

THE PROVENANCE OF BRIGHTON'S RAILWAY WORKERS, 1841-61

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When a railway was opened, a need arose for employees, and the number of employees grew as that railway attracted more passengers and freight. Some men were required in country areas as linesmen or porters at small stations, but most were employed at major foci such as terminal and junction stations or railway engineering works. At such a focus, where were the railway employees drawn from? What proportions came from the immediate vicinity, the rural hinterland and distant places? The proportions would have varied from one railway centre to another, influenced by the site itself, the character of the hinterland and the distance from other centres of population. At one extreme were large cities like London and Birmingham with many suitable employees among their own citizens; at the other extreme were railway engineering works established in small settlements like Crewe, Swindon and Wolverton where most employees perforce came from a distance. This article examines the case of Brighton, which falls between these two extremes, in that the terminus station and engineering works were situated on the fringes of an existing resort town with a population in 1841 of 46,000.¹

The London to Brighton railway was opened in 1841, and by 1847 the Brighton terminus was also serving a West Coast line to Portsmouth and an East Coast line via Lewes to Hastings, with a branch to Newhaven. Both passenger and goods traffic expanded rapidly during the two decades 1841-61, requiring a growth in the number of employees. (The network as it existed in 1861 can be seen in Figure 3 below.) From the start there were limited facilities in Brighton for the repair and maintenance of rolling stock, but until 1846 the major engineering depot was at New Cross, near the London end of the main line. The decision was then taken to shift this work to Brighton where, over the next few years, new workshops were established on land adjacent to the passenger and goods stations. From the late 1840s there was therefore a steady increase in the number of men employed with engineering and metal-working skills. The London Brighton and South Coast Railway Company (henceforth LBSCR) ensured that no other railway company gained access to Brighton, or to a large part of the rest of Sussex, hence the approximately 1,000 railwaymen in the town in 1861 were all its employees. Brighton was 85km (53 miles) from London and some 200 to 300 miles from the major industrial districts of the

country, with a predominantly rural hinterland. Where did Brighton's railway workers come from?²

In 1961, Michael Robbins commented that 'no one has yet studied the origins of the 100,000 or so staff of all grades who were employed on the British railways in 1851'.³ Since then there have been a number of important studies, among which that of Kingsford is especially valuable for its detailed analyses based on the records of several railway companies, including the LBSCR.⁴ While Robbins had suggested that two major sources of recruits were the rural poor and former soldiers and sailors, Kingsford observed that former servants and shop workers were also numerous among operating staff.⁵ He did not include workshop men in his analysis, but Turton noted that many of the skilled men employed in the railway workshops at Ashford, Swindon and Wolverton came from the older industrial areas of England.⁶ Drummond's study of Crewe and Revill's article on Derby (both places with railway workshops) revealed a similar pattern of skilled men drawn from a distance and less skilled men from the rural hinterland.⁷ In other words, migration among railway workers has been shown to conform to broad nineteenth-century migration patterns in Britain.⁸

These earlier studies use as their main sources of evidence the published census reports and the extant manuscript records of the railway companies. Census volumes provide rather general data on sources of migrants and can offer a valid picture for towns where railway employment dominated, but they are less informative in those cases where the new railway community was attached to an existing town. To meet this limitation when studying Derby, Revill used 10 per cent samples from the 1851 and 1881 Census Enumerators' Books (CEBs). Railway company registers of employees and other records, exploited especially by Kingsford and Drummond, provide details of the different occupational groups, the skill or experience each required and their levels of pay.

In this study of Brighton's railway workers, two aspects of their provenance will be considered: the area of origin and the social background, the latter represented by the occupation of the father or, where relevant, of the worker himself prior to transferring to railway employment. Because the railway community grew up alongside a resort town that itself attracted migrants, the summary data provided in the published census reports is of limited value for establishing the places from which the railwaymen were attracted, and the preferred source is the birthplace data included in the CEBs. This has the long-recognised limitation of telling us nothing about intermediate moves (except where the birthplaces of children can be used), but is adequate for sketching in the broad pattern.⁹ Evidence for the occupational background for young workers living with their birth family can also be extracted from the 1861 CEBs. For some of the 1861 employees who can be located in the 1851 CEBs living with their birth families, similar details of fathers' occupations can be identified, while for others details of their own employment can be used. Enough evidence has been found to provide a broad indication of the type of

person recruited during this early period of railway growth. By later decades of the nineteenth century, Brighton's recruitment patterns probably resembled those of other railway centres, where members of the families of existing employees played a much bigger role.¹⁰

An earlier study that used a microfiche index to the 1851 CEBs covering the whole of Brighton demonstrated that virtually all of Brighton's railway workers then lived within 300 metres (half a mile) of the passenger and goods stations or the workshops, especially in a newly built-up part of the town just to the east of the railway land.¹¹ Farther east lay the open ground occupying an intermittently flooded valley which linked at its northern end with the dry valleys followed by the main roads to London and Lewes (Figure 1). In 1851 there was already a little development on Round Hill and Race Hill, to the north and east respectively of these valleys, but many more houses had been built by 1861, some occupied by railway families. Other new houses had appeared just west of the station. The 1861 analysis was confined to these northern parts of Brighton, covered by Enumeration Districts 14 to 42.¹² A quick scan of the CEBs for adjoining Enumeration Districts revealed virtually no railway workers.

