PLATFORM 3

Issue 7 May 2021

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

It's hard to remember that the area now covered by the massive car park at Stourbridge Junction was once marshalling yards

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INTRODUCTION
by Roger Davis

This is the fourth, and final, *Platform 3* issue looking at old newspaper articles on all aspects of the Stourbridge line and articles that discuss the changes that have happened in the West Midlands area since the Stourbridge line was built.

In this issue, we start with two letters that were sent to the *Birmingham Post* by Stourbridge line correspondents. What they demonstrate is that nothing much has changed in nearly 50 years as far as that great hell-hole in the centre of Birmingham is concerned. Even £600 million failed to cure these two problems.

Birmingham Post - 28 June 1968

TO THE EDITOR

Discomfort station

Sir, - The other day I went to Birmingham New Street Station to meet a traveller. On arrival in the wonderful new entrance hall I looked for the toilets. On inquiring, I was told that there was none - save on the train side of the barrier!

May one inquire of British Rail what is being done to rectify this monumental planning boob? Surely no one with a grain of intelligence would deliberately plan a modern station with such an appalling defect.

W. A. HEATH,
Kidderminster.

Birmingham Post - 27 September 1971

Nowhere to sit down

Sir. - I recently went to Birmingham by rail from Stourbridge Junction. After a tiring day trying to find the nearest way from one point to another, I arrived at New Street Station, only to find no way in without climbing a flight of stairs which I was much too tired to do. I went back up to the top of Stephenson Place and found the way in from there.

No seats whatever on the most dreary platforms anyone could visualise. I had to stand leaning against a wall while the train arrived 10 minutes after it should have left for Stourbridge, and a job to find a seat after that.

No wonder the older ones like me do not want to go into Birmingham, and certainly not to wait on such a dreary station. The old Snow Hill was a light cheery place and plenty of seats and waiting rooms. What a dungeon New Street is.

I support all M. M. says.

(Mrs.) M. BENNETT.
Brierley Hill.

THE HAGLEY WATER PIPE BOMBING
1968 - 1970

For obvious reasons, the bombing of the water pipe that carried the water supply from the Elan Valley to Bartley Green Reservoir in Birmingham made the national press. The bombing was obviously the work of Welsh Nationalists and various blog entries on the internet state that a trial took place, with one blog entry claiming that three Anglesey County Council employees were convicted of the crime. However, extensive research of the newspapers of the time has not unearthed any trial which refers to the Hagley bombing by name. Press reports from the time tell the story of the bombing and the investigation that took place.

Coventry Evening Telegraph - 2 December 1968

Blast shatters water pipeline

AN explosion early today shattered a pipeline carrying water to Birmingham from Elan Aquaduct, Radnorshire, at West Hagley, Worcestershire.

The explosion caused a "serious breach" of the water link, and caused extensive flooding of the rail line between Stourbridge and Kidderminster.

Scores of West Mercia police with tracker dogs sealed the area, setting up road blocks and stopping vehicles and there was a general police alert throughout Wales soon after the blast.

Known members of the Free Wales Army and other organisations were checked.

Birmingham's Water Committee said there had been a “deliberately placed explosive charge.”

The supply had been reduced by a half, and an urgent appeal was made for people in the Meriden area to cut the consumption of water.

Coventry’s water supply is not affected by the explosion.

COVENTRY SUPPLY

Some water is bought from Birmingham under a long-standing arrangement, and this is continuing, Mr. R. Y. Bromwell, Coventry Water Engineer and Manager, said today.

Coventry’s main supply is brought by duplicated pipeline from the River Severn at Upton-on-Severn to the Coventry reservoirs at Meriden.

Mr. Bromwell declined to comment on how vulnerable the Coventry pipeline might be to sabotage such as that experienced with the Birmingham supply.

The Coventry pipeline covers a distance of about 40 miles, and is exposed to view at points such as river and road crossings, where it is lifted over. It would obviously be difficult to maintain constant watch on it.

Because of track damage a rail shuttle service was introduced between New Street Station, Birmingham, and Stourbridge Junction, with a connecting bus service between Stourbridge and Kidderminster.

Chief Supt. Jock Wilson, of Scotland Yard Special Branch, who has been placed in charge of security over the investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales next year, visited the scene.

Supt. Wilson led the investigation into the Pembrey R.A.F. Station bomb blast which injured a warrant officer on September 9.

Birmingham Post - 3 December 1968

Saboteurs pick vital point for explosion

Birmingham Post Reporter

Saboteurs who blew up two of the four pipes carrying all Birmingham's water supply chose one of the most strategic points on the 75-mile long aqueduct.

The explosion at 1.50 a m yesterday (reported in later editions of *The Birmingham Post*) was just west of Hagley where the four mains are taken over the Kidderminster-Stourbridge railway cutting.

It devastated two 42-inch pipes on a steel bridge carrying them over the cutting.

The bridge was also damaged and the explosion released a wave of water which swept away the ballast from the railway lines beneath and left the rags suspended perilously.

Anyone close to the railway line would have been drowned by the gush of water.

Engineers worked through last night to remove the damaged concrete abutments and replace the damaged pipes.

Finally they will have to re-concrete in the pipes. The work could take at least two days.

The effect of the explosion has been to reduce water supply by a third. and yesterday there was a plea from the chairman of the Birmingham Water Committee, Ald. Dr. Louis Glass, to industrialists and householders to economise on water.

The city holds a week's supply of water at Frankley reservoir, but this leaves it vulnerable to other bursts.

Knowledge

The explosion indicated that it was done by saboteurs with a reasonable knowledge of explosives and of places where an explosion would do the most damage.

The new supply of water from the River Severn joins the four pipelines of the Elan aqueduct just west of Hagley.

The blast hit both supplies.

Mr. R. C. Whitehead, the undertaking's engineer and manager, explained that the damage was caused by "deliberately placed explosive charges."

The hole blown in a 42in. main was big enough for a man to step into, he said.

The effect was to release a jet of water at a pressure of 200lbs a square inch.

If trains had come either way there would have been a disaster. "It is an example of the callous, irresponsible thing which can happen with this sort of sabotage," Mr. Whitehead said.

Throughout the day, British Rail ran a coach shuttle service between Kidderminster and Stourbridge - a distance of 6½ miles.

Trains from New Street halted at Stourbridge. and a further train took passengers from Kidderminster to Worcester.

Gangmen worked through the night to replace the washed-away ballast.

Last night a British Rail spokesman said: "We hope to have single line working by this morning. Trains will be running at reduced speeds while the track settles down, and the bridge is strengthened."

Patrols

Lengths of the aqueduct are patrolled regularly for maintenance and security.

In the House of Commons. Mr. Leo Abse, Labour M P for Pontypool, said that the majority of the people of Wales would have heard with considerable dismay, that the extremists were again active.

He then asked Mr. Kenneth Robinson, Minister of Planning and Land, if he would consult with the Home Secretary to form a special squad to inquire into such acts of sabotage.

Another Welsh M P, Mr. Emlyn Hooson (Lib., Montgomery) suggested that it was time to call a conference of police officers to deal with the matter.

Mr. Harold Gurden, Conservative M P for Selly Oak, is to make a fresh approach to Mr. Anthony Greenwood, Minister of Housing and Local Government, asking him to consult with the local authorities and the West Midlands Police.

Pattern

Police made a search of the area and soil casts of footprints and vehicle marks were sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory in Birmingham.

(cont'd on next page)

Det. Chief Supt. Robert Booth, head of West Mercia C I D, described the blast as a "dastardly attack."

"My belief now is that the people responsible for this have affiliations to Wales." he said.

"The explosion followed a pattern of the previous four attacks on pipelines in Wales."

But his remarks were repudiated by Mr. Gwynn Matthews, North-East Wales organiser of Plaid Cymru.

"We are a political party and we are committed to political methods." he said.

Birmingham Post - 3 December 1968

Have Welsh fanatics gone too far?

Birmingham Post Reporter

The vast majority of Welshmen will reject this latest act by the fanatics as having gone too far; the pale image of a Welsh I R A is no longer amusing.

Following so soon after the outrage at R A F Pembrey, Carmarthenshire, in which an R A F warrant-officer was seriously injured when a time bomb exploded in the control tower, the latest blast was bound to cause an outcry.

For years the few unknown extremists have toyed with explosives.

Other more publicity conscious advocates of home rule for Wales have applauded the explosions.

There is evidence to suggest that the explosions when they happen are carefully planned and carried out.

In the early hours of November 18, a call was made to *The Birmingham Post* that a final warning had been given to Birmingham Water Department not to drown the Dulas Valley as a reservoir.

The call was passed to the police, but until yesterday it appeared to have been the work of a crank.

Last night. Mr. Julian Caio Evans, self-styled commandant of the Free Wales Army, said: "The call and the explosion were almost certainly the work of the F W A."

But Mr. Evans said he could not say who carried out the sabotage. "If I admitted that, I would have the police down on me like a ton of bricks." he said.

Another commandant of the F W A, Mr. Dafydd Coslett, said: "I think the explosion is marvellous. There will be more. I know the underground has plans to carry out explosions at regular intervals."

Just how many members the F W A has is uncertain. The known activists are certainly no more than 20, although Mr. Evans claims there are more than 200 active members.

Chief Supt. Wilson, of Scotland Yard, responsible for security at the investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales next year, is well aware of the extremists' identities.

They were all interviewed at length after the explosion at R A F Pembrey and Chief Supt. Wilson went to West Hagley last night, scene of the latest incident.

