

The Bassil Shippam Centre

Tozer Way, St Pancras, Chichester, P019 7LG

Weds 27 May 19:15

Signalling Topics

From starting his railway career as a Junior Railman at Chatham in 1974 to becoming the Incident Controller at Croydon in 2008, Peter Gibbons has gained a wealth of rail operating experience and knowledge throughout the former Central and South Eastern Divisions of BR Southern Region. Peter takes us through the evolution of railway signalling in the 1820's to the present day with an emphasis on its development in Southern England. The talk is well illustrated with many of the images taken from a privileged position on the 'inside'. Many Southern enthusiasts will know him through his frequent and incisive contributions to the SR Email Group.



**Suggested
donation
on the door
£3 Members
£4 Guests**

Join us - No Membership or Advance Booking Required

<p>The Monthly Newsletter of RCTS Chichester Branch</p> <p>Editor: Graham Benzeval</p> <p>Distributor: Roger Sandford</p> <p>Additional Proof Readers: Geoff Adams, Geoff May, Hefin Jones, Ian McKey, John Robbins & John Barrowdale</p>	<p>Front Cover by Roger Sandford ©</p> <p>Contributors: Joe Whicher, John Barrowdale, Roger Sandford, Geoff May, Peter Free, Ian McKey</p>
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What's on for the Railway Enthusiast in May

Railway Name	Website	Contact Email	Contact Phone
Bluebell Railway	Bluebell Railway Web Site	Bluebell Email contact	01825 720800
Isle of Wight Railway	IOW-SR Website	IOW Steam Railway Email	01983 882204
Kent & East Sussex Railway (K&ESR)	K&ESR Website	K&ESR Email	01580 765155
Watercress Line	Watercress Line Website	Watercress line Email	01962 733810
Amberley Museum	Amberley Museum Website	Amberley Museum Email	01798 831370
Hayling Light Railway	Hayling Island Railway Website	Hayling Island Railway Email	07902 446340
Littlehampton Miniature Railway (LMR)	LMR Website	LMR Email	01903 719876
South Downs Light Railway	South Downs Light Railway Website	South Downs Railway Light Email	07518 753784
Stansted Park Light Railway	Stansted Park Light Railway Website	Stansted Park Light Railway Email	02392 413 324
Chichester Model Engineers	Chichester Model Engineers	Chichester Model Engineers	

Railway	Start Date	End Date	Event
Bluebell Railway	2/05/2026	31/05/2026	Trains running on most days, see website for Afternoon Teas, Fish and Chip runs, etc
IOW-Steam railway	02/05/2026 16/05/2026	04/05/2026 17/05/2026	Real Ale Festival Cider and Sausages.

IOW-Steam railway	17/05/2026 05/05/2026	17/05/2026 31/05/2026	Festival of Transport Trains running on Sat, Sun, Tues, Thurs
K&ESR	04/05/2026 16/05/2026 9 th & 13 th May 29/05/2026 03/05/2026	04/05/2026 17/05/2026 29/05/2026 31/05/2026	Star Wars event, 1940s weekend, Bird song tours Murder Mystery Trains do not run on Thurs and Fri, see website
Watercress Line	10/05/2026 17/05/2026 23/05/2026 06/05/2026	10/05/2026 17/05/2026 31/05/2026 21/05/2026	Vintage buses, Watercress Festival in Alresford, Day out with Thomas all week Trains running Wed and Thurs.
Amberley Museum	04/05/2026 10/05/2026 16/05/2026 24/05/2026 23/24&27/31	04/05/2026 10/05/2026 17/05/2026 24/05/2026 May	Motorcycle day, Classic car meet, Home Front Weekend James Bond, Half Term Activities, outside of these dates normal opening Wednesday to Sunday.
Hayling Light Railway	02/05/2026	31/05/2026	Running Wednesday, weekends and daily during school holidays
Littlehampton Light Railway	02/05/2026	26/05/2026	Weekends and school holidays
South Downs Railway	02/05/2026	26/05/2026	Weekends and Mon and Wed on school holidays
Stansted Light Railway	02/05/2026	26/05/2026	Running on Wednesdays and Saturdays
Chichester Model Engineers	10/05/2026	10/05/2026	Public afternoon 1pm to 5pm

Southern Engineering Works - May 2026



Some Engineering works likely to affect
journeys in our area.

