QUEEN VICTORIA - TIME TRAVELLER
by Roger Davis

The acclaimed historical ITV series *Victoria* certainly chose the right actor when it cast former *Doctor Who* companion Jenna Coleman in the title role. In the wake of the Chartist demonstrations in London in 1848, Queen Victoria and her family retreated to Osbourne House on the Isle of Wight. Footage of the train and ship that carried her on this journey was shown during the episode.

Engine 53808, built in 1925, is shown pulling carriages built in the 1950s, while the crossing of the Solent is on the *PS Waverley*, built in 1946. Jenna's alter ego from *Doctor Who*, Clara Oswald, would have been proud of Victoria's gift of time travel.

ALL IN THE NAME – STOURBRIDGE TOWN

The following are definitions of words which can be found by using the letters in STOURBRIDGE TOWN. The number of letters in each answer is given. Can you name the words?

1 Conventionally middle class (9)
2 A chemist's shop in the USA (9)
3 Cigarettes manufactured by W D & H O Wills (9)
4 An assistant to the person who directs the preparation of a newspaper or periodical (9)
5 A cricket fast bowler's delivery that moves away from the batsman (10)
6 Tortillos rolled around a savoury filling (8)
7 A composer of music (10)
8 A slow-moving land or freshwater reptile (8)
9 People who behave immorally or illegally (10)
10 Sitting on eggs to hatch them (8)
11 Small parrots bred in various colours and kept as cage birds (7)

WISH YOU WERE HERE QUIZ 5 - ANSWERS

The answers to the questions set in the last edition of Platform 2 were :-

A - Stourport-on-Severn, B - Stratford-upon-Avon, C - Swansea High Street, D - Tenbury Wells, E - Tenby, F - Warwick, G - Wembley Stadium, H - Wilmcote, I - Wolverhampton Low Level, J - Wombourn

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Platform 2

STOURBRIDGE LINE USER GROUP

Many Pathfinder Tours railtours described on pages 6 to 8 included a run along the Dawlish sea wall. Sunday 1 September 2024 saw two railtours run on this section of track within an hour.

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CHANGE AT WORCESTER FOR ….. MORETON-IN-MARSH
by Roger Davis

This is the fifth in a series of articles that look at potential day trip destinations that may be reached by changing trains at Worcester and which are within an hour's direct train journey from Worcester.

Moreton-in-Marsh is a small market town in Gloucestershire. The train journey from Worcester takes just under 40 minutes on a Great Western Railway service to London Paddington. The station is adjacent to the town centre, which is accessible by walking along the station drive and bearing right into New Road to access the High Street and the town centre.

The town is a typical Cotswolds town with fine buildings of Cotswold stone, including a fine Market Hall. More details are available at :
https://www.cotswolds.com/dbimgs/Moreton%20Town%20Leaflet%20for%20Web.pdf

Curfew Tower

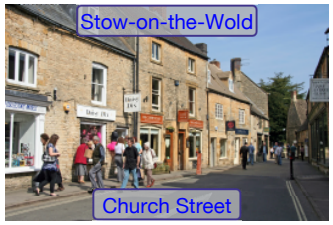
Moreton-in-Marsh
High Street and Market Hall

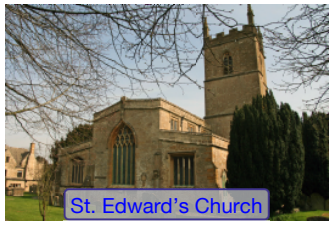
High Street and War Memorial

However, Moreton-in-Marsh station acts as a great interchange for onward travel with four fine Cotswolds attractions a short bus ride away. However, you should be warned that the bus services mentioned do not run to a regular clockface timetable, so you are advised to plan your onward journey carefully. The first bus route is Pulhams service 801, which runs approximately every 60-90 minutes. This service takes about 20 minutes to reach Stow-on-the-Wold and about 30 minutes to reach Bourton-on-the-Water. Details can be found at :
https://www.pulhams.co.uk/busservices/timetables/service801/

Stow-on-the-Wold is a similar small market town in Gloucestershire centred on a large Market Square. The square leads on to Church Street and Sheep Street, both of which contain fine buildings, including the Norman St. Edward's Church.

