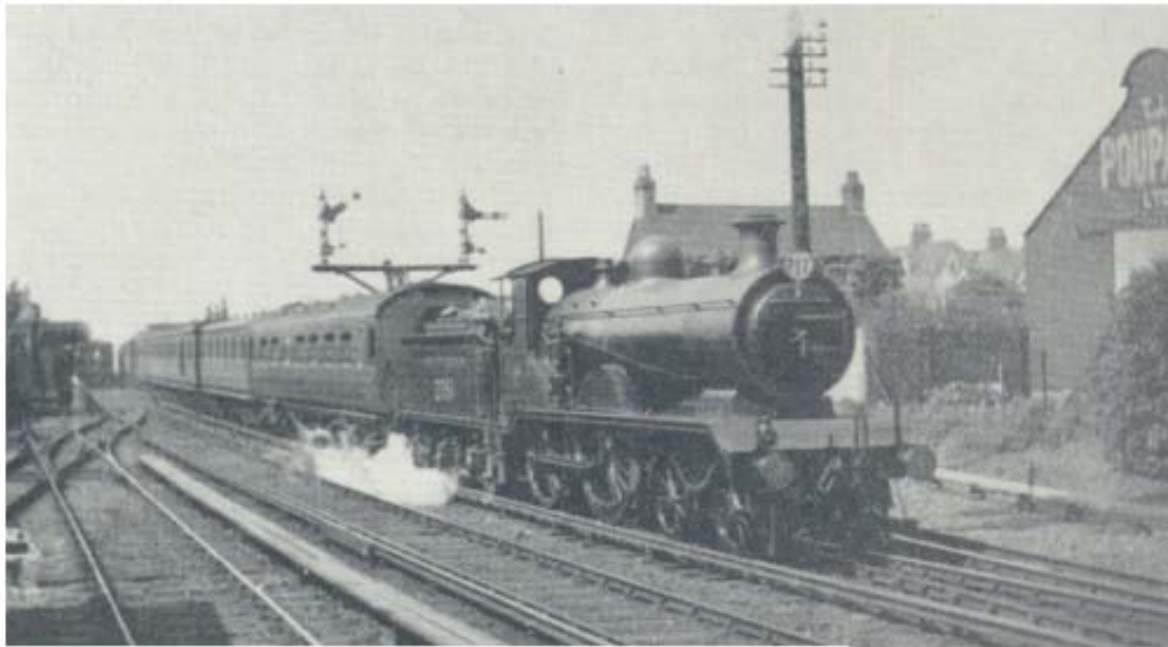


Railway Development in Worthing

By H. C. P. SMAIL



Photo]

[H. M. Madgwick

Portsmouth to Brighton train, headed by "B4" class 4-4-0 locomotive No. 2051, leaving Worthing Central before the extension of the electrification to Portsmouth in 1938

WHEN the London & Brighton Railway reached Brighton in 1841, and was extended westward along the coast during the following years, Worthing and the other coastal towns in the region found themselves disadvantageously placed for communication with London. Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, efforts were continually made by the people of Worthing to obtain direct access to London and the Midlands without going through Brighton, which, had they been successful, would have had a considerable effect on the development of this area.

Of the six competing lines to Brighton which were debated in Parliament between 1835 and 1837, no less than four, those of Cundy, Vignoles, Gibbs and Robert Stephenson, took a westerly route through Horsham. Unfortunately, the towns chiefly concerned could not agree among themselves on the merits of the respective schemes. While Horsham favoured Stephenson's line, Worthing preferred Cundy's route, and the earliest reference we have of the railway in connection with Worthing is a notice of a meeting held on May 11, 1836, at the

Nelson Hotel, in South Street, Worthing, in support of Cundy's line.

The western routes to Brighton did not meet with official approval, and on July 15, 1837, the London & Brighton Railway, by Rennie's direct line, was authorised, with a branch from Brighton to Shoreham, and Horsham and Worthing were temporarily left unprovided for. The Brighton and Shoreham section was the first part of the line to be completed, and was opened on May 11, 1840, more than a year before the main line was completed.