Start Date	End Date	
04 May	04 May	Amended service for the Bank Holiday
04 May	08 May	Buses replace trains between Littlehampton/Barnham and Bognor Regis/Chichester
24 May	24 May	Buses replace trains between Barnham and Littlehampton/Arundel/Angmering
25 May	29 May	No trains to/from Portsmouth Harbour
25 May	28 May	Buses replace late night trains between Brighton/Hove and Worthing/Littlehampton

South Western Railway Engineering Works - May 2026



Some Engineering works likely to affect
journeys in our area.

Start Date	End Date	
04 May	04 May	Amended service for the Bank Holiday
16 May	17 May	Buses replace trains between Woking and Guildford
23 May	24 May	Buses replace trains between Woking and Guildford
25 May	29 May	No trains to/from Portsmouth Harbour
18 May	18 May	Buses replace trains between Petersfield and Havant
19 May	19 May	Buses replace trains between Barnham / Petersfield and Chichester / Portsmouth Harbour / Southampton Central

BRANCH NEWS

RCTS Chichester have announced a Photographic Competition

This competition is only for members of the Chichester Branch

As a member you will have received an email telling you about the competition with entry form attached.

Entries can be made many times up to the closing date of 31st August

More Branch News – a Summer Outing

We bring you news of a RCTS Chichester Branch visit to Romsey on Thursday 25 June, to which you are very welcome to join.

In the morning at 10:30, The Friends of Romsey Signal Box have agreed to open their site especially for our group from RCTS. This will be a hosted two hour guided tour of the various items on display including of course the working signal box that once stood on the junction to the east of Romsey station. Further details about this attraction can be found at: <https://romseysignalbox.org.uk>

Ample time will be available for lunch and a leisurely look around Romsey, there are numerous eating establishments in the Town Centre. In the afternoon The Abbey has agreed to a guided one-hour tour at 14:30 for our RCTS group. Further details about the Abbey can be found at: <https://romseyabbey.org.uk>

Both these attractions request a £5 donation for the tours they are offering, exclusive to RCTS on this occasion. A free hot drink will be included at the Signal Box.

Numbers are limited and booking in advance essential. You can pay by bank transfer to:

Roger Sandford Sort Code: 30-93-04 Account 00459640

Please put your surname and Romsey, as the reference if paying by bank transfer.

Please email chichester@rcts.org.uk to advise once you have transferred payment. For any further information please use the same email address.

All transactions will be acknowledged as quickly as possible.

Note parking is widely available in Romsey, but very limited at the Romsey Signal Box attraction, which is barely 5 minutes walk from the station. The Town centre can be reached comfortably in a 15 minute walk from the Signal Box and the Abbey is literally a couple of minutes from the main shopping and food outlets area.

Participants make their own travel arrangements.

Here is another Railway interest group with monthly meetings



Watercress Line Heritage Railway Trust, Portsmouth Regional Group

Where

Cosham Community Centre, Wootton Street, Cosham, Portsmouth, PO6 3AP

When

On the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm (Apart from July and August). Admission is by a donation of £4.00. Group funds are used to support the Watercress Line.

Programme 2026

19 May: The History of Railways within 20 miles of Ropley with Peter Cutler

16 June: AGM/East Southsea Railway and other images of local interest such as trams and the Southsea Miniature Railway with Steve Hayward

Further Information

Meetings start at 7:30pm. They will be held in the small function room which has a separate entrance on the south side of the building. There is a car park at the centre and on street parking as well.



SAVING OUR SIGNAL BOX



The unique platform-level signal box has been a feature of Haslemere station since 1895, when it was built to replace an earlier 'ground frame'. The signal box is Grade II listed, retains classic levers and was staffed round the clock to control train movements in the station and beyond. However, its operational days are over, following completion of the Portsmouth Direct Line resignalling project, and the transfer of control to the Basingstoke Rail Operations Centre in November 2025.



Haslemere Signal Box Trust aims to preserve the signal box, spearheading Haslemere Community Station's heritage activities – and developing a new visitor attraction to mark the 200th anniversary of railways.

For more information follow the website link –

Their website is www.haslemereinfohub.co.uk

There will also be a special steam train to Haslemere using B1 Mayflower on Saturday 10 June.

The Trust are waiting for formal handover from Network Rail before the Signal Box can be open to the public.

Roger Sandford and family visited the Chichester Model Engineers open afternoon in Blackberry Lane on Sunday 12 April. It is all railways and just a stone's throw from the Bassil Shippam Centre. They are open to the public on the 2nd Sunday of the month April to October from 1pm to 5pm.



