The Coming of the Railway

Arguably the most important event in the history of Barnes and Mortlake was the opening of the Richmond Railway. In little more than 50 years, it was to change our locality from small villages surrounded by fields and farms with a few large estates, to the teeming suburbs of today.

The Inception

In 1836 the prospectus of the City of London & Richmond Railway was published. This was two years after the Act for what later became the London & South Western Railway (LSWR) had received Royal Assent, but two years before the first part of the line was opened. The projected capital of the company was £1 million, and the line proposed ran on the south side of the river from a terminus near Southwark Bridge to Richmond. The deposited plans in the Public Record Office show the intended line following a rather more southerly course than the present railway, with the terminus in Richmond adjacent to the northern end of Waterloo Place. From there it was to follow a straight course almost parallel with the Upper Richmond Road through Mortlake and Barnes. It was intended to be in a shallow cutting, with Green Lane (now Manor Road), Sheen Lane and White Hart Lane carried over it on bridges, thus avoiding the inconvenience of level crossings. It would have run a little to the south of St Leonard's Road, passed under Sheen Lane where Nelson Terrace now stands, entered Barnes at the junction of White Hart Lane and Priests Bridge and run along the southern border of Barnes Common. The proposal aroused strenuous opposition from the local vestries and landowners, typical being the reaction of Mortlake Vestry which passed a resolution opposing the railway for the following reasons:

1. Because the inhabitants either collectively or individually would not derive the smallest benefit.
2. That most serious annoyance would be experienced by obstructing the highways and footways.
3. That it would be a needless and uncalled for invasion of private property and cause an irreparable injury to houses and lands of several of the inhabitants.
4. No advantage, as there is no manufactory or object of commerce along the whole route to be benefited.

5. That, if completed, it would tend to the increase of the desecration of the Lord's Day in this neighbourhood.

With regard to 3, no doubt the inhabitants most affected would have included some of the leading members of the Vestry! However, the scheme was abandoned without being put before Parliament.

The project for a railway to Richmond was revived six years later in 1844, when the prospectus of the Richmond & West End Junction Railway appeared. The capital was to be £260,000 in £20 shares. The route was to be similar to that of 1836 from a terminus either in the City or near what is now Waterloo, but running on a more northerly course through Barnes and Mortlake with the terminus at Richmond on the south side of the present station. It was stated at the time that there were 98 omnibuses daily between Richmond and London, and this was doubtless the reason the LSWR showed an interest in the new railway. The promoters were mainly local businessmen and soon reached agreement to co-operate with the LSWR. The latter agreed to work the railway when it was built but insisted that they would construct the section onward from their terminus at Nine Elms to the City. That section was therefore omitted from the final proposal which received Royal Assent on 21 July 1845 as the Richmond Railway, for a railway six miles long from a junction with the LSWR at Battersea. The Act stated that it was now "lawful to enter upon, take and use such lands as necessary" and required the directors to construct the railway at their own expense and within three years.

The Richmond Railway

Under the Act the company had 14 directors, with William Chadwick as chairman. Three of the directors were appointed by the LSWR and included William James Chaplin, the outstanding figure in the early history of the LSWR. A former coach proprietor, he became chairman of the LSWR in 1842. Joseph Locke (1805-60), already engineer to the LSWR, was appointed to a similar post to the new railway. A pupil of George Stephenson, he was one of the foremost of the early railway engineers, his principal achievements being the main lines from Waterloo to Southampton and Exeter. The route of the new railway was hardly a test of his abilities. It ran through virtually level countryside and the only major works were a viaduct 1,000 feet long at Wandsworth, carrying the line over the Wandle and the Surrey Iron Railway, and a cutting at Putney. The route was similar to that proposed in 1836 apart from the more northerly route through Barnes and Mortlake, where it followed the course of the Worple Way (an established commonfield roadway) and with level crossings over the roads, not bridges. Anderson states the railway would have preferred bridges, but there were objections locally on the grounds that they would be too steep for horses - under the 1836 proposals the bridge over Sheen Lane for instance would have been seven feet above ground level. (The more northerly course was presumably dictated by the 1836 route no longer being available through the construction in 1845 of Nelson Terrace (the cottages in Sheen Lane south of Milton Road), although following the course of the Worple Way may have made the acquisition of land easier.

Building the Line

In September 1845 Joseph Locke informed the directors he had received an offer from Henry Knill to complete the works (except for land, stations, iron rails and chairs) for £50,000. The offer was accepted and Knill commenced work from the junction with the LSWR at Falcon Bridge, Battersea (a short distance east of Clapham Junction, which did not then exist). Progress was good and there are entries in the company minutes of payments for land to various people in Barnes and Mortlake from October 1845 onwards. The course of the line through Barnes lay through part of the Common, market gardens, and some meadow and osier beds, with no buildings in the way. Similarly, through Mortlake the course was through market gardens and fields. Early in 1846 Knill reported several overbridges completed

between Putney and Barnes Common and that, although the Richmond end had not yet been started, he thought the line might be completed by June, or earlier if pressure were applied.

