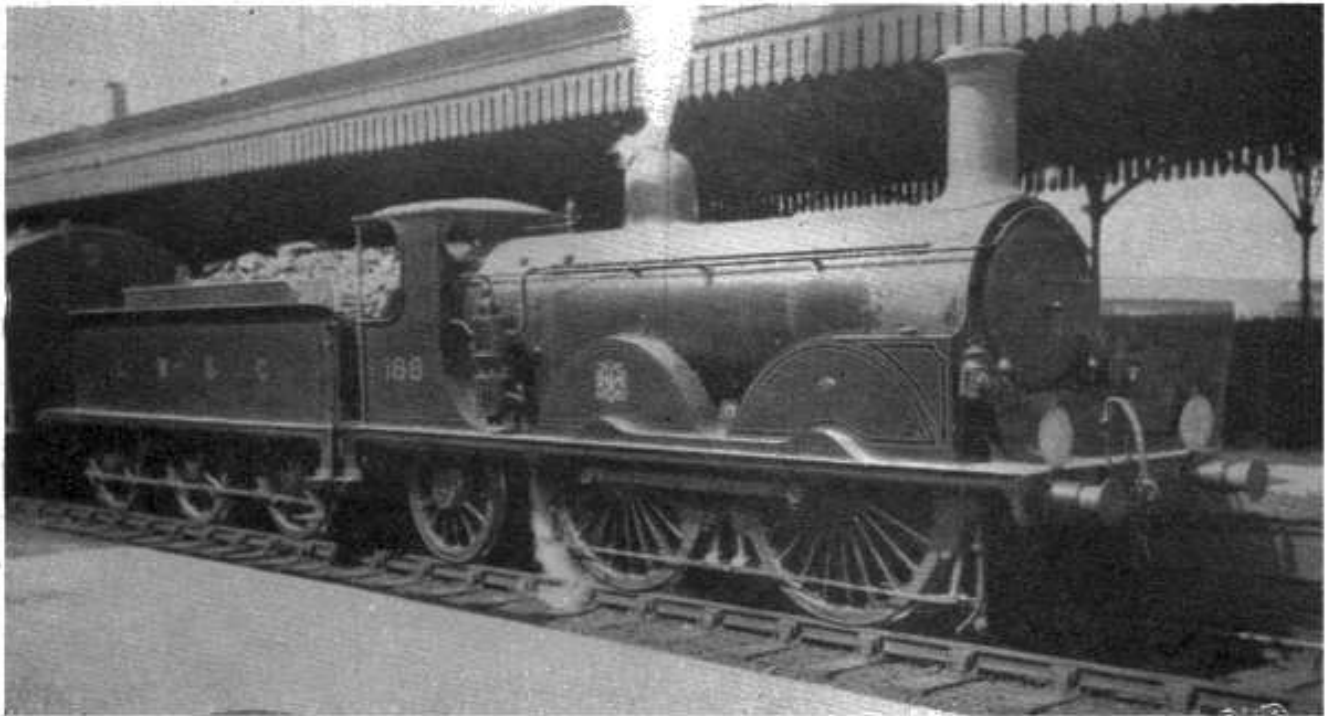


Some "Brighton" Reminiscences

By C. R. L. COLES



London, Brighton & South Coast Railway Stroudley 0-4-2 locomotive No. 188 at Clapham Junction in 1920

IT was a quaint little engine with the front four wheels coupled and a pair of relatively large trailing wheels under the cab. The dark sepia livery was relieved only by the letters L.B.S.C. on the tank sides and plain numerals on the bunker panels.

The engine was coupled to two bogie passenger vehicles in similar exterior guise and with a vestibule corridor connection between them. Internally the vehicles were of the conventional compartment type, but there were no partitions between the corridors and the compartments. The upholstery was of a dark red and black rep possessing a sombre appearance, the corner seats were without arm rests and the panels beneath the luggage racks displayed vivid advertisements for a variety of consumer goods.

