

The L.B.S.C.R. East Coast Section—1

By the late G. A. SEKON



An early print of the first Hastings Station, South Eastern Railway, which was opened on February 13, 1851

THE East Coast line of the former London Brighton & South Coast Railway bore a remarkable resemblance geographically to the West Coast line of the same section of the Southern Railway, described in *The Railway Magazine* for January-February, March-April, and May-June, 1946.

Beginning at Brighton, the following similarities on the Eastern and Western sides of the main line were to be observed:—

East Coast
Local Brighton branch to Kemp Town.
Spur from main line Keymer Junction to Lewes.
Through secondary route to London from Lewes via Eridge. Main connecting line to other parts of system. Polegate to Tunbridge Wells and London.

Two short branches to the coast: Lewes to Seaford; and Polegate to Eastbourne.

Junction with competing system, and working arrangements to terminus of line: Brighton Junction St. Leonards to Hastings, with S.E. & C.R.

West Coast
Local Brighton branch to Devil's Dyke.
Spur from main line Preston Park to Hove.
Through secondary route to London from Shoreham via Horsham. Main connecting line to other parts of system: Ford Junction to Horsham and London.

Two short branches to the coast: Ford to Littlehampton; and Barnham Junction to Bognor.

Junction with competing system, and working arrangements to terminus of line: Havant to Portsmouth with L.S.W.R.

On the whole, the East Coast line may at first appear to be more important than the West Coast line, because of the

importance of Eastbourne and Newhaven (for Continental traffic); but, even with the Lewes traffic included in the East Coast section, that of Worthing probably turns the scales in favour of the West Coast, although Littlehampton and Bognor may not equal the Eastbourne, Newhaven, and Seaford traffic. On the other hand, before Grouping, when a large traffic was carried to and from Bexhill-on-Sea over the East Coast route, that section was probably slightly more important than the West Coast line, despite the circumstance that it never carried a heavy local traffic, such as that between Brighton and Worthing on the West Coast line. With regard to mileage, we have the following approximate figures:—

East Coast	miles	West Coast	miles
Brighton to Hastings	34½	Brighton to Portsmouth	45½
Kemp Town branch	1½	Devil's Dyke branch	3½
Seaford and Eastbourne (with spur) branches	13	Littlehampton (with spur) and Bognor branches	5½
Total	48½	Total	54½

Apart from several short tunnels on the East Coast line, the engineering works on the two sections were about equal, the bridge over the Adur at Shoreham and

the opening bridge over the Arun at Ford on the West Coast section being set off by the long and lofty viaduct at Brighton and the bridge over the Ouse at Lewes on the East Coast line. The engineering works on the line to Portsmouth on the West may be set off against the Hastings tunnels on the East; before Grouping the former were joint, and the latter S.E.R. property.

A further point of similarity was that both East and West Coast lines were authorised to separate companies formed in close association with the London & Brighton Railway. The original Act of the L. & B.R. (July 15, 1837) had sanctioned a branch from Brighton to Lewes and Newhaven, but the powers were not exercised, and it was left to the Brighton, Lewes & Hastings Railway Company to secure the authority under which most of the line was built.

The first section of the East Coast route, 8 miles in length, from Brighton to Lewes, was again authorised direct to the London & Brighton Railway on July 29, 1844, and opened on June 8, 1846. It leaves the main line on the east side about $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile north of Brighton terminus, at a point where there is a deep valley, which is bridged by a substantial viaduct constructed on a curve, 330 yd. long, estimated to cost £25,565. There are 27 arches, 67 ft. in height. In the original plans, the viaduct was to be succeeded by a tunnel about 200 yd. long, estimated to cost £24,000. There was a tunnel at Falmer, 485 yd. long, estimated to cost £21,600, and another, 110 yd. in length, approaching Lewes, the estimate for which was only £3,960. The line as projected to Lewes had a terminus in the town, and when, later the same year, the railway had been extended to St. Leonards, and in 1847 a spur from Keymer Junction to Lewes (cutting off the *détour* via Brighton) had been constructed, Lewes still remained a terminal station, though simple through platforms were built at the junction. This arrangement was so inconvenient that a new through station was built in 1877, succeeded by the present station 12 years later. During the past 40 years, there has been much controversy as to the exact sites, and particularly as to the layout, of the old stations at Lewes. Articles have appeared in various issues of *The Railway Magazine* in elucidation of the points in dispute,

and one by G. F. Burtt, in the June, 1914, number, cleared the air considerably, but even now there remain some points on which further light is desirable, although the map published in *The Railway Magazine* for Nov.-Dec., 1946, showed all the essential details.

