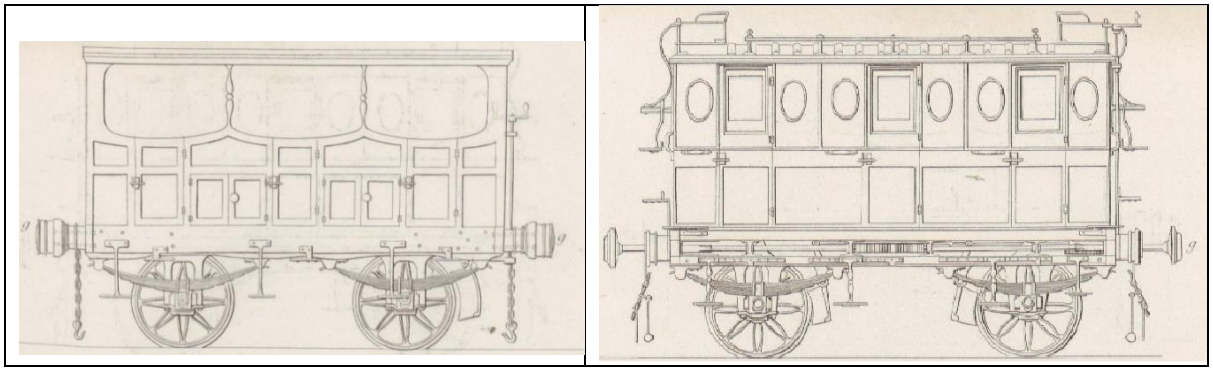
Second Class:

Open but roofed carriages and windowed night seconds some of which were also used as firsts

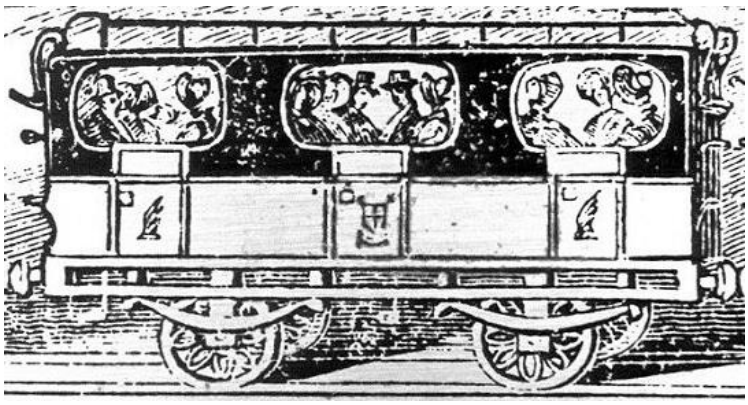


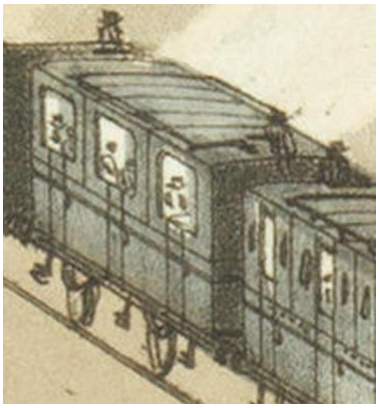
The London & Birmingham railway took a while to settle on carriage types and classes for second a and third class travel. Discussions went backwards and forwards between directors in London and Liverpool but agreement on either enclosed or 'shuttered' window second class carriages could not be achieved. As the opening approached the Company settled upon carriages without roofs for 'curiosity' travelling. These carriages were later roofed to become 'open' second class carriages for the day trains. These second class 'open' carriages became thirds from the introduction of third class proper in 1840.

From the outset running at night was considered and carriages with windows, to prevent the passengers from freezing, were built to Joseph Wright's design and suggestions from Liverpool were rejected. These night seconds can be seen in TT Bury's early images. However many of these night carriages were already converted to 'stand by' firsts and stationed along the line to be used as needed, by 1840. Some in their turn were converted to composites.

So after a short period of adjustment the London & Birmingham settled on 'open' but roofed seconds and 'enclosed' glazed night seconds. During the London & Birmingham period radical first class carriage designs were introduced, and these carriages lasted upwards of a decode, but of the lower class carriages very few designs stood still. Second class enclosed with shutters and glazed evolved from 1840 onwards and third class were eventually roofed in 1843 and enclosed as per their Parliamentary Carriage design submitted in 1844 to the Gladstone Railway Act.

Due to an overestimate and confusion with regard to the number of individuals wanting to travel at Night it would seem these carriages were over ordered. There was also the opinion from Liverpool that Second class travellers didn't deserve glazed accommodation. A number of the Night Seconds were rebuilt as 'small' firsts. These proved unpopular but nevertheless they were stationed along the line as emergency firsts when needed.