"I have sent him a get-well card. He must be pretty sick about the whole thing. We are driving him up the wall." Mr. Coslett said.

In terms of arms the F W A are not a force. They were persuaded to hand in the few guns they possessed after the Pembrey explosion. As a matter of routine they were all interviewed by detectives yesterday. The F W A, with typical melodrama, call them the "political police."

The explosions certainly do not help Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Nationalist Party, which is the rallying point for the moderates who believe in more autonomy for Wales.

And the explosions embarrass the average Welshman. One man, experienced in Welsh politics for more than 30 years, said last night: "Nobody is going to start a revolution for one simple reason. Nobody, except a tiny minority, wants one."

Birmingham Post - 3 December 1968

New blast latest in series of attacks on water supplies

As Det. Chief Supt. Booth observed, yesterday's pipeline blast was another in a series of incidents over the past few years In May this year there was an explosion at the base of the dam at Lake Vyrnwy, Montgomeryshire, the main water source for Merseyside, caused by a gelignite time bomb.

The Vyrnwy-Merseyside pipeline was damaged by saboteurs at Llanrhiadr In September, 1967, but supplies were not affected.

In March last year, 40 sticks of gelignite were spotted in a water pipe from the Elan Valley dam, near Llandrindod Wells, after a sheep farmer had found a manhole cover forced and the same month vital overhead cableway equipment was wrecked at the site of the reservoir scheme of Clywedog, near Llanidloes.

The Hagley pipeline in 1988. It has since been buried underground

(Railscene)

Daily Mirror - 3 December 1968

CID HUNT EXTREMISTS AFTER PIPE BLAST

By PAUL CONNEW

DETECTIVES probing a bomb attack on a vital water pipeline questioned known Welsh extremists last night.

Scotland Yard's top expert on Welsh extremists, Detective-Chief Superintendent Jock Wilson, was called in to join the hunt for the saboteurs.

Chief Superintendent Wilson is the man responsible for security arrangements for next year's installation of the Prince of Wales.

It was at 1.50 a.m. yesterday that an explosion ripped open a pipeline carrying Birmingham's water supply from the Elan Valley, Radnorshire, on an aqueduct above the main Worcester-Birmingham rail link, near West Hagley.

Millions of gallons gushed out of the shattered pipe. Tons of ballast were washed away from the line. Rail services were disrupted.

Appeal

The explosion cut off 50 per cent of Birmingham's water supply. Water Department officials last night issued an emergency appeal to consumers to "conserve water."

Teams of police with tracker dogs spent yesterday searching surrounding fields and woods. Road blocks were set up throughout the Midlands.

Then, under the direction of Chief Superintendent Wilson, police in Wales moved in to interview known extremists.

Teams of detectives in the Midlands were questioning extremist "exiles."

IN CARDIFF. Dr. Gareth Morgan Jones, assistant secretary of the Welsh Nationalist Party, said: "We are absolutely fed up with people who still try to connect us with these outrages. We are a responsible political party."

AT WESTMINSTER, Welsh M Ps called for firm measures to prevent further outbreaks of violence.

Birmingham Post - 4 December 1968

New threat to blow up water supply line

Birmingham Post Reporter

Security measures along the 75-mile aqueduct carrying Birmingham's water supply were reinforced last night after a new threat was made to blow up the pipeline.

The latest threat - that another explosion would take place "tonight or tomorrow night" - was revealed by Ald. Dr. Louis Glass, chairman of the Water Committee, at last night's meeting of the city council. He refused to give any further details.

A police spokesman at the incident headquarters, Stourbridge, said last night: "We are taking all the precautions we possibly can. We have got to take this threat seriously and we are doing that." It is understood that the whole of the length of the pipeline is being watched in case any attempt is made to blow it up.

Ald Glass praised the staff of the Water Department for their work and commended Birmingham citizens who had responded spontaneously to appeals to economise in the use of water.

Ald. Glass said they knew the pipeline was vulnerable. In recent years the committee had been concerned that it was an ageing aqueduct which could break down at any time. It had also been concerned with the security aspect of the pipeline. The new threat was being treated seriously, he said.

Stourbridge police yesterday issued an appeal for information from any one who saw a mini-van with two occupants travelling along the A450 Stourbridge-Hagley road or parked in a lay-by near to Trehern Farm, West Hagley, several hours before Sunday night's explosion.

Supt. F. R. Hodges, officer-in-charge of Stourbridge division, in a statement, said that people who saw the mini-van near the scene of the explosion, which blew up two of the four pipes carrying water from the Elan Valley, agreed that it was light green in colour.

At one stage the two men were seen unloading a paper parcel or sack from the rear of the van.

One of the men is described as between 25 and 30, 5ft. 8in. tall, untidily dressed and wearing a college-type scarf.

The other was 25 to 35, 5ft. 8in. tall, slightly built and wearing a duffle jacket or what might have been a combat jacket.

Supt. Hodges said that the police were anxious to hear from anyone else who might have seen the vehicle.

One of the two damaged 42in. pipes should be back in use today, Birmingham Water Board said.

The need to continue to economise in water consumption in the Birmingham area was again emphasised yesterday by the department.

The Birmingham to Worcester railway line, severely damaged by the force of water, was re-opened for passenger and freight traffic yesterday, subject to a 10 m.p.h. speed limit at the blast scene.

Birmingham Post - 6 December 1968

Pipe blast; three sought

Birmingham Post Stourbridge Staff

Stourbridge police said last night that they were anxious to trace three people who might be able to give vital information about the pipeline explosion at West Hagley early on Monday.

Det. Supt. Clifford Hughes said that the police wanted to trace a couple who took their dog for a walk in Worcester Lane near the junction with Bromwich Lane at about 7.30 p.m. on Sunday.

They were also anxious to trace the driver of a dark green 15cwt. Austin or Morris van, F registration with the letters B M C in reflecting material on the rear offside.

This vehicle was parked in a lay-by in Worcester Lane facing Hagley. This is on the other side of the road from where a light green mini van was seen parked in a lay-by.

Police are confident that the occupants of this green van were responsible for the explosion.

The three people are asked to contact the police at Stourbridge 71850 or 71859 or any police station.

Birmingham Post - 7 December 1968

Damaged pipes repaired, now ...

Council plans to explain water needs to Welsh

By JOHN LEWIS Birmingham Post Municipal Correspondent

Liverpool, Manchester and other cities which take their water from Wales are to be asked by Birmingham to join in a big public relations campaign to explain to the Welsh the problems of water undertakings.

The city's Water Committee yesterday agreed to take the initiative by first approaching the British Waterworks Association.

As an immediate step, the corporation is seeking a confrontation with Welsh Nationalists on radio and television - and in Welsh.

Ald. Dr. Louis Glass, the committee chairman, agreed last night that there was not much prospect of converting extremists, but did not think that the Welsh, as a whole, were unsympathetic.

"We have been trying to put our views across, but apparently we have not been doing it on a big enough scale."

"We want the Welsh to understand the point of view of the water users. There is talk of us paying for the water, but to whom? We have 80 square miles which gathers our water."

"There are same positive advantages in building reservoirs. The creation of lakes attracts tourism and means better roads. I think we have helped to slow the depopulation of Mid-Wales."

Irritations

Ald. Glass said that apart from informing the people about the problems of water undertakings, Birmingham wanted to make the undertaking more accessible so that if there were irritations they could be dealt with promptly.

Ald. Glass said that both Manchester and Liverpool offered help when they heard of the explosion at Hagley and they and other undertakings were to be approached about a mutual aid scheme in case any undertaking was faced with an unexpected breakdown of its supply.

Yesterday's committee also reviewed the security arrangements along the 75 miles of pipeline from the Elan Valley and decided to buy vans for the patrolmen who at present use bicycles to keep watch for maintenance and security.

The vans would enable the patrolmen to cover longer stretches and increase security.

Restored

The damage to the second of the 42in. pipes blasted at Hagley on Sunday night has now been repaired and the supply is operating normally.

The other pipe to be damaged was operating fully on Thursday.

Police investigating the explosion are now concentrating on piecing together the jigsaw of a mass of information which has been given by over 200 people.

Supt. F.R. Hodges, of Stourbridge, said last night: "We are piecing together timings, sightings and descriptions of people seen and we hope to eliminate some people by them coming forward."

"So far we have taken 86 statements and we are going back to some of those interviewed," he said.

"We have had a fantastic response from the public and we are grateful to the Press for the way they have treated it."

Thirty officers from several forces are engaged in the investigation.

Birmingham Post - 7 December 1968

Pipeline blast; road check

Police investigating the explosion of the Elan Valley pipeline made a three-hour check last night on drivers using the road between Stourbridge and West Hagley. They were seeking more information about a green mini-van seen parked off the road last Sunday.

A West Mercia police spokesman said after the check: “The response was encouraging. A number of people recalled seeing the van and we feel the picture is beginning to harden a little.”

Birmingham Post - 10 December 1968

Pipeline guardians hit out at patrol by van

Birmingham Post Reporter

Vans being supplied for the men who inspect and maintain Birmingham’s 75-mile water pipeline, attacked by Welsh extremists last month, are largely valueless for patrols, the men said last night. One of them pointed out that they would still have to do most of their work on foot.

Ald. Louis Glass, chairman of Birmingham Water Committee, said the vehicles would help the men to get from point to point. “But they will have no value otherwise,” he added. “They won't be able to go along the pipeline in them.”

“There is no question of them being introduced because of the explosion at the pipeline. We would have provided them anyway,” he said.

