



Volunteers' Handbook



President's Foreword

Welcome to the Watercress Line

Whether you are a new volunteer or have been with us for some time, may I offer you a warm welcome to the Watercress Line. Our paid staff working in conjunction with our many volunteers are the cornerstone on which our railway is founded. Without the time and effort of our many volunteers, freely given, we would not be able to run trains or fulfil our educational objectives to the visiting public. You are therefore vital in making our business a success and I hope that you will enjoy working with us and gain much satisfaction from your role as a volunteer.

We like to think that we are an open and cohesive team and we see your work with us as a partnership - you fulfil your role to the best of your ability and we will train you and look after you to the best of ours. We will always comply with our legal obligations to you and where we can, we will try to do better than that. Teamwork is the essence of our business and we want you to feel a part of that team from the word go, to enjoy the benefits of working in that kind of environment, and to be prepared to share with us your thoughts about how we can be constantly improving what we do and how we do it.

We are fortunate that we work with many historic and irreplaceable railway artefacts in our volunteering, and that can bring a special set of challenges but also great satisfaction. We have to be resilient to deal with the demands of working with heritage rolling stock and infrastructure which can throw up unexpected issues perhaps more often than in other lines of work. However, the satisfaction that we can derive from working in this can-do environment can be huge.

Above all, safety has to be our watchword and we must all take personal responsibility for the safety of ourselves and our colleagues. We are also subject to regulation and inspection by the Office of Rail and Road from time to time in just the same way as the mainline railways. We must, therefore, maintain the highest standards of professionalism and safety in the operation of our railway so that we can continue to be allowed to run our trains.

So once again, a very warm welcome to the Watercress Line. Thank you very much indeed for offering us your time and enthusiasm. I wish you a long, happy and fulfilling time with us and I look forward to meeting and working with you in the near future.



Richard Lacey



Introduction

This is your guide to volunteering on the Watercress Line. It is designed to complement your induction and should be read in conjunction with other documents which will be introduced to you during your induction or training including our vision, values and standards booklet. Although at first sight it may seem lengthy, we hope you find it a valuable source of information and reference for your time as a volunteer with us.

The Watercress Line has a large number of volunteers without whom it could not exist and this booklet is our way of providing everyone with a base level of knowledge about volunteering with us. Particularly important is the explanation of the nature of relationship between the volunteer and the Watercress Line and, in effect, it sets out the code of conduct for both sides.

If you would like more information on any aspect of volunteering or have any queries about your role, please talk to your line manager or supervisor in the first instance, or our Volunteer Liaison Team on 01962 587058



The Watercress Line Story

It is important that all volunteers who interact with our visitors understand the Watercress Line story and can provide a consistent commentary about what we aim to show.

The Watercress Line today differs from all other standard-gauge preserved railways except the Great Central, because our line was built as a mainline railway not a branch-line. It is unique in being the only railway in preservation that was built as a single-track mainline.

We are a railway that carried people to school and work locally, transported troops to war, and London families to their holidays on the South coast. We provided an alternative route for trains to the docks at Southampton, particularly if the mainline through Winchester was blocked. We are a railway that was frequently challenging to operate due to the gradients, but which continued to provide a very valuable service throughout its history. We are a railway that became synonymous with the rapid despatch of one particular perishable – Watercress – but which served many other purposes as well.

The Watercress Line represents a Southern secondary main line during the final three decades of steam (1939-1967). The aim is to capture an era rather than a specific year. The main focus is on the period of transition from 1945 to 1960, which saw the Southern Railway become British Railways Southern Region. This was the 'Indian summer' of steam in the South, with hundreds of new locomotives being delivered but with pre-war and pre-grouping classes still surviving.

There was a mix of loco liveries on display during that period - wartime black, malachite green, BR lined black and BR Brunswick green. Coaches appeared in olive green, malachite green, 'blood and custard' and Southern Region green, with Somerset & Dorset (S&D) trains formed of maroon BR Mk1s. Stations gradually switched from Southern Railway to Southern Region colours. The Watercress Line reproduces all this in a historically-valid way that is of intrinsic interest and educational value to visitors.

Inevitably there are anomalies – for example, rebuilt Merchant Navies never ran alongside anything in malachite green. But this is acceptable in the sense of enabling visitors to experience both the 'old' Southern and the 'new' BR within a coherent 28-year timeframe. The important thing is that we will continue to maintain standards of authenticity with regard to each station, loco, coach or significant artefact. So station paint schemes will be consistent with the physical structure of buildings, signage etc. In the same vein and in general, we will only turn out a loco in a livery that it (or at least one other member of its class) carried during the period that we are representing.

