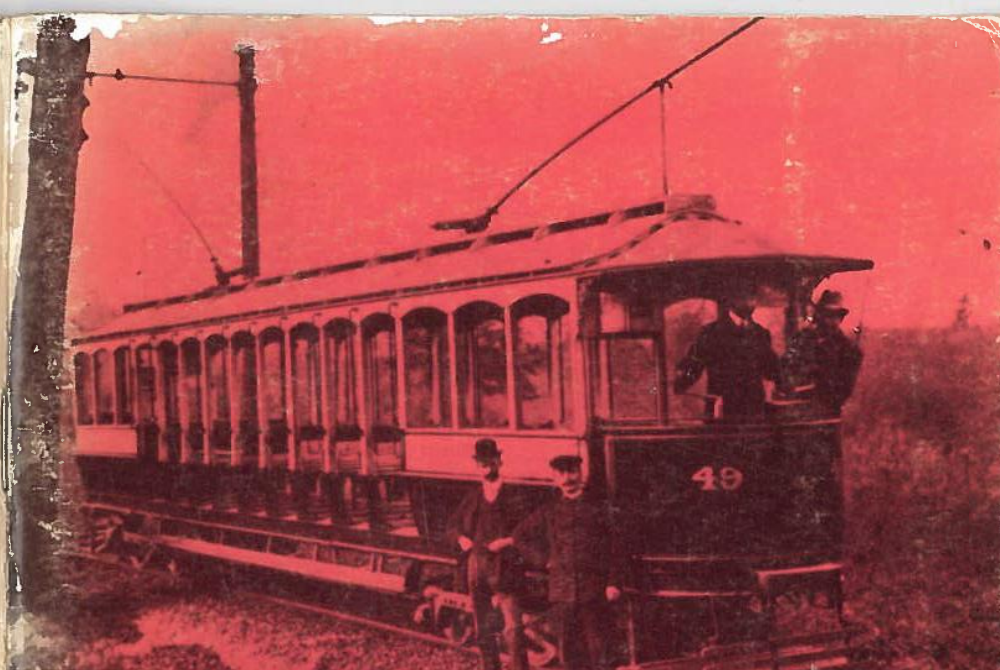


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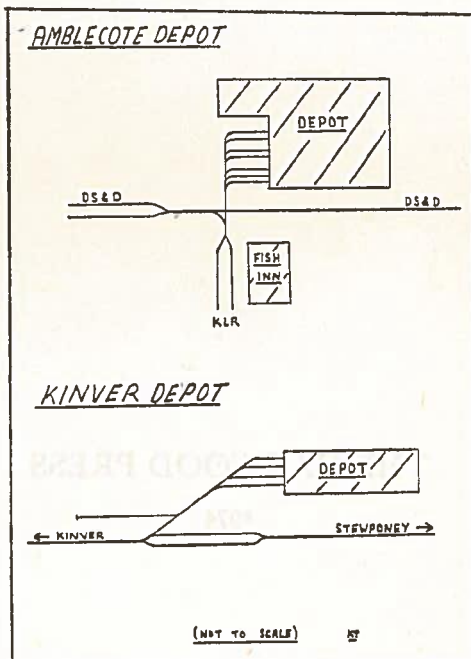
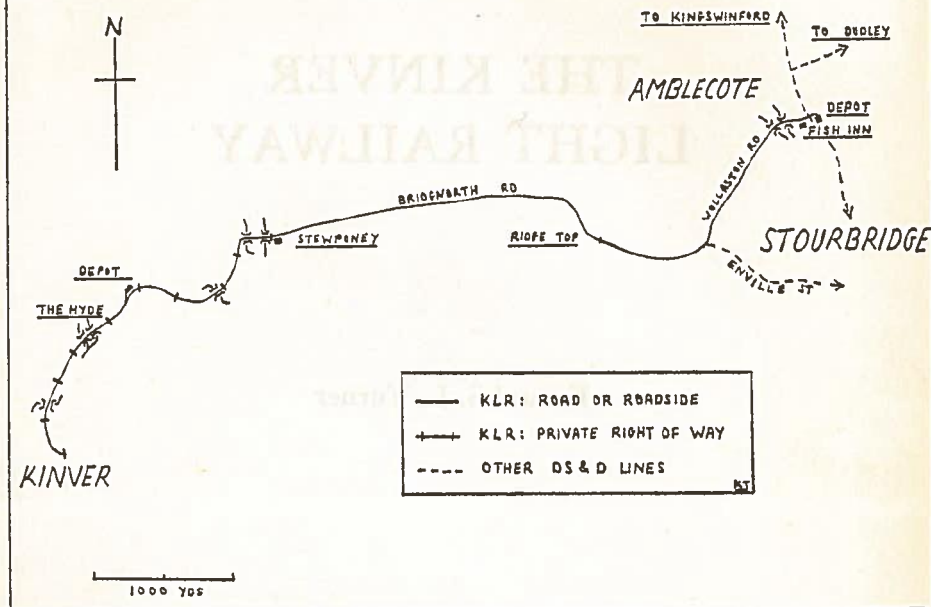
# THE KINVER LIGHT RAILWAY

K. and S. L. Turner

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# KINVER LIGHT RAILWAY



## PROMOTION AND OPENING

The Kinver Light Railway occupied an extreme south-westerly position in the former Black Country tramway network, though strictly speaking it was not a tramway but rather a light railway masquerading as one. This peculiar state of affairs came about for two reasons: firstly, the growth of the urban tramway network throughout the whole of the Black Country; and secondly, the growth in popularity of Kinver as a beauty spot and tourist attraction within easy reach of the Black Country conurbations. The first reason was naturally not without its effect upon the second.

The history of the whole Black Country network is obviously outside the scope of this book, and only those matters relevant to the KLR will be dealt with; what is important is the fact that by 1890 a major system of both standard gauge and 3ft. 6in. gauge lines, both horse and steam worked, had evolved to link Birmingham with Wolverhampton via Smethwick, Oldbury, Dudley and Sedgley, and with Bloxwich via West Bromwich, Wednesbury and Walsall. The network was completed by various cross-connections, forming a roughly triangular pattern of lines, and various branches—the longest of which and the most important with regard to the history of the KLR being a line from Dudley south-west through Brierley Hill to Amblecote and Stourbridge. Opened on 31 May 1884 by the Dudley & Stourbridge Steam Tramways Co. Ltd., it was a 3ft. 6in. gauge steam-worked line terminating in Stourbridge High Street. Stourbridge was at this time a small town on the edge of the industrial area of the Black Country and renowned for its glassware. It was also the nearest point on the tramway system to Kinver, a small village some four miles away to the west.

