

History Trail

Point 9 – Hill End Station



In 1862 the Hatfield and St Albans Railway Company was formed. In 1865 a link was constructed from the London Road terminus to Abbey Station. There were halts at Sanders (the orchid growers), Hill End, Smallford, Nast Hyde and on to Hatfield. Hill End station was opened on 1st May 1899 to serve the Hertfordshire County Asylum with passengers being set down, on request to the guard. A siding ran south across Hill End Lane, between the houses into the hospital grounds for delivering coal, stores and sometimes patients. The line was poorly used with passenger demand destroyed by the new Midland main line railway to St Albans (City) and was closed to passengers in 1951 and freight traffic in 1964.

Mr Truwert recalls how, in the 1950s, "some of the patients from Cell Barnes hospital worked at the nearby station" (Herts Memories/Lost Rails/The Alban Way)



Hill End Halt with footway over tracks between the Hospital and Marconi's electrical engineering works at Long Acres – late 1950's. Hospital Pumping Station is the large building in right background. (Source unknown)



Hill End Station 1959 (Courtesy M. Covey-Crump)

The station buildings consisted of a wooden parcels office, waiting room and timber office and an iron gents loo.

"Many people will remember Hill End Railway Station which was situated quite near to the hospital, consisting of a single track line operating between St Albans and Hatfield, by which lots of goods were brought to the hospital until the station closed sometime after the war. In the early days, coal was used for the boiler house and for the many fireplaces in the residential quarters and was brought by trucks to Hill End station, which were then shunted by a steam railway engine into the hospital siding along its own trackthe trucks were emptied every time by men using shovels into the bunkers which were on one side of the main corridorthe coal was lowered from the bunkers, conveyed under the corridor and then hoisted up again above ground to be moved to the boiler house by a special conveyor mechanism. A rather labour intensive system!

House coal was received by the same shunting of trucks, stored and the delivered to all the offices, residences etc. by hand trucks for the countless open fireslater an electric battery trolley was bought for this job."

Extracts from L A Frost's memories of working at Hill End Hospital in the 1930's and 1940's (document from St Albans Museums 1995 - Out of Sight, Out of Mind)



*William Francis Hatten – Hill End Crossing Keeper
early 1920's (Courtesy of I. Tonkin)*

GNR did not consider that the line warranted a controlled level crossing and put in an “occupation crossing”. Gates were manned 10am to 6pm otherwise the road users operated the gates. After an accident in 1928 tubular metal gates were installed across the railway.

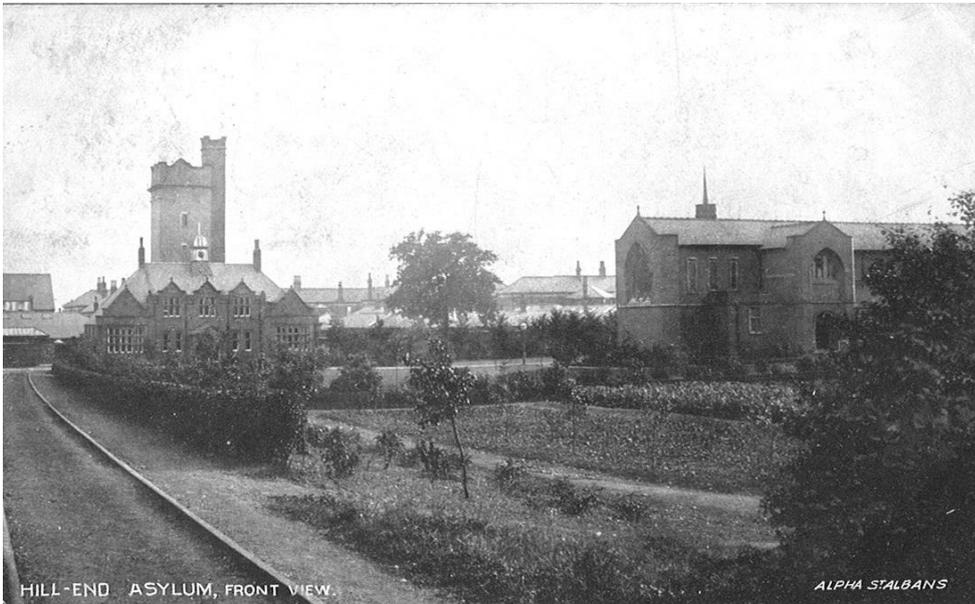


*N7 tank engine with freight at Hill End Lane level crossing with Crossing Keeper's Hut on left – April 1960
(Courtesy M Covey-Crump)*



*Site of siding across Hill End Lane (formerly Station Road) 1969
(Source unknown)*

“My house was next to where the railway siding came through into the hospital grounds. The semi-detached pair in Hill End Lane opposite the Garden of Rest. Between 1971-8 I lived in that house but the railway siding had ceased as too had the railway line. My garden had a gate into the alleyway (track route)”. (HE Senior Staff)



HILL-END ASYLUM, FRONT VIEW.

ALPHA STALBANS

Railway line visible on left; Hospital Administration block left centre with water tower behind; Chapel on right. (Courtesy of Museums of St Albans)

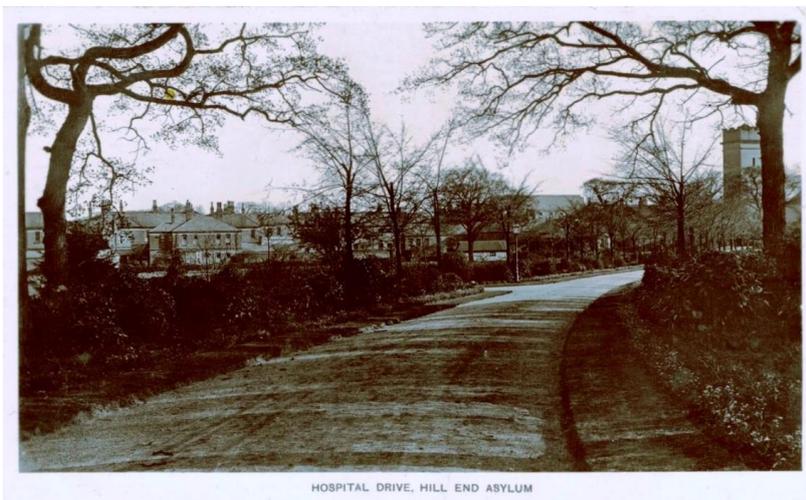


Track in hospital grounds leading to boiler house (Courtesy of Museums of St Albans)

Taken from “The Hatfield and St Albans Branch of the Great Northern Railway” Roger D Taylor & Brian Anderson.

Hill End Station – The 3rd September 1939 timetable has a lengthy note about the delivery of coal wagons to Hill End Hospital which makes interesting reading. The train engine was not allowed into the hospital grounds after dark so that coal wagons had to be brought, as far as possible, by the 3.05pm goods from Hatfield. This did not run on Saturday so any wagons on this day would arrive by the evening goods at about 10.30pm. The hospital staff were responsible for hauling any empty coal wagons to the hospital gate, using their horses. The train engine would remove the empties and place the loaded ones just inside the gate. The horses then

again took over. The hospital’s staff were responsible for protecting road traffic in Hill End Lane (there were no gates across the road) and for securing the catch points at the end of the siding, but as stated “this will not relieve the guard of the responsibility for seeing that the points are secure”.



HOSPITAL DRIVE, HILL END ASYLUM

Hospital Drive leading from railway station (Museums of St Albans)

When Hill End became a military hospital there were occasional hospital trains and at such times, the engine probably did enter the

hospital grounds even after dark; two coaches would have been a bit much for the hospital’s horses.