Large sections of the pipeline from the Elan Valley are underground. But the lengthsmen will continue to walk these sections since leaks which occur from time to time can only be detected at the surface.

Seven vans are being supplied to replace the bicycles the men used previously to get to the pipeline.

Mr. Richard Warwood, aged 52, of Hagley, is responsible for ten miles of pipeline, including the scene of last month’s blast.

“We don't only go to the places where valves or meters are situated,” he said. “We have to follow the pipeline. I’ve no idea how many miles I must walk in a day.”

He took on the job 18 months ago after driving for the department from their Ludlow depot. “I knew there was a possibility of something like an explosion when I came here," he said. “We've come to expect trouble.”

“For all we know these people could be watching us all the time. Fortunately the police patrol the pipeline at night.”

At Stourbridge, three miles away, police continue to man a special incident room, well aware that another explosion is likely.

With repair work at Hagley ending today, word is being passed down the pipeline from Wales that another blast could be imminent.

The Town Clerk of Tenby, Pembrokeshire, has written to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Ald. Charles Simpson, informing him that members of Tenby Council deprecate the incident “and wish to dissociate themselves from this act of violence.”

He adds. "For many years there has been a close affinity between many of the people in Birmingham and the Midlands and the town of Tenby as a holiday resort.”

“It is my council’s wish that the friendliness of the past years should be preserved and fostered.”

Birmingham Post - 11 December 1968

Aid sought on blast

Birmingham Post Stourbridge Staff

Stourbridge police yesterday issued further descriptions of two men they want to trace concerning last week's Hagley pipeline explosion.

Two pairs of men were seen in two different vehicles, and for the first time a girl has been mentioned.

Supt. F. R. Hodges said that at 10.30 a m. on December 1 two men were seen in an A35 or A55 light green or grey van parked near an unmade track leading from the A450 to Quarry Park Road.

One of these men was 5ft. 10in. to 6ft. tall, had rough uncombed hair and was wearing a striped college scarf.

The second man was in his early twenties, 5ft. 7in. to 5ft. 8in., slightly built with darker hair and wearing a dark donkey jacket.

The superintendent also said that between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. a B M C Mini-van was seen parked in a lay-by near the scene of the blast and of the two men connected with this van, one was 5ft. 8ins. to 5ft. 9ins. and in his early twenties, of slim build with a longish face, light brown hair which was rough. He had a slightly receding forehead.

He was wearing a short light coloured coat and a striped scarf.

The second man was a similar height, medium build and wearing a three-quarter length coat which might have been a duffle coat or combat jacket.

Supt. Hodges said that the first of this pair could have been seen in the area earlier with a young girl who had shoulder length blonde hair with a fringe.

Telephone numbers to ring are Stourbridge 71850 and 71859.

Birmingham Post - 6 January 1969

Bomb scare in Elan Valley

Birmingham Post Rhayader Correspondent

Police forces in Mid-Wales and the Midlands were alerted yesterday after a new threat to Birmingham's water supplies from the Elan Valley, Radnorshire.

With Birmingham Corporation Water Department officials, the Welsh police carried out a six-hour systematic search of the five reservoirs in the Elan and Claerwen valleys after a threat that a bomb had been placed against the wall of one of them.

The threat came in an anonymous telephone call to the London office of a London newspaper early yesterday.

The caller claimed the bomb had been placed at waterline level against the wall of one of the reservoirs and had been timed to explode within 14 hours from 1 a.m. yesterday.

Strengthened

The information was given to Scotland Yard, who passed it on to police in Mid Wales.

Security patrols in the Elan Valley and along the Birmingham pipe line were immediately strengthened and a senior officer of the Dyfed police organised the detailed search which revealed nothing.

Strict security has been imposed on the Elan Valley area and on the pipe line for some time and was increased following last month's explosion on the pipe line at West Hagley.

Last month extremists sent a tape recording to the same London newspaper office warning that they intended to step up their attacks on English water supplies taken from Wales.

Timing change

The tape also said that a change of timing methods to set off such explosions would be used.

Until now the saboteurs have favoured the "alarm clock" system to detonate their bombs. Now they claim they will use an "acid burning" device presumably giving those responsible more time to get away and to make things more difficult for the security forces.

A police spokesman said last night that the latest scare was obviously a deliberate hoax. "While such things are very frustrating we cannot ignore them and our security arrangements are very much in force." he said.

STOURBRIDGE MARSHALLING YARD CLOSURE 1968 - 1969

It is hard to believe now that extensive marshalling yards stood to the east of Stourbridge Junction station. However, in 1968, British Rail took the decision to close the yards and the reaction to the closure was reported by the Birmingham Post.

Birmingham Post - 23 January 1968

200 redundant fear at freight yard

The latest move by Stourbridge railwaymen following British Rail's decision to close the marshalling yards at Stourbridge Junction has come from the local branch of ASLEF, which has sent a telegram to Minister of Transport, Mrs. Barbara Castle.

This says that the branch wish to draw the Minister's attention to the proposed closure. "They think this a detrimental step in view of proposals contained in the Transport Bill which seeks to transfer freight from road to rail." the telegram says. The branch has decided that the local departmental committee shall take any steps it thinks necessary as the situation develops, and there are fears of 200 redundancies.

Birmingham Post - 29 January 1968

N.U.R. branch to lobby on yards closure

A deputation from the Stourbridge No. 1 branch of the National Union of Railwaymen is to lobby M.P.s in the House of Commons in protest against the proposed closure by British Rail of the marshalling yards at Stourbridge junction.

This was one of the decisions reached after a well attended meeting of the branch last night.

In a statement afterwards, the branch's secretary, Mr. F. Hunt, said that the feeling was one of anger and disgust, mingled with disappointment in top management.

Mr. Hunt said that the branch in co-operation with ASLEF is to compile a dossier of wastage in the Birmingham area.

Birmingham Post - 6 March 1968

Rail yard as commuters' car park

Stourbridge Town Council is investigating the possibility of using the present railway marshalling yard at Stourbridge Junction as a commuters' car park.

The council has heard from Mr. E. R. Williams, Divisional Manager to British Rail, that the closure of the yard is inevitable.

The chairman of the council's General Purposes Committee, Ald. J. L Guest. said yesterday: "It seemed to us that this would be a good opportunity to find somewhere for the commuters' cars which are parked all round the station every day."

Birmingham Post - 6 January 1969

Rail station to get new look

Stourbridge Junction railway station, on the main line from Birmingham to the west, is to be given a new look. It is proposed to move the entrance to the Chawnhill side and the station drive will probably be closed.

British Rail intends to provide parking space for 200 cars between the station and the gardens at the back of houses in Chawnhill. This will compensate for the loss of parking space in the existing station drive.

However, Stourbridge Town Council, rather than oppose the closure, proposed that the land be used, not only as a commuter car park for 200 cars, but also as the new main entrance to the station, with the existing station drive closed. Looking back now, the proposed new station entrance was never built, with the old station building surviving until it was demolished and replaced in 1994. As for the proposed car park … well, 200 spaces seems quite small today !

EXCURSIONS BY RAIL
1889 - 1912

Today, a day out by train normally means catching regular train services, and probably having to change trains at least once to reach your destination. The Great Western Railway were far more proactive in getting you to your destination.

County Advertiser and Herald - 27 July 1889

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

BANK HOLIDAY EXCURSION TRAINS will run as under :-

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3rd.

To BANBURY, OXFORD, READING and LONDON, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 1.40 p.m., to return August 5th or 9th.
To BORTH and ABERYSTWYTH, leaving STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 8.23 a.m. or 12.50 p.m. ; to return August 5th, 6th or 8th.
To LLANGOLLEN, BALA, FESTINIOG, DOLGELLY, BARMOUTH, CHESTER and OSWESTRY, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 12.50 p.m. ; to return August 5th, 6th or 8th.
To WEYMOUTH, GUERNSEY and JERSEY, for 5, 8, 10 or 15 days, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 10.45 a.m.
To PONTYPOOL ROAD, NEWPORT, CARDIFF and SWANSEA , for 3, 4, 6, 8, or 10 days, and to LLANELLY, CARMARTHEN, TENBY, PEMBROKE, PEMBROKE DOCK, HAVERFORDWEST and NEW MILFORD, for 4, 6, 8 or 10 days, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 12.30 p.m., and KIDDERMINSTER at 12.45 p.m.
To CHESTER, BIRKENHEAD, LIVERPOOL, STOCKPORT, MANCHESTER, and STOKE-ON-TRENT, for 3 or 6 days, leaving STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 3.5 p.m.

L-R : Tenby, Bristol, Bath, Liverpool, London

MONDAY AUGUST 5th - BANK HOLIDAY

To LONDON, leaving STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 6.20 a.m., And to return same day or August 9th.
To BANBURY, OXFORD, READING and LONDON, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 10.45 a.m. ; to return August 9th.
To HEREFORD (day trip only), ROSS, SYMONDS YAT, MONMOUTH, TINTERN and CHEPSTOW, leaving STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 5.30 a.m. and 6.15 a.m., and to return same day or following day.
To BIRKENHEAD and LIVERPOOL, for 1 or 2 days, leaving STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 12.50 a.m.
To PONTYPOOL ROAD, NEWPORT, CARDIFF and SWANSEA , for 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, or 10 days, and to TENBY, PEMBROKE, PEMBROKE DOCK, HAVERFORDWEST and NEW MILFORD, for 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 or 10 days, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 12.30 p.m., and KIDDERMINSTER at 12.45 p.m.
To WORCESTER and MALVERN LINK, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 11 a.m. ; to return same day.

