

Birmingham Post - 16 June 1960

Engine Lifted by Sleepers on Line

A diesel engine was raised into the air when it struck some sleepers on the line. Miss J. Fisher, for the British Transport Commission, told Smethwick Juvenile Court yesterday.

She said the driver was lifted out of his seat, but the engine fortunately dropped back on to the line.

A signalman went to the spot - just outside Smethwick West station - and found four sleepers had been placed on or near the line, Miss Fisher said.

A boy aged 10 denied placing the sleepers on the line and denied trespassing on the railway embankment. On the first count the case was dismissed and on the second he was ordered to pay £2 with £6 9s. costs.

Miss Fisher said the boy had made a statement admitting putting the sleepers on the line.

Mr. G. Challinor, for the boy, said the prosecution's case was that the boy put the sleepers on the line when he went to get some sweets at about 2 o'clock on May 15. But a dozen trains had safely passed along that line between that time and 7 o'clock when the incident occurred.

Mr. Challinor said the boy had made his statement because he was frightened by repeated questioning by the police, though he was not suggesting there was anything improper in the questioning.

Birmingham Post - 13 June 1967

British Rail will tighten up on crime

Birmingham Post Reporter

A special plan has been devised by the British Rail police to catch vandals and thieves who are threatening chaos to services in the Birmingham area.

Thieves swooped on seven stations in the West Midlands at the weekend, but got away with only a few shillings in each case.

But they caused considerable damage at Wolverhampton Low Level, Wednesbury, West Bromwich, Hockley, Halesowen, Stourbridge Junction and Kidderminster.

All the stations are closed on Sundays, and the raids were discovered by early morning staff yesterday. British Rail fear that attempts might be made on other stations without Sunday services.

A big drive also started last night to round up thieves who steal copper signal wire from the side of lines.

Raiders have been operating on little used branch lines and closed routes. But last week two men were said at Birmingham to have caused 112 trains to be halted over two months, in which they stole more than four miles of cable.

Trains delayed

At Dudley yesterday two boys who cut a cable connecting two signal boxes causing delays to 60 trains were remanded in custody for two weeks for reports.

The boys, aged 12 and 13, were said to have stolen 180 yards of the cable.

While a railway employee was checking for the fault between the signal boxes he found the boys loading the cable onto a wheelbarrow, the court heard.

Birmingham Post - 12 March 1959

B.T.C. CARPETS THEFT CHARGE

Police enquiries into thefts of carpets in transit from Kidderminster railway station were mentioned at a special court at Kidderminster yesterday. James Harvey (39), a labourer, of Whittall Drive East, Kidderminster, was remanded in custody charged with receiving carpets worth £76 10s. belonging to the British Transport Commission, knowing them to have been stolen.

Det.-Sgt. E. V. Thomas said the alleged thefts came to light during enquiries into other matters.



Kidderminster Carpet Museum

PLATFORM 3



Issue 6

April 2020

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID



CONTENTS

- 2 Introduction - Excursion Trains 1954 - 1957
- 5 WMPTE Plans for the Future 1972 - 1973
- 7 Station Facilities 1951 - 1972
- 9 The Birmingham City Centre Brainstorm 1970 - 1971
- 13 Operational Issues 1959 - 1977
- 16 A Matter of Life and Death 1954 - 1963
- 17 Crime and Punishment 1901 - 1967

PLATFORM 3 is published by:

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INTRODUCTION
by Roger Davis

Welcome to the third issue of *Platform 3* that looks at press coverage of the Stourbridge line and the West Midlands in general over the years.

We start by looking at the excursion market which existed in British Railways' days but which has been largely neglected by Train Operating Companies in the privatised era.



Sports Argus - 27 April 1957

NEWBURY RACES

DAY TRIP

SATURDAY, 30th APRIL

TO

**NEWBURY RACECOURSE
STATION**

| From | Depart | Return Fares | |
|---------------------------|--------|-----------------------|------|
| | | 2 nd Class | s.d. |
| Wednesbury Central | 9 50 | 21/3 | |
| West Bromwich | 9 55 | 21/0 | |
| Stourbridge Town | 9B0 | 22/6 | |
| Stourbridge Junction | 9B10 | 22/6 | |
| Smethwick West | 9B35 | 20/9 | |
| Birmingham Snow Hill . | 10 10 | 20/0 | |
| Newbury Racecourse | arr. | 12 55 | |

Return same day at 4.50 p.m.

B - Change at Birmingham Snow Hill

First Class Fares available at approximately 50% over Second-Class

Further information from Stations and Official Railway Agents.



Sports Argus - 13 March 1954

F.A. CUP
In the event of a replay
W.B. ALBION v TOTTENHAM H.

**A Special Excursion
WILL RUN
WEDNESDAY, 17th MARCH
— TO —
LONDON**

| From | Depart a.m. | Return Fare |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Wednesbury Central | 9. 50 | 16/- |
| Swan Village | 9. 55 | 15/9 |
| West Bromwich | 10. 0 | 15/6 |
| Stourbridge Junction | 9.A25 | 15/6 |
| Lye | 9.A29 | 15/6 |
| Cradley Heath | 9.A35 | 15/6 |
| Old Hill | 9.A40 | 15/6 |
| Rowley Regis | 9.A45 | 15/6 |
| Oldbury & Langley Green | 9.A50 | 15/6 |
| Smethwick Junction | 9.A55 | 15/6 |
| Handsw'th & Smethwick . | 10. 5 | 15/3 |
| Birmingham (S.H.) | 10. 15 | 15/- |

LONDON (Paddington) arrive 12.30 p.m.
Return same day at 8.10 p.m.

A - Change at Birmingham Snow Hill

Full details from Stations and Agencies.



Birmingham Post - 8 March 1960

Booking Clerk Foils Hold-up Attempt

Police patrol cars searched a wide area of Stourbridge last night after an attempt by a young man to hold up a booking-office clerk at the point of a gun at Stourbridge Junction Station.



