

# By Rail to Bournemouth

By DAVID R. WEBB



*Photo]*

*[S. Rickard*

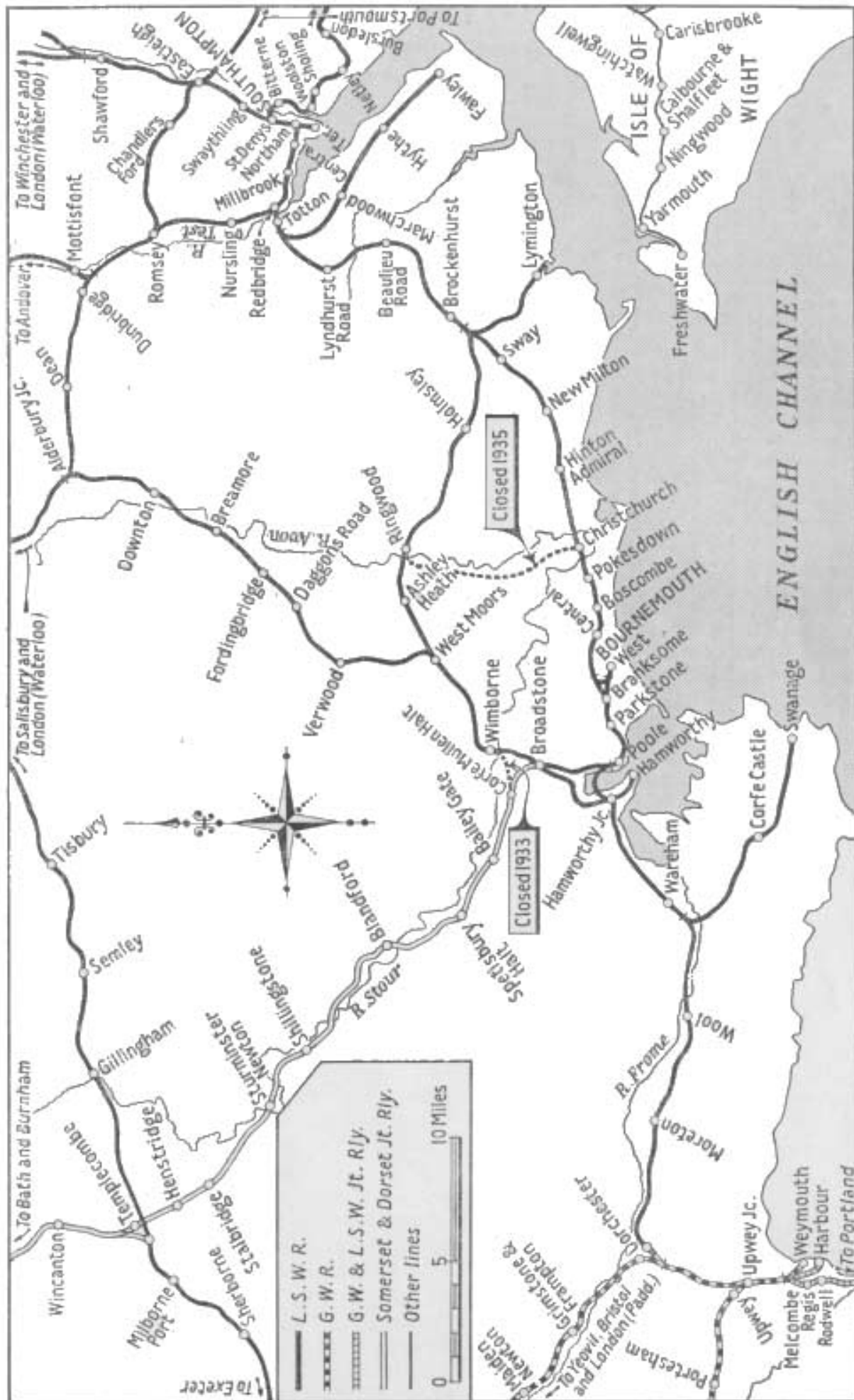
The up "Bournemouth Belle" leaving Bournemouth Central Station on June 8, headed by "Merchant Navy" class 4-6-2 locomotive No. 35011, "General Steam Navigation"