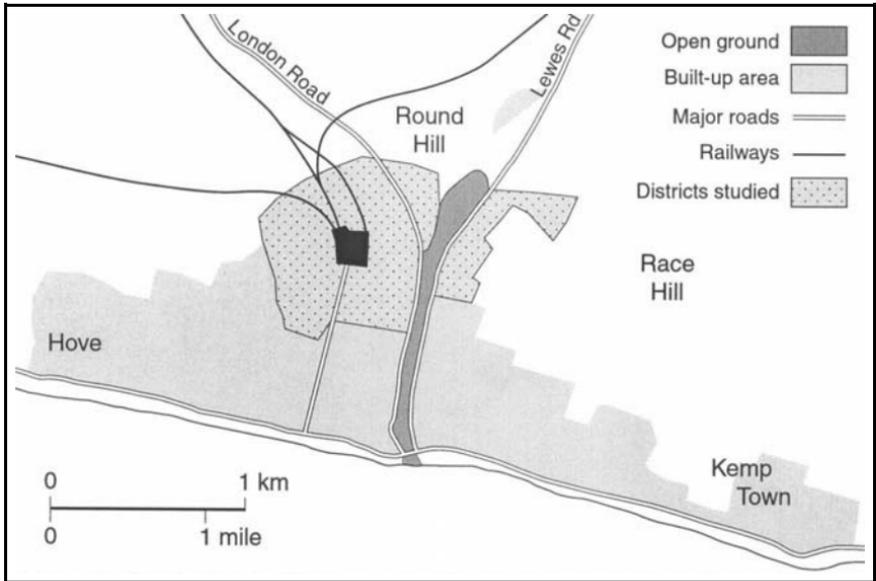
Kingsford and Revill have both emphasised the large number of employment grades and the extent of inter-grade rivalry within railway companies.¹³ Each grade within the LBSCR's administrative departments (traffic, locomotive and workshop) had its own entry requirements, and these inevitably influenced where their recruits were drawn from. The occupational groupings distinguished below and used in the analysis of birthplaces are therefore based on these entry requirements. The CEB occupational data are far from perfect for this purpose, principally because there was no obligation put on the enumerator to identify the employer. While most traffic and locomotive staff are clearly identifiable (e.g., railway porter or engine driver), it is only in a few instances that workshop employees are labelled as 'with the LBSCR'. There were, however, few other potential employers in the area, and in the case of most types of workshop employee any errors resulting from assuming that all were railwaymen are likely to be few. There is greater scope for error in the case of carriage workers, for the term 'carriage' could also be applied to a road vehicle, and some men described as carriage workers may have been employed by local coach makers. In addition, it is possible that some of the numerous carpenters and sawyers in the area may have been employed in the LBSCR carriage works. Carriage worker numbers used in this article may well be understated, and this may affect conclusions relating to their places of birth.

Occupational groups

The numerous grades make some form of grouping necessary, and the descriptions here are based on similarity of entry requirements.¹⁴

Inspectors and supervisors were usually well-educated men who could if necessary frame a report to the Board of Directors. Some had been promoted

Figure 1 Brighton in 1861.



Source: For the extent of the built-up area: S. Farrant, K. Fossey and A. Peasgood, *The growth of Brighton and Hove 1840–1939*, University of Sussex, Centre for Continuing Education Occasional Paper 14, (Brighton, 1981).

from other grades, others came from other railway companies or comparable organisations. Because the LBSCR management was based in London, there were relatively few such senior staff in Brighton, earning between 40s. and 60s. a week.

Engine drivers and firemen were required to be reliable and have stamina and aptitude rather than formal education. By the 1850s, a chain of recruitment had been established from teenage engine cleaner (pay 10-12s. a week) to fireman (20-30s.), with eventual promotion for many to driver (30-45s.). Senior drivers were thus well paid and highly respected employees.

Engineers, fitters, turners and boilermakers required high levels of skill, which usually involved several years of apprenticeship followed by experience with other firms. The training was available in engineering firms, including the earlier-established workshops of other railway companies; pay was in the range of 30-36s. a week. *Blacksmiths* required several years of apprenticeship or training, in many cases provided in village or small town smithies. Levels of pay were broadly comparable with those of engineers, 30-36s. a week. *Hammermen, iron-moulders, brass and copper workers* also required several years of training, mainly provided by metal-working concerns in the older industrial districts of Britain. Pay was generally somewhat lower than for blacksmiths.

