

**KINGSBRIDGE STATION,
KINGSBRIDGE, DEVON**

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD

April 2009

Martin Watts

1 Trinity Cottages
Cullompton
Devon
EX15 1PE

Project 176/2009

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Site survey and report prepared by

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Summary

Kingsbridge railway station was built between 1891 and 1893, to serve a branch line that ran from South Brent to Kingsbridge. The line was opened in December 1893 and closed in 1963. The railway track was lifted shortly after. The station building, which is built of grey limestone under a slated roof, now stands within a small industrial estate. While the building is relatively intact, it has been largely gutted of the furniture and fittings of its working days.

Introduction

The recording of the former railway station at Kingsbridge was carried out at the request of the property owner, prior to its demolition, for which notice has been lodged with South Hams District Council (ref: 28/2301/08/DEM). The station is not a listed building.

A rapid non-intrusive measured, photographic and descriptive survey (English Heritage Level 2) was carried out by Martin and Sue Watts on 27 January 2009. Background and other relevant information have been compiled from a variety of sources, which are acknowledged and referenced.

An archive report and photographs will be deposited at Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery under the allocated museum accession number AR.2009.6. Copies of the report will also be deposited with Devon County Council Historic Environment Record and the Conservation Officer at South Hams District Council. A digital copy of the report will be uploaded onto the OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS) database, under reference martinwa1-56759.

Location

The station is situated to the west of Kingsbridge town centre, on the north side of West Alvington Hill, the building being centred on NGR SX 7320 4405. The principal station building, with the platform to its north side, now stands within a compound at the east end of Station Yard Industrial Estate. The site stands at about 20m above sea level.

Historical background

No buildings are shown on this site on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of 1888-90. Although a rail link to Kingsbridge was proposed several times from the middle of the 19th century, it was not until 1891 that work began on building the line from Brent to Kingsbridge. In 1863 a proposal was put before Parliament and in 1864 an Act was passed permitting the Kingsbridge Railway Company to build a branch from the main line at South Brent. Only 3 miles (6.4km) of track had been laid between South Brent and Avonwick by 1867; by October 1868 the company was in debt, work had stopped and the rails were sold. In 1872 a further Act was passed, of which nothing came, and in 1875 a new scheme using narrow gauge to reduce the cost was proposed but inadequate funds were raised and it was withdrawn. In 1882 the Kingsbridge and Salcombe Railway Company was incorporated by Act of Parliament to construct a railway from South Brent station to Kingsbridge and on to Salcombe. The Act

incorporated earlier proposals and repealed other Acts. The scheme was supported by the Great Western Railway Company, which eventually took over the Kingsbridge and Salcombe Company in 1888. The line and buildings were designed by William Clarke, engineer to the Great Western Railway, and work commenced in January 1891; Messrs R.J. Rolfe and Son of Plymouth were the contractors, with Messrs Beer, Trant and Balkwill of Kingsbridge supplying materials. According to the Minutes of the Traffic Committee, quoted in Williams & Reynolds (1977, 26), Kingsbridge station cost £2720 to construct, compared with £855 for Avonwick, £955 for Gara Bridge and £880 for Loddiswell, the three smaller stations serving the 12½ mile (20.1km) line. The total cost of the line was estimated to be about £180,000. The first official inspection was carried out in October 1893, with two 45-ton locomotives testing the strength of the bridges. The line was officially opened on Monday 18 December 1893 (Williams & Reynolds 1977; Tanner 1978). The line was originally intended to extend beyond Kingsbridge to Salcombe, but this proposal was soon abandoned.

Within 25 years much local passenger traffic had already been lost to motor vehicles, but long distance passenger travel and freight business remained substantial (*Western Morning News*, 16 September 1963, quoted in Bastin 1993, 17). Local traffic of note included shellfish and rabbits, for which special vans were attached to many passenger trains. During the Second World War the railway played a major part in supporting the preparations for the D Day landings; as well as large tonnages of military traffic, Generals Montgomery and Eisenhower also came to the station in 1944 (Williams & Reynolds 1977, 98). Kingsbridge station was also an important centre for a number of local bus services covering the South Hams and Plymouth, which for many years were operated by the GWR and, later, Western National. Steam was last regularly used for passenger services in April 1961, although steam was still used for freight haulage until July 1962. The line closed on 14 September 1963, a victim of Dr Beeching's axe. Track lifting began in November 1963 and was completed by May 1964 (Williams & Reynolds 1977, 163-73).