As already mentioned, Kinver was a popular beauty spot, but at the close of the nineteenth century could only be reached by boat, carter's horse or wagonette. It was an interesting sight-seeing centre, for there one could hire a boat for a trip up the River Stour or the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, visit the red sandstone parish church and the local



(and inhabited) cave dwellings cut into Kinver Edge, or climb the Edge itself and enjoy the view stretching to Clee Hills, the Welsh Marches and the Malverns. (Kinver Edge was the end of the rocky sandstone ridge into which the village snuggled in its basin.) Other notable places of interest were within easy reach of the village. All in all, it seemed inevitable that some scheme for a connection with Stourbridge would sooner rather than later be promoted; the beginnings of such a scheme eventually occurred in 1897, when, in the November of that year, an application for a Light Railway Order was made to the Light Railway Commissioners by agents for the British Electric Traction Co. Ltd. Both the LRC and the BET had been formed the previous year, the LRC under the Light Railways Act of 1896.

The two principal promoters of the light railway between Stourbridge and Kinver were Mr E. Garcke and Mr S. P. W. Sellon; on 22 December 1898 they held a meeting to approve a draft order drawn up by the LRC. Known as the Kinver Light Railway Order 1898, it was given the Board of Trade's seal of approval on 7 March 1899. Its sub-title was 'Authorising the construction of Light Railways from Stourbridge to Kinver in the counties of Worcester and Stafford'. The two principal lines authorised were firstly: 2 miles 44½ chains from the Fish Inn at Amblecote to the Stewponey and Foley Arms Hotel at Stourton, and secondly: 1 mile 48½ chains from there to Kinver. Two short connections were also authorised to provide physical linkage with the former D & SST line at Amblecote (controlled since 2 April 1898 by the BET). In view of this connection the authorised gauge given in the Order was 3ft. 6in., but permission was granted for any other to be adopted, providing the Board of Trade approval was obtained. Two years were allowed for the compulsory purchase of the necessary land with a further year for the completion of the whole works.

Several other provisions were made as to the construction of the railway. For example, the intention of the BET was naturally to use electric traction (though steam or horse working was provided for) and in accordance with this a minimum height of 18ft. 6in. was stipulated for the overhead wire above the rail surface. This allowed for the use of double-deck vehicles over the line—or so in theory, for other circumstances dictated otherwise. Of the 4 miles 15 chains of route, 1 mile 48 chains were planned for a private, rural right-of-way; 1 mile 32

chains were planned to occupy roadside reservations and the remainder was to be laid along the road. This necessitated widening the road at several points and replacing some of the bridges over the River Stour and the Stourbridge Canal with wider structures. And so, with the Light Railway Order secured, work commenced on the construction of the KLR. The cost of this was less than £2,000.

The actual building of the railway was not without its attendant difficulties. To begin with, several of the landowners involved were reluctant to part with their land and it was some time before the private right-of-way section was secured. A special agreement with one landowner even earned for itself the distinction of being mentioned in the Light Railways Order: 'P. H. Foley shall be permitted at his own risk to load osiers from the osier bed by depositing the same over the canal hedge on to the towpath and for this purpose shall have the right of crossing the railway: Provided that in so doing he shall not interfere in any way with the operation of the Company'. The section along the public road was easily laid, as was the stretch after that along its own roadside reservation to the Stewponey. (A clause in the Light Railway Order insisted that 'The Company shall in the construction of the railway as far as is reasonably practicable avoid all interference with growing trees'.) The only major works undertaken up to this point were (besides the actual laying of the track and the erection of the steel poles, together with the installation of the overhead wire) several sections of road widening and the widening of the two bridges 8 chains from the Fish Inn over the Stourbridge Canal and the River Stour respectively.

On the rural section, however, through the meadows and woods from the Stewponey to Kinver, the engineering works were far greater; a firm and reasonably level trackbed had to be laid through thick woods (and a depot constructed in the middle of one) and across marshy water meadows continually prone to flooding; in addition several bridges had to be built over the meandering waterways of the area. Here, as on the roadside reservations, bullhead rails were used instead of grooved tramway rails, and wooden poles were utilised for carrying the overhead wire. The laying of this last section was not without its hazards, for heavy rainfall led to equally heavy flooding of the lower portions, and on one occasion the canal bank burst, washing away part of the railway embankment and many of the wooden sleepers. Another setback occurred



when the contractor's steam locomotive, pulling a trainload of ashes and ballast, managed to derail itself near the Stewponey and fell into the river. The crew escaped safely. At last, in the spring of 1901, the line was completed and ready for the mandatory Board of Trade inspection. The inspecting officer was evidently concerned with the proposed methods of working the line, for he ordered compulsory stops to be made at the various crossing-places and road junctions along the route, as well as at the top of steep descents. Moreover, he forbade the use of double-deck vehicles over the rural and roadside sections, on the grounds that the railway track laid on these sections were not as safe as tramway track and, furthermore, the close proximity of the trees beside the line constituted a danger to passengers on an open top deck. In the interests of public safety the recommendations were sound ones, but for the operators, faced with a severe reduction in the carrying capacity of the line, they were not so welcome. Appeals against the decisions failed and, after a hurried change-round of the stock, the line opened for public traffic on Good Friday, 1 April 1901.

It was a quiet opening—unusually so in fact, for the line was not advertised, nor was its first day covered in the local press. Its existence was left to be spread by word of mouth and by the bare timetables issued in the papers; the process did not take long, for by the next public holiday—Whitsun—the numbers of trippers seeking a ride were a definite embarrassment to the owners. In short, the light railway was soon strained far beyond its capacity.

### THE ROUTE DESCRIBED

The KLR began outside the Fish Inn at Coalbournbrook, Amblecote; on the wall of the inn two large signs read TERMINUS FOR KINVER CARS in eight-inch high raised gilt letters. Here the line formed a trailing junction with the Stourbridge to Kingswinford (and Dudley) line, while a crossover connected the KLR with the Amblecote depot directly opposite. (The Stourbridge–Dudley tramway had been electrically worked since 28 July 1899.) A sub-station at the depot, fed by the Midland Electric Corporation, supplied the necessary current via a

feeder to a point near the Stewponey, from whence a second feeder ran to Kinver Depot. The Fish Inn stood on the corner of Wollaston Road, down which the KLR ran, the actual terminus being marked by a loop in the track.

