

# The Genesis of the Sussex Coast Lines

By H. C. P. SMAIL



*Photo]*

*[Denis Cullum*

**A recent view of Shoreham-by-Sea Station, looking towards Brighton**

**T**HE London & Brighton Railway as finally authorised by Parliament on July 15, 1837, provided not only for a main line from London to Brighton by Sir John Rennie's direct route, but also for a branch from Brighton to Shoreham and another to Lewes and Newhaven. The Act stipulated that work on the Shoreham branch should be commenced before, or at the same time as the main line. The Shoreham branch was, in fact, the first section of the Brighton Railway to be opened for traffic, on May 11, 1840, a year and four months before the main line was completed, and it therefore holds a position of some importance in the history of the L.B.S.C.R.

The line ran from Brighton Station, on the north side of Trafalgar Street, to Shoreham Station, adjoining Buckingham Road, a distance of six miles. The only major engineering works were the New England Tunnel through the hill carrying the Dyke Road and the cuttings by which it was approached. These were necessitated by the awkward siting of Brighton Station, on the south-east flank of a hill,

so that it had a cutting on the west side and an embankment on the east.

Work on the Shoreham branch was started as soon as possible after the passing of the Act, under the direction of the Resident Engineer, John Urpeth Rastrick, and seems to have been carried out under two or more separate contracts. The only trouble encountered was a strike at the Brighton end, the cause of which is obscure. As the line was originally isolated from any other railway, the contractor's engines for work on its construction were delivered by sea at Kingston and dragged to the scene of their labours by horses. A contemporary record states that towards the end of 1839, "an immense engine," as much as eighteen horses could move, had arrived and been set to work on the completion of the New England Tunnel. The progress of the line aroused great interest among the inhabitants of Brighton and Shoreham, and a number of people availed themselves of the opportunity of having a free ride on the engine as far as Southwick, then the termination of the permanent track.

One passenger, who was much impressed by his experience, has recorded for posterity his impressions of his first trip on the footplate. "I have now seen with my own eyes the mighty steam carriage rushing along with uninterrupted speed, rivalling the winds in swiftness. I myself have had a ride on this steam monster. The feeling of being shot forward at twenty or thirty miles an hour is awful, and produces that feeling one experiences upon a vessel upon a storm tossed ocean."

There were actually four engines at work on the line at the time of its opening, not three, as usually stated. These were

*Eagle* opened the Shoreham branch in May, 1840, and was taken into the company's stock in October of that year and the other two were sold to contractors. Contemporary newspaper reports state that *Brighton* was delivered by Rennie on February 5, 1839, and tested on the line on the 16th of the same month, and *Shoreham* was delivered on April 18, 1839. It is clear that one or two engines at least must have been at work on the line early in 1839.

C. F. Dendy Marshall, in "A History of the Southern Railway," mentions three original engines, *Brighton* and *Shoreham*, built by Rennie, and *Kingston*,



Brighton Station, from Surrey Street, soon after the opening of the railway, showing Mocatta's original front facing Trafalgar Street

named *Brighton*, *Shoreham*, *Kingston* and *Eagle*, the last having arrived only a few days before the opening from the works of G. & J. Rennie, together with one first class and one second class carriage. Other first, second and third class carriages and luggage vans had already been delivered in readiness for traffic.

The particulars of the engines concerned as published in different accounts are slightly confusing. F. Burtt, in "The Locomotives of the L.B.S.C.R. 1839-1903," records three engines of the 2-2-2 type named *Brighton*, *Shoreham*, and *Eagle*, built by G. & J. Rennie, with 5 ft. 6 in. driving wheels and 14 in. × 18 in. cylinders, dated 1840. He adds that

which he says opened the Shoreham branch, without giving further details, but in the same author's detailed list of Brighton engines that were taken into the Croydon Joint Stock, the following engines are mentioned: No. 1, *Brighton*, a 2-2-2, built by Jones in 1839, with 5 ft. 6 in. driving wheels, and 13 in. × 18 in. cylinders; became No. 45 in the Croydon Joint Stock, and was transferred to the S.E.R. in 1846, being renumbered 4 and 130, and withdrawn in 1863. No. 2, *Shoreham*, a 0-4-2, built by Jones in 1839, with 5 ft. driving wheels, and 15 in. × 22 in. cylinders; became No. 46 in the Croydon Joint Stock, and was transferred to the S.E.R. in 1846. No. 7,

*Eagle*, a 2-2-2, built by Rennie in 1840, with 5 ft. 6 in. driving wheels, and 14 in. × 18 in. cylinders; became No. 50 in the Croydon Joint Stock, and was returned to the L.B.S.C.R. in 1846, and was renumbered 14 and 9.

