

TRACK TOPICS

Newsletter of the Southern Counties Railway Society

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March

Dates for your diary

Meetings held in the downstairs room, Friends Meeting House, Ordnance Road, Southampton. Doors Open 18.15hrs. - 21.15hrs., with the lecture/slide show commencing at 18.45hrs., at which time the front door will be shut for security purposes. Anyone arriving later than this should knock loudly to ensure those inside can hear to let them in.

- Sat. 16th March** : "Terry's Allsorts" – Terry Foulger
Sat. 20th April : "Gosling's Gallivants," – Paul Gosling
Sat. 18th May : "40 Years of Railfreight" – Stewart Smith

THEN & NOW : ALRESFORD – by David Mead and Stewart Smith

Although the line "over the Alps" was slated for closure by the Beeching Report in March 1963, it was not until 5th February 1973 that the line actually succumbed, in the meantime proving invaluable as a diversionary route during the Bournemouth line electrification. The last train over the line was a BR special from Eastleigh to Alton and return on Sunday 4th February, formed of a Class 33 diesel and 8-TC. Daily services were latterly provided by a mix of 2- and 3-car Berkshire and Hampshire d.e.m.u.s running between Southampton Central and Alton. The service pattern involved trains passing at Alresford, adding to the expense of operation by requiring the signal box to remain open. The picture on the left, taken from Sun Lane bridge on Saturday 23rd December 1972, shows unit 1132 forming the 12.02 hrs. from Alton to Southampton crossing 1121 on the 11.40hrs. in the reverse direction.



Just over four years later, on 30th April 1977, Alresford station re-opened under the auspices of the Mid-Hants Railway. The picture on the right depicts a scene rather busier than in BR days, during the Spring Steam Gala on 24th March 2011. Bulleid Pacific 34007 *Wadebridge* prepares to depart for Alton, with Black 5 45379 preparing to follow tender-first on the next departure. Meanwhile 9F 92212 stands in the cattle dock acting as turnover engine for the next arrival. The station building has been extended by the addition of a buffet using components recovered from Wimborne station, while the goods shed has been rebuilt and now houses conference and catering facilities as well as a gift shop and toilets. The former SCATS warehouse standing on staddle stones at the back of the goods yard has been replaced by flats and a car park now occupies the rest of the yard. The signalling has been enhanced to reflect what is now a terminus station, with upper-quadrant signals replaced by LSWR lower quadrants, although they are still controlled from the original LSWR "type 1" signalbox.

Mid-Hants Railway Spring Gala : This year's event will be a three day affair over the weekend of 1st, 2nd and 3rd. March with an intensive service operating each day from 09.30hrs. It will have a "4-4-0" theme and, subject to last minute changes it has been confirmed that the "T9" 120 from the Bodmin & Wenford Railway, 3717 *City of Truro* and resident "Schools" 925 *Cheltenham* will perform. All three are owned by the NRM, as is "King Arthur" 777 *Sir Lamial* which will also attend. It has been decided to hold a diesel gala over the weekend of 26th, 27th and 28th April, to include resident 50027 *Lion* and other "guest" traction. For the third year in succession, standard fares have not increased although a levy will be included on these and other special event days to cover visiting loco transport costs, etc.

RECENT EVENTS

After heavy snowfall during the days preceding the January meeting, with many local roads and most pavements remaining unsalted, and with city bus services suspended, the Committee took the decision on Friday night to cancel the meeting, contacting as many local members as possible by 'phone. It is hoped that the Photographic Evening can be rescheduled later in the year.

ROUND & ABOUT

Uckfield – Lewes : “Railfuture Group” has placed an advert in Modern Railways magazine inviting expressions of interest from railway consultancies in preparing a business case for extending the Uckfield branch line to Lewes. Bridging the gap will provide an additional rail route between the Sussex Coast and London, opening new journey possibilities and aiding the regeneration of places like Newhaven. On Monday 10th December, Railfuture members canvassed morning commuters at Uckfield station and received over 60 responses overwhelmingly in favour of developing a new station car park and transferring the former station site to Network Rail, thereby permitting the reopening the line to Lewes.

The Solent Witness: On Friday 28th December an enthusiast’s special was run from London Victoria departing 07.48hrs via Staines, Woking and Winchester to both cruise terminals in Southampton Eastern and Western Docks, before proceeding to Totton, Fawley Oil Terminal gates and Hamworthy Goods, where it departed at 15.33hrs and ran back to London Victoria. The train was topped/tailed with 66007 and 66201. The only untoward delay was 7 minutes at Hamworthy - difficulty in obtaining the branch token.

