

PLATFORM 2



Issue 4

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GWR Castle Class No. 5043 "Earl of Mount Edgcumbe" at Stourbridge Junction in 2014. Castles were used by BR on Plymouth services through Stourbridge until 1965.

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THE LAST REGULAR PASSENGER TRAINS THROUGH DUDLEY STATION

by Roger Davis

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 This removed its last remaining passenger links as the Wolverhampton to Stourbridge services had been withdrawn on 30 July 1962 and the Bumble Hole line services to Old Hill on 15 June 1964.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

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

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



(Norman Lockett)

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

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

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

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

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



(George Heiron)

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

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

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

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

Dudley Station in 1957



(R S Carpenter)

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

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

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

LIGHT RAILWAYS IN PERSPECTIVE

by Rob Hebron

In an earlier edition of the SLUG newsletter, Caspar Lucas explained the technicalities of Very Light Rail in the modern context. Light railways have been around for a very long time and there is a misconception that they are purely tracks for trams. In stark contrast to the slick, modern Midland Metro system, the Severn Valley Railway (SVR) is also classified as a light railway. Although the SVR was once an integral part of the Great Western Railway and conformed to the same standard as the Stourbridge Line main line, it has re-opened in its present form as a condition of its operating licence. Trains on a light railway invariably run at slower speeds for reasons of safety. Signalling is usually basic and without any kind of electronic monitoring or over-ride.

A famous pioneer of light railways was Colonel Holman Fred Stephens (31 October 1868 – 23 October 1931). He was a British civil engineer and manager. His skills were employed in engineering, building, and later managing, 16 light railways in England and Wales.

The 1896 Light Railways Act enabled Colonel Stephens to build the Rother Valley Railway which has survived to this day. It is now a heritage railway known as the Kent and East Sussex Railway. His other ventures have had varying measures of success.



Colonel H F Stephens

The Colonel's passion was to provide transport to rural areas and part of his strategy was to convert freight lines to passenger use. A good example was the Ashover Light Railway, opened in 1924 and built primarily to carry stone. In 1925, this narrow gauge railway (1ft 11½") began to carry passengers but this traffic ceased in 1936. Such was the nature of rural transport because the British rail network was saturated, following the surge of competitive companies building duplicate end to end routes without regard to the sparse populations in between and limited incomes of potential passengers.

Kent & East Sussex Railway. Stroudley Terrier 32678 at Tenterden Town on 6 August 2014



Kent & East Sussex Railway. Stroudley Terrier 32678 at Bodiam on 6 August 2014



The Colonel Stephens's Railways are too numerous to list here but each one is fascinating. The subject is worthy of research, simply to appreciate the enterprise and ingenuity of the man, as well as the diversity of his trains. The operation may have been crude and ramshackle but nonetheless, he probably saved many routes which would have been closed much sooner.

Roger Davis has compiled a series of articles about former branch lines of the Stourbridge Line. His piece on the Tenbury Wells branch in a later issue of *Platform 2* will reveal that there was a light railway in Worcestershire, namely the Cleobury Mortimer and Ditton Priors Light Railway.

We need look no further than Stourbridge itself for a light rail vehicle which was featured in an article by Phil Tonks, in a previous edition of Platform 2. The inventor of the Class 139 PPM vehicle, John Parry, must certainly have been inspired by Colonel Stephens. A browse through his company's website will discover parallels with an entrepreneur who wanted to save Britain's branch lines. Some of them will have to be re-laid first!

INDEPENDENT BREWERIES ALONG THE STOURBRIDGE LINE
Part 1 : The Northern Section by Arthur Bitter

Anybody who can remember the 1960s and 1970s will know that the large breweries monopolised the pub trade. It meant that a major proportion of beer sales was shared amongst the insipid keg beers produced by these major breweries - Watney's Red Barrel, Courage Tavern Keg, Whitbread Tankard, Worthington E and Double Diamond to name a few. The West Midlands were more fortunate than many areas in having a number of good independent breweries producing cask conditioned ales. However, the past few years has seen many small independent breweries created and the area around the Stourbridge line has witnessed a fair few of these. The following article details the independent breweries along the line.



TWO TOWERS BREWERY
Mott Street, Hockley
Founded 2010
➡ Birmingham Snow Hill
www.twotowersbrewery.co.uk



The Two Towers Brewery is in Hockley but its main outlet is the Gunmakers Arms in Bath Street, Birmingham just off of St Chad's Queensway.

ANGEL ALES
Furlong Street, Colley Gate
Founded 2011
➡ Cradley Heath
www.angelales.co.uk



The building close to Colley Gate was a Chapel of Rest, a coffin makers' workshop and a pattern makers before becoming a brewhouse.

