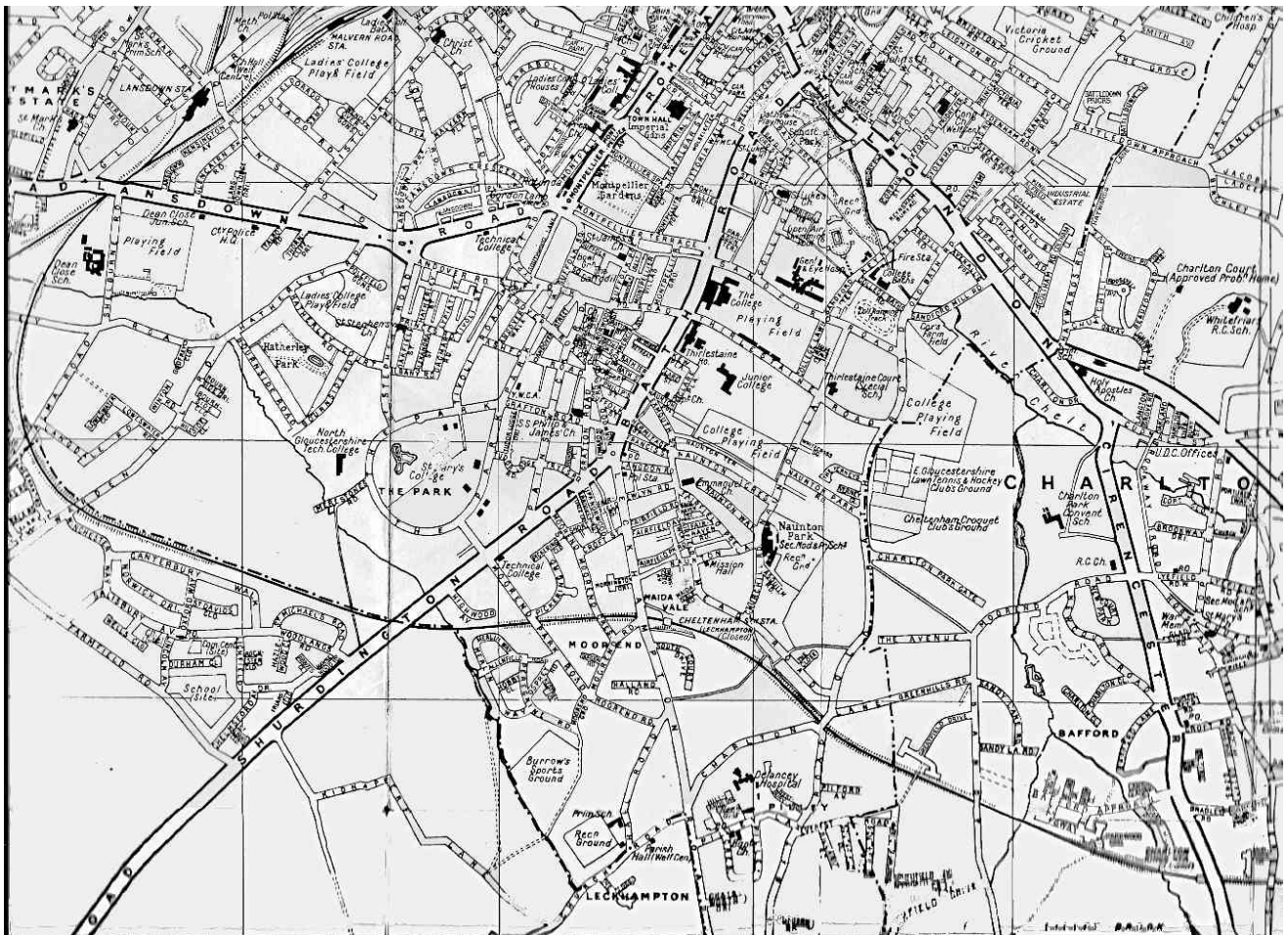


## Banbury & Cheltenham Direct Railway (B&CDR) – Hatherley Triangle to Andoversford

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The following article is meant for investigation using NLS, Google Earth and/or Magic for either (or both) home or directly on the ground. For those who might like to explore the route themselves, the list below details points on the route where remains might be accessible to view and/or explore (e.g: the crossing of roads, trackways, watercourses, access bridges etc).