TUESDAY AUGUST 6th - DAY TRIPS

To HEREFORD, ROSS, SYMONDS YAT, MONMOUTH, TINTERN and CHEPSTOW, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 6.15 a.m.
To BATH, BRISTOL and WESTON-SUPER-MARE, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 5.55 a.m.
To BIRKENHEAD and LIVERPOOL, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 5.40 a.m. ; to return same day or August 10th.
To GLOUCESTER and CHELTENHAM, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 8.35 a.m.
To BEWDLEY, TENBURY and LUDLOW, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 9.5 a.m.
To WORCESTER and MALVERN LINK, from STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION at 10.55 a.m., HAGLEY 11.10, and KIDDERMINSTER at 11.20 a.m.
For full particulars, see special bills.
8531

HY. LAMBERT, General Manager

County Express - 25 June 1910

Excursions. G.W.R. Excursions.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29

DAY TRIP to WORCESTER & MALVERN LINK. Leave Dudley 8.10 a.m., Netherton 8.15, Brierley Hill 8.25, Brettell Lane 8.28, Stourbridge Junction 8.35, Stourbridge Town 8.20 a.m. FARE 2/3.

To WINDSOR & ETON and LONDON, for HALF-DAY or 3 DAYS. Leave Stourbridge Junction 12.25 p.m., Brettell Lane 12.30, Brierley Hill 12.35, Dudley 12.50, Smethwick Junction 12.50 p.m. HALF-DAY FARE 5/-

COMBINED RAIL & COACH TRIP to HOLT FLEET (via Ombersley). Leave Dudley 1.24 p.m., Brierley Hill 1.33, Brettell Lane 1.36, Smethwick Junction 1.26, Stourbridge Junction 1.38 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 30 - to LONDON (JAPAN-BRITISH EXHIBITION) for 1, 3, 5, or 8 DAYS

	Dep.	DAY FARE.
Kidderminster	6.35 a,m.	6/6
Droitwich	7.10 a.m.	6/-

DAY TRIP to WOLVERHAMPTON & DUNSTALL PARK (GREAT MIDLAND AVIATION MEETING). Leave Droitwich 10.25 a.m., Kidderminster 10.45 a.m.

WORCESTER RACES

THURSDAY & FRIDAY, JUNE 30 & JULY 1 - DAY TRIP to WORCESTER. Leave Dudley 11.15 a.m., Brierley Hill 11.35, Brettell Lane 11.40, Smethwick Junction 11.0, Stourbridge Town 11.15, Junction 11.45, Kidderminster 11.55 a.m.

E X C U R S I O N S T O L O N D O N

BY THE
NEW & SHORTEST ROUTE via BICESTER

SATURDAYS, JULY 2 & 9 - TO LONDON (JAPAN-BRITISH EXHIBITION) for 1 or 3 DAYS, and MONDAYS, JULY 4, 18, 25 for 1, 3 or 5 DAYS.

	Dep.	DAY FARE.
Stourbridge Town	5.5 a.m.	7/6
Stourbridge Junction	5.10 "	
Smethwick Junction	5.45 "	
Brierley Hill	5.20 "	
Brettell Lane	5.15 "	
Dudley	5.30 "	

SATURDAYS, THURSDAYS and MONDAYS, JULY 2, 7, 11, 16, 21 and 23. - EXPRESS HALF-DAY CORRIDOR EXCURSION to LONDON (JAPAN-BRITISH EXHIBITION) for HALF-DAY or 3 DAYS.

	Dep.	HALF-DAY FARE.
Stourbridge Junction	12.5 p.m.	5/-
Brettell Lane	12.5 "	
Brierley Hill	12.10 "	
Dudley	12.25 "	
Smethwick Junction	12.35 "	

GREAT MIDLAND AVIATION MEETING at DUNSTALL PARK, JUNE 27- JULY 2.
CHEAP TICKETS to DUNSTALL PARK & WOLVERHAMPTON. For full details, see bills.

For details, see bills, or send postcard to stations or offices.

JAMES C. INGLIS, General Manager

County Express - 24 September 1910

Excursions. G.W.R. Excursions.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 - To SWINDON, CHIPPENHAM, TROWBRIDGE, YEOVIL, BRIDPORT, DORCHESTER, WEYMOUTH, & THE CHANNEL ISLANDS, for 5 or 12 DAYS. Leave Dudley 9.15 a.m., Brierley Hill 9.0, Stourbridge Town 9.15, Junction 9.20 a.m.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 - COMBINED RAIL & COACH DRIVE to HOLT FLEET. Leave Dudley 1.24 p.m., Brierley Hill 1.30, Brettell Lane 1.35, Smethwick Junction 1.10, Stourbridge Junction 1.40 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 - HALF-DAY TRIP to BIRMINGHAM (ONION FAIR). Leave Bewdley 1.35 p.m., Kidderminster 1.45 p.m. Fare 1/9. Return 11.10 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 - To MINEHEAD, BARNSTAPLE, DAWLISH, TEIGNMOUTH, ILFRACOMBE, NEWTON ABBOT, TORQUAY, PAIGNTON, BRIXHAM, DARMOUTH, PLYMOUTH, LISKEARD, NEWQUAY, FOWEY, TRURO, FALMOUTH, HELSTON, PENZANE etc., for 8, 11 or 15 days. Leave DUDLEY 9.15 a.m., Brierley Hill 9.0, Brettell Lane 8.55, Stourbridge Town 9.30, Junction 9.35, Smethwick Junction 9.49 a.m.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 - To BRISTOL, CLEVEDON, CHEDDAR, WELLS, WESTON-SUPER-MARE, TAUNTON, EXETER, etc., for 8, 11 or 15 DAYS. Leave DUDLEY 11.20 a.m., Brierley Hill 11.0, Brettell Lane 10.55, Stourbridge Town 11.5, Junction 11.10, Smethwick Junction 11.40 a.m.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 - To BOSCOMBE, BOURNEMOUTH, WINCHESTER, PORTSMOUTH, SOUTHAMPTON, ISLE OF WIGHT, etc., for 4, 8, 11 or 15 DAYS. Leave Dudley 11.20 a.m., Brierley Hill 11.45, Stourbridge Town 11.50, Junction 11.55, Smethwick Junction 11.40 a.m.

For details, see bills, or send postcard to stations or offices.

JAMES C. INGLIS, General Manager

L-R : Weymouth, Dawlish, Wells, Bournemouth, Shanklin

County Express - 11 March 1911

Excursions. G.W.R. Excursions.

SATURDAYS, MARCH 11, 18 & 25 - HALF-DAY EXCURSIONS BY THE SHORTEST ROUTE (with 3-day bookings) to

HALF-DAY FARE

5/-

L O N D O N

	Dep.
Stourbridge Junction	12.5 p.m.
Brettell Lane	12.5 "
Brierley Hill	12.10 "
Dudley	12.25 "
Smethwick Junction	12.35 "

HALF-DAY FARE.

5/-

TRAINS HEATED BY SPECIAL PROCESS

RESTAURANT CARS PROVIDED FOR PARTIES
Hot Lunch, Forward Journey ; Hot Supper, Return Journey. Usual Prices.

For details, see bills, or send postcard to stations or offices.

JAMES C. INGLIS, General Manager

County Express - 24 August 1912

G.W.R.

SPECIAL EXCURSIONS

ROYAL DUBLIN HORSE SHOW

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27 - To DUBLIN, for 16 days or less. Leave Dudley 8.03 p.m. FARE 19/-

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28 - HALF-DAY TRIP to WELLINGTON, SHREWSBURY, CHURCH STRETTON & LUDLOW. Leave Stourbridge Town 1.10 p.m., Stourbridge Junction 1.22, Brettell Lane 12.40, Brierley Hill 1.28, Dudley 1.42 p.m.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30 - DAY TRIP to HEREFORD, ROSS, SYMONDS YAT, MONMOUTH, TINTERN & CHEPSTOW, & COMBINED RAIL & SEA DAY TRIP to WESTON-SUPER-MARE & ILFRACOMBE. Leave Dudley 3.45 a.m., Brierley Hill 3.55, Brettell Lane 4.0, Smethwick Junction 3.35, Stourbridge Junction 4.10 a.m. FARE to ILFRACOMBE 7/6.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 31 - To BLACKPOOL, for 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, or 15 days. Leave Stourbridge Junction 5.5 a.m. DAY FARE 6/6.

DAY TRIP to WORCESTER & MALVERN LINK. Leave Dudley 8.10 a.m., Brierley Hill 8.20, Brettell Lane 8.25, Stourbridge Junction 8.35 a.m.

To LONDON (Exhibitions etc.), for HALF-DAY or 3-days, by THE SHORTEST ROUTE. Leave Stourbridge Town 11.55 a.m., Stourbridge Junction 12.0 noon, Smethwick Junction 12.33 p.m. HALF-DAY FARE 5/6.

SUNDAY NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 1 - EXPRESS DAY TRIP to WEYMOUTH (with bookings for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, or 15 days). Leave Dudley 11.30 p.m., Brierley Hill 11.35, Brettell Lane 11.38, Stourbridge Junction 11.50 p.m., Smethwick Junction 12.20 night. DAY FARE 5/9.

For details, see bills, or send postcard to stations or offices.

FRANK POTTER, General Manager

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH
1881 - 1988

Incidents on the railway do happen, but seemed to be more prevalent in the old days. Unfortunately, many incidents resulted in injury or death as the following articles prove.

