

Liverpool Street, and all that Jazz

We had relations living in various parts of North East London, so made two or three journeys a year across the capital to Liverpool Street station, then utilised what was once the most intensive steam worked suburban railway system in the world to travel out to Walthamstow or Higham's Park. This route was (and is) known familiarly as the "jazz service", and a little history is in order.....

The Liverpool Street terminus was opened by the Great Eastern Railway in 1874, extending their line from a temporary terminus at Bishopsgate right into the heart of the city. This part later became platforms 1 to 10, the "West Side"; the "East Side" platforms 11-18 were added in 1894. Suburban services were developed gradually until in 1919 some trains were carrying between 1200 and 1400 passengers!

Electrification was considered, but the estimate was three million pounds, a vast sum in those days, which could not be justified as fares were kept low due to competition from the tramways. Instead, General Manager Sir Henry Thornton (from the USA) and Operations Superintendent F.V. Russell devised a scheme to optimise passenger capacity with the existing steam service.

The routes concerned were those to Chingford, Enfield and Palace Gates (Wood Green). At Liverpool Street, tracks were re-arranged, engine dock spurs provided at the platform ends, and signalling improved. The platform barriers were moved back enabling rapid passenger dispersal, and new loco sheds were provided at Wood Street (Walthamstow) and Enfield. The changes were implemented from 12th July 1920, giving a 50-75% capacity increase, for a total cost of only 80,000.

Initially, the existing small engines and 16-coach trains of 4-wheeled carriages were used, providing 848 seats. The spaces between seats and roof were open, and my father recalls as a child being able to clamber over them between compartments! Using platforms 1-4 at Liverpool Street, the service interval of two and a half minutes (10 minutes turn round cycle at each platform) gave a peak capacity of 20,350 passengers per hour, or five per second, a world record at the time. A train was only actually at rest in the platform for 4 minutes, in which time the locomotive took on water.

Seats were provided for all three classes; First Class was denoted by a yellow stripe painted above the compartment windows, and blue for Second Class (the majority Third Class being unmarked). Coloured boards were used to identify the routes and destinations served, with numbers to denote the sequence of stops. With all these stripes and colours, the new scheme was initially dubbed "The Rainbow Service", but a local paper first called it the "Jazz Service" and that name endured, later even being used officially by the control office amongst others.



The Chingford line peak-hour service was every five minutes, with alternate trains stopping at all stations, the rest fast to St. James Street, reached in only 12 minutes, then Hoe Street and Wood Street only - the latter were the "Walthamstow Specials" used regularly by my father and other family members.

The first two N7 0-6-2 tank prototypes had been built in 1915, and a further 20 in the period 1921-24, but the bulk of the class, 112 more, did not appear until 1925-28, replacing the last of the small engines. Also from 1915, some of the old 4-wheeled, 27 foot long, five-compartment, 60 seat third class carriages were rebuilt in pairs onto new 54-foot bogie underframes, but this progressed very slowly.

The familiar Gresley Quint-Art bogie articulated stock was introduced in 1925. Each unit comprised three 8-compartment thirds, a 6-compartment brake third, and a 5 + 2 compartment second/first composite, total 440 seats; thus a total capacity of 880 in a standard 10-coach train. Together with the N7 tanks, these provided sterling service on the "Jazz" right through until electrification in 1960.

Travelling to Liverpool Street

Liverpool Street was somewhat awkward to get to from Waterloo, as there was no direct tube connection. One option was that strange little underground section of the Southern Region, the Waterloo & City Line (otherwise known as "The Drain") whose green and silver train - only one outside the peak hours, and that often just a single car - shuttled backwards and forwards to Bank station, a one and a half mile, four minute non-stop ride.

From here it was one further stop on the Central Line tube, but we rarely bothered with this, instead coming up to street level, in later years making use of the "Travolator", an early example of the type of moving walkway now common at airports, and walking the last few hundred yards past the Stock Exchange and up Old Broad Street; all strangely deserted at weekends.

The "W & C", primarily a commuter service, did not run at all on Sundays, so it was then a choice between Northern and Central line tubes with a change at Tottenham Court Road, or a bus, with the possibility of some long waits either way. The Liverpool Street /Broad Street station forecourt area was the hub of several of London's busiest bus routes, including the famous no.11, supposedly the most frequent of all with a claimed service interval of only 40 seconds. Armed with my new first watch, it was of course essential to check this out, and I was amazed that one could stand there for some five minutes without seeing a single one; but then seven or eight appeared from round the corner, bunched together in time honoured fashion! They were the less common, wide bodied version of the standard RT type, designated RTW, for greater ease of rapid loading and unloading.

Here also was a major Trolleybus terminus, serving three busy routes (with another ten coming into nearby Moorgate or Aldgate, on either side). This necessitated a complex network of overhead wiring, weaving between the tightly packed tall buildings in this centre of London commerce. Nestling among the Victorian office blocks was that wonderful emporium "Hobbies", also another little model shop, "City Models", which always had an interesting array of second-hand stock acting, I suspect, merely as cover for a more lucrative under the counter bookmaking business (such being illegal before 1961).

