

The Railway from Pill Junction to Portishead in March 2015

A series of pictures
taken to record the status of the old line
following the major clearance operation

Never assume you are safe on or near old railway tracks

*The track could have been reconnected at any time, without
you knowing*

*Never walk on or near old railway tracks that are still
connected*



All aboard!

A look back along the line towards Pill and the right-hand curve towards Pill Junction, about 250 yards away.

A wooden gate (not locked!) has been inserted in the boundary fence, just out of view to the left, by the side of the pedestrian/cycle path. The gate provides access across the track to what looks like a mobile phone mast.

Photo 3260088



The view looking back towards the curve into Pill Junction.

Taken about 450 yds towards Portishead from Pill Junction, just before the M5 bridge.

The shadow shows there is a metal fence across the line but the fence on the left is not in a condition to prevent access to the line!

Photo 3260089



Looking back from near the Marsh Lane bridge, towards the bridge carrying the M5 motorway over the railway.

A motorway sign on its high posts can be seen to the left of the trees in the distance.

The throat of the M5 bridge can be seen, just left of centre.

Photo 3260091



Next stop: Marsh Lane bridge

The view looking towards Portishead, where the cycle path comes in from the right.

The width of the bridge shows this was once a 2-track broad-gauge line. The bridge is typically GWR, massively built.

Note the rails and sleepers have been tarmac'd over. No problem with access to the line here!

Photo 3260092



Under Royal Portbury Dock Road bridge, looking towards Portishead.

A much more modern structure, built to carry heavy dock traffic. Note; concrete, not wooden sleepers, laid when the bridge was built.

The pedestrian/cycle path is on the right.

There's no restricted access to the line here either.

Photo 3260094



In the shadow of the Royal Portbury Dock Road bridge, looking back towards the Marsh Lane bridge, a sun-lit arch spanning the track in the distance.

The pedestrian/cycle path sweeps in from the left to run alongside the track under the Royal Portbury Dock Road bridge.

A semi-rural setting despite close proximity to the docks and the M5.

Photo 3260095



A charming remnant of yesteryear. A track ganger's hut by the looks of it, made out of old sleepers, many of them in far better condition than the ones on the track-bed, supporting the rails!

The rake of the roof-line can be seen in the sloping cut of the top sleeper on the far side (the slope-cut sleeper on the near side is missing). The old roof-tiles are in a heap by the near side.

Photo 3260098



Here's the Portbury Hundred (A369) at the end of a short track, where the car is passing by.

Before the M5 motorway and the Portbury Hundred were built, this track, known as The Drove, led from Portbury church to fields on Portbury Marsh.

The Drove long pre-dates the railway and may be many centuries old. It probably once led to the medieval saltings out towards the estuary.

Photo 3260100



The view towards Portbury Station, which is just visible on the right-hand curve in the distance, marked by the wooden fence that has been erected along the old platform edge.

The A369 lies about 100 yards to the left of here

Photo 3260101



A few daffodils, struggling on after the clearance operation.

Good for them, but how did they get there?

Photo 3260103



The crumbling, ivy-clad platform at Portbury Station, looking back towards Pill.

No new photograph of the old Portbury Station building was taken as it's a private dwelling. This is what it was like:



Photo 3260104



The view on the Portishead side of the Station Road bridge looking back towards Pill.

The platform of the old Portbury Station is clearly visible on the right, beyond the bridge.

This is the second of three old heavily engineered GWR bridges that remain along the line, again wide enough for two broad gauge tracks.

Photo 3260106



A farm crossing to fields on the left, from Elm Tree Farm in Sheepway, to the right.

One of at least 7 farm crossings along the 2¾ mile stretch from Pill Junction to Portishead.

Old maps show 7 such crossings but there is evidence of there having been 8 farm crossings between Pill junction and Portishead.

Photo 3260107



The remains of a sign that once upon a time would have said "SW". Back in the day, this would have meant "Slow. Whistle." A very necessary instruction to the driver due to the many farm crossings!

What's that white thing to the right of a small log? (see the next photograph)

Photo 3260110



Railways usually had telegraph poles alongside the line, with telephone wires slung from pole to pole.

The wires were bare (uninsulated) tinned copper wire, wound around porcelain insulators mounted on wooden cross-bars towards the top of each pole.

Here's a porcelain insulator that has seen better days! But the wire is still in good condition.

Photo 3260111



A clear run to Portishead!

This is the beginning of the 1¼ mile dead-straight run to Portishead.

In the very far distance, the road bridge at Portbury Common on the Portishead to Sheepway road can just about be seen.

A fairly remote area of the line with open fields on either side.

