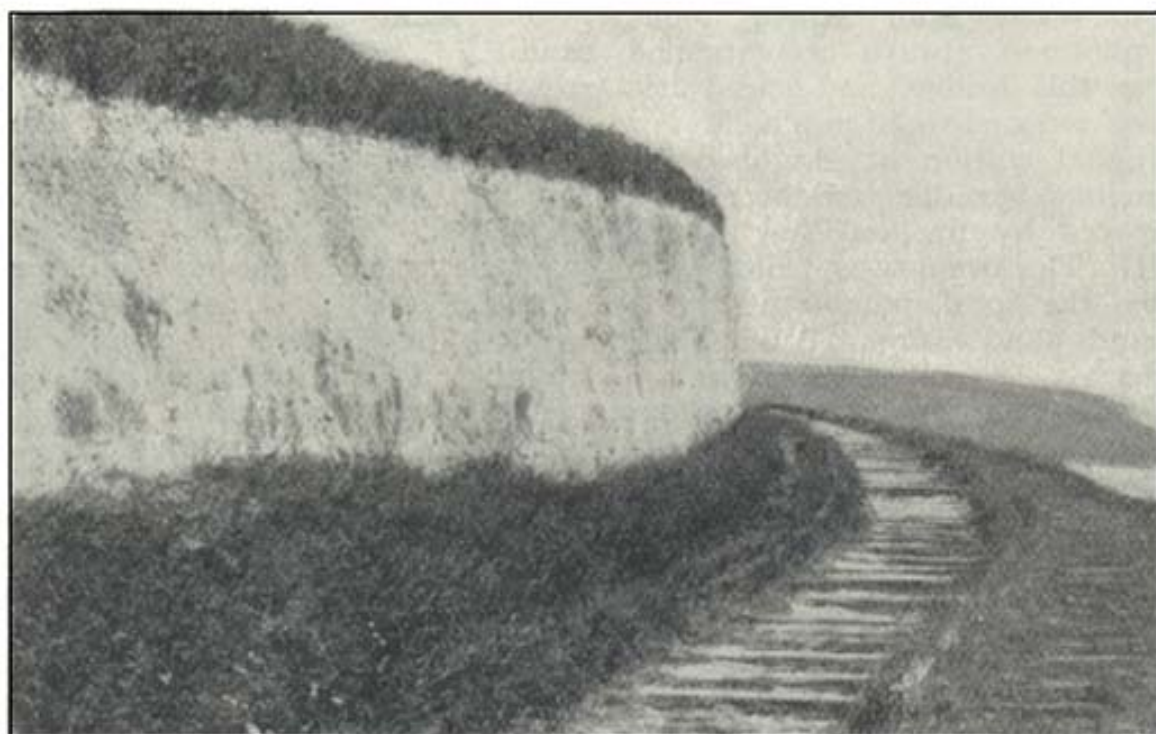


The Dover & Martin Mill Railway

By J. DOUGLAS McDONALD



Photo]

[J. D. McDonald

Steeply-graded remains of mineral railway in 1937, in chalk cutting at north end of Dover, near Langdon battery, where the line curved inland

