

GOSPORT'S ROLE IN THE FUNERAL OF QUEEN VICTORIA

By kind permission of Liz Stevens, wife of our departed former Hon. Secretary Malc Stevens.

Queen Victoria died at Osborne House on 22nd January 1901. Plans were drawn up to transport her body from the Isle of Wight to Gosport from where her body would be taken by train to Frogmore for internment.

On 1st February her body was brought across the Solent on board the Royal Yacht "Alberta".

A unique and very important occasion not only in the history of the Gosport railway branch but also of the town itself.

***'The funeral of Queen Victoria'
From The Railway Magazine, March 1901, pp. 260-4***

The funeral cortege of our late Queen, in addition to travelling by sea and road, performed two journeys by train, both on Saturday, February 2nd. The first of these was over the London and South-Western Railway from Gosport to Fareham, and thence by London, Brighton and South Coast Railway to Victoria. The train in question consisted of the elaborate "Prince of Wales" Royal train, of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, for the accommodation of King Edward VII. In addition to this train, the Great Western Railway provided two saloons (Nos. 229 and 223), the former had the internal fittings removed, and contained the coffin within which was the body of Queen Victoria; the interior of the saloon was lined with white cloth relieved by purple bands. Great Western saloon, No. 223, was used to convey the wreaths and other floral emblems.

The train was under the personal charge of Mr. Sam Fay, superintendent of the London and South-Western Railway; whilst Mr. Owens, the general manager, and Mr. Drummond, the locomotive superintendent, travelled with the train. On arrival at Fareham, the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway officials took charge for the rest of the journey. Mr. Forbes, the general manager, and Mr. Greenwood, superintendent of the line, being in attendance; whilst Mr. Billinton, the locomotive superintendent, and Mr. J. Richardson, the chief of Battersea locomotive district, travelled on the engine. The train being in charge of two Royal guards, in gorgeous uniforms (J. Youatt and E. Rose). The engine attached at Fareham was No. 54 ("Empress"), one of the "Sirdar" class of four-coupled bogie express locomotives ... it was decorated with a gilt crown on a crimson cushion at the front of the chimney, and with white and purple cloth festoons along the sides of the boiler barrel, and smoke-box. The train left Portsmouth 10 minutes late, and leaving Fareham at 8.51, made up 9 minutes before Horsham was reached, and was finally brought to a stand in Victoria Station at 10.58, 2 minutes before the actual booked time. How exceeding fine this performance was, anyone who knows the difficulty of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway's road from Portsmouth will appreciate. The "Sirdar" ran as pilot in front of the funeral train from Portsmouth to Victoria.

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Queen Victoria's funeral
 HMV *Alberta* entering
 Portsmouth Harbour
 Feb 1901

Painting by William Wyllie



Queen Victoria's Funeral
 Carriage

BODY OF HER LATE MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA,
Accompanied by the Chief Mourner,
H.M. KING EDWARD VII.
 AND
H.I.M. THE GERMAN EMPEROR
 AND THE OTHER ROYAL PRINCES,
 On **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2nd, 1901.**
 FROM GOSPORT (S.W.R.) TO VICTORIA (via Fareham, Cosham, Havant, Ford
 Junction, Horsham, Dorking and Mitcham Junction):—
TIME TABLE.

UP JOURNEY.	PILOT.		ROYAL TRAIN.		UP JOURNEY.	PILOT.		ROYAL TRAIN.	
	A.M.		A.M.			A.M.		A.M.	
	arr.	dep.	arr.	dep.		arr.	dep.	arr.	dep.
Gosport (Clarendon Yard, S.W.R.)	...	8 35	...	8 45	Stammerham Junction	...	9 32	...	10 2
Gosport	...	8 38	...	8 48	Horsham	...	9 55	...	10 5
Fareham	...	8 45	8 54	8 58	Warnham	...	9 58	...	10 8
Cosham	...	8 57	...	9 7	Okley	...	10 3	...	10 13
Farlington Junction	...	9 0	...	9 10	Holmwood	...	10 6	...	10 16
Havant Junction	...	9 3	...	9 15	Dorking	...	10 13	...	10 23
Boham	...	9 11	...	9 21	Leatherhead Junction	...	10 18	...	10 28
Chichester	...	9 15	...	9 25	Epsom Junction	...	10 21	...	10 31

Details of Train Journey
 Gosport to Victoria Station.



View of Royal Station,
Clarence Yard

*From Gosport Society
Archives*

From: http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/g/gosport_clarence_yard

Station Name: GOSPORT CLARENCE YARD

Date opened:	21.9.1845
Location:	Within Clarence Yard east of Weevil Lane
Company on opening:	London & South Western Railway
Date closed to passengers:	1.2.1901
Date closed completely:	?
Company on closing:	London & South Western Railway
Present state:	Partly Demolished – (the site used by UK Docks Ltd at 2023)
County:	Hampshire
OS Grid Ref:	SU618004
Date of visit:	11.3.2006 (Malc's visit?)

Notes: In 1846, the renovation of Osborne House at Cowes on the Isle of Wight was completed and upon remembering her previous trip to Gosport the Queen Victoria requested that the ramparts be opened (a request that the Commanding Officer of the Garrison readily agreed) and a 600 yard extension was laid into the Royal Clarence Yard where the new Royal station was built.

