

Trains, Lanes and Spatial Planes:

The Evolution of Railway Commuting

Into London 1840-1914

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Signed Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is my own work. Where reference has been made to other research, this has been acknowledged in the footnoted references and collected bibliography.

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Abstract

Railway commuting is today a mundane and routine necessity, yet for the Victorians it was a novel experience. It opened up new possibilities of living at a remove from the crowded urban centre, but still connected to its places of work. This thesis examines its development both chronologically and spatially. It explores both the supply side of the commuting equation; the suburban railway network and the demand for a commuter service. The thesis fits within the interdisciplinary field of historical mobility. This perspective offers a new line of enquiry from previous historical studies of the social and economic impact of the railway. It places the activity of commuting and the commuter centre stage, rather than focusing on the transport infrastructure or suburban environment of the commuters.

Methodologically it adopts both a quantitative and qualitative approach. The former centres on the mapping of commuting patterns for a variety of occupational groups working in central London in both the Victorian and Edwardian eras. These groups cover the full social spectrum, with an emphasis on middle-class occupations, as these groups were the earliest to embrace commuting by rail. The thesis aims to provide an explanatory narrative for these patterns from different viewpoints. There are individual chapters on: the providers of the transport infrastructure, the railway companies; the commuting experience itself; and the relationship between the railways, the commuters and their suburban communities. A concluding section considers the inter-relationships between these elements.

The research highlights that railway commuting developed at an uneven pace, both chronologically and geographically. The thesis argues that the action, or conversely inaction of the various railway companies serving the London suburban market was a significant factor behind these patterns. They performed a gatekeeper role to the growth of railway commuting through their control of fares and services. Yet they were often reluctant to promote their suburban services due to competing business priorities. Commuters, both actual and potential, were initially deterred by the slow investment in the suburban railway infrastructure, with concerns over its reliability, safety, comfort and cost. Suburban communities, particularly on London's periphery, were similarly constrained by the quality of their railway connection to London. These

impediments were only gradually overcome. Long-distance railway travel was commonplace by the mid-Victorian period, but it was a much longer and slower journey before short-distance commuting into London became ubiquitous.

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Abbreviations

Major Railway Companies Serving London

ECR	Eastern Counties Railway
GCR	Great Central Railway Company
GER	Great Eastern Railway Company
GNR	Great Northern Railway Company
GWR	Great Western Railway Company
LBSCR	London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Company
LCDR	London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company
LNWR	London and North Western Railway Company
LSWR	London and South Western Railway Company
LTS	London, Tilbury and Southend Railway Company
MID	Midland Railway Company
NLR	North London Railway Company
SER	South Eastern Railway Company
SECR	South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company

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‘She had waited over half an hour between eight and nine and in that time she had had full opportunity to observe why those suburban stations had been built so large. A dark torrent of human beings, chiefly men, gathered out of all the streets of the vicinity, had dashed unceasingly into the enclosure and covered the long platform with trampling feet. Every few minutes a train rolled in, as if from some inexhaustible magazine of trains beyond the horizon, and, sucking into itself a multitude and departing again, ... it was like the flight of some enormous and excited population menaced with disaster’¹

Chapter One - Introduction

This unflattering account described the eponymous heroine’s first encounter with suburban railway commuting in Arnold Bennett’s 1911 novel *Hilda Lessways*. Its insight into the sheer scale of the phenomenon was echoed in the 1905 Royal Commission’s investigation into the increasing levels of congestion in London. The introductory comments to its report declared that ‘one of the most important features of the problem of London locomotion is the movement of the population from the suburbs towards the centre every morning and back again in the afternoon and evening’². Both highlighted that railway commuting had become part of the quotidian work-day routine of Edwardian London. This ability to transport large numbers by train on a daily basis over ever-increasing distances was the culmination of an evolution in London’s suburban railway network from its first incarnation in the mid-nineteenth century. At the time of Dickens, the capital was primarily a ‘walking city’ and the arrival of the railway into London’s surrounding countryside was still a novelty. In *Dombey and Sons*, Dickens described its appearance in Stagg’s Gardens,

¹ A. Bennett, *Hilda Lessways*, (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1911), accessed 20 January 2019, from <https://archive.org/details/hildalessways02benngoog>, pp.114-15.

² 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic, Volume 1, p.3, Chapter 1, Section 1.

a fictional new suburb near Camden Town, as the ‘first shock of a great earthquake [which] had rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre’³.

The wider impact of the railway on London’s periphery was initially less dramatic; ‘the neighbourhood was shy to own the Railroad. One or two speculators had projected streets; and one had built a little, but had stopped among the mud and ashes to consider farther of it’⁴. Yet other contemporaries could glimpse the future sprawl of the capital. In 1847 the social reformers Henry Mayhew and John Binney recorded their impression of London from a trip in a hot-air balloon. ‘It was impossible to tell where the monster city began or ended, for the buildings stretched not only to the horizon on either side, but far away into the distance’⁵. By 1915 the urban planner Patrick Geddes likened London to an ‘octopus’ and a ‘big spreading amoeba’ which had devoured a ‘great part of South East England’⁶. For many, the agent of change behind London’s relentless expansion was the new and transformative power of the railways. As William Thackeray observed in 1860 ‘we who have lived before railways were made belong to another world. It was only yesterday, but what a gulf between now and then. Then was the old world. Stage-coaches, more or less swift, riding-horses, pack-horses, highwaymen ... all these belong to the old period. But your railway starts the new era’⁷. Geddes made the connection between the railways and London’s suburban growth more explicitly; that the railways and their passengers were ‘the throbbing arteries, the roaring pulses of the intensely living whole’⁸

As the title suggests, the themes of this thesis are trains (the development of London’s suburban railway network), lanes (the residential location of the suburban homes of the railway commuters), and spatial planes (the relationship between the railway and

³ C. Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1848), accessed 21 January 2019, from <https://archive.org/details/sondombey00dickrich>, p.46.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 18 September 1852, quoted in N Barratt, *Greater London, the story of the suburbs* (London: Random House, 2014), p.178.

⁶ P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1915), accessed 23 January 2019, from <https://archive.org/details/citiesinevolutio00gedduoft>, pp. 26-27.

⁷ W. M. Thackeray in *Cornhill Magazine*, October 1860, quoted in I. Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain, the epitome of modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p.24.

⁸ P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution*. p.27.

London's suburbs and hinterland). Its subject matter, railway commuting in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, straddles the disciplines of history and geography. It incorporates ideas from transport history, urban and suburban history as well as a historical perspective on personal mobility. In addition it has a spatial dimension as it traces the evolution of London from a compact, pre-modern, urban space to the suburban sprawl of the modern metropolis. This thesis, therefore, adopts an interdisciplinary approach to its subject. Its theoretical perspective is derived from the mobility studies movement, initially championed by Urry and Sheller⁹. Their 'new mobilities paradigm' challenged the prevailing orthodoxy of the social sciences. They argued that 'travel has been seen ...as a black box, a neutral set of technologies and processes predominantly permitting forms of economic, social and political life that are seen as explicable in terms of other, more causally powerful processes'¹⁰. The importance of mobility in its own right has been brought home by the 2020 coronavirus outbreak. At the time of writing in autumn 2020 in the midst of the second Covid-19 lockdown, the opportunities and limitations that arise from the freedom to, or absence of, travel are glaringly obvious. Instead a focus on mobility creates an alternative perspective, which emphasises the network of connections created by travel and the impact of the experience of travel itself. A study of railway commuting has an obvious and natural fit within this framework.

Any historical study of the social and economic impact of the railway has to recognise that this is a well-established and crowded field. The point of departure from past approaches is that this thesis places the activity of commuting, rather than the transport infrastructure or the suburban environment of the commuters, as the focus of its research. This foregrounding allows new questions to be asked about the nature of suburban development and its relationship with the railway network. They start with the basic enquiry of how railway commuting evolved around London, who commuted and the relation between their home address and place of work. This leads on to further

⁹ M. Scheller and J. Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm", *Environment and Planning A*, Volume 38, no 2 (2006).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.208.

lines of investigation on the relationship between the supply side of the commuting equation; the suburban railway network and the demand for a commuter service. Additional questions then arise around why railway commuting was an unequal and uneven experience, with differences in geography, class, occupational group and gender. Finally commuting involved a trade-off between a longer journey time and the anticipated reward of the suburban lifestyle. This thesis asks how commuting was experienced and whether the reality of suburbia was perceived as adequate recompense for the inevitable trials and tribulations of the journey to work.

This thesis fits within the field of historical mobility, which stands at the intersection of transport history and mobilities studies. It is an area of research that remains relatively unexplored, in part because their different academic foci have not encouraged inter-disciplinary collaboration. This tendency towards compartmentalisation was acknowledged by Pooley in his 2017 survey¹¹ of the ways in which the interaction between mobility, migration and transport has been researched. He argues ‘that transport history would benefit substantially from greater engagement with mobilities studies; and that mobilities research would be enhanced by having a stronger historical perspective’¹². This thesis looks to bridge this gap in its exploration of railway commuting from the perspective of the commuter. Its specific focus on the journey to work in Victorian and Edwardian London covers new ground as there have only been a handful of studies of the history of commuting. These largely pre-date the digital age, with Green’s 1988 case study of the workforce of London tailor, Henry Poole, being the most recent review of London’s commuting patterns. Green wrote at the time that ‘relatively few studies have considered in any detailed and systematic way the precise changes that occurred in the pattern of the journey to work. The absence of study is even more marked in relation to London, a

¹¹ C. Pooley, *Mobility, Migration and Transport: Historical Perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) ProQuest eBook.

¹² *Ibid*, p.10.

city which embodied ... the concrete manifestation of the lengthening journey to work'¹³. This thesis aims to address this anomaly in the academic literature.

The themes covered in this thesis are also relevant, and contribute to, wider academic debates. The social and economic impact of the railway has a long historiography, starting with the Victorians themselves. From its position of centrality in the Victorian imagination, later transport historians have largely been more circumspect in attributing primacy to the railway as the explanatory mechanism of urban and suburban development. In Simmons' view 'it is much harder to isolate the part played by railways in the growth of towns, other than railway towns, where the economy and society were varied. ... The railway was an agent of change, but in none can we assess exactly the quantity of that change, still less its quality'¹⁴. Urban historians have similarly downplayed its influence. F.M.L. Thompson commented that 'it has long been recognised that transport services played an important part among the general influences on suburban growth, but the exact nature of that part and whether improved transport was an essential, causal, or permissive element in suburbanization, have been matters of dispute'¹⁵. This thesis takes issue with this historiographical downgrading of the significance of the railway. Instead it asserts that the impact of the suburban railway and, in particular, the railway commuter is identifiable from other factors, and further their role should be seen as central to explanations of the growth of London beyond its Georgian boundaries.

The thesis traces commuting patterns, both spatially and chronologically, across London over a number of different occupational groups. The observed changes in the journey to work fit within a wider transformation of London from a pre-industrial city to a modern metropolis. It was an evolution that the urban theorists of the twentieth century saw as shaped by the inequalities in opportunity for commuting. The barriers created by commuting costs forced the poor into crowded inner-city areas close to

¹³ D. Green, "Distance to work in Victorian London: a case study of Henry Poole, bespoke tailors" *Business History*, Volume XXX, No.2 (April 1988), p.179.

¹⁴ J. Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830 – 1914* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008), p.17.

¹⁵ F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), p.19.

their place of work, yet enabled the wealthier sections of society to live in segregated low-density residences on the periphery of the city. The timing of this transition has been a matter of dispute amongst historians. The divergent views were initially set out in two articles. The first, by Ward, entitled *Victorian Cities, How Modern?*¹⁶, postulated that residential segregation in London came late in the Victorian period with the introduction of mass public transport. In response, Cannadine argued in *Victorian cities: how different?*¹⁷, that segregation had been an early feature of Victorian cities. The lack of statistical analysis has hindered further consideration and resolution of this debate. The development of the tools of digital humanities has, however, provided a means for a new perspective. It is the intention of this thesis to utilise a historical geographic information system (HGIS) to progress this debate, by providing an insight grounded in statistical analysis into the nature and timing of suburban formation.

This thesis is structured to address the questions posed above and methodologically it adopts both a quantitative and qualitative approach. The foundation of the research work has been the creation of a database of the residential addresses of employees in various London businesses and institutions. In conjunction with HGIS this has been used to map their residential location in relation to their place of work. These maps are set out in chapter three for the Edwardian era and chapter four for the Victorian period. They have been written in reverse chronological order to commence with the first official record of commuting contained in the 1921 Census results. The chapters then move progressively backwards in time to cover more fragmentary records. They show both the commuting patterns of different occupational groups and their evolution over time. The results inevitably require interpretation and explanation and this is a qualitative aspect of the thesis. The following three chapters consider the dynamics of the growth of commuting and in particular, railway commuting, from different perspectives. They focus on: the providers of the transport infrastructure, the

¹⁶ D. Ward, "Victorian Cities, how modern?" *Journal of Historical Geography*, Volume 1, Issue 2 (April 1975), pp.135-151.

¹⁷ D. Cannadine, "Victorian cities, how different?" in *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History, 1820-1914*, eds. R. Morris and R. Rodger (London: Longman, 1993), pp.114-146.

railway companies (chapter five), the commuting experience itself (chapter six) and the relationship between the railways, the commuters and their suburban communities (chapter seven). The inter-relationship between these elements is considered in the concluding section (chapter eight) and a comprehensive explanatory narrative is offered for the evolution of railway commuting.

Railway commuting is today a mundane and routine necessity, yet for the Victorians it was a novel experience. It opened up new possibilities of living at a remove from the crowded urban centre, but still connected to its places of work. Surprisingly the fundamental prerequisite for commuting, the construction of a suburban railway network, proved slower to take tangible shape than might be expected in the Victorian ‘age of the railway’. Although Britain’s inter-city railway network rapidly expanded in the 1830s and 40s as ‘railway mania’ took off, suburban lines were a secondary consideration. This lag can be seen in the maps submitted to the 1905 Royal Commission as explanation for the expansion of the capital’s traffic. Four plans of London and the surrounding area (figures 1.1 – 1.4 below) were presented by Mr R W Perks MP to illustrate both the growth in railways and urban area of London between 1845 and 1900 (the dark red areas represent London’s built up areas superimposed on the 1905 Ordnance Survey map and the light red area is the County of London boundary with the extant railways marked in black. A fine black circular line denoted 12 miles distance from Charing Cross).



Figure 1.1: Map of Greater London 1845,
County of London pop. 1.9m, Extent of Railway Network - 30 miles.¹⁸

¹⁸ 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic, Volume VI, plate LXXX 'Growth of London', produced by Mr R. Perks MP.

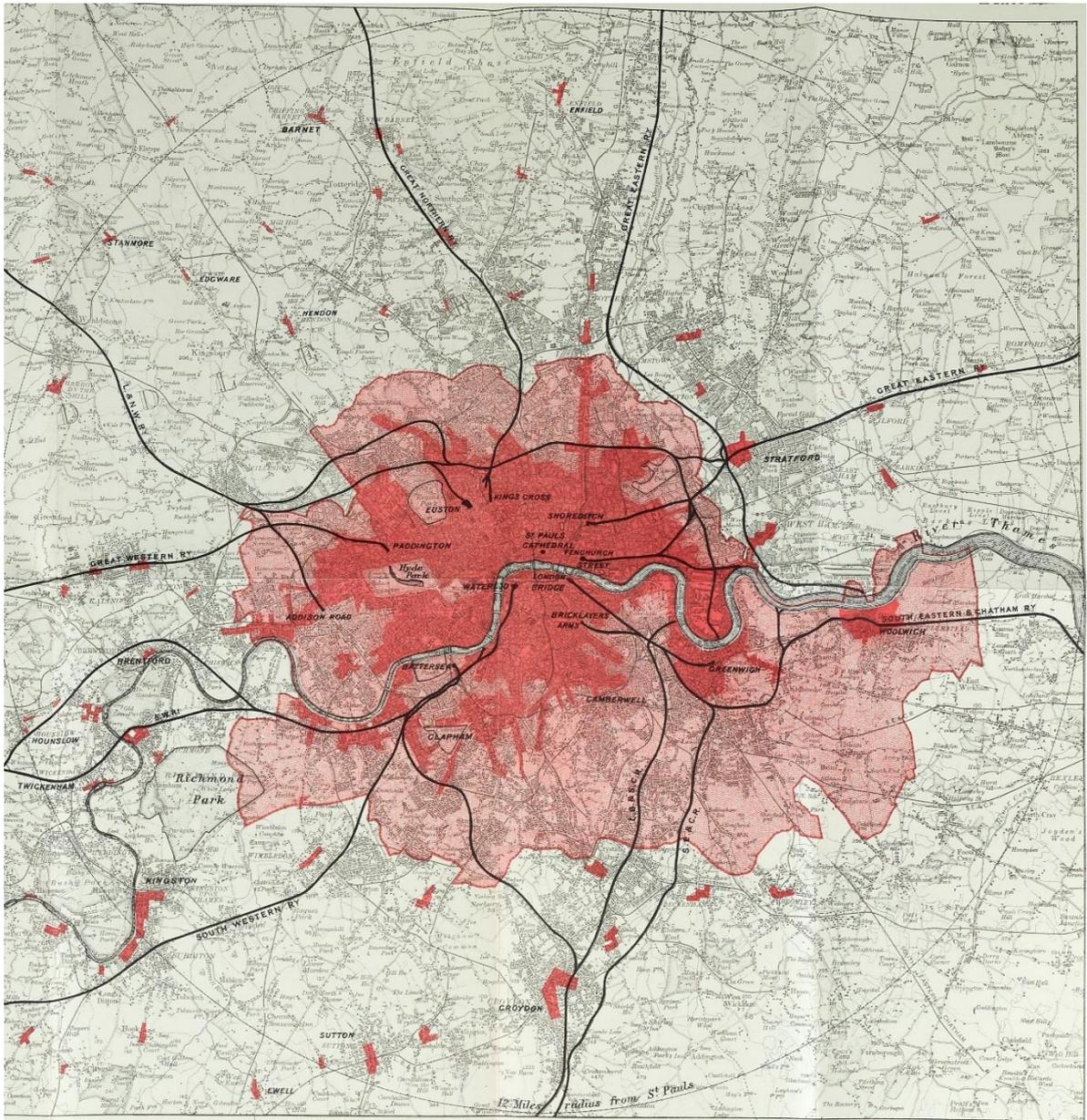


Figure 1.2: Map of Greater London 1860,
 County of London pop. 2.8m, Extent of Railway Network - 69 miles.¹⁹

The lack of a suburban railway network in the 1840s and 1850s is immediately obvious from figures 1.1 and 1.2. The railway lines of this period were built to link London to the other major cities and ports across the country, rather than serve the local hinterland. They were trunk lines, running long distance express services with only limited capability for short-distance travel. The capital's first suburban railway,

¹⁹ Ibid.

the London and Greenwich railway was only opened in 1836 and the suburban network remained under-developed until the 1860s.



Figure 1.3: Map of Greater London 1880,
County of London pop. 3.8m, Extent of Railway Network - 215 miles.²⁰

²⁰ Ibid.

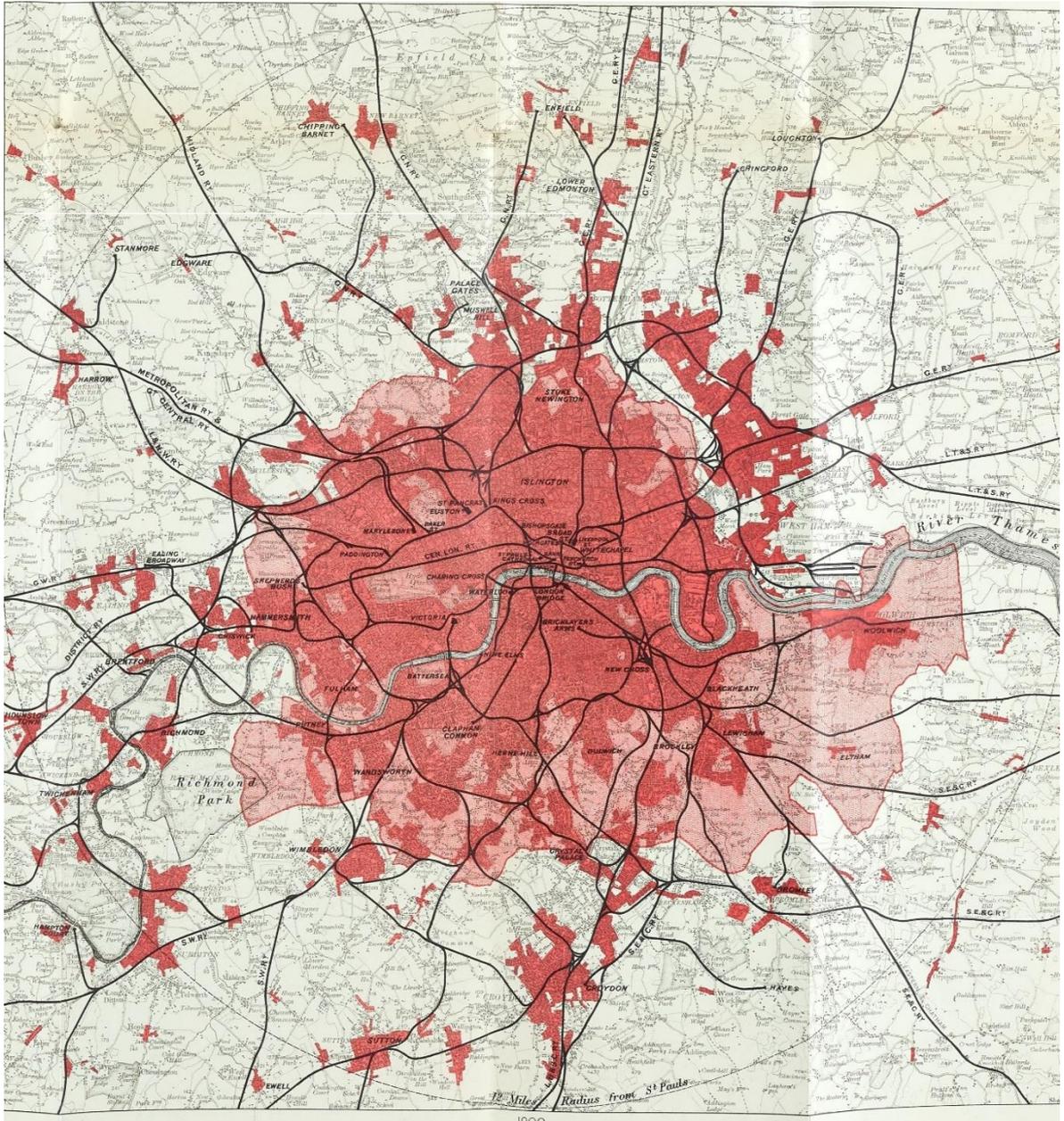


Figure 1.4: Map of Greater London 1900,
County of London pop. 4.5m, Extent of Railway Network - 249 miles.²¹

As illustrated in figures 1.3 and 1.4, it then underwent a period of rapid expansion in the 1860s and 1870s, followed by more gradual growth. Underlying this chronology was the ambivalent attitude of the railway companies towards the development of London's suburban railway network. They were slow to recognise the commercial opportunity arising from railway commuting, then made a significant infrastructure

²¹ Ibid.

investment in just a couple of decades, but failed to sustain this over the remainder of the century. The railway companies were also not a homogenous group. In total eleven major railway companies served the capital and each had a different regional territory and differing business priorities. As the maps illustrated, this manifested itself in a geographical concentration of suburban lines to the south and east of the capital. The reasons for this outcome and the consequences that flowed from the action and inaction of the railway companies are a key theme of this thesis.

The maps above suggest a broad correlation between the growth of the railway network and the expansion of suburbia. The existence of a railway line or suburban station did not, however, immediately or necessarily translate into the construction of suburban residences for the railway commuter. Other factors, such as the frequency of service and the willingness of local landowners to release land for building development, played a significant part. Moreover, commuting was not a new phenomenon in London as suburbia pre-dated the appearance of the railway. The wealthy had long been able to travel by horse and carriage from their residences on the outskirts of the city and with the advent of the horse-drawn omnibus in the first half of the nineteenth century, the middle classes were also able to live at a greater distance from their place of work. Yet, even in the mid-nineteenth century this was still viewed as unusual, especially amongst the upper echelons of society, as reflected in that mirror of social tastes, the *Punch* cartoon (figure 1.5).



Figure 1.5: ‘Going out to Tea in the Suburbs
A Pretty State of Things for 1862’: Punch Cartoon. ²²

Nonetheless, the arrival of the railway marked a step-change in London’s suburban development. It enabled the commuter to live beyond the range of both horse-drawn transport and pedestrians. It offered new locations to realise the traditional suburban dream of a semi-rural lifestyle at a safe remove from the perils of the city. Despite these attractions, the Census records (table 1.1 below) showed that the Victorians proved reluctant to live too far from the centre of London. The rapid expansion of the metropolis in the nineteenth century was initially concentrated in the central districts and inner suburbs. As can be seen from the table below, the growth of the outer suburbs, those only easily accessible by railway, came much later.

²² J. Leech “Going to Tea in the Suburbs”, *Punch Magazine*, (3 January 1863), accessed on 10 April 2019, from the Gale collection of 19th Century periodicals at <https://0-go-gale-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/ps/GALE|DX1901576590>.

Census Year	Inner London		Outer London		Greater London	
	Populatn 000s	Incrse %	Populatn 000s	Incrse %	Populatn 000s	Incrse %
1801	939		162		1,101	
1811	1,109	18%	193	19%	1,302	18%
1821	1,349	22%	224	16%	1,573	21%
1831	1,624	20%	256	14%	1,880	20%
1841	1,904	17%	302	18%	2,206	17%
1851	2,308	21%	342	13%	2,650	20%
1861	2,745	19%	445	30%	3,190	20%
1871	3,244	18%	602	35%	3,846	21%
1881	3,906	20%	817	36%	4,723	23%
1891	4,432	13%	1,142	40%	5,574	18%
1901	4,898	11%	1,609	41%	6,507	17%
1911	5,002	2%	2,160	34%	7,162	10%

Table 1.1: Census statistics for London and surrounding area - 1801-1911.²³

Despite its slow beginning, the demographic trend was unmistakable and the popularity of the outer suburbs has proved to be enduring. As the graph below (figure 1.6) illustrates the population of inner London peaked in 1911 and then steadily declined until the onset of gentrification and rejuvenation in the latter part of the twentieth century. In contrast the population of the outer suburbs rapidly increased from the late nineteenth century, through the inter-war years, to overtake the inner suburbs by the 1950s.

²³ 1905 Royal Commission, Volume 3, Appendix No 6, Table No 1 for years 1801 to 1901 and VisionofBritian.org for 1911 Census (Table 11). The County of London included the 28 metropolitan boroughs of central and inner London. The outer ring comprised the other boroughs of 'Greater London' (defined as the Metropolitan Police District and the City of London).

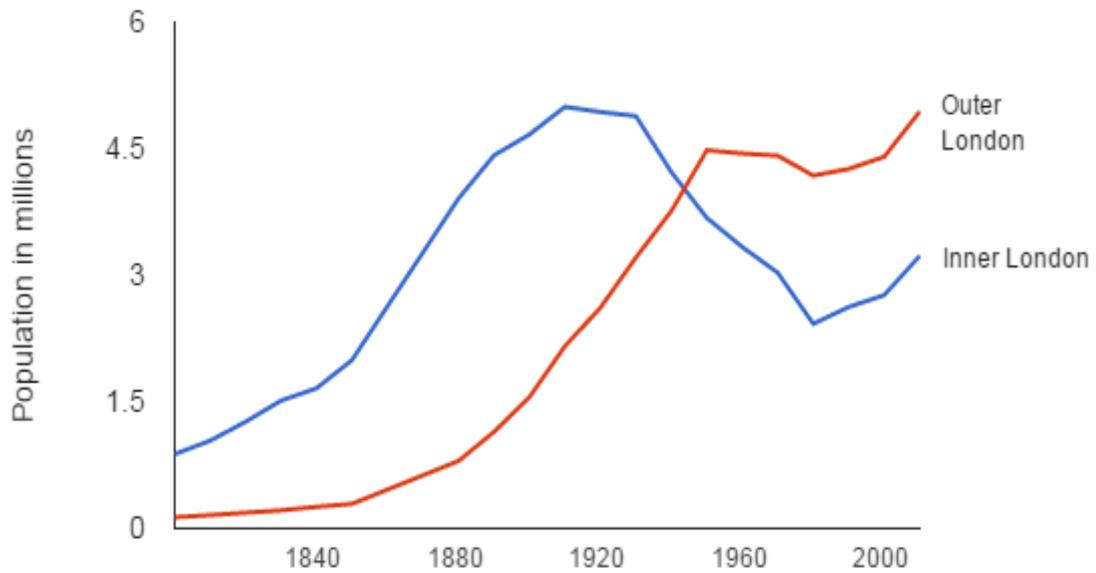


Figure 1.6: London's population growth since 1800.²⁴

Any history of railway commuting is bound up with the history of the outer suburbs. Understanding their inter-relationship is, however, a more difficult task and attributing suburban growth to the opening of a new line or station is too simplistic as an explanatory narrative. As Thompson wrote 'the presence of a railway could be regarded as a necessary, although not a sufficient, condition for outer suburban growth'²⁵. Instead this thesis proposes that the availability of a viable commuting service was the significant factor in enabling and facilitating suburban development. Regular, reliable and rapid services were the key ingredients. In conjunction with appropriately targeted fare levels, this determined the type and quantity of commuters, which, in turn, had a major bearing on the character and social composition of the outer suburbs and the satellite towns beyond.

This thesis has the ambition to rescue the railway commuter from anonymity. Thompson cautioned that this was a difficult task 'since the new suburban dwellers left no body of records of their life styles, their cultural outlook or their motives for

²⁴ Census data accessed via <http://visionofbritain.org.uk>.

²⁵ F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.19.

moving'²⁶. Kynaston similarly warned about making claims about the life of the railway commuter: 'what do we really know of the 301,000 people, who, by 1891, were working daily there? [the City of London]...We read *The Diary of a Nobody* and think we know, but it is an illusion'²⁷. It is a task, not made easier by the anti-suburban feeling of the social and literary elite, which has proved to be a significant influence on later commentators. The literary figure seen as most representative of suburban man was Mr Pooter, in *The Diary of a Nobody*²⁸. Yet he was portrayed as a hapless clerk, forever obsessing over trivial things, and an object of mockery for being dull, pretentious and bourgeois. This negative picture was reinforced by contemporary accounts of the despoiling of the countryside and the construction of dreary and monotonous housing of little architectural merit. This narrative of suburbia as a place of limited interest has recently undergone a more positive revision as outlined in the literature review (chapter two). In keeping with this historiographical trend, this thesis provides a more sympathetic appraisal, despite the evidential shortcomings, of the railway commuter and his suburban lifestyle.

As outlined above the individual chapters each cover a different aspect of commuting. In chapters three and four the aim is to understand how, in spatial terms, commuting evolved over time. The starting point of their investigation is the 1921 Census return, which included, for the first time, a question on the journey to work for individuals (albeit only available at the time of writing in aggregated form at the level of London's boroughs or district councils). Although this official source is strictly outside the period of study, it remains relevant as it provides an insight into the overall level of commuting activity around London by the early twentieth century. As there are no earlier official records on commuting activity, a different approach for earlier periods has necessarily been adopted. This takes the form of tracing the residential addresses of a number of occupational groups through the Victorian (chapter four) and the Edwardian (chapter three) eras. The resultant data has been presented as a series of

²⁶ Ibid, p.15.

²⁷ D. Kynaston, *The City of London, Volume II Golden Years 1890-1914* (London: Pimlico, 1995), pp.34-35.

²⁸ G. & W. Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody* (London: J Arrowsmith, 1892), accessed 23 January 2019, from <https://archive.org/details/diaryofnobodybyg00grosuoft>.

maps, which illustrate the chronological and spatial changes in the residential location of these sample groups.

Occupational groups have been chosen from across the social and economic spectrum, ranging from barristers to stevedores. It has to be acknowledged that the selection process has, in part, been determined by the limitations of surviving primary records. It was relatively rare for employers to record the residential address of their employees, particularly in the Victorian era. However, a number of large and robust data sets have been identified and exploited, with some spanning the entire period; for example the members of the Stock Exchange and clerks at the Bank of England. The chosen occupational groups are predominantly middle class in socio-economic composition, partly for the evidential reasons noted above, but also to represent their earlier and greater adoption of longer journeys to work. In order to significantly speed up the data collection and representation process, this quantitative approach utilises HGIS software to generate the mapped output. Other studies of historical commuting have previously adopted this mapping approach, though most pre-date the digital age and, of necessity, were smaller in their data samples. This thesis analyses much larger data-sets and so, for the first time, is able to examine commuting patterns across Greater London. The results show three clear trends; first that the dispersal to the outer suburbs was relatively slow until the Edwardian era, secondly it was geographically uneven in its spread and finally there was a marked disparity across occupational groups and by social class.

The following chapters aim to construct an explanatory narrative for the patterns emerging from the data mapping. In doing so, they look to answer the other questions on the nature of commuting and commuters. The maps of residential addresses show the evolution of commuting across all forms of transport, but a limitation in scope has been applied to this thesis. It only seeks to explore the development of railway commuting in detail. This focus has been chosen as the railway led the way in transforming public transport opportunities in the period. In British, European and American cities railways were, invariably, the first mechanised mode of transport and

facilitated a greater geographical scope to commuting than was achievable with horse-drawn transport. Given their wider social and economic impact, there is an expectation that the railways were a major contributing factor to the development of commuting and suburban growth.

This thesis draws on primary sources connected with the Victorian and Edwardian railways. This is, of course, a vast field of information, however, the research focuses on those documents directly related to the operation of London's suburban railway networks. The railway companies' board minutes detailing their strategic and operational planning have been of particular interest, along with their analysis of the financial returns for their suburban lines. In considering railway commuting within London, records of central government and London's local administrative authorities have been highly relevant as these bodies became increasingly involved in transport matters in the capital. The 1905 Royal Commission was, in particular, a landmark survey of the state of London's transport and its report and accompanying appendices of supporting material have been extensively utilised in this thesis. Finally there is a wealth of contemporary accounts of the social and economic impact of the suburban railway. These include letters penned by frustrated commuters to newspapers, local accounts of the arrival of the railway in London's hinterland, early periodicals devoted solely to the workings of the railway, and literary descriptions of suburbia and suburbanites. It is a rich and varied array of sources and the only caveat is that commuting is rarely visible as a subject in its own right. This thesis has had to rely on implicit as well as explicit references for its source material.

The first of the explanatory chapters, chapter five, covers the physical infrastructure of railway commuting; London's suburban railway network. Its evolution is described in both geographical and chronological terms. The considerable regional variances around London are identified and the chapter then moves on to consider the attitudes and expectations of the railway companies towards this new commercial opportunity. It examines how these changed over time and why other business priorities often took precedence over the promotion and management of their suburban networks. The

major regional companies are the focus of this chapter as they accounted for the vast majority of London's railway network. The chapter contrasts their modus operandi and explores why these led to significant differences in the type and level of suburban services around the capital. The evidence presented to the 1905 Royal Commission is drawn upon to illustrate both the characteristics and the divergent nature of railway commuting across the metropolis by the Edwardian era. It is also used to place the role of the suburban railway within the wider context of London's public transport system as a whole. It concludes that the approach adopted by each railway companies towards its suburban networks resulted in fundamental inequalities of opportunity for railway commuting both by geography and by class.



Figure 1.7: London-bound commuters at Orpington station c.1900. ²⁹

²⁹ Photo courtesy of the Tony Riley collection. (A Kent-based railway enthusiast and collector of old railway photos and memorabilia).

The railway commuter and the experience of commuting is the subject of chapter six. Commuting is today, at best, a monotonous routine of making the same journey at the same time every day. It was a necessary compromise in order for the commuter to enjoy a suburban lifestyle. The attractions of escaping the crowded inner districts exerted a strong pull for those able to afford to do so. Unsurprisingly, as shown in figure 1.7 above, it led to commuting being predominantly a male and middle class activity. Yet the social practice of commuting was slow to be established. This chapter examines how it was held back by the potential commuter's experience of fears over the safety, and frustrations with the quality of the suburban railway service. It traces how these concerns were gradually overcome by a range of practical improvements; to the comfort of the stations and rolling stock, the frequency of the timetable, the punctuality of the service and the implementation of safety measures.

This sixth chapter covers how the commuting experience became a routine one for ever-increasing numbers and how the railway companies sought to provide a differentiated service for different sections of London's working population. The chapter utilises contemporary records, both descriptive and statistical, to identify the changing nature and perceptions of the commuter. It recognises that accounts in diaries and journals of the daily journey to work are scarce and so it has drawn on the correspondence in newspapers to provide a picture of the commuting experience. In addition the chapter mines the railway companies' records for the measurable aspects of the commuting experience; fare levels, timetables and journey times. It concludes that commuting was not the same experience throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras, nor was it the same experience for all sections of society.

The relationship between the suburban railway and the outer suburbs and satellite towns is explored in chapter seven. It has long been recognised that there was not a simple causal relationship. Instead this chapter argues that it was the provision of everyday mobility through access to commuting services that was key to suburban development. It acknowledges that this was often an unintended consequence of

railway companies' actions, rather than their stated strategic aim. They were national or regional enterprises with commercial ambitions to match and, in addition, they were prohibited from profiting from their rights of compulsory purchase of land in the suburbs. Their interaction with the local agents of suburban development - the landowners, property developers, the communities and their governing bodies - was often a distant and difficult one. The Edwardian authority on railways, Charles Grinling, coined the phrase 'suburban incubus' in his history of the GNR³⁰ to describe this uneasy relationship. As a result the existing historiography has tended to downplay the impact of the railways on suburban development. This chapter argues that the railway companies may have lacked a consistent strategy for their suburban operations, but through their actions and inactions they acted as a gatekeeper over suburban growth.

Chapter seven explores how this role manifested itself in a variety of ways. Initially the wider business priorities of the railway companies, including their regional rivalries, heavily influenced the development of their suburban network; where lines were built and stations situated. Later their fare and service levels set the parameters of commuting activity and so dictated the pace of suburban growth. These limitations on access to suburbia were instrumental in the formation and character of suburban communities. Their civic ambitions reflected the interests and priorities of this new suburban resident; the middle-class commuter. They campaigned for better transport links to the capital, whilst striving to remain a socially segregated community. Yet the gradual expansion of the commuting franchise to an ever-widening section of society by the railway companies threatened to upset this social equilibrium. This raised the fear of de-gentrification amongst the new suburban elites. The chapter concludes with the challenges faced by suburban communities from new forms of public transport in the Edwardian era, as the railway companies' gatekeeper role faded or disappeared.

³⁰ C. Grinling, *The History of the Great Northern Railway, 1845-95* (London: Methuen & Co, 1898), accessed 25 January 2019, from <https://archive.org/details/historyofgreatno00grinuoft>.

The chapter draws on a similar range of national and local sources, both in quantitative and qualitative forms, to the previous chapter. In addition, it draws on the literature of suburbia as contemporary writers sought to explore the new world of London's suburbs. Its analysis covers the Greater London area, with a specific emphasis on the North West Kent area. This was a region which experienced rapid suburban development, but was also served by competing railway companies, the South Eastern Railway (SER) and the London, Chatham and Dover Railway (LCDR). One suburb in this area, Beckenham, has been considered in further detail to explore the changing relationship between suburbia, commuting and commuters. This approach has enabled the wider themes of this chapter to be examined at a more granular level.

The final chapter brings the various themes of this thesis together and fits them back into the theoretical framework offered by the mobilities paradigm. It focuses on the opportunities for personal mobility presented by London's new suburban railway network as opposed to the railway infrastructure itself; the study of transport conceived as a verb rather than transport viewed as a noun. As the title suggests this thesis views the activity of commuting as an inter-relationship between trains, lanes and spatial planes. Each of the three elements - the railway companies providing the physical infrastructure, the commuters themselves, and their place of residence in the suburban communities - are the individual subjects of the previous chapters. In this final chapter their interaction is considered, so that a comprehensive explanatory narrative can be offered for the patterns of commuting observed in chapters three and four.

It was an evolutionary story that proceeded at the pace of the slowest of the inter-related components. In 1850 *The Times* wrote of the rapid adoption of long distance rail travel and that 'thirty years ago not one countryman in a hundred had seen the metropolis. There is scarcely one in the same number who has not spent the day there'³¹. In contrast it was a further fifty years until short-distance railway commuting

³¹ Quoted in S. Bradley, *The Railways, Nation, Network and People* (London: Profile Books, 2015).

had become as ubiquitous. For the fictional Mr & Mrs Pooter it was a novel experience to move to suburban Holloway, where ‘we were rather afraid of the noise of the trains at first, but the landlord said we should not notice them after a bit, and took £2 off the rent’³². This trepidation was shared by many Victorians. However, once overcome, railway commuting helped transform London by the Edwardian era, in Geddes’ words, into ‘a vast irregular growth without previous parallel in the world of life – perhaps likeliest to the spreadings of a great coral reef’³³.

³² G. & W. Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, p.15.

³³ P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution*, p.26.

Chapter Two – Railway Commuting - An Historiographical Perspective



Figure 2.1: Commuters Waiting at Lewisham Station c.1905.³⁴

‘Let no-one, unless he has stood on the bridge at Liverpool Street, say, at 9 o’clock in the morning or 6 o’clock in the evening, ever suppose he knows what suburban traffic really can be’³⁵

The quintessential image of railway commuting is one of the work day ‘rush-hour’; with a mass of passengers either arriving for work in the city or departing for their homes in the suburbs. The image (figure 2.1 above) of commuters waiting at Lewisham station encapsulates the key themes of this thesis; the concept of everyday mobility, the transport technology of the suburban railway network and inter-

³⁴ Photo courtesy of the Tony Riley collection. The style of dress indicates the passengers were waiting for a normal rather a workman’s train service.

³⁵ W. Acworth, *The Railways of England* (5th edition), (London: John Murray, 1900), p.460, accessed 20 April 2019, from <https://archive.org/details/cu31924022791572>.

relationship between the urban centre and the suburban periphery. It is an illustration that a history of railway commuting does not fit neatly into any one academic category. It sits between the disciplines of history and geography, as it explores a spatial activity within a chronological timeframe. This thesis aims to be cross-disciplinary in its approach and, further, it adopts both qualitative and quantitative approaches to the phenomenon of railway commuting. It draws upon research from the fields of mobility studies, transport history, suburban history as well as the wider history of London. It also includes research in the field of social history concerning the commuters themselves; predominantly male and middle class, as well as those excluded from commuting by class or gender. This inter-disciplinary approach extends to the domain of both sociologists and urban geographers as railway commuting influenced the spatial construction of the city and its suburbs. Literary criticism also falls within its purview as contemporary authors provided a human context to these social changes and there was a flowering of writing on suburban themes in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Finally the use of HGIS to map the residential patterns of commuters is not a neutral process and the epistemological implications of the utilisation of this digital technology are considered. The aim of this thesis is to marshal these different perspectives to bring a new insight into an important, but neglected aspect of railway history; that of railway commuting.

Everyday Mobility

The concept of mobility as a key explanatory narrative in the social sciences and humanities was brought to academic prominence by Sheller and Urry in their article '*The Mobilities Paradigm*'³⁶. They argued that social sciences had 'largely ignored or trivialised the importance of the systematic movement of people for work and family life, for leisure and pleasure and for politics and protest'³⁷. In their view mobility, in its widest sense of the movement of people, goods and ideas, offered a paradigmatic challenge to the static conception of society, which they saw as the contemporary

³⁶ M. Scheller and J. Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm".

³⁷ Ibid, p.208.

theoretical framework of the social sciences. They argued that mobility was central to human existence and fundamental to social and economic structures. The implication, as Cresswell commented, was that ‘the movements of people (and things) all over the world and at all scales are, after all, full of meaning. They are also products and producers of power’³⁸. The experience of mobility was seen as transformative both for individuals and society as a whole.

Their arguments have resonated with the wider academic community and research with a mobilities perspective has taken off across the social sciences; not least with the establishment of associations and conferences dedicated to mobility issues as well as a number of journals, notably; *Mobilities* (2006), *Transfers* (2011) and, specifically in the historical field *Mobility in History* (2011). Longer established academic journals have also embraced this approach to a greater or lesser extent. The incoming editor, Gijs Mom, of the venerable *Journal of Transport History* saw in 2006 ‘that our field is in turbulent flux, moving from ‘traditional history’ towards a ‘history of mobilities’³⁹. By 2012 its proponents felt able to claim that ‘mobility and mobilities appear to be everywhere, underpinning both past and present economic, social, cultural, political and environmental processes, but also peppering conference programs, publisher’s catalogues, and the papers of academic journals’⁴⁰.

Yet this ‘mobility turn’ has not been without its challengers and challenges. Mom, writing in 2015, lamented that, in fact, mobilities research had not been new or iconoclastic enough. He concluded that the field of mobility history ‘suffers from ... barely conversing sub-fields separated by transport mode, a myopic national orientation (whereas transport history was international and transnational from the onset) and an only half-heartedly taken cultural turn’⁴¹. In response to Mom’s article, Merriman noted that even in 2015 ‘this emergent body of research was and perhaps

³⁸ T. Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p.2.

³⁹ G. Mom, “Editorial” *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 27, Issue 1, (March 2006), p.iii.

⁴⁰ P. Merriman & R. Jones, “Ideas in Motion: Mobilities; Geographies, Histories, Sociologies”, *Transfers*, Volume 3, (Spring 2013), p.1.

⁴¹ G. Mom, “The Crisis in Transport History; A Critique and a Vista”, *Mobility in History: the Yearbook of the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility*, Volume 6, (2015), p.7.

still is quite contentious'⁴². Was it really new or did it fail 'to recognise the many traditions of research on communications, transport and mobility that clearly preceded (and arguably underpin) this new interdisciplinary field'⁴³. Shaw and Hesse offered a defence by citing the new research possibilities offered by mobilities studies in their survey of the academic literature. They saw it 'setting out to (dis)cover a range of topics behind and beyond 'traditional' transport geography (and history): it elucidates the framework conditions underpinning the generation of movement, the experience of movement and the implications thereof, and the wider impact of movement across a whole range of socio-cultural, economic and political milieux'⁴⁴.

This thesis has a natural fit within this theoretical framework and that of the wider mandate for transport history set out in the 2017 editorial of the *Journal of Transport History*. Moraglio, the incoming editor, urged that 'we should make a history of movement of people and things. We must leave our comfort zone, and adventure in a new research landscape... We must offer our knowledge to other disciplines... who define mobility based on a largely de-historicized knowledge'⁴⁵. The focus of this thesis is on the activity of commuting. It gives prominence to this act of everyday mobility rather than the suburban built environment. It argues that commuters were more than passive participants in the wider story of the growth of London's suburbs and their aspirations and desires helped shape the actions of those other agents, traditionally viewed as the architects of suburban development: the landowners, property developers, and the railway companies themselves. Historical attention has often concentrated on long distance and permanent mobility, in form of migration, emigration and immigration. However, this thesis concurs with Pooley's contention

⁴² P. Merriman, "Mobilities, crises and turns; some comments on dissensus, comparative studies and spatial histories", *Mobility in History: the Yearbook of the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility*, Volume 6, (2015), p.20.

⁴³ Ibid, p.21.

⁴⁴ J. Shaw and M. Hesse, "Transport, Geography and the 'New' Mobilities", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Volume 35, Issue 3 (July 2010), p.306.

⁴⁵ M. Moraglio, "Seeking a (New) Ontology for Transport History", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 38, Issue 1 (2017), p.7.

that ‘the small journeys that are undertaken everyday are also essential to the construction and facilitation of daily social, economic and cultural life’⁴⁶.

Any inter-disciplinary approach to research has to contend with the different traditions of each academic field. As Pooley noted ‘historical studies ... tend to be quite firmly located within the humanities with a strong emphasis on empirical research and engagement with theory from cultural and literary studies. In contrast mobilities research comes from a social science tradition with a strong emphasis on social (rather than literary theory) and, in some instances, weaker empirical research’⁴⁷. Social scientists have also tended to see mobility as a relatively new phenomenon and downplayed its links with the past. Indeed Haefeli et al concluded in their survey of the current state of research in 2015 that ‘studies on mobilities history covering the time before 1945 are very scarce’⁴⁸. Despite this lack of academic interest, Pooley has argued that the ‘new mobilities paradigm is as applicable to past mobilities as to present’⁴⁹ and for a greater willingness to embrace both sides of this divide in future research. This thesis attempts to achieve this through its employment of quantitative data on commuting patterns and alongside the examination of qualitative sources including contemporary writings in its explanatory chapters. These cover different aspects of railway commuting - from the transport technologies responsible for facilitating commuting, the experience of commuting itself and the suburban residential environment of the commuter.

The Journey to Work

Transport history has traditionally focused on the role of the transport providers or the infrastructure itself, rather than the users of the transport system. By considering

⁴⁶ C. Pooley, *Mobility, Migration and Transport: Historical Perspectives*, p.3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.10.

⁴⁸ U. Haefeli, H. Schiedt, M. Sieber and B. Spielmann, “Comprehensive Mobility Studies – a theoretical framework for historical analysis”, *Submission to T2M/Cosmobilities Caserta* (2015), accessed 30 October 2020, via https://www.academia.edu/17043590/Comprehensive_Mobility_studies_a_theoretical_framework_for_historical_analysis, p.3.

⁴⁹ C. Pooley, *Mobility, Migration and Transport: Historical Perspectives*, p.68.

railway commuting as a topic in its own right, this thesis is covering new ground. Pooley acknowledged that there was a ‘small body of work that has examined everyday mobility from a historical perspective’⁵⁰. Some studies of the separation between home and workplace in 19th century Britain have been undertaken, although all pre-date the digital age. The most recent and relevant are the 1988 study by Green⁵¹ of the changing commute to work of tailors at one London firm and the 1991 research by Barke⁵² into the shifting residential patterns of middle-class occupational groups in Newcastle, though they build on previous work on other British towns by Vance⁵³ and Dennis⁵⁴. Barke traced the patterns of commuting of three broad groups of middle-class occupations - professionals, retail shop owners and workshop owners - through the use of trade directories (where, unusually, both the work and home addresses were recorded). It showed that Newcastle largely remained a ‘walking city’ until the end of the Victorian period, when the arrival of the suburban railway and the tram system, began to lengthen the journey to work. Newcastle was, of course, a much smaller city than London and so the timing and nature of the impact of transport developments was clearly likely to be earlier and different in the capital.

It is the intention of this thesis to replicate Barke’s approach in focusing on different occupational groups for Victorian and Edwardian London, albeit using different types of data sources and a different methodological approach. It will complement and expand Green’s study of the London tailor, Henry Poole. His study observed a doubling of the average distance to work in the period from 1857 to 1893 for the artisan workers at this London tailor. He noted that this involved ‘the break-up of a localised catchment area within walking distance to work and its replacement by a much more dispersed, almost city-wide journey to work pattern’⁵⁵. It was, however,

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.32.

⁵¹ D. Green, “Distance to work in Victorian London: a case study of Henry Poole, bespoke tailors”.

⁵² M. Barke, “The Middle Class Journey to Work in Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1850-1913”, *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 12, No.2, (September 1991), pp.107-134.

⁵³ J. Vance, “Housing the worker: determinative and contingent ties in nineteenth century Birmingham”, *Economic Geography*, Volume 43, (1967), pp. 95-127 and J. Vance, “Housing the worker: the employment linkage as a force in urban structure”, *Economic Geography*, Volume 42, (1966), pp. 294-325.

⁵⁴ R. Dennis, *English Industrial Cities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁵⁵ D. Green, “Distance to work in Victorian London: a case study of Henry Poole, bespoke tailors”, p.192.

a study of only one firm with a relatively small number of employees, c.90, who were all skilled manual workers and he commented that ‘it would be unwise to claim that the experiences of workers at a single firm were fully representative of the wider workforce at large yet it would be equally foolish to ignore those experiences as something peculiar to that firm alone’⁵⁶. Green generated the data for his case study by manually plotting the changing residential locations of the firm’s workforce. As this was a painstaking task before the advent of HGIS, Green’s study was a rare investigation into the patterns of commuting. He highlighted the value of this type of research and how ‘far from leading up a blind alley, such studies can add flesh to the bones of mere suggestion’⁵⁷. This position still remains the case and this thesis looks partly to address this gap.

Further insight into potential approaches to researching the nineteenth century journey to work in Britain can be gained from similar studies of commuting in the twentieth century. Pooley has written extensively on the subject of everyday mobility. One major piece of research on changes to the journey to work in the twentieth century came from his leadership of a large-scale oral and family history project. In this study life history data was collected on people who began work in each decade from 1890s to 1980s, with details of 12,439 journeys to work taken from 1,834 individual life histories⁵⁸. Analysis of the data by Pooley et al highlighted three findings of direct relevance to this thesis: that changes in the amount of time spent commuting were relatively small, implying journeys to work were governed as much by time as by distance; men were more mobile than women and that London commuting journeys were significantly different in terms of both time and distance to those elsewhere in the country. This data will form a point of comparison for the quantitative research in chapters three and four of this thesis and will illustrate how different the results for

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.191.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.192.

⁵⁸ C. Pooley, J. Turnbull & M. Adams, *A Mobile Century, Changes in Everyday Mobility in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2016), Kindle edition p.115 and also C. Pooley & J. Turnbull, “The Journey to Work: a Century of Change”, *Area*, Volume 31, No.3, (September 1999), pp. 281-292.

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries appeared in relation to the period covered by Pooley and colleagues' data.

Official surveys on the journey to work in the metropolitan area were sparse and generally subordinate to other purposes. The 1905 Royal Commission into London Traffic was the first to collect statistical information on a systematic basis relating to commuting activity in London, though it was part of a wider investigation into congestion in London's central districts. The 1921 Census was the first to include a question on commuting, though this has only been published to date at the aggregate level of administration units in London and the Home Counties rather than that of the individual. The 1928-31 New Survey of London Life and Labour was conducted by a noted statistician, Arthur Lyon Bowley, along the same lines as the earlier and more famous survey by Charles Booth. It collected data on transport costs for a sample of individuals across all of London's boroughs. Yet academic research based directly on the data on journeys to work contained in all three surveys is almost non-existent. The only specific study was Liepmann's 1944 survey⁵⁹ of commuting motivation and patterns around London in the inter-war period. This lack of study provides an opportunity for this thesis to make an original contribution through its examination and utilisation of these sources (primarily the 1905 Royal Commission and the 1921 Census).

The unique characteristics of London, as the first 'world city' in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, make comparisons with the literature on the journey to work in other international cities difficult. A further problem was identified in a recent overview, edited by Divall and Bond⁶⁰, of the state of historical research into the wider field of public transport and suburbanisation in the nineteenth century Europe and America. This highlighted that historians 'usually deal with only one country, and, often, one

⁵⁹ K. Liepmann, *The Journey to Work; its Significance for Industrial and Community Life* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner & Co, 1944), accessed 20 April 2019, from <https://archive.org/details/journeytoworkits0000liep>.

⁶⁰ C. Divall and W. Bond, eds., *Suburbanizing the Masses, Public Transport and Urban Development in Historical Perspective* 2003 (Reprint London: Routledge, 2018).

city'⁶¹. As there is not an extensive historiography of international comparative studies, this thesis has not considered the academic literature on European and American commuting in detail. An exception is the Lafreneire and Gilliard study of the journey to work of c.5000 workers in London, Ontario in 1881⁶², which has direct relevance due to its similar use of HGIS techniques. This research combined city directories and census records with a GIS network-derived journey to work model for almost all of the city's workforce. It aimed to re-create the most probable route taken to work based on street layout and so capture more accurate journey to work measurements than a simple 'as the crow flies' calculation. London, Ontario was, of course, a much smaller urban centre than London, England. Nonetheless the study highlighted some of the methodological challenges for the quantitative analysis of commuting patterns and the caveats that need to be made in interpreting the results. These are considered in more detail in the review of the selected occupational groups in chapters three and four.

Railways and Railway Companies

This thesis seeks not only to approach the subject of railway commuting from a data mapping perspective, but also to consider the social and economic processes responsible for the commuting patterns revealed by the quantitative research. As the providers of the transport infrastructure the railway companies and their behaviour will be central to any explanatory narrative. The literature on railways is, of course, vast with multiple histories at local, national and international level and a comprehensive survey is far beyond the scope of this review. Instead this section will concentrate on three main themes: changing historiographical approaches to railway history, histories of the social and economic impact of the railway in Britain and histories of London's suburban railway system.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.8.

⁶² D. Lafreneire & J. Gilliard, "Revisiting the Walking City, A Geospatial Examination of the Journey to Work" in eds., C. Travis, F. Ludow, F. Gyuris, *Historical Geography, GIScience and Textual Analysis* (New York: Springer International, 2020), pp.85-110.

The *Journal of Transport History* was founded in 1953 with a remit to be ‘specifically devoted to the history of transport as a whole, without limitation of period or place’⁶³. It has acted as a barometer of the changing focus and fashion of academic history on transport and railway history, not least as its longevity has led to retrospective assessments in both 1993 and 2003. In the fortieth anniversary edition, the founding editors felt vindicated that the journal had provided a ‘useful stimulus to work in areas then virtually unexplored’⁶⁴. They noted the range of scholarly articles across the field of transport history and lamented that ‘our hope and intention that *transport as a whole* should be studied has not so far been fulfilled’⁶⁵. In the fiftieth anniversary edition, the deputy editor, Mom explored whether any further progress had been made towards this goal and traced the journal’s evolution from its foundation. He noted that the journal had gradually moved its emphasis: from a focus on the trio of transport modes of road, railways and shipping to encompass a much broader range of transport types; from the British or European arena to more international studies; and from articles on transport infrastructure and economics to incorporate social and cultural analysis. He concluded that the journal still remained conservative in its outlook; ‘an overwhelming Anglocentric enterprise... dedicated mostly to railway and shipping’⁶⁶, and ‘new approaches, developed elsewhere, entered its columns on an incidental basis’⁶⁷. A similar verdict could be reached on the historiography of railway studies more generally. From a heyday spanning the 1950s to 1970s, histories of the railway have struggled to keep pace with other approaches to the writing of history. The shift in research from the production of railway infrastructure to its consumption by its users has been a slow one.

This challenge has been taken up more recently with a call to place railway history within its cultural setting. Freeman wrote that ‘it must be one of the tasks of future

⁶³ J. Simmons & M. Robbins, “Forty Years On; A Message from the Founding Editors”, *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 14, Issue 2, (September 1993), p.iv.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.vi.

⁶⁶ G. Mom, “What kind of transport history did we get? Half a century of the JTH and the future of the field”, *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 24, Issue 2, (September 2003), p.133.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

writing on railway history to recover not only material features of the railway age but the way it was apprehended by a society with very different sympathies and outlooks from our own'⁶⁸. Freeman took up this challenge himself in his account of the transformative impact of the railway on Victorian society and culture⁶⁹. In his view 'the railway was deeply embedded in the evolving structures of Victorian society. ... It was enmeshed in the spirit of the age, an undiminishing zest for bigger and better, for an all-pervasive machine technology and, in concert, a perpetual fascination with a sense of becoming, of living in an age of transition, in anxious and sometimes fearful contemplation of what the future held'⁷⁰. Freeman believed 'the time is therefore long overdue for a new portrait of the railway at a critical turning-point in the history of society'⁷¹.

Yet how railway history (and transport history in general) should be re-assessed as cultural history has been the subject of debate. Divall and Revill have argued that 'we need a conception of culture that does more than merely consider (although this is no easy matter) how and why transport technologies are represented in the arts and the popular imagination'⁷². Instead, they suggest, transport history should be approached from an inter-disciplinary perspective with the aim of 'understanding the contradictions and dilemmas of contemporary societies as these relate to the social inequalities and ecological costs of ever-increasing levels of mobility'⁷³. An acerbic exchange of views with Freeman⁷⁴ followed in the *Journal of Transport History* without any conclusion on the application of the 'cultural turn' to transport history. It did, however, point the way to the assessment of the wider impact of the railway and

⁶⁸ M. Freeman. "The Railway as Cultural Metaphor; what kind of transport history revisited?", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 20, Issue 2, (September 1999), p.165.

⁶⁹ M. Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.19.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.19.

⁷² C. Divall & G. Revill, "Cultures of transport, representation, practice and technology", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 26, Issue 1, (March 2005), p.109.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

⁷⁴ M. Freeman, "Turn if you want to, a comment on the 'cultural turn' in Divall and Revill's Cultures of Transport", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 27, Issue 1, (March 2006), pp.138-143 and C. Divall & G. Revill, "No turn required; a reply to Michael Freeman", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 27, Issue 1, (March 2006), pp.144-149.

has led to new railway histories, best exemplified by Revill's *Railway*⁷⁵ and Bradley's *The Railways: Nation, Network and People*⁷⁶. In the former book, the author examined the relationship between railways and modernity and argued 'that railways articulate a set of dilemmas and contradictions central to its [modernity's] construction'⁷⁷. In the latter, Bradley explored the physical experience of railway travel and how it had transformed lives and landscapes across Britain. This thesis covers similar themes; of how the modern commute by locomotive power rather than by foot evolved and how it was experienced.

Approaches to railway history have changed in recent decades, but any assessment of the social, economic and cultural impact of the railway must still refer back to the historical works from the 'Golden Age of Transport History' from 1950s to 1970s. In Britain, the pre-eminent railway historians were John Kellett and Jack Simmons. The former's *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*⁷⁸ and the latter's two volume work on the Victorian railway⁷⁹ were wide-ranging surveys of all aspects of the impact of the railway across Britain. Their research covered the many-faceted influence of the railway in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, but they were forced to conclude that quantifying this was an elusive task. As Simmons commented, 'if we ask the question 'what precisely was the contribution of the railways to the development of _____?' we must acknowledge it is unanswerable in a finally satisfactory form'⁸⁰. This thesis takes note of Simmons' caveat of over-attributing social and economic change to the coming of the railway. Nevertheless, it had an obvious impact in urban areas, where, in Kellett's words, it was 'the influence of the railways, more than any other single agency,... which influenced the topography and character of its central and inner districts, the disposition of its dilapidated and waste area, and of its suburbs, the direction and character of its growth; and which probably acted as the most potent

⁷⁵ G. Revill, *Railway* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

⁷⁶ S. Bradley, *The Railways: Nations, Networks and People* (London: Profile Books, 2015).

⁷⁷ G. Revill, *Railway*, p.14.

⁷⁸ J. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

⁷⁹ J. Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales, 1830-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978) and *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830-1914*.

⁸⁰ J. Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country*, p.17.

new factor upon the urban land market in the nineteenth century⁸¹. Railway companies built impressive terminals in all the major towns and cities, acquired thousands of acres to house rolling-stock and supporting infrastructure and undertook major demolition and construction works to make way for the new railway lines. Both Kellett and Simmons included case studies on the impact of the railway in London in their wider histories and this thesis refers to and builds upon this work.

In the case of London, there are numerous histories of various aspects of its transport system. Many of these fall into the category of works by and for transport enthusiasts. Wider histories on the social and economic impact of transport are more uncommon with the most comprehensive for the nineteenth century still being Barker and Robbins' study⁸², written in 1963. Some have concentrated on the rich pictorial history of London's transport systems⁸³ and utilised the resources of the London Transport Museum. This thesis has followed their lead in mining the Museum's archives. Despite the multitude of histories of the Victorian railway companies, no book covers London's suburban railway system in its entirety. The closest to date have been Jackson's *London's Local Railways*⁸⁴ and *London Termini*⁸⁵, which covered respectively London's branch lines and the evolution of London's major termini, including their suburban services. The former account only included the suburban services operated on the local lines and excluded those that ran over the main trunk lines. Its primary focus was a chronological account of each of London's lines used for local passenger traffic, with a topographical rather than thematic arrangement of chapters. The wider impact of these railways received less attention, although, in the author's words 'an attempt has been made to sketch the social backcloth by showing how each line affected its catchment area'⁸⁶. The histories of the great regional railway

⁸¹ J. R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, p.xv.

⁸² T. Barker & M. Robbins, *A History of London Transport; passenger transport and the development of the Metropolis. Volume 1, the nineteenth century* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963).

⁸³ T. Barker, *Moving Millions: A Pictorial History of London Transport* (London: London Transport Museum, 1990) and S. Taylor, ed., *The Moving Metropolis: A History of London's Transport since 1800* (London: Laurence King, 2001).

⁸⁴ A. Jackson, *London's Local Railways* (second edition) (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1999).

⁸⁵ A. Jackson, *London's Termini* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1969).

⁸⁶ A. Jackson, *London's Local Railways*, p.5.

companies, such as the GWR⁸⁷ or the LNWR⁸⁸, have included an account of their suburban networks, but their focus has been on the wider picture of the companies' activities.

The history of London's suburban railway network has been written in a piecemeal fashion and often as a by-product of other broader narratives. In part, this gap has been filled by journal articles on the operation of specific parts of the railway network and particular areas of operational practice. The former include Simmons' analysis of the working of the GNR's suburban service at King's Cross⁸⁹ and Bagwell's account of the rivalry between the two companies serving Kent and South East London⁹⁰. The latter covers the introduction of workmen's trains and fares aimed at facilitating working-class railway travel. Dyos⁹¹ and Abernathy⁹² have explored how effective these measures were in achieving this aim, but they did not expand their analysis to a consideration of wider commuting activity. This thesis covers new ground within the crowded field of railway history by placing the operation of the whole of London's suburban railway network at the centre of its research.

Suburban Development and the Role of the Railways

Giving a central position to the role of railways sits at odds with the prevailing consensus amongst urban historians on the relationship between suburban growth and transport developments. This was summed up by Thompson when he argued that 'the largest English towns ... were suburbanized and socially segregated, half a century or so before the arrival of cheap mass transit, which were not developed effectively in an English setting until the 1890s ... the omnibus and suburban train should be

⁸⁷ C. Maggs, *A History of the Great Western Railway* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2013).

⁸⁸ M. Reed, *The London and North Western Railway* (Truro: Atlantic Transport Publishing, 1996).

⁸⁹ J. Simmons, "Suburban Traffic at King's Cross, 1852 -1914", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 6, Issue 1, (March 1985), pp.71-78.

⁹⁰ P. Bagwell, "The Rivalry and Working Union of South Eastern and London, Chatham & Dover", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 2, Issue 2 (November 1955), pp.65-79.

⁹¹ H. Dyos, "Workmen's Fares in South London, 1860-1914", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 1, Issue 1 (May 1953), pp.3-19.

⁹² S. Abernathy, "Opening up the Suburbs: workmen's trains in London, 1860-1914", *Urban History*, Volume 42(1), (February 2014), pp.70-88.

regarded as permitting, rather than creating the suburb'⁹³. In answer to the question as to whether the coming of the railways was the cause or the result of the development of the outer London suburbs, Barson wrote that 'the conclusion from numerous studies of particular areas is that no simple cause-and-effect can be proved; suburbs existed for many years with a poor transport service and the building of a station did not always attract development'⁹⁴. Certainly work on individual London suburbs has created a more nuanced picture, showing that London's suburbs were not homogenous and the relationship between the railway and suburban development varied. In his study of the West London suburbs of Chiswick and Acton, Jahn⁹⁵ contrasted the general indifference of the GWR to their growth with a more proactive stance adopted by the Metropolitan District Railway. Rawcliffe, in his study of Bromley⁹⁶ highlighted the importance of the reaction of other actors, notably landowners and property developers, to the arrival of the railway to facilitate suburban development.

London's suburban development pre-dated the arrival of the railways and in the inner suburbs its impact was difficult to clearly distinguish from that of other transport improvements. It has been argued they played a much greater part in the growth of the outer suburbs. Railway commuting became a practical reality in the 1860s and experienced continuous growth up to the First World War. Given the inherent logistical limitations of horse-drawn transport, Thorns asserted that they were 'almost completely the creation of the improved system of railway transportation'⁹⁷. Briggs argued further that 'the building of local and suburban railway lines helped to determine the main lines of suburban growth'⁹⁸. Barker and Robbins also attributed this growth to a self-reinforcing cycle of suburban growth and improved transport services. In their view it was led by the middle classes, who were enjoying rising

⁹³ F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.6.

⁹⁴ S. Barson, "Infinite Variety in Brick and Stucco: 1840-1914", in *London Suburbs*, ed. A. Sant (London: Merrell Holberton, 1999), p.74.

⁹⁵ M. Jahn, "Suburban development in outer west London, 1850-1900", in *The Rise of Suburbia*, ed., F. Thompson (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982).

⁹⁶ J. Rawcliffe, "Kentish market town to London suburb, 1841-81" in *The Rise of Suburbia*, ed., F. Thompson (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982).

⁹⁷ D. Thorns, *Suburbia (Sociology and the Modern World)*, (London: Harper Collins, 1972), p.38.

⁹⁸ A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, (London: Oldham Press, 1963), p.80.

prosperity in the latter part of the nineteenth century. They ‘were seeking homes farther and farther away from their place of work, and as their numbers grew, so their craving for suburbia brought into existence more and better transport facilities’⁹⁹. Two contrasting schools of historical thought have, therefore, emerged on the evolution of ‘railway’ suburbs. On one hand urban and suburban historians have downplayed the impact of the railway and followed Thompson’s lead that ‘railway companies did little or nothing to encourage such [suburban] growth’¹⁰⁰. On the other transport and cultural historians have generally heeded Simmons’ comment that ‘there is also a danger of the opposite kind, of overlooking how much railways did, in the anxiety to show that they might have done still more, and that others contributed too’¹⁰¹. This thesis looks to make a contribution to this longstanding debate on the relative importance of the railway to suburban development.

There has been a further inconclusive discussion on the timing of the impact of the railways and its creation of socially segregated residential areas in nineteenth century British cities. This drew on the work by sociologists and urban geographers on the development of twentieth century urban centres. They developed socio-economic models to understand the motive forces behind the growth of cities and surrounding suburbs. Central to all of these theories is the idea that the ‘city lies at the centre of, and provides the organisational logic for, a complex regional hinterland’¹⁰²: suburbs only exist because they service the city centre. One of the most iconic and enduring models has been the ‘concentric zones’ map outlined by the Chicago School sociologists Burgess and Park in the 1920s¹⁰³ (see figure 2.2).

⁹⁹ T. Barker & M. Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, p.198.

¹⁰⁰ F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.19.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.21.

¹⁰² M. Dear, “Los Angeles and the Chicago School: Invitation to a Debate”, *City and Community*, Volume 1, (2002), p. 16.

¹⁰³ R. Park, E. Burgess and R. Mackenzie, *The City: Suggestions of Investigation of Human Behaviour in the Urban Environment*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925).

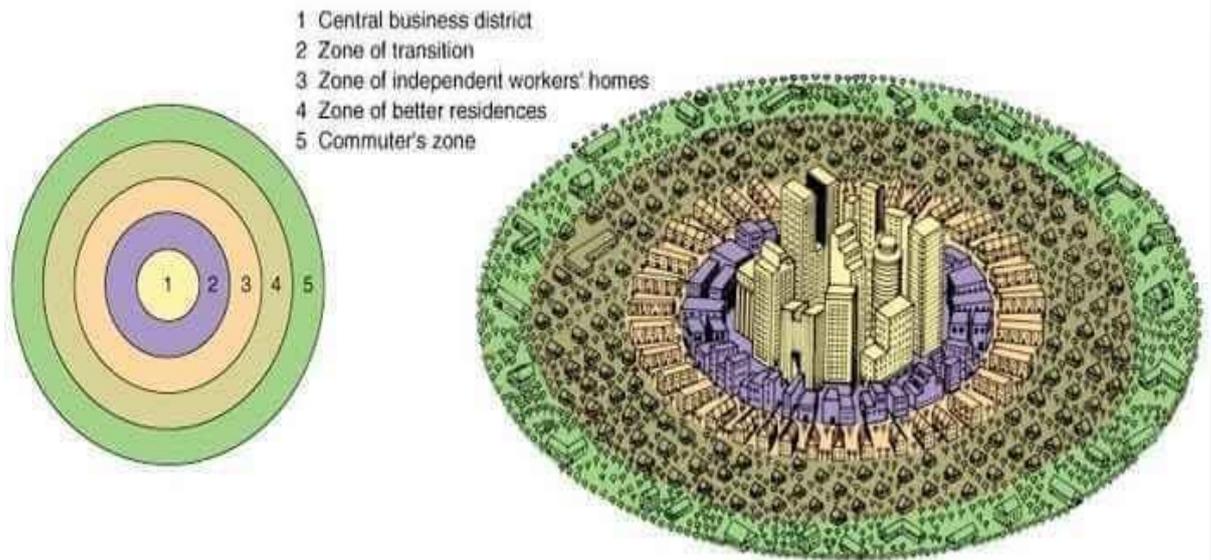


Figure 2.2: Burgess – Park concentric zone model.¹⁰⁴

It suggested that cities have identifiable zones of occupation extending outward from a central business district. This central area benefited from being the focus of transport links and scale economies, which acted as a mechanism for the agglomeration of commercial enterprises. Over time their presence drove up land prices and priced out residential space. Segregated residential areas then formed with the working class forced to live in less salubrious areas closer to their place of work. Later urban theorists noted the tendency for cities to grow in star-shaped rather than a concentric configuration due to the advantages conferred by proximity to efficient transport links. This observation gave rise to a sector theory of urban structure, an idea advanced by Hoyt in the 1930s¹⁰⁵. Harris and Ullman introduced greater real world complexity of historical and international influences in their multiple nuclei theory¹⁰⁶. Underlying these models is the critical assumption that there are inequalities in commuting opportunities. The poorer sections of society cannot afford to live as far out from the centre of city as more affluent groups. In Redding and Rossi-Hansberg's recent overview of these theoretical models, they commented that, 'in the canonical

¹⁰⁴ Image accessed 5 April 2019, from <https://planningtank.com/settlement-geography/concentric-zone-model-burgess-model>.

¹⁰⁵ H. Hoyt, *The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighbourhoods in American Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939).

¹⁰⁶ C. Harris and E. Ullman, "The Nature of Cities", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Volume 242 Building the Future City (November 1945), pp 7-17.

monocentric city ... commuting costs play the key role in determining the land price gradient with respect to distance from the center of the city'¹⁰⁷. For historians of the nineteenth century, the point of contention was when or indeed whether these models were applicable explanatory tools for the growth of Victorian cities and towns.

In his essay, *Victorian Cities, How Modern?*¹⁰⁸, Ward argued that many features of early and mid-nineteenth century cities had survived from pre-industrial times, including limited segregation of residential areas. He suggested that 'the retrospective application of many of the generalizations and methods of the contemporary social studies to ... nineteenth century cities should be undertaken with more caution than has sometimes been the case'¹⁰⁹. Cities continued to follow the pattern of Sjoberg's¹¹⁰ pre-industrial model with the rich at the centre for much of the nineteenth century. There were exclusive suburbs in the early and mid-Victorian periods in the major cities; Edgbaston in Birmingham, Victoria Park in Manchester and Kensington and Mayfair in London. In Ward's view, it was the invention of mass transportation systems in the latter half of the century that finally enabled residential segregation to be achieved on a significant scale. Cannadine disputed this in his essay, *Victorian cities: how different?*¹¹¹, written in response to Ward's article. He claimed that London and other major cities had achieved a high degree of social segregation in its residential areas by the middle of the nineteenth century. He cited 'the rise of 'the language of class', the practice of equating working-class areas with 'darkest Africa', and the fear of the unknown and irreligious masses who inhabited these regions'¹¹² as bearing witness to a segregated society. He concluded that 'the pattern of segregation *did* approximate towards that later found in early twentieth-century Chicago ... as a result, the analytical tools evolved in other disciplines to analyse the 'modern' city

¹⁰⁷ S. Redding and E. Rossi-Hansberg, "Quantitative Spatial Economics", *Annual Review of Economics*, Volume 9 (August 2017), p.30.

¹⁰⁸ D. Ward, "Victorian Cities, how modern?" *Journal of Historical Geography*, Volume 1, Issue 2 (April 1975), pp.135-151.

¹⁰⁹ D. Ward, quoted in D. Cannadine, "Victorian cities, how different?" in *The Victorian City: A Reader in British Urban History, 1820-1914*, eds., R. Morris and R. Rodger, (London: Longman, 1993), p.117.

¹¹⁰ G. Sjoberg, *The Pre-Industrial City, Past and Present* (Glencoe: Illinois: The Free Press, 1960).

¹¹¹ D. Cannadine, "Victorian cities, how different?"

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.119.

can have useful and retrospective application'¹¹³. In Cannadine's view residential segregation pre-dated transport improvements and he saw the period 1820-1870 as 'the golden age of exclusive, middle-class suburbia'¹¹⁴. In his view, the arrival of the railway and the tram 'did not so much *liberate* the middle classes from the town centre as *threaten* their exclusiveness on the periphery'¹¹⁵, as the lower middle class and labour aristocracy were also able to live at a distance from their place of work. The middle classes had to retreat and find new locations of exclusivity and 'what had been for over half a century segregated, secure suburban havens became transit camps with transient campers'¹¹⁶.

As Pooley highlighted, this debate about the level and timing of residential segregation in Victorian urban society was significant on a number of levels. He identified three key areas; first, for the individual, secondly, for those actors responsible for shaping the urban environment and 'thirdly, for Victorian urban society as a whole where differentiation had implications for such factors as the structure of social organization and the development of class-consciousness'¹¹⁷. This thesis looks to make a contribution to this debate through its chronological tracking of the residential addresses of certain professional and trade groups around London. Its results provide a quantitative assessment, albeit a partial one, of the nature and timing of middle class suburban formation and the differential distribution of different employment groups. In addition, this thesis looks at the gatekeeper role played by the railway companies in creating and maintaining segregated communities through their fare structures and scheduling of the railway timetable. It aims to evaluate the impact made by railway commuting and commuters on the social stratification of the suburbs.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p.126.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.126.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.126.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.127.

¹¹⁷ C. Pooley, "Residential Differentiation in Victorian Cities: A Reassessment", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Volume 9, No. 2, (1984), p.135.

Suburban Aspiration or Fear of the Masses?

Another aspect of this thesis' research is to explore why workers in central London came to live in the suburbs and journey to work by the railway. In Thompson's view this is a difficult, if not impossible task 'since the new suburban dwellers left no body of records of their life styles, their cultural outlook, or their motives for moving'¹¹⁸. Despite these evidential difficulties, historians have put forward a number of explanatory hypotheses to the suburban phenomenon. Some have favoured negative social and cultural factors as the primary drivers in the formation of suburbs. The new suburban residents, who had left the city centre were, in Thompson's words 'escaping from increasing dirt, noise, stench, and disease, dissatisfied with the social confusion of mixed residential areas'¹¹⁹. Stedman Jones¹²⁰ saw the creation of large, anonymous working-class districts, such as the East End, as a source of increasing apprehension to the wealthier sections of society. In his view 'the presence of an unknown number of the casual poor, indistinguishable to many contemporaries from criminals, apparently divorced from all forms of established religion, or ties with their social superiors, inhabiting unknown cities within the capital, constituted a disquieting alien presence in the midst of mid-Victorian plenty'¹²¹.

More positively, suburbanites were influenced by the fashionable and aristocratic example of 'rus in urbe' as exemplified by the high profile developments by Nash and Cabot. Thompson surmised that 'suburban growth and the suburban life was set in successful motion by the more imitative and self-effacing sections of the middle class in pursuit of the illusion of bringing the country and gentrification into the urban setting'¹²². The Victorian suburbs were to become synonymous with the middle class values of respectability and privacy. They were bourgeois spaces in which the middle class home was seen as providing a bedrock of morality in an unstable world. They

¹¹⁸ F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.15.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p.16.

¹²⁰ G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (4th edition) (London: Verso, 2013) Kindle edition.

¹²¹ Ibid, location 911 out 8558 on Kindle edition.

¹²² F. Thompson ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.16.

developed into distinctive communities bound by cultural, commercial and religious ties. More recent historical approaches, particularly in the field of gender studies, have added another dimension to this picture. Davidoff and Hall's study of the middle class¹²³ highlighted that men and women operated in separate spheres, with a distinction between the male public space of the workplace and the female private space of home. Commuting was a facilitator of the development of these different gendered roles. The daily physical remove of the predominantly male workforce allowed increasing emphasis to be placed on the privacy and respectability of the family by the middle classes. The middle-class suburb with its detached and semi-detached houses guarded by hedges and gardens became the ideal environment for this lifestyle. As Thompson commented Davidoff and Hall's analysis was an attractive explanation that 'grounds a new form of middle-class housing demand firmly in a set of ideas and ideals whose own origins have roots in changes in the economy and developments in religion'¹²⁴. Olsen put forward this argument in stronger terms. In his words 'cities help to reveal, the 'zeitgeist of any period'¹²⁵ and in the case of Victorian cities, this was the growth of suburbia. He saw the process as a 'flight to the suburbs, which involved the temporary rejection of the rest of society, of that part that extended beyond the immediate family of the householder: the most satisfactory suburb was that which gave him the maximum of privacy and the minimum of outside distraction'¹²⁶.

Other historians have approached the appeal of suburbia from an economic perspective. When households made the decision of where to live, they traded-off the cost in time and money of travelling a greater distance against the benefit of lower suburban land values and cheaper homes. In economic terminology, the land price gradient reflects these choices, with the cost of land falling with increasing distance from the city centre. As Ball and Sutherland commented, 'the better-off ... end up,

¹²³ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, revised edition (Oxford: Routledge, 2002).

¹²⁴ F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.13.

¹²⁵ D. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1976).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p.211.

seemingly paradoxically, living on the cheapest land – at the urban fringe'¹²⁷. Dyos and Reeder in their essay, *Slums and Suburbs*¹²⁸ explored the social implications of this economic relationship. They saw the suburbs as middle-class enclaves, inoculated against the hazards of the city, but also able to take economic advantage of this position through property ownership of slum areas. In Dyos and Reeder's analysis, the suburban boom provided numerous business and investment opportunities, yet also allowed the dream of a semi-rural idyll to be created in the most cost effective way. They concluded that 'the middle class suburb was an ecological marvel. It gave access to the cheapest land in the city to those having the most security of employment and leisure to afford the time and money travelling up and down; it offered an arena for manipulation of social distinctions ...; it kept the threat of rapid social change beyond the horizon'¹²⁹.

In the absence of direct evidence of the motivations of suburban residents, many studies of suburban areas have focused on their physical evolution. As Thompson described it in his history of Hampstead¹³⁰, the purpose of this type of local study was to understand 'how was urbanisation, as a physical process, carried out: what determined the timing of the development; and why did the social segregation or class zoning so widely noted as a feature of nineteenth century urban growth, emerge where and when it did'¹³¹. The dynamics of the process were clearly articulated in Dyos' pioneering analysis of the development of the inner London suburb of Camberwell¹³², which has formed the template for this approach. He traced its rise and decline as a sought-after residential location. He described how newer, lower quality, properties and the sub-division of older, larger, properties enabled poorer residents to move in, which, in turn, forced the original wealthier inhabitants out. The primary focus of this

¹²⁷ M. Ball and D. Sutherland, *An Economic History of London 1800 -1914* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.177.

¹²⁸ H. Dyos and D. Reeder, "Slums and Suburbs", in H. Dyos and M. Wolff, eds., *The Victorian City, Images and Realities (Volume II)* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp.359-386.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p.369.

¹³⁰ F. Thompson, *Hampstead, Building a Borough, 1650-1964* (London: Routledge, 1974).

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p.3.

¹³² H. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: A Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (4th edition) (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977).

thesis is different from these studies. It covers the development of the suburbs rather than their decline as they were engulfed by working-class migration. It is focused on the outer suburbs of London, the area most influenced by the arrival of the railway. It considers the extent to which the evolutionary forces that shaped the development of London's inner suburbs were visible to the same extent at a greater distance from the capital.

There has been less scholarly attention solely on the outer suburbs outside of PhD theses. These are still limited, but include studies of Sutton¹³³ and Bromley¹³⁴ as well as the aforementioned works by Jahn and Rawcliffe. In addition there have been numerous local histories and the growth of the suburbs form part of general histories of London; notably by Barratt¹³⁵, White¹³⁶ and Jackson¹³⁷. This thesis aims to contribute to this body of research, by examining how commuting and commuters defined these suburban populations. Further, it explores the impact on suburban development of the service parameters set by the railway companies in the form of fares levels and the scheduled timetable. It looks to argue that the ease of access to the capital in terms of both time and money was key to shaping the growth of the outer suburbs.

It has to be acknowledged that suburban history, like railway history, is already a crowded field. In their survey of the scope of scholarly literature in 2007, McManus and Ethington attempted to identify gaps in its coverage. They commented that 'to date, the main lines of inquiry have been dedicated to the origins, growth, diverse typologies, culture and politics of the suburbs, as well as the gendered nature of suburban space'¹³⁸. They noted that the 'vast majority of these studies have been about

¹³³ D. Woodward, "Suburban Development in Five Neighbouring South London Parishes in the Middle Decades of the 19th Century" (University of Kingston, PhD Thesis, 2012).

¹³⁴ M. Greenhalgh, "Gentleman Landowners and the Middle Classes of Bromley: the Transfer of Power and Wealth" (University of Greenwich, PhD Thesis, 1995).

¹³⁵ N. Barratt, *Greater London; the Story of the Suburbs* (London: Random House, 2014).

¹³⁶ J. White, *London in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007).

¹³⁷ A. Jackson, *London's Metroland* (Harrow: Capital History, 2006).

¹³⁸ R. McManus & P. Ethington, "Suburbs in transition: new approaches to suburban history", *Journal of Urban History*, Volume 34, no.2, (August 2007), p. 317.

particular times and places'¹³⁹. They believed that a new perspective on the study of suburbs was possible if they were 'subjected to a longitudinal analysis, examining their development in the context of the metropolises that usually enveloped them'¹⁴⁰. With its focus on commuting, one of the key mechanisms for linking the suburbs to the metropolis, this thesis fits this framework for a novel approach to the history of suburban formation and change.

The Commuting Experience

This thesis also aims to explore the experience of commuting; that quotidian routine of a morning and evening rush hour. It looks at both the daily railway journey to work and the reasons for choosing to undertake this commute. This is one of the thesis' biggest challenges given the paucity of written evidence from Victorian and Edwardian commuters themselves and, is a reason why, only limited research has hitherto been conducted in this field. Pooley and Turnbull are one of the notable exceptions and have approached the topic from the perspective of personal diaries and life histories to explore changes in urban mobility, including the journey to work, in the Victorian era. Utilising the rich source material of the life history of Henry Jaques, a shirt-maker in London, their case study¹⁴¹ brought out the many factors that influenced the relationship between home and place of work. They noted that 'the uncertainty of work... the difficulty of generating enough income to support a growing family and rising aspirations... close ties between home and workplace ...and the attractions of suburbanization all interacted to shape the residential and employment history of Jaques and his family'¹⁴². Jaques' occupation placed him as a member of the upper working class. Their concerns and preoccupations were similar and familiar to many middle-class users of the suburban railways. Pooley and Turnbull's study highlighted that the decision to become a railway commuter was not

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ C. Pooley & J. Turnbull, "Changing home and workplace in Victorian London; the life history of Henry Jaques, shirtmaker", *Journal of Urban History*, Volume 24, No.2, (August 1997), pp.148-178.

¹⁴² Ibid, p.148.

just an economic decision, instead it was rooted within a wider social and cultural context.

Yet Jaques's account was a rare first-hand source, and for this reason, this thesis has turned to newspaper accounts and literary sources to provide an insight into the experience of commuting. Local and national newspapers have been mined for accounts of the journey to work. Similarly, contemporary literature has been investigated for relevant references to the lifestyle of the railway commuter. The analysis of the latter has been the province of literary critics. The more famous writers on suburbia - Forster, Gissing, Wells, Doyle and Grossmith - have been individually studied. Outside of this, as Bilston commented wider 'literary narratives engaging suburbia ... have received scant attention, yet they constitute a crucial tradition without which the more famous late nineteenth texts of suburbia ... cannot be adequately understood'¹⁴³. The rehabilitation of suburban literature and its consideration as a wider literary phenomenon has been central to recent reviews by Hapgood¹⁴⁴, Kuchta¹⁴⁵, Cunningham¹⁴⁶ and Bilston¹⁴⁷.

One of their key themes was that contemporaries viewed suburbia as a novel and different type of society. It was a new arena for writers to explore. Hapgood described how 'literary interest moved from the excitement of extremes, both of the rural (wildness/nature/heightened sensibility/the sublime) and of the urban (density/intensity/drama), to an appreciation of the equilibrium of the ordinary'¹⁴⁸. If the suburbs were seen as a haven of safety from the moral hazards of the city, they were also viewed as a threat to the established social order. Amongst the circles of the

¹⁴³ S. Bilston, *The Promise of the Suburbs, a Victorian History in Literature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), p.16.

¹⁴⁴ L. Hapgood, *Margins of desire: the suburbs in fiction and culture 1880-1925* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁵ T. Kuchta, *Semi-detached empire: suburbia and the colonization of Britain, 1880 to present* (Virginia: University of Virginia, 2010).

¹⁴⁶ G. Cunningham, "Houses in Between, Navigating Suburbia in Late Victorian Writing", *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Volume 32(2), (2004), pp.421-434.

¹⁴⁷ S. Bilston, *The Promise of the Suburbs* and "The Stereotyping of Early Victorian Suburbia", *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Volume 41, (2013), pp.621-642.

¹⁴⁸ L. Hapgood, *Margins of desire*, p.10.

elite there was a strong antipathy to suburbia. As Bilston commented ‘it was a virtual axiom at the turn of the twentieth century that suburbia was an architectural blight, a cultural wasteland, a national embarrassment’¹⁴⁹. Crosland’s novel *The Suburbans*, epitomised this negativity towards the suburbs, which he described as ‘a country devoid of graciousness to a degree which appals’¹⁵⁰. The suburban commuters were mocked as ‘a grubby, limited, old, unhappy, underbred crowd’¹⁵¹. Less dramatically, but more generally, Cunningham noted that ‘for many writers of the nineteenth century the prime response was one of anxiety and disorientation’¹⁵². This thesis has employed these literary sources and other contemporary written material to provide an insight into lifestyle of commuters and the suburbs in general. It also recognises that allowance has to be made for class and cultural biases inherent in their composition.

Some of this discomfort with and disdain for the suburbs can be attributed to the fact that they were female-dominated spaces. Commuting reinforced the separation of gender roles, with men leaving the home and travelling to work by train or other forms of transport. Cunningham observed, as a result of the absence of men, the ‘suburb privileged the family unit, privacy, and individual self-expression through domestic display and decoration’. It was a recognition that commuting had implications for the social, class and gender characteristics of the suburban lifestyle. This aspect of Victorian and Edwardian life has received little scholarly attention, with Abernathy’s PhD thesis¹⁵³ being a rare exception. This explored the close relationship between class, gender and the available opportunities to commute to work around London from 1880 to 1940. Its primary focus was on the evolution of London’s working-class suburbs. The thesis also drew heavily on data derived from the New Survey of London Life and Labour conducted between 1928 and 1930 and so was more orientated

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.1.

¹⁵⁰ T. Crosland, *The Suburbans* (London: John Long, 1905), p.15, accessed 20 March 2019, from <http://archive.org/details/suburbans00crosgoog>.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p.45.

¹⁵² G. Cunningham, “Houses in Between”, p.423.

