

in the year, together with the main-line refreshment room. This annexe, 240 ft. long and 70 ft. wide, forms the northern façade of the station and has an illuminated clock in the middle.

At last the great day came when the final section was completed, and on July 1, 1908, the new station was opened formally. The final stage was the bringing into service on that day of the eastern platforms, numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4. Henceforward, these were the principal suburban platforms, as the decision had

with the traffic." The work involved an expenditure of considerably over £1,000,000.

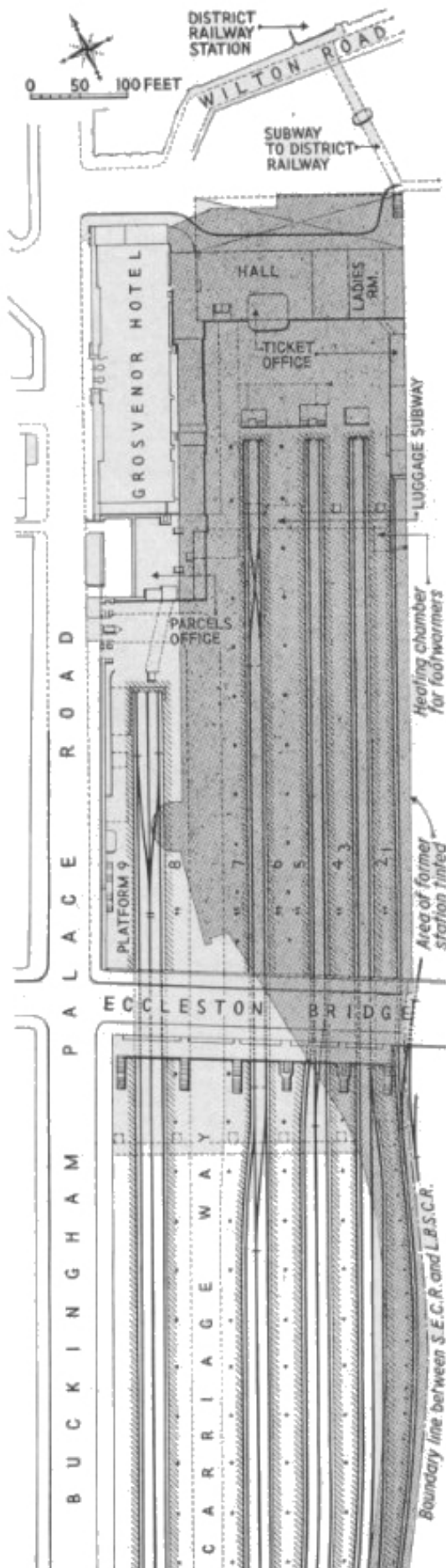
The new "Brighton" station covered nearly 16 acres (compared with the former 8½ acres), and was 320 ft. wide by 1,500 ft. long, against the 230 ft. by 800 ft. of the original. It had 2½ miles of platform, covering an area of 40,000 sq. ft. The front had been set back 56 ft., and the additional forecourt space thus provided—an area of 12,000 sq. ft.—was covered with a glazed roof. Although



Victoria Station forecourt about 1904, before the rebuilding of the "Brighton" station and the erection of the new stone frontage to the "Chatham" station

been taken with rebuilding to change the suburban traffic from the west to the east side of the station, to accord with the volume of traffic. The greater portion of the suburban traffic came from places to the east of the main line. The Earl of Bessborough, who had succeeded Lord Cottesloe as Chairman of the L.B.S.C.R. on February 5, 1908, was able to report to the shareholders: "It is a matter of congratulation that the company is provided with a handsome and commodious terminus, affording increased facilities for dealing with and developing business, and that so heavy and responsible a work has been carried to completion without accident or interference

horse buses had used the forecourt for many years, the railways denied similar facilities to motorbuses until November, 1908. Particular attention was devoted to the main booking hall, 120 ft. by 70 ft., with its curved booking office panelled in dark fumed oak. The circulating area occupied 25,000 sq. ft. and was provided with a train departure indicator with 18 clock faces. Additional exits from the south station were provided by staircases from all platforms to an interchange footbridge alongside Eccleston Bridge. In the basement, communicating with the luggage subway, was a special furnace room for heating the carriage footwarmers in winter. The new station was

