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Railway footbridge

South Eastern Railway Company, 1886

The plaque is on the south side wall



THE railway, from Reading to Redhill, came to Wokingham in 1849 and the level crossing by the station has been with us ever since.

Following two accidents at the level crossing in 1886, including a young girl knocked down by a goods train (recorded in a letter to *The Times* in May of that year by a Mr Thomas Cooke!), the authorities set aside a sum of money for a footbridge to be built between the station and the crossing from Station Road to Barkham Road. It was constructed late in 1886 by enterprising navvies putting an old stock of rails and sleepers to good use.

The railway then was the South Eastern Railway (SER), becoming The South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company in 1898. A number of such designs were built at that time but few, if any, survive and is therefore almost unique to Wokingham. The bridge is grade II listed, originally made from double-headed rails, with sleepers for the steps. Some sleepers and rails have been replaced in the 1980s (in the latter case by bull-head rails) during BR maintenance.

The footbridge is independent of the station, a braced bowstring supported on piers. The arch of the bowstring girders continue down to ground level. It is a Wokingham landmark and regarded as one of the foremost examples of innovative industrial archaeology remaining in the town.

The level crossing itself is still notorious as a traffic nightmare!

