
Railway 200

In the New Forest





Staff at Brockenhurst Station, May 1964 (left to right): Alf Poole (Foreman), Chris Lawford (Junior Porter), Vic Marsh (Ticket Collector), Derek Hollier (Luggage Porter), Ted Legg (Porter), Fred Fox (Goods Porter), Ted Curtis (Driver).



Sway Railway Station by Robert Powell

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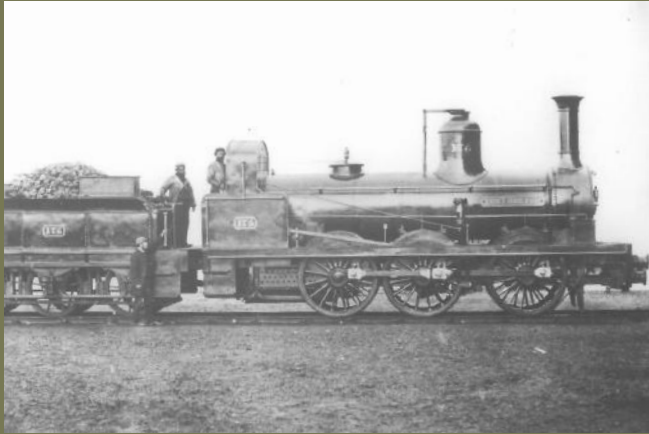
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All images Courtesy of St Barbe Museum + Art Gallery unless otherwise stated.



'Contractor', The first complete new locomotive built at North Road Works, Darlington. Photo: The John Proud Collection, courtesy of Win Proud and the Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.

Railway 200

On 27 September 1825, the Stockton & Darlington Railway opened. This marks the birth of the modern railway, an innovation connecting people, places, and ideas for 200 years.

Railway 200 is a nationwide, year-long campaign commemorating 200 years of railway heritage with events across Britain exploring the railway's past, its role in today's society, and its potential for a sustainable future. Led by a cross-industry partnership, involving communities, rail organisations and Friend groups hosting a programme of events and activities.

Railway 200 seeks to engage young people from all backgrounds, sparking their interest in railway careers and encouraging volunteering in heritage railways. It will showcase four key themes:

- Skills & Education
- Innovation, Technology & Environment
- Heritage, Culture & Tourism
- Celebrating Railway People



New Forest and western Solent, including railway lines, circa 1910. Markers and station names added.

Development of the Railway in the New Forest



'Last Steam Branch 1967' with 4 railway men, 2 April 1967
Lymington-Brockenhurst.

The Southampton and Dorchester Railway

This line, nicknamed Castleman's Corkscrew after its promoter and winding route, was opened in 1847. It ran from Southampton to Brockenhurst and then on to Ringwood. Electric traction was introduced on 10th July 1967.

The Ringwood to Christchurch line was completed in 1862 and the final link, the Brockenhurst to Christchurch line was opened 5th March 1888.

A branch from Totton down to Fawley came in to use in July 1925 and sadly lost its passenger service in 1966. The Ringwood to Christchurch line closed in 1935, followed by Ringwood to Brockenhurst in 1964 as part of the Beeching Axe, which aimed to streamline the British Railway network.

The Bournemouth Direct Line

This line was built between 1885 and 1888. It ran for ten miles from Lymington Junction, near Brockenhurst, to Christchurch where a line went on to Bournemouth. When it opened, trains could travel from London Waterloo direct to Bournemouth for the first time. It is still the main line to Bournemouth and Dorset today.

The opening of the Bournemouth line was delayed by two years as Engineers struggled to lay tracks across an area of unstable clay and sand near Sway. Vast amounts of stone were used to make it stable and a number of workers were killed or injured in the process. Three identical brick-built stations were constructed along the new line. Each of the three stations has a terracotta plaque with the date 1886 – the date when the station buildings were constructed, although the line itself was not ready until 1888.



'Railway open for passenger traffic' poster, 1858, with train times.

Navvies

In the eighty years from 1822, when the first rail of the Stockton to Darlington Railway was laid, millions of navvies were employed in constructing 20,000 miles of railways in Britain. The railways were made by hand, not by machines, using picks, shovels and gunpowder.

The word navvy comes from navigator. This was the name given to the canal builders of the eighteenth century, because commercial canals were called navigations.

When the railway line between Brockenhurst and Bournemouth was built, the majority of the navvies employed came from outside the region, and moved from one project to another.

Hundreds of men were hired and they had a significant impact on local rural communities. They lived in various types of accommodation; some lodged with local families, or lived in specially constructed wooden hutments. At Ashley Arnewood men slept on straw in farm buildings, and there were communal galvanised iron huts.

Work was hazardous and the men suffered financial hardship when the company contracted to build the line went into liquidation. Several men were killed and many injured, particularly in the construction of cuttings and embankments, which collapsed owing to the heavy clay soil.

Navvies worked hard and played hard; it was common for a man to eat two pounds of beef and drink a gallon of beer a day! Most were considered to be devoid of Victorian virtues of sobriety, honesty, and devotion to Christian worship. However, they were courageous and hard working!

Their contribution to the Industrial Revolution was considerable, and the life of a navvy was not commonly a long one. Many died as boys, run over by the wagons they were leading to the tip-head. The few who survived until they were sixty looked seventy and most died at forty – a good age for a navvy.