### **Figure 1: Banbury & Cheltenham Direct Railway - Lansdown to Charlton Kings, Cheltenham circa 1955-65**

Having to regularly travel to Cheltenham over the last few months, I decided that I would research the line of the Banbury to Cheltenham Direct Railway (B&CDR), as I was unable to find the point where it crossed under the A46 Shurdington Road.

The line from Banbury to Cheltenham comprised five sections, two of which were built by the B&CDR, two made use of the GWR's branch lines from Kingham (originally called Chipping Norton Junction) on their Oxford to Worcester line (OWWR (1853), WMR (1860) & from 1863 GWR) to Chipping Norton (opened 1855) and Bourton-on-the-Water (opened 1861), and one made use of the section of the GWR's Oxford & Birmingham Junction Railway (O&BJR) between Kings Sutton Junction and Banbury (the Oxford to Banbury section opened 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1850).

The first section built by the B&CDR was that from 'Bourton-on-the-Water' to 'Hatherley Loop Junction' (SO92959-21806) on the Cheltenham and Great Western Union Railway (C&GWUR, from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1843, GWR - over which the Midland Railway's Birmingham & Bristol line had running powers). It was opened on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1881 with intermediate stations at 'Leckhampton' and 'Charlton Kings' (where passing loops were soon added) 'Andoversford' (which included a passing loop), and 'Notgrove'. The second section built by the B&CDR was that from Chipping Norton to Kings Sutton Junction (on the GWR's Oxford to Birmingham line). It was completed in 1887, allowing five daily passenger and two goods through services to be worked each way between Cheltenham and Banbury. From the completion of both sections, B&CDR's services were worked by the GWR who purchased both sections of the line in 1896. On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1891, the Midland & South Western Junction Railway (M&SWJR) made connection with the B&CDR at Andoversford Junction, from where it had running power to Hatherley Loop Junction in order to reach the Midland Railway stations at Lansdown (SO93628-22096) and High Street (SO93221-23517). The resultant increase in traffic brought about by M&SWJR resulted in doubling of the line between the two junctions in 1901, and from 1<sup>st</sup> May 1906, the GWR added its 'Ports to Ports' Cardiff (later Swansea) to Newcastle-on-Tyne, eight-coach express, using the then recently completed 'Kingham Flyover' and 'Gloucester Loop Junction' (SO92055-21276), which removed the necessity to reverse trains at Kingham and 'Hatherley Loop Junction'.

The Station at 'Leckhampton' was renamed 'Cheltenham South and Leckhampton' in 1906 and renamed again as 'Cheltenham Leckhampton' in 1952. Loss of revenue due to competition from road transport services and widespread car ownership in the 1950s resulted in the countryside destruction of railways. This included the B&CDR, where 'Leckhampton', 'Charlton Kings' and 'Andoversford' stations were closed on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1962 and passenger services over the line withdrawn in stages from 1962 up to final closure in 1964. The GWR Station at 'Malvern Road' (on the link to Cheltenham St James Station) opened on completion of the Honeybourne line on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1908, was closed due to WW1 austerity on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1917, reopened again on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1919, and closed completely on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1966 when the GWR's Cheltenham St James Station also closed.

With traffic congestion and noxious fumes engulfing our towns and cities, and concerns about public health (e.g: hypertension, obesity, diabetes, etc.) there is now much interest in healthy exercise and moves to get people out of their cars. Today, organisations such as 'Sustrans' promote the reuse of abandoned railway courses for walking, cycling, and other recreation practices. However, the drastic loss of so many railway lines in the 1950s and 60s was made even worse by national and local government's triadic failure to ensure that their trackbeds were retained and preserved. In plotting the course of the B&CDR, it became very clear that Cheltenham had followed its traditional practice of having little interest in, or having no idea of town planning for the health and welfare of its citizens - or just leaving it to developers *since they almost always win appeals made to our Government!* Consequently, the town has lost the chance to make an excellent cycle track and/or walking route, or even a valuable road traffic reducing tramway, which could have taken one around the town between 'Charlton Kings', 'Leckhampton', 'Warren Hill', 'Up Hatherley' and on to Lansdown Road where it could have joined up with the cycling and walking route that now exists between there, the St

James and the Lower High Street areas of the town; and could have extended further north along the route of the dismantled GWR Honeybourne Line to the racecourse.

Although a great deal of the trackbed is either inaccessible, has been built over or otherwise obliterated, some parts are still accessible (e.g. at Old Bath Road Bridge (SO95530-20218) where it can be accessed from the bridge over the railway.



