

The Railways

While a majority of main-line railway services from London for southern destinations start from Victoria, those for the south-west start from Waterloo, a mile further east. Trains from and to these termini must cross and interconnect; they do so in Battersea. The extent and the vagaries of the railway system there follow from this hapless piece of Victorian non-planning (Ill. 7.1). As a result an area remote from London's core when the railways were projected between 1835 and 1870 acquired the country's busiest station in the shape of Clapham Junction, three separate railway works, many goods depots, and a cat's cradle of elevated lines.

The indulgence of these lines was possible because they were projected over land then hardly developed. In the parts of the parish they overlaid, they shaped succeeding patterns of building. Between the Thames and the line of St John's Hill, Lavender Hill and Wandsworth Road, their high tracks blockaded off one district from another and redefined the terrain, while the jobs they brought and the industries they served stamped northern Battersea as a working-class quarter.

The first layout of the lines which thus affected Battersea's destiny had nothing to do with legislators deciding how railways should fan out from the capital. As the following account makes clear, they were largely the upshot of provincially based railway companies thrusting their way into London, impervious to local interests.

The London & South Western Railway

Since railways first came to Battersea, their spine has been the main line westwards out of Waterloo, running roughly parallel with the river to Clapham Junction and beyond. This route was projected in the 1830s as the London & Southampton Railway. But when it was opened, neither Waterloo Station nor Clapham Junction was yet thought of. The London terminus lay at Nine Elms. Hence at the time of opening in May 1838 the tracks ran out to Wandsworth and on to Woking. By the time the route to Southampton had been completed in 1840, the name of the company and line had already been changed to the London & South Western Railway (LSWR).

Like other early railways in and out of the capital, the London & Southampton was promoted by provincial interests eager to reach metropolitan markets. Determining the route into London was entrusted to Francis Giles, appointed engineer around the time the company was constituted, in 1831. Giles soon decided against taking the line across the Thames, where 'residence property' would have had to be bought: 'nearly from the commencement I decided upon recommending the entrance to take place at Nine Elms at Battersea and I never altered that opinion'.¹ But the idea of a railway terminating at Nine Elms was not original to Giles. So early as 1825 there had been talk of bringing up such a line from Wandsworth to Nine Elms. Other proposals for terminating railways there or at Vauxhall were aired before the London & Southampton arrived, including the first route sketched out for the Great Western Railway (GWR) by I. K. Brunel.²

The reasons for selecting Nine Elms were set out by the architect Charles Fowler, the first witness examined by the Lords Committee of 1834 on the London & Southampton's bill, and probably then the intended designer of the terminus. Fowler emphasized its excellent location for 'diffusing a supply of provisions', notably 'country-killed meat'; it was, he explained, 'as convenient a one as can be found considering its relative bearings to the different markets in London'. Supplies could

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pass efficiently from Nine Elms to the various bridges, so Fowler and Giles asserted, notably Vauxhall Bridge, opened in 1816 with links to the West End. In addition, valuable buildings and land were unscathed by the projected route. 'I never knew a public work that intersected ornamental property so little as this line', testified Henry Crawter, a surveyor who had examined the route from Vauxhall to the River Wey.³ Through Battersea the line bisected mainly market gardens; almost no buildings were to be demolished.

Preparations for earthworks in Battersea were being made in 1834, but full-scale construction started only in 1836. The main contractor for this sector of the line was Edward Dixon, while the bridges here and further west went to David McIntosh. For structures at Nine Elms the contractor was David Nicholson, probably assisted by Samuel Grimsdell for the station or depot itself.⁴

Like the other terminus at Southampton, Nine Elms Station was ultimately designed by William Tite (Ills 7.12–14). It stood on the south side of Nine Elms Lane, just short of the Thames, near the present New Covent Garden Flower Market. Passengers could arrive and depart by wherry or steamboat, while from 1839 goods could be drawn across the lane to and from a warehouse beside the wharf. From the terminus the line crossed a millpond on five timber spans before rising on to an elevated embankment some two miles long (Ill. 7.4).⁵ It skirted the southern edge of Battersea New Town, then crossed Battersea Fields, continuing straight to the later site of Clapham Junction, whence it bore south over Wandsworth Common. The one engineering challenge within the parish came where the railway passed over Falcon Road (then Lane) and just after that under St John's Hill by means of a cutting.⁶ North of the next bridge southwards, under Battersea Rise, lay the only other original station within the parish, at first called Wandsworth because it served that community, later misleadingly renamed Clapham Common.

This first railway elicited little controversy in Battersea. The Vestry set a pattern by acquiescing in compensation for rights extinguished when the company purchased

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parts of Wandsworth Common. The 2nd Earl Spencer, still then a large freeholder in the parish as well as lord of the manor, was claimed by Francis Giles 'always to be a consenting party'.⁷ Despite high fares and complaints about access due to unreliable steamer services and turnpike tolls, the line proved instantly popular. On Derby Day, soon after it opened, 'upwards of 5000 persons' arrived early at Nine Elms, only to find 'there were ten times more applicants for seats in the train-vans than there were seats for their accommodation'. A riot was narrowly averted.⁸

Prestigious customers soon presented themselves. In 1843 the Duke of Wellington, 'whose early habits are well known', reached Nine Elms at twenty to six a.m. to take the seven o'clock train to Farnborough and accompany the Queen and the Prince Consort from there on to Southampton. The Duke with other peers 'examined the workshops at the terminus, the carriages, locomotive engines, &c., and appeared much interested in what he saw'.⁹ After Victoria bought Osborne House in 1845, she travelled regularly to and from Buckingham Palace via Nine Elms and Gosport; when the terminus closed, a private station was created near by for royal use. It was from Nine Elms too that the surreptitiously married Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning departed in 1846 en route for Southampton, Le Havre and felicity.

In 1844 the LSWR's directors opened negotiations with independent promoters lobbying for a branch diverging from their line after the Falcon Lane bridge and running on via Wandsworth to Richmond. They now also resolved to protract their line eastwards to Waterloo, an extension foreseen even before Nine Elms had opened. These developments, carried out in 1846–8, had long-term consequences. From July 1848 goods traffic and engine sheds and works became the sole functions at Nine Elms. Having handled a million and a quarter passengers in its last year of operations, it was supplanted as a terminus by Waterloo, while for local traffic a new station opened at Vauxhall. The first track-widenings also began, though these fell far short of the railway's ultimate breadth. West of Falcon Bridge, the divergence of the Richmond branch from the line to Southampton foreshadowed the creation of Clapham Junction there fifteen years later.¹⁰

The West End of London & Crystal Palace Railway

For seventeen years the LSWR line remained Battersea's only railway. An Act of 1847 permitted the costly West London Railway to extend from Kensington and Chelsea across Battersea Reach into South London, with the aim of continuing along LSWR tracks to Waterloo. But nothing was done for the moment.

A harsher era was heralded by an interloper from the south, the West End of London & Crystal Palace Railway (WELCPR), announced in October 1852 and authorized in 1853. As its name implied, it aimed to link the fashionable parts of town with the Crystal Palace, then re-erecting at Sydenham. Among its backers were several involved in that venture, including Francis Fuller, who originated the idea, Joseph Paxton, and Charles Geach, the company's first chairman. The choice of Sydenham for the renascent palace had been enmeshed with the ambitions of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway (LBSCR), whose original metropolitan terminus lay further east, at London Bridge.¹¹ The Brighton company was interested in the newcomer from the beginning, quickly offered to lease or work the line, and soon enough took it over.¹² In Edwin Course's view, 'there seems little doubt that having staked a claim to a valuable route, the promoters hoped to sell out to the highest bidder among those main-line companies which were seeking access to the West End'.¹³

The first plan was to bring the WELCPR line up from Streatham across Clapham Common by means of a cut-and-cover tunnel, and link up with the LSWR before terminating on the south bank next to Battersea Park.¹⁴ But the company was frustrated by defenders of Clapham Common, and by the LSWR's reluctance to admit its rival's trains into Waterloo.¹⁵ In the Bill presented to Parliament the WELCPR line therefore took a roundabout western route via less-defended Wandsworth Common. Engineered by Hamilton H. Fulton working with G. P. Bidder and, later, George H. Phipps, it met but did not actually join the LSWR main line just south-west of where

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the Richmond branch diverged. It then ran eastwards parallel with the LSWR tracks before swinging northwards under them and Battersea Park Road, and arriving at a terminus next to the Thames close to Chelsea Bridge, just east of Queenstown Road (III. 7.6).

By 1853 the stretch of land between the LSWR line and the river belonged to the Crown and had been earmarked by James Pennethorne, architect to the Commissioners of Works, for housing to support the cost of Battersea Park (page xxx). Pennethorne feared that the WELCPR line

would entirely destroy the value of the Building-ground at the East side of the Park ... and the anticipated return in Ground-rents ... would be so considerably reduced that the Park in a pecuniary point of view would become a total failure. As a Park also for the enjoyment of the Public it would be greatly deteriorated ... by the barrier which these Branch Railways would present to the formation of the improved approach intended to have been made from Nine-Elms.¹⁶

Yet instead of opposing the Bill, the Crown slipped in a clause stipulating the Battersea Park Commissioners' consent before the WELCPR could be started. Having failed to coerce the company into developing good-quality housing alongside the line here itself, the Commissioners accepted compensation of £61,600. But the officials did manage to suppress an ancillary WELCPR branch proposed through the park itself, linking with the LSWR's Richmond line.¹⁷

The siting of this new line's riverside terminus next to Battersea Park and Chelsea Bridge, both incomplete in 1853, was peculiar. At the outset the directors gave no thought to crossing the Thames from this point by rail, in part because they hoped to link up with a separate company planning a terminus on the site of the Millbank Penitentiary, to be reached by another route. Well after the bill passed, alternative final destinations in alliance with other railways were being debated, but in the end

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the WELCPR stuck with Chelsea Bridge. An ambitious south-bank terminus was envisaged at Battersea Park, similar in scale to Waterloo; a railway hotel was even mooted. Passengers, the Commons committee was told, would arrive and depart by boat or cross by the bridge.¹⁸

But the line was delayed by the depressed investment climate during the Crimean War, and the directors' inability to make terms with the LSWR. The failure of the rebuilt Crystal Palace to earn its way probably also affected the associated railway company; in 1854 Francis Fuller, committed to both enterprises, was close to bankruptcy.¹⁹ The Crystal Palace to Wandsworth Common section of the WELCPR was finally built in 1855–6 and the stretch on to the Thames (under Bidder) in 1857–8. The contractors for both sections were Peto & Betts, with Sir Morton Peto leading later negotiations on the company's behalf. The railway was recalled afterwards as 'a very costly line'.²⁰

From mid 1856 the WELCPR fell under the control of the LBSCR, which linked with it at its southern end and formally absorbed it in 1859. So the northern stage of construction took place under the LBSCR's aegis. Already in 1856 the Brighton company's chairman, Leo Schuster, claimed that the 'West-End' or Battersea station had been designed by its own engineer (probably R. Jacomb Hood).²¹ Schuster was then still envisaging a grand terminus. But by a revised arrangement accepted before the northern stretch of the line had been commenced, only a temporary wooden station was built (Ill. 7.42). After talk of 'Sloane-street terminus', the anomalous name given to this station was Pimlico, because it served Pimlico on the north bank opposite – the line having neatly been opened in 1858 at the same time as the Chelsea Bridge. By 1860 the station was more realistically known as 'Battersea terminus'.²²

This scaled-down status followed from a further turn of events. The Brighton company had always seen the WELCPR as a means of access to the West End, to supplement London Bridge. In 1857, just before the northern section was started, the LBSCR promoted the fresh Victoria Station and Pimlico Company to take the railway

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on over the river and into a new terminus via the line of the Grosvenor Canal. An Act of Parliament followed in 1858. These works, including the first Victoria Bridge over the Thames, were rushed up under the engineer John Fowler, allowing the through route from the South Coast to Victoria to operate from 1860.²³ That October, a modest new station on the bridge's southern end replaced the Battersea terminus.

