

CHAPTER 10 THE END OF THE SURREY IRON RAILWAY

The London and Southampton Railway Company was incorporated by an Act of 25 July, 1834, and authorised to "build a railway from Southampton to a London terminus at Nine Elms. Renamed the London and South Western Railway, it was opened from Nine Elms to Woking on 21 May, 1838, and throughout to Southampton on 11 May, 1840.

In 1844 this company was planning an extension from Nine Elms to a point near Waterloo Bridge, and in conjunction with this project the directors began discussions with the L.&B.R. Company on the idea of forming a branch railway from the Brighton Railway at Croydon to connect with the L.&S.W.R. near Earlsfield. Because the L.&B.R. trains ran over the London & Croydon and London & Greenwich lines to reach London Bridge station, that company had to pay tolls to each of those concerns. "By means of the suggested branch, the L.&B.R. Company would be provided with another route to London, thereby avoiding payment of the tolls; and the L.&S.W.R. would gain "by the additional traffic on their line.

The proposal for this branch seems to have originated with the L.&S.W.R. Company, but a similar line had been envisaged much earlier by Joseph Gibbs as a branch from the London & Croydon Railway at Croydon to the L.&S.W.R., then under construction. This connection, which he referred to as the "west-end branch", and described as "following the line principally of the old tramroad", was incorporated in his unsuccessful London and Brighton railway proposal of 1836.[1]

The first move in respect of the proposed branch was reported to the L.&S.W.R. board of directors by its chairman, W. J. Chaplin, on 18 August, 1844. He said that "he had seen the present Proprietors of a tramway between Wandsworth and Croydon and that he thought they would guarantee to obtain an Act of Parliament with power to take the additional land to straighten the curves and likewise an Act for rendering the tramway applicable to railway purposes for the sum of £30,000." A week later Chaplin reported that "he had concluded an arrangement for the purchase of the Croydon Tramway at ,£19,000 and that a deposit of £1000 had been paid to bind the bargain." [2]

A meeting of representative directors of the Brighton and South Western companies was held on 13 September, 1844, to discuss the proposal. The route was to be "from a point of the Southampton Railway distant about $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Nine Elms to extend by Tooting and Mitcham to the Brighton Line near Foxley Hatch about $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of the Croydon Station and following mainly the direction of the present Wandsworth and Merstham Tramway about 8 miles in length estimated to cost £100,000 including about £19,000 for the Tramway."

The directors entered into a provisional agreement, the essence of which was that the proposed branch, and the extension of the L.&S.W. R. to Waterloo, should be made, funded and managed jointly by the two companies; that the "Brighton Company shall join the South Western Company in their purchase of the Tramway at once and whether the above Railway from Croydon to Wandsworth be made or not"; and that if the 'L.&S.W.R. extension were to be built but not the connecting branch, the former line should be built entirely by the L.&S.W. R. and for their use. It was also agreed that the South Eastern Railway Company be invited to share in the construction and use of the two lines.

On 1 October, 1844, the L.&S. W. R. directors signed an agreement for the purchase of the Surrey Iron Railway, and on 5 October they instructed their engineer, Joseph Locke, to make a survey of the Surrey Iron Railway, "with a view to an application to Parliament for power to convert it into a railway applicable for Locomotive Engines and Carriages." The L.&B. R. directors became more involved in the scheme when on 4 November they instructed their engineer, John U. Rastrick, to prepare plans, based on Locke's proposals, for the connecting line, and ordered their solicitor to prepare the Parliamentary notice of intent. This, dated 8 November, 1844, was duly published a few days later. [3] There was no specific mention in the notice of an alliance with the L.&S.W.R. Company, and this may be indicative of an impending rift between the companies that was soon to open.

