

Further down the line at Kidderminster, visitors to the Severn Valley Railway are greeted by a giant poster of a steam locomotive advertising the Great Western Railway. Is this art? Of course, it is! Even though it is a print it is a permanent feature and represents all that is great about a by-gone age (8).



Art is for everyone. Art is everywhere, whether it is a decoration or a stand-alone piece of work. It should inspire or at least provoke a reaction. If it goes unnoticed, it has not fulfilled its purpose – it is art for art's sake!

THE DAFTA AWARDS

The **TomTom award for the clearest directions** goes to the GWR senior conductor for the following announcement. "Can I remind all passengers who have just joined this train at Reading that this is the service to Exeter, Plymouth and Penzance. If you are travelling to Didcot, Swindon, Bath, Bristol, Cardiff or South Wales, please get off now as we turn left in a bit".

ALL IN THE NAME – DROITWICH SPA

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

- 1 An edible pale-green nut (9)
- 2 A large African swift-running flightless bird (7)
- 3 Juicy soft fruits, smaller than peaches (8)
- 4 Two-wheeled vehicles drawn by horses (8)
- 5 Used to send a short message by mail without an envelope (8)
- 6 Important or likely to be important in the past (8)
- 7 A mounted man with a lance in a bull fight (7)
- 8 An armoured vessel of the Royal Navy (7)

TRAIN TRACKS QUIZ 2 - ANSWERS

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

- 1 - Last Train To San Fernando, 2 - Morning Train (Nine to Five), 3 - Crazy Train, 4 - Freight Train, 5 - Last Train To Trancentral, 6 - Runaway Train, 7 - Love Train, 8 - Friendship Train

Platform 2

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CHANGE AT WORCESTER FOR GLOUCESTER

by Roger Davis

This is the seventh 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.

Gloucester is the only cathedral city in Gloucestershire. The train journey from Worcester takes about 35 minutes on a Great Western Railway service to Bristol Temple Meads.



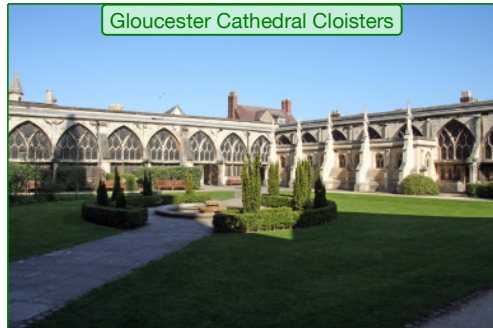
Gloucester once had two railway stations at Central and Eastgate (connected by a footbridge), but the latter closed in 1975, meaning that through services from the Midlands to Bristol now have to reverse at Gloucester. The station is on the edge of the city centre and only 1/3 mile from the city's fine cathedral. This is reached by walking down the station drive, crossing the dual carriageway at the lights, going straight ahead past the new bus station on the right, and then turning right along Station Road and continuing straight ahead along St. Aldgate Street. A left turn into Northgate Street and right into St. John's Lane will get you to the cathedral precincts.



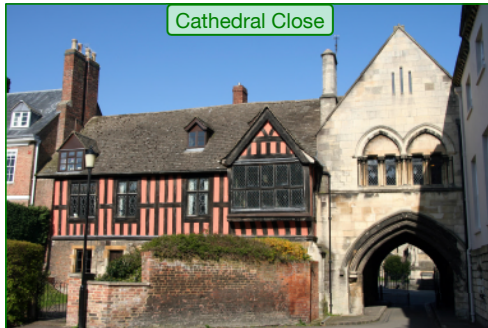
Gloucester Cathedral



Gloucester Cathedral



Gloucester Cathedral Cloisters



Cathedral Close

At Saltwells Nature Reserve in Netherton, there is an iron sculpture by local artist, Luke Perry which depicts a locomotive which was employed on the Pensnett Railway (3). The Saltwells section of line was lifted in 1952 and so it is a fitting memorial to Dudley's industrial past. Luke's work can also be seen in Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge which is a twenty-minute walk from Stourbridge Junction railway station.

Gornal itself, has also lost its railway lines including its passenger halt which was closed in 1932. Major recent housing development in the area has included a representation of a locomotive, constructed of bricks or tiles as a reference to the local industry, to commemorate the Shut End Railway to Ashwood Basin (4).



