

# **REPORT OF SOCIETY MEETING**

## **THE HAMMERSMITH & CITY RAILWAY**

**by Mike Horne – author of “150 Years of Hammersmith & City Railway”**

**A report of the LURS meeting at All Souls Club House on Tuesday 14 April 2015**

Our speaker had been asked to write a book for the 150th anniversary of the Hammersmith & City Line, but at the time wondered what could be said of such a short line. Very little had been written about the railway during its lifetime. However, new research revealed a lot of little-known detail, some of which was included in this talk.

### **EARLY DAYS**

Monday 13 June 1864 was opening day, following upon approval by the Railway Inspectorate on the previous Friday. Of the 2 miles 31 chains, 1 mile 40 chains was on 241 arches from Hammersmith with an embankment for most of the remainder. The line opened with three stations, Hammersmith, Shepherd's Bush and Notting Hill (now Ladbroke Grove), through a thinly populated area with clay pits and brickworks. No photos of these original stations have been found. The line was operated by the Great Western Railway, who provided a broad gauge train service, station staffing, maintenance, tickets, etc., in return for half of the revenue. Trains worked between Hammersmith and Farringdon Street every 30 minutes, later doubling and then in stages to every 10 minutes. After electrification a 5 minute service operated. The line started with 37 staff, only three of whom were over age 30.

Eighteen days later a branch opened from Latimer Road Junction to Kensington on 1 July 1864. Of 1 mile 11 chains, 52 chains ran on the West London Railway. The GWR operated this as a shuttle service by splitting trains on the viaduct at Latimer Road Junction, which was without a station. The rear of the train was worked to a single platform at Kensington, before being propelled back to join the rear of a train from Hammersmith which was already standing on the viaduct beyond the junction.

### **WHERE TO STOP**

Hammersmith opened as a temporary station short of the current terminus, opposite Dartmouth now Glenthorne Road, since a final destination was undecided at the time. It was not until 1868 that it was extended into the current terminus. A connecting bus service with through ticketing operated from opening to Richmond, and later to Barnes until 1899. A connecting railway to Richmond was promoted, whilst one to Barnes was petitioned against, and another connecting to Fulham was supported; these did not come about. The London & South Western Railway gained permission for a line from Kensington to Richmond which was linked with the H&C north of Hammersmith. This allowed the H&C to operate trains through to Richmond from Moorgate in 1870. Other planned connections from Latimer Road would have linked with the Great Western main line at Acton or the GWR's Ealing & Shepherds Bush Railway, the later scheme eventually being used by the Central London Railway instead.

The Richmond service went through to the City until 1906 when it was cut back to Ladbroke Grove, and this was left to the GWR to operate upon electrification of the H&C; the service ceased in 1910. The Kensington Addison Road service went through to the City until 1910 when it was cut back to Edgware Road. Some services had gone beyond Kensington, such as the GWR's Middle Circle service to Earl's Court, but the branch was abandoned in 1940 due to wartime damage. The station remains to this day, now known as Kensington Olympia.

### **ORIGINS OF THE H&C**

The line was proposed in 1860 and authorised in 1861. Public transport of the time mainly linked Hammersmith and Shepherd's Bush with the City, the short stage coaches in the process of being superseded by horse omnibuses. Thames steam boats also provided a competitive service in the absence of railways. The only passenger line serving Hammersmith was a branch in Chiswick that provided a circuitous link with Fenchurch Street along a two-hour, 17 mile route. John Fowler, the engineer of the Metropolitan Railway, helped obtain GWR and Met. support for the H&C whose real purpose was to help developers market their housing estates in an area devoid of transport, the developers being prominent on the H&C board. This particularly assisted the developers of Kensington Park Estate (now Ladbroke Grove), St. Quintin Estate and Portobello Estate.

## **LATER DEVELOPMENTS**

A joint management committee was established between the GWR and the Metropolitan Railway in 1865, and the railway then vested in the Metropolitan Railway and GWR jointly in 1867 with stations run by joint staff. The broad gauge track was lifted in 1869, but the wider space between tracks can still be seen today. The train service became increasingly a Metropolitan Railway task, although the GWR again provided its share from the 1880s until electrification. Even in 1946 the line was included in the GWR timetable and map as though totally part of that company. The line had opened with only three stations, but only one remains on its original site although rebuilt, and 19 stations have featured through its life.

An 1885 fire in an arch under Shepherd's Bush station destroyed much of the wooden station structure, which had to be rebuilt. It was sited midway between Uxbridge Rd and Goldhawk Road, but in 1914 was replaced by two new stations directly serving each, and no trace of the original station remains. The market was introduced at that time to maintain the rentable value of the railway arches around the original station.

## **ELECTRIFICATION**

With electrification of the Metropolitan Railway, the H&C had little option but to do likewise. This was entirely a GWR enterprise. They had opened an early power station at Paddington in 1886 and supplied the stations at Paddington, Royal Oak and Westbourne Park, Paddington Goods station and the GWR Hotel, replacing railway produced gas. The power station site was required for railway widening, so a replacement was constructed at Park Royal in 1907, just at the time of electrification of the Hammersmith line.

The new H&C trains were similar to the Metropolitan Railway electric stock, but half were owned by the GWR, although all were maintained as one fleet. When it became time to replace them with modern O Stock, the GWR were unhappy with additional demands to be made on their power supply system. Park Royal power station closed in 1936 and supplies then came from the National Grid, but the substations at Royal Oak and Shepherd's Bush remain. It was not until the late-1970s that the power supply was incorporated into the London Underground system.

