

PLATFORM 2



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The Cornishman ran via Stratford and Cheltenham using the line now partially restored and reopened by the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway

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STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION - TWINNED WITH ...

by Roger Davis



Stourbridge Junction

The history of Stourbridge Junction station is well documented. It originally opened as Stourbridge in 1852 on a site close to Junction Road, was renamed Stourbridge Junction in 1879 when the line to Stourbridge Town opened, and was completely rebuilt on its current site in 1901 when the Town branch was diverted to its current route. The new station consisted of two island platforms - each 600 feet long and 40 feet wide -

with four platform faces, reached via a subway from the booking office. The station was adjoined by extensive marshalling yards which were removed in the late 1960s and replaced by the massive car park which now serves the station. At the same time, platform 4 was taken out of use, leaving the station with the three platforms that it has today. One other change occurred in 1988/89 when the original 1901 booking hall (pictured left) was demolished and replaced by the current single storey building.

If you travel 115 miles by train from Stourbridge Junction with a single change at Worcester Shrub Hill, you will reach a station with a very similar history. This station originally opened in 1848, but was moved and rebuilt in 1899. A subway from the booking office led to two island platforms - each 600 feet long and 40 feet wide - with four platform faces and was adjoined by extensive sidings and an engine shed. Rationalisation in 1985 saw one platform taken out of use, leaving the station with the three platforms that it has today. At this station, the local transport body is promoting the reinstatement of the fourth platform.



Not Stourbridge Junction



As you have probably worked out, Stourbridge Junction had a slightly older twin when it was rebuilt in 1901. Over the years, redevelopment of both stations has seen them move apart in appearance. At Stourbridge, both the GWR booking hall and the ornate GWR gable ends have been replaced by something more functional and it is a pity that West Midlands Railway did not take the opportunity to use a replica ornate design when they replaced the gable ends recently.



At the other station, the original booking office and gable ends still survive. However, if you look at the photos above, you could almost imagine that you are at Stourbridge Junction.

So, where is Stourbridge Junction's twin? Like Stourbridge, it is an important junction station. It also has through trains to London. However, instead of being overlooked by the houses on Chawn Hill, it is overlooked by a White Horse.

The answer is Westbury, in Wiltshire. It is thought that these are the only two stations built to this design. Unless, of course, somebody knows differently.



ALONG THE LINE 1 - GALTON BRIDGE by John Warren

This is the first in a series that looks at the history of sites alongside the Stourbridge line.

It is somewhat appropriate after the previous article that the first subject in the series should be Galton Bridge as will be made clearer later. Although partially obscured by the glass panels at the rear of the platform, the bridge is a few yards to the east of the Stourbridge line platforms at Smethwick Galton Bridge.

In 1824, the Birmingham Canal Company consulted Thomas Telford to instigate major improvements to the route of the canal between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, as the original route, designed by James Brindley and opened in 1772, followed the contours of the land with a summit 450 feet above sea level at Smethwick. The new wider route took a more direct route to avoid the summit and passed through the 2¼ miles long Smethwick Cutting.

Galton Bridge, named after local banker Samuel Tertius Galton, carried the Smethwick to West Bromwich road over the deepest part of the cutting. Its single cast iron arch spans 150 feet, springing from brick abutments set high on the sides of the cutting and, when completed in 1829, was the highest bridge in the country, at 65 feet above the canal. In August 1972, the bridge was Grade II listed, and this was raised to Grade I in February 1989. The bridge was pedestrianised in 1975 and a new trunk road (Telford Way) built over the canal just to the south-east.

However, Galton Bridge has a very close relative just 4¼ miles from the Stourbridge line. It too was designed by Thomas Telford and opened one year before Galton Bridge in 1828. It also has a span of 150 feet but is only Grade II listed. Some of you will have guessed the location of this second bridge. It is the road bridge over the River Severn at Holt Fleet, just west of Ombersley.



