

# PLATFORM 2



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## NEGLECT AND RESPECT by Rob Hebron

Despite the restricted booking office openings imposed by London Midland, Stourbridge Line stations are largely staffed where usage demands it. The unstaffed stations such as Lye and Hartlebury are generally looked after as far as upkeep and appearance are concerned. However, the rationalisation of stations post-Beeching has left many towns on the national rail network with very poor gateways to their communities.

Such is the case with Abergele and Pensarn in North Wales. The entrance building is unoccupied and the premises available to rent. Only a coat of Arriva blue paint saves the run down appearance.



Pensarn is the most accurate part of the station name, and passengers alighting at this modest coastal resort must walk a considerable distance to Abergele which is further inland.

In its heyday, Abergele and Pensarn station would have been served by frequent local and excursion trains with crowds thronging the platforms. Nowadays the station has a basic hourly service of trains which pull into the loop line. Other fast trains avoid the station and travel on the centrally placed main lines.

... Although there is a signalman  
– a lady in this case!



The signal box has been spared the blue paint treatment,  
probably because it is Network Rail property.



Pensarn is very bicycle-friendly. Bikes can be  
hired at the seafront and there is an excellent  
cycleway running parallel to the railway.

## CAPITAL DIRECT by Roger Davis

### Part 1 : London

With the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway (OWWR) completed in December 1853, it wasn't long before through trains to London were introduced. An arrangement had been reached with the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) for trains to leave the OWWR south of Handborough (as Hanborough was then known) and run via the newly opened Yarnton loop and Bletchley into London Euston station. A second agreement with the LNWR enabled trains to leave the OWWR just north of Tipton station and operate via a loop line over the LNWR through Coseley (Deepfields) to the LNWR's Wolverhampton Queen Street station. In fact, the OWWR sought to abandon the building of five miles of railway from Tipton to the GWR at Priestfield, but Parliament would not allow it.

By 1857, four through trains operated in each direction. Two of the northbound trains from Euston terminated at Wolverhampton Queen Street while the other two terminated at the OWWR's Wolverhampton Low Level station. There was one southbound service from Queen Street and three from Low Level. Journey times were pedestrian by today's standards. One train in each direction was designated an express train with journey times of 4½ hours between Kidderminster and Euston and 4¾ hours between Stourbridge and Euston, while the remainder of the journeys took between 5¼ and 6½ hours between Stourbridge and Euston.



OWW no 1 "Hawthorn" was the first locomotive delivered new to the OWWR. It was renumbered 171 when the GWR took over the line. It was scrapped in 1885

On 1 July 1861, management of the OWWR was taken over by the Great Western Railway (GWR) and on 1 August 1863 the OWWR was absorbed into the GWR. Through trains to Euston ceased on 1 October 1861 and London trains operated via the GWR main line through Reading to London Paddington. The number of through trains increased to 4 each way between Paddington and Wolverhampton Low Level and 1 each way between Paddington and Dudley. Although the majority of services continued to take between 5¼ and 6½ hours between Stourbridge and London, the two Dudley services saw a Stourbridge to Paddington journey time of 4 hours, with the return journey taking 3 hours 40 minutes.

By the beginning of the 20th century, there were 5 journeys from Paddington to Wolverhampton Low Level and 2 to Stourbridge Junction, with 5 journeys from Wolverhampton Low Level and 3 from Stourbridge Junction in the opposite direction. Journey times at that stage had not improved from 40 years previously, possibly because George Jackson Churchward had yet to drag British locomotive design into the 20th Century.

However, in 1905, a new express was introduced to the line. It left Wolverhampton at 0750 calling at Dudley (0802), Stourbridge Junction (0814), Kidderminster (0826), Droitwich Spa (0839) and Worcester Shrub Hill (0855). It then ran non-stop to Paddington arriving at 1110 - just 2 hours 56 minutes from Stourbridge Junction. The return journey left Paddington at 1645 and reached Wolverhampton Low Level at 2004 (3 hours 19 minutes journey time).

