

RailWestMidlands

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From the West Midlands branch of *Railfuture* -
Britain's leading independent advocate of rail

Shiny New Station



Picture courtesy of Steve Wright, branch committee member

But the work's not over yet

Following their presentation to *Railfuture's* successful and well attended national conference in Birmingham in November 2012, Network Rail invited the West Midlands branch committee to go behind the hoardings and see what would face passengers – and what could be improved - when the first phase of the re-built Birmingham New Street station was opened to the public. This was one of a series of events that the branch attended on behalf of members during a busy 2013.

Don't miss the West Midlands AGM in Birmingham on 12th April 2014

Railfuture breaks new ground



Jerry Alderson, *Railfuture* director and former national vice chairman, writes: this is my fourth and [probably] final *Rail West Midlands*. I hope you enjoy it. I look forward to reading the next edition under a new editor. The branch is busy and thriving but offers of a newsletter editor will be gratefully received. Please contact peter.hughes@railfuture.org.uk.

Last year's branch AGM (at Carrs Lane Church Centre in Birmingham) had the best attendance for many years. I hope everyone will try to attend this year's on Saturday 12th April at 10:30 (same venue). After the close of the AGM we have invited speakers from Birmingham City Council Transportation Department to speak about the city Council's transport vision for the next 20 years as part of the Birmingham Action Mobility Plan. You'll also be able to find out what the committee has been doing (such as its regular meetings with Centro and behind-the-scenes visits to see Birmingham New Street station and the new Midland Metro trams) and what it hopes to do in the future. More active members will be welcomed by the enthusiastic group.

At national level 2013 was even busier than 2012, especially responding to more consultations and issuing more press releases than ever before. I would like to thank all members who answered our Have Your Say survey. This has helped the Board identify some priorities. Here are our 15 key findings:

- * Heal any divisions, agree on policy, and communicate with one voice
- * Focus on specific issues where we have a chance of succeeding
- * Provide branches with the tools and skills to campaign effectively
- * Branches must engage their members - more open, local, well publicised meetings
- * Most members want to campaign, but they need to be mobilised, guided and led
- * Provision of access to the rail network is important to our members
- * We must not appear to be rail buffs or anoraks
- * Most successful recruitment method is via friends: give members recruiting materials
- * Potential members need to believe Railfuture will succeed/have evidence of success
- * We must become more relevant to rail users – not just knowledgeable rail supporters
- * The key rail issue to most people is lack of capacity (overcrowding, poor frequency)
- * Attracting rail users to join us requires local campaigns and targeted materials
- * We must engage the RUGs, colleges and universities
- * We should have a membership gift pack for members to give to friends and family
- * Railwatch needs a refresh and to be more positive.

More info at: <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1446-Have-Your-Say>

I hope that list fairly represents what you've told us. Not everything can be done immediately but all of the above are achievable. In fact we've been working on some of them more than a year. An example is the expansion of the www.railfuture.org.uk web-site to include detailed information for rail travellers, such as how to find lower fares. Our Twitter account ([@Railfuture](https://twitter.com/Railfuture)) attracted many new followers in 2013. If you use Twitter please follow us.

We have just staged a very successful 'open door' event at Westminster to raise our profile with politicians (MPs and Peers). The general election is just over a year away and we'll be campaigning strongly for rail throughout Great Britain.

jerry.alderson@railfuture.org.uk

Members of *Railfuture's* West Midlands branch were invited to a guided tour of Birmingham New Street station a few weeks before the first major phase opened to the public on 28th April. Members who attended our national conference in Birmingham in November 2012 would have seen an impressive Network Rail video of the ambitious (and very costly) plans – but did reality live up to expectations?



Busy on 14th Sept 2013 (Jerry Alderson)

West Midlands committee member, **Steve Wright**, who attended the visit, wrote up a report, which was endorsed by the committee. He says it really is rather impressive. This is a very modern building inside and out with a unique polished steel facade, not to everyone's taste, but well in keeping with Birmingham's aspirations for a 21st century image, and complementing Selfridges and the Bull Ring Shopping Centre.

It's quite astonishing the work that was undertaken just to prepare the site before redevelopment could start – including removing most of the concrete decks of the Palisades car park and demolition of Stephenson Tower – all without disrupting the train services or damaging the surrounding neighbourhood. Equally impressive was conversion from the major building site that we saw to (more-or-less) fully functioning station facilities in just four weeks! Of course, not quite everything was working 100% as planned – a couple of escalators were still being assembled – but the transition was very well handled with hordes of staff to direct travellers to their required area. The oversize hands were particularly effective. We'll forgive Network Rail and Mace for a few last-minute glitches on a project of this magnitude.

So, nearly a year later, where are we now? There is considerably more space above the platforms for circulation and travel-related shopping. In fact almost too much, with three bridges across the tracks, two for access to the platforms and one for general public access (which will eventually form the west side of the atrium when phase 2 is complete). To the newcomer it can be rather confusing. That means signing and travel information needs to be ubiquitous, legible and comprehensible. And the developers have made a pretty good effort here. However there are a few short-comings. The scale of the new concourse makes some signs not sufficiently conspicuous, especially for exiting the station. The drop-off area outside the station is particularly poor at signposting the way-in. It is most frustrating when you can clearly see passengers waiting for trains in the departure-side concourse through the emergency exits!

The provision of travel information is a bit mixed. The screens in the main concourse and entrances, whilst clear and comprehensive in themselves, are not all of them well located. For instance, once inside the main concourse their location is not obvious and there are no screens near the north-end (Stephenson Street) ticket barriers, apart from a temporary stand facing the

east-side barrier. Some screens facing pedestrians moving along the new concourse would improve this radically. On the other hand, the provision of interactive touch-sensitive information screens is an excellent idea. More of them would be even better!



Photo by Steve Wright showing plenty of signs in Network Rail's standard format

Initially there were no information screens at the bottom of B-end (west) escalators, so that a traveller has to remember which platform they require. Network Rail thought providing these would cause congestion at the bottom of the escalators. However, they appear to have had second thoughts, hopefully at least partly from our comments, as some platforms do now have these and – we hope soon – all platforms will be so provided

The screens at the top of the new escalators can be confusing as they give information about trains on both A and B platforms, even though this is not at all a good route to A (east) platforms. Conversely, on the A platforms access bridge (the old bridge) there is no information about the B platform trains, even though these stairs and escalators give good access to trains on B platforms. The original screens which used to show information for the B-platforms were initially still in situ, albeit unused, but have now been removed.

