

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-WEST LONDON

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At the height of the Railway Age in England, it was difficult to find any place reasonably claiming to be a town which lay as far as ten miles from a railway.¹ In the industrial districts and close to the big cities, railway lines figured prominently on the map and in the landscape, crossing and recrossing one another, sometimes with curves and junctions connecting them, sometimes without. An area map of south-west London (or, historically, north-east Surrey) displays, as all suburban districts used to do, a net work of railways, but one that is unusual in two respects: there is a considerable hole in the centre of the web, the area of Putney Heath, Wimbledon Common, and Richmond Park, that railways never penetrated – though not for want of trying; and, with only trifling exceptions, all the lines that were built are still carrying passengers today.

To establish the chronology of the events, and some non-events, which led to the creation of the lines shown on the map is a necessary preliminary to understanding how the railway map came to look as it did; but one needs to take the matter farther, not concentrating simply on what the railway *was*, but trying to discover *why* it was located precisely where it was, and what it *did*.

Railways were built in particular pieces of territory either because their promoters expected to carry traffic arising within that territory, or because they had to pass that way in order to get somewhere else. (There were also lines built to loop round congested areas, and to make connections; and there were lines promoted, and even

built, just to be a nuisance.) Broadly, however, in origin railways were either local lines or main lines; though as time went on parts of main lines became important local carriers too, and the original distinction of purpose was lost. Still, the broad distinction is a useful one. London's first two local railways, the London & Greenwich (London's first railway of all) and the London & Blackwall, originally looked only to traffic along the line between their termini (with, in the Blackwall's case, a valuable catchment from the River Thames steamboats serving Blackwall Pier).² But Harrow would not have had a railway station in 1837 if that rural parish had not happened to be on the route selected to link London with Birmingham; nor, to come to our district, would Wimbledon in 1838 if it had not been on the Southampton line. Neither of these stations lay particularly close to its parish centre – a long mile away at Harrow, a short but hilly mile at Wimbledon; but both of them were closer to the places they were named after than the station named Kingston, farther down the Southampton railway, which was getting on for two miles from its town.

This London & Southampton Railway was the first true railway to come into the area covered by the south-west London map (Fig. 1), and after it had become the London & South Western it proceeded to construct, or be concerned in some way with, every one of the railways that was built. But first brief mention must be made of two curiosities from the pre-historic age of railways. The Surrey Iron Railway of 1801 remains noteworthy as the first pub-