In February 1846 there was a complaint from the contractor that he was not able to get possession of land. The company minutes indicate the problem was principally in Barnes. In Mortlake there do not appear to have been many problems. In November 1845 Robert Yeates was paid £110. 2s. 6d for his crop and interest in something over an acre of land and another market gardener received £571 for land and crop, but much of the land appears to have been owned by Mr Ratcliff, who in March 1846 accepted £1,650 the largest payment the company made to an individual. These seem to have been the only substantial payments for land in Mortlake.

Progress by Knill was sufficiently good for Joseph Locke to order 1,000 tons of iron rail from the Coalbrookdale Company at £10 10s per ton in November 1845, but only a month later Locke was worried that the Coalbrookdale Company wished to cancel the contract (perhaps getting a better price elsewhere), so the directors agreed to make an immediate part payment of £5,250. This is all we know about the actual work on making the railway. Elsewhere stories of the navvies abound, but locally they do not seem to have made an impact. It may be that because the works were so light, they moved on so quickly that they left no mark, but there may be

another reason. There was much itinerant labour in connection with the market gardens and it is possible Knill employed only a limited number of experienced navvies, with the general labouring being done by labour he recruited locally. Anderson records that Henry White, a corn dealer and contractor in Mortlake High Street who later became the first Mortlake stationmaster, did some carting for the contractor.

Bridges and Rights of Way

Due to its close proximity to the village and the railways course through the old commonfields, there were more rights of way to be respected in Mortlake. Apart from the three level crossings mentioned earlier, there were also:

- Worple Way. This was recorded in 1832 as "a commonfield roadway" which the railway met by White Hart Lane, crossed near Second Avenue, and then followed on the north side to Sheen Lane. The eastern part of North Worple Way to Second Avenue and South Worple Way from there westwards thus represents the course of the original Worple Way, the remainder of North Worple Way and the eastern end of South Worple Way being new roads constructed by the railway to comply with the Act, which obliged the company to make a parallel road on the north side of the line. The pronounced curve in the railway approaching Sheen Lane and through Mortlake station was brought about by the need to avoid Portobello House which stood on the site of Howgate Road and Oaklands Road and whose grounds bordered the Worple Way.
- Tinderbox Alley (later Spur Bridge). A foot crossing with stiles.

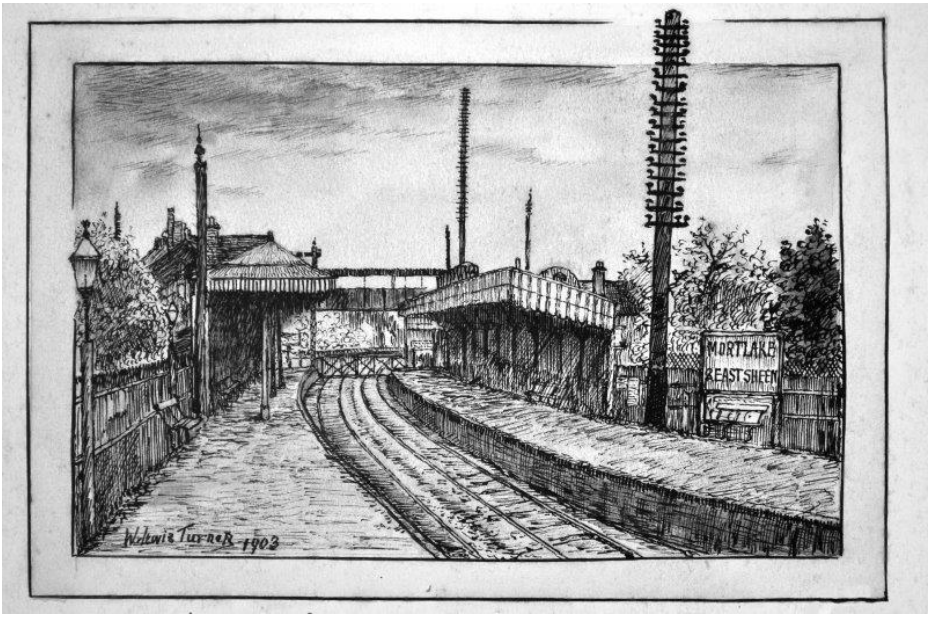
- Church Path. The Act required the company to "make and for ever after maintain a good and sufficient bridge for the passage of foot passengers over me railway where the same crosses the public footpath leading from East Sheen to Mortlake church." A wooden bridge was duly put up when the railway opened, but Mortlake Vestry objected strongly and insisted the bridge was not as commodious as the Act required, pressing the company "to allow the public to pass to and from church on Sundays and all other days when there is a service in church on a level where Church Path crosses the railway, and to place a policeman there for their protection, also to allow a funeral procession to pass at the same level and to give them the same protection." Four months after the railway opened, it was reported that a Mortlake churchwarden had broken down the palings beside the track, whereupon some were placed on the track and run over by a train, fortunately without derailing it, but the company offered £20 for the apprehension of the person who placed the obstruction on the line. After further representations, the company dismantled the bridge and replaced it with a foot crossing and gateman in April 1847.
- Wrights Walk. The railway crossed this path which provided a route from Mortlake to East Sheen. A crossing was not made, although people continued to cross the railway and Richmond magistrates fined the company 40 shillings for obstructing the right of way. Crossing the line at this point seems to have stopped when the foot crossing was made at Church Path in 1847 (the distance between the two was only a few yards).
- Sheen Lane. Under the Act, in addition to the level crossing, the company was bound to erect a footbridge if, within six months of the opening of the railway, it was called upon to do so by the parish surveyors. The surveyors did not exercise this right.
- Forty Path (west of Mortlake station). A foot crossing with stiles.

