

# Proposals for doubling the Corfe Mullen line

By Jonathan Edwards



The management of the S&D made no fewer than three attempts to double a short section of main line single track. This was the final three miles of S&D 'proper' before it joined the L&SWR at Broadstone. Subsequently more commonly known as the 'Corfe Mullen cut-off', it was referred to by the S&D's management as the 'Corfe Mullen Curve Line' - the direct chord between Corfe Mullen Junction and Broadstone that avoided the Wimborne detour and reversal. Although only a single track was laid, the earthworks and bridges were constructed to be capable of accommodating a second line of rails. It was opened, initially to goods traffic, on 14 December 1885.

Broadstone could be quite a busy crossroads at times, with knock-on delays resulting from late running on the S&D's single line 'cut-off' potentially impacting all services threading through the junction. Doubling the 'cut-off' would have assisted in the smooth running not only of S&D traffic, but also of Salisbury and

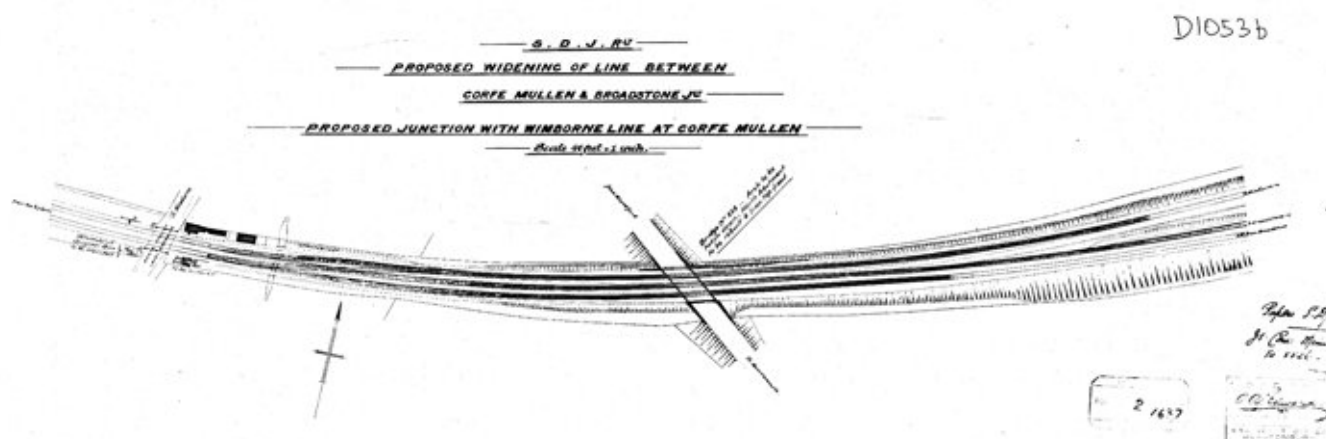
Brockenhurst services to and from Bournemouth West, and goods trains to and from Hamworthy Junction. (Additionally, on Summer Saturdays in the 1950s and early '60s, there was a Weymouth service to and from Waterloo which ran via Ringwood, Broadstone and Hamworthy Junction.)

