

# The Kingswear Branch Line

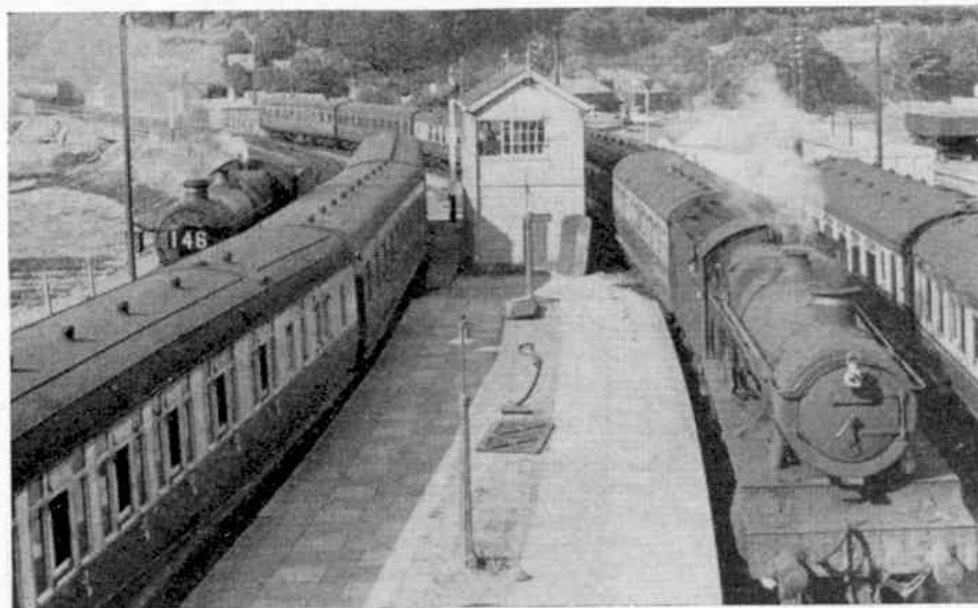
By R. E. Toop

**A**BOUT one mile west of Newton Abbot in Devon, at Aller Junction, the railway to Torquay and Kingswear leaves the W.R. main line to Plymouth and Cornwall, which it has paralleled so far, keeping straight on, with the main line swinging sharply away to the right. Soon it is rising at 1 in 152 and this steepens to 1 in 110 for some two miles, passing Kingskerswell station in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Aller Junction. Then after a short level stretch at the summit the line drops at 1 in 73/55, the main road adjoining and crossing it several times. It passes Torre

One of British Railways' local modernisation plans is intended to ease the present difficulties of dealing with these trains. The scheme involves the construction of a turntable, with locomotive sidings, and a water tower, together with sidings for storing empty carriages. Already this plan has involved the replacement of Tanner's Road level crossing by an over-bridge, with steps leading down to the two platforms of Goodrington Sands Halt.

From the southern end of this Halt the line becomes single and is launched on the climb to Churston. Beginning at 1 in 71 the

line at first runs alongside the sea shore and then commences twisting and bending its way up the incline, passing a holiday camp, with caravans on one side of the line and tents on the other side, the sea and the great sweep of Tor Bay being in sight for most of the way. By the time it makes its way over Broadsands Viaduct the gradient has steepened to 1 in 60, and then a long right hand



No. 4920 "Dumbleton Hall" arrives at Kingswear with a down semi-fast train, while No. 7004 "Eastnor Castle" after working the down "Torbay Express" waits in the background to return to Newton Abbot sheds.

before reaching Torquay station, quite close to the main sea front.

After a level half mile, there follows a series of minor gradients through the built-up area between Torquay and Paignton, which end with a drop of 1 in 81 down to Paignton itself, where the signalmen spend many wearisome hours opening and closing the level crossing gates at the approaches to the station. Here the line crosses the very heart of the shopping centre at the top of the main street to the promenade. Then follows a gentle stretch of about three quarters of a mile out to Goodrington Sands, where a large number of trains to this popular district terminate.

curve brings trains to the summit and Churston station.

One can get some idea of the severity of the curvature by the fact that a *fixed* "distant" signal appears at the end of Broadsands Viaduct, on the steepest part of the climb.

