

*The London Gazette*

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.  
St. James's Palace, S.W.1.  
17th May, 1955.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to give orders for the undermentioned appointments to the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for the following awards of the George Medal and of the British Empire Medal, and for the publication in the London Gazette of the names of those specially shown below as having received an expression of Commendation for their brave conduct.

*Awarded the George Medal: -*

Anthony James Arthur RIVERS, Lampman, British Transport Commission, Western Region. (Dudley.)

Rivers was carrying out his duties at Cradley Heath and Cradley Passenger Station when he heard unusual sounds to the rear of a passenger train. Upon investigation he found a woman on the line close to the level crossing struggling to release her right foot which had become wedged between the stock rail and a check rail on the Main line. Rivers endeavoured to release her foot, but without success, and seeing a train nearing the Station on the Main line, he lifted the woman as far as he could away from the track and took a penknife from his pocket with the intention of cutting her shoe loose but before he was able to do this the train was upon them. He had the presence of mind to realise that to save the woman's life it would be necessary to sacrifice her foot, and he held her by the shoulders as far away from the line as possible as the train rushed by. The woman's right leg was severed below the knee and Rivers sustained a fractured pelvis and injury to right knee and multiple bruises and abrasions.

Rivers without hesitation took what action he could to save the woman's life and knowingly accepted serious risk of personal injury. There is little doubt that if the woman had remained in her original position she would have been killed.

*Daily Mirror - 18 May 1955*

**GRADE THREE  
TONY SHOWED HE  
WAS A GRADE ONE  
HERO**

ARMY doctors examining slimly-built Tony Rivers, 18, for National Service, put him in Grade 3. But they were not sizing up his pluck.

Last night, it was announced that Tony, of Park-road, Netherton, Worcs, has won the George Medal—his SEVENTH award for bravery.

He got the medal for saving Mrs. Amy Rowlands, 66, one of whose feet was trapped in the railway line at Cradley Heath, Staffs.

**Tony, a porter at the station, leapt on to the track and threw himself over Mrs. Rowlands as a train approached.**

He was badly injured.



Cradley Heath Station in 1963

(Lens of Sutton)



(R G Nelson / T Walsh Collection)

# PLATFORM 3



Issue 4

April 2018

## WHAT THE PAPERS SAID



The Stourbridge Town branch would have been a distant memory had the authorities had their way

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**WHAT THE PAPERS SAID**  
**INTRODUCTION by Roger Davis**

The Stourbridge Line User Group occasionally supplements its regular quarterly newsletters (*Platform* and *Platform 2*) with an additional electronic newsletter (*Platform 3*) that deals with a specific subject in each issue.

In this issue, SLUG has used a genealogy website to access 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 line was built.

The articles have been transcribed to make them more readable, but all articles have the original spelling and are totally unedited.

What has become evident while doing the research is that, although many aspects of the service have remained unchanged, some have changed considerably. Can you imagine how different things would be if the following plan had reached fruition.

*Birmingham Post - 21 April 1973*

## Station plan will cost £160,000

Birmingham Post Reporter

A major new station at Stourbridge Junction, with full interchange facilities between rail, car and bus, is planned by the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive.

The overall cost of the project is estimated at £160,000.

It invokes scrapping the existing Stourbridge Town station which would probably become a bus station for the town.

The Birmingham - Kidderminster - Worcester rail service will be improved, as part of the area's transport development plan. The service caters for commuters to Birmingham, most of whom live in the Stourbridge area.

The rail feeder service from Stourbridge Town station to Stourbridge Junction which carries only 500 passengers a day, and incurs a heavy loss, would be withdrawn and replaced by a bus service.

About four acres to the east of Stourbridge Junction station would provide parking for about 300 cars and loading facilities for buses. The station's old administrative buildings and passenger facilities would be replaced by new buildings at a cost of about £65,000.

The car park and other interchange facilities would cost about £60,000 and the various approach roads and traffic lights, £34,000 more.

Members of the Passenger Transport Authority will be asked at their meeting on Wednesday to approve the idea in principle, apply to the Government for a grant toward the scheme, and allow the P T E to negotiate with British Railways about the development.

Hopefully, you will find some of the old articles in this edition of *Platform 3* interesting, including the attempts to close the Stourbridge Town branch which are detailed on pages 7 to 9. There is more than enough material to fill this edition of *Platform 3* so further editions will be published in the future.

We hope you enjoy them, and find something of interest within these pages.

*Birmingham Gazette - 8 October 1954*

## Train Hits Woman and Youth at Cradley Heath

A 65-year-old widow, who was apparently trapped between the rails, and a 17-year-old railway employee who tried to free her were both seriously injured when a train ran into them at Cradley Heath passenger station last night.

The woman, Mrs. Amy Rowlands, of 80, Park Road, Quarry Bank, was seen to have one of her feet wedged between the rails.

Mr. Tony Rivers, a railway lampman, of 132, Park Road, Netherton, ran to her assistance and tried to release her, but both were hit by the 7.19 Stourbridge to Birmingham passenger train.

They were taken to Dudley Guest Hospital, where it was stated last night that Mrs. Rowlands's right leg had had to be amputated. Her condition was "fair." Mr. Rivers had leg and head injuries, and his condition, too, was described as "fair."



(Lens of Sutton)

Cradley Heath Station in 1963



(H C Casserley)

*Birmingham Post - 1 March 1955*



THE MAYOR OF ROWLEY REGIS, Ald. T. Woodward, presenting Mr. Anthony James Arthur Rivers, aged 17, a railway porter, of 77, Dudley Road, Springfield, Rowley Regis, with the Carnegie Hero Trust Fund Bronze Medal in the Council Chamber last night. The medal, the highest award the Trust can make, was awarded Mr. Rivers for his bravery last October in trying to save a woman trapped on the railway line at Cradley Heath station in the path of an oncoming train. With the medal was a cheque for £25, Trust compensation for Mr. Rivers's loss of earnings while injured.

The woman he tried to save, Mrs. Amy Rowland, of 80, Park Road, Quarry Bank, was present. Her right leg was severed by the train, but she is now able to get about on crutches.

Mrs. Rowland crossed the metals and her foot became trapped between the main line and a guide rail. Though a train was approaching, Mr. Rivers tried to free her foot, but before he could do so the train struck him. Mr. Rivers sustained a fractured pelvis and knee. He crawled towards the booking office, but collapsed on the way.

**AN ACT OF BRAVERY**  
1954 - 1955

On 7 October 1954, a British Railways porter, Tony Rivers, performed an act of such bravery that it resulted in a woman's life being saved and him being awarded the George Medal. The photograph shows the Birmingham bound platform in the foreground and the Stourbridge bound platform beyond the level crossing. The story was covered initially by the local press and later by the national press as the following newspaper articles demonstrate.



Cradley Heath Station in 1963

(R G Nelson / T Walsh Collection)

*Birmingham Post - 8 October 1954*

**RESCUE DIVE AT STATION**

*Porter, 17, hit by train in bid to save woman's life*

**Cradley Heath.**

A 17-YEAR-OLD porter leapt in front of a train here last night to pull a woman passenger clear of danger. The train struck them both.

The porter, Tony Rivers, of 132, Park Road, Netherton, Dudley, was taken unconscious to Dudley Guest Hospital with head and leg injuries.