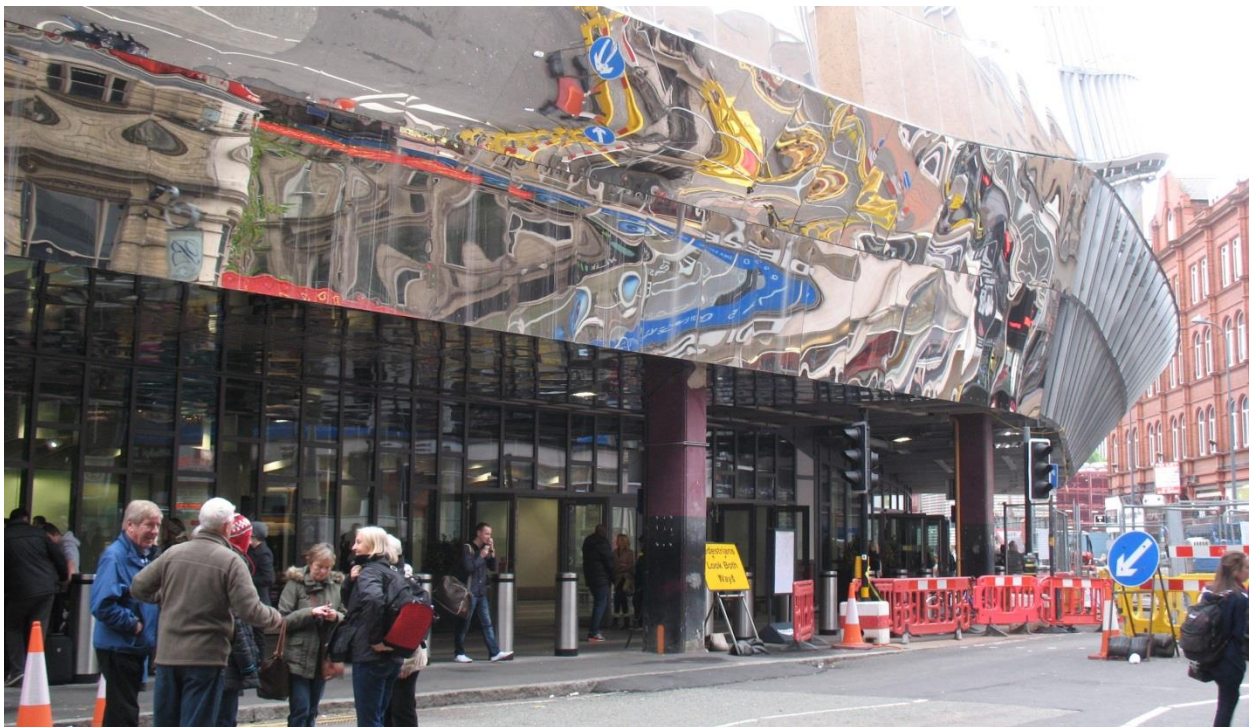
Access to the B platforms has been significantly improved with new escalators up and down. However, even these are insufficient for peak hour egress so that quite considerable congestion can build up at the bottom of the escalators. The older provision of escalator up only and staircase, whilst inconvenient for less-able passengers wishing to reach the platforms, enabled exiting passengers to use either the escalator or stairs. The old Navigation Street footbridge (which remains as an emergency exit) may be brought back into use as a means of exit to the new main concourse.

But not all is improvement. The closure of the original stairs to the A-end platforms and also the old lifts has worsened access to these platforms, which can now only be reached from the original escalator/stairs for the B-

platforms or a fairly lengthy walk from the new B-end escalators or lifts, possibly through crowds of passengers waiting for or alighting from other trains. This situation will exist until phase 2 of the re-development is complete, so we have suggested a temporary remedy. At present almost all through trains arriving from the Five Ways or Smethwick directions run through the B platform and stop at the end of the A platform. If, where possible, these trains stopped at the B ends, then passengers would have an easier access to the lift and all the escalators and stairs on that platform. We also have some apprehension about the ticketing facilities and wonder if enough of the twelve desks will be manned to deal with the demand.

We had a meeting with Network Rail in September 2013 to discuss these and one or two other issues and received a very sympathetic hearing. They themselves had spotted some of these short-comings and were looking at possible remedies. Our suggestions have gone to them to add to their cases for further improvements.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, this is already a far, far better station than its predecessor, with better access to the city centre, more spacious circulation and better and brighter facilities. It will be truly world class when the whole redevelopment is complete - we are now eagerly looking forward to this and will report in detail in a future *Rail West Midlands* newsletter.



Reflections from construction site barriers and bollards give a 'fun fair' appearance (S Wright)

If you haven't been there already we recommend that next time you use New Street you spend a few minutes wandering around and observing the pluses (and minuses) for yourself. One major enhancement, at least to us train watchers, is the new walkway to Moor Street Station providing an uninterrupted view of all train movements in and out of the east end of the station.

West Midlands Branch Cross Country Liaisons

Following a decision of the *Railfuture* board, the posts of TOC Liaison Officers was set up early 2013 to co-ordinate communications between *Railfuture* Groups and each train operating company, reporting to the re-launched Rf Passenger Group. Steve Wright from the West Midlands Group committee volunteered to liaise with Cross Country Trains, being a life-long observer and user of these services. Being a Birmingham resident put him in a good position to perform this role. He has met and communicated with XC's Public Relations Manager, Richard Gibson, on several occasions and has established good relations and discussed a wide range of topics, including especially the much disliked ten-minute reservations process.

This topic is on-going and Steve would welcome details of any negative (or positive) experiences with this facility, particularly instances where a passenger has been required to give up their seat because of one of these last minute reservations. Contact him at steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk.

William Whiting is *Railfuture* Liaison Officer for London Midland Trains. He will attend the London Midland stakeholder meetings on our behalf.

West Midlands Branch AGM 2014

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the West Midlands branch of *Railfuture* will be held in the Bertha Wright room at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham, B4 7SX (close to Moor Street station) at 10:30 on Saturday 12th April 2014.

ELECTIONS TO THE BRANCH COMMITTEE

The committee is vital to the running of the branch. We have a very friendly group of people who care about the railway in the West Midlands but would appreciate some new members who have something to contribute, particularly younger people, women and those from ethnic minorities. You do not need to be an expert on the railways, finance, or management. You do need enthusiasm, willingness to help, a friendly nature and hopefully have a sense of humour. Committee members give up at least two hours each month to attend meetings. In addition there may be meetings with the rail industry and local authorities and invitations to go 'behind the scenes'.

All details about the elections, whether there are more candidates than places will be posted on the West midlands page on the national web-site:

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/West+Midlands+Branch>

E-MAIL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE BRANCH

Some of you may receive a variety of *Railfuture*-related emails, some from Passenger Focus, some Rail Expresses, some from the branch. We are able to efficiently 'mail-merge' these to send out to each member for whom we have an email address. If you would like to receive information emails but don't currently then please email Lloyd Butler (renewals@railfuture.org.uk) and/or Steve Wright (steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk).

Two Together discount rail-card resurrected

In the last issue of this newsletter we mourned the demise of the then year-old £28 **Two Together Railcard** which was being piloted by ATOC just in the West Midlands (available to people with a Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley or Coventry postcode).



