

SHREWSBURY RAILWAY STATION



HISTORY

- The Station was formerly known as Shrewsbury General.
- It was originally built in October 1848 for the county's first railway – the Shrewsbury to Chester Line. The architect was Thomas Mainwaring Pension of Oswestry.
- The building is unusual as it was extended between 1899 and 1903 by the construction of a new floor *underneath the* original station building.

HISTORY

- The building style was imitation Tudor, complete with carvings of Tudor style heads around the window frames. This was done to match the Tudor building of Shrewsbury School (now Shrewsbury Library) almost directly opposite.
- The Station was given Grade II listed status in May 1969; this applies to the main building on Castle Foregate, adjacent to Platform 3.

HISTORY



Carvings on the railway station – each window has different carved heads



Station building's tower

TRAIN OPERATIONS

- It was operated by the Great Western Railway (GWR) and the London and North Western Railway (LNWR).
- In Shrewsbury's steam days, the GWR regularly turned its locomotives by running round the triangle formed by using the Abbey Foregate loop.
- Until 1967 Shrewsbury was served by the GWR, latterly BR Western Region. Now managed by Transport for Wales Rail Services.
- Currently runs two direct trains to London Euston every weekday.

STEAM TRAIN IN SHREWSBURY STATION - 1962



PLATFORMS

As in many towns and cities, the railway lines are elevated. *Unusually*, the bridge at the end of the Station (south side) carries the tracks and some extended platforms over the River Severn.



PLATFORMS

- There are five platforms in use, numbered 3-7 (platforms 1 and 2 have been disused since the 1970s and have no track).
- A pedestrian footbridge over the platforms still exists but has long since been disconnected from the station; instead is a public walkway allowing pedestrians to cross over the station area and part of a route named “The Dana”.

PLATFORMS

- Opposite platform 7 is a high concrete wall that divides the rest of the station from the old platform 8. This platform was built for the use of transporting prisoners to Shrewsbury Prison between 1868 and the First World War. (The Prison gateway is visible from Platform 7)

WAR MEMORIALS

- On Platform 3 there is a metal plaque listing (with their respective Stations of employment) 42 employees who died serving in the armed forces in 'THE GREAT WAR' with figures of a soldier and sailor and representations of a cannon and steamship. It was restored and re-dedicated in 2010.
- Inside the offices is a metal plaque to the 14 "heroes" of the LNWR's Locomotive Dept. in **Shrewsbury** who died in World War 1.

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

- On 15th October 1907 a mail train was derailed at Shrewsbury due to excessive speed on a curve. 18 people were killed.
- On 6th November 2017, an Arriva Train caught fire in the morning causing the station to be evacuated for some hours. There were no fatalities.
- Arwel Hughes composed 'Tydi a roddai' in 20 minutes during a wait for train connections in 1938 – a plaque to mark this was unveiled on Platform 3 in 2004.

