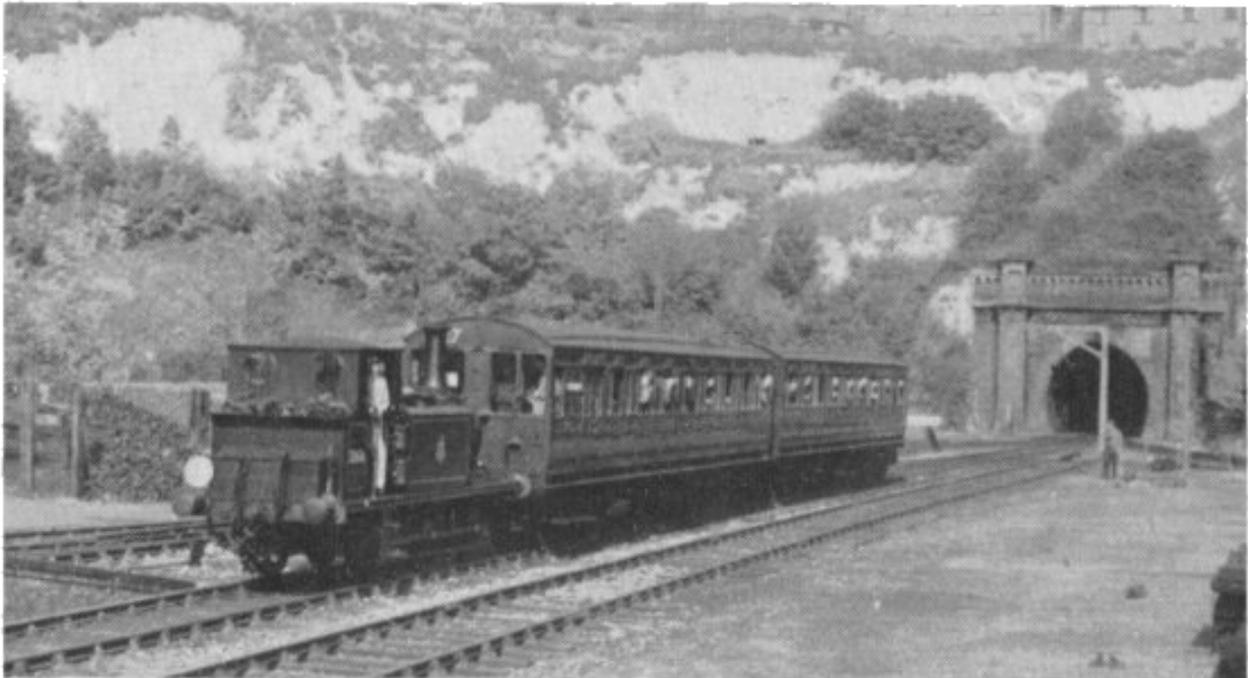


By Rail to Kemp Town

By R. C. RILEY



Photo]

[Denis Cullum

R.C.T.S. special train arriving at Kemp Town on October 5, 1952, headed by Stroudley "Terrier" No. 32636

THE special trains to Kemp Town, organised recently by the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society, have brought into prominence this short branch on the eastern outskirts of Brighton, almost forgotten since its closure to passenger traffic 20 years ago. Kemp Town takes its name from a one time Joint Lord of the Manor, Thomas Read Kemp, who built the large and architecturally magnificent estate there. Today it remains virtually unspoilt, one of the finest examples in the country of an estate conceived on the grand scale in the style of the Regency period. Many years elapsed before the success of Kemp Town as a residential district was assured; the foundations of the estate were laid in 1823, but some houses remained untenanted until the 1850s.