Origins

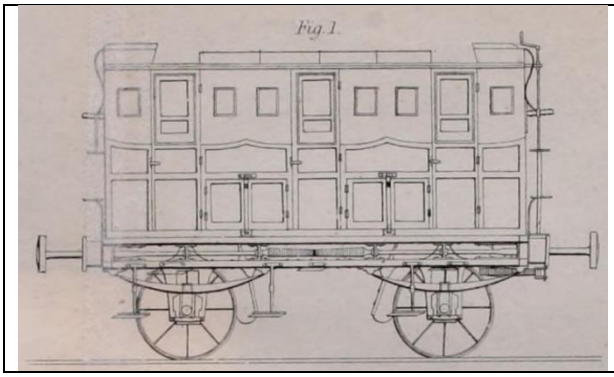
In 1835 the London & Birmingham directors were consulting the Worsdells at Crown Street and several directors of the Liverpool & Manchester railway who they called the Lancashire Directors with regard to a 2nd class design. There was significant difference of opinion, the Lancashire directors suggesting at least once that the L&B should follow the L&M model of only two classes derived as it was from the old coaching days with 1st inside and 2nd class outside.

The L&B despatched a 'deputation' to Dublin and Liverpool to look at carriages on the (then) Dublin & Kingstown railway and see how a railway worked. By November of 1836, the Board had settled on five classes of carriage but there was still disagreement.

Various versions of enclosed second were suggested and at least three drawings of an enclosed 2nd were presented to the L&B directors, who were keen to have the 'most improved' carriage designs on the L&M. However when the GJR adopted a second class, with shutters, apparently influenced by the practice seen on the Dublin to Kingstown railway, it seemed that the question had been resolved. It had not.

There was a debate about night running, it was suggested that the advantage being that maintenance could occur during daylight hours. Thomas Clarke Worsdell (II) suggested that second class carriages should be entirely enclosed on one side to stop fare dodgers escaping, as he said he saw many hundreds on the L&M do. W. Rathbone was concerned for women and children that they would be vulnerable to the weather in the open carriages.

Nevertheless a few orders were placed in Liverpool on the specification drawn up in Nov 1836 upon this design of carriage and consideration was given to build 3rd class carriages at the Camden works by the railway company themselves.

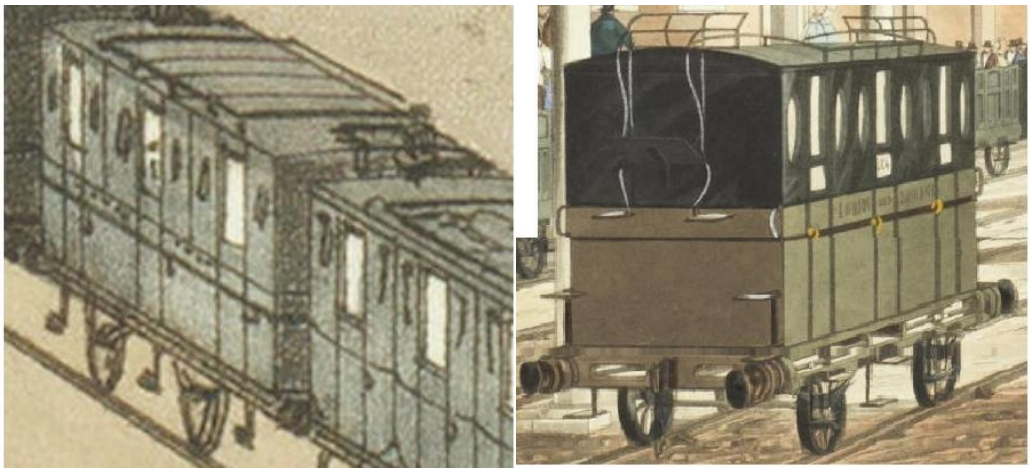
	This is the second class in Lecount. I believe that this was a projected design that was rejected although there isn't a way to be certain. The Lancashire directors of the London & Birmingham offered a number of drawings but it was mainly Joseph Wright and the Worsdells who were to steer the carriage designs.

The orders for the second and 'blue box' carriages, placed in Liverpool, were cancelled with requests by the board for either the modification of the design, or to change the orders to different carriages entirely. It is possible that some 'enclosed' carriages were built to this specification and delivered to Birmingham but essentially production of second class carriages was shut down while 'Blue box' carriage production continued with most being built by the company themselves at Camden. These are the 'roofless' carriages seen in the TT Bury print at the opening.

I suggest the following as reasons as to why this happened.

