



ROUTE NOTES (NORTHBOUND) STRATFORD-UPON-AVON to BIRMINGHAM SNOW HILL

The following route notes have been compiled by Vintage Trains to add interest and enjoyment to passengers travelling on the heritage steam train services. The journey therefore describes the steam train trip along the line, which does not stop at all the stations that the regular Shakespeare Line trains call at. Nevertheless, these notes should be of interest to ALL Shakespeare Line users. The notes can be used in conjunction with the separate route map. They are written as if facing the direction of travel throughout the journey.

Please note that some of the undergrowth on this line may scrape along the coaches in places and this can be very dangerous to the unwary. We would ask therefore that you take great care and do not lean out of the windows - on the left-hand side of the train in both directions where the undergrowth is closest – on the right hand side there is the danger of trains travelling in the opposite direction.

Leaving **Stratford-upon-Avon** on a left handed curve, we pass the ground of Stratford Town FC on our left before crossing the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. Our steam locomotive will be working hard to accelerate the train as we make our way towards the beginning of the steep climb of Bishopton Bank. We pass beneath the A46 and the beat of our locomotive slows as we take on the 1-mile 1-in-75 climb. It ends shortly before we pass through **Wilmcote** station, where, on the left-hand side, can be seen Mary Arden's House, former home of Shakespeare's mother. This is now a countryside museum showing life in Tudor times. Accelerating briefly, we run downhill and reach Bearley West Junction.

With the line to Hatton and Leamington Spa curving off to the right, the train takes the 'North Warwick' line to the left at Bearley West Junction with the signalbox on our right in the fork made by the two lines. Now running on a gentle left-handed curve, we run under Edstone Aqueduct, a superb example of an early iron aqueduct, which carries the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal for 200 yards over the railway, a river, a road and the remains of the trackbed of the former branch line from Bearley to Alcester.

Shortly after we pass a camping site at Sillesbourne on the left hand side, the occupants of which usually give the train a friendly wave. A short run through pleasant countryside brings us to **Wootton Wawen** station, and then there is a long straight run into **Henley-in-Arden** station with its signalbox on the right.

Immediately afterwards we are curving left and on the left hand side, we see the golf course attached to the Henley Golf and Country Club. A little way further on, look out on the left hand side for the Umberslade Stables where there are usually a number of young riders undergoing instruction in the paddock. We curve round to the right as we pass through **Danzey** station, skirting Mockley Wood on our left hand side. The bark of the locomotive sharpens as we start to climb the gradient of 1-in-150. We are soon running on an embankment with the village of Tanworth-in-Arden away to our left. Then we hear the blast from the whistle just before we enter the 173 yards long Wood End Tunnel followed by **Wood End** station.

The engine continues to climb as we pass beneath the M42 Motorway and then cross Spring Brook. The train now accelerates as the gradient eases and we pass through the small station at **The Lakes**. The lakes, which give the station its name, are to the right of the railway just after we pass through the station. We run through the nature reserve at Clowes Wood and shortly after pass through **Earlwood** station.

Soon, on the left hand side, can be seen the links of Fulford Heath Golf Course where often, a crucial putt is delayed in order to watch and wave as our steam train passes. The train continues to accelerate and the line takes a gradual right curve passing through **Wythall** station to run northeasterly. Another mile takes us to **Whitlocks End** station, which has been rebuilt and is in stark contrast to the many stations on the line, which still retain their GWR character. Soon afterwards the train slows down to negotiate the bridge over the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal immediately before **Shirley** station.

The train starts to accelerate again towards **Yardley Wood** where the River Cole can be glimpsed on the left hand side. The line then makes a gentle curve to the right and we continue to accelerate on a slight down gradient through **Hall Green** station. The train brakes as it approaches **Spring Road** station and some times we are held at a signal awaiting a clear road to join the GWR main line at Tyseley South Junction. The line makes a sharp curve to the left as it approaches the junction and prepares to stop at Tyseley station.

BEFORE ALIGHTING FROM THE TRAIN AT ANY OF OUR STOPS (TYSELEY, MOOR STREET, SNOW HILL), PLEASE ALLOW THE STEWARDS TO UNLOCK THE DOORS AFTER THE TRAIN COMES TO A HALT AT THE PLATFORM.

We are only booked to stop for a very short time at Tyseley so, if you are not intending leaving the train at this point, please remain on board. Leaving Tyseley, we pass the diesel unit maintenance depot on the left with Tyseley Locomotive Works, headquarters of Vintage Trains beyond. Occasionally another steam locomotive is running up and down the yard, if so the two locomotives exchange whistles.

Passing through **Small Heath** station, the A45 then parallels the line on the right as far as Bordesley Junction where the line, which links with the 'Camp Hill' route, diverges right. We then pass beneath this route, which allows freight trains to bypass the very busy Birmingham New Street station.

The island platform at **Bordesley** station passes on the right-hand side, while to the left we catch our first glimpse of the refurbished and very modern looking Bullring as we cross the 797 yards long Bordesley Viaduct. Slowing for the speed restriction through **Birmingham Moor Street** station allows us a closer view of the striking architecture of the new Bullring shopping complex on the left-hand side and also the refurbishment of the older part of Moor Street station and a glimpse of GWR 2885 loco on display in the bay platforms. Some Shakespeare Express trains are booked to stop for a very short time at Moor Street so, if you are not intending leaving the train at this point, please remain on board.

There is a steep climb through the 580 yards long Snow Hill Tunnel and our locomotive will have to work hard before reaching the end of our journey in **Birmingham Snow Hill** station. This usually involves a slow run along the length of the platform and we would ask that you do not attempt to open any external doors until the train has come to a complete stand. The present Snow Hill station was opened in 1987, the much grander original GWR station having been closed in 1972.

Our locomotive will be detached from the north end of the train and run forward a little way before reversing through one of the other platforms and down through the tunnel to Birmingham Moor Street. It will then return through the tunnel to be attached to the south end of the train ready for the next stage of the journey. This should provide plenty of opportunity for photographs, but we would ask that you stand well clear of the locomotive and platform edges.

We do hope that you have enjoyed your journey with us today and look forward to seeing you again very soon.