Broad Street station

The two British Railways terminal stations stood side by side, the most prominent but least important being Broad Street, on the left facing north. It served only the North London Line suburban electric route round to Camden Road and Richmond and a few other peak hour local destinations, and was not intensively used. The main building was ridiculously large for its purpose and, I thought, of somewhat bulbous and grotesque architectural style - it is now demolished, and the whole area completely redeveloped. The only public access was by long and draughty open staircases on either side, leading up to a dingy concourse layout fronting six platforms (most seemingly used only for berthing empty carriage sets) under a truncated, bomb damaged overall roof. From a train spotting viewpoint, the climb up the stairs was never worthwhile.

Liverpool Street

Liverpool Street station next door was far more extensive, with 18 platforms fronted by the opulent Great Eastern Hotel; its more restrained but interesting architecture was somewhat diminished by its sprawling, semi subterranean location. The suburban side passenger entrance which we normally used was unpretentious, down a long sloping taxicab ramp flanked by a dirty yellow brick retaining wall, on the west side of the hotel building. This old postcard from around 1910 shows the area, with the entrance under the clock tower, right of centre. Broad Street station is on the left....

Here was the suburban lines ticket office, leading through to our Chingford line train, normally to be found at Platform 2 directly ahead.

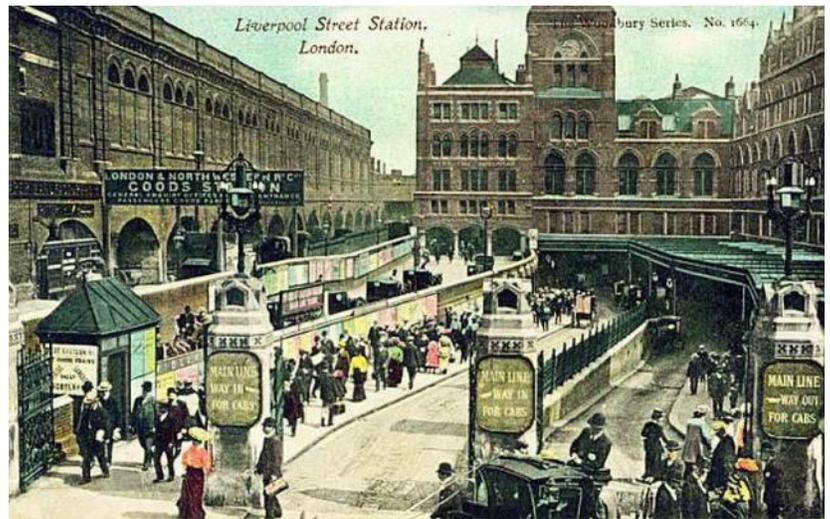
If time allowed, I would spend half an hour or so looking round the rest of the station while my parents had a cup of tea in the refreshment room. This was unusually situated, on stilts above the concourse, reached up a wide flight of wooden stairs which also connected with a footbridge spanning the whole of this side of the terminus.

What a wonderful ethereal, atmospheric place this was in steam days, though doubtless hated by the weekday commuters and quite unappreciated by casual travellers! The footbridge enabled an excellent general view of proceedings, uninterrupted by the bustle of the concourse below. A cavernous overall roof echoed the constant sounds of slamming carriage doors, unintelligible station announcements, and the staccato beat of an engine getting under way somewhere - perhaps giving the train it had brought in a helping shove up the bank which started almost at the platform ends, before dropping back from it. The roof was filled with a permanent fog of smoke and steam, so that its ironwork and glass was blackened and dingy, and its further recesses often totally obscured.

The Great Eastern section used air operated brakes on its trains, rather than the more common vacuum system, so all the engines seen here were fitted with Westinghouse pumps and air reservoirs. Both engines and carriages were thus not interchangeable with those on adjacent Eastern Region lines such as those into Kings Cross. As an incoming train came to a stand, the sound of squealing brakes was replaced by the rapid pulsating rhythm of the pump working hard to restore the reservoir pressure. After a short while it would shut down to a much slower, tick over rate (a double stroke every twenty seconds or so) to maintain the status quo. This contented sighing from the pumps of several locomotives standing on adjacent lines at the buffer stops would be the dominant sound in quieter moments, and was a characteristic feature of the old Liverpool Street, fondly recalled.

The West Side section of the station comprised platforms 1 - 8, from left to right as we faced them. The lines into 1 and 2 extended beyond the others, alongside the concourse - many years previously they continued into a tunnel to link up with the Metropolitan Railway - so access to No.1 was rather tortuous, via a narrow passageway. This platform was normally used for the Enfield Town trains, so definitely did not have the special status accorded at many other major termini! Platforms 5 to 8 tended to be used for outer suburban trains headed by L1 class 2-6-4 tanks, and comprising fairly modern Thompson all steel carriages, some with internal side corridors and lavatories.

