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Wimbledon Bridge and Station c. 1870

The Coming of the Railways

The London to Southampton railway arrived in Wimbledon in 1838. Once surrounded by fields, its new station was soon flanked by shops, homes and roads. By 1870 a newspaper article declared ‘Wimbledon itself has sprung from a very small village into a very fair little town’.

By 1881, the population was five times larger than in 1850, with most newcomers occupying the ‘New Wimbledon’ that was being built around the station. Another train line to Croydon opened in 1855, making Wimbledon a transport hub.

The railway’s arrival caused friction: Wimbledon’s identity was changing. Its proximity to the countryside was a selling point for local property developers, but that balance between rural and urban was hard to preserve. Village residents were keen to keep a rural, and exclusive, feel. They didn’t allow the tramway into the Village because they saw it as working class. The class divide between the Village and The Broadway down the hill was taken for granted.