

# TRAINS COMING THIS WAY AND THAT

## George Corbett of Brading Junction

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It seems that some of those who were working in the quieter parts of the Island during the 1890s may have appeared at times to become somewhat stressed by the pressures modern transport technology imposed on their time keeping and work schedules.

As a schoolboy holidaying with relatives on the Isle of Wight in the 1950's the gist of the content of the first report below was usually recounted as the train pulled into Brading. Then it was always taken with a pinch of salt, but now perhaps I am not quite so sure thanks to the *Isle of Wight County Press* and a chance find in the *IW Record Office*.



Scene the railway station platform not 100 miles from Brading during the busy season

Strange gentleman says to the station master bustling about on the platform:

*“You seem to have plenty to do here, Station Master.”*

Station master:

*“Do Sir, what with trains coming this way and trains coming that way, besides attending to passengers’ luggage and goods traffic, I have something on my mind.”*

Strange gentleman:

*“Yes I know something of what it is, being station master of Clapham Junction.”*

Exit station master - train arrives:

*“B----- Junction, change here for -- ----- and etc and etc”*



A response to the supposed encounter was printed a week later in the *Isle of Wight County Press*. It survives and adds an extra little twist to the story. Perhaps George Corbett, stationmaster of the then Brading Junction - with at the most two trains an hour to St Helens and Bembridge with the same to Ryde and Ventnor and a little goods traffic - did not at the end of 1890 wish to enter fully into the festive spirit.

*Brading Junction.  
To the editor of County Press*

*Sir,*

*Doubtless the festivities of Christmas assisted the vivid imagination of the person (late station master of Clapham Junction) who invented and inserted in your last issue the remarkable conversation said to have passed between himself and me at my station. I flatly deny uttering the words he attributes to me either to him or to anyone else, and shall feel obliged if you will in your next impression insert this denial, and if he would condescend to reply, perhaps he will be good enough to add his name and address.*

*I am Sir yours obediently  
Geo Corbett, Station Master  
1<sup>st</sup> January 1891.*

Courtesy County Press 1891 Jan 03 p2 c6

True or not, George Corbett, Stationmaster of Brading - the Isle of Wight Clapham Junction - became part of modern Island folk lore. He might have been rather surprised that he was still being remembered by many well over a century later and his story, true or not, revived yet again after another sixty years. His station now reduced to a single run-through track with just four train movements an hour at the most using electric traction nearly half the age of his original outburst no doubt would provoke yet another letter to the *County Press*. At least his splendid signal box, even if it could not match those of Clapham, has been restored and stands proudly testifying to an Island junction when steam was the 'white hot technology of the future'



Photographs: Brading Station as it is today showing the single electrified track  
The front of the station building which house a heritage centre  
The restored signal box

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