1910 was a significant year as far as the OWW route was concerned. It saw the opening of the direct route between Paddington and Banbury via High Wycombe and Bicester which made that route much shorter than the route via Worcester for main line services between Wolverhampton and London. By the early 1920s, the number of southbound services had reduced to three from Wolverhampton with a best journey time from Stourbridge Junction of 3 hours 21 minutes, while northbound journeys totalled 4 (2 to Wolverhampton and 2 to Stourbridge Junction) with the best journey time being on the 1645 Paddington to Stourbridge Junction service, which arrived at 2001.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the service level remained roughly the same. For instance, in 1939 there were 4 northbound journeys (2 to Wolverhampton and 2 to Stourbridge Junction) and 4 southbound journeys from Wolverhampton.



Yes, I remember Adlestrop. In 1920, an express from London rushes through the station made famous by the poem by Edward Thomas.

However, after the war, Hereford became the preferred destination for London services via Worcester, and the number of journeys through Stourbridge Junction and Kidderminster had been reduced to two in each direction, with northbound journeys to Wolverhampton leaving Paddington at 1345 and 1645, and southbound journeys from Wolverhampton at 0650 and 1205. On Sundays, there was one journey in each direction which left Paddington at 1645 and Wolverhampton at 0800.

A Castle Class 4-6-0 hauls a London bound express on Campden Bank.



By 1955, two journeys from Paddington at 1345 and 1645 still reached Stourbridge Junction, the latter journey terminating at Stourbridge Junction. However, only 1 southbound journey remained at 1425 from Wolverhampton. The Sunday service remained as it was in 1947, with one journey in each direction between Paddington and Wolverhampton, although the southbound journey that left

Wolverhampton at 0755 had been withdrawn by 1957. However, an additional service was introduced from Kidderminster to Paddington in 1955. This departed at 0819 and combined at Worcester Shrub Hill with the 0745 service from Hereford to Paddington. In 1957, this was named "Cathedrals Express" and the 1645 service from Paddington (by now truncated to terminate at Kidderminster) was similarly named.

By 1963, only a single journey from Paddington reached Stourbridge Junction and this was on Sundays only. It left Paddington at 1700 and arrived at Stourbridge Junction at 2115. When the Cathedrals Express was withdrawn in 1965, the line lost its main line services completely after over 100 years of operation.

A Thames Turbo Class 166 DMU at Evesham.



The story now fasts forward 28 years to October 1993 when Network South East announced a new "Thames Turbo" service. The southbound service ran as follows :- Birmingham New Street (0900), Cradley Heath (0914), Stourbridge Junction (0920), Kidderminster (0929), Droitwich Spa (0940), Worcester Shrub Hill (0955), Pershore (1003), Evesham (1012), Moreton-in-Marsh (1027),

Kingham (1034), Charlbury (1043), Hanborough (1050), Oxford (1103), Reading (1137), Slough (1154), Paddington (1215). It returned from Paddington at 1248 and called at Slough (1304), Reading (1324), Oxford (1400), Hanborough (1409), Charlbury (1416), Kingham (1425), Moreton-in-Marsh 1435, Evesham (1450), Worcester Shrub Hill (1508), Droitwich Spa (1516), Kidderminster (1526) and Stourbridge Junction (1536). Given the timings, it was not surprising that the service did not last long, with the northbound service lasting only 12 months, while the southbound service survived a further 7 months. However, it was probably the first time that Cradley Heath enjoyed a through service to London.

Privatisation saw the creation of Chiltern Railways and in 2001 they introduced a through service on Mondays to Fridays between Stourbridge Junction and London Marylebone. There were 4 trains in each direction - from Stourbridge Junction at 0602, 0634, 0703 and 0825, and from Marylebone at 1700, 1800, 1900 and 2000.

In 2002, entrain (now Today's Railways UK) published the following.

