

ENGLISH HERITAGE

HAMPTON COURT STATION
HAMPTON COURT WAY
EAST MOLESEY
SURREY

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Research and Analysis, London Section
Reports and Papers B/020/2003
2003

NATURE OF REPORT

A request was received from the Listing Team of English Heritage for information on Hampton Court Station, Hampton Court Way, East Molesey, Surrey, to assist with an assessment for listing.

Origin of Research Request:	Roger Bowdler (Listing Team)
Date of Request:	July 2003
Date of Report:	November 2003

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Hampton Court Station, Hampton Court Way, East Molesey, Surrey

Background

Queen Victoria opened Hampton Court Palace free to the public in November 1838. The palace quickly became a popular place of excursion for Londoners. With visitor numbers of over 80,000 in the first year of opening, Hampton Court soon attracted the interest of the railway companies.¹ The London and South Western Railway main line from London Nine Elms (later extended to Waterloo) to Southampton (opened in 1840), passed within two miles of the palace. The LSWR chairman, W.J. Chaplin, thought the construction of a branch line to Hampton Court “will afford a fresh means of cheap and legitimate recreation to the poorer classes”.² Land for Hampton Court Station was purchased in May 1846, and an act for the construction of the 1 ½ mile line was passed in July 1846.³ Work on the scheme seems to have been delayed while the LSWR worked on plans to extend their main line to Windsor. It was not until July 1847 the directors resolved that “the works on the Hampton Court Branch...be placed under contract without delay”.⁴

The contract for the construction of the line was won by Thomas Brassey.⁵ Described in *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History* as “the greatest railway contractor of his generation”, Brassey worked in association with the equally illustrious engineer Joseph Locke, who was responsible for the construction of many of the LSWR lines, and Sir William Tite, architect to the LSWR from 1838 to 1871.⁶ From the LSWR minutes it is clear that all three men were simultaneously working on other LSWR suburban and main line projects throughout the 1840s and 50s. Indeed, Locke, Brassey and Tite became one of the greatest partnerships in the history of British rail, working together on the Lancaster & Carlisle, Caledonian, and Scottish Railways, as well as working abroad on the line between Paris and Le Havre.⁷

Brassey received payments of £1422 (September 1848), £358.15.7 (January 1850), and £1000 (February 1850) for his work on the Hampton Court Branch Line. A Mr Nicholson was contracted to construct Hampton Court Station and his work was supervised by Tite, who certified that a payment of £1500 should be made to Nicholson “for the Station Works at Hampton Court” on 8 February 1849.⁸ Construction expenditure for the line was fixed by the directors at £2000 a month in September 1848. On 12 January 1849 Locke reported to the directors that the line would be ready to open on 1 February 1849.⁹ The Inspector for the Railway Commission reported on 30 January that “the line is in such a condition that I am

¹ Nash, *Hampton Court*, 192.

² Williams, *The London & South Western Railway*, Vol. I, 181.

³ PRO Rail 411/403; Williams, vol I, 181.

⁴ PRO RAIL 411/003

⁵ 14 January 1848, PRO Rail 411/003.

⁶ See Simmons and Biddle eds., *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, 43, 275, 515.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁸ PRO RAIL 411/174; Nicholson was paid a further £1460.0.10 in March 1850.

⁹ PRO RAIL 411/003

aware of nothing affecting the safety of the public to prevent its being opened for traffic..." and the Hampton Court Branch Line was opened on schedule.¹⁰

Hampton Court Station

On 3 February 1849 *The Illustrated London News* published a drawing of the new station, accompanied by a description, which seemed to make clear that this branch line had been built solely to facilitate sightseeing at the palace:

This holiday railway is now completed and was opened for traffic on Thursday....It consists nearly of one continuous embankment, eighteen feet in height, graduating from the main line until it crosses the river Mole, and reaches level ground close to the foot of Hampton Bridge.

Our view shows the Hampton Station, a not unpicturesque structure in the old English style, of deep red brick, with stone dressings. Thence across the bridge to the palace is less than five minutes' walk; so that notwithstanding several stoppages, you may reach Hampton-Court from Waterloo station in less than three-quarters of an hour.

