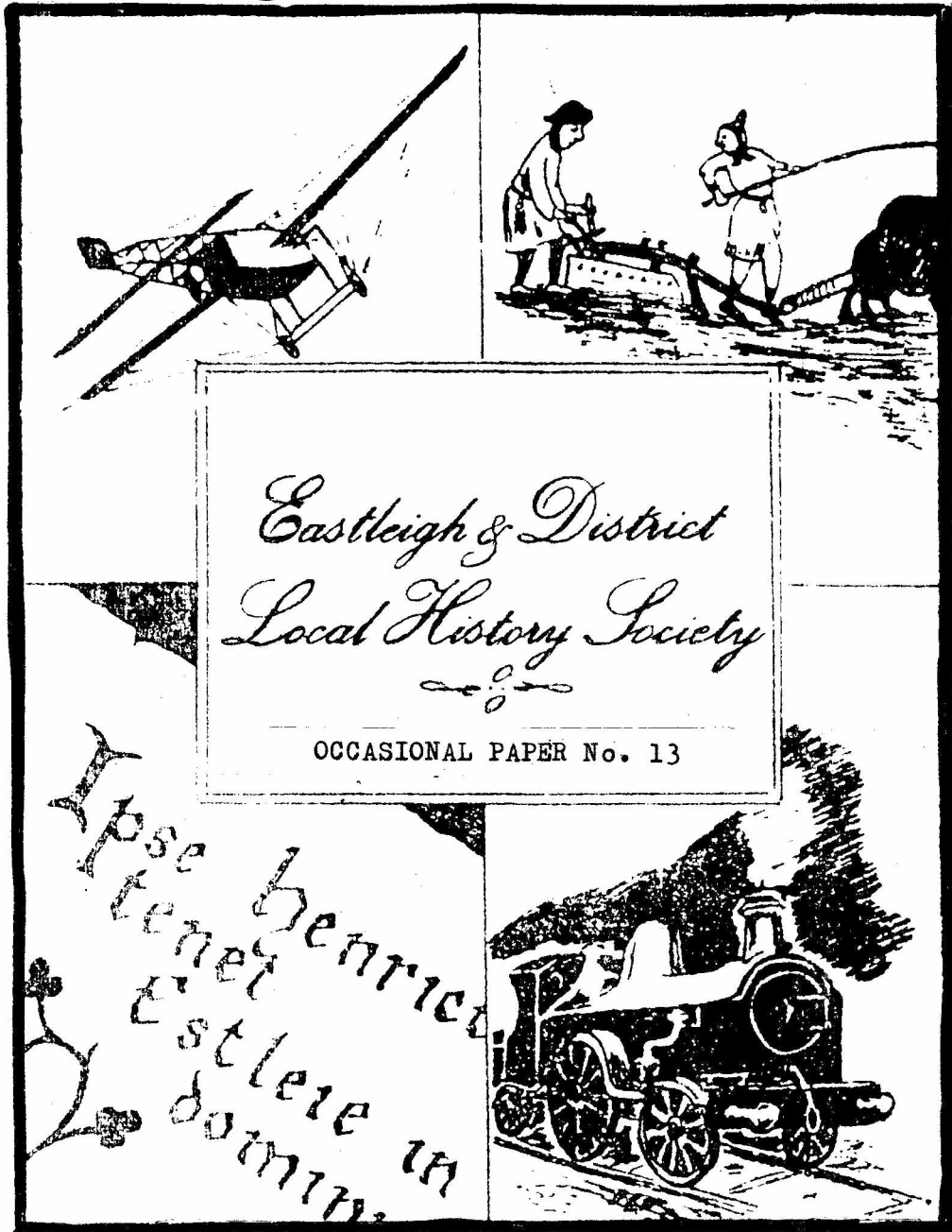
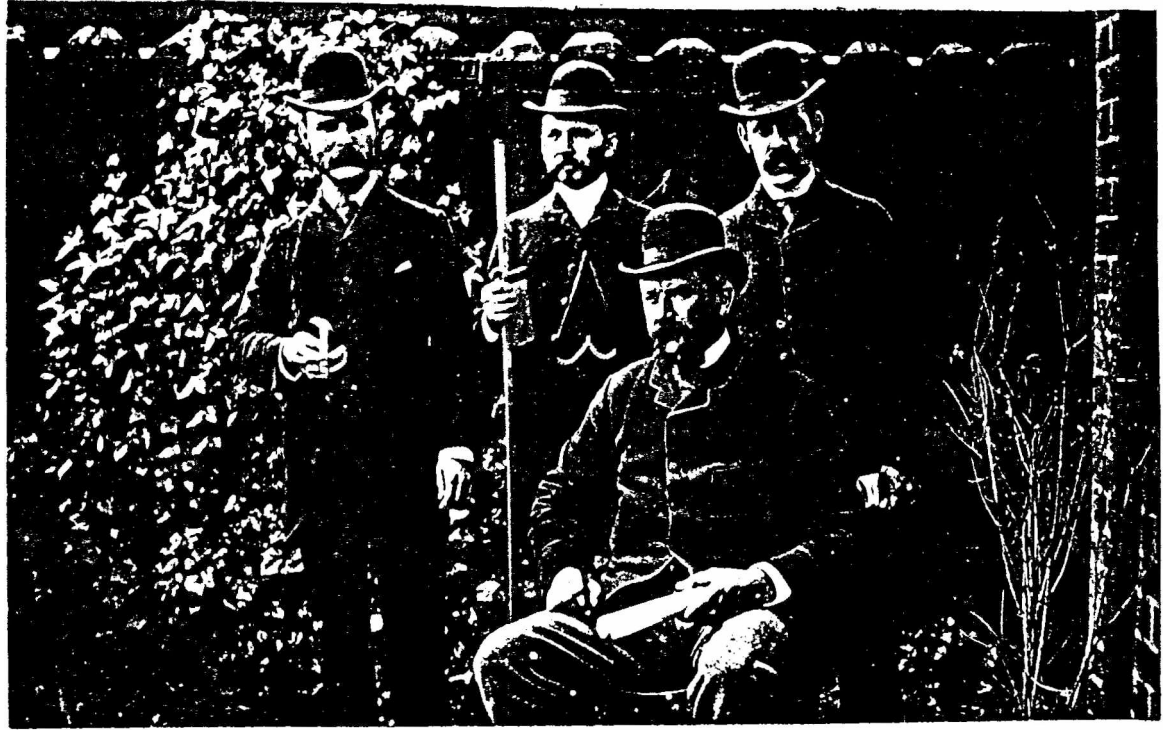


