



ROUTE NOTES (NORTHBOUND – ALTERNATIVE ROUTE) 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. 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.

Here our usual route is to take the Shakespeare Line to the left, but due to a weight restriction on a bridge, we have to leave that line to take the alternative route to the right through Claverdon to Hatton to join the GWR mainline for the run to Tyseley.

With the usual route along the Shakespeare Line continuing to the left we take the line to Hatton and Leamington Spa curving off to the right at Bearley West Junction with the signalbox on our left in the fork made by the two lines. We are climbing now and pass the station at **Bearley** and climb Langley Bank to **Claverdon**. Both of these stations now only have platforms on the left-hand side as the line has been reduced to a single track. 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 **Acocks Green** after which we shall soon be slowing for our booked stop at **Tyseley** where the usual route, the Shakespeare Line from Stratford-upon-Avon trails in on the left-hand side as we near the 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 stop at **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. All 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.