Thus began the pattern whereby trains to the south and the south-west left from different London termini, and crossed in Battersea. With hindsight that became inevitable once the LSWR had extended its line to Waterloo, ill-sited for the lucrative West End traffic, in an era before cross-river railway bridges in central London were countenanced. Had the WELCPR secured a less circuitous route, crossing Clapham Common and heading due north for Victoria, there would still have been a major convergence of railways south-east of Battersea Park, but no need for Clapham Junction. That station sprang into being because the two branches of the LSWR divided and the WELCPR joined them close by. As a result, northern Battersea suffered major railway intersections in two places. The vigilance of Clapham's middle classes in safeguarding their common was indirectly responsible for that.

The Battersea Tangle

During the second railway mania of the 1860s two further companies barged into Battersea. All four soon wished to interconnect, while safeguarding their own lines and traffic. A radical overhaul of the network laid out in 1858–60 now became necessary. The outcome was the so-called 'Battersea Tangle', a term said to derive from railwaymen's lore (Ills 7.2, 7.5, 7.7).²⁴

First came the West London Extension Railway (WLER), a line now controlled by a consortium of larger railway companies including the GWR, whose requirement for 'mixed-gauge' track complicated arrangements. In 1859 the WLER picked up and renewed the powers previously granted to cross the river from Chelsea, and planned

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spurs joining up with the LSWR and WELCPR/LBSCR (John Collister, engineer).²⁵ The opening of this line in 1863, with a railway bridge across the Thames at Battersea Reach and a small station called Battersea on the High Street, precipitated the creation that year of Clapham Junction Station, as a means of changing between the LSWR, the LBSCR and this new contender, all of them now cautiously keen to co-operate. In the words of its historian Tim Sherwood, Clapham Junction was 'not primarily a station for Battersea'.²⁶

A larger incursion came from the London, Chatham & Dover Railway (LCDR). The irruption of this company in 1859–60 and its twin push into the West End via Battersea and into the City via Blackfriars ruffled feathers. The LCDR had a reputation for skimpy finances; it paid its contractors, normally the ubiquitous Peto & Betts, in shares, and it came resoundingly unstuck in the bank crash of 1866. Until then the company proved itself raw but effective. It was created in 1859 out of the East Kent Railway, which had been trying to muscle its way into the West End by purchasing running powers over the WELCPR/LBSCR tracks. It succeeded in 1860, when LCDR trains started running into an already cramped Victoria Station.

That year the LCDR acquired further powers to bring up a fresh, direct line of its own from Beckenham Junction to Victoria via Herne Hill, Brixton, Clapham (where a railway had long been called for if it could avoid the common) and over Wandsworth Road. The route then aligned itself with the LBSCR just south of the LSWR tracks, after which the lines ducked under Battersea Park Road together before rising sharply to the Victoria Bridge. Opened by stages in 1862–3, this further new railway was engineered by Joseph Cubitt and Frederick Turner, and built by Peto & Betts. That firm was so far implicated in financing the LCDR that in September 1862 it secured a monopoly of its work in the London area for the fabulous sum of almost six million pounds.²⁷ The LCDR. 'endowed abundantly with organs of acquisitiveness', also bought part of Longhedge Farm west of its new line for its main London railway works; here sheds and other structures soon sprouted (Ill. 7.6).²⁸ Longhedge Works,

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renamed Stewart's Lane in 1934, survives partly in railway use east of Silverthorne Road. A short-lived Stewart's Lane station was opened near by in 1863.²⁹

The arrival of the LCDR and its works, just as the LSWR bought thirty acres close by for enlarging its Nine Elms locomotive works, set the seal on north-eastern Battersea as a railway enclave. The creation of the 'tangle' followed, in a frenzy of yet further railway construction. The four companies – LSWR, LBSCR, LCDR and WLER – were keen to put in connectors between their lines which had been neglected in the first flush of promotion. The network spatchcocked together in 1856–63 was also wanting on other counts. Victoria Station and the Thames bridge leading to it were both too small; the deep curve as the LBSCR/WELCPR line swung northwards under the LSWR had to be taken slowly; after which, the climb from the low point of the tracks under Battersea Park Road up to the level of the river crossing taxed locomotives to their utmost.

In August 1862 the LCDR engaged the great engineer Sir Charles Fox to propose a solution.³⁰ His scheme, with which the LBSCR grudgingly fell in, was propelled with Fox's habitual drive and carried out between 1864 and 1867, with his son Douglas Fox as coadjutor and Edmund Wragge as resident engineer. It entailed replanning the whole approach to Victoria south of the river with high-level tracks on viaducts which passed over the LSWR and Battersea Park Road west of the previous lines, before debouching on to an enlarged Thames bridge. Besides the river bridge, a pair of wide-span lattice-girder bridges were constructed to carry the new main LBSCR elevated tracks over the old low-level lines and the LSWR west of Queenstown Road. The project involved some five miles of viaduct and cost over £900,000. Peto, Betts & Crampton carried out the LCDR works with assistance from Lucas Brothers, while the LBSCR's contractors were William & John Pickering.³¹ Two new stations were opened in 1867 to complete these works, both designed by Charles Driver: the present Battersea Park Station, originally 'York Road (LBSCR)', and, a hundred yards further east, the demolished Battersea Park Road Station, at first 'York Road (LCDR)'.

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One part of Fox's plans did not come off. That was the West London Docks, a project floated by the veteran engineer Joseph Gibbs in 1862 to create inland docks for barges and lighters, to be reached via a river outlet east of the Southwark & Vauxhall Waterworks and penetrating by canal south beyond the LSWR line to a basin adjoining Stewart's Lane. After Gibbs died in 1863 Fox took over the scheme for the LCDR, adding warehouses round the innermost dock to serve the railway company works. Its promoters claimed that this would remedy a dearth of warehousing in London's developing upper Thames reaches. The West London Docks company obtained two Parliamentary Acts but fell victim to the bank crash of 1866.³²

Fox's task was compounded by the need to cope with the road system just then emerging. To accommodate the dock scheme, Prince of Wales Drive east of Battersea Park was realigned and curtailed to a short arm running into Battersea Park Road, instead of continuing in parallel with it, as the Crown had hoped. He also clashed with the promoters of Queenstown Road, then in an advanced stage as a route from Clapham to Chelsea Bridge, which was forced to pass under three separate railway bridges in the stretch south of Battersea Park Road.³³

In addition to these lines, the LCDR's Longhedge Works and the LSWR's enhanced Nine Elms Works, the LBSCR in 1868–70 constructed the first two of three circular running sheds beneath the new high-level viaducts in the final run-up to the river. The LBSCR's 'Battersea Loco' base never undertook manufacture or major repairs, but its goods and engine depots here gradually extended along most of the east side of Queenstown Road facing Battersea Park.

If the completed Battersea Tangle damaged the area through which it passed, it multiplied and eased suburban journeys. On the LCDR side, 'its effect on time-keeping in the London area was out of all proportion to its length'.³⁴ Completed before the District line connected Victoria to the City, it allowed people to travel from Victoria or Clapham Junction via South London to Ludgate Hill or London Bridge and back again, a journey which sounds illogical now but was far from seeming so then.

The railways after 1870

By 1870 Battersea's railway layout was all but complete. The main later additions were fresh or extended freight depots and yards. Freight provided a growing proportion of railway income compared to passenger traffic in the late-Victorian decades. There were restrictions on its presence in central London north of the Thames, offering an incentive to companies like the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) and the Midland Railway to take space in Battersea. The biggest such addition was the GWR's South Lambeth Goods Station, built as late as 1911–13 on part of the Southwark & Vauxhall Waterworks site.

The other major railway-building activity was track-widening. Between 1875 and 1910 the very profitable LSWR persistently updated and widened sections of its busy line, hitherto mostly just four tracks wide between Waterloo and Clapham Junction. Around Nine Elms, depots and yards on both sides of the line caused narrowness, obstruction and delay. In 1877–8, under the LSWR's engineer William Jacomb with George Shaw as contractor, the high brick viaduct from Waterloo to Nine Elms was extended westwards on an alignment south of the previous main line approximately to the point of Sleaford Street; west of there, the railway still ran on an embankment. Then in 1885–7 Jacomb with Perry & Company as contractors tackled the widening of the Richmond lines west of Clapham Junction.³⁵

Further widening took place from 1898, when the LSWR approved the policy of an eight-track railway all the way through from Waterloo to Clapham Junction, not completed until 1910.³⁶ Much infrastructure observable on this line today in Battersea is therefore Edwardian in date, including not only the viaducts but the stations. Clapham Junction, though often upgraded after its opening in 1863, was recast between 1904 and 1910. The resultant breadth of track, varying from eight to ten or even more lines in that vicinity, further cut off one district of Battersea from another.³⁷

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Electrification, first applied to the LBSCR lines in and out of Victoria after 1905, led in time to a phasing-out of the locomotive works. From about 1904 Longhedge was run down in favour of Ashford. It closed as a primary manufacturing site in 1911, eking out an existence until 1934, when it became the Southern Railway's Stewart's Lane Depot. Nine Elms likewise lost its locomotive manufacturing to Eastleigh in 1909-10. Though long resilient as a goods yard and depot, it closed in 1968 and was obliterated for the New Covent Garden Market developments. Even Tite's old terminus, which should have been saved, was suffered to disappear.

Long after the railway heyday, the Battersea Tangle acquired one final strand. This was the concrete viaduct added in 1990-2 so that the Eurostar trains could cross from tracks on the north side of the lines out of Waterloo to the southbound former LCDR line to Wandsworth Road and beyond.³⁸ Its original use was short-lived, for in 2008 the Eurostar route was withdrawn from Waterloo and redirected to St Pancras International. No longer can arriving passengers from the continent survey a panorama of rooftops, sheds and railway viaducts – the grain of inner south London.

The impact of the railways

Two broad railway corridors shape northern Battersea. These are bounded by Nine Elms Lane-Battersea Park Road-York Road and Wandsworth Road-Lavender Hill-St John's Hill in one direction, and Queenstown Road-Silverthorne Road and Stewart's Road in the other. The Battersea Tangle occurs where these axes cross. Close by lay all three of the railway works and depots once located in Battersea – Nine Elms for the LSWR, Longhedge for the LCDR and Battersea Loco for the LBSCR. Only Longhedge retains a railway presence today, as Stewart's Lane Depot.

