

= Flekkefjord Line =

The Flekkefjord Line (Norwegian : Flekkefjordbanen) is a 17 @. @ 1 @-@ kilometre (10 @. @ 6 mi) abandoned branch line to the Sørland Line . It ran between Sira and Flekkefjord in Vest @-@ Agder , Norway . The only current activity on the line is tourist draisines . The station buildings along the line were designed by the architect Paul Armin Due ? these have all been demolished .

The line opened in 1904 as a 64 @-@ kilometre (40 mi) extension of the narrow gauge Jæren Line . It was planned as the first step of a main line along the South Coast . At Flekkefjord , there was steam ship connection , onwards to Oslo . In 1941 , the line was converted to standard gauge , and in 1944 the Sørland Line was completed . The western part of the Flekkefjord Line was integrated into it , while the remaining section became the branch line that kept the name Flekkefjord Line . During the 1940s , steam locomotive @-@ hauled trains were replaced by railcars . Following the declining traffic , in part due to the slow speeds caused by the line 's narrow profile , the line was closed , with the last trains running in 1990 .

= = History = =

= = = Construction = = =

The first committee that looked into the possibility of a railway to Flekkefjord was created in 1875 . After the completion of Jæren Line from Stavanger to Egersund , in 1878 , proposals were made to build an extension westwards along the coast , that eventually would reach Oslo . The first part of what was named the Vestland Line was passed by Parliament in 1894 , and would run from Egersund , via Sira , to Flekkefjord . The initial proposal proposed that the line would eventually continue onwards via Mandal to Kristiansand . The decision to build the line was taken by the Parliament of Norway in 1894 . Construction started in 1896 , and was originally planned to be completed by 1902 . However , delays prevented the line from being brought into use before 1 November 1904 . The line was built by the Norwegian State Railways (NSB) and was 64 km (40 mi) long .

The coast between Egersund and Flekkefjord would give a very difficult route to build , so it was decided to build a more inland line . Like the Jæren Line , and most railways being built at the time , the Flekkefjord Line was built in 1 @, @ 067 mm (3 ft 6 in) narrow gauge . Both telephone and telegraph cables were laid along the line . Along the section from Sira to Flekkefjord , there were many vertical cliffs straight into the fjord , forcing 5 @. @ 4 km (3 @. @ 4 mi) , or 38 percent , of the line to be built in tunnels . Of the whole length from Egersund to Flekkefjord , there are 46 tunnels , totaling 8 @. @ 8 km (5 @. @ 5 mi) . The most prominent was Ravnejuret Tunnel which is 1 @, @ 174 m (3 @, @ 852 ft) long . Just before Flekkefjord , a 71 @-@ metre (233 ft) bridge was built that crosses Selurelva ; it was a reused bridge from the Voss Line . In total , about 12 % of the line consisted of tunnels . Francis Hagerup , when delivering the line 's opening speech , remarked that no other railway had until then been more difficult to construct .

All the stations along the line were designed by Paul Armin Due , with all but the terminal station built in wood . Flekkefjord Station was built as a three @-@ story brick building in Art Nouveau . In addition , there was construction a depot and a wharf at Flekkefjord . Passengers could transfer to steam ship services that operated eastwards along the south coast towards Oslo .

= = = Pre @-@ war operations = = =

The first part of the line to open for temporary operation was between Flekkefjord and Moi on 1 October 1904 . For the official opening , the town of Flekkefjord was adorned with Norwegian flags . A train departed to Egersund on 31 October 1904 with several notable passengers : Prime Minister Francis Hagerup , State Railways director Elias Sunde and board member Sven Aarrestad , director of traffic Jens Christian Mellbye , Flekkefjord 's mayor and city council as well as other mayors of the

district . Festivities continued on the next day , when the train returned from Egersund to Flekkefjord .