Shortly after 7.30 p.m. the man, dressed in a grey overcoat and with a white scarf covering the lower part of his face, pointed a gun at Mrs. Minnie Wooldridge and demanded money from the office.

Mrs. Wooldridge immediately pressed the button for the alarm bells, which rang all over the station. The man made off without taking anything. He was seen by a member of the station staff riding off down the drive on a bicycle. He was said to be about 22 and to have light coloured hair.

Afterwards Mrs. Wooldridge remained on duty in the office until her husband, who is an engine driver, called to take her home to Hatfield Road, Stourbridge. She said: "It was a shock and a nasty experience."

A police officer said: "We were lucky to get any sort of description as Mrs. Wooldridge was able to get only a limited view of the man through the booking-office window."

Birmingham Post - 17 May 1960

DIESEL TRAIN HIT SLEEPERS ON LINE

Police were keeping special watch yesterday on the Western Region Birmingham to Kidderminster railway line at Smethwick after a diesel train travelling at 25 m.p.h. hit sleepers left across the line.

No passengers were hurt and the train was undamaged. It had only just left Smethwick West station about 400 yards away.

The sleepers - there were three on the track - had been torn down from a fence near Marriott Road Bridge.

After the incident at 7.10 last night, all other trains on the route were warned of the possibility of other sleepers being left on the track.

A British Railways spokesman said that it was thought youngsters had ripped away the sleepers to use them as toboggans on the railway embankment.

"This must be stopped," he said. "Not only is it a threat to the trains but the children could slip underneath a passing engine."

Police Superintendent R. Hazell appealed for information, and about hooligans who damaged gates and boundary walls to seven houses in the Holly Lane area of Smethwick.

Wooden copings were loosened, and at one house a coping stone and a course of brickwork were dislodged.

"This is just senseless vandalism," he said.



Birmingham Post - 2 April 1955

RAIL TRUCK RAN OVER SLEEPING MAN'S FINGERS

KIDDERMINSTER.— A man found with a badly mutilated hand in the railway goods yard here at 5 a.m. explained that he had got under a truck to go to sleep the previous night and woke up to find that a wheel had run over his fingers. He was taken to hospital where an emergency operation was performed.

This was stated at the magistrates' court yesterday when Thomas Goddard, of 6, Coronation Road, Droitwich, pleaded "Guilty" to trespassing on the railway. Goddard was granted a conditional discharge on payment of 8s. 6d. costs.

Kidderminster - Crime Capital of BR!



(Brian Moore)

Birmingham Post - 7 November 1957

£700 Reward Offered for News of Jewels

A LONDON insurance firm has offered a £700 reward for information leading to the recovery of jewellery worth £10,000 stolen from Kidderminster Railway Station last Thursday.

The two men who carried out the theft when a jeweller's traveller left a case unattended for a moment on the station platform have not been traced.

The case, says the insurance firm, contained single-stone three-stone and five-stone diamond rings, gem set rings, pendants, brooches, gold bracelets, necklets, signet rings, wedding rings and antique and Victorian gold set jewellery.

Birmingham Post - 1 November 1957

POLICE SEEK TWO MEN £10,000 Jewels Snatched at Station

By Our Kidderminster Correspondent

A thief working to a split-second plan picked up a suitcase containing jewellery worth £10,000 on a platform at Kidderminster Railway Station yesterday and walked out before the case was missed.

Last night detectives of the Midland crime squad were looking for two men who drove away from the station yard in a new Morris Minor saloon.

They believe that the movements of Mr. Robert Wythe, of Monks Drive, London, W.1, representative of a London firm of jewellers, were watched long before he stepped off the slow train from Wolverhampton which arrived at Kidderminster at 9.24 a.m. He had visited the town to collect orders regularly for years.

When he left the train he was carrying two cases. One contained a change of clothing and his toilet kit, the other diamond rings, wedding and signet rings, cuff links and brooches which he hoped to sell.

Put Case Down

While he went to the parcels office to deposit his personal effects, he put down the other case, which the thief had been watching. Mr. Wythe, wearing a bowler hat and carrying a rolled umbrella, told me: "I was away from it for less than two minutes and when I went back it had gone. I saw no one."

While he was in the parcels office a man walked out of the booking hall to the station forecourt, where a car waited with its engine running. Without hurrying he got in beside the driver, who drove off into the busy Comberton Hill which carries the main Bromsgrove Road into the centre of Kidderminster.

Worcestershire Police have issued a description of a man they wish to interview. He is between 36 and 40, 5ft. 10in. to 6ft., with a pointed chin, wearing glasses, and dressed in a grey-green raincoat and a grey cap.

They are also asking for information from any passenger who travelled on the train which left Wolverhampton at 8.14 a.m.

Sports Argus - 23 April 1955

Race Excursions

2,000 GUINEAS - APRIL 27
1,000 GUINEAS - APRIL 29

DAY TRIP
WEDNESDAY and FRIDAY
27th and 29th APRIL

to
NEWMARKET

Return 21/- Fare

Birmingham New St. . depart 8.37 a.m.
Newmarket arrive 12.11 p.m.

Return same day at 5.52 p.m.
Light refreshments available

NEWBURY RACES

DAY TRIP
SATURDAY, 30th APRIL

To
NEWBURY

(Racecourse Station)

Return Fares
(Third
Class)

| From | Depart a.m. | Return Class |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| West Bromwich | 9 55 | 21/- |
| Stourbridge Town | 9A 1 | 22/6 |
| Stourbridge Junction . | 9A20 | 22/6 |
| Smethwick Junction ... | 9A36 | 20/9 |
| B'ham Snow Hill | 10 10 | 20/- |
| Knowle & Dorridge | 10 25 | 17/9 |

Newbury Racecourse Station
Arrive 12.55 p.m.

Return same day at 4.55 p.m.