Photo 3260112



The first of two farm crossings linking fields belonging to Sheepway Gate Farm.

This farm crossing connects two odd-shaped fields which an old map shows was a single field before the railway was built across it.

Following reinstatement of the line, no farm crossings will exist, as all line crossings are considered to be unacceptable sources of danger.

Photo 3260115



This was the marker-post showing 128½ miles from Paddington.

The numbers of miles (128) above the horizontal bars are missing, though the bar on the right is still in place. The "11" below the bar means "2 quarters".

The inset pictures show roughly what it once looked like and also that it is set on a post made from a piece of old broad gauge rail.

Photo 3260116



The still much-used Sheepway Gate Farm crossing.

This farm crossing will be replaced by a bridge, to provide continued safe access across the line.

This is the only farm crossing that will be replaced by a bridge. All others will be closed, permanently.

Photo 3260119



The third of the heavily engineered GWR bridges that remain over the line. Note the permanent way width: wide enough for two broad gauge tracks.

Before the M5 and the Portbury Hundred were built the Portbury Common bridge up ahead carried a narrow A369 from Portishead through Sheepway, then via Station Road, over the bridge by the old Portbury Station and into Portbury.

Photo 3260121



As with all lines that use wooden sleepers, a continual programme of replacement is required. If not.....

The ones shown here are very old indeed and may have been laid in the late 1940s, following nationalisation, maybe earlier.

The rail keeper at the right-hand side of the photograph needs hammering into place! Much more track movement and it will spring out!

Photo 3260122



The remains of the 128¾ mile marker-post.

The two faces used to show the "111" meaning "3 quarters"; you can see where the missing "1" was placed. The horizontal bars are missing but you can see the bottom-half of "1" (of 128) on the right-hand side.

The post had been recently shattered (the characteristic deep orange of fresh rust) by the chain-flail that was used to clear the line.

Photo 3260124



One of numerous culverts carry rhynes under the permanent way.

This one looks like it was re-built in the late 1940s maintenance works carried out along the line, following nationalisation.

The Village Quarter can be seen in the distance, across the far side of the Nature Reserve.

Photo 3260125



Moor Farm had at least two crossings, to gain access to its fields after the line was built in 1867.

The farm-track over this major crossing once stopped about 350m north of here at a section of the old sea wall which ran roughly along the east-west course of The Finches, towards Phoenix Way.

Photo 3260131



The line was “strategically important” due to Portishead Dock but also because of the oil tanks that were sited to the north of Wyndham Way until about 1990.

At some point, some track-works had been carried out but the various track sections were stacked, perhaps for future repairs etc.

Photo 3260133



The single track becomes doubled to form a passing loop. The points operating lever is to the right of the line, beyond a piece of rubbish.

The passing-loop was laid to cope with the GWR150 celebration train that ran down the line but actually formed a loop that should have been installed following closure of the line to freight in 1981.

The boundary fence of Trinity School is on the right.

Photo 3260134



The well-used permissive crossing between The Vale and The Village Quarter, near Trinity School.

“Permissive” means “not permanent” and it is intended this crossing will be replaced by a full-access pedestrian bridge.

Photo 3260138



The raised road-bed of Quays Avenue, originally to support the future installation of a level crossing, sits just the other side of the fence.

No new level crossings are allowed, unless there are exceptional circumstances, hence the proposed re-layout of Quays Avenue in the plans for the new station and access to it.

This shot was taken from roughly halfway down the future platform.

Photo 3260140



Looking towards the site of the old (1954) station, this is where the sidings were once situated.

The re-routed Quays Avenue will run across this land, with the car park and pedestrian walkway beyond.

The photo was taken roughly where the platform will end and the station building will begin

Photo 3260142



The twin tracks converge at points near the end of the line. These points and the previous points provided a "run around" track for a locomotive.

Sainsbury's store is on the left, roughly where the oil-tanks once stood.

Note the lone buffer at the right-hand edge of the photo; the sole remaining hint that many sidings were once around here.

Photo 3260145



The end of the line, with the Sainsbury's store in the background.

Looking in this direction up until the early 1990s, you would have seen the oil-tanks with their surrounding earth ramps.

Photo 3260149



The south side of the railway bridge across the rhyne, with Sainsbury's in the background.

The bridge used to carry twin tracks into the platforms and some of the many sidings at Portishead station.

Photo 3260151



The railway ended at the 1954 Portishead station and the sidings to the north of it.

The picture (from the Internet) was probably taken in the late 1960s or early 1970s, after closure of the railway to passenger traffic in 1964 but before the station was demolished.

Mother Nature was already getting hold of the platforms and track-beds.