- The company felt that it had sufficient carriages already to open the railway.
- As the matter of the enclosed second design was not resolved it was considered viable to open the railway just using the firsts and 'blue box' thirds giving time to sort out the enclosed design.
- In 1835 it had not escaped the notice of the directors that without a finished railway to transport the carriages the cost of conveying them to London was prohibitive when compared to building them in London, with the railway still not complete through out at the time of opening, this may still have been a factor.
- Joseph Wright had offered the board a 3rd class carriage with a roof, this itself might serve as a day second at a later date.
- Additional carriages were available, built by Wright, referred to as Night seconds, as they have been built for the Night running scenario. The directors may have felt that costs were getting out of hand.

Night seconds



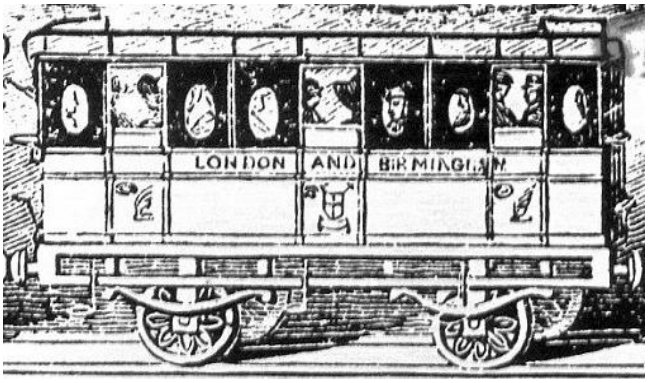
During the negotiations with the Lancashire directors Joseph Wright had redesigned the coach body on the enclosed 2nd to create a glazed carriage for Night running. Presumably, given that he had proved himself in his production of the first class carriages, it seems his design found favour and a good number of carriages were ordered to this design. In fact it was deemed that too many of these carriages were produced and this may have been a factor in shutting down 'enclosed second' production.

In response to the building of these enclosed Night Seconds or 'London Plan' carriages as they were also known. The Lancashire directors renewed their feelings on only having two classes of carriage. As such they applied pressure to have the Night Seconds converted to 'small firsts'. The conversion was expensive and only a few were initially so converted, the remaining conducting the role they

were assigned to on the night mails, but by 1840 a good number were classified as either ‘firsts’ or ‘composites’.

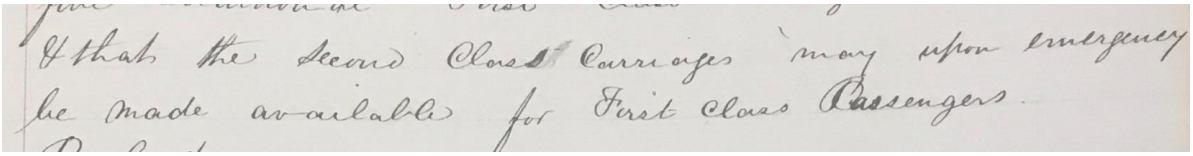
Following the opening, production of the open seconds for day use resumed, presumably on the design on Wright’s roofed third until this design was again modified.

The Story of the conversion of the Enclosed Seconds



From what I have gathered so far it would appear that the L&B commissioned more Enclosed Night Seconds than demand required.

These carriages originally intended for second class, were enclosed to protect passengers from the night cold, however it appears that the demand was insufficient. Warly on they were considered to double up as Firsts when required! Carriage Sub-Committee, 8th February 1837