Moving eastwards across the concourse, the footbridge contorted sideways, then struck out across the broad expanse of the principle main-line departure platform (no.9) and the four lines between this and the correspondingly long arrival equivalent no.10, right at the heart of the station. Here were concentrated the



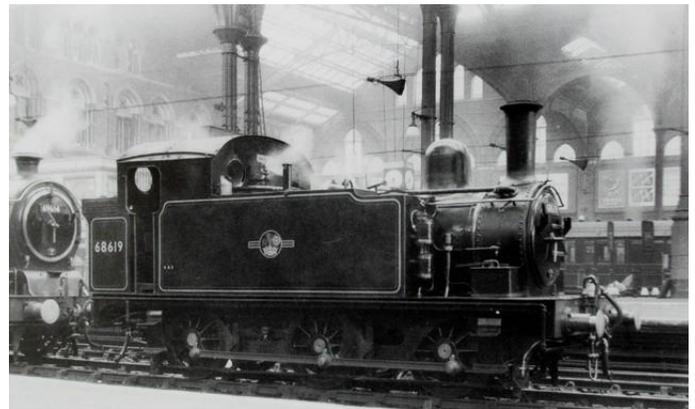
most prestigious workings, the Norwich expresses and the "Hook Continental" and other boat trains for Harwich. The passengers waiting here were of a noticeably different social class, expensively dressed and with much luggage, porter - attended. There was direct access from the end of platform 9 to and from the Great Eastern Hotel, whose opulence we could marvel at by standing on the threshold; the reception area was a haven of peace and quiet amidst the bustle of the station. Immediately adjacent though, the running lines continued into a gloomy and smelly undercroft occupied by a couple of open wagons. All the hotel rubbish was tipped directly into these from overhead chutes!

The main-line trains were usually headed by gleaming modern "Britannia" pacifics and comprised up to about 12 coaches of Gresley teak panelled stock from the 1920s and 1930s. These were by now of course overpainted in the standard red and cream early British Railways colours or the later dull maroon, neither of which suited them at all well. Our picture shows loco 70041 on its train in platform 9 in September 1960. By then B.R standard Mark 1 carriages were more prevalent on these trains (though the old type buffet cars lingered on for many years) and these with their smoother external surfaces did manage to look quite smart in the lined out maroon livery when kept clean.



To avoid the inconvenience of a noisy and smoky pilot engine simmering immediately outside the hotel entrance, the train of empty stock would be propelled slowly back into the station ready for departure, an unusual arrangement in London.

Descending the stairs to ground level on platform 10, the main attractions here were two immaculately maintained station pilot engines, little J69 class 0-6-0 tank no. 68619 and big brother N7 0-6-2 69614, both in gleaming B.R lined out black livery with all steel bright work and brass and copper fittings well polished. They were often standing side by side in the centre roads between the main line platforms, as if specially posed for admiration and photographs.



Quite obviously the pride and joy of their crews (who were paid a little extra for this attention), they did not appear to do much work, apart from shunting the odd parcels van or two around the station. In late 1959, 68619 disappeared for a few weeks, replaced by various filthy and leaky examples of the same class, often 68633, but came back even more resplendent, this time in Great Eastern Railway royal blue colours, with red painted coupling rods, and carrying the garter coat of arms of the old company as well as B.R decals.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this famous and well liked pair of engines fell easy prey to unfeeling accountancy towards the end of 1961, and disappeared from the scene with little advance warning, most disappointingly just before I went specially to photograph them in colour. The principle of having a "showpiece" engine amidst all the gloom lingered on though, as they were replaced by one of the very short lived D84xx diesels of the American "switcher" pattern, relatively unusual in the U.K, which was similarly bulled up and stood in position for some years afterwards.

Emerging blinking into the daylight, maybe even sunshine, at the further end of platform 10, we walked up the cab road ramp and leant on the wall here, a long favoured vantage point for spotters at Liverpool Street.

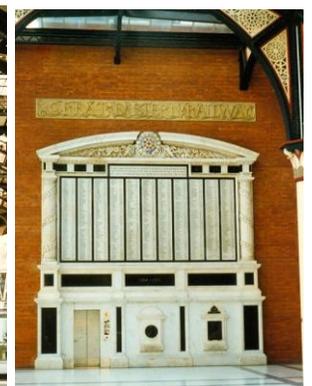
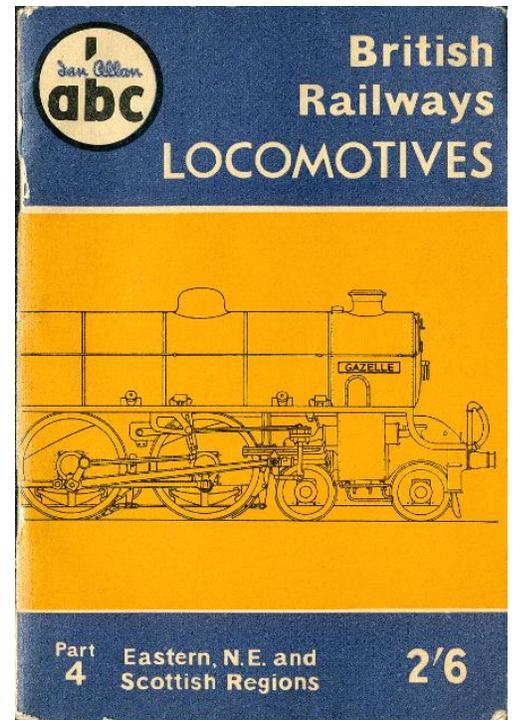
This was right at the heart of things, adjacent to the locomotive servicing facilities which included a 70-foot diameter turntable.

