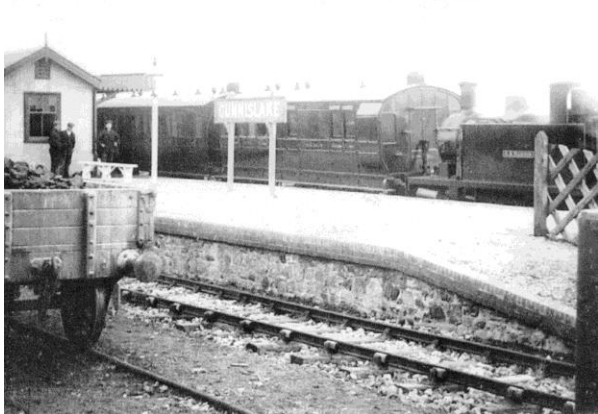


## Gunnislake Station History

Gunnislake station was opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1908 by The Plymouth Devonport and South Western Junction Railway. It had been formerly the old East Cornwall Mineral Railway Drakewalls Depot.



*Gunnislake station track laying in 1907, note the Midland Railway style of fencing used by the PD&SWJR also visible below. The station buildings were designed by Holman Fred Stephens, later Colonel.*



*Gunnislake station just after opening*

On the opening the Station Master was Mr Godfrey. My next record of Station Masters start in 1936 when the S M was Mr E H Layman. At that time the SM worked turns with the porter signalman George Jury. The train service of this era meant the workings could be covered by two staff. In 1936 there were 3 camping coaches at Gunnislake station.

In 1939 Harry Snell was appointed SM. (No relation of mine). The Station Masters house was at 12 Albert Terrace Drakewalls. It was most unfortunate but Mr Snell died on duty in the stations parcels office from a heart attack.

Mr S Murch was next appointed as SM. He was later promoted to SM Broadclyst.

Frank Lovis was the next SM. Mr Lovis was based at Calstock being responsible for Calstock, Gunnislake and Chilsworthy Halt.

Gunnislake then became staffed with two porter signalmen, George Jury and Rex Phillips.

In 1948 Mr E S Tubb was the next SM. Mr Tubb had been promoted from being a signalman at Devonport. Mr Tubb was my first boss when I started on the

railway aged 15 as a junior clerk at Calstock on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1949.



*Gunnislake station 1949*

It was a career which was to last me 46 years. Mr Tubb was kind to me. (The staff at Calstock then were Mr Tubb, John Rickard Junior Clerk, C Barnes Signalman, Tim Wonnacott, signalman and temporary porter Jack Willcocks. Temporary porters were hired during the Flower and Fruit seasons.

In 1957 Mr Tubb was promoted to SM at Holsworthy. For some 6 months Mr Maurice Phare a relief SM from Exeter was in charge. In November 1957 Mr D L Mantanle was appointed SM at Calstock. Mr Mantanle was to be the last SM at Calstock.

In 1966 all stations in the area came under the new Area Manager at Bere Alston Mr W H Nicholls who had been the SM at St Erth Cornwall (GWR)

Mr Nicholls was in charge of Bere Ferrers, Bere Alston, Tavistock North, Brentor, Lydford, Lifton (for Ambrosia Ltd), Calstock, Gunnislake, Chilsworthy Halt, Latchley, Lockett and Callington.

In 1968 stations passed to the Area Manager at Plymouth Mr B J Yandell. In 1991 Regional Railways were set up and stations remaining came under Mr Tim Bell the Cornish railways manager, at Truro.

Today 19/8/10 the Tamar Valley line is run by First Great Western with a manager at Plymouth.

I worked at Gunnislake from August 1949 to August 1950 when I was moved to Bere Alston.



*L to R (back row) John Snell, clerk; Rex Phillips, signalman; Jock Thompson, porter. (front row) George Symes, porter/signalman; Ron Pote, porter/signalman; George Jury, signalman.*

Gunnislake was the crossing point for the branch with two platforms. When I was there the staff were John Snell junior clerk, George Jury, signalman, Rex Phillips signalman, Ron Pote Porter Signalman. During the war early trains were run and this meant a porter signalman was needed to cover the turns in that ere.

In my time, there was a booking office, a parcels office, and an area for making tea. The lights were gas with a gas heater in the office. The Passengers waiting room had wooden forms. Entry to the offices was by double doors on each side. First was the parcels office. This was where you way billed fruit and flower traffic, alongside was a gas ring for making tea. You went through a door to the booking office. This was once the Station Masters office. The ticket rack and the booking window and till was there. Also the stations safe was located in this office. The office also included 2 Tyers No 7 instruments for train signalling. One to Callington and one to Calstock. The internal railway telephone and the GPO national telephone was in this office.



*Callington – Gunnislake token and key*



Gunnislake internal phone was 4. The GPO Number was Gunnislake 115, Calstock was 116. When I worked there it was a candlestick GPO phone. To obtain a number you had to first contact the Gunnislake Post Office switchboard and then you would be connected. Other branch internal telephone codes were Bere Alston signal box 3, Bere Alston Booking office 2-3, Calstock 2, Luckett 1-2 and Callington 1-3.

The Station Masters when I started on the railway at Callington were Mr Lazenbury here and Mr Skinner at Bere Alston.

The signals at Gunnislake were operated from a ground frame which was situated at the Chilsworthy end of the station. It had 10 levers. The Up home and Starter signals were Southern upper quadrant type. The down home was also Southern upper quadrant but the down starter was a lower quadrant type. The station also had

a weighbridge where spot checks were made on stone wagons from Hingston Down quarry.

The station was a busy one on the early train a good number of H M Dockyard workers bought tickets, then it was shoppers and office people who were regular travellers.

Mondays to Saturday's milk in churns were despatched to the Plymouth Co-op at Plymouth Friary station. The Farmers sending milk was Mr Breen from Cothele, Mr Cole St Anns Chapel, Mr Lawrence St Anns Chapel, Mr Bickle Drakewalls Mr Bratchley, Hawkmoor Gunnislake and Mr G Doidge Gunnislake. During the Flower and Fruit season many passenger vans were loaded to stations in the midlands, the north and London.



*A drivers eye view of Gunnislake station from a DMU*

Under the Beeching proposals Chilsworthy, Latchley, Luckett and Callington stations were closed. This was from 5<sup>th</sup> November 1966. A bus service then operated from Gunnislake station to Callington provided by Messrs Ford and Watson of St Anns Chapel. This lasted until 1972.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1968 stations became unstaffed and DMU Pay trains worked from Plymouth to Gunnislake. The old station building was boarded up and in 1970 the buildings were demolished and a concrete block waiting shelter was erected. Electric lights were installed from the de-staffing.

Further developments were to be added to the stations history. The last trains called at the old Gunnislake station on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1994. On the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1994 the road bridge at the top of Sandhill was removed and a new station was opened on the former site of the old Perry Spears siding.. The site of the former station was sold off and now Sandhills Park occupies the old site. The new station was opened on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1994. In the interim trains were terminated at Calstock with a connecting bus service.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2008 one hundred years of the railway was celebrated. Commemorative Plaques were unveiled. At Bere Alston Geoffrey Cox MP did the unveiling at Calstock Colin Breed MP did the honours and at Gunnislake I was most proud to do so. I am listed as a retired Tamar Valley rail man.

Today the trains are well used and provide the bst service ever from the Cornish side of our beautiful Tamar Valley.

*John T R Snell.*