

Railway Magazine

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Former G.W.R. 2-6-2 tank No. 4147 at the head of a Birmingham Snow Hill to Leamington Spa local train at Lapworth in 1948



Photo: W. A. Camwell

THE GREAT WESTERN IN THE SHAKESPEARE COUNTRY

PART ONE

J. M. TOLSON

Stratford-on-Avon, once focus of intense inter-company rivalry, is now faced with withdrawal of three of its four passenger services

STRATFORD-ON-AVON, which, because of its fame as Shakespeare's birthplace, is one of Britain's main tourist attractions, has during the past four years been threatened with the withdrawal of three of its four remaining passenger services. Two of these, the services to Evesham and Worcester and that to Gloucester, were recently little more than token services and the latter has already been withdrawn, but the third service over the North Warwickshire line to Birmingham via Henley-in-Arden is one of real importance, serving as it does small villages with only a minimal public transport service, and its withdrawal will undoubtedly cause some hardship unless a greatly recast and improved bus service is implemented.

Stratford has long been a town of importance, and in 1817 was served by no less than 24 stage coaches daily. In fact, the first railway to reach it and by far the oldest line in the West Midlands was the result of an ambitious scheme surveyed in 1819-20 known as the Central Junction Railway which would have run from Stratford to Paddington via Moreton-in-Marsh, Oxford, Thame, Amersham and Uxbridge. Although this failed through lack of funds, a purely local venture—the Stratford & Moreton Railway Company—was authorised on May 28, 1821, to construct a 17-mile railway or tramroad from the canal at Stratford to Moreton-in-Marsh together with a short branch to Shipston-on-Stour.

The main line, built to the 4 ft.-gauge under the direction of Thomas Telford and worked by horses, was opened on September 5, 1826, but powers for the Shipston branch lapsed until an amended scheme was authorised on June 10, 1833, and the line opened in February, 1836. The tramway company did not act as carrier and traders who used the line had to provide their own wagons and pay tolls as on a turnpike road, but licences were issued for the conveyance of a limited number of passengers.

The tramway was leased in perpetuity by the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway from May 1, 1847, and converted to standard-gauge shortly before the opening of that railway from Wolvercot Junction near Oxford to Evesham in June, 1853. It was then strengthened to take main-line stock but horse traction continued, and on the opening of the O.W.W.R. Stratford branch in 1859, the section to Stratford was closed to passenger traffic. In 1882, however, the G.W.R. obtained powers to convert the nine miles from Moreton to Shipston for locomotive-hauled trains and laid in a new spur to facilitate through running between Moreton and Shipston. Work proceeded slowly and it was not until July 1, 1889, that a service of four mixed trains in each direction began running over the steeply-graded line on which severe speed restrictions were imposed.

Passenger services were withdrawn on July 8, 1929, and even a railway-owned bus failed to

stimulate traffic and was soon discontinued. The line was completely closed on May 2, 1960, but Shipston remained as a road-served depot until February 21, 1963. Freight traffic over the line to Stratford ceased about 1904, the track was lifted in 1917 and the line formally abandoned by the Act of August 4, 1926. Its course can still be seen and its most outstanding engineering feature, a bridge across the River Avon at Stratford near the Clopton Bridge, is still in use as a footbridge, while one of the tramway wagons is also preserved nearby.

Construction of the O.W.W.R. branch from Honeybourne to Stratford, authorised on July 27, 1846, proved an extremely long-winded affair. On August 2, 1848, a Commissioner's of Railways' Warrant under Seal granted an extension of time for construction until August 4, 1852, but this did not prove sufficient and a further Act of Parliament of June 30, 1852, allowed the time for purchase of

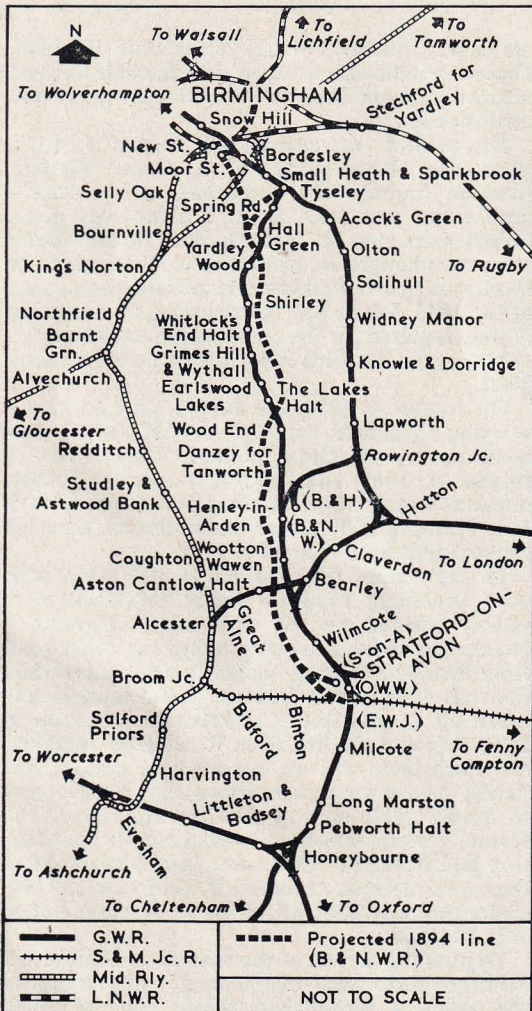
the land to be extended for one year and that for the construction of the line until June 30, 1854. Even this was not enough, but an Act of July 31, 1854, granting a further five-year extension for construction finally enabled the line to be opened on July 11, 1859.

Meanwhile, the railway was also nearing Stratford from the north, for on August 10, 1857, the nominally independent Stratford-on-Avon Railway had been authorised to construct a 9¼-mile single-track line from a junction with the Great Western Railway Birmingham-London main line at Hatton to a terminal station at Birmingham Road, Stratford, some distance from the proposed O.W.W.R. station. Unlike the branch from Honeybourne, which was one of standard-gauge, this line was to be provided with both broad- and standard-gauge tracks. Powers to raise capital of £65,000 in £20 shares and loans of up to £21,000 were obtained, and the line was ceremonially opened on October 9, 1860, while public services calling at intermediate stations at Claverdon, Bearley and Wilmcote began on the following day. Further capital of £17,500 in £10 shares and powers to raise up to £6,000 by loans were authorised in August, 1861. From July 1 of the same year arrangements came into force with the G.W.R. to work and maintain the line after the first year for 45-55 per cent of the gross receipts. This arrangement was to run for ten years and was renewable for a further ten with the G.W.R. responsible for providing all facilities for long-distance as well as local traffic.