FIXED WHEEL BREWERY

Long Lane, Blackheath

Founded 2014

⇒ Rowley Regis

www.fixedwheelbrewery.co.uk



The first two beers available are No Brakes IPA and Blackheath Stout.

OLDE SWAN BREWERY

Halesowen Road, Netherton

Founded 1835. Restarted 2001

⇒ Old Hill



Based in the pub of the same name, locally known as Ma Pardoe's.

BATHAM'S BREWERY

Delph Road, Brierley Hill

Founded 1877

⇒ Cradley Heath, Lye

www.bathams.com



The brewery is based at the Vine pub, better known as the Bull & Bladder. The company has 11 tied houses and supplies about 30 other outlets.

PIG IRON BREWING COMPANY

Venture Way, Brierley Hill

Founded 2014

⇒ Cradley Heath, Lye

www.pigironbrewingco.co.uk



The company is so named as it is based at the site of the Earl of Dudley's original pig iron works which opened in 1857.

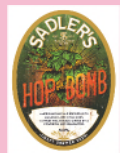
SADLER'S BREWERY

Station Drive, Lye

Founded 1900, reopened 2004

⇒ Lye

www.sadlersales.co.uk



The main outlet is the Windsor Castle public house in Stourbridge Road close to Lye Cross.

GREEN DUCK BEER COMPANY

Rufford Road, Stourbridge

Founded 2012

⇒ Stourbridge Junction

www.greenduckbrewery.co.uk



The new brewery has a bar area overlooking the brewery through a large glass wall and this is open on Fridays 4-10 and Saturdays 1-7.

CRADDOCK'S BREWERY

Coventry Street, Stourbridge

Founded 2011

⇒ Stourbridge Town

www.craddocksbrewery.com



This brewery has two pubs in Stourbridge - The King William in Coventry Street and the Plough & Harrow in Worcester Street.

KINVER BREWERY

Fairfield Drive, Kinver

Founded 2004

⇒ Stourbridge Town

www.kinverbrewery.co.uk



The brewery consists of a five-barrel plant which brews three times a week to supply an ever increasing number of clubs and pubs locally.

In the next edition, we will continue our journey southwards looking at independent breweries from Stourbridge to Great Malvern.

PASSENGER BRANCHES OF THE STOURBRIDGE LINE 2 : OLD HILL TO HALESOWEN AND LONGBRIDGE by Roger Davis

This is the second in a series of seven articles that looks at the branch lines that fed into the Stourbridge line between Smethwick and Droitwich Spa, working down the line from north to south.



The Netherton and Halesowen Railway consisted of two distinct sections which met at Old Hill station, although getting from one section to the other required a reversal at Old Hill. Both sections opened on 1 March 1878. The section north of Old Hill will be described in part 3 of this series.

The line to Halesowen left the line from Birmingham to Stourbridge just to the east of Old Hill station and accessed a platform face behind the current Stourbridge-bound platform which curved to the left on the site of the current timber yard. The line ran downhill at 1 in 50 to the 151 yards long Haden Hill tunnel before emerging and running parallel to and just to the east of the A459 Dudley to Halesowen Road.



The station at Halesowen was to the north of Mucklow Hill, just to the west of Prospect Road. By 1881, there were 14 passenger services in each direction on the line, although there was no Sunday service.

The station originally only had one platform but, on 10 September 1883, the Halesowen & Northfield Railway opened their own line which continued under Mucklow Hill and ran via Hunnington and Rubery to join the MR main line from Birmingham New Street to Gloucester at Halesowen Junction, just to the south of the current Longbridge station. Thus, Halesowen gained a second platform and an agreement between the two railway companies enabled through trains to operate, with some GWR services extended to Rubery.



By 1895, the timetable showed 13-15 trains between Old Hill and Halesowen, with 5 running between Halesowen and Kings Norton.

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

Old Hill	0650	0745	0848	1005	1035	1313	1405	1514	1540
Halesowen (arr)	0656	<u>0749</u>	0853	<u>1010</u>	1040	<u>1318</u>	1410	1518	<u>1545</u>
Halesowen (dep)	....	0753	....	1025	....	1323	....	....	1600
Hunnington	....	0800	....	1032	....	1330	....	....	1608
Rubery	....	0808	....	1040	....	1338	....	....	1616
Northfield	....	0818	....	1049	....	1347	....	....	1627
Kings Norton	....	0821	....	1053	....	1352	....	....	1630

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

Old Hill	1705	1828	1935	2035	2152	2347
Halesowen (arr)	1710	<u>1832</u>	1940	2040	2156	2350
Halesowen (dep)	....	1836	....	....	....	....
Hunnington	....	1843	....	....	....	....
Rubery	....	1852	....	....	....	....
Northfield	....	1901	....	....	....	....
Kings Norton	....	1904	....	....	....	....