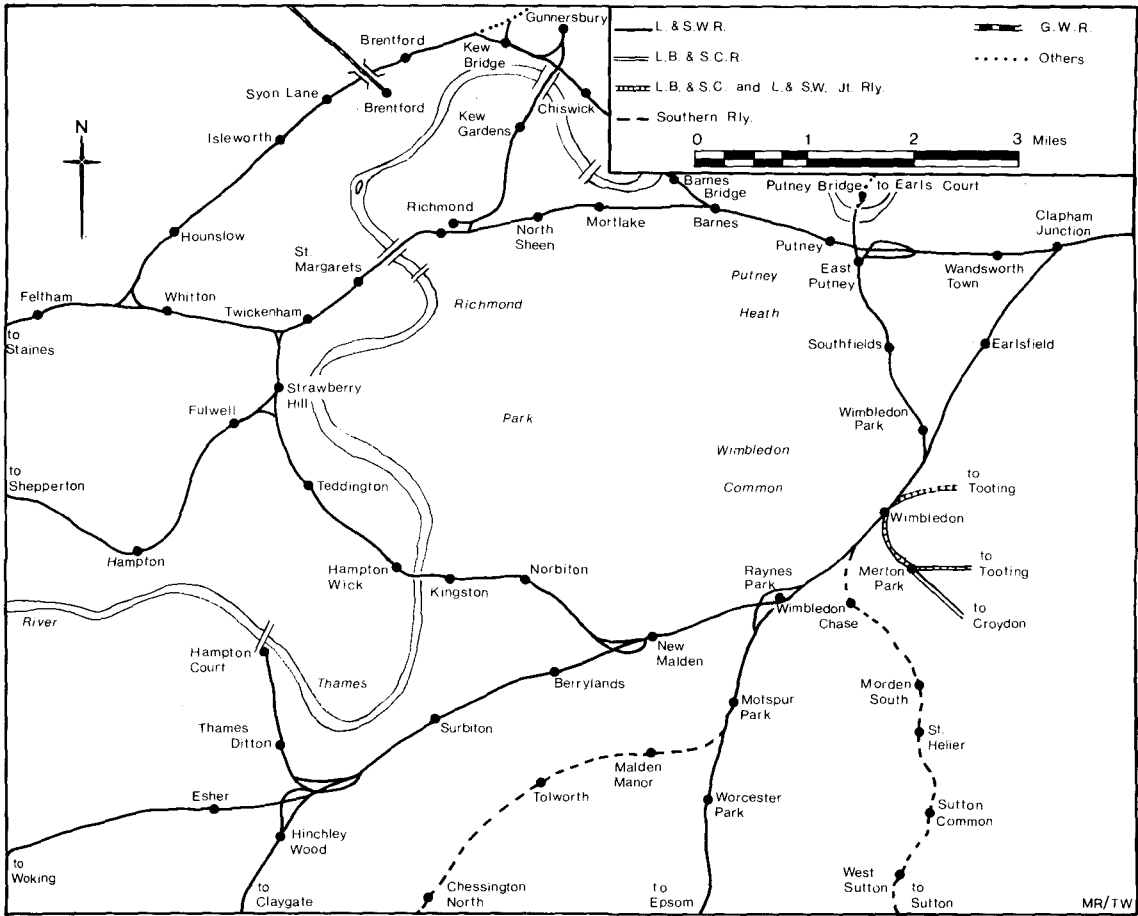


Fig. 1 Railways in outer south-west London.

lic railway, not associated with a canal, to be authorised by Act of Parliament for the conveyance of goods of all kinds and ownerships (not merely for the accommodation of a single owner or a group, such as the Middleton Railway at Leeds, which had got its Act in 1758). From a creek on the Thames just north of the brewery at Wandsworth, this line ran close to the River Wandle and its industrial installations along Garratt Lane, past Mitcham, and over the common to Pitlake at West Croydon. It has been carefully explored and its topographical features lovingly set down by Mr. Derek Bayliss in a recent publication.³ Much more

obscure, and deservedly so, is an experimental line, constructed on Wimbledon Common in 1845 to demonstrate the alleged advantages of Mr. William Prosser's system of using squared chemically-hardened wooden rails instead of the orthodox iron rails. The carrying wheels of the locomotive and vehicles were flat, without flanges; guidance was achieved by interior wheels, cut with a V-shaped groove, lying at a 45-degree angle to the running rails, whose inside upper corner they engaged. The layout was not a circle round the Wimbledon windmill, as has been stated,⁴ but a kind of cusp or frying-pan shape, with the handle-

end near to the windmill and a loop, some 220 yards in radius, to the north of it, not far from the southern exit of Inner Park Road. The line taken by Mr. Prosser's track is still fairly easy to identify and follow, though one part on the east side is now overgrown. The experiment was not successful; but Mr. Prosser had been astute enough to interest the promoters of the Woking and Guildford line in 1843 in the use of his system, and he had to be compensated when the South-Western took over that branch and wanted no such unorthodoxy.⁵

The South Western Railway ('London & Southampton' only till 1839, thereafter London & South Western, to mitigate the hostility of Portsmouth to any concern carrying the name of its rival) was originally promoted in 1831 as the "Southampton, London and Branch Railway & Dock Company"; it was supported by the commercial interests of Southampton, in order to restore the fortunes of their declining seaport, and by naval and military authorities. It was opened throughout from Nine Elms in 1840; the Peninsular & Oriental steamers made Southampton their home port in the same year; and the railway succeeded, with its associated docks, in carrying the town forward to great commercial prosperity.⁶

Along the way, stations were built for the accommodation of local traffic: at Wandsworth (near Freemasons' Bridge, a little west of the later Clapham Junction), Wimbledon, Kingston (later Surbiton), and Ditton Marsh (later Esher). The first stationmaster at Wimbledon is asserted by some people to have been the original of Dickens's Mr. Pickwick – that is, until they notice that the famous Papers had begun publication in 1836, two years before the station was opened.⁷