The woman he tried to save, Mrs. Amy Roland, a widow, aged 66, of 80, Park Road, Quarry Bank, Brierley Hill, received multiple injuries. Her right leg was amputated in hospital.

Mrs. Roland had stepped from the 7.17 train into Cradley Heath station after a visit to her husband's grave. She walked over the line behind the train as the 7.19 from Stourbridge was steaming into the station.

Apparently she did not see or hear the train and Tony Rivers leapt from the platform on to the track to pull her partially clear.

**'Terribly brave'**

"If it had not been for Tony she would have been struck head on." another porter at the station said last night.

"It was terribly brave of him because the train was almost on top of Mrs. Roland when he jumped. There is a steep incline up to the station so the train driver still had full steam up although he was almost into the platform."

"The 7.17 was still at the other platform and the noise from that probably drowned the sound of the other engine."

The accident happened on a level crossing, the gates of which were closed. There is a footbridge over the track further up the platform.

"But passengers do sometimes slip across the line and through the pedestrian gate of the crossing as a short cut," said a station official. "With two trains to handle. all the staff were busy at the time."

Last sight the condition of both patients was said to be "fair."

**THE DEMOLITION OF KIDDERMINSTER STATION**  
1959 - 1972

At a time when the reviled basic station building at Kidderminster station is being replaced by a new larger building more appropriate for the number of passengers using the station, it is easy to look back at the old "Mock Tudor" station building with great affection and ask why it was demolished in the first place. It would be easy to think that the demolition of the building met with great opposition at the time, given its unusual design.

However, nothing could be further from the truth as the following press cuttings demonstrate.

*Birmingham Post - 1 June 1959*

**Somebody Else's Station**

THE news that British Railways may at last replace Kidderminster's antiquated station is sure to revive the legend of how the town acquired the station buildings intended for Stratford-upon-Avon.

The story is told that after fire destroyed the first station in 1854 the railway company, to save delay, used plans and materials intended for Stratford and thus gave Kidderminster an incongruous black and white building which might have started out as a Tudor farmhouse and certainly does not fit into an industrial town.

In fact, the architect had planned the station to harmonise, not with Stratford, but with the old buildings at Droitwich. He simply moved his builders ten miles down the line.

\*

IT is also said that when they had finished, the station was so much admired that it has not been touched from that day to this. In fact it has probably been painted.

British Railways themselves dislike it so much that when the Queen visited Kidderminster in 1957 they completely covered the outside with drapes and Her Majesty did not set eyes on it.

Others have wished it the fate which almost befell the first station on the day the line was opened. A burning wad from a cannon fired during the celebrations lodged in the wooden roof over the tracks and only prompt action by men with buckets of water prevented an untimely end to a popular novelty.



Kidderminster Station in 1962

(A W V Mace Collection)

*Birmingham Post - 21 December 1967*

**Railway station is disgrace to town - councillor**

**Birmingham Post Kidderminster Staff**

Kidderminster's railway station looks "like something Will Hay abandoned 30 years ago," Coun. C. E. Talbot said last night. It was a disgrace to a prosperous town, he told the council, and has probably not been painted since the days of the Great Western Railway.

The station was being deliberately run down by British Rail, with the intention that it should be closed. "They will deny that hotly," Coun. Talbot said, "but I shall be interested to see whether we still have a station in five years' time - and if we have, whether it has been painted."

Coun. D. V. Adam, Health Committee chairman, said that complaints about lack of facilities at the station were being taken up by the Medical Officer of Health and the Inspector of Factories.

A British Rail spokesman said last night that there were no plans for closing the station.

Birmingham Post - 1 February 1968

## 1863 railway station to be rebuilt

Kidderminster's 1863 railway station is to be rebuilt at a cost to British Rail of £60,000.

Announcing the decision yesterday, a B.R. spokesman said that work would start at once on demolition of the old station and temporary accommodation for passengers would be provided within a fortnight.

It would not be a "temporary" structure which would become permanent, he said. A comprehensive modernisation scheme had been agreed and would be carried out as soon as the money was authorised.

Kidderminster Station in 1959



(R S Carpenter Collection)

Kidderminster Station in 1959



(R S Carpenter Collection)

Birmingham Post - 22 February 1969

## Complaints

Coun. C. Guise, a member of Worcestershire County Council, complained of British Rail's "self-made Siberia" at Kidderminster station.

Buildings on one side of the track have been demolished and in spite of promises of replacements, he said, travellers for Birmingham waited without shelter in the snow.

Birmingham Post - 3 January 1969

## Argument over footbridge may delay new station

Building of Kidderminster's new railway station may be held up because British Rail has no funds to provide a footbridge for passengers to cross the lines.

The planning authority is insisting that a bridge is necessary, especially because of a decision to build lavatories on only one platform.

B.R. has said it considers the road bridge spanning the station is adequate. To cross from one platform to the other passengers would have to leave the station, walk along a stretch of main road and re-enter.

Mr. N. A. James, Associate Town Clerk of Kidderminster, said yesterday that a plan for an "austere but acceptable" station, including a footbridge, had been approved by the council's Planning Committee.

British Rail then submitted an even more austere plan for the station buildings and had omitted the bridge. The planning consent had been withdrawn.

"The road bridge in its present condition is quite unsuitable to serve the station," Mr. James said. "It has a very narrow footpath and carries heavy traffic and it would be unreasonable to force rail passengers to use it."

A B R spokesman said the negotiations with the planning authority had been complicated by the fact that the line serving Kidderminster was grant-aided by the Minister of Transport and the cost of building the new station had already been allocated.

"Any additional spending would have to go up separate approval and it is unlikely that funds would be spared for extras," he said. "We hope to be able to resolve the difficulty in further discussion with the local authority."

The old Kidderminster station, built in 1864, was demolished last year after councillors had called it "a disgrace to a prosperous town."

A former mayor, Coun. C. E. Talbot, said it had the appearance of "something Will Hay abandoned 30 years ago."

Birmingham Post - 29 January 1972

## After long illness bravely borne ...

By JOHN SOLAN

"Merciful release," we murmur when a long-sick friend dies. This is how Birmingham has come to regard Snow Hill Station, which has attracted more words than passengers over the past five or six years.

Now that Mr. Peter Walker has read the Committal, we can look forward, with what aesthetic expectation we can summon, to the erection of another block of offices in the "multi-million-pound" bracket.

### Shabbier sister

It looks as though Joe Balmer's pleasure-dome will never see the light of day. Sir Joseph, a former Lord Mayor of Birmingham, campaigned for the site to be turned into a recreational centre, but one of the objections was that it was too cold round there (hence "Snow Hill").

The new development is now going through the official maw. The latest position is that "outline planning permission has been given." There is even a rumour, nothing stronger, that Birmingham Police will move from their claustrophobic quarters in Steelhouse Lane.

It would have amused some of those who have preceded Snow Hill into oblivion that it was New Street that was preserved, for the old New Street was always the shabbier of the two sisters.

It seems only a few years since some wag's slanderous slogan became general currency "Travel G.W.R. and see the world, travel L.M.S. and see the next."

Snow Hill has had a varied history. The first building, of wood, was opened in 1852. A new station was built in 1871, and the last was completed in 1912.