¹⁵³ S. Abernathy, “Class, gender and commuting in Greater London, 1880 – 1940” (Cambridge University, PhD Thesis, 2016).

towards the inter-war period than the earlier Victorian and Edwardian eras. This thesis looks to explore similar themes, but with an emphasis on middle-class commuting and suburban development.

Methodological Approaches

This thesis utilises a quantitative approach as part of its research; in particular it employs geographic information software to map historical data, ‘HGIS’, in order to spatially map the residential addresses of various occupational groups identified as commuters. It has become an established technique for historical research. The Layers of London project¹⁵⁴ run by the Institute of Historical Research is an excellent example of its ability to organise digitised historic maps, photos and other crowd-sourced material into an accessible format for research. Digital technologies have slowly become incorporated into the mainstream of research techniques, but their usage does pose potential new challenges for the historian. First, as Griffiths commented, ‘urban historians have long acknowledged the difficulties in tracing ‘patterns on the ground to patterns in society’¹⁵⁵. The data capture techniques available prior to the digital age made the construction of spatial historical maps a time-consuming process. The development of data mapping software over the last twenty years has offered a technological ‘tool’ for researchers to process much larger quantities of data and led to an increased interest in the ‘spatial turn’. Yet, as Griffiths commented, ‘any well-defined specialised method such as GIS cannot be said to mediate innocently between the historian and the subject of his or her study’¹⁵⁶. The ‘black-box’ nature of this type of technology raises some epistemological concerns that HGIS is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Additionally, as Gregory and Ell warned, ‘the historian wanting to use GIS must not only learn the technical skills

¹⁵⁴ *Layers of London* website, at <http://layersoflondon.org>.

¹⁵⁵ S. Griffiths, “GIS and Research into Historical ‘Spaces of Practice’: Overcoming the Epistemological Barriers”, in A. von Lunen and C. Travis, eds., *History and GIS, Epistemologies, Considerations and Reflections* (Dordrecht: Springer Science, 2013), p.154.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.161.

of GIS, but must also learn the academic skills of a geographer'¹⁵⁷. The approach adopted by the thesis is mindful of the pitfalls and caveats that apply to its use and these will be discussed in greater detail in the quantitative research section of the thesis. These should not be viewed as materially significant as this thesis employs HGIS in a relatively straightforward way, as simply a means of dramatically speeding up the capture and representation of spatial data.

Beyond GIS, the recent advances in digitisation and increases in computing power have opened up many other new possibilities for research. Directly relevant to this thesis' research area, they have allowed the theoretical socio-economic models of the urban geographer to be expanded to include greater complexity and contemporary and historical data. Redding and Rossi-Hansberg commented on these models that they 'are rich enough to incorporate first-order features of the data, such as large numbers of locations ... as well as trade and commuting costs. They are also able to incorporate key interactions between locations such as trade in goods, migration and commuting'¹⁵⁸. They believed that predictions could now be made from these models, which would bear scrutiny with the observed data. The recent work of Heblich, Redding and Sturm¹⁵⁹ into the historical role of commuting flows in promoting agglomeration effects in London has utilised this ability to manipulate 'big data'. They focused on the mid-nineteenth century transport revolution from the invention of steam railways, as the commencement of this phenomenon. They used aggregate data on commuting patterns from the 1921 census as the benchmark for their gravity equation model of commuting flows and then applied this retrospectively in time using observable historical changes in number of residents and rateable values across London. Their aim was to model whether 'a reduction in commuting costs facilitates an increased separation of workplace and residence'¹⁶⁰ and in turn whether this geographic specialization enabled the realization of economies of scale in production

¹⁵⁷ I. Gregory and P. Ell, quoted in S. Griffiths, "GIS and Research into Historical 'Spaces of Practice'", p.153.

¹⁵⁸ S. Redding and E. Rossi-Hansberg, *Quantitative Spatial Economics*, p.2.

¹⁵⁹ S. Heblich, S. Redding, D. Sturm, "The Making of the Modern Metropolis: Evidence from London", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 135, Issue 4 (November 2020), pp.2059-2133.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.2127.

and residential choices. They concluded that their model was ‘successful in explaining the large-scale changes in the organisation of economic activity observed during 19th century London’¹⁶¹ and that the railways played a causal role in reshaping the organization of economic activity by workplace and residence. The quantitative section of this thesis has adopted a similar chronological approach and worked backwards from the 1921 Census. While this thesis’ research is not intended as a commentary or a validation of this model, nonetheless it will consider the ‘closeness of fit’ of this model of commuting to its own observations.

Concluding Comments

This chapter opened with a description of the rush hour to serve as the illustration of the range of social and economic influences on the activity of commuting. This highlighted that there were a number of different perspectives that could be applied to a study of commuting. Commuting is an act of everyday mobility and its study clearly falls within the purview of the new field of mobility studies. Railway commuting predicates a transport infrastructure as a logistical necessity and research in the field of transport history is of obvious relevance to this thesis. Commuting is, by definition, a journey from home to the workplace; or in the context of Victorian and Edwardian London from the suburbs to the centre of London. This activity can be considered as part of the histories of suburbia, with direct relevance to their formation and evolution. As this overview of the literature has indicated all three perspectives are rich and varied fields of historical research in their own right. In addition there is substantial relevant inter-disciplinary work across the social sciences, most notably in the fields of urban geography, sociology and literary studies. Yet, perhaps because commuting lies at the inter-section of various traditions of historical research, detailed studies of the historical journey to work are rare. This thesis puts commuting and commuters as its central focus and, in doing so, can claim a different perspective and as a result yield new insights from its research.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.2128.

The opportunity to make a contribution to academic scholarship also arises as this review has identified both gaps in the literature as well as ongoing debates in a number of fields. As Pooley highlighted, much of the research in mobility studies has been focused on contemporary issues, yet its approach can be validly applied to studies of historical mobility. In the case of the daily journey to work, the studies by Green and Barke are the most relevant to this thesis and their limited scope ensures there is no overlap with its area of research. Pooley noted the absence of recent studies and suggested that one of the reasons for this was that ‘the focus of much historical research has moved from the empirical analysis of processes (such as travel to work), towards more cultural and subjective understandings as represented through the literature on mobilities’¹⁶². This review suggests that this shift has met with some resistance in the field of transport and, in particular, railway history. Histories along the lines of Bradley’s history of the social dimension of railway infrastructure are an unusual exception.

A more contested field of research is that of the social and economic impact of the railway both nationwide and in the creation of suburbia. Given the difficulties in precisely quantifying the changes wrought by the arrival of the railway, this will always be an elusive goal. The historiographical trend has been a general downgrading of the significance of the railway as a driver for the changes of the Victorian era from its central position in the Victorian imagination. Economic historians have reassessed, downwards, its contribution to the country’s growth and detailed local studies have been hesitant in attributing especial influence. In more recent reviews, a more revisionist tone can be seen led by historians, such as Freeman, looking to move the debate from a direct focus on the built environment to a wider social and cultural context. Without declaring an allegiance to any particular viewpoint, this thesis can be seen to have a natural fit with the latter’s approach.

¹⁶² C. Pooley, *Mobility, Migration and Transport*, p.33.

This thesis seeks to argue that commuting was a significant factor and commuters were important actors in the development of London's outer suburbs. It is a hypothesis that finds support in the socio-economic models of urban geographers and sociologists. Their explanatory framework for the development of the cities of the twentieth century emphasises the role of inequalities in commuting opportunities in creating and maintaining segregated residential zones. The application of these models to the nineteenth century has met with a mixed response from historians, with Ward and Cannadine holding opposing views on their relevance to the growth of Victorian London. The quantitative sections of this thesis aim to provide some statistical illumination on the chronological and spatial characteristics of London's development and provide a partial answer to the contending views held by Ward and Cannadine.

There is tangible evidence of the infrastructure for commuting and the suburban environment, but historical records of the commuting experience are much sparser. This presents a difficulty for this thesis that has been addressed, in part, by recourse to literary works. As this review has highlighted, suburbia has suffered from an image problem amongst the Victorian and Edwardian urban elites. They saw it as despoiling the countryside and replacing it with a featureless, monotonous sprawl of housing without architectural merit. It was an attitude that has shaped the perceptions of later commentators, both literary and academic. Graham Greene dismissively regarded them as commuter dormitories since 'you couldn't live in a place like this ... it was somewhere to which you returned for sleep and rissoles by the 6.50 or the 7.25'¹⁶³. The suburbs were deemed to be places preoccupied with conformity and respectability and in Thompson's damning words 'were the setting for dreary, petty, lives without social, cultural or intellectual interests'¹⁶⁴. Unsurprisingly this anti-suburban feeling has played a part in diminishing academic interest. As Clapson observed in his study of suburban growth in the twentieth century, 'crass characterizations flow from a

¹⁶³ G. Greene, quoted in P. Knox, *Metroburbia, the Anatomy of Greater London* (London: Merrell, 2017), p.124.

¹⁶⁴ F. Thompson, *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.3.

gaping hole in the historiography of English suburbia'¹⁶⁵. This thesis looks to answer Clapson's call for a more sympathetic evaluation of the suburbs and their residents; the railway commuters.

¹⁶⁵ M. Clapson, *Suburban Century; Social Change and Urban Growth in England and the USA* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p.8.

Chapter Three – Patterns of Commuting: Part One - The Edwardian Era

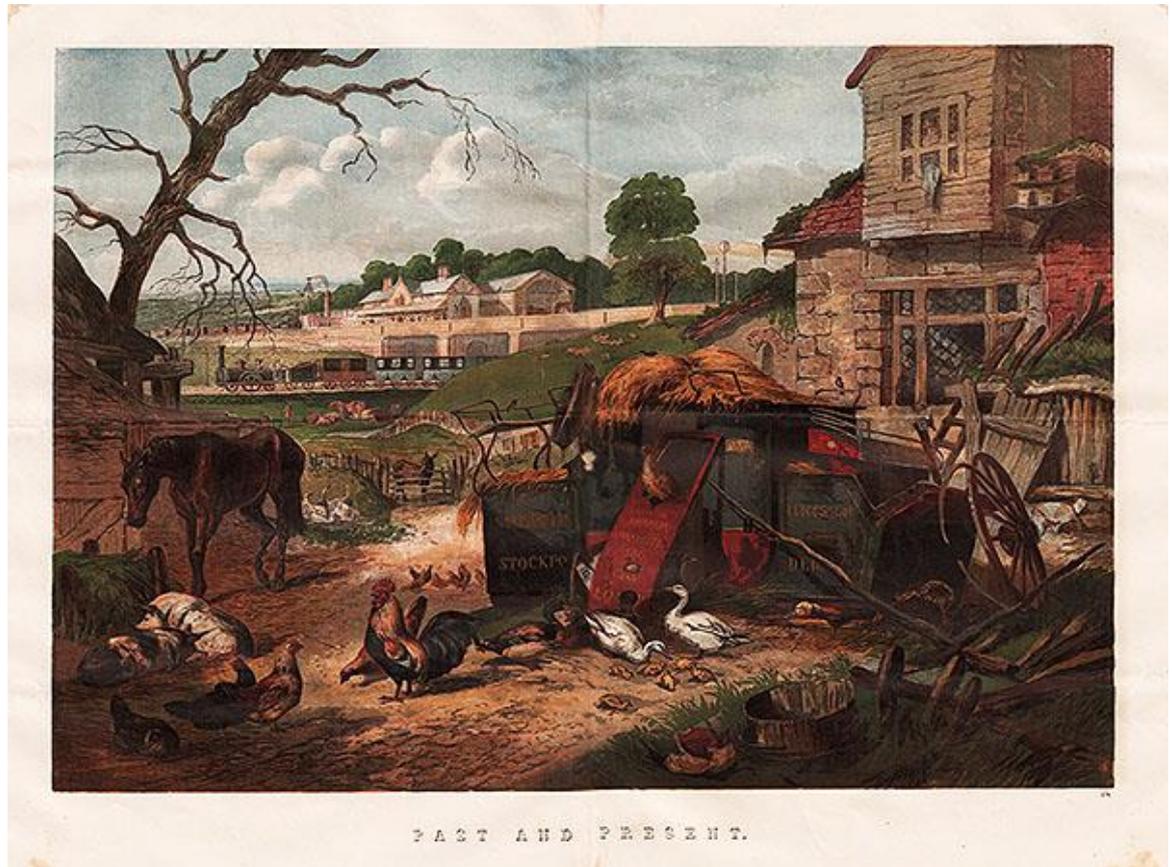


Figure 3.1: ‘Past and Present’: The Replacement of the Stage Coach by the Train¹⁶⁶

Pooley commented that ‘in nineteenth century Britain, the railways provided a transport revolution at least as significant as the motor car in the first half of the twentieth century and low cost air transport in the late-twentieth century’¹⁶⁷. ‘The growing rail network allowed people to travel more quickly and in greater comfort than before.... The poorest in society could rarely afford rail travel, and not all locations in Britain were connected into the railway system, but by the 1870s at least travel by train was a real possibility for a large proportion of the population’¹⁶⁸. Its speed and convenience, in comparison with the horse and carriage, allowed mass

¹⁶⁶ “Past and Present”, *Illustrated London News*, (23 April 1859), accessed on 6 June 2020, via <http://britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>. It depicts William Chaplin’s London to Manchester stage coach, *Defiance*, as a derelict wreck in the foreground with the new railway in the background.

¹⁶⁷ C. Pooley, “Mobility, Transport and Social Inclusion: Lessons from History”, *Social Inclusion*, Volume 4, Issue 3, (2006), p.102.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.103.

travel both for pleasure and work, broadened horizons and facilitated new ways of living. One of these new opportunities was the ability to live at an increasing distance from the workplace; to be able to use the railway for the journey to work. This chapter and the following one explore the chronological and geographical shape of the evolution of railway commuting around London; Britain's largest city and its fastest growing as measured in absolute terms. It is an account that is written chronologically backwards, commencing with the 1921 Census and then covering the Edwardian and finally the Victorian eras. The reason for this approach is twofold: the 1921 Census was the first official record of the journey to work and provides an obvious starting point to gauge the level and nature of London's commuting, secondly there is a bias in the available records with those of the Edwardian era proving more widespread and accessible.

The next two chapters aim to illustrate how and when commuting evolved around London by way of a series of maps showing changes in residential locations for groups of commuters. From mediaeval times the Thames and the horse and carriage allowed the wealthy few to live on the outskirts of the city or have a second home outside the capital. For the rest of London's population, walking was the most practical and cheapest option, with the result that the city was geographically compact until the nineteenth century. It was during the Victorian era that alternative forms of transport became available. Pooley commented that 'within urban areas walking continued to be important for many, but horse-drawn omnibuses and trams (first steam and then electric) rapidly provided increased travel options for most people. In London in particular, the expanding suburban rail network, both over ground and underground provided further travel options'¹⁶⁹. Chapter five will give a more detailed analysis and context of London's public transport revolution from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. An illustration of the explosion of travel, including commuting, by mechanised means that had taken place by the Edwardian era can be seen in the chart below (table 3.1).

¹⁶⁹ C. Pooley, "Mobility, Transport and Social Inclusion: Lessons from History", p.103.

Year	Railways Passengers Carried	Tramway (millions)	Omnibus (millions)	Total	Greater London Pop. (Mllns)	No. of Journeys Per Head
1867	41	N/a	41	82	3.60	22.76
1871	73	N/a	44	116	3.89	29.90
1881	130	72	58	261	4.77	54.68
1891	180	188	159	528	5.63	93.68
1901	237	311	290	837	6.58	127.24
1911	436	822	401	1,659	7.32	226.62

Table 3.1: London's Transport System,
By Passenger Numbers 1867 -1911.¹⁷⁰

The 1921 Census – The First Official Record of Commuting Activity

The 1921 Census was the first occasion that information on the place of work was recorded. It provided the first official insight into urban mobility, albeit only aggregated totals at a district or borough level were recorded. The information captured provided details of the number of commuters between each of the London boroughs and urban and rural districts in the Home Counties. A summary of the movements (table 3.2 below) between the Home Counties and London shows the gravitational pull of the capital.

	<i>Commuting To</i>						
	London Brghs	Essex	Hertfrdshre	Kent	Middlesex	Surrey	Total
<i>Commuting From</i>							
London Boroughs		16,530	1,189	6,588	36,015	13,100	73,422
Essex	180,947		933	946	4,951	772	188,549
Hertfordshire	15,186	1,047		147	4,025	174	20,579
Kent	43,528	3,379	315		1,378	2,265	50,865
Middlesex	208,470	3,456	2,378	535		7,283	222,122
Surrey	93,324	694	194	1,549	5,837		101,598
Total	541,455	25,106	5,009	9,765	52,206	23,594	657,135

Table 3.2: 1921 Census – Commuting Between London and the Home Counties.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ 1912 London Traffic Report to Board of Table, Appendix II, Table 6.

¹⁷¹ Table compiled from the 1921 Census data held on the Online Historical Population Reports Website accessed 12 December 2018 at <http://www.histpop.org/census/1921/countyoflondon/PartIII/Table 1>.

Over half a million workers commuted into London (defined as its 1888 county boundaries) from the surrounding hinterland, with the largest contingents coming from Middlesex and Essex. It was, overwhelming, a one-directional journey, with only 13 per cent of the total travelling in the reverse direction. An idea of the scale of this migration, relative to the population of these areas, can be seen in the table below (table 3.3).

1921 Census - London & Suburbs Commuting Patterns			
Area	Night Time Census 000s	Net Inflow/ (Outflow) %	Day Time Census 000s
City	14	3086%	437
Inner Boroughs	1,036	37%	1,422
Outer Boroughs	3,435	-9%	3,130
Outer Ring	2,996	-13%	2,596
Outer Ring Split:			
Essex	844	-16%	709
Kent	148	-12%	131
Middlesex	1,044	-15%	882
Surrey	439	-12%	388
Other	521	-7%	486

Table 3.3: 1921 Census - London and Suburbs Commuting Movements.¹⁷²

A calculation of the number of London commuters using the outflows figures for each borough (i.e. excluding those travelling from farther afield or within the same borough) yields a total of c.1.6mil or 23% of the population of Greater London. These summary net inflow figures concealed a much higher degree of mobility within London and its suburbs and also a distinctive regional variation. Many boroughs and urban districts saw individual outflows or inflows over 20% of their night-time population. In the outer ring the highest levels of daily commuting were found to the

¹⁷² 1921 Census, Appendix Table 91 "Movements relating to boroughs and urban districts within Greater London", accessed 12 December 2018 via https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table/EW1921GEN_M92. (Note: the inner and outer boroughs were defined as those within the administrative boundary of the county of London. The outer ring was that portion of Greater London i.e. within the area covered by the Metropolitan Police Districts, but outside the county of London).

north and east of the capital with Leyton, Wood Green, Hornsey, Tottenham, Southgate, Walthamstow and East Ham all recording over 25% of their night-time population working outside of their residential borough.¹⁷³ The more salubrious districts to the south and west of London also recorded net outflows, but their proportion of the population working elsewhere was in a lower range between 18 and 25%.¹⁷⁴ The figures suggest that commuting was experienced in different ways by different sections of London's population. They indicated that a substantial proportion of London's suburban residents did not travel significant distances and the outer suburbs were more than residential dormitories. For all these regional variations, commuting, had by 1921, unmistakably, become a daily part of life for the population of London and the Home Counties.

The principal destinations for these commuters (see figure 3.2) were the City of London (404,309) and the borough of Westminster (251,441), followed by the other central London boroughs of Finsbury (82,250), Holborn (69,044), Marylebone (68,211) and St Pancras (55,718). The map below (figure 2) of all commuter destinations shows the attraction of the centre of the London, with only the dockland areas of West Ham (34,073) and Woolwich (23,032) standing apart from this centripetal trend. In total nearly 1.4 million workers travelled into an area 4 miles in radius from the Bank of England. These daily migrants significantly outnumbered the residential population of this central business district, with, at the extreme, the City of London only having c.14k permanent residents in 1921. It was the culmination of a process of an ever-increasing separation between the home and the workplace that had gathered pace in the second half of the nineteenth century. This chapter, and the next one looks at the development of this phenomenon by considering how different occupational groups responded to the opportunities to commute to work.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

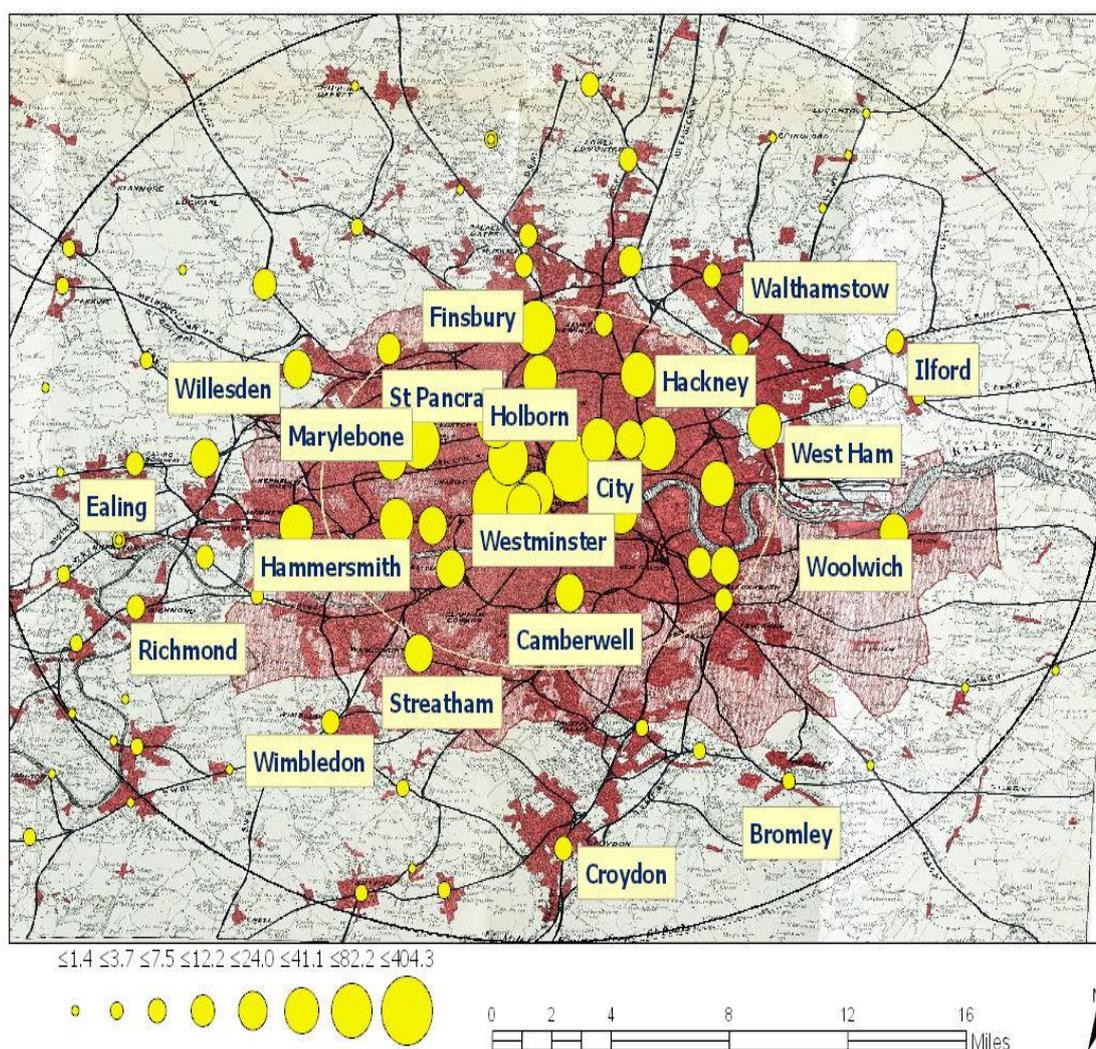


Figure 3.2: Commuters' (in '000s) Workplace Destination in London and the Home Counties from the 1921 Census.¹⁷⁵

A useful starting point is an analysis of the 1921 commuter flows into the City and the borough of Westminster. Two clear patterns emerge from the map below (figure 3.3) of the residential location of commuters into the City. They predominantly came from the surrounding inner London boroughs, with a preponderance towards the south, east and north-eastern areas of the capital. The largest contributors were the boroughs of Islington (19,897), Lambeth (18,544), Camberwell (18,350),

¹⁷⁵ Table compiled from 1921 Census data held on the Online Historical Population Reports Website accessed 12 December 2018 at <http://www.histpop.org/census/1921/countyoflondon/PartIII/Table2>.

Wandsworth (17,745) and Hackney (16,909). Outside of the county of London, the most significant flows came from Essex, particularly the urban districts of West Ham (12,819), East Ham (10,779), Walthamstow (10,685), Leyton (10,540) and Ilford (9,607). In contrast commuters from the more salubrious districts were much lower. Commuters from Wimbledon, Richmond, Twickenham, Sutton and Beckenham did not exceed c3k, with Croydon (10,095) and Southend (6,937) being the only significant centres of commuters more than 8 miles from the centre of London. The average distance to work was 6.6 miles. This statistic belied the fact that c.300k travelled less than this average. The remaining c.100k travelled much further, with the average skewed by journeys of up to 60 miles. It was a highly uneven travel pattern and the development of short distance travel for the masses along with longer distance travel for the few will be explored later in the thesis.

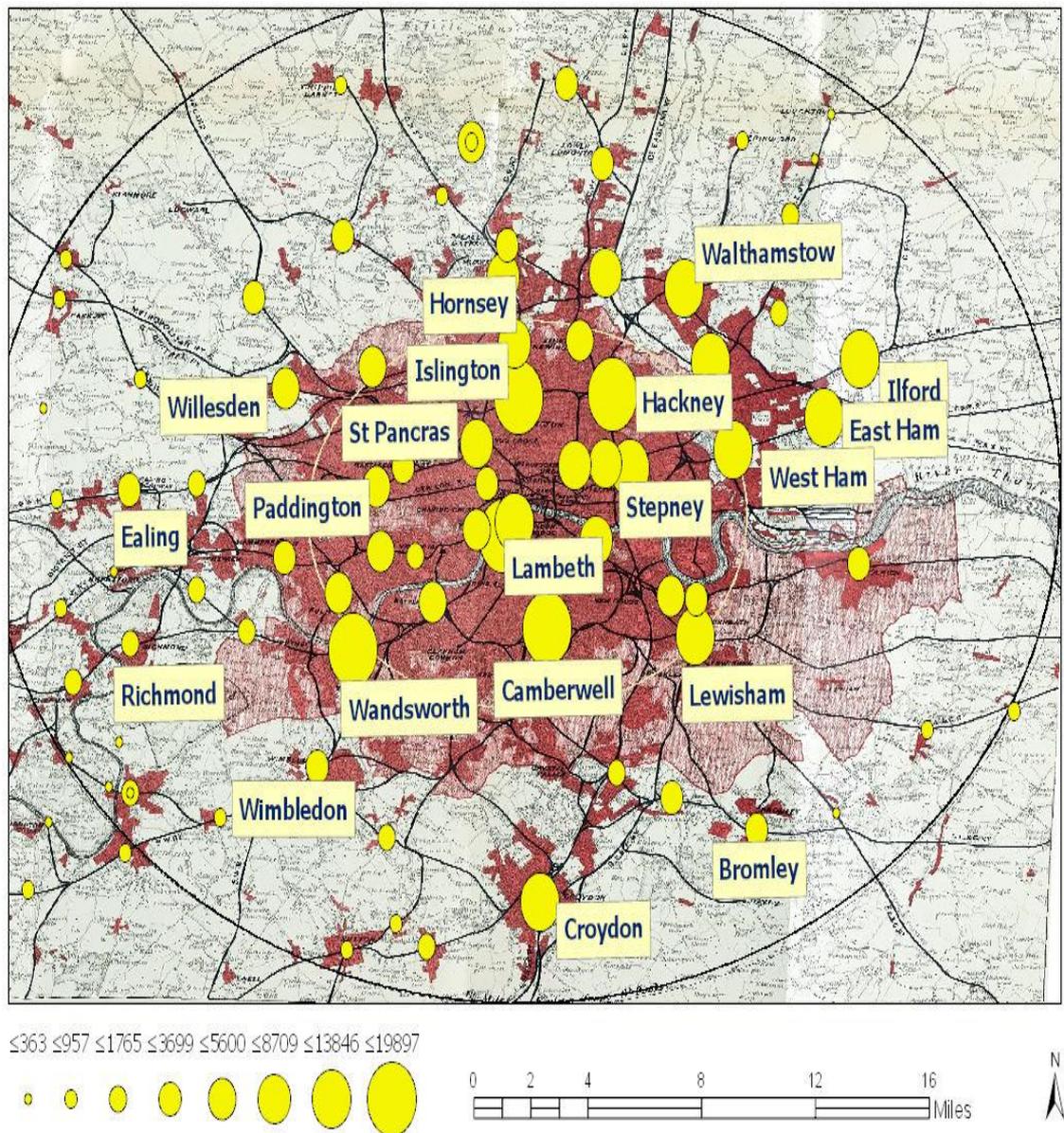


Figure 3.3: Residential Location of Commuters to the City of London from the 1921 Census.¹⁷⁶

The map for commuters travelling into the City of Westminster shows a similar pattern (see figure 3.4). Most workers travelled from the surrounding inner London boroughs, notably neighbouring Lambeth (23,891), Wandsworth (19,226) and Battersea (12,670). In contrast to the City, the majority of commuters came from the

¹⁷⁶ Map compiled from the 1921 Census data on workplace location accessed 12 December 2018 via <http://www.histpop.org/census/1921/countyoflondon/PartIII/Table 2>.

south and west of the capital, with the east and north-east areas being far less represented in the Westminster commuting workforce.

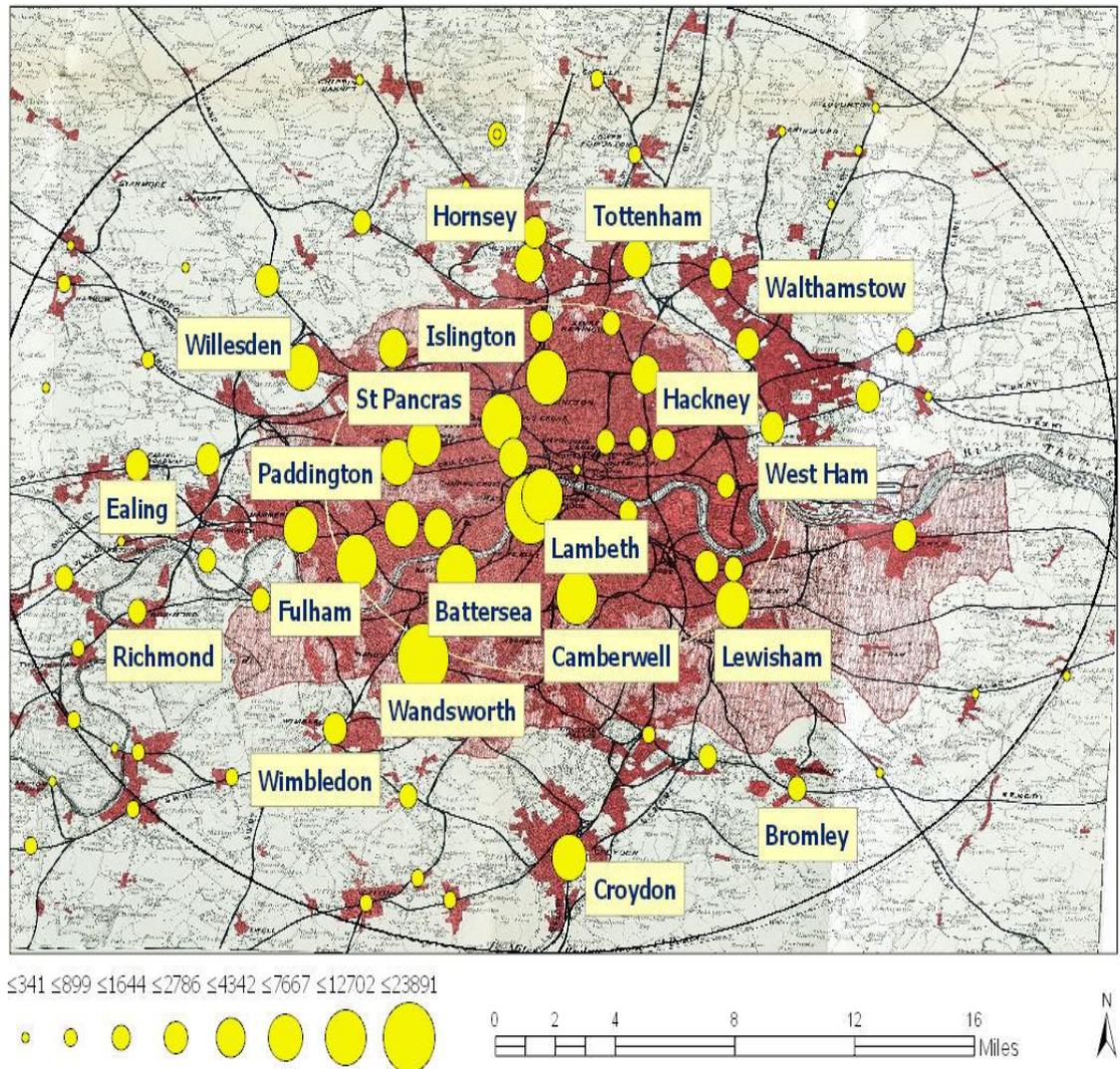


Figure 3.4: Residential Location for Commuters into the City of Westminster from 1921 Census.¹⁷⁷

It suggests that travel across the central districts of London was an additional complication in terms of travel time and cost and a deterrent to many. The average distance to work was 5.3 miles and, as with the City workforce, two-thirds of the

¹⁷⁷ Table compiled from 1921 Census data held on the Online Historical Population Reports Website accessed 12 December 2018 at <http://www.histpop.org/census/1921/countyoflondon/PartIII/Table 2>.

commuter journeys were less than this distance, but were counterbalanced by the significant distances travelled by the remaining third.

Some circumspection is required in utilising the 1921 Census data as only the total numbers for London and the Home Counties by district were recorded. Information on commuters from further afield, for example Sussex, Hampshire and Buckinghamshire, was not captured. The total number of commuters into London has probably been understated (the omission of Brighton and Hove being an obvious example) as a result. A further caveat in the utilisation of this data in understanding the commuting patterns in the Edwardian era was highlighted by the Registrar-General. He wrote in his introduction to the 1921 Census results, ‘the great gulf of War¹⁷⁸’ lay between the 1921 Census and its predecessor. Clearly the terrible loss of life in the Great War impacted population numbers and mobility around London. In other respects, there was less of a significant discontinuity with the immediate pre-War position. Given the hiatus in transport development in this period, it seems reasonable to infer, that some broad conclusions can be drawn from the 1921 Census data that have relevance to the pre-war era.

Firstly commuting activity in and around London was significant in scale. It was also primarily a movement to and from the central districts of London, with the principal destinations being the City of London and borough of Westminster. Second, the majority of the commuters came from the inner London suburbs, but there was a significant minority who travelled substantial distances. This then provides a general picture of the nature and levels of commuting activity, but does not give any more detailed analysis. It was also the first official estimation of journeys to work and there is a paucity of equivalent data for the Victorian and Edwardian eras. This thesis looks to fill, in part, these data gaps, principally through the reconstruction of commuting patterns of various individual occupational groups. Its aim is to answer, at least in a

¹⁷⁸1921 Census, Part 1, Introduction accessed 12 December 2018 via <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1921PRE/2>.

partial way, questions of how, when and why Londoners chose to adopt a commuting lifestyle.

The Methodology for the Analysis of Commuting Patterns

In the previous chapter the general merits and limitations of the utilisation of data mapping software were discussed. The ability of GIS technology to process significant amounts of data and produce spatial representations onto historical maps is unquestionable. It is a technology that promises to be able to provide a different and fresh perspective to old historical questions. The use of this software is not without some issues, part epistemological and part technical. HGIS software has the danger of creating representations through an opaque, ‘black-box’ process, whilst the set-up process runs the technical risk of distorting the data. For example the maps in this thesis have been constructed by using a consistent, but specific, method of grouping the data. They use the Jenks natural breaks classification method¹⁷⁹, which is a data clustering method designed to determine the best arrangement of values into different classes. Other methods would have produced slightly different visual results. Historical research has now recognised that the rewards of historical insight outweigh the risks of technical misrepresentation and this thesis has employed the widely used commercial ARCGIS¹⁸⁰ software as its HGIS platform. The data from various occupational groups has been plotted onto a variety of geocoded historical maps using the ARCGIS software.

A more practical limitation has been the identification of a precise residential location for commuters. Depending on the historical source, this can be the exact house number, but on occasion it can be limited to the road name or just the postal area. As

¹⁷⁹ Pioneered by G Jenks. The method seeks to minimize each class's average deviation from the class mean, while maximizing each class's deviation from the means of the other groups. In other words, the method seeks to reduce the variance within classes and maximize the variance between classes. Accessed 15 November 2020, via https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenks_natural_breaks_optimization.

¹⁸⁰ ArcGIS is a geographic information system (GIS) for working with maps and geographic information maintained by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri). Accessed 15 November 2020, via <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ArcGIS>.

a minimum, location data has only been utilised where the parish can be identified with certainty. In addition, over time London streets have sometimes disappeared due to re-development or undergone name changes. Fortunately this problem has not proved too significant for the chosen occupational groups as they have been less affected by urban redevelopment. In areas where this has occurred the website http://www.maps.thehunthouse.com/Streets/Old_to_New¹⁸¹ has been used to identify the modern equivalent. These two factors have meant that a precise residential location could not always be identified and this has led to a decision to record the residential location for data mapping purposes as the nearest rail or underground station (as measured by as the crow flies, rather than by road route). This approach loses a degree of accuracy, but allows a greater range of data to be utilised and so preserves the benefits of a large sample. It has the added benefit of highlighting the areas of residential concentration and clearly showing favoured residential areas on the HGIS maps.

A further limitation has been the historical sources themselves. They fall into two categories: those which included a residential location and those which did not, but contained sufficient information on full name, age and occupation to allow an accurate match with the Census records. The first included the members of the Stock Exchange and London-based solicitors and chartered accountants. The second grouping included bank clerks working at the Bank of England, Coutts and Lloyds Bank. Some datasets, notably barristers working in London, straddled both categories. Clearly the latter group introduced an element of uncertainty that an incorrect match could be made with the Census records. In order to retain appropriate rigour in the data capture process, an individual's residential location was only used if the full name, age and occupational group matched. There were some further nuances with each of the specific datasets for the occupational groups, which are explained later when the individual results are presented.

¹⁸¹ [http:// www.maps.thehunthouse.com/Streets/Old_to_New](http://www.maps.thehunthouse.com/Streets/Old_to_New).

Finally there is the risk that the individuals selected within each of the occupational groups were not regular commuters. There is insufficient evidence to resolve this uncertainty at the individual level. It can only be mitigated through the selection of occupations, which required a regular attendance at a specific place of work, and from the creation of large enough datasets to determine aggregate patterns. A further complication was that the wealthiest sections of the professional classes could have both a town and country residence. This was stated in some datasets and the nearest location to their place of work has been chosen. This remains another unknown variable in the data, though, as the ranks of the professional classes increased, its proportionate impact probably diminished over time. Despite the limitations outlined above, this thesis holds that the integrity of the datasets is robust enough to be utilised for this enquiry into historical commuting patterns.

The Selection of Occupational Groups

First and foremost a defined and identifiable place of work in central London was required for the chosen occupational groups. Dispersed areas of employment, as was the case for the medical profession, would have made any assessment of commuting difficult and potentially invalid. The number of occupational groups meeting this criteria and possessing adequate historical records has been a limiting factor. In addition the groups chosen for the GIS mapping process have been selected as being broadly representative of the evolutionary trajectory of commuting amongst London's population. Therefore, there has been a bias towards the middle class professions to reflect their earlier and greater usage of the transport system, particularly the railways. This ability to make first use of new transport opportunities and establish the social norms and lifestyle associated with commuting, broadly set the pattern for other sections of society to emulate. As Abernathy's¹⁸² and Green's¹⁸³ research on working-class travel in the nineteenth century London identified, many members of working-class occupational groups were increasingly able to afford regular usage of

¹⁸² S. Abernathy, "Opening up the suburbs, workmen's trains in London, 1860-1914".

¹⁸³ D. Green, "Distance to work in Victorian London: a case study of Henry Poole, bespoke tailors".

mechanised forms of transport. Commuting patterns for some working-class occupational groups have been included to provide this perspective.

In the case of the middle class professions, barristers and solicitors working in London, members of the Stock Exchange, and chartered accountants have been chosen. All of these had clearly identifiable central London workplaces and also a suitably large membership to provide a substantial dataset. The lower middle class are represented by the clerks working in the financial institutions of the Bank of England, Coutts and Lloyds Bank. Smaller datasets have also been collected for insurance underwriters, architects, London university professors and staff at Reuters & Co and the private bank Hoare & Co. These groups have not been analysed in detail. The records for working-class trades are much scarcer. The sorters at the General Post Office, Metropolitan Police officers, shop workers at Harrods and workers at the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich are included as representative of workers with a regular and reliable income, while stevedores have been chosen for those in more irregular work. The datasets range from around a hundred to over four thousand records and the most comprehensive records are those of the legal profession, the Stock Exchange membership and the Bank of England staff. Given their breadth, these three groups have been used to trace the development of commuting around London from the advent of the suburban railway in 1840 to the outbreak of the First World War.

Spatial Expectations from the Reconstruction of Commuting Patterns

The 1921 Census provided an insight into commuting activity in aggregate and the patterns reconstructed for different occupational groups would be expected to bear resemblance to its results. The extent of any deviation from the 1921 pattern has been assessed both by occupational group and over time. The resultant patterns by occupational group provide a quantitative perspective on two historical debates on the development of Victorian and Edwardian London; firstly the degree of residential segregation across the capital and second the timing and nature of the evolution of

London from a pre-industrial urban centre with the rich clustered at the centre to a modern city with the rich living at the periphery.

The attribution of residential segregation solely to transport alternatives clearly overstates the case. While the commuter had to be able to travel to and from his suburban house, he (and the commuter was usually a man) also had to make his home there and this required weighing up other factors important to daily life for the whole family. Some of these other considerations were discussed in a lively correspondence, prompted by a letter to the *London Evening News* of 3 September 1912. An ‘Inquirer’ asked where in the Greater London area he could find a suburb that met the following requirements: ‘rents are cheapest for the accommodation offered; rates are most reasonable compared with rents; railway season tickets within the reach of the man of moderate means; education facilities are best and at reasonable cost, either in fees or education rate; food of all kinds cheapest, especially greengrocery’¹⁸⁴. Readers recommended Norbury, Bowes Park and Lewisham, for their reasonable prices, excellent facilities and respectable atmosphere, while others were not so satisfied with the high cost of travel encountered in Muswell Hill, overcrowded trains in New Southgate or lack of good street lighting and paving in Twickenham¹⁸⁵. It conveyed the concerns for value for money and social status that characterised the suburban lifestyle, but it highlighted that choosing a suburban home was the outcome of a number of competing factors, of which the transport service was only one consideration, albeit a critical one. The commuting patterns of each occupational group will be examined to see whether they reveal a correlation with transport links or cannot be easily attributable to any one causal factor.

In the literature review chapter, the models proposed by urban geographers for the evolution of the modern city were discussed. Their theoretical analysis posited a strong relationship between the cost of travel and residential status. In the Chicago

¹⁸⁴ *London Evening News*, 3 September 1912, accessed on 2 November 2018, via <http://www.newspaperarchive.com>.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, Various dates in September 1912.

Model, there were zones of occupation radiating outward from the central business district with the wealthiest residential areas on the periphery of the city and the poorest closest to the centre and their source of work. While later models introduced the concept of multiple centres and fashionable inner city sectors, the general expectation was that the evolution of the modern city should be accompanied by a migration away from the over-crowded, noisy and unhealthy inner city areas by those able to afford to do so. This chapter will consider how far these models were applicable to Edwardian London.

Patterns of Commuting – the Edwardian Era

A brief description of the geographic spread of Edwardian London is required to place its commuting patterns in the appropriate context. London had expanded physically far beyond the walking city of Dickens' era of the mid nineteenth century. In 1888 the county of London was created, which spanned from Hammersmith in the west to Woolwich in the East and from Hampstead to the north and Lewisham to the south. In 1911, these 75,000 acres were home to 4.5 million inhabitants, and a further 2.7 million lived in the Metropolitan Police District catchment area (defined as any parish within 15 miles of Charing Cross). Not all of this area had, of course, been covered by new housing, but it had seen a rapid transformation; the *Building News* called it 'one of the social revolutions of the time' in 1900¹⁸⁶. Indeed *The Times* lamented in 1904 that London had become a sprawl and its suburbs had begun to be associated as 'more and more the abode of working London', 'the residence of the clerk and the thriving artisan' and 'of the family of small means'¹⁸⁷. Despite their concern that the growth of this type of suburb was 'to surround London with acres of such streets to produce a district of appalling monotony, ugliness and dullness'¹⁸⁸, there was a recognizable differentiation and degrees of exclusivity to London's suburbs.

¹⁸⁶ *The Building News* quoted in L. Haggood, *Margins of Desire*. p.3.

¹⁸⁷ "The Formation of London Suburbs", *The Times*, 25 June 1904, p.8 *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 12 November 2018, via <https://0-link-gale-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk>.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

In inner London, the areas adjoining Hyde Park - Bayswater, Mayfair, Knightsbridge and Kensington - were the most prestigious and desirable residential locations. Adjacent suburbs, such as St John's Wood, Notting Hill, Chelsea and Hampstead represented the next band of residential stratification. To the East of London lay the working-class districts of West Ham, Stepney and Poplar, based around the docks and factories. Elsewhere, as Booth's poverty maps indicated, inner London areas were often mixed in character, with large houses interspersed amongst smaller, cheaper, and less attractive buildings. Dyos' famous history of Camberwell in the nineteenth century covered its trajectory from fashionable suburb on London's outskirts to crowded inner London neighbourhood. The same fate had also befallen most other inner London areas by the end of the nineteenth century; Hackney, Islington, Brixton, Bloomsbury and Battersea being other examples of this trend.

Outside of London's continuous built-up area, three broad categories of suburb can be distinguished by the Edwardian era. The most exclusive catered for the upper middle class. It was spacious in scale with tree-lined roads and more generous plots, with the villas of the first class season ticket holders were discretely hidden from view with gravel drives and screens of shrubbery. Houses were within walking distance from the station, apart from the most prestigious residences occupying nearby higher ground and accessible only by carriage. Green fields still surrounded the residential areas and a genuine sense of 'rus in urbe' could be found in places such as Chislehurst, Richmond, Carshalton, Chiswick and Hampton. Further down the social scale, the residential areas were more densely populated and the housing more compact, being detached or semi-detached in design but still with room for servants. This style catered for the broad mass of the middle class and its visual characteristics defined the bourgeois status of suburbs such as Bromley and Surbiton south of the river and Belsize Park and Crouch End to the north. Finally there were the suburbs complained of by *The Times*, characterised by rows of terraced housing set out on a grid-like pattern with few trees or greenery to alleviate the monotony of their appearance. These were to be found to the east and north-east of London, in the districts of Leyton, Walthamstow and Edmonton, all in the orbit of the GER and NLR's cheap fare

services. The presumption of complete social segregation needs to be qualified. Newer, less desirable developments were often grafted onto older more salubrious districts or progressively overwhelmed them and downgraded their status. As *The Times* article indicated the correlation between a lower cost of transport and low quality housing was evident to many contemporaries, but elsewhere the patterns of commuting for the wider middle class were less obvious. This has remained the case for historians, since the railway companies and other transport operators kept few records on the detailed workings of their networks. The next section examines the spatial distribution of a variety of occupational groups to see how they fitted into the mosaic of London's residential spaces in the Edwardian era.

Patterns of Commuting – the Edwardian Middle Class Professionals

The nineteenth century saw the rise of the professional classes, and the professional man became synonymous with the middle class. Reader¹⁸⁹ described the transformation of the professions from aristocratic preserves with entry based on family connections and a classical education to ones with systems of regulation and qualification and entry based on academic merit and appropriate training. This concept of professionalism extended from the three historic callings, of the church, the law and the physician, to encompass architects, accountants, engineers, surveyors and chemists by the end of the nineteenth century. The insistence on certain standards of competence and conduct along with an effective professional association enabled them to gain royal charters and so establish a monopoly in their field. This expertise bestowed prestige onto professional people and marked a notable cultural distinction with other classes. As a consequence, as Gunn and Bell noted 'in the later Victorian and Edwardian years 'mental labour' based on prolonged education became established ever more firmly as a foundation of middle-class identity'¹⁹⁰. Even in the City of London office work was equated with middle-class respectability. One

¹⁸⁹ W. J. Reader, *Professional men: the rise of professional classes in nineteenth-century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1966).

¹⁹⁰ S. Gunn and R. Bell, *Middle Classes, their rise and sprawl*, (London: Phoenix, 2002). p.49.

commentator wrote ‘the City is crowded with well-educated lads who are doing men’s work for a boy’s wages. It is quite useless to argue with parents, and urge the propriety of sending boys to learn a trade; the idea of a lad returning from his work in the evening with his dirty hands, and clad in fustian or corduroy, is quite shocking to the respectability of Peckham and Camberwell’¹⁹¹.

The chosen categories of professionals for this study of commuting patterns are barristers, solicitors, and chartered accountants working in practices in central London along with two types of members of the Stock Exchange, stock brokers and stock dealers or jobbers. Barristers had a pedigree dating back to the Middle Ages and viewed themselves as the pinnacle of the legal profession. Solicitors were in general their poorer relations. In the view of Abel-Smith and Stevens ‘by the Edwardian era no-one better symbolized the prosperity and respectability of middle-class England than the family solicitor’¹⁹². As Offer observed ‘this veneer of respectability belied some sordid realities. The prosperity of the top echelon of Edwardian lawyers obscured the declining economic position of the profession as a whole’¹⁹³. In the nineteenth century barristers had a monopoly on the rights of audience in the higher law courts. As a result they were almost exclusively based at the four Inns of Court; Inner Temple, Middle Temple, Lincoln’s Inn and Gray’s Inn, next to the Law Courts, which were situated between Fleet Street and Holborn on the western edge of the City of London. Solicitors’ practices, which required the services of the barristers to represent their clients in these courts, inevitably clustered around the barristers chambers. (For the purposes of this thesis, solicitors based outside of this area have been excluded). The area around Temple and Holborn was the focal point for the London legal profession and can be viewed as the destination for the regular journey to work of both barristers and solicitors.

¹⁹¹ Quoted in *ibid*, p.49.

¹⁹² B. Abel-Smith and R. Stevens, *Lawyers and the Courts*, (London: Heinemann, 1967), p.128.

¹⁹³ A. Offer, *Property and Politics, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.11.

The City of London acted as a similar magnet for financial service firms, where the benefits of conducting business face to face and having access to the wide range of banking and insurance services created a concentration of such businesses within the Square Mile. In the nineteenth century stocks and shares could only be purchased on a stock exchange by an authorised stock jobber, and these transactions were all carried out in person on the floor of the stock exchange. The stock broker was the intermediary with the wider world, who took orders and generated client interest in stocks. Both stock brokers and jobbers could earn considerable sums, though as Kynaston summarised ‘undoubtedly some members made the proverbial pile ... but the great majority did not’¹⁹⁴. For London-based stockbroking practices, stock dealing was restricted to the Stock Exchange at Capel Court, just off Threadneedle Street and adjacent to the Bank of England. City offices were usually also maintained to handle clerical tasks. Chartered Accountants were a much newer profession, only established by Royal Charter in 1880. Their emergence came about as Victorian Britain created a demand for more technically proficient accountants to deal with the increasing complexity of financial transactions. Unsurprisingly many practices were set up in the City to meet this demand. The workplace location can, therefore, be established with certainty for all of these chosen professions and the nature of their business strongly suggests that a regular if not daily presence was required to manage their affairs.

Their commuting activity has been summarised in the table below (table 3.4), with their distance to work measured from Temple (the underground station) for barristers and the Bank of England (Bank underground station) for stock brokers and dealers and chartered accountants. (Note: London-based solicitors have been excluded from this table but included in the text as data is only available for inner and outer London).

¹⁹⁴ D. Kynaston, *The City of London, Volume II Golden Years 1890-1914*, p.389.

Summary By Occupational Group	Stock Barristers	Stock Brokers	Stock Dealers	Chartered Accountants
Inner London (5 Miles Radius)	63%	50%	39%	37%
Outer London (5-10 Miles Radius)	14%	19%	24%	39%
Home Counties (Beyond 10 miles)	23%	31%	38%	25%
Average Distance to Work (Miles)	9.24	10.40	11.90	9.96
Standard Deviation (Miles)	12.04	10.32	10.37	10.30
Sample Size	1134	1732	1921	849
Date of Sample	1911	1910	1910	1911

Table 3.4: Summary of Residential Location by Occupational Groups 1910-11.¹⁹⁵

It is immediately apparent that there was a divergence in the distance travelled to work by the four occupational groups tabulated above, ranging from geographic concentration in inner London for barristers to a more mixed spread of locations, particularly inner and outer London, for chartered accountants and a greater preference among stock dealers for the Home Counties. The residential patterns of London based solicitors were closer to those of the stock brokers than their fellow legal practitioners. This is borne out by the detailed HGIS maps presented below, which overlay the statistical data onto a map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London's traffic, which identifies London's residential areas (shown in dark red) and railway network (in black) in 1900. In order to convey a sense of scale the original maps showed an outer ring measured as 12 miles radiating out from St Pauls (in black) and to which an inner ring has been added (in yellow) using the GIS software c.5 miles out from the centre of the capital. For reference, a guide to London's suburban districts is set out below (table 3.5).

¹⁹⁵ Table compiled for the barristers from the 1911 Census (cross-referenced with 1910 Post Office London Directory (Volume 2, Part II, Law Directory) accessed at various dates in October and November 2018 via <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection>, 1910 Stock Exchange Members' List and 1911 Chartered Accountants Members Directory.

Geographic Area	Districts of London
Inner C	City of London, Charing Cross, Holborn & Westminster
Inner E	Stratford, Stepney & Plaistow
Inner N	Hampstead, Camden Town, Canonbury & Tottenham
Inner NE	Stoke Newington, Angel, Hackney, Highbury & Clapton
Inner NW	Regent's Park, St John's Wood & Maida Vale
Inner S	Clapham, Kennington, Lambeth, Stockwell & Dulwich
Inner SE	Blackheath, Lewisham, Denmark Hill & Peckham
Inner SW	Kensington, Knightsbridge, Chelsea & Pimlico
Inner W	Mayfair, Marylebone, Bloomsbury & Bayswater
Outer E	Ilford, Romford & Chingford
Outer N	Finchley, Enfield, Barnet & Palmers Green
Outer NE	Woodford, Loughton & Wanstead
Outer NW	Harrow, Pinner & Hendon
Outer S	Croydon, Sutton, Streatham, Thornton Heath & Norbury
Outer SE	Beckenham, Bromley, Sydenham, Chislehurst & Eltham
Outer SW	Twickenham, Wimbledon, Earl's Court, Richmond & Surbiton
Outer W	Ealing, Acton, Chiswick & Hounslow

Table 3.5: Districts of London.¹⁹⁶

The detailed distribution map (figure 3.5 below) for the barristers shows a strong preference for the most desirable residential locations in London: the districts of Kensington, Knightsbridge, Mayfair, Marylebone and Bayswater. They accounted for 50% of the sample, followed by Hampstead, Westminster and the Inns of Court themselves. The wide variance (as measured by the standard deviation) from the average distance to work indicates that barristers primarily lived either in fashionable central districts or on London's periphery or beyond. The outer suburbs were less attractive, with Wimbledon, Harrow, Fulham and Richmond being the only areas with significant representation. The Home Counties exerted a greater pull, with clusters of commuters to be found in most salubrious districts; Surbiton, Epsom, Woking, Weybridge and Brighton. Unsurprisingly East and North East London along with the counties of Essex and Middlesex were largely avoided.

¹⁹⁶ Illustrative London districts derived from the modern Ordnance Survey maps of London.

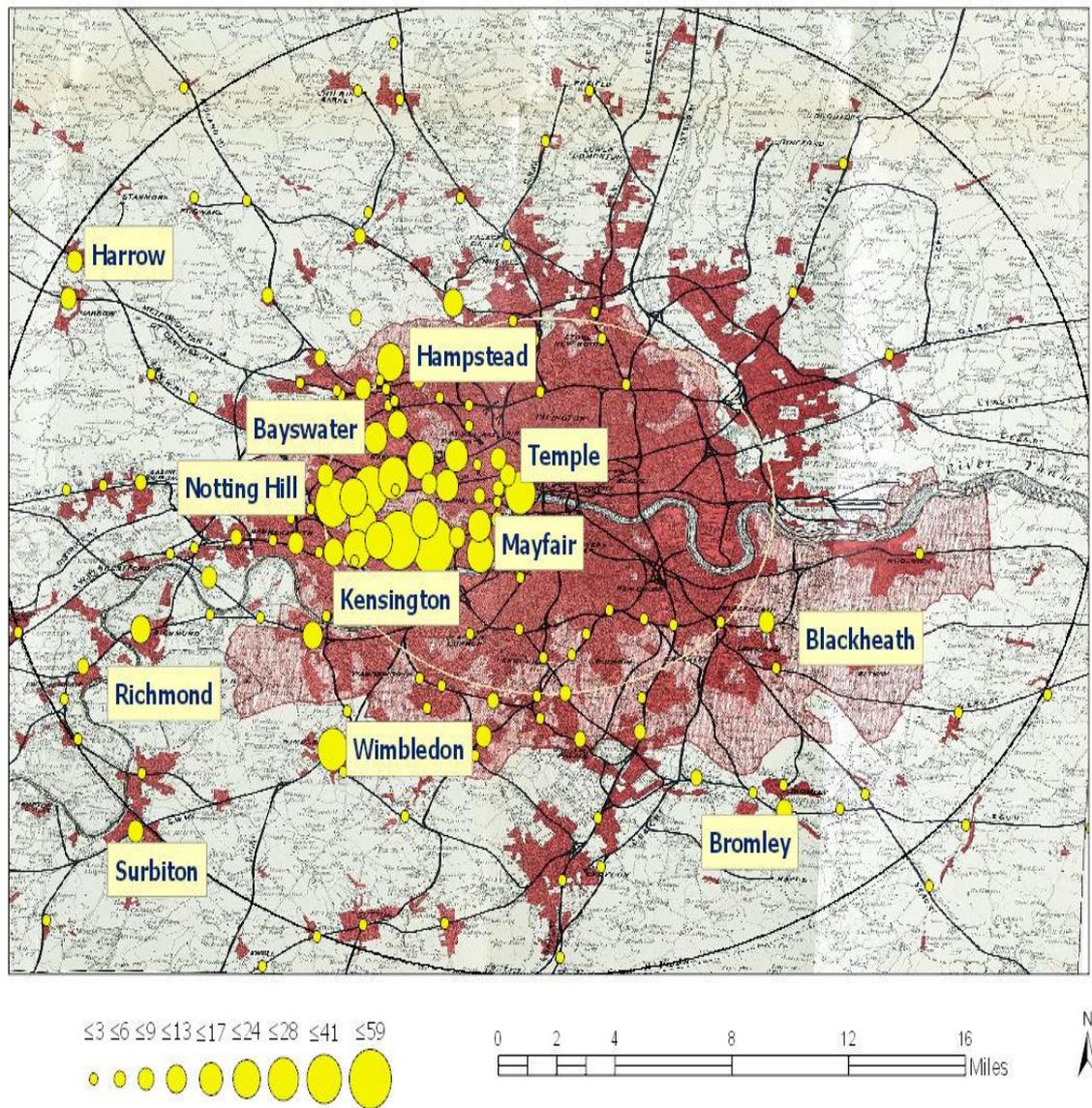


Figure 3.5: Geographic Distribution of the Residential Location of London's Barristers 1911.¹⁹⁷

Solicitors were regarded as the less prestigious branch of the legal profession. Reflecting this slightly lower social standing, London based solicitors were to be found in a wider range of residential locations than barristers (figure 3.6). The most favoured residential locations were still in west London, notably in the Bayswater and Marylebone areas to the north of Hyde Park. Hampstead, St John's Wood, Streatham,

¹⁹⁷ Compiled from the 1911 Census (cross-referenced with 1910 Post Office London Directory (Volume 2, Part II, Law Directory).

Brixton and Finsbury Park also featured as desirable areas in inner London, along with the archetypal suburban destinations of Wimbledon, Putney, Ealing, Bromley and Surbiton.

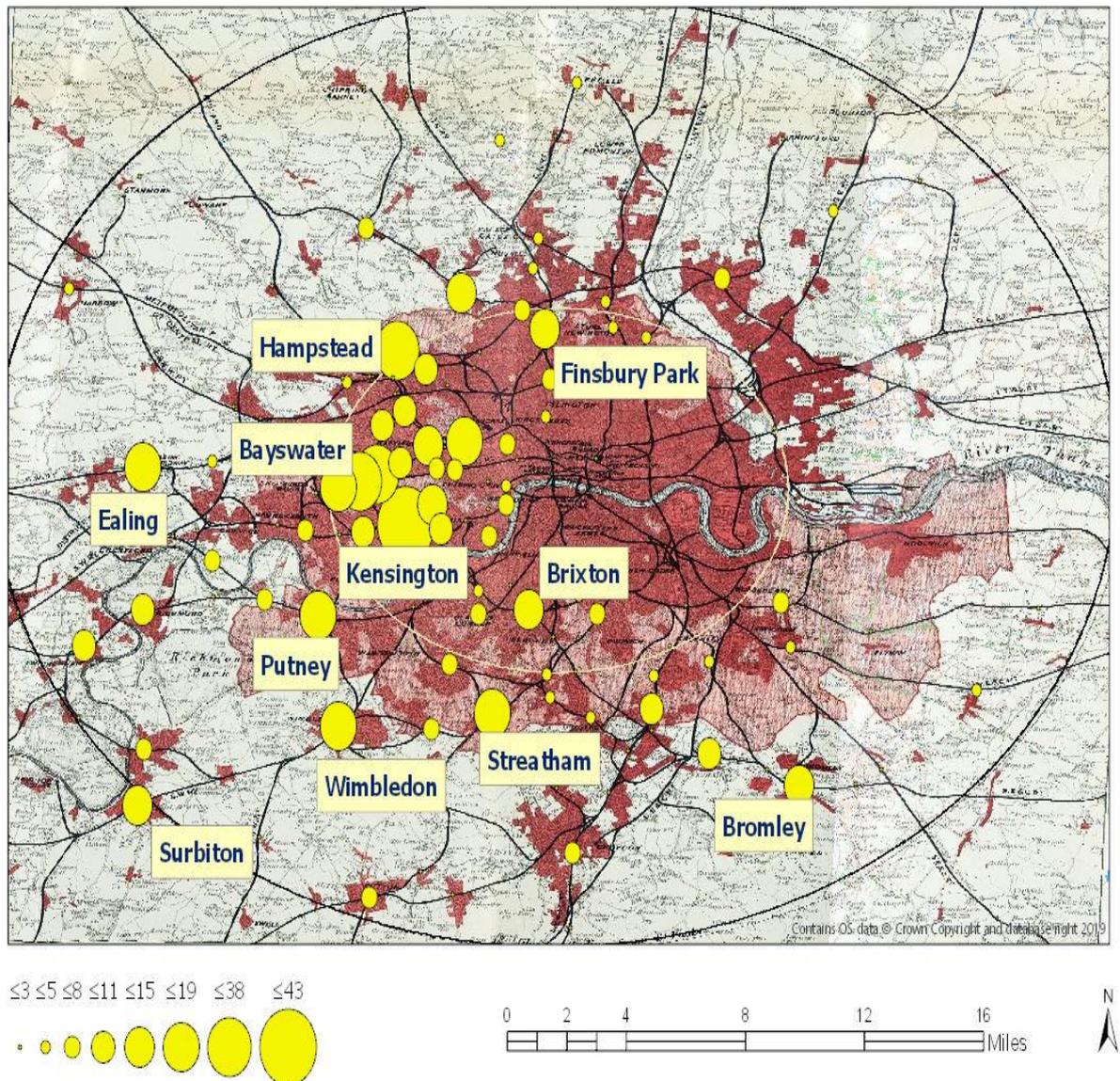


Figure 3.6: Geographic Distribution of the Residential Location of London's Solicitors 1902.¹⁹⁸

It should be noted that the dataset for the London based solicitors was derived from the London Post Office Directory. This only recorded residential addresses within the

¹⁹⁸ Compiled from Law section pp. 2559-2676 of the 1902 Post Office Directory (London, Kelly Directories Printing Ltd), accessed at various dates in October and November 2018 via <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/1547>.

Metropolitan Police District (roughly 15 miles from Charing Cross) and not further into the Home Counties. Given the similarities with the stock broker residential patterns within London, a significant representation beyond this geographic limit would be expected.

The distribution maps (figures 3.7 & 3.8) for members of the Stock Exchange, both brokers and dealers have a similar profile to that of London's solicitors within Greater London's boundaries. Their numbers were concentrated both in the western inner London suburbs and the affluent outer ones. Beyond this, the wider Home Counties exerted a strong appeal with a substantial number of commuters travelling over 20 miles each day to work. An embryonic stockbroker belt had formed with favoured locations being Woking, Leatherhead, Hampton, Reigate and Epsom in Surrey, Sevenoaks in Kent, along with Gerrard's Cross, Watford and St Albans to the West and North. Further out, commuting was confined to a few destinations with adequate transport links; notably Bishops Stortford, Maidenhead and Chelmsford and the two resort areas of Brighton and Hove, and Westcliff and Southend.

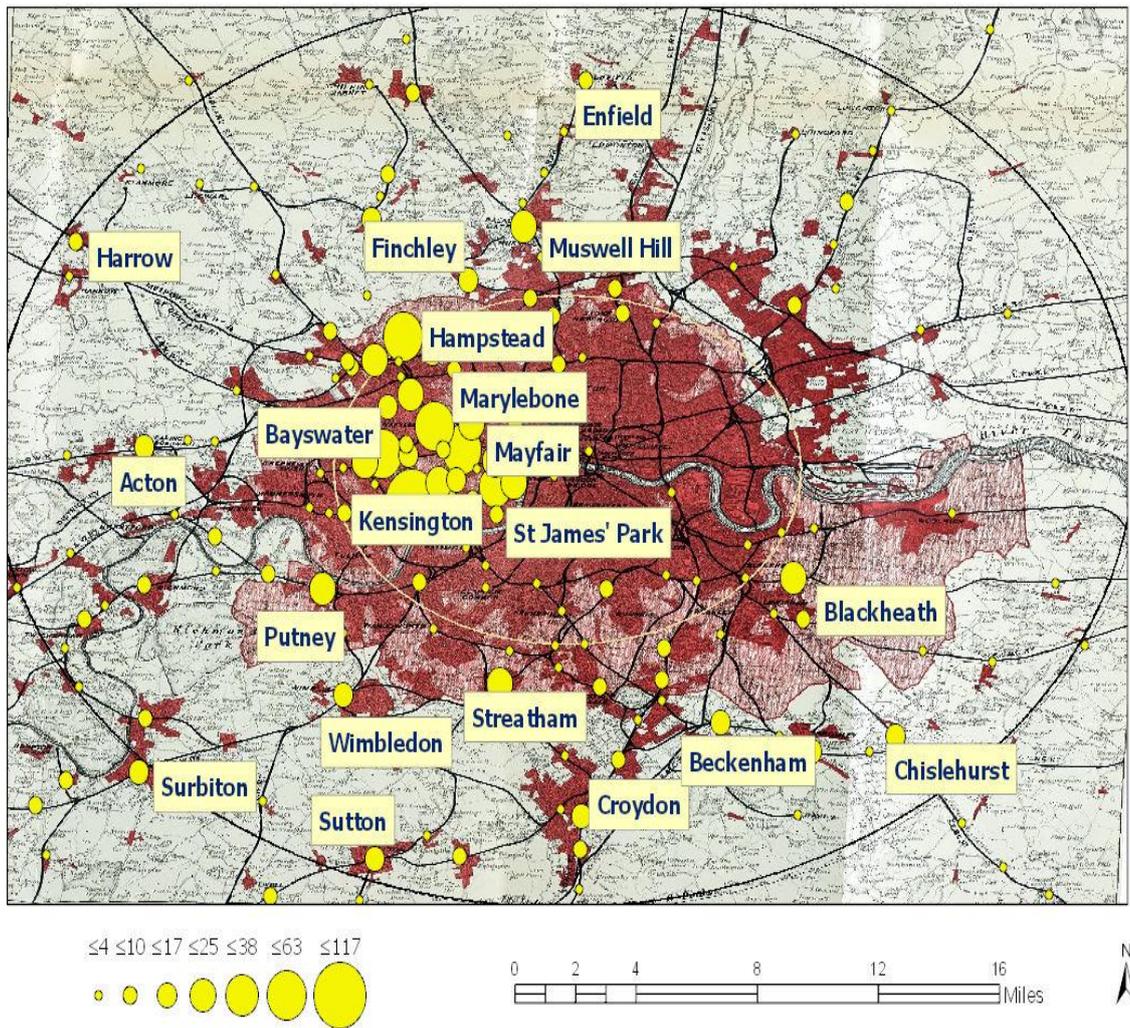


Figure 3.7: Geographic Distribution of the Residential Location of Stock Exchange Brokers 1910.¹⁹⁹

There was a hierarchy within the Stock Exchange, with stock dealers viewing the stock jobbers as their social inferiors. In reality, this social distinction was immaterial and at the aggregate level of this study, little difference in residential status can be identified. Both groups were well represented in the most salubrious areas of London and almost entirely absent from the least affluent parts of the capital.

¹⁹⁹ Compiled from the 1910 Stock Exchange Membership List held at the Guildhall Library (with functional split between brokers, dealers and clerks derived from Stock Exchange Membership application forms accessed at various dates in September and October 2018 from <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61169>).

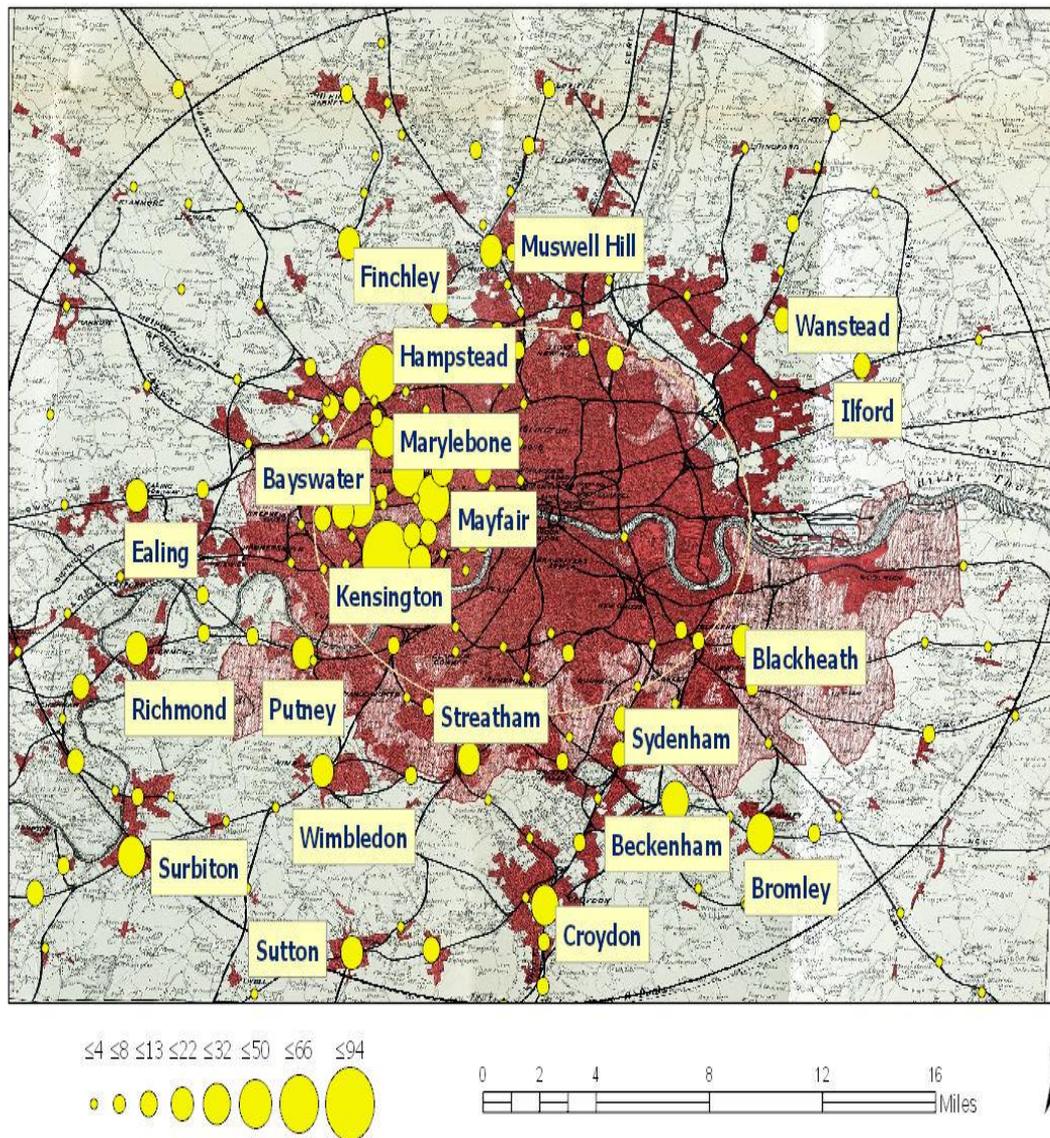


Figure 3.8: Geographic Distribution of the Residential Location of Stock Exchange Dealers 1910.²⁰⁰

In contrast the Chartered Accountants working in the City lived in slightly lower status middle-class neighbourhoods on the periphery of London (see figure 3.9). Few resided in the area around Hyde Park, instead they favoured the outer London suburbs of Muswell Hill, Streatham, Croydon, West Hampstead, Putney and Bromley.

²⁰⁰ Compiled from the 1910 Stock Exchange Membership List held at the Guildhall Library (with functional split between brokers, dealers and clerks derived from Stock Exchange Membership application forms accessed at various dates in September and October 2018 from <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61169>).

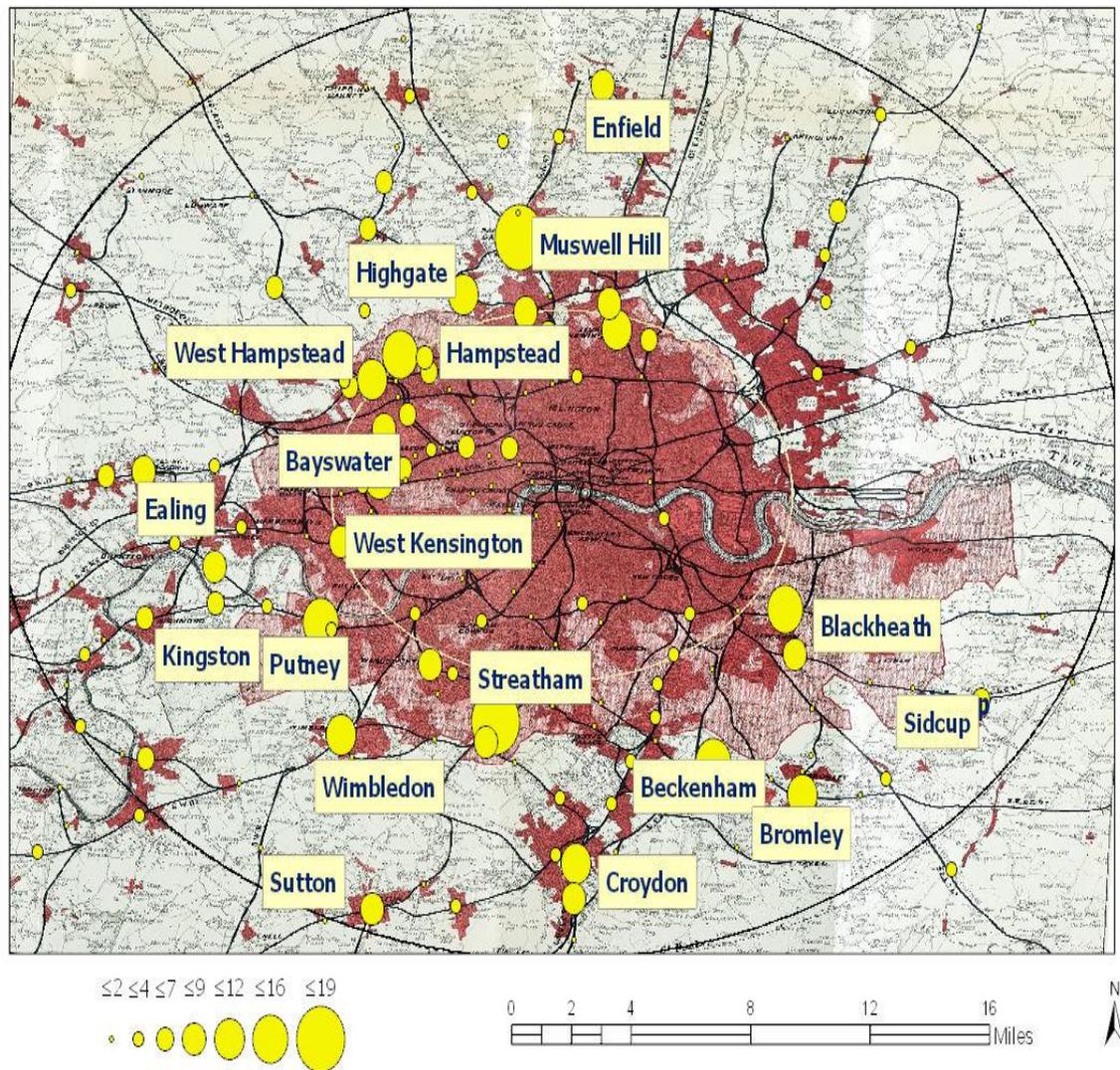


Figure 3.9: Geographic Distribution of Chartered Accountants 1911.²⁰¹

Possible explanations for the formation of these patterns will be reviewed in more detail in the later chapters. These chapters will consider London's transport environment and the appetite for the suburban lifestyle as well as specific factors relating to the nature of the work performed by the occupational groups and their social composition. Some general observations can, however, be made about the residential patterns of these five professional groups. The occupational maps (figures 3.5 to 3.9) present a very different picture to those of the broader cross-section of

²⁰¹ Compiled from the 1911 Chartered Accountants Members List held at Chartered Accountants Hall, Moorgate Place, London.

commuters shown in the 1921 Census results (figures 3.2 to 3.4 above). These high-status groups were, of course, unrepresentative of this wider population, with only 4,121 barristers and 17,259 solicitors listed in the 1911 Census out of a national total of c.16 million active workers²⁰². Unsurprisingly there was an obvious correlation between these occupational groups and the most desirable residential areas. The inverse relationship also applied as these professional classes were entirely absent from the less salubrious inner London suburbs and the outer London suburbs to the east and north-east. Two main residential patterns were highlighted by the HGIS maps; they chose to live in the central western suburbs of Kensington, Mayfair, Bayswater, Marylebone and Knightsbridge or in a railway suburb either on the fringe of London's metropolitan area or further out into the Home Counties. The maps further suggest that living in central London was the preferred choice for the professional classes, with the most prestigious occupational group, the barristers, heavily concentrated in this area. This runs contrary to the view that the lure of suburbia, in the sense of a semi-rural location, exerted an ever greater pull on the wealthy. This thesis will consider in its later chapters the rationale for this preference, whether it was dictated by the practical requirements of specific occupations or whether suburbia was, in fact, a second choice destination for those with the means to choose between alternatives.

A further residential pattern can also be observed, if only the commuters, who chose to live in the outer suburbs or the Home Counties, are considered. For this group there was a marked geographical bias towards the south-west and south of London.

²⁰² 1911 Census results from accessed 3 February 2019
www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1911GEN/S.

Professional Occupational Groups - Most Popular Residential Locations in Outer London					
Rank	Barristers	Solicitors	Stock Brokers	Stock Dealers	Accountants
1	Wimbledon	Ealing	Putney	Woking	Alexandra Palace
2	Hove	Wimbledon	Alexandra Palace	Bromley	Streatham
3	Richmond	Bromley South	Streatham	Beckenham	Putney
4	Brighton	Surbiton	Surbiton	East Croydon	Beckenham
5	Woking	Richmond	Finchley	Surbiton	East Croydon
6	Blackheath	Beckenham	Westcliff	Ealing	Bromley
7	Bromley South	Twickenham	Woking	Sutton	Wimbledon
8	Chiswick	Sydenham	Bromley South	Westcliff	Enfield
9	Eastbourne	Blackheath	Weybridge	Wimbledon	Lee
10	Harrow & Wealdstone	Chiswick	Wimbledon	Sevenoaks	Purley

Table 3.6: Most Popular Residential locations outside of Edwardian Inner London.²⁰³

As illustrated in table 3.6 above, residential addresses in Surrey, Sussex and Kent were far more popular than those in the northern Home Counties. Locations north of the Thames accounted for only 20% of the most favoured destinations for commuters in these five occupational groups. One of the key factors behind this regional bias was a marked difference in the type of suburban railway service and infrastructure. To the north, north-west and north-east, the commuter service was often either limited in scope or orientated towards the working-class passenger. Whereas to the south and south-west, services were frequent and orientated towards the middle-class commuter. The reasons for this are considered in the later chapters of the thesis.

Patterns of Commuting – the Edwardian Clerk

The clerk was a ubiquitous presence in the Victorian and Edwardian workplace. They carried out the tedious, but necessary administrative tasks of firms in an age before the automation of routine office work. Accuracy, punctuality and conscientiousness were their prized characteristics. Their work was often dull and repetitive, but it required certain standards of dress and behaviour and so was perceived to be a middle-

²⁰³ Table compiled from the datasets of professional occupational groups.

class occupation, rather than a working-class job. Charles Booth described this gulf in his great survey of London: ‘financially the great mass of clerks are on a level with the great mass of artisans... But socially, and economically too, they are on an entirely different footing. From top to bottom clerks associate with clerks ... A clerk lives an entirely different life from an artisan – marries a different kind of wife – has different aims and different ideas’²⁰⁴. The choice of residential location was highly important in order for the clerk to maintain the appropriate appearance and move in the right circles to achieve career success. The path was well-trodden; enter an office at the age of sixteen or seventeen as the junior and gradually work one’s way up the office hierarchy to the position of senior clerk, or for the most able, a partnership within the firm. At this level it could also be relatively well-remunerated. Mr Pooter, the much put-upon senior clerk in a bank in the City in *Diary of a Nobody* was able to rent a ‘nice six-roomed residence, not counting basement, with a front breakfast-parlour’²⁰⁵ in Holloway. As the City of London was the centre of finance, banking and insurance services both for the country and the British Empire, there were numerous employment opportunities.

For all their apparent ubiquity clerks occupied a relatively privileged position within the working population. As Ball and Sunderland noted in their review of London’s economy, employment in the service sector covered a wide variety of jobs, including domestic service, transport and working in hotels and restaurants. London’s rapid population growth led to a ‘ready availability of cheap labour, [which]... encouraged London service firms to be profligate with labour – cabs permanently on hand, hourly postal deliveries and thousands of waiting messengers are but a few examples’²⁰⁶. They noted that ‘relatively high-productivity services, on the other hand, such as finance and the higher echelons of clerical work, employed only a small proportion of London’s total workforce’²⁰⁷. There were 40,379 bank clerks and 36,265 law clerks

²⁰⁴ C. Booth ed., *Life and Labour of the People in London, Volume. VII Population Classified by Trades (Continued), part III, chapter III* (London: Macmillan, 1896), p.277.

²⁰⁵ G. & W. Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, p.1.

²⁰⁶ M. Ball & D. Sutherland, *An Economic History of London 1800-1914*, p.68.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

recorded in the 1911 Census of England and Wales, out of a total working population of c.16 million²⁰⁸. In addition, there were a further 477,535 categorised as commercial clerks. Of these 126,395 resided in London in 1911. They were a distinctive group, distinguished by dress and outlook from the working masses. As Lockwood noted ‘if economically they were sometimes in the margin, socially they were definitely part of the middle classes. They were regarded so by the outside world, and they regarded themselves as such’²⁰⁹. Historical writing on the clerking profession has been divided on whether they were an occupational group in decline, gradually becoming ‘proletarianized’ or were able to take advantage of the technological changes in office work to enhance their status. Anderson²¹⁰ and Guerriero Wilson’s²¹¹ studies of clerks respectively in Manchester and Liverpool, and Glasgow took the former view. While Heller’s thesis²¹² on the working conditions of London clerks argued that prior to the First World War ‘in the context of London these claims are unfounded. Incomes were shown to have increased rather than deteriorated. There is little sign of unemployment, lack of promotional opportunities, deskilling or a fundamental sense of disquiet amongst clerks’²¹³. Regardless of whether they are viewed as a social class on the rise or wane, their regular income combined with an identifiable means of advancement by dint of ability or length of service, meant that the clerk was ideally suited to the suburban lifestyle.

Five groups of clerks have been chosen; three from the banking sector, clerks working in stock exchange practices and one from the legal profession. The three chosen banks represent different aspects of the banking system in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. The Bank of England had emerged as the country’s central bank, responsible for the stability of the wider banking system as the ‘lender of last resort’ and the management of the government’s borrowing requirement. Coutts was a family owned business,

²⁰⁸ 1911 Census results accessed 3 February 2019 via www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1911GEN/S.

²⁰⁹ D. Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker: a study in class consciousness* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), p.9.

²¹⁰ G. Anderson, *Victorian Clerks*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976).

²¹¹ R. Guerriero Wilson, *Disillusionment or new opportunities? the changing work of clerks in London and Glasgow 1880-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1998).

²¹² M. Heller, “London clerical workers, 1880-1914: the search for stability” (PhD Thesis, University of London, University College, July 2003).

²¹³ *Ibid*, p.2.

which had established itself as the bank of choice for the rich and famous of British society. In contrast Lloyds had begun life as a regional bank based in Birmingham, but had gradually expanded across the country through merger and acquisitions to establish a national presence. Of these banks, the Bank of England was the largest employer in London with over six hundred clerical staff and a further hundred porters and messengers in 1911 at its Threadneedle Street headquarters. The Head Office of Lloyds Bank in Lombard Street employed around three hundred staff and Coutts & Co, based in the Strand was the smallest with one hundred and fifty staff. By way of contrast in the rarefied world of merchant banking, the numbers were even smaller. At the turn of the century, there were only 40 at Hambros, 41 at Schrodgers, 60 at Barings and 71 at Kleinworts²¹⁴.

Clerks in stock exchange practices shared many characteristics with banking staff, as they carried out the routine administration of financial transactions. In contrast to Edwardian bank, stock-broking firms were often small, family-run concerns. Working as a clerk was viewed, for some, as an apprenticeship for the younger family members before becoming a fully-fledged broker or jobber. The clerks in the dataset represent this mix of career clerks and trainee brokers and jobbers. The role performed by barristers' clerks has been described as 'the middlemen, or mediator, between the diverse interests of the legal system, namely those of barrister, solicitor, judges, list offices, and occasionally the client upon whom the system depends'²¹⁵. It was a unique role, based on a very close relationship with the clerk's barrister. The clerk was 'at once his clerk, his good servant, his dresser, his friend, his 'flapper', his guide, stop-watch, auditor and treasurer'²¹⁶. Notwithstanding these close ties, there was a clear social divide between employer and employee, with the latter being on the fringes of polite society. The clerk was also dependent on the barrister making a success of his career for his own living. Yet for an enterprising clerk working for a successful barrister it could be a well-rewarded role. In Trollope's *Orley Farm*, the clerk, Mr

²¹⁴ R. Roberts, *Schrodgers, Merchants & Bankers* (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), p.121.

²¹⁵ J. Flood, *Barristers' clerks, the law's middlemen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p.3.

²¹⁶ Quoted in *ibid*, p.10.

Crabwitz was described a ‘genteel-looking man, somewhat over forty years of age ... with a small bachelor’s box down at Barnes and not unfrequently went abroad in the vacations’²¹⁷. This quality of entrepreneurship marked out barristers’ clerks from the majority of clerks. In the case of bank clerks, they were expected to conform to set rules and regulations on dress and behaviour and work within a strict hierarchy. The aim of selecting barristers’ clerks for consideration in this thesis was twofold: to provide a contrast both with their employers, the barristers, and also with clerks working in financial institutions in the City.

The summary results of the HGIS mapping are shown below (table 3.7), though it should be noted that the actual sample sizes used were smaller than total staff lists as the residential address could not always be determined with certainty. The residential profile of the clerks shows a marked variation, which, in part, reflected the different socio-economic characteristics of the groups. The pattern for the barristers’ clerks most closely resembled that of their employer, the barristers, with its concentration in inner London. In contrast the patterns for the bank staff and the clerical members of the Stock Exchange favoured more distant locations.

Summary By Occupational Group - Clerks	Barristers Clerks	Stock Exchange	Bank of England	Lloyds Bank	Coutts Bank
Inner London (5 Miles Radius)	61%	38%	19%	24%	38%
Outer London (5-10 Miles Radius)	33%	36%	42%	56%	36%
Home Counties (Beyond 10 miles)	6%	26%	39%	20%	25%
Average Distance to Work (Miles)	5.08	9.91	10.95	8.34	7.75
Standard Deviation (Miles)	4.01	8.10	8.56	8.79	6.18
Sample Size	319	1063	447	222	138
Date of Sample	1911	1910	1911	1911	1911

Table 3.7: Summary residential location of clerical groups in Edwardian London.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid*, p.11.

²¹⁸ Table compiled for barristers’ clerks from the 1911 Census records and the 1910 Stock Exchange Members list for Stock Exchange clerks. Data on other bank clerks compiled from the staff records of the

These high level impressions have to be qualified when the detailed distribution maps are considered. In the case of the sample of barristers' clerks (figure 3.10), their residential concentration was not in the most desirable areas around Hyde Park lived in by their employers, but the second tier inner London areas of Southfields, Fulham, Pimlico, Camberwell and Balham.