First Class Fares available at
approx 50% on Third Class

A - Change at Birmingham Snow Hill

STRATFORD RACES

DAY TRIP
to

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
Racecourse Platform

SATURDAY, 30th APRIL

| From | Depart noon | Return Fares (Third Class) |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Dudley | 12A00 | 7/6 |
| | p.m. | |
| West Bromwich | 12 55 | 6/6 |
| Stourbridge Town | 12 05 | 8/3 |
| Stourbridge Junction . | 12A10 | 8/3 |
| Lye | 12A14 | 7/9 |
| Cradley Heath | 12A19 | 7/6 |
| Old Hill | 12A24 | 7/3 |
| Rowley Regis | 12A29 | 7/- |
| Oldbury & Langley Gn | 12A32 | 6/9 |
| Smethwick Junction ... | 12A36 | 6/3 |
| Handsworth & Sm'wk | 1 0 | 6/3 |
| B'ham Snow Hill | 1 10 | 5/6 |
| Bordesley | 1 15 | 5/3 |

Stratford-upon-Avon Racecourse
Platform arrive 2.00 p.m.

Return same day 6.10 p.m.

A - Change at Birmingham Snow Hill

First Class Fares available at
approx 50% on Third Class

Full Details from Stations and Agencies

BRITISH RAILWAYS

Birmingham Post - 26 August 1954

Excursions to Blackpool Illuminations

British Railways have arranged many day and half-day excursions to Blackpool for the illuminations, which begin on Friday, September 10, and continue until Monday, October 25.

A new feature of this year's excursion arrangements are week-end excursion tickets, which will be issued on Saturday, September 11, and returning Sunday, September 12, and on Saturday, September 18, returning Sunday, September 19. These tickets will be available from the following stations: Birmingham New Street (25s.), train depart 9.0 a.m., Redditch (27s. 6d.), 8.0 a.m.; Dudley Port (24s. 6d.), 9.32 a.m.; Stourbridge Junction (25s.), 8.41 a.m.; Dudley (24s. 6d.), 9.4 a.m.; and Wolverhampton High Level (23s. 6d.), 9.46 a.m. Passengers return the following day, Sunday, by the 2.40 p.m. train from Blackpool (Central).

Early application should be made for party reservations.



Birmingham Post - 2 September 1954

Midland Cheap Day Tickets

Experimental Facilities

British Railways yesterday introduced experimental cheap day tickets between Birmingham New Street and Snow Hill, Wolverhampton Low Level, Dudley, Stourbridge Junction and Stourbridge Town and Droitwich, Worcester, Great Malvern and Malvern Wells. The tickets will be available by any train on the day of issue.

For Birmingham passengers this new facility means the withdrawal of the 9.30 a.m. restriction which applied to the "Summertime" tickets to Droitwich, Worcester and Malvern.

For Wolverhampton, Dudley and Stourbridge passengers the facility is entirely new and there will be reductions in all the day return bookings to Hartlebury, Droitwich, Worcester, Malvern Link, Great Malvern and Malvern Wells. Examples of the new return fares are:-

Wolverhampton to Droitwich 5s., to Worcester 6s. and Great Malvern 7s. 6d.; from Dudley to Droitwich 3s. 9d., Worcester 4s. 9d. and Great Malvern 6s. 3d.; and from Stourbridge Junction to Droitwich 3s. 1d., Worcester 4s. 1d. and Great Malvern 5s. 1d.

Late return train services from Worcester have been arranged for the Three Choirs Festival next week. On the Tuesday the 9.45 p.m. Worcester (Shrub Hill) to Birmingham Snow Hill will leave at 10 p.m., and on the Wednesday and Friday the 10.20 p.m. train from Worcester (Foregate Street) to Droitwich will depart at 10.30 and be extended to Snow Hill, calling also at Kidderminster, Stourbridge Junction and Smethwick Junction.

Birmingham Post - 2 May 1957

19 Special Trains for the Cup Final

Between 7 a.m. and 11.15 a.m. on Saturday 19 special trains will leave the Midlands taking crowds to the Cup final between Aston Villa and Manchester United.

From Birmingham New Street Station there will be four cafeteria-car trains to Euston, at 7.0, 7.50, 8.35, and 8.58, and two dining-car trains to Wembley Central, at 10.35 and 11.15. There will also be two cafeteria-car trains from New Street to Wembley Central at 9.50 and 10.10.

Four cafeteria-car excursions from Birmingham Snow Hill to Paddington will leave at 6.45, 7.36, 8.30 and 9.10. From Snow Hill to Wembley Hill there will be a dining-car train at 10.30 and a cafeteria-car train at 11.20.

There will be cafeteria-car trains from Wolverhampton Low Level to Paddington at 7.20 and 9.15; from Stourbridge Junction at 7.5 to Paddington; and to Euston there will be special trains at 7.10 from Dudley and 6.25 from Willenhall.

Birmingham Post - 13 April 1956

The double mystery of wife killed on railway

TWO questions remained unanswered at a Stourbridge inquest yesterday on Mrs. May Chatwin, who was knocked down and killed by a Stourbridge-Birmingham train on March 28.

1. Why was she walking on the railway line at Lye, 12 miles from her home at 98, Marshall Road, Smethwick?
2. Where did 64-year-old Mrs. Chatwin spend the night of March 27?

Railway porter Mr. Harry Garbutt, who was at Lye station, saw the train hit Mrs. Chatwin.

"I saw a woman walking along the line towards the station," he told the coroner. "At the same time I saw the train about 30 yards behind her. She was stepping from sleeper to sleeper on the outside of the line. She was not hurrying. I shouted, but she did not hear me. She just kept walking, and the train hit her."

WIND

Mr. Garbutt suggested that the wind carried the noise of the train away from Mrs. Chatwin.

Mr. Henry Chatwin said that his wife was missing when he returned from work on March 27. "She was a happy woman and I had no reason to worry. I thought she had gone swimming as usual. It was her only hobby. She was a gold medallist and swimming instructor. She enjoyed very good health and could run like a 16-year-old."

