Queen Adelaide and The London & Birmingham Railway: The First Carriage and the First Royal to Ride the Rails

Previous authors have suggested Queen Adelaide used (at least) two carriages in her travels on the London & Birmingham railway. [1] The Queen Adelaide carriage in the NRM sometimes has its origins confused with the London & Birmingham railway mail carriage that Queen Adelaide used between 1839 and around 1845.[2]

A picture of Queen Adelaide's early travels as the first Royal to ride the rails, can be revealed along with her initial use of a little known and short lived vehicle known as a railway mail carriage. This design was derived from the Royal Mail road coaches, that carried both letters and passengers.

Introduction

Queen Adelaide despite her health issues very much adopted the railway as a means of travel and predominantly travelled on the London & Birmingham railway. She toured the Midlands, as far as Leeds and Nottingham at a time when no other Royal had set foot in a rail carriage. Mostly she travelled between London and several of the country houses where she stayed hoping to improve her health, via the London & Birmingham.

From the opening of the Grand Junction Railway and particularly the London & Birmingham and Great Western, with their Royal patronage, resistance generally to railway travelling amongst the aristocracy diminished. However it was still the case, as with stage coaches, that normal first class carriages were deemed public transport and were somewhat shunned. These early companies sought to counter this view with a range of exotic carriage designs. By far the most exclusive was the narrow bodied railway mail carriage. This carriage design had its origins in the earliest Liverpool & Manchester carriage bodies. These bodies initially, 1830-1831, sat between the wheels. Some evolved, with the body being given a new full width under carriage, as in one example in 1832-3, thus retaining their small 4-inside compartments. It seems that following examples continued this tradition built new in 1836-8.

For some time a number of the aristocracy and those that could afford it went by train, but unusually they often travelled in their private (road) carriages, carried on carriage trucks. [3] The railways responded, in an attempt to attract the higher classes into railway carriages, as early as March 1831 on the Liverpool & Manchester with an exclusive class of travel [4], mirroring the (road) Royal Mails, in having only four passengers in a compartment. This form of carriage was consolidated in the form of a railway mail carriage, having the respected branding of the Royal Mails, it was tolerated by the better off due to the reduced number of passengers with whom one had to share the compartment and the Royal Mails' legendary reputation.[5]

[1] Lambert's Railway Miscellany Hardcover, Anthony Lambert, 14 Oct. 2010, Ebury Press, ISBN-10 : 009193771X
ISBN-13 : 978-0091937713; Queen Adelaide's saloon – A misunderstanding clarified, Peter Chatham LNWR Society Journal, Volume 8 No 8, 2017.

[2] Contemporarily also referred to as a 'mail coach' this form of railway carriage 1831-c.1840 was intended by the Post Office as the railway form of the horse drawn road counterpart. The development of the TPO and baggage tenders from 1839 onwards and the increasing volumes of mail quickly made them obsolete. This paper uses the term railway mail coach from the wording used in the Railways (Conveyance of Mails) Act 1838, to separate this form of railway vehicle from other mail vehicles often referred to similarly.

[3] Carriage Trucks on the GJR and London & Birmingham railways, LNWR Society Journal, September 2023

[4] 'The want of a superior description of Carriage, at a higher fare, having been frequently presented to the Directors, they have caused one Four-inside Coach, in each First Class train to be fitted up in a superior style, for which an extra charge of 1s. is made' Pamphlet, Travelling by the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, March 1831.
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7c/Liverpool_and_Manchester_Railway_1831_billboard.jpg

[5] The Royal Mail carriages, on both road and rail, only carried only 4 inside (in a compartment), stage coaches usually 6. This difference was a class divider as great as the distinction between inside and outside. See The English Mail-Coach, an essay by Thomas De Quincey, 1849.

Horse drawn Royal Mails had a reputation for excellent time keeping as well as guaranteed quality of accommodation. Unscrupulous coach proprietors, of which there were plenty, with run down vehicles that had seen better days and who weren't concerned about overloading their coaches, would not earn the prestigious status of proprietor of the Royal Mail. Royal Mail carriages were also a patented design, [6] an early form of standardisation but also with the best technical arrangements available. All of this had meant that by 1830 the Royal Mail brand was considered a cut above other road couriers.

In this way railway mail carriages inherited an existing status as a cut above common public transport. Railway mail carriages also ran in trains that carried mail, thus giving the train the name 'mails'. These trains were despatched from their stations by the order of the Post Office [7] who kept a close eye on their time keeping, as they also did with the road Royal Mails. Perhaps there was still a degree of distrust of railways from certain factions in the public, that meant knowing that the Post Office would be holding the railway company to account for any failure or discrepancy in the service, added to their sense of security.

Combining the exclusivity of the carriage's limited seating and the status of the train, in 1839 there wasn't a more prestigious form of railway carriage transport than riding mail class on the London & Birmingham[8] and this is almost certainly the reason as to why the Railway Mail Carriage was chosen for her Royal Highness' first journey.

Carriage Design – Nathaniel Worsdell & Joseph Wright

Railway mail carriages, with mail guards employed by the post office and bags of post in their imperials on their roofs, were all narrow bodied and carried passengers as did horse-drawn road versions. Other forms of mail carrying vehicles already existed, by 1839, the Midland Counties and Newcastle and Carlisle both had their own forms of mail vans, but the London & Birmingham kept in very close communication with the Post Office, gaining approval directly of the design and livery.

In 1839 the railway mail carriage was the cream of the London & Birmingham and GJR carriage stock. Not only were they exclusive but they were also finished to a high degree of excellence. Their design included gilded ornamentations, the interior was of superior cloth and lace and they were predominantly complimented with a front facing coupé compartment for the exclusive use of two if not three passengers. While other forms of coupé carriage would be introduced, in the early 1840s various lines had full width double coupé carriages, the earlier design seems to have made the longest lasting impression.[9]

Certainly the myth that the Queen Adelaide carriage of 1845, which is in the NRM to this day, was actually a mail coach has done much to confuse the issue. But the fact that it was built seemingly deliberately with a semblance of the earlier railway mail carriages, which had all gone by 1845, has meant that the style of the carriage has persisted in at least one prominent example.

[6] John Besant patent no. 1674, in 1786 improved mail coach design

[7] Referred to in later years as 'controlled trains' by the railway and known generally as 'mails', time bills were kept by post clerks on the trains with any delays being reported and causing a concerned enquiry being made by an officer of the Post Office to the Board of the railway. Additionally throughout the history of the post office use of railways, mail trains maintained a small capacity to accommodate passengers.

[8] Elegance and splendour was certainly matched on the Great Western broad gauge with their 'post' carriages however these sat 8 persons in an open saloon arrangement and I believe it may be argued this made them more 'common' in terms of the aspect of being a shared space.

