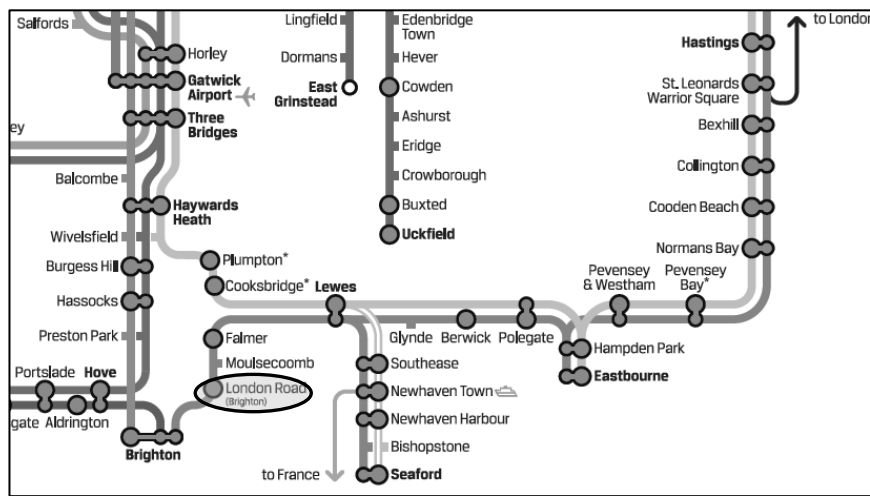
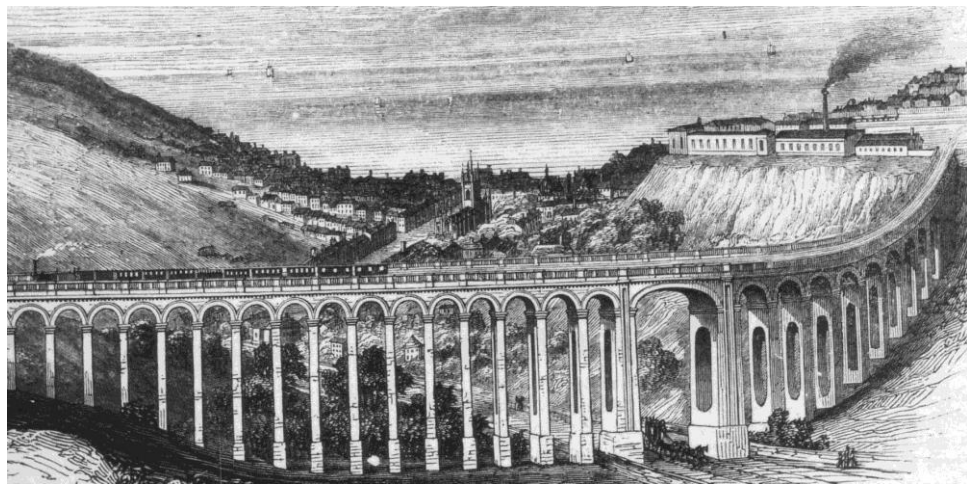


London Road Station and its Connections

London Road Station is on the East Coastway line, which links Brighton with the coastal towns of Seaford, Eastbourne and Hastings and passes through the county town of Lewes and the port of Newhaven. It is much used by residents of this area for access to Brighton station and commuter trains to London, but also for daily travel eastwards to the university sites at Falmer and East Sussex County Council's headquarters in Lewes. On match days, local supporters of Brighton and Hove Albion travel up the line in large numbers to the new football stadium in Falmer.



From the start, the London to Brighton line was planned with connections along the coast: the London and Brighton Railway Act of July, 1837 authorised branches from Brighton westwards to the port of Shoreham and eastwards to the port of Newhaven. At that time, coal, freight and building materials often came to Brighton by sea and were unloaded onto Brighton beach as there was no harbour. The harbour at Shoreham to the west of Brighton had been improved during the first part of the nineteenth century, so linking Shoreham to Brighton by rail became a priority. When Brighton station opened on May 11th, 1840, it was initially for travel to Shoreham. The London to Brighton line opened the following year on September 21st, 1841.



Contemporary etching of the London Road Viaduct, B&H City Council (Thanks to C.Fry)

The line eastwards to Lewes, with a stop at Falmer, received approval in 1844 and opened on June 8th 1846. This required the building of the magnificent 400 yard-long 27-arch Viaduct over the London Road which is still a focal point of our area today. This was followed a few weeks later by the extension onto Hastings Bulverhythe, with a stop at Polegate for Eastbourne. Newhaven Town and Newhaven Wharf stations opened for passengers on December 8th, 1847. The Newhaven extension had by that time become important as it was to connect with the steam packet crossing to Dieppe in France. The London, Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) could now boast the shortest route from London to Paris. (See poster on Cross-Channel Connections). From Newhaven, it was proposed to extend the line to Seaford, just over two miles further along the coast.

The London to Brighton and the coastways lines were constructed by a variety of different railway companies. In July 1846, however, the LBSCR was formed from the merger of five of these companies. Although the LBSCR came to dominate the railway network in Sussex, competition with rivals such as the London & Chatham & Dover Railway and South Eastern Railway (SER) was never far away. In the end, these railway companies were amalgamated, along with the London & South West company, to form the Southern Railway in 1923, but during the second part of the 19th century, much of LBSCR's rapid railway building was driven not just by a real demand but also by the desire to stop other companies from encroaching on its territory.