This new branch is expected to be a lucrative addition to the main line, since it appears, from the Government returns, that 178,000 persons annually visit Hampton-Court Palace. There are to be five trains a day from Waterloo Station, and an equal number back, including one parliamentary or penny-a-mile train....¹¹

The line did prove to be quite popular with tourists, annual visitor numbers reaching 208,374 in 1850 and jumping sharply to 325,774 in 1851, when millions of people travelled to London for the Great Exhibition.¹²

The Illustrated London News image, apparently of the station viewed from the palace side of the river, shows a small building, its steep, pitched roof with a ridge lantern and buttressed walls (fig 1). A train and platform can be seen to the back and left of the building. The design is in keeping with Tite's Tudor Gothic railway style, which he employed for a number of stations built for the LSWR, the best example being Windsor Station (1851) (fig 2). Gordon Biddle, in his book *Victorian Stations*, describes this structure as being a goods warehouse, quite separate from the station building.¹³ As payments for work on Hampton Court Station were still being made to the contractor Mr. Nicholson in March and June of 1850, it is quite possible that the station building was not actually completed until well after the line opened in February 1849. Therefore, it is equally possible that *The Illustrated London News* article could have mistakenly referred to the goods warehouse as the station. It is also feasible that if this early structure was indeed a warehouse, it may have been

¹⁰ PRO MT/6/7/10

¹¹ *The Illustrated London News*, 3 February 1849, 75.

¹² PRO WORK/19/192

¹³ Biddle, *Victorian Stations*, 66.

used temporarily as the station before the main building was completed. Certainly, it bears little relation to the Hampton Court Station we see today.

A partial view of the station appeared in *The Illustrated London News* on 1 October 1864, in an engraving of Hampton Court old bridge (a new bridge was then under construction) (fig 3). This showed a much grander building, in a Jacobethan style, consisting of a rectangular block (presumably) in brick with stone dressings, two stories high, with projecting end bays crowned by Dutch gables. This building remains today largely intact, apart from some possible window alterations and the addition of a single storey extension and screen wall (figs 4,5,6). The ordnance survey map of 1868, shows the outline of this building (with the extension) on the west side of the tracks, and another structure with buttresses to the east linked by track to a turntable (fig.7). This suggests that the eastern building is the structure illustrated in 1849, and its association with the turntable would indicate that it was some sort of warehouse or train shed, rather than a passenger station.¹⁴

It has been suggested that the choice of style and materials for Hampton Court Station was influenced by the Office of Works, who required that the station be in keeping with the architecture of the palace.¹⁵ However, no references to the station or its style were found in the Office of Works files at the PRO.

No descriptions or plans of Hampton Court Station survive in the LSWR archives at the PRO, and it is therefore impossible to ascertain beyond a shadow of a doubt that the surviving station is the original station, and that it was designed by Sir William Tite. A drawing of the station of c.1888 survives in the Network Rail archives, and this may provide further information.¹⁶ However, the LSWR minutes clearly show that Tite was involved in the construction of the station, and as he was working for the LSWR until at least 1871, it would seem likely that any building built before that date would have been to his designs.

Later Alterations to Hampton Court Station

While the LSWR archives say almost nothing about the station building itself, they do shed some light on alterations made to the platforms and the station surroundings. In April 1849 the Way Works and Land Committee of the LSWR ordered that a turntable be installed at Hampton Court Station. The next month an approach road to the station was constructed, the platform length was extended by 100 yards and a fence added around it.¹⁷ In June the committee was discussing the construction of a carriage shed and coal pens, although neither seem to have been built immediately.¹⁸ A coal depot appears on the 1868 ordnance survey, while a wharf on the riverbank had been linked to the tracks by 1894 (fig. 8).

¹⁴ This building was labelled as a goods shed on the 1956-7 OS map.

¹⁵ Sheaf and Howe, *Hampton and Teddington Past*, 63.

¹⁶ A number of requests were made to see this drawing, but all were unsuccessful.

¹⁷ PRO RAIL 411/174

¹⁸ PRO RAIL 411/174

Various improvements to the station were undertaken between 1897 and 1899, to facilitate growing numbers of visitors to both the palace and the nearby Hurst Park racecourse.¹⁹ By August 1899, when the Railway Department of the Board of Trade made a report on the station, a new platform and verandah had been added, "...the lines have been rearranged, the signalling has been revised, and a bridge, with flood openings, over the River Mole, has been constructed."²⁰ It seems likely that this report refers to the verandah, with elegant columnettes, that survives (fig.9).