[9] All types of end carriage coupe, except for some Royal examples, which travelled under special orders, were shown to suffer rather graphic destruction when involved in accidents and by the mid-1840s most in existence were survivors rather than new carriages. If the coupe itself didn't disintegrate passengers suffered head injuries from colliding with the glass that one imagines were not dissimilar to car accidents before seat belts were mandatory.

Nathaniel Worsdell and Joseph Wright [10] worked closely with the initial stock for the London & Birmingham which followed closely what which was being built at Crown Street, for the GJR. [11] This included the Mail carriage design. It would appear the Worsdells built at least one mail to the Liverpool & Manchester pattern, that of three full compartments and a box, but it isn't clear who was responsible for the coupé in the final design.

Queen Adelaide's first carriage: The Royal Mail [12]

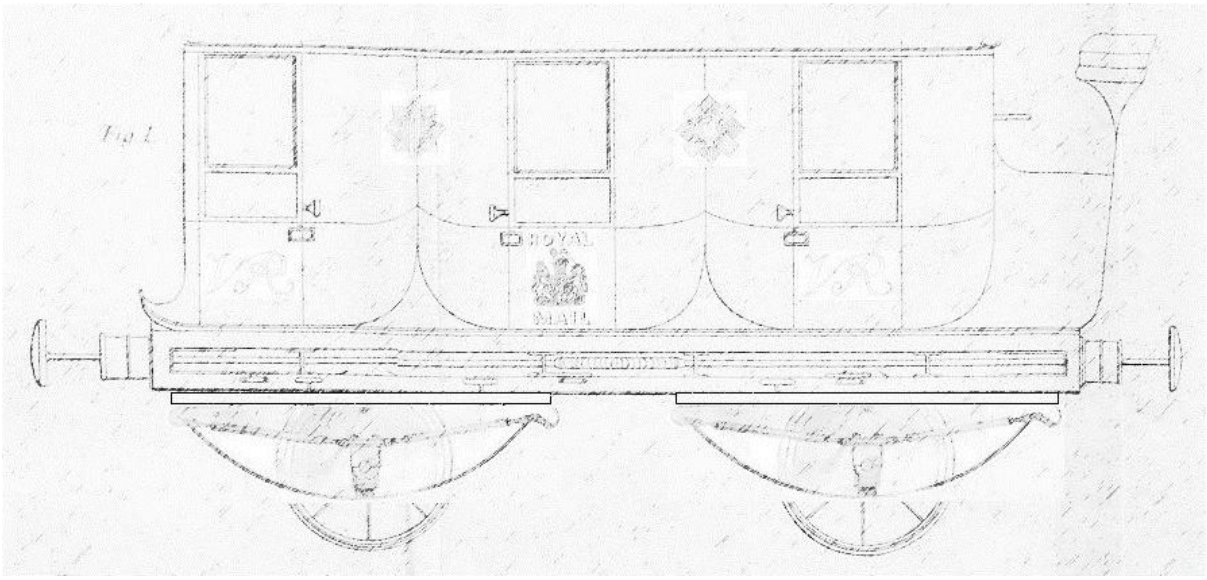


Fig.1. Author's impression of the original design of the Queen Adelaide Royal Mail of 1839 based upon Lecount mail carriage. Chris Cox, expert in bow springs and WB Adams their inventor, confirms that the springs were made in various sizes depending on the vehicle to which they would have been attached but these would have been of a smaller size (A practical treatise on railways, explaining their construction and management ..., Lecount Peter, A.& C. Black, 1839)

[10] TNA RAIL 384/60-61 Non-resident Engineers Minutes copy of letter from W Rathbone, Liverpool 12th September 1836 "1st The ordinary first Class carriages with six inside bodies. Of these the [London & Birmingham] Company has ordered 25 with and 25 without side lights**, on the Grand Junction Specification** [a], and we are not disposed to urge further ordered at present
TNA Rail 384/35 Meeting of the Sub Committee for Carriages, 1st Oct 1836 "That Mr Wright be requested to as early as possible to Liverpool for the **purpose of preparing the necessary plans and specification in concert with Mr Worsdell Junior** and under the immediate superintendence of the Members of the Carriage Committee in Liverpool and that the Secretary be desire to furnish Mr Wright with the requisite instructions_____"
Meeting of the Sub Committee for Carriages, 19th Oct 1836, "Mr Wright attended the Committee and with reference to Minute 27 laid on the table Draft Specifications of railway Carriages as prepared by him in conformity with the suggestions of the Members of the Carriage Committee at Liverpool and ***with the assistance of Mr Worsdell junior*** namely,
Meeting of the Sub Committee for Carriages, 2nd Nov 1836 "The Secretary stated that Messrs Wright & Horne ***in following the dimensions of the Grand Junction Carriage*** had provided axles for a portion of the Coaches of their first Contract of 2 ¼ inches diameter instead of 2 5/8 inches the dimensions given in the Specification."
TNA RAIL 384/62 Meeting of the Non resident directors, Newton 4th November 1837 "Letter from Mr N. Worsdell applying for £54.8.8 expenses incurred in journeys to London, Birmingham & Lancaster for the purpose **of superintending and giving instructions with respect to the carriages built for the London & Birmingham Company**…."

[11] With the exception of the GJR enclosed 2nd class, see drawing in Lecount, which the London Committee rejected in favour of open but roofed (day) seconds and Wright's own design, see drawings in Brees. Curiously Camden turned out a number of the original Liverpool & Manchester unroofed thirds, visible in the TT Bury prints, for the first season. They were soon after rebuilt into day seconds with roofs.
[12] Newspaper references are, unless otherwise stated, sourced from britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk. Pages number references relate to the pages of the individual issue of the newspaper and not, as in the case of some originals, to year-through page numbers.

The story of the Queen riding in a railway mail coach hastily prepared by Joseph Wright, the main carriage builder at the time for the London & Birmingham railway, is true. [13]

'Her Majesty, with her suite, took her departure from Euston station, by a special train provided by the Directors, who deserve great credit for the handsome manner in which, at very short notice, they made arrangements for her Majesty's accommodation. The mail, suspended on Mr. Adams's bow-springs, having been selected as the most eligible carriage, was immediately sent to the factory of Mr. Wright, the contractor for the mails, with the directions to put it into complete order within the space of three days. A large number of workmen were set upon it, the whole of the cloth lining was instantly stripped out, and replaced by an elegant trimming of flowered silk. The mouldings were gilded, and the carriage repainted, the work completed, and the carriage delivered at the station …' [14]

The writer for the Wolverhampton Chronicle is more specific, 'linings and trimmings being of white figured satin, with white sarcenet blinds' . [15] Sarsenet being a fine, soft silk fabric.

A number of newspaper accounts suggest that the repainting was in fact no more than the addition of the royal cyphers V.A.R. (Victoria, Albert, Regina) as Royal Mail was still legible on the carriage doors.