The two lines are going to be missed by the few commuters who use them. On the last train out from Snow Hill last night (as early as 17.48) passengers spoke of tiresome and time-consuming alternatives.

Mr. Eric Farrow, who has used the service for 15 years, will have to go by bus to and from Bilston where he lives.

Mr. Edward Simpson, Wolverhampton, could not understand why, with all the congestion on the A41, the services had been discontinued.

Three young women bank clerks, Linda Fullard, Jenny Wilkes and Andrea Gill were fuming quietly about what the buses will cost.

The end is high - Snow Hill Station in February 1972



(Geoff Dowling)



Snow Hill in dereliction - the fate of many stations after the 1960's purge

## Walker agrees to close Snow Hill

Birmingham Post Reporter

The lingering death of Birmingham's Snow Hill Station was completed yesterday with one final blow from the shining sword of Mr Peter Walker, the Environment Secretary.

From the department's offices in Marsham Street, S W 1, he announced his "unconditional consent" to the closure of the services between Birmingham and Wolverhampton Low Level and Birmingham and Langley Green.

The station building has long since disappeared, but a handful of passengers can still be seen plodding to a remote platform from which Snow Hill has been conducting its last stand. From March 6, even this skeleton facility will end.

Mr. Walker stresses this aspect of the matter when he refers to "the poor patronage of the services and heavy financial losses."

In addition to Snow Hill the following eight stations, already the haunt of vandals and scribblers, will be closed. Hockley, Winson Green, Handsworth, West Bromwich, Swan Village, Wednesbury, Bilston and Priestfield.

Wolverhampton Low Level will continue to function as a parcels concentration depot for the area and will not be affected by the withdrawal of the passenger service.

The British Railways Board has estimated that the cost of continuing the two services in 1972 would be £240,000, Wolverhampton accounting for £179,000 and Langley Green for £61,000.

Earnings from fares have been put at £13,000, leaving a deficit of £227,000 which would have had to be met by a grant.

The board has also worked out what costs will be avoided in the future. In the first year after closure, it is estimated that £90,000 will be saved. which will rise to £125,000 in the fifth year. Additional costs of £22,000 for signalling and telecommunications will also be avoided.

Mr. Walker's letter to the chief secretary of the British Railways Board sets out frequent alternative rail service between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, using New Street Station and Wolverhampton High Level and the Stafford-Birmingham line.

There was also a 12-minute bus-service between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, following a route nearly parallel to the railway.

Between Birmingham and Langley Green, trains from New Street will continue to serve Smethwick and Langley Green stations on the Birmingham-Kidderminster line.

The Transport Users' Consultative Committee for the West Midlands had stated that closure would cause considerable hardship "which they could suggest no means of alleviating".

While the Passenger Transport Authority was not prepared to give financial support to continuance of the services, it recommended that the tracks should be retained until "the feasibility or otherwise of use of the routes for rapid transport has been determined."

All other relevant factors had been considered, including social and economic ones. "The conclusion reached in all the circumstances is that refusal of consent to the closure would not be justified," Mr Walker said.



## BR's 'shame' station puts on a happy face

The next time the Queen visits Kidderminster she will be able to see carefully preserved relics of a railway station, specially designed for Droitwich.

The last time she was there, 15 years ago, British Railways were so shamefaced about its mouldering station that it was covered - completely - in bunting. The Queen was whisked through, across a red carpet to the Royal Train, without catching a glimpse of the buildings.

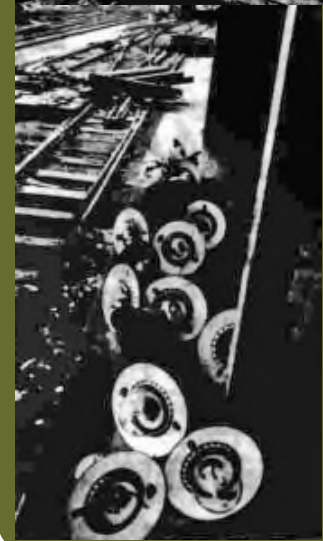
But like the Thane of Cawdor, nothing in its life became it like the leaving. Once it was due for demolition the station, described by a councillor as "something abandoned by Will Hay," became a prospective museum piece.

Half of it was pulled down two years ago. Now the rest is falling to the hammers and yesterday the corporation museum curator, Mr. Anthony Davis, was picking over the pieces, by courtesy of the scrap dealer who has contracted to remove them.



Mr. Anthony Davis (left) Kidderminster librarian and museum curator, with the deputy librarian, Mr. Paul Ellis, select railway relics at the partly demolished Kidderminster Railway Station yesterday. Mr. Davis is hoping to make a mock-up of a Victorian railway for the museum.

Left : redundant gas mantles await their fate on the platform of the station, which is to be rebuilt.



The pieces were taken to Kidderminster from Droitwich in 1863 after the original station, built 11 years earlier, had been destroyed by fire. The black and white pseudo-Tudor, designed to harmonise with old buildings at Droitwich, stuck out like a bandaged sore thumb in its industrial surroundings at Kidderminster.

Mr. Davis plans to cut away some of the choicest ornamental ironwork and some of those informative signs common to every Victorian railway station.

And he is nothing if not optimistic. "If I hold on to parts of the station," he suggested, "someone might give us some line and rolling stock to make a mock-up of an old-style railway."

Meanwhile British Rail is to erect less elaborate buildings appropriate to a new-style railway.



(National Railway Museum)

*Birmingham Post - 28 November 1972*

### Alas, poor Kidderminster

Sir,—The letter from Mrs. Joan Roberts (Post, November 25) urging a movement for the preservation of amenities an Kidderminster has, for me, a rather strange connotation.

I refer to the preservation, in a state of Victorian squalor of Kidderminster Railway Station up to the time I last used it a few years ago. Whether it has since collapsed under the weight of its accumulated grime, or whether British Rail has been shamed into redecoration, I do not know.

Of one thing I am certain: at the time I knew it, the station was the gloomiest, dirtiest, most depressing and neglected edifice I have come across in a life of extensive travel. It was as if the railway authorities had decided to leave it untended for a century as a warning to the others.

Now Kidderminster itself was a town with a centre of character and a lively market, with the growth of the traffic problem, instead of making the cars go round the perimeter, they proceeded to knock the buildings down

The centre of a town, generally comprising its oldest and most individual buildings, is the heart and soul. When it is gone, what is there left to preserve, since the outer environs of all towns are pretty well alike.

It saddens me that the preservationists only come on the scene after the bulldozers have done irreparable damage and a town has been destroyed for ever. With respect in Mrs Roberts, I think she is too late. What is there now in Kidderminster worth fighting to preserve ? Except, of course, the railway station.

DENNIS STEVENS.

Worcester.

*Birmingham Post - 1 December 1972*

### Kidderminster Minded

Sir—Are letters to your paper so few or of such poor quality that you have to publish one deploring the town of Kidderminster, based entirely, it seems, on the state of the railway station “a few years ago.” I refer to the letter from Mr. Dennis Stevens (Post, November 28).

All right, Kidderminster railway station was an eyesore, but it was demolished some years ago, a fact of which Mr. Stevens does not seem to be aware as he sarcastically suggests preserving it.

