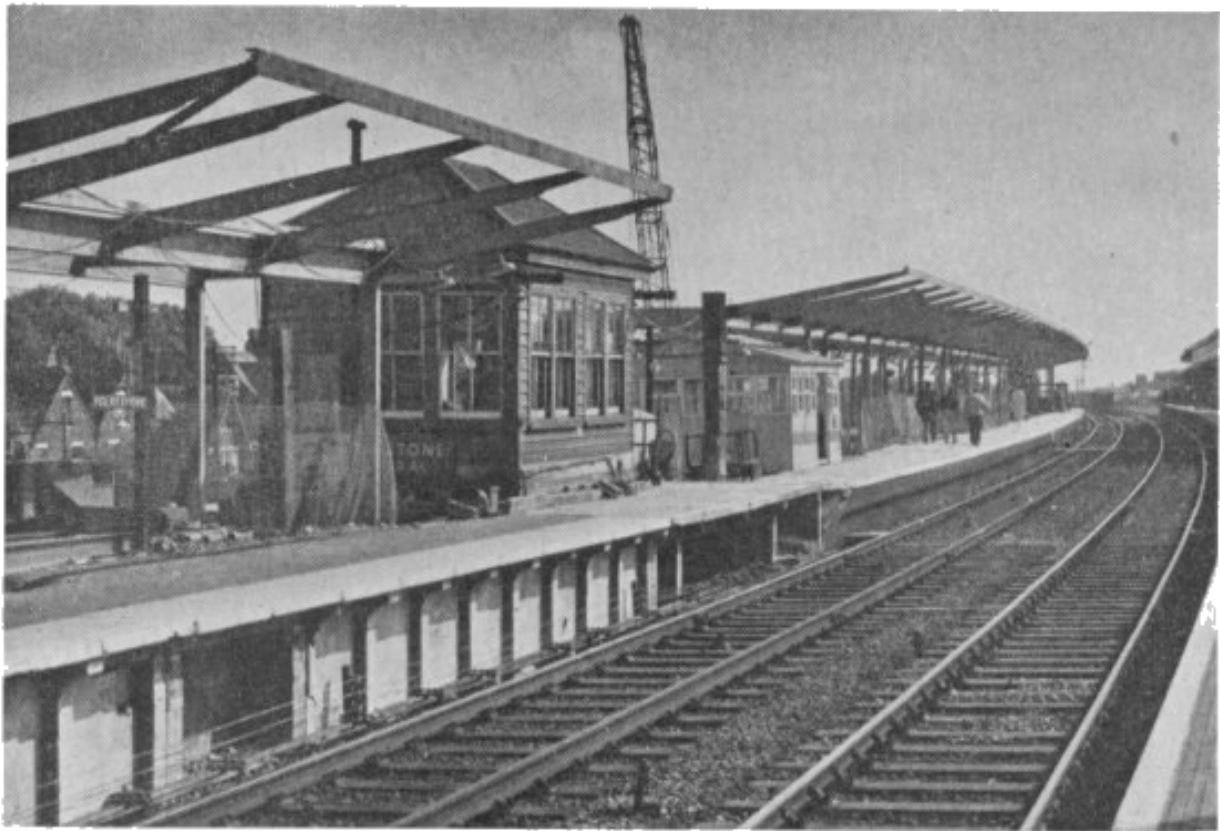


Electric Trains to Folkestone and Dover



Photo]

[H. P. Mason

The down platform at Folkestone Central Station during rebuilding in September last, before the third rails were laid