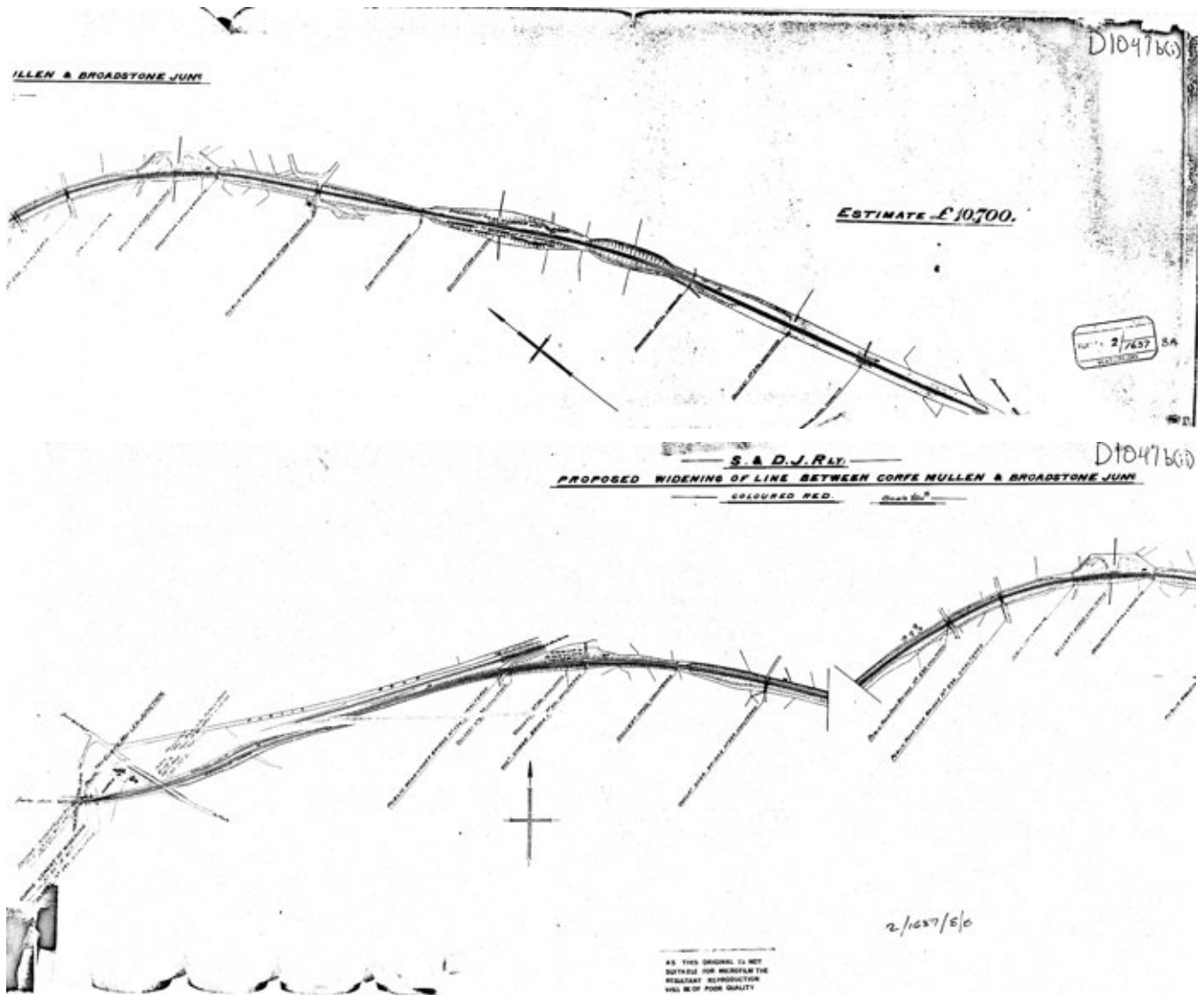
## Doubling the 'cut-off'

The 'cut-off' was included in the very first proposal for doubling a section of the line south of Templecombe. At this time, the two single lines to Wimborne and Broadstone ran side by side from Bailey Gate to Corfe Mullen crossing before heading off in their separate directions. Following the Directors' annual inspection of the line on 3 & 4 May 1893, the company's Engineer was instructed to prepare an estimate of the cost of 'laying a second line of rails upon the Corfe Mullen Curve Line, removing the current junction of the Wimborne line at Bailey Gate and moving it to Corfe Mullen, and doubling Corfe Mullen to Broadstone'.

*Above, ex-LMS 2P class No. 40563 climbing Corfe Mullen bank with a train for Templecombe, lit by the setting sun, sometime before the withdrawal of the loco in November 1961. [Photo by M K Lewis/S&DRT collection, ref. WSHSD\_2019\_6\_12.]*

*Below, The Engineer's 1903 drawing for the revised layout and junction for the Wimborne line at Corfe Mullen, showing the widening of Bridge 223 to accommodate three sets of rails. [Plan D1053b, S&DRT archive.]*





Above, the proposed 1903 plan for doubling between Corfe Mullen and Broadstone.