By Great Western standards—for it was that system with which I was very familiar and which, earlier that day, I had left—this two-coach pull-and-push unit was smaller, much less attractive and less comfortable. But being the first journey that I can recall in a London, Brighton & South Coast Railway train it was indeed a novelty—as all first

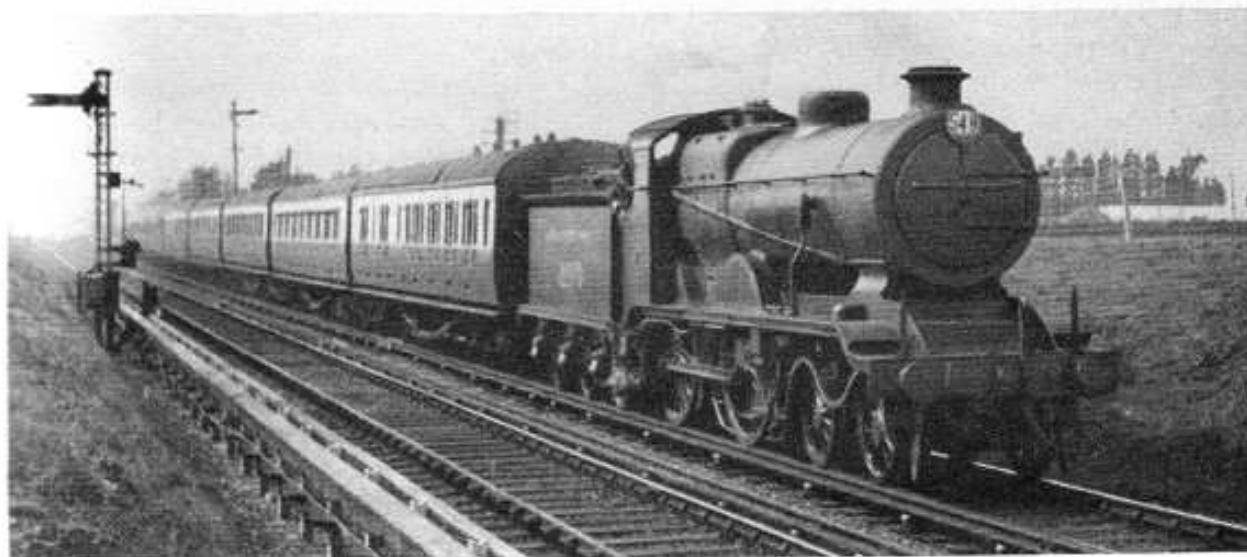
things are. It was a few months before the "Brighton" was to lose its independence when that little Stroudley "D1" tank locomotive meandered along the single-line byway linking Guildford with Horsham, and as I look back I only regret that I was without the means of recording the occasion photographically.

Nearly five years were to elapse before I found myself domiciled in West Sussex, by which time the sepia of the L.B.S.C.R. had given way to the dark green of the newly-formed Southern Railway. That was the only significant change so far. Otherwise it was still the "Brighton"—engines, coaches, signals and suchlike. Very few "foreigners" were to be seen apart from the through trains operating between Brighton and Cardiff. These were comprised alternately of Great Western and London & South Western corridor stock and were often hauled to and from Brighton by a L.S.W.R. "Greyhound" class 4-4-0.

I soon became familiar with many of the "Brighton" locomotives, of which the gradually declining "Gladstones" quickly became warm favourites. They were generally confined to the coast line trains between Brighton and Portsmouth.



Marsh "I3" class 4-4-2 tank No. 2089 near Havant with a Portsmouth-Brighton train in 1938



Brighton train, composed of Great Western and Southern Railways stock, near Barnham Junction headed by "B4X" 4-4-0 No. 2070



Stroudley "D1" class 0-4-2 tank engine No. 2274 near Barnham Junction in 1938 with an up local goods

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I do not recall observing any of these engines on the mid-Sussex routes over which the principal trains were worked by Marsh 4-4-2 tanks and Billinton 4-4-0s. The Midhurst branch trains were invariably worked by Stroudley "D1" tanks, as also were the local pull-and-push trains operating between Arundel, Littlehampton and Bognor.