Platforms 11 to 18 comprised essentially a separate station, the "East side". Most lines here were electrified during the 1950s, and different (though, confusingly, similarly numbered) types of green suburban train sets worked on the Shenfield and Southend line services respectively. Latterly, the stylish and (unusually) maroon painted "Clacton" sets of main-line units were also to be seen, after the completion of that scheme. There was often a grimy, nondescript B1 class 4-6-0 (known as "Bongo's", as some of the class were named after antelopes) waiting to leave with a semi fast train over on this side of the station. Other types seen on similar duties were the "Baby Bongo's" (K1 class 2-6-0) or the B.R standard equivalent 76xxx series, and occasionally, one of the rugged looking K3 class moguls. All of these types, indeed most of the engines seen at Liverpool Street (except the Britannia's), were based at the vast Stratford depot some 6 miles out to the east, but also worked in from Cambridge, Ipswich & Parkeston. There was generally less of interest to be seen in the east platforms though, compared to the west side.

As we leaned against the cab ramp wall, almost under our feet in one of the locomotive servicing bays would often reside, simmering gently, an example of my favourite LNER engines, the B17 or "Sandringham" class 4-6-0. Those regularly seen were 61607 "Blickling", 61645 "The Suffolk Regiment" and three of the "Footballers": 61653 "Huddersfield Town", 61660 "Hull City" and 61664 "Liverpool". They were usually kept very clean in their lined green livery, the latter having "football" emblems incorporated into their nameplates, brightly painted in the appropriate team colours.

Retracing our steps back along the length of platform 10, there was rarely time to venture eastwards onto the concourse of the "new" station, which was architecturally quite plain but did have some surprising features, including groups of cherubs carved in stone going about various tasks of railway business, with different poses and expressions. Hastening back across the footbridge to the West side suburban platforms allowed a brief appreciation of the lofty, cathedral like roof structure of the older part of the station.

Unfortunately we took no photographs of the station itself in steam days, and did not visit again until after its complete refurbishment and rebuilding in the early 1990s. As this progressed, I often wondered what it would look like, and was very favourably impressed after completion. Our 1992-3 photos below show that the best of the old has been retained, cleaned up and sympathetically painted, and blending in very well with the new.....





Of our older photos, unfortunately most of those taken during 1958-62 were of the new diesels; the first of these is of interest as D5579 was painted in a strange mustard-yellow colour, smart when new but quickly looking very grubby in the Liverpool Street atmosphere. Another of the type was painted light blue, but both were soon repainted in the standard green.....



West side suburban trains in the 1950s

The Chingford line trains we used regularly were almost invariably worked by N7 class 0-6-2 tanks, powerful brutes which were well masters of their task, especially at weekends when the trains consisted of only five coaches instead of the full peak-hour complement of ten. They were never as clean or well maintained as the station pilot showpiece 69614, and often in unashamedly disgusting condition. Their trains were formed of Gresley "quint-art", 5-coach articulated sets in which each of the centre three vehicles shared bogies with its neighbours. They dated from 1925 and had short, wooden panelled bodies, each compartment with a narrow side door, upright seating for six on each side and minimal legroom in between; real "sardine cans" designed for the most intensive peak commuter loadings. The outer end of a set had little guards' lookout windows, and the stock set number was painted in large numerals for easy identification by operations staff. The trains were normally filthy inside and out; it was not considered wise to travel in our best, clean clothes! The only

practicable way for us keen youngsters to get a good view out of the window during our journey was to stand at the door with its droplight fully opened, not always best appreciated by one's fellow travellers especially in winter! Vandalised, ripped seat cushions and graffiti were commonplace here; such disfigurement was rarely encountered elsewhere in those days, either on our local Southern or Western Region trains or on London tube stock.

I recall only a couple of exceptions to N7 haulage on this line in the years prior to electrification, which was inaugurated in late 1960. The first occasion involved one of the small G.E 0-6-0 tanks - probably a J69 - of the family which worked the trains regularly before the N7's were built in the 1920's. Viewed from a distance near Walthamstow during a walk across the marshes one summery evening in May 1959, this loco was presumably acting as last minute substitute for a failed N7. Its diminutive size made it look fairly incongruous, but it nonetheless pounded gallantly along the embankment from Hall Farm Junction up towards the Essex Road bridge with a full 10-coach train in tow, little wheels and their side rods flailing around at a good rate.

The second incidence was a very unexpected visitor, which I recorded as no. 69204, a North British Railway class N15 0-6-2 tank of a type normally based only around Edinburgh. This was a rather similar design to the N7 and would presumably have been on a comparative trial. I encountered it one afternoon lurking in the gloomy recess at the terminal end of platform 2 at Liverpool Street, most probably sometime towards the end of 1958 but unfortunately did not record the exact date. Despite being quite new to loco spotting, I realised that this was something very unusual in the London area, and as it was in a filthy state I had to have a really good look to be sure my eyes did not deceive me. It was impossible to get a good clear view in this cramped location, but the bunker shape was very different to that of the N7 engines and the chimney and dome much taller. However, I have never been able to find any reference in magazines or books then or since to confirm my sighting. Such a trial on the G.E section would however have been quite logical, as the N15s were Westinghouse fitted and had a somewhat higher tractive effort than the N7s; they were becoming increasingly redundant in Scotland due to the widespread introduction of diesel multiple unit trains. It was recorded that other such trials were going on at Liverpool Street around this time, involving such types as the GNR N2 0-6-2 and LMS "Tilbury" 4-4-2 tanks, but I never saw these.