Deindustrialization has hardly touched the lines themselves, still in intensive use and persistent obstacles to planning. The dividing of communities north and

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south by the barrier of the railway is especially felt still between Queenstown Road and Latchmere Road. Further west, Clapham Junction on its sprawling 28-acre site is equally obstructive, cutting off the housing to its north from the shopping area beyond the station.

An example of the frustrations to access caused by railway lines is 'Poupart's crossing', in modern terms the southward continuation of Culvert Road, midway between Queenstown and Latchmere Roads. When the London & Southampton line was laid out, no north-south crossing was made here. In 1847 the LSWR put in a 12-foot-wide tunnel taking an 'occupation road' under the railway embankment for workers in Poupart's market garden. While the surrounding land was thus used, that sufficed, but as lines and population multiplied, access became an issue. First to join the LSWR was the WELCPR, also covered by the tunnel, followed by further lines at ground level for the WLER in 1863. When the LCDR added a yet further track, the width of railway here came to some 400 feet. These latter lines were traversed by a level crossing. The railway inspectorate insisted on a gatekeeper and told the WLER that 'they would do well to construct a Bridge', but nothing happened.³⁹

After the artisan Shaftesbury Park mushroomed on the market garden site, the WLER and LCDR provided an inadequate footbridge, five feet wide at most and with dangerously steep stairs. Soon after its opening in 1877 it was recorded that 4,372 adults and 1,725 children crossed this bridge on one day, or 420 persons per hour. Frequent accidents took place.⁴⁰ It took a combination of the railway inspectorate, the Battersea Vestry, the Metropolitan Board of Works and the Board's successor, the London County Council, to procure a proper Culvert Road footbridge. Double the old one in width and with ramped approaches, it was erected at public expense in 1890-2 by the LCC.⁴¹ The combined tunnel and footbridge (rebuilt since 1945) remain awkward and unprepossessing.

The railways mostly preceded development. Building, coming later, filled the gaps in between; roads worked round the layout of the lines, and bridges and arches

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were threaded through and laboriously adjusted. Queenstown Road's clarity was destroyed from the outset by the contortions it had to undergo in order to duck beneath the railways south of Battersea Park Road. Likewise, the Battersea Park Commissioners' hopes to develop east of the park and prolong Prince of Wales Drive with good houses towards Nine Elms proved valueless once the WELCPR bill had passed. The result was a multiplicity of dead ends, backs, left-over triangles of land, and railway arches ('goodness knows we have enough of them', sighed the local paper in 1894⁴²) with an ill-policed life of their own. Reformers remarked on the obstacles to social control posed by such features. Graham Balfour in Booth's survey writes of Battersea's 'worse elements' having 'taken refuge in blocks of houses isolated by blank walls or railway embankments, or untraversed by any thoroughfare'. One of Battersea's criminal black spots, Orville Road off the High Street, backed partly upon the railway which, noted Balfour, 'provides a means of escape when needed'.⁴³

Noise, smoke and dust from the trains inevitably devalued adjacent property. Promoters of a chapel on the Park Town Estate off Queenstown Road in 1883, for instance, declined to erect their permanent building 'because of the dreadful noise especially in the week when ... at times it is impossible to worship God or to hear another speak and the strain on both brain and nerve would be too much for any minister.'⁴⁴

Battersea's southern suburban landscape bears no resemblance to its northern topography. Here the presence of the railways has been less cruel. Beyond Clapham Junction the former LSWR main line and LBSCR/WELCPR line veer south, but the former soon passes out of the parish while the latter runs on in a cutting, emerging only at Wandsworth Common Station. Yet it was in the south, not nearer the Thames, that the companies' depredations aroused most animosity, because wealthy and articulate people lived there, and the railways ate up prized common land. Wandsworth Common was the main victim, noted the *Clapham Gazette* in 1866.

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Two or three railway companies in succession fell upon the devoted common ... A space of open land was too tempting not to invite attack. The South-Western Railway seized a fragment; the Crystal Palace Railway appropriated 29 acres; and the London, Brighton, and South Coast 7 acres.⁴⁵

The effect was to cut the common into three. The same fate would have overtaken Clapham Common had the companies not been stopped.

Though the railways accelerated building development and commuting in Battersea, they were not built with that primary purpose. Even when the area had been built up, thousands of local residents travelled to work in central London not by railway but by tram, bus or even boat. Queenstown Road Station, opened in 1877 on the LSWR line only after housing around it was well forward, appears to support the maxim that suburban railway stations followed behind the house-builders. On the other hand the LSWR's early halt at 'Wandsworth' or 'Clapham Common' featured in property advertisements of the 1850s, while the subsequent stations at Wandsworth Common and New Wandsworth were undoubted boons to development.⁴⁶ New Wandsworth indeed briefly gave its name to the district around it, as stations often do. So too more permanently did Clapham Junction. But an equal stimulus of that great interchange was commercial. The emergence from the 1880s of Battersea's prime shopping centre south of the station relied on its accessibility by train.

Battersea recognized what it owed to the railways; there are reliefs of locomotives on the flanks of its town hall (III. 7.10). But it received no obvious loyalty or favours in return, apart from some social clubs for their employees. Though local manufacturers took a growing interest in promoting technical education from the 1890s to foster engineering skills, the railways were not among them. When Battersea Polytechnic was mooted, *The Times* thought the district ripe for 'a model Institute for technical instruction in the mechanical arts which are subsidiary to railway and electrical engineering. From such an Institute the railway companies ought not to

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withhold their countenance and support.⁴⁷ The hint met no immediate response, though the LSWR did eventually send Nine Elms apprentices to the polytechnic.

The employees themselves were the railways' main social contribution to Battersea. Graham Balfour estimated 'railway servants' at 7,982, or 5.2% of the total population in the late 1880s, higher than any other group of workers except the building trades, and more than double the percentage in any of the east London districts investigated by the Booth survey.⁴⁸ In some districts – north of Clapham Junction, lesser streets round the Longhedge Works, and parts of Nine Elms – railway workers and their families were dominant for years from the 1860s. Their houses have largely vanished, but the census offers glimpses of their incidence.

When the parish of St Peter's, Plough Road, was created in 1874, its residents were said to be 'principally employed' by the LSWR and LBSCR, mostly no doubt at Clapham Junction.⁴⁹ In Grant Road, just to its north, the 1881 census records 20 guards and 16 porters; ten years later the balance had changed, with only 7 guards but 13 porters and 13 carriage cleaners. These were unskilled workers, living mostly in houses rated at under £20 p.a. Round the locomotive works and depots resided most of the higher-paid railwaymen – estimated by Balfour as 2,029 in number, more than a quarter of the total complement. In the impoverished parish of St Andrew's, beside the LSWR's Nine Elms locomotive depot, railwaymen and gasworkers were described in 1905 as the 'superior' class.⁵⁰ Motley Street, near the entrance to the LCDDR's Longhedge works and goods yard, in 1881 housed 9 engine drivers, 7 engine fitters, smiths or turners, 5 porters, 4 guards and one or two engine strippers, firemen, goods checkers, inspectors, signal fitters and waggon builders or fitters. By 1891 the complement was 11 guards; 10 fitters, smiths or turners; 9 firemen; 7 porters; 6 engine drivers; 5 stokers; 4 shunters; and 4 waggon builders or fitters.⁵¹

Another railway enclave was a nexus of streets close to the LBSCR's Battersea Loco works south of Battersea Park Station, including Lockington Road, Gladstone Street and Terrace, and the significantly named Brighton (later Patcham) Terrace,

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jammed up against an LBSCR line. There in 1871 the unskilled jobs of porter and guard were again dominant, though there were also a few drivers, fitters, ticket collectors and carriage examiners. Nine of the fifteen dwellings housed railwaymen, sometimes two or three to a house. In Grant Road and Motley Street likewise, railway families often let rooms to other railwaymen. At 29 Grant Road in 1891 lived a railway constable and his wife, along with a shunter, a carriage cleaner and two porters, while at No. 135 a guard and his wife presided over a carriage examiner, a carriage cleaner, another guard and a railway clerk. All the carriage cleaners mentioned in the censuses were men, the only women railway employees being a smattering of waiting-room attendants.⁵²

After the LSWR carriage works moved to Eastleigh in 1890–1 a deskilling of Battersea’s railway population ensued, as manufacturing operations were relocated and the spare space was taken up by goods and storage. The jobs these offered were unglamorous, and with increasing mobility the sense of a nucleus of resident railway folk diminished. Eventually the locomotive depots too declined and finally vanished. A sense of their hierarchies and arcane practices in their heyday is well conveyed in passages of Andrew Martin’s novel *The Necropolis Railway* (2002).

Works, Depots and Stations

NINE ELMS

This section covers the history of the former railway site at Nine Elms, principally its origins with the London & Southampton Railway in 1837–9 and the various waves of Victorian expansion under the LSWR, chiefly in 1862–5 and 1876–99. The short-lived passenger and royal stations at Nine Elms are described first, followed by the works and goods yards. For the manufacture and servicing of locomotives here, Barry Curl’s *The LSWR at Nine Elms* (2004) may be consulted. All these sites were totally redeveloped from 1969 onwards, leaving little trace of railway structures apart from

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the viaducts carrying the main line with their capacious arches, and one warehouse in Pascal Street off Wandsworth Road (not in Battersea), scheduled for demolition at the time of writing.

Nine Elms Terminus

The London & Southampton Railway's terminus at Nine Elms opened for passenger operations on 21 May 1838 and was closed on 11 July 1848. The building then passed into goods use and was extended around 1865. After bomb damage in February 1944, it was demolished in two stages during the 1960s.⁵³

Nine Elms was London's third railway terminus in date, after London Bridge (1836) and Euston (1837). An early example of the head-station type, it followed Euston in the arrangement of its train shed, having a departures platform on one side and an arrivals platform debouching into a yard on the other. But at Nine Elms the frontispiece was a two-storey office building abutting the shed, whereas at Euston the famous arch was ceremonial and separate. In that respect it was closer to the first Lime Street Station at Liverpool (1836).⁵⁴

The architect of the terminus was William Tite, who went on to design the company's stations at Southampton and Gosport. At the parliamentary enquiry into the line in 1834, Charles Fowler gave evidence for the company about Nine Elms and probably expected to design the terminus. The change may have come from Joseph Locke, who took over as engineer for the line in 1837 and later often employed Tite on railway work. Nine Elms was their earliest known collaboration. But Tite was already involved in railways, as a director of the GWR and the London & Blackwall Railway.⁵⁵ How far his brief went beyond the frontispiece of offices is uncertain. He was appointed architect to the London & Southampton company in October 1837, but references to him in its minutes are sparse, apart from an allusion a year later to 'works now erecting under his superintendence' at Nine Elms by two separate

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builders, David Nicholson and Samuel Grimsdell. Tite received £300 for his work on the terminus in December 1838.⁵⁶ Possibly he also designed the granary warehouse next to the dock opposite the station.