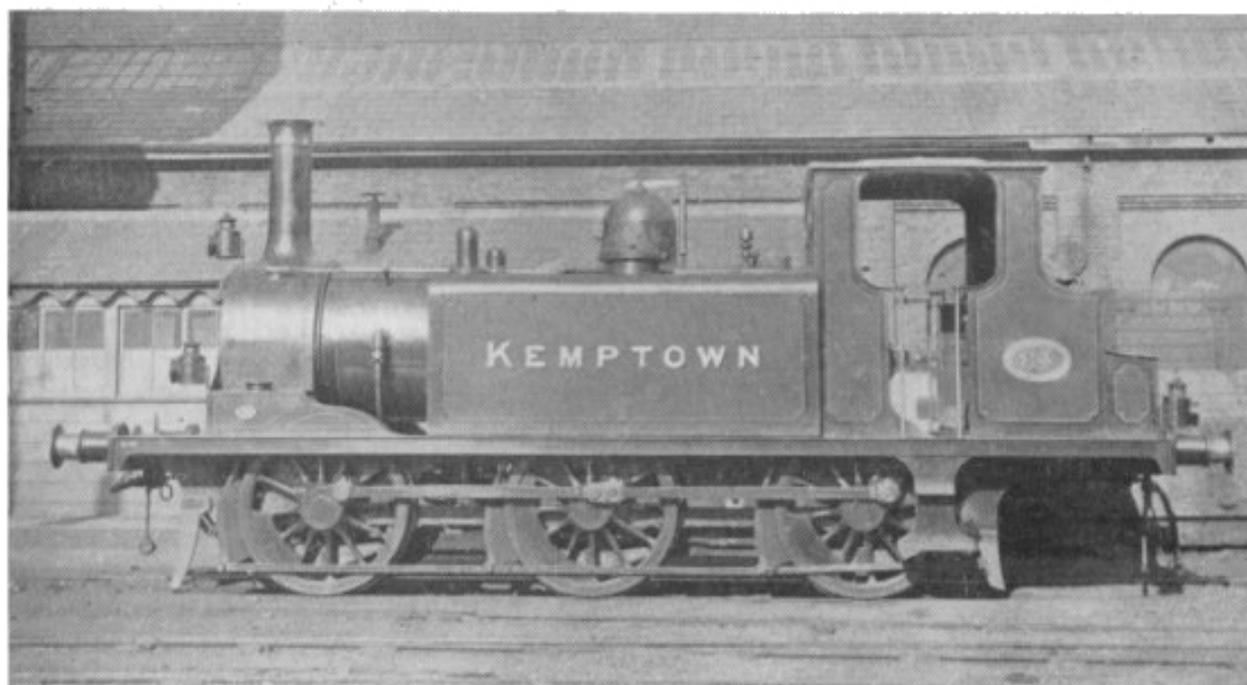
The London, Brighton & South Coast Railway obtained parliamentary authority to construct a branch to Kemp Town on May 13, 1864, at an estimated cost of £100,000, and the line was opened to traffic on August 2, 1869. A few days later a formal ceremony took place when the last brick was laid in the eastern pier of the central arch of the Lewes Road Viaduct. The privilege of carrying out

this duty was accorded to Alderman Martin, to whom the contractors presented an elaborately engraved silver trowel which bore the inscription "Presented to Mr. Alderman Martin by the Contractors, Wm. & Jno. Pickering, in commemoration of his turning the first sod of the Kemp Town Branch Railway on the 17th day of February 1866, as Mayor of Brighton, and finished by him on the 6th day of August 1869." Among the speakers at this ceremony, Alderman Marchant expressed the hope that the line would be a considerable benefit to the east side of Brighton, which, in some respects, had been less prosperous than the west. He also hoped that the railway company would provide a station near where they were standing as it was a rapidly expanding district to which the development of local transport facilities was highly important and necessary.