Running in a westerly, then south-westerly, direction down Wollaston Road, the street tramway (for such it was for all intents and purposes) almost immediately crossed over in quick succession the Stourbridge Canal and the River Stour just 8 chains from the Fish Inn. The tramway then entered Wollaston High Street (Wollaston, like Amblecote, being an outlying district of Stourbridge) and formed a trailing double junction with the Enville Street tramway from Stourbridge; this junction was never in fact used for traffic as passengers from Stourbridge for Kinver had to change cars here. The line then ran westwards up the Bridgnorth Road to the Ridge Top, where it deserted the roadway for the left-hand grass verge and in doing so began to look more like a light railway. (The tramway track from the Fish Inn loop to this point was doubled soon after the opening.) The road, closely followed by the light railway, now left the built-up area and ran between the fields to the Stewponey Inn near Stourton. There were occasional passing loops on this stretch of the line. Just before reaching the Stewponey the track re-entered the roadway for a short distance before making another passing loop outside the inn. At this point the railway was just over  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from its starting place.

Leaving the Stewponey on its left, the KLR at once crossed over the main Wolverhampton–Kidderminster road and entered its private right-of-way section. Immediately next to the roadway ran the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal (which joined the Stourbridge Canal to the north); this was crossed by a wooden bridge, later replaced by a plate-girder structure. Within the space of a few yards the River Stour was crossed for the second time with another girder bridge; the line then turned abruptly south and crossed the low-lying Dunsley Meadows. It then bridged the Stour for the third time and followed the north bank of the canal to Kinver Depot, the halfway halt on this rural section. The depot itself was situated in a small wood close by the canal and consisted of a four-road tramcar shed rather crudely constructed of corrugated iron, a short spur siding, a passing loop and two concrete-sided inspection pits where work was carried out on the running gear of the trams.



Passing to the south of the depot the line continued to run parallel to the canal and emerged from the trees on to the Hyde, or Hyde Meadows, where there was a fixed halt. On this stretch the railway crossed various branches and tributaries of the Stour by means of a number of minor bridges in its journey through the water meadows. Doubling back on itself, the KLR turned to run south-east, parallel with Kinver High Street, before terminating at the east end of the village by Mill Lane, close to the canal lock, just to the north of the houses. Here was a three-road terminus complete with its own station premises including a waiting room and a ticket office.

The above is a rather bald description of the route; the local guide-books of the early twentieth century were slightly more verbose and, expectedly, informative. The following passage is from the *Illustrated Guide to Kinver*, published shortly after the opening of the light railway: 'Thence the ride is exhilarating, and the scenery of the grandest description. Just before leaving the highway to cross the fields we pass on our left the ancient Inn, the "Stewponey", whilst almost facing it on the right and nestling among the trees can be seen the embattled tower of the famous Stourton Castle, the birth place of Cardinal Pole. The Hyde is next reached where once stood the first iron rolling and splitting mill ever erected in England.'

### OPERATING HISTORY

The coming of the light railway opened up Kinver as a popular resort in no uncertain manner; it also provided a cheap, safe and easily available means for the clergy and schoolmasters of the Black Country to introduce town children to the countryside and the type of surroundings they might never have otherwise seen. The tourist boom hit its peak in the 1901-1904 period when the novelty of a day trip along the KLR had not yet had time to wear off; Kinver was known at this time as the 'Switzerland of the Midlands'. In the words of the *Illustrated Guide to Kinver*: 'Every facility is now given for the conveyance of Excursionists in large or small parties, as there are in active operation about 90 miles of tramways, intersecting practically the whole of the Black

Country, from almost any point of which Kinver may be reached without a change of car. This is itself a great boon to the pleasure seeking public, and should do much to draw them for a short holiday from the smoke and grime of the manufacturing districts to the pure and bracing air of this locality.'

Naturally, tourism, though important in its own way, was not the only benefit from the building of the KLR. It contributed to the economic growth of Kinver, allowing workers to come and go with ease; it resulted in a population growth of the village as it gave access to a wider area and choice of workplaces, and in itself offered some local employment. The village shops benefited both from trippers and from housewives now able to reach them; the whole of Kinver indeed developed and changed as it became part of the Black Country transport system with the KLR offering through goods and parcel services at cheap rates and quick transit.

From the outset the KLR was a success; June 1901 proved it to be a roaring one, for at Whitsun thousand upon thousand of visitors flocked into Kinver. The tramcars, running since 8.00 a.m., were packed to capacity, and what they could not carry at 3d per head the horse-drawn brakes were more than willing to do so at 9d. Four cars were in operation, and these ran at 20-minute intervals instead of the usual 30; such was the heavy demand made on them that one of the motors failed and the car concerned had to be withdrawn from service for a few hours for hurried repairs to be effected. Such were the crowds at the Fish Inn that a man had to be stationed there permanently to supervise the loading and unloading of the cars. Come nightfall, the mammoth exodus began and many set off on foot to either walk home or else walk as far as the Enville Street junction and catch a tram there. Others, more cunning, walked only as far as the Stewponey and caught a car back to Kinver in order to secure a seat on the return journey to Amblecote.

On Tuesday the pattern was repeated, though to a somewhat lesser degree, and the traffic on Wednesday still taxed the line's capacity as many trippers sought to avoid the crush by coming so late in the week. By mid-June two more cars entered service on the KLR to help ease the problem of congestion (not of course helped by the ban on double-deck trams); Wednesday 19 June saw a special excursion of Birmingham schoolchildren to Kinver and back again in three cars. The attractions



of the line had soon been recognised and all summer traffic was heavy; teething troubles were slight and confined to the odd car breakdown or failure of the automatic staff equipment. Above all, the line was constantly warmly spoken of in the local press and its smoothness of operation highly commended.

Throughout this period tramway extensions were also going on elsewhere in the locality: under the Dudley & District Light Railway Order of 1898 the Stourbridge to Kingswinford line was constructed, utilising for part of its length the Stourbridge-Dudley tramway as far as Amblecote. This new tramway (and its counterpart, the Dudley-Kingswinford line) opened on 7 December 1900 and in the following year was extended up Stourbridge High Street. Under the Kinver Light Railway Order of 1898 the BET was instructed to build 'with all reasonable dispatch' an electric tramway from Wollaston, down Enville Street to Stourbridge High Street. An order to proceed with this was obtained in 1900 and the line, connected to the KLR, opened on 13 December 1902. (As mentioned in the previous section, this connection was never actually used for normal traffic.)