[Plans D1047(i) and D1047(ii), S&DRT archive.]

Below, Bridge 223 showing the original Wimborne line diverging to the left away from the Broadstone line.

[Photo by John Eyers, South Western Circle; Eyers collection.]

A plan with a cost estimate of £7,000 - approximately equivalent to £920,000 in today's values - was submitted to the next Joint Committee (JC) meeting in August, where 'consideration of the question' of carrying out the work was postponed (JC, 2 Aug 1893; Minute 2923). Two years later, the decision was again postponed (JC, 7 Aug 1895; Minute 2046) and that was then the end of the matter.

### A second doubling proposal

A second attempt at doubling the 'Curve Line' occurred in 1903. The first stretch of double line south of Templecombe had been opened between Bailey Gate and Blandford on 29 April 1901. Two years later, plans were submitted to the Officers' October meeting (OM, 20 Oct 1903; Minute 5526) to include doubling the 'Corfe Mullen Curve'. With reference to Minute 5526, the plan (reproduced opposite) shows the new double track at Corfe Mullen towards Broadstone and the revised junction layout for the Wimborne line. Bridge 223 - pictured right - was to be widened to accommodate a slewed

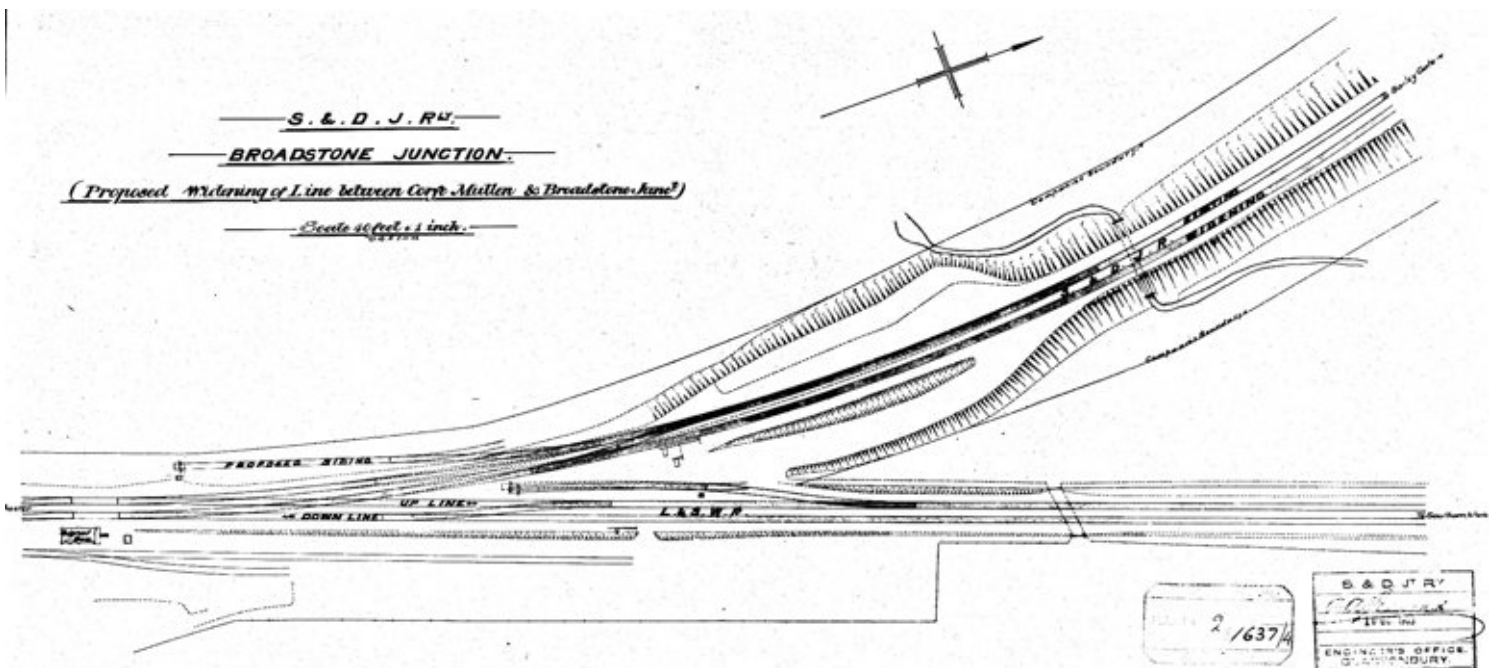




As viewed from Bridge 223, ex-LMS 4F 0-6-0 locomotive No. 44535 approaches Corfe Mullen Junction from Broadstone with an Up local passenger train. The single line originally to Wimborne is seen on the left. Freight continued to run between Corfe Mullen Junction and Wimborne until 17 June 1933, after which, access as far as Carter's Siding was retained from Corfe Mullen. [Photo by Stephen C Townroe/S&DRT collection ref. WSHSD\_2021\_16\_3, undated, circa 1948-50.]