Enjoying a trip around the circuit



Admiring the indoor layout



This one does not need rails to give rides



BR 4-6-0 class B1 SPRINGBOK steam loco on the raised working area to allow the fire to be raked and take on water and coal.



30 Years of working as part of the Watercress Belle Team Part 3

By John Barrowdale

The two wine waiters per coach had 18 people to serve at the start of the evening, or 36 if we were short of a wine waiter which in the early days did not happen often. The customer would choose their wine which we recorded on the docket in duplicate, then we took the order to the bar to obtain the wine or other drinks which we were sometimes asked for. I usually took two table orders at a time, then returned to the coach for the next two orders taking this back to the bar, by which time the bottles/drinks were ready for you from the first orders. The bottle for each table and drinks was taken to the first table of two people (dropping off the drinks for the table of four on the spare table) as we always served the two seat tables first before serving the four-seater tables. The uncorked bottle would be shown to the customer to check you had the right bottle, then we opened it and let the person who ordered it have a taster. If ok, we then poured the wine into the glasses and place the bottle near the window for them to add to their glasses later so it was not knocked over when waiters were serving food. This procedure would go on until all six tables you were responsible for were served, then the rest of the evening you just served extra wine/drinks when asked to do so and that would be any customer in the coach, not just from the initial six tables you started with. Empty bottles would be removed and unused glasses as well as usually customers stuck to either white or red wine all evening. All the initial wine orders were being served at the same time the soup course was being served so you were circulating around other bodies. Sometimes the 2nd course had been started after the empty soup bowls had been collected before the wine waiters could assist the food waiters with their work. We usually just cleared dirty plates etc before the next course was served. In my early days the serving staff did not serve the next course until the entire 36 people had finished the previous course, but eventually we decided because some people were so slow eating, we could do the clearing of the 4-table section first and then serve their next course, while the 8-

table section were still eating the previous course. In later years once two adjacent tables had finished, we would clear the dirty dishes from the six of them. This meant much walking up and down the train to check whether adjacent seats had finished only to be caught out by a customer lifting a fork at the last second. In the end we just asked all six customers whether they had finished before removing their plates. The wine waiters often assisted the food waiters with serving the dessert course & cheese & biscuits course, but just prior to the latter we would see if anybody wanted a Port wine or a liqueur to go with it. About 21.30 we would go to the bar to collect the drinks bills to hand out to customers while they drank their tea/coffee and ate their mint chocolates. These were delivered on silver dishes and about a quarter of an hour later we would collect their money and take it to the bar. Any surplus money would be handed back to the customer, albeit we knew it was tips, but we left them to place these on the table as they were leaving at the end of the evening. The last duty we did for the customers was to see them safely off the coaches, made more difficult by the lower-than-normal platforms at Alresford. We used a wooden step to help them down from the central doors and would put an arm out to steady them especially if they had a little too much alcohol during the evening. You always ended up with a few customers using the end doors making their descent more difficult! In the noughties the wooden steps were replaced by metal ramps due to H & S concerns. This made it slightly easier, however they had low metal lips along each side, so we had to say careful as you go and please go to the end of the ramp as the last thing we wanted was for someone to take a short cut and trip over the side and go flying onto the platform. We also said hope you enjoyed the evening and were rewarded by many compliments, the occasional rare hug and even a kiss sometimes! Our evening did not end there, as there was all the table clearance to do, which would consist of empty glasses, plates, cups, and saucers taken back to the pantry albeit some of this would have been done earlier. Sacks were used for rubbish and to put tablecloths and serviettes in for cleaning. Flower arrangements would be removed and used again the next day

on the lunch time countryman services that ran on a Sunday. Before the customers left, we would ask them if they wanted to keep their table copy of the food menu as a souvenir, the wine menus being kept by us as they were the same every time we ran the train, but usually changed on a yearly basis. After that we would go to the kitchen car to help the TTTs wipe up and take the clean crockery back to the coaches where they were added up to make sure, we had at least 36 of everything. During this period the waiting staff were offered any surplus desserts left over as we always had about 50 for each coach to give a choice of three different deserts. The kitchen staff of barmen, chefs, pantry and TTTs had eaten their deserts while we were doing the coffee course. After this we could relax, sign off and either have a free drink before we left or head home straight away.