Volunteering on the Watercress Line

Opportunities

The Watercress Line has a wide range of volunteering opportunities available in a variety of roles from working on stations and operating the trains to maintaining the infrastructure and permanent way, to helping in our shops and cafes. We believe that volunteering should be open to all regardless of sex, sexual orientation, race, marital status, age, religion, community background or political beliefs.

However, some departments of the railway may not be suitable for every volunteer, particularly as a good many are safety-critical. Applicants for these roles will need to meet the appropriate selection criteria and the sole determinant will be the ability of the individual to carry out the task safely taking account of the needs and limitations of the locations in which they will work.

Induction

Induction is the process by which the volunteer and the Watercress Line introduce themselves to each other and the volunteer enters into training. We will ask you about your background, educational and professional qualifications and your aspirations for working with us. We will explain the opportunities available to you and do our best to meet your aspirations, though we may try to steer you towards roles where we have a particular need. However, subject to your suitability, the choice of whether to accept a role or not will be yours. For a number of roles you will need to be interviewed to assess your suitability, especially in safety-critical positions. Your data will be held securely in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation as modified by the Data Protection Act 2018.

Once we have agreed with you the role that we think you are suited to, we will arrange for you to be introduced to your new department in which a supervisor or trainer will be appointed to welcome you and give you the training you need to become effective. During this period, we expect that you will do your utmost to attend any training sessions that are specifically arranged for you so that opportunities are not wasted and you become effective at the earliest opportunity. Your trainer/supervisor is the person to whom you should turn to answer any questions you have or issues that arise.



Settling In

When you start with us, you will make a judgement as to where you think you would like to work. Most people find they make the right choice and go on to stay with us for lengthy periods. This is our ideal where both sides are happy with the arrangement and expectations are being met. Occasionally, someone finds that the role is not perhaps what they thought, so after a settling in period, a member of our Volunteer Liaison team will contact you to find out how things are working out for you.

At this point we can assess whether you are happy in your role, and whether there are any issues we need to resolve. You might possibly wish to change role and work in a different department, an option that is always open to you as a volunteer. You can also work in more than one department at a time if you have the time available.



Our Partnership with You

The success of our railway depends entirely on the people who both work for and with us, and volunteers and paid staff alike contribute to that success. Our 500-some volunteers are an integral and key part of the Watercress Line contributing skills, talents, experience and enthusiasm that keep our trains running. Volunteers therefore help to contain costs and undertake tasks that otherwise could not be afforded.

Working in partnership with our volunteers are our employees who provide most of the key management structure, organisation and safety-critical maintenance of our infrastructure and rolling stock that keeps us functioning. Many volunteers, in addition to fulfilling their primary roles, allow us to benefit from their specialist skills developed in their working lives and whose expertise it would be hard to find or extremely expensive to buy in. We are extremely grateful to all who put their skills at our disposal and we may ask you whether you have such specialist skills on which we might call on an occasional basis.

It is vital therefore that we maintain an effective and balanced partnership with all of our people and it is really important to us that we make sure each volunteer's experience is happy, productive and mutually beneficial.



What you can expect from us:

- Appropriate induction, training and guidance in the role for which you have volunteered
- That we value the contribution you are able to make and accept that the commitments of volunteers may change over time.
- To be kept up to date about what is happening on our railway
- To have safe working conditions
- That we are clear about who your line manager or supervisor is and how your department is organised.
- To be listened to when you have a concern, provided it is raised in the appropriate way.
- To be treated with respect and courtesy in accordance with our equality and diversity policy.
- That your personal information and records will be safeguarded in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2008.
- That you will have periodic reviews of performance to ensure you remain content in role and we with you.
- That we will resolve fairly any problems, complaints or difficulties you may have whilst volunteering with us
- The chance to meet and work with other volunteers and paid staff

What we expect from you:

That you will:

