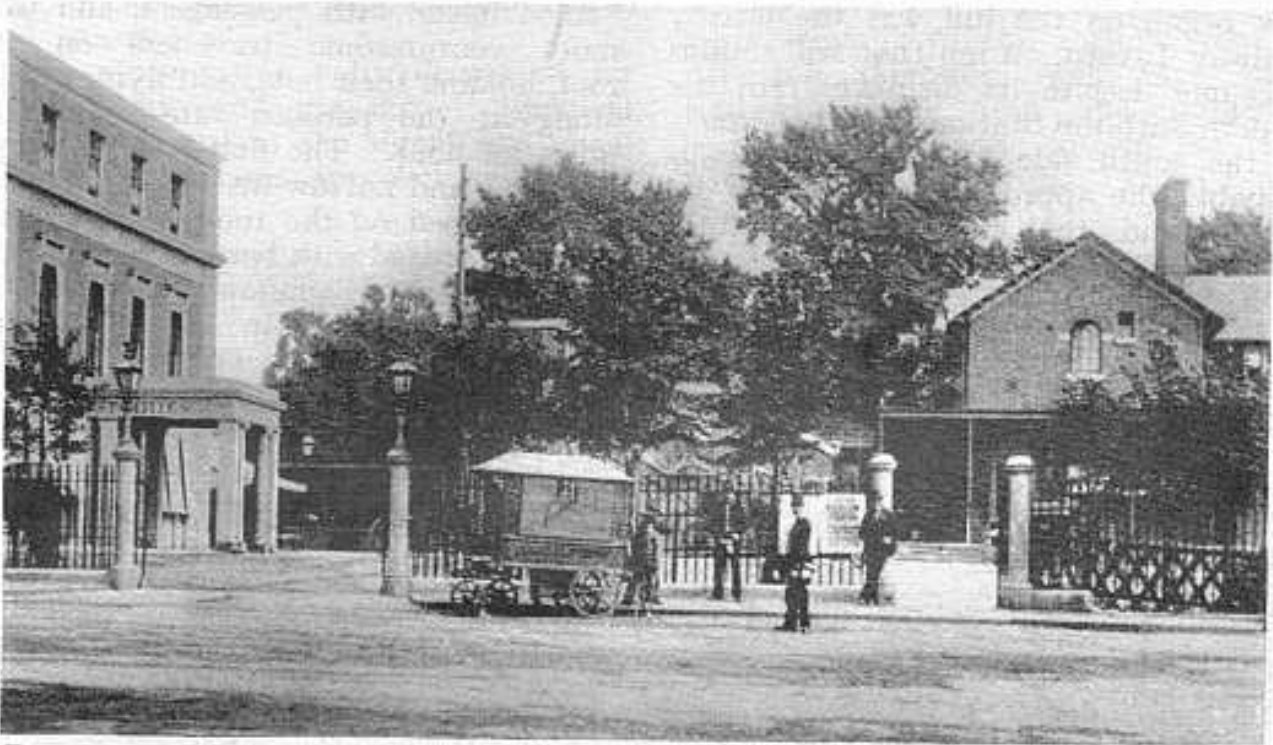


# Railway Development at Kingston-upon-Thames—1

By J. SPENCER GILKS



Reproduction of a photograph taken about seventy years ago showing the exterior of the station at Surbiton opened in 1840 and the adjoining Southampton Railway Hotel

**P**LEASANTLY situated on the eastern bank of the Thames, and famed as 'the Market Place of Surrey,' Kingston-upon-Thames is a well equipped residential and business centre offering every facility and service expected of a modern town." So runs the current guide to Kingston, a town that was important when Saxon kings were crowned there, but little mention is made of the railway facilities available in the borough. This is not surprising, for although the station might have been on the Great Western main line, had Brunel's proposals of 1833 and 1834 come to fruition, it is, in fact, on only a loop line, and, with the exception of the service to the Shepperton branch, all trains go to Waterloo whichever way you travel. On the other hand, if the strong coaching interests on the town council in the 1830s had had their way, it is possible that there would have been no railway at all.