In memory of the following workers, known as “Navvies”, who were killed during the construction of the direct railway line from Brockenhurst to Bournemouth (1885 to 1888):

Alfred Whitcher, 22nd April 1885, at Arnewood.

John Clark, 29th April 1885, in Sway.

John Biddulph, 20th March 1886, in Ashley.

James Brooks, 9th August 1886, at Mead End.

Frederick William Clarke, 30th August 1886.

George Brown, 16th October 1886, in Walkford.

Alfred Taylor, 11th April 1887, in Sway.

Charles Young, 26th May 1887, in Sway.

“Tall”, 19th October 1888, in Milton.



From School, train at platform,
Railway Station, Lymington, 1969

Social Impacts of the Railway

Revolutionary Coal

The railway brought coal to the Forest at half the cost of the boats of the previous century. This was a catalyst for industrial development near the railways and a second agricultural revolution; steam-powered ploughs, both stationary and later moving under their own power, traction engines, and threshing machines. New Milton became an important distribution point for coal, which was packed into sacks and delivered by horse-drawn cart (later by truck) to the area.

Education

Before the advent of the railways, few people could even sign their own name. But the railways brought newspapers to the whole country, and books for bookshops; King's of Lymington, founded in 1805, expanded in the 19th century. In 1870 Forster's Elementary Education Act provided education for children from 5-12 years old, and many of these travelled to schools in local towns. Brockenhurst Sixth Form College (formerly Brockenhurst Grammar School from 1950 to 1969) takes students from the west Wight as well as the Lymington area; many of these travel by train. One local lady recalls how Mr. Farley the train driver would wait for her if she was late for the train!

Agriculture and Produce

The 1840s were known as 'the hungry forties'; the population of England and Wales grew from eight to thirty million over the nineteenth century. When the railways came, local produce could be exported to centres of population, to arrive in peak condition. Goodall's of Walhampton and farms around Wellow sent strawberries to Covent Garden along with carnations from Brockenhurst. Watercress went by the Mid-Hants railway to markets everywhere. Freshly caught fish went to Southampton fish market and onward from there to Billingsgate in London. Produce from the Isle of Wight came by ferry to meet trains, first at Lymington Town Quay, then at the Pier from 1890. Milk and meat went in refrigerated vans; an underground line went from London termini to Smithfield.

New Forest ponies were corralled and auctioned at Beaulieu Road station, then sent on in railway horseboxes. Meanwhile new livestock for cattle farms came into the New Forest in cattle-trucks to local stations. Driving livestock along roads, during which the animals lost condition, ended, but subsistence farmers were squeezed out.

Small livestock like poultry could be sent in suitable baskets by express passenger parcels overnight, looked after by the guard. Day-old chicks (which didn't need food overnight) went from breeders to poultry-rearers.



Ponies on Junction Rd Level Crossing, Totton Historical Society

Culture

Railways allowed people to travel in search of culture, such as music, theatre, museums and (later) films. Orchestral concerts were offered at the Winter Gardens in Bournemouth and theatres provided shows at Winchester (Theatre Royal 1912), Southampton (the Mayflower, originally the Empire, 1928), Bournemouth (the Pavilion Theatre, 1929), and even to London. Closer to home, the Lyric Cinema in Lymington opened in 1913 but was soon equipped with a stage for live performances.

Artists came down to the New Forest to paint, and sold their work to local residents, such as Walker Tyndale, who painted Forest landscapes and Charles Neame Spencer who painted in Milford and whose work is now in Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne.

Industry

Lymington was always a centre for ship-building, but the railway brought in timber and equipment. The Berthon Boat Co (from 1917 in its present form) was building Motor Torpedo Boats and mine-sweepers during and after WWII; it was named after the Revd. Edward Lyon Berthon of Romsey whose folding life-boats (1850) would have travelled by train to purchasers.

No. 26A

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

30th SEPTEMBER, 1935, AND
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

**TRAIN SERVICE
AND FARES**
BETWEEN
LONDON (Waterloo)
AND
**WINCHESTER
SOUTHAMPTON CENTRAL
SOUTHAMPTON TERMINUS
BROCKENHURST
LYMINGTON TOWN
NEW MILTON
CHRISTCHURCH
POKESDOWN
BOSCOMBE
BOURNEMOUTH
(CENTRAL & WEST)**

H. A. WALKER,
General Manager.

WATERLOO STATION.

3159/100,000
4935

* ORDINARY SINGLE FARES			
	1st	2nd	3rd
d. s. d.	22/3	15/-	
3	22/5	15/6	
7	23/2	15/1	
-	19/4	11/7	
9	21/8	13/-	
6	20/3	12/2	
6	20/5	12/3	
7	22/-	13/3	
-	16/6	9/11	
-	16/5	9/16	
-	13/9	8/3	

ve Single Fares,
outward or return
thereon.

re issued May to

ce at any London

onditions published
times.

Train Service and Fares Timetable, 1935.

Instead of local thatch and cob, slates from Wales were brought in for building roofs after the tax was repealed in 1833, and bricks from Lymington brickyards would have travelled to inland towns and villages. These materials became standardised. Fittings such as Belfast sinks and enamel baths came by train. Wellworthy's on the present Waitrose site and in WWII at Ampress made piston rings for guns and aircraft engines; the halt (1956–89) served workers (many from the Island).

