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Seventy Years Ago

October 1978

In 1909 the railway from Reading to Waterloo was a busy freight artery, and Bracknell had a large and Important goods yard. Here are some snippets from the working timetables for the summer of that year.

The 0748 horse-box train from Waterloo stopped at Vauxhall to pick up milk churns for Bracknell. It terminated at Bracknell at 1015 but could extend to Reading if required. It conveyed horse boxes, empty coaching stock and carriage trucks, and the engine shunted Bracknell yard for some time. A spare guards van was kept at Bracknell.

The 0935 goods from Ascot to Wokingham was responsible for shunting Ascot West siding. The footnote states:

“Trucks for the siding at Ascot West will be taken from Ascot Station by this Goods Train, and any trucks there may be from the siding must be taken by the same Goods Train from the siding to Bracknell, from whence they will be invoiced and despatched to their destination. The Station Master at Ascot must send a competent man with the Goods Train with the Key of the Points, who will be responsible for locking the Points and leaving everything in its normal condition, and until this man returns to Ascot with the Key nothing must leave that station for Bracknell. The Cross Over Road Points must not be used, nor the Up line in any way fouled or obstructed. The Signals for the Down Line at Ascot West will be used for the protection of the train while doing its work at the Siding.”

Imagine the chaos today if trains from Ascot to Bracknell had to await a shunter walking back from Ascot West!

Stores for Amen Corner, Waterloo and Star Lane Crossings were unloaded by the 1055 goods from Wokingham to Sunningdale on Mondays. This train also served Drake & Mount's siding between Ascot and Sunningdale, as well as shunting Amen Corner siding.

The 1019 fast goods from Brentford to Reading stopped at Earley “when required” to “put out skins”.

The 0655 passenger train from Reading to Waterloo was allowed two minutes extra between Ascot and Sunningdale, so that horse boxes could be attached at Ascot after the train had left the platform.

In 1914 Cheap return Tickets were issued from Bracknell for the 0828 to Vauxhall and Waterloo, and you could return by any train. The Cost? 7/- return 1st class; 5/- return 2nd class!!!

A 1st class single from Bracknell to Waterloo cost 4/10d.

A 2nd class single from Bracknell to Waterloo cost 3/-d.

A 3rd class single from Bracknell to Waterloo cost 2/5d.

A dog ticket cost 9d.

Bracknell Earlier This Century

Part 1 (January 1982)

Binfield Brick and Tile Company's Siding: Commonly known as Amen Corner Siding, this was a trailing connection with the Up line on the Bracknell side of Amen Crossing and there was no connection to the Down line. Traffic was coal & bricks to & from the brickworks and it was served in 1909 by the 10:55am Wokingham-Sunningdale goods each day, which was allowed 11minutes (11:09-11:20) to shunt it. Traffic was exchanged inside the brick Company's property. The 10:55am did not reach Sunningdale until 2:50pm(!) after shunting at Bracknell (11:25-12:15) and Ascot (12:23-2:25). It returned but only as far as Ascot .at 3:00pm.

As for the siding: "A board is provided at the Siding warning persons to stand clear of the gate posts at the entrance when shunting operations are in progress, this being necessary owing to the restricted clearances." (1934 Working Timetable Appendices). This board is still there although iut cannot be read except from the trackside.

Outside the railway fence today the siding is still laid but as this area is due for landscaping it may not last much longer. The track is partly buried under earth and the brickworks is completely demolished. By the road entrance to the brickworks (at Amen Crossing) is an LSWR cottage, now derelict; it is a standard design and has PW huts built on as outbuildings. By the front door, hidden in long grass, is a metal L&SW marked guardrail to protect the edge of the building.

Manor Siding: This was a trailing connection to the Up line and left just west of Downshire Lane bridge. It was controlled by Manor Siding box, which had concrete piers, and these can still be seen today on the Down side of the embankment. This box also controlled a crossover at this location. The siding was steeply graded and dropped down to run parallel to the main line.

In 1934 it was the Maidenhead Brick and Tile Company's siding and was served by propelling wagons, brake van leading, from Bracknell station on the Down line, crossing to the Up at Manor Siding box, which was opened as a block section when required.

The earthworks for this siding can still be seen from Up trains entering Bracknell but all trace of the brickworks has gone.

