

THE RAILWAY COMES TO BIRCHINGTON

By Alfred Walker

The Railway to Birchington was opened in October 1863.

The Railway was an extension of the London Chatham and Dover railway from Faversham and Herne Bay. At first it was really a branch line – the main line ran from Faversham to Dover. The services provided were only second class railway services. The line from Chatham to Faversham was opened 1st January 1858. At first it was a single line.

The line was then extended to Whitstable by 1860 and reached Herne Bay a few weeks later. The extension to Margate was opened in September 1863 but public services did not begin until October 1863. Keble's' Gazette has the time tables of the London Chatham & Dover Railway printed each week.

In March 1870 there were 4 up trains a day – week days –. The first train left Birchington at 7.38a.m and went via Chatham to Ludgate Hill arriving at 10.10a.m and at Victoria at 10.08a.m. There were 7 down trains each week day. The first reached Birchington at 10.05a.m and at Margate at 10.15a.m.

On Sundays there were 4 trains each way. The 3rd class fare on a cheap fast train from Margate to London, return was 7s. In 1867 the fare from Margate to Birchington 3rd class was 3d.

Before the present brick bridge over the railway near the station, there was a level crossing and then, for a short while, a wooden bridge.

Westgate station was opened in 1871.

