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## RAILWAYS AND THE COMMUNITY: THE KENTISH EVIDENCE

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That railways made a difference to the economy and society of nineteenth-century Britain is hardly in dispute, but just *how* big the difference was has become a subject of considerable debate. One view has been that the influence of railways – that is, the extent to which the undoubted changes which came about could *only* have been brought about by the railways – has been much overstated,<sup>1</sup> and the subsequent debate, for and against, has produced ‘a little hill of theses, articles and monographs’.<sup>2</sup> Another view has been that railways ‘could not have been sacrificed in 1865 without the need to compensate for a loss of 10 per cent of the national income’.<sup>3</sup> Very usefully, the whole debate on the economic influence of railways, as it stood in 1980, has been surveyed and considered but many of the conclusions discussed seem to depend very much upon where the historian started from, and what assumptions he was willing to make about the validity of the evidence.<sup>4</sup>

Some things are certain. The railways required far more capital expenditure over a short period of time than had ever been needed before and, when in operation, produced far more complex problems of business administration, of record-keeping, and of cash-flow, over a very much larger geographical area, than had ever had to be considered previously.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the failure of many of the records to survive should not surprise the student: the early railway officials can hardly have been clear in their own minds as to what questions *needed* to be asked, leaving aside the practical problems of finding the answers.<sup>6</sup>

The railways were pioneers in civil engineering, in the size of the great cuttings and embankments, the span of the great bridges and the long tunnels, many on a far more massive scale than their canal predecessors. In mechanical engineering we may compare the sheer size of James Watts’ early beam engines with the no less powerful neat railway locomotives of the 1840s, and in metallurgy it became

vital to develop metals and castings capable of standing pressures and stresses unthinkable three or four decades earlier.<sup>7</sup>

All these aspects of the influence of railways are amenable to measurement – how many, how much – but there is in addition the enormous field of qualitative influence: how far life was changed for ordinary people, who may have lived and died without riding on a train, or perhaps even seeing one. This field is also the subject of an increasing literature.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, the railway was ubiquitous: almost every aspect of life was affected in some way. Standard, or railway, time is the most obvious example.

### *Movement of People and Goods in East Kent*

The most obvious change is the enormous increase in the amount of movement of people and goods that took place in the area. In 1836 the backers of the proposed London and Dover (South Eastern) Railway [SER] estimated that each year some 41,080 passengers travelled by mail or stage coach between London and Dover, and that a further 25,584 made the journey using post-horses, a total of 66,664 passengers a year.<sup>9</sup> In 1846 the SER's Chairman reported that in the year ending 31 December 1845 his company had carried 88,949 passengers between London and Dover alone,<sup>10</sup> an increase by one-third on those who had previously made the journey by road. In 1867 the Company reported that on *excursion* trains to Dover there were, on average Mondays, 20 second-class and 263 third-class passengers, a total of 283. Under normal conditions, first-class passengers comprised 10 per cent of a SER train's loading in 1870:<sup>11</sup> if first-class ticket-holders also travelled on the excursion trains, they would therefore have added some 31 passengers, giving a total loading of 314 persons. In 1910 there were 17 SER trains which made the down London-Dover journey, and 16 up trains, 33 all told.<sup>12</sup> Assuming that the train-loading for 1867/70 held good in 1910, the implication is that 33 trains, each carrying 314 persons made the journey between London and Dover 365 days in the year – over 3.75 million persons. In practice the figure would not have been so high: trains travelling through the night, and mail-trains, carrying only first and second class passengers, would have been much more lightly loaded than the 314 of the calculation, but even if the calculated overall figure is halved, to some 1.9 million, the contrast between that figure and the 66,664 of pre-railway days, or even the 88,949 of the railway's early years is self-evident, being some 28 times as great. In addition to the SER's services, by 1910 the LCDR was also running to Dover: certainly between them the two companies shared the traffic, rather

than doubled it,<sup>13</sup> but the LCDR must have picked up a certain amount of North Kent coast traffic which was not available to the SER, so the total number travelling between London and Dover by 1910 is likely to have been in the order of 2.5 million or more over a year.

These figures only apply to traffic between London and Dover: the *total* figure quoted for all passenger traffic in the 1836 *Report* was 252,356 persons travelling along the line of the proposed South-Eastern Railway (i.e. via Reigate and Tonbridge) by coach, with a further 64,896 by post-vehicles, a total of over 317,000. In 1845 the SER declared a total of 840,365 journeys, two and a half times the estimated pre-railway figure, and that within two years of the line's opening. It is not possible to make a general calculation for the number of journeys made in 1870 or 1910 as was made for Dover, but it seems certain that the general growth must have been of the same order.

Whichever way the calculations are made, the staggering increase in the number of people who could, and did, move into, out of, and within East Kent after the railway came is obvious. A further consideration is the increased speed at which it was all possible: Charles Dickens described in a tone of wonder and disbelief his eleven-hour trip to Paris, taking about the same time over that journey as he had described Jarvis Lorry taking for the mail-coach journey he had made between London and Dover in 1775.<sup>14</sup>

The original target of the SER was Dover, to serve the cross-channel traffic. According to one authority the numbers passing between England and Calais, Boulogne or Ostend in 1840 was 86,794:<sup>15</sup> in 1844 (the year the SER arrived at Dover) the figure rose to 116,926, an increase of one third. By 1870 the figure had reached 230,203, and by 1913 had passed 1.1 million, a twelvefold increase on the 1840 figure.<sup>16</sup> These passengers themselves can have had little effect on East Kent: by definition they were transients, but the infrastructure needed to service their journeys – railway and port facilities, hotel and restaurant accommodation – must have benefited.