With reference to his fourth paragraph, Kidderminster is in the process of building a Ring Road, some of which is already in use. Cars, therefore, do go round the perimeter and are, in fact, banned from parts of the town centre.

I am all for preserving tradition, but I am not alone in thinking that the redevelopment of Kidderminster town centre is an improvement.

It is a pity to leave people with the impression that this town is a bygone based on facts of long ago.

(Mrs.) J. G. WILLING.

Kidderminster.

*Birmingham Post - 15 March 1969*

## Rail line will never pay its way - B R

**Birmingham Post  
Worcester Staff**

British Rail could not cover costs on services between Kidderminster and Hartlebury even if revenue went up 40 times, it was claimed yesterday.

The West Midlands Transport Users Consultative Committee was told this by Mr. A. S. Mead, representing B. R. at a public hearing at Worcester into the proposed withdrawal of the services which run via Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley.



Wilden Viaduct

There were 20 objections to the proposal including Worcestershire County Council and the committee has to advise the Minister of Transport whether the loss of trains would lead to hardship.

In written evidence. BR described the services as “highly uneconomic.”

### Peak traffic

Bus services were frequent between the main centres of population and extra services would operate between Bewdley and Hartlebury stations to cater for peak traffic in each direction.

Mr. Mead said the Minister had already refused to give grant aid for the train services.

Mr. J. D. Schooling, assistant clerk of Worcestershire County Council, said hardship would be caused to employees at the Hartlebury R A F Maintenance Unit. The proposed alternative bus services would start earlier and cost more.

Objectors from the Stourport and Bewdley areas complained in letters that they would suffer hardship because the bus services would be “inconvenient, more expensive and less comfortable.”

The Minister’s decision will be made known later.

*Birmingham Post - 5 December 1969*

## BRITISH RAILWAYS BOARD LONDON MIDLAND REGION

### TRANSPORT ACT 1962

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

Following the decision of the Minister of Transport giving his consent to the withdrawal of the local Passenger Train Service between Hartlebury Junction (exclusive) and Kidderminster Junction (exclusive) via Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley the British Railways Board hereby give notice that on and from Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1970, all passenger train services over this line will be discontinued and the following stations closed: -

### STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN, BURLISH, BEWDLEY, FOLEY PARK

BEWDLEY (Louie Street)	dep	07.30
BURLISH PARK	"	07.40
STOURPORT (Vale Road)	"	07.45
STOURPORT York St./High St.)	"	—
HARTLEBURY (White Hart)	"	07.55
HARTLEBURY (Station)	arr	07.58
HARTLEBURY (Station)	dep	16.42
HARTLEBURY (White Hart)	"	16.45
STOURPORT York St./ High St.)	"	16.55
STOURPORT (Vale Road)	"	—
BURLISH PARK	"	17.00
BEWDLEY (Loade Street)	arr	17.10



(John Dew)



(Brian Moore)

*Birmingham Post - 1 July 1964*

## M.P. urges rail reprieves

In the House of Commons today Mr. George Wigg (Lab - Dudley) will ask the Minister of Transport if he will withdraw his consent to the closure of the Birmingham Snow Hill-Dudley railway line, pending the completion of the West Midlands traffic survey and if he will withdraw his consent to the closure of the Dudley-Old Hill and Walsall and Dudley lines.

*Birmingham Post - 22 September 1966*

## Few would be affected by rail cut, report says

Few Stourbridge people would be affected by the proposed withdrawal of railway passenger services between Wolverhampton and Birmingham (Snow Hill), Smethwick West, and Handsworth.

This is claimed in a report to be presented to Stourbridge Council next Monday. Trains from Stourbridge Junction now travelling to Snow Hill would be diverted to New Street. The council's General Purposes Committee is asking the council not to object to the withdrawal.

*Birmingham Post - 16 November 1967*

## Snow Hill ruling brings reprieve for 11 stations

Nearly 3,000 commuters are likely to benefit from the Ministry of Transport decision to keep open a small part of Snow Hill station. They travel every day on services between Birmingham and Wolverhampton Low Level and on the link line to Smethwick West.

The Ministry decision means that the following stations under threat of closure, will remain open: Snow Hill, Hockley, Winson Green, Handsworth and Smethwick, the Hawthorns Halt, West Bromwich, Swan Village, Wednesbury Central, Bilston Central, Priestfield, and Wolverhampton Low Level.

But the Minister of Transport has decided that local trains from the south of Birmingham which run into Snow Hill at present will be diverted into Moor Street or New Street stations, cutting out the Moor Street-to-Snow Hill link.

Mrs. Castle has also agreed to the closure of Dunstall Park Station, west of Wolverhampton.

In both cases she feels that the withdrawal of passenger services on these short stretches of line will cause no significant hardship.

"In each case the area is well covered by intensive local bus services," the Ministry maintains.

At present, 24 trains are operated between Snow Hill and Wolverhampton Low Level in each direction every day.

The Handsworth Junction to Smethwick West link line, which is to stay open to avoid inconvenience to passengers travelling from the Stourbridge direction to intermediate stations on the Snow Hill line, is serviced by a total of 29

trains a day. Fourteen trains a day are operated from the Birmingham end of the link and 15 in the reverse direction.

A British Rail spokesman in Birmingham said last night that it was still not certain how many of these services would be maintained.

"In the case of Redditch, the Minister stipulated that certain types of services must be kept going, particularly peak-hour services," he said.

"We will have to wait until we get the Minister's full directive on Snow Hill before we know how the frequency of services has to be maintained."

The decision to keep at least part of Snow Hill open, announced by Mr. John Morris, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport, is based on the fact that, although there has been a considerable decline in the use of the Snow Hill-Wolverhampton services, a substantial number of people still use it, particularly commuters at peak periods.

### Congestion

Complete closure of Snow Hill would not only add significantly to the journey times of commuters, but also increase the already considerable road congestion.

The Minister recognises that the British Railways Board will now be exploring possible economies to reduce their "substantial" losses on the line while still meeting the main traffic demand.

At the moment, three platforms are in operation at Snow Hill, but this is likely to be reduced to two when services into the station from South Birmingham are discontinued.

## THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE TOWN BRANCH 1964 - 1971

Today, 678 return journeys a week operate between Stourbridge Junction and Stourbridge Town, with more promised in 2021, and Stourbridge Town serves an estimated 575,000 passengers per year.

Thus it is now almost unthinkable that the line was considered for closure, especially as it had not been proposed for closure in the 1963 Beeching Report.

However, within a year, the vultures were circling.



*Birmingham Post - 30 June 1964*

## 'Closure of station loss to B R'

BRITISH Railways would lose considerably more passengers under the proposal to close Stourbridge Town Railway Station because the one mile journey by bus to Stourbridge Junction main line station would take twice as long and cost twice as much, it was claimed at a meeting of Amblecote Urban Council last night.

The council decided to support its General Purposes Committee in lodging a formal objection over the intended closure of the station.

Coun. H. J. Clarke said that he doubted whether the Midland "Red" bus company would be able to meet the needs of proper connections with main line train services.

"There is no guarantee that buses will be able to get through all the traffic in the centre of Stourbridge in time to catch many of the trains," he said.

"This is supposed to be a land of hope and glory, yet here we have people in London who have never seen this station, except possibly on a map, dictating in Communistic fashion what is to happen to our transport system."

