tablet, which is adjacent to that of his wife, describes him as 'Lord of this Manour . . . Faithfull to his friend, Just to his Neighbour, and Devout and Pious towards GOD'.

### James Wright (1643-1716/17)

James Wright, antiquary and author, was Lord of the Manor of Manton from 1683 until about 1716. He was born at Yarnton, Oxfordshire, where he was baptized on 12th May 1644, the eldest son of Abraham Wright (1611-1690), Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, clergyman and author, and his wife, Jane.

Abraham Wright's career progressed under the patronage of Juxon, Bishop of London, who presented him to the vicarage of Oakham in 1645. However, because of the Civil War, he lived at Peckham, just outside London, until the Restoration in 1660 when he was finally able to claim the living of Oakham. He stayed there for the rest of his life.

Nothing is known of James Wright's boyhood and youth. He did not study at university but became a student of New Inn, London, in 1666, transferring to the Middle Temple in 1669. He was called to the bar on 14th May 1672.

Living and working as a lawyer in London, Wright loved the country and regularly visited his father at Oakham, as well as Manton where he acquired the manor in 1683. He enjoyed 'angling, and such like diversions of a country retreat', and probably fished the River Gwash and Burley Fishponds.

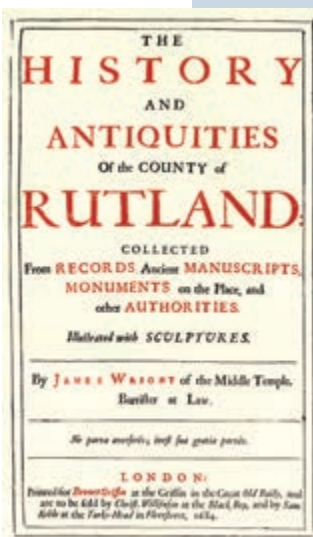
Wright's first published work appeared in 1668. It was an anonymous poem on the ruins of St Paul's after the Great Fire. Ironically, he lost his library of valuable books in a fire at the Middle Temple ten years later. His second publication was *The History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland* in 1684, and in his Preface he writes:

'As to this undertaking of mine, I must acquaint the Reader, that having been above twenty years past, for the most part, resident in the County of Rutland (tho' no Native of the same) I collected many years ago something of this nature, for my own private satisfaction. Which Notes tho' few and those imperfect, I have since been encouraged by several Persons of Honour to compleat into a just Volume as it is now publisht.'

*The Collections of James Wright Concerning the County of Rutland and other Matters* is a manuscript in the author's own hand, a facsimile copy of which is in the Rutland History Society collection. This most interesting volume of mainly unpublished material is sufficient to make a second volume to the author's *History of Rutland*.

James Wright never married and he died in his chambers in the Middle Temple in late December 1716 or early January 1717, leaving 'the comfortable sum of £1,600'.

Below: The title  
page of  
Wright's  
Rutland



## Thomas Blore (1764-1818)

When the history of Rutland was next attempted, it was by Thomas Blore, another antiquary and author. He, like James Wright, was a lawyer of the Middle Temple, although he was never called to the bar. However, unlike James Wright, he did live in Manton for a time, before moving to Stamford.

Thomas Blore was born in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, in 1764, and educated at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Ashbourne. He married Margaret, and their son, Edward, became a well known antiquarian artist and architect.

From at least 1791, Thomas was collecting materials for his intended history of Derbyshire. Later he transferred his attention to Hertfordshire while living at Benwick Hall, near Hertford, and collected historical notes which formed the nucleus of the history of the county. He then moved successively to Mansfield Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire, and Bakewell, Derbyshire, before settling for a short time in Manton.

In 1811 he produced the first instalment of a new history of Rutland, based on a more detailed investigation of the national records than James Wright. His vol I, part 2 of *The History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland*, illustrated with drawings made by his son Edward, covered the East Hundred of Rutland. This was the only part published. For this research he received a great deal of help and encouragement from the landed gentry of Rutland, especially Gerard Noel Edwards of Catmose House, Oakham, to whom he dedicated his work. For a short period he edited Drakard's *Stamford News*; he also produced an account of Stamford's charitable foundations in 1813, and a guide to Burghley House and its collections in 1815.