In 1844 the contest was keen between companies supported by the London & Brighton and the South Eastern interests respectively for connecting Hastings with the existing railway system. The former proposed a $32\frac{1}{2}$ -mile line called the Brighton, Lewes & Hastings Railway, from Brighton Station, *via* Lewes (whence a $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile branch led to the river Ouse) and Polegate (to serve Hailsham and Eastbourne), to the west end of St. Leonards; the latter proposed a $25\frac{1}{2}$ -mile branch from the South Eastern main line at Headcorn, through Biddenden, Tenterden, Whittersome (whence a short branch led to Rye), and Winchelsea, to Hastings. Notices of the latter had been lodged in previous sessions, but the promoters had not felt able to proceed further until this year.

The Parliamentary Committee felt that there was a case for both lines, inasmuch as they served different districts and were competitive only for traffic between Hastings and the district north of Redhill. The distance from London to Hastings was about 2 miles in favour of the Headcorn route. The committee was not satisfied, however, that the prospective traffic was sufficient to sustain both lines, and decided in favour of the Brighton line on the plea that it would be valuable for coast defence in case of invasion.

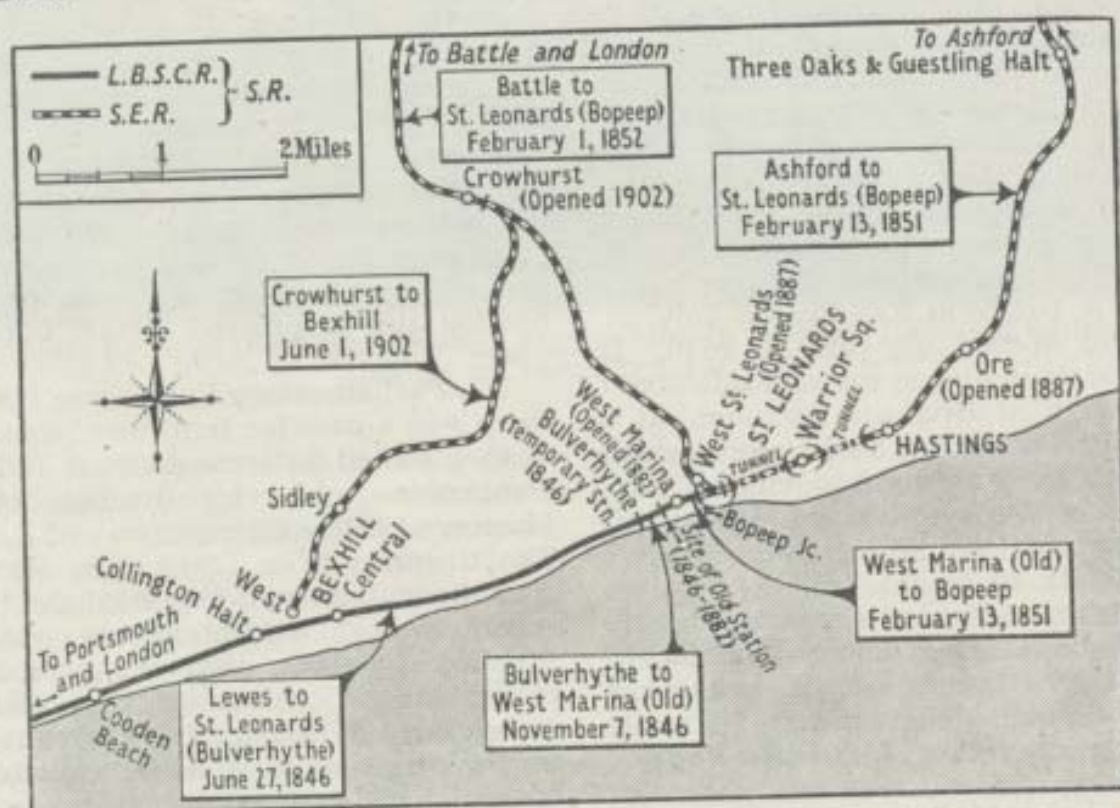
Accordingly, the Brighton, Lewes & Hastings Railway Company was incorporated by Act of July 29, 1844, and authorised to build a line from Lewes to St. Leonards, with specific power to sell its undertaking to the L. & B.R. The Brighton-Lewes section was authorised direct to the L. & B.R. by an Act which received the Royal Assent on the same day, as already noted.