In pursuance of the arrangement with the L.&S. W. R. Company for the purchase of their line, the Surrey Iron Railway Company published a notice of their intention to apply to Parliament for a Bill to enable them to abandon the railway, sell the property, and dissolve the company. This was also dated 8 November. [4]

On 16 November, Rastrick reported to the L.&B.R. board his estimates for three different routes for the branch, as follows: (1) Locke's first proposal, for a line joining the L.&B.R. at Purley, which he estimated would cost £318,792, including £20,000 "for tramway." (2) Locke's alternative proposal, for a route joining the Brighton line north of Croydon station, in the sum of £162,616, again including £20,000 for the purchase of the Surrey Iron Railway. (3) A proposal put forward by Rastrick, for a line joining the L.&B.R. at Croydon Common, and not following the course of the Surrey Iron Railway, at a cost of £117,644.

Insofar as Locke's estimate for route (1), the original proposal, which "amounted to something between £100,000 and £150,000, but nearer £100,000", differed so greatly from Rastrick's, it was decided to have a meeting with the L.&S. W. R. directors to discuss the discrepancy.

At this joint meeting, held on 18 November, it emerged that Locke had not made an accurate survey, and "did not intend to be bound to his estimate but he was of opinion nevertheless that the Tramway line would not cost the money Mr. Rastrick had estimated it at." The L.&S. W. R. directors did not think there was sufficient reason to vary the terms of the agreement of 13 September, but the L.&B. R. directors thought otherwise and decided that in the circumstances, "the Board is not bound in honour to take the Tramway." Their intention now was to go ahead with proceedings in respect of Rastrick's proposed route for the branch, which did not interfere with the Surrey Iron Railway, independently of the L.&S. W. R. Company.

A further meeting of the two boards was held on 4 December, 1844, when it was agreed, *inter alia*, "to divide the loss upon the resale of the tramway equally between the two companies."

On 7 January, 1845, the companies entered into a formal agreement concerning a number of matters, the items relevant to this study being as follows:

"(4) That the Surrey Iron Railway which the South Western Company have agreed to purchase shall be resold under the direction of a joint Committee of Six, viz. Three Brighton Directors and Three South Western Directors and the loss (if any) upon the re-sale with all Costs attending the purchase and sale shall be borne by the two Companies in equal shares.

(5) That the Brighton Company shall apply to Parliament for Powers to construct a Passenger Line of Railway from their own Line at or near Croydon to form a junction with the London and South Western Line at or near a Point where the same crosses the Surrey Iron Railway but they shall not be obliged to make such Junction if the South Western Company do not make their Extension to or near Waterloo Bridge."

A week later the railway department of the Board of Trade published a notice of their intention to report against the Croydon to Wandsworth Branch Bill of the L.&B.R. Company. [5] On 20 January Captain B.K.Kelly, the chairman of the L.&B.R. board, met with W.J.Chaplin of the L.&S.W.R. Company, and they held a discussion "upon the subject of the mode in which the arrangement recently made between the two Companies stood affected by the decision of the Board of Trade against the Wandsworth Branch." As a result, the following "Memorandum" was annexed to the agreement of 7 January:

"That in consequence of the Report of the Board of Trade against the Croydon and Wandsworth Junction Line the Brighton Company may exercise their option as to applying to Parliament either in the present or in the ensuing session for an act or acts to make such a Junction."

Meanwhile, another company had been promoting a railway which affected the terminus of the Surrey Iron Railway at Croydon. An Act was passed on 29 July, 1844 (7 & 8 Vic. cap.92) which authorised the construction of the Croydon and Epsom Railway, an extension of the London and Croydon Railway from (West) Croydon station. The route was to cross the line of the Surrey Iron Railway just north of its terminus, and in April, 1845, notice was served on that company that the land at the terminus and the railway where it would have been crossed, were to be taken. B.C.Luttly, the clerk of the Surrey Iron Railway Company, wrote to the L.&S.W.R. Company, "to make some arrangement by which the Compensation might be assessed in a manner satisfactory to all parties, to them for instance if they failed to obtain power to complete the sale to them and to the South Western Company if the sale should be completed." Luttly suggested that a Mr.Tite be engaged to deal with the Croydon and Epsom Railway Company in the matter of compensation, and the L.&S. W. R. and L.&B. R. companies agreed.

