

DOWN PLATFORM

(down from London)

The "new" 1904 platform is brick faced and the former waiting room, a GWR standard design of red and blue brick, is now a **MUSEUM** of smaller exhibits from the age of steam. These are mostly Great Western Railway or British Rail Western Region in origin, ranging from china and silver, uniforms and buttons, to signal and telephone equipment, all beautifully displayed in purpose-built show cases. The walls are non-cavity, 3 bricks thick, and the platform canopy is supported on steel girders extending right through the building to where they are joined to metal straps. These straps run down the inside of the rear wall and the huge weight of this holds the girders down supporting the canopy without the need for pillars on the platform. Although electricity and heating have been recently added, the original flagstone floor remains. The museum, opened in 1985 on the 150th Anniversary of the forming of the GWR, is normally open on Sundays and Bank Holiday Monday's from Easter to the end of September. It can also be opened at other times by prior arrangement with the Curator. Entrance to this interesting museum is free, but your donation for its upkeep will be gratefully accepted.



GOODS YARD

Opened in 1913, the former goods yard on the Minehead side of the crossing and now the station car park, contains three privately owned ex Great Western Railway topflight third class coaches of 1914 vintage, which are now used for volunteer sleeping accommodation. This was formerly a traditional site for holiday camping coaches in GWR and BR days.

SOME THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Both platforms have "**RUNNING IN BOARDS**", large wooden signs with the station name in cast iron letters. The one on the up platform is supported on GWR cast iron pillars. Sunk into the bank near the museum is the cast iron **BOUNDARY POST** which once marked the limits of the railway owned land at Minehead. It is mounted on an old section of Brunel's broad gauge "bridge" rail, often used for such purposes - look out for more of this rail used as fence posts etc.

There are numerous ancient **GWR SACK TRUCKS** and **TROLLEYS** in use at Blue Anchor, also an old Post Office mail trolley from Liskeard Station in Cornwall. Many of the pieces of **LUGGAGE** and **MILK CHURNS** on view, which travelled on the line in years gone by, were donated by local people. The station has had various **LIGHTING SYSTEMS** over the years, all based on pressurised parafin lamps (note those in the Waiting Room). The "latest" scheme reverts to that of the turn of the century, with recently acquired authentic GWR cast iron lamp standards as seen in old photographs of Blue Anchor. Reproduction tops of the correct pattern have been made, although electricity now illuminates the platforms for the first time in the station's history. The **COLOUR SCHEME** at Blue Anchor is the old GWR light and dark stone, with certain details, signs etc. black, white or chocolate brown. The somewhat gloomy green and brown interior of the waiting room is quite authentic as samples scraped from the walls of various old stations have shown, but since colour schemes varied slightly over the years, the best we can hope achieve is the right sort of "feel". As an economy measure the GWR only issued **DARK STONE PAINT**, leaving the painters to mix the "light" colour by adding white. Having tried this rather unsuccessfully with modern colours, we now get ours ready mixed, but no doubt there were many variations produced in the old days!

We hope that you have enjoyed your visit to Blue Anchor. As you can see, there is still much work to be done before the station is restored to its former Great Western glory. Donations towards this are always gratefully received, and if you would like to join the team and lend a hand then you would be made most welcome.



Any profits from the sale of this leaflet will be used for further restoration work at Blue Anchor Station.

BLUE ANCHOR RAILWAY MUSEUM
West Somerset Steam Railway Trust
Ltd



West Somerset Railway

BLUE ANCHOR STATION VISITOR GUIDE



BLUE ANCHOR STATION

A POTTED HISTORY



Blue Anchor Station was opened in 1874 at a cost of £350 with then only one platform, now the up (to London) side, to give direct access to the beach. Known at this time as the Blue Anchor Excursion Platform, it later became known as Bradley Gate for a period of over 12 months, thereafter acquiring its current name. It was probably built to serve the village of Carhampton about a mile inland, as there were very few houses and no caravans or chalets in the area at that time. The name Blue Anchor is derived from the blue clay which is found on the anchors of boats who have sheltered in the bay. The single track coastal line was built by the Minehead Railway Co., connecting at Watchet with the original West Somerset Railway, which had been opened to Taunton in 1862. Both lines were built to Brunel's Broad Gauge (the rails were 7ft.0½in. apart) and were leased to the larger Bristol & Exeter Railway who operated the train service. All of these smaller railway companies were eventually absorbed by the Great Western Railway, which in 1882 converted the line into the narrower "standard" gauge of 4ft.8½in., which is the one in use today.

