BRASSEY HERITAGE LINE RESEARCH
Thomas Brassey's links to Heritage Railways – No 6
By Dave Bebb

The Albert Edward Bridge and the Telford Steam Railway



The Albert Edward Bridge was constructed by Thomas Brassey as part of a contract to connect Coalbrookdale with Buildwas on the Severn Valley Railway and opened in 1864. The 61 metre span cast iron arch comprises four ribs and is almost identical to the Victoria Bridge on the Severn Valley Railway, also built by Brassey under a contract for the Severn Valley Railway.

The line across the River Severn linked Coalbrookdale with the Great Western Railway route northwards via Lightmoor and Horsehay to Wellington (on the line between Shrewsbury and Birmingham) and southwards via Much Wenlock to Craven Arms. The latter was also constructed by Brassey for the Wenlock Railway Company in 1862.

The railway network within the Ironbridge Gorge was developed primarily for goods traffic rather than to carry passengers. Following the end of World War II a decline in passenger numbers resulted in the closure of the line between Much Wenlock and Craven Arms in 1951 and passenger services between Wellington and Much Wenlock were withdrawn in 1962. General freight traffic continued until 1964. However, the line between Madeley Junction (on the Shrewsbury to Birmingham line) and Buildwas via Lightmoor, Coalbrookdale (and the Albert Edward Bridge) was kept open for coal trains supplying the Ironbridge Power Station until closure of the power station in 2015.

The Telford Steam Railway, a heritage railway formed in 1976, now operates a one mile section of track around Horsehay and Dawley. With the closure of the power station at Ironbridge and proposed redevelopment of the site the steam railway has aspirations to extend southwards to Buildwas as part of a wider plan to link up with the Ironbridge industrial heritage sites.

We may once again see trains passing over the Albert Edward Bridge.

