



Stratton Station c1959

## RAILWAY & PUBLIC TRANSPORT HISTORY

### Railways

In October 1841 the Stratton St Margaret Churchwardens, having got wind of the Great Western Railway development, asked for and got a land survey of value of land along proposed new railway route.

**Highworth Light Railway** – Mr Hussey-Freke chaired the first meeting of locals in 1873 to build the line and a company was set up. In 1875 the Company was authorised to build a light railway from Swindon to Highworth via Stratton and was built by Hilton & Haynes. The line was completed in 1881 but the company was by now bankrupt so sold out to the GWR. The line was finally opened in May 1883. Station-master in 1890 was John Hopkins. The line never had more than a dozen staff and the best year for passengers was in 1913 when over 40 thousand tickets were sold. Not many accidents were reported but Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November 1896 a lad in the employ of Mr Hoddinott was backing his cart when the service from Highworth came out of the fog and smashed up the cart, luckily the lad and horse were unhurt. There was originally a signal box at Stratton but this was closed in 1906 the sidings then being accessed by Ground frames. A temporary Signal box was built in 1917 to service the new Ordinance Factory, this closed with the factory in 1919. Stationmaster in 1928 was W Cousens. A spur and signal box was added for the Vickers factory in 1942 during WWII. The line finally closed to passenger traffic in 1953 and the final freight train ran in 1962. Part of the line nearest the main line had a small yard with spurs into the Kembry Park Cordite works and from 1955 to the BMW (originally Pressed Steel) plant. The BMW link was originally used to bring in Steel Coils for the press shops, Oil for the boiler houses and Calcium Carbide for the Acetylene generation plants (used for welding on cars). During the Rover period it was used to send 3 train loads a day of car parts to the Longbridge plant in Birmingham. When Rover failed the trains stopped and a lot of the track work in the plant was removed. The line was entered from the main line under a bridge at the end of Gypsy Lane and controlled by Highworth Junction Signal box. The Ermin Street road bridge was demolished in 1975/6. J H Thomas, a Labour Chancellor, was once a train driver on this line.

A complete History of the line can be found at <http://www.highworth.freeuk.com/>

**Stratton Park Halt** on the main London to Bristol line opened circa 1840 and was re-built in 1933 consisting of a corrugated steel/iron shelter with a rounded roof. There was no door, just an opening which was about 1/3 of the front. The station closed with the Beeching cuts in 7th Dec 1964. The listed Ermin Street Railway Bridge was built in 1841.

The new Keypoint Rail Terminal was opened during 2002, to date it has hardly been used following the downturn in the Motor Industry, Honda only used it to ship new cars during 2010 and 2011.

## Public Transport

In 1947 the 183 Swindon to Stratton cost 1½d. By the 1950's Bristol Bus Company ran the service in a loop around the parish starting in Swindon down Shrivenham Road, Stratton Road, Oxford Road, up Ermin Street past Crown to Kingsdown then along Beechcroft to the Moonrakers then via Gorse Hill back into Swindon and another in opposite direction. When Meadowcroft & Grange Drive estates were added a second route Swindon, Stratton Road, Grange Drive, Ermin Street, Beechcroft, Meadowcroft, Headlands Drive, Gorse Hill, Swindon and reverse was added. These two routes became the 184/184A and 186/186A. Bristol Bus Company was sold off as part of The Conservative Governments de-nationalisation and became Swindon & District, this was eventually bought out by Stagecoach who now run the services. Today these have disappeared to be replaced by No. 6 Swindon, Gorse Hill, Meadowcroft, Queensfield and return, and No. 7 Swindon, Lower Stratton, Crown then Highworth & return. For a while Thamesdown ran the Outer circle service 20 which did pass through Stratton on its grand tour of Swindon, after this was withdrawn in 1999 a Swindon to Great Western Hospital via. Upper & Lower Stratton service was launched, this service itself was withdrawn 29<sup>th</sup> May 2015.