Description of the building

Kingsbridge station is a single-storey structure constructed of coursed limestone under a double-pitched slated roof. The main building, which is orientated almost east-west, is approximately 17.5m long by 5m wide, with the canopy over the platform extending about 4.4m on the north side. The platform and canopy are built to a slight curve. The former Left Luggage and Parcels Office extends to the west of the main station building; this section is now approximately 17.5m long by 4.5m wide. The original plan of the station building is shown on the 1904-6 second edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (Fig.1). The Left Luggage and Parcels Office was extended westwards in two phases, the first between about 1910 and 1924 (from old photographs and an official plan of 1924, in Clark 1979, 239) and the second in the late 1940s (Williams & Reynolds 1977, 74). These two phases of extension are visible in the stonework of the walls (see below). The third chimney was added when this end of the building was extended, and the dressed stone quoins were reused.

The basic layout of the surviving building is shown in Fig.2. Williams and Reynolds (1977, 74) describe it as constructed of a light grey stone and being in two distinct parts: "On the platform side, underneath the canopy, the doors are as follows, starting at the western end of the block; Left Luggage and Parcels Office – unmarked – (this part added during the rebuilding of the station), Gentlemen, Ladies Room, Booking Office, Enquiries and Advance Booking Office, Station Master. A small sliding-bar platform

scale is fixed flush on the right of the door of the Left Luggage and Parcels Office. On the end wall nearest the shed are kept fire buckets, whilst there is also the usual typical platform furniture. The west end of the building was extended in the late 1940s.”

Exterior:

The walling stone is a grey Devonian limestone, a likely source being the quarry at Berry Head, Torbay (John Allan, pers comm), from where the stone would probably have been transported to Kingsbridge by sea. The walling is of random coursed squared blocks which have been dressed to leave a rusticated outer face. The top of the projecting base courses that run all round the building has a smooth chamfered finish. The door and window lintels are chamfered and other dressings, including the corners of the building and the chimneys, are finished either smooth or with neat parallel tooling along the edges of the blocks. The window cills appear to be of Bath stone, an oolitic limestone which was brought by rail into the south-west during the 19th century. The stonework is bedded in lime mortar, and the two phases of extension of the Left Luggage and Parcels Office are visible because of the use of a cement-based mortar and different pointing techniques. The final phase has an inelegant projecting band pointing. The lintels over the openings of the final extension at the west end are of cast concrete, their style and appearance imitating that of the stone lintels that were used in the original building. Outside the thresholds of the two doorways on the south side at the west end, are iron drain covers with diagonally set bars. Both rear (south) doors had fanlights over, with two glazed lights and a central vertical glazing bar. The doorway at the west end has been blocked. The original frame and double doors survive in the eastern doorway. The door leaves are of vertical tongued and grooved boarding, framed all round the edges with two ledges and diagonal brace. The external joinery is painted green and the inside of the doors white.

The guttering on the rear (south) elevation is cast-iron, moulded box section, with cast-iron downpipes fixed back to the stonework with decorative cast-iron brackets. The downpipes on the south side of the main station building are of circular section, while those at the west end and on the north side are rectangular. The positions of the downpipes are noted on the plan (Fig.3). The rainwater goods are painted green, the same as the exterior joinery.

The platform canopy on the north side of the main building is a timber structure supported on ornate cast-iron brackets. There were originally 7 of these at about 2.8m centres, but that at the east end has been broken off. The brackets are painted white. No evidence of a founder's name was apparent on the castings. The stonework of the platform wall was formerly painted green, but this has been removed by the present owner. This paintwork was recent in both colour and extent, being applied after the station became disused. A blockwork wall was built a short distance in from the edge of the canopy, enclosing the former platform, in 1970 (see below).