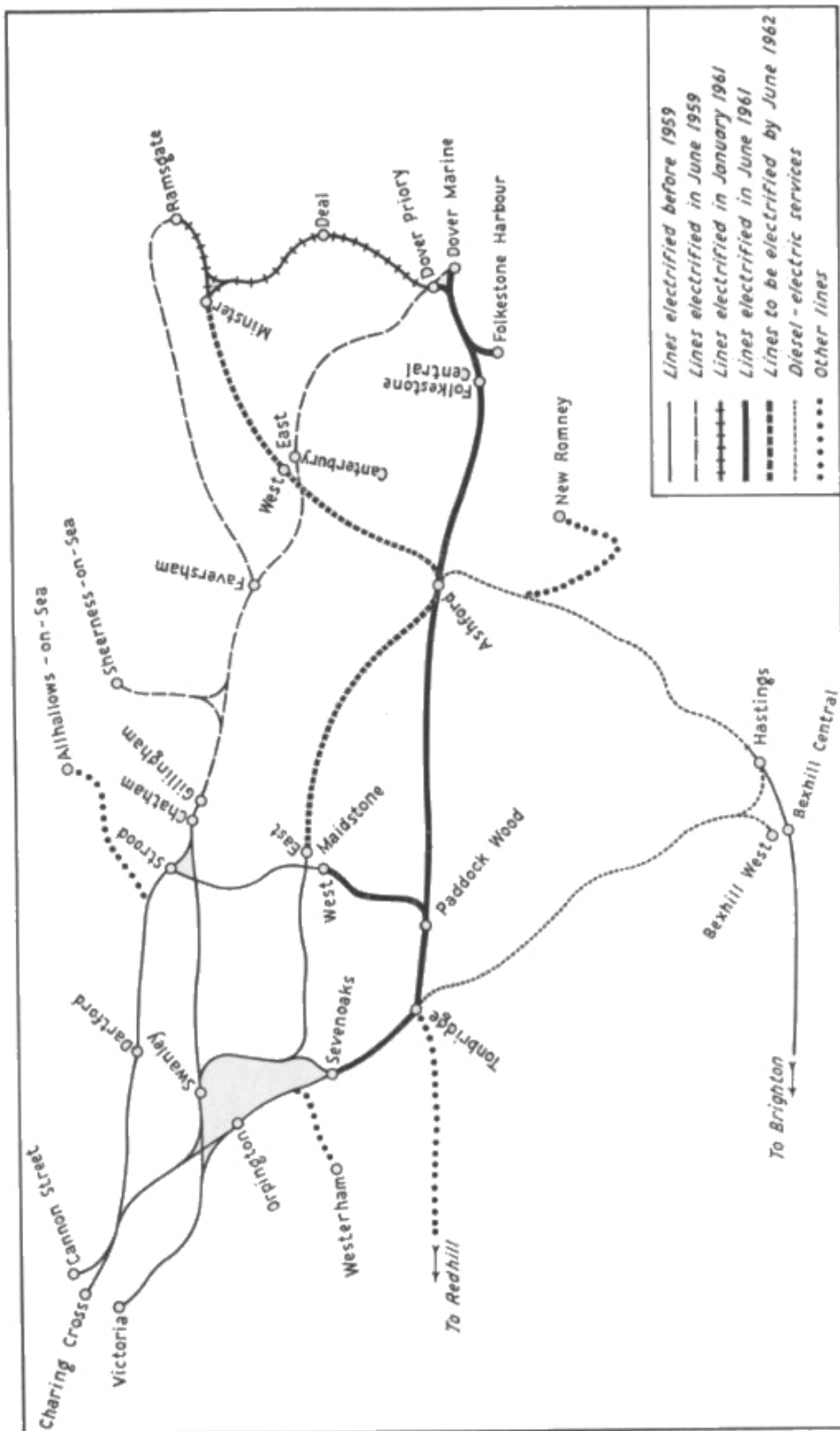
THE second phase of the Kent Coast electrification scheme in the Southern Region of British Railways involves a considerable amount of electrical, mechanical and civil engineering work, much of it of a difficult nature. However, progress has been so rapid that electric working was introduced on the London-Tonbridge-Ashford-Dover main line, and on the branches from Paddock Wood to Maidstone West, and to Folkestone Harbour, on June 12. This represents an advance of one year on the time originally fixed for electrification, but June, 1962, must remain the date when its full benefits become available.

Much work remains to be done, including the installation of colour-light signalling, and until such facilities are available it will not be possible to introduce faster services. Accordingly, at this stage, the alteration has been a straightforward replacement of existing stock by electric multiple-unit sets. Benefits deriving from this changeover

