

Redbridge Wharf

4mm:1ft '00' Finescale , Set in 1965, and sometimes beyond

Historical Background:

Redbridge Wharf is situated on the north-westerly shore of Southampton Water, at the mouth of the River Test in Hampshire. Redbridge has been an important crossing point on the River Test since Saxon times, probably earlier. ("Red" is a corruption of Saxon hreut or reed). There has been a wharf at Redbridge for several hundred years

The station was opened in 1847 by the Southampton and Dorchester Railway. During construction of the line, the large area of drained marshland between the wharf and station was used as a holding area for materials as the route developed west towards Bournemouth. Redbridge became a junction in 1865 when the "Sprat and Winkle" line opened from Redbridge to Andover via Romsey. The station in the 1960's, as now is served only by a few stopping trains.

The drained area became the sleeper works, involved in the manufacture and finishing of sleepers, bridge timbers and cast track components. The preparation and laying out of large point work complexes were an important part of the work, examples include London Cannon St station.

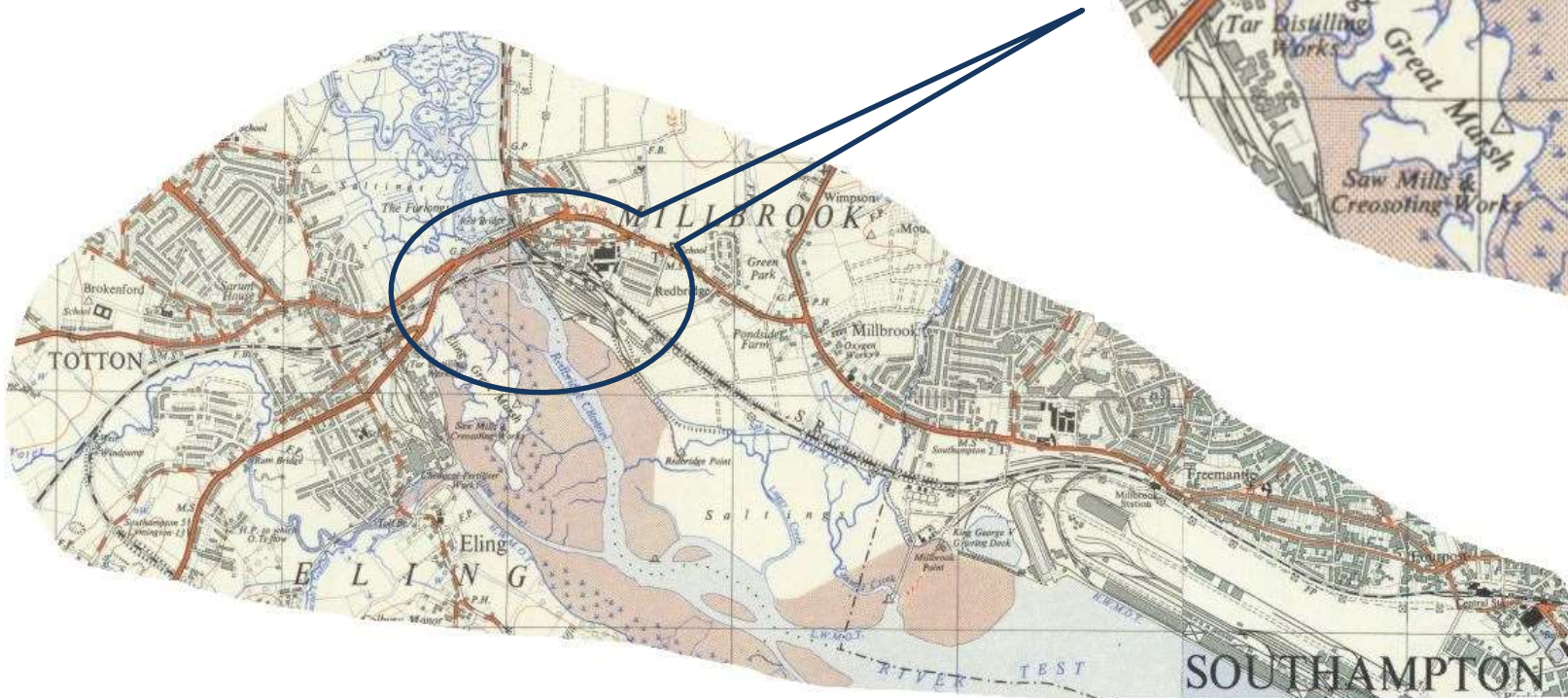
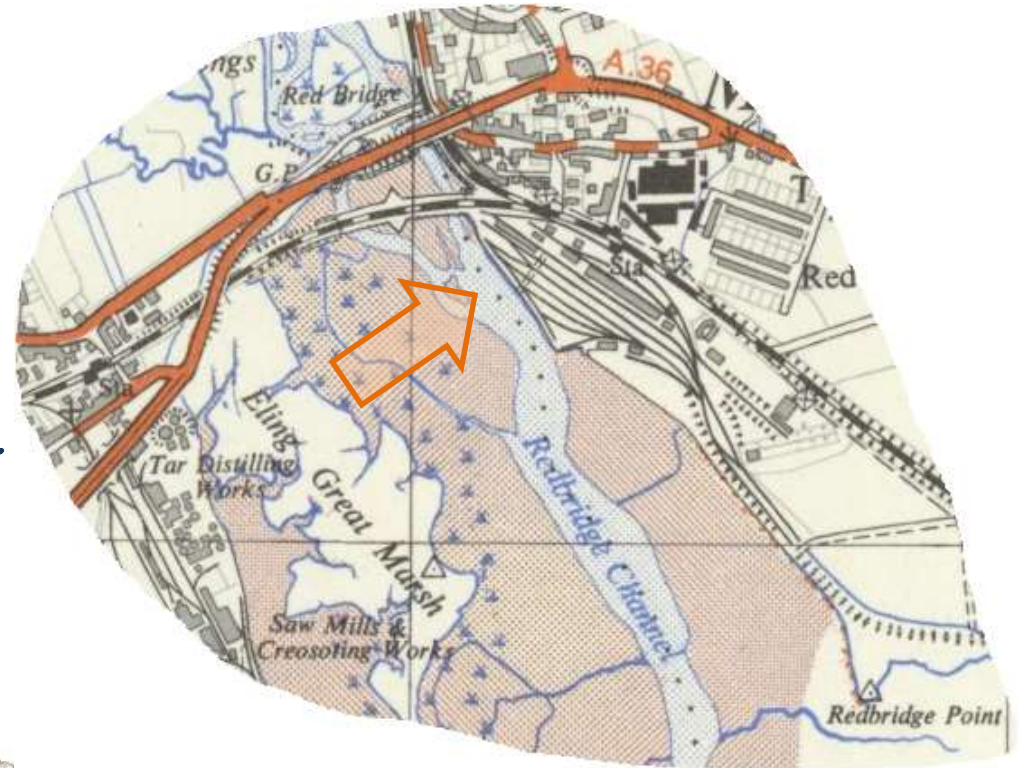
In the final years of operation, the site was used for the assembly of long welded rail sections.

