

Abandoned Lines of the L.B.S.C.R.

By G. A. SEKON

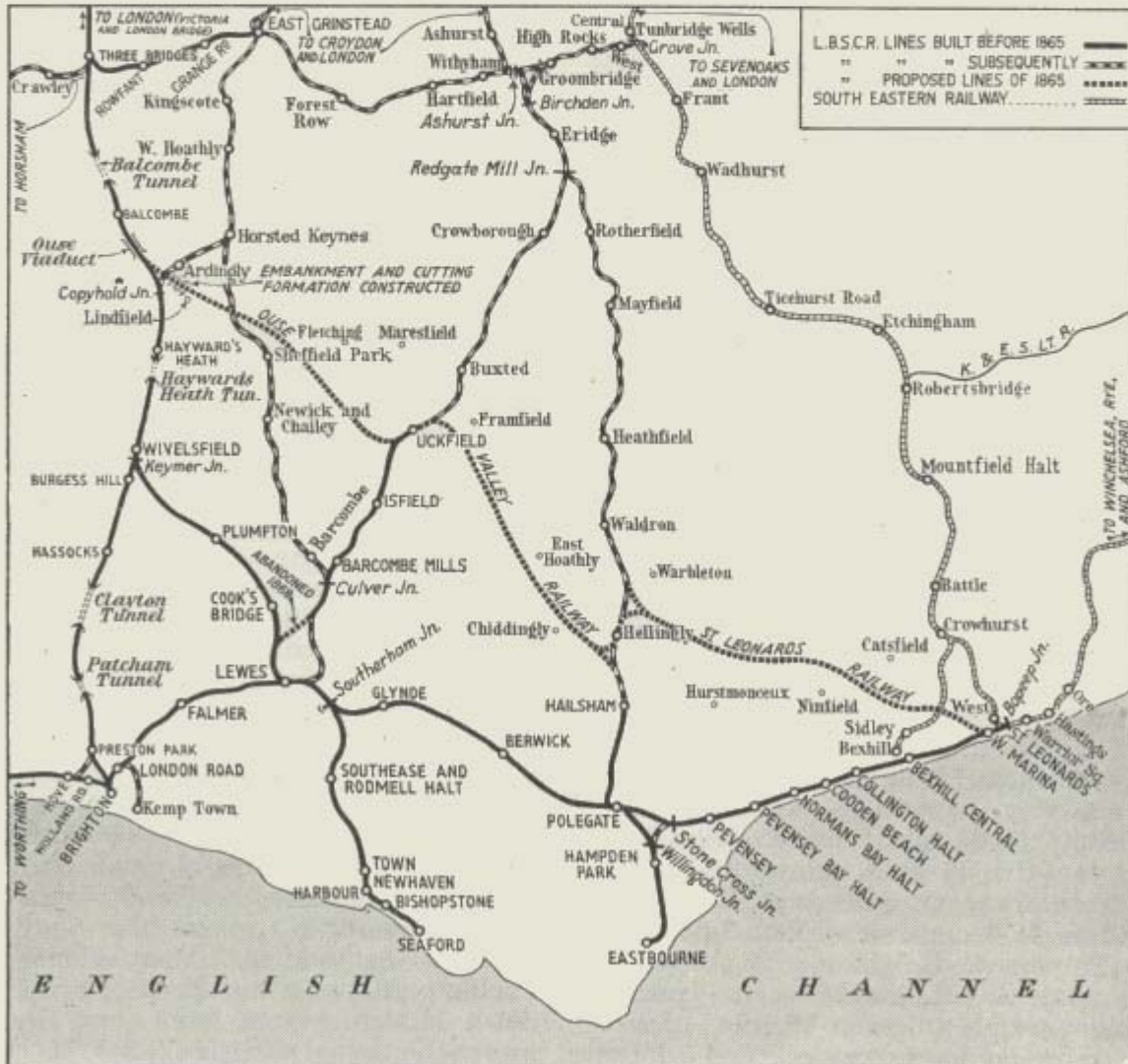
BY a series of book-keeping entries in the accounts for 1924 of the Southern Railway, items were buried that for nearly 60 years had appeared regularly in the half-yearly or annual capital account of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway, and always excited the curiosity of those not conversant with the details. The items for 45 years had been:—

Lines Abandoned under Act, 1868	...	£216,400
West Sussex Junction	...	£10,361

For some years before 1878 there had been an additional and much bigger item

of capital expenditure, namely, Surrey & Sussex Junction Railway; in 1877 the amount was £472,086.

