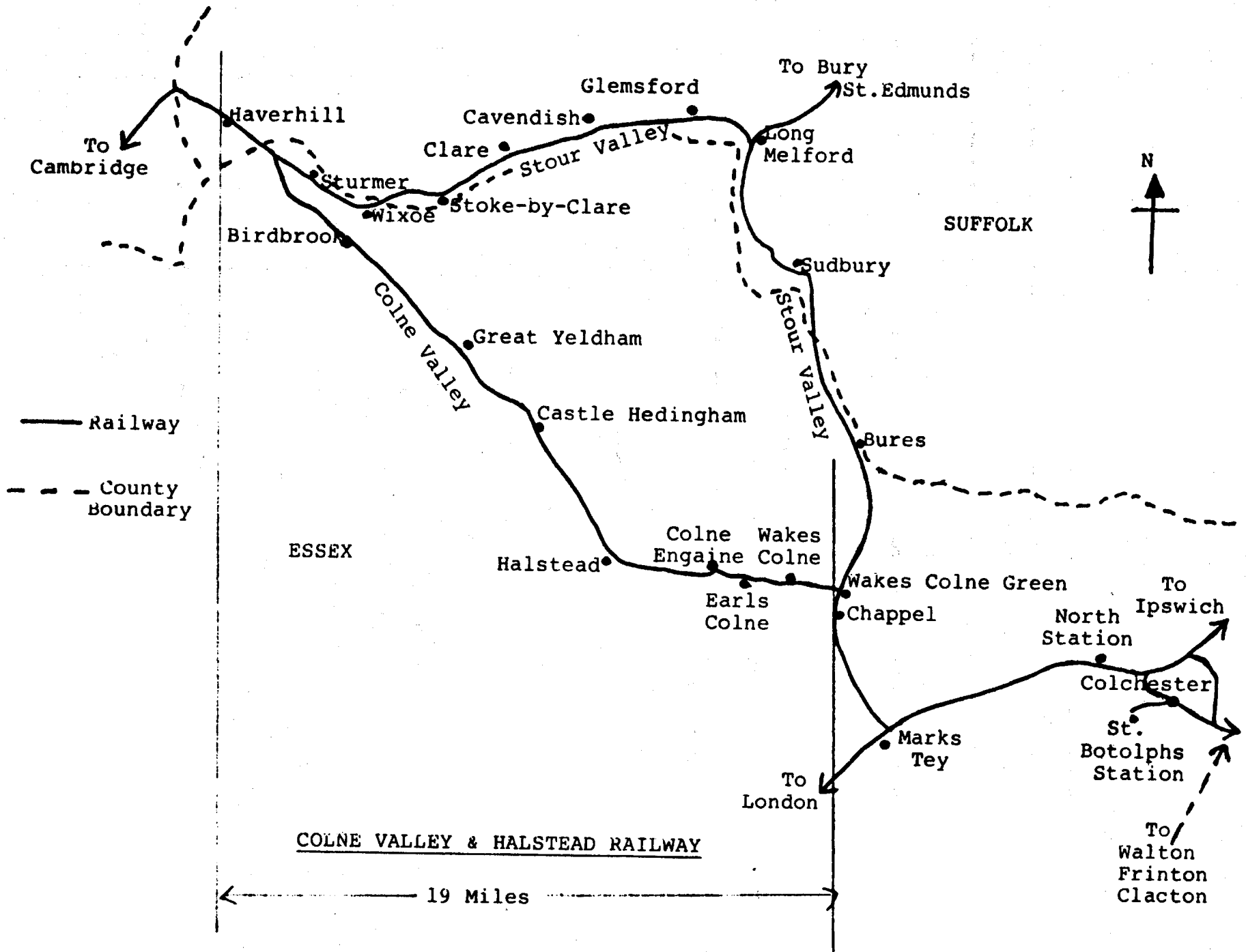


COLNE VALLEY & HALSTEAD RAILWAY Roy Everett

This very informative article first appeared in The Perfins Bulletin of May 1988. We have the sanction of our American friends to reproduce it in our Bulletin. Roy has added some more facts to the original and also corrected a few mis-spelt place names.

"For the curious, when one finds a book on a subject close to one, RAILROAD PERFINS OF GREAT BRITAIN by R.Bowman with details of a line, and one possesses an early scale map depicting the line, one puts the two together to check out the details.

This little railway, the Colne Valley and Halstead, served nineteen miles of track when it was nationalised on January 1st 1923, becoming a part of the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). The line had been incorporated under Acts 19 and 20 of Queen Victoria on 30 June 1856 with a later authorisation of 13-8-1859. The principal reason for its establishment was that the Valley of the Colne was not serviced by the then existent Colchester and Stour Valley Railway, which went from Colchester through to Haverhill in a long loop which avoided the Colne Valley. At this time Halstead was a marketing centre for farming produce, like its' neighbours Braintree (where I live) and Bocking on the Blackwater. Additionally Halstead was a fabric weaving town with sites going back to 1066 as noted in the Domesday Book, the survey that William the Conqueror had produced for levying taxes. By agreement with the existing Colchester and Stour Valley line a spur line was built from the Chappel station line at Wakes Colne Green. This went west along the valley passing wakes Colne, Earls Colne, Colne Engaine and then to Halstead. This provided direct access to the main line at Marks Tey, and thence to the East Coast seaports and London, opening up wider markets for the town. The Head Office was situated at Halstead. In later years, the line was extended fourteen miles passing through Whiteash Green, Sible Hedingham, Castle Hedingham, Great Yeldham, Stambourne, Ridgewell and Birdbrook ending at Haverhill. (See map) In this earlier age many small areas were only served by a raised stage for loading and offloading rather than the station with platforms that we have come to expect for railroads. Consequently many other small farming communities and large landed estates may well have been served in this fashion.



According to 'Bradshaw's Railway Shareholders Guide and Manual of 1921' the line's rolling stock consisted of 15 locomotives, 15 carriages and 176 wagons; and expenditures on the line as of the end of 1919 had totalled 516,245 pounds sterling for stations, track and rolling stock.

The line felt the heavy hand of the infamous Dr. Beeching, then Minister of Transport, when he closed umpteen hundred miles of rail lines when I was a lad. However, today it flourishes again in the hands of the dedicated members of:-

The Colne Valley Railway Company,Ltd.,
Steam Railway Preservation, Castle Hedingham Station,
Yeldon Road, Castle Hedingham,
Essex, England.

But the line no longer reaches Halstead as the station there was demolished to make way for housing years ago. Now the line operates under private control based at Castle Hedingham and the steam trains and refurbished station hold school trips, line tours, special functions and other fairs. A travelling classroom allows field study classes to proceed while the train chugs along the line.

The line used the rare perfin illustrated below. Bowman knew of only seven copies all bearing the postmark of Halstead. The latest one being marked "Trinity Street, Halstead" which is on the main road through Halstead. The station was at the base of a long steep hill with the Post Office halfway up the hill, opposite the bus station."

Only four stamps are known with this perfin:

King Edward VII	½d and 1d.
King George V	1d McKennel
	2d Typo (Royal Cypher)
	pen cancel 10-4-22

Dates of use:

Earliest 24 October 1904

Latest 27 March 1913

(a pen cancel of 10-4-22)

Postmarks:

Halstead. (Editor now has one pmk Earles Colne 5-7-11)