The station and its environs underwent further alterations in the 20th century. Electrified services were extended to Hampton Court in 1916, and a new road layout and bridge were completed in the 1930s. Other changes have included the addition of the screen wall and entrances along the north side of the site, and the disappearance of the riverside wharf (later the site of a pub, now demolished). The demolition of the goods shed, presumably to make way for the car park, occurred sometime between 1957 and 1965.²¹ In recent years, windows on ground floor have been damaged by the clumsy insertion of a shopfront into the western façade (fig. 10).

Conclusion

While there is a slight possibility that the station we see today may not be the first station built on the site, the evidence does point to Sir William Tite as the architect. Certainly, the Hampton Court Branch Line and station are historically important as an example of the partnership of Brassey, Locke and Tite, three of the best known and most successful figures in British railway history. It is also an early example of a "sightseeing" station, initially built for the sole purpose of improving visitor access to the royal palace. While it has suffered from neglect in recent years, it is a grand and substantial building, the design of which clearly seems to have been influenced by its close proximity to the palace. In comparison to other LSWR and Tite listed railway buildings (Barnes and Kew Bridge Stations) near London, Hampton Court Station is of equal quality, and it may be argued that it is of higher architectural and historical interest.

¹⁹ Faulkner and Williams, 45.

²⁰ Longstaff-Gowan and Knox, 10; PRO MT/6/919/2.

²¹ See 1956-7 and 1965 OS maps.

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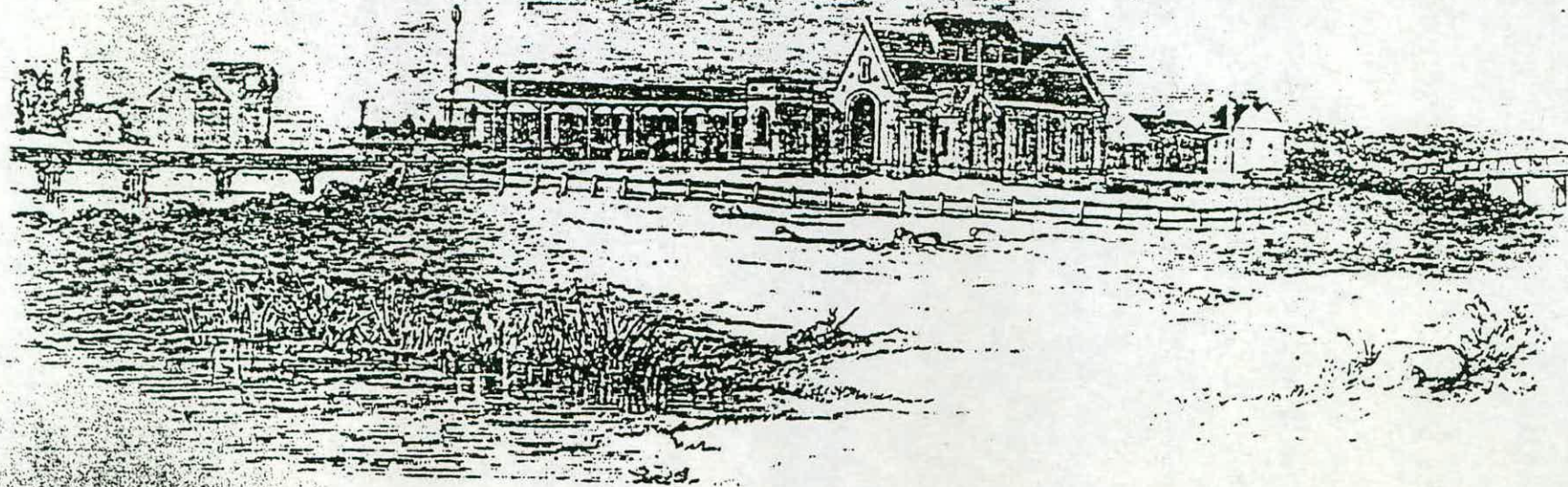
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Fig. 1