Clerks were responsible for collecting and paying out money, as well as keeping accounts and other records, so needed to be well-educated by contemporary standards, as well as totally honest. Apprentice clerks recruited at age 16 started at around 10s. a week, while men aged 21 and over received between 20s. and 30s. according to responsibility. *Porters, ticket-collectors, guards, signalmen, switchmen (pointsmen) and railway policemen* did not need much in the way of skill or education on recruitment, but they were required to be reliable and honest. Porters in particular needed to be strong and healthy, so this was a job well-suited to men in their late teens or twenties. Pay was modest at 16-19s. a week. Other grades carried more responsibility and were often filled by men promoted from the porter grade, along with some non-railway men whose former employers provided references that commended their honesty and reliability. Policemen could earn 20-21s. a week, ticket-collectors up to 23s., signalmen up to 24s. and guards 25-29s.

Machinists formed a small but distinctive group of semi-skilled workshop employees, resulting from the introduction during the 1850s of a few simple machine-tools such as foot-operated lathes.¹⁵ These jobs provided an entry route for men with aptitude but less formal training, with pay around 22-25s. a week. *Carriage workers* were a miscellaneous group, some of whom required only modest levels of training and skill. Carriages and wagons were constructed on a metal frame provided by the main workshops. Carpenters, or men who had previously built road vehicles, then added the main structure, and carriages were finished by trimmers and painters, who had often learnt their skills working for a coach-maker. Pay varied with the level of skill required but most men probably earned between 20s. and 30s. a week. *Labourers* were needed in various branches of railway work. They required strength and stamina but little education, training or skill. Pay was 2s. 6d. to 2s. 8d. per day, so a man employed for the whole of a six-day week could earn 15-16s.

These different entry conditions meant that each branch of railway employment provided openings for men with differing skills and backgrounds. The broad occupational groups outlined above therefore provide the most suitable framework for the following discussion of the source areas from which the LBSCR drew its mid nineteenth-century work force.

Areas of origin

Table 1 classifies the men identified as railway employees in the 1861 CEBs by their occupational group and household status. Out of a total of 1,008 men, 714 (71 per cent) were classified as heads of household, 144 (14 per cent) as lodgers or boarders, and 150 (15 per cent) were living with their parents or other relatives. Only a handful of women employees were identified, all cloakroom attendants or carriage trimmers; these are not included in any of the tables. Some of those recorded as heads of household were single men living in one room. Most lodgers and boarders were also single, the few who

Table 1 LBSCR employees in Brighton, 1861: household status of occupational groups.

Occupation	Status within household						Total
	Head (a)		Lodger		Young relative		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Clerk	30	64	5	11	12	25	47
Porter (b)	65	61	16	15	26	24	107
Guard (c)	41	87	5	11	1	2	47
Engine driver	34	72	10	21	3	6	47
Fireman	24	86	3	11	1	3	28
Engine cleaner	2	18	1	9	8	73	11
Blacksmith	74	80	16	17	2	2	92
Iron worker	52	81	8	13	4	6	64
Brass worker (d)	18	78	2	9	3	13	23
Engineer	58	62	11	12	25	27	94
Fitter or turner	98	70	23	16	19	14	140
Boilermaker	38	70	6	11	10	19	54
Machinist	17	81	2	10	2	10	21
Carriage worker (e)	34	69	7	14	8	16	49
Labourer	103	67	27	18	24	16	154
Inspector	16	94	1	6	0	0	17
Other (f)	10	77	1	8	2	15	13
Total	714	71	144	14	150	15	1,008

Notes: (a) includes some older relatives not classed as head but who were chief wage earners;
 (b) includes ticket collectors;
 (c) includes signalmen and policemen;
 (d) includes copper workers;
 (e) includes sawyers and carpenters;
 (f) includes mechanics, railway servants, timekeepers, telegraph workers, a chain maker and a spring maker.

Percentages may not sum exactly to 100 because of rounding errors.

Source: 1861 Census CEBs, PRO RG9 / 595-7.

were married but living alone may have been recent recruits, looking for suitable accommodation before moving their family to Brighton. The analysis that follows is restricted to the 850 heads and lodgers (out of the total of 858) for whom detailed birthplace data are available. Some of the larger

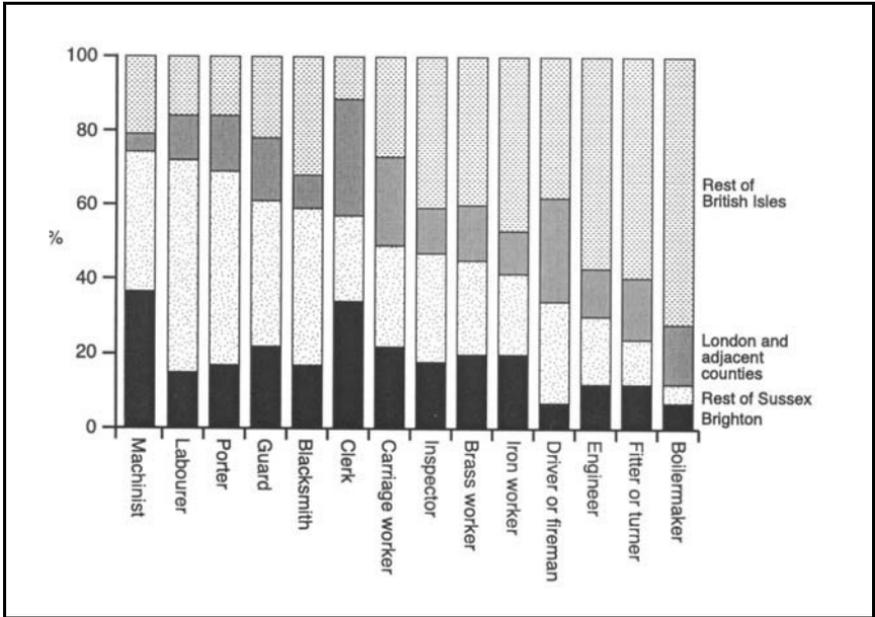
occupational groups described above have been subdivided (for example, porters are distinguished from guards, and engineers from fitters and boilermakers), in order to test whether they exhibited differences of provenance.