The details of the latter engines *Brighton* and *Shoreham* are confirmed in N. Wakeman's "S.E. & C.R. Locomotive List, 1842-1953," though he adds that they might have been built by Rennie. It seems more likely that the original Rennie engines, *Brighton*, *Shoreham* and *Kingston*, were never taken into the company's stock but were replaced by the Jones engines *Brighton* and *Shoreham*. We learn from contemporary accounts that *Kingston* hauled the opening train, with a little assistance from *Eagle*, and it seems clear that the latter engine was afterwards taken over by the L.B.S.C.R.

The official opening of the Shoreham line was fixed for three o'clock on Monday, May 11, 1840. An hour or two before that time, the station at Brighton began to fill with ticket-holders, for whom a thousand tickets had been issued, while large crowds gathered along the side of the cutting and the top of the New England Tunnel. Inside the station, the band of the 12th Lancers struggled to make itself heard above the noise of escaping steam and excited people.

Soon afterwards, the first train was made up, under the direction of Rastrick. It was headed by the engine *Kingston*, and consisted of two open third class carriages each containing about forty passengers, mostly directors and local tradesmen, two second class and two first class carriages holding about twenty passengers each, and occupied by the ladies, and finally three luggage vans containing temporary benches and accommodating about seventy people, making a total of about 230 passengers. The driver, named Jackson, had previously been employed working the same engine during the construction of the line.

As the clock approached three, the band struck up a popular tune of the day appropriately entitled "Off! Off! Said the Stranger," and at three o'clock precisely the all clear signal was given by the waving of a white flag, and to the strains of the National Anthem the train moved slowly off. Scarcely had the last carriage cleared the end of the

station, however, when the train came to a standstill with the driving wheels of the engine slipping violently. On investigation it was found that the brake of the second carriage was locked on. This was soon set right by Rastrick, his assistant, Statham, and other gentlemen "of scientific attainments," and at eleven minutes past three a second start was made, this time with assistance from behind by the engine *Eagle*.

Travelling at over thirty miles an hour, the train passed the station house at Copperas Gap (Portslade) at 3.18 p.m., the harbour entrance at 3.21, and arrived at Shoreham Station at 3.23, having accomplished the six miles between Brighton and Shoreham in exactly twelve minutes. At Shoreham several hundred people assembled to see the arrival of the first train, and a fete was held at the famous Swiss Gardens to celebrate the occasion. At 26½ minutes to four the train started off on the return journey, and arrived at Brighton at eleven minutes to four, making 15½ minutes for the journey.

A second train, hauled by the engine *Eagle*, left Brighton for Shoreham at nine minutes past four with a further load of passengers, and two other trips were made during the course of the day, on the last of which the band accompanied the train. Altogether about a thousand passengers were carried during the day. In the evening a dinner was held to celebrate the great event at the Old Ship Hotel, Brighton.

The following morning, a train left Shoreham for Brighton at eight o'clock on the first day of normal traffic. The service consisted of six trains a day each way, running at two-hourly intervals, starting from Brighton at nine o'clock and from Shoreham at ten in the morning. On Sundays, there were five trains each way. Fares between Brighton and Shoreham were: first class, 1s.; second class, 9d.; third class, 6d. The company also ran first class *coupé* carriages, for which the fare was 1s. 4d.

There seems at first to have been rather a shortage of passenger vehicles on the Shoreham line. On Sunday, May 17, just a week after the opening of the line, a man named Atherall, while riding on the tailboard of a luggage truck which had been pressed into service for the conveyance of passengers, was thrown

off and killed between Shoreham and Southwick. This was the first fatal accident on the London & Brighton Railway.

