

The Horsham-Guildford Line, Southern Region

By H. A. VALLANCE



[Photo]

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Christ's Hospital Station, showing the main line to Portsmouth on the left, and the Guildford line on the right

HORSHAM, the Metropolis of North-West Sussex, is a railway centre of considerable importance. To the east of the station, the electrified routes from London *via* Croydon and Three Bridges, and *via* Sutton and Dorking, converge, and continue as the main line to the West Sussex coast and Portsmouth. Some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the west the steam-operated cross-country routes to Guildford and Shoreham diverge at Christ's Hospital Station and Itchingfield Junction respectively. All these lines were opened between 1848 and 1867, and formed part of the former London Brighton & South Coast Railway.

The Guildford branch was projected by a nominally independent company, and was authorised on August 6, 1860, as the Horsham & Guildford Direct Railway. Christ's Hospital Station did not then exist, and the junction with the L.B.S.C.R. took its name from the nearby farm of Stammerham. At its northern end, the railway was to join the Portsmouth line of the L.S.W.R. at Peasmarsh, whence running powers were to be exercised for $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles into Guildford. The distance from Stammerham Junction to Peasmarsh Junction was $15\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

Although the Act authorising the line empowered the company to enter into a

working agreement with the L.B.S.C.R., the directors appear to have negotiated with the L.S.W.R. while the railway was under construction. Whether the L.S.W.R. seriously contemplated an incursion into Sussex, or whether the local company hoped to obtain better terms from the L.B.S.C.R. by considering an alliance with Waterloo, must remain obscure. The result was that negotiations with the L.B.S.C.R. were brought to a successful conclusion, and the Horsham & Guildford Direct Railway was acquired by that company in 1864.

The L.B.S.C.R. provided the stations and the permanent way, and the line was inspected by the Board of Trade in the summer of 1865. The Inspector criticised the incompleteness of some of the works, and refused to issue the certificate for the opening of the line until the gradient of 1 in 80 through Rudgwick Station had been eased to 1 in 130. In passing, it may be noted that the contractor had been over-optimistic in his estimate for the works, and had incurred a loss of more than £30,000.

The railway was opened on October 2, 1865. It was single throughout, and was worked on the staff and ticket system, with Baynards as the only crossing station. Several years later, the long

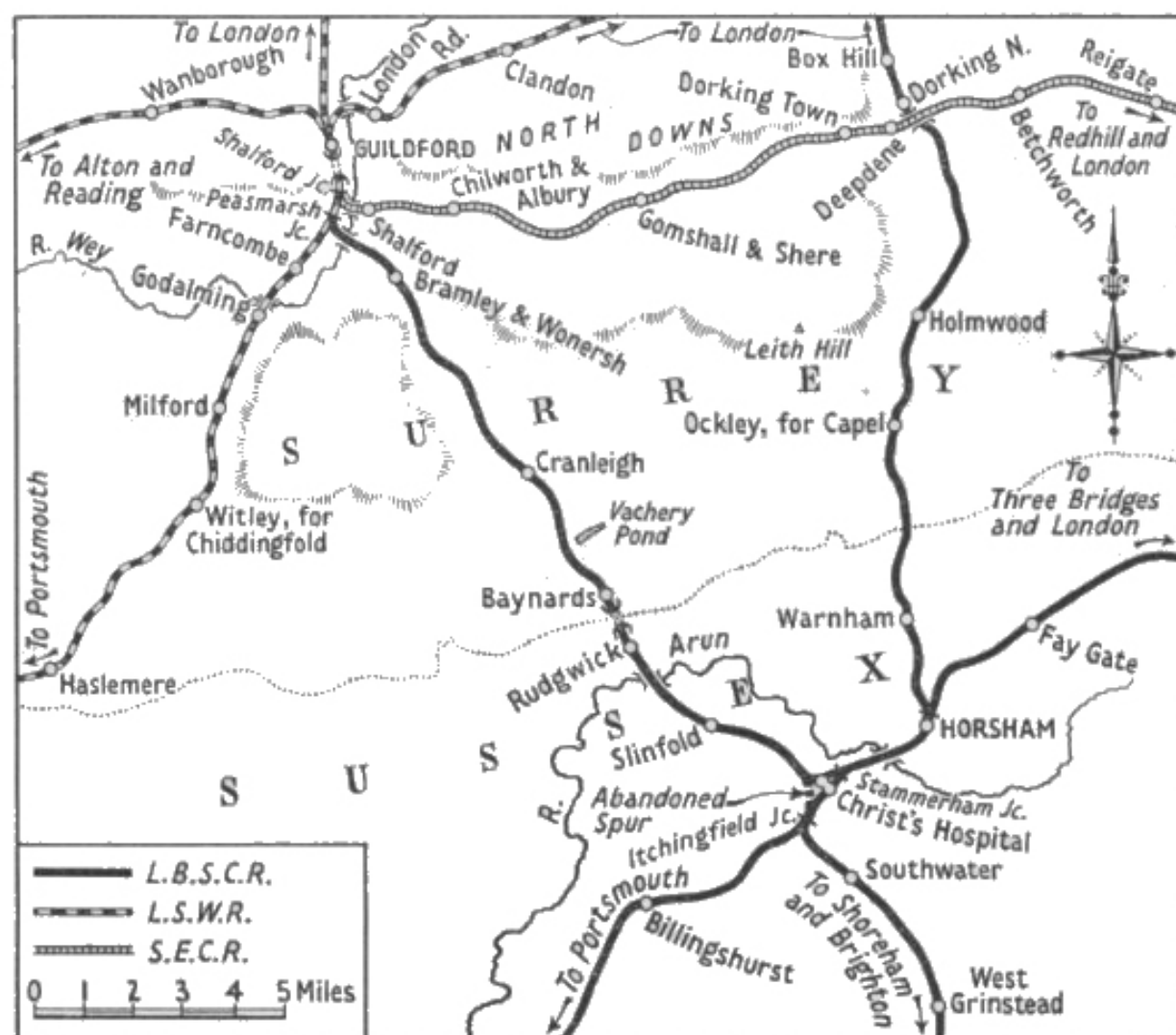
single line section of $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Baynards to Peasmarsh Junction was broken by the provision of additional crossing loops at Bramley (in 1876) and at Cranleigh (in 1880). These three sections are now worked with the electric train staff. On the other hand, the six miles from Christ's Hospital to Baynards still constitute a single section worked with staff and ticket.