- Learn about the history, structure and working of the Watercress Line and support our aims and objectives.
- Be a good ambassador for the Watercress Line in dealing with the public.
- Attend training and periodic assessment sessions relevant to your role.
- Work within established Watercress Line policies and procedures.
- Always use your best endeavours and apply your training and the rules that support your role.
- Fulfil your rostered duties, if appropriate, or obtain cover for your duties if you are unable to fulfil them for any reason.
- Foster and maintain good relations with other volunteers, paid staff and managers.
- Protect the assets of the Watercress Line including equipment, artefacts and funds from loss or damage as far as you are able.
- Make a worthwhile contribution of your time to the Watercress Line in return for the training, support and benefits that you receive.
- Take responsibility for your own health and safety and that of your working colleagues while on the line and observe our Health & Safety policies.
- Safeguard any confidential information about the Watercress Line that you may come into contact with in the course of your duties.
- Uphold our good name and reputation at all times and have regard to our policy on the use of social media.
- Offer any practical suggestions you may identify for the continual improvement of the business.
- Let us know as soon as possible if you are no longer able to fulfil your role or wish to change roles.

The Way We Work

Attendance

As a volunteer, you will determine how often you attend for duty taking into account your other commitments, but it is important that you give us an idea of how often you will be able to attend when you apply to join us. There is generally no compulsion from us to undertake a certain number of duties each year, though where we invest significant amounts of time and effort in providing training, such as for drivers and firemen, signalmen and guards, we do look for an equitable return on our investment. We also need to maintain competence in the more technical roles, eg signallers, so again we look for a reasonable number of turns (our term for a shift) in those areas.

Reliability is very important and, for obvious reasons, we need you to attend when you are rostered to do so. If you know in advance that you will not be able to fulfil your rostered turn, please arrange cover with one of your colleagues and let your roster clerk know about the change. If you are unable to attend on the day, please make sure that you contact the station/department concerned as early as possible so that they can find someone else quickly and aren't waiting for you to turn up.

We also recognised that your circumstances may change and you may need to cease volunteering with us. If you feel unable to continue with us, please let your Head of Department (HoD) and our Volunteer Liaison Office know in good time. We will always want to talk to you about your reasons for wanting to cease in case there is anything we can do to resolve a problem for you or there are issues that we need to address more broadly. It is much better to tell us if something is wrong than simply to stop coming.

Training and Progression

In most volunteer roles you will be given the necessary basic training to equip you to do the job. This is key in any of the safety-critical roles. Once you have completed a course of training, you will need to prove your competence by passing a suitable test and to ensure you maintain the necessary standard, you will be reassessed periodically afterwards.

Once you have completed your initial training and after a period of settling into the role, you may be considered for further training if you wish to do so and your head of department considers you suitable. You may ask them to consider you for further training, or they may approach you to see if you are interested. For such advancement, merit and suitability are the only criteria. In the longer term, we are always looking for committed people who can help us fill some of the volunteer management positions which include such posts as foremen, training officers, roster clerks and inspectors, all of whom we need to enable us to function.

Competence Management

It is vital that we track the training and competence of each individual, especially in safety-critical tasks and we are inspected on this by our regulator, The Office of Road and Rail. We therefore record in our competence management system details of training given, assessments taken, whether passed or not. All competences require to be formally reassessed at frequencies specified by departmental heads to ensure continued acceptable performance. Everyone has the right to see their own competence management records if they wish and application should be made to their HoD if they wish to do so.

If you are working in a safety-critical role, because the directors bear personal responsibility for safety on the line, we need to ensure that you remain competent in your duties at all times. You can expect to be subject to informal performance checks by supervisory staff as part of standards management and in between your more formal assessments. Should we have any concerns at your ability routinely to discharge your responsibilities safely, we may need to suspend you from duty to undertake a period of remedial training. Concerns about your performance will be discussed with you and a training plan devised to restore your competence, which is always our aim.

Identity Card

When your induction and initial training is complete and you are judged to have shown sufficient commitment, you will be issued with a Watercress Line identity card that includes a photo. Your competences are recorded on the reverse as you gain them including your Personal Track Safety certificate, if appropriate. You must ensure that you have your ID card with you at all times when on the railway and that it is in date. It will be renewed as your competencies change or are renewed, but please contact your manager as your ID approaches its renewal date, to ensure suitable requalification has been arranged. Your ID card does not entitle you to trackside access unless in the course of your volunteering duties.

Your ID card entitles you to free travel on non-event trains on the line, but not for family and friends. Your ID card also entitles you to reduced-price travel on some other heritage railways.

Insurance

The Watercress Line provides insurance for protection against liability for claims made against it and its volunteers and employees for injury and accidental loss or damage to property suffered by visitors and contractors.

Volunteers using their own vehicles to attend for duty should check that their insurance policy covers them for such activity as the Watercress Line is unable to provide cover for damage or injury to the volunteer while travelling to and from the Line or loss/damage to their property while on the Line's premises.

