



THE SAFFRON WALDEN BRANCH RAILWAY LINE

An Archaeological Assessment of the Former Audley End-Saffron Walden-Bartlow Branch Railway Line



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SAFFRON WALDEN BRANCH LINE SURVEY

**An Archaeological Assessment of the Former Audley End-
Saffron Walden-Bartlow Junction Branch Railway**

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1.0 SUMMARY

The Saffron Walden railway branch line was opened by the Saffron Walden Railway Company (SWRC) in 1865 to improve overland communications to markets in London and the south-east and promote commercial growth within the town. Initially the branch line was built between Audley End station and Saffron Walden but was extended during 1866 to link into the Shelford-Sudbury line at Bartlow Junction. The branch line undoubtedly encouraged industrial growth within the town, serving the established malting industry and fuelling the growth of new industry around the station and along the eastern fringe of the town, but to remain commercially viable the line also depended upon investment and the support of passenger numbers, both of which ultimately proved to be inadequate. The Saffron Walden Branch line along with many other rural branch lines was axed, following the recommendations of the Beeching Report, in September 1964.

The survey details all significant archaeological/structural elements associated with the branch line and comments upon extent, integrity, relative significance and condition of the surviving resource. These encompassed a wide range of features from bridges, complete or partially demolished, halts, culverts, posts and crossings to a diverse group of railway buildings. The results have shown that survival within these categories has been erratic, the main station buildings and railway halts are still mainly intact, although the railway bridges have not fared so well, while the loss of ancillary structures, particularly around Saffron Walden station, has been extensive.

Today the branch line lies either redundant or as is the case in Saffron Walden, has seen localised redevelopment or some form of encroachment. The branch line and its extant structures enjoy no form of statutory protection and are generally 'at risk' from future development. This report makes a number of specific recommendations relating to all classes of structures, with the overarching message that significant elements of the former railway do survive and that all efforts should be made to conserve and retain these, with demolition, and/or replacement, only to be considered as a last resort.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The survey was undertaken by the Historic Environment Branch as a response to internal demands brought about by the considerable pressures placed upon any undeveloped land, particularly that which could be designated 'Brown Field' within and around Saffron Walden and its outlying villages. Uncertainties over levels of survival highlighted the need for an archaeological assessment of the former branch line and its related sites and structures. This report details the results of this field survey, assesses significance of each site and provides appropriate recommendations for dealing with future proposals which may adversely affect this resource. This survey follows a comparable assessment of the industrial archaeology of the Bishops Stortford to Braintree branch line (Flitch Way) carried out in 2002-3 (Havis & Pratt, 2003) and will hopefully form part of a wider assessment of all redundant branch lines within the county. Copies of this report will be made available to the relevant internal Essex County Council sections, to the Essex Record Office

and to the National Monuments Record, Swindon. Further copies may be obtained, at a nominal cost to cover reproduction, from the Historic Buildings Records Officer on (01245 437613)

2.1 Methodology

The route of the former railway branch was surveyed during July 2004 by the author. The route was walked south to north-east starting at Audley End Station and progressing north-east toward Saffron Walden, Ashdon and finally Bartlow. In most cases it was possible to accurately plot the sites onto a 1:2500 scale map. Access to all of the line was not possible as parts now fall within or skirt privately owned land, commercial sites or residential developments, while in certain areas access was also hindered by the density of the undergrowth. The survey was also unable to assess the internal integrity of Saffron Walden or Bartlow stations as both are now privately owned.

A photographic record was made of all the buildings, bridges and culverts etc where they could be located and accessed. The photographs were taken using a Fuji Finepix digital camera at a 2 million pixel resolution. The survey archive is held at the Historic Environment Record of Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Site Location and Description

The area surveyed follows the route of the former Saffron Walden branch railway from Audley End Station (TL 51603630) to its junction with the Shelford-Sudbury line at Bartlow junction, Cambridgeshire (TL 5841 4496). The route almost entirely passes through arable land, only traversing one urban area, Saffron Walden, along its entire length. The route cuts through the mixed geology of boulder clay and chalk characteristic of north-west Essex and crosses, from west-east, the rivers Cam, Fulfen, the Slade and tributaries of the river Bourne.

3.2 Historic Background

(The Historic Background is mainly derived from Paye. P, 1981)

The Saffron Walden branch line firmly belongs to the second phase of railway building in the East Anglian region and follows on from the establishment of the main arterial lines radiating out of the capital, around the 1840-50s. The first section of the London to Cambridge line was opened in 1840, by 1842 it had reached Bishops Stortford finally completing its destination at Cambridge by 1845. Despite Saffron Walden supporting many commercial interests with a well established and thriving industry in brewing and malting, communication links were historically poor. The London to Cambridge road and the railway line were 2 miles distant, while goods such as malt, had to be hauled 13 miles overland to the terminus basin at Bishops Stortford. During the mid to later 1840s various schemes to provide a rail link were mooted but none came to fruition. Meanwhile as a result of its isolation between 1851-60 Saffron Walden slipped into a distinct period of decline, resulting in a 10% population decrease. Finally in 1860 a committee was formed, backed by local

businessmen with vested interests and by the Gibson family, powerful bankers and maltsters in the town, to pursue the construction of a branch independent of the established railway companies.

In 1861 the Saffron Walden Railway Company (SWRC) nominally came into existence, with an Act of Parliament authorising a railway between Wendon (Audley End) and Saffron Walden. Concerns regarding the purchase of expensive locomotives and rolling stock were eased following an important agreement struck between the SWRC and the Great Eastern Railway (GER) in 1862. The initial take up of shares in the newly formed company was slow and it was not until May 1863 that works commenced following the ceremonial cutting of the first sod by the company's Vice Chairman George Gibson. Later that year Parliament granted approval for the extension of the line to Bartlow and by the summer of 1865 the Railway Company announced the line was virtually complete (to Saffron Walden) and ready pending the outcome of an inspection by the Board of Trade. However, as the platform, connections and points at Saffron Walden station were incomplete the inspector declined to sanction its opening. The railway was revisited later that year, and this time the inspector was satisfied and on the 23 November 1865 the first train departed Saffron Walden Station. Work continued on the extension to Bartlow, and by late 1865 the line was complete but was not formally opened until the 22nd October 1866.