Coun. W. T. Skidmore said that more and more young people were travelling from the Stourbridge area by railway to complete their training at colleges in Birmingham, and closure of the station could impose severe restrictions on them.

*Birmingham Post - 7 July 1964*

## 'Chaos if station is closed'

CLOSING of Stourbridge Town Station and ending the service to the main line at Stourbridge Junction Station would cause "traffic chaos" in the town, Coun. A. H. Mason (C.) said at a meeting of the General Purposes Committee of the Town Council last night.

The Town Clerk, Mr A. P. Drury read a letter from the British Transport Commission which said that the public would be given at least six weeks notice of an inquiry to be held by the Transport Consultative Users Council when objections could be heard.

Coun. Mason said that there was traffic congestion already round the Junction Station every morning and this would be increased if the service from the Town Station ended.

The service was used extensively by old people and by children travelling to all parts of the county.

The committee decided to recommend appointment of a sub-committee with powers to act if objections needed to be stated.

*Birmingham Post - 7 October 1964*

## Council urged to fight rail plan

British Railways is proposing to withdraw parcels services from Stourbridge Junction station, and now Stourbridge Town Council is being recommended to support the protest made by the town's Chamber of Trade.

Birmingham Post - 12 November 1964

## RAILWAY CLOSURE OPPOSED

Birmingham Post  
Stourbridge Staff

STOURBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL is to be asked to object to the threatened withdrawal of the railway passenger service between Stourbridge Town and Stourbridge Junction Stations and the proposed closure of the Town Station to parcels traffic as well.

The chairman of the council's General Purposes Committee, Ald. J. L. Guest, said yesterday that it was thought that the Midland "Red" bus company would be unable to provide an adequate alternative service between the town centre and the Junction Station because of staff shortages.

The committee had received a letter from British Railways stating that the question of an alternative bus service was being considered and asking what domestic implications would be involved by the proposals to withdraw the train service and close the Town Station.

### No room to turn

"We feel that the bus service would have to be at least equal to the present railway service." Ald. Guest said, "and we would want to see through-buses to the Junction from outside areas, such as Brierley Hill and Kinver."

"Parking facilities at the Junction are poor and there is no room for buses to turn round outside the station."

"Bearing all this in mind, we feel that it would be undesirable for British Railways to implement these closures and we are therefore recommending the council to object to them."



It appears that the imminent threat of closure was averted and the story moves forward to 1967, when closure threats were replaced by economy measures.

Birmingham Post - 6 February 1967

## Concern over decision to stop parcels traffic

The closure of Stourbridge Town railway station to parcels traffic is causing concern to members of the chamber of trade.

The secretary, Mr. A. Dutton, said yesterday shopkeepers now have to use the Stourbridge Junction station about a mile away.

Before making any decision the chamber of trade would wait for information from members about the effects the closure is having on them.

Birmingham Post - 19 July 1967

## Just the ticket?

The booking office at Stourbridge Town railway station may be closed at certain times to make the line linking the centre of the town with Stourbridge Junction, more economic.

Discussions are now going on between British Rail and union representatives.

The idea is to close the booking office from 1 p.m. on Mondays to Fridays and from 9 a.m. on Saturdays. After those times tickets will be issued by the guard on the train, usually a single-carriage one.

Birmingham Post - 21 September 1966

## Snow Hill line: Buses 'no alternative'

Birmingham Post Reporter

As objections were being heard in Birmingham yesterday to the proposed closure of the passenger service between Birmingham Snow Hill and Wolverhampton Low Level Stations, the Minister of Transport, Mrs. Barbara Castle, announced that she had refused to close several other services. In her announcement the Minister quoted from the recent White Paper on Transport: "The touchstone of a sound railway policy is the extent to which it meets the country's overall transport needs." She said that this was the policy she had applied in reaching her decisions.

Midland stations involved in the decisions are Norton Bridge Station at Stoke-on-Trent and Hope and Edale, which serve the Peak National Park.

Though Norton Bridge is used by only a small number of people, the Minister noted that the Transport Users' Consultative Committee felt that hardship would be caused by closure of the line, and accepted its conclusion.

Several of her decisions affected holiday areas, and she has refused to allow the closure of the line between St. Ives and Looe in Cornwall because of heavy holiday traffic which would be transferred to the roads.

### 'Cost £917,400'

At the Birmingham hearing 18 members of the West Midlands Transport Users Consultative Committee, under their chairman, Mr. C. E. T. Cridland, were handed a British Rail memorandum stating that to keep passenger trains running between Snow Hill and Wolverhampton Low Level Stations would cost £917,400 in the next five years.

The memorandum said that the annual cost of keeping the line running was £197,700 and estimated annual earnings were £69,500. Renewals and maintenance on the line during the next five years would cost £276,400.

The stations listed for closure are: Birmingham (Snow Hill), Hockley, Winson Green, Handsworth and Smethwick, Hawthorns Halt, West Bromwich, Swan Village, Wednesbury Central, Bilston Central, Priestfield, Wolverhampton Low Level and Dunstall Park.

### Hourly service

Passenger trains between Birmingham and the South on other lines could be rerouted to New Street Station and Moor Street Station would be retained for some passenger trains. Other services would also use New Street, and trains between Wolverhampton and the North would use Wolverhampton High Level Station.

There would be an hourly express service between Euston and Liverpool or Manchester via Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and an hourly local service between New Street and Wolverhampton High Level. The memorandum also gave details of alternative bus services.

The objectors expressed dissatisfaction with the service offered by buses, which they said were more costly and took much longer, causing hardship to many.

### Effect on football

Mr. F. W. Robson, senior assistant solicitor to Wolverhampton Corporation, said that the journey already took longer by bus than by train and with extra congestion caused by more bus services would take longer still. He said that Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club would be affected if the service was withdrawn.

Mr. G. P. Key, representing West Bromwich Town Council, said that West Bromwich Albion Football Club was also worried about the effect on its "gates" as a result of the closure of the Hawthorns Halt.

### Only two left

West Bromwich now had 175,000 people and four stations would be closed within its boundaries. This would leave only Tipton (Owen Street) and Dudley Port, and these could not meet the needs of the population.

The journey from West Bromwich to Birmingham took nine minutes longer by bus than by train, and from Wednesbury 17 minutes longer.

Mr. Thomas Patterson, a member of the executive committee of the Transport Salaried Staffs Association, said that hardship would be caused to railway employees by closure of the line.

The inquiry was closed and the chairman said that the committee would make its recommendation to the Minister.



## Five Midland passenger rail services to go

BEECHING proposals to withdraw services, including three serving Dudley, on June 15, have been accepted by the Minister of Transport, Mr. Marples, it was announced yesterday.

The services are Birmingham (Snow Hill)-Dudley, Dudley-Old Hill. Walsall-Dudley, services from Spon Line on the Birmingham (New Street) to Wolverhampton line, and services from Ettingshall Road and Bilston Station on the Birmingham New Street to Wolverhampton line.

The Minister made his announcement after studying reports of four local public enquiries held by the West Midland's Transport Users' Consultative Council into the proposed closures. A report by the enquiry committee stated that the Birmingham-Dudley closure would cause hardship to passengers using the service between Swan Village and Dudley.