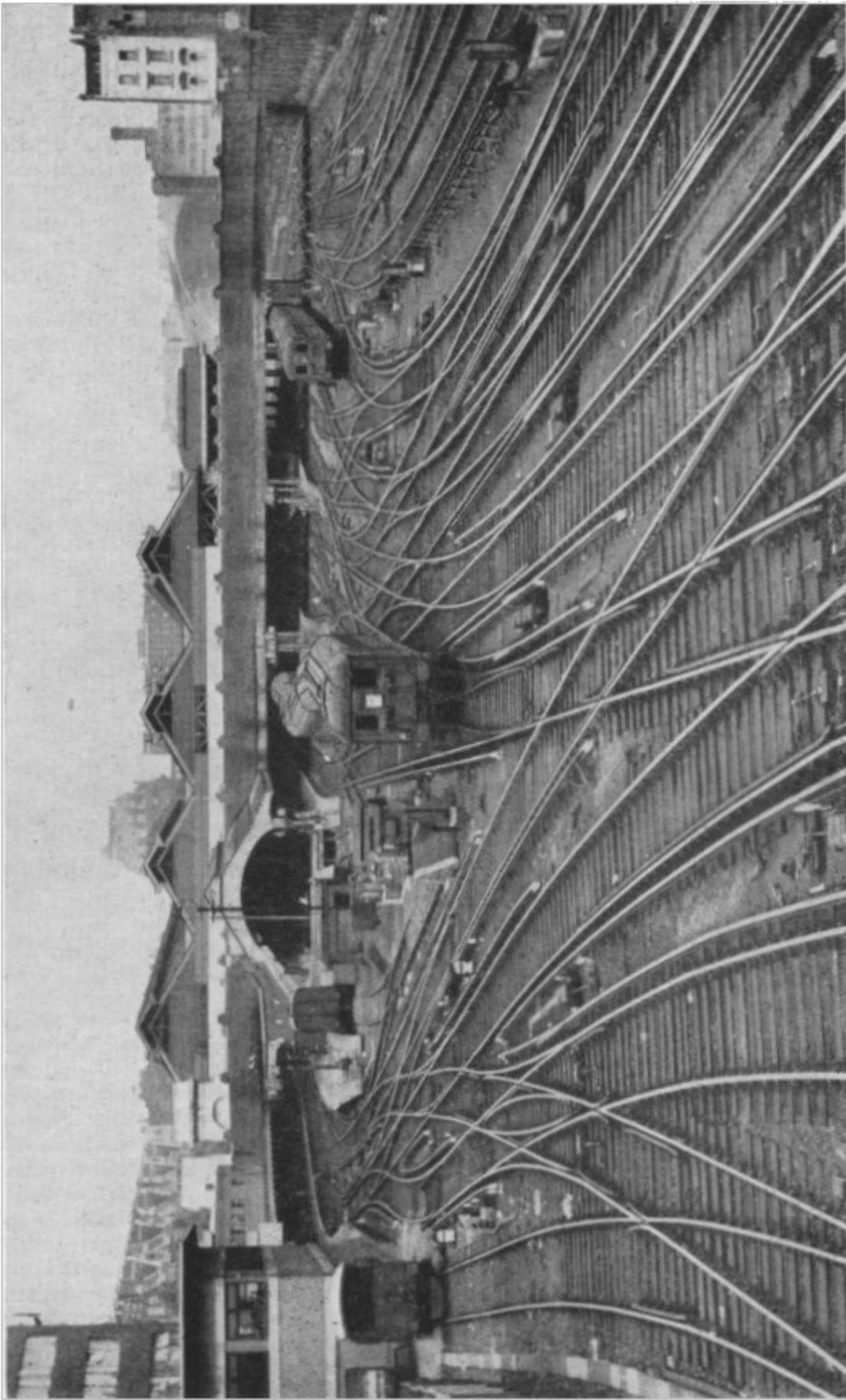


The "Brighton" station in 1908

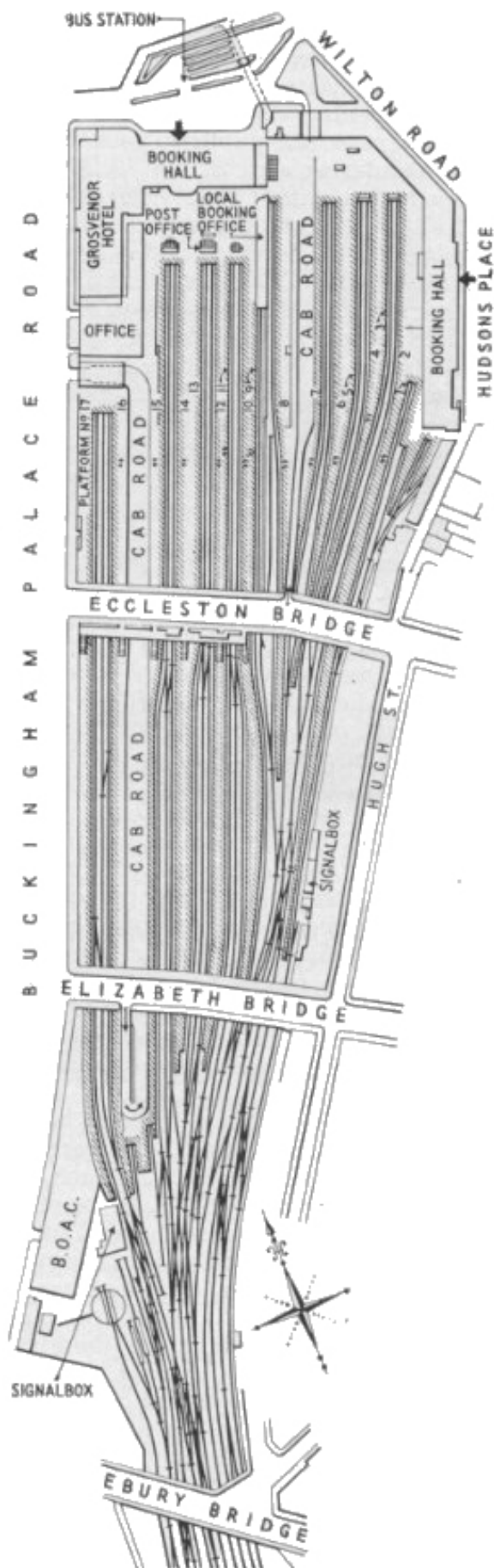
unusual among London railway termini at that period in not using electricity for lighting. This was particularly noteworthy as electric lighting had been introduced experimentally in the old station as early as February, 1888. High-pressure incandescent gas lighting was adopted, giving an exceptionally brilliant and satisfactory light. The gas supplies were taken from the mains of the Gas Light & Coke Company, and then passed through compressing plant at the station. This lighting was not replaced by electricity until 1926-7.

Public reaction was aptly summarised in the *Evening News* at the end of March, 1909, when it was recorded that "the new Victoria Station has at last parted with the forest of scaffolding and girders which beset the path of travellers. The fierce light that beats up from the newness of it all still seems to dazzle both public and staff. The sharp contrast of the present with the recent past is too arresting and may well surprise and even disconcert people who for many years used narrow entrances and exits and elbowed through the dingy little platform gateways. There is one cause for regret—that is the substitution of the handsome but dark and nameless locomotives for the old yellow engines with the names of towns and villages painted on their sides."

On the "Chatham" side, the station was given a new look, and improved office and booking facilities, by the erection in 1907/9 of substantial stone-faced frontage buildings, from which the scaffolding was removed in November, 1908. The fascia was lettered prominently "South Eastern & Chatham Railway" at the top and "Great Western Railway" lower down. Two of the long-standing "foreign" workings ceased at this period, partly because the