His wife was still missing early the next day, so he called the police.

P.C. Hanmer said he had made extensive inquiries but had been unable to trace Mrs. Chatwin's movements during the previous 24 hours.

The coroner: "Why she was there we have no explanation. She had no reason to be on the railway line, or in the neighbourhood of Lye at all. It may be that on this occasion she was suffering from some lapse of memory."

Verdict: "Accidental death."

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT 1901- 1967

It is certain that, if you have a railway system that handles cash or goods of value, some lowlife is going to attempt to gain possession of such items by illegal means.

The Stourbridge line has had its fair share of crimes, although nothing to compare with the Great Train Robbery (right).

We start with a crime that, unfortunately, takes place, undetected every day, on the Stourbridge line. Incidentally, 10s in 1901 is equivalent to about £58 today.



Worcester Chronicle - 20 July 1901

DISTRICT NEWS.

KIDDERMINSTER

NO TICKET - At Wolverhampton, yesterday, a young man named John Smith Moule, of Kidderminster, was fined 10s. and costs, or 14 days, for travelling from Stourbridge Junction to Wolverhampton in a truck to avoid payment of his fare.

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH 1954 - 1963

Unfortunately, among the newspaper articles in the archive, there are some very sad stories, as well as a minority that have a happy ending.

The Stourbridge Town story is a particularly sad one, but what is noticeable from the report is that it was not treated as a sensational story as would happen today with the media frenzy lasting days (if not weeks). No follow up to this story was found, so it is hoped that it was resolved sympathetically.

*Birmingham Post -
8 October 1954*

Man Found Dead at Station Had Been Drinking



(Lens of Sutton)

A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned at a Brierley Hill inquest on a British Railways carriage cleaner, Mr Alan Tombs, aged 19, of Bedcote Place, Stourbridge, who was found lying with multiple injuries at Stourbridge Junction station.

Prof. J. M. Webster said a post-mortem examination revealed that Mr. Tombs had drunk the equivalent of five pints of beer, enough to impair a man's judgment.

The stationmaster, Mr Frederick Samuel Sykes, said he organised a search for Mr Tombs after he had been missed by his fellow workers.

On one previous occasion he had known Mr. Tombs go to work the worse for drink, and he had ordered him home because he did not think he was in a fit state to do his job.

*Birmingham Post -
29 January 1962*

Grandfather Saves Child From Train



(R J Buckley)

Quick thinking by Mr Edward Cole, aged 50, of Douglas Road, Oldbury, probably saved the life of his grandson, Kevin Cole, aged 2, who fell between a train and the platform at Oldbury and Langley Green Station on Saturday as the train began to move.

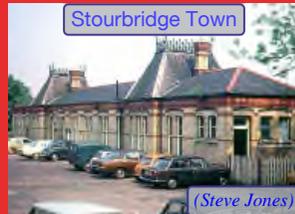
"I immediately lay down on the platform and grabbed Kevin to keep him close to the side and away from the wheels," Mr Cole said last night.

"Women and other passengers screamed and shouted and the train stopped. I immediately swung Kevin on to the platform and his only hurt was a slight cut on the mouth"

The child is the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Cole, of Douglas Road.

*Birmingham Post -
11 September 1963*

BODIES OF TWIN BABIES FOUND



(Steve Jones)

The bodies of newly-born twin babies have been found in the waiting room at Stourbridge Town railway station.

Police Superintendent G. V. Sedgwick, of Stourbridge, said yesterday that the bodies were found wrapped in a newspaper in a plastic bag, which was placed inside a carrier bag.

The police are making enquiries among doctors and midwives, as well as at hospitals, to try to trace the mother.

"Our enquiries are taking a definite line and we should like to know if anyone has been asking for after-birth treatment," the Superintendent said.

The police are waiting for the result of a post-mortem examination.

WMPTA PLANS FOR THE FUTURE 1972 - 1973

After the carnage of the 1960s, it was pleasing to see that the Passenger Transport Executive was planning to invest in improving rail transport.

The Birmingham Post reported their future plans in the following article and, as can be seen, a lot of the proposals have come to fruition, including the Cross City line built in 1978.



Birmingham Post - 29 November 1972

Back to trains is transport group's plan for future

Birmingham Post Reporter

An ambitious programme to improve rail services in the region is expected to be approved by the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority this afternoon.

The switch to dependence on railways is the main feature of a plan prepared by the Passenger Transport Executive to shape public transport development up to the turn of the century.

It is proposed to maintain almost all existing passenger-carrying lines in the region, as well as to press for the reopening of some lines already axed.

The railways network would be backed up by an integrated bus service, especially in the north of the region.

Free travel

It is expected that the P. T. A. will approve the continuance of the policy to make bus services pay their way, while train services are subsidised.

Labour has already said that if it gains control of the West Midlands Metropolitan County Council when it is formed in 1974, it will introduce a free public transport system paid for from the rates.

The P. T. E. plan confirms its earlier proposals for existing rail services.

Those to be retained and developed are lines radiating from Birmingham to Coventry, Redditch, Lichfield, Stourbridge and Kidderminster, Leamington and Stratford via Lapworth, Derby and Leicester via Water Orton, and Stratford via Henley-In-Arden on the North Warwickshire line.

In particular, the Birmingham to Coventry service is recommended to be developed in time for the opening of the National Exhibition Centre in 1976.

New stations

Also expected to be completed within five years is development of the Birmingham to Redditch line, with proposed new stations at Longbridge and Birmingham University, and restoration of the station at Five Ways.

The P. T. E. plan recommends that rail services to be retained and supported temporarily should include lines from Birmingham to Walsall via Aston, Walsall via Soho, Stafford, and Wolverhampton (High Level).

To co-ordinate the services it is proposed that there should be more bus and train interchanges and station car parks.

