

Photo: C. R. L. Coles

Manchester to Bournemouth and Portsmouth express at Winchester, Southern Railway, in August, 1937, headed by 4-4-0 locomotive No. 114

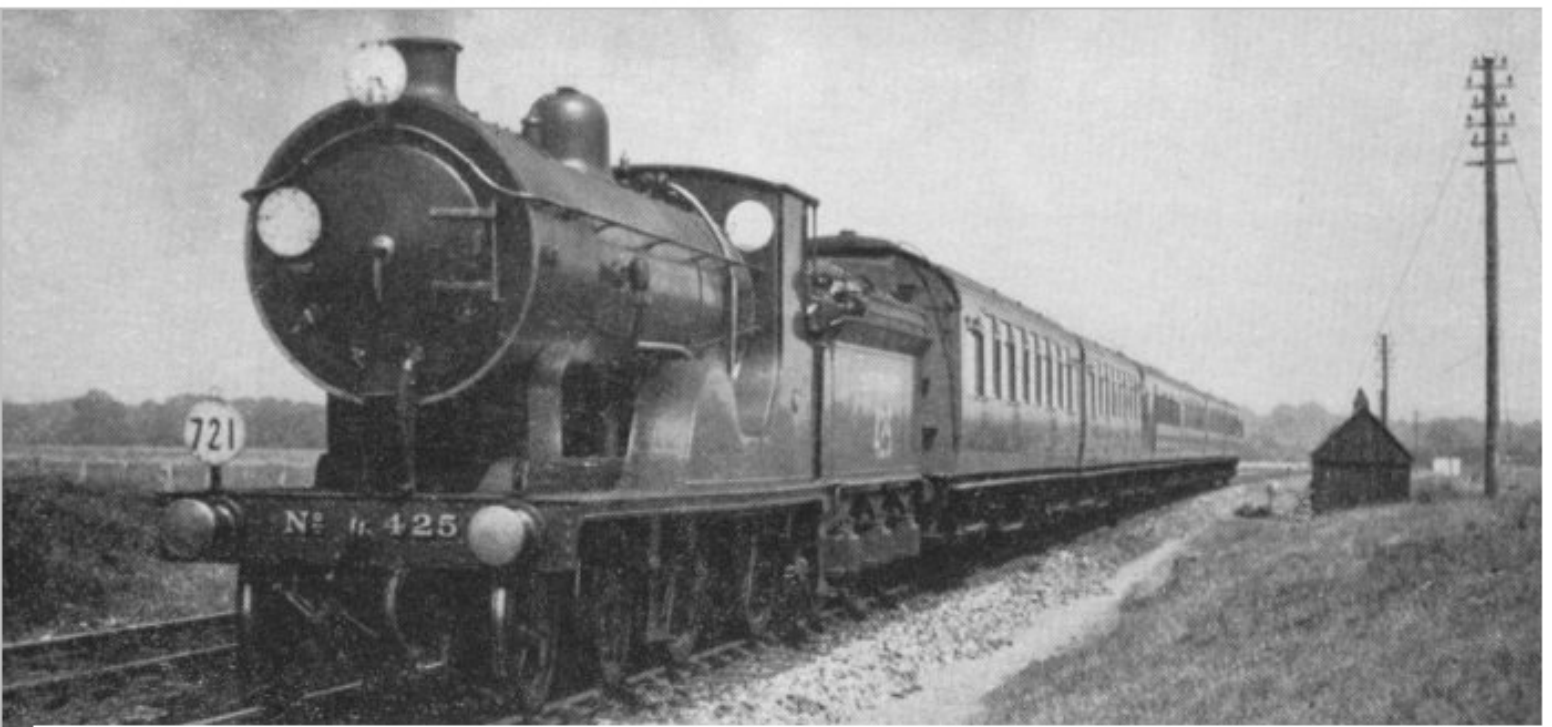
Through services to the Hampshire Coast

By ALAN RANNIE

BOURNEMOUTH is, or has been, connected by through trains with a few districts other than London, the Midlands and the North. For instance, there is South Wales, though this is a service which began only in the 1930s, and is confined to summer weekends. The route is by the Severn Tunnel and Bath to Salisbury, where the Southern Railway formerly took over from the Great Western and where engines are still generally changed. From Alderbury Junction box, some four miles south-east of Salisbury, to West Moors, on the old Southampton-Weymouth main line, these trains traverse the single-line Avon Valley branch which normally carries only local traffic to and from Bournemouth West. The South Wales trains, however, run to Bournemouth Central, reaching it by way of Wimborne and Poole, and of the two southbound trains

shown as running on Saturdays in July and August, 1961, one from Swansea ran through to Brockenhurst and the other from Cardiff to Pokesdown. In the reverse direction, New Milton was the starting-point of the Swansea train and Bournemouth Central had, in the busiest weeks, two departures for Cardiff only. No restaurant facilities were provided and no stops made at Bristol (Stapleton Road).

Brighton was first connected with Bournemouth by a through carriage in 1908; two companies then were involved, causing a change of engines at Cosham. The Bournemouth carriages were detached at Southampton from the 11.20 a.m. Brighton-Salisbury express, part of which ran through to Plymouth. In the opposite direction it was necessary to run them to Eastleigh in order to join the corresponding train from Salisbury.



Worthing-Bournemouth train near Brockenhurst in 1938, headed by Southern Railway 4-4-0 No. 425

Photo: H. J. Ashman



Cheltenham to Andover and Southampton train near Chiseldon, on the Midland & South Western Junction line, in 1939, with Great Western Railway "Duke" class 4-4-0 No. 3278, "Trefusis"

Photo: W. Vaughan-Jenkins