"After a period of negotiation with the SRA, lasting 18 months in total, Chiltern Railways announced the securing of a contract for a 20-year franchise on 18 February at the Great Central Hotel next to Marylebone station".

The 20-year franchise: contracted obligations

Operation of hourly through service between Marylebone and Kidderminster for most of Monday-Saturday from September, plus the trial of Sunday services from September 2003.

In September 2002, Chiltern Railways did extend their through Monday to Friday service to Kidderminster, with 5 southbound services (at 0539, 0621, 0728 and 0828 from Kidderminster and 0615 from Stourbridge Junction) and 6 northbound journeys (at 1657, 1755, 1850 and 1950 to Kidderminster, and 1549 and 2050 to Stourbridge Junction).

A Saturday service was introduced by Chiltern Railways from May 2003. There were 5 southbound journeys at 0538, 0630, 0710, 0813 and 0910, and 4 northbound journeys at 1640, 1740, 1817 and 2040, the final journey terminating at Stourbridge Junction. The northbound journeys were cut back to terminate in Birmingham later in the decade, and SLUG are campaigning to get at least one of these reinstated.



In the intervening years, the major upgrade to the service has been the introduction of Silver Set trains onto the service. The situation in September 2015 is as follows :-

Monday to Friday southbound (5 services) - Silver Sets from Kidderminster at 0609 and 0705, class 168 from Kidderminster at 0730 and 0809, and silver set from Stourbridge Junction at 0638.

Monday to Friday northbound - Silver Sets to Kidderminster at 1715, 1815 and 1847, class 168 to Kidderminster at 2015, and class 168 to Stourbridge Junction at 2115.

Saturday southbound (4 services) - Silver Sets from Kidderminster at 0609 and 0910, and class 168 from Kidderminster at 0637 and 0813.

October 2015 will see Chiltern Railways introducing their new service to Oxford Parkway. As a result, the Kidderminster will gain a Silver Set service from Marylebone at 1615 but the 1847 service will be cut back to terminate at Birmingham Snow Hill.

It means that, although part of the contracted obligations for the 20-year franchise as reported by entrain was fulfilled, there has been no indication that an hourly through service to Kidderminster for most of Monday to Saturday or a trial of Sunday services will ever be actioned.



Chiltern Railways opened a depot in the old sidings north of Stourbridge Junction to operate the through services. While train sets operate between the depot and either Stourbridge Junction or Kidderminster at start and end of service on weekdays, there are a number of empty carriage stock workings at weekends to and from Birmingham. Train sets leaving the depot and running ecs (empty) to Birmingham do so from the north end of

the depot and operate directly towards Lye. However, train sets returning ecs from Birmingham have to stop at Stourbridge Junction and reverse to gain access to the depot. The empty carriage stock workings between Stourbridge Depot and Birmingham at weekends are as follows:-

### From Stourbridge Depot

<u>Day</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Arr</u>	<u>To form service</u>
Saturday	168	1022	Moor Street	1053	1055 Moor Street - Marylebone
Sunday	168	0945	Snow Hill	1009	1012 Snow Hill - Marylebone
Sunday	Silv	1021	Moor Street	1047	1055 Moor Street - Marylebone

### To Stourbridge Depot

<u>Day</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Dep</u>	<u>Arr</u>	<u>Stbrge Jct</u>	<u>Arr</u>	<u>Depot</u>
Saturday	Silv	1706 Marylebone - Snow Hill	1907	1936			2002
Saturday	Silv	1806 Marylebone - Snow Hill	2007	2029			2055
Saturday	168	1906 Marylebone - Snow Hill	2104	2130			2146
Sunday	Silv	1806 Marylebone - Moor Street	2000	2025			2055
Sunday	168	2030 Marylebone - Snow Hill	2240	2301			2321

Stourbridge Line User Group believes that at least one of the ecs workings to Stourbridge Depot on a Saturday evening could be operated in service. It also believes that through services on a Sunday would prove successful. The committee will continue to canvass Chiltern Railways to improve through services between the Stourbridge line and London Marylebone.

