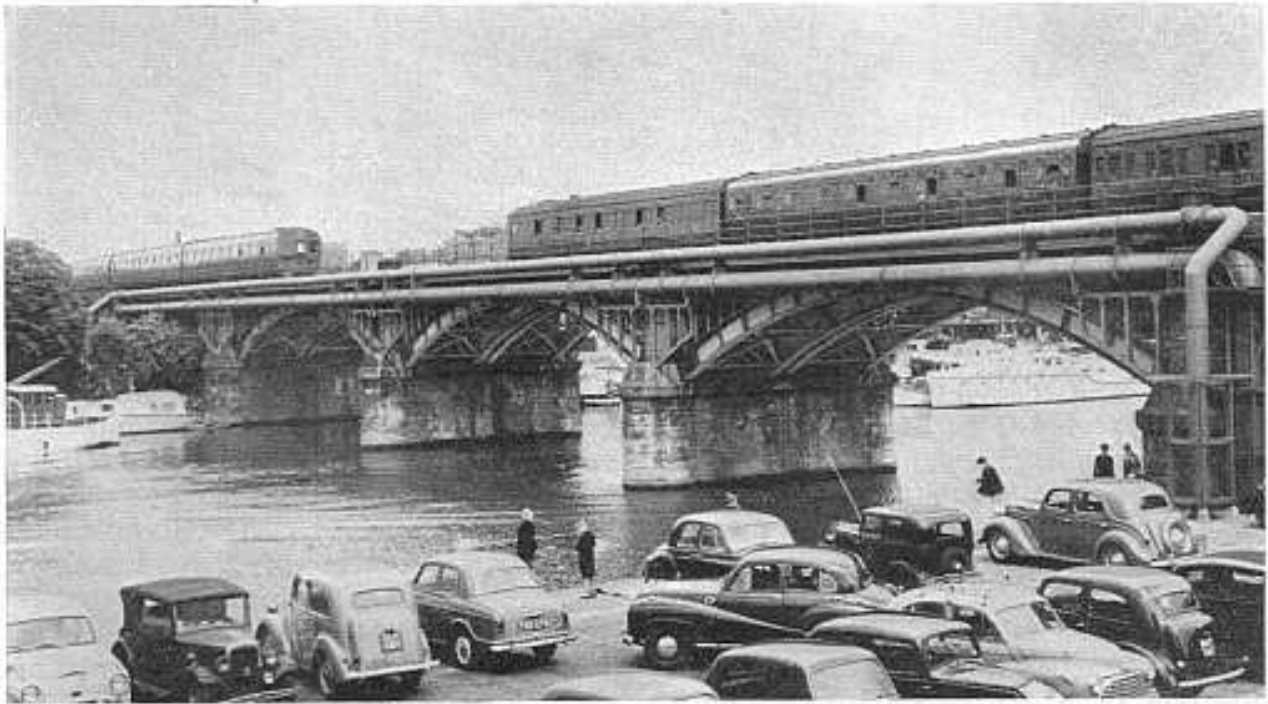


Railway Development at Kingston-upon-Thames—2

By J. SPENCER GILKS



Two electric trains crossing the bridge over the Thames at Kingston

THE London & South Western Railway met the threat of competition for the Kingston traffic by obtaining powers for a shortened route to London in 1864. This took the form of an extension from Kingston to the main line at Wimbledon, with the new tracks running on the southern side of the existing metals from just west of Malden Station. At Wimbledon the extension was to join the London Brighton & South Coast Railway's new loop to Tooting and Streatham. Originally, it was intended to cross Richmond Road, Kingston, on the level, but in 1866 approval was given to raise the line through Norbiton so as to pass over the road into a new high-level station. This bridge necessitated a very steep dip in the roadway, which frequently causes considerable flooding during heavy rain.

The extension was opened on January 1, 1869. The *Surrey Comet* for January 2 indicates that, once again, the opening was quite unpretentious. The new service ran to Ludgate Hill, and involved a change at Wimbledon for passengers proceeding to Waterloo. The local press states that eleven trains were run in

each direction, and that passengers could book to Victoria by nine of these and change at Herne Hill. The North London service to Kingston ceased on January 1, 1869, although the timetables continued to show connecting services. The line from South Acton, through Gunnersbury, to Richmond was brought into use on the same day.