Other aims during the next five years are the completion of the P. T. E.'s conversion to one-man bus operation, improvement of the bus fleet and the provision of more shelters at bus stops.

Birmingham Post - 26 April 1973

'Quicker to go by bus' after £5m railway improvement

Birmingham Post Reporter

The estimated journey time from Redditch to Birmingham after a £5 million rail improvement programme will be four minutes longer than the scheduled running time of a rival Midland Red bus service.

This was revealed yesterday to the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority before it approved the major development scheme for the line. Mr. Dennis Emlyn Jones, chairman of the PTA's East Central Advisory Committee, pointed out that a proposed new Midland Red express service between Redditch and Birmingham had a scheduled running time of 35 minutes.

In comparison, the improved rail link when it came into service in 1976, would have an estimated journey time of 39 minutes.

Trains will have to stop at ten stations including new ones to be built at Cofton Hackett, Longbridge, Queen Elizabeth Medical Centre and Five Ways.

Mr Emlyn Jones referred to the direct competition between the rail and bus services and commented: "If you cannot run any quicker than a bus then you are not going to win."

In his report to the P T A, Mr. Frederick Lloyd, Director General of the Passenger Transport Executive, said that some inducement might need to be given to passengers to travel by rail. He also observed that traffic congestion during peak hours could delay bus services.

Referring to Midland Red's estimated journey time, Coun. David Gilroy Bevan, chairman of the P T A, said "I think this has got to be taken with a pinch of salt."

He criticised Midland Red for not consulting the P T A before placing proposed route alterations, including the Redditch to Birmingham service, before the Traffic Commissioners.

Unfortunate

Mr. F. A. Moffatt, the P T E's Director of Operations, replied "It is unfortunate, but they have apologised. I do not think it will happen again. I think it is some local man at Worcester who has slipped up."

The P T A also approved plans yesterday for a £160,000 station at Stourbridge Junction with full interchange facilities between rail, car and bus.

The P T A approved in principle the reopening to passengers of the Camp Hill railway line which links King's Norton with the Birmingham-Coventry main line.

A proposal that new track should be laid to allow the line to run from Moor Street station, Birmingham, is expected to be dropped, as this would cost an estimated £3 million.



Although the Stourbridge line only gets a brief mention in the above report, it is interesting to see how some things have changed in the intervening 45 years, while others haven't.

The Cross City line has proved to be a major success, whereas the bus services to and from Redditch are now sporadic. However, it is interesting that the reopening of the Camp Hill line, and the possible link to Moor Street station, was under consideration in 1973 ... and is still under consideration today.

Birmingham Post - 17 September 1969

Unwelcome music

Birmingham Post
Stourbridge Staff

Drivers of diesel railway engines passing through Stourbridge Junction are evidently musically inclined - but the sort of "music" they produce on their horns is not appreciated by the residents, who have complained to British Rail.

The residents of Oldswinford complained that they are rudely awakened at various times of the night not only by horns but by idling engines which cause vibration.

Mr. D. J. Owen, of Redhill Close, chairman of the recently-formed Oldswinford Residents' Association said last night: "People who work amid noise and become immune to it do not realise that they are disturbing others' sleep."

Mr. Owen said that the "double hooting" between drivers was disturbing. "We shall take it further because it cannot be allowed to go on like this," he added.

A British Rail spokesman said: "We will certainly look into it. We do not get many complaints like this, and it is not the normal thing to play tunes on diesel horns. There is no reason why drivers should do this."

Birmingham Post - 29 November 1972

Oil wagon is derailed

Railway lines between Birmingham and Stourbridge were blocked for about an hour last night when a 100-ton oil wagon was derailed.

The wagon, part of a train of about ten wagons from B P's Stanlow refinery, left the rails during shunting at Rowley Regis. A British Railways spokesman said that there was no danger of explosion and no spillage.

Birmingham Post - 5 April 1973

Main-line tunnel closed by collapse

The 896-yard tunnel between Old Hill Junction and Rowley Regis station, on the main Birmingham-Stourbridge railway line partially collapsed yesterday.

No trains were passing at the time. A British Railways spokesman said: "A full inspection is being made, but we think it may be only the lining of the tunnel. In that case, it is not too serious."

He was unable to say when the tunnel would be re-opened. Meanwhile, British Railways is arranging a bus service between Cradley Heath and Rowley Regis.

Birmingham Post - 4 April 1977

Riddle of runaway train

British Rail is to hold an inquiry this week into Saturday's train crash at Stourbridge.

More than 20 passengers and crew escaped serious injury after the one-carriage train ploughed through buffers, a sand barrier and wall and came to a halt overhanging the adjoining street.



A British Rail spokesman said "We are trying to clear up today, and the inquiry will start either on Tuesday or Wednesday."

"The cause is not clear. The brakes either failed or were not applied properly. This should be determined by an inquiry."

Services between the Stourbridge town station and Stourbridge Junction, a short rail journey connecting commuters with other services, are unlikely to operate today and may be suspended for longer.

Eight of the 20 passengers and two crew were taken to the Corbett Hospital with minor injuries. All were later allowed to go home.

The train driver, Mr. Walter Knowles, aged 57, is a former member of Stourbridge Council, the leader for some years of the Labour opposition and past chairman of Stourbridge Trades Council.

He was resting at his home in Farm Croft Road, Wollescote, Lye, Stourbridge, yesterday and declined to comment on the accident.

Birmingham Post - 7 February 1966

Trains delayed by engine catching fire

An engine which caught fire disrupted passenger services from Snow Hill, Birmingham, yesterday.

The engine, which was severely damaged, was hauling a freight train from Hednesford to Hartlebury when it caught fire on Churchdown Viaduct, near Churchill and Blakedown station. Another engine pushed the train to Kidderminster after the fire was put out.

The 9.30 a.m. from Snow Hill to Cardiff was delayed for 90 minutes; the 8.5 a.m. from Cardiff to Snow Hill was 30 minutes late arriving in Birmingham; and the 11.13 a.m. from Snow Hill to Paddington was 20 minutes late leaving.