'On the centre door is painted "Royal Mail," and on the side doors, "V.A.R." while on the top panels are beautifully coloured stars, with royal mottos round them.' [16]

This would suggest the carriage was still resplendent in its original post office red as the features of its Royal Mail identity were still visible. The Journalist of this report is somewhat out of their depth, however it is clear that the 'stars' they refer to are the 'orders' that were part of the Royal mail coach livery.

Also of note is the reference to Bow Springs described again as 'of the finest texture and admirable elasticity; 'The interior of the carriage exceeds in beauty the exterior, the seats being made of white velvet, and the back and sides covered with white flowered satin…. A guard's seat is placed behind it, the same as on a mail coach.'

The writer of these descriptions reveals a important aspect of the forward coupé' but makes another mistake in their observation. The coupé was undivided, it was also deeper than the normal compartment, so that it could carry two or three persons. Certainly references to them being 'popular' seem to indicate three in the narrow bodied coupé wasn't uncommon as Lady Shelley's letter below indicates:

'35 Belgrave Sq., January, 22nd 1840

Lady Shelley presents her compliments to Mr Creed and is obliged to request his good offices in consequence of a mistake about the Coupé being engaged for her by a friend for Monday next which she wishes not to have in consequence of hearing that there are three places in it instead of two as she had been informed. Sir John does not like to go on the Railway except with his back to the

[13] Lambert's Railway Miscellany Hardcover, Anthony Lambert, 14 Oct. 2010, Ebury Press, ISBN-10 : 009193771X ISBN-13 : 978-0091937713

[14] QUEEN ADELAIDE'S EXCURSION ON THE BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY Court Gazette and Fashionable Guide – p.10 Saturday 26 October 1839 British Newspaper Archive

[15] THE QUEEN DOWAGER p.4 Wednesday 29 July 1840 Wolverhampton Chronicle and Staffordshire Advertiser

[16] HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S VISIT TO THE MIDLAND COUNTIES Derby Mercury – p.3 Wednesday 29th July 1840 British Newspaper Archive. This account has a number of small errors but it is not clear if the reference to the Royal Cyphers is a mistake, although the inclusion of consorts in Royal monograms is known other depictions of the mail coaches show just 'V.R.'

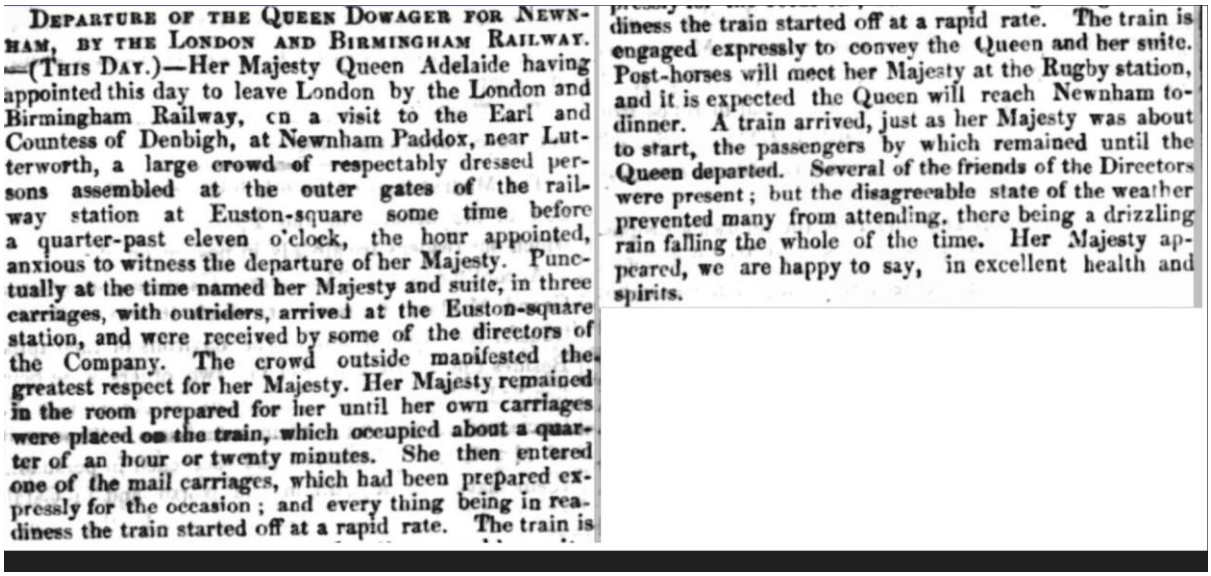
Horses, and as the railroad is now so much broken up and, Lord Derby having been 4 hours too late, there is so much delay – it will be impossible to read Belvoir Castle in one day. Therefore they wish only to send their Horses and hope as the Coupé is so much liked there will be no difficulty in giving it up as it is done so immediately and had been engaged this evening under a mistake. Lady Shelley hopes Mr Creed will excuse the trouble she gives him and let her know whether he can get rid of the places.' [17]

Although this letter feels something like a series of back peddling excuses, the sentiments with regard to the three persons in the coupé is very much real. Where the Journalist from the Derby Mercury, has slipped up in his observations above, is that the seats in the compartments were divided by elbows and this meant that they were for only four persons or two abreast. It is not to stretch incredulity to think the observer from the Derby Mercury saw three in the coupé and assumed the same for the compartments. 'It is capable of containing fifteen; two parts [compartments] containing six each, and the other [coupé] three.' [18]

Further reference to this position of increasing seating by removing the elbows can be found in the first class carriages used for excursions [19] and in the later wider improved mails where the coupé is said to be for 3 or 4 persons. [20]

Having separated this part of the story, it is worth noting some points on the origins of railway mail coach design as they clearly had impact on the design of the preserved carriage.

Queen Adelaide, The Queen Dowager's journeys, 1839-1844



DEPARTURE OF THE QUEEN DOWAGER FOR NEWNHAM, BY THE LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY. —(THIS DAY.)—Her Majesty Queen Adelaide having appointed this day to leave London by the London and Birmingham Railway, on a visit to the Earl and Countess of Denbigh, at Newnham Paddox, near Lutterworth, a large crowd of respectably dressed persons assembled at the outer gates of the railway station at Euston-square some time before a quarter-past eleven o'clock, the hour appointed, anxious to witness the departure of her Majesty. Punctually at the time named her Majesty and suite, in three carriages, with outriders, arrived at the Euston-square station, and were received by some of the directors of the Company. The crowd outside manifested the greatest respect for her Majesty. Her Majesty remained in the room prepared for her until her own carriages were placed on the train, which occupied about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. She then entered one of the mail carriages, which had been prepared expressly for the occasion; and every thing being in readiness the train started off at a rapid rate. The train is engaged expressly to convey the Queen and her suite. Post-horses will meet her Majesty at the Rugby station, and it is expected the Queen will reach Newnham to-dinner. A train arrived, just as her Majesty was about to start, the passengers by which remained until the Queen departed. Several of the friends of the Directors were present; but the disagreeable state of the weather prevented many from attending, there being a drizzling rain falling the whole of the time. Her Majesty appeared, we are happy to say, in excellent health and spirits.