Stations

Of the five original stations, Richmond, Mortlake, Barnes, Putney and Wandsworth Town, only the station house at Barnes survives and there is little in the minutes concerning them, They were excluded from the contract with Henry Knill and all the minutes tell us are that in April 1846 a payment

of £11,075 was approved to John Tombs for building the stations at Barnes and Putney, and that in January 1847 he received a final payment of £500. The lack of detail is remarkable because the surviving station house at Barnes is architecturally notable. "Tudoresque gothicism" is how Charles Hailstone has described it, and with its tall chimneys rising above the steeply pitched roof, mullioned windows and red brick walls stone-quoined and diapered with blue bricks, it is unlike any other surviving wayside station.

The architect is unknown, although Charles Hailstone asserts it was almost certainly Sir William Tite. Tite certainly built stations for the LSWR, but there is nothing in the minutes of either the LSWR or the Richmond Railway to suggest he had anything to do with the Richmond Railway. The station is mentioned twice in the minutes. In March 1846 it was suggested it be roofed with tiles rather than slates, have chimney pots in character and a small room in the roof, and in May 1846 the Barnes copyholders complained the company had trespassed on Barnes Common by building the station outside of the land allotted. The original stations at Putney and Mortlake stations are said to have been similar, but much smaller. The office at Mortlake is described by Anderson as very small, with a very small entrance room and a small inner room for the ladies' waiting-room. At the time the railway opened it was incomplete, as was the terminus at Richmond (the result of another delay in obtaining land).



The Opening of the Railway

Despite the delays in obtaining land, Knill built the line in only nine months at a cost of £195,000 (a little over £30.000 a mile) and, although Mortlake and Richmond stations were unfinished, a directors' special of 16 carriages drawn by the locomotive *Crescent* left Nine Elms terminus of the LSWR at 2pm on Wednesday, 22 July 1846. *The Times* recorded that "At a few minutes after the hour named, the train started, and moved slowly along the main line of the South Western for two miles; it then turned off to the right, and proceeded at a more rapid rate along the newly-constructed portion to Richmond. The pace, although not great, yet was sufficiently fast, and, from the very slight motion experienced, there is no doubt when it has been longer used all unpleasant motion will entirely cease."

Herepaths Journal considered the line wanting in the picturesque though crossing beautiful country, a defect compensated on reaching Richmond where the station was decked with flags bearing the word "Welcome" in large letters. There was the usual band, and the bells of the parish church were ringing as the train arrived. A second train arrived about 4pm and trains were run for the rest of the day, with free rides for the local residents. Years later, Samuel Minton of Mortlake recalled to Anderson how as a boy he traveled twice to Nine Elms that day. Later there was a banquet and ball

for several hundred ladies and gentlemen at the Castle Hotel, with a "cold collation, accompanied by all the delicacies of the season." Public services commenced on Monday 27 July 1846, but the track had apparently been laid in too much haste. On the directors' special two heavy jolts had been noticed near Richmond and within four days of the opening G.V. Gooch, the LSWR Locomotive Superintendent, reported the line unsafe, his drivers being unable to maintain time. Joseph Locke was called in to remedy matters and was doubtless not amused. Staff engaged for the railway included at Barnes the station agent at £60 per annum and the railway policeman (the forerunner of the signalman) at £48 8s per annum, although when the latter discovered other policemen were receiving £49 8s the directors gave him a suitable increase.