Following the ceremony on the spot, a banquet took place at the Old Ship Hotel. It is of interest in that reference was made in the speeches to the difficult time the railway was then going through; among other problems there was the possibility of a rival line from London to Brighton, leaving the London, Chatham

& Dover Railway at Beckenham. Alderman Cox, in proposing the toast of the L.B.S.C.R., remarked that while withholding any opinion on the necessity for a second line, he thought the existing line had been served as efficiently as it was possible for any line to be served. One cannot help but feel that he had been mellowed considerably by the contractor's champagne to make such a complacent statement, on considering the facilities (or lack of them) that were available to travellers in those days. In responding, J. P. Knight, the Traffic Manager, emphasised the company's desire to meet

4d. respectively. In those days, there were no intermediate stations, and the journey took ten minutes. As is well known, Craven had the eccentric habit of designing entirely different locomotives for each and every branch of the railway, but the opening of the Kemp Town branch seems to have caught him unawares, for it was not until October, 1869, that the special engine intended to work the line was delivered. It was a small 2-4-0 tank, designed and built by Sharp Stewart & Company, numbered 96, and later named *Kemptown* by William Stroudley, who became Locomotive Engineer in 1870.



Photo]

[Locomotive Publishing Co. Ltd.

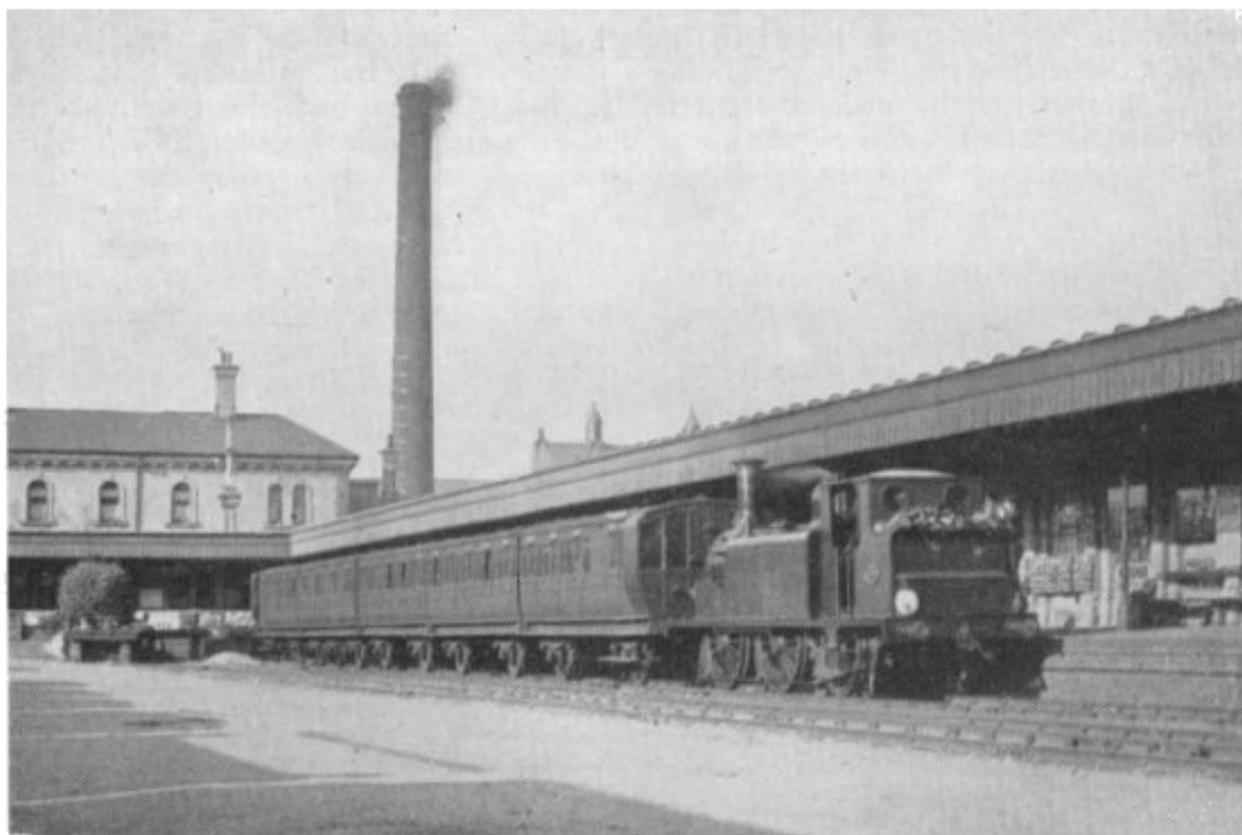
London, Brighton & South Coast Railway "Terrier" 0-6-0 tank locomotive No. 64, "Kemptown," built by William Stroudley in 1874, at Brighton