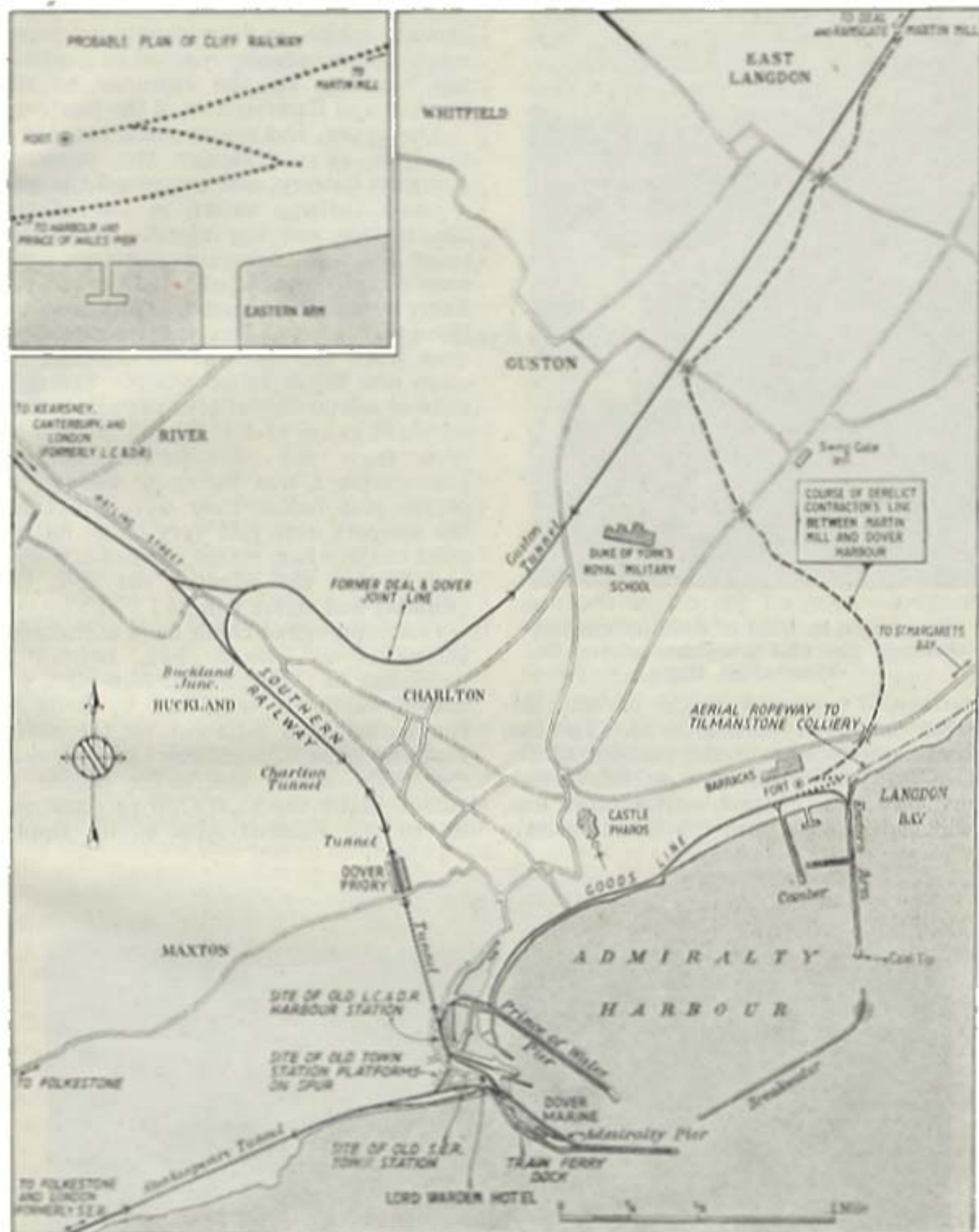
UNTIL 1937 it was possible to trace for most of its length a derelict railway from the top of the East Cliff, Dover, south east of the Castle, extending to Martin Mill Station on the Southern Railway. Subsequent events have obliterated some of the traces, but there are still sufficient to act as reminders of an almost-forgotten scheme, which is still kept alive legally.

Many important harbour works at Dover were undertaken in the closing years of last century, and, in connection with these, the line was built from Martin Mill on the then Dover & Deal Joint Railway (S.E.R. and L.C.D.R.) by S. Pearson & Son, the contractor for the construction of Dover Admiralty Harbour. The immediate use was the conveyance of material from Martin Mill Station to the sea front at Dover, but it was intended, on the completion of this work, to use the railway as a public passenger line.

With this object, an application for a Light Railway Order was made in November, 1901, by Sir Weetman Pearson, Sir John Jackson, and Sir

William Crundall. The proposal was for a 5-mile railway laid to 3 ft. 6 in. gauge, and worked by electric traction. There was a local inquiry at Dover on April 17, 1902; the scheme was approved, and was submitted to the Board of Trade (then the responsible Department in the period before the Ministry of Transport was formed) on January 23, 1903. Eventually, the Dover, St. Margarets & Martin Mill Light Railways Order was made on August 9, 1909. The work has never proceeded further, but the powers have been kept alive, and the most recent Order is that made by the Minister of Transport, called the Dover, St. Margarets & Martin Mill Light Railways (Extension of Time) Order, of November 11, 1946, (S.R. & O. 1946, No. 1923), which further extended the time for the completion of the railways authorised by the 1909 Order.

The following notes refer to the remains of the old mineral railway, which for convenience may be regarded as starting at the top of the East Cliff, although it must be recalled that, to carry the mass of material to the level of the new works



The course of the derelict Dover & Martin Mill contractor's railway in relation to the existing lines of the Southern Railway

during the construction of Dover Harbour, it was necessary to bring the railway from the top of the cliff, over 300 ft. high! On the top of the cliff, the line would appear to have terminated at one of the gun turrets used for coast defence during

the 1914 war, and which quite possibly was served in its construction by the same line. From here it ran in an easterly direction on a slight embankment, skirting the wall of Langdon Barracks. On the seaward side is a drop to a lower



Photo]