## **HAMMERSMITH AREA**

The current Hammersmith building dates from 1907-08, with some alterations in 1912. The large central ticket office carried pre-printed tickets to destinations throughout the London Transport rail system, but also to GWR destinations ('change at Westbourne Park') well into the 1970s. A family barber shop was a continuous station tenant for 101 years until recent alterations resulted in their eviction. The ticket office was removed to allow platforms to be lengthened for the new S7 Stock trains, ironically back to their original position before the 1908 rebuilding. Platform 3 has been lengthened by extending the track into the former Station Manager's office space.

The car depot was built by the GWR in 1905. The Osram siding to the east of the depot building was constructed for the Ford Motor Co. in the First World War for delivering road vehicles, and was later acquired for Osram by the Air Ministry during the Second World War. The full lever frame signal box of 1906 was shown, replaced by a London Transport standard design in 1952 which is still in use. A view north from Hammersmith platform showed that the 1906 station layout had reverted to standard track spacing, but the track on the viaduct retains the former broad gauge track spacing, necessitating a 'kink' in the eastbound track at that point. Grove Road junction signal box for the LSWR Richmond line connection remained standing into the early 1970s.

## **LATIMER ROAD & NORLAND TOWN**

It was mentioned that the railings alongside the line near Latimer Road resulted from an accident in 1869 when a late night train was detained here for some time, and a passenger eventually disembarked and fell from the viaduct to his death. The inquest noted that the parapets were at platform height, and with poor lighting and no railings they could be mistaken for a station platform. The inquest was held in the Station Hotel at Latimer Road, which adjoins the station and then provided a waiting and refreshment room for passengers on its upper floor. The landlord was convicted in 1881 of selling alcohol on a Sunday to persons who were not genuine passengers, having merely entered the station with a platform ticket.

Latimer Road was the most prominent road in the area when the station opened in 1868, and the entrance was originally sited there, but was moved to the busier Bramley Road in 1884 without a change of station name. The station is currently separated from Latimer Road by the motorway and over 200m.

Latimer Road Junction and the connection with the West London Railway was lifted in the 1950s. Passenger services to Kensington Addison Road via Uxbridge Road had been withdrawn after bombing in 1940. A view of a southbound Metropolitan line train approaching Uxbridge Road showed the large staircases at the north end of the platforms which linked with the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908 held in buildings stretching over the Central London Railway depot site at Wood Lane. A station called Norlands had been built north of Uxbridge Road junction in 1864 without agreement of the GWR, and was never opened. A station along the main line near Wood Lane was opened in connection with the 1908 exhibition, and was subsequently retained for special events. When Shepherd's Bush station was resited in 1914 there was only a train's length between the two station platforms, and when Wood Lane (then White City) was damaged by fire in 1959 it did not reopen. Exhibitions were also held at Addison Road and Earl's Court and early posters were shown.

## **WESTBOURNE PARK**

The line originally had a flat junction with the GWR west of Green Lane, but from 1871 separate H&C tracks ran parallel to and along the south side of the pair of main line tracks as far as Westbourne Bridge, with a new station at Royal Oak. The new alignment avoided the Westbourne Park station platforms of 1866, and a new station was constructed further east adjoining Green Lane, now Great Western Road. GWR goods yards developed here on both sides of the H&C line, and were linked by a single flat crossing which remained into the 1970s. Street views of the station buildings showed little change from 1906 to the current day.

## **ROYAL OAK**

The Railway Inspectorate were unhappy that effectively a flat junction remained at Westbourne Bridge where the H&C trains crossed the GWR main line. In 1878 the GWR provided independent tracks all the way between Bishops Road and Westbourne Park, which allowed H&C trains to cross under the GWR main line west of Royal Oak platforms using the underpass seen today. This was achieved by diverting the GWR main line tracks south of the 1871 H&C tracks. Connections remained to allow workings between the GWR and the City and also between Paddington GWR and the Hammersmith branch. The current platform here was once the up (eastbound) platform, but around the time of electrification extra GWR tracks were needed. To make space the old down platform was removed and the tracks ran around the remaining one, which became an island. A 1960s view showed the non-symmetrical canopy which presumably resulted from this.

This concluded the comprehensive presentation which unusually attracted no questions from the large audience present. This is necessarily a summary of the presentation, and readers keen for further details are referred to the book.

**John Hawkins**

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## **MODELLING MATTERS**

Bachmann UK and the London Transport Museum are working together to produce 4mm scale (00 gauge) models of the London Underground S Stock. These models are to be exclusive to LTM and, we are told, will not be sold elsewhere. Sets will be available as 4-cars (two motored and two trailers), a supplementary 4-car pack of trailers to make up a prototypical 8-car train and individual trailers to make up a S7 train.

Further details are on the [www.bachmann.co.uk](http://www.bachmann.co.uk) website and (with prices) on the LTM website ([www.ltmuseumshop.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseumshop.co.uk)) website. LTM are taking pre-orders now. The 4-car motored set is £280 plus £10 postage and packing. This set with four more trailer cars is £439. Single cars are priced at £39.99 each. LURS Member Roger Tuke has seen the pre-production models at a show and says they look "absolutely superb".

The website claims that on-line customers' orders will be dispatched from 29 September 2015. Modellers will be aware that production dates are notoriously optimistic so it will be interesting to see in the Autumn what really happens.

**N.C. Friswell**