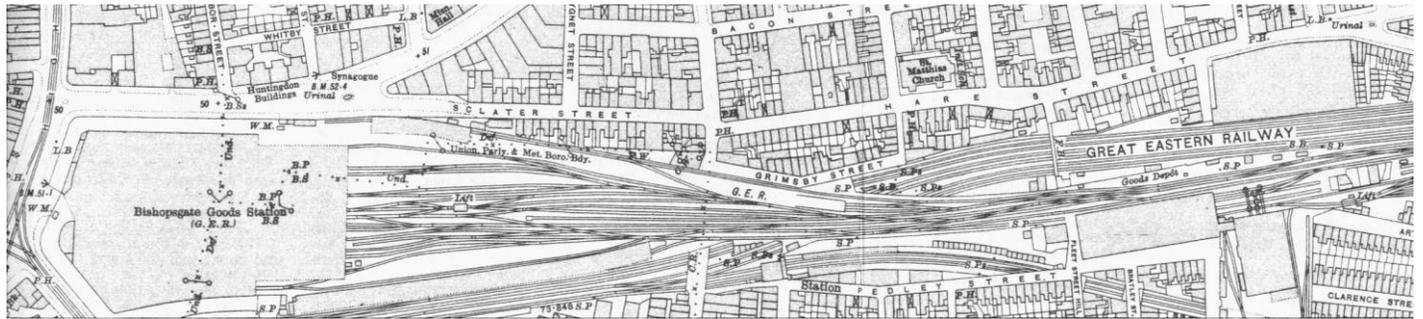
A journey along the Chingford Branch

The basic method of turning round the suburban trains at Liverpool Street was the same at weekends as for weekday peak hour services, though the need for such split second timing was of course absent. Immediately after the arrival of an up train at the platform, points were switched to allow an engine waiting in the short spur line (one such being provided for each platform road) to come onto the other end of the carriages. Coupling up of the new engine and uncoupling of the old were carried out simultaneously by their respective crews; after testing the brakes, the train was started off out of the terminus again. The incoming engine gave a brief push then followed the departing train up the length of the platform, pausing briefly before being allowed to run into the spur, ready to take out the next train in the cycle. In this way, each of the inner suburban platforms 1 to 4 could handle a new train every 10 minutes, giving a service interval of only two and a half minutes at the height of the peak. Our weekend train was normally much more leisurely, with far fewer passengers to load and unload, but the whole operation was the same, and one got the impression that some loco crews carried on working at the same peak pace all the time, through habit, even when there was no real need!

Once under way, the smoky gloom of the terminus hardly abated for the first mile or so, a soot blackened subterranean labyrinth of high retaining walls, arches, bridges and tunnels. The pair of suburban tracks ran quite separately from the other lines, in their own tunnels, but occasionally we might be diverted to use the "through" tracks instead, due to weekend engineering work. Deserted platforms lit by occasional shafts of sunlight penetrating the deep cutting marked the site of the former Bishopsgate Low Level station, surely the most obnoxious surroundings that waiting passengers might be expected to endure anywhere on the railway system, before its closure in 1940. Somewhere up above us lay the Bishopsgate goods depot, former terminus of the G.E lines before construction of the extension into Liverpool Street; I could never work out exactly where

this large and then still-busy yard was located. This old print shows the original Bishopsgate terminus in about 1870.....

A couple of hundred yards further on, the wall on the east side suddenly opened up to reveal a string of bright lights along the curving platform of London Transport's Shoreditch station, northern terminus of the East London line through the Thames Tunnel. A single line of rails came through to make physical connection with the G.E tracks facing into Liverpool Street; this was then still used for through excursion workings from the NE London suburbs to the South coast, which reversed and changed engines in the terminus.



We were now gaining height quickly, and finally burst out into fresh air just before the first stop at Bethnal Green station. Here the goods lines converged, and an ex - Great Eastern J15 or J19 0-6-0 and perhaps a J66 or J69 tank would normally be engaged in shunting amongst the lines of vans and wagons. Our train runs briskly into Bethnal Green's down fast platform, the noise of the engine and then the carriage wheels reverberating around each gable of those very distinctive G.E.R transverse canopy awnings, found at all the inner suburban stations. These "wavy roofs" were fronted by elegant fascia boards, undulating along each platform in perfect unison, their lower edges forming a series of graceful curves, some later brutally disfigured by having the points sawn off apparently to increase clearance for the overhead electrification wiring.

After a brief halt, we lurched round to the left, carriage wheels squealing, on a sharply curving viaduct, bearing away from the main lines to Stratford, Southend and Ipswich but still on the fast roads of a four track route, circumnavigating the Tate & Lyle sugar factory. The engine was then opened up for a relatively straight run of some one and a half miles northwards, past the back walls of the next two stations, Cambridge Heath



and London Fields, which were served only by Enfield Town trains running on the slow lines. We were in reality travelling more slowly than might be indicated by the rhythm of the wheels upon the rail joints, as the carriages were quite short. This rhythm was most unusual and distinctive on account of the articulation, varying according to whether we were travelling in an end carriage or an intermediate one.