The line becomes double track through Churston station and here connecting services with Brixham are provided by the auto-train or pull-and-push unit, operating from a short bay platform and run on weekdays only, powered by the usual 14xx 0-4-2 tank engine. This generally runs light from Newton Abbot to Churston in the morning, the first trip to Brixham



No. 1010 "County of Caernarvon" is seen here pulling away from Kingswear up the estuary of the River Dart with a local passenger train for Newton Abbot.

starting at 7.34 a.m., and remains on the branch throughout the day, returning to shed during the early evening, sometimes with a light pick-up goods train. When the author has been on holiday in this area, it has been a joy to see good numbers of people flocking out of trains here to patronise the *Brixham Whippet*, as it is locally known. Another "named" train!

From the southern end of Churston station the line again becomes single track and falls first at 1 in 90. Then it steepens to 1 in 75 and after traversing Greenway Tunnel at 1 in 100 and passing over Higher Greenway Viaduct, comes to the beautiful tree-lined slopes of the River Dart. There is many a

running over you; instead, you would get a good soaking in Dart water. The journey across from Kingswear in the launch takes about five minutes.

Kingswear possesses a turntable and several carriage sidings, but locomotives that have brought in through trains such as the *Torbay Express* and the *Devonian*, which end their journeys there, invariably return for servicing to Newton Abbot sheds. One amusing feature of this is that the engine for the up *Torbay Express*, which leaves Kingswear at 11.20 a.m. on Saturdays and 11.25 a.m. Mondays to Fridays, complete with title board and reporting

The down "Torbay Express" arrives at Churston station behind No. 5028 "Llantilio Castle", to connect with the Brixham branch line train powered by 0-4-2T No. 1427.



fine view down through the trees as the line falls steeply at 1 in 66 down to Britannia Halt—also known as Kingswear Crossing Halt—where the main road along the coast crosses the railway and cars board Dartmouth's upper ferry. The level crossing gates are operated by hand. Then follows a level mile of railway along the banks of the river to the terminus at Kingswear. This consists of an island platform, with a regular ferry service across to Dartmouth.

numbers at the front, works down to Kingswear soon after 10 a.m.—at the head of a local passenger train from Newton Abbot!

At holiday times traffic on the branch increases considerably and I have even seen such a large engine as a "Castle" class 4-6-0 pressed into service to bank a heavily loaded up passenger train out of Torquay and up the 1 in 55/73 gradients past Torre.

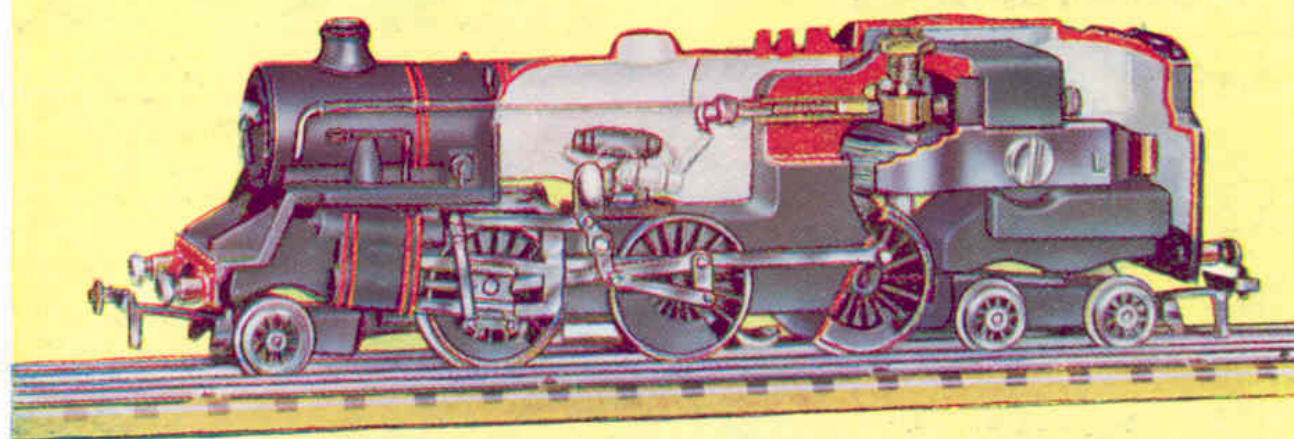


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