



Photo: P. Poulter

The final Guildford-Horsham train, headed by 2-6-2 tank No. 41287, awaits departure from Guildford on June 12, 1965. Three extra coaches were added for this journey. Chalked on the smokebox are the words "The end - farewell" and on the sidetank "Last day"

The HORSHAM & GUILDFORD DIRECT

Last completed line serving Horsham, closed in 1965 after a century of service across the Sussex - Surrey border

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When the 19.34 Guildford-Horsham train left Guildford behind 2-6-2 tank engine No. 41287 on June 12, 1965, it consisted of two three-coach sets containing some 400 passengers. If this had been a normal Saturday, there would have been only three coaches and probably not more than six passengers, but it was not a normal Saturday: the train was the last regular one to run over the line, closed as from June 14 to all traffic as part of the Beeching Plan. However, negotiations have been opened between the newly formed Horsham & Guildford Direct Railway Society and British Railways for a lease of the line, with a view to reopening it under a Light Railway Act.

THE Horsham & Guildford Direct Railway was an independent concern of 1860 which did, in fact, start its own construction between the two towns; however, the company

sold out jointly to the London & South Western and the London, Brighton & South Coast railways before the line was completed, leaving the latter company to finish the work and provide the actual train service. The first passenger trains ran on October 2, 1865.

The Guildford line was the last completed of the several serving Horsham. Since February, 1848, trains had run to Horsham from Three Bridges, and on October 10, 1859, this route was extended southwards through Billingshurst and Pulborough before turning abruptly and unexpectedly westwards, at Hardham, to terminate at Petworth, the station being about one and a half miles from the town. Only in 1863 was the link from Hardham to Arundel Junction provided, which permitted through running to Littlehampton and later to Bognor. From Shoreham, a branch had been constructed in a north-westerly direction to Partidge Green, and was extended on September 16,

The 12.09 (Saturdays only) Horsham-Guildford train arrives at Christ's Hospital Station behind 2-6-2 tank No. 41287, travelling bunker first. When this station was built by the L.B.S.C.R., Stammerham Junction lost its identity, the Guildford line junction being controlled from Christ's Hospital "A" box



1861, to the Horsham-Petworth route at Itchingfield Junction.

The Guildford trains took the same route as those for Brighton and Bognor most of the way to Itchingfield Junction. Shortly before the divergence, however, at Stammerham Junction, they left the main line on the up side on a sharp curve and headed north-westwards. Initially, a spur was provided which permitted through running from Guildford to Bognor and Brighton; this was never used by regular trains and is believed to have been removed by about 1870. Had it survived, the story of the branch's prosperity might have been rather different.

At the Guildford end, the branch trailed into the Woking-Havant line at Peasmarsh Junction, a desolate spot on the edge of a swamp, and a very short distance south of Shalford Junction, where trains from Redhill, on the South Eastern Railway, joined the L.S.W.R. route to run into Guildford.

Work was begun on a spur at this end also, which would have allowed trains to run from Havant or the Cranleigh line to Redhill and beyond; the *raison d'être* of this idea was a suggestion that in view of the early incessant quarrelling between the L.B.S.C.R. and L.S.W.R., the third company, the S.E.R., should provide a service to Portsmouth via Redhill and Dorking. In fact, after construction of the spur had begun, the S.E.R. politely declined the invitation; the earthworks are still plainly visible at the Peasmarsh end, though at the Shalford end they are obscured by trees. Both the L.B.S.C.R. and S.E.R. exercised running powers over the L.S.W.R. metals into Guildford Station, from Peasmarsh and Shalford Junctions respectively.

Until the beginning of this century, Stammerham Junction was in the middle of a field some distance from any habitation. When Christ's Hospital School was moved out from London into the

Single-platform station at Slinfold with No. 41294 arriving at the head of the 15.09 train from Horsham to Guildford. In its heyday, Slinfold boasted three signalboxes—North, South and Middle