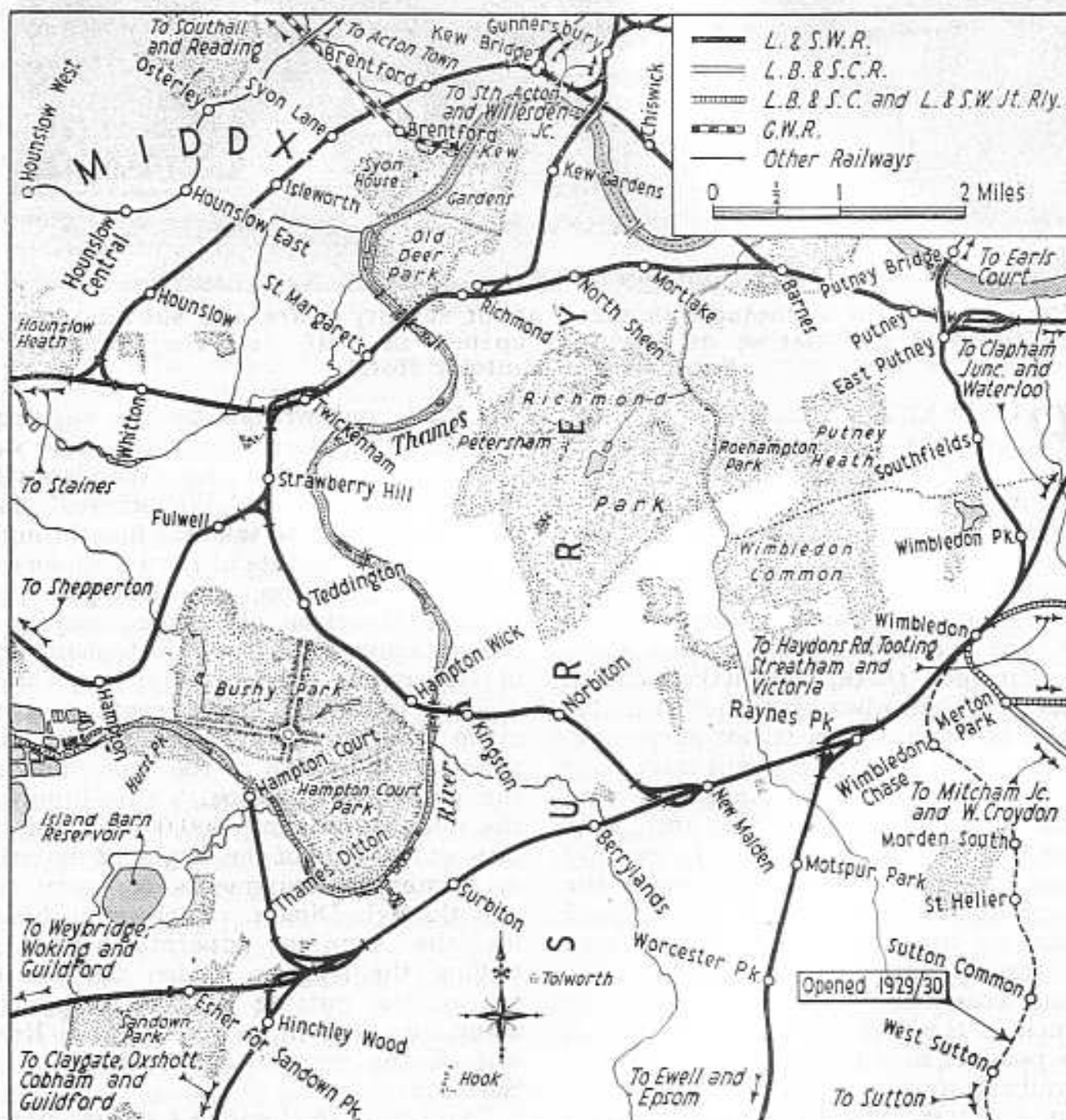
In a letter "to the Committee for promoting the intended London & Southampton Railway" dated December

29, 1830, and written by the engineer, Francis Giles, the route of that line was proposed to "pass by Wandsworth, Kingston, Ditton, and Weybridge." The promoters hoped to take the line through, or close to, the estate of Lord Cottenham, west of Wimbledon, and then pass just south of Kingston. However, because of the antagonism of Lord Cottenham and of Kingston Corporation, they were obliged to amend their route and to make a deep cutting through the hill about a mile south of the town, now in the parish of Surbiton. This involved the removal of some 500,000 cu. yd. of clay and the use of the displaced material in forming embankments to carry the line through Ditton. The engine house for the winding apparatus used in pulling the wagons loaded with earth out of the cutting was built midway along this section, at the Brighton Road end of the present Glenbuck Road in Surbiton.