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

Kings Norton	....	....	....	0842	....	1221	....	1440	....
Northfield	....	....	....	0846	....	1225	....	1445	....
Rubery	....	....	....	0857	....	1234	....	1454	....
Hunnington	....	....	....	0907	....	1243	....	1504	....
Halesowen (arr)	....	....	....	<u>0914</u>	....	<u>1250</u>	....	<u>1510</u>	....
Halesowen (dep)	0728	0800	0858	1015	1202	1350	1450	1525	1635
Old Hill	0733	0804	0902	1019	1207	1355	1455	1535	1640

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

Kings Norton	....	1802	1920	....
Northfield	....	1806	1923	....
Rubery	....	1815	1932	....
Hunnington	....	1825	1942	....
Halesowen (arr)	....	<u>1831</u>	<u>1948</u>	....
Halesowen (dep)	1755	1910	1958	2125
Old Hill	1800	1915	2003	2131

No Sunday service

Between Old Hill and Halesowen, a branch goods line was opened on 2 April 1902 which enabled trains from Halesowen to branch to the right and serve Coombes Wood Colliery and Halesowen Basin, a goods shed being built at the latter. Three years later, on 1 July 1905, an intermediate halt named Coombes Holloway Halt was built close to Coombes Road. The original platform was on the east side of the line, but in 1914, it was moved to the west side to enable a connecting line to the Halesowen Basin line from the Old Hill direction. By 1906, the Old Hill to Halesowen service had increased to 25 trains in each direction on Mondays to Saturdays and 13 in each direction on Sundays.



South of Halesowen, the line ran uphill across country through Hunnington station and across the slender Dowery Dell Viaduct which had nine lattice steel spans, a 1 in 50 gradient and a 10 mph speed limit. There was also a severe weight restriction on the viaduct which meant that heavy goods trains had to be split to enable them to cross the viaduct hauled by a single locomotive. Sidings were added at Frankley in 1902 to serve

the new reservoir being built to hold water from the Elan Valley. After reaching the summit, the line ran downhill through Rubery station to Halesowen Junction and then along the Midland Railway main line to Northfield station. In 1906, the Great Western Railway and Midland Railway became the joint owners of the Halesowen & Northfield Railway.

World War I had a profound effect on the line, with all regular passenger services south of Halesowen withdrawn by April 1919 and Sunday services withdrawn between Old Hill and Halesowen. However, weekday services between Old Hill and Halesowen seemed unaffected as the 1922 timetable shows.

MONDAY TO SATURDAY										
	Old Hill	0550	0635	0730	0838	0851	0912	0936	1008	1138
Coombes Holloway Halt	0553	0638	0733	▼	0854	0915	0939	1011	1141	
Halesowen	0555	0640	0735	0841	0856	0917	0941	1013	1143	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY										so	sx
	Old Hill	1310	1340	1435	1500	1548	1647	1720	1740	1747	
Coombes Holloway Halt	1313	1343	1438	1503	1551	1650	1723	1743	1743	1750	
Halesowen	1315	1345	1440	1505	1553	1652	1725	1745	1745	1752	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY				so	sx					ws	so	
	Old Hill	1810	1825	1850	1912	1957	2055	2115	2153	2255		
Coombes Holloway Halt	1813	1828	1853	1915	2000	2058	2118	2156	2258			
Halesowen	1815	1830	1855	1917	2002	2100	2120	2158	2300			

so Saturdays only, sx Saturday excepted, ws Wednesdays and Saturdays No Sunday service

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

Halesowen	0607	0652	0755	0843	0900	0925	0950	1025	1200
Coombes Holloway Halt	0610	0655	0758	▼	0903	0928	0953	1028	1203
Old Hill	0612	0657	0800	0846	0905	0930	0955	1030	1205

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

								SO	SX
Halesowen	1328	1355	1445	1533	1615	1705	1730	1748	1807
Coombes Holloway Halt	1331	1358	1448	1536	1618	1708	1733	1751	1810
Old Hill	1333	1400	1450	1538	1620	1710	1735	1753	1812

MONDAY TO SATURDAY

						WS	SO		
Halesowen	1835	1900	1930	2030	2105	2130	2200	2305	
Coombes Holloway Halt	1838	1903	1933	2033	2108	2133	2203	2308	
Old Hill	1840	1905	1935	2035	2110	2135	2205	2310	

However, regular passenger services between Old Hill and Halesowen were to last only another five years and were withdrawn on 5 December 1927, with Coombes Holloway Halt closing completely. The GWR replaced the train service with their own bus service between Old Hill and Halesowen on the same day, proving that bustitution is not a modern trend.