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In 1909 the 3:47pm Horse Box train from Waterloo to Bracknell stopped when required at Vauxhall to pick up milk churns for Bracknell. This shows two traffics which were once important but have now vanished. It arrived at Bracknell at 5:40pm (in the middle of today's peak period!) and returned to Waterloo at 6:00pm.

The 7:48am Waterloo-Bracknell train was also for horse boxes and milk churns, but this could extend to Reading if required. If so the engine had to return to Bracknell immediately for shunting. The train reached Bracknell at 10:15am and returned to London at 11:05am.

Part 2 (January 1982)

Goods Trains in Summer 1909

Until quite recently Bracknell station had a large and busy goods yard, served by various workings as befitted a prosperous small market town. The main goods handled were cattle, agricultural produce, bricks and coal. It is maybe difficult to visualise such traffic today.

In 1909 the passenger trade was catered for by ten Reading-Waterloo stopping trains each way, as well as a couple of shorter Reading-Ascot trips worked from the small engine shed at Ascot. Trains ran at about 2 hourly intervals, adequate by the standard of the day as this was a rural area and the Great Western main line to London from Reading was shorter and quicker. The 19th Century days when the GW, L&SWR and SER had competed for the Reading traffic had long gone.

The Down Trains

The first weekday goods to run over the line towards Reading was the 3:50am Nine Elms Yard-Reading, which ran via Staines Junction, to call at Bracknell from 0531 to 0537. This was its only booked stop after Staines and was made so that "Wokingham General Goods" could be detached to go forward by the following 0530 ex Woking. The long Down sidings were probably used for this purpose. This train could run very late as we shall see later.

The 0530 ex Woking arrived at 0635 and left at 0640. It ran via the (now long disused) Virginia Water West Curve and only stopped at Ascot and Wokingham for short periods before reaching Reading at 0714. The working timetable contains the footnote that this train must be held at Bracknell to connect with the 0350 ex Nine Elms when that train is running late. Since this means that the 0350 would be an hour behind time, it must have been a regular late runner due to shunting delays at Nine Elms.

Next to arrive was the 0430 Nine Elms-Bracknell goods at 0857 (during today's peak period). This train ran via Brentford where it stopped to "set down guards" and shunted all stations from Staines for varying periods. It did not return to Nine Elms until 1630 and so the engine and van remained in Bracknell Yard, presumably shunting, until the late afternoon.

At 0957 the 0935 Ascot-Wokingham goods arrived, a local working which we shall see more of later. It did not shunt, the engine of the horse box train did that, and after detaching/attaching wagons left at 1017.

The next train was the 0748 Horse Box train Waterloo-Bracknell, which arrived at 1015, and returned to Waterloo at 1105. The fact that two daily trains ran to Bracknell shows the amount of traffic the station generated at that time. It could be extended to Reading and so a long footnote was provided in the WTT:

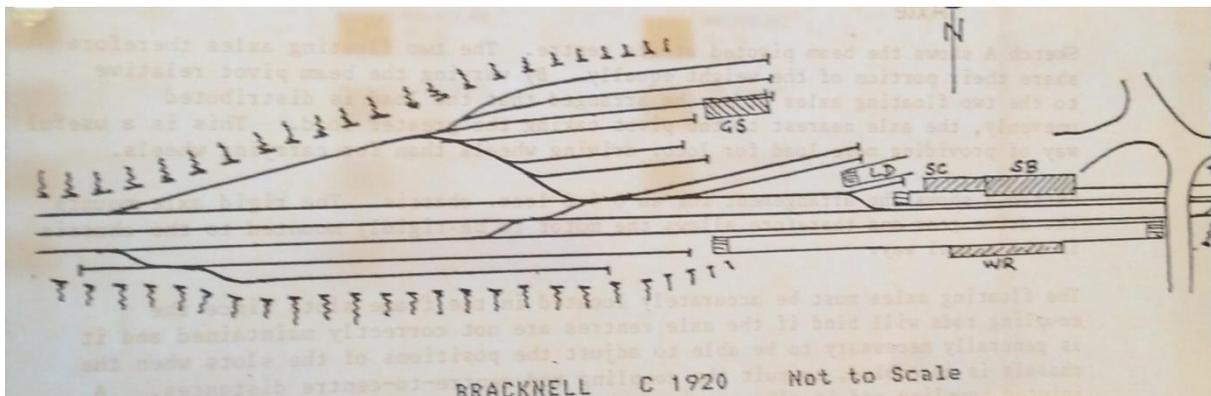
"This train will stop at Vauxhall when required to take up milk churns for Bracknell: it will call at Clapham Junction to detach spare stock: when required it will be extended to Reading and convey Horse Boxes, Carriage Trucks and ECS for Earley, Wokingham & Reading. The engine is to return at once to Bracknell. The guard of the 4:30am goods from Nine Elms to Bracknell to work the 7:48am Horse Box train from Bracknell to Reading. When it is necessary for the 7:48am Horse Box train from Waterloo to Bracknell to be extended to Reading, it must precede the 9:35am goods Ascot to Wokingham from Ascot and on the arrival of the latter train at Bracknell, the engine must perform shunting operations until the arrival of the 7:48am engine back from Reading. Ascot to make the necessary arrangements. A spare guards van to be kept at Bracknell."

