

The last BPThursday trip using a train was to Bath in 2019, this time we are going by train to Hereford. We could use our bus pass to get there but the journey would take nearly three hours. We are at Cardiff Central station (hope no one went to Queen Street) for 9.15 and our train will leave at 9.30. Please collect your train ticket from me in the usual place, and also your reserved seat cou-



neys, and would those, no names necessary, please finish their coffees and follow me.”



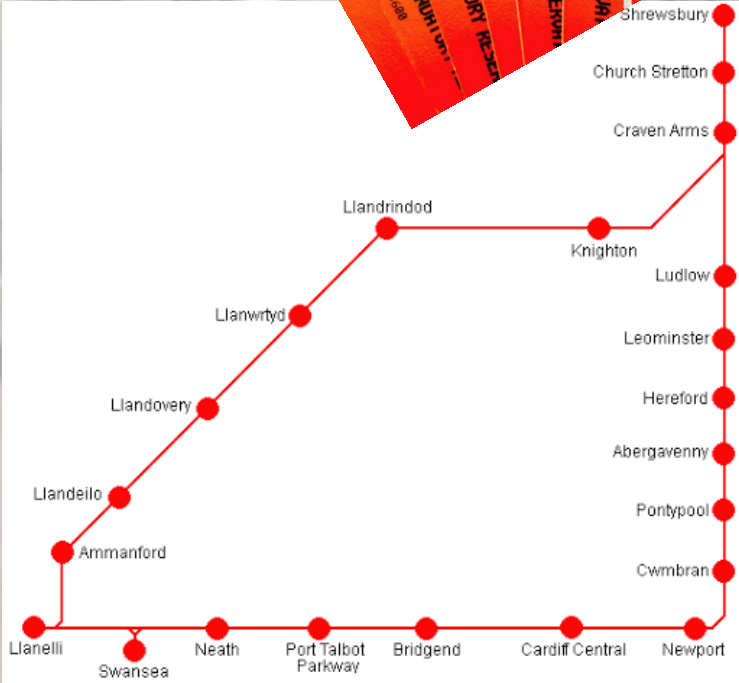
platform 2 and not some other one as some have been too busy talking to listen to my instructions. I think Alison will have her hands full acting as `rear gunner` today.



pon. We may not need it going to Hereford but coming back may prove to be a different matter. “Well done Raj and here is your ticket; we all hope you get to use it this time!” “I think that I will be okay today” Raj replies with a smile. “We leave from platform 2 today and our reserved seats are in carriage B for both jour-



Counting as people go through the ticket barrier I hope that everyone will go to



“Don’t worry that’s not our train, it’s the one before ours” I have to explain as I can see a slightly worried look on the faces of several people, including Wenda and Alan Doble on their first BPThursday today. I have to ensure that no one ‘lingers’ for a last coffee before boarding!



There was a surprise awaiting us, a special event is taking place at the station today, and if you look to our right you will notice the train pulling into the station. Yes, it’s a steam train and it’s stopping on platform 1. My informant in the group, no name but

she is wearing an anorak even though it’s summertime, is a train spotter. I can see several of



you surreptitiously glancing around to ‘spot’ the ‘spotter’!

I can also see many of you have a look of nostalgia in your eyes. Convert ‘spotters’ perhaps or possibly brought about by the coal smuts from the train - or whatever your parents called them, that got into your eyes as you stuck your head out of the window on those trips long ago to Barry island. Ah, those

were the days.

“This is it, our train to Hereford arriving at our platform I shout,” mainly to reassure those of you who are not frequent train travellers and are unsure how to tell one train from another.

“Remember we are in coach B and make sure you have your tickets ready to find your reserved seat.”

For some reason we have to board at carriage A, and it looks as if it will be quickly filled up. Thank goodness I had the the experience (and your interests of course) to book seat reservations as there are so many of us today. You might however find some one in your reserved seat but they usually move when requested. Unless they are old and grumpy of course. None of us are, are we?



Walking through carriage A we looks as if we will not have any seat- there is a nice TfW lady to help us sive! Mind can be con-



The train without any on the way. mints! Drat. However I need not have worried, Sandria and Anita have brought some and are even now passing their bags around. Well done ladies. Our first stop will be Newport which is just a short but slow, trip down the line.



come to carriage B, and it ing problems, what's more find our seats, very impres- you the seat reserved signs fusing,.