THE coming of the railway brought a yearly visit to the seaside within reach of many who had not previously enjoyed such pleasures, and resulted in startling changes in many coastal places. Some developed from mere hamlets to vast towns and many more experienced considerable, if less amazing, increases in size. In few districts has the railway made more difference than at Bournemouth. In 1841, the rent rolls showed under 30 houses. In 30 years the population had increased to 5,896, and had reached 16,859 by 1881. Today there are some 130,000 inhabitants, not counting those in the neighbouring boroughs of Poole (80,000) and Christchurch (14,000).

In 1840, the London & South Western Railway opened its main line through to Southampton, and was already looking farther westwards. At the same time, various interests in Dorset, led by a Wimborne solicitor named Castleman, had promoted the Southampton & Dorchester Railway to connect those two towns by way of Brockenhurst, Ringwood, Wimborne, and Wareham, with a

branch line to Poole. The L.S.W.R. was interested at first, but soon began to think of an Andover-Wimborne line. The Castleman group then took its scheme to the G.W.R., and its Bill first appeared on the 1844 Parliamentary programme. The Board of Trade refused to approve the G.W.R. proposals (it had to consider all railway bills at that time), and when next year the normally antagonistic L.S.W.R. and G.W.R. concluded a brief armistice, the G.W.R. gave up the Southampton & Dorchester in return for reciprocal action by the South Western in Cornwall. The Act for Castleman's Southampton & Dorchester Railway was dated July 21, 1845, and required that the line should be of standard gauge, and follow the route already mentioned, with the branch to Poole from Thurland Farm, Hamworthy, to a terminus at or near the Ballast Quay, Poole. Powers to lease the railway at any time were given. The Forest Commissioners prevented the new line from running through any wooded portion of the New Forest.

The railway was opened between



Map of the railways in the Bournemouth district, showing pre-grouping ownerships and lines now closed to traffic

Blechynden (later Southampton West, and now Southampton Central) and Dorchester on June 1, 1847, as a single line 60½ miles long, with the branch to Poole. A tunnel had been built between Blechynden and the L.S.W.R.'s Southampton terminus, but it collapsed shortly before the opening, and a bus service was run between the two stations until the connection was brought into use on July 29. Traffic soon warranted the provision of double track, which was completed from Redbridge (just outside Southampton) to Beaulieu Road by August 1, 1857, and from there to Brockenhurst by September 1, 1858. The Christchurch Road (now Holmsley) to Brockenhurst section had been doubled by August 1, 1857, and the Christchurch Road-Ringwood section by September 1, 1858. The Ringwood-Wimborne portion also was doubled by 1857, and the double-tracking reached Wareham by March, 1863, and Dorchester by the summer of the same year. The L.S.W.R. acquired the Southampton & Dorchester Railway in 1848.

On January 20, 1857, the G.W.R. had opened its line to Weymouth. The L.S.W.R. was granted running powers between Dorchester and Weymouth over a mixed-gauge line. With a route to London 21½ miles shorter than the G.W.R., the L.S.W.R. meant to make the most of its chances. In addition to the doubling of track, powers were obtained to build a short loop from Northam Junction to Tunnel Junction at Southampton, to enable trains to run direct from Waterloo to the Dorchester line. Blechynden Station was enlarged at the same time. Although the reason for all this activity was the traffic to Weymouth, the improvements were of signal benefit to Bournemouth later on.

