

DO YOU KNOW?

Which named express train operated from Kidderminster

Table 14

THE CATHEDRALS EXPRESS
RESTAURANT CAR SERVICE
LONDON, OXFORD, WORCESTER and HEREFORD

WEEK DAYS

		pm			am
London (Paddington)	.. dep	4A45	Hereford	.. .. .	7A45
Oxford	.. .. .	5 58	Leobury	.. .. .	8 6
Moreton-in-Marsh	.. .. .	6 4	Colwall	.. .. .	8 16
Evesham	.. .. .	6 41	Malvern Wells	.. .. .	8 21
Worcester (Shrub Hill)	.. .. .	7 0	Great Malvern	.. .. .	8A25
		7 20	Malvern Link	.. .. .	8 29
					8 40
Fernhill Heath	.. .. .	arr	Worcester (Foregate Street)	.. .. .	arr
Droitwich Spa	.. .. .	7 46	Worcester (Shrub Hill)	.. .. .	8 45
Hartlebury	.. .. .	7 56	Kidderminster	.. .. .	8A20
Kidderminster	.. .. .	8 3	Droitwich Spa	.. .. .	8A32
Worcester (Shrub Hill)	.. .. .	dep	Worcester (Shrub Hill)	.. .. .	dep
Worcester (Foregate Street)	.. .. .	7 32	Evesham	.. .. .	9 12
Malvern Link	.. .. .	arr	Moreton-in-Marsh	.. .. .	9 36
Great Malvern	.. .. .	7 47	Colwall	.. .. .	arr
Colwall	.. .. .	7 56	Oxford	.. .. .	dep
Leobury	.. .. .	8 7	London (Paddington)	.. .. .	arr
Hereford	.. .. .	8 30			

A—Seats can be reserved in advance on payment of a fee of 2s. 0d. per seat (see page 23).
dd—Calls to set down passengers on notice to the Guard.

The 1960 BR (WR) timetable shows that the up Cathedrals Express operated in two portions - one from Hereford and one from Kidderminster - which joined at Worcester Shrub Hill. The Kidderminster portion departed at 0820 and called at Droitwich Spa. The down service left Paddington at 1645 and called at Fernhill Heath on request, Droitwich Spa and Hartlebury before arriving at Kidderminster at 2003.



PLATFORM 2

Issue 9

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RAMSGATE ARENA (or ANAGRAM TEASER) - No 3

The clues below are all anagrams of either stations or locations on the Stourbridge line or stations served by direct trains from the Stourbridge line.

All you have to do is unravel the anagrams. The answers will be given in the next issue.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. RAIL LINE HUNT BLOWN | 7. TUBING INJURES DOCTOR |
| 2. RIP DRAGONS | 8. UPWARD OAK TRANSPORT OF NAVY |
| 3. ROUND PATRON OF VATS | 9. WE WANT ONE TWO |
| 4. RUN BABY | 10. WETLY JEER QUARREL |
| 5. SHEATH THROWN | 11. WHO HARMS LIMB LINING |
| 6. THIN COMIC JUST KNEW | 12. WILL BOTHERS CRUSHER |

NAME THE STATION ANSWERS - No 3 : JUNCTION

Here are the answers to Name The Station 3 which featured in the previous issue.

1 - Clapham Junction, 2 - Evercreech Junction, 3 - Sidmouth Junction, 4 - Tiverton Junction, 5 - Llandudno Junction, 6 - Dovey Junction, 7 - Severn Tunnel Junction, 8 - Watford Junction, 9 - Smallbrook Junction, 10 - Barnstaple Junction.

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PASSENGER BRANCHES OF THE STOURBRIDGE LINE
7 : HARTLEBURY TO SHREWSBURY by Roger Davis

This is the last 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.

