

Kidderminster Jolly Boys 26 April 2018.

History & Stuff :

Kidderminster is a town in the Wyre Forest district of the county of Worcestershire and is approx halfway between the cities of Birmingham and Worcester. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book and other historical sources, often with slightly different names, until they got the spelling sorted out in the 16th century. There was a fortified sort-of castle but only the Caldwall Tower remains, conveniently situated for Jolly Boys viewing enroute between two of our pubs.

And really not much more to say until the Industrial Revolution did its thing and the town became a centre for the carpet manufacturing industry with about 30 mills turning them out, and this is probably still its main claim to fame today, although no carpet industry exists now. There is however a large carpet museum which we will also pass close to. Nowadays it is probably best known as the southern terminus of the Severn Valley Railway, which was opened in the 1980s and a very impressive building based I think on the old Ross-on-Wye GWR station. And although we will not, on this occasion, use the trains we will avail ourselves of the refreshment facilities there. Sadly I don't think any SVR trains will be active on the 26th although on the date of the recce nos. 80072 and 1501 were a fine sight on a sunny morning on their respective trains to Bridgnorth (see photos attached to email).

Itinerary :

As most of you know the Severn Valley Railway's station is just a few yards (but many years) from Kidderminster station and breakfast can be had at the SVR's **King and Castle** bar (**KC** on the map). Prices are £5.99 for the Big Breakfast down to £2.99 for smaller offerings and they do Lite breakfasts too. Tea/coffee are about £2. For JD Wetherspoon diehards there is the **Penny Black** down in the town (**PB** on the map). This is fairly close to the first pub proper on the list. **Ye Olde Seven Stars** is on Coventry Street (**SS** on the map). Arrival time 11.15. Quickest way from the SVR station (dep about 11.00) is down Comberton Hill and right down George St just before the ring road roundabout. Past the Golden Lion (which could have been included had it opened earlier) then take the subway under another ring road roundabout and it's on the right down Coventry St. 5 or 6 ales and a cider are on handpump. Leave about 11.50.

The Swan (**SW** on the map) is on Vicar St after a short walk through the town centre, which is mainly not very attractive 60s/70s redevelopment. However The Swan is an interesting and older building with 5/6 real ales, including 2 or 3 from the Bewdley Brewery, and a cider. It also opens early and does a cheap cooked breakfast so is yet another option for early birds. However the lunch menu also looks reasonable so this is probably the best place for food. Leave about 12.45.

The Weavers (off Park Lane) Real Ale House (**WP** on the map) is our next stop. The bit in brackets is important because, yes, there are 2 of these (see below). We leave the Swan and walk along Exchange St, over the River Stour, past bus station on right, through a bit of Tesco's car park to reach the Staffs & Worcs canal. Left along the towpath and the Weavers is on the other side of the canal, so exit at the bridge right and next right. There are about 8 real ales and 4 ciders with a beer garden to the side affording views of the canal (nice) and Tesco's (not so nice). Leave about 13.30. Back over the canal and continue down Castle Rd. On the right is

Caldwall Tower as mentioned above, cross New Rd then next left and past the Carpet Museum. Take the subway under the roundabout and emerge on Comberton Hill which is quite an uphill trudge but mercifully cut short by arrival at our next pub.

The Weavers Real Ale House (WA on the map) unlike it's namesake above is a modern pop-up type of bar but it has about the same number of real ales and ciders on handpump. It is one-roomed but should accommodate all Jolly Boys. Apparently the 2 Weavers pubs were originally owned by the same people which explains the similarity of names. But it may be the split has promoted a "spirit" of competition between them. Leave about 14.15. Back up the hill.

To finish there is a choice of venues. At the SVR there is the **King and Castle** again which has 7 or 8 real ales and often includes Bathams, a big plus for yours truly at least. And very handy for trains back. Although as an alternative there is the **Station Inn** (ST on the map) which is on the other side of the railway, 1st on the right Farfield about 50 yards down on the right. This is a very nice traditional local with up to 5 real ales and also does food if anyone is still hungry. And to offer an even more bewildering amount of choice there is the **Railway Bell** just across the road from the SVR station if you like Jennings Cumberland Bitter or Brakspears Oxford Gold.

Train connections :

I will not insult Jolly Boys by telling you how to get to Birmingham New St from anywhere on the planet you happen to be. JB's arriving there can get an onward connection to Smethwick Galton Bridge and ascend to the upper platforms for the train to Kidderminster. A change at Stourbridge Junction might be involved but you shouldn't wait long. Changing at Smethwick Galton Bridge also applies to those coming from t'north or from Shrewsbury (i.e. me). To avoid New St. those from "daan saath" might arrive at Birmingham Moor St or Snow Hill from Marylebone and get the connection to Kidderminster from those places. Or you can walk to Moor St from New St - about 10 mins - and Moor St is a very nicely restored GWR-type station with a lovely buffet bar, feels a bit like Brief Encounters and all that. I haven't included specimen train times but you shouldn't have to wait more than 20 mins to get your connection.