The withdrawal of services from the Snow Hill-Dudley line and between Dudley and Old Hill will also involve the discontinuance of passenger trains serving Great Bridge (South), Dudley Port (Low Level), Dudley, Baptist End Halt and Old Hill (High Street) Halt.

The Walsall-Dudley decision will involve the closure to passenger traffic of Wednesbury Town, Great Bridge Town, Dudley Port (Low Level) and Dudley.



Darby End Halt

(Michael Mensing)

### More buses

As a result of the decisions all passenger services will cease between Swan Village and Dudley, Dudley and Old Hill, from stations and halts at Great Bridge (South), Dudley Port (Low Level), Dudley, Baptist End, Windmill End, Darby End, and Old Hill (High Street).

In the notice of his decision on the Walsall-Dudley closure, the Minister stated that he had noted the enquiry committee's view that in general there were adequate alternative services, but that the closure would cause limited hardship to a small number of people. He had made his decision having regard to the bus services at present being provided, but on condition that the closure should not take place until additional bus services had been authorised.

The additional bus services referred to are: A Monday to Friday service from Walsall to Dudley Port arriving at about 7 30 a.m., and a service from Dudley Port to Walsall leaving at about 5.15 p.m.



Dudley Port Low Level Station

(Stations UK)

Mr Marples's notice of decision on the Snow Hill-Dudley closure includes his belief that bus services between Dudley and Dudley Port provide a satisfactory alternative for connections with main line services at New Street. He ignored a suggestion by the committee that a suitable rail service might be run between Dudley and Dudley Port to connect with main line services at New Street.

His decision to withdraw passenger services from Ettingshall Road and Bilston Station is on condition that closure should not take place unless and until the Midland "Red" Bus Company's route 881 service is revised to provide a Monday to Friday service from Coseley to Ettingshall, leaving Coseley at about 6.36 a.m.; and a Monday to Friday service from Ettingshall to Coseley leaving Ettingshall at about 5.35 p.m., and the condition that withdrawal or alteration of bus services should be notified to him immediately.

By 1970, closure of the branch was back on the agenda and, according to the Birmingham Post, the newly formed West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive, rather than opposing British Rail's plan to close the line, shockingly supported the proposals. The PTE listed the line alongside the Snow Hill to Langley Green line for closure, the latter actually closing in March 1972, and it appears that it was British Rail that actually reprieved the line, albeit with a temporary subsidy from the PTE.

## Bus services cuts?

Fewer buses on some services may be the result of a re-examination of passenger needs and bus requirements being undertaken by the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive.

The executive is likely to suggest a reduction in the number and frequency of Saturday services, and later starting of buses on Sundays.

On weekdays, a number of changes for the Stratford Road routes are being considered and some services in the Cannock area may be affected.

These and other plans are contained in a number of reports that will be presented to West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority members next Wednesday.

The P T E also says that it is to make no objection to British Rail plans to close the line between Stourbridge Town station and Stourbridge Junction, and does not think it worth while retaining the service between Birmingham Snow Hill and Langley Green, unless the local authorities involved wish to make a contribution.

turning Stourbridge Junction into a halt. He said that two-thirds of the passengers travelling from the main line junction used the line from the town centre.

A British Rail spokesman said, "We are reviewing all services with the P T A, and this is one of them. All our services are making losses.

## First shots in fight to save rail link

### Birmingham Post Stourbridge Staff

First shots in a campaign to save the short railway link between Stourbridge Town Station and Stourbridge Junction were fired yesterday.

Although British Rail says that the closure is "not imminent," a hint that the line's life is limited is given in a report by the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive.

This says that the executive has no objections to plans to close the line, which takes passengers the three-quarters of a mile from the town centre to the main line junction.

Two retired railwaymen, both former mayors of the town, made it clear last night that they would resist any plans to close the line.

Ald. E. J. Broughton said: "When I was mayor in 1965-66 I pleaded with British Rail not to close the line and I was assured that this would not happen for two or three years."

Another retired railwayman, Mr. Harry Hardwick, also a former mayor, said that closing the line would be the first stage in

## Rail line not closing

British Railways gave an assurance yesterday that the short line between Stourbridge Town and Stourbridge Junction is not being closed. "The service is merely being amended," it was stated.

There had been reports in the town that the rail service, which takes passengers from mainline trains at the junction to the town centre, was being replaced by buses.

Stourbridge Town in 1978



(Peter Shoemith)

## CAN WE HAVE OUR TRAIN BACK ? 1961

When I first read this article, I had a vision of Stanley Holloway and Hugh Griffith stealing a locomotive at night from a railway shed in "The Titfield Thunderbolt". This was surely the domain of a Ealing comedy and could not possibly happen in real life. Of course, with the heightened security that now exists, we will never see a repeat of this incident. Having said that, if you are ever at Stourbridge Junction in the middle of the night and see a Class 172 passing through the station .....

*Daily Mirror - 26 January 1961*

### STOLEN: A RAILWAY ENGINE By PHIL TIBENHAM

BRITISH Railways chiefs yesterday ordered a full-scale hunt for two young hoaxers who STOLE A RAILWAY ENGINE. They have also asked Western Region executives to explain how the two men:

- Fooled a signal box with an unauthorised telephone call;
- Tricked officials at a junction into allowing them to fill the engine with water;
- Hoodwinked the staff of six signal boxes on an amazing twenty-eight-mile joy-ride.

The two men first phoned the signalbox which controls a goods siding in Stafford-road, Wolverhampton, and spoke four key words ... "Light engine to Worcester."

Then they climbed aboard Engine No. 6422 and started out on their twenty-eight-mile journey.

The Wolverhampton signalman passed the message on to the next box and so on down the line through Dudley, Worcs ... Stourbridge Junction and Kidderminster.

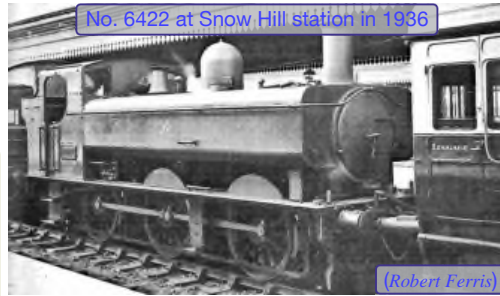
But two hours later the railway pirates had to end their journey at Droitwich.

Worcester Control Centre had warned Droitwich signalman twenty-nine-year-old Frank Wilkes to stop the engine.

He said yesterday: "The engine stopped and reversed on to a loop line."

"One of the men phoned Worcester."

"They told him to wait for instructions and he went back to the engine. Later when we went to look for the men they had disappeared."



*Daily Mirror - 19 July 1961*

### The day Phineas got steamed up

PHINEAS went off the rails the night his love was scorned.

He proposed to his girl - and she turned him down.

Phineas Whitehouse, 29, stormed off in a temper - and let off steam on a railway locomotive. He climbed into the driver's cabin at Wolverhampton railway sheds and drove the loco through Stourbridge and on to Droitwich.

There he abandoned it after his twenty-five-mile cooling-off run.

And at Wolverhampton Quarter Sessions yesterday the lovesick Phineas stood in the dock and sadly admitted "endangering the safety of passengers on the railway."

