

CROXLEY RAIL LINK – THE HISTORICAL REPORT

Please see the attached extracts from Alan A. Jackson - "London's Metropolitan Railway"; where at pages 211 and 212 it is stated that "present [1910] land prospective competition in central London obliged the Metropolitan [Railway] to concentrate on the development of its *longer distance* business". Please note that insertions are indicated by square brackets ie: [].

Indeed the quote continues, "the country served by this [Metropolitan Railway] Company's Extension Lines to Aylesbury and Uxbridge is coming [and continues to be] into favour, and I [Robert H. Selbie - Metropolitan Railway General Manager; *ibid* page 362 - 1908 to 1930] see no reason why we should not in a short time *very greatly extend*, our [Metropolitan] business on those lines, provided we put ourselves in a position to run a frequent and fast service of trains between the places they serve and the city".

At the lower part of page 211 this is actioned. "Developing his theme, Selbie also argued in 1911 that in conjunction with the GCR, the Metropolitan should build a two mile electrified branch from Rickmansworth to Watford, whose [48,222 -192 via page 385] inhabitants had been agitating for a link to the Metropolitan since the 1880s (possible routes had first been investigated as early as 1889). This project would of course involve extending the electrified track from Harrow to Rickmansworth but Selbie thought that would be "necessary in any case shortly".

There seems to have been some suggestion that the Watford branch might eventually have gone to St. Albans, but although nothing more was heard of that.

There was the threat of LNWR suburban electrification to Watford, [of 1917 including Croxley Green, where the line was built in 1912 during the pre-First World War period in point, and electrified in 1922]. [This threat was] supplemented by projection of Bakerloo tube trains over the new suburban tube lines beyond Willesden Junction, confirmed by an announcement late in 1911, [which] convinced the Metropolitan board that Parliamentary authority for a Metropolitan & GCR branch [to Watford] should be sought".

Taking pages 211, 217 and 293 together - the longer distance commuter business, even in its 1910 & 1911 derivation, merited the Metropolitan Railway urging Parliament to allow them to "very greatly extend." Accordingly Parliament granted the Railway Act, see pages 271 and Statement of Case page 26, to Watford see page 217 and 'Statement of Case' page 26; dated 7th August 1912. Indeed via an alternative route by Stanmore to *Watford*; Parliament had authorised the Watford and Edgware Railway Act 1897 to the Metropolitan Railway near Wembley.

Alan A. Jackson *ibid* page 293 highlights:- "with hindsight, we can see that although this would have cost a little more to build, and done some damage to what became the London Green Belt, its rather more convenient terminus in Watford and much larger catchment area suitable for good middle class housing development (producing a fair crop of First Class commuters) might well have given a better financial return than the two short branches eventually built to Watford and Stanmore".

"twice more [ie. after the 1897 Act] in 1908 and 1911, the [Metropolitan [Railway Board] was asked to consider a Stanmore - Watford proposal, but co-operation was again refused by Baker Street [i.e. Metropolitan HQ.], now committed to the shorter [and thus cheaper] branch from Rickmansworth to Watford".

One proceeds to Alan A. Jackson *ibid* page 217, where it is highlighted:- "The branch to Watford, authorised by the Metropolitan Railway Act of 7th August 1912 despite fierce LNWR opposition, had its commercial prospects [and page 212 prospects towards St. Albans] very firmly nipped in the bud."

"Opposition from Watford Council on amenity grounds secured abandonment of the final 35.4 chains through Cassiobury Park to the proposed [central Watford] terminus close to the High Street." [It is odd that the Metropolitan did not put forward to Parliament; a tunnelled alternative under the roads, like the original Metropolitan Railway, of 150 years ago – 1863, Paddington eastwards under the 'New Road' by cut and cover construction].

This short-sighted [anti-northward continuation in Hertfordshire towards St. Albans] move left the Metropolitan [Railway] and its GCR partner with a Watford Station [still surviving] sited on the Western edge of the town not inappropriately [in 1912] known as "The Wilderness."

