

Garth Tramway

This is the smallest yet, a narrow gauge tramway little more than 100 yards in length, but one with which I actually had a slight personal connection!

Back in the 1970's I had a couple of horses, which for a time were stabled at the old Garth Hunt kennels in Bracknell. These were at the north end of Kennel Lane (where else?) in Priestwood. The kennels were built in the early 20th Century, but the hunt had moved out, due to increasing development in the area. The last foxhunt on the eastern side of the county was a children's meet near Shurlock Row at the end of 1971. The opening of the M4 effectively put an end to foxhunting in the area after that, although there were some Boxing Day meets in Wokingham into more recent times. There are some more details of the Hunt's history at http://www.arborfieldhistory.org.uk/memories_garth.htm

When the field next to the old kennels was rolled in 1979, a length of Jubilee track running diagonally across it was revealed. Somebody local told us that this was used to bring meat up to the kennels from a small abattoir on the far side of the field.

I can remember this building from my childhood in the 1960's; if I recall correctly, it was semi-derelict by then, but there was still a lot of horsehair around.

Upon checking old maps (<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/486604/170517/12/1005>) I found the following

1900 1:10560 map (<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/486604/170517/10/100482>)
The kennels is not present

1912 1:2500 map (<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/486604/170517/12/100588>)
The kennels is present, and a track is shown running west by north across the field to a small building

1932 1:2500 map (<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/486604/170517/12/101173>)
The kennels is present and there is now a marked tramway running across the field to the small building, which appears to have been slightly enlarged.

1960-61 1:10560 map (<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/Map/486368/170592/10/101324>)
The kennels and the abattoir are still present, but the tramway is no longer shown. Clearly it was still there, since it was still present in the late 1970's, but it must have been out of use and sufficiently overgrown as to be no longer obvious.

The meat for the hounds was apparently loaded into hoppers or skips (there may only have been one) and pushed across the field. The track was 2' gauge sectional Jubilee track with metal sleepers, and most likely obtained as war surplus after WWI. There is nothing left now, the site has been completely erased by modern housing development.

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