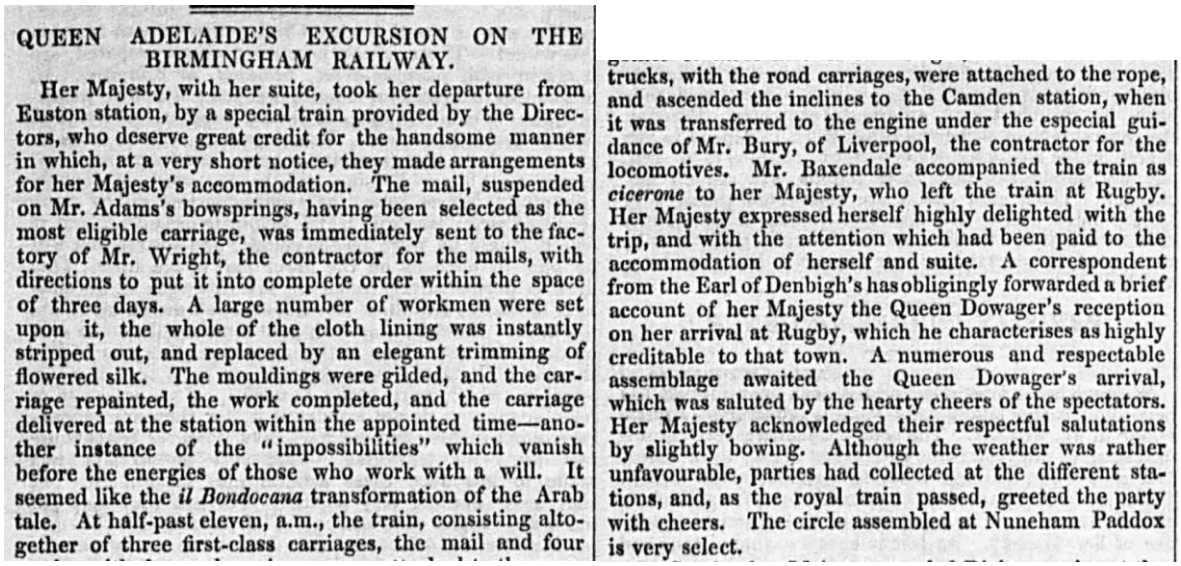
[17] P.46, Old Euston, by (G. Royde Smith) An Account of the Beginning of the London and Birmingham Railway and the Building of Euston Station, Country life Ltd, London, 1938

[18] HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S VISIT TO THE MIDLAND COUNTIES Derby Mercury – p.3 Wednesday 29th July 1840 British Newspaper Archive; Richard Ball has pointed to the possibility that this isn't an error and is in fact evidence that the carriage was a wider improved mail carriage, however the Coaching and Policing Committee minutes of the 10th of August 1842 states the mail carriages are described as only carrying '10 as at present', thus narrow bodied, and describing the 'increased space'. Minute 1725, follows giving permission for the construction of 'a body as proposed'. This indicates that this was the first improved mail.

[19] The removal of elbows, that divided the seats, was a long standing practice: TNA RAIL 384/35 Minutes of the Sub Committee for Carriages, 26th Nov 1836, minute '48 resolved. That a proportion of the First Class Coaches, to be hereafter determined, be fitted for the present without elbows to receive a greater number of passengers for excursions.'

[20] TNA Rail 384/96 Coaching and Policing Committee minutes of the 10th of August 1842; '3, or in the case of need, 4 passengers, in the coupe'

Fig. 2. 15th October 1839, First rail journey by Queen Adelaide, or any member of the Royal Family (London Courier and Evening Gazette)



QUEEN ADELAIDE'S EXCURSION ON THE BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY.

Her Majesty, with her suite, took her departure from Euston station, by a special train provided by the Directors, who deserve great credit for the handsome manner in which, at a very short notice, they made arrangements for her Majesty's accommodation. The mail, suspended on Mr. Adams's bowsprings, having been selected as the most eligible carriage, was immediately sent to the factory of Mr. Wright, the contractor for the mails, with directions to put it into complete order within the space of three days. A large number of workmen were set upon it, the whole of the cloth lining was instantly stripped out, and replaced by an elegant trimming of flowered silk. The mouldings were gilded, and the carriage repainted, the work completed, and the carriage delivered at the station within the appointed time—another instance of the "impossibilities" which vanish before the energies of those who work with a will. It seemed like the *il Bondocana* transformation of the Arab tale. At half-past eleven, a.m., the train, consisting altogether of three first-class carriages, the mail and four

trucks, with the road carriages, were attached to the rope, and ascended the inclines to the Camden station, when it was transferred to the engine under the especial guidance of Mr. Bury, of Liverpool, the contractor for the locomotives. Mr. Baxendale accompanied the train as *cicerone* to her Majesty, who left the train at Rugby. Her Majesty expressed herself highly delighted with the trip, and with the attention which had been paid to the accommodation of herself and suite. A correspondent from the Earl of Denbigh's has obligingly forwarded a brief account of her Majesty the Queen Dowager's reception on her arrival at Rugby, which he characterises as highly creditable to that town. A numerous and respectable assemblage awaited the Queen Dowager's arrival, which was saluted by the hearty cheers of the spectators. Her Majesty acknowledged their respectful salutations by slightly bowing. Although the weather was rather unfavourable, parties had collected at the different stations, and, as the royal train passed, greeted the party with cheers. The circle assembled at Nuneham Paddox is very select.

Fig. 3. 26 October 1839, Details of Joseph Wright's conversion and undercarriage bow springs Court Gazette and Fashionable Guide

October 1839

Queen Adelaide's trip in October 1839 appears to have been organised at short notice given the three days Joseph Wright had to improve the royal mail carriage for her use. Several newspaper reports give us a really interesting viewpoint into, not just Royal working, but the methods of interaction between road and rail at the time. The London & Birmingham railway provided post horses at several key stations along the line so it wasn't always necessary to include horse-boxes and convey horses with a train. The preference of the aristocracy was definitely to bring their own carriages with them on carriage trucks, but not horses. Of course in terms of Royal Journeys the Royal Party were often to continue on road once having disembarked at a station. The Queen Dowager had to wait in a private room while the loading arrangement took place. Euston had only one departure platform in 1839 but with the limited number of departures this wouldn't have caused too much inconvenience.