This was a summer service only, but between the two wars there was an independent through train leaving Brighton at 9.35 a.m. and running non-stop from Chichester to Southampton throughout the year. The time to Bournemouth was 2 hr. 40 min. and there was a corresponding return train in the afternoon. The present service is on the same lines, but is some ten minutes faster than it was 30 years ago. On the other hand, it is now again suspended from October to April. A Brighton-based Pacific works it in both directions.

In October, 1922, as though in preparation for the impending grouping, a through service began to operate between the Kent Coast and Bournemouth *via* Tonbridge and Guildford. At first this took the form of a semi-fast train from Dover Marine at 9.45 a.m. which eventually reached Bournemouth Central at 3.50 p.m. Between Guildford and Southampton the Portsmouth main line was followed as far as Havant; then came a direct run to Cosham, Fareham and the Netley line. In the reverse direction the arrangements were similar, Bournemouth being left at 10.43 a.m. and Dover reached at 4.30 p.m.

Soon, however, this train became involved east of Guildford with the Margate-Birkenhead express, though the Bournemouth coaches always came round the coast *via* Deal and Dover Priory, even when the main train, with the restaurant car, ran direct to Ashford through Canterbury. This arrangement applied both ways and lasted until September, 1939, so far as the eastern portion of the route was concerned. But in 1937, when the Portsmouth Direct line was electrified and a more intensive service introduced, the Margate-Bournemouth trains were diverted *via* Aldershot to Alton and then over the heavily-graded single line (with four-mile banks as steep as 1 in 60) which connects Alton with Winchester. In spite of these obstacles to fast running, the shorter mileage and rather fewer stops produced an acceleration of half-an-hour (the load was very light). The east- and west-bound trains were timed to pass each other in Alton Station. It is not surprising, perhaps, that this particular service, though of obvious propaganda value in the earlier stages of the Southern Railway, ceased with the last war.

All services using the eastern approach to Bournemouth call at Southampton Central about an hour earlier or later, according to direction. This may seem a generous allowance for 28½ miles, but at least six intermediate stops are made by all cross-country trains to serve smaller coastal resorts or, in the case of Brockenhurst, the Isle of Wight.

