

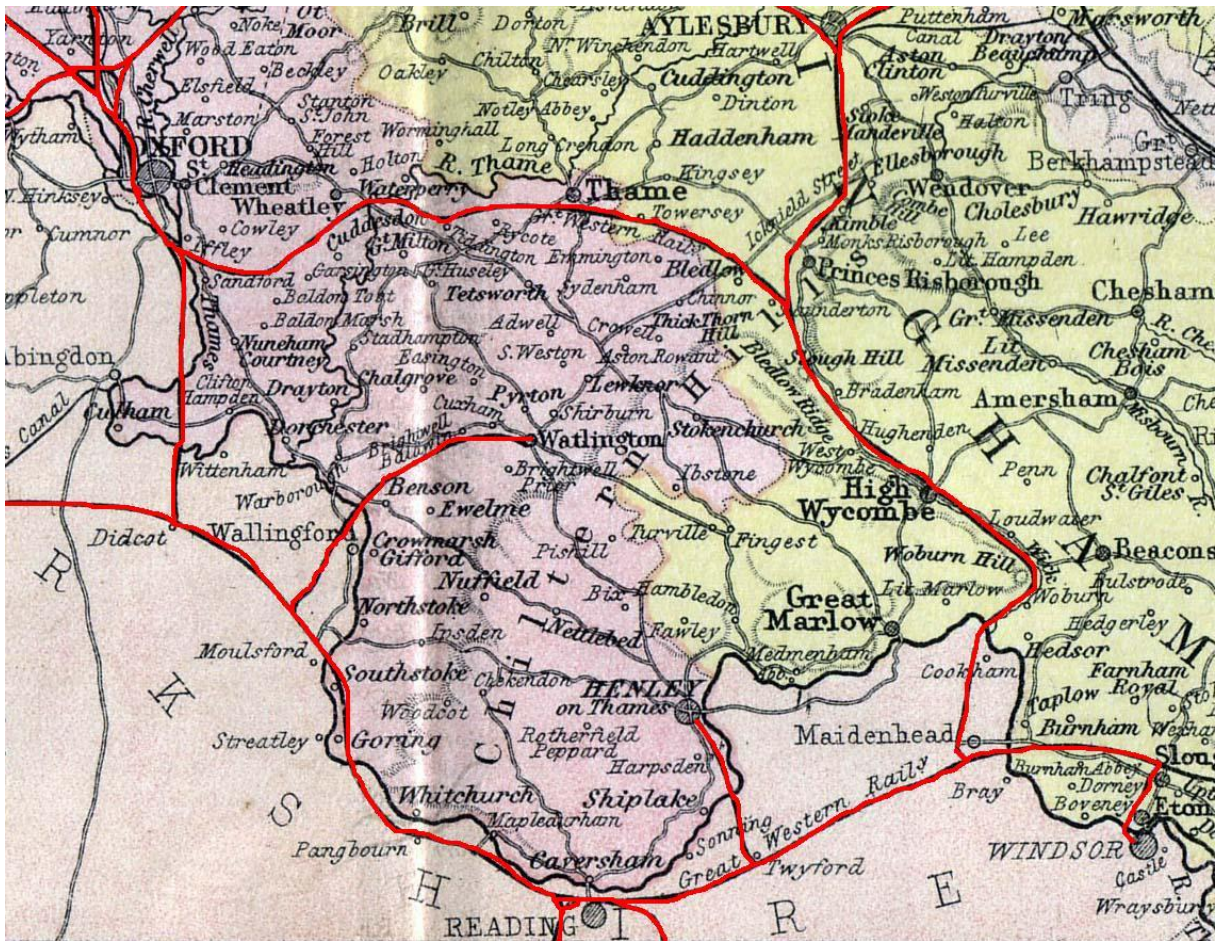
Railways in the South Chilterns

Some of the history of the railways in the South Chiltern area can be traced from antique maps.

The Great Western Railway from London (Paddington) to Maidenhead was opened on 4th June 1838. An extension to Twyford opened on 1st July 1839 and the railway reached Reading on 30th March 1840.

Twyford to Henley branch line (The Regatta Line)

In 1857 a single-track branch line from Twyford to Henley-on-Thames was opened. There was one intermediate station at Shiplake.



Extract from Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire map published 1873

The 1873 map shows the Henley branch line from Twyford. All the railways in this article have been highlighted in red.

In 1897 the Henley branch line was converted to a double track. This allowed more trains to be scheduled and run in both directions.

Wargrave station was opened in 1900.



The original Henley-on-Thames Railway Station

In 1961 the branch line was converted back to single-track. Subsequently the terminus station at Henley was rebuilt and a new station created about fifty metres down the line. While the original station had about four platforms, the replacement has only one. The sidings, turntable and coal yard in Henley were demolished and made way for car parking. The line is still in use today.



Henley-on-Thames Railway Station in 2008

The Cholsey and Wallingford branch line (The Bunk Line)

The Wallingford and Watlington Railway was planned in 1861. It is shown on the 1873 map going from Cholsey to Watlington.

The original plan was to link this branch line to Princes Risborough, with stations at Moulsoford, Wallingford, Benson, Watlington, Chinnor and Princes Risborough. This never happened. The line was opened to Wallingford in 1866 but the planned extension was abandoned in 1868.

The Cholsey to Wallingford branch was closed to passenger traffic in 1959 and to goods in 1965.

In 1981 the Cholsey and Wallingford Railway Preservation Society was formed to preserve the line.