Thomas Blore died in London on 10th November 1818, and his memorial stone in Paddington Church, London, records that his 'days were embittered and [his] life was shortened by intense application'.

## Manton Village School

The National School in Manton opened in October 1861, having been built on land given by E W Smith Esq, Lord of the Manor. The small stone-faced building cost £400 and was designed to accommodate 60 pupils.

In September 1863 an HMI [Her Majesty's Inspector] report states: 'not a single child in the 1st and 2nd standards has passed in reading, writing or arithmetic. My Lords of the Council House, Downing Street, therefore will deduct one tenth of the grant from Government. In addition attendance is so poor, that HMI suggests prepayment of fees by parents should include a discount for good attenders' (Traylen 1999, 142). The Managers, roused by this Report, suggested that some of the desks should be removed, and that a small gallery should be built on which the infants could sit. Seats would be supplied with back rails and it was hoped that this would result in less disturbance to the juniors. Like other Rutland villages, Manton at that time was very much a farming community and many of the children would have been expected to work on the land at certain times of the year instead of attending school.

The school was closed for three years from 1874 but the reason is not known. In 1895 Her Majesty's Inspectors suggested that a large, flat, open



vessel containing water should be kept on top of the school stove. Presumably, this was to provide hot water for washing hands.

The school roll in February 1902 was 21 boys and 32 girls. There were no infants. Absenteeism was still a problem. One of the boys, eleven-year-old George Neal, was kept away from school to cart coal.

In November 1903 a report records that the playground supervisor was told that it was his duty to see that there was no rough play, and not to stand talking to the older girls!

By 1943 the roll had dropped to a total of 23 local pupils. In addition, thirteen evacuees were being taught at the school. Later in the Second World War, 50 or more children, mainly from London and Kent, were billeted with families in Manton and Gunthorpe. They were taught separately from the village children at the Old Hall, and The Croft was used for those who were ill or who had special problems.

Daphne Elliott, a former pupil of the school, became the new headmistress in 1946. The school was finally closed in 1948 and soon afterwards it was acquired for use as the village hall.

*Headmistress  
Daphne Elliott  
with pupils of  
Manton School  
in 1947*  
(Daphne Ball,  
née Elliott)



*The former  
school is now  
Manton Village  
Hall (RO)*



## Manton Village Hall

Before the present village hall was established in Manton, the malthouse, part of the Old Hall Estate owned by Col Heathcote, was used as a venue for social events. The George V and Queen Mary Jubilee celebrations were held here in 1935, as were many dances, fêtes and concerts. A stage was erected for performances by the village drama group directed by Mrs Street of The Priory.

The origins of Manton Village Hall lie in a Deed of Trust dated 10th October 1948, some two and a half years after the first committee had been formed to work towards the establishment of a community facility. The Trustees were Thomas Haywood of Gunthorpe Hall, Charles Cramp, William McKinn and George Sharp Smith. They undertook to erect a building known as Manton Village Hall to be used for ‘. . . the purpose of physical and mental training and recreational and social, moral and intellectual development through the medium of reading and recreational rooms, lectures and library classes, recreations and entertainments or otherwise, as may be found expedient for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Manton in the County of Rutland and its immediate vicinity, without distinction of sex or of political religious or other opinions’.

Funds for the project were raised through dances, fêtes, door-to-door collections, car rallies, interest-free loans and grants. When the village school closed at this time it was decided that it should become the new hall. The building and the land to the rear was acquired under trust from The Charity Commission. A large hall, two dressing rooms and a stage were added to the Victorian school building and this new village hall was officially opened on 1st November 1952 by W M Codrington, the Lord Lieutenant of Rutland.

Activities in the early days of the new village hall included the Cubs, the Girl Guides, the Youth Club, the Women’s Institute, produce shows, badminton and dances. A representative of each user-group was entitled under the constitution to sit on the Village Hall Committee along with the elected members.

The hall almost closed in 1968 when it ceased to cover its costs. The situation was saved in 1969 when the main hall was let for a short time to Polytoy who employed about 25 women, mostly from local families, to pack Action Man toys, but the small hall was retained as a meeting room.

