



THE  
OLD  
MINERAL  
LINE

## How to find us

### To Watchet

#### By bus

From Taunton: No. 28 and no. 18 (Minehead to Taunton).

#### By car

From the east: Leave the M5 at Junction 24 (Bridgwater) and follow the signs for Minehead (A39). After about 16 miles (25.5 km) turn right down minor road signposted to Watchet.

From the west: Leave the M5 at Junction 25 (Taunton) and follow the signs to the A358 towards Minehead. At Williton turn right and then left following the signs to Watchet (about 18 miles (30 km) from the motorway).

### To the Brendon Hills

#### By bus

For up to date information check the Travel Line website at [www.travelinesw.com](http://www.travelinesw.com) or the Exmoor National Park at [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/getting-around](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/getting-around).

#### By car

To Raleigh's Cross Inn: Leave the M5 at Junction 25 (Taunton) and follow the signs to the A358 towards Minehead. Approximately 1 mile (1.6 km) after the sign for Bishops Lydeard, turn left along the B3224 for 8 miles (12.8 km). The Inn is on the left hand side at a crossroads.

From Raleigh's Cross Inn to Langham Engine House: Pass Raleigh's Cross Inn on your left, continue along the road (now the B3190) and at the junction at Beulah Chapel take the right hand road (B3224). Continue for approximately 5 miles (8 km). The Chargot Woods car park for Langham Engine House and Bearland Ventilation Flue is on your right.

#### By train

Alight at Watchet or Washford. Occasional tours run from Minehead. Visit [www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk](http://www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk) for times and details.

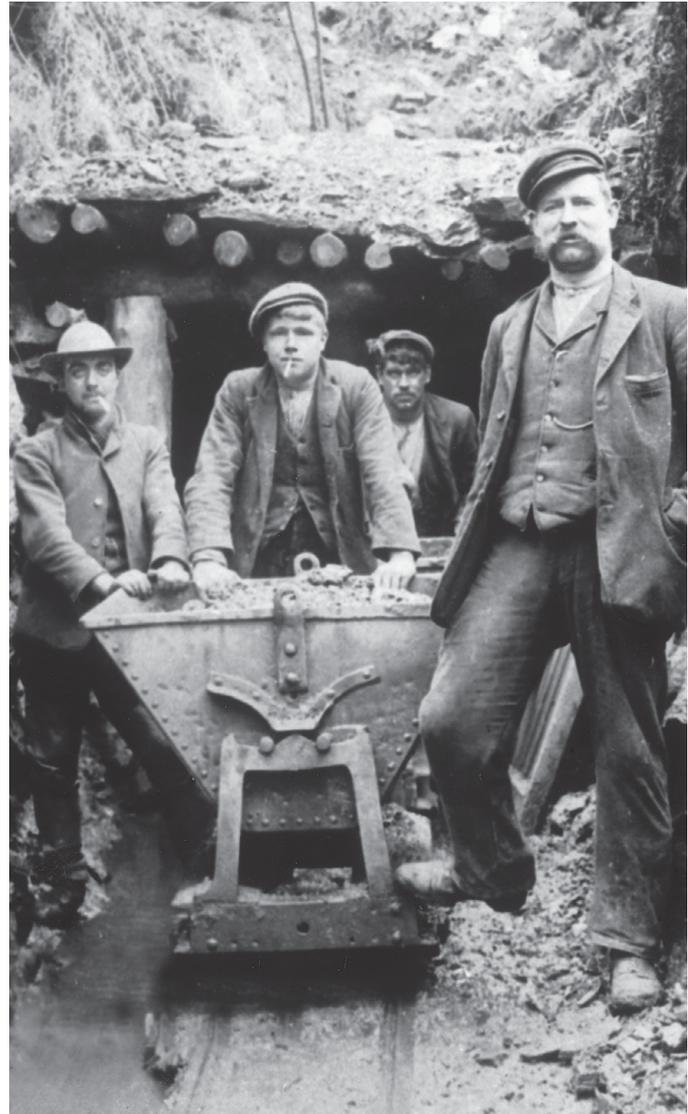
#### On foot

Many WSMR sites are accessible by foot following public rights of way. Ordnance Survey map OL9 covers Exmoor National Park, and includes the Brendon Hills and Watchet. Other maps are also available from most Tourist Information Centres.



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## The West Somerset Mineral Railway



A hidden heritage

A hidden heritage

# West Somerset Mineral Railway

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## An introduction to the Old Mineral Railway

Iron ore has been mined intermittently on the Brendon Hills for the past two thousand years, but it was not until the 1850s that the iron mines became part of a significant industrial enterprise. This was as a result of the Ebbw Vale Company, established sixty years earlier, developing the mines.

The West Somerset Mineral Railway was an 11 mile (18km) long railway constructed between 1857 and 1864 to transport iron ore from the Brendon Hills to the harbour at Watchet, for shipment to Newport in South Wales and finally by rail to one of the Ebbw Vale Company's smelting works.