Built from the outset as a through station with a 202 ft platform, Saffron Walden was constructed in a 'corporate' style using local white brick. It comprised a large booking hall and waiting room with accommodation for the station master provided on first floor. The goods yard lay to the NW (down-side of the line) and accommodated a large goods shed, loading dock, cattle pens and sidings for local coal merchants. Opposite to the yard, on the up-line side, was a siding built by the Dix Cement Works for loading bagged cement directly onto the wagons and rail access for the adjacent Railway Foundry. Another siding lay to the east of the South Road overbridge, serving the Town Gas Works and later the Anglo-American oil company's storage tanks. Within the same siding was a brick-built engine shed, a water tower, a carriage shed and a 40ft turntable.

The relationship between the SWRC and the GER, for many reasons, was not always harmonious. This acrimony, to some extent was fuelled by the financial position of the SWRC who struggled to remain buoyant, and by August 1867 had no choice but to call in the receiver. The company continued to operate in receivership up until 1873, when it finally emerged following an upturn in passenger and business use. Unfortunately the writing was on the wall for the SWRC and it was bought out by the GER for £70,750, taking effect from January 1878. Although in 1923 the GER became part of the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) no difference to the schedules were implemented and the weekday only service between Audley End to Saffron Walden and Saffron Walden to Bartlow continued. The 1930s saw a distinct increase in passengers, particularly recreational use, and with the onset of WWII traffic on the branch line was significantly increased as aviation fuel supplying six local airfields was transported through Saffron Walden on route to an air ministry depot to the NE of the town, while ammunition and explosives were regularly unloaded in the station sidings.

The post war nationalisation of the industry instituted little overall change, although in 1958, possibly the most significant and ultimately damaging change was the replacement of the old steam hauled push-pull trains by diesel railbuses. As the railbuses had a much reduced seating capacity, the carriages became very congested particularly during peak travelling times, leading many users to abandon the line and drive to Audley End to catch the main line train. In 1961 a one rail bus system, seen by some as an attempt to run the line down, was introduced. March 1963 saw the publication of *'The Reshaping of British Railways'*, better known as the Beeching Report. It recommended the closure of many branch lines including the Audley End-Saffron Walden-Bartlow line and the connecting Shelford-Sudbury line. The proposals were ratified by the incumbent Minister of Transport on the 21st May 1964 and the final passenger train ran between Audley End and Saffron Walden on the 6th September 1964. Despite the withdrawal of passenger services the line remained open for goods traffic until late December 1964 but it was not until 1968 that the track was finally removed.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The demise of the railway following the recommendations of the Beeching Report, resulted in considerable losses to the railway infrastructure, notably the removal of the track, sidings and many of the rail underbridges. Survival of original structures/remains within Saffron Walden was as expected, poor, given the development pressures upon redundant land close to the centre and the need to modernise existing structures, but fared better outside the built-up areas. Generally this was proven to be the trend, survival within Saffron Walden almost certainly depended upon use or re-use i.e. the two overbridges at Debden and South Roads or the conversion of the former station building to domestic use.

Outside the boundaries of Saffron Walden the railway faced an entirely different threat. Here the largest impact upon the railway cutting has been the backfilling of the railway cutting and its reversion to arable land. This is particularly evident to the south of Saffron Walden where almost no trace of the line survives. The Saffron Walden-Ashdon-Bartlow stretch of the branch line cutting has seen much less impact from agriculture or redevelopment and still retains significant stretches of cutting and embankment, albeit densely overgrown.

It is evident that the former line, with some new build interruptions and re-landscaping excepted, can still be traced. Modern housing development, while causing some loss within the urban sections, has not overly impinged on the route of the line itself, although in some areas, particularly around Saffron Walden station, development has hindered the readability of the historic landscape. In this area clearance of the former railway sidings and of the industrial and commercial buildings along Station Road, followed by the areas residential regeneration has significantly impacted upon the towns railway heritage and irretrievably altered the character of this former industrial landscape. Presently, former industrial sites adjacent to the Station Road site are under development, and it seems inevitable that if development continues apace then the few known sites and those with potential industrial archaeological remains will be put at risk in the near future.

Unlike a recent scheme involving the improvement of the Flich Way Country Trail between Bishops Stortford and Braintree, a role involving the entire Saffron Walden Branch Line as a recreational resource is untenable due to loss within and south-west of Saffron Walden and the need for sufficient levels of investment to re-establish bridges as footpaths and clear undergrowth and waste. This said, the section between Saffron Walden and Church End, Ashdon retains the best preserved stretch of cutting and presents the greatest potential for future reuse as a footpath/country trail. It has definitive start and finish points, linking Saffron Walden to Church End and Ashdon and joins up with the Harcamlow Way to the west of Church End providing an extension of the route northwards or alternatively a circular route back to Saffron Walden. In addition to a recreational use the railway cutting and its association with the industrial revolution and the Victorian period has clear educational benefits which may be used by local schools.

Although presently lacking an identified re-use these historic remnants, from buildings to signage, have an individual and a group value which may be exploited in the future. Once any of these are removed this use is diminished. It is therefore recommended that all the surviving structures relating to the railway, including any not recorded during the survey, are wherever possible retained in situ. Given below are more specific recommendations relating to each individual group identified by the survey.