Southampton Terminus has also had its share of through trains to and from the North; up to 1939 it was used by two distinct services, one of which extended into Scotland. First we must refer to the Midland & South Western Junction Railway, an independent line connecting Cheltenham with Andover and possessing running-powers over the London & South Western into Southampton. Sam Fay became its General Manager in 1892 and quickly raised it from penury to a state of moderate prosperity. Hitherto its activities had been almost entirely local; now it became a useful cross-country main line, and for the next 30 years its all-red trains enlivened the mid-Hampshire landscape, the two chief ones in each direction being known as the "North Express" and the "South Express." Hauled by 4-4-0s of quite respectable dimensions, they included Midland through carriages to or from Bradford and Derby, and from October, 1910, a Manchester-Southampton carriage was added, using the new joint L.N.W.R.-Midland route north of Cheltenham already referred to in connection with Bournemouth. For some years before 1914 there was also, on Friday nights, an "Ocean Boat Express" with a through carriage from Whitehaven (of all places), but this had a tragic significance for it was intended to help emigrants travelling from the newly-depressed industrial area of Cumberland.

When through running was resumed in 1922, the Southampton-Manchester coach was diverted to Liverpool and in due course became part of the "Pines Express." The second daily through service became merely a semi-fast between Southampton and Cheltenham, and the "Ocean Boat Express" was heard of no more. In 1923 the M.S.W.J.R. fell rather inappropriately into the hands of the G.W.R. which, however, loyally continued the Liverpool service—indeed it provided the stock—and continued to



Photo: R. Leslie

Bournemouth-Newcastle express near Kings Sutton on June 23, 1961, headed by 4-6-0 No. 7911, "Lady Margaret Hall"

run all M.S.W. trains into the Midland station at Cheltenham instead of into its own. The Liverpool coach ran until September, 1939.

As soon as the routes *via* Banbury were fully developed by the G.W.R. and the G.C.R., the times achieved from competitive places to Southampton *via* Cheltenham fell somewhat into the shade. As early as 1910 the difference from Birmingham amounted to three-quarters-of-an-hour, though it had fallen to 24 min. by 1939, and the through carriages which ran from Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and so on before the first world war were handsomely beaten by the Great Central. The Liverpool-Southampton coach of later days, though useful to the seafaring community, was appreciably slower than the train from Birkenhead (Woodside). The recent history of this line has been a sad one. Through traffic was increasingly discouraged under British Railways and in 1961 the route was closed, most of it being now dismantled.

The other cross-country service which Southampton could claim for its own was also associated with Sir Sam Fay, for in his early G.C.R. days that most enterprising man turned his eagle eye towards the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton, a lengthy tendril of the G.W.R. consisting then entirely of single line down to the point where its trains sought the hospitality of the L.S.W.R. at Shawford Junction. Strange as it may seem, 50 years ago the 7.30 a.m. from Southampton, though stopping at the majority of stations as far as Didcot, was formed of Great Central corridor stock bound for Scarborough in summer, but transferring its passengers to the 10 a.m. from Marylebone at Woodford during the rest of the year. The last down train over the D.N.S., though a

good deal slower still, was similarly composed and in this direction the through working was from York throughout the year. There was a connection with the Havre and Channel Islands boats.

It was an agreeable surprise to many when this service was revived, with variations, in 1921. There were now only two through coaches, rather than a complete train, but they ran through from Southampton to Newcastle all the year, picking up a restaurant car at Oxford en route. All stations were called at going north in the morning to Didcot, but southbound the through carriages were run fast from Oxford *via* Reading West to Basingstoke, there to be attached to an L.S.W.R. local for Southampton. One of the through vehicles was provided by the G.W.R. and it was associated alternately with Great Central and North Eastern stock. The last-named company had hitherto been very chary of sending its carriages far from home and to see an example in Hampshire seemed strange indeed.

