

## REV JOSEPH LLOYD BRERETON AND RAILWAYS

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The Rev Joseph Lloyd Brereton (1822-1901) obtained a national reputation as an educational reformer but that was not enough for him. He was also important at a more local level. He was instrumental in encouraging agricultural improvements in Devon (where he was rector of West Buckland) and, later, in Norfolk (where he was rector of Little Massingham) He hoped to achieve these agricultural improvements through the establishment of farmers clubs (for the exchange of ideas) and through the promotion of new railways. He played an important role in establishing the Devon and Somerset Railway (running from Barnstaple to Taunton) and the Lynn and Fakenham Railway. It was ironic that he was seriously injured in a train crash on a journey to Kings Lynn in 1882, and was awarded £4000 compensation. A huge amount at that time. .

This account is based on research by Doug Watts and Michael Sandford together with members of the M&GN Circle (<http://www.mgncircle.org.uk/>). Valuable assistance was also provided by Rosemary Jewers, Berwick Coates and Peter Searby. The text is based on material which appeared/will appear in the privately circulated *M&GN Circle Bulletin* which brings together research on the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway (M&GN) which ran through Brereton's Norfolk parish of Little Massingham. The *M&GN Circle Bulletin* text is reproduced here by kind permission of the Editor.

We divide the account into four parts:

1. Family background
2. Railway promotion
3. The Lynn and Fakenham Railway (research in progress)
4. The Stretham accident and after (research in progress)

### Rev Joseph Lloyd Brereton: Part I Family Background:



*Rev Joseph Lloyd Brereton c1866 (George Richmond RA)  
Painted shortly before his move to Norfolk and showing him at the age of 44 years  
Reproduced with permission of West Buckland School*

The Rev Joseph Lloyd Brereton (pronounced by the Norfolk family as Brer-ton as in Brer Rabbit) was the 'main force' in the promotion of the Lynn & Fakenham Railway (L&F) and we ask, 'How was it that the rector of a small rural Norfolk parish had a strong influence on powerful local landowners and a close interest in railways?' The answer to this question can be found by exploring the family background and life of Joseph Lloyd Brereton (hereafter JLB) before he became Rector of Little Massingham. In Part 1, his family history is emphasised and it shows how he developed links with wealthy landowners whom he encouraged to fund railway projects.

**Overview.** Over the course of his life, JLB was rector of two small rural parishes (West Buckland, near Barnstaple, Devon from 1852-1867 and Little Massingham, Norfolk from 1867-1901). In both parishes, he became concerned with the promotion of new railways but, most importantly, he became a person with a national reputation stemming from his role in educational reforms in the second half of the nineteenth century. He wrote extensively on educational matters (a key work was *County Education* published in 1874). He was one of the first to argue for a national school leaving examination (a forerunner of today's GCSEs and A levels). He set up, or was connected with the setting up of **County Schools** for the sons of middle income families in Devon (now West Buckland School), Norfolk (the now closed County School at North Elmham), Hampshire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Bedford, Suffolk, Surrey, and Durham. He later established a new Cambridge college (**Cavendish College**) and developed an organisation for the education of girls (the **Graduated County Schools Association**). Admittedly, many (but not all) of his plans for educating the middle classes were unsuccessful but he had been brought up to

endeavour to help others and this was the driving force behind his activities. It is because of his major significance as an educational reformer that his work in the development of rural railways is less widely reported.

He was of sufficient importance as an educational reformer to obtain an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) published in 1912 and the entry was updated in 2004 for the current online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB). The ODNB can be accessed on-line by registered readers in most public libraries in the UK. There is information about JLB on a Brereton family history on this web site (<http://brereton.org.uk>) and in three academic studies of his life (R S Honey, 1977; Peter Searby, 1979; Peter Searby, 1982-3). Details of his work and aspects of his family life can be found in these sources. Full references to the Honey and Searby articles can be found in the ODNB entry. However, it should be noted that recent research, reported on the web site, has thrown some doubt on certain aspects of JLB's life as recorded in the academic studies. A book by Berwick Coates (2005) *The Natural History of a Country School* contains further information on JLB and there is a large Brereton archive in the Norfolk Record Office.