4.1 BUILDINGS

The survival of auxiliary railway buildings is generally poor. The main brick built station buildings have survived intact but have largely been altered during conversion to residential reuse, while those buildings built of timber or of a more temporary nature, such as signal boxes or railwayman's huts, tended to have been cleared away following the closure of the railway. The major brick buildings were all built between 1862 and 1865 to SWRC or GER corporate architectural designs, and can be described as, 'simplified Italianate style' (Cooper-Reade 1996). This architectural detailing was generally applied to railway buildings across the eastern railway region as it allowed for quick and cost efficient construction to a relatively standardized plan. Buildings (EHER 15906 & 40458) comprise the sole surviving representation of the SWRC corporate building style, and together with the GER built Bartlow Station (EHER 40470) form a cohesive group of mid-Victorian railway branch line architecture which is of local and regional importance. Since the railway's closure, the fate of individual buildings has varied, specific recommendations are therefore given below, but in general it is recommended that:

No building should be demolished

Any adaptation of the buildings should be kept to a minimum so as not compromise the historic integrity of the building; and where possible features, detailing and plan forms should be retained

4.1:1 Saffron Walden Railway Station (EHER 15906)

One of the two only surviving buildings built by the short lived Saffron Walden Railway Company. Following its redundancy and subsequent use for many years as the head quarters for the local cadets, the station house after falling into disrepair was sympathetically converted to residential accommodation, following the completion of a detailed historic and architectural survey and assessment (Barnes, 2000). At present the station house could not be classed as 'at risk' and should remain so for the foreseeable future. The development of the site around the station and its conversion to residential use has resulted in the removal of original railway architecture, attached buildings and much of its historic internal configuration. In view of the impact these alterations have had on architectural and historical integrity of the building it is not recommended that this building should be considered for listed status. However, a slight northerly extension of the Pleasant Road Conservation Area would afford the Old Station building some future protection and help preserve the last few built remnants of the Saffron Walden Railway Company.

4.1:2 The Railway Tavern (EHER 40458)

The Railway Tavern was built by the SWRC and adopts the same corporate styling as the station but was built to a squarer plan to provide guest accommodation. Following the closure of the branch line it continued as a public house under new ownership and still remains in use today as a tied house. The original boundary walls, courtyard with contemporary stabling, trap house and outbuildings remain and until a recent refurbishment, much of the original internal layout of the pub had survived, including a horse-shoe bar, public and lounge divisions and an off-sales hatch adjacent to the door. Prior to these works the public house, together with its range of outbuildings were arguably of list able quality, but its subsequent refit has removed much of its character, historic integrity and significance. In common with old station building an extension of the Conservation Area would afford the public house and more specifically its outbuildings some future protection. Should the opportunity arise, an internal inspection of the outbuildings should be made to assess and record any surviving features relating to their former use.

4.1:3 Booking Hall, former Bartlow Station (EHER 40470)

The former Bartlow Station Building, latterly renamed 'Booking Hall' was built along the same lines as Saffron Walden station but adopts a slightly different architectural treatment, which reflects the GER corporate style. The railway canopy and all other external features including the platform and cutting were removed or covered when the station was converted to residential use, although a single-storey (?eastbound) waiting room, latterly reused as a storage/outbuilding lies to the rear of the station (TL 5841 4498). The waiting room is built in the same architectural styling and retains its original canopy with decorative pendant fascia. At present neither the station building nor the waiting room could be classed as 'at risk', their future secured by conversion to residential use. The general development of the station site has however removed associated landscape features, original architecture, auxiliary structures and presumably much of the station buildings historic internal configuration. Considering the impact these alterations has had on the site and the architectural and historical integrity of the buildings, it is thought they do not merit

listed status. Protection through Conservation Area or local list status may be an alternative to ensure their future.

4.1:4 Signal Box at Bartlow Junction (EHER 40473)

The remains of a late C19 (1890s) Saxby and Farmer signal box is situated within dense undergrowth toward the junction of the Saffron Walden Branch Line and the Shelford-Sudbury line at TL 5827 4499. The derelict two-storey timber-framed signal box is no longer weathertight missing all of its roof covering and a significant amount of its shiplap weatherboarding. Internally all of the mechanisms/levers controlling the points and signals have been removed and the floor boards to the upper floor are decayed and no longer safe. However, the wall frames survive in a reasonable state with few significant areas of rot. The survival of functional railway buildings such as signal boxes from the later C19 are unusual and the survey has shown that no other examples remain along the branch line, with those at Saffron Walden and Audley End removed not long after the lines redundancy. To ensure its future the signal box initially requires remedial repair works to halt its deterioration, but in the longer term requires fuller conservation and ideally needs to be adopted/used by an interested party. The signal box is not beyond restoration and could be a rewarding project if taken up by a local historical society, a group of railway enthusiasts or the Railway Heritage Trust.

4.2 HALTS

All four of the main railway halts built along the length of the branch line still survive. Three of the halts were built during the initial construction stage of the branch line, and comprise two distinct forms, a brick-built waiting room/office as at Audley End Station (EHER 40454) or a battered earthen bank as survives at Ashdon (EHER 40467) and Bartlow (EHER 40471). The fourth, Acrow Halt was a later introduction to the line built specifically for the employees of Acrow, a large manufacturing works based on the eastern side Saffron Walden. These structures are no less significant than the main railway buildings and probably more so as loss of auxiliary railway structures and buildings is much more pronounced. The halts form part of a group of railway architecture which is of local and regional importance. Since the branch lines closure, the use of these structures has varied considerably. Given their significance they should fall under the same specific recommendations as proposed for the main railway buildings. Generally it is recommended that:

No halt or building should be demolished

Any adaptation of the halt or its buildings should be kept to a minimum so as not compromise the historic integrity of the building; and where possible features, detailing and plan forms should be retained.

If threatened by future development the halts should be fully recorded at an appropriate level (at RCHME level 2- 3)

4.2:1 Audley End Halt (EHER 40454)

The original branch line waiting room/station office at Audley End is a small unimposing building lacking the grandeur of the main station, but built using similar materials. The small brick-built gable ended halt is a symmetrical building retaining its original architectural treatments, spatial plan form, central open canopy with pendant fascia and windows with original vertical sliding sash windows and coade (fake) stone heads and sills. The ramped brick built halt platform retains its stone oversailing edge copings and extends up to c.60m to the east of the halt. At present the halt building is maintained and not in any serious risk as it remains in daily use albeit in a secondary role for storage and as a bicycle shelter. Possibly the greatest threat to this building and the platform will be the need for increased levels of station car-parking, which at present is barely adequate. Should the opportunity arise, an internal inspection of the halt should be made to assess and record any surviving features or treatments.