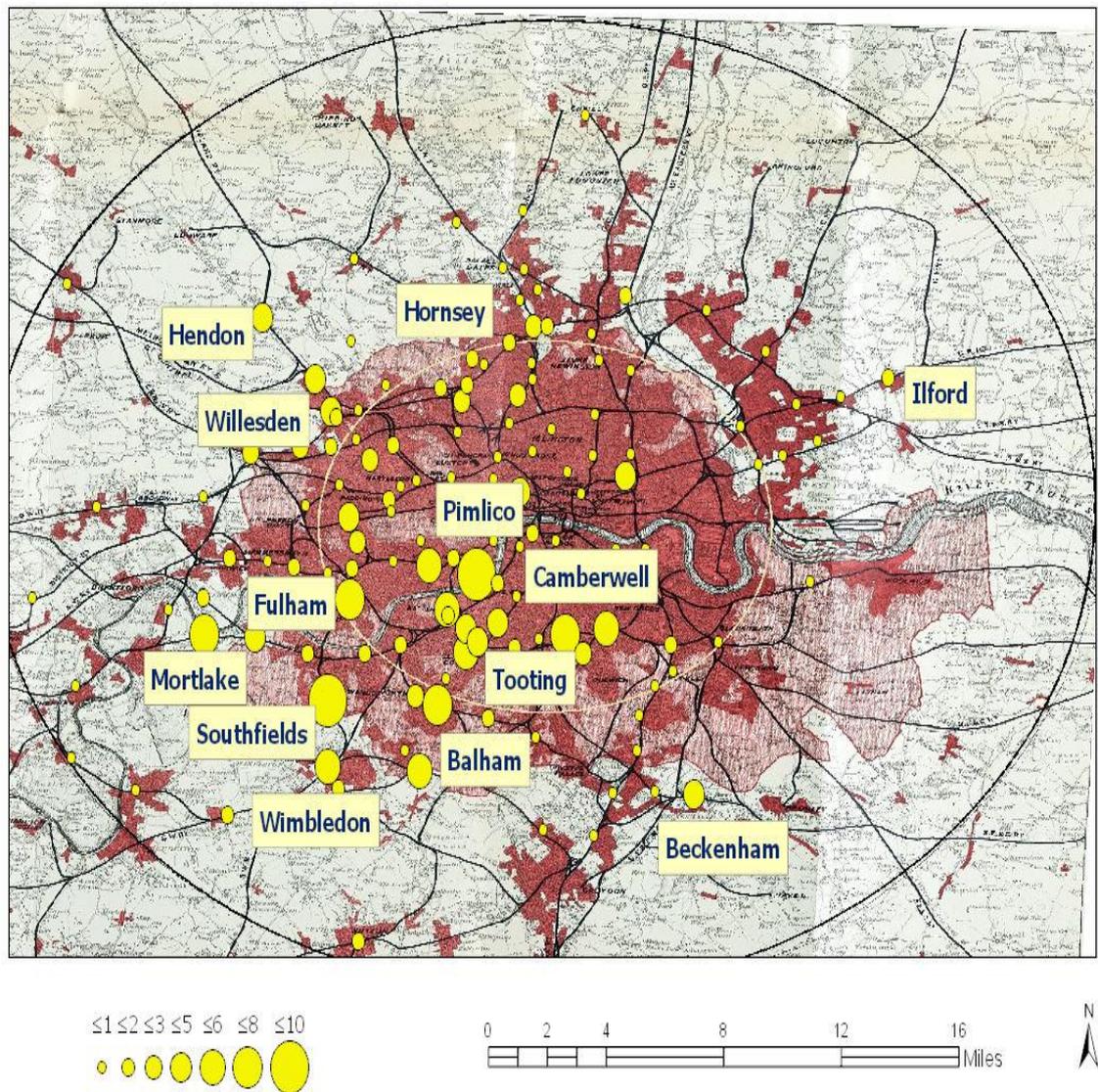


Figure 3.10: Geographic Distribution of Barristers' Clerks 1911.²¹⁹

Bank of England, Lloyds Bank Head Office and Coutts Bank, cross-referenced with the 1911 Census records.

²¹⁹ Compiled from the 1911 Census using <http://www.genealogist.co.uk>.

The heterogeneous nature of clerking for Stock Exchange practices suggested that there would be a split in the residential location of its membership. This can be seen in the data mapped below (figure 3.11). There was a concentration in the desirable areas around Hyde Park, which indicated a close connection between some of the clerks and their employers, the stock brokers and jobbers. There was also a notable deviation from the patterns of these professional occupational groups. Clerks were found in large numbers in the less fashionable suburbs of Croydon, Ilford, Streatham and Maida Vale.

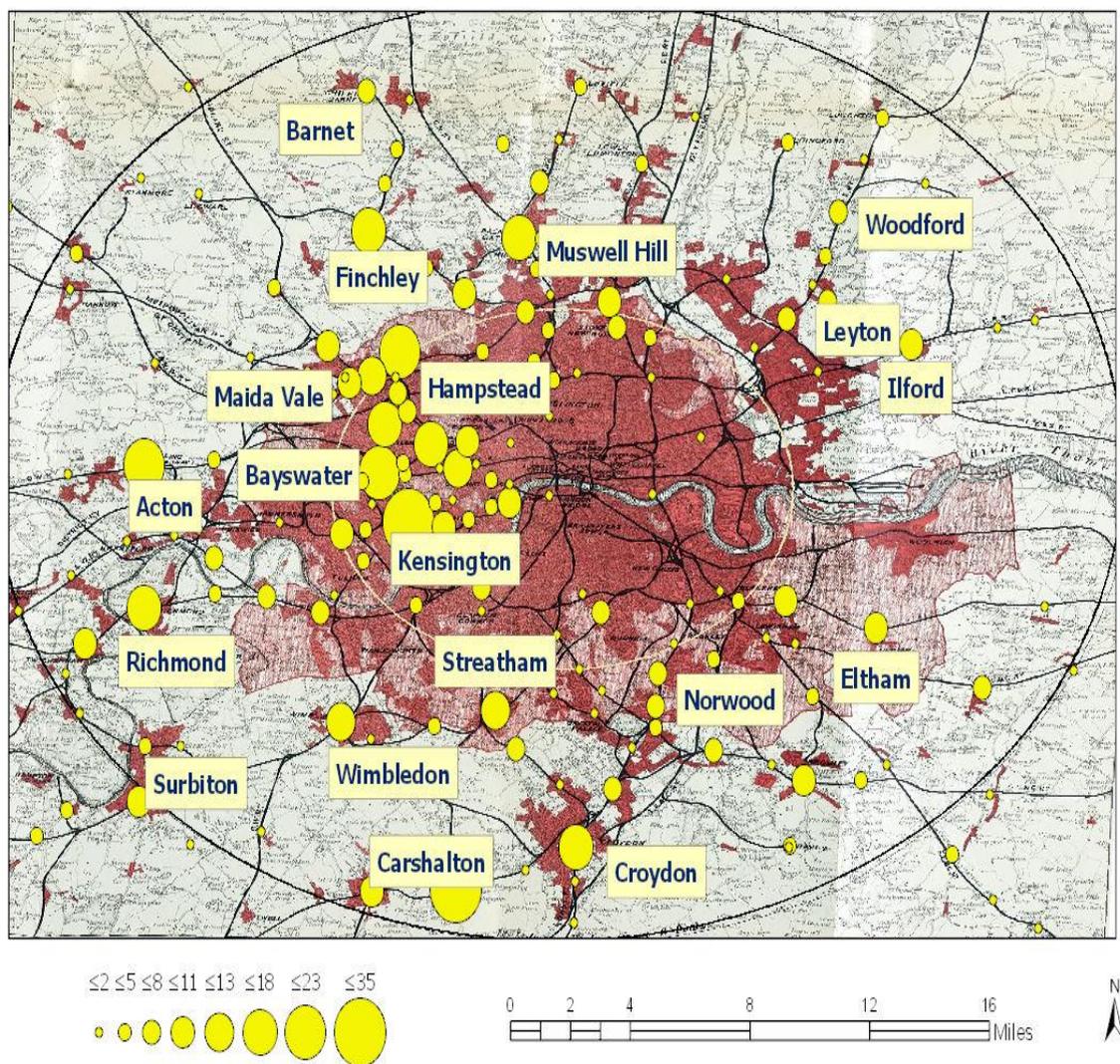


Figure 3.11: Geographic Distribution of Stock Exchange Clerks 1910.²²⁰

²²⁰ Compiled from the 1910 Stock Exchange Membership List (with functional split between brokers, dealers and clerks derived from Stock Exchange Membership application forms accessed at various dates in September and October 2019 from <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61169>).

This latter residential pattern was similarly seen with the three groups of bank clerks. In general their homes were in slightly less fashionable, but still in archetypally middle-class suburbs. Streatham, Croydon, Norwood, Highgate and Surbiton were all popular locations for the Bank of England clerks (figure 3.12). They travelled relatively long distances to work and in general showed a preference for London's semi-rural outer suburbs. They were noticeably absent from the inner London suburbs to the east and south, and only a minority chose, or could afford to live in, the fashionable west London suburbs.

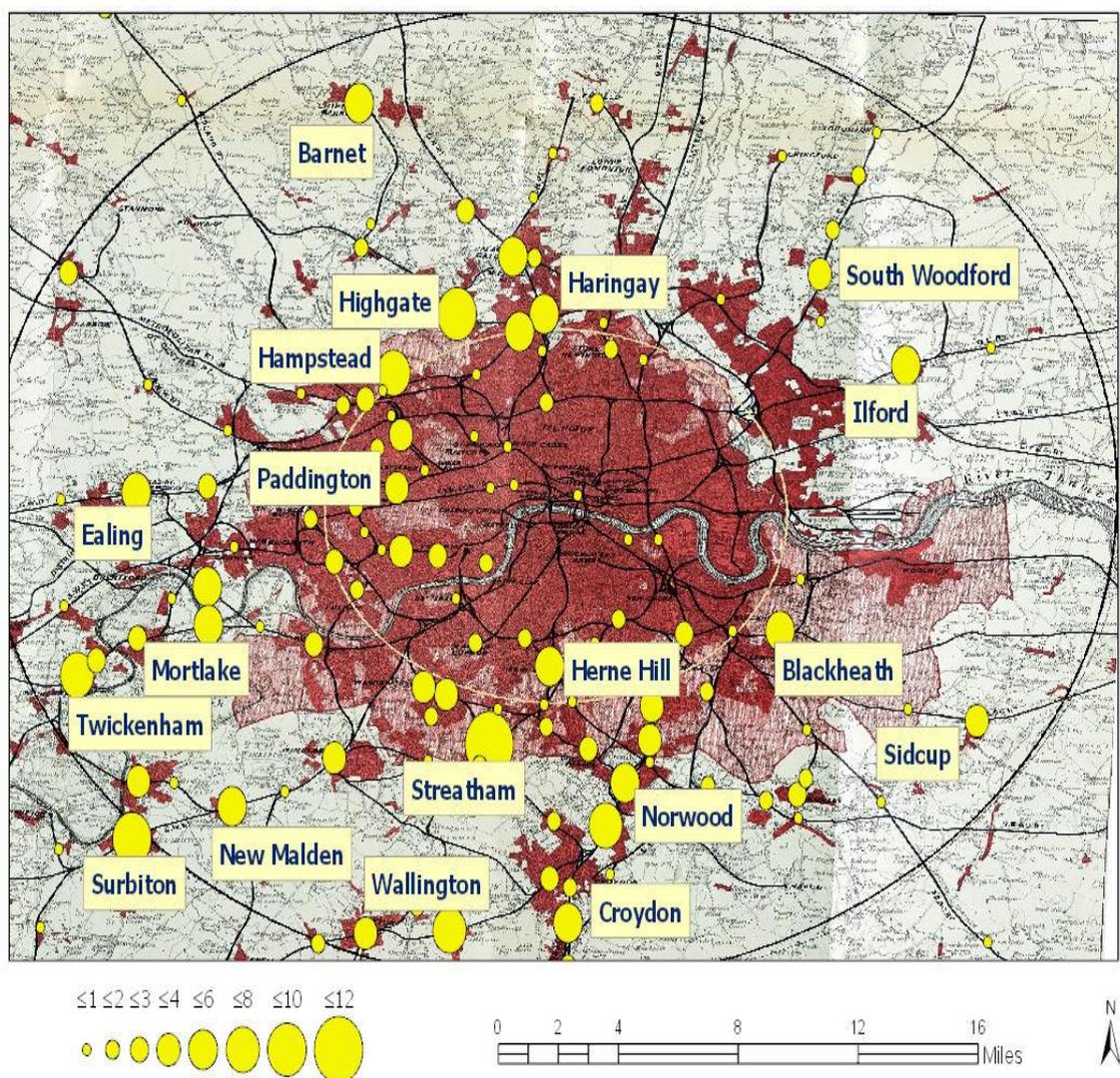


Figure 3.12: Geographic Distribution of Bank of England clerks 1911.²²¹

²²¹ Compiled from the 1911 Bank of England staff list combined with the 1911 Census using www.genealogist.co.uk.

The Bank of England staff list contained information about salary, age and position within the organisation. There were clear hierarchies within each department, with salaries largely linked to length of service. Surprisingly, the analysis of the data did not identify a clear correlation between age or salary and residential location. The map showed that lower ranked clerks were to be found living in the outer suburbs in significant numbers. The reason for this may lie with the restrictions imposed on recruitment to the Bank. Up to a one-sixth of all vacancies were reserved for sons of those who were or had been clerks of fifteen years or more standing. There was a strong tradition of word-of-mouth recommendation and all appointments relied on the support of a person of good standing. Many younger clerks may have, therefore, remained within the family home or lodged with well-to-do friends of the family.

The detailed distribution map for the Lloyds Bank staff (see figure 3.13 below) has many similarities to that of the Bank of England clerks, albeit the results come from a smaller sample size. The staff were concentrated in a suburban ring at least 3 miles out of the City of London, with the middle status areas of Thornton Heath and Brockley to the south, Harlesden to the west, Tottenham and Wood Green to the north and Ilford to the east being the most popular locations.

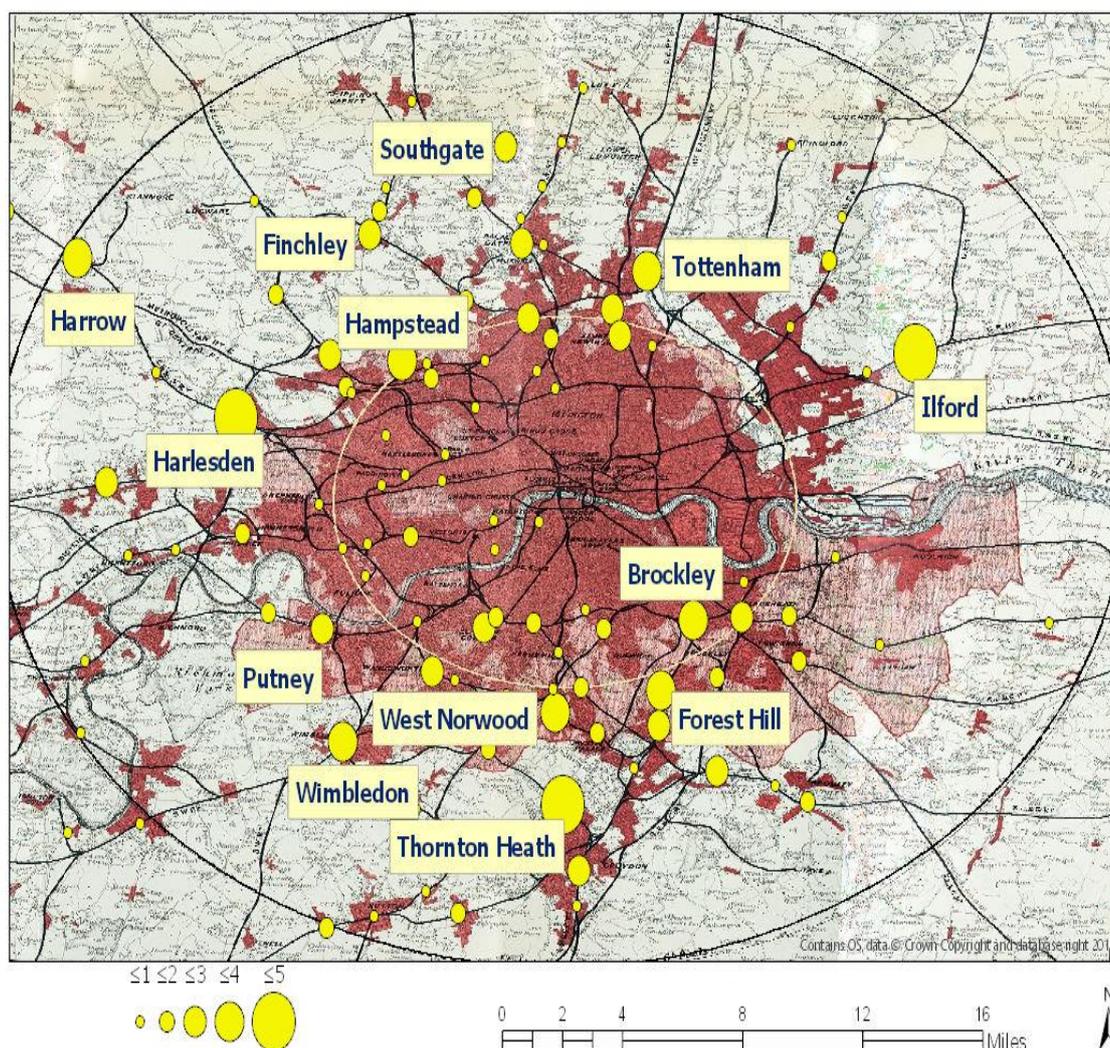


Figure 3.13: Geographic Distribution of Lloyds Bank clerks 1911.²²²

For staff at Coutts the pattern of their residential address (see figure 3.14 below) was only a partial fit to the preceding two maps. They were to be found in greatest numbers in the more salubrious outer London suburbs to the west and north; in Richmond, Putney, Wimbledon, Surbiton and Hampstead and a few of their number were to be found in inner west London. Yet, like the clerks in the Bank of England and Lloyds they completely avoided the inner London suburbs to the east and south of the City.

²²² Compiled from the 1911 Lloyds Bank staff list combined with the 1911 Census accessed from www.genealogist.co.uk.

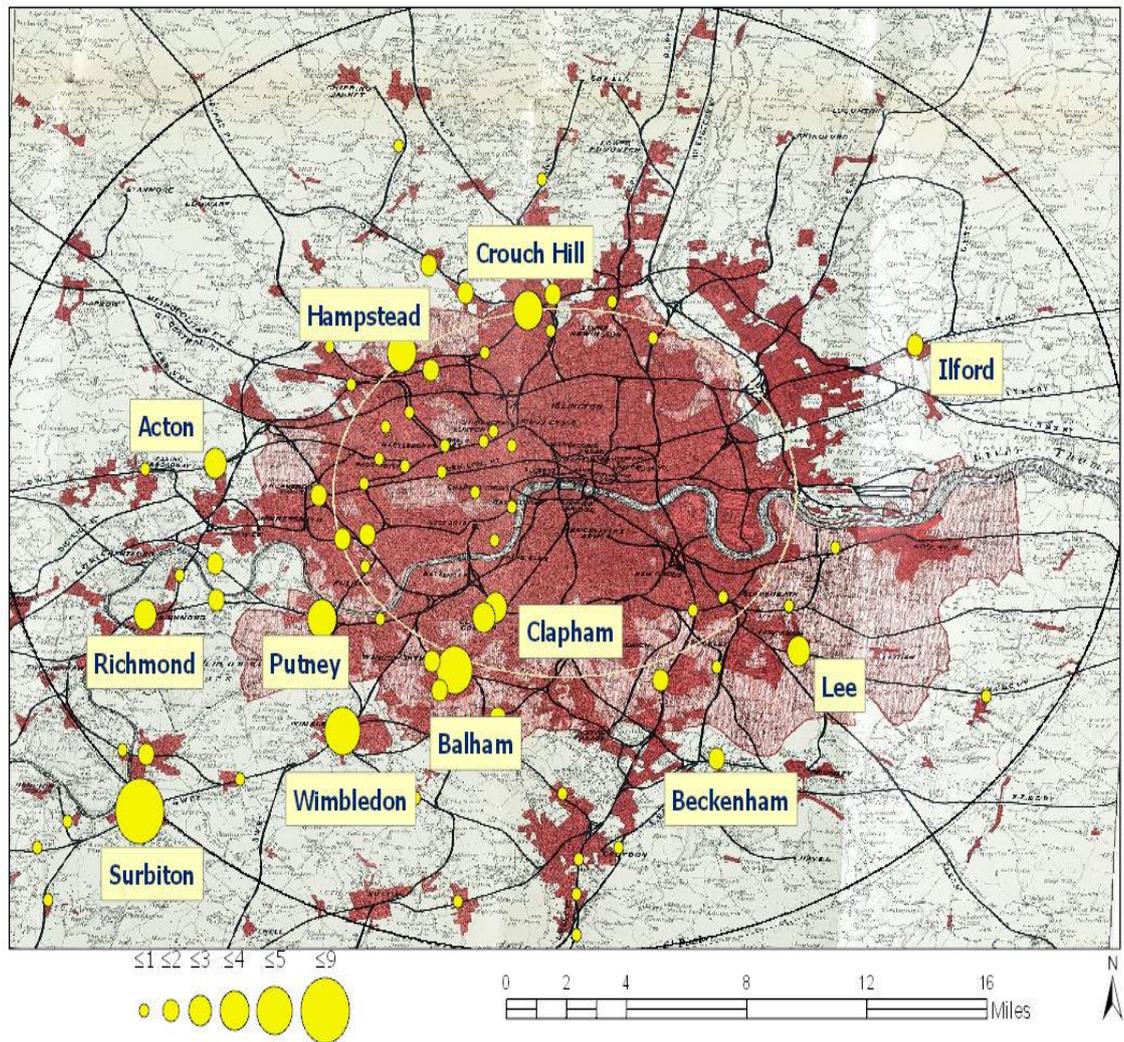


Figure 3.14: Geographic Distribution of Coutts Bank clerks 1911.²²³

Some general observations can be drawn from the residential location maps of these five occupational groups. In comparison with the five professional groups, they resided in slightly less salubrious areas, but these were still pleasant suburban locations far removed in their style and feel from the inner London suburbs and working-class areas to the east of the capital. As with the professional groups, there was evidence of a migration towards the periphery of metropolitan London. Indeed, this shift out of inner London was more pronounced than for the professional groups

²²³ Compiled from the 1911 Coutts Bank staff list combined with the 1911 Census accessed from www.genealogist.co.uk.

as they were unable to afford to live in the fashionable districts around Hyde Park. They were similarly financially constrained from commuting over very long distances. The measurements of standard deviation (the level of variation from the average) indicates that clerks, as a group, lived within a relatively narrow residential zone in comparison with the professional groups. This was still outside the innermost London suburbs and they can be said to have whole-heartedly embraced the concept of commuting by the Edwardian era. The maps are also suggestive of a relatively high degree of residential segregation and this theme will also be explored in more detail later in the thesis.

Patterns of Commuting – the Edwardian Working Class

This thesis is primarily focused on the origins of longer distance commuting by the railways. Its premise is that the middle classes were the first to adopt this way of living and that the suburban railway service was developed primarily to meet their needs and expectations. By time of the 1921 Census its reach had widened and the results showed that a significant proportion of London's workforce travelled long distances each day and that the working classes were clearly regular users of the rail network by this date. The evolution of London's suburban railway network from a relatively exclusive service to a mass transit one will be considered from a chronological and geographic viewpoint in the following chapters. In this section the residential patterns of a limited selection of working-class occupational groups have been mapped to give some partial indication of the degree of working-class commuting in 1911. The five selected groups are sorters at the General Post Office, retail staff at Harrods, Metropolitan Police officers, stevedores at London docks and workers at the Woolwich Arsenal. They have been selected primarily because their workforce can be easily identified either from the Census or surviving occupational records. Unfortunately extant employment records for the thousands of London businesses from this period are a rarity and any conclusions drawn from this sample have to be caveated accordingly.



Figure 3.15: General Post Office Buildings at St Martins-le-Grand.²²⁴

London's postal service developed rapidly in the Victorian and Edwardian eras as mail services became affordable and accessible to the majority of the population. In London, a 'Post Office Quarter' developed at St Martins-le-Grand (figure 3.15), just north of St Pauls to handle the capital's postal requirements. Within these vast, imposing neo-Classical buildings, resided the Postmaster General, the Secretary and his administrative staff together with the main sorting offices for London. The latter handled both inbound and outbound mail to London, the provinces and overseas. R Tombs estimated c. 17,500 sorters were employed in 1890 in his history of the London Postal Service²²⁵. This number continued to grow in the Edwardian period as a new building, King Edward's Building was added on the same site in 1910-12. Sorters at the General Post Office were among the ranks of the 'labour aristocracy'. Their work was regular and relatively well-paid with additional employment benefits, including

²²⁴ GPO West and GPO North photographed c.1900, accessed 3 July 2020, from <http://www.postalmuseum.org.uk>.

²²⁵ R. Tombs, *The London Postal Service of Today*, 1891, (Reprint, London Postal History Group: Dulwich, 1984), p.1.

pensions. As a large and well-defined group of workers, they formed one of London's early trade union groups, which eventually became part of the Union of Post Office Workers in 1919. This was an occupational group that enjoyed the relative security of employment necessary to live at a distance from one's place of work.

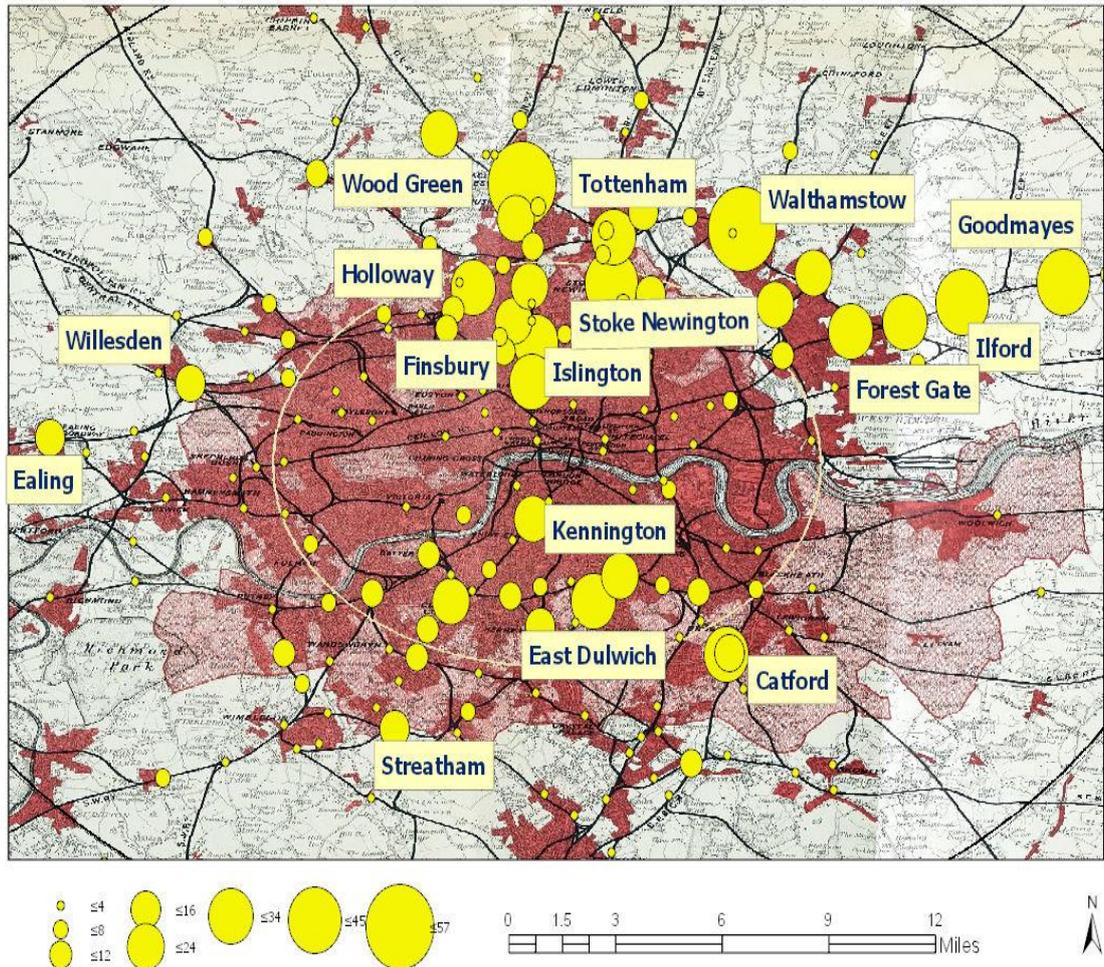


Figure 3.16: Geographic Distribution of Sorters at the General Post Office 1911.²²⁶

This ability to commute is reflected in the map above (figure 3.16). The average distance travelled to work was 5.5 miles on a sample of 1,385 workers. There were significant clusters of workers in London's northern and north-eastern suburbs of Islington, Holloway, Wood Green, Tottenham and Walthamstow as well as the new towns in Essex of Forest Gate and Ilford. All of these areas were served by the low-

²²⁶ Compiled from the 1911 Census using <http://www.genealogist.co.uk>, cross-referenced to the 1911 Post Office Establishment List held at The London Postal Museum.

cost railways operated by the Great Eastern Railway (GER) and North London Railway (NLR) or the workmen's fares of other railway companies. The strong correlation can be seen as confirmation that differences in commuting arrangements and opportunities went hand in hand with residential segregation.

A different perspective on the difficulties faced by working-class commuters was visible in the patterns of the lower echelons of the working class. Harrods had become established by the Edwardian era as London's leading luxury store. Situated on its present day site on Brompton Road in Knightsbridge it employed c. 7,000²²⁷ staff by the commencement of the First World War. It sold everything from ladies fashions to early motor cars and over one hundred different departments can be identified from the sampled staff records. Large department stores first emerged in the late Victorian era as increasing middle-class prosperity gave rise to a more consumerist culture. These monumental stores with vast shop window displays were directed at well-to-do women. In turn this fashion for shopping gave rise to a major source of employment for working-class women as shop assistants. Their working arrangements were in stark contrast to the opulence of their surroundings. At William Whiteleys Ltd 'assistants worked from 7am to 11pm, six days a week ... Fines were imposed from meagre wages for breaking numerous rules, assistants had to stand all day ... and had to pay for the poor quality food provided for them'²²⁸.

The Harrods staff records only record the department worked in by each employee and it can only be surmised that the vast majority of the workforce fell into this low-paid category. Crucially for the purposes of this thesis, they do record the employee's address (as well as previous addresses throughout their employment). The staff records for the period 1910 to 1920 are voluminous, as all staff employed, including those on temporary arrangements were documented (staff were frequently employed or only stayed for less than three months). A sample of all staff employed for at least

²²⁷ Employment totals from Harrods staff records held at Harrods Archive, Hammersmith, London.

²²⁸ Accessed 8 May 2020, via <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/womens-history/visible-in-stone/fashion-for-shopping/>.

one year between 1910 and 1914 has been selected, but just for those with surnames starting A,B,C, F and G. This yielded a total of 377 employees, split between 192 women and 185 men. The pattern of their residential address can be seen below in figure 3.17. The clustering around the store's site in Knightsbridge is clear, with Fulham, Chelsea, Battersea, Hammersmith and Putney being the most popular locations. The lack of representation in the sample from London's northern, eastern and southern districts is also obvious, suggesting that staff either moved to be close to their place of work, or chose a place of employment close to their home, rather than undertaking a long and costly commute. The average distance to work was 3.4 miles, though 26% of the sample lived more than 4 or more miles from the store. The result suggests that many staff walked to work. The map also indicates a longer commute, probably using the new low-cost mechanised trams and underground lines, was a viable option for a significant minority of the staff.

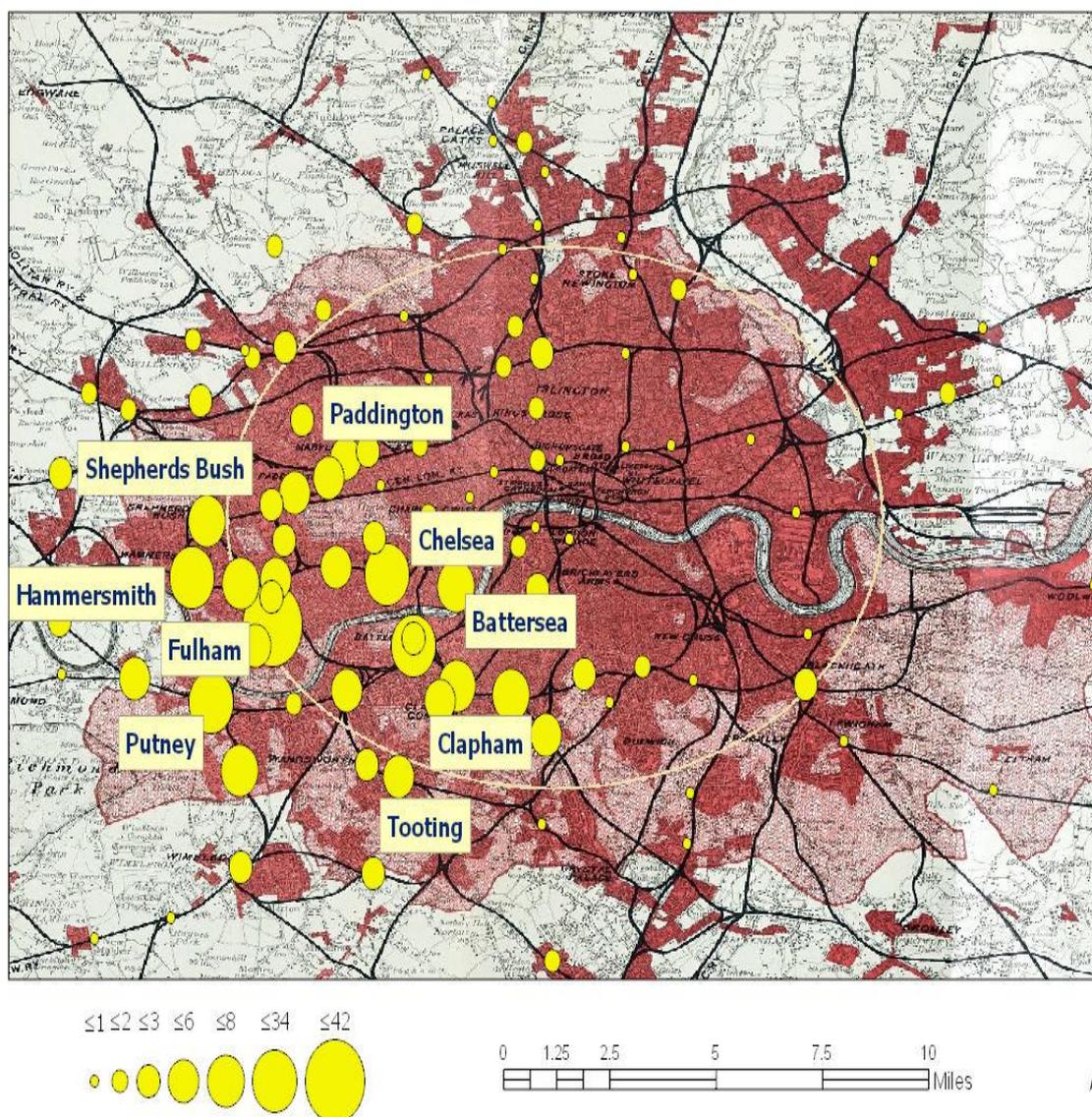


Figure 3.17: Geographic Distribution of Harrods retail staff 1910-14.²²⁹

A London wide organisation is represented by the Metropolitan Police. This regional force was well established by the Edwardian era and in 1888 the London metropolitan area was divided into specific districts, each designated by a letter (a map of these districts is shown below, figure 3.18). There was a central police station and several sub-stations within each district.

²²⁹ Compiled from a sample of Harrods staff records (Surnames A to C and F to G) held at the Harrods Archives.

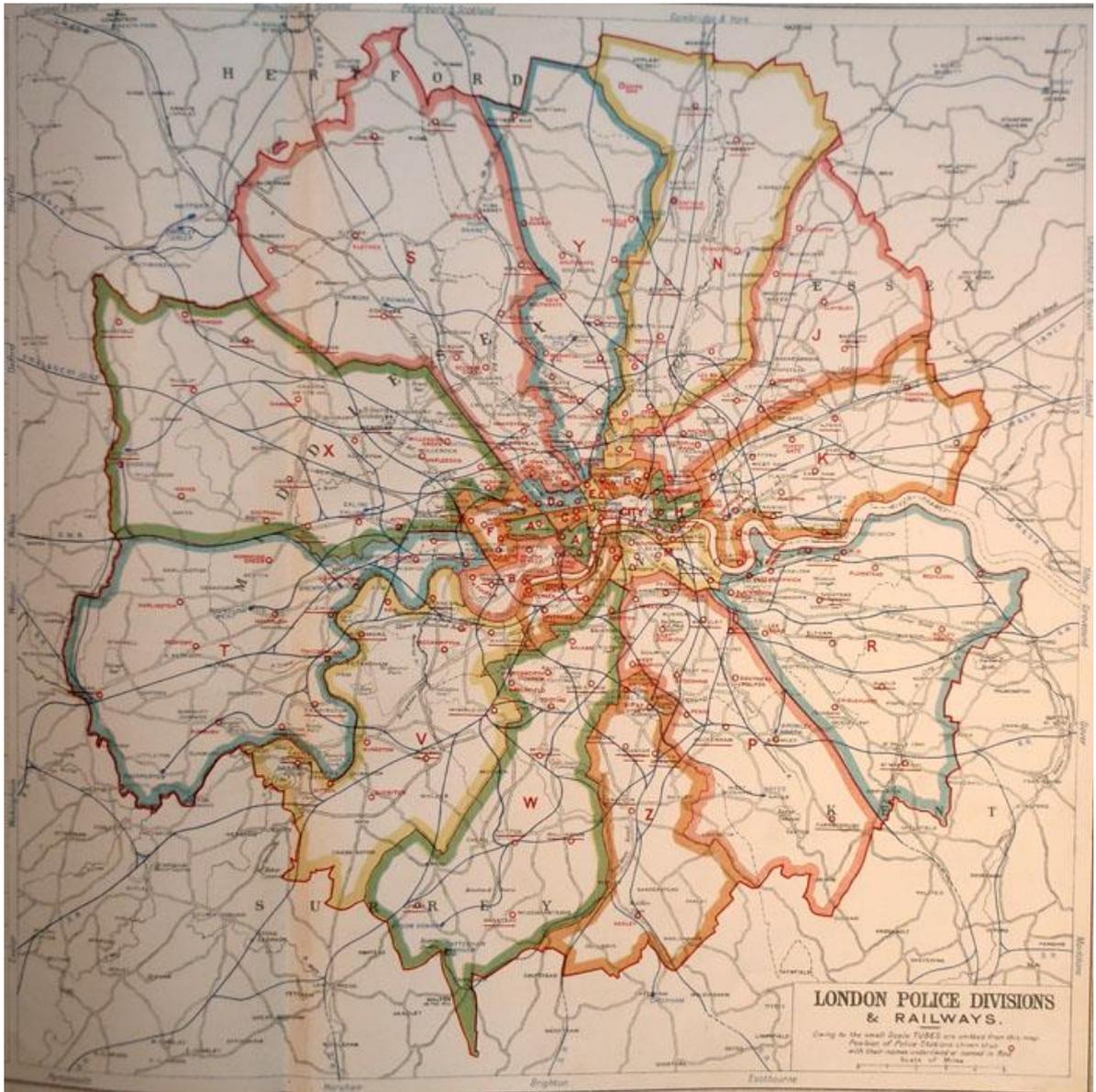


Figure 3.18: Metropolitan Police Districts in 1928²³⁰

The force was strictly hierarchical with three ranks of constable, sergeant and inspector. The latter was largely a middle-class preserve especially for the positions at Scotland Yard, whilst working-class recruits filled the other two roles. The wages of a policeman increased as he rose in rank and length of service. He also received basic occupational benefits, such as a pension and so the job of police officer was more secure and better-paid than most other working-class occupations. It might be expected that the police officer could afford to travel some distance to work,

²³⁰ Map of Metropolitan Police Districts, accessed 8 November 2018, from <http://www.open.ac.uk> online course *Policeman as a worker*.

notwithstanding the requirement to be on duty at potentially anti-social hours. A distribution map of Metropolitan Police officers has been drawn from the pension records maintained at the National Archives for 1910-11. They record the date of retirement and the home address of the police officer at that date and consequently, the sample is biased towards mature officers. A summary of the results is shown below (table 3.8); which includes the individual districts with a sample size above 20, and a total for all districts.

Metropolitan Area District Letter	Chelsea B	Bethnal Gr J	Islington N	Camberwll P	Greenwch R	Hampstd S	Wandswrth V	Highgate Y	Total
Sample Size	24	28	21	30	26	47	21	26	408
Av Distnce to Work	1.73	3.95	7.11	3.10	4.76	2.72	4.94	3.87	3.59

Table 3.8: Residential addresses for Metropolitan Police officers on retirement in 1910-11.²³¹

The average distance to work totals are undoubtedly overstated as they have been measured against the main police station in each district; whether the officer worked there or at a sub-station is not recorded. In the case of the larger geographic districts, for example Islington, Greenwich and Wandsworth, the sub-station could be up to five miles away from the central police station. A better indication comes from considering just the central London districts labelled A to H plus L and M. On a total sample of 132, the average distance to work was 2.25 miles and if inspectors are excluded from the total, the average dropped to c.2 miles. In addition the individual data records show virtually all police constables and sergeants lived within the boundaries of their district. The inference from the data was that the lower ranks of the police force lived close by their place of work, with only inspectors being longer distance commuters.

²³¹ Compiled from the Metropolitan Police pension records (1852-1932) held at the National Archives and digitised at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61310>.

A similar picture emerges from the detailed distribution map of stevedores. The principal job of a stevedore was to load and unload ships' cargoes. It was a poorly paid living, with no fixed terms of employment. Typically those seeking work simply had to arrive early at the docks to see who was hiring workers on the day. In the Edwardian era the main dock areas were to be found eastward along the Thames away from the centre of London, as the older docks in the Port of London had been designed for sailing ships and could not handle the larger steam-driven ships of the mid Victorian and Edwardian eras. The first of these new style wharves was the Royal Victoria Dock, which was opened in 1855 on Plaistow marshes. It had quays half a mile in length and was connected by purpose-built railway lines to the rest of the capital and country. This was followed by the Millwall dock in 1868 on the Isle of Dogs, the Canada dock in 1876 at Rotherhithe and the Royal Albert Dock in 1880, which adjoined the Royal Victoria Dock and became London's largest dock. In geographical terms, London's docklands were concentrated on the north side of the river between Limehouse, Poplar, Canning Town and West and East Ham. The detailed distribution map (see figure 3.19 below) of stevedores identified in the 1911 Census mirrors the geographical location of the docks.

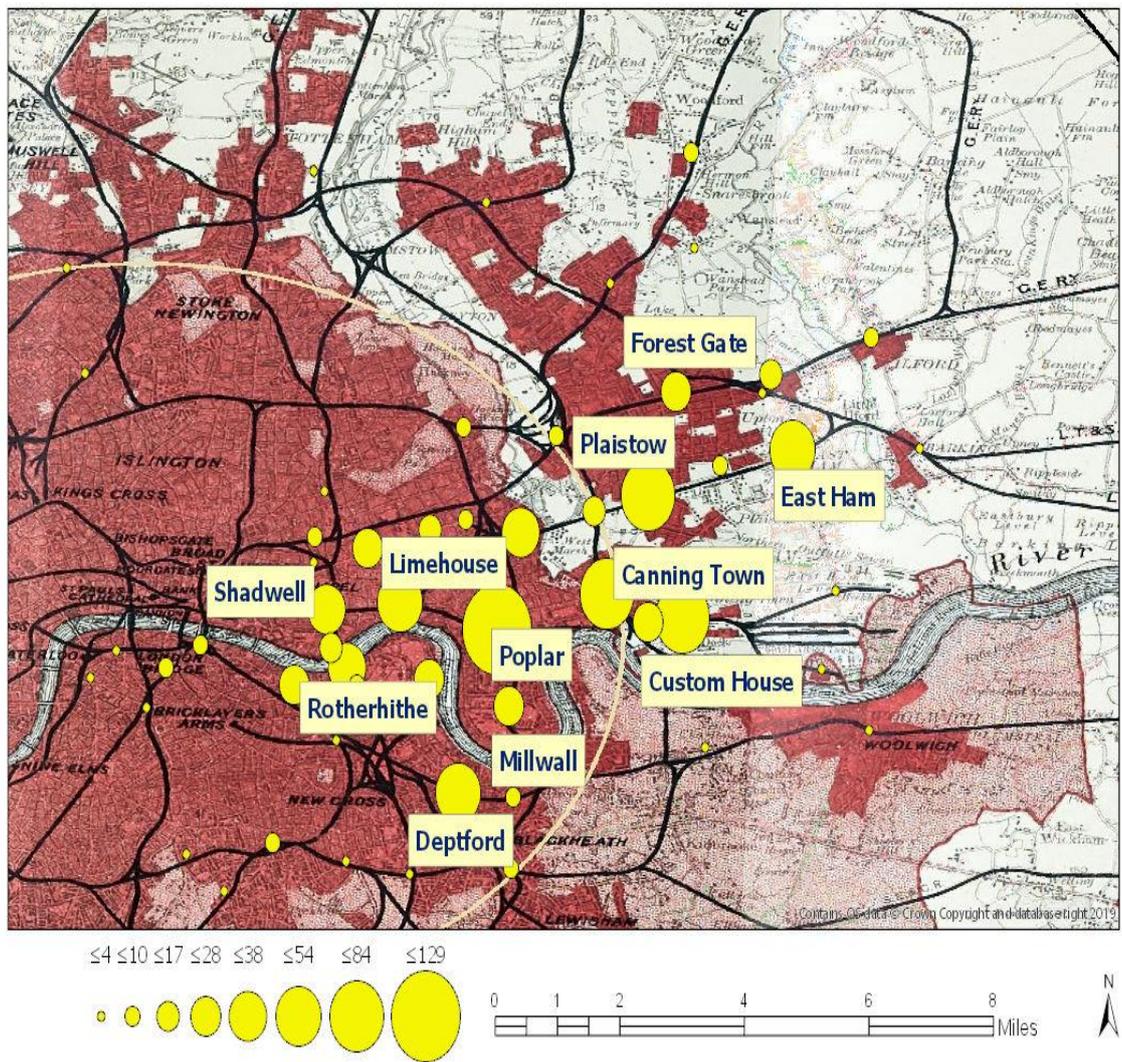


Figure 3.19: Geographic Distribution of Stevedores 1911.²³²

The pattern of residential locations being close to their place of work was to be expected given the precarious nature of dock-based employment; where unskilled workers were hired on a day rate basis. Additional money could not easily be afforded to travel to work other than on foot. A more skilled position did exist in the form of the head of these loading gangs, known as master stevedores. Only 15 were identified out of a population sample of 1,033, but every one of this group lived outside of the main dockland residential areas, favouring the more attractive neighbourhoods of Ilford, Romford and Woodford Green. As with the Metropolitan police force, the

²³² Compiled from the 1911 Census using the occupational descriptor of stevedore on <http://www.genealogist.co.uk>.

opportunity was taken to commute if the combination of income, job security and working hours allowed.

The final working-class occupational group selected were the workers at the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich. The site carried out armaments manufacture and weapons testing and at its height during the First World War it employed 80,000 workers²³³, though this expansion came at the outbreak of war rather than during the Edwardian era. Prior to this date it was still a major employer, with a wide variety of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manufacturing jobs as well as research, military and administrative roles. As the Royal Arsenal was on the outskirts of London, the suburb of Plumstead developed from the 1880s to house its workforce. It would be expected that the majority of workers at the Royal Arsenal identified in the 1911 Census would have taken advantage of the close proximity of this housing, but given the relative security of the work, others would have taken the opportunity to live at a greater distance. The sample from the 1911 Census represented in the detailed distribution map below (figure 3.20) suggests that this was not the case. Overwhelmingly the selected Royal Arsenal workers (80% of the sample of 825) lived in Plumstead, regardless of the nature of their employment; following by neighbouring Woolwich (8%), Abbey Wood (5%) and Welling (3%).

²³³ Brigadier O. Hogg, *The Royal Arsenal, its Background, Origin and Subsequent history, Volume II* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.1292.

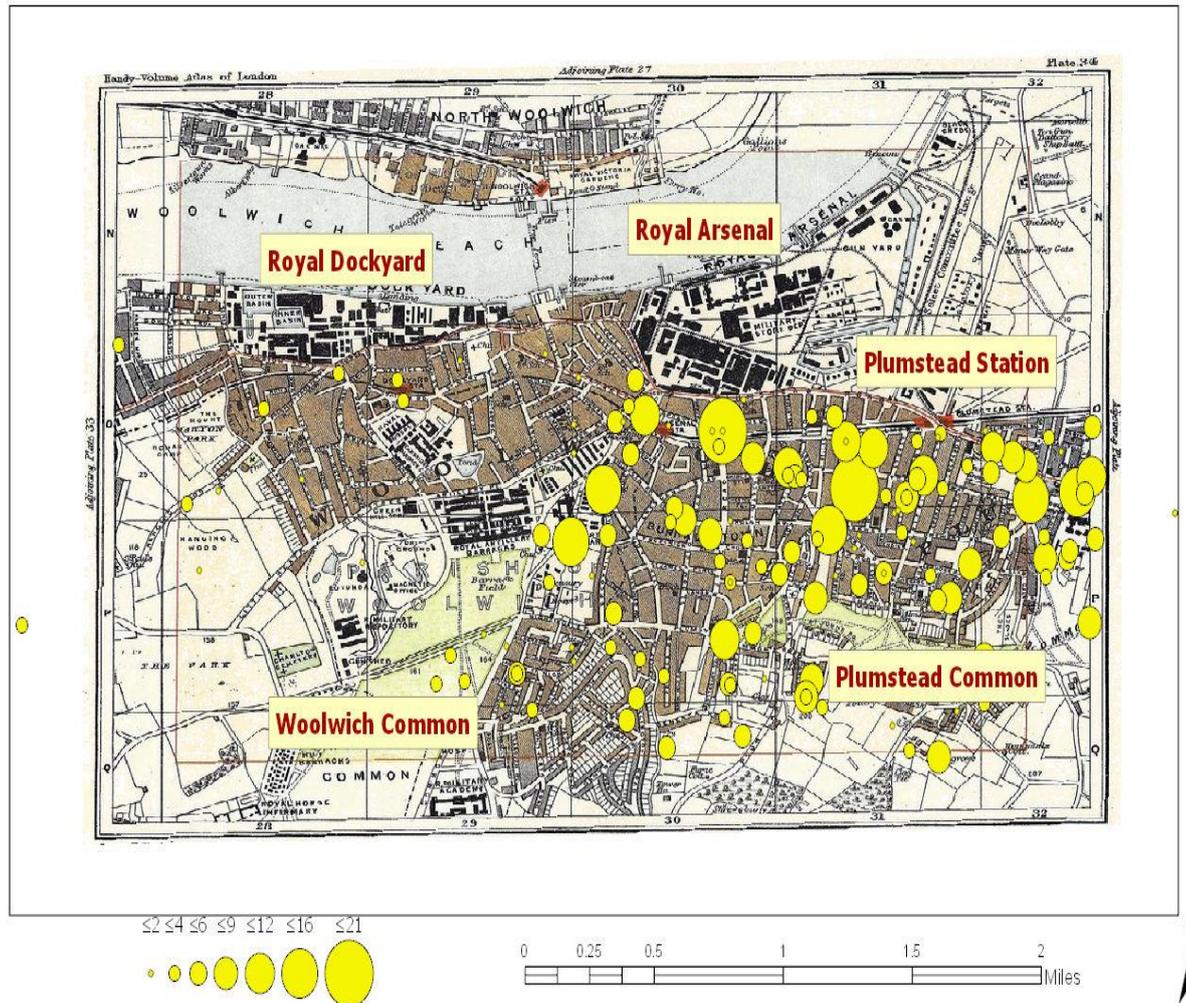


Figure 3.20: Geographic Distribution of Royal Arsenal workers 1911.²³⁴

The actual means of travel to work is not known, but nearly 90% of the sample population could easily have walked to work. It is a general observation that links the last four selected working-class occupational groups. Collectively the residential location maps present the picture that walking or at best, short distance travel, remained the norm for workplace mobility in the Edwardian era for the working class. Only the better paid and economically more secure sorters at the General Post Office indicated that longer-distance commuting was a viable option for the working classes. This conclusion, of course, has to be caveated by the highly limited and selective sample and it is also has to be squared with the relatively high degree of mobility

²³⁴ Compiled from the 1911 Census using the occupational descriptor of Royal Arsenal on <http://www.genealogist.co.uk>.

observed in the 1921 Census. This will be considered in the later chapters, but an analysis of the detail of the 1921 Census provides some clues to address this apparent contradiction. The urban district of East Ham (pop 143,246) had one of the highest rates of daytime migration outside of its boundaries at 29% of the night-time population. This impression of high levels of commuting activity was slightly misleading. If the travel to adjacent districts is excluded, then the rate dropped to 16%; of which half was accounted by commuters into the City of London. The same pattern can be seen in Lambeth (pop 302,868) with daytime migration rate of 28%, which dropped to 14%; with a third accounted for by City commuters. In contrast Southend on Sea (pop 106,010), the most distant significant commuter destination, had a rate of 15%, but there was almost no travel recorded to adjacent districts; with nearly 90% of commuters travelling at least 50 miles into London. Two models of commuter locations can be observed; those in inner London and predominantly working class in character, where the residents choose to live close to their place of employment and those in outer London and the Home Counties, where there was an expectation among the middle-class residents that employment would be at a distance from their home.

Patterns of Commuting – Concluding Comments on the Edwardian era

It is potentially misleading to make generalisations about commuting patterns based on the small sample sizes of the selected occupational groups relative to London's total working population. For similar reasons, comparisons with or resemblances to urban models are hard to advance with certainty. Equally, not to offer a wider perspective on London's commuting patterns in the Edwardian era would be a failure to fully interpret the results of the various datasets. Some concluding comments have, therefore, been put forward.

First there was a widespread use of some form of mechanised transport amongst all the middle-class occupations. It had become a rarity to be able to walk to work for businesses based in London's central districts. This did not, necessarily, result in a general abandonment of inner London for London's periphery and beyond. The

residential location maps show between two-thirds and three-quarters of both the professional groups and the bank clerks lived within a ten mile radius of their place of work. Long distance commuting was for the minority, not the majority.

Secondly, within these groups there was a clear correlation between social status, levels of income and residential location. The most affluent occupational groups, notably the barristers and members of the stock exchange, were to be found in the fashionable areas around Hyde Park. Other less prestigious professions - solicitors, accountants as well as the smaller samples of architects and university professors - predominantly resided in the next tier of socially desirable inner London suburbs; notably Hampstead, St John's Wood, Putney, Wimbledon, Streatham and Blackheath. The sample of bank clerks generally occupied a further lower social rung and so were most heavily concentrated in the middle tier districts; for example Croydon, Tooting, Ilford and Finchley. This depiction of London as rigidly socially segregated requires caveating. Most London suburbs contained a range of housing and within the data samples there were many instances of individual residential choices that did not fit this pattern. The notable exceptions were the innermost suburbs and the working-class districts to the east of the capital, where the almost complete absence of middle-class workers is striking. Spatial differentiation in the patterns of commuting along class lines was to be expected and is borne out by the HGIS mapping.

This leads to the third general observation; on the closeness of fit of these patterns to the urban geographers' models of cities in the twentieth century. These theorised the relationship between distance from the city centre, the quality of residential areas and social segregation. As noted in the literature review section, spatial differentiation based on inequalities in commuting opportunities was central to their formulation. Their application has, of course, to be qualified by the historical realities of London's cityscape. As Morris observed the 'image of east end/west end and concentric rings are 'ideal types'. They aim to simplify and to abstract the essential characteristics of

a situation and of historical change and never claim to reflect every detail'²³⁵. Accepting these qualifications, the Edwardian commuters' London was better represented by Hoyt's sector model than Burgess' concentric ring model in the inner suburbs. The high value residential areas were clustered around Hyde Park to the west. To the east of the capital, the industrial areas and working-class districts were concentrated along the commercially navigable sections of the Thames. Further out, Burgess' model of increasing exclusivity with distance from the city centre seems more appropriate. In general the clerks lived closer to their place of work than the professional classes. The outer suburbs of London were the home of the former, and the Home Counties the residential place of choice for the latter.

The fourth observation is that, for those willing to commute longer distances, there was an uneven geographical distribution. Commuters living on London's periphery, were most likely to be found in an arc from the south-west to the south from Ealing, through Richmond, Putney, Wimbledon to Streatham and Norwood, and then to Beckenham and Bromley. Further out, there was a similar geographical band, which included Woking, Weybridge, Surbiton, Sutton, Croydon and Sevenoaks. There were some exceptions with Harrow, Finchley, Barnet, Enfield, Watford and Bedford to the west and north, and Ilford, Romford and Southend to the east all featuring in the datasets with sizeable commuter populations, but the pattern was closer to that of a crescent, than a ring of commuter residences. The popularity of all of these locations was clearly related to their proximity to a railway connection to London. The implication was that some railway services and railway companies were more focused or better equipped to cater for commuter traffic.

The final observation relates to working-class commuting. The limited sample of occupational groups indicated that shorter journeys to work were the norm, with travel by foot being the most likely means of commuting. The implication was that workers moved to be close to their place of employment, rather than incur the cost of a longer

²³⁵ R. Morris, "Urban space and the Industrial City in Britain", *ReFRESH*, Volume 28, (Spring 1999), p.1.

journey to work. Yet the 1921 Census data, the rapid increase in passenger journeys in the Edwardian era as well as the minority of longer distance commuters within the sample datasets, all point towards a greater ability for sections of the better-paid working class to afford and use some form of public transport. The sorters at the GPO indicated that this was already a reality for the better-paid and more securely employed working-class groups. Catering for these new commuters represented a clear commercial opportunity for London's transport operators. At the same time this increased mobility posed a challenge, as the provision of a service for the working class ran the risk of alienating their middle-class clientele. As a result the patterns of working-class railway commuting were strongly linked to the solutions adopted by some London railway companies to balance these different interests.

The questions raised by these observations are considered in the following chapters of this thesis, in the context of understanding and explaining the evolution of railway commuting. These chapters seek to answer what part railways and railway companies played in the creation of these commuting patterns. In summary they consider the class and geographical distinctions in railway commuting, which were brought into sharp focus by the various data samples. They also address, as part of the review of the commuting experience and the relationship between commuters and their new suburban communities, the apparent reluctance of commuters to travel long distances to work in large numbers. The starting point for these investigations is a greater understanding of the chronology of railway commuting and its development during the Victorian and Edwardian eras is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Four – Patterns of Commuting: Part Two - The Victorian Era

The Victorian era witnessed the transformation of London from its pre-industrial shape to a recognisably modern form; a transition from a ‘walking’ city to one with a sophisticated public transport network. In urban geography terminology this was a decisive period in the shift from Sjoberg’s pre-modern city structure, with the elite concentrated at the centre and the poorer sections of society at the city margins to the modern urban models of Burgess et al discussed in chapter two with the rich migrating to the periphery. Morris cautioned that this was not a linear, clear-cut process of ‘urban sorting’ resulting in clearly delineated segregated areas in British cities in general. ‘The analysis of urban ordnance survey maps of the 1890s will show such regularities as the expanding business district, the residential suburb, bands of institutional and factory building, etc., reflecting the bid-rent curve of successive building cycles, but further analysis with the help of trade directories and census enumerators’ returns indicate that most areas compromised various mixes of residential, commercial and manufacturing’²³⁶. Viewed across the nineteenth century, the trend towards residential segregation was unmistakable. Yet, the processes behind and the timing of this change in the city’s structure remain imperfectly understood and a matter of dispute. This chapter traces the evolution of the residential distribution of various occupational groups; with a focus on barristers, solicitors, members of the Stock Exchange and Bank of England clerks, across the Victorian era to provide a new perspective to this discussion.

In the previous chapter, the application of the urban geographers’ models to Edwardian London was discussed. This inter-disciplinary approach was extended to the development of the Victorian city in a debate first initiated by Ward²³⁷ and Cannadine²³⁸ in the 1970s. In Ward’s view it was the advent of mass transportation in the latter part of the nineteenth century that enabled the shape of the modern city to

²³⁶ R. Morris, “Urban Space and the Industrial City in Britain”, p.8.

²³⁷ D. Ward, “Victorian Cities, how modern?”.

²³⁸ D. Cannadine, “Victorian cities, how different?”.

evolve and for the wealthy to move to their segregated exclusive suburbs on the periphery. Cannadine saw things differently; arguing that segregated residential areas pre-dated the development of a widespread suburban transport system and its primary effect was to force the wealthy on the periphery to continually migrate outwards from the centre as lower social classes encroached on their exclusive domains. This chapter looks at Victorian commuting patterns to consider whether the quantitative data supports one side more than the other in this historical argument. As the debate centres on the inter-relationship between the growth of segregated residential areas and improvements in public transport, this chapter considers the patterns of development of both phenomena.

General Characteristics of the Evolution of London's Suburban Railway Network

The relationship between the railway and suburban expansion was not one of simple cause and effect. As noted in the literature review chapter, numerous detailed studies have found the process to be complex and subject to considerable local variations. This thesis adopts a new perspective to this debate by focusing on the activity of commuting. It investigates the dynamics of change in both commuting patterns and the growth of London's suburban railway network and explores the degree of correlation between them. The fundamental infrastructure requirement for railway commuting was a suburban railway station. In this section the nature, chronology and form of the spread of the railway into London's suburbs, as measured by the opening of suburban railway lines and stations, has been considered from a statistical and spatial perspective. This is then compared with the commuting patterns of the above-mentioned four middle-class occupational groups. In a departure from previous lines of research, the conundrum of the relationship between the railway and suburban growth is examined through the lens of commuter behaviour, rather than from that of the evolution of the suburban built environment.

The broad outlines of this growth can be seen in the table below (table 4.1), which compares the numbers of railway stations opened in each decade at both a national

and the London region level. There were clear differences between the growth rate of the railway network at a national and regional level and three broad phases can be discerned. Railway construction was initially focused on linking the country's major cities and towns. The dramatic transformation of journey times encouraged further investment in new railway lines and fuelled the 'railway mania' of the 1840s. The second phase was the growth of suburban routes. This was a later development, which did not gather momentum until the 1860s. The final phase, from the 1880s onwards, was the infilling of both the national and suburban networks as railway companies competed to extend their regional hegemonies. The rate of expansion of the network slowed as these opportunities were exhausted and competition in urban areas from mechanised trams and buses began to threaten the railway's monopoly on longer-distance travel. By 1914 both the national and suburban networks had reached their zenith.

	Total National Stations	Net Stations Opening	% Growth in Stations	Total London Stations	Net Stations Opening	% Growth in Stations	London vs National %
1820s	23	23					
1830s	386	363	1578%	44	44		11%
1840s	1,390	1,004	260%	107	63	143%	8%
1850s	2,216	826	59%	171	64	60%	8%
1860s	3,294	1,078	49%	298	127	74%	9%
1870s	3,958	664	20%	375	77	26%	9%
1880s	4,509	551	14%	407	32	9%	9%
1890s	4,922	413	9%	439	32	8%	9%
1900s	5,511	589	12%	493	54	12%	9%

Table 4.1: Railway Stations in England and Wales and the London Metropolitan area 1820 -1910. ²³⁹

²³⁹ Railway stations in England and Wales derived from I. Gregory and J. Henneberg, "The Railways, Urbanisation and Local Demography in England & Wales 1825 – 1911", *Social Science History*, Volume 34, No.2, (Summer 2010), p.212 and London stations in London Metropolitan area from own calculations (derived from London's current railway stations at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_London_railway_stations and disused railway stations at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_closed_railway_stations_in_London (accessed at various dates in June 2019) and cross-referenced against W. Conolly, ed., *British Railways Pre-Grouping Atlas & Gazetteer*, (6th edition) (Shepperton: Ian Allan Publishing 2015).

These phases were not experienced uniformly by the major railway companies. Some were more focused on national routes, for others their suburban network was a business priority. This was usually the product of the railway company's regional franchise, where geographical opportunities or constraints often dictated their response to network construction. Its effect was particularly marked in London's Metropolitan area, where there was a considerable difference in the approach adopted by London's regional companies to their suburban networks (as shown in table 4.2).

Stations Opened													
Date	Total	GER	GNR	GWR	LBSCR	LCDR	LNWR	LSWR	LTS	MID	NLR	SER	GCR
1836-40	44	18		6	6		2	8	1				3
1841-50	63	14	2		8		5	18				4	12
1851-60	64	10	3	3	14	5	9	6	7			2	5
1861-70	127	15	7	6	28	19	3	13		10		9	17
1871-80	77	41	7	4	2	4	5	3	1			1	9
1881-90	32	5	2		7	3	1	8	2	1			3
1891-1900	32	11			7	5			2				6
1901-14	54	6	7	13	6	1	5	3	2			2	3
Total	493	120	28	32	78	37	30	59	15	11	18	58	7

Table 4.2: Stations opened in the London Metropolitan area by each major Railway Company 1836-1914.²⁴⁰

This table shows London's suburban station openings split by decade and by the major railway companies serving London. In the interest of clarity, these have been deemed to be those in operation in 1900. Any stations opened by predecessor or acquired companies (e.g. the Eastern Counties Railway, which became part of the Great Eastern Railway (GER) in 1862) have been classified under the successor or acquirer company. Similarly the small surviving local lines in 1900 have been ascribed to the company, which had an operational working agreement with them (e.g. stations of the East London Line and Tottenham and Hampstead Junction Railway have been classified as GER stations). All stations operated by Underground companies, including the Metropolitan and District Railway over-ground stations have been

²⁴⁰ London stations in London Metropolitan area from own calculations.

excluded (on the grounds that they are not strictly comparable. The Underground companies only performed a short-distance passenger public transport role rather than the wider range of services offered by the main line railway companies).

It can be seen that four companies; the Great Eastern (GER), London, Brighton and South Coast (LBSCR), London and South Western (LSWR) and South Eastern (SER), were the most prolific builders of suburban stations. They accounted for 64% of the total number of stations. The remaining eight companies were either more nationally focused - the Great Northern (GNR), Great Western (GWR), London & North Western (LNWR), Midland (MID), and Great Central (GCR) - or served a narrower geographical area - the London, Chatham and Dover (LCDR), London, Tilbury & Southend (LTS) and North London (NLR).

The implication was that better suburban services were offered by those companies with the greatest density of network coverage. These summary numbers disguise significant variations in the nature of the suburban service provided. These differences and the reasons why railway companies serving London adopted a variety of approaches to its suburban market are explored in the next chapter. This chapter, instead, focuses on the spatial relationship between the commuting patterns of four middle-class occupational groups and the growth of London's suburban railway network across the Victorian era.

Commuting Patterns and the Suburban Railway Network in the Victorian Era: the Birth of Railway Commuting 1840 -1860

In 1840 London was still geographically concentrated around its historic centre. It was a compact city of two million people crowded into an area bounded by Hyde Park to the west, Regents Park to the north, St Katherine's Dock to the east and Vauxhall to the south. The fashionable districts to the west had only just reached Bayswater, Kensington and St John's Wood. Hampstead, Greenwich and Clapham were separate to the capital. At the time of construction of the first London railway termini, it was

still a 'walking city'. These termini were to be found on cheaper land on the outskirts of the city; Paddington (GWR - 1838) to the west, Euston (LNWR - 1837) to the north, Bishopsgate (ECR - 1840) to the east and Nine Elms (LSWR - 1838) to the south, with only London Bridge (LBSCR and SER - 1836) and Fenchurch Street (London & Blackwall Railway - 1841) occupying central locations. With the exception of the three mile London to Greenwich line (which opened between 1836 and 1838), all of these stations only offered a long distance service to England's major towns and ports. Railway commuting was not yet a practical alternative to the traditional means of transport by foot or carriage.

These limitations on mobility can be seen in the choice of residential location of barristers based at the four Inns of Court (figure 4.1) and members of the London Stock Exchange (figure 4.2). The barristers were predominantly either registered as residing at their place of work in Temple and Holborn or lived close by in the neighbouring districts of Russell Square and Bloomsbury. Some were willing to live at a distance beyond that of an easy walk to work. They were to be found in the new prestigious housing developments around Regents Park and Hyde Park as well as the older fashionable locales on London's periphery, notably Clapham and Camberwell. A similar pattern is visible in the map for the Stock Exchange members. The most notable difference being their additional choice of the northern suburbs of Islington, Clapton and Hackney.

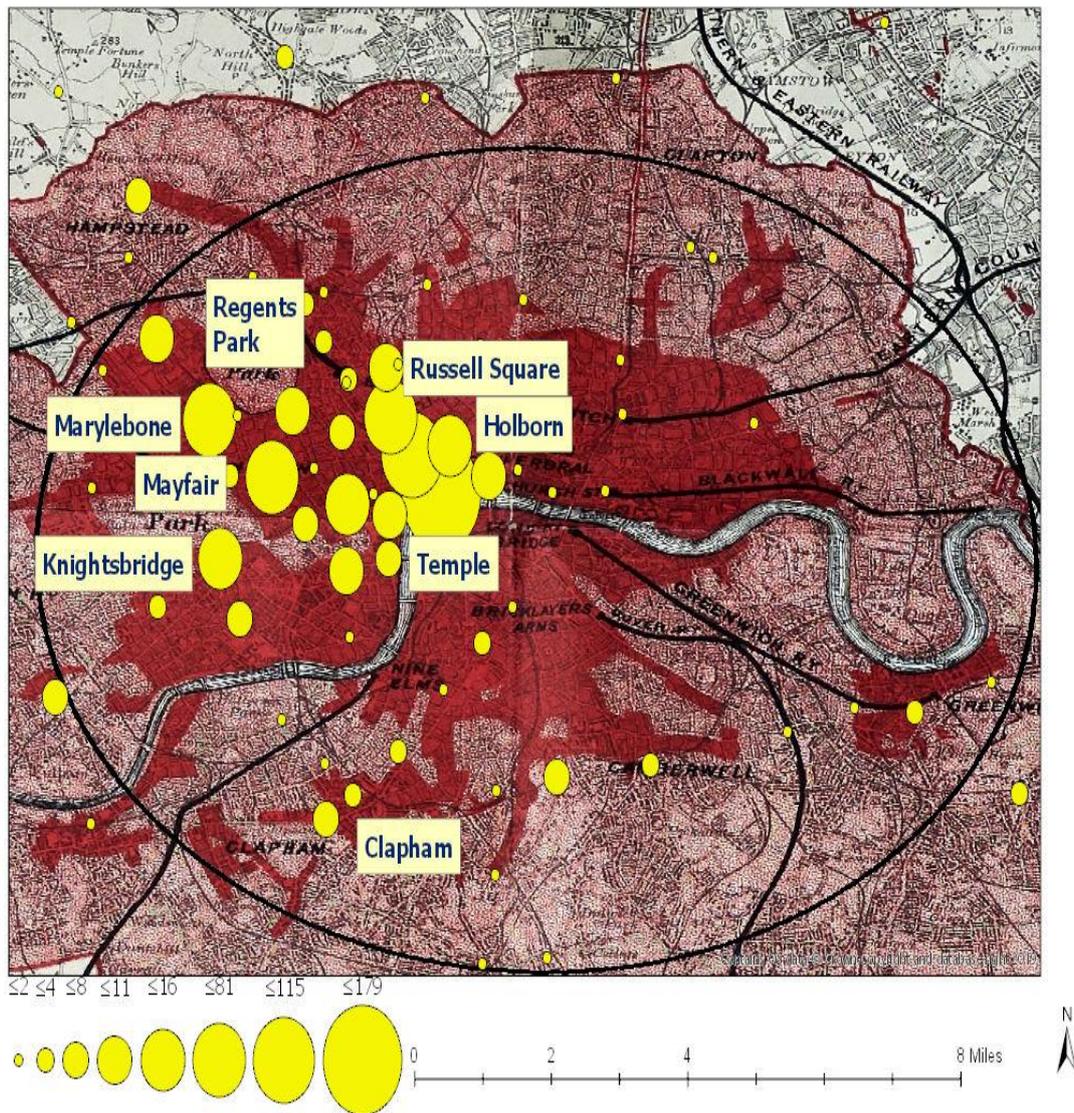


Figure 4.1: Geographic Distribution of Barristers 1841.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Compiled from the 1841 Census (cross-referenced with 1841 Post Office London Directory (Volume 2, Part II, Law Directory), accessed at various dates in October and November 2018 via <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4> combined with the 1840 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

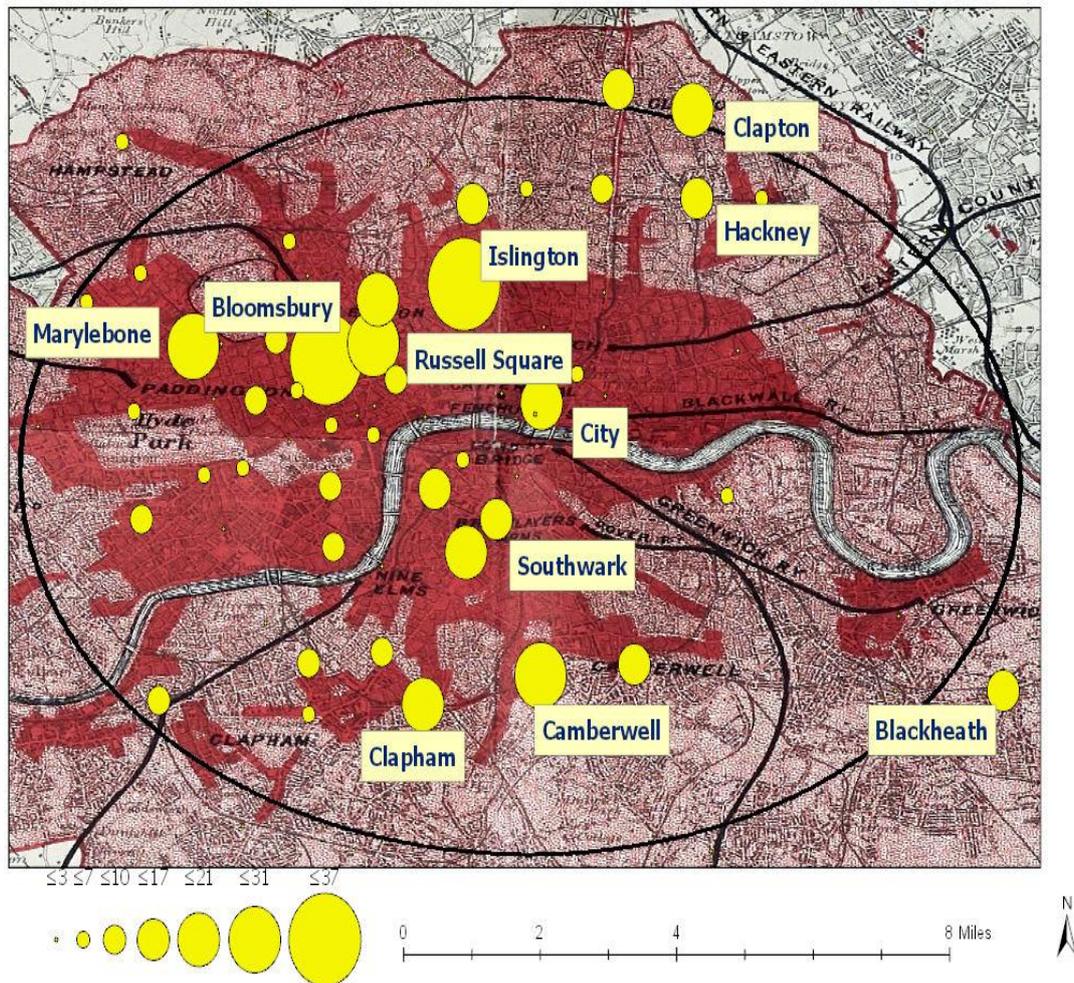


Figure 4.2: Geographic Distribution of Stock Exchange Members 1840.²⁴²

The lack of barristers or stock exchange members along the London to Greenwich line suggested the idea of journeying to work on a regular basis by train was regarded as unfeasible and unattractive. Whishaw's contemporary railway guide offered good reasons why the well-to-do eschewed railway commuting. His opinion of the London and Greenwich service was that 'the present rattling of the trains, and the deafening noise throughout the trip, are ill-suited to the improving taste of the locomotive portion of the public'²⁴³. Notwithstanding these criticisms, trains ran every fifteen minutes

²⁴² Compiled from the 1840 Stock Exchange Membership List combined with the 1840 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

²⁴³ F. Whishaw, *The Railways of Great Britain and Ireland Practically Described and Illustrated*, (London, John Weale, 1842), p.284, accessed 8 August 2019, from <https://archive.org/details/railwaysgreatbr00whisgoog>.

and the line proved to be popular with passengers, particularly for the novelty of a day-trip to Greenwich. There were 1.5 million journeys, an average of c4k passengers per day²⁴⁴.

This model of a small-scale dedicated suburban railway service was not to be repeated. The cost of construction proved to be prohibitive and instead the railway companies began to add stations along their existing main-line routes. By 1850 this approach had been adopted to a greater or lesser extent by all of the major companies serving London.

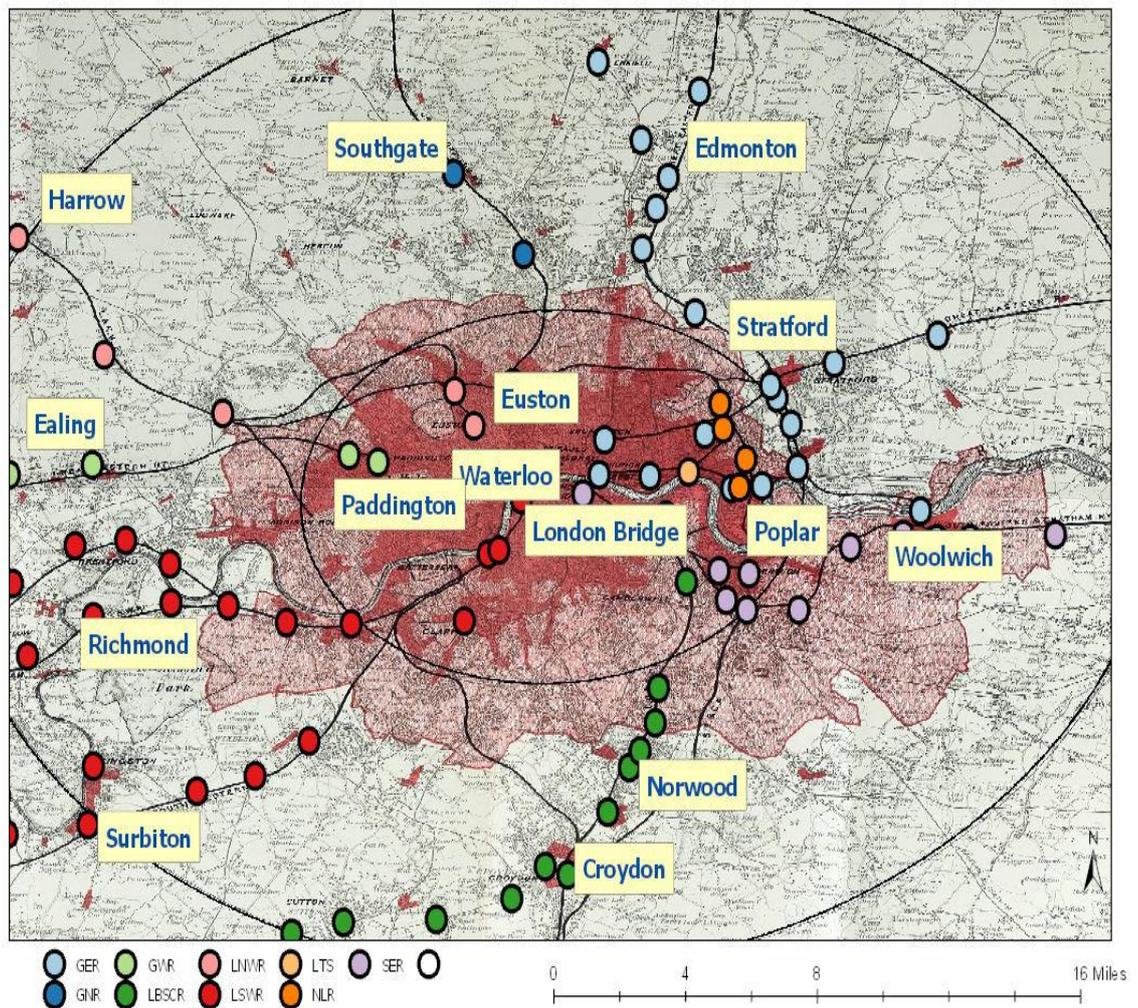


Figure 4.3: Railway Stations in the Greater London area opened by 1850. ²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p.289.

²⁴⁵ London's metropolitan area and railway lines in 1860 from 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic with GIS mapping of London stations in 1850 in London Metropolitan area from own calculations.

As illustrated by figure 4.3, the LSWR, LBSCR and Eastern Counties Railways (ECR) (forerunner of the GER) were more committed to the concept of suburban rail services than the GWR, LNWR and GNR. The former group built more stations within easy reach of their London termini and both the LSWR and ECR constructed specific suburban loop lines to Richmond and Hampton and Edmonton and Enfield respectively. This was to give an early mover advantage to these railway companies in the provision of suburban services, which was to prove influential in shaping commuting patterns in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Further development of the suburban railway network was slow and by 1860 only limited expansion had taken place (figure 4.4). Kings Cross station was opened in 1852 by the GNR and the London passenger terminus of the LSWR was moved further into London from Nine Elms to Waterloo in 1848. The LNWR, LBSCR and ECR all opened new branch lines in the decade, but the rail network remained essentially an inter-city transport system rather than a suburban one. Significantly for the future of railway commuting, Croydon, Richmond and Surbiton now had established railway connections to London and became the first commuter destinations outside of London's metropolitan boundaries

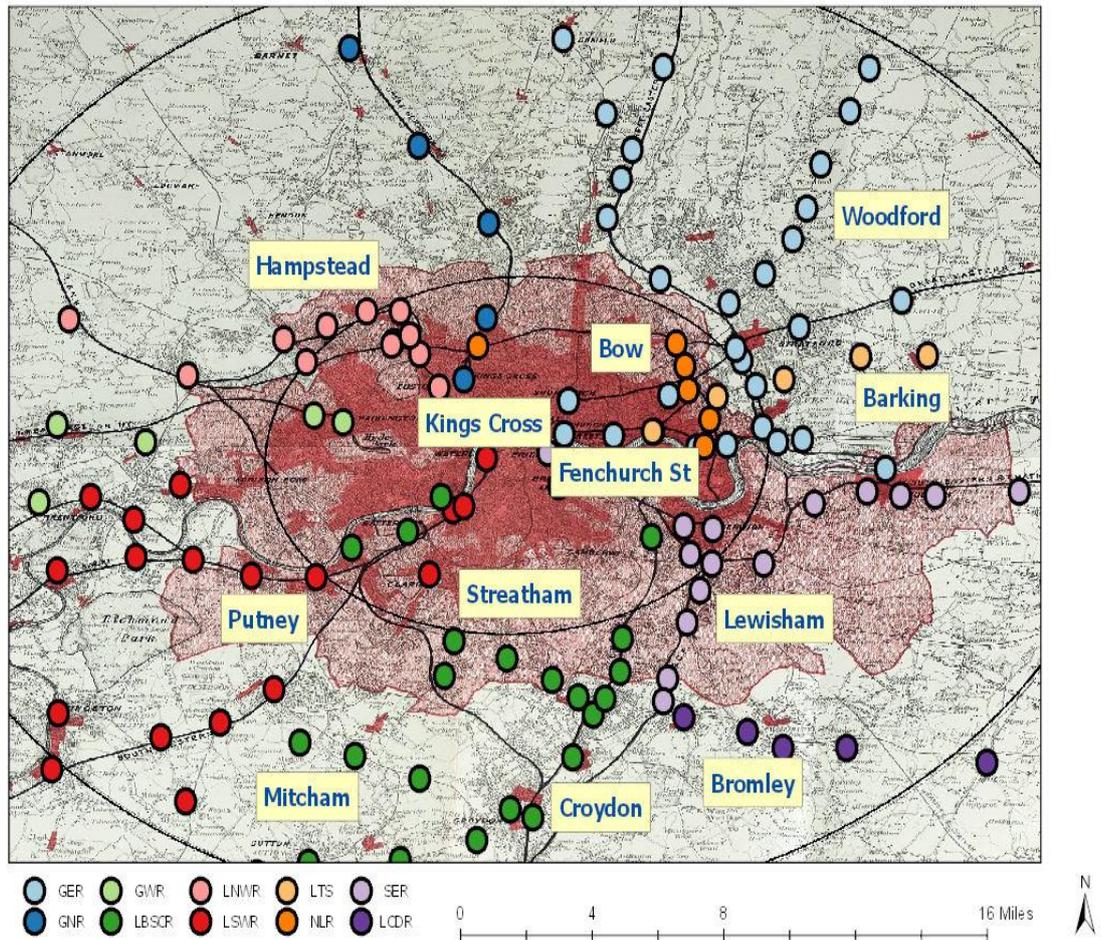


Figure 4.4: Railway Stations in the Greater London area opened by 1860²⁴⁶

This slow pace of change in the provision of suburban railway services was reflected in the commuting patterns of all four occupational groups in the 1850s and 1860s. The earliest map of the distribution of clerks working at the Bank of England in 1851 (figure 4.5) showed their close proximity to the City of London. They were largely absent from the most salubrious areas of central and west London favoured by the barristers and Stock Exchange members. Instead they were concentrated in the suburbs on the City’s periphery to the north and south. The map suggests that the City itself was already no longer home to some elements of its working population and that the eastern districts were to be avoided by the middle class.

²⁴⁶ London’s metropolitan area and railway lines in 1860 from 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic with GIS mapping of London stations in 1860 in London Metropolitan area from own calculations.

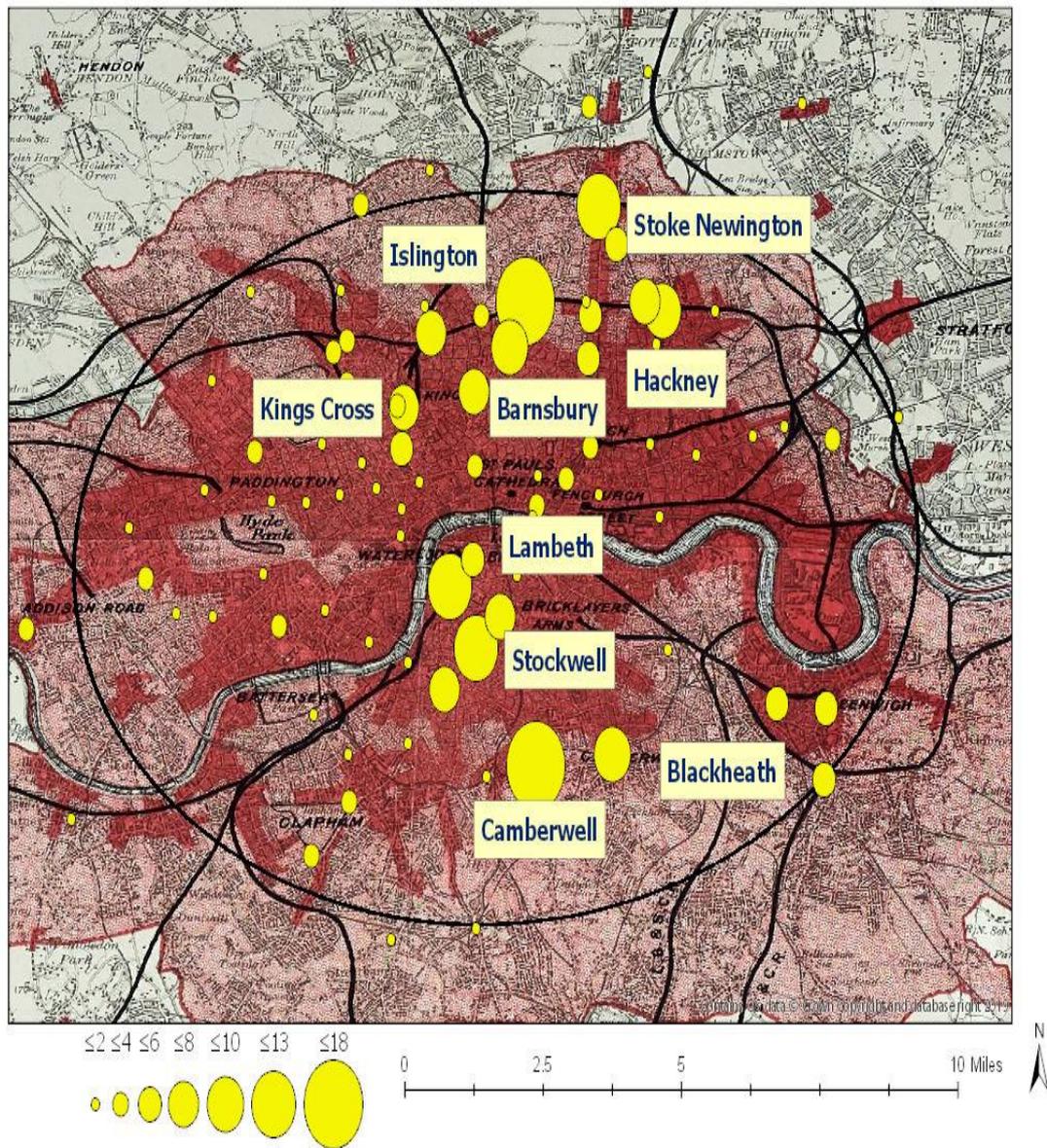


Figure 4.5: Geographic Distribution of Bank of England clerks 1851.²⁴⁷

This spatial trend was also evident in the residential maps of barristers (figure 4.6), solicitors (figure 4.7) and members of the Stock Exchange (figure 4.8).