Tite's stuccoed frontispiece was in a well-proportioned Italian style, dubbed by Colvin 'Durandesque neo-classical' and by the railway writer Hamilton Ellis 'respectably sobersided'.⁵⁷ The centre consisted of a five-bay open portico recessed behind arches on square piers and crowned by a high parapet. It was flanked by double-storey end pavilions in channelled stucco, with sides concentrating the fenestration within arched recesses (Ills 7.11, 12). The accommodation included a ticket office and waiting rooms below and offices above including a board room, first used in July 1838;⁵⁸ there were probably stairs on both sides. 'On entering the great station-house,' says an early description, 'the passenger pays his fare to the clerk appointed to receive it for the particular station to which he is going, and receives a ticket, which he will have to give up on alighting. He then passes through a doorway on the left, where he will see the line of carriages next to be started, placed close to the pavement on the left-hand side, under a spacious and well-lighted roof.'⁵⁹ A century later, a worn semi-circle could be seen in the paving where passengers queued for tickets.⁶⁰

The train shed behind was attached to the office block and measured 290ft by 74ft 9in. No early views of the interior are known, but it was invaluabley measured and drawn by four students from the Architectural Association during the station's last years (Ill. 7.15).⁶¹ Between the two original low platforms were four lines of rails, the central ones no doubt for sidings. The platforms themselves were flat-roofed, with two lines of columns on the arrivals (north) side and one on the departures side (south); on the latter side an extra track covered by a lean-to arrangement was introduced at an early stage to allow for two departing trains to wait. Between the platforms a pitched roof spanned about fifty feet, covered by queen-post timber trusses and hipped at the two ends. The main structural interest lay in the cast-iron columns and girders stretching thirteen and a half bays lengthwise (Ills 7.13, 14). The

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columns, at 21ft-centres, carried cast capitals of a stiff-leaf acanthus pattern, beneath which brackets bore shallow-arched cast-iron girders in one piece with open spandrels pierced by circle motifs, like those at Euston. Similar girders extended transversely across the platforms at the hipped ends; they spanned over 48ft and appear to have been cast in a single piece.

By 1847 the platforms had been extended outside the shed, with rows of small columns on the departure side doubtless supporting a canopy, but no such shelter on the arrivals side.⁶² Next year passenger services left Nine Elms, and the terminus was converted for goods use. Yet Queen Victoria still used it when travelling to and from Windsor or Osborne until the royal station in Wandsworth Road became available in 1854. Here also Garibaldi, returning bronzed from the Isle of Wight, was feted by enthusiasts on 11 April 1864, when the shed was 'cleared out of carriages, and a hasty and certainly most ineffectual attempt made to decorate it in honour of the occasion ... Every part of this building, in which even the smallest amount of standing room could be secured, had its occupants, and in some cases its disputants for the right of possession.'⁶³

Around then the old passenger terminus was extended to almost twice its original length and paired with a new 'hydraulic shed', in parallel to its north. During its century of life as a goods shed it was little altered. An article of 1942 in *The Builder* drew attention to its historic value, calling the office building 'a very dignified piece of work' and 'a better work architecturally than the Royal Exchange' (also by Tite).⁶⁴ After an oil bomb gutted the front building in 1944, its central parapet was taken down. In *First and Last Loves* (1952) John Betjeman described the terminus as standing 'classic, stuccoed and deserted, amid the gas-works, goods yards and factories of that district where strikes seem often to originate'.⁶⁵ By then its best chance of preservation had come and gone. In 1951 the British Transport Commission's committee on 'relics and records' proposed Nine Elms Station as a museum for larger railway memorabilia. The idea was accepted in principle, but the regional executive of British Railways declined to release the building. When such a museum eventually opened in

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1960, it was at Clapham.⁶⁶ The fate of Tite's station was now sealed. The office block disappeared in 1963; the shed followed a little later.

The Royal Station

Since Nine Elms Terminus was more convenient for Buckingham Palace than Waterloo, it continued after it closed in 1848 to be made accessible to Queen Victoria, her family and guests by special arrangement. That turned out impractical, so in 1854 a siding and platform were set apart on the south side of the extended main line, just west of the bridge over Wandsworth Road (in Lambeth parish). There were no buildings at first, only an awning, but in 1857 the LSWR provided a waiting room where Prince Albert and others could attend to greet foreign potentates. According to Henry Godson, a senior official at Nine Elms, it was 'expensively furnished, and the ceiling illuminated in various colours and designs, the execution of which work I watched while in progress'.⁶⁷ The Ordnance Survey of 1869 shows a carriage drive, garden and fountain behind the back of a pre-existing villa lending amenity to 'The Royal Station', mapped as a thin rectangle. The villa itself was lived in by the superintendent of the goods department.

After Albert's death in 1861 the station was less in commission, though the Prince and Princess of Wales used it on their journeys to and from Ascot. The raising of the main line on to a viaduct in 1876-7 and the encroachment of LSWR yards and sheds along Wandsworth Road made it less amenable. It was finally removed around 1891-2, when the viaduct was widened.⁶⁸ According to one reminiscence 'the Prince Consort was very partial to the Queen's Station, but I think her Majesty never liked it'.⁶⁹ No illustrations seem to survive.

Nine Elms Works and Goods Yards

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The land which the Southampton company bought for its Nine Elms terminus in the 1830s included what must have seemed a large space north-west of Tite's station building. This became the first railway yard for housing locomotives, carriages and trucks, and for repairs. Initially three separate structures were erected, the largest being the engine shed (Ill. 7.4).

For goods traffic, fundamental to the line's prosperity, the link to the river was crucial. The wharf, used for goods and passengers alike, lay north of the terminus on the other side of Nine Elms Lane, boxed in by miscellaneous structures. In 1839, just after the railway commenced operations, the company built a substantial, two-storey goods shed just east of this wharf; the contractor may have been William Lucas.⁷⁰ A horse railway connected it to the main site, crossing Nine Elms Lane next to the station.

Under the LSWR the yard north-west of the station soon spawned further carriage and engine workshops, as well as a clocktower that succumbed to a serious fire on 16 March 1841.⁷¹ Locomotives started to be built here by John Viret Gooch in 1843. A second connection was also made across Nine Elms Lane north-west of these early carriage and engine works to a larger goods depot next to Belmont Wharf, opened in 1845 and used primarily for coal and stone. For freight coming and going by road another goods shed was added south-east of the station, reached from Wandsworth Road.

All the above buildings lay on the site of the New Covent Garden Flower Market or between Nine Elms Lane and the river, north of the present main line to and from Waterloo. Once that line had opened in 1848 as the LSWR's 'metropolitan extension', the Nine Elms site ceased to be used by the public and became devoted to goods and railway works alone.

The manufacturing sheds and workshops north of the extended line were squeezed tightly between the freight and coaling facilities, and had no eastward outlet

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towards Waterloo. So under Joseph Beattie, Gooch's successor, the LSWR resolved in August 1861 to create locomotive and carriage works south of the main line, leaving the old station and its environs for goods traffic. Thirty acres of market garden land were purchased, stretching westwards almost to New (now Thessaly) Road and corresponding to the site of the present New Covent Garden Fruit and Vegetable Market. The works rose on the eastern portion of this land to a compact layout. Beattie supervised the overall arrangement, assisted by his son William. As they were mechanical engineers, others may have helped design the buildings, including the LSWR's resident engineer, John S. Stratton.⁷²

First to be erected in 1862 was a rectangular running shed just south of the main line, issuing in tracks and turntables on both the down and the up sides. Larger workshops southwards followed in 1865. The outcome was a square complex computed to cover some seven acres of roofed-in space (Ills 7.16, 18). *The Engineer* described the buildings as

substantial, plain in style, but far from being unsightly ... Almost all the shops are on a gauge of 57' 3". This result was arrived at from a calculation of the working room necessary for a certain number of lines of rails – four as a maximum ... The shop walls throughout are 16ft high, from the floor to the tie rods, excepting the range which includes the boiler, coppersmiths and erecting shops, which are 26ft high. The roofs, very light in appearance, are all of iron, and abundantly supplied with large surfaces of glass.⁷³

At first there was full rail access to these sheds from the east only.

The western portion of the site purchased in 1861 was left vacant, though some sidings percolated there. Then in 1876 the LSWR resolved to shift the main line in this sector bodily southwards and elevate it on to a viaduct, so as to make more space for the goods yards. That meant demolishing the fifteen-year-old running shed and creating a new one on this western land. Instead of repeating the rectangular

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arrangement, a broad fan-shaped locomotive shed was erected behind the workshops, on an inner radius of some 400 feet and with two turntables in front. A narrow office building with a Gothic tinge and mansarded clocktower perched in isolation between the turntables (Ill. 7.17). These structures were probably designed by William Jacomb, then the LSWR's chief engineer, with William Beattie, who had succeeded his father as mechanical engineer. Further west, a set of 'sick horse stables' perhaps dated from the same period. Next to these a yet further large running shed, this time conventionally rectangular, was built in 1885, doubled in 1889 and enlarged again in 1910, around which date the 1876 buildings were demolished. This third running shed, updated after severe war damage, became the principal shed until steam locomotives left Nine Elms in 1967.⁷⁴

The LSWR workshops had reached their maximum size by the end of the 1880s, for in 1890–1 the carriage and wagon shops decamped to Eastleigh near Southampton, allowing a short-lived expansion of the locomotive works.⁷⁵ In 1894 a journalist found the complex 'absorbingly interesting, with its glaring contrasts of light and shade; some shops stifling hot, others cold, with the same deafening ceaseless clangour in them all.'⁷⁶ At that date the locomotive works were said to employ 1,400 men; in 1901 the figure given, perhaps for the whole LSWR complex, was 2,400 men and boys. Space had by then already been earmarked at Eastleigh for manufacturing, while pressure from the ever-expanding goods operations at Nine Elms had become irresistible. Following the transfer of men and machinery in 1908–10, the sheds were converted to goods use.⁷⁷

East of these workshops and still south of the main line, a miscellany of LSWR buildings arose in the 1870s or '80s off the Wandsworth Road on or near the present site of Sainsbury's, Nine Elms (in Lambeth). Here a covered area 220ft by 170ft doubled in 1889 as a road van shop and a carriage repairing shop, with smaller stores, stables and shops around it. The royal station further east was demolished soon afterwards for a hay and straw depot. Till recent years there was one survival hereabouts: a warehouse at 10 Pascal Street. A store for iron and other commodities

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with offices over in 1889, later it became a stationery office. Its workmanlike architecture, with recessed windows between pilaster buttresses along the sides and triplets of relieving arches at the ends, is representative of other LSWR buildings. It was threatened with demolition in 2012.

The company's freight-handling, shunting and docking operations were said to employ 1,700 in 1900. Most of this took place north of the main line. The old terminus had been the main down goods shed since the transfer of locomotive and carriage works in the 1860s, with the 'hydraulic shed' in parallel on the site of the first works. Eastwards stood smaller structures, notably the carriers' shed, egg shed and van dock. In 1898-9 these last, along with a cul-de-sac of houses (Southampton Street East) gave way to the New Shed (later 'A' Shed, later again Nine Elms North Goods Depot), a basic structure measuring some 500ft by 238ft and covering five platforms and nine roads. It became the main dispatch centre for shop and manufactured goods. According to a reporter in 1900:

A consignment of iron spades rubs shoulders with somewhat gruesome suggestion against a number of coffin lids; gimcrack furniture from Curtain Road leans for support against wooden cases full of sugar; whilst bicycles and beef find themselves in close juxtaposition.