The Act for the London & Southampton Railway (renamed the London & South Western Railway in June, 1839) received

the Royal Assent on July 25, 1834, and a station known as Kingston was opened on May 21, 1838, in the cutting adjacent to the western side of the bridge carrying the Ewell Road over the line. One of the first houses erected during the period of speculative building which now began on the hill was the nearby Railway Tavern, an inn that still retains its name despite its distance from the modern Surbiton Station. South Terrace, on the south side of the cutting, was probably the approach road for the old station and the circular stone steps which now begin the path from there to the present station contrast strongly with the rest of the path and may well mark the original entrance.

According to F. Somner Merryweather in his "Half a Century of Kingston History," published in 1887, "crowds came to Surbiton from all parts of the neighbourhood to see the train of 'steam coaches' pass" during a trial run from Nine Elms to Woking on May 12, 1838, "filled inside with passengers, and with more venturesome travellers on the roof, holding their hats, and flying madly along at the perilous rate of twenty miles an hour. The first-class carriages were low and narrow inside; the luggage was strapped on the roof. The second-class were fitted with bare seats, and with open, unshaded windows which made umbrellas requisite in rainy weather. The third-class . . . were open trucks



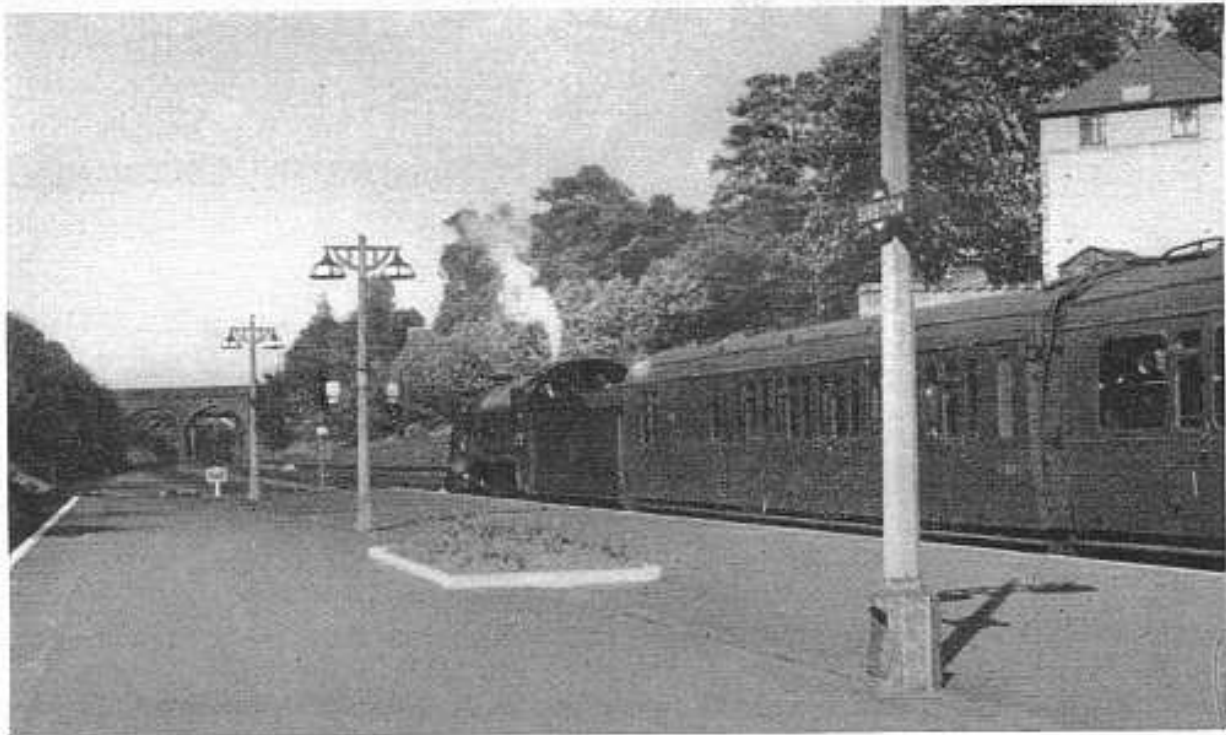
Map of the railways in the Kingston area, showing pre-grouping ownerships