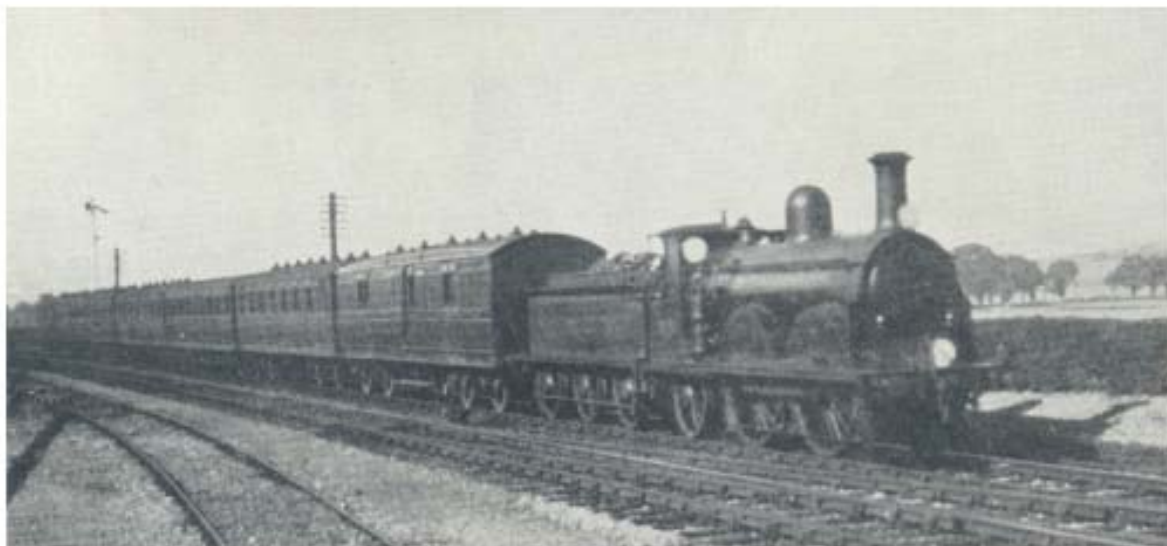
The next intimation we have of a railway to Worthing comes in a letter dated December 17, 1840, headed Shoreham & Worthing Railway, and addressed to the Surveyor of Highways for the Parish of Broadwater (in which Worthing was then included) from the solicitors of the railway. This stated that it was proposed to apply in the forthcoming Session of Parliament for an Act to build a railway from the terminus of the Shoreham branch to Worthing. According to the accompanying schedule, the line was to be carried under Ham Lane (now Ham Road Bridge) and over a footpath leading to Broadwater (now the Quashetts sub-

way) but apparently it was not intended to cross Broadwater Road. This suggests that the station was to be on the east side of Broadwater Road, on or near the site of the present goods yard.

Nothing further was heard of this scheme, and it was not until July 4, 1844, that the Brighton & Chichester Railway Company was authorised to construct a line from Shoreham to Chichester, and to sell the railway when it was completed to the London & Brighton Company. In September, 1845, the Brighton & Chichester Railway Company sold the line as far as it had gone, together with additional powers to extend it to Ports-

attitude towards the development of Worthing throughout the next half-century.

It has been stated that the first Worthing Station was on the east side of the main road over Broadwater Bridge, but this appears to be a misapprehension. Map references dated 1848 show the station about a hundred yards west of the bridge, where the original building still stands, and it was many years before the land east of the bridge was developed. It was intended, as in the scheme of 1840, to place the station east of the bridge, but the owners would not sell the land required for a



Photo]

[A. E. Gurney-Smith

L.B.S.C.R. 0-4-2 locomotive No. 618, "Gladstone," passing Goring about 1920 with a Portsmouth-Brighton express (non-stop Chichester to Worthing)

mouth, and it was therefore the Brighton Company that brought the railway into Worthing on November 24, 1845.