[E. W. P. Veale

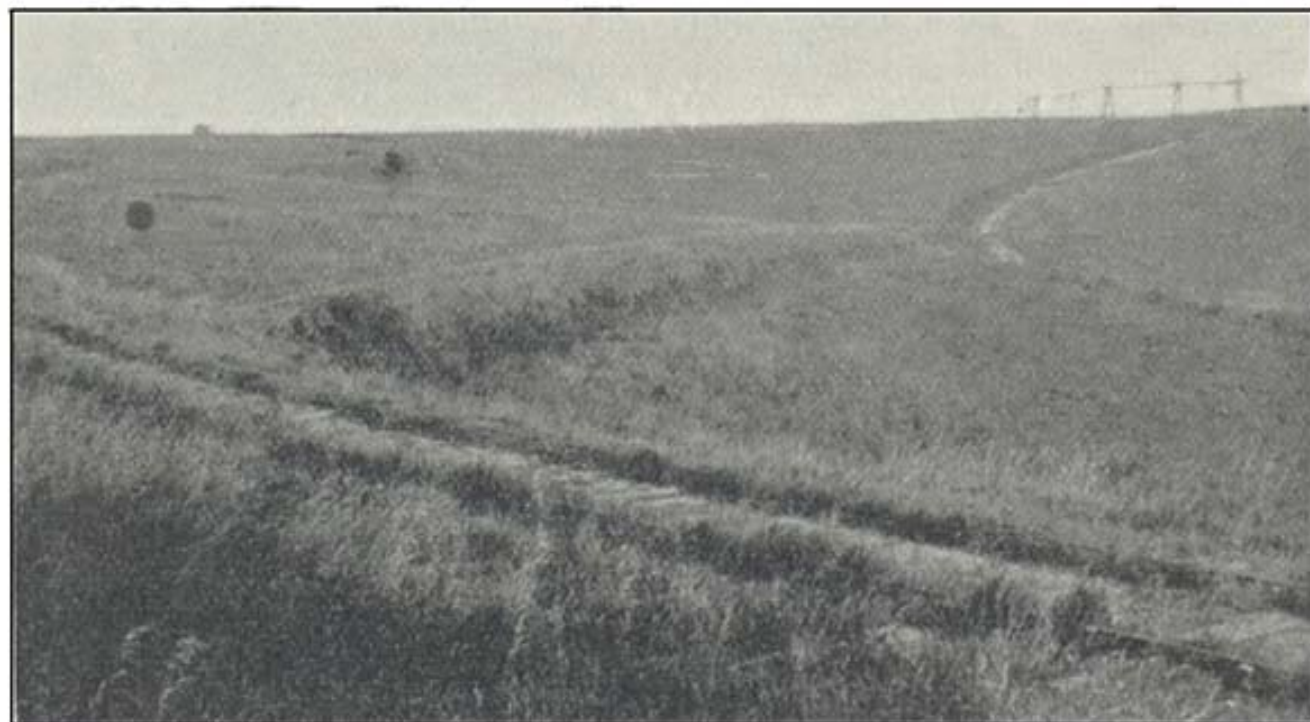
View taken in 1936 of derelict cutting through the chalk upland above St. Margarets Bay

terrace of cliff, and on the barrack side what may have been a moat. The line continued to rise to the summit of the cliff, but before this was reached, there is evidence of a junction with another line, which, though it also ran in an easterly

direction, descended towards the lower terrace, which in turn descended westwards and eventually reached at sea-level the roadway by the entrance to the Camber and Eastern Arm of the Harbour.

The upper, and main, track reached a precipice of cliff under the brow of Langdon battery, and continued through a chalk cutting, shown in one of the illustrations, curving inland. From this point the rails, fishplates, sleepers, etc., were complete until July, 1937, when the Army authorities began demolition operations with drag-chains and tractors at a time when the Government demand for scrap iron began to be urgent. The rails were of heavy flat-bottom pattern laid to standard gauge of 4 ft. 8½ in. As will be seen from the reproduction of the photograph I was fortunate enough to secure just before they were uprooted, the sleepers were laid very close, on the solid chalk. Just round the bend, within two feet of the edge of the cliff, the gradient was about 1 in 25!

Outcroppings of chalk have obliterated the lines in places, but, beyond a hummock of chalk several feet high, the course wends its way, still upwards, to the flatter land adjacent to the aerial ropeway from Tilmanstone Colliery, near the point where the latter begins to tunnel under the East Cliff to come out on to the Eastern Arm to its tippler



Photo]

[J. D. McDonald

Derelict mineral railway track (in foreground) running towards the Deal Road (to the left, beyond the picture), with part of the unfinished works of proposed line to St. Margarets Bay. The Tilmanstone Ropeway pylons are in the background

plant. In another illustration the track may be seen after it has regained the level with a distinct northerly turn, where it continues, more or less curving, across allotments and the top road to St. Margarets, over broken ground on a slight embankment. From the St. Margarets road it was fenced on both sides, and in a very poor condition. A sharp drop during the next 300 yd. brings it into a deep cutting under the Dover-

Deal road. This bridge is really a strong affair, with bricked embankments. Still in cutting, the course turns easterly again, crosses the Guston road, and runs parallel with the Southern Railway main line from Kearsney Junction to Deal. Crossing the road from St. Margarets to East Langdon, it joins the Southern Railway on the Dover side of Martin Mill Station, and apparently terminates with an engine pit.