To facilitate through traffic the local company was authorised, on May 17, 1861, to construct a 29-chain connection to the O.W.W.R. station (by this time part of the West Midland Railway). This section, between Stratford Goods Junction and the present passenger station, was brought into use on July 24 for excursions to Warwick, and a regular standard-gauge passenger service commenced between Leamington, Worcester and Malvern on August 1, 1861, using the new connection.

From January 1, 1863, Birmingham Road Station was closed to regular passenger traffic but continued to be used for excursions and freight. From the same date all regular trains from Hatton to Stratford were worked on the standard-gauge only and by April 1, 1869, the main Oxford-Birmingham line and the Hatton-Stratford branch were converted to standard-gauge. Although the West Midland Railway had fallen into the clutches of the Great Western in 1863, the Stratford-on-Avon Railway remained nominally independent until its amalgamation with the G.W.R. under the provisions of the Great Western Railway Act of July 1, 1883.

Meanwhile yet another company, the East & West Junction Railway, had been authorised on June 23, 1864, to build a line from the Northampton & Banbury Junction Railway at Greens Norton to Stratford, where it would join the Great Western line. A year later on July 5, 1865, the imposingly-titled London, Worcester & South Wales Railway was authorised to construct a line from a junction



Railways in the Stratford-on-Avon and Henley-in-Arden areas, showing pre-grouping ownerships, and the route of the projected B.N.W.R. line of 1894.

Birmingham Road Station, Stratford, original terminus of the Stratford-on-Avon Railway, which was closed to regular passenger traffic from January 1, 1863, on extension of the Honeybourne branch to the West Midland station

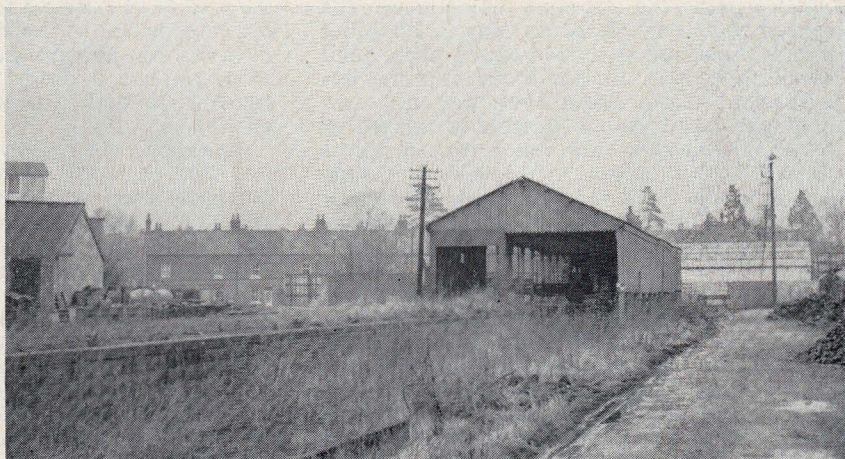


Photo: J. M. Tolson

with the E.W.J.R. at Stratford to Worcester together with a junction with the Evesham & Redditch Railway near Salford Priors, but this line was never built.

Despite the extreme financial embarrassment which was to beset it throughout its existence, on July 1, 1873, the East & West Junction Railway opened its line from Kineton to Stratford, where it used the Great Western station until June, 1875, when its own temporary station was opened, only to be replaced by a permanent structure in the following year. August 5, 1873, saw the incorporation of the Evesham, Redditch & Stratford-on-Avon Railway for the construction of a line to the Evesham & Redditch Railway at Broom, with intermediate stations at Binton and Bidford-on-Avon. This was opened on June 2, 1879, at a very bad time in the history of the E.W.J.R. which, because of financial difficulties, had to suspend passenger services from August 1, 1877, to March 22, 1885. Both these nominally independent lines became part of the Stratford-upon-Avon & Midland Junction Railway on January 1, 1909, and passenger services were withdrawn from the Broom-Stratford section from June 16, 1947, and from the Stratford-Blisworth line from April 7, 1952.

While there were now railways in plenty at Stratford, the little town of Henley-in-Arden had to wait for more than thirty years after the formulation of the first scheme before it was reached by the railway, and even then this line proved to have a relatively short life. June 28, 1861, saw the Henley-in-Arden Railway authorised to construct a mixed-gauge line 3 miles 15 chains in length from the G.W.R. Birmingham-Oxford line at Rowington Junction and to raise capital of £18,000 in £20 shares together with loans of up to £6,000. The local company made arrangements with the Great Western to work and maintain the line which was to be completed within three years. Although the Henley Railway was granted an additional year for purchase of land and construction as well as additional capital on June 30, 1864, its funds ran out and its powers were transferred to the G.W.R. by

the G.W. (Further Powers) Act of July 30, 1866. These were allowed to lapse, and the half-finished earthworks soon became covered with grass and small bushes.

The project was revived on August 5, 1873, when the Henley-in-Arden & Great Western Junction Railway was authorised to construct a similar line but once again nothing was done. Eleven years later on June 23, 1884, the moribund company changed its name to the Birmingham & Henley-in-Arden Railway and revived the powers of the 1873 Act as well as obtaining an extension of time required for the construction until June 23, 1887, but for the third time little or no action took place.

On August 4, 1888, the B.H.R. entered into a working agreement with the G.W.R. (which was confirmed by the Great Western Railway Act of August 12, 1889) and three days later the B.H.R. obtained a second revival of the powers of the 1873 Act, allowing still further extensions of time for construction until August 7, 1891.

In due course, the inhabitants of Henley, who were becoming tired of empty promises, were greatly cheered by the sight of a contractor's locomotive making its way along the main road from Bearley to Henley under its own steam while the rails were laid in front of it and immediately taken up as it passed. Construction was soon in full swing and the line from Rowington Junction, on which there was no intermediate station, was finally opened for passengers on June 6, 1894, and to freight traffic on July 2 of the same year. The Great Western, which had assisted in its construction and worked it for a substantial percentage of the gross receipts, absorbed it from July 1, 1900, under the provisions of the Great Western Act of July 30, 1900.