Initially there were four services in each direction each day , with three services on holy days . The train that connected with the steam ship would wait up to 45 minutes in case of delays , to allow connection . Until 1927 , the routes remained the same . That year , the Kragerø Line opened , and it became possible to take a night train from Oslo to Kragerø , continue by bus to Flekkefjord , and be in Stavanger the following afternoon . Travel time was further reduced when the Sørland Line was extended to Arendal in 1935 . The initial rolling stock was from the Voss Line , and some of the bridges and track was from that line too . The Voss Line was being upgraded to 25 @-@ kilogram (55 lb) rail tracks , and 25 km (16 mi) of 17 kg (37 lb) track was used on the Flekkefjord Line .

Until 1927 , all trains were operated with steam locomotives . NSB introduced the first diesel multiple unit with the introduction of " lightning trains " that corresponded with coach services that connected with the Kragerø Line . The first were Class 14 railcars . These reduced travel time from Flekkefjord to Stavanger by 50 minutes to 3 hours 15 minutes . In addition to passengers , major cargo were herring and lumber .

= = = Connecting the coast = = =

In 1923 , it was decided by parliament that the Sørland Line , that would connect Oslo , Kristiansand and Stavanger , would follow an inner route . The section of the Flekkefjord Line from Egersund to Sira would become part of that line , while the eastern 17 @.@ 1 km (10 @.@ 6 mi) from Sira to Flekkefjord would become a branch line , retaining the Flekkefjord Line name . Since the Sørland Line needed to be built from the east , construction along the Flekkefjord Line did not start until 1940 . After the German occupation of Norway during World War II , the German occupation forces were rebuilding the narrow gauge railways to standard gauge . In 1940 ? 41 , the Flekkefjord and Jæren Lines were rebuilt to dual gauge . Not until 1944 was the Flekkefjord Line only standard gauge .

Due to limited funds , and unlike the rest of the Jæren Line , the profile of the Flekkefjord Line was not changed during the conversion of gauge . This gave a speed limit of 40 kilometres per hour (25 mph) , and creative solutions such as lowering height of the ballast by 20 cm (7 @.@ 9 in) . The route from Egersund to Sira received a better upgrade , since it was to become part of the main line through Southern Norway . The route between Sira and Sirnes was completely rebuilt . This gave severe limits to the use of the section between Flekkefjord and Sirnes ; most classes of trains could not run on the line , as were freight trains .

= = = Post @-@ war operations = = =

After the line had been relegated to a branch line , traffic fell considerably . Another factor was car traffic , which did not exist in Flekkefjord until 1918 , but thereafter became widespread . After the war , Class 20 steam locomotives were used on the line . During the 1940 , several railcars of Class 87 were taken into use , and soon all passenger trains were operated using such units . From 1956 to 1966 , also Class 86 units were used on the line , but the narrow profile of the tunnels made operations problematic . Class 87 remained in service until 1981 , when used Class 89 units were bought from Sweden . At first , two Y7 units were brought to Norway on 23 January and taken into service on 24 February . After they proved to work well , NSB bought them for 95 @,@ 000 Swedish kronor plus freight . Two more units were bought in 1986 .

= = = Closing = = =

The line had major limitations on speed , and also served the " wrong direction " , heading westwards into less populated areas instead of the populated parts of Agder in the east . Major investments would be needed to upgrade the line to a suitable speed , and through the 1970s this became an important issue of debate . On the other hand , the line had among the highest ridership

of the branch lines , with 120 @, @ 000 passengers per year , which was for instance 50 % higher than the Arendal Line , which was not closed . However , parliament decided to close the line , along with several other branch lines , in 1988 , with effect from 1990 . The last scheduled train ran on 31 December 1990 .

There were plans to establish private operations along the line . Continental Railway Systems was established by Rasmus Surdal . The company would be allowed to use the rolling stock and infrastructure , and two of the trains were painted white . However , it was not possible for the company to get the necessary bank surety demanded by NSB , and nothing came of the plans .

The line has been suggested preserved as a cultural heritage , since it represents one of very few railways with the original narrow gauge profile intact . However , all stations have been demolished ; Flekkefjord in 1970 , Sirnes in 1977 and Flikkeid in 1988 . The organization Friends of the Flekkefjord Line offer rental of draisines for tourists since the closure of the line , and a round trip from Flekkefjord to Bakkekleivi just outside Sira takes about three hours . However , the Norwegian National Rail Administration have since banned the operation of draisines until the line is fully fenced in .