4.2:2 Acrow Halt (EHER 40463)

Built in 1957 by Acrow for the benefit of the works and particularly its staff, Acrow Halt survives intact and in a sound structural condition within a stretch of overgrown cutting to the east of the works and north of Ashdon Road. Its robust concrete construction and isolation away from the former works (now an industrial estate) after the lines closure are key factors in its survival. Although of a very simple utilitarian design, functional modern structures like Acrow halt, rarely survive their redundancy. Unlike the majority of the ancillary railway structures which were rapidly swept away, the halt remains as an important example of the towns post war industrial development. At present the halt is under no foreseeable threat although any expansion of the Ashdon Road Industrial Estate or development to the north of Ashdon Road would compromise its future.

4.2:3 Ashdon Halt (EHER 40467)

Ashdon Halt was the only (public) scheduled stop between Saffron Walden Station and the Bartlow Junction. It simply comprises a ramped and battered earthen bank, improved in 1915 with the addition of a waiting room in the form of a disused GER coach body. The site lies redundant and although some protection to the carriage has been attempted through its re-roofing with felt, the loss of cladding from the carriage body has exposed its structural timber frame, which is visibly deteriorating. The timber battering to the bank has also deteriorated, resulting in localised collapse. Both bank and carriage require conservation and ideally a full survey prior to further deterioration.

4.2:4 Bartlow Halt (EHER 40471)

The halt platform mainly survives intact and extends for c.120m along the north-eastern side of the railway embankment, south west of the station. The platform is built in a similar style to that at Ashdon Halt, comprising a ramped and battered bank but in this case with a tarmac top dressing. The railway embankment is presently used as a footpath and the platform, although extensively overgrown, survives in a reasonable condition, but is suffering localised collapse and subsidence. The site at

Bartlow junction has already seen the loss of the pedestrian causeway to the station, demolition of ancillary railway structures and the conversion of the station and the Sudbury bound platform. The halt contributes significantly towards the branch lines heritage and as such should be conserved to arrest its deterioration and insure its immediate future.

4.3 BRIDGES

Ten of an original 14 bridges survive at least in part. Three types of basic bridge designs were used along the route: iron beam overbridges on brick piers, brick arch accommodation bridges more frequently used for wider spans and the much simpler iron beam underbridges. Four of the bridges remain in constant vehicular use and as such are regularly maintained to meet safety requirements, although at present one of the brick accommodation bridges (EHER 40465) is being monitored following structural cracking. Although maintenance works of bridges affecting public roads are given greater priority than others, this class of bridge is also more vulnerable to being replaced. All of the six bridges which only partially survive were underbridges i.e. bridges that carried the railway over roads. Redundancy and the height restrictions this class of bridge imposed upon the carriageway led to the removal of the iron beam decks, although in the majority of cases the brick piers, revetments and banks still remain.

Whilst recognising that the bridges are elderly structures with limited structural and load bearing capabilities and that there is potential for the redundant brick revetments/banks to become unstable through deterioration, the following general recommendations are made:

All bridges, in use or otherwise, should be regularly inspected, maintained and appropriate conservation measures put in place

Bridges should only be replaced or removed as a last resort where they cannot be repaired and are dangerous

4.4 CULVERTS

Many of the factors and problems affecting bridges also apply to culverts. These range from small diameter drains to larger structures channelling, in Essex terms, relatively fast flowing rivers. All the culverts dating to the railway period are built in brick and are well constructed. The brickwork on culverts such as EHER 40468 & 40495 is beginning to suffer, and is showing localised spalling of brickwork, loss of mortar and encroachment of vegetation.

Culverts should be maintained and kept clear of vegetation

Original brick culverts should retained where possible

4.5 CROSSING POINTS

No level crossings were identified during the survey but two crossing points (EHER 40494 & 40496), providing access to adjoining fields were recorded along the line to the north of Saffron Walden. Both were recognised by either opposing gaps in the hedgerow and/or by concrete gate posts and in one case (EHER 40494) the surviving five bar gates. Crossing point (EHER 40496) followed a pre-existing route across the railway and constitutes physical evidence of former tracks and in some cases no longer extant landscape features such as field boundaries. The concrete posts are particularly vulnerable where the crossings are still used, as they liable to be removed to improve access for modern farm machinery.

Crossing points should be kept clear of vegetation

Concrete posts should be retained

4.6 POSTS

The survey uncovered no surviving examples of gradient posts, and intermittent stretches of wire and concrete/timber post fencing defining the boundary of the land take. These originally prevented livestock from wandering onto the former railway but now merely delineate the cutting from the surrounding arable fields. The only surviving sign post, which has lost its fingers, lies to the north-east of Bartlow Halt.

All historic posts should be retained *in situ*

4.7 OTHER SITES

Of particular interest are the air ministry sidings built in 1939 to serve underground fuel tanks (EHER 40476) stockpiling aviation fuel for the surrounding World War II airfields at Debden and Little Walden. The sidings (redundant by 1949) a network of internal roadways and six large circular subterranean tanks capped by earthen banks can still be recognised on the ground. At present completeness and levels of integrity remains unclear, however, as the site is still in petro-chemical use it is very likely that the original WWII fuel tanks still remain. Such sites are extremely rare on a local and regional level, and as such may qualify for protection through scheduling. Should the opportunity arise a detailed inspection of the site should be made to assess and record the extent and significance of the surviving tanks and the site infra-structure.

The fuel tanks or associated structures should NOT be demolished

Any adaptation of the site or its buildings should be kept to a minimum so as not compromise its historic integrity; and where possible features and plan forms should be retained.

If threatened by future development the site should be fully recorded at an appropriate level (not less than RCHME level 3)

The survey also discovered a number of features which do not fit into any of the above categories. The recommendation for these sites, such as the weighbridge (EHER 40457) in Saffron Walden, as with the rest of the railway, is that they should be retained wherever possible.