The first station to serve Bournemouth from close at hand was the original Poole Station. It was badly situated, as it was separated from both Poole and Bournemouth by a toll bridge. In its palmy days a daily bus owned by one G. Axford conveyed rail passengers between the station and Bournemouth. Nevertheless, the branch prospered enough to warrant doubling in 1863. In some ways, this was unfortunate, as its very prosperity seems to have delayed any search for a more convenient site. When this was found, and the present Poole Station

opened in 1872, the passenger traffic on the branch declined, ceasing as long ago as 1893. The old station at Poole once had two platforms, but the up one vanished years ago. It is now known as Hamworthy Goods. Hamworthy Junction, where passengers changed for the branch, has a small engine shed and a down platform of the island type, but its passenger traffic is now very light. The branch line has reverted to single track, and is still used for goods trains.

Meanwhile, other interests, which possibly had never heard of Bournemouth, were at work planning lines which eventually were to carry heavy traffic to that town. The Somerset Central Railway had built a line from Burnham, on the Bristol Channel, *via* Glastonbury to join the G.W.R. at Bruton. A broad-gauge *protégé*, the S.C.R. was planning to join up with the Dorset Central Railway and provide a standard-gauge link between the English and Bristol Channels. The D.C.R. Act was passed in 1856, and gave powers to build a line from a point 25 ch. south of the Southampton & Dorchester's station at Wimborne to Blandford. The D.C.R. was opened on October 31, 1860, and was worked from the outset by the L.S.W.R. The D.C.R. obtained powers in 1857 to extend northwards from Blandford to meet the S.C.R. at Bruton, and this link was completed on August 31, 1863; the S.C.R. had been converted to standard gauge by that date. The two companies had been amalgamated as the Somerset & Dorset Railway some twelve months earlier. The S.D.R. trains ran to the old Poole Station *via* Hamworthy Junction by reversing at Wimborne.

By now the traffic potentialities of Bournemouth seem to have been realised. In 1859, powers were granted for a railway from Ringwood, on the Southampton-Dorchester line, to Christchurch, some 4½ miles east of Bournemouth. This line was opened on November 13, 1862, as a single track and worked on the train staff and ticket system. Severe curves and gradients limited the speed to 25 m.p.h. At Christchurch, a bus service (which did considerable harm to that provided by Axford) took on Bournemouth passengers. It must also have harmed the road services which had been run for some years from Christchurch Road Station to Bournemouth. Although this involved a 15-mile road journey, many

travellers went this way rather than continue in the train to Poole. Christchurch Road was not actually the nearest station to Bournemouth on the Dorchester line (this is West Moors, the junction for the Salisbury branch) but it was the nearest on the main road.

The extension from Christchurch to Bournemouth was opened on March 14, 1870; free transport for passengers was provided on the opening day. The first station in Bournemouth was named Bournemouth East, and stood on the site of the goods yard of the present Central

been closed since September 30, 1935, and is now dismantled. The three bus services mentioned did not long survive the opening of the extension.

On May 26, 1865, the Royal Assent was given to the Poole & Bournemouth Railway Act for a line from Poole to a station in Bournemouth which is now Bournemouth West, but it was not until July 16, 1866, that the L.S.W.R. extension from Poole New Junction (now Broadstone) on the former Southampton & Dorchester Railway to the present station in Poole was authorised. The



*Photo]*

*[David R. Webb*

**The original station at Poole, now Hamworthy Goods. The wooden structure astride the platform and the single-story brick building in the foreground are recent additions**

Station. The Ringwood, Christchurch & Bournemouth Railway was worked from the beginning by the L.S.W.R., which absorbed it in 1874. The trebling of Bournemouth's population between 1871 and 1881 was one result of the new railway. By this route, Waterloo and Bournemouth were 116 miles apart. The trains were divided at Ringwood and the Weymouth portion continued its journey over the old Castleman line. The station at Ringwood has extensive roofs on the down platform, where the branch loop still exists. The branch itself runs parallel with the main line for some distance before turning down the valley of the River Avon, but has

L.S.W.R. line was opened on December 2, 1872, and the Poole & Bournemouth Railway on June 15, 1874. The P.B.R. was absorbed by the L.S.W.R. in 1882; its Chairman also was the Chairman of the Somerset & Dorset Railway.

