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EASTLEIGH: 'THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LATE VICTORIAN RAILWAY TOWN'. SOME COMMENTS

Bryan Luffman's recently published book traces the growth of Eastleigh in the late nineteenth century. It concentrates on the phase of development which began with the transfer of the London and South Western Railway's carriage works to the town from Nine Elms, London in 1890 and ended with the amalgamation of Eastleigh and Bishopstoke in 1898. It is perhaps a pity that the impact made by the transfer of the locomotive running sheds from Southampton in 1903 and the Locomotive Works from Nine Elms in 1910 is not also fully discussed, since in many respects 1910 marks the end of the first stage of the town's industrialisation. Nevertheless, Luffman's study of Eastleigh makes an interesting comparison with the larger railway towns of Swindon and Crewe, which were also developed on greenfield sites, but fifty years earlier. In retrospect, it is surprising how some of the deficiencies in planning and provision of services at Swindon and Crewe were repeated again at Eastleigh half a century later, despite much national legislation on the subject in the meantime. In view of the value and interest of this book, it is regrettable that there are several errors of fact and interpretation, which this paper seeks to correct.

It is misleading to suggest that the London and South Western railway company was unique in its desire to move the company's railway works from London to a rural site (Luffman n d, iv). In fact, the works of the South Eastern Railway were similarly moved from New Cross, London to the small market town of Ashford, Kent, in 1847 (White 1982, 32). Following the amalgamation of the South Eastern Railway with the London, Chatham and Dover Railway,

the latter's works in London were closed in 1913 and many of the staff moved to Ashford. The new satellite town of Alfred Town was built just outside the old market town for the railway workforce. To all intents and purposes this was a new railway town on a greenfield site as at Eastleigh.

Luffman correctly states that the London and South Western Railway built only a small proportion of the housing for the railway staff at Eastleigh. However it is misleading to suggest (Luffman n d, iv) that Eastleigh differed from other railway workshop towns in this respect. Detailed studies of other towns, for example Peck on Swindon and Chaloner on Crewe, clearly indicate that this was normal practice. A slightly higher proportion of houses was built by the company in Crewe than at Swindon or Eastleigh, but even in this case the proportion was still quite small (Peck 1983; Chaloner 1950). It was the usual practice for railway companies to leave the provision of most of the housing to private builders, although companies often laid down basic guidelines for street patterns and water supply.

Luffman points out that the Chamberlayne family were the principal landowners in the area and sold large amounts of land both to the railway company and private builders (Luffman n d, 2). It would have been worth mentioning that Thomas Chamberlayne was a director on the reconstituted board of the London and Southampton Railway Company in 1833 (Temple Patterson 1966, 169–70). Whether Thomas or his son Tankerville played any part in the running of the L S W R later in the century would certainly be worth further research. If it

could be proved that they did it would cast an interesting light on Victorian commercial practice. However, it appears unlikely that Tankerville had any direct connections with the L S W R in the crucial 1890–1910 period, since he was initially a strong supporter of the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway, and was also trying to build up his political reputation as a Tory Radical friend of the working man (Temple Patterson 1975, 55, 78–9).

The reference to the Cheese Market being in the junction is misleading, implying that it was built in the fork of either the Southampton and

Portsmouth or Salisbury and Winchester lines. Luffman's accompanying map makes it quite clear that this was not the case (Luffman n d, 2, 45).

Finally, it is unfortunate that Luffman does not make more of the issues in which he claims particular interest in the preface: how the immigrant population settled down in Eastleigh. It should still be possible to record this with the help of oral sources, especially from people associated with the transfer of the locomotive works from Nine Elms in 1910.

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