An Act of Parliament in 1853 authorised the building of a 40 mile line that would branch off the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway main line about ½ mile north of Hartlebury station and follow the course of the River Severn to join the Welsh Marches line south of Shrewsbury. A revised Act of Parliament in 1855 took into account some revisions to the original route and construction started in 1858.

There were a number of major structures along the line. Between Hartlebury and Stourport, a tunnel ½ mile in length was bored, track laid and wagons moved into the tunnel. The tunnel was then opened up to form a deep cutting, which can still be seen today (albeit filled with trees) from Wilden Top Road. The reason for opening up the tunnel was to provide spoil to build an embankment closer to Stourport. Another tunnel, this time 124 yards long, was needed at Mount Pleasant between Stourport and Bewdley and, despite its relatively short length, was responsible for a number of injuries and one fatality during construction. A third tunnel, 550 yards long, took the railway north of Bridgnorth station under High Town and was on a double curve, curving first to the right and then to the left. However, the most magnificent structure along the line is the 200 feet single span Victoria Bridge, designed by John Fowler, which takes the line over the River Severn between Bewdley and Arley.

The line opened throughout on 1 February 1862 with stations at Stourport, Bewdley, Arley, Highley, Hampton Loade, Eardington, Bridgnorth, Linley, Coalport, Ironbridge and Broseley, Buildwas, Cressage and Berrington. It was absorbed by the Great Western Railway in 1872.



aspirations to take over this branch.

On 1 November 1864, Buildwas became an interchange station when a line from Craven Arms and Much Wenlock used a high level platform at Buildwas before passing under the Severn Valley line to Coalbrookdale and Wellington. The line east of Buildwas was in use until recently as a freight line to serve Ironbridge Power Station. However, the power station closed in November 2015 and the Telford Steam Railway now has

In 1950, the Stourbridge railcars operated two diagrams on Mondays to Saturdays and one on Sundays. These diagrams concentrated on two routes - Dudley to Old Hill and Dudley to Birmingham Snow Hill via Great Bridge South.



ran 7 round trips to Old Hill between its 2 round trips to Snow Hill.

Duty B saw the railcar run empty from Stourbridge to Dudley on weekdays to enter service. It then did 3 round trips to Old Hill, 4 round trips to Snow Hill, 2 round trips to Old Hill and 2 round trips to Snow Hill. It then returned to Stourbridge Junction in service. The Saturday service was the same as on weekdays, except that it only did 1 round trip to Old Hill between its two stints on the Snow Hill service.



On Sundays, the railcar ran in service from Stourbridge Junction to Dudley, followed by 2 round trips in service to Snow Hill. It then did a round trip to Stourbridge, running empty in both directions. The afternoon and evening saw 4 round trips to Snow Hill before it returned empty to Stourbridge.



1957 saw numbers 7 and 15 move to Stourbridge and this enabled the Stourbridge Town branch to be converted to railcar operation. Number 13 joined them in January 1958. However, railcar operation in the Stourbridge area was now short lived. 1958 saw the introduction of the Class 122 first generation bubble cars and some of these were allocated to Tyseley diesel depot. Railcars 7, 8 and 15 were withdrawn from Stourbridge shed in January 1959. The two remaining Stourbridge based railcars, 13 and 14, continued in service until 16 May 1959 when they were transferred to Leamington Spa, where they remained until withdrawn in August 1960. As Rob wrote in his article, the Class 122 bubble cars took over, not only on the Stourbridge Town branch but also on the Dudley to Old Hill and Dudley to Snow Hill routes until these succumbed to the Beeching Axe.

