

**THE MILITARY RAILWAY
AT
FOVANT**

1915 - 1926



Dinton Station Master during WW1



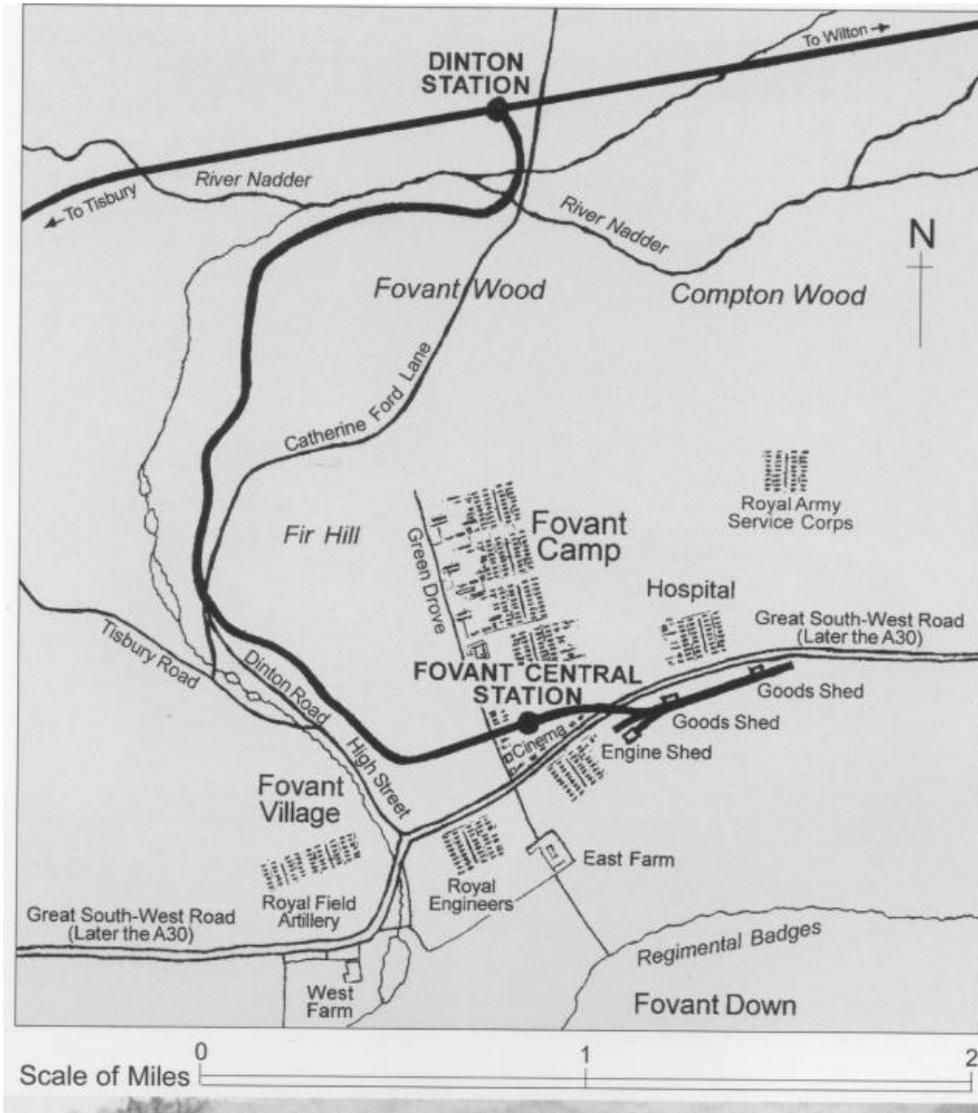
Fovant Central Station



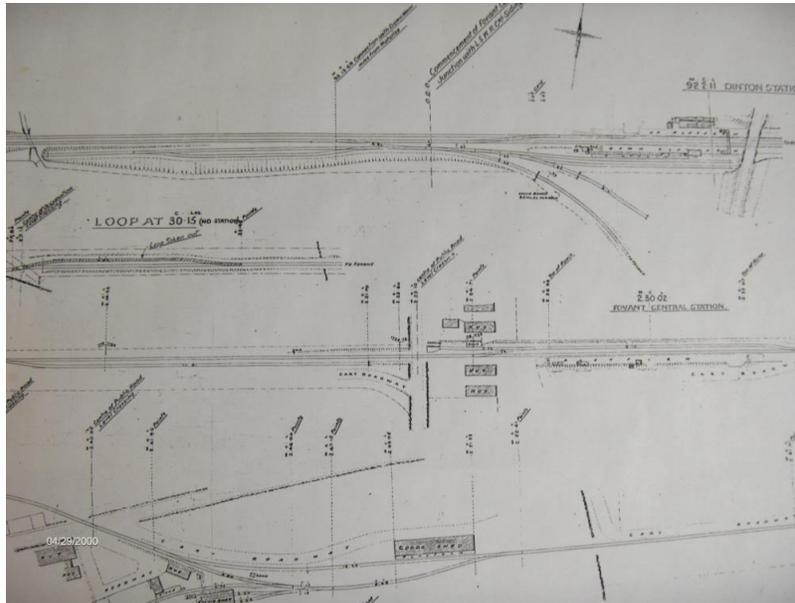
Modern Dinton Station showing the Fovant Railway spur exit.

Opened on October 1915, closed in December 1920, reopened on 5th March 1921 and finally lifted in 1926.

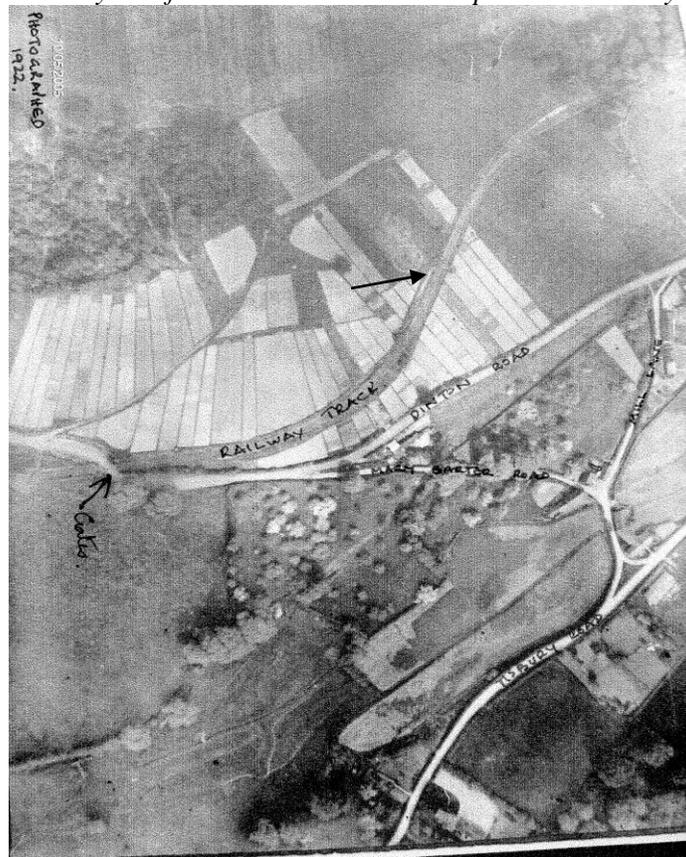
The Fovant Military railway joined the South Western Rail from Salisbury to Exeter at Dinton Station and wound its way up the hill to Fovant valley. It crossed Dinton Road, ran along the foot of Fir Hill below the village allotments, up behind the cottages on High Street to the small quarry above the Pembroke Arms. Here it turned west across Green Drove to Fovant Central Station. Continuing a few hundred yards the track crosses the main road between Salisbury and Shaftsbury (now the A30) to the Goods Shed. Another Goods Shed lay 50 yards further on.



Staff of the Army Stores, Fovant, taken in the early 192



The surveyor's drawing showing Dinton junction, Fovant Central Station and the main goods platform. There is another smaller shed 100 yards further on across the Compton Chamberlayne parish boundary.