²⁴⁷ Compiled from the 1851 Bank of England staff list combined with the 1860 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

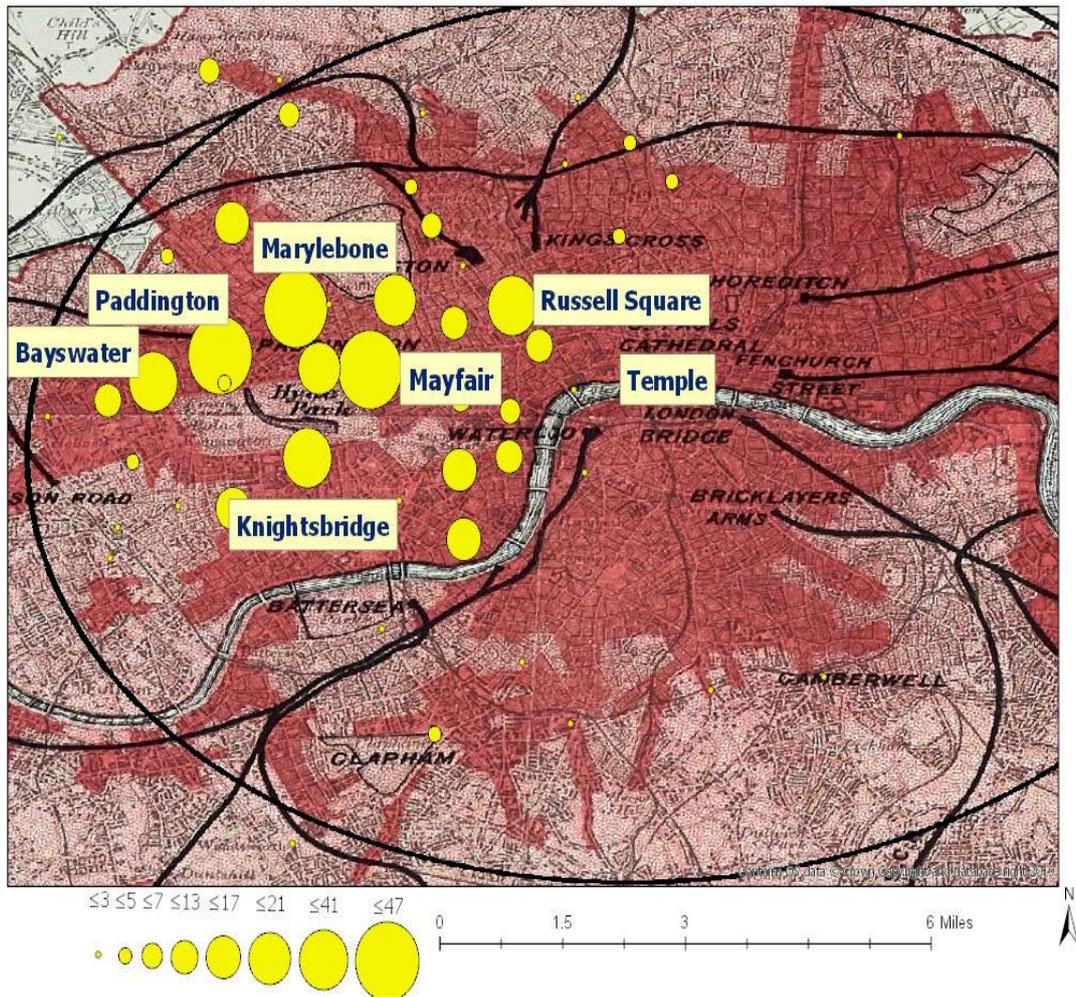


Figure 4.6: Geographic Distribution of Barristers 1856.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Compiled from the 1856 Post Office Directory accessed at various dates in October and November 2018 via <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection> combined with the 1860 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

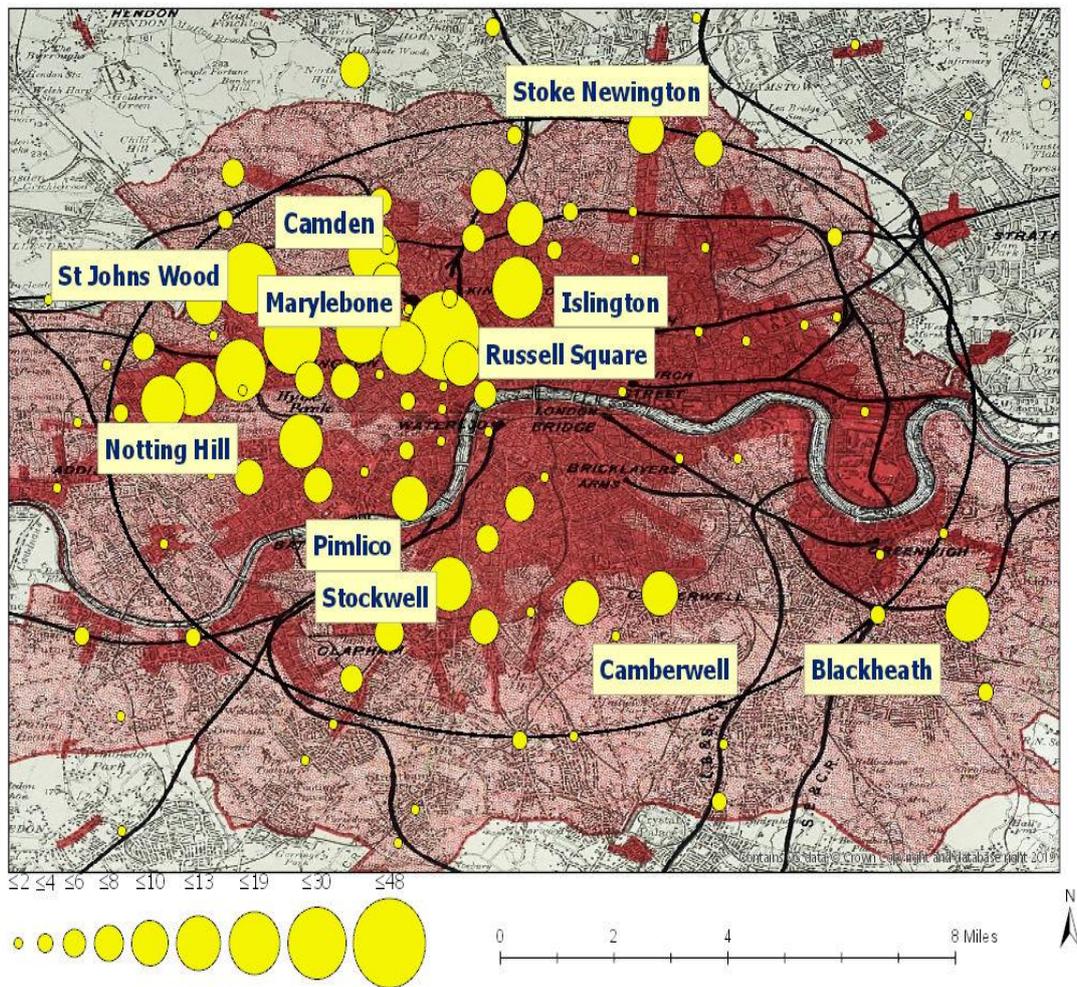


Figure 4.7: Geographic Distribution of Solicitors 1856.²⁴⁹

In addition the movement towards the newer developments on the Duke of Westminster and Duke of Portland's estates in Marylebone, Bayswater and Belgravia can be seen. The fashionable areas of London were moving westwards toward Hyde Park. The early signs of the decline in the appeal of the older suburbs of Stoke Newington and Islington to the north and Camberwell and Stockwell to the south of London were apparent.

²⁴⁹ Compiled from the 1856 Post Office Directory accessed at various dates in October and November 2018 via <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/> combined with the 1860 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

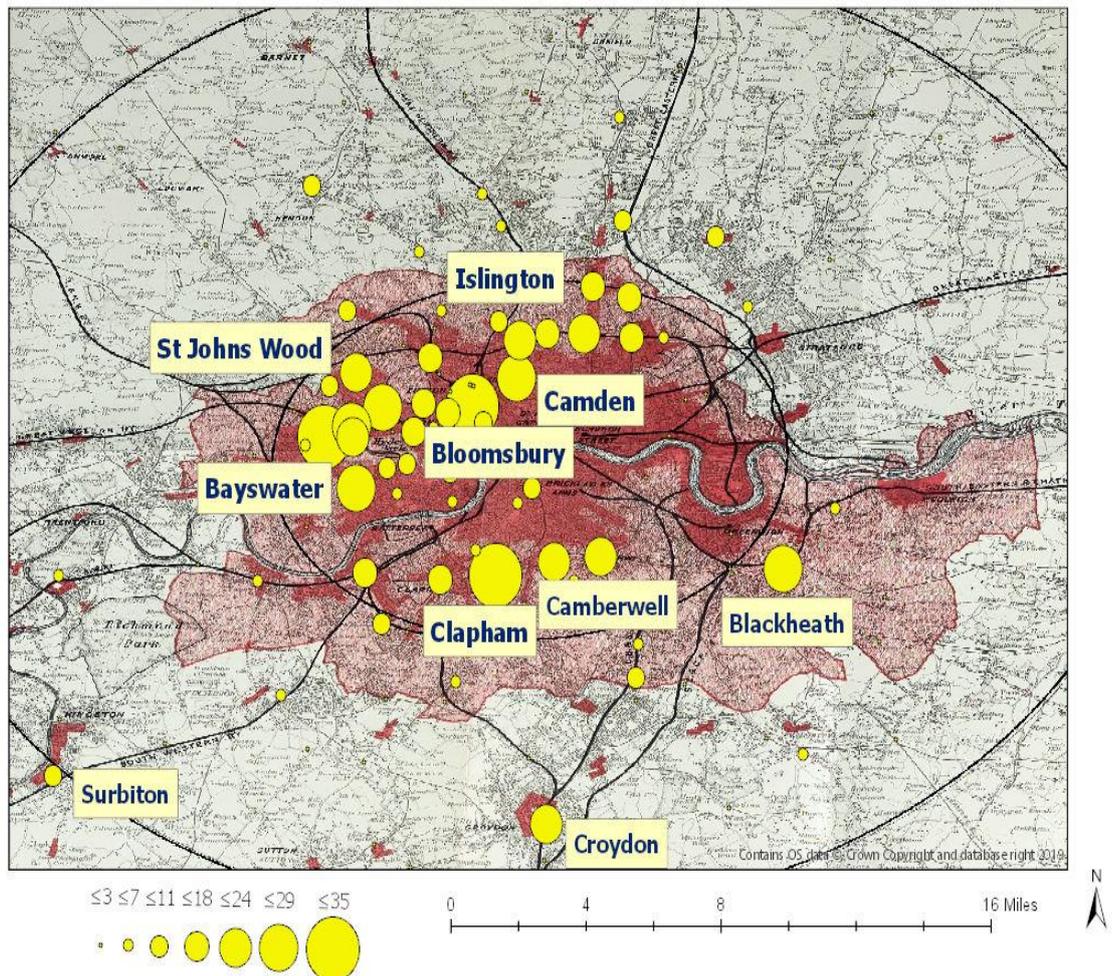


Figure 4.8: Geographic Distribution of Stock Exchange Members 1860.²⁵⁰

Similar trends are visible in the 1860 distribution map of London's Stock Exchange members. For the first time, railway commuting was in evidence with small numbers now residing in Croydon and Surbiton. F Thompson stated that 'commuting in London pre-dated the coming of the railway by several decades'²⁵¹ and this analysis bears out his judgment. In some respects the growth of railway infrastructure was not the key development in London's urban structure. The period up to 1860 saw the rise of the inner west London districts at the expense of the more established suburbs and

²⁵⁰ Compiled from the 1860 Stock Exchange Membership List combined with the 1860 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

²⁵¹ F. Thompson, *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.20.

the commencement of clear delineation of residential areas along segregated class lines. Instead it was in the following two decades that the possibility of widespread railway commuting arose, which, in turn, created a new pressure on the social composition of London's suburbs. The lack of utilisation of the early suburban network suggests that more than the opening of a station was required to generate commuter traffic. The logistical shortcomings of the early network and the psychological concerns of the first commuters are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

The Suburban 'Railway Mania':- 1860-1880



Figure 4.9: Ludgate Hill Railway Bridge 1863.²⁵²

The 1860s witnessed a period of intense competition amongst the major railway companies for access to London's central districts. There was a realisation that both long distance and short distance railway passengers wanted to arrive directly into

²⁵² London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company's railway bridge at Ludgate Hill, *Illustrated London News*, 14 November 1863, accessed on 17 June 2020, via <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>.

either the City of London or the City of Westminster. Grand new London termini were constructed by the LBSCR at Victoria (1862), the SER at Charing Cross (1864) and Cannon Street (1866). London Bridge station was rebuilt in 1864 and Waterloo station was extended in 1860. The LCDR was even able to build a line through the heart of London (figure 4.9) and opened a new station at Ludgate Hill (1865), close to St Pauls.

Other railway companies looked to follow suit. The newly formed GER (from an amalgamation of the ECR and other local companies in 1862) sought approval to relocate its London terminus from Shoreditch to the heart of the City at Liverpool Street. The MID managed to extend its network into London from Bedford and opened St Pancras station in 1868. Even the GWR and GNR discussed plans for a combined central London station. These plans and other initiatives to encroach upon central London were brought to an abrupt halt by the 1863 Select Committee. It opined that 'it is not desirable to bring the main stations of any of the principal long lines of Railway, except the Great Eastern, farther into London than is at present authorised'²⁵³. It was a decision taken, in part, to address the concerns of the owners of London's great estates, who foresaw a reduction in land values resulting from the additional railway building. It was also a decision that significantly shaped the development of London's suburban railway network. As a result, there were to be no further major stations constructed in central London, other than the GCR's Marylebone station in 1898. The relative strengths and weaknesses of the London termini were frozen in time. For the GWR, LNWR, MID and GNR, their main London stations remained on the periphery of the central districts only connected by the new Underground system. In contrast, the LBSCR, SER, LCDR, LSWR, GER, NLR and LTS all had their termini within or bordering the boundaries of the Cities of London or Westminster. It was to give the latter group an additional advantage in the coming scramble for the suburban commuter market.

²⁵³ Third Report from House of Lords Select Committee on Metropolitan Railway Communication 23 July 1863, p.iv, point 11 accessed 15 May 2020 from <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1863-039107?accountid=14565>.

The construction and expansion of the main London termini was accompanied by significant investment in the suburban network (figure 4.10). In the south, the LBSCR built additional loops into London via Wimbledon and Streatham to compete with the LSWR, which in turn added new lines to Kew and Kingston. The LCDR had emerged as the major rival to the SER in North West Kent and both battled to establish dominance in the suburban hinterland. In the east the newly-formed GER followed the policy of its predecessor and continued to construct new suburban lines, notably out to Leytonstone and Epping. The GNR and LSWR built their first branch lines to Edgware and through Hampstead respectively. Not all new lines were built out into the surrounding countryside. The NLR, along with the GER, built stations to serve the dockland area and the surrounding working-class districts. The GWR was the most reluctant to build a suburban network, though eventually it did construct an additional terminus at Hammersmith. Even the MID added suburban stations on its new London trunk line.

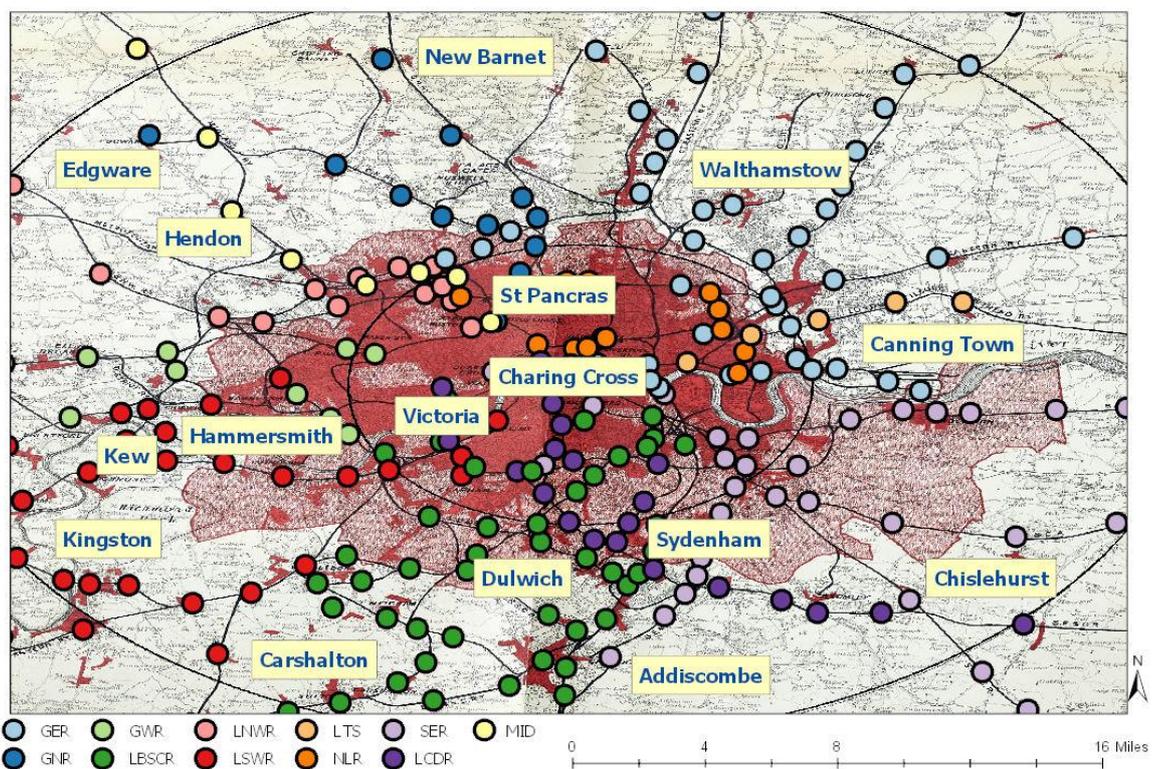


Figure 4.10: Railway Stations in the Greater London area opened by 1870. ²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ London's metropolitan area and railway lines in 1880 from 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic with GIS mapping of London stations in 1870 in London Metropolitan area from own calculations.

This rapid growth in railway infrastructure in the 1860s made railway commuting a far more realistic proposition. Yet the following maps of the residential location of the four occupational groups in this period suggest that there was a reluctance to embrace a commuting lifestyle. The 1871 map for the Bank of England clerks (figure 4.11) shows that some had chosen to live in the railway suburbs of Croydon, Sydenham, Kingston and Walthamstow. Despite these early signs of an exodus from the centre, the majority still resided in London's inner suburbs; principally Hackney and Islington to the north and Kennington and Camberwell to the south. This was, in part, attributable to the financial situation of the clerks, whose living costs had outstripped their wages in the preceding decade. In 1865 a memorandum to the Bank's directors was signed by 558 members of the staff, representing that they had 'much difficulty in meeting their unavoidable expenses and maintaining their social respectability, in consequence of the very high price of provisions, the advance in house rents, and the generally diminished value of fixed incomes'²⁵⁵. It prompted a review by the Secretary of the Bank of England, Hammond Chubb, which led to the introduction of a pension scheme in 1870, paid leave and a general improvement in conditions. The average clerk's wages rose from £253 per annum in 1860 to £329 p.a. in 1880²⁵⁶ and so their prospects of travelling greater distances to work markedly improved in the latter part of the Victorian era.

The clerks themselves were undergoing a gradual metamorphosis from an ill-disciplined group to a more professional cadre. In the words of one of the first historians of the Bank 'during the latter half of the nineteenth century a great deal of attention was paid by the Directors to matters concerning the clerical staff, and determined efforts were made by them to put a stop to the insubordination, irregularities and careless work of which so many complaints had been made in the ten years prior to 1844'²⁵⁷. It was a slow process that was not fully completed until

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Marston Acres, *The Bank of England from Within, 1694-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931), p.557.

²⁵⁶ From own calculations based of Bank of England staff lists.

²⁵⁷ Marston Acres, *The Bank of England from Within, 1694-1900*, p.557.

the Edwardian era. Allan Fea recalled in his memoirs that ‘in 1881 the Bank was very different from the orderly place it is now, and the above-mentioned department [the Private Drawing Office] was one of the rowdiest of the lot. The pandemonium was a little startling to a novice – jokes shouted from one end of the office to the other; the singing of a line from some popular song²⁵⁸’. Rising living standards and increasing respectability narrowed the gap with other City professions. It enabled the Bank of England clerks increasingly to emulate their lifestyle, including choice of residence, albeit on a reduced budget.

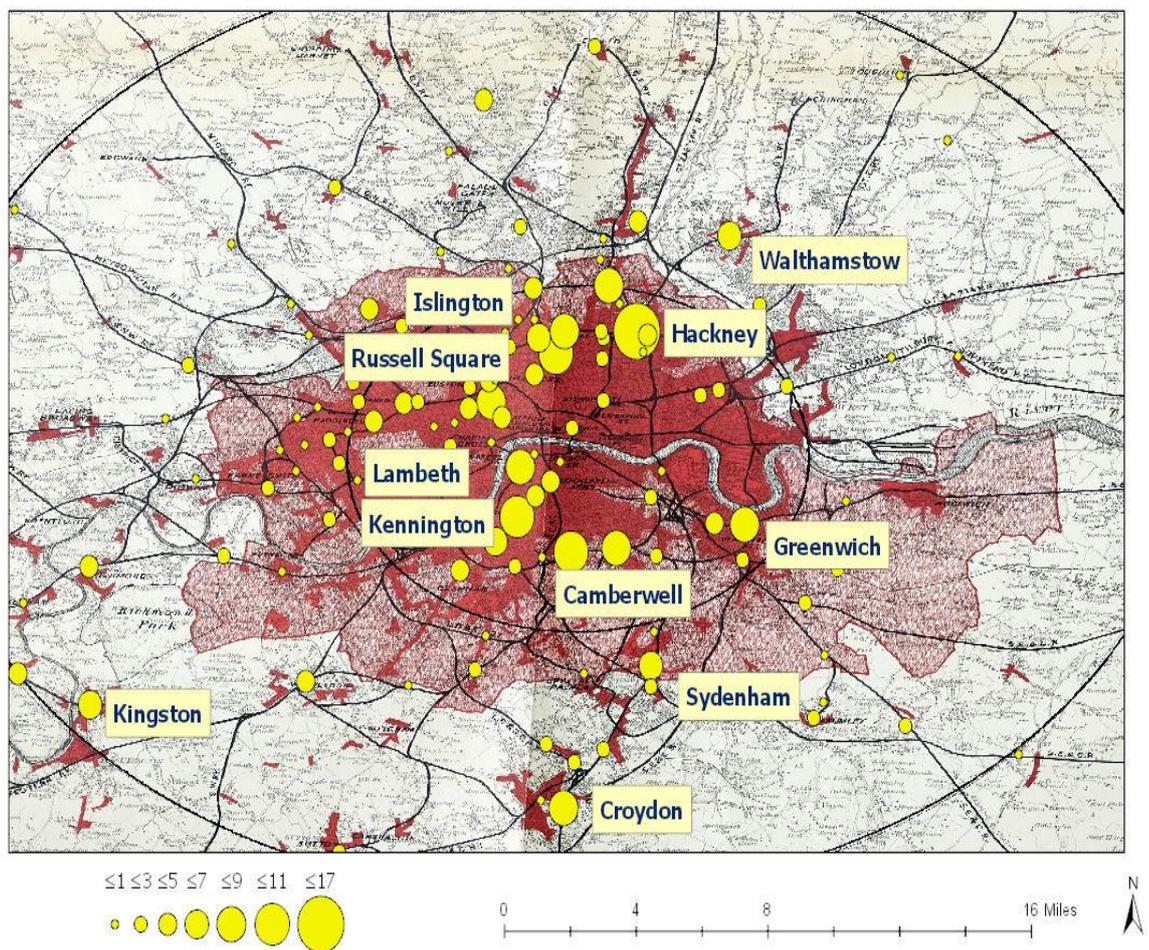


Figure 4.11: Geographic Distribution of Bank of England clerks 1871.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ A. Fea, *Recollections of Sixty Years* (London: The Richards Press Ltd, 1927), p.142.

²⁵⁹ Compiled from the 1871 Bank of England staff list combined with the 1880 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

Financial constraints were less of an issue for the other three occupational groups. Stock brokers and jobbers did not earn as much as other financiers, but they were, in general, well remunerated. An analysis of the value of estates in the 1890's by the *Statist* found foreign and merchant bankers left an average of £512,578, English bankers and money dealers £211,450 and members of the Stock Exchange an average of £95,865, just ahead of members of the legal profession whose average estate was £84,933²⁶⁰.

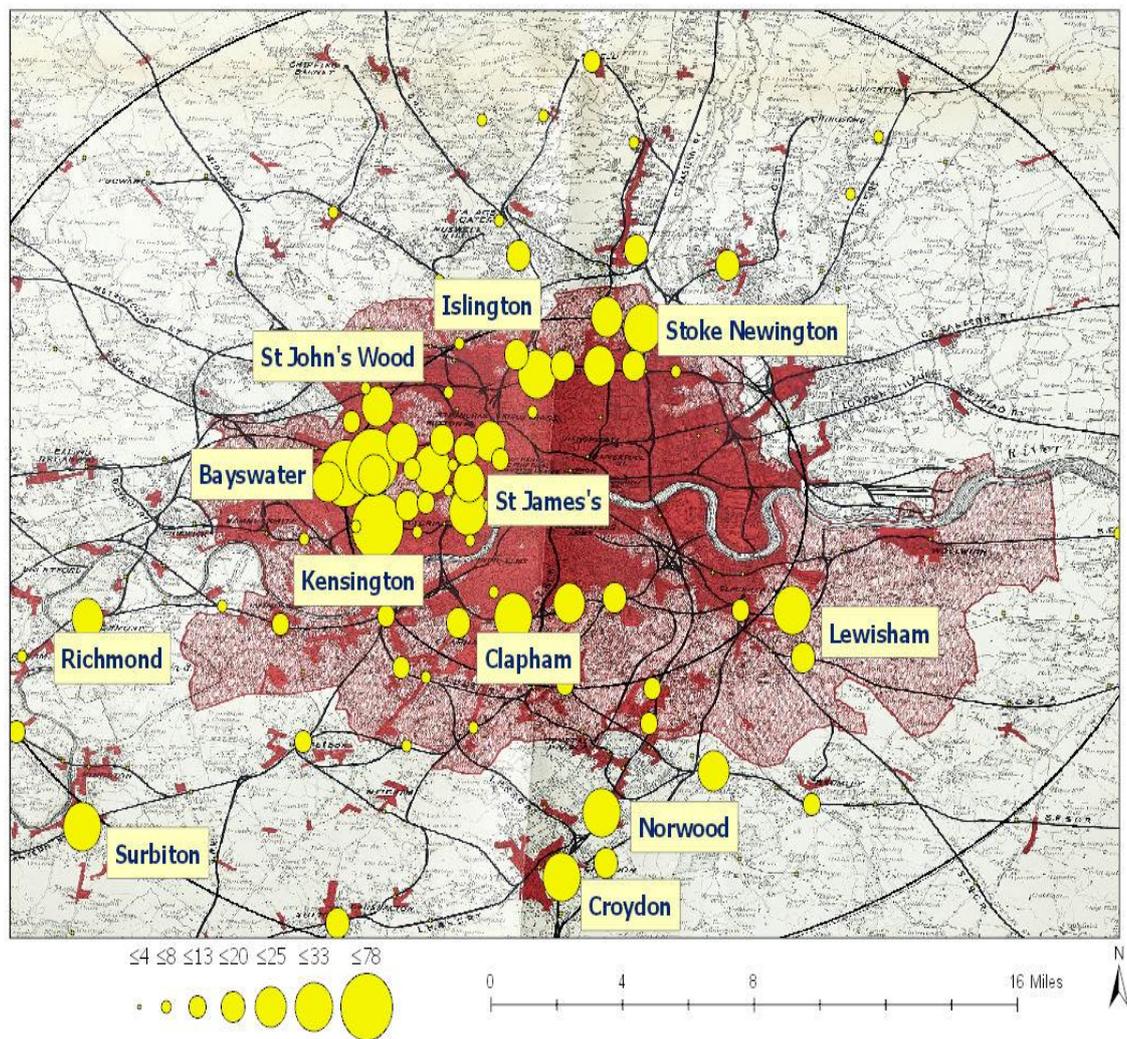


Figure 4.12: Geographic Distribution of Stock Exchange Members 1875.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Quoted in D. Kynaston, *The City of London, a World of its Own, 1815-90*, p.384.

²⁶¹ Compiled from the 1875 Stock Exchange Membership List and superimposed on the 1880 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

The trends in the favoured locations of the upper middle class already apparent by 1860 were now clearly visible (figures 4.12, 4.13 & 4.14). The withdrawal from the inner London suburbs, notably Lambeth, Battersea and Southwark to the south of the river and Hackney and Dalston to the north-east had gathered pace. This process was more advanced amongst the sample of barristers, but was also apparent in the other two groups. The fashionable reputation of the districts around Hyde Park was cemented and its social cachet spread to the adjacent areas of St John's Wood, Notting Hill and Earls Court. The City was no longer a place to live and London's eastern districts were abandoned to the working classes. In addition, for the first time, a growing minority moved outwards to the ever-shifting periphery of London and to the towns and villages in London's hinterland accessible only by railway.

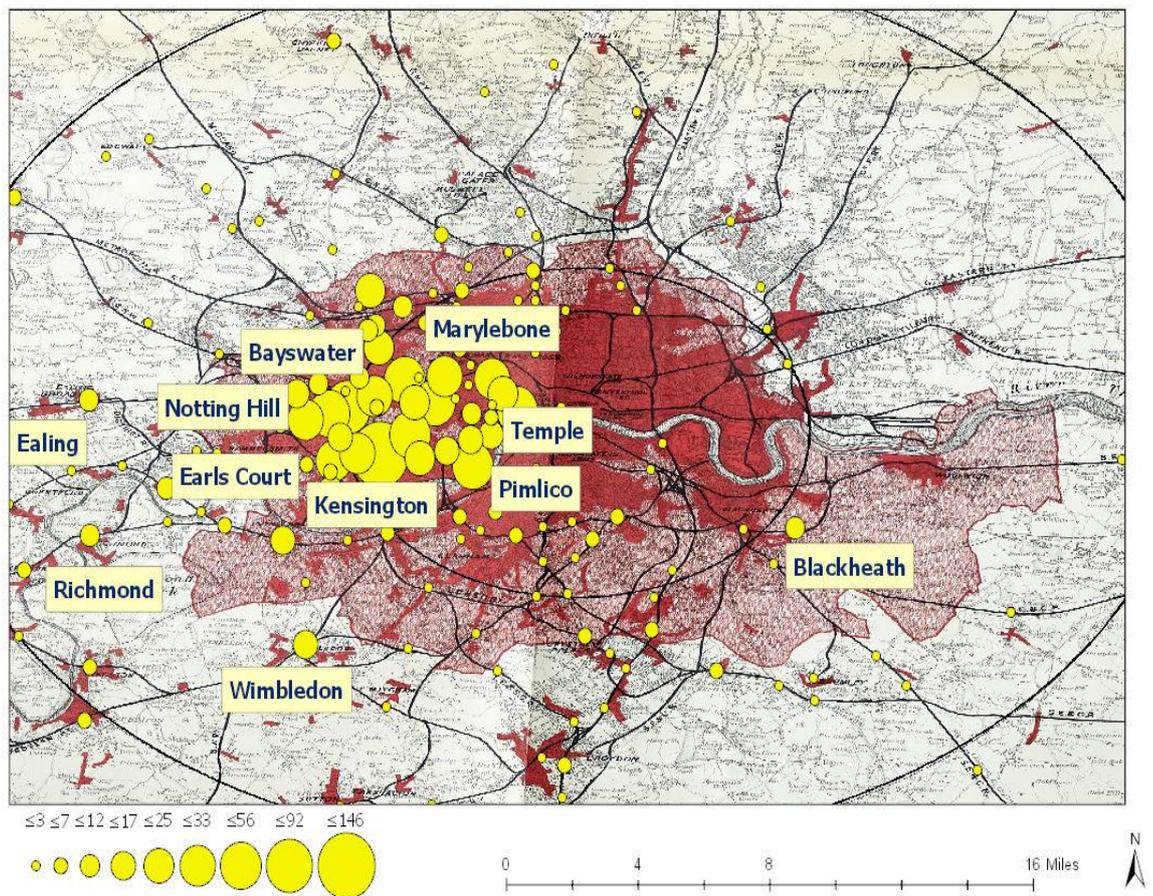


Figure 4.13: Geographic Distribution of Barristers 1881.²⁶²

²⁶² Compiled from the 1881 Census and 1882 Post Office Directory accessed at various dates in October and November 2018 via <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/combined> with the 1880 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

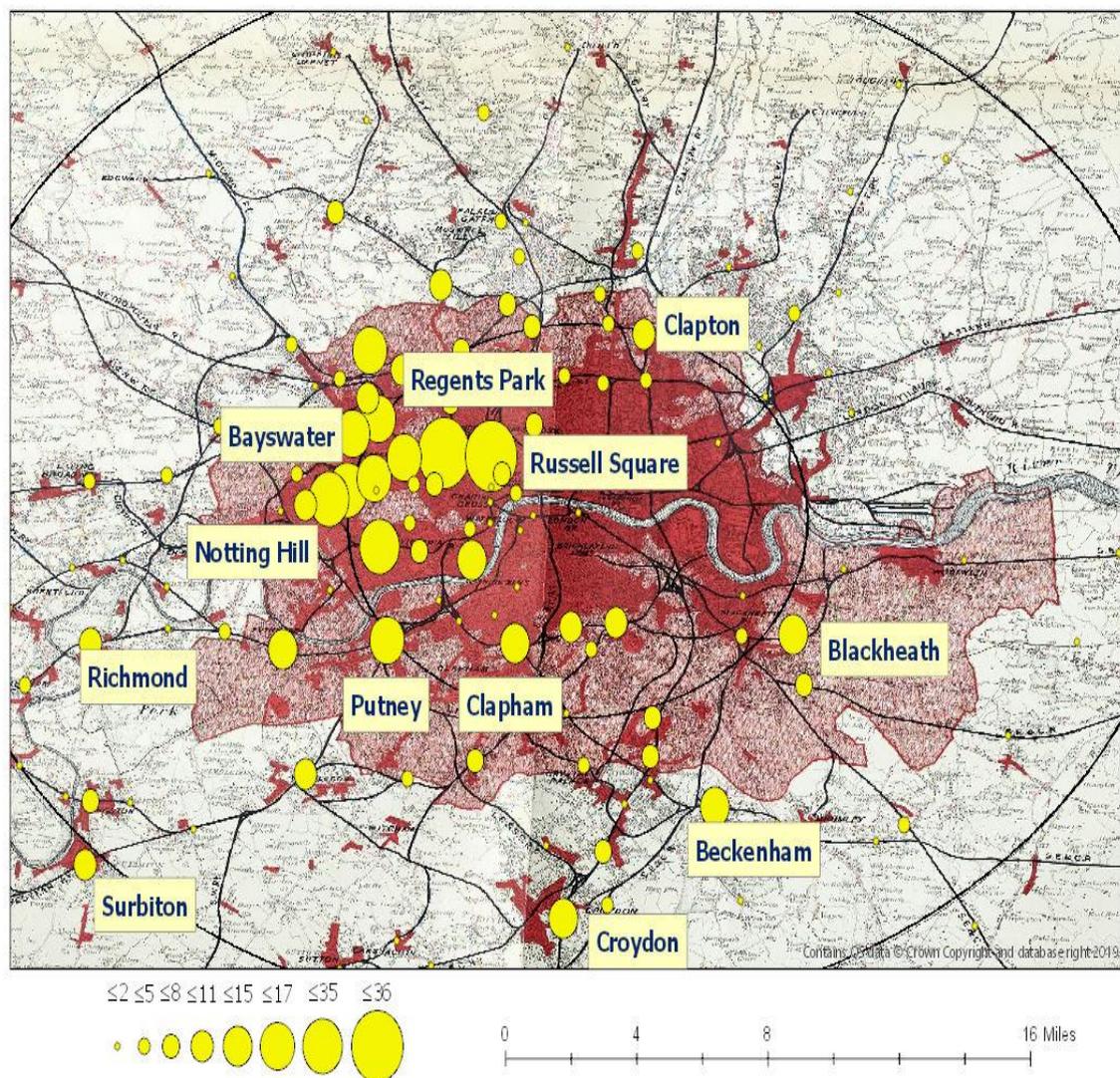


Figure 4.14: Geographic Distribution of Solicitors 1881.²⁶³

In summary, the picture of railway commuting by 1880 presents a paradox. Despite the vast investment by the railway companies in their stations and the suburban railway infrastructure, there was a tentative, rather than a wholesale adoption of railway commuting. The reasons for the lag between the creation of the railway

²⁶³ Compiled from the 1881 Census and 1882 Post Office Directory accessed at various dates in October and November 2018 via <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/> combined with the 1880 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

network and its widespread usage are explored in the later chapters. It had taken over forty years from the opening of the first suburban railway, but railway commuting finally came of age in the final two decades of the Victorian era.

The 'Coming of Age' of Railway Commuting: 1880-1900

By 1880 the suburban network was approaching its mature state (see figure 4.15). Further suburban lines were added following the opening of the GER's new Liverpool Street station in 1874, most notably the expansion of their low fare routes to Chingford, Tottenham and the Thames docks. Yet the building of new stations in middle-class residential areas was much more limited. The GNR added a branch line to Muswell Hill and the SER did the same to Bromley, but elsewhere only a few new stops were added to existing suburban lines.

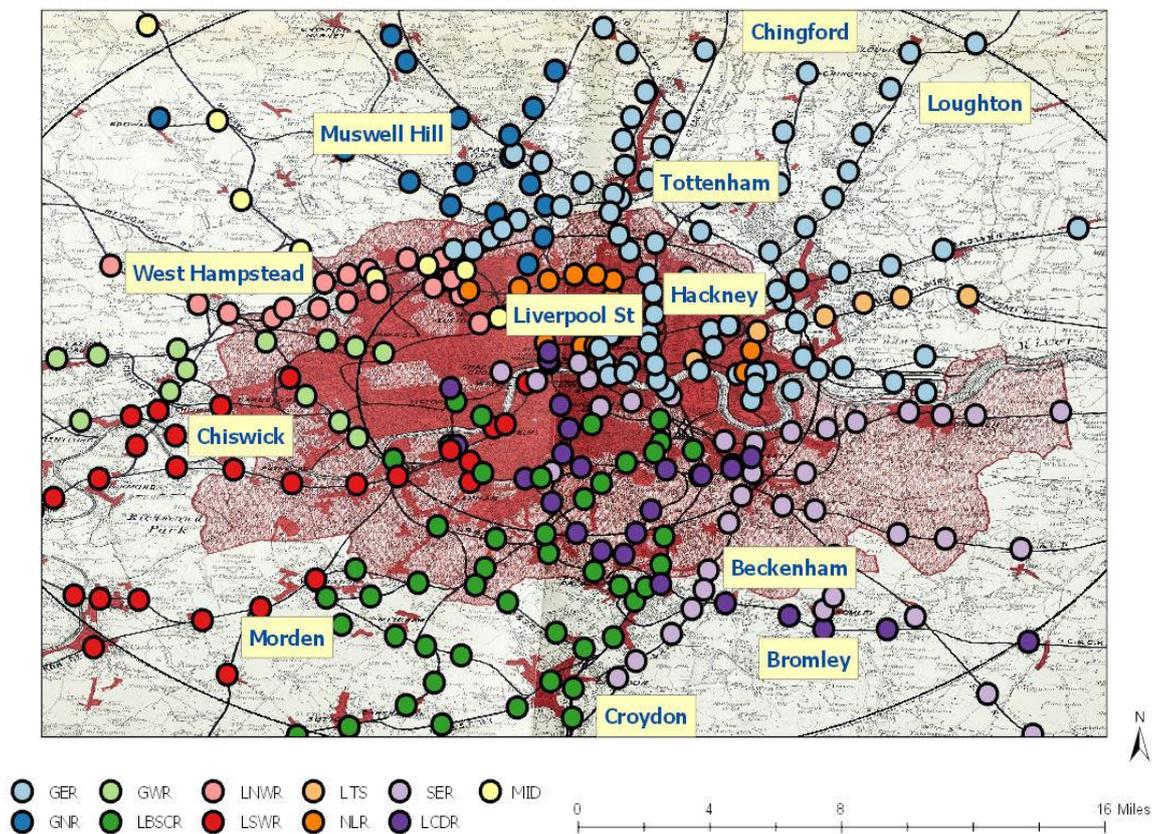


Figure 4.15: Railway Stations in the Greater London area opened by 1880. ²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ London's metropolitan area and railway lines in 1880 from 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic with GIS mapping of London stations in 1880 in London Metropolitan area from own calculations.

Instead there was a noticeable change in the commuting patterns of the wealthier selected occupation groups. Stock Exchange members (see figure 4.16) continued to be clustered in Kensington, Bayswater and Mayfair, but the outer suburbs were becoming increasingly popular.

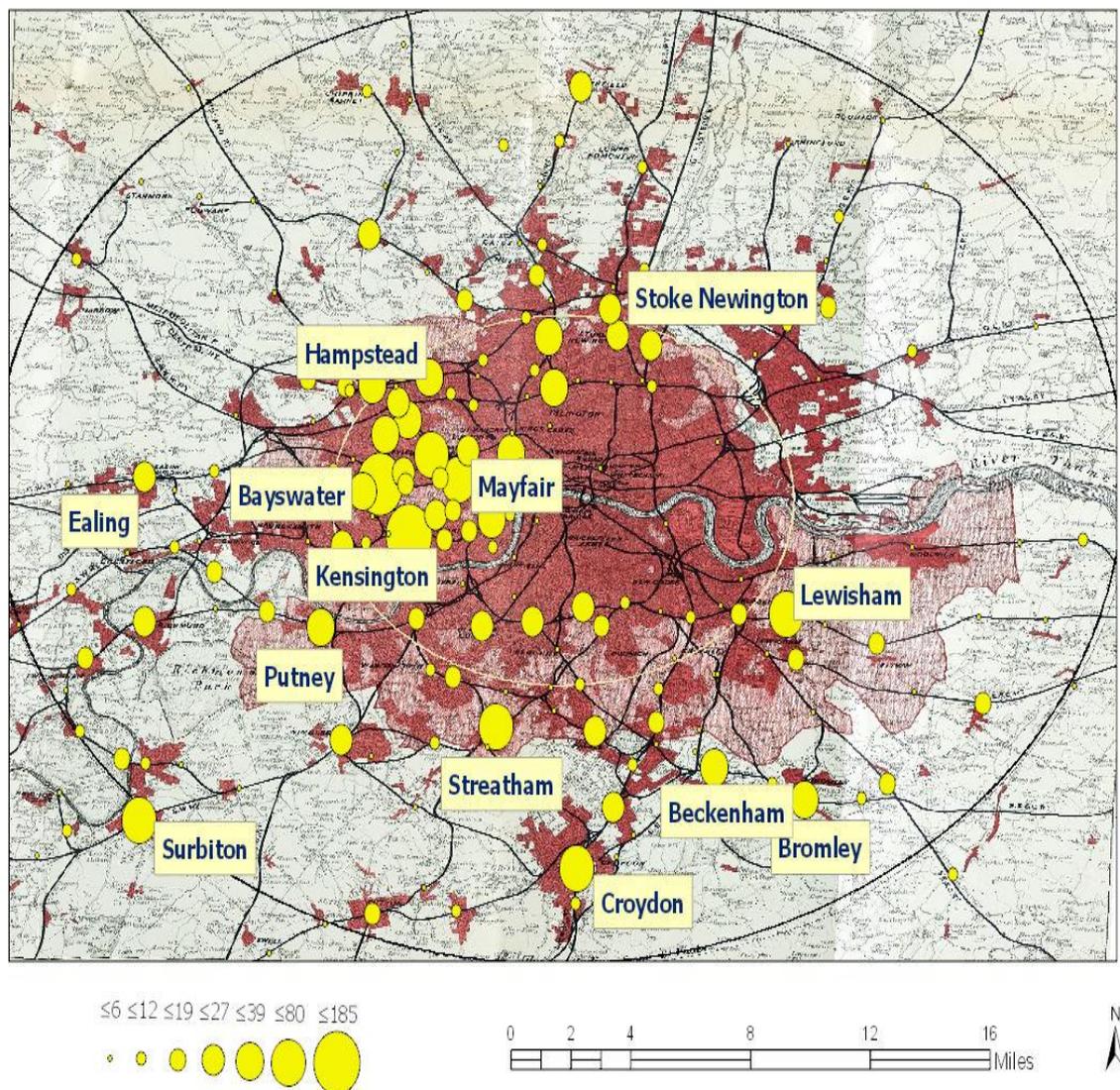


Figure 4.16: Geographic Distribution of Stock Exchange Members 1890.²⁶⁵

The favoured destinations were predominantly to the south of London, spanning in an arc from Ealing via Putney, Surbiton, Streatham and Croydon in Surrey to

²⁶⁵ Compiled from the 1890 Stock Exchange Membership List combined with the 1900 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

Beckenham, Lewisham and Bromley in Kent. There was a clear correlation between these locations and the early establishment of a suburban railway connection. It also suggests that a positive cycle was created with suburban rail links generating residential development, which in turn encouraged railway companies to increase their service and led to a further expansion of these suburbs. The impact of the railway on suburban communities is explored further in chapter seven, which includes local examples from the North West Kent area.

For the less wealthy occupational groups, this move to the suburbs was less pronounced. The Bank of England clerks (see figure 4.17) had migrated to the railway suburbs of Croydon, Kingston and Chislehurst, but the majority resided much closer to their place of work.

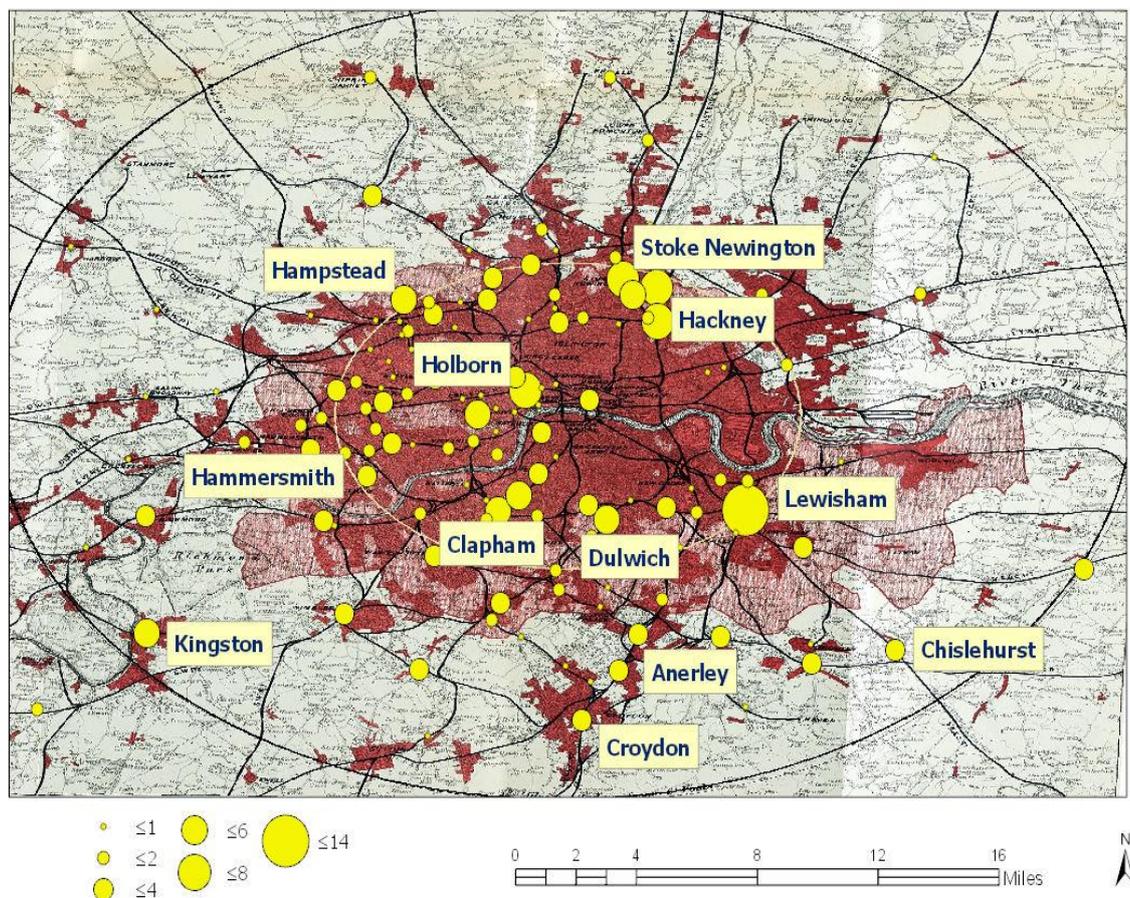


Figure 4.17: Geographic Distribution of Bank of England clerks 1891.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Compiled from the 1891 Bank of England staff list combined with the 1880 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

By way of further comparison, Chartered Accountants (figure 4.18) working in the City had already moved to London's periphery, although not further out into the Home Counties in great numbers. In 1891 they were to be found in Hampstead, Putney, Streatham, Beckenham and Muswell Hill; all salubrious areas on the edge of metropolitan London. The inference was that the desertion of inner London was led by the most prosperous social groups, but that their example was quickly followed by those lower down the social order.

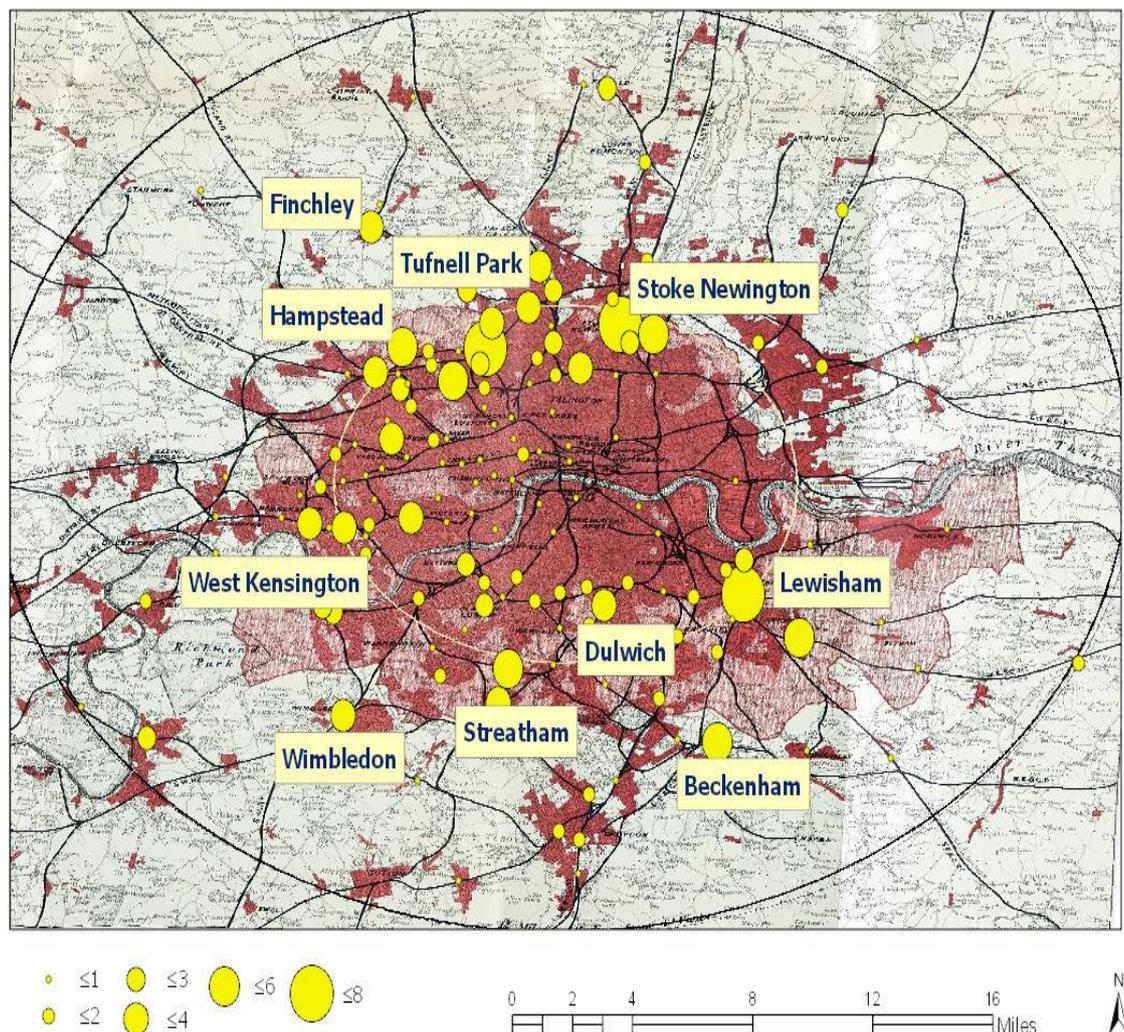


Figure 4.18: Geographic Distribution of Chartered Accountants 1891.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Compiled from the 1891 Chartered Accountants members list combined with the 1900 map presented to the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic.

The distribution of Fellows of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) provides additional confirmation of this trend (figure 4.19). This sample was relatively small; 159 Fellows newly admitted to the RIBA between 1891 and 1901 and working in central London, their pattern of residence followed that of the sample of Chartered Accountants. They favoured the more fashionable outer London suburbs and avoided the east of London. The average distance to work for the architects was 8.3 miles, compared with 6.5 miles for the sample of 325 Chartered Accountants.

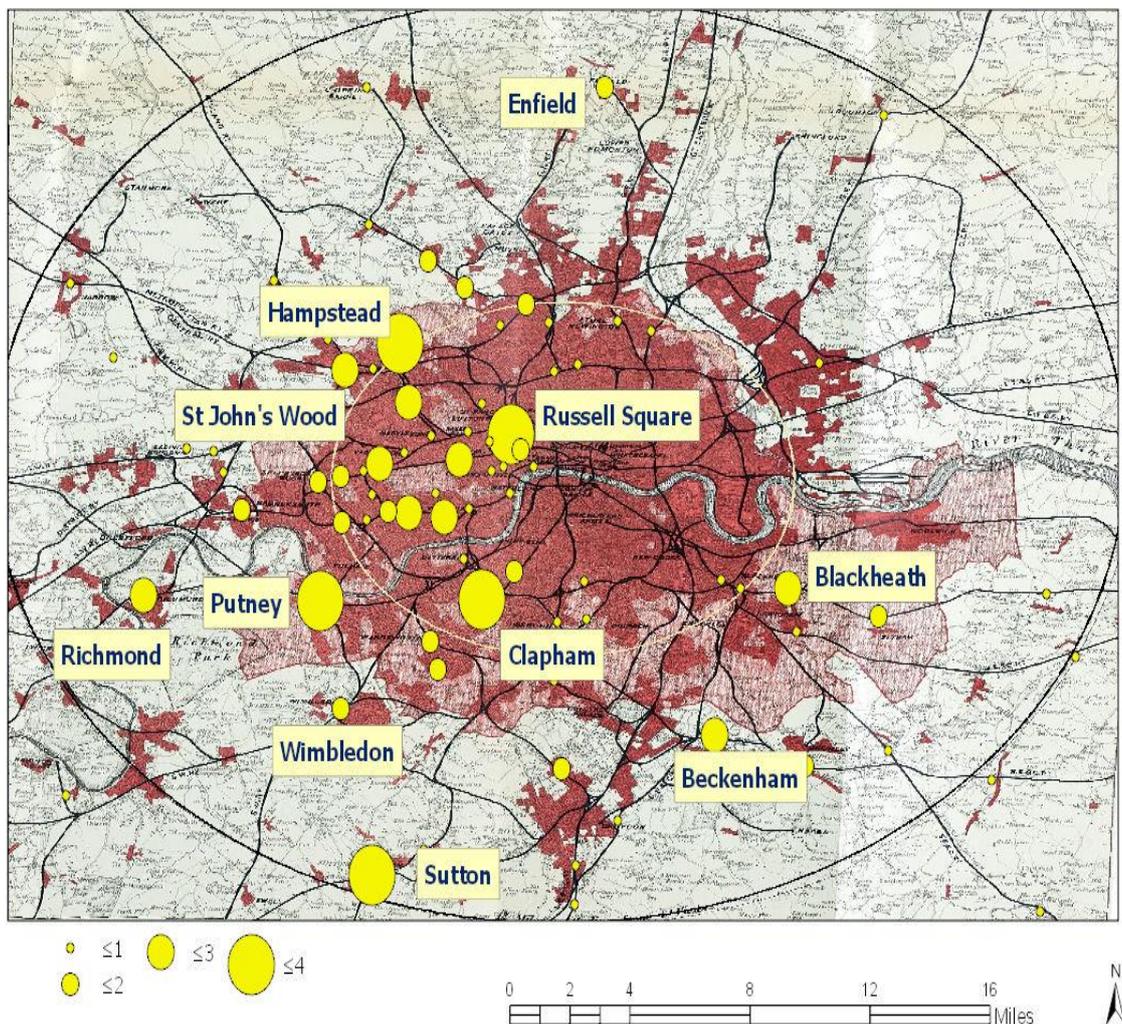


Figure 4.19: Geographic Distribution of Fellows of Royal Institute of British Architects 1891-1901.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Compiled from the admission list of Fellows to the RIBA between 1891 -1901 held at RIBA archives.

A strikingly different pattern can be seen from the sample of sorters at the General Post Office (figure 4.20). This working-class occupational group travelled an average distance to work of 2.7 miles (based on a sample of 763). They were concentrated in the inner north London suburbs of Islington, Hackney and Highbury and the southern ones of Kennington, Lambeth and Bermondsey.

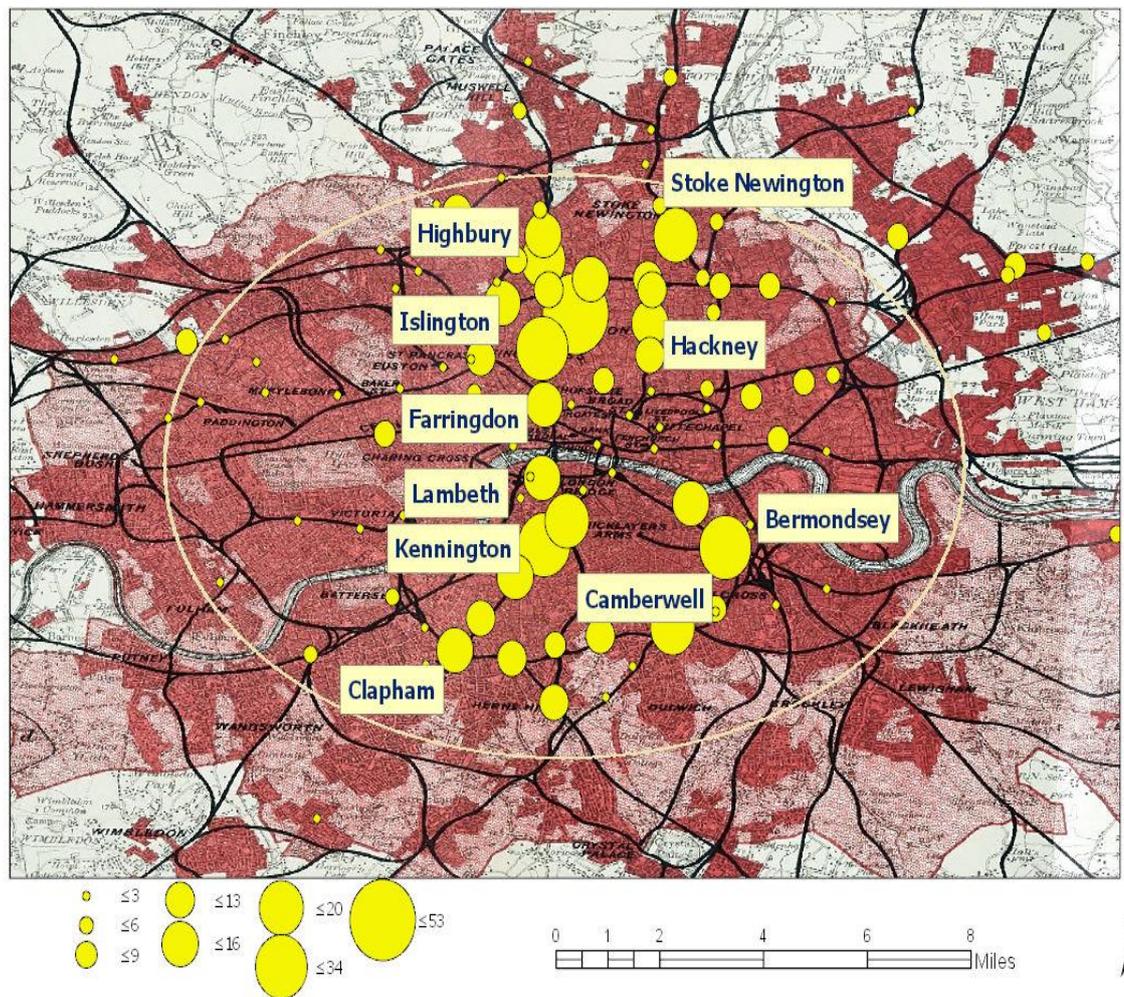


Figure 4.20: Geographic Distribution of Sorters at the General Post Office in 1891.²⁶⁹

In contrast to the middle-class occupational groups, they had not yet been able to take advantage of railway commuting in significant numbers. The former saw a lag between the opening of railway stations in the 1860s and 1870s and the later uptake

²⁶⁹ Compiled from the 1891 Census, accessed via <http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk>.

of commuting. This also applied to the GPO sorters, but not until in the 1880s and 1890s. Widespread use of the workmen's fares and other low cost railway services did not come until the Edwardian era, as indicated in the last chapter. Working-class railway commuting was, therefore, a new business market for railway companies to cater for. Some companies were more reluctant to do so than others and the reasons for this are discussed in the next chapter.

By the end of the century, London's suburban railway network was largely complete. The last major London railway terminus was opened at Marylebone in 1898 by the Great Central Railway and suburban stations (including Wembley) along this trunk line were constructed shortly afterwards. Its final extent is shown below (figure 4.21). Future improvements in London's transport system were to come from other modes of transport; notably the deep level underground lines and the mechanised omnibus and tram services. They were to threaten the railway's monopoly on intra-urban longer distance travel, but at the end of the Victorian period, the railways were only reliable means of transport for the longer daily commute.

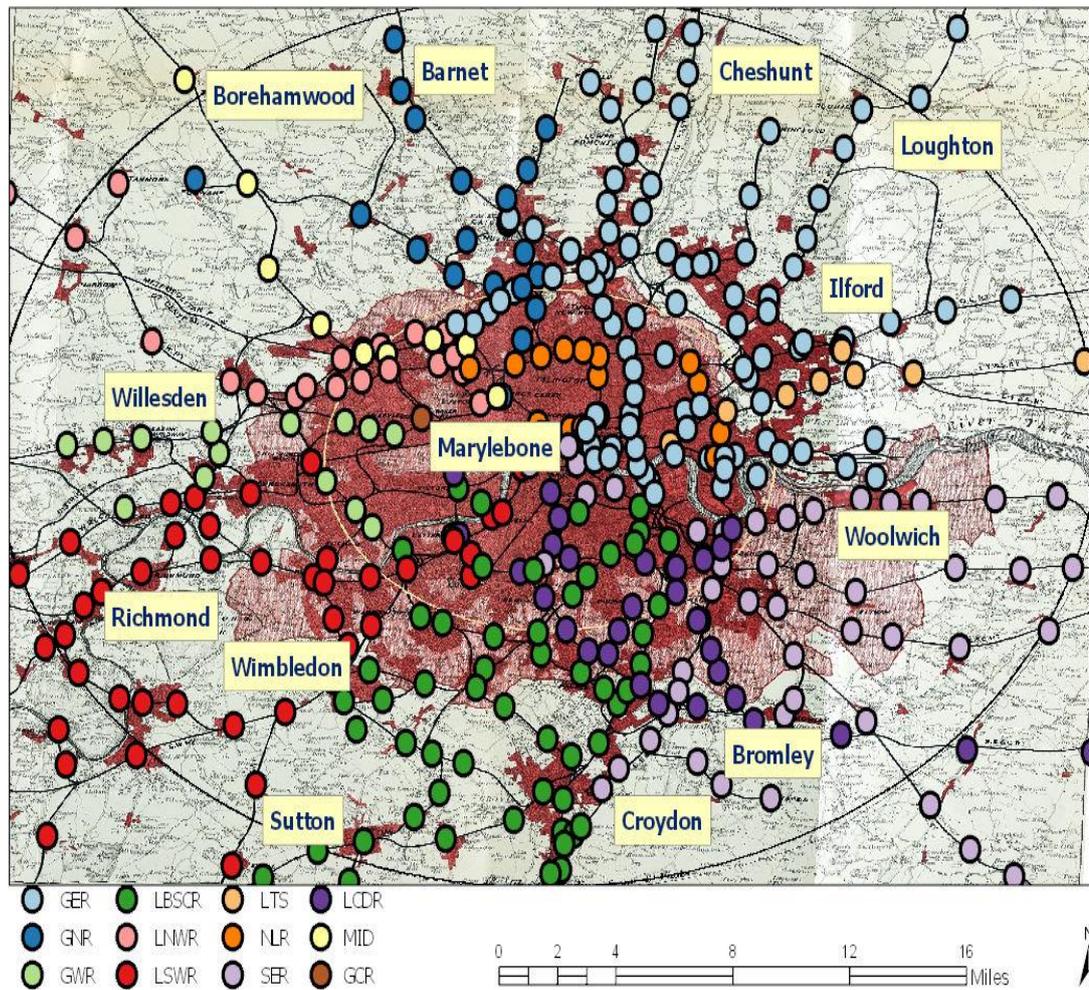


Figure 4.21: Railway Stations in the Greater London area opened by 1900. ²⁷⁰

The final form of London's railway network shows it was densest to the south and east of London. The map is a visual confirmation of the geographic inequality and varying levels of interest by the major railway companies set out earlier in table 4.2. The map also shows the greatest density between 3 to 8 miles from central London. Closer in to the centre of London, there were either parliamentary, landowner and cost restrictions to building in the most expensive residential areas or greater competition from horse-drawn transport. Beyond 8 miles, the network took the form of clearly defined lines to more distant destinations, the suburban stations being largely

²⁷⁰ London's metropolitan area and railway lines in 1900 from 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic with GIS mapping of London stations in 1900 in London Metropolitan area from own calculations.

supplementary to the logistical rationale of the wider network. A numerical confirmation of this spatial distribution is shown in the table below (table 4.3).

Station Distance From Central London													
Miles	Total	GER	GNR	GWR	LBSCR	LCDR	LNWR	LSWR	LTS	MID	NLR	SER	GCR
Undr 3m	63	12	1	2	6	10	5	7	1	2	10	6	1
3 - 5m	145	43	10	8	18	15	13	14	3	5	8	8	
6 - 8m	121	32	8	11	19	8	5	12	4	1		19	2
9 - 12m	87	16	8	5	18	2	3	14	2	1		16	2
12m +	77	17	1	6	17	2	4	12	5	2		9	2
Total	493	120	28	32	78	37	30	59	15	11	18	58	7

Table 4.3: Stations opened in the London Metropolitan area by Distance from Charing Cross by 1914.²⁷¹

By 1900 there was an increasing convergence between the commuting patterns and those of the railway network. The lag between the opening date of the station and the growth of residential development had reduced considerably. Indeed, a two tier railway commuting market was becoming evident. There was a concentration of middle-class commuters, notably of the less prestigious professions, and suburban stations in a band roughly three to eight miles out from London's central districts. Beyond this distance, the number of stations reduced along with the number of commuters. The profile of most of the railway companies fitted this pattern, with the exception of the LBSCR and LSWR (and the SER and LTS to a lesser extent). The suburban network of these companies extended further out into London's hinterland. It was not a coincidence that the commuting sections of the upper middle-class professions favoured these areas. The concept of segregated residential areas went hand in hand with the practices and operating structure of the railway companies themselves. The reasons behind this symbiotic relationship are covered in more detail in the next chapter.

²⁷¹ London stations in London Metropolitan area from own calculations.

Comparisons between Railway Commuting in the Victorian and Edwardian Eras

The last chapter concluded with a series of observations on the patterns of commuting in the Edwardian era. This section re-visits some of those observations to explore how they were shaped by the evolution of commuting in the Victorian period. The first highlighted the fact that commuting in some form was the norm for the middle classes by the Edwardian era. The origins of this phenomenon can be seen in the tables below for the four occupational groups (tables 4.4 & 4.5).

Summary By Occupational Group	Stock Exchange Members					Bank of England Clerks			
Inner London (5 Miles Radius)	44%	52%	60%	76%	93%	19%	56%	67%	94%
Outer London (5-10 Miles Radius)	21%	32%	26%	17%	6%	42%	32%	24%	5%
Home Counties (Beyond 10 miles)	35%	16%	14%	7%	1%	39%	12%	9%	1%
Average Distance to Work (Miles)	11.19	8.74	7.40	5.60	3.10	10.95	6.60	5.00	2.91
Standard Deviation (Miles)	10.35	8.58	7.21	5.77	2.44	8.56	7.12	3.74	2.01
Sample Size	3653	3048	1742	1021	667	447	356	405	341
Date of Sample	1910	1890	1875	1860	1840	1911	1891	1871	1851

Table 4.4: Summary of Geographic Distribution of Stock Exchange Members and Bank of England clerks. 1840-1911²⁷²

²⁷² Compiled from the Stock Exchange membership lists and the Bank of England staff lists.

Summary By Occupational Group	Barristers				Solicitors		
Inner London (5 Miles Radius)	63%	80%	91%	96%	66%	72%	83%
Outer London (5-10 Miles Radius)	14%	12%	7%	3%	34%	28%	11%
Home Counties (Beyond 10 miles)	23%	9%	2%	1%	N/A	N/A	6%
Average Distance to Work (Miles)	9.24	5.25	2.85	1.59	N/A	N/A	4.08
Standard Deviation (Miles)	12.04	9.29	2.36	2.26	N/A	N/A	4.20
Sample Size	1134	1435	591	756	811	795	647
Date of Sample	1911	1881	1856	1841	1902	1882	1856

Table 4.5: Summary of Geographic Distribution of Barristers and Solicitors
1841-1911.²⁷³

At the beginning of the Victorian period all four occupational groups were concentrated in close proximity to the City of London or the Inns of Court. There was a gradual move outwards from the centre, but each group migrated at different speeds and to different destinations. The Stock Exchange members led the way in this dispersal towards London's outer suburbs and the Home Counties. Yet a significant number chose to move into the newly fashionable inner London districts around Hyde Park. The barristers were even more reluctant to live outside of this salubrious residential zone of west London. The Bank of England clerks and solicitors could not generally afford these favoured locations and instead moved from inner to outer London in the Victorian period. Within these specific patterns, two broad step changes can be observed. The first came in the 1850s and 1860s, when it became possible to commute for longer distances than achievable by horse-drawn transport and the second in the 1880s and onwards, when it became commonplace to do so for those who could afford it. The position observed in the Edwardian era of relative similarity

²⁷³ Compiled from the Census records cross-referenced with the Law section of the Post Office London Directories accessed at various dates in October and November 2018 via <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/>

in the average distance travelled to work by these occupational groups was the product of different, rather than the same evolutionary path.

This direction of migration by the wealthiest sections of the middle class can be seen in table 4.6, which covers the most popular individual residential locations. The move westwards of London's fashionable districts from Islington, Bloomsbury and Russell Square to Kensington, Bayswater, Mayfair and Hampstead was clearly apparent. The second observation of the Edwardian era, of the strong correlation between social status, levels of income and residential location was already present in the Victorian era.

Stock Exchange Members - Location					
Rank	1840	1860	1875	1890	1910
1	Islington	Bayswater	Kensington	Kensington	Kensington
2	Bloomsbury	Russell Square	Bayswater	Hampstead	Hampstead
3	Camberwell	Mayfair/Belgravia	Mayfair/Belgravia	Mayfair/Belgravia	Bayswater
4	Russell Square	Brixton	Paddington	Bayswater	Mayfair
5	Marylebone	Islington	Croydon	Marylebone	Marylebone
6	City of London	Kensington	Marylebone	Croydon	St Johns Wood
7	Kennington	Marylebone	Lancaster Gate	Blackheath	Croydon
8	Mayfair/Belgravia	Paddington	Brixton	Surbiton	Streatham
9	Lambeth	Blackheath	Blackheath	Streatham	Finchley
10	Brixton	Croydon	St James' Park	Brighton	Ealing

Table 4.6: Most Popular Locations of Stock Exchange Members 1840 -1910.²⁷⁴

The move outwards to London's periphery and the Home Counties also shows a clear pattern. From the 1860s locations south of the Thames were significantly favoured by the members of the Stock Exchange over those to the north (table 4.7). The uneven geographical distribution of the longer distance commuters observed in the Edwardian era was an extension of a trend established in the Victorian era. Some of the reasons for this were alluded to earlier in this chapter. They included the differing business foci of the major railway companies. The concentration on their large national networks by the northern and western railway companies gave early mover advantage

²⁷⁴ Compiled from the 1840, 1860, 1875, 1890 and 1910 Stock Exchange Membership Lists.

to the southern railway companies in establishing a suburban network. The curtailment of future extensions of the overground railway network in the heart of London by Parliament in 1863 cemented this position. A fuller account of the decision-making of the major railway companies in respect of their suburban networks is the subject of chapter five.

Stock Exchange Members - Most Popular Residential Locations					
Rank	1840	1860	1875	1890	1910
1	Alexandra Palace	Croydon	Croydon	Croydon	Putney
2	Finchley Central	Surbiton	Norwood	Surbiton	Alexandra Palace
3	Streatham	Sydenham	Surbiton	Streatham	Streatham
4	Chigwell	Finchley	Beckenham	Beckenham	Surbiton
5	Hendon	Edmonton Green	Richmond	Brighton	Finchley
6	Ponders End	Brighton	Addiscombe	Putney	Westcliff
7	Putney	Lee	Lee	Bromley South	Woking
8	Southall	Reigate	Sutton	Gipsy Hill	Bromley South
9	Sutton	Staines	Sydenham	Norwood	Weybridge
10	Sydenham	Alexandra Palace	Brighton	Wimbledon	Wimbledon

Table 4.7: Most Popular Locations in Outer London and Home Counties
For Members of the Stock Exchange 1840 -1910.²⁷⁵

The final observation covered working-class commuting. It noted that it had proved difficult for railway companies to cater for both working and middle-class commuting. The sample of occupational groups in this chapter suggests that this was partly attributable to the different timing in their emergence as commercial opportunities. The adoption of widespread railway commuting by the middle classes took place from the 1880s, whereas it was twenty years later for the working class. This chapter also highlighted that the eastern districts of London were abandoned early on in the Victorian period by the middle classes. Residential segregation in this area pre-dated the arrival of the railway, but the railway network managed by the GER and NLR reinforced this geographical separation on class lines by enabling working-class commuting from these districts. As a result their region became the largest and

²⁷⁵ Compiled from the 1840, 1860, 1875, 1890 and 1910 Stock Exchange Membership Lists.

geographically densest of all of London’s railway regions and the GER and NLR delivered the greatest number of commuters into central London via Liverpool Street and Broad Street. This relationship between railway company and class of commuter was more nuanced than at first sight, as most of the other companies offered cheap fares for early morning ‘workmen’s trains’. Nevertheless, the differential impact of the business strategies of the railway companies was clearly visible in the Victorian period and found full expression in the Edwardian era. Their reasons for choosing different approaches are explored in the next chapter.

It is appropriate to conclude with a note of caution on the degree of mobility and the direction of migration, even of the middle classes, in both the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Beneath the over-arching patterns of movement of the members of the Stock Exchange; westwards within London and outwards to the Home Counties, there were differing patterns at an individual’s level (see table 4.8). The average journey to work increased from 8.7 miles in 1890 to 11.2 miles in 1910 for Stock Exchange members, but it was not a one-directional process.

Stock Exchange Members: Change in Residential Address		
From 1890 to 1910	No	%
Same address or close proximity	148	26%
Move within 2 Miles	94	16%
Move within Inner London suburbs	73	13%
Move within Outer London suburbs	83	15%
Move from Inner to Outer London & Home Counties	130	23%
Move from Outer London & Home Counties to Inner London	42	7%
	570	

Table 4.8: Stock Exchange Members: Patterns of Migration
Measured from 1890 to 1910.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Compiled from the 1890 and 1910 Stock Exchange Membership List.

An analysis of the residential choices of long standing individual members in this period revealed a significant proportion either stayed at the same address or only moved a short distance over this twenty year period. While nearly a quarter of the group did move out of inner London to the outer suburbs and the Home Counties, this was partially offset by migration in the reverse direction. The average distance moved was 9.5 miles, which suggested significant mobility. This was, however, skewed by the long distance relocations to the coastal resorts of Brighton and Southend. Overall the analysis suggests that residential mobility was more limited and more nuanced than portrayed by the aggregated data and that moves of significant distance were the exception rather than the norm.

Concluding Comments on Commuting in the Victorian Era

This chapter has considered the evolution of commuting across London in the Victorian era from the perspective of a sample of middle-class occupational groups. It has focused on the role played by London's developing suburban railway network by comparing its growth (as measured by station openings) to the residential patterns of selected groups. There are clear limitations in drawing general conclusions from this relatively small sample. All were privileged groups, albeit with different levels of income and social status, but they were the first groups to be able to take advantage of travelling to work by rail. The choices made by these groups set the aspirational paths for other social groups to follow. It was a dynamic that led to the creation of segregated residential areas and new social barriers. The maps of their commuting patterns have wider resonance for the study of London's urban development.

At one level these maps of the commuting patterns show that there was a rapid pace of change. In the course of one or two generations, wealthy Londoners had moved from living close to the city centre to residing at much greater distances from their places of work. Commuting to work and suburban living was already an established concept by 1840, but in the age of horse-drawn travel, the outskirts of London were still not far from the original City walls. It was the suburban railway system that

proved to be transformative. The establishment of a reliable service that delivered the commuter close to their London place of work in the morning and did the same in reverse in the evening enabled ever-increasing numbers to live further and further out of London. Yet the maps also show that process was slower to gather momentum than might have been expected. Despite the railways being an established national transport system by the 1830s and the expansion during the age of railway mania in the 1840s, London's suburban railway network did not emerge until the 1860s. Thereafter there was a proliferation of new lines into the capital. Even then the maps indicate a reticence to embrace the possibilities of commuting to work over long distances. Many professionals continued to live in inner London, albeit in the most salubrious areas, throughout the period. For those who chose to live in the outer suburbs and the Home Counties, there were clear favoured areas to the south-west, south and south-east. It was a social change led by the wealthiest sections of the middle classes but it had clear aspirational appeal, as by the Edwardian era the next strata of the middle classes had followed their lead.

These patterns provide a quantitative insight into the chronology and spatial characteristics of long distance commuting. They suggest that commuting only became a viable option for more than the few from the 1860s onwards. Thereafter, in the following decades, there was a steady increase in the average distance travelled to work with a more rapid acceleration from the 1890s until the outbreak of the First World War. From that point more transport options became available to most of the working population and as the patterns from the 1921 Census data illustrated, commuting, albeit often over short distances, was to become a commonplace activity. This statistical analysis addresses, to some degree, the question of when and where commuting took place around London and who embraced this new style of living. It provides a partial answer to the debate between Ward and Cannadine, which suggests that both were describing different aspects of the same phenomenon. The maps confirm that there were already high status segregated residential areas at the beginning of the railway era as highlighted by Cannadine, but also that changing residential patterns went hand in hand with the development of a mass transport

system in London as claimed by Ward. They suggest that the desire, by many of the upper and middling ranks of the middle class, to live on London's periphery was a consistent theme throughout the period.

Yet these maps cannot answer other aspects of the debate. They cannot tell us whether this shift outwards from the centre was the result of the pressure of newcomers into previously desirable suburbs - a constantly fearful retreat as described by Cannadine or a more positive wish to live in locations still retaining that semi-rural 'rus in urbe' quality. These questions of how and why this change took place are the subject of the next chapters. In the following chapter, the construction of a commuting infrastructure is examined to understand how this provided the physical means of travelling long distances. This is followed by considering why commuting was an attractive proposition, and in particular how it was intrinsically linked to ideas of suburban living. Finally the concept of commuting is investigated from the perspective of the new commuter communities themselves and how London's outer suburbs and peripheral towns and villages were shaped by these new arrivals.

Chapter Five – The Infrastructure of Commuting



Figure 5.1: Interior of Charing Cross Station c. mid 1860s.²⁷⁷

In the editorial in the first issue of the journal *Mobilities*, the editors noted that ‘mobilities cannot be described without attention to the necessary spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings that configure and enable mobilities’²⁷⁸. This chapter explores the key characteristics of London’s suburban railway network; the infrastructure of commuting. It examines the decision-making rationale of the major railway companies serving the London market, who were the architects of this infrastructure. It covers the practical reality of what was available to the commuter: how far could he travel, to and from which locations, how long did it take and how

²⁷⁷ Kell Brothers, “Charing Cross Station”, Coloured chromolithograph c.1863 (Science & Society Picture Library, Image reference 10301723, accessed 7 June 2020, from <https://www.scienceandsociety.co.uk/results.asp?image=10301723>).

²⁷⁸ K. Hannam, M. Scheller & J. Urry, “Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities & Moorings”, *Mobilities*, Volume 1, No.1, (March 2006), p.3.

much it cost. These were critical considerations for the commuter, and a regular, timely and financially affordable service was a fundamental requirement for living in the suburbs and working in the centre of London. This chapter presumes a correlation between the commitment of the railway companies towards the development of a suburban railway system, the efficiency of that network and the growth of residential settlement in the suburbs.

This posits a central role for the railway in the story of suburban development. It runs counter to the prevailing view of the impact of the railways on the Victorian urban and suburban form. Kellett's seminal work²⁷⁹ on the operating policies of the railway companies concentrated on their relationship with landowners, and in his view it was the latter that had the upper hand in the development of the suburbs. He concluded that 'the railway companies' influence in the nineteenth century was important at the margin, rather than paramount' and 'the outcome of the railways' incapacity to reap corporate benefit from anything except the traffic a line generated was to give them a neutral, passive role in the outward spread of Victorian cities'²⁸⁰. This suggests that the London's suburban growth would either be evenly or randomly spread around the capital, with only limited correlation to the suburban railway network. This chapter asserts the contrary view: that the role of railway companies was not a marginal or passive one. Instead the action or inaction of the various railway companies serving London led to notable geographical and class biases in the location of the capital's suburbs. It is argued that the railway companies were performing more than 'the classic role of intermediary between the supply and demand forces in the land market'²⁸¹, attributed to them by Kellett.

The list of histories of the railway is long and although few concentrated on London's suburban railways, it is not intended to write a chronological account of the construction of this infrastructure. Instead this chapter follows the structure of the

²⁷⁹ J. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.405.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.405.

previous two, by considering the position in the Edwardian era and then its evolutionary path in the Victorian period. It looks to explore the railway companies' rationale for the creation and operation of their suburban rail network. These include the competing business priorities of the railway companies and why there was not a consensus on the approach to the commercial opportunity offered by suburbanisation. The impact of the rivalries between the major railway companies as a significant influence on this process is assessed along with the growing competition in the market for short-distance travel. A wider perspective comes from examining the role of the important outside influences on the decision-making of the boards of the railway companies; notably their shareholders and Parliament and other regulatory bodies. The research for this chapter has been primarily drawn from the information held or published by the railway companies themselves, as well as official reports on London's transport system, notably the 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic report. Contemporary commentators on the railways have also been utilised, particularly *The Railway Magazine*, to give a less formal perspective. In summary this chapter intends to provide part of the explanatory narrative for the patterns of commuting observed in chapters three and four.

The Edwardian Suburban Railway Service – One or Many Commercial Strategies?

A series of maps were shown in the last chapter to illustrate the growth of London's suburban network as measured by the opening of new stations. They indicated a clear geographical distinction between the networks serving southern and eastern London in comparison with those catering for northern and western districts of the metropolis. The chapter suggested some causes of this phenomenon and this section expands on these observations. Three broad groupings of London's major railway companies were identified by the Edwardian era: those with a national rather than a London only focus (the Great Western (GWR), Great Northern (GNR), London & North Western (LNWR), Midland (MID) and Great Central (GCR)), those with a regional network based around London as the hub (London and South Western (LSWR), London, Brighton and South Coast (LBSCR), South Eastern (SER) and Great Eastern (GER))

and those serving a specific geographical niche (London, Tilbury & Southend (LTS), London, Chatham and Dover (LCDR) and North London (NLR)). A flavour of their business strategies can be gauged from a series of interviews conducted by the *Railway Magazine* at the end of the nineteenth century with the business leaders of the major railway companies.

The first edition opened with an interview with Mr Joseph Wilkinson, General Manager of the Great Western Railway. He enthused to the reporter about the Company's express service to Cornwall, Wales and to Weymouth for its steamer connection to the Channel Islands. The latter was part of a general promotion of tourist excursions across its network. Catering for London commuters appeared to be low on the list of priorities. He opined 'we still have that important source of revenue practically untapped, because our terminal station being at the West End of London serves a different district to that of any other railway. The other districts, however, around London are rapidly filling up, and the turn of the Western suburbs must soon come'²⁸². It was a similar story for the other railway companies with national networks, which had competing and often more glamorous business opportunities to pursue than the London suburban market. Mr Frederick Harrison, General Manager of the London and North Western Railway was more preoccupied with the prospect of competition with the GWR on the Birmingham line and the LSWR for transatlantic passengers. He proudly boasted that 'every time one of the Cunard or White Star steamers sails from Liverpool, we run a special timed to connect with it at the Riverside Station at Liverpool, performing the journey from London to Liverpool in four hours, and sometimes even less, practically without a stoppage'²⁸³.

Even where the commercial opportunity was recognised, this group of railway companies appeared to embrace it slowly and grudgingly. Mr George Turner, General Manager of the Midland Railway commented that 'we are widening our main line into

²⁸² *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 1, July 1897, p.6, held at the London Transport Museum Library and also accessible via <https://www.railwaymagazine.co.uk/archive>.

²⁸³ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 3, September 1897, pp.195-196.

London. This, of course, is a very costly undertaking, but our traffic in and out of London has grown to such an extent as to make it absolutely necessary that relief lines be constructed.²⁸⁴ The GNR was more pro-active in developing its suburban network. *The Railway Magazine* commented that ‘the suburban traffic – which has assumed enormous proportions in recent years – is also a very material factor in the Company’s earnings power’²⁸⁵. Yet this service was only one of a number of major business lines operated by the GNR. These included the main passenger lines to Scotland, Yorkshire and the east Midlands cities of Nottingham and Leicester as well as significant national freight services and the management of major hotels at King’s Cross, Peterborough and Leeds. This geographic and functional spread of business interests was common to all of the five companies with national networks. Inevitably their focus on London’s suburban market was either subordinate to or competing with other priorities.

This presented an opportunity to the second group of companies, with a regional rather than national focus. The LSWR, LBSCR, SER and GER were all excluded from the major connecting routes to the North, Midlands or the West of the country. The most significant urban centres in their regional orbit were respectively, Southampton, Brighton, Dover and Felixstowe/Harwich. Geographically hemmed in and lacking access to the main industrial areas of the country, they were, unsurprisingly, fully committed to serving the London market. This did not mean an exclusive concentration on suburban commuting services. The transport of freight, particularly agricultural goods, to the capital, connections to the continent and excursions by Londoners to the coast or other places of interest, were also competing priorities. They did have in common, a more forward-thinking business strategy in respect of the potential of railway commuting. It was best exemplified by the LSWR. Its General Manager, Sir Charles Scotter was proclaimed ‘the most successful railway manager of his time’ and this was certainly confirmed by the company’s stellar stock market performance in the 1880s and 1890s. Its financial success was attributable to its

²⁸⁴ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 2, August 1897, p.104.

²⁸⁵ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 9, Match 1898, p.204.

wealthy commuter clientele, where high fares led to healthy profit margins. The *Railway Magazine* described the resulting virtuous business cycle: ‘a large number of stations have in many places been rebuilt; the rolling stock has been brought up to the standard of modern requirements; small, private lines, opening up new districts, have been absorbed, everywhere to the public advantage; extensions have been made in other directions where fresh traffic has been found ready to be tapped; safe and punctual working has come to be recognised as an essential feature of the daily routine – in short, the whole machinery of the vast network which forms the South-Western system has been kept well abreast of the times’²⁸⁶.

The other companies in this group sought to emulate this outcome, but with different formulae. The LBSCR was one of the pioneers of large-scale third class travel in the 1850s, at a time when other railway companies, including the LSWR and SER, concentrated on their first and second passengers. Sir Allen Sarle, general manager of the LBSCR, castigated this approach and claimed ‘the old idea of management was to charge as much as you dare and to give as little as you knew how’²⁸⁷. This strategy of improving third class travel arrangements was driven by the self-interested aim of maximising the excursion traffic from London to the south coast. For London’s suburban market, this meant a slightly cheaper fare structure than the other southern railway companies and a greater appeal to the mass middle-class market.

The SER fell between these differing approaches of its southern rivals. Its new Chairman, Mr Henry Cosmo Orme Bonsor, lamented in his 1898 interview that ‘in the past the South Eastern has exposed itself to much hostile criticism. The third-class accommodation was deliberately kept at a low standard, under the erroneous impression indicated that all except the poorest passengers could be driven into the higher classes’²⁸⁸. Yet it failed to achieve the LSWR’s reputation for operational efficiency, as its commuter service was subordinated to the smooth running of the

²⁸⁶ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 5, November 1897, pp.389-90.

²⁸⁷ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 7, January 1898, p.2.

²⁸⁸ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 11, May 1898, p.395.

express routes to the continent and suffered further from a lack of infrastructure investment around its London termini. This failing to secure a captive commuter market was exploited by its bitter rival, the LCDR. In the interview with John Morgan, its secretary, the *Railway Magazine* observed that ‘among business and professional men they are as popular as the local services of any company in London: indeed an exodus is taking place from suburban districts north of the Thames to suburbs served by the London, Chatham and Dover Railway’²⁸⁹. There was, therefore, no common operating strategy among the regional railway companies, although it was apparent that service and fare levels were the key ingredients to their success or failure.

The GER should be considered as an exception to all the other railway companies on account of the size and nature of its suburban operations. Its region encompassed the cathedral cities and coastal resorts and ports of East Anglia, but its greatest volume of passengers came from its extensive suburban network. Much of its network was aimed at the middle-class commuter on a similar basis to the approach adopted by the other regional companies. The main point of difference was that it was the first company to actively facilitate working-class commuting. This position arose from Parliamentary stipulations attached to their approval of the building of Liverpool Street station in the 1870s. They were required to run one train a day from Walthamstow and one from Edmonton at a fare of two pence. The GER quickly began to run additional trains, seeing an opportunity to increase the utilisation of its network and as *the Railway Magazine* observed ‘the enormous traffic on those branches has for years far exceeded the wildest dreams of their promoters’²⁹⁰.

²⁸⁹ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 12, June 1898, p.490.

²⁹⁰ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 18, December 1898, p.512.

