

UNUSUAL RAILWAY PUBS, REFRESHMENT ROOMS AND ALE TRAINS

REPRINT

Bob Barton

Queen Victoria's private waiting room; the setting for the film classic *Brief Encounter*; a Lincolnshire signal cabin; a pre-war parcels van; a gas-lit ladies' waiting room; and a wooden carriage of 1876... some of the locations that serve as station pubs with a difference. You can, quite literally, drink in Britain's railway history (and dine too) in the world's first purpose-built railwayman's inn, or the Metropolitan Railway's headquarters, or the terminus of the late lamented Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway. The author, Bob Barton, has spent five years visiting remarkable hostelrys where cask ale and coffee is served along with generous portions of railway heritage and now you can too, with the help of this lavishly illustrated guide.

Stations both large and small once had licensed refreshment rooms of the type immortalized in Noel Coward's *Brief Encounter*. During the nineteenth century, a new generation of railway pubs on and adjacent to stations became the successors to coaching inns, for which the railways had sounded the death-knell. Bob Barton traces the 175 year-old relationship between railways, refreshment rooms and the brewing industry through this guide covering everything from main line termini to rural branch line halts. It includes the growing phenomenon of steam hauled Ale Trains on heritage railways, and features reproductions of pump-clips of railway themed beers. The book will appeal to railway enthusiasts as well as both armchair and actual travellers (the places featured can all be visited, most of them by train as well as by car) in addition to real ale lovers and those who like their nostalgia infused with the sight or spirit of steam trains.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob Barton is former senior press officer at tourist board VisitBritain and has written travel features in magazines and newspapers worldwide; he is also a columnist for nostalgia magazine *Best of British* and co-author of *The Rainy Day Book* (Guardian Books, 2009).

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UNUSUAL RAILWAY PUBS REFRESHMENT ROOMS AND ALE TRAINS

The Crown Inn, with Stockport's massive viaduct rising above.



Above: The Middy Bar, Brockford, Suffolk, is an ancient third class coach carefully converted for real ale lovers



Left: Denmark Hill Station, London, was restored as a pub after a fire in 1980.



Left: Railwayman's Arms, Bridgnorth Station, Shropshire.

Below: Bonapartes, Bristol Templemeads, has the look of a medieval great hall.



Example of a double-page spread.

RIFORD & BRAMPTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Former London & North Western Railway between Northampton and Walsley Harborough (closed). Partially reopened as Northampton & Lampeter Railway (a heritage line).

THE BRAMPTON HALL

This popular pub-restoration is set around a greatly extended former stationmaster's house in a beautiful spot. Adjacent is a branch line that closed in 1981, now the headquarters of a developing heritage railway. Beer real ales are regularly available (Sharp's Doom Bar, Buller's London Pride, Mumford Old Spiced Hen and Adams' Better when I called) and the menu is extensive (served all day until 9.30pm, Sunday 9pm), including a barbecue in summer and afternoon tea.

The former branch line corridor has been re-routed as the Brampton Valley Way and is a linear country park used by National Cycle Network Route 6. I found cycling from Northampton Station a pleasant way to reach the pub, including views of the West Coast main line. After three miles of mainly level pedalling I glimpsed a semaphore signal and signal box marking the southern extremity of the preserved line. A volunteer engineering gang was re-erecting the telegraph wires.

The old stationmaster's house, which is the pub's nucleus, is the only original railway building surviving at this location, dating from around the time of the line's 1859 opening. In red brick with horizontal courses of yellow, and three upper windows set within pointed arches—their crown with delicate finials—are indications that this was home to a railway employee of some rank. He would have taken personal charge of any important or urgent shipments arriving or leaving by train, supervised a staff of at least full-time and come out to meet the main passenger train. Today, the original entrance has been sealed and a modern glazed canopy placed in front, for smokers use, detracting from the look somewhat. Nothing original



A Heritage Railway lamp stands the garden of The Brampton Hall, an extended former stationmaster's house.

remains inside, though the pub's spacious interior is decorated with railway prints and photographs. Two snug have been laid out to resemble passenger train compartments, complete with luggage racks. A sports room, laid in pairs and lawn, with lots of tables and seating, overlooks a small lake and wooded valley. A perfect location for an all-ages venue, especially on summer weekends when the sound of a steam locomotive often fills the air. The car park is entered through an old level crossing gate, here fenced in September. Children welcome.

Nearby: The Northampton & Lampeter Railway is maintained by volunteers who run steam or heritage diesel-hauled trains every Sunday from March until October. An array of working telegraphs and several signal boxes enhance the attraction. The cycle track/footpath follows its length. Northampton has a restored Art Nouveau house, 78 Dengrave, designed in 1917 by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for model railway manufacturer WJ Bassett-Lowke and displaying some of his models.

The Brampton Hall, Pinfold Road, Chapel Brampton, Northampton, NN6 8BA. Tel. 01604 812676. Weekdays 11am–midnight (Friday and Saturday 1am), Sunday noon–midnight. Nearest station: Northampton, 3.7 miles, then taxi or cycle. www.thebramptonhall.co.uk

PORTHMADOG, GWYNNED (1)

Former Cambrian Railways (GWR) between Barnmouth and Pwllheli.

STATION INN

The Cambrian Coast line is one of Britain's most scenic and this is the only licensed station refreshment room on the route from Machynlleth to Pwllheli. Situated in the building on the compact south-bound platform, it is a fine house popular with the

local community as well as dispense one ale from its another from a further off. Former Cambrian Railways (GWR) between Barnmouth and Pwllheli. Situated in the building on the compact south-bound platform, it is a fine house popular with the local community as well as dispense one ale from its another from a further off. Former Cambrian Railways (GWR) between Barnmouth and Pwllheli. Situated in the building on the compact south-bound platform, it is a fine house popular with the



GAZETTEER

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The Cambrian Coast Express at Porthmadog on August 25, 2005, headed by BR 60127 Class No. 76079. The station foreman occupies the single remaining building on the right.