The last two decades of the twentieth century saw a marked increase in the number and popularity of activities in the village hall, both those organized by the committee as well as new user groups, particularly The Manton Players. Today visiting theatre companies, touring musicians, dance groups and live bands, as well as club events, ensure that it is a thriving village hall and one of the most active in the county.

## Thomas Fryer Almshouses

Thomas, son of William and Ann Fryer, was born in Manton *circa* 1837. Like his father, Thomas was a grazier. By 1891 he had married Mary Hack, daughter of a near neighbour. In 1895, two years after the death of his wife,



*Headstone of Thomas Fryer in Eggleton churchyard (SS)*

Thomas purchased Beech Farm at Middle Hambleton. He was living there in 1901 but died the following year.

The will of Thomas, dated 2nd August 1901 (private collection), gave two freehold cottages in Manton with gardens and premises at that time 'in the respective occupations of George Bellamy and John William Wade' to his Trustees upon trust, stating that immediately after his demise they were 'to establish and for ever after maintain' them as almshouses. The almshouses were to be called or known as Thomas Fryer Almshouses.

The occupants of the almshouses were to be chosen by the Trustees and the following rules were to apply. The 'inmates' were to be:

'... aged or infirm persons being inhabitants of the Parishes of Manton or Hambleton ... of either sex, and either married or single ... no able bodied person shall be elected, and no inmate shall without express permission be allowed to have any person whether a member of his or her family, or any other person to live with him or her in the almshouse, it being the express wish and intention to provide a home for aged or infirm persons who would otherwise probably be compelled to end their days in the Union Workhouse.'

The Trustees sold these original cottages in Priory Road but some of the garden was retained. In 1981 two bungalows were erected on this land and they still provide accommodation for aged or infirm persons in need.



*The two cottages in Manton, owned by Thomas Fryer at the time of his death in 1902, have been converted in to one house. It has been named Fryers Cottage (SS)*





*These bungalows, built by the Thomas Fryer Charity in 1981, replaced the original almshouses (SS)*



## The Railway

The first railway through Rutland was the Midland Railway Company's Syston (Leicestershire) to Peterborough (then in Northamptonshire) line which opened for passenger traffic on 1st May 1848. Over the previous 23 years a number of railway companies had advertised their intentions to build lines linking the agricultural east and the east coast ports with the Midlands towns and coal fields, most of which passed through Rutland. The successful scheme received Parliamentary approval on 30th June 1845. From Syston, the line was to pass through Melton Mowbray (Leicestershire), Rutland stations at Whissendine, Ashwell, Oakham, Manton, South Luffenham and Ketton, and then on to Stamford (Lincolnshire) and Peterborough. However, the construction was not without its problems, particularly the section between Melton Mowbray and Stamford. The Earl of Harborough objected to the line passing through his Stapleford Park (Leicestershire), and a tunnel was proposed. However, he eventually agreed to a cutting, saving the railway company £35,000. Another major challenge was to excavate a tunnel under Manton, the most onerous component of the whole project. This led to more opposition in the village, particularly from local landowners. Col Robert Heathcote lived at the Old Hall on Stocks Hill in Manton at the time of the railway expansion. It was to him that an approach was made to cross his land and build a tunnel under the village. He gave his approval on condition that the railway company build him a new home to avoid any possible disturbance from trains running under his property. New Hall was built as a result. It is now Manton Hall Residential Home.

*Manton Hall, often referred to as New Hall, in 1910. It was built for Col Robert Heathcote at the cost of the Midland Railway Company (Hart)*



*St Mary's Road Manton, about 1907. The railway tunnel passes under the village approximately where the man (ringed) is standing on the pavement on the left. An air-shaft (also ringed) is visible on the right of this picture. Behind the air-shaft is Old Hall (Hart)*

Within two months of the railway company receiving approval, the first navvies were working on the line, and within a year there was completed track between Syston and Melton Mowbray, and Stamford and Peterborough. Work on Manton tunnel had also started and by November 1846 it was half completed. The hundreds of navvies working on the tunnel and living in a nearby temporary hutted encampment inevitably caused problems. Poaching and theft were rife, and there were complaints of a 'free trade' economy whereby beer and spirits were being sold without licence from certain huts. One more legitimate and prosperous business was that of William Robinson of Preston who, having set up as a boot maker in 1846, eventually employed eleven men making boots for the local railway navvies.