Estimating the extent to which goods traffic increased in the area is far less easy: the figures just do not exist in the detail which would be necessary. The 1836 *Report on the South Eastern Railway Bill* suggested that just under 80,000 tons of goods were moved in and around Kent by road (along the original line of the SER) by carrier and other means, and that the SER might expect to receive just over £59,000 for carrying it by rail, at an average cost of 14s. 9d. per ton.<sup>17</sup> In 1846 the SER reported that it had carried just under 89,000 tons of goods, which had brought in just under £42,000:<sup>18</sup> in 1900 the figures

for the SECR were just over 6.66 million tons and just over £ 1m.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately there is no way of knowing just how much of this movement took place in East Kent, but if the total amount of freight moved within the area covered by the SER and LCDR increased from the pre-railway 80,000 tons to 6.66 million tons by 1900, an eighty-fold increase, it seems reasonable to assume that traffic within East Kent must have increased by a similar factor.

The figures quoted above suggest that the *cost* of transportation by rail fell as time passed, but it is very difficult to establish just by how much, and how far in real terms, these costs fell. Gourvish suggests that between 1830 and 1870 freight costs had dropped by about 30 per cent, from about 1.67*d.* to 1.2*d.* pence per ton-mile.<sup>20</sup> In any case, the railways charged what the traffic would bear, and so the cost for transportation might vary wildly within a small area, according to the demand, supply and transport competition.<sup>21</sup> Certainly the *quality* of transport services improved over the period.<sup>22</sup> If nothing else, this will have given East Kent (as elsewhere) the advantages of economy of scale: goods manufactured in large (and therefore individually cheaper) quantities meant that most people would have gained in terms of the cost, range and availability of consumer goods, and at the same time, have the advantage of easier transportation of local products to elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

This had certain clear results for East Kent. Perishable goods could now be moved over considerably longer distances than had previously been possible, and East Kent fruit appeared in the London markets; fish, which had previously only been saleable as fresh fish within a very limited distance of the port of landing could now be sold at a considerable distance. Thus Ramsgate, Folkestone and Whitstable were able to increase their catches in the knowledge that the fish could be sold whilst still in good condition. The number of fishermen shown in the official census returns as being at work in Kent (most of whom must have been in East Kent) increased from 946 in 1841 to 1,355 in 1911, by 43 per cent.

The coming of the railway meant that heavy and bulky goods could now be transported economically: the most visible result was a virtual standardization of building materials throughout the country.<sup>23</sup> The evidence is clear in (for example) Sandwich: in the centre of the town the roofs are of the traditional Kent peg tiles; further out, those houses built in the second half of the nineteenth century and up to about 1930 are likely to have roofs made of the cheaper and ubiquitous Welsh slate; houses built later still have roofs made of the even cheaper machine-made tiles.

Coal became cheaper: the price of coal in Canterbury fell from 42-45s. a chaldron,<sup>24</sup> even in the summer when road transport was at its easiest, to 23-30s. by 1833 after the Canterbury and Whitstable railway (opened in 1830). Similar savings were reported for grocery (unspecified) and corn.<sup>25</sup> It was reckoned that to send goods from Ashford to London before the railway came had cost £2 10s. per ton; the railway planned to charge £1 2s. 6d.<sup>26</sup>

Chain stores began to invade East Kent as the century turned: by the death of Edward VII all the major grocery chains were represented – the Home and Colonial, the International Tea Company, Lipton's, Sainsbury's and Vye and Son. Chains of butchers were represented by Eastman's, W. & R. Fletcher and the London Central Meat Company. Boots Cash Chemists and Timothy White & Taylor were in local High Streets. Freeman, Hardy and Willis were spearheading the invasion of the High Street shoe shops.<sup>27</sup> The local producer was slowly being ousted by the mass-producer who had the benefit of volume production and rapid transport. Thus in 1841 there had been 4,448 boot and shoe makers in Kent; by 1911 the figure had dropped to 2,301, though the population had almost tripled. In Canterbury the 1841 figure had been 276: by 1911 it stood at 88. In Dover equivalent figures were 189 and 139.<sup>28</sup> The Pickwickian day of 'Country make ... Brown ... Muggleton' was rapidly vanishing.

When the SER was first proposed, traders saw the advantage of being able 'at any time to run up to London and bring stock next day instead of keeping stock several weeks in consequence of the uncertainty of the hoys'.<sup>29</sup> MacGregor's evidence of 1846 (quoted previously) that 'the public have had their goods carried at a very large reduction of price, and they have had much greater convenience' suggests that traders had taken the advantage expected very soon after the railway appeared, and continued to do so.<sup>30</sup> At the turn of the century it was pointed out that:

in order to work with as little capital as possible and to minimize the risks from changes in market conditions, the retailers and local agents keep but little stock on hand and depend upon quick transit for execution of the orders they receive. As a consequence, instead of large consignments as formerly, the railway companies are called upon to convey small separate lots at more frequent intervals and with extreme expedition and regularity of service.<sup>31</sup>