THE ROAMING EMPIRE Part 4 : HAGLEY by Rob Hebron

A Roman salt road running from Droitwich, crossing the Hagley parish provides evidence of the village being in existence back in the days of the Roman Empire. We also know that the village is mentioned in the Domesday Book and that Roman pottery and coins have been found in the area. Remnants of an Iron Age fort have been discovered at Wychbury Hill in Upper Hagley which establishes the origins of the village.

Lower Hagley (or West Hagley) lies downhill and started to expand with the arrival of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway in 1852. The railway transformed local and long distance travel. The wealthier residents and business people could now roam as far afield as London Paddington. It didn't take long for the Birmingham and Midland Motor Omnibus Company (Midland Red) to eye up Hagley and extend its empire in that direction. The village is a convenient intersection of roads to Worcester, Birmingham, Stourbridge and Bromsgrove and bus services were introduced to connect these towns via Hagley.



The bus timetable section on the stourbridgelineusergroup.info website reveals that by 1968 other destinations were introduced such as Kingswinford and Wolverhampton (service 885) which were routed via Stourbridge bus station. Hagley folk could travel as far afield as Ludlow by bus (service 192). There was even a once a day trip to Leominster – but no return trip!

Another long distance bus route from Hagley was the 318 Stourbridge to Redditch.



The 318 has survived to this day and passes within a short walking distance of Hagley station. However, in 1968 a long trek to Upper Hagley (Forge Garage) was required to board the 318. Even so, Clent Hills were reachable by train plus bus.

Over the years, bus travel in Hagley has declined almost in proportion to the increase in train patronage. The improved train service frequency lured Birmingham-bound passengers

away from the Midland Red. The bus company lost many of its profitable cross-county routes as a consequence of the newly created West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive and the remaining network was rationalised.

Strangely, Midland Red and its competitors have never seriously tried to draw traffic from Hagley to Merry Hill Centre. For a brief period, an X95 service ran from Bridgnorth to the shopping centre via Hagley and Lye. It did not survive long enough to develop and was a once a week variation of the 297 Bridgnorth to Kidderminster service which itself was not a strong route. The last time the X95 service number was used, prior to this experiment was in 1960 when the X95 operated between Stafford and Stratford-upon-Avon via Hagley. This was a Sunday seasonal service from the end of May until end of September. Taking over three hours for the full length of the journey, it was a challenging trip for families with children.

Another attempt at connecting Kidderminster and Hagley with the Black Country was made in 2001 when Midland Red introduced the 285 service from Kidderminster to Dudley via Merry Hill Centre and Woodside. The timetable, consisting of only four outward trips was not attractive to residents of Kidderminster or Hagley and the 285 did not survive.

Hagley rail station now has only two bus services in close proximity; the aforementioned 318 (Stourbridge to Bromsgrove) and the 192 Kidderminster to Halesowen service. This is a shadow of itself and it is unlikely to ever be extended back to Birmingham. It has no weekday evening journeys or Sunday daytime provision.

It could be argued that Hagley enjoys the best train service it ever has. The destinations available from the village are more numerous than any bus company would be willing to provide. Despite extensive new housing development in Hagley, no new commercial bus routes have been introduced and there is a simple choice for commuters – car or train.



TITLED TRAINS ALONG THE STOURBRIDGE LINE - PART 4

by Roger Davis



This is the fourth 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 Cornishman operated along the section of line between Stratford-upon-Avon and The Hawthorns from 1952 to 1962.

The name was first used in the Brunel broad-gauge era, first running in June 1890 between London Paddington and Penzance in Cornwall. It was replaced in 1904 by the train that is arguably the most famous of the GWR's named expresses - the Cornish Riviera Limited. The name was resurrected on 8 July 1935 and used on the 10:35 departure from Paddington, the relief train of the Cornish Riviera Limited which departed at 10:30. On this occasion, the name was only used for one year.



