

MANAGES ERRATA (or ANAGRAM TEASER) - No 2

The clues below are all anagrams of either stations or locations on the Stourbridge line or stations served by direct trains from the Stourbridge line.

All you have to do is unravel the anagrams. The answers will be given in the next issue.

1. ENRAGE COCKS
2. GANGRENE YELL
3. GERMAN TRAVEL
4. GET WATER FOR SECRET STEREO
5. HEY CATHEDRAL
6. I BACK VOODOO HURT
7. I SORELY GREW
8. IN HELL NOT DULL
9. MINDER SKIRTED
10. NAKED BLOW
11. ORDER DIG
12. PIGS RUB RHINOCEROS

DO YOU KNOW?

Where a Brunel designed viaduct still exists in our area.

The Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway built five viaducts between Worcester and Dudley - at Hoobrook (south of Kidderminster), Blakedown, Stambermill, Brettell Lane (south of the station) and Parkhead. All were Brunel designed wooden viaducts. The first three of these were rebuilt in the early 1880s by building a brick viaduct alongside and then demolishing the Brunel example.

Brettell Lane



At Brettell Lane, the 390 feet long and 55 feet high viaduct had been filled in earlier using cinder and other materials from local foundries to form an embankment with the viaduct buried inside it. Whether it is still there is unknown as the embankment was reconstructed in 1972 after subsidence problems that had afflicted this section of line for over 15 years.



Parkhead Viaduct

However, Parkhead Viaduct was replaced in 1877-1878 by encasing the wooden viaduct with about 1 million bricks. Whether the existence of the original wooden structure inside it has contributed towards the viaduct's current poor state of repair is anybody's guess, but it is estimated that repairs would cost between £10 million and £20 million.

NAME THE STATION ANSWERS - No 2 : STREET

Here are the answers to Name The Station 2 which featured in the previous issue.

1 - Havenstreet, 2 - Glastonbury and Street, 3 - Streetly, 4 - Wolverhampton Queen Street, 5 - Blake Street, 6 - Liverpool Street, 7 - Fenchurch Street, 8 - Tipton Owen Street, 9 - Worcester Foregate Street, 10 - Liverpool Lime Street

PLATFORM 2



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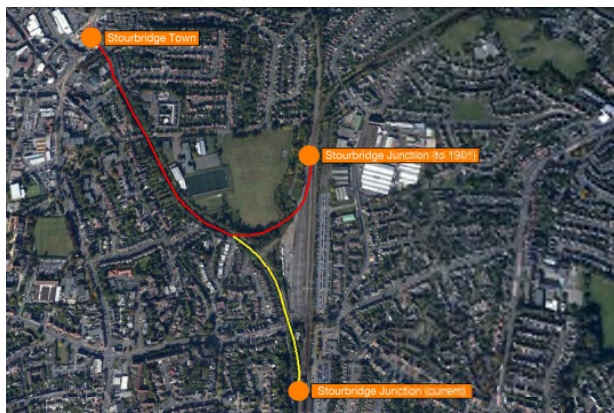
CONTENTS

- 2 Stourbridge Line Branches : Stourbridge Junction to Stourbridge Town
- 6 A Century of the Stourbridge Town Branch
- 7 Striking The Right Chord
- 9 Diesel and Electric Locos with Stourbridge Line Connections
- 10 Walking The Line
- 12 Anagram Teaser 2
- 12 Do You Know ?
- 12 Name The Station 2 - Answers

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PASSENGER BRANCHES OF THE STOURBRIDGE LINE
5 : STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION TO STOURBRIDGE TOWN by Roger Davis

This is the fifth in a series of seven articles that looks at the branch lines that fed into the Stourbridge line between Smethwick and Droitwich Spa, working down the line from north to south.