Despite these improvements there was still considerable dissatisfaction among Kingston residents who saw Surbiton flourishing on the main line, and Richmond served by several different companies, while they remained on a loop. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that plans for four more lines were deposited in November, 1865. The Croydon, Mitcham & Kingston Railway was to run from Mitcham Junction (where there were to be connections towards both Croydon and Streatham) via Morden, Motspur Park, Malden and Berrylands to a terminus at the junction of Grove Crescent and Penryhn Road. A spur at Motspur Park was to provide for through running between Kingston and Epsom, and a connection was to be made at Malden with the authorised

L.S.W.R. line from Kingston. This project formed one of the subjects of the London, Chatham & Dover Railway (Various Powers) Bill, 1866, and evidence was considered by a House of Commons Committee between April 24 and 27. Petitions against the scheme were received from the L.B.S.C.R., the L.S.W.R., and the promoters of one of the other schemes, the City, Kingston & Richmond Railway.

On behalf of the Croydon, Mitcham & Kingston it was urged that the line would connect Kingston with the City,

mentary committee, and the Bill was rejected.

The second plan, deposited in November, 1865, was for the City, Kingston & Richmond Railway, which began at Petersham, but ran more to the west in Kingston than the former Petersham Railway before continuing through Berrylands, Motspur Park (where spurs were to be provided from both east and west towards Epsom) and Morden to a triangular junction at Balham with a line through Kennington, Clapham and Brix-



Exterior of the present station at Kingston

the West End, Victoria, Kensington, and the ramifications of the Brighton lines generally, and that it should be worked mutually by the Brighton and South Western Companies. It was considered "a great blot upon the South Western system" that its running powers over the L.B.S.C.R. and the L.C.D.R. did not include access to Victoria. Kingston Corporation was in favour of the scheme, and suggested that by the existing railway (*via* Twickenham) travel to London was so slow that people often drove as quickly from Kingston to Putney Station as the train and caught it there! However, these arguments failed to convince the parlia-

ton jointly projected by the South Eastern and the London, Chatham & Dover Railways. The station at Kingston would have been on the Fairfield Recreation Ground, and to avoid spoiling the amenities, a viaduct was to be constructed across most of this land rather than an embankment as originally envisaged. An undertaking was also given to the Commons Preservation Society that on Ham Common the railway would be constructed in a covered way piled with turf. The South Eastern was to work the line, which received the support of Kingston Corporation, but it was rejected by the parliamentary committee in April, 1866.

The Kingston & Epsom Railway, the third scheme to be introduced in 1865, was to run from the Kingston-Wimbledon line at Norbiton Station *via* Tolworth and West Ewell, where there was to be a spur from the London direction on the L.S.W.R. Epsom branch to Obelisk Field, Epsom. The Kingston Corporation was indifferent to this scheme, and also to the fourth line projected in 1865, the Wimbledon Railway, which was to link the Kingston-Wimbledon line at Norbiton with the Fulham Railway

To provide both Kingston and Surbiton with more direct communication with the West End of London, the Guildford, Kingston & London Railway was projected in 1880. The line was to begin at the terminus of the Metropolitan District Railway at Putney Bridge, and passing through Kingston Vale and Norbiton, was to run parallel with the L.S.W.R. main line at Surbiton to which there was to be a connection. From its own station at Surbiton, the line would have passed near Ditton Hill to



Kingston Station, looking towards New Malden

near Putney Bridge. The Fulham Railway had been authorised in 1865 as a branch of the Hammersmith & City Railway. The Bills for the Kingston & Epsom, and the Wimbledon Railways were rejected, and the Fulham Railway was never built.

Dissatisfaction also had been expressed with the facilities provided by the L.S.W.R. at Surbiton. As the result of this agitation, some improvements were effected, including the lengthening of the platforms, and the enlargement of the waiting rooms. Additions also were made to the station yard and goods depot, where the arrangements for receiving and despatching cattle had been severely criticised.

join the route of the present railway from Surbiton to Guildford at Oxshott. Branches were to serve Leatherhead and Little Bookham. At Guildford, it was hoped to use the existing station, and to construct a spur over the Woking line to connect with the lines to Farnham and Aldershot. Running powers were to be sought at Guildford to reach the L.B.S.C.R. Horsham branch at Peasmarsh Junction, and from Putney Bridge to High Street Kensington, South Kensington, and Addison Road.