Sometime in the mid 90' Dave Bates stood down as Watercress Belle train manager and was replaced by Clive Howells a regular coach manager. Clive was a Welshman and with his waitress wife Ann had been a regular on the Belle not long after it had first started. Very different from Dave and a bit gruff at times but once you got to know him, he was fine. If I remember rightly, he had worked for 'Cordon Bleu' or 'Michelin Guide' so knew the catering trade at the top end very well and his standards were very high.

I continued wine waiting throughout the 90s but sometimes went over to food waiting when we had surplus people that could do wine waiting. I tackled the use of silver service food placement onto the plates at home to start with so that I could become use to holding the larger serving fork inside the large serving spoon in silver service fashion. Not easy to start with, but I soon got used to it. In 1990 when I first went to China and North Korea for a three-and-a-half-week railway holiday I practised at home with eating my food with chop sticks so by the time I got to Beijing I was quite efficient with Chinese eating ways. Pouring wine on a 4-seat table was not easy when serving the two customers by the window as you had to lean over their friends to reach them. The same applied to silver service food serving as you could not walk round the

table like in a restaurant. Following my left eye operation in 1999 I asked if I could just do food waiting in future, as with vision only good in one eye lining up the bottle with the glass sometimes proved difficult and the odd spillage was not uncommon. I also preferred food waiting as you were busy continuously, unlike wine waiting where you stood around for periods waiting for a customer to demand more drinks.

There were 5 food courses, starters of soup or fruit juice, 2nd course, would consist of either cold meats or pate or melon or fish and all sorts of things that the train manager dreamt up usually served with salad items. This was prepared by the day staff and manager onto plates with circular metal rings to keep the plates apart when stacked up, main course will be a typical British meat dish served with potatoes and two selections of vegetables plus a sauce or gravy done by the chefs in the kitchen. Many customers were amazed that their main course was cooked in the train kitchen. (Obviously they never experienced meals on BR and post grouping companies in their heyday). Next came deserts where there was a choice of 3 different types. These were either prepared at somebody's home beforehand usually by Marie Knight who was an expert cook or sometimes on the train. Then came the cheese and biscuits and hot drinks as already mentioned.

May's Miscellany: by Geoff May ©



With barely three weeks to go before the end of steam on the Southern, 'West Country' Class 4-6-2 34023 formerly *Blackmore Vale* heads a return school party excursion from Southampton Docks to Hemel Hempstead past Micheldever on 21st June 1967. The crew have ensured that the engine is displaying the correct head code for a train heading for Willesden Junction via Chertsey and Kew East Junction.