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Location

1960 Ordnance Survey map of the river Test with an insert for Redbridge.

The orange arrow shows your location standing on Eling Great Marsh, looking across the Redbridge channel.



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The layout:

Your viewpoint is unusual. You are standing in Southampton Water looking North East. Southampton Central station is 3 miles to the South East, and Totton about 1/2 mile to the West, just under the bridge. The focus of the layout is the wharf, with the works behind, and Redbridge station and junction to the rear. Redbridge causeway frames the layout to the left.

The new rail causeway, the lack of the 1970's road bridge, and the laying of third rail sets 1965 as the earliest possible operating date, offering operating flexibility from late steam through to modern image. The nature of the layout is such that it provides a constant stream of rail traffic, with a rich mixture of mainline, branch, works and freight workings.

The works were extensive, and only a small proportion of buildings, sidings and activities are represented in the model.

Redbridge Wharf is being continually developed, and more detail will be added for each exhibition. Recent additions include the 1965 transformer building on the old bridge approach, the crossing gates and fences and the pattern shop next to the foundry. There is still a lot to occupy the team in scenic work. If we get adventurous the continuous welded rail structures and weld test equipment which are off scene to the Southampton end, may be added.

Research is ongoing. An old photograph also shows an intriguing wooden building with a platform jutting out into the river, one to add if only we knew what it was for!

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Rail traffic around Redbridge Junction in the 1960's

The works generates traffic: trip workings to Eastleigh; raw materials and track recovery trains. Works traffic from the west approaches wrong line across the causeway, and traffic from Romsey required the use of wrong line running under the road bridge from an off scene cross over. Departures to Eastleigh from the works required a wrong line departure through the station.