When the New Shed was opened, the complex around the old station became the main up shed.⁷⁸

Rails from these buildings and yards crossed Nine Elms Lane at three points by 1889 to link up with riverside operations. Yards and sheds had then taken in the whole river front from a point just east of Ponton Road to Brunswick Wharf and the Vauxhall gasworks site south-west of Vauxhall Bridge. That area (mostly in Lambeth), took the name Brunswick Yard in homage to Brunswick House, a handsome house of 1758 bought by the LSWR in 1854-5. It is still there today, an obdurate survival on the north side of the Vauxhall gyratory.⁷⁹ Used by the company as an institute or club for

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its workforce, by 1900 it boasted reading rooms, billiard rooms and a theatre.⁸⁰ Further west on the Brunswick site stood the goods shed of 1839 and a shed for flour, sugar, butter and bacon with a granary above. Both were removed in 1935–6 in favour of a single large and conspicuous concrete granary for the Southern Railway. This ‘new landmark for London’ consisted of a long slab rising to six main storeys crowned by three towers housing the elevator heads (III. 7.19). It was designed and engineered by Oscar Faber, with Peter Lind Ltd as general contractors, and made use of a special reinforced-concrete framing system with brick-faced cavity walls.⁸¹ It had only a short life, disappearing in 1970.

Much damaged by Second World War bombing, Nine Elms never resumed its full level of operations under British Railways, becoming a ramshackle, strike-prone depot for marshalling and dispatching goods, with a steam locomotive shed marooned at its south-western end. In 1964 it was formally selected as the location of choice for the Covent Garden markets, in circumstances described on page xxx. The last steam locomotives having left in 1967, redevelopment of the whole started two years later.

STEWART’S LANE DEPOT (FORMERLY LONGHEDGE WORKS)

Stewart’s Lane Depot, east of Silverthorne Road and north of Dickens Street, incorporates Battersea’s most significant remaining Victorian railway buildings, stations apart. Here grew up from 1861 onwards the London, Chatham & Dover Railway’s Longhedge Works. Of the many large and homogeneous sheds erected by the LCDR only those on the southern sector of the site, still in railway use, survive.

When the LCDR first encroached upon London, it lacked independent lines or plant. The powers granted to the company in 1860 to build its own lines from Herne Hill to Blackfriars and Farringdon in one direction and to Battersea and Victoria in the other made a metropolitan base necessary. In 1861 therefore the LCDR bought 62

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acres of Longhedge Farm, adjacent to its projected route running in to Victoria via Brixton and Clapham.⁸² That line, constructed in 1862–3, met the LBSCR's tracks at the north end of the site. So the proposed works were strategically placed, becoming more so as railways proliferated and interwove.

At the time of purchase the only substantial structure on the site was the solid house of Longhedge Farm itself. This became the manager's premises, surviving until the 1960s on the east side of Silverthorne Road near the junction with Queenstown Road. Eastwards beyond the LCDR line lay some minor streets off Stewart's Lane (now Road), where additional houses and industry soon burgeoned. Here the short-lived Stewart's Lane Station opened in 1863.

An overall plan for Longhedge was probably made at the outset. The layout is said to have been 'modelled upon the L & NW works at Wolverton' at a smaller scale.⁸³ Engine sheds and repair workshops, urgently needed by William Martley, the LCDR's locomotive superintendent, were the priority. Peto & Betts (who also built the adjacent line) began an intensive programme of construction from 1861, until in August 1863 Martley confirmed he had all he needed.⁸⁴ A ten-foot wall round the whole site, parts of which remain, was also built at this stage. Then came disruption. The high-level viaducts of the Battersea Tangle smashed through the site in 1864–6, after which the LCDR slumped into bankruptcy. In 1867 the vendors of Longhedge Farm were threatening seizure of machinery on the site for non-payment.⁸⁵ All this must have made Longhedge hard to operate. Although the building of new locomotives there was authorized in December 1865, the first one made there did not leave the shed for four years: 'it was called "Enigma", and legend has it that the name reflected the surprise felt at its ultimate completion'.⁸⁶ Little further investment at Longhedge took place for a decade.

The high-level lines split Longhedge into three. On the east side closest to the line of 1862–3 and cut off from the rest of the works lay the north-facing 'locomotive stable' or running shed for 24 engines, well forward in August 1861 but not operated

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until the start of 1862.⁸⁷ It was semicircular in shape, or half a roundhouse, with a fitting shed attached to its south side (Ills 7.6, 27). This first running shed proved too small, and in 1877–8 gave way to a vast squareish structure covering 1.75 acres. A new fitting shed and water tower (both surviving) were attached to its eastern side (Ill. 7.25) and a coal stage was built adjacent ‘upon an entirely new principle, from which engines can be loaded with the necessary supply of coals in less than half the time previously occupied’.⁸⁸ In the south-eastern sector of the site near the present entrance from Dickens Street was the Stewart’s Lane Goods Station, commenced by Peto & Betts in 1861 but not strictly part of the works.⁸⁹

The main portion of the Longhedge Works stood on open ground between the farmhouse and the goods station. As completed around 1900 it amounted to a series of long, parallel sheds on the north side of the site, and a larger carriage and wagon shop on the south side, facing Dickens Street. All these buildings were in a consistent, red-brick idiom, displaying a succession of tall rounded windows and pitched roofs with deep Italian eaves over end-corbelling.⁹⁰ Their walls, many of which supported overhead travelling cranes for hoisting engines or carriages, were described by Simmonds as of ‘immense thickness’. He particularly relished the smithy, ‘a region where Vulcan and his Cyclops are at work, not forging thunderbolts for Jupiter, but giving shape and form to bars of half-molten iron, which shall afterwards be used in the structure of steam-engines and for other practical purposes’.⁹¹ The larger sheds were toplit at the ridge, while clerestory lighting was contrived by raising or lowering adjacent longitudinal bays. There is a hint of dimensional co-ordination between the units, with some standard external widths of 45ft. Light metal trusses were employed for major spans. According to one analysis, the buildings exhibited ‘some pretensions from an architectural point of view not commonly to be met with in works of this kind’, by following ‘the separate system ... in place of successive bays of one storey more generally adopted’.⁹²

The design of the original Longhedge buildings was due to Joseph Cubitt, the LCDR’s chief engineer in the early 1860s.⁹³ The internal arrangements were no doubt

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controlled by the successive locomotive superintendents, William Martley (1860–74), and William Kirtley (1874–98). Kirtley was explicitly credited with an active role in creating the second running shed, but its overall design was by William Mills, Cubitt's successor after the latter's death in 1872.⁹⁴ Mills, together with W. B. S. Mills, perhaps his son, were also responsible for the first part of the new carriage shop in 1887.⁹⁵ This building inaugurated the development of the southern and surviving portion of the site, nearer Dickens Street (Ill. 7.23). Three bays wide and measuring 331ft by 146ft, it was aligned with the carriage shop to its north and connected to railway tracks on its cross axis. In 1899 it underwent substantial extension westwards by four further bays⁹⁶ In about 1934 under the Southern Railway it was stretched eastwards also in lightweight construction with north-light roofs, to attain a length of over 800ft, removing the stores in the process (Ill. 7.26).

About 600 men were employed at Longhedge in 1886.⁹⁷ But after the LCDR merged with the South Eastern Railway in 1899, the constricted site was gradually replaced by Ashford, Kent, as the main manufacturing base. No new locomotives were built there after 1904. Instead the plant dealt with routine repairs or at most re-boiling. Between 1909 and 1911 there was a gradual transfer of personnel to Ashford, which enjoyed an influx of 'Battersea people' into new houses.⁹⁸ The carriage sheds however survived for building Pullman cars between 1912 and 1928 before becoming the 'commissary department' of the Pullman company.

Longhedge lost its name in 1933–4. It now became the Southern Railway's Stewart's Lane Depot, used primarily for repairing and cleaning carriages. By then parts of the north range of buildings had already been let off for commercial purposes. The buildings on this side were torn down at various dates thereafter, the last of them in 2009. But the seven bays of the carriage repairing shop facing Dickens Street survive, incorporated with the Southern Railway extension to form a 14-road shed which at the time of writing houses and maintains the trains of the Gatwick Express. To the south-east, Stewart's Lane Goods Station closed in 1970.⁹⁹

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Sequence of main buildings (from north to south and east to west)¹⁰⁰

Running shed. Original semi-circular shed with attached fitting shed built by Peto & Betts, 1861. Replaced with large square structure in gabled bays by Charles Dickenson, builder, 1877–8, and a fitting shed and water tower along its eastern flank. Roof structure largely reconstructed with north-light trusses, 1931. Coal stage adjacent, also of c.1878. *Fitting shed and water tower only survive.*

Fitting shop. Long narrow two-storey building set lengthwise between the main ranges and Longhedge House. *Demolished.*

Boiler shop. Long, single-bay building. North end of c.1862–5, to a depth of 196ft. Southward extension adding further bays and chimney, probably of 1899, with raised southern end for lifting boilers. Bridge shop after 1909, still so called 1963. *Demolished 2009.*

Boiler house. Small building with chimney at north end, c.1910, replacing copper shop probably of 1871. *Demolished 2009*

Erecting shop (Ill.4/28). In three longitudinal bays, the centre bay lower and narrower than the side ones, which carried traversing cranes. North end of c.1862–5; south end added probably in 1875 by Wall Brothers. Used for locomotive repairs under Southern Railway. *North end demolished c.1935, south end demolished 2009.*

General stores. Three-bay office building of the 1860s surrounded by semi-open timber sheds. *Demolished for 1934 extension of carriage cleaning shed.*

Smiths' shop. Long narrow building of 1861–2 with cruciform north end. Converted after 1909 to sawmill and other uses, badly damaged in Second World War, but survived ruinously into the 1960s. *Demolished.*

Carriage shop, later wagon repairing shop, later engineer's department. Built 1862–3. Three longitudinal bays, the centre bay higher and narrower than the side ones. Projections at the two ends. Converted after 1909 to various uses, latterly a store for Messrs Cadbury and Fry. *Demolished.*

Sawmill. Second sawmill on site, replacing or supplementing original of 1865. Original portion of the 1870s to depth of about 125ft, lengthened to 200ft by 1886. *Demolished.*

Turning shop and office. Transversely sited narrow two-storey building of 1862–3. *Demolished.*

Carriage cleaning shed, formerly carriage and wagon shop. Original portion of three longitudinal bays south of carriage shop built 1887. Westward addition of four bays added c.1899, builder probably James Welton, using columns supplied by John Lysaght Ltd. of Bristol. Eastern continuation with north-light roof trusses over site of general stores added c.1933–4. *Surviving.*

BATTERSEA PARK DEPOT

The east side of Queenstown Road opposite Battersea Park, covered now by flats and offices, was formerly the site of one of the LBSCR's main London depots. Squeezed and elongated between the road and the high-level railway lines coming out of

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Victoria, it was never a coherent location. At the north end lay Battersea Wharf, used for freight interchange between rail and river and connected to a small goods depot. Further south came the locomotive depot, a unique group of three roundhouses interlinked under and around the railway viaduct (III. 7.41).