At the Horsham end of the line, a spur $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long, and known as Itchingfield South Fork, enabled trains to run between Guildford and Shoreham or Portsmouth without reversing at Stammerham Junction. No regular use was made of this connection, and it was closed on August 1, 1867. The track was removed soon afterwards, but the course of the line remains clearly visible. Although more than 80 years have elapsed since it was closed, this connection is still shown on some modern maps of Sussex.

Christ's Hospital, the well-known public

school, founded in the reign of Edward VI, was moved from Newgate Street, London, to its present site, south of the railway, near Stammerham Junction, in 1902. A new station, known as Christ's Hospital, West Horsham, was built on the west side of the junction, and opened on April 28 of that year. It is of neat design, and harmonises well with the red brick of the adjacent school buildings. Accommodation for passengers was provided on a rather lavish scale, in expectation of housing development in the vicinity, which never took place. Apart from the school premises, the surroundings are still completely rural.

The main line and the Guildford branch are served by separate platforms. In addition to the up and down tracks, there is a loop line on the down side of the main station, with a platform on each side, which is used by the special trains provided for the school at the beginning and end of term. This loop is signalled



Map of the railways in the Horsham and Guildford areas, showing pre-grouping ownership

for working in both directions. The Guildford branch diverges on a sharp curve, and is double track through the station. The down line has a platform on each side, but trains from Guildford to Horsham use the outer face of the branch island platform.

The branch becomes single track immediately beyond the station, and runs through well-wooded agricultural and pastoral country on undulating gradients, some of which are as steep as 1 in 88. The view towards the north extends across the county boundary to Leith Hill, the highest point in Surrey. Slinfold, the first station, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Christ's Hospital, serves a small village with some picturesque old cottages. A nearby private house was built as an hotel, but traffic never developed to an extent that justified such a facility. A short distance beyond the station, the railway crosses the line of Stane Street, the Roman road from Chichester to London.

The country becomes more hilly beyond Slinfold, and the gradients for the next $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, to Baynards, include a fall for about a mile at 1 in 80 followed by a rise at 1 in 80 and 1 in 100, broken at Rudgwick, the only intermediate station, by

the short stretch at 1 in 130 required by the Board of Trade in 1865. Rudgwick Station serves the old-world villages of Rudgwick and Bucks Green. The layout includes a small goods yard, which deals with a considerable coal traffic.

About $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the south of the station, the railway is carried over a branch of the River Arun on a single-span girder bridge, with high brick abutments. The original design for the bridge provided for a brick arch at a lower level, but the girder span was substituted when the level of the railway was raised to improve the gradients. The brick arch already was constructed, and now serves as a flying buttress.