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6.0 GAZETTEER

The gazetteer details the sites identified during the survey of the former Saffron Walden Branch Line. The sites are ordered from Audley End in the SW to Bartlow in the NE and are located onto a series of maps each with an identifying letter. Each site entry comprises the Essex Historic Environment Record number (EHER), the name/location, National Grid Reference (NGR), a photograph (if available), a short description and any statutory designations. For the general descriptions and recommendations see section 4.0

EHER 0372

Saffron Walden to Bartlow Junction Branch Line

The Saffron Walden railway branch line was opened by the Saffron Walden Railway Company (SWRC) in 1865 to improve communications to markets in London and the south-east and promote commercial growth within the town. Initially the branch line was built between Audley End station and Saffron Walden but was extended to Bartlow Junction and the Shelford-Sudbury line in 1866. A number of new industrial activities became established around the station sidings, including goods sheds, cattle pens, a cement works, brass and iron foundry (subsequently converted to a malthouse), a saw mill and a steam-driven corn mill. The success of the branch line was not assured, and to remain commercially viable the line depended upon investment and the support of passenger numbers, both of which proved to be inadequate. The branch survived for just less than 100 years, finally closing to the public in September 1964, following the recommendations of the Beeching Report.

Map A

EHER 36774

Audley End Main Line Station

NGR TL 5160 3630



Although Audley End Station was not included in the branch line survey as it belongs to the first phase of railway construction initiated during the 1840s, it is included in the gazetteer because of its obvious associations with the branch line. The Grade II listed station at Audley End (EHER 36774) was built circa 1845 by Francis Thompson, railway architect of the early C19 whose work (mainly in the north Midlands) notably includes, Chester Station. In 1845 "The Builder" attributed both Great Chesterford and Audley End stations to Francis Thompson. It is a rectangular two storey yellow gault brick building with a parapet and ornamental stucco band. Three window range on the west and east fronts and one window range on the north and south ends, double-hung sashes with semi-circular heads, in stucco architraves. The east front has a covered carriage approach with corresponding stucco arches and coursed pillars. The west front has a C20 platform canopy, without a fascia, on original cast iron ornamental brackets (DoE 1984). The North bound platform is a simple three bay waiting area built in corresponding yellow gault brick with a moulded pendant fascia and canopy supported on original decorative cast-iron columns.

Map A

EHER 40454 Branch Line Halt and Platform

NGR TL 5163 3628



The original branch line halt and a length of platform still survive to the south-east of the main station building and at the western extreme of the former branch line. The waiting room/station office (EHER 40454) is a small unimposing building lacking the grandeur of the main station. It is built using a similar yellow stock brick in Flemish bond and uses blue bull-

nosed bricks to dress and protect the lower courses on each wall angle. Covered in Welsh slate and with gable ends, north and south, the halt is a symmetrical building having a central open canopied seating area with bench seating flanked by either an office or waiting room. Truncated stacks show that both rooms were once heated, although whether the fireplaces are still intact is unclear (no access). All the windows retain their original vertical sash windows and have coade (fake) stone heads with deep skewbacks and stone sills. The platform extends for c.60m to the east of the halt and is brick built with stone oversailing edge copings. Ramped at both ends, the platform also tapers gradually to compensate for the disparity in ground levels as the branch line rises out of the Cam valley up to the level of the main line.

EHER 0372 Railway Cutting to the east of Audley End

The cutting (EHER 0372) extending east to (NGR TL 5176 3642) is presently used as overflow car parking for the station. However from (NGR TL 5176 3642) to Mutlow Hill (B1383) it has been extensively backfilled and is now within the grounds of a private house (Bruncketts). No evidence of the underbridge over Mutlow Hill remains although the cutting continues to the east becoming an embankment as it traverses the flood plain of the Cam valley.

Map A

EHER 40455
Culvert at the River Cam

NGR TL5222 3665



A brick-built C19 culvert channelling the River Cam below the railway embankment to the north-east of Wendens Mill. The bridge abutments and revetments are built in red stock brick laid in English Bond while the parapets are capped with blue brick copings. The double-arch of the culvert is built using four on-edge courses, and is supported on a central cutwater. The culvert shows little sign of alteration and survives intact and in a sound structural condition. It is however, no longer in use, very overgrown, and would benefit

from maintenance to control invasive vegetation.

Map B

EHER 0372
West of Saffron Walden

NGR TL 530 372 – 535 376

The embankment/cutting to east of the culvert (EHER 40455) has now been removed and the railway line as it continues east is now only recognisable as a linear plantation of coniferous trees. From TL 576 368 to the western outskirts of Saffron Walden, the cutting has been backfilled and the land reverted to arable. No evidence



remains of the culvert or railway embankment that passed over the River Fulfen (TL 530 372). On the outskirts of the town, the railway cutting partially remains to the north and west of Beeches Close, but the Newport Road and the Borough Lane overbridges have both been removed.

Map B

EHER 0372 **Saffron Walden Centre**

To the east of Newport Road the line of the railway is preserved only by the property boundaries within the present townscape. The cutting has been backfilled and continuously built over between Newport Road and Borough Lane and between Borough Lane and Debden Road. From Debden Road to South Street the cutting is still recognisable but has been compromised by numerous small commercial and residential developments.

EHER 40456 **Debden Road Overbridge**



NGR TL 5382 3789

Iron beam and brick jack arched bridge supported on piers of red stock brick with yellow brick dressings and a parapet with decorative bands and over-sailing brick copings. Four jack arches support the bridge bed axially and spring from five large wrought iron bridging beams, manufactured in 1864 by founders J.I. Headley of Cambridge. The outer

beams are embossed with decorative panels (one bearing the date plaque, see picture) and are set onto highly compressive stone corbels. Additional lateral support was provided to the piers, on both flanks, by lean-to buttressing. There is evidence of localised reworking and a large section of the northern approach wall has been rebuilt.



Map B

EHER 15906 Saffron Walden Railway Station and Goods Yard

NGR TL 5393 3795

With the opening in 1865 of the Saffron Walden Railway a number of businesses and industrial sites were established around the station and its sidings. These included Dixs Cement Works, Railway Brass and Iron foundry (subsequently converted to a malthouse), a saw mill and a steam-driven corn mill. Most of these buildings have been demolished leaving only the station building, a weighbridge within the sidings and the Cornmill (fronting South Road and now converted to residential use) extant. Within the sidings the goods shed, sidings, signal box, lamp room, platform and cattle pens to the west of the station have all been cleared away following the commercial and then residential re development of the area. A turntable, engine house and carriage shed to the east of the South Road overbridge were also demolished, although at present this area, unlike that to the west, remains unbuilt.