The main station building, which was the only structure in existence when the line opened, is completely different in design from those at Washford and Dunster. In January 1904 a passing loop was added by the Great Western Railway, together with a down platform and waiting room, signal box and level crossing gates. Trains could now pass one another here for the first time, controlled by the new signals. Because of the large numbers of holidaymakers coming to West Somerset and the need for longer trains to carry them, both platforms were lengthened in 1934, together with the passing loop towards Taunton. The station was very busy during the summer and railway porters wheeling luggage on the station barrows around to the sea front caravan sites could earn almost an extra week's wages in tips on a busy Saturday.

The station was closed by British Rail in January 1971, along with the rest of the line, but in March 1976 the present West Somerset Railway re-opened the section from Minehead to Blue Anchor to steam services. Blue Anchor station is now in the care of a voluntary Station Master and a small team of volunteers who are trying to recreate the atmosphere of a typical country station of a bygone era, with its well tended flower gardens and polished brasswork. This is a long term project which is mostly being carried out by volunteers and funded by donations from visitors.

UP PLATFORM

(up to London)

This is the original 1874 platform, which is stone faced. You can see where it was extended at the London end in 1934. The oldest building is the **BOOKING OFFICE AND WAITING ROOM** which has been much altered and extended over the years. It is quite different from the other stations built by the Minehead Railway Co. (Washford, Dunster and Minehead) and was much cheaper to construct (£350 compared with £912 for Dunster), so originally was probably much smaller. The walls are brick beneath the rendering which was added during this century and there is a flagstone floor beneath the present wooden one.

The Waiting Room and Booking Office have been lovingly restored, using Great Western Railway fittings, many of them originally belonging to the station. You can peep through the small ticket window behind the cast iron barrier, which was rescued from the closed Somerton station on the Westbury - Taunton main line. Edmondson's traditional ticket system is still in use at Blue Anchor: you can see the old green cast iron dating press just inside the ticket window. The small **LADIES ROOM** was built in 1904. Its odd shape is because it is built right out to the boundary of railway owned land. Ladies might like to note that the toilet roll holders are the original GWR "Dreadnought Thieftproof" ones: the old company did not like its toilet rolls being stolen and in fact each sheet of toilet paper had "GWR" printed on it - we have a framed piece in the Museum! A rustic wooden **WAITING SHELTER** that used to occupy the space between the Ladies Room and the main station building was demolished before the present preservationists arrived on the scene and this space has been filled by a modern building constructed to blend in with its railway surroundings.

SIGNAL BOX AND SIGNALS

The **SIGNAL BOX** was erected in 1904 to the standard GWR design of the day. It has its original 17 lever frame, controlling signals (by wires) and points (by rods), interlocked with the big wheel (visible from the opposite platform) that opens the level crossing gates across the road, which are opened by the signalman. Levers are all interlocked and must be pulled in the correct order for safety reasons. Some of this complex interlocking gear can be seen through the lower window of the box. The rods and wires pass beneath the platform and can be seen working whenever a train is being signalled. Any bells that you may hear ringing are coded messages between signal boxes. All the **SIGNALS** at Blue Anchor are of the lower quadrant type used by the GWR and later by BR Western Region. These go **DOWN** rather than **UP** like most other railways. The signals are all lit by electric lamps at night (red - stop, green - all clear) and the original **GWR LAMP HUT** is still in use on the far side of the level crossing. In here the signalman fills, lights and trims the lamps, a pleasant job on a wet and windy day! The level crossing gates were once a familiar sight all over the railway system, but this is now the only example still in existence in the West Country, everywhere else having changed to barriers and flashing lights. There is a superb view from the signal box and one is able to observe trains leaving Dunster and follow their progress along the coast of Blue Anchor Bay. Also on a clear day the Welsh coast is visible some seventeen miles away across the Bristol Channel. It may be possible to visit the signal box, by prior arrangement with the duty signalman.