None of these stations has survived in anything like its original form, and most of

them have been resited: Clapham Junction (Mid-Battersea, as Bradshaw used to point out) replaced Wandsworth in 1863; Earlsfield came in 1884; Wimbledon was removed to the north side of the road bridge in 1881, leaving the South Western pub across the road until it was demolished a century later. There have been at least two temporary stations at Wimbledon, one on the London side for Volunteers going to camp on the Common, and one on the country side for the tennis championships at the Worples Road ground in the Edwardian decade – not counting the diminutive Railway Staff Halt near Durnsford Road bridge. Raynes Park came in 1871, the subject of an extremely obscure joke by a guide-book writer of 1889 – referring to Stanhoe, in north Norfolk, as 'possibly the least important station in England, except Raynes Park'.⁸ Malden came much earlier, in 1846 – the railway found it difficult to decide exactly where it was, and changed its name four times. Kingston was resited – it began in 1838 down in the deep cutting, near the Ewell Road bridge below the Railway Tavern, and was removed in 1840, when the Southampton Arms Hotel had been built, and got the name of Surbiton ('and Kingston' at first) only in 1863.⁹ The last in our area was Ditton Marsh ('for Hampton Court'), renamed Esher within two years.

The main line, which had been widened to provide four tracks as far as Hampton Court Junction by 1884 and beyond in 1902–4, threw off branches, from west of Kingston station to Thames Ditton and Hampton Court in 1849, from Raynes Park to Epsom in 1859, and through Claygate and Oxshott to Guildford in 1885. But to the north of it, nearer to and crossing the Thames, the South Western was engaged in much activity and a good deal of quarrelling. The railway always called this part of its system 'the Windsor

and Reading lines', and that accurately describes the intention with which they were exploited – to secure valuable middle-distance traffic from the Thames Valley, and to be a nuisance to its detested neighbour, the Great Western. But the origin of these lines was a local promotion, the Richmond Railway, which proposed in 1844 to build from Richmond up to a junction with the South Western at the Falcon bridge (later known as Clapham Junction) and, rather saucily, beyond the Nine Elms terminus to the neighbourhood of Hungerford and Waterloo bridges. The South Western took over the latter part. The Richmond's line was easy to build, the only important works being a viaduct over the Wandle and the Surrey Iron Railway, a cutting at Putney, and a bridge at Barnes to carry the Hammersmith road over the line, with a screen to prevent horses being frightened. The vestry of Mortlake opposed the provision of a bridge at Sheen Lane and asked for a level crossing instead. They got it, and road traffic and residents are afflicted to this day. Mortlake was not the only place to make this misjudgment – Lincoln, having taken advice from Canterbury, who affirmed that the railway crossing of their High Street caused not the slightest inconvenience, did the same thing and regretted it for more than a century.¹⁰

The line was opened in 1846, when the Lord Mayor of London proposed the toast 'Prosperity to the Richmond Railway' at the inaugural banquet, having arrived not by railway but, inappropriately, by the City barge *Maria Wood*.¹¹ Traffic between Richmond and London was already considerable – there were 98 omnibus trips daily, and there were river steamers also. Most of the railway's traffic was, as expected, end-to-end – over 50,000 each way between Nine Elms and Richmond in June and July 1847. The four intermediate stations contributed only 23 per cent of the

passengers, the descending order of business being Wandsworth, Mortlake, Putney, and Barnes. One of the railway papers found the line 'wanting in the picturesque'. That could, however, hardly be said of the stations, designed by Sir William Tite: the *Builder* called them 'fairly pretty country stations, of red brick with black lozenges, mullioned windows, and Tudor chimney stacks etc., all quietly and nicely designed'. Only Barnes, which still substantially survives, outlasted the quadrupling of the line in 1885–7. Richmond station, not complete at the opening date, was on the London side of Kew Road; a new station west of the road was opened in 1853; and this was in turn replaced by another on the London side. In the 1870s the local vestry felt strongly about the facilities: 'Any old woman at the workhouse could have designed better and more convenient stations than those at Richmond. Even the old station . . . would anyone suppose that an engineer with any brains about him could have designed such a station?'¹²