Western Docks Intermodal Service : On and from Monday 7th January a revised timetable for the DB Schenker W.Docks intermodal services came into operation. There are now two daily services from Birch Coppice (arriving 22.28hrs SX and 03.31hrs MX – the latter conveys a portion from Trafford Park), a daily service from Wakefield (arriving 12.43hrs SX), and a four days per week trip service from Eastleigh (arriving 09.38hrs MSX – conveying traffic from Bicester and Barry). Services depart at 02.39hrs MSX / 02.52hrs SO to Birch Coppice, 09.47hrs MO / 09.32hrs MSX to Birch Coppice with Trafford Park portion, 12.07hrs MSX to Eastleigh with Bicester and Barry traffic, and 16.40hrs SX to Wakefield. Note that the West Midlands services are now concentrated on Roadways Container Logistics’ Birch Coppice terminal at the expense of the ABP-owned Hams Hall, and that the DB Schenker terminal at Manchester Trafford Park no longer warrants a dedicated train. The services to Stobart Rail’s Widnes terminal and to Maurice Hill’s Burton site ceased some time ago.

New Station Facilities : As part of their franchise commitment, SWT are to provide a new ticket office and toilet within the car park at Overton, and a new ticket office, waiting room and toilet, again in the car park, at Templecombe. The latter is on the Down side and will replace the facilities on the former Up platform which included the use of the former signal box. Once complete there will be no need for passengers to cross the line using the former LBSCR footbridge from Buxted which was relocated from Sussex in the 1980s.

Footbridges : News from Network Rail that they are to replace Southern Railway-era concrete footbridges in Kent with modern structures due to deterioration in the structural integrity of the Exmouth Concrete Works products prompted a question for your Editorial team – how many such footbridges remain in the SCRS area? Two spring to mind, namely at Gillingham and Southampton Airport Parkway. Do readers know of any more?

Service Disruption : On Wednesday 2nd January CrossCountry and freight trains serving the Southampton area were disrupted by a level-crossing collision at Sandy Lane AHB, Yarnton north of Oxford. The train involved was 4O09 10.18hrs. Trafford Park to Southampton Maritime Freightliner service hauled by 66565. Damage to the train was minor although the same cannot be said of the car in which an 85 year-old passenger died. The accident occurred at 15.39hrs., and buses replaced passenger trains between Oxford and Banbury until normal working resumed around 22.40hrs.

Stone Working : The on-off-on-off saga of the Hanson stone terminal at Fareham continues. Scheduled for closure last year, services re-commenced the week after closure was supposed to have taken effect, then final closure was announced, only for the site to be reprieved again. 59205 (DBS red livery) was spotted at Fareham awaiting departure for Westbury with the empties at 10.30hrs on Tuesday 15th January, having arrived as scheduled with the loads at 08.18hrs. The Kendall group has taken over the Fareham Hanson Rail Terminal and renamed it as the Kendall Aggregate Rail Terminal.

Snow : Due to a heavy predicted (and actual) fall of snow on Friday 18th January, South West Trains and Southern Trains took the decision to operate a drastically reduced train service with many stations and lines closed, continuing through to close of service on Monday 21st January. The direct line from Fareham to Eastleigh was closed for most of the day on Friday and trains from London Waterloo terminated at Bournemouth on all days with an occasional service operating from Bournemouth to Weymouth. No trains ran on the Isle of Wight. No trains ran between Ascot and Ash Vale, Virginia Water and Weybridge, and no SWT trains ran between Salisbury and Bristol T.M. Peak trains only ran Aldershot to Guildford, and Waterloo to Chessington South, Hampton Court and Shepperton. Beaulieu Road was not served. Freight services were also cancelled including the Holybourne Tanks and the Western Docks to Wakefield intermodal on the Friday. The Mid-Hants Railway also closed its heritage line for the whole weekend of 19th and 20th January. On Monday 21st January the Surbiton – Hampton Court line re-opened at 13.00hrs, and S.W.T. substituted electric unit workings with diesel units between Portsmouth and Southampton/Eastleigh via Netley/Botley. Some observations were:- 159019 on 11.33hrs Portsmouth Harbour to Southampton Central, 158890 and 158888 on 13.33hrs Portsmouth Harbour to Southampton Central, 159011 and 159015 on 12.59hrs Portsmouth Harbour to Eastleigh via Botley, and 159016 on 12.44hrs. Southampton Central to Portsmouth Harbour. The units remained working the whole day

71000 : On Thursday 24th January, 31190 departed Eastleigh Works for Crewe Heritage Centre at 15.55hrs. hauling 71000 *Duke of Gloucester* with Support Coach 17041, Anglia 9527 and Virgin 6067. Whilst at Crewe the condition of the locomotive will be examined with a view to assessing the scope and the likely cost of the overhaul. Following this, and if deemed to be feasible, the 71000 Trust may operate the locomotive on preserved lines in 2013 until overhaul arrangements are finalised.