James Higgins was appointed as arbiter in the matter of the purchase price and compensation. His award, dated 13 November, 1845, required that the C.&E.R. Company should provide a new terminus for the Surrey Iron Railway on the north side of 'the Croydon - Epsom line with an approach road from Pitlake Road (now Roman Way), and pay £740 for the land to be taken. The sale was delayed because it was found the the Surrey Iron Railway Company had never paid for the land they occupied at Pitlake. In November, 1846, they purchased the land from the owner, William Sampson, for £474, and then re-sold it to the London, Brighton and

South Coast Railway Company, which had absorbed the Croydon and Epsom Railway, for £1,140, which included compensation. The conveyance was dated 16 June, 1847. [6] The Croydon and Epsom line had been opened, a little earlier, on 10 May. The new terminus and approach road were never built.

On 24 February, 1845, the Surrey Iron Railway presented their petition to the House of Commons, for leave to bring in a Bill to enable them to sell their land and property and dissolve the company. The petition was referred to a Select Committee on Private Bills. On 5 March Robert Wilson, on behalf of the owners of the oil and leather mills at Hackbridge

established by George Shepley, submitted a petition to the Committee, pleading that the Standing Orders of the House had not been complied with. The Committee agreed with the allegation, insofar as the notice of the intention to apply for the Bill had not made any reference to seeking powers to repeal the Act of incorporation. They reported accordingly to the House on 15 April, when their report was passed to the Select Committee on Standing Orders. On 17 April this Committee informed the House of their resolution that in this case the Standing Orders ought not to be dispensed with: and so the Bill was lost.

In October, 1845, the Surrey Iron Railway Company applied to the L. &S. W. R. Company for a reimbursement of the costs incurred in connection with their failed Bill. The latter company agreed to pay half, and to obtain the other half from the L.&B. R. Company, which at first objected that they were not liable, but eventually agreed to comply. In November both companies paid £142-2s-10d to the Surrey Iron Railway Company.

Despite the announced opposition by the Board of Trade, the L.&B.R. Company had gone ahead with their application for a Bill for making the Croydon to Wandsworth branch. They presented their petition on 3 April, 1845, when it was referred to the Select Committee on Private Bills. The London & Croydon Railway Company, and a local landowner, submitted petitions on 9 May, alleging that Standing Orders had not been complied with. The Committee upheld the complaint, and identified numerous errors in the naming of landowners listed in the book of reference. Nevertheless, the Select Committee on Standing Orders resolved that the Bill should be presented, and it was read for the first time on 2 June.

Sundry opposing petitions from landowners and others were delivered during the next few weeks. On 30 June it was determined that the preamble to the Bill had not been proved, and so the Bill was set aside.

The L.&B.R. Company then made preparations for a further application in the following Session. A notice of intent was published on 1 November, 1845 [7], and a plan deposited on 29 November [8]. The route shown was pretty much that of Rastrick's original proposal, and kept well to the north of the Surrey Iron Railway. Starting from a junction with the L.&B.R. about half a mile north of East Croydon station, the line ran in a generally northwesterly direction through Norbury, Streatham Vale and Tooting Graveney. It then turned northwards to join the L.&S. W. R. just north of the present Earlsfield station.

Their petition to Parliament to bring in a Bill was presented on 27 January, 1846, and the first reading was given on 14 February. After the second reading on 18 February, numerous petitions against the Bill were heard. The petitioners included the L.&S. W. R. Company, the churchwardens and overseers of Wandsworth, the Trustees of the Surrey and Sussex roads, James Lyon (who was still leasing the Surrey Iron Railway tolls), and Thomas Phillips and John Dormay, both coal merchants at Wandsworth. The third reading was given on 23 May.

The Lords Committee made some amendments, and the Royal Assent was given on 27 July, 1846, to the "London and Brighton (Wandsworth Branch) Railway." (9 7 10 Vic. cap.281). The Act was never carried into effect, as the L.&C. R. was amalgamated with the L.&B. R. Company by an Act passed on the same day, to form the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway Company. The union obviated the burden of the tolls paid by the L.&B. R. Company to the L.&C. R. Company, the avoidance of which had been their main motive in seeking to have the branch built.

