

The Railway Comes and Goes

The railway finally came to Navenby in 1867. The Great Northern Railway (GNR) built a branch line to Lincoln which joined the Grantham to Sleaford line at Honington. At Honington the branch line turned towards Grantham so trains were unable to head towards Sleaford if travelling from the north. It was proposed at some stage to also have a link turning in an easterly direction, but there is no evidence that this was ever built, or even started.

The stations along the line, from the south, Caythorpe, Leadenham, Navenby, Harmston and Waddington. The station at Leadenham was situated in the village but because the line followed the base of the cliff edge northwards, all the other stations were little distance outside their respective centres. In the case of Navenby it was around 1.2 kilometres, which wouldn't be so bad but for the fact on your way back from an afternoon shopping in Lincoln you were confronted by the climb back up the ridge to the village. Occasionally there were a few horse-drawn carts available but because of the steepness they would need to go round via the Smoots or Maidenwell Lane, which would be a rather bumpy ride as even Church Lane would prove too much of a load for the horse. In general, people would have to walk. Due to this, some of the locals still tended to use the carriers for their transportation to Lincoln and back, however this also had its disadvantages, not only taking more time but also, (unless you were pregnant), you would have to get out of the carriage and walk up the Cross O'Cliffe Hill near Bracebridge on the return journey, so it wasn't long before the railway proved its worth and became a popular mode of transport.

The stations along the line were all built to a standard design except for Leadenham, the landowner demanded their station was built of local stone, the rest were brick built. The line was very busy with freight of coal and iron ore plus up to 12 passenger trains a day. The line also proved very useful as a diversion route when maintenance on the Newark to Lincoln line took place.



In 1923 the line became part of the London and North East Railways (LNER)

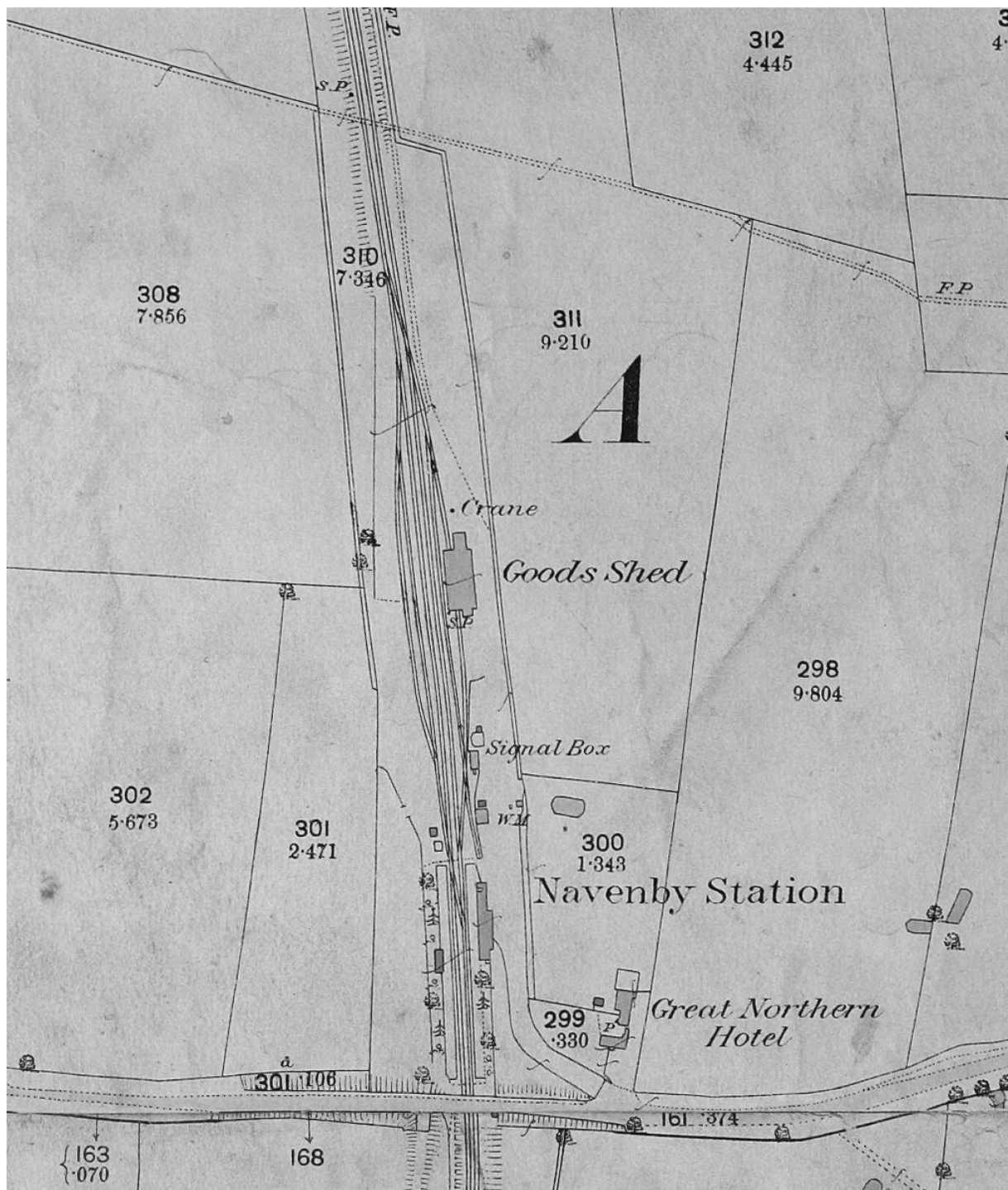


LNER Class A4 Lord Faringdon 60034 passing through Navenby in 1959



Navenby Signal box located between the southbound platform and the goods shed.

The decline of the line was due to the usual competition from road transport, as a result the parcel and passenger services to Navenby closed in 1962, though the goods services via the goods yard carried on for another couple of years until 1964. The line finally closed during the Beeching reforms on 30th October 1965, just short of 100 years after opening. Interestingly, Dr. Beeching had recognised the lines value as a diversion route and recommended that the line remain open, sadly however his superiors overturned that suggestion.



There were two lines on the track bed which meant a quicker journey with no passing loops to negotiate. The village coal merchant worked from the goods yard with its own allocated siding; his office was a small room constructed under the signal box. There was also a goods yard and shed, four sidings and a signal box. Newark Road/Lowfields crosses over the line via a bridge, which is still there today, with the station on the northern side of the bridge.

The Great Northern Hotel was built alongside the station on the village side of the line; this was not a "Hotel" as we might define it nowadays, but more a hostel/Inn/Public House. The station is now a private dwelling and the hotel long demolished.



The Great Northern Hotel in 1979, shortly before demolition. © Geoff Ellis



A steam train arrives at Navenby station with the local service heading south towards Leadenham. (early 1950's)

During a very severe thunderstorm in August 1872, many trees were uprooted and the roof of the passenger shelter, seen on the left of picture, was “entirely lifted off and carried for a considerable distance”

Sources:

Navenby Church Minutes

Navenby Parish Council Minutes

Map - Lincolnshire Archives.

“Hat pegs of History” – Maurice Addison.

The signal box photograph - Richard Goodman

Great Northern Hotel photograph – Geoff Ellis