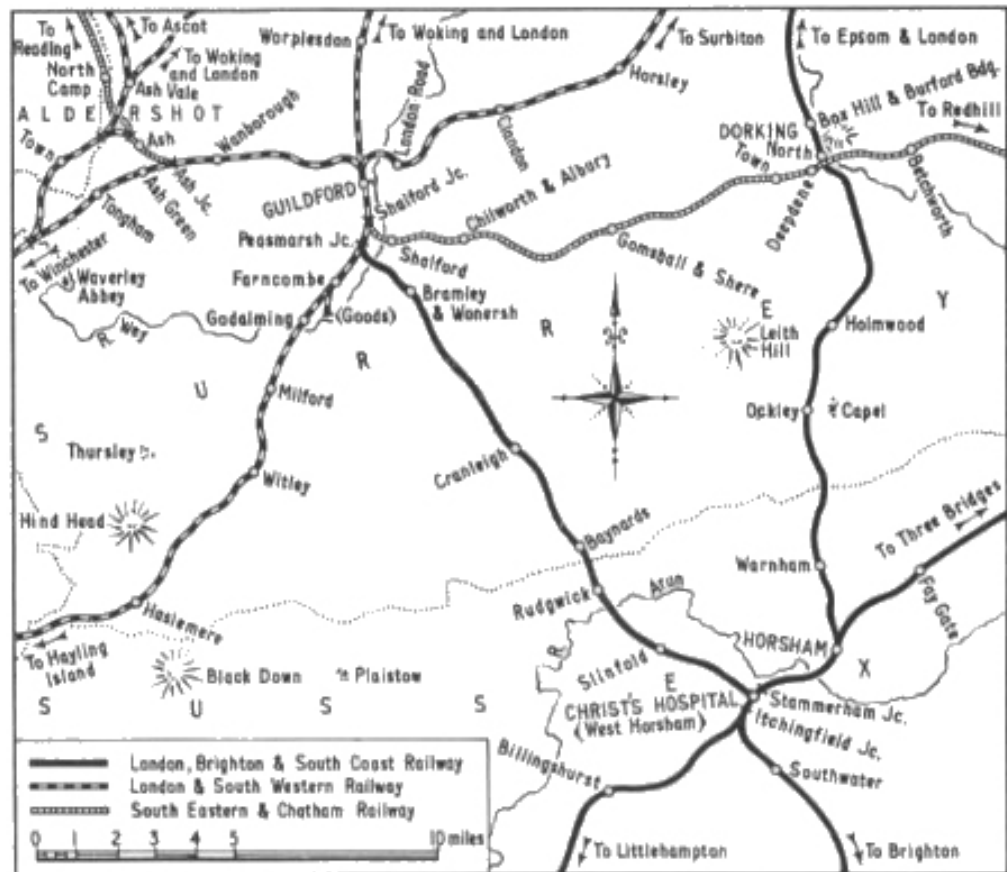


Photos: David Sillince

country, and a site adjacent to the railway selected in the vicinity, the L.B.S.C.R. provided a station for the school, with platforms on the main line and on the Guildford branch. Stammerham Junction was thereafter no longer known as such, the Guildford line junction being controlled from what is now Christ's Hospital "A" box.

Christ's Hospital Station is a vast echoing cavern for most of the year, and not a delectable spot to wait for trains, particularly in the winter. The L.B.S.C.R., hoping that the town of Horsham would eventually extend some way to the south, provided more lavish facilities than were justified, but as the surrounding land belongs to the school, no building has taken place, and the station's present title of "Christ's Hospital: West Horsham" is more a pious hope than a reality. There are no less than seven platform faces, three on the Guildford branch alone, while the crossover at the west end, leading onto the single line, is controlled by a ground frame released from "A" box. One double-sided loop from the main line through the station is normally disused except at the beginning and end of school terms, when it is occupied for several days by P.L.A. vans; as this loop is the nearest track to the station entrance, it makes loading and unloading of trunks that much easier.

After Christ's Hospital Station, the Guildford line veers away to the north-west on a switchback course, with gradients as steep as 1 in 60 and 1 in 80, to Slinfold (4 miles 67 ch. from Horsham). Here there is a single platform on the up side, with two sidings behind the station. Goods facilities were withdrawn on May 7, 1962, and the track in the yard has since been removed, although the site is still used by a coal-merchant for storage. In earlier days there were two private sidings, one serving the brickworks, now a timber yard, and because of the restrictions on distance of facing points from a signalbox, no less than three boxes had to be provided—Slinfold North and South, and a middle box to control a level-crossing. The North box survived, on the down side, though normally switched out; although the level-crossing at the Horsham end—over the most insignificant of minor roads leading nowhere—was later hand-operated,



The Horsham & Guildford Direct Railway and associated lines, showing pre-Grouping ownerships

the gates opened outwards from the railway, with nothing to stop cattle from straying down the track. As a result, right up until closure, staff was booked on duty at this station on Sundays although there were no trains, and it would seem that the small mechanical alteration necessary to allow the gates to work the other way would have been justifiable, in view of the immense sums paid out for Sunday work.

