

# BASINGSTOKE RAILWAYS 1839 TO 2013

## Introduction

The construction of the railways and the town's emergence between 1840 and 1854 as the junction for three routes transformed Basingstoke's economy. While the railways devastated the road carrying trade, they also offered considerable advantages for the town. Raw materials could easily be transported, and manufactured goods were exported to other parts of the country. The second half of the 19th century was thus to see the development of large industrial units in the companies of Wallis and Stevens, an engineering firm, and of Burberry and a group of related companies who manufactured clothing. These were very different in scale from the workshops that had hitherto dominated manufacturing in the town and Basingstoke became an important manufacturing centre. This resulted in the town's population growing significantly more rapidly than the national population.

## The coming of the railway

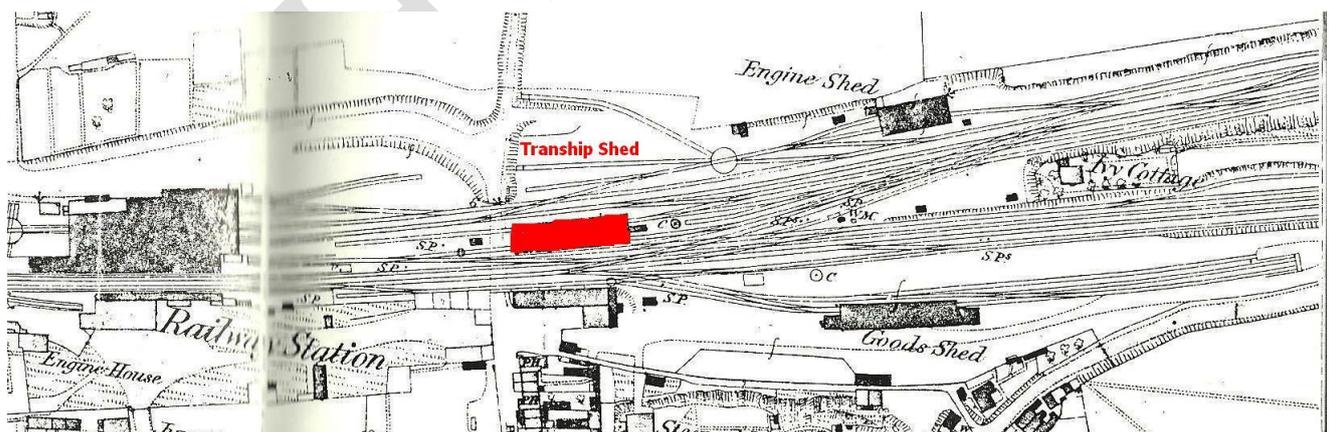
Although the London Southampton railway could have followed the shorter route via Alton, the fact that it was routed via Basingstoke is shown in the original title, *Southampton, London and Branch Railway*, for Basingstoke was to be the place where a branch to Bath and Bristol was to diverge<sup>1</sup> to run via Newbury. However, this was not built as a House of Lords committee ruled in favour of a Broad Gauge route to Bristol via Reading.

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<sup>1</sup> C. F. Dendy Marshall, (revised R. W. Kidner, (1963) *History of the Southern Railway*, 53.

An Act was passed in 1834 for making a railway from Nine Elms to Southampton,<sup>2</sup> and construction work started in October of that year. On 10 June 1839 the line was opened from Nine Elms in London to Basingstoke and from Southampton to Winchester. Passengers had to travel by coach between Basingstoke and Winchester until the line between the two towns opened on 11 May 1840.<sup>3</sup> The line was extended to Waterloo in 1848.<sup>4</sup>

On 1 November 1848 the Great Western Railway (GWR) opened a line from Reading. This used the GWR broad gauge and so was not compatible with the narrower track of the other companies until a third rail laid in 1856 allowed standard gauge trains, mostly goods trains, to travel from the south coast to the industrial heartlands of the midlands and the north. Prior to that goods were transferred from broad to standard gauge wagons in a tranship shed.<sup>5</sup> Broad gauge trains ceased to run in 1869. Since the two railway lines were run by different companies there were initially two distinct but adjacent stations



Map 1 *The tranship shed in red, the first LSWR Goods shed and extensive sidings to the east of the two stations*

<sup>2</sup> 4 and 5 William IV ch.88, 25 July 1834.