EHER 40457 Weighbridge Court

NGR TL 5783 3794



Adjacent to Debden Road Overbridge at the junction of Station and Debden Roads is weighbridge court, a complex of modern apartments named after the weighbridge, retained within the development. The site lies within the former goods siding/coal yard, to the north of the line. The weighbridge, added in c.1930 and replacing an earlier example depicted on a map of

1900, lay near to yards main entrance onto Station Rd. Capable of weighing up to 12 tons, it was manufactured by H. Pooley and Sons Ltd, of Birmingham and London and was commissioned in 1930 by the LNER (London and North Eastern Railway) Acc No. 524.

EHER 15906

Saffron Walden Railway Station

NGR TL 5402 3801



Built in c.1865 the station is a symmetrical 2 storey 5 bay building in yellow gault brick, with forward set gabled cross-wings at each end. The shallow pitched roofs are slate covered and the angles are dressed with nail-head banded brick quoining (a characteristic of the SWRC) rising to a simple moulded eaves cornice and an open pediment at gable. The walls have a

brick plinth with a bead moulding and a moulded first-floor band which wraps around both cross wings. The principal windows are either four or eight pane sash windows set into apertures with gauged brick voussoirs. A small single-storey toilet and porters annex formerly attached to the east end was demolished during the buildings conversion to a dwelling, while the former main entrance from Station Road, also built with brick voussoirs, has been converted into a window. The present canopy on the rear trackside elevation is a modern replica, possibly reusing original brackets.

EHER 40458

The Railway Tavern

NGR TL 5396 3801

Contemporary with and sharing many of the same architectural traits/corporate styling as the main station the Railway Tavern was purpose-built to serve the station and its customers. Built to a slightly over square plan the two-storey basemented gault brick building, has brick quoins with nail head decoration, horned sash windows and a shallow hipped slate covered



roof with wide overhanging eaves. Moulded cavetto floor and eaves bands decorate the main elevations. Original courtyard boundary walls and contemporary stabling, trap house and outbuildings remain around courtyard to the east. A recent refurbishment removed the original public bar/lounge bar divisions, horse shoe bar and a small off-sales hatch adjacent to the main entrance.

**EHER 40459
South Road Overbridge**

NGR TL 5412 3804

The South Road overbridge adopted the same design and was built to the same



specifications as its contemporary to the west at Debden Road. It is an Iron beam and axial jack arched bridge supported on brick-built piers of red stocks in English bond, with yellow brick dressings and a brick parapet. Four jack arches strengthen the deck axially and spring from five large original wrought iron I section bridging beams. The outer

beams are embossed with decorative panels and inscribed with the founders, J.I. Headley of Cambridge and dated 1864. Additional lateral support is provided to the piers on both flanks by lean-to buttressing and to the deck by tie-rods. The bridge was widened to the east in 1887, but has since also been re-engineered, using modern reinforced concrete beams. The bridge lies just within the Mount Pleasant Road Conservation Area and as such enjoys some protection

South Road to Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden

The eastern half of the railway cutting between the South Road overbridge and Thaxted Road remains unbuilt as does parts of the rail embankment immediately west of Thaxted Road. New build which is starting to encroach from developments along the south of the cutting increases pressure for future development to infill the cutting. Such



schemes would have a negative impact upon the remains of a railway turntable, engine house and carriage shed formerly situated near to south road bridge and within the unbuilt cutting. Future planning proposals should accommodate the need for an archaeological evaluation to fully assess and record buried evidence of the sites Industrial past.

EHER 40496
Brights Wood Crossing Point

NGR TL 5667 4043



Crossing point of former track/droeway between Brights Wood and the Ashdon Road. Only the chamfered concrete gate posts and a number of concrete fence posts remain along the south-eastern side of the rail cutting. The corresponding posts to the north have been removed.

EHER 40497
Posts

The survival of fence posts along both sides of the line is particularly good along the stretch from Butlers Farm to Puddle Wharf. The fence posts are either timber as present along the northern side or concrete fencing present along the southern side. Neither types are original.

NGR TL 5642 3997- 5692 4100



The decayed bases of telegraph poles, presumably carrying electrical cabling for power or telecommunications are present intermittently along the southern side of this stretch of the rail cutting

Map E

EHER 40466

Underbridge at Puddle Wharf

NGR TL 5700 4115

Apart from the remains of the rail embankments, no structural evidence, either brick piers or revetments, of the former underbridge survive.

EHER 40499
Thaxted Road Culvert

Brick built culvert channelling the Slade under the rail embankment as it approaches the Thaxted Road. Although it has a large structural crack in the face of the arch, the culvert remains in use, unblocked and maintained.



EHER 40460
Thaxted Road Underbridge

NGR TL 5449 3812



Former iron beam underbridge spanning Thaxted Road. The bridge deck was probably removed due to the height restrictions it imposed upon one of the main arteries serving the industrial area of the town. All that remains is the red brick piers, earth embankment and the brick abutments. The brickwork is much plainer than that used in the

Debden and South Road bridges and may demonstrate, in its stylistic change, the second phase of the line in 1866.

Map C

EHER 0372

Saffron Walden East

NGR TL 5450 3820-5510 3845

The railway between Thaxted and Radwinter road runs to the south of Saffron Walden Cemetery, turning gradually north-east to cross Radwinter and Ashdon Roads. Little survives of the cutting to the rear of the cemetery as this area now forms part of the Shire Hill Industrial Estate. A small length remains at TL 546 382 adjacent to Prospect Place.

EHER 40461

NGR TL 5507 3845

Radwinter Road Underbridge

Only the red brick piers and abutments of the former iron beam underbridge remain on the south side of Radwinter Road. The iron beam deck probably met the same fate and for the same reasons, as its Thaxted Road contemporary



EHER 40475 and 40476

NGR TL 5541 3859 & TL 5555 3865

Ashdon Road Air Ministry Site



Restrictions on access into the grounds of two large commercial operations between Radwinter and Ashdon Roads prevented inspection of the railway cutting in this area. Map evidence shows that the branch line forked to the east at TL 553 386 to an Air Ministry Sidings (EHER 40475), which was built in 1939, to serve massive underground fuel tanks (EHER 40476) stockpiling aviation fuel during World War II for the surrounding airfields at Debden, Little Walden etc. The sidings/cutting (seen to the north-east of the large white building), a network of internal roadways and six large circular subterranean tanks capped by earthen banks, still appear on contemporary aerial photographs (see above). At present completeness and levels of integrity remains unclear, although as the site is operated by Serco petro-chemicals it is very likely that the original WWII fuel tanks still remain in use.