3



4

Although has Dudley lost its railway station in Castle Hill, visitors will be able to arrive by tram when Metro Line 2 has opened. In the vicinity (Castle Gate Island), there are historic and industrial-themed sculptures. Among them are a bronze crucible, a replica stone wall, a heraldic lion, and a cannon with cannon balls. These are the work of sculptor, Andrew Burton (5).

Returning to the Stourbridge Line, situated at Lye Cross near Lye station, there is a fine tribute to actor and director, Sir Cedric Hardwicke (1893-1964). A sculpture in the form of a film reel was created by Tim Tolkien in 2005 (6).



5



6

At Stourbridge Junction, a quirky 3.5m clock tower overlooks the car park. It was commissioned by Centro, (now TfWM), designed and constructed by Anuradha Patel in 1996. Its vivid colours and modernity caused controversy at the time. However, the recesses on all four sides are a testament to Stourbridge's glass industry - they are representations of wine flute glasses (7).

ART FOR ART'S SAKE - PART 1

by Rob Hebron

Amongst my favourite TV programmes, there is one which is unmissable: "The Architecture the Railways Built" is broadcast on the U&Yesterday channel (Freeview 27) or can be found at <https://uktvplay.co.uk/shows/the-architecture-the-railways-built/watch-online>.

The presenter, Tim Dunn has a wealth of knowledge on the subject and his enthusiasm is infectious! It is generally accepted that art of architecture is in the design and is further embellished by craftsmen. For an extreme example of design and adornment, one should visit London's St Pancras Station (or watch Season 1, Episode 6). This edifice was designed by George Gilbert Scott and William Henry Barlow. The station opened in 1868 and is classed as "Gothic Revival" style. Here, no expense has been spared by the Midland Railway to provide a lavish terminus and proudly establish its presence in the Capital.



Railway art is distinct from railway architecture. Art is an interpretation of a subject but does not need to be viewed within a railway environment. A David Shepherd painting of a steam locomotive would be wasted if it was hanging in a station waiting room. A gallery is the best place to view an oil painting but alas, many masterpieces find their way into private collections. Here they appreciate in value but are not appreciated in the other meaning of the word.

In the West Midlands and Worcestershire, we are fortunate to be bequeathed railway art in various media. It's all a matter of taste. I believe all of my chosen examples enhance the surroundings. Many are a pictorial reference to a period in history: -

In Birmingham, there are small mosaics at the bottom of the steps from Snow Hill Station to Snow Hill Queensway (1) and (2). I think they replace the much larger mosaic that adorned the underpass at St Chad's Queensway which is now buried.



As well as visiting the magnificent cathedral, a complete walk around the exterior of the building reveals many fine buildings in the cathedral precincts and cathedral close.



Returning to Northgate Street and turning right brings you to the main shopping centre which is centred on the Cross and the four streets that radiate from it - Northgate, Eastgate, Southgate and Westgate Streets. Eastgate Street is the location of two shopping precincts - King's Walk and Eastgate Shopping Centre. By continuing along Southgate Street and turning right along Commercial Road, you will reach two other attractions. The first is Gloucester Prison, closed in 2013, which offers guided tours on selected dates. The other is Gloucester Docks which has been restored and offers a number of attractions. On the eastern side of Gloucester Docks is an outlet shopping centre called Gloucester Quays, while on the western side of the docks are the remains of Llanthony Segunda Priory, founded in 1136.



Further information on the attractions described above can be found as follows:

Gloucester Cathedral - <https://www.gloucestercathedral.org.uk/>

Gloucester Prison - <https://www.gloucester-prison.co.uk/tickets>

Gloucester Docks - <https://www.gloucesterdocks.me.uk/gloucester/forvisitors.htm>

Gloucester Quays - <https://www.gloucesterquays.co.uk/>

Llanthony Priory - <https://llanthysecunda.org/>

UNUSUAL SERVICES ON THE STOURBRIDGE LINE

7. TO AND FROM LONDON PADDINGTON IN THE 1990s by John Warren

Although through services between Wolverhampton Low Level and London Paddington via Worcester Shrub Hill were common in the steam era, they died out when the line between Wolverhampton and Stourbridge closed in 1962. A single service between Stourbridge Junction and London Paddington survived until 1963, while Kidderminster retained a through service until 1965 when the Cathedrals Express was withdrawn.