<sup>3</sup> R. A. Williams, (1968), *The London and Southampton Railway*, Vol. 1, 38-40.

<sup>4</sup> R. A. Williams, (1968), *The London and Southampton Railway*, 158-61.

<sup>5</sup> K. Mitchell, & K. Smith, (1988), *Woking to Southampton*, 43.

Later, the London and South Western Railway (LSWR) extended its operations westward. It opened a line to Andover on 3 July 1854, which was extended to Salisbury in 1857, and then to the West Country. It reached Exeter in 1860 just over 20 years after the opening of the station at Basingstoke.<sup>6</sup>

## The impact of the railways on existing transport

### *The Basingstoke Canal*

With the coming of the railway to Basingstoke, the canal company began to lose traffic. In 1835-6, the canal carried 25,988 tons and took toll receipts of £4,875. The corresponding figures for 1849-50 were 9,896 tons and £1,237.<sup>7</sup> The canal enjoyed occasional spurts of activity with the building and rebuilding of the barracks at Aldershot and the short-lived brickworks at Up Nately, but as that traffic was further along the canal, these had limited benefits for Basingstoke's economy. The last carriage of goods to and from Basingstoke appears to have been in 1901.<sup>8</sup>

### *The collapse of the coach trade*

The coming of the railway in 1839 had a devastating effect on the coaching trade, the long distance carriers, and the turnpike trusts. The railway meant that goods and livestock could be transported more quickly and cheaply than before. By 1844, the Reading coach was the only one serving Basingstoke, and this ceased after 1848, when the GWR line opened. Those turnpike trusts for roads that did not follow the railway saw a modest increase in income, caused by carriers and others making journeys to the railway and the shops and market in Basingstoke. Carriers left the

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<sup>6</sup> R.A.Williams (1968). 72-3, 85-6, 91-2

<sup>7</sup> P.A.L.Vine (1968). 198.

<sup>8</sup> P.A.L.Vine (1968). 150.

Basingstoke inns to travel to Alton, Kingsclere, Newbury, Odiham, Overton, Reading, Whitchurch and many of the surrounding villages.<sup>9</sup>

Those inns dependent on the long distance coaches were seriously hit. In 1839 James Biggs, a Basingstoke coach master, was made bankrupt.<sup>10</sup> In 1840, Charles Tubb, a Basingstoke innkeeper, was imprisoned for debt<sup>11</sup>, Eliza King, the landlady of the *Crown*, was made bankrupt.<sup>12</sup> One her ostlers committed suicide for fear of being sent to the workhouse.<sup>13</sup> The *Crown* and its yard were put up for sale by order of the Sheriff of Hampshire, but such was the lack of demand, that Charles Paice, the Auctioneer, had to hold three separate auctions on 25 May 1840 and the three following days, 17 June 1840, and 23 September 1840 and the two following days.<sup>14</sup> The *Crown* ceased to be an inn.<sup>15</sup> Part of the building was later used as an ordinary public house, which retained the name of the *Crown*, initially the *Crown Tap*, and the yard was used as a coach-maker's workshop.<sup>16</sup> The *George* with its seven bedrooms and other equipment was put up for auction in 1843, "the Business of the Inn being relinquished."<sup>17</sup> The owner of the *Angel* was unable to pay his debts and in 1850 his assigns put his property up for auction.<sup>18</sup> The accounting book of an unnamed Posting establishment for the period September 1849 to March 1851 showed much reduced business with approximately 50 hirings per month with 54 per cent being for mules and only 46 per cent for horses. Almost all the journeys were to places within a 12

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<sup>9</sup> Pigot's *Nat. Comm. Dir.*(1844).