The first trains started running between Worthing and Brighton at seven o'clock in the morning and were watched by a large crowd. There was an opening-day accident, when the fourth train of the day, the 12.50 from Worthing to Brighton, ran into a horse-drawn cart near Lancing and was derailed. The railway was worked as a single line, and the accident caused considerable delay to the later trains. In the evening, a dinner was held at the Nelson Hotel in South Street to celebrate the day's event, but it was poorly attended, and there were no representatives of the railway company present. Indeed, the lack of interest shown by the railway on this occasion seems to have been the keynote of its

road from this site to the High Street, then the centre of the town. The station was therefore erected to the west of the bridge, and the present Railway Approach set out.

This first station consisted of a narrow two-storied building with a single-storied wing at each end, now divided into two premises and known as Station House and Railway Cottage. It was built of grey flint and red brick, with a slate roof, in the prevailing local style of architecture adopted by the Brighton Railway for many of its smaller stations and gatekeepers' cottages. Even at the time of its construction it was rather small for the size of the town it was intended to serve. There was a canopy in front on the south side for the benefit of passengers alighting from the station omnibus. This was removed when the

building was converted into a dwelling house after the erection of the second station. The up platform had a long canopy and was placed much further eastward, with its east end nearly adjoining Broadwater Bridge, so that the two platforms did not even overlap.

It was originally intended to have a level crossing at Broadwater Road (which would have made three crossings in less than a mile) but thanks to the foresight of the Town Clerk, a Mr. Tribe, a road bridge was built instead. At a meeting of the Town Commissioners on June 24, 1844, Mr. Tribe reported that he had succeeded in having introduced into the Brighton & Chichester Railway Bill a clause for carrying the London and Worthing road over the railway on a bridge. It is a pity that similar arrangements were not made at South Farm Road and Tarring Crossing.

Broadwater Bridge was erected slightly to the west of the original alignment of the main road. In 1852, Thomas Hampton, a local corn merchant, erected a Corn Exchange on the north side of the line adjoining the bridge, with an entrance on the bridge itself. The building, which still exists almost unaltered, is now used as a horticultural warehouse.

The original service of six trains a day to Brighton was far from satisfactory, and one of the first items of local railway news is a notice of a meeting held at the Town Hall on June 27, 1846, to protest against the inadequacy of the railway communication between Worthing and London. One of the chief causes of complaint for many years was the badly-timed connections at Brighton.

At first, neither Worthing nor Horsham obtained direct access to London by rail as they had hoped for from the proposed western routes, and it was not until February 14, 1848, that Horsham received a branch joining the main London and Brighton line at Three Bridges. The line from Horsham to Petworth was completed on October 10, 1859, and from Shoreham to Horsham on September 16, 1861. On August 3, 1863 the railway from Hardham Junction to Ford was brought into use, and with the opening of the line from Horsham to Dorking on May 1, 1867, Horsham at last acquired direct access to London through Leatherhead and Epsom. This then became the main L.B.S.C.R. route to Portsmouth

in place of the former coast route through Brighton and Worthing, and increased the importance of Horsham as a railway centre at the expense of the coastal towns.

The people of Worthing continued to press for a direct line to London through the Horsham system. The first attempt was in March, 1866, when a Worthing Railway Bill was brought before the Standing Orders Committee of the House of Lords, but was dismissed as not being in accordance with the requirements of the house. The object of the promoters seems partly to have been to force the L.B.S.C.R. into providing a faster service and cheaper fares, which it had promised to do while the Bill was under consideration, and the local press pertinently enquired whether these promises would be kept now that the Bill had been rejected.

In November, 1866, another Bill was brought forward for a new line to commence in the Parish of Broadwater and terminate by a junction with the Shoreham and Horsham line near Southwater. The railway was to be worked by the London & South Western Railway, the Brighton Railway, or the South Eastern Railway, either jointly or severally. A new station was to be built in Worthing on the north side of Park Lane (now Richmond Road) opposite the junction with Grafton Road, about a third of a mile south of the existing station. It is not clear why a second station should have been considered necessary so close to the first, and the embankment or viaduct needed to carry the line over the existing one would have been very costly, and no doubt contributed to the inevitable failure of this too ambitious scheme. In any case, the L.B.S.C.R. would hardly have tolerated the presence of either of its rivals in the heart of its territory.