Figure 2 and Table 2 show the areas of birth of men in each occupational group, using four birthplace categories: Brighton itself; the rest of Sussex; London and the adjacent counties of Kent, Surrey, Middlesex and Essex; and the rest of the British Isles. In total nearly half of the men were born in Sussex (16 per cent in Brighton, 32 per cent in the rest of the county), 16 per cent in London and adjacent counties and 36 per cent elsewhere, but some occupational groups differed markedly from this overall pattern. These differences are revealed in Table 2 and Figure 2, which show the numbers and percentages respectively. Both use the same order of occupations, from machinists with the highest percentage of Sussex-born men, through to boilermakers with the lowest percentage. This occupational order is retained in the discussion that follows and in subsequent tables.

Machinists, labourers and porters were most likely to have been born locally, though the small size of the machinists group means that its percentages must be treated with caution. Because machinists required little initial skill, local men with a technical bent or background but too old to start as an apprentice were given a chance; those who showed promise could be promoted to more skilled work, but others would have proved unsuitable. Such modestly-paid jobs did not attract many distant migrants. Seventy per cent of porters were born in Sussex (18 per cent in Brighton, 52 per cent in the rest of the county). The entry requirements (health and a good character reference from a local worthy) could be met by at least some young countrymen. The pay was higher than their contemporaries who remained in the countryside could earn, and had the great merit of being reliable.¹⁶ However, a significant proportion of recruits seem to have found it difficult to adapt to railway standards of discipline and left or were dismissed after a short time.¹⁷ Sixteen per cent of labourers were born in Brighton and 56 per cent in the rest of Sussex. Because entry requirements were low, rural migrants as well as Brighton-born men had a good chance of acceptance. Those who had experienced the hard physical work involved in farm labour may have been preferred, but again there was a probably a significant turnover, with some moving on to less demanding jobs.

A second group of occupations also drew men predominantly from Sussex, though the Sussex-born were not so predominant as in the first group. Guards (including signalmen and policemen) had a smaller Sussex-born proportion (42 per cent) than porters, with a larger proportion from Brighton itself (21 per cent) or from London (39 per cent). Likely reasons for the difference were the recruitment of some older men from other companies in the early years after establishment, and transfers from the London end of the line on promotion from porter grade. Local promotions, however, kept the balance in favour of Sussex-born men. Blacksmiths also show a predominance of Sussex-born men (41 per cent from the rest of Sussex and 17 per cent from Brighton). Small iron

Figure 2 Birthplaces of railway employees in Brighton, 1861: by occupational group.



Note: The 'other' group in Table 2 is not included.

furnaces and forges were common in the Wealden district of East Sussex and there were village smithies throughout the county.¹⁸ Young men who had trained in these establishments usually moved away for further experience, and when the Brighton works opened it was able to attract some of them. Clerks, also predominantly local-born, were more likely to come from Brighton itself (34 per cent) or from London (31 per cent) than from the rest of Sussex (23 per cent). Many were recruited as teenagers when they were still living with their parents, and if the 'young relatives' of Table 1 had been included in this birthplace analysis, the Brighton proportion would have been even higher. Promotion after several years of service often involved transfer, bringing London-born men to Brighton and *vice versa*.

Four occupational groups had between 40 and 50 per cent of locally-born men: carriage workers, inspectors and supervisors, brass and copper workers, and iron workers. In each case, the Brighton-born element formed between 18 and 22 per cent of the total. Among carriage workers, each of the four birthplace areas provided about a quarter of the 1861 employees. Carpenters or men with skills in coach and wagon building were to be found throughout the lowland parts of the country, so it is not surprising that men were attracted to the Brighton works from a wide area of southern England.¹⁹ The small inspector group comprised largely older men; the 27 per cent born in Sussex had probably been promoted within the company, as had some of the London-

Table 2 LBSCR employees in Brighton, 1861: birthplaces by occupation (heads of households and lodgers).