However, the third incarnation of The Cornishman was applied by the Western Region of British Railways in the June 1952 timetable to a Monday to Friday through service which ran between Wolverhampton Low Level and Penzance. Unlike the other titled services that ran between Wolverhampton Low Level and Birmingham Snow Hill, the train served intermediate Black Country

stations with stops at Bilston Central, Wednesbury Central and West Bromwich as this timetable from 1959 shows.

Wolverhampton Low Level 0900 : Bilston Central 0906 : Wednesbury Central 0912 : West Bromwich 0920 : Birmingham Snow Hill 0940 : Stratford-upon-Avon 1019 : Cheltenham Spa Malvern Road 1102 : Gloucester Eastgate 1120 : Bristol Temple Meads 1222 : Taunton 1315 : Exeter St David's 1358 : TRAIN SPLIT : FRONT PORTION : Plymouth North Road 1520 : Liskeard 1559 : Bodmin Road 1615 : Par 1628 : St Austell 1639 : Truro 1702 : St Erth 1738 : Penzance 1750 : REAR PORTION : Dawlish 1433 : Teignmouth 1441 : Newton Abbot 1451 : Torre 1511 : Torquay 1514 : Paignton 1524 : Goodrington Sands Halt 1527 : Churston 1534 : Kingswear 1544

FRONT PORTION : Penzance 1030 : St Erth 1040 : Truro 1120 : St Austell 1148 : Par 1157 : Plymouth North Road 1300 : REAR PORTION : Kingswear 1215 : Churston 1230 : Goodrington Sands Halt 1240 : Paignton 1255 : Torquay 1302 : Torre 1307 : Kingskerswell 1315 : Newton Abbot 1323 : Teignmouth 1334 : Dawlish 1342 : TRAIN COMBINED : Exeter St David's 1424 : Taunton 1505 : Bristol Temple Meads 1608 : Gloucester Eastgate 1705 : Cheltenham Spa Malvern Road 1721 : Stratford-upon-Avon 1805 : Birmingham Snow Hill 1849 : West Bromwich 1904 : Wednesbury Central 1912 : Bilston Central 1919 : Wolverhampton Low Level 1925

However, between 24 July and 21 August the service ran as two separate trains.

Wolverhampton Low Level 0900 : Bilston Central 0906 : Wednesbury Central 0912 : West Bromwich 0920 : Birmingham Snow Hill 0940 : Stratford-upon-Avon 1019 : Cheltenham Spa Malvern Road 1102 : Gloucester Eastgate 1120 : Bristol Temple Meads 1222 : Plymouth North Road 1510 : Liskeard 1549 : Bodmin Road 1605 : Par 1618 : St Austell 1629 : Truro 1652 : St Erth 1728 : Penzance 1740

Wolverhampton Low Level 0910 : Bilston Central 0916 : Wednesbury Central 0922 : West Bromwich 0930 : Birmingham Snow Hill 0950 : Stratford-upon-Avon 1029 : Cheltenham Spa Malvern Road 1112 : Gloucester Eastgate 1130 : Bristol Temple Meads 1234 : Taunton 1325 : Exeter St David's 1410 : Dawlish 1433 : Teignmouth 1441 : Newton Abbot 1451 : Torre 1511 : Torquay 1514 : Paignton 1524 : Goodrington Sands Halt 1527 : Churston 1534 : Kingswear 1544

Penzance 1030 : St Erth 1040 : Truro 1120 : St Austell 1148 : Par 1157 : Plymouth North Road 1300 : Bristol Temple Meads 1552 : Gloucester Eastgate 1646 : Cheltenham Spa Malvern Road 1705 : Stratford-upon-Avon 1755 : Birmingham Snow Hill 1833 : Wolverhampton Low Level 1903

Kingswear 1215 : Churston 1230 : Goodrington Sands Halt 1240 : Paignton 1255 : Torquay 1302 : Torre 1307 : Kingskerswell 1315 : Newton Abbot 1323 : Teignmouth 1334 : Dawlish 1342 : Exeter St David's 1424 : Taunton 1505 : Bristol Temple Meads 1608 : Gloucester Eastgate 1705 : Cheltenham Spa Malvern Road 1721 : Stratford-upon-Avon 1805 : Birmingham Snow Hill 1849 : West Bromwich 1904 : Wednesbury Central 1912 : Bilston Central 1919 : Wolverhampton Low Level 1925