Cottage industries transported by rail included rustic garden furniture and children's rocking-horses. But many crafts were lost or endangered, like blacksmiths and joiners.

Leisure and Tourism

'Boat trains' from Waterloo to Lymington Pier connected with the ferries to Yarmouth. In the New Forest, hotels were built in Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst, and seaside hotels on Milford cliffs, where public gardens were created behind them along the stream, and beach huts were built near the sea. The Holidays with Pay Act of 1948 enabled day trips (and longer) to beaches and piers at Bournemouth, and rambles in the New Forest. Campers

could bring their tents via 'camping carriages' to the New Forest or the Island via the ferry.

Before the railway many people would not travel outside their locality all their lives, but now people went shopping in Southampton and Bournemouth. Days out horse-racing were possible to Salisbury and Sandown Park. Racehorses could travel by train down to Tozer's training stables at Brockenhurst Manor. Sailing flourished; many Admiral's Cup contenders and Olympic sailors practised their skills. Weekend sailors would travel back to London and work by train late on Sunday evening. The train also allowed city workers to go out of London at weekends to enjoy the pleasures of the Forest, and many decided to stay, becoming commuters from towns and villages with stations.

Highcliffe Castle became a national resource. Owned by the Stuart-Wortley family, it played host on behalf of the Government to many important figures, such as the Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone and his wife in 1880, the Duke of Connaught (a son of Queen Victoria), the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) in 1898, and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany in 1907. All came by train to Hinton Admiral, a request stop on the Meyrick estate.



British Railways poster advertising Barton-on-Sea, New Milton and Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire, c. 1950s.



King Edward VII at Hinton Admiral Station, with 4 old cars, c.1904-1910, during one of his visits to Highcliffe Castle



Sway Camping coaches, c. 1960s



WWI post card from the Forest sent by a New Zealand soldier in Brockenhurst hospital

The Railway During the Wars

Trains in the New Forest played a significant, though often behind-the-scenes, role in both World War I and World War II, due to the area's strategic coastal location, military camps, and proximity to Southampton docks.

World War I

Troops were moved by rail from Southampton docks through the New Forest to training camps, including Brockenhurst, Beaulieu Heath and Sway, before they were then sent to the trenches on the continent. Other training grounds across the forest were accessed from these and other stations including Ashurst and Lyndhurst Road (now Ashurst New Forest) where materials and personnel were unloaded.

As the horrors of the conflict unfolded, Brockenhurst became a key military hospital. Large numbers of Indian and New Zealand wounded troops came from Southampton on special medical trains equipped with stretchers and medical staff.

World War II

Thousands of children were evacuated from Southampton and Portsmouth on trains to villages in the Forest. They left families behind to find new ones for much of the war. A few days after the declaration of war, 200 children alone arrived at Sway station with gas masks in cardboard boxes around their necks. One of them, Joy Ponsford, recalls the thrill of the train but being frightened. The Women's Voluntary Service and the WI organised homes for them and they soon became part of the community. St Luke's school could not accommodate them all and a shortage of teachers meant that elder children helped teach the younger ones – activities included gardening and making piccalilli.

With the threat of invasion, all station name boards were removed. The similarities between the stations on the Brockenhurst to Christchurch line must have caused some confusion to visitors! Temporary sidings and track extensions were laid to allow the loading and unloading of war matériel at Beaulieu Road, Sway and Lymington.

The railway was a key supply route for the 13 air landing strips that were set up across the Forest to initially defend the country and then to launch offensive operations. Wellworthy's in Lymington manufactured piston rings for guns, tanks and aircraft engines,

distributed by rail to assembly plants across the country. Beaulieu was a key training location for Special Operations Executive, the spy and espionage personnel who were dropped into enemy territory.

In the Spring of 1944, in the lead up to D-Day, troops were on the move to the New Forest, chiefly by train. Trees around the stations were felled, and new sidings erected full of wagons bearing supplies – a total of seven new sidings appeared at Brockenhurst during the war. World War II saw restrictions on travel with the service limited to local people and the Isle of Wight crossing for residents only during the build up to D-Day.



Tanks on Trains. British Railways at War, 1943, John Hind

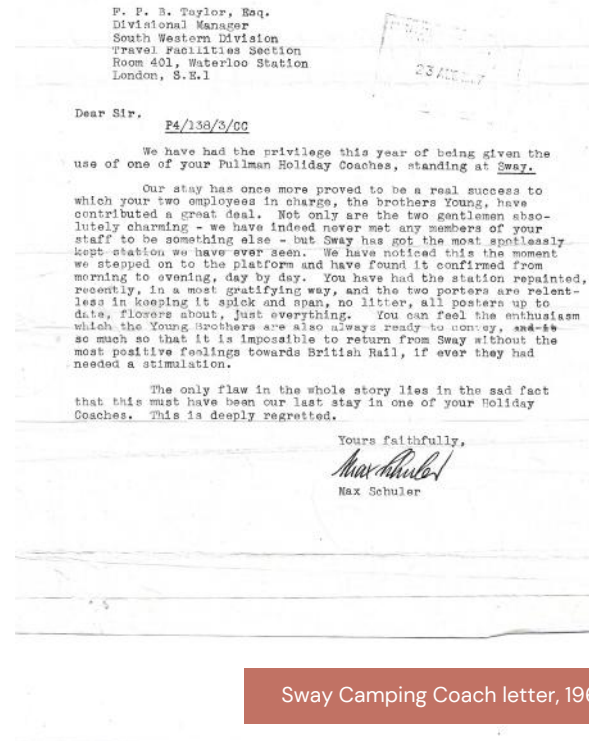
Trains

Camping Trains

Camping coaches first appeared up and down the country on Britain's Railways in the 1930's. They were popular, and in those days cost between £2.50 - £3.50 for a week's rental!