The railway did not stop at Richmond for long; it was pushed on through Twickenham, Feltham, and Staines as far as Datchet in 1848. *Punch* did not think much of the line, calling it the London & Datchet Snailway – indeed, the stopping trains took an hour and twenty minutes for the 24 miles. After delays due to lengthy negotiations with the Crown, and partial failure of the Thames bridge at Black Potts, near Datchet, Windsor was reached in 1849. A loop line from Barnes crossed into Middlesex, as far as Isleworth (Smallbury Green) in 1849 and on through Hounslow to rejoin the Staines line at Feltham Junction in 1850. About this date, a laundry for the royal household was established in Richmond, in Kew Foot Road, and thereafter for many years the royal washing was received and despatched by train, whether to

Buckingham Palace, Windsor, or Osborne (but not to Balmoral).¹³

Another branch, from Twickenham, curved round through Teddington and Hampton Wick back over the river to Kingston town, and stopped there, in 1863; and from Strawberry Hill the grandly-named Thames Valley Railway branched to Shepperton in 1864 – it wanted to get at least as far as Chertsey but never managed it.¹⁴ This group of lines displayed few remarkable features: the only engineering works of note were the three Thames bridges, at Barnes, Richmond, and Kingston. The stations on the Hounslow loop line, by Tite again, were not Tudor but thickly classical – Chiswick survives more or less unaltered; on the Shepperton line they were suitably equipped with iron boot-scrapers for the use of passengers who had to walk the muddy roads of the vicinity; and at Teddington the market-gardener and novelist R. D. Blackmore waged a bitter fight against the railway which took away some of his land at Gomer House.¹⁵

So far, the railway developments were straightforward and indeed foreseeable in an area close to London which was obviously suited for middle- and high-class housing developments. But the next phase (which in fact began earlier than the last of the opening dates already mentioned) is most confusing unless it is remembered that the South Western's London terminus, first at Nine Elms and from 1848 at Waterloo, was a very unsatisfactory point for the traveller: it was on the wrong side of the river, having no reasonable communication either to the City or to the West End until the tube railways arrived – the Waterloo & City in 1898, the Bakerloo in 1906, and the Northern in 1926. Therefore the South Western had either to secure a route of its own, or for its own trains, to the City or to see other railways which could offer direct

West End and City services come into its territory. It was determined not to have foreign ownerships south of the river, and in this it succeeded remarkably: a mark of its success is that on the District routes to Wimbledon and Richmond the Underground never owned, and London Transport today does not own, the river bridges or the lines south of them.

The shifts and devices by which the South Western tried to get to the City are too numerous to list here, but some of them must be mentioned. The South Western actually did get power to extend from Waterloo to London Bridge in 1846 and bought some land; but the power was abandoned in 1849 when money was short after the 'railway mania' of the middle forties had collapsed. The South Western directors and their successors spent a lot of time and money from then to the end of the century trying to repair that mistake. They tried in 1859 to get into Charing Cross with a connection to the railway from London Bridge sanctioned in that year (almost immediately absorbed by the South Eastern Railway); then in 1861 they tried to get to Cannon Street but jibbed at taking a half-share in this very expensive piece of construction. In 1865 some South Western and London & North Western trains from Euston via Kensington began running through the middle of Waterloo station (at 4mph) and across Waterloo Road by a bridge which still stands and over South Eastern tracks, first to London Bridge, then to Cannon Street. From farther afield the South Western joined with the London, Brighton & South Coast in building the Tooting, Merton & Wimbledon Railway, so that its trains could get via Herne Hill over the London, Chatham & Dover to Blackfriars and Ludgate Hill, which made the South Eastern, which regarded the Chatham as a vexatious upstart, very cross indeed. The Cannon Street trains were soon cut back to

Waterloo, and the South Western began running another way to Ludgate Hill, from Clapham Junction and from Kensington via Loughborough Junction. The maze of connections on the London side of Clapham, built to enable trains to run from virtually all directions to all others, created what became known as the 'Battersea Tangle', whose surviving lines and earthworks still occupy many acres.¹⁶ The junctions were named after the farms of the departing countryside – Latchmere, Pouparts, Longhedge, Stewarts Lane – with one from the railway-dominated present, Factory Junction.