Though impossible to quantify, the railways must have made a major difference to the way shopkeepers and manufacturers organized their business: anybody who dealt in heavy or bulky goods (such as coal,

timber, or bulk agricultural produce) certainly expected to benefit from the railway.<sup>32</sup>

To what extent did these undoubted benefits result in the decay of alternative forms of transport, particularly road services by coach and carrier? The long-distance coach services seem to have disappeared almost immediately a railway which duplicated their route was opened. Shorter distance services survived, for a time at least, to provide a link to the small intermediate villages on or just off the road, which the railway did not serve. In the long term, there were three clear results. Firstly, the service supplied by carriers and omnibus owners (which for the present purpose are probably indistinguishable) based on the major towns, particularly Ashford and Canterbury, and to a lesser extent Faversham and Dover, became much more intense. The length of the carriers' journeys was, on the whole, rather shorter than it had been, but they served far more small villages, and far more often: services were far less likely to be 'market-day only'. In addition to this, services into these towns from these villages increased, so that the total number of trips per week increased very considerably.

Secondly, it was less likely that villages which were now served by the railway would benefit much from extra services, unless of course the pattern of roads meant that these services had no choice but pass through – thus Bridge would certainly benefit from the extra services to Petham and Waltham. Thirdly, villages which by the end of the period were still not served by the railway might hope for an improved road service, but essentially an *augmented* service: villages which had had no individual road service at the beginning of the period would probably still not have one at the end. The upshot was that, by 1914, it was very much easier to travel round in East Kent, whether you lived in a big town or a tiny village.

### *The Railway Workforce*

By 1911 the SECR must have been, apart from the War Department, one of, if not the, largest single employer of labour in Kent. The 1911 Census Occupational analysis for Kent listed 2,213 males over 10 years of age as employed in 'Conveyance on the railways' in those East Kent Urban Districts having a population in excess of 5,000 and the county borough of Canterbury.<sup>33</sup> There were a further 2,474 so employed in the aggregate of all the Kent Rural Districts, some one-third of whom (825) were probably at work within East Kent, so the total railway work-force in East Kent in 1911 will have been in the order of 3,000. To be categorized in the census as 'workers on the railway' these men

and boys had to be employed in work they could *only* do on the railway, such as engine driver, signaller, platelayer, etc. To these must be added the number employed by the works at Ashford, the carpenters and joiners, the blacksmiths and boilermakers who were not particularized by the census enumerators as being in railway employment, which number would have been by 1911 in excess of 2,500 and may also have approached 3,000,<sup>34</sup> though exact information as to the size of the railway workforce at any time seems impossible to come by.<sup>35</sup> To these again must be added the crews of the cross-channel packets and the marine engineers responsible for their maintenance, probably another 600, and even again the young ladies of the various station refreshment rooms, and the staffs of the *Lord Warden Hotel* at Dover, and the *Royal Pavilion Hotel* at Folkestone. The total of persons employed directly by the railway, or by contractors employed by the railway in East Kent in 1911 is therefore not likely to have been far short of 7,000, or in the order of 7 per cent of all those who were at work in East Kent.<sup>36</sup>

Any railway, in providing employment, indirectly paid all the wages so earned into the economy of the locality large or small. Actual wages of course depended on degree of skill and on length of service, but if an *average wage* is assumed of 22s. per week per member of staff employed by the SECR, no great error is likely to arise. If that is so, the railway was pumping some £7,700 a week, or over £400,000 a year into the economy of East Kent by 1911. Few of those who provided any sort of service in the area, particularly the shopkeepers, could fail to have had a share of this money.

It was not all entirely new money of course: there had been enumerated in 1841 in Kent 684 coachmen, coachguards and postboys, and a further 590 grooms and ostlers, not apparently in domestic service but presumably providing coach and post-horse services, in all some 1,300 persons.<sup>37</sup> More must have been engaged than that 1,300 – hotel and inn staff, if no others – but even if the number is doubled, there is still a big difference between any revised figure and the railways' probable workforce in 1911 of 7,000: the railway must have put a great deal more money into the economy of *any* district than ever the coaching service had been able to do.

### *The Population and the Growth of Towns*

It is clear that if a village did not have a station, its population was likely to stagnate or decline, and the further from a station it was, the greater the depth of that stagnation or decline. However, at the other end of the scale, possession of a station – or even stations – was no sure passport to population growth. There is no direct evidence that



TABLE 1. COMPARISONS OF DEGREE OF POPULATION CHANGE

Group	1841	1911	% change
ALL EAST KENT	163,914	320,782	+96
Railway towns & the channel ports	32,893	97,995	+198
Holiday resorts	31,546	80,669	+156
Canterbury	19,019	25,125	+32
Minor resorts	16,291	30,620	+88
Villages with stations	16,755	29,733	+77
Villages without stations (control group)	15,115	14,993	-1

the railway *per se* led to population growth in East Kent in this period:<sup>38</sup> for a town to expand there must be another factor, likely to produce expansion, which the presence of the railway might stimulate (Table 1). Thus the holiday towns, already growing before the railway came, continued to do so, though the really rapid expansion did not come until after the arrival of the LCDR with its much shorter route from London, and its more densely populated catchment area. Dover grew on the back of its cross-channel activities; so did Folkestone, and in later years it grew as a holiday resort as well. Ashford grew because it became the SER's engineering centre, not just because there was a station there.