The Atlantics (familiar enough on picture postcards and in children's painting books) together with the six-coupled express tank locomotives seldom worked west of Brighton; in fact, the only six-coupled engines to be seen regularly were on freight trains—0-6-0s of classes "C2X" and "C3," various 0-6-2 tanks and, occasionally, a "K" class 2-6-0 being assigned to such duties. The Hayling Island branch was, as it still is today, worked exclusively by Stroudley 0-6-0 "Terrier" tanks because of weight restrictions over Langston Bridge.

Most of the passenger trains were composed of non-corridor stock seating five aside, though some vehicles had lavatory accommodation. The "Brighton"—catering principally for relatively short-distance traffic—evidently thought that the necessity for providing corridor facilities was not justified except on the more luxurious Pullman trains.

A typical L.B.S.C.R. express was the morning business train from Portsmouth to London Bridge, which called at Chichester at 9.5 a.m. Loaded to eight or nine non-corridor bogie vehicles and invariably hauled by a "B4" or "B4X" 4-4-0, this train called also at Barnham Junction and Arundel, then continued non-stop *via* Dorking to the city terminus, where it was due at 10.55 a.m. This, incidentally, was one of the longest non-stop booked runs on the "Brighton"—in fact, longer than any at present operating on the Central Section of what is now the Southern Region of British Railways.

A few trains included one or more Pullman cars in their formation. There was, however, no vestibule connection between these more luxurious vehicles and the rest of the train. If you wanted to travel "Pullman" you had to join the car at the starting point or, if there was room, at any intermediate station at which the train was booked to stop.

At holiday times travel on the "Brighton" could be—even by present-day standards—anything but comfort-

able. It not infrequently fell to my lot to travel on the 6.20 p.m. from Victoria to Chichester which would be loaded to as many as eleven non-corridor eight-wheel coaches, but had no refreshment or Pullman car.

Passengers sat five aside, which was a bit of a squash if you happened to be in a "straight-back" vehicle of somewhat ancient vintage or if one or more of your fellow-travellers approached anything like outside proportions. The shallow luggage racks were usually crammed with suitcases, folding push-chairs and all the paraphernalia for the family seaside holiday which, somehow or other, looked as though it might tumble down at any moment but never did! However, you invariably arrived at your destination—which, of course, was the object of your journey!

Gradually, however, the effects of the grouping became more significant. New locomotives released a number of L.S.W.R. Drummond 4-4-0s which, in turn, replaced the "Gladstones" and earlier types of Brighton-built 4-4-0s as they were withdrawn for scrapping. The comforts of the passenger were likewise not neglected and towards the end of 1930 new and more spacious corridor stock had been introduced on to the Mid-Sussex route. Compared with the older L.B.S.C.R. "thirds" these new vehicles were definitely the last word as far as passenger comfort was concerned.

With all the amenities of main-line travel and the provision of Pullman refreshment cars on most of the principal trains, the Mid-Sussex route gained popularity with the travelling public. Trains became longer and heavier but weight restrictions over the swing bridge spanning the River Arun at Ford Junction precluded the use of any locomotives larger than the Atlantics and Baltic tanks over this route. But with these engines already engaged on London-Brighton and London-Eastbourne expresses, the bulk of the Mid-Sussex trains were worked by rebuilt "B4X" 4-4-0s, 4-4-2 tanks and various Drummond 4-4-0s off the "South Western."

January 1, 1933, was a red-letter day for the "Brighton." Britain's first main-line electrification was inaugurated. Even the luxury all-Pullman "Southern Belle" became electric and was re-

named the "Brighton Belle" in 1934. As a result of this development, the Baltic tanks became redundant as such and were converted to tender engines, while some of the Atlantics likewise displaced from the London-Brighton main line were transferred to Bognor Regis.