Trains were faced with a 1 in 80 gradient on leaving Slinfold and speed was thus slow in the Guildford direction. As the gradient eased, the train ran over a stretch of concrete-sleepered track and crossed the River Arun; the embankment here is notorious for its tendencies to slide into the river and, shortly after the opening of the line, the whole trackbed had to be relaid at this spot. The original brick arch over the Arun became useless as the embankment on each side had been raised well above it, and a girder bridge, some 10 ft. directly above the brick arch, carried the trains. A few years ago slipping became serious and several trainloads of ashes were required to maintain the height of the embankment, the track at this spot being extremely rough.

Rudgwick (7 miles 9 ch.) consists of a station building and platform on the up side, and two sidings and a shunting neck at the Horsham end. This station did not open at the same time as the others, as the Inspecting Officer refused to allow trains to stop on the gradient up from the Arun until this had been eased. To great local annoyance

the opening was delayed a month. The former heavy coal traffic withered away after 1955, and goods traffic ceased on April 2, 1962; the track in the yard itself has now been removed. The ten-lever signalbox was opened as required for goods traffic, generally for the return afternoon trip, Slinfold being open only in the morning, but since April, 1962, it was switched out and was officially closed in October, 1963. The signal arms have now been removed, the closing switch fixed and the points clamped and padlocked, permitting movements on the running line only. A crossover some 50 yd. on the Horsham side of the station, allowing access from the shunting neck to the running line, was operated by a small ground frame controlled by Annett's Key in the main box; its installation was a distinct extravagance, for it was only used for about five goods trains before closure and remained until October, 1963. Both Rudgwick and Slinfold stations were closed in 1964 for inwards parcels traffic, except "To be called for". Although Rudgwick is an expanding village, it is still very much a one-street place, and whereas the hourly bus service runs the whole length of it, the station is at one end, in the least inhabited area. Passenger traffic was thus very small, and it was by no means unusual for no tickets at all to be sold after the departure of the 8.37 for Horsham.

The 1 in 100 gradient steepens to 1 in 80 after Rudgwick, and the line climbs up through a wooded cutting to enter Baynards Tunnel, an extremely damp and noisy bore. It is hereabouts that trains could come to grief in wet weather; on a recent occasion a "Q1"-hailed excursion entered the tunnel at a walking pace and, after a few choking minutes—and to the surprise of the driver—emerged at the same end of the tunnel gradually slithering downhill. In the other direction slippery rails often prevented trains from managing a Rudgwick stop at all, and lengthy reversals were occasionally necessary. The western end of Baynards Tunnel is in the County of Surrey (a stone in the tunnel denotes the boundary) and just beyond this point the control of the Central Division Engineer ended and that of the South Western began. This dual control always resulted in extravagance, two weed-killing trains being run in the year as far as Baynards only in each direction, when it would have been far more economical to run one straight through. The Central Division also sent its track-recording machine up to Baynards annually, an operation shunned by the South Western, possibly because its section had been completely relaid.

Baynards Station (8 miles 27 ch.) was constructed only to appease Lord Thurlow, owner of Baynards Park, through whose land the line passes for some distance; as an additional sop, Lord Thurlow was also given the right of through carriages to London, though it is not known if this privilege was ever exercised. Baynards is not a village at all or even a hamlet; it consists only of the House, the former lodge (now occupied as flats), a few scattered farms and some cottages for workers at F. W. Berk's earthworks nearby. Nevertheless, local people relied on the railway a good deal as there was no

bus service, and there were as many regular travellers as at Rudgwick, as shopping had to be done in Cranleigh.