We described it as one of very few innovations by the privatised railway, despite the private sector supposedly being good at innovation and attracting new business. We suspected that the excellent card (which William Whiting extolled the virtues of in a previous issue of the newsletter) was the victim of ATOC indecision, inertia, and fear of loss of revenue – at the expense of benefiting the public and the nation's economy through greater use of the railway. *Railfuture* was delighted to hear – after some lobbying by its own Passenger Group – that it would be launched as a new national railcard (the first since the 1980s) on Monday 3rd March.

Two people who often travel together can buy the new annual rail card for £30 (£27 if entering LEAFLET3 on www.twotogether-railcard.co.uk) allowing each of them 1/3rd off off-peak fares. It can only be used by the pair (who may be friends, family, colleagues, members of a club etc.) when they travel together (both of their photographs will be on the card). It is valid for first class travel too. The annual fee is good value for people in the West Midlands who can more than recoup it after two return journeys to London.

Railfuture is a strong believer in this card. Whilst most standard class travel is cheaper than the person travelling alone by car (not just petrol but also wear to brakes and tyres as well) two adults travelling by rail is often more expensive. Until now – apart from three or four people travelling as a group – no-one of working age (i.e. not eligible for a young person or senior card) without disability and travelling without children has been able to obtain any discount (apart from travel within the former Network South East area). With a decade of RPI+1% increases rail for two was simply not competitive on price so this card should see a shift from road to rail, providing that it is publicised widely. *Railfuture's* concern is that the rail industry will be very nervous of revenue loss and will not promote it widely, just as the Network Card is rarely seen on posters and you have more chance of seeing the Abominable Snowman than an advert for the All-Line Rover.

Railfuture would like to see more discounted travel – not just the very cheap advance fares with very strict and inflexible conditions. Perhaps someone buying an annual season ticket costing over £3,000 should get a 50% discount on any rail travel in Britain at the weekend or on Bank Holidays – a similar concept applies in other European countries such as Germany. Weekend overcrowding can be ridiculous and unnecessary – could anyone with a senior rail card be given a free first class upgrade at the weekend?

Our Passenger Group would like to hear your ideas to grow rail patronage for no additional cost to taxpayers – e-mail: passenger@railfuture.org.uk.

What is happening at Moorland and City?



Each of the last few newsletters has reported on the progress – or so we thought - of the ground-breaking initiative to create a private rail network for freight and passengers. Rapid reopening of the Cauldon Lowe branch, government cash and Adrian Shooter joining as chairman.

There was much optimism for their plans but it seems to be a case of two steps forward and one step back – perhaps even the other way around.

After much lost time, and expense that depleted funds an application to turn the railway into a village green (!) was defeated in November 2012, but the line from Leekbrook Junction to Endon has yet to open. Network Rail appeared to be the sticking point but agreement was reached on 16th October 2013 to run trains on 12 days each year from Easter 2014. MCR is using contractors in to re-sleeper the three miles of track between LBJ and Endon, which was cleared a couple of years ago and saw works trains run on the track. This extension will provide impetus to the Churnet Valley Railway who need a big attraction to boost their income, following a financially disastrous 2012 (largely though bad weather), though fortunately a much better (if still loss-making) 2013.

The eight-mile line from Leekbrook Junction to Cauldon Lowe (MCR spelling) was hugely popular with enthusiasts even if it did end in the middle of nowhere. It was always known that the track would need replacing for freight trains to run. However, a lot of concern was raised when the last three miles of track was lifted - with no promises to relay it in the short-term. There was some speculation about a shortage of cash leading to a sale of assets. However, a new run-round loop has been constructed at Ipstones, which allow passenger trains to continue on that branch, albeit not as far.

The priority for both MCR and the Churnet Valley is to run trains into Leek (the nearest big market town). This will bring in a lot of passenger revenue to the heritage railway, although a major disappointment is that the terminus would be half a mile from the town centre, on the edge of Leek at the former cattle market (the former station site is now occupied by Morrison's supermarket). It is intended to fund the 1-mile extension north (along the former track-bed that was last used in 1970, which is now owned by the local council and is used as an unofficial footpath) through sale of land at Leekbrook Junction (former sidings) and the project (dubbed "Reconnect Leek") is conditional upon MCR being given permission to build 90 houses.



Trains to Planes

Peter Rowland reports that four members of the branch committee met with Michelle Thurgood, Transport Officer for Birmingham Airport in early August. There was a wide-ranging and open discussion and it was clear that the Airport values and wishes to expand its existing, mainly good, rail transport links. 23% of passengers use rail to access the airport. This needs to grow.

There is an anomaly over the railway station name. Almost uniquely amongst UK stations that serve major airports, the word 'Airport' is not part of the station name. Research shows that this has caused passenger confusion with Birmingham New Street, especially amongst non-English speakers. Both the airport and the NEC would like it renamed but they disagree over the order: either Birmingham Airport/NEC or NEC/Birmingham Airport. Network Rail is considering the request, which it says will cost £400,000). Maybe it should be just 'Birmingham International Airport' or 'Birmingham Airport'. What do you think?



Airport Surface Access Strategy
"...committed to ... the provision of a realistic choice of modes of transport for passengers, visitors and staff that reflects the 24 hour operation of the Airport."

The airport is very busy in the early morning. Many flights leave between 06:00 and 08:00. As passengers need to be there two hours before departure, many cannot use rail with the constraints of the current timetable. The situation is even worse with Sunday flights. Also affected are airport workers. Maybe train operators need to look again at this and the point should be raised when the Department for Transport relets the west Midlands rail franchise.

The Airport is very keen to promote the re-opening of the long-closed line from Whitacre to Hampton-in-Arden, known as the Whitacre Link. With a new north facing spur at its southern end, and a new platform on the north side of the station, this could allow trains from Tamworth, Nuneaton and the east Midlands to approach the airport directly. The Airport's own research shows that 78% of all rail travellers to the Airport have to change at New Street. A report has been commissioned on this proposal and can be found at www.railnews.co.uk/content/documents/whitacre_v2.pdf

Contact the West Midlands Branch

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Branch secretary: Peter Hughes. Peter.hughes@railfuture.org.uk
19 Redwood Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham B30 1AE. Tel: 0121 459 4743

Send news and photos for the newsletter to: steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk

More on Fares

Railfuture has focused strongly on fares (as well as other concerns such as overcrowding) in the last few years. We, along with other group with whom we have worked, have succeeded in persuading the government to stop demanding that regulated rail fares increase by RPI+1% (in England) as they have done since 2004. However, we haven't yet persuaded them to base increases on income and consumer-spend increases (as measured by CPI) rather than by prices (RPI). We will continue pushing for this.

We have received a lot of media attention from national press releases - and we get a surge of new members after we've criticised fare rises - but we also work at branch level too. On 13th August 2013 West Midlands branch chairman William Whiting was on the Paul Franks BBC WM show. They phoned him at home and none of the questions were pre-planned. William's main concern was that disposable incomes are falling and the increase in fares would hit people hard. Whilst he recognised that the Coalition has largely protected public transport from cuts in expenditure many services in the West Midlands will not benefit from the planned investment. He quoted Cross Country Trains as an example where there are no plans to deal with the severe overcrowding on the key corridors Birmingham-Reading and Birmingham-Leeds. They also have the most expensive fares on the network and the increases, he felt, would do nothing to rectify the overcrowding on some of their services. He feared that our rail system socially excludes many people and poorer people will simply not be able to afford fares increases.