From the opening in 1852 of the South Eastern Railway Company's second route to Hastings (*via* Tunbridge Wells instead of *via* Ashford), that railway and the L.B.S.C.R. had routes between London and Hastings of approximately the same length. In 1862 the S.E.R. obtained powers to construct a direct line through Sevenoaks to Tonbridge, reducing the distance to Hastings by 13 miles. It was patent that the construction of this line



The relationship of the Ouse Valley and St. Leonards Railway schemes of 1864-5 to the South Eastern Railway and to the L.B.S.C.R. lines then existing and built subsequently

would give the S.E.R. such an advantage as to command the Hastings traffic. The L.B.S.C.R. therefore in 1864 obtained powers to make the Ouse Valley Railway from Cuckfield, near the Ouse Viaduct, on its main line, to Uckfield on the Lewes-Tunbridge Wells line, and continue from Uckfield to Hailsham, joining there the branch from Polegate. This line would have shortened the distance to Eastbourne and Hastings, but apparently not sufficiently to the latter town, so in 1865 another Act (St. Leonards Railway) was obtained for a line from Hellingly (on the Ouse Valley Railway of 1864) to the St. Leonards Station of the L.B.S.C.R. This station was then called "Bo-Peep."

These lines would have given the L.B.S.C.R. a route between London and Hastings still about 10 miles longer than the direct S.E.R. line, although they involved about 34 miles of new railway. The district through which the railways were to be constructed was rather difficult and sparsely populated; money was scarce; and, after all, the lines would not form a really effective competitive route. Nevertheless, after obtaining the Acts, feverish haste was made to construct them, in view of the approaching completion of the S.E.R. direct line to Tonbridge, which was opened in 1868.

In view of this circumstance, and the big expenditure that would be involved, the L.B.S.C.R. suggested the abandonment of its scheme for a shorter line to Hastings, and the inclusion in a pool of the competitive traffic of the L.B.S.C.R. and the S.E.R. Terms were arranged, and in 1868 an Act was obtained to abandon these lines. A curious agreement was scheduled to the Act by which the L.B.S.C.R. undertook to pay the contractors for the Surrey & Sussex Railway—quite a different scheme—£100,000 and all materials on the works, except iron girders, for loss of the right to construct the S. & S.R., and also to pay £25,000 jointly to R. Jacomb Hood, the Engineer, and to the Solicitor of the S. & S.R., as compensation for loss of profits that would have come to them from the construction of this S. & S.R. It is not clear whether this £125,000 is part of the money that was shown in the accounts for "Railways Abandoned under the Act of 1868" or whether it was afterwards transferred to the debit of the

S. & S.R. R. Jacomb Hood was in later years a Director of the L.B.S.C.R.

The West Sussex Junction Railway authorised in July, 1864, was for a railway from Hardham, about a mile south of Pulborough, on the Mid Sussex line, to Steyning on the Shoreham and Horsham line. In 1865 a deviation was sanctioned; the new line was to begin at Pulborough and join the 1864 line at Storrington. The W.S.J.R. was merely a contractor's line and would have been of little use, except for any small traffic that might pass between Petersfield, Midhurst, Shoreham, Brighton, and the coast eastward. At this period the L.B.S.C.R. appeared quite willing to adopt any scheme, however poor its financial prospects, that proposed to fill districts in its territory then unprovided with a railway. The argument probably was that if a district was "filled" with a line there would be no opening for a competing railway.

The Chichester & Midhurst Railway obtained powers for an extension to Haslemere, and probably there was an idea to extend thence to Basingstoke to join the G.W.R., so providing a through north-west to south-east railway avoiding the Metropolis—a veritable "candle to the moth" to the railway projector of the mid-Victorian era. Luckily the L.B.S.C.R. only sank £10,361 in the abandoned West Sussex Junction Railway.

In the 1860s several schemes were proposed for a new railway between London and Brighton. The northern section of all of them would have to be through the difficult country bounded on the west by the L.B.S.C. & S.E. line between New Cross and Redhill and on the east by the S.E.R. direct Tonbridge line. To fill this district there was promoted by a so-called independent company, but really the L.B.S.C.R., the Surrey & Sussex Junction Railway. The Bill, obtained in 1865, authorised a railway from Croydon to the East Grinstead, Groomsbridge & Tunbridge Wells Railway, with a branch to join the Tunbridge Wells-Lewes line. The total length was 24½ miles.