"A Watford Joint Railway Committee was formed by the [next page - 218] two companies in August 1912, but although some land was purchased, no start on construction was to be made [because of the First World War changed circumstances] for another ten years. Going forward to Alan A. Jackson *ibid* page 251 covers this decade of war. "We have already noted [page 212] Selbie's 1911 comment that the seven miles between Harrow and Rickmansworth [near Watford] would soon justify electrification on their own merits apart from providing access to the new Watford branch. With a decision to get on with the Watford line already taken, in June 1923 the board readily agreed Selbie's scheme for electrification north of Harrow."

"At first the LNER hesitated, declaring that an increased service would congest the double track [1887 to 1962, thence widened to quadruple track]. [A grade separated junction for Uxbridge west of Harrow, and new signalling], effectively deferred the larger expenditure of quadrupling [until 1962] between Harrow and Rickmansworth, for which much land had already been bought. The LNER did however insist that it would have a right to use the Metropolitan [Railway] installation, for its own electric trains should these be introduced at some future date ... "as a safeguard for CROSSRAIL.

Readers are advised that almost 100 years after the 1925 electrification; and that of the forward looking LNWR - going out with a bang - to Croxley Green in 1922; there is still **no** suburban electrification out of Marylebone towards Aylesbury as yet. Indeed, the ex GCR lines from Marylebone are practically the last radial route from Central London, yet to be electrified. The "Conservative" Crossrail which fell in Parliament in 1994, was intended to electrify the above lines, and also the Watford dc lines, and potentially the WCML suburban lines. This has all been sidelined since 1994 - eighteen long years now. There is still no suburban electrification out of Marylebone towards Aylesbury as yet.

Many railway authorities now see the virtue of taking both Watford dc line, and WCML suburban trains out of Euston. HS-2 needs the released capacity at Euston. The replaced services will proceed into Crossrail, via a new link between west of Paddington and Willesden.

Readers are directed to the previous Government's Integrated Transport White Paper, entitled "A New Deal for Transport" of 20th July 1998, CM 3950; at paragraph 1.28.

This highlights "We [the Government] will put greater emphasis [in the Croxley Rail Link TWA Inquiries] on listening to transport users [such as the South & West Transport Action

Group - SAWTAG, in point here] - there will be a New Deal for the public transport passenger [in and around Watford, see also at paragraph 1.33 BOX following].

Paragraph 1.28 continues "Through investing in technology, we [the Government] will *improve* the speed and efficiency of customer services [involving the forwarding of the Watford revised Croxley Rail Link canvassed here] provided by Government agencies. In particular the Watford etc. revised Croxley Rail Link will be expedited, in improving the speed at which it is implemented.

Going to paragraph 1.33 BOX setting out the above-mentioned "New Deal for the [potential Croxley Rail Link future] public transport passenger [in and around Watford] requires.

- i) More and better trains.
- ii) [The highlighted] stronger voice for the [SAWTAG in the role of] passenger
- iii) Better interchanges and better connections
- iv) Enhanced networks," [as represented].

There is now a brief visit to another of the key Alan A. Jackson's books. Together with Desmond F. Croome as co-author, this book is "Rails through the "Rails Through the Clay", and has pages 146, 147 and 148 that are important.

Page 146. Crossing the main line south of Wembley, [Bakerloo tube and Watford dc] the electric line would run on to Bushey on the south-west of the main. At Bushey, it would swerve west to join the Rickmansworth branch, which was to be doubled through High Street station to Watford Junction. A new spur from the Rickmansworth branch would terminate at Croxley Green, and a new curve would allow through running from Bushey and Euston to Croxley Green or Rickmansworth. These proposals received Parliamentary sanction in 1907.

Page 147. The 1911 proposals for the Bakerloo and the less ambitious 1910 scheme to project CLR trains over the new GWR line from Shepherd's Bush to Ealing (to be mentioned in a moment) are therefore of considerable importance, as they mark the beginning of what was later to become a common pattern of tube development. Traffic experts lost no time in pointing out that these schemes were almost an ideal arrangement for all parties; passengers would benefit by more convenient journeys; tube railways would acquire a new traffic; main line companies would be relieved of increasing terminal congestion and thus save the expense of reconstruction;". and, finally, street traffic round the main-line terminal would be relieved as the tube trains would distribute suburban traffic all over central London.

