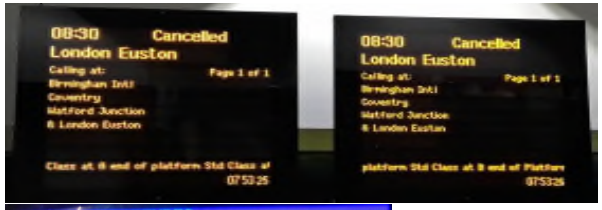
## SIGN OF THE TIMES - CANCELLED TRAINS
by John Warren

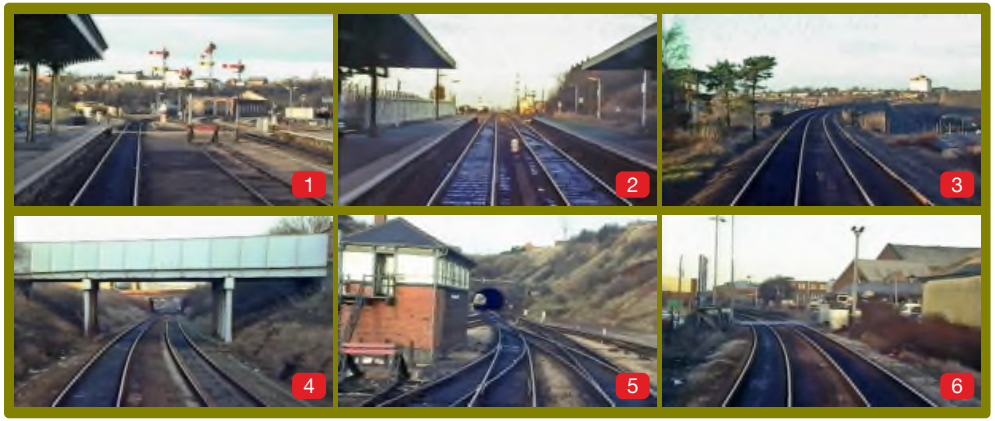



It is always galling when your train is cancelled. However, it is pleasing when the rail industry provides you with useful information. In the first photo, taken at New Street, the 08:30 service to Euston has been cancelled. However, if you decided to go down to platform 4 to wait for it not to arrive, it is useful to know that First Class would have been on platform 4a and second class on platform 4b.

In the second photo, taken at Cheltenham Spa, passengers would have been reassured to know that First Class was available on the cancelled 19:57 Nottingham service while they waited an hour on a second class platform.

## WHERE ARE WE ? - NO. 6

The following are views taken from the driver's cab between Worcester Shrub Hill and Smethwick Galton Bridge taken in 1988. Can you name the locations?




## NAME THE STATION ANSWERS - No 6 : NEW

Here are the answers to Name The Station 6 which featured in the previous issue.

1 - Newmarket, 2 - Birmingham New Street, 3 - Newquay, 4 - Pontypool & New Inn, 5 - New Brighton, 6 - Evercreech New, 7 - Newhaven Marine, 8 - Maiden Newton, 9 - Newbury Racecourse, 10 - Newton Abbot.

*The answer to the teaser on page 9 is 45651 Shovell. It was scrapped in 1962 while 7029, 45690 and 45699 have been preserved for main line use.*



# PLATFORM 2

STOURBRIDGE LINE USER GROUP

Issue 21 September 2020

"The Devonian" linked Yorkshire with the South Devon coast and the final part of its journey would have skirted the beach at Goodrington

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## ON SCREEN … THE STOURBRIDGE MAIN LINE AND BRANCHES
## 5. THE SEVERN VALLEY ON THE BIG SCREEN by John Warren

*This is the final article in a series that looks at the occasions when the Stourbridge line or its branch lines have featured either in feature films or in television series. In this issue we look at two films that used the Severn Valley Railway for location shots.*

*The Thirty Nine Steps* was a 1915 adventure novel by John Buchan about a civilian in London, Richard Hannay, who becomes caught up in preventing an organization of spies called the 39 Steps from stealing British military secrets. After being mistakenly accused of the murder of a counter-espionage agent, Hannay goes on the run to Scotland with an attractive woman in the hopes of stopping the spy ring and clearing his name.

