

Åseda's Railway History

Wexjö-Klafreström-Åsheda Railway

As early as 1865, Växjö got a railway line to the main line via Alvesta. The need for rail transport was great and they wanted to build a narrow-gauge railway between Växjö and Hultsfred with a further connection to Västervik. The first stage to Klavreström's mill was completed in 1895. It took almost two years to build the next stage of 16 km to Åseda. Here in the area there were large forest assets, sawmills and, among other things, Malmö Carpentry Factory. The railway was opened for traffic in 1902 under the company name WKÅJ Wexjö-Klafreström-Åsheda Railway.

Åsheda Railway Station

The railway station in Åseda was originally clad externally with dark red horizontal wooden panels with a folded metal roof. Åsheda was spelled Åseda on 22/10 1927. The first facade sign also stated that the station is 236 m above sea level and 404 km from Stockholm.

In 1956, an extensive reconstruction of the building was carried out. In addition to interior renovation, the roof and windows were replaced, wooden details at the eaves were removed and the entrance to the waiting hall was moved from the center to the left side. The facade was resurfaced and painted yellow. In 1989, SJ sold the station and the railway yard area to Uppvidinge municipality. Today the station is privately owned.

Växjö-Åseda-Hultsfred Railway

The railway widens and the continuation towards Hultsfred was started in 1909 and in 1911 the track to Virserum could be inaugurated. In 1917, the extension to Hultsfred was started and opened for traffic in December 1922 with the new name Växjö-Åseda-Hultsfred Railway (VÅHJ). It then became possible to travel all the way between Växjö and Västervik - a distance of almost 19 kilometres. The stretch Hultsfred – Västervik, which was also narrow gauge with the same gauge width of 891 mm, was completed as early as 1879. VÅHJ never recovered from the economic crisis of the 1920s and in 1941 the track was nationalized.

Narrow gauge railway 891 mm wide

Originally, it was intended that the railway between Växjö and Klavreström would have a gauge of 600 mm, but it was realized that this was not suitable. In the long-term planning, it was thought to extend the railway to Hultsfred, in order to connect there to the existing railway between Hultsfred and Västervik, which had a gauge of 891 mm. The track width of 891 mm is unique for Sweden as it was based on three Swedish feet. That is why these railways are called "tripod railways". Narrow track otherwise refers to all track widths that are less than 1435 mm, which is the width that counts as normal track.

The normal track Nässjö-Kalmar

The line was originally built in 1875 from Kalmar via Nybro and came to Sävsjöström in 1876. A large part of the transports were wooden goods to the port in Kalmar. The line from Sävsjöström to Åseda and on to Nässjö was opened in 1914.

A unique track cross between narrow gauge and standard gauge

The meeting of the two railways in Åseda meant that a railway crossing was built just west of the station under a road bridge. The former wooden bridge was replaced with an iron structure after the track crossing was put in place. This is the only place in Sweden's railway history where narrow gauge and standard gauge cross each other under a bridge. If you also consider that it was directly under a viaduct, you have to search far and wide in Europe and the world for something similar. The unique track width of 891 mm makes the search difficult. The track cross was demolished for safety reasons in 1993 in connection with the renovation of the normal track and has since been stored in the municipality's storage until it has now been moved to the Railway Park.

The railway station

In the station area, there were locomotive sheds with turntables for changing the direction of travel of the locomotives, both for the standard gauge and the narrow gauge. The narrow gauge turntable was placed in front of the locomotive shed doors. It was located between the two railway tracks to the west of the station. The locomotive sheds and turntable of the standard gauge lay to the east in the railway yard area. In front of the station building were four narrow-gauge tracks, two of which were torn up beginning in 1992. The narrow-gauge turntable was removed in 1993 and moved to its current location in Järnvägsparken. The traffic intensity within the railway yard was perhaps at its highest in the 1940s. There were transfer ramps, loading docks, traverses and several knitting tracks, e.g. eastwards to the then Glasbruk and Åsedahus. Here there was an expedition and staff building for track masters, the garden department and workshops for carpenters and television repairers. At the most, 50 people have during certain periods worked on various tasks in the station area.

Warehouse

Next to the two railway tracks between the viaduct and the station was a large warehouse that received, redistributed goods between the two railways and forwarded it. The goods warehouse was built when the standard gauge was added in 1914 and demolished in 1982.

The final phase of the railway era

In 1970, the narrow gauge between Växjö and Västervik was the last of SJ's narrow gauge lines with passenger traffic. This lasted until 1984. Freight traffic continued on some routes, but in 1986 the SJ era was definitely over. Instead of tearing up the railway, SJ chose the same year to sell the narrow gauge between Växjö and Västervik to the newly formed limited company Växjö-Hultsfred-Västerviks Järnväg (VHVJ). The track was now privately owned again. Tourist traffic was started and for a period also school trains. When VHVJ had payment difficulties, the company went bankrupt in 1992 and the track was divided among different owners. Småländska Smalspåret AB (SMAB) took over the traffic on the Växjö-Hultsfred section. SMAB went into liquidation and in 2000 was forced to sell the Sandsbro-Åseda railroad to Uppvidinge municipality, which tore up the track the following year. When SJ dismantled the narrow gauge, however, the standard gauge Nässjö-Åseda was upgraded. Passenger traffic on the line was managed by Krösatågstrafiken, while freight traffic was closed by SJ in 1990. When the county traffic in Jönköping and Kronoberg no longer wanted to spend any money on passenger traffic, it was discontinued in 2002. The Norwegian Railways closed the route to traffic in 2006. The track has later been torn up on some sections but is still partly left. The railway era, which for more than 100 years contributed to developing Åseda into a vibrant commercial and industrial community that created development and prosperity in Åseda, was now at an end.