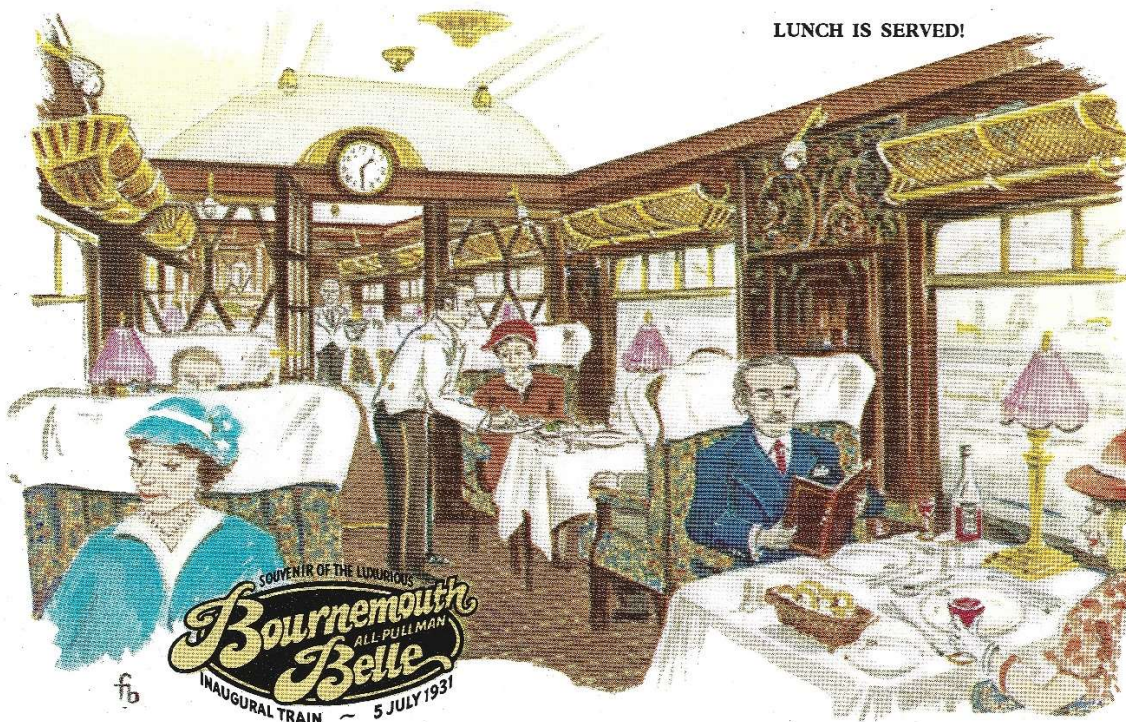
Postcard Corner by Roger Sandford

This month we look at Dalkeith picture Postcards created by Frank Burridge, a railway enthusiast and artist who lived in Bournemouth. The Dalkeith Publishing Company produced a variety of railway-themed postcards in limited edition sets.

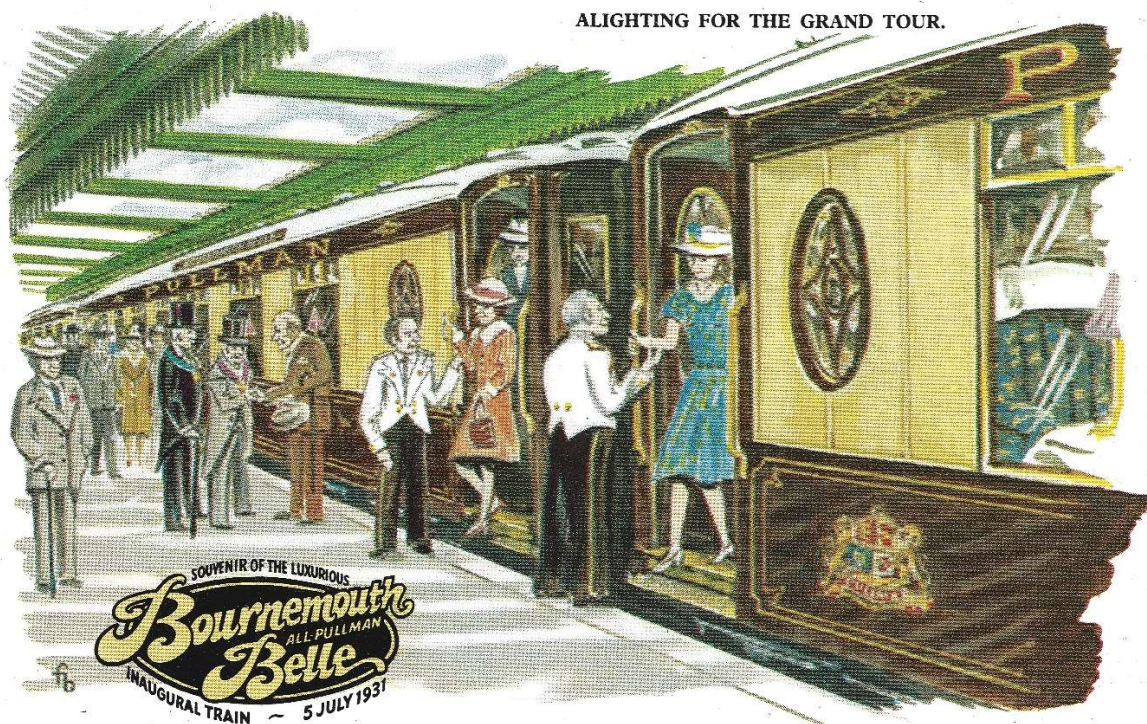
The Bournemouth Belle was commemorated in a set of 6 cards, three of which are included below, depicting various aspects of the inaugural service on Sunday 05 July 1931. Initially operating on Summer Sundays, it soon became successful and operation was extended to cover all weekends and Summer Weekdays, until 1936 when it became a daily service. Departure from Waterloo was at 10:30 non-stop to Bournemouth, but a Southampton stop was soon added and ultimately departure moved to 12:30. Initially, usually hauled by a Lord Nelson class loco, on resumption following World War II on 07 October 1947, Bulleid's Merchant Navy class loco was the preferred motive power. Steam haulage was regular until January 1967 when diesel locomotives were preferred in the months leading to full electric services on the Waterloo – Bournemouth line in July 1967, the final train operated on Sunday 09 July hauled by BR Class 47 D1924 (47810). Steam had substituted when a diesel locomotive was unavailable right into the last week of the life of the Bournemouth Belle.