In 1869, a new station was built at Worthing, about a hundred yards west of the original structure, an improvement which had been demanded for some time. This second station was on the site now occupied by the present one, which is the third in succession. It consisted of a plain cement-faced single-storied building on the down side, with a central entrance and offices on each side. There were two platforms opposite each other and connected by a subway. A refreshment room was opened in 1879. Later, a

wooden extension was added on the west side of the main building, which housed a sub-post office. Part of this wooden structure is now used as a parcels office, and, together with the last three gables of the south canopy, is incorporated in the present building. The first station was left standing and the house occupied as a residence by members of the railway staff.

The train service at this period was still very unsatisfactory. The fastest booked time between Worthing and London, *via* Brighton, was 1 hr. 45 min., though most

Preston (renamed Preston Park on July 1, 1879) for the Worthing trains. This action forced the L.B.S.C.R. to introduce a similar Bill, and to reopen negotiations with the Worthing Association. At a meeting on April 14, 1875, a settlement was reached, whereby the Worthing Association agreed to withdraw its Bill while the L.B.S.C.R. undertook to construct the proposed curve, and operate through trains between London and Worthing.

The new line, called the Cliftonville Spur, was authorised on June 29, 1875,



Photo]

[H. M. Madgwick

Brighton to Plymouth train leaving Worthing about twenty years ago, headed by "T9" class 4-4-0 locomotive No. 336

trains took considerably longer because of traffic delays and badly-timed connections at Brighton. In April, 1874, an Improved Railway Communication Association was formed in Worthing, and on June 24 a deputation from the Association met J. P. Knight, then the General Manager of the L.B.S.C.R., to urge the provision of more through coaches and discuss the possibility of a direct line to London. Other meetings followed but without achieving any result, and on November 6, the railway company informed the Association that it failed to see that Worthing had any cause for complaint, and virtually closed the negotiations.

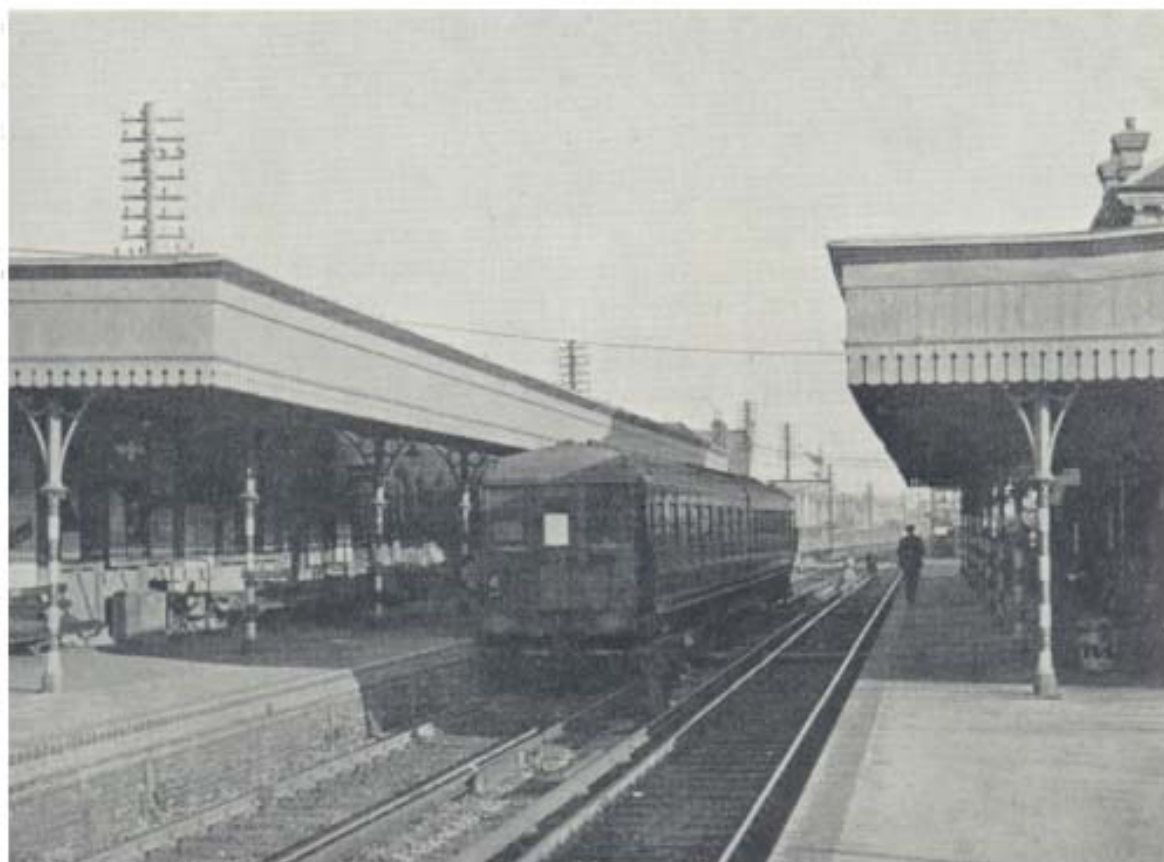
The Worthing Association thereupon promoted a Bill for a spur from Hove to

