

Platform 2



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CHANGE AT WORCESTER FOR GREAT MALVERN

by Roger Davis

This is the eighth in a series of articles that look at potential day trip destinations that may be reached by changing trains at Worcester and which are within an hour's direct train journey from Worcester.

Great Malvern is a charming spa town in Worcestershire at the foot of the Malvern Hills. The onwards train journey from Worcester takes about twelve minutes on a Great Western Railway or West Midlands Railway service. The majority of West Midlands Railway services only serve Foregate Street.



The station is east of the town centre, which is reached by an uphill walk of just over ½ mile by turning right from the station exit and then left up Avenue Road. At the top of Avenue Road is the Council House and a path on the left will lead you from the Council House into the charming Priory Park. A walk through the park and over the lake leads you up a few steps to the Malvern Theatres. If you exit at the far end of the theatre complex and cross Grange Road, a path leads up to the 11th century Great Malvern Priory.



Council House



Priory Park



Malvern Theatres



Great Malvern Priory

The Priory is well worth a visit. However, continuing westwards and uphill, leads to the Abbey Gateway, which houses the Malvern Museum, and the Abbey Hotel. Crossing the road will bring you to the A449 (Wells Road) and Rose Bank Gardens.



Great Malvern Priory



Abbey Gateway and Malvern Museum

At the northern edge of Rose Bank Gardens are the 99 steps which lead up to the foot of the Malvern Hills.

There are magnificent views from the top of the steps, and the more adventurous might decide to continue to climb to the top of the hills where the views are even more spectacular.

From Rose Bank Gardens, a left turn back along Wells Road leads to the top of Church Street and the statue of Sir Edward Elgar. Turning right down the main shopping area in Church Street leads back downhill to the Council House, Avenue Road and the railway station.



Abbey Hotel



View From Top of 99 Steps



Elgar Statue



Church Street

UNUSUAL SERVICES ON THE STOURBRIDGE LINE

5. TO FISHGUARD HARBOUR IN THE LATE 1950s by John Warren



From 1957 to 1961, a new overnight train service was introduced which departed late on a Friday night to provide a direct connection with the Fishguard to Rosslare ferry service.

The ferry left Fishguard Harbour at 0700 and arrived at Rosslare at approximately 1015.

In 1957, the train service ran on six consecutive weeks from 12/13 July to 16/17 August. However, by 1959, it had been cut back to just operate on a single night at the start of the main industrial holiday fortnight. In 1959, it ran overnight on 24/25 July, in 1960 on 22/23 July and in 1961 on 28/29 July. The service did not run from 1962 onwards.

The timings of this service remained essentially the same over the five years and were as follows.

Birmingham Snow Hill 2157, Stourbridge Junction 2226, Kidderminster 2239, Worcester Foregate Street 2304, Great Malvern 2317, Hereford 2353, Cardiff General 0145 (pick up only), Whitland 0435, Fishguard Harbour 0530

As we have seen in previous articles, there was no direct return service although only a single change at Cardiff General was necessary. In addition, trains operated every week throughout the summer.

The ferry boat left Rosslare at 2315 on the Friday evening and arrived at Fishguard Harbour at approximately 0230. The connecting train was the 0355 service to London Paddington which reached Cardiff General at 0655, allowing a connection onto the 0715 service from Cardiff General to Birmingham Snow Hill. Kidderminster was reached at 1013 and Stourbridge Junction at 1026.

Once again, we see a service provided purely for the convenience of people taking their annual holiday. With leisure travel becoming more important in the recovery of rail services back to pre-Covid levels, it would be great if such services were brought back. Perhaps, the integration of the railways under Great British Railways might make this possible again in the future.



WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE by Rob Hebron

The Stourbridge Line takes its name from the principal intermediate station between Birmingham and Worcester, (in railway terms and not necessarily in commercial status). The name “Stourbridge” literally defines itself as “Bridge over the River Stour”. The road bridge itself is a very modest piece of engineering and bears no traditional Victorian or Edwardian cast iron features. However, it has been adorned with plate metal artwork referring to the English Civil War. Yet, in its time, the River Stour has played an important part in the Industrial Revolution and the growth of the town as well as surrounding areas. I have written about attempts to make the River Stour navigable through Stourbridge in another article titled “Railways and Waterways” (*Platform 2, Issue No.1 – October 2015*) and so I will revisit the subject from another perspective.

