

# Opening celebrations

## From the Derby Mercury dated 22 April 1819 which read:

“A more exhilarating scene was probably never exhibited in the town of Mansfield, than was occasioned by opening the new Railway from the Cromford Canal on Tuesday last. A week’s previous notice having been given of the intention, the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, for seven or eight miles round, poured into the town, in the early part of the day, to witness the ceremony. The morning was ushered in with the ringing of bells, and a bonfire was made in the marketplace. About one o’clock the proprietors and friends of the undertaking began to assemble at the Swan Inn, and about two o’clock they proceeded on horse-back, attended by hundreds of foot people, along the Alfreton Road about a mile and a half, to where it comes in contact with the Railway, at the beautiful five arch bridge, constructed under the direction of Mr. Jessop, the engineer, where they met ten waggons, laden with coal, from the Pinxton Colliery, surmounted by workmen and colliers, carrying branches of laurel. There the assemblage amounted to some thousands, covering not only the road, but in great measure the fields by the roadside.

The procession then moved towards the town. Mr. Mason having presented the proprietors with a flag for the procession, bearing the motto, ‘By perseverance we have obtained’, this was carried in front, and the Friendly Societies having also attended with their flags and a good band of music, from Sutton-in-Ashfield, long provided for the occasion, the whole had a most enlivening appearance, to which the joy and satisfaction pictured on the countenances of the spectators, contributed very considerably.

Having arrived at the market place, about three o’clock, which, notwithstanding the heavy rain falling at the time, was thronged with people, the band struck up, ‘God save the King’, which was followed by loud huzzas, from the whole population assembled, who thus testified their satisfaction at the accomplishment of this arduous undertaking.

Near three hundred of the workmen, who had been employed during the last three months on the road, then retired to partake of a dinner, provided for them by the proprietors, at different public houses in the town; and the proprietors themselves, with their friends, at four o’clock, partook of a most excellent dinner, furnished by Mr. Stirrup at the Swan Inn, for the occasion, Colonel Need being President and Mr. James Heygate Vice-President, where they spent the remainder of the day with the greatest conviviality, and they satisfaction which must always attend the accomplishment of any undertaking for the public good.”

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## From a history of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway by Alan Hughes:

“The following were some of the toasts drank on the occasion: The King, The Prince Regent, Success to the Railway,

The Duke of Portland, the great Patron of the Railway, John Coke, Esq., with thanks for his zealous service during its progress, Mr. James Heygate, with like thanks, the absent Subscribers and Friends of the Railway, Colonel Need, with thanks for his uniform Support and Exertion during the whole Undertaking. The Members of the County, the Duke of Wellington, Thomas Walker Esq., Lord Exmouth, The High Sheriff, Mr. Mason, with Thanks for the Colours, presented to the Subscribers this day, Lord Titchfield, Henry Walker Esq., the Treasurer of the Company, The Ladies, The Army and Navy.”

## The Mansfield and Pinxton Railway Company was now almost ready for opening, and in the Nottingham Journal for Saturday 10 April 1819 there appeared the following notice:

“We understand the new railway from Mansfield to Pinxton will be opened on Tuesday next, when the proprietors and friends to the undertaking intend dining together at the Swan Inn to celebrate the same. The numerous hands who have been employed are also to be regaled with a dinner. Considerable advantage to the town of Mansfield and the neighbourhood, in a commercial point of view, is anticipated from the completion of the undertaking.”



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