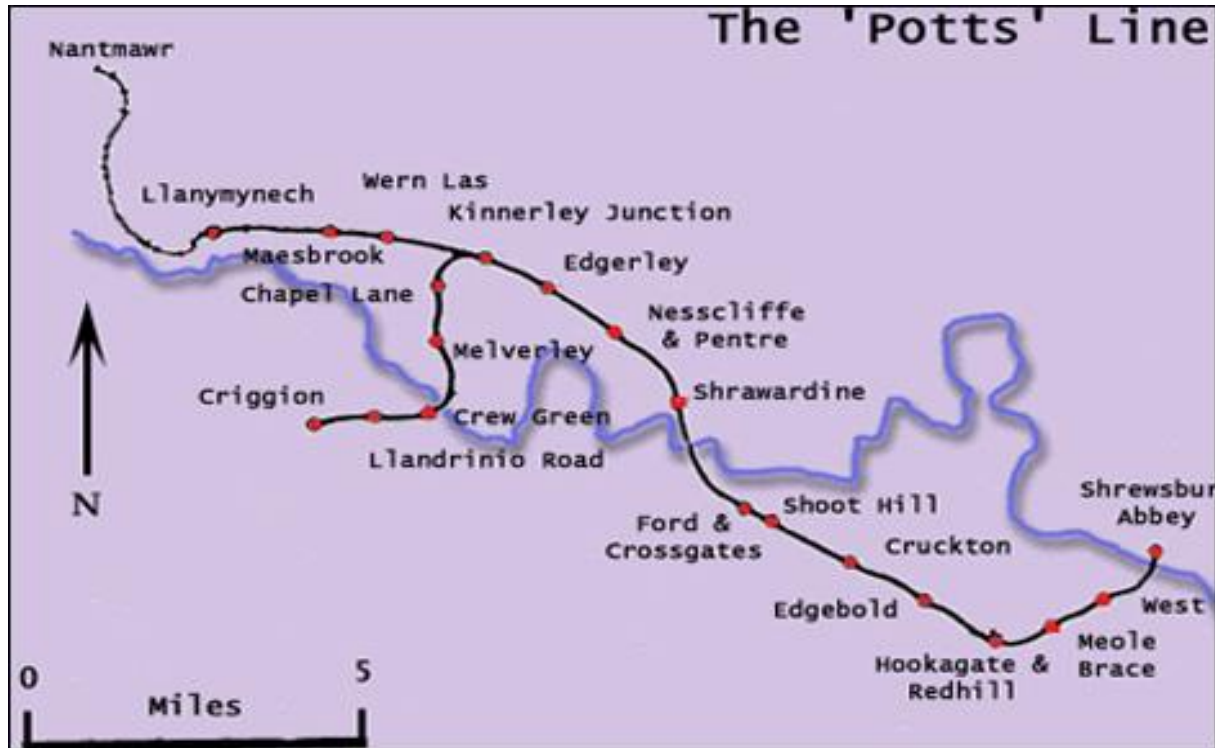
THE FUTURE – OUT OF TOWN RAILWAY STATION ALONG A5?

- It has been proposed (Shropshire Star 29.4.19) that Shrewsbury should have a Parkway railway station, built on the Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury line, east of the town in the Preston Boats/Emstrey area adjacent to the A5. This station would have its own Park and Ride facility.
- Reason cited for this project include the poor parking provision, the one-way system and traffic congestion all making the station difficult and time consuming to reach by car.

THE POTTS LINE, ABBEY FOREGATE



The Potts Line Map



This line fulfilled the cliché of the English rural branch line, with its slow and unreliable service, collapsing bridges and most bizarre rolling stock ever seen on a British railway.

BIZARRE SECOND-HAND LOCOMOTIVES AND CARRIAGES



Strangest of all – ‘The Gazelle’ – nicknamed ‘The Coffee Pot’ – believed to be the smallest locomotive ever operated on a standard gauge railway in Britain.



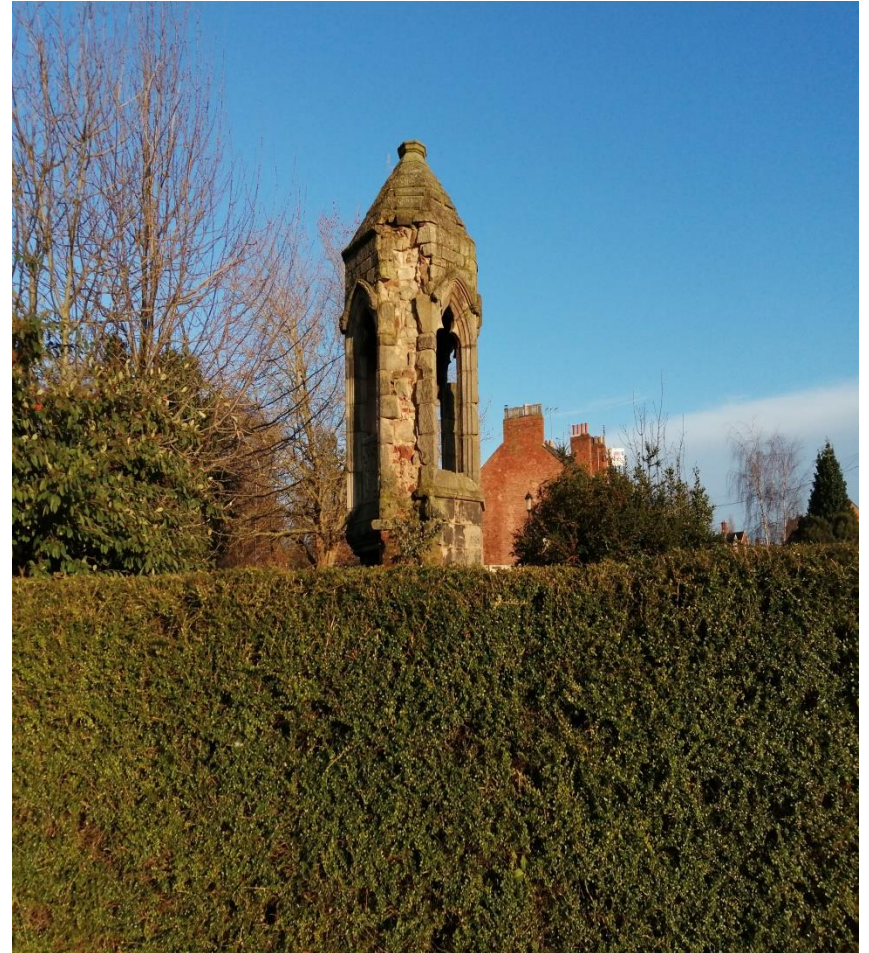
Carriage – originally a horse-drawn tramcar, adapted to be used behind the Gazelle by ripping out the top deck and the stairs.

