



## **Ransomes & Rapier 45-Ton Breakdown Crane 1561S**

Steam breakdown crane 1561S was built as a wartime emergency crane and delivered to the Southern Railway at Guildford in August 1940. An unusual feature of the crane is that it is fitted with Walschaert's Valve Gear rather than a normal link motion.

Although full details of how it was used are not available, two Southern Railway cranes (1651S and 1560S) along with LNER crane 941600 were sent to Martin Mill Military Railway near Dover. Between June 1940 and January 1941, the cranes were used to help construct two giant 14" cross-channel guns, "Winnie" and "Pooh". In order to change the barrel on one of these guns, all three cranes were required. The line was worked exclusively by diesel locomotives requisitioned from the LMS and Southern Railway as smoke from a steam locomotive would have been visible from across the channel.



1561S returned to the Southern Railway at Guildford after the war. In 1950, it was transferred to Ashford where it remained until 1966. Its next home was Eastleigh and it was later based at Chart Leacon, Brighton and Stewart's Lane. Under British Railways it was renumbered S1561 then DS1561. It later became ADRR95210 under the CEPS numbering system.



Along with ADRR95209 (now scrapped) both cranes were withdrawn from British Rail service at Stewart's Lane in early 1989. By the end of the year, they had both been moved to Swindon.

### **Ransomes & Rapier**

Robert Ransome started in Ipswich as a manufacturer of ploughshares. From there, it diversified into iron bridges and different types of railway equipment. In 1849, the factory was moved to

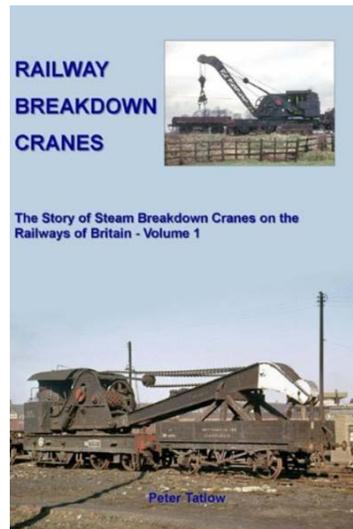
alongside the River Orwell where it became known as the Orwell Works with over 1,000 employees.

From 1869, the railway side of the business became Ransomes & Rapier. This was based at Waterside Works, opposite the original Orwell Works. Amongst other products, the company manufactured two locomotives and much of the equipment for the first railway in China.

Breakdown cranes were an important part of the business. The company's achievements included, in 1904, a relieving bogie system for reducing loading on breakdown crane axles. In 1908, the company built the first heavy, long jib breakdown crane from which all other evolved until the mid-1970s.

### More Information

- **Kent History Forum** - [www.kenthistoryforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=1542.0](http://www.kenthistoryforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=1542.0)
- **Breakdown Crane Association** – [www.bdca.org.uk](http://www.bdca.org.uk)



Railway Breakdown Cranes by Peter Tatlow available from the Swanage Railway Shop or via our Web site.

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All photographs courtesy Martin Payne