with the rudest of benches. The guard's seat was on the roof of one of the carriages from which he worked a primitive brake which consisted of a shaft or rod underneath the carriage, attached to the brake blocks, with a connecting rod running up to the guard's seat. The position was uncomfortable and hazardous."

The station was gaily decorated for the occasion and the crowd "pressed eagerly forward as the signal was given that the train was approaching. As it

think that they had made a huge mistake, for population and fashion sought the 'new town' on the hill."

The *Observer* commented in 1840 on the growth of Surbiton and the need to remove the station to its present position (achieved in that year) at the entrance to the town. Claremont Road, which leads straight to the station from the Kingston direction, was then called Railway Road, and the immediate neighbourhood was known as New Kingston, later New Town, then



View from the up platform at Surbiton, looking towards the Ewell Road bridge and the site of the original station

drew near, the guard startled the nerves of some by the shrillness of his whistle. To many in the crowd it was a strange sight, but cheers burst forth as the train passed through Surbiton. The trip was successful and was celebrated by a grand banquet."

Merryweather adds that, when the station was opened, passengers "were rather timid at first, and read with anxious care the bill of 'directions and conditions' with which intending passengers were supplied on presenting themselves at the station. They were especially warned not to alight, or even to open a carriage door without the assistance of the company's servants. The public soon got used to the new and speedy way of travelling, and liked it, and the grave councillors of Kingston began to

Kingston-on-Railway, and finally Surbiton. The rapid development of the district must provide one of the earliest examples of the desire to live in the country while working in the City, and the note in the same issue of the *Observer* that the area was only twenty minutes journey from London has a modern ring about it. The population of Surbiton rose from under 200 in 1837 to more than 9,400 in 1881, and 62,000 today.

When the London & Southampton Railway announced in 1838 that it would run special trains to Kingston on Derby Day, such a crowd gathered at the London terminus that it had to be dispersed by the police. The branch from Raynes Park to Epsom was not authorised until 1859, but plans for an Epsom & Kingston Railway, drawn up



Exterior of the present station at Surbiton

by Joseph Locke (who had succeeded Francis Giles in February, 1837), were deposited with the Clerk of the Peace for Surrey in November, 1843. The line of some five miles length would have run from a triangular junction at Surbiton through Tolworth and Ewell to a terminus at Epsom where the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway was later to cross the London Road. As a result of this project, a special meeting of the London & Croydon Railway was convened to consider the propriety of extending that line to Epsom. The company were reported in the *Railway Times* of December 23, 1843, as being of opinion that the South Western would not stop at Epsom but would go on from there to Horsham, and quite likely over Stephenson's original route to Brighton. The special meeting accordingly agreed that the extension to Epsom should be built and the South Western's project was deferred.

At the same time, a far more ambitious scheme was drafted for the Middlesex & Surrey Grand Junction Railway, which would have joined the London & Birmingham at Harrow with the Brighton line at Merstham, and would have passed through the Kingston area by crossing the river about a quarter of a mile north of the present bridge, curving southward

to run along the eastern edge of the Fairfield and passing over the main line in the cutting at Surbiton. It already had been stated in the *Railway Times* of May 13, 1843, that the proposed line would cost less than £700,000 and that the estimated revenue from receipts on passenger traffic between Kingston and Epsom during race meetings alone would amount to £1,400. On December 2 of that year, it was alleged that the new line would unite every railway from Scotland to those of the south and west without going through London, and on a more local plain that it would connect the markets at Kingston, Uxbridge and Southall. The *Railway Times* of the November 25, 1843, includes a comprehensive report on the line taken from the *Sussex Express*.