These extensions enabled the Somerset & Dorset Railway to run to the new Station at Poole, and thence to Bournemouth West. Meantime, that company had built a line from Evercreech over the Mendips, *via* Radstock, to join the Mangotsfield-Bath branch of the Midland Railway near Bath. This extension, which connected the Midland with the L.S.W.R., was opened only a month after the Poole & Bournemouth Railway.



The cost of the Mendip line had, however, bankrupted the S.D.R., and it was leased to the two larger companies for 999 years in 1875, and named the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway.

Thus, by the middle 1870s, Bournemouth was linked to London from the East Station, and with the Midlands and North from the West Station. Both routes had been intended to serve places other than Bournemouth, and were in need of some improvement. The single-track line from Ringwood was inadequate, and the S.D.J.R. trains had to reverse at Wimborne. Both drawbacks were remedied by the Act of August 20, 1883, which authorised a double-track railway between Brockenhurst, on the old Southampton - Dorchester line, and Christchurch (to be known as the Bournemouth Direct Railway), doubling between Christchurch and Bournemouth East, and the double-track Bournemouth Junction Railway, to connect the two stations at Bournemouth. Powers also were obtained for a cut-off between Corfe Mullen, on the S.D.J.R., and the L.S.W.R. at Broadstone, to enable the trains of the former railway to run between Bath and Bournemouth without reversing at Wimborne. A new and larger station, now Bournemouth Central, was built on land acquired under the Act of 1873, and opened on July 20, 1885.

The second track between Christchurch and Bournemouth was brought into use on May, 30 1886, but slips on the embankment at Sway delayed the opening of the Bournemouth Direct Railway until March 5, 1888. The inaugural train was hauled by the Adams 4-4-0 No. 526, almost straight from the Newcastle Jubilee Exhibition. Engine and coaches were brand new; the latter were of the bogie type. The distance from Waterloo to Bournemouth by the new line was 107½ miles, and the route *via* Sway had a far greater traffic capacity than that *via* Ringwood. Tickets between Waterloo and Bournemouth continued to bear the words "*via* Sway" until the railways were nationalised. The opening of the Bournemouth Junction Railway on the same day as the Sway line enabled all trains from Waterloo to reach Bournemouth West, but the Weymouth portions were detached at Brockenhurst, and ran *via* Wimborne.

The Corfe Mullen-Broadstone cut-off,

opened on December 14, 1885, saved only 2¼ miles in distance, but a great deal of time and operational inconvenience. Although there is room for a double track, the line has always been single. The S.D.J.R. local trains continued to run into Wimborne until 1920, after which only milk and goods trains used the line. The milk traffic ceased in 1932, and the last goods train used the connection some twelve months later. The line has since been abandoned.

It was not yet possible for trains to proceed from Bournemouth West to the Dorchester line without reversing at Broadstone. A train from Bournemouth Central would also have had to reverse at the West Station. On May 18, 1893, however, a double-track line, across the tidal creeks of Poole Harbour, between Poole and Hamworthy Junction (known as the Holes Bay Curve), was brought into use, and the third side of the triangle at Branksome, which obviated the reverse at Bournemouth West, was opened a fortnight later, on June 1. It then became the practice to divide and join the Bournemouth West and Weymouth portions of trains at Bournemouth Central.

In all these years only one effort was made to break the L.S.W.R. monopoly at Bournemouth. In 1885, shortly after the G.W.R. at last obtained a foothold in Southampton by the opening of Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway, that company replied to the L.S.W.R.'s intention to build the Bournemouth Direct Railway by projecting a new line towards Bournemouth from the D.N.S.R. There was some support for the scheme in Bournemouth, but a good deal of opposition in the New Forset, and the Bill was dropped after its first reading.

