

In brief

Van hits cars slowing on A2

CANTERBURY: Emergency services attended a collision on the A2, just before the Aylesham turn off, at 8.30pm on Friday. A van had hit cars in front of it which had slowed down.

The van was written off but no one was injured in the collision.

A spokesman for Kent Fire and Rescue said: "It shows in these sorts of conditions drivers need to keep their speed down."

Model railways

CANTERBURY: The City of Canterbury Model Railway Society will be presenting its 26th model railway exhibition at St Anselms School, Old Dover Road, on January 17 and 18.

The display will be open from 10am to 5pm on Saturday and 10am to 4.30pm on Sunday.

There will be layouts large and small, from busy main lines with lots of trains to sleepy byways with an atmosphere of bygone days. For the young there will be a small railway where they can drive trains with Thomas and friends, and the Canterbury and District Model Engineers will be running their popular ride on trains as long as the weather permits.

The host club will have on display its new layout called Nonington Quay, this is being built to give the less experienced members a chance to learn by getting down and doing it.

Refreshments will be available all day. There is free parking on site for many cars, and lots of buses stop near the school. ■ Visit [www.ccmrs.co.uk](http://www.ccmrs.co.uk)

# The floods that resurrected Harbledown's railway link

Way We Were

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AN IMPORTANT aspect of an historical railway archive video accessible on The Chaucer Education Project's Twitter account @ChaucerUniv is that at the two minute, 15-second mark onwards it shows the double track Harbledown railway link between the Faversham to Dover via Canterbury East and the Ashford to Ramsgate via Canterbury West main lines.

This sequence was shot during what was likely to have been the temporary reopening in spring 1953 to enable an extended period of the coastal flood relief train running to and from Thanet.

The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway closed to goods traffic on December 1, 1952, having already closed to passenger traffic on December 31, 1930, from which date the line was downgraded to a goods siding.

The quick reopening of the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway on Friday, February 6, 1953, after the severe flooding



ON TRACK: A locomotive emerges from the world's first railway tunnel on the Crab and Winkle Line, Whitstable

caused by the strong winds of the north-easterly gale blowing the North Sea onshore on the night of Saturday, January 31, is

widely known but not the whole story.

The Kent coast railway line from Faversham to Herne Bay reopened on Monday, March 2, 1953, but with a very low speed restriction, with train services on the Canterbury and Whitstable line ceasing on February 28.

The Harbledown link line, which seems to have been known as the Canterbury Loop, was reopened on February 22, 1953, and continued in use for regular services until May 21, 1953, when the flood damage to the coastal line between Faversham and Herne Bay had been fully repaired.

The Harbledown link line remained usable until March 4, 1956, although track lifting had started in October 1955.

Canterbury "B" signal box controlled the Harbledown link line and can be seen at the beginning of that part of the archive video, as can later the higher level junction with the Faversham to Dover mainline.

The Canterbury end of the Harbledown link began where the Canterbury West to Ashford line passes the Toddlers Cove play area and flood plain, to the west of what is now the Rheims Way road bridge which had carried the A2 trunk traffic.

The boundary of The Frank Hooker School land, now Canterbury Academy, increasingly moves back from the line of the railway, enabling the link line route to be identified.

The higher western end of the link line is the junction by the Whitehall railway bridge, where the two main lines cross each other.

A control box for a water pumping station is believed to have subsequently been built on the route near that bridge.

Apart from that one obstruction, the route is still clear and I personally proposed the rebuilding of the link, in my 1986 objective thesis and, controversially, for a



FLOOD: Whitstable Golf Club was underwater after the sea flooded the town on January 31, 1953



WELLIES: Herne and Broomfield councillor Peter Vickery-Jones aged 11 in the 1953 floods

hypothetical parkway station which environmentally kept Whitehall field but encouraged new local train operators, as part of The Chaucer Education Project.

The Harbledown link line was originally opened on May 5, 1918 to facilitate movements of military traffic to and from Port Richborough (via Canterbury West, Minster and the branch line to Sandwich).

The line was single track when closed on November 21, 1924. The track remained in place until 1935. It was reinstated for military use only between March 2, 1941, and October 21, 1951.

Reinstating the Harbledown link would enable the now funded Thanet Parkway railway station to serve both mainlines

through Canterbury. ■ My previous articles, including Pioneering Greats Of Our Early Railway Networks, are available to read under Latest Articles in the right hand column of The Chaucer Education Project's virtual learning environment website, which now has the new top level domain name of [chaucer.university](http://chaucer.university) in addition to redirection from the previous domain name of [vle.tcep.org.uk](http://vle.tcep.org.uk)



■ Watch video of the Canterbury and Whitstable railway and the Harbledown link on our website at [canterburytimes.co.uk/nostalgia](http://canterburytimes.co.uk/nostalgia)



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