

# EASTGATE STATION R.I.P.

REV. W. AWDRY

In view of the closure of Eastgate Station on Dec.1st 1975 we hope the following very brief account of its story will be of topical interest.

"The Citizen" of April 13th 1896 reported the closure of the Old Midland Station and the opening of the new one, known since Nationalisation as Eastgate.

"The last train to make use of the old metals on the Barton Street curve on Sunday 12th April" they wrote, "was the 5.00 a.m. Scotch Express. This was the signal for the deflection of the lines to provide a connection to the New Station; and the departure of the 7.40a.m. train for Birmingham, was the signal for the closing of the Old Station for traffic purposes."

"The departure of the 8.40a.m. train for Bristol saw the opening of the New Station for all passenger purposes."

"The works involved in the change over were considerable, and included the shifting of the old signalbox, deflection of rails, and the removal of everything from the Old Station to the New.....This was watched by a large concourse of spectators, and .....took place in the early morning."

"The entire cost of the New Station ..... was just about £100,000."

"The Gloucester Journal" of 18th April gave further particulars. They pointed out the advantages of the New Station in that for the first time all trains would be able to pass directly through Gloucester without reversal, and that the New Station was capable of dealing with four trains at once, a feat impossible under the cramped conditions of the Old. This, they went on would enable Express trains to be divided or amalgamated at Gloucester instead of at Cheltenham. (Evidently it is no new thing to have to change at Cheltenham for Gloucester! W.A.) The lines at the Old Station were to be used as much needed carriage sidings.

"The Journal" went on to criticise "the narrowness of the general approach to the station", and regretted that the clocktower on the original drawings had not been built. Work had begun on site in January 1895. This work included the demolition of the old engine shed on the site of which the New Station was built. A hundred outside labourers were employed in addition to the company's men. No lives were

lost during the entire operation, and no accident occurred.

The frontage to Station Road was 147 ft, built of red pressed brick with terra-cotta facings. It had a roof level balustrade embellished with A.R. shields. The platform buildings were of red pressed brick with Bisley stone dressings. Three through platforms and one bay were provided. The through platforms were between 700 and 800 ft long.

Much of the work remained unfinished at the time of opening ; but all was complete by the end of the year. Among the unfinished works was the 190 yard long footbridge to the GWR station. Some of the piers rested on the bed of the Twyver Brook, and it had been found difficult to give them a firm foundation on the silt. Three of the six spans were of 130ft and weighed some 26 tons each.