Passing The New Forest. The new and opulent Bournemouth Belle speeds through the picturesque New Forest on the last stage of the journey.



Lunch is served; a splendid lunch is served on the train to the invited guests.



Alighting for the grand tour. During the afternoon guests are taken on a delightful conducted tour of Bournemouth by the deputy Lord Mayor.

The Langston to Isle of Wight Train Ferry by Peter Free

In the March 2026 Newsletter, Joe Whicher provided an interesting description of the 1850 Granton to Burntisland 'Floating Railway', with photographs of the floating bridge and train ferry 'PS Carrier'. Readers of the newsletter may be aware that this ferry and a Scottish linkspan system were later moved south, and continued in use in a location much closer to us - the Langston to Isle of Wight train ferry.

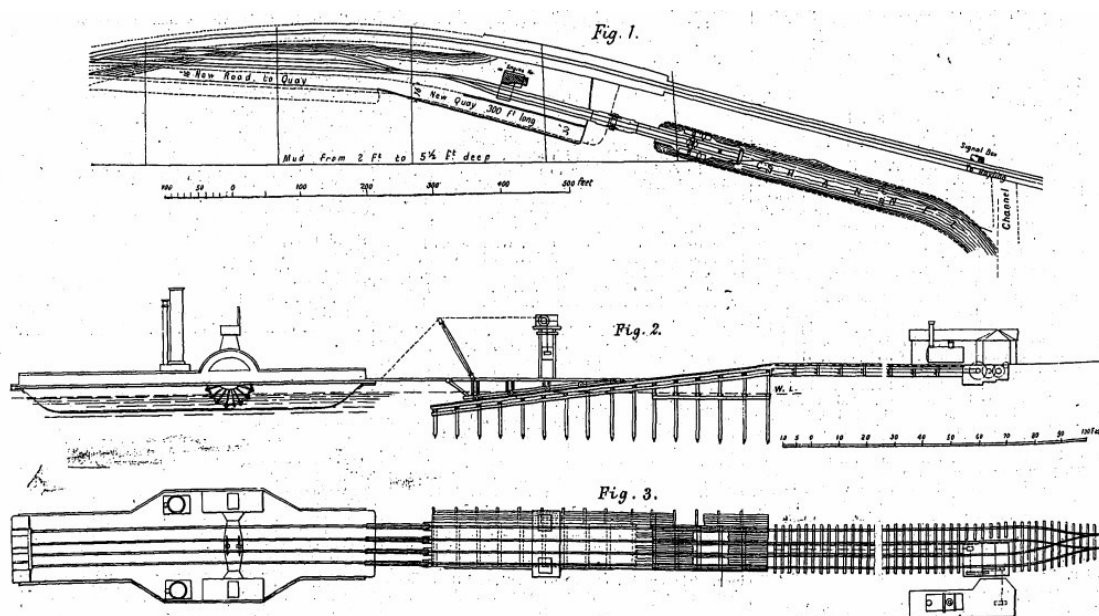
The paddle steamer 'Carrier' originally operated across the river Tay, then moved to the Firth of Forth at Granton following opening of the Tay Bridge. The ferry was sold by the North British Railway in 1882 to the Isle of Wight Marine Transit Co. and moved to Newhaven for refurbishment, together with the loading ramps and stationary engines from the Tay ferry. A siding and loading facility were built adjacent to the Hayling Island bridge on the Hayling Island branch line, then in 1885, service between Langston and St. Helens commenced.

The deck of the ferry was fitted with two tracks which could take up to 7 wagons each. An interesting feature was that the 6-foot between the two lines was reduced to 4'8 1/2", so that if only one line of wagons was carried, they could be loaded on the ship's centreline, to improve its seagoing performance. The wagons were moved on and off the ferry by gravity or by cable haulage, assisted by a stationary engine, which also operated the linkspan alignment.

The crossing time to the island was about 90 minutes and the ferry operated three times per week. The main product carried was coal, and initially the service was fully booked for the movement of coal to the island.

Unfortunately, the service was not a commercial success, due to a combination of low traffic receipts and the ferry being found unsuitable for use in the open waters of the Solent. In 1886 the route was taken over by the LBSCR, who operated it for a further two years, until closure in 1888. The ferry was then laid up and later sold for scrap.

This ended the Isle of Wight's only train ferry service.