Canterbury is a clear example of a place where the 'extra' factor was missing: up to 1841 the city was growing steadily, though not as rapidly as the holiday towns and the ports were doing, but in later years that growth virtually ceased; by 1911 its population had only increased by about a third on the 1841 figure, a lower rate of increase than any other group of towns or villages here considered. There was no particular reason for Canterbury to grow rapidly in the period, and railway or no railway, it did not. One suggestion is that the opening of the SER through to Dover in 1844 meant that Canterbury was no longer an obvious stopping-place for travellers to or from the continent:<sup>39</sup> just what proportion of the nearly 90,000 pre-railway travellers to or from the Continent spent much time or money in Canterbury can only be a matter of conjecture, though it is almost certain that virtually none of 117,000 who made the trip in 1844 did so. A second possibility is that the city never recovered from being on only a 'branch line' when the SER opened.<sup>40</sup> This seems a little doubtful: though Canterbury's link to the SER system in 1846 was admittedly only through the branch to Thanet, the LCDR station (opened in 1860) was on the direct main line to Dover, yet the

population still did not show any marked growth, even after 1860. However, Canterbury remained a major, probably *the* major retail and professional centre of East Kent, though it lost its local pre-eminence as a social centre as it became more easy to travel to other, more distant venues and particularly to London.<sup>41</sup> Later Canterbury became a major tourist centre in its own right, but certainly this did not cause a population expansion.

A railway station might be very useful – not to have one reasonably nearby might prove to be a major social difficulty – but it did not, of itself, attract residential expansion or even (in East Kent) industrial growth.<sup>42</sup> Town growth in East Kent was generally *away from* the station, so far as geography allowed.<sup>43</sup> Herne Bay is a classic example: the station was built some way from the centre of the town as it then existed, and though a housing estate was laid out between the railway and the town, the roads remained undeveloped for most of the period discussed. At Westgate, something of a railway creation, the new building took place by the sea, not near the railway. At Dover the commercial centre of the town, originally close to the original SER station and the LCDR's nearby Harbour station, moved away up the road toward London, and what had been the commercial centre became a very run-down area indeed. Ashford of course is the reverse of the coin: the SER built its own factory village (on a much smaller scale than the GWR's Swindon New Town) and a settlement grew up around the works.<sup>44</sup> When the only way to get to work was to walk there, the closer you lived to the job, the better.

There is evidence in other places of an escalation of land values following the arrival of the railway, perhaps by a factor of three to five,<sup>45</sup> and meadows and gardens alongside the London and Greenwich Railway '[were] almost covered with houses' within five years, that is by 1839.<sup>46</sup> This may well have happened occasionally in East Kent as well, though the situation at Herne Bay is evidence against the idea, but unfortunately no clear local evidence either way appears to exist.

### *Commerce and Services – a Statistical Analysis*

'Every railway takes trade from the little town to the big town, because it enables the customer to buy in the big town'.<sup>47</sup> Walter Bagehot was writing in 1866, when there were some 12,000 miles of railway, about three-fifths of the eventual total, open: did what he said represent factual observation, or contemporary prejudice?

To obtain the information which follows, directories were examined for every town or village in East Kent which had a railway

and the information brought together under 24 occupational heads, or classes of service, plus a heading for 'private residents' (Table 2), and these were brought together into six groups, the composition of each group varying slightly according to whether the discussion centred on railway towns and ports, holiday towns, or villages, etc. Directories were also examined for a further group of 22 villages which did not have stations [the *control* villages].

TABLE 2. COMPOSITION OF THE VARIOUS TRADE GROUPS,  
BY TRADE

I LAND	Corn dealer/factor/merchant, farmer, farrier, gardener, hop grower, horse dealer, nurseryman, seedsman, veterinary surgeon.
II SEA	Boatbuilder, boatman, fisherman, marine store dealer, sail loft, sail maker, sailor, shipbuilder, ships' chandler, smack owner.
III BUILDING	Architect, bell-hanger, bricklayer, brickmaker, builder, carpenter, contractor, decorator, estate agent, electrical fitter, gas fitter, glazier, house agent, joiner, painter, paperhanger, plumber, surveyor.
IV OTHER INDUSTRIES	Blacksmith, engineer, manufacturers not otherwise accounted for, whitesmith, worker in electrical, gas or water works.
V TRANSPORT BY SEA	Hoyman, mariner, pilot, seaman.
VI INLAND TRANSPORT	Carman, carrier, coach maker, coach proprietor, cycle agent, cycle maker, fly proprietor, licensed to let horses, livery stable keeper, motor car agent, postmaster (not GPO), railway, saddler, stationmaster, wheelwright.
VII SERVICE AT DOMESTIC LEVEL	Artist, assembly room, bather, bath owner, camera dealer, chimney sweep, hairdresser, laundress, laundry or washerwoman, photographer, servants' registry office.
VIII COAL	Coal dealer, coal merchant, coal seller.
IX CLOTHING	Berlin wool supplier, bonnet maker, boot maker, clothier, clothes dealer (second-hand), dressmaker, haberdasher, hatter, milliner, outfitter, shoemaker, tailor, umbrella maker, wardrobe dealer, wool merchant, wool supplier.
X FOOD	Baker, butcher, cheesemonger, confectioner, cow-keeper, dairyman, fish dealer, fishmonger, fruiterer, greengrocer, grocer, milkman, miller, oil and colourman, pastrycook, poulterer, provision dealer, provision merchant, tea dealer/merchant.
XI TOBACCO	Cigar seller, tobacconist, tobacco pipe maker.
XII DRINK	Ale and porter merchant, beer retailer/beer seller, brewer, innkeeper, maltster, publican, wine or spirit merchant.
XIII LODGING AND DINING FACILITIES	Apartment keeper, boarding house keeper, coffee rooms, dining rooms, eating house, hotel keeper, lodging house keeper, refreshment rooms, restaurant.