### **The Brereton family**

The Norfolk Breretons were country gentry who could trace their origins back to Norman times in Cheshire. Family records date back to 1156 and they have their own coat of arms, family motto and family crest (a muzzled bear). The family seat was at Brereton Hall (near Sandbach and Crewe in Cheshire). By the end of the seventeenth century, one branch of the family was established in Norfolk where they were associated particularly with Brinton, close to Melton Constable. Opposite the church in Brinton is Brinton Hall on a seventeenth century site. The hall was remodelled by the Brereton family in 1822.

**John Brereton** (1753 - 1823) of Brinton was JLB's grandfather. John Brereton married his first cousin, Anna Lloyd. Her mother (Mary Brereton of Brinton) had married David Lloyd of Llanvaughan (just to the west of Lampeter) who died after only a few years of marriage. Mary must have maintained connections with Brinton and so, in due course, her daughter Anna met and married her cousin John.

**Rev. Charles Brereton** (1790 - 1868), JLB's father, was one of the sons of John and Anna. Charles went up to Cambridge, graduated from Queens College in 1813 and married Frances Wilson in 1819. Frances Wilson's father, Joseph Wilson, was a prosperous London silk merchant who lived at Highbury Hill in Islington (a site occupied by Arsenal FC until it moved to the new Emirates Stadium) and was investing his wealth in land. Looking at two Norfolk properties which were for sale, he rejected the Sandringham estate (which was 'like a rabbit warren') and purchased (in 1807) the Little Massingham estate (of over 2000 acres), including the rectory. With the estate came the right to nominate the rector but he was unable exercise this right until the death of the incumbent. Rather fortuitously the incumbent died in 1820, shortly after his daughter's marriage, and Joseph Wilson was able to install his new son in law, Charles Brereton, as rector of a parish not far from the Brereton family home in Brinton. Thus, in 1820, began the Brereton/Little Massingham connection. Charles Brereton held the living for 47 years until 1867. The Brereton family later obtained the patronage of the living from Joseph Wilson's son and it remains with them today. Members of the Brereton family lived in Little Massingham until 2004. The church contains a Brereton family memorial and there are graves in the churchyard.

### **Rev Joseph Lloyd Brereton** (1822-1901)

*Birth, education and early career*



The old rectory at Little Massingham c1910 (Demolished 1950s) (R. Jewers)

*Photo courtesy of Rosemary Jewers (nee Brereton) © Rosemary Jewers, and taken from Jewers R&T (2010) **Rev. elations from Old Parish Magazines**, Larks Press (<http://www.anmerclub.co.uk/page29.html>)*

JLB was born in Little Massingham on 19 October 1822. He was one of the eleven children of Charles and Frances. JLB was given his maternal grandfather's first name (Joseph) and his paternal grandmother's maiden name (Lloyd). After initial education at home in Little Massingham Rectory, JLB was moved to Islington Propriety School in north London as a day boy. While in London he was in the care of his grandfather and a widowed aunt. After these first stages of his education, JLB moved, as a 15 year old, to Rugby School (1838-1841) under Thomas Arnold. JLB gained a scholarship to University College, Oxford. At Oxford he won the Newdigate prize for poetry in 1844 (Matthew Arnold had won it the previous year) and he graduated with a BA in 1846 and took his MA in 1857. At Oxford 'chronic poor health' prevented him from doing well in exams. Indeed, during his university education he was granted leave of absence on account of illness and while recovering he started employment as a private tutor for wealthy families, a practice he continued for many years.

Links with south west England began in 1844 when he took leave from Oxford to act as private tutor to the nephew of Jemima Pole Crewe, a member of a noted Cornish-Devon family. The nephew was an Oxford student who needed extra tuition and who better to give this than an Oxford prize-winner. The nephew and aunt set up house in Cornwall with JLB as a tutor. She provided a link between JLB and the local gentry and developed a close and long lasting relationship as an unofficial aunt. She was known as Aunt Mi in the Brereton family.