Track diagram and general arrangement of railway and Isle of Wight train ferry dock at Langston, Hayling Island branch, 1885.

Photo credit: Digitised by Google from 'Engineering' magazine, 7 August 1885.

References:

'Engineering' magazine, 7 August 1885

Paye, Peter: The Hayling Railway, Oakwood Press No.49, 1979

National Transport Trust Red Plaque

1851 LAMBLEY VIADUCT

The Newcastle and Carlisle Railway, 60 miles long, built in the 1830s linked Newcastle upon Tyne with Carlisle.

With their main line completed and prospering, the N.& C.R. applied for powers to build branches up the valleys of the North and South Tyne Rivers, but the Act of 26th August 1846 only authorised a line from Haltwhistle to Nenthead. A second Act was obtained which allowed the heavily graded section from Alston to Nenthead to be abandoned. Construction then proceeded with the branch being opened on 17th November 1852. The Alston branch was the final extension of the Newcastle & Carlisle Railway, as in July 1862 they amalgamated with the North Eastern Railway.

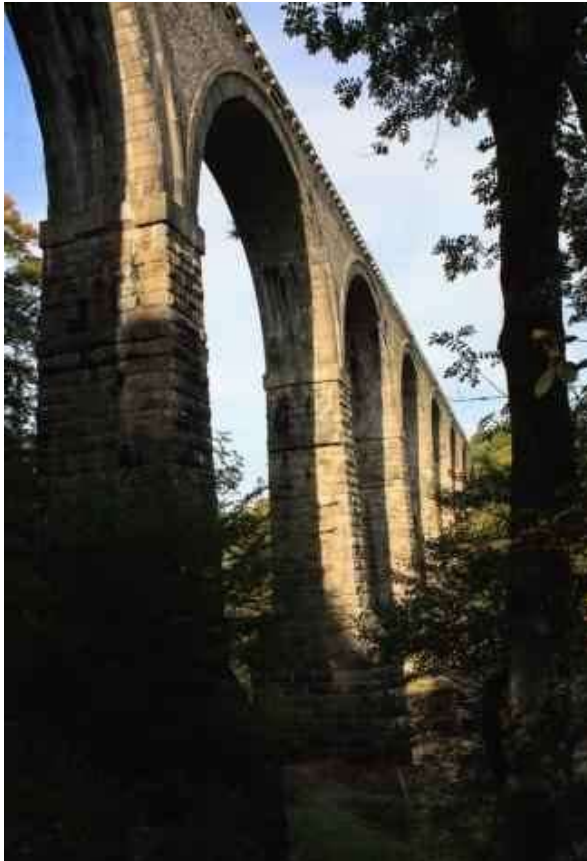


The Alston branch ran from the town of Haltwhistle and in early days the line served the lead mines in the upper South Tyne Valley. The branch also included the monumental Alston Arch Viaduct (also with Red Plaque) and was the last of the branch lines to close in 1976. Part of the Alston end has been turned into a narrow-gauge heritage railway, *The South Tynedale Railway*. The railway company's intention had been to carry the lead, coal and other minerals in the Alston district but although rival schemes were proposed it was the Newcastle & Carlisle railway whose scheme obtained approval. Passengers were of secondary importance at first but eventually, with the decline of lead and coal mining the line retained some importance as a vital link in the often-severe winters in the district. When a so-called 'all-weather road' opened in 1976 the line closed.

The viaduct spans a steep sided wooded valley. In 1996 the viaduct was restored and is approached from Lambley village via a footpath leading down to the river where the pillars can be explored.