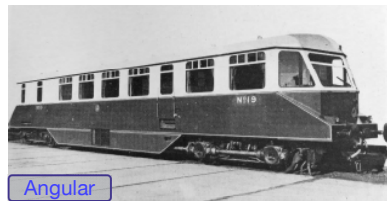
STOURBRIDGE SHED'S BANANAS
by Roger Davis

In issue 5 of Platform 2 in his article “*Bubbles and Bananas*”, Rob Hebron looked at the use of railcars on the Stourbridge Town branch and detailed the introduction of the GWR AEC railcars into service. Without revisiting too much of Rob’s article, 38 railcars were built, numbered 1 to 38. They can be summarised as follows :-

Nos.	Bodywork	Type	Body Shape
1 to 4	Park Royal	Passenger	Streamlined
5 to 16	Gloucester RCW	Passenger	Streamlined
17	Gloucester RCW	Parcels	Streamlined
18	Gloucester RCW	Passenger	Experimental
19 to 33	GWR Swindon	Passenger	Angular
34	GWR Swindon	Parcels	Angular
35 to 36	GWR Swindon	Passenger	Angular 2-car unit
37 to 38	GWR Swindon	Passenger	Angular 2-car unit



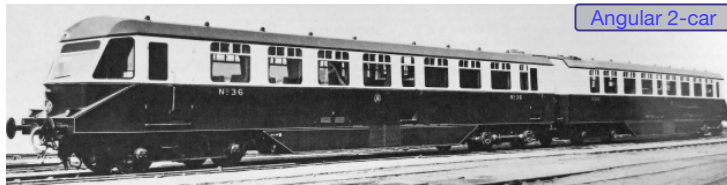
Streamlined



Angular



Experimental



Angular 2-car

The story as far as Stourbridge shed was concerned started in March 1936 when number 8 was delivered new. However, it did not last long before heading to Bristol (St Philip’s Marsh) two months later. Whether it was actually used in service is undocumented. The same could be said of the 2-car units. 35/36 arrived new at Stourbridge in November 1941 followed by 37/38 in February 1942. Again, they soon moved away with 35/36 heading to Reading and 37/38 to Bristol (St Philip’s Marsh).

After the war, Stourbridge received three railcars with 33 arriving in 1945 and 8 and 14 in 1946. 33 transferred away in 1953 when it was converted to become one half of a 2-car unit, replacing 37 which had been damaged by fire and scrapped. However 8 and 14 were to remain at Stourbridge throughout the majority of the 1950s, being renumbered W8W and W14W after nationalisation.

By December 1895, six services ran in each direction on Mondays to Saturdays with a single service on Sundays. Most journeys worked to and from Worcester Shrub Hill stopping at Fernhill Heath, Droitwich and Hartlebury before joining the Severn Valley line. The following table shows only the principal stations, including Iron Bridge and Broseley which had gained a new name on 9 November 1895, although all stations were served by the majority of services.

DAILY	m-s	su	m-s	m-s	m-s	m-s	m-s	m-s	m-s
Worcester Shrub Hill	0725	0910	0945	1045	1430	....	1810	....	....
Hartlebury	0752	0942	1011	1107	1510	1800	1855	....	2125
Stourport	0801	0949	1019	1113	1516	1807	1902	....	2131
Bewdley	0815	0957	1035	1123	1525	1813	1916	2043	2137
Bridgnorth	0852	1034	1112	1156	1601	....	1952	2113	....
Coalport	0908	1053	1128	....	1617	....	2007	....	....
Iron Bridge & Broseley	0915	1059	1135	....	1622	....	2012	....	....
Buildwas	0921	1104	1147	....	1626	....	2018	....	....
Shrewsbury	0950	1135	1212	....	1650	....	2043	....	....