The train consisted of three first class carriages, the mail coach with its improvements and four 'truck's. The Queen travelled from her residence in Bushy Park in a Chariot, possibly that depicted by James Pollard as being used from William IVth. Her suite were conveyed to the station in two carriage and fours possibly Barouche or Landau carriages, these were likely to be 'closed' carriages, i.e. with the hoods up given the inclement weather. The suite would however travel in the railway carriages. Once they arrived Rugby, the original temporary station, the carriages would be removed from the trucks and attached to new 'post' horses for the journey to Newnham Paddox, near Lutterworth, for the visit to the Earl and Countess of Denbigh. The Earl was travelling with them.[21]

[21] Her Majesty, with her suite, took her departure from Euston station, by special train provided by the Directors, who deserve great credit for the handsome manner in which, at very short notice, they made arrangements for her Majesty's accommodation. The mail, suspended on Mr. Adams's bowsprings, having been selected as the most eligible carriage, was immediately sent to the factory of Mr. Wright, the contractor for the mails, with direction to put it into complete order within the space of three days. A large number of workmen were set upon it, the whole of the cloth lining was instantly stripped out, and replaced by an elegant trimming of flowered silk. The mouldings were

After a stay that included visiting Coventry, and Belvoir Castle, by road carriage, the Queen Dowager returned to London on the 2nd of December via Rugby. At Rugby it is interesting to note that the Directors provided a number of their Policemen to keep public order. [22]

On the 19th of July 1840 the Queen Dowager again rode from Euston in her special London & Birmingham train. This would be something of a tour of the Midlands as far as Leeds and the Lakes, made essentially to show some of the country to her visiting sister, the Duchess of Saxe Weimar. The London & Birmingham directors having given permission for its use for the entire journey to Syston. [23] This train matched that used in 1839 including the mail coach and a first class coach and a number of carriage trucks. At Rugby the junction with the Midland Counties had been completed and the Queen was able to continue without needing to change train, although they did change to a Midlands Counties' locomotive, they continued to Leicester.

The carriages on the five carriage trucks are described as being 'two close[d] carriages, two phaetons, and a luggage van belonging to her Majesty'. This last carriage may have been a Forgon as depicted by John Cordrey[24]. Detailed reference is again made here to the carriage livery, interior and particular reference to the Adam's bowsprings. The references to 'compactness' certainly reflect the narrow bodied form of the early mail coach and the 'lightness' maybe a reflection of Adams's springs.

On the 22nd The Queen arrived by road at Nottingham where she was treated to breakfast by the Directors of the Midland Counties railway. Entrance to the station was by ticket only, which were issued for a 'very respectable assemblage of Ladies and Gentleman'. Her Majesty then continued with her train to Derby where 'one of the North Midland carriages, elegantly fitted up, was substituted for that in which she arrived' [25]. One presumes at this point the 'mail coach' was returned to London. The train then set off for Leeds but rode at such as speed that the Queen Dowager requested that they might travel a little slower.

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gilded, and the carriage repainted, the work completed, and the carriage delivered at the station within the appointed time… At half-past eleven, a.m., the train, consisting altogether of three first-class carriages, the mail and four trucks, with road carriages, were attached to the rope and ascended the inclines to the Camden station.." DEPARTURE OF THE QUEEN DOWAGER FOR NEWN HAM, BY THE LONDON AND BIRMING- HAM RAILWAY Court Gazette and Fashionable Guide – p.3 Saturday 19 October 1839

'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager, attended by Lady Clinton, left her residence, Bushy House, Bushy Park, in a chariot and four shortly before ten o'clock yesterday morning for the station of the London & Birmingham Railway, in Euston-square. A carriage and four preceded her Majesty, containing Earl Howe, the Earl of Denbigh, and the Rev. J.R.Wood; and another of the Royal carriages and four followed, conveying the Hon. Miss Mitchell, Maid of Honour in Waiting; and Lady Georgiana Curzon. .. A special train was appropriated to the use of her Majesty, who occupied one of the mail carriages that had been fitted up for her accommodation. Her Majesty was received by the Directors of the Company, and was conducted to a private room while the necessary preparations were in progress.' QUEEN ADELAIDE, Morning Post – p.3, Wednesday 16 October 1839

Her Majesty ' … entered one of the mail carriages, which had been prepared expressly for the occasion; and everything being in readiness the train started off at a rapid rate. The train is engaged expressly to convey the Queen and her suite. Post- horses will meet her Majesty at the Rugby station and it is expected the Queen will reach Newnham to-dinner.' DEPARTUREOF THE QUEEN DOWAGER FOR NEWNHAM, BY THE LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY, p.3, London Courier and Evening Gazette - Tuesday 15 October 1839

'The Queen Dowager left London, by the Birmingham Railway, on Tuesday, for Newnham Paddox, near Lutterworth, on a visit to the Earl and Countess of Denbigh.' MILTUM IN PARVO, p.2, Durham Chronicle - Saturday 19 October 1839S

[22] 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager arrived at Rugby shortly before twelve to-day .. A strong posse of the Birmingham railway police was in attendance to preserve order at the railway station.' THE QUEEN DOWAGER, p.3 London Courier and Evening Gazette - Monday 02 December 1839

[23] TNA RAIL 1008/104 Letters relating to royal train journeys, Letter 23rd July, 1840

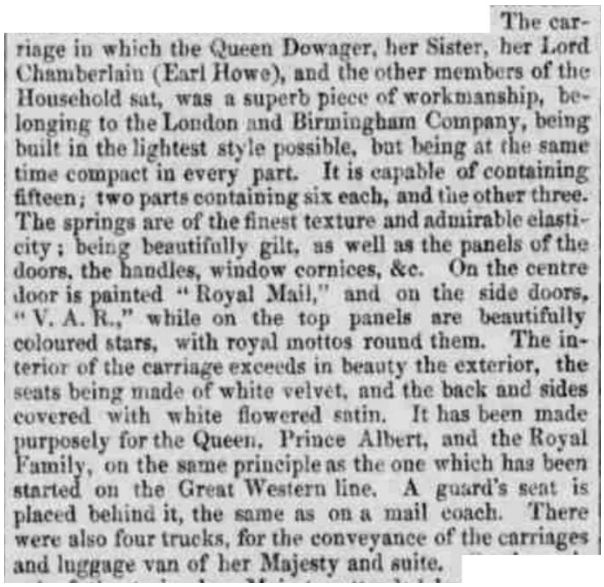
[24] The Royal Forgon, painting by John Cordrey, Ackermann & son

[25] THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S VISIT TO THE PROVINCES, p.4 Staffordshire Advertiser - Saturday 01 August 1840

From Leeds the Queen rode in her Phaeton through the town and then on to Harwood House, with the two closed carriages following. The remaining carriage and luggage van were forwarded to Otley directly, where the Queen was to stay before embarking on several days of tours around Yorkshire and the Lakes.