During wartime they were commandeered often for other purposes, such as for military use or re-housing. It was in the 1950's that they re-appeared on British Railways. Sway received an allocation of two coaches between 1962 and 1967, after that, when the main line was electrified, they were withdrawn for reasons of safety.

The coaches proved popular and were modestly priced with a weekly rate around £10.00, with variation for high or low season. While comfortable, they were a bit Spartan - campers had to use the station toilets and get supplies of water. Nevertheless, it is clear that Sway's coaches were popular and that the campers were well looked after by the stationmaster, Joe Young. Campers came from far and wide and in the archives we can find lots of appreciative letters, including one from a Swiss family who visited Sway more than once.



Sway Camping Coach letter, 1967

The final two camping coaches based at Sway were ex-Pullman carriages: large wooden-bodied vehicles. When the time came to withdraw the facility of Camping Coaches these two carriages weren't taken away to be scrapped, they were set fire to on-site – and we have images of them making a fine blaze! Somehow it seems unlikely that such an approach would be adopted or welcomed nowadays!

The coaches were located in Sway's goods yard – an

area of sidings behind platform two which would have dealt with all sorts of freight such as flowers, timber, coal etc. for local businesses and farms. This is all gone now and has been replaced by the mini-industrial estate with independent Citroen and Volkswagen garages.

Camping coaches were a successful effort on the UK's railways and a source of revenue, as the campers had to purchase appropriate return tickets as part of the rental process!



Pullman Holiday coach at Sway circa 1968. Photo: Joe Young Archive

Coal Trains

Coal trains in the New Forest were not a central or defining feature of the area in the way they were in industrial regions like the Midlands or South Wales, but they did support the local economy and provided coal for the residents. These steam locomotives were powered by the very coal they carried and comprised long strings of open wagons (also called coal hoppers or coal trucks), often covered in soot and coal dust. They would deliver coal to station depots where it was distributed for local domestic uses as well as timber yards and forges, and maritime quays for steamships.



Commuter Trains

Commuter trains in the New Forest serve as vital connections between rural communities and larger urban hubs such as Southampton, Bournemouth, and London. These electric and diesel trains provide efficient, reliable service for daily travel and individual routines that for some means quiet/sleep time, for others joining their 'commute group' to chatter about the events of the day and for others an extended work day. Post-Covid, there is a greater propensity for people to work from home a couple of days a week, which has encouraged more commuters to move to the Forest, enduring a longer commute but on fewer days.

Steam Trains

Steam trains were the pioneers of the New Forest railways and today evoke a sense of nostalgia, showcasing a golden age of travel with their rhythmic chugging, billowing steam, and polished engines.

Today these trains often run on special occasions and provide a glimpse into early 20th-century rail travel. Volunteers maintain the engines and carriages with dedication, keeping history alive.



Steam engine and train at Lymington Town Station, Hampshire

Station Spotlight

An in-depth focus on stations
across the district



Totton Station by John Lucas

- **Ashurst**
- **Brockenhurst**
- **Lymington Town and Pier**
- **New Milton**
- **Sway**
- **Totton**
- **Forest - Wide**
 - **Beaulieu Road**
 - **Hinton Admiral**
 - **Holmsley**
 - **Ringwood**

Station Spotlight - Ashurst

Ashurst (New Forest)/Lyndhurst Road was built to serve Lyndhurst although it is 2½ miles west of the town. It became the main depot for goods leaving and arriving in the New Forest. The village that grew up around it was also known as Lyndhurst Road.

The station was renamed Ashurst (New Forest) in 1995.

Events

Unveiling of Mural by Simon Chadwick

5 April 2025 (section of mural shown below)
Ashurst Station, Lyndhurst Road, SO40 7AA



Ashurst Station Mural by artist Simon Chadwick

Station Spotlight - Brockenhurst

Brockenhurst station was opened on 1 June 1847 as part of the Southampton and Dorchester Railway with services running to Dorchester via Ringwood and to Southampton where it joined the line to London. On 12 July 1858, the Lymington Branch Line opened, turning the station into a junction station and leading to its name being changed between 1876 and 1888 to Brockenhurst Junction to emphasise this.

On 5 March 1888, the direct line from Brockenhurst via Sway to Bournemouth and Poole opened to traffic. This massively increased the number of trains passing through the station for both routes and enhancing its status as an interchange but resulted in the downgrading of the Ringwood route to that of a branch line.