Battersea Park Depot grew out of the original plans of the WELCPR for a terminus on the south side of the Thames, just east of Chelsea Bridge (see above). After the first railway bridge to Victoria was completed in 1860, the short-lived terminus building of 1858 and its environs were retained for non-passenger uses by the LBSCR. A freight depot was opened in April 1862, the terminus building adapted as a carriage shed, and a small timber goods shed added to its north by the contractor John Perry in 1866.¹⁰¹ By the 1890s the carriage shed had disappeared in favour of open sidings for the LBSCR, while later, probably in the Edwardian years, the goods shed was replaced on an enlarged scale. The open expanse at the river end of the site became known as Battersea Wharf (III. 7.31). According to Simmonds, writing around 1879, it 'combines a water frontage affording facility for discharging cargoes of goods for and from all parts of the Brighton, South-Eastern, London, Chatham and Dover Railways. The traffic during the last ten years has very sensibly increased.'¹⁰² These wharf facilities continued in diminished operation up until 1970. The goods shed was occasionally used for small post-war railway exhibitions, no doubt because of the stimulus of the Festival of Britain displays in Battersea Park opposite. One featured railway travel by kings and queens, following the Coronation in 1953; another was an electrification exhibition in 1960.¹⁰³

Further south, a rare set of structures emerged in connection with the LBSCR's Battersea Loco Depot, known later under the Southern Railway as Battersea Park Depot. The WELCPR had in 1858 built a small timber engine shed south of their terminus, in later terms just north of the Field Gasholder Station. This was inadequate for the LBSCR once Victoria was in active use. But no replacement was possible until the high-level lines of the Battersea Tangle had been completed. The new locomotive accommodation as finally undertaken took the configuration of connected

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roundhouses, an old-fashioned form which Peter Winding has suggested was adopted for lack of space.¹⁰⁴ The original pair of roundhouses, on a diameter of about 180ft each, was designed by the LBSCR engineer Frederick D. Banister and built by John Perry junior in 1868–70.¹⁰⁵

First came the northern roundhouse west of the viaduct, known as the Middle Shed; it was immediately succeeded by the East London Shed, whose circumference was enlarged by means of side wings and connected with the Middle Shed under the elevated viaduct. Some two dozen roads in each roundhouse, with pits beneath for servicing and repairing locomotives, faced a central turntable of 45ft diameter (Ils 7.30, 32). Winding calculated that because many of the locomotives kept here were short tank engines, some 80 could fit in the two roundhouses and yards outside. Their structure consisted of plain external brick walling pierced by round-headed windows, and an internal ring of tall cast-iron columns. On these sat doughnut-shaped roofs, pitched round the circumference and conical in the middle, where spanning trusses of iron were connected to a central column. The wings of the eastern shed were covered with pitched roofs. The lighting, via skylights and clerestories, was generous.

Because of increasing traffic a third roundhouse was added in 1889–90 south of and linked to the western shed. Its diameter was slightly larger, at about 200ft, but again it had 24 roads. Some drawings for it are signed by Charles Dempster Collins, who may have been the LBSCR's superintendent at Battersea, as in 1890 he witnessed contract drawings for an adjacent house for the locomotive superintendent; the builder was probably J. Firbank.¹⁰⁶ A small office was added south of this ancillary shed in 1913, replacing earlier offices in a railway arch.¹⁰⁷ The depot was sealed off by an impressive brick wall, probably of about 1900, which ran along Queenstown Road's east side.

Battersea Loco was largely an engine running shed; all new fabrication and major repair work for the LBSCR were undertaken at Brighton, though some repairs went on in the roundhouses and adjacent arches. Simmonds reckoned the locomotive

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staff here as 'upwards of 300 hands' in about 1879. He noted a clever method for coaling the engines, and admired the cleanliness of the sheds which were 'constantly whitewashed', as well as the locomotives' livery, light brown for the passenger engines and dark green for the goods engines.¹⁰⁸ The depot lost business and status after the Southern Railway was created in 1923 and the main line from Victoria to Brighton then electrified. It closed in 1934, when remaining locomotives were transferred to Stewart's Lane. The western roundhouses became a road vehicle maintenance depot, while by the 1980s the eastern one had become a builders' merchant's store. The western ones and perhaps also the eastern one were removed in 1986. Lamentably, all three were demolished without full record.

CLAPHAM JUNCTION

Self-advertised as Britain's busiest station, Clapham Junction is a macrocosm of its own, a railway landscape of over 28 acres aloof from the streets and wider world around it. The experience it offers must impress but may bewilder even the seasoned traveller.

Clapham Junction is not unique among large British railway stations in lacking a fitting exterior to herald its operations. No grand office building or hotel, not even a taxi rank, dignifies its public face. Because it is a through station, it is also laid upon its context with a disregard which no terminus can afford. The tilt of the land slightly softens that overlay. From the east some twenty tracks arrive at a high level, converging before they cross Falcon Road upon a crushing bridge. In advance of the platforms, their dispersal is foreshadowed and the station's splay begins. Its breadth is best appreciated from the footbridge across the western end, some 330 feet in length, whence the fanning-out of the lines and the extensive sidings between them can be viewed. To the south-west, the ascent of St John's Hill forces the main lines under the roadway, whereas the Richmond branch to their north passes over Plough Road. The effect is that of a great river broadening and breaking up into a

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delta. Only at Clapham Junction the current is two-way, with over 2,000 trains crossing one another daily through the neck (III. 7.33).

As an architectural totality Clapham Junction is incoherent. Apart from an Edwardian block marooned on St John's Hill, its approach buildings lack merit. A hectic, claustrophobic subway forming the main passenger route across the station is linked to a banal entrance concourse on the south, and a pragmatic space under cantilevered tracks facing Grant Road on the north. There are no large waiting rooms, as Clapham Junction is about coming and going, not lingering. The seventeen platforms, their buildings and their equipment are in sundry styles. No all-encompassing roofscape pulls the complex together. The best feature is the western footbridge, yet even that has different parts and has been mauled.

Nevertheless the station has its own unity, imposed by efficiency. Signs are clear, and announcements terse; trains arrive and leave with dispatch. In all its heartlessness Clapham Junction is perhaps the single most resilient place in Battersea. The part it has played in focussing identity is epitomized by the enduring title *Up the Junction*, first a book (1963), then a television film (1965) and feature film (1968), latterly the title of a hit single by the group Square (1979). To echo Tim Sherwood, whose history of the station is heavily relied on in the account that follows, 'what other junction was there?'¹⁰⁹

Calls for a station at this point were first heard in 1846, when the LSWR's new branch to Richmond and Windsor, parting from its main line west of Falcon Bridge, was mooted. The existence of a halt further south where Battersea Rise crossed the main line, known first as Wandsworth and then as Clapham Common (see below), allowed the LSWR directors to ignore these voices. The first stop on the Richmond branch was therefore made at Wandsworth Town.

So things stood until the advent in 1858 of the WELCPR, whose tracks coming up from Wandsworth Common converged in this same locality, before running

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parallel with the LSWR on its southern side. Next year a third company, the WLER, resumed its plan to build a westward spur from its projected line across the river to join the others at the same point. The spur made no sense without a station, and finally induced the LSWR to create a concentration west of Falcon Bridge, including an interchange station. Work began in 1860 with a 570ft-long carriage shed north of the Richmond line, built to relieve pressure of space at Nine Elms and help 'nourish the LSWR's terminus at Waterloo'.¹¹⁰ Sidings, later known as Clapham Yard, were laid out between the Richmond branch and the main line, while closer to Falcon Bridge came the first LSWR station. It was a rudimentary affair with a hip-roofed station house, reached by footpath and underground passage from Falcon Road or by a slanting drive accessible from a point beside the original railway bridge under St John's Hill.

Relations between the LSWR and the LBSCR, which had taken over the WELCPR, were poor. Only after lengthy squabbles did the LBSCR and WLER undertake their own platforms and accommodation south of the LSWR's. The combined station finally opened in March 1863 with the ever-misleading and snobbish name of Clapham Junction – not Falcon Bridge as first intended. The first LBSCR accommodation was meagre, with not even a closed-in shelter on the down line. Access to the company's platforms was mainly via a booking office at the north end of New (later Prested) Road.¹¹¹

The 1863 station had six platform structures and twelve platform faces (III. 7.37). The LSWR's lines were on the north side and the LBSCR's on the south, but they were flanked by the WLER's up line on the outlying northern side of the station, and its down line on the extreme southern counterpart. From 1866 the LCDR also had access to one track on the northern side. Then as now, the platforms were numbered from north to south, yet confusingly. All interchange took place by means of a foot tunnel or 'tubular dungeon' lined with corrugated iron (at six feet, half the width of its present equivalent) east of the station-house structures.¹¹² The rival

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companies ran their own booking and other facilities, and there was no proper linkage between their tracks.

The first of two major rebuildings of Clapham Junction took place in 1873–6, in acknowledgement that its ‘general accommodation is altogether inadequate to the enormous traffic, and the necessity of extensive enlargement and entire reconstruction of the station has for some time past been felt’.¹¹³ Work began on the LBSCR side, where extended platforms with proper offices upon them were constructed in 1873–4 by the contractor Charles Dickenson under the LBSCR’s engineer, Frederick D. Banister. The longest, of 700ft, was protected by a zinc-covered roof on iron columns. Platform buildings included waiting rooms, booking offices and other facilities. Though their stock brickwork was set off by multi-coloured bricks and some dressings of Bath stone and terracotta, the *South London Press* pronounced them ‘anything but pleasing’.¹¹⁴ A little later, a footpath was put in leading from St John’s Hill east of the railway bridge to a new open iron footbridge across the west end of the rebuilt LBSCR platforms.

In 1874–6 the LSWR followed suit to the plans of their engineer, William Jacomb; Jackson & Shaw were the main contractors, though parts of the job were carried out by direct labour. The brunt of this work was extending and in some cases doubling platforms on the LSWR or north side of the station, and rebuilding the opening stretch of the Richmond branch on a new trajectory so as to run north of the 1860 carriage shed and over Plough Road (then Lane), where a level crossing had impeded traffic. A new northern entrance was also provided. The LSWR’s architecture ran to mansard-roofed pavilions with blue and green slate roofs and iron cresting at the two ends of the principal building on the main-line Platform 5 (now 9–10), over stock-brick elevations relieved by red brick (III. 7.34, 38). *The Builder* noted that ‘the central portion of the elevation has a circular timber roof, open throughout, which gives it a light and striking appearance’.¹¹⁵ The core of this building survives along with the iron roof supports and brackets on Platform 10, though the pavilions lasted only till about 1906. A covered area for cabs,

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communicating by ramp with St John's Hill, was probably added west of this platform about 1885.¹¹⁶ Simmonds, writing after the works of the 1870s, counted thirteen waiting rooms and two refreshment bars. He found the railway staff 'respectful and obliging to passengers; there is none of that bull-dog growl in reply to questions which characterize some men with surly dispositions who fill public positions'.¹¹⁷ A less comforting image is offered by an incident on 21 November 1895, when Oscar Wilde was transferred from Wandsworth to Reading Gaol and had to stand on a rainy Clapham Junction platform for half an hour, handcuffed and in convict dress. 'A crowd formed, first laughing and then jeering'; one man spat at him. The prisoner was harrowed by the memory for a full year.¹¹⁸

The second reconstruction, of 1904–10, created the Clapham Junction familiar today. This time the initiative reverted to the LSWR, which in 1904–7 added in two extra tracks on its main line and doubled its Richmond and Windsor platforms. To the west, the carriage shed of 1860 disappeared. The effect was to shift the station's centre of gravity northwards. The outermost tracks on this side were cantilevered out on a long steel structure which, following post-war clearances, is now open to view along the south side of Grant Road. A booking hall opened here under the new Platform 1, leading into the notorious tunnel or subway. This was widened and lined with white tiles, but remained gloomily gaslit until 1940.¹¹⁹ The three new platforms on this side (Nos 1–6) remain much as they were, with timber roof coverings and awnings carried by cast-iron columns and steel trusses. Some decent platform shelters also remain.