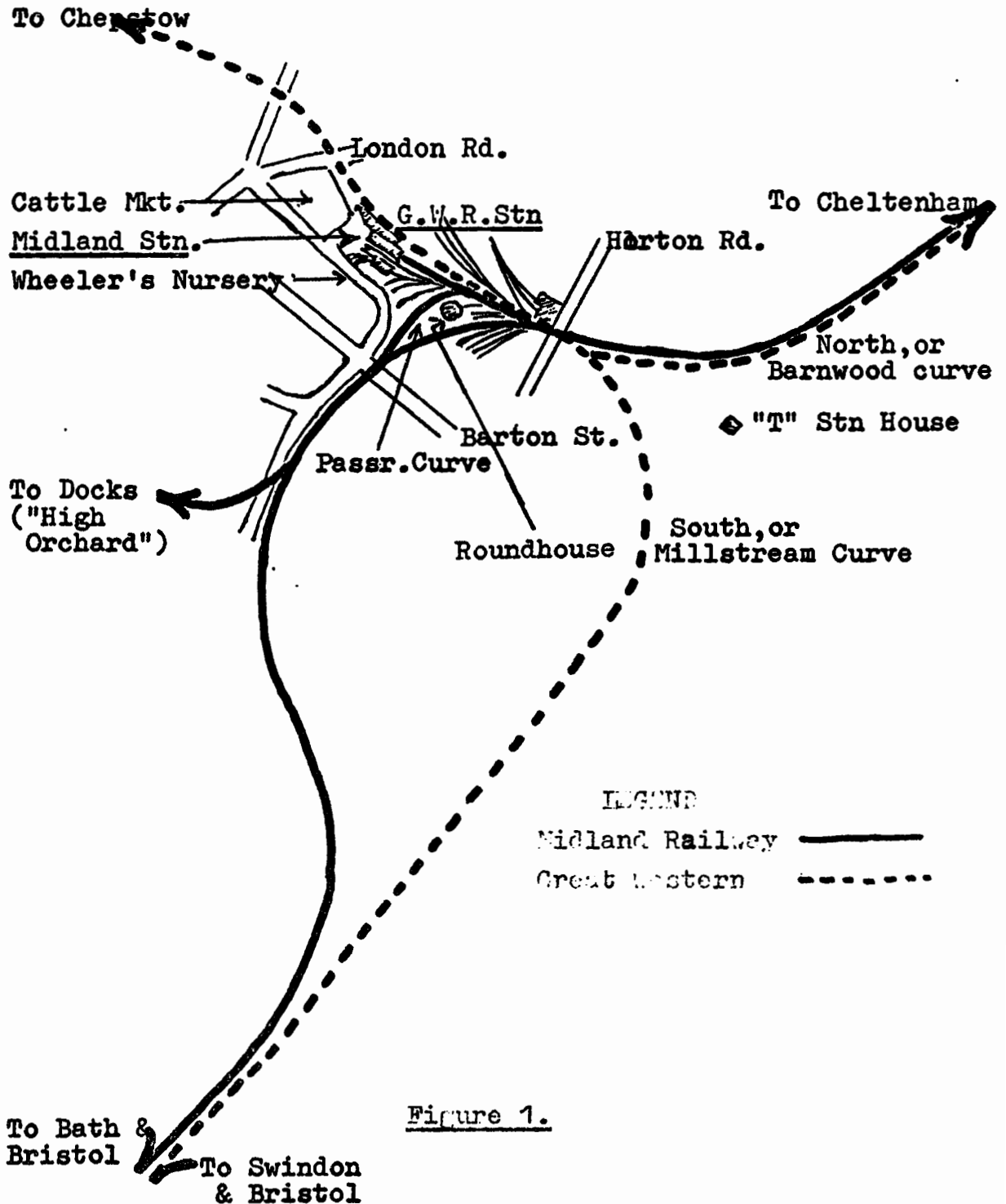
"The Stroud News and Journal" of April 17th said that "pending the completion of the bridge between the GWR and the New Midland stations ..... passengers will be conveyed between them by 'bus.'"

"The Gloucester Journal" gives the names of those responsible for the work. Mr G. Trubshaw was the Architect; Mr J.A. McDonald, the Engineer; Mr T. Wright, Clerk of the Works; and the Contractors were Messrs. J. Walker & Sons, of Wirksworth, Derby.

Eastgate Station was built to enable the Midland to compete effectively with the GWR for the north/south Bristol and west of England traffic. The opening of the Severn Tunnel in 1886, had put the GWR "one jump" ahead, and it is noticeable from photographs of that period in our collection, that from 1884 onwards the Midland were upgrading their Birmingham/Bristol line to enable it to take heavier and larger rolling stock. But the weakness in their route was Gloucester.

The first diagram shows the layout in 1881, and is drawn from an official Midland map of that date. Note the cramped terminal station site hemmed in on the west by the Cattle Market; and on the east by the junction for the "Passenger Curve". Through trains calling at Gloucester had to reverse in and out of the station - a time wasting operation. The platforms had been extended as far as possible, but they were still too short for the normal length of trains of the period. These, in consequence, had to be divided at Cheltenham to sort out the Gloucester traffic. The Passenger Curve too, had become a hindrance. Laid down in 1854 together with the Tuffley Loop, it had at last enabled the Midland to run standard gauge to Bristol; but its curvature was sharp, and though it had given little trouble to the small coaches and 6 wheeled engines of the 50's and 60's, it was quite another matter for the bogie coaches and eight wheeled engines of the 80's and 90's. A severe speed restriction had had to be imposed.

The second diagram, drawn from a map of 1914, shows how the situation was eased. The Midland pulled down their "Roundhouse"



replacing it with a locomotive Shed at Barnwood. A new "Passenger Curve" was then laid on the site of the old shed, and a through station built on the curve to replace the former terminus.

