

Turn right into Pier Street. At the next junction the road becomes Old Station Approach. This was the site of the former station and the roadway broadly follows the old track bed.



Running parallel to the road, on the right-hand side, you will see a raised area of lawn, this is the remains of the old excursion platform, the only remaining part of the Station. The small building, TA8s Bar, is Burnham's original lifeboat station. From here the lifeboat was wheeled on a rail track down to the jetty for launching. Just past TA8s you will see a replica signal box; this is a faithful copy of the original signal box which stood on the main platform. It is painted in Somerset & Dorset colours. Near the signal box you will find an information panel giving more details of the various railway exhibits located close by. Looking to your left you will see a replica station name board.



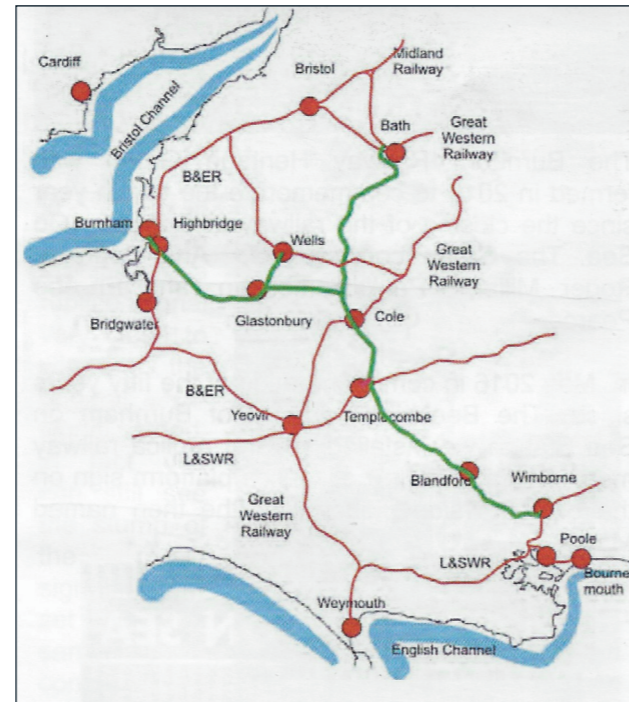
Cross over Old Station Approach to the Town Green, where there are several things of interest to see. Now used as a flower planter is an old horse trough similar to one that stood outside the Station for many years. Close to the horse trough is an information panel with details of the Somerset & Dorset Railway and photographs of the station. In the middle of the green there is a weathervane. The pointer takes the form of a locomotive carrying the number of the locomotive of the last train to arrive in Burnham.



Continue down through the adjacent car park, In railway days this was the coal yard, and near to the large brick building you will find a further information panel showing the layout of the yard and station as it was in 1929.

It is difficult to believe today that Highbridge was once a railway town like Swindon, Crewe and Derby, boasting the main carriage, wagon and locomotive works of the Somerset & Dorset. The works were closed with a loss of 300 jobs after operation of the line was taken over by the LMS in 1930 and its activities moved to Derby.

This completes your walk. We hope that you have enjoyed venturing into the railway heritage of Burnham and Highbridge.



— Somerset & Dorset Railway

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We gratefully thank the local sponsors who have contributed to the costs of the Heritage Walk Project.

## Burnham on Sea to Highbridge Somerset & Dorset Railway Heritage Walk



To hire this signal box as a 'pop-up' shop contact Burnham on Sea & Highbridge Town Council. Tel 01278 788088

The walk takes you from South Esplanade, Burnham on Sea to the mainline railway station in Highbridge, approximately following the route of the former Somerset & Dorset Railway Highbridge to Burnham branch.

**Burnham on Sea  
Railway Heritage Group**



### Section 1 – South Esplanade to Apex Park

The walk commences at the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) on the South Esplanade, near the Rescue Centre. If you enter the TIC you will find a scale model of Burnham Railway Station, the northern terminus of the Somerset & Dorset line. The station was finally closed to traffic in 1965.



Leaving the TIC, cross over the road at the pedestrian crossing and turn left. On the corner of South Esplanade and Pier St you will see a set of railway buffers. These were placed here to commemorate the arrival of the first passenger train into Burnham on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1858 and they are located close to their original position at the end of the line.



Burnham was intended to be a railhead for a cross channel ferry and rail service from South Wales to France via Poole. It is believed that goods wagons travelled onto the jetty, as did the lifeboat for launching but not the locomotives. On the opposite corner note the Reeds Arms. This was built to accommodate overnight passengers who were taking the ferry to Cardiff and South Wales or arriving from Wales before taking the train to travel to the South Coast and beyond. The Old Pier Tavern was part of the hotel complex and provided a tap room and railway refreshment rooms plus accommodation for the servants of the passengers.

As you walk further down the car park, look at the fence on the left-hand side. You will see that the main upright posts are fashioned from the old railway track. The next point of interest is a replica signal. This stands almost in the same place as the original signal controlling access to the station and coal yard. If you look closely at the concrete base you will see the base of the original signal.



If you stand with your back to the sea, the railway line would have run to your left, along what is now the footpath.