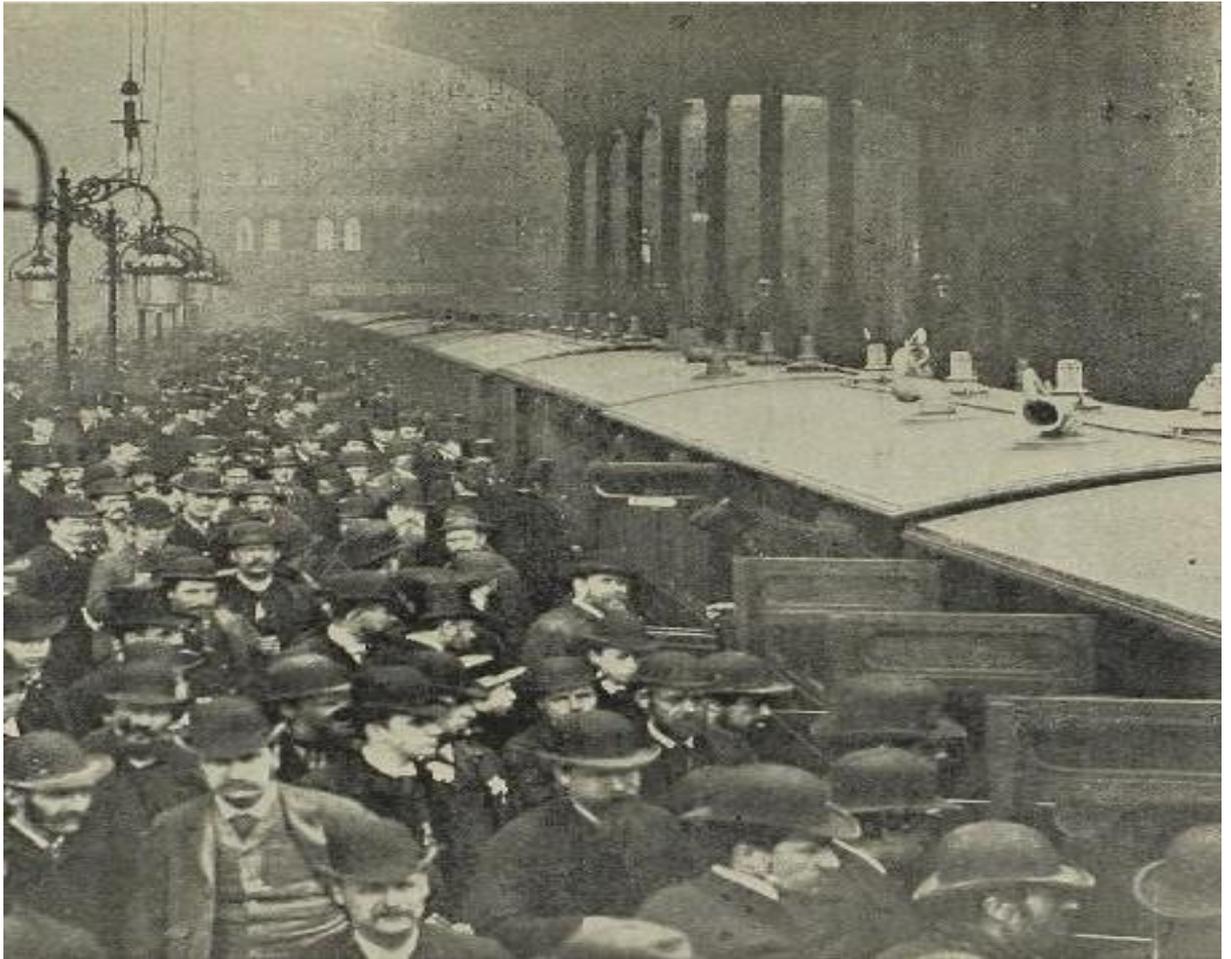


Figure 5.2: Workman's Train at Liverpool Street c.1890s.²⁹¹

The railway companies serving the eastern districts of London were responding to the wider demographic changes arising from the increasing industrialisation of this area of the capital, but their low cost services helped accelerate this process. It was not an outcome that the companies had foreseen or indeed promoted. George Newton, General Manager of the North London Railway, explained how his company had been forced to adapt to the transformation of the inner London suburbs of Islington, Dalston and Hackney. He commented that 'as a matter of fact the character of people travelling by the North London Railway has altered a great deal. For 25 years after the railway was opened our passengers were of a class that could afford to travel first or second class, but as the districts we serve became more thickly populated, another class of travellers came to us, and the directors quickly recognised the need of third-class

²⁹¹ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 18, December 1898, p.521.

accommodation, which since 1875 has been amply provided on every train we run. At the present time we carry enormous crowds of working men every day at nominal fares'²⁹². The responses of the management of these two railway companies can be viewed as largely reactive to changing circumstances. Though they derived substantial revenues from their cheap fare services, the management of a railway service predominantly for the working class was not their original intention.

The broad operational strategy of the railway companies serving the metropolis thus ranged across the spectrum from a passive to an active interest in London suburbs and their residents. Broadly those based in the west and north-west of the capital were least interested with the eastern and southern railways being far more positive and ambitious in the development of their suburban railway networks. There was also no single commercial approach, as each company found its strategy shaped by its specific operational circumstances.

The Edwardian Suburban Railway: A Statistical Evaluation

This impressionistic picture of the railway companies serving London on the eve of the Edwardian era is borne out by the available statistical data. The 1908 London traffic report to the Board of Trade included two maps (figures 5.3 & 5.4) showing passenger numbers commuting into London. (Passengers travelling on ordinary tickets, including season tickets and third-class travel, were shown in red, whereas low cost and workmen's fares were coloured blue).

²⁹² *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 15, September 1898, p.215.

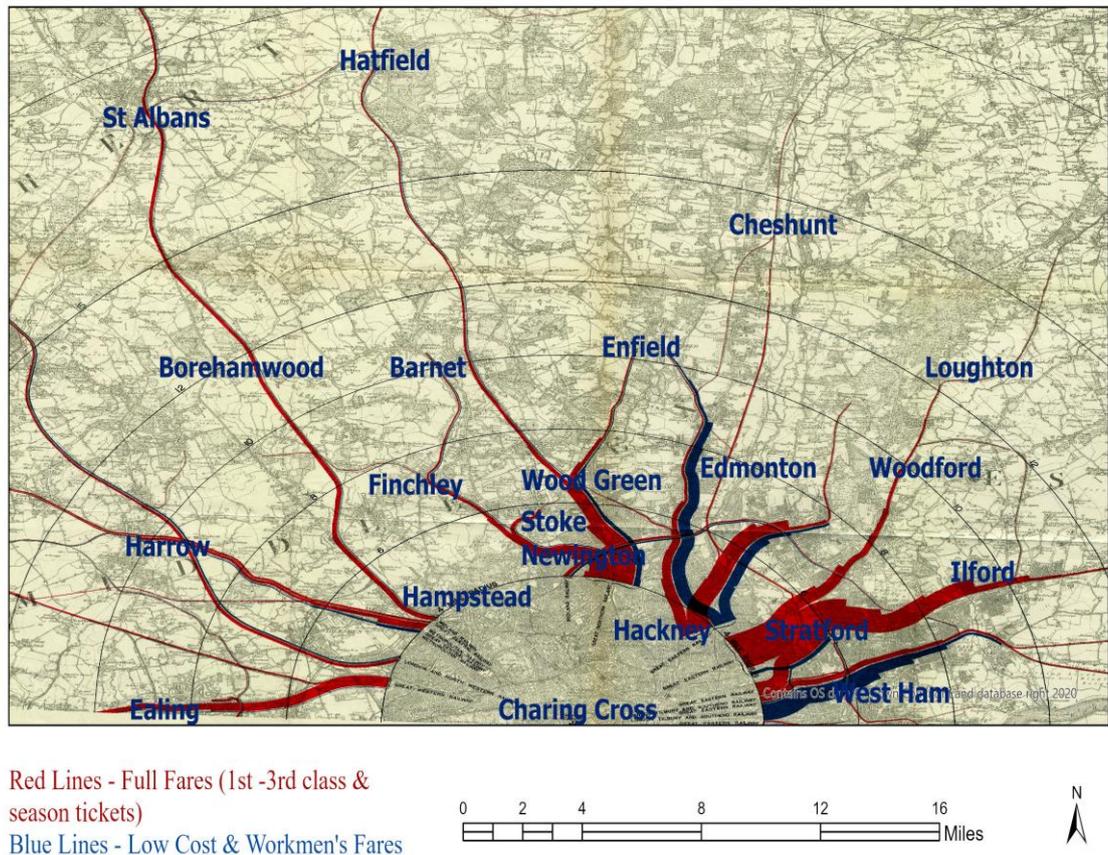
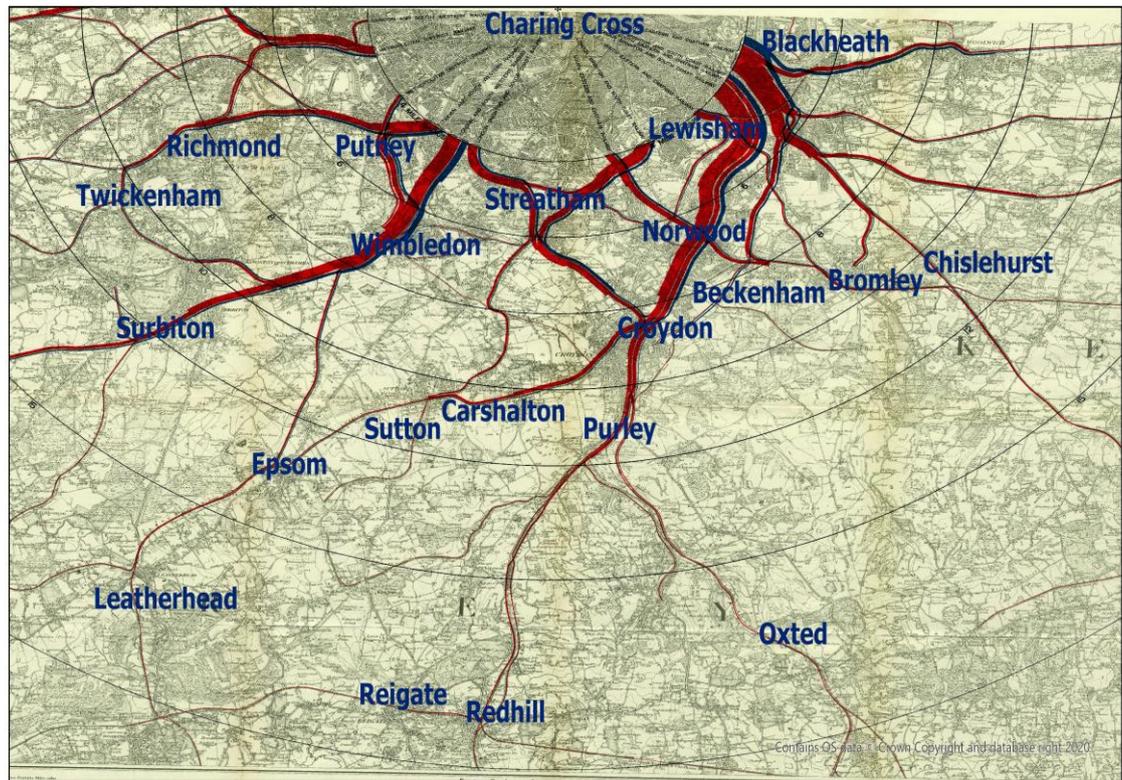


Figure 5.3: North London Railways: Volume of traffic 1908.²⁹³

To the north of London, it was evident that the volume of traffic was markedly greater in the north eastern districts of the capital. The highest numbers of passengers came from the working-class districts of Stratford, Hackney and Stoke Newington. This was the area served by GER and NLR and the only area where low cost travel was significant. In comparison the traffic to middle-class destinations such as Harrow, Ealing, Barnet, Loughton and Cheshunt were lower. It was visual confirmation that working-class commuting was substantial by the Edwardian era and it helps explain the high number of commuters from these locations recorded in the analysis of the 1921 Census data in chapter three.

²⁹³ 1909 London Traffic Report to the Board of Trade (National Archives, Ref MT70/6).



Red Lines - Full Fares (1st-3rd class & season tickets)
 Blue Lines - Low Cost & Workmen's Fares

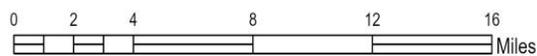


Figure 5.4: South London Railways: Volume of traffic 1908.²⁹⁴

A similar pattern can be seen to the south of London, albeit on a lesser scale. The south eastern suburbs of Lewisham, Norwood, Streatham and Croydon served by the LBSCR, LCDR and to a lesser extent the SER recorded the highest passenger numbers. Volumes were slightly lower on the LSWR's network, with Wimbledon and Putney being the most popular destinations. All four companies had commenced offering low cost fares on these routes by the Edwardian period, though numbers were lower than those travelling on the GER and NLR services. The much thinner lines out to Richmond, Twickenham, Epsom, Sutton, Bromley and Chislehurst suggest that there was a difference in service on these routes compared to the numerically more

²⁹⁴ 1909 London Traffic Report to the Board of Trade. (National Archives, Ref MT70/6).

popular destinations. This correlation between social exclusivity and a limited suburban service is considered further in this chapter and later chapters.

The volume of passengers carried by each of the railway companies was also measured from the perspective of the traffic arriving at their London termini. The 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic gathered statistical information on the various means of transport into the capital in order to make informed recommendations on reducing congestion in the city centre. The table (5.1 below) on the daily arrivals at the London termini corroborated the picture from the interviews in the *Railway Magazine*.

Daily Railway Services into London				
Railway Company	Termini	Suburban Trains	Other Trains	Total
GER	Liverpool Street	380	36	416
NLR	Broad Street	322		322
LBSCR, SER & LCDR	Victoria	306	64	370
LSWR	Waterloo	256	47	303
LBSCR, SER & LCDR	London Bridge	243	50	293
GER & LTS	Fenchurch Street	232	1	233
SER	Charing Cross	152	35	187
GNR	Kings Cross	60	41	101
SER	Cannon Street	59	3	62
LCDR	Holborn Viaduct	50	21	71
GWR	Paddington	39	64	103
MID	St Pancras	38	28	66
LNWR	Euston	36	42	78
GCR	Marylebone		13	13
Total Services by Overground Railways		2,173	445	2,618

Table 5.1: Daily Railway Services into London in 1905.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁵ 1905 Royal Commission, Volume III, Appendix 6, Table 33.

The limited interest in a London suburban service shown by the railway companies with a national network was evident. They (GNR, GWR, MID, LNWR & GCR) recorded the lowest number of suburban trains, with their other services either matching or exceeding this total. The regional and niche group of companies were far more committed in operating a suburban service, which far exceeded their long-distance services. The extent of working-class commuting was confirmed by the GER and NLR providing the greatest number of suburban trains.

The GER and NLR were not alone and all companies operated a low cost service to a greater or lesser extent (as shown in table 5.2 below), though these two companies were undoubtedly the largest conveyors of working-class commuters.

Region	Number of Trains					Grand Total
	Workmens Trains (2d)	Other Workmens	Cheap or Half-Fare	Total	Ordinary Fares	
West		8		8	18	26
North	8	20	10	38	140	178
East	48	41	24	113	144	257
South-East		81		81	188	269
South-West		68		68	111	179
	56	218	34	308	601	909
Region	Number of Passengers '000s					Grand Total
	Workmens Trains (2d)	Other Workmens	Cheap or Half-Fare	Total	Ordinary Fares	
West		1		1	4	5
North	2	5	3	10	51	61
East	20	18	14	52	59	111
South-East		18		18	68	86
South-West		20		20	38	58
	22	62	17	101	220	321

Table 5.2: Weekday Suburban Rail Traffic up to 10.30 a.m. in 1905 ²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ 1905 Royal Commission, Volume III, Appendix 6, table 34 (ordinary fares exclude season tickets).

Despite the increases in the number of low cost fares, railway commuting in the Edwardian era was predominantly the preserve of those able to afford at least a third-class ordinary ticket. Even in London's eastern districts, the majority of passengers paid standard fares (or had a season ticket) and the percentage was much higher elsewhere around the capital. A clearer indication of the scale and geographic spread of this type of commuting can be seen in table 5.3, which includes both ordinary and season ticket journeys.

Railway	Termini	Ordinary Journeys 000s	Season Tickets 000s	Total Journeys 000s
GWR	Paddington	6,495	2,679	9,174
LNWR	Euston	2,601	1,869	4,470
GCR	Marylebone	382	89	471
Total West London		9,478	4,637	14,115
GNR	King's Cross	7,112	8,265	15,377
MID	St Pancras	2,482	7,285	9,767
NLR	Broad Street	16,851	9,844	26,695
Total North London		26,445	25,394	51,839
GER	Liverpool Street	45,233	20,066	65,299
GER & LTS	Fenchurch Street	18,397	5,528	23,925
Total East London		63,630	25,594	89,224
LBSCR	London Bridge	14,028	9,713	23,741
	Victoria	12,612	5,948	18,560
SECR	London Bridge	4,030	2,013	6,043
	Cannon Street	9,196	4,343	13,539
	St Paul's	2,561	1,230	3,791
	Ludgate Hill	3,280	1,534	4,814
	Charing Cross	6,853	3,321	10,174
	Waterloo	1,870	845	2,715
	Holborn	7,213	3,456	10,669
	Victoria	7,371	3,488	10,859
Total South & South East London		69,014	35,891	104,905
LSWR	Waterloo	22,268	8,732	31,000
	Vauxhall	2,208	16	2,224
West London	Addison Road	3,104	1,000	4,104
Total South West London		27,580	9,748	37,328
Grand Total		196,147	101,264	297,411

Table 5.3: Passenger Numbers for 1902 by Region. ²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷ 1905 Royal Commission, op cit. Volume III, Appendix 6.

Ranked by ordinary class and season ticket sales, Liverpool Street was London's biggest commuter station, followed by Waterloo, London Bridge, Victoria and then Broad Street. The latter's high position can be explained by the high proportion of cheap fare passengers carried by the NLR in comparison with its larger competitors. The table was further evidence that the biggest suburban passenger markets were to the east, north-east and south of the capital, with the north and west being less popular. However, a slightly different picture emerges if only the season ticket journeys are considered. In this ranking, Liverpool Street remained the largest commuter destination, followed by London Bridge, Broad Street, Victoria and Waterloo. The gap with the north London stations of Kings Cross and St Pancras was much narrower on this basis. If season ticket journeys are considered a proxy for the regular commuter, then the attraction of railway commuting appears a little more evenly spread.

This picture can be expanded to factor in the distance travelled on the suburban railway network. A report presented in the 1909 London Traffic Report to the Board of Trade showed that the vast majority of suburban rail users only made short journeys to work. The table below (table 5.4) indicates c.90% of London's ordinary fare suburban service (97% for cheap fare travellers) catered for passengers within the Greater London area (a distance of c.12 miles from the centre).

Distance From Charing Cross Miles	Number of Passengers	Area in Square Miles	Number of Passengers Per Sq Mile
4 to 6	2,232,201	63	35,432
6 to 8	3,406,588	83	41,043
8 to 10	2,432,996	113	21,531
10 to 12	843,780	138	6,114
12 to 15	238,252	244	976
15 to 20	331,213	560	591
20 to 25	151,025	707	214
25 to 30	107,614	864	125

Table 5.4: Distance Travelled by Railway to Work in 1909.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ 1909 London Traffic Report to the Board of Trade, p.52 (includes season ticket holders).

The 1909 London Traffic Report commented that there was a strong correlation between the length of the commute and the level of commuter activity as measured in terms of time, not distance. It confirms the general principle of commuting, that there is a limit to the amount of time as well as money that one is willing to spend on travelling to one's place of work. In the Edwardian era only a limited number of destinations had the railway infrastructure of fast and regular services to allow commuter journeys. This is illustrated by the table below (table 5.5).

Number of Ordinary Passengers who Travelled to London in October 1907											
Railway	Miles	4 to 6	6 to 8	8 to 10	10 to 12	12 to 15	15 to 20	20 to 25	25 to 30	30 to 40	Total
		000s	000s	000s	000s	000s	000s	000s	000s	000s	000s
GWR		-	79	83	26	12	32	22	31	-	285
GCR		-	-	5	12	12	7	5	5	-	47
LNWR		-	-	14	21	13	23	4	4	-	79
Total West London		-	79	103	60	37	61	30	40	-	410
GNR		632	203	101	66	6	9	5	12	-	1,033
MID		60	54	6	-	13	33	15	21	-	201
Total North London		692	257	107	66	19	42	20	32	-	1,234
GER		229	1,092	495	162	55	14	8	-	-	2,055
LTS		3	45	55	-	3	19	16	7	126	274
Total East London		232	1,137	550	162	58	33	24	7	126	2,329
LBSCR		357	258	82	150	14	14	12	4	-	892
SECR		229	331	304	85	48	56	51	8	-	1,111
Total South & Sth East London		586	589	386	235	62	70	63	12	-	2,003
LSWR		141	121	750	144	30	86	12	13	-	1,297
Total South West London		141	121	750	144	30	86	12	13	-	1,297
Total		1,651	2,183	1,896	666	206	292	149	104	126	7,273

Table 5.5: Distance Travelled by Railway to Work by Railway Company in 1907.²⁹⁹

The table brings out the differences in the nature of the suburban services provided by the railway companies. The GER and GNR primarily catered for shorter distance railway travel to the north-east, east and north, and the LBSCR and SER/LCNR (merged as the South Eastern & Chatham Railway (SECR)) provided a similar short distance service to the expanding inner London suburbs to the south of the river.

²⁹⁹ 1909 London Traffic Report to the Board of Trade, Appendix B, XII.

Beyond 10 miles from the capital, the railway passenger numbers fell away across all networks. There were some notable exceptions; to the south-west of the capital, the LSWR provided a good service along its main line to the south-west through Wimbledon, Surbiton and Woking. Croydon, Purley, Bromley and Sevenoaks in the south and south-east were similarly well served by the LBSCR and SECR. The GER's main line to Norwich linked Romford and Chelmsford to the capital in the east, and the GNR ran specific suburban services out to Enfield, Edgware and Barnet. Longer distance commuter services were less common, with only a few locations enjoying a fast and frequent enough rail connection to allow a daily trip to London. Long distance commuting was the exception in Edwardian times with sole express commuter services being to Westcliff and Southend, run by the LTS, and Brighton and Hove, operated by the LBSCR.

This chapter seeks to explain the commuting patterns observed in the previous two chapters. It compares Edwardian railway commuting, viewed in aggregate, with the specific occupational groups chosen in chapter three. Unsurprisingly the commuting patterns of chosen professions and occupations correlate with those of the wider picture of the infrastructure of commuting. The preference for living to the south of the capital observed amongst the middle-class groups corresponds with the better developed suburban networks in these areas. The concentration within a radius of three to ten miles from central London also mirrored the spatial characteristics of the total commuting population. The limited extent of working-class railway commuting observed in the sample groups reflects the fact that it was still subordinate, at an aggregate level, to a focus on middle-class commuting by the railway companies. It has to be recognised that the small sample of working-class commuting does not present a comprehensive picture of this phenomenon. This should not be a major limitation as it is not the intended focus of this thesis to consider working-class commuting in isolation. Instead this thesis contends that the nature and geographical extent of working-class commuting was moulded by the factors that shaped the evolution of the journey to work for the middle classes. These are considered in the rest of this chapter.

The Victorian Suburban Railway: The Early Phases - Afterthought or Design?

It can be seen that a wide range of operating strategies towards London's suburban railway market had emerged by the Edwardian era amongst the major railway companies. This section explores how these differing approaches came about and what were the major influences on the decision-making process for the creation of London's railway infrastructure. The historical literature of this aspect of London's suburban railway network is not substantial. Turner noted that 'scholars have largely focused their attention on the management of railways serving northern and industrial regions of the country'³⁰⁰. As a result 'the management of southern companies operating within a distinct business and trading environment, and whose decision-makers possibly responded to challenges in alternate ways, has been neglected in the literature'³⁰¹.

The starting point of this review is the railway companies' own operational strategy over the period as articulated in Board minutes, shareholder meetings and accompanying financial statements. They have limitations as sources; they sometimes lapsed into a formulaic, summary or opaque style of reporting, with a positive corporate gloss put upon their actions or delegated key operational matters to sub-committees, whose records have been lost or not been deemed worthy of retention. The companies' management also tended to have a short-term time horizon and rarely conducted the longer-term planning common in modern enterprises. As a result the written records covered the full range of issues facing the company at that moment, ranging from the significant; the presentation of Bills to Parliament, to the mundane; approval for donations to a local charity. They provide a flavour of the constraints on

³⁰⁰ D Turner, "Managing the Royal Road, The London & South-West Railway 1870-1911" (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2013), p.45.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

decision-making faced by railway companies' management, and how they responded to these challenges and shaped the development of their businesses.

It was stated in the last chapter that the creation of a large regional railway network was the first priority of railway companies at the beginning of the 'Railway Age'. This intention was expressed in the early minutes of the newly formed companies. At the inaugural meeting of the LBSCR in 1846, the Chairman saw the need to expand its routes across its region to reach new destinations. He sought agreement to build branch line extensions from its main line to Brighton and co-operate with neighbouring companies to achieve this strategic vision. He asserted that 'a glance at the map will suffice to point out the importance of this agreement. You will have at your disposal very extensive means of affording to a large district, the most satisfactory accommodation. You will have lines extending from London Bridge on one hand to Brighton, Lewes, Newhaven and Hastings and on the other to Epsom, Dorking, Petersfield and Portsmouth with coast lines from Portsmouth to Hastings'³⁰². At this date, the conception of a regional railway company was one that connected London to other major towns.

A similar grand design was expressed at the first meeting of shareholders of the SER in 1836. The Chairman defended the siting of its main route from London to Dover via Redhill, Tonbridge and Ashford as opening up the region for railway travel, by allowing easy access to other towns. He stated that 'one of the principal advantages of the South-Eastern line is, its situation at nearly equal distance from the Thames and the British Channel: thus forming a main trunk, from which branches may be extended to almost all places of importance, not only in Kent, but also in East Sussex'³⁰³. This desire to create a large railway network was driven by the perceived opportunity for long distance passenger and freight transportation. The 1844 prospectus for the London and York Railway (forerunner of the GNR) stated 'that Yorkshire, Derbyshire

³⁰² London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Shareholders Meeting, 19 August 1846, (National Archives, RAIL 414/2).

³⁰³ South Eastern Railway Proprietors meeting, 10 November 1836, (National Archives, RAIL 1110/424).

and Nottinghamshire coals, Yorkshire manufactures and London goods would ‘find a ready market along the whole route’³⁰⁴. The route would also benefit ‘the farmers and graziers in the counties of Nottingham, Lincoln, Northampton, Bedford and Hertford’³⁰⁵. It led to a scattergun approach to constructing new lines to seek out these commercial opportunities. For example the LBSCR’s original list of new routes for Parliamentary approval included lines to ‘Wandsworth, East Grinstead, Steyning, Littlehampton, Newhaven, Hailsham and Eastbourne’³⁰⁶. These early visions of the geographical spread of their networks were to exert a long-standing hold on all regional railway companies. They always remained interested in a far larger area than just London and its surrounding hinterland and a much wider range of railway services than its suburban network.

This strategic ambition was conducted amidst a crowded and fiercely competitive market. The ‘Railway Mania’ of the 1840s had led to the formation of a multitude of railway companies, all seeking to maximise the opportunities from their rail franchises. Inevitably the high cost of railway infrastructure led to a series of amalgamations and takeovers of smaller companies by the larger regional players in the 1850s and 1860s. By 1870 consolidation of the market was largely complete with 88.7% of all revenues were accrued by the fifteen largest companies³⁰⁷. The legacy of this corporate survival of the fittest was to ingrain a deep-seated suspicion of the intentions of neighbouring railway companies into the railway companies’ business culture. Boards were wary of their actions and constantly concerned that their franchise was under threat from a rival’s activities. The Board minutes were filled with references to the state of relations with their neighbours, often couched in terms of an ongoing war with battles and truces.

The impulse to defend ‘territory’ often overrode more economically viable investment options. At a LSWR shareholders’ meeting in 1852 the question was asked ‘whether

³⁰⁴ Quoted in C. Grinling, *History of the Great Northern Railway 1845-1895*, p.17.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Shareholder Meeting, 19 August 1846.

³⁰⁷ D. Turner, “Managing the Royal Road, The London & South-West Railway 1870-1911”, p.43.

they should endeavour to carry their lines through the extensive district beyond Salisbury and Dorchester'³⁰⁸. The motion was carried and so, the 'Race to the West' between the LSWR and the GWR began. It was a battle for pre-eminence in the West Country that was to shape both companies' decision-making for decades to come. Simmonds summed up this continued investment in increasingly remote districts as 'rivalry for its own sake, without reference to the interests of the consumer or the investor, merely for the purpose of spiking an opponent's guns'³⁰⁹. A sense of the scale of over-building and illogical layout of the country's railway network resulting from the legacy of the 'Railway Mania' and the subsequent competition between the major regional railway companies comes across in Casson's counterfactual study³¹⁰ of the Victorian and Edwardian railway. He estimated that a national railway system 'was over-built by 30%: too much track, and hubs in the wrong place'³¹¹ by the eve of outbreak of the First World War.

The railway companies were largely oblivious to or sanguine about the long-term economic consequences of their actions. Elsewhere in the south of England, there were similar bitter rivalries between the SER and LCDR in Kent, Sussex and Surrey (which is explored further in chapter seven), as well as between the LBSCR and both the SER and LSWR. Proposed new routes were debated and disputed during the Parliamentary approval process and line-sharing agreements were frequently brokered and then broken. A typical Board minute of the LBSCR from 1864 recorded that 'the laws promoted by the SER affecting the interests of the Company were withdrawn, satisfactory arrangements were made with that Company as regards the traffic from Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne and all questions of variance adjusted. The Directors believe that this will prevent any future collision and thus strengthen the friendly

³⁰⁸ Special Meeting of Shareholders of London and South Western Railway 27 October 1852, reported in *The Evening Mail*, accessed on 30 August 2019, from <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001316/18521027/057/0006>.

³⁰⁹ J. Simmonds, "South Western v Great Western, Railway Competition in Devon and Cornwall", *Journal of Transport History*, 1st series, no 4, (May 1959), p.321.

³¹⁰ M. Casson, *The World's First Railway System: Enterprise, Competition and Regulation on the Railway Network in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³¹¹ M. Casson in "Public Service or Private Profit? British Railway Policy 1845-2000", *The Clinker Lecture 2020*, accessed 24 October 2020 at <https://rchs.org.uk/clinker-lecture/>.

relations of the two Companies'³¹². Unfortunately this peace did not last and the minutes for 1865 angrily noted that the SER had gone back on its agreement. The southern railway companies were not unique in their rivalries, the difference was simply that clashes between the major northern companies took place away from London. Considerable management attention was devoted to these competitive tensions. The broad framework of railway companies' strategic thinking can be conceived as a desire to exploit all revenue opportunities within the whole of its franchise, combined with the aim of maintaining or increasing its territorial reach.

The major railway companies were not formed to focus solely on London's suburban market. Nonetheless, its evolution was shaped by these wider influences on the decision-making process of the companies' management. This can be seen as the commercial opportunities for railway commuting became apparent in the 1860s. As illustrated in the last chapter, London's suburban network was largely constructed between 1860 and 1880. First and foremost, the railway companies realised that the growing suburbanisation of London represented a new source of passenger revenue. They saw that railway construction encouraged a profitable cycle of further suburbanisation. The LBSCR Board minute recorded in 1866 that 'the line to South Croydon was opened on 1 September [1865] and the station on the southern part of that town will afford great accommodation to a neighbourhood where building is at present rapidly increasing and will no doubt still further increase by reason of the new railway accommodation'³¹³. The SER also recognised this new potential, although it was guided as much by its competitors' actions as any financial analysis. The 1856 report to the Directors on the proposed extension from Lewisham to Dartford stated 'the experience of this and other Metropolitan Railway Companies, sufficiently proves that any line constructed through such a district as that which lies between Lewisham and Dartford, *must* eventually prove eminently remunerative *per se*; and in connection with this Railway especially so, in consequence of the advantages offered

³¹² London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Shareholders Meeting, 29 July 1864 (National Archives, RAIL 414/2).

³¹³ London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Shareholder Meeting, 29 January 1866 (National Archives, RAIL 414/2).

by this Company's terminus at London Bridge, which brings the residents along its lines into almost direct communication with the more important places of business in the City'³¹⁴. This combination of a strongly held belief in the remunerative properties of suburbanisation and the fear of rivals stealing a march provided much of the impetus behind the London suburban railway building boom of the 1860s and 1870s.

Indeed these two factors were to be a particularly significant influence on the GER. Newly formed in 1862 from an amalgamation of railway companies serving Eastern England, it only had a modest London terminus at Shoreditch. The Board of the GER immediately recognised that the success of the company was bound up with securing access to the London market. From the outset, they proposed the construction of a new terminus at Finsbury Circus (which was to be Liverpool Street station). They saw the location as 'convenient and spacious, in the heart of London, in close proximity to the Bank of England, the Royal Exchange, and the principal places of business, ease of access, with excellent approaches from all quarters of the town'³¹⁵. They believed it would 'secure the full benefit ... to every portion of the Great Eastern system, so that all traffic both along the main line, via Colchester and via Cambridge, and of all of the branches, may be brought to the Central City Terminus'³¹⁶. In addition they recognised the importance of suburban rail services and also proposed 'an extension commencing at Enfield, and following the course of the direct high road, from hence to London, collecting the traffic of the populous districts of Enfield, Edmonton, Tottenham, Stamford Hill, Stoke Newington and all the crowded suburbs in that direction and discharging the same at Finsbury Circus'³¹⁷. They held high expectations of the return from London suburban market and stated 'there can be no doubt that a large Metropolitan and Suburban traffic will be secured from the neighbourhood of Tottenham and its adjacent localities in which this Company has hitherto but very partially participated; and, bearing in mind that, of existing traffic

³¹⁴ South Eastern Railway Company Board report, 1856 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/424).

³¹⁵ Great Eastern Railway Company Board minutes, 27 February 1863 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/158).

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

on the Great Eastern system, *that which actually ARISES within 20 miles of London exceeds ONE-SIXTH of the whole passenger traffic over the whole system of 644 miles*; your Directors, looking to the experience of every extension within the Metropolitan area, cannot doubt that this extension will repay its cost'³¹⁸. This early commitment to a focus on the suburban market stood the GER apart from the other major regional railways and was a significant influence on its subsequent path to becoming the largest operator of London's commuter services.

The climax of this initial phase of London's suburban railway infrastructure was the battle by the railway companies to secure a prime central location for their London terminus. As noted above, this was the original *raison d'être* of the GER and all the main companies sought a similar degree of access to either the City of London or Westminster. The locations and dates of construction of these new grander termini were set out in chapter four. Their neo-classical designs (see figure 5) were primarily intended to stand as symbols of the corporate ambition and success of the railway companies, rather than to just facilitate their suburban service. This was evident from their ruinous expense, with both the LBSCR and the GER requiring rescue from bankruptcy during the 1866/7 banking crisis as a result of their over-ambitious expansion.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

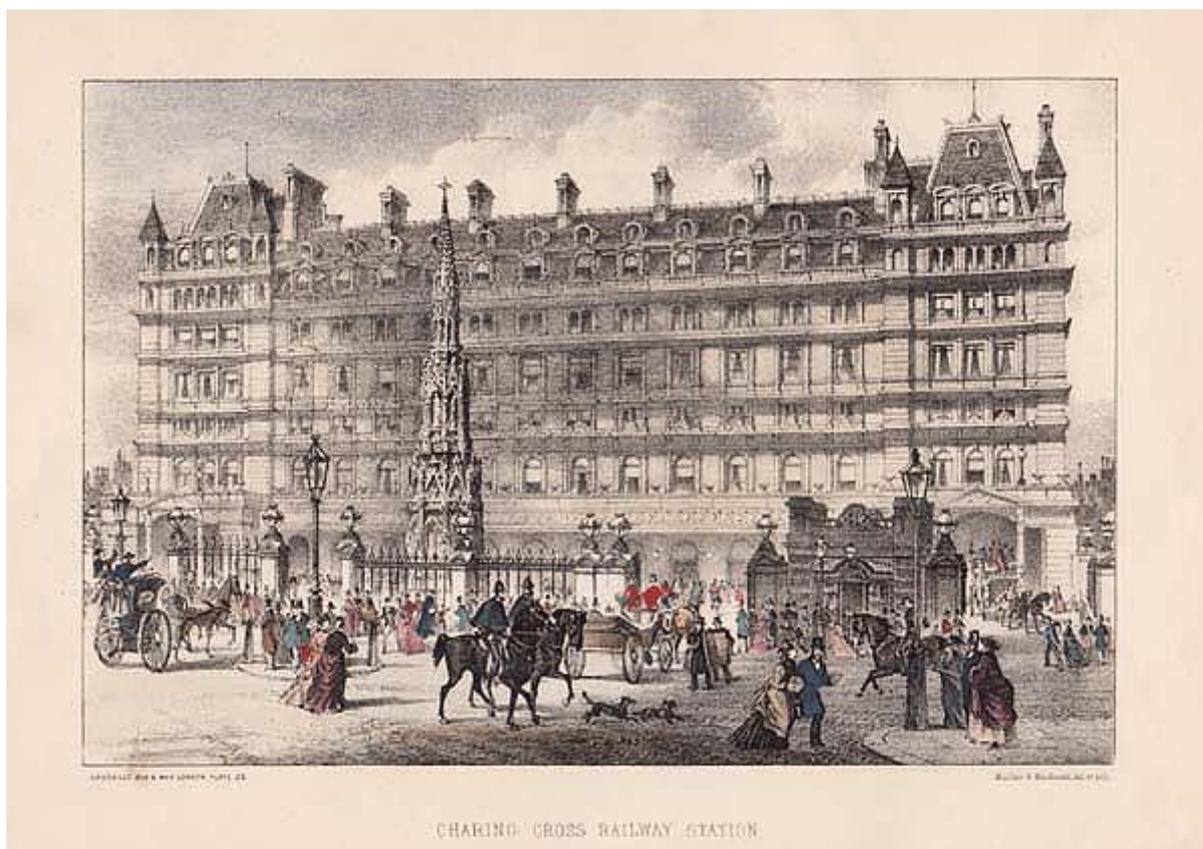


Figure 5.5: Exterior of Charing Cross Station c. late 1860s.³¹⁹

Of longer-term significance was the reaction of Parliament to this encroachment into central London. As noted in chapter four, the 1863 Parliamentary Committee halted the building of further railway infrastructure. It was the culmination of Parliament's increasing concern with impact of the railway on the capital's most valuable districts and followed two previous reports in 1854 and 1846³²⁰. Looking back at the evolution of the capital's suburban network the 1905 Royal Commission declared that 'the whole course of railway construction around London was influenced by the policy adopted in excluding railways from the central area'³²¹. It permanently tilted the

³¹⁹ Coloured lithograph by A. Maclure & A. Macdonald. Originally produced as supplementary presentation plate for E. Walford and G. Thornbury, *Old & New London* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1873-78).

³²⁰ Royal Commission to Investigate Projects for establishing Railway Termini within the Metropolis (House of Commons Parliamentary papers, 1846, Volume XVII.25, 399) and House of Commons Select Committee on Metropolitan Communication (House of Commons Parliamentary papers, 1854, Volume X.1, 297).

³²¹ 1905 Royal Commission, Volume III, p.611.

balance of opportunity towards those companies that had managed to establish a central location for their London termini. It enabled the southern and eastern railways to take greater advantage of London's ongoing suburbanisation, whereas the northern and western railways had less of an incentive to invest in their suburban networks. The impact of this difference in strategic outlook became evident in the next phase of the evolution of the Victorian suburban network, which was marked by the take-off of demand for railway commuting. It required a further investment in infrastructure in order to achieve operational efficiency and an adequate return on capital. This was to determine the railway companies' level of commitment towards facilitating railway commuting around the capital.

Victorian Suburban Railway Commuting: Take-off – From a Trickle to a Flood

At the time of the first major Parliamentary investigation into London's transport system, the 1854 House of Commons Select Committee on Metropolitan Communications, Charles Pearson, Solicitor to the City of London, observed in his evidence to the Committee, there had been 'a vast increase of what I may term the migratory population, the population of the City who now oscillate between the country and the City, who leave the City of London every afternoon and return to it every morning'³²².

³²² 1854 House of Commons Select Committee on Metropolitan Communication, C Pearson evidence to the Committee, p.152. point no.1345.

1854 - Estimated Numbers of Commuters		
Railways	1854 Total	Daily Average
London Bridge	5,422,500	14,856
Fenchurch Street	4,072,000	11,156
Waterloo	1,654,000	4,532
Shoreditch	1,071,500	2,936
Paddington	700,000	1,918
Euston	485,000	1,329
King's Cross	355,955	975
Total	13,760,955	37,701
Estimates of Other Modes of Transport to City		
Omnibuses		44,000
Steamers		15,000
Other carriages		26,000
Walking		200,000
Total		322,701

Table 5.6: 1854 Select Committee
Estimates of Commuter Numbers.³²³

He presented the first estimates of commuter numbers to the Committee and, as table 5.6 indicated the principal mode of travel to work, by a large margin, was by foot. Yet, the importance of termini for railway commuters close to the City was already evident. London Bridge, the London terminus for both LBSCR and the SER, had established itself as an important gateway to the City. A sense of its rapid growth and that of railway commuting in general can be seen from the financial results of the LBSCR from 1848 to 1908 (table 5.7).

The financial statements of the LBSCR have been selected as representative of the group of regional companies most focused on the London suburban market. It should be noted that the results of the other railway companies in this group, the LSWR, SER, GER and LCDR followed a similar pattern. Financial reporting in the Victorian era

³²³ Ibid, Appendix pp.215-6, Tables II and IV.

was rudimentary and there was limited detailed analysis of the results. It is not possible to determine the exact contribution of the suburban network of any major railway company to revenues and profits. Despite these caveats, it is clear that there was a much closer correlation between the two for this group of companies, than for the railway companies with a national network.

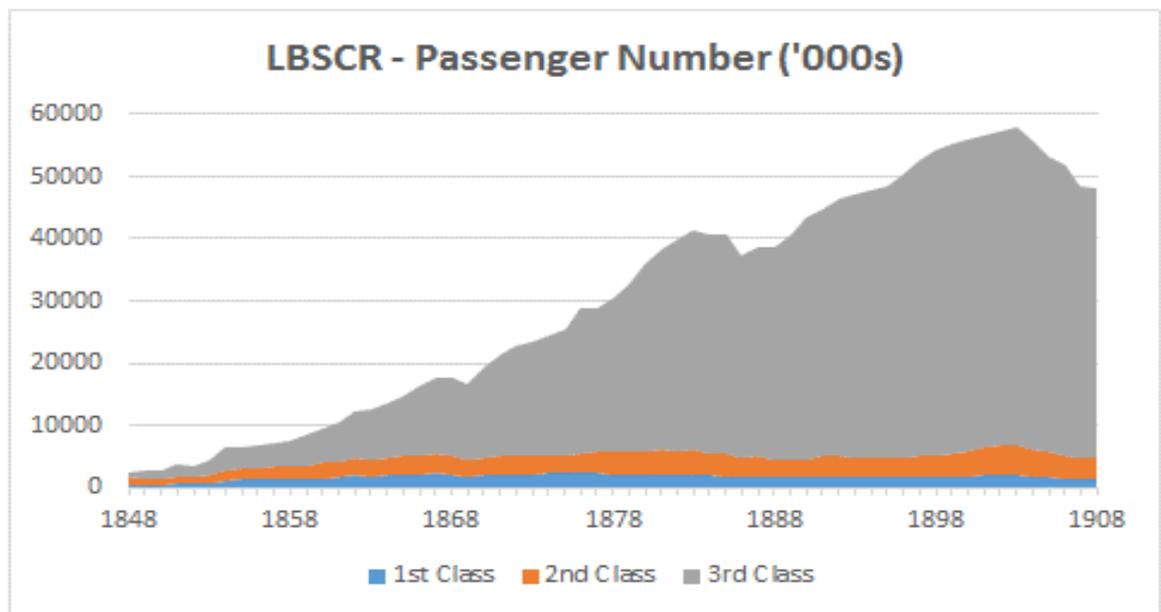


Figure 5.6: London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Company
 – Passenger Numbers 1848-1908.³²⁴

The inexorable rise in passengers travelling on the LBSCR until the Edwardian era is immediately apparent from the graph above (figure 5.6). Equally clear is that almost all of this increase came from third class fares, with numbers travelling by first and second class remaining largely static throughout the period. It should be noted that season ticket holders, predominantly first or second class fares, are excluded from these numbers. The scale of the increase was also distorted by the growth of the excursions market, with Brighton and the south coast becoming popular destinations for all sections of society. Allowing for this particular revenue stream, the underlying

³²⁴ Compiled from LBSCR financial reports 1848-1908 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/285-291).

trend was still clear. The growth of railway commuting was accompanied by a fundamental shift in its nature; from a service aimed at the wealthy to one for the mass of the middle classes.

Notwithstanding Parliamentary exhortations to cater for the working man, the railway companies had full control over setting the level of their own fares. Initially all railway companies subscribed to Galt's view of railway economics, expressed in his influential book published in 1865 on railway management. In his view, the 'directors manage the railways with one view and one view only – to obtain the greatest profit for their shareholders, without any more regard to the interests of the public than is necessary for effecting that object'³²⁵. He advocated that that fewer regular passengers paying higher fares were a better business proposition than catering for a mass market. He asserted this as his analysis of railway finances had led him to the view that 'the actual profit varies but comparatively little, whether a high, low or medium fare be adopted'³²⁶. This consensus was broken by the MID's decision in 1874 to abolish its second class service and reduce the price of its first class service to that level. Other companies followed suit in recognising the growth potential of the third class ticket market. Scott, the general manager of the LSWR, justified this on the basis that first and second class traffic had become 'non-elastic throughout the kingdom' in the 1870s and argued that it was a 'mistake to suppose that the increased accommodation for Third Class passengers is, in any respect or degree, an evil - something to be restricted or altogether stopped if possible'³²⁷. The change in economic logic was understandable, but as with other actions relating to the railway companies' decision-making, it was also influenced by the perceived threat of competitors' actions.

Once established as the key market segment, it attracted further investment in its rolling-stock. Indeed by the 1890s, Pattinson, a contemporary writer on railway travel,

³²⁵ W. Galt, *Railway Reform: Its Importance and Practicability*, (London: Longman & Company, 1865), p.6, accessed 15 July 2019, via <https://archive.org/details/railwayreformits00galtuoft>.

³²⁶ *Ibid*, p.6.

³²⁷ Passenger Traffic - Second Report to London and South Western Railway Directors, made by Archibald Scott, General Manager and Third Report, Scott's report to the directors, 16 December 1881 (National Archives, RAIL 411/281), p.5.

observed ‘in England at the present time it is common ground for complaint among railway managers that their first and second class carriages run almost empty, and, that everybody including even ‘gentlemen of the first position’ as one well-known railway chairman has remarked, goes third class. The reason is not far to seek; nearly all our best English trains carry all classes of passengers at the present time, and the slight increase of comfort in the firsts and seconds is not sufficient to compensate for the higher fares demanded, considering that the superior classes are not conveyed at any greater speed’³²⁸. It was to be a decisive shift for the suburban commuter. The increased affordability, comfort and availability of third class travel enabled more than only the most wealthy to live in the suburbs, but work in the City.

A better sense of the timing of this transition can be seen in graphs below (figures 5.7 and 5.8), showing passenger revenues by class of fare and total revenues for the company. It was not until the 1870s that the revenue contribution from third class fares exceeded that of first and second passengers combined. Moreover, the proportion of revenue derived from this source never exceeded more than 45% of the company’s total revenues. Yet it was the direction of travel for all companies serving London’s commuter market. Lower fares meant more passengers were required to generate the same level of profit, which in turn needed additional train services, further track to overcome service bottlenecks and bigger stations and termini to handle the passenger load. This was the level of investment necessary to achieve an acceptable operating margin - it was the ‘suburban increment’ and later the ‘suburban incubus’³²⁹ referred to by Grinling in his history of the GNR.

³²⁸ J. Pattinson, *British Railways: their passenger services, rolling stock, locomotives, gradients and express speeds* (London: Cassell & Co, 1893), p.1, accessed 15 July 2019, via <https://archive.org/details/britishrailways00peargoog>.

³²⁹ C. Grinling, *The History of the Great Northern Railway*, p. viii.

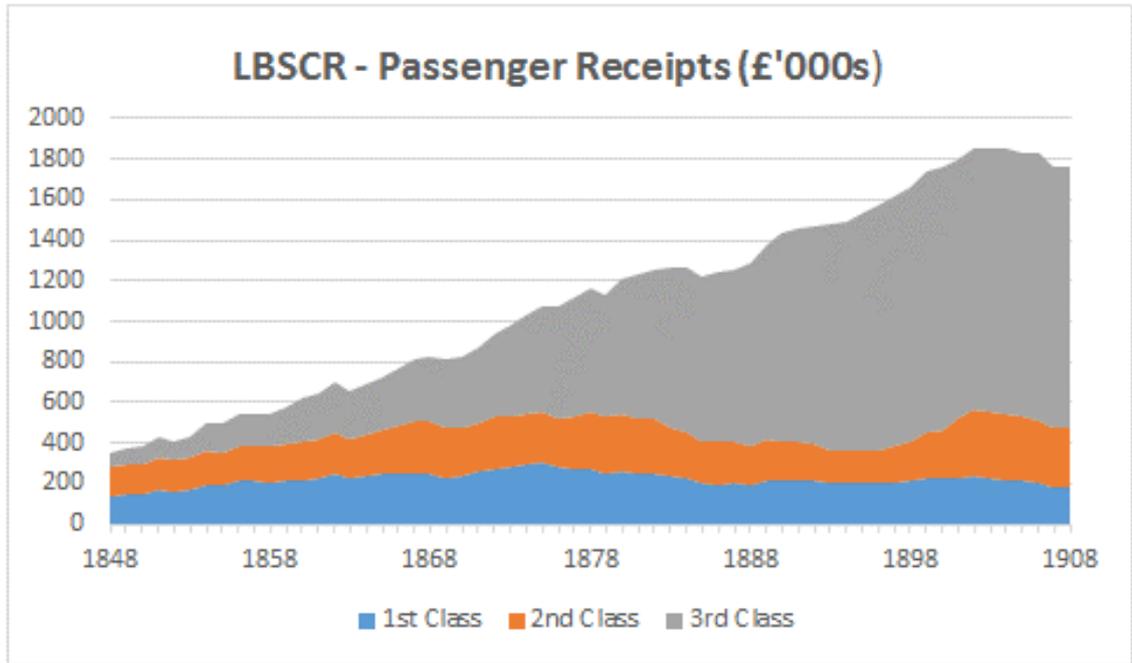


Figure 5.7: London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Company
 – Passenger Revenues 1848-1908.³³⁰

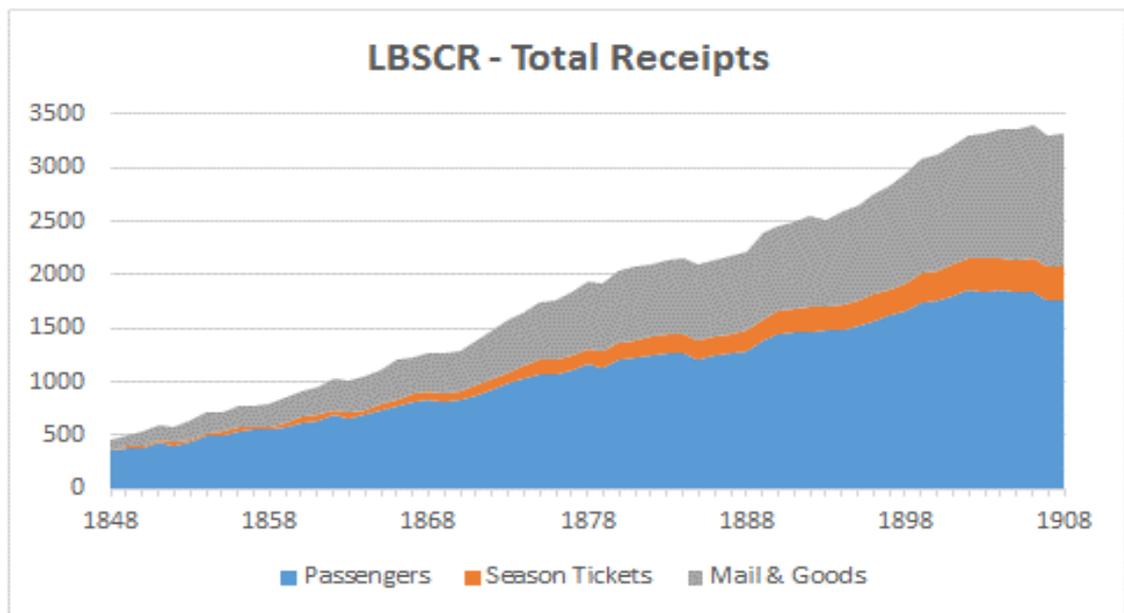


Figure 5.8: London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Company
 – Total Receipts 1848-1908.³³¹

³³⁰ Compiled from LBSCR financial reports 1848-1908 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/285-291).

³³¹ Compiled from LBSCR financial reports 1848-1908 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/285-291).

Grinling's account provided an insight into the decision-making process of the railway companies in tackling this rising demand for suburban services. He described "the problem of the neck in the bottle" – the problem that ... all classes of London traffic on the Great Northern had to use a single 'up' and single 'down' track through the Copenhagen tunnel [near King's Cross station]³³². In the 1870s the growing number of suburban commuters from Edgware, Finchley and Barnet using this route petitioned the Board for a resolution of this logistical bottleneck. Rather than incur the expense of widening the track, the solution adopted by the Board was to enter into an agreement with the NLR to share its suburban trains and London terminus at Broad Street. Suburban passengers changed trains at Finsbury Park to catch a connecting shuttle on the NLR's line into the City. With the historian's prerogative of hindsight, Grinling commented that 'it was easy to lament the Great Northern was not in the position to cater for it [the suburban increment] without 'foreign' help, and to see how profitable a City extension of its own might have become'³³³. The episode highlighted the dilemma facing the railway companies serving the areas to the north and west of the capital. Their other business priorities prevented them from concentrating on London's suburban market.

To the south and east of the capital the railway companies operating in these regions gradually improved and upgraded their infrastructure. London Bridge, a shared station between the LBSCR and the SER, was re-built and extended in the 1860s to cope with additional traffic. Victoria, another jointly operated station between the LBSCR and the LCDR, was completely demolished and enlarged in the Edwardian era, to cater for the volume of passengers. Waterloo station, operated by the LSWR, was similarly enlarged, with two new suburban platforms in 1878 and a further six built in 1885 and a final complete refurbishment in the 1900s. Even the GER's vast Liverpool Street station, which was viewed as an expensive 'white elephant' on its construction in the 1870s, required extending in the 1890s³³⁴. These building works suggest a thought-

³³² C. Grinling, *The History of the Great Northern Railway*, p.301.

³³³ *Ibid*, p.303.

³³⁴ All dates from A. Jackson, *London's Termini*.

out approach by these railway companies to the suburban market. This was far from the case as Jackson highlighted in his description of Waterloo station around 1900. ‘At the turn of the century, Waterloo was an untidy and confused collection of platforms, passages, stairways, cab yards and offices, the despair of any stranger. To make confusion worse, the platform-numbering system was almost beyond comprehension’³³⁵. Instead railway companies’ Board minutes record building work was largely a reactive response to the increasing congestion experienced on their lines and in their termini.

Railway company management generally struggled to keep up with the growth of its suburban network and to balance its requirements with those of other lines of business. The LCDR Board’s reaction to suburban growth was common to all of this group of companies. Its chairman commented in 1879 that ‘during the past few years this development has been very marked in the districts near London, and the Board feel that they must now take measures for increasing the capacity of the lines traversing these districts. Between the City and Herne Hill there are four lines of rails; but from Herne Hill to Bickley (which may be looked upon as the present limit of the suburban district) there are only two lines, and considerable difficulty is already felt in conducting the suburban and long traffic over these lines with due regard to the importance of each’³³⁶. Investment in suburban infrastructure was often a necessity to ensure that suburban trains did not interfere with the smooth running of long distance expresses. The later construction of a new line by the LCDR from Shortlands in Kent to London was recommended to shareholders on the basis that ‘it can be constructed at a very moderate cost, and will open up a charming suburban residential district; but its chief advantage will be in affording an alternative route into London and relieving the existing line through the Penge Tunnel’³³⁷. The regional railway companies

³³⁵ Ibid, p.225.

³³⁶ London, Chatham and Dover Railway Board meeting 12 February 1879 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/293).

³³⁷ London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company, report and accounts, 1890, section 9 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/293).

operated in a state of constant tension; managing their significant freight and long-distance passenger services, whilst expanding their suburban railway network. .

This investment in infrastructure reflected a belief among the Boards of these railway companies that the success of the early suburban lines would go indefinitely and could be repeated in other areas around London. One exchange between shareholder and management at the LSWR shareholder's meeting of 1881 illustrated this conviction. In respect of a proposed line between Guildford and Leatherhead, a Major Carpenter declared 'I know Guildford very well. I cannot say I know Leatherhead; but I have heard no wish for a line there, and on looking on the map there does not appear the country to supply a line – there are only villages, and no towns whatsoever. It can hardly be the wish of the proprietors to make the line, because if they did wish it they would subscribe to it'³³⁸. In response the chairman of the LSWR, Ralph Dutton, outlined the company's rationale for construction. 'We cannot sit down and allow another Company to come and interfere with our line so long as we perform our duty, and the fact of another Company wishing to come into this district shows it is a district worth coming to. I believe that this is a line which will be remunerative ... You know that people will go seeking suburban residences as far as they can, and they grow around us so fast that I really wonder where they all come from'³³⁹. This combination of a fear of a rival's actions and a blind faith in the suburban revenue stream was to be the guiding principle for the railway companies serving London's southern and eastern regions.

Edwardian Suburban Railway Commuting: Complacency and Challenge

This vision carried over in the Edwardian era. By then the major railway companies were some of the largest commercial enterprises of the age. The largest ten businesses

³³⁸ London and South Western shareholder meeting minutes, 28 June 1881 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/283).

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

listed on the Stock Exchange in 1910 were all railway companies. In 1901³⁴⁰ they collectively carried 1,172 million passengers and 416 million tons of goods, they generated £106 million of revenues and employed c. 500,000 staff. It was an industry dominated by a few enterprises due to the advantage of size for both capital investment and operational efficiency. It enjoyed a monopoly on travel beyond the range of horse-drawn transport in urban areas and did not foresee that this position could be undermined.

Their fare structures, set in the Victorian era, were still aimed squarely at the mass middle-class market. The Cheap Trains Act of 1883 required companies to provide ‘sufficient’ trains for workmen and as an incentive it abolished the long-standing government levy on train travel. It was a light regulatory stipulation, but it opened the door to lower fare structures. Initially the railway companies made little effort to operate new low-cost services. In the view of the Board of the LBSCR ‘the injustice will be removed of taxing Railway Traffic in urban districts, while competing traffic by tramways, steamboats and omnibuses is not subject to taxation’³⁴¹. This new level playing field did not translate into lower fares on the LBSCR. The Board justified this decision on the basis that ‘our Company, 98% of whose trains are already 3rd class will share with the public the benefit of this reduction, not so much by direct pecuniary result, as by the removal of restrictions now imposed by the Inland Revenue department in the running of trains’³⁴². Even the GER wanted to restrict low cost fares to specific areas and routes. Its general manager J Gooday, told the 1905 Royal Commission that ‘a further result attending the immigration of workmen to suburban places is that better traffic is turned away; in proof of this the season ticket traffic has not shown the same expansion as Walthamstow and Edmonton as at other places where such cheap fares are not in operation’³⁴³. There was a floor to the level of ordinary fares set by the railway companies.

³⁴⁰ All statistics are from *The Railway Magazine*, May 1903, pp. 416-18, compiled from the Board of Trade reports.

³⁴¹ London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Board Minute, 18 July 1883 (National Archives, RAIL 411/2), pt.15.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ 1905 Royal Commission, *op cit.* Volume III, Appendix 56, p.580.

Of equal importance to the middle-class commuter, the railway companies also scheduled their service to enable them to arrive at their place of work at the appropriate time. This convenience came at the price of paying the full ordinary fare. Workmen or cheap fares only applied early in the morning, usually on trains arriving in London before 8 a.m. Railway companies saw this temporal differential pricing as fundamental to their business model. As a result, as Abernathy noted, ‘the fear of de-gentrification, ... buttressed the fare disparities which in turn meant working-class suburbanisation was funnelled into certain districts along particular lines, principally the GER lines to Edmonton and Walthamstow to the north-east and the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway through East and West Ham to the east’³⁴⁴. The extent of this low fare area can be seen in the map below (figure 5.9).

³⁴⁴ S. Abernathy, “Opening up the suburbs, workmen’s trains in London, 1860-1914”, p.7.

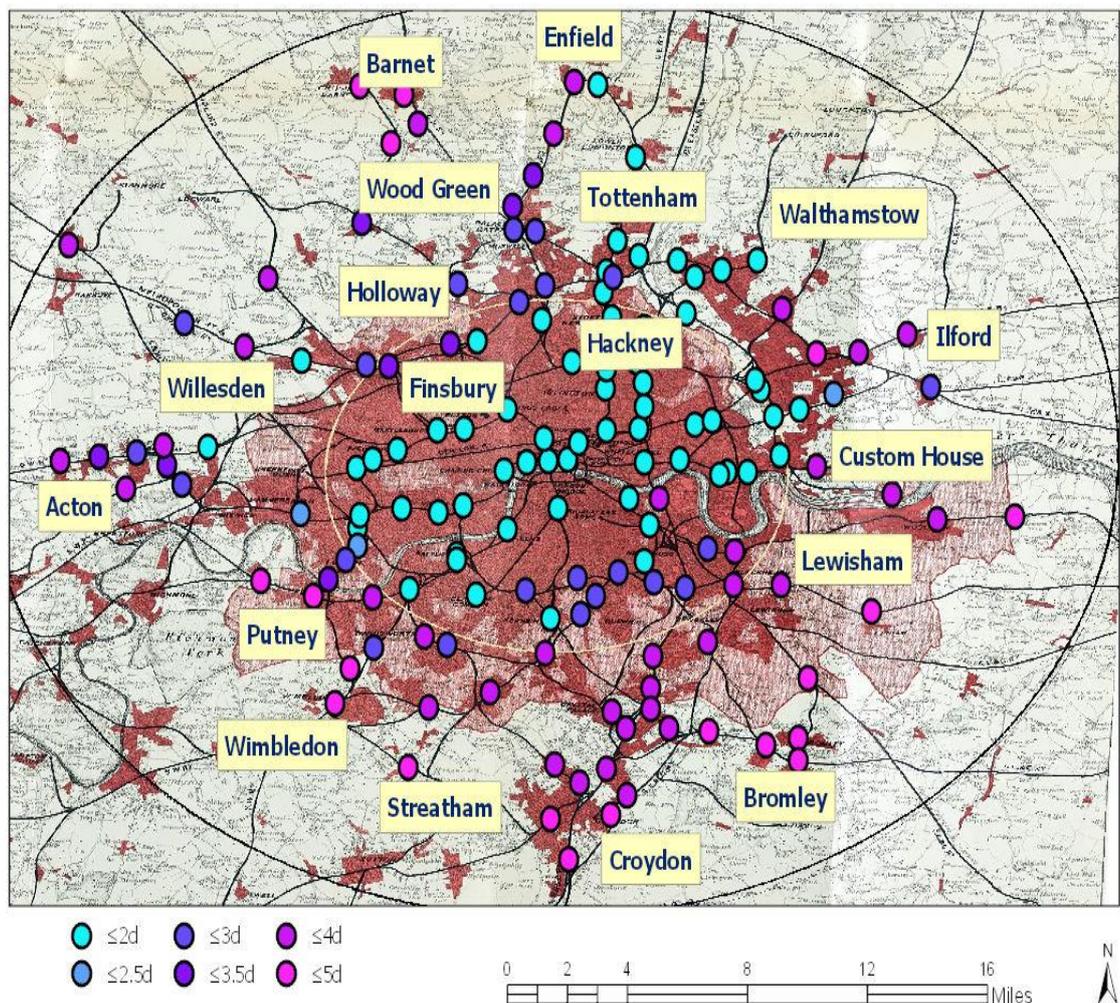


Figure 5.9: Low Cost Fares into London Termini 1904.³⁴⁵

The lowest fares (2d return) covered the area served by the two original underground lines (the Metropolitan and the District) and the parliamentary regulated services to the east and north-east of London. Beyond this, low cost fares (a mixture of the workmen’s fares legislated by Parliament and other reduced fares set by the railway companies), were limited to certain routes and rarely extended too far out into London’s suburbs. The result from this largely unrestricted ability to set fare and

³⁴⁵ Compiled from information presented to 1904 Select Committee on Workmen’s Trains, Appendix 1, Table E (Parliamentary Papers Online, accessed on 15 September 2019 via Proquest <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1905-005362?accountid=14565>, 3 February 2019) and supplemented by railway company’s fare schedules.

service levels was to stifle the opportunity for a widespread, low cost, railway service and, as a consequence, present an opportunity for new transport operators to exploit.

The early challenge from the first underground lines, the District and Metropolitan lines, to the dominance of the railway companies had not been seen a significant threat. They subscribed to the view of its inherent unsuitability for passenger travel expressed by R D Blumenfeld, the American journalist and future editor of the *Daily Express*. In 1887 he commented in his diary that ‘I had my first impression of Hades today, and if the real thing is to be like that I shall never again do anything wrong. I got into the Underground railway at Baker Street ... It was very warm – for London at least. The compartment in which I sat was filled with passengers who were smoking pipes, as is the British habit, and as the smoke and sulphur from the engine fill the tunnel, all the windows have to be closed. The atmosphere was a mixture of sulphur, coal dust and foul fumes from the oil lamp above, so that by the time we reached Moorgate Street I was near dead of asphyxiation and heat. I should think these Underground railways must soon be discontinued, for they are a menace to health’³⁴⁶. For those willing to brave this discomfort, the service offered low cost journeys (with third class tickets at 2d per journey), which significantly undercut the equivalent railway company fares.

Following the success of the Metropolitan and District lines there was demand for further underground lines. The 1892 Joint Select Committee was set up to determine the terms of operations of these proposed new lines. It recommended that ‘the companies should be allowed to acquire a wayleave, instead purchasing the freehold of the land’³⁴⁷. This considerably reduced the cost of operation, though in ‘consideration of such free passage, the Committee advised that the companies be put under obligation to furnish an adequate number of cheap and convenient trains’³⁴⁸. The underground’s long-held reputation for slowness, discomfort and unreliability

³⁴⁶ R. D. Blumenthal, *R D B Diaries*, (London: Wiesenthal Press, 1930), entry for 23 June 1887, p.6.

³⁴⁷ 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic, Volume 1, p.27.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.27.

was swept away by these new tube trains. This service was also available at fares starting from 2d per journey and as illustrated by the promotional material (figure 5.10) it unsurprisingly proved highly popular with all sections of the travelling public.



Figure 5.10: ‘Strap-hanging’ on the Underground c.1905.³⁴⁹

The forerunners of the modern day Central, Piccadilly, Bakerloo and Northern lines all came into being in the early 1900s, whilst services on the existing District and Metropolitan lines improved with the electrification of their lines. The result was an expansion of the underground network out to Golders Green, Highgate and Finsbury Park to the north and Clapham to the south (see figure 5.11). These lines largely covered areas to the north, west and centre of the capital, which were not well-served by the existing over-ground railway network. A greater threat was to come from the mechanisation of the tram and omnibus.

³⁴⁹ G. E. P. Davey “Strap-hangers” comic colour postcard c.1905, (London Transport Museum, Ref 2009/8140), accessed on 20 May 2019, from <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/collections-online/ephemera/item/2009-8140>.

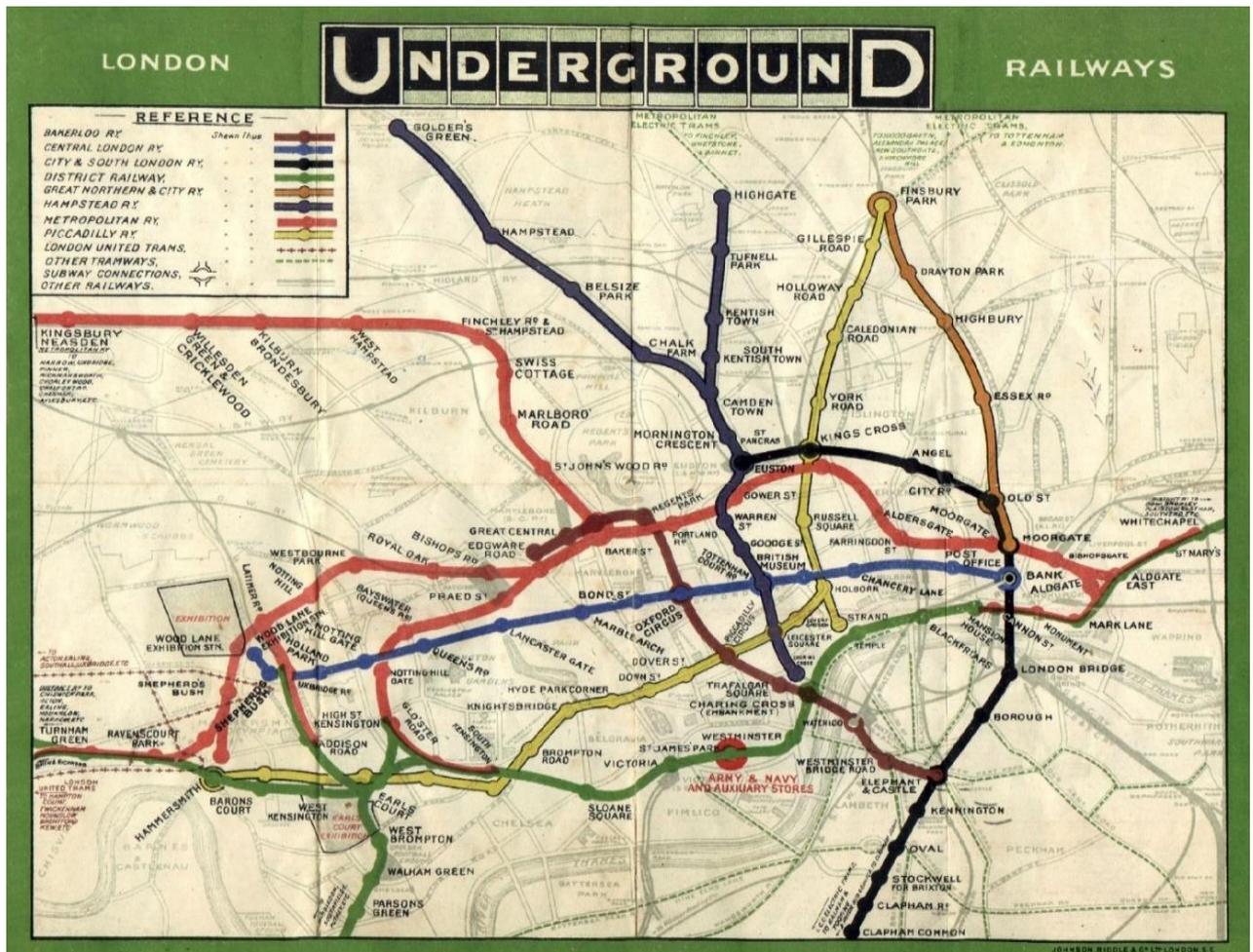


Figure 5.11: London Underground Map 1908.³⁵⁰

The new tram and omnibus services followed a broad divide in the social class of their passengers, but collectively they reached many of London's suburbs previously only served by the railway. The former was most extensive in the working-class districts of Stratford, Walthamstow, East Ham and Woolwich to the east and north-east of London as well as the inner south London suburbs of Lambeth, Bermondsey and Camberwell. Their reach was not solely restricted to inner and east London. Low cost travel by tram across the capital was actively promoted by the London County Council and some lines stretched out into the outer suburbs of Croydon, Kingston, Wimbledon, Ealing and Edgware (see figure 5.12).

³⁵⁰ 1908 London Underground Map, (London Transport Museum, Ref 1992/85) accessed 15 June 2019 via <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/collections-online/maps/item/1992-85>.

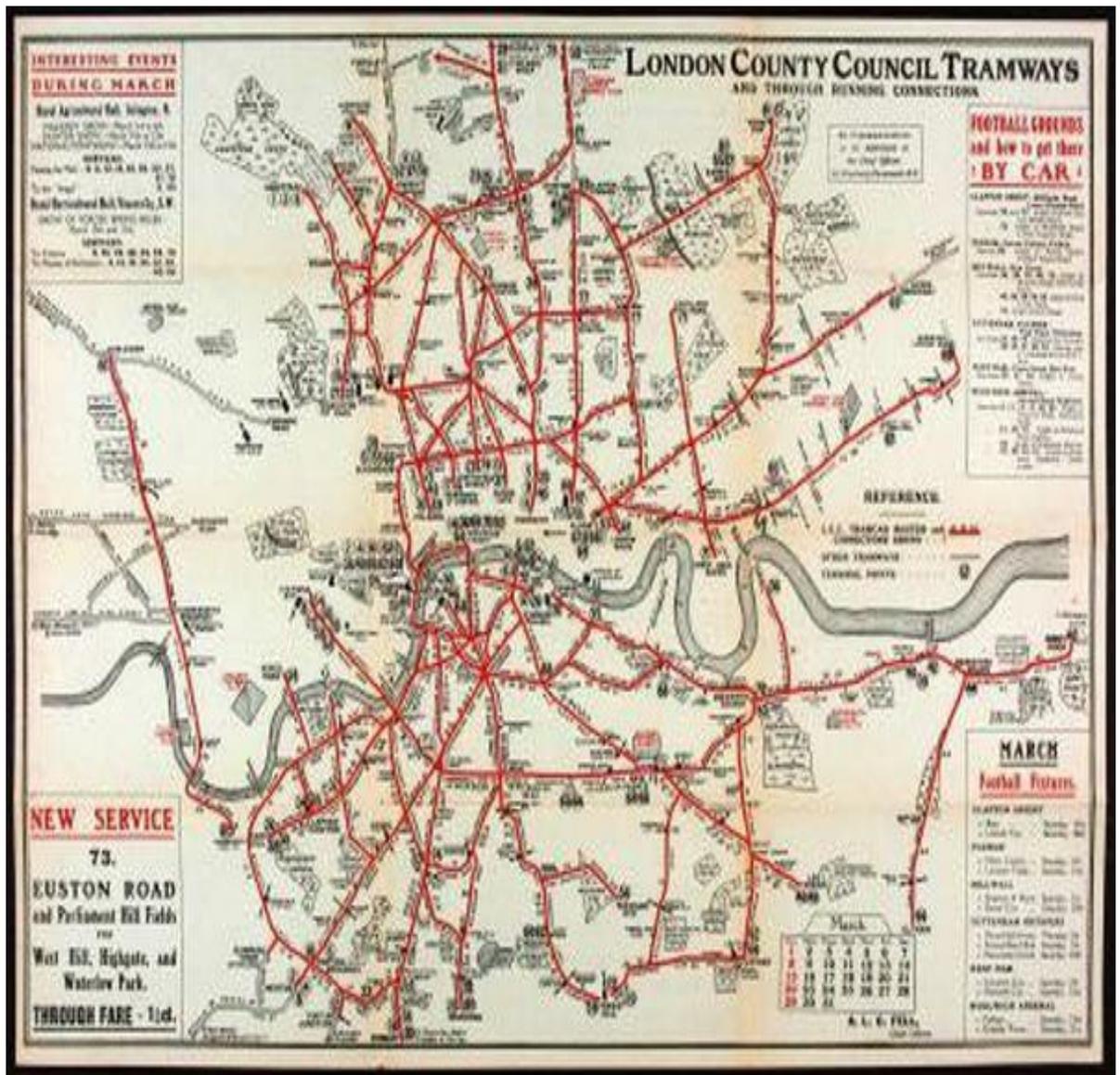


Figure 5.12: London County Council Tram routes 1914.³⁵¹

In contrast the omnibus expanded into the more salubrious districts, and its service extended out to Twickenham, Ealing and Hampstead (see figure 5.13). The result was a notable geographical differentiation with the south, north-east and east of the capital best served by the tram, whereas there was greater coverage of the west and north-west by the omnibus. In combination these new forms of transport provided a serious threat to the dominance of the railway companies in providing suburban services in many areas.

³⁵¹ 1914 Pocket Map and guide, London County Council (London Transport Museum, Ref 1984/51/115) accessed 15 June 2019 via <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/collections-online/maps/item/1984-15-115>.

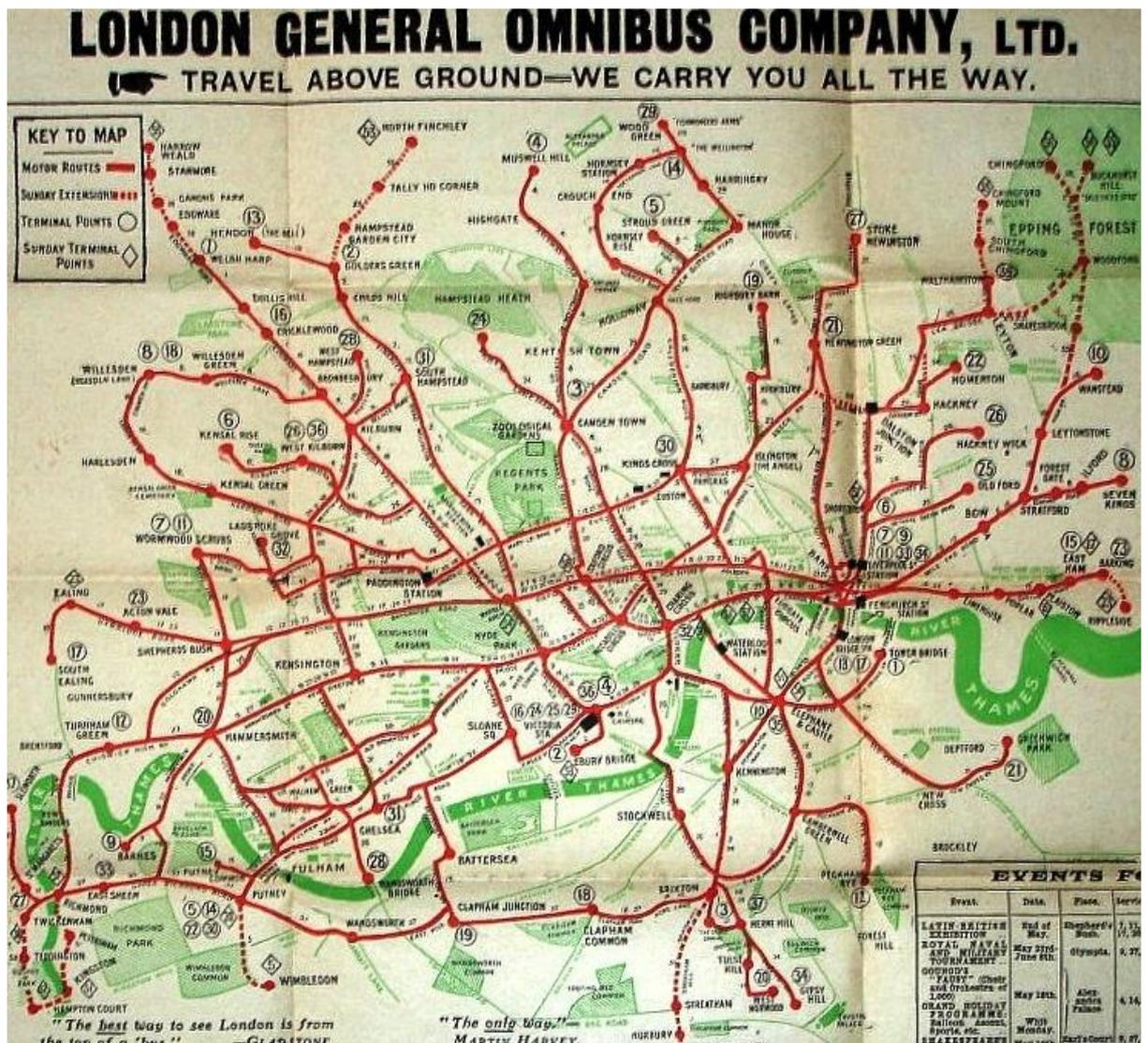


Figure 5.13: London Omnibus Service Map 1912.³⁵²

The reaction of the railway companies was, at first, one of obstruction followed by a realisation that the tide had turned and there was either a re-invention of the suburban service or a retreat from its provision. Initially the railway companies had sought to prevent and delay the Parliamentary approval of the new underground lines. They also complained bitterly that trams and omnibuses were not competing on a level playing field as they did not have to pay for the maintenance of their infrastructure, as roads were the responsibilities of local councils unlike railways. As the general manager of

³⁵² Map accessed 20 June 2019 via Commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:London_General_Omnibus_Company_route_map_May_1912.jpeg.

the District Railway complained ‘that is an old and sad story. The omnibuses are practically free from taxation; do absolutely nothing to maintain the roads over which they run; and, while their expenses ... are thereby kept down to the lowest figure, enabling them to charge fares out of all proportion to the service rendered, the District Railway is not only compelled to construct, at its own expense, the railway over which it runs, and to incur the enormous outlay which that construction involves, but is forced to contribute £32,000 per annum in rates and taxes, and therefore pays largely towards the roads over which its competitors – the omnibuses – run!’³⁵³. These efforts were to no avail as Parliament and local government were strongly in favour of cheap transport options. Indeed the London County Council became the largest tram operator in the Edwardian era.

The writing was on the wall for the railway companies. The London Traffic Report to the Board of Trade noted in 1907 that ‘the remarks of the Chairmen [of the railway companies] at the half yearly meetings contain many references to the loss of traffic caused by the competition of tramways and motor omnibuses’³⁵⁴. The GNR saw a loss of 1.3 million passengers in six months, as did the LSWR. It was a similar experience for the LBSCR, which saw a loss of 3.3 million passengers due to the arrival of tramways in Croydon and Sutton³⁵⁵. Some companies, notably the LBSCR and LSWR invested in the electrification of some of their lines to improve the speed, reliability and quantity of their suburban service. Others, such as the SECR withdrew services. Its chairman lamented that ‘I am afraid that we have to recognise the fact that this competition cannot be met by anything we can do in the way of attracting public back to our trains and, consequently, the only way to meet it is by making economies’³⁵⁶. The boundaries of competition established in the Victorian era and the comfortable status quo for the railway companies were broken, and the rapid shift in

³⁵³ Interview with Alfred Powell, general manager of the Metropolitan District railway company, (*Railway Magazine*, June 1899, Issue 24) p.492.

³⁵⁴ London Traffic report to the Board of Trade 1907, p.56.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ South Eastern & Chatham shareholder meeting, 30 January 1908 (National Archives RAIL 1110/428).

allegiance by commuters highlighted that they were highly sensitive to the cost, convenience and speed of transport options.

The Edwardian period was a different experience for the railway companies. The optimism of the Victorian era of endless expansion of their suburban markets was replaced by a battle for passengers. Fares of third class tickets on some routes were reduced and smaller station halts were introduced to boost traffic. Despite these efforts, the competitive pressure from these alternative means of transport led to a defensive mentality among the Boards of the railway companies. They chose to concentrate on the longer distance commuting market, out of the reach of their new competitors.



Figure 5.14: Railway company publicity posters from the Edwardian era. ³⁵⁷

This was to be the target audience of the railway companies, when they belatedly commenced advertising their suburban network. The convenient access to London's surrounding countryside offered by their services was the chosen marketing theme

³⁵⁷ Posters by Great Eastern Railway Company and London & North Western Railway (London Transport Museum Ref 1984/51/702) <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/collections-online/maps/item/1984-54> & 1984 -702.

(see figure 5.14). The railway companies still enjoyed a significant share of London's suburban transport market in the early twentieth century, but the commuting landscape was markedly different between the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

Concluding Comments

This chapter set out to explore the relationship between the immobile infrastructure of the suburban railway network and the mobility of commuting. The first editorial of the *Mobilities* journal saw this relationship between the fixed and the mobile as shaping all systems of mobility and described the various elements as interacting in a 'complex network'³⁵⁸. In the case of railway commuting, the actions of the train operators, the demands and expectations of the railway passengers and the physical environment of the trains, carriages, stations and termini all played a part in its evolution. They are all considered in this thesis, but this chapter has focused primarily on one aspect of this network; the decision-making process of the railway companies' management in respect of the creation and growth of their suburban networks. It was fundamental to the pace and nature of their development and had obvious implications for the level of service provided for the railway commuter.

It also had direct relevance for an explanatory narrative of the commuting patterns observed in the previous two chapters. These highlighted the geographically uneven nature of commuting. This reflected a broad differentiation between companies with a wider national network, particularly to the north and west of the capital, where the provision of suburban services was a lower priority than their more geographically constrained rivals to the south and east. As Jackson noted they 'had no great mineral or industrial traffics to keep them solvent...their main lines eked out a precarious living on a mixture of Continental and pleasure traffic, and such bread and butter as they could get came from the suburbs'³⁵⁹. The latter required easy access to the City and the West End and this was the underlying rationale for the siting of their London

³⁵⁸ K. Hannam, M. Scheller & J. Urry, "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities & Moorings", p.13.

³⁵⁹ A. Jackson, *London Termini*, p.4.

termini as close to the heart of the capital as possible. Parliamentary intervention in the 1860s on the limits of railway infrastructure projects established the advantage of the southern and eastern companies in the suburban market. The financial and operational commitment required to meet the logistical challenges of the ever growing demand for commuting in the Victorian era only reinforced their pre-eminence in this market. The statistics presented to the 1905 Royal Commission confirmed this position. In summing up his evidence, Mr Gomme, clerk of the London County Council concluded ‘that the railway lines in London are unequally distributed, and that certain districts are to a great extent unprovided for’³⁶⁰.

Within this broad statement of intent towards the development of a suburban railway network, it is, however, difficult to discern a conscious, consistent and coherent business strategy towards the suburban market. The governance structure of railway companies struggled to keep up with the growth of the companies. Financial planning and the ability to consider longer-term horizons was rudimentary. Instead railway company directors often focused on prestige projects, such as express services, or turf wars with neighbouring companies. The latter was a key factor in the growth of suburban services as rivals rushed to capture their slice of the new commuter market by building new lines and stations. Commuting patterns owed much to this competitive rivalry as companies sought to thwart a competitor’s actions and maintain or expand their territorial fiefdoms. Chapter seven explores this phenomenon in more detail, particularly in its focus on suburban development in the North-West Kent region.

Decision-making tended to be backward-looking and past success often guided future actions. The continuous growth of the suburban railway service of the Victorian period blindsided the railway companies to the impact of new competitors in this market. In 1903 the chairman of the South Eastern & Chatham declared ‘I cannot help thinking that the tramways have more or less had their day, and that [as a result of]

³⁶⁰ 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic, Volume II, p. 132, note 3574.

the increased punctuality of our suburban service, the third-class passenger, whose time is most valuable, is coming back to the railway as the more certain way of getting to London and obtaining the accommodation he requires'³⁶¹. The dramatic fall in suburban passenger numbers in the Edwardian era came as an unpleasant surprise to the railway company Boards. The increase in this period of the average distance travelled in the journey to work across all of the middle-class occupations reflected, in part, a necessity on the part of the railway companies to improve their longer-distance services.

The patterns of commuting set out in chapters three and four have to be interpreted within the context of these two different operating environments. In one area of the Board's decision-making remit; the responsibility for setting fare levels, there was less change. The original high tariff railway service was quietly abandoned in the Victorian era as the railway companies recognised the commercial opportunity afforded by a daily short-distance passenger service and sought to expand railway commuting from the preserve of the wealthy to the domain of the middle class. Beyond this the railway companies were reluctant to go. The new fares were largely formulaic based on a set price per mile depending on the class of travel, rather than one fixed price for the journey as adopted by the first underground lines. This fare-pricing policy had the obvious effect on facilitating the social segregation of London's suburbs. Further, the railway companies were largely able to resist the promptings of Parliament and the pressure of public opinion in the Victorian period to introduce low fares on a widespread basis and only reluctantly gave ground in the Edwardian era.

Working-class railway commuting evolved to be geographically bound and temporally segregated. At least until the outbreak of the First World War, the evolution of railway commuting was largely dictated by the needs and expectations of the middle class. Their experience of commuting is considered in the next chapter. Finally the chapter sought to demonstrate that the railway companies played more

³⁶¹ South Eastern & Chatham shareholder meeting, 30 July 1903 (National Archives RAIL 1110/428).

than the passive role attributed to them by Kellett in the development of suburbia. At the high level of Board decision-making the action or inaction of London's railway companies had unmistakable implications for the evolution of the capital's suburban network. Their reactive approach to the growth of suburbia suggests, however, an indifference to their wider socio-economic impact and this dual aspect to their relationship with suburban communities is explored further in chapter seven.

Chapter Six – The Commuting Experience

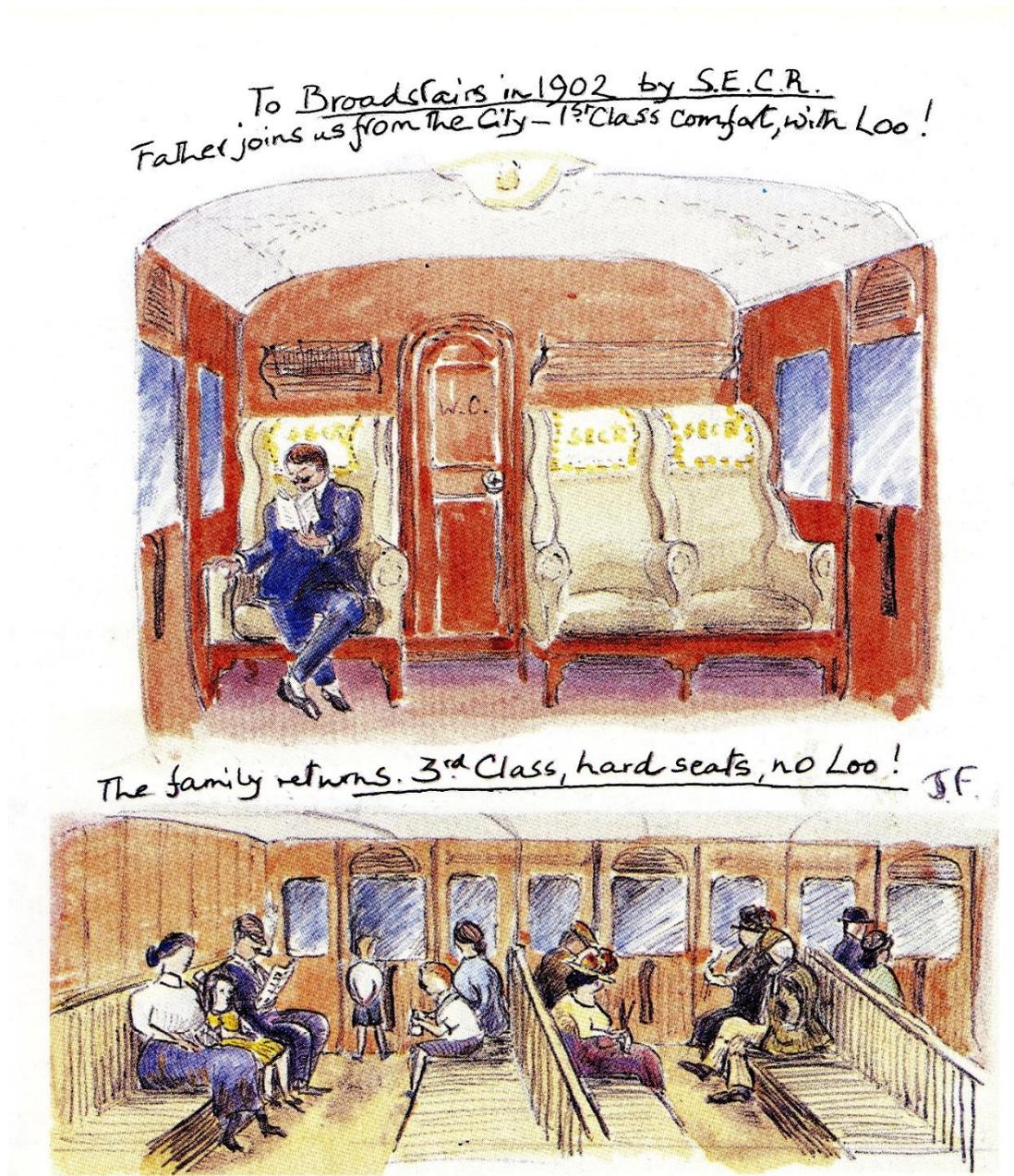


Figure 6.1: Railway Journey on South Eastern & Chatham Railway c.1902.³⁶²

The previous chapter examined the development of the infrastructure of commuting and the motivation of the principal actors; the railway companies, in the creation of a suburban railway network around London. This chapter explores the phenomenon of railway commuting from the perspective of the commuters themselves. It aims to trace

³⁶² Painting from Brigadier J. Faviel, *Railway Journeys of my Childhood* (London: Pan Books, 1983), p.27.

the development of railway commuting from its infancy in the 1860s to the establishment of a recognizably modern form in the Edwardian era. It considers both how Londoners responded and adapted to the opportunities and challenges of railway travel on a daily basis and why they chose to embrace this new form of transport. The last chapter highlighted that railway commuting into London did not become widespread until the latter part of the nineteenth century. It was principally concentrated in the provision of short-distance railway travel from the periphery of London's metropolitan area, which suggests there was a tension between the attractions of suburban living and the practical difficulties in fulfilling this dream. This chapter addresses the questions raised by these observations and argues that the concept of regular railway travel to and from London's suburbs was hindered by deep-seated reservations over the reliability, cost and safety of the suburban rail service in the eyes of commuters and potential commuters. Only when these concerns were gradually addressed by the railway companies, often with some reluctance, did the latent demand for suburban living find full expression.