Despite the arrival of the railway at Henley and Stratford there were several small communities to the south of Birmingham which had no public transport services other than horse-drawn buses. So, in 1892 a public meeting was convened at Henley to assess public support for a direct link

between Birmingham and Stratford. The Midland Railway showed no interest in the idea and the Great Western suggested a scheme similar to that finally built, which would leave the main London line south of Birmingham and rejoin its Stratford branch at Bearley.

This idea did not find favour with the local committee, particularly as it appeared the G.W.R. would be unable to construct the line itself. So the local people decided to go it alone and in 1894 a Bill was introduced into Parliament for a line some 24 miles in length with no fewer than 12 intermediate stations, independent stations in both Birmingham and Stratford, and a connection to the G.W.R. Alcester branch at Aston Cantlow. The proposed capital was £600,000 in £10 shares with power to raise loans of up to £216,000. As originally surveyed the gradients were somewhat severe as the level of the line at Earlswood was 300 ft. above that at Wootton Wawen only nine miles away, but a modification was effected which reduced the ruling gradient from 1 in 40 to 1 in 50 and, as finally authorised, there were only two miles on a gradient steeper than 1 in 60, all of which occurred in very short lengths.

The Bill was opposed in the Commons by both the Midland and Great Western Railways but the opposition of the former was little more than formal. Much of the latter's opposition centred on whether the estimates for the construction of the line (which included a tunnel 553 yards long in Birmingham) were sufficient. At the same time the completion of the line to Henley which, although nominally independent, was worked by the Great Western, led that company to attempt to prove that the district was adequately catered for. Work was also put in hand to provide a new curve at Hatton to facilitate through running between Birmingham and Stratford-on-Avon. This was

taken into use on July 1, 1897, enabling the distance between the two towns, including one stop at Bearley, to be covered in 43 min.

The Great Western's underlying reason for this determined opposition was that the promoters had realised the potential of their line as part of an independent through route between Birmingham and London, a route about 16 miles shorter than the existing G.W. route. By means of a short spur at Stratford access could be gained to the East & West Junction Railway, which, because of its financial embarrassment, would be happy to grant running powers over its line to Moreton Pinkney some 22 miles east of Stratford to join the proposed M.S.L.R. London extension. This would be of advantage to all concerned, particularly as the M.S.L.R. had expressed a willingness to work the North Warwickshire line.

Although the Great Western had made it clear to the House of Lords that in the event of the Bill being rejected it would be prepared to construct a line from the outskirts of Birmingham to either Bearley or Henley-in-Arden, on August 25, 1894, the Birmingham, North Warwickshire & Stratford-on-Avon Railway was authorised to construct its 24½-mile line starting from an independent station in Birmingham on the east side of Moor Street to Stratford with connecting lines to the Alcester branch at Aston Cantlow and to the G.W.R. and E.R.S.R. at Stratford. Powers were also granted to the M.S.L.R. to work the line just as they had been in the case of the E.W.J.R. and E.R.S.J.R. in 1893.

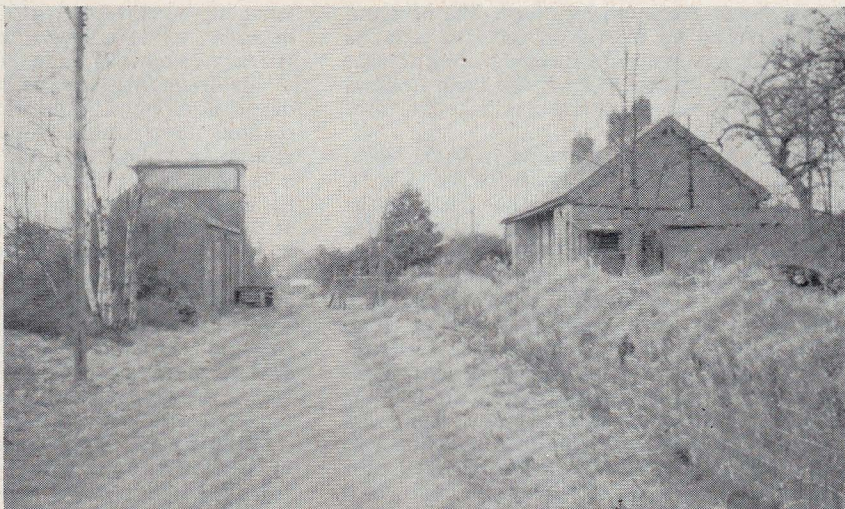
In 1896 and 1897 further powers were obtained, and the capital was increased to £1,200,000, principally with a view to doubling the E.W.J.R. to make it suitable for through traffic. But by this time the Great Central (as the M.S.L.R. had by now become) was experiencing difficulties with the



Single-unit B.R. diesel railcar No. W55018, forming the 11.38 Stratford-on-Avon to Hatton train, leaving Wilmcote on November 11, 1966. This station was opened on December 8, 1907, replacing the original station which was north of the over-bridge. The goods depot was not affected

Photo: J. M. Tolson

Original Birmingham & Henley-in-Arden Railway terminal station at Henley-in-Arden. This was closed to passenger traffic from July 1, 1908, when the North Warwickshire line was opened, and trains from Lapworth were diverted to the new through station. The old station remained open to goods traffic until December 31, 1962, and the tracks have now been lifted. Building on the left, with water tank, was the engine shed



Present station at Henley-in-Arden with the 09.40 d.m.u. train from Birmingham Moor Street on December 28, 1966



Photos: J. M. Tolson

construction of its London extension and the arrangements for working over the Metropolitan Railway from Quainton Road. Having formed an alliance with the Great Western, it withdrew its support from the Birmingham scheme and a short connecting line between Woodford and Banbury rendered the two systems complementary to each other while at a later date a joint line was built into London.

This loss of support was a terrible blow to the little company which had been unable to raise any capital to start on the construction of its line, but another scheme intended to link Stratford with Cheltenham via Winchcombe and Broadway was to bring fresh hope. At this stage neither the Midland nor the Great Western showed great interest in the scheme, particularly as the former's Evesham-Ashchurch branch ran parallel some six miles to the west. But in 1898 the Andoversford & Stratford-on-Avon Railway was promoted to run from Stratford to the Midland & South Western Junction Railway line at Andoversford, some seven

miles south-east of Cheltenham, and the latter proposed to work both this and the Birmingham & North Warwickshire line as this would give a direct link between Birmingham and Southampton.