rapid development of motorbus services made roundabout railway services less attractive. All Great Northern Railway trains were withdrawn as from October 1, 1907, and all Midland Railway trains from July 1, 1908. These had worked *via* Brixton, Blackfriars, and Farringdon Street, and then on the Widened Lines of the Metropolitan Railway to their respective main lines. Grosvenor Road Station (L.C.D.R.) was closed on and from October 1, 1911. Great Western Railway trains continued to run into Victoria



Approach to Victoria Station from a point north of Ebury Bridge. The Central Section ("Brighton") signalbox is on the extreme left, and the roof arch of the Eastern Section ("Chatham") side of the station is in the distance on the right



Victoria Station in January, 1960

until 1915. The weekday service was withdrawn as from Monday, March 15, but the Sunday service ran for the last time on March 21. It was basically a service to Southall, but some trains went through to Uxbridge and Windsor.

The G.W.R. continued to be joint lessee with the L.C.D.R. of the "Chatham" station, and this arrangement survived grouping. In accordance with the Railways Act, 1921, the Victoria Station & Pimlico Railway was absorbed into the Southern Railway by the Southern Group Preliminary Absorption Scheme, dated February 6, 1923, but this did not affect the position of the G.W.R. under the lease of 1860, as modified in 1863. The practical result of the amalgamation, so far as the "Chatham" portion of Victoria Station was concerned, was that the Southern Railway Company became Joint Lessee with the G.W.R. to itself. The words "Great Western Railway" continued to appear on the stonework for nearly twenty years after the last G.W.R. train had run. Ultimately, the lease was surrendered by agreement confirmed by the Southern Railway Act of 1933.