There are actually five River Stours situated in England, one each flowing through the counties of Dorset, Kent, Suffolk, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Our own Stour has an interesting history and geography. There are many sites where it passes close to railways and tramways that serve (or have served) Stourbridge. For this reason, I will take a geographical narrative. Please forgive me if I slip between tenses!



The River Stour at Stambermill Viaduct

The streams that drain the northern slope of the Clent Hills, such as from Yew Tree Farm at Romsley and Chapel Farm at the top of Uffmoor Lane, form the source of the Stour. These are too small to be called rivers, but it is known as the River Stour probably from their confluence with Lutley Gutter at Belle Vale. The Stourbridge Line first crosses it just west of Cradley Heath station and follows it to Lye. The river then wanders westward

under Stambermill Viaduct, whose railway presently only goes as far as Round Oak, but was once the main line to Dudley and Wolverhampton.

The next railway which crossed the Stour was the extension of the Stourbridge Town branch to Amblecote Goods Depot and the gas works. The purpose of the line was not to access the Stour but to enable transshipment of wares to and from the canal. The goods branch closed in 1965.

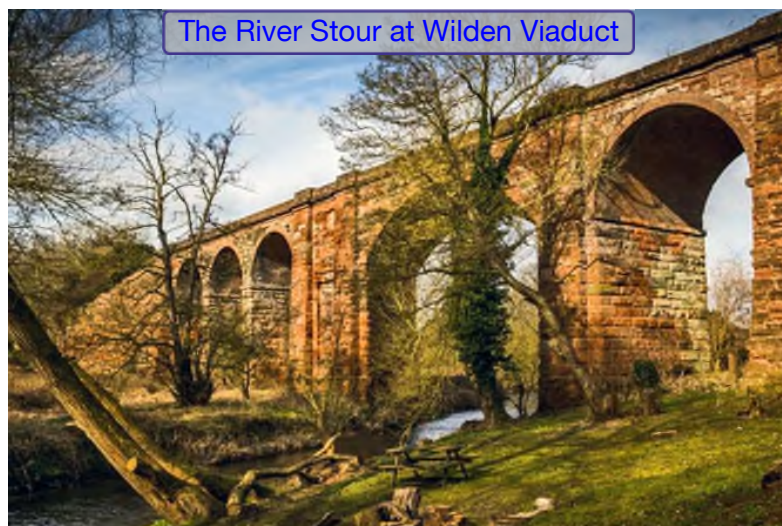
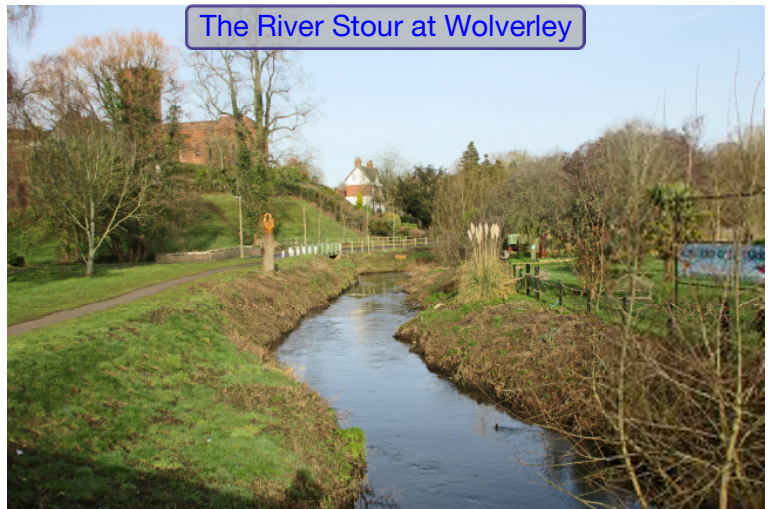
From Stourbridge, the river is accompanied by the Stourbridge Canal Town Arm and the Stourbridge Canal through Amblecote and Wordsley into open countryside.