Ordinary goods traffic ceased on September 10, 1962, but the earthworks, possessing not only private sidings but also a diesel locomotive of its own, still required sulphur supplies, generally delivered in two or three trainloads quarterly, for which, until closure, a "Q" path was available at 8.48 from Horsham and 10.26 from Baynards. Latterly these were worked by a type "3" diesel, and the wagons, formerly sent from Deptford Wharf, came from Angerstein or Immingham, being set empty to Newhaven for cleaning. Almost all the works' finished products had been switched to road, however; in 1948, 671 loaded wagons came in and 802 were despatched, while the inwards total reached 924 in 1950. Yet in 1962 only 263 wagons came in (nearly all sulphur), and only one was sent out. Total cash taken was £7,766 in 1948, but only £1,227 in 1961, while the 1948 total of 8,162 collected tickets contrasts with 3,579 in 1962.

Baynards possessed a crossing loop (and formerly a ground frame for the crossover at the west end), while the hand-operated gates were originally worked from the box by a small crank-handle with a horizontal worm. This was replaced by the more conventional gate wheel, which lasted only a few months before being removed to Bramley. The 17-lever signalbox (three spares) was open for all trains. What endeared the station to non-railway enthusiasts was the magnificent display of dahlias provided annually by the signalman. In late summer and early autumn both platforms and the station forecourt were almost obliterated by a mass of blooms.

Beyond Baynards the line passes through the grounds of Baynards Park on an extremely switch-back course, including one cutting near Cranleigh which has given much trouble with slipping.



Photo: David Sillince

Engine No. 41299, heading the 17.04 Guildford-Horsham train, halts at Rudgwick. The ten-lever signalbox was switched-out in April, 1962, and closed in October, 1963



Photo: David Sillince

Class "Q" 0-6-0 No. 30543 entering Baynards with the 16.53 Horsham-Guildford train. Serving no village, this station was built to satisfy Lord Thurlow, of Baynards Park, through whose land the line passed. The 17-lever signalbox was open for all trains

Cranleigh Station (11 miles 19 ch.) has a passing loop, station buildings and an 18-lever signalbox on the up side, and a small goods yard, closed since September 10, 1962, and now dismantled; a long siding continues in the Guildford direction to Cranleigh gasworks, though unused since the cessation of freight services. Although there is not a house in sight on the down side, the station was, in fact, extremely well situated for the shopping centre of this large village, and about 80 commuters travelled to London daily. A small level crossing at the Horsham end of the station was controlled from a separate gate box, interlocked with Cranleigh station box, and in communication with it by a special bell code (2 for "open gates", 2-2 for "open gates for engine to run round train", and 2-1-2 from the gate box for "engine clear of points").

It was a nine-minute run on to Bramley (16 miles 15 ch.), over a mostly straight and level course, but including one sharp reverse curve at Run Common, where the railway paralleled the rival Wey & Arun Canal (connecting Guildford with Pulborough and the sea, and closed in 1871), and a steep and sudden descent into Bramley Station past the site of Birtley siding, which served Surrey County Council. All the track on this section was renewed, with concrete sleepers, only three years before closure, and a new telephone circuit provided. Bramley Station also has a passing loop, though it was not normally necessary to cross trains here; the station buildings and goods yard are on the down side, opposite the signalbox, which is the only one on the line to possess a gate wheel of its own. As at Baynards, the crossover at the Guildford (down) end was once controlled by a separate ground frame. Bramley Station was also

well situated for the village and for the adjacent St. Catherine's School, some of whose pupils used the train daily.

From Bramley there is a slight descent to the flat and marshy ground bordering the Wey; at the Bramley-Guildford road overbridge was once Stonebridge Sidings, the nearest the branch came to Shalford and near to the Wey & Arun Canal's Stonebridge Wharf. The Wey is crossed shortly before Peasmarsh; although the bridge was replaced only a few years ago, it remained the cause of restrictions on types of locomotives used, the "Q1" class, for example, being prohibited from exceeding 30 m.p.h. at this point. At Peasmarsh (18 miles 10 ch.) the main Portsmouth line is joined, down trains running on the southbound main track for a short distance before crossing to the northbound line. Here, also, down branch trains had to become up trains into Guildford. The Peasmarsh layout formerly involved a direct connection from the single to the up line. Before grouping, the L.B.S.C.R. had its separate signalbox, slightly to the east of the existing box, controlling the entrance to the single line. The very short section between Peasmarsh (L.S.W.) and Peasmarsh (L.B.S.C.) was worked as an ordinary double line.