In L.N.E.R. days the through service was from Southampton Terminus to Glasgow Queen Street and from Glasgow to Basingstoke, though on the nights when the Havre boat was run it continued with the boat train from Waterloo into Southampton Docks. North of Newcastle use was made of what may be called secondary East Coast expresses, and there was restaurant accommodation between Newcastle and Oxford both ways. Useful as it might be on occasion, as for instance to get northern pupils home for the holidays from the numerous Winchester boarding schools at the end of term, one felt that this service was run more as an advertisement than because of any constant demand

and it has not been revived since it was interrupted by the outbreak of war in 1939. The section of line between Newbury and Winchester is now out of use for passenger traffic altogether.

Perhaps the most glamorous cross-country service which has ever been operated to Portsmouth was composed of Midland stock and had a short all-the-year-round career between 1905 and 1908. There were several alterations within that limited period, but in its final form the train was a restaurant-car express from Manchester Central (11.15 a.m.) to Portsmouth, with a through carriage for Southampton detached at Eastleigh. As far as Hendon, where L.S.W.R. engines took charge, there was also a portion for the Kent Coast *via* the Metropolitan and the South Eastern & Chatham lines; in one form or another this last survived till 1914. After Hendon the Portsmouth train called at Richmond, Staines, Woking, Farnborough, Basingstoke, and so on, and took more than three hours to reach Portsmouth from Hendon. In the northward direction independent running ended at Nottingham, which was reached by way of Leicester. The restaurant cars built for this service comprised a small kitchen in a brake composite with two first and two-and-a-half third compartments, in which meals were served. In later years they might be found working on trains out of St. Pancras, including the 8.15 p.m. to Leeds and Stranraer.

More-permanent through services have been devised to connect Portsmouth with Plymouth, Bristol and Cardiff, and Reading and north thereof. The connection with Plymouth has passed through many vicissitudes which can only be summarised here. The pre-1914 summer trains already mentioned as running between Brighton and Plymouth missed out Portsmouth altogether, but as soon as the first world war was over, possibly because of the important traffic still passing between the two great naval bases, the L.S.W.R. instituted a fast restaurant car express to Portsmouth leaving Plymouth Friary at 9.50 a.m. This train may be said to have preserved its independence throughout the inter-war period, but after seven or eight years it was extended to Brighton and altered to leave Plymouth substantially later,

ultimately at noon. And though for several years it continued to serve Portsmouth by running in and out of that city, those who needed to travel earlier in the day were compensated by additional through carriages, attached as far as Salisbury to the 8.20 a.m. from Plymouth to Waterloo. Incidentally, these coaches also went on to Brighton at one time.

The west-bound arrangements were closely similar, the chief difference being that in the second phase (that is, from 1927 onwards) the train from Brighton was normally attached, restaurant car and all, to the 12.40 p.m. (later 1 p.m.) from Waterloo at Salisbury. This, of course, was not practicable at summer weekends, and it then ran in advance of the London train as far as Exeter. The early through carriages started from Portsmouth at 8.45 or 9 a.m. and formed part of the breakfast train from Waterloo west of Salisbury.

In 1937 separate Brighton and Portsmouth portions, joined or divided at Fareham, made their first appearance, thus anticipating the present service which has been in operation ever since the end of the last war. It consists of one independent express in each direction, with a restaurant car in the Brighton portion, leaving Plymouth North Road at 11.10 a.m. and Portsmouth at 12.15. As with all previous Plymouth-Portsmouth trains the route is *via* Southampton, which town benefits accordingly.

There were two through trains in each direction between Cardiff and Portsmouth as long ago as 1897, if not before. They called at Bristol Stapleton Road and went on by Bath, Salisbury and Southampton. Early in the present century they were augmented by two services between Bristol Temple Meads and Portsmouth which were not notable for their speed, for they tended to call at all stations over long sections of the route. After the first world war improvements were made and the number of trains was increased until there were three from Cardiff as well as three from Temple Meads. In 1922 one of the former became a restaurant express to Brighton, serving Portsmouth *en route*. For some years it ran direct between Romsey and Fareham *via* Eastleigh, and one or two other trains did the same. After some five years the restaurant

car was withdrawn, but the through running to and from Brighton continued and is in force today.