As might be expected, once this scheme became a practical proposition, it was strongly opposed by both the Midland and the Great Western and the latter pledged itself to build a line from Honeybourne to Cheltenham if the scheme was thrown out. On this occasion the Great Western's wishes were granted, its own Honeybourne-Cheltenham line being authorised by the Act of August 1, 1899, and completed in stages, being opened throughout on August 1, 1906. Moreover the B.N.W.R. was about to fall into the hands of the Great Western, as on August 9, 1899, the local company was authorised to abandon the scheme for a wholly independent route between Stratford and Birmingham.

It was now to start from a junction with the G.W.R. main Birmingham-Banbury line just south of the present Tyseley station. But financial

difficulties had beset the B.N.W.R. throughout its existence and even the modified scheme threatened to collapse. So by the Act of July 30, 1900, the powers for the construction of the line were transferred to the Great Western and the B.N.W.R. was vested in the G.W.R. by the same Act which also authorised an extension of the time to purchase the land until July 6, 1902, and for construction until August 25, 1903.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

From "The Railway Magazine" of July, 1918

Ambulance trains for the use in France of the Army of the United States of America have been supplied by various British railways through the Railway Executive Committee, who have appointed what is known as "The Ambulance Trains for the Continent Sub-Committee". This body make all arrangements regarding design, equipment, transportation, etc., in conjunction with military representatives from the British and the American Army. The coaches are transported to the Continent complete, so that a train is ready for service as soon as the vehicles arrive.

A United States ambulance train [No. 65, constructed at Wolverton by the London & North Western Railway] was, before its transfer to the war area, on view at Euston Station for two days. A large number of visitors were attracted, and the entire receipts were devoted to war charities. The train consists of sixteen vehicles, and the total length (exclusive of the locomotive) is 310 yards. Unloaded the train weighs about 440 tons. It is composed of long bogie, khaki-coloured vehicles, and is vestibuled throughout.

* * *

As I remarked last month, commenting on timetable alterations today is a thankless task. So rapidly do changes succeed one another that one's comments, written some five weeks before they finally reach the eye of the reader, are by that time out of date already. The May issue of *Bradshaw*, which was not procurable until the 10th of that month, and left the unfortunate business traveller somewhat "in the air" during that period, revealed another crop of all-round curtailments and decelerations, in some cases of trains to which I actually referred in the last issue. [Opening of "British Locomotive Practice and Performance", by Cecil J. Allen.]

* * *

In the House of Commons, Mr. Illingworth (Postmaster-General), in submitting the Estimates for the Post Office on June 12, mentioned that the mails had been affected by the restrictions of the railway services. He also said that the Post Office (London) Railway promised to be of great value, but that it would be impossible to complete its construction until after the war.

* * *

Under the Defence of the Realm Regulations the Board of Trade has made an Order increasing the fares on Irish railways by 50 per cent. The Order provides that on and after June 1 railway companies in Ireland may charge, in addition to the passenger fares contained in the lists exhibited at the stations at that date, a sum equal to one-half of such fares, or, where the fare is not contained in such list, they may charge one-half more than the maximum fare which would be chargeable but for the Order.

On July 26, 1901, the Great Western was authorised to alter the route from Tyseley to Bearley North Junction and the junction with the Hatton-Stratford branch, together with a short branch to the B.H.R. station at Henley-in-Arden. It was further authorised to construct a loop from Bearley North Junction to Bearley West Junction which had previously been authorised on August 1, 1899, but never built, and to make a deviation in the junction with the Alcester branch at Bearley North Junction. Surveys were carried out to ensure that this line would be fit to carry through traffic and the contract was obtained by Messrs. C. J. Wills & Sons, the first sod being cut at Henley-in-Arden with scant ceremony on September 5, 1905. The contractors' headquarters were at Henley and no less than 23 locomotives were used in construction of the line together with 11 fearsome-looking digging devices known as steam navvies.

North Warwickshire line opened

Work proceeded steadily and the opportunity was taken to improve existing lines and stations. On December 8, 1907, the old station at Wilmcote was closed and a new station, south of the road bridge, was opened to serve both the new North Warwickshire line and the Bearley Station-Stratford section which was being doubled. This section was taken into use on the following day when the North Warwickshire line was opened to freight traffic. Passenger services began over the North Warwickshire line on July 1, 1908, when no less than ten intermediate stations were opened.

At Henley-in-Arden the old station was also closed to passengers from July 1, 1908, and converted to a goods depot, and the Lapworth branch passenger trains ran to and from the new station. This proved a short-lived arrangement as services were withdrawn from January 1, 1915, although freight trains continued to run for one year longer. The Lapworth branch was closed to all traffic on January 1, 1917, and the track removed for the war effort in May and June of the same year, except for a short section at Rowington Junction which was retained as a siding, together with the line serving the B.H.R. station at Henley-in-Arden, which continued to function as a goods depot.

Of the Great Western lines to Stratford the North Warwickshire alone is worthy of description in full within the limited scope of this article. The line from Honeybourne to Stratford, which is still traversed by trains from Worcester and Evesham, had three intermediate stations, Pebworth Halt (opened in 1937), Long Marston and Milcote which were closed from January 3, 1966. Of these Milcote had been an unstaffed halt from March 1, 1956, and closed to freight from July 1, 1963, while Long Marston, well known for its W.D. establishment and Birds scrapyard where steam locomotives are cut up, lost its freight services from September 7, 1964. Just south of Stratford was the Racecourse station, like its counterpart at Cheltenham, used for a race meeting in March of this year shortly before the withdrawal of the Leamington-Gloucester service.

(to be continued)

B.R. single-unit diesel railcar No. W55002 at Stratford-on-Avon on December 23, 1967, forming the 11.30 from Gloucester Eastgate to Leamington Spa. This service was withdrawn from March 25 this year



Photo: J. M. Tolson

THE GREAT WESTERN IN THE SHAKESPEARE COUNTRY

PART TWO

J. M. TOLSON

Traffic past and present on the North Warwickshire line, now under threat of closure

STRATFORD STATION which, despite the town's tourist importance, no longer has a regular Sunday train service, has three platform faces, the island platform being slightly staggered from the other platform on which the main offices are situated. Many interesting locomotives visited the station on excursions, particularly from the North-West in recent years, including L.M.S.R. class "5", "Jubilee", "Patriot" and "Royal Scot" 4-6-0s, while the interest aroused by the Shakespeare Quatercentenary in 1964 brought a number of Southern Pacifics to the area. North of the station is the engine shed closed on October 1, 1962, and now devoid of tracks. This was a subshed to Tyseley and its usual allocation was about five or six engines, before the war "Bulldogs" and 2-6-2 tanks but latterly Collett 0-6-0s for banking, piloting and freight duties and 2-6-2 tanks for passenger turns.