Taken over by Southern Railway in 1923 the station was further extended in 1936 to include two new platforms. There was also large expansion of the goods sidings in WW2 as the railway sought to diversify some of the goods traffic from Eastleigh. The sidings were later used to serve the Normandy Landings of 1944.



Steam train tour passing through Brockenhurst, 2024



Richard Burton and Sophia Loren
filming at Brockenhurst, July 1974



Photograph of Julia Margaret Cameron, 1870

Services over the old Southampton and Dorchester line via Ringwood fell victim to rationalisation, ceasing in May 1964. The track through the station was electrified in 1967.

In 1974, the station was used as the set for the remake of the film 'Brief Encounter' starring leading film stars of the time Richard Burton and Sophia Loren. Between 1970–90 the station was a southern terminal for the Intercity Motorail service to Scotland. From 1994 until 2004, there was a direct service to London via Gatwick Airport.

Prior to the pandemic, passengers using the station peaked to 1.2 million a year. They are now steadily increasing again.

Events

Station Birthday party and sustainable producers market; plus unveiling of murals and heritage plaque, 1 June 2025.

Station Displays

- History of Brockenhurst Station – platform 3 & 4 waiting room
- History of New Forest caravanning & camping – platform 1 & 2 waiting room
- History of Lymington Branch Line – platform 1 & 2 waiting room

Julia Margaret Cameron Photographic Exhibition – A rare opportunity to view the newly restored 1871 prints donated to the station by pioneering photographer Julia Margaret Cameron. Brockenhurst Ticket Office, ongoing.

Screening of Brief Encounter, 10 October, 6:45pm for 7:15pm, Brockenhurst Village Hall. Tickets £6, cultureincommon.co.uk

Station Spotlight - Lymington

The Lymington Branch was the second railway line to be completed in the New Forest, the first being Castleman's Corkscrew, which opened in 1847. A route from Lymington to Brockenhurst had been surveyed as early as 1846 and in 1847 permission was given for the line but the railway promoters failed to raise the necessary capital and the scheme was abandoned. The people of Lymington had to make do with a horse-drawn connection with the station at Brockenhurst.

A group of wealthy residents decided to form their own company and seek Parliamentary consent for a new scheme. Among those involved were George Foster St. Barbe of the Lymington Bank, George Inman the ship builder, Alfred Mew the brewer, Richard Sharp solicitor, Edward Hicks magistrate and William Squire a shop owner who lived on the Isle of Wight. In 1856, they asked Parliament for permission to bring in a Bill for creating a railway from Lymington to Brockenhurst and it received the Royal Assent on 4th July 1856.



Steam engine at Lymington, circa 1962

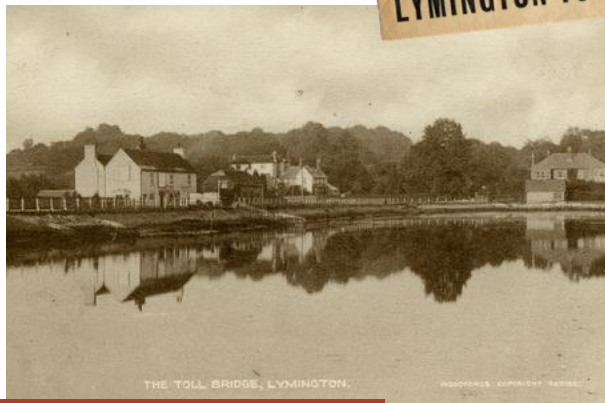
Events

Station Display:

'What the Railway Has Done for Us in Lymington'

Enjoy the exhibition all year-long to 31 December 2025 at the station, Mill Lane, Lymington, SO41 9AZ

Steam train at Lymington Town Station, 1966



'The Toll Bridge, Lymington', circa 1910

The Lymington Railway Act not only allowed for the building of the line but also provided for a landing place at Lymington as well as powers to buy the toll bridge across the Lymington River. It was expected that the railway would carry more than just passengers, and tolls were set up at one penny per ton per mile for materials like coal, charcoal, dung and limestone. Cotton, medicines and manufactured goods would be charged at two pence per ton per mile.

The promoters organised themselves into a Board of Directors and by 1857 nearly £15,000 had been raised mainly from 112 local shareholders making the Lymington Railway very much a local business. Work began on 8th January 1857 but took longer than expected, partly because it took some time to raise all the necessary capital, and partly because the construction involved filling in an old mill pond. In the end, to avoid further delay, the Directors decided to build a temporary wooden station next to the toll bridge road, this was finished by May 1858. The line was officially opened on 12th July 1858, with a service of seven trains in each direction each day, except Sundays when there would be three trains.

Station Spotlight - New Milton

The arrival of the railway at the village of Milton was to have an enormous impact on its development. The Bournemouth Direct Line linked Brockenhurst and Christchurch and provided the first direct route from London to the west country. New stations were built at Sway, Milton and Hinton Admiral and the line opened in 1888. The first public train stopped at Milton on 6th March that year.

Milton Station was built in 1886, nearly a mile from the old village centre. The Milton Hotel was built beside the train station by a Mr Hugh Wyeth, a Winchester brewer who believed that the area would develop.

In 1896, Mrs Emma Newhook, who ran the sub Post Office opposite the station, named the building the 'New' Milton Sub Post Office to avoid confusion with the post office at Milton village and to acknowledge the rapid growth around the railway station. This name was formally adopted by the railway company in 1897.