Following on their failure to obtain a dissolution Act in 1845, the Surrey Iron Railway Company made a further application in 1846, their notice of intent being published on 10 November, 1845. [9] Their petition was submitted to the Commons on 4 February, 1846. This time it was confirmed that the Standing Orders had been complied with, and the Bill received its first reading on 20 March. On the same day, the owners of the Hackbridge oil and leather mills, together with their tenant James Watney, presented a petition against certain parts of the Bill. Further opposing petitions were received during April, from several landowners, from James Lyon, and from John, and Edward Child, the tenants of the corn mill near Merton formerly owned by James Perry.

The Commons Committee examining the Bill decided that a reference in the preamble to an agreement for sale made with the L.&S. W. Company should be omitted, and that "no case for compensation had been made out." [10] The third reading was heard on 7 July. On 24 July a special general meeting of the proprietors of the Surrey Iron Railway was held, with Thomas Forbes Reynolds in the chair, and the Bill, then pending in the House of Lords, was formally approved. [11] The Bill passed through the Lords without further amendment, and Royal Assent was given on 3 August, 1846, to "An Act to enable the Surrey Iron Railway Company to sell the Land, Houses, and other Property of the Company, together with the navigable Communication from the Dock of the Company to the River Thames at Wandsworth in the County of Surrey, and to dissolve the said Company." (9 & 10 Vic. cap. 133)

The Act directed that the Company should be dissolved on 3 August, 1848. The land generally was to be offered for sale, in the first instance, to the adjoining landowners. Section III directed that the trackbed between Wandsworth High Street and Garratt Lane, where it crossed and recrossed the Wandle and ran near the Upper Mill, was to be first offered to John Watney, the owner of that mill. Section IV retained the right of John Child, the owner of the Merton corn mill, to use that part of the railway site where it crossed a road leading to that mill (now Byegrove Road), so that he could continue to use that road. Section XIII provided that any railway property not disposed of before the dissolution date should become vested in a group of gentlemen, including Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, Sir William Jolliffe, James and Daniel Watney, and Thomas Forbes Reynolds, and sold by them in accordance with instructions to be given by the Court of Chancery. Other clauses gave directions concerning the apportionment of the purchase money.

Following the passing of the Act, a special general meeting of the proprietors was held on 17 August "to take into consideration the affairs "of the Company, and to define the future proceedings of the Company." The chair was taken by W. Gosse, and a committee was appointed to deal with the winding-up and sale procedures. [12]

Soon afterwards, in a notice dated 26 August, 1846, the committee announced the impending closure of the railway: "Notice is hereby given, that from and after the 31st. day of August instant, the Passage of Waggons upon the above line of Railway from Wandsworth to Croydon, including also the Branch Communication to Carshalton, will be stopped. The Company's Basin and Dock at Wandsworth will for the present continue open for the reception of barges and other craft as usual, upon payment of the customary lockage, together with the use of the wharf and cranes, upon payment of the usual dues for the same." [13]

Following the closure, the Surrey Iron Railway Company first tried to persuade the L.&S.W.R. Company to honour the original sale arrangements. At the beginning of

September they wrote to that company, calling on the directors "to complete the Agreement of the 1st. October, 1844, as far as the. Act dissolving the Surrey Iron Tramway Company enabled that Company." A month later they wrote again, reducing their demand to a claim for £300. The L.&S.W. R. Company apparently ignored both appeals, and the matter rested for a time.