There were, of course, some snags in the arrangement, such as the different platform heights of tube and main-line stations, the small seating capacity of tube stock, the impossibility of complete integration owing to the small-bore tunnels, the extra strain on station and line capacity on the inner sections of tube railways, and the inevitability of weather and other delays on the open sections affecting the tube service.

Powers for the Bakerloo extension were obtained in the LER Act of August 7, 1912, and the LNWR agreed to lend up to £1 million in perpetuity at 4% to cover the cost of construction. Walter Scott & Middleton (tube section) and Mowlems (the remainder) began work in October 1912.

In the same session, the Metropolitan and GCR obtained powers for a branch from their main line at Rickmansworth to Watford; the LNWR opposed and Stanley [later created Lord Ashfield] appeared as a witness for their side. He explained that the first idea had been to

bring the Hampstead tube to the LNWR at Chalk Farm but this had proved impossible owing to the intensive service on that tube. Although much was made of the proposed electric service to Watford, Parliament evidently thought a little competition would do no harm, [if this was **not** to the centre of Watford.]

In 1905, the Great Western Railway promoted a successful Bill for a railway between Ealing and Shepherd's Bush which provided for a connection with the West London Railway and a suburban line terminus opposite Shepherd's Bush Green (adjacent to the CLR station, 32 feet below). When reviewing this line in the *Railway Magazine* for July 1905, the Rev. W.J. Scott suggested that before it was finished some way would be found to connect it to the tube railway. And this came about.

The CLR Act of 1911 authorised a half-mile connection between the tube terminus at Wood Lane and Ealing & Shepherd's Bush Line, and also gave the CLR running powers over the E & SB to Ealing. Construction of the E & SB began in 1912 (the suburban terminus in Uxbridge Road was dropped) but tube trains did not use it until 1920 and we shall deal with it in a later chapter."

Is there a latter day Rev W J Scott in or around Watford, who catalyses "Some way would be found" to connect Watford etc; with Crossrail? This fell in Parliament in 1994 during the Major Government, and 18 years for "some way would be found" to relieve Euston to progress HS-2, besides Crossrail," is a little long, and by analogy might have emerged from full-time education to vote.

One or two further notes may be of interest, as one in hand is better than two in Shepherd's Bush. Vesuvius erupted in 1906, and the hell-fire stopped the Italian 1908 Olympics. The latter was transferred, as the London 1908 Olympics. Lord Desborough of Taplow Court, that era's equivalent of Lord Coe, took charge.

He not only organised the 1908 Olympics in two years, but achieved this with **no** Government expenditure. He encouraged the Central Line (CLR) to White City!

Going back to the text, can we not today achieve a half-mile of Railway, Paddington (west) to Willesden, like at Croxley Green?

Returning to London's Metropolitan Railway, page 251, Alan J. Jackson now describes the more and better trains, better interchanges, and particularly the enhanced networks in their 1925 guise, on the eve of the General Strike 1926. Alan A Jackson continues that the electrification north of Harrow, including re-signalling with a burrowing junction immediately west of Harrow entailed a "final cost was to be £216,261 [or about £21.6 millions in today's costs]. The Ministry of Transport Inspecting Officer spoke admiringly of the finished installation, describing it in December 1924 as "the most considerable" of its type on British [main line] railways..."

From page 252 - "the three junctions" of the Watford branch and access to the Croxley Hall gravel sidings, now re-arranged, and please see *ibid* page 245 - "There were also large shipments of gravel by train from the Rickmansworth pits" thence west to both Wembley Stadium site, and the site of the 1924-1925 British Empire Exhibition there. The three junctions "were controlled by a new 28 lever Watford Road Junction box, south of Rickmansworth."