A tranquil Country scene just south of Ashwood Park Estate in Wordsley

After much meandering, the River Stour arrives at Stewponey Bridge in Stourton. Here, it was once traversed by the Kinver Light Railway, a 3 feet 6 inches gauge electric tramway which operated from 1901 to 1930. At this location, the Stour is boosted by a major tributary, Smestow Brook, and thereafter, the river flows south through Cookley and Wolverley, closely accompanied by the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal which uses its valley.

If the Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway had chosen to take another of its route options in the 1840s, Cookley and Wolverley would probably have had railway stations. Whether they would still be open is another scenario and an academic argument.



As it approaches Kidderminster, another major tributary, Barnett Brook, joins the Stour. This is the stream that gives Broadwaters its name. Flowing down through West Hagley and Blakedown, its source is a spring near the top of St Kenelm's Pass, less than half a mile from the Stour's source in the Clent Hills.

South of Kidderminster, the Severn Valley Railway flies high above the Stour on Falling Sands Viaduct. The

next crossing of the Stour by a railway was just south of Wilden near the Bewdley to Hartlebury line (the original Severn Valley Railway). Sadly, this is now only a track bed. The final crossing of the Stour by the old SVR was the branch to Stourport Power Station, where the River Stour flows into the River Severn.

If we journey back to Kidderminster, we can view the River Stour in a new context as the demolition of the old bus station and Brintons' factory buildings in Corporation Street has opened up the area to showcase the river in the heart of the town.

The Tesco company has sponsored the landscaping which is sympathetic to the remaining industrial buildings and its own store.



I have happy recollections of walking near the River Stour in Kidderminster on my way to catch the school bus. There are no memories as vivid as the varied colours of the river which were directly related to the dyes discharged by the carpet factories! Nowadays, wildlife is making a comeback along the Stour with kingfishers and grey heron present. There have even been recent sightings of salmon and trout which are beginning to recolonise as far as Stourbridge. A wholesale return to its original natural state is unlikely because of the numerous culverted sections of the river beneath the town which are not attractive to fish and water fowl and more conducive to flooding.



The 1955 Kidderminster Floods

Happily, I never witnessed the severe floods in Kidderminster in 1955 and 1960 because I was too young. However, I have seen old photographs and these portray dramatic and distressing scenes in the Vicar Street and Mill Street areas. The last flood was in 1998, long after I had moved out of Kidderminster and I don't recall my parents even mentioning it. Nowadays, it seems that the Environment Agency

has the River Stour under control in Kidderminster and instead, concentrates on the problem with the Severn in Bewdley!