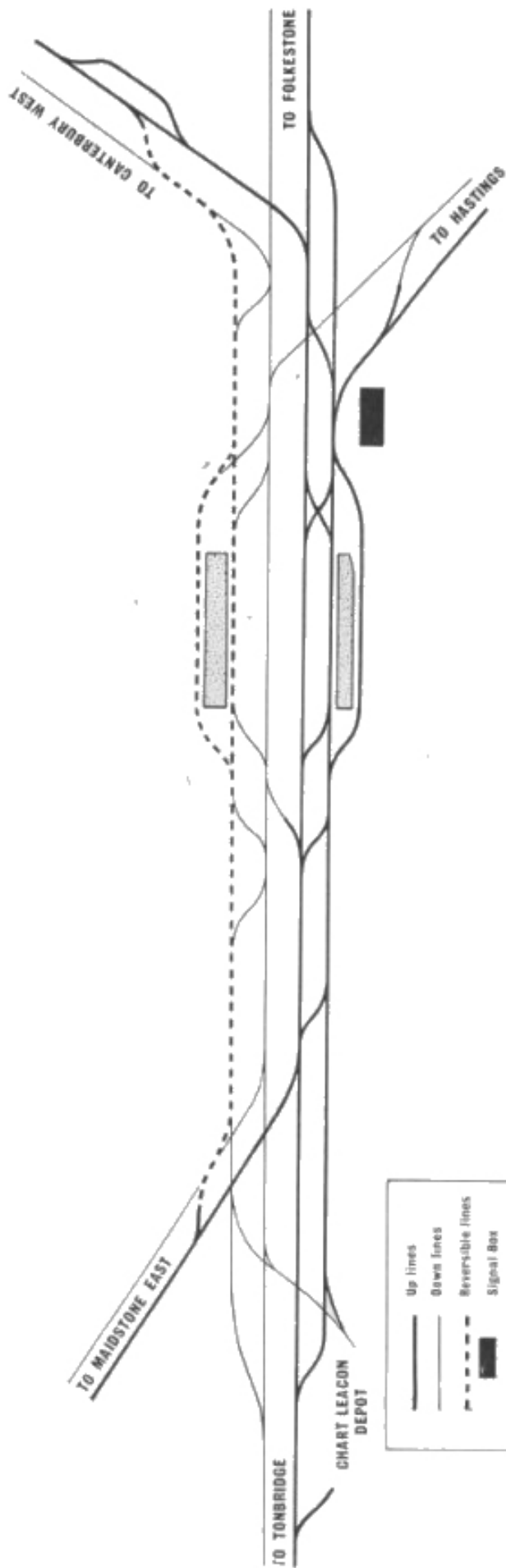
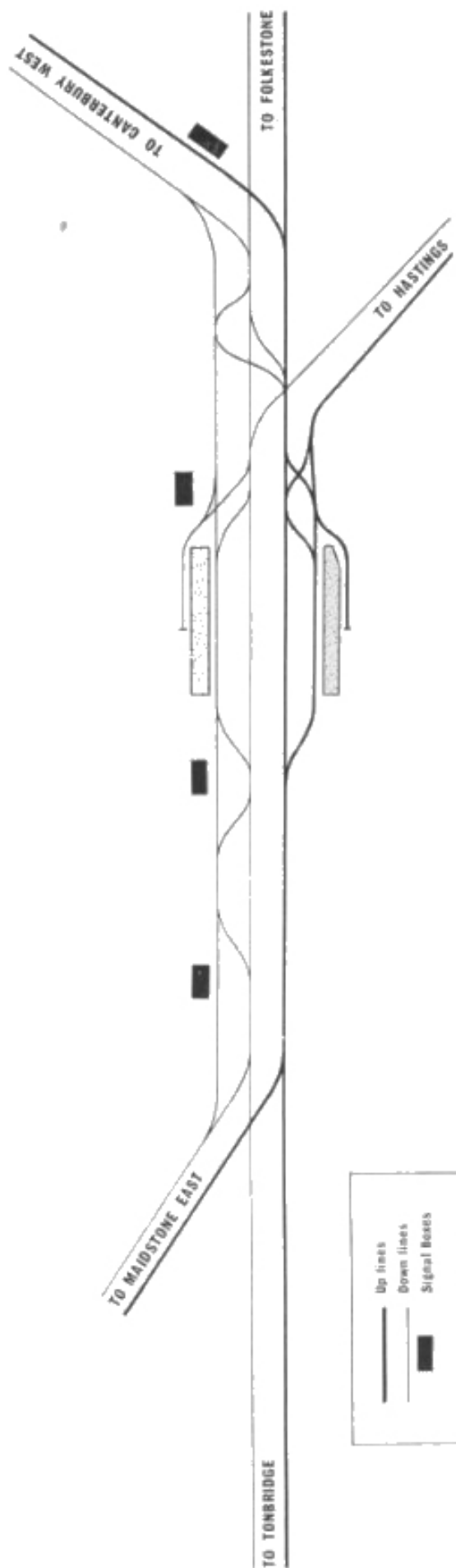
include cleaner trains and increased seating capacity. A few trains are hauled by electric or diesel-electric locomotives. Of the boat trains, only the "Golden Arrow" and the "Night Ferry" are so worked. (Both these services use Dover, thus steam operation on the Folkestone Harbour incline has virtually ended.) The few steam locomotives remaining on the sections concerned are being used mainly on freight trains.