Railfuture would like to see a repeat of London Midland's offer in early 2013 of up to 50% off Standard Off-Peak Return and Off-Peak Day Return fares.

IT'S MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS..... AND THE BIRMINGHAM CONNECTION

One Sunday morning in September found my wife and I, says **Peter Rowland**, at London's Victoria Station awaiting the 11:12 VSOE Charter Train to Folkestone East from platform 2. It's quite a change from our normal train from this terminus - a Southern service to Crystal Palace. Our trip today was something we had worked, saved for and planned for many years. It was exciting to be going overseas by train again, bringing back memories of trips as a child, a schoolboy and then as a student from platform 8 to Folkestone Harbour or Dover Marine. On one memorable occasion I took a train from Ostend to Moscow.



The train was topped and tailed by 67025 and 67022. We had seats in car Perseus, built by the Birmingham RC&W Co in 1951. It had a moment of fame when used for Sir Winston Churchill's funeral train. It has been beautifully restored, down to the smallest detail. The mosaic toilet floor, for example. This ride brought back



more memories, this time of a trip on the Bournemouth Belle in car Iolanthe from Bournemouth West to Waterloo. A route south east along the Down Chatham Main, then via Nunhead, Lewisham, Hither Green, Sevenoaks and Ashford, with lunch on the way.

Photo of Perseus at Folkestone Harbour.

Everyone out at Folkestone East for a fleet of coaches through the Channel Tunnel to Calais where the big blue train starts. Our car was number 3482, once again built by the BRC&W Company, but in 1929. Once again it had been spectacularly well restored, notably the marquetry work. It was warm, quiet and very comfortable and was turned into a bedroom whilst we had dinner en route to Paris Est. Many people had dressed up - clearly Moss Bros et al had done well. Then to bed. I stirred at Basle, (Bâle, Basel?) then woke whilst the train stopped at Arth-Goldau. Progress is leisurely and there are a lot of stops. Then through the St. Gotthard tunnel and then down to another stop at Chiasso for a leisurely lunch in the dining car 4110 'Etoile du Nord', once again built by BC&W in 1927. On via some branch lines round Milan, then a stop at Verona and finally the magnificent approach across the causeway to Venice. All in all, a ride to remember!



What can this train teach modern rail operators? Firstly that speed is not everything. Secondly some will pay for a little more comfort. Thirdly people like seats that line up with windows. Fourthly heavy coaches with separate locomotives give a quieter ride and fifthly that people like to eat well on trains. But the main point that a skilful and imaginative operator can engender a sense of romance with train travel that could reap economic dividends. Clearly the Orient Express (www.vsoe.com) is an extreme example of this, but it does give a pointer to a trend.

Railfuture Diary 2014/15

Saturday 10th May 2014 - AGM - Sheffield

Saturday 21st June 2014 - Summer Conference - Cambridge

Saturday 1st November 2014 - Autumn Conference - London

Saturday 16th May 2015 - AGM - Blackpool

NEW RAILWAY STATION FOR BROMSGROVE

Bromsgrove Rail User Group chairman Mike Ponsonby writes: in September 2013 Worcestershire County Council Planning Committee granted planning consent for this new £17.4m station (ratified by the cabinet on 12th December) to be constructed in 2015 in the ex-UK Oil terminal yard 250 metres south of the current station. Jointly funded by Worcestershire County Council and Centro, it will have four six-car platforms (linked by a footbridge and lifts), toilets and a manned ticket office. Together with a 350-space car park and facilities for bus, bike and taxis, plus DDA-compliant bridge for the less able bodied, all of which gains access to southbound platforms. When the



Current station (to be replaced) – from Wikipedia.

25 kV electrification from Barnt Green to Bromsgrove is completed by May 2016 it will give rail travellers five trains an hour into the city, with an electric train waiting in platform 3 at Bromsgrove new road-rail interchange for turn-back to Lichfield, via Birmingham New Street station.

As many will know, the original station was authorised by the Gloucester to Birmingham Railway Act 1838 and since opening in 1840 has always been at the foot of the Lickey Incline, which means that stopping trains then have a long slow climb up the 2 mile long very steep incline, with all of the attendant PM10 pollution caused by two or three 12-litre turbocharged diesel engines working at peak torque. However, electric trains will change all that, with fast hill-climbing performance and a positive impact on air quality in north east Worcestershire.

Station footfall is presently circa 520,000 per annum and forecast to increase by 54% over the next five years to circa 800,000 passengers per annum, all as a result of the so-called 'sparks effects' of service improvements coinciding with electrification adding to the appeal of rail as the mode of choice for Bromsgrove's ever-increasing population. This makes the decision by Worcs CC, the most important infrastructure development in over 150 years for Bromsgrove...and all funded via a self-financing and highly cost-effective scheme.

(Patronage table on right from Wikipedia)

Annual passenger usage*

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 2004/05 | 0.173 million |
| 2005/06 | ▲ 0.210 million |
| 2006/07 | ▼ 0.207 million |
| 2007/08 | ▲ 0.230 million |
| 2008/09 | ▲ 0.427 million |
| 2009/10 | ▲ 0.441 million |
| 2010/11 | ▲ 0.465 million |
| 2011/12 | ▲ 0.523 million |
| 2012/13 | ▲ 0.540 million |

* estimated usage based on sales

In 1969 Bromsgrove station was rebuilt with a single platform on the up (northbound) side. A new platform on the down side opened in May 1990.

STOP PRESS: MARCH 2014 - CONTRACTORS ARE ON SITE TO BUILD BROMSGROVE STATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF ALVECHURCH STATION IS WELL UNDER WAY.

On 18th March 2014 **Steve Wright** took some photographs of the work site that is being prepared by the contractors to become the new Bromsgrove station. Top photo shows a Hereford Class 153 train at the existing station in the foreground and the new station location in the background.



The photo below shows the land that will become the new station's car park.



Railfuture meetings with Centro on your behalf



www.centro.org.uk

Representatives of the Railfuture West Midlands branch committee meet with Centro four times a year for a free, open and wide ranging discussion to raise matters on behalf of our members.

Centro advises *Railfuture* of their concerns and proposals, and we in turn give our comments, raise concerns and promote our aspirations. Although the detail of our meetings must remain confidential – otherwise we would be told little and therefore unable to influence things – **Peter Rowland** has written a summary of the last three meetings.

CENTRO meeting on 13th August 2013

We were aware of a number of short-notice train cancellations on the **Cross City Line (South)** line and stressed that if this must happen then the short journey services to Longbridge should be cancelled rather than the less-frequent Redditch services.