Roof, exterior:

The roof of the principal building is double-pitched and clad with Welsh slate, with lapped inverted v-section clay ridge tiles with a bluish glaze; these have a horseshoe and a name (not readily decipherable) stamped into them. The roof of the Left Luggage and Parcels Office is clad with asbestos slates, with butt-jointed v-section glazed clay ridge tiles stamped PLATTS 90. The original station building had two stone chimney stacks, serving fireplaces in the main building. There was originally a flat roof with a parapet over the western wing of the building (Fig.4). When this part of the building was extended, a double-pitched roof was put on and third, matching, chimney stack added.

The roof had a skylight which was in two parts, a short section which lit the Gents toilet, to the east of the new stack, and a longer section to the west of the stack. The skylight was removed after the station became disused and the artificial slates must therefore date from this time. The form and extent of the timber-framed rooflight can be seen in Fig.5. The eaves of the roof project 0.17m beyond the west gable end wall, and the verges have painted timber barge boards. The flat roof of the platform canopy is clad with ribbed metal sheeting.

Interior:

See Fig.2 for location and use of internal spaces. The following descriptions run from east to west:

Parcels Office:

This room has been largely gutted and the wall plaster removed. It has a plain plastered ceiling. Part of timber the architrave only survives to platform doorway, the door having been removed, as has the window to the platform. The window in the east gable has also been removed and the opening closed in concrete blockwork. There is a projecting chimney breast on the west wall, but the fireplace has been removed. The door in the northwest corner, to the Station Master's Office, is steel-plated, with a brass knob and 0.35cm long bolt.

Station Master's Office/Ticket Office/Waiting Room:

This is now a single open space, but was formerly divided into three, latterly probably two, rooms. The ceiling is white-painted plaster, with a moulded cornice all round. From photographic evidence the internal partitions and panelling were still in place in August 1969 (Catford 2007), but have subsequently been removed. The walls are now plastered and painted yellow. At the east end was the Station Master's Office, with a built-in cupboard in the southeast corner. This has two pairs of two-panelled doors, the top ones being hinged, the lower ones sliding. The top part contains two shelves on decorative timber brackets, and there are pigeon-holes and shelves behind the sliding doors below. There was formerly a safe at floor level in the left-hand corner of the projecting lower part of the cupboard. The sash window in the south wall has shallow reveals with two-panelled shutters. The windows on the south side are all vertical sashes, with two casements each with two lights, central glazing bars, glazed with obscured glass. These windows have fixed internal security bars. The door between the Station Master's Office and the Parcels Office is four-panelled. The interior joinery is painted white. There were formerly fireplaces at the east and west ends of this space, both which have been removed. There are two doorways and two windows in the north wall. The frames and fanlights of the doorways are still in place. There were formerly double doors, but the door openings have been narrowed and flush panel doors fitted. The two windows are both vertical sliding sashes, each having two lights divided by a central vertical glazing bar.

Ladies Room:

This room has a lath and plaster ceiling with moulded cornice all round, painted white. The walls are plastered and painted orange. There is a double vertical sash window on the south side, glazed with obscured glass, which has a timber frame and cill board and shallow splayed reveals. It is similar to the other windows, with security bars fixed over it internally. A doorway with a plain architrave in the west wall leads to a former WC, a small space with a window with single small top-hung opening light on the south side. The doorway to the platform has been reduced in size; the original door and frame and

fanlight have gone, and the present four-panelled white-painted door appears to have been moved from the entrance to the ladies WC to this position.

Gents toilet:

This space, which is outside the gable end of the main station building, contains two WC cubicles against the south wall. Both cubicles have a small top-hung window on the south side which have been blocked internally. The cubicles both have half-glazed doors, with two panels below the lock rails. The wall of the former ladies WC, which intrudes into this space, and the partitions between the gents cubicles are of brick, one brick thick. The former ladies' WC has a flat roof over it, from which access can be made into the roof of the main station building. The roof above the gents' toilet has tongued and grooved boards fixed to the underside of the rafters and one timber king post roof truss and a steel I-beam are visible. The brickwork of the walls is painted orange.