The opening of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway in 1852 saw the opening of Stourbridge station. However, this station was neither of the existing stations - it was about 3/8 mile north of the current Stourbridge Junction station just south of Junction Road. This station was not convenient for the town centre, so a line was built from it to a new station situated just south of Foster Street. This opened

on 1 October 1879 and ran south from the OWW station, now renamed Stourbridge Junction, before turning sharply right and heading in a north westerly direction to the town centre station, which was simply named Stourbridge. The line was built with double track throughout, the line from the Junction being the down line. The town centre station was a single 298 feet long platform built on the down side of the line and possessed a fine station building. On 1 January 1880, the up line was extended down a steep 1 in 27 incline beyond the station to serve the goods depot at Amblecote.

Double track continued past the station over a very low bridge which spanned Foster Street, before the down line terminated about 150 yards past the station. A crossover onto the up line at this point allowed steam locomotives to be released to run around their trains. Trains leaving Stourbridge on a train bound for Stourbridge Junction used the down line for the first 100 yards before crossing to the up line.



The first major change to the branch occurred on 1 October 1901 when the original two platform Stourbridge Junction station closed and was replaced by the four platform station that is still in use today, albeit with one less platform. This meant that the branch was realigned at its southern end to follow the route that exists today.



Aldersley Stadium marks the northern end of the walk



Tettenhall Station is now home to Cupcake Lane tearoom



Tettenhall Station booking office and goods depot still exist



The Meccano Bridge is about 1/2 mile south of Tettenhall



Compton Bridge carries the railway over the Bridgnorth Road



The platform face at Compton Halt is still intact



Castlecroft Bridge. The canal and Wightwick are to the west



Wightwick Manor is about 1/2 mile walk from Castlecroft Bridge.



Wombourne Station houses the Railway Cafe



The Bratch Pumphouse is about 1/4 mile from Wombourne Station



The Bratch Locks are just past the Pumphouse



Wombourne village green is about 1/4 mile from Planks Lane



Himley Station platform is just visible beneath the vegetation



Himley Church is 1/4 mile from the A449 bridge



Himley House and Park is 3/4 mile from the A449 bridge

WALKING THE LINE by Roger Davis



In issue 6 of *Platform 2*, the history of the railway line between Stourbridge Junction and Oxley was discussed. Since the closure of the line to all traffic in 1968, the section from Ham Lane, Kingswinford to Aldersley Stadium has been opened as a footpath and named the South Staffordshire Railway walk as far as Castlecroft and the Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve from there to Aldersley.

For anybody using a car, parking is available at Himley, Wombourne and Tettenhall and, at the last two locations, a circular walk is possible by leaving the railway line and walking a short distance to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to return to your starting point.

Public transport users will find that regular bus services serve various points along the line, so it is possible to walk a section of the line before catching a bus back to your starting point. For instance, anybody travelling from Stourbridge Junction could catch the town car into Stourbridge, a 256 bus to a number of points up to Wombourne before walking a section of the line to pick up a bus service back to Wolverhampton, where a 256 bus will return them to Stourbridge.

The following photographs were taken along the line and at locations close to the line during 2016 by the author.

KEY

- Free Parking is available at this site
- A cafeteria is normally open at this site
- Access to Staffs and Worcs Canal
- Connecting bus services :
- 1 Tettenhall Wood - Wolverhampton - Dudley
- 3 Castlecroft - Wolverhampton - Fordhouses
- 6/6A Wobaston - Wolverhampton
- 10 Perton - Wolverhampton
- 255 Merry Hill Centre - Wolverhampton
- 256 Stourbridge - Wolverhampton
- 257 Stourbridge - Dudley



Aldersley Stadium 0.00 miles 6/6A
Tettenhall Station 0.80 miles 1
Compton Bridge 1.68 miles 10
Compton Halt 1.83 miles 10
Castlecroft Bridge 2.50 miles 3
Lower Penn 3.83 miles
Wombourne Station 5.31 miles 255/256
Planks Lane 5.82 miles 255
Common Road 6.20 miles 256
Bridgnorth Road 6.65 miles 256
Himley Station 7.17 miles 256
A449 Road Bridge 7.66 miles 256
Ham Lane 8.11 miles 257

Economy measures during World War I saw the line closed from 29 March 1915 to 1 May 1919 and, on reopening, timetables renamed the station as Stourbridge Town, although all the signage at the station still displayed the name Stourbridge.