Livelier is the western footbridge. As it stands today, it is only half of a more extensive system of high-level communication carried through in 1905–7. Though the LBSCR side already had a raw iron footbridge, the need for improvement had been highlighted in 1900, when a porter was killed and another badly injured by a train while pushing bags across the tracks. Luggage and, even more dangerously, milk churns were then regularly crossing the lines. Criticism from the coroner, Braxton Hicks, prompted planning for a proper system with lifts up from the

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platforms.¹²⁰ The LSWR bridge originally had two arms – the missing one being a covered way which started on St John's Hill west of the main-line railway bridge and connected with the present footbridge over the present platforms 9–10, where the junction was marked by a broad and high booking hall. Next to where this south-western arm debouched on to St John's Hill, single-storey luggage and parcels offices were built, communicating with the sidings and milk depot below. This arm and booking hall were abandoned in the 1930s and demolished in 1969.

The remaining footbridge consists of a timber superstructure atop longitudinal steel spans over the tracks, in contrasting style and colour. It is in three parts, each varied in axis and appearance. At the north or LSWR end the steel trusses are arched but the superstructure is plain; between Platforms 8 and 12, still over LSWR lines, the bridge breaks out into straight girders carrying transverse, top-lit compartments marked by half-hipped roofs with gablets and picturesque articulation of the windows; the LBSCR or southern end is crudest, perhaps because it has been damaged by fire. The bridge varies in width between about 30ft and 42ft, and was originally divided into two passageways, one for passengers and the other for luggage. The lifts from platform level were removed in 1986 but some new and bulkier ones were installed in 2011–12.

The LBSCR's final reconstruction followed on in 1908–10. On this side the track work was less drastic, despite some replacement of platforms and structures. The more significant work took place on the southern approaches, where a new yard and a handsome Wrenaissance station house (Ill. 7.40) were constructed on St John's Hill west of Prested Road (W. Johnson, builder). It communicated with the Brighton company's end of the western footbridge.¹²¹ The new station house afforded more convenient access to the footbridge than the LSWR's covered way further up the hill.

Of the many changes since 1910, the most significant from the public's point of view have been on this St John's Hill side. In 1912 a private passageway attached to a disused tramway depot at the bottom of the hill, much used by pedestrians to

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and from the station, was converted by the LCC into a wider roadway called Clapham Junction Approach.¹²² In 1969 came the removal of the high-level link, described above, and the demolition of the adjacent luggage and parcels office. After years of blight while the British Land Company attempted to redevelop the lower station approaches to a scheme by Richard Seifert & Partners, the two and a half acres they had assembled were bought in 1984 by Compact Retail Developments, later the Charterhall Group. In the ensuing development, the approach road (abbreviated to Junction Approach) was replanned to debouch into Falcon Road, and a humdrum covered shopping arcade became the new main pedestrian approach to the station. Its opening in 1988 led to the closure of the LBSCR's Edwardian booking hall further up St John's Hill.¹²³ In 2009 a plan by Metro Shopping Fund to replace the shopping arcade as part of yet another comprehensive redevelopment of the whole quarter south-east of the station, featuring two tower blocks, was turned down by Wandsworth Council. But Network Rail undertook a programme of station improvements in 2011–12, though these were scaled back after government cuts. The St John's Hill booking hall was reopened, and work began to create a set of larger new stairs and lifts from the main footbridge to the platforms, with scant respect for the character of the existing platform structures. The north or Grant Road entrance was being renovated in the summer of 2012, while next to it the Junction Health Centre has been inserted into a railway arch. Most of these works were undertaken by the engineering contractor Osborne.¹²⁴

Finally, reference should be made to the number of trains passing through Clapham Junction. In 1877 Colonel Yolland of the railway inspectorate noted a total of 656 for an ordinary weekday but added that on the previous Derby Day no less than 1,023 trains had passed. These figures excluded the manifold shunting operations. Simmonds gives the round daily figure of 1,000 for the same period; Sherwood, over a century later after transformations in track layout, timetabling and signalling, put it at 2,200 per day; today the figure is even higher.¹²⁵

GOODS DEPOTS

South Lambeth Goods Station, Battersea Park Road

Last of the major railway works in Battersea was the confusingly named South Lambeth Goods Station of the Great Western Railway. It operated from a 12½-acre site between what is now Battersea Power Station and Battersea Park Road (Ill. 7.41) from 1912 till about 1970.

The company had owned a stake in this district since 1863, when the opening of the GWR-controlled West London Extension Railway connected its lines north of the Thames with the Battersea Tangle and Victoria. A base close to this well-serviced stretch of the river allowed the GWR's haulage trade to compete with rival railways. In 1908–10 the company negotiated to buy the southern portion of the old Southwark & Vauxhall Waterworks, where a large reservoir and two filter beds had stood (page xxx). Access to the site lay over South Eastern and Chatham Railway (formerly LBSCR) tracks south of Victoria, whence the lines swept round to sidings parallel with Battersea Park Road. The site's main structure, opened in 1913, was a 400ft-long goods shed, built with a Hennebique reinforced-concrete frame and brick infill – a trademark of GWR buildings of that period. Above the shed itself were two and in places three storeys of warehousing, while underneath was a basement for bacon, butter and other foodstuffs. South and east of this came stables, again of concrete construction, a garage next to Kirtling Street, and a small office facing the main road. The depot's layout was generous and its equipment up to date, with electrically operated travelling cranes and bridges, and rolling shutters.¹²⁶

The venture's success and the growth of motorized deliveries brought extra buildings, notably two further sheds north and south of the original one, of similar dimensions and again with warehousing over platforms and tracks, accessible under canopied shelter from both sides. These were built in 1928–9 by Halliday & Greenwood. The southern shed was an adjunct to its predecessor and entailed the

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removal of the stabling, but the northern one lay across the main yard against the site boundary. Both were again concrete-framed, and at least the southern one had deep cambered beams over the shed. Ensuing works included the prolongation eastwards of the southern shed, extra covered space along the west side of all three main buildings, and the improvement of access for trucks and other vehicles from the Battersea Park Road/Kirtling Street corner.

The South Lambeth Goods Station's business was varied, ranging from an important milk depot (handled from separate platforms in the south-west corner of the site) to hardware, bottle storage and general provisions; much of the warehousing added from 1929 was let out to private firms. 82,000 tons were handled here in 1912, the first year of operations, rising to 377,000 in 1917. The workforce amounted to 590 in 1929, making South Lambeth the third largest concentration of GWR employees in London.¹²⁷ Operations continued until about 1970, after which all the buildings were demolished.

Falcon Lane Goods Depot

One of Battersea's minor railway freight depots was the Falcon Lane depot of the London & North Western Railway. It was connected with the West London Extension Railway in which the LNWR, like the GWR, had a stake. It opened in 1869, around the time that the LNWR started running passenger services in and out of Victoria.¹²⁸

Falcon Lane depot lay west of the main railway concentration of the Battersea Tangle, and linked into the WLER loop connecting with the south side of Clapham Junction. It was situated east of Falcon Road (Falcon Lane until 1882) and north of Lavender Hill, and laid out largely on the grounds of a villa, Abingdon Lodge. There were two elements to the five-acre site, a coal depot at the west end and a goods station with a single shed to the east. Three-storey offices were added in 1908–9.¹²⁹ When the site was declared available for redevelopment in 1963, it was expected to be

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used for public housing, but an outstanding lease to a bottling company delayed matters. The depot finally closed in 1968.¹³⁰ British Rail retained the site for years thereafter. A new street called Falcon Lane was eventually laid out, following the depot's internal roadway system and giving access to the present Asda store and other large commercial buildings (page xxx). A northern slice of the land was retained in railway use for the strategic Victoria Signalling Centre, opened in 1980.

Midland Railway Depot, Wandsworth Road

Another company with freight facilities in Battersea was the Midland Railway, which in 1874 opened a goods yard east of the LCDR line, a few hundred yards north of Wandsworth Road Station and west of Stewart's Road. According to Edwin Course, writing in the early 1960s, it 'handled general merchandise with a stress on coal from the Midlands. During the Second World War it received a new goods shed in case bombing should necessitate the transfer of work from other terminals. Now its traffic includes coal, builders' materials, and milk which is delivered in tank wagons.'¹³¹ In 1966 steel and milk were the main commodities.¹³² There were no structures of interest and all trace of the depot has gone. It has been replaced by a miscellany of industrial sites north of Pensbury Street.

OTHER RAILWAY STATIONS

Accounts of Nine Elms terminus and Clapham Junction appear above. It remains to give the history of Battersea's lesser passenger stations, existing and demolished. These are grouped into three sections, by locality. Only three of these stations survive today: Battersea Park, Queenstown Road and Wandsworth Common. These are denoted in bold. Demolished stations are referred to in italics when principally mentioned.

Stations of the Tangle

As explained above, the original and short-lived terminus of the WELCPR was called Pimlico, because of its purported connection with the district across Chelsea Bridge to its north. It was sited just south-east of the bridge, across from Battersea Park and at a slight angle to Queenstown (then Victoria) Road. River access for passengers was from a pier just to its north. The line and station started operating at the end of March 1858, to coincide with the opening of Chelsea Bridge. By then the LBSCR had effectively taken over the WELCPR and plans for carrying the line over to Victoria were advanced, so cost was spared. An engraving shows a cheap timber building with glazed roofs over the lines and the three platforms – an up and a down platform, and a third on the west side flanked by offices (Ill. 7.42). The *Daily News* called the terminus ‘simple and characteristic in its design, spacious, commodious for all purposes, and inexpensive’. A refreshment room was run by Sawyer & Strange, who held the licence for the Crystal Palace.¹³³ By January 1860 the name had been changed to Battersea Terminus. The station closed that October, after services to Victoria began.¹³⁴ It survived for some years as a carriage shed for the LBSCR.