Therefore, it was a shock when the Network SouthEast sector of British Rail introduced a new service in October 1993 which ran from Birmingham New Street to London Paddington. The timings of the up journey, which gave Cradley Heath its first ever regular through service to London, were as follows.



Birmingham New Street 0900, Cradley Heath 0914, Stourbridge Junction 0920, Kidderminster 0929, Droitwich Spa 0940, Worcester Shrub Hill 0955, Pershore 1003, Evesham 1012, Moreton-in-Marsh 1027, Kingham 1034, Charlbury 1043, Hanborough 1050, Oxford 1103, Reading 1137, Slough 1154, London Paddington 1215

Unfortunately, the return service from London Paddington only ran as far as Stourbridge Junction as follows.

London Paddington 1248, Slough 1304, Reading 1324, Oxford 1400, Hanborough 1409, Charlbury 1416, Kingham 1425, Moreton-in-Marsh 1435, Evesham 1450, Worcester Shrub Hill 1508, Droitwich Spa 1516, Kidderminster 1526, Stourbridge Junction 1536

Given that the service was of little use to passengers from the West Midlands with only 33 minutes in London before the train returned, it was unsurprising that it proved a failure. The service from London only lasted a year, with the service to London surviving for a further seven months before it was withdrawn.

Since then, through services from the Stourbridge line to London have been operated by Chiltern Railways via Leamington Spa and High Wycombe. Worcestershire County Council has an aspiration for an hourly service between Paddington and Kidderminster. SLUG's aspiration is for this to be extended to Stourbridge Junction. All we can say is "Watch this space".

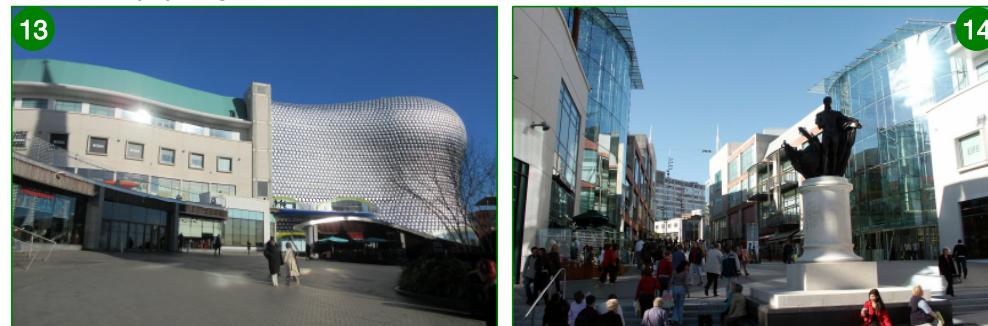
Turning left onto the path alongside the Old Fox bar leads into the Arcadian Centre (9), the heart of the Chinese Quarter. Go down the steps at the end, walk across the lower level and continue along the path (10) towards Pershore Street.



Turn left into Pershore Street (11) and cross the road at the lights. Continue up the road with the Indoor Market to your right and turn right into Edgbaston Street. The Indoor Market to your right is followed by the Rag Market. St Martin's Church appears to your left (12). Turn left just before the church, which is well worth a visit if it is open.



Follow the semi-circular path to your left up the slope, with the distinctive Selfridge's building to your right (13). When you reach the statue of Horatio Nelson (14), turn left a short distance up the slope and turn right into the Bull Ring Centre. Walk through the shopping centre to the exit. By crossing the dual carriageway of Moor Street Queensway, you get back to the main entrance of Moor Street station.





Enter the concourse of New Street station and walk to the large departure board at the far end, passing Ozzie the Bull (3). Turn left and exit the concourse with the London and North Western pub to your right. At the top of the steps, you can look down over Station Street, with the Electric Cinema (4), the oldest cinema in the country until closure in 2024. Walk down the steps (5), cross Hill Street and walk up Station Street. Continue up the steps to Suffolk Street Queensway and turn left. Walk down to the island with the Chinese Pagoda in the middle (6).



