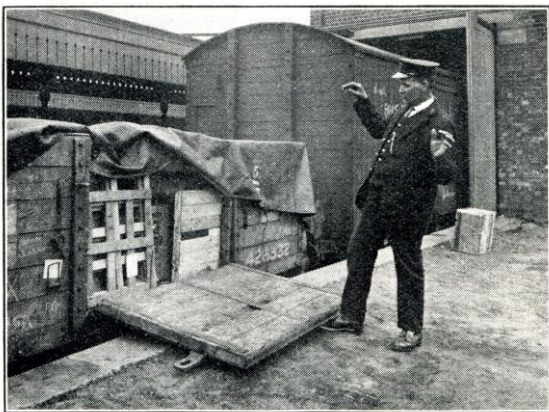


Work & accidents on the line

The Railway Work, Life & Death project database so far has nearly 100 entries for staff on the Severn Valley route. They show us who was needed to run the railway, like:

- horse driver George Goode, 25, injured at Kidderminster in 1908 when a horse moved suddenly, trapping Goode's arm between railway wagons;
- gas fitter D Cartright, injured at Kidderminster in 1911 when he was hit by a rail motor, a lightweight passenger train;
- goods checker William Tarver, whose foot was bruised by the door of a cattle wagon at Bridgnorth in 1914.



1930s posed staff safety photograph, showing a similar issue to William Tarver's accident.

We know at least 24 women joined the National Union of Railwaymen's Kidderminster branch during World War 1. They would also have had accidents.

If you know more about any of the people featured in this leaflet, we're keen to hear from you: please get in touch!

The Railway Work, Life & Death project: revealing ordinary people's surprising stories

This leaflet focuses on a few of the hundreds of ordinary people who worked on the Severn Valley Railway before it was preserved.

It was produced by the Railway Work, Life & Death project. We're a volunteer-driven social history project, researching the lives and stories of British and Irish railway workers before 1939.

We do this via the accidents they had – and the records they left behind. Often it's the only way we can find out about these people.

Our amazing volunteers have created a free database of over 115,000 people for you to explore – including those in this leaflet.

Our project is a collaboration between the University of Portsmouth, National Railway Museum and Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick. This leaflet was funded by the University of Portsmouth's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

 www.railwayworkeraccidents.port.ac.uk

 railwayworkeraccidents@gmail.com

 [RailwayWorkLifeAndDeath/](https://www.facebook.com/RailwayWorkLifeAndDeath/)

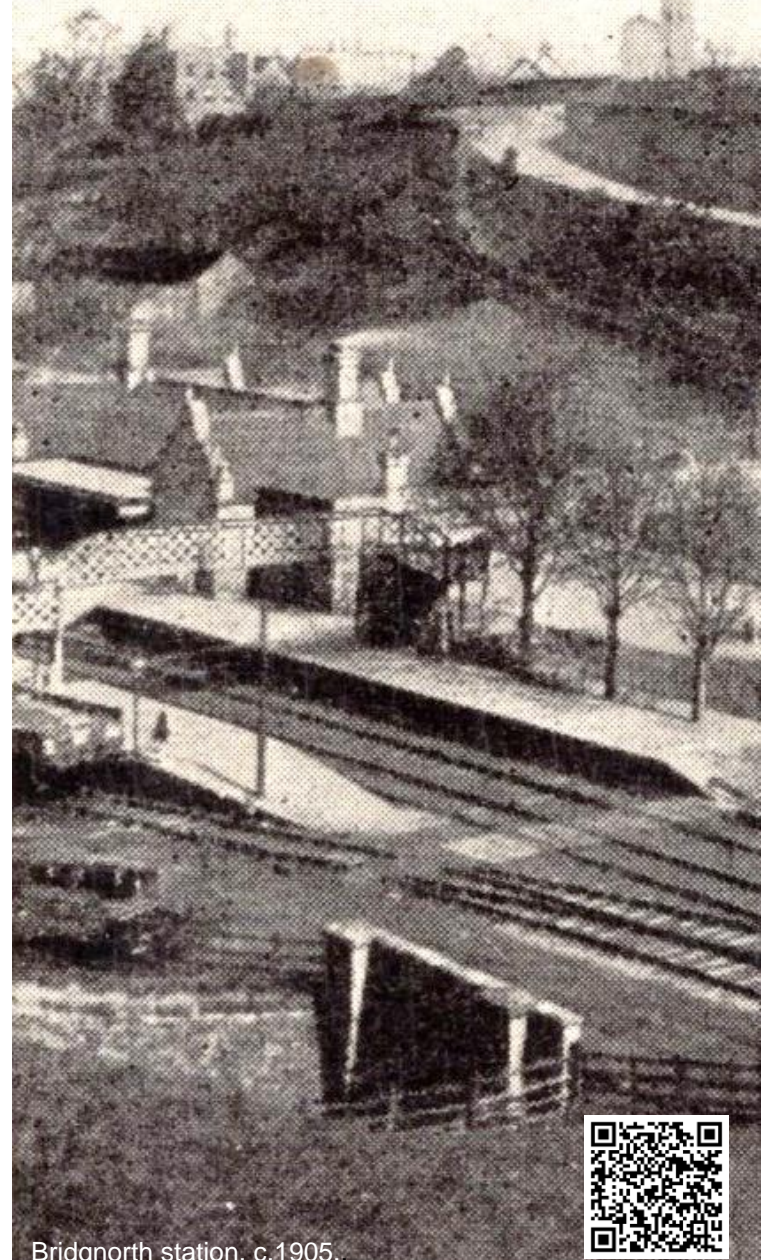
 [@RWLDproject](https://twitter.com/RWLDproject)