Nearby there is a large block of modern flats, this was the site of the Cox & Cox Depository. A little further on to your left would have been Holt Brothers brewery & field. The Lighthouse Pub and surrounding housing now occupies the site. At one time most of the public houses in Burnham belonged to Holts.



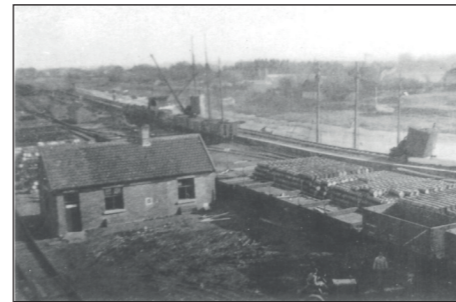
Just past the Lighthouse commences a row of modern houses on Marine Drive. The railway line ran along what is now the service road behind the houses. Follow the service road to the fire station. A little way down on the left-hand side you will see a road named Channing Walk; this marks the area of Channing's Builders Yard formally a large employer. At this point we are moving into what would have been during the railway era a busy industrial area featuring many large employers. At the fire station cross over Marine Drive and enter Apex Park via the pedestrian entrance Lakeview Walk, which is to the left of the main vehicle entrance to the car park.

## Section 2 – Apex Park to the Line Gates

The land which now forms Apex Leisure Park was purchased in 1969 by the local council to help with drainage and for conversion into a park. It occupies the site of a former industrial area which was home to many industries including brickworks, industrial fuel manufacture, wood yards and a busy wharf serving the port, market and railway town of Highbridge. Now landscaped, the lakes in the park were originally man-made, left behind through the extraction of raw materials for the two brickyards which occupied much of this area. The area nearest to Marine Drive was Colthurst Symonds Brickworks; further into the park was the Apex Brickworks from which today's park takes its name. The railway line broadly follows the line of today's Lakeview Walk which runs along the north east perimeter of the park.



Continue along Lakeview Walk until you reach the picnic area. Here you will find a further information panel which shows the route of the railway and gives more information regarding the industry and its location. Return to Lakeview Walk and a few yards along the path you will come to a pair of cottages on your right-hand side. This building formed part of the brickworks and is the only remaining visual evidence of its existence. Continue along the Walk; on your right-hand you will see a notice board giving information about activities in the park. Continue along the Walk and look over to your right; this was previously the industrial area, served by the railway.



Leave the park through the pedestrian exit and carry on along Lakeside Track until its junction with Newtown Road. Near the nameboard for Lakeside Track you will find a further information panel. This area of new housing on your left occupies the area which was once Highbridge Wharf. Highbridge Wharf was established in 1860. The Railway ran along the right-hand side of Newtown Road and the buildings on the left-hand side were, as now, a mix of workers' housing and commercial. There were originally three pubs along this stretch of road, serving crews and workers from the wharf, industrial area and residents: The Somerset Vaults (known as Top House), The Globe and the Anchor. Some of the workers received their pay at the Somerset Vaults.



Today only the Globe remains as a reminder of this bustling area. There was also a place of worship, the Gospel Tabernacle Hall, demolished in 2019. This building started life as a Citadel of the Salvation Army. It was opened in 1937 by General Edward Higgins, a Highbridge man born at 10 Church Street. He was the third head of the Salvation Army and its first head to be elected following a change in its constitution. The development of modern redbrick houses on the left stands on the site of the Highbridge Livestock Market which was established in 1851.

Follow Newtown Road until it meets Church Street, Highbridge (A38). It was at this point that the line crossed the road. The block of flats to your left, Regal Court, stands on the site of the Regent Cinema, later the Regal Club. On your right would have been the signal box controlling the level crossing.



## Section 3 – Line Gates to Highbridge Station

Crossing over Church Street you will see that a modern retail building is now built over the former line of the railway. Here was the pedestrian footbridge over the line. At this point you will find a further information panel. Unfortunately, from this point on to Highbridge Station there is virtually nothing to tell that the railway was ever there. Walk to the right of the retail building and you will come into Bank Street car park. Much of this area was devoted to the railway during its heyday, being used as a goods yard. If you have time, turn left into Southwell Crescent and follow the road. You will eventually come to Southwell Gardens where you can find the rather grand War Memorial to the members of the railway who fell in the Great War. This was made and originally located at the Highbridge Railway Workshops, before being moved on the closure of the works onto the platform of the station, prior to a later removal to the current location.

Returning to the car park, make your way into Market Street. Follow Market Street to its junction with Station Walk, cross over and walk down to the station. Near the station entrance there is a further information panel.

Just to the north of the station the Somerset & Dorset branch line to the wharf and Burnham crossed over the Exeter & Dorset Line, emerging through the existing roadway overbridge before running into the station. From here the line continued across the Somerset Levels to Evercreech Junction, for trains to the Midlands and North via Bath Green Park and trains to the south coast for France. Cross over the line using the modern footbridge and just by the station entrance you will see a short length of track and a pair of axles and wheels which mark the site of the Somerset & Dorset station. Here you will find the final information panel.

