

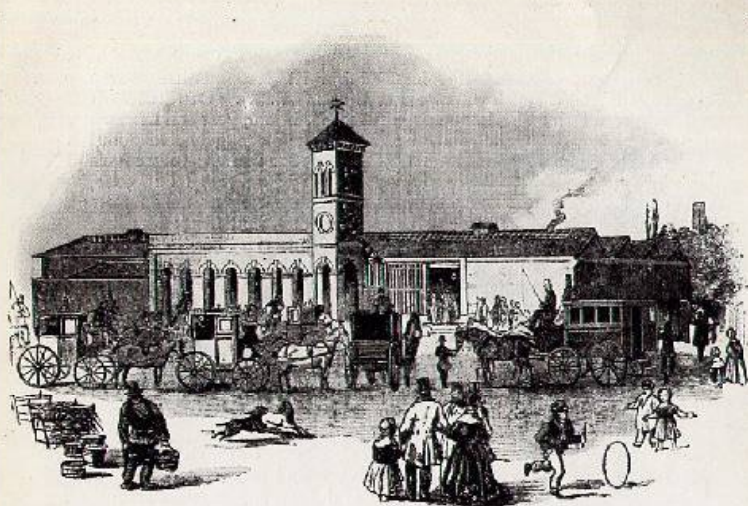
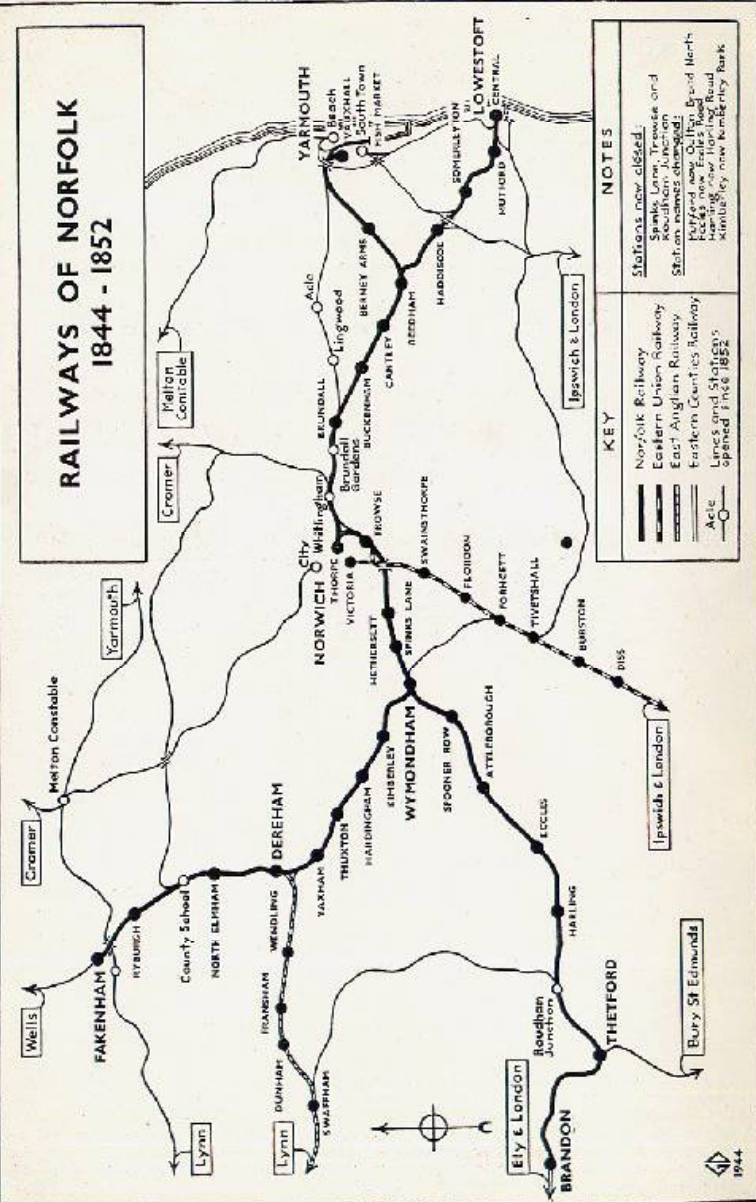