Eastgate Station was essential in the 1890's to enable the Midland to deal effectively with traffic then offering, but it did little to ease congestion at Tramway Junction where Midland north/south traffic crossed that of the GWR

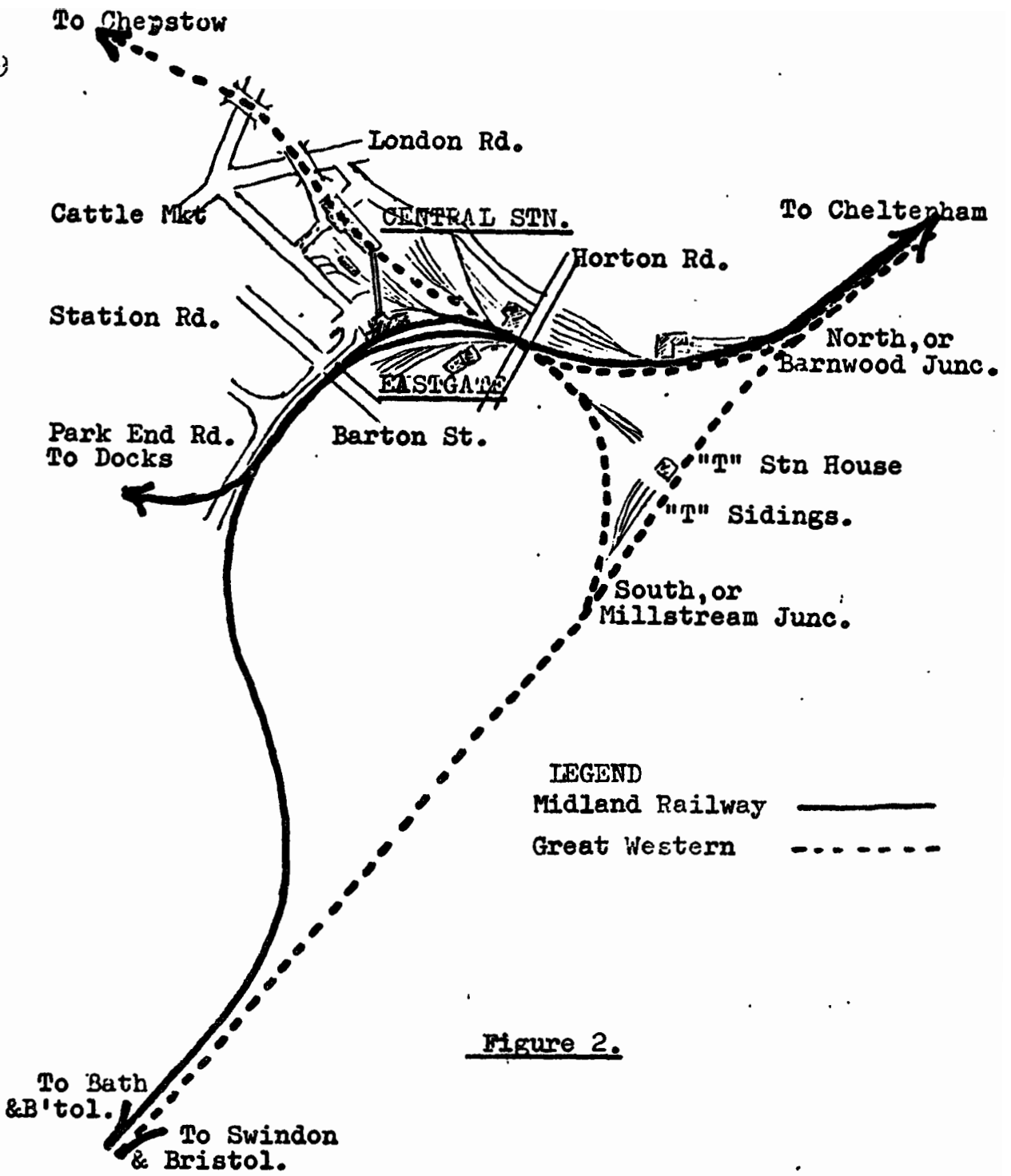


Figure 2.

from west, northeast, and south.