Bromsgrove and Droitwich Messenger – 23 January 1904

KIDDERMINSTER RAILWAY TRAGEDY

A coroner's jury at Kidderminster on Thursday evening returned a verdict of "Wilful Murder" against Albert Green, formerly of the Coldstream Guards, relative to the death of Emily Jones, of Kidderminster, which occurred at that town on Wednesday. The pair were engaged to be married, and it will be remembered that on New Year's Day, when returning from Hartlebury by train to Kidderminster, Green drew a revolver from his pocket, twice shot Jones, and then blew out his brains.

Worcester Journal - 24 September 1881

REMARKABLE ESCAPE AT STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION

A passenger train was leaving Stourbridge Junction last night when an aged man, belonging to Wolverhampton, attempted to enter a carriage, but stepped between the train and platform. Everyone thought he would be killed, but fortunately he gripped the board work and held on for life. The cries raised led the driver to slacken speed, and the poor fellow was rescued. The railway officials said it was the narrowest escape they ever witnessed.

Long Eaton Advertiser - 29 March 1890

SUICIDE IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE

On the arrival of the 10.53 train from Stourbridge to Smethwick Junction on Sunday night the guard, on going to a third-class smoking carriage near the engine, for the purpose of collecting tickets, discovered a young man, apparently about 20 years of age, lying on the seat in a pool of blood, he having evidently shot himself with a small revolver. The young man's wound was dressed and he was taken on in the train to Birmingham and conveyed to the General Hospital. From enquiries among the passengers, it appeared that he was under the influence of drink, and had travelled from Hereford. After leaving Worcester, he produced a revolver and commenced flourishing it about, to the alarm of the passengers, who threatened to give him in charge. He begged them not to do so, saying he had been a teetotaller until that day, when he had given way to drink, and had bought half a pint of whiskey at Hereford. He said he had a brother-in-law a grocer, in Oxford-street, Kidderminster, and that he was proceeding to the Lye. The young man died a short time after his admission to the hospital. His name is said to be Clewiss, and it is understood his mother resides at Wollescote, Stourbridge.

Cradley Heath & Stourbridge Observer - 5 April 1884

FATAL RAILWAY ACCIDENT AT STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION

A sad accident took place on Tuesday night on the Great Western Railway at Stourbridge Junction. A married woman, named Cookson (40), who lived near Stourbridge, had been to Bilston, and returned by an evening train. Instead of leaving the company's premises by the proper way, she walked down the line towards her home. While crossing the down line an engine that was being shunted knocked her down and ran over her, almost severing her right arm from her body, and otherwise injuring her.

She was at once conveyed to the Guest Hospital, where she died on Wednesday morning from the effects of her injuries.

The original Stourbridge Junction

(Stourbridge Library)

Sandwell Evening Mail - 8 September 1988

Passenger hits head on rail bridge

A train passenger was seriously injured when his head struck a bridge parapet in the Black Country after he leaned out of a carriage window.

Airline steward Mr Ian Smith suffered extensive head injuries last night between Smethwick West and Langley Green stations as he travelled to visit his parents in Dudley.

Mr Smith, aged 21, from Narborough in Leicestershire, was detained in the Midland Centre for Neurosurgery and Neurology at Smethwick.

A hospital spokesman said he had "serious but not critical" head injuries and was "stable" in intensive care.

STATIONS TO BE PROUD OF
1907

Great efforts are being made today to improve the ambience of our railway stations. Community Rail Partnerships are being set up throughout the country to coordinate these initiatives, and SLUG has been instrumental, along with fellow user groups, in the setting up of the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership with a full-time officer. This has led to the setting up of Station Adoption Groups, and the two Stourbridge stations have been adopted by FOSS (Friends of Stourbridge Stations).

West Midlands Railway provides both moral and financial support to these initiatives. However, in the days of the GWR, stations had a permanent station master supported by a team of staff - booking clerks, porters etc. It was the station staff who were encouraged to beautify their stations in those days with the company offering prizes to the stations with the best displays. In 1907, the following article was published detailing the efforts made at our stations. Could we see Station Adoption Groups transforming our stations in the same way in the future?

County Advertiser & Herald – 17 August 1907

RAILWAY STATION GARDENS

SOME PRETTY EFFECTS

Ever since railways were established there have probably been here and there, especially in the country districts, station masters who showed their love of floral beauty by cultivating any spare patch of ground at their disposal and producing upon it the flowers which taste and opportunity dictated. Not until recent years, however, have the railway companies themselves recognised that this practice was one which should receive specific encouragement. Since they have done this by the gift of money prizes, station masters in the less favoured districts, where poor soil, and poisonous fumes, and cutting winds have to be contended against, have been stimulated to do something in the way of beautifying the places under their charge, to their own pleasure and benefit as well as to the gratification and delight of the travelling public. Even in the thickly populated centres hereabouts, trees and plants have been coaxed and trained into healthy and vigorous growth and bloom by the devoted care of the railway officials, and the local stations have not been the least successful in the competition for prizes. A word of praise is due to those gentlemen who by judicious gifts of plants, flowers, and seeds, have done their part in encouraging an altogether pleasing development.

CRADLEY HEATH

Cradley Heath station

(R G Nelson / T Walsh coll'n)

The railway station at Cradley Heath does not lend itself to decoration by flowers, and the room for garden is rather limited. However, the stationmaster and his assistants have made the down platform look very pretty. On the side of the rails opposite the booking office is a beautiful bed of red and white stocks and nasturtiums, with which are intermingled some pretty designs of thrift in stars, hearts and crescents. This is, indeed, a very pretty bed. A little further along the platform on the opposite side there is a narrow strip of garden which runs the whole length of the platform. Here again there are some beautiful heads of stocks, with caladiums, irises, nasturtiums, sunflowers, and there are also some dahlias which are at present only budding, but which give promise of flowering very soon. The gardens are kept in neat and trim order, free from weeds ; they are a credit to the stationmaster and his staff, and make the station exceedingly attractive.

LYE

The gardens at Lye Railway Station looked very pretty indeed on Wednesday when inspected by one of our representatives. On the down platform the garden is especially attractive, and amongst the flowers to be seen are some excellent specimens of pinks, stocks, and pansies. There are also some beautiful border flowers, and the arrangement and neatness of the garden left nothing to be desired. The small plot of ground on the opposite platform has been carefully utilised, and is planted with red and white stocks and pansies, which are now blooming freely. The gardens make the station look very pleasant, and much credit is reflected on the stationmaster (Mr. Gibbs) and his staff for their painstaking efforts in this direction.

STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION

Each year shows a gradual improvement in the gardens of Stourbridge Junction, and the results achieved should encourage Mr. Bruton and the ganger of his staff in their laudable efforts to beautify the approaches to the station. One must travel a good distance before reaching another station amid such picturesque surroundings as Stourbridge Junction, and the public duly appreciate what has been done at the station itself to render more attractive the once uninviting banks of the station as newly constructed. Along the bank adjoining the station drive the attempts at raising trees and shrubs are gradually meeting with success. Owing to the poverty of the soil very many of the large stock of plantings have perished, but others have now become well established, and birch trees, laurel, broom, etc., look particularly well in consequence of the wet summer. Here and there along the slope small gardens have been formed, from which nasturtiums and marguerites furnish pretty patches of bright colours. In the rock garden near the booking office white rock plants made a good show in the spring, and snapdragons, nasturtiums, pansies, ferns, etc., have now a brighter effect. The triangular gardens in the cutting between the Chawnhill bridges are well stocked with shrubs and flowers. The former have made splendid growth. Fair sized bushes of privet are now in full flower, and laurels, birch trees, broom, etc., have all proclaimed the liking of a wet season but putting forth an abundance of growth, which now covers the slopes of the gardens. By a judicious use of the pruning knife Mr. Bruton is training these in the way they should grow, one laurel representing a plume of feathers, another an armchair, and others similar designs. One of the gardens is rather bare of flowers, but the other makes ample amends by displaying a wealth of roses, marigolds, godetias, poppies, cornflowers, antirrhinums, and other blossoms. In the spring wallflowers, bluebells, and pinks were a bonny show, followed later by Canterbury bells, fennel, etc. ; and chrysanthemums, perennial sunflowers, and other autumn flowering plants are preparing to brighten the garden in due course. Considering the many other calls upon their time, Mr. Bruton and his assistants are to be congratulated on the results of their work in the station gardens.

NETHERTON

Gardening at this station is carried on under great difficulties. The close proximity of the gas works on the one end, and the bone manure works on the other, coupled with the poverty of the soil, is anything but favourable to the cultivation of flowers. In spite of those adverse circumstances, however, the narrow strip of garden is at the present time gay with a variety of flowers, conspicuous amongst which are asters, sweet Williams, thrift, violas, candytuft, geraniums, lobelia, calceolarias, nasturtiums, mignonette, etc. The flower borders are edged with moss and thrift, which is allowed to grow between the stonework which forms the borders, and the whole presents a very pleasing appearance, and does great credit to the railway employees, who certainly display commendable taste and perseverance in their work. Immediately outside the station are several plots of garden ground which are rented from the company by the men. These are somewhat exposed to the cutting north and east winds, however, and the vegetables and flowers suffer in consequence.