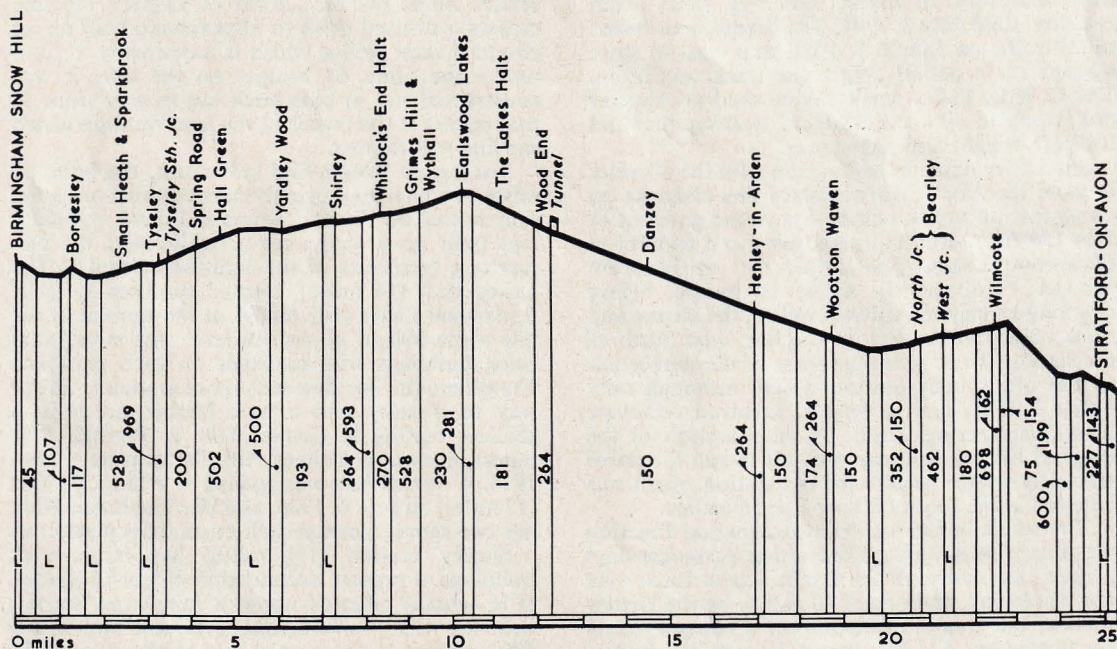
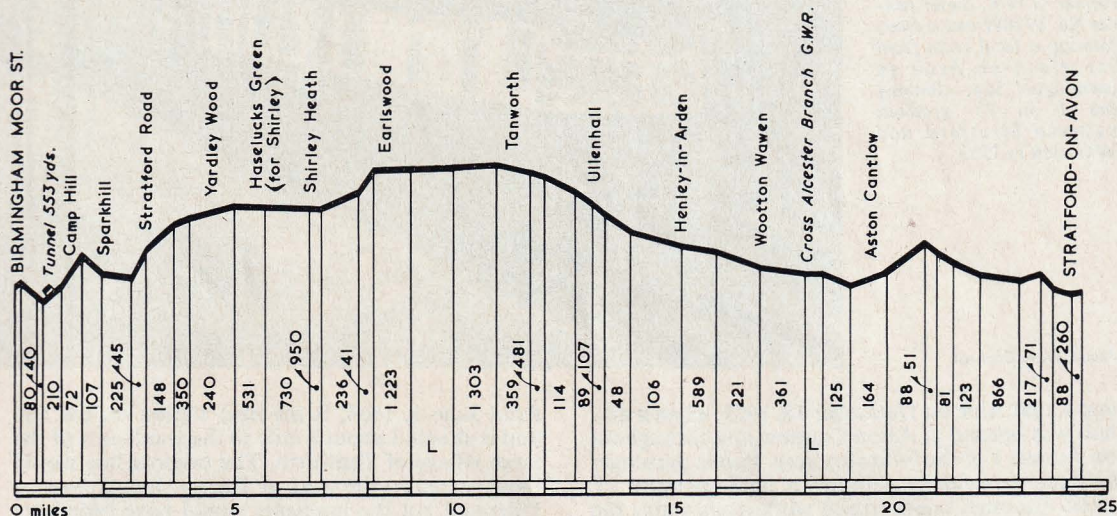
At Stratford Goods Junction the line from the original Stratford-on-Avon Railway terminus at Birmingham Road trails in and rather surprisingly the buildings at this station, including the wooden canopy, are still standing. From here there is a sharp climb at 1 in 75 up Bishopton Bank for over a mile to Wilmcote ($2\frac{3}{4}$ miles) where the present station has been repainted and the old passenger station which served as a goods station until November 11, 1963, recently demolished. About a mile north of Wilmcote the line to Hatton diverges

at Bearley West Junction. This $4\frac{1}{2}$ -mile section remained single track when the North Warwickshire line was built, but in March, 1938, the Great Western began work on realigning the curves for faster running, the line being doubled and taken into use on July 2, 1939.

A new station was built at Claverdon to the west of the original one which was closed on July 2, 1939, and converted into a goods lockup, while at Bearley the platforms were lengthened and the offices rebuilt. Both stations were closed to freight traffic on May 20, 1963, and Bearley, which had been partially destaffed since September 17, 1956, became an unstaffed halt from June 21, 1965, since when the station buildings have been demolished and small glass shelters provided.

As the North Warwickshire line heads northwards, the course of another spur from the Hatton line can be seen trailing in at Bearley North. This was part of the Alcester branch which was slightly altered during the construction of the line to Tyseley. This slightly shortened the branch which headed west under the 13-span aqueduct of the Stratford Canal, erected in 1813, from which the branch engines used to take water. This spur had been out of use since 1951, but was re-opened for a time in 1959 to enable main-line trains to be diverted during maintenance work on water troughs near Lapworth.