In addition to the two Bournemouth stations, those at Pokesdown, and Boscombe, are within the Borough. Branksome, Parkstone, Poole, Broadstone, and Hamworthy Junction are in the Borough of Poole. Before the first world war, the whole area enjoyed extensive local railcar services, which ran as far east as Christchurch, and there was also a halt in Meyrick Park, but both railcars and halt vanished during that war. There is now a reasonable main-line local service both east and west of Bournemouth, and the semi-fast Waterloo-Bournemouth West trains usually call at stations from Christchurch and so augment the service.

The Southampton & Dorchester Railway's original services consisted of five trains daily each way on weekdays. A local guide of 1856 gives the travelling times between Bournemouth and London *via* Poole as five hours. It would probably have been some 30 minutes quicker *via* Ringwood and Christchurch. After the opening of the Direct Line, the best pre-1914 timings were: 1889, Waterloo-Bournemouth, 2 hr. 24 min.; 1896, Bournemouth-Vauxhall non-stop, 2 hr. 13 min.; 1914, 2 hr. (3 daily non-stop trains in each direction).

After the gloomy war and pre-grouping periods, the Southern Railway remodelled and accelerated the Western Section timetables in 1924. Non-stop Waterloo-Bournemouth runs came back on the 12.30 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. down Saturday trains, which also made the fastest runs, 2 hr. 10 min. The 11.30 a.m. from Waterloo had its schedule cut by 15 min. to 2 hr. 31 min., and the 5.30 p.m. down was cut by as much as 59 min. The greatest improvement in the up trains was 52 min. with the 9.4 a.m. from Bournemouth. None of the accelerations introduced anything outstanding in the way of speed, but a start had been made. By 1929, two up and two down expresses were making the non-stop run daily, but by 1934 only the "Bournemouth Limited," 8.40 a.m. up and 4.30 p.m. down, was non-stop. This ceased in 1939, and has not yet been restored. The two-hour timing was revived in 1930, but cut by 2 min. in 1935, and by yet another 2 min. in 1936. The two-hour schedule was reinstated in 1946, only to be withdrawn as a result of the fuel shortage in 1947.

A curious feature of timetables during the second world war, when the Waterloo-Bournemouth service was reduced to 17 trains each way, was the long gap in the down service between 11.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. The cessation of hostilities saw an immediate increase in the service. In spite of the setback of the fuel crisis, the present service is better than that of 1938. The fastest run during 1952 was that of the up "Bournemouth Belle" with its schedule of 2 hr. 5 min.

Pullman cars were introduced on Bournemouth trains on April 21, 1890. Four new cars were built at Eastleigh in 1893, but the subsequent introduction of the L.S.W.R.'s own bogie corridor stock

and restaurant cars reduced the popularity of the Pullmans, and they had all been withdrawn by 1910. No more appeared until the all-Pullman "Bournemouth Belle" began to run in July, 1931. At first it was a daily summer service train, and ran only on Sundays in winter. In 1936, it became a daily service during the winter also. It was withdrawn during the war, and restored on the pre-war basis in 1946, and is still very popular.

Bournemouth has long attracted visitors from the North and Midlands. As early as 1875, through coaches *via* the Somerset & Dorset Railway were run between Birmingham (New Street) and Bournemouth West, with the following timings:

Birmingham	dep.	9.5 a.m. and 3.25 p.m.
Bournemouth	arr.	3.35 p.m. and 9.50 p.m.
Bournemouth	dep.	7.25 a.m. and 10.15 a.m.
Birmingham	arr.	3.35 p.m. and 4.55 p.m.

The S.D.R. could not adhere to this schedule, and had to decelerate the service, but the original timings were restored when the M.R. and L.S.W.R. leased the S.D.R. Subsequently additional coaches were added from towns served by or *via* the Midland, such as Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, and Newcastle. There were also other connections from Bournemouth for which through coaches were not provided. For instance, in 1905, a train was inaugurated to leave Bournemouth West at 8.40 a.m., and connect with the 10.55 a.m. Bristol-Leeds express, which in turn made a connection at Leeds with the 11.30 a.m. St. Pancras-Glasgow express.

