

# **BANBURYSHIRE'S LOST MAIN LINE**

## **The Great Central Railway:**

### **A short history**

*Alan Donaldson*

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the Manchester Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway (a northern concern, as its title indicates with a west-east trans – Pennine main line) constructed an extension railway to London. The new line ran from Annesley, just north of Nottingham, to a new station in the centre of that city to be named, like so many of its contemporaries, after the reigning queen. It then progressed south through Leicester, Rugby and Brackley, before meeting the existing Metropolitan Railway line from London at Quainton Road, a few miles north of Aylesbury. This station was already a junction, situated on the Aylesbury-Verney Junction line, whence an eccentric little tramroad, promoted by the Duke of Buckingham in the 1870s, diverged westwards to the hill-top village of Brill. The London extension then used the Metropolitan line as far as the north London suburbs, where it constructed its own line partly through tunnels, including one under Lord's cricket ground, to a new terminus of its own at Marylebone.

So, in contrast to the other main lines constructed 50 or 60 years earlier, it penetrated the capital from the provinces and not vice versa. In this respect its only similar predecessor was the Midland Railway, which in the 1860s had similarly reached its own new terminus at St Pancras. The original plan had been to terminate the new line at Boscobel Gardens, a little to the north, but this was opposed by the artists' colony in St John's Wood, led by Alma Tadema, in alliance with the M.C.C. in defence of the sacred turf of Lord's, and the bill was thrown out. One speculator who built a hotel in anticipation of the original site saw the final line by-pass his building. In this respect his frustration differed from that of Captain Lampet who built his hotel locally to us at Tadmarton in readiness for a line which never came. A second bill located the new terminus at a more central site fronting the Marylebone Road, and the cricketers were placated by an undertaking to 'cut and cover' the new line where it passed under the corner of their ground, subsequently restoring the turf to its pristine condition. In its revised form the London Extension Bill finally received the Royal Assent at the end of March 1893.