HAGLEY

Hagley Station has always pretty gardens, and this year Mr. J. Phillips, the genial stationmaster, and his active staff have been more successful than ever in their endeavours to beautify the station and its approaches. The amount of work entailed may be gauged from the fact that included among the garden ground are the extensive shrubbery 67 yards long, which lines the station drive, and two strips of garden, each 150 yards long, running the length of the platform beneath the station palisading. Formerly the sloping side of the approach was in considerable measure devoted to flowers, but the results of 20 years' experience have polated to the advisability of evergreen trees superseding flowers there, and now well-grown conifers, laurels, and other hardy evergreens cover the bank, making a decidedly attractive drive. The rockery abounds in creeping plants and rock plants in great variety, and throughout the spring and summer has afforded successions of flowers, in bright contrast to the background of evergreen. Beneath the palisading at the entrance to the station the beds always receive special attention. The shamrock, growing almost wild, and now in flower, has often been the subject of appreciative comment on the part of Irishmen who have passed through the station. Behind the shamrock are rows of red and white geraniums, calceolarias, and nasturtiums, with mosses, "featherfew," and other plants. Inside the station the bed by the railway crossing makes a beautiful picture. Trusses of lobelia in the border are succeeded by rows of variegated and lowering geranium, while at the rear a further dash of colour is added by the red foliage of the variegated pyrethrum. The fine standard rose trees earlier in the season had a splendid array of choice bloom, which is not yet over. The glossy ivy which clothes the sides of the pretty stone bridge received judicious attention last winter and is now in perfect trim and the white convolvulus shows here and there its effective though quickly fading blossoms. One of the sumach trees in the shrubbery was three weeks ago struck by lightning and injured. Luckily the electric current did not further damage. Along the line below the railway bridge the building of the culvert by the Birmingham Corporation has left free beside the bridge a fairly extensive patch of ground which Mr. Phillips is already bringing into gardening trim. Irises and other hardy perennials have become well established. We have yet to speak of the portion of the gardens running beside the platform. Here a strip of soil nine inches wide is at the command of the gardeners, and the results achieved are splendid. While the plants are not overcrowded, it is safe to say there is not a vacant spot throughout the 150 yards' length on either platform. At present the chief display is of lobelias, asters, geraniums, and nasturtiums, helped along by cornflowers, snapdragons, daisies, and marigolds. The shrubs – rhododendrons, lilacs, laurels, etc. – springing at intervals along the strips are doing splendidly, the laurels being now some six feet high. One feature of the beds is the charming variety of the plants, which are quite too numerous to mention in detail ; and another is the clean and weedless condition of the ground. Mr. Phillips and his assistants may well await with hope the inspection which heralds the allocation of the annual prizes, though earlier in the year the station was well worthy of a visit, and pinks, tulips, rock plants, mosses, gillyflowers, pyrethrum, and auriculas filled the beds with a blaze of vernal colour.

HALESOWEN

The garden at this station is somewhat backward owing to the fact that the stationmaster (Mr. H. W. Payton), and his staff have been prevented from doing much work by the unfavourable state of the weather. There is but little alteration in the show of plants and flowers compared with previous years, although the flowers are not in full bloom. On the up platform there is an excellent display of flowers surrounding a small lawn. These include geraniums, calceolarias, poppies, nasturtiums, sunflowers, phlox, petunias, French marigolds, carnations, pinks, stocks, sweet Williams, and roses. The borders are concealed beneath graceful tufts of variegated grass. The show of rhododendrons and other evergreens is a feature of the arrangements on this side of the station. On the opposite side of the platform there is a large plot of land, which has been tastefully planted with numerous moss and guelder rose trees, stocks, pinks, carnations, pansies, lobelias, asters, canterbury bells, narcissus, ivy-leaved geraniums, and a variety of dahlias. Ferns are also growing luxuriantly on this side, whilst the signal box is covered with ivy and flowers. At the far end of the platform the laburnum, fir, birch, sycamore, and other trees, planted a few years back, are doing exceedingly well. The garden compares favourably with the show of any previous year, although it will be at its best a little later in the season.

CHURCHILL

Last year the gardens at Churchill Station maintained their reputation by securing one of the prizes offered in the Worcester division, and this year they are again going strongly for a similar honour. Mr G. Bennett (the stationmaster) and the porters have spared neither time nor money in making the gardens as attractive as possible and the results have fully justified their efforts. In the large garden near the signal box on the down platform the standard rose trees had a fine profusion of bloom early in the summer, and give promise of another wealth of flowers later on. In the beds beneath the main attraction is the stocks which are showing fine bunches of flowers of all colours, the whites being specially noticeable. More handsome flowers of the kind it would be difficult to find. Asters and lobelias unite with the stocks in adding diversity to the display of flowers. The season has been unkind to the asters, many having perished, but the numbers remaining give promise of a capital show if the autumn should be fine. The small bed formed two years ago beside the station railings on the opposite side of the line is now thoroughly established, and looks very pretty with socks, marguerites, "daisy buttons", and other flowers in full bloom. As in former years, there is a fine floral display in the large crescent shaped bed fronting the approach to the station, and beside the railway crossing. Dahlias of vigorous growth and handsome flower form the background of the bed, fronted in succession by a row of sweet scabious, three rows of variegated geraniums, one of calceolarias, and one of lobelia and "featherfew," while the whole bed is hedged in with a laze of nasturtium which completely hides the rockery. Other plants fringing the bed to left and right are phlox and coreopsis. On the opposite side of the approach the little garden sheltered by the station building looks very dainty. Its border of rockery is over-trailed by flowering shamrock. Behind, a row of petunias is in full bloom, and the background is occupied by geraniums, variegated and otherwise. The little strip of garden by the up platform is gay with nasturtiums, stocks, and lobelia, and the rose trees, like those upon the walls of the signal box, were covered with bloom earlier in the summer. In the spring the beds were occupied by a splendid show of tulips, hyacinths, and spring flowers, which quite eclipsed the best displays of former years.

BRIERLEY-HILL

The garden at Brierley-Hill Railway Station has gained several prizes in the competition but aspires to do better, and we should not wonder if it achieves further success this year, for just now it certainly affords a very attractive prospect to the visitor. For years Mr. B. Harris has taken a deep interest and pride in such floriculture and arboriculture as is possible under the none too helpful conditions. Especially as he has done so since the construction of the improved approach to the station, which opened up the possibility of an attractive shrubbery at the front. This was planted with a good variety of trees and hardy shrubs, and growth of these has yearly improved the aspect on that side of the station. The sycamores seem to have taken most kindly to the soil, but they are accompanied by silver birches and other graceful trees, and the interspaces (to use a Johnsonian epithet) are pleasingly filled in by hardy plants such as acubas, coronella, broom, etc. Early in the year the border of the shrubbery was glorious with the deep blue of the iris, of which there were hundreds of blooms, while the dainty clusters of the coronella above, and the gold of the wallflowers below, aided a very pretty ensemble. Later the stately phlox bloomed, and mosses such as stone crop and silver moss, together with the graceful "Creeping Jenny," formed the background to a show of nasturtium colour. Evening primroses are now flaunting their bright yellow, and there are yet to bloom the arpaliums (single sunflowers) and chrysanthemums, and the shrubbery certainly looks fuller and more like a shrubbery than it has previously done. On this, the upside of the platform, there are no flower borders, but on the down-side there are three. Taking into account the impurity of the atmosphere in a district so filled with ironworks and brickworks as Brierley-Hill, and remembering also the rather lofty and unsheltered position of the station, the results obtained in the garden this year are certainly very praiseworthy. What will at once take the fancy of the casual visitor, is the splendid show of stocks, now at its best. Some of the spikes are quite a foot long, and the flowers are not only large, but very rich and varied in their colours. Scarcely less effective in its way is the border of trim lobelia, of a deep handsome blue ; and Mr. Harris has been fortunately that, for the seed of both stocks and lobelia, he was indebted to the generosity of Messrs. Webb and Sons, of Wordsley. The gardens are kept in neat and trim order, free from weeds ; they are a credit to the stationmaster and his staff, and make the station exceedingly attractive.

THE OPENING OF THE JEWELLERY LINE
1990 - 1994

Today, we take it for granted that our train service operates through Birmingham Snow Hill station. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the reopening of the line between Smethwick Junction and Snow Hill station was not certain to happen due to problems with Government funding and other factors.

Sandwell Evening Mail – 3 July 1990

Bid to reopen rail link

TRAIN services may be restored between Stourbridge Junction and Birmingham Snow Hill in two years time, it was revealed today.

Members of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority Rail and Metro committee will tomorrow be asked to approve a £15.3 million scheme to restore the "missing link" - the stretch between Snow Hill and Smethwick West.

But officials are seeking a policy decision on what station facilities should be provided in the Smethwick West/Galton Bridge area.

The report calls for all passenger services on the Stourbridge line to run into the recently re-built Snow Hill Station.

The move would reduce congestion in New Street, where they terminate at present. Two other new stations are proposed for the line: Jewellery Quarter (Vyse Street) and The Hawthorns (Halfords Lane) near West Bromwich.

Birmingham Evening Mail – 30 August 1990

£20m BLUEPRINT FOR RAILWAY SHAKE-UP

By DAVID BELL

TRANSPORT Minister Roger Freeman visited Birmingham and was shown why he should invest £20 million in a new cross city line and divert thousands of commuters from New Street.

Key to the project is a British Rail Bill, soon to emerge from Parliament, which will allow the restoration of miles of track between Smethwick West and Birmingham Snow Hill.

Officials want to use the track to re-route Black Country services into the modern city centre station instead of using New Street.