After graduation and then ordination to the priesthood in Norwich cathedral in 1847, he worked from 1847 – 1850 as a curate first, briefly, in Norwich (a post obtained from family connections) and then London (St Martins in the Fields and Paddington). He then moved to the Torbay area (without a parish) and in 1850/1851 Aunt Mi and JLB were living in Paignton where JLB took in private pupils. The 1851 Census records John Musters (aged 13) was staying with him. It is probable he was a private pupil. Musters, an orphan, was due to inherit Wiverton Hall (near Bingham, Nottinghamshire). Here, in Paignton ‘at 29, with precarious health and uncertain prospects’, JLB became engaged to Frances Martin, the 17 year old daughter of a clergyman. It is said his local preaching had impressed both Frances and her widowed mother.

JLB’s fiancée was the daughter of the late Rector of Staverton around ten miles from Paignton who was related to the Martin’s banking family which had many family members in Devon. Her mother was a Champernowne from Dartington Hall whose ancestry, like the Breretons, could be traced back to Norman times. One of the Champernowne’s was a witness when JLB was married on 24 June 1852. The marriage lasted 39 years until his wife’s death in 1891. He and his wife had 16 children of whom five died in infancy.

It was Aunt Mi and her network of connections which provided the introduction to obtain the living at West Buckland to the north of the county, a small village with a population of almost 280 in 1851 and some 10 miles east of the coastal town of Barnstaple. The living was in the gift of Baroness Basset of Tehidy (near Camborne). It is thought that JLB hoped the Devon air would continue to be good for his lungs and Peter Searby argued that JLB ‘enjoyed the most contented and productive period of his life (in Devon). Its remote and desolate beauty attracted him and its invigorating winds improved his health’. Indeed they may have cured his health problems as there are few further references to them and he lived for another 50 years which was rather unusual for a 30 year old thought to be suffering from consumption.

In West Buckland, the most important family (with land, like the Breretons, since the mid twelfth century) were the Fortescues of Castle Hill, and JLB formed a lifelong friendship with the man who became the third Earl Fortescue (1818 -1905). He was Viscount Ebrington until 1861 and third Earl Fortescue from 1861 to 1905. JLB described Fortescue as ‘the salt of my soul’. The friendship lasted into JLB’s Norfolk days and two Fortescue portraits were hung on the walls of the Little Massingham rectory. Fortescue was a Whig MP from 1841-1852 and was a junior minister in the 1840s but an infection cost him the sight of one eye and led to his withdrawal from an active political career after he reached the Lords. This allowed him to spend more time on his Devon estates and, most importantly, on JLB’s plans for education, rural development and railways. One outcome of these plans was JLB’s first county school at West Buckland, begun in 1858, and the promotion of the Devon and Somerset Railway (see Part 2)

These two men, one educated at Oxford and the other at Cambridge and both in their early 30s, discovered that their respective talents complemented each other perfectly. As Berwick Coates comments: ‘JLB had the ideas, the charm, the drive, the energy; Fortescue had the money, the connections, the clout – he knew absolutely everybody’. As a consequence of his work for education, agriculture and rural development in Devon, JLB was elected an honorary canon of Exeter Cathedral. Of course, his educational concerns often took him away from West Buckland and, to assist in church duties, he sometimes employed a curate. Indeed, his brother in law, Richard Martin, is recorded as a curate in West Buckland in 1861.

In 1867, when his father became unwell, JLB left Devon and returned to his childhood home to become Rector of Little Massingham. His father died a year later in 1868 and, in 1872, most of the Wilson lands in Massingham were sold to William Walker. Some land was also sold to a Mr Dring. On arrival in Norfolk (aged 45), JLB was an experienced country parson and, of particular relevance to the future L&F, a very well connected one. In Norfolk, his experience in working with wealthy land owners in the south west enabled him to quickly build on his father’s links with the local gentry and he set about organising a Norfolk County School. Once this Norfolk County School was opened in permanent buildings in 1874, he used his influence with local landowners to promote the L&F.