Occupation	Birthplace				Total
	Brighton	Rest of Sussex	London	Rest of British Isles	
	No.	No.	No.	No.	
Machinist	7	7	1	4	19
Labourer	20	74	15	21	130
Porter	14	42	12	13	81
Guard	10	18	8	10	46
Blacksmith	15	36	8	28	87
Clerk	12	8	11	4	35
Carriage worker	9	11	10	11	41
Inspector	3	5	2	7	17
Brass worker	4	5	3	8	20
Iron worker	12	13	7	28	60
Engine driver	1	9	11	23	44
Fireman	4	10	9	4	27
Engineer	8	12	9	39	68
Fitter or turner	14	15	20	72	121
Boilermaker	3	2	7	31	43
Other	0	1	6	4	11
Total	136	268	139	307	850

Notes: Some totals differ from those in Table 1 because of incomplete birthplace data. Percentages may not sum exactly to 100 because of rounding errors. London includes the surrounding counties of Kent, Middlesex and Surrey. The three adult engine cleaners are omitted.

born (12 per cent), but many of the 41 per cent born elsewhere would have been recruited from other companies.²⁰ The broad spread of birthplace areas among the brass and copper workers no doubt reflects the scattered nature of small specialist works throughout the country alongside major centres such as the West Midlands; 40 per cent of these workers came from the rest of the British Isles. Nearly half of the iron workers were born outside south east England; their skills were most likely to have been acquired in large iron works, heavy engineering and shipbuilding concerns that had grown up on Britain's major coalfields during the previous decades²¹

Table 3 Birthplaces of LBSCR skilled workshop employees in Brighton: 1861 (heads of households and lodgers).

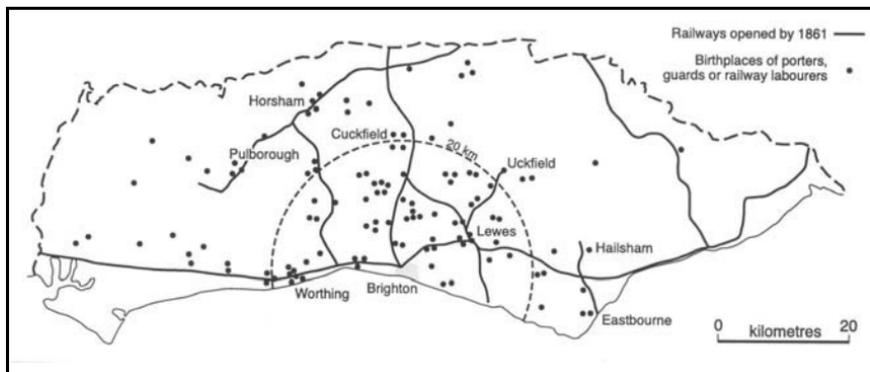
Birthplace	Boilermaker	Fitter or turner	Engineer
	%	%	%
Sussex	11.6	22.3	29.4
London and adjacent counties	16.3	18.2	13.2
Lancashire and Cheshire	34.9	10.7	10.3
Yorkshire	9.3	22.3	23.5
Northumberland and Durham	9.3	8.3	5.9
East Midlands	7.0	3.3	1.5
Lincolnshire and East Anglia	0	2.5	2.9
Rest of England	7.0	8.3	11.8
Ireland	2.3	2.5	0
Scotland	2.3	1.7	1.5
Total %	100.0	100.1	100.0
Number	43	121	68

Source: 1861 CEBs PRO RG9 / 696-7.

Around a third or less of the men in the final four occupational groups had been born in Sussex. The footplate men (engine drivers and firemen) were 34 per cent Sussex-born and 28 per cent London-born, with 38 per cent born elsewhere. However, when drivers alone are considered, we find that 52 per cent were born in the rest of the British Isles and only 23 per cent in Sussex. This pattern is likely to have resulted from the need to recruit the first drivers in the early 1840s at a time when the company had no facilities to train its own men. Drivers had to be poached from earlier-established railway companies, and although some of these men later left or died, enough remained with the company in 1861 to influence birthplace patterns. Company training and promotion among men recruited as firemen in the earlier years of operation meant that some locally-born men had joined the ranks of drivers by 1861, but it is when the birthplaces of the 1861 firemen are considered that a change of provenance becomes apparent: 52 per cent were Sussex-born (16 per cent in Brighton, 37 per cent in the rest of Sussex). London-born men may have started work in the LBSCR's sheds at the London end of the main line, and might have been in Brighton on the night of the census as a result of either transfer or rostering.²²

Most likely of all to be born in the rest of the British Isles were three groups of workshop employees: 57 per cent of the engineers, 59 per cent of the fitters and turners, and 72 per cent of the boilermakers. Table 3 shows that a major source area for engineers and fitters was Yorkshire (principally the Leeds area), while Lancashire and Cheshire provided a third of the boilermakers. The North-East, comprising the counties of Northumberland and Durham,

Figure 3 Sussex birthplaces of LBSCR porters, guards and labourers living in Brighton.



