

South Devon Railway (Exeter to Plymouth) Rail Chair of 1875. Teignmouth Old Quay

This is a rail chair normally used on standard gauge track work. However the South Devon Railway (SDR) was Broad Gauge and did not use them. So when this example was seen in Teignmouth & Shaldon Museum it did not seem to make sense – the Broad Gauge was converted to standard gauge long after in 1892.



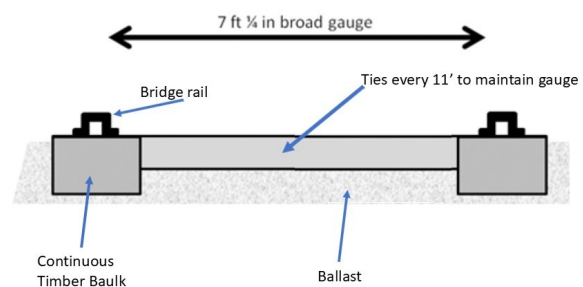
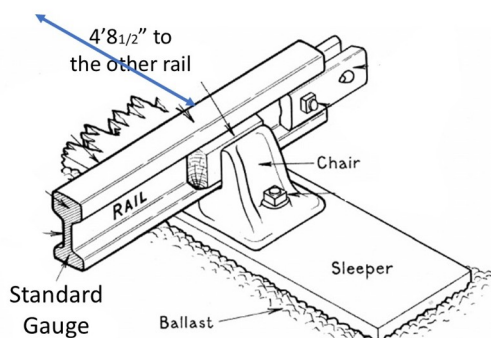
The reason, it turns out, is that cross sleepers with rail chairs holding the rail was much more economic to maintain than the longitudinal timber baulks and bridge rail of Brunel's Broad Gauge. So as time passed and as track renewals became necessary they were relaid with cross sleepers and rail chairs

but obviously still to the broad gauge. An example is Teignmouth Old Quay, when the sidings were lifted they were laid with chairs so maybe the Museum example comes from there. Another example is the St Ives Branch, opened in 1877, whilst Broad Gauge was laid new using cross sleepers and rail chairs.

For those not railway minded the Broad Gauge was 7'1/4" between the rails and the standard gauge was and still is 4'8 1/2".

The SDR was absorbed into the GWR in 1877 and the final Broad Gauge was converted to standard gauge in 1892.

The following thumb nails show the original Broad Gauge construction and the standard gauge construction:



Broad Gauge Track