For certain roles, the Watercress Line provides vehicles to assist in the discharge of the function including insurance cover for those who drive them. These vehicles may only be driven by those over 25 years of age who have provided their driving licence for inspection, have an acceptable claims and conviction record and have been authorised by their manager to do so.

Signing On and Off Duty

To get the benefit of the insurance protection, it is vital that you sign on duty as soon as you arrive at your place of work and sign off again immediately before you leave. When you sign on you are stating that you are fit to fulfil your role and you are not under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Health and Safety

The Watercress Line is responsible for ensuring, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and well being of visitors, contractors and staff, whether paid or volunteer, and the directors of the Company carry that responsibility personally. However, safe operation of all aspects of our railway relies on a partnership between the company and the individual; neither can achieve safety without the positive co-operation of the other. In particular, we need every member of staff to be responsible for: ensuring their own safety and that of their colleagues; ensuring their own actions do not endanger others and; abiding by the Watercress Line's policies for providing and maintaining a safe place of work and working practices.

The key to ensuring the safe operation of our railway is our Safety Management System to which you will be introduced in your training if appropriate to your role and to which you will need to adhere during your work on the line. This series of documents exists for a reason, which is that it sets out the safest way we can conceive of how to do our business. That said, we seek constantly to find better, more safe ways to undertake our tasks and we positively encourage you to put forward suggestions for improvement or report anything that you think could be detrimental to Health & Safety. These may include everything from defects in tools or appliances to trip hazards and potentially hazardous situations. Please submit any suggestions or concerns you have up through your line management. We must all take responsibility for safety and never "just walk by".

To help in managing safety, we have an advisory committee, the Safety, Health, Environment and Quality committee (the SHEQ) on which sits a representative from each area of the business. You can raise issues to the SHEQ if you wish through your departmental representative.



Expenses

Generally, the Watercress Line is unable to pay you expenses for attending the line for routine duty, as we need to reserve our funds for conserving, maintaining and refurbishing our equipment and rolling stock. However, there may be occasion when you are asked to take on a special duty for our railway outside of your normal rostered volunteering. In that case, and subject to preauthorisation by your manager, we will reimburse you the cost of travel in accordance with our travel policy. This also applies to those in supervisory and training roles, but only when undertaking those roles and not routine duty. Expenses claims should be submitted on the appropriate form by the end of the month in which the expense was incurred.

Dress Code

We aim to maintain standards of dress that reflect the picture we seek to portray of a railway in the late 1950/early 1960s. Where volunteers are in contact with visitors, we ask them to equip themselves with a minimum standard of dress, which you will be briefed on in your induction. Many go on to dress and equip themselves fully for the role which we applaud but do not demand. Suitable dress and equipment may be found on some of the internet auction sites and at Heritage Operations Processing (<https://www.heritage-ops.org.uk>) as a starting point. All volunteers must ensure that their dress is appropriate for the situation in which they are working and that they present a professional image.



Modern health and safety legislation requires that for safety reasons anyone conducting tasks on or about the running lines wears High Visibility (HiVis) vests or clothing. While we equip our stations with a small number of such vests for occasional use, we ask our volunteers to provide themselves with a HiVis vest if their role requires it. However, to maintain our dress code HiVis clothing should not be worn on platforms, by train crew and on authorised walking routes including barrow crossings.

Volunteers in other departments also provide their own clothing but are still expected to maintain a good and appropriate standard of dress. Please do not wear overalls in station buffets and other places frequented by visitors so that we can maintain the necessary hygiene standards.

If you are working in a role that requires personal protective equipment, then this will be provided for you by your supervisor.

Smoking

In accordance with current UK legislation, we do not allow smoking of real or E-cigarettes in any of the Company buildings and trains or on the platforms. We ask our staff not to smoke in the presence of visitors when on or about the stations and other facilities.

Representing the Watercress Line

Please remember that whenever you are on the line and can be identified as a member of its staff, you are representing the Watercress Line and anything that you do or say will reflect upon us. This is why presenting the best public image through correct dress and helpful manner is so important.

Similarly, there may be other occasions such as giving talks or speaking to the press when you will represent us and our interests. We know that our volunteers are proud to represent us and sharing your passion and experience is good for our public image. If you are contacted by the press as a result of an incident or a more general story, please contact your manager immediately. If you are happy to speak to the press, you may be involved in the follow-up, but please do not speak to them until cleared to do so by senior management. If you do not wish to be involved, that is also fine as there is no pressure from us to do so if it would make you uncomfortable.