Figure 2 Cheltenham Railways, OS survey 1958



Figures 3 & 4 Leckhampton Station, probably around 1901 to 1910.



**Figure 5 Charlton Kings Station, 1962**

**Figure 6 Hook Norton Station (note B&CDR architecture)**

*(With thanks to the Leckhampton Local History Society for images 3, 4 & 6)*

Further information can be found using the following hyperlink to Peter & Paul Townley's B&CDR *Then & Now* article: [https://issuu.com/greatwesternstar/docs/spring\\_2021\\_issue\\_vol\\_1\\_no\\_3/s/12321034](https://issuu.com/greatwesternstar/docs/spring_2021_issue_vol_1_no_3/s/12321034) and for those who might like to explore the route themselves, the list below details points on the route where remains might be accessible to view and/or explore such as the crossing of roads, trackways, watercourses, access bridges etc.

This article has made use of **Wikipedia** and the **National Library of Scotland's (NLS)** excellent **Georeferenced Maps** facility to trace the course of the line from its triangular Hatherley and Gloucester Loop Junctions which connected the B&CDR to the main Birmingham-Bristol Line (SW of the existing ex LMS Station at Lansdown), to Andoversford Junction where the B&CD and M&SWJ Railways diverged.

#### **To check the route of the railway against Modern Map & Aerial Views of Cheltenham:**

- Click on the following link *and if necessary click again to open its hyperlink*:-  
<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15.5&lat=51.89148&lon=-2.06933&layers=168&b=1&marker=51.87560,-2.05312>
- Click **Accept**, or if you prefer, Click **Reject** cookies (bottom right)
- Cancel the '**Georeferenced Maps - Help**' Box (top left)
- From the list below, choose the **OS Grid Reference** for the location you wish to investigate
- Paste the Grid Reference into the '**Type Grid Ref...**' slot in the '**Search**' box (top left)
- Delete the (-) separating the **eastern** and **northern** co-ordinates and **click** on the '**Go**' slot.
- To **overlay** the map with a modern aerial view of Cheltenham:-  
**Slide the Blue Dot Left** along the slot at the bottom of **Choose an historic map overlay** box.

*Google Earth* and/or *Magic* (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>) may also be used to examine the current landscape at selected locations. However, in both cases latitude & longitude co-ordinates need to be used since *Google Earth* does not accept OS co-ordinates, and *Magic's* six numeral OS co-ordinates do not give as close precision.

The latitude & longitude co-ordinates for any location selected can be found below the OS Co-ordinates, in the left-hand corner of *NLS's* Georeferenced Maps.

*Google Earth's* Aerial images are sharper than those of *NLS* and *Magic* and, where the co-ordinate is a road crossing, *Google Earth's* 'Street View' can be used to see the location at ground level.

For both *Google Earth* and the *Magic Map Application*, co-ordinates can be entered in either Decimal Degrees (Form DD.ddddd, *Negative for Western co-ordinates*); or in Degrees Minutes and Seconds, without superscript characters (*Google Earth* form is:- DD mm ssN DD mm ssW)

(*Magic Map Application* form is:- N (DD mm ss) W (DD mm ssW))

(e.g: Hatherley Road Bridge:- Decimal - 51.89123 -2.10765 : **OR**:- Lat. & Long. Co-ordinates:  
*Google Earth* form: 51 53 29N 02 06 29W: *Magic Map Application* form: N (51 53 29) W (02 06 29).

#### ***West to East from Hatherley junction with the Birmingham to Bristol Main Line to Andoversford Junction***

Hatherley Loop Junction (with the GWR [ex C&GWUR])  
Hatherley Brook Tunnel (under the Hatherley Loop)

(SO92959-21806)  
(SO92730-21517)