the wants of Brighton in every way and to develop traffic, while the question of a reduction in fares would be considered as soon as they had tided over their most pressing difficulties. He added that the report of the Government Inspector on the Kemp Town Branch had been wholly favourable. J. C. Craven, the Locomotive Superintendent, proposed the "Town and Trade of Brighton," which was suitably acknowledged, and then the proceedings terminated.

The earliest service over the branch consisted of nine trains each way on weekdays only, and first, second, and third class passengers were carried. The fare for the 2½ mile journey from Brighton to Kemp Town was 6d. first class and 2d. third class, with return fares of 9d. and

In 1874, this little engine was renamed *Hayling Island*, and went to work that branch concurrently with the delivery of the "Terrier" 0-6-0 tank engine No. 64, *Kemptown*.

The long awaited station at Lewes Road was opened on September 1, 1873; and on the Brighton-Lewes line just to the west of the short Ditchling Road Tunnel another intermediate station was opened on October 1, 1877. This was London Road, and it became the ticket collecting station for all westbound trains over the East Coast line, replacing the old ticket platform in Brighton Station yard. In 1876, powers were obtained for considerable developments at Kemp Town, where the company owned a large area of land. For some time excavations



Photo]

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One of the five-coach close-coupled sets of Stroudley four-wheel coaches at Kemp Town about fifty years ago, hauled by "D1" class 0-4-2 tank engine No. 28, "Isfield"



Photo]

[R. C. Riley

Exterior view of Kemp Town Station in September, 1952

had been taking place to remove the considerable amount of chalk from the site, and eventually a large goods and coal yard was built there.

A Sunday service of no less than 11 trains each way was running in April, 1876, but was short lived, and was not resumed until 1879, by which time the weekday service had been increased to 13 trains each way daily. By 1883, the first and second class single fares had been reduced to 4d. and 3d. respectively, the third class fare remaining at 2d. For the next 20 years or so, the service averaged 17 trains each way on weekdays, and seven on Sundays. The train usually consisted of a five-coach close-coupled set of Stroudley four-wheel coaches. Motive power continued to be provided by "Terriers," usually appropriately named *Kemptown* and *Preston*, but during the 1890s several of those with London associations appeared regularly, notably *Piccadilly*, *Tulsehill*, *Fulham*, *Gipsyhill*, *Beulah*, *Stepney*, and *Deptford*. More rarely, class "D1" 0-4-2 tanks were used.

On January 1, 1906, a 48-seat petrol railcar was introduced on the branch, and with some exceptions the service became half-hourly on a regular interval basis, no less than 32 trains running each weekday and 24 on Sundays. The railcars, one of which was illustrated as a frontispiece to *The Railway Magazine* for April, 1952, only lasted a few months on the branch. After the failure of the railmotors—car No. 4 alarmed its passengers when three pistons penetrated the crank case in the murky depths of Kemp Town Tunnel—the "Terriers" were restored to the line, but with a difference. Douglas Earle Marsh, who became Locomotive Engineer in 1905, had designed a form of mechanical control permitting pull-and-push trains to be run. A number of the "Terriers" were so fitted, and they ran in conjunction with large high-roof saloon trailers which, in view of their large appearance, emphasised by the diminutive locomotive which hauled them, became known as "Balloons." One such trailer was usually sufficient to meet the needs of the Kemp Town traffic. Lawson B. Billinton, who succeeded Douglas Earle Marsh in 1911, modified the pull-and-push apparatus to air control, which was later to become standard throughout the Southern Railway.

