

VINTAGE TRAINS LTD. 'THE SHAKESPEARE EXPRESS'

ROUTE NOTES - SOUTHBOUND

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.

Our description of the route begins in **Birmingham Snow Hill** station. This once magnificent Great Western station was closed in March 1972 and lay derelict for many years. Rebuilt on a much less grand scale, it was reopened in 1987, it is now once more a busy station. Leaving Snow Hill, we enter the 580 yards long Snow Hill Tunnel, descending on a gradient as steep as 1-in-45 to emerge into the daylight once more and reach **Birmingham Moor Street** station. Look to the right and you will see the beautifully restored platforms and buildings of the original part of the station. Beyond that and in sharp contrast, is the rather striking architecture of the new Bullring Centre. Leaving Moor Street behind, we pick up speed as we run along the 797 yards long Bordesley Viaduct with extensive views over the city of Birmingham on both sides. Shortly after we reach the end of the viaduct we reach the island platform at **Bordesley** station and then pass beneath the 'Camp Hill' line from Bordesley Junction to Kings Norton. This route allows freight trains to bypass the busy Birmingham New Street station. Soon afterwards and trailing in round a sharp curve on the left, is the line which links to the 'Camp Hill' line at Bordesley Junction and from there to the main North East/South West route at Landor Street Junction.

The A45 parallels the railway on the left as we continue towards **Small Heath** station and we are soon rattling over the pointwork at Small Heath South Junction where connections to the Maintenance Depot and to the Tyseley Locomotive Works, headquarters of Vintage Trains, diverge on the right. Having picked up more passengers at **Tyseley**, we resume our journey, curving sharply right at Tyseley South Junction to take the 'North Warwick' route while the former GWR main line continues to the left. This curve allows a great view of our locomotive from the right hand side of the train but here, perhaps, a word of warning. Some of the undergrowth on this line scrapes along the coaches in places and can be very dangerous to the unwary. We would ask therefore that you take great care and do not lean too far out of the windows, particularly on the left-hand side of the train where the undergrowth is closest.

Returning to our journey, we begin to accelerate round a gentle right hand curve, which carries us on a rising gradient of 1-in-200 to **Spring Road** station. The climbing continues, though on easier gradients, to **Hall Green** station but the line levels out as we approach **Yardley Wood** where the River Cole can be glimpsed on the right hand side. Occasionally, for operational reasons, we may make a brief stop in **Shirley** station. If we do, only the very front of the train will be alongside the platform and we would ask that you do not open any external doors or make any attempt to alight from the train.

Soon after Shirley, we cross the bridge over the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal and then we continue our journey through pleasant countryside. **Whitlocks End** station has been rebuilt and is in stark contrast to the many stations on the line which still retain their GWR character.

Another mile takes us to **Wythall** station where the line begins to turn to run south-westerly. Soon, on the right 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. Shortly after passing through **Earlswood** station we run through the nature reserve at Clowes Wood to reach the small station at **The Lakes**. The lakes, which give the station its name, are to the left of the railway just before we pass through the station.

We now cross the Spring Brook, which accompanies us on the right hand side as we pass beneath the M42 Motorway and accelerate on falling gradients. **Wood End** station is quickly followed by the 173 yards long Wood End Tunnel and we are soon running on an embankment with the village of Tanworth-in-Arden away to our right. The gradient continues to fall at 1-in-150 as we pass through **Danzey** station, skirting Mockley Wood on our right hand side.

Shortly afterwards, also on the right hand side, we begin to see the golf course attached to the Henley Golf and Country Club and soon we are curving right handed to reach **Henley-in-Arden** station with its signalbox on the left. Having picked up more passengers, a short run through pleasant countryside brings us to **Wootton Wawen** station, shortly after which we cross Sillesbourne Crossing. We then run under Edstone Aqueduct, a superb example of an early iron aqueduct which carries the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal for 200 yards over both the railway and the road.

Now running on a gentle right handed curve, we reach the signalbox at Bearley West Junction (left) with the line from Hatton and Leamington Spa also trailing in on that side. A short run now brings us to **Wilmcote** station. Leaving Wilmcote behind, we descend the steepest gradient on the line, a little over a mile of 1-in-75 of Bishopton Bank, which carries the line beneath the A46 to the outskirts of Stratford-upon-Avon.

We approach the station at **Stratford-upon-Avon** on a right-handed curve, crossing the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal for the last time. Our outward journey ends in platform 1 where we ask that you leave the train as quickly as possible to allow us to shunt to platform 2 ready for the start of the return journey.

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

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