Wimborne line, the north side abutment to be rebuilt. It also shows the removal of the existing signal box on the east of the level crossing to be replaced by a new 'standard' signal box on the west side – in the event, this was accomplished. The estimated cost of doubling was £10,700 (£1.3m today). Also included was an estimated cost of doubling Blandford to Shillingstone at £33,500 (£4.2m today). At a combined cost of £43,200 the plans were dropped and neither scheme came to fruition.

The plan for Broadstone (below), dated 10 June 1903, shows the new double track towards Corfe Mullen. The existing single line would have become the new Up line. Just beyond the junction, the existing running line spur ending in a sand drag was to be converted into a short siding. This would have replicated a similar siding on the L&SWR Up line towards Wimborne. The purpose of these short sidings is unclear; they may have accommodated assisting engines having aided heavy goods trains up the gradients from the south, particularly from Hamworthy Junction.



The Engineer's 1903 Drawing of the proposed revised junction layout at Broadstone, with a short siding trailing off the Up line. [Plan D1046b, S&DRT archive.]



*BR Standard Class 5 4-6-0 locomotive No. 73019 comes off the single line from Corfe Mullen and approaches the junction at Broadstone with the Down 'Pines Express'. The 1903 doubling scheme envisaged a siding where the photographer is standing. 31 March 1962.  
[Photo by Mike Fox/S&DRT collection, ref. WSHSD\_2016\_42\_35.]*

### **The final attempt**

The final attempt at doubling came in 1925, in conjunction with a proposal to truncate the Corfe Mullen-Wimborne line. Passenger traffic had ceased on 11 July 1920 and it was proposed to retain access to Carter's Siding from Wimborne. This would have enabled doubling the Broadstone line at Corfe Mullen without having to widen Bridge 223, the existing Wimborne track alignment becoming the commencement of the new Down line to