Railfuture's branches throughout Britain have concerns about the lack of **revenue protection** – if the success of services is not known it makes our case for a bigger and better network even harder. We reported that on-train ticket inspection appeared, at best, rather patchy and believed that no more than 30% of services were being checked on the Stourbridge line. Checks seemed never to happen on down Virgin trains once they enter the west Midlands.

It was noted that a number of **Cross City trains** going south from New Street are stopping at the 'A' end of platforms where exit/entrance to/from is currently (until 2015) limited. It was suggested that halting at the 'B' end would be far more convenient, giving access to lifts, stairs and escalators. This would be an advantage to many, including the disabled and those with luggage or buggies.

Cashless Ticket Machines. There were a number of recently de-staffed stations that had yet to receive ticket machines. Elsewhere, new machines did not have the ability to dispense free 'permit to travel' enabled. We were pleased that new machines were being installed, including one on the Birmingham University campus remote from University station. (Right: London Midland TVM)



We discussed CENTRO's capital projects. On the car park front work was about to start at Longbridge to provide circa 100 more spaces – see *News*

Snippets for other stations. Disability access work was to be undertaken at Acocks Green, Shirley, Worcester (Shrub Hill) and Henley-in-Arden. Shirley station would be made 'step-free'. There is a need for a priority list of other stations where such work is needed. Current suggestions include Stechford, Dudley Port and Lichfield (Trent Valley).

CENTRO meeting on 12th November 2013

It was more than six months since phase 1 of New Street station upgrade opened. We discussed the **New Street / Moor Street link** (also raised by Peter Rowland at the West Coast Rail 250 meeting) and all agreed that the situation was not good, with regular changes to the route owing to construction work, signs of many different styles let alone the generally depressing nature of the environment next to the route. We intended to bring up this matter with the City Council.

We welcomed construction work on the new **Metro** link and brought up the point that with the linking of Snow Hill and New Street stations, the customer base is likely to change with more passengers being irregular users with luggage. At your committee's subsequent visit to Wednesbury depot we were heartened to see that the new trams are more spacious, have more doors and with a common floor level - all points that should help.

We welcomed the use of Pendolinos on Virgin's West Midlands to Scotland services instead of the inadequate Voyagers and we were pleased to see that the Sandwell & Dudley stop was retained.

CENTRO meeting on 25th February 2014

Following on the progress made in the north of England, under the 'Rail North' banner, CENTRO, together with the other local authorities in the West Midlands area, is keen to be far more involved with the next rail re-franchising round in 2017. This process was discussed and is supported, but with the proviso that there is plenty of scope for stakeholder involvement.

We welcomed funding for the new station at Kenilworth. This is likely to happen before electrification as part of the 'Electric Spine' project with its linked re-doubling of the track. Train services along this line are likely to be a diesel shuttle between Coventry and Leamington. There was no decision yet on whether or not Cross Country services will stop at the new station.

Railfuture is eager to see some major progress on the Coventry-Nuneaton NUCKLE scheme to upgrade the railway between Coventry and Nuneaton. However, in the short term, because of funding issues, all that will happen is the building of two new stations. There is nothing at the moment for additional services, for freight loops or an extra platform at Coventry with direct access to the Bedworth lines.



Read more about NUCKLE at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/nuckle.

Construction of a passing loop at Alvechurch

More photos courtesy of Steve Wright, this time at Alvechurch where the track is being doubled and a second platform being constructed – all to increase the train service from two to three trains per hour. Once such a scheme would have been a dream but growing patronage is the justification.



Working towards double track and the second platform - adjacent to and west of the existing platform

The section of the Cross-City Line between Barnt Green and Redditch is single track. Network Rail is increasing capacity on the line by adding a passing loop and second platform at Alvechurch station. This will also include a footbridge and lifts to reach the new platform. This service can then be increased from two to three trains per hour. The scheme was approved in November 2013 and upgrade work began immediately initially clearing the site and then constructing the new platform and footbridge."



Men- at work! (Redditch train waiting for right-away)

This final photograph shows the extent of the civil engineering work required to double the track north of the station. Those stanchions can't stay there.



Network Rail has produced a useful Q&A factsheet on Alvechurch station

What is going to happen to the car park?

The car park at Alvechurch station falls outside the remit of the project to increase the number of services between Birmingham and Redditch. There aren't any existing proposals to change the car park. However, Network Rail maintenance is looking at ways to improve the drainage system.

Can we have ticket machines at Alvechurch station?

London Midland and Centro (the passenger transport authority) are rolling out a programme of new ticket vending machines which will be completed by 2013. Alvechurch station is included in this programme so you can expect a new one to be delivered before this date.

Will there be shelter on the platform?

Yes, the new platform will be equipped with a passenger shelter similar to the one on the existing platform.

Why isn't the station staffed?

The number of passengers travelling to and from Alvechurch does not currently warrant the provision of a staffed station.

Will you improve the lighting at the station?

The new platform at Alvechurch will be designed and built to meet all the current lighting standards and any existing faulty lighting at the station will be repaired. There are no plans to alter the lighting on the approach to the station or the current platform.

What happens if the lifts breakdown?

The lifts will be covered by a maintenance contract which will include repair and response by an engineer. There will also be an additional help button on the new platform, along with the existing one on the current platform, which can be used to report any faults.

Can we learn from the Vienna transport system?

Jerry Alderson writes: since May 2013 I have regularly visited Vienna for work. The Austrian capital is widely recognised as having one of the best public transport systems in the world. It's the best amongst the twenty or so countries I've visited, in my opinion. I wondered whether there is anything we – in Britain and in the West Midlands - could learn from them and, in fairness, things that we've got right that they should emulate.

Just as one would expect, the entire rail passenger network around Vienna is **electrified**. At least this is something the British government is finally supporting (Selby-Hull has just been announced), but (despite some infill electrification as mentioned in the Bromsgrove station article) how many decades are we from having a fully-electrified railway in the West Midlands?

They seem to be ahead of us in meeting the EU 2020 **accessibility** regulations, with high-quality lifts (usually glass so one doesn't feel vulnerable inside them) installed at most stations both in the city and outside. All trams will be compliant by 2015. However, on their trains, like many on the continent, floors are not at platform level. This is being addressed, as new trains with low floors in certain carriages are introduced.

Integration between transport systems is excellent, truly extraordinary. The bus stop is literally outside the front door; perhaps six metres to board the bus, all under cover, rather than a walk down the road or crossing a busy road. If you hop on to a bus you will at some point arrive



at a railway or U-bahn (underground) station or a tram stop. The photo above shows a tram outside Praterstern station – it is completely undercover from the tram to the station and U-bahn entrances - both just metres away.

In an excellent example of infrastructure integration, with emphasis on creating a cleaner and quieter city, the overhead wires used on trams are also used to recharge battery-powered buses. As the bus waits at the terminus it takes a quick charge on a current collector on the roof. With the Midland Metro being extended is this something that could be done in Birmingham and Wolverhampton?