The Great Central Railway was largely responsible for the inception in 1902 of a new restaurant-car express between Sheffield and Bournemouth, *via* Leicester, Rugby, Banbury, Reading and Basingstoke. The train was greatly accelerated the next year, and also included coaches from Manchester, Bradford and Huddersfield. It was extended to Newcastle in 1921, and survives today in a modified form.

In 1910, a working agreement between the L.S.W.R. and G.W.R. resulted in a new service between Birkenhead and Bournemouth, *via* Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Birmingham (Snow Hill), Oxford, Reading and Basingstoke. The service commenced on July 1, and included Manchester through coaches *via* Wellington which ran over the L.N.W.R. between Manchester and Crewe. The



*Photo* [S. Rickard]  
The 1.29 p.m. Fareham to Bournemouth train leaving Christchurch on June 8,  
headed by 4-6-0 locomotive No. 30850, "Lord Nelson"



*Photo* [G. R. Mortimer]  
Southern Region diesel-electric locomotive No. 10202 arriving at Bournemouth  
Central with the down "Bournemouth Belle"

Manchester-Bournemouth timing was 6 hr. 24 min. The Midland counter-stroke was ready in 1911; the L.N.W.R. provided coaches from Manchester and Liverpool, which ran non-stop between Birmingham and Stockport in 1½ hr., to join the M.R. train from Bradford and Leeds at Birmingham (New Street). This train had a 6 hr. 7 min. timing between Manchester and Bournemouth. In 1927, it was named the "Pines Express." Both services are still in operation.

During the first world war, the S.D.J.R. services were maintained at a high level, but this line almost ceased to be used as a through route during the early part of the second world war, although there was an improvement later. Today, however, they are more than restored.

There is also the cross-country service to and from Bournemouth and Brighton, and two trains between Bournemouth and Cardiff, and Swansea on summer Saturdays, which run non-stop between Poole and Salisbury *via* Broadstone, West Moors, and Fordingbridge. Another Saturday train is the 9.28 a.m. Wimbledon to Poole, which runs on the slow line to Basingstoke, and stops at Surbiton and Woking. Other examples are the 8.5 a.m. Bournemouth West-Sheffield train *via* Bath, and the 10.28 a.m. Poole-Bradford express, which runs *via* Basingstoke, Oxford, Rugby Central and Leicester. There is a corresponding south-bound train.

The only long-distance trains serving Bournemouth which now make regular use of any part of the route through Wimborne are the South Wales trains on Saturdays. Nevertheless, this one-time main line is a useful by-pass route. The 3½ miles between Broadstone and Hamworthy Junction are not suitable for fast running, but it is otherwise with the double-track Brockenhurst-Broadstone section. The route frequently has been used to pass trains on the Weymouth line round the congested Bournemouth area. During the summer of 1952, two up and two down expresses regularly used this line on Saturdays.

The old Southampton & Dorchester Railway is used for relief in emergencies. A year or two ago, the derailment of an engine resulted in the diversion of the 4.35 p.m. from Waterloo to this route at

Brockenhurst; the Bournemouth and Weymouth portions were divided at Wimborne. During the relaying work at Sway in 1948 and 1949, the down mail train was sent to Bournemouth by this route; the Weymouth vehicles were reversed at Bournemouth. Special trains carrying American sailors to London from U.S.A. warships visiting Portland also have used this former main line. Usually, however, this line, which once had a monopoly of all the traffic to Bournemouth, is a quiet backwater carrying a purely local traffic.

In conclusion, the writer wishes to acknowledge the assistance given by Mr. B. J. Knowlman in providing details of recent train services, and for permission to use information from the traffic survey organised by him on August 23, 1952, of the Western Section of the Southern Region.