and opened on July 1, 1879. It involved a tunnel 535 yd. long, and for so short a line was expensive to construct. A Worthing portion was included in several of the down Brighton expresses, and was either detached from trains stopping at Preston Park or slipped at Haywards Heath or Horley. Apart from the convenience of through coaches, there was a slight improvement in timing by the new route, and in 1888, the fastest time between Worthing and London was 1 hr. 35 min.

At this period, a number of local trains terminated and started at Worthing. The present loop on the north side of the up platform was then only a siding, and there was a turntable on the north side of the line, just east of Broadwater



Worthing Central Station, looking east, in 1945



A two-coach local electric train about to leave West Worthing for Brighton in November, 1945

Bridge, near the present cattle pens. When a train arrived on the down line the engine was uncoupled, run on to the up line and then to the turntable, where it was turned, shunted back on to the down line, and coupled to the train for the return journey. This complicated manoeuvre was possible only when traffic was far less frequent than it is now, since it caused both lines, as well as the level crossing, to be blocked for long periods.

The next development was the opening on November 4, 1889, of a new station at West Worthing, to serve the parish of Heene, then a rapidly growing district. There was a turntable on the down side, about 350 yd. west of the station, which was removed when the line was electrified in 1933.

Unfortunately, hopes of continued rapid growth at West Worthing did not materialise, and in 1893 financial difficulties intervened and development came temporarily to a standstill. In the same year, the progress of the town was still further retarded by the disastrous typhoid epidemic, which caused a serious financial loss to the railway. It was said that in the month of August, 1893, there was not a single visitor in Worthing, and it was several years before the town fully recovered from these set-backs.

At the opening of West Worthing Station, the question of a direct line to London was again brought up, and considerable disappointment was caused when the railway company stated that it was not prepared to consider the construction of such a line, and that in any case it would not shorten the travelling time between Worthing and London.

The project was revived once more in 1891, some twelve months after Worthing and West Worthing had been incorporated as a municipal borough. The Rev. John Goring, of Wiston Park, who owned large tracts of land between Worthing and Horsham, proposed a line through the Findon Valley, to serve the agricultural districts of Findon, Washington, Ashington and Storrington. In those days, it was hoped that Worthing would become a holiday resort for visitors from the Midlands and it was suggested that, if the L.B.S.C.R. was not interested in the scheme, a connection might be made with the Midland Railway. This suggestion is not quite so far-fetched as it sounds. The Midland was an enterprising railway,

and by joint lines and running powers had extended its influence to Bournemouth and the East Coast. However, that company expressed no interest in the proposed Worthing line.