The book has since spawned four adaptations - a 1935 film directed by Alfred Hitchcock starring Robert Donat, a 1959 film starring Kenneth More, a 1978 film starring Robert Powell and a 2008 BBC series starring Rupert Penry-Jones. Whereas in adaptations 1, 2 and 4, Hannay boards a train at London King's Cross to escape and flees from the police by pulling the communication chord as the train crosses the Forth Bridge and climbing down onto the substructure below the track, the 1978 version was slightly more low key. Instead of boarding at King's Cross, Robert Powell actually boarded the train at Highley and escaped by pulling the communication chord as the train passed over the Victoria Bridge south of Arley.

The Thirty Nine Steps

In 1992, the 1910 E M Forster novel *Howards End*, about personal relationships in turn-of-the-century England, was adapted into an award winning film, starring Anthony Hopkins as Henry Wilcox, the owner of Howards End, and Helena Bonham Carter and Emma Thompson as sisters Helen and Margaret Schlegel. Helen has got engaged to Henry Wilcox's son, which results in her Aunt Juley, played by Prunella Scales, arriving by train and causing a scene. The arrival station is Bewdley.

Howards End



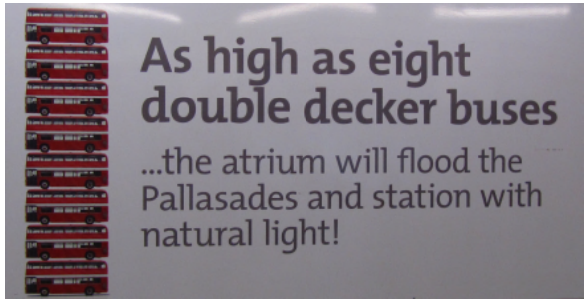
Over the years Worcestershire County Council has provided a Bewdley and Stourport night-time service from here and a daytime Worcester service (303). The best idea was starting the 291 service from here which produced a train/bus connection to Bewdley and Tenbury Wells. Such a journey had not been possible since the closure of the Cleobury Mortimer branch railway. Sadly, it was not to last and 291 reverted to starting at the town centre bus station.

Most buses that call at the station use stops on Comberton Hill. All Halesowen, Stourbridge and Bromsgrove-bound services stopped at a shelter outside the Railway Bell Hotel. Buses bound for the town centre had no lay-by on the opposite side by the railway station. The pavement was narrow with little space for a bus queue while pedestrians were passing by.

Well loaded bus services at Kidderminster station on a Sunday? Unfortunately, this was due to a bus rally at the station

Thankfully, the whole of the station has been rebuilt and two new bus shelters have been provided on Comberton Hill. A pedestrian crossing by the Railway Bell Hotel has been provided, thus making access to both stops a lot safer. The forecourt stop has been taken out of use and all services (10, 15, 42, 125 and 133) use the new Comberton Hill stops. These services, provided by Diamond and Coniston, should have improved as a result of a more frequent and later train service in 2019. Unfortunately, they didn't!

## THE UP-TO-DATE RAILWAY
## by Roger Davis




When the new shopping centre that doubled as an appalling underground railway station was opened in 2015, a notice proudly announced that the atrium was as high as eight double decker buses and would flood the Pallasades and station with natural light (unless you're at platform level of course). To keep the notice bang up to date, eight double decker buses were illustrated. It's just a pity that the model of bus that they chose was a Bristol VR which was in production from 1967 until 1981!

## THE ROAMING EMPIRE
## Part 2 : KIDDERMINSTER by Rob Hebron

In a previous edition of *Platform 2*, I examined the timetables of today and compared them with 1968. I looked at a Stourbridge Line station (Hartlebury) and evaluated the scope for travel further afield.

