

STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION TO DERBY - A MAJOR MAIN LINE ?

by Roger Davis

The Stourbridge Line User Group is campaigning for the reinstatement of the Stourbridge Junction to Walsall railway line as part of a wider scheme to link Worcestershire with Derby via Dudley, Walsall, Lichfield and Burton-on-Trent. The Group accepts the concept of a Midland Metro line operating alongside this line as it would properly serve the centres of Brierley Hill and Dudley and provide direct services to both Birmingham and Wolverhampton. However, the Group is demanding that nothing is done to prevent a heavy rail or tram-train line from operating alongside the Metro route to Wednesbury and extended through to Walsall and Lichfield City where it can link up with existing lines.

The Group realises that, to achieve that aim, its arguments must be based on fact. There are other campaigning groups with the same aims as SLUG who are basing their argument on the fact that the line from Stourbridge to Derby was a main line passenger route that was unfairly axed by Doctor Richard Beeching. Part of that argument is patently untrue as the Stourbridge Junction to Dudley passenger service was withdrawn on 30 July 1962, some 8 months before the much beloved doctor published his report on 27 March 1963. Another aspect of the claim also seems unlikely as the Stourbridge Junction to Dudley service was part of the GWR while the lines from Dudley onwards were owned by the LMS.



For this reason, SLUG decided to investigate just how easy it was to get from Stourbridge Junction to Derby before the lines closed in the 1960s. What it found was that the journey was even harder than thought. Although it is possible that excursion trains traversed the line in full, a regular timetabled journey needed to use four or five different services with three or four changes of train.

- Stourbridge Junction to Wolverhampton Low Level (GWR/BR(WR)) as far as Dudley
- Dudley to Walsall (LMS/BR (LMR))
- Wolverhampton High Level to Burton-on-Trent (LMS/BR (LMR)) from Walsall with some changes necessary at Lichfield City in 1950, but not 1960
- Birmingham New Street to Derby (LMS/BR (LMR)) from Burton-on-Trent

Timetables for 1950 (in blue) and 1960 (in green) are shown. All services between Dudley and Walsall are shown together with the first connecting services for the rest of the journey. Poor connection times are highlighted in **yellow** (over ½ hour wait), **orange** (over 1 hour) or **pink** (over 2 hours). The resultant timetables are printed on the next page and prove that the route was never considered a though route with connections as they were. Even with good connecting services, the journey would have taken about 1¾ hours for 47 miles at an average speed of about 27 mph. Any journey from Stourbridge to Derby would have made between 13 and 19 stops.

MON TO FRI 1950						MON TO FRI 1950							
Stourbridge Jct	d	0610	0755	1031	1220	1640	Derby	d	0610	0748	1246	1715	1715
Dudley	a	0631	0815	1052	1239	1703	Burton-on-Trent	a	0628	0811	1310	1738	1738
Dudley	d	0720	0840	1233	1308	1705	Burton-on-Trent	d	0650	0823	1312	1745	1745
Walsall	a	0738	0858	1251	1328	1726	Lichfield City	a	▼	▼	1341	▼	▼
Walsall	d	0823	1028	1316	1652	1756	Lichfield City	d	▼	▼	1644	▼	▼
Lichfield City	a	0847	▼	1343	▼	1820	Walsall	a	0752	0923	1710	1838	1838
Lichfield City	d	0850	▼	1507	▼	1854	Walsall	d	0822	1201	1726	1845	2005
Burton-on-Trent	a	0922	1122	1538	1746	1931	Dudley	a	0844	1220	1745	1905	2024
Burton-on-Trent	d	0954	1143	1714	1815	2007	Dudley	d	0919	1231	1750	2044	2044
Derby	a	1011	1203	1731	1840	2023	Stourbridge Jct	a	0942	1252	1810	2106	2106
JOURNEY TIME						4:01 4:08 7:00 6:40 3:43	JOURNEY TIME						
						3:32 5:04 5:24 3:51 3:51							

MONDAY TO FRIDAY 1960													
Stourbridge Junction	dep	0710	0755	0841	0841	1150	1150	1338	1338	1635	1727	1907	
Dudley	arr	0731	0816	0902	0902	1209	1209	1359	1359	1700	1747	1926	
Dudley	dep	0735	0837	0918	1018	1218	1318	1418	1618	1718	1755	2018	
Walsall	arr	0751	0853	0934	1034	1234	1334	1434	1634	1736	1812	2034	
Walsall	dep	0753	1049	1049	1049	1253	1449	1449	1649	1849	1849	2049	
Burton-on-Trent	arr	0845	1145	1145	1145	1334	1537	1537	1735	1936	1936	2136	
Burton-on-Trent	dep	0859	1213	1213	1213	1416	1706	1706	1759	1956	1956	2150	
Derby	arr	0921	1228	1228	1228	1431	1723	1723	1816	2012	2012	2206	
JOURNEY TIME			2:11	4:33	3:47	3:47	2:41	5:33	3:45	4:38	3:37	2:45	2:59

MONDAY TO FRIDAY 1960												
Derby	dep	0612	0655	0812	0906	0906	1155	1325	1509	1509	1720	
Burton-on-Trent	arr	0628	0717	0827	0924	0924	1211	1341	1523	1523	1741	
Burton-on-Trent	dep	0642	0800	0900	1000	1000	1218	1400	1600	1600	1805	
Walsall	arr	0727	0843	0943	1043	1043	1303	1446	1643	1643	1848	
Walsall	dep	0811	0850	0950	1050	1250	1356	1458	1650	1726	1850	
Dudley	arr	0828	0907	1007	1107	1307	1414	1515	1707	1745	1909	
Dudley	dep	0840	1030	1030	1430	1430	1430	1616	1712	1749	1930	
Stourbridge Junction	arr	0902	1047	1047	1447	1447	1447	1629	1731	1810	1950	
JOURNEY TIME			2:50	3:52	2:35	5:41	5:41	2:52	3:04	2:22	3:01	2:30

However, the fact that it was not a viable cross country route in the past does not preclude its use as such in the future. The line will never be the strategic main line with express trains from Scotland and the North East to the South West as envisaged in some quarters, as such services need to serve Birmingham for connections to all parts of the country. However, it could be a strategic feeder line, connecting Worcestershire and the Black Country to services to the North East at Burton-on-Trent or Derby. We need to campaign to get this line reinstated sooner rather than later.