The Railway Line that Wouldn't Die

- The 1860's were the golden age of railways when tiny branch lines sprung up, backed by private investors speculating in the hope of making a fast buck. But whoever had the idea of building a railway line connecting Shrewsbury with the small village of Llanymynech, Nr. Oswestry, wasn't a business genius!
- How any of the owners ever expected to make a profit from this venture is a mystery – for a start the line didn't go near any population centres, apart from Shrewsbury, and its stations were located in the middle of nowhere!

- Yet despite this, the Potts Line was used – on and off – for nearly a century before it finally fell into obscurity.
- The terminus was built at Abbey Foregate, opposite Shrewsbury's Abbey Church, standing on the site of the former monastery's refectory. Passengers arriving at the station were greeted by the sight of the 14th century refectory pulpit, fenced off at the edge of the platform.

The 14th Century Refectory Pulpit



PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT

- The line first opened on 13th August, 1866 and, according to the Shrewsbury Chronicle, “large numbers of passengers turned up at Abbey Foregate Station to try out the new service and got out the other end determined to explore Llanymynech”. “Many walked up Llanymynech Hill but other sought sport in the River Vyrnwy, as well-filled baskets testified”. But the novelty soon wore off and numbers dwindled.

- It was originally intended to transport minerals from Llanymynech but these plans suffered an early blow when owners were refused permission to run its trains in Shrewsbury General Station.
- Freight trains came in February 1912.

FOR KING AND COUNTRY

- The line closed completely in November 1933 but when war broke out everything changed.
- In June 1941 the War Dept. requisitioned the line from Shrewsbury to Llanymynech and established a vast ammunition storage dump at a secret depot in Kinnerley. More than 200 huge storage sheds (camouflaged) were built around the village of Kinnerley; each served by a railway siding. Some still survive today as shelters for livestock.

THE WAR DEPARTMENT

- The Department improved facilities during the war including viaducts and bridges. Although the Melferley viaduct was yet again declared unsafe in 1945
- Shortly after the war, the Severn floods were so bad they reached the top of the embankment at Shrawardine and a bridge at Maesbrook was washed away.
- In 1959 the War Dept. closed its last depot and the following year the line was returned to civilian status.

