

# VINTAGE TRAINS LTD. 'THE SHAKESPEARE EXPRESS'

## ROUTE NOTES – NORTHBOUND (via Solihull)

On behalf of everyone at Vintage Trains Ltd. we would like to welcome you on board today's train and thank you for travelling with us. We hope that you have a pleasant and enjoyable journey with us. Our stewards are there to answer any questions you may have and to ensure your safety throughout the journey. We would ask therefore that you comply with their reasonable instructions and behave in a responsible manner whilst on or about railway property.

### IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE

**DUE TO OPERATIONAL REASONS ON THE DAY IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE TRAIN WILL BE STOPPED AT A PLATFORM AT WHICH IT IS NOT BOOKED TO CALL TO SET DOWN OR PICK UP PASSENGERS. SHOULD THIS HAPPEN, PASSENGERS MUST NOT OPEN ANY EXTERNAL DOORS OR ATTEMPT TO ALIGHT FROM THE TRAIN.**

The following route notes have been compiled to add interest and enjoyment to your journey. They are written as if facing the direction of travel throughout the journey.

Leaving **Stratford-upon-Avon** on a left handed curve, we climb and cross the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. Our 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 which ends shortly before we pass through **Wilmcote** station.

Beginning to accelerate now as we run downhill, we soon reach Bearley Junction. Here, we branch right and take the single line route that takes us through the stations at **Bearley** and **Claverdon** to Hatton West Junction. At the junction we slow and swing left to reach the former GWR main line at Hatton North Junction. Passing beneath the M40 Motorway, we branch to the left as the line to Hatton continues to the right.

Rounding a sharp left-handed curve we reach the former Great Western Railway main line at Hatton North Junction and with the M40 for company on the left, begin to regain speed. Along this level section were the famed water troughs at Rowington in the 'good old days'. We cross a 200-year-old link between the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal on the left and the Warwick & Birmingham Canal on the right.

By the time we pass through **Lapworth** station we are on a gentle climb, which continues as far as **Dorridge** station. As we leave Dorridge behind, we cross the level crossing at Bentley Heath and then pass over the M42 Motorway and the River Blythe to reach **Widney Manor**. We note the golfers at Widney Manor Golf Course on the left.

Next we can see the town centre of Solihull and the Touchwood Court shopping complex on the right before we pass through the island platform at **Solihull**. We run through a cutting, which then opens out to reveal Olton Reservoir. Built to supply the Warwick & Birmingham Canal with water, it is on the left just before we cross the main A41 Warwick Road by way of a 1930's built girder bridge. Immediately following is **Olton** station. It is then less than a mile from Olton to the station at **Acoccks Green** after which we shall soon be slowing for our booked stop at **Tyseley** first negotiating Tyseley South Junction where the Shakespeare Line from Stratford-upon-Avon trails in on the left-hand side as we near the station.

It is four track railway from Tyseley to Bordesley Junction. Usually our train stops in platform 2 and is then routed onto the Snow Hill line at Tyseley North Junction. However occasionally there is a following train that needs to pass us, so we are routed on to the Snow Hill line at Tyseley South Junction and call at platform 4.

Leaving Tyseley, we pass the diesel unit maintenance depot on the left with Tyseley Locomotive Works, headquarters of Vintage Trains beyond. 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.

We make a stop at **Birmingham Moor Street** station which allows us a closer view of the striking architecture of the Bullring and also of the beautifully restored platforms of the station on the left-hand side. 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.

## **BEFORE ALIGHTING FROM THE TRAIN, PLEASE ALLOW THE STEWARDS TO UNLOCK THE DOORS AFTER THE TRAIN COMES TO A HALT AT THE PLATFORM.**

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 soon.