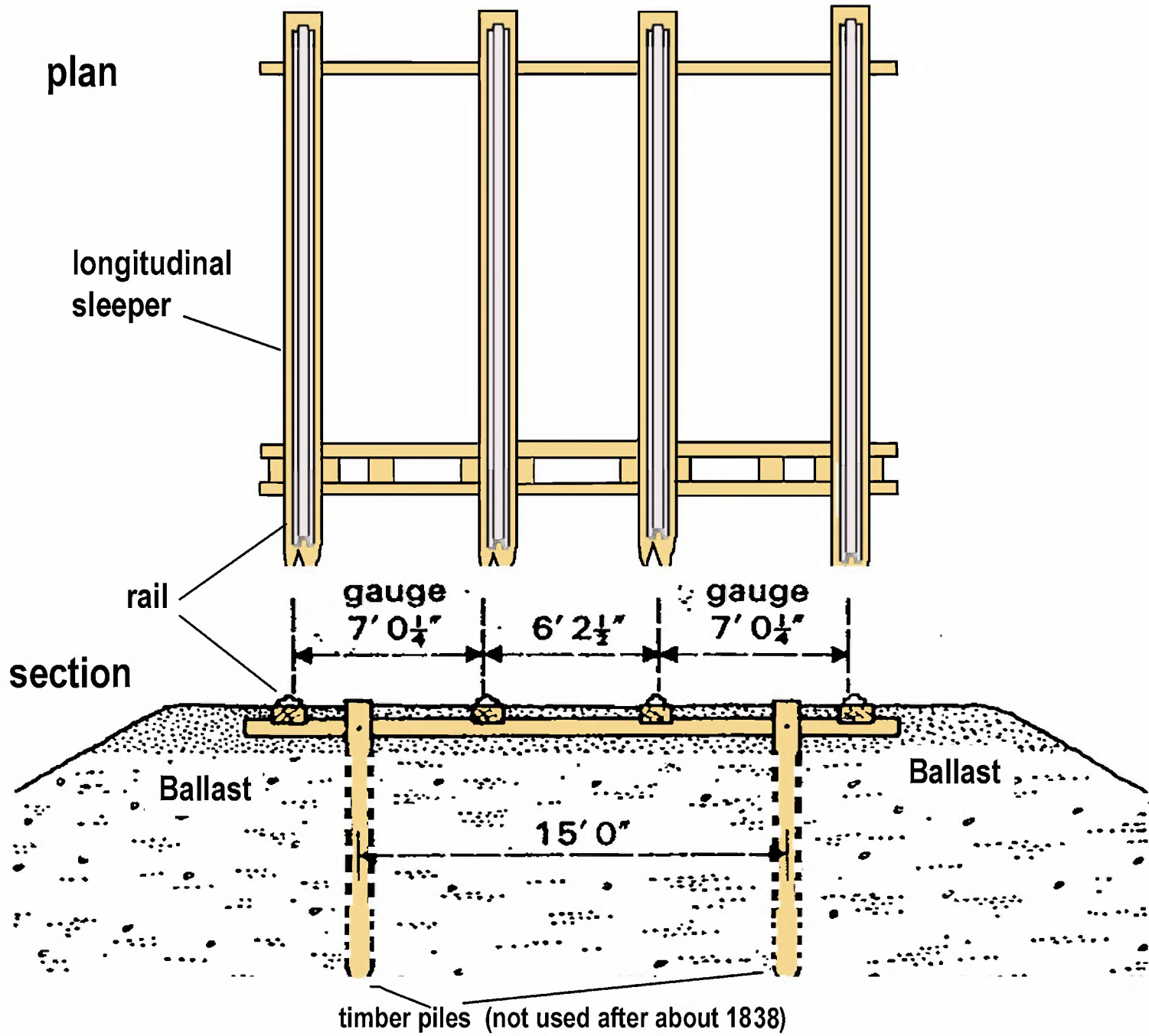
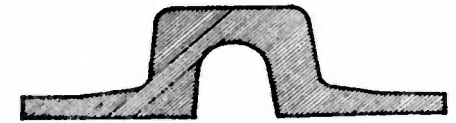


Brunel's 7 foot Broad Gauge Track



Early solid rail section (replaced by the bridge section shown below)



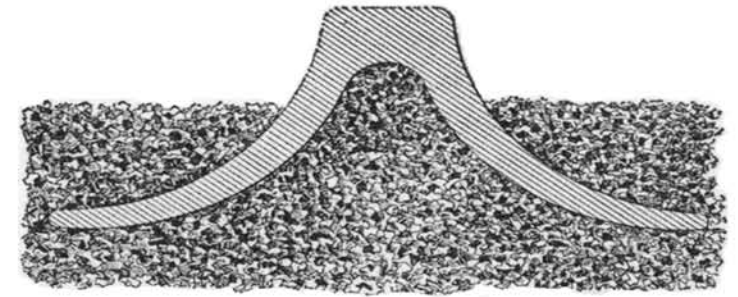
Section of Bridge rail used extensively on the Broad Gauge system

Barlow Rails

Barlow Rails were the invention of William Henry Barlow of the Midland Railway who also designed the roof of St Pancras Station. They were sufficiently wide that they could be laid directly onto ballast without the need for sleepers. Brunel was persuaded to use them for some lines in South Wales but there were technical problems and so were soon replaced.

The redundant rails found uses all over the south west and some reached the Stroud and Chalford area.

They were often used in pairs as gate posts as shown here at the lane just across the tracks from the Stroud Goods Shed at Stroud Station (Cheapside car park).



Section of Barlow rail



Other types of Rail (Schematic)

A very common type of rail used on standard gauge (4ft 8½in) railways up to the mid 20th century was bullhead rail (below). This had a symmetric cross-section and the intention was to turn over the rails when the running surface was worn and run on what had been the lower surface. However the lower surface also tended to wear (in the chairs) and so often no advantage was gained.



Most of the rails used today are flat bottomed as shown below. They are normally welded into very long lengths which overcomes the technical problems of having many short lengths bolted together.