The railway station at Barton (Eastleigh)





— Bishopstoke Railway Staff. —

June, 1866.

— T. Stanley. — W. W. Neil. — J. Annett. — G. Baster. —



— A Gang of Platelayers. —

Sept. 1866.

— J. Moran; J. Warne; H. Fiddler; T. Parker; J. Shehan; C. Miller; W. Cawfe. —

THE STATION AT BARTON

The first train to travel on the newly laid London and Southampton Railway left the station at New Road, Southampton, (the terminus in the Marsh not yet being completed) shortly before 8 a.m. on Monday, 10th June 1839. Hampshire newspapers reported that thousands of people came to witness the event. *“Booths had been erected, with the double view of affording opportunity for obtaining refreshment and a sight of the departing or arriving train; and in addition to the great numbers that availed themselves of such accommodation, the skirting of the road on every accessible part was lined with a living mass, which, in some places was five or six persons deep, extended a considerable distance without any interval, and then a series of broken groupings studded the green pastures or crowded the verdant slopes, or thickly lined the battlements of bridges, as far as the eye could reach.”* The locomotive was called Pegasus, *“a very powerful engine, beautifully made, and glittering in a profusion of brasswork”*. The train consisted of the steam carriage, four other carriages and a truck to carry a stage coach from the Royal Hotel which arrived late and delayed the start scheduled for 7.30.a.m. The train took twenty-six minutes to reach Winchester and on its way, it passed through the tithing of Barton in the parish of South Stoneham. Later, the regular service stopped at all stations to London.

Was there ever a station or halt called Barton? As the line passed through a place called Barton, one might assume that name would be used, but the total population of Barton and Eastley was at that time less than eighty and mostly associated with the farms on either side of the line. Bishopstoke was much more important.

There has been talk of a picture postcard with a finger-post indicating the way to Barton station or halt, but despite appeals to the public this card has never been found and one wonders whether it ever existed. It is known that within two months of the opening of the railway, trains stopped at Allbrook to put down and take up passengers going to Cranbury Park to witness a cricket match between teams representing the Gentlemen of Hampshire and the Marylabonne Cricket Club. Did trains stop in a similar way at Barton to put down or take up passengers?

One might think that consultation with those who specialise in the study of railway history could provide the answer. Unfortunately, evidence from such specialists is inconclusive and they are almost equally divided in their opinions on the use of the name Barton. Dr. Edwin Course of Southampton University has found no trace of Barton in the early issues of Bradshaw, whereas other railway buffs consulted via Tudor House Museum are convinced that Barton “*was the original name given to Eastleigh, previously Bishopstoke, station*”, which latter name had already been adopted by 1840.

Perhaps the most interesting evidence for the name Barton is to be found in maps published by Charles Letts and by Longmans, which appear to indicate a Barton station. However, research at the two firms, at Reading University and finally in the Map Room at the British Museum makes it clear that the maps were all based on plates made by J. & C. Walker, cartographers, before 1839. Further editions were published from time to time with some modifications, notably with added railway lines. It is therefore by pure coincidence that the word "station" should have been added (in different typescript) just below "Barton" printed on the original map. Oddly, the figures of population, area, etc., are always those that appeared on the 1841 edition, although the latter date has been omitted, even up till the end of the century.