Market Square


Stow-on-the-Wold
Church Street


St. Edward's Church

Continuing along the river bank you will pass the chain ferry (5) and this could be used if you want a shorter walk. The path continues past Holy Trinity Church (6) and the River Avon weir before reaching a footbridge (7). Cross the river via the footbridge, turn right and follow the road up a slope to reach Holy Trinity Church and the tomb of William Shakespeare (8).

5

6

7

8

Continuing through the churchyard leads to the Avonbank Gardens which take you past the Chain Ferry and along the front of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Walk around the side and back of the theatre with the Bancroft Gardens to the right and turn right just before the Arden Hotel into Chapel Lane.

9

10

Turn right into Chapel Street with Nash's House and New Place (9) on the right Continue past the Shakespeare Hotel and turn left into Ely Street. At the end, turn right into Rother Street to the Shakespeare Memorial Fountain (10). Turn left to access Alcester Street and retrace your footsteps to the railway station.

A WALK FROM THE STATION - STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
by John Warren

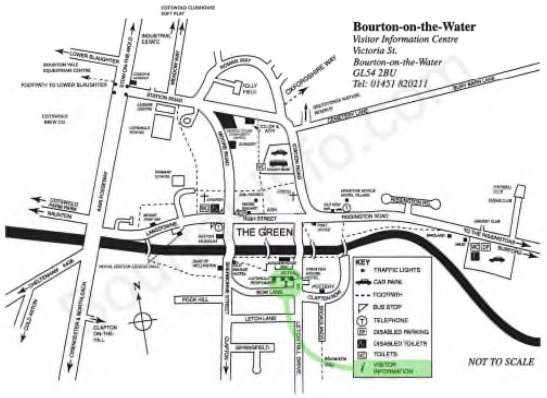
This is the third of a series that looks at what you can discover by taking a walk from a station served directly by Stourbridge line trains. This walk is approximately 3.1 miles.

Turn right along the front of the station building and continue into Alcester Road. Continue over two sets of traffic lights and turn left at the third set into Windsor Street. Turn right at the Jester Statue into Henley Street. Shakespeare's Birthplace (1) is on the left. Continue along Henley Street and walk down Bridge Street. Continue across the canal with the canal basin to your right and turn right through the gardens past the Gower Memorial.

Cross the river via the Tramway Bridge (2) with Cox's Yard to your left. Turn right at the end to access the riverside gardens with a view back to the bridge (3). Continue along the river bank with the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (4) on the opposite side.

A town plan and guide for Stow-on-the-Wold can be found at :
https://www.cotswolds.com/dbimgs/Stow%20on%20the%20Wold%20Town%20Leaflet%20for%20Web.pdf

If the bus timings are favourable, it is well worth stopping off at Stow-on-the-Wold for an hour or so before continuing the final 10 minute bus ride to one of the jewels of the Cotswolds - Bourton-on-the-Water. This town is situated on the River Windrush and the river flanks the High Street and is crossed by a series of footbridges.



A fine open garden fills the area between the river and the High Street.

The town boasts a number of attractions - Motor Museum, Model Railway, Birdland. Plenty of cafes and pubs are available for food and drink. The town even has its own model village - which is a model of the town itself. Of course, included in the model village is a model of the model village! A visit to the visitor information centre will provide further information.

The final two onward destinations from Moreton-in-Marsh are both Cotswold jewels. However, buses are very infrequent so you will need to research connections carefully before travelling. Buses are provided by Stagecoach Midlands services 1 and 2 and details are available at : https://tiscon-maps-stagecoachbus.s3.amazonaws.com/Timetables/Midlands/Leamington%20Timetables/July2024/S123_TT_240720.pdf

The first destination is the market town of Chipping Campden which can be reached on both service 1 and service 2. Journey time is about 30 minutes on service 2 and about 50 minutes on service 1. There are a total of 6 buses per day (Monday to Saturday) in each direction.

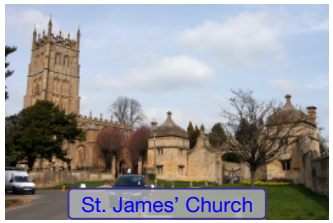
Chipping Campden is a beautiful Cotswold market town with fine historic buildings constructed with Cotswold stone. The railway line from Worcester to Oxford passes within a mile of the town but unfortunately the station closed in 1966. There is a local campaign to reopen the station.

