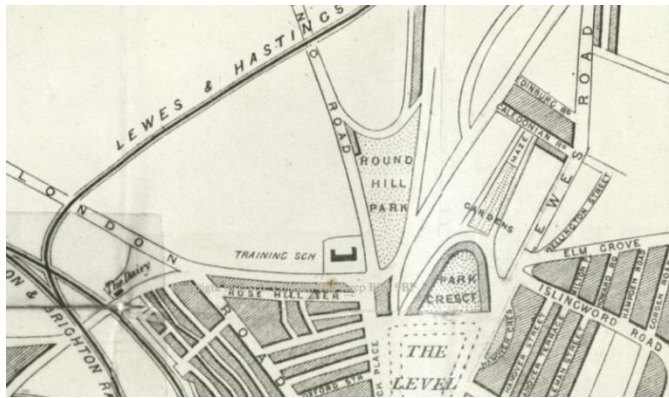


# London Road Station and the Birth of a Community

Which came first – the station or the houses? Well, to some extent it's one of those "chicken and egg" questions. No doubt the presence of the station made the houses more attractive to purchasers, but then the presence of the houses gave the station a *raison d'être*. It certainly wasn't the railway itself; trains chuffed and rattled quite happily across the viaduct and under the Ditchling Road for 30 years before there was anywhere to stop. John Hoare, in his book "Sussex Railway Architecture", says that the station opened "at a time when suburban growth justified a number of additions to stops on the coastal services". Before that, as this 1865 map shows, there were only the London (later Preston) and Ditchling Roads, with no houses to the north of Viaduct Road.



Detail from Dollin's Map (1865)

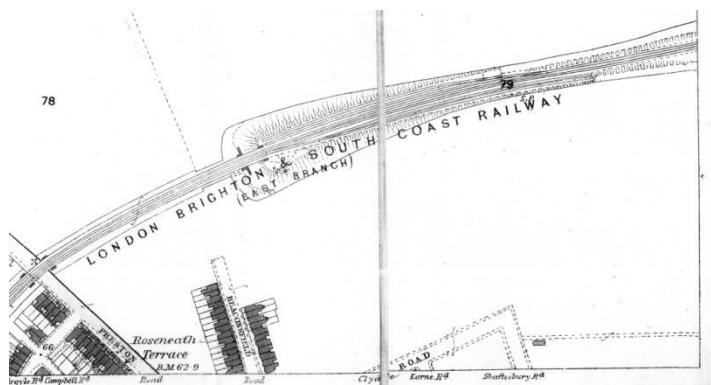
The building of the Kemp Town branch line in the late 1860s may have had something to do with it; it enhanced the importance of this area from a railway perspective, with sidings being built to the east of the viaduct, presumably partly to accommodate eastbound trains from Kemp Town, which had to reverse here. Paul O'Callaghan, in "The Ashford to Brighton Line", points out that "most of the trains stopping [at London Road] originally ran to and from Kemp Town" – so the branch line made it possible to run a suburban stopping service (which also stopped at Lewes Road station, located at the corner of Richmond and D'Aubigny Roads, and Hartington Road) without slowing down the longer-distance trains going to Lewes and beyond.

What later became the station site is the only point between Kemp Town Junction and the viaduct where the railway is at ground level, and hence it was a useful access point. By 1867, construction of the branch was well under way, and parts of what became Beaconsfield, Stanley, Clyde, Shaftesbury and Warleigh roads had begun to appear.



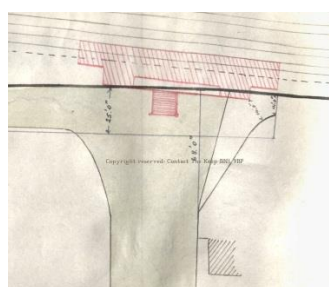
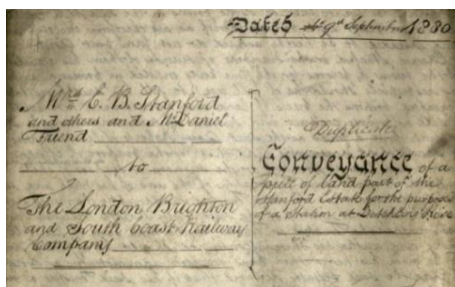
Detail from Pike and Ivimy's 1867 map

By 1875, Clyde and Shaftesbury Roads had been completed up to their mutual junction – at least in outline; Lorne Road had appeared, and there were houses in Beaconsfield Road up to where Ditchling Rise now is.