The navvies also had their own problems. There were many complaints that their pay was being withheld for trifling and unjust pretexts, and working conditions were such that there were many accidents. A typical example is that of William Tomlinson who was descending one of the tunnel access

shafts when the basket he was standing in turned over and he fell 40 feet into the works below. His body was taken to the Horse and Jockey public house in Manton where it was left pending a Coroner's inquest.

In August 1847 the contract for building the station at Manton, as well as those at Ashwell and Oakham, was let to Norman Coleman Waterfield and Jarrom of Leicester. An innovation, considered to be expensive at the time, was the use of galvanised corrugated iron for covering the platforms.

By November 1847 there was concern that problems in constructing Manton tunnel were delaying the opening of the line and many more navvies were brought in to ensure that it was completed on time. By March 1848 the first coal trains were running along the whole route, and after five weeks of testing the track was considered to be ready for opening to passenger traffic on 1st May. Peak traffic in 1911 comprised 33 passenger trains and many goods trains running on each weekday.

The opening of the line was somewhat marred by the excessive prices of the tickets. A second class ticket from Melton Mowbray to Stamford was 4s 9d. At 2½d per mile it was more than twice the rate for a ticket from Stamford to London.

Within less than 30 years Manton was to be affected again by the Victorian railway boom. This time the Midland Railway Company proposed a direct route from Nottingham to London by building new lines between Nottingham and Melton Mowbray, and between Manton and Kettering (Northamptonshire), utilising the existing Melton Mowbray to Manton line to link the two. Permission was given in the Midland Railway Bill of 1874 and work had started on the Manton to Kettering section by July 1875. The 15½-mile route crossing the hills and valleys of south Rutland was to prove to be an immense engineering challenge. However, this section of the project was completed and ready for traffic by July 1879. It opened for passenger traffic in March 1880 and had sixteen cuttings, twelve embankments, four tunnels and five viaducts, including the impressive Welland Valley viaduct of 82 arches, each with a span of 40ft. The interesting story of the building of this line and the lives of the navvies who worked on it is given in *3000 Strangers* by J Anne Paul.

*Manton station looking south-east in 1908. The line to Peterborough is on the left and that to Kettering on the right. The original (1848) station building is in front of the tall grain store. The second station building (of circa 1878) is immediately behind the long footbridge (Hart)*





*The original 1848 station building is now an office and the station site is now a small industrial estate (RO)*



Manton now became an important junction with a new station building. As well as encouraging the nobility to travel to Rutland to enjoy the fox-hunting, it was a popular embarkation point for journeys to London St Pancras on the 'Robin Hood' which took little over one hour. Day trips were popular and easily managed.

Travel to Nottingham in the north, Leicester to the west and Peterborough, Cambridge or Norwich to the east was also possible directly from Manton Station. Employment was provided for the villagers as porters, platelayers and signalmen, as well as stationmaster. Several cottages were built for railway employees on St Mary's Road, formerly Middle Street, and on Stocks Hill opposite The Forge. All have now been demolished. Manton Station closed on 6th June 1966.

*The second station building, of circa 1878, has seen better days (RO)*



Oakham is now the only remaining operational railway station in Rutland. Most of the elegant station buildings have survived at Manton and the site is now a small industrial estate. The tunnel, which passes directly under the village, and the railway lines are, however, still in use, having both survived the 'Beeching Axe'. The Syston to Peterborough line, although much quieter than in its heyday, remains an important link between Birmingham, Leicester and East Anglia. The Kettering branch is now used mainly for freight traffic, but occasional 'steam specials', and trains diverted to avoid engineering works on the Kettering to Leicester line, are popular with passengers who want the experience of crossing the Welland Valley viaduct.

## The Manton Bus

Originally it was not intended for the Syston to Peterborough line to pass near Manton, but pressure from Uppingham residents persuaded the company to re-route and build a station at Manton, conveniently only three and a half miles from the town. From its opening until the 1950s the station was listed as 'Manton for Uppingham'.