Of course, integration only works if the information about different modes is available. Not only do station passenger information screens give running times for trams and buses but the brand new trams have TV screens throughout that display the route numbers of every bus, tram and underground line at each tram stop. More impressive still is that as a tram arrives at its stop the TV screen inside the tram shows you how many

minutes before each connecting service is due. This has saved me valuable minutes as I knew how fast I had to move to catch my connection.

Overcrowding is not as bad as in Britain. I have had to stand only once so far on a train. It was on a Sunday afternoon and on a "kurzzug" (short-formed train). Trams are so frequent that I rarely have to stand. The underground is a different matter and impossible to avoid, not least because Vienna's U-bahn has the second highest per-capita ridership in the world.

Punctuality on the trains is superb. I've never been more than a few minutes late on any train, and passenger information screens rarely shows any trains late and if so only by five minutes. I've seen one train shown as being two minutes late – nothing any later. I've previously spent 16 months working in Brussels and being a daily commuter there. Punctuality was truly dreadful; in the mornings I timed my arrival to catch a train at two minutes after the train should have left and rarely ever missed it!

So why is punctuality so much better in Vienna than Brussels (both are entirely state run systems)?

I think there are two reasons. The first is that all Brussels trains are dispatched by a guard but all Vienna trains are driver operated. This reduces dwell times – no waiting for a guard to wander down the train to open the door, and then buzz the driver to allow them to depart. Even at major stations I've been on trains are stationary for as little as 20 seconds.

Both Brussels and Vienna have trains that go through the city (not just to termini, like most of London). Both have a two-track section that limits capacity. This destroys punctuality on Brussels trains but not in Vienna. Why? Well, it took me months to work it out but the answer seems to be that in Brussels the junctions are on the flat whereas the Viennese have spent money and built fly-overs and dive-unders everywhere. Some of these are so subtle that it took me several trips before I figured out that the track was splitting. Superb punctuality also means that there are very few **cancellations**. In ten months in Vienna, during which I have visited a station on almost 100 days, I have only seen a couple of trains showing as cancelled on the passenger information screens.

In Britain if there is any engineering work needed then passengers are forced onto buses – often on routes that could operate a partial or diverted rail service - but that is not how they do things in Vienna. For example, they see their tram system, which at 180 route kilometres is one of the largest systems in the world, as vitally important. Planned service **disruption** is a last resort. Trams continue running even when workmen are digging up the concrete and tarmac around the tram tracks; they simply install temporary supports to keep the track in place. I've even seen workers cutting rails who stop work to let the tram cross the cut rails and then resume work. Trams run slower, naturally, but they run! On the railway



network every track is bi-directional. With their generous loading gauge the tracks are further apart so their track-workers can be on one track whilst a train whizzes by on the other. The photo on the left shows a road-rail vehicle on the other track and there is not even a temporary fence to protect the workers. We'd call this 'red zone working'.

They also know how to build infrastructure – the robustness of their overhead wire system (with enormous stanchions) puts ours to shame.

Austrians are much more pragmatic when it comes to **health and safety**. I've noticed that the doors unlock, and can even be opened, perhaps half a second before trams and trains "come to a complete stop." No, they don't have our irritating and patronising automated safety messages.

Like Britain they are investing in railway infrastructure. One difference, though, is that they know how to do **publicity** well and encourage the public to get involved. They recently opened an extension to one of their U-bahn lines. On the Sunday two weeks before opening they offered free rides to everyone. There were lots of staff on-hand to talk about the scheme, goody bags were given out and at the new terminus there was a marquee and bands paying and, of course, plenty of food and beer on offer. Photo on the right is a poster at a station on the other side of Vienna promoting the extension.



How can any comparison not involve **fares**? Well, Vienna has some good and bad points on this front. Like most of Europe there is no concept of peak and off-peak, which makes life simple but weekend travel can be more expensive than in Britain. Like the West Midlands there is an easy-to-understand zonal system, centred on the core area, meaning that within reason, the further you travel the more it costs. The downside of such a system is that a very short journey that crosses two boundaries can cost twice as much as a much longer journey within a single zone. There is no flexibility to avoid this, and the concept of pricing according to demand – in particular to encourage patronage – does not really exist. There are stupid anomalies such as a cross-border train to Bratislava in neighbouring Slovakia being much cheaper than a domestic train that only goes half as far on the same route. On the other hand fares are cheap - very cheap indeed if you buy a long-term season ticket – that the fare can become insignificant. All tickets (except the extortionate City Airport Train) cover all modes of public transport in Vienna (rail, underground, tram and bus), so a concept of PlusBus is not necessary. It does mean that a bus journey is no cheaper than a train journey, for example. There are no OAP free bus passes either.

Adults buying an annual ticket get unlimited travel on all public transport within Vienna for just €1 (80p) a day. Children, students and seniors get cheap travel. At the weekends, on bank holidays and during the entire school holidays children travel for nothing. One might imagine children would become a nuisance on the trains - especially since there is only a driver – but this doesn't seem to be a problem. There are extra charges: people have to pay a half fare to bring a bicycle or dog onto the train.



Whatever people may think of our prices at least the tickets make sense. If you buy a weekly ticket then you will get a week's worth of travel. However, in Vienna there are some bizarre and apparently pointless restrictions, which are borderline corrupt. A weekly ticket runs strictly from Monday to Sunday and is a waste of money if you buy it on Friday, Saturday or Sunday as a 24-, 48- or 72-hour ticket would be cheaper but ticket machines will still offer it to you. Likewise the monthly ticket is for a calendar month i.e. first to last of the month. It allows you to buy these tickets in advance, for next week or next month.

Smart-cards are not currently used in Vienna. Given that there are no barriers, and that season tickets are such good value there is probably no economic case for introducing the technology to support pay-as-you-go smart-cards across the city.

Station **Ticket machines** (above) are all touch screens. They offer a choice of languages (at least seven – Austria borders many countries) but the real bonus is that you can choose a starting date and an originating station, but since two-way tickets don't exist you need to buy a ticket when you return

So, what do we do better? Well, not much in my opinion. Like much of continental Europe they have a continuous stream of **graffiti** alongside the track and at some stations (see below). Network Rail has made reasonable efforts to clean this up, but the Austrians have just given up. On the trains themselves our TOCs have 'key performance indicators', one of which is that trains covered in graffiti are not allowed into service. Despite there being no apparent shortage of rolling stock it's not uncommon to see trains in Vienna covered in graffiti including on the windows. At least litter isn't a problem – they have no concerns about terrorists planting bombs in rubbish bins (see right).