The town centre is a conservation area with many listed buildings. St. James' Church dates from 1400, the Market Hall from 1627, while the almshouses in Church Street pre-date this by 15 years. A map and guide to the town is available at :
https://www.cotswolds.com/dbimgs/Chipping%20Campden%20Town%20Leaflet%20for%20web.pdf

Town Hall

Chipping Campden
High Street and War Memorial

Church Street Almshouses


St. James' Church

East Banqueting Hall

Market Hall

The final onward destination is Broadway which is a 30 minute journey on bus service 1. Unfortunately, there are only three return journeys per day. Broadway does have its own railway station on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway which means that it is reachable from Cheltenham. There is a long term aspiration to extend the line to Honeybourne, which would give a direct connection with trains to and from Worcester. The tourist area is essentially the High Street as these photos show.

Broadway

In conclusion, Moreton-in-Marsh is the gateway for onward travel to some Cotswolds gems as well as a fine town to visit in its own right.

THE GREAT BRITISH RAILWAY STATION USER
by Roger Davis

Buoyed by the success of "The Great British Bake Off", "The Great British Menu", "The Great British Sewing Bee" and the subsequently retitled "The Great British Artist", "The Great British Jewellery Maker", "The Great British Make-Up Artist" and "The Great British Drag Act", the BBC commissioned two production companies, Lichfield TV and Rugeley TV, to produce a new series. It will be entitled "The Great British Railway Station User" as attempts to Americanise it with the title "The Great British Train Station User" have thankfully failed. It will be shown prime time on BBC1 and will be introduced by renowned rail eggheads Stacey Dooley and Maya Jama with a panel of "National Treasures" consisting of Craig Revel Horwood, Joey Essex, Gemma Collins, Jamie Laing and Holly Willoughby.

The programme, which was actually recorded in Summer 2021, features twelve regular rail users undertaking a series of tasks with the worst two facing a vote off each week to determine which one is asked to "leave the platform" (catchy, eh?).

Initial filming saw teething problems with some of the tasks proving far too easy for the contestants to complete :–

- travelling for 8 hours on a West Midlands Railway service without a ticket
- travelling on a CrossCountry service running more than an hour late
- travelling on a train that skipped all stops from Jewellery Quarter to Lye
- travelling on a short-formed Class 172 service
- recording a really annoying announcement on an Avanti West Coast Train

One other task proved impossible – visiting one station starting with each letter from A to Z, although one contestant claimed all 26 letters as he thought that Exeter St. David's started with an "X" and that Zermatt was in the UK. Another task to travel from Barmouth to Great Yarmouth with exactly nine changes of train resulted in three nervous breakdowns and one passenger stranded at Stranraer.

The quest to ride on the first HS2 train ended in disaster (BBC)

Television crews were seen on the Stourbridge line for two assignments. The task to visit every station with a three letter name resulted in the footfall at Lye doubling on 22 August, while another task to visit three stations suffixed "Green" as quickly as possible saw plenty of activity on our trains, although cancellations and skip-stop operations meant that it took over six hours to reach Langley Green, Hall Green and Acocks Green.

One outcome of the "Great British" series of BBC programmes was that Grant Shapps and Keith Williams pinched the idea and decided to rebrand the rail network as "Great British Railways". The BBC has said that it only allowed this when the Conservative Party banished Nadine Borris from the House of Commons.

The Great British Railway Station User premieres on BBC1 on 2 October at 9 p.m.

There was then a break of three years to 3 April 2004 before I embarked on my final railtour for reasons I will elucidate later. On this occasion, the train from Worcester Shrub Hill picked up at Kidderminster (0600) and Stourbridge Junction (0613) before heading via High Wycombe, Kensington Olympia and Redhill to Kent. Pathfinder once again provided three options, alighting at Headcorn for a coach to Leeds Castle, at Ashford International for a coach to Dover Castle or at Canterbury West to explore this fine cathedral city at your leisure. I chose the final option and enjoyed a stay of over 4 hours in Canterbury. The return journey followed a different route via Ramsgate, Margate, Clapham Junction, Staines, Reading and Oxford to regain the outward route at Aynho Junction, south of Banbury. Stourbridge Junction was reached just after half past ten after an enjoyable day out.