This thesis has drawn upon the theoretical framework of the 'new mobilities paradigm'. The experience of mobility by the individual lies at the heart of this concept. As Pooley observed, the paradigm assumes that 'movement has significant meanings over and above the physical transfer of someone or something from one location to another. This implies not only that movement has impact and significance in terms of its consequences, but also that the act and experience of moving itself is of importance'³⁶³. There has been extensive research on the individual's experience in a contemporary context, though it has equal validity when applied to past. The main obstacle is that everyday mobility is elusive to capture in the historical sources. This chapter attempts to achieve this through drawing on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative sources.

³⁶³ C. Pooley, "Travelling through the city: using life writing to explore individual experiences of urban travel c.1840-1940" *Mobilities*, Volume 12(4), (August 2017), p.601.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, historical material directly relating to the experience of railway commuting is scarce. As an everyday activity it merited little attention in Victorian and Edwardian diaries and journals, unless something out of the ordinary occurred. As Pooley noted ‘there is a real risk that the picture of mobility we get from any life writing is one that focuses disproportionately on the unusual or problematic, rather than on the routine and everyday’³⁶⁴. Further, the businessmen, clerks and other workers who travelled to London by train on a regular basis were not as a group noted for recording their thoughts in this manner and so only provide an occasional glimpse of the nature of the journey to work. These would be an invaluable source, as in Pooley’s words, they ‘provide insights into the process of mobility and the experiences of individual travellers that cannot be revealed by quantitative sources’³⁶⁵. This ideal has proved elusive as only a limited number of first-hand accounts have been identified.

A better source for the trials and tribulations of commuting comes from the letter pages of the national and local newspapers. In an age of regular letter-writing, their columns frequently featured correspondence from their readers in which they could express their views on the railway service. *The Times*, in particular, frequently included such letters. This reflected the composition of their readership, who could afford regular rail travel and were likely to be season ticket holders and their belief that coverage in *The Times* might get the attention of the management of the railway companies. The letters were largely negative, reflecting the fact that a poor experience was far more likely to provoke a reaction than a routine journey. Nonetheless, after allowing for this bias, these letters of complaint provide a valuable insight into the concerns of regular suburban railway travellers. Another fruitful source of material comes from the magazines and literature of the day. The new railway age provided *Punch* and other weekly and monthly magazines with plenty of satirical material as the public gradually came to terms with the social changes wrought by its arrival. Government also had to produce new legislation to cater for the practical and social

³⁶⁴ Ibid, p.604.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, p.605.

issues arising from this new form of transport and the various commissions into its workings provide insights into the commuting experience. This qualitative picture of railway commuting has been built-up from this mixture of private, public and official sources.

The material culture of the passengers' experience of the suburban railway is far more extensive. Rolling stock and infrastructure have often been preserved either in physical or photographic form. Its history has already been widely covered, most recently in Bradley's authoritative survey³⁶⁶ of the physical environment of Britain's railway network. As this subject has often been the property of the railway enthusiast, this chapter only explores a small sample of this material relevant to London's suburban service. Instead, more emphasis has been placed on examining the logistical mechanisms of commuting. The evolution of suburban timetables, fares and quality of service are all considered. It is intended that this combination of the quantitative and qualitative will provide a wide-ranging view of commuting from the passenger's perspective.

Frustration, Full Fares and Fear – the Early Experience of Railway Commuting

Railway travel had become an established part of life by the early Victorian era. Regular train services were in place between virtually all of the major towns in the country and railway excursions to the seaside, the races or other places of interest had become a recreational norm for most parts of society. Yet in 1860, as highlighted in the previous chapter, the suburban railway network around London was still in its infancy. The '*Railway Travellers Handy Book, Hints, Suggestions and Advice*'³⁶⁷, provides an insight into the trepidation felt for regular rail travel. The author tells a tale of an early commuter, who moves to Brighton for the sea air, but travels up to London twice a week for business. The result was apparently disastrous for his health,

³⁶⁶ S. Bradley, *The Railways, Nation, Network and People*.

³⁶⁷ E. Shelton, (though published anonymously), *Railway Traveller's Handy Book of Hints, Suggestions and Advice* (London: Lockwood & Co, 1862), accessed on 4 April 2019, via <https://archive.org/details/railwaytraveller00unse>.

‘the simple truth was, that the performance of a journey of a hundred miles within so short a space of time, and at such a rapid pace, had too greatly excited the nervous system, and had otherwise disturbed the functions of a delicate organisation and a debilitated frame; and the force of this conclusion was afterwards made apparent by the cessation of the headaches with a discontinuance of the journeys’³⁶⁸. The implication was clear to the reader that regular rail travel was not for the faint-hearted.

The publication of the book itself suggested that regular railway travel was still something of a novelty even in 1862. There were tips and advice to ensure a comfortable journey for the various types of traveller. For a man of business, who persisted in living in a place only accessible by railway, it set out a list of considerations which would be entirely familiar to the modern day commuter. Firstly, there was the cost of the season ticket, ‘for virtually the railway fare is a part of the rent, and therefore ought to enter into the calculation of the probable cost when taking a house under these conditions’³⁶⁹. Secondly, there was the issue of the timetable and the record of punctuality. As the author sternly pointed out ‘to a man of business the arrival of a train even a few minutes behind time is apt to prove of serious consequence’³⁷⁰. In the same vein, he opined that ‘this want of punctuality in commencing the duties of the day is regarded as one of the worst traits in the character of a man of business, and greatly tends to shake the confidence of the employer’³⁷¹. Finally there was the distance from the terminus to the place of work to be considered. ‘For if the interval between these two points is protracted, it follows that the getting to one from the station will occupy more time than is consumed by the journey itself’³⁷². While the book probably intended to overstate the perils of railway travel in the 1860s for dramatic effect, clearly the purchase of a season ticket was not to be undertaken lightly and railway commuting was not yet considered the norm.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.7.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.8.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.8.

³⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.9.

³⁷² *Ibid*, p.9.

Instead, travel in and around London was largely conducted by foot or by horse. An early suburbanite, Leonard Wyon, the chief engraver at the Royal Mint, lived in St John's Wood. In his diary for 31 August 1853, he recorded that he and his wife 'walked through Regent's Park to town, bought some Baby's frock-bodies and other things, walked home'³⁷³. Walking was common for all sections of society and not just for the poor. The future law lord, Nathaniel Linley, recalled in the late 1840s how 'I had to walk from home [Chiswick] to attend my father's lectures at University College, a distance of some six miles as the omnibuses did not start early enough to get to Gower Street in time'³⁷⁴. Longer trips around London were undertaken by horse-drawn transport. Wyon noted the difficulties of getting to Sydenham in the snow, as 'omnibuses are very scarce & the charge is raised to 9d. Many cabs are drawn by 2 horses, enormous sums are paid'³⁷⁵. Yet his diary did contain a glimpse of the future as he explored the possibility of commuting from London's periphery, in a trip to West Drayton, a station on the GWR line a short distance out of Paddington. 'The object was to see if we liked the place sufficiently to look for lodgings there', but he concluded that 'it is a very rural place, which in fact is its chief charm ... though it is not very practical for our purpose'³⁷⁶. His conclusion summed up the trade-off inherent in becoming a railway commuter – where the expense, tedium and duration of the commute had to be balanced against the attractions of residing in a rural or semi-rural location.

A reassessment of transport options began in the 1860s as the slowness and difficulty of horse-drawn travel across London, particularly from west to east and across the bridges, became apparent. London's population boom had made congestion in its central districts a major obstacle to everyday mobility. Trainee barrister, Louis Distan Powles recalled in his memoirs that in 1863 'every day I had to get from Somerset Street, Portman Square into the City. The Metropolitan Railway had just been opened

³⁷³ H. Creton ed., *Victorian Diaries, the daily lives of Victorian men and women* (London: Octopus Publishing, 2001), p.24.

³⁷⁴ Lord Linley, "Memoirs", Middle Temple collection ref GD42/2.

³⁷⁵ H. Creton ed., *Victorian Diaries*, Diary entry for January 5, 1854, p.29.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid*, January 27, 1854, p.29.

but went no further than Farringdon Street. The omnibuses were very uncomfortable. The insides stuffy and filthy³⁷⁷. As Porter noted ‘with few policemen on point-duty, no traffic-lights and no one-way systems, jams could be grim, especially round Snow Hill and the foot of the steep Ludgate Hill’³⁷⁸ Commuting by railway offered an escape from this congestion from the 1860s.

The previous chapter described the boom in London’s suburban railway infrastructure in the 1860s, with the construction of grand termini in the capital and the opening of new suburban lines. Yet railway commuting was a relatively expensive and uncomfortable experience for all but the wealthy few. Henry Tilden, a clerk at the private bank Hoare & Co, recalled the difficulties of early rail commuting in this period in his unpublished memoirs. ‘I lived with my mother in a cottage in Mark House Lane Walthamstow. It was then quite a country village & in the summertime I nearly always walked to the City leaving the house about 7.30 as it was nearly 6 miles. I returned by train from the Eastern Counties Railway Terminus in Shoreditch to Lea Bridge Station more than a mile from our house. The fare was 6d 3rd class & the journey was made in open trucks with benches like forms to sit on, so that in wet weather you were exposed to the full force of the rain, driven into you by the speed of the train’³⁷⁹. For those able to afford to travel first class, railway accommodation was more pleasant. As Bradley noted, initially most first class railway carriages ‘were built by the same businesses that manufactured private road conveyances for the rich’³⁸⁰. It represented the practical reality of the early business philosophy adopted by the railway companies, and described in the last chapter, of a concentration on the first and second class passenger market.

For this group, living at and commuting from outer London locations with a good train service was becoming a viable option by the 1860s. Powles’ account of his

³⁷⁷ L. D. Powles, “Memoirs”, Middle Temple collection, ref GD2.

³⁷⁸ R. Porter, *London, A Social History* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 273.

³⁷⁹ H. J. Tilden, unpublished reminiscences, copied from his notebook in c.1930 by L. Bennett, held in Hoare & Co archives.

³⁸⁰ S. Bradley, *The Railways, Nation, Network and People*, p.26.

experience on the Home Counties Circuit in the late 1860s and early 1870s indirectly testified to this. ‘The social life of the Circuit at Kingston and Guildford was always pleasant, but at Croydon it was practically nil, as we were so near London that everybody used to bolt off home as quickly as possible. Kingston was very little further, but the railway journey was longer ... so many of us who at Croydon would have gone home to London after the day’s work was done, often stopped and walked through Bushey to Hampton Court ... and dined at mess afterwards’³⁸¹. The choice of suburbia was not to everyone’s tastes. Unlike his father, Lord Linley chose to live close to Hyde Park throughout his whole working career. He started in lodgings near Sloane Square in 1858, and then moved to the more fashionable Bayswater in 1860 and Holland Park in 1865 and only left London on his retirement in 1906³⁸². The experiences of the legal profession were different to that of many, less affluent, middle-class occupational groups. For them the prospect of a home on the edge of the countryside and linked by an efficient railway service to work in London was to be the lure of suburbia.

Such a decision was to expose the suburban resident to the pitfalls of railway commuting. Poor punctuality and a lack of interest by the railway companies in addressing the concerns of passengers were a recurrent theme of newspaper correspondence. They saw writing to *The Times* and other national newspapers as a rare opportunity to vent their frustrations as well as exert some public pressure on the railway companies, which they characterised as remote and interested primarily in profitability rather than the passengers. A ‘regular passenger’ entreated the editor of *The Times* in 1847 to ‘lend your powerful aid to correct a great evil to which we poor passengers on the Epsom branch of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway are almost daily subjected? There is a train, generally used by parties engaged in business in London, which the time-bill states leaves Croydon at 20 minutes to 10, and arrives at London Bridge at 10 o’clock. ... If this train does arrive within 10 minutes of the

³⁸¹ L. D. Powles, “Memoirs”.

³⁸² Lord Linley, “Memoirs”.

stated time, it is really the subject of congratulation among the passengers'³⁸³. In similar vein, an 'unfortunate victim' lambasted the management of the LBSCR: 'to say that it is disgraceful is but giving a faint impression, for there is no management at all. ...What we complain of is that a train is rarely, if ever, started to its times, and never arrives at its destination to time. ... We leave of a morning never having any idea of when we shall arrive at business.'³⁸⁴ This level of discontent was not confined to passengers on the LBSCR, and other railway companies were also targets of the ire of disgruntled regular passengers. 'Late, shaken and weary' complained of the mismanagement of the London and South Western Railway (LSWR) that 'I have lived here over three years, and my experience is that 'business trains' are very often 5 to 10 minutes late and the mid-day and other trains very often 15 to 30 minutes late'. He added 'our carriages are for most part, dirty, shaky and draughty in the extreme'³⁸⁵. There is a common thread amongst these letters that season ticket holders and regular travellers, as people of standing, were not accustomed to this perceived lack of service.

This second class treatment of first class fare paying customers was exemplified, in their view, by the prioritization of excursion trains over regular traffic. 'A daily traveller on the LSWR (Windsor line)' bemoaned that 'during the last Ascot races no less than 20 regular trains on the Windsor line, 10 up and 10 down were discontinued' and the 'utter disregard of the directors of South-Western Railway for the comfort of their passengers' might change 'were the directors and their families subjected to the crushing that takes place every afternoon at Vauxhall station in order that places might be secured in first-class carriages'³⁸⁶. 'A Season Ticket Holder on the LBSCR' fumed that 'all through the summer months every attraction is offered by the Company, every allurements held out to induce special traffic, but no adequate provision is made for it,

³⁸³ Letter to *The Times*, published 23 June 1847 p.6, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019 at <https://0-go-gale-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/>.

³⁸⁴ Letter to *The Times*, published 7 June 1870 p.7, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

³⁸⁵ Letter to *The Times*, published 18 Aug 1870 p.5, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

³⁸⁶ Letter to *The Times*, published 3 July 1862 p.9, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

consequently we are in a chronic state of unpunctuality'³⁸⁷. Similarly 'a Season Ticket Holder' living in Surbiton complained that 'I take little interest in horse-racing, but I do desire to get home in time for dinner. Yet when the Hurst Park and Sandown Races occur, which they seem to do almost every week, we season-ticket holders (not unimportant contributors to the balance sheet of the company) are sacrificed to the demand of ephemeral traffic'³⁸⁸. These instances of complaint were part of a wider perception by its passengers that suburban railway traffic was of secondary importance to railway management and they were simply a captive source of revenue.

In addition to these grievances over punctuality they felt there was a general lack of consideration for their requirements from a suburban railway service. Often only one service was available at suitable times according to the timetable. The written response to the House of Commons by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) on the number of trains leaving Redhill in 1863³⁸⁹ was typical of suburban branch lines. This recorded that there was a 7am service and then no further passenger services until 8.48am. It was a similar problem in the evening. 'A Streatham resident' highlighted that 'for the return journey between 12 and 6.30pm there are trains from Ludgate Hill at 2.54, 5.06 and 6.07, the result being that the last two trains are much overcrowded, and that those who are able to leave their offices or chambers by 4 o'clock or earlier have to wait for a train till after 5pm'³⁹⁰. The lack of choice inevitably led to a slow or uncomfortable journey.

The 'Streatham resident' attributed this situation, in part, to the territorial tensions between the railway companies. The previous chapter highlighted the role that rivalries played in decision-making by railway companies' management. This could

³⁸⁷ Letter to *The Times*, published 9 August 1873 p.6, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

³⁸⁸ Letter to *The Times*, published 27 July 1894 p.2, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

³⁸⁹ House of Commons papers, 1864, Volume 53, p.LIII.913 (Parliamentary Papers Online, accessed 16 August 2019, via Proquest <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers/docview>).

³⁹⁰ Letter to *The Times*, published 16 November 1900 p.9, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

benefit the commuter through the creation of multiple suburban routes, but there were some significant drawbacks. As each company's network was not extensive enough on its own to provide a complete service, it was common to share the operating costs between companies. This gave plenty of opportunities for sharp business practice. In the case of the Ludgate Hill line, this was jointly owned by the LCDR and the LBSCR, but the trains to Streatham were operated by the LSWR. In the correspondent's view, the latter provided a minimal timetable to prevent competition with their other services. A similar complaint was levied at the LSWR and the LBSCR by a resident of Lower Merton. Its station stood on a line operated by the Tooting, Merton and Wimbledon Railway, a joint venture between the two regional companies. As a result neither were committed to making a success of the line. They were accused of imposing 'fares from Lower Merton which are absolutely prohibitory. This they have done to protect their Wimbledon station from competition. The consequence of that, *nolens volens*, the inhabitants of Lower Merton have to find their way to the comparatively distant station at Wimbledon, while the Lower Merton station stands useless within a stone's throw of their residences'³⁹¹. If the railway companies were an easy target for criticism, they did not help themselves. Their only public communications were solely addressed to an audience of investors and shareholders. Many writers to *The Times* complained of only a perfunctory response to their direct letters to the railway companies. The relationship between the railway companies and their suburban passengers was often a strained and difficult one.

A further issue that attracted accusations of insensitivity was the subject of fares. The imposition of higher ticket prices in the 1860s by the southern railway companies was met with bitter complaint. This was part of a general fare increase to restore profitably after the battles for market share through low prices in the 1850s. It was implemented rapidly and with little public explanation. *The Times* thundered that 'from 20 to 70 per cent has been added on the sums, already sufficiently large, to be extracted from their passengers. The dwellers in New Cross and Sydenham, Bickley and Norwood, are

³⁹¹ Letter to *The Times*, published 21 August 1872 p.5, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

loud in their complaints; but their cry of indignation seems to the magnates against whom they complain nothing but sweet testimony to their powers'³⁹². A Bickley resident called it 'a most unwarrantable breach of faith. Hundreds and thousands of us on various parts of the line in taking our residences did so on the faith that our railway expenses per year would be so much and no more'³⁹³. This traveller claimed to be able to mitigate the increase by switching from first class to second class travel, but others were not so fortunate. 'A Victim' noted that 'today's augmentation of 3d makes an increase of 33 per cent in the sum I paid this time last year for my third-class return between Lee and London. ... All I can say is 'the sooner I leave this neighbourhood the better'³⁹⁴. This sense of being deceived by the railway companies was also felt north of the river. 'A Foreman Shipwright' who travelled by the NLR highlighted the plight of the working classes, who had moved out of inner London. He wrote that 'it may not be so annoying to those who have the means and time to walk or ride, but to others whose employers demand their attendance at a certain hour ... to pay £3 18s per year for their temerity to change their place of adobe is a great hardship'³⁹⁵. He warned 'we shall ever be at the mercy of the railway companies, who understand our weakness.'³⁹⁶ It can only be surmised that these fare increases and the potential for further ones directly deterred some from travelling to work by the railway in the 1860s. Certainly these uncertainties over the cost and reliability of the railway service tarnished the allure of living in the suburbs.

There was little evidence to regular railway travellers of the re-investment of the higher fares revenues into improving the quality of the suburban service. They had to contend with discomfort before, during and after their journey. Aside from the main London termini, waiting accommodation at suburban railway stations was often

³⁹² Editorial in *The Times*, published 5 August 1868 p.6, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 30 July 2019.

³⁹³ Letter to *The Times*, published 5 August 1868 p.4, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 30 July 2019.

³⁹⁴ Letter to *The Times*, published 3 August 1868 p.9, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 30 July 2019.

³⁹⁵ Letter to *The Times*, published 26 April 1864 p.6, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 30 July 2019.

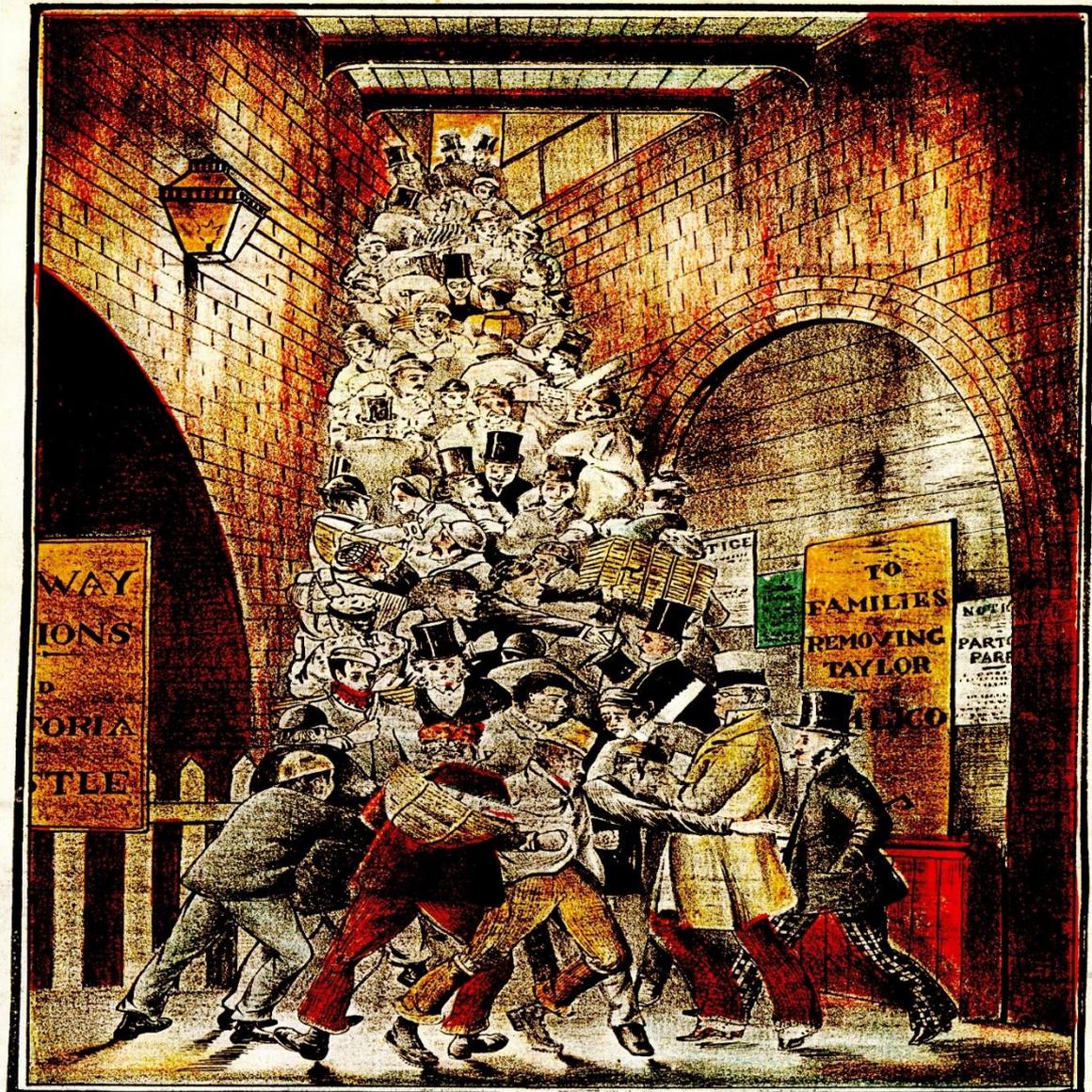
³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

rudimentary in nature or entirely non-existent. A deputation from the Plumstead District Board of Works complained to the SER in 1877 of a wide range of deficiencies at Plumstead and Woolwich Arsenal stations. At Plumstead these included ‘the want of a footbridge to access the down platform and the want of a waiting room or shelter on that platform’³⁹⁷. At Woolwich Arsenal they additionally listed ‘the incommodious character of the station altogether, the booking office and adjacent waiting room being quite inadequate to the large and increasing traffic’ and ‘the necessity of opening the booking office for the issue of tickets earlier than at present prior to the time fixed for starting the trains’³⁹⁸. This was a situation that persisted until the end of the nineteenth century. Writing in the 1890s, a contemporary commentator on the railway system noted ‘the station accommodation provided by the Chatham and Dover cannot be said to rank high. On the whole, it would appear scarcely equal to that found on the South Eastern Railway, the standard of both companies being distinctly poor. ...We need hardly attempt to criticise the older suburban stations, many of which are on viaducts. These dingy-looking wooden structures, garnished with a truly formidable array of advertisements, stand much in need of repair and renovation’³⁹⁹. Indeed, certain stations on the line, particularly those on ‘high level’ lines, became notorious for their poor regard for passenger comfort or safety as illustrated by the cartoon of the rush hour at the Walworth Road station (see figure 6.2 below).

³⁹⁷ Plumstead District Board of Works, General Meeting Minutes 1st January 1877, Points 1 and 2 (Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust Archives, Plumstead District official records).

³⁹⁸ *Ibid*, points 6 and 7.

³⁹⁹ J.P. Pattinson, ‘*London, Chatham & Dover Railway, its passenger services, rolling stock, locomotives, gradients & express speeds*’ (London: Cassell & Co, 1897), p.9.



Walworth Road Station
c 1846.

The "Walworth Shoot"

Dedicated (without permission) to the Directors of the L. C. & D. R.

Figure 6.2: Walworth Road Railway station c.1876⁴⁰⁰

In contrast to the luxuriously appointed carriages on the main line express services, those on the suburban routes were their poor relations, with inferior levels of comfort and facilities. Pattinson wrote 'coming now to the stock provided in the Brighton Company's local and suburban trains, we find little to commend. The firsts are, with

⁴⁰⁰ Cartoon from *The Suburb* magazine, 1876 accessed 15 September 2020 from the Cuming Museum online collection via <http://heritage.southwark.gov.uk/objects/21433/the-walworth-road-railway-station-c-1876?>

very few exceptions, only moderately well upholstered and decorated. ... Few of the suburban coaches of this class [second] are at all roomy, and the interior has frequently a sombre appearance, owing to the use of dark panelling'⁴⁰¹. Indeed they were inferior in quality to other forms of transport. The Plumstead deputation complained of the condition of second and third class carriages being 'dirty and uncomfortable and the contrast presented by such carriages to the tramcars and other modern conveyances'⁴⁰².

It was a familiar complaint across London's suburban services. A letter-writer to *The Times* bitterly criticised the directors of the GER for 'their retention of the hard-seated, cushionless-backed and crutchless second class carriages'⁴⁰³. 'A Season Ticket Holder' went further: 'it is not enough to say that the carriages are old and uncomfortable – they are filthy, and as they travel their very bones rattle as if to the tune of presentiment'⁴⁰⁴. Worse, suburban trains often lacked any form of heating. It was an obvious inconvenience in cold weather, and its dehumanising effect was satirically observed by *Punch*: 'the Company, by carefully omitting to supply foot-warmers or other life-saving appliances in winter, must surely class its passengers as 'imperishables'⁴⁰⁵. Finally, when the railway commuter did return to his home station, he was faced with the challenge of negotiating the journey to his house along often ill-lit and poorly maintained suburban roads and lanes. In the ironic words of a *Punch* columnist: 'I can assure you that, until you try it, you cannot tell the amount of pleasure and exercise which walking a couple of miles (the distance from my cottage to the station), laden with groceries and other eatables, can be made to afford'⁴⁰⁶.

⁴⁰¹ J.P. Pattinson, 'London, Brighton & South Coast Railway, its passenger services, rolling stock, locomotives, gradients & express speeds' (London: Cassell & Co, 1897), p.13.

⁴⁰² Plumstead District Board of Works, General Meeting Minutes, 1st January 1877. Point 8.

⁴⁰³ Letter to *The Times*, published 29 August 1879 p.4, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 30 July 2019.

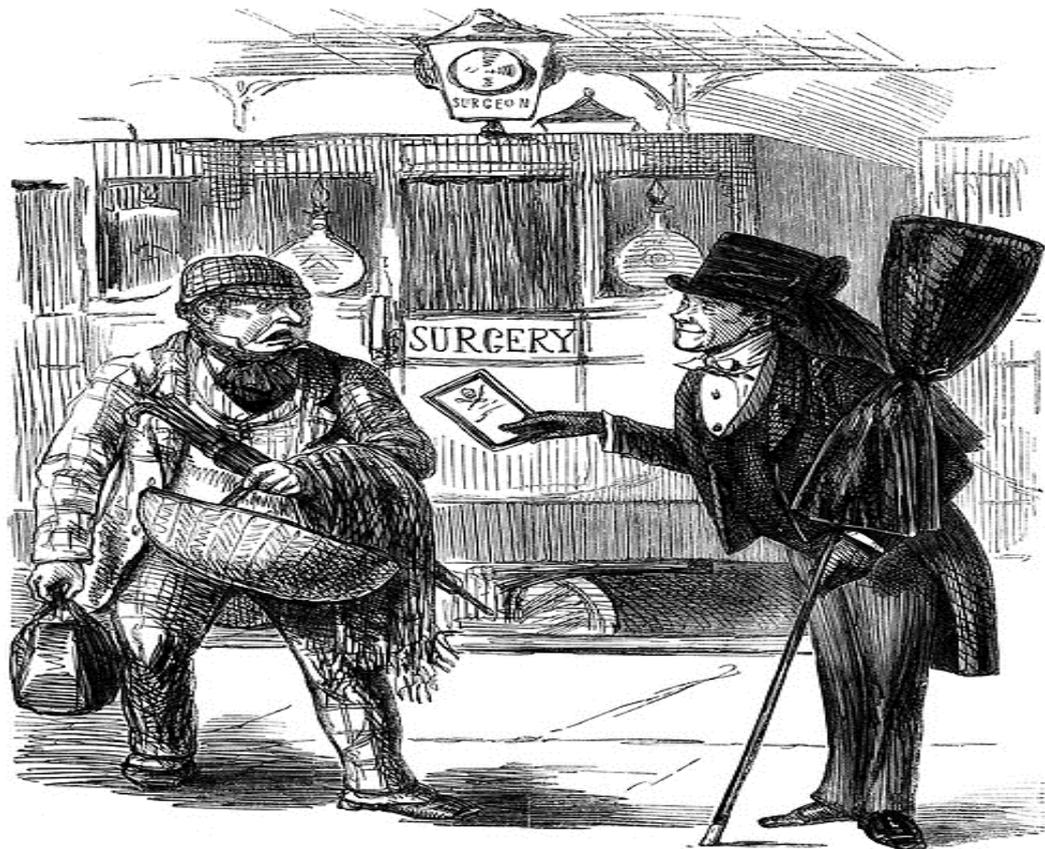
⁴⁰⁴ Letter to *The Times*, published 12 September 1871 p.6, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

⁴⁰⁵ "Hard Training or how to reach the suburbs", *Punch*, Volume XCVI, p.37, (26 January 1889), accessed 31 July 2019, from the Gale collection of 19th Century periodicals at <https://0-go-gale-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/GALE|DX1901935153>.

⁴⁰⁶ "Green Pastures or Piccadilly", *Punch*, Volume XCIX, p.137 (20 September 1890), accessed 31 July 2019, at <https://0-go-gale-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/GALE|DX1901927749>.

A more general concern was the safety of railway travel itself. The advent of high speed travel by rail was accompanied by the possibility of disaster, and the death or injury of passengers, railway workers and members of the general public became increasingly common. As Rolt observed ‘a railway accident is always news. ... Almost invariably human fallibility is responsible. The cause is found to be trivial – a single mistake... It is in this contrast between trivial error and terrible consequence that the drama of the railway accident lies’⁴⁰⁷. The Victorian newspapers gave lurid coverage to this new type of catastrophe, accompanied by graphic illustrations of the accident scene. There were high-speed derailments, head-on collisions in tunnels and in bad weather, and tragic miscalculations or negligence by drivers, signalmen or other railway workers. The risk to life and limb was conveyed with dark humour in *Punch*. In the cartoon below from 1852 (figure 6.3) a smiling doctor can be seen handing over his card to a nervous railway traveller.

⁴⁰⁷ L.T.C. Holt, *Red for Danger*, 1955 (Reprint, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), pp.16-17.



RAILWAY UNDERTAKING.

Touter. "GOING BY THIS TRAIN, SIR?"

Passenger. "M? Eh? Yes."

Touter. "ALLOW ME, THEN, TO GIVE YOU ONE OF MY CARDS, SIR."

Figure 6.3: The dangers of Railway travel⁴⁰⁸

Dickens also captured the public anxieties over railway travel. In 'Mrs Lirriper's Legacy' the operations of a miniature railway were portrayed as a satirical image of the real world and were 'typified by collisions, burst boilers and all sorts of accidents and offences all most correct and pretty'⁴⁰⁹. For the passenger, there was no redress for this state of affairs, as the Major (one of the lodgers) explains to Mrs Lirriper, 'that is between us who are in the Railway Interest Madam and our friend the Right Honourable Vice-President of the Board of Trade'⁴¹⁰. Even worse, the passenger, enclosed in their compartment, was a passive bystander and had little notice of

⁴⁰⁸ "Railway Undertaking", *Punch*, Volume XXIII, p.128 (18 September 1852) at <https://0-go-gale-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/ GALE|DX1901576090>, accessed 30 July 2019.

⁴⁰⁹ C. Dickens, *Mrs Lirriper's Legacy, the extra Christmas number of All the Year Round* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1864), p.8, accessed 8 August 2019 via <https://archive.org/details/mrsrirriperslega64dickrich>.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.8.

impending disaster. The Railway Traveller’s Handy Book of Hints offered some practical advice: ‘it is well to know that the bottom of the carriage is the safest place, and therefore, when a person has reason to anticipate a concussion, he should, without hesitation, throw himself on the floor of the carriage’⁴¹¹. Rail travel was perceived in the early, and mid-Victorian period as dangerously unsafe, with the blame attached to underinvestment and indifference on the part of the railway companies’ management.

Year	No of Accidents Per Year	Passengers In Train Killed	Accidents Injured	No of Passenger Journeys (Mil)	No of Accidents Per Mil Journeys
1850-1854 (average)	74	16	302	92.6	0.80
1855-1864 (average)	73	22	493	180.4	0.40
1865-1874 (average)	161	34	967	422.8	0.38
1875-1884 (average)	162	28	915	598.4	0.27
1885-1894 (average)	76	21	600	798.6	0.10
1895-1904 (average)	65	12	581	1100.7	0.06
1905-1914 (average)	35	21	575	1306.7	0.03

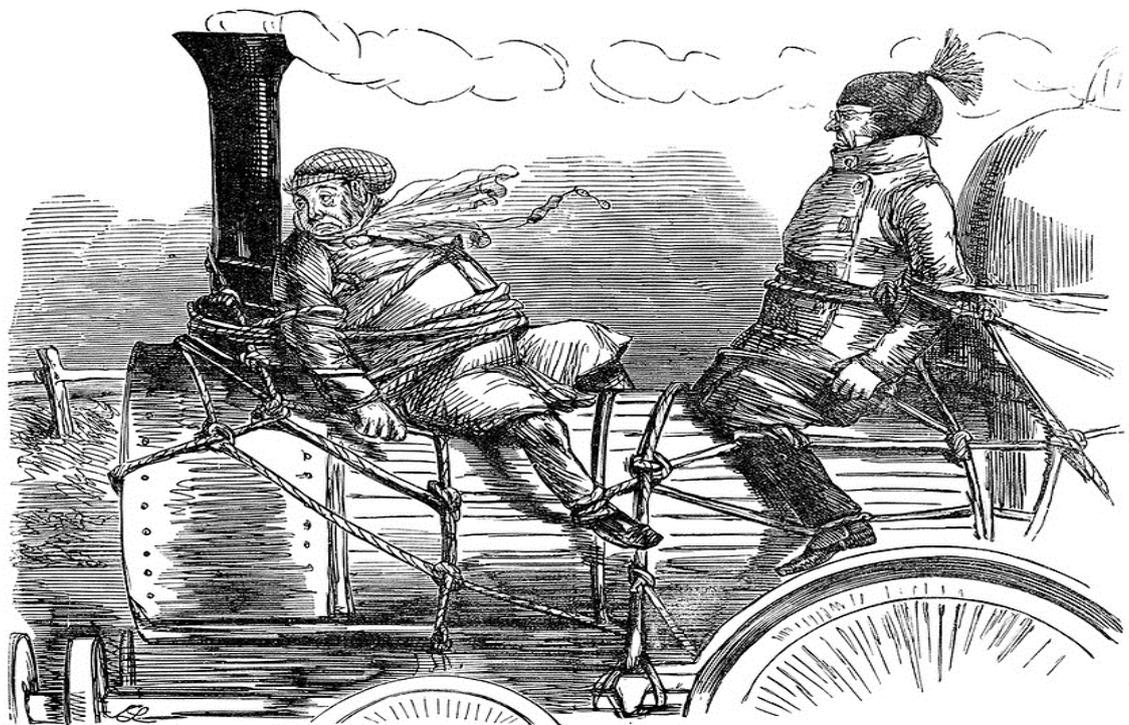
Table 6.1: Average no. of Accidents per year and Passengers Killed or Injured 1850-1914.⁴¹²

This perception of the dangers of rail travel was borne out by the statistics on railway accidents collected by the Board of Trade and presented to Parliament. These showed an alarming rise in the number of accidents from the 1850s until the 1880s (see table 6.1 above), when safety measures were finally widely implemented across the network. On a system that required constant vigilance and manual intervention to ensure that the track was free of obstructions and signals and points were correctly set, there was obvious room for human error. The problem was compounded by the reluctance of many companies to invest in safety improvements or, as the 1850 report of the Railway Commissioners highlighted, even to follow the recommended operational rules and regulations. They reported to Parliament that ‘several accidents appear to have been due to a neglect in the enforcement of the regulations which have

⁴¹¹ E. Shelton, *Railway Traveller’s Handy Book of Hints, Suggestions and Advice*, p.103.

⁴¹² Compiled from accident reports held on <https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/> with passenger journeys taken from the Board of Trade reports.

been adopted by the Directors of Railway Companies for the safe conduct of traffic upon their respective lines. In some instances these regulations have been neglected with the cognizance of the superior officers of the Companies: this appears a most improper practice'⁴¹³. This battle between the Board of Trade railway inspectors and the railway companies was to be fought in the public gaze through the medium of the official accident reports. As *Punch's* cartoon (figure 6.4) wryly observed, the blame for poor railway safety lay, in the eyes of the public, squarely with the directors of the railway companies.



HOW TO INSURE AGAINST RAILWAY ACCIDENTS.

TIE A COUPLE OF DIRECTORS *À LA MAZEPPA* TO EVERY ENGINE THAT STARTS WITH A TRAIN.

Figure 6.4: Insurance against Railway accidents ⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ Report of the Commissioners of the Railways, 1850, Paper no 1332, p.10 (London: William Clowes & Son, 1851) accessed 25 July 2019 from https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.hol_01159-000003?accountid=14565.

⁴¹⁴ "How to Insure against Railway Accidents", *Punch*, Volume XXIV, p.125 (26 March 1853) accessed 30 July 2019 at <https://0-go-gale-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/GALE|DX1901567343>.

These were not remote dangers for London’s suburban railway traveller confined to the main lines or other parts of the country. The fact that insurance against railway accidents could be purchased from the Railway Passengers Assurance Company when buying a train ticket at most major railway stations testified to the real possibility of death or injury from railway travel. Between 1850 and 1914 there were 918 recorded accidents within a 30 mile radius of Charing Cross station⁴¹⁵ (see figure 6.5 below), with the accident black spots being the London termini themselves and the major junctions at Willesden, Stratford, Vauxhall, Clapham and New Cross.

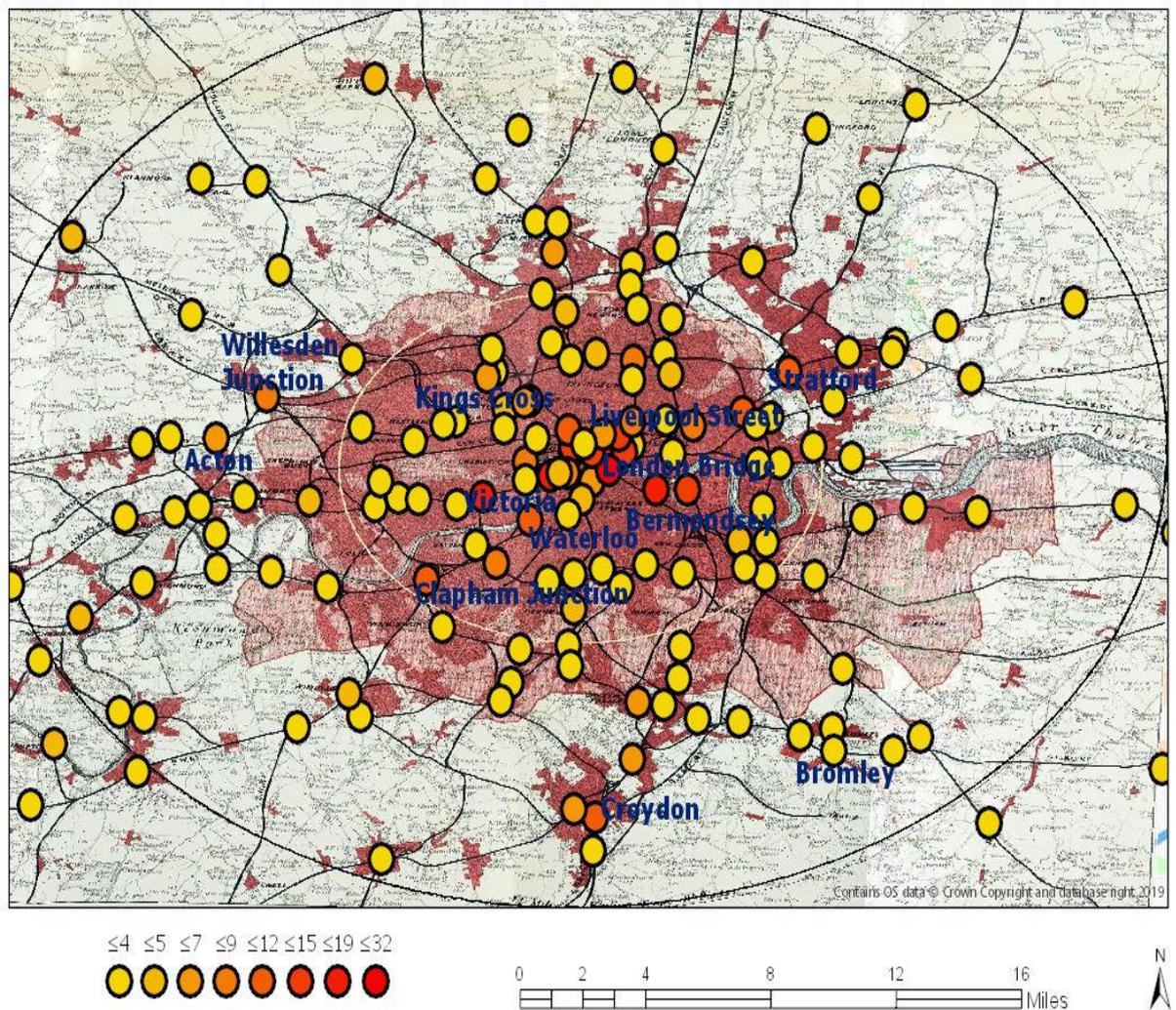


Figure 6.5: Accidents between 1850 and 1914 in London and Home Counties.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ Calculated from the accident reports held on <https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/> and accessed at various dates in June 2019. It should be noted that the calculations only include injuries to passengers and not railway staff. The accident rates for the latter group were even higher.

⁴¹⁶ Compiled from accident reports held on <https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/>.

Those companies bearing the highest proportion of commuter traffic, the SER, GER, LSWR, LCDR and LBSCR faced the biggest logistical challenges. Unsurprisingly there was a general correlation between the number of accidents and the number of passengers carried by each of the railway companies serving the metropolis (see table 6.2 below). This was compounded by a highly negative perception of suburban railway companies' attitude towards railway safety amongst the travelling public. In 1862 a 'season ticket-holder' on the LSWR castigated its 'penny wise pound foolish policy' towards railway safety and asked dramatically 'must there be the usual hecatomb of human victims and 'heavy compensations' before this new 'King of Dahomey', which has arisen here in England recognises that his own interests are identical with those of his unfortunate subjects'⁴¹⁷.

	Total	1850-59	1860-69	1870-79	1880-89	1890-99	1900-14
SECR*	154	32	20	27	28	21	26
GER **	140	21	16	41	37	14	11
LSWR	129	21	17	33	28	15	15
LBSCR	127	18	28	29	23	15	14
GNR	86	12	20	20	16	10	8
LCDR***	85	2	12	34	25	12	
NLR	59	4	12	26	11	3	3
Metropolitan & District	42		1	18	9	4	10
GWR	41	3	2	16	12	5	3
LNWR	31	10	4	10	4	2	1
LTS	11	2	1	1	4	2	1
MID	10		1	3	1	2	3
GCR	2						2
	917	125	134	258	198	105	97

*SER up to 1900 and combined SECR from 1900
** Includes ECR up to formation of GER in 1862
*** Merged with SER from 1900

Table 6.2: Accidents within 30 miles of Charing Cross by company and date.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁷ Letter to *The Times*, published 6 December 1862 p.12, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 30 July 2019.

⁴¹⁸ Compiled from accident reports held on <https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/>.

The railway companies felt they were being unfairly pilloried by the public and the press. Edward Watkin, chairman of the SER, declared to his shareholders that ‘there is no duty imposed on any class of industrialists as severe as the duty which is imposed by public demand upon a great institution like yours. Speed, punctuality, numberless trains, all the demands, both by day and night, constitute this, I say, the severest of all duties; and these duties have to be performed by fallible men; but, nevertheless, the law assumes that upon a railway, at least, everybody may become infallible; and the slightest mistake ... is taken into Court and dealt with under Act of Parliament’⁴¹⁹. Yet they were often resistant to adopting new safety procedures. Following the Clayton tunnel disaster of August 1861 on the LBSCR’s line (the worst railway accident up to that date with 23 dead and 176 seriously injured), the company’s written response to the official accident report on this catastrophe showed no sign of repentance for its operational practices. The secretary wrote that ‘my Board feel bound to state frankly that they have not seen reason to alter their views which they have so long entertained on this subject, and they still fear that the telegraphic system of working recommended by the Board of Trade will, by transferring much responsibility from the engine drivers, augment rather than diminish the risk of accident’⁴²⁰.

This reluctance to submit to outside oversight was coupled with over-stretched finances for most suburban railway companies in the 1860s and 1870s. The infrastructure boom and the banking crisis of the mid 1860s had forced the suburban railway companies to make operational savings wherever possible. This was the case with the GER and in 1876 its Board candidly stated that ‘the present Board were appointed at a time when the Company was insolvent, and when its permanent way and rolling stock were in a deplorable condition’⁴²¹. It proved to be a slow process to improve the poor state of the rail infrastructure and safety measures. The Board of Trade report of 1879 stated that ‘it appears that little progress has been made in the

⁴¹⁹ South Eastern Railway shareholders meeting, 23 February 1871 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/425).

⁴²⁰ Quote from L. Rolt, *Red for Danger*, p.57.

⁴²¹ Report in *The Times*, published 31 August 1876, p.6, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 30 July 2019.

adoption of continuous brakes. ...At the date above, it seems that not more than 23 per cent of the number of engines and 28 per cent of carriages used in passenger trains were fitted with continuous brakes'⁴²². The impact on railway commuters, both actual and potential, of this financial impecuniosity, management dogmatism and the effective acceptance of a certain level of accidents by the railway companies cannot be gauged. The heated correspondence by letter writers to *The Times* and other newspapers and the damning reports by the Railway Inspectorate suggests a high level of public concern and the safety of the suburban railways must have cast a shadow over the attractions of commuting.

One commentator stated there were two axioms in railway travelling: 'the one financial – the more you pay the less you get in return ... The other axiom is geographical, in other words the Northern lines are very good and the Southern lines are very bad, while the West 'cometh midway and shareth the qualities of either'⁴²³. This was a judgement at a national level, but the inference was obvious, the principal railway companies serving the suburban market offered poor levels of customer service. As the commuters' experiences in this period testified, there was more to running a suburban service than the construction of stations and routes in London's suburbia. The other elements of the railway service - comfort, safety, cost, punctuality and timetabling were all critical factors. It was to be the gradual improvement in these metrics that was to transform railway commuting and make it accessible to a much wider section of society.

Reliability, Regularity and Rush Hour – the Coming of Age of Railway Commuting

In *Told in a First Class Smoker*, 'the 4.32pm out of Liverpool Street was notable for two reasons. First, it was one of the most punctual trains on a line famous for its punctuality. Secondly we [a group of six first-class commuters] travelled by it all year

⁴²² Report of the Commissioners of the Railways, 1879 (London: William Clowes & Son, 1881), accessed 5 August 2019, from <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers>.

⁴²³ W M Acworth, "Our Southern Railways", *The New Review*, Volume 1, (1889), p.1, accessed 30 July 2019, via <https://0-go-gale-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/>.

round'⁴²⁴. This image of commuting at the end of the nineteenth century encapsulated how far the daily journey to work by the railway had come from the mid Victorian era. This improvement in the reliability and regularity of the service made commuting a routine act of everyday mobility. It was bound up with and facilitated the growth of suburbia around London and other major cities. The attractions of suburbia were part of a wider cultural and economic shift in Victorian society, which forged a distinctive middle-class identity characterised by concerns for respectability and privacy. The suburbs were viewed as the counterpoint to the city. In Hapgood's words, the suburbs 'carve out self-contained worlds, safe from London's dangers, where the sanctity of family life and the pre-eminence of love flourish in *rus in urbe* surroundings'⁴²⁵.

The railways provided the means to realise this suburban dream. Jane Ellen Panton's *From Kitchen to Garret* published in 1887 was a typical example from a wide literature on suburbia, which made the link between suburban living and access to the railway. In her book she gave guidance to a fictitious couple, Edwin and Angelina, on setting up home in the suburbs. 'To young people like my couple, I would strongly recommend a house some little way out of London. Rents are less: smuts and blacks are conspicuous by their absence; a small garden or even a conservatory is not an impossibility; and if Edwin has to pay for his season ticket, that is nothing in comparison with his being able to sleep in fresh air,...and with Angelina's absence from the temptations from the shop-windows in town'⁴²⁶. If the suburbs were to be the chosen residential destination for the middle classes, then logistical issues had to be considered first. She stated that 'Edwin's work and its locality must, after all give the casting vote, for, if it be at the West End, Liverpool Street Station must be out of the question, and Victoria, is a *sine qua non*'⁴²⁷. The inference was clear, that for the practical Victorians, it was location for commuting purposes that mattered the most.

⁴²⁴ T. Ridgwell, "Told in a First Class Smoker, the Adventures of Plantagenet Smith", *The Railway Magazine*, February 1898, p.133.

⁴²⁵ L Hapgood, *Margins of desire*, p.12.

⁴²⁶ J. Panton, *From Kitchen to Garret: Hints for Young Householders* (London: Ward & Downey, 1887), p.3, accessed 5 August 2019, via <https://archive.org/details/b21528871>.

⁴²⁷ J. Panton, p.4.

This acceptance of commuting as part of everyday life was recognition of the slow but steady transformation of the commuter experience itself. This was the result of improvements across all aspects of the journey to work, including the refurbishment of the station facilities to provide shelter and comfort for the passengers. Pattinson's review of the LCDR in the 1890s noted that 'stations of recent erection show marked improvement, and the neatly-designed structures on the new line from Nunhead to Shortlands [an additional suburban branch line] may be said to satisfy all requirements. The most commendable advance, however, is seen in the spacious and well-planned four-line stations with island platforms at Shortlands, Bromley and Bickley. These are fully equal to the best on any of the suburban lines near London, and with their ample width of platform, brightly-furnished waiting rooms, and light, ornamental iron and glass roof-screens, deserve no little praise'⁴²⁸. From platforms exposed to the elements, commuters could, by the end of the century, expect a far higher standard of facilities for their wait for the train across London's suburban network (see figure 6.6 below).

⁴²⁸ J.P. Pattinson, '*London, Chatham and Dover Railway, its passenger services, rolling stock, locomotives, gradients & express speeds*' (London: Cassell, 1897), p.9.



Figure 6.6: Bow Road station c.1904.⁴²⁹

At the same time the rolling stock had been upgraded. Trains became more powerful and so could pull more carriages at faster speeds. The carriages themselves were lengthened to accommodate more passengers, but were also more comfortable with better seating and a smoother ride and, significantly, incorporated the new, safer, braking mechanisms. The gap in quality between the express trains and the suburban services gradually narrowed, even for the financially weaker southern railway companies. In his review of the SER, Pattinson commented that ‘many new and commodious carriages chiefly for the suburban traffic have, however, been recently built... we find that the first and second class carriages are, as a rule, very good, and differ but little from the main line standard’⁴³⁰. A sense of this change can be gauged from the photos of suburban third class carriages on the SER; the first from the 1860s

⁴²⁹ Photo provided courtesy of the John Alsop railway photograph collection, accessed 7 September 2019 via <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/b/bow/>.

⁴³⁰ J.P. Pattinson, *The South Eastern Railway, its passenger services, rolling stock, locomotives, gradients & express speeds* (London: Cassell & Co, 1895), pp.5-6.

and the second from the 1890s (figures 6.7 & 6.8), with the former rudimentary design being replaced by a recognizably modern construction.

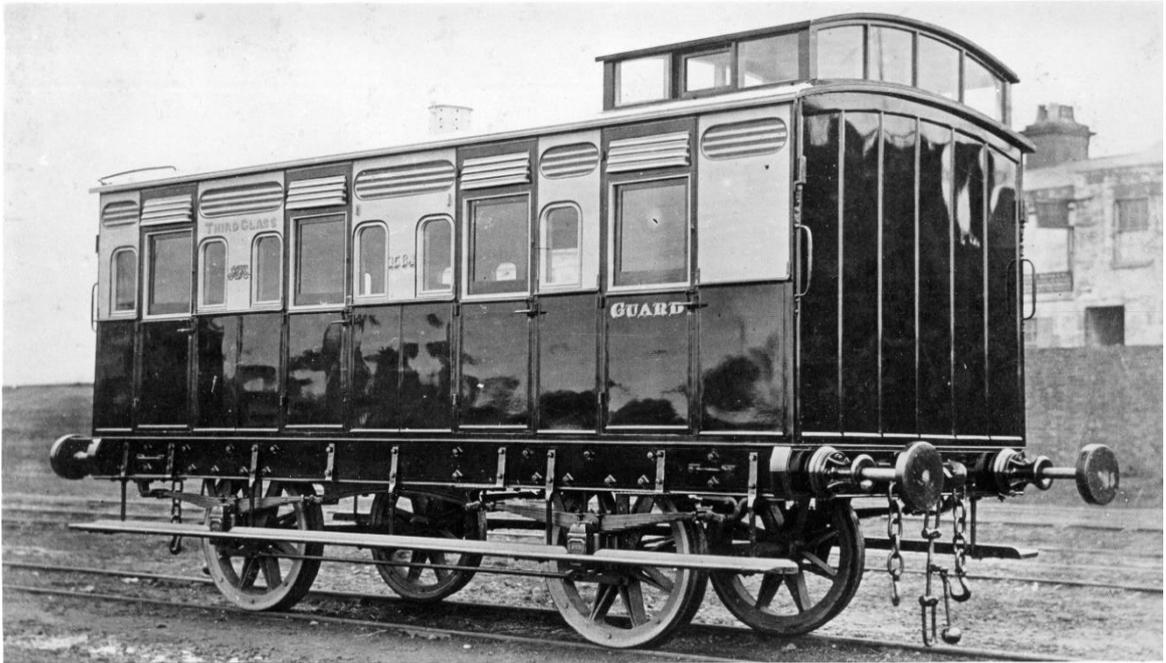


Figure 6.7: South Eastern Railway Third Class Carriage c.1867.⁴³¹

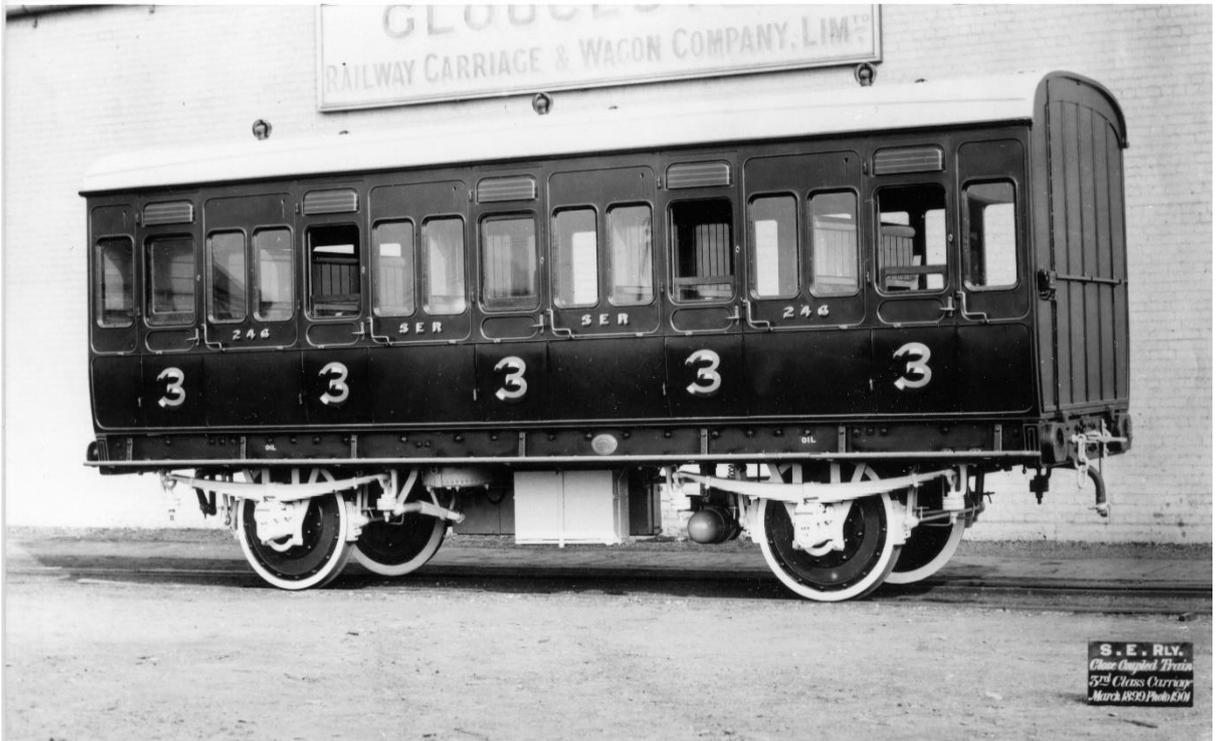


Figure 6.8: South Eastern Railway Third Class Carriage c.1899.⁴³²

⁴³¹ Photo provided courtesy of the Tony Riley railway photograph collection.

⁴³² Photo provided courtesy of the Tony Riley railway photograph collection.

These improvements came as a result of a strategic decision by the railway companies to invest in their suburban services, though not all were willing to do so. The contemporary commentator Grinling summed up the dilemma, which faced the railway companies serving the London market. He observed that ‘it is extremely doubtful whether it is good policy for a railway company with good main-line resources to lay itself out for the accommodation of short-distance suburban customers. At the outset such traffic is undoubtedly very profitable...but later on it may become excessively costly by necessitating the provision of lines, station accommodation and rolling stock which are only required within a few hours of the morning and evening’⁴³³. This commercial assessment gave rise to the geographical inequality of the suburban network observed in the previous chapters. It also left the southern railway companies less profitable than their northern peers and financially stretched to provide a comparable quality of service. Commuters were well aware of the advantages and disadvantages of this outcome.

On the plus side, commuting from the southern suburbs was favoured due to their better transport connections. Panton praised ‘their cheap fares to town, and their numerous stations which land one in almost any part of London: allowing one to return from another with the same ticket if we find Victoria more convenient than the City for the home journey’⁴³⁴. This accessibility came at a price, for Panton unfavourably compared ‘the service, carriages and indeed everything connected with the railway service [of the southern companies] with that of the northern lines, where the trains are punctual, tolerably clean and well-lighted, and where the officials have graduated in a school of fine manners ... and do not receive with an insolent stare, ... one’s modest request for help’⁴³⁵. She concluded that the commuter has to ‘consider the vileness and uncertainty of the train service’⁴³⁶. Therefore, Edwin ‘should be within a certain radius of his office and should not ... be condemned to more railway travelling

⁴³³ C. Grinling, *The Way of our Railways* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, 1905), p.169.

⁴³⁴ J. Panton, *From Kitchen to Garret*, p.6.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*

than can possibly be helped ... that perpetual catching of trains is very bad indeed for one and that the worry and bother of feeling of even a short journey between London and home is singularly fatiguing'⁴³⁷. The commuting experience had undoubtedly improved by the late Victorian period, but the commuter faced a trade-off between the convenience of the southern railway companies' suburban service and the superior quality of their northern counterparts.

This difference can be seen in the letters sent by frustrated commuters to the national newspapers in this period. The southern railway companies were portrayed as parsimonious and indifferent to the concerns of customers. It continued to be a regular refrain of their season ticket holders, that they were taken for granted and poorly treated as a result. A lively correspondence in 1885 over the provision of foot warmers illustrated this public perception. It was sparked off by 'A Mystified One' complaining that the item had not been provided free of charge on a trip from Victoria to Eastbourne. A 'Sojourner at Dover' echoed this experience in recalling a journey by second-class, stating that the LCDR 'refused a foot warmer and no bribe would induce the porter to give one'⁴³⁸. 'Condemned to travel on the South Western' from Epsom thought the LSWR 'the slowest to make any move in the direction of convenience to its regular passengers, a foot warmer is never seen'⁴³⁹. In contrast 'a Traveller' smugly stated that 'the LNWR, desirous of promoting the comfort of their passengers, have put on some of their trains, drawing-room carriages heated with hot-water pipes'⁴⁴⁰. Yet the southern and eastern railway companies provided more suburban services than those companies serving the north and west of the capital. As one letter-writer observed that 'I think only fair to point that the public are themselves in some degree responsible for the inconveniences they suffer by their continued call for further accommodation [in the form of more trains to serve the ever-expanding

⁴³⁷ Ibid, p.2.

⁴³⁸ Letter to *The Times*, published 13 January 1885 p.4, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 30 July 2019.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

suburbs]’⁴⁴¹. In some respects, the main suburban railway companies were the victim of their own success in attracting business.

On other measures, the gap was narrower. Public concerns over punctuality into the London termini were such that the issue merited Parliamentary scrutiny. The Board of Trade required monthly returns from each of the main suburban railway companies. They showed (see table 6.3) that the GER and the GNR’s suburban services were the most punctual with 90 per cent of trains arriving within 5 minutes of their scheduled time. Indeed the GER had earned itself an excellent reputation for its timekeeping. A correspondent to *The Times* wrote ‘that the running is so accurate that it is no exaggeration to say one’s watch could be set by the time kept’⁴⁴². No other company bettered 80 per cent.

The results were, however, slightly misleading as, with the exception of the GNR, they included both long distance and suburban services. The former were always likely to perform badly, when punctuality was measured absolutely. Complaint letters on this issue continued to be published in *The Times*, with the LSWR main line being particularly singled out. One correspondent bitterly complained of its service that ‘as long as unpunctuality enables directors to declare a dividend, passengers must go to the wall’⁴⁴³. Yet customers on the branch lines had a different experience. Another passenger using the LSWR noting the complaints of his fellow passengers felt compelled to defend their record. He cited ‘the punctuality and speed with which trains travel on the Thames Valley line’ and portentously concluded with the Latin tag ‘fiat justitia ruat caelum’ [let justice be done though the heavens fall].⁴⁴⁴ If an allowance was made for the long distance services, the record for the suburban

⁴⁴¹ Letter to *The Times*, published 16 October 1884 p.10, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

⁴⁴² Letter to *The Times*, published 12 October 1889 p.7, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

⁴⁴³ Letter to *The Times*, published 14 October 1884 p.4, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

⁴⁴⁴ Letter to *The Times*, published 16 October 1884 p.10, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 July 2019.

services of all companies had reached a point by the 1880s, where lateness was an occasional inconvenience rather than a regular occurrence.

Punctuality Record	GER	GNR	GWR	LNWR	LSWR	LBSCR	LCDR	MID	SER
	(Suburban)								
Time to 3 Mins Late	82%	80%	70%	60%	64%	74%	57%	50%	64%
3 to 5 Mins Late	8%	10%	8%	9%	12%	6%	14%	11%	13%
6 to 10 Minutes	6%	6%	10%	13%	16%	13%	16%	17%	15%
11 to 15 Minutes	2%	2%	5%	7%	5%	4%	6%	9%	4%
16 to 20 Minutes	1%	1%	3%	4%	2%	2%	3%	5%	2%
21 to 25 Minutes	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	1%
26 to 30 Minutes	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%
Over 30 Minutes	1%	1%	2%	4%	1%	1%	2%	4%	1%
Avg. Mthly No of Tra	8,670	587	2,103	1,832	6,291	11,426	7,634	987	6,536

Table 6.3: Train Punctuality into London Termini 1890.⁴⁴⁵

Similarly there was far less dissatisfaction expressed over the level of fares or their arbitrary increases. This was in large part due to the stabilisation of fares by the 1870s with companies broadly adopting a formulaic rate of roughly 2d, 1 1/2d (then 1 1/4d) and 1d per mile for the three classes. More importantly for the purposes of household budgeting for the cost of commuting, this relationship and the fares themselves remained almost unchanged from the 1870s to the late 1900s, when competition from mechanised trams and omnibuses became significant and forced fares on these routes downwards. This arrangement reflected the effective cartel established for longer distance journeys by the major railway companies. The only exceptions were the discounts offered on season tickets (primarily for those travelling by first or second class and only from the 1890s for third class passengers) and workmen's fares. As noted in the previous chapter, the latter represented a compromise between cost and an inconvenient time of commuting. The geographic relationship is shown in figure

⁴⁴⁵ Table compiled from Board of Trade reports to Parliament for alternate months in 1890. House of Commons papers 1890, Volume 65, Pg. LXV.791, Paper 29, accessed 2 November 2019, via <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers>.

6.9 below and highlights the obvious correlation between distance travelled and the cost of the journey.

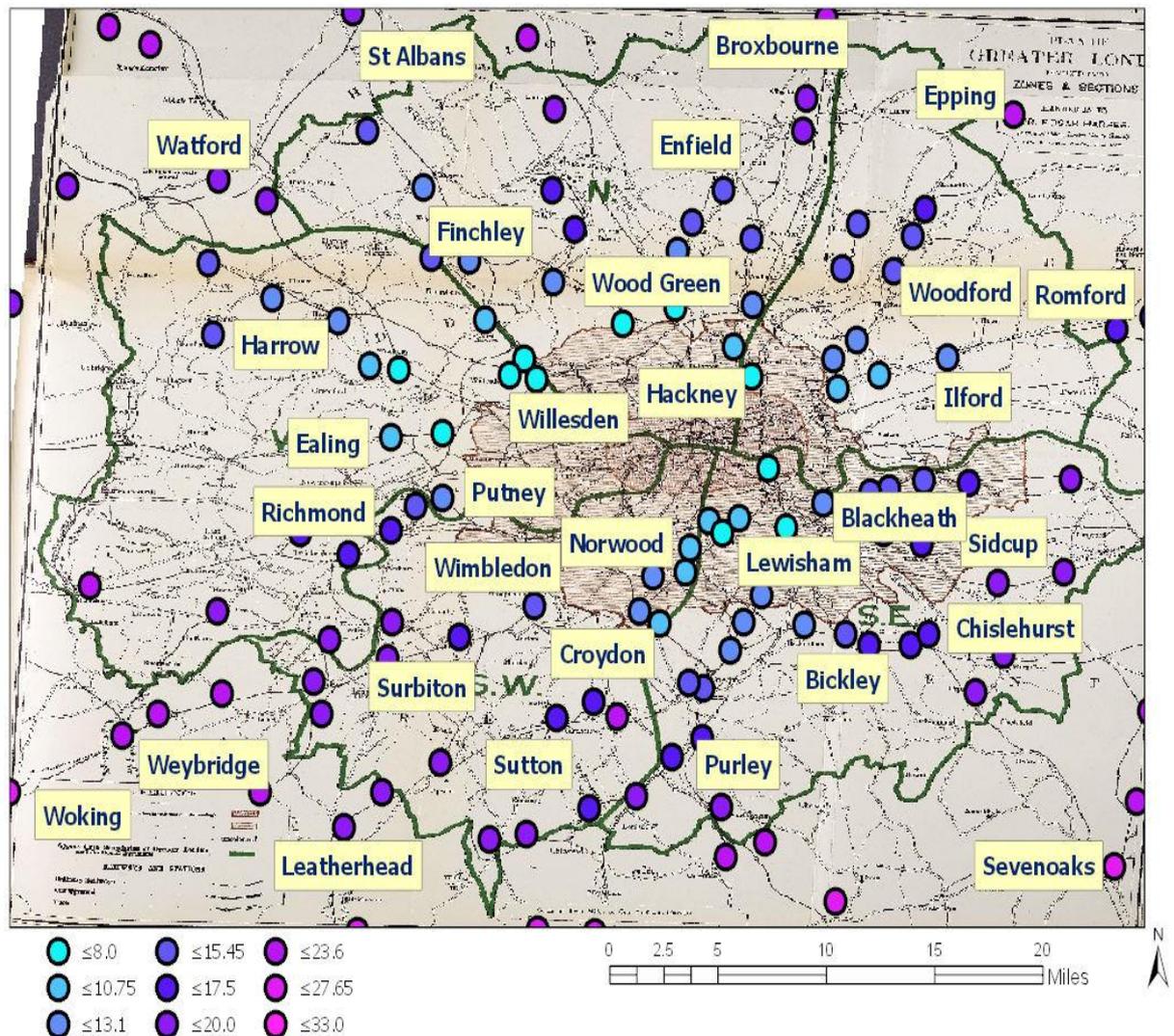


Figure 6.9: Annual First Class Season Ticket Fares (expressed in £) in 1898.⁴⁴⁶

As can be seen from the map above, this relationship between the fare and the distance from London was not entirely uniform. The lower fare areas covered short distance journeys to the east, north, west and south-east of the capital. This reflected three factors: the requirement for low fares set by Parliament on some routes provided by the GER and the NLR (notably those serving Hackney, Willesden and Ilford);

⁴⁴⁶ Compiled from individual railway company timetables held at the National Archives.

competition from the fixed fare Metropolitan and District underground services to the west of the capital; and competition between the LBSCR, the LCDR and the SER on their inner London suburban networks. Further out, competitive tension between rival companies put downward pressure on fares, notably on the lines serving Croydon, Purley, Wimbledon and Bickley. Elsewhere the routes were protected by the railway companies' regional hegemony and they were able to set fares as they saw fit for that location. This allowed the LSWR to set slightly higher fares on their main line route out through Surbiton and Woking, and similarly for the SER on its lines to Sidcup and Chislehurst. Nonetheless, the railway commuter had a much more predictable fare environment than that of the 1860s and this cost certainty combined with gradually rising living standards facilitated the expansion of railway commuting. It brought commuting within the grasp of lower income households.

The final crucial element of the commuter experience was the timetable; how easy it was to get to work at the appropriate time. On this measure, the southern and eastern railway companies were significantly superior to their northern and western competitors. This might be expected from the discussion of the previous chapter, as the latter had prioritised their main line and freight services over their suburban network for London. This can clearly be seen in the table of train arrivals at London termini presented to the 1905 Royal Commission (see table 6.4 below).

Suburban Trains - Number and Average Fares and Speed				
Railway Company Termini		Number of Inward Suburban Train Between 8 - 9am	Average 3rd Class Return Fare For 10 Mile Journey	Average Speed of Suburban Trains Mph
GER	Liverpool Street	38	6.5	20.1
LSWR	Waterloo	28	7.9	22.1
LBSCR	London Bridge	28	7.3	22.7
NLR	Broad Street	26	4.3	18.3
LBSCR	Victoria	20	7.2	22.3
GNR	King's Cross	17	7.9	22.9
GER	Fenchurch Street	14	6.1	15.8
SECR	Charing Cross	12	8.6	19.7
SECR	Cannon Street	12	8.6	21.5
SECR	Victoria	10	8.0	20.5
SECR	Holborn	10	7.3	18.2
GNR	Moorgate	8	6.8	17.2
MID	Moorgate	6	6.5	17.4
LNWR	Euston	6	6.8	26.3
GWR	Paddington	6	8.9	27.9
MID	St Pancras	5	8.0	25.1
GCR	Marylebone	5	6.6	31.6
LTS	Fenchurch Street	3	6.3	19.9

Table 6.4: Number of Suburban Trains and Average Fare and Speed in 1905.⁴⁴⁷

The table also highlighted the trade-off between the journey time and the frequency of the service. The suburban services provided by the MID, GCR, LNWR and GWR ran on their main lines and stopped at fewer intermediate stations. They were faster, but less frequent than the southern and eastern services. This latter group, for all their shortcomings in quality and the complaints levelled at them, delivered what the commuter wanted; a regular and reliable means of making the journey to work.

The suburban railway timetable was the visible proof of this coming of age of railway commuting. Better logistical management, particularly signalling and track improvements, enabled an increasing number of trains to be employed on the suburban rail network without any significant lengthening of journey times. Combined with improved rolling stock, station refurbishments and a predictable fare

⁴⁴⁷ 1905 Royal Commission, op cit. Volume III, Appendix 6, Table 40.

structure, railway commuting had become part of the daily routine for many middle-class workers. Its attraction as the means to living in the suburbs was confirmed and the fulfilment of this dream for a wider section of society was to be the challenge for the mature market for railway commuting.

Segregation, Selectiveness and Snobbery - the Maturity of the Railway Commuter Market

By the Edwardian era, the GER operated the largest suburban railway network around London. The *Railway Magazine* described its operations and the temporal segregation that had evolved to cater for all sections of the commuter market. ‘The passengers by the twopenny trains are not to be commended as models, either in language or attire; in fact, they form no inconsiderable proportion of London’s vast array of unskilled labourers. The half-fare trains are used by the better class of workmen, warehousemen, shopmen and not a few poorly-paid clerks. Last year Great Eastern carried close upon six million of passengers by the twopenny trains and four millions by the half fare trains. The last half fare train arrives at Liverpool Street just before 8 o’clock. Henceforward during the day ordinary fares are charged, but from 8 till 10 the suburban trains are mostly filled with season ticket-holders. There are at the time of writing some 25,000 season ticket-holders on the Great Eastern. The bulk of the season ticket holders arrive before half past nine. From half-past nine until half past ten the holders of long distance season tickets arrive. They come from Clacton, Colchester, Chelmsford, Brentwood, Ongar, Bishop’s Stortford and similar places. Comfortable-looking, well-fed, well-dressed, middle-aged gentlemen most of them’⁴⁴⁸. This segregation of the commuter market along class lines had taken place to meet both the pressure from Parliament and the public for more trains catering for the working class and to preserve the middle-class character of commuting.

⁴⁴⁸ *The Railway Magazine*, Volume 18, December 1898, pp.317-318.

If the middle-class experience of commuting had improved considerably by the Edwardian period, this was not the case for working-class commuters. The railway companies providing workmen's train services professed that their low fares did not pay and so poor accommodation and excessive passenger loads were the norm. Frank Broad, the Labour M.P for Edmonton (one of the first low-fare destinations) testified to the unpleasantness of the commuting experience. He recalled that 'during a hot summer we had girls who had been working in underground warehouses, men who had come from the fish market with their clothes reeking from that market, men from the meat market, and men from all sort of industries – men whose work made them perspire until their clothes were reeking with perspiration. There were 22 in a carriage [officially seating 12], night after night packed into the compartment, with no means of getting air, until I had to get out mid-way and vomit at the station because of the condition of the carriages'⁴⁴⁹. The 1904 Report from the Select Committee on Workmen's Trains⁴⁵⁰ contained many similar examples of gross over-crowding by witnesses, but also heard evidence from the railway companies that they were financially unable to do more than meet the minimum standard for the conveyance of passengers.

The early morning timing of the cheap fare services was intended to be for the convenience of the middle-class commuter, not the working-class traveller. The latter were supposed to be out of the way by the time the former group arrived at their station or their London terminus. As the Select Commission noted this was not the best start to the day for a working man or woman; 'the loss of an hour's early morning sleep to a hard worked man or woman cannot but be prejudicial to strength and vitality, especially in the case of the old and weakly, and of the numerous boys and girls who travel up by these trains. Then the long period of enforced idleness, or of loitering around the streets or the station means a waste of valuable time, and may be harmful

⁴⁴⁹ F. Broad, M.P. for Edmonton in House of Commons debate 29 June 1922, quoted in S. Abernathy "Opening up the Suburbs: Workmen's Trains in London 1860-1914", *Urban History*, Volume (42)1, (February 2014), p.87.

⁴⁵⁰ Select Committee Report on Workmen's Trains, 1904, accessed 19 August 2020, via <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers>.

to many⁴⁵¹. It was a social ill that the railway companies were reluctant to address, pleading logistical difficulties in allowing the later running of low fare services. This hardship fell particularly on the working woman, as her place of work, a shop or factory, often did not open until 9a.m. The 1894 Board of Trade enquiry into later running of workmen's trains heard from the James Spicer and Sons envelope factory in Southwark. The company stated in relation to some of its female workforce that 'in order to avail themselves of the workmen's trains, they get to the trains by 6.30 or 7.00 a.m.'⁴⁵². The GER robustly responded to the Enquiry that its 'directors are of the opinion that the workmen's train and fare arrangements on this railway are at the present time sufficient to meet all the reasonable requirements of workmen and workwomen, and they regret their ability to add to them.'⁴⁵³. The outcome for James Spicer & Sons was that there were a number of workers 'who come up by 'North London' and 'Great Eastern Rail'. The bulk, however, live in the surrounding neighbourhoods'⁴⁵⁴. This timetable segregation extended along class and gender lines, for it was far more likely that working-class women had to work and potentially commute than their middle-class counterparts (see figure 6.10 on women commuters as measured as a percentage of the total female population in each residential district in the 1921 Census).

⁴⁵¹ Select Committee Report on Workmen's Trains 1904, p.7.

⁴⁵² "On the Question of the Alleged Necessity for the Provision of later cheap trains for Workwomen", Board of Trade Correspondence 1894, Enclosure 2 to Correspondence No. 3, accessed 3 October 2019 via <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers>.

⁴⁵³ Ibid, Correspondence No. 8 dated July 24, 1894.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, Enclosure 6 to Correspondence No. 3.

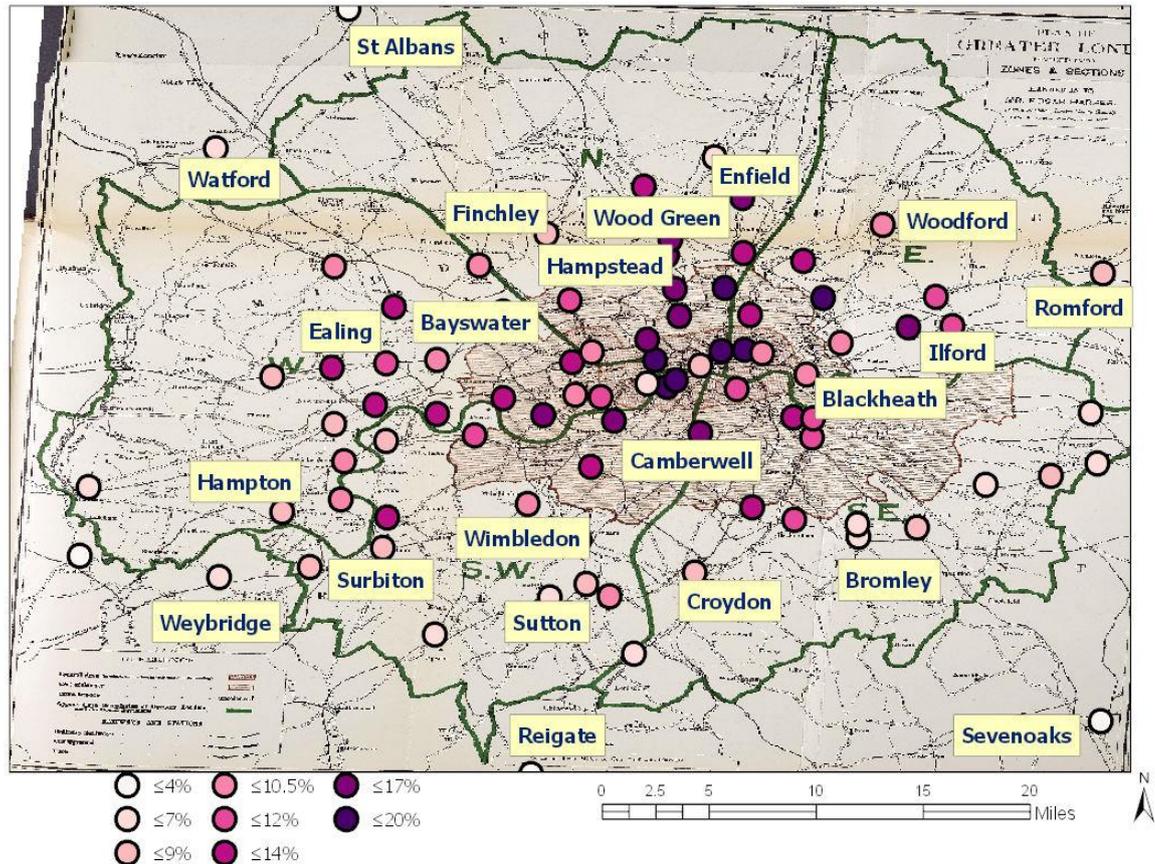


Figure 6.10: Women Commuters as Measured in the 1921 Census.⁴⁵⁵

The railway companies did make a limited effort to make railway commuting easier for women. Mr Lough of the GER testified to the 1904 Select Committee that for women travelling on the Edmonton and Walthamstow lines, ‘where there were first class carriages in the train, we cover the seats with oilcloths and allow the women to go into the first-class carriages’⁴⁵⁶. Women were not obliged in travel in women-only carriages and this solution did not apply to the workmen’s trains, which were made up entirely of third-class carriages. On the question of women having to travel in overcrowded carriages with men, Lough admitted this was a regular occurrence. Indeed, as Abernethy’s research highlighted women-only carriages proved to be unpopular with women themselves and most railway companies discontinued their

⁴⁵⁵ Map derived from 1921 Census data of women working outside their residential district accessed 13 August 2019 from <http://www.histpop.org/>, Part III, Table II.

⁴⁵⁶ Select Committee Report on Workmen’s Trains, 1904, p.87.

use after an initial trial⁴⁵⁷. Working-class women, along with their children had to endure the same commuting experience as their menfolk.

Despite the drawbacks, there was a desire from all sections of the working class⁴⁵⁸ to escape from the slums of inner London. The railway timetable increasingly included workmen’s trains and low fare services; but only to selected suburban locations. This progression can be seen in the following tables covering the timetables of a representative sample of suburban destinations around London.

	1869 Bickley LCDR	1869 Chislehurst LCDR	1869 Blackheath LCDR	1866 Norwood LBSCR	1866 Brighton LBSCR
Dist to London (m)	11	12	6	6	47
Trains Leaving					
4am-5.30am	1		1	1	
5.31 am- 6.30am	0		0	1	
6.31 am-7.30 am	1		1	1	1
7.31 am-8.30 am	2		2	2	1
8.31am- 9.30am	3	2	4	2	2
9.31am- 10.30am	2	2	3	4	1
Total	9	4	11	11	5

	1864 Surbiton LSWR	1864 Leatherhead LSWR	1864 Putney LSWR	1864 Richmond LSWR	1875 Broxbourne GER	1875 Woodford GER	1875 Ilford GER
Dist to London (m)	11	17	5	9	16	9	7
Trains Leaving							
4am-5.30am							1
5.31 am- 6.30am							0
6.31 am-7.30 am				1	1	2	1
7.31 am-8.30 am	2	1	2	1	2	3	1
8.31am- 9.30am	4	2	3	3	1	4	2
9.31am- 10.30am	3	1	2	2	2	2	1
Total	9	4	8	7	5	11	6

Table 6.5: Number of ‘Rush Hour’ Trains at Selected Suburban stations in 1860s & 1870s.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ S. Abernethy, “Sending females by rail; the history of women-only carriages”, *History Today*, 28 August 2015, accessed 20 May 2020, viaHistorytoday.com.

⁴⁵⁸ S. Abernethy, “Opening up the suburbs; workmen’s trains In London 1860-1914” *Urban History*, Volume 42(1), (2014).

⁴⁵⁹ Compiled from individual railway company timetables held at the National Archives.

In the 1860s and 1870s the number of commuter trains was generally limited across the suburban network. The timetable was primarily designed to suit those commuters of sufficient wealth and seniority that they did not need to arrive at their place of work until after 9.30a.m.

	1886 Bickley LCDR	1890 Chislehurst LCDR	1890 Blackheath LCDR	1883 Norwood LBSCR	1883 Brighton LBSCR	1883 Sutton LBSCR
Trains Leaving						
4am-5.30am	1		2	1		
5.31 am- 6.30am	1		1	2		
6.31 am-7.30 am	2	1	1	1	1	
7.31 am-8.30 am	4	1	4	2	2	2
8.31am- 9.30am	3	2	6	4	2	4
9.31am- 10.30am	5	2	4	4	2	3
Total	16	6	18	14	7	9

	1887 Surbiton LSWR	1887 Leatherhead LSWR	1887 Putney LSWR	1887 Richmond LSWR	1887 Broxbourne GER	1887 Woodford GER	1887 Ilford GER
Trains Leaving							
4am-5.30am			1				1
5.31 am- 6.30am			1	1		1	1
6.31 am-7.30 am			2	1		2	3
7.31 am-8.30 am	5	1	7	4	1	6	6
8.31am- 9.30am	7	2	9	8	3	6	6
9.31am- 10.30am	6	1	9	5	2	3	4
Total	18	4	29	19	6	18	21

Table 6.6: Number of ‘Rush Hour’ Trains at Selected Suburban stations in 1880s & 1890s.⁴⁶⁰

By the 1880s and 1890s, it was evident that the majority of destinations had experienced a significant increase in their commuting population. The demand from the favoured middle-class residential locations of Putney, Richmond, Bickley, Norwood and Woodford was clear. It was also beginning to incorporate a wider section of the middle class with the ‘rush-hour’ becoming slightly earlier, starting from 7.30a.m. Earlier trains were also timetabled, but only from a few destinations. At the other end of the temporal spectrum - some suburban locations; Chislehurst,

⁴⁶⁰ Compiled from individual railway company timetables held at the National Archives.

Surbiton, Sutton, Leatherhead and Broxbourne - remained more exclusive and no early trains featured on their timetables.

	1905 Bickley LCDR	1905 Chislehurst LCDR	1905 Blackheath LCDR	1905 Norwood LBSCR	1905 Brighton LBSCR	1905 Sutton LBSCR	
Trains Leaving							
3am-5.30am	1		3	2			
5.31 am- 6.30am	1		1	3	1		
6.31 am-7.30 am	4	1	1	4	1	1	
7.31 am-8.30 am	6	2	4	6	1	2	
8.31am- 9.30am	5	2	6	7	4	4	
9.31am- 10.30am	4	2	4	5	4	3	
Total	21	7	19	27	11	10	
	1907 Surbiton LSWR	1907 Leatherhead LSWR	1907 Putney LSWR	1907 Richmond LSWR	1907 Broxbourne GER	1907 Woodford GER	1907 Ilford GER
Trains Leaving							
3am-5.30am			3	2		1	6
5.31 am- 6.30am			4	2		1	4
6.31 am-7.30 am	1	1	3	1		3	8
7.31 am-8.30 am	6	2	6	5	2	6	12
8.31am- 9.30am	7	3	7	7	2	6	12
9.31am- 10.30am	6	2	7	5	3	4	7
Total	20	8	30	22	7	21	49

Table 6.7: Number of 'Rush Hour' Trains at Selected Suburban stations in 1900s. ⁴⁶¹

The 1900s saw, finally, the emergence of working-class commuting, represented by a significant number of early trains at certain stations. It was largely restricted to destinations within a short distance from central London; Blackheath, Norwood, Putney and Ilford in this sample. The greatest number of services continued to be in the 'rush-hour' period between 7.30a.m and 9.30a.m and the middle-class commuter market remained the most important for the railway companies. Services after 9.30a.m declined in relative importance, but were still substantial in number and of particular importance for the most salubrious suburban destinations. The inter-relationship

⁴⁶¹ Compiled from individual railway company timetables held at the National Archives.

between the suburbs and the railways is covered in the next chapter, but it was clear that a commuter's experience varied according to both where one lived and when one travelled to work. Within their financial means, the commuter could, by the Edwardian era, be selective about the nature of their railway commute.

Indeed, the growth of alternative public transport options enabled commuters to also be selective about their mode of transport for journey to work. Another report presented to the 1905 Royal Commission described some typical journeys.

Typical London Journeys - 1905						
Origin	Destination	Distance	Time	Av Speed	Fare	Method of Transport
		Miles	Minutes	M.p.h	d	
Clapham Common	Bank	6.25	40.75	9.2	4.5	Tram/Underground (City & South London Rlwy)
Hammersmith	Bank	8.27	51.75	9.58	3	Tram/District Railway
East Ham	Fenchurch St	8.25	51.5	9.6	4.5	Tram/ Rail
Norbury	Victoria	9.5	54.5	10.5	6	Tram / Rail
Ealing Common	Mansion House	11.5	72.5	9.52	4.5	Tram/District Railway
Enfield	Liverpool Street	11.5	53	12	8	Walk/Rail
Carshalton	London Bridge	13.5	49	16.5	9	Walk/Rail

Table 6.8: Typical London Commuter Journeys in 1905.⁴⁶²

The chosen journeys illustrated that railway travel was more expensive but also significantly faster than the alternative forms of transport. In the typical journeys cited by the Royal Commission the train element of the commute from Carshalton to London Bridge took 30 minutes to cover 12.5 miles at an impressive average speed of 25 mph. The commuter's experience was dictated by factors familiar to their modern-day equivalent; how much they were willing or able to pay for their fare and how long they were prepared to spend each working day on their commute. For

⁴⁶² 1905 Royal Commission, Volume III, Appendix 47, Table 18.