Entrance to Heiligenstadt U-bahn rear entrance is not a welcoming sight

I'm confident that our fare evasion is much lower, but whether that matters depends on your attitude. The Vienna authorities are more interested in getting cars off the road than getting fares from passengers, whereas in Britain the greater sin is fare evasion. Their system works on trust – there are no ticket barriers anywhere; only inter-city trains have conductors. They expect people to be socially responsible to pay their way. There are occasional ticket inspection blitzes and penalties are considerably higher than in Britain – an on-the-spot fine (€103) is 50 times higher than a single fare (€2.10). Why would a daily user risk a fine when an annual season ticket is only €365? On trains outside the city a flat €65 penalty applies, requiring an extra €30 if not paying by cash – this extortionate surcharge makes low-cost airlines look reasonable! Car parking is often cheap too – €3 for a day or €12 for a week – it really cuts down congestion in the city.

| P+R HEILIGENSTADT | | Kostenpflichtiger Parkplatz | |
|-------------------|--------|-----------------------------|--|
| TARIFE | | ÖFFNUNGSZEIT | |
| Tagestarif | € 3,- | 0-24 Uhr | |
| Wochentarif | € 12,- | | |

Do you have a ticket?

Get your ticket before boarding!

If there is no ticket machine and no booking office at your station, use the ticket machine on board of the train immediately after boarding. If there is no ticket machine on board immediately go to our train staff to buy a ticket.

If you buy your train ticket on board of the train although you had the opportunity to buy a ticket at the station, an additional fee of € 3,- will be charged.

Passengers who travel without a valid ticket will be charged a penalty of € 65,- plus an additional € 30,- if not paying cash.

Railfuture involvement in West Coast Rail 250

Railfuture West Midlands is a member of West Coast Rail 250, which bills itself as the national campaign for improved services on the WCML. (See their web-site: www.westcoastrail250.co.uk). Branch committee member **Peter Rowland** attended their last meeting, in Coventry, on 13th February 2014.



There was a presentation by Patrick O'Sullivan (who spoke at the *Railfuture* conference in Oxford in November 2013) about the **East West Rail Link**. Although this is quite a distance from the West Midlands, it will link with the West Coast Main Line at Bletchley, with services continuing onto Milton Keynes. This was followed by Carol Stitchman of Network Rail talking about **Birmingham New Street Gateway**. Several questions to her focused on the lack of additional capacity at platform level, although she felt that the 139,000 passengers using the station during the German Christmas Market has showed that it could cope with the expected 150% increase in usage. Network Rail were congratulated on the "fantastic job" they did to keep the railway running whilst the development was taking place as many passengers had not realised they were in the middle of a building site.

Peter expressed the branch's concern that the link between New Street and Moor Street would be difficult for strangers. He said signage should be better and departures from Moor Street should be advertised in New Street.

Ben Herbert of Network Rail then spoke about the possessions for the re-signalling work at **Watford** later this year. The good news is that threatened long closures of the WCML between August 2014 and February 2015 would no longer take place. However, weekend work would take place and Network Rail intended to reduce impact to tourism by working with the tourist industry to promote mid-week breaks. Unfortunately Voyagers could not be diverted along the Chiltern route to the Midlands because of incompatible loading gauges but some service enhancements using Chiltern's rolling stock might be possible.

The last presentation dealt with the **Coventry Station Master Plan** and was introduced by Ian Baxter, who had previously been Customer Service Director at Chiltern Railways and was now Rail Industry and Development Consultant at SLC Rail. Despite the region having seen population growth from 2.24 million in 2001 to 5.42 million in 2012, the area did not feature in any Network Rail studies and was not part of any RUS process. The Master Plan aimed to keep jobs in Coventry and provide new ones.



Ian Baxter
Photo: LinkedIn

Mike Waters of Coventry City Council described the new Boulevard project scheduled for 2015, which would link the railway station to the city centre.

Midland Metro extension and new rolling stock

In November 2013 the first section of rail was laid on the £128m 1.3km Metro extension from Snow Hill Station along Upper Bull Street, Corporation Street and Stephenson Street to New Street Station. The opening is on schedule for mid-2015.



Local authorities are well aware how disruptive - and therefore unpopular - tram works in cities can be. To reduce the impact, particularly to businesses, tracks are not being laid sequentially but at different work sites along the city; no work site is longer than 50 metres. Balfour Beatty is the contractor. Diversion of the tram at Snow Hill station, where it currently terminates, onto the road will release the original platform 4, which was removed for the Metro, to be reinstated for heavy rail use and increase capacity.

Once the New Street extension is open Centro has a £31m plan to extend the line from New Street along Pinfold Street, Victoria Square, Paradise Street and Broad Street before terminating at Centenary Square. A public consultation period opened in September 2013 and construction should start quickly after the New Street extension as funding, primarily through the Enterprise Zone, has already been obtained. If so, it will open in 2017. At the other end of the route, subject to a TWA Order being granted, there will be an extension from Wolverhampton town centre to the railway station, which could be open in 2017. In addition, a consultation is taking place until 28th March on extending the Metro to Curzon Street. Two alternative routes are being considered: 1) 950 metres to run along Lower Bull Street, High Street and Carrs Lane; 2) 800 metres also to Lower Bulk Street then New Meeting Street (stop at Albert Street) and Moor Street Queensway.

Railfuture West Midlands branch visited the Metro depot at Wednesbury on 13 January 2014 and saw some of the 20 new Urbos 3 trams from CAF in Spain William Whiting's photos show them stabled outside and undercover.



The first of the larger trams, which cost £40m (part of the £128m total) and can carry 200 people rather than the 156 in the current vehicles, arrived in Birmingham last October, and will enter passenger service in 2014. We were also able to go inside them and also saw for ourselves the day to day operation of Midland Metro. The branch is grateful to National Express and Centro for arranging our visit.

Birmingham Mobility Action Plan

Cllr Phil Davis, who is a member of Birmingham City Council, is one of the branch committee members. He reports that *Railfuture* West Midlands has welcomed the Birmingham city region vision for transport (the Birmingham Mobility Action Plan, launched in November 2013), which deals with buses as well as trams. However, we felt that there should be more emphasis on rail and light rail. We expressed alarm at an apparent confusion in the plan on the Midland Metro extension (the branch wants to progress the extension towards Edgbaston. He has raised the branch's concerns with the lead city cabinet members.



BIRMINGHAM
MOBILITY ACTION PLAN
Delivering a journey for the future

The branch believes the plan is sensible in its support for more heavy rail investment (e.g. constructing the Bordesley chords into Moor Street station), but offers a dangerous hostage to fortune in a potentially unworkable plan for a wholly new network of 'sprint buses' running in dedicated route ways. There is no UK or continental system operating on the scale proposed in the plan and the idea that a bus can substitute for the extension of light rail as a 'pretend tram' - which is what the report implies - is nonsense.



Cllr Albert Bore introduced the BMAP – a video of his Nov 2013 presentation can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIQ46J0TA2c>

Worse, money spent on building an expensive new bus system creates not more public transport connectivity, but less. It also risks taking scare cash better spent on extending the tried and tested Midland Metro light rail system. *Railfuture* West Midlands is not against better, more integrated use of conventional bus services, but the Sprint Bus idea is a leap in the dark likely to do more harm than good.

Read more about the plan at <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/bmap>.