In view of a threatened new line to Brighton (an Act for which was obtained by the S.E.R. and L.C.D.R. jointly in 1866), no time was lost in spending money on the purchase of land, etc., required for

the S. & S.J.R., and by Act of 1869 the railway was transferred to the L.B.S.C.R. The S.E.R. about this time repented of its arrangement with the bankrupt L.C.D.R. for a joint line to Brighton, and entered into the pooling agreement previously referred to with the L.B.S.C.R. The necessity for the protective S. & S.J.R. therefore no longer existed. The L.B.S.C.R. had already spent much money on the line, but determined to abandon it. It was thought this could be best accomplished by paying the penalty of £50 a day under the Act for every day after July 6, 1871, that the railway was not opened. The Act limited this penalty to a maximum of £35,250 (705 days).

The Chairman of the L.B.S.C.R. in August, 1869, considered that this would be the best way of cutting the loss, remarking that the line would cost about £2,000,000 to complete, could never pay working expenses, and would be a drain on the L.B.S.C.R. if built and worked. The penalty would go to compensate the landowners whose property had been scheduled for the railway. The re-sale of land already acquired was expected to reduce slightly the financial loss. Apparently the L.B.S.C.R. was unable to get out of its liabilities in this manner, as arbitration proceedings were instituted, and the Duke of Richmond was appointed Arbitrator. The claims soon mounted up, and by 1877 the total expended on this abandoned railway amounted to the very considerable sum of £472,086.

In 1878 the L.B.S.C.R. changed its mind as to the desirability of a railway through this district, and the Croydon, Oxted & East Grinstead Railway was authorised; this line ran over the route of the Surrey & Sussex Junction Railway as far as Hurst Green Junction. The S.E.R. agreed to become joint owner of the section between Croydon and Oxted, and also of a connecting spur with the S.E.R. Redhill-Tonbridge line at Crowhurst. In 1881 powers were obtained by the L.B.S.C.R. for the construction of a line from Hurst Green to Groombridge—practically the same line as the southern section of the S. & S.J.R. This line was opened in 1888; that from Croydon through Oxted to East Grinstead had been opened in March, 1884.

The construction of these lines over the route of the S. & S.J.R. enabled the L.B.S.C.R. to transfer the dead loss item

in its Capital Account "S. & S.J.R. £472,086" to "Lines Open for Traffic." All this amount had been transferred by 1888 except £10,331, and the latter sum remained in the Capital Account until the beginning of the present century. The addition of so large a sum to the actual cost of the Croydon-Oxted-Groombridge lines made the sum represented by these lines unduly heavy. The S.E.R. never made much use of the joint line, and 1914-19 wartime restrictions enabled it to reduce further its train service over the line; this service for some years was represented in the timetables by one up and one down train daily.