Tiny Thorpe, of Uppingham, ran a horse-drawn bus between the Falcon Hotel, Uppingham, and Manton station from about 1900 to 1928. In the following poem, author John Perkins, whose family, before World War I, had a clothing shop in Oakham, and another in Uppingham next to the Falcon Hotel, recounts the story of the last journey:

### The Passing of the Manton Bus.

(Scene – Manton Station)

I was travelling from London to Manton,  
On the old Midland line as of yore,  
T'was a journey I'd often repeated,  
And hoped to complete it once more.

As far as the Railway conveyed me,  
I had nothing to fear, you'll admit,  
But what of the rest of the journey?  
The puzzle was, how about it?

I hurried along the dim platform,  
Climbed the steps, and crossed o'er the line,  
To gain the box seat was my objective,  
Should I do it ere others could climb?

How well I remember the picture,  
The Hall, dimly lighted and bare,  
Ah yes, I had gained my objective,  
The notorious Busman was there.

With a touch of his hand to his forehead,  
And a musical ring in his voice,  
'Good evening Sir, any more luggage?'  
I knew I'd the seat of my choice.

The familiar old bus was there waiting,  
And so was a crowd of twelve more,  
Could he do it? 'Why bless you Sir, easy,  
I have brought up fully a score.'

I walked round the steeds, and appraised them,  
Then glanced at the crowd waiting there,  
To convey all that lot to Upp-ham,  
There are very few others who dare.

'Come along Sir, we're ready', he shouted,  
I clamber'd up into my place,  
Gripped the cold iron rail, and we started,  
Preparing the bleak wind to face.

We meandered our way by the Coal yard,  
Thro' the gate and under the Arch,  
When I noticed a weary pedestrian,  
Bravely starting his four miles to march.

With a jerk at the brake, and a 'Whoa Pet,  
Come Master, I've room for one more',  
Good heavens, where will he place him?  
On top, at the back, over the door.

With a click and a laugh we restarted,  
The patient steeds heaving a sigh  
'You're amused Sir, why bless you this  
aint nothing,  
To what we have done years gone by.'

'You must know that our town is Scholastic,  
And the boys at the end of the term,  
Did perform many tricks quite gymnastic,  
And a seat on the Bus did not spurn.'

The inside was full to o'er flowing,  
On the top it was even so more,  
Round the rail their long legs limply hanging,  
The young rascals enjoyed it the more.

'My loads they are varied and numerous,  
Blocks of ice, fish, bananas, and fruit,  
Traveller's luggage, bikes, prams, very various,  
And a lot of things stored in the boot.'

'This corner we're coming to now Sir,  
Is a horrible turn, you'll admit,  
Now my lads, click, click, come get at it,  
Steady on, catch your wind just a bit.'

'My horses, they're not very fast Sir,  
But they manage their work very well,  
Never judge by appearance in Horse flesh,  
It's blood, bone and muscle that tell.'

We crept by the Pond and the New Inn,  
Threw the paper roll down to the door,  
Nor stayed e'en a moment to lubricate,  
More hill climbing yet was in store.

So you've heard that this Bus has  
been running,  
How many long years? eighty-four,  
But we're told it is now antiquated,  
That new schemes and ideas are in store.

Yes, this is the very last journey,  
On the coach that is driven by two steeds,  
A Motor Bus quickly will follow,  
To meet all our present day needs.

'Old customs and ways seem to please you,  
And a liking for things that are gone,  
Would you buy the old Bus at a price,  
Sir? If I put it in for you at a song.'

'No harm Sir, I'm sure you'll excuse me,  
For trying to get on with "biz",  
If I can't have a chat and a deal Sir,  
Well, my name is not what it is.'

'I feel rather sad at the parting,  
Bless my life, we are here at the gate,  
Drive straight in without any slackening,  
Or else they will think we are late.'

Well, Good night my friend, here's your shilling  
And another one, added as well,  
It is worth a bob more, every copper,  
To hear all the tales that you tell.

'Thank you Sir, should you e're need a  
Coachman,  
Don't forget for yours truly to send.  
My address, wire "Tiny, Uppingham",  
I'm very well known at this end.'

*Tiny Thorpe's  
horse-drawn  
bus at Manton  
station (RCM)*