The Alcester Railway was authorised on August



Gradient profiles of the Birmingham, North Warwick & Stratford-on-Avon Railway (upper), as-projected in 1894, with stations as originally intended; and (lower) of the North Warwickshire line, from Tyseley South Junction to Bearley West Junction

6, 1872, to construct a 6½-mile line from Bearley on the Stratford-on-Avon Railway to Alcester on the Evesham & Redditch Railway. This was opened on September 4, 1876, being worked by the Great Western, and the maintenance of the concern was handed over to the latter company exactly one year later, as provided for in the agreement made between the two companies on July 12, 1872. The Great Western Railway Act of July 22, 1878, vested the line jointly in the Stratford-on-Avon and G.W. Railways, while the Great Western formally took possession of the line on September 1, 1883,

when the Stratford-on-Avon Railway passed into its hands. The line to Alcester passed through rather desolate country, and originally had one intermediate station at Great Alne. Passenger services, which averaged between five and six trains in each direction on weekdays, were worked for many years by an auto-fitted engine and trailer to which wagons were attached if trains were mixed.

The branch did not have a very happy career, and was closed as a wartime economy measure on January 1, 1917. It was reopened between Bearley

Former G.W.R. diesel railcar No. W26W and trailer, forming a local train from Stratford-on-Avon to Leamington Spa, climbing the 1 in 75 gradient between Stratford and Wilmcote in 1953



Photo: W. A. Camwell

and Great Alne on December 18, 1922, when a new halt was opened at Aston Cantlow, and throughout on August 1 of the following year. Public passenger services were finally withdrawn on September 25, 1939, although unadvertised workmen's trains ran from Coventry to Great Alne, $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Alcester, until July 3, 1944. The branch was closed to all traffic on March 1, 1951, and used to store wagons for a period before the track was lifted. The G.W.R. had a small engine shed at Alcester but its traffic used the Midland Railway facilities for both freight and passengers.

Soon after passing the junction with the Alcester branch, the North Warwickshire line embarks on an almost unbroken climb on a ruling gradient of 1 in 150 for more than nine miles to a summit at Earlswood Lakes. The simple halt at Wootton Wawen Platform ($6\frac{1}{4}$ miles) is passed before reaching Henley-in-Arden (8 miles), the largest and most important station on the line. Just north of the station can be seen the course of the connection to the old Henley Station which, although only about half a mile in length, involved relatively heavy engineering works. A short section of the original Henley Railway was left *in situ* to enable trains to reverse to gain the old station which was situated at the foot of a long 1 in 55 incline.

The whole of the line from Rowington Junction was relatively steeply graded and in passenger days a speed restriction of 20 m.p.h. was in force over the whole line, and one of 10 m.p.h. on the Henley incline, but this did not prevent a runaway train on September 4, 1899, going through the buffers and finishing in the field beyond. The old station remained in use for "smalls" traffic until December 31, 1962, but the rail freight service had in fact been discontinued since November 5 of the same year. The brick goods shed and station building remain at the time of writing although the track has been lifted. There is also a small one-road brick engine shed with a water tank on its roof, but although saplings block the way to its rotting doors a short length of rail bears witness to its former use. Nevertheless it is very difficult to imagine the scenes here at the turn of the century when up to three excursion trains with eight or nine bogie coaches hauled by 0-6-0 saddle-tanks could be seen in the station at the same time.

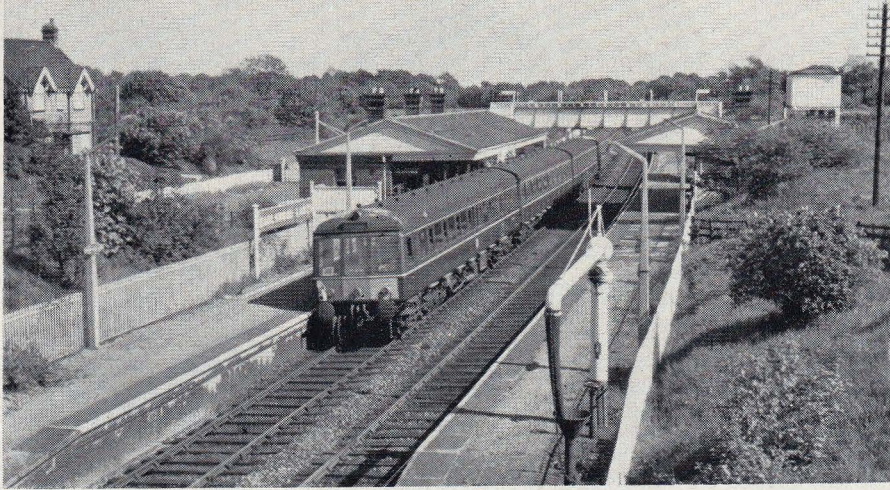
Danzey for Tanworth (11 miles), closed to freight

from June 1, 1964, is the next station on the line and is situated about a mile to the south-east of the large village of Tanworth. The original line would have passed to the west of Tanworth and close to Ullenhall but the gradients would have been very severe. Some distance north of Danzey the line crosses a disused drive to Umberslade Hall on an elliptical skew bridge which is noteworthy in that, unlike the other 63 bridges on the line, it was constructed not in blue brick but in grey stone at the request of the owner of the land through which the line was to pass.

Just before Wood End (13 miles), the booking office of which was recently burnt down, comes the only tunnel on the line, which is 175 yd. in length and built on a sharp curve, while near the picturesque reservoirs of the Stratford Canal is The Lakes Halt (14 miles), opened on June 3, 1935. Earlswood Lakes ($14\frac{3}{4}$ miles), at the summit of the line some 500 ft. above sea level, has substantial brick buildings with canopies on each platform. From here the line descends more gradually all the way to Tyseley and a mile farther north in a shallow cutting is Grimes Hill & Wythall ($15\frac{3}{4}$ miles), known as Grimes Hill Platform until July, 1914. A further halt was opened at Whitlock's End (17 miles) on July 6, 1936, and like The Lakes Halt, has two simple wooden shelters on short platforms.

Shirley Station ($17\frac{3}{4}$ miles) has large brick buildings at present decorated in colourful shades. It is actually situated about a mile from Shirley, near the village of Haselucks Green, and in the 1894 scheme the station rather than the east of the present one would have borne that name. Between here and Yardley Wood (19 miles), the smallest of the suburban stations, is an embankment which gave tremendous trouble during construction. The next station at Hall Green ($20\frac{1}{4}$ miles) is similar to Shirley and Henley, and a curious feature of all three is that the buildings have no doors facing the approach road and access to the offices is obtained from the platform.