During this period, the fruit growing industry had become firmly established around Worthing, and for some time there had been a demand for increased goods accommodation at West Worthing. An appeal to this effect was addressed to the L.B.S.C.R. in 1894, but it was turned down on the grounds that there was already ample goods accommodation at Worthing and Goring. In actual fact, the latter did not serve Worthing at all, while the former was inconvenient for West Worthing, Durrington and Salvington, where much of the industry was then concentrated. A meeting to press the matter further was held at the Downview Hotel, West Worthing, early in June, 1894. It was suggested that a new goods yard should be built on the west side of the station, and a committee was appointed to take up the matter again with the railway company, but it was not until November 6, 1905, that the present goods yard at West Worthing was opened.

In 1898, the perennial direct line came up once more. This time it was suggested that, as none of the main-line companies seemed interested in the idea, a light railway should be built between Worthing and Horsham, and operated by the Hundred of Manhood & Selsey Tramway. It was intended mainly for the transport of agricultural produce from the Worthing area to London. Correspondence passed between the Selsey Tramway and the local landowners, most of whom were in favour of the scheme, but there were obvious practical and financial difficulties, and after some lengthy negotiations the project was abandoned.

With the turn of the century, there came an improvement in local travelling facilities, thanks to the efforts of Mr. (later Sir) William Forbes, who became General Manager of the L.B.S.C.R. in 1899, to reorganise the traffic department, and to the introduction of motor trains designed by D. E. Marsh to serve the congested coastal region. The first push-and-pull trains ran between Worthing and Brighton on September 3, 1905. A new halt was built at East Worthing, about a mile east of Worthing Station,

called Ham Bridge Halt, and renamed East Worthing Halt in 1949.

Between 1908 and 1911, Worthing Station was rebuilt completely, and the roads in the vicinity widened. The station remained in use throughout the time of its reconstruction, but it was officially reopened on April 23, 1911. The improvements included an entirely new south front and offices in red brick, a subway, and entrance on the up side from Southcourt Road, a third platform on the north side, and the conversion of the north siding into a loop. At the west end of the station, part of the former wooden building was retained as a

Worthing in 1933, and the extension to Portsmouth in 1938. The level crossing at South Farm Road was widened in the summer of 1934, although it still lacks either a footbridge or even a pedestrian wicket, and remains one of the most inconvenient crossings on this extraordinarily inconvenient stretch of line. In 1936, Worthing Station was renamed Worthing Central, and a new station named Durrington-on-Sea, between West Worthing and Goring, was opened on July 4, 1937.

Needless to say, the direct line has finally faded from local politics, but for many years there has been a demand



Photo]

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Worthing Station, south front, about 1921. Part of the second station is on the left, and the first station house (of 1845) can be discerned on the extreme right of the main building

parcels office. At the east end, the original first station still remains, so that within a distance of some two hundred yards can be seen the evidence of the three successive stations.

For many years, and in fact right up to the electrification of the line, it was occasionally the practice for local trains returning to Brighton to start from the down platform with the engine running bunker foremost. The crossover to the up line, just outside the station, was controlled by a starting signal on a bracket at the east end of the down platform. This eliminated some of the complicated shunting previously referred to, but even so it would not be feasible under present traffic conditions.

The most important development in recent years has been the electrification of the main line to Brighton and West

that Worthing should be provided with an alternative route to London, either by the construction of a spur from Shoreham Airport to Old Shoreham, with a new bridge over the Adur, and the electrification of the Shoreham—Horsham line, or by a spur from somewhere near Lyminster to the electrified Mid-Sussex line at Arundel. Both these plans have been considered, though the threatened closing of the Shoreham and Horsham line in the summer of 1951 seemed to contradict this. Traffic on the Brighton main line, which is shared by all the other towns along the coast as far as Littlehampton, has now reached such a density that it is difficult to see how Worthing and other rapidly growing areas of population in the neighbourhood can ever hope for an improved train service without making use of alternative routes.