However, wouldn't it be nice to see through services to London re-established over the traditional route via Oxford ?



## RAILWAYS AND WATERWAYS

by Rob Hebron  
(with additional material by Keith Flinders)

As I look out of my window at the freight railway from Stourbridge Junction to Round Oak, I am reminded of a time when goods were transported by water rather than on rail tracks. The canals of Great Britain which are now mainly a leisure facility were once the only way to move heavy cargo from factories, mills, mines and quarries to the ports. Horses were literally the horse power which assisted the barges and narrowboats. These beasts of burden hauled vessels, laden with industrial commodities along tow paths and for little reward. Some unknown entrepreneur realised that horses could drag wagons more efficiently on iron tracks rather than on turnpike roads and so railways were born. Steam locomotives were invented and the rest is history.

Perhaps, some readers are unaware that boats and trains co-existed for many years before the railways finally killed the canals. It was not unknown for companies such as the Great Western Railway to have interests in the waterways and boat-based haulage because it could be cheaper to reach Birmingham and inland ports by water than rail, if timescale was not the overriding factor.

A very unassuming bridge connects Amblecote High Street and Stourbridge High Street. This is the bridge over the River Stour which gives the town its name. Local history website Stourbridge.com features a map showing its course. The guide accompanying the map also refers to the river being made navigable by Mr Andrew Yarranton in 1665. He built “flash locks” but they were destroyed twenty years later by floods. Mr Yarranton ran out of money and it is unlikely that anyone else invested in a wharf.



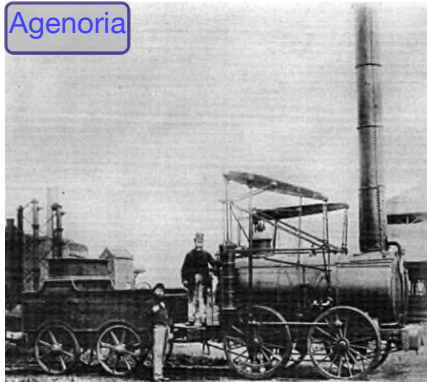
The River Stour viewed from the small bridge connecting Amblecote High Street to Lower High Street in Stourbridge

The Stourbridge Canal from the Stewpony viewed from alongside the Bonded Warehouse in Canal Street.



Another watercourse was to take over: The canal from Stewpony was authorised in 1776, but finished/began west of Lower High Street. An extension under the road came in the 1830s to serve an ironworks.

Agenoria



The famous Agenoria steam locomotive was built in 1829 at the foundry in Bradley Road, alongside the canal. The Stourbridge Lion, an even more famous locomotive was built at the same time. Stourbridge Lion set off in February 1829 for Liverpool, arriving in the USA on 13 May, becoming the first railway locomotive to run in America, on the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company's Railway. They didn't think much of it and put it in store!

Stourbridge Lion



It's wrong to assume that because railway engines were being built at Bradley Road in 1829 that tracks across Amblecote High Street must have existed. We suspect that Agonoria was taken by canal to Ashwood Basin and Stourbridge Lion likewise to Liverpool because rail did not reach this location until 1859. It was then that a goods branch was built from the Stourbridge to Wolverhampton line, north of Stambermill Viaduct [close to where Stourbridge's engine shed was later built], down to a level crossing over Lower High Street, ending

at an ironworks. It dropped into the valley of the River Stour by a cable worked 1 in 14 incline. 'Dropped' was the right word in 1877 when the cable snapped, having had 18 or 19 trucks attached, instead of the usual four!

But the end was in sight for this line. From the original Stourbridge Junction station on Junction Road [then much more attractively called Halfpenny Hall Lane], the Town Branch was built in 1879. The 1920 edition of Ordnance Survey at 25 inches to the mile shows two tracks crossing the road to Amblecote between the river bridge and the canal bridge, but careful examination shows it was not a double track railway. The more southerly track was a private siding, merely a back shunt to sidings near 'Leather Works' north of Mill Street.