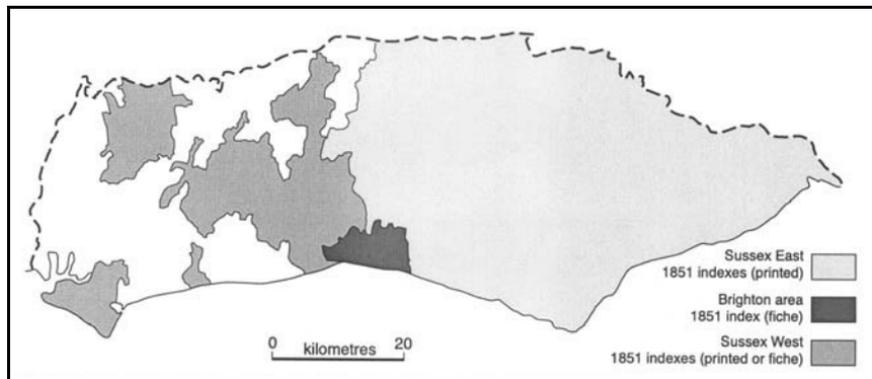
was another significant source area, while the 13-18 per cent born in London and adjacent counties came mainly from the older railway engineering works such as Stratford in Essex. When John C. Craven was appointed Locomotive Superintendent at the end of 1848, he brought to Brighton some of the men he had previously worked with in Leeds and Stratford, and these men may have instigated the migration of relatives and former work-mates. By the 1850s, some local men were being trained in the relevant skills, but it was not until some years later that the local contribution to the skilled engineering workforce became significant.²³

The overall pattern is thus of the less skilled jobs being filled largely by Sussex men, the more skilled jobs largely by migrants from distant parts. Many of the less-skilled men came from Brighton's rural hinterland rather than from the town itself. Such findings, of course the are in line with those of Turton, Drummond and Revill discussed earlier. Figure 3 maps the Sussex birthplaces of the 1861 porters, guards and labourers. Most had been born within a radius of 20km (12.5 miles) of the town; those born farther away often came from parishes with a railway station by 1861. In contrast, the skilled workshop jobs were filled during these early years predominantly by northerners who brought an interesting new element into the town's social geography.

Family and occupational backgrounds

It is possible to discover a little more about some of the LBSCR employees by means of nominal linkage, bringing 1851 CEB evidence alongside that of 1861. The evidence discussed above shows that in 1861 a sizeable proportion of LBSCR employees had moved to Brighton from places outside Sussex, in many cases during the 1850s when growth among workshop employees in particular had been rapid. It would require a nation-wide study like that conducted by Pooley and Turnbull to discover more about the backgrounds of these long-distant migrants.²⁴ The following analysis is therefore confined to men living in Sussex in 1851, whether they were Sussex-born or pre-1851 migrants. The names of all 1861 railwaymen who were heads of household or

Figure 4 Areas of Sussex covered by 1851 CEB indexes.



lodgers, and for whom there was no evidence such as children's birthplaces that they were elsewhere in 1851, were sought in the indexes of the 1851 CEBs, available for Brighton, the whole of East Sussex and parts of West Sussex (Figure 4).²⁵ Where 1851 and 1861 first names and surnames were identical (apart from minor variations of spelling), and ages (within one year) and birthplace details tallied, it was assumed that the same person was recorded. All names were sought initially in the 1851 indexes covering the whole of Brighton; names not found there were sought in the index for the district that included the birthplace recorded in 1861. As a result of the search 275 men were located living in Sussex in 1851.

The first two columns of Table 4 show for each occupation group the number found in the 1851 CEBs and the percentage this number formed of the 1861 total. The proportion found ranges from 13.6 per cent of the small boilermaker group, a result of few such workers being needed before the building of locomotives began in 1851, to 58.5 per cent of inspectors and supervisors, many of whom were working locally before promotion. Although conclusions based on such relatively small numbers can only be tentative, the following discussion of occupational history and family details can throw a little light on the backgrounds from which employees were drawn.

The three final columns of Table 4 summarise the details in the occupation columns of the 1851 CEBs for the 275 men found. Nearly 10 per cent were then classed as scholars (though many were probably doing some part-time or unpaid work), and 63 per cent were already working for the LBSCR, though not all in the same grade as later. It is the remaining 27 per cent in other occupations who are the most interesting; most numerous in this category are the 1861 labourers, machinists, porters, drivers and firemen, contrasting with very small numbers of 1861 blacksmiths, clerks and skilled workshop men.

Table 5 subdivides the 'other' occupation category of Table 4. It shows that railway labourers had been recruited largely from among 1851 general labourers already living in Brighton and teenage agricultural labourers living

Table 4 1851 employment status of 1861 LBSCR employees in Brighton (heads of households and lodgers).

1861 Occupation	No.	% of 1861	% of those found in 1851 who were returned in that census as:		
			Scholar	LBSCR employee	In other employment
Machinist	9	47.4	22.2	33.3	44.4
Labourer	41	31.5	9.8	34.1	56.1
Porter	19	23.4	57.9	0	42.1
Guard	20	43.5	5.0	65.0	30.0
Blacksmith	22	23.3	4.5	90.5	4.5
Clerk	10	28.6	90.0	0	10.0
Carriage maker	16	39.0	18.8	56.3	25.0
Inspector	10	58.5	0	70.0	30.0
Iron/brass worker	28	35.0	7.1	57.1	35.7
Driver/fireman	21	29.6	0	57.1	42.9
Engineer/fitter	50	26.3	6.0	84.0	10.0
Boilermaker	6	13.6	16.7	66.7	16.7
Other	3	27.3	0	100.0	0
Total	275	32.4	9.8	62.9	27.3

Note: Some groupings presented in earlier tables have been combined.