Victorian and Edwardian working men or women this was a finely balanced equation, with transport costs being a significant element of the family budget. The 1904 Select Commission noted that as a result of ‘the value these classes attach to a slight saving in travelling expenses, passengers will wait and struggle for a place on a tramcar at workmen’s fares, while a car at ordinary fares is allowed to go practically empty, though the difference is only 1/2d for the journey’⁴⁶³. Even for middle-class workers, the choice was dictated by their position on the career ladder. Herbert de Fraine recalled in his autobiography⁴⁶⁴ of life as a clerk in the Bank of England, that on joining in 1886 his level of pay restricted him to living in digs in lower middle-class neighbourhoods; ‘my rooms were usually in little villas in a row, let by middle-aged couples’⁴⁶⁵. Similarly, E L Cheese, a long serving clerk at the private bank, J Henry Schroder, recalled that on his appointment in 1887 that his commencing salary ‘although far from being a princely salary and small even for those days, it would, at any rate, buy my bus fares to and from the office’⁴⁶⁶. Later in life, they would both set up home in the suburbs and journey to work by train. In the Edwardian period, the ability to commute was still constrained by financial exigencies for some middle-class workers as well as many of the working class. The trend was, nevertheless, clear that the realisation of life in the suburbs was becoming increasingly achievable for a wider section of society.

Yet at the opposite end of the social spectrum, the attraction of suburbia had been spoilt by this increased accessibility. In the words of the aspirational Edwardian magazine, *Where to Live Round London*, ‘the word ‘suburb’ is one of those words which have had an evil fate. In its original meaning it stood for an altogether pleasant thing, a tract of land which lay on the boundary of the city, and necessarily adjoined the unbuilt-on country; a place of residence which was in close touch with the busy town on one hand, and with trees, fields and the open air on the other. Now, observe how, in our country at least, the word has ceased to bear this fine signification. Like

⁴⁶³ 1904 Select Commission on Workmen’s Trains. p.18.

⁴⁶⁴ H. G. de Fraine, *Servant of this House* (London: Constable & Company, 1960).

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.131.

⁴⁶⁶ Transcript of interview with E. L. Cheese by R. Alford on 6 May 1954, held at Schroders & Co archives.

many other changes good and bad, this change was largely the work of the nineteenth century. In the enormous expansion of London and the large cities, the original suburbs became in turn surrounded by suburbs of suburbs, till those of fifty years ago are now buried deep within the outer ranges of the city itself⁴⁶⁷. It lamented that ‘possessing no local spirit, equally remote from the humming life of the city's heart, and from the ever- receding country, the word 'suburb' came to stand for a depressing, monotonous thing, a huddle of congested streets and unregulated development in which natural beauty was sacrificed to commercial necessity’. For the upper echelons of the middle class, living in the London suburbs was not to be coveted, but to be looked down upon.

The solution offered to the readers of *Where to Live Round London* was to live further out of London, as ‘the *new* suburbs of London, the *true* suburbs, must fulfil two conditions - *they must be in the unspoilt country and they must be near London*⁴⁶⁸. Living in the Home Counties was possible in the Edwardian era because ‘the improvement of the suburban traffic on the railways brings the unspoilt woodlands of north-west Middlesex, Essex, Herts, Bucks, Surrey and Kent within the magic circle of a half-hour's ride⁴⁶⁹. For all the attractions of this *rus in urbe* lifestyle, there were pitfalls as Annie Thomas’ humorous account, *The Modern Housewife or How We Live Now*, illustrated. At the outset Annie described her situation as a newly married woman and the ‘mistress of a small prettily-appointed villa, standing symmetrically in the middle of its own grounds, about an hour south of London⁴⁷⁰. As her choice of words indicated, for the commuter, distance was measured in terms of time not miles. Her husband, ‘a young partner in an old firm, had to go up to his duty by the nine o'clock train⁴⁷¹. Initially everything appeared cleaner and healthier ‘all the poultry looked plumper, all the fish glittered more freshly, than they had ever glittered in London⁴⁷². The appearance of a rural idyll proved to be deceptive; food was more

⁴⁶⁷ B. Prescott Row, *Where to Live Around London* (London: The Homeland Association, 1911).

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ A. Thomas, *The Modern Housewife, or How We Live Now* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, 1883), p.1.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p.5.

expensive than in London, the servants were of inferior quality and visitors were infrequent. The expense of keeping up appearances in the countryside proved ruinous and the family decided to return to London. In their calculations, they concluded that they could afford to live in 'Kensington, St John's Wood or Bayswater ... as we must take off the railway season-ticket from the ground rent'⁴⁷³. They anticipated that 'we shall have plenty of more congenial company than we get now, and have it at less expense'⁴⁷⁴. This, of course, proved not to be the case and the book concluded by reflecting on the perils of living beyond one's means to maintain a certain social status. Fashion and snobbery played an important part in the decision-making process of the wealthiest sections of the middle class. Depending on the outcome of the choice between the Home Counties or central London, it also resulted in very different commuting experiences.

The mature market for railway commuting catered for almost all sections of society. However, this did not mean that it was experienced in the same way. There was a vast difference between the comfort of first-class travel at a time of the commuter's convenience and the unpleasant crush of workmen's trains at the time of the railway companies' convenience. This segregation along class lines was strongly upheld by the railway companies, who believed that abandoning the principle of differentiating fares by time would undermine their appeal to the middle-class commuter. For this social group, the Edwardian suburban network allowed the possibility of choice in their journey to work. Certain suburban locations, particularly those on a main line or at junction points within the railway network, had a comprehensive suburban service. Others, along branch lines, were less well-served, which made them backwaters or exclusive and desirable. The expansion of the railway network into the Home Counties enabled a new form of longer-distance railway commuting to become established. Yet, paradoxically, for those at the top of the social hierarchy, the improved suburban railway diluted the appeal of suburbia and the option not to commute often proved to be the most attractive alternative. The experience of railway

⁴⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.82.

commuting was more than the quality of the service itself. It was bound up with social and cultural influences on and the expectations of the commuters themselves. This inter-relationship between the railway, the suburbs and the commuter is explored further in the next chapter.

Concluding Comments

This chapter set out to explore the everyday experience of railway commuting. As an act of daily mobility, it differed in significant ways from going on a single railway journey. Lateness and discomfort could be endured for a special or irregular railway trip, but were more of a burden if they had to be borne on a frequent basis. This was one of the underlying reasons why railway commuting took much longer to become established than railway travel. At the outset of railway commuting, suburban train services were inferior in quality and comfort to the main line services, whilst the accident record in general was worryingly high for the regular traveller. Suburban trains were also limited in numbers, particularly during the ‘rush hour’, which restricted their use to the wealthy few. These were significant factors that shaped the residential patterns observed in chapter four in the early and mid-Victorian periods, where the slow spread of commuters out into London’s suburbs was led by the wealthier occupational groups (albeit that many within these groups chose to live in the salubrious districts of central London).

The logistical mastery of ‘rush hour’ travel by the railway companies transformed the possibilities of railway commuting from the 1870s. Even though journey times did not diminish substantially, more suburban destinations could be reached as the network expanded. The everyday experience of travel by railway became more bearable as new infrastructure in the form of improved station accommodation, trains and track upgraded the suburban railway service. Fare levels remained stable and additional ‘rush hour’ services were laid on. Complaints about the quality of service did continue, but the alarm over early commuting had given way to grumbling about value for money and being taken for granted by large and remote corporations. The

commuting experience had become a routine one and, arguably, this was a fundamental prerequisite for London's suburban expansion in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The perception among the travelling public, as the railway companies bemoaned, was that 'it is just as comfortable a thing to travel at a penny a mile as to travel at twopence or threepence a mile in the second or first class'⁴⁷⁵. Unsurprisingly the growth of the suburban market was driven not by an increase in first and second class fares, but by third class travel. The residential patterns described in chapters three and four were testimony to the enthusiastic embrace of railway commuting across the full range of the middle classes. For the working classes, the commuting experience was more challenging. They suffered from geographical limitations on available routes, temporal restrictions and the poorest quality rolling stock. The movement of the working class into the suburbs prior to the First World War was undoubtedly held back by their commuting experience.

If working-class commuting was subordinated to the interests of the middle-class commuter, there was a different challenge for the wealthiest section of the commuter market. The quality of their commuting experience improved in absolute terms, but the relative differentiation to other classes diminished. To return to the debate between Ward and Cannadine on the nature of London's suburban development referred to in earlier chapters, the decline in the exclusiveness of the commuting experience played a part in their migration towards London's periphery or their rejection of suburbia altogether. The commuting experience across all sections of society in this period helped shape the nature and character of London's suburbs in an enduring way. This relationship between the commuter, the railway companies and suburban development is the subject of further examination in the next chapter.

⁴⁷⁵ South Eastern Railway shareholders meeting, 28 January 1886 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/425).

Chapter Seven – The Railways and the Suburbs



Figure 7.1: Camille Pissarro, Lordship Lane station, Dulwich, 1871.⁴⁷⁶

Camille Pissarro's painting of a suburban train leaving Lordship Lane station for London captured the idealised image of the relationship between the railway, the commuter and the suburbs. Suburbs were a haven of peace and tranquillity, still part of the countryside, but connected to the capital by the suburban railway network. For the commuter, the suburbs represented the best of both worlds; the urban and the rural. This chapter examines the reality of this image. It considers the extent that commuting was a driver of suburban development. This chapter, therefore, explores the ways in which railway commuting and commuters shaped the actions of the four principal agents of suburban development; the railway companies, landowners, property developers, the local communities and their governing bodies. In summary, it seeks to answer the question of whether the availability of a viable commuting service was the significant factor in enabling and facilitating suburban development.

⁴⁷⁶ Image retrieved on 11 November 2018 from <http://www.wikiart.org/en/camille-pissarro/lordship-lane-station-dulwich-1871>.

By placing the emphasis on the activity and influence of commuting, it departs from the more traditional accounts of suburbia. As outlined in chapter two, the study of suburbia has become an established field of historical research following Dyos' pioneering work on Camberwell in the 1960s. Later studies of individual suburbs have tended to follow its format of a chronological account of a defined area. The suburb has been viewed as a residential domain distinct and separate from the wider city, rather than the product of a relationship of mobility between the two in the form of commuting. Similarly histories of the railways have downplayed their impact on suburban development. Kellett concluded that 'the railway companies' influence in the nineteenth century was important at the margin, rather than paramount'. Further, he noted that 'the outcome of the railways' incapacity to reap corporate benefit from anything except the traffic a line generated was to give them a neutral, passive role in the outward spread of Victorian cities'.⁴⁷⁷ This chapter argues that this assessment understates the influence of the railways on suburban development, particularly in the outer suburbs. The provision of actual or potential mobility in the form of commuting was a powerful driver of change.

At a fundamental level, the suburbs attracted residents who wished to escape the city but needed to work there. Landowners and house builders looked to satisfy this demand by releasing and then developing land close to railway stations. Suburban communities grew up around these points of access to London; a *raison d'être* that shaped their character and governance. Ironically, as seen in previous chapters, the railway companies were ambivalent in their support and promotion of their suburban networks, but also had particular views on the nature of railway commuting. As the gatekeepers of the means of suburban mobility, the railway companies performed more than 'the classic role of intermediary between the supply and demand forces in the land market'⁴⁷⁸ ascribed to them by Kellett. This chapter argues it was the tension

⁴⁷⁷ J. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, p.405.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

between the railway companies and the other agents of suburban development that defined its path.

One of the obstacles to this line of enquiry has been a lack of historical sources as encountered in the previous chapter on the commuting experience. As Thompson noted research on suburbia ‘has concentrated on analysing the process of constructing the built environment and on explaining in detail why development followed particular layout patterns and builders put up particular kinds and values of houses in specific places’⁴⁷⁹. He lamented that the paucity of material made it difficult to balance this ‘with an equally intensive study of the previous backgrounds, attitudes and aspirations of the new inhabitants’⁴⁸⁰. It is undeniable that suburban commuters are an elusive group to study, though this seems an unduly pessimistic assessment of the limits of historical research. This chapter draws upon direct sources, both in the limited form of personal accounts and the more voluminous records found in local and national newspapers. More tangentially, it looks at contemporary literature, local community and authority records, parliamentary investigations and the activities of the railway companies to augment the written evidence. In addition quantitative methods are employed to analyse Census data and historical maps to complete the picture of suburban commuting. If the extent of personal evidence of Victorian and Edwardian commuters was limited, the geographical area of London’s suburbs was vast. This chapter has limited itself to the consideration of the outer suburbs of London, as these owed their existence most clearly to the arrival of the railway. General themes are explored at the London wide level, with greater detail provided by examples from the North-West Kent region.

The latter has been selected as it encompassed an area on the periphery of London, which saw both the development of an extensive railway network and rapid suburban expansion. The area of North West Kent has been defined as being bounded by the topographical features of the Thames to the north and the North Downs to the south

⁴⁷⁹ F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.15.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

along with the London suburbs of Lewisham and Greenwich to the north-west and the Kentish town of Dartford to the north-east, and the periphery of metropolitan London in the west (see figure 7.2 below). Its primary focus is on a narrower band of towns and villages still just outside the continuous metropolitan area in the Edwardian era, in particular Beckenham, Bromley, Chislehurst, Orpington, Sidcup, Bexley and Bexleyheath. As contributors to the University of Kent oral history project recalled, they were viewed as desirable middle-class locations. Rose Trinder, born in New Cross, recounted how a person’s address spoke volumes about their social standing. ‘If you went ...along to Lewisham, or Bromley ... you were, oh! really sociably somebody. You never did vulgar things like sing in the street ...the districts kept themselves socially apart’⁴⁸¹. The railways were a key factor in maintaining this segregation and this chapter considers how their role and relationship with the suburban communities evolved through the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

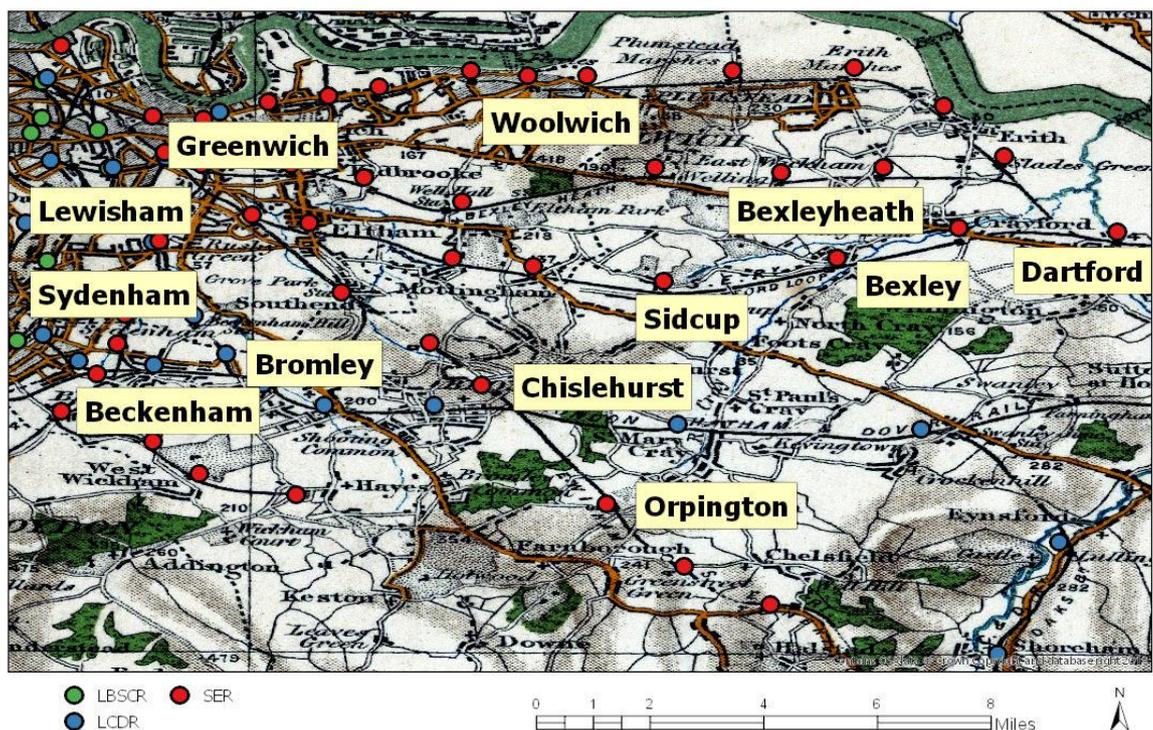


Figure 7.2: North West Kent area showing railway lines and stations c.1903.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ R. Trinder, quoted in M. Winstanley, *Life in Kent at the Turn of the Century* (Folkestone: Dawson & co, 1978), p.163.

⁴⁸² Detail of 1903 Ordnance Survey for Kent, downloaded from https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/sheet/new_series_revised_medium/sheet_20_and_24 on 1 December 2019 annotated via GIS with railway stations as at 1900.

The North West Kent area was also the battleground for a bitter rivalry between two major railway companies - the South Eastern Railway (SER) and the London, Chatham and Dover Railway (LCDR) - and at the edge of regional influence of a third company, the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR). (Their stations in the area are marked in red, blue and green respectively on the map). It offers the opportunity to examine differing approaches adopted by these railway companies to the growth of suburban commuting.

Three broad phases in the evolution of the relationship between commuting and the suburbs can be distinguished. The initial construction of the suburban railway network made commuting a reality. As parliamentary prohibition forced them to step aside from building and then selling suburban residences, railway companies were unable to participate in the physical development of suburbia. This role fell to a host of speculative builders, who offered new homes to those who wished to live in a railway suburb. Despite the potential demand for the suburban lifestyle, the fare and service levels set by the railway companies were to be significant financial and logistical factors in restricting the scope of commuting and the influence of the commuter. As commuting became accessible to a wider section of society, suburban communities expanded in size and began to develop their own voice. In this second phase the local communities came to represent the interests of the commuter and assert their influence in dealings with the established rural elite and the railway companies themselves. The third and final phase saw a challenge to the character of these outer suburbs from the promotion of a better service for the working classes and the emergence of new forms of transport. The commuter has been characterised as living a dormitory existence in the outer suburbs; this chapter suggests that their influence was more complex and wide-ranging than implied by this depiction.

The Arrival of the Suburban Commuter – Unwanted and Unexpected

Pissarro's tranquil scene belied the fact that the arrival of the railway into London's hinterland was not welcomed by all. The rapid growth of its suburbs upset the longstanding rhythms of life in the small villages and towns of the Home Counties. James Thorne's monumental survey of 1876 contained 'an account of every town and village and of all places of interest, within a circle of twenty miles round London'⁴⁸³. Throughout this account he lamented their transformation following the intrusion of the modern age. Lewisham 'was only a few years ago a pleasant rural district, but it has fallen prey to the builder and become much like any other suburban village'⁴⁸⁴. Similarly Bickley, a 'picturesque' village near Bromley, 'is a good deal changed by building operations the inevitable result of railway facilities'⁴⁸⁵. For Ruskin the new suburbs represented another aspect of his general antipathy towards the changes in Victorian society; 'what a pestilence of them, and an unseemly plague of builders' work - as if the bricks of Egypt had multiplied like its lice, and alighted like its locusts - has fallen on the suburbs of loathsome London'⁴⁸⁶.

Many contemporary writers voiced similar concerns and bemoaned the outcome. The suburbanite lacked the practical skills of the working man or the finer qualities of the rural and urban elite. In Ruskin's words, 'the men can indeed write, and cast accounts, and go into town every day to get their living by doing so; the women and children can perhaps read story-books, dance in a vulgar manner, and play on the piano with dull dexterities for exhibition; but not a member of the whole family can, in general, cook, sweep, knock in a nail, drive a stake, or spin a thread. They are still less capable of finer work. They know nothing of painting, sculpture, architecture; of science'⁴⁸⁷. The arrival of the middle-class railway commuter represented a significant break with

⁴⁸³ J. Thorne, *Handbook to the Environs of London* (London: John Murray, 1876), accessed on 20 July 2020, via <https://archive.org/details/handbooktoenvir04thorgoogwww.archive.org.uk>.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*, Part 2, p.417.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid*, Part 1, p.45.

⁴⁸⁶ J. Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera, Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain, No. XXIX*, dated 2 April 1873 (Orpington, George Allen, 1873), accessed 26 August 2020, via <http://www.pseudopodium.org>.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

the past. He (and commuters were overwhelmingly male) was portrayed as a newcomer, a socially inferior interloper, but still a challenge to the established order.

Yet, at the outset of the railway era, railway companies did not envisage the impact their planned routes would make on suburban development. As covered in chapter four on the infrastructure of commuting, the initial establishment of commuting was a by-product of the wider business strategies of the major railway companies. Railway companies enjoyed the powers of compulsory purchase to acquire land, but they were prevented from becoming long term landowners. The Land Clauses Consolidation Act of 1845 and Railway Clauses Consolidation Act of 1845 had established the principle that the railway companies had to sell off any excess land held within ten years after the completion of the construction phase. This denied them the opportunity to benefit from the appreciation in land values arising from their investment. The sole exception to this legal prohibition was the Metropolitan Railway Company, which as a local rather than a national company, was, uniquely, able to sidestep this restriction. The 1898 Metropolitan Railway Act allowed it to ‘improve, develop and lay out for building any of its lands, included those acquired thereafter’⁴⁸⁸. The result was the beginning of ‘Metroland’ as the Metropolitan was able to develop the Willesden Park and Wembley Park estates before the First World War. If this exemption had been widely available, London’s suburban development might have followed a different path.

Instead the railway companies were forced to stand aside and the result was an obvious opportunity for local landowners for gain financially, both from the sale of some of their land to the railway companies at inflated prices under the compulsory purchase scheme and subsequently from developing the remaining portion of their land for residential housing. As a contemporary commentator wrote ‘if the first railway engine had been laden and fed funnel-wise, with guineas, and if the wheels had been constructed with an apparatus for whirling the gold by centrifugal action over the land

⁴⁸⁸ A. A. Jackson, *London’s Metroland*, p. 11.

it traversed we should have an allegory in action which would correctly describe the working of the railway system'⁴⁸⁹. The early suburban routes were the result of the combination of the railway companies' aim to construct main line routes from London to other urban centres and the attitude of local landowners towards this new opportunity.

This can be seen played out in the Railways Bills presented to Parliament for any proposed new railway line. Following the codes of practice established for canal company schemes, Parliament required extensive preliminary information from railway companies. These included detailed plans of the route of any proposed line accompanied by a 'book of reference' of the properties and their owners affected by the line, a subscription list of potential financial backers and an estimate of its cost by the railway company's surveyor. The railway company was obliged to invest significant time and effort to determine whether a route was viable, both financially and operationally, which involved garnering support from local landowners and communities along the proposed route. This local support was important as the putative private Bill then faced scrutiny by Parliamentary Committees in both Houses. They assessed the deposited materials for the financial soundness of the scheme and whether it was in the public's interest or at least the interests of local landowners.

To follow the path of least resistance, outside of inner London, suburban routes often avoided existing settlements for reasons of local opposition or cost, preferring to locate their stations in green field sites. The choice of Surbiton instead of Kingston by the LSWR on its line to Southampton and the unwillingness of the Crown to allow the SER to build across Greenwich Park, being notable examples of the former. In North West Kent, the situation of Bromley, Orpington, Sevenoaks and Chislehurst stations on the outskirts of these towns and villages were some of the numerous examples of the latter. Another feature of the Parliamentary process was that it became the battleground for rival railway companies. Issues and objections could be raised at the

⁴⁸⁹ H. Davies, *The Way Out*, (1861), p.32 quoted in J. Kellett, *The Impact of railways on Victorian Cities*, p.391.

Committee stage and the often contested parliamentary passage of the companies' Bills absorbed much of the attention of the companies' management during the formative years of the railway network. These constraints faced by the railway companies resulted in a spatial configuration of the early suburban railway network that was not primarily designed in the interests of the commuter.

North West Kent witnessed an extreme example of the competing influences on the design of its suburban network as a result of the bitter rivalry between the two dominant railway companies in the region; the SER and the LCDR. This owed its origins to the fact that Kent's railway network got off to an inauspicious start. There was an obvious destination in Dover for the initial main line, but as there was little existing trade, funding for Kent's railway was in short supply. The SER had to heavily compromise on its route to the coast. Instead of following the old Roman road route through Rochester and Canterbury to Dover, it chose the longer, but flatter line through the Weald of Kent from Tonbridge to Ashford to the ports of Folkestone and Dover. This route had the additional cost saving, but with it came the strategic inconvenience of using the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway's (LBSCR) Brighton line to connect it to London via a junction at Redhill. Railway historian O S Nock summed up the SER's predicament; 'the strategic and continental interests at Dover were obvious, but there was no flourishing trade waiting to be picked up. ... There were no funds available for the building of a London terminus in the grand style of Euston, Paddington, or even of Kings Cross; and the parsimony thus engendered led the South Eastern into a quagmire from which it did not climb out for nearly seventy years!'⁴⁹⁰. The SER put a more positive spin on its business prospects. At its inaugural meeting, its management claimed that 'one of the principal advantages of the South-Eastern line is, its situation at nearly equal distance from the Thames and the British Channel: thus forming a main trunk, from which branches may be extended to almost all places of importance, not only in Kent, but also in East Sussex'⁴⁹¹. The

⁴⁹⁰ O. Nock, *The South Eastern and Chatham Railway* (London: Ian Allan Ltd, 1961), p.2.

⁴⁹¹ South Eastern Railway First Shareholder Meeting, 10 November 1836 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/424).

effect is to place in the hands of a company, whose capital is only two millions, the shortest route by Dover to the continent'⁴⁹⁴. It created a rivalry between the two companies over Kent's railway system and in particular the lucrative cross-channel trade. The larger SER believed that financial necessity would eventually force the smaller LCDR to agree to a merger or takeover. Despite the overt competition of the SER the LCDR continued as an independent and antagonistic concern until 1899, when financial exhaustion on both sides forced them into a working union. Bagwell attributed this long-running feud to three factors; 'partly the historical factors at the time of their promotion and early development, partly in the conflicting personalities of the two ...chairmen of the two concerns and partly in Parliament's reluctance to sanction closer union'⁴⁹⁵. Of these the attitude of the two dominant chairmen, Sir Edward Watkin of the SER and James S Forbes of the LCDR appeared to be biggest obstacle to any cessation of hostilities. The result was excessive and duplicitous railway building across Kent in an effort to defend their own territories or undermine their rival's.

For the North West Kent area, the most significant result of the challenge of the LCDR was the construction by the SER of a more direct line from London to Dover via Orpington in 1868, tunnelling through the North Downs to Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and then the coast (the strategic logic of the new route can be seen from figure 7.4 below). It was one of a number of major infrastructure projects during a period of intensive rivalry between the two companies. The SER opened its two London termini at Charing Cross (1864) and Cannon Street (1866). The LCDR did the same at Victoria (1862) and Blackfriars (1864), primarily to allow its long-distance and continental passengers access to the heart of London. As a by-product new suburban railway stations were created along these main line routes into London.

⁴⁹⁴ *Bromley Record*, June 1858, p.3.

⁴⁹⁵ P. Bagwell, "The Rivalry and Working Union of South Eastern and London, Chatham & Dover". p.65.

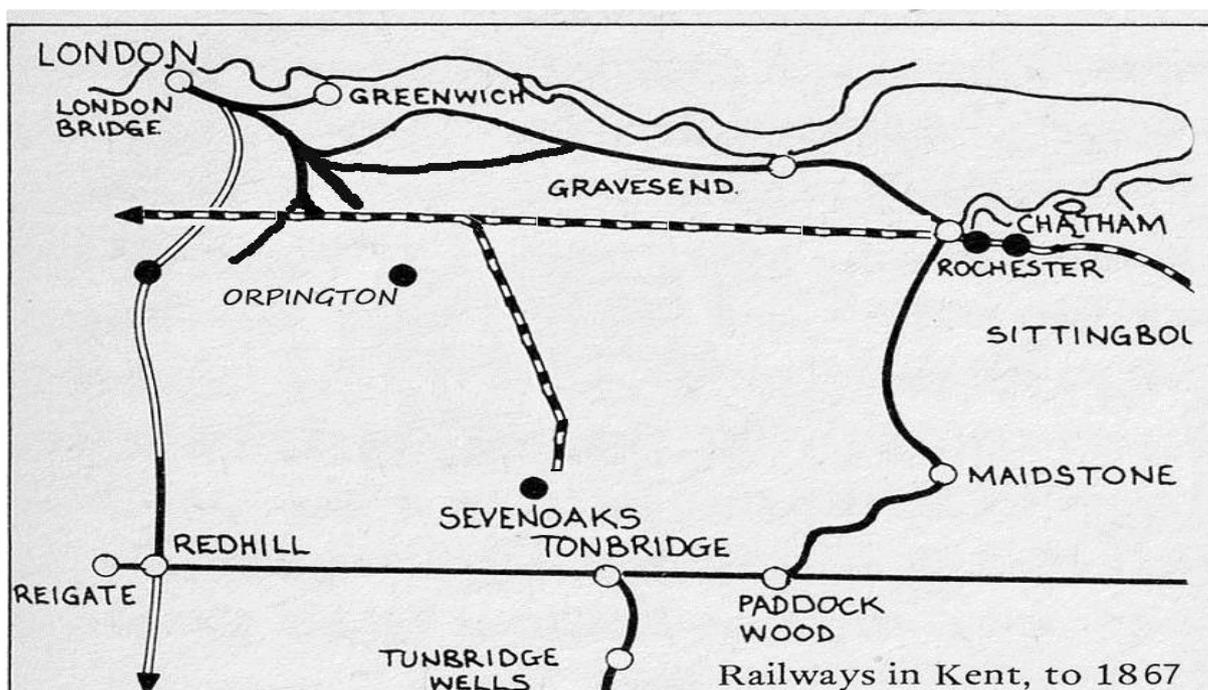


Figure 7.4: The North West Kent railway network, immediately prior to the opening of the SER line to Tonbridge.⁴⁹⁶

The SER line from London Bridge to Tonbridge ran through Lewisham and Grove Park and resulted in new stations in 1868 at Chislehurst, Orpington and Sevenoaks, while the LCDR's route ran from Victoria and the City via Sydenham and Beckenham on to Rochester and the coast and created new stations in 1858 at Shortlands, Bromley South and Bickley. In a retaliatory move the SER constructed lines from Lewisham to Croydon via Catford and Beckenham in 1865 and the Dartford loop line, via Bexley and Sidcup, completed in 1866. In this competitive environment the legal process for obtaining Parliamentary approval for a new line described above, and in particular the opportunity for objections to be made in the Select Committees, was used to thwart each other's own plans.

A proposed route from Lewisham to Farnborough (near Bromley) in the late 1850s illustrated the machinations at work in this process. There were three interested parties; the local landowners, the SER and the Crystal Palace Railway Company

⁴⁹⁶ Map drawn by M Batten of Bromley Borough Local History Society.

(CPRC). The landowners put forward the initial Bill to Parliament, but it was opposed by the SER, who were described by the *Bromley Record* as acting as a ‘dog in the manger’⁴⁹⁷. The landowners were successful, but then agreed to step aside in favour of the SER in carrying out the work. The SER did not do so due to other competing commitments, so the CPRC put forward a new Bill, despite the SER’s opposition. When this was approved by Parliament the CPRC looked to landowners for financial assistance, ‘but the latter at this time seem to have been less than zealous in this matter’⁴⁹⁸. Without support, the CPRC instead agreed an arrangement with the East-Kent Railway to link Crystal Palace to Beckenham and Bromley. The line to Farnborough was never built, the local landowners missed out on their anticipated financial windfall and the SER’s miscalculations allowed their rival to establish a territorial foothold.

North West Kent’s suburban network of the 1850s and 1860s was the result of this interplay between railway company rivalry, parliamentary manoeuvring and local petitioning. The outcome was far from a rational and planned one with numerous suburban destinations served by both companies; for example Bromley South (LCDR) and Bromley North (SER), Catford (LCDR) and Catford Bridge (SER) and Beckenham Junction (LCDR) and New Beckenham (SER). The final configuration of the suburban network with its overlapping and haphazard pattern is shown below (figure 7.5).

⁴⁹⁷ *Bromley Record*, May 1859, p.93.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

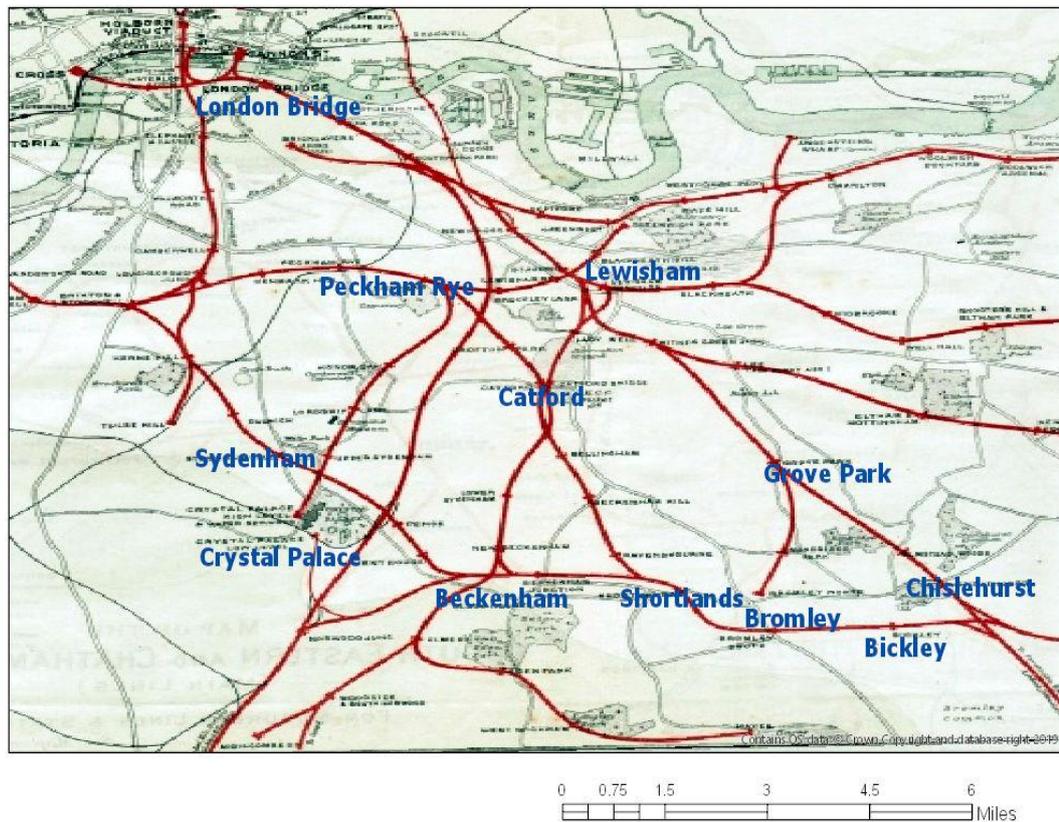


Figure 7.5: The South Eastern and Chatham Railway suburban network c.1920.⁴⁹⁹

The example of North West Kent illustrates that the initial layout of the suburban network was the product of various competing factors. There was the requirement for a main line service, which often followed a route that by-passed local towns for reasons of cost and efficient operation. Suburban stations along its route were often green field sites (Shortlands, Bickley, Chislehurst and Grove Park in this example). Suburban routes were usually constructed as loops from these main lines. This led to certain locations becoming key junctions in the network (Beckenham, Peckham Rye and Lewisham) and they benefited from a greater range of railway services. On the other hand, long-standing settlements could find themselves downgraded or completely ignored in the resulting network (Bromley and Eltham). Finally the prospect of competition from a rival company could either result in multiple stations

⁴⁹⁹ Annotated map of South Eastern & Chatham Railway network, provided by the South Eastern & Chatham Railway Society.

and choice of service (Catford and Crystal Palace) or relegation to a stop on a branch line constructed to thwart a rival's potential plans (Hayes and Sidcup). This framework and the resultant inequalities in commuting opportunities were to inevitably shape suburban development both in North West Kent and around London's wider hinterland.

The Arrival of the Suburban Commuter – Early Provisions

Despite the focus on wider strategic goals, the railway companies did encourage use of their suburban networks by offering enticements to the potential commuter. The practice of issuing season tickets at a discount to the sum of the individual journey costs was introduced. It was an advantageous arrangement for both parties. The commuter received a financial reduction both for himself and his family as well. In return the railway company received an ongoing revenue source and an ever expanding captive market of railway users. The *Railway Magazine* described the arrangement as similar to that of a brewer who 'lets his 'tied house' at a rent below market value, because of the trade in beer, etc., resulting from the business of the 'tied house''⁵⁰⁰. The logic was that 'the first season ticket holder of a household is usually the *pater familias*, and, having decided to live in the country, the removal of the family to the chosen retreat means the local baker, butcher, grocer, coal merchant, will have an additional customer, and that the goods required by the season ticket holder's household will need to be conveyed over the railway, whilst purchases made in London or in other places also will have to be consigned by the railway. Then the wife and family of the season ticket holder will frequently have to 'run up to town', and their town friends will as frequently make visits to the country – all meaning grist to the railway'⁵⁰¹.

The self-interest of the railway companies in this arrangement was made clear by the SER's chairman. Watkin told his shareholders that 'you should look at another

⁵⁰⁰ *Railway Magazine*, April 1909, p.300.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid*, pp.300-301.

element beyond the results of the day, and that is permanence. If a man goes down your Railway and builds a house, the house remains. It is a perpetual source of traffic, and if you extend that sort of arrangement largely you make villages grow into towns, and towns spread out with population and with manufactures. Therefore look at it as sowing the seeds of permanent and enduring income'⁵⁰². Of course, only those with a steady income and sufficient surplus monies to finance the initial outlay could afford to take up this offer of a season ticket. To reinforce the class distinction, it was initially only offered on first and second class tickets. The season ticket concept was an offer aimed squarely at the upper echelons of the middle class.

This early link between railway commuting and suburbia as a middle-class space was made explicit in newspaper advertisements placed by the railway companies to promote usage of their new suburban lines. The approach tapped into the desire for a healthy and attractive environment for a new home. The *Illustrated London News* reported on a new line to Caterham in Surrey that 'from the salubrity of the air and the undulating character of the country through which the railway passes, it is thought that the locality will be much sought after for villa residences'⁵⁰³. Further 'the London, Brighton and South Coast and the South-Eastern Railway Companies are to ... grant season-tickets to residents on the line at a cheap rate for ten years, with a view to encourage building on the railway'⁵⁰⁴. The LSWR adopted a slightly different approach to the same end on their Windsor line. They were 'prepared to arrange terms for the issue, at a reduced rate and a given number of years of Residential Tickets (1st and 2nd class) with persons erecting twenty houses or more ...for the use of the occupiers of such houses and their families'⁵⁰⁵. This was, however, the limit of the direct incentives offered by the railway companies to encourage suburban commuting.

⁵⁰² South Eastern Railway General Half Year Meeting, 23 February 1871 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/425).

⁵⁰³ *Illustrated London News*, 16 August 1856, accessed 7 June 2020, via <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 10 April 1852, accessed 7 June 2020, via <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>.

They also did not see the need to promote their suburban services. Their advertising efforts in national and local newspapers were focused on excursion trips to the seaside, places of interest or major race meetings. In contrast railway companies offered little beyond the publication of time-tables and small newspaper adverts of season ticket arrangements relating to their suburban network. New services on suburban lines went largely unheralded, as did train and station improvements, in the national press. It was a similar story at the local level. As two examples among many, the *Croydon Chronicle and East Surrey Advertiser* included adverts by the LBSCR for excursion fares to Brighton, while the *Action Gazette* ran adverts for the GWR excursions to Bath and the West Country⁵⁰⁶. Neither made mention of their local lines. Only the LSWR took a more active and imaginative stance. They advertised in *The Times* additional evening services to the suburbs ‘for the accommodation of residents on the Richmond line going to places of entertainment in London’⁵⁰⁷. An explanation for the lack of a direct focus on the suburban market, has been offered by Shin⁵⁰⁸ in his research on railway advertising. He argued that there was a business culture that emphasised achieving returns for shareholders, which led to a focus on cost control and the avoidance of any expenditure without a directly measurable financial return. This combined with the railway companies’ view that commuting was not for the mass market and so there was no need for wider promotion.

This reluctance fitted with the picture of the early railway commuting experience described in the previous chapter. Commuting was difficult and the preserve of those of sufficient seniority to be able to arrive last into the office. The first commuters sought to emulate the lifestyle of the rural gentry, rather than that of a distinctively suburban existence. Joshua Bates, one of the partners in Barings in the City commented in his diary on the desire of a fellow partner, Russell Sturgis, to buy a large property at Walton on Thames in 1856. He felt that ‘it would be a delightful

⁵⁰⁶ *Croydon Chronicle and East Surrey Advertiser* and *Acton Gazette*, accessed 25 September 2019, from <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>.

⁵⁰⁷ *The Times*, May 3 1850, p.2, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 25 September 2019.

⁵⁰⁸ H. Shin, “The art of advertising railways; organisation and co-ordination in Britain’s railway marketing 1860-1910”, *Business History*, Volume 56 No 2, (2014).

house for a large family, the Gentleman out of business, but too far from the City for a junior Partner in a commercial House'⁵⁰⁹. Yet Sturgis went ahead anyway and settled into a morning routine that involved 'catching the 8.55 train to arrive at Bishopsgate by 10 a.m.'⁵¹⁰. This view of the outer suburbs as a place for retirement for successful businessmen as much as commuters held sway in their early development.

The first generation of estates developed close to railway connections catered for both interests. Usually under the direction of the landowner, they were built to be exclusive and self-contained and aimed at the upper middle class. They were a geographical extension of the rationale for suburban living in the original Georgian suburbs of London. Highgate, Clapham or Camberwell, were, in the words of Thompson for 'mixed use for family summer stations removed from the heat and stench of the city, and for holiday resorts, as well as for some permanent residence, [which] gave them a pleasantly varied experience and a diversified social life rather than an unmistakably suburban stamp'⁵¹¹.

The abortive 1854 development of Eden Park in Beckenham continued this concept of suburbia. The Eden family aimed to take advantage of the new attraction of the Crystal Palace, which had opened to the public earlier in 1854, by selling part of their estate. The plan went no further than the production of a sale prospectus, but the model for promoting these early suburban developments was clear. The key selling point was an easy connection to London, as the location map showing both actual and proposed railway routes made explicit (see figure 7.6 below).

⁵⁰⁹ Quoted in D. Kynaston, *The City of London, Volume I, A World on its Own 1815-1890*, (London: Pimlico, 1994) p.184.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.184.

⁵¹¹ F. Thompson, *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.8.

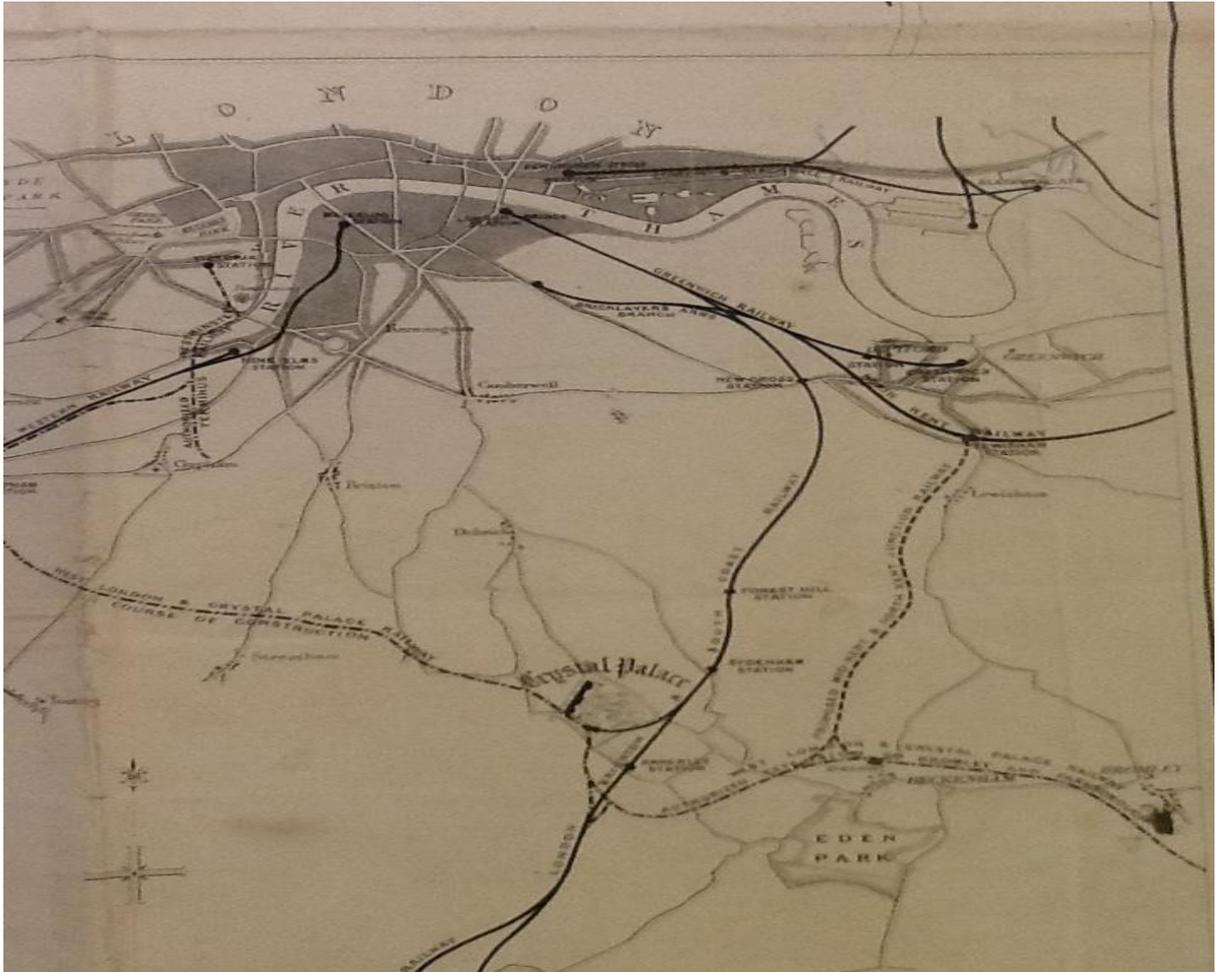


Figure 7.6: Proposed Eden Park Residential Development⁵¹²

Beckenham Place Park on the Cator family estate and Bickley Park by George Wythes were further examples of this type of development in North West Kent that did take place in the 1860s. The houses were large detached homes with substantial gardens. There was little sense of building a new community, with shops, public houses and business premises being explicitly prohibited. The architects of the early forms of the outer suburbs did not envisage mass development, but instead the incorporation of the new residents into the lifestyle of the established rural elite.

The limited extent of the transformation of London's hinterland can be seen in the map below (figure 7.7) derived from the 1851 Census. Early railway commuters were taking up residence outside London's boundaries and new property developments

⁵¹² Eden Park Estate papers, Bromley Library Archives collection.

were being targeted at this new market. This was, however, not yet significant in terms of population growth. Overwhelmingly Greater London's 2.6 million inhabitants lived in the centre or the inner suburbs. Approximately 340k lived outside of this compact area, with Croydon, Woolwich and Greenwich being the only major settlements on the outskirts of London. The importance of a rail connection to London was not yet significant, with both Woolwich and Greenwich being sites of local industry linked to London by the river rather than the railway. This concentration of London's population was also mirrored in the commuting patterns of the early Victorian period described in chapter four. The residential location of the selected occupational groups up to 1860 were almost exclusively within this central zone. Commuting was a limited driver of the growth of the outer suburbs and in turn, the outer suburbs only experienced a slow expansion. This pace of development was to change significantly from the 1860s onwards as the symbiotic relationship between commuting and suburban growth became established.

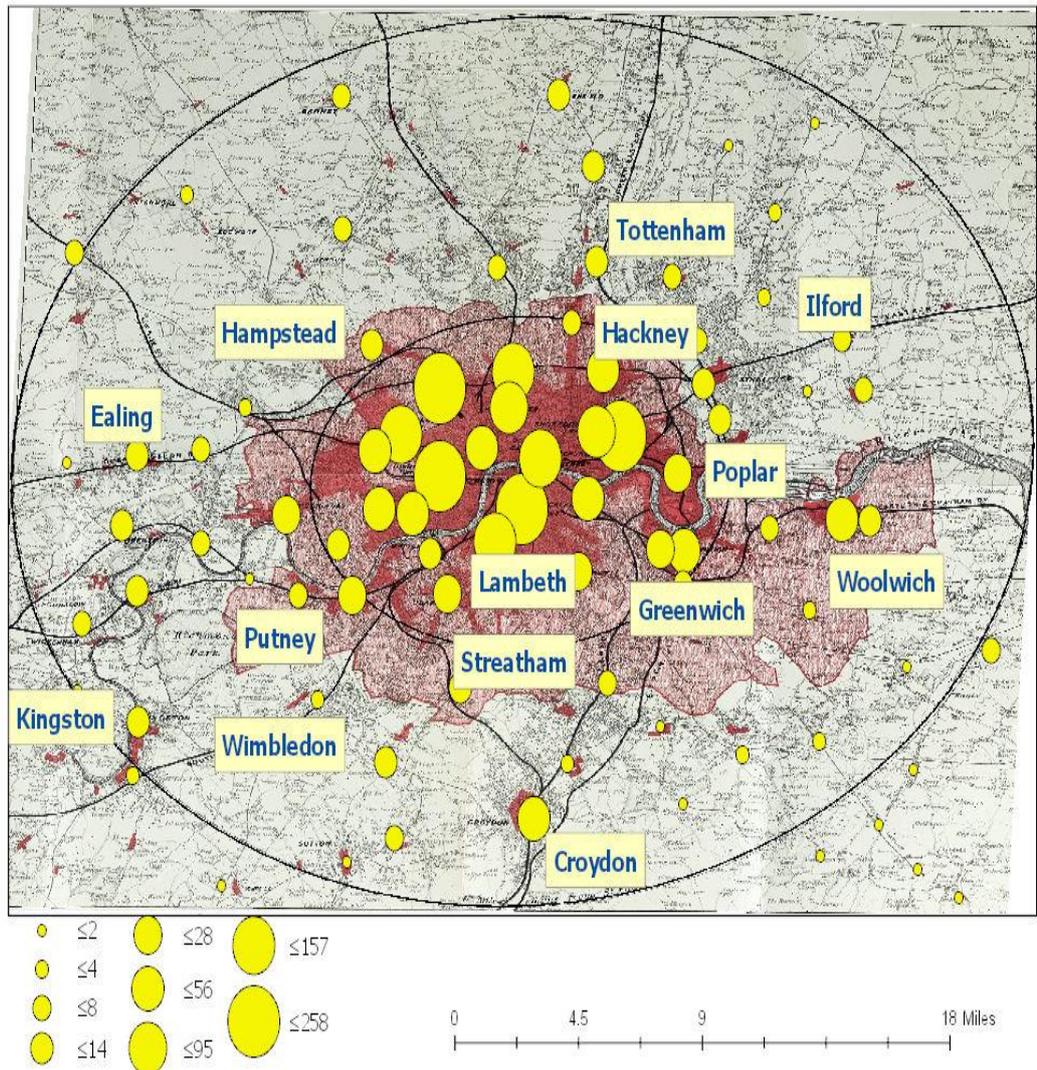


Figure 7.7: Greater London's Population in 1851 ('000s).⁵¹³

The Rise of the Suburban Commuter

The initial growth of suburbia has been attributed to a number of factors, which have been viewed as more influential than the establishment of a transport connection to the capital. Thompson described this causal relationship as follows; ‘where other conditions were favourable – an attractive location, an established nucleus of village or small market town, landowners keen to act as developers, a handful of existing

⁵¹³ Population numbers derived from parish level Census data held on <http://www.visionofbritain.org> and accessed at various dates in January and February 2020.

residents with city connections, and a propitious moment in the trade cycle – the promotion of a railway could be the catalyst of expansion, producing a genuine railway suburb⁵¹⁴. This focus on the structural characteristics of the suburban location overlooks the motives and requirements of potential suburbanites. Suburbs were new residential spaces and there were no existing family ties to influence a re-location decision. A potential new suburban resident could be geographically wide-ranging in their search for a new home. There was, however, an important constraint, that they needed to be able to travel to their place of work in a convenient and timely fashion. This thesis argues it was the needs of the commuter and the existence of an appropriate commuting service that was key to suburban growth.

This assertion recognises that, as previously highlighted in chapter five, the major railway companies were not solely focused on their suburban railway services. It was a position that was compounded by their diminution of interest in local affairs, once the first phase of the construction of lines and stations was completed. Despite their substantial contribution to the local rates bill, they remained aloof from suburban development unless this directly impinged upon the operation of their railway lines. The soliciting of support from local landowners required to ensure the safe passage of their Parliamentary Bills for a new line was replaced by an arms-length relationship with the other agents of suburban development. Commuting services were shaped by this position of remoteness from local affairs adopted by the railway companies.

One of the consequences of this attitude was that local residents, at the outset of the suburban era, had little influence on the actions of the railway companies. The weakness of the local governance structure was exposed. The parish Vestry system, run on a voluntary basis and focused on the local church, was ill-equipped to effectively negotiate with the large railway companies. An example of their impotence can be seen in the efforts of the residents of Bromley to secure a railway connection to their town. In 1851 a meeting of the Bromley parish Vestry was held to consider

⁵¹⁴ F. Thompson, *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.19.

the ‘propriety of assenting to a bill to be introduced into Parliament for constructing a railway to be called ‘the Mid-Kent and Dover railways’ as projected by certain landowners of Kent’⁵¹⁵. At least 50 prominent locals were present and the motion ‘that this Vestry feels the necessity of a Railway for the advantage of this town’ was carried ‘by a large majority’⁵¹⁶. Despite this endorsement Kent’s two railway companies chose routes that suited their wider objectives of building a line to the coast and deliberately avoided building their railways too close to the existing centres of population to reduce land purchase costs. The Bromley station on the LCDR line was to the south of the town, and the town’s isolation was compounded by the SER line bypassing the town entirely to the north. When Bromley South station was opened in 1858, the *Bromley Record* laconically noted that ‘the pedestrian will find his nearest way from the Station to Bromley is by way of a pleasant footpath (in dry weather) leading over Martin’s Hill’⁵¹⁷. Suburban expansion was not to be the result of planned co-operation between the railway companies and the local governing bodies. It was left to market forces to determine the shape of future development.

The vacuum left by the absence of the railway companies from parochial affairs was filled by the local landowners in partnership with builders and property developers. The developers promised the established suburban ideal of an escape from the unsanitary, overcrowded world of the inner city, where the respectable wealthy lived in close proximity to the undesirable poor and instead they offered cleaner air, a semi-rural location and social segregation, allowing security of both person and property. Local landlords saw the opportunity to profit from the demand for this dream. It led to the rapid transformation of the traditional village setting as this ‘villa’ lifestyle became the fashion for London’s middle classes. For properties on the outskirts of London, the chief selling point was their proximity to a railway station. As the property advertisements made clear access to London was a key requirement for the target market of the middle classes.

⁵¹⁵ Bromley Vestry meeting 23 January 1851, minutes held at Bromley Archives.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ *Bromley Record*, June 1858.

North West Kent was no exception to this phenomenon of speculative house building. The *Bromley Record* contained numerous advertisements of houses and building plots close to a station around Bromley and Beckenham. In 1858 three ‘first class semi-detached villa residences ... within one minute’s walk of the station, which affords communication with the City and the West End ... and commanding extensive views of the Kent and Surrey Hills’⁵¹⁸ were advertised in Beckenham. As soon as Orpington station was opened in 1868, ‘plots for the erection of detached and semi-detached residences in this most picturesque and sought-after locality’⁵¹⁹ were advertised for sale. They offered ‘an excellent opportunity ... and will no doubt prove a safe and profitable investment. It is only a short distance from the station on the new Tonbridge line and about 25 minutes from London Bridge’⁵²⁰. Even the prospect of a railway station was enough for estate agents to put out advertisements. Seventeen acres of building land at Luxted (close to the proposed Farnborough railway line described above) was portrayed as ‘very eligible for the erection of villa residences commanding extensive views of undulated and admired country around a railway in contemplation of which a station will be within 2 miles of the premises’⁵²¹. Access to a railway station was the clear attraction and this was reflected in the asking price for leasehold or freehold property. The rent on detached villas on the Shortlands estate (next to the new railway station) was £75 p.a., £45 p.a. in Bromley town centre (half a mile from the station), but only £30 p.a. at West Wickham and £25 p.a. at Keston (3-4 miles from a station)⁵²². The clustering of residential development around railway stations was evident particularly at Beckenham, Shortlands and Bickley in North West Kent and it was a pattern that was repeated all around London.

The lack of regulation around property construction inevitably led to cycles of over-building as speculative developers over-estimated the demand for their product. These

⁵¹⁸ *Bromley Record*, 1858.

⁵¹⁹ *Bromley Record*, 1868.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ *Bromley Record*, 1860.

⁵²² All rental rates taken the *Bromley Record* property advertisements 1863-67.

periods of slump in the building cycle brought out the conflicting views of the railway companies and the property developers towards suburban development. The latter laid the blame for the shortage of buyers at the door of the railway companies. Their complaint was directed at the high fare policy adopted by the railway companies and it highlighted the latter's role as gatekeepers to the outer suburbs. As the 1860s building boom petered out, one of the SER's shareholders lobbied on the behalf of this interest group. He lamented that there were a 'large number of empty houses in the South Eastern district' and predicted that 'if you don't keep the fares down to a moderate rate, the people in those districts will get up new lines in spite of everything you can do'⁵²³. In response the Chairman of the SER, Sir Edward Watkin stated the company's policy in unequivocal terms; 'with regard to fares, we try to fix them on commercial principles. We have no friend to serve, no feelings to gratify, we have simply the hard mathematical duty to perform, of fixing a fare which will yield the most money'⁵²⁴. A similar response met an appeal from the Croydon's Board of Health for a reduction in fares to lure back departing residents. The SER's response was again robust, arguing that 'they left Croydon because the rents were so enormously high and also because their local expenses were very exorbitant'⁵²⁵. Residential development and commuting activity had to operate within the service parameters set by the railway companies.

The impact of these restrictions can be seen in the development along the Dartford loop line, which created stations at Eltham, Sidcup and Bexley. It was constructed through similarly picturesque countryside as that of Bromley and Beckenham and the expectation of the SER was that it would spark significant levels of new residential construction. In its proposal to shareholders for the new line, the directors claimed that 'there is an important and prosperous district lying between Lewisham and Dartford - already containing a local population of almost 20,000 – still required to be

⁵²³ South Eastern Railway General Half Year Meeting, 25 February 1869 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/425).

⁵²⁴ South Eastern Railway General Half Year Meeting, 25 February 1869 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/425).

⁵²⁵ South Eastern Railway General Half Year Meeting, 24 February 1870 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/425).

opened up by railway communication. There is no district in the neighbourhood of London, which, by reason of the healthfulness of its soil, the beauty of its scenery, is better adapted for residential purposes⁵²⁶. Yet residential development was not on the same scale as Beckenham and Bromley, with large-scale suburban house building only taking place in the 1930s⁵²⁷.

One of the reasons for the slower pace of development lay in the nature of the suburban loop line operated by the SER. The line opened in 1866, but only operated two 'rush hour' services in the 1870s and 1880s and a total of eleven per day, or one every two hours. There were no faster express trains as these were routed via the North Kent line to London. The evidence of empty properties at Sidcup suggests this limited service was an unattractive proposition to potential commuters. It highlighted a general feature of the operating policies of the railway companies towards suburban services. Beyond the initial construction of a line, railway companies generally responded to demand rather attempted to generate it. Watkin compared the commercial logic with that of a general retailer; 'every one of these new trains is like opening a new shop. ... If he [the shopkeeper] finds a new population springing up here and there, or that there is a great want for his particular commodity, he starts a new shop'⁵²⁸. This connection between the demand for commuting services and their supply tended to lead to one of two patterns of suburban development. There was either a positive cycle of further demand and additional services, as took place in Bromley and Beckenham or an equilibrium of limited supply and demand was established, as proved to be the case along the Dartford loop line.

Once consigned to the position of a station on a branch line, it proved difficult for the middle-class commuter to improve their transport facilities. Their lack of influence was illustrated by a row over the SER's practice of holding manure in the sidings at

⁵²⁶ South Eastern Railway *Report to the Directors on the Suggested Formation of a Branch Line from Lewisham to Dartford 1856* (National Archives, RAIL 1110/424).

⁵²⁷ M. Carr, "The development and character of a metropolitan suburb: Bexley, Kent", in F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, pp. 212-267.

⁵²⁸ South Eastern Railway shareholders meeting, 20 July 1876 (National Archives, Rail 1110/425).

Bexley and Sidcup for use by the local market garden farmers as fertiliser. Under initial pressure from resident railway passengers the Local Board drew up instructions to counsel to act against the SER and described the grounds for complaint as follows: ‘the trucks loaded with this stuff frequently remain in the stations for a considerable time and are very objectionable to the passengers to and from the stations. This is especially the case at Bexley where the station is so constructed that passengers passing up and down the principal thoroughfare to the station are obliged to pass within a very short distance of the sidings, and the nuisance at Bexley is also aggravated by the fact that in carting the stuff from the station the carts are drawn over a portion of the same approach to the station as that used by the general public’⁵²⁹. Yet the Board did not pursue the claim and took no further action. It has to be surmised that the influence of the landowning representatives on the Board proved to be stronger than that of the local middle-class community. The result was a lack of engagement by the new residents in the local communities of Bexley and Sidcup. This was lamented by the local vicar, Reverend G Newman, who pointedly commented that ‘I have heard it stated that the collective wisdom of the parish went to London every day’⁵³⁰. It was a recognition that a critical mass of commuters was required to achieve both a change in the established social order and significant suburban growth.

This pattern can be seen played out across London in the map below (figure 7.8). This shows the rate of population increase (or decrease) between 1851 and 1871 expressed in percentage terms. The darker colours indicate the highest levels of population growth (note, as the outer suburban areas were scarcely populated in 1851, their percentage growth rates came from a low base).

⁵²⁹ Bexley Local Board, Instructions to Counsel, 29 April 1885 (Bexley Local Studies Archive, ref H349).

⁵³⁰ Rev. G Newman, *Bexley Heath and Erith Observer*, 15 May 1880.

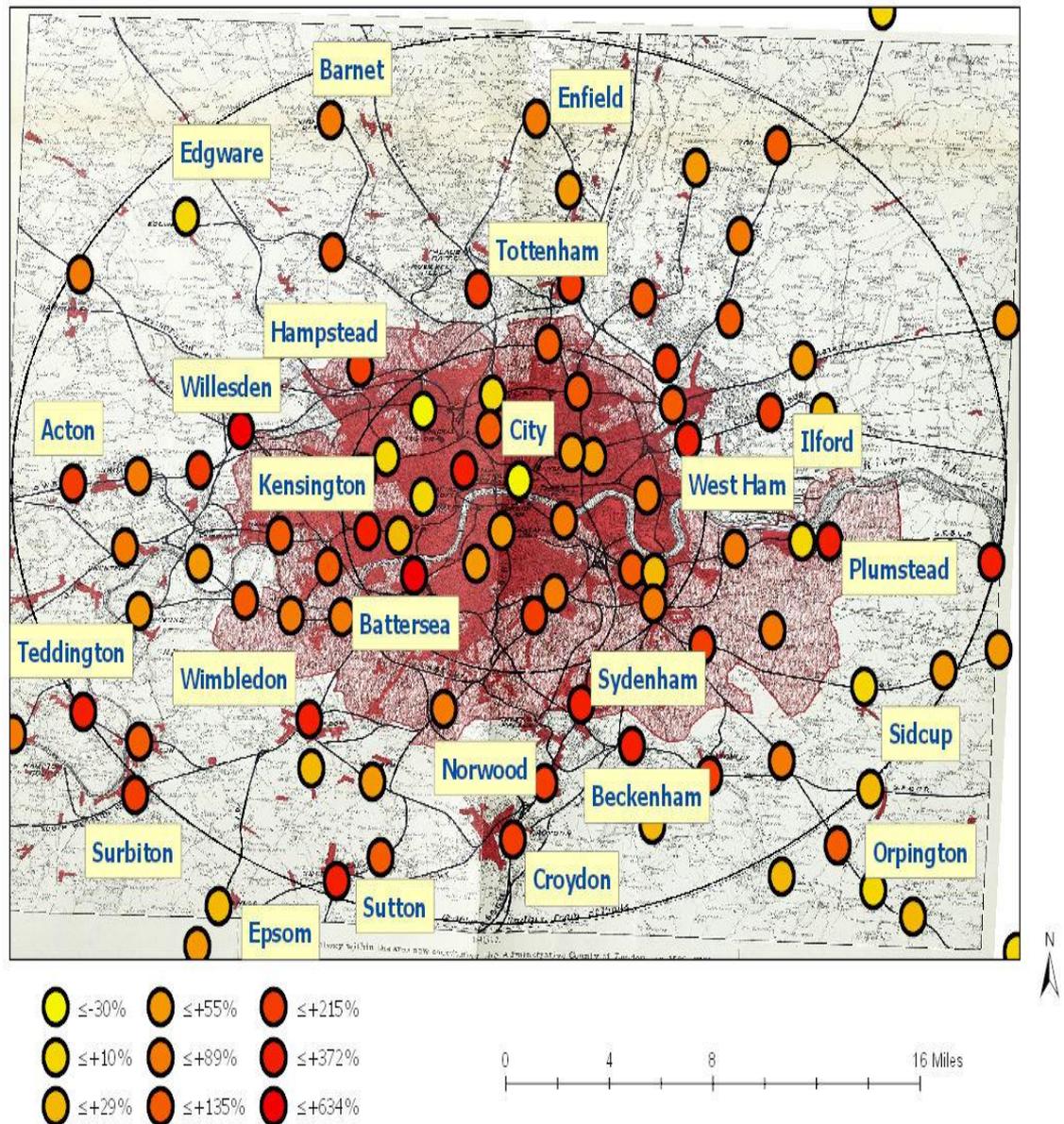


Figure 7.8: Increase in Greater London's Population between 1851 and 1871.⁵³¹

Greater London's population grew rapidly in the period, from 2.6 million to 3.8 million (a 44% increase), as the capital acted as a magnet for immigrants from the rest of the United Kingdom and beyond. The inner London districts still contained the bulk of the metropolis' residents (3.2 million), but the dynamics of the capital's expansion had started to shift. The rate of growth was now higher in the outer suburbs (76%) compared to the inner suburbs (40%). The central districts around the City of London,

⁵³¹ Population numbers derived from parish level Census data held on <http://www.visionofbritain.org> and accessed at various dates in January and February 2020.

Holborn and Westminster all experienced low growth or population declines as businesses gradually replaced residential housing in these areas. The displacement of population led to increases in the surrounding inner London districts of Battersea, Southwark, Bermondsey, Wandsworth, Tower Hamlets and Islington. The exodus of the wealthy from the centre was now underway, with Kensington, Bayswater and Hampstead all expanding rapidly. This shift out of the central business districts and the general population increase combined with the lure of suburbia to make railway commuting a more attractive proposition to the middle classes. As noted above the highest rates of population increase were experienced in the towns and former villages on London's periphery (albeit from a low base). Locations with a good railway connection were the main beneficiaries of this increased interest in commuting. These were generally to the south of London for the reasons outlined in chapter four on the varying level of interest shown by the major railway companies in their suburban networks. Residential areas around the stations on the LBSCR's London to Brighton line (Croydon, Norwood and Sydenham), the LSWR's main line to the south-west (Wimbledon and Surbiton) and the LCDR and SER's lines to Dover (Beckenham and Bromley) all grew rapidly. Yet those locations at the end of branch lines (Epsom and Edgware) or on suburban loop lines (Sidcup and Bexley) did not register the same rates of increase. The 1860s marked the arrival of commuters on a large scale into London's outer suburbs. The next stage of development was their establishment of roots in the local communities and the shaping of local governance structures to reflect their interests.

The Commuter and the Suburban Community

Conan Doyle's suburban romance, *Outside the City*⁵³², was set in Norwood, a South London suburb. Here, a new suburban development of 'three eligible Swiss-built villas, with sixteen rooms... hot and cold water and every modern convenience,

⁵³² Sir A Conan Doyle, *Beyond the City*, 1892 (Reprint Chicago & New York: Rand, McNally & Company 1900), accessed on 4 September 2019, via <https://archive.org/details/beyondcity00doyl>.

including a common tennis court'⁵³³ called 'The Wilderness' was built and three new families moved in. They included an admiral and a doctor and their families, and Mrs Westacott, a free-thinking 'modern' woman of independent means. The suburb was presented as a rural haven of peace and security for these representatives of the upper middle classes, in stark contrast to the temptations of the city. Only the admiral's son, Harold Denver was a railway commuter. He worked as a junior partner in a stockbroking firm and the plot played on this tension between the world of work and home life. The attraction of commuting as the means to preserve the boundaries between two was encapsulated in the novel's conclusion: 'with his sweet and refined home atmosphere he [Harold] is able to realise his wish and keep himself free from the sordid aims and base ambitions which drag down the man whose business lies too exclusively in the money market of the vast Babylon'⁵³⁴. The concept of the suburbs as an enclave, sheltered from the outside world, was long established and the coming of the railways provided a new mechanism to achieve this end.

The first challenge of new residents was to ensure that their railway connection to the capital was suitable for their commuting needs. It was a test of the assertiveness of the local communities to be able to persuade the railway companies to take notice of their concerns. Railway companies were reluctant to accede to local requests for additional services unless these fitted in with other wider strategic goals. Watkins summed up this policy in his advocacy to his shareholders of a new branch line to Westerham on the Kent and Surrey borders. 'We think it will enable you to extend your Railway system through a very beautiful district – a district, which in time will no doubt be developed as Chislehurst and Sevenoaks have been developed. ... I think that, in practice, you have generally agreed with the Board upon two principles: the first is, that if you wish to keep the district to yourselves, you must fairly accommodate the wants of the district; and the second is, that if you wish to retain your traffic, and render yourselves independent of competition, you must possess the shortest and

⁵³³ Ibid, Chapter II, "Breaking the Ice", accessed 4 September 2019.

⁵³⁴ Ibid, Chapter XVII, "In Port at Last", accessed 5 September 2019.

quickest routes to the places upon your system'⁵³⁵. Local residents faced an uphill task to gain the attention of the railway companies and to galvanise them into meeting their requests.

This frustration can be clearly seen from the residents along the suburban branch lines. The *London Evening Standard* reported a meeting of residents of Chiswick, Kew, Brentford, Isleworth and Hounslow in 1865. They agreed a resolution stating that 'this meeting is of the opinion that the existing arrangements of the LSWR as regards the loop-line traffic, are quite inadequate to meet the present requirements of the important and increasing districts represented at this meeting'⁵³⁶. Their main complaint was that the stations on the main line to Surbiton and the Richmond line were much better served by the company and cited inadequacies in both the speed and frequency of their service. 'Of the 61 trains daily between Twickenham, Richmond and London, the journey was performed at an average rate of 23 miles an hour, occupying 33 minutes. The 36 trains between Hounslow and London travelled only at the rate of 18.5 miles an hour'.⁵³⁷ (A journey time of 55 minutes). Even more egregiously 'the holder of an annual ticket on the loop line paid as much as the annual ticket holder on the Richmond line'⁵³⁸. Their efforts came to nothing and in 1870 it was reported that there were 'many hundreds of empty houses in the neighbourhood solely on account of the high railway fares and time wasted on the journey to London'⁵³⁹. It was a recognition that, as suburbanisation progressed around London, the success of an individual town in attracting new residents was closely linked both to the quality of their own railway connection and that of their local neighbours.

This equating of the railway link with civic pride can be seen in North West Kent, in Bromley in the 1860s and 1870s and later in Bexleyheath in the 1890s. In Bromley this took the form of the campaign for a quicker journey from London to the City.

⁵³⁵ South Eastern Railway shareholders meeting, 20 March 1878 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/425).

⁵³⁶ *London Evening Standard*, 25 January 1865, accessed 12 September 2019, via <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ Quoted in A Jackson, *London's Local Railways*, p.194.

Bromley had initially been bypassed by the main lines of both the SER and LCDR and had to rely a connecting service from neighbouring, but better served Beckenham. A public meeting was called in 1863, sparked by the ‘very great inconvenience to the inhabitants’ of the trains now stopping at Beckenham ‘so that passengers to Bromley were obliged to change carriages there, and wait for the London, Chatham and Dover trains⁵⁴⁰’. In the next decade their efforts to persuade the SER to build a branch line off its main line to Tonbridge were to be of no avail. A further public meeting was held in 1873 at which the chairman, local worthy, William Starling, declared that the ‘people of Bromley were not properly accommodated with railway communication between their town and London ... and they were worse off than any suburban town, and he asserted they had been trifled with and made fools of by these two companies [the SER and LCDR]’⁵⁴¹. He favoured an extension from the SER station at Grove Park to the north of Bromley and cited ‘an old proverb, ‘wasted time is misused talents’, so nothing was more essential than their time, and by the proposed route they would be able to travel to Cannon Street within an average of half an hour’⁵⁴². With the support of the Local Board (the successor to the Vestry Committee) a new company, the Bromley Direct Rail Company was formed to raise the finance for the line’s construction from the residents. This was a common tactic for the emerging suburban communities, as it was a means of raising the profile of a local issue with the railway companies.

It was also a rallying point for the new suburban communities. Greenhalgh in his thesis on the relationship between local landowners and the middle classes in Bromley⁵⁴³ saw this coalescence of local support around the new line as a pivotal moment in Bromley’s transition to a middle-class town. He wrote ‘it was a classic example of the varying ranks of the middle class, from architect to chemist, pulling together towards a common objective. Each group had something to gain’⁵⁴⁴.

⁵⁴⁰ *Bromley Record*, December 1863.

⁵⁴¹ *Bromley Record*, December 1872.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ M Greenhalgh, “Gentleman landowners and the middle classes of Bromley, 1840-1914”.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.177.

Unfortunately the SER had the upper hand in negotiations over the running of the new line as the proposed branch line had to be integrated into the main SER network. As a result the Bromley Direct Rail Company failed to raise the £20,000 required to build the railway. Eventually the SER did agree to finance the construction of a branch line, which opened in 1878. Whether their change of heart was due to local pressure, a recognition of the revenue potential of a new line by the SER or the support of a local landowner, and SER Board member, Sir Edward Henry, was unclear. The campaign for the new line signalled a shift in the power structure at a local level. As Greenhalgh commented ‘significantly they [Bromley’s middle classes] had organised themselves without the need for either leadership or patronage by the local gentry’⁵⁴⁵. It represented the coming of age for the new suburban communities and a clear identification of their interests with the provision of a commuting service.

The Bexleyheath Railway Company was another example of a local initiative to improve railway communication for reasons of self-interest and civic improvement. The Bexleyheath area had begun to be populated with detached villas and respectable society from the 1870s. It lay, however, between the SER’s main North Kent line along the Thames through Woolwich and Erith and the Dartford loop line through Sidcup and Bexley. Given the slower rate of suburbanization, the driving force was the local landowners rather than the suburban community. The former were led by the prominent railway engineer and the owner of the local Danson estate, Alfred Bean, who saw an opportunity to create a second Blackheath and in the process significantly enhance the value of their land holdings. This self-interested financial motive was clear from the evidence submitted as part of the Parliamentary approval process. A local land agent ‘compared the Blackheath land values from £1,000 to £2,000 per acre with those of Bexleyheath from £500 to £600 an acre and ascribed the difference almost entirely to a lack of railway facilities’⁵⁴⁶.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.179.

⁵⁴⁶ 1886 Bexleyheath Railway Bill, evidence by James Rolph to the House of Lords Select Committee (National Archives, Rail 32/2).

As with the Bromley branch line, the success of the line depended on the SER's willingness to incorporate it into their network at Lewisham. They were reluctant to develop another suburban line after the relative failure of the Dartford loop line. This position, in turn, undermined the willingness of other landowners along the route to back the scheme. William Beadal, one of the Bexleyheath Railway directors, complained that 'I doubt whether any owners will enter into binding arrangements without first knowing the exact position of the stations, actual extent of land required and the accommodation works which will be given'⁵⁴⁷. As the financial costs of purchasing land mounted, the Bexleyheath Railway Board had to admit defeat and agree to the SER's terms for assistance to finance and operate the line. The Bexleyheath line finally opened in 1895 and the lengthy delay from the initial proposal confirmed the limitations of independent action. It was a demonstration that the fate of suburban communities initially rested on their relationship with the railway companies. Over time, there was a gradual shift in power towards the local communities and in both Bromley and Bexleyheath, local pressure was eventually successful. The suburban market was the fastest growing revenue stream for the railway companies and increasingly they had to take notice of the requirements of these commuting customers.

Evidence of the growth of this market can be seen in the map below (figure 7.9) showing the population increase at a local level between 1871 and 1891. Greater London's population continued to surge in the 1870s and 1880s, up from 3.8 million in 1871 to 5.6 million by 1891 (a 45% increase). The rate of increase was now higher in the outer suburbs (an average 90% increase) than the inner suburbs (37% increase). A commentator on the 1891 Census results remarked that 'the greatest advance in this decade [the 1880s] is shown, not in the cities themselves, but in the ring of the suburbs which spread into the country around them. If the process goes unchecked the Englishman of the future will be of the city, but not in it. ...He will be a suburb-dweller. The majority of the people of this island will live in the suburbs; and the

⁵⁴⁷ Bexleyheath Railway Company minutes, 26 February 1884, (National Archives, RAIL 32/1).

suburban type will be the most widespread and characteristic of all, as the rural has been in the past and as the urban may be perhaps said to be in the present'⁵⁴⁸.

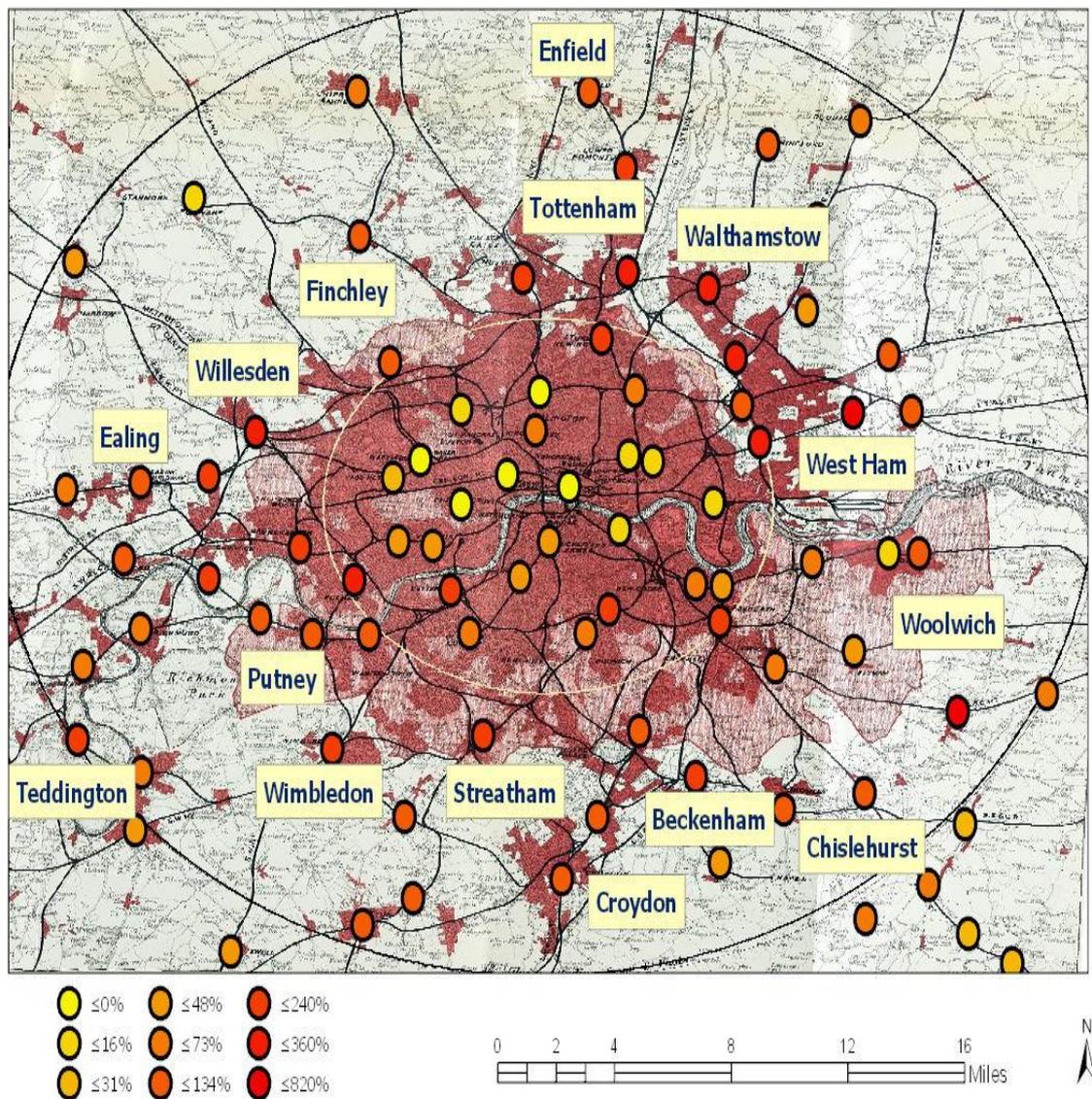


Figure 7.9: Increase in Greater London's Population between 1871 and 1891.⁵⁴⁹

Many of the central districts experienced little or negative growth as the process of dispersal to both the inner and outer suburbs continued apace. The popular suburban destinations to the south and south-west of London, including Beckenham, Ealing,

⁵⁴⁸ S. J. Low, "The Rise of the Suburbs", *The Contemporary Review*, (October 1891), p.548.

⁵⁴⁹ Population numbers derived from parish level Census data held on <http://www.visionofbritain.org> and accessed at various dates in January and February 2020.

Putney, Streatham, Teddington and Wimbledon at least doubled in size in the period. In chapter four, the residential patterns indicated a tentative rather than a wholesale adoption of railway commuting up to the 1880s, when considered against the total population of each occupational group. From the perspective of measuring the rate of change, the contribution of railway commuting to suburban growth can be seen more clearly. The highest increases, albeit from a low base, were seen in the working-class districts to the north-east of the capital, notably Tottenham, Walthamstow and West Ham. This was evidence of the emergence of the working-class commuter. The next stage of the development of the commuter market brought the issue of segregation of the outer suburbs along class lines to the fore.

Class and the Suburban Commuter

In Pett Ridge's novel, *Outside the radius, stories of a London suburb*⁵⁵⁰, the suburban houses in his fictional setting of The Crescent are much smaller than those of Doyle's The Wilderness. 'Every house has its front lawn, which is not perhaps so much a lawn as a rather large sod of turf'⁵⁵¹. It was a story that chronicled the lifestyles, aspirations and pretensions of the lower middle class; each house had a name not a number and at least one servant. They were all homes for office workers in the City with an unvarying routine; 'at about eight twenty each week-day morning The Crescent despatches its grown-up male inhabitants in search of gold. The adventurers set out, each with a small brown bag, and are silk-hatted... They hurry across the Common to the station'⁵⁵². For this social group, their suburban homes and routine of commuting were the outward signs of their social status, which distinguished them from the working class. They were also the latest and most populous section of the middle classes to be able to afford to live in suburbia.

⁵⁵⁰ W. Pett Ridge, *Outside the Radius, Stories of a London suburb* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899), accessed 5 September 2019 via <http://www.hathitrust.org/Record/100407228>.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.4, accessed 5 September 2019.

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 8-9, accessed 5 September 2019.

The residents of the Crescent were the archetypal third-class passengers. Despite the professed misgivings of the railway companies, meeting their requirements was to be the main driver of the growth of the suburban commuter market in the late nineteenth century. Watkins explained to his shareholders that ‘the third-class passenger is the man to whom we must look, for two reasons: first, because he travels more cheaply; secondly, because, through the liberality of the railway companies he travels in vehicles which are of a very much better construction than they used to be. ... Probably the taste will become permanent, therefore we must look to very cheap prices and very good accommodation if we are to carry the traffic in the way we want to do it’⁵⁵³. This expansion of the railway franchise was to alter the character of the outer suburbs; the villas of the upper middle class were supplemented by housing affordable by a wider section of society. It was a process described in H G Wells’ novel *Ann Veronica*. In Morningside Park, loosely based on his own home in Worcester Park, ‘the Avenue ran in a consciously elegant curve from the railway station into an undeveloped wilderness of agriculture’⁵⁵⁴. This was the home of ‘various business men, solicitors, civil servants and widow ladies’, and where Mr Widgett, a journalist and art critic, stood out as he ‘travelled third class to London by unusual trains’⁵⁵⁵. Yet its allure was being tarnished by ‘little red-and-white rough-cast villas, with meretricious gables and very brassy window-blinds’ which appeared ‘like a bright fungoid growth in the ditch’⁵⁵⁶. It also represented a challenge to the newly established social order of the outer suburbs.

The arrival of the railways had allowed the upper middle classes to take centre stage in local affairs. As Greenhalgh observed of Bromley ‘in the second half of the nineteenth century, retailers, professionals and merchants all enhanced their representation within the town’s office-holding elite ... As the more laid-back, less informed image of past local government disappeared, so too did those tradesmen who lacked the qualities and time necessary for dealing with more complex legislation. In

⁵⁵³ South Eastern Railway shareholders meeting, 27 July 1893 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/427).

⁵⁵⁴ H. G. Wells, *Ann Veronica* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1909), p.3.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.6.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.3.

their place came those men involved in finance or commerce on a national or international basis⁵⁵⁷. Woodward's study of Sutton and Carshalton⁵⁵⁸ and French's of Surbiton⁵⁵⁹ reached similar conclusions. This was a group that had chosen to live in the outer suburbs because of its pleasant semi-rural location and the railway connection to London. The preservation of this position was a key concern of these communities, but it was undermined by conflicting interests in this social group over how to manage the ongoing growth of their suburbs.

There was an initial alignment of interests between the railway companies and the new suburban elite as the high fares and limited service of the mid-Victorian era handicapped suburban expansion. This was, however, tested as the opportunity for suburban property development became apparent. The local governing bodies were still in an embryonic state and often lacked the powers or possessed the desire to restrain property developers or co-ordinate an orderly expansion of their communities. In Bromley and Beckenham, a Local Board replaced the Vestry committee in the 1860s, with separate Urban District Councils created in 1894 and finally borough status in 1903 for Bromley. In Bexley and Sidcup the process was even slower, with the Local Board created in 1880 and the Vestry system only ending with the formation of the Urban District Council in 1896. Members of the Local Boards were also often conflicted as they sought to profit from property development opportunities. For example, in Surbiton, the chairman of the Improvement Commissioners, Thomas Guilford, owned 107 properties⁵⁶⁰. Their policies tended to follow the principles of small government. They aimed to be prudent with public expenditure, in line with a low rates policy and adopted a laissez-faire attitude towards new residential building. Supported by the railway companies' encouragement of third-class travel (and, as outlined in chapter five, the provision of better facilities for commuters), suburban growth had little restraint, other than simple supply and demand in this period.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 160-161.

⁵⁵⁸ D. Woodward, "Suburban Development in Five Neighbouring South London Parishes in the Middle Decades of the Nineteenth Century".

⁵⁵⁹ C. French, "Housing the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Surbiton" *The Local Historian*, Volume 45(2), (April 2015).

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, p.130.

A further challenge to the suburban order came with the Cheap Fares Act of 1883. This repealed the passenger duty on the original workman's trains and 'compelled the railway companies to introduce workmen's fares as and when required by the Board of Trade'. The London County Council Committee on Public Health and Housing described the purpose of the Act as 'further encouraging the working classes into the suburbs'⁵⁶¹. Workmen's trains were run as far out as Weybridge to the south-west, Croydon to the south and Bromley and Dartford to the south-east by the end of the nineteenth century. As highlighted in the previous two chapters, the railway companies were careful to temporally segregate their services, so that first and foremost, commuting services were aimed at the middle classes. It geographically squeezed the provision of affordable services for the working classes to be largely concentrated to the north-east of the capital. It still represented a new market for their services and the railway companies sought to benefit from this. The alignment between the interests of the suburban elite and the railway companies now came under pressure.

There were growing concerns amongst the established residents of the outer suburbs that their rural charms were in danger of being spoiled. In Bromley, "Rusticus", a correspondent to the *Bromley Record*, struck a suitably alarmist note, that 'sinister rumours have been breathed of a 'workman's town'⁵⁶². The local middle-class elite now had to deal with the challenge posed by the growth of these new passenger groups. In 1884 a petition was made by Bromley's residents to the LCDR and SER 'asking them to lower the price of their season tickets and institute third class season tickets'⁵⁶³. They claimed that the 'high railway rates were chiefly instrumental in causing 350 empty houses in Bromley'. Previously it had been the railway companies, who had rejected this assertion. Now it was the turn of the local elite, as when it was

⁵⁶¹ London County Council Report of the Public Health and Housing Committee on Workmen's Trains for Districts South of the Thames 1892, accessed on 25 September 2019, via <https://0-parlipapers-proquest-com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/parlipapers>.

⁵⁶² *Bromley Record*, July 1882.

⁵⁶³ *Bromley Record*, October 1884, p.88.

presented to the Bromley Local Board for their support, they objected to the wording. The members believed that ‘overbuilding by speculators was the cause of so many empty tenements’ and ‘the houses remained empty because those of the wrong class were being built’⁵⁶⁴. It was part of a rear-guard action to maintain the social status quo.

Railway fares and services were in the forefront of this battle. At the Beckenham Local Board meeting of September 1884 the members heard that the Board of Trade had ‘recommended that the Company [the LCDR] should be required to run a train about 5.50 or 6.20 a.m. and also try the experiment of permitting workmen’s tickets to be available by their ordinary trains’⁵⁶⁵. The latter proposal was a step too far for the Beckenham Board, as it would breach the temporal segregation practiced by the railway companies. They agreed a joint position with the LCDR that ‘complied with the first recommendation, but declined to accede to the second ... as it was found that persons in no way entitled to the benefit of such tickets used to obtain them’⁵⁶⁶. Indeed it was not until 1910 that Bromley Council was willing to support a proposal to the SER for third class season tickets from Bromley to London. Even then this decision was aimed at assisting the lower middle class, as in words of one councillor there was ‘dissatisfaction with the way the town was spreading. They were getting too many of the richer class and too many of the poorer class’⁵⁶⁷. As another councillor spelt out, the clear implication was that ‘railway facilities were very largely responsible for the making and marring of a district’⁵⁶⁸. This realisation on the part of the new suburban elites can be seen played out around London in the Edwardian era as they struggled to maintain the middle-class character of their communities.

Greater London’s population continued to grow in the Edwardian period, up from 5.6 million in 1891 to 7.2 million by 1911 (a 29% increase). The trend of the previous

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Beckenham Local Board minutes, October 1884 (Bromley Library Archives).

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Councillor Gillett, *Bromley Record*, June 1910.

⁵⁶⁸ Alderman James, Ibid.

two decades up to 1891 was still evident as this expansion was primarily located in the outer suburbs (a 89% increase). The central districts and inner suburbs were now either contracting or experiencing only modest growth (a net 13% increase). Yet the growth rate of many salubrious outer suburbs fell below this average and also that of the prior two decades. Beckenham, Bromley, Richmond, Surbiton and Sutton, a representative sample of this group, averaged a 40% increase, compared with a 101% increase between 1871 and 1891. In these areas the barriers to entry erected by the railway companies and supported by the local elite held reasonably firm. Elsewhere this was not the case, as illustrated by the ongoing expansion of working-class suburbs to the north-east of the capital. Suburban expansion was now being driven both by the railway and by the arrival of cheaper alternative forms of transport; the deep level underground and the electric tram and omnibus. Its impact was felt most in the suburbs on the fringes of metropolitan London, such as Lewisham, Putney, Streatham and Wimbledon, which all now fell within commuting range of the competitors to the suburban railway.