The Surrey Iron Railway Company then began to take steps for the disposal of their property. On 11 November, 1846, the committee published an advertisement for tenders, to be submitted on 25 November, for "Taking up the whole of the Iron and Stone upon the Company's line of Railway and bringing the same down and stacking the same upon the Company's Wharf at Wandsworth." The tender was to include for making good all public roads, and the work was to be completed by 31 January, 1847. [14]

The removal of the rails was apparently well advanced by 9 December, when the company announced that they would consider bids of a price per ton for the "iron tramway plates" now being stacked on the wharf, which could be viewed upon application to the superintendent. It was estimated that the whole quantity would amount to about 1200 tons, and it was asserted that "the iron is believed to be of a quality, highly valuable for mixing with and tempering certain varieties of British iron for new railway rails." [15]

The removal of the sleeper blocks was more protracted, and it was not until 17 March, 1847, that the committee were able to announce that they were ready to receive offers for the purchase of the blocks, to be handed in by 14 April. The whole number was estimated at 60,000, and in addition there were about 80 tons of broken blocks. [16]

On 29 April the Wandsworth Board of Highways resolved that a quantity of the sleeper blocks be purchased for use in the repair of the parish roads. At the same meeting they decided that they would apply to the Surrey Iron Railway Company for permission to widen the road leading from Wandsworth High Street to the wharf. Presumably this involved the purchase of the trackbed at the side of the road, and on 16 December, 1847, the terms were agreed. [17]

By December the sale of materials had evidently realised sufficient money to enable the company to pay a dividend to the shareholders, for they published a notice requesting a number of named proprietors to prove their entitlement "to the Dividends declared due to them." [18]

On 17 March, 1847, the railway company had issued a notice of the intended forthcoming sale, in May or June, of the wharf, basin, and other property at Wandsworth [19]. In fact, the sale was not held until the following year, when an advertisement published in March, 1848, announced that an auction would be held on 11 April of the "valuable and important premises, comprising the Surrey Iron Railway Company's spacious and convenient docks, wharfs and canals, basins and land, warehouses and cranes, counting-houses with offices and gardens." [20]

Soon afterwards, notice was given of the forthcoming sale by auction of sundry "strips of land being the site of part of the Surrey Iron Railway", in Garratt Lane, Wandsworth; near Mitcham church; and near the Prince of Wales public house at Mitcham. The auction was to be held on 25 May, 1848, at Mitcham. [21] The owners of the lands adjoining these portions had presumably declined to buy them. The surveyors who produced the Mitcham Tithe Map

in 1847 noted in the book of reference thereto, dated 20 September, 1848, that the site of the railway along Church Road and elsewhere was "now broken up and being sold to Owners of adjoining lands." This was probably the case generally by the time of the dissolution of the company. Specifically, there is a record that William Simpson, Lord of the Manor of Mitcham, bought the trackbed between Willow Lane and the Goat Inn at Mill Green, at Mitcham. [22]

The auction of the wharf and dock premises held on 11 April, 1848, had apparently not produced any acceptable bids, for a further auction was advertised to be held on 8 June. [23] On 11 July a special meeting of the railway proprietors was held "to take into consideration and determine upon the propriety of completing the sale of the Company's Basin and Wharf to Messrs. Watney and Wells, and also to sanction or otherwise the sale of certain small slips of land previously made to other parties; or to adopt such measures relative thereto as the Meeting may think fit." [24]

The final sale of materials was advertised to be held on 12 July, 1848, when 40,000 stone blocks were to be auctioned in lots of 500 and 1000. [25] The Wandsworth Board of Highways resolved to bid for 5° blocks at this auction, up to a maximum of £1-5s., but the reserve price of £1-15s. deterred the Board from proceeding. [17]

Early in 1848 the Surrey Iron Railway Company had begun a court action against the chairman of the L.&S.W. R., to obtain compensation for that company's failure to purchase the Surrey Iron Railway in accordance with the agreement of 1 October, 1844. On 4 August, 1848, the L.&S.W. R. Company's solicitor reported to the directors that the matter had been settled out of court, a compromise having been reached. The terms were that the L.&S.W. R. Company would pay the parliamentary and legal costs of the Surrey Iron Railway dissolution Act, from which

amount would be deducted as a credit £500 of the deposit the L.&S.W. R. had paid in 1844. On 12 October the L.&S.W. R. board resolved to apply to the L. B.&S.C.R. Company for payment of £423-8s-6d as their share of the cost. Evidently the latter company were reluctant to pay, but on 11 December, 1849, the L.&S.W. R. Company made it a condition of an arrangement to be made between the two companies respecting a joint line from Cosham to Portsmouth, that the L. B.&S.C.R. Company pay the sum demanded. Agreement and final settlement were then made on 11 January, 1850.