Steam train at New Milton Station, 1961

The railway station and sidings were crucial to the development of the new town. Timber, slate and other building materials were brought in by train, and farmers were able to send produce, cattle, and milk to markets that would otherwise have been closed to them.

In World War Two, the train station was targeted by an enemy aircraft on the 23rd of August 1940. The Luftwaffe claimed to have destroyed a station east of Christchurch and cut the strategic railway line from Weymouth to London. The bombs missed their target and fell in Station Road, killing many civilians and servicemen in what became the worst incident for the town in the war.

Post war, the railway station continued to be a key factor in supporting the development of the town. Not only were people using the station daily to commute to work, and travel to college but visitors and holiday makers were coming to the town to stay in the many hotels, holiday parks and bed and breakfast facilities.

In July 1967 the line was electrified and the goods sidings removed. The railway station had created a new and thriving town which it continues to support to this day.



Indian Soldiers returning to the Front, 1915

Events

Unveiling of Railway 200 Mural, 15 March 2025, New Milton Station, Station Approach, New Milton, BH25 6JS

Talk: 'How the Railway Created New Milton' by Nick Saunders, 1 July 2025, Forest Arts Centre, 7:30pm. Tickets: £5.50

South Coast Model Railway Exhibition, 26 – 27 July 2025, Arnewood School, New Milton, 10am–4pm

Station Spotlight - Sway

Sway Station, located in the heart of the New Forest, has been a key part of the local history, connecting the community to the wider area since it opened in 1888. The line known as the "Direct Line" was built through Sway between 1883 and 1888 to provide a faster line to serve the emerging seaside resort of Bournemouth as well as Christchurch and Poole.

Sway is famous for its clay and its unique landmarks. The term "treacle" was the nickname given to the stubborn Barton Clay, a treacherous substance that the unlucky navvies had to dig through while constructing the railway line.

Engineer Joseph Firbank famously described the clay as "treacherous and slippery in the highest degree." Workers constantly grumbled about the exhausting task of scraping the clay off their tools, clothes, and equipment, adding to the already gruelling demands of their job. The "Treacle Mines" became something of a local joke.



Sway Railway Station

Manchester Road and Brighton Road in Sway are named after the navvies that originated from those respective locations.

There were 2 Pullman coaches converted to holiday homes in the sidings at Sway in the 1950s and 60s. These were terminated as part of the electrification and modernisation of the line in 1967 and they were disposed of on site by burning! At the same time the sidings and goods handling closed and that area is now occupied by a small industrial estate.

With the open forest easily accessible on foot or bike from the village, the station continues to draw attention. Many use it as a gateway to explore the beauty of the New Forest and the famous concrete folly nearby, Petersen's Tower, a remarkable landmark offering a unique vantage point over the surrounding landscape.

Friends Of Sway Station (FOSS), founded in 2012, has played a vital role in improving the station. With a dedicated group of volunteers, FOSS continues to enhance the station's appearance, ensuring it remains a welcoming spot for commuters and visitors.



Events

Talk: 'History of the New Forest Railway' by Simon Hanney, 26 September 2025. Featuring a rail memorabilia display, related exhibition and the showing of the 1960 Schlesinger documentary, 'Terminus'.

- **Eco display panel** on sustainable travel and Sway: Platform 1
- **Thanksgiving and memorial Service** to honour 19th-century railway construction workers, 28 September
- **Art competition** inspired by local rail or historical themes

Station Spotlight - Totton

Totton was originally known as Eling Junction when it opened in 1847. Prior to the arrival of the railway most of the people in the small villages of Totton and Eling were tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, estate workers or house servants for the local gentry, and local traditional boat builders.

However, this all changed when Mr Burt and Mr Boulton put in a successful tender to supply the London and Southampton Railway Company with timber. Their firm went on to become a major local employer. Mr Burt imported timber by sea to Eling Quay, right by where Mr Boulton treated the timbers ready to be used. The land for the timber depot was owned by the Revd. Sir John Barker-Mills who was the owner of the Barker-Mills estate at that time. As well as leasing the land for the Burt Boultons timber depot, Sir Barker-Mills also invested his money into the building of a branch line from Totton down to Eling Quay. These actions and investments transformed the local area in just a few short years.



Totton Junction Road signal box & level crossing

Events

Off The Rails: Creative Writing Project with poet, AJ Hardingson. Free creative writing, poetry, and collage workshops for young people aged 13-18 years. 19th, 22nd, 26th & 29th August 2025, 1pm - 3pm at Fluid Motion Creative Hub, Totton Precinct.

Exhibition Launch & Poetry Performance on 27th September 2025, 2pm at Totton Railway Station

1847 – Railway arrives in Totton and Eling. The London to Southampton track cut through two existing roads which were renamed Station Road and Junction Road – both needing level crossings. Eling Junction is the name which originally shows on railway timetables.

1857 – The railway track at Totton is upgraded from a single to a double track. A new signal box is built at Junction Road. The growth of housing around the station area leads to Totton also becoming a dominant name used in maps and timetables.

1859 – Totton Station building completed. The main building was on the 'up' line to London, with a canopied waiting room also on the 'down' side. Originally passengers had to cross between platforms via the level crossing in Station Road.