Despite the problems with the track, receipts in the first two weeks were £476 and £536 respectively, while a year after the opening the passenger figures in June-July 1847 were:

Between the termini	104,515		
Wandsworth	9,486	Barnes	4,738
Putney	8,550	Mortlake	9,221

Well might the directors as early as the half-yearly meeting on 18 August 1846 "cordially congratulate their Proprietors upon the favourable prospects which may be fairly anticipated", the "favourable prospects" being the extension of the line to Waterloo, which was completed by the LSWR in July 1848. By then the local company had been absorbed by the LSWR. That railway had been given powers to lease or purchase the Richmond Railway in July 1846, but by then negotiations were already in hand. The first LSW offer was for the Richmond stock to become LSW stock after paying construction expenses, but many, including the Railway Times, considered the offer unreasonable and it was rejected. (As a result, the Railway Times was not invited to the opening by an annoyed LSWR). The South Western was forced to concede better terms and under those finally accepted the shareholders had the choice of one LSW £50 paid-up share for three Richmond £15 paid-up shares, or £25 cash for each Richmond share surrendered. In addition, a Richmond director would join the LSW board. The Richmond company was wound up on 31 December 1846, although when T.B. Simpson, the Richmond deputy-chairman, was nominated for the LSW board he was informed that no vacancy existed. An irate Mr Simpson eventually extracted a

promise from William Chaplin that he would have a seat as soon as a vacancy arose. One of the last acts of the company in June 1846 was to submit a Bill for a branch line to Kew, diverging west of Mortlake station, crossing the Lower Richmond Road and Williams Lane and running close to Kew Meadows Path to a terminus at the foot of Kew Bridge. The Bill was rejected by Parliament in August 1846.

Train Services

The earliest timetable provided for trains about every hour from Nine Elms between 8am and 9.30pm, with "the whole distance performed by ordinary trains in half an hour and by express trains in a quarter of an hour." Fares were first announced as: Express 1s 6d, first class 1s 4d and second class 1s. These were criticised as being too high and the first and second class were reduced to 1s and 10d respectively.

In the National Railway Museum at York are two carriages which came from the Bodmin & Wadebridge line, and these are probably early LSW carriages of the type used on the trains to Richmond. *Crescent*, which hauled the directors' special, was one of-four six-wheeled singles (2-2-2) built by Fenton, Murray & Jackson of Leeds in 1839-40. Little is known of

these particular engines but they and similar locomotives most likely worked the service for the first decade or so. *Crescent* itself was broken up in 1856, having been rebuilt as an early tank engine in 1852 for use between Eastleigh and Salisbury. Only one other engine is known from the opening. On the day after the public opening, a local resident noted that the first train from Richmond at 7.45am was pulled by *Raven* and carried five passengers. Assuming it was correctly recorded (and there seems no reason to doubt it since the LSWR had only one engine called *Raven),* this is interesting because *Raven* was built by Nasinyth, Gaskell & Co. of Manchester, in 1839, one of four small four-wheeled Bury-type singles (2-2-0). They proved so useless that they had been broken up by 1843 except for *Raven,* which was reported as "worn out" in 1 844 and relegated to use as a stationary boiler at Nine Elms, being finally scrapped in 1852. What was it doing working a train from Richmond in 1846? Mechanical reliability was not the strong point of even the best of these early locomotives. No extra engines were built for the new railway, and it is not difficult to imagine a crisis at Nine Elms, with no engine fit to work the first train to Richmond. Although a stationary boiler, *Raven* may still have been complete with its wheels and motion and, since it was only six miles to Richmond, it was level and the train very light, the foreman may have decided that even *Raven* should be able to get there and back in one piece before anyone in authority was about to ask awkward questions.

Conclusion

It can be safely said that the Richmond was a railway that more than justified the highest hopes of its promoters. It is obvious the primary interest of the LSWR was not in Richmond. Chaplin's sights were set firmly on a far more glittering prize, Windsor, and within two years the Richmond line was being extended to Datchet, reaching Windsor in 1849. Traffic increased to such an extent that the line, built as double track, had to be quadrupled between Clapham Junction and Barnes in 1885. This is undoubtedly the reason so little of the original railway of 1846 remains. The small stations at Putney and Mortlake soon proved inadequate and had to be rebuilt. There remains the curious question of why Barnes was singled out for the Richmond's grandest station (the original terminus at Richmond became the goods yard after 1848 but the buildings never rivaled Barnes). Of one thing we can be certain. Chadwick and his fellow directors and shareholders, like John Hibbert of St Ann's, could hardly have realised that their little railway would form part of one of the busiest sections of railway in this country, the Windsor Lines.

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