### Stealing

And he pleaded guilty to stealing just under quarter of a ton of British Railways coal - the amount of fuel burned up as his blazing ardour cooled.

Said the Recorder, Mr. M. A. B. King-Hamilton: "We all suffer disappointments from time to time. It is no excuse for breaking the law."

And Phineas, ex-railway fireman, formerly of Burns-avenue, Wolverhampton, was put on probation for two years.

*Birmingham Post - 10 September 1963*

### Closure protest

Ald. Watton said the General Purposes Committee had also decided to ask the City Council to make a "strong protest" to the West Midland Transport Users' Consultative Committee over the proposed closure of the Birmingham - Dudley railway line. This is among the first of the proposed cuts in the West Midlands arising from the Beeching Report.

Ald. Watton commented: "It seems a little incongruous to try to put even more people on an already-overcrowded road system from Birmingham to Dudley."

In 1962 three local M.P.s met representatives of Birmingham and Dudley councils to investigate the need for the Birmingham-Dudley train service to be continued.

At the same time Birmingham Corporation began to gather statistics on road and rail travel to the Midlands to see whether there was a need for an integrated transport system.

*Birmingham Post - 5 June 1964*

### DUDLEY TOWN COUNCIL'S 'DISAPPROVAL'

Dudley Town Council last night authorised its General Purposes Special Sub-committee to tell the Minister of Transport of its "disapproval" of his decision to close Dudley Station to passenger traffic and added that it thought he should have awaited the result of the West Midlands Transport Enquiry.

This enquiry, which will cost about £250,000, includes all the county boroughs and the three county councils in the West Midlands conurbation. It has already had a number of meetings.

Coun. T. Friend said that he thought the Minister's decision deplorable.

Ald. G. B. Norton, chairman of the General Purposes Committee said later that he would have to consider what, if any, action the council could take in opposition to the closure.

The Minister's decision was described as "a very big mistake and a most regrettable one" by the deputy Mayor of Walsall, Coun. H. F. Truman.

Roads between Walsall and Dudley were already over-crowded, he said, and by withdrawing trains to such a popular spot as Dudley Castle the position would be seriously aggravated.

*Birmingham Post - 13 September 1963*

### Support for campaign against closing line

A campaign organised by Rowley Regis Trades Council to prevent the closure of the Old Hill-Dudley branch railway line has had an encouraging start, members were told at their meeting last night.

About 200 forms have been handed to people travelling on trains on this line, and 60 per cent have already been returned supporting the campaign.

The service is only for workers during mornings and evenings and connects with the main line stations of Old Hill and Dudley.

Members expressed the view that by taking the service off many people would find their working day increased by half an hour or more because of the longer time spent in using road transport to the stations or in walking to the main line.

It was also pointed out that because Old Hill station was within a certain radius of Birmingham (Snow Hill) it would be dearer to go from Old Hill than from one of the halts on the branch line.

The trades council decided that one of its members should be sent to represent its objections at an enquiry into the proposed closure.



*Birmingham Post - 11 February 1964*

### RAIL PROTEST

Birmingham General Purposes Committee agreed yesterday to make representations to the Minister of Transport in support of West Bromwich Council who have protested about the proposed closure of the Birmingham (Snow Hill) to Dudley railway line.

*Birmingham Post - 23 July 1962*

## Dr. Beeching's New List of Rail Closures

### Last Before Replanning of Whole System

A list of proposals for the closing of lines and withdrawal of services has been sent to the railway unions by Dr. Richard Beeching, chairman of the British Transport Commission.

He says that this is the final list of closures, beyond which the Commission does not intend to go until completed plans for the whole railway system are ready later in the year.

In a letter to Mr. Sidney Greene, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, Dr. Beeching says that, having reviewed the situation concerning the current closures, it has now decided that those listed are the last before the provisions of the new Act come into effect, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The overall plan for the railway system is expected to be ready by the autumn.

### 'Breathing - space'

Reporting receipt of the list and the letter in a circular to N.U.R. Branches, Mr. Greene says that Dr. Beeching has acknowledged that the union has expressed concern at piecemeal closures of lines before a general plan has been formed and hope that the information he has now been given will remove some uncertainties.

Commenting on Dr. Beeching's letter, Mr. Greene said: "The N.U.R., as is known, is conducting a nation - wide campaign against indiscriminate closures."

"The knowledge that Dr Beeching is calling a temporary halt to this sort of thing convinces us that the only real solution is to run an integrated transport system as a social service, subsidised as required and not as a purely profit - making business."

"Dr Beeching's decision gives the travelling public a breathing space, and we can only hope that the common sense shown will be continued."

The list Dr Beeching sent includes the following proposals for closures and withdrawals of service as sufficiently advanced to warrant completion: -

London Midland: Great Central main line run jointly with the Eastern Region; Kimberley East - Pinxton (Derbyshire); Leicester - Marefield; Crewe - Wellington; Cheadle - Cresswell (Staffordshire); Closing of eight stations.

### Western Region



Western Region: Kidderminster - Tenbury Wells; Stourbridge - Wolverhampton; Wrexham - Ellesmere; Wellington - Much Wenlock; Whitland - Cardigan; Newbury - Didcot; Swindon - Highworth; Neath - Brecon; Hereford - Brecon; Moat Lane - Brecon; Newport - Brecon and New Tredegar; Cheltenham - Kingham; Coaley - Dursley; Gloucester - Chalford; Kingham - Chipping Norton; Princes Risborough - Oxford; Princes Risborough - Banbury; Llandovery - Craven Arms - Shrewsbury (Central Wales line); Carmarthen - Llandilo; Redditch - Evesham - Ashchurch; Radley - Abingdon and Shrewsbury - Hartlebury.

Six stations will be closed as a result of the withdrawal of the Passenger service between Wolverhampton (Low Level) and Stourbridge Junction next Monday. They are Bilston West, Daisy Bank and Bradley, Princes End and Coseley, Tipton Five Ways, Blowers Green and Round Oak. Priestfield station will continue to be served by local trains between Wolverhampton (Low Level) and Birmingham Snow Hill.

A less sensational trial account appeared in the Birmingham Post the same day.

*Birmingham Post - 19 July 1961*

## 'PIQUED' MAN TOOK LOCOMOTIVE ON A NIGHT JOYRIDE

A 29-year-old Wolverhampton man took a steam locomotive on an unauthorised journey from Wolverhampton to Droitwich in a "fit of pique" after a girl refused to marry him, the Recorder, Mr. M. A. B. King-Hamilton, was told at Wolverhampton Quarter Sessions yesterday.

Phineas Whitehouse, of Burns Avenue, Wolverhampton, pleaded guilty to mounting a railway locomotive, causing it to travel from the Stafford Road engine sheds, Wolverhampton, endangering the safety of persons on the railway; stealing 4cwt 56lb. of coal from the British Transport Commission; obstructing a diesel train at Stourbridge, and falling to comply with the requirements of a probation order. He was put on probation for two years.

Mr Wilson Mellor, prosecuting, said: "On January 24 a tank locomotive was left watered and filled with coal outside the locomotive sheds at Wolverhampton"

"At about 11 p m the locomotive was driven away and a man on duty signalled it to stop."

"He asked Whitehouse where he was going and he replied "Light for Worcester." He was told to hook up another locomotive and did so."