In 1845, the B.L. & H.R. was authorised to build a $9\frac{1}{2}$ -mile cut-off between Lewes and Keymer with the object of effecting a saving of $8\frac{3}{4}$ miles for traffic between London and the coast east of Brighton, compared with the journey *via* Brighton. Another Act of the same year gave powers for an extension from Hastings to Rye and Ashford, but these

were transferred to the S.E.R. The L. & B.R. purchased the B.L. & H.R. in August, 1945; it paid a premium of £7 per share of £50 amounting to £35,000.

Little time was lost in extending from Lewes towards Hastings. The opening to St. Leonards (Bulverhythe) on June 27, 1846, left the L.B.S.C.R. about 2 miles from the centre of Hastings; the extension to St. Leonards (West Marina) was opened on November 7, 1846. Access to Hastings was to be obtained by use of the expensive line, chiefly in tunnel, that the S.E.R. was about to construct into that town.

The first S.E.R. route to Hastings, via Redhill and Ashford, 93 miles from London Bridge, was opened on February 13, 1851. The new line extended to a junction with the L.B.S.C.R. at St. Leonards (Bopeep Junction) and enabled that company's trains to be extended to Hastings on the same day. Originally, L.B.S.C.R. trains called at St. Leonards L.B.S.C.R. station only, and ran through the S.E.R. station. L.B.S.C.R. trains called also at the S.E.R. station from December 5, 1870; the stations were then named West Marina and Warrior Square respectively. The L.B.S.C.R. route via Lewes was only 76½ miles, and



Chronological map of the railways around Hastings

The cut-off branch line from Keymer Junction, on the main line, 9½ miles north of Brighton, to Lewes, 8¾ miles in length, was opened for passengers on October 1, 1847, but goods had been carried in the previous month. Already the inconvenience of Kingston (Shoreham Harbour) as a port for the French traffic had been realised. Powers were obtained on June 18, 1846, to construct a railway from the Lewes-Hastings line, at Southerham, about a mile east of the former, along the east bank of the Ouse to Newhaven. This line was opened for passengers on December 8, 1847, but again goods traffic began in the previous month.

consequently commanded the traffic. Foreseeing that this permanent disability of a route 23 per cent. longer must eventually tell against it, the S.E.R. had obtained powers in 1845 to extend its Tonbridge-Tunbridge Wells line to Hastings, reducing the distance between London Bridge and Hastings, via Redhill and Robertsbridge, to 74¾ miles—1½ miles shorter than the L.B.S.C.R. route via Lewes. The latter railway, moreover, could reach Hastings only by running powers over the S.E.R. from Bopeep Junction, close to West Marina.

In November, 1849, an agreement for closer working between the two railways

had been signed, one clause of which bound the S.E.R. to complete its line through St. Leonards to Hastings as quickly as possible; the mile that separated St. Leonards from Hastings was mostly in tunnel. Before its completion, the two railways had entered into an agreement for the division of receipts arising from the Hastings traffic, but the L.B.S.C.R. was always allowed to feel that its presence at Hastings was in some measure due to the magnanimity of the S.E.R.

Between Brighton and Lewes two intermediate stations were provided, namely, London Road (a Brighton suburban station, $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile from the Central Station), and a wayside station at Falmer, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Lewes. Maps published about 90-95 years ago showed a railway from Falmer to Newhaven. So far as our researches show, such a line was never projected, unless the Act obtained in 1837 for a railway to Lewes and Newhaven bifurcated at Falmer. Anyhow, this Act lapsed. Possibly the mistake arose through a badly-informed, but enterprising, cartographer, who, knowing a railway was to be constructed from near Lewes to Newhaven, considered the route between Falmer and the mouth of the Ouse the mostly likely course for such a railway.