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XIV FURNITURE	Cabinet maker, chair maker, furniture maker, furniture seller, furniture warehouse, pawnbroker, undertaker, upholsterer.
XV STATIONERY	Bookseller, library owner, music seller, newsagent, printer, publisher, stationer.
XVI HOUSEHOLD GOODS	China dealer, clock maker, fancy goods dealer, glass dealer, ironmonger, jeweller, musical instrument dealer, piano dealer, silversmith, watchmaker.
XVII SHOPKEEPER	Shopkeeper, not otherwise defined.
XVIII* INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES	Accountant, auctioneer, banker, commercial traveller, insurance agent.
XIX* PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	Court officials, customs officers, overseer, parish clerk, post office (GPO), rate collector, registrar, tax officer.
XX* UNIFORMED SERVICES	Army, fire, navy, police, prison, volunteer.
XXI* LAW	Attorney, notary, solicitor.
XXII* EDUCATION	Professor, school, tutor.
XXIII* MEDICINE	Chemist, convalescent home, dentist, doctor, home of rest, hospital, infirmary, midwife, optician, orphanage, physician, surgeon.
XXIV* RELIGION	Clerk in orders, curate, minister, mother superior, priest, rabbi, rector, sexton, verger, vicar.
XXV PRIVATE RESIDENTS	

\* denotes the Professional Group

For the purposes of this paper, to make it possible to compare across the whole spectrum of the 58 towns or parishes examined (36 with a station or stations, 22 without) comparison will be made across the 24 classes, rather than across the six sub-sorts. For this purpose, directory information on the towns and parishes discussed has been aggregated into their six main types, as shown in **Table 3**.

As previously, a calculation has been made for each town and village group, where the number of people listed in the various directories providing each service – e.g. the food group, or those involved with dress – has been divided by the number of thousands of the *total* population to obtain a figure of ‘Outlets per thousand of the population’ [OPT], and it is these figures which are used (Table 3). For a breakdown by trades of the individual groups, see Table 2.

In making comparisons, an immediate question arises: which is more important, *actual* changes in the OPT figures themselves, or the *degree* of change which took place? Both sets of figures have been examined so some degree of selection has been necessary. The first obvious point is that town and village groups tended not to change places: if the railway towns had the highest OPT in a certain class in Year -1, it is likely that they still had the highest – or at least the second highest – by Year +25: the same applied at the bottom of the

TABLE 3. THE NUMBER OF 'OPTS' IN CERTAIN TRADE CLASSES  
ACROSS ALL TOWN/VILLAGE CLASSES

Yr -1	Yr +5	Yr +10	Yr +25	Town and Village Type	Yr -1	Yr +5	Yr +10	Yr +10
Service at Domestic Level					Drink			
1.05	0.97	0.98	1.54	Railway & Port	6.11	7.84	7.28	5.60
1.37	1.64	1.27	2.28	Holiday	5.13	4.94	4.65	3.90
1.70	1.19	1.92	1.99	Canterbury	9.44	8.32	9.04	8.84
1.13	1.04	1.31	2.25	Coastal Towns	8.51	8.20	7.57	8.37
0.36	0.20	0.26	1.53	Railway villages	3.58	3.52	3.78	3.64
0.13	0.54	1.02		Control villages	3.97	4.75	4.01	
Clothing					Household			
4.25	7.42	4.88	4.70	Railway & Port	2.27	2.13	1.63	2.20
5.71	4.94	4.54	3.99	Holiday	1.43	1.28	1.24	2.39
10.40	8.77	9.53	7.42	Canterbury	2.66	2.21	2.25	1.99
6.19	5.32	5.24	5.96	Coastal Towns	1.96	1.79	2.33	2.09
3.01	2.30	2.40	3.06	Railway villages	0.31	0.31	0.26	0.49
3.51	2.81	2.04		Control villages	0.26	0.87	0.34	
Food					Professional Group			
11.94	9.60	8.59	8.10	Railway & Port	8.68	9.28	6.54	8.35
9.12	7.68	7.71	8.29	Holiday	6.53	7.52	6.68	9.01
11.42	12.34	11.45	10.40	Canterbury	9.33	10.36	12.11	9.88
10.26	9.49	10.63	9.95	Coastal Towns	10.83	9.84	7.77	11.89
5.24	4.80	5.52	6.79	Railway villages	5.70	6.23	6.13	6.97
5.03	5.42	6.73		Control villages	4.24	7.09	9.99	

Note: Year -1 is the last before the railway arrived; Year +5 (as nearly as possible) 5 years after the railway arrived; Year +10, 10 years after; Year +25, 25 years after (where served by two railways, after the arrival of the second).

list, that is, the villages. The railway did not produce any sort of revolution, restructuring the economy of East Kent society.

