

Folkestone and the L.C.D.R.

AT the time of the Dover Railway Centenary, in February, 1944, Mr. Kenneth Brown directed attention (in a letter to our weekly contemporary *The Railway Gazette*) to the fact that the danger of landslides on the line between Folkestone and Dover, and also its vulnerability to enemy action, were used as arguments by the London Chatham & Dover Railway in favour of its Bill in 1884 for an inland line from Kearsney to Folkestone, where an emergency junction with the South Eastern Railway could be put in. Before the House of Commons Committee Mr. James Staats Forbes (June 11, 1884, Question 3614) gave the following evidence in regard to the 1877 landslides:—

"On January 12, 1877, a great landslip took place between Folkestone and Dover, and for two months, that is to say from January 12 to March 12, the line between Folkestone and Dover was absolutely closed. On March 12 it was opened as a single line; but it took until May 30, 1877, and therefore nearly six months (*sic*) before it was restored to its full working efficiency. What we did then was this. The very moment we heard at Victoria of this serious slip, which had taken place, we offered our whole railway to the South Eastern Company without any conditions of any sort or kind; we said: 'You cannot get with the mails to Dover, we are partners in the mails and other business to Dover take them over our railway.' That is what we said, and that is what we did. That went on for two months; we carried all the mails and all the South Eastern passengers from Charing Cross and from Cannon Street, *via* Beckenham, and put them on by means of the Mid-Kent span; we took them, as I say, for two months, and I think on one occasion since then, for a few days they were in the same position and we willingly gave the use of our railways."

Presumably the subsequent occasion mentioned by Mr. Forbes was in March, 1881 (see *The Railway Magazine*, July, 1919, page 30). The most serious break was the landslip of December 19, 1915, illustrated in *The Railway Magazine* for July, 1919 (pages 28-9). Traffic was not resumed until August 11, 1919. Sub-

sequent slips to that of 1881, including the chalk falls of 1939 in the early months of the recent war, were recorded in *The Railway Magazine* for October, 1940.

Later, we received an interesting letter from the late Mr. G. A. Sekon in which he pointed out that Mr. Kenneth Brown's quotation was a sidelight in a series of attempts by the L.C.D.R. to reach Folkestone, and contributed the following summary of the efforts.

Before the L.C.D.R. reached Dover in 1861, the Dover-Calais Mail Service was provided by Mr. J. G. Churchward and his partner; the L.C.D.R. acquired the contract for this service for the English mails, and retained Churchward as manager of it. The railway was extended to the Harbour Station on November 1, 1861. The S.E.R. trains with passengers and mails ran to and from the Admiralty Pier; its passengers therefore were close to the trains, when embarking and disembarking from the steamers. It was not till the Spring of 1863 that the L.C.D.R. trains ran alongside the steamers.

Meanwhile the two railways had entered into an agreement for the pooling of the receipts of all traffic to and from Dover and Folkestone, including Continental, and stations in towns served by both lines. At first the larger share of of the receipts went to the S.E.R. Under this agreement the percentages finally became equal. As shown in Mr. Kenneth Brown's letter, the L.C.D.R. was seeking to reach Folkestone, but the S.E.R. had anticipated such attack, and already had powers to construct a line from Canterbury to Folkestone in 1881, which prevented effectively any line for which the L.C.D.R. might obtain sanction being of any competitive use.

This Elham Valley line of the S.E.R. between Canterbury and Folkestone (Shorncliffe) was opened throughout on July 1, 1889. I was on a visit to Folkestone shortly after, and took the opportunity to travel over the line to Canterbury and back. At the end of 1925 I was again staying in Folkestone and made another journey to Canterbury and back over the Elham Valley branch. Omitting South Canterbury, the combined

population of the places named by the other five stations on the branch was 4,154. At South Canterbury and the three following stations the time for setting down and picking up passengers was given as 30 seconds each station in the working timetables; Elham and Lyminge were allowed a minute each.

From the opening of the line to Folkestone Harbour in 1849, that station had been generally made use of by travellers to and from Folkestone; the Junction station being farther east than the town. It was located at that site because the Harbour branch left the main line near there. A considerable extent of land in Folkestone and district is owned by the Earl of Radnor. From about 1880 this had been developed as a high-class residential district; the S.E.R. runs through this neighbourhood. As Folkestone extended westward, new stations were opened at Radnor Park and Cheriton Arch. These, the S.E.R. asserted, were not included in the division of receipts, as they were not in existence when the 1863 agreement was made. The L.C.D.R. maintained that the stations were in Folkestone, and therefore the receipts should go into the pool.

To "make assurance doubly sure" the S.E.R. built a new station about 150 yd. nearer Folkestone, and named it Shorncliffe Camp. It was quite away from any developed building land, which necessitated the railway constructing several roads to give access to the new station from the Folkestone district. Shorncliffe Camp was granted cheaper fares than Folkestone, and a first-class service of trains. The L.C.D.R. asserted that the Shorncliffe Camp traffic was Folkestone traffic, and therefore the receipts from it came into the pool.

The S.E.R. thereupon ceased to make any payments to the L.C.D.R. in respect of the Folkestone traffic. Two years after the non-payment of its share of the receipts, the L.C.D.R. commenced a lawsuit to obtain a declaration that the stations in dispute were Folkestone stations, and claimed £70,000 as the sum in dispute. The legal proceedings were prolonged by the S.E.R. raising numerous side issues. In May, 1888, the House of Lords decided certain points in favour of the L.C.D.R., and the S.E.R. paid the victor £115,000. This judgment left undecided the point as to whether the disputed stations were "Folkestone."

The S.E.R. then made a proposal to the L.C.D.R. that, if it would agree to the cancellation of the 1863 agreement, the S.E.R. would work the traffic of the latter by its express trains from Folkestone, over the Elham Valley line to Canterbury, where a junction was to be made to connect with the L.C.D.R., so that Folkestone-Victoria trains and *vice versa* could be run through. The distance between Folkestone Harbour to Victoria by the suggested route would have been 82 miles, or ten miles longer than Charing Cross to Folkestone Harbour. The L.C.D.R. declined the offer.

The S.E.R. appealed, but the Court of Appeal decided that Shorncliffe, etc., were Folkestone stations, and in May, 1890, the House of Lords gave judgment in favour of the L.C.D.R. So Folkestone Central replaced in a general way Radnor Park, as Shorncliffe Camp appears to have effaced Cheriton Arch. The L.C.D.R. received as its share of the Shorncliffe traffic £85,000. It was currently reported that the litigation had cost about a quarter of a million.



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