

## WORCESTER SHED'S BANANAS

by Roger Davis

The previous issue of Platform 2 featured the GWR AEC railcars that were based at Stourbridge shed. This second part moves the story southwards along the Stourbridge line to look at the railcars that were based at Worcester shed and used on many lines throughout Worcestershire including the Severn Valley and Wyre Forest lines from Hartlebury and Kidderminster.

Worcester shed received railcars from the very start, with numbers 6, 7, 25 and 33 being delivered brand new. From 1947 to 1958, Worcester had a constant allocation of six railcars, receiving both the early Gloucester RCW streamlined models and the later GWR-built angular designs.

In 1950, the six Worcester railcars operated four diagrams on weekdays but were not used on Sundays. Two of the diagrams served most parts of Worcestershire and extended into Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire serving places such as Ledbury, Oxford, Bromyard, Stratford-upon-Avon and Droitwich Spa. One of these two diagrams spent the early morning in our territory operating from Worcester shed to Highley, Bewdley, Hartlebury and Kidderminster before returning to Worcester Foregate Street at 0927. However, it was the other two diagrams that served the Severn Valley and Wyre Forest lines.

Diagram B operated out of service from Worcester to Kidderminster and then spent all day on the Severn Valley line operating 7 journeys from Hartlebury and 6 journeys from Kidderminster, with one of these journeys travelling as far north as Buildwas. The final journey from Kidderminster to Worcester Shrub Hill operated in service at 2250 before the railcar retired to the shed having amassed 233 miles during the day.



Diagram D operated out of service from Worcester to Shelwick Junction, just north of Hereford, before reversing to operate out of service to Ludlow. It then ran in service to Woofferton before operating three full round trips from Woofferton to Kidderminster and one short round trip from Kidderminster to Bewdley. In the evening, it ran a workers' special from Woofferton to Leominster before

returning to Worcester Shrub Hill in service from Leominster via Bromyard. It then retired onto shed having completed 239 miles during the day.

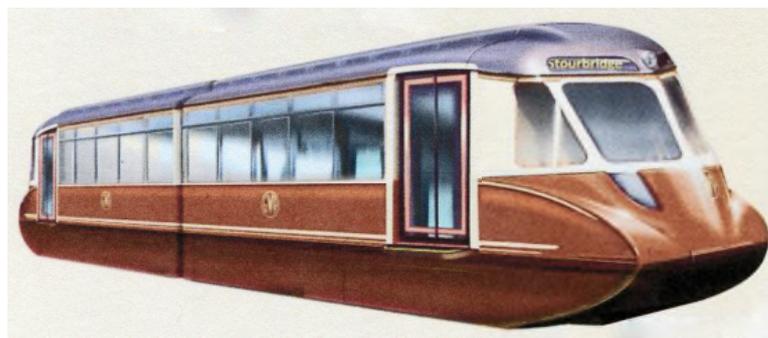
Railcar 22 arrives at Bewdley with a service from Bridgnorth on 15 August 1959



One withdrawal in 1956 was railcar 10 which was destroyed in a fire in Bridgnorth. 1958 saw an influx of the angular type from other depots to replace older streamlined models which were withdrawn and this increased the strength at the depot to seven railcars. Worcester was actually the last depot to operate railcars and the last six were withdrawn from Worcester in October 1962. These were numbers 20, 22, 23, 24, 26 and 32, the last of these having been at Worcester since 1947.

This was not the end of the story as far as Worcestershire was concerned. Number 22, which had finished its days at Worcester and regularly saw service on the Severn Valley line, was purchased by the Great Western Society at Didcot in 1967. After restoration into GWR chocolate and cream livery at both Bewdley and Bridgnorth in 1968, it remained on loan to the Severn Valley Railway until 1978 and operated a Saturday morning shoppers' service between Bridgnorth and Hampton Loade (later extended to Bewdley).

Preserved railcar 22 at the Great Western Society in Didcot



However, this may not be the end of the story if the Black Country Bugle is to be believed. In an article published in March 2015, they reported that "Parry's have designed a longer, bogie version of the Flywheel Hybrid Stourbridge Railcar and they have designed a body for it that recreates

the iconic GWR railcars that were once a common sight in our region". The new West Midlands rail franchise has specified that the new operator should address overcrowding problems on the Stourbridge Town branch. With the Class 139 having proved a very reliable vehicle on the branch, could a larger version be procured from Parry's and, if so, could we once again see a flying banana heading up the hill from Stourbridge Town station?

Most of the information in the two GWR Railcar articles came from an excellent reference book - *The History of the Great Western A.E.C. Diesel Railcars* by Colin Judge. This book was originally published in 1986 but was reprinted in 2008.