Most of this section of route was closely hemmed in by Victorian era buildings, domestic and commercial intermingled, in the grimy yellow brick architecture so characteristic of East London. The signalling was all colour lights, installed as long ago as the 1930's. At this point in the journey the air would always be heavy with a distinctive scented aroma emanating from the nearby perfumery works; even nowadays, an occasional whiff of a similar brand will remind me of this locality. After passing over the goods only section of the North London line to the docks, we screeched to a stand at Hackney Downs, a full four platform station.

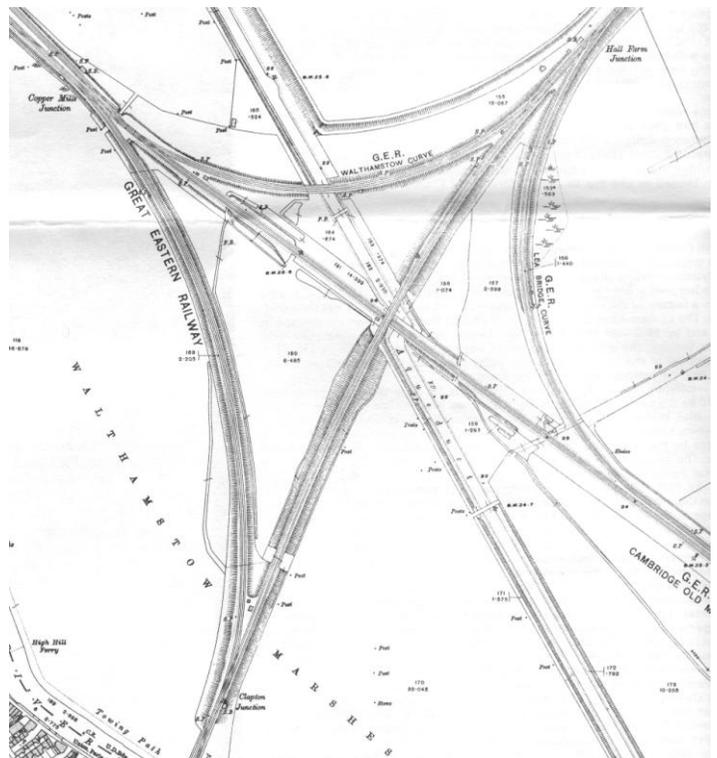
Beyond here the Enfield lines diverged to the left; we bore right, now on double track only, and plunged into a short tunnel under Hackney Downs Park. I was somewhat apprehensive of tunnels when young, so after emerging from this I would then count the 1, 2, 3 equally spaced road bridges to be better prepared for the second one, under Clapton Road, leading directly to the platform ends of Clapton station.

Just beyond the girder bridge over the River Lea Navigation, the Cambridge main line tracks swung away to our left, and we were now on the Chingford branch proper. Within the next half mile was a complex of junctions and spurs linking to the Tottenham - Lea Bridge - Stratford route running at right angles below.....

After crossing the iron bridge over busy Blackhorse Road, in earlier years we would usually alight from the train at the first of three Walthamstow stations, St James Street, familiarly known to the enginemen and locals alike as "Jimmy Street". My grandparents lived at 9 Rensburg Road, a small Edwardian terraced house off Coppermill Lane nearby, until Grandfather died in 1956. At the far end of these little streets lay the railway line, and I would often go to stand by the railings and watch the trains go by.

Rensburg was the last but one turning off Coppermill Lane before the latter became a more rural, unsurfaced track leading out onto the Walthamstow marshes. We went for walks across here, especially as a large family group after we had gathered for Christmas lunch. Past the old school and an extensive waterworks, there was a very low bridge under the Cambridge main line, with headroom only about five feet, and I was very proud to be the only one in the party able to walk under it without needing to stoop awkwardly. The Cambridge route never seemed to be very busy; though I must occasionally have seen one of the old D16 class 4-4-0s or B12 4-6-0s passing here, I cannot recall them. Just beyond we came to the River Lea, with a fascinating roving bridge carrying the towpath from one side of the navigation to the other. The purpose and mode of operation of this was carefully explained to me, and indeed could be seen in practice if we were lucky, as one or two horse drawn barges were still in use along here, carrying imported timber trans-shipped at the London docks.

After 1956, my Grandmother moved from Rensburg Road (the house then being gutted and "modernised" with such luxuries as a bathroom and inside toilet!) to stay with an aunt at Higham's Park, and our journeys on the Chingford train were extended by a further three stops.



In late 1939, just after the war had started, a press photographer took this shot of my father waiting for his train to Liverpool Street one Saturday morning, "the lone passenger", presumably to illustrate a much-reduced level of travel compared to peacetime. He was pleased to receive this copy of his picture in the post a few days later.....



After St. James Street came Hoe Street, the most central of the Walthamstow stations and by far the busiest, even before the Victoria line tube came through to terminate here in 1968. This one, renamed as Walthamstow Central, still retains its elegant Great Eastern Railway canopies on both sides, pictured here in 1993.....



The third one, Wood Street, was another situated atop an embankment and adjacent to a main road bridge. There was a small engine shed just beyond the platforms where several grimy examples of the 14 class N7 tanks out-stationed here stood simmering amongst piles of ash. A long siding was unusually situated between the main running lines, and contained empty and decrepit rakes of the "quint-art" carriages, stored here outside of peak hours.