The South Western did not prove very successful in its offensive eastwards towards the City; but it did score remarkable defensive victories when assailed from the north by other railways having west-end and City terminals. Their trains did penetrate south of the river, but always over South-Western tracks and under South-Western control. The first of these penetrations grew out of a modest line promoted in 1851 for exchange of goods traffic between Willesden Junction and Kew Junction on the Hounslow loop and opened in 1853. This North & South Western Junction Railway was at first jointly owned by the L.N.W.R. and the South Western, but its passenger trains were provided, remarkably, by the North London, a dependent of the L.N.W.R., whose line extended from Hampstead Road (Chalk Farm) to Bow, with trains running into Fenchurch Street. From Fenchurch Street trains ran for a time through to Windsor, L.S.W.R.; next, to Richmond and Twickenham, with two reverses *en route*, at Kew and Barnes; then, to help defeat a proposed direct line from Acton to Richmond, the South Western put in curves at Kew and Barnes in 1862 to allow through running without reversing. (The curve at Barnes was later abandoned but its course is still clearly marked today.)

By this corkscrew route trains ran from Fenchurch Street (after 1865 from Broad Street) for a few years until the South Western yielded to pressure and built the direct line through Kew Gardens and Gunnersbury, opened in 1869. This South Western line meandered on through Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush to Kensington (Addison Road), and its trains went forward over the West London Extension, past Chelsea into the Battersea Tangle and so to Waterloo or Ludgate Hill. This extremely indirect service continued until 1916.

By means of junctions from this route, trains reached Richmond from the North London (Broad Street), the Midland (Moorgate via Child's Hill), Great Western (Bishop's Road, later Aldgate, via Hammersmith), Metropolitan (Aldgate, some from New Cross, via Hammersmith), and District (via Earl's Court, its own Hammersmith station, and Studland Road Junction), not all simultaneously but at different times, with the District and North London services surviving. These have continued to run to Richmond, under South Western, Southern Railway, and now B.R. control. The District once tried to get beyond Richmond, at least as far as Twickenham, but the South Western's terms were too stiff.

The Metropolitan District Railway, with its west-end and City stations and its share of the Inner Circle, was an evident threat to the South-Western monopolist. As a loyal South-Western officer put it: 'The District company, tired of burrowing like a mole in the bowels of the great City, cast their eyes enviously upon the fair and rich traffic district of the South-Western suburban system'.¹⁷ Only the District's appalling financial situation preventing it giving active, rather than sympathetic, support to a proposed line from Hammersmith to Barnes authorised in

1872 and then frustrated the achievement of an invading line which would have cut like a knife through the South-Western's territory, and through some highly-prized countryside. That this plan so nearly succeeded was due not only to the pugnacity of the hard-up District but also to the strong dislike of the South-Western repeatedly expressed by the citizens of Kingston; the railway had left the town off its main line and only after pressure had agreed to extend from Hampton Wick over the river into the town. When this was achieved, in 1863, the 15-mile journey to Waterloo took between 45 and 57 minutes, in the timetable. Kingston would welcome any railway – even, rather wildly, the London, Chatham & Dover – which would give it something better than that. In 1864 the South Western countered a batch of competing schemes by agreeing to build from Kingston through Norbiton to join the main line at Malden, and this was opened in 1869; the trains ran, however, to Ludgate Hill, and Waterloo passengers had to change at Wimbledon. Competing schemes continued to be promoted, of which the Guildford, Kingston & London of 1881 was the most important. This was to start from the District Railway at Putney Bridge station in Fulham, reached by its branch from Earl's Court in 1880, and run past Tibbets Corner, Kingston Vale, and Norbiton to Oxshott and Guildford. The District was behind the scheme; the South Western was naturally against it. So were the conservationists of the day, who soon forced the promoters to substitute a tunnel under the ridge of the commons for the proposed cutting, though even that did not satisfy the objectors. The scheme emerged from the Parliamentary session cut into two – the Surbiton-Guildford part was taken over by the South Western (and this, as the Guildford New Line, was opened in 1885); the remainder, the Kingston &