During the last fifteen years the service has again been built up and now consists of the 10.30 a.m., 12.50 p.m. and 4.25 p.m. from Cardiff, supplemented between April and October by the 8.17 and 10.55 a.m., 5 and 7.25 p.m. from Bristol, with corresponding return trains. From November to April inclusive the Bristol trains, except the 5 p.m., are cut short at Salisbury, whence diesel connections are available to Southampton and Portsmouth. When it is running through, the 10.55 from Bristol is scheduled to make a non-stop run from Salisbury to Fareham at the unspectacular rate of 40 m.p.h.; apart from this, the route is always *via* Southampton. The 12.50 from Cardiff divides into Portsmouth and Brighton sections at Fareham and the 11 a.m. from Brighton is there united with the 11.50 from Portsmouth. Now that the stations between Warminster and Salisbury are closed, all the trains involved have some title to be considered as expresses. They are mostly formed of Western Region corridor stock.

Through stopping trains from Reading to Portsmouth were introduced soon after the first war, and there are at present three of them in each direction. Western Region engines—usually "Halls"—frequently work through on these trains. They normally consist of three Southern corridor coaches and a varying tail of vans, but some of the workings have recently been taken over by W.R. diesel trains. Other slow trains work between Reading and Southampton Terminus. Rather more exciting were two expresses which left Portsmouth Town at 8.22 a.m. and Portsmouth Harbour at 2.30 or 3 p.m. from 1920 onwards. The first of these, which had a short life only, ran through to Birkenhead *via* Eastleigh, Reading West and Birmingham. The second followed the same route but terminated at Birmingham or Wolverhampton, at either of which points Birkenhead passengers could change into the 6.10 from Paddington. This train continued to run until 1939 and appeared to fill a useful purpose. Curiously enough no return workings appeared in the timetable for either of these trains.

In 1930 the early train, which had by then become the 8.45 a.m. from Ports-

mouth Harbour, ceased to run beyond Reading, but two years later its place was taken by an excellent arrangement which lasted till 1939. This took the form of a through carriage from Portsmouth to Manchester attached to the Bournemouth-Birkenhead express at Eastleigh. There was a corresponding south-bound service and it seems a pity that there has been no post-war revival. Indeed, for most of the year there are now no through workings between Portsmouth and points north of Reading, though on Saturdays in summer Sheffield and Nottingham (*via* Banbury), as well as Birmingham and Wolverhampton, still have through trains.

The train service from Waterloo to all three centres—Bournemouth, Southampton and Portsmouth—is in most respects much better than it was fifty years ago, and even compares favourably with what was provided in 1939. But, as will be seen from this article, it is not the same with routes avoiding London. Though a small improvement may be noted here and there, the story is largely one of slower schedules and of facilities which are no longer available. The cross-country traveller now seems to be of much importance only on Saturdays in July and August, and the preference of the public for making holiday journeys by motor-coach or private car must, one supposes, be chiefly to blame.

Even so, it is possible to feel that the scales are a little loaded in favour of travel *via* London, which secures in most cases a higher revenue for British Railways now that fares have been put on to a fairly strict mileage basis. In the old days it was possible to travel from Liverpool Central to Southampton *via* Manchester, Sheffield and Marylebone at the same fare as from Birkenhead *via* Birmingham and Reading, but now-a-days the extra eighty miles would have to be paid for. Whether the policy of discouraging cross-country travel, especially in winter and spring, is a wise one is a different question. One can only hope that, though many once-popular routes and services have fallen into total or partial disuse, such continuing support will be found as will justify the retention in the daily schedules of well-tried features like the "Pines Express" or the Wolverhampton-Bournemouth train.