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THE BEECHING REPORT – FIFTY YEARS ON – by Stewart Smith

This month sees the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of ‘The Reshaping of British Railways’, the so-called Beeching Report which recommended closure of 1,924 stations and halts nationally, together with the withdrawal of associated passenger services and closure of a large number of uneconomic branch lines (and also some main lines). Much has been written in the intervening years about the methods employed to gather the statistics which justified the report’s conclusions, and the lack of foresight which saw the closure of many lines which could now provide valuable transport arteries to relieve road traffic congestion. But how much was Beeching (the report, not the man) actually to blame for the shrinkage of the rail network? Withdrawal of loss-making services and associated closures has always been a part of the evolution of the rail network, and although Beeching was responsible for much which was lost in the mid- to late-60s, the process in fact started much earlier.

Taking the SCRS “area” – that bordered by the Portsmouth Direct, the LSWR West of England main line and the Axminster to Lyme Regis branch – closures had started as far back as 1888 when the LSWR withdrew services from Shirley Holmes shortly after the Bournemouth Direct line had opened. Prior to Beeching, 95 stations and halts were closed by BR and its predecessors (plus a few more “temporary” stations), while the 1963 report eventually accounted for the closure of only 54.

ROUTE

ASSOCIATED STATION CLOSURES

Pre-Beeching closures:

Hamworthy Junction-Hamworthy (1896)	Lake, Hamworthy (Poole)
Fratton-East Southsea (1914)	Albert Road Bridge Halt, East Southsea, Jessie Road Bridge Halt
Stokes Bay Branch (1915)	Gosport Road & Alverstoke, Stokes Bay
Bridport-West Bay (1930)	East Street, West Bay
Fullerton Junction-Hurstbourne (1931)	Wherwell, Longparish
Fort Brockhurst-Lee-on-the-Solent (1931)	Browndown Halt, Elmore Halt, Lee-on-the-Solent, Fort Gomer Halt
Botley-Bishops Waltham (1932)	Bishops Waltham, Durley Halt.
Ringwood-Christchurch (1935)	Avon Lodge, Hurn
Basingstoke-Alton (1936)	Bentworth & Lasham, Cliddesden, Herriard
Tongham Loop (1937)	Ash, Tongham
Grateley-Bulford Camp (1952)	Amesbury, Newton Tony, Bulford, Bulford Camp
Upwey Junction-Abbotsbury (1952)	Abbotsbury, Broadway, Coryates Halt, Portesham
Merstone-Ventnor West (1952)	Godshill, St.Lawrence, Ventnor West, Whitwell
Weymouth-Portland (1952)	Easton, Portland, Melcombe Regis, Sandsfoot Castle Halt, Westham Halt, Wyke Regis Halt
Brading-Bembridge (1953)	Bembridge, St.Helens
Newport-Freshwater (1953)	Calbourne & Shalfleet, Carisbrooke, Freshwater, Yarmouth, Ningwood, Watchingwell Halt
Fareham-Gosport (1953)	Fort Brockhurst, Gosport
Fareham-Alton (1955)	Droxford, Farringdon, Privett, Tisted, West Meon, Wickham
Ludgershall-Tidworth (1955)	Tidworth
Sandown-Newport (1956)	Alverstoke, Blackwater, Horringford, Merstone, Newchurch, Shide
Bentley-Bordon (1957)	Bordon, Kingsley Halt
Southampton Terminus-Newbury (1960)	Winchester Chesil, Kings Worthy, Worthy Down, Sutton Scotney, Whitchurch North, Litchfield, Burghclere
Andover Junction-Cheltenham (1961)	Weyhill, Ludgershall
Havant-Hayling Island (1963)	Langstone Harbour, North Hayling, Hayling Island



Examples of two pre-Beeching branch line closures from the John Bailey collection. On the left 0-6-0PT 5412 stands at Chard General on Tuesday 26th June 1956 with a two-coach train from Taunton to Chard Junction. The former GWR line from Taunton to Chard General together with the LSWR line through to the Junction closed on 10th September 1962. On the right M7 30031 is seen at Bishops Waltham station on Friday 15th April 1955 with the 11.00hrs. branch freight. Although closed to passengers as long ago as 1932, the branch remained open for goods traffic until 1962..