There is now no station at the actual Keymer junction, where the Lewes line leaves the main line, but until July 1, 1896, the station now named Wivelsfield (opened on January 1, 1862) was called Keymer Junction. The change of name is widely but erroneously attributed to an accident to the Continental express on December 23, 1899, resulting in six fatalities, which brought Keymer Junction into undesirable prominence. Between Keymer Junction and Lewes are two wayside stations, Plumpton ($3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the junction), and Cooksbridge ($2\frac{1}{2}$ farther east). The Uckfield line originally diverged some distance from the west end of the Lewes tunnel, and the course of this line is still plainly discernible. The removal of the junction to the east of Lewes Station was referred to in the article on "Abandoned Lines of the L.B.S.C.R." (Nov.-Dec., 1946, issue).

Lewes is an important junction, and the present station, constructed in 1889, is a large and relatively modern building. It is, however, most awkwardly placed, and

necessitates that all trains approach from any direction at low speed. The sharp curves arise from the necessity of providing a through run between Brighton and the Uckfield line, the circumstance that a tunnel occurs at the west end of the London line platforms, and that east of the station is the River Ouse. Doubtless the engineers made the best use of the restricted area for dealing with existing lines when carrying out the rearrangement, but if Lewes had now to be served by railways connecting it with Brighton, Keymer, Uckfield, and Hastings, we imagine an entirely different layout would be adopted.

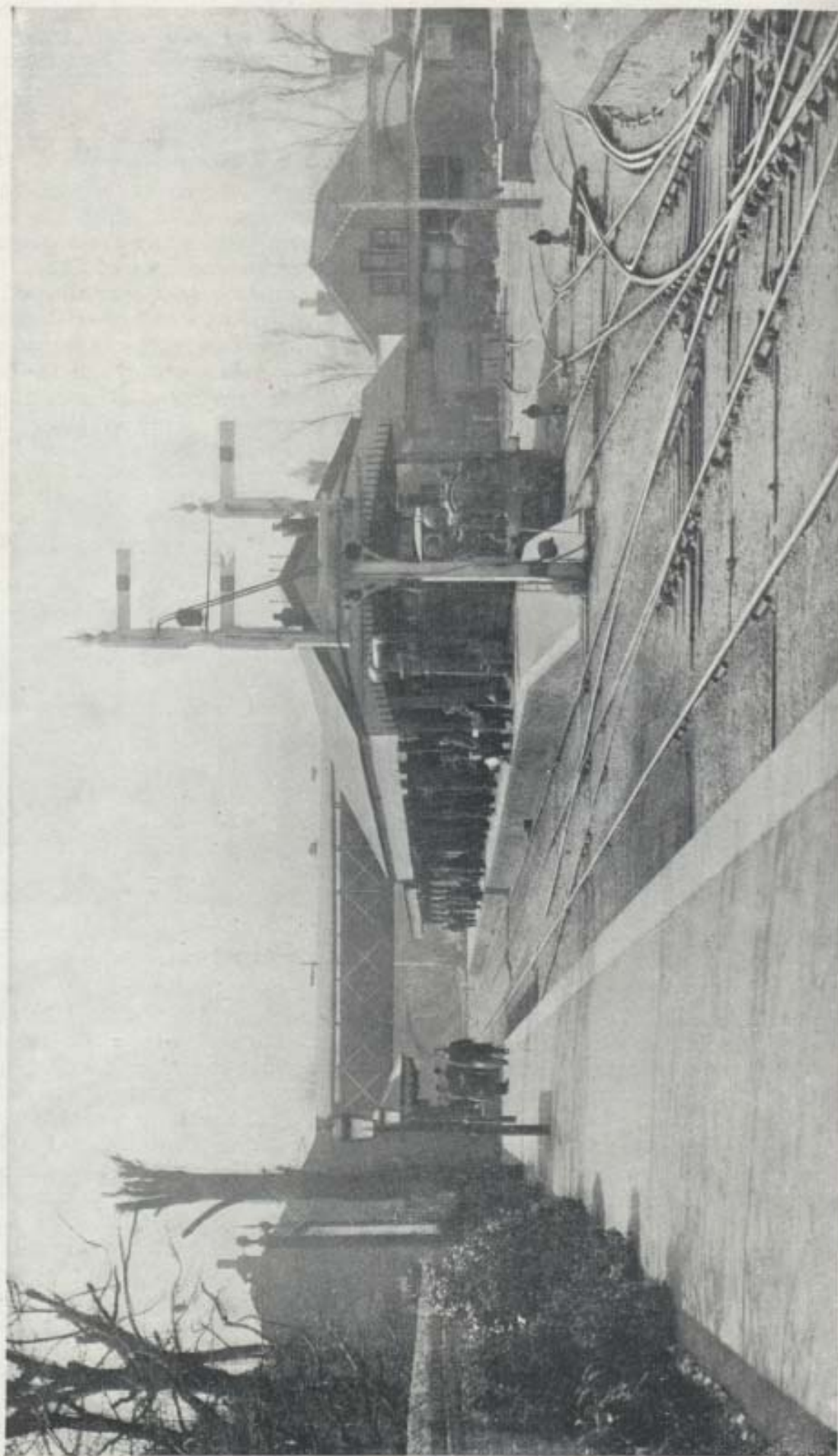
Between the east bank of the Ouse and St. Leonards, the railway is chiefly a surface line, somewhat similar to the West Coast line to Portsmouth. The cost of the whole line between Brighton and St. Leonards was only a little over half a million pounds and, as already mentioned, it was completed and opened in the summer of 1846. There are wayside stations at Glynde, Berwick, Polegate, Pevensey, and Bexhill.