1885 – The footbridge is built, connecting the two platforms. The sidings on the west side of the station are also expanded at this time, and the Goods Yard is established to meet new transport requirements, including for the new Peter Mumford & Sons steam flour mill built next to the station in Mill Road.

1900 – The Station Hotel opens on Station Road South.

1925 – Totton became the junction station for the new Fawley Branch Line.

1930 – The Station Road level crossing closes permanently and the old signal box is removed.

1966 – The Fawley Branch line closes to passengers and becomes a freight-only service.

1974 – Totton and Eling officially becomes a town, after long being known as the 'largest village in England'.

1986 – The Station Hotel building (still in use as a pub) is given a Grade 2 listing.

1993 – The Eling Branch line closes. The Station Hotel closes and is converted to housing.

2007 – The Totton to Romsey route closes

2024 – The Disabled access to platform 2 opens, using the land from the old Eling Branch line.



Totton + Eling Station Staff

Forest - Wide

Beaulieu Road

Beaulieu Road is the most remote of the New Forest stations and was built to serve Beaulieu village, 3½ miles further south. During the First World War, it was the depot for the City of London Wood Wool Company but today is mainly associated with the pony sales held across the road.

Hinton Admiral

Hinton Admiral station served the communities of Hinton and Highcliffe. It was built on land belonging to Sir George Meyrick and as owner of the local estate he had the right to ask any train to stop at Hinton Admiral whenever it suited him!

Holmsley

was first known as Christchurch Road and was intended to serve Christchurch and Burley. In 1964 the part of the line running from Brockenhurst to Ringwood closed. The building survives today as a tearoom.



Hinton Admiral Station, 2013, by Jack Pease

Ringwood

Ringwood was important to the line, as it was the largest market town on the route. It became the junction for a branch line to Christchurch from 1862 to 1935 but closed altogether in 1964.

Events

The Railway 200 Exhibition Train, Inspiration is coming to Southampton Central Station, 14 – 16 December!
Book your free tickets at railway200.co.uk



New Milton Railway Station from the air, circa late 1920s.



Hythe Pier Carriages,
Copyright Morwenna Fuge

Innovation and Heritage

Hythe Pier Railway

The Victorians greatly enjoyed pier building. In 1870, it was proposed that the Hythe ferry would serve its passengers better, if it did not require them to walk out onto a gravel hard which frequently resulted in the ferry passenger getting wet feet. It took another eight years before the pier was finally built.

The iron pier is 640m in length and such was its success, that in 1909, tracks were laid to carry passenger's baggage to the ferry. The trolleys were moved along the track by hand but in 1922 a narrow gauge electric railway was opened, and this conveyed passengers along the full length of the pier, adding to the excitement of the whole event. This railway with its original engine and rolling stock is still in operation, making it the oldest pier railway in continuous operation in the world today.

Established in 2018, Hythe Pier Heritage Association aims to secure the long-term future of the pier and its historic railway through a series of projects to preserve and restore the pier railway, train and pier. A brand-new museum room is now open near the ticket office where you can find out more about the history of this unique pier railway. The what3words for the pier in Hythe is 'gears.toward.asleep'.

The Monorail at the Motor Museum

Beaulieu is home to England's oldest monorail. The mile-long elevated railway provides sweeping views of the grounds and gardens before passing right through the roof of the National Motor Museum in Beaulieu!

Accompanied by a recorded commentary, the journey offers historical context and behind-the-scenes stories, enriching the visitor experience with educational detail. The Monorail runs at frequent intervals throughout the day, and is a fun way to explore the Beaulieu grounds.

Exbury Steam Railway

Brainchild of the late Leopold de Rothschild 22 years ago, the narrow-gauge steam engines depart from Exbury Central, a replica of Aviemore Station as it would have appeared in Victorian times. The trains travel on an extended 1.5 mile track through the gardens, meandering through the Summer Lane Garden, before skirting past the Rock Garden, travelling through the tunnel and then stopping off at Exbury North to refuel. The return journey includes a loop around Dragonfly Pond, where passengers can watch out for wildlife, before heading back to Exbury Central.

Spotting Steam Trains in the Forest

Heritage steam trains frequently journey through the New Forest enroute to or from Dorset. Check the list below to discover when you might catch a glimpse of one as it passes through one of the local stations. Find out more at <https://www.railwaytouring.net/calendars>

9 July 2025

The End of Southern Steam
Passing through the New Forest on it's return journey

23 July 2025

The Dorset Coast Express
Passing through the New Forest in both directions

14th August 2025

The Dorset Coast Express
Passing through the New Forest in both directions

10th September 2025

The Swanage Belle
Passing through the New Forest in both directions

Nationalisation and the Future of the Railway



The railway in the Forest has been impacted by many challenges over its history, including the Beeching Report in 1963 and subsequent axings, changes in use and technology, and different funding, operating and ownership structures. The railway provides vital links to the Forest and beyond to Dorset and the Isle of Wight. Indeed, the Lymington Branch escaped Beeching's axe because of the link with the Isle of Wight.

The railway has remains resilient through all these changes. The last steam trains on a British country branch line ran between Lymington and Brockenhurst until 2nd April 1967 when diesel electric took over.