In addition, various main line stations were closed as follows:

1888 : Shirley Holmes. 1917 : Meyrick Park Halt. 1937 : Farlington Halt. 1939 : Paulsgrove Halt. 1946 : Bramshot Halt. 1953 : Whippingham, Wootton. 1956 : Corfe Mullen Halt, Charlton Marshall Halt, Spettisbury Halt, Stourpaine & Durweston Halt. 1957 : Monkton & Came (Golf Links) Halt, Nursling, Upwey Wishing Well Halt. 1962 : Sutton Bingham

Beeching closures proposed, actual closure dates shown in brackets:

Axminster-Lyme Regis (1965)	Combyne, Lyme Regis
Basingstoke-Salisbury-Exeter (Local) (1966)	Oakley, Overton, Whitchurch (North) , Hurstbourne, Grateley , Porton, Idmiston Halt, Wilton South, Dinton, Tisbury , Semley, Templecombe, Milborne Port Halt, Chard Junction
Bath Green Park-Bournemouth West (1966)	Bailey Gate, Blandford Forum, Henstridge, Shillingstone, Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge
Bridport-Maiden Newton (1975)	Powerstock, Toller, Bridport
Yeovil Junction-Yeovil Town (1967)	Yeovil Town
Alton-Winchester City (1973)	Medstead & Four Marks, Ropley, Alresford, Itchen Abbas
Andover-Romsey (1964)	Mottisfont, Horsebridge, Stockbridge, Fullerton, Clatford, Andover Town
Bournemouth-Ringwood-Brockenhurst (1964)	Wimborne, West Moors, Ringwood, Holmsley, Ashley Heath Halt, Broadstone, Creekmoor Halt
Salisbury-West Moors (1964)	Downton, Fordingbridge, Breamore, Daggons Road, Verwood
Portsmouth-Botley-Romsey (1969)	Chandlers Ford, Botley
Ryde Pier Head-Ventnor/Cowes (1966)	Ryde St.Johns Road, Brading, Sandown, Shanklin , Wroxall, Ventnor, Ashley, Havenstreet, Newport, Mill Hill, Cowes
Westbury-Weymouth (Local) (1966)	Bradford Peverell & Stratton Halt, Yeovil Pen Mill, Chetnole Halt, Thornford Bridge Halt, Yetminster , Evershot, Maiden Newton, Dorchester West
Portsmouth-Netley-Southampton-Romsey/Andover (local services)	No station closures proposed

Not all of the proposed Beeching closures were put into effect - 15 stations slated for closure (shown in **bold** above) remained open, being many of the smaller stations between Basingstoke and Exeter, between Yeovil and Weymouth, and Botley. Furthermore, 7 have been reopened subsequently – Templecombe and Chandlers Ford on the main line network, plus 5 on the Mid-Hants and Isle of Wight Steam Railways. The latter has also reopened Wootton which had closed earlier. Curiously Ryde Pier Head and Ryde Esplanade were never slated for closure, and neither were the smaller stations on the Netley line even though the local services on the latter were listed for withdrawal.

Much of the Beeching Report was taken up with methods of making the freight and parcels traffic profitable by introducing block and liner trains. Whilst the passenger service cuts proceeded quickly, freight services took much longer to rationalise with many lines and stations remaining open for goods only. This may have been related to the existence of freight contracts which couldn't be easily broken without compensation being payable to the traders involved, but it certainly delayed the achievement of the anticipated savings. Beeching having shown the way, the railway juggernaut continued the "good work" and rationalisation of perceived loss-making services (for the economics of the rail industry were still not fully understood) became a way of life through to the early 90s. Stations and lines not mentioned by Beeching continued to close – Bournemouth West in 1965 (to make way for the electric maintenance depot), Northam and Southampton Terminus in 1966 (they didn't fit in to the new Bournemouth line electric service), the Fawley branch (also in 1966), and finally the Swanage branch (in 1972, although subsequently reopened).

Was Beeching to blame for the decimation of the rail network? In my view not, as the statistics show that, whilst some of his closures may have been ill-judged, deeper cuts had already been made in our area. Perhaps more consideration should have been given sooner to improving the passenger service product to protect and increase revenue on what remained, in the same way that the freight business introduced new ways to operate traffic, and then the Beeching Report might never have been commissioned.

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CLOSURE OF AMESBURY and the BULFORD BRANCH.

The March 1963 Track Topics carried the following item:-

On and from Monday 4th March 1963 the line from Grateley to Amesbury and Bulford will be closed to all traffic. The passenger service between Salisbury and Bulford was withdrawn in June 1952 but in view of the number of military camps still in use in the area it is surprising that there is not enough freight traffic to keep the line open. In future all military traffic will be dealt with at Ludgershall, whilst other traffic will be delivered from Salisbury. On Sunday 10th March 1963 a special train will run from Victoria to Bulford Camp and then on to Southampton Docks. A variety of engine power will be used for this trip including LSWR T9 4-4-0 No. 120.

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Material for Track Topics should be sent to: **John Goodrich** or may be e-mailed to scrsouthampton@Gmail.com