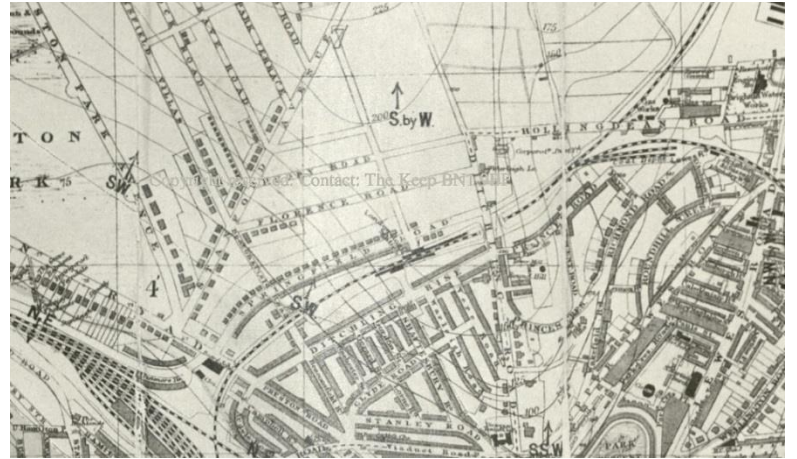
Detail from an 1875 map

The official date for the opening of London Road Station is 1 October 1877. The conveyance of the land to the south of the railway line, "part of the Stanford Estate, for the purpose of a Station at Ditchling Rise", had to be revised in 1880, however, after the builder made Shaftesbury Place 10 feet too wide and had to buy more land!

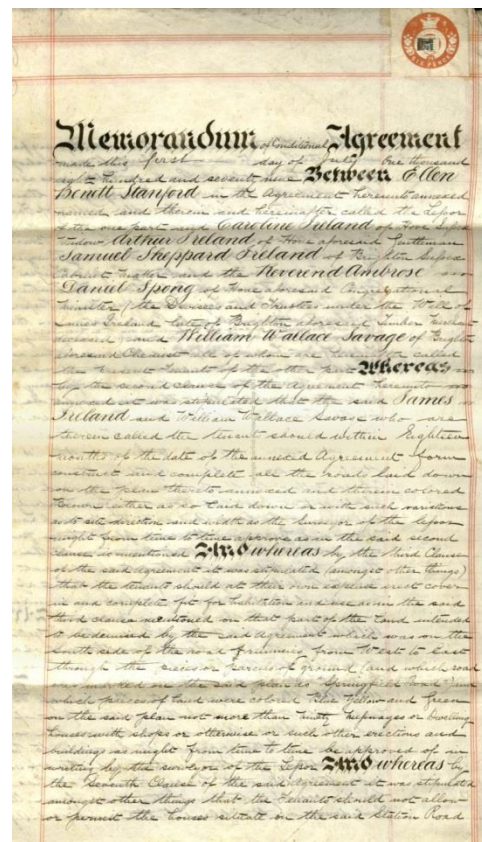


The cover of the 1880 conveyance and the attached plan showing the station building

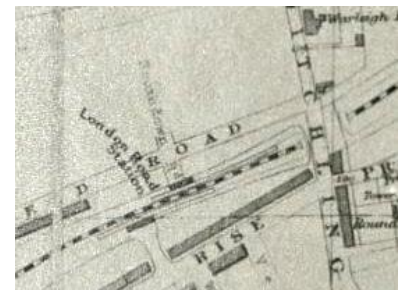
Clearly, at that point, Ditchling Rise existed, albeit without too many houses. But a map dating from just two years later shows all the streets to the south of the line in existence, and with their full complement of houses; to the north, most of the roads had been laid out, and building in Springfield Road was well advanced.



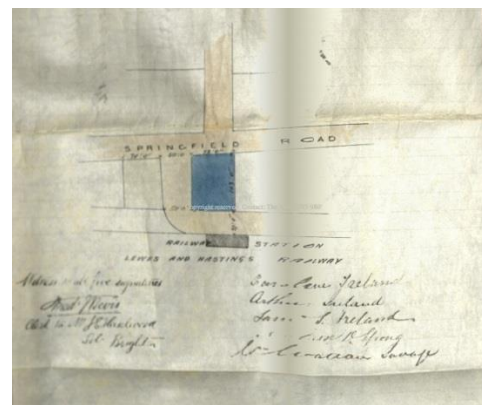
Detail from 1882 Health Map with curious compass points



Left: The front page of an Agreement dated 1 July 1879 describing the building of part of Springfield Road and the short (nowadays unnamed) access road which it refers to as "Station Road", together with what became the Springfield Hotel, and some houses. In a later street map, however, this little road seems to have been annexed by Southdown Avenue (then known as Southdown Road):



Below: This plaque on a house in Springfield Road shows that it was built in 1878



Left: The plan attached to the 1879 Agreement. The Agreement refers to the construction of the roads together with "an Hotel", and "Dwelling houses with shops". The site to the left of "Station Road" did indeed become the Springfield Hotel (now the Open House); and there was a parade of four shops (coloured blue on the plan) at Nos. 148-154 Springfield Road, opposite the end of Southdown Avenue, which disappeared in the late 20th century.

It is not clear when the footbridge first appeared; certainly it was there by 1896, as this street plan shows (although it may have had to wait until the north side of the line was sufficiently populated to justify it). Note that the four shops can be clearly distinguished by the absence of front gardens.