Railway running along the allotments

When preparing the ground for the track the workmen found three graves. Dr Clay was called and decided they were Romano-Celtic farmers buried with some care in stone cists. One was an older man who had suffered a broken leg in life which had healed with a three

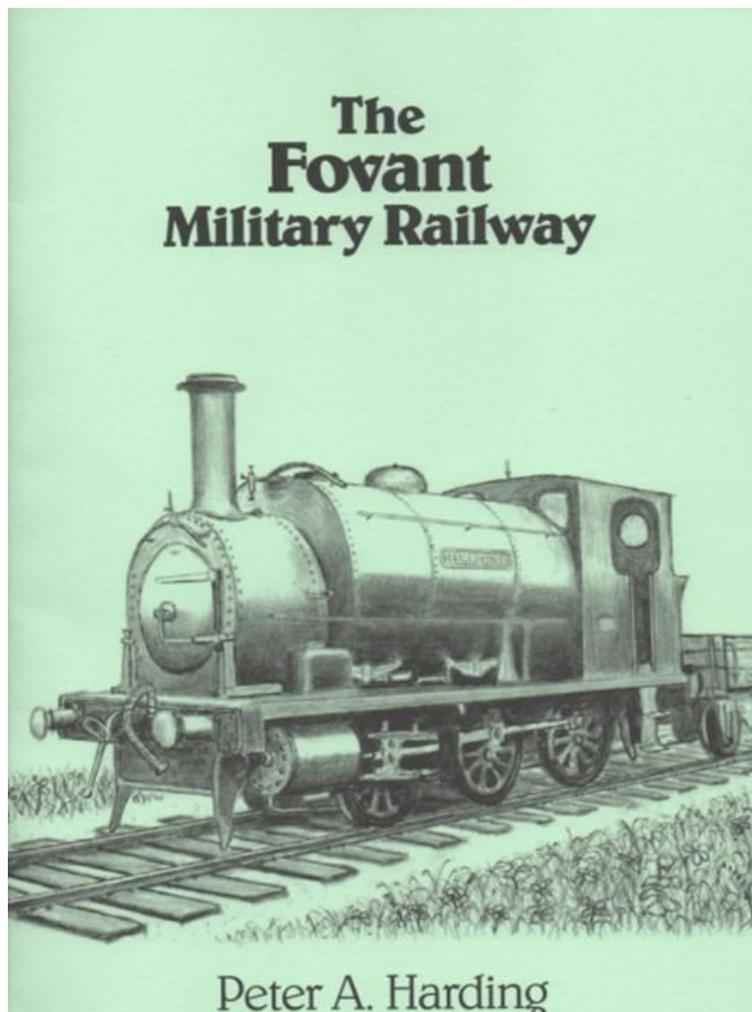
One was an older man who had suffered a broken leg in life which had healed with a three inch overlap. This would have left him with a distinct limp. There were hob nails at the foot of the cists, hence the decision they were Romano-Celts. The woman was older, 40 – 50 years old and had seven worn teeth. Because the stone lids had fallen onto the skeletons little was left intact. A fuller report can be found in *WAM vol 39 pgs 499-52*.

It was understood that the skull had been given to Devizes Museum. *WAM vol 39 pg 521*.
“Rev.E.H.Goddard gave to Blackmore Museum iron hobnails from feet of a Romano- British skeleton at Fovant.” On enquiry they could not be found.

Several engines were used on the Fovant Military line, some after service on other lines on Salisbury Plain. This photograph shows the Hampshire, at Fovant Station. Others have names, some just numbers. Fuller technical details of both the engines and the railway and many more photos can be found in the excellent book by Peter Harding:

“The Fovant Military Railway”

www.branchstow.co.uk/peterahardingrailwaybooks.





Private Crossman got a window seat on the train at Dinton Station on his way to the war in France in 1915



The rest of his battalion waiting on Dinton station to find their places on the train



The 'Westminster' in her prime

What is left of the Military Railway in Fovant?

When the railway was finally demolished in 1926 some of the materials were offered for sale to the local people. There are still signs in the village of the use that was made of this chance.

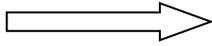
The landscape of the village had also been changed and this can still be seen.



Embankments and cuttings can still be seen where the track wound its way up the gradient.



Mike Harden of the FHG, showing a NZ visitor a cutting.



Kissing gates were built to keep any livestock from wandering onto the track.



A goods wagon makes a perfect shepherd's hut, now used as a storage place for hay and 'useful' bits and pieces.

**Parts of the
railway can still
be seen in
Green Drove**



**They may be
sleepers or,
perhaps, wood
placed parallel
to the track to
make a level
crossing**



When the railway was finally dismantled in 1927 many of the sleepers were bought and put to good use by the villagers.



Researched and written by M. McKenzie 2021