Service 192 ran from Birmingham to Ludlow via Kidderminster

In the 1960s, the Midland Red Bus company had built up an empire of routes and competed with the train both on price and number of destinations served. British Railways was in no shape to react as its network had been decimated by agents of the government. There were no transferable tickets such as PlusBus and so day tripping roamers opted for Explorer bus network tickets.

Kidderminster in 1968 was a thriving town and still the hub of the carpet industry. Employees arriving by train had a choice of eight different bus services into the town centre. By crossing Comberton Hill, a passenger could catch a bus into Bromsgrove, Stourport, Worcester or local estates such as Comberton and Greenhill. Various buses competed with the train for Birmingham traffic and for many years, the 133 passed the railway station every half hour, seven days a week. Of course, Sunday was a train-less day in Kidderminster and so the 133 had a clear field.

Kidderminster bus services declined under the ownership of First and many had to be supported by Worcestershire County Council. A welcome improvement was a limited stop X33 (later X3) which ran from Kidderminster to Redditch via the station. This was a financially subsidised service to take visitors to the Alexandra Hospital when Kidderminster Hospital was downgraded. Previously, Kidderminster and Bromsgrove had a two-hourly 317 bus service and a connection was necessary to reach Redditch.

A Whittles bus on the 16A service to Areley Kings waits on the forecourt of Kidderminster station

In competition to First, Whittles provided a few commercial bus services and snatched tenders from their rival. This company ran the 16A service from Kidderminster Station to Stourport via the hospital. This was absorbed into the X3 which, nowadays is numbered 42 and does not serve Stourport.

The problem with Kidderminster station was the limitations of the forecourt. One bus stop was all that could be accommodated because of the adjacent taxi rank which was very busy.



## THE END OF THE LINE
## by Rob Hebron

I must confess that I have never desired to walk from Land's End to John O'Groats. That does not mean that I do not understand why people want to do just that. Such an arduous journey is a personal challenge and all the more meaningful as it embraces the beautiful English and Scottish landscape. I imagine that whether one's journey is northbound or southbound there is an anticipation in finding something worthwhile on completion, much like finding the metaphorical pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. There is an abruptness at arriving at one's destination, knowing that there is nowhere else to go but also a sense of achievement. I would like to look at the furthest points of the UK railway network and to discover if the rail passenger can expect the same fulfilment as the long distance walker.

The nearest equivalent southward/northward rail journey is that from Penzance in Cornwall to Thurso in the Highlands of Scotland.

Penzance Station

Penzance Station

Penzance station still retains much of its architectural grandeur. Though not the original incarnation, the current station has four platforms and an overall roof. It was built in 1879 of rock-faced granite to a design by William Lancaster Owen. The town of Penzance is a famous and attractive holiday destination and well worth a visit.

Thurso Station

Thurso station is 154 miles north of Inverness and is also aesthetically pleasing. It has a simple but attractive frontage consisting of two arched windows and matching doorway. The adjoining section has one rectangular window and an integrated post box in the wall. The town lies on the River Thurso which flows into Thurso Bay. The river estuary serves as a small harbour and the town was once a Norse port. It has been a thriving fishing centre and also built up a reputation for its linen-cloth and tanning activities.

To continue with my theme of compass points, the most westerly railway station in the UK is Arisaig on the West Highland Line but it is not a terminus. Although Penzance qualifies as the most westerly English station, I am not going to include it in both southernmost and westernmost categories. Instead, I am picking a heritage station which may not be westernmost but is certainly unusual. I am referring to the Devonshire terminus of the Dartmouth Steam Railway which runs from Paignton to Kingswear. The real terminus is Dartmouth, but this is only reachable by a ferry from Kingswear. Not only is Kingswear station impressive but unusual in having a wooden train shed. It has traditional canopies further along the main and bay platforms. The booking office building at Dartmouth has survived and is now a privately owned restaurant. Train and riverboat tickets can still be purchased from adjacent kiosks.