"He unhooked this second locomotive at the Low Level Station, Wolverhampton, and was next seen at Stourbridge Junction, where a diesel train was held up for five or ten minutes while he took on water."

"Whitehouse moved off again and continued until he was stopped at Droitwich Signal Box. He went into the box and spoke to the control at Worcester by telephone telling them that the "Stafford Road foreman" had instructed him to make the journey." Mr. Mellor added: "Whitehouse left the signal box and went to the engine. By the time the signalman received confirmation that Whitehouse was not authorised to be with the engine, he had disappeared."

"The engine was not damaged, although the lubricator was closed indicating that he was not familiar with the necessary maintenance. Although Whitehouse was a former railway cleaner and fireman he was not qualified to drive and did not know the road."

"He plainly had experience of that line, but had not been on the railways for at least six years. He disappeared after the incident and was on the run until he gave himself up at Middlesbrough."

### 'No Traffic'

Whitehouse said in a statement: "I am sorry. As far as engineering life is concerned, I knew there was no traffic on the road and I had the right of way for most of the way."

Det. Sgt. H. Fleetwood said at 16, Whitehouse took part in a canal rescue at Wolverhampton and was presented with a Certificate by the Royal Humane Society.

Mr. D. Draycott, for Whitehouse, said: "The only explanation that can be found is that Whitehouse is emotionally immature and has the general outlook of a child. He has an illegitimate child by a girl."

"When she refused to marry him, you may think wisely, he went off in a fit of pique and found himself in the vicinity of the railway sheds. Then as some sort of emotional outlet he decided to take the engine for a ride."

The Recorder told Whitehouse: "You may have had previous railway experience, but the rules could have changed. You might have injured or killed somebody and although I am placing you on probation you cannot expect another chance."

"Ninety-nine out of one hundred people would like to drive a train. You have had your fun and have driven a train, but do not do it again unless you rejoin the railways and become fully qualified."

## THE "BEECHING" CLOSURES 1961 - 1972

Line closures in the West Midlands were rife during the 1960s, starting with the withdrawal of services from Wolverhampton to Stourbridge Junction on 30 July 1962 and continuing until 6 March 1972 when the Birmingham Snow Hill to Wolverhampton Low Level and Langley Green services ceased. Most of the withdrawals came about because of the infamous Beeching Report which was published on 27 March 1963.



The following articles follow the story as it unfolded.

*Birmingham Post - 30 November 1961*

### 6 Black Country Stations May Close

In addition to proposing to close the passenger train service between Wolverhampton and Stourbridge Junction via Dudley, British Railways (Western Region) also propose to close six Black Country stations to passengers.

They are Bilston West, Daisy Bank and Bradley, Princes End and Coseley, Tipton Five Ways, Blowers Green and Round Oak.

Mr. F. H. Pearson, secretary of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee, in Birmingham, said yesterday: "We shall collate any objections which councils, other local authorities and interested parties send to us, after I have been to touch with them."

#### Possible Enquiry

"There will certainly be a meeting in Birmingham to discuss this matter and, depending on the weight of evidence which I receive, there may even be a public enquiry."

"Whatever is decided at the meeting or enquiry will be sent by my council to the Central Consultative Council, and after it has considered this, it can make recommendations to the Minister, who can, if thought desirable in the public interest, amend the proposals."

A British Railways spokesman described as premature a report that trains from Birmingham (Snow Hill) to Stourbridge Junction routed via Great Bridge South, would end at Dudley. He agreed that an examination of the line was being made, as with other lines in the Midlands, but no decisions or

recommendations had yet been made.

He emphasised that all such proposals are put first to the Consultative Committee before final decisions are made.

#### Protest Petition

Passengers on early morning trains from Stourbridge to Wolverhampton are signing a petition of protest against the proposal to close the service.

Thirty names were collected yesterday by Mr. W. V. Cox, who travels from Stourbridge, and he plans to continue collecting them for the rest of the week.

The petition will be sent to Mr. G. E. C. Wigg, M.P. for Dudley; Mr Robert Edwards, M.P. for Bilston; and Mr. Gerald Nabarro, M.P. for Kidderminster.

#### 'Unremunerative'

There is unlikely to be any action from the railwaymen's unions about the proposed closure. A member of the committee of the Stourbridge Branch of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, Coun. H. Hardwick, said last night: "The service is unremunerative and there does not seem much that we can do about it. I have worked trains on that service when there have been more coaches than passengers."

Another member of the same union, Coun. E. J. Broughton, said: "Generally we are concerned about the closing of these branch lines and services because it seems to us that it will inevitably lead to wholesale redundancy."

*Birmingham Post - 22 December 1961*

### Railway Closure Protest

Criticism of the British Transport Commission recommendations for closing down the passenger service between Wolverhampton and Stourbridge Junction was made last night at a meeting of Wolverhampton and district Trades Council. The council agreed to send to the West Midland Transport Users' Auxiliary Committee a request that the line should be kept open for passenger traffic, as well as for freight.

*Birmingham Post - 4 February 1962*

### RAILWAY USERS BACK CLOSURES

#### Committee May Endorse End of Dawley Line

By a Staff Reporter

British Railways' proposals to save about £200,000 over the next five years by withdrawing passenger services from two Midland lines yesterday gained the support of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for the West Midlands.

The lines involved are those from Wolverhampton (Low Level) to Stourbridge Junction and from Wellington to Much Wenlock. The latter serves Dawley, probable site of a new town for Birmingham and the Midlands.

At a Press conference after the committee meeting yesterday, the chairman, Mr. C. E. T. Cridland, said that the Transport Users' Central Committee would be recommended to endorse the plans.



In the case of the Wolverhampton-Stourbridge Junction line, Mr. Cridland said that there had been objections from local authorities, chambers of commerce and commercial organisations, and individuals.

About 600 passenger journeys were made on the 20 trains daily and British Railways had estimated that if these were withdrawn and eight stations on the route closed, the estimated saving would be £18,000 annually, plus £36,850 renewal charges in the next five years.

#### Bus Assurances

Mr Cridland said "In the committee's view the matter turned on the adequacy of alternative services. The principal bus operators have appeared before the committee and have given unqualified assurances that all demands will be met. To ensure this, they have agreed to put on special inspectors during the initial period.

Of the Wellington-Much Wenlock line, Mr. Cridland said: "Members of the committee visited the area and found that the number of passengers using the 12 daily trains was so extremely small that the committee felt bound to endorse the B.T.C.'s proposals despite the undoubted inconvenience to a few individuals."

An average of 17 people were using each train daily and British Railways had estimated that if the services were withdrawn it would result in an annual saving of £12,325 and an additional £6,500 for renewal charges in the next five years.

Mr Cridland said that many of the objectors - who included the National Farmers' Union, Wrekin Trades Council and several local authorities - had referred to the possibility of a new town at Dawley.

#### 'Deal with Facts'

"The committee has to consider these matters on a day-to-day basis," he said. "We have to deal with the facts as we know them at the time of the case. If a new town is built and a railway is needed, then that is a matter to be dealt with as and when it arises."

The committee yesterday decided also that it could not recommend the reopening of Backney Halt, on the Hereford-Ross-on-Wye line.

The halt was closed in February.