

Thomas Brassey and his link to Heritage Railways No 2

The Severn Valley Railway

The Severn Valley Railway is a preserved line operating between Kidderminster in Worcestershire and Bridgnorth in Shropshire, a distance of 16 miles.



The line was originally built by Thomas Brassey under a contract for the Severn Valley Railway Company and linked Hartlebury near Droitwich Spa with Shrewsbury, a distance of some 40 miles. The preserved railway now operates on part of this line and includes the link between Bewdley and Kidderminster built by others for the Great Western Railway in 1878.

Work started in 1858 and included stations at Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley, Highley, Hampton Loade, Bridgnorth, Coalport, Iron Bridge, and Buildwas amongst others. The line

also included the Victoria Bridge over the River Severn near Arley and the 559 yard tunnel north of Bridgnorth. The line was opened in 1862 and absorbed into the Great Western Railway in 1863.

The Severn Valley line was closed to both passenger and through freight services in 1963. The restoration of the line started with the formation of the Severn Valley Railway Society in 1965.

Initially the 5 1/2 mile section of line from Bridgnorth, south through Hampton Loade, to Alveley Colliery sidings near Highley was acquired and in 1970 train services between Bridgnorth and Hampton Loade were started.

In 1973 the 9 mile section from Alveley Colliery sidings through Highley, Arley and Bewdley to Foley Park was purchased and progressively opened during 1974. The final section between Foley Park and Kidderminster opened in 1984. The photograph below from September 2014 shows a scene at Bewdley, once a busy junction. *(Photographs by the author)*