Education

One of the important things to remember is that we need a visit to the WL to be an educational experience for our guests. This enables us to claim Gift Aid on the majority of our ticket sales and is a significant source of income for us. All volunteers have a role to play in helping to deliver an educational experience and this may simply be through passing on to visitors something of what you have learned from us about operating our railway. It is important that we look for opportunities to chat with our visitors to see whether they would like to know a little more about what we represent and what they are seeing. This could simply be, for example, by explaining to those watching a loco coupling to a train the importance of the tail lamp or of the vacuum hose being correctly connected. In particular, engaging with children or younger people can be a good way to engage with their parents/grandparents as well.

Confidentiality

Whilst volunteering, you may sometimes be party to confidential or sensitive information about our activities or our people which should not be public knowledge. In such cases we need you to respect the requirement for the confidentiality of this material and ask you not to misuse such information or communicate it outside the Watercress Line. Failure to abide by this would be a disciplinary offence.

Safeguarding

We all have a responsibility for safeguarding of both our visitors and our own people. This particularly applies to dealing with children (defined as those under 18 years of age) and vulnerable adults. It is vital that we foster an environment that is safe from all forms of abuse, discrimination, and unfair or inappropriate treatment. Particular considerations apply to dealing with children and you will need to read and be conversant with our safeguarding policy, which your line manager or team leader will make available for you. In essence, treat everyone, whether visitor or colleague, with due respect and ensure you never put yourself in situations that could be misconstrued in any way.

Social Media

The Watercress Line understands that many of its volunteers use social media and wish from time to time to talk about their volunteering experiences and to post photos showing their work. When you do this, whether you intend to be or not, you are an ambassador for our railway. Whilst we judge this as generally a positive thing that brings our railway to the attention of a wider audience, which is always helpful, we do ask users to think carefully before posting about us. We particularly ask volunteers to think whether what they are posting could inadvertently damage our reputation in any way, which could have a hugely adverse impact on us. A good reputation takes a long time to build and a short time to damage. We would particularly ask that you follow these principles when posting about the WL and your activity with us:

- Remember that what goes online, stays online, and is widely visible
- Set a positive tone, be polite and respectful
- Be clear about whether you are commenting as an individual or an appointed representative of the railway
- Don't share confidential information
- Respect copyright and don't post images you don't own without permission
- Consider how others might interpret what you post, use judgement and common sense and adhere to our visions and values

In particular, social media should not be used to air disagreements or grievances about things that have happened within the railway. There are established ways of solving such issues, which should always be used and the public airing of grievances, especially if formal use of the internal dispute resolution mechanisms has not been used, may be considered as grounds for dismissal.

If Things go Wrong

If you are unhappy with your role, for example if you are finding it difficult to cope with the pressure or responsibilities of your task(s), you should speak with your manager or supervisor as soon as possible. Their main responsibility to you is make sure you are comfortable with your task and to resolve any problems for you. They will deal appropriately with your concerns.

If it's thought that you have engaged in minor inappropriate behaviour, such as working unsafely, or against the interests of the line, your manager will meet with you to talk through the details of the allegation or complaint and you can explain your actions. Your manager will then decide if the allegation was justified, and advise you of ways to avoid it happening again. If there is a recurrence, you may be asked to attend another meeting and if your manager feels there is no prospect of improvement, or a constructive resolution is not possible, you may be asked to leave.

If an allegation of serious inappropriate behaviour is made against you, you may be asked not to attend the line until the matter has been investigated by your Head of Department (HoD), which will include a meeting with you. If after investigation your HoD believes you have committed gross misconduct, you may be asked to leave immediately. Gross misconduct can cover a broad range of issues including, but not limited to theft of money or property; deliberate falsification of an expense claim; discrimination or harassment; physical assault, malicious damage, abuse or other violence or aggression towards person(s) or property; serious breach of health and safety regulations; and being under the influence of alcohol, solvents or non-prescribed drugs during volunteering.



If you have cause to complain about the actions of another volunteer or your manager, or have any other grievance with the Company, you should first raise the matter with your manager, ideally in writing and in accordance with our grievance policy. They will try to resolve things simply at this stage. If they are unable to do so, or you remain unhappy, you should write to the next appropriate manager in your management chain, which may be your HoD. Please do not raise the issue outside of your management chain as this causes confusion and is unlikely to result in the outcome you want.