During this period, an additional halt

was provided on the branch at Hartington Road, only 20 ch. beyond Lewes Road. Opened on January 1, 1906, to meet the needs of local residents, and also to serve the adjacent cemetery, it had a short life and was closed about April, 1911. It was also with the introduction of the pull-and-push service that accommodation was provided for third-class passengers only, and it remained so until the branch was closed, with the exception of one morning and two evening services, which connected with London business trains, on weekdays only. The passenger services were withdrawn, as a wartime economy measure, on January 1, 1917, and were not resumed until August 10, 1919. This long interruption in the service, and the introduction of motor-buses to the district, proved disastrous to the line, and despite an increased service—36 trains were running daily at the end—passenger traffic was withdrawn on January 1, 1933. The last train ran on December 31, 1932, almost unnoticed, for it coincided with the running of the last steam passenger train down the main line from London to Brighton, a much more momentous event. On July 29, 1933, the branch ceased to be worked as a section, and became officially regarded as a siding worked by one engine in steam.

Kemp Town trains left Brighton from the short bay platform at the extreme east side of the station, and traversed the Lewes line as far as Kemp Town Junction, immediately to the east of Ditchling Road Tunnel, a distance from Brighton of 76 ch. The branch is 1 mile 32 ch. in length. From Kemp Town Junction the line continues double to Lewes Road Station, which has the curious arrangement of an island platform between the up and down lines and a main platform serving the up line only. Latterly the station was reduced to halt status, and tickets were issued by the guard of the train. The coal yard here is still in use and served by a daily train. Soon after the line was closed to passenger traffic, the station building was taken over by a pickle manufacturer, and later became a builder's yard. Today it is in a sorry state, and the footbridge between the platforms has long since disappeared.

Immediately beyond Lewes Road, the line becomes single and crosses the fine curved Lewes Road Viaduct, of 14 arches,

of which two are large arches crossing Lewes Road and Melbourne Street respectively. Within a short distance of the viaduct there is a three-arch bridge over Hartington Road, on the south side of which is the site of the halt platform of that name. Thence the line goes into a cutting, and soon enters Kemp Town Tunnel (1,024 yd. long). This tunnel assumed some measure of importance during the second world war, when it was used nightly as an air raid shelter for multiple unit electric trains which were propelled over the branch by a steam engine. This practice commenced in

extravagant hopes of the 1870s that the goods depot at Kemp Town would eclipse that at Brighton in volume of traffic have never been realised. Nowadays there is a daily freight train over the branch, usually hauled by an "E4" class 0-6-2 tank engine.

From the point of view of the passenger, the journey of 2 ml. 28 ch. from Brighton to Kemp Town always was rather circuitous. Furthermore, the station is situated only on the westernmost outskirts of Kemp Town, and with the development of local motor bus services, it was inevitable that this more con-



Photo]

[R. C. Riley

Lewes Road Station, looking north, in September, 1952

October, 1941, and with the exception of a few weeks in May and June, 1943, when London Road Viaduct was closed as a result of bomb damage, it continued until May, 1944.

On emerging from the tunnel, Kemp Town Station and goods yard are reached. The station consists of one main platform with a short bay and a run round loop. The buildings are maintained in good condition. The rooms on the ground floor are used for the Goods Agent and a coal order office, and the remainder of the building is a dwelling house. The goods and coal yard is extensive, but the

venient form of transport would take all the passenger traffic. Unlike some of the branch line closures so familiar today, the withdrawal of the passenger service on the Kemp Town branch was wholly understandable. Nevertheless, there were many passengers on the recent special trains to whom the immaculate little 80-year-old "Terrier," No. 32636, formerly *Fenchurch*, and its two L.B.S.C.R. coaches, recalled nostalgic memories of the old days on the line, when the trains were always spick and span; and days when the Kemp Town branch train was packed to capacity.