

THE MID HANTS RAILWAY REVISITED

Matt Allen

This book takes a return trip to the Mid Hants Railway, commonly known as "The Watercress Line", to see what has changed since Matt Allen's original book on the line was published by Halsgrove in 2007. There is no better sight than a superbly restored steam locomotive in action and the Mid Hants Railway is one of the best heritage railways in the UK to see this happen, with its steep gradients ensuring the locomotives have to work hard.

The Mid Hants is one of the many railways that fell foul of the Beeching review and was closed by British Railways in 1973. However a determined band of volunteers who were keen not to see this line fade from history set about preserving and rebuilding it to its former glory. The line was partially re-opened from Alresford to Ropley in 1977, extending to Medstead in 1983, and in 1985 Alton followed, finally connecting the railway back with the mainline. It is now, one of the UK's premier heritage railways and one of Hampshire's biggest tourist attractions.

Matt Allen has used his local knowledge of the railway to showcase over 150 spectacular photographs which capture the essence of what the railway is all about. The line continues to develop and evolve, which means for the photographer and the returning visitor there is always something new to see.

Throughout this book you will see the locomotives that haul the passengers along the 10 mile journey; the people who give up their time to make it all happen; the sympathetically restored stations and even the author's 1964 Triumph 3TA motorbike being used a scenic prop!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Allen has been interested in railways for as long as he can remember. His father was a fireman in the steam days and latterly a driver for British Rail, so an interest in railways may appear to be in the bloodline.

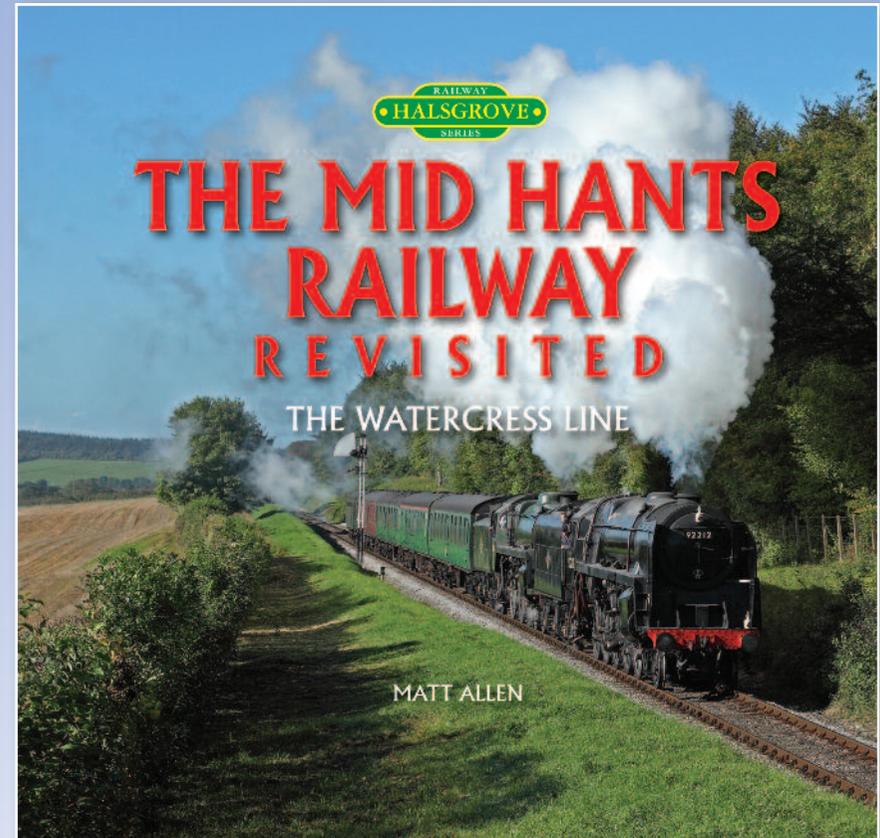
...Matt's first job was in a camera shop and was one that he greatly enjoyed; so it seemed inevitable these interests would someday collide. However, his interest in railway photography wasn't ignited until the new "digital photography" revolution. It provided what he had always craved for, instant results from the camera.

He is a regular contributor to the railway media, organises railway photography events and has also written other books in this series including his first book on the Mid Hants Railway, to which this title is the successor. Every autumn also sees the launch of his annual 'Steam Railway Calendar' showcasing his best pictures from the year. Most weekends will find him photographing steam trains somewhere, covering many miles all over the country in the process. Holidays tend to revolve around strategic locations for heritage railways, so if you are sitting on a steam train and see someone standing in the middle of a field pointing a camera, it might just be Matt!

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During a steam gala the "Yankee Tank" number 30075 works a short goods train towards Ropley from Alresford.



Above: Taken on Boxing Day, the great smoke effects and the last of the winter sunshine create a very dramatic scene with 34007 "Wadebridge" in charge.



Left: The chalked slogans on the front of 34016 add to the authentic end of Southern steam atmosphere.

Below: Medstead and Four Marks Station is a real gem and is superbly restored to 1930s' condition. Here 925 "Cheltenham" is approaching from Alton.

Left: 850 "Lord Nelson" passes under the "Harry Potter Bridge" as it approaches Ropley Station.



With lovely winter light reflecting off the locomotive, 925 "Cheltenham" waits for its next duty.



Example of a double-page spread.