This scheme did not materialise, but on February 1, 1849, a new line was opened in the Kingston area, when the branch from Ditton to Hampton Court was brought into use. This had been authorised in 1846 and was worked by horse traction, a coach being detached from and attached to main-line trains at the junction. *Bradshaw* for November, 1855, indicates that by then Hampton Court trains were worked through from Waterloo as individual services.

Kingston was not really affected by the Railway Mania of the 1840s, and the next plans for a railway in the district do not appear to have been deposited until 1854. Then the Merton & Kingston Railway was projected to connect the proposed Wimbledon-West Croydon line, authorised in 1853, at a point just north of Morden Halt, with a terminus in Kingston adjoining the Lower Ham Road near the gas works. The line would have passed under the L.S.W.R. near Raynes Park Station, and run through Norbiton. A further five years were to elapse before the next line to materialise was considered.

In the book referred to earlier, Merryweather writes that "when the oppor-

it difficult to attract the occupiers of the luxurious villas fast rising on Surbiton Hill, and the shops erected near the station made the competition still more keen. When the cattle market was proposed, it was suggested by the dealers that it should be held at Surbiton because of the facilities afforded by the railway for bringing up the stock. This was strenuously opposed by Kingston Corporation, and the market was held in the town from 1855.

The Kingston people, therefore, were delighted when, in 1858, a Mr. William Bull proposed the incorporation of a company for the making of railways from the Hounslow Loop line of the L.S.W.R., just west of Isleworth Station,



Down express, headed by "Merchant Navy" class Pacific No. 35009, "Shaw Savill," passing Surbiton in May, 1958

tunity occurred, Kingston was ready, with almost frantic enthusiasm, to encourage any railway scheme that proposed a station within the borough," for the old coaching trade had declined rapidly with the opening of the line through Surbiton. The trade of the brewers and maltsters of the district, who had for generations enjoyed a reputation throughout the country, suffered severely from the goods traffic of the railway. Hitherto the river had given facilities to Kingston traders which their competitors elsewhere could not possess, but now the railway took the malt from distant towns to the London market at lower rates than the barge-masters. The retail trade of the borough also suffered, for the shopkeepers found

and the Great Western at Southall (joining at Isleworth) to Kingston, and thence to the L.S.W.R. just west of Malden Station and the Wimbledon-West Croydon line at Merton, with a branch from Teddington to Hampton. The encouragement which this project received induced the conception of others, among which was one "for making railways from the North & South Western Junction Railway [Willesden Junction to Kew] and the Great Western Railway, and the Great Western & Brentford Railway, to Richmond, Hampton Court, and Kingston, with working arrangements with other companies, running powers over the Great Western & Brentford and the use of the stations of the L.S.W.R. and the N.S.W.R." The principal line

was from the Brentford branch to the Hampton Court branch. The Kingston section left this near Strawberry Hill, and ran for some two miles to a terminus on the site of the present Wood Street Car Park in Kingston.

This project, with its broad gauge implications, spurred the L.S.W.R. into action, and in 1859 that company secured powers for a branch from Twickenham to the Middlesex bank of the Thames in Hampton Wick, where the White Hart Hotel now stands. The Act provided for a service of trains to and from the North & South Western Junction Railway. All intending visitors to Kingston would have had to pay  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. toll to cross the bridge, and the town, therefore threatened to support the rival scheme unless the line was brought across the river. This was agreed, and an extension to a terminus adjoining Richmond Road was authorised in 1860. Passenger services to Kingston began on July 1, 1863. The new station was called Kingston Town, that at Surbiton being renamed Surbiton & Kingston. A station on the Middlesex bank was provided to serve Hampton Wick.

In recording the opening of the line, the *Surrey Comet* stated on July 4, 1863, that there were 15 up and 13 down trains between Kingston and Waterloo, and nine trains to Fenchurch Street and eight in the reverse direction. Appreciation was expressed of the "very excellent station provided for the town," but the high fares charged for short journeys were severely criticised. It was suggested that the L.S.W.R. should take as an example the fares charged on the North London Railway, with which the service from Kingston to Fenchurch Street had brought the L.S.W.R. so much into comparison.