The train was hauled from Wolverhampton by a "Castle" or "County" Class locomotive based at Wolverhampton's Stafford Road shed. It was replaced at Bristol Temple Meads by a similar locomotive based at Newton Abbot shed. The Wolverhampton locomotive was turned and serviced at Bristol Bath Road shed before returning home just under 4 hours later on the northbound Cornishman.



The route south of Birmingham took the train through Stratford-upon-Avon and Broadway to reach Cheltenham's Malvern Road station. Stopping services north of Cheltenham had ceased from 1960, and British Railways took the opportunity to downgrade the line even more in 1962 by rerouting The Cornishman north of Gloucester via Cheltenham Spa Lansdown, Birmingham New Street, Tamworth, Burton-on-Trent, Derby Midland and Chesterfield Midland to

terminate at Sheffield Midland. This was further extended to operate to Bradford Forster Square in 1965 and rerouted to operate to Bradford Exchange on 1 May 1967. The name lingered on until 3 May 1975 by which time it was running to and from Leeds.



So, what has happened to the route since. Bodmin Road station – one of those railway stations where the word Road meant a five mile cross-country hike to reach the aforementioned settlement – was renamed Bodmin Parkway on 4 November 1983. The line between Kingswear and Paignton was closed on 30 December 1972, but was immediately sold to the Dart Valley Railway and now operates as the Paignton and Dartmouth Railway, while Kingskerswell station closed on 5 October 1964 and is now seen by Devon County Council as a candidate for reopening.

Although a Western Region train, the Cornishman ran from Bristol Temple Meads to Yate via the London Midland route through Mangotsfield, this line closing in 1969 and now used as a cycle path. The line from Tuffley Junction through Gloucester Eastgate closed on 1 December 1975 meaning that through trains from the Midlands to the South West now have to reverse at the erstwhile GWR Gloucester Central station.

The last scheduled passenger services operated between Honeybourne and Stratford on 5 May 1969 but the line to Cheltenham continued as a diversionary route until complete closure in 1976.

The section between Cheltenham Racecourse and Broadway has been reopened as a steam heritage railway by the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway, and there are long term aspirations to extend at both ends – southwards towards Cheltenham Town Centre and northwards to Honeybourne. There is a concerted campaign to reopen the section from Honeybourne to Stratford-upon-Avon, with the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group and Campaign for Rail at the forefront of the campaign. Their argument is compelling – the missing link is only 9 miles long and passes a major housing development which would see 3,500 new houses built as a Garden Village on Long Marston Airfield. The reopening of the line would allow a circular Worcester – Stourbridge Junction – Birmingham Snow Hill – Stratford-upon-Avon – Evesham – Worcester service.



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Today, no through trains operate directly between Wolverhampton and Cornwall except on Summer Saturdays when there are through trains to Newquay. There is one daily service in each direction between Wolverhampton and Plymouth.

