

Wolverhampton Jolly Boys Itinerary 14 September 2023.

Wolverhampton is an industrial city to the north west of Birmingham, although its status as a city is fairly recent being one of three so-called “Millennium” cities created in the year 2000 (if anyone knows what the other 2 are you have a better memory than me as I had to look it up - they are Inverness and Brighton & Hove). It is in an area that is still known as the Black Country, so-called because of the huge growth of heavy industry across this area during the 19th century. Today, although the reasons for this name have mainly disappeared over the years it is still widely used. The name Wolverhampton was derived from a 10th century Mercian noblewoman Wulfrun, or Wulfruna, who was an anglo-saxon landowner. This name has stuck around and is used quite a bit, at least locally. There is the Wulfrun shopping centre and people from Wolverhampton are supposed to call themselves Wulfrunians, although I never heard anyone use it. Maybe we should ask Noddy Holder if we see him.

Wolverhampton had 2 railway stations, which used to be known as High Level and Low Level. The former is on the line into Birmingham New St. and is still very much in use, whereas the latter was on the GWR line to Birmingham Snow Hill from Shrewsbury, which fell into disuse with the closure of Snow Hill, all traffic being diverted to New St. and the High Level station, although the Low Level station building remained standing impressively (but without a railway) almost underneath the viaduct carrying the line into the remaining Wolverhampton station, and is still worth a visit. As indeed we will be able to when we visit the **Great Western** which will be the last pub on our itinerary and only a few yards away from Low Level. The station building has been restored and is still used and is quite grand inside too, and well worth a look if access is possible. I have read somewhere that the services using Low Level were only ever suspended and never legally withdrawn so technically the station is still open (but this could be an urban myth!) Wolverhampton station has been modernised extensively in recent years and this is a recent photo :



At time of writing I don't know if the tram service is actually in "normal" operation but just in case it might be an idea to be careful on leaving the station!

A mention in the "cultural" section might also be made of the Wolverhampton Wanderers football club. Although they only recently regained their top-flight status after many years of playing in the lower leagues against clubs like Crewe Alexandra, back in the 50's and early 60's they were pioneers in playing against major European teams, often in "friendly" games under their floodlights, which Wolves installed in 1953 thus becoming one of the first British clubs to have them. These games attracted huge crowds and created a good deal of interest, and not long after the European Cup came into being, and the rest as they say is history, which Wolves helped to make. Unfortunately when entry to this competition became "big-time" in the 1960's Wolves were no longer a top team and clubs such as Manchester United, Liverpool and Leeds were the beneficiaries of their efforts. Anyone wishing to get a look at Molineux, it is not far from our 1st pub The Hogshead.

Itinerary

Exit the station following Railway Drive which crosses a canal and then a busy dual carriageway. Cross Pipers Row and we are into Lichfield St which is a major street in the city centre. To the left are the Britannia Hotel and the Grand Theatre, opposite which is our first destination. Yes it's our JD Wetherspoon for the day :

1. **The Moon under Water** : 53-55 Lichfield St, Wolverhampton WV1 1EQ. This is a classic 'Spoons, in an impressive large traditional city centre building, which used to be a Co-op store, the 'Spoons being in the part of the store which was the cafeteria. The pub name is taken from that of a fictitious "ideal" pub described by the writer George Orwell in one of his essays, a fact which I actually knew without having to resort to Wiki, as I read a lot of his stuff back in the '70s. But Wiki does provide the extra information that there are 13 JD Wetherspools with this name! Depart at the traditional 11am. Continue to the junction with Princess St and turn right along a short stretch of dual-carriageway. On the roundabout just further down is our next pub :

2. **The Hogshead** : 186 Stafford St, Wolverhampton WV1 1NA. This is an impressive traditional brick-built pub on a busy road junction. It used to be known as The Vine and this previous identity is engraved in the brickwork over a former side entrance in Stafford St. Has a nice comfortable interior and the bar has 8 hand pumps - 7 of which were in use. Return to Lichfield St but this time on the opposite side of the dual-carriageway, turn right and on the left, just past The Posada, which we will also visit is :

3. **The Goose** : 32-36 Lichfield St, Wolverhampton WV1 1DN. A large city-centre pub. As was also the case in a couple of other pubs nearby there were 3 handpumps but only 1 in use! However I happen to like Mad Goose Purity (an apt name for this pub!) so I chose this one, although whether it will be available on the day is open to question. A few steps further along Lichfield St is :

4. **The Posada** : 48 Lichfield St, Wolverhampton WV1 1DG. This is a small pub a few steps away from the Goose. There are 5 handpumps and joy of joys 2 were in use, dispensing Ossett Blonde and Shropshire Gold

5. **The Lych Gate Tavern** : 44 Queen Square. At the end of Lichfield St, where it becomes Queen Square, pass St Peter's church and take the next right. The pub is up the hill on the left. And well-worth a visit as this is a "proper" pub. On the recce it had 4 Black Country ales and a couple of guest beers - Gornal Gold and Stonehenge. Also does a snack menu.

Return to Lichfield St and left back towards the station. Jolly Boys with earlier trains, or who have had enough, can leave at this point. Those left can make our way along Corn Hill round to the right of the station, and through a short tunnel under the railway. At the exit to the left is the former Low Level station which I have referred to above, and if you are interested this is well worth a closer look. While just over the road to the right is :

5. The Great Western – Corn Hill. A nice local pub with railway memorabilia and a friendly atmosphere. On my visit there were four beers from Holdens range plus Bathams and Elgoods Cambridge Gold. Also does a snack menu.

Then retrace steps back to the (High Level) station, although had history turned out differently I might have got a train back to Shrewsbury from the Low Level station just across the road, perhaps pulled by an ex-GWR Castle class loco. What a nice thought!

Recce carried out on 20th July by Howard Lowndes.