Left Luggage and Parcels Office:

This space has a 6 bay roof, with 5 painted softwood timber trusses, with bolted king posts and angled struts. The second truss from east end has scarf-jointed tie beam, which appears to be original; the remainder are single lengths of timber. The tie beams span the width of building and there are 6 I-section steel beams that span from the south wall across the top of the north wall to support the canopy that projects some 4-5m to the north. As the canopy edge curves, the beams at the east end are shorter in length. The shorter span steel beams are 10 x 5in (25 x 12.5cm) section, with FRODINGHAM IRON & STEEL CO LTD ENGLAND embossed on their webs. The longer span beams at the west end are 10 x 8in (25 x 20cm) with APPLEBY & FRODINGHAM ENGLAND on them (see note on p.6). The south ends of these beams are built into the top of the south wall and tied down with vertical wrought iron or steel rods, which are shackled to short horizontal sections of rail which project from the wall just above floor level. The roof has tongued and grooved boarding laid up the slope from the eaves to the lower purlin. Where the roof light was located, above the purlin, the roof slope is now raftered and felted. The walls are plastered and painted, pale greeny/blue. The door openings on both the north and south sides have fanlights over them. With the exception of the east door on the south side (see exterior description), the original doors have been removed. The floor is concrete.

Main roof interior:

The roof is framed with king post trusses, of good quality softwood timber. The timber was circular-sawn and pencilled setting-out marks are visible at the apex and joints. There is a single row of purlins notched into the backs of the principals on both slopes and common rafters, with close boarding under the slates. The jowled heads of the king posts support a vertical ridge board. The tie beams are 29 x 15cm section.

Canopy: At the east end the timber canopy over the platform projects 0.7m beyond an inserted concrete blockwork wall built along or close to the former platform edge. The canopy is carried on 6 steel beams at the west end and on chamfered timber beams supported by the ornate cast-iron brackets at the west end. The 17cm wide vertical softwood boards that were fixed all around the front and ends of the canopy have all had their decorative lower ends cut off square. The outer ends of the main horizontal timbers have quadrant mouldings. One of the horizontal roof timbers has 'Moore Bros Aveton Gifford 18.9.70' pencilled on it, which is presumed to be the date when the platform was enclosed.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following for their help: the site owner; Amyas Crump, who, with other railway and local historians, provided much valuable background information and useful insights into the use of the station; to Graham Tait, Devon County Council Historic Environment Service; Sue Watts, for assistance on site and in the preparation of this report; the staff of the Westcountry Studies Library, Exeter and the Railway Studies Library in Newton Abbot Library.

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A note on Frodingham Iron and Steel Works

The Frodingham Iron Company of Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire, was the first to produce steel in that area in 1890. By 1895 it was known as the Frodingham Iron & Steel Company and it acquired the Appleby Works in 1912. In 1917 the plant was taken over by United Steel Companies but was still known as the Appleby Frodingham Steel Company in 1950.