The L.S.W.R. opposed the scheme, and proposed a deviation line in the Surbiton area which would have crossed the main line near Berrylands and served Surbiton Hill, but would have ignored

the needs of Kingston and Surbiton proper. Eventually, a compromise was reached, by which the L.S.W.R. agreed to make the line between Guildford and Surbiton, and to unite with the Metropolitan District in building the section thence to Putney Bridge. The New Guildford Line, as it has always been known, was opened from Hampton Court Junction to Guildford on February 2, 1885.

In 1884 and 1885, the L.S.W.R. sought an extension of time in which to complete the line to Putney, and in 1886 to abandon part of the route, and to build the remainder itself, securing at the same time an interest in the proposed Wimbledon & West Metropolitan Junction Railway which aimed at joining Wimbledon with Putney Bridge. On June 25, 1886, the company obtained powers to build this branch to Putney Bridge from Wimbledon and to abandon the Surbiton-Putney Bridge line.

The L.S.W.R. decided to widen its main line between Clapham Junction and Surbiton in connection with the construction of the Cobham line to Guildford. This necessitated the removal of part of the south side of the cutting at Surbiton, and alterations and improvements to the station. The quadrupling was completed to Surbiton by April 1, 1884, and to Hampton Court Junction by November 5, 1885.

At this time, steps were taken to improve the station at Kingston. The high-level through platforms were partly rebuilt, and linked by stairs with the low-level terminal bays; and a commodious concourse was formed between the end of the low-level platforms and Richmond Road.

One further scheme to connect Kingston with Croydon *via* the Wimbledon-West Croydon line must be mentioned. In November, 1883, plans were deposited for the Croydon & Kingston Junction Railway, which would have run from the vicinity of Morden Halt to the Kingston branch tracks at Malden Station. The company was not successful in obtaining its Act.

The extension of the quadrupling of the main line led to the provision in 1908 of a burrowing connection for the up Cobham line at Hampton Court Junction, and in 1915 of a viaduct to carry the down Hampton Court line.

The year 1916 saw the introduction of electric traction on the Kingston loop line and the Shepperton branch from January 30, and the conversion of station lighting to electricity. The line from Malden, through Surbiton, to Hampton Court, was electrified on June 18, and the Guildford line as far as Claygate by November 20. Now the words "Change at Claygate" in *Bradshaw* greeted would-be travellers to Guildford *via* Cobham, but the pull-and-push service operated south of Claygate did not last long, and steam trains worked through from Waterloo at the peak hours. Because of shortage of rolling stock to deal with increasing traffic on other suburban lines, the electric service to Claygate was withdrawn in July, 1919, and was not regularly operated again until the line was electrified to Guildford on July 12, 1925. The main line west of Surbiton was electrified by the Southern Railway on July 4, 1937.

At this time, a complete reconstruction was undertaken at Surbiton Station, so that the alignment of the running roads was improved, and an island platform served the up local and up through lines. The down through line had no platform but another island platform served the down local and a new loop. A new and enlarged goods yard was provided. A new signalbox was brought into use at Surbiton on June 28, 1936.

Kingston Station had been completely rebuilt during 1934 and 1935. The existing buildings, which comprised up and down high-level platforms and three low-level terminal bays under an overall roof, were replaced by a modern block of station offices on the down side, with access from Wood Street and from the corner opposite the bus station. A new bay line was provided on the down side to replace the former low-level bay (which is now cut back to form a siding to a loading dock) and the down platform widened to face this track. Accommodation on the platforms was rearranged, and new subways constructed, both from the new concourse and booking hall to the up platform, and parallel with Richmond Road under the bridge.

Thus, one hundred years after the first train had passed through the district, both Kingston and Surbiton were given

the railway facilities that they had sought for so long, and which they enjoy today. Perhaps it is a just cause for satisfaction that, whereas in 1838 five trains ran from Surbiton to London, there is now the same number in the

average half-hour from both Surbiton and Kingston.

In conclusion, the author wishes to record his thanks to the Archivist of the British Transport Commission, and to Messrs. Y. H. Rushworth and F. M. Cow of County Hall, Kingston, for assistance in the preparation of this article.