Once away from Wood Street, the surroundings became more "outer suburban" and spacious in character; we alighted at the next stop, Higham's Park, which even managed to look quite rural with level crossing gates operated from an adjacent small signal box. Even in those days however, this was a busy road where traffic jams quickly built up awaiting passage of a train in each direction.

Although I had another uncle, aunt and cousins living at Chingford, we seldom ventured by train beyond Higham's Park to the line terminus here, with its impressive layout and station buildings. Instead, when visiting them, we would usually get off at Hoe Street and wait for a route 557 trolleybus to Chingford Mount, much closer to their home. This ride was sometimes not without incident, as I recall the vehicle being stranded for a while one day when its trolley poles parted company with the overhead wiring during the climb up to the Mount, and the conductor had to perform various antics with a long bamboo pole trying to retrieve and replace them.

Our Great Eastern suburban train trips are fondly remembered, being full of interest and atmosphere in steam days, as I have tried to convey in this description. All this was changed beyond recognition after electrification in November 1960, most would say for the better, certainly far cleaner, but it was never again quite such an experience as previously. Steam traction disappeared from the Liverpool Street lines as a whole by Autumn 1962. I had hoped for a long time to see one of the lovely old Great Eastern D16s or B12s which reputedly still came up to London regularly throughout 1959, but this was not to be.

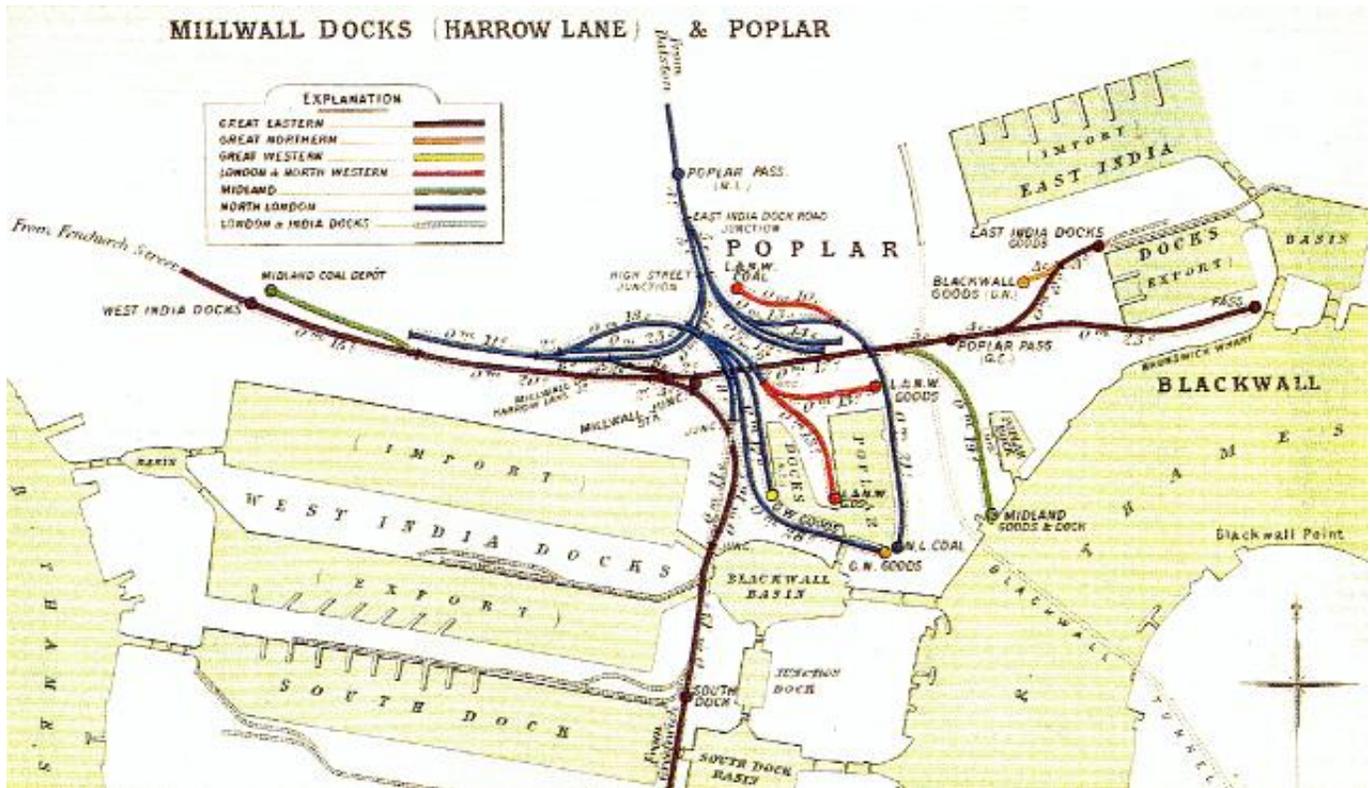
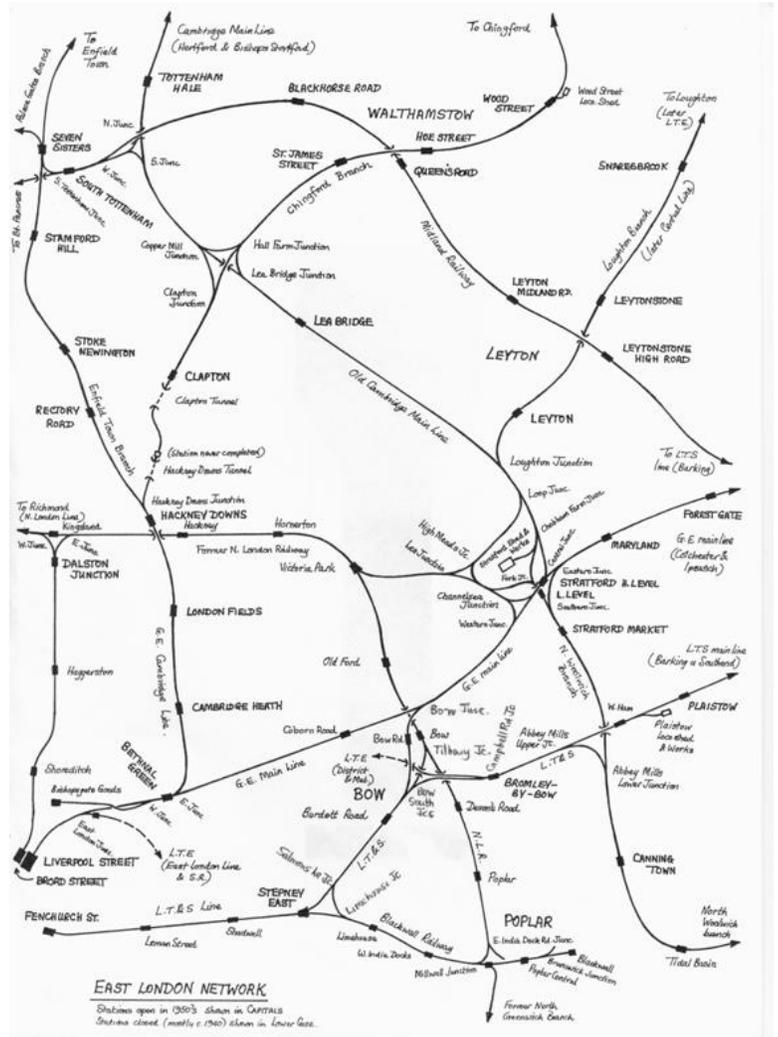
Here is a sketch map showing all the East London lines, in the 1950s.....