The last station on the line, Spring Road Platform (21 miles), is situated in a cutting now partially covered by a car park. Two dilapidated shelters are on the platforms while the booking office at road level still bears the title "G.W.R. Platform". Soon after leaving Spring Road the line curves sharply to the right to reach the main Birmingham-



Earlswood Lakes Station, at the summit of the North Warwickshire line, with the 15.41 diesel train from Stratford-on-Avon to Birmingham Moor Street, on May 30, 1966

Photo: J. M. Tolson

London line at Tyseley South Junction. Tyseley Station (21 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles), which was opened on October 1, 1906, has two island platforms and a booking office at road level while the 127-lever box controlling the junction was, at its opening, the largest in the Birmingham district. From here, the line passes through Small Heath & Sparkbrook (22 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles) whence trains could run either to New Street, Snow Hill or Moor Street Stations until March 5 of this year. Next comes Bordesley (23 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles) and then Moor Street (24 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles) where the majority of North Warwickshire line trains terminate.

The B.N.W.R. had originally intended to build a station here as a terminus for its independent line, but although this scheme came to nothing the G.W.R. found the burden of the additional services generated in the first decade of this century difficult to deal with at Snow Hill despite reconstruction and enlarging, together with increasing occupation problems through the long tunnel. On June 18, 1908, the G.W.R. was authorised to construct a new station at Moor Street which was opened to passengers on July 1 of the following year and to freight on January 7, 1914. Perhaps the most intriguing feature of this station is its absence of run-round loops which are rendered unnecessary by two electrically-operated locomotive traversers capable of taking engines up to the size of a "Castle" class 4-6-0.

The Great Western's dream of a direct route between Birmingham and Bristol had been coming gradually closer with the construction of the Honeybourne-Cheltenham line. The section from Honeybourne to Toddington was opened on August 1, 1904, although passenger services ran only between Honeybourne and Broadway until December 1 of the same year. The line was extended to Winchcombe on February 1, 1905, and to Bishops Cleeve in June of the following year. Although the final section from Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham was opened on August 1, 1906, it was not until the opening of the North Warwickshire line on July 1, 1908, that the Great Western inaugurated its direct express services between the Midlands, the West Country and South Wales.

At first, these consisted of a train between Wolverhampton and Penzance and a cross-country working from Cardiff to East Anglia via Leamington and Rugby, but the latter was soon replaced

by a Bristol-Birkenhead train known as the "Shakespeare Express". By 1914 there were four and by 1922 five expresses running over the line, one each to Penzance, Plymouth and Cardiff and two to Bristol. By the outbreak of the second world war there were no less than twelve long-distance expresses each way on summer Saturdays. In the early days, because of the weight restrictions on Stonehouse Viaduct, only 4-4-0s and the occasional Atlantic were used on these trains but in the late 1920s the restriction was lifted and thereafter all types of Great Western 4-6-0s with the exception of "Kings" were to be seen on these trains.

On July 9, 1934, a 44-seat diesel railcar with buffet and lavatory facilities began working between Birmingham and Cardiff with stops at Gloucester and Newport only. A full service of two trains in each direction was inaugurated on September 22 but despite the later use of 70-seat cars the popularity of this service proved its undoing and the workings reverted to steam haulage. Although in November, 1941, the railcar service was partially reinstated using three-car sets capable of carrying 184 passengers, steam traction gradually took over once more. The through trains to Bristol and the South-West had remained steam-hauled and because of the existence of a suitable alternative route were suspended from September 25, 1939, to October 1, 1945. Stratford also lost its through trains to London during the war years and these were not reinstated until several years later but have long since vanished from the timetables.

On June 17, 1957, two of the four daily South Wales trains were taken over by Inter-City diesel sets but on March 10 of the following year these were replaced by Cross-Country sets which also took over remaining steam duties. Sunday services continued to have steam haulage rather sporadically for a couple of years which brought "Britannia" Pacifics to the line. From September 10, 1962, trains to South Wales were re-routed via the Lickey Incline as was Stratford's sole remaining daily express to the South-West, "The Cornishman". This had normally been worked by "Castles" or "Halls" but often saw interesting combinations of motive power particularly on northbound workings out of Stratford when the 0-6-0 or 2-6-2 tank acting

G.W.R. 2-6-0 No. 7308 at Evesham (G.W.R.) Station on an afternoon local working to Stratford-on-Avon and Leamington. The Midland station at Evesham was to the left of the picture, across the station drive



Photo: W. A. Camwell

as pilot up Bishopton Bank was often to be found set inside the train engine.

At the same time a twice-daily Leamington-Gloucester diesel train, stopping at Stratford and Cheltenham, was introduced to provide connections at Gloucester. Although this service was initially worked by three-car sets, traffic was very light and, after about two years, a single-car unit was found to be sufficient. Traffic was not helped by the deletion of the Cheltenham stop on the closure of Malvern Road station from January 3, 1966, and the service was withdrawn from March 25 of this year. Summer Saturday services to the South-West calling at Stratford continued to be routed over the line until 1966 when there were four such trains, but since then only special and diverted trains have used the Honeybourne-Cheltenham section apart from the Leamington-Gloucester railcars.

Local services between Honeybourne and Stratford were covered for the most part by through workings from Worcester and Evesham to Leamington or Birmingham, connecting at Honeybourne with a local service from Cheltenham until this was withdrawn on March 7, 1960. Before dieselisation, these trains were largely in the hands of G.W.R. tender engines, with "Bulldog" 4-4-0s predominating until the early 1950s but gradually replaced by "2251" class 0-6-0s, "43xx" class 2-6-0s, or more occasionally B.R. standard 2-6-0s. Services over the Honeybourne-Stratford section were reduced to morning and evening trains on the closure of the three intermediate stations and at present the remaining trains are under threat of withdrawal together with the closure of Honeybourne Station, and the consequent isolation of Stratford as far as direct trains from south and west are concerned.

Services over the Stratford-Hatton section are much more frequent and include several through trains to Leamington or Birmingham as well as reasonable connections with main-line trains in each direction. Although Great Western diesel railcars had been used on these services since before the second world war, 2-6-2 tanks were to be found on many trains until their almost complete

dieselisation in May 1958. Steam working continued until the end of 1964, one such turn being diagrammed for a "2251" class 0-6-0 to enable the Stratford banker to be changed. At the time of writing the North Warwickshire line provides the main link between Stratford and Birmingham with more than a dozen trains in each direction on weekdays and several additional workings between Birmingham and Henley-in-Arden.

