

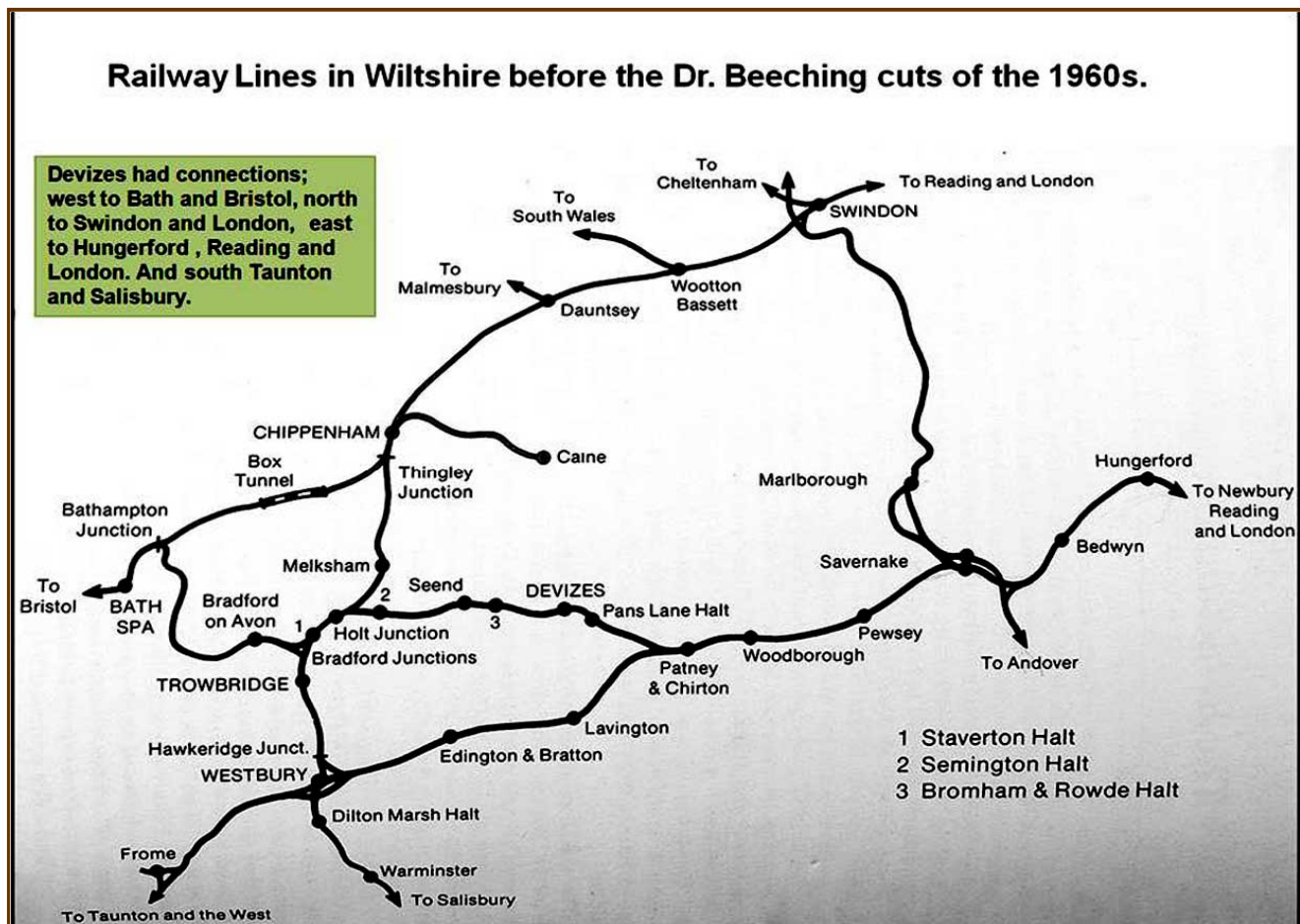
## Devizes and the railway

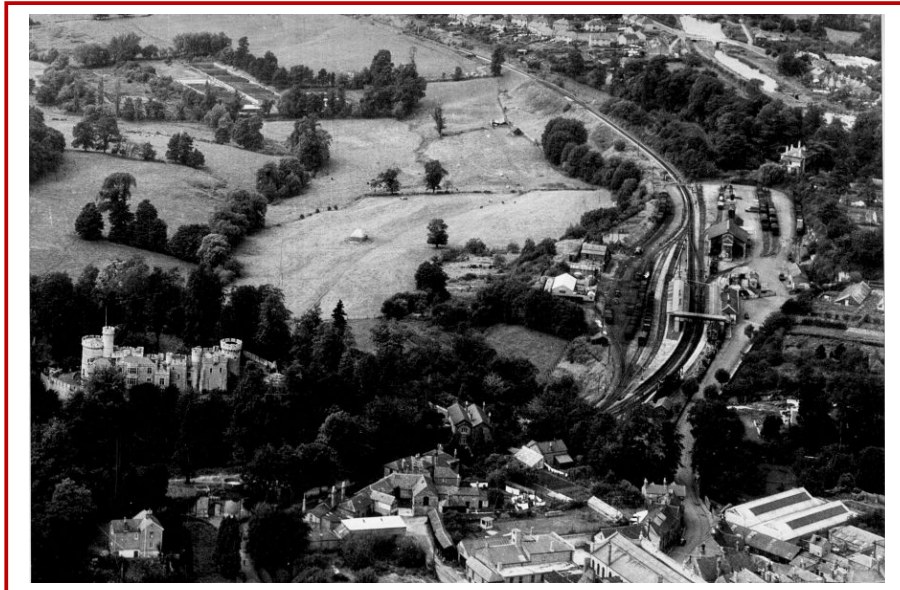
The railway came to Devizes in two phases.

A branch line to the town was opened in 1857, which approached from the west. The line from Holt to Devizes was built by the Wilts, Somerset and Weymouth Railway in 1857, connecting with the line from Chippenham to Trowbridge (now on the Wessex Main Line). A Station was built on a low lying site north-west of the castle on what is now Station Road.

This line was extended to the east in 1862 by the Great Western Railway Company to create a link to London. This extension involved the digging of a tunnel under the castle and a cutting to its south-east through a small part of the outer bailey and town's defensive circuit. The main reason for the alignment of the railway was the difficult gradient on Caen Hill that would not allow it to pass on the northern side of the town. Thus the GWR extended their Reading-Hungerford railway station to Devizes via Pewsey in 1862 and that provided a direct line from London to the West Country through Devizes. The line from Pewsey was extended to Taunton in 1906.

The building of a by-pass line through Westbury removed most of the traffic from the Devizes line, and it closed in 1966 during the infamous, and now much regretted, Dr. Beeching cuts. It is such a great shame that this closure also lost the rights of way making it now very difficult to establish a new railway line or use the old rights of way for recreational purposes.





Left - an aerial view of an operating Devizes Railway station, the Castle and the edge of the Market Square from the air.

We would very much like to publish more photos of Devizes Railway station and of trains in and around the Devizes, Melksham, Chippenham, Pewsey area. If you have ones you could lend us we would be very grateful. Please get in touch via the Contact page.

**Below left** – a diesel train emerging from Devizes Castle tunnel towards Pan's Lane halt. **Below right** is the Trowbridge - Melksham line running north with the Devizes branch line going right (just north of Holt junction, see the map above)



A diesel train emerging from Devizes Castle tunnel towards Pan's Lane Halt - pre 1966.



The branch line just north of Holt junction is branching right towards Devizes – pre 1966.