In sum, JLB’s background made him acceptable to wealthy families and he felt at ease working with them. We have seen he was descended from an old Cheshire family, was the grandson of a wealthy merchant, had been educated in one of the seven elite public boarding schools of the mid nineteenth century, had been an undergraduate at Oxford and had married into a family well connected with the land owning gentry in south west England. His links with wealthy families were strengthened further when he acted as a private tutor to their sons whilst he recuperated from periods of ill health. This background meant that he was comfortable moving in wealthy land owning circles and he was able to use these connections to good effect. JLB was a religious and selfless man and, when not looking after his flock, he wanted nothing more than to promote education for the middle classes. This interest may have arisen both from his father’s interests in rural affairs and from his mother’s Congregational family who had a long tradition in the financing of the construction of churches and chapels. Those who knew him saw JLB as ‘an energetic and attractive man’ and they ‘found his complex nature exciting and creative’. Further, they were conscious of ‘his commanding presence and unusual energy and charm’.

It was this man who, as part of his wider interest in rural development, encouraged the introduction of railways to stimulate rural economies. We will look at his work on the promotion of railways in Parts 2 and 3.

## Rev Joseph Lloyd Brereton: Part 2 Railway promotion



*Joseph and Frances Brereton in Little Massingham, 1871/2*

*Photo courtesy of Rosemary Jewers (nee Brereton) © Rosemary Jewers*

JLB's interest in railways was part of his wider concern with the problems of the people of England's rural areas, especially in the two rural areas (Devon and Norfolk) in which he worked. In this interest in rural matters, he followed his father who wrote 'important pamphlets on poor law and agricultural questions' and he believed, like his father, in a paternalist rural society 'controlled by squire and parson'. However, unlike his father, his interests were primarily with farmers and middle income people rather than agricultural labourers and the rural poor. We saw, in Part 1, that his major interest was in educational reform and that rural development (other than that linked to education) was a secondary interest.

The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (on-line) discusses JLB's agricultural and railway work briefly.

"Brereton was highly successful at West Buckland, compiling two parochial year books, founding the Barnstaple Farmers Club in 1854, initiating an annual agricultural show and helping bring the railway from Taunton to Barnstaple (*the Devon and Somerset Railway*). In Norfolk, his similar efforts led to the Kings Lynn to Fakenham Railway".

It is recorded (in a talk in 1881, see Part 3) that JLB saw railways as a way of allowing farmers to widen their markets. JLB noted (present authors edits in italics):

"The cost of carriage of agricultural produce by road is estimated at one shilling (*12d*) per ton mile. The cost of the same carriage by rail may be reduced to 2d per ton/mile (*a feature attractive to farmers*)...I believe it may be shown that by every mile you bring the railway track nearer to the centre of any given farm, you add at least one shilling per acre to the value of the farm" (*a feature attractive to land owners*)

Not only were railways valuable in moving agricultural products to market (both grains and livestock), they also offered savings in inputs to the agricultural economy. As a proponent of steam power on farms, JLB argued that, after the arrival of a railway, coal for the new steam powered machines (for ploughing or threshing) would be purchased in north Norfolk for 11d per cwt compared with 18d per cwt previously.

JLB grew up at the beginning of the railway age and, like many people of the time, he seems to have been enthused by the potential of the new technology. However, he is the only rector we know of who played a leading role in encouraging the promotion of railways. We would like to hear of any other such rectors.

He had two features, possibly unique to a rector, that would have reinforced a general interest in railways. In his work for educational reform, he travelled widely by rail and this alone may well have been sufficient for him to see the potential of railways as a tool for rural development. Second, JLB's railway interests may have been reinforced by other family members who were railway engineers. A second cousin Robert Pearson Brereton (1818-1894) trained with Brunel from 1836 and became Brunel's chief assistant from 1844, supervising nearly all the stages in the construction of the Saltash bridge and later helping to complete, after Brunel's death, the West Somerset Railway (Taunton to Minehead) in 1862. This was shortly before JLB's involvement with the Taunton to Barnstaple line in 1863 (see below). JLB and RPB must surely have met when they were both in south-west England in the first half of the 1860s.