The line was operated on the electric train staff system from Peasmarsh to Bramley (red), Bramley to Cranleigh (yellow), and Cranleigh to Baynards (blue). When Birtley and Stonebridge sidings were opened, both the Peasmarsh to Bramley and Bramley to Cranleigh staffs had to be provided with a key to release the ground frames at these places. The Baynards to Christ's Hospital section was worked by train staff and ticket; the staff was believed to date from the introduction of this kind of working in about 1875 and was certainly suitably battered. It caused some bad delays in winter when trains ran out of course and the staff was at the wrong end of the line, the position being aggravated by the length of the section (16 min. for down trains).

Accidents have been few and far between. The most recent occurred at Bramley a few years ago and was caused by a combination of mishaps. Firstly, the weather was bad and trains were running late and, secondly, the electric staff was out of action between Peasmarsh and Bramley and pilot working was in force. Because of late running, it was necessary to cross two trains at Bramley, an unusual occurrence. The up train arrived first, but the signalman omitted to change the road behind it. Regulation 25 states that if the staff is out of action, the signal allowing entrance to a section should not be pulled off, but kept on, and the driver warned. As a result, the failure to change the road was not discovered, as it would have been if any attempt to pull off the signal had been made, and the down train ran in the darkness off into the shunting neck and had attained considerable speed before colliding with the buffer stops. A more serious incident was in 1940, when the 13.09 Guildford-Cranleigh was bombed by enemy aircraft near Bramley.

The 9.08 train from Guildford arrives at Baynards, with 2-6-2 tank No. 41301 in charge. The same train formed the 9.46 return working to Guildford



Photo: David Sillince

Operation, motive power and running formed interesting and, at times, surprising aspects of the Horsham-Guildford line. From days of early promise it degenerated into a railway hampered by mismanagement, while the loss of freight traffic after the strike of 1955 destroyed any hope of its recovery.

EARLY in Southern Railway days, the "M7" class 0-4-4 tank had taken over most of the passenger workings, and this was to remain the practice until modernisation made more powerful engines available. At Horsham shed, B.R. Nos. 30047-53 were responsible for the majority of the turns, assisted by class "E6" 0-6-2 tanks. After 1960, Horsham ceased to be a shed in its own right, merely acting as a stabling point for goods engines from Three Bridges and passenger engines from Brighton, which also worked to Guildford. Following the Kent Coast electrification, Brighton shed became host to several previously "strange" classes, including the *ex*-S.E.C.R. "H" class 0-4-4 tank.

Later, L.M.S.R. 2-6-2 tank locomotives replaced the older engines and thereafter monopolised the workings, except in the event of a failure. Horsham and Brighton sheds having both closed, the engines

were based at Guildford, though stabled overnight at Three Bridges. For goods working, Horsham commonly turned out a "C2X" or "Q" 0-6-0. The less-frequent Guildford turns were covered by a greater variety of motive power, from "C", "700", and the "Q1" 0-6-0, to the stately class "D" 4-4-0 for the evening commuter train to Cranleigh. On Monday mornings, Guildford shed was required to send a light engine to Horsham to return on the goods, and in latter years a diesel shunting engine was provided and once succeeded in seizing up completely between Slinfold and Rudgwick. Baynards Station has been used for several films, including the B.B.C. production, "The Railway Children", for the filming of which a class "T9" 4-4-0, No. 30126, was made available during 1956, and most recently Eric Sykes's "Rotten to the Core", for which D6519 was provided.

Most of the lighter Southern Region locomotives were permitted to work over the line, the most notable exclusions being all Moguls, Pacifics and 4-6-0 locomotives and, until their extinction, the classes "L" and "L1". Western Region pannier-tanks were permitted, though they have never appeared, as were several surprising diesel classes, including, most extraordinarily, the "Deltic" 3,300-h.p. locomotives! Trains latterly generally

consisted of one three-coach Southern Railway set, occasionally strengthened at beginnings and ends of terms for Christ's Hospital and Cranleigh schools, though this traffic dwindled rapidly; only a few years ago an "M7" could be seen struggling along the line with eight packed coaches. The last appearance of the stalwart "M7s" was on January 28, 1963, when No. 30241 worked the 18.05 to Horsham.