<sup>10</sup> *London Gazette*, June 14, 1839.

<sup>11</sup> *London Gazette*, March 20, 1840.

<sup>12</sup> *London Gazette*, May 22, 1840.

<sup>13</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser*, May 16, 1840.

<sup>14</sup> *Reading Mercury*, May 16, June 13 and September 19, 1840.

<sup>15</sup> *Census*, 1841 and Pigot's *Nat. Comm. Dir.*(1844).

<sup>16</sup> *Census*, 1851.

<sup>17</sup> *Reading Mercury*, March 4, 1843.

<sup>18</sup> *Reading Mercury*, January 19, and June 8, 1850.

mile radius; the same area covered by carriers and later by buses.<sup>19</sup> Ten years before stage coach work would have produced much more activity. However, this loss of employment following the collapse of the coaching trade was not immediately offset by the benefits of being at the centre of a railway hub. One observer noted in 1841 that, because the coaches had ceased to run through Basingstoke, “not only is the appearance of the town much less cheerful ... but many local interests are suffering from the transition.”<sup>20</sup>

*The impact of the railway on Turnpike Trust viability*

The coming of the railways also had a major impact on the finances of turnpike trusts that maintained the roads and levied the tolls. This can be seen in returns published in Parliamentary Papers. Prior to the advent of the railways the turnpike trusts were profitable, but the impact on the three

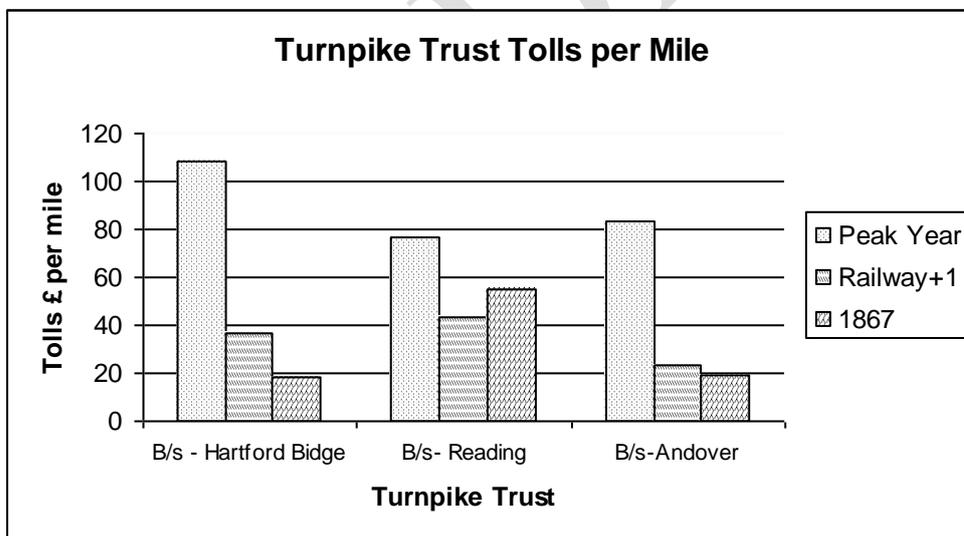


Figure 1 *Turnpike Trust Tolls per mile*

<sup>19</sup> HRO, 8M62/10.

<sup>20</sup> C.Knight (1841), *The Journey Book of England – Hampshire*.

turnpike trusts that run parallel to new railways is seen in Figure 1. The Basingstoke-Hartford Bridge Trust paralleled the London-Southampton line from Winchfield and was greatly affected from 1839. The trust to Andover had an even greater decline after the direct line was opened in 1854 but the Reading route, surprisingly, suffered only a modest decline after the Great Western broad gauge branch reached Basingstoke in 1848.