Go-ahead for Kenilworth station after decades of campaigning

Final approval was given on 12 December 2013 for £5m expenditure from the New Stations Fund for the building of Kenilworth station. This will be part of a Coventry-Kenilworth-Leamington service (which is part of the 'Electric Spine' project) to start in December 2016.

See: www.gov.uk/government/news/green-light-for-kenilworth-station

Patronage growing slowly at Stratford-upon-Avon Parkway Station

The new £6.9m Stratford-upon-Avon Parkway station opened on 19 May 2013, seven months ahead of schedule and on budget. It took only 22 months since the initial proposal for the station, setting a standard for other stations. However, according to the station operator, London Midland, patronage started low and is growing very slowly. There have been around 4,700 passenger journeys each month. Their view is that this is reasonably common and nothing to worry about. *Railfuture* contacted the TOC to ask what publicity is being given that a parkway facility exists. We are requested to be patient and wait for the summer to see how it grows. This seems to contrast the pre-opening hype by London Midland's managing director, Patrick Verwer, who said "I have no doubt that both the station and new services will prove hugely popular with passengers."

London Midland overcrowding traffic-light system liked by DfT

The government would like other train operators to adopt London Midland's use of red-amber-green posters at stations showing which services are the most heavily used ones so that regular passengers can consider using different trains. *Railfuture* says that although this innovation may help to reduce overcrowding it is no substitute for creating greater capacity with more carriages.

Severn Valley Railway share offer closes after failing to reach target

The Severn Valley Railway's £3m share offer closed on 30th September 2013, after the full 12 months having only raised £2m. This is quite a disappointment for such a large, well supported and prestigious heritage railway. Much of the money raised will be spent improving station facilities.

More car parking at Longbridge, Four Oaks and Yardley Wood stations

Construction work is complete on a 102-space park and ride at Longbridge station. The government's Local Pinch Point Fund paid £700,000 for it. Also, in early 2014 work started on a second car park at Yardley Wood station. The £260,000 project will add 59 spaces to the existing 100 parking spaces. It should be completed in summer 2014. Meanwhile, at Four Oaks station £2m will be spent on a single-deck modular car park to increase the number of spaces from 272 to 335. Finally at Rowley Regis station Centro are providing an extra 300 spaces and there is also funding for more capacity at Stourbridge Junction.

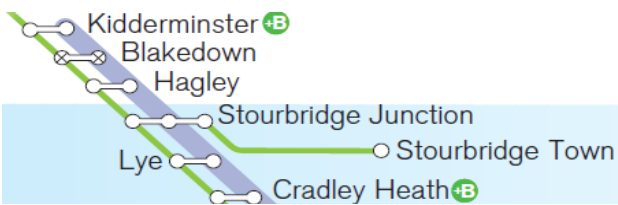
The Next Station is...Blakedown

BLAKEDOWN - opened in 1852 as Churchill and later became Churchill and Blakedown before the present name was adopted. Originally on the Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway (the Old Worse and Worse) the line was absorbed into the Great Western.

Serving an affluent area populated by commuters to Kidderminster, Stourbridge and (mainly) Birmingham, Blakedown has 2 trains per hour in each direction - augmented at the peaks. Currently one change is required off-peak to reach Worcester in one direction or Stratford-upon-Avon in the other. The London Midland service is operated by the new and very popular class 172. At 8.14 Mon - Fri there is a Chiltern service through to Marylebone but no direct return working!



Photo: Wikipedia



Blakedown is just beyond Zone 5 (the outer 'network' zone)

The level crossing at the western end of the station is automatic full barrier and is the only link between the two platforms. The 1888 signal box has been removed. It still carries the name "Churchill and Blakedown" and was given by NR to the Parish Council bearing that name. The box is currently in storage and will be re-erected for community use on a site ready and waiting in Mill Lane if a favourable response is received from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

By Peter Hughes. Station details: <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations/BKD/details.html>

Shut that Swiss train door

Peter Hughes writes: unless you had been with me on the Swiss regional train and felt the rush of air you would not believe that a door could slide open and the train continue at about 90 km/h.

We were travelling last summer on a Brig to Geneva Airport train and clearly not even such a dangerous incident as this is allowed to sabotage the punctuality record. Despite an alarm sounding (presumably repeated to the two-man crew) nothing happened and we alerted the guard at the next stop. By that time the braking of the train had caused the single door to slide shut!! Nobody except us showed any concern and the guard seemed

unconvinced that there was a problem - so still did nothing. You can guess what happened next.

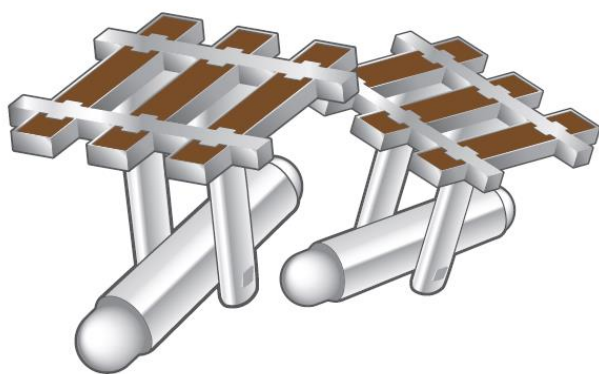
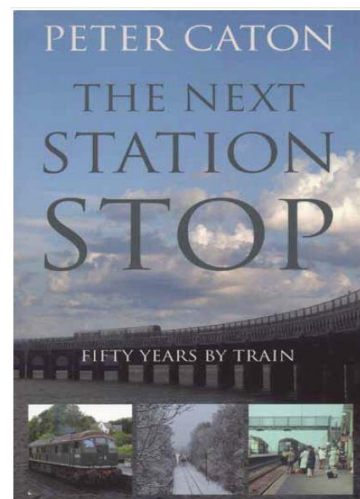
As the train accelerated away the door slid open again and at the next stop the guard ensured that the door was locked shut. The platform was on the other side of the train as we alighted at Lausanne.

We were relieved that the incident did not delay us, as missing our connection to Paris would have been a disaster. With our double sliding or plug doors in the UK we are unlikely to suffer a similar occurrence. However, if we did, just imagine the sensational headlines!!

Books available from Railfuture web-site

We sell a small range of third-party books on the *Railfuture* web-site (www.railfuture.org.uk/books). They are discounted from the recommended price. It will never be as cheap as Amazon but we also get commission to plough back into our campaigning.

Prices range from £8.99 for **The Next Station Stop** by *Railfuture* member Peter Caton (son of our former President Michael Caton), to our best seller, **Holding the Line** by Chris Austin OBE, our Head of Infrastructure and Networks, to our most expensive, **The InterCity Story** co-written by our Vice President Chris Green.



We have just ordered some cufflinks with a railway theme (see left). These will be on sale to members shortly via the web-site. We also have some *Railfuture*-branded pens. These will also be sold at our conferences.

Have you any ideas on other items we could sell? If so, please e-mail chris.page@railfuture.org.uk.

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