One roster for an Atlantic was with the 10.20 a.m. Bognor Regis to Victoria train, returning with the 3.20 p.m. down. Booked *via* Dorking, the latter train ran non-stop from Horsham to Arundel. On summer Saturdays it was one of the heaviest trains of the day, frequently

few *ex*-L.S.W.R. "M7" 0-4-4 tanks, monopolised the pull-and-push passenger services.

There is no doubt that electrification brought about an almost complete transformation as far as a quick and frequent train service was concerned. But one is often left to wonder why the Horsham-Brighton line was not included in the West Sussex electrification scheme. Had that been the case, a useful and much shorter alternative route from Brighton to London would have been available in the event of a derailment or electrical failure on the direct line. As it is,



Down weekday "Southern Belle," headed by one of the Marsh 4-6-2 tanks, No. 326, "Bessborough," south of Three Bridges soon after the grouping

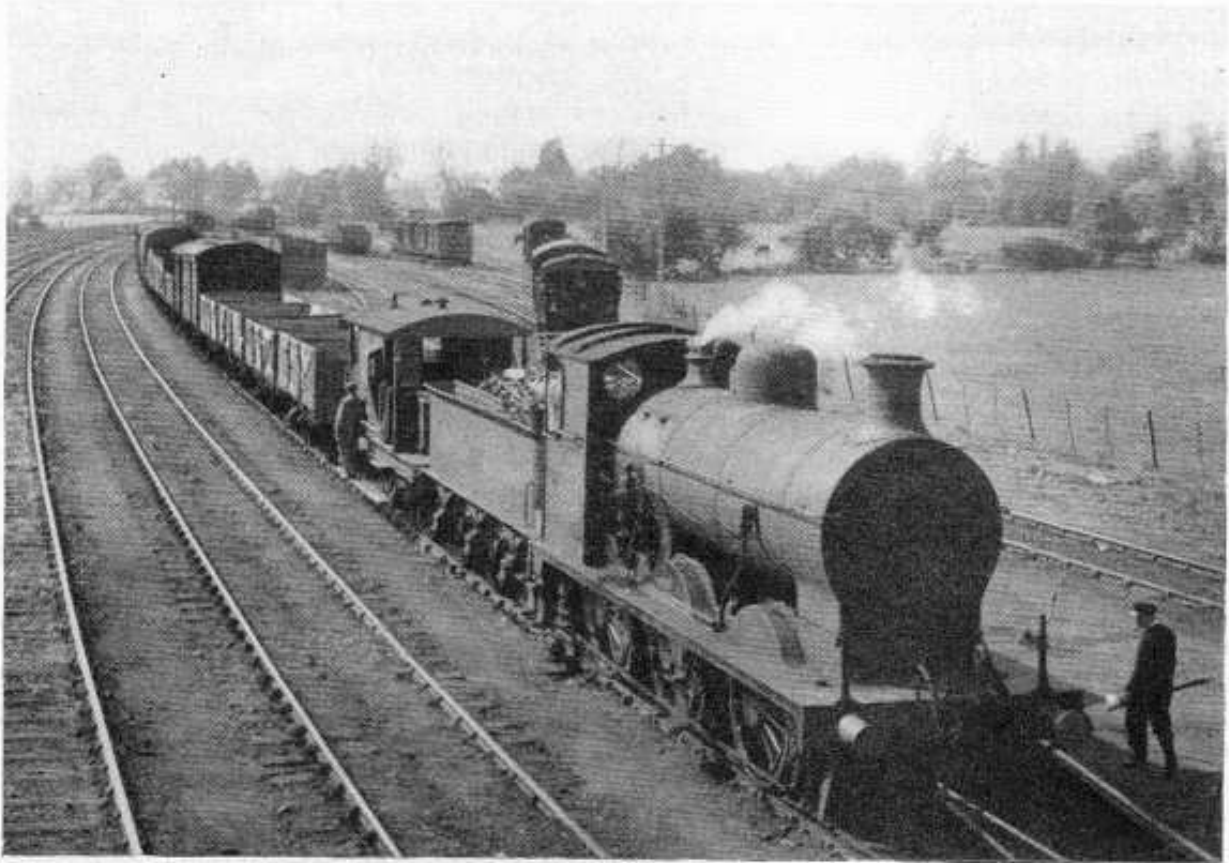
loaded to twelve coaches and invariably double-headed—the pilot engine being usually a Drummond 4-4-0. At Barnham Junction the first three vehicles were detached and worked to Chichester and back by the Atlantic, the engine running tender first on the return journey.