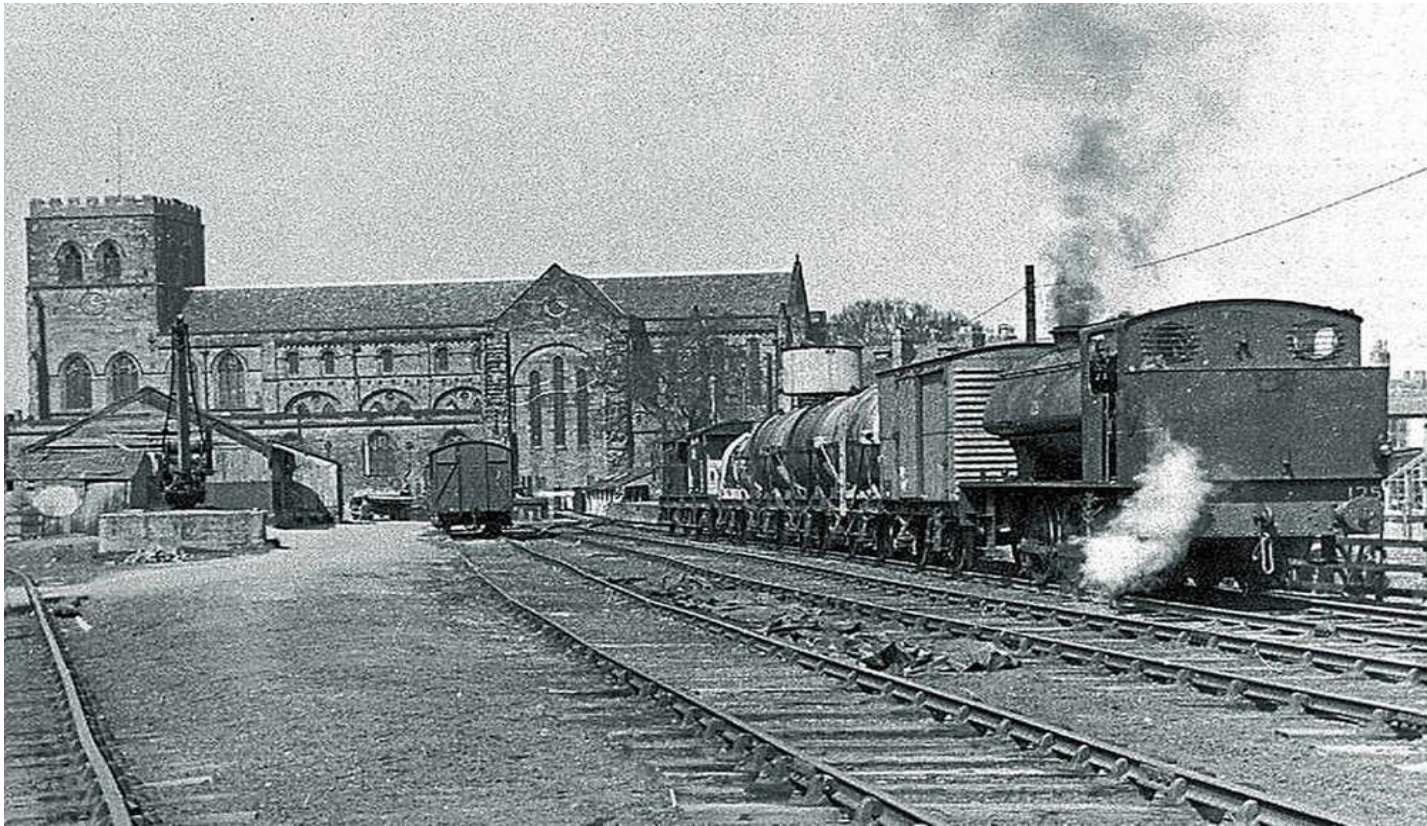
THE END OF THE LINE

In 1960 the line was again operated by British Railway. But the writing was on the wall and operations were run down.

The last scheduled train from Shrewsbury to Llanymynech ran on 26th February 1960 and three days later the line closed.

NB part of the original venture was funded by the Potteries, Shrewsbury and North Wales Railway – hence the nickname ‘The Potts Line’

Abbey Foregate Station During the last week of Operation in February 1960



Picture taken by Russell Mulford

ABBEY FOREGATE STATION



A very individual building at Abbey Foregate Station. The passenger platforms slope upwards behind the photographer.

THE PLATFORM



The Platform as it is today, part of the Abbey Car Park

ABBAY FOREGATE STATION - VISTOR CENTRE



Note the original ticket window in the background



First opened in September 2012 and was well supported. In 2013 opened every third weekend of the month through the summer.

RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST

- Abbey Station is home to some fascinating artefacts and the original Waiting Room and Station Masters Office remain so the public can see what a simple Victorian rural railway station looked like.

THE ABBEY STATION HERITAGE TRUST CENTRE



Heritage Visitors Centre

