

Southern Railway stations in South London

The south London area stations of Southern Region of British Railways and its constituents tend to be somewhat neglected, perhaps due to the prevalent suburban electric services, but comprised some fine examples of former company architecture. The following pictures were all taken in August 1973; a few of the sites have since disappeared, many others surely much modernised by now, and some have even been nicely restored.....

First, we look at the former South Eastern Railway branch line from Purley to Caterham. Here is Kenley, whose cottage-style station house with very steep-pitched roof and gothic detailing is now a listed building, but privately owned. It dates from the construction of the Caterham Railway in 1856 and is by architect Richard Whittall.



Below is Whyteleafe, (left) down side waiting room and footbridge, and the signal box and level crossing at Whyteleafe South.....



The signalbox nameboard shows that the station had been re-signed with modern British Rail white enamel plates; in late 1972 I found one of the much more attractive 1950-era station nameplates for sale in an antique shop near Paddington station, for the princely sum of £2.50p.



In contrast the terminus station building at Caterham still displayed its "Southern Electric" enamelware.....



Here are two more views at Caterham, with the SE&CR wooden signalbox at right.....



Moving on to Anerley, this is an ex London Brighton & South Coast Railway station on its line from London Bridge to West Croydon, just to the north of Norwood Junction. At least part of the main building is thought to date from the line opening in 1839.. ...



Platforms were only provided on the outer (slow) lines, and the choice of destinations shown on the sign seems rather odd! Note the elegant wooden fascia panel over the subway entrance.

Under half a mile to the west, Crystal Palace (Low Level) station was on the LB&SCR link line to Tulse Hill, part of the complex network of lines in this area.....



The platforms in the foreground of the left hand image were on the west to south spur leading to Norwood Junction, and the large main building to the rear contains four more, on the west to north line round to Sydenham.

The two routes join to the west of the station, heading for Tulse Hill and eventually, Clapham Junction.

This final view at Crystal Palace also looks west in the main station; the stored carriages on the right look as though they have been involved in an accident, not a good advertisement to any intending passengers!



Next stop going north is Sydenham, built on the site of the former Croydon canal and re-arranged at least twice since 1839. The main building is on the down or Croydon side (left, below), also visible in the right background of the second photo; it still survives though with much modernized signage....



Curious how the sign on the bridge is tilted following the slope of the road rather than erected horizontally!

The London bound ticket office referred to was off to the left on the bridge itself, and on the other side of the road due to the peculiar platform layout here; this old and rather decrepit building was in a totally different style to the one above, and no longer exists.....



Back to the old SE&CR system now, at Greenwich. The line from London Bridge was constructed in 1836, and is claimed by some to be the world's first suburban railway. This large and elegant main building dates from 1840 and was designed by architect George Smith. Even in 1973 it has already lost its front canopy....



This building has been nicely restored in recent years, and its surroundings much tidied up.

The cast-iron notice bolted to a bridge parapet at St John's station, Lewisham bears the full, lengthy title of the SE&CR. This organization was formed in 1899 from the London, Chatham & Dover Railway and the South Eastern Railway, which had formerly operated in fierce competition with each other for the traffic to the south east coastal resorts. The new co-operation lasted until 1923 when they were absorbed into the newly-formed Southern Railway.



West Dulwich station was opened by the LC&DR in 1863 on the Herne Hill to Penge Junction link line constructed that year; the building shown here is thought to be original.....



About a mile to the north, the LB&SCR had its own station at North Dulwich, on the Peckham Rye to Sutton (Surrey) line opened in 1868.



This is another iconic structure very much characteristic of its period, designed by Charles Barry junior for the London & Brighton Railway, with Romanesque features; it is now a listed building (left).

Going around the houses for a further mile or so northwards, we come to Denmark Hill station, on the LB&SCR part of what is now generally known as the South London line running from London Bridge

round to Victoria. Constructed in Italianate style, the extensive winged main building sits on the road bridge astride the four tracks and platforms.....



The street frontage was highly decorative, and as we see here the passenger's view was not entirely neglected either; that footbridge must be one of the most ornate in the country!

Unfortunately much of this work was destroyed by a major fire in 1980, but the whole was subsequently fully restored, and won a Civic Trust award.



Lastly on our brief 1973 tour around south London we come to Battersea Park, at the junction of the South London route with the LB&SCR's main line to Brighton, between Victoria and Clapham Junction stations. Another 1867 original building (left), in Venetian Gothic style in yellow brick with polychrome decoration; what a pity we could not afford more colour film at the time!

Remarkably, platform one upstairs was until as recently as 2006 entirely constructed in wood. Despite its backstreet location only a mile or so out of Victoria terminus this station has been undergoing complete refurbishment and restoration during the last four years.

The brick bridge arch on the right of our picture carries the South London lines. The cast iron arch supporting the main Brighton route whose shadow is cast on the left hand side is

ornately decorated, and incorporates the coat of arms of the LB&SCR.....

Finally, the enamel sign on the wall at Battersea Park shows the interesting variety of destinations then served by trains stopping at this station.....



All in all a lot of variety to be seen within a relatively small and somewhat neglected area of the great metropolis, and most of which can still be enjoyed today!