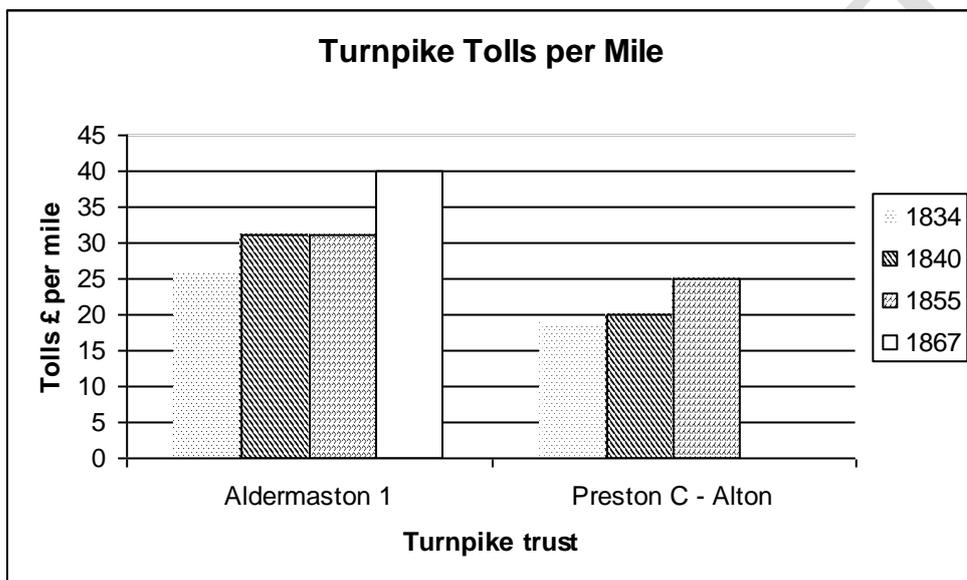


Figure 2 *Turnpike Tolls per mile*

Some trusts were less affected. The two trusts in Figure 2 had much smaller incomes and served areas from Basingstoke where railways did not compete. These continued to be used by carriers and others making journeys to the railway and shops in Basingstoke. Their income showed modest growth after the opening of the railways.

The last Turnpike trust ended in 1885 and in 1889 the newly founded county councils took responsibility for main roads.

The coming of the railways brought little immediate gain to the town, although it was to have a major long-term impact. Between 1841 and 1851 the population of Basingstoke grew by only 197 – a 4.8 per cent increase, compared with the 12.7 per cent increase during the same period for England and Wales as a whole. This indicates that, allowing for births, there was an exodus of people leaving the town in search of work.<sup>21</sup> The economy of the town did not pick up until the 1860s when Basingstoke began a period of industrial expansion, manufacturing goods that were exported beyond its immediate vicinity. This expansion was very much based on the new conditions generated by the railways, with the import of raw materials from the north and Wales, and the opportunities to serve a much more national, and even international, market.

### Goods Traffic

The railway enabled a huge increase in the transport of goods and this required the development of an extensive range of sidings to both the east (see Map 1) and west of the LSWR and GWR stations for handling goods traffic. Coal from the Somerset coal field and further away and raw materials for the industrial concerns were important items. Large amounts of hay were transported from Northern Hampshire to London and manure from the capital was brought in to fertilize local farms.

Although the LSWR did not carry the volume of traffic of railways in the north of England it quickly became the prime goods carrier. The company issued a detailed tariff in 1845<sup>22</sup> which showed that it was cheaper to bring coal to Basingstoke from Southampton rather than from Hambro Wharf in London, although much coal was

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<sup>21</sup> VCH Basingstoke 2013 Population Chapter.