1849



685 The opening of Hampton Court Station; wood-engraving, 1849.

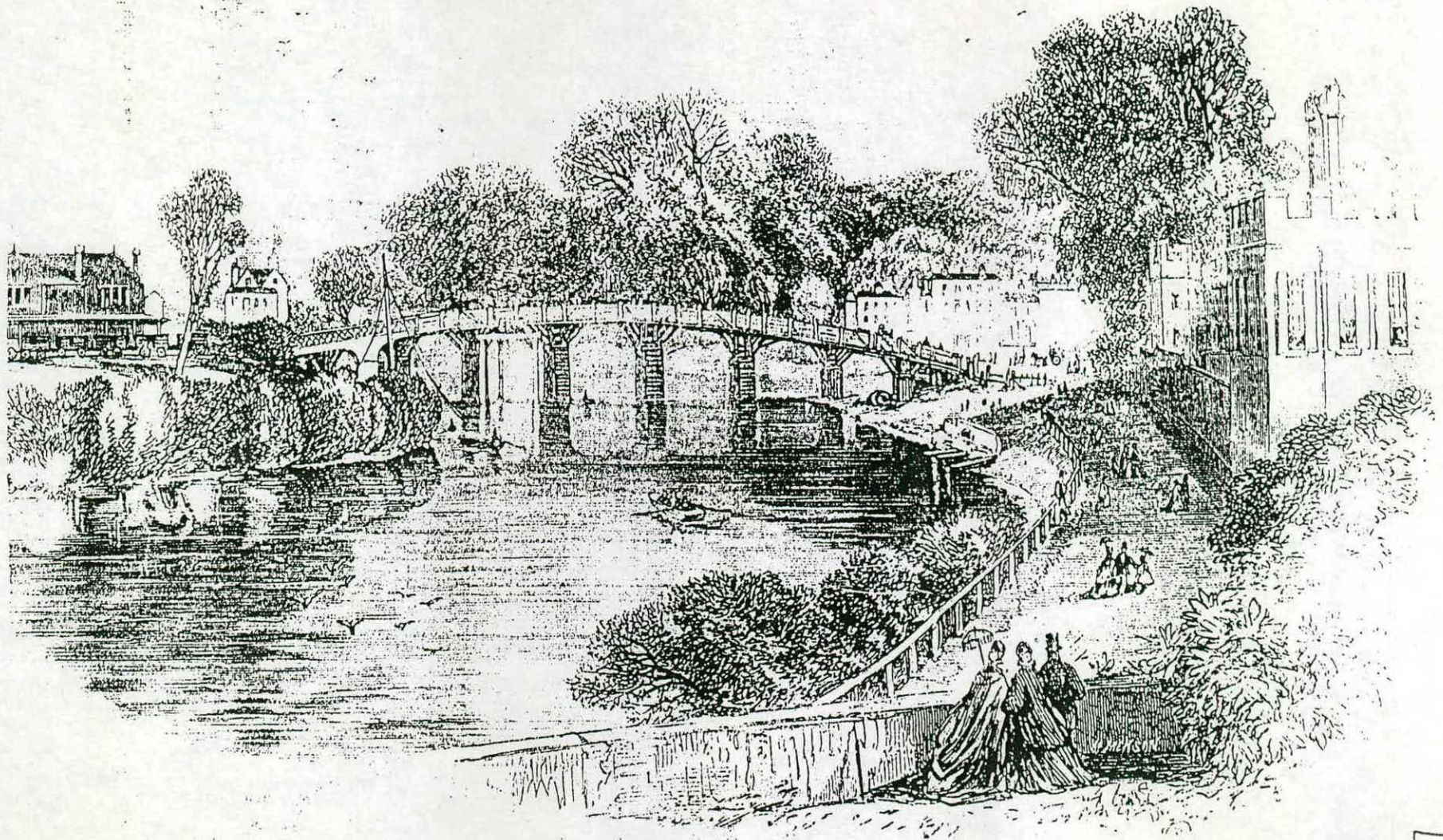
from The Illustrated London News 3 February 1849, p. 76.

Windsor Station. from Gordon Biddle,
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fig. 2



From The Illustrated London News
1 October 1864 (Supplement), p. 371



HAMPTON COURT OLD BRIDGE.—SEE NEXT PAGE.