The first bridge over the Ouse at Southerham (Lewes) was of timber. The opening section was telescopic, and was presumably similar to that over the Arun at Ford. Several of the stations on the East Coast line have been rebuilt, in some cases on a different site. A notable feature of the L.B.S.C.R. development is shown in the liberal plans on which modern stations are constructed. Bexhill-on-Sea has two long, wide, and straight platforms, well adapted for the huge crowds that made use of it in the summer. However, for several years after Grouping, the London traffic to and from Bexhill was concentrated at the former S.E.C.R. terminus, and Bexhill Central (as the L.B.S.C.R. station was renamed on July 9, 1923) lost some of its importance. St. Leonards (West Marina) was enlarged to meet the traffic of the L.B.S.C.R. and modernised, but since Grouping its importance has fallen to a position similar to that occupied by Bexhill Central. St. Leonards (Warrior Square), an important wayside station between two tunnels, and Hastings, at the extremity of the East Coast line, belonged to the S.E.R., and the L.B.S.C.R. used them under agreement; terminal platforms were provided for the L.B.S.C.R. traffic.

(To be continued)

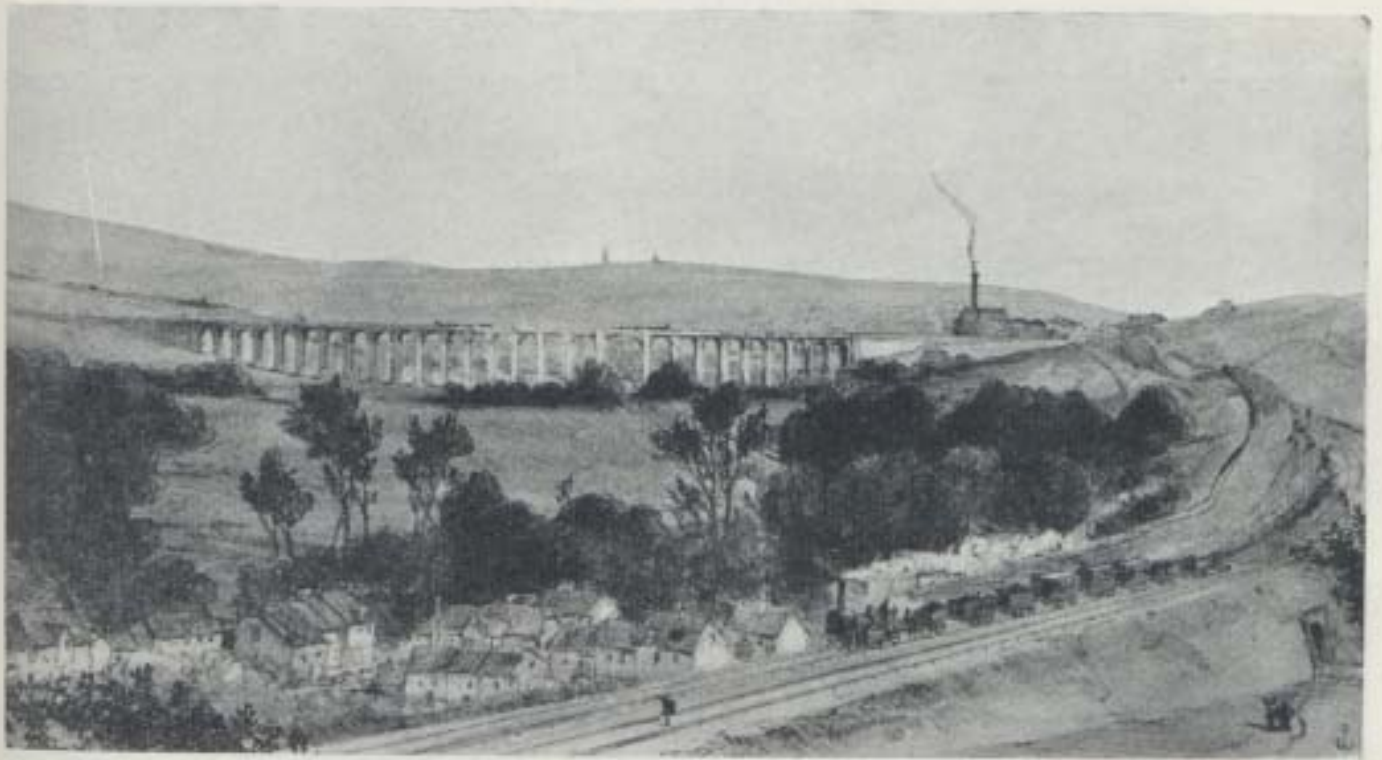
The L.B.S.C.R. East Coast Section

(See article on page 146)



Lewes Station, in April, 1887, looking west along the Brighton line platforms

The L.B.S.C.R. East Coast Section



Reproduction of an early print showing the London Road Viaduct, Brighton (on the Brighton and Lewes line) viewed from the main London line, looking southward. Note right-hand running of train

The L.B.S.C.R. East Coast Section—2

By the late G. A. SEKON

A STRAIGHT line from London to Paris passes almost through Newhaven and Dieppe, and consequently the L.B.S.C.R. at once realised that it occupied a position of first-class importance for the development of a Continental traffic. Powers were obtained without delay for a branch from Southeram Junction, Lewes, to Newhaven, $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length. This branch was opened on December 8, 1847, some two months after the connecting line from Keymer Junction to Lewes. The distance from London Bridge to Newhaven steamer platform was $56\frac{1}{2}$ miles, or $33\frac{1}{2}$ miles less than the then route to Dover. The cross-Channel steamer service from Kingston-by-Sea was speedily transferred to Newhaven, but the Newhaven-Dieppe service