The railway in the New Forest has immense potential to meet the needs of residents, commuters, and tourists – and we look forward to the hoped-for benefits of the “Great British Railway”. Rail usage nationally has almost recovered to pre-Covid levels, and in some areas the use of the railway for leisure travel is at higher levels than before the Covid pandemic. We look forward to newer, even more environmentally sustainable a trains, more frequent stops at smaller stations, and integration with wider transport initiatives such as buses, school travel, cycling and rail to trail.

We need to embrace fully the potential of our railway. 200 years ago the advent of the railway had a massive impact on people's lives – the railway has been key to the development and growth of our towns over these 200 years. What will the next 200 years bring? If we realise the potential of our imagination and creativity the future will be very exciting!



Kurt Jackson: Between the tracks, Weybridge Station. 2019 monoprint and mixed media on train tickets

Environmental Benefits of Rail Travel

Rail is an environmentally friendly way to travel and plays a critical role in helping to tackle climate change. Compared to cars and planes, train travel reduces carbon emissions by two thirds, producing approximately 10 times less carbon emissions per passenger

Passenger and freight trains are all becoming quieter and more sustainable. The rail industry is actively working to improve its environmental performance, with efforts focused on electrification, low-carbon technologies, and renewable energy. However, the real challenge lies with each and everyone of us to consider how we can use the railways more and benefit from the legacy of English civil engineer and 'Father of Railways', George Stephenson.

Get Involved

Friends of Brockenhurst Station

friendsofbrockenhurststation@gmail.com

[Friends of Brockenhurst Station Facebook](#)

Our friendly team of volunteers of various ages work on a wide range of rewarding opportunities to keep the station welcoming and attractive. We meet socially monthly. Partnering with local community groups we also promote sustainable travel and the needs of environment.

Friends of Lymington to Brockenhurst Line

honsec.folbl@gmail.com

tom.cornwall@btopenworld.com

FOLBL are looking for volunteers to help with station decoration and gardening, historical research and people with web and social media skills.

Friends of New Milton Station

friends@newmilton.org.uk

For more information and to sign up for the newsletter go to:
www.newmilton.org.uk

Friends of Sway Station

<https://swaystationfriends.org>

alastairsmith@me.com

FOSS are looking for volunteers and especially for help developing a further local advertising campaign.

Totton Community Rail

[Totton Community Rail Facebook](#)

We are always looking for volunteers who want to help make our station a more welcoming place and make better use of the assets we have. We also welcome collaborations with other local clubs, groups, societies and organisations.

Culture in Common

cultureincommon.co.uk

cultureincommon@energiseme.org

Go to our website and sign up to our mailing list to find out more about cultural events and activities in the New Forest, chosen by you.

Booklet designed by Cicely Oreffo, Culture in Common. We would like to thank Neil McLocklin, Alastair Smith, Amy Hardingson, Andy Austin, Freya Gulliver, Georgina Craufurd, John Wingham, Mandy Hayes, Nick Saunders, Simon Hanney, Tom Cornwall, and all the 'Friends of' groups in the New Forest for their contributions to the creation of this booklet.

Calendar of Events

1 January – 31 December 2025

Display: 'What the Railway Has Done for Us in Lymington', year-long display at Lymington station

15 March 2025

Railway 200 Station Mural Unveiling, New Milton Station, 12:00pm

5 April 2025

Mural Unveiling, Ashurst Station, 11:00am – 2:00pm

July 2025

Completion of the restoration of the historical prints donated to the station in 1871 by regular passenger and pioneering world renown photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, Brockenhurst Ticket Office. Exhibition ongoing.

1 July 2025

Talk: 'How the Railway Created New Milton' by Nick Saunders Forest Arts Centre, 7:30pm. Tickets: £5.50
Includes unveiling of 1930–1950 model of New Milton Station by South Coast Model Railway Club.

26–27 July 2025

South Coast Model Railway Exhibition, Arnewood School, New Milton
Saturday: 10:00am – 5:00pm
Sunday: 10:00am – 4:00pm

19th, 22nd, 26th & 29th August 2025

Off The Rails: Creative Writing Project with AJ Hardingson. Free creative writing, poetry, and collage workshops for young people aged 13–18.

Totton Creative Hub, Fluid Motion, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

26 September 2025

Talk: 'History of the New Forest Railway' by Simon Hanney, Sway
Includes showing of Terminus (1960 Schlesinger documentary on Waterloo Station). Also features a rail memorabilia display and related exhibition

27 September 2025

Off The Rails Exhibition Launch, 2:00pm at Totton Railway Station

28 September 2025

Thanksgiving and memorial service to honour 19th-century railway construction workers, Sway Station

10 October 2025

Screening of Brief Encounter, Brockenhurst Village Hall, 7:15pm

14 – 16 December 2025

Railway 200 Exhibition Train at Southampton Central Station

On-going Brockenhurst Station Displays:

- History of Brockenhurst Station – platform 3 & 4 waiting room
- History of New Forest caravanning & camping – platform 1 & 2 waiting room
- History of Lymington Branch Line – platform 1 & 2 waiting room

On-going Sway station displays:

- Eco display panel on sustainable travel and Sway, Platform 1



The Last Steam Branch 1967, by A T ('Tony') Sterndale



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