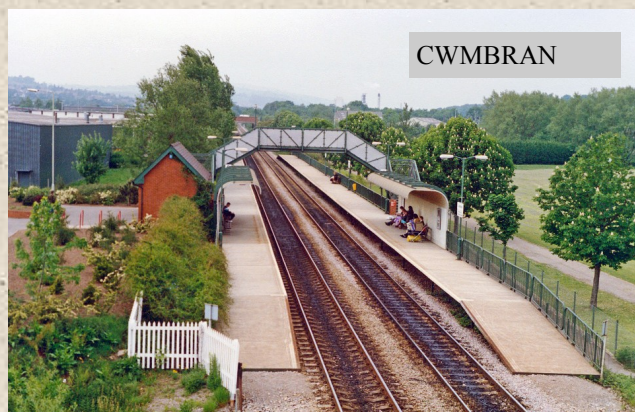
pulls away from the station seating problems, and we are Ah, I forgot to pre-order the



Newport approaching ----



Off once more and the next stop is Cwmbran which looks rather nice set outside the town.



CWMBRAN

After that Pontypool is next, or to give it its full title Pontypool and New Inn. "Not a lot to the station is there" I hear mentioned. "But I suppose it does the



job replies Beryl. Actually the station has a history, perhaps more than you might think. For almost 100 years from the mid 19th century to the early 1960s, Pontypool Road as it was first called was an important station and key railway junction connecting to the main line from Newport to the Midlands and north of England via Hereford and branch lines to Neath and Merthyr. At its height, Pontypool Road featured a 50-line marshalling yard, engine sheds, goods sheds and refuelling facilities."



Abergavenny (Y Fenni) duly follows, looking a bit more important. Mind you it was built a long time before the present Pontypool station. "They knew how to build them in those days" exclaimed Stan who quite probably was one of the `smuts in the

eyes` generation, as the original stone built station buildings still survive.



Our destination, Hereford is the next stop.

“Did you know that the station has some

bilingual signage in Welsh and English, mentions Pat Stowell, and it is one of the relatively few stations in England to such bilingual signage include Wallsend (Latin), Southall (Punjabi), and St Pancras International, Ebbsfleet International and Ashford International (all French).”

Everyone appears to have remembered to get off the train, so we head down from the platform (lift just under the sign) to the ground floor, give in our tickets and we have arrived.

Once all of you are counted a dislike of losing anyone (but by a few) !! - and we exit into course, but no taxi for us as



yet again as I have I could be tempted the station converse shall walk to the centre of town. Turn left and take the zebra crossing (look out for hungry lions in pursuit of lunch).



“Just before we set off, will all of you gather around please.” Here is your map of the centre of



Hereford, please keep it safe as you will need it during the course

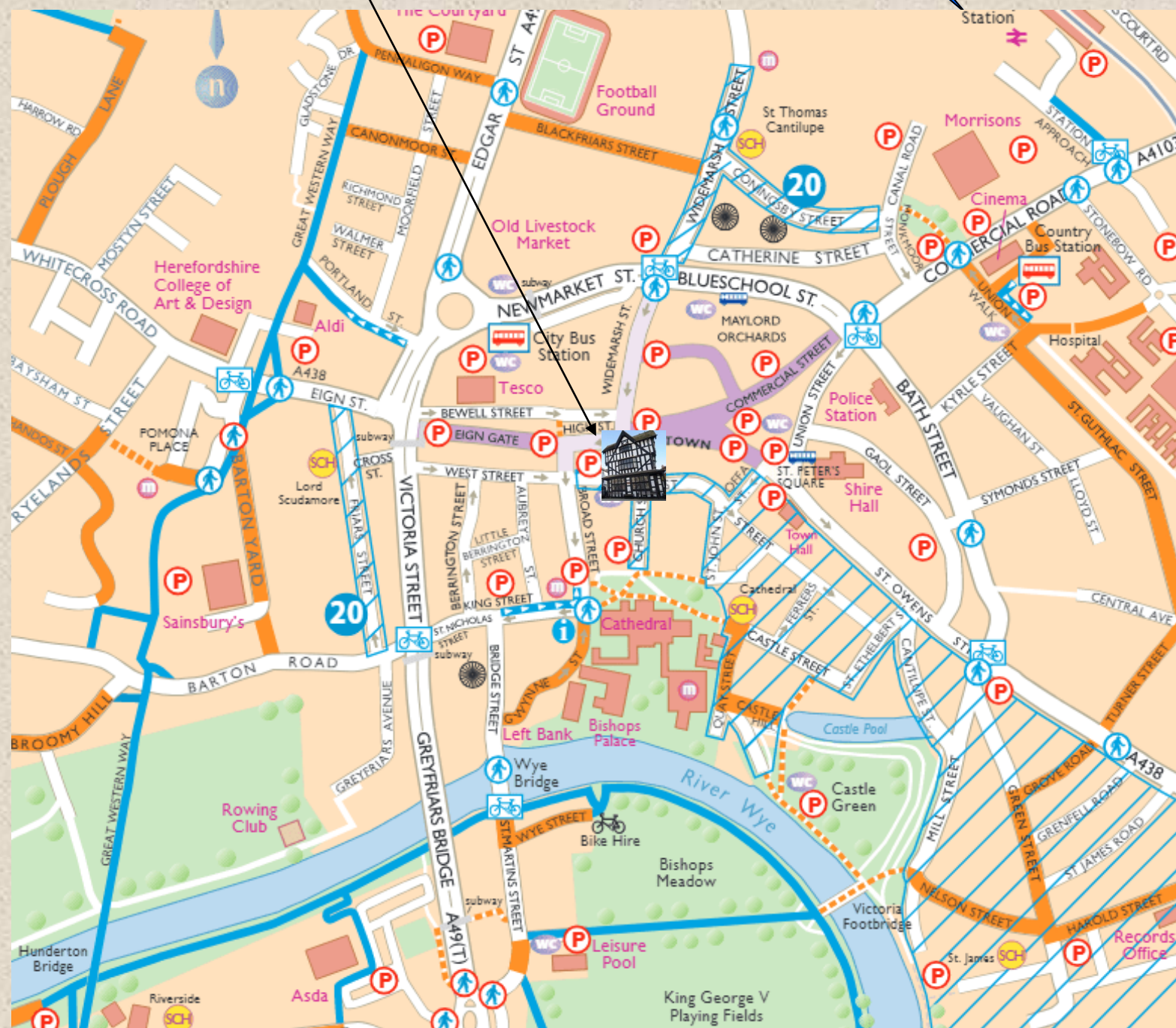
of our stay.