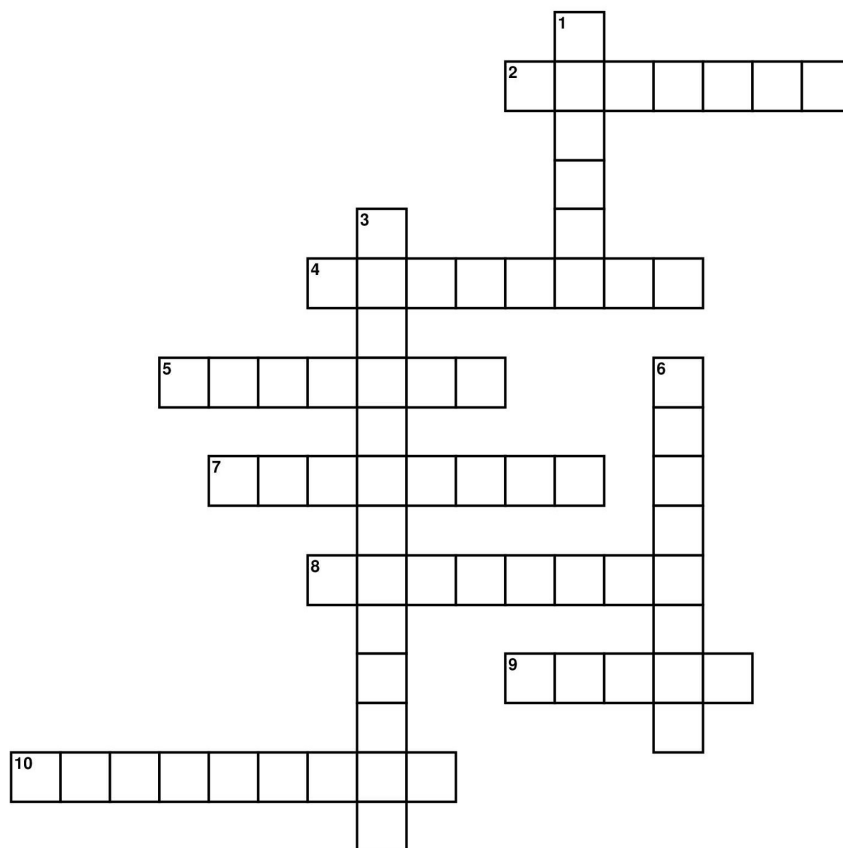
The viaduct is a particularly elegant example of Victorian engineering: the river is crossed by nine 56 ft wide arches which support a deck 105 ft above the river but, as it carried a single rail track is only 11.5 ft wide. The piers to the arches are built of massive rough-faced stones with similar-sized stones in ashlar to the main arch voussoirs. The spandrels and piers to the wide 19.7 ft approach arches are built of coursed rubble masonry.





In 1824, surveyor William Chapman was asked to report on the cost advantages of a Canal or a Railway from ~Newcastle to Carlisle', and he estimated that even a minimal canal would cost three times as much as a railway which could carry the same traffic. Josias Jessop confirmed the advantages of a railway in a report of March 1825, and a prospectus for the Newcastle & Carlisle Railway was issued only 24 days later, followed by a meeting of shareholders. After delays, notice of application for the Newcastle & Carlisle Railway Bill was made in 1828 and it received the Royal Assent on 22nd May 1829. The pioneering nature of the N. & C.R. can be realised when it is remembered that the Rainhill Trials had not yet taken place.

May Puzzle



Across

- [2] Name of the Red Plaque viaduct
- [4] Bill Gage's talk in April was centred on which station
- [5] which is the closest station to Pompey football club
- [7] London terminus of the Petersfield travellers
- [8] Where did the train ferry leave from to go to the IOW
- [9] How many bridges are there in the name of the southern line station
- [10] Name of the B1 engine in an article in this newsletter

Down

- [1] John Barrowdale's job in his article
- [3] Alan's article showed this station still has Semaphore signals
- [6] Name of the class 150 unit newly arrived at the Watercress line

Answers on the last page

Branch Meeting Report from 25 March 2026

Chasing Steam in Western Europe 1970-1974

Presented by John Barrowdale

John has a long history of being a train enthusiast and has a strong affinity for steam. In the 1970's he and some of his friends realised that steam power was not going to last much longer, so they set about visiting places where it could be found. In the 1970's there was still steam power to be found in Continental Europe.

Over a period of 5 years, John spent three holidays and several weekends visiting many parts of Western Europe in search of working steam including Germany, Austria, Italy, France and Portugal. These continental visits were the subject of John's presentation, which was illustrated by a collection of photographs that John had taken on his visits.

A large proportion of the collection featured engines used on express passenger and heavy goods trains and showed 6,8 & 10 coupled tender engines, with examples included from all the countries visited, but John also captured some of the heavy tank engines, especially those used on major branches. Included were engines and trains on a steeply graded rack system.

John provided the audience with details of each image including location and class details (for many of these he also provided original builder & build date details!).

The time and effort that John spent in creating this presentation must have been extensive and was much appreciated by the audience.

Answers to the crossword

ACROSS		DOWN	
3	Three	1	Midhurst
5	Littlehampton	2	Sprinter
6	Langston	4	Scotsman
7	Fratton	4	Springbok
9	Waterloo	8	Lambley
10	Waiter		