Churchill & Blakedown Station in 1960

(Joe Moss Collection)

Birmingham Post - 8 September 1966

Subsidence closes rail line

**Birmingham Post
Warley Staff**

A BRITISH RAIL spokesman said last night that no trains will operate between Langley Green and Rowley Regis stations until Monday because of subsidence on the line yesterday.

The closure means a diversion via West Bromwich and Dudley of all main-line trains between Snow Hill and Worcester, Hereford and South Wales, with buses being laid on for users of local trains to take them between the Langley and Rowley stations.

The closure came at lunch-time when there was a subsidence at Pennycricket Lane, Blackheath, where an existing railway bridge is being strengthened in connection with work for the new link of the M5 motorway, which will pass beneath it.

Restricted

All trains had been restricted to 5 m.p.h. over the bridge since subsidence was first noticed a few days ago.

To cut delays to commuters at the rush-hour this morning, two trains into Birmingham which use the line, the 7.28 a.m. from Bewdley and the 8 a.m. from Kidderminster, both through Stourbridge Junction, will be switched via Dudley and Great Bridge. This will cut down the delays for passengers who have to take the bus link between Langley Green and Rowley Regis.

A British Rail spokesman at the site said last night that the subsidence was caused by the earth below being brought to the surface and coming into contact with the air.

He said that initially the earth was very hard, but it corroded when air got to it.



This diversionary route used, via West Bromwich is no longer available so replacement buses are now needed

(Michael Mensing)

STATION FACILITIES 1951 - 1972

Complaints about facilities at railway stations are common today, with many stations enjoying minimal facilities. On the Stourbridge line, SLUG is concerned about the closure of booking offices, and waiting rooms when a station is unmanned. The following press cuttings show that this is an age old problem, although the final article about Hartlebury station shows what can be done with some cooperation.



Old Hill Station in 1959

(Douglas Thompson)

Birmingham Post - 26 January 1951

FIRE FOR PORTERS AS PASSENGERS FREEZE

FIVE HUNDRED shivering Austin workers waited for their train at Old Hill station. The morning was cold and no fires glowed in the waiting rooms.

But in the porters' room the station staff sat in comfort before a large crackling fire.

When Rowley Regis Trades Council were told this by a delegate last night they agreed to complain again to the railway authorities - particularly about the state of the waiting rooms at Blackheath and Cradley Heath stations.

"The empty grates are no encouragement to early morning workers," declared one member.

Last time the Trades Council complained they were told that there was not enough coal for fires in all the waiting rooms, and that junction stations received preference.

The Council are to tell the railway authorities that they are not satisfied with that reply.

Birmingham Post - 25 January 1958

A Station Without Cups of Tea

There will be no more cups of tea at Kidderminster railway station after today. British Railways say the refreshment room does not pay, and have decided to close it.

Shivering passengers who stood on the draughty platform last night and read the announcement of the closure in the refreshment-room window reflected that of all the jokes about railway catering, this was the worst.

A taxi driver said there had been hundreds of protests, and local taximen were intending to boycott the station.

Birmingham Post - 9 December 1961

Waiting-room Complaint by Passengers

People who use Oldbury and Langley Green station complain that parcels are given preference over passengers waiting for the 7.22 a.m. train to Birmingham.

"Every day we have to stay outside the waiting-room, whatever the weather, because the parcels are put inside and the door is locked." Mr. E Hoult of Ferndale Road Oldbury said. Passengers for Wolverhampton, on the other hand, have a waiting room open and warmed by an electric fire.

A railway official said: "We are hoping to make other arrangements shortly; at the moment we have no other room."

Birmingham Post - 27 October 1972

British Rail is happy to announce ...

Birmingham Post Reporter

The long wait for a place to wait is almost over for the passengers now standing at Platform One at Hartlebury station.

British Railways is about to allow excursions into two waiting rooms which have been closed to homeward-bound passengers for about three months.

They have remained locked, curiously, since they were brought up to first-class standard with a new coat of paint.

Passengers each afternoon have been able to admire the black, cream and white livery from outside, but they have not been able to get in.

British Railways' new arrangement will come as a special relief to women passengers.

The ladies' room, one of the two waiting rooms which have stood brightly painted and unused, leads to their lavatory. When it is shut, women must do without.

Protests

The rooms have remained locked every afternoon and evening because the porter goes off duty at 2.0 p.m.

Now, after protests from passengers left out in the cold, it has been arranged that they will stay open until the last train departs at 9.39 p.m.

The waiting rooms will then be locked by the signalman coming off duty. A British Railways spokesman said yesterday: "It is not part of his job to do it, but he is doing it because he has an interest in the passengers' welfare". Mr. Raymond Court, duty signalman at Hartlebury, near Stourport, yesterday said: "It is passengers we want. We don't want to drive them away."



The buildings - which include the ladies' lavatory - on the Kidderminster line at Hartlebury. Since they were redecorated, they have been locked up every afternoon and evening because the station porter goes off duty at 2 p.m.



"It's passengers we want," said Raymond Court, one of the three signalmen who work at Hartlebury station. They have volunteered to lock up the waiting rooms every night after the last train has left.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

1959 - 1977

The following articles come into the general operational category of closures and fires and even complaints of noise from the neighbours around Stourbridge Junction station. At least, we don't get the complaints any more !



Rowley Regis Station in 1964

(D Johnson)

Birmingham Post - 28 May 1959

Kidderminster 'Disappoints' British Railways

British Railways are disappointed that they have been unable to alter the travelling habits of Kidderminster people who work in Birmingham.

Two years ago they introduced a fast diesel rail car service between Kidderminster and Birmingham, similar to those between the city and other Midland towns.

Everywhere the diesels increased traffic - except from Kidderminster. The number of passengers carried from there has not varied, although the railways have been picking up a few new passengers from Hagley and Stourbridge.