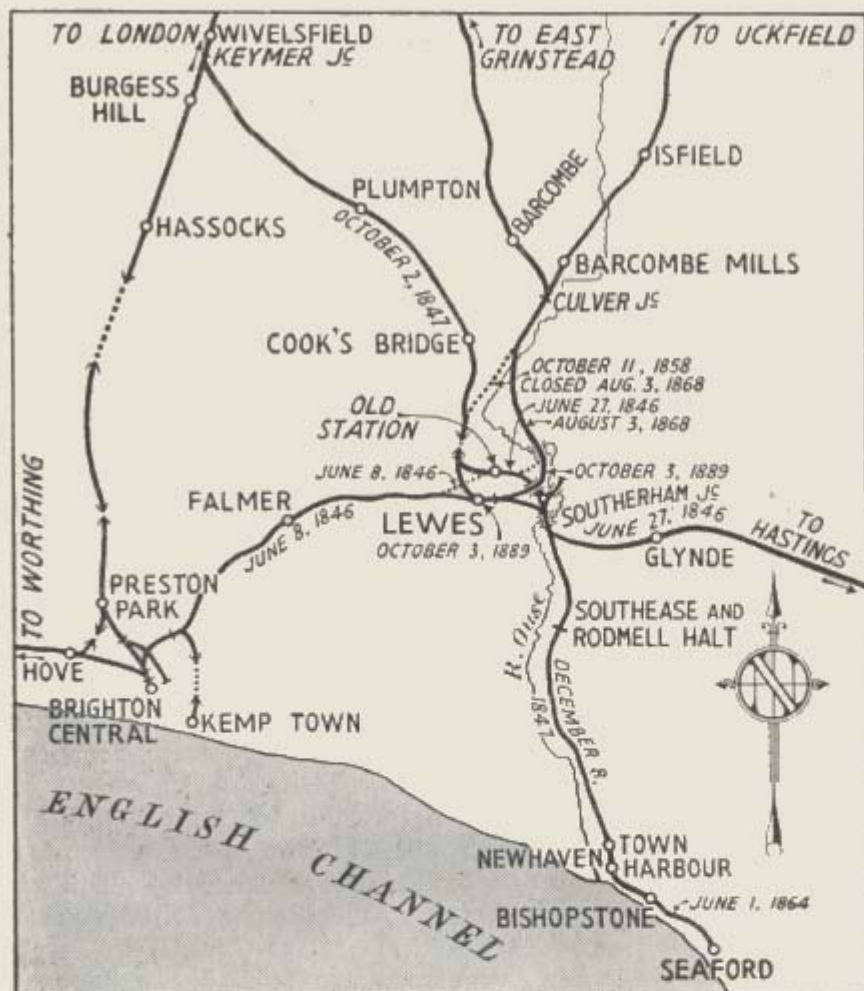
The agreement between the L.B.S.C.R. and the S.E.R., which enabled the former to abandon its projected short route to Hastings, pooled the receipts from traffic between London and certain towns in the following percentages:—

	S.E.R.	L.B.S.C.R.
Hastings	75	25
Tunbridge Wells	80	20
Dorking	55	45
Redhill and Reigate	80	20

This agreement was for ten years from February 1, 1869, and was renewable every ten years, to enable the percentage divisions to be reviewed.

The Chichester & Midhurst line, 11½ miles, was another undertaking of the L.B.S.C.R. that was treated in the Capital Account on the same basis as the S. & S.J.R. It was incorporated in 1864, and next year obtained powers to extend 9½ miles to Haslemere (as mentioned above). In the latter year the undertaking was vested jointly in the L.B.S.C.R. and the L.S.W.R. The line was not then constructed. An item "Chichester & Midhurst lines, £86,435" appeared regularly as an expenditure in the balance sheet. After all, however, the line was opened between Chichester and Midhurst in July, 1881, enabling the item to be included in the "Lines Open for Traffic."

There have been interesting abandonments of lines by the L.B.S.C.R. One is between Barcombe Mills and Lewes. The original line between Lewes and Uckfield diverged from the main line at Harnsey near the west end of the Lewes tunnel, with the facing junction in the up direction. This line was opened in October, 1858, and purchased by the L.B.S.C.R. in 1860. When competing lines between London and Brighton were



L.B.S.C.R. realignments at Lewes

the middle 'eighties, it was thought that Littlehampton traffic would increase if trains could have a straight run through from and to London and to and from Brighton. To effect this arrangement a deviation of the straight coast line was made; eastward of the new junction the deviation made a semi-circular curve on the north side. This new layout, opened in 1887, provided a length of S-shaped line in substitution of the previously straight stretch of the coast line. By means of junctions at the confluence of the curves of the S, it enabled trains from both London and Brighton to run direct to Littlehampton and *vice versa* with the

projected, it was considered desirable that the line from the north through Uckfield should enter Lewes in such a way that trains to and from Brighton and the Uckfield line should have a through run. This necessitated the construction of a deviation line, about 2½ miles long, forming a semi-circle around Lewes on the north and west sides. It was opened in 1868. The new line joined the other lines on a sharp curve at the east end of Lewes Station, with the facing junction in the down direction. At various times the lines east of Lewes station have been deviated, and the complicated position is indicated on the accompanying sketch map.

provision of only one additional junction, whereas three would have been required had not the coast line been deviated from the straight. Full details of this realignment (with sketch map) were given in the writer's article on "the L.B.S.C.R. West Coast Section," published in *The Railway Magazine* for January-February, March-April, and May-June, 1946.