Cross over the road and turn left into Smallbrook Queensway. Turn first right into Hurst Street. The first major building to your right is Birmingham Hippodrome (7). On the opposite corner to your right are the “Back To Backs” (8) which have been restored by the National Trust and are open to the public via guided tours. Details are available at :-

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/birmingham-west-midlands/birmingham-back-to-backs>

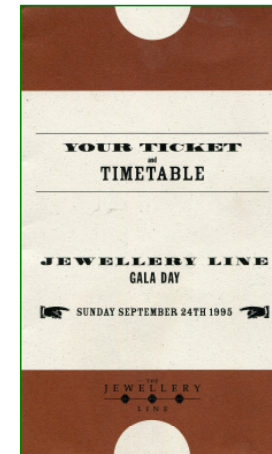


IS IT REALLY 30 YEARS?

by Roger Davis

Do you remember 1995? British Rail was still in existence, John Major was Prime Minister and the Queen urged Charles and Diana to divorce. In the US, O J Simpson surprisingly was found not guilty of murder while, in the UK, Fred West was found hanged in prison and his wife sentenced to life imprisonment for ten murders. In the West Midlands, there was no West Midlands Metro.

However, on Sunday 24 September at 09:50, the first passenger train for over 23 years headed north from Snow Hill station with a long list of dignitaries on board, including Shadow Transport Secretary John Prescott MP. The train was named "The Black Diamond" and was headed by ex-British Railways Standard 2-6-4T locomotive 80079, based at the Severn Valley Railway. It made lengthy stops at the new stations at Jewellery Quarter, The Hawthorns and Smethwick Galton Bridge to enable John Prescott to officially open them, before running non-stop to Stourbridge Junction and arriving at 11:22.



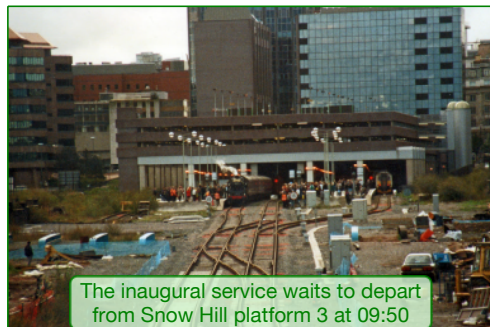
BLACK DIAMOND TIMETABLE		
BROWN TICKET HOLDERS	SNOW HILL TO STOURBRIDGE JUNC.	9.50
TAN TICKET HOLDERS	STOURBRIDGE JUNC. TO SNOW HILL	12.05
YELLOW TICKET HOLDERS	SNOW HILL TO STOURBRIDGE JUNC.	13.20
RED TICKET HOLDERS	STOURBRIDGE JUNC. TO SNOW HILL	14.40
BLUE TICKET HOLDERS	SNOW HILL TO STOURBRIDGE JUNC.	16.00
GREEN TICKET HOLDERS	STOURBRIDGE JUNC. TO SNOW HILL	17.20
GREY TICKET HOLDERS	SNOW HILL TO STOURBRIDGE JUNC.	18.40
PURPLE TICKET HOLDERS	STOURBRIDGE JUNC. TO SNOW HILL	20.00

THE USE OF A STEAM LOCOMOTIVE IS SUBJECT TO RAILTRACK RESTRICTIONS.
IF NECESSARY THE TRAIN SET WILL BE DIESEL HAULED.

[illegible]

The first train from Stourbridge Junction to Snow Hill was not a steam special but a scheduled Great Malvern to Leamington Spa service – two destinations that are no longer reachable on direct West Midlands Railway services on Sundays. This left Stourbridge Junction at 11:24, although I think that the dignitaries were transported back to Birmingham on a non-stop diesel service at 11:40. Thereafter, Steam Specials ran throughout the day for the general public. These trains sold out weeks before the event, with all passengers receiving the souvenir packs illustrated above.

The three new stations, plus Snow Hill and Stourbridge Junction, hosted gala events throughout the day, including a jazz band at all of these stations. Amongst other attractions at some of these stations were children's fun fairs, bouncy castles, a miniature railway, railwayana stalls and hot and cold refreshments.



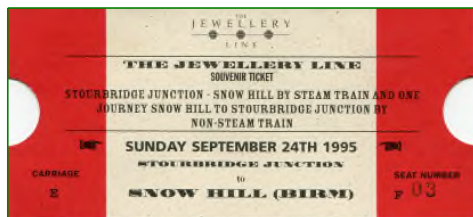
The inaugural service waits to depart from Snow Hill platform 3 at 09:50



The inaugural service arrives at The Hawthorns behind BR 2-6-4T 80079

My own day started early with a drive to the overbridge in Livery Street to photograph and video the train as it left Snow Hill at 09:50. Thereafter, I "chased" the train to the three new stations before finally taking video of it as it hurried through Rowley Regis. I then video recorded the 12:05 Stourbridge Junction to Snow Hill steam hauled service from the superb vantage point above the western portal of Old Hill Tunnel.

