

THE STORY OF STOREY based on research by Peter Singlehurst, John Raw and Caroline Hardie.

Thomas Storey (1789-1859) was one of the many talented people brought to the S&DR through their connections with George Stephenson.

Born in Make Me Rich Farm near Ponteland on the 7th December 1789 to Alice Storey (nee Hindmarsh) and William Storey; he went on to be educated at Stamfordham. He served an apprenticeship under Mr. Watson, of Willington, and then in Lancashire where he was employed by Messrs. Clark, Roscoe, and Co., as their Mining Engineer in Lancashire, in Wales, and in Shropshire too.¹ He married Elizabeth Scott in c.1810 and together they had six children.

He was related to George Stephenson through his mother Alice, who was the sister of George's second wife Elizabeth Hindmarsh. Thomas was released from his employment in 1822 in order to join Stephenson on the Stockton & Darlington Railway as their civil engineer. He moved to St. Helen Auckland to be near his work and spent the rest of his life there.

Between 1822 and 1825, before the line was open, Thomas was in charge of the construction of the S&DR from Witton Park colliery to Heighington Lane (now on the edge of Newton Aycliffe). He also oversaw the construction of the first enginemen's houses at Etherley and Brusselton. Local tradition suggests that for some time, he lodged at what is now The Manor House hotel in West Auckland before setting up home with his family.²



Figure 1. Storey's House

His house survives at 67 Manor Road (at the time this was called Main Road or Front Street) at St. Helen Auckland. Local people might be familiar with it as it was the Wheatsheaf Inn until a few years ago. It's now a private house. It is likely that Storey had the house built when he took up his permanent post as engineer with the S&DR in 1825. The wall that enclosed his garden was designed with a dip in it so that Storey could observe the workings

¹ ICE Memoirs pp182-183 Downloaded by Caroline Hardie on 25/08/22. Copyright © ICE Publishing, all rights reserved. <https://www.icevirtuallibrary.com/doi/pdf/10.1680/imotp.1860.23616>

² John Raw pers comm

of the railway from his home. He also had a path running directly from the east side of the house to the incline, later visible on the 1st edition OS map surveyed in 1856. This still survives at the side of the house.³

As engineer to the S&DR,⁴ Storey's work extended along the whole line, but mostly as far as Darlington. This included supervising the construction of the Haggerleases branch line, designing the skew bridge near its terminus, surveying the Middlesbrough branch line (and the alternative route not chosen at Haverton Hill) in 1827. He attended parliamentary committees to be cross examined on the proposed Middlesbrough branch in 1828, designed a stone bridge to cross the old route of the river Tees, oversaw and contracted out the work on the Middlesbrough branch – much of his work overlapping with his work on the Haggerleases.⁵ He also designed and oversaw the construction of the Goods Shed at North Road in Darlington between 1832-3, designed new bridges as part of the widening of the S&DR mainline in 1831-3 and trained up the S&DR's next engineer John Harris who took over in 1836.⁶

No wonder at the opening ceremony of the Haggerleases branch in 1830, one of the many toasts was to '– "Mr Storey", to whose professional skill and individual perseverance the Company and the public are alike indebted".⁷

In the early days of the railway, some friction arose between Storey and Timothy Hackworth who was the S&DR's locomotive superintendent. Hackworth lived in New Shildon. Both Storey and Hackworth had to attend the S&DR Committee meetings in Darlington on Fridays. A stage coach, mounted on railway wheels, was used for the conveyance of passengers, and when it arrived at Shildon from West Auckland, on its way to Darlington, if Storey was riding on the top Hackworth invariably got inside, but if Storey was inside Hackworth would go on top, even if it was a wet and stormy day. ⁸ The cause of this hostility is unknown, but both had jobs with considerable overlap and a dependency on each other for successful outcomes. Storey was a civil engineer and so designed the physical structures such as engine houses, railway formation and bridges, but Hackworth was a mechanical engineer so he designed the machinery, locomotives and engines that were housed within or ran on the structures. This inter-dependence may have led to strained relations if one perceived that the other was not working to the same standard.

