

Huddersfield Chronicle, Saturday August 4th, 1894

THE NEW STANDEGE TUNNEL.

On Wednesday morning, the new double-line railway tunnel made through the Standedge Hills from Marsden to Diggle by the London and North Western Railway Company, and the works connected therewith at each of those places, so far as the works are completed, were inspected by Major Yorke, Government inspector of railways. He arrived by a special engine and carriage at the works at nine o'clock and was accompanied over his tour of inspection by Mr. Thombull, the company's assistant engineer, from Euston, London; Mr. Mawby, of Manchester, passenger traffic superintendent for the Yorkshire section; representatives of the signalling department; and Mr. Macgregor, the company's engineer for the works. Three hours were spent in the inspection of the tunnel, the permanent way, and the testing of the bridges, and at the close Major Yorke gave his certificate for the opening of the new tunnel and works. The first ordinary train to be run through the tunnel will be the 7-32 passenger train from Diggle on Sunday evening, next, after which the two single-line tunnels will be closed for three months for repairs.

It was four years ago—namely, on the 5th of August, 1890—that the first sod of the new tunnel was cut. The whole of the material and engineering has been provided by the company, and they carried out the work entirely excepting as regards the labour since February, 1893, which was provided by contract by Messrs. Williams, Lee, and Thomas, who, up to that date, had been foremen of different departments of the works. The tunnel, which is three miles and 60 yards long, runs parallel to the canal tunnel, and the two old single-line tunnels—the first of which was opened on the 9th of August, 1849, and the second in 1876—are on the other side of the canal tunnel. The new tunnel was not pierced in the usual way, from each end, but was begun at 13 openings at the side, made from the old down-line tunnel, and crossing over the canal tunnel, and then headings were driven right and left on the route marked out for the new tunnel. Air was pumped through tubes into the new workings by machinery erected at each end of the down-line tunnel. Until a complete passage through had been made the men were conveyed to and from their work in three shifts by a special train, and after that they worked in two shifts, and walked to their respective places. The maximum number of men employed on the works has been 1,800. The work of boring the tunnel was of a stupendous character, the geological formation being millstone grit and Yoredale shale, with coal in a few seams too thin almost throughout to be worth separating. The character of the work may be judged from the fact that 120 tons of gelignite were used in blasting operations. The millstone grit removed was crushed and used for ballast for the permanent way.

The walling of the tunnel is throughout of bricks, those next the soil being made in neighbouring places, but the facing is of brindled bricks from Staffordshire, as they are much more durable, and capable of resisting the action of steam, smoke, and gases. No less than 25,000,000 bricks were used. These have been laid in mortar of hydraulic lime, from the Rugby district, and 4,645 tons of this lime were consumed for the purpose. The tunnel is provided with three ventilating shafts—one 512ft., one 498ft., and one 490ft. deep, from the surface of the hills above to the roof, and the two former are 18ft. in diameter, and the latter 20ft. The works at Marsden and Diggle for the approaches to the new tunnel and the improvement of the old ones are of considerable magnitude. At Diggle there is work yet to be done which will take three months. One platform of the new station is completed, and that will be used on Sunday night. The canal tunnel at the Diggle end has been extended for 220 yards, by the covering in of that length of canal formerly open near the station, and over that the new line will run and further accommodation will be furnished at the station. Two new bridges have been constructed for the whole width of the widened lines over the canal at the Marsden end, and a bridge has been constructed over the line to carry the storm water overflowing from the canal reservoir into the river Colne. About 400 men are now employed in repairing the canal tunnel.