London, was to be worked by a joint committee of the District, the South Western, and the promoters, who included the Corporation of Kingston. The tunnel was to be 1700 yards long, and there were to be stations at Putney Heath, Roehampton (Robin Hood Gate), Coombe, and Kingston. The Act required the company to plant the open sections of the line adjoining Wimbledon Common in a 'reasonably ornamental manner' and to raise protective mounds near the rifle butts. The District was to run trains as far as Kingston, the South Western up to South Kensington, High Street, and Addison Road. At South Kensington the South Western was empowered to build a west-end terminus on the south side of the District tracks, in the area of Pelham Street.

In the next session, 1882, a Wimbledon, Merton & West Metropolitan Junction line was approved, to run from East Putney to a junction south of the South Western main line with the Wimbledon-Tooting line near Haydons Road. Bridges and stations near the Wimbledon Park estate were to be 'ornamental' – no doubt Lord Spencer's agents saw to that clause.

Some preliminary work on the Kingston & London Railway had been undertaken by January 1882, but the District could not find or raise its half-share of the £750,000 required, and by 1886, when no actual construction had been begun, the South Western hooked together the part of the Kingston line between Putney Bridge and East Putney and the West Metropolitan Junction thence to a north-side junction at Wimbledon, to be built wholly by the South Western with District trains having running powers to Wimbledon. This line, a modest end-product of so much scheming, was opened in 1889, with a flyover later the same year to the Windsor line at Point Pleasant Junction to let South Western trains round the corner

to Clapham Junction and Waterloo. So today East Putney, Southfields, and Wimbledon Park are Southern Region stations though no Southern train has served them since 1941 (the line is used by trains of Southern empty stock). The traveller can still feel the sharp curve just south of East Putney where the Wimbledon branch diverges from the Kingston & London's alignment running directly ahead and marked by a straight line of property boundaries up to the point where the long tunnel under the Heath would have begun. It looks as though Holmbush Road was laid out where the approach cutting was intended to be.

But the South Western was not finished with the District yet. The story of the last chapter in their hostile relations involves territory across the main line and outside the area we have been considering. Like the inhabitants of Kingston, those of Sutton, and especially some local land-owners, thought that their town would gain much if it could bring in another railway to compete with their established monopolist, the London, Brighton & South Coast; and in 1910 a local company secured powers for a line from Sutton to Wimbledon. The South Western was not much interested in it; the District (which was authorised to work the line) was friendly but unwilling to put up any money. In 1912, however, the company became a subsidiary of the Underground group, land along the line was bought, and improvements were begun along the existing branch down to Putney Bridge. But in the end, the Underground in 1924 traded off its Sutton powers for withdrawal of Southern Railway opposition to its Morden tube extension, and the Southern built the line, no doubt in hopes of a substantial traffic from the London County Council's new St. Helier housing estate, and opened it throughout in 1930.¹⁸

But this has taken us rather far ahead. In 1889, to the fury of many inhabitants of Kingston and Surbiton who saw themselves deprived of the through West End services that they had thought within their grasp, the South Western was again triumphant in having kept its threatening competitors on the curb. The suburbs complained bitterly about the services doled out to them from Waterloo, as suburbs always do about their railway services. The South Western's in the nineties were perhaps a few shades better than those in the south east of London, where two impecunious companies thought it preferable to spend money on fighting each other rather than on amenities for passengers. But the South Western's slowly – very slowly – improved, with more tracks past Vauxhall and finally a rebuilding of the dreadful old Waterloo station, carried out in stages between 1900 and 1922. Only with electrification, inaugurated in 1915 on the South Western with the Waterloo – East Putney – Wimbledon service and completed for local services in 1916, and rebuilding of several important stations between 1929 and 1938 – Wimbledon, Surbiton, Kingston, and Richmond – could the suburban railways south of the Thames be considered up-to-date and adequately serving the great influx of population that the railways had themselves induced. To the electric period also belongs the opening of more intermediate stations to serve new suburbs: Berrylands (1933) on the main line; North Sheen and Whitton (both 1930) on the Windsor line; Barnes Bridge (1916) and Syon Lane (1931) on the Hounslow loop; Motspur Park (1925) on the Epsom line; and the final addition, the branch from Motspur Park through Tolworth to Chessington (1938 and 1939) – it was meant to go on to Leatherhead

but never did. In only ten years, from 1927 to 1937, the number of season tickets issued at New Malden and Surbiton increased two and a half times.¹⁹