By 1834, Pigot & Co's. Directory listed him as '**Thomas Storey, Surveyor & Civil Engineer**' under St. Helen's with no reference to the railway. However his replacement John Harris did not take up post until 1836, so perhaps about this time, Storey moved from the S&DR to the GNER where he became Engineer-in-Chief, surveying the line between Darlington and York and designing 77 bridges between the two towns. Only one of them collapsed! When he

³ This may be unregistered land as it is no longer in any ownership

⁴ Bill Fawcett pers comm, quoted in Archaeo-Environment 2013, 26. However the 1828 Parson & White's Directory Vol II listed '**Thomas Storey, Agent to the Railroad Co.**' under St. Helen's rather than engineer.

⁵ Archaeo-Environment 2018, 45

⁶ Archaeo-Environment 2013, 83 and List Entry Numbers: 1478390, 1478497, 1478498 for surviving listed bridges designed by Storey between School Aycliffe and Darlington

⁷ Durham Chronicle 8th May 1830

⁸ Young 1975, 338 quoting the Graham reports.

resigned from GNER in 1841 because it was not finished on time, he was presented with a splendid dinner service of silver plate.⁹

Storey moved on to carry out consultancy work for the S&DR and other railways and so he was the consulting engineer for the Prince of Wales tunnel at Shildon (1842). He also projected and formed the Auckland and Weardale Railway (opened 1842) and designed the first Bishop Auckland station (1843).

Thomas Storey took over the existing West Auckland Iron and Brass Foundry as a going concern, possibly after resigning from the GNER in 1841.¹⁰ The Foundry now lies under the 1970's road called 'Oakley Green'.

One of his additional businesses was as a developer building houses including a row in Flintoff Street (off Newgate Street) in Bishop Auckland in the mid 1840s.¹¹ Flintoff was his daughter Hannah's married name (she and her family later emigrated to Australia). He also owned a row of houses next to his own in St. Helen Auckland.

So he became a businessman of significant means and continued to view the growing S&DR from his garden with the dip in the wall (although by his death the Brusselton Incline was little used).

He died after a short illness, on the 15th of October 1859, aged seventy years old.¹² This was only three days after Robert Stephenson whose death dominated the local press and so his demise was overlooked in the media.

Storey's obituary published by the Institution of Civil Engineers¹³ described him:

'In person, Mr. Storey was tall and athletic, and capable of undergoing great fatigue. He possessed great decision of character, and was deservedly respected for his strict integrity and honesty of purpose. He was as scrupulously just, as an employer, towards those who served under him, as he had been when an agent, to those under whom he served. During the last few years, he lived in retirement, his health not permitting him to undertake any great public work.'¹⁴

Thomas is buried in the churchyard at St Helen's Auckland with other family members.

⁹ ICE Memoirs pp182-183 Downloaded by Caroline Hardie on 25/08/22. Copyright © ICE Publishing, all rights reserved. <https://www.icevirtuallibrary.com/doi/pdf/10.1680/imotp.1860.23616> and [https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Thomas_Storey_\(1789-1859\)](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Thomas_Storey_(1789-1859))

¹⁰ Parson & White's Directory Vol II (1828); Pigot & Co's. Directory (1834)

¹¹ Chris Lloyd – 2011. The Northern Echo.

<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/8799887.career-line/> [accessed 18/01/22]

¹² Thomas Storey Obituary 1860 ICE Virtual Library p182 Accessed <https://www.icevirtuallibrary.com/doi/pdf/10.1680/imotp.1860.23616> 17/01/22

¹³ He had been a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers for thirty years, having been elected on the 12th of May 1829

¹⁴ Thomas Storey Obituary 1860 ICE Virtual Library p182 Accessed <https://www.icevirtuallibrary.com/doi/pdf/10.1680/imotp.1860.23616> 17/01/22