DAILY	m-s	m-s	m-s	m-s	m-s	m-s	su	m-s	m-s
Shrewsbury	....	0758	1120	....	1540	....	1705	1900	....
Buildwas	....	0827	1148	....	1611	....	1735	1928	....
Iron Bridge & Broseley	....	0832	1154	....	1622	....	1740	1933	....
Coalport	....	0837	1159	....	1627	....	1745	1938	....
Bridgnorth	0735	0855	1219	....	1646	....	1804	1957	2128
Bewdley	0810	0924	1300	1417	1719	1820	1840	2045	2156
Stourport	0818	0932	1308	1424	1727	1827	1850	2053	....
Hartlebury	0824	0938	1314	1431	1734	1833	1900	2100	....
Worcester Shrub Hill	0850	1000	1355	1510	1812	....	1930	2135	....

m-s Mondays to Saturdays, su Sundays

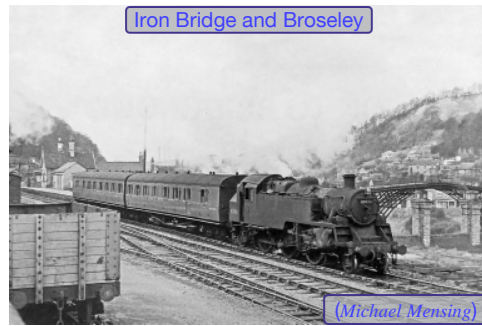
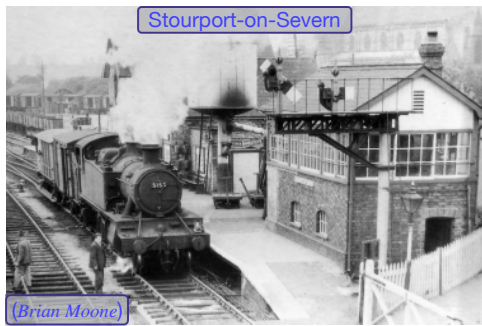


Burlish Halt

(John Dew)

During the 1930s, four additional halts were opened along the line. Burlish Halt between Stourport and Bewdley opened on 31 March 1930, and was a typical GWR halt of a simple platform with a pagoda hut. Cound Halt between Cressage and Berrington followed on 4 August 1934, with Jackfield Halt between Coalport and Ironbridge and Broseley opening on 3 December 1934, although the latter had to be moved a short

distance along the line on 1 March 1954 because of fear of landslips. Finally, Northwood Halt between Bewdley and Arley opened in June 1935 to serve holiday homes built in the vicinity and was very popular with fishermen. October 1934 also saw Stourport station gain its “-on-Severn” prefix. The final innovation of the 1930s came in 1938 when a camping coach was parked at Arley offering holidays for £3 per week. It only lasted one season.



Nationalisation in 1948 saw a change to the service pattern with some services on the Shrewsbury line operating to Kidderminster, while some trains on the Tenbury Wells line operated to Hartlebury. Weekday service levels remained at approximately the same levels with 5 trains in each direction to both Shrewsbury and Tenbury Wells.

However, at weekends, the potential of Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn as leisure destinations resulted in through services operating via Stourbridge Junction to and from Birmingham Snow Hill. By 1961, the Saturday service showed an hourly service between Bewdley and Snow Hill, while the following through services operated on Sundays (principal stations only).

SUNDAY									
Birmingham Snow Hill	0730	0805	0855	0955	1055	1155	1255	1355	1455
Stourbridge Junction	0812	0845	0935	1035	1135	1235	1325	1435	1535
Kidderminster	0822	0901	0945	1105	1145	1245	1345	1446	1546
Bewdley	0833	0914	0956	1118	1156	1258	1356	1459	1556
Stourport-on-Severn	....	0921	....	1124	....	1304	....	1505	....
Northwood Halt	0841	....	1001	....	1201	....	1401	....	1601
Arley	0849	....	1006	....	1206	....	1407	....	1606
Highley	0857	....	....	....	....	....	1414	....	....
Hampton Loade	0905	....	....	....	....	....	1419	....	....
Bridgnorth	0915	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....

SUNDAY					
Birmingham Snow Hill	1555	1625	1655	1755	1855
Stourbridge Junction	1635	1653	1735	1835	1935
Kidderminster	1646	1732	1746	1846	1946
Bewdley	1659	1742	1756	1859	1956
Stourport-on-Severn	1705	....	....	1905	....
Northwood Halt	....	1746	1801	....	2001
Arley	....	1752	1806	....	2007
Highley	....	1759	....	....	2014
Hampton Loade	....	1805	....	....	2019
Bridgnorth	....	....	....	....	....