"Advertised as *Into the Heart of Metro-land by Electric Train*, the new facility came into use on Monday 5th January 1925 with a much improved timetable which concentrated all

enginechanging at Rickmansworth, where sidings had been added for this purpose. Non-stop trains covered the seventeen and a half miles between Baker Street and Rickmansworth in 24-25 minutes. Although in use from 14th September 1925, all the work on the new burrowing junction [page 251 gives its cost at £77,000, about £7.7 millions in today's money. If the 1912 Act of Parliament had included proper access to Watford, then a similar scheme as immediately west of Harrow would have been most valuable at Watford Junction for S1. Albans]. at Harrow was not finished until October [1925]."

"From page 252 - perhaps wisely in view of events, the GCR and its successor the LNER evinced little enthusiasm about finding a half share of the capital for the [curtailed] Watford branch.

"Penny-pinching as always, the LNER sought the abandonment of the Rickmansworth North Curve but finally gave in to the Metropolitan's pressure for a start on the complete [although curtailed by the 1912 Act of Parliament] scheme of 2 miles 37 chains double track, including double line junctions towards Rickmansworth as well as those towards London.

"J.M. Clark was the resident engineer for the project and the contractors were Logan and Hemingway, of Doncaster, who began operations at the end of 1922 . Construction proved difficult and laborious involving as many as ten bridges and a deep cutting through chalk followed by a high embankment between *Croxley* and the [curtailed] terminus. [This was] to maintain a maximum gradient of 1 in 100 (designed to accommodate main line [eventually through to St. Albans, where the Midland Main Line, at that time at its Manchester End was a co-partner in the Cheshire Lines Committee - CLC- Railways, with the GC] steam trains)." Finishing work was carried on through the almost continuously wet weather of 1924 [the year of the Wembley British Empire Exhibition nearby with the first year after Wembley Stadium of 1923]. Final cost was £388,000 (today £38.8 millions) against the estimate of £300,000."

Proceeding to page 253,"at Croxley Green (now Croxley) the station and goods yard were more *centrally situated* for the community than the terminus of the LNWR [1912, electrified 1922 in point] branch from Watford. From the [originally] gaslit station building on the road overbridge, 10 ft wide stairs led down to 420 ft side platforms lit from the traction supply."

Watford had a double-sided 615 ft platform, 30 ft wide, capable of handling a full length main line [even through to St. Albans etc. eventually) steam train and sheltered by a 280 ft wood and glass canopy supported on steel girders." It is to be compared with the Metropolitan Railway's Stanmore station, also situated on what was intended to be a continuous through line to the centre of Watford; and even interlinked with the Watford 1925 station discussed here, and for reference on page 255 – see 'Statement of Case' page 26.

On page 296 of Alan A. Jackson's London's Metropolitan Railway, the Stanmore 1932 line is described:- "the branch crossed the western edge of the ancient Canons Park As the tracks approached the lower slopes of the Elstree Ridge, some cutting out was necessary and the [Stanmore] terminus itself was scooped from the side of the rising ground, its platforms 125 ft above the level at the [Wembley] start to the branch. Dispositions here were such that future extension northwards would have been possible, if costly, by tunnelling through the hill without disturbing the station structures."

"Clark's terminal building [at Stanmore] was *similar to that at Watford*. Set back 77 ft from the London Road, approached by a carriage drive, it was about half a mile east of the old village centre. With its multi-coloured red bricks, mock plinth of darker brindled bricks, Georgian sash windows, hipped and dormered roof, this 116ft by 33ft three-storey structure,

set on the side of the hill, might be mistaken at a distance for the residence of a prosperous middle class family. Its upper floors contained three residential flats whilst on the street frontage, where the first floor was at ground level owing to the slope of the land, there were three shops. A khaki-tiled ticket hall with [page 297] hardwood trim round the booking office window and lit by a dormer window, opened on to 12ft 6 in wide covered staircase. Below was a [shorter than Watford's 615ft] 440 ft x 30ft wide island platform protected by a 100ft canopy of the standard type which covered the lower landing of the stairs as well as a building containing waiting and staff rooms".