Kingswear Station

Dartmouth Railway Station was unusual as it never had a train service

The most easterly railway station in Great Britain is Lowestoft, built in 1847 and replaced by a substantial new structure in 1855. This second version was designed by the Lucas brothers who are credited with its Italianate architectural style. Rationalisation in the late 1960s caused the platform awnings to be cut back and services too. In 1992, more alterations were carried out; these involved removing some brickwork, refurbishing an area of the platforms as well as eliminating the station roof and canopies to create a new open, paved concourse. In addition, contractors demolished the bookstall and toilet block. By 2012, the station was showing signs of age and decay. Its MP at the time, Peter Aldous, described it as an embarrassment to the town and "a blot on the landscape". As a result of his intervention, Lowestoft station was given a makeover to the exterior and interior with £1 million of funding from Suffolk County Council. A multi modal transport hub was created which has secured the future of the station.

The British railway network is not an interwoven piece of fabric with a neat hem. Thanks to Doctor Richard Beeching it is a patchy frayed version of its former self. There are now many loose ends where he has unstitched the garment. Where enthusiasts have been able to reverse his cuts by restoring tracks and trains, there are sometimes gaps between heritage lines and Network Rail lines. Very often, stations which were never termini are now the end of the line. Such an example is Bridgnorth on the Severn Valley Railway.



## TRUMPED UP NEWS
## authenticated by Donald Fake

West Midlands Trains proudly announced today that the first of the new stations promised in the new franchise opened today. Unfortunately, the station on the Stourbridge main line at Pedmore cannot be used as contractors built it on the misapprehension that it would be served by the Stourbridge Town Class 139s.

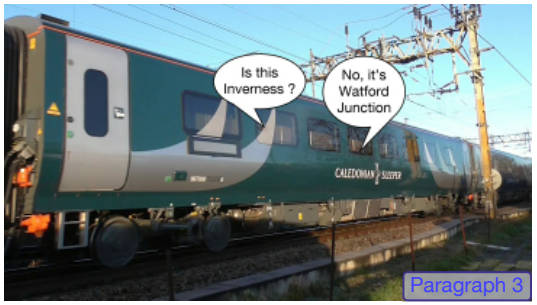
The Department for Transport today unveiled the proposed design of seats to be used on HS2 services from Birmingham to London. A DfT spokesman said "Passengers will not need anything that is too comfortable as the journey will only take 50 minutes. Of course, standard class seats will not be finished to the same quality as these first class examples". The choice of seats is expected to reduce HS2 costs by £30bn.

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 2

Despite much adverse publicity that the Caledonian Sleeper service regularly arrives hours late (or never) since Serco took over the franchise, one irate customer has complained that the train arrived early when she travelled, thus disturbing her sleep. Princess Aurora, known to her friends as "The Sleeping Beauty", claimed that the journey from London Euston to Inverness only took 99 years, thus depriving her of her final year of sleep. She added that she was disgusted that, instead of being roused by a kiss from a handsome prince, her slumber was ended by being shaken by a hairy Scottish steward with the greeting "och aye lass, we've finally made it".

Alton Towers has proudly announced its exciting new theme park attraction for 2021, which will operate every weekend and on bank holidays throughout the year. It's the Ghost Train Bus Replacement Service.



Paragraph 3

Paragraph 4

The other interesting aspect of the timetable involved the northbound Saturday service which ran “non-stop” from Newton Abbot to Gloucester Eastgate – although its actually stopped to change engines on a line that avoided Bristol Temple Meads. It also ran non-stop from Cheltenham Spa to Burton-on-Trent and avoided Birmingham New Street. Today, a train between Devon and Yorkshire that avoided both Bristol Temple Meads and Birmingham New Street would be inconceivable.

Apart from a gap for World War II, the Devonian survived until May 1975. However, its northern terminus changed twice during its final 8 years - in 1967 to Bradford Exchange and in 1971 to Leeds City. By that time, the service was operated by a “Peak” diesel locomotive throughout, thus avoiding the need to change engines.

So what has changed since the days of the Devonian? The national rail network now runs to Paignton and the section onwards to Kingswear is now the preserved Paignton and Dartmouth Railway.