The afternoon was the high point of the day as far as I was concerned. I managed to get a ticket on the 14:40 service from Stourbridge Junction which meant a very enjoyable journey with the tank engine working very hard up Old Hill Bank. The hour or so at Snow Hill included browsing the various sales stands that had been set up for the occasion, before watching 80079 depart on the 16:00 service. My own journey back was on a more mundane diesel multiple unit at 16:20. However, Stourbridge Junction station was still a hive of activity and I waited until 17:20 to watch 80079 start its return journey to Snow Hill before heading home. In all, a very enjoyable day!



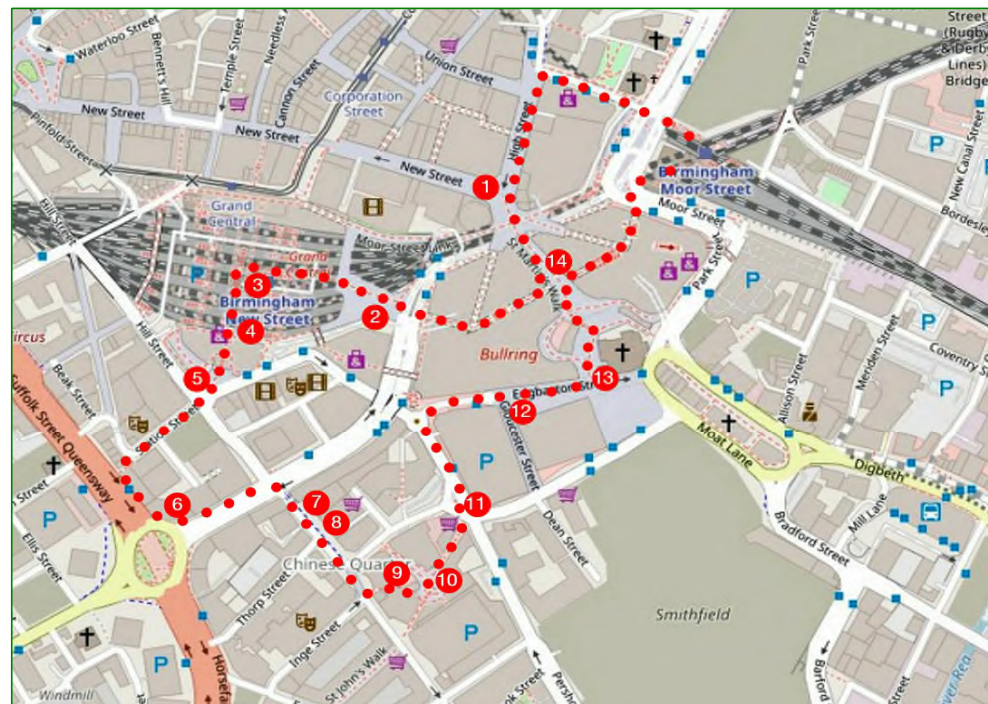
80079 at Stourbridge Junction before hauling the 14:40 service to Snow Hill

It's frightening to believe that it's 30 years since the Jewellery Line reopened. Many regular commuters today are too young to remember the days when our trains went into New Street, often having to wait at Galton Junction for our driver to "throw a six" to gain access to the Wolverhampton to New Street main line. Personally, I think the opening of the Jewellery Line improved our services. It also gave us an interchange station at Smethwick Galton Bridge, which has removed the need to travel into Birmingham to make connections to Shrewsbury and the North West. Here's to the next 30 years!

A WALK FROM THE STATION - BIRMINGHAM MOOR STREET

by John Warren

This is the seventh of a series that looks at what you can discover by taking a short(ish) walk from a station served directly by Stourbridge line trains. This walk is approximately 1.4 miles.



Leave the station from the north end of platform 1 and cross the dual carriageway into Carrs Lane. At the top of Carrs Lane, turn left into High Street. At the end of High Street, the Bull Ring Centre is in front of you with the large bronze bull (1) to the right. Head down the slope towards St Martin's Church. Turn right before the bottom of the slope and walk through the Bull Ring. Exit at the end and cross the road onto the concourse of New Street station (2).

