

# TYLER HILL

Kent

TR 140603-143595

Length in Yards

842

Bore

Single

Railway Company

Whitstable Harbour Branch (Canterbury & Whitstable Railway)

Location of Tunnel

Canterbury West-Whitstable  
Harbour

Status

Disused

Line of Rail

Whitstable Harbour Branch

## Internal Condition:

Internally subsided under school grounds

## Access:

Northern portal sealed. Southern portal in corner of a school field, access via university grounds. Entry possible into a short section of the tunnel.

## Usage, Ownership or Status:

Not known

## Date of last visit, inspection or update:

2<sup>nd</sup> November 1974 : Updated by John Mann 1981

## Notes & other points of interest:

Built between 1826-1829 and opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1830. Built by George Stephenson. The first tunnel to be opened in Britain for the use by passenger traffic. Passenger traffic ceased to run on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1930 and the line was closed completely in 1952. The tunnel was built to somewhat restricted dimensions, the clear width being no more than 12 feet and the maximum height above rail level also being 12 feet. This meant that only certain selected stock and engines could use the line. The roof has collapsed in places.

*From an article in The New Civil Engineer 26<sup>th</sup> April 2001*

Efforts reopen one of Britain's oldest railway tunnels moved a step closer this week when engineers declared the project technically feasible.

The 700m Victorian tunnel is on the long-abandoned Canterbury & Whitstable Railway line and there are plans to use it as part of the National Cycle Network.

The 10km line, which includes the tunnel, was abandoned after 120 years in 1952 and has since fallen into disrepair.

It has been adopted by the Crab & Winkle Line Trust, which hopes to bid for lottery cash to fund site investigation work later this year.

The tunnel partially collapsed in 1974. It was blocked off and back-filled from boreholes with low-grade concrete.

George Stephenson was one of the original engineers for the project and his son Robert supervised construction.

The initial report, commissioned by the Trust and carried out by Alan Auld Associates, fed data from a visual survey into a desk-top study and concluded that ground conditions appeared good enough for re-excavation.

However, the visual inspection was limited by the fact that only 200m of the 700m tunnel is currently accessible.

The Trust is eager to re-open the whole line, and has a formal agreement with cycle charity Sustrans to integrate the line into the National Cycle Network.

#### **Comments:**

In the grounds of the Archbishops School the trackbed reaches the southern portal of the tunnel (see map), which has been bricked-up with a grill to provide access to storage space but no longer used as such. Part of the tunnel was damaged during the construction of the university but some 150 metres from the portal are accessible and in good condition for a 170 year old structure. Some 4% of the length has been plugged with concrete as a result of the collapse, with about 25% being filled with a loose mixture of ash and cement. The trust would like the tunnel to be designated as a listed building with a view to attracting funding for possible restoration. The northern portal has been bricked-up.

No trace remains of the Crab & Winkle railway in the Whitstable Harbour area apart from a pair of wrought iron gates in the perimeter fence with the 'SECR' logo in the centre of each. This dates these at the turn of the century when the SER and the LC&DR amalgamated.

The 8-mile line, which includes the tunnel, was abandoned after 150 years in 1952 and has since fallen into disrepair. In 1846 the South Eastern Railway reached Canterbury and acquired the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway in 1845. The branch was re-laid with heavier rail and locomotives replaced the stationary engines. Journey time was about 20 minutes with no intermediate stops (the halts at South Street, Tankerton & Tyler Hill were opened much later).

Passenger services continued until 1930 with final closure of the line on 1st December 1952, although the line was again reopened for a time in 1953 to supply Whitstable following the East Coast floods.



**Tyler Hill's Bricked-Up North Portal**  
(Photo by Crab & Winkle Trust)



**The Bricked-Up South Portal**  
(Photo by Crab & Winkle Trust)