



The Railway Station

Walk 2: The Heart of Harrogate Town walk



At the beginning of 1860, visitors arriving at Harrogate by railway had to disembark at either the Brunswick Station at the junction of Otley and Leeds Roads, or at Starbeck. This was not convenient for the visitors, nor was it likely to be of use to the increasing numbers of retailers who sprang up in central Harrogate.

Consequently, the town's Improvement Commissioners asked the railway company on 3 September 1860 to complete a branch line into central Harrogate. Construction work began in 1861, the new central station being designed for the North Eastern Railways by Thomas Prosser.

It had two facing platforms without either bridge or subway link, an unsatisfactory state of affairs not rectified until 1873 when a footbridge was added. It was the first major structure in Harrogate built of brick, using a pleasing mixture of the warm red brick seen on many other North Eastern Railway Stations, and Pease's white glazed brick (also known as Scarborough brick).

The windows of the long, single-storey structure had architraves of sandstone, with attractive arched tops. Each end was terminated by a slightly taller square water tower, and the new railway station was opened for use on 1 August 1862. A series of major improvements in 1896-7 gave the station a

magnificent ornamental entrance canopy, and, on a separate site, a new goods station was located where ASDA came to be built in the following century.

In 1965, Harrogate's Victorian Railway Station was very largely demolished in what many citizens regard as having been an act of unutterable folly, the only part of Prosser's original Station to survive being the north wing containing various offices and the refreshment room.

After removing several unsightly later additions, this section was recently restored to accommodate a beautiful pub, the Harrogate Tap, that has successfully re-created the atmosphere of the town's lost railway station. The replacement station by architect Harold E. Taylor was a featureless shoe box building that was dwarfed by Taylor's adjoining office tower – an uncouth slab that became Harrogate's most hated building.

