

Stoke-on-Trent Jolly Boys 15th May 2025.



Bottle Kilns in Hanley - 1930

in the bottom right corner is the former ground of Port Vale Football Club

photo: Times On-Line Archive

An awe-inspiring photo of our forthcoming trip to Hanley, one of the six towns of Stoke-on-Trent. I should quickly add at this point that Hanley does not look like this anymore, and most of the features you see above were cleared for redevelopment during the 1960's and 70's when Hanley became modernised and very much the commercial centre of the Potteries. Along with the other towns Hanley had a railway station on what was known as the Potteries Loop Line. Sadly most of this rail network was closed leaving only the main north-south line through Stoke, so we will need to get a bus from Stoke to Hanley. Fortunately the service is quite good and it's only a short walk from the station exit to the bus stop. The journey to Hanley takes about 15 mins, depending on traffic, and we get off at Hanley's fairly modern bus station.

Itinerary :

It is well worth pausing at Stoke station for a look at its North Staffs Railway train shed which is still remarkably unspoilt, even by the arrival of electrification in the 1960's. Exit the station through the main buildings on the Up side and once outside admire the station's architecture and also the matching elegance of the North Stafford Hotel on the other side of the road. Both built in "robust Jacobean manor-house" style according to Wikipedia.

Unfortunately on the recce there were a lot of roadworks at the front of the station, which somewhat spoilt the view described above and means we need to be careful crossing the road. Then make our way to the right and at the end of the station road turn left and a few yards further along is a bus stop where I got the no. 25 bus to Hanley. I think it's safe to say that all the buses going that way will go to Hanley bus station but it's always an idea to check with the driver.

Hanley has a fairly large and modern bus station. From the access road exit right along Lidice Way then left along Lichfield St. On our journey to Wetherspoons we should pass an art installation known as The Face which is a mosaic of tiles on the side of a building done in 2017 I think, and depicting the then 23 year old Jozef Clark. It's hard to miss and if nothing else it tells us we are going in the right direction. At the end of Lichfield St we do a slight right along Tontine St and then right into Percy St. Across the road is a large building which I think used to be a market hall and is now, you guessed it, our **J.D. Wetherspoon** and is called The **Reginald Mitchell**. The entrance is round the corner on the left on Parliament Row. This worthy gentleman was born and educated in the Potteries and at the age of 21 embarked on a career as an aircraft designer working for the Supermarine company in Southampton. He lead the team that produced the Spitfire, but sadly died in 1937 before having the chance to see the vital role that the planes played in the 2nd World War. Any Jolly Boys wanting to learn more including seeing an actual Spitfire there is an exhibition in the Museum/Library which is the second of two large modern buildings in Bethesda St which we will pass on our travels. The first one which is now disused used to be the Museum/Library. Leave at 11.

The Albion Hotel: Lichfield St, Stoke ST1 1QS. Opens at 10. A traditional town centre pub. 2 real ales on my visit.

Leave at 11.45 and retrace our steps back along Tontine St. and left into Percy St, over the road on the right is :

The Auctioneer : 2-6 Percy St, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1NE. This pub opens at 10, 3 real ales on my visit. Leave about 12.30. Back to Stafford St, right to Piccadilly then left and we will see on our right :

The Unicorn : 40 Piccadilly, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1EG. A small local pub. Opens 10. 3 real ales including Bass a Potteries favourite. Leave about 13.15. Exit right along Piccadilly, left along Pall Mall and right down Bagnall St which will bring us back to the bus station :

At this point I must apologise that I did not check any of the above pubs for food. So I will enquire as we are making our way around and Jolly Boys needing to avoid starvation will have to check the food available if any. There is food at our final pub (see page 2 below), which is back at the railway station but I do appreciate that this will be a bit late. We will pass fast food places on our journey around so that is another possibility.

Return to the Bus Station and get the number 25 bus (headed for Keele) which goes past the Stoke railway station. Here very conveniently is our final pub :

The Bod at Stoke Station : this is a cafe/bar which is accessible from Platform 1. It is a Titanic Brewery place with 6 handpumps dispensing all or most of Titanic's range of beers. The "Bod" comes from Bodmin Ave, Stafford where the 1st Bod was opened.

Stoke is on the main north-south line from Manchester to Birmingham and London and also the east-west line from Derby to Crewe. As Jolly Boys are highly train-literate and know their way around railway timetables, as compared to the general populace, I see no need to give you train times. You'd be mad to trust me anyway. And before departure you will be sitting in the station bar (or on the platform outside it) supping away and keeping an eye on what's coming and going. There is also a monitor screen, which is in the bar just under the ceiling on the wall next to Platform 1.

Recce carried out on 6th March 2025 by Howard Lowndes.