As observed in chapters three and four, this was the period when all the middle-class occupational groups embraced commuting. There was a general increase in the average distance travelled to work amongst the sample populations. They had abandoned the inner suburbs, with the exception of the salubrious districts around Hyde Park, and were part of the general exodus towards the periphery shown in the map below (figure 7.10). Despite this pattern of dispersal, the majority of the sample population still lived within a 10 miles radius of central London. They were to be in the midst of the transport revolution that finally broke the railway companies' monopoly on suburban commuting.

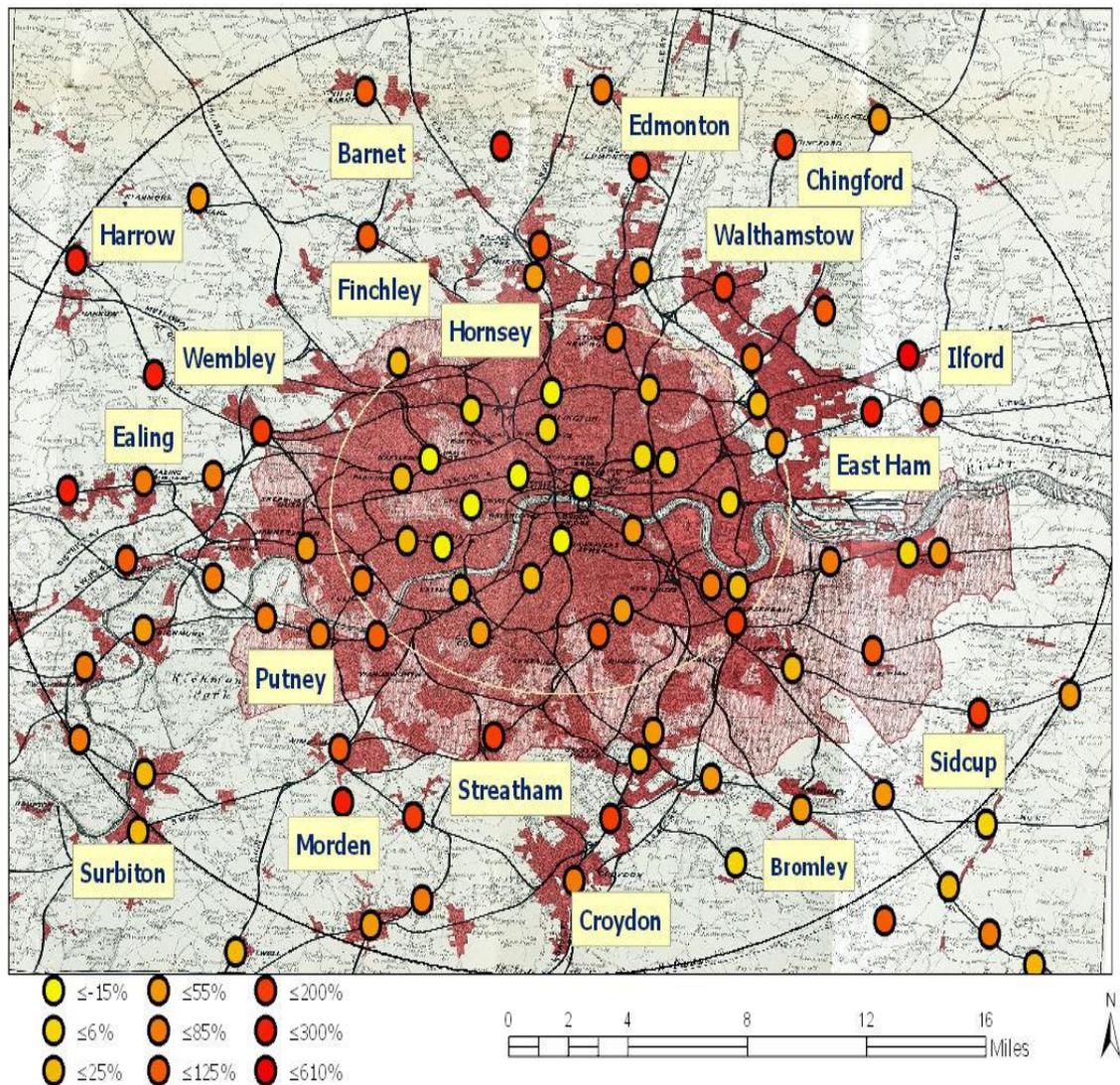


Figure 7.10: Increase in Greater London's Population between 1891 and 1911.⁵⁶⁹

The Arrival of New Forms of Suburban Transport

The Edwardian era saw the arrival of the deep-level underground lines and the electric trams and omnibuses. Often backed by the metropolitan authorities, they were able to penetrate the commuter belt around London and offered the commuter a more regular and cheaper service. As highlighted in chapter five, the railway companies were at

⁵⁶⁹ Population numbers derived from parish level Census data held on <http://www.visionofbritain.org> and accessed at various dates in January and February 2020.

first complacent towards this threat to their revenues and then largely conceded defeat in the battle for the suburban customer in metropolitan London. For the suburbs within reach of the new tram and omnibus routes, the impact was both decisive and divisive.



Figure 7.11: Comic Postcard of the First Electric Tram in Wimbledon in 1907.⁵⁷⁰

Initially the suburban elites sought to ward off this threat to the social status quo. The first attempt in 1898 by the tram companies to expand south of the river met with resistance. The Beckenham Urban District Council sent a delegate to a conference organised by the London County Council on potential schemes. He reported back that ‘none of the delegates from the South side of London desired electrical tramways, while the people to the North of London wanted tramways to get them to work’⁵⁷¹. This solidarity quickly broke down as some suburban authorities reacted in the same way as their predecessors had done to the arrival of the railway. They wanted to be on the side of progress and so the network expanded rapidly south of the Thames in the Edwardian era. The two sides to this debate can be seen in Bromley and Beckenham,

⁵⁷⁰ From the Tony Riley collection, originally published by Hutchins & co, Wimbledon, 1907.

⁵⁷¹ Beckenham Urban District Council minutes, August 1898 (Bromley Library Archives).

when the British Electric Traction Company approached the Urban District Councils ‘stating that the Company had a view to a comprehensive system of electric tramways connecting Bromley with Penge and the existing Croydon system’⁵⁷². The potential arrival of trams divided the community.

They were seen both as modern and progressive, but also egalitarian and detrimental to property values. Some commentators claimed that ‘a system of electric tramways is an absolute essential to bring about that growth and development for which this district is now so ripe’⁵⁷³. Others were more conservative and feared that the middle-class character of their communities would be undermined. As part of an initiative to allay local concerns and persuade public opinion the Chief Engineer of the Company gave an interview to the *Bromley Chronicle*. There was discussion about the routes, the proposed operational arrangement with the local authorities and also the fare structure. He commented that ‘as to fares, we charge popular prices – about a penny a mile for short distances and less for longer distances – about five miles for two pence. Then we charge at a rate of a halfpenny a mile for workmen before breakfast and during meal-hours’⁵⁷⁴. These were significantly below the equivalent rail fares and would have allowed a wider section of society to live in the Bromley and Beckenham areas.

In a decision that could not have been foreseen in the mid-Victorian period, in 1903 Beckenham’s rate-payers voted two-thirds to one-third in favour of a tramway constructed by the British Electric Traction Company. Meanwhile in Bromley, this tramway scheme was rejected, but it was expected that another would be constructed by the Local Council instead. In Bexley the Council appointed consultants, Dawbarn and Mordey, to assess the potential of a tramway scheme and they reported the positive benefits that ‘in the case of [lines to] Woolwich and Erith, the lines would be highly remunerative from the start, apart from the immense influence they would have

⁵⁷² Bromley Urban District Council minutes, 9 September 1902 (Bromley Library Archives).

⁵⁷³ *Bromley Chronicle*, 29 January 1903.

⁵⁷⁴ *Bromley Chronicle*, October 1902.

on further developments in the district'⁵⁷⁵. Across North West Kent, the tramways created new routes that did not simply link the suburbs to London, in the traditional manner of the railway lines. Instead they provided access between suburbs, so that Beckenham would be connected to neighbouring Penge, Bromley to Croydon and Bexleyheath to Dartford and Erith. The spatial relationship between metropolis and the suburbs and the latter's socially segregated nature were fundamentally challenged by this new form of transport. It signalled that the longstanding dependency of suburban communities on the railways was coming to an end and that henceforward commuting to work from the outer suburbs was to be a multi-faceted phenomenon.

The Face of the Suburban Commuter

This chapter has portrayed the changing inter-relationship between the railway companies and the agents of suburban expansion. It has sought to identify the role played by commuting and commuters in the evolution of the suburban communities of the outer suburbs. It has also drawn a picture of a gradual shift in the commuting population downwards through the social scale; from first class to predominantly third class travellers. Further understanding of this trend can be gathered by a detailed analysis of an individual suburban community throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

Beckenham has been chosen as it incorporates many of the elements of suburban development described in this chapter. Beckenham was originally a small village centred on the mediaeval church and the High Street. With the arrival of the railways and the construction of the LCDR main line (east-west on the map) and the SER loop line (north-south on the map), the Cator estate began to be developed. This was a classic development of large detached villa residences adjacent to the pre-eminent local country estate of Beckenham Place Park and also to a number of railway stations (Beckenham Junction (opened 1857), New Beckenham (1857), Lower Sydenham

⁵⁷⁵ Dawbarn and Mordey report to Bexley Urban District Council quoted in M. Carr, "The Development and character of a metropolitan suburb: Bexley, Kent", p.225-6.

(1857), Kent House (1884), Clock House (1890), Beckenham Hill (1892) and Ravensbourne (1892)). It attracted both the well to do professional or businessmen, working in London, but also the wealthy retirees or those living on private means, who wanted easy access to London's attractions.

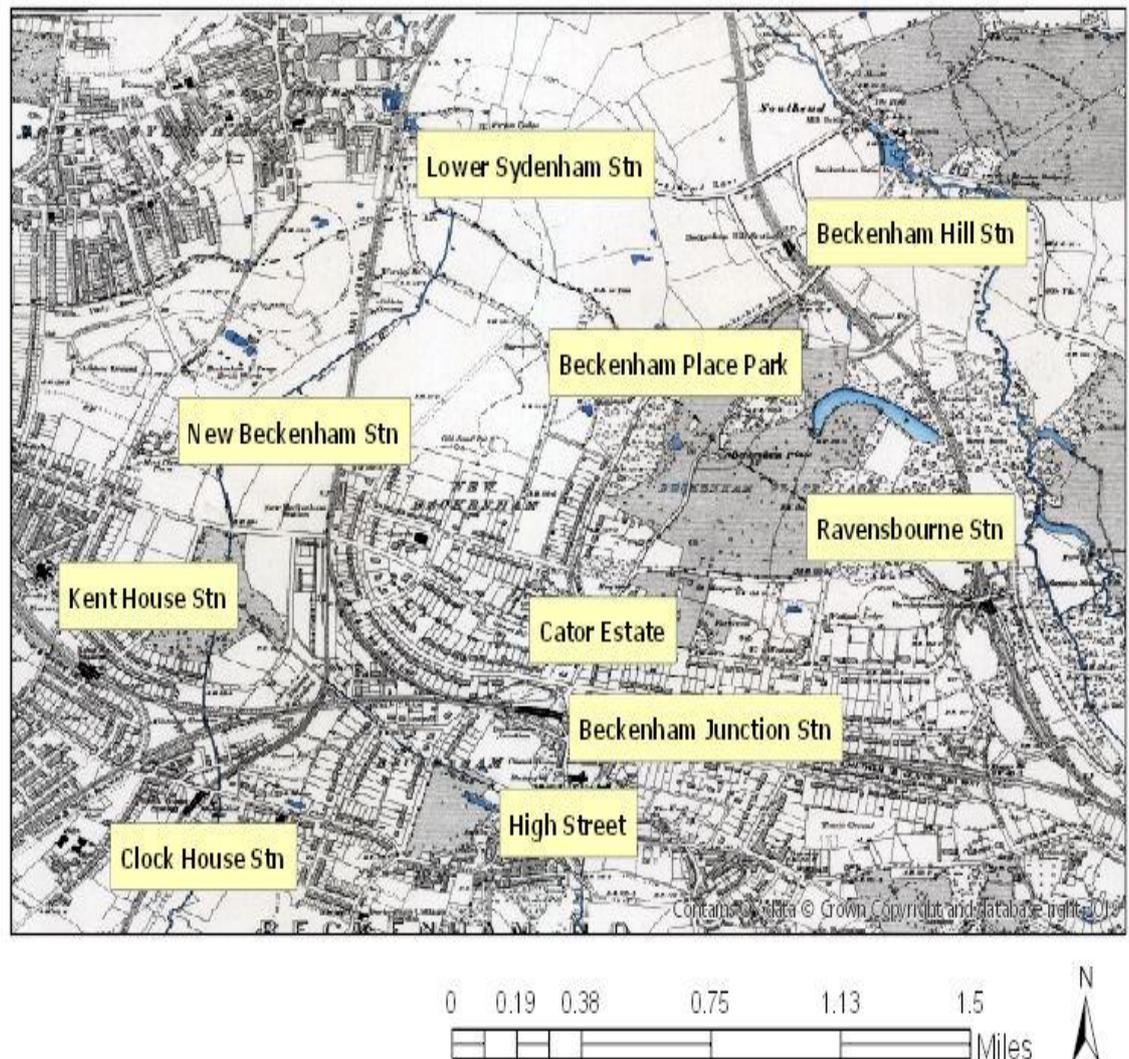


Figure 7.12: Beckenham District in 1898.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁶ Detail of 1898 (Second Edition) Ordnance Survey map, downloaded as digital map from National Library of Scotland on 3 March 2020.

In 1871 Beckenham was a small town of only 6,000 inhabitants. The railway had arrived in the late 1850s, suburban development only slowly took place thereafter. Thorne's entry for Beckenham in the 1874 survey of London's suburbs reflected this position as a nascent commuter town. It reads that Beckenham 'is a pleasant suburban village, but has lost much of its old-fashioned rusticity and seclusion since the opening of the railways. The neighbourhood is still agreeable: it abounds in trees, the surface is undulating, and there are tempting field and lane walks to Bromley, Hayes and Wickham'⁵⁷⁷. The Cator family already had experience in property development from their Blackheath estate. They adopted the same formula of selling building plots for spacious housing with large gardens on tree-lined avenues at Beckenham, but uptake proved slower than in Blackheath. Only four roads on the estate had been completed by 1871. These did attract representatives of the upper middle class, including members of the Stock Exchange, officials at the Bank of England, barristers and solicitors. Despite this influx of commuters, they were out-numbered by retirees and those living on private means. Even though Beckenham sat at the intersection of two railway lines, commuting was only an activity for a minority of the residents. Despite the lag, the quality of its railway connections did eventually prove an irresistible attraction to property developers and Beckenham experienced, like many other towns on London's periphery, a building boom in the 1870s and 1880s.

Gradually further residential development took place to provide accommodation both for a local workforce to service the requirements of the Cator Estate residents, but also for those looking to emulate their lifestyle on a smaller scale. This led to the growth of a much greater density of housing around the Kent House and Clock House stations. This socio-economic change can be seen in the analysis below of the Census results (table 7.1). Beckenham expanded fivefold in size between 1871 and 1911. The preponderance of building trades in 1871 (25% of the total heads of households) was indicative of a rapidly growing new town. By 1911 this had given way to a more settled residential community, with a greater representation in the Census records of

⁵⁷⁷ J. Thorne, *Handbook to the Environs of London, Part 1*, p.36.

shopkeepers (17%) and domestic servants (9% - though this percentage would be higher if measured as a percentage of Beckenham's total population). By 1911 Beckenham, like many similar towns and villages on London's periphery, had become unrecognisable from its semi-rural and parochial mid Victorian form.

	1871		1891		1911	
	No		No		No	
Administration - clerical	31	3%	200	6%	431	9%
Agricultural trades	51	5%	72	2%	93	2%
Artistic professions		0%	8	0%	19	0%
Building trades & labourers	244	25%	614	18%	595	12%
Clergy	7	1%	31	1%	35	1%
Commerce, agents & merchants	68	7%	249	7%	308	6%
Domestic service - inside/outside	108	11%	313	9%	406	9%
Education	8	1%	26	1%	60	1%
Finance, banking & insurance	12	1%	70	2%	59	1%
Central gvt adminsitration		0%	30	1%	51	1%
Horse trades & transport	51	5%	159	5%	173	4%
Local gvt infrastrctre & admnstratn	7	1%	53	2%	217	5%
Manufacturing and enginring trades	46	5%	135	4%	260	5%
Medical professions	6	1%	39	1%	43	1%
Military	5	1%	9	0%	7	0%
No occupatn, not knwn, unemployd	22	2%	25	1%	252	5%
Private means, pensioner & retired	41	4%	355	11%	460	10%
Police	12	1%	38	1%	46	1%
Printing & newspapers	15	2%	93	3%	146	3%
Professional (lawyers, accountants)	32	3%	115	3%	128	3%
Retail, shopkeepers and hospitality	180	18%	614	18%	833	17%
Transport, rail, motor & trams	36	4%	92	3%	154	3%
Total	982	100%	3,340	100%	4,776	100%

Table 7.1: Analysis of Occupational Groups in Beckenham 1871-1911.⁵⁷⁸

Contemporaries were in no doubt about the causes of Beckenham's transformation. The editor of the local trade directory wrote in 1885 they were twofold: 'first, the

⁵⁷⁸ Derived from the Census records at <http://www.genealogist.co.uk>. It should be noted that the analysis only includes head of households in Beckenham parish in order to identify the main economic agents.

natural beauties of the place, and secondly, that modern revolutioniser, the railway, and thus attraction and facility combined, have changed Beckenham from the quiet village to the favoured and genteel suburb'⁵⁷⁹. Walford, in his history of London, described this process of new housing styles supplanting older traditions in Beckenham in the 1880s: 'the chief street of Beckenham is long and winding, and the houses are largely intermixed with fields and gardens, looking as if they were built at a time when space was plentiful ... But modern 'Tudor', 'Jacobean' and 'Queen Anne' houses are rapidly superseding the ruder, and perhaps not less picturesque, erections of bygone time; ...and modern grandeur is gradually driving away the air of quiet and homely respectability which has up to this time given a character to Beckenham'⁵⁸⁰. The Cator estate received a boost from the opening of new stations at New Beckenham and Ravensbourne and was largely complete by the 1890s.

The ease of commuting was an important draw for incoming residents. A better railway service also enabled easy access to London, which was also attractive to retirees and those living on private incomes. The result was that no one group dominated Beckenham's most prestigious roads. A sample of four roads from the 1891 Census within the Cator estate (Albemarle Road, Beckenham Place Park Road, Foxglove Road and The Avenue) found that their residents came from a wide range of occupational groups, with approximately a third of the heads of households being either retired or of independent means. The image of the outer suburbs evolving into monolithic communities of commuters needs some qualification.

This observation holds for the Edwardian period as well as the Victorian era. The 1911 Census recorded a growing number of clerks, but their rise did not dominate over other social and occupational groups. An estimate of the number of commuters (see table 7.2 below, which assumes that all clerical, financial, professional and commercial occupational categories were commuters) suggests they always remained

⁵⁷⁹ *Thornton's Beckenham Directory*, 1885, p.10, Bromley Library Archives.

⁵⁸⁰ E. Walford, *Greater London; a narrative of its history, its people and its places, Volume 2* (London: Cassell & Co, 1883-84), p.100.

a minority of the total working population and that Beckenham was more than a dormitory town.

	1871 No	1891 No	1911 No	1921 No
Estimated Number of Commuter				
Potential Commuters	158 16%	757 23%	1,123 24%	8,412 25%
Potential Non-Commuters	824 84%	2,583 77%	3,653 76%	24,888 75%
Total Heads of Households	982	3,340	4,776	
Total Population	6,090	20,707	31,709	33,300

Table 7.2: Estimated number of commuters in Beckenham 1871-1921 ⁵⁸¹

Instead by 1911 Beckenham, and other outer suburbs or towns in London's hinterland, resembled a pyramid in economic structure. The shopkeeper, hospitality and domestic service occupational groups were the largest employment categories and were representative of a widespread service sector, which supported the needs of both commuters and the leisured well-to-do. It was a structure that led to a gendered divide. Commuting was largely a male preserve and so the suburbs became a female space. A sense of this can be seen in the analysis of the heads of households by gender.

Age	1871			1891			1911		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Under 20				8	9	17	5	2	7
20-29	186	8	194	421	14	435	437	15	452
30-39	293	12	305	963	55	1,018	1,294	40	1,334
40-49	199	15	214	802	100	902	1,034	120	1,154
50-59	142	20	162	485	104	589	747	175	922
60-69	65	20	85	291	85	376	416	167	583
70-79	24	10	34	82	62	144	152	114	266
80+	2	1	3	19	16	35	29	30	59
Total	911	86	997	3,071	445	3,516	4,114	663	4,777
Average Age	41	52		43	54		44	58	

Table 7.3: Heads of Households in Beckenham by Gender 1871-1911 ⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Derived from the Census records at <http://www.genealogist.co.uk> and <http://www.histpop.co.uk> for 1921 numbers. It has been assumed that only certain occupational categories (administration – clerks, finance, banking and insurance, commerce, agents and merchants and the professions) commuted to work.

⁵⁸² Derived from the Census records at <http://www.genealogist.co.uk>.

The heads of households were usually men and the primary wage-earner in the family. They made up the overwhelming majority of the commuting population in the analysis of Beckenham's commuters in table 7.2 above. It was the common position around London as a contemporary cartoonist satirically observed (see figure 7.13 below).



Figure 7.13: City and Suburban Life Cartoon⁵⁸³

In Beckenham and other outer suburban towns, it was a position accentuated by the commuters' ability to walk to a station, which removed the need for horse-drawn transport at home and male servants to attend to the horses. The extent of this social

⁵⁸³ "Two Views of Life – "The City and the Suburbs" *Fun Magazine*, 21 October 1891 accessed on 19 July 2019 via <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/19th-century-uk-periodicals>.

transformation can be seen in the 1921 Census analysis of commuting by gender (see figure 7.14 for percentage of male commuters and 7.15 for female commuters).

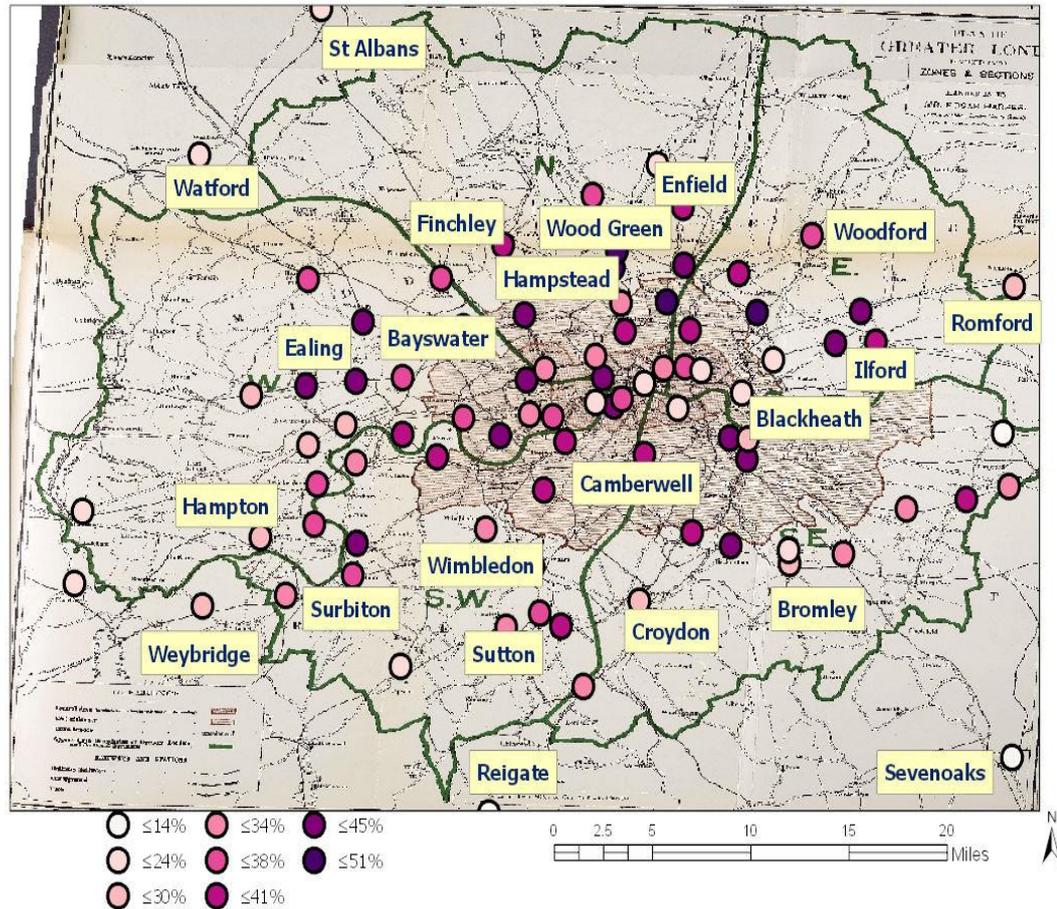


Figure 7.14: Percentage of the Male Population Commuting to Work by Borough or Local District in 1921⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸⁴ Derived from the 1921 Census summary records for County of London, Part III, Table 2 accessed 13 August 2019 at <http://www.histpop.co.uk>.

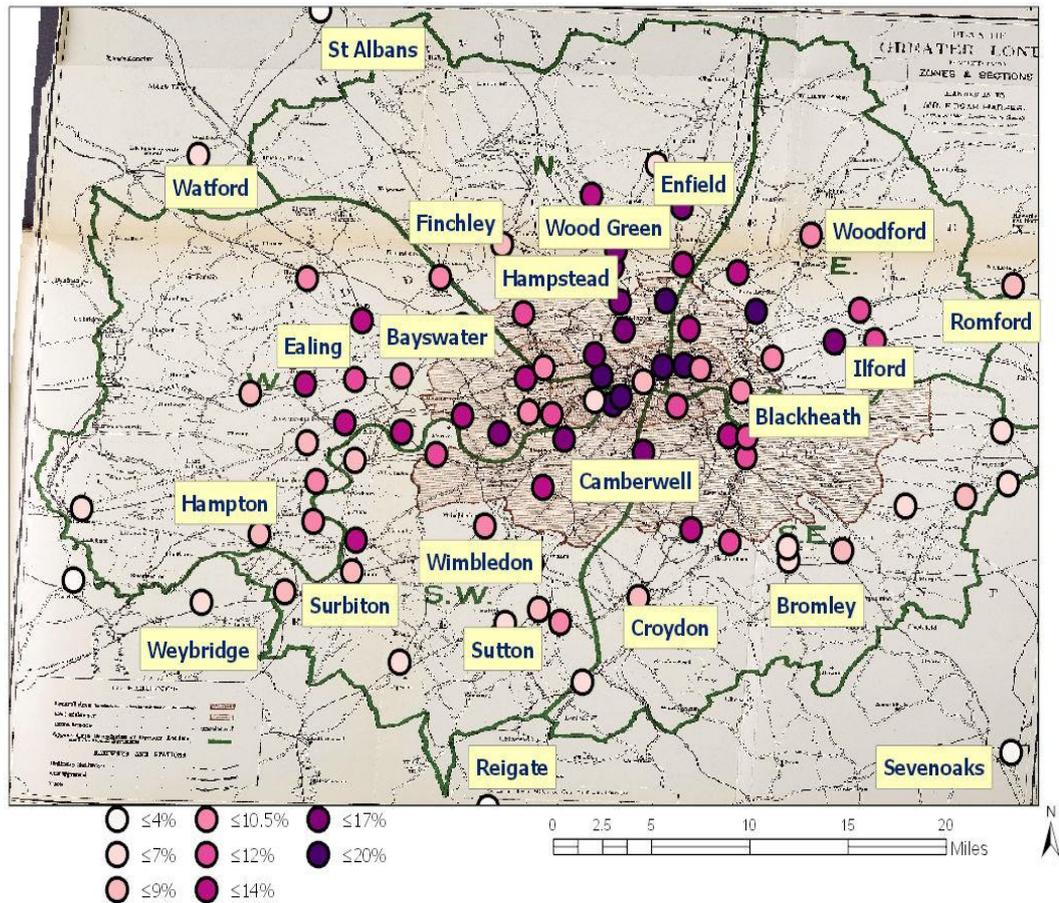


Figure 7.15: Percentage of the Female Population Commuting to Work by Borough or Local District in 1921.⁵⁸⁵

The maps show that the levels of commuting were much higher among men than women. In Beckenham, for example, 25% of the total population worked outside of the borough, but this masked a large variation between men (44%) and women (11%). This was reflected around London, with over 30% of the male population journeying outside of their borough or district each day for work. The only exceptions were towns on London's periphery or working-class districts in the centre of the capital. The former category included Sevenoaks, Reigate, Weybridge, Romford, Watford and St Albans. In these towns the longer distances made commuting a minority activity, only for those wealthy enough to afford the high fares to London. In the inner London districts of Poplar, Woolwich, Stepney Green and Bermondsey, residents lived in

⁵⁸⁵ Derived from the 1921 Census summary records for County of London, Part III, Table 2 accessed 13 August 2019 at <http://www.histpop.co.uk>.

close proximity to their place of work to minimise transport costs. Elsewhere the spatial separation of men and women during the working day facilitated the suburban focus on domestic affairs, privacy and respectability. The rise of Victorian middle-class values has been strongly associated with the growth of suburbia. The act of commuting played an important role in enabling their spread and so had significant implications for the development of the social, gender and cultural characteristics of suburbia.

Concluding Comments

This chapter set out to explore the inter-relationship between commuting and suburban development. Existing historiography has tended to frame the role of the railway as a passive one. Thompson acknowledged that ‘the outer suburbs at more than five or six miles from the centre could not have developed as dormitories without commuter rail services’⁵⁸⁶, but ‘only in a few exceptional cases can railways be regarded as an important cause of suburban growth’⁵⁸⁷. If the railway is viewed instead as the facilitator of suburban mobility, then this offers a different perspective. This chapter has argued that the provision of a commuting service enabled the railway companies to act as gatekeepers to the development of suburbia. From the outset of the railway age their action and inaction had a significant impact on the shape of suburban development around London. The initial layout of the network had an obvious bearing on suburban development, with certain regions, and locations within those regions, being favoured above others. The railway companies’ territorial rivalries led to the duplication of lines and stations, which helped fuel the suburban building boom. The railway companies moved away from the centre stage of suburban development after the construction of their networks. However, from this point, their fare policies and service levels continued to be strongly influential in determining who could afford both in terms of time and money to commute from the outer suburbs. In turn, they influenced the pace and extent of speculative development.

⁵⁸⁶ F. Thompson, ed., *The Rise of Suburbia*, p.19.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

This less visible constraint shaped the type of housing constructed and the social composition of these communities. Its gradual relaxation, as train services catering for a wider section of society increased, facilitated the expansion of the outer suburbs.

The other agents of suburban development had to operate within this framework and their conflicting priorities inevitably led to tensions. Initially local landowners and communities were generally keen to improve their railway connections, as it enhanced land values and civic status. In contrast, as illustrated by Bromley and Bexleyheath, towns and villages on branch lines often struggled to get a sympathetic hearing from railway companies. In turn, their lack of a wide range of commuter services limited their appeal to potential suburban residents and to house builders looking to profit from an expanding population. As the suburbs developed, the high fare policy of railway companies was the subject of complaint from property developers looking for suburban residents for their new homes. Yet, the introduction of low fare structures in the latter part of the nineteenth century prompted concerns over the de-gentrification of the suburbs. The new local suburban elites now wanted to protect the social status quo and fought a rear-guard action to do so. It was a battle that was finally lost when alternative cheaper forms of public transport reached the outer suburbs. This contesting of suburbia's character provided the background and context to the commuting patterns observed in chapters three and four. In summary, the arrival of the suburban railway into London's hinterland was marked by a rise in social tension and accompanied by far-reaching social, economic and cultural consequences for the towns and villages on London's periphery. It has to be concluded that Pissarro's tranquil image of suburban South London at the start of the chapter was a misleading one.

Chapter Eight – Conclusion



Figure 8.1: London Commuters Arriving at Cannon Street Station c.1895⁵⁸⁸

To mark the fortieth anniversary of the *Journal of Transport History* in 1993, the editor T Gourvish surveyed the articles on railway history featured in the previous four decades of publication⁵⁸⁹. He concluded that many of the expectations of its founding editors had been realised: ‘we know a great deal about the promotion, construction and operation of railway companies, their role in the process of economic growth, and their influence upon industry, commerce, the financial sector and society generally’⁵⁹⁰. Yet he was optimistic that future research could yield dividends as ‘no

⁵⁸⁸ Photograph courtesy of the Tony Riley collection c.1895.

⁵⁸⁹ T. Gourvish, “What kind of railway history did we get?”, *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 12, issue 2, (September 1993), pp.111-125.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.120.

research area is ever exhausted. Each decade produces its particular transport issues which encourage responses from historians'⁵⁹¹.

Indeed this thesis has been shaped by two developments that have occurred since 1993. The first is the digital revolution and the advent of GIS software, which has allowed historical questions to be considered from a fresh perspective. The second is the growth of interdisciplinary interest in the concept of mobility. This has stemmed from the recognition that 'a major characteristic of modernity... has been mobility: 'modern society is a society on the move'⁵⁹². The term 'mobility turn' was coined to describe a new paradigm in social sciences, which aimed to change its focus from the fixed and static to emphasise 'the importance of the systematic movements of people for work and family life, for leisure and pleasure, and for politics and protest'⁵⁹³. This thesis has embraced both the technological opportunity afforded by GIS mapping tools and the theoretical framework of the mobility paradigm to address its research questions and to yield new insights in the field of transportation history, with a particular focus on the suburban railway.

The research questions, outlined in the introductory chapter, focused on understanding the origins of travelling to work by the railway into London. The railway enabled workers to be transported to the centre of London and their place of work. This thesis aimed to explore the relationship between commuting and suburban development and consider whether the widespread adoption of railway commuting initiated a new and distinctive phase of suburban growth around London. The existing academic literature on these themes of technological developments in transport, particularly the impact of the railways, and changes in urban form, notably the rise of suburbia, was reviewed in the second chapter of the thesis. Its conclusion underscores the point made by Gourvish that there are still gaps in the literature. While there are numerous railway histories, as Newby noted, analytical studies of the wider impact of the railway are

⁵⁹¹ Ibid, p.120.

⁵⁹² A. Kellerman, *Personal Mobilities* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.1.

⁵⁹³ M. Sheller & J. Urry, "The Mobilities Paradigm", p.208.

relatively uncommon. A failing he partly ascribed to its unfashionableness as a subject with ‘those intending to undertake a PhD at a history department put off by an image problem – the anorak trainspotters’⁵⁹⁴. The benchmark studies of the social impact of the railway remain those of Kellett⁵⁹⁵ and Simmons⁵⁹⁶ of over forty years ago. Further, Freeman lamented that ‘the subject is often examined in a way that disconnects it from its wider cultural milieu’⁵⁹⁷. On the subject of commuting itself, there is a notable dearth of research literature. In his research into the pattern of change in the journey to work of a single London firm of skilled artisans, Green lamented the lack of studies into this phenomenon, particularly in London. He believed ‘that the issues raised by these findings go beyond merely stepping on and off the Clapham omnibus’⁵⁹⁸ as they shed light on wider social and cultural historical debates. This thesis concurs with this sentiment and its aim is to redress, in part, this absence of research into historical daily mobility.

Its starting point was to employ a quantitative approach to the question of when and where railway commuting became established around London. The techniques of GIS mapping were utilised to record the spatial and chronological changes in the residential addresses of various occupational groups with a defined place of work in central London. The detailed analysis of the residential locations of these representatives of the Edwardian and Victorian workforce was set out in the third and fourth chapters respectively. The following chapters covered different explanatory perspectives of the patterns revealed from the GIS mapping. Chapter five examined the infrastructure underlying railway commuting; London’s suburban railway network and the factors behind its uneven formation. In chapter six the experience of the railway commuter was considered, as slowly the initial trials and tribulations were overcome and there was an increasing willingness to travel further and in greater

⁵⁹⁴ H. Newby, “Antiquarianism or analysis? The future of Railway History”, in R. Ambler, ed., *The History and Practice of British Railways: A New Research* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.1.

⁵⁹⁵ J. Kellett, *The Impact of the Railway on Victorian Cities*.

⁵⁹⁶ J. Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales 1830-1914* and *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830-1914*.

⁵⁹⁷ M. Freeman, “The railway as cultural metaphor, ‘What kind of railway history revisited’” p.160.

⁵⁹⁸ D. Green, “Distance to work in Victorian London: a case study of Henry Poole, bespoke tailors”, p.192.

numbers out into London's suburbia and hinterland. In chapter seven the inter-relationship between railway commuter and their suburban communities was explored as well as the influence on the process from the agents of suburbanisation; the railway companies, the property developers and local landowners. The dynamics of their interplay was viewed both at the regional level and through the lens of a detailed study of the North West Kent area. This final chapter seeks to bring together these various strands of analysis with the statistical GIS data to produce an explanatory narrative both of the residential patterns of chapters three and four and of the origins of railway commuting in general in and around London.

Reluctant Suburbanites? The Commuting Experience in the Victorian Era



Figure 8.2: Exterior of Maze Hill Station in North West Kent c.1885.⁵⁹⁹

The photo above (figure 8.2) suggests a train station in a remote rural location, with its two sets of horse and carriage awaiting the arrival of a few well to do railway

⁵⁹⁹ Photo courtesy of the Tony Riley collection c.1885.

passengers from a distant urban centre. In fact it is a picture of Maze Hill station, just beyond Greenwich and six miles from central London, with a journey time to London Bridge station of about 20 minutes in 1885. It neatly illustrates the fact that railway commuting was both not commonplace and not for all in the Victorian era. Historians have asserted that ‘Victorian towns were predominantly places for walking, not riding, for legs not for wheels’⁶⁰⁰. This verdict related to Britain’s provincial towns and cities. Yet, even in London, by far the largest urban centre in the country, long-distance journeys to work were not the norm and the suburban railway was slow to be adopted. The results of the two largest datasets in chapter four for the Victorian era; the members of the Stock Exchange and clerks at the Bank of England, bear this out. In summary, they show that over half of the sample still lived in inner London (defined as within 5 miles of their place of residence) up to the end of the Victorian period (tables 8.1 & 8.2).

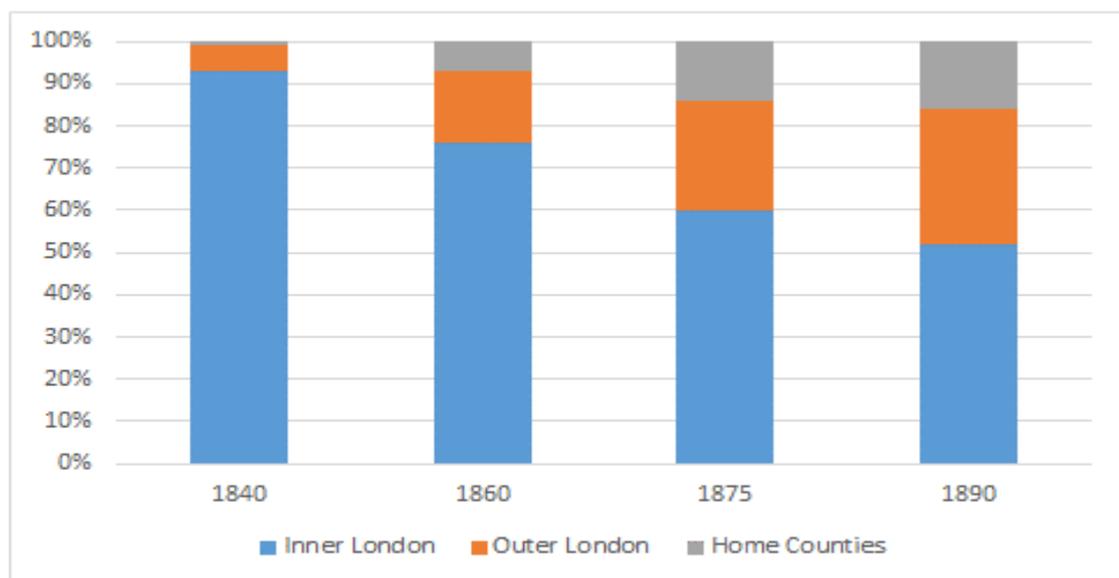


Table 8.1: Residential Location of Members of the Stock Exchange 1840-90.⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰⁰ J. Armstrong, “From Shillibeer to Buchanan: transport and the urban environment” in M. Daunton, ed., *Cambridge Urban History, Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.230.

⁶⁰¹ Compiled from the Stock Exchange membership list.



Table 8.2: Residential Location of Bank of England clerks 1851-91.⁶⁰²

For the other occupational groups with smaller datasets covered in chapter four - barristers, solicitors and chartered accountants - there was a greater concentration in inner London. Barristers were found to be clustered around Hyde Park in the fashionable districts of Kensington, Knightsbridge and Bayswater. Solicitors and accountants were largely to be found on the fringes of these salubrious districts. It was an outcome that sits at odds with the idea of the irresistible lure of suburbia for the growing middle classes of Victorian London. The suburbs were undoubtedly bourgeois spaces of detached or semi-detached homes, guarded by hedges and gardens, which naturally suited the middle-class values of respectability and privacy. Their position on the periphery of the city shielded them from the moral and health hazards of the metropolis. Yet these benefits could only be enjoyed if their occupants were able to travel to work in a quick and convenient manner. Other factors; the willingness of landowners to sell their land, the enthusiasm of builders to develop it and attitude of local communities towards suburbanization also played a part, but the existence of a reliable means of getting to work was fundamental to growth of railway suburbs and railway commuting. The latter explanatory chapters have attributed

⁶⁰² Compiled from the Bank of England staff lists.

primacy to the role of the railway and the railway companies. Paradoxically this was not always a positive role and this thesis has brought to the fore the varying degrees of effectiveness of the London's suburban railway system to deliver the suburban dream.

As outlined in chapter five, the biggest impediment to the development of suburban services was the railway companies themselves and their preoccupation with other business priorities. Following the 'railway mania' of the 1840s, a multitude of railway companies had sprung up to meet the anticipated demand for the new phenomenon of railway travel. Their initial priority was the construction of inter-city lines and railway companies introduced short-distance travel only gradually, principally by running additional stopping services along their trunk lines. As illustrated in chapter four there was a noticeable lag in the development of the suburban routes relative to the national network. It was only in the 1860s and 1870s that the construction of London's suburban network took off. It was in this period that total track length rose rapidly from 69 miles in 1860 to 215 miles in 1880 as rival railway companies competed to secure their share of the new suburban commuter market.

This was all part of a wider picture of amalgamations and takeovers that took place from the 1850s. Driven by economies of scale, these led to the emergence of a few large railway companies by the latter part of the nineteenth century. The smaller companies solely serving the London market were largely eliminated, which hindered the growth of the capital's suburban network after the 1880s (London's suburban network had only expanded to 269 miles by 1900). Instead these much larger companies had a regional rather than a local focus and benefited from multiple revenue streams, including long distance passenger traffic, mail and freight transport, as well as the income from short distance travel. Further the review of board and shareholder meeting minutes in chapter five highlighted the corporate ambition of these companies, which found expression in territorial turf wars and trophy projects. The minutes often spoke in martial terms of wars or truces with neighbouring rival railway companies. There was the 'race to the west' between the GWR and the LSWR

and a bitter rivalry between the SER and the LCDR for most of the second half of the nineteenth century. Grandiose London termini were built by all the major railway companies, despite the ruinous expense. Their collective corporate vanity was neatly lampooned by *Punch's* cartoon of the SER's plan (represented by their chairman, Sir Edward Watkin in figure 8.3 below) to construct a Channel Tunnel. The focus on high profile projects and other competing business priorities meant suburban railways proved to be the poor cousins of the high speed express and the inter-city network.



RULE BRITANNIA.
Britannia (to Sir E. Watkin). AS I RULE THE WAVES, I MUST DRAW THE LINE SOMEWHERE, SO I STOP IT AT CHANNEL TUNNELS—
 TILL FURTHER NOTICE. BUT HAPPY TO COME AND LUNCH WITH YOU ANY DAY AND TALK IT OVER.

Figure 8.3: South Eastern Railway's proposed Channel Tunnel project.⁶⁰³

Chapter six on the commuting experience highlighted that the suburban season ticket holder often felt taken for granted. The vexation of the early commuters with the vagaries of railway travel and the apparent indifference of the railway companies to their plight can be clearly heard in the letters pages of *The Times*. As one among many, a commuter from Hounslow wrote to the editor 'could you afford the space you would

⁶⁰³ "Rule Britannia" *Punch* Cartoon dated 15 July 1882, accessed 27 January 2020, via <https://www.gale.com/intl/c/19th-century-uk-periodicals>.

doubtless be overwhelmed with complaints of the shortcomings of the London and South Western Railway'⁶⁰⁴. He goes on to register his own complaint of 'a hundred season ticket holders on this part of the line ... to the extreme slowness of the trains, their want of punctuality, and the wretched state of their carriages'⁶⁰⁵. The LSCR were not exceptionally bad. As outlined in both chapters six and seven, railway companies did not see an obvious commercial opportunity in developing extensive suburban services. It was an attitude exacerbated by the inability of the railway companies to profit from holding land for suburban development themselves. The 1845 Land Clauses Consolidation Act had prohibited railway companies from holding land surplus to the construction requirements for more than ten years. Their revenue opportunities were limited solely to ticket sales and they complained of constructing a suburban railway that provided windfall profits to others. The resultant increase in land values had a further negative side-effect as they were saddled with high property rates levied by local communities. In addition there were greater expenses arising from operating short distance travel for a large numbers of passengers. As a contemporary commentator observed, these included 'heavy train loads and frequent stopping increasing the consumption of coal, the greater cost of coal in London, greater rates of pay in London, shorter working hours and larger number of stations'⁶⁰⁶. It was not a recipe for financial success in the eyes of most railway companies. The result was a relatively small-scale service aimed at the upper echelons of the middle class or those wishing to retire within easy reach of the attractions of London, rather than one for a wider section of society.

This limited interest of railway companies in developing and operating suburban commuter services was a major constraint on living outside or on London's periphery. It was a position compounded by the poor reputation for safety across the railway network. As analysed in chapter five on average there was an accident every other day somewhere in Britain from the 1850s to the 1870s. It was an issue that attracted

⁶⁰⁴ Letter to *The Times*, published 16 August 1870 p.8, from *The Times Digital Archive* accessed 22 January 2020.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁶ C. Grinling, *The Ways of Our Railways*, p.170.

Parliamentary intervention, but the railway companies' management resented the interference of the newly created Railway Inspectorate into their affairs. They complained to their shareholders of the onerous and unreasonable burden placed on the company of the inspectorate's recommendations for railway safety and were slow to implement them. As seen in chapter seven landowners and property developers were also frustrated by the inaction of the railway companies in promoting their suburban services, which in their view hindered their opportunities for residential development. Their common complaint expressed by 'a Landowner' in *The Times* was that 'there are capital building sites of large extent in my neighbourhood, on which extensive building operations were commenced, but there has not been a brick laid for years, and simply for this reason that the accommodation afforded by the railway is so indifferent'⁶⁰⁷. Against this background, the apparent reluctance of the sample of middle-class occupational groups to live too far from the centre of London makes logical and logistical sense.

Yet there was a further prejudice; a striking findings to be seen in the maps of commuters' residences was the preference for suburban living in certain geographical areas. Excluding those based in inner London, the largest concentrations of members of the Stock Exchange were to be found south of the Thames. This can be clearly seen in the table below (table 8.3) of the most favoured residential locations in outer London (6-10 miles from the Stock Exchange) and the Home Counties (11+ miles). In 1840 half of the top ten locations were to the north or east of the capital, but this quickly declined, with none in the top ten in either 1875 or 1890. While it was understandable that the Stock Exchange members would wish to avoid the industrial districts of East London, there was no obvious reason that East Croydon should be preferred over St Albans, or Surbiton over Harrow; other than the prosaic one that they were more easily accessible by the railway. In contemporary research on travel behaviour, it is well-established that the distance travelled to work is related to the

⁶⁰⁷ Letter to *The Times*, published 15 August 1870 p.5, from *The Times Digital Archive* accessed 22 January 2020.

time spent doing so, or put another way, there is a maximum amount of time that people are willing to spend each day commuting.

Stock Exchange Members - Most Popular Residential Locations				
Rank	1840	1860	1875	1890
1	Alexandra Palace	Croydon	Croydon	Croydon
2	Finchley Central	Surbiton	Norwood	Surbiton
3	Streatham	Sydenham	Surbiton	Streatham
4	Chigwell	Finchley	Beckenham	Beckenham
5	Hendon	Edmonton Green	Richmond	Brighton
6	Ponders End	Brighton	Addiscombe	Putney
7	Putney	Lee	Lee	Bromley South
8	Southall	Reigate	Sutton	Gipsy Hill
9	Sutton	Staines	Sydenham	Norwood
10	Sydenham	Alexandra Palace	Brighton	Wimbledon

Table 8.3: Favoured Residential Locations of Stock Exchange Members in Outer London and the Home Counties 1840-1890.⁶⁰⁸

In the Victorian period there was simply a better railway service from East Croydon and Surbiton, than St Albans or Harrow. It was not necessarily faster in terms of journey time to their respective London termini (as can be seen from figure 8.4 below), but crucially the railway termini of the southern and eastern railway companies (London Bridge and Waterloo in this example) were much closer to the Cities of London and Westminster than their northern and western counterparts (St Pancras and Paddington). The former were clearly more convenient destinations for the railway commuter heading to either the City of London or City of Westminster: an advantage backed up by more ‘rush hour’ trains.

⁶⁰⁸ Compiled from the Stock Exchange membership lists.

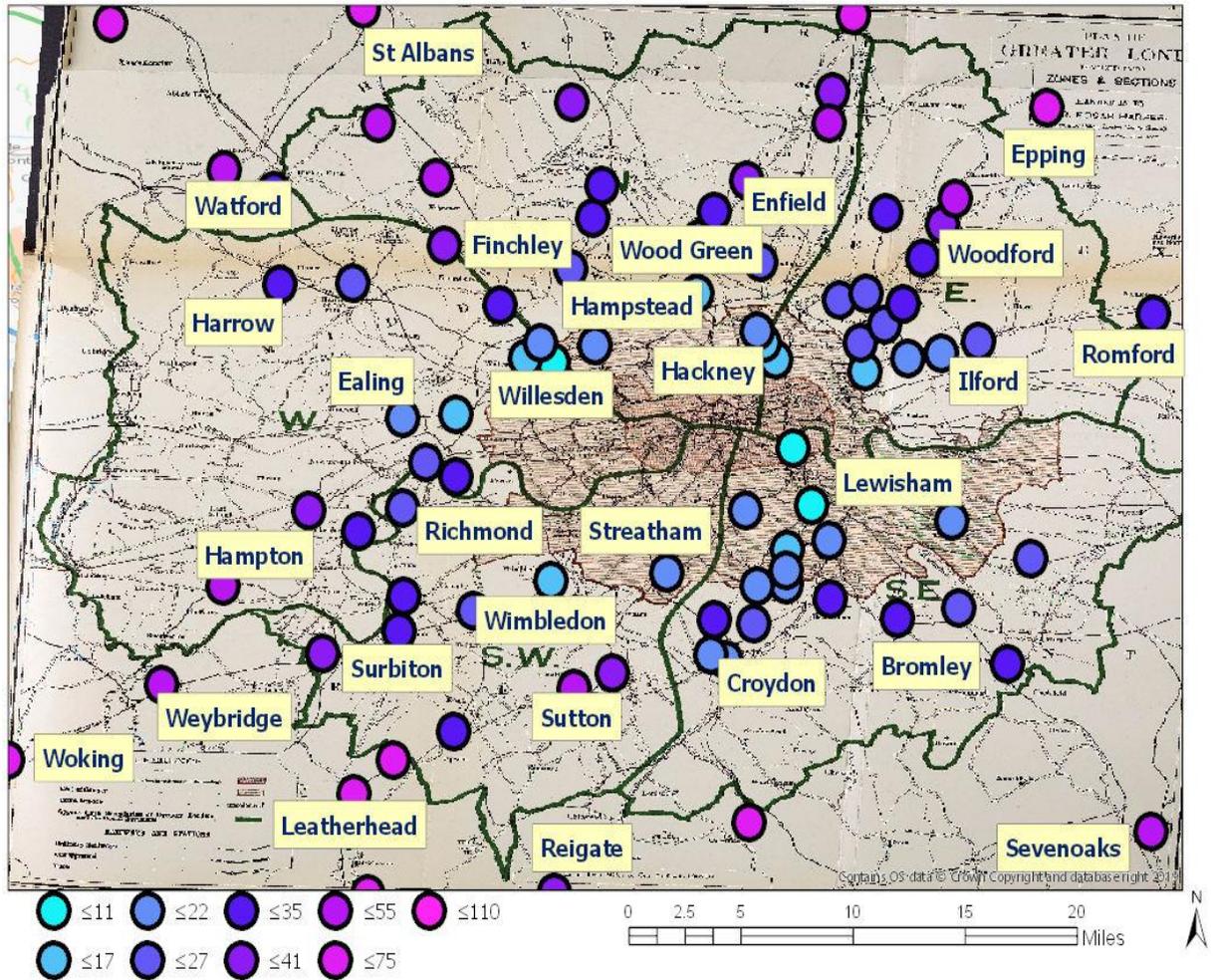


Figure 8.4: Commuting Time (in Minutes) to London Termini in 1875-76.⁶⁰⁹

Chapter five expanded on the reasons for this geographical inequality. Using the analogy of a wheel to represent London’s railway network, with the central districts as the hub, the spokes to the south and east were much more evident than those to the west and the north. By the end of the Victorian era, the railway companies with the largest commuter catchment area were to be found serving the south and east of the capital (the SECR, GER, LBSCR, and LSWR companies accounted for 74% of the total suburban stations in 1903 – see table 8.4 below).

⁶⁰⁹ Compiled from the public timetables of the various railway companies.

Number of Stations	In		Total
	London	London	
GWR	4	11	15
GCR	1		1
LNWR	12	7	19
Total West London	17	18	35
MID	6	8	14
GNR	4	24	28
NLR	18		18
Total North London	28	32	60
GER	27	61	88
LTS	1	7	8
Total East London	28	68	96
LBSCR	28	28	56
SECR	63	36	99
Total South & SE London	91	64	155
LSWR	12	38	50
Total South West London	12	38	50
Total	176	220	396

Table 8.4: Number of Suburban Railway Stations
in the London Metropolitan area in 1903.⁶¹⁰

This concentration on suburban services arose from their geographical focus. All of these railway companies were limited in their connections to other populous parts of the country. While they catered for inter-continental and excursion traffic to the coast, they served predominantly rural rather than industrial areas. Commuting traffic, rather than inter-city or freight traffic, was a necessary business priority and hence why they invested heavily in situating their London termini as close to the centre of London as possible. The converse of this position was experienced by the five major railway companies serving the west and north of London (GWR, MID, GCR, GNR and LNWR). Faced with the requirement to deliver strong and consistent financial returns to shareholders, they prioritised the development of other areas of their railway network. Unsurprisingly the result was that commuting services were less developed to the north and west of the capital than to the south and east.

⁶¹⁰ 1905 Royal Commission, Volume III, Appendix 6, Table 30.

Middle-class occupational groups were noticeably absent to the east of London on the residential maps of chapters three and four. It was a result that was at odds with the fact that the GER had the one of the largest suburban networks, with its terminus at Liverpool Street being the busiest station in the capital. As discussed in chapter seven there was a strong correlation between the nature of the available commuting service and the class composition of the suburbs. Despite the pressure of public opinion to relieve the over-crowding of the inner London districts, effective Parliamentary intervention in railway matters was rare. The exception was the GER, which was forced to accede to Parliament's request to facilitate suburban travel for the working classes, as a trade-off to fulfil its ambition to develop Liverpool Street railway station and so gain access into the heart of the City of London. The company was required to provide low-cost railway travel, most notably a 2d workmen's fare to Walthamstow and Edmonton. There were protestations by GER's management that this type of travel did not pay, nevertheless, the company evolved into a provider of workmen's trains and cheap fares which enabled the working-class residential areas to spread outwards into Essex. As a result the immediate eastern hinterland was largely lost to middle-class development. The middle-class commuter was forced further out, primarily along the route of the long distance services to Chelmsford and Southend.

Ward and Cannadine had argued over the timing of the emergence of these segregated suburbs in the Victorian era. Ward had seen the social segregation as arriving with the advent of mass transport in the latter part of the nineteenth century, whilst Cannadine had viewed it as pre-dating its impact. His 'the golden age of exclusive, middle-class suburbia'⁶¹¹ was between 1820 and 1870 and, in his view, it was the arrival of the railway that disrupted this status quo. The quantitative evidence of this thesis suggests that their views were not mutually exclusive. The railway complemented and extended the existing preferences of the middle class for segregated living, either at the centre or on the periphery. Yet the fares policies and service limitations of the

⁶¹¹ D. Cannadine, "Victorian cities, how different?", p.126.

major railway companies were instrumental in defining the nature and geography of suburban development in the outer suburbs and beyond. Once the reputation of a suburban area had become established, it proved to be remarkably enduring. In 1962, J Westergaard's evidence to the Royal Commission on Local Government asserted that 'the pattern of residential zoning, by class and income, in central and suburban London, still bears the imprint of the limited transport facilities which characterised the closing decades of the nineteenth century'⁶¹². The railways and the railway companies of the Victorian era both shaped the development on the suburbs and acted as a constraint on that growth.

Suburbia for All? The Commuting Experience in the Edwardian Era



Figure 8.5: London Commuter Train Crossing Holborn Viaduct c.1902.⁶¹³

⁶¹² Quoted by J. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, p.384.

⁶¹³ Postcard courtesy of the Tony Riley collection c.1902.

If the commuters of Victorian era experienced the hesitant evolution of the suburban railway service, the commuters of the Edwardian era, in contrast, witnessed its apogee. Ever greater numbers travelled by railway with the 1905 Royal Commission reporting an increase in passengers carried into London from 43 million in the year 1867 to 237 million in 1901⁶¹⁴. In fact there was an explosion of commuting across all forms of transport around London. The Royal Commission noted that in 1881 there were 270 million passenger journeys in and around London per year, but this had risen to 1,164 million by 1904 or 170 journeys per person per year⁶¹⁵. It was a new transport environment where, as illustrated above (figure 8.5), the horse had largely disappeared as a means of public travel. The arrival of new means of transport - the deep level underground lines, mechanised omnibuses and the electrification of the tram network - promised access to suburbia for all (see figure 8.6 below) and brought new competition to the railway's hitherto monopoly on longer distance commuting.

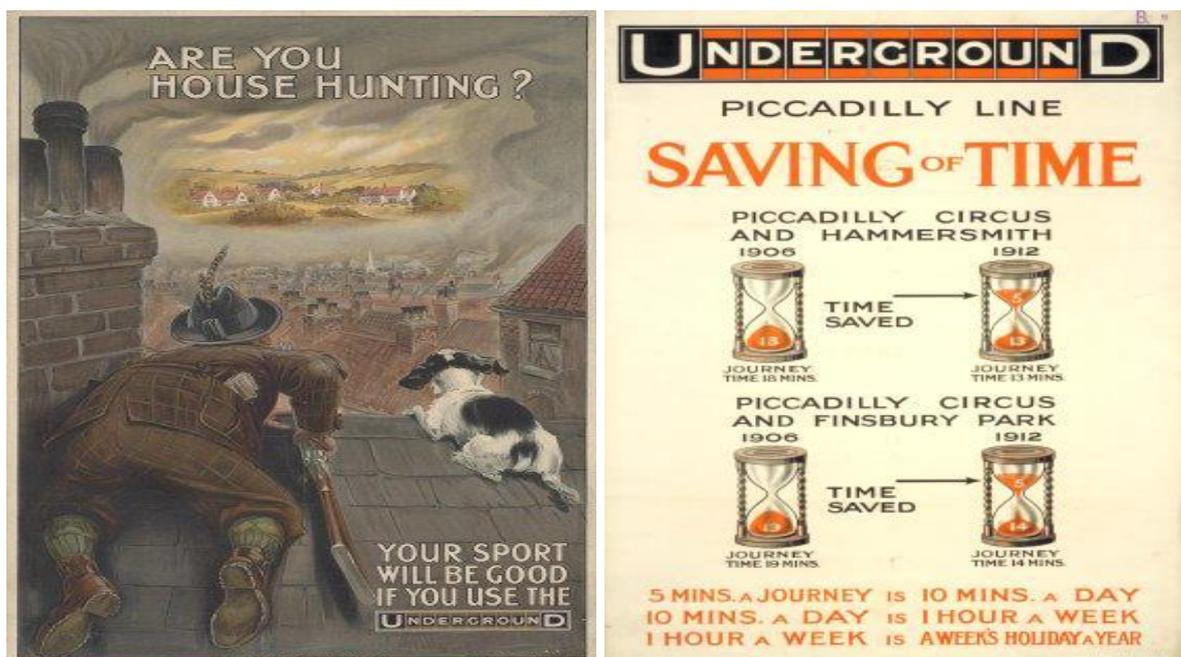


Figure 8.6: London Underground Advertising Posters from the Edwardian Period⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁴ 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic, Volume 1, p.116.

⁶¹⁵ 1905 Royal Commission on London Traffic, Volume 1, p.116.

⁶¹⁶ *Are you House Hunting?* (Poster, Haddock, 1912, ref 1983/4/187) and *Piccadilly line: Saving of Time* (poster, unknown, 1912, ref 1983/4/160) TfL online archive, accessed 13 January 2020, at <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/collections-online>.

This upsurge in personal mobility was the product both of transport improvements, and also the continued growth of London and the attraction of its suburbs. Fitzgerald's 1893 account of London and its suburbs recorded that 'an ever-growing, ever-absorbing London' now numbered 'nearly seven hundred thousand houses and buildings spread over some seven hundred miles'⁶¹⁷. Chapter seven highlighted that the fastest growing areas were the outer suburbs. This was a new style of living, different from both the urban and rural environment. Hapgood noted how these changes found expression in Victorian and Edwardian literature. In her view 'the proliferation of writing about the suburbs ... began to engage with the suburbs as a qualitatively different kind of social terrain, creating a new culture and consciousness.'⁶¹⁸ This was a reflection of the fact that the horizontal spread of London began to challenge the social structure of the capital's periphery. As the examples of Beckenham, Bexleyheath and Bromley in chapter seven highlighted, suburban middle-class communities found their own voice in the latter part of the nineteenth century. One key area of this new-found self-assertiveness was the demand for better transport connections. The railway companies gradually recognised the commercial opportunity of the suburban market, and so became more inclined to accommodate these demands. In combination, these drivers helped fuel the growth of the outer suburbs.

As described in chapter five, there was a realisation that suburban traffic could not be adequately accommodated on the original main trunk lines. Additional lines of track, suburban loop lines and more and longer station platforms were built. Improved rolling stock and better station facilities for commuters also appeared. Total passenger numbers rose steadily, though virtually all of the growth was in the form of additional third class travel (see figure 8.7 below), with first and second class ticket sales either static or declining. This was assisted by the increased affordability of the suburban

⁶¹⁷ P. Fitzgerald, *London City Suburbs as they are today* (London: Leadenhall Press Ltd, 1893), accessed 3 April 2020, via <https://archive.org/details/cu31924028062739>, p.16.

⁶¹⁸ L. Hapgood "'The New Suburbanites' and Contested Class Identities in the London Suburbs 1880-1900" in R. Webster, ed., *Expanding Suburbia; reviewing suburban narratives* (Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2000), p.31.

railway. The fare increases of the 1860s were replaced by fixed rates per mile from the 1870s, which remained largely unchanged until the Edwardian era. As real wages gradually rose, it brought railway commuting within financial reach of increasing numbers of London's middle-class workers.

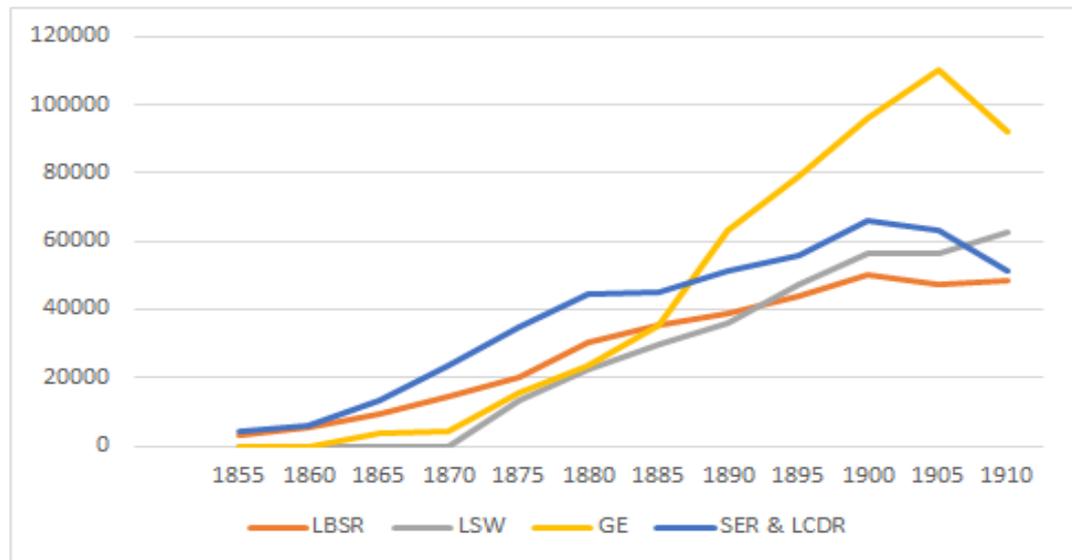


Figure 8.7: Ticket Sales for Third Class Passengers 1855 -1910.⁶¹⁹

This thesis sought to explore the relationship between the railway and the outer suburbs and it was in this period that railway commuting moved from being exclusive to the commonplace. It required a change of attitude by the railway companies towards the railway commuter, although in some cases their management embraced travel for the mass market with apparent reluctance. As Watkin chided his shareholders ‘you have always urged us to give more accommodation to the working-man, and we have built better third-class accommodation, and done everything we could to accommodate him – and the result is, that not only the working-man, but the clergyman, the solicitor, and the shopkeeper, are going third-class instead of first’⁶²⁰. Noticeably the number of complaints published by *The Times* declined from the 1880s. It was a signal that railway commuting had come of age, both in that

⁶¹⁹ Table compiled from the Railway Companies annual financial returns.

⁶²⁰ South Eastern Railway General Half Year Meeting, 23 July 1885 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/426).

complaints were less newsworthy and that railway companies had finally started to come to terms with running large-scale operations. A further indicator of this progress was the fall in railway accident rates from the 1880s. Gradually new signalling systems, better brakes for both engines and coaches and improved staff training were introduced and railway travel became a safer, more routine means of transport. The foundations of a commuting service suitable for greater numbers and a larger section of society were being put in place. By the end of the nineteenth century the earlier relative indifference of the major railway companies was being replaced by a more progressive attitude towards suburban railway operations.

It led to a shift in commuting practices, which was seen in residential maps of the middle-class occupational groups of the Edwardian era in chapter three.

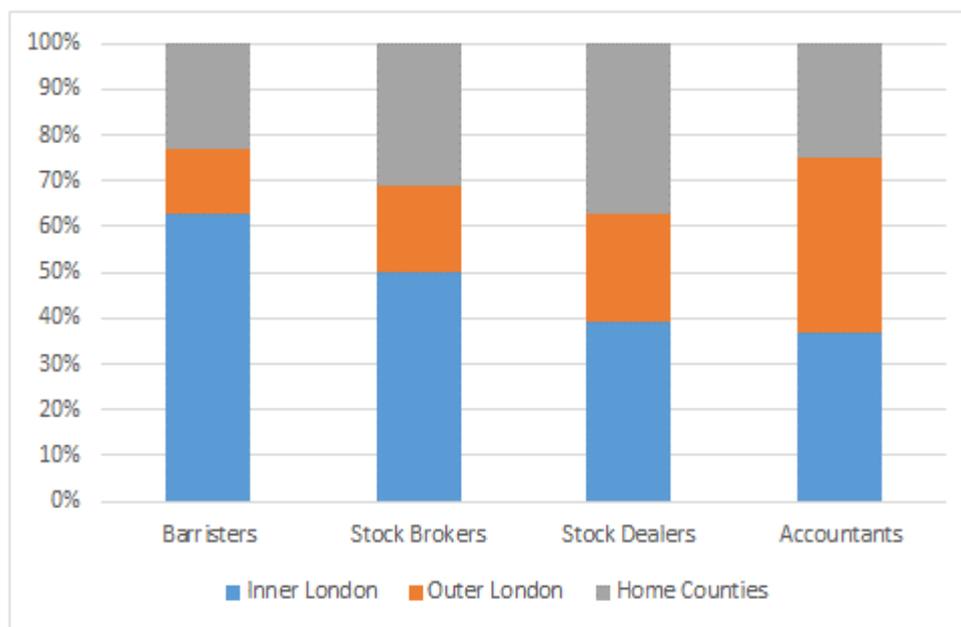


Table 8.5: Residential Location of Professional Groups between 1902 -11.⁶²¹

The results show that, excluding the barristers, who remained resident in the salubrious districts of west London, the other professional occupational groups (table 8.5 above) were gradually gravitating towards London's periphery and the Home Counties. Similarly the clerks, further down the spectrum of middle-class workers,

⁶²¹ Table compiled from the 1902 Post Office Directory, 1910 Stock Exchange Members' List and 1911 Chartered Accountants Members Directory.

were abandoning the inner London districts. Their outward dispersal was more marked as they could not afford to live in the affluent districts around Hyde Park, with the percentage living within 5 miles of their place of work falling to 40% or less (table 8.6 below).

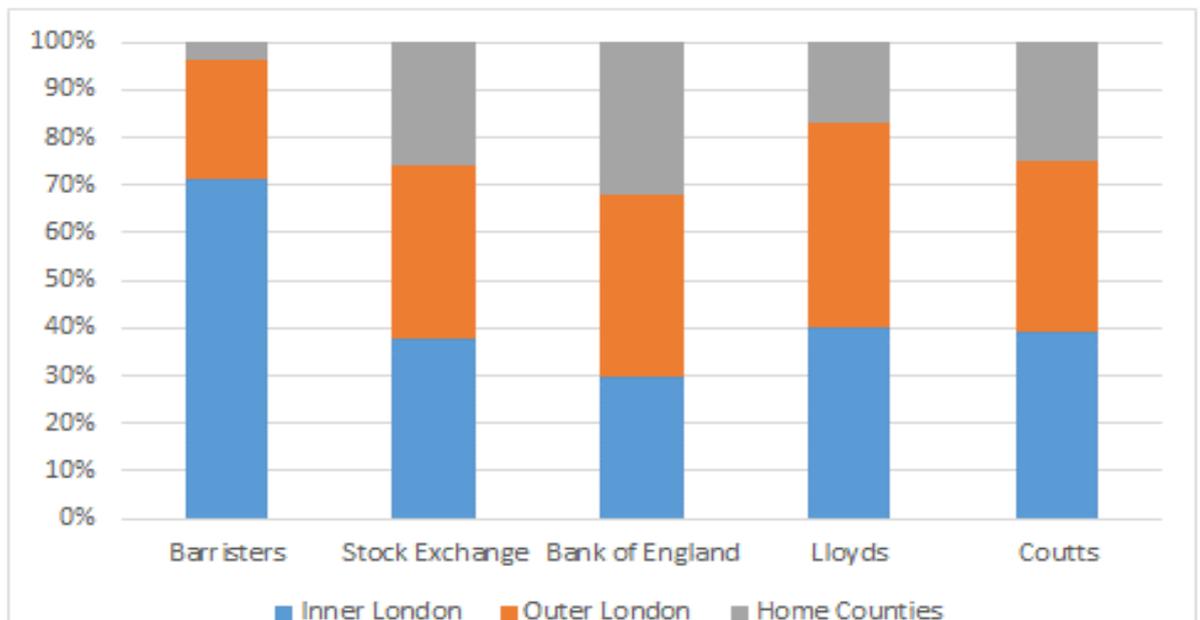


Table 8.6: Residential Location of Clerks from 1911 Census.⁶²²

The ‘pre-modern’, ‘walking’ city of Dickens, had been replaced by Geddes’ spreading coral reef, and the segregated spatial pattern that had emerged in the Victorian era had become fully realised in the Edwardian period. The sample populations of chapter three were now concentrated in the high class residential districts of inner west London or the suburbs and commuter towns in and around the periphery of London. This evolution of outer suburban areas from bourgeois retreats to substantial middle-class communities allowed the lower middle-class clerks to inhabit many of the same residential locations on London’s periphery as the more affluent professional workers. As can be seen from the two tables below (tables 8.7 & 8.8) constructed from the sample populations for these two groups, there was a clear commonality in their preferred choice of residence.

⁶²² Table compiled from the 1911 Census records combined with staff records of the Bank of England, Lloyds Bank Head Office and Coutts Bank.

Professional Occupational Groups - Most Popular Residential Locations in Outer London					
Rank	Barristers	Solicitors	Stock Brokers	Stock Dealers	Accountants
1	Wimbledon	Ealing	Putney	Woking	Alexandra Palace
2	Hove	Wimbledon	Alexandra Palace	Bromley	Streatham
3	Richmond	Bromley South	Streatham	Beckenham	Putney
4	Brighton	Surbiton	Surbiton	East Croydon	Beckenham
5	Woking	Richmond	Finchley	Surbiton	East Croydon
6	Blackheath	Beckenham	Westcliff	Ealing	Bromley
7	Bromley South	Twickenham	Woking	Sutton	Wimbledon
8	Chiswick	Sydenham	Bromley South	Westcliff	Enfield
9	Eastbourne	Blackheath	Weybridge	Wimbledon	Lee
10	Harrow & Wealdstone	Chiswick	Wimbledon	Sevenoaks	Purley

Table 8.7: Favoured Residential Locations of Professional Occupations in Edwardian Outer London.⁶²³

Clerks - Most Popular Residential Locations in Outer London and Home Counties				
Rank	Barristers	Stock Exchange	Bank of England	Lloyds
1	Southfields	Wallington	Streatham	Harlesden
2	Mortlake	Ealing Broadway	Surbiton	Ilford
3	Tooting	Finchley Central	Twickenham	Thornton Heath
4	Wimbledon	East Croydon	Norwood Junction	Brentwood
5	Barnes	Alexandra Palace	Wallington	Harrow and Wealdston
6	Hendon	Richmond	Chiswick	Wimbledon
7	Beckenham Junction	Streatham	Alexandra Palace	Beckenham Junction
8	Chiswick	Wimbledon	Anerley	Cricklewood
9	Epsom	Ilford	Ealing Broadway	East Croydon
10	Gravesend	Bromley South	High Barnet	Finchley Central

Table 8.8: Favoured Residential Locations of Clerical Groups in Edwardian Outer London.⁶²⁴

This expansion of commuting possibilities extended beyond provision solely for the middle classes. As covered in chapter five, faced with the extreme overcrowding of the poorer inner London districts, central government pushed the railway companies to provide workmen's trains. Initially they felt able to resist this pressure. Watkin predicted that 'even fortified by Mr Gladstone's advice to 'look to the democracy',

⁶²³ Table compiled from the 1902 Post Office Directory, 1910 Stock Exchange Members' List and 1911 Chartered Accountants Members Directory.

⁶²⁴ Table compiled from the 1911 Census returns and staff records.

they will find, as everyone else will find, that there is an inevitable element of cost attaching to railway work, and that fares below a certain line won't pay'⁶²⁵. Yet the ongoing competition between the major railway companies and the introduction of compulsory low fares by the 1883 Cheap Fares Act gradually undermined this position. The pioneering low cost fares of the GER, the egalitarian flat fares of the early Underground lines and the spread of workmen's services all made inroads into the middle-class monopoly of longer distance suburban travel. Commuting had been brought within the reach of the working classes, yet the residential mapping of working-class occupations cautions against the presumption that all sections benefited from this. Green's sample of the tailors of Henry Poole indicated a dispersal towards the suburbs by these members of the labour aristocracy. This pattern was not followed with more manual occupations. The maps of stevedores and workers at the Royal Arsenal, showed a heavy concentration around their place of work, and even the less strenuous occupations of policemen and Harrods shop workers predominantly lived within walking distance. Only the Post Office sorters lived at a distance from their place of work, and then they were concentrated along the GNR and GER's low fare routes. With the exceptions of these parts of the suburban network it was not to be the railway that allowed the working classes to fully access suburbia; it was new forms of transport - the deep level underground, the mechanised omnibus and the electric tram.

As highlighted in chapter seven, the arrival of the latter was viewed as the harbinger of decline by the middle classes. 'Exsul', a resident of Streatham deplored the possible arrival of the tram 'because universal experience has shown that trams bring accompaniments and sequels which ruin a neighbourhood for residential purposes. ... The retirement of the place is invaded, the high road becomes noisy and crowded, rough visitors are more frequent, cheap and nasty shops spring up ... then the exodus begins'⁶²⁶. *The Times* commented in 1904 on this phenomenon that 'all means of cheap transport increase exceedingly; and it becomes every day more easy to cover a

⁶²⁵ South Eastern Railway General Half Year Meeting, 23 January 1873 (National Archives, RAIL1110/425).

⁶²⁶ Letter to *The Times*, published 21 April 1892 p.14, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 January 2020.

considerable distance in a short time at small expense'⁶²⁷. As a result 'the habit of living at a distance from the scene of work has spread from the merchant and the clerk to the artisan, the suburbs become more and more the abode of working London, the man of comfortable income no longer cares for suburban life; a small flat within a cab drive of Charing Cross and a cottage some twenty to forty miles out take the place of the spacious villa with its four or five acres at Wimbledon or Clapham'⁶²⁸.

Along with the middle classes, the railway companies were forced to retreat from serving inner London. The chairman of the South-Eastern & Chatham Railway, Cosmo Bonsor, lamented that 'it has been suggested that we should compete with the tramways ... it is impossible for us to compete. ... The City merchant, City clerk and many of those employed in the City warehouses are now moving further from the centre where their business is established, and to cater for that outer suburban traffic has been our policy'⁶²⁹. This statement affirmed the long standing inter-relationship between the middle classes and the railway companies. Despite increasingly catering for working-class travel, first and foremost railway commuting was the preserve of the middle class even into the Edwardian era. With cheap fares only available before 8am, the prime 'rush hour' travelling time remained their segregated preserve.

This thesis asked whether the outer suburbs represented a distinctive phase and form of suburban growth. The question has to be answered in the affirmative. While inner London had become a truly mobile city (with some exceptions around the dockyards and in the East End), the outer suburbs and the Home Counties presented a different pattern. The percentage of commuters was much lower beyond the reach of the underground, tram and bus services, and also the workmen's trains, as can be seen in the maps of commuting activity (figure 8.8 for men and figure 8.9 for women) derived from the 1921 Census. For both men and women counted as working in the Census,

⁶²⁷ Editorial in *The Times*, published 25 June 1904 p.8, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 January 2020.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ South Eastern & Chatham Railway General Half Year Meeting, 30 January 1909 (National Archives, RAIL 1110/428).

commuting levels were high in the inner London districts as well as the first ring of surrounding suburbs – for example Ealing, Enfield, Leyton, Woodford and Wood Green. All of these districts were served by multiple modes of transport. Further afield, the number of commuters as a percentage of the working population fell significantly. Towns on London’s periphery – Reigate, Romford, Sevenoaks, St Albans, Watford and Weybridge – were only connected by the railway and the higher cost of travel was a deterrent to large-scale commuting.

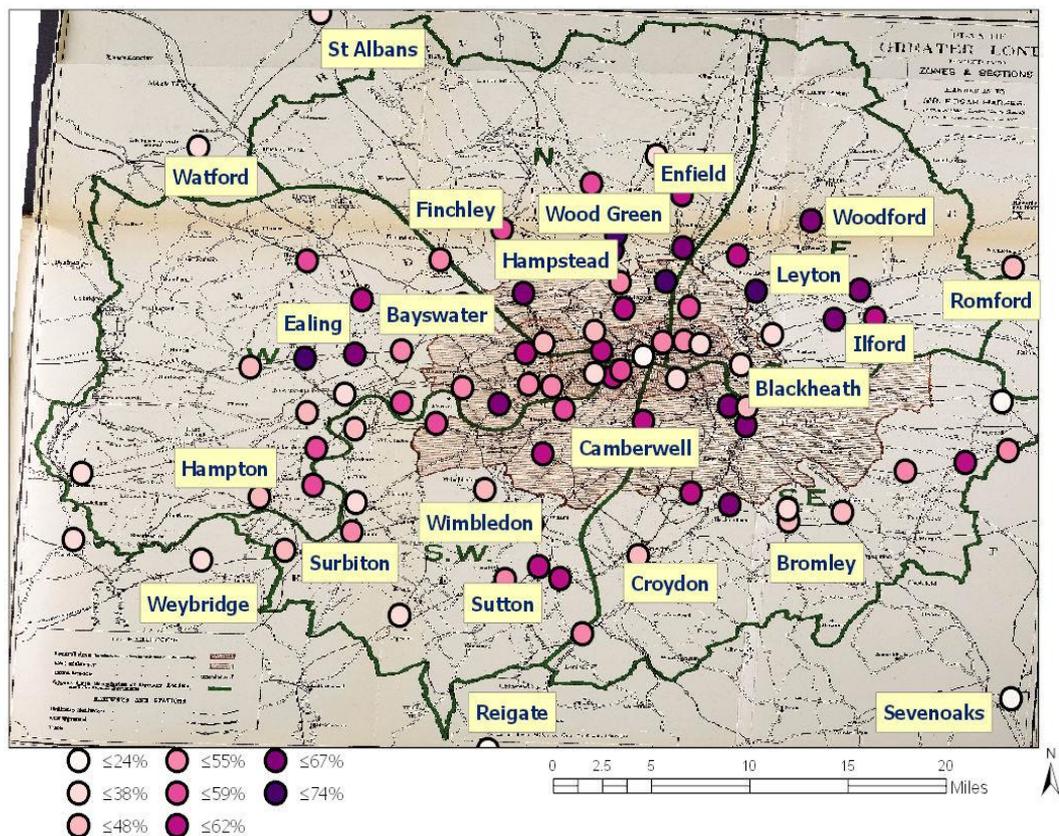


Figure 8.8: Percentage of Men Working outside their Residential District in 1921 (as measured against the total population of working men in their residential district).⁶³⁰

⁶³⁰ Map derived from 1921 Census summary records for the County of London, Part III, Table 2 accessed 13 August 2019 from <http://www.histpop.org>. This map is similar to figure 7.14, except that the percentages have been calculated using the working male population as a denominator, instead of the total male population of each residential district.

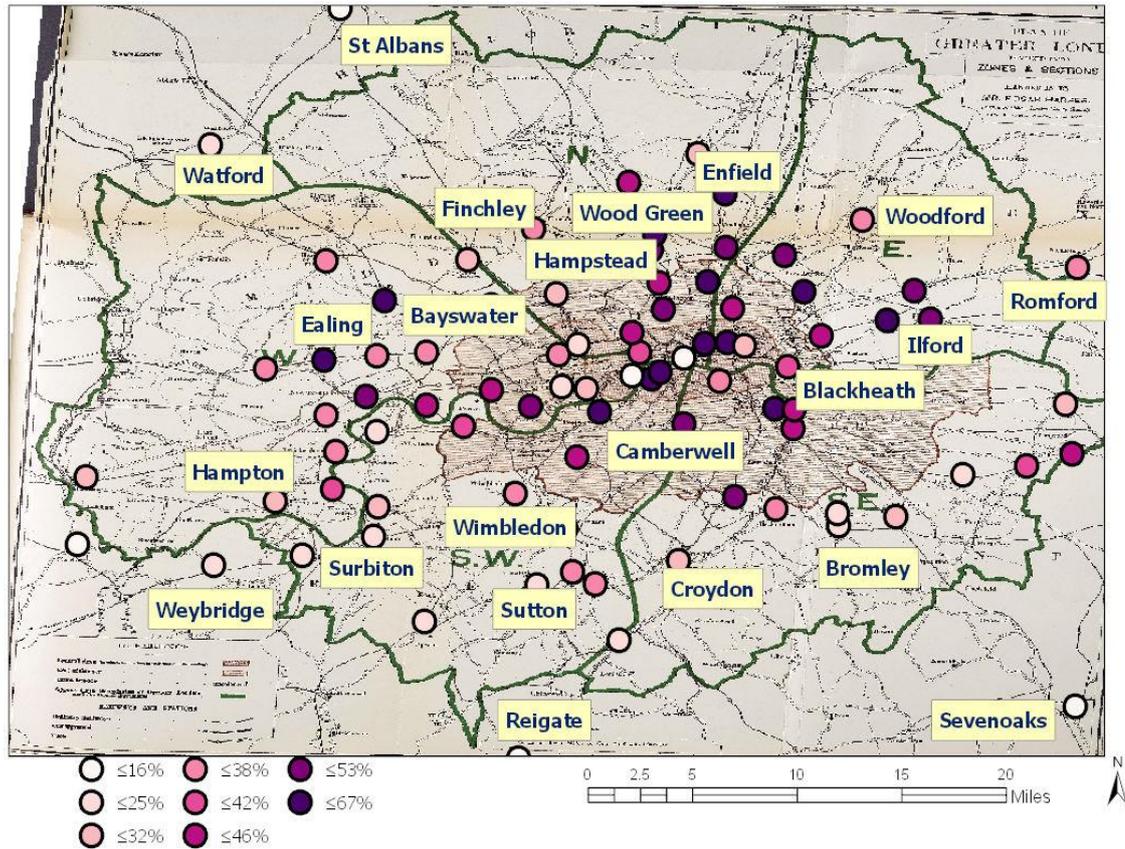


Figure 8.9: Percentage of Women Working outside their Residential District in 1921 (as measured against the total population of working women in their residential district).⁶³¹

The point was also made in chapter seven, that there were far more men were commuters than women. At a summary level, in inner London over 40% of men and 15% of women (previously measured in figures 7.14 and 7.15 as a percentage of the total enumerated population) worked outside their residential district or borough. In the outer suburbs the numbers fell to less than 15% of men and 4% of women. Contrary to Thompson’s image of dormitory settlements, commuting from railway suburbs was the exception, not the rule for their residents. Instead a pyramidal structure developed, with establishment of local shopkeepers and domestic servants, builders and estate agents to service and support the households of the wealthy

⁶³¹ Map derived from 1921 Census summary records for the County of London, Part III, Table 2 accessed 13 August 2019 from <http://www.histpop.org>.

commuting few. It was in these segregated spaces that Cannadine's flight of the middle classes finally came to rest.

This thesis aimed to place itself within the methodological framework of the expanding field of mobility studies. Sheller and Urry's 'mobilities paradigm' asserted the centrality of all forms of movement, from people to goods and ideas, to the social and physical structure of society. As noted in the literature review, there has been some dispute over the meaning and application of this phrase to the humanities, and the study of history in particular. Yet, as Pooley wrote 'there is much to be gained by transport historians developing stronger links with mobility concepts and ... to consider more fully the role that different transport modes played in shaping the everyday experiences of migration and mobility in the past'⁶³². In essence the emphasis should be shifted from the history of transport as a noun to transport as a verb. A central theme of this thesis has been the inequalities in access to railway commuting, determined by the different availability of suburban rail services around the capital, logistical restrictions in the provision of a viable commuting timetable and class distinctions in the cost and timing of its service. It suggested that the relationship, found in modern transport studies, of a limit to the amount of time commuters were willing to devote to their journey to work has clear historical validity.

The thesis argued further that the arrival of commuters had a major influence on the development of the outer suburbia of London, shaping it according to their numbers and class background. The thesis also explored how the relationship between the railway and other modes of transport affected levels of mobility. It suggested that the railway companies developed local monopolies around London, which held back commuting activity. Wider social mobility was only achieved through the disruptive impact of the new transport technologies in the Edwardian period. The economic models proposed by Hebling, Redding and Sturm⁶³³ to map commuting patterns

⁶³² C. Pooley, "Connecting Historical Studies of Transport, Mobility and Migration", *Journal of Transport History*, Volume 38, Issue 2, (June 2017), p.254.

⁶³³ S. Hebling, S. Redding, D. Sturm, "The Making of the Modern Metropolis: Evidence from London".

between 1840 and 1921, inevitably, failed to fully capture the complexities of the historical development of increasing separation between home and work. Rather than a smooth transition from a ‘walking city’ to high levels of urban mobility, the pace of change was an uneven one, both chronologically and geographically around London. Instead the research patterns of chapters three and four point to a paradoxical conclusion. The Victorian railway age transformed long distance travel; all sections of society enjoyed an unprecedented increase in levels of mobility with the advent of inter-city expresses and excursion trains. In contrast, at the level of the daily journey to work widespread mobility was much slower to be realised. As the explanatory chapters of the thesis revealed, suburban mobility brought a threat to both the social order and to the economic rationale of the railway companies. As a result of the constraints imposed by the railway companies, railway commuting only slowly became part of the quotidian existence.

For all its difficulties in development, suburban railway commuting represented a new phenomenon in public transport; one which combined both the ordinary and the extraordinary. Its trick was to fulfil an everyday function of providing the means to travel to work; but for workers in their thousands. From being the by-product of the urban express service, the commuter network grew into Grinling’s ‘suburban incubuses’⁶³⁴ of duplicate and triplicate lines. It enabled the suburban dream to be the pursuit of the many and not just the wealthy few. It facilitated the construction of the classic suburban semi-detached home and in the process it transformed the spatial and social landscape of London. Yet this history of everyday mobility has been overlooked or neglected and the histories of this multitude of commuters have largely been lost. It was the ambition of this thesis to rescue the real-life equivalents of the archetypal fictional Victorian commuter, Mr Pooter, from their collective obscurity and they should have the last word. Their collective view was perhaps embodied in the correspondence in *The Times* by a ‘‘another happy man’, a clerk in a ‘most

⁶³⁴ C. Grinling, *The History of the Great Northern Railway: 1845-1902*.

respectable London office'⁶³⁵, who found 'he was able to afford to live in a suburb about six miles distant with his family and two servants and commute by second class season ticket'

⁶³⁵ Letter to *The Times*, published 19 January 1858 p.7, from *The Times Digital Archive*, accessed 22 January 2020.

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Staff records – held at the Hammersmith Road site as a collection of staff cards for the period 1890 - 1920

Hoare & Co Archives

H J Tilden “Unpublished Reminiscences” copied in c.1930 by L Bennett
Staff records – held in the form of staff signature books from 1841

Institute of Chartered Accountants

Membership Records – held as part of the collection of the ICAEW’s Library at Moorgate Place, London.

Middle Temple Archives

Lord Linley, “Memoirs”, Middle Temple collection ref GD42/2
L D Powles, “Memoirs”, Middle Temple collection ref GD2

Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust Archives

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