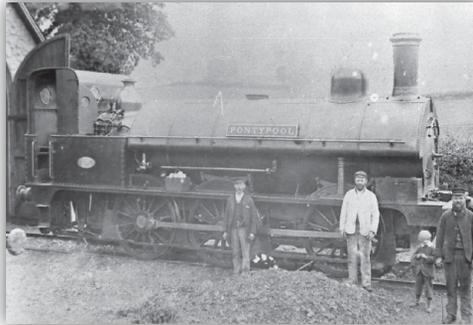
The ore found in the Brendon Hills was low in sulphur and phosphorus, and rich in manganese, which meant it was valuable for making Bessemer steel. The Bessemer process was the first inexpensive industrial process for the mass-production of steel.

By the 1870s, more than two hundred men from Somerset and Cornwall were employed in the mines and on the railway, and they formed new communities along the "Old Mineral Line". Although built specifically to transport ore, the railway was opened to passengers in 1865. This bold industrial venture had a profound effect on the rural landscape and local economy.

The disused railway has remained a reminder of Exmoor's industrial past for the last hundred years. In 2007 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the West Somerset Mineral Railway Project a grant to conserve key Mineral Line sites and improve public access.



The Incline, c. 1890. Photograph courtesy of the Tilley Collection.

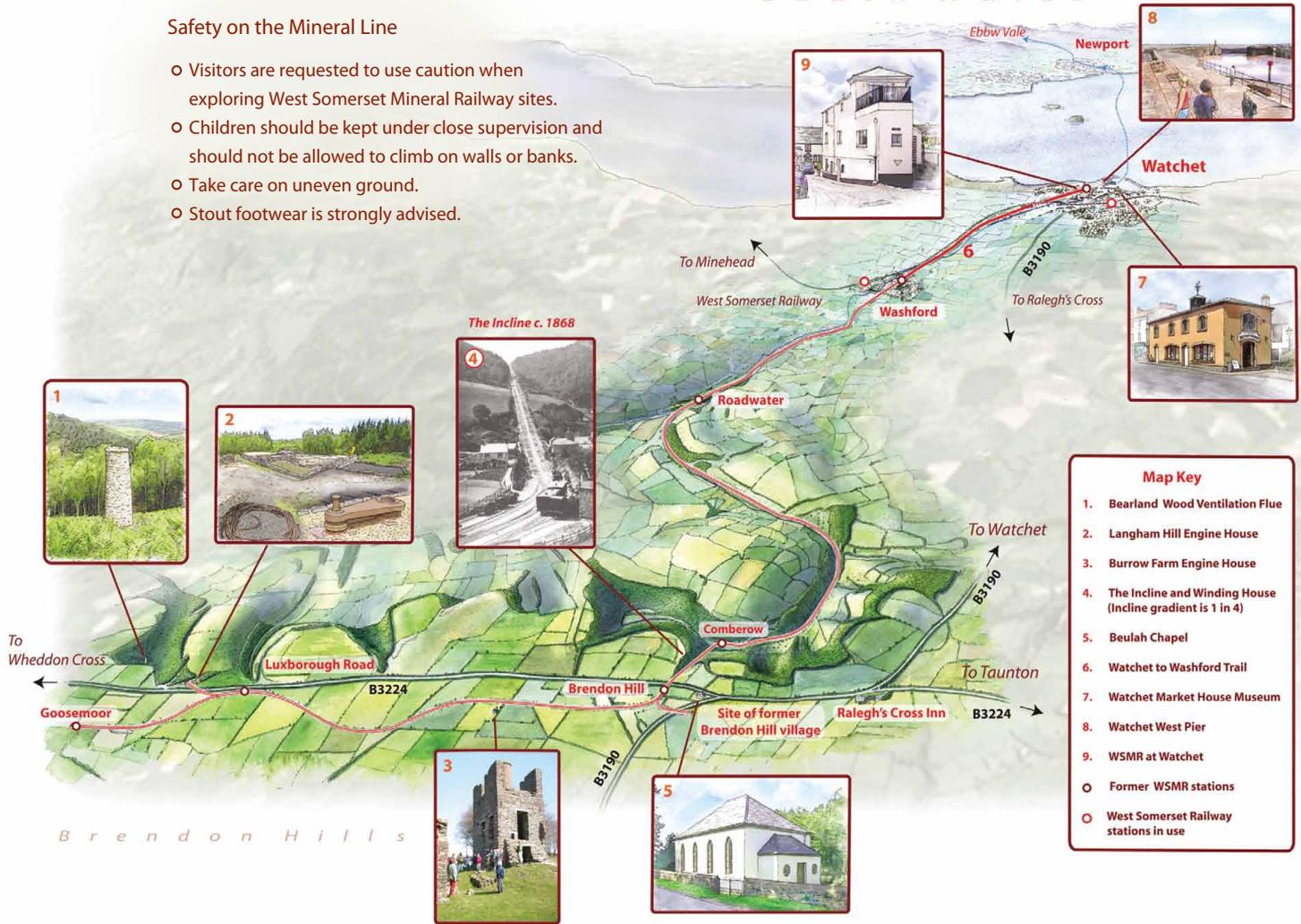


Pontypool outside Whitehall shed in Watchet, c. 1880.  
Photograph courtesy of Mike Jones.