The KLR continued to be well patronised, especially in the summer and public holiday periods—the Easter weekend of 1902, from the Thursday to the Monday, once again saw the trams overflowing with passengers and once again many had to return on foot. A fortnight later on Sunday 12 April a hitch occurred when one of the cars left the rails near the Stewponey, blocking the track in the process. A work gang was sent from Hart's Hill Depot to the scene and after two hours' work the tram was rerailed; in the meantime the trams operated to and from the blockage on both sides with little inconvenience to the passengers, who merely had to walk round the obstruction and board another car. The incident had occurred at 4.00 p.m.

In the autumn of 1902 a new signalling system was installed between the Ridge Top at Wollaston and Kinver. The original automatic staff equipment was not apparently behaving quite as it should have done and trams frequently overshot loops where they should have waited for another to pass. The new apparatus consisted of colour light signals automatically controlled by the passage of the cars; these were fixed to the nearest poles to either end of the passing loops and indicated whether or not the section ahead was clear. The system was a success and did

away with a lot of time wasting caused by trams meeting and having to reverse back to a loop. It was especially advantageous at night time in the absence of street lighting, for it indicated to the motorman just where the loops were—a similar advantage was enjoyed by prospective travellers along the route. By November the equipment was in operation and later similar apparatus was installed on other lines in the Black Country.

In March 1903 heavy rain led to the Stour overflowing at the Hyde. In the words of the *County Express*: 'Until about Wednesday the whole of the meadow was under water, causing great inconvenience to persons making their way to the trams'. The public road was also impassable, but on Thursday (19 March) the floods slowly began to subside. Immediately after this, work commenced on the preliminary arrangements for laying a short branch line from the main track across the Hyde to the bottom of Stoney Lane at the western end of the village. The intention was to make this the new terminus of the KLR, the 100yd. long branch bringing the light railway much nearer to Kinver Edge. The *County Express* optimistically commented that 'It is thought possible that the company intend to construct the line to Kidderminster in this direction'; the new terminus was hoped to be ready for use by Whitsun.

Whit Monday arrived on 1 June but no further progress had been made on the new terminus and the whole project was eventually shelved. The holiday was, however, marked in a different way—by the line's first fatal accident. On the Monday afternoon, while riding back from Kinver to Stourbridge on the conductor's platform, a 52-year-old Quarry Bank resident named William Beasley fell from the tramcar just past the Stewponey Inn and fractured his skull. He died of his injuries the next day. A second serious accident—by good chance not a fatal one—occurred when car No. 47 from the Fish Inn ran into car No. 48 at Wollaston instead of passing it in the loop (this was before the track was doubled). PC's Clews and Walsh were travelling on the front platform of No. 47 and, together with motorman John New, received serious injuries. The holiday was further marked by a number of minor accidents such as crushes in the 5-600-strong crowd at the Kinver terminus, but considering the fact that on the Monday alone over 14,000 passengers were carried on the railway, small incidents of this sort were inevitable. Once again the combination of a public holiday



and good weather had brought the crowds flocking out; in anticipation of them palisades had been erected at the Kinver terminus to help control the crushes.

The KLR now in theory changed hands, but in practice it remained the same as before. Although originally owned by the BET, it had been worked from the time of its opening by the Dudley, Stourbridge & District Electric Traction Co. Ltd. (The DS & DET was the renamed BET-controlled Dudley & Stourbridge Steam Tramways.) The line now became part and parcel of the whole DS & DET system—now an important constituent of the Black Country network. In 1904 the ownership changed again when the Birmingham & Midland Tramways Ltd. acquired the controlling interest in the KLR from the BET; in May of the same year the B & MT helped form the Birmingham & Midland Tramways Joint Committee to control the whole of the Black Country network through the various companies within the embrace of the BET. The B & MT later changed its name in June 1912 to the Birmingham District Power & Traction Co. Ltd. In May 1907 a new tramway depot was opened by the Joint Committee; this was at Tividale on the Oldbury–Dudley route and served the whole of the network with its repair and maintenance facilities. Previous to the works opening, repairs of a major kind were performed on the KLR stock at Hart's Hill Depot on the Amblecote–Dudley route of the former DS & DET.

In 1916 four new cars were built at Tividale Works for the KLR, probably from prepared Brush parts, to supplement the line's ageing stock—the original three cars were in fact scrapped at this time. In spite of this injection of new blood the light railway suffered severely during and after the First World War. During the war years the line was overworked, understaffed and poorly maintained. Men and materials were both in very short supply and the track and rolling stock were left to deteriorate through neglect; when the war ended the railway was in a pitiful state and finding it hard to survive in a world which had rapidly changed. The post-war years saw the rise of the motor car and, far worse for the KLR, the rise of the motor omnibus. Just as the tramways had killed off the horse-drawn transport, so were the buses about to destroy the trams. Their victory was made all the more easier by the fact that, admirable though the Joint Committee was, it had little chance of achieving a co-ordinated operating policy when opposed to the multitude

of local authorities with which it had to deal. The first victim to fall to the buses was the service known as the Tramways Parcels Express. This had existed in its final form since 1917 and consisted of an efficient and comprehensive parcels delivery service operated by the Joint Committee. Collecting posts were set up at various points and small, van-bodied trams were used to convey the parcels to either the central office in Lionel Street, Birmingham, or else to the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Co. depot in Bearwood Road. The parcels were then delivered by tram or bus; this joint service had its origins before the war, but with the introduction of the bus service it was obviously only a matter of time before they replaced the trams entirely. This indeed occurred in the mid-1920s and the passenger services too began to feel the pressure. Hart's Hill Depot closed in 1925 and from then on all major repairs to the KLR stock were performed at Tividale; on the last day of that year the Dudley–Kingswinford route closed, quickly followed on 11 April 1926 by the Stourbridge–Kingswinford line.

Beside the competition from the B & MMOC, who continued to undercut the KLR's fares, the railway was forced to close during the General Strike of 1926; at the end of the strike on 13 May the line reopened, but Amblecote Depot closed except for use as a store for KLR stock. Further closures in the local system followed as a result of poor traffic figures—one of the main ones being the Enville Street line—and these cuts were accompanied by reductions in the remaining services. In spite of one or two half-hearted attempts to attract trade, the picture steadily worsened until by the beginning of 1930 all that was left of the original DS & DET system was the KLR and the Stourbridge–Dudley main line.