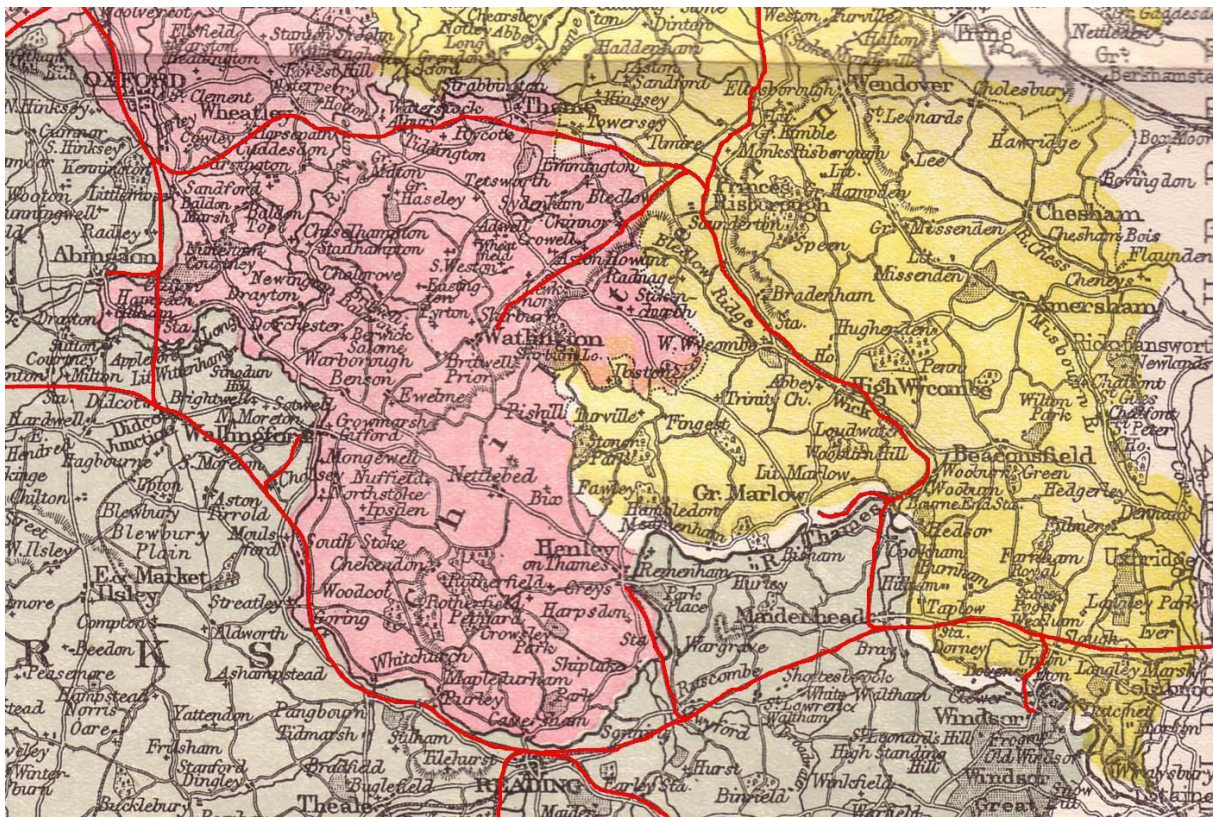
Wallingford Station in 2009



A 'Bunk Line' train arrives at Cholsey station 2010

Watlington to Princes Risborough (The Icknield Line)

After the failure of the Wallingford to Watlington line extension, a branch line was opened from Princes Risborough to Watlington (Pyrton) in 1872. There were intermediate stations at Chinnor and Aston Rowant and halts at Lewknor Bridge, Kingston Crossing, Wainhill and Bledlow Bridge. The line can be seen on the map below, where the railways have been highlighted in red.



From Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire map circa 1890.

The branch line closed to passengers in 1957 but remained open from Princes Risborough to Chinnor until 1989 to serve the cement works.



The remains of the Watlington to Princes Risborough line at Pyrtown, Watlington in 2009



A train
approaches
Chinnor
Railway
Station,
before 1957

The Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway Association now operates this part of the original Princes Risborough to Watlington branch line.



The Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway at Chinnor station in 2009



The Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway in steam in 2010

Princes Risborough to Oxford, via Thame

The line linking Princes Risborough to Oxford via Thame was closed to passengers on 7th January 1963. The line from Princes Risborough to Thame was kept open for freight until 1989.

The first mile of the track bed out of Princes Risborough is now owned by the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway Association.

Radley to Abingdon branch line

The second (1890) map shows a branch line going to Abingdon. This was opened in 1856 and closed in 1984.

Maidenhead to Marlow and beyond.

A line from Maidenhead to High Wycombe was opened in 1854, known as the Wycombe Railway branch, terminating at High Wycombe.

In 1862 the line was extended to Thame, with a branch line to Aylesbury and in 1864 it reached Oxford.

Intermediate Stations on the line were at Maidenhead (Boyn Hill), Bourne End, Wooburn Green and Loudwater. The Boyn Hill station was closed in 1871. A second station for Maidenhead was opened at Furze Platt in 1937 to reflect the increasing size of the town to the north.

A branch line from Bourne End to Marlow was also added. This is shown on the second (1890) map.



Sign bought from High Wycombe station in 1970

In 1906 the Great Western and Central Joint Railway opened a line from London (Marylebone) to High Wycombe. This eventually led to the demise of the Bourne End to High Wycombe line, which closed in 1970.

Today the branch line operates from Maidenhead to Bourne End. The train then travels to Marlow before returning to Maidenhead. It is affectionately known as the 'Marlow Donkey'.



The 'Marlow
Donkey' at
Marlow
Station in
2010