"The tracks were set in a formation 30 ft wide (32 ft on banks) [to page 298]". "[The Stanmore] "official opening ceremony on Friday 9th December [1932], at which the guest of honour was The Minister of Transport, P.J. Pybus (asked to attend as Stanmore was the *last* development by the Metropolitan Railway as a separate entity and 'in the nature of a *historic event*'). Lord Aberconway and other Metropolitan notables were present to entertain the 162 guests, who were carried to and from Stanmore in an interesting [including a re-varnished Pullman Coach], special train Before the cameras of Movie tone News, the new stations [including Stanmore] were inspected. The party was then returned to [Baker Street's] Chiltern Court restaurant for luncheon, at which they were addressed by [risen from the ranks] former GWR engine driver J. H. Thomas, Dominions Secretary in the National Government [a Coalition]. Public Service started on the following day, Saturday 10th December 1932."

Returning to page 253, for Watford the description continues: - "Locomotive escape roads [for electric locomotives and LNER locomotives initially] were positioned each side of the platform roads. A well-equipped seven-road goods yard contained a large shed etc, all reached by a new 40 ft wide approach from the main road. Watford Council had insisted on this, not wanting vehicular traffic along Cassiobury Park Avenue, which the passenger station fronted, as this was designated a residential road."

Both station building [At Watford and Croxley, like the later Stanmore] were very pleasing designs in C.W. Clark's well-mannered, domestic style. [Two Clarks were involved - C.W. Clark, the Metropolitan architect~ and the abovementioned J.M. Clark - the resident engineer for the whole Watford project]. With the walls of red brick under steeply-pitched, multi-chimneyd roofs with dormer windows they made a *telling contrast* to the buildings around them, then and later. [Both stations are now protected listed buildings].

An impressed Inspecting Officer commented the companies are to be congratulated on the arrangements at these stations. They appear to have ample accommodation [if extensions to St Albans are mooted] and are well laid out, the buildings have character and are *well designed* and executed [And hopefully may forthwith gain a stay of execution in the present processes and survive for further *well-designed* suitable use].

Readers are now directed to a change in the format utilised for this report. Two key pages of Alan A Jackson's epitome - London's Metropolitan Railway pages 254 and 255 are copied in their entirety, and are followed by a commentary.

COMMENTARY ON ALAN A JACKSON'S LONDON'S METROPOLITAN RAILWAY
PAGES 254 and 255

aa. Readers are asked to note that the LNER provided 30 UP and 29 DOWN (main line weekday) trains on the Watford to Marylebone route for four months between the line opening on Monday 2nd November 1925 and 1st March 1926, when this weekday service was reduced to 18 UP and 12 DOWN.

With the outbreak of the General Strike on 4th May 1926 all LNER trains ceased, never to return on a regular basis, though some excursions were worked occasionally.

The LNER suffered the most of the "Big Four" Railway Groups from the aftermath of the General Strike. It was the most dependent on coal transport, having the greatest share of the coalfields.

Going to page 252, the LNER had found a half share of the capital for the Watford branch, which was £388,000 in total. Thus its £194,000, the equivalent in today's money of 19.4 million, did not gain an adequate return.

The Metropolitan Railway was more fortunate. The Watford Branch construction co-incided with the advent of the 1924 – 1925 British Empire Exhibition and Wembley Stadium of 1923. Please see *ibid* pages 244-249 where the former attracted page 247 17.5 million in 1924 and 9.7 million in 1925, over half travelling by the Metropolitan. This was more than the Olympics 2012 overall totals. Thus the receipts from wonderful Wembley paid for the Metropolitan's share of the Wembley Branch.

ab. From 1862 to 1952 there was a Watford Junction to Rickmansworth (LNWR) service, supplemented for almost a decade from November 1925 - January 1934; by a parallel Metropolitan Railway service.

ac The key page in all this is page 255. Please see also the Wikipedia entry for the Croxley Rail Link, at the 'Moon under Water.' This would have come to pass, like Uxbridge of 1938, if the Metropolitan's General Manager Selbie had not died in St Paul's Cathedral in 1930. Unfortunately the scheme died with him.