Sources: 1861 CEBs, RG9 / 595-7; Sussex Family History Group, *The Brighton 1851 census microfiche series* (1997-8).

in rural Sussex. A few porters, guards and footplate men had been labourers in 1851, but more had been working in shops or craft workshops. Most strikingly, the bottom row of Table 5 shows that if the railway labourer group is excluded, 39 out of the 52 former non-railway occupations were of a trade, craft or service type.

Further evidence of occupational backgrounds was sought by extracting details of the fathers of all employees (in this case including the 'young relatives' identified in Table 1) who were living in the parental home in either 1851 or 1861 (Table 6). Out of the 172 fathers found, 81 (47 per cent) were working for the LBSCR; 33 (19.2 per cent) were engaged in a trade or craft, and 42 (24.4 per cent) were general or agricultural labourers. The tendency for sons to follow fathers into railway employment was particularly marked among both skilled workshop men (76.4 per cent) and semi-skilled machinists (63.5 per cent). One third of the 1861 railway labourers had a father in railway

Table 5 Non-LBSCR occupations in 1851 of 1861 LBSCR employees in Brighton (heads of households and lodgers).

1861 Occupation	1851 Occupation				Total
	Trade or Craft	Labourer	Agriculture	Service or Profession	
Machinist	3	0	1	0	4
Labourer	1	13	5	4	23
Porter	3	2	0	3	8
Guard	2	2	1	1	6
Blacksmith	1	0	0	0	1
Clerk	0	0	0	1	1
Carriage maker	3	0	0	1	4
Inspector	3	0	0	0	3
Iron/brass worker	7	0	2	1	10
Driver/fireman	5	2	2	0	9
Engineer/fitter	2	1	0	2	5
Boilermaker	0	0	0	1	1
Total	30	20	11	14	75
Total excluding labourers	29	7	6	10	52

Source: Sussex Family History Group, *The Brighton 1851 census microfiche series* (1997-8).

employment, while 42 per cent had a labourer father. Porters and guards had nearly equal proportions of railway and labourer fathers. Smiths, iron and brass workers mostly had metal-working fathers, some employed by the LBSCR, but 20 per cent had labourer fathers.

The evidence from this small sample of Sussex-born men suggests that those who were not the sons of railwaymen had been drawn into LBSCR employment principally from two types of background: traders and small craftsmen, and labourers. In both cases, some men or their fathers were already working in Brighton in 1851, but others were then living in other parts of the county. In view of the important role that migration from rural area played in the growth of nineteenth-century towns, and the emphasis that Robbins, Kingsford and others place on rural sources of railway employees, it is worth focusing briefly on the latter group. Can the sample provide clues as to the type of rural migrant that LBSCR employment attracted to Brighton? An attempt is made here to find hints in the case of two specific occupational groups.

In 1861, in the parts of Brighton studied, there were living 87 blacksmith heads of household or lodgers, of whom 36 (44 per cent) had been born in a Sussex parish other than Brighton, 29 of these in parishes covered by the published

Table 6 Occupations in 1851 or 1861 of fathers of men employed in 1861 by the LBSCR.

Son's occupation	Father's Occupation						Total
	Railway	Trade or craft	Labourer	Ag. Lab.	Clerk	Other	
Machinist	5	0	0	1	0	2	8
Labourer	8	2	4	6	1	2	24
Porter or guard	9	3	4	4	0	2	21
Smith or metal worker	12	12	2	5	1	3	35
Clerk	3	4	1	0	2	0	10
Carriage worker	0	2	0	2	0	0	4
Driver or fireman	3	3	5	3	0	1	15
Engineer, fitter or boilermaker	42	7	2	2	0	2	55
Total	81	33	18	24	4	12	172

Sources: 1861 CEBs, PRO, RG9 / 595-7; Sussex Family History Group, *The Brighton 1851 census microfiche series* (1997-8).

1851 CEBs. Of these 29, nine were already living in Brighton by 1851, two were teenagers living with their parents in their birth parishes, and five were living and working in other Sussex parishes.²⁶ The remaining 13 were not found; a few of these might be accounted for by name discrepancies, but the majority must be presumed to have been living and working elsewhere in 1851. It was common practice among rural and small-town craftsman, including blacksmiths, to take on their own teenage sons and some of the sons of neighbouring craftsmen or farmers as apprentices. Once trained, these apprentices went off as 'improvers' to gain further experience wherever they could find employment, often in distant parts of the country. Some such men were attracted back to Sussex when the LBSCR opened its workshops, as exemplified by Edmund Muddle, who was born in East Grinstead, but was living in Brighton by 1861, with children born in Shropshire and Yorkshire.