What, after all this building and battling, had the railways *done*? Obviously, they had made it possible for an immense number of people to live in these districts while the earner of the family did his daily work somewhere else, normally in central London. They did this of course not only by means of passenger train services but also by providing carriage of goods of all kinds: construction materials for the houses; coal to keep them heated; and most provisions for their daily needs. By doing these things they created quite new settlements round some of the stations; Surbiton is the most striking case, where as early as 1850 150 new houses had been built, but there are others – Wimbledon below the hill, the St. Margaret's area of Twickenham, Raynes Park (rather a slow starter), New Malden. By contrast, nothing of the same order happened at Kingston in the mid 19th century – all its historians lament its decline at that period.

It is much too simple to say of all suburban places: The railway came, and from that date development took off. It was not always true. The process was far more complex. First of all, having a railway station did not always mean having a convenient service of trains; the timetables need to be studied in some detail before a judgment can be made, and the fares taken account of too. In 1851 only two of the 15 trains from Waterloo to Putney had third-class accommodation. Then there were other conditions constraining development: landlords' different policies about selling land and

controlling what was to be done with it – the policies of grandees like the Duke of Devonshire at Grove Park in Chiswick and Earl Spencer at Wimbledon Park were very different from those of the Conservative Land Society at St. Margaret's²⁰ or again of the numerous and mostly unremembered small-scale builder-developers; whether the local authority would provide roads, water, and drainage; whether building-society or other forms of borrowing were available; whether it was an attractive investment to build houses for rent; and finally whether the tide of continuously built-up settlement flowing outwards from London, having run along the most obvious and attractive channels, at length overflowed the remaining unprotected islands of green country.²¹

One activity that usually followed the railway was, however, not strongly represented in our area: industrial development. There were some rail-served factories here and there, but they were unimportant by comparison with those in other sectors of outer London, like Willesden or Southall or Woolwich. There were no 'railway colonies', either, of concentrated railway employment; men working the trains were concentrated on Battersea and Nine Elms (apart from a fifty-locomotive depot at Strawberry Hill between the 1880s and 1922, employing 500 men). Only with electrification was there a significant concentration of railway staff at Durnsford Road, Wimbledon, for the generating station and at the running sheds for the suburban trains. There is, too, a civil and signal engineers' depot at Wimbledon, where the strokes of a bell sounding like one in an ancient schoolhouse are still heard at 7.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. on working days to tell the staff, presumably not possessing watches, of starting and finishing time.

But suburban settlement, in the sense of providing buildings for people to live and work in, was not the only effect of railways in our area. The very nature and quality of many people's lives were changed because the means of communication – railways, telegraphs, newspapers – had so greatly enlarged the possibilities of social life. Such a qualitative change is hardly to be measured or pinned down; but some 'anecdotal' evidence must serve to indicate the kind of change that began with, and largely because of, the railways. In 1855, the writer Marian Evans (who later adopted the pen-name 'George Eliot'), having married – as she regarded it, though others did not – G. H. Lewes, went to live at 7 Clarence Row, East Sheen. She asked her friends to visit her there – 'it is far less trouble to get to than Bayswater. You have only to jump into the train at the Waterloo Bridge Station and in ten minutes you will be at Mortlake where you must get down',²² she wrote, somewhat exaggerating the ease and speed of the journey. The point was that Sheen could now be treated, for social and cultural purposes, as a part of London; and when George Eliot moved on to Richmond and then in 1859 to Holly Lodge in Wimbledon Park Road she could still call on company to visit her almost as easily as when she lived facing Regent's Park. Another pair, Theodore Watts-Dunton and Algernon Charles Swinburne, living at the Pines in Putney, were similarly a part, if not very willingly, of the London literary scene. One of my uncles,²³ a very young man up in London for a few days from his provincial home, took the train to Putney so as to hang around on Putney Hill in the hope of seeing and saluting the great poet while he was taking a walk. Scores of thousands of less notable people had the potential of their lives enlarged by the accessibility that the railway conferred on their homes and

the mobility it offered to them personally.