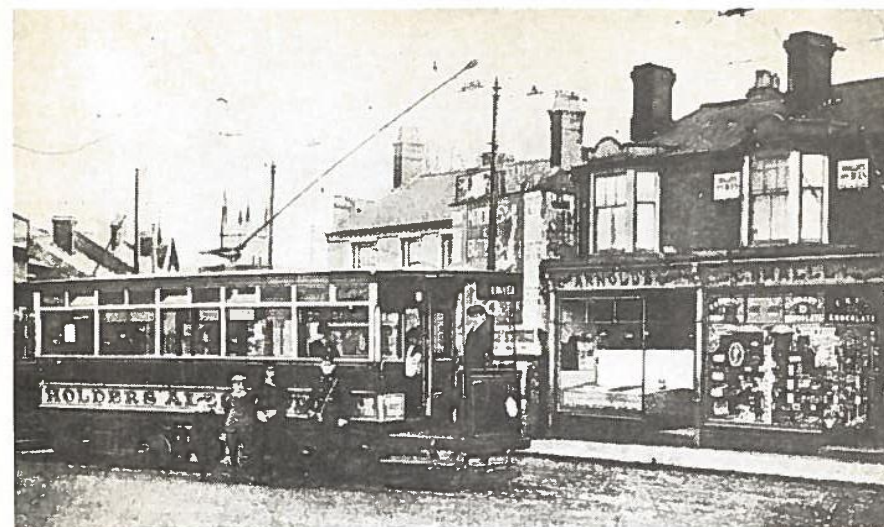
The local authorities began to discuss the implications of the situation; in January 1930 Kinver Parish Council received a letter from the tramway owners informing them of the proposed tramway abandonments in the area—i.e. the KLR. During the middle of the month the Stour flooded the track for what was to be the last time. By the end of the month Stourbridge Town Council had received a letter from the Joint Committee 'expressing their desire to abandon the Stourbridge–Dudley and Wollaston–Kinver tramway services by agreement with the local authorities concerned, in order that the services might be abandoned as soon as practicable, and to obviate the necessity of following the



lengthy procedure to obtain an Order for such abandonment'. (*County Express*, 1 February 1930.) The necessary agreement was quickly reached.

The closure of the KLR is as poorly documented as its opening; even the date normally ascribed to the event is almost certainly inaccurate. The date given in other accounts is always 1 March—the same day on which the Stourbridge–Dudley services ceased—but all the contemporary evidence suggests an earlier date. To begin with, the *County Express* of 8 February, covering a meeting of the Kinver Parish Council, states that 'The tramways company had sent a letter stating that the morning and evening cars would cease running on Saturday, February 1st, but some of the members said they had seen a car on the route that (Monday) evening'. (The KLR service now consisted of only these two cars.) The mystery of the Monday car is an interesting one—perhaps it was merely engaged upon a salvage trip or perhaps the public service continued for a short while before petering out. Whatever the answer, the KLR was definitely closed by 1 March, for the closure of the Dudley line was covered in depth in the press; it was referred to as 'the last tram service to run locally'. Of the Kinver Light Railway there was not a mention.

Although defunct, the railway remained very much as a physical presence with the track and poles left virtually intact. (The latter were adapted to carry power cables.) As road improvements and reconstructions took place so the remains were slowly nibbled away and the track and poles vanished from the street section. At Kinver Edge an unusual reminder of the tramway era was provided by two ex-Wolverhampton Tramways Co. horse-car bodies given a new lease of life as refreshment stalls. With the scrap drive of the Second World War most of the material assets of the KLR disappeared for good, including the two gilded signs on the wall of the Fish Inn. The occasional voice was raised to reopen the line using modern rolling stock, but the cause was a hopeless one. And so to today: the Fish Inn still stands, as does Amblecote Depot (now occupied by a wholesale greengrocer's), and the route to the Stewponey Inn can be easily followed along the roadway. Past Wollaston the grassy left-hand verge marks the site of the roadside reservation. Entering the private right-of-way section the bridges and embankments still remain, though in a very decrepit condition, and the site of Kinver Depot can be identified by the half-filled inspection pits



*Car No. 43, ex-South Staffs, at Wollaston junction waiting to depart for Kinver*



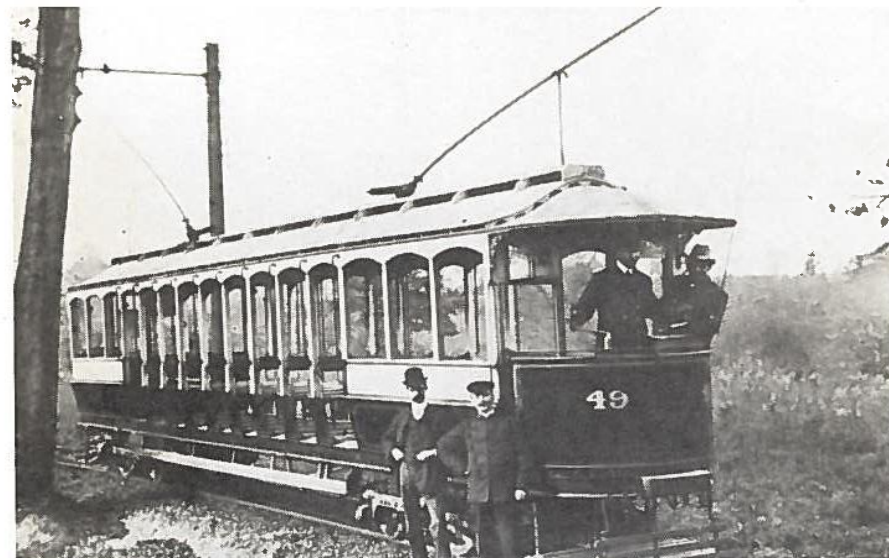
*Edwardian heyday: the Stewponey with the horse and tram still ruling the road.  
(courtesy L. Dunn)*





*Stewponey Hotel.*

*Into the motor age: Car No.50 passing the Stewponey. (Lens of Sutton)*



*Car No.49 on the occasion of the engineering inspection of the Stewponey-Kinver section of the line to consider the installation of heavier feeder cables. c.1904, to make possible a more intensive service warranted by the success of the tramway. The gentleman in front is Inspector Horton, next to him in the bowler is Mr. Nelson, the engineer. (courtesy Stourbridge Public Library)*

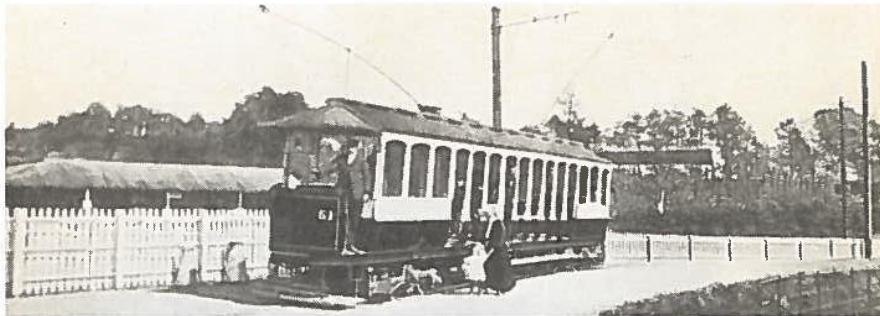


*Left: Car No.46 in the trees beside the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. The tram is approaching Kinver Depot from the Stewponey. Right: enlargement of the car, cut-down original KLR No.1, now in later rebuilt form. (courtesy Dudley Central Library)*