"We estimate the new line could pull in 43,000 commuters a day and be a huge boost for Birmingham and the Black Country," explained Transport Authority chairman Coun Phil Bateman.

"At the moment around half the local services from Stourbridge run late because of the congestion at New Street Station."

"This scheme will offer passengers a more reliable service to a modern station and ease at least some of the congestion at Birmingham New Street."

New stations will be included on the revived Smethwick West-Snow Hill line which will be partly shared with rapid transit railcars.

Coun Bateman gave Mr Freeman a briefing and bird's eye view of the West Midlands transport problems on a helicopter tour of the area.

He travelled over the Birmingham-Wolverhampton route of the first £73 million Midland Metro line, ceremonially began the start of work on the £22 million cross-city electrification project, and was given a tour of Snow Hill station.

Birmingham Evening Mail – 26 September 1990

SUNDAY 21 OCTOBER 1990

Here's your chance to walk from Birmingham Snow Hill station to Handsworth along the trackbed of the former Great Western railway's mainline, prior to work starting on rebuilding the railway route to reconnect Snow Hill with Smethwick and Wolverhampton. At the same time you can help three well known charities-the Sunday Mercury "Give A Girl Health fund" and the BBC's Children in Need and the Birmingham Mail Christmas Tree Fund.

On Sunday 21 October 1990 between 09.30 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. you can officially walk the 2¼ miles from Snow Hill to Handsworth from where a special half hourly free train will run back to New Street Station.

To take part in this unique walk we invite you to voluntarily donate £1.50 per person taking part, for which you will receive a souvenir certificate and newspaper.

Those of you who do not wish to walk the full distance can leave the walk at Hockley a distance of about a mile or at Winson Green which is 1¾ miles – but you will have to make your own way back to central Birmingham.

Special conditions governing the walk:

a) Only fit and able persons can take part.
b) All children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.
c) Strong footwear is advisable as the surface is uneven. In places, it will be difficult to push wheelchairs or prams.
d) The marshalls instructions must be obeyed at all times.
e) British or Centro will not be held responsible for any injuries or loss to walkers.

Along the walk on 21 October 1990

The site of Jewellery Quarter station

Handsworth & Smethwick station

Sandwell Evening Mail – 3 July 1990

FEARS OVER SNOW HILL RAIL LINE

BY DAVID BENJAMIN

PROPOSALS to reopen the railway line between Birmingham Snow Hill and Stourbridge Junction may be in jeopardy of the British Rail's proposals for a New Heartlands station, it was revealed today.

Public works and highways engineers at Dudley Council claimed that a tandem scheme to shut down New Street station to Inter City services could put the scheme under threat.

Borough engineer Mr John Eastwood said "The proposed closure of New Street to Inter City will destroy one of the arguments for the Snow Hill line.

"British Rail said New Street was saturated and the scheme for £20 million loop from Smethwick West to Snow Hill was put up as a way of relieving the situation.

"But as the main line services are to be transferred via Bescot under BR proposals, the argument no longer holds."

But Counc Phil Bateman, chairman of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority, said "We have no intention of dropping the Stourbridge to Snow Hill scheme.

'The scheme is in our Bill going to Parliament this year and all we need is the finance."

He said British Rail had so option but to build a new station at Birmingham to deal with quarter mile long Inter-Continental trains.

The opening day at The Hawthorns
24 September 1995

Sandwell Evening Mail – 6 October 1992

GO-AHEAD FOR £23m RAIL PLAN

STAFF REPORTER

PLANS to provide a new £23 million rail link across the Black Country and Birmingham have been approved.

But the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority has been forced to take £15 million from its own reserves because the Government refused to put up any cash for at least three years.

A four-mile route from Smethwick to Birmingham Snow Hill should be completed in 1995.

It will create a third cross-city route from Stourbridge and Worcester to Leamington and Stratford-upon-Avon via Snow Hill and Moor Street.

By taking the decision this year the scheme will attract a £5 million grant from the European Community.

British Rail is expected to put up the remaining £3 million.

Studies predict an extra two million passengers will use the line, enabling the scheme to pay for itself within 15 years.

It will include new stations at Vyse Street in the Jewellery Quarter and near the West Bromwich Albion ground. Both will also serve the Midland Metro. A third station will be built at Galton Bridge in Sandwell.

Coun Dick Worrall, authority chairman, said: "The scheme is too important to wait for three years for Government borrowing approval -- even supposing it would be forthcoming then.

"We want the scheme completed by 1995 so that passengers can enjoy the benefits of the new cross-city link and more reliable services."

Courageous

Labour's Transport Spokesman Mr Peter Snape (West Bromwich East) heralded the PTA's decision as courageous. "It will go a long way towards opening up derelict and vacant land that lies alongside and adjacent to this rail route."

Sandwell Evening Mail – 19 March 1994

Railway link at risk as £4m bill row brews

STAFF REPORTER

A BITTER row over who should pay a £4 million bill could threaten the jobs of hundreds of workers building a new line between Birmingham Snow Hill and Smethwick.

Around £12 million has already been spent on building track and stations at Galton bridge, The Hawthorns, and Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter since work began in March 1993.

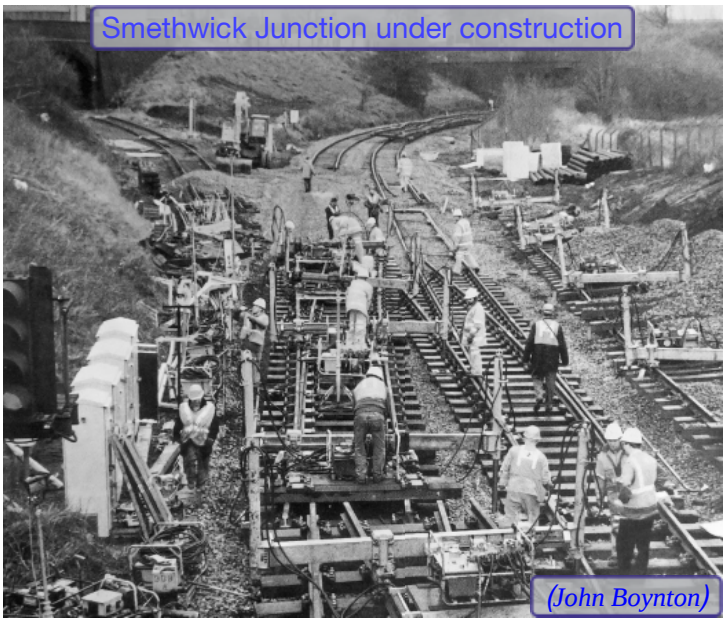
But Regional Railways and Centro have now clashed over the escalating costs for the project — with both sides refusing to pay the additional bill.

Centro has refused to sign a works agreement underwriting the £22.5 million project, due to be completed in May 1995, because of dissatisfaction with Regional Railways' rising costs.

Now, with less than two weeks to go before Regional Railways is replaced by Railtrack, talks between the bodies have stalled.

And Railtrack, which will oversee Britain's railway network in the run-up to privatisation from April 1, has refused to take over responsibility for the project because of the dispute.

Midlands travel chiefs yesterday warned that work on the line - a key part of the region's transport policy - could come to a halt on April 1.



Smethwick Junction under construction

(John Boynton)

Sandwell Evening Mail – 14 April 1994

BRITISH RAILWAYS BOARD TRANSPORT ACT 1962

PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE RAILWAY PASSENGER SERVICES

The British Railways Board gives notice under Section 56(7) of the Transport Act 1962 that, after 27 May 1995 it proposes to discontinue all railway passenger services from the following station, which is situated in the former West Midlands County.

SMETHWICK WEST

(between Smethwick Rolfe Street and Langley Green Stations)

Objections to the proposed closures may be lodged by any user of the service affected and any body representing such users. All objections should be in writing and must be lodged within six weeks of 23 April 1994 (ie not later than 04 June 1994) with:

The Secretary, Transport Users Consultative Committee for the Midlands, 77 Paradise Circus Queensway, Birmingham, B1 2DT.

It appears to the Board that the following alternative services will be available.

NEW SERVICES BY RAIL:

A station to be built on the new route from Smethwick Junction to Birmingham Snow Hill station, to be known as Smethwick Galton Bridge. The new station will be some 250 yards east of the existing Smethwick West station and will serve both the Stourbridge - Birmingham Snow Hill and the Wolverhampton - Birmingham New Street routes.

Closure is being sought consequently upon the opening of Smethwick Galton Bridge station.

EXISTING SERVICES BY RAIL:

At Langley Green and Smethwick Rolfe Street stations.

EXISTING SERVICES BY BUS:

Frequent bus services operate between Dudley and central Birmingham, and the vicinity of Smethwick West station (Oldbury Road).

… AND FINALLY
1888-1968

As Dave Allen used to do in his shows after a series of themed sketches, we finish with some miscellaneous articles that have not fitted into categories in the four editions of "What The Papers said.

To start off with, you have to wonder if this was a slow news day.

If newspapers today published a story every time a late running express train passed through a local station non-stop, they would comprise about 200 pages every day.

Can you also imagine the uproar on antisocial media had it existed in 1966, with Indignant of Stourbridge posting "My train didn't stop this morning" in huge type on Facebook and 253,257 people liking it!

Bemused passengers at Stourbridge Junction watch the 1151 to Worcester pass without stopping

Birmingham Post - 24 February 1966

A case of mistaken identity

Birmingham Post Reporter

The mystery of the "commuters' train which failed to stop" along the Kidderminster to Snow Hill, Birmingham, line yesterday has been solved by British Rail.

