

## The Alcester Railway

In 1876 a railway line was opened between Bearley and Alcester. The section between Great Alne and Alcester was subsequently closed, leaving the four remaining miles of track open between Bearley to Great Alne.

This is one of the local lines I knew as a locomotive fireman in the 1940s. On Fridays only, a little train of two or three wagons, plus the brake van, was formed at Bearley. Between 10.00 and 11.00am. we,(driver,myself, guard and a porter from Bearley) would start the journey after obtaining a staff for the single line between Bearley East Signal Box and the North Signal Box. This was exchanged for another staff (one engine in steam) for us to occupy the single line to Great Alne. No other train would be allowed on this line until the staff had been returned.

This line, only being used once a week for this one train had little maintenance. Only small locomotives were allowed. Brambles overhung, grass and weeds were over the track, pheasants and partridges would scurry out of the way. Although the journey was taken at a very leisurely pace, farm animals in the fields would look alarmed and race from the line side. On approaching Great Alne was a level crossing (Spencer's Crossing). Here was a narrow lane leading to Spencer's mill. The gate had to be closed to road traffic for us to pass through. This operation was performed by the porter. We then proceeded the few hundred yards to Great Alne station and yard.

The porter operated the ground frame. We took the empty wagons from the sidings and put the fresh ones in position and then formed a little train for return journey. With the train left secure, it was then time for us all to walk the short journey to the Mother Huff Cap inn for refreshments. The big attraction there was the big blousy landlady. My mate who was not known for his hospitality, insisted in getting the drinks more than once so he could ogle at the landlady leaning over the barrels to draw the beer. We then returned fully replenished to the station and made the journey back, often taking water for the engine from Edstone aqueduct before proceeding to Bearley North Signal Box where the staff was given up. We were then given a staff to enter the short section of line to Bearley East Box.

Excursion over.

Peter Chater