

ISLAND RAILWAYS WERE DIFFERENT

SOME EARLY IW RAILWAY ACCIDENTS & OTHER LITTLE STORIES

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In the beginning, and one can expect throughout their whole life, not everyone has been in favour of having railways on the Isle of Wight. In a letter to the Hampshire Telegraph, which was published in Portsmouth and served the Island, a correspondent wrote in 1855:

“The Isle of Wight Railway, although promising little or nothing as far as we can see in the way of remuneration to the outlay of the shareholders, and being undoubtedly one of the most rabid of all the schemes that has been concocted by our local agitators, has actually been once more dragged into light after having to all appearances been consigned to the oblivions such abortive projects deserve. We trust that for the sake of the future prospect of the Island this absurdity will at once be knocked in the head.”

Hampshire Telegraph 3 Nov 1855

He, for in those days no women would dare write, especially on the subject of railways, to a local newspaper, no doubt was not surprised when he read ten years later:

Ryde – Throwing at a Railway Train

At the Ryde police court before T. Fowke Esq. on Wednesday, a lad named Guy, was charged with having thrown a large stone at an up-train, on the previous day, near Bembridge (Brading? as the Bembridge line still had to be built), which was so dexterously aimed that it smashed the window of a first-class carriage, placing the passengers in the most imminent danger from the splinters. The guard witnessed the act, and without a moment's loss of time, jumped off the carriage and pursued the offenders. After a chase he succeeded in capturing Guy. The delinquents have, we believe, rendered

themselves liable to penal servitude, and they certainly richly deserve a very heavy punishment for such reckless conduct.

Hampshire Telegraph 9 Dec 1865

Over the next decade or so many might have thought, when they read in the *Hampshire Telegraph* regular accounts of accidents and other happenings, that he could have been right. (The author is grateful to the *Hampshire Telegraph* for the use of the extracts and to the *Portsmouth Central Library* for making them available - for the latter houses the newspaper archive and has microfilm copies of most editions.)

Ryde – I. W. Railway - A railway accident in the Island would be a novelty fortunately; but on Thursday an incident very nearly approaching one took place. The 2.25 up train from Ventnor was on the way to Ryde, when, about a mile this side of Brading station, the spring to one of the wheels broke. The accident was perceived by the driver, who immediately brought the train to a stand, and removed the broke pieces from between the wheels. The passengers were somewhat alarmed, but beyond a short delay, as the engine I its crippled state could not precede with the accustomed celerity, no unpleasant results ensued.

2 Oct 1869



Sandown – Accident on the line – At the Sandown Station on Tuesday evening last week, through the points being wrong, one of the carriages of the train leaving the station for Ryde was overturned and smashed. Mr W. Groves, builder of Ryde, was much shaken and bruised and he was removed to his home, and two doctors have been in attendance. The other occupants of the carriage appear to have escaped without much injury.

30 Jan 1878

How many of us today would accept being described as 'belonging to our employer'?

St Helens – At 10 am on Friday morning, as a good train from Ventnor to Brading arrived on the quay, close to St Helen's Harbour, the newly made ground gave way and the guard's brake van with one wagon went over the quay into the Harbour. The passengers consisting of the guard, two captains of schooners, and one man belonging to Messrs Pickfords & Son, were locked in the brake, and had it not been for the guard passing the key through a window and a man coming to their assistance and opening the door they in all probability have drowned.

23 April 1879

Ryde – A signalman drunk whilst on duty – The signalman on the Ryde, Newport and Cowes railway, was charged with being drunk whilst on duty. Inspector Williams proved the charge. The points were against the train he was in, which left Cowes at 12.30, and on getting down to see the cause he found the defendant drunk and incapable of attending to his duties. The defendant had excellent testimonials as to previous good character, and the Bench taking that into consideration, fined him only £1 and costs, or in default 14 days imprisonment with hard labour.

10 May 1879

Ryde – Accident on the Ryde and Newport Railway – The passengers on the Ryde, Newport and Cowes Railway were subject to some considerable inconvenience on Friday in consequence of a collision which occurred at Ashley Station. A passenger train, was shunted up the siding leading towards the quarry and, after connecting with a number of heavily-loaded trucks, was returning to the main line, when it was found that the trucks at the rear of the train were so heavy and the gradient of the line so steep that the brakes were not sufficiently powerful to keep the train back. The course of the train was impeded by violent contact with a number of standing carriages, the first of which was smashed, the engine also being considerably damaged. For several hours the line was blocked, and passengers between Ryde and Newport were conveyed via Sandown.

11 February 1880

Ryde – Accident – On Sunday morning an engine got off the line on the new railway between the Pier-gates and St John's-road Station, and the traffic was delayed for several hours in consequence travellers being carried from the Pier to St John's-road in busses.

16 June 1880



Ryde – Yesterday morning about ten o'clock an accident occurred to one of the ordinary trains from Ryde to Ventnor. As the train was approaching Brading station it was diverted from the main line into a siding, in consequence of the points being wrongly fixed, and the carriages were brought into violent collision with a coal store. Some of them were badly damaged, and five passengers are reported to be injured.

18 August 1880

This accident even was followed up in the next edition three days later. What would the media of today have made of the incident?

Brading – The Railway Accident – We are happy to learn that the recent railway accident at the station here was by no means so serious as it was first supposed. The 9-20 train from Ryde was coming slowly into the station, when owing to a mistake in the setting of the points, instead of running by the side of the platform it went into a siding terminating in a 'dock' used for loading and unloading. There were eight or more wagons in the siding, and the engine dashed into these. The first was splintered and the wheels and axle jammed under the engine. The truck at the extreme end was also damaged, pushed partially out of the dock, and all the others were thrown off the line. The carriage next to the engine was also damaged. There were four or five passengers shaken and injured, but the only serious case was that of Miss Blain, a lady lodging at

Cumberland House, Ryde, who was much shaken and fainted. Dr Thurston was telegraphed for from Shanklin and attended as soon as practicable. The front part of the engine was damaged, but to no great extent, it being in use later in the day for shunting.

21 August 1880

Shanklin – Railway Accident – An accident very similar to that which occurred at Brading last year took place at our station on Wednesday. It seen that some wagons were turned into a siding, and the points locked in the wrong direction. The consequence was that the down train from Ventnor ran into the siding, and the engine went off the line. No one was hurt but a little delay was occasioned.

18 September 1880

It must have been some gale!



Ryde – A Runaway Goods Van – During the height of the gale (Sunday night 26th Dec1886) a railway goods van broke away from the end of the railway pier and was blown the extreme length of the structure. On reaching the town end it went down the incline with great velocity into the tunnel, and was dragged out about midday on Monday.

Sat 01 Jan 1887

Nearly thirty years

Perhaps this letter to the Editor of the *Hampshire Telegraph* was in its own way as damming as the famous Punch cartoon with the caption
“twelve miles for twelve shillings in twelve hours”

The Isle of Wight Railway

By far the worst managed line I have ever travelled on is the Isle of Wight Railway. The train are so unpunctual as sometimes to render it possible for the punctual traveller to catch the train before the one he intended to go by. The other day a train was delayed nearly a quarter of an hour, because there was no official in the booking office to issue tickets. The London Brighton and South Coast Railway Company has purchased the line as far as St John's-road Ryde. For the sake of visitors to the island, it is to be hoped there is some truth in the rumour that this company is in treaty for the whole of the service. signed 'Truth'

28 May 1881

Were they all that different? - Have a safe journey

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