“Now have a close look and find Commercial Street on the map. This will be our route to the centre of the town as well as our route back to the station. The walk will be about ten or twelve minutes, so please try to stay together with no one rushing off into the distance please. Please note the rendezvous point marked which I have also marked, and more about that later, so off we go please.”

I am very glad to note that everyone does move off ‘as one’ but for how long?

The station

Rendezvous point



Walking towards the town centre we use Commercial Street, full of local shops and businesses.

The `country` bus station as opposed to the `city` bus station can just be seen at the end of the road on our left. This is where the bus from Cardiff arrives and, also very conveniently goes back to, Cardiff. Yes, we can use our bus pass to get to Hereford but it is a long journey via



Abergavenny. Now those of you who misbehave today will know where to get the early bus home!

I have deliberately got everyone to walk on the right hand side pavement for a very good reason. See the whitish building on the left -- hardened coffee drinkers?

As it's a little while, well a few

hours since their last coffee and with the extreme temptation of coming across an oasis called

Weatherspoons, anything could happen.

So, cunningly, this will now be on the opposite side of the road. from us! And the road is busy.

This saves me having to stand in front of the Kings Fee and ensure that I do not `lose` any of the Cardiff `Weatherspoons aficionados`, to name but a few; Mererid, Sandria, Joan, Alison, Steve, and Anne_Marie and I have include myself but then I have good will-power (I hope)!



Mission accomplished, but I anticipated a riot and so had the local police on standby, just in case!

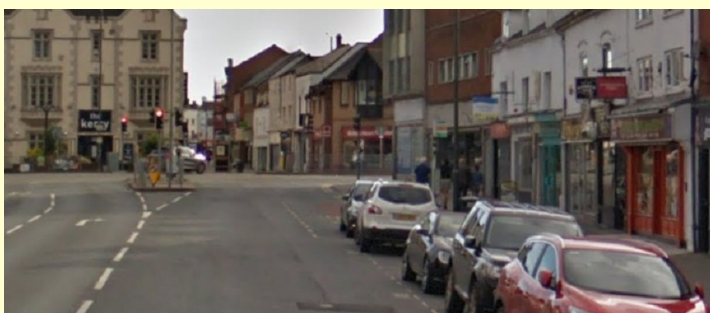
“As you know, most Weatherspoons are named after the original building or area. The name of this pub recalls the early years in the history of Hereford. The central area around the cathedral was the Bishop’s Fee (or property) and the rest (within the city walls) was the King’s Fee.”



So now you know!

Moving on and with all present, some presenting obvious withdrawal symptoms, we approach the ring road.

"Did I mention Heather, that when Alison and





I were in China we were on ring road number 6 (the Chinese were not very imaginative at assigning road names) around Beijing meaning there were six ring roads encircling Beijing. and they were already constructing number 7!" "I think you might have Mario" she re-

plies after some thought.
My memory is obviously getting worse.

Taking care we cross the road and continue along Commercial Street to its end (or its beginning) but don't argue that point with



me today, please.

We have now arrived at a very, for our trip today, central spot, a statue. Yes, it's a statue. In front of the Black and White House museum

"Is it a bull" I ask?

"Yes" replied one or two.



"How did you make up your mind?"

"It was the plaque" says a diminutive and slightly hesitant, voice.

"Well, the plaque actually says

"Oh ahem."

Both bull and plaque are in front of our destination, the museum called not surprisingly, The Black and White House. I wonder why not the White and Black House?

And now it nearly coffee time., and perhaps a cake as well?

