

THE OLD MINERAL LINE

Revised Edition

R.J. Sellick

An independent and sometimes eccentric line, which connected the local port of Watchet with long abandoned mines and deserted villages more than 1000 feet high on the Brendon Hills, the West Somerset Mineral Railway enjoys a place in West Somerset folklore unrivalled by any closed branch line. Rarely accorded its full title, it is invariably referred to with nostalgic affection as the 'old mineral line'.

In this collection of historic photographs and expert commentary, R.J. Sellick traces the story of the Mineral Railway from its beginnings in 1856, through its fitful decline, to the end of the company in 1925. In this revised and updated new edition guidance is offered to exploring what remains of the railway from routes open to the public.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After attending the tiny village school at Herner, in the Taw Valley, the late

R.J. Sellick went to Barnstaple Grammar School and then to Taunton School.

A Chartered Surveyor, his work took him all over the country, from Plymouth to Sheffield, but latterly his permanent home was at Luxborough, only three miles from the West Somerset Mineral Railway.

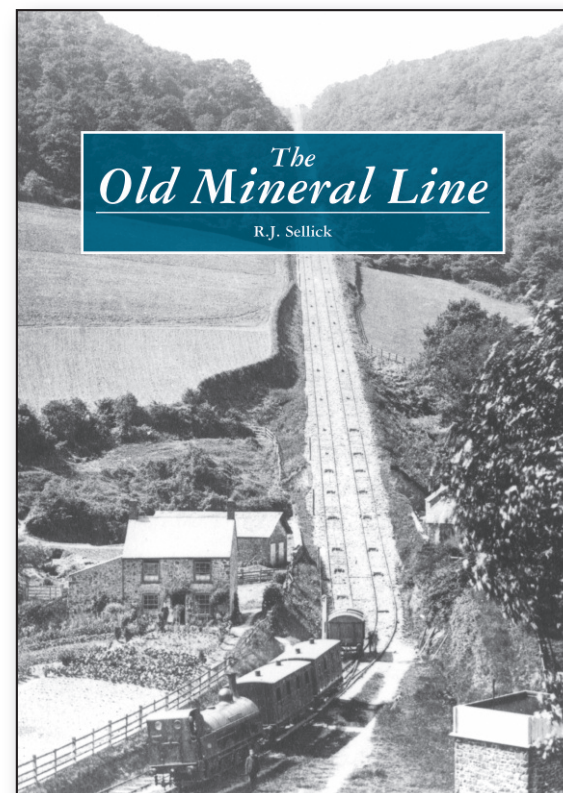
His interest in the mineral line dated from his schoolboy days when, his curiosity aroused by his father's stories of the derelict line, he explored the route by cycle and on foot and interviewed many who had worked on or remembered the railway and mines. Much later, in 1962, he wrote *The West Somerset Mineral Railway*, the standard history on the subject. He also compiled a new extended edition of C. S. Orwin's classic history *The Reclamation of Exmoor Forest* and edited E.T. MacDermot's notes for the new edition of *The History of the Forest of Exmoor*.

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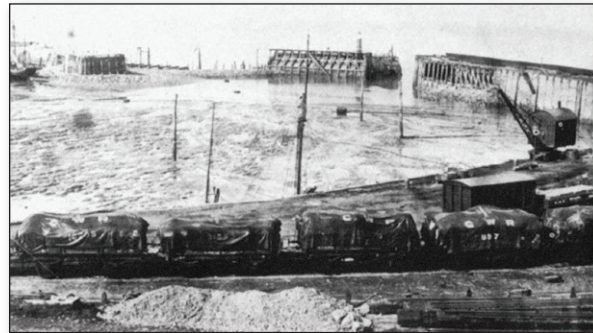


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Watchet harbour after the great storm of 28-29 December 1900.

Left: Secured to the incline cable by triple chains, this waggon was used by passengers who travelled free at their own risk.

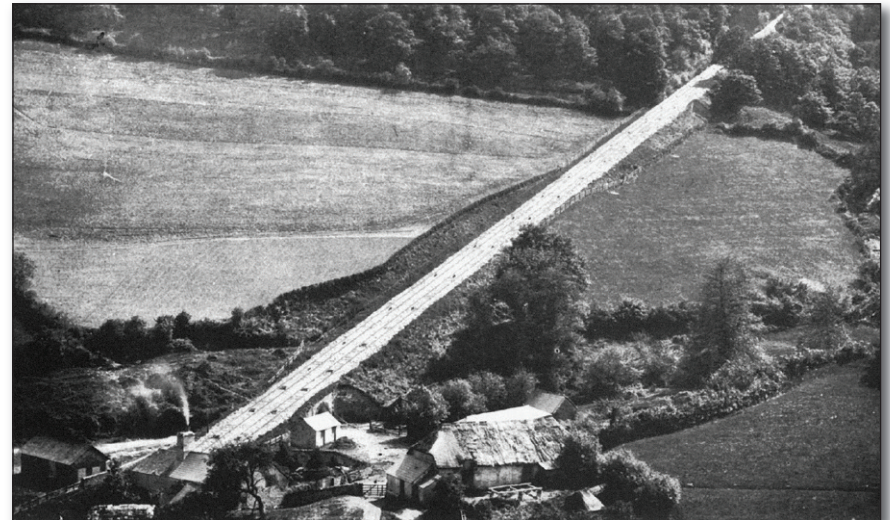
Right: The reopening of the mines provided extra trade to The Stores at Brendon Hill.



Below: This old gentleman, photographed in Smith's cutting on Withiel Hill in May 1911, lived at Gupworthy station and had the task of looking after the entire upper section.



Example of a double-page spread.



The immense size of the incline is shown dramatically in this photograph taken in 1895.



The Syndicate's locomotive, former Metropolitan Railway No. 37, was hauled dead by rail over the GWR to Kentsford where a temporary connection was made between the Minehead branch and the WSMR. The transfer took place on Sunday 30 June 1907 and the photograph shows the arrival of No. 37 behind a GWR engineer's train.