Fig. 3



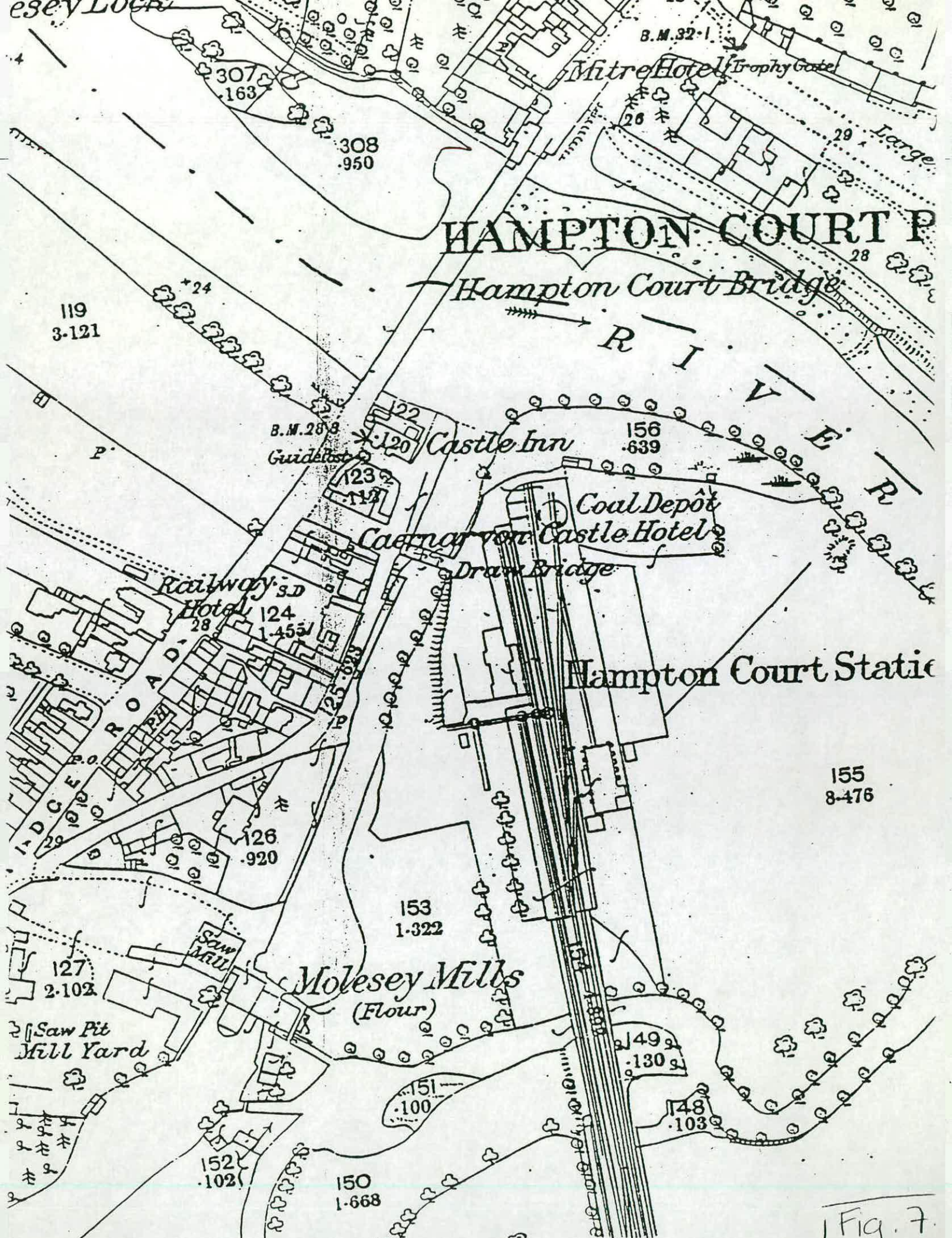
fig. 4 west elevation of Hampton Court Station



