



MALVERN MEMORIES

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▲ Malvern Link Station, circa 1861.

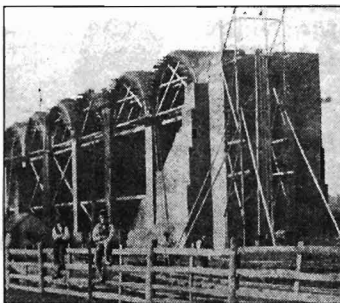
First train leaves in link between cities

150 YEARS ago, on July 25, 1859, a train left Malvern station bound for Henwick – a momentous occasion, as it was the first train to run on the first section of the Worcester-Hereford line to be completed.

Plans for connecting the two cities by rail had been mooted since 1846, but had become bogged down in rivalry between railway companies.

However, an agreement was eventually reached and the project was started in earnest by two men, Thomas Brassey, an immensely wealthy engineer who had built miles of track elsewhere in the county, and Stephen Ballard of Colwall.

Stephen Ballard, who was born at Pickersleigh Court in Malvern, spent some years at Kew Gardens



▲ Ledbury Viaduct under construction.

in London, where he studied landscape gardening, and then he became an engineer, building the Ledbury-Gloucester canal.

By the time the two worked on the Worcester-Hereford line, they were engineers of some

renown, and well suited to facing the four main challenges of completing the line – the tunnels at Malvern and Ledbury, and the viaducts at Worcester and Ledbury.

The Malvern tunnel was bored through rock so hard that the best week's work was a mere two-and-a-half yards.

Although it opened in 1860, it closed a year later for several days because of a rockfall, and a further fall occurred in 1907. A new tunnel came into operation in 1926.

The Ledbury tunnel was not so difficult to bore, but the ventilation proved troublesome, and it became known as one of the foulest tunnels in the country.

The Ledbury viaduct, built by Ballard's brother Robert, used an estimated five million bricks, and was completed in June 1861.