It is interesting to reflect that when Daniel Trinder, engineer to the Gloucester and Cheltenham Railroad (hereinafter called the Tramway), decided in 1808 to cross Horton Road at that particular spot, he little knew that he had already selected the site for a bottleneck which has bedevilled railway operation at Gloucester ever since. When in 1839/40 the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway arrived (Diagram 3.), Captain W.S. Moorsom their engineer, naturally chose for the sake of

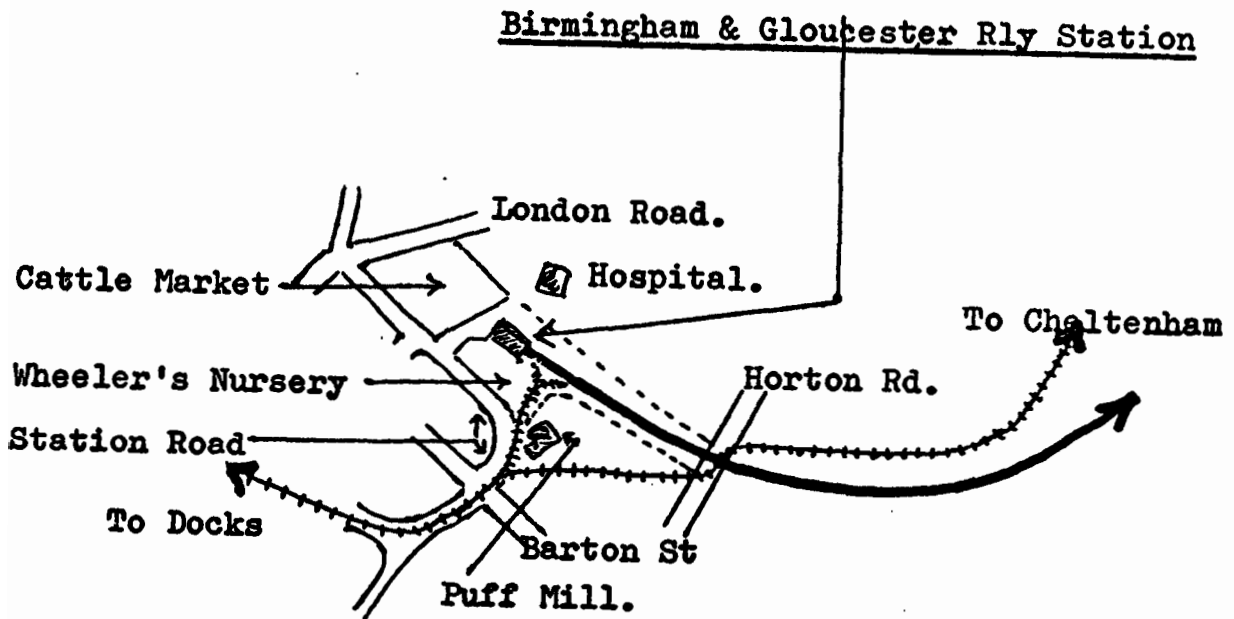


Figure 3.(1843)

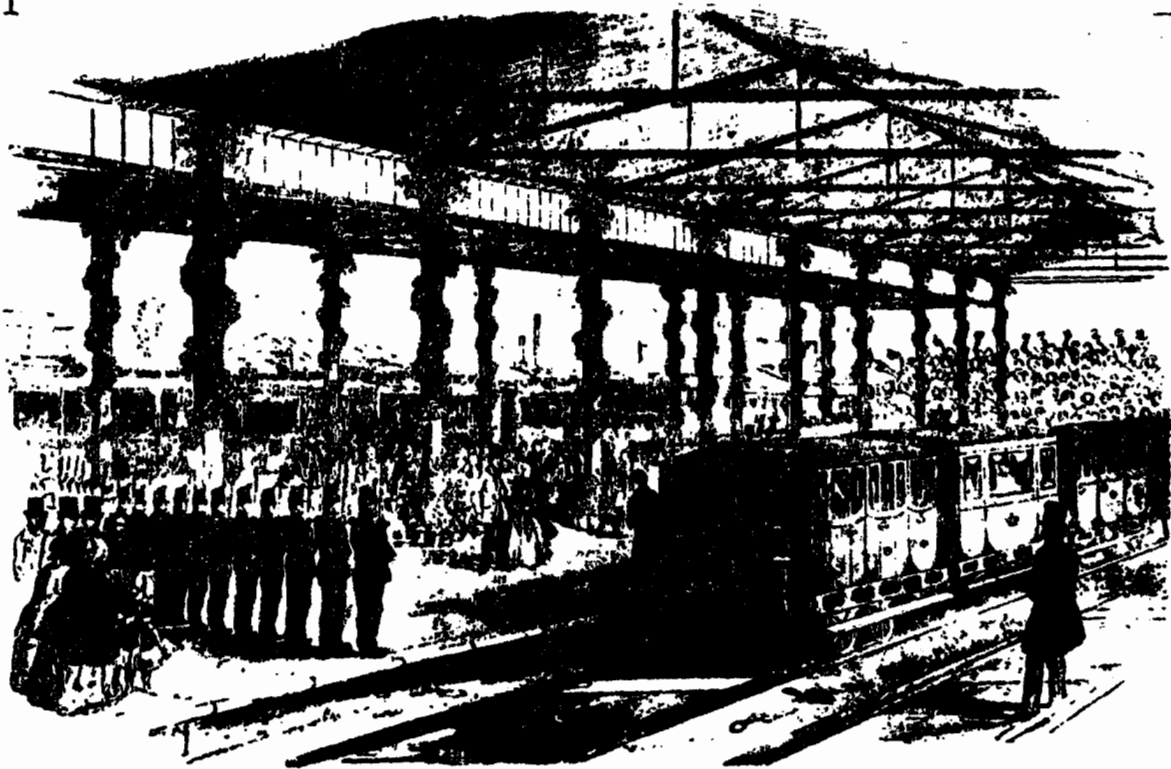
**LEGEND. Birmingham & Gloucester Railway**

