

FOVANT MILITARY RAILWAY.

The work of constructing the line began soon after the outbreak of war.

Until its opening on October 15th 1915, transport between Dinton mainline station and Fovant Camp was provided by traction engines, which frequently wallowed and became stuck in the mud.

Fovant Military Railway ran from a junction with the main London and South Western Railway's Salisbury to Exeter line at Dinton, crossing a red girder bridge over the River Nadder, went through Fovant Wood, over a level crossing, skirted Fir Hill above the village, curved and ran towards the A 30 towards Compton-Chambayne and the Military Camps.

The line was a total of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and had a rather steep gradient of 1 in 35. The line was kept very busy during the war, delivering goods, troops and of course despatching troops from the Dinton Mainline Station, to London and the Western Front. The camp's last job was dealing with demobilisation, when a regular passenger service was run in addition to the troop specials, using LSWR carriages. Shunting operations at Dinton often seriously delayed regular mainline trains and as a result timekeeping suffered throughout the LSWR's West Country system.

The line finally closed about 1921 and the track lifted, though its formation can be traced, ballast and the occasional sleeper can still be found.

A varied selection of War Department locomotives worked the line, one of the first being Westminster, built in 1914 by Peckett and Sons, of Bristol. It was painted holly green and decorated with polished brass and copper. Westminster is now preserved on the Kent and East Sussex Railway.

Other engines were No 3 Salisbury and No. 4 Seafield, both tank engines built by Hudswell Clarke and Co in 1914 and, in 1916 came No. 0424 a 4-4-2 tank engine built for LSWR in 1882. Surplus to requirements it had been left at the Eastleigh Works since late 1913 for breaking up, but with the outbreak of war, this was not proceeded with. Following repairs at Eastleigh, it was painted emerald green lined out with gold and lettered Military Camp Railway No. 424, and arrived at Fovant in 1916

In October 1917, it suffered a derailment when the right-hand cylinder was so badly damaged that another engine of the same class had to be cannibalised for a replacement.

It worked the line until towards the end of the war when it was sent to the Longmoor Military Railway.