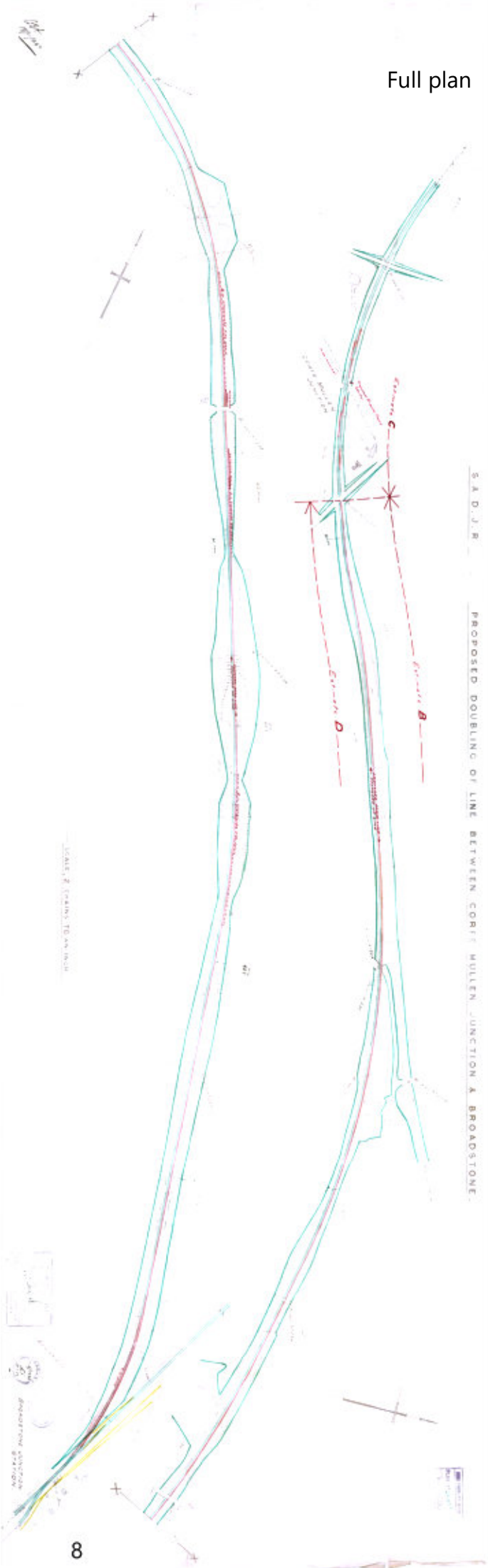
Broadstone. Corfe Mullen Signal Box would have become redundant and been removed. A ground frame with a shelter would have been provided on the opposite side of the tracks to control the level crossing. (WSHSD\_D2248c)

Either side of Ashington Lane Bridge (Bridge 238) in the deep cutting just to the north of the summit of the 'cut-off', a 6-inch stoneware pipe drain and retaining wall would have been provided on the Down side. This cutting had been subject to slippage in the 1890s.