remained a tidal one for many years. Remarkable expansion of Newhaven as a port was expected. A guide book in 1852 was emphatic that Newhaven would become "the Liverpool of the South," with docks extending up the river as far as Lewes! An hotel was built on the Wharf at Newhaven, and the Continental trains ran to a platform on the land side of the hotel. Newhaven Town Station, $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile nearer Lewes, was built for general traffic. Experience soon showed that the harbour at Newhaven was unsatisfactory as a packet station, and various attempts were made, from time to time, to improve the situation, but with little success. Eventually, in 1878, powers were obtained for a comprehensive scheme of improvement, and a company was formed under L.B.S.C.R. auspices to carry out the project. Although to all intents and purposes an integral part of the railway undertaking, it was not until 1926 that the Newhaven Harbour Company was dissolved, and the works absorbed in the Southern Railway. As usual, the original capital was quite insufficient to effect the purpose proposed, and additional capital was raised by subsequent Acts. The tidal service to Dieppe gave place to sailings at fixed hours on April 1, 1889, and the main part of the scheme had been completed by about 1895. A new Continental station was erected on the Wharf about 200 yd.

seaward of the old Harbour Station. On June 30, 1862, an Act was obtained to extend the line from Newhaven Harbour Station to Seaford, a distance of $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles. This single-line extension was opened on June 1, 1864, with an intermediate station at Bishopstone, $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile from Newhaven Harbour. Bishopstone Station probably collected less revenue for the railway than any other station on the system, but, as a level-crossing keeper was necessary in connection with the road traffic to the Tide Mills (since acquired by the railway), it was considered that a small station might as well be erected. The Newhaven-Seaford line was doubled in 1905. On September 26, 1938, a new station (still in use), $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile nearer Seaford, was provided to serve Bishopstone, and the original station was closed. The latter was re-opened April 6 of the next year as Bishopstone Beech Halt, only to be closed again on January 1, 1942, as a wartime economy measure.