Broadwaters in Kidderminster



Springfield Park in Kidderminster

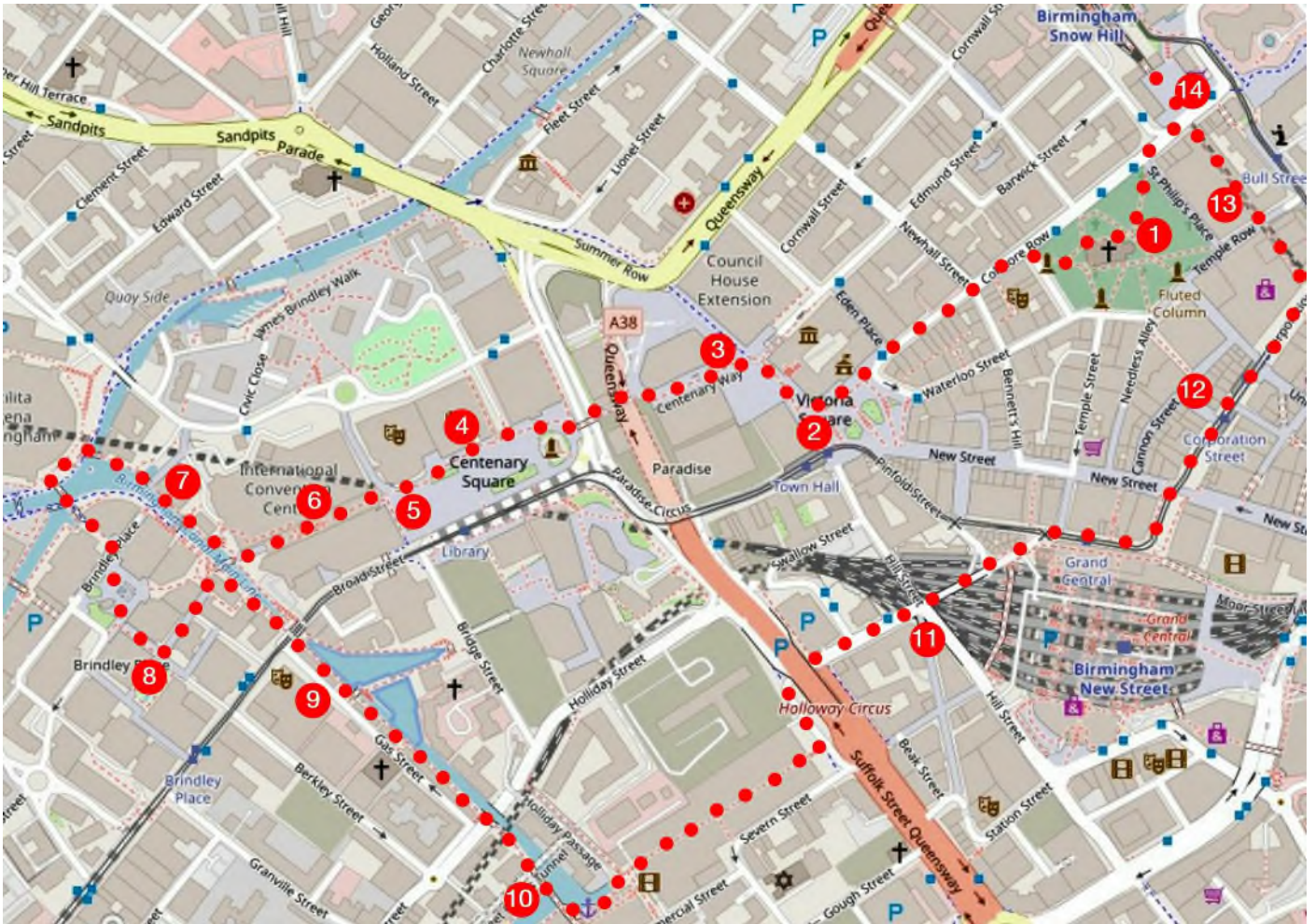
I cannot do justice to the subject of the River Stour merely in words. It is hard to transfer an image on a map to an accurate and complete description in text. On the other hand, the lack of continuous river bank walkways makes it impossible to walk the length of the River Stour. It is perhaps, a better idea to select an area such as Springfield Park near Broadwaters and spend some time exploring. Here, as well as the River Stour, there are the Stack Pools, the Staffs and Worcestershire Canal and a pleasant children's play area.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of my colleague Keith Flinders who has provided detailed historical and geographical information.

For more information on the River Stour and associated photographs please visit <https://www.stourbridge.com/riverstour.htm>.

A WALK FROM THE STATION - BIRMINGHAM SNOW HILL by John Warren

This is the fifth of a series that looks at what you can discover by taking a short(ish) walk from a station served directly by Stourbridge line trains. This walk is approximately 2.2 miles.



Leave the station via the main entrance and turn right into Colmore Row. Follow the path around the Cathedral Square and optionally visit the cathedral (1). Continue back onto Colmore Row and continue into Victoria Square with the Council House (2) to your right and the Town Hall (based on Roman architecture) straight ahead.



Turn right alongside the Council House and then left into Chamberlain Square which houses the Chamberlain Memorial and is flanked by the Town Hall (3).



Continue into Centenary Square and pass the circular Hall of Memory to the left and Baskerville House to the right. The next building to the right is the new Library of Birmingham. This is well worth a visit and contains open air terraces on floors 3 and 7 (accessible by lift) which afford fine views of the city (4). Leaving the Library, turn right into Centenary Square (5) and pass the Repertory Theatre to reach the International Convention Centre (ICC) and Symphony Hall (6).