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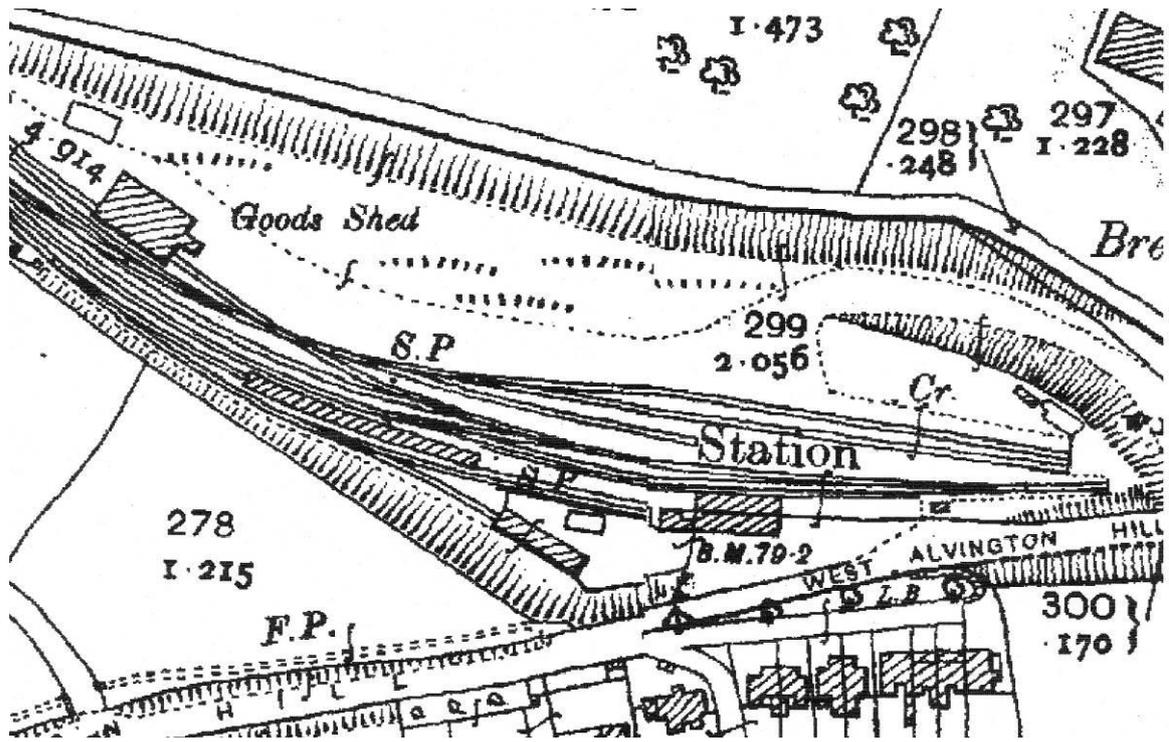


Fig.1: Kingsbridge station, from Ordnance Survey 1:2500, 2nd edition, 1904-6
Not reproduced to scale