The Queen's 'mail coach' was again witnessed arriving unaccompanied to Curzon St station, Birmingham, on July 31st [26] as part of its conveyance forwards to Lancaster where it again met the Royal party. The Queen travelled in her carriage 'which had been handsomely fitted up by the London & Birmingham Company for her Majesty's use' [27] from Lancaster, via the Lancaster and Preston and North Union railways, as far as Stafford, on the Grand Junction. The Queen exited the train at Stafford this being the closest alighting point for her destination of Alton Towers, the then seat of the Earl of Shrewsbury. The GJR provided locomotive power over its own metals, the locomotive the Vandal was under the direction of Mr Buddicom himself, the then locomotive superintendent to the GJR.

The trip was noteworthy because the train of three carriages and five loaded carriage trucks made 'extraordinary' progress but there is another reason, because of the financial arrangements. In a letter dated 1st September, Lord Denbigh settles the accounts with the railway companies involved, so while the railways went to great expense to provide the vehicles for the trains and on occasions provided considerable decoration, they also billed the Royal Household for expenses.[28]



The carriage in which the Queen Dowager, her Sister, her Lord Chamberlain (Earl Howe), and the other members of the Household sat, was a superb piece of workmanship, belonging to the London and Birmingham Company, being built in the lightest style possible, but being at the same time compact in every part. It is capable of containing fifteen; two parts containing six each, and the other three. The springs are of the finest texture and admirable elasticity; being beautifully gilt, as well as the panels of the doors, the handles, window cornices, &c. On the centre door is painted "Royal Mail," and on the side doors, "V. A. R.," while on the top panels are beautifully coloured stars, with royal mottos round them. The interior of the carriage exceeds in beauty the exterior, the seats being made of white velvet, and the back and sides covered with white flowered satin. It has been made purposely for the Queen, Prince Albert, and the Royal Family, on the same principle as the one which has been started on the Great Western line. A guard's seat is placed behind it, the same as on a mail coach. There were also four trucks, for the conveyance of the carriages and luggage van of her Majesty and suite.

Fig. 4. 29th July 1840, Further details of the Royal Mail carriage, however see text for care needed in interpretation. HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S VISIT TO THE MIDLAND COUNTIES Derby Mercury

The Queen Dowager was clearly happy with the arrangements and the performance of her 'mail coach' so that on the 23rd July, the London & Birmingham minutes record that the Queen Dowager

[26] THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S PROGRESS, p.8 Leeds Intelligencer - Saturday 01 August 1840

[27] THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S TRIP ON THE RAILWAY-EXTRAORDINARY SPEED, p.6 English Chronicle and Whitehall Evening Post - Thursday 06 August 1840

[28] TNA RAIL 1008/104 Letters relating to royal train journeys, Letter 1st September, 1840

had communicated her request to have the mail coach 'arranged for her use, in the further railway excursions which she has to make'. The request 'to be complied with' [29]

On August 10th the Queen Dowager rode again in her 'special train', from Rugby, arriving at Wolverton. [30] [31] The next planned trip was the 19th of September Euston to Sudbury Hall which is to the West of Derby. [32]

Adam's bowsprings had initially received considerable acclaim. They fitted the aesthetic of the times. Just observe a Curricle carriage of the period to see the almost infatuation with wide curving slender springs. It would appear that the Board hadn't fully tested them before their fitting to the 'mail coach'. They had fitted them to a vehicle, possibly Worsdell's, they called a Travelling Office and also to at least one carriage truck. [33] They even considered them for the new sheep wagons.[34]

By September of 1840 however concerns were growing and the board was getting nervous. Indications are that only the Queen Dowager's mail coach was fitted up with Adam's bowsprings, but in August a Mr Hogson complained of the motion of a new mail coach. The legendary T.C. Worsdell (II), then carriage superintendent, rode in it but he found the motion 'very easy' [35]. Was this because the Adam's Springs? What is clear is that there was a degree of horizontal motion that made some travellers' uneasy. Mr Hyde wrote to the board in October of 1840 stating that 'in consequence of the unpleasant motion of his carriage when placed on a truck to which Adams' bow springs were applied, himself and party had taken their seats in one of the company's carriages for which he had paid excess fares…'. In November at Wolverton station, 'The committee having held their sitting in the Travelling Office fitted with the bow springs must express their experience of the very uneasy motion of the carriage.' [36] It doesn't appear that any sheep wagons were fitted.

Adams must have felt that his business portfolio was crumbling. When he received the news of the order to remove his springs from the incredibly prestigious Queen Dowager's carriage his heart must have sunk [37]. Edward Bury, who already had a grudge, was asked to write a report and Wright was ordered to remove the springs. Interestingly Wright stuck his neck out for Adam's on a couple of occasions and it appears he attempted to correct the motion of the springs by adding leather braces and making an alteration to the axleguards[38].

By the end of September it would appear that the tide was were turning against Adams and his springs. On the 30th of Sept 1840, "The Chairman reported that Lord Denbigh, Master of the Horse to the Queen Dowager, had informed him that Mr Adams had called at Marlborough House and stated that Company having made an alteration in the Bow Springs of the Carriage used for Her Majesty without his consent he could not be answerable for their security, and that Lord Denbigh had replied he was perfectly satisfied with any arrangement the London & Birmingham Railway Company might make for Her Majesty's conveyance. The committee being informed that Mr Adams is in the frequent practice of walking about the stations and workshops"[39]

[29] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 23rd July 1840, Minute 328

[30] THE QUEEN DOWAGER'S PROGRESS, p.4 Dover Telegraph and Cinque Ports General Advertiser - Saturday 15 August 1840

[31] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 5th August 1840, Minute 359

[32] TNA RAIL 1008/104 Letters relating to royal train journeys, letter 27th of Aug 1840

[33] TNA RAIL 384/4 Board, 13th June 1839, Minute 853

[34] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 27th May 1840, Notes following minute 257

[35] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 5th August 1840, Notes between minutes 354-355

[36] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 5th November 1840, minute 544

[37] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 5th November 1840, minute 604

[38] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 9th Sept 1840, minute 427

[39] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 9th Sept 1840, note following minute 453

There is evidence of correspondence between the Committee and Adams by November two of the springs had broken.