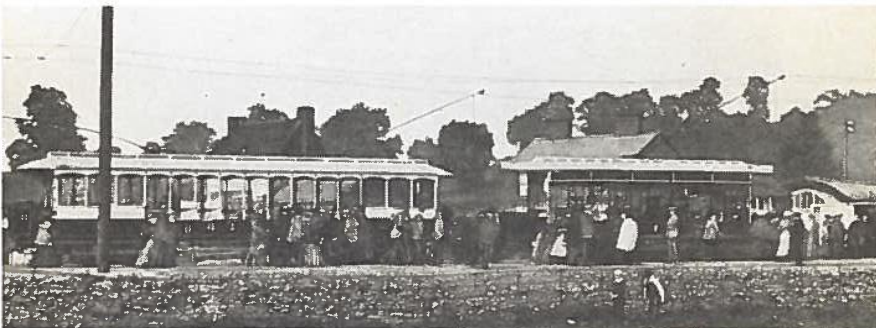


*The halt at Hyde Meadows in pre-1914 days; note the prominent advertisement (a rare occurrence on the KLR) on the 46-8 series tram. The 'waiting room' is of doubtful origin—probably a horse-drawn car from elsewhere on the Black Country system. (courtesy Dudley Central Library)*

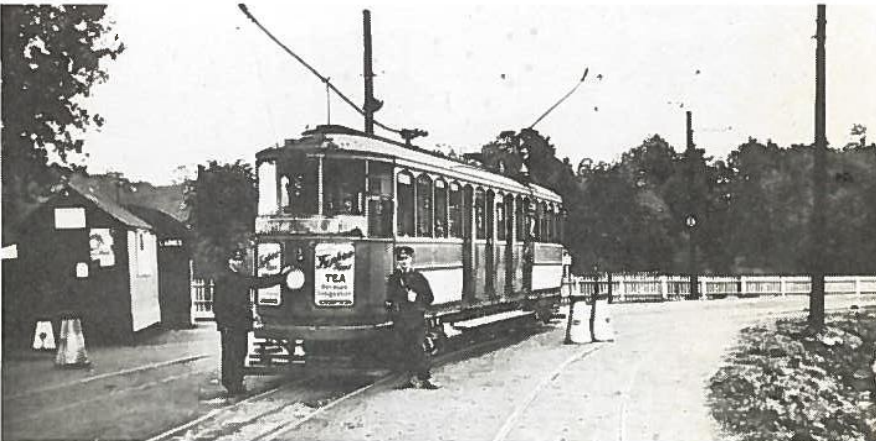




Car No. 51 at Kinver; the terminus roads lead off to the left. Note the two milk churns—an important source of revenue for the line. (courtesy Dudley Central Library)



Car No. 51 again at Kinver, this time in the company of one of the ex-Hockley cable cars. The condition of the latter tram indicates a date between 1911 and 1920. (courtesy L. Dunn)



The Kinver terminus of the K.L.R. showing all three roads, the customary milk churns and Car No. 6, built at Tivdale works 1916. (Author's collection)

and general rubbish—including the odd length of rail. The land upon which once stood Kinver terminus is easily identifiable, being on the west side of the road to the Stewponey between the river and canal bridges, just on the edge of the village it once served so well.

## SERVICES

As one would expect from a line run more as a tramway than as a railway, the KLR timetables were very flexible and often changed from one week to the next. In the early years the summer service at first improved from one car every hour or 30 minutes to one every 20 minutes or less. The timetable for the line, together with those for the others in the DS & DET system, was published every Saturday in the *County Express*. (The first one was issued on 27 April 1901 and is given in full in *Appendix 2*.) The first tram left Kinver at 7.00 a.m. and was known as the 'workmen's car' as its purpose was to bring workmen to Stourbridge from the village. The light railway was actually bound by law to run this service as in its 1898 Order it was laid down that

The Company at all times after the opening of the railways or any portion thereof for public traffic shall run at least one carriage each way every morning in the week and every evening in the week (Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday excepted) at such hours not being later than seven in the morning or earlier than half-past five in the evening respectively as the Company think most convenient for artisans mechanics and daily labourers at fares not exceeding one halfpenny per mile. . . .

From 20 July 1901 a slightly more frequent service was introduced with cars running at 20-minute intervals during the afternoon and evening until 11.00 p.m. A similar service was in force on Sundays as well.

During the winter months a slightly less frequent service was operated and some of the stock was put into storage in the closed Kinver Depot until the summer season recommenced. The 12 October timetable shows an adaptation made in preparation for the winding-down of the services with a basic 30-minute service operation throughout the day. At the



end of November the full winter service began with hourly cars in the morning and a 30-minute interval service in the afternoon and evening. (*Appendix 3* gives the 7 December 1901 timetable in full.) This alteration between winter and summer services continued for many years until the late 1920s, when only the compulsory morning and evening workmen's cars were being run. The morning car commenced running in 1902 at the much earlier time of 5.25 a.m. from Kinver, but was soon put back to 6.30 a.m. The earlier time was apparently the more preferable one as it enabled workers to travel further afield than Stourbridge to begin their day's work, and when the time was changed various protests were made to the operators from both individuals and local authorities. The protests proved effective and the 5.25 a.m. service was reinstated.

Various tales abound about the actual running of the trams; all emphasise the quiet good-humour and friendliness of the crews and the 'local' atmosphere of the line. It is pleasant to read, in an age that is rule-bound and appears to run its public transport systems for the sole benefit of those working them, of a time when such vehicles actually waited for late arrivals to catch them up! One local anecdote concerns the father of the actress Nancy Price; Mr Price always carried with him a loud whistle with which to warn the waiting tram crews of his approach and would give several hard blasts on it to ensure that he was never left behind!

At Bank Holiday times the light railway was worked as intensively as possible to cope with the demands made upon it; often this entailed running cars at intervals of 10 minutes or less throughout the day. During the Whitsun Bank Holiday of 1902, for example, six cars were in use on the Saturday and Sunday, while on the Monday and Tuesday seven cars were running at 7-minute intervals all day long—the most intensive service ever operated on the KLR.