 [@rwldproject.bsky.social](https://www.bsky.social/rwldproject)



Staff & work on the Severn Valley Railway before 1939

A look at employees & their work through the Railway Work, Life & Death project.



Bridgnorth station, c.1905.



John Hughes – Kidderminster

14 October 1901 probably started just like any other day for Great Western Railway (GWR) goods guard John Hughes. It ended very badly.

He was working an evening goods train from Wolverhampton to London. As it was moved over points into a siding at Kidderminster, the guard's van derailed.

As John tried to jump from the van, it turned over. Sadly, it landed on him and killed him.

A RAILWAY GUARD'S TERRIBLE DEATH.

John Hughes, a Great Western goods guard, met with a dreadful death on Monday night, at Kidderminster. His train was being shunted into a siding, when some trucks and his van left the metals. The van fell over, apparently, just as Hughes was leaving it, and he was crushed to death instantly. It took some time to raise the van and remove his remains. Hughes was a Wolverhampton man, and had been long in the Great Western service.

From the *Grantham Journal*, 19 October 1901.
Courtesy Iliffe Media

Though John was held responsible for the accident, the GWR was recommended to change the point operating mechanism.

John's interests were protected at the coroner's inquest by his Union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.

His wife, Ann, received £271.16.0 compensation from the GWR – around £31,400 today. It would have helped financially, if not emotionally. John and Ann had eight children, all over 18.

William Capewell – Highley

During the First World War, the railways had to keep running. They were vital to the war effort. Many staff were kept in their jobs as 'reserved occupations'; some were too young or too old to sign up.

One of them was William Capewell. Born in Worcestershire in 1901, by 1916 he was working for the Great Western Railway (GWR). That year he joined the Kidderminster branch of the National Union of Railwaymen, as a lad porter.

On 22 August 1917, age 16, he was working at Highley station. We don't know how, but he ended up with blood poisoning.



This may be the condition of the iron binding. Many men get their hands badly cut in this way.
Before grasping corner of box with iron binding around edges have a thought for "IS-IT-SAFE?"

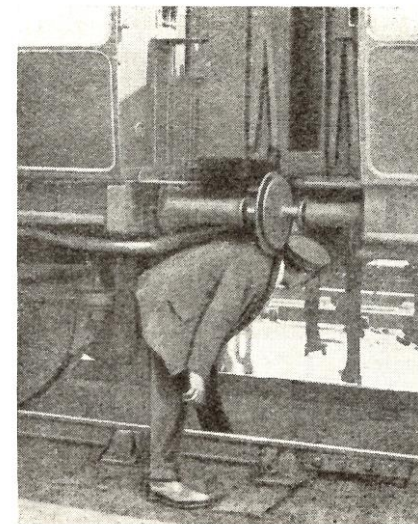
Posed GWR staff safety photograph, c.1914.
Courtesy Railway Work, Life & Death project.

Before penicillin, this could have been fatal. However, William was back at work on 22 October 1917; while he was off he received £1.19.1 compensation (c.£150 now). By 1921 he was a signaller for the GWR, a role he kept at least until 1939.

William Clayton – Bewdley

William Henry Clayton was born in 1897 in Shrewsbury. He followed his father, who was a Great Western Railway (GWR) shunter, into the railway industry – 'railway families' were common.

William joined the GWR in 1915, age 18, as an engine cleaner. By 1921 he was a fireman. He was still a fireman when he had an accident at Bewdley on 7 January 1931.



Posed staff safety photograph about the dangers of coupling carriages, c.1918. Courtesy Railway Work, Life & Death project.

He was coupling an engine to some carriages – an activity which involved being very close to the vehicles as they came together. The engine moved slightly and William's head was caught between the coupling and the carriage.

Fortunately 'only' his head and face were cut – it could easily have been much worse. William survived and went on to be a driver for the GWR. He lived with his wife, Edith, and their children in Shrewsbury.