The busy main line traffic through the area is varied, and includes:

- Trains between Weymouth, Poole and Bournemouth and London Waterloo, including the down Bournemouth Belle Pullman train.
- North / South inter-regional trains re-routed since the closure of the Somerset & Dorset
- Oil traffic from the Fawley refinery and return empties.
- Military traffic for Marchwood military port using the reception sidings to reverse.
- Salisbury – Southampton local traffic
- East / West Inter-regional trains serving Bristol, Cardiff, Exeter and Plymouth to the west, and Portsmouth and Brighton to the east.
- Freight to and from Southampton docks
- The odd rail tour, test train, parcels vans and even a pigeon race special

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Redbridge – the causeway and bridges

The rail bridge and causeway as shown was opened in 1964, replacing the earlier alignment. The real location has two identical rail bridges on the causeway over the River Test's two channels - space constraints mean we have only been able to model one. The abutments for the old bridge (a rather rickety looking structure) can be seen in front of the new bridge. The transformer building was added for electrification, and placed on the old track bed

The 1930s road bridge dominates the scene over the River Test. The earlier five arch bridge built in the 1700s can be seen under the arches. Until 1930, the eastern end of the bridge led to a level crossing, passing over the Romsey line, and arriving outside the Anchor public house on Test Lane.

The eastbound carriageway of the A35 main road from Totton and the New Forest to Southampton now uses the 1930s structure. The westbound carriageway runs over yet another bridge, opened in the early 1970s. This bridge is not modelled, in line with our 1960s architecture setting.

During WWII the bridges were considered strategic, and demolition plans were made in case of invasion. The explosives were stored in small blockhouses under the arches next to the Romsey line. These are still there, hopefully the explosives have been removed!

The area either side of the bridges is tidal marshland. The Redbridge channel runs past the front of the sleeper works.

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Northern Wharf area

During the sleeper works heyday there was a busy collection of machine shops, sleeper stacks and steam cranes. Until closure, the works received most of its raw materials by boat. Timber would be offloaded to lighters in the main areas of Southampton Docks and brought up the river. Smaller coasters could navigate up to the wharf. Creosote was ferried across the river from Burt, Boulton & Haywood works in Eling (behind where you are standing).

To the rear of the machine shop is the small engine shed. It lost its rear wall in the early 60's after a shunting incident involving a USA tank engine.

The road access to the wharf comes across the main line between the signal box and the station. The signal box received a blast wall during WWII and retained it for the rest of its working life.

The busy Redbridge Junction is behind the rail works. The junction even today has severe speed restrictions (50mph for Bournemouth and 30mph for Romsey). The crossing is modelled as a switched diamond, as per the real location until 2018.

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Creosote treatment pressure vessels

The Creosote plant area is framed to the left by the overhead gantry crane and forms the heart of the sleeper processing plant. In this area sleepers started at the Adzing and Boring machines, then a narrow-gauge industrial network moved the sleepers through into the creosote pressure vessels, and onwards to chairing and stacking onto sleeper wagons to the rear, with an alternate exit for non-chaired timbers to the front. Loaded sleeper trucks were manhandled through the process, with the aid of powered capstans. Behind the creosote plant, there were oil tanks, creosote tanks and heaters. The tower to the left is part of a vacuum sawdust extraction system from the adzing and boring area. Just look how labour intensive the whole process was.

Access to the main line from the transfer sidings is protected by a wide-to-gauge trap point, which is still in use as part of the Maritime Freightliner Terminal serving the container port.

The main station building is on the up line, with a simple shelter on the down. Trains that called at Redbridge then, as now, tended to be local stopping trains. The footbridge was used by workers as well as passengers, thus the double set of steps.

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Central area

To the front of this area is the log pond, where incoming timber was stored pending processing (not for standard sleepers, they tended to arrive cut to length). The log pond had posts and chains set into the river which were used for tying down the floating logs. Many of the posts still exist. The logs were hauled up the slipway to the drying area and the sawmill.

Behind this is the main cross over and shunting area in the yard. The Southampton end of the station is to the rear. The main line and “elephant” sidings run south-east behind the docks on the way through to Millbrook and Southampton.

To the right is a “laying up ground”. Dependent upon the size required, these could be anywhere in the yard, and often spare sidings were used to provide a level raised base for laying up. Once complete, the point work was reduced to modular kit form for transfer to the final destination. Every component had to be labelled to ease final assembly and minimise the track possession time.

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Southern area

The southern area of the complex hosted the foundry, a reclaim yard, as well as numerous sidings, of which we have only been able to model a few.

The backscene is dominated by the foundry, with its tall cupolas and charging hoist. To the left is the pattern shop, which contained a mini foundry for specials and prototype work.

In front of the Foundry is a representation of the reclaim yard, where sleepers were de-chaired, and decisions on re-use were made dependent upon type and condition. Scrap chairs were moved to the foundry for reprocessing.

The route of the disused Andover Canal is not visible but ran across the southern end of the station platforms and behind the foundry, before reaching the River Test in the area where the container port is now located.

Visitors to this area now will be greeted by row upon row of new cars and vans being imported and exported through Southampton docks.