The remaining lines in the second phase of the scheme, from Maidstone East to Ashford, and from Ashford to Ramsgate *via* Canterbury West, will for the present, be worked by locomotive-hauled trains.

The trains introduced last month are made up from 214 new electric coaches, 180 of which have been built as four-coach corridor express units. These are similar to those already working to Dover and Ramsgate *via* Chatham. Both new and existing trains will be pooled in service. Thirty-four of the new coaches are built in two-car sets for intermediate stopping



Map of Southern Region lines in Kent, showing stages of electrification



Layout in the vicinity of Ashford Station before and (below) after alterations

services. In June, 1962, when Phase 2 is completed, a further 14 express units and 29 intermediate units will be added.

The new coaches already introduced replace a similar number of steam-hauled coaches, the best of which are being transferred to other parts of the Southern Region. The remainder will be withdrawn. Experience, since the first stock went into service, has led to a number of improvements in the new coaches. In compartment-type coaches the heating system is now controlled by individual switches, and the first-class compartments now have adjustable head-rests. Litter bins are provided in the corridors. Mechanically, an important departure is the use of specially-adapted Commonwealth bogies.

The 24 electric locomotives of 2,500 h.p. required for both phases of the Kent Coast electrification scheme are already in service. More than half of the 98 type "3" diesel-electric locomotives of 1,550 h.p. are in use, and new ones are being delivered at an average of one a week. Some diesel-electric locomotives, which previously worked trains of ordinary coaching stock on the main line, were transferred to main-line freight services when electric multiple-unit trains were introduced on June 12.

Phase 2 requires the electrification of 132 route miles of track. Thirty-four power sub-stations and 41 track paralleling huts have been built and there is a new electric control room at Paddock Wood.

Ashford and Folkestone Central stations are being completely rebuilt; the latter is a particularly difficult job. In addition to the improved passenger amenities at Folkestone, both platforms are being lengthened. The additional running lines, provided by the quadrupling between Cheriton and the Dover end of the Central Station, will run on the outside faces of the lengthened platforms. They will come into use later this summer, when the work of raising the inner face of the up platform to standard height, and building a connecting luggage subway, will start.

The new station at Ashford will have a central booking hall, leading to the two island platforms. The previous layout was barely able to handle the traffic on the

five converging routes, and would have been unable to cope with the increased service. The new layout will permit of far more trains using the station simultaneously. With the northern platform lines signalled for working in both directions, trains to and from Maidstone East and Canterbury West can use that platform irrespective of their direction of travel. This prevents a considerable number of fouling movements. Trains from Folkestone and Hastings can call simultaneously at the southern platform. Most of the track at the junction of the Folkestone, Canterbury West, and Hastings lines has already been taken up and relaid.

The new carriage repair shop and inspection shed at Chart Leacon, near Ashford, is progressing. In due course trains proceeding to this depot will be able to use the additional up road, leaving the others clear for trains in service.

At Maidstone East a spare road running through the centre of the station, and used mainly as a siding, is being converted into a reversible line. This will be used as a passing loop by trains running either way.

The work in connection with the installation of colour-light signalling is proceeding. This will extend from Hither Green to Dover, and for a few miles along several feeder lines joining the main route. Control will be almost entirely by six new master push-button signalboxes and stretches of automatic signalling.

In preparation for the change-over, more than 70 steam drivers at Tonbridge, Ashford, Ramsgate, Dover and Battersea sheds have attended three-week courses at the Southern Region's central motive-power training school at Stewarts Lane depot, Battersea. Training here is devoted to theory for the first week, theory and practical work on stock stabled in the depot in the second week, and trial runs on the road during the third week. In addition to these concentrated courses, there is a continual training programme for electric and diesel-electric locomotive drivers. So far, in connection with the Kent coast scheme 380 men have qualified to drive diesel-electric locomotives, and of these 144 are also qualified to handle electric locomotives.