The fares charged on the light railway were also subject to the 1898 Order, with the basic rate fixed at up to 1d per mile. A fare of 2d was, however, permitted for any distance between half and 2 miles provided that a fare of 4d was not exceeded on the railway for any distance. No provision was made for any class differential and indeed none was ever operated. In practice the fare from Kinver to Stourbridge (Fish Inn) was originally set at 3d and that from the Stewponney to the Fish Inn

at 2½d. Both fares applied, of course, in the opposite direction. This fare structure drastically undercut the 9d charged for the journey in a horse-brake and was greatly responsible for the early success of the line. In 1927 the through fare from Kinver to the Fish Inn was raised to 4d with an 'excursion return' of 6d, but by now the fares had been undercut in turn by the buses. A free travel concession was granted to blind people on the B & MTJC network.

The mainstay of the line was, of course, the excursion traffic, either in the form of day trippers making use of the normal scheduled services or else in the form of special through cars hired for the day by a Sunday School, factory, etc. Kinver could be reached quite easily from as far afield as Birmingham, Walsall or Wolverhampton. (*Appendix 4* gives the fares charged from various points in the Black Country.) The 1910 B & MTJC *Tramway Guide to Birmingham and the Black Country* quotes the case of the Birmingham-Kinver journey as an example. The route distance was 17 miles and the time taken on the trip was 2 hours; the return fare was 1s 6d and the single 1s 0½d. Cars left Edmund Street Birmingham at 5.16 a.m. and then at 20-minute intervals until 10.15 p.m. Passengers had to change cars at Dudley Railway Station and then again at the Fish Inn. On the return journey cars left Dudley for Birmingham at similar 20-minute intervals from 5.22 a.m. till 10.42 p.m. Cars between Dudley and the Fish Inn ran every 15 minutes in the mornings and every 10 minutes in the afternoon.

Passenger traffic, important though it was, was not the sole source of revenue for the KLR. In its 1898 Order it was laid down that

The Company shall having regard to the necessities of the district and the traffic offered for conveyance afford reasonable facilities for the carriage of all kinds of agricultural and garden produce including live stock.

The rates given for livestock were as follows:

Horses, mules, etc.	... ..	4d per mile
Oxen, cows, bulls, etc.	... ..	3d per mile
Calves, sheep, pigs, small animals	... ..	1½d per mile

No evidence appears to exist to indicate that the KLR ever actually



carried cattle and the like, but smaller animals were certainly conveyed. (One wonders exactly *how* farm animals could have been transported.) As also happened with many of the country's other railways, the KLR was extensively used to carry pigeons to Kinver from the Black Country; there they would be released to fly back to their homes and owners.

Besides the parcel traffic referred to earlier, the KLR's other main freight traffic consisted of the carrying of milk. The line had its own special goods car which was used for this purpose (the vehicle had been converted from a conventional passenger tram) though the usual cars sometimes carried the occasional churn on the platform. The service took the form of picking up loaded churns from Kinver and along the route where they had been left by the farmers, then taking them through to Dudley for distribution or bottling. This took place early in the morning, while in the evening the empty churns would return and be off-loaded at the relevant points.

### ROLLING STOCK

The history of the stock used on the KLR is a somewhat complicated one, due to exchanges with other routes, renumbering and so forth. During the first two years of operation normal working on the line was provided by the following three batches of cars:

#### *Original 1-3 (Later 46-8)*

These were constructed in 1900 by the Electric Railway & Tramway Carriage Works, Preston, as double-deck bogie cars fitted with Brill 22E maximum traction trucks. The bodies had four side windows on each side of the lower deck and open top decks. Direct ordinary stairs connected the two decks. It was the intention of the BET to open the light railway with these three trams, but their use was prohibited by the Board of Trade inspector. After some hasty decision-taking it appears that the top deck was removed from one of the cars to enable it to open the line. They were all then exchanged for three single-deck cars of the DS & DET (see below). After a year they were all converted to single-deck cars and returned to the KLR to deal with the heavy traffic demands. They now bore the DS & D numbers 46-8 which they retained

with the takeover of the line by that company; they also still carried their original lettering: BRITISH ELECTRIC TRACTION COMPANY LTD. As cut down they retained their original short-roof canopies upon which were fitted small electric headlamps adapted from the deck lights. (Under the 1898 Order all trams were to be lit front, back and inside between the hours of sunset and sunrise.) No. 46 later had new dashes fitted complete with more conventional headlamps; later still the roof was extended to form full-length canopies at each end. Nos. 47 and 48 (the two cars in the 1903 collision at Wollaston) remained with their original dashes and off-side grills, but they too had the roofs lengthened and headlamps fitted into the dashes. All three remained in service until the First World War, when they were withdrawn and scrapped.

#### *Temporary 1-3*

These were the single-deck trams loaned to the KLR by the DS & D in 1901 and these too had been built by the ER & TCW in the previous year. They were single-track trams fitted with 'Lord Baltimore' trucks. The bodies had monitor roofs, open platforms and five drop windows on each side; seating was for 26—rather a poor exchange for the original Nos. 1-3 which held 40. Oil signal lamps lit the front and rear. The three cars were taken from the DS & D 19-24 class and temporarily renumbered 1-3 for use on the KLR. With the return of the original 1-3 they returned to work elsewhere on the DS & D system. All were later rebuilt as double-deck vehicles except one which had its windows boarded up and side doors fitted, thus converting it into the special goods van used for milk traffic on the KLR.

#### *Final 1-3 (Later 49-51)*

The final cars to take the numbers 1-3 were the ones that came to be associated most in visitors' minds with the KLR; in a sense they were symbolic of the line, for they nearly always appeared in photographs and postcard views of the railway. They were constructed in 1901—probably as a rush order for stock for the line—by Brush. They were single-deck bogie vehicles with Type B maximum traction trucks originally fitted with the pony wheels outwards. This arrangement was, however, found to be conducive to derailing on curves and the trucks were soon reversed. The long centre section of the body was open and



had cross bench seats; at either end was a short, closed (but unglazed) compartment with longitudinal seating. The whole accommodation was for 56. In their original form they were equipped with normal single trolleys and with oil signal lights. Internal lighting was provided by Smith portable oil lamps. Later in their life, after the trucks had been reversed, double trolleys were fitted (one above each truck) and electric headlamps installed in the dashes. At the same time the end sections were glazed. No doors were provided—passengers entered through the open centre section (a central gangway was later provided through the benches); the driver reached his platform from the offside. When the DS & D finally took over the ownership of the railway the three cars were renumbered 49–51 and used solely on the line, though they only saw service in the summer months. During the winter period they were stored in Kinver Depot.