<sup>22</sup> HRO, 10M57/TR10/1.

brought direct from the North or Wales. For over 100 years the railway was the major goods carrier. Goods trains used the goods sheds and smaller urgent parcels were carried in passenger train guards vans. In Basingstoke both companies provided goods facilities. Sidings were expanded by the LSWR, especially to the west of the station after 1875 when the bridge over Chapel Street was widened to take four tracks.<sup>23</sup> A massive goods shed was built in 1903 and later private sidings were provided for Ely Lilly and others to the north of the running lines.<sup>24</sup> Between 1914 and 1954 a one mile long branch, in effect a long siding, served Park Prewett Hospital.<sup>25</sup> In 1901 the Basingstoke to Alton line was built as a light railway, but it was little used and closed in 1934<sup>26</sup>. However, there was also a siding into Thornycroft's motor works which was retained.

Basingstoke had two stations run by different companies and detailed statistics for freight for both stations at the same time are not available. There is a set of figures for the GWR branch, figure 3 below.<sup>27</sup> This shows the importance of coal and coke deliveries. Although some may have come via the LSWR it is likely that the majority was handled by the GWR, given their direct links to South Wales and the north. Two-thirds of the merchandise was coming into Basingstoke and only a third being sent out. Already by 1938 there were signs that freight traffic was in decline. The LSWR is likely to have handed more general merchandise to London and Southampton.

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<sup>23</sup> Mitchell & Smith, 1988 , 43.

<sup>24</sup> K. Mitchell, & K. Smith, (1991), *Basingstoke to Salisbury*, 5.

<sup>25</sup> D. Smith, (1986), *Park Prewett Hospital*, 91 -99.

<sup>26</sup> M. Dean, K. Robertson, & R. Simmonds, (1998) *The Basingstoke and Alton Light Railway*.

<sup>27</sup> GWR Traffic Dealt with at stations and Goods depots 1903 – 38, National Railway Museum G2/116/1.

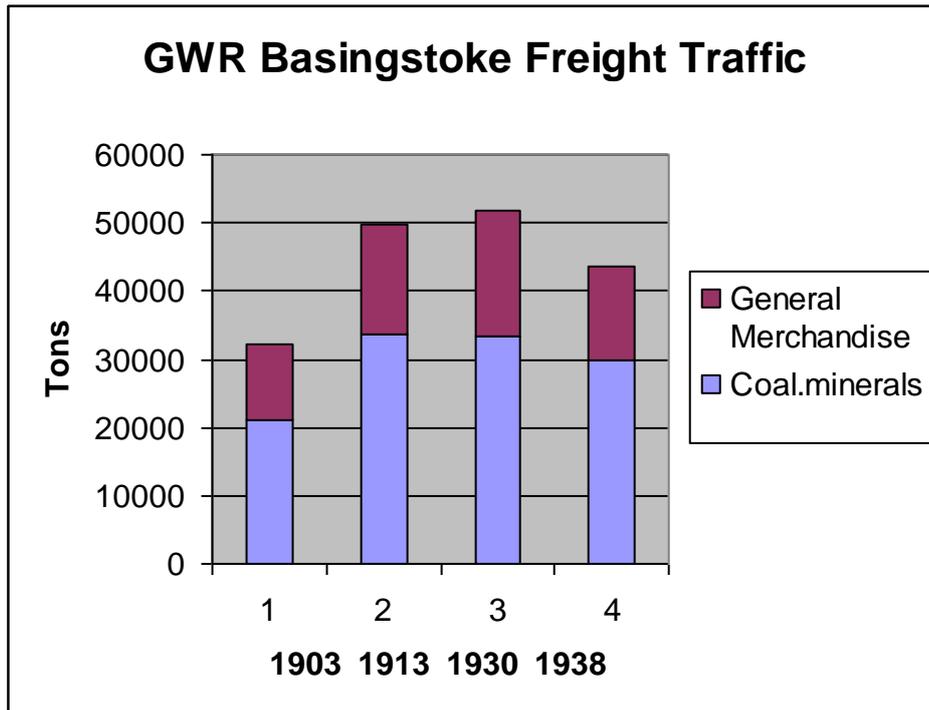


Figure 3 *GWR Basingstoke Freight Traffic*

By 1949 the return covered both stations and showed rail was still a major player in goods distribution, 12,700 wagons were handled in the year.<sup>28</sup> Figure 4 below shows that coal ‘imports’ were still important and the general merchandise column shows that incoming traffic exceeded goods being carried out. But subsequently it was to be a picture of decline as rail freight came under increasing pressure from road transport and the goods yard closed in 1968<sup>29</sup>. The Red Star parcel service by passenger trains was sold off in 1995 and in 2013, other than sidings for infrastructure trains, Basingstoke has become solely a station for passengers.