EHER 40462
Ashdon Road Underbridge

NGRTL 5541 3886

Only the brick piers and revetments on the south side of Ashdon Road survive. The deck and the northern bridge structure were removed during the construction of a goods siding for Acrow Engineering during 1955 and later in 1957 for Acrow Halt (EHER 40463). The goods sidings serving the works no longer survive as it has been redeveloped as part of the Ashdon Road Industrial Estate.



EHER 40463
Acrow Halt

NGR TL 5543 3889



Built in 1957 for the benefit of the Acrow Works and particularly its staff, Acrow Halt still lies within a stretch of overgrown cutting to the east of the works and north of Ashdon Road. The Halt comprises a c. 80m stretch of reinforced concrete platform ramped at both ends and oversailing the former line to the east. A simple lean-to shelter of concrete construction is situated along the western side of the platform, as is a concrete ramp leading up into the adjacent works. Tubular iron hand rail posts are intermittently spaced along the edge of the platform and access ramp. Although the halt lies redundant, its robust construction and isolation away from the former works and outside the envelope of the modern industrial estate are key factors in its survival.

Map D

EHER 40464

Underbridge at Painters cottage

TL 5570 3950

The bridge site lies within agricultural land belonging to the Audley End Estate. The deck of the underbridge, originally built to maintain vehicular access to Painters Cottage (since demolished) has been removed leaving only the brick-built bridge piers, revetments and the embankment. The remains are currently overgrown and showing signs of distress.

Cutting from TL 5570 3950 to TL 5745 4168

The railway cutting from Painters Cottage at (TL 5570 3950) through to Ashdon Halt (TL 5745 4168) is still predominantly intact and heavily overgrown throughout most of its length, although a stretch to the SW of the Butlers Lane accommodation bridge has been illegally backfilled through fly-tipping. Just before Ashdon Halt and either side of Puddle Wharf, the line embanks to take account of the undulating topography and to enable the underbridge to span the access road to Puddle Wharf Farm.

EHER 40465

Overbridge at Butlers Lane

NGR TL 5640 3997



A triple arch accommodation bridge built with a large central (rail) arch flanked by smaller outer arches springing from the railway banks. Built with red brick piers and abutments (English bond), the bridge has white brick dressings facing each of the three course on-edge arches and a plain blue brick band at deck level. The parapets, also in red brick, are modern and have a blue brick on-edge coping. Generally in a fair condition, although there are areas of brick spalling within the arches, particularly on the west side and more seriously a large structural crack passing through the parapet and abutment in the southern springing arch. Limitations on maximum road weights may be necessary due to structural weakness. Movement in the bridge (AEB2122) is presently being monitored.

EHER 40493
Conduit

Pre-cast concrete conduit with ceramic pipe located on the northern side of the track bed. The conduit was probably used for the underground channelling of railway signals/cablings alongside the track.

NGR TL 5650 4008



EHER 40494
Crossing Point



Crossing point comprising four concrete gate posts, two either side of the cutting and a pair of timber gates. The crossing is banked slightly along its flanks suggesting its was used as a cattle drove way. The gates have deteriorated but the concrete posts remain upright and intact.

NGR TL 5659 2422

EHER 40495
Culvert

Redundant brick built culvert channelling a small east to west flowing spring beneath the rail embankment. The small diameter culvert is built using red brick but has a blue brick coping course around the opening. It is no longer in use, (replaced by a modern drain) and is starting to deteriorate badly.

NGR TL 5662 4032



**EHER 40467
Ashdon Halt**

NGR TL 5745 4168



Ashdon Halt was the only (public) scheduled stop between Saffron Walden station and Bartlow junction. Reached from Fallowden Lane, the halt originally comprised a length of raised platform built along the south-eastern side of the rail cutting. Later in 1915, a disused GER coach body was provided to act as a waiting room (Paye, 1981). Both the platform and the former waiting room/carriage remain in situ. Measuring c.50m in length, the platform is ramped at both ends and built using a railway sleeper revetment holding back an earth and clinker bank. The sleepers are laid on-edge four courses high (c.1.2m) and held by sleeper posts at c.1m intervals. Set onto the platform bank and toward its northern (village) end is the body minus under carriage, of a former GER passenger carriage. It is mainly constructed of timber, with close boarded timber-framed walls supporting a shallow camber arched timber boarded roof (latterly felted). The original front-facing seating have been removed and the carriage refitted with continuous bench seating, built along three of its walls. No glazing remains. The site lies redundant and the coach body, exacerbated by the loss of external wall cladding, is deteriorating badly.



Ashdon Halt to Rectory Lane

NGR TL 5745 4168 - TL 5809 4354

From Ashdon Halt to Rectory Lane (TL 5745 4168) and onto the overbridge west of the sewage works (TL 5809 4354) the cutting has either been backfilled and surviving as field boundaries, or is densely overgrown.

EHER 40468
Culvert at Rectory Lane

NGR TL5794 4229



No evidence of the rail bridge at Rectory lane or the rail embankment to the south of the road, remain. The southern embankment appears to have been completely quarried away while to the north of the road survival is intermittent. Presently only the causeway which provides access to Reckitts Farm remains. A culvert channelling a tributary of the River Bourne, east-west below the

causeway, still remains in use. Built to a typical railway architectural style the culvert comprises a squat 4 course on-edge blue brick faced arch with red brick abutments in English bond. Splayed brick revetment walls channel the river bed and retain the bank around the area of the opening. The culvert is in use and is presently clear of any obstructions. Only the eastern culvert arch was inspected. It showed considerable amounts of brick spalling and loss of mortar, particularly around the arch face, and a number of large and significant structural cracks within the brickwork of the revetments and abutments. There are no signs of collapse within culvert itself, but to ensure its future stability the culvert requires remedial repairs.

