

To avoid confusion please read this note concerning the lines of railway that eventually became known as the Stratford upon Avon and Midland Junction Railway (SMJ).

The network of railways that eventually ran from Blisworth LNW to Broom Junction MR via Stratford upon Avon (with branches to Ravenstone Wood on the MR and Banbury on the LNWR) consisted of various amalgamations of small companies that took place prior to 1923. The Government enforced "grouping" of 1923 placed the line in the camp of the LMSR and later on nationalisation in 1948 into BR (LMR). This caused its name to be altered on a number of occasions between 1864 and 1948. Although the line was only legally known as the Stratford upon Avon and Midland Junction Railway (always abbreviated SMJ) between 1910 and 1922 most historians and enthusiasts use the SMJ abbreviation to refer to it no matter what period of history they may be looking at. I have always tried to call it the SMJ line when not specifically looking at events between the dates above but I admit to failure on many occasions. The little line christened "The Shakespeare Route" by the SMJ is almost universally and affectionately remembered as the SMJ!! This small confusion has already led to sloppy journalists and others looking at file images taken at any time during its history and using the SMJ title incorrectly. The passage of time makes such matters worse as my generation who knew the line in its final British Railways years are the last to really appreciate how long lasting and influential the SMJ was locally around Stratford where most residents used the SMJ description when talking of the line even in the 1950's. Anyone wanting to get a true perspective of the various names and dates of amalgamations of the line should refer to the published histories of the line the most definitive of which is the history written by Arthur Jordan. SBN 86093 131 5 Oxford Publishing Co 1982

Key dates and company names

1866 Northampton & Banbury Junction Railway opened from Blisworth to Towcester (later extended to Banbury).

1871 East & West Junction Railway opened between Fenny Compton and Kineton

1873 First train ran on E & W J R between Kineton and Stratford upon Avon (July 1st)

1879 Evesham Redditch & Stratford upon Avon Junction Railway opened June 2nd forming an end on junction with the E & W J R at Stratford and a north facing junction at Broom with the Midland Railway Co.

1887 Line completed between Towcester and Ravenstone Wood on the Midland Railway Bedford – Northampton line thus connecting the East & West at both ends with the Midland Railway. This nominally separate undertaking had the cumbersome title of the Stratford upon Avon, Towcester and Midland Junction Railway although it could only reach Stratford by virtue of legal running powers over the East & West Junc Rly from Towcester to Stratford!

1909 Jan 1st Ownership of the East & West Junc Rly, The Stratford upon Avon, Towcester & Midland Junction Rly and the Evesham, Redditch & Stratford upon Avon Junc Railways was vested in a new company the **Stratford upon Avon and Midland Junction Railway**.

1910 On July 1st the SMJR formally absorbed the Northampton & Banbury Junc Rly

1923 on 1st Jan the SMJR ceased to exist as it was amalgamated as a minor constituent into the London, Midland & Scottish Railway Co. (the Midland Railway Co was a major constituent of the LMS)

1948 1st Jan the LMS was nationalised along with all other major UK railways and became the London Midland Region of British Railways.

1952 April 7th All remaining passenger services were withdrawn from the lines of the former SMJ system leaving the lines open for freight traffic only

1965 April 24th The last ever train (a passenger special) ran over the Stratford – Fenny Compton section of the line.

See also my reference document Stratford upon Avon local history 02.03

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