The next journey of Her Majesty The Queen Dowager was to London by a special train on Saturday 28th of November. The Queen was returning from Sudbury Hall to her London residence of Marlborough House, Pall-mall.[40]

After a short stay the Queen Dowager returned to Sudbury Hall taking a special train from Euston. [41] What carriage she travelled in however is not clear since the board ordered that 'arrangements be made for the conveyance of Her Majesty the Queen Dowager on the 4th instant in one of the Company's Carriages not fitted with the Bow Springs'. [42] The Queen Dowager returned to Sudbury, from Marlborough House, most likely by rail from Euston, on December 5th. [43]

The mail coach bodies were built as complete removable units from their undercarriages. Adams' letter in response to the being notified that the bow springs were being removed seems to confirm that the body had in fact been place on a new or replacement under carriage. [44]

'Sir, I have received your note informing me that the Body of the coach fitted for the use of the Queen Dowager was removed from the carriage to which the patent Bowsprings were fitted .'

This rail journey appears to have been repeated in February; 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager and her Household are expected in town on Saturday next, from Sudbury Hall, in order to attend the christening of her Royal Highness the Princess Royal.' [45] At the christening the Queen Dowager was described as suffering the 'extremity of the weather' and while she was again at Sudbury Hall, presumably having travelled by the London & Birmingham as usual, she was delayed in her return; 'The arrival in town of Her Majesty Queen Adelaide has been deferred, Her Majesty having within the last few days become indisposed at Sudbury Hall, her present residence. We are happy to state that the last accounts received in town were to the effect that Her Majesty was better.' [46]

[40] QUEEN ADELAIDE, p.5 Morning Post - Monday 30 November 1840
[41] THE QUEEN ADELAIDE., P.5 Morning Post - Saturday 05 December 1840
[42] TNA RAIL 384/94 Coaching & Police Committee, 26th November 1840, minute 604
[43] LONDON, Saturday, December 5th, p.2 The Scotsman 9th December, 1840
[44] TNA RAIL 1008/104 Letters Adams' 18th December, 1840
[45] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.9 New Court Gazette - Saturday 30 January 1841
[46] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.9 New Court Gazette - Saturday 24 April 1841

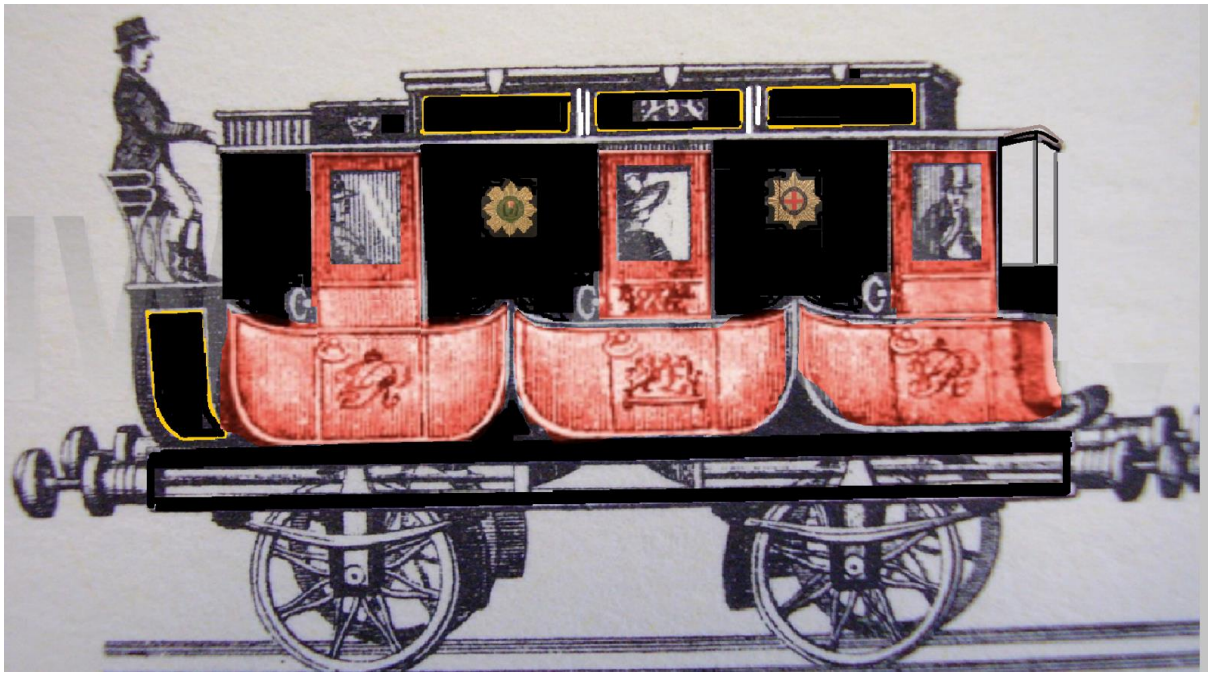


Fig. 5. Blind Mail with conventional springs. Note addition of brakes is an error. Original image Osborne with additions and edits by the author. (image by Samuel Williams (23 February 1788 – 19 September 1853) from Osborne's London & Birmingham Railway Guide, E.C.& W. Osborne / Simkin, Marshall & Co. 1838)

Other Royals travelling on the London & Birmingham; 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager, accompanied by his Serene Highness Prince Ernest of Hesse Philippsthal, and attended by the ladies of her suite, and her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester, attended by her Lady in Waiting, left Gopsall Hall, Leicestershire, the seat of Earl Hose, yesterday morning, for Belton House, Lincolnshire, to honour the Earl and Countess Brownlow with a visit… Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester, attended by Ledy Georgiana Bathhurst and the Earl of Denbigh, left Cambridge House at half-past ten o'clock on Saturday morning for the terminus of the London and Birmingham Railway, in Euston-square, and left town for Sudbury Hall, on a visit to her Majesty the Queen Dowager.' [47]

In September, 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager, attended by her suite, her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester and his Serene Highness Prince Ernest of Hesse Philippsthal, left Belton-house, Leicestershire, the residence of the Earl and Countess Brownlow yesterday for Belvoir Castle, Leicestershire, to honour the Duke of Rutland with a visit.' [48]

'His Seren Highness Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar arrived at Marlborough House on Wednesday evening from Sudbury Hall. Her Serene Highness the Duchess Ida of Saxe Weimar, after her arrival from the Continent on Wednesday evening, left Marlborough House, accompanied by her son Prince Edward, and paid a visit to her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent at Clarence House, St. James's. Their Serene Highnesses the Duchess Ida of Saxe Weimar, the Duke of Saxe Meiningen, and Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, left town on Friday morning on a visit to their august relative the Queen

[47] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.8 New Court Gazette - Saturday 18 September 1841
[48] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.8 New Court Gazette - Saturday 25 September 1841

Dowager. Their Serene highnesses travelled by the London and Birmingham Railway, and left the Euston-square terminus at nine o'clock for Sudbury Hall.' [49]