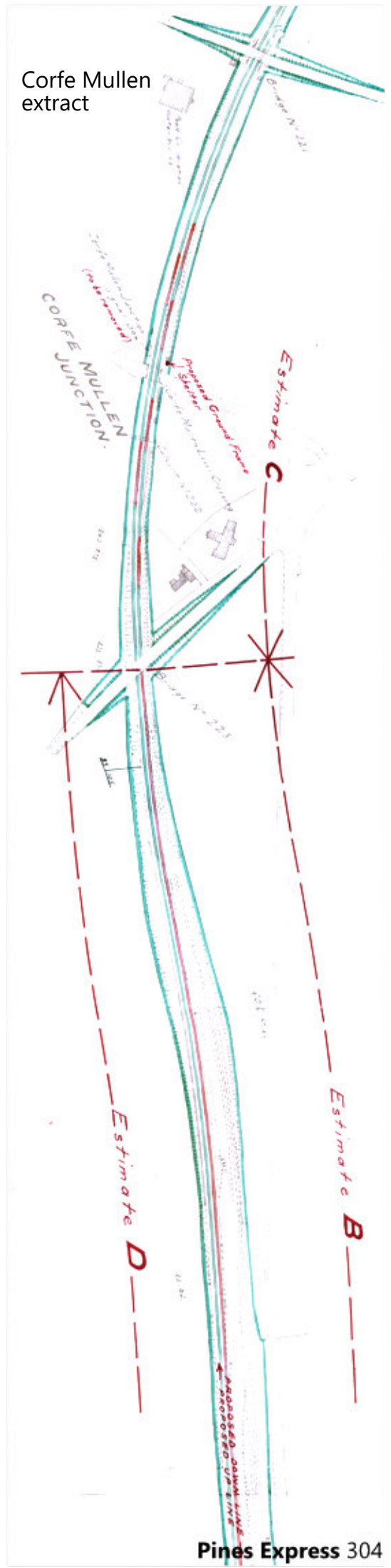


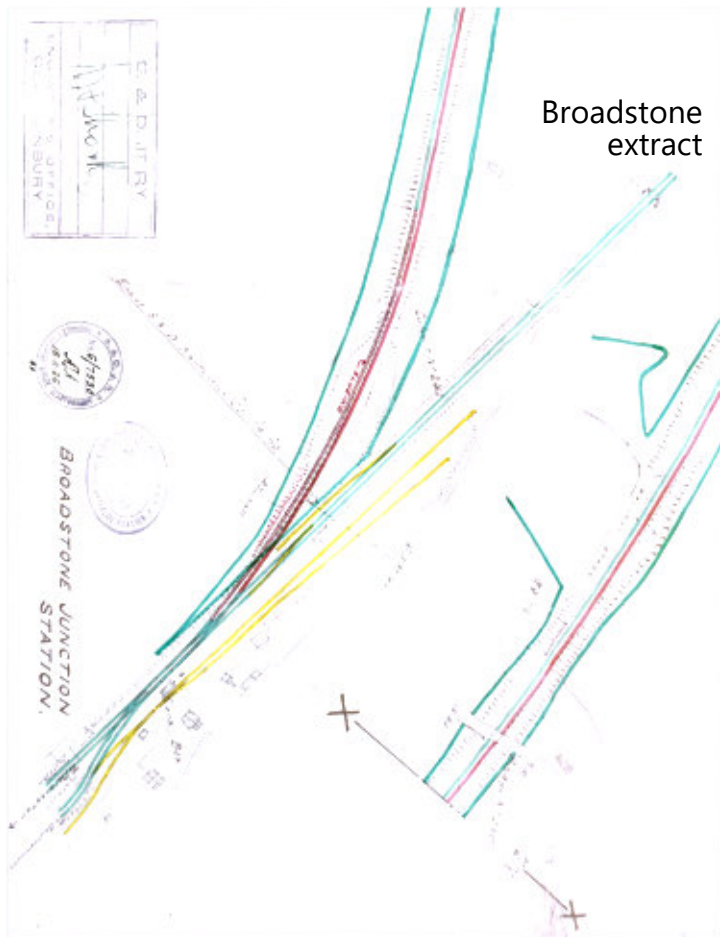
*A 1965 view of Broadstone station, looking north from the island platform, showing the 'crossroads' nature of the junction. The S&D line curves its way through the straight line formation of the Ringwood-Hamworthy Junction route.  
[Photo by Peter Barnfield/S&DRT collection, ref. WSHSD\_2015\_50\_14.]*

Full plan



Corfe Mullen extract





### Broadstone extract

The new block section would have become Bailey Gate - Broadstone, totalling 4¾ miles. Although involving considerable gradients in climbing to the summit – 1 in 80 southbound and 1 in 97 northbound – the line having been doubled should have eradicated any bottleneck delays at Broadstone.

The plan (WSHSD\_D2248c) - numbered G/7530 - emanating from the Engineer's Office at Glastonbury was dated 18 November 1925. It was date stamped two days later by the Southern Railway Engineer's Office at Waterloo Station and given the Plan Number 26951. And that is as far as it went.

The finances of S&D operation after the First World War militated against any investment proposals that were not deemed absolutely essential. Just like the proposal in the previous year to do away with the level crossings at Bailey Gate Crossing and Corfe Mullen (see PE 302, p16-19), it failed to reach the Officers' management meeting for consideration.

### Sources

- The National Archives; SDJR Officers' Minutes and Joint Committee Minutes.
- S&DRT Archives.
- Bank of England Inflation Calculator.

*The plan, left and above, is the Engineer's 1925 drawing with enlarged extracts covering the detail at Corfe Mullen Junction and at Broadstone.  
[Plan D2248c, S&DRT archive.]*



*As evidenced here, the deep cutting near the summit of the 'cut-off' was prone to slippage. The 1925 plan included the provision of additional drainage and a retaining wall on the Down side at this location (on the right of the picture). Ashington Lane Bridge (No. 238) is prominent in the background. [Unconfirmed photographer, possibly T E Maidment; undated, circa 1890-1900, S&DRT collection ref. WSHSD\_P301\_038.]*