There have been no major accidents on the Brighton-Shoreham line, though in its early days it suffered from the usual minor mishaps. In December, 1842, the boiler of an engine named *Brighton* blew up shortly after passing Hove Station with a train from Brighton to Shoreham. The connecting rods and other parts were blown a considerable distance by the force of the explosion, and were later picked up by the policeman from Hove Station, who arrived on the scene with other helpers attracted to the scene by the report of the explosion. The driver, named William Cavan, was severely scalded about the legs and body, but the fireman escaped injury, and so also did one of the railway engineers, named Meredith, who was travelling on the tender at the time. The engine was probably the Jones & Potts *Brighton* that was afterwards taken over by the S.E.R., unless it was the Rennie locomotive of that name, which may have disappeared thus from the company's stock.

An incident occurred in 1844, which reveals the laxity that was then all too prevalent in railway working. At this period there was a regular steamship service between Shoreham, Brighton, and Dieppe, which was run in conjunction with the London & Brighton Railway. When the ship was prevented by the weather from approaching Brighton Pier the railway ran a special train from Shoreham to convey passengers to Brighton. On the evening in question, a special train left Kingston Station at 9 p.m. with passengers for Brighton, and at the same time the usual passenger train left Brighton for Shoreham. By some mismanagement, both trains were sent off on the same line and met head-on between Hove and Southwick. Fortunately the drivers saw each other in time and shut off steam, and at the same time signalled to their guards to apply their brakes, so that a collision was just averted. Both engines were carrying red lamps in front, which seem to have given adequate warning of their approach.

The original stopping places between Brighton and Shoreham were Hove,

Portslade, Southwick, and Kingston. Because of extensive development in the area, and the consequent rebuilding of the stations along the line, there are few relics to be seen of its original construction. At Brighton Station, Mocatta's south front of 1841 originally faced on to Trafalgar Street, with an approach from Surrey Street on the west side. A narrow bridge was erected in 1845, connecting the station with Queen's Road. This was widened in 1863, and again in 1875, to form a direct approach from Queen's Road, with Trafalgar Street running in a subway underneath. The outer canopy which now obscures much of the original facade was erected in 1882.