In the early stages of the "Brighton" station reconstruction, the L.B.S.C.R. had obtained Parliamentary powers, under its Act of July 21, 1903, to adopt electric traction. From the outset, main-line electrification was envisaged, and a high-tension a.c. single-phase system, at 6,700 volts, was adopted. Initially, however, suburban lines were selected for conversion, and, in the Victoria Station rebuilding, provision was made for the equipment of five platform and two through lines. Public traffic with electric traction was inaugurated on Wednesday, December 1, 1909, on the South London Line, using the distinctive name "Elevated Electric," which was displayed in white letters on a green background. The trains normally used platform No. 1, but, with the conversion of the Victoria to Crystal Palace line, further platforms were brought into use for electric trains. The Crystal Palace service was opened on May 12, 1911. The subsequent developments were outlined by the present writer in *The Railway Magazine* for December, 1959.

After the first world war, the newly-formed Southern Railway decided to adopt as standard the 600-volt d.c.

system, and the impending conversion of the a.c. system was announced in August, 1926. The first d.c. service into Victoria was opened on Sunday, June 17, 1928, on the South London Line. Other d.c. workings from Victoria began on March 3, 1929, but some a.c. trains continued to run until sufficient new rolling stock was available. The last "overhead electric" train left Victoria for Coulsdon North officially on Saturday, September 21, 1929, but actually at 12.30 a.m. on the Sunday morning.

During 1905, the District Railway had been electrified, and steam was finally withdrawn from the underground station at Victoria on December 6 of that year. The last steam-hauled trains were those of the L.N.W.R., which had been running since February 1, 1872. They were hauled by electric locomotives until final withdrawal from Victoria and the Inner Circle line as from January 1, 1909. In 1911, the District Railway station was rebuilt, and the three stations constituting Victoria assumed substantially the form which they still retain. The L.N.W.R. trains from Willesden Junction continued to reach Victoria "Brighton" station *via* the West London Railway until well into the first world war. They last ran in September, 1917, and were the last regular "foreign" workings into the Victoria main-line stations. They had been among the earliest, instituted on January 1, 1869, and survived for 48 years. Great Western services into the "Chatham" station had lasted for 52 years, but they could not be classed as "foreign" workings, as the G.W.R. was the joint lessee of the station.

In common with other termini, Victoria had its period of quiet on Sunday mornings when it was the general practice for suburban train services to be suspended during church hours, approximately from 10.45 a.m. to 1 p.m. This ceased generally on the South Eastern & Chatham system on January 6, 1918, but lasted on the L.B.S.C.R. until July 15, 1923—actually into Southern Railway days.

At grouping in 1923, the L.B.S.C.R., the L.C.D.R. and S.E.R., the S.E.C.R., and the Victoria Station & Pimlico, all became part of the newly-formed Southern Railway. Until that time, the two main-

line stations at Victoria had been entirely independent, and without internal communication. Beginning in January, 1924, steps were taken to remove the divisions, and an opening was made in the dividing wall to enable the public to pass through. The circulating area in the "Chatham" station was due to be enlarged, and, with that object, and also to allow for the opening to be made, No. 1 road—the nearest to the "Brighton" station—was shortened. The butter-stops on Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5 roads were put in alignment with those in No. 1, providing a much improved concourse. What was No. 6 road was taken out and the platform on the east side of No. 5 road widened and brought up to No. 7, which was converted from a siding into a platform line. Later, the platforms in both stations were renumbered; the most easterly platform in the "Chatham" station became No. 1, and the most westerly in the "Brighton" station No. 17.

In the second world war, Victoria was damaged during the sustained air-raiding of 1940-41, and again in October, 1944, but was never put out of action. In September, 1940, a Dornier bomber was shot down into the courtyard and remained on view for some days; the crew landed by parachute at Kennington Oval. Both in repairing war damage, and also as part of the general policy of improvements, many detail changes have been made in recent years, the latest of which is the provision of a new self-service refreshment room called "The Garden," which was opened as recently as March 23, 1960.

In its centenary year, Victoria handles 959 trains daily at its 17 platforms, of which nine will take two trains each. The longest platform is 1,431 ft., and the total length of platform faces 17,424 ft. Comparisons of size and traffic importance between one station and another are often misleading and inconclusive, but certainly Victoria must be numbered among the great stations of this country, in addition to its claim to be "the Gateway to the Continent."

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