fig. 5 East elevation of Hampton Court Station

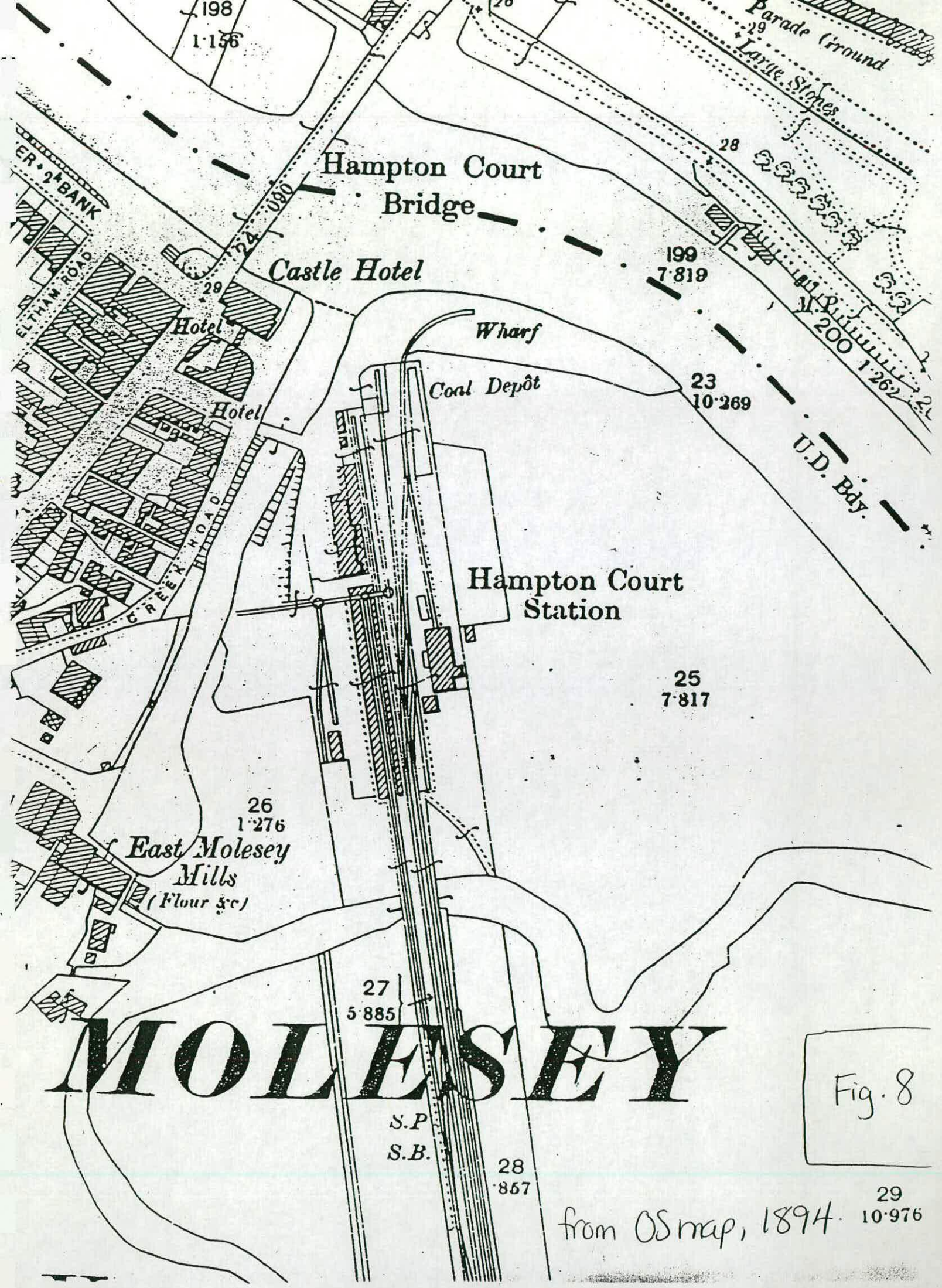


Fig. 6 Screen wall and entrance at north end of Hampton Court Station.



from OS map, 1868.

Fig. 7.



198
1-156

Hampton Court
Bridge

Castle Hotel

199
7-819

Hotel

Wharf

Coal Depot

23
10-269

Hotel

Hampton Court
Station

25
7-817

26
1-276

East Molesey
Mills
(Flour &c)

27
5-885

MOLESEY

S.P.
S.B.

28
857

Fig. 8

from OS map, 1894. 29
10-976



Fig. 9 Verandah at Hampton Court Station.



fig. 10 Detail of storefront and windows
on west elevation of Hampton
Court Station.