Dismantled 1964?  
Existing Yes/No

Hatherley Road Bridge (under the railway)	(SO92697-21410)	Existing, No
(Brook Court Road. now occupies the course of the Line across Dean Close School)		
Gloucester Loop Junction (with the GWR [ex S&CUR])	(SO92055-21276)	Dismantled 1xxx.
Hatherley & Gloucester Loop Junction	(SO926981-21101)	Dismantled 1964?
Alma Road Bridge (under the railway)	(SO92704-21038)	Existing Yes/No
Warden Hill Road Bridge (under the railway)	(SO92858-20825)	Existing Yes/No
Unfinished Road or Railway Bridge (over the railway)	(SO92858-20825)	Existing Yes/No
Hatherley Brook Culvert (under the railway)	(SO93772-20507)	Existing, Yes/No
Shurdington Road Bridge (over the railway)	(SO93877-20464)	Existing, No
(Leckhampton?) Stream:-		
Shurdington Road Bridge @SO93975-20541		
Fish Pond N. @SO9387-2046		
Watercress Beds, ESE @SO94174-20264 & NNE @SO94006-20520		
Morend Park Road Bridge (over the railway)	(SO94302-20458)	Existing Yes
Brick parapets survive, line below infilled		
Morend Street (Now Crescent) Bridge (over the railway)	(SO94511-204592)	No Trace left
Leckhampton Road Bridge (over the railway)	(SO94645-20484)	Existing Yes
Brick parapets & Station Side Iron Railings survive, line below infilled		
Morend Crescent (past Street) Bridge (over the railway)	(SO94511-204591)	Existing, Yes/No
Leckhampton Station	(SO94726-20498)	Closed 15/10/1962
Leckhampton Saw Mills, Brick Works, area adjacent to & NE of Station		Now Liddington Park
Liddington Lake SW @SO9481-2036 (contained an Island, Boat House & Fish Pond)		" " "
Footpath Bridge (over the railway)	(SO95017-20349)	Existing, Yes/No
Footpath Tunnel (under the railway)	(SO95004-20285)	Existing, Yes/No
Old Bath Road Bridge (over the railway)	(SO95530-20218)	Existing Structure
Cheltenham Tile works NW of bridge @SO9387-2046.		
Sandy Lane Bridge (over the railway).	(SO95728-19933)	Existing, Yes/No
Southfield Brook Culvert (under the railway).	(SO95867-19861)	Existing, Yes/No
Footpath Bridge (over the railway).	(SO96083-19765)	Existing, Yes/No
Lilley Brook Culvert (under the railway).	(SO96308-19702)	Existing, Yes/No
Charlton Kings Station.	(SO96440-19671)	Closed 1xxx.
Coal Wharf & associated Sidings NW of Station @SO96407-19724		
Cirencester Road Bridge (over the railway).	(SO96467-19680)	Existing Yes/No
'Up End' Site NNE of Station @SO9649-1974		Investigation Required
Little Herbert Lane Bridge (over the railway)	(SO96642-19671)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Link Tunnel (under the railway)	(SO97041-19766)	Existing, Yes/No
Footpath Tunnel (under the railway)	(SO97132-19792)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Track(under the railway)	(SO97276-19813)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Track Bridge(over the railway)	(SO97409-19814)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Link Bridge (under the railway)	(SO97756-19731)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Link Bridge (under the railway)	(SO97919-19682)	Existing, Yes/No
Stream Culvert (under the railway)	(SO97997-19668)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Link Bridge (under the railway)	(SO98036-19660)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Track Bridge (over the railway)	(SO98175-19636)	Existing, Yes/No
Footpath Tunnel (under the railway)	(SO98374-19601)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Link Bridge (under the railway)	(SO98456-19585)	Existing, Yes/No
Small Stream Culvert (under the railway)	(SO98537-19570)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Track Bridge (under the railway)	(SO98457-19584)	Existing, Yes/No
Footpath Tunnel (under the railway)	(SO98669-19548)	Existing, Yes/No
Footpath Tunnel (under the railway)	(SO98848-19538)	Existing, Yes/No
Small Stream Culvert (under the railway)	(SO98918-19548)	Existing, Yes/No
Farm Track Bridge (under the railway)	(SO99186-19518)	Existing, Yes/No
Lower Dowdeswell Lane (under Viaduct W. Abutment)	(SP99665-19902)	Existing, Yes/No
Dowdeswell Viaduct	(SO9969-1993)	Demolished 196x
Dowdeswell Tunnel SW Portal	(SP00789-20344)	Existing, Yes
Dowdeswell Tunnel NE Portal	(SP01124-20446)	Existing, Yes
Sandeywell Park Bridge (over the railway)	(SO01430-20407)	Existing, Yes/No
Footpath Tunnel (under the railway)	(SP1664-20248)	Existing, Yes/No
Andoversford Station.	(SP01707-20187)	Existing, No
Andoversford Road Bridge (under the railway)	(SP02018-1996)	Abutments only

Andoversford Junction (GWR, ex B&CDR & M&SWJR)

(SP02039-19981)

Existing, No