The 1019 Brentford-Reading goods arrived next, at 1200. It called only at Staines and Ascot before Bracknell and after brief shunting it left at 1210. This train conveyed wagons which were brought to the L&SW from the Midland, North London and L&NW Railways, over the North and South Western Junction line from Brent and Willesden to Brentford Yard. There an engine sent from Nine Elms collected them, providing a link to Reading from the North. This train would stop at Earley if required to “put out skins”; what these were and why they had to be put out at Earley I do not know.

Another Woking-Reading goods was the next arrival, this being the 0930 ex-Woking which called from 1220 to 1244. These trains conveyed wagons from Portsmouth and the London area as Feltham Yard did not exist until 1924. As before this train used the Virginia Water West Curve and it called for shunting at all stations Sunningdale to Reading. This train had to be held at Ascot until the 1150 goods (1019 ex Brentford) and the 1112 passenger (1000 ex Waterloo) had left, although this only applied if these trains were running very late. It could not leave Bracknell until the 1234 passenger (1105 ex Waterloo) had departed.

Another Nine-Elms-Reading goods arrived at 1410 and left at 1436. This was the 1012 ex-Nine Elms which ran via Hounslow and called at several stations en route. This train stopped at Kew Bridge when required for Road Box traffic (goods carried in box vans which could be opened en route) and at Barnes, by signal, if there were wagons there for the Reading line. It would also stop at Feltham to attach or detach wagons, and to detach when required at Ashford and Earley. It finally arrived at Reading at 1528, and was the last though Down train of the day.

The final goods working was another Waterloo-Bracknell Horse Box train which left London at 1547 and after a few stops en route arrived at 1740. It called at Vauxhall if required to take up milk churns for Bracknell. It only stayed in the yards for 20 minutes and left for Waterloo at 1800. Unlike the morning train there was no provision for it to extend to Reading.



Part 3 (May 1982)

Up Trains

As we have seen almost all of the down goods ran during the morning. In contrast the up trains ran during the afternoon and evening. This was because they conveyed wagons which were delivered to Reading during the morning by the GWR. By the time these wagons had been shunted and sorted in Reading yards and transferred to the L&SW/SECR side of the station it was the late afternoon and evening, but the trains reached London by the end of the day ready for despatch the following morning.

The first up goods train was in fact the return working of the morning horse box train which left Bracknell at 1105. Horse Boxes and Carriage Trucks conveyed by this train could be detached at Richmond if required to be forwarded to Kensington via Turnham Green.

Soon after this train had left, the return working of the 0935 Ascot-Wokingham local goods arrived at 1125 and stayed until 1215. This was the 1055 Wokingham-Sunningdale goods which returned from Sunningdale to Ascot later on. During its travels this train shunted all the private sidings in the area; it also stopped at Star Lane, Waterloo and Amen Crossing Boxes on Mondays when required to put out stores. Between Ascot and Sunningdale it shunted Drake & mount's siding.

The first "through" Reading-Nine Elms goods was the 1218 ex Reading which did not run on Mondays or Saturdays. Unlike the down trains this ran through Bracknell non-stop (at 1253) and only stopped at Ascot, Feltham, Brentford & Clapham for short periods. The wagons in up trains were mainly through workings, there was not a large Reading-Bracknell traffic. The 1218 stopped at Egham when required, to detach cattle wagons for Main Line (Southampton line) Stations, which went forward by the 1530 Staines Junction-Woking goods. It also took on wagons at Feltham and conveyed empty L&SW coaching stock for Clapham.

