

# Marking the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Roundstone Crossing Crash

**This is the story of what transpired on this fateful day on Wednesday 22 September 1965**



On September 22, 1965, at 09.31 the 08.47 Brighton to Portsmouth train smashed through the closed gates on the Roundstone level crossing bordering Angmering and East Preston and hit a Southdown double-decker bus on its way from Worthing towards Portsmouth.

There was thick fog in the area, but an official report concluded the crash resulted from human error, the signalman for the crossing opening the gates to a queue of road traffic, when he wrongly thought the Portsmouth train had already passed.

Diesel from the ruptured fuel tank of the bus caught fire as the train pushed it 54 yards along the track. Three women on the bus died in the flames and seven other passengers and the driver, Patrick Kiely, 56, of Worthing, were injured. No one on the train was injured.

The three who died were widows Dorothy Collins, 68, of Gorse Avenue, Worthing, and Molleen Barnard, 55, of Montrose Close, Goring, and Anne Orchard, 79, of Ferringham Lane, Ferring.

Newspaper accounts from the time tell of desperate attempts to reach the women, which were defeated by the heat from the blaze.

One woman on the lower deck, teacher Sheila Gigg, 45, from Worthing, had a narrow

escape when the train ploughed into the bus close to where she was sitting. With her clothing on fire, she leapt from the bus and rolled in wet nettles beside the track to put out the flames. She had been on her way to teach at the Convent of the Holy Family School in Littlehampton.

Col W. P. Reed carried out the official inquiry for the Ministry of Transport. In his report, published three months after the crash, he stated: "The bare facts are that the crossing keeper became confused over the state of rail traffic because a number of trains had been running late, saw a queue of road vehicles beginning to form when the gates had been closed for a little time for the Down train and, listening on the omnibus telephone circuit which connects a number of signal boxes, thought he heard the signalman at Goring tell the signalman at Angmering that the 08:47 hrs train was not in section. He then put his signals to the "On" position and opened the gates to road traffic.

"The bus was at the head of the queue and began to go over the crossing. In the meantime the train had passed the distant signal at clear and was approaching the crossing at some speed. Because of the fog the driver saw the home signal at danger at short range only and could not even reduce speed appreciably before running through the gates and hitting the bus which the train carried ahead for 54 yards, as already stated, before coming to rest."

Col Reed recommended a safer system of automatic half-barriers should be installed at the crossing.