In some classes there was little change between Year -1 and Year +25, for all town and village types. Apart from the villages, the land class did not change, nor did the sea class. Generally the OPT of the

building class declined, especially in the control villages, though where the evidence is available there is an indication that the *size* of the unit increased: more people were employed by fewer firms. In the long term the manufacturing group declined except at Canterbury: inland transport simply recovered earlier losses, except in the villages with stations, where there was a clear (if modest) increase.

Service at domestic level (hairdressers, washerwomen, chimney sweeps, social clubs and the like, Group VII) generally increased (Table 3), especially in the villages, with or without stations: by Year +25, though the villages still occupied the last two places, the difference between them and the town groups immediately above was far less than it had been in Year -1. This may well signify not that (for example) the villages put more of their own washing out, but that it was possible for them to take in washing from more distant places. The point must not be laboured, as the actual number of directory entries on which the OPT figures are based is not large, but the trend appears to be there. A similar pattern existed in the coal trade (Group VIII): only in the villages was there a great deal of change, and that in a sharply upward direction: very clearly, coal was more likely to be distributed from a village level after the railway came than before.

When Bagehot wrote he probably had in mind shops above all, where changes certainly took place. Between Year -1 and Year +25 the OPT for clothing (Group IX) rose in the railway and port towns (just), remained almost stable in the villages with stations, and fell elsewhere: the fall was particularly sharp in the control villages (Table 3). This picture is rather misleading though: evidence for Canterbury and Dover suggests that the size of the shops (the numbers of staff employed) increased, and it seems reasonable to assume that that applied to other large towns' clothing suppliers. Among the food suppliers (Group X) there was a general, but slow and gradual, decline in the OPT among the *towns*; in the *villages*, with or without stations, the OPT rose quite considerably: food shops certainly survived in the villages, and even prospered in a modest way (Table 3). The general shopkeeper (Group XVII), however, barely survived in the villages with stations and in the minor resorts, and suffered badly in the control villages. In the railway towns and ports, and in the holiday towns, however, he prospered and numbers increased.

The more specialized retail outlets – stationery, household goods – give a slightly different picture. In the long term, the OPT for stationery increased in all groups (though the highest Year +25 figure was only 1.89, at Canterbury); in the household goods class there was a slight fall at Canterbury, and a rise in the holiday towns and the

railway villages, though the actual figures are still small: the railway villages' OPT rise was actually 0.18; in the holiday towns by 0.96, from 1.43 to the highest figure for the class in any group of 2.39, still a very modest level of service. Furniture, another 'specialist' retail and craft group, just held its own in the holiday towns and villages, but declined elsewhere.

On this evidence, it seems clear that, contrary to Bagehot's perception, the village shop was not killed off by the railway but stayed in business, and in some fields actually expanded – though it must be repeated that, for both groups of villages, the figures derived from the directories are small: there may be a degree of sampling error. All the same, aggregation of figures reduces this possibility, and the trends appear to be clear enough, if not of any great magnitude.

Unexpectedly, bearing in mind the national increase in the consumption of ale and beer which reached a peak in the late 1870s, the OPT for the drink interest (Group XII) declined slightly everywhere except in the villages (Table 3): the biggest percentage fall was recorded (surprisingly) by the holiday towns, where the level declined steadily from Year -1 onwards.<sup>48</sup> Lodging and dining increased in every group, even in the control villages: the biggest increase was, of course, recorded in the holiday towns.

Industrial service (Group XVIII) is another class where the biggest percentage rises are recorded by the villages: most of these were in fact the local insurance agents, who usually seem to have done that work in their spare time from another, recorded, occupation, but again, the trend *is* there.

The directory figures on which the professional group's figures are based are small and particularly liable to error, but there is clear evidence that the OPT of those engaged in public administration was rising, especially in the control villages; likewise the OPT for the education class increased, except, rather surprisingly, in the railway towns (Table 3);<sup>49</sup> This may reflect that the schools were likely to be bigger there, and so, since generally only the head teacher was given a directory entry, the larger number of assistant teachers was passed over. The big increase in OPT for education in the holiday towns may well reflect the probability that most of the schools which proliferated in Thanet were small in terms of pupil numbers, and so the ratio of principals to teaching staff was much higher.<sup>50</sup>

The real losers in all these figures appear to have been the minor coastal resorts. Their OPT figures for the sea class and the lodging and dining facilities class showed sizeable growth of 258 per cent and 281 per cent respectively between Years -1 and +25, and reasonable growth for the tobacco class (127 per cent) and the service at

domestic level class (99 per cent) but the other classes showed either very modest growth – stationery at 52 per cent is the largest – or actual decline.

Canterbury fared little better: though it was likely that Canterbury's OPT figure would be higher than any other groups in any given class, that figure tended hardly to move between Year -1 and Year +25: apart from the atypical sea and transport by sea classes, the growth of lodging and dining facilities by 99 per cent was the best that Canterbury could offer – and every other type, even the control villages, showed a greater percentage of expansion in that class than that. Canterbury's OPT figures, however, must be regarded with some caution: comparison of the directory evidence with the census evidence suggests that the number of persons actually *involved* in the various occupations, as opposed to those who were actually *managing* or *owning* a business, rose during the period: the shops and businesses of Canterbury were getting bigger in every way, staff numbers, cash turnover and simple volume. (The same applied to Dover.) At the other end of the scale, the holiday towns were more likely to show expansion than otherwise.