Railway records for the Southern Region of British Railways are now preserved in the Public Record Office at Kew; they are largely unindexed but a search through them has so far failed to find any mention of a Barton station. Sir David Price, M.P. for Eastleigh, has been good enough to look for evidence in the House of Commons Library, but records kept there only go back to the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign.

Reference to Geoffrey Body, author of many railway books and reputed to be “the railwayman with all the answers” has brought the tantalising reply, “*My own suspicion is that you are right (concerning the station name of Barton) but my own sources and those taken over from the late C.R. Clinker refer only to Bishopstoke and then Eastleigh*”.

Mr. L.J. White of Eastleigh refers to C.F. Denby Marshall's “History of the Southern Railway” as revised by R.W. Kidner which is reckoned to be the definitive book on the subject. According to an appendix, Eastleigh was opened as Bishopstoke on June 10th 1839, becoming Bishopstoke Junction from December 1852, until July 1889, when Eastleigh first appeared on the nameboards as Eastleigh and Bishopstoke, a name which persisted until July 1923.

Certain records dealing with the preparations for the building of the London and Southampton Railway are preserved at the Hampshire Records Office. There is an original map of 1832 showing the proposed route and other associated plans, but station names are not included on them. However, there is also a copy of Freeling's London and Southampton and the Isle of Wight Railway Companion, prepared "by permission of the Directors of the Company". It was published in 1839 (the Preface was written in March of that year) well before the London / Southampton line was opened. This Guide is probably the most precious document available concerning the early railway, since it was written in close association with railway officials. It describes in great detail the route of the Railway and gives a list of stations with distances from London. This list includes Shawford (67 miles), Barton (72) and Swathling (73), but these three station names have a star against them, and a note at the bottom states that "*the stations marked with a star are not quite determined on, but the above is the distance to each place*".

It is therefore a little exasperating to find that in the text we come to BARTON STATION which "*gives easy access to Bishops Stoke on the east, and to Stoneham and to Romsey on the west of the line*". It is also stated that "*the line to Gosport and Portsmouth here commences*". Similar references are made concerning the proposed stations at Shawford and Swathling. Now, it is known that these two stations were built much later and that the first stationmaster was appointed at Shawford in 1882. He was Matthew Mathews, who was the second line Inspector at Eastleigh. Also, although the line from Eastleigh to Gosport was already planned, it was not opened until November 1841. (The Bill was given its third reading by the House of Commons on 3rd May 1839).

Presumably Freeling made those references since he was aware of the proposals and, quite naturally, wished his guide to be valid beyond 1839 and so included details which, at the time of writing, were not strictly true but were probably supported by information supplied locally. In his Preface appears this paragraph: "*Mr. Williams, the Clerk of the Works at Winchester, I must publicly thank for accompanying me over the ground in his department and for pointing out many interesting objects which might otherwise have been overlooked by a stranger to the country, or by a less intelligent companion.*"

I have kept till last the conviction of Mr. C.E. James, former Health Officer and eminent researcher into the past history of Eastleigh and whose statements one must respect. His lecture notes clearly refer to a tiny station called Barton Halt. Unfortunately, no authority for this statement can be found, despite a fairly thorough search through his usually carefully documented papers. The earliest picture to be found is of Bishopstoke station and dated 1848.

What conclusions can one draw from all this?

Certain facts can be established without question.

1. The railway line passed through the tithing of Barton.
2. The company had evidently considered Barton as an appropriate name for a station.
3. Barton was in the parish of South Stoneham where records contain a number of references to people being employed "*at the station at Barton*".
4. Newspaper reports of the time do not mention a Barton station.
5. In its issue of Monday, 29th April 1839, the Hampshire Chronicle states that "*The buildings at Bishopstoke and Winchester stations and at the Southampton terminus are rapidly advancing*".
6. Newspaper evidence is useful but can only be accepted if supported by documentary proof.
7. Guidebooks are notorious for their inaccuracies, despite all claims to careful preparation, and their information must be viewed with caution unless based on factual evidence. Thus references to a Barton station found in works published by Mate of Bournemouth and other firms at the turn of the century must be disregarded.
8. In 1839, Bishopstoke was a much more important place than Barton, both in status and in population.
9. There is proof that within a year of the opening of the line, the station was called Bishopstoke.

Hence, in the light of evidence available at present, one can only assume that locally the station was referred to as Barton and that it may have been so called by railway officials; but within a very short time it was officially named Bishopstoke.

GORDON COX
SEPTEMBER 1985