The 1922 timetable shows that 46 services operated in each direction on Mondays to Saturdays, with 3 services in each direction having first class accommodation as well as third class. By 1932, this had increased to 62 services in each direction.



In 1935, the signal box that stood opposite the station alongside the up line (almost on the same spot as the current station) was closed, the crossover south of the station was removed, and the branch was operated as two separate parallel single lines - the down line being a bidirectional passenger line and the up line a bidirectional goods line. North of the station, a buffer stop was installed with a wagon parked behind it and sleepers piled up

behind that to stop trains reaching the crossover there. At the same time, the railmotors which had operated most of the services since the line reopened were replaced by auto trains - a locomotive pulling an auto coach down the slope from Junction to Town and propelling the train back to the Junction. The position of the engine was for safety reasons given that the branch was downhill at 1 in 67 from Junction to Town.

By the 1950s, the auto trains were operated by ex-GWR 14xx 0-4-2T locomotives based at Stourbridge shed. These engines were famed for their performance on auto-trains, especially on services from Gloucester Central to Chalford in the Stroud Valley. On journeys back to Gloucester when propelling their train, they often got engaged in a race with LMS Jubilee Class express locomotives on the adjacent Bristol to Birmingham line, and often won the race. If a 14xx locomotive was not available, a 64xx 0-6-0PT locomotive was brought in from Wolverhampton Stafford Road shed. Steam operation was replaced by diesel operation from late 1956 when GWR "Flying Banana" railcars were moved to Stourbridge shed to operate the service.

1957 saw two very significant developments. The first was purely cosmetic when the suffix "Town" was finally added to the station's name boards. However, in October and November, the passenger line was truncated to terminate at the end of the platform to the south of Foster Street. The double track bridge over Foster Street was removed and replaced by a single track bridge for the goods line. At the same time the abutments and trackbed were raised by 2 feet and Foster Street was lowered by 4 feet to enable double decker buses to use Foster Street.

In 1959, the GWR railcars based at Stourbridge shed were withdrawn from service and replaced by modern Tyseley based bubble cars that would become Class 121 and 122 vehicles when TOPS classification was introduced in 1968/69.

The 1960s and the closure of the line from Wolverhampton to Stourbridge Junction had an effect on the Town branch. In early 1964, British Rail announced that they intended to close both Amblecote Goods Depot and Stourbridge Town station, even though neither the line nor the station were in the hit list of closures in the previous year's Beeching Report. As it turned out, the threat of closure of the Town Branch was lifted, but Amblecote Goods Depot closed in July 1965, the goods line was lifted and the bridge over Foster Street was removed on 24 September 1967, a brick wall being built on the south side of Foster Street. The station itself became an unstaffed halt from July 1967. Today, there is no trace of the line north of Stourbridge Town to Amblecote Goods Depot.

Stourbridge Town Station Building



(D Allen)

A second attempt, in November 1970, to close the line to save £30,000 per year was staved off. The fine station building, which was deteriorating and had lost its canopies during the 1970s, was finally demolished in February 1979 when the platform was cut back by 70 yards and fitted with a temporary building as a booking office and a bus shelter. The site of the station forecourt, the station building and the adjoining trackbed was redeveloped as the first version of the bus station.



Stourbridge Town (1970s)

(Marilyn Hüben)



Stourbridge Town (1980s)

(E J Dew)

The 1990s saw the introduction of new Class 153 single car units onto the line to replace the aging Class 121/122 bubble cars. There had been braking issues with the older units which resulted in them overrunning the buffers in 1977, 1989 and 1990, on the first occasion crashing through the wall and finishing up overhanging Foster Street. The Class 153s had been used on the Stourbridge line previously in their original guise as 2-car Class 155 units which were used on the Birmingham - Stourbridge Junction - Cardiff services. During 1991 and 1992, the 35 2-car units were converted into 70 single car units and redesignated as Class 153.