The railway leaves Sussex and enters Surrey in the tunnel (381 yd. long) between Rudgwick and Baynards. The county boundary is marked by a stone beside the tunnel wall. The cuttings on each side of the tunnel are very picturesque, and the views from the top of the hill through which it is driven are renowned for their beauty.

Baynards Station was provided to serve the historic Tudor mansion of Baynards Park, and stands in an isolated position, far from any village. It is



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The south portal of Baynards Tunnel

approached by one of the private roads leading to the estate, which continues as a tree-lined avenue beyond the level crossing. Deposits of fuller's earth occur in the neighbourhood, and extensive sidings have been laid down, on the north side of the station, to serve the pits.

The scenic interest is maintained beyond Baynards, although Vachery Pond, a magnificent sheet of water, nearly a mile in length, is screened from the railway by a belt of trees. Naturalists will recall that a pair of ospreys visited the pond for a few days, some 45 years ago. The railway is now approaching the valley of the River Wey, and the undulating gradients continue with a falling tendency for some $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles, from Baynards to Peasmarsh Junction.

Cranleigh is a large village, famous for its wide tree-lined street, with the cricket ground at the northern end, and for Cranleigh School, founded in 1865. The name originally was spelled Cranley, but the present spelling was adopted in 1867, at the request of the Postmaster General, to avoid confusion with Crawley, in Sussex. The station adjoins the main road, and has the southbound platform signalled for working in both directions. The goods yard is on the north side of the station.

On more than one occasion, the L.B.S.C.R. considered the provision of a link between its Portsmouth main line and the Horsham-Guildford branch, through the rather isolated district lying to the south of Leith Hill and Pitch Hill. In 1897, plans were prepared for a line from Holmwood to Cranleigh, a distance of about eight miles. A Bill was submitted to Parliament in the ensuing year, but was withdrawn in the face of opposition from landowners in the Holmwood district. The scheme was never revived.

From Cranleigh to Peasmarsh Junction, the railway follows a branch of the River Wey, through the gap between Pitch Hill and Hascombe Hill. Bramley & Womersley (5 miles from Cranleigh) is the only intermediate station on this section. Here and there may be seen traces of the Wey & Arun Junction Canal, authorised in 1813, and opened some two years later, from the Wey, near Shalford, to the Arun, near Pulborough. The waterway had fallen into disuse by the time the railway was opened, but was not abandoned officially until 1868.

About a mile beyond Bramley, the

branch of the river and the main stream are crossed in quick succession, and the railway curves sharply to join the electrified main line from Waterloo to Portsmouth at Peasmarsh Junction, $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles south of Guildford. The signal box on the Horsham side of the junction has been demolished, and the electric train staff instruments are now under the control of the signaller in the former L.S.W.R. box on the main line.

For some time after the railway was opened, about six services were provided in each direction between Horsham and Guildford on weekdays, and two on Sundays. The trains called at all stations, and were allowed 50 min. for the journey of $19\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The connections at Guildford were by no means conveniently arranged, but the L.S.W.R. excused this lack of facilities on the grounds that the accommodation at that station already was overtaxed. A considerable improvement did, in fact, take place after the station had been enlarged. For many years, a reduced service was operated during the winter months on weekdays only. The Sunday services were suspended again, throughout the year, from 1917 to 1919, as a wartime economy measure.

The present service consists of eight trains in each direction on weekdays, and two on Sundays. An additional train is run between Guildford and Cranleigh for season ticket holders travelling daily to and from London. During the summer months, the line also is used by Sunday excursions to the Sussex coast resorts. These trains have to reverse at Christ's Hospital in both directions.

In the autumn of 1865, two small 2-2-2 tender engines were completed at Brighton Works to the designs of John Chester Craven, and numbered 29 and 30. They had 15 in. \times 20 in. inside cylinders, 5 ft. 6 in. driving wheels and 3 ft. 9 in. leading and trailing wheels. The weight in working order was $27\frac{1}{2}$ tons. No. 30 went to Horsham, to work the then newly-opened branch to Guildford. It remained in service until May, 1886.

Since those early days, traffic has been worked by a variety of L.B.S.C.R. tank engines, including Stroudley's well-known Class "D" 0-4-2s; and Drummond 0-4-4 tanks from the L.S.W.R. appeared on the line after the grouping, in 1923. With few exceptions, two-coach pull-and-push sets are now used for the passenger services.