In November, 1848, the solicitors of the Surrey Iron Railway Company, which by this date had been dissolved, published a notice directing creditors and shareholders to whom any money was due, to substantiate their claims at the High Court of Chancery [26].

The scheme for a connecting line between the L.&S.W. R. and the L. B.&S.C.R. was revived when a Bill drawn up by a group of local promoters was introduced into the parliamentary session of 1852. This was opposed by both the L.&S.W. R. and L. B.&S.C.R. companies, but negotiations ensued, and the Bill was withdrawn on the understanding that the promoters should apply in the following session in respect of a modified route, from Wimbledon on the L.&S.W. R. line, instead of Earlsfield, to a point near West Croydon station on the Croydon and Epsom line of the L. B.&S.C.R., rather than near East Croydon station on the main Brighton line. The two main-line companies were to be jointly involved in the operation of the connecting railway.

The Act incorporating the Wimbledon and Croydon Railway Company was passed on 8 July, 1853. A single line only was built, and opened on 22 October, 1855. The route passed over that part of the former Surrey Iron Railway from a point just north of Mitcham station to Waddon Marsh station (built later), and that land was re-purchased from the landowners who had bought it 8 or 9 years earlier.

The railway was at first worked by the owning company, but under an Act of 21 July, 1856, the L. B.&S.C.R. Company took a 21-year lease from 1 July, 1856. In 1862 it came under the joint management of the L. B.&S.C.R. and L.&S.W. R. companies, and the former company became the sole owner from 1 January, 1866.

The line was closed on and from 1 June, 1997, as the whole of the route was required for the western part of the Croydon Tramlink project. This part of the tram line was opened for public traffic on 30 May, 2000.

References

- 1.** Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee on the London and Brighton Railway Bill (Gibbs1 Line), 1836. .
- 2.** This and most of the following information is extracted from the minute books of the boards of the London & Brighton, London, Brighton & South Coast, and London & South Western Railway Companies. (Public Record Office. MIL/386/-, PAIL/414/-, and RAIL/411/-respectively). .
- 3.** The London Gazette, 14 November, 1844.
- 4.** The London Gazette, 12 November, 1844.
- 5.** The London Gazette, 14 January, 1845.
- 6.** Charles Townsend, Further Notes on Early Railways in Surrey, article in Transactions of the Newcomen Society, Vol.27, 1949-51.
- 7.** The London Gazette, 5 November, 1845.
- 8.** Surrey History Centre, QS 6/8/321..
- 9.** The London Gazette, 15 November, 1845 .
- 10.** Surrey History Centre, QS 6/8/321..
- 11.** The Times, 18 July, 1846; also Kerapath's Railway & Commercial Magazine, 25 July, 1846.
- 12.** The Times, 6 August, 1846; also Herapath's Railway & Commercial Magazine, 22 August, 1846.
- 13.** The Times, 28 August, 1846.
- 14.** The Times, 12 November, 1846.
- 15.** The Times, 17 December, 1846.
- 16.** The Times, 30 March, 1847.
- 17.** Wandsworth Local History Library. Wandsworth Board of Highways Minute Book.
- 18.** The Times, 13 January, 1848.
- 19.** The Morning Chronicle, 8 April, 1847.
- 20.** The Times, 23 March, 1848.
- 21.** The County Chronicle, 16 May, 1848.
- 22.** Merton Local History Library, Simpson Papers, Box 18a.
- 23.** The Times, 22 May, 1848; a copy of the auctioneer's plan is held at Purley Public Library.
- 24.** The Times, 1 July, 1848.

25. The Times, 7 July, 1848.

26. The Times, 21 July, 1848.