Seaford Station was remodelled when the line was doubled. It has a long platform with a bay on one side, a running round line, turntable, goods shed, sidings, and plenty of space for future extension.

The branches from Polegate to Hailsham and Eastbourne (authorised by Act of June 18, 1846) were opened on May 14, 1849. The then Polegate Station was west of the present station, adjacent to the level crossing. The Hailsham branch was then entered by a facing junction for down trains.

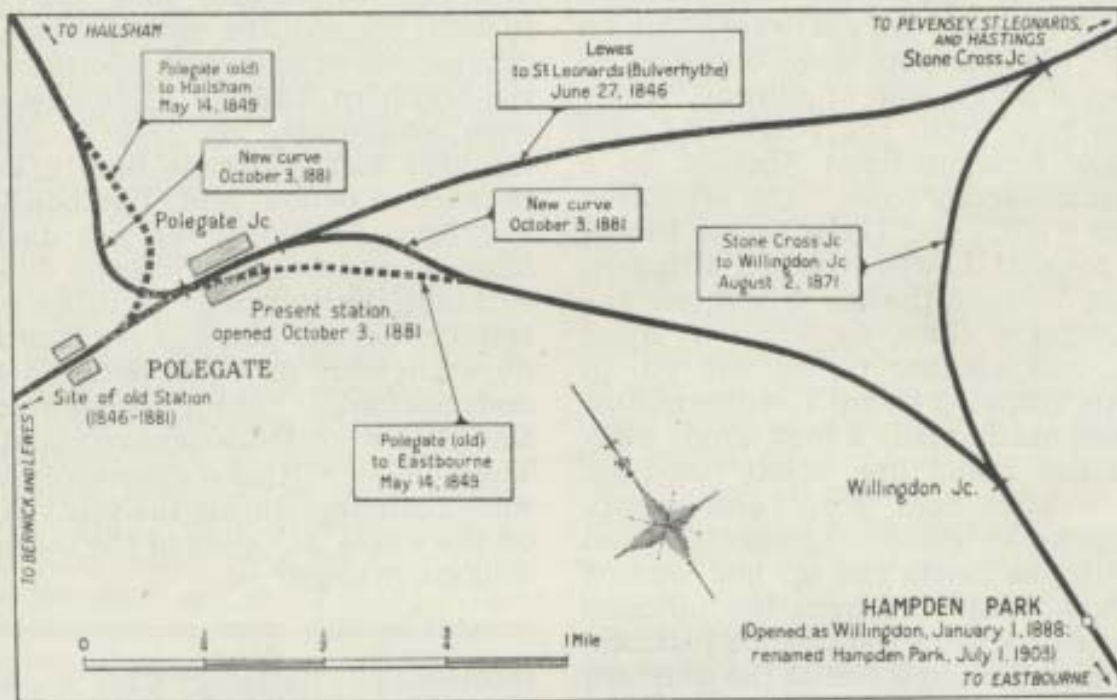
The S.E.R. was seeking a route to Eastbourne, and, to keep that company out of the seaside resort at the foot of Beachy Head, the L.B.S.C.R. obtained powers to construct lines between Hailsham and Tunbridge Wells. The S.E.R., however, was successful in obtaining running powers over these lines to Eastbourne, and constructed a single-line junction between its own system and the L.B.S.C.R. at Tunbridge Wells. To enable trains to run through to and from the S.E.R. and Eastbourne, the Hailsham branch at Polegate had to be made a facing junction for up trains. A new station was erected, and the Hailsham branch was diverted at the junction, and

now joins the main line by an extremely sharp curve at the west end of the new Polegate Station. The station has two long island platforms, and the layout includes extensive marshalling sidings.

The final section of the through route—Hailsham to Eridge—was not opened until September 1, 1880, but from July 6, 1879, under the terms of an agreement sanctioned by Parliament, the S.E.R. had been receiving a portion of the revenue arising from L.B.S.C.R. East-

better connection east and west than by branch trains to and from Polegate.