In January of 1842, 'The health of her Majesty the Queen Dowager continues gradually to improve. Their Serene Highnesses Prince Ernest of Hess Philippsthal, and Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, left the residence of their august relative, her Majesty the Queen Dowager, Sudbury-hall, on Wednesday morning for town. Their Serene highnesses arrived at the terminus of the London & Birmingham Railway soon after six o'clock yesterday evening, and immediately proceeded to Marlborough-house, Pall-mall.' [50] 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager, accompanied by his Serene Highness Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, … left Sudbury Hall, at half-past ten o'clock on Friday morning for London, travelling by the London & Birmingham Railway. Her Majesty and suite arrived at Marlborough House at a quarter before five o'clock in the afternoon.' [51]

In August 'The Queen Dowager remains with Earl Howe until Tuesday, when at an early hour she proceeds b y the Birmingham and Gloucester railway to Worcester, a special train having been engaged for the accommodation of her Majesty and suite, which will convey the party as far as the Spetchley station.' [52] 'Her Majesty and suite arrived at the terminus of the London and Birmingham Railway, in Euston-square, soon after ten o'clock on Saturday morning, in two carriages and four, from Bushy-house, Bushy-park. Her Majesty, attended by the Countess of Sheffield (Lady in Waiting), Lady Mary Feilding, :and the Earl of Denbigh (Mast of the Horse), left town by a special train, at half-past ten o'clock, for Gopsall-hall, Leicestershire, to honour Earl Howe with a visit.' [53]

May 1843, 'On Monday afternoon the inhabitants of the ancient and pleasant little town of Stratford-upon-Avon were not a little surprised by the sudden arrival and hasty visit of the Queen Dowager and her Royal suite. Her Majesty, Earl Howe, attendants, and domestics, travelled in two carriages -and-four, and arrived at the Old Lion Inn, Stratford, from the Coventry station, shortly before three o'clock…. Yesterday morning her Majesty and part of her suite left Stratford above eight o'clock for Ragley, [Alcester] where they arrived shortly before nine… The Queen Dowager minutely inspected the entire of this magnificent residence, and her Majesty and suite returned to town by the London and Birmingham Railway yesterday evening, -- Globe.' [54]

'We understand the Queen Dowager will leave Marlborough House this morning, and proceed by the railway to Birmingham, and from thence to visit the Earl of Ducie's, we believe, estate in Worcestershire, a special train having been engaged to convey her Majesty and suite on the Gloucester railway from Birmingham.' [55]

In June, 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager, attended by her suite, left Marlborough House at a quarter-past eight o'clock on Wednesday morning, for the Euston-square terminus of the London and Birmingham Railway. Her Majesty took her departure for Worcestershire, to pay a visit to Croome. Her Majesty the Queen Dowager, attended by her suite, returned to her residence, Marlborough House, at eight o'clock on Thursday evening from Worcestershire.' [56]

As we've seen previously the Queen Dowager's journey to Witley Court involved taking trains via the Birmingham & Gloucester railway to Spetchley. 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager left her residence,

[49] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.3Cork Examiner - Monday 22 November 1841
[50] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.9 New Court Gazette - Saturday 01 January 1842
[51] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.3 Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondent - Tuesday 25 January 1842
[52] HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.5 Morning Herald (London) - Saturday 13 August 1842
[53] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.3 New Court Gazette - Saturday 20 August 1842
[54] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.3 Morning Post - Thursday 18 May 1843
[55] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.7 Morning Post - Wednesday 07 June 1843
[56] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.9 New Court Gazette - Saturday 10 June 1843

Bushy House, Bushy-park, on Tuesday morning, attended by her suite, for the terminus of the Birmingham Railway in Euston-square, where her Majesty and suite arrived soon after ten o'clock. The Queen Dowager, attended by Lady Charles Somerset, Hon. Miss Mitchell, Hon. Miss Eden, Earl Howe, Earl of Denbigh, and Sir David Davies, left town by a special train at half-past ten o'clock, for Witley Court, Worcestershire, which has been fitted up and prepared for her occupation.' [57]

'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager arrived at the Gloucester terminus about half-past, from Witley Court, accompanied by Earl Howe, and her carriage having been passed down the "lift" to the Derby line, her Majesty proceeded to Drayton Manor, to join the royal guests already assembled there, and enjoying the hospitalities of Sir Ribert Peel. IT was the intention of Price Albert to have accompanied her Majesty to Drayton, but at the pressing solicitation of the gentlemen who waiting upon him last night he was induced to prolong his stay in Birmingham beyond the time originally fixed upon.

'On her Majesty's arrival at Hampton station, yesterday, the chairman of the Derby Company, Samuel Beale, Esq., accompanied by the deputy-chairman, Abel Peyton, Esq., Sir Oswald Moseley, and others of the directors, had the honour of presenting her Majesty with a beautifully embellished map of the Midland Railway (embracing the Derby, the Midland Counties, and the North Midland), which her Majesty was graciously pleased to accept. The map was enclosed in a rich Morocco case, with the royal arms splendidly emblazoned outside.' [58]

December, 1843; 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager arrived to-day at the Tamworth station at 3 o'clock, by special train, accompanied by Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, Earl Howe, and the Countess of Brownlow. Sir Robert Peel left Drayton soon after 2 o'clock, and proceeded to the Tamworth station, where he received her Majesty the Queen Dowager, who proceeded, accompanied by the Premier and her suite, and escorted by the Staffordshire Yeomanry, immediately to Drayton Manor.' [59]

March, 1844: 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager, accompanied by his Serene Highness Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, … left Witley Court, Worcestershire, at half Past 11 o'clock yesterday morning, for the station at Droitwich. Her Majesty and suite took their departure at one o'clock by a special train and travelled to town on the Gloucester and Birmingham Railway, and afterwards on the London and Birmingham Railway. On arriving at the Euston-square terminus her Majesty and Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, attended by her Majesty's suite, immediately proceeded to Marlborough House, where the illustrious party arrived at half-past six o'clock.' [60]

Sept, 1844: 'Her Majesty the Queen Dowager arrived at Witley Court, Worcestershire, at half-past five o'clock on Monday evening. Her Majesty travelled by the Birmingham, London and Birmingham, and Gloucester Railways, Her Majesty's route lay through the town of Droitwich, and the villages of Omberley, Holt, and Little Witley.' [61]

Conclusion

It cannot be said for certain that the Queen Dowager used the same carriage through this period but we do have sufficient detail to establish the design of the first carriage.

[57] THE QUEEN DOWAGER., p.9 New Court Gazette - Saturday 12 August 1843
[58] ARRIVAL OF THE QUEEN DOWAGER, p.6 English Chronicle and Whitehall Evening Post - Thursday 30 November 1843
[59] ARRIVAL OF THE QUEEN DOWAGER, p.4 Cambridge Chronicle and Journal - Saturday 02 December 1843
[60] London Evening Standard - Wednesday 27 March 1844
[61] New Court Gazette - Saturday 14 September 1844