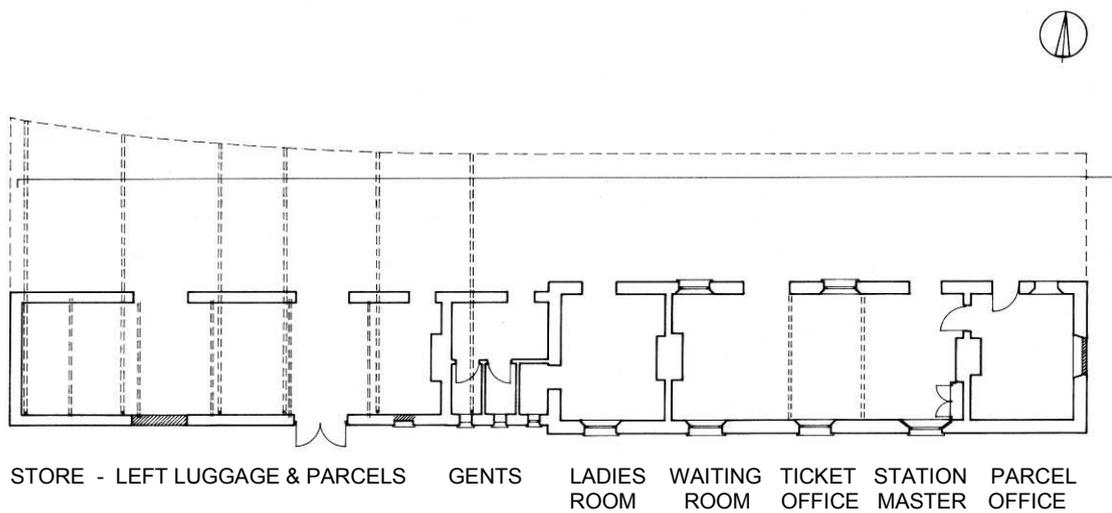


Fig.2: Kingsbridge station: plan, showing principal uses of building

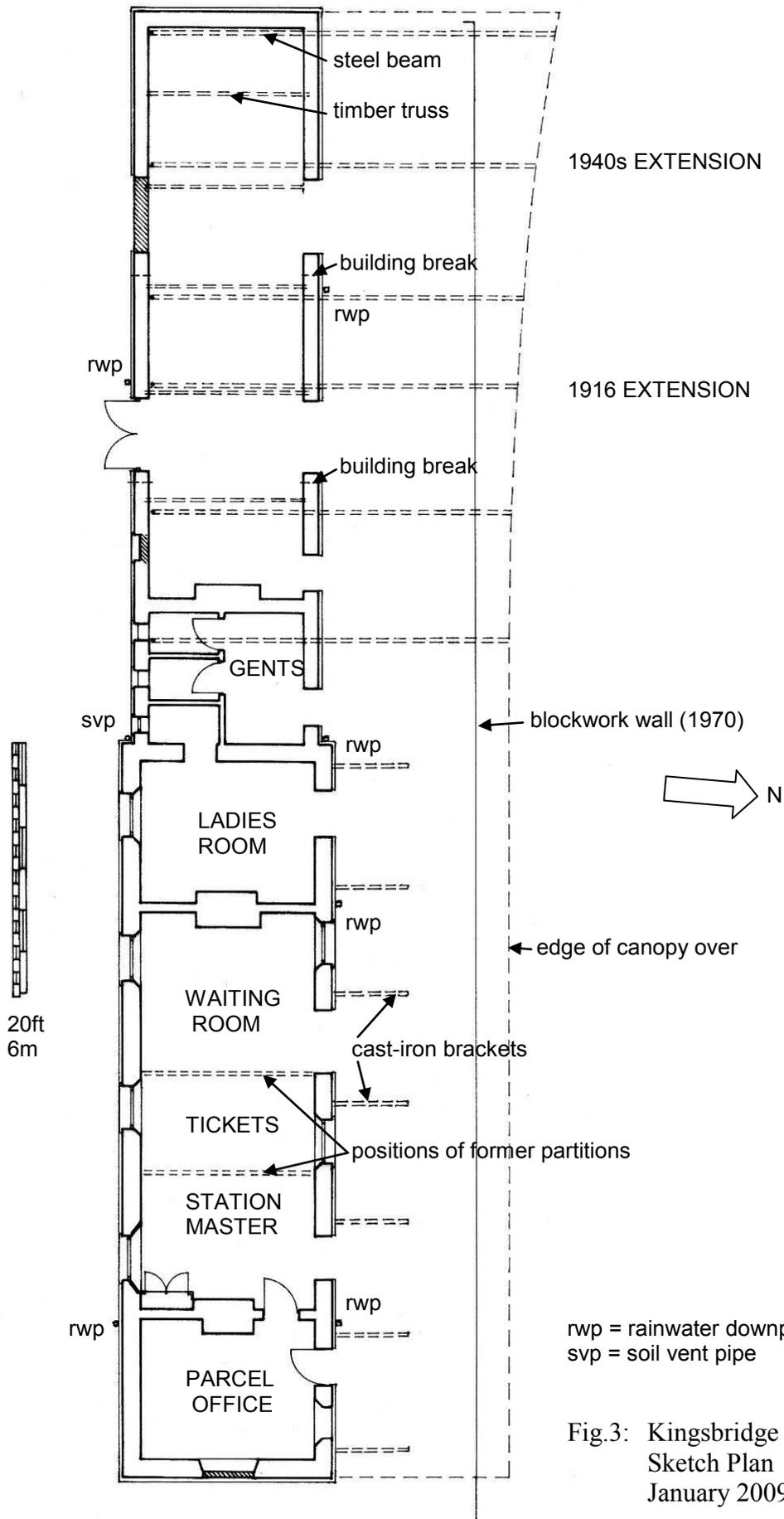


Fig.3: Kingsbridge Station Sketch Plan January 2009



Fig.4: Kingsbridge station, late 19th century, showing original extent of west end
Picture by Lens of Sutton, from Robertson 1989, 117

