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Cyclopede

Of the many extraordinary suggestions which the advertisement brought forth, 'Cyclopede' was the only one, if the manumotive be ignored, which materialized in the actual Trial. It was worked by two horses walking on an endless platform. The entrant T.S. Brandreth of Liverpool, drew attention to what must have been obvious to everyone – that this entry did not comply with the Stipulations as it had no pressure gauge! It also had no springs, which would have proved rougher on the horses than it was on the track. Complete with horses, the unit weighed 3 tons and accordingly had a poor power – weight ratio.

The Cyclopede did not merit the serious consideration of the judges and did not – fortunately for the horses – get involved in the competitive running. However much of the sources of power exerted themselves, maximum speed could not rise above six miles an hour, a figure much below that at which the L&MR Directors has set their sights.

The Cyclopede also has a place in history, which historians have overlooked. It incorporated spur gearing, providing a change of speed, one of the earliest occasions on which this had been incorporated in a locomotive. As previously stated, Perseverance also used a gear drive, but had no choice of speed.

Which Brandreth took out a patent for his locomotive on 9th September 1829 (No 5840), he seems to have purloined the idea from George Stephenson who, in a letter to Hackworth dated 28 July 18288 said, 'it appears that Brandreth has got my plan introduced for the horses to ride, which I suppose he will set off as his own invention. It is more than two years since I explained this to Brandreth – Canterbury was the place where I meant to put it to use, but as the Company have now determined to work the line by steam power, it will not be wanted.'

Thus there were five entries, in this competition for 'the best locomotive power' which got as far as being under starters orders and of these, as time was shortly to show, but one finished the course.