The first train at Seaford station, June 1864. (Seaford Museum)

The need for an extension from Newhaven to Seaford was demonstrated by the fact that from 1862, a 'first class omnibus' met almost all trains at Newhaven station to take passengers on to Seaford. The journey by road, however, was four miles, significantly longer than a rail route. Seaford at the time had a harbour and the aspiration to develop as a port and seaside resort. The local people were strongly in favour of the rail link

as a stimulus to the development of the town. On 1st June 1864, the Seaford line opened, with an intermediate stop at Bishopstone, to great excitement and celebration: the first

train into the station, bringing with it the mayors of towns from along the line, was greeted with church bells ringing and ships sounding their sirens.

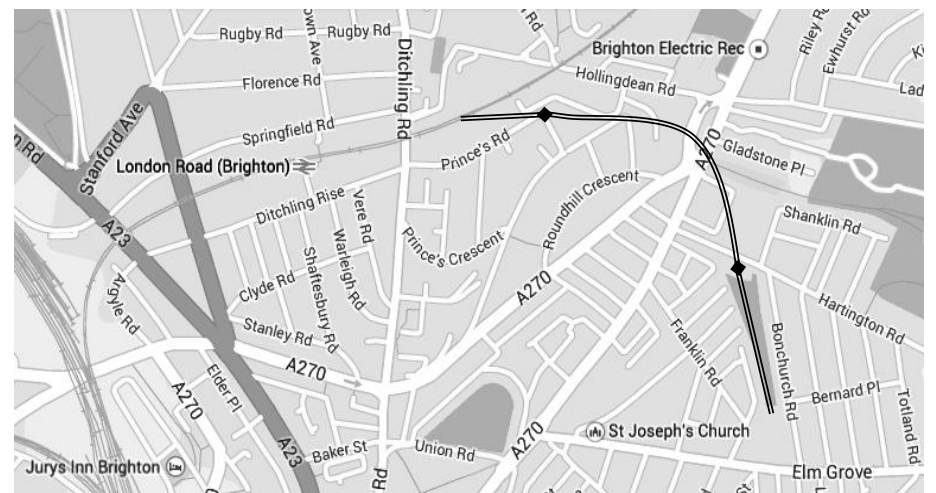
The Kemp Town line



Train on the Kemp Town line. The Lewes Road Viaduct is visible in the background. Photo P.Hay (locodriver.co.uk)

In 1864, the LBSCR was also about to embark on the construction of a further line, linking Brighton Station with the fashionable seaside area of Kemp Town. LBSCR's rival the London, Chatham & Dover Railway, had been threatening to build a line from London to Kemp Town to compete with LBSCR's Brighton service. The Brighton to Kemp Town venture was thus principally designed to stymie their plan. However, the construction of the line proved extremely costly, requiring as it did several viaducts and tunnels.

The Kemp Town branch opened on August 3rd, 1869. It ran for just over a mile from Brighton Station to Kemp Town Station (now the Freshfield Industrial Estate), and it cost some £100,000 to construct. It branched off to the south east just after the Ditchling Road tunnel, clearly visible at the east end of London Road Station. It then ran along an embankment at the back of Princes Road with a station (Lewes Road) situated at the north end of D'Aubigny Road (now Richmond House). It was carried over what is now the Vogue Giratory on a 14-arch viaduct and a further three-arch viaduct took the line up to Hartington Halt station on Hartington Road. It then entered a short cutting (now the William Clark 'Patch' park) before entering the almost kilometre-long Kemp Town Tunnel through Race Hill. The tunnel is still visible from the Freshfield Industrial Estate.



Map of current day street layout showing approximate line of Kemp Town railway (to Kemp Town Tunnel) with Lewes Road Station and Hartington Halt.

The Kemp Town line was never particularly successful and certainly did not generate sufficient income to offset its costly construction. Regular services were temporarily withdrawn during the First World War, but passenger numbers picked slightly up in the 1920s. A local resident, Derek Brimley, remembered Sunday School outings from Lewes Road Station. A resident of Hollingdean, interviewed in 1984, remembered how the trains stopping at Lewes Road station were particularly useful for getting to the Royal Sussex Hospital at that time. But gradually, more and more buses appeared on Brighton's roads. The journey from Brighton to Kemp Town by rail took twice as long as the equivalent journey by road, and even though the service was pretty regular, buses across the town were even more frequent. Furthermore, at 6d for just over a mile-long journey, the railway fares were relatively costly. The last passenger train went through on December 31st 1932 but goods traffic, especially the transport of coal, survived until 1971.



Lewes Road Station: north end of D'Aubigny Road. (Photo by R.C. Riley, disused-stations.org.uk)

There is not much left of the Brighton to Kemp Town line, but here and there, traces can be found. A gap in the Victorian houses in D'Aubigny Road marks the site of Lewes Road Station. Sainsbury's supermarket at the Vogue Giratory, built on the site of the viaduct, has viaduct arches in the brickwork. A sheltered house scheme in Hartington Road is called Old Viaduct Court and at the Bingo Hall on Eastern Road by the Freshfield Industrial Estate where Kemp Town Station and its goods yards were sited, there is a sculpted locomotive coming out of the brickwork.