*Robert Pearson Brereton (left) with Brunel.*

*Part of a mural in SS Great Britain, Bristol (painted in 1997) Photograph by Michael Sandford*

JLB's interest in railway developments may have been strengthened further when one of his younger brothers (Robert Maitland Brereton, 1834-1911) gained work experience with Brunel from 1852-56 and was involved in construction of the Saltash Bridge and the Devon and Cornwall Railway. This younger brother trained at the Royal School of Mines as a civil engineer and became a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers in 1865. From 1878 to 1885, while his older brother was encouraging railway construction in Norfolk, he was the Norfolk County Surveyor for roads and bridges.

Despite JLB's railway interest, it is vital to stress again that, throughout his life, his educational work took priority over his interests in wider aspects of rural development and railway promotion. The Devon County School (at West Buckland) was established first and the Devon and Somerset Railway (D&S) followed. The Norfolk County School (near North Elmham) opened in permanent buildings in 1874 and promotion of the L&F followed later.

#### *Brereton and the Devon and Somerset Railway*

Published records tell us little of JLB's links to the railways in Devon. We know that JLB laid on a 'free Christmas dinner in 1865 for a large number of navvies building a local line'. Another source suggests a 'railway was lured near' the West Buckland School. However, archival records of his links are much stronger. There are extensive files on his Devon activities in relation to railways in the Norfolk Record Office. We have not explored these NRO files. In the south west, there may be material in the *North Devon Journal* available in Barnstaple (at the North Devon Athenaeum) as they have a person index in which Brereton figures strongly. This newspaper is also available on line at a cost. There may be further records available in the Devon Record Office and in the archives of the Devonshire Association.

JLB's first foray into encouraging railway construction in rural areas was in support for the broad gauge Devon and Somerset Railway (D&S) which was planned to run from the Bristol and Exeter railway at Taunton, across north Devon, to Barnstaple. The account of the line below draws principally on the history of this line by Maggs (1972). As its name suggests, the railway was to link Devon to the wider national network in Somerset. Maggs makes no reference to JLB but does stress the close involvement of his friend Fortescue (see Part 1). The lack of a reference to JLB is probably an oversight by Maggs as the NRO files (T158c Items 98 and 99) are testimony to JLB's involvement.

A route for the D&S had been proposed by Brunel in 1845 and supported by Fortescue some years before JLB's arrival in Devon. The idea behind the line was to link Barnstaple and north Devon to the major city of Bristol. The proposal, a product of the 1840s railway mania, did not come to fruition. After Brunel's death, the idea was revived by Fortescue and Brereton in the early 1860s. Although Barnstaple was linked via a standard gauge line to Exeter, it provided only a very roundabout route to the regional centre of Bristol and the north. A further, and new, impetus for the line in the 1860s was the fact that JLB's new school at West Buckland was almost ten miles from the nearest railway in Barnstaple where the North Devon Railway had arrived from Exeter in 1854. A revival of the Barnstaple to Taunton scheme was in order. A bill was prepared in 1863 using Eugenius Birch as the engineer. Although not known primarily for his railway projects (he had advised on the Delhi Calcutta railway before 1862), Birch was building a national reputation as a pier designer with Margate in the late 1850s and Blackpool North pier in the early 1860s. He may have been working in the Barnstaple area on Ilfracombe harbour at this time.

The plans for the line from Barnstaple to Taunton were not straightforward as Fortescue and Brereton were planning a line at the 'frontier' between what would be LSWR (standard gauge) and GWR (broad gauge) territory. In passing through the committee stage in parliament, the committee recommended that the D&S be built only as far as South Molton from Taunton and then diverge to the south west to meet the Exeter to Barnstaple line at UMBERLEIGH. Presumably UMBERLEIGH to Barnstaple would have been dual gauge. Such a route would have by-passed West Buckland School and the Fortescue estates. Further it would increase the distance from Barnstaple to Bristol. It is suspected this change was encouraged by the fact that the LSWR were interested in the Barnstaple- Exeter line so that all traffic leaving Barnstaple would depart on that line. Other advantages of the more southern route were that it removed the need for two stations in Barnstaple and avoided the costs of constructing a tunnel and viaduct at Castle Hill. The bill, with the new route, went to the House of Lords where Fortescue got an amendment passed to ensure the original direct route from South Molton to Barnstaple was retained thus ensuring his estates and the Devon County School got a station at Filleigh.