Canterbury Cathedral

35005 Canadian Pacific stands at Southampton Docks

During the period between 1997 and 2000, there were also opportunities to join railtours at either Birmingham New Street or Wolverhampton. During these years, I visited Settle and Carlisle, Dover, Durham and Norwich by diesel train. A trip to Southampton Docks was hauled by Southern Railway Merchant Navy Class locomotive 35005 *Canadian Pacific,* while *King Edward I* hauled excursions to Carlisle and Holyhead.

However, the turn of the century marked the end of my excursions from Stourbridge Junction on organised railtours. By that time, train operators such as Central Trains, First Great Western and Wales and Borders had special promotions to encourage leisure travel. In addition, Virgin Trains were offering advance tickets at ridiculously low prices while the company also introduced Megatrain tickets which allowed travel on certain services at prices as low as £1. I managed to travel from Birmingham to Bournemouth and back on a number of occasions using a Megatrain ticket.

With these offers coinciding with an increase in railtour prices, I decided to organise my own days out. Even so, had it not been for the railtour companies who offered trips from the Stourbridge line to all parts of the country, I don't think that I would have got the bug of travelling Britain by train. They should be commended for the way in which they promoted rail travel. Current train operators should take note!

Bournemouth could be reached for £2 return!

UNUSUAL SERVICES ON THE STOURBRIDGE LINE
3. TO AND FROM BARRY ISLAND IN 1950 by John Warren

In 1950, the Western Region of British Railways introduced a holiday special which ran on Saturdays only during the school summer holidays. The destination was the South Wales resort of Barry Island which, at that time, was famous for its amusement park which contained the biggest wood built roller coaster (or scenic railway as it was known) ever erected in the UK with a track of just over a mile long and an initial climb and drop of seventy two feet. I am not sure how extensive holiday accommodation was on the "island" as it would be another 16 years before Billy Butlin opened his holiday camp there. It would also be another 57 years before Barry Island gained national notoriety as the backdrop for the BBC series *Gavin and Stacey*.

A train leaves Barry Island station in the 1950s. The scenic railway is in the background

Direct services ran in each direction, with the southbound service from Kidderminster operating on the six Saturdays from 22 July to 26 August at the following times.

Kidderminster 0750, Droitwich Spa 0805, Worcester Foregate Street 0817, Malvern Link 0829, Malvern (Great) 0834, Colwall 0843, Ledbury 0854, Hereford 0923, Pontypool Road 1015, Newport High Street 1034, Cardiff General 1116, Cadoxton 1133, Barry Docks 1136, Barry 1141, Barry Island 1144

The return journeys started a week later on 29 July and continued until 2 September. These services ran through to Birmingham Snow Hill at the following times.

Barry Island 1025, Barry 1030, Barry Docks 1034, Cadoxton 1038, Cardiff General 1110, Newport High Street 1130, Pontypool Road 1155, Hereford 1305, Ledbury 1331, Colwall 1340, Malvern (Great) 1350, Malvern Link 1353, Worcester Foregate Street 1405, Droitwich Spa 1415, Kidderminster 1427, Stourbridge Junction 1442, Birmingham Snow Hill 1512

Barry Island in 2014

Today, a trip to Barry Island from the Stourbridge line via the same route would involve three changes - Droitwich Spa or Worcester Foregate Street, Hereford and Cardiff Central. The alternative route via Birmingham would involve getting from Smethwick Galton Bridge, Snow Hill or Moor Street to New Street, followed by a change of train at Cardiff Central. Unfortunately, holiday specials are a thing of the past.

BY CHARTER TRAIN FROM STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION
3 : PATHFINDER TOURS by John Warren

1996 saw another rail charter company running regular excursions from the Stourbridge line. This company was Pathfinder Tours who were based in Woodchester, Gloucestershire, just a stone's throw from England's most successful village football team – Forest Green Rovers. Like Eagle Railtours, which was featured in the previous edition of this series, 1950s carriages were used. However, some tours were partially run using preserved steam locomotives rather than the usual diesels, adding to the appeal … and the price!