Walking through the ICC leads to the canal. Turn right along the towpath and pass the Malt House pub and cross the canal bridge to reach the National Indoor Arena (NIA) (7). Turn left and walk along the front of the NIA before re-crossing the canal. Continue straight ahead passing the Sealife Centre to your left and walk diagonally to your right across Brindleyplace. Bear left along Oozells Street to reach Oozells Place and the Icon Gallery (8). Turn left past the Icon Gallery and down the steps to the canal towpath. Turn right and continue under Broad Street Bridge.



The towpath passes Gas Street Basin (9) to your left before crossing the Birmingham and Worcester Canal with the Mailbox on the left. Turn left and walk up the steps to enter The Mailbox. Walk through The Mailbox (10) and exit at the other end into Suffolk Street.



Cross the road and walk through the underpass into Navigation Street. Continue over the railway bridge with New Street station to your right (11). You will now join the route of the West Midlands Metro which you will follow along Stephenson Street with New Street station to your right before bearing left up the hill into Corporation Street (12).



After passing House of Fraser to your left, turn left into the North Western Arcade. This leads to the Great Western Arcade (13) which was built above the railway tunnel linking Snow Hill and Moor Street stations. At the northern end of the arcade, Snow Hill station is directly in front of you on the far side of Colmore Row (14).



'TWIXT OLD HILL AND DUDLEY
A Pictorial Guide to Bumble Hole Line Stations by Roger Davis



OLD HILL (HIGH STREET) HALT.

Opened 21/8/1905, Closed 15/6/1964

Situated on the south side of the A4100 (Garratt's Lane). Rebuilt in the late 1950s with the wooden platforms replaced by pre-cast concrete, the wooden shelters by corrugated iron structures and oil lighting by electric lighting.

DARBY END HALT

Opened 21/8/1905, Closed 15/6/1964

Situated on the north side of Gawne Lane. Rebuilt in the late 1950s with the wooden platforms replaced by pre-cast concrete, the wooden shelters by corrugated iron structures and oil lighting by electric lighting.



WINDMILL END

Opened 1/3/1878, Closed 15/6/1964

Situated between Windmill End and the Dudley Canal. Opened with the line. Destaffed in 1952 and renamed Windmill End Halt. Rebuilt in the late 1950s with the wooden platforms replaced by pre-cast concrete, the wooden shelters by corrugated iron structures and oil lighting by electric lighting.



BAPTIST END HALT

Opened 21/8/1905, Closed 15/6/1964

Situated on the west side of Baptist End Road. Rebuilt in the late 1950s with the wooden platforms replaced by pre-cast concrete, the wooden shelters by corrugated iron structures and oil lighting by electric lighting.



TRUMPED UP NEWS authenticated by the reinstated Donald Fake

CrossCountry Trains has apologised to passengers who complained that they were not packed like sardines as usual on the 1712 departure from Birmingham New Street on 1 April. A spokesman for CrossCountry said that the issue was out of the Company's control as the number of passengers who boarded the train was less than half of the usual number. As a result, the service departed with a handful of empty seats.



Windolux “the miracle window cleaner”, which has been in business since 1875, has appointed administrators having posted a seven figure loss last year. A spokesman for the administrators said that the company's largest customer, West Midlands Railway, had cancelled its contract as it has stopped cleaning the windows on its Class 172 diesel multiple unit fleet.

ALL IN THE NAME – CRADLEY HEATH

The following are definitions of words which can be found by using the letters in CRADLEY HEATH. The number of letters in each answer is given. Can you name the words?

- 1 The improvement of wellbeing via the prevention, diagnosis, treatment or cure of disease, illness or injury (10)
- 2 The principal church of a diocese (9)
- 3 Mental anguish or grief (9)
- 4 Mangled or torn (9)
- 5 A female employed as a cleaner in offices or houses (8)
- 6 A swift-running feline (7)
- 7 A syrup produced in refining sugar (7)
- 8 The windpipe (7)

TRAIN TRACKS QUIZ 1 - ANSWERS

The answers to the questions set in the last edition of Platform 2 were :-

- 1 - Midnight Train To Georgia, 2 - Love Train, 3 - Runaway Train,
- 4 - Last Train To Clarksville, 5 - Long Train Running,
- 6 - Trains and Boats and Planes, 7 - Downtown Train, 8 - Last Train To London