The general railway scene in the area remained of great interest for some years further, and during 1963 - 64 we explored more of the complexities of Stratford's junctions and around the docks at Poplar and Limehouse.

Here is a reminder of Stratford, main line platforms around this time; the scene has changed out of all recognition in recent years.....



Most fascinating of the docklands lines was the further end of the old Blackwall Railway, then largely intact but in a state of extreme dereliction. The plan below shows something of the complexity of routes here.....



There were remains of stations at Millwall Junction (pictured right), where the route joined up with a still heavily used freight network (now completely obliterated by the Docklands Light Railway) and two different sites at Poplar Central.



Our second picture shows the older of the two, replaced before 1900 with another further east, under the road bridge in left background, but with the remains of its platform still extant in the undergrowth. The lines going off to the right led to the Midland Railway's Poplar Dock goods station.

Looking the other way, towards the bridge from which the previous picture was taken, we see the Great Eastern signal box controlling the junction, half collapsed but still with its nameboard! A youthful Paul Chamberlain is testing the integrity of the rotting wooden floor.....



Some choice examples of G.E.R wooden armed signals survived further along the "main

line"; we pondered long and hard (and unsuccessfully) as to how we might dismantle one of these and carry it home on the bus and tube, to safety and preservation!

The Blackwall line lost its passenger service as long ago as 1926, but we found the reason for the retention of the grass grown tracks within about half a mile, as some redundant Great Eastern section steam locomotives had been towed down here for breaking up. The line now terminated very abruptly at this point, known as Brunswick Junction, against the high brick wall of Blackwall power station which had been built over the route and the former East India Export Dock in the early 1950s. The adjacent derelict signal box was of Great Northern Railway design, and used to control access to that company's East India Dock depot; one of the fascinations of this area was the number of different former railway companies operating within its bounds, even the Great Western having premises in Poplar!

In August 1963 we found J15 class 0-6-0 no. 65445 and the last of the diminutive but powerful Y5 0-4-0 tanks, Stratford works departmental no.33 in residence awaiting their fate. Although unfenced, the site was guarded by a large and fierce Alsatian dog, fortunately tethered by a robust chain. Barking and growling for the whole of docklands, there seemed to be no way we could pass by. However, being two of us, we went one to

each side and said mutt went totally berserk, running around in ever decreasing circles as its chain snagged on a fence post and other obstructions!

We made a return visit two weeks later, with a camera this time. To make things easier, we also took along some meat in a bag with which to placate the dog, but he was nowhere to be seen on this occasion. The J15 loco was no more, so no. 33 was to be the very last, and quite untypical, steam engine we saw in East London.....



The lines to Blackwall survived in an increasingly derelict state for at least five more years, and the yard was latterly used for wagon breaking. Further east, the straggling route from Stratford to North Woolwich, via a tunnel under the Royal Docks, even retained a passenger service for many years, using diesel multiple units. Here is one last image from east London, of the inviting prospect in store for any unwary passengers arriving at Silvertown station in 1973.....