The line received its Act on 29 July 1864 and, after a change of the planned contractors, a contract was signed in July 1865 and by August 1866 sections of the line had been staked out but sales of shares were slow. The contractors were pressing for payment and, in September 1866, navvies were fired and the work postponed. In July 1867, the contractors began removing

their equipment from the site and, in December 1867, the contractor's agreement was terminated. It was at this point in the line's history that JLB left Devon for Norfolk. This is not the place to review in detail the further financial wrangling between directors, engineers and contractors (see Maggs, 4-10) and it is sufficient to note that, as JLB left Devon, the D&S was in considerable financial trouble.

Despite these problems with the D&S, JLB seems to have been forging ahead with further plans for railways in Devon. In both 1866 and 1867, there is correspondence in the NRO files relating to a Combe Martin Railway. It is likely this was to provide an alternative route to the Ilfracombe area, possibly via East Buckland. We have not looked at these records.

The Combe Martin railway was never built but the D&S opened as far as Wiveliscombe (7 miles/12kms) by 1871 and the full length of 43 miles (69 km) was not opened until November 1873—almost ten years from Act to full opening and six years after JLB had left West Buckland.

His experience with the Devon & Somerset railway had given him an insight into ways of bringing promoters together, dealing with the line engineers, depositing a bill in Parliament, coping with the problems presented by a Select Committee and, once the Act had been passed, selecting the contractors and seeing work on construction of the line get underway. The problems with the directors, engineers and contractors on the D&S were a warning as to what might occur in the promotion of the L&F. The story of JLB and the L&F from 1874 to 1881 follows in Part 3.

#### **Reference**

Maggs, C. (c.1972) *The Taunton to Barnstaple line: Devon and Somerset Railway*, Locomotion Papers 126, Oakwood Press.

## **Rev Joseph Lloyd Brereton: Part 3 The Lynn and Fakenham Railway (research in progress)**

1874 saw the revival of plans for a railway from Kings Lynn to Fakenham when JLB sent an invitation to the principal landowners in the district to meet to discuss whether it was worth considering a new railway line between the two towns. JLB became a key player in promotion of the line.

Plans for the L&F went ahead in the midst of what we can now see as the onset of an agricultural recession. The 'high farming' or 'golden years' of British agriculture were ending as a result, primarily, of grain imports from overseas. JLB may have felt his new line would stimulate the local economy but he could not have foreseen the wider economic problems which would arise as the agricultural recession gathered pace throughout the 1870s. This can of course be seen only with hindsight. The recession was reflected in the fact that the price of grain in Norwich fell from about 65 shillings a quarter in 1872 to below 55 shillings for the rest of the century, reaching its lowest price in 1894 at 25 shillings. Farm output in Norfolk fell by 14 per cent between 1873 and 1894 compared with a national fall of 4 per cent in England as a whole. Landowners found their rental incomes falling (therefore they were less likely to fund railways) as farmers found it increasingly difficult to meet their rents. The sale price of agricultural land almost halved between 1870 and 1900.

This period too saw the growth of the agriculture workers' unions. There were unions in eight Norfolk market towns (including Fakenham) by 1872 and, in the same year, Joseph Arch set up the National Agricultural Labourers Union. Strike activity on one or more farms in Norfolk occurred almost every year from 1872 up to 1883. An indication of the support unions enjoyed in north west Norfolk is seen in the fact that some years later, in 1885, Joseph Arch was elected liberal MP for North West Norfolk (a constituency which included Little Massingham). This was the first election in which the majority of male agricultural labourers had the vote.