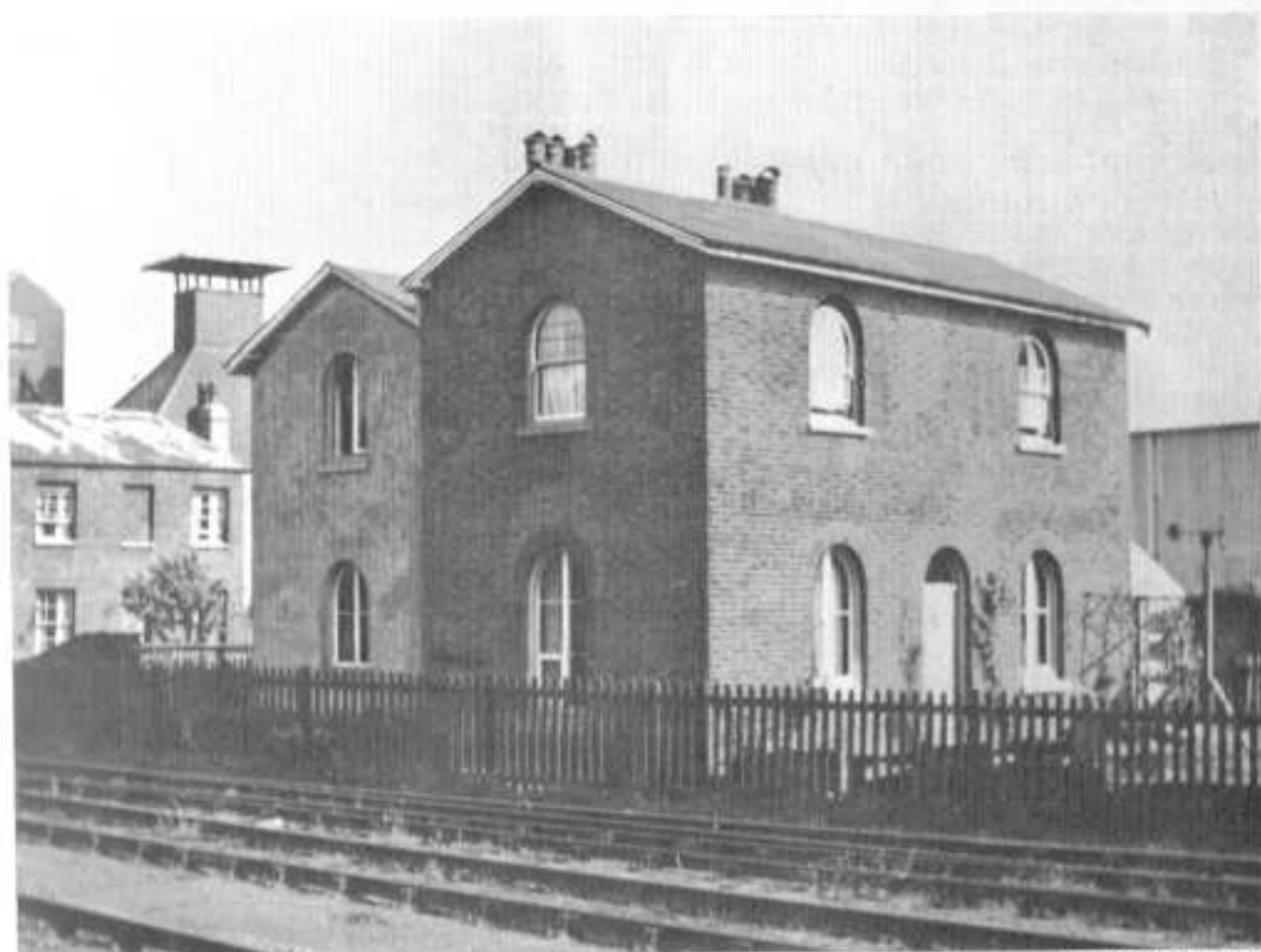
The interior of the station when it was first built hardly came up to the florid magnificence of the exterior. It consisted of three bays, aptly described as passenger sheds, two each of 52 ft. span for the main lines, and one of 62 ft. span for the Shoreham line. The roof was described as a very chaste design. The divergence of the Shoreham branch originally came outside the station, but subsequent lengthening of the platforms has brought it within the station area.

The first Hove Station was on the site of the present Holland Road goods yard, immediately to the east of Holland Road Halt, and half a mile east of the present station. It was built to serve the fashionable quarter of the town growing up around Adelaide Crescent in the early part of the nineteenth century, and was nearly a mile from the old village of Hove. With the rapid growth of the town westward a new station called Cliftonville was opened in 1866, half a mile west of the first, and on the east side of the present Hove Station.

Cliftonville was renamed West Brighton when the spur to Preston Park was opened on July 1, 1879, and the original Hove Station was closed to passenger traffic. West Brighton then became the nearest stopping place to Brighton for through Worthing trains using the Cliftonville Spur, and the station was enlarged to deal with the increased traffic. On October 1, 1894, the name was changed to Hove & West Brighton, and on July 1, 1895, it was changed again to Hove. The present extension of the station westward, and the canopy over the road, were completed in 1908.



Horse shunting at Kingston sidings in 1938



Photos]

[H. M. Madgwick

The station house at Kingston-by-Sea, near Shoreham, on the down side

Portslade (now Portslade & West Hove), and Southwick were both stations on the original Shoreham Railway, but for many years were comparatively unimportant. The original down platform at Portslade was on the west side of the level crossing, where the gatekeeper's curious little cottage still stands. The present station on the east side of the crossing was erected in 1881. The present Southwick Station dates from 1891. Part of the former station premises at the west end of the present building on the up line, consisting of a small waiting room with a sloping canopy, remained until it was demolished in the winter of 1951.

The station at Kingston-by-Sea was built to handle the cross-Channel traffic which it was once hoped would develop at this port. In the eighteenth century, packet boats sailed from Kingston harbour to Dieppe, and by 1788 had become a regular service. The harbour itself was not entirely satisfactory, because the Adur, in common with other Sussex rivers, tends to build up a bar across the entrance and push its mouth eastward. Efforts were made during the latter part of the eighteenth century to keep the harbour clear, but they met with little success, and it was not until 1817-20 that the present entrance at Kingston was made.