Issues with Visitors

Most of our visitors are not railway enthusiasts and may not be familiar with such things as timetables and slam-door trains. They are after a relaxing day out and our task is to help them have that, so that they will want to return. Inevitably things do not always go to plan for them and occasionally there are tensions.

Most issues can be resolved if dealt with quickly and calmly. Defuse tension by listening carefully, being courteous, giving clear and above all accurate information delivered in plain language and avoid being defensive either in tone or body language. If you can't resolve the matter or do not know the answer to a question, find a supervisor to help. If after all has been done, a visitor remains unhappy with our service, advise them politely to put their concerns in writing to our Chief Executive.

Occasionally it may be necessary to give direction to visitors, usually for safety reasons. In this event, it is helpful to explain why you are giving such direction and most people will then accept the direction more easily. In such circumstances be firm but always polite.

Employment with the WL

From time to time we will need to recruit people for our paid positions. All such opportunities will be advertised to our volunteers in addition to being advertised through the normal external channels. Advice may be sought from your department head or from the Volunteer Liaison staff.

Benefits

As a working volunteer you are entitled to:

- An identity card that entitles you to travel free on normal train services, but not for events.
- Free tea, coffee and squash at your place of work.
- Discounts on food and drink at our catering outlets.
- Discounted fares on some other heritage railways on production of an ID card.

History of the Watercress Line



In 1861, the Alton, Alresford and Winchester Railway Company was authorised to build a new railway to connect to the existing London & South Western Railway lines at Alton and Winchester. Opened on 2 October 1865 as the Mid-Hants Railway, trains were operated by the London & South Western Railway which eventually purchased the Mid-Hants Railway Company in 1884. Laid as a single track line, the formation was nevertheless sized to take a second track though this was never laid.

Stations were initially constructed at Itchen Abbas, Ropley and Alresford. The station at Medstead and Four Marks was added in 1868. Just east of this station, the line is at its highest point at 652 feet (199 m) above sea level, having risen from Alresford (263 feet (80 m) above sea level) and descending to Alton (339 feet (103 m) above sea level) with a ruling gradient of around 1 in 60. As a result, the section of line became known as "the Hampshire Alps".



The line provided an alternative route between London and Southampton and, besides being used in the late 1800s to send whole train loads of watercress from Alresford to London markets, was particularly important for military traffic between the army town of Aldershot and the military em-

barkation port at Southampton right up to the 1960s. With the development of motorised transport, the line declined during the post-war period of the 20th Century and was further compromised by the closures of the Basingstoke and Alton Light Railway in 1932 and the Meon Valley Railway in 1955, which both joined the MHR at Butts Junction to the west of Alton.

The line became part of the Southern Railway in 1923 and then part of the Southern Region of British Railways in 1948. Following electrification of the line from London to Alton in 1937 the Watercress Line was no longer part of a through route as a change at Alton was required. Routine services became branch line in nature worked in the line's final years by Class 205 (Thumper) diesel-electric multiple units. However, the line provided a vital diversionary route between Woking and Southampton in the event of blockage of the main line and regularly performed this function seeing Bulleid Pacifics traverse the line usually with a pilot engine on the front. It also carried a great deal of excursion and holiday traffic to and from the South Coast. The line survived the Beeching Axe in 1963, but was eventually closed by British Railways in February 1973 and parts of the line were dismantled.

Almost immediately a group of enthusiasts banded together with the aim of bringing the line back to life as a preserved railway. Shares were sold in the then Winchester and Alton Railway, which was incorporated on 6 Jun 1973, to raise funds for the purchase and restoration of the line.