At the turn of the century, trains over the two routes to Henley and Stratford were handled largely by 0-4-2 tanks, 2-4-0 tanks and the various types of 0-6-0 saddle-tanks, the forerunners of the ubiquitous Great Western pannier-tanks. The introduction of the "3600" class 2-4-2 tanks and the "County" 4-4-2 tanks gave an opportunity for more powerful locomotives to be used, while steam railmotors found their way onto North Warwickshire services, but all these were soon eclipsed by the Great Western's preference for 2-6-2 tanks, particularly the "51xx" class. These fine engines were to carry the responsibility for the majority of services and some spirited runs were to be had over both the routes to Stratford. In the 1950s the B.R. "82xxx" class took over some of their workings for a time but were transferred away, and some of the "61xx" class came from the London area to lend a hand.

On the North Warwickshire line the "Duke" and "Bulldog" 4-4-0s performed some sterling work on semi-fasts, particularly in the 1930s, but once again tank engines tended to monopolise the services. On September 20, 1954, services from Birmingham to Stratford and Leamington were reorganised to give a more regularly spaced service and improve train utilisation. This also provided a pattern for the dieselisation of these services which took place at the start of the 1957 summer timetable using Derby-built three-car sets. Steam working continued on rush-hour trains and other odd workings and as these became fewer the variety of traction became greater and even "King" class 4-6-0s and "Western" class diesels found themselves on the North Warwickshire line, but for the last two years all normal services have been worked by diesel railcars.

Not long ago the lines to Stratford provided a useful route for through freight traffic from the Midlands to Bristol and South Wales with a large number of trains headed by "28xx" class 2-8-0s and various types of 4-6-0.

Freight traffic from Woodford and Banbury also passed through the town, and in anticipation of an upsurge in iron-ore traffic which did not materialise, full working commenced on June 13, 1960, over the new connection from the S.M.J. to the Honeybourne line near Stratford Racecourse Station. This enabled the Stratford-Broom Junction line to be closed and brought Eastern Region "W.D." and Stanier 2-8-0s to join the "28xx" 2-8-0s and class "9" 2-10-0s working over the Honeybourne line on trains from the Banbury area. But from March 1, 1965, the Woodford-South Wales trains were re-routed via Washwood Heath and the Lickey incline and the dwindling iron-ore traffic from Banbury, together with most inter-regional freight, was dieselised and diverted via Didcot by November 8 of the same year. Special workings and diversions of both freight and passenger trains were to continue, and brought various types of L.M.S.R. and B.R. standard steam power to the area for several months, although these were gradually replaced by diesel locomotives. Thereafter, only three freight and two parcels workings ran between Stratford and Cheltenham, but the former were later diverted leaving only the parcels trains which were withdrawn from March 6, 1967.

Local freight traffic has also declined considerably and recently Stratford has been served only by a twice-weekly working on Mondays and Thursdays from Bordesley via the North Warwickshire line and diagrammed for a type "4" diesel locomotive which also worked two trips on Tuesdays and Fridays from Bordesley to Hall Green. These services were withdrawn from May 6, 1968, and the goods depots at Shirley, Hall Green and Stratford closed, although coal stacking facilities are to be maintained at the latter two stations. There have been no regular freight workings recently to Stratford over either the Hatton or Honeybourne lines, but trips are made from Honeybourne to Bird's Scrapyard at Long Marston. Although all regular traffic has now been withdrawn from the Honeybourne-Cheltenham line, its complete closure has been delayed because of its usefulness as a diversionary route, and it will be retained for some three years to enable Midland line trains to be diverted during extensive Sunday occupations between Worcester and Cheltenham. Moreover, a local group in Stratford has expressed an interest in purchasing or leasing the line and operating it as a tourist attraction. However, complete closure of at least some of the Honeybourne-Stratford section will no doubt follow the withdrawal of passenger services between these points, proposals for which are now being considered by the T.U.C.C.

In conclusion I would like to thank Mr. R. Maund and B.R. Public Relations Officer at Birmingham for their extremely generous help in the preparation of this article.

Concluded

FIFTY YEARS AGO

From "The Railway Magazine" of August, 1918

The London & South Western Railway is the latest convert to the abolition of second-class travel. From Monday, July 22nd, no second-class bookings on this line have been made. The step has been dictated by war conditions, although the decrease in second-class long-distance travel to about 2 per cent. of the traffic has for some time made the change advisable . . . No surprise was expressed when the L. & S.W.R. made the announcement of the change. The question of stopping second-class travel had been raised at more than one meeting of the shareholders, and it is noteworthy that only first- and third-class rolling stock were provided when electrical services were brought into use. The South Eastern & Chatham Railway is the only large system in Great Britain retaining the second class for main-line, suburban and Continental traffic. AS RAILWAY MAGAZINE readers are aware, the Great Eastern and the London, Brighton & South Coast Railways have maintained second-class bookings for Continental trains, while the Great Eastern and Great Northern lines still retain second-class fares and carriages for their suburban services. [First British railway to abolish second-class bookings was the Midland, from January 1, 1875.]

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From Mr. David L. Thomson comes some interesting Scottish locomotive news. "Few railways," he writes, "have been more affected by war-time working than the Highland, and as the large increase of traffic on this line is not likely to be wholly permanent after the war, some extensive borrowing has been done. On Highland metals may be seen locomotives of the Caledonian, G.N. of S., N.B., N.E., L. & S.W., and L.B. & S.C. Railways, together with a motor coach belonging to the L. & N.W.R. New locomotives have also been acquired, the latest arrivals being Nos. 75-78, inclusive, of the 4-6-0 type built by Messrs. Hawthorn, Leslie & Co. Ltd., and said to resemble the previous series constructed by the same firm for the Highland Railway, and subsequently sold to the Caledonian . . . These engines, which are great favourites with their drivers, are employed principally on double-trip express goods working between Glasgow and Perth and Carlisle. Thirty-four Caledonian engines, including the six of this series, are now equipped with "pop" safety valves.

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An interesting railway action recently came before Mr. Justice Darling and a special jury arising out of an accident at Oxford Circus Station on January 30th, 1918. The plaintiff, Mr. Towse, who was a consulting engineer, was trying to board a Tube train at Oxford Circus when he was thrown on to the platform and injured. According to his evidence, the train was stationary, and the conductor in closing the gates pushed him off and started the train. The defence was that Mr. Towse ran after the train, which was already in motion, and in trying to board it stumbled and fell. Plaintiff's counsel told the jury that the plaintiff brought the action as a protest against the methods of conductors on the Underground railways in their treatment of the public at large, and not with a view to obtaining damages. The Judge, in summing up, warned the jury to confine their attentions to the evidence in the case and not to consider their own experiences. The jury found for the railway company, and judgment was entered accordingly.

Railway Magazine

3/6

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