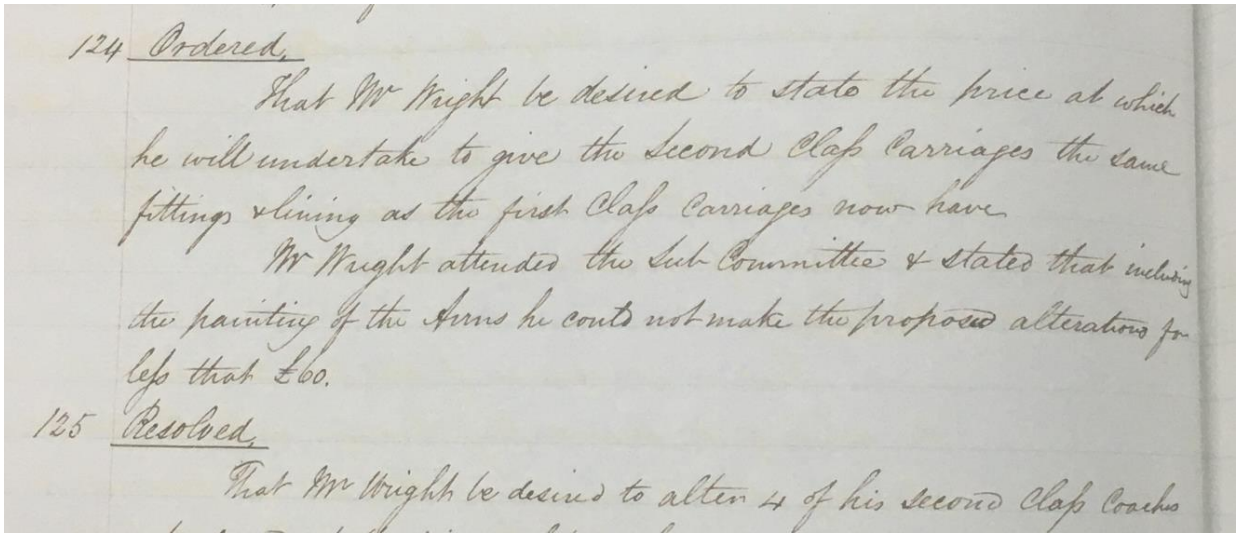


As early as the 21st of Sept 1837 J.Wright was instructed to convert them to 1st class carriages.

Minute 124/5 states “that Mr Wright be desired to state the price at which he will undertake to give the second class carriages the same fittings & lining as the first class carriages now have.

Mr Wright attended the sub committee & stated that including the painting of the Arms he could not make the proposed alterations for less than £60.”

However due to the expense only four such carriages were altered.



124 Ordered,

That Mr Wright be desired to state the price at which he will undertake to give the Second Class Carriages the same fittings & lining as the first Class Carriages now have.

Mr Wright attended the Sub Committee & stated that including the painting of the Arms he could not make the proposed alterations for less that £60.

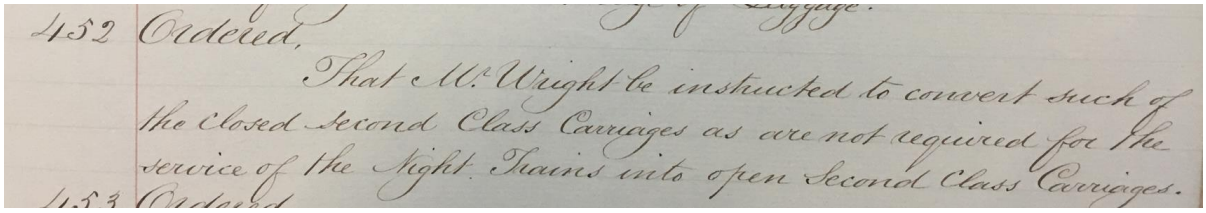
125 Resolved,

That Mr Wright be desired to alter 4 of his second Class Coaches

This may account for the additional livery details in the images below – The Mirror's illustration (July 22nd 1837) includes a very well dressed enclosed 2nd. The illustration of a train, TT Bury, Entrance to the Tunnel at Watford, London Birmingham Railway, 1837, also shows the inclusion of an enclosed 2nd – but in a day train.

These carriages however were not a success, referred to later as the small firsts.

26th Aug 1840 -



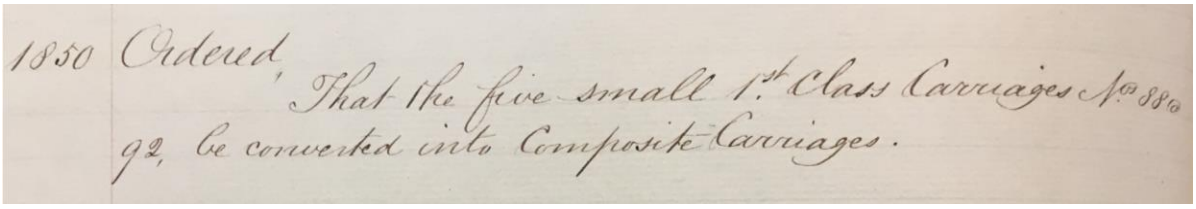
452 Ordered,

That Mr Wright be instructed to convert such of the closed Second Class Carriages as are not required for the service of the Night Trains into open Second Class Carriages.

453 Ordered

By the time of J. Wright's report on the state of the L&B's 1sts in 16th of December 1840 there were 10 such carriages converted to 1sts. Carriage numbers 99 to 103.

19th October 1842 further carriages were converted to composites. Although these are referred to as 'small 1st class' carriages it is possible that they had done service as 'Branch' carriages – an enigmatic carriage of which I only have the name. It is possible that these Branch carriages were themselves conversions of Night Seconds.



1850 Ordered,

That the five small 1st Class Carriages Nos 88 to 92, be converted into Composite Carriages.

T.Nicholls, 2022