Map F

EHER 40469
Overbridge W of Ashdon Sewage Works

NGR TL 5809 5354

A single arch accommodation bridge built with red stock brick abutments in English



Bond, a three course on-edge brick arch with white brick dressings and red brick piers and splay revetments holding back banks to the north and south. The brick parapet, tops of the piers and saddle-back copings are later replacements. The bridge remains in use, now providing access to farm buildings to the west of the line and is well maintained, showing areas of recent repair, particularly to the revetment walls.

To the north of accommodation bridge EHER 40469 the line becomes embanked as it crosses the low lying flood plain of the River Bourne and passes the site of the demolished Ashdon Brickworks (EHER 15097) formerly sited to the west of the railway.

EHER 40498
Culvert across the Bourne

NGR TL 5822 4395



A culvert channelling the River Bourne, below the railway embankment still remains in use presently carrying an access road to farm buildings to the north. This culvert is not typical of the arch/tunnel type brick culverts but is more akin to the iron beam bridges with a wrought iron beam bed resting on brick built abutments. Brick revetment walls

channel the river and retain the bank either side of the bridge. The culvert remains in use, is clear of any obstructions and there are no obvious signs of distress.

Map G

EHER 40470
Booking Hall

NGR TL 5841 4496



Bartlow Station was initially built (between 1862-1866) by the Great Eastern Railway (GER) to serve the Shelford to Sudbury line and subsequently the Saffron Walden branch line reached via a pedestrian causeway between the station and adjacent halt. The Shelford, Haverhill, Sudbury line is now redundant and the station building has since been converted

for residential use and lies in private hands. The station adopts a similar architectural style to Saffron Walden Station, and is built using similar brickwork and standardised ground plan. The roofs however, are hipped and not gabled and the brickwork lacks the nail head detail within the quoining typical of the SWR corporate style. The stone window surrounds at Bartlow are more elaborate and the sash windows taller and more elegant. The slight variations in architectural treatment between the two stations reflect the corporate styles of the two companies who built them. The railway canopy and all other external features including the platform and cutting appear to have been removed when the station (now renamed Booking Hall) was converted to residential use. A small single storey eastbound waiting room (reused as an outbuilding) is present to the rear of Booking Hall at TL 5841 4498. It is built in the same style as the station and has kept its original canopy with pendant fascia. The subsequent re-landscaping of the grounds to the south of the station and the creation of a small lake has removed the pedestrian causeway which once linked the station to the branch line. Both station and waiting room lie just within Cambridgeshire



**EHER 40471
Bartlow Halt**

NGR TL 5835 4492

As the branch line sweeps in a wide arc toward Bartlow junction and the Shelford-Sudbury line, it progressively rises onto a railway embankment (TL 58374487-5817 4503) and out of the low lying flood plain of River Bourne. The branch halt line platform



mainly survives intact and extends for c.120m along the north-eastern side of the embankment between (TL 5832 4495-5838 4487). The platform is built in a similar style to that at Ashdon Halt, comprising an earth and clinker bank, c.1.2m in height, but in this instance with a tarmac top dressing. The platform bank is battered back using

a timber sleeper revetment (4 courses deep) with upright sleeper posts braced laterally using iron tie-bolts. An over-sailing timber kerb runs along the rail side of the platform and both the north-western and south-eastern platform ends are ramped. The railway embankment is presently used as a footpath and the platform, although overgrown, survives in a reasonable condition but starting to suffer from areas of localised collapse and subsidence.

EHER 40472

Post

Located centrally to the rear of the halt platform (EHER 40471) and at the junction of the former pedestrian causeway to the station (TL 5835 4491) is the cast-iron base of a railway sign/finger post (EHER 40472).

Although the head is missing, its fingers were probably directed to the north-east and toward the main station building.



EHER 40473

Signal Box at Bartlow Junction

NGR TL 5827 4499

To the north-west of the platform and toward the junction of the branch line and the Shelford-Sudbury line lies a derelict late C19 (1890s) Saxby and Farmer signal box (TL



5827 4499). The signal box is a two-storey, rectangular plan building with gable ends east and west and an external straight flight to the first floor. The walls are clad with weatherboard (shiplap) nailed onto a heavy primary braced 3 bay softwood (pine) timber-frame mounted onto a 5 brick course 1B wall plinth capped with chamfered blue brick copings. Heavy iron brackets with quatrefoil

sprandrels supported an external walkway with handrail which formerly ran around the first floor. Some lengths of boarding and handrail remain. The first-floor was extensively glazed with 6 large window openings in each long wall and 3 window openings in both gable ends. The shallow roof trusses are still partially covered in elm boards but the roofing slates are no longer intact. Both gables retain their moulded barge boards and square gable ventilators. An aperture cut through the roof boards for a flue betray the use of a small boiler/heater on the first floor. The first floor structure comprises lateral timber joists at 12" centres resting upon timber rails nailed to the long wall frames. Internally all of the mechanics controlling the points and signals have been removed. A large axial beam support for the lever mechanisms still extends the length of the ground floor, while braced to the northern wall were heavy upright timber mounting posts with rounded heads, formerly providing anchorage for the main control levers on the floor above. Floor mountings and conduits passing beneath the signal box to trackside were also in evidence. No other internal fixtures, fittings or finishes were recognised. Access up onto first floor was not possible.



The signal box currently lies derelict and within dense undergrowth. The roof coverings are missing and the building is far from watertight. There is considerable decay to the first floor boards and roof structure. However, remarkably the wall frames survive in a reasonable state. The survival of signal boxes from this period are unusual and the survey has shown that no other examples survive along the branch line. To ensure its future the signal box needs to be made weathertight, but in the longer term, it needs to be adopted/used by an interested party. The signal box is not beyond restoration and could be a rewarding project if taken up by a local historical society or group of railway enthusiasts.

EHER 40474
Underbridge at Hadstock Road

NGR TL 5817 4503



The embankment, brick revetment and piers belonging to the bridge remain either side of the Hadstock Road, but the deck of the underbridge (probably iron beam) has been removed. The remains are currently overgrown but show little obvious signs of distress.