The branch line from the second [and current] Stourbridge Junction to Stourbridge Town which opened in 1901, had a gradient of 1 in 67 as far as Foster Street and north from there it was 1 in 27. The branch was worked as double track until 1935, when the signal box at Town station was closed. Then it was parallel single tracks. They were only connected at the Stourbridge Junction end. One line was dedicated to passengers and the other one to goods. Each line was bi-directional but neither operated as mixed traffic. The goods line was on such a severe gradient that brakes would be put on at the top and left on until the bottom of the bank so as to avoid runaways. The line crossed a bridge in Vauxhall Road where the old Stourbridge Town Station once stood, crossed Birmingham Street and descended into the extensive Stourbridge Goods Yard. As well as the numerous sidings where goods were unloaded, there was also a gas works, built sometime between 1884 and 1903. This was in the day when gas was produced by heating coal and so the ingredient and bi-product (coke) would have to be transported on a daily basis. It closed in 1963.

There is little evidence of the railway goods yard, nowadays. It is now an industrial estate. The gas works has gone and the site is an apartment block. The transshipment basin must have been filled in years ago. The land to the east of the cycle track next to the apartments is so overgrown that few features are discernible. The Bonded Warehouse survives as a tourist facility and meeting room. Narrowboats take parties from here to Stourton and Kinver on Sunday afternoons.

Stourbridge (Amblecote) Goods Yard just before it closed in 1965. Stourbridge Gasworks is in the right background, while Stourbridge Road crosses from left to right in the background.



(E J Dew)



I recommend a walk around the site of the old Stourbridge Goods Yard. Leave Stourbridge Town Station and proceed down Vauxhall Road and Foster Street to its junction with Birmingham Street. Turn right and cross Birmingham Street by the means of a pedestrian crossing near the Premier Inn. Turn left into Stamford Road and pass the entrance to Stourbridge refuse disposal site. A few yards ahead, turn left into

Lickey Road. At the end of this road, continue to Grampian Way. Between house numbers 20 and 22 on the left is a set of steps leading down to a rough track. This narrow, unsurfaced pathway will lead you to the Cycle track next to Trefoil Gardens apartments. Turn left down the cycleway and cross the road to the Bonded Warehouse. Turn left again after the Bonded Warehouse and cross the wasteland which leads to Bradley Road. Walk as far as Lowndes Road Junction and you will find that the old foundry has been converted into The Lion Medical Centre (referring to the Stourbridge Lion locomotive which was built there). It retains many of its original architectural features and still serves a useful purpose. That's progress.



(1) Birmingham Street bridge  
(3) Bonded Warehouse



(2) Old Wharf Road  
(4) Lion Medical Centre



### DO YOU KNOW ....?

#### 1. When through services between Kidderminster and Birmingham started

Although the Stourbridge Extension line from Stourbridge North Junction to Handsworth Junction and Galton Junction via Old Hill was not opened in its entirety until 1 April 1867, through trains between Birmingham and Kidderminster had been running since 1 March 1856.

This was due to the co-operation of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway (OWWR), the South Staffordshire Railway (SSR) and the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). Services ran from Kidderminster over the OWWR line via Stourbridge (no Junction in those days) to Dudley, then via the SSR and Sedgeley Junction onto the LNWR line at Dudley Port (High Level), and from there over the LNWR to New Street Station. Trains initially left Kidderminster at 0800, 0930, 1245, 1620 and 1740, returning from New Street at 0930, 1230, 1620, 1800 and 2005. These services continued to operate until August 1867, four months after the more direct route via Old Hill opened. Services took about 1 hour 10 minutes from Kidderminster to New Street and about 55 minutes from Stourbridge to New Street.

One thing to note was the strange spelling of Sedgeley given that the junction was just east of Sedgley Road West in Tipton.