The port also suffered from poor inland communications. The only road running east and west, apart from the coast road to Brighton, which was more often than not impassable, was the Upper Brighton Road over Old Shoreham Bridge, about a mile north of the harbour. In 1820 it was proposed to build a turnpike road from Shoreham to Brighton (now the Lower Brighton Road) and an iron railway from the harbour to the western extremity of Brighton, but only the road materialised. William James, in his great plan for an "Engine Rail Road" linking London, Shoreham, Rochester, and Portsmouth, in 1823, also included a branch from Shoreham to Brighton. In February, 1825, the Shoreham & Brighton Railway was revived once again, while four of the six competing Brighton lines of 1835-37 also included Shoreham in their route.

Soon after the completion of the London & Brighton Railway in 1841, the company advertised trains to connect

with the steamers sailing from Kingston, but when the L.B.S.C.R. formed a separate company in 1847 to run its own cross-Channel steamers, the railway company was unable to agree on terms with the harbour authorities, and transferred the port of sailing to Newhaven. The passenger station at Kingston was closed about 1863, but the station building on the down side of the line still exists, and is now used as a dwelling.

Although as a passenger port Kingston was a failure, it has long been used for goods traffic, and even before the railway arrived it was quite busy. When the railway reached Shoreham in 1840 the company built coke ovens at Kingston to provide fuel for its engines, and a wharf with sidings to enable ships to unload, though the layout of the harbour was not as convenient as it might have been.

The sidings on the wharf were connected to the goods sidings on the down side of the main line by an inclined plane at right angles to the sidings, with a turntable at each end, up which the trucks were hauled by a stationary engine. An additional complication was caused by the coast road from Shoreham to Brighton, which ran between the wharf sidings and those on the main line, and was carried over the inclined plane by a bridge.

Various engines have been used from time to time to supply steam for working the inclined plane, including, in 1878, a Craven mixed-traffic 0-4-2 tender engine, No. 156, originally built at Brighton in 1862. In the summer of 1926, a Stroudley "E1" class 0-6-0 tank, No. 136 (formerly *Brindisi*), originally built in 1878, took a turn for a few months before going back into normal service again. Horses were used for shunting until 1938, when the wharf and sidings were completely rebuilt. The separate basins were filled in to form a straight sea wall, and the inclined plane was replaced by a loop with a gradient of 1 in 82. Shunting is now performed by an *ex-S.E.C.R.* "P" class 0-6-0 tank engine.

At Shoreham, the original station building on the down side was below the level of the platform, which was reached by a flight of steps from the waiting room, and it is probable that there was at first no raised platform. Early photo-

graphs show that, in 1870, the platform was even lower than it is now. There was a flat narrow canopy which was little more than a wide projection of the eaves. It was an attractive little building, and bore a strong resemblance to the work of David Mocatta, the architect of Brighton Station and a number of smaller stations on the Brighton main line. On the up side, there was a plain wooden shelter with a sloping canopy, now incorporated into the present structure at the east end.

Excursions to the famous Swiss Gardens at Shoreham formed an important part of the early traffic on the Shoreham branch. These gardens were opened in 1838 by J. B. Balley, a local shipbuilder, and were a popular pleasure resort in the early part of the nineteenth century. On occasions there would be as many as 5,000 visitors to the gardens, or twice the entire population of the town at that time, and the L.B.S.C.R., in conjunction

with the proprietors, ran excursions from Brighton and as far afield as Portsmouth. Arrangements were made for the charge for entrance to the gardens to be included in the excursion fare.

From 1840 to 1845, Shoreham was the terminal station of the western extension of the London & Brighton Railway. Coaches ran from Worthing, Arundel, Littlehampton, and Bognor to Shoreham to connect with the trains to Brighton and London. A Brighton coach proprietor, Strevens, of the Blue Coach Office, ran a coach to Portsmouth which was conveyed by the 9 a.m. train from Brighton to Shoreham, and then did the rest of the journey by road, *via* the Littlehampton Ferry and Bognor. The return journey was similarly made by road to Shoreham and thence by train to Brighton. In 1845, the line was continued westward, and finally reached Portsmouth on June 14, 1847, and the subsequent history of the Shoreham branch is merged into that of the West Coast line of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway.