

# BEECHING TELLS RINGWOOD TO 'HOP ON A BUS'

## 400-passenger link is to close

C.T. March 6, 1964

**NO more trains will run from Brockenhurst to Ringwood after May 4. Dr. Beeching's axe has fallen on the New Forest**

Passenger trains will no longer run on the Ringwood and Fordingbridge branch lines, it was announced this week. British Railways claim to be losing £103,000 a year on the services.

**The announcement comes within two weeks of a statement from the Southern Region that the line might be reprieved as a holiday route and kept open until October.**

But there is no appeal against Mr. Ernest Marples' decision now. A condition of the closure is that extra bus services must be run between Wimborne and Brockenhurst through Ringwood, to connect with morning and evening Southampton trains, with a further service morning and evening for schoolchildren.

### READY

General Manager of Hants and Dorset Motor Services, Mr. D. W. Morison, said his company was ready to run the services. He was sure that where Traffic Commissioners' approval was needed, it would be given in time.

Holmsley, Ringwood, Ashley Heath, West Moors and Wimborne will close to passengers. Ringwood is to stay open as a goods station and trains will run when they are needed.

A British Railways spokesman at Waterloo told the C.T. that the Ringwood line carried approximately 400 passengers daily. A quarter of these were schoolchildren.

Staff affected by the closure totalled 35. These would not be made redundant and would be offered other jobs. They would be dealt with according to arrangements agreed by the Railways Board and the Trade Unions.

### HOMES

Asked whether the unused stations would be available for people wishing to convert them into homes, he said they would.

They had had instances of people converting stations to houses on previous occasions and generally it was found that the demand exceeded the supply.

Concern was expressed in Ringwood that if the bus services proved uneconomic they could be withdrawn without the elaborate appeal machinery provided for rail closures.

Said Dr. A. T. Westlake, chairman of Ringwood Rural District Council: "I expected this to happen. My concern is that if the bus services do not pay, the services will be withdrawn and there will be no appeal".

### CLAUSE

However, the Minister's letter to the Railways Board has a clause which states that the Board must tell the Minister when there is a proposal to change the bus services.

Dr. Westlake added "This means it will be almost impossible to get to London. We will have to go by road to Salisbury, and the roads will now be even more congested.

"This has arisen because the railways are run in a Victorian manner. If they were privately owned and run in this way they would have gone out of business.

"Buses are no substitute. They will bring congestion and people will not get to their destinations."

### NOT AS QUICK

Commented Mr. H. Brooks, chairman of Ringwood Parish Council: "Obviously the buses won't be as quick as the trains. It is a pity we were not able to speak about the mismanagement of the railways at the inquiry. Our case was confined to hardship".

At the inquiry, held in Bournemouth in September, county Alderman T. H. Lowndes pointed out that Brockenhurst Grammar School had been built in its present position because it was easily accessible by rail.

He asked why ratepayers now had to pay because the railways were closing.

A spokesman for the county council had told the inquiry that the cost of running a school bus would be £600.

Extra bus services to run are:—

A service Monday to Saturday from Wimborne to Ringwood and Brockenhurst station, leaving Wimborne at approximately 6.10 a.m. to connect with the 7.38 a.m. train from Brockenhurst to Southampton.

A service Monday to Saturday from Brockenhurst station to Ringwood and Wimborne, to connect with the train arriving at Brockenhurst from Southampton at 5.50 p.m.

A service Monday to Friday from Ashley Heath to Ringwood and Brockenhurst station, leaving Ashley Heath at approximately 8.7 a.m.

A service Monday to Friday from Brockenhurst station to Ringwood and Ashley Heath, leaving Brockenhurst station at approximately 4.15 p.m.