"We are disappointed," a railway spokesman said yesterday. "We can only suppose that we were carrying all the traffic that there was available on the old steam train service and when we improved it there was no scope for more business."

Birmingham Post - 4 January 1963

BUSY COAL MACHINE

The cold weather and the Christmas holiday have brought a brisk trade to the coin-in-slot coal vending machine in the yard at Stourbridge Town railway station. It has had to be refilled several times a day.

The machine was installed by the N.C.B. about three months ago. It holds 49 28lb. bags selling at 3s. 6d. each.

Birmingham Post - 7 September 1965

Runaway train's crew leap to safety

ENGINE-DRIVER Walter Hugill spoke last night of his dramatic escape from death.

He and his fireman leaped from their runaway goods train seconds before it crashed down a fifty-foot embankment.

The only injury was - a broken toe for driver Hugill.

The train, pulling twenty-three wagons full of steel sheets, was approaching Stourbridge, Worcestershire, down a steep slope. It gathered speed.

But when 52-year-old Mr. Hugill applied the brakes, he said: "Nothing happened."

Barrier

He added at his home in Carter-road, Wolverhampton: "When I realised we were out

of control I told fireman John Wilkinson to jump." Alert signalman Leslie Heeks, on duty at Stourbridge Junction, spotted the runaway train and switched it to a siding where the track was level.

Driver Hugill stayed with it until just before it burst through a barrier at nearly forty miles an hour.

"I have driven for nineteen years, and although I have had a few bumps in that time, this has really shaken me up," he said.

A British Railways spokesman in Birmingham praised Signalman Heeks.

"He certainly did the right thing in diverting the train," he said. "It was the safest course."

An inquiry will be held into the reason for the brake failure.

Birmingham plan for £50m 'underground'

Birmingham Post Reporter

A £50 million-plus scheme for a rapid transit system for Birmingham is proposed in a report to be announced this week.

It would run in a tunnel linked to three new city centre subway stations.

The rapid transit rail system would run from Longbridge, Birmingham, to Four Oaks - partly on existing rail track, and partly underground in a tunnel from Five Ways to the Aston Expressway.

The route could be extended to the south along the "A38 corridor" to Redditch.

In the central area there would be stations at the Centre, Broad Street, a city centre station at St. Philip's Cathedral, and a third at Lancaster Place.

The proposals are made in a report by consultant engineers, commissioned by Birmingham City Council and the Department of the Environment in September 1969.

Second study

Details of a possible tunnel network in Birmingham for the rapid transit system and road links come in a second study by another firm of engineers, which will also be submitted this week.

Their report recommends that roads and the rail system should run in separate tunnels under the city centre.

It also looks at the possibility of a circular road tunnel, roughly following the line of the new inner ring road, with five "spurs" for traffic approaching and leaving the city.

The central circular tunnel would be linked to three car parks and would have a lay-by and access for pedestrians to enable cars to drop passengers.

The existing Snow Hill-Moor Street tunnel could be converted for road traffic to form a car park link road for £300,000, the report says.

Both reports will be considered by the General Purposes Committee on Wednesday.

Ald. Eric Mole, the committee chairman, said last night that they would probably be referred to the special purposes sub-committee for detailed study.

"It will be something that is looked at quite seriously because of the future congestion of traffic in Birmingham," he said.

"It is a big thing, of course, and in my opinion it has got to be looked at closely, by the Government as well, I should think."

Mr. Neville Borg, the City Engineer and Surveyor, will recommend that both reports should be passed to the West Midlands Transportation Study Group.

He will also recommend consultation with the Department of the Environment, British Rail, the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive and other authorities.

The first report, prepared by De Leuw, Chadwick, says that the Longbridge-Four Oaks rapid link would cost £50.9 million, or £55.8 million if it was extended to Redditch.

Implementation of the first stage, from Longbridge to Lancaster Place, would take about six years.

"To be effective, fast, frequent, comfortable service with modern well-maintained vehicles and stations would be essential. On sections of the route where existing stations and track can be used, they should be reconstructed to higher standards," it says.

Trains at intervals of 3 minutes

"Trains should be operated at three-minute intervals between Four Oaks and Longbridge."

It says that an automated pedestrian connection should link the cathedral station with New Street station.

The route

The multi-purpose tunnel study by Sir William Halcrow and Partners, concluded that it would be more costly to construct shared tunnels within the area of the middle ring road than independent tunnels for private and public services.

The proposed transit system would run from Redditch, through Alvechurch, Barnet Green, Longbridge and Northfield, and then swing through King's Norton, Bourneville and Selly Oak - close to Birmingham University - to the tunnel section at Five Ways.

North of the city it would pass through Aston, Erdington, Wylde Green and Sutton Coldfield to Four Oaks.

THE BIRMINGHAM CITY CENTRE BRAIN STORM 1970 - 1971

By 1970, New Street Station had been buried, Snow Hill Station was in its death throes and Moor Street Station had a token local service. Therefore, it was the time for hair brained schemes on how the last two stations should be used, including turning them into bus stations. Thankfully, these schemes were not implemented and Stourbridge line passengers can now travel by train through Snow Hill and Moor Street to Solihull, Stratford-upon-Avon and London. The proposals were reported by the Birmingham Post.



Birmingham Post - 9 April 1970

Another New St precinct quiz

Birmingham Post Reporter

Birmingham Junior Chamber of Commerce is to circulate a questionnaire to traders in the area about turning part of New Street and some adjoining streets into a traffic-free shopping precinct.

Included with the questionnaire, to be sent next week, will be a copy of an article in *The Birmingham Post* studying the results of creating traffic-free streets.

The survey is the second in the area - New Street from Corporation Street to Victoria Square, and parts of Bennett's Hill, Temple Street and Cannon Street.

The first survey, last month, was taken from 200 pedestrians in New Street.