Longbridge Works station



(Austin Memories)

That was not the end of passenger services. Herbert Austin established his works at Longbridge in 1905 and car production had started in 1910. Longbridge Works station on the Halesowen branch was built on the west side of the A38 Bristol Road South in 1915. From 1917, unadvertised trains for Longbridge workers had started. On 31 March 1928, regular unadvertised car worker services were introduced

between Old Hill and Longbridge Works and these continued until 29 August 1958, with Halesowen, Hunnington and Rubery stations still being served.

The 1960s saw the complete closure of the line in stages. The Halesowen to Rubery section closed completely on 6 January 1964, with the Rubery to Longbridge Works section following on 6 July 1964. April 1965 saw the track between Halesowen and Longbridge Works lifted and Dowery Dell Viaduct demolished. The section between Old Hill and Halesowen, including the Halesowen Basin branch closed on 1 October 1969.

Rubery station in 1960



(Tony Harden Collection)

Today, there is little to show that the line ever existed. The Halesowen branch platform at Old Hill is now a timber yard, while Halesowen station is now a trading estate. In the early 2000s, Centro proposed to extend Cross City line trains that terminated at Longbridge via a rebuilt line to Frankley, where there had been major housing developments. That proposal never came to fruition and has since been replaced by a project to extend all services alternately to Redditch and Bromsgrove by 2017.



The Halesowen branch at Old Hill in 2016



The site of Halesowen station in 2016

If anybody wishes to find out more about the Halesowen branch, I would recommend “The GWR at Stourbridge and the Black Country” (Oakwood Press) by Clive Butcher.

In the next issue : Part 3 - Old Hill to Blowers Green and Dudley.

DO YOU KNOW ...?
How much a return ticket to London cost in 1960

The British Railways (Western Region) timetable of 1960 listed the prices of Ordinary Return Tickets to London in shillings and pence (there were 20 shillings to the pound). These tickets were available to return within 3 months. The 2015 price has been calculated by using the Bank of England Inflation Calculator.

	1960 Price		Equivalent 2015 Price	
	2nd Class	1st Class	2nd Class	1st Class
Birmingham Snow Hill	42/-	63/-	£43.62	£65.43
Droitwich Spa	48/-	72/-	£49.85	£74.78
Dudley	45/-	68/-	£46.74	£70.63
Hagley	47/-	71/-	£48.81	£73.74
Hartlebury	50/-	75/-	£51.93	£77.90
Kidderminster	49/-	74/-	£50.89	£76.86
Stourbridge Town	47/-	70/-	£48.81	£72.70
Stourport-on-Severn	51/-	76/-	£52.97	£78.94
Wolverhampton Low Level	47/-	70/-	£48.81	£72.70
Worcester Shrub Hill	46/-	69/-	£47.78	£71.67

NAME THE STATION - No 1 : ROAD

When applied to railway station names, the word Road means “is a long hike across country”. Thus, alighting at the remote West Wales station of Clarbston Road means that, to get to the village of Clarbston, you have a 2½ mile walk. The following are clues to 10 other similar Road stations past and present. Can you name them.

1. This station, still open but now renamed as a Parkway station, is 3½ miles from the former county town of Cornwall.
2. This remote Hampshire station in the New Forest is nearly 3½ miles from the village of the same name, which houses a famous Motor Museum.
3. A long-closed Gloucestershire station on the A38 between Gloucester and Bristol was the main line junction for the small town just under 3 miles away and made famous by Edward Jenner.
4. A major Monmouthshire rail centre in the 1960's, this station is still open today under a different name to serve the town 1¾ miles away and made famous in the 1970s as the home of the legendary Wales front row of Graham Price, Bobby Windsor and Charlie Faulkner.
5. This station is 2¾ miles from the Major village, while the Minor village is 6¼ miles away and a lot closer to Newquay station.
6. This station on the Heart of Wales line is 2 miles from a Powys town on the River Wye that gained its suffix when springs were discovered in the 19th Century.
7. This closed station is now home to the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre and is about a mile from the village it is named after.
8. This closed Cornish station, just north of Hayle, was 1¼ miles from the village of the same name and would probably have been named Helston Junction had it been built by the Southern Railway.
9. This closed Oxfordshire station was close to the village of Grove but named after the market town 2½ miles to the south.
10. This station definitely does not serve a famous Scottish sporting venue and university town as it is 430 miles away in Bristol.

SIGN OF THE TIMES



The sign states :-

“The next train is not scheduled to call at this station”.

This would be okay in normal circumstances but this is Brighton station, which is a dead end !