The first train runs on MHR metals

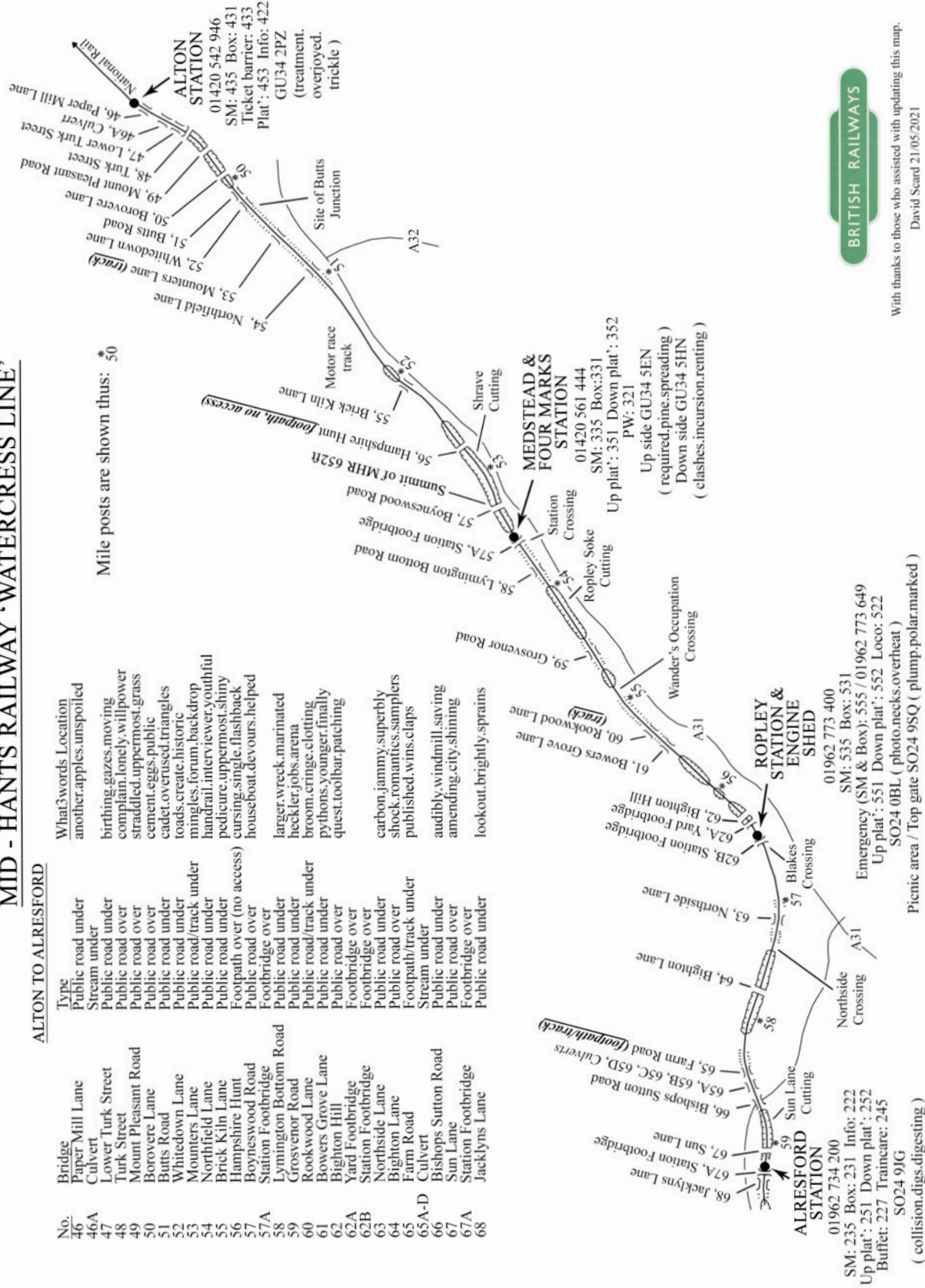
The first trains ran between Alresford and Ropley in 1977 because this section was bought with track in situ. The trackbed and remaining buildings were bought from Alresford as far as Alton and after the opening of the line the restoration of track work to allow through running into Alton began. The section to Medstead and Four Marks was opened to traffic in May 1983 and to Alton in May 1987. The Watercress Line has now lasted longer as a heritage railway than the line did in British Railways ownership!

MID - HANTS RAILWAY 'WATERCRESS LINE'