But it was not only buildings that the railways encouraged – they offered new opportunities for recreation too. The commons and parks began to swarm with people. Hampton Court was, before the Crystal Palace, the day-trippers' favourite place of resort. Rowing clubs along the Thames; angling; Wimbledon common for rifle-shooting; the All-England grounds for lawn tennis; Twickenham rugby ground; innumerable club and private playing fields – all these were made accessible by railways.

'Railway Development in South-West London' – an ambiguous title which is meant to refer not only to development *of* railways but also *by* railways, what they engendered – is thus a highly complex story, and one that has not by any means been fully explored. Study of the process in detail is something that local societies are particularly well fitted to carry out, with members who are prepared to hack their way, perhaps fairly slowly, through the mass of data which is available, asking themselves all the time not only 'Why did this happen when it did?' but also on occasion 'Why did nothing happen here?' Their answers will throw a flood of illumination on the processes by which a particular place ceased to have an independent economic life of its own and became a full-blown suburb. The contribution of the railway will be found to provide the key to many otherwise puzzling things about the suburbs.

The railway has of course not been the only agent in the transport story. There is another chapter to be written about the effects of the application of the internal combustion engine to road transport vehicles, with all that that has meant for the lives of the people living in our area. But it cannot be doubted that the railway was the principal force, after the natural geography, that has determined the shape

and character of the area as we know it today.

SOURCES – GENERAL

Railway historical literature dealing with south-west London is extensive; see G. Otley *Bibliography of British Railway History* (1965). For the London & South Western Railway, S. Fay *A Royal Road* (Kingston, 1883); G. A. Sekon *The London & South-Western Railway* (1896); C. F. Dendy Marshall *History of the Southern Railway* (1936; revised ed., 1963); H. Ellis *The South Western Railway* (1956); R. A. Williams *The London & South Western Railway* (2 vols. (to 1900), 1968, 1973); C. F. Klapper *Sir Herbert Walker's Southern Railway* (1973); R. H. Clark *Southern Region Record* (1964). Other railways: E. T. MacDermot *History of the Great Western Railway* (2 vols. (to 1923), 1927, 1931; revised ed., 1964); A. Edmonds *History of the Metropolitan District Railway Company* (to 1908) (1973); C. E. Lee *The Metropolitan District Railway* (1956); M. Robbins *The North London Railway* (1937, later editions revised). General works: T. C. Barker and M. Robbins *History of London Transport* (2 vols., 1963, 1974); H. P. White *Greater London Vol. 3 Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain* (1963); A. A. Jackson *London's Local Railways* (1978); *id.*, *Semi-Detached London* (1973).

Of the very numerous articles in periodicals, the following are especially relevant: J. S. Wilks 'Railway Development at Kingston-upon-Thames' *Railway Magazine* 104 (1958) 445, 564; B. G. Wilson 'The Railway Development of Wimbledon' *Railway World* (January 1961) 14, and (March 1961) 98; A. A. Jackson and B. G. Wilson 'Rails on Wimbledon Common' *Railway World* (July 1960) 219.

NOTES

1. Information from Professor Jack Simmons, based on *Railway and Commercial Gazetteer* (1917). Hartland, Devon, which was not much of a town, was 16 miles either from Bideford or from Bude station. Painswick, Glos., Ambleside, Westmorland, and Kingsclere, Hants., were the largest towns over three miles from a railway.
2. M. Robbins 'The First London Railways' *Trans. London & Middx. Arch. Soc.* 28 (1977) 292.
3. D. A. Bayliss *Retracing the First Public Railway* (Croydon, 1981).
4. A. A. Jackson and B. G. Wilson 'Rails on Wimbledon Common' *Railway World* (July 1960) 219.

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23. Richard Capell (1884-1954), born Northampton, music editor and war correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*.