The stations at Cudworth and Kingskerswell were victims of the Beeching Axe while Rotherham Masborough was closed on 3 October 1988 when a new station at Rotherham Central was opened closer to the town centre. CrossCountry services still run through Masborough station and all four platforms are still intact.

Jubilee Class 45690 *Leander* arrives home from Leeds as it brings the Devonian into Bristol Temple Meads

(Colour Rail)

Of the stations still open, Normanton, Bristol Stapleton Road, Bridgwater and Torre no longer see long distance express trains stopping, while the station at Bradford Forster Square has been downgraded, reduced in size and hidden behind a modern development. They would never try to hide a railway station in Birmingham, would they?

Finally, the the CrossCountry network has bypassed and abandoned the cities of Bradford and Worcester, while Gloucester and Weston-super-Mare have a token CrossCountry service. It means that to get to the south west from Worcester, you have to rely on a slow all-stations train that only runs every 2 hours and then change at either Cheltenham Spa or one of the Bristol stations. SLUG and fellow campaigning group, Campaign for Rail, are pressing for connections from the Stourbridge line and Worcester to the South West to be radically improved. It is wrong that Worcester, Gloucester and Weston-super-Mare, that are only just off of the main cross country route and which see trains pass through their suburbs non-stop, are treated so badly.

Finally, a quick teaser. The four photos show 3 Jubilees based at Bristol Barrow Road and 1 Castle based at Newton Abbot. However, which is the odd one out and why? All we will say is that the answer is one of the Jubilees.

*The answer is at the bottom of page 12.*

The end of the line just south of Stratford-upon-Avon station

The line represented by SLUG consists entirely of intermediate stations on a longer route. Even Birmingham and Worcester are not termini, in the sense that they are not buffer stops. If one wanted to travel to the buffers to achieve a sense of fulfilment, then one has to take a ride to either Stratford-upon-Avon or London Marylebone. In the case of Stratford-upon-Avon, this is only a terminus because the original line has been truncated. If the tracks had been left in place from Stratford-upon-Avon to Honeybourne then the next set of buffers probably would have been over a hundred miles away.

A buffer to buffer rail journey can be done in three minutes! Stourbridge Junction to Stourbridge Town will take you to the end of the line at either end. In reality, the Class 139 railcar which operates the line pulls up adjacent to the subway on Platform One and technically does not qualify as buffer to buffer until it returns to its shed at the end of the evening timetable. Who is going to quibble? The Town Branch is a self-contained operation and it has THREE sets of buffers because there are two at Stourbridge Town. The old buffers for the Class 153 are still in place.

The two sets of buffers at Stourbridge Town

I am nearing the end of my article and will soon be at the end of the line. I hope you arrive safely at the end of your journey and if you wish to share your experience, please contact the editor of *Platform*.

## ALL CHANGE AT ... CRADLEY HEATH
### The changing scene at one of the Stourbridge line stations

1979

(Stephen Burdett)

2019

## TITLED TRAINS ALONG THE STOURBRIDGE LINE - PART 2
## by Roger Davis

*This is the second in a series of articles that looks at the seven titled express services that operated along sections of the line between Birmingham Moor Street and Worcester Shrub Hill, in chronological order of their first run over the line.*

The Devonian operated along the section of line between Droitwich Spa and Worcester Shrub Hill between the late 1940s and the mid 1950s.

Jubilee Class 45699 *Galatea* heads the Devonian near Rotherham

It was introduced on 26 September 1927 and ran Monday to Saturday as a train from Bradford Forster Square which had through coaches for Paignton which were detached at Bristol Temple Meads and handed over to the GWR for onward haulage. En route, the train picked up a Newcastle to Bristol coach and dropped off a Bradford to Bournemouth coach. In LMS days, the train only carried the name between Bradford and Bristol, and searches of old timetables show that it operated directly between Birmingham New Street and Cheltenham Spa, thus bypassing Worcester.

However, timetables from 1948 to 1955 indicate that, while the northbound service continued to bypass Worcester, the southbound service operated via Droitwich Spa and Worcester Shrub Hill and stopped at both of them. Later timetables from 1957 show the train as reverting to the direct route between Birmingham and Cheltenham Spa.