**Cheltenham & Gloucester Railway**



economy, to cross Tramway and road at the same place. He took his line to a station east of the Cattle Market, and just within the city boundary. The "Birmingham's" station was a modest affair with Offices on the west and a train-shed covering four tracks and two platforms. On the north side were engine sheds, and on the south a goods transshipment shed with a plateway spur linking it to the Tramway in Station Road, thus enabling freight to be carried to and from the Docks.

In 1844 the Bristol and Gloucester Railway arrived. Coming from the south one would expect them to site their station on the south side of the "Birmingham's"; but no, not a bit of it. I.K. Brunel was their engineer, and he had his eyes on South Wales. He really wanted to cross the Severn lower down at Hock Crib, but in view of expected opposition to this plan, he was prepared to settle for a crossing at Over. Accordingly the "Bristol" crossed the road, the Tramway, and the "Birmingham" on the level at Tramway crossing. It then lumbered on to settle down at a station on the north side of the "Birmingham" (Diagram 4). The problems created were many, but break of Gauge was outstanding. The main traffic flow was Birmingham/Bristol, and every passenger, every item of freight had to be transferred at Gloucester from vehicles of one gauge to another.



The Break of Gauge at Gloucester. Queen Victoria changes trains. Ill. London News. Oct. 6th 1849.

The freight problem was worst, since the facilities provided for the "Bristol" were hopelessly inadequate. Both the "Birmingham" and the "Bristol" found the problems more than they could solve. They joined forces in flirting with the GWR in hopes of a take-over bid; but in January 1845 the Midland made a better offer and scooped them up from under the GWR's nose! The Midland built extensive dual gauge transfer sheds in Wheeler's Nursery to beat the Break of Gauge, and 'Traders' complaints gradually died down. The real answer however, was "standard gauge to Bristol", but since the "Bristol" had reached Gloucester by running powers over the GWR from Standish, and had agreed with the GWR to stay broad gauge for 10 years, nothing could be done till 1854 when the Tuffley Loop and the Passenger Curve were laid (Diagram 1.). This enabled the Midland to run through to Bristol on the standard gauge, and thus no longer to be dependent for way-leave on the GWR's rather grudging arrangements. The 1854 arrangement, though adequate in the 1850's and 60's, could not meet traffic requirements of the 1890's and so it had to go.