On Mondays and Saturdays this train left Reading at 1356 and this time stopped at Bracknell (1441-1446), Ascot and Egham before Nine Elms. It stopped at Sunningdale when required to detach cattle traffic, and at Clapham when required to detach not less than four empty L&SW coaching stock vehicles. As with the earlier train it ran via the Hounslow Loop and called at Brentford.

At 1630 the return working of the 0430 Nine Elms-Bracknell goods left the yard to return to London, reaching Nine Elms at 2052. This train had spent all day in the yard, with presumably the engine engaged in shunting. This train called at Virginia Water for Road Box traffic when required, at Hounslow to take on loaded wagons, and at Barnes to take on "important wagons". Regular stops were made at Ascot, Sunningdale, Egham, Staines, Feltham, Hounslow, Brentford, Kew Bridge & Chiswick.

The first of two Reading-Woking goods arrived at 1716. This train left Reading at 1625 and called at all stations to Ascot; it left Bracknell at 1900 which meant that 1.75 hours were spent in Bracknell yard. It ran via the Western Curve at Virginia Water and called at Chertsey & Addlestone, also at Woking Station for Road Box traffic. (Woking yards lay to the west of the station, and of course still do.)

At 1800 the 1547 Waterloo-Bracknell Horse Box train, which had arrived at 1740, returned to Waterloo which it reached at 2113. It stopped at all stations to Staines, and at Feltham, Twickenham, Richmond, Barnes & Clapham, but only for very short periods. Somewhat unusually, there were no special instructions concerning this train.

The up goods was the only non-stop goods working over the line. It left Reading at 1920 and ran non-stop to Nine Elms which it reached at 2105. It passed Bracknell 1t 1946; the time of 26 minutes non-stop Reading-Bracknell does not compare too badly with modern electrics (with two stops). The train ran via Twickenham and had no special instructions.

Part 4 (July 1982)

The second working goods arrived at 2032 having left Reading at 2005 and run non-stop. It left at 2118 after the 2015 Reading-Nine Elms Goods had arrived; for nearly half an hour these two trains were in the yard together and one presumes that all concerned could cope with this situation. The Woking goods ran, as usual, via the West Curve at Virginia Water and during its hour-long sojourn in Bracknell yard it probably shunted. It ran non-stop from Bracknell to Chertsey, and would call at Addlestone if required to detach wagons containing Pottery traffic.

The last Up goods was the 2015 Reading-Nine Elms which arrived while the Woking goods was still in the yard, at 2054. It stayed until 2230, shunting, and finally reached Nine Elms at 0125 the following morning, after calling at various stations en route for short periods. It stopped at Earley when required to take on wagons or Road Box traffic, and at Barnes and Putney when required to put out biscuit traffic (no prizes for guessing where this came from).

A light engine ran from Reading to Ascot at 2230, passing Bracknell at 2250 and reaching Ascot six minutes later. This did not run on Wednesdays and conveyed a guard. The engine was shedded at Ascot, and was possibly used for shunting at Reading.

Sundays

There were no goods services over the Reading line, and about seven passenger trains ran each way. There was a return working which left Wimbledon at 0955 to run to Reading via Chertsey, and back by this route to reach Waterloo in the evening; the only scheduled passenger services to use the Virginia Water West Curve. Some of the passenger workings were Ascot-Reading locals.

Locomotives

It is likely that passenger services in 1909 were in the hands of "415" class 4-4-2 tanks and "T1" class 0-4-4 tanks, both Adams designs. The new Drummond "M7" 0-4-4 tanks were probably beginning to appear by now.

L&SW goods services were never heavy and the Company had relatively few 0-6-0s. It is likely that goods trains to Reading were worked by Adams "Jubilee" class 0-4-2 and Drummond "K10" and "L11" 4-4-0s, with Adams "395" class 0-6-0 goods engines on some workings. The new Drummond "700" class 0-6-0s were also available but were much used on troop and similar heavy passenger workings at this time. Ascot shed probably housed tank engines, "415" or "T1"s, which handled local goods workings. There was a 49ft 9in turntable in the yard at Ascot, long enough to turn 4-4-0s and 0-6-0s, but there is no evidence in the wtt that engines terminating at Bracknell went there to be turned. Possibly they ran tender-first as far as Ascot on the Up journey.