

# Two railtours at Kew Bridge

The former North & South Western Junction Railway platforms at Kew Bridge closed in September 1940 and were the subject of an article in *Journal No 60*, back in August 2014.

The main buildings were on the up side and survived into the first half of the 1960s. However, they seem to have been little photographed, so decent views of them tend to be rare.

John Smith, of Lens of Sutton fame, certainly took some, as did John Gillham, who lived in the area. However, all known views by the latter seem to have been taken from the road bridge and therefore the up side buildings are hidden by the canopy.

Anybody who has seen the 1958 feature film *'Nowhere To Go'* will know what the buildings looked like, albeit at night, but of course they were simply used as a backdrop for the action.

Therefore, I was very pleased when a negative for the photo reproduced below appeared on a well known Internet auction site and I was able to obtain it.

It has to be one of the finest shots that I have ever seen of the Kew Bridge buildings and it was taken in May 1959.

They appear much as they did in the film, which is not surprising as the photo was taken soon after.

Some other negatives of Kew Bridge materialised a little later and although these were not as unusual as that from 1959, they are still very interesting, so I thought that I'd share them with you all, along with a couple of Hammersmith & Chiswick, which happened to be on the same strip of negs.

The only problem acquiring negatives in this way is that invariably we know nothing about who took them. As a photographer myself I believe in acknowledging those whose foresight in taking the pictures has preserved a little bit of railway history for posterity. Therefore, if any member knows who took these views, please let me know so that they can be properly credited if featured in future NLRHS publications.

**Jim Connor**



**North British Type 1 Bo-Bo No D8402 stands at Kew Bridge with a Westminster Bank Railway Society special train on 2nd May 1959.**



**Above :** Another special train to visit Kew Bridge NSWJR was the Railway Enthusiasts Club *South London Railtour* of 25th March 1962. The view is very similar to one taken by Alan A Jackson which was published in *Journal 60*, but is almost certainly by another photographer. The platform buildings were still there at the time, but they had gone by 1966.

**Below :** The loco hauling the train, ex-LSWR O2 No 30199, stopped beneath the road bridge, no doubt disappointing some of the participants, who wanted to photograph her there. This view is interesting though in that vestiges of the station's street level access can be seen on the right, along with the line of the former stairway, which is visible on the brickwork.



**Above :** Those disappointed at not being able to photograph 30199 at Kew Bridge could at least console themselves by various earlier opportunities such as here at Hammersmith & Chiswick, where she was surrounded by enthusiasts after being detached from her stock in the goods yard. After a brief wait she ran light to Bath Road then crossed over and coupled onto the opposite end of the train to continue the tour bunker first.

**Below :** A view looking towards the end of the line, with the remains of the former Hammersmith & Chiswick passenger station just visible beyond the buffer stops to the right of centre. The bridge in the foreground is that which carries the LT District and Piccadilly Lines between Stamford Brook and Turnham Green stations.



## GENERAL HISTORY

Of all the passenger stations belonging to the East & West India Docks & Birmingham Junction Railway, the most mysterious is that which the company erected in Poplar High Street but never opened.

The station was first brought to the attention of our Society by the late Michael Robbins in the autumn of 1995, and David Hanson produced a detailed Journal article on it four years later. However, since then, further information has come to light, so it is perhaps worth taking a second look, particularly as it proves David's assumption regarding the siting to be correct.

Surprisingly, H.V. Borley in his *Chronology of London's Railways*, published in 1982, made no mention of the station and to say that it's obscure is an understatement. All information on it comes from original sources, but in many cases these are very sketchy, so a certain amount of detective work has proved necessary.

The station was located 59 chains south of Bow and was to be served by trains linking the E&WID&BJR with Blackwall.

Passenger services had been introduced between Islington and Fenchurch Street in September 1850, but the section of route between Bow and the junction with the London & Blackwall Railway was still not ready for use. Work continued however, and was advancing well by the early months of the following year.

## THE STATION AS PLANNED

Initially it seems that no intermediate passenger facilities were intended but, on 8th May 1851, the E&WID&BJR Board was read "a Report from the Engineer [Henry Martin] recommending that a Station at Poplar be commenced, the cost estimated at £800"<sup>(1)</sup>. This was duly

approved and its construction, by the contractor, George Myers, is thought to have started soon after.

## A CHANGE OF PLAN

Although the E&WID&BJR was set on extending its services to Blackwall, the London & Blackwall Railway, seemed none too happy about the idea and claimed that "the [Blackwall] station would not afford the accommodation required."

Nevertheless the E&WID&BJR pressed on with its plan, but it was obvious that, for the time being at least, Poplar would have to be used as a terminus.

By early summer, the line was nearing completion, and Captain R.M. Laffan RE from the Board of Trade came along to inspect it. His report, written on 8th July 1851, was chiefly concerned about a significant difference between the road gradient as shown on the Deposited Plan and the High Street bridge as built. However, it also stated that: "The station arrangements at the Poplar station are not yet complete, and there remains a considerable portion of fencing to be put up... As the line may be considered to terminate at the Poplar station, in the immediate vicinity of which it joins the Blackwall Railway, I am of opinion that turntables should be fixed at Camden Town and at the Poplar station, so that when the line is open throughout no engine should have to travel tender foremost."

Captain Laffan was clearly concerned about the unfinished station and stated: "I am of opinion... that the opening of this portion of the East and West India Docks and Birmingham Junction Railway would be attended with danger to the public by reason of the incompleteness of the works."

On the same day, Captain J.L.A. Simmons RE wrote: "I am directed by the Commissioners of Railways to forward to



The Harrow Lane Goods Superintendent's Office as it appeared in 1967, with a corner of *The Resolute* pub just in shot to the right. There is a 1930 photograph in the London Metropolitan Archive's collection, which includes a hand-written caption describing the building as "The old station at Poplar". At the time, it looked much as it did here, although there were wrought iron railings around the open area between the frontage and pavement, along with a matching gate. The writing appears to be contemporary with the print, although we know from company minutes that the Goods Office only dated from the 1870s, so it couldn't have been the "old station". However, if the earlier building on the site was that shown as "Parry Thomas Sparke & Charles" in the 1859 directory, then it might have been regarded as part of the premises. It is conceivable that older residents still living in the area in 1930 would have remembered the unopened station and, with the passage of time, forgot that the building at the corner of Harrow Lane had been reconstructed. Memories cannot be relied on for accuracy, as illustrated by the former station at Kingsland, which even the most respected railway historians of yore once regarded as retaining its original street level building, whereas it only dated from the 1880s.

you the accompanying copy of a Report they have received from their inspecting officer relative to his inspection of the East and West India Docks and Birmingham Junction Railway, between the Bow-road and Poplar High-street station; and to inform you, that for the reasons therein stated they have postponed the opening thereof for one month from this date."

The Company was wasting no time in getting the work finished and it was recorded in the E&WID&BJR Board Minutes of 10th July that: "The Station at

Poplar & the Works of the Railway from Bow leading thereto having been completed. The Railway Commissioners have been requested to signify their approval of the same so that this further portion of the Line might be passed for Passenger Traffic..."

After this, the E&WID&BJR Secretary wrote back to Captain Simmons and said: "I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th instant enclosing a copy of Captain Laffan's Report to the Commissioners of Railways relative to his inspection of this railway from the Bow-