ALL CHANGE AT ... BIRMINGHAM SNOW HILL
The changing scene at one of the Stourbridge line stations



Of course, connectivity cannot be created without co-operation. The proposed Worcestershire Parkway is not guaranteed to be served by all CrossCountry trains but at least the potential is there. Birmingham Moor Street is an interchange but it cannot be called a hub because the vast majority of inter-city train services are centred at Birmingham New Street. In Central London there are at least nine termini for national and international train services. The River Thames is the biggest obstacle to creating a single rail hub. London does not boast a monumental station such as Grand Central in New York, USA. It is debatable whether a single gigantic interchange would be practical or desirable in the UK capital.



An artist's impression of Worcestershire Parkway station

A service from Birmingham New Street passes Smethwick Junction with a service to Cardiff via Kidderminster in 1988



SLUG has long campaigned for better connectivity from the Stourbridge line. It has embraced the concept of single-change as being most attractive to customers. The loss of Birmingham New Street terminus was a body blow for long distance commuters travelling from Kidderminster and beyond. The Stourbridge line has unofficially been designated as a suburban type service and the trade-off for losing

Birmingham New Street was a more intensive (turn up and go) frequency. No one would want to go back to the 1970s timetable but there is still much to be done to boost connectivity : Worcester stations are the gateway to the south west but connections are poor. SLUG would like to see the necessary infrastructure improvements implemented to allow better management of Foregate Street and Shrub Hill. At present, there is no consistency in the timetable to facilitate clockface connections.

What about changing from train to bus? Cradley Heath is a good bus-train interchange but not all bus services run as late as the train. Stourbridge Town offers more diverse destinations but the shuttle service from Stourbridge Junction finishes early on Sunday evening. If these two stations are inadequate, what chance is there for Kidderminster station interchange? Assuming that the majority of passenger train journeys are destined for Birmingham, what connections will be available at Kidderminster on the late return journeys? County transport strategies are all well and good. Public funds can build the interchanges but which operators will serve them? You can lead a horse to water....



Cradley Heath Interchange

SUNDAY									
Bridgnorth	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Hampton Loade	....	....	....	....	....	1430	....	....	....
Highley	....	....	....	....	....	1436	....	....	....
Arley	....	1045	....	1245	....	1445	....	1645	....
Northwood Halt	....	1051	....	1251	....	1451	....	1651	....
Stourport-on-Severn	0940	....	1140	....	1340	....	1540	....	1740
Bewdley	0956	1056	1156	1256	1356	1456	1556	1656	1756
Kidderminster	1007	1105	1205	1305	1405	1505	1605	1705	1805
Stourbridge Junction	1018	1118	1218	1318	1418	1518	1618	1718	1818
Birmingham Snow Hill	1054	1154	1254	1354	1454	1554	1654	1754	1854

SUNDAY				
Bridgnorth	....	1848	....	....
Hampton Loade	....	1859	....	2030
Highley	....	1906	....	2036
Arley	1845	1915	....	2045
Northwood Halt	1851	1921	....	2051
Stourport-on-Severn	....	....	1940	....
Bewdley	1856	1926	1956	2056
Kidderminster	1905	1935	2005	2105
Stourbridge Junction	1918	1948	2018	2118
Birmingham Snow Hill	1954	2026	2054	2154

Unfortunately, the end was nigh. The section from Shrewsbury to Bewdley closed to passenger traffic on 8 September 1963, while the passenger line from Hartlebury to Bewdley soldiered on until 3 January 1970, although by that time trains only ran between Hartlebury and Stourport-on-Severn at rush hours, the majority of the sparse service comprising of a service from Stourport-on-Severn to Bewdley, Kidderminster, Stourbridge and Birmingham. However, the portion of line between Hartlebury and Stourport was the last operational section of the line in BR ownership as it was used by goods trains serving Stourport Power Station until 1980.