DIESEL AND ELECTRIC LOCOS WITH STOURBRIDGE LINE CONNECTIONS

by John Warren

The following are named diesel locomotives with Stourbridge line connections. Please let us know if you can add to this list and we will publish them.

Class 08



08 849 West Bromwich Albion

Class 37



37 114 City of Worcester

Class 43



43 053 University of Worcester

Class 50



50 007 Sir Edward Elgar

Class 67



67 014 Thomas Telford

Class 86



86 245 Dudley Castle

Class 87



87 009 City of Birmingham

Class 92



92 009 Elgar

Class 390



390 032/132 City of Birmingham

Class 31



31 106 The Blackcountryman
31 233/413 Severn Valley Railway

Class 47/57



47 590/825 Thomas Telford
47 607/821 Royal Worcester
47 828 Severn Valley Railway
57 308 County of Staffordshire

Class 220



220 025 Severn Voyager
220 028 Black Country Voyager

A CENTURY OF THE STOURBRIDGE TOWN BRANCH



GWR Railmotor



GWR 1400 Class 0-4-2T Autotrain



GWR 6400 Class 0-6-0PT Autotrain



GWR "Flying Banana" AEC Railcar



BR Class 122 Bubblecar



BR Class 153 Sprinter DMU



Class 999 PPM 50 Railcar



Class 139 PPM 60 Railcar

STRIKING THE RIGHT CHORD

by Rob Hebron

Rebuilding railways or laying completely new lines is costly and not undertaken on a whim. Where there are other modal options, they have to be considered. There is another engineering solution which also enhances journey opportunity – the chord. The chord is a length of track which joins two diverging railway lines at two or more points. A chord does not necessarily have a junction station at each intersection or an intermediate halt. In essence it uses existing infrastructure to create new end-to-end journeys. A chord may be laid on a flat bed or on a flyover. The curvature of the track may require more land than a straightforward new railway and furthermore, the cost of junctions each end plus their effect on line must also be considerations.

The portion of the Severn Valley Railway between Kidderminster and Bewdley was effectively a chord in a triangular diagram but by virtue of its length, it could be defined as a branch of the SVR. With the closure of the route between Hartlebury and Bewdley (the original SVR), the newer section is now technically a main line.

Another type of junction or railway appendage is a spur. Spurs traditionally enabled joint working of separately owned tracks and stations. From Dudley station (pre-closure), the LNWR line passed under Tipton Road and headed north east, soon passing over (the later) A4123 Birmingham New Road, bridging the Birmingham Canal and Sedgley Road at Sedgley Junction, where the spur to Dudley Port High Level station diverged left. This spur has long since been lifted and the land used for housing, precluding any physical connection between a re-laid Stourbridge to Walsall Line and the Stour Valley Line. The main line then passed under the Stour Valley line and through the Low Level station, continuing north east in a cutting to Horseley Junction where a connection to the GWR main line diverged east.

In the late 1990's, the concept of a new chord from the Stourbridge Line was being promoted. The so-called Soho Pool Link was a possible way of linking the newly re-opened Jewellery Line with the Perry Barr Junctions Line. The West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive identified the chord as a means of diverting local passenger traffic out of Birmingham New Street. Chiltern Railways investigated the proposal with a view to expanding its West Midlands operation. In the end, Chiltern decided to concentrate on the London end of its operations:

A Chiltern Class 168 on the Bicester Curve with a classmate on the main line behind it.



(6089gardener)

The Bicester curve is a Chiltern Railways infrastructure project which has been fully realised. It joins together the former GWR and LNWR main lines and eventually will form part of the East-West Rail Link with trains running between Milton Keynes and Bedford. The curve provides an alternative route between London and Oxford, serving Marylebone rather than Paddington and new stations at Oxford Parkway and Bicester Village.