My first experience of a Pathfinder service was on 22 June 1996 with a trip to Cornwall. The train picked me up at Stourbridge Junction at 0657 and stopped at Kidderminster 10 minutes later. The destination was Penzance, although there were options to alight at Plymouth, Truro and St. Erth. I opted for Truro, which offered a river cruise to Falmouth as part of the cost. A departure from Truro at about 1800 saw the excursion get back to Stourbridge Junction shortly after midnight.

The following Saturday, I joined a train at 0857 at Stourbridge Junction for a day out in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The train followed the direct route via Sheffield, Pontefract and York in each direction and allowed just over 2 hours in Newcastle. Arrival back at Stourbridge Junction was a lot earlier than the previous week at about half past eight as the train continued through Kidderminster to Bristol Parkway, Bath, Chippenham and Swindon.

6024 King Edward I on arrival at Paddington

The next two journeys both featured GWR King Class locomotive 6024 *King Edward I*. On 5 October 1996, passengers were picked up at Kidderminster at 0934 by a diesel hauled train. However, the first part of their journey did not last long, as everybody detrained at Stourbridge for it to be moved into the sidings and the diesel locomotive replaced by the King. The train then ran steam-hauled to London Paddington using the old GWR route via Banbury and High Wycombe. Four hours were allowed in London which enabled me to explore the areas around Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Royal Albert Hall and South Kensington. The return trip was via Didcot (where the steam engine was replaced by diesel), Swindon and Cheltenham with a drop off at Stourbridge Junction at about a quarter past eleven.

On 5 April 1997, I again enjoyed travelling behind 6024 on a trip to Plymouth. The diesel hauled train picked me up at Stourbridge Junction at 0718 and further pick ups at Kidderminster, Worcester Shrub Hill, Cheltenham Spa, Bristol Parkway and Bristol Stapleton Road got us to Taunton, where the steam engine was attached. The main reason for the tour was to travel behind a steam locomotive over the formidable West Country banks - Wellington, Dainton, Rattery and Hemerden. What surprised me was the number of people who lined the famous sea wall at Dawlish and Teignmouth, many of them waving at the train. (Why do people wave at steam trains?).

Haverthwaite and Lakeside Railway

One thing that Pathfinder did well was to organise trips away from the train as the river cruise to Falmouth mentioned earlier proved. On 14 June 1997, it organised a tour from Cardiff to the border city of Carlisle, picking up at Kidderminster (0819) and Stourbridge Junction (0828). One option was to alight at Oxenholme for an organised tour of the Lake District. Coaches were ready at Oxenholme to transport passengers to Haverthwaite station on the Haverthwaite and Lakeside Steam Railway. A trip up the line to Lakeside was followed by a boat ride over Lake Windermere to Bowness and some free time before the coaches transported us back to Oxenholme to rejoin the train back to Stourbridge Junction, arriving at a quarter to nine.

Of course, some days were longer than others. Saturday 9 August 1997 saw a trip to Edinburgh which would depart from Stourbridge Junction at 0510 and arrive back at about half past nine. However, this was not as long as some passengers had experienced as the train had started at Swindon at 0218 and got back home 22 hours later. The train travelled to Edinburgh via the West Coast Main Line through Crewe and Carlisle and returned via the East Coast Main Line through Newcastle, York and Doncaster. A break of over three hours gave me the opportunity to explore the beautiful Scottish capital city.

Waiting for the eclipse at Plymouth Hoe

An even earlier start was necessary for the next trip although this was necessary due to a special event taking place – the total eclipse of the sun on 11 August 1999. It meant starting out before 0300 to arrive at Plymouth at 0725. A full day in the city which included being on Plymouth Hoe as the sun disappeared behind the moon … and, unfortunately, a lot of cloud! A departure at 1809 got us back to Stourbridge Junction just after half past ten.

Yet another early start (0537) greeted my final steam excursion from Stourbridge Junction, this time to Penzance on 7 April 2001. The train was diesel hauled apart from outward run from Taunton to Penzance. On this occasion, the train was double headed using GWR Castle Class number 5029 *Nunney Castle* and GWR Hall Class number 4936 *Kinlet Hall*. This allowed a break of just over 1½ hours at Penzance before we returned via the same route and finally getting back to Stourbridge Junction after midnight.

5029 and 4936 wait at Taunton to haul the railtour to Penzance