While it seems likely that many of the Sussex-born blacksmiths employed by the LBSCR in 1861 were the sons of, or at least trained by, Sussex rural blacksmiths, it would require lengthy studies in family history to prove the point. One sample case must suffice here, that of Reuben Ellis, born in Hailsham in 1813, the middle of three surviving sons of John and Judith Ellis. In 1841, both John and Reuben were blacksmiths in Hailsham; Reuben, with his wife and three children, was living a short distance from John's smithy and home and is likely to have been working with his father.²⁷ John was then in his early 60s and perhaps hoping that Reuben would take over the business. By 1851, however, no member of the family remained in Hailsham, and Reuben

was living close to the Brighton works; judging by his children's birthplaces, he had moved to the town soon after the 1841 census was taken and may have been one of the first blacksmiths employed by the railway company. He must have prospered, for by 1861 he was living in the newly developed Islingword Road with a large family.

The second group of rural-born men whose family backgrounds were sought were those employed as porters, guards, drivers, firemen and carriage workers. The 1851 published CEB name indexes were searched for all rural-born men in these occupations who were aged under 35 in 1861. Thirty-two names were sought and 22 located. Of these, six had fathers with non-agricultural occupations (five craftsmen and one railway porter), while the remaining 16 fathers had agricultural occupations. Two were gamekeepers and one was a gardener in Horsham (with three railwaymen lodgers); the remainder were listed as agricultural labourers or farm workers. Several features suggest that these were not commonplace rural labourers: three had a second occupation (messenger and two parish clerks); three shared a family name and probable kinship with a nearby farmer; and three had relatives who were traders or craftsmen. More detailed study would probably reveal that all were permanent employees, perhaps stockmen, living in tied accommodation. Since the LBSCR required any applications for employment to be supported by a reference from a person of some standing, young men with permanent agricultural employees as fathers and who were integrated into the local kinship network would have found it easier to obtain such a reference than those whose father relied on weekly or casual engagements. In addition, sons of families of permanent employees would be more likely to have received some education, helping to widen their horizons and making them more ambitious. Railway employment provided a potential route out of rural poverty and drudgery for this type of rural youngster, a route that was rarely open to the sons of casual labourers.

Conclusion

Recruitment to railway employment in Brighton conforms to the broad picture painted by earlier writers. Many of the skilled workshop jobs were filled by long-distance migrants from the older industrial areas of the country, while local men were recruited for many of the less skilled jobs. The merit of using 1861 CEB evidence is that it has made possible a far more detailed picture of recruitment patterns for each sub-group of employees, revealing interesting variations in the proportions born in Sussex, and within Sussex between those born in Brighton itself and the rest of Sussex. Nominal linkage between the 1861 and 1851 CEBs has also provided pointers to the selective nature of migration from rural Sussex. In this county, railway employment in the mid-nineteenth century offered prospects to better educated rural migrants from established families, but did little for those from a background of casual agricultural labour.

The same conclusions relating to rural recruits would not necessarily apply in other parts of the country, in view of the significant regional variations in farm

sizes and the composition of the agricultural work force.²⁸ Further CEB-based analyses of mid-nineteenth century worker recruitment at other railway centres are needed before the Brighton experience can be set fully in context.

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NOTES

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3. M. Robbins, *The railway age* (London, 1962), 76.
4. P.W. Kingsford, *Victorian railwaymen* (London, 1970).
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10. F. McKenna, *The railway workers 1840-1970* (London, 1980); P. Howlett, 'The existence of an internal labour market in the Great Eastern Railway Company, 1875-1905', *Business History*, 42 (2000), 21-40.
11. J.A. Sheppard, 'Brighton's railway workers in the 1850s', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 139 (2003), 191-201.
12. PRO, RG9 / 595-7.
13. Kingsford, *Victorian railwaymen*, xiii; Revill, 'Railway Derby', 381.
14. Pay details for Traffic Department staff are taken from PRO, RAIL 414 / 770 (1857); for footplate staff from PRO, RAIL 414/863 (a muddled and incomplete register, but with some pay details for the 1860s); for inspectors from PRO, RAIL 414 / 767 (details of appointments, promotions and pay for a few of these men); see also Kingsford, *Victorian railwaymen*, 88-108. There are no LBSCR extant records of workshop pay, and the figures given are estimates based on figures in J. Burnett, *Useful toil* (London, 1974), 267-70, and C. Booth, *Life and labour of the people of London, second series: industry* (London, 1901), 235, 301, 331, 360.
15. N. Cossins, *The BP book of industrial archaeology* (Newton Abbot, 1975), 185-93.
16. Agricultural wages varied with location, age and responsibility. Bethanie Afton and Michael Turner give the Sussex average in 1850/51 as 10.5s. in E.J.T. Collins, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales. Vol VII 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 2000), 1999.
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21. J. Langton and R.J. Morris, *Atlas of industrializing Britain 1780-1914* (London, 1986), 127-139.
22. The extent of rostering in Brighton is not known. Since most routes were short, it may have been insignificant.
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26. The five blacksmiths living in 1851 in a parish other than that in which they were born were Thomas Dawes, born in Laughton and living in Framfield; Henry Ellis born in Hellingly and living in Ripe; William Fowler born in Westmeston and living in Jevington; Thomas Smith born in Lewes and living in Hamsey; and Samuel Willett born in Pyecombe and living in Portslade.
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