#### SUMMARY

What picture emerges of East Kent as affected by the railway? Very clearly, manufacture as a whole simply did not come to East Kent. What bulk manufacture there was – paper, bricks and tiles – remained at a modest level compared with other areas, such as West Kent for paper, or East Anglia for bricks. East Kent had a large share of the nation's gunpowder manufacture (at Faversham), but it was not a major industry in terms of the numbers employed. In general terms there was less change than the generally received view of the railways' economic influence would lead the student to expect: OPT on the basis of the calculation used in this study was more likely to fall than rise, though in certain trades this must conceal an increase in size of unit: to take an obvious example, the food outlets in Thanet must have been larger (in terms of stock turnover, and probably staff, if not in square feet) to have supplied the Mr Pooters who came to stay.

The point has been made that the coming of the railway tended only to reinforce an existing trend. It was very unlikely to establish a new one.<sup>51</sup> Thus the holiday towns, already expanding rapidly, continued to do so, but attempts to establish new, artificial and railway-induced resorts failed (as at Allhallows on Sea on the Isle of Grain in the 1930s). Canterbury, which was only growing at the same rate as East



Kent as a whole when the railway came, grew no faster after its arrival, since there was no trend to reinforce. In the conflict between the geographer's possibilist and determinist theories of development, railways give weight to the determinist view.<sup>52</sup>

Bagehot suggested that the railway enabled the big towns to strangle the small ones: there is some evidence that this was true; the minor resorts seem generally to have suffered a greater decline in OPT levels than the other towns, but it does not seem to be true of the villages. It would be considerably over-stating the case to say that East Kent's villages prospered as a result of the coming of the railway, but they certainly were not ruined.

The railway *per se* did not result in population growth: there had to be another factor for that to happen, but at the other end of the scale there is evidence that the lack of a station was likely to produce stagnation, or more likely a population decline, and that was likely to be worse the further the parish was from a station.

A visitor to East Kent in 1914 who had last been there in 1842 would have found that the bustling market town of Ashford was now a major railway engineering centre as well, though as a market town it no longer dominated Romney Marsh. Folkestone too would have changed out of all recognition: Lord Radnor's town development and the SER's harbour had made the depressed and insolvent fishing port a fashionable watering-place and a major cross-channel port. Dover and the Thanet resorts were very much bigger, but not fundamentally very different, and Canterbury would hardly have changed at all. All in all, the answer to the question 'Did the railway make any real difference to the place' is (in quantifiable terms) 'Not nearly as much as you might expect'.<sup>53</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Fogel, R.W., *Railroads and American Economic Growth* (Baltimore, 1964) and Fishlow, A., *American Railroads and the Transformation of the Ante-bellum Economy* (Cambridge, USA, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> Simmons, J., *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830-1914* (Newton Abbot, 1986), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Hawke, G.R., *Railways and Economic Growth in England and Wales* (1970), 404-5.

<sup>4</sup> Gourvish, T.R., *Railways and the British Economy, 1830-1914* (1980).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Though suggestions had been made as long ago as 1850 in Lardner, D., *Railway Economy* (1850, new edition, Newton Abbot 1968), Chapters IV to XIII, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Snell, J.B., *Railways: Mechanical Engineering* (pb edition, 1973).

<sup>8</sup> See especially Robbins, M., *The Railway Age* (1962); Simmons, J., *op. cit.* (see note 2) and, *ibidem* (1991) *The Victorian Railway*; Bagwell, P.S., 'The decline of rural isolation', in Mingay, G.E. (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, Vol. I (1981), 30-42.

<sup>9</sup> *Supplement to the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons; 16th May, 1836: Report on the London and Dover (South Eastern) Railway Bill* [hereinafter South Eastern Railway Bill report], 953-75: House of Lords Record Office.

<sup>10</sup> *Report of the Select Committee on Railway Acts Enactments*, PP HoC 1846 (XIV), 571-81, esp. 540.

<sup>11</sup> *Railway Returns for the year 1870*, PP HoC 1871 (LX), 68.

<sup>12</sup> *Bradshaw's Railway Guide for April 1910* (new edition, Newton Abbot, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> Ahrons, E.L., *Locomotive and Train Working in the latter part of the nineteenth century: Volume 5* (Cambridge, 1953), 39.

<sup>14</sup> Dickens, C., 'A flight', one of the *Reprinted Pieces*; and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), Chapter 2. The SER began to operate the 11-hour service in 1851, for the Great Exhibition; in 1858 the time was reduced to 10¼ hours, Bucknall, R., *Boat Trains and Channel Packets* (1957), 55, 57.

<sup>15</sup> Croft, R.J., 'The nature and growth of cross-channel traffic through Calais and Boulogne, 1840-70', in *Transport History*, Vol. IV (1971), 265.

<sup>16</sup> *SER: Numbers of passengers embarking and disembarking at various Channel ports: tables*, PRO RAIL 633.425.

<sup>17</sup> *South Eastern railway bill report*, 970. (See note 9.)

<sup>18</sup> *Report of the Select Committee on Railway Acts Enactments*, PP HoC 1846 (XIV), 542.

<sup>19</sup> *Railway Returns for the year 1900*, PP HoC 1901 (LXVII), 43.