ALTON TO ALRESFORD

No.	Bridge	Type	What3words Location
46	Paper Mill Lane	Public road under	another.apples.unspoiled
46A	Culvert	Stream under	
47	Lower Turk Street	Public road under	birthing.gazets.moving
48	Turk Street	Public road over	complain.lonely.willpower
49	Mount Pleasant Road	Public road over	straddled.uppermost.grass
50	Borovere Lane	Public road over	cement.eggs.public
51	Butts Road	Public road under	cadet.overused.triangles
52	Whitdown Lane	Public road under	loads.create.historic
53	Mounthers Lane	Public road/track under	mingles.forum.backdrop
54	Northfield Lane	Public road under	handrail.interviewer.youthful
55	Brick Kiln Lane	Public road under	pedicure.uppermost.shiny
56	Hampshire Hunt	Footpath over (no access)	cursing.single.flashback
57	Boyneswood Road	Public road over	houseboat.devours.helped
57A	Station Footbridge	Footbridge over	
58	Lymington Bottom Road	Public road under	larger.wreck.marinated
59	Grosvenor Road	Public road under	heckler.jobs.arena
60	Rookwood Lane	Public road/track under	broom.cringe.clothing
61	Bowers Grove Lane	Public road under	pythons.younger.finally
62	Brighton Hill	Public road over	quest.toolbar.patching
62A	Yard Footbridge	Footbridge over	
62B	Station Footbridge	Footbridge over	carbon.jammy.superbly
63	Northside Lane	Public road under	shock.romantics.samplers
64	Brighton Lane	Public road over	published.wins.claps
65	Farm Road	Footpath/track under	
65A-D	Culvert	Stream under	audibly.windmill.saving
66	Bishops Sutton Road	Public road under	amending.city.shining
67	Sun Lane	Public road over	lookout.brightly.sprains
67A	Station Footbridge	Footbridge over	
68	Jacklins Lane	Public road under	

Mile posts are shown thus: * 50



BRITISH RAILWAYS

With thanks to those who assisted with updating this map.
David Seard 21/05/2021

The Watercress Line Structure

The Watercress Line Heritage Railway Trust (WLHRT)

The WLHRT is a registered charity that aims to preserve, exhibit and stimulate interest in heritage railway transport and to support the preservation of Hampshire's railways. The WLHRT, acting through its board of trustees, sets the policies, strategic priorities and overall direction of the railway and is responsible for outreach and crucially, fundraising in support of its charitable objectives. These are to educate visitors in the history and development of travel by train, to operate an open archive of artefacts and photographs, to promote and support educational visits and to maintain and conserve and restore its assets. The WLHRT maintains a membership base, and produces and distributes the Watercress Line magazine to its members.

The WLHRT owns the goods shed at Alresford, a number of locomotives and some rolling stock to be seen on the Line, and it owns part shares in certain other locos. It places these assets at the disposal of the MHR for use in running train services and, in return, receives fees for their use, which are then used to fund overhauls when required.

The WLHRT raises funds to support the overhaul and restoration of its assets and to grant or loan money to the MHR for specific projects and in furtherance of the Trust's charitable aims.

The Mid Hants Railway Company Limited (MHR)

The MHR operates the Watercress Line on behalf of the WLHRT and holds the operating licence for the railway. It is governed by a board of volunteer directors, who direct its activities to deliver its part of the strategic plan developed by and agreed with the Trust. The MHR is a limited company registered at Companies House and is owned by its shareholders of which the WLHRT is the largest owning some 52% of the shares. The MHR operates the Line, in essence as a not-for-profit organisation, because any profit made from the sale of tickets to visitors, is ploughed back in to maintaining and improving the railway and its rolling stock. The MHR pays no dividend on its ordinary shares and they can only be traded privately.

The MHR owns all of the track bed, track, stations and buildings within the line's boundary except for the goods shed at Alresford, owned by the Trust, and the station area at Alton which is rented from Network Rail. The MHR owns some locos, coaches and other rolling stock and has access to other rolling stock in group or private hands. It employs approximately 40 staff mainly in the engineering, operations and office functions, but its operation of train services and many other supporting functions such as infrastructure, permanent way, signals and telegraph and operations is almost wholly reliant on volunteers.

In a normal year, the MHR will make sufficient income from its train services to pay for its running costs and the maintenance of its key assets both fixed and moveable. However, it relies on the Trust to support it for investment to maintain or improve key facilities and for overhaul of major items of rolling stock. For example, in 2020 the then MHR Preservation Society (now the WLHRT) granted funds to the MHR for the purchase of carriage lifting jacks to enable much faster repair and servic-

ing of the line's coaches. The WLHRT and MHR therefore work closely together and in mutual support.

Other Watercress Line Organisations

In addition to the WLHRT and MHR, the Watercress Line family has other members. These currently include the Urie Society, the Eastleigh Railway Preservation Society and the Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust. In addition, we have items of rolling stock that are owned by groups of individuals. All of these organisations own their own assets and artefacts but deploy them in support of the overall aims of the Watercress Line. Their contributions broaden our public appeal and customer experience, and in return we allow them to use our facilities to store and refurbish their assets. Working in close co-ordination and mutual support is our preferred way of doing business, which generates goodwill and a common sense of purpose.

Notes