<sup>28</sup> British Rail Traffic Returns, TNA AN82/93.

<sup>29</sup> V. Mitchell, & K. Smith, *Basingstoke to Salisbury*, Middleton Press, Midhurse, 1991, note 10.

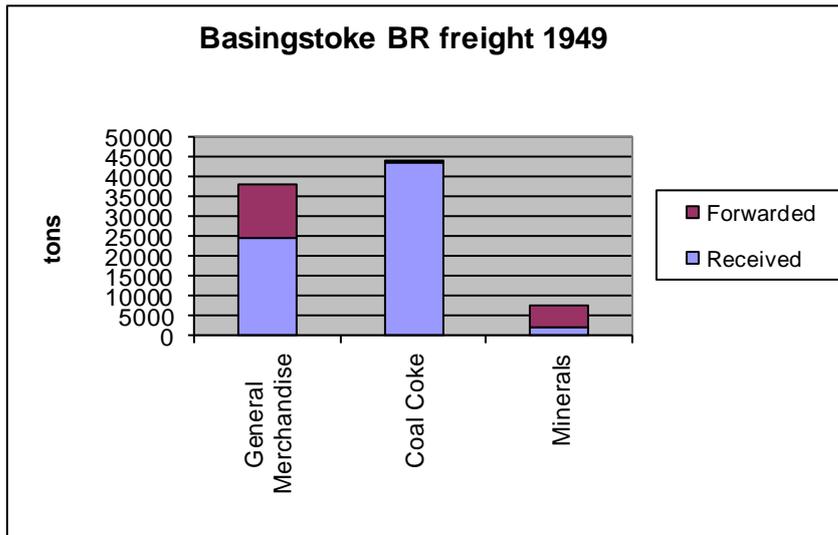


Figure 4. *Basingstoke BR freight 1949*

### Passenger Traffic

Since the coming of the railways, there has been an immense and continuing growth in passenger traffic. When the line from Basingstoke to London was opened in 1839 there were five trains a day in each direction with a second class fare of 7s. Carriages were conveyed for 26s. plus 25s. for two horses.<sup>30</sup> By 1856 there were nine trains a day with the fastest taking 1 hour 15 minutes and the cheap Parliamentary train 3 hours.<sup>31</sup> Under an 1844 Act each company had to provide one train each day stopping at all stations for a fare of not more than one penny per mile to enable the less well off to travel.

The 1938 timetable is an example of the mature steam operated timetable<sup>32</sup>. This shows 20 stopping and 15 fast trains to Waterloo with the fastest taking 54 minutes.

The Salisbury service had only 12 stopping trains and two expresses going as far as

<sup>30</sup> HRO 9M49/Z230/4

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell & Smith (1988), p 40

<sup>32</sup> Bradshaw, *July 1938 Railway Guide*, 50, 98, 154, 170, 189

Plymouth. The GWR service to Reading had 13 stopping trains and only five that ran to the midlands or the north.

