

# **GUILDFORD VIA COBHAM:** **THE ORIGINS AND IMPACT OF A COUNTRY RAILWAY**

A REVIEW BY IAN POPE WHICH APPEARED IN THE DECEMBER 2006 EDITION OF *ARCHIVE* IS GIVEN BELOW.

THE FIRST GLANCE AT THE BOOK, WHICH REVEALED HEAD AND TAIL BANDS ON THE BINDING, SUGGESTED THAT THIS WAS TO BE A WELL PRODUCED VOLUME AND A DIP INTO THE PAGES CONFIRMED THIS. AS ALWAYS YOUR REVIEWER LOOKS TO THE LAST TO SEE IF AN INDEX IS INCLUDED AND, AGAIN, WITH THIS WORK ONE OF A COMPREHENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE NATURE IS FOUND.

WITH A MORE IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE CONTENTS IT WAS FOUND THAT THIS WAS NOT AN AVERAGE RAILWAY HISTORY. THE BOOK IS DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS: ORIGINS AND IMPACT, WHICH ARE THEN FURTHER SPLIT INTO CHAPTERS. THE TWO SECTION HEADINGS REVEAL HOW THE BOOK APPROACHES THE RAILWAY, FIRSTLY LOOKING AT THE REASONS BEHIND ITS PROMOTION AND CONSTRUCTION AND THEN AT THE IMPACT THAT ITS ARRIVAL HAD ON THE AREA.

IT IS THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND BEHIND THE LINE'S PROMOTION AND CONSTRUCTION WHICH ADDS SO MUCH TO THE WORK. THE POLITICAL MANOEUVRING, AND THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED WITH IT, IS BROUGHT TO LIFE. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VARIOUS SETTLEMENTS IN THE AREA AND THE OVERALL STATE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IS DESCRIBED, ALL OF WHICH WERE TO BE CHANGED BY THE ARRIVAL OF THE RAILWAY.

THE AREA WAS SEEN AS SOLIDLY LONDON & SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY TERRITORY BUT THEY WERE NOT KEEN TO BUILD A LINE THROUGH COBHAM BUT THE ARRIVAL OF THE DISTRICT RAILWAY IN SOUTH LONDON AND THE EFFORTS OF LOCAL LANDOWNERS, ESPECIALLY THE EARL OF ONSLOW, WON THE DAY.

BUILDING THE LINE WAS PUT IN THE HANDS OF THE WELL-KNOWN FIRM OF LUCAS & AIRD AND THE VOLUME IS MUCH ENHANCED BY A WONDERFUL COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MAJOR WORKS UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND OF CONTRACTOR'S DEPOTS, LOCOMOTIVES, STEAM NAVVIES ETC. ONCE THE LINE WAS OPEN THE BOOK CONCENTRATES ON THE IMPACT THAT IT HAD ON THE SETTLEMENTS IT SERVED AND THE GROWTH THAT WAS GENERATED BY THE EASIER CONNECTION TO THE METROPOLIS.

THE STORY COMES RIGHT UP-TO-DATE AND THE BOOK INCLUDES A SIXTEEN PAGE COLOUR SECTION WHICH IS PREDOMINANTLY VIEWS TAKEN IN 2005/6 OF THE CHANGING EMU SCENE.

WITH AN APPENDIX DEALING WITH ALL OF THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS INVOLVED WITH THE RAILWAY AND THE COMPREHENSIVE INDEX ALREADY MENTIONED, THIS BOOK IS ABOUT AS GOOD A STUDY OF A LINE AS ONE COULD GET. WHILST NOT A FULLY ILLUSTRATED HISTORY WHICH GIVES CHAPTER AND VERSE ON EACH STATION ALONG THE LINE IT DOES GIVE A USEFUL, AND THOUGHT PROVOKING, SOCIAL SLANT ON THE HISTORY.

THE QUALITY OF THE PRODUCTION CANNOT BE FAULTED NOR CAN THE PRICE WHICH CERTAINLY GIVES VALUE FOR MONEY.