

## THE LAST REGULAR PASSENGER TRAINS THROUGH DUDLEY STATION

by Roger Davis

It is a well-known fact that Dudley station closed on 6 July 1964 when the Dudley to Walsall line was closed to passenger services. This removed its last remaining passenger links as the Wolverhampton to Stourbridge services had been withdrawn on 30 July 1962 and the Bumble Hole line services to Old Hill on 15 June 1964. Thus Dudley had seen the last passenger services pass through the station ... or had it?

Up to the late 1960s, services from the West Country to Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester Piccadilly operated via the Welsh Marshes line with the majority of trains between Bristol Temple Meads and Crewe stopping at Bristol Stapleton Road, Pontypool Road, Hereford and Shrewsbury. On Sundays, due to maintenance work in the Severn Tunnel, three of these services were diverted

A Plymouth to Liverpool express passes Coryton Cove, Dawlish hauled by a GWR County Class locomotive



(Norman Lockett)

between Bristol Temple Meads and Shrewsbury to operate via Gloucester Eastgate, Worcester Shrub Hill and Wolverhampton Low Level passing through Stourbridge Junction and Dudley, and these services operated after the Dudley line and station had closed. The British Rail timetable dated 14 June 1965 to 17 April 1966 shows these services as follows :-

Manchester Piccadilly (0005), Stockport Edgeley (0013/0017), Crewe (0045/0140), Shrewsbury (0217/0226), Wolverhampton Low Level (0259/0309), Worcester Shrub Hill (0419/0425), Bristol Temple Meads (0615/0700), Yatton (0719), Weston-super-Mare General (0730/0740), Highbridge for Burnham-on-Sea (0755), Bridgwater (0806/0810), Taunton (0829/0835), Exeter St David's (0913/0920), **ON SUMMER SUNDAYS Exeter St Thomas (0925), Starcross (0935), Dawlish (0944/0946), Teignmouth (0952/0955), Newton Abbot (1005/1010), Totnes (1028), Plymouth (1110), OR ON WINTER SUNDAYS Dawlish (0937/0939), Teignmouth (0945/0948), Newton Abbot (0958/1005), Plymouth (1100)**

Liverpool Lime Street (1100), Runcorn (1118), Crewe (1149/1220), Shrewsbury (1300/1306), Wolverhampton Low Level (1343/1348), Worcester Shrub Hill (1446/1450), Gloucester Eastgate (1524/1528), Bristol Temple Meads (1618/1630), Yatton (1648), Weston-super-Mare General (1659/1702), Bridgwater (1723), Taunton (1740/1745), Exeter St David's (1820/1825), Dawlish (1840/1842), Teignmouth (1848/1850), Newton Abbot (1900/1905), Totnes (1921), Plymouth (2005). **ON SUMMER SUNDAYS ONLY, through carriages detached at Newton Abbot (dep 1910) to Torre (1919), Torquay (1923/1925), Paignton (1930/1932), Churston (1942), Kingswear (1950)**

**ON SUMMER SUNDAYS Plymouth (0845), Totnes (0924), Newton Abbot (0942/0951), Through carriages from Kingswear (0855), Churston (0905), Goodrington Sands Halt (0911), Paignton (0916), Torquay (0922/0924), Torre (0929) attached at Newton Abbot (arr 0938) OR ON WINTER SUNDAYS Plymouth (0855), Newton Abbot (0947/0951), Teignmouth (1001), Dawlish (1009), Exeter St David's (1028/1034), Taunton (1109/1114), Bridgwater (1133), Weston-super-Mare General (1152/1155), Yatton (1207), Bristol Temple Meads (1230/1240), Gloucester Eastgate (1324/1328), Worcester Shrub Hill (1406/1410), Wolverhampton Low Level (1504/1510), Shrewsbury (1549/1554), Whitchurch (1616), Crewe (1635/1655), Runcorn (1717), Liverpool Lime Street (1739).**

The same service at Bristol Temple Meads hauled by a GWR Castle Class locomotive



(George Heiron)

The first of these trains had First and Second Class sleeping cars. According to Clive Butcher, in his excellent book *The Railways of Stourbridge*, the train was steam hauled from Wolverhampton by a Wolverhampton based Castle, Hall or Grange class locomotive until the end of October 1965 when diesel haulage took over. There was a corresponding northbound sleeper service from Penzance to Manchester Piccadilly but

this ran via the normal Welsh Marches route. The daytime services to and from Liverpool Lime Street had a restaurant car and, from the timings, it would appear that they passed each other somewhere in the Hartlebury area.

The timetable for the following year shows that, apart from slight adjustments to the timings, the main change was that through Summer Sunday services to Torquay, Paignton and Kingswear had been withdrawn, a change at Newton Abbot being necessary. The Beeching Report could not be held responsible for this as the line to Kingswear had not been earmarked for closure, although it was the first step towards the closure of the line west of Paignton in 1972.

The final passenger services through Dudley ran on 27 February 1967 with the 0855 service from Plymouth being scheduled to be the last one to pass through the station at about 2.45 pm. The following Sunday saw Wolverhampton Low Level, along with Birmingham Snow Hill, lose all of its through services with just all-stations local services to Snow Hill remaining. Incidentally, this was also the day that Stourbridge line trains were routed into New Street.

Dudley Station in 1957



(R S Carpenter)

The sleeper service from Manchester Piccadilly to Plymouth left Piccadilly 30 minutes earlier and was routed via the Welsh Marshes line with the result that it stopped at Bristol Temple Meads from 0355 hrs to 0700 hrs.

The two expresses between Liverpool Lime Street and Plymouth were rerouted between Crewe and Bristol Temple Meads with stops at Wolverhampton High Level and Birmingham New Street and reduced to running Summer Sundays only with no catering facilities. The rot had really started to set in.

Very shortly after the last trains had passed, Dudley station was demolished and replaced by the Freightliner depot which survived until 1986. The line north-west of Dudley was ripped up and there is little to suggest today that the line ever existed.