THE FIRST RAILWAY IN
NORFOLK



PRICE ONE SHILLING

RAILWAYS OF NORFOLK 1844 - 1852



Norwich Station in 1845

"Illustrated London News"

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Soon after the opening in 1825 of the Stockton & Darlington Railway—ancestor of the L.N.E.R.—people in Norwich were thinking of a rail connection between their city and London, but this was not completed until 1845 and the first railway into Norwich, which was also the first in Norfolk, was destined to be the line from Yarmouth, which was brought into public use on 1st May 1844, having been formally opened the preceding day with the usual civic banquet and post-prandial toasts.

In the year 1834 Messrs. Dimes & Boyman of 18 Austin Friars, London and Sewell, Blake, Keith & Blake of Norwich issued a prospectus for a proposed "Grand Eastern Counties Railway" from London to Norwich and Yarmouth. Therein were reviewed the benefits and advantages of railway communication and some interesting evidence was given of the stimulating effect the railways then existing had had upon passenger travel and freight transport. "The Stockton & Darlington Railway," it was stated, "has actually multiplied the intercourse between these two towns forty-fold. The Liverpool & Manchester Railway conveys now, on an average, about 1,200 passengers daily; which is triple the number ever conveyed on the common road during the best days of the coaching system. The quantity of goods transported on this railway has also been constantly on the increase, and falls now little short of 200,000 tons per annum, though it has had to contend in this branch of its business with an unusually strong canal opposition." An example further

north was provided by the Edinburgh & Dalkeith Railway (one of the Scottish ancestors of the L.N.E.R.). Of this line it was stated that the last returns revealed, in one year, an increase of nearly 100 per cent. in the number of passengers and about 30 per cent. in goods, the figures for 1832 being : passengers 91,814, goods 61,000 tons ; and for 1833 : passengers 160,000, goods 80,000 tons.

Turning to speed, the prospectus stated succinctly "The rate of speed on the best horse roads of the kingdom has rarely exceeded ten miles an hour ; on the Liverpool & Manchester Railway the ordinary rate is twenty miles an hour." Finally it was recorded that the poor rates of the three counties of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk amounted to the enormous [*sic*] sum of about one million per annum, and were increasing every year. "It would be difficult to suggest," it was said, "any undertaking so likely to put a check to this overwhelming evil as one like the present, which would give a new impulse to every branch of industry—furnish directly or indirectly employment for many thousands of hands—and take a large share of the burden of the poor rates on itself ; thus multiplying prodigiously the resources of the district, while at the same time it diminished the demands upon them." There must be few railway officers or shareholders to-day who regard the large sums paid by the



Yarmouth (Vauxhall) Station

Exterior

Photograph taken in 1933



Yarmouth (Vauxhall) Station

Interior

Photograph taken in 1933

railways in local rates as a benefit to anybody except the local authorities or who know of many cases where the advent of the railway has materially reduced the poor rates!

The prospectus of the Eastern Counties Railway (it soon dropped the "Grand") met with an encouraging reception, although some trouble was inevitably experienced from various people whose property was to be acquired or encroached upon. The capital was set down as £1,600,000 in shares of £50 and £25 each and the map accompanying the prospectus, drawn by John Braithwaite, who was to become the first engineer of the Company, shows that the route proposed from London to Norwich and Yarmouth via Chelmsford, Colchester and Ipswich is substantially the same as that which eventually became an important main line of the L.N.E.R.

The Bill for the proposed Eastern Counties Railway was presented to Parliament on 19th February 1836, being introduced into the House of Commons by Sir Charles Broke Vere, M.P. A tremendous struggle ensued, in which the claims of two rival lines had to be overcome, as well as the opposition of some landowners had to be overcome, but eventually all objections were disposed of and although the Bill also had a difficult time in the House of Lords, it finally received the Royal Assent on 4th July 1836.