

## What might have been

**B**etween the late 1840s and the 1890s Britain had seen the establishment of a national railway system. But by 1890 that momentum had slowed down considerably and the railway engineers then turned their attention to the improvement of existing stations. Emsworth's first station had been built in 1847 by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Company. In order to do so it needed to ask permission to cross North Street, a parish road, as recorded on 9 April 1846 in the parish of Warblington with Emsworth Vestry Book. This was granted subject to a station being built on the west side of North Street "with accommodation and appearance equal to that at Fareham at least (sic) in the land of Mr Hale to the south of the railway"... . So on Monday, 15 March 1847, Emsworth station opened to a large queue of would-be passengers.

As well as two platforms and a small booking hall entrance, Emsworth station had an adjacent signal box, a large animal yard, sheds and a coal storage depot with its own sidings. According to the Railway Clearing House handbook of Railway Stations, it stated that the types of traffic Emsworth could handle included goods, passengers and parcels, furniture vans, carriages and machines on wheels, livestock, horse boxes, prize cattle and vans – and reception for these had been provided accordingly. Some twenty years later two cottages were built, one for the stationmaster and his family and the second for a member of his staff at nos. 102 and 104 North Street. Luckily these escaped the damage caused by lightning which burnt the station down in 1870 and although a much larger station was planned in 1872, what was provided was still quite basic (plan).

Another twenty years on in 1891 again plans for larger facilities were drawn up and again they came to nothing.

However, by 1896 Emsworth residents clearly now thought that the earlier station provision had long been outgrown and a petition was presented at the London Bridge LB&SCR headquarters on behalf of some 270 townspeople, for improved station accommodation. As a result of the petition it was promised that the Company's Engineer would shortly visit Emsworth to evaluate what improvements were thought necessary. In the same year it was announced that an entrance to the subway on the north side of the station would be made, allowing safer access to Platform 1, and that the old lamp house and other buildings adjoining the down platform would be removed, thereby providing better platform accommodation. However, it took a further three years before a waiting room on the down platform and other improvements were put in hand.

As everyone knows, over the years the whole railway network has been nationalised, Emsworth's two signal boxes and a WH Smith's bookstall on the down platform have come and gone as well as all the station's goods sheds and storage, but improvements go on. Only in the last five years the station has benefited from the establishment of 'Carriages', serving light refreshments, a brightly painted, spruced-up and pleasant waiting room, toilet provision, ticket machines, disabled access to both up and down platforms and new bicycle sheds at either side. In keeping with the times the station's personnel has shrunk from the provision of a full time uniformed stationmaster, porters, signalmen, and railway and telegraph clerks to a part-time ticketman, not dissimilar to other small stations all over Britain, but still able to provide an efficient and useful service for Emsworth's townspeople.

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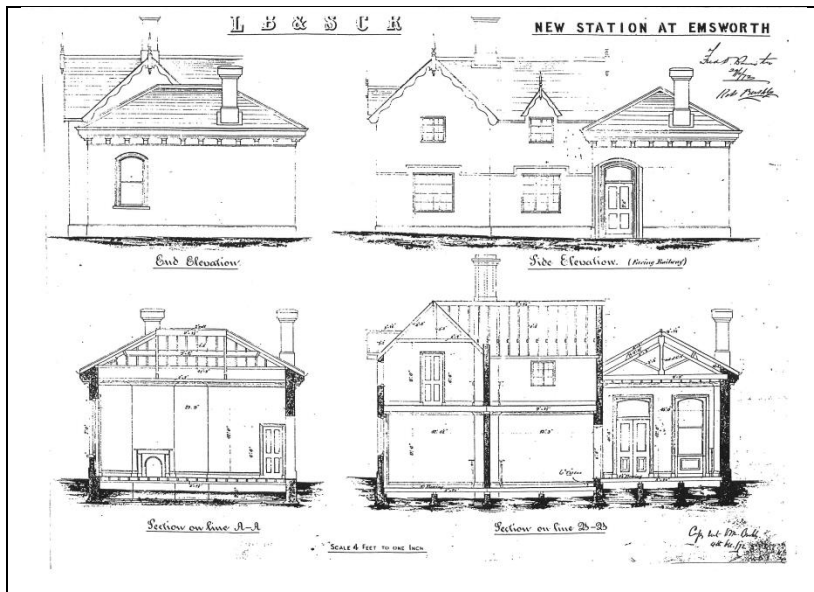


Figure 1: The plan of 1872

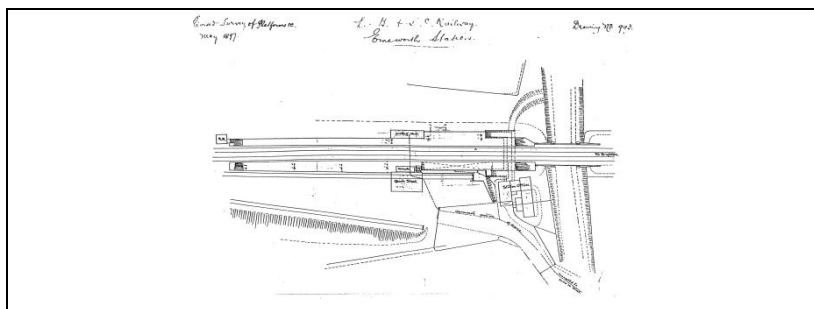


Figure 2: Revised survey of platforms. May 1897