As at Polegate for the Tunbridge Wells-Eastbourne traffic, so at Lewes a metamorphosis became necessary for the Tunbridge Wells-Brighton traffic. The original Uckfield branch from Lewes left the Lewes-Keymer Junction line west of the tunnel at Lewes, and was opened on October 11, 1858. Uckfield commanded a strategic position in the valley of the Ouse, down which competing lines to



Rearrangement of Polegate lines

bourne traffic. The S.E.R. service between Eastbourne and London was begun when the line was completed, but was not continued for long. The two railways agreed that the S.E.R. should be paid a proportion of the receipts from the Eastbourne traffic, and, as such an arrangement was more satisfactory to the S.E.R. than running a few trains to Eastbourne, the service was withdrawn.

Between Polegate and Eastbourne a station called Willingdon was opened on January 1, 1888. This was renamed Hampden Park on July 1, 1903.

The present Eastbourne terminus is commodious, and similar in general layout to that at Bognor. The construction of a spur line west of Pevensey, joining the Eastbourne branch about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Polegate, enabled trains between Hastings and Lewes, etc., to run into and out of Eastbourne, thus giving that town a

Brighton might be constructed. Such lines were projected, and sanctioned by Parliament, and on July 22, 1861, the Uckfield Railway had obtained powers to extend to Groombridge, near Tunbridge Wells. To prevent the line being acquired by a competitive railway, the L.B.S.C.R. in 1864 purchased the Uckfield Railway. The extension to Groombridge was opened on August 3, 1868. A new approach line to Lewes, which enabled trains from Tunbridge Wells to enter the station from the east, was opened on October 1. This diversion left the existing line about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Barcombe Mills Station, and was carried round the north and east sides of Lewes to join the lines from Hastings on the north (or down) side by a very sharp curve. The Brighton line diverged at the same point by a similar sharp curve on the south (or up) side. A later in-

dependent scheme to reach Brighton *via* Lewes was frustrated only by the L.B.S.C.R. undertaking to complete a line from Croydon to Groombridge with a spur towards Eridge, so that through trains could run between London and Eastbourne and Brighton. This route was completed on October 1, 1888. Part of the line—from South Croydon to Hurst Green Junction, south of Oxted—was jointly owned by the L.B.S.C.R. and S.E.R.

In the early 'sixties of last century Brighton was extending considerably along the cliffs to the eastward, and on May 13, 1864, powers were obtained to construct a single line of railway, about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles long, from the Brighton-Lewes line, near London Road Station, to a terminus at Kemp Town. The estimated cost was £100,000. There was a tunnel 63 yd. long at Lewes Road, a Brighton suburban station (Lewes Road) on the branch, quite close to London Road Station, and another tunnel 946 yd. in length approaching Kemp Town terminus. The latter station had a long single platform, a run round line, a bay (used for goods), a large coal yard, and plenty of space for extension. Lewes Road had two platforms with the up line serving both; the down line from the junction used the east side of the eastern platform and ran into the single line at the southern end. The branch was opened on August 2, 1869; in addition to providing for passengers to all parts of the system, it catered for a fair local service, although the motorbuses running between Kemp Town and other parts of Brighton subsequently captured most of the traffic with the result that the passenger services were withdrawn on December 31, 1932. The branch service was performed by a push-and-pull train to and from Brighton Central. On Saturday, July 29, 1933, the London Road-Kemp Town section was put out of use as a section, and became worked as a siding.

The East Coast line is served by trains to and from London, Newhaven, Eastbourne, and Hastings, *via* Keymer Junction, and by the secondary service between London and Brighton, *via* Lewes. In addition, there are services between Brighton and Tunbridge Wells, East Grinstead, Eastbourne, and Hastings, *via* Lewes, and local journeys on the Seaford branch. Connections to and from the

Hailsham line are provided at Polegate. Most of these trains run between Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells, and some include through coaches between Eastbourne and London, *via* Eridge. For some years after Grouping, the principal trains between London and Hastings used the former S.E.C.R. route, and the services *via* Lewes became of secondary importance. The timetables were entirely revised when the railway from Brighton to Eastbourne and Hastings, together with the connecting line from Keymer Junction to Lewes, and the Seaford branch, formed the second stage in the programme of main-line electrification on the Southern Railway. The new services were inaugurated on July 7, 1935, and included fast trains at hourly intervals between London and Eastbourne and Hastings, additional services during the morning and evening business hours, and substantially increased facilities for local traffic. Several through services in each direction were provided between London and Seaford. Steam locomotives continued to work the Newhaven boat trains. The number of trains necessarily suffered some reduction during the war years, but, on the whole, the level of the services was well maintained.