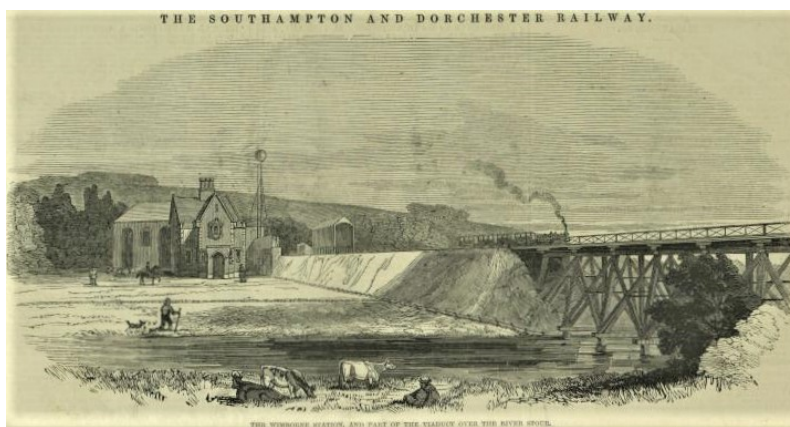


Modelling East Dorset's Railways: Wimborne, June 1847 (maybe...)

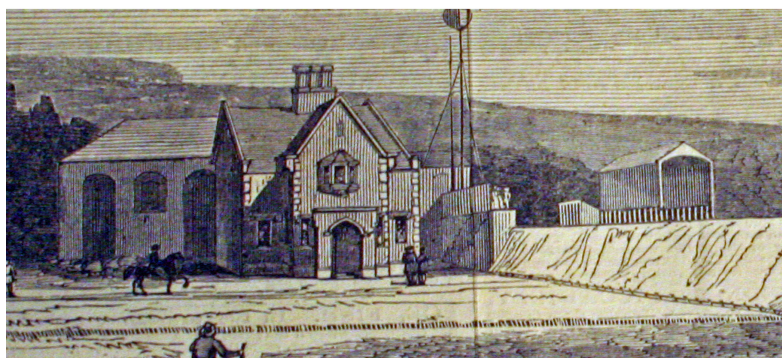
Even in a world awash with archival film, photos and even virtual realities, it's hard to beat seeing something in miniature to conjure up the past. Even those who're too young to remember often love a good model – particularly if Gran can point out to the grand-kids the things she can recall. But Wimborne in 1847?

Well, why not? Much modelling's motivated by nostalgia but that only gets us so far back. Even the 'experts' don't always appreciate just how different the early(ish) railways were from those we knew as kids, 50 or more years ago. So I thought it'd be a challenge and, yes, fun to see if I could discover enough for a plausible model of the very first days of Wimborne's railway.

There's not a lot to go on – when I started, the only contemporary evidence was this engraving from the *Illustrated London News*:



The proportions are clearly 'distorted' (these pictures were never intended as literal representations), but a bit of work on the computer gives something probably closer to 'Reality', and the basis for a model:



Several notable features:

- 1) The main station building (centre) survived until the whole site was levelled in the 1980s – albeit much extended and modified. Here it looks very similar to the surviving building at Holmsley in the New Forest.
- 2) The building to the left and behind the main one looks like the goods warehouse at Wareham (now an architectural practice), and also that at Ringwood, demolished about 50 years ago.

- 3) The disc on a high pole is a good representation of an early London & South Western Railway signal.
- 4) There seems to be a shelter or similar building at the far end of the platform.
- 5) The building on sticks in the foreground is a puzzle but might be a carriage shed – there is mention of one in the Southampton & Dorchester Railway company’s minutes.
- 6) The smaller structure behind it might be a shelter on the other platform – or it might be a coke shed, for refuelling steam locomotives. Again, the company’s minute book mentions one at Wimborne.

This was enough to commission Ken Ball (formerly of Macclesfield Model Railway Group) to make the station building, goods shed and platform shelter – enough to make a diorama of the key elements. I was responsible for the guesswork to fill in the gaps in our knowledge, and pulling together the various elements into the diorama....

Ken did a great job:

The Station Building



South and West elevations.



North and East elevations

The Goods Warehouse



The Platform Shelter



A lot of guesswork here!

I've been less diligent in pulling it all together. As this was to be a static diorama, I used foam board for the baseboard, main scenic elements and trackbed – easy to work, and light.



Initial progress was good and an early effort appeared at Wimborne Railway Society's 2017 show.



Since then progress's been sloooooow. I do intend to have the diorama finished by the station's bi-centennial...