



# RAILS TO ASHBOURNE

BY HOWARD SPRENGER



Passing through the beautiful scenery on the border of Derbyshire and Staffordshire from the White Peak surrounding Ashbourne to the grimmer Dark Peak of Buxton, the London & North Western Railway's line from Ashbourne to Buxton has long been a favourite of historians and photographers. Along its route, it served remote communities, often isolated by winter snowfalls, and industry in the form of limestone quarries that seem to be eating away north-west Derbyshire to leave a permanent blizzard-white panorama. If the attraction of the scenery were not enough to generate interest in the line, it also had the distinction of being partly aligned

on the northern half of the famous Cromford and High Peak Railway.

At its southern end, it connected with a line built by a different railway company, the North Staffordshire Railway – a line that has tended to be overlooked in other published works. This book redresses the balance by viewing the line as a whole.

The lines were quite different in character. The earlier one from Uttoxeter was rooted in the railway mania of the mid-19th century. The later one from



Buxton was a comparatively recent addition, built after the railway network of Great Britain had been largely completed. This was a period of consolidation when the speculative schemes of fifty years earlier gave way to strategic routes that filled in some of the last-remaining gaps on the railway map. Where the earlier line was built by navvies using only the most basic tools and equipment, the later line had the benefit of half a century of railway-building expertise.

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