Commuters waiting for the 8.38 a.m. service from Kidderminster complained after seeing what appeared to be the scheduled train pass through the intermediate stations without stopping. A later train picked up the people waiting at the intermediate stations - Stourbridge Junction, Cradley Heath, Old Hill, Rowley Regis, Oldbury and Smethwick.

The solution

A British Rail spokesman said last night after extensive inquiries had been made: "We have solved the mystery. It was a case of mistaken identity."

"The morning train from Hereford to Birmingham was 25 minutes late on reaching Kidderminster - its only stop before Snow Hill. It would normally have passed through the stations between Kidderminster and Snow Hill before the commuters had arrived. Yesterday morning it passed through at about the time the 8.38 stopping train should have called at the stations."

Birmingham Post - 20 March 1967

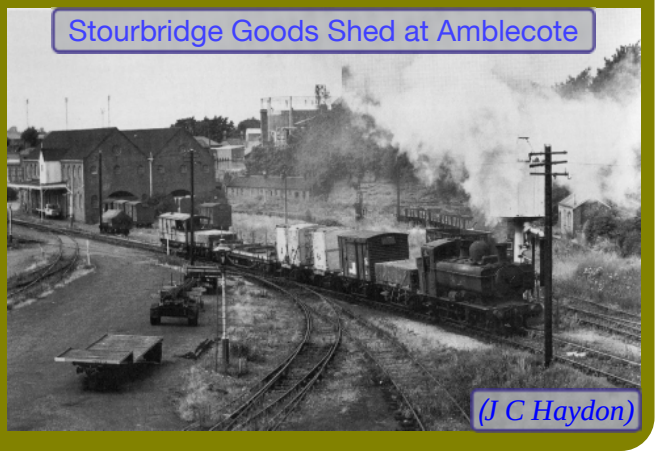
Fire damages railway office block

A derelict two-storey office block at Stourbridge railway goods yard in Lower High Street was severely damaged by fire in the upper storey and roof last night.

Stourbridge firemen dealt with the fire.

A senior officer said: "There were a number of old papers stored in this building and it looks as though someone must have got in there and dropped a light."

Stourbridge Goods Shed at Amblecote



Birmingham Post - 25 November 1968

Improve rail services - plea

Birmingham Post Reporter

It was nonsense for commuters to travel by train until road conditions become intolerable, Mr. Gerard Fiennes, former general manager of British Rail's Eastern Region, told railway enthusiasts in Birmingham yesterday.

He added that local services would only be preserved at the expense of the ratepayer. But if improvements brought people back to the railways, this burden need not be intolerable.

Mr. Fiennes, a stern critic of British Rail, was speaking to nearly 400 members of the Railway Correspondence and Travel Society at their annual reunion at the Grand Hotel.

Commenting on the findings of the West Midland Transportation Survey, Mr. Fiennes said that, with the exception of London, all commuter rail services were running at a loss.

"We have got to reach speeds of something like 20 to 25 m.p.h. average between home and the place of work" he said. "Not until we do this are we in business."

Quite ruthless

This would mean being quite ruthless about intermediate stops. He suggested a Walsall-Birmingham service, with one stop and Wolverhampton-Birmingham service, with perhaps two stops. Mr. Fiennes called for improvements for the Birmingham-Glasgow service. It was impossible, he said, to travel there and back by rail in a day.

Wolverhampton Low Level station

(Ian Charles coll'n)

Express passenger services between London and the provinces had been accelerated, but so far cross-country routes had not been dealt with.

"The timetable boys are now working on services between the south-west and the north-east. There is a great deal of route improvement and civil engineering work to be done," he said.

The all-male society has 5.000 members. Members include a number of railwaymen. Many enthusiasts specialise in railway photography or tape recordings, railway history or architecture.

There was plenty of interest in a 93-mile rail tour on Saturday, organised by the West Midlands branch.

A three-car diesel multiple unit left Birmingham New Street at 10.15 a.m. with 150 members on board. After travelling through Soho Pool and Windsor Street Goods depot, the train stopped for 15 minutes at Curzon Street, the original terminus of the London-Birmingham railway, which opened in 1838.

A DMU enters Snow Hill station

(Warwickshire Railways coll'n)

It was the first time a passenger train had called at the station since 1893. Members interested in architecture admired the facade of Ionic columns, built to match the Doric facade, now demolished, at. London Euston.

The tour continued through New Street and went on to Stourbridge Junction, Rugeley, Bushbury, Heath Town, Wolverhampton and finished at Birmingham Snow Hill at 3.40 p.m.

Midland Counties Tribune - 23 December 1927

PRISONER ESCAPES.

Wollescote Man Eludes Warder at Stourbridge Junction

When being brought Wednesday from Winson Green Prison to Stourbridge, where at a special court, he was to be charged on remand with breaking and entering a house in Brook Street, Wollescote, and stealing a bicycle. Frank Glazzard (25), of Brook Street, Wollescote escaped from the charge of the warder accompanying him at Stourbridge Junction.

Although handcuffed Glazzard made a successful "get-away," and had not been recaptured at 11 o'clock when the court should have sat.

Stourbridge police are using every effort to trace him. He is wearing a blue double-breasted suit, coloured pullover, and soft hat.

Dudley Chronicle - 14 February 1935

ROWLEY REGIS POLICE COURT

JUMPED FROM MOVING TRAIN

George Henry Tipton, 33, Butcher's Lane, Cradley, did not appear to answer a summons for jumping out of the train while in motion at Cradley Heath Station on January 16th.

Detective Davies, of the G.W.R. company, said the defendant alighted on the platform from the 6.15 p.m. train at Cradley Heath Station, when the train was in motion. His bowler hat fell off, and he almost lost his footing.

Detective-Inspector Humphries said there had been so much of this sort of thing that complaints had necessitated the presence of detectives on the station.

The Chairman said he had seen the same sort of thing himself, and announced a fine of 30s.

The Bridgnorth Journal – 23 April 1892

DISGRACEFUL CONDUCT AT KIDDERMINSTER RAILWAY STATION

Two men, belonging to West Smethwick, named George Deeley, a foundry fireman, and Henry Incles, steam train driver, were brought up before the Kidderminster magistrates, on charges of assaulting a railway guard, a booking clerk, and a police officer, at the railway station, late on Tuesday evening. The number of excursionists to Kidderminster on Tuesday was very great. The defendants and a large number of other excursionists reached the station nearly two hours after the last excursion train had gone and demanded to return home by the last express. They were directed to obtain ordinary tickets. Many declined to do so, and endeavoured to rush themselves onto the platform. A very wild and disorderly scene ensued, many of the men striking and fighting in all directions. The two defendants were apparently leaders in the disorderly conduct, and after the assault complained of they were locked up. The railway officials had plenty of additional strength at the station to cope with the disorder. The Mayor commented, in severe terms, upon the dangerous conduct of the defendants, pointed to the Hampstead Heath calamity, and the recent fatality at Kidderminster as having occurred from similar rushes, and said the railway authorities must be protected from such wild mobs – Deeley was fined £2 and 12s. 6d. costs, or 14 days, and Incles £2 and 21s. 6d. costs, or 20 days, with hard labour.

Agatha Christie, eat your heart out! Here is a mystery that would have tested the intellect of Joan Hickson and the little grey cells of David Suchet. One question that wasn't answered in later editions of the Birmingham Post was whether they actually found the coal trucks.

Birmingham Post - 8 February 1955

When will I get my coke? he asks

TWO RAIL TRUCKS LOST FOR 17 DAYS

TWO railway trucks - holding 12 tons of coke - are missing on 10 miles of track between the towns of Swan Village and Cradley Heath. And British Railways and the merchant who ordered the coke have now been waiting for 17 days.

But they are not "lost," say British Railways. They are "temporarily mislaid."

The trucks left Swan Village on January 21. They were due at Cradley Heath the next day.

They were known to have been despatched; they were even seen to pass through Handsworth.

'Vanished'

After that, with seven miles to go, no one knew where they were. They had "vanished."

Next station after Cradley Heath is Stourbridge. They had not arrived there.

Twice each day since, Mr. William Pritchard, the coal merchant, has gone hopefully to Corngreaves railway sidings to meet the coal trains.

Each time he has expected his coke to be with them. Each time it was not.

He is becoming worried. His coke stocks are exhausted and on his waiting list are more than 30 customers.

Compensation

Mr Pritchard

"When I tell them the coke is delayed, they don't believe me. They think I am not giving them proper service."

"I'm not going to place more orders. I don't want to risk losing them."

If the coke has not arrived by noon today, Mr. Pritchard intends to claim £60 compensation.

But last night a British Railways spokesman said: "The trucks were not lost—just temporarily mislaid, due to congestion in the Cradley area."

Where are they now ?

"I can't say exactly."

When will they be delivered ? In a day or two ?

"I couldn't say that."

In a era when Lye station has no staff at all, it is hard to recall a time when the station was fully staffed, not only by human beings, but also apparently by staff of the equine persuasion.

Birmingham Post - 15 March 1954

News in brief

KIDDERMINSTER animal lovers are appealing for £200 to buy five horses which have become redundant at Lye railway station.

To finish, a classified advertisement.

County Express - 11 August 1888

10s REWARD – LOST, at Stourbridge Junction Station, August 6th, BROWN CAPE (Martin Tail); in Train arriving from Worcester at 10.46 p.m., for Wolverhampton – Apply to Mr. Davis, Station-master, Stourbridge Junction 1070