On 25 June 1965, a meeting of eleven people was convened at a private house to discuss the possibility of reopening the line as a tourist attraction. As a result, a public meeting was convened on 6 July at the Coopers Arms public house in Habberley, Kidderminster in which the 50 or so people present decided to form the Severn Valley Railway Society. Demolition trains had already started their work from the north of the line and, by 24 July 1965, had emerged from Bridgnorth tunnel and had started removing track in the Bridgnorth station area, when frantic calls to BR halted the demolition.



Arley in 1973 before reopening

(Brian Moore)

The rest is history, although the signal box at Bridgnorth is not the original, having come from Pensnett. It really is God's Wonderful Railway. The SVR was incorporated on 24 May 1967 and the section between Bridgnorth and Hampton Loade reopened on 23 May 1970. The Severn Valley Railway reached Highley on 12 April 1974 and Bewdley on 18 May 1974. The final section to Kidderminster Town opened 10 years later on 30 July 1984.



Wilden Viaduct



Bewdley



Arley



Highley

So what exists of the parts of the line that weren't saved? North of Bridgnorth, the station buildings at Berrington, Cressage, Coalport and Linley were converted into private dwellings, while the station site at Iron Bridge and Broseley is now a car park for visitors to the adjoining World Heritage Site. There is little to suggest that Buildwas station ever existed, as the line from Much Wenlock to Wellington closed to passengers in 1962 (the Craven Arms to Much Wenlock section having succumbed 11 year earlier). South of Bewdley, the Severn Valley Railway owns the first part of the trackbed towards Burlish, including Mount Pleasant Tunnel which is still intact. The start of this branch is currently being relaid for hire as a test track for new equipment for the rail industry. Burlish Halt itself has now disappeared under a housing estate, as has Stourport-on-Severn station which is now a housing estate along Longboat Lane. East of Stourport-on-Severn, much of the alignment still exists and anybody driving along Wilden Lane will pass under the line close to the Wilden Viaduct over one branch of the River Stour. Hartlebury station has seen its service improved over the past couple of years and now sees hourly off-peak services as a result of campaigning by SLUG. Hopefully, its proximity to the town of Stourport will see further improvements in the future.

HUBS AND STUBS

by Rob Hebron

There is little point in lamenting Dr. Beeching's cuts to the UK railway network. What is done is done. What is truly lamentable is the haste in disposing of railway land and infrastructure which continues to this day. The scale-down of British Railways was primarily an economic measure but the Doctor had designs on creating a modern high speed inter-city network for both passengers and freight. The largely electrified trunk routes would incorporate connectivity at strategic hubs.



This was the theory. In practice, branch railways and stations were spared from closure in marginal seats where protest votes could evict Members of Parliament belonging to the party of government. The resulting railway network evolved more by accident than design and so the intended connectivity and convenience did not materialise in certain areas.



Shrewsbury Station

The railway that we know began life as a group of private companies, experienced public ownership and has reverted to corporate control once more. Nevertheless, despite competition, all players recognise the value of stations where lines intersect. Rail centres such as Crewe and Shrewsbury are valued interchanges and track layouts allow many permutations of through journeys from various parts of the nation. These

well-known hubs are equipped with facilities for passengers who are required to change trains. The experience compensates for the waiting interval.

Sadly, some lines have been truncated – mere stubs and are deprived of connectional opportunities. Many heritage railways which have been restored by enthusiasts terminate in locations which have no interchange facilities (in some cases not even reachable by road). Thankfully, where track beds still remain in situ, preserved railways still aspire to re-connect to main lines as part of their long term strategy.



The Swanage Railway has finally been reconnected to the national network at Wareham