It was into this increasingly depressed and unhappy agricultural environment of the 1870s that JLB introduced the idea of building a new railway, a railway to be built in the midst of perhaps the most serious agricultural recession of the nineteenth century. This must, of course, have contributed to the poor financial performance of the L&F and, later, the Eastern and Midlands Railway, which took over the operation of the L&F in the mid 1880s. The local history records that JLB's father (who, as noted earlier, had preceded him as rector of Little Massingham) 'was possessed of considerable influence with all classes of society in both the County and the Diocese'. JLB was able to build upon these relationships with local gentry. JLB's contacts included local landowners with two of the three largest estates in Norfolk, Lord Townshend of Raynham Hall (owner of 18,000 acres), Lord Cholmondeley of Houghton Hall (owner of 17,000 acres). ffolkes of the smaller Hillington Hall estate (8,000 acres) was also involved. Another key local person was William Walker, head of the Kings Lynn firm of William Walker and Sons, who had purchased the Little Massingham manor house and most of the land in Massingham (around 1,500 acres) from the Wilson family by the time the line was promoted. Mr Dring, who had purchased a small part of the Wilson lands in Little Massingham, is also recorded as supporting the railway

The squire(s) (Townshend, Cholmondeley, ffolkes and Walker), led by the parson (JLB), were to attempt to take this rural society into the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the promotion of a railway. However, Cholmondeley tended to distance himself from the project.

A near contemporary commentator was of the view that:

'the L&F...may trace its origin to Little Massingham. Mr Walker, the present Lord of the manor and Mr Brereton, the rector, took together the first active steps for its promotion in 1874 and 1875, in consequence of which several meetings were held at the Rectory, and were attended by the Marquis of Townshend, Sir William ffolkes, Mr Walker and other gentlemen who were interested in the movement'.

This commentator does not give, perhaps, enough weight to the fact that there had been earlier plans for a Lynn and Fakenham Railway. A Lynn and Fakenham railway had been proposed (but not built) in the railway mania of the 1840s and a bill was deposited, in November 1845, for a line to start about one and a half miles out of Lynn on the line to Dereham.

For the 1874 line, the engineer selected by JLB and his associates was the well recognised J S Valentine who was perhaps the obvious choice as he had worked previously on the Lynn and Ely and the Lynn and Dereham lines. It may be relevant that JLB's line used a Great Eastern Railway (GER) engineer and was planned to join existing GER track at both Lynn and Fakenham. It would have been feasible to link up with the Great Northern and Midland companies in the Lynn area as their trains ran through to Lynn but, at this stage of its history, the line was seen by JLB and other promoters as a local line linking into the established GER network. A Bill was presented to parliament in 1875 and became the Lynn and Fakenham Act of 1876. One of JLB's grandsons told us that his grandfather, as Rector of Little Massingham, 'did not have many funds himself... (but he)...influenced and was the main force in combining local wealthy people to finance the project.'

The complex and convoluted history of the relationships between JLB and the L&F from 1876 to 1882 is still being researched by the M&GN Circle. The L&F was extended eventually from Fakenham to Norwich and from Melton Constable, on the Norwich line, to Yarmouth (via Aylsham, North Walsham and Stalham). A short spur was also built northwards from Melton Constable towards the coast. All these lines became part of the Eastern and Midlands Railway in 1883 and then, in 1893, part of the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway. JLB was still acting for the L&F as late as November 1880 and in July 1881 he is recorded giving an after dinner speech on the positive impact of the L&F on the local economy. This must have related to the line as far as Fakeham as the extension to Norwich was not yet open.

However, after 1881, JLB moved away from active involvement with the L&F, a move which probably reflected three factors. First, a return to his main interest in educational reform. The 1881 Census shows 59 year old JFB staying in Norwich House Cambridge which was the initial base for his Cavendish College (see part 1). From 1881, he was busy with Cavendish College and, from 1884, in setting up the Graduated County Schools Association within which he assembled a collection of almost ten

girls' schools including one in Kings Lynn. Second, there were changes in the personnel running the L&F and there is a suspicion that, like local landowners, he may have been pushed out of railway matters. We might have expected rather more involvement with the L&F as the railway got closer to the place with long established family associations (Brinton). Third, the railway accident in which he was injured seriously in 1882 may also have played a role (see part 4)

In the period between 1887 and 1901, his wife died in her late 50s, the girls' schools scheme crashed, Cavendish College was re-organised without JLB and the Norfolk County School went into liquidation. So by the 1890s, JLB had settled in the Little Massingham rectory as a country parson. No doubt he could hear the Kings Cross-Cromer express (from 1887) and the fast trains from the Midlands to Yarmouth (from 1894) passing by on the line in which he had once played such an important part. JLB himself died in 1901 at the age of 79. A good record for someone who had been a sickly youth.