When in the summer of 1938 the West Sussex main lines were electrified, the sight of a former L.B.S.C.R. express passenger engine became almost a thing of the past except on occasional excursions off other systems, and on the through trains to and from Bournemouth, Plymouth and Cardiff—all of which started from and terminated at Brighton.

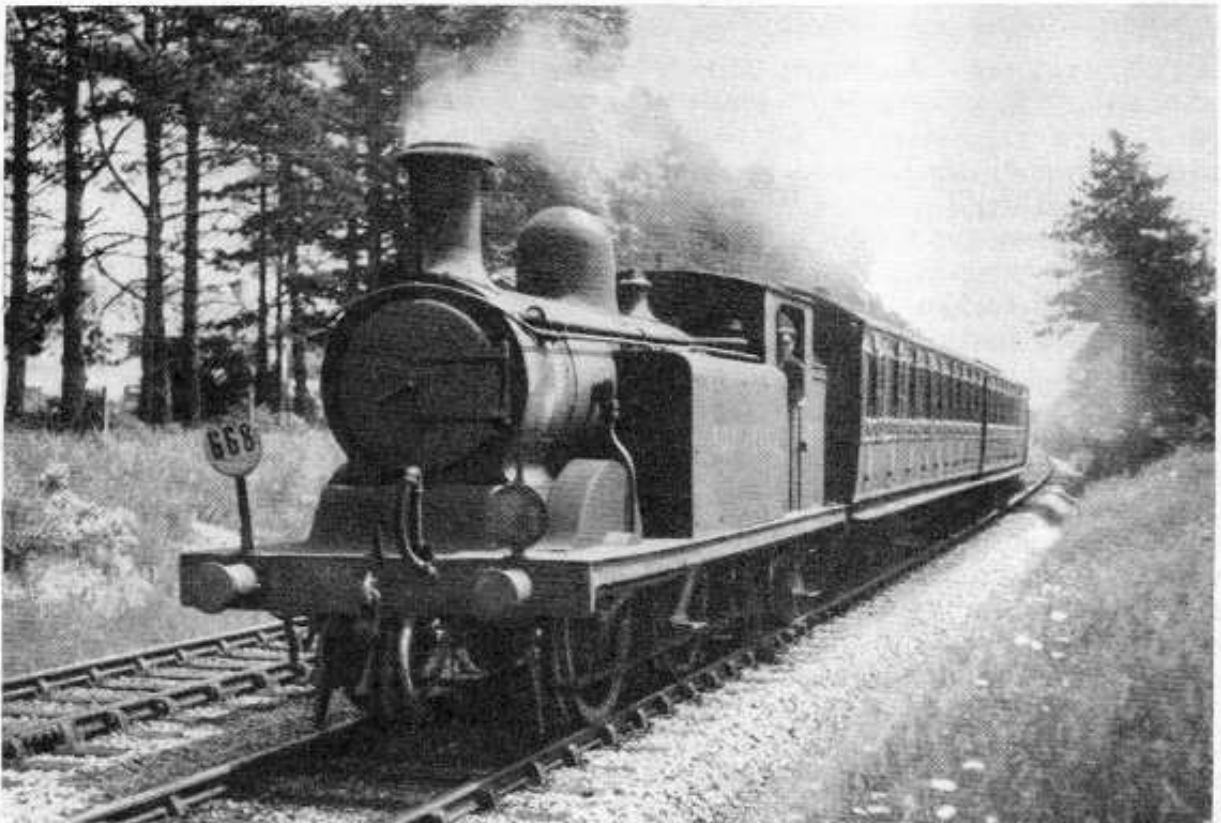
Various types of Brighton-built freight engines were regularly engaged on goods and parcels traffic, however, while on the Midhurst and Guildford branches and on the Horsham-Brighton line (*via* Steyning) Stroudley "D1" 0-4-2 tanks and Billinton "D3" 0-4-4 tanks, together with a

whenever any interruption to the services does occur, trains between London and Brighton have to make the long detour *via* Ford Junction.