<sup>20</sup> Gourvish, T.R., 'Railways, 1830-70: the formative years', in Freeman, M.J. and Aldcroft, D.H., *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester, 1988), 77. Ville, S.P., *Transport and the Development of the European Economy, 1750-1918* (Basingstoke, 1990), 155.

<sup>21</sup> Freeman, M.J., 'Introduction', in Freeman, M.J. and Aldcroft, D.H., *op. cit.* (see note 20), 32-38.

<sup>22</sup> Gourvish, T.R., *op. cit.* (see note 20), 77.

<sup>23</sup> This can also be noticed in the increasing standardization of materials used by the railways to build their own stations and lineside works: Simmons, J., *The Railway in England and Wales, 1830-1914: Vol. 1: The System and its Working, 1830-1914* (Leicester, 1978), 156-8; also Biddle, G., *Victorian Stations* (Newton Abbot, 1973), 72.

<sup>24</sup> A Newcastle chaldron of coal weighed 2 tons 13 cwt: Simmons, J., *op. cit.* (see note 23) 204.

<sup>25</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, 4 February, 1883.

<sup>26</sup> Jackson, K.E., 'A new town called Alfred' (UKC extended essay, 1968), 89-90.

<sup>27</sup> Examples in this paragraph taken from *Kelly's Directory for Kent* (1905), except for Sainsbury's which opened in Folkestone in 1909.

<sup>28</sup> Figures derived from the occupational tables in the published census returns.

<sup>29</sup> William Jeffery, a grocer from Ashford and keen supporter of the railway: quoted in Turner, G., *Ashford and the Coming of the Railway* (Maidstone, 1984), 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Second Report from the Select Committee on Railway Acts Enactments*, PP HoC 1846 (XIV), Appendix 5.

<sup>31</sup> Aldcroft, D.H., *Studies in British Transport History, 1870-1970* (Newton Abbot, 1974), 34-5.

<sup>32</sup> Jackson, *op. cit.* (see note 26), 83-88.

<sup>33</sup> *Census of England and Wales, 1911: County of Kent area, families or separate occupiers and population also classified by ages, condition of marriage ... etc.* (HMSO, 1914), Centre for Kentish Studies, XK/312, Table 24.

<sup>34</sup> Anon., *Ashford Works Centenary, 1847-1947* (Southern Railway, 1947), 22. Turner, G., *Ashford: the Coming of the Railway* (Maidstone, 1984), 165 suggests a similar figure.

<sup>35</sup> Simmons, J., *The Railway in Town and Country* (Newton Abbot, 1986), 18.

<sup>36</sup> By contrast, at Strood, Messrs. Aveling and Porter, who were nationwide known manufacturers of steam traction engines and road rollers, employed some 1,000 men at the turn of the century. Smetham, H., *History of Strood* (Chatham, 1899), 350.

<sup>37</sup> *Abstract of Answers and Returns made pursuant to 3 & 4 Vict., c. 99, and 4 Vict. c. 7 [Enumeration abstract, 1841]*, PP HoC 1844 (XXVII), 60.

<sup>38</sup> This is not true of 'commuter' towns, of course, but there were none in East Kent in the period considered.

<sup>39</sup> Templeman, F., 'Canterbury and the coming of the railways', unpublished extended essay, University of Kent at Canterbury (April 1970), 166.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-17.

<sup>41</sup> Everitt, A., *Landscape and Community in England* (1985), 27.

<sup>42</sup> Simmons, J., *Railways: an Anthology* (1991), 208-9.

<sup>43</sup> The actual railway - the track, the stations, the viaducts - tended to act as a social blight on the area through which they passed; in major towns, railway arches tended to be the last refuge of the destitute; Kellett, J.R., *Railways and Victorian Cities* (pb edn, 1975), 345.

<sup>44</sup> Larkin E.J. and Larkin J.G., *The Railway Workshops of Britain, 1823-1986* (1988), 20, 90.

<sup>45</sup> Jackman, W.T., *The Development of Transportation in Modern England* (Third edition, 1966), 528, note 1. Jackman was referring to land values alongside the Liverpool and Manchester line.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas, R.H.G., *London's First Railway - the London and Greenwich* (pb edition, 1976), 82.

<sup>47</sup> Bagehot, W., *The English Constitution*, Chap. V, quoted in Simmons, J., *Railways: an Anthology* (1991), 204.

<sup>48</sup> Dingle, A.E., 'Drink and working-class living standards in Britain, 1870-1914', *Economic History Review*, Second series. Vol. XXV (1972), 609. Dingle's figures show that after about 1875 consumption of beer per head began to fall, having been rising fairly steadily since 1855, but the OPT figures for drink outlets in East Kent tended to fall from Year -1 onwards.

<sup>49</sup> This group comprised the same classes, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII and XXIV for all town types.

<sup>50</sup> So the census enumerators' returns, which of course only provide information on boarding schools, seem to indicate.

<sup>51</sup> Walton, J.K., *The English Sea-Side Resort, 1750-1914* (Leicester, 1983), 61.

<sup>52</sup> This conflict is usefully outlined in Briault, E.W.H. and Hubbard, J.H., *An Introduction to Advanced Geography* (1957), 12-13.

<sup>53</sup> The question is posed in Simmons, J., *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830-1914* (Newton Abbot, 1986), 19.