#### *Later stock*

In 1916 four more cars were added to the KLR's stock (the original Nos. 1–3 were now being scrapped); these were somewhat similar in design to Nos. 49–51. They were constructed at Tividale Works by the B & MTJC as single-deck bogie cars with Brush Type D equal wheel bogies; the bodies had a partially-open centre section and a closed compartment at either end. For winter service the centre openings could be closed, leaving a sliding door to allow access. The driver had to use this centre opening as it was the only way to reach the end platforms. Seating arrangements were similar to those used on Nos. 49–51 with 24 in the centre and 16 at either end. Double trolleys were mounted towards the centre of the roof which ran the full length of the body. These cars too were used solely on the KLR and were based at Amblecote Depot; they took the DS & D numbers 6, 21, 32, 70.

#### *40, 43*

These vehicles had first begun life in 1902 as South Staffordshire Tramways double-deck trams fitted with two Brush maximum-traction trucks. They later replaced two of the original Nos. 1–3 when they were scrapped; the bodies were cut down and mounted on the old cars' Brill trucks. There was almost certainly a third similar car so used, No. 4?

#### *63–9*

These dated back to 1899, when they had been built by the City of Birmingham Tramways Co. for the Hockley Hill cable line. They were later rebuilt for electric working with Brush radial trucks. When the CBT ceased operations in 1911 they were moved to the KLR to help with the summer traffic. Within the space of a few years they were rebuilt once again, this time as closed cars (still single-deck), and used on the Kingswinford route. Originally numbered 141–50, they took the DS & D numbers 63–9.

#### *'Visitors'*

The above account gives details of the main classes of trams which were employed for any length of time on the KLR. There were several others, however, which appeared from time to time on the line, notably in the first few years of operation, when the traffic was often heavier than the line's permanent stock could cope with. These were borrowed from the DS & D as required. The other source of visitors to the KLR was on the specials from other parts of the Black Country. These were invariably worked by the single-deck 'Cradleys' (so-named after the route on which they first began service with the DS & D), Nos. 52–9.

The only other points left to note are those of the livery and the working of the trams. The former was originally BET colours of mustard yellow and ivory, lined out in maroon, though this was subsequently altered to DS & D green and cream. As to the latter point, operation followed normal tramway practice, though at peak periods two trams would occasionally be run together to increase the line's capacity.



## APPENDIX I

## LIST OF PERMANENT KLR STOCK

KLR No.	DS & D No.	Built	Manufacturer	Remarks
1-3	46-8	1900	ER & TCW	Cut-down double-deck cars; scrapped 1911.
1-3	49-51	1901	Brush	Used on summer services only.
—	6, 21, 32 70	1916	Tivdale Works	Lasted till closure of the KLR.
—	40, 43	1902	Brush	Ex-South Staffs; replaced 46-8 (may have been others).
—	—	1900	ER & TCW	Milk car; originally loaned to KLR by DS & D as passenger car in 1901.



## APPENDIX 2

TIMETABLE ISSUED 27 APRIL 1901

*Weekdays*

Depart from Fish Inn	—	7.00 a.m.	8.00 a.m.	9.00 a.m.
then every 30 minutes until	—			11.00 p.m.

Depart from Kinver	—	6.15 a.m.	7.15 a.m.	8.15 a.m.
then every 30 minutes until	—			10.15 p.m.

*Sundays*

Depart from Fish Inn	—			9.30 a.m.
then every 30 minutes until	—			11.00 p.m.

Depart from Kinver	—			8.45 a.m.
then every 30 minutes until	—			10.15 p.m.

## APPENDIX 3

TIMETABLE ISSUED 7 DECEMBER 1901

*Weekdays*

Depart from Fish Inn	—	6.45 a.m.	8.00 a.m.
then every hour until	—		1.00 p.m.
then every 30 minutes until	—		11.00 p.m.

Depart from Kinver	—	6.15 a.m.	7.15 a.m.	8.30 a.m.
then every hour until	—			12.30 p.m.
then every 30 minutes until	—			10.30 p.m.

*Sundays*

Depart from Fish Inn	—			9.30 a.m.
then every hour until	—			1.30 p.m.
then every 30 minutes until	—			11.00 p.m.

Depart from Kinver	—			9.00 a.m.
then every hour until	—			1.00 p.m.
then every 30 minutes until	—			10.30 p.m.



## APPENDIX 4

## NOTICE OF EXCURSION FARES ISSUED BY B &amp; MTJC 1910

*These tickets can be obtained from the Conductors of all Cars  
as per conditions contained on Special Bills*

RATES:— From	Double Journey	
	Adults	Children (under 12)
B'ham (Edmund St.) ... ..	1/6	1/-
Windmill Lane ... ..	1/5	1/-
Smethwick (Blue Gates) ... ..	1/4	11d
(Spon Lane) ... ..	1/2	10d
Oldbury (Town Hall) ... ..	1/1	9d
Handsworth (Woodman) ... ..	1/4	10d
Carters Green ... ..	1/3	9d
Great Bridge (Market Place) ... ..	1/2	8d
Dudley Port ... ..	1/1	8d
Wednesbury (Dartmouth Arms via Princes End)	1/4	10d
Ocker Hill ... ..	1/3	9d
Princes End ... ..	1/2	8d
Tipton ... ..	1/1	8d
Bradley or Willenhall ... ..	1/7	1/1
Bilston Town Hall ... ..	1/6	1/-
Fighting Cocks ... ..	1/3	10d
Sedgley ... ..	1/-	8d
Dudley Station ... ..	10d	6d
Brierley Hill (Five Ways) ... ..	6d	4d

*For Quotations for Special Parties apply General Manager*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We should like to acknowledge gratefully the assistance received from the following individuals and bodies: Mr L. Dunn; Mr N. Williams; Mrs J. M. Skinner; Mr G. R. Keats; Mrs M. Edmunds; Mrs O. Eardley; Mr H. Parsons, editor of the *Blackcountryman*; Mr P. Clarke, Birmingham Public Library; Alison Dodds, Librarian, Kinver Branch Library; Librarian and staff of Dudley Public Library; Librarian and staff of Stourbridge Public Library; staff of the Local History Department, Birmingham Public Library; staff of the *County Express* office, Stourbridge; Lens of Sutton.

We should especially like to thank all those of the above-mentioned individuals who willingly gave up their time to recollect the life of the light railway for us; for any of those whose names have inadvertently been omitted, we sincerely apologise.



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