In 1940 an emergency of a totally different character occurred towards the latter part of January which affected practically the whole of the Southern Railway's electrified system. Southern England was in the grips of severe winter weather and, on Sunday, January 21, a prolonged blizzard was followed by a rapid fall in temperature resulting in a hard film of ice quickly forming on the conductor rails, thereby causing severe dislocation and interruption of traffic. The following day was dry, although the temperature remained below freezing point, and the few trains that ran were hauled by steam locomotives. There was no means of ascertaining what the next train would be or when it was likely to turn up. Nobody seemed to know—



The last of the "C3" class 0-6-0s, No. 32303, shunting at Chichester in 1951, shortly before being withdrawn from service



Photos]

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Pull-and-push train from Tunbridge Wells approaching Hurst Green Junction in 1946, with "D3" class 0-4-4 tank engine No. 2393

not even railway officials. One simply had to go to the railway station and wait. Eventually I was able to board a London train at Chichester at 4.30 p.m., having waited in the station waiting room for nearly three hours!

The train was cold and cheerless and—being wartime—all the blinds were drawn. What little light there was flickered continuously except in the few short tunnels where the conductor rails were free of ice. It takes a great deal to damp the spirits of the railway enthusiast; nevertheless, I was mighty glad when, 3½ hr. later, the train drew into Victoria Station. The only consoling feature was that, because of the unforeseen and totally unexpected circumstances, I had travelled in an electric train hauled (nay, towed!) by a former L.B.S.C.R. "C2X" 0-6-0 over a former L.B.S.C.R. main line.

With most of its main lines now electrified, I turned my attention—after the war—to some of the secondary routes which were still steam operated and remain so today. Not the least attractive of these is the Oxted line, particularly where it threads its way through the North Downs into the Sussex Weald.

In 1946 I spent a long day during the summer at Woldingham, Oxted and that delightfully-situated junction at Hurst Green—where the East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells lines diverge. Here I found that what remained of the former L.B.S.C.R. locomotives was much in evidence—Marsh 4-4-2 tanks, "B4X" 4-4-0s, one "D3" 0-4-4 tank, and also the two 4-6-2 tanks *Abergavenny* and *Bessborough*. Although these latter had long since lost the names by which they were popularly known, they were still regarded as express passenger locomotives, presenting an immaculate appearance in Southern malachite green, which livery was now being restored to all Southern engines in the "express passenger" category.

Six years were to elapse before I paid a second visit to this line. By then nearly all the "I3" 4-4-2 tanks had disappeared; *Abergavenny* and *Bessborough*, as well as the last of the "B4X" 4-4-0s, had likewise been broken up. In their place were a number of London Midland Region and standard 2-6-4 tanks, "N" class Moguls and Maunsell "Q" class 0-6-0s. Of the Atlantics,

only five of the "H2" class remained in service, one of which regularly worked the 5.40 p.m. from London Bridge to East Grinstead.

However, apart from locomotives there was still plenty to remind me that this was once a part of the L.B.S.C.R. "Brighton"-pattern lower-quadrant signals were still in use at Hurst Green, while the water column on Oxted up platform was also of "Brighton" origin.

Such was the "Brighton" of yesterday. What of today? At the time of writing only one of the rebuilt Baltics (No. 32331, *Beattie*) and one "H2" Atlantic (No. 32424, *Beachy Head*) remain on the active list. A fair proportion of "C2X" 0-6-0s, various shunting tank locomotives and, last but not least, a small group of 0-6-0 "Terrier" tanks can also be seen whenever we travel on what was once the L.B.S.C.R., and which, for some years to come, will bring back memories of such famous engineers as Stroudley, Marsh and Billinton.