

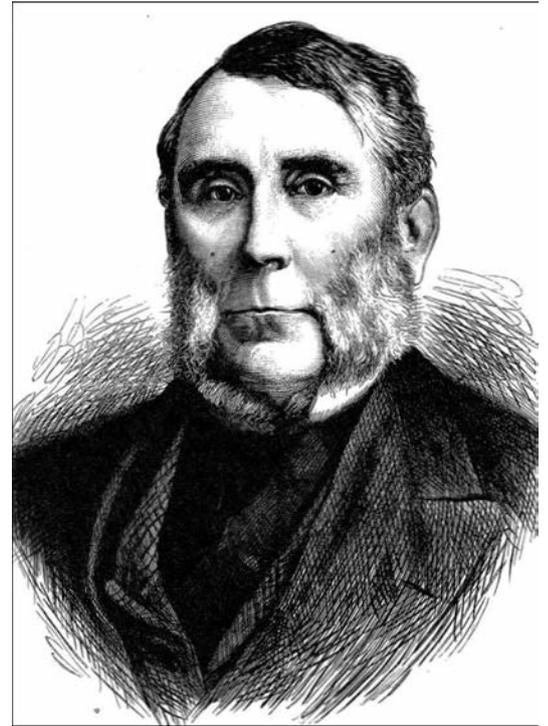
# 'A new, and first class route to the Continent'

Edward Watkin was born in 1819 and like today's Richard Branson, he was an innovator, with a fiery quick temper and plenty of fresh ideas.

During his early career he introduced parks and open spaces to his home town of Manchester and helped to reduce the extreme poverty of it's inhabitants.



Peel Park Salford



With the coming of the railway in 1830, he saw a future where, not only towns and cities but great nations would be connected by rail across the world.

Watkin was a Liberal Member of Parliament for Hythe in Kent (1874–1895). He was Knighted in 1868 and made a Baronet in 1880.

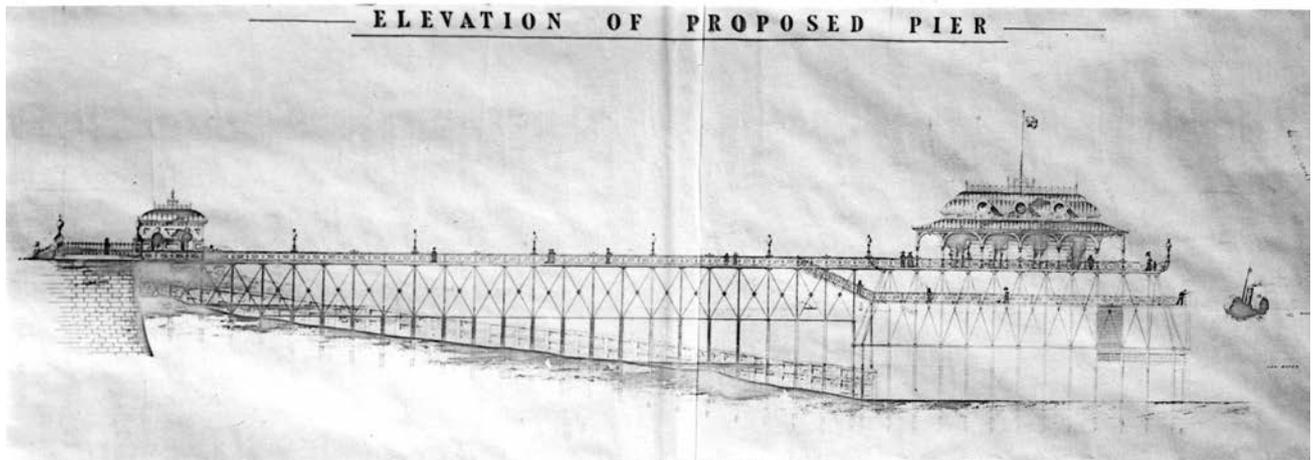
Sir Edward Watkin Became Director of South Eastern Railways in 1866 and had a long-term ambition for the SER to become one link in a chain of 'Watkin' railways from the industrial north of England to the Continent via a proposed [Channel Tunnel](#).

Part of this plan in the 1880s, was to create a new south-coast resort and SER bought as much land and property as was available between and around Hythe and Sandgate railway stations (see map below).



Areas marked green are known SER property/land as in about 1906

This was set up as the Seabrook Estate Company together with the Seabrook Hotel company, to develop the area into a grand open estate with squares and gardens. There was even a plan to build a pier. New roads were planned to the north of Hythe station on what is now Sene Valley Golf Course but none of this came about and only Cliff road was ever built.

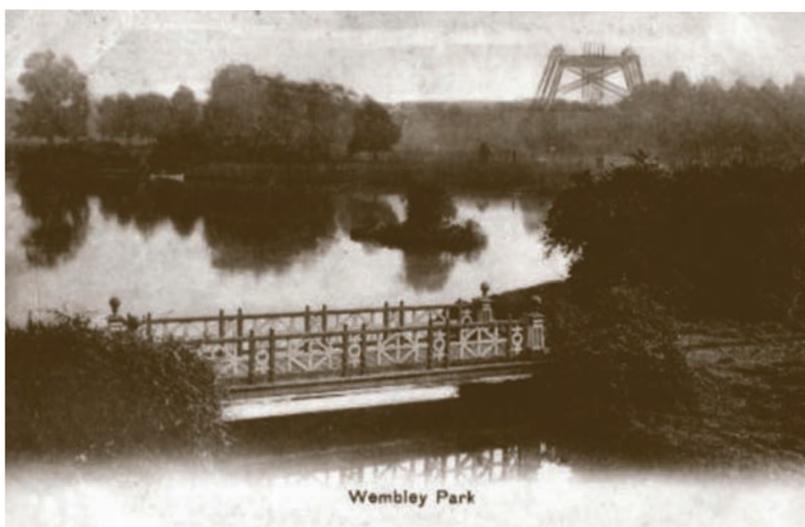


In March 2020, a new map of the Seabrook Estate drawn in 1872 came to light, showing a proposed street layout. This is reproduced [here](#).

There were major problems, mainly with Lord Radnor, who had no desire to see such a rival to his development of the Leas in Folkestone being built and the shutting down of the work on the channel tunnel in 1882, due to fears by parliament that it could be used as a means of invasion from France (some say this was orchestrated by certain parties with a vested interest in preventing SER from continuing).

As a result the land was gradually sold off as 'Watkin's dream' gradually faded.

As well as being director of nine railway companies, he was also responsible for the partially completed Watkin's Tower, at Wembley, London and plans for a deep-water port at Dungeness in Kent.



Watkin's Folly.

After a trip to Paris in 1889, Sir Edward Watkin decided that London should have a tower to rival the Eiffel Tower. Work started in 1893, and the first stage was completed in 1895. A combination of poor design and marshy ground caused the work to be stopped after one level had been completed. The tower grounds with cafes and pleasure gardens, proved very popular at first, but attendance soon fell and in 1899 Watkin's company was forced into liquidation. The tower was demolished in the early 1900s, and eventually Wembley Stadium was built on the spot where it once stood .