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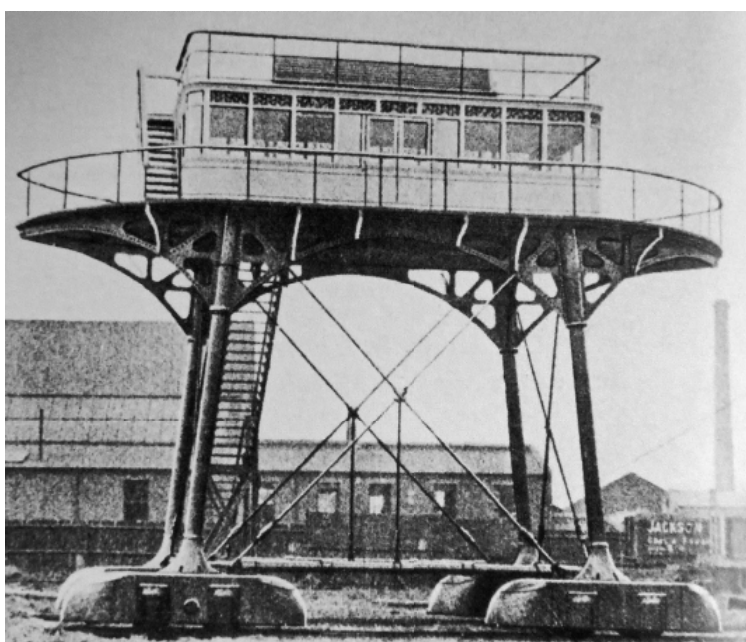
GETTING ITS FEET WET by John Warren

After articles by Rob Hebron in the previous two editions of *Platform 2* about railway lines to the sea and then over the sea on piers, a SLUG member contacted us for information about a line where the tracks were actually under the sea except at low tide. This railway was the Brighton and Rottingdean Seashore Electric Railway or the Daddy Long-Legs as it was affectionately known.



In his article, Rob mentioned the Volk's Electric Railway which ran for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile east from the Aquarium along the seashore to a groyne at Paston Place in the Kemp Town area. This 2ft 8½ins gauge railway, powered by an electrified third rail, opened in two stages in 1883 and 1884 and is the oldest surviving electric railway in the world. Magnus Volk proposed to extend the line eastwards for just under 3 miles to the village of Rottingdean but the entire extension would have been on a viaduct, and this proved to be prohibitively expensive. Instead, Volk came up with a revolutionary proposal. Two parallel 2ft 8½ins gauge tracks would be laid 18ft apart on a base of 5ft x 3ft concrete blocks about 100 yards out from the cliffs. The track would only be above water at low tide which meant that construction took 2½ years. Poles were erected alongside the line and carried the electrified wires that powered the line – third rail electrification would have proved fatal! Jetties were built at Paston Place and Rottingdean, the latter housing the electricity generator to provide the power.

A single vehicle named "Pioneer" was built by the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company and is pictured (below) at the factory prior to delivery. The deck



was high above the waves and measured 45ft x 22ft with the saloon in its centre measuring 25ft x 12ft. A second deck was provided on the roof of the saloon and this was sometimes protected by a canopy on sunny days. The line opened on 28 November 1896 and was immediately very popular due to its curiosity value. However, one week later, Brighton was hit by a severe storm that wrecked both jetties, overturned some of the concrete blocks, and inflicted major damage on "Pioneer", which had been tethered to the Rottingdean jetty for "protection".

The line finally reopened on 20 July 1897 with a new intermediate jetty at Ovingdean Gap just to the east of the newly built Roedean School for girls. This stop was served on request only.



A well loaded "Pioneer" leaves the jetty at Paston Place



The saloon interior. The seated gentleman is Magnus Volk

Despite a number of issues – the maximum speed was 8 mph, operation was suspended in bad weather, the track needed daily inspection and "Pioneer" proved unreliable – passenger figures were high. However, only 4 round trips per day (2 on Sunday) could be achieved (at a cost of 6d (2½p) each way) and a return journey could take up to 2 hours with "Pioneer" reduced to walking pace at high tide. As the service became more unreliable, the number of journeys to Rottingdean became few and far between, with short pleasure trips from Paston Place being provided instead.



"Pioneer" heads towards Rottingdean at low tide



"Pioneer" at Rottingdean jetty with the electricity generator visible

In 1900, Brighton Corporation announced its intention to build another groyne at Black Rock (½ mile east of Paston Place) to improve sea defences and told Magnus Volk that he would need to reroute the line to avoid the groyne. Volk's first idea was to extend his original electric railway by ½ mile to Black Rock and truncate the Daddy Long Legs to operate from Black Rock groyne to Rottingdean. The first half of this scheme was completed in 1903 and the Volk's Railway from Aquarium to Black Rock still runs today.