Another abandoned length of railway of the L.B.S.C.R. is to be found on the West Coast line, between Angmering and Ford. Originally there was a straight line between these places, with the Littlehampton branch running into it (as now) west of the Arun bridge, the connection providing for a straight run in the down (Portsmouth) direction. In

Ouse Valley Railway Relics

(See article, page 346)



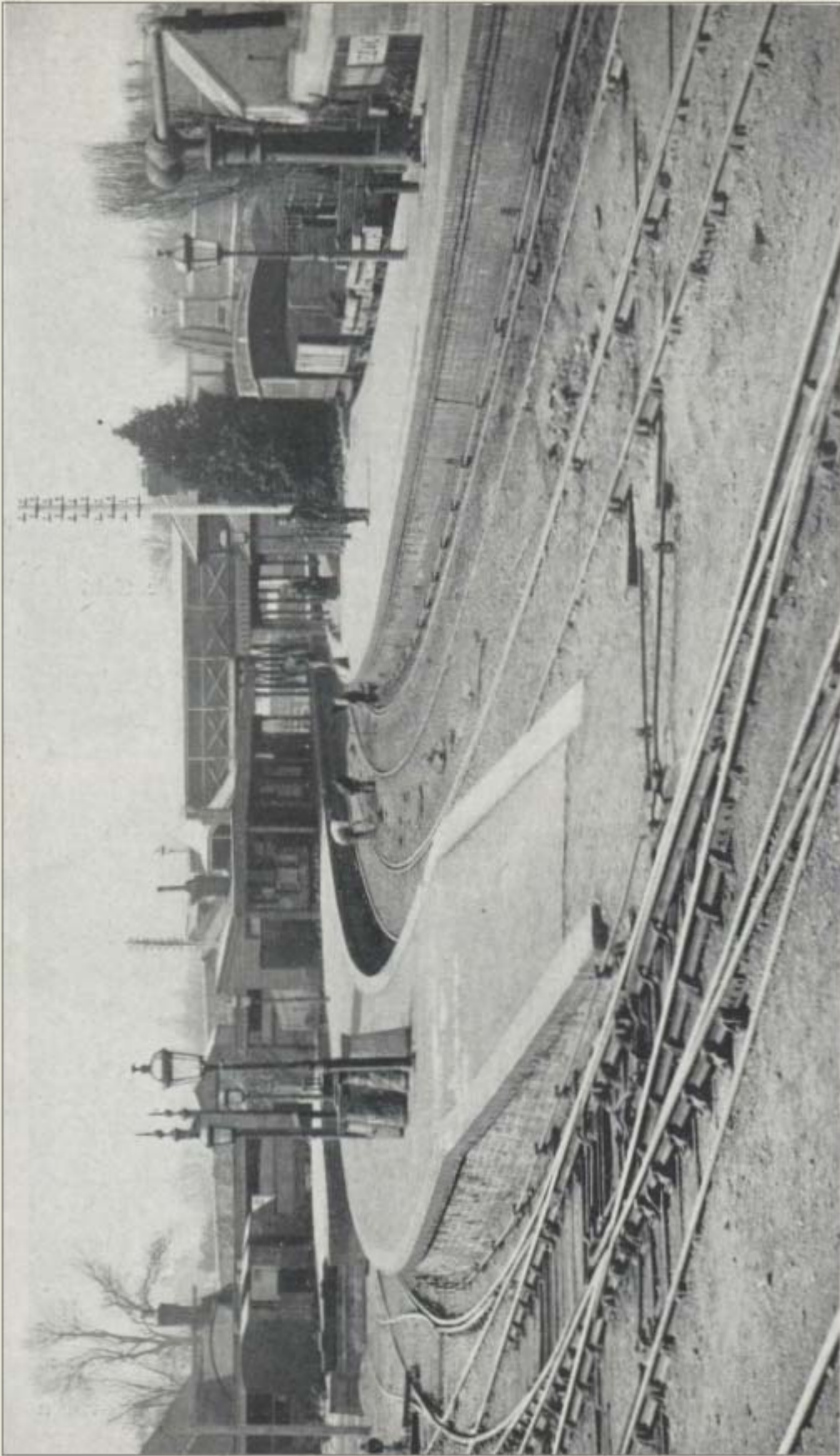
An abandoned underbridge and embankment near Uckfield



Photos]

[A. C. M. Clements

The abandoned embankment, and abutments of a bridge over a stream, near Uckfield



The main-line platforms at Lewes, from the east, in April, 1887. The extensive rearrangement of the junctions and station at Lewes are described (with sketch map) in the article on page 346