The two surveys, with comments from bodies such as the City Engineer's Department, the Post Office, and the police, will be included in a report being prepared by the chamber.

Mr. Michael Ashton, president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, said last night that he hoped the final report would be ready next month.

"We are asking for comments as well at the answers to questions because we feel this is a subject people want to expand their views on," he added.

The questionnaire includes a map illustrating proposed traffic diversions and artists' impressions of how the area could look if a traffic-free system was introduced.

Among the questions it asks business men in the area are their types of business, their hours of business, number of employees and deliveries to their premises.

It also asks whether they are in favour of traffic-free precincts; whether existing streets should be made into such precincts; and what effect they think such action would have on their trade.

Mr. Ashton said that the junior chamber was not trying to force the idea of traffic-free precincts on to people, but was bringing the suggestion to the notice of those concerned.

For instance future planning of car parks for city centre premises might have to be revised if such schemes were introduced, he said.

A future scheme which the junior chamber may consider creating a "mini-underground" for Birmingham. It suggests that the disused railway tunnel between Snow Hill and Moor Street could be fitted with moving walkways and escalators so that people could leave their cars parked at either end and travel underground to the city centre.

Shoppers vote for traffic-free Birmingham city centre plan

By BRIAN VERTIGEN

Birmingham Post Municipal Correspondent

Plans to make parts of Birmingham's city centre into traffic-free shopping precincts to bring back some life and vitality into the centre are announced today.

A random survey of shoppers in New Street showed that 76 per cent were in favour of the proposals, 14 per cent were against, and ten per cent did not know or were not sure. The survey also revealed that more people said they would use the area if it was traffic free.

The proposals are contained in a special report prepared and published by the Birmingham Junior Chamber of Commerce, and follows a 12 month study into the idea of creating a traffic-free area in the city centre.

The report proposes one major scheme and three alternatives.



New Street

The major suggestion is; that New Street should be made traffic-free between Pinfold Street and Stephenson Place.

The alternatives are: turn Corporation Street into a pedestrian-only street.

Close New Street to all traffic except public transport, and severely restrict the speed of buses. This would enable pavements to be widened.

Close Union Street and Lower Bull Street. Extend Martineau Square and Martineau Way precinct to the rebuilt C & A store. This will give a continuous traffic-free zone from New Street/High Street to Priory Ringway, almost half a mile.

Experiment

It suggests that bus stations could be built at Moor Street and Snow Hill stations. Then, by using the disused railway tunnel which exists between these two places, construct an underground moving pavement with access to the surface at Great Western Arcade, Corporation Street and in High Street.



Birmingham's intended Bus Stations



Last night, the project leader, Mr S. R. Oldfield, said he hoped the city authorities would at least be prepared to try an experimental traffic-free scheme in the city centre for three or six months.

The project was undertaken because the Junior Chamber had noticed that for some time there had been a trend for shoppers to come less often into the city centre and to use instead the out-of-town or suburban shopping centres.

Having found out that the city council had the powers to close streets, the chamber set about *(cont'd on next page)*

finding out if both shoppers and traders would like traffic-free pedestrian streets.

The random survey of New Street shoppers showed 76 per cent in favour. Out of just over 100 replies from traders (500 were circularised), 86 per cent were in favour of traffic-free precincts.

The big traders in favour of the scheme included Rackhams and Lewis's. Also British Rail was in favour of the New Street scheme, provided that bus interchange facilities for New Street Station were maintained.

The West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive did not favour the New Street scheme as this, it claimed, would make the rerouting of buses difficult. Therefore, the chamber rather reluctantly suggests that New Street could be traffic-free apart from buses.

The chamber stresses that any experimental scheme should not start until the Inner Ring Road is finished - some time next year - so that through traffic will have been greatly reduced.

Because there are no rear access facilities in New Street, the chamber suggests that delivery vehicles should be allowed into the area up to 10 a.m. and perhaps for an hour in the afternoon for food shops.

Parking space

Side streets off New Street, namely Bennetts Hill, Temple Street, Lower Temple Street, and Ethel Street could be developed for parking with meter bays at right angles. This would make up for the loss of parking space in New Street.

Access would remain available all the time for police, fire and ambulance vehicles and also contractors' and salvage department vehicles.

Public transport, with other traffic, would be re-routed via Pinfold Street, Stephenson Street and Stephenson Place, all of which would be made one-way in the opposite direction to the present.

With the Corporation Street scheme, the chamber suggests that the traffic could be rerouted by reversing the present traffic flow at the southeastern end of New Street and sending traffic along High Street and up Bull Street.

Last night Mr. A. Gibson, president of the Junior Chamber said: "If there is sufficient interest in our ideas, we may feel able to arrange a symposium of people who want to discuss them. Unless something is done to improve the city centre, the decline will continue. A city centre is something people should feel is a focal point of their community and somewhere worthy of going to."

Rapid rail service call

Birmingham Post Reporter

New stations at Grange Road, Olton, and at Robin Hood Lane and Baldwins Lane, Shirley, are suggested for the first phase in the development of high-speed electrical rail service network in the Birmingham area.

A report by the Railway Development Association, which is promoting the idea using existing railways, states in a report that the Grange Road station would serve the extensive residential area between Olton and Solihull.

Tyseley and Solihull stations are well placed for expansion as road-rail interchange stations, says the report, since interchange with buses and cars is "an essential feature of modern rapid transit."

The first phase route would terminate at "a much abbreviated" form of Snow Hill Station and

would utilise the Snow Hill-Moor Street tunnel.

Embodied in the second stage would be the continuation of this line southwards to Knowle and the extension of it from Birmingham city centre to Wolverhampton, with a station at Boulton Road providing interchange with outer circle buses. In the South, the line could be extended to Lapworth if necessary.



The third stage would involve the line from Lichfield, through Sutton Coldfield to Birmingham, with branches serving Walmley and

Castle Vale, and continuing south-west to Longbridge and Rubery.