The same is true in reverse, of Eastgate in the 1970's, and it is interesting to note that BR (WR) are cutting facilities back to what was, in effect, Brunel's basic plan. Diagram 5 shows the layout. Reversals will be necessary for all trains except those to and from Wales, though inevitably some north/south expresses will use the loop. Once again therefore we shall be back to the situation in the 1880's

## Midland Railway Stations

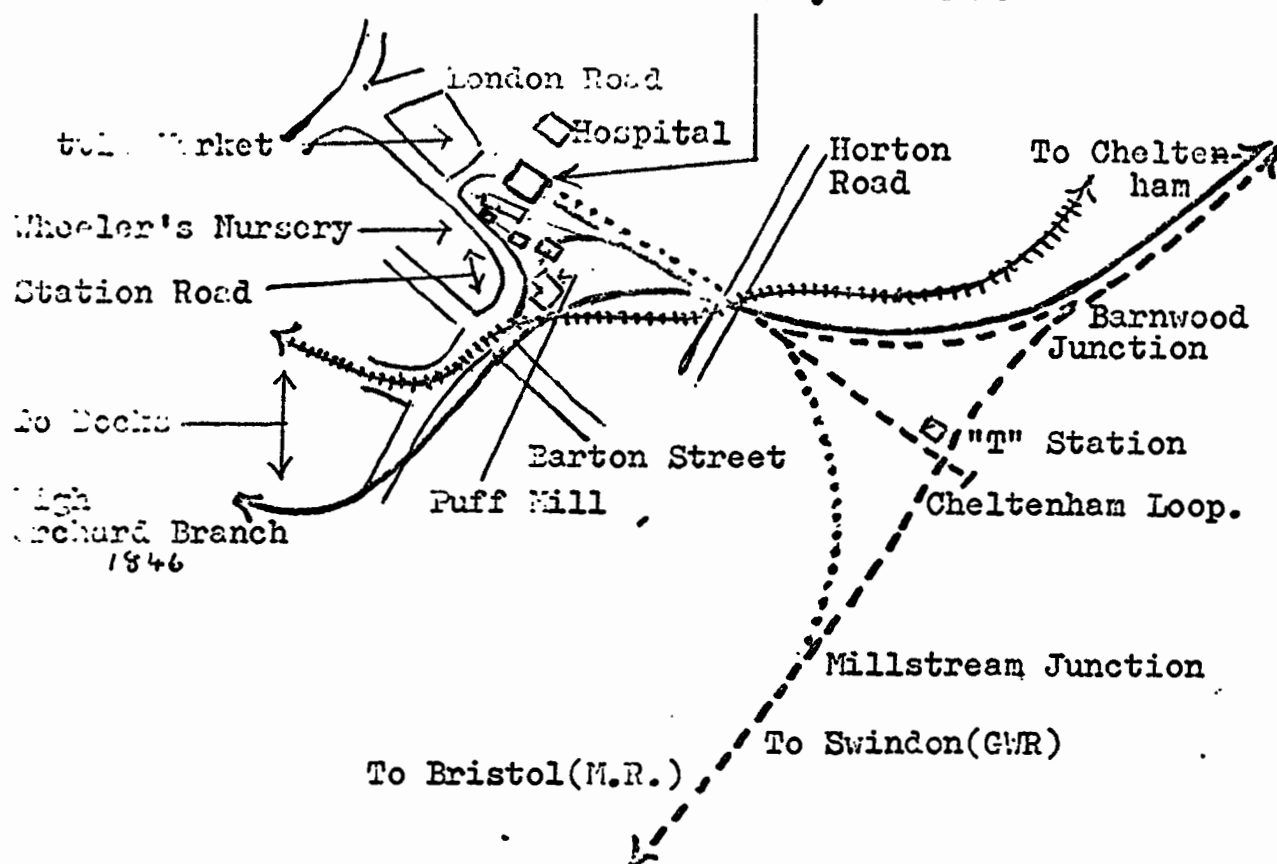


Figure 4. (1847)

LEGEND. Midland.  
 Standard Gauge — "Birmingham"  
 Broad Gauge ..... "Bristol"  
 Cheltenham & Gloucester +++++  
 Great Western - - - - -

When Cheltenham was the Junction for Gloucester. Time only will show if the hoped for economies of £49,000 a year will actually be realised through the closure of Eastgate, and the elimination of four out of the five level crossings. We personally are wondering how one double length platform at "Central" without benefit of a diamond crossing can possibly be adequate for the traffic offering from all directions. It will be interesting too, to see what railway land is disposed of and what retained.

Eastgate's remains will probably be buried under bricks and mortar, doubtless to be disinterred by Industrial Archaeologists in some future age. Meanwhile we hope it will be remembered not only as a pleasant station of distinctly individual character, but also for those intriguing quirks of previous railway history which led to its erection some 79 years ago.

Farewell Eastgate. R.I.P.

W. Awdry  
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