However, given the reliability problems and lack of funds, Volk suspended the Rottingdean service in 1901 and formally closed it in 1902. "Pioneer" was tethered to the Ovingdean jetty and left to face a lingering, undignified end. The Rottingdean jetty remained open for a few years and was used by local fishermen including one Rudyard Kipling who lived in the village at the time.

Today, the only trace that the railway existed are the concrete blocks which can still be seen at low tide. A model of “Pioneer” is on display at the Volk’s Railway Visitor Centre.



Magnus Volk was a pioneer in the use of electricity and fitted the Brighton Royal Pavilion with electric lights in 1883, and the following year completed the illumination of the Royal Pavilion grounds and all adjacent buildings. He also built a second Volk’s Electric Railway a lot closer to the Stourbridge line. It was a short-lived railway in the grounds of Aston Hall in Birmingham.

The narrative and photographs for this article were sourced from the excellent book “The Extraordinary Daddy-Long-Legs Railway of Brighton” by Martin Easdown (Amberley Publishing, 2019)

THE DAFTA AWARDS

This month’s DAFTA Awards ceremony is a triumph for CrossCountry Trains who swept the board by picking up the following awards.

The Chris Kamara award for looking at the wrong screen goes to the couple at Bristol Temple Meads who boarded a Plymouth to Leeds train at the last minute thinking that it was a Edinburgh to Plymouth train, having unfortunately looked at the arrivals screen rather than the departures screen in the booking hall.

The Boris Johnson award for performing U-turns goes to CrossCountry whose Train Manager made the following announcement, “Passengers travelling on this train beyond Bristol Temple Meads towards Plymouth will be thrilled to hear that this train isn’t going to Plymouth. We have just been told by our management that this train will turn round at Temple Meads and form a service to Edinburgh. Sorry”.

The George Washington award for honesty goes to another CrossCountry Train Manager for the following announcement – “A derailment in the Eastleigh area means that this service is delayed by over 45 minutes and will terminate at Macclesfield rather than Manchester Piccadilly. Throughout the journey, I have assured passengers that they can connect onto a London Euston to Manchester train at Stoke-on-Trent. Unfortunately, some idiot has just let an all-stations service to Wolverhampton leave Birmingham New Street in front of us which means that it is doubtful that we will be able to make that connection. All I can do is apologise.”

ALL CHANGE AT ... WORCESTER FOREGATE STREET
The changing scene at one of the Stourbridge line stations



NAME THE STATION - No 7 : SAINT

The following stations, past and present, have the word Saint (or St.) somewhere in their name. Can you name them?

1. Is this the station for a Tribute or a Proper Job ?
2. These three stations can be found in a West Country city.
3. Lelant Saltings is on a branch line which connects these two stations.
4. A branch line from Leuchars served this station until closure in 1969.
5. These two stations serve an East Sussex coastal resort.
6. This Glasgow terminus closed in 1966 and the site is now a shopping centre.
7. This island station will be served by "new" ex-District Line stock from May.
8. These two stations serve a Hertfordshire city.
9. These two stations on the outskirts of Plymouth are only 100 yards apart.

AREAS SAW ARRANGEMENTS (or ANAGRAM TEASER ANSWERS) - No 6

The answers to Anagram Teaser No 6 were as follows :-

- 1 - Burlish Halt, 2 - Bilston West, 3 - Baptist End Halt, 4 - Daisy Bank and Bradley, 5 - Soho and Winson Green, 6 - Foley Park Halt, 7 - Darby End Halt, 8 - Old Hill High Street, 9 - Fernhill Heath, 10 - Swan Village, 11 - Blowers Green, 12 - Stourport-on-Severn, 13 - Princes End and Coseley, 14 - Handsworth and Smethwick, 15 - Brettell Lane, 16 - Great Bridge South, 17 - Cutnall Green Halt, 18 - Tipton Five Ways