

# Dyke Railway

## Trail



• Class E4 loco starting the descent from the Dyke

### The Trail

The route of the trail follows part of the line of the old Dyke Railway which ran from Aldrington Halt up to the Devils Dyke Station, (see map overleaf). This leaflet sets out to explain a little of the railway's history, and to tell you about the surrounding area in its present form.

### History of the line

The Dyke Railway opened on 1st September 1887, originally being run by the Brighton and Dyke Railway Company with the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway (L.B.&S.C.R.) allowing running rights through to Brighton. It ran at a loss for several years, and in 1895 went into receivership. In 1925 it was absorbed into the Southern Railway, and finally closed on the 31st December 1938.

The route was 3 miles 45 chains long and, at an almost continuous gradient of 1 in 40, was the steepest stretch of track of the entire L.B.&S.C.R. network. It was always a very exposed line carrying mainly fodder and coal up to the local farms, with hay on the return, as well as tourists on better days!



The journey took just under half an hour and cost 2s.6d. first class, 1s.8d. second class, and 1s.3d. third class return fare. At one time there was a plan to extend the line over the downs to join the Shoreham-Horsham single line track at Steyning, but this was never built as it would have been too expensive.

It was never a very profitable route being built to serve the Devils Dyke beauty spot, but also opening up the Braybon Estates of the Rowan Avenue area with the construction of Rowan Halt in January of 1934.

The line also served the Brighton and Hove Golf Club where a halt was constructed in 1891. In 1895 a bell was installed between the Golf Club house and the Dyke station, which would sound in the Golf Club bar on the departure of a train from the terminus, allowing members time to drink up in the bar and still catch their train home!

The Dyke Station was a sparse affair consisting of a few small buildings, one platform, a goods siding and a run-around siding for the loco on the return journey. A disused carriage body served as a tea-room at the Devils Dyke terminus. The station staff here normally consisted of one man who acted as booking clerk, porter, signaller and shunter.



• Devils Dyke Station

### Public Information

The route is open to all pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders. Please remember to always consider your fellow users at all times, and do not leave your cycles, or anything else, in the way which could obstruct or be a danger to them.

**BEWARE!** In addition from time to time farm machinery uses parts of the route to gain access to surrounding fields.

Only the route, and other public paths, are open to the public. Do not enter neighbouring fields, or obstruct gateways, for picnics etc., (please use the areas provided), and **please take your litter home.**

**Public footpaths** are for the use of walkers only whereas, **Public bridleways** may also be used by horse-riders and cyclists.

### The Route - (No.'s show map locations)

**1** Standing by the entrance to the car park you are about one and a half miles from the start of the original Dyke Railway Branch Line at Aldrington Halt, and approximately half way up to the Dyke.



Heading north along the old track bed you leave the edge of suburban Hove and start to head out into the countryside. Ahead you can see the beauty of the open Downs, not too dissimilar to the view that the last users of the railway would have had during the late nineteen thirties.

Much of this area in front of you has been designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food. This will promote, through the aid of grants etc, a reversion to traditional downland agricultural farming, such as grassland with sheep.

About 400 yards up from Hangleton Way the line of the long awaited proposed Brighton By-Pass crosses the route. This is due to be started in 1989, and completed about 3 years later, hopefully relieving some of the traffic problems in central Hove & Brighton.

**2** As you round the second sweeping curve you come to a fine viewpoint. Turning to your left you can see Benfield Hill opposite, with Benfield Valley immediately in front of you. This is to be the site of the relocated West Hove Golf Course, which is being moved due to the construction of the by-pass and link road. This valley also contains the remains of Northlane Barn, once used as sheep pens by local farmers.



• Class D loco about to run around its train

Directly behind you is the site of a tumulus, an ancient burial mound, which has been called Round Hill, the top of which is 445 feet above sea level.

Looking north it is possible to pick out the course of the old railway by following a line of trees all the way to the site of the old Dyke Station, now the site of Devils Dyke Farm.

Continuing up the line you pass the Brighton and Hove Golf Course to your right, which was opened in the same year as the railway.

**3** You now come to the site of the old golf club halt, this is on private land, so please don't trespass! The site of the halt is clearly visible and it doesn't take much imagination to see a party of golfers returning to the waiting train on a warm summer's afternoon.

Off to the left and right from this point runs a public right of way, maybe just right for another afternoon's leisurely ramble?

Forking right from the site of the halt, and then left about 100 yards later, you have left the line of the railway and joined one of the many pleasant bridleways in this area. This continues between grassed fields and up to Devils Dyke Road. About half way up and off to your right there is the site of the Black Burgh Tumulus.

**4** Turning left at the end of the bridleway, Devils Dyke is about 1 mile distant. Cyclists can either continue with the ramblers and horse riders up the bridleway on the grass verge, though this may be a little rough, or join the road.

**5** Pausing as you pass Devils Dyke Farm you can see the site of the old Dyke Station, now covered with many farm buildings, and look back down the route of the line which can be seen winding over the hills.



• Devils Dyke Station as it was

**6** Continuing up the road you pass, to your right, Devils Dyke. It is said that this was created by the Devil in an attempt to flood the many Wealden churches! This is, in fact, a natural formation in the chalk hills with its sides rising over 300 feet on either side.

**7** Finally, you arrive at the Dyke viewpoint. This was the site of a massive hillfort dating back to the Iron Age, and is one of the South Downs' largest examples. The highest point is 711 feet above sea level and is marked by a triangulation pillar.

You can now rest and make use of the small cafe, restaurant or pub while you enjoy the fabulous views over the Sussex countryside or watch the often present hanggliders.

From here you can retrace your steps back to the beginning of the line, or venture further into the countryside with its many beautiful villages.

Photographs and illustrations reproduced from "South Coast Railways - Brighton to Worthing", published by Middleton Press.







- KEY**
- Trail
  - Route of Dyke Railway
  - Other rights of way

Design & Artwork by Steve Collins, Hove B.C.

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Local viewpoint

Car park at the beginning of the trail

Based on the Ordnance Survey map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationary Office.  
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