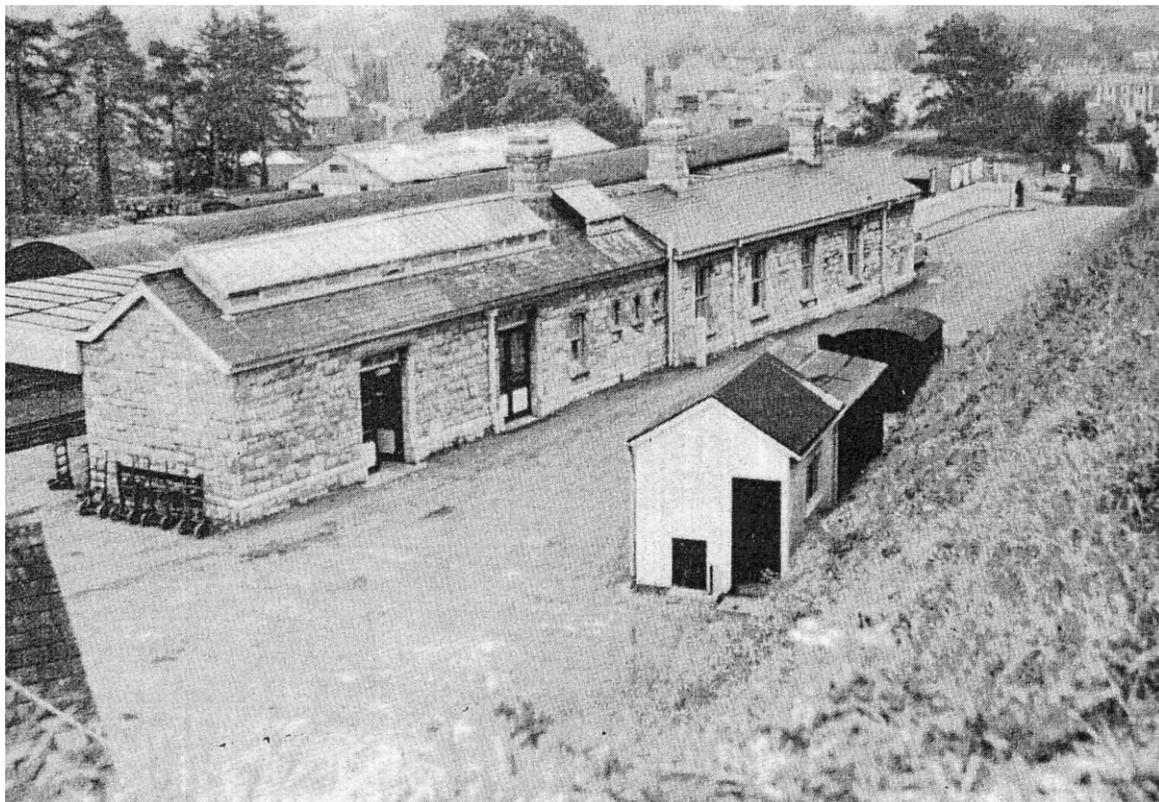


Fig.5: Kingsbridge station from the southwest, showing final extent of building
Undated photograph from KAW Collection, from Williams & Reynolds 1977, 80