The station consisted of a single curved platform flanked on one side by a long wall. There was a waiting room for Royal travellers, but it is said that Queen Victoria never used it when using the station. When the Queen used the station, a carpet was laid between the train and the Royal Yacht.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FAREHAM - GOSPORT LINE

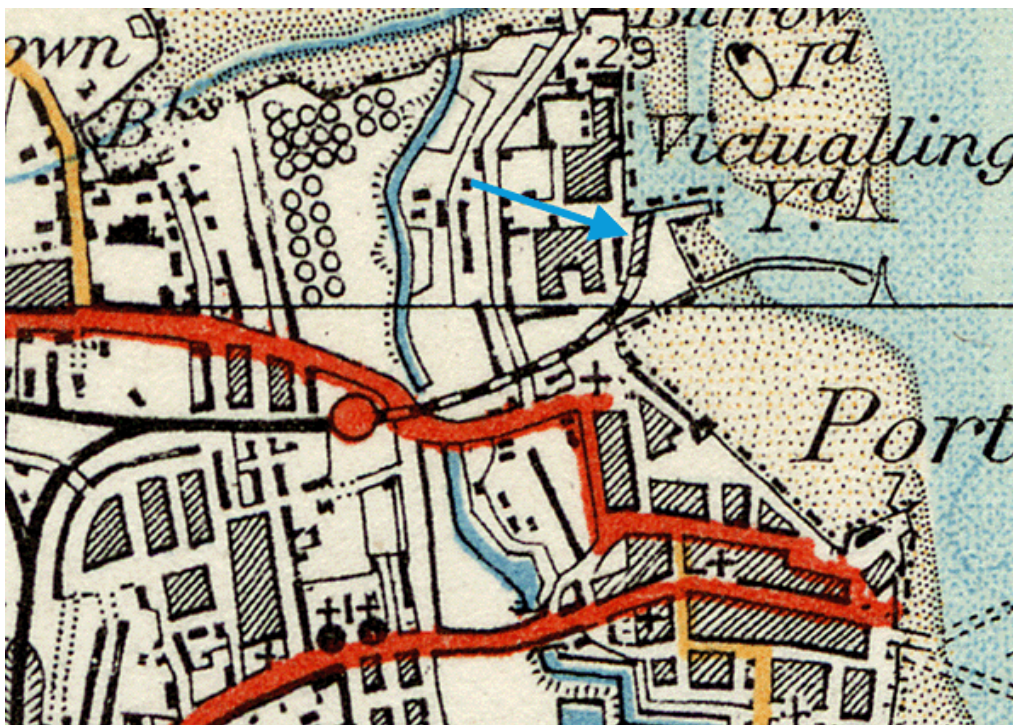
A railway to Gosport was first promoted in 1836 as part of a plan by the London and Southampton Railway to connect Portsmouth to London. There was strong opposition from

local residents to the building of a branch line into Portsmouth for a line that was destined for Southampton, such was the animosity between the two towns. Instead it was proposed that the line should be built to Gosport from where there was a short ferry journey to Portsmouth. The plan was dropped but was revived two years by the London and South Western Railway (LSWR) who had taken over the London & Southampton. The proposed terminus was to be just short of the town centre as Gosport was a fortified town and the Commanding Officer refused to allow the walls to be breached to bring the railway closer to the town centre.

The line opened on 29th November 1841. The terminus at Gosport was designed by William Tite in an Italianate classic tradition and finished with Tuscan columns with Corinthian capitals and an overall 'trainshed' roof. The station was first used by the Royal Family on 8th October 1843 when Prince Albert arrived at Gosport by train to greet the King Louis - Phillippe of France. Queen Victoria came to the station six days later when she accompanied the King on his return to France. The following year the Queen purchased the Osborne Estate on the Isle of Wight and the Clarence Victualing Yard at Gosport was her favoured point of departure rather than Portsmouth or Southampton. Shortly afterwards Prince Albert and the LSWR agreed to build a 605 yard extension from Gosport through the ramparts of the Gosport Lines to a new station closer to the pier; Gosport Clarence Yard Station (also known as Royal Victoria Station) opened on 13th September 1845.

The railway and the station were very busy in the middle part of the 19th century, particularly with the carriage of coal and other freight.

By 1900 passenger numbers were in decline due in part to the competition from street tramways but with the coming of WW1 rail traffic quickly improved with supplies to and from the Royal Clarence Yard and large numbers of troop movements including the transportation of the wounded soldiers to Haslar Hospital in Gosport.



Stevens Family Recollection

My paternal grandfather, Ernest Richard Stevens (1875-1950) died when I was two years old. He and my grandmother were living with us at the time of his death and I have a recollection of

his passing, my earliest memory. Ernest's first wife died in 1917 and a year later he married my grandmother. My father William (born 1.1.1923) was the youngest child from that marriage.

I recall my grandmother telling me that my grandfather had been a pallbearer at Gosport when Queen Victoria's coffin arrived from Osborne House. As a youngster I was somewhat impressed that my late grandfather had played a small part in an event of international as well as local significance, but I never learnt of the circumstances that led to my grandfather standing alongside the coffin of the Queen with all the dignitaries including the new King Edward VII looking on. My thoughts while growing up was that it had something to do with a military connection as he had served in the Royal Marines Light Infantry.

Malc Stevens. Gosport Society.

I found this article on Malc's memory stick together with all the records that Malc had recorded as Hon. Secretary, Malc has also left us a archive of Gosport Publications he collected over many years. These records will be kept in our Gosport Society Archives which are currently being recorded by Pam Braddock. Thank you Malc on leaving us such a legacy.

We hope you have found our Spring Newsletter informative, and look forward to your support for 2023 – 2024.

Best Wishes,

Richard Cook

Chairman

Gosport Society.