The final timetable, considering the enormous population expansion in the area, was worse than that provided in 1865. The 17.04 from Guildford, indeed, had run in more or less the same times since the opening day! The basic service was formerly one of eight trains each way, with a week-day evening working to Cranleigh only; the L.B.S.C.R. also provided a late-night train from Guildford to Cranleigh twice weekly. From September 1962, the lunchtime trains vanished except on Saturdays; the 9.22 *ex*-Guildford and 9.30 *ex*-Horsham were replaced by one working to Cranleigh and back, extended from December 1962, to Baynards for the benefit of one or two shoppers, while the last Saturday working was cancelled, leaving a final departure from Horsham at the early hour of 18.00. Sunday services, even then confined to the summer, also ceased, as did trains at Christmas, Easter and, more surprisingly, Whitsun and August Bank Holiday, whereas formerly the line was alive with excursions to Brighton from Reading, Oxford, North Camp, Staines, Gloucester, Worcester or Great Malvern.

Beginning of the end

The sudden disastrous loss of freight traffic after the 1955 strike ruined the line's chances of paying, and the route was "in the red" for many years. In September, 1963, the British Railways Board announced that it wished to abandon the service on November 11 of that year. There were the inevitable objections and a T.U.C.C. hearing took place at Cranleigh in March 1964. A year later, ironically enough only one day after the railway had failed to justify the claims of its defendants that it was more reliable in snow than the bus—the 6.46 from Horsham having run nearly three hours late—came Ministerial approval, and closure as from June 14. The final train of all was a special run by the Locomotive Club of Great Britain and hauled by two class "Q1" locomotives.

Thereafter the junctions at each end were disconnected and signal arms removed, telephone cables were cut down and train staff equipment, along with the Harper's block instrument for the Baynards-Christ's Hospital section, was recovered. A society has been formed to revive the line, but the price demanded and the fact that Peasmarsh Junction has been abolished as part of the Guildford resignalling scheme make this project seem dubious. Originally the Guildford resignalling was to extend to Bramley, and Signal & Telecommunications staff were busy wiring the Peasmarsh-Bramley section even after the closure decision had been announced! Only the chance cancellation of the train scheduled to supply concrete troughing

throughout the section spared the railway the embarrassment of removing it all again.

To say that the line was hampered by mismanagement would be an understatement; it was brought to collapse by it, not so much on the part of the present management, faced with an irretrievable situation, but by the Southern Railway and the Railway Executive, both having failed to improve the service after electrification to Bognor and to Portsmouth. An hourly service, with good connections at Christ's Hospital for Brighton, would have done much good, both to the branch and the Brighton route via Steyning, which itself has now been closed, from March 7, 1966.

Operating conditions were always paramount: apart from lengthy waits at intermediate stations caused by crossing trains, the authorities at Horsham decided that they could not cope with main-line trains, Brighton trains and Guildford branch trains all in a few hectic minutes, and insisted that the Guildford trains should leave before the hourly "rush". Thus the 12.09 and 15.09 trains left without making any connections of any sort and generally empty, but because Guildford could not receive the trains at a revised time, were obliged to wait for no less than 15 min. at Cranleigh, thereby prolonging the through journey to more or less 60 min.—a breathtaking speed for 19½ miles! The dieselisation of the Brighton services in May, 1964, led to no change of heart.

There is an hourly 'bus service from Guildford Bus Station (2 min. from the railway station) to Horsham Station, serving all the places on the railway except Slinfold—which has a frequent service to Horsham of its own—but with the addition of Shalford. There are also extra workings between Guildford, Wonersh, Bramley and Cranleigh, all contrasting markedly with the bizarre train service which, latterly, was made all the more unreliable by the deplorable state of the locomotives provided, the nadir being reached when a certain "Q1" locomotive was dispatched from Guildford having been lubricated with water instead of oil, with disastrous consequences! These locomotives were never intended to work the passenger services; crews understandably refused to work them tender-first from Horsham back to Guildford and, as there is no turntable at Horsham, the diesel locomotive on important freight work there had to be appropriated and, of course, could not heat the train. In the last months, the South Western section was responsible for providing coaching stock, and the set for the 17.04 to Horsham appeared from Woking on a particularly erratic-running parcels train.

The Horsham-Guildford line had its moments: it was open continuously during the second world war; the "Schools" locomotive *Cranleigh* came to the village station for exhibition after naming; and on occasions it proved a useful diversionary route. Yet on its closure it had few local admirers, and Slinfold Parish Council have decided to rename Station Road in the village, feeling the title gives an undesirable tinge of the Industrial Revolution to the area.