Cover image: Miners at Timwood Adit during the Somerset Mineral Syndicate, c. 1908. Photograph courtesy of Mike Jones, photographer Bert Hole.

### Safety on the Mineral Line

- Visitors are requested to use caution when exploring West Somerset Mineral Railway sites.
- Children should be kept under close supervision and should not be allowed to climb on walls or banks.
- Take care on uneven ground.
- Stout footwear is strongly advised.



Map Key	
1.	Bearland Wood Ventilation Flue
2.	Langham Hill Engine House
3.	Burrow Farm Engine House
4.	The Incline and Winding House (Incline gradient is 1 in 4)
5.	Beulah Chapel
6.	Watchet to Washford Trail
7.	Watchet Market House Museum
8.	Watchet West Pier
9.	WSMR at Watchet
○	Former WSMR stations
○	West Somerset Railway stations in use



# West Somerset Mineral Railway

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## The West Somerset Mineral Railway

### FAQ

#### Is the railway being rebuilt?

The project received funding to conserve several important industrial structures associated with the West Somerset Mineral Railway. The track was dismantled in 1917 and many other remains of the railway are now on privately owned land; some people live in the former WSMR buildings, others have the route of the old line running through their gardens. It is not the intention of the project to open up the entire section of the railway or re-lay train tracks.

#### Can you go into the mines?

The project has focussed on sites above the ground. Due to dangerous conditions underground the former mine sites have been filled in and are not accessible to the public.

#### The West Somerset Mineral Railway Project

In 2007 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the West Somerset Mineral Railway Project a grant to conserve key Mineral Line sites and improve public access. For more information please visit [www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk](http://www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk).



Burrow Farm Engine House.  
Photographs courtesy of ENPA.





## Contacts

**West Somerset Mineral Railway** - visit [www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk](http://www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk) for further information about the Mineral Line, the Heritage Lottery funded project, a selection of images and educational material.

**Watchet Market House Museum** - is the ideal starting point for exploring the Mineral Line. For opening hours please visit [www.watchetmuseum.co.uk](http://www.watchetmuseum.co.uk).

**Exmoor National Park Centres** - provide informative displays, maps, publications and specialist knowledge to enhance your visit to Exmoor.

- Dunster 01643 821835
- Dulverton 01398 323841
- Lynmouth 01598 752509

Please check [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk) for more information about the Exmoor National Park Authority, and for opening hours of the National Park Centres.

**West Somerset Railway** - this railway connects several Mineral Line locations. Occasional tours run from Minehead. Visit [www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk](http://www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk) or call 01643 704996 for more information.

**Raleigh's Cross Inn** - is a sixteenth-century coaching inn situated a few miles from the remains of the West Somerset Mineral Railway on the Brendon Hills. To find out more please visit [www.raleghscross.co.uk](http://www.raleghscross.co.uk) or call 01984 640 343.

**Forestry Commission** - is owner of two key Mineral Line sites. For more information visit [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk).



Watchet Market House Museum. Photograph courtesy of EPNA.

 Large font versions of these leaflets are available to download from [www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk](http://www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk).



Individual leaflets giving detailed information about the sites listed below are available at National Park Centres, local Tourist Information Centres, Raleigh's Cross Inn, Watchet Market House Museum, and can be downloaded from [www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk](http://www.westsomersetmineralrailway.org.uk).

### Key

-  Wheelchair accessible
-  Pushchair accessible
-  Toilets
-  Car parking
-  Watchet Market House Museum
-  Watchet Town Council
-  West Somerset Railway
-  Somerset County Council
-  Scheduled monument
-  Exmoor National Park Authority
-  Forestry Commission
-  Information point

**Watchet** - is the ideal starting point for exploring the West Somerset Mineral Railway. Discover the harbour town of Watchet, see where iron ore was loaded onto ships bound for south Wales, and visit the Market House Museum.



**The Watchet to Washford Trail** - walk along the former track bed of the West Somerset Mineral Railway. The trail is a stroll on the flat of approximately 2 miles (3.2 km).



**The Incline and Winding House** - is a spectacular piece of Victorian engineering which took four years to build. It opened in 1861 to lower wagons of iron ore down a 1:4 slope to the valley below, where it was transported by rail to Watchet. Enjoy magnificent views across the Brendons to Wales, and explore the conserved Winding House. The Incline: OL9 Grid reference ST 023 344.



**Langham Engine House and Bearland Ventilation Flue**

**Chargot Woods** - is a peaceful place with a lively history. Forestry Commission trails will help you explore the industrial remains of a way of life that was difficult, dangerous, and short lived. The Langham Engine House trail is suitable for all abilities. Chargot Woods: OL9 Grid reference SS 975 355.



**Burrow Farm Engine House** - the remains of this Engine House were conserved by Exmoor National Park Authority in 1990.

The Engine House is now on privately owned land, and there is a permitted footpath to the remains of the Engine House.

Please note that visitors are not permitted during April, and no dogs are allowed on site at any time of the year. This site can be reached through the public rights of way network. Parking is on the grass verge before Naked Boy Stone: OL9 Grid reference ST 015 344.