Until 1967 all trains were steam or later diesel hauled but then the line from London to Bournemouth was electrified and a more intensive regular passenger service was initiated from 1968. In contrast to the 1938 service the 2011 service showed a very great increase in trains to cater for the much larger town and the greater scale of commuting to London, with 79 trains running to Waterloo, the local service to Reading having grown to 36 and the through services to Birmingham, Newcastle and Manchester numbering 23 each weekday. Both the Salisbury to Exeter and the Southampton, Portsmouth and Bournemouth services also showed significant increases.<sup>33</sup>

In 1949, 1015 season tickets were issued and over 390,000 ordinary tickets issued or collected.<sup>34</sup> It is difficult to make a direct comparison but by 1982 the number of passengers using the station reached 1.8m., rising to 2.5m. in 1984<sup>35</sup> and 4.9 m. in 2010-1.<sup>36</sup> There were originally two adjacent stations, one for each company. The first modest LSWR station was replaced in 1850-1; this was expanded in the 1870s and the present large station was built in 1903.<sup>37</sup> This underwent an improvement in 1985 and a fuller refurbishment was carried out in 2012.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> South West Trains, First Great Western and Cross Country trains 2011 timetables.

<sup>34</sup> British Rail Traffic Returns 1949 TNA 82/93.

<sup>35</sup> K. Mitchell, & K. Smith, (1991), 10.

<sup>36</sup> Office of Rail Regulator website, *Station Usage statistics 2011*. Accessed 28/2/2013

<sup>37</sup> Mitchell, & Smith, (1991), 10.

<sup>38</sup> Basingstoke Observer 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2012 .

## The railway as employer

In the 1851 census there were 35 railway employees listed in Basingstoke.<sup>39</sup> In 1911 313 male workers were recorded as 'on railways'.<sup>40</sup> The GWR statistics between 1903 and 1930 showed that between 32 and 40 were employed by that railway but by 1938 the number had fallen to 10 as many were transferred to the Southern Railway<sup>41</sup> A census for staff on the LSWR in 1921<sup>42</sup> just before it was absorbed into the Southern Railway is shown in Figure 5 below and shows that with GWR staff over 350 were employed in Basingstoke:

Department	Number
Carriage and Wagon. Examiners & Oilers	27
Engineers Gangers & Lengthmen, Signals & Telegraph	55
Locomotive. Engine shed. Cleaners, Drivers (31), Firemen 30,	92
Traffic. Station master, Inspectors, Clerks (15), Carters, Checkers, Guards, Porters (passenger & goods 38), Shunters (28), Signalmen (21)	151 <b>Total 325</b>

Figure 5 *London and South Western Railway staff, January 1921*

<sup>39</sup> Census, 1851 Data retrieved by Bob Applin.

<sup>40</sup> Census 1901,94 (HRO/W/K3/1/3).

<sup>41</sup> GWR Traffic Dealt with at stations and Goods depots 1903 – 38, National Railway Museum G2/116/1.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, AN82/93. The 1921 census summary for Basingstoke lists 254 male 'railway workers' (Census 1921, Hampshire) 68 (HRO, W/K3/1/6i 1921).

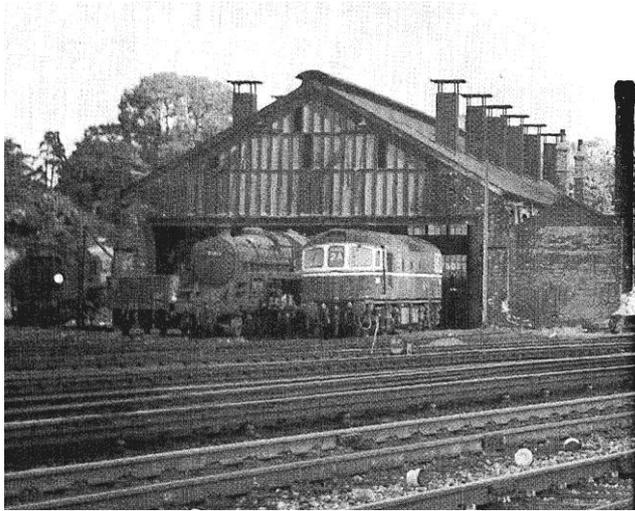


Figure 6. *Basingstoke Engine shed in 1966. It closed in July 1967 when BR steam ceased. All the locomotive staff in Figure 5 above were employed here.*

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