

Factsheet

Southern History

When the railway began in the 1840s, trains started off as steam engines. In 1909 the first electric line was opened on the network; the South London line. The railway could then begin to offer higher speeds and better reliability, lower operating costs and cleaner journeys for passengers.

These great changes meant that the passenger journeys each year went up to 7.5 million.

Over the next few decades Southern carried out a massive programme to work towards electrifying the whole network. With frequent, fast and comfortable trains, the Southern Railway was regarded as the best railway in Britain, possibly even the world!

The electrification programme was brought to a halt by the Second World War, when London and its railways bore the brunt of the German air raids. By 1945, a near normal service was brought back, but the shortage of staff and materials made the repair of the railways very difficult.

Despite the war's disruption, by 1948 Southern had the biggest electrified suburban rail system in the world and most of the steam trains had been replaced.

The railways were then nationalised by the Government and the Southern name disappeared.

In 2003 the name 'Southern' was reborn when we took over running the current network.