Traffic on the new line began shortly before 7 a.m. without any opening celebrations. There was, however, a desire among the Kingston Corporation to honour the company, but several circumstances had interfered with this idea, namely that the Corporation had no funds for such a purpose, and that whatever took place had to be at the collective expense of the promoters, and that there was little time available to make the necessary arrangements, for until the last moment no one was aware whether the directors would have a

ceremonial themselves. Eventually, invitations were extended to the directors to lunch at the "Griffin," and two of them attended in company with the Secretary, Treasurer, Resident Engineer and Engineer of the L.S.W.R.

During the proceedings the Mayor referred to "the wonderful works carried out by the Company, and particularly to the new bridge over the Thames, which he designated as a beautiful specimen of engineering ability." A councillor said he looked on the new branch as an instalment, and hoped that it would not end there but would in time be carried on to intersect the main line. Several of the members had a trip along the line and visited both Twickenham and Teddington Stations.

Members of the general public were not so satisfied with the new train service. A season-ticket holder writing to the *Surrey Comet* on July 11, 1863, wished to draw "the attention of travellers . . . and of the officials of the South Western Railway who regulate the traffic, to the marvellous fact that we are allowed to travel the distance from Kingston (New) Station to Waterloo, in the extraordinary short space of from 45 to 57 minutes, the distance of which is, I believe, 15 or 16 miles. Now, Sir, may it not be fairly asked is this compatible with railway travelling, or is it not receding to the good old times of coaching. As a simple fact I think this is a case that calls for attention, for although it may be a decidedly safe speed the traveller cannot help conjecturing the time a journey from London to Liverpool at the same speed would occupy."

In 1862 the Thames Valley Railway had been sanctioned from the Kingston branch at Strawberry Hill (from the direction of Twickenham) to Shepperton. This line was opened on November 1, 1864, and absorbed by the South Western in the following year. The inaugural train service of seven up and down trains to Waterloo led to critical comments in the local Press, because, to make way for the additional trains, two of those serving Kingston had been withdrawn. One writer looked forward to the approaching time for the submission of Parliamentary notices in respect of new railways, and expressed

"an earnest desire that the London, Chatham & Dover Railway should again make the attempt to bring the town into their system." His letter continued "nor is the greater accommodation competition would provide us the only advantage to be derived from a union with the London, Chatham & Dover Railway. Look at the position of our Metropolitan terminus—no where; the connection with the Charing Cross Railway, although made for two years, still unused through the narrow cheese-paring policy of the South Western Company. The L.C.D.R. would give us a West End terminus, and a City one on Ludgate Hill, why then are we to remain unwilling victims of the South Western Company, who treat us so indifferently?"

The elongated route to London provided by the South Western line led to the appearance of several schemes for connections eastwards from Kingston, the first two plans being deposited in November, 1863, and known respectively as the Petersham Railway, and the Kingston, Tooting & London Railway. The first of these, which was quoted in *Herapath's Journal* as likely to cost £580,000, would also have provided a shorter route from Richmond, for its terminus was to be in the water meadows, three-quarters of a mile below that town, at a point opposite the junction of Nightingale Lane with the main road. In the Kingston area the line would

have run round the periphery of Richmond Park to enter a tunnel under Kingston Hill before heading east to join the West End of London & Crystal Palace Railway on Wandsworth Common, and the L.C.D.R. at Brixton. A branch, to a point adjacent to the L.S.W.R. station at Kingston, left the main line near St. Paul's Church in Queens Road. The second of the 1863 proposals was for a ten-mile line from a triangular junction with the South London line of the L.B.S.C.R. at Clapham and Brixton Stations respectively, *via* Tooting, Morden, Malden and Berrylands, to a terminus in Orchard Road, Kingston.

In the following year (1864) more plans were deposited. The Great Western & Surrey Docks Junction Railway would have run from a junction with the Southall-Brentford branch *via* St. Margarets, Petersham, Kingston and Raynes Park to the Wimbledon-West Croydon line at Morden Halt and the Merton Park-Tooting line at Merton Abbey. (The Merton Abbey and Haydons Road lines were both authorised in the same year.) The North Surrey Railway would have run from the L.S.W.R. at Kingston Station to Putney, and from there to connect again with the South Western, and with the West End of London & Crystal Palace Railway at Clapham Junction. In view of the influence that these new railways might have on the town, the Kingston Corporation appointed a special committee in November, 1864, to watch its interests.