By the mid 1950s, the Devonian was operated by three engine sheds. The section from Bradford to Leeds was operated by a tank engine from Manningham shed. The long section from Leeds to Bristol was operated by a Jubilee class locomotive from Bristol's Barrow Road shed. A Bristol engine and crew operated from Bristol to Leeds on day 1, stayed overnight in Leeds (the engine at Holbeck shed) and returned home on day 2. The final leg southbound from Bristol was the responsibility of Newton Abbot shed, who normally rostered a Castle Class locomotive.



The summer timetable for 1955 is shown below with the Saturday timings in brackets.

Bradford Forster Square 0925 (0925) : Shipley 0933 (0933) : Leeds City 0956 (0956) : Normanton 1018 (1018) : Cudworth 1040 (1040) : Rotherham Masborough 1105 (1105) : Sheffield Midland 1120 (1120) : Derby Midland 1217 (1217) : Birmingham New Street 1321 (1321) : Droitwich Spa 1400 (1400) : Worcester Shrub Hill 1411 (1411) : Cheltenham Spa Lansdown 1443 (1443) : Gloucester Eastgate 1502 (1502) : Bristol Temple Meads 1600 (1600) : Weston-super-Mare General 1646 (1646) : Bridgwater 1710 (1730) : Taunton 1728 (1805) : Exeter St David's 1810 (1852) : Dawlish 1832 (1912) : Teignmouth 1840 (1921) : Newton Abbot 1852 (1933) : Kingskerswell 1905 (1945) : Torre 1913 (1953) : Torquay 1917 (1957) : Paignton 1925 (2005)

Kingswear 0805 (0845) : Churston for Brixham 0815 (0900) : Paignton 0915 (0916) : Torquay 0923 (0926) : Torre 0928 (….) : Newton Abbot 0950 (0948) : Teignmouth 1000 (….) : Dawlish 1008 (….) : Exeter St David's 1030 (….) : Taunton 1110 (….) : Bridgwater 1130 (….) : Weston-super-Mare General 1155 (….) : Bristol Temple Meads 1230 (….) : Bristol Stapleton Road 1238 (….) : Gloucester Eastgate 1336 (1327) : Cheltenham Spa Lansdown 1354 (….) : Birmingham New Street 1500 (….) : Burton-on-Trent 1548 (1534) : Derby Midland 1603 (1550) : Chesterfield Midland 1641 (1631) : Sheffield Midland 1704 (1656) : Rotherham Masborough 1719 (1712) : Cudworth 1744 (1737) : Normanton 1805 (1758) : Leeds City 1830 (1820) : Shipley 1900 (1850) : Bradford Forster Square 1909 (1900)

What the timetable shows is that, for an "express" train, it made a lot of station stops and served stations which no longer see long distance express services.

The routing north of Bristol is interesting as, while the southbound train used the London Midland route into Bristol via Mangotsfield, the northbound service left Bristol by the Western Region route and made a stop at what was then Bristol's second station at Stapleton Road. The reason for this was to make a connection with a service from Cardiff General to Brighton which bypassed Bristol Temple Meads. It is difficult to comprehend that Stapleton Road, which is now a dismal unmanned halt that makes Lye station look salubrious, was once an important four-platform station with its own Restaurant Room.

Also of interest is the route taken between Sheffield and Leeds which was via Normanton rather than the current route through Wakefield Westgate.

Jubilee Class 45651 *Shovell* enters the old New Street station on its way home to Bristol

*(warwickshirerailways.com)*

Castle Class 7029 *Clun Castle* passes Dawlish on the northbound Devonian

*(Ben Brooksbank)*

In the mid 1950s, the southbound journey only operated through to Paignton even though the northbound train started at Kingswear. This was rectified in the 1960s when the southbound train ran to Kingswear although its official destination was Dartmouth – the only town in the country that had a railway station but never had a railway line *(as Rob describes on page 4).*