Although both lines with which JLB was involved (the Devon and Somerset and the Lynn and Fakenham) were unsuccessful, they were not alone and their history is typical of many of the rural railways built towards the end of the nineteenth century. Looking back over JLB's railway activities, we can see parallels between his two lines. Both were based on a revival of older plans and would challenge the territory of other companies. The D&S was surveyed by a leading engineer (Birch), was slow in construction, went into receivership in 1877 and was taken over subsequently by the GWR and closed to passengers in 1964. The L&F, similarly, was surveyed by a leading engineer (Valentine), was slow in construction, was in receivership in 1889 and was taken over jointly subsequently by the Great Northern Railway and the Midland Railway in 1893 and closed to passengers in 1959. Parts of the track beds of both lines are now followed by main roads. It is pleasing to note that some of the schools inspired by JLB's thinking survive but, sadly, his railways do not.

## **Rev Joseph Lloyd Brereton: Part 4 The Stretham accident and after** (Research in progress)

JLB was injured seriously in a railway accident at Stretham Fen (just south of Ely) on 28 July 1882 when a train heading towards Ely and Kings Lynn, hit a balance weight which had fallen off the locomotive of a train heading in the opposite direction towards Cambridge. The front part of JLB's train was derailed. As with the other seriously injured (eventually there was one fatality) he was brought up from the wreckage on an improvised stretcher made from a carriage door, taken on a special train to Cambridge where a requisitioned tram car took him on to Addenbrookes Hospital. JLB had a dislocated hip and 'severely injured' feet. Cambridge college records suggest that, subsequently, he could only walk short distances with the aid of two sticks. On his college visits he was pushed around in what was then called a 'bath chair'. He sued the Great Eastern Railway (GER) successfully for his injuries and was awarded £4000 in compensation.

Despite his lack of involvement with the later days of the L&F there are two further railway links to consider after 1882.

The first link relates to an investment abroad in a new railway in northern Sweden being constructed by Wilkinson and Jarvis. This company had been the contractors on the construction of the Lynn and Fakenham railway. JLB seems to have been on good terms with the senior partner James John Wilkinson as, as late as 1885, he held bonds in the contractor's railway development in northern Sweden. It may be, of course, that Wilkinson was simply a good bond salesman!! Indeed, one would have liked to have been present at a meeting where our JLB an 'energetic and attractive man' (now in his 60s) met the contractor Wilkinson (35 years old) a man 'with superabundant energy and an absolute belief in his own schemes' One suspects that, as the Swedish line had a troubled history, Wilkinson's bonds offered only limited returns.

The second railway link is that he may have persuaded the GER to open County School station in 1884 on the line which ran north from the market town of Dereham to the small port of Wells. Prior to the opening of this station there were special trains at the beginning and end of term to North Elmham (the closest station to the school), in the same way that the Devon school had been served at first from Barnstaple.

County School station was located on the Dereham to Wells line between North Elmham (to the south) and Ryburgh (to the north). Between these two stations a line from Wroxham (to the east) joined the Dereham to Wells line at Broom Green. There was no station at Broom Green and trains from Wroxham continued south through North Elmham to terminate at Dereham. Although the GER had powers to develop the Broom Green area they were never exercised. The site of County School station is to the south of Broom Green at the point where a tree lined private drive between the school and a public road crossed the railway. It may be significant that the 1882 GER bill, which included the purchase of land for County School station, was submitted in November 1882 after JLB's rail accident in July 1882. The logic at the time was that it would save running costs over the six miles between the proposed County School station and Dereham. The 1882 Bill became the GER 1883 Act and the new station was constructed. It is a more substantial station than others on the Dereham to Wells line and was opened on 1 March 1884. However, County School seems to have been used only intermittently as a junction station for the Wroxham line as, for much of the time, trains from Wroxham stopped briefly at County School but then continued, as before, to terminate at Dereham. Was this station put in place simply to placate JLB since its junction role was very limited? We are currently researching whether there any links in the archives between his accident and the opening of the station.