Fig.6: Kingsbridge Station in 1956

Peter Gray

Site photographs taken 27 January 2009



From E



From W



S elevation, W end



Looking along S elevation from



From SE



Detail of chimney stack



Roof from W



Ridge tile mark, main roof



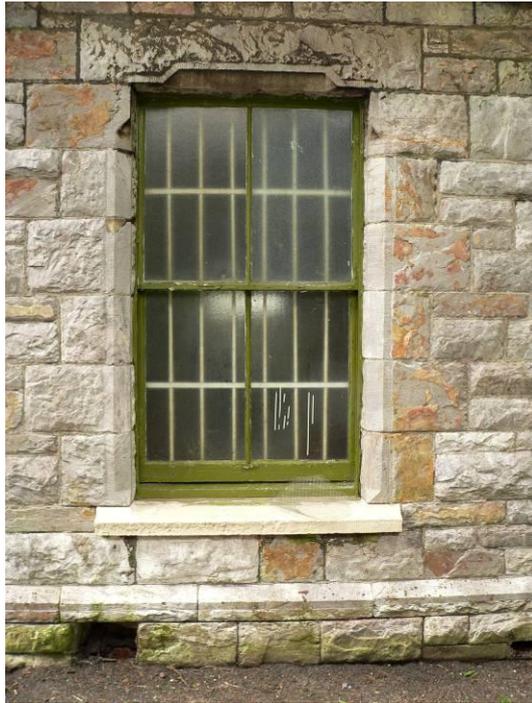
Roof from E



Ridge tile mark, west roof



Chimney and ridge, main roof



Masonry and window detailing



Blocked window, E gable end



Detail of stonework and pointing



Small window to WC



Detail of 1940s pointing



Detail of rwp and fixing



Window opening at NE end



External doors at W end, S elevation



West block, looking E



Roof of W block, looking E



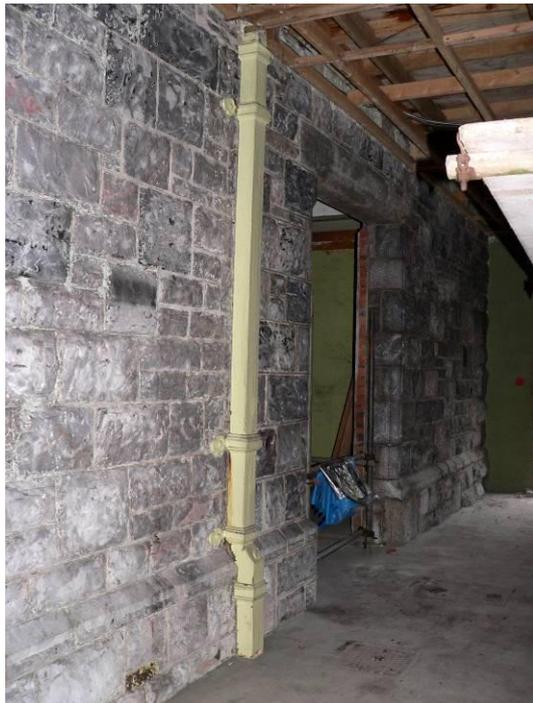
Detail of steel beam hold-down



Roof of W block, looking W



Platform side of W block, looking E



N elevation of W block, with downpipe



Looking W along former platform



Looking E along former platform



Doorway to former Waiting Room



Cast-iron canopy supports



Detail of canopy roof timber, N end



Roof structure of main block



Detail of roof structure at ridge



Tie beam and principal, S side



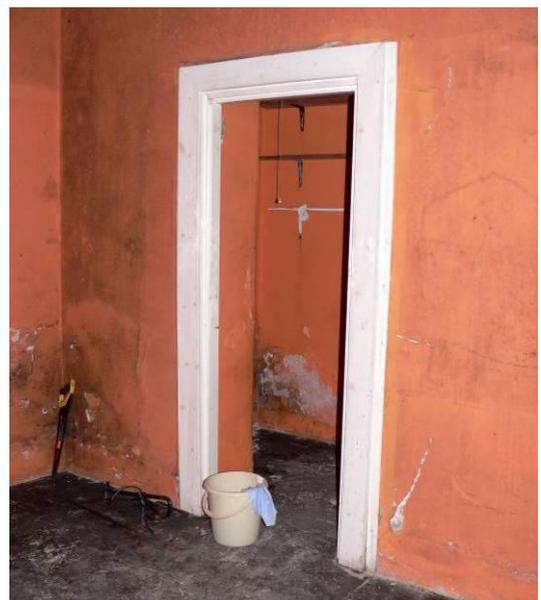
Roof over Gents WC



Cubicle doors in Gents WC



Cornice in Ladies Room



Doorway to WC in Ladies Room



N wall of Waiting Room/Ticket Office



Panelled door to Parcel Office



E end of Station Master's Office



Back of panelled door in Parcel Office



Cupboard and shuttered window in Station Master's Office