For passengers to and from the park, or for those who preferred to pick up or leave the railway at the river, a minor new station replaced the terminus in 1860. This was Battersea, renamed Battersea Park in 1862 and sometimes also known as Battersea Pier. It was perched at high level on the south end of the original railway bridge into Victoria, and connected by stairs to the pier in the river and by a footbridge over the LBSCR’s goods yard below to Chelsea Bridge and Battersea Park. Cheap, narrow and an impediment to through traffic, there were objections from the railway inspectorate before it could be opened. After the bridge was doubled as part of the Victoria improvement works, Sir Charles Fox & Son reconstructed the station in 1866.¹³⁵ The platforms now ran right across the river in the middle of the bridge with entrances at both ends, the counterpart to Battersea Park on the north bank being called Grosvenor Road. But they were still perilously narrow, and the inspectorate again insisted on

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changes. The LBSCR claimed that the reopened station would be mainly used by steamboat passengers, 'as the Battersea-park traffic will chiefly be provided for by the York Road Station which is within half a mile'. It survived only until 1870, though a rebuilt Grosvenor Road Station on the other bank continued much longer.¹³⁶

The present **Battersea Park Station** should not be confused with the station described above. Its original name was 'York Road (LBSCR)'. It was one of a pair of new stations built close to one another in 1866–7 along Battersea Park Road (this section of which was briefly called York Road) to service the high-level lines in and out of Victoria built for the LBSCR and LCDR by Sir Charles Fox & Sons. Its twin a little further east was the demolished Battersea Park Road Station. Both stations were designed by Fox's firm in collaboration with the architect Charles Driver, and at least the LBSCR station was probably built by Jackson & Shaw.¹³⁷ The resourceful Driver had been working freelance for the LBSCR since about 1860, and had just designed stations on the company's South London line linking Victoria with London Bridge, including Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye; common features may be found in all three stations.

Battersea Park Station lies at the junction between the main line from Victoria to Clapham Junction and the South London branch peeling off southwards to Wandsworth Road and beyond. The office building on Battersea Park Road is therefore jammed between the bridges of the two branches as they cross the road. The front takes the form of a stalwart, five-bay Italianate villa, with a narrow mezzanine floor between full storeys at ground and platform level. White brickwork is relieved by red bricks, stone banding and dressings, and liberal ornament including incised keystones – a Driver trademark. The roof, carried on stone brackets and hipped, was originally pantiled and crowned by iron cresting (Ills 7.44, 45).¹³⁸

The site obliged Driver to cram accommodation under the tracks, with a ladies' waiting room on one side of the hall and a first-class waiting room and offices on the other. Today only this impressive hall is publicly accessible. Roughly cubic in shape

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and with a full attic storey, it is divided by an arched screen with pairs of cast-iron columns and ornamental capitals; high-relief heads, vaguely Roman, perch in niches between the spandrels. On the entrance side are the ticketing area (the booking office, reduced in size, retains its original position) and a concealed private stair to the upper floors; beyond are a top-lit waiting area and the main staircase, rising centrally. On both flanks, staircases outside the envelope of the building formerly led down from the up platforms, which were canted out on columns and lattice girders; this striking arrangement remains on the eastern side only. The staircases were interconnected by a cross-gallery at mezzanine level.

At track level the best preserved of the 1866 platforms is No.1, originally the up platform for the South London line. This has the slim iron columns, capitals and ornamental brackets found also at Denmark Hill Station, with a roof gently pitched and a sawtooth-edged awning; remarkably, the platform's timber decking remains. Platforms 2 & 3, attached to the back of the office building, have plainer columns and awnings, perhaps dating from about 1905–6,¹³⁹ though pieces of Driver's ironwork survive at the head of the stairs. The northward extension of these and the adjacent platforms westwards, Nos 4 & 5, may also be Edwardian. A similar canopy once ran the full length of Platforms 4 & 5, with an overhead signal box perched between. There is now no superstructure on these latter platforms and the signal box was removed in 1979.¹⁴⁰ On the western side the lines were doubled in the Edwardian period, entailing a widening of the bridge below. This bridge was designed by Fox's firm.¹⁴¹ It has conspicuous cast spandrel panels on its eastern face (originally on both sides), dated 1865 and decorated with the Brighton company's arms (III. 7.43).

Battersea Park Station was called York Road only from its opening in 1867 until 1870, when it became York Road and Battersea Park, a combination reversed in 1877; the present name dates from 1885.¹⁴² The station building was modestly restored following a fire of 1984 in the booking office.¹⁴³

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Battersea Park Road Station, formerly 'Battersea Park, York Road', or 'York Road (LCDR)', lay some yards further east than Battersea Park Station, and was likewise positioned across the high-level lines crossing Battersea Park Road – here those of the LCDR. Also built in 1866–7, it too was designed by Charles Driver in partnership with Sir Charles Fox & Son.¹⁴⁴ Though a simple station with no front to the road and only a single platform on each side, it enjoyed Driver's profuseness of detail. Since the LCDR was in dire straits at this time, some scaling back in execution may have taken place. Modest entrances either side of the bridge led to a booking hall and waiting room beneath the tracks, or to open stairs leading up to the platforms, which as at Battersea Park Station were canted out on widely spaced iron columns and girders so as to let light into the rooms under the tracks. The platforms followed the pattern of Battersea Park Station Platform 1, having slim columns and a pitch to the canopies. The station was renamed Battersea Park Road in 1877, closed in 1916, and demolished in 1923.¹⁴⁵ All that remains of it are some stylish Gothic arches set into two railway arches on the Battersea Dogs' and Cats' Home side of the bridge; these originally lit the waiting room and booking hall from the east.

Stewart's Lane was a short-lived station, open only between 1863 and 1867, on the LCDR's original low-level line to Victoria. It lay at the end of Corunna Road (now Terrace) off Stewart's Lane, and probably served workers at the LCDR's adjacent Longhedge works. It closed shortly before Battersea Park Road Station opened.¹⁴⁶

Queenstown Road Station lies on the east side of the road of that name. Although the previous name of Queen's Road was dropped in 1939, the station refused to follow suit until 1980, and 'LSWR Queen's Road Station' still shows in large letters on the front fascia (III. 7.46). The station represents an infill by the LSWR, which was unwilling to sanction a stop between Vauxhall and Clapham Junction until suburban growth justified it. In 1877, with the Park Town estate well forward and the main line six tracks wide in this sector, the company finally built a small station at the point where the line crossed Queen's Road.¹⁴⁷ The raw, tile-glazed corridors and stairs leading to the platforms may go back to 1877, but the front to Queenstown Road, of

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pinkish brickwork with mullioned windows, stone dressings and a neat gable, is an Edwardian extension. The platforms stretch west of the office building over the road. The island Platforms 2 & 3 are original, plain timber affairs with iron brackets to the canopies. Platform 1, now disused, is attached to the station building and has a plain awning supported by heavy steel brackets. The west end of the station affords a good view of Charles Fox's trussed girder bridges carrying the LBSCR over the LSWR.

Battersea Station

North of Clapham Junction, there was just one railway station. This was the modest Battersea Station on the WLER, opened in 1863 and closed in 1940. It allowed those in the environs of Battersea village to cross the river to Chelsea, Kensington and Hammersmith, travel into Victoria or change for other trains at Clapham Junction. Sited on an embankment east of Battersea High Street, the station was of timber with wooden boarded stairs and simple platform canopies. On the north side at ground level were a booking office and ladies' waiting room with WCs; on the south side was just an entrance. Waiting rooms at platform level were added in 1882.

The whole station was remodelled in 1909–10. Incendiary damage in October 1940 to the West London line in general and Battersea Station in particular led to its closure, at first temporary, but made permanent after the platform decks were stripped for timber. The remaining structures were demolished in about 1951–2, leaving no trace.¹⁴⁸

Wandsworth Common area

West of Nine Elms, the original London & Southampton Railway as opened in 1838 included one station within Battersea parish. This was situated in a cutting just north of the bridge which took Battersea Rise over the railway. It enjoyed two names during

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its twenty-five year life, both misleading: Wandsworth from 1838 till 1846, and Clapham Common from 1846 to 1863. The former was understandable, as the station lay within a mile of Wandsworth to its west. Once the Richmond branch of the LSWR supplied that community with a station of its own, Wandsworth Town, the name had to be changed. 'Clapham Common' was an utter misnomer. It proved, as a correspondent complained to the *Clapham Gazette*, 'a mere trap for the unwary. The luckless traveller who took his ticket for this station found himself at the end of his journey turned adrift on Wandsworth Common, two miles distant from Clapham Common.'¹⁴⁹

The station, happily recorded by photograph, was perfectly plain, with an office at the east end of the road bridge and stairs down on both sides to timber platforms, perhaps both with shelters (III. 7.47). Though it closed in 1863 when Clapham Junction opened some way to the north, it conferred its mendacious name upon its successor. As the same writer observed, Clapham Junction 'deceives ten passengers where the Clapham Common Station deceived but one.'¹⁵⁰ The buildings survived until the LSWR tracks were widened in the 1880s.¹⁵¹

Just east of the above, on the eastern branch of the railway from Clapham Junction southwards as it crosses Battersea Rise, lies the site of the former New Wandsworth Station. Another short-lived station, it existed only between 1858 and 1869, yet lent its name to the developing area around it. New Wandsworth was built as a local stop on the WELCPR when that railway was taken on from Wandsworth Common to the Thames in 1857-8, replacing the temporary terminus of the WELCPR at the next road bridge southwards. Like its LSWR neighbour it stood in a cutting, in this case south of the Battersea Rise bridge. There was a booking office on the east side, and a shelter on the east or down platform. Also on this side at a higher level was a coal and goods yard, opened along with the station. The creation of Clapham Junction near by in 1863 made the station otiose, but it hung on for another six years. New Wandsworth Goods Yard carried on longer, was extended probably in the

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Edwardian years, and closed only in 1968. The site is now covered by housing on the west side of Chivalry Road.¹⁵²

The one surviving station in this sector is **Wandsworth Common**, south of Nightingale Lane and accessible from Jaggard Way or from a roadway out of St James's Drive. The present site dates from 1869, but it had a predecessor further north, beyond the Nightingale Lane bridge. There lay the original temporary terminus of the WELCPR, constructed from Crystal Palace up to here in 1855–6 before carrying on to the river. The neighbourhood was as yet all but empty of buildings. In the customarily maladroit way, the station was at first denominated plain Wandsworth, 'Common' being added about a year after its official opening in December 1856. Nothing is known of its appearance. It closed in June 1858 when the line continued northwards, and was briefly replaced by New Wandsworth Station, leaving little trace behind.¹⁵³

The current Wandsworth Common Station owes its existence to the opening of Clapham Junction in 1863, which made New Wandsworth Station obsolete. But an intermediate LBSCR station was now needed between Clapham Junction and Balham, as development was taking off hereabouts, with the Hope Tavern and other buildings mushrooming up on Bellevue Road in the mid 1860s. The new station opened in October 1869. The original station office, in a minimal brick Gothic style, survives on the north-east side of the line (Ill. 7.48), reached from Jaggard Way. The rest of the station has been much reconstructed in tandem with track widenings. In 1887–8 new platforms, a waiting room and a footbridge were reported. Works of 1894 corresponded with further widening on the south-west side, when the footbridge was no doubt lengthened. A stationmaster's house of 1897–8 is perhaps the extension north of the 1869 building. Further alterations costing over £4,000 were made by the builders Kirk & Randall in 1907.¹⁵⁴ These must have included the single-storey booking office of brick and brown stone in a handsome Wrenaissance manner protruding on the St James's Road side; it is pierced by what was originally a porte cochère (Ill. 7.49), and hipped back at the end either side of a pedimented gable over a

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round-headed window. The coverings of the outside platforms have been removed, while those on the island platform have had a shallow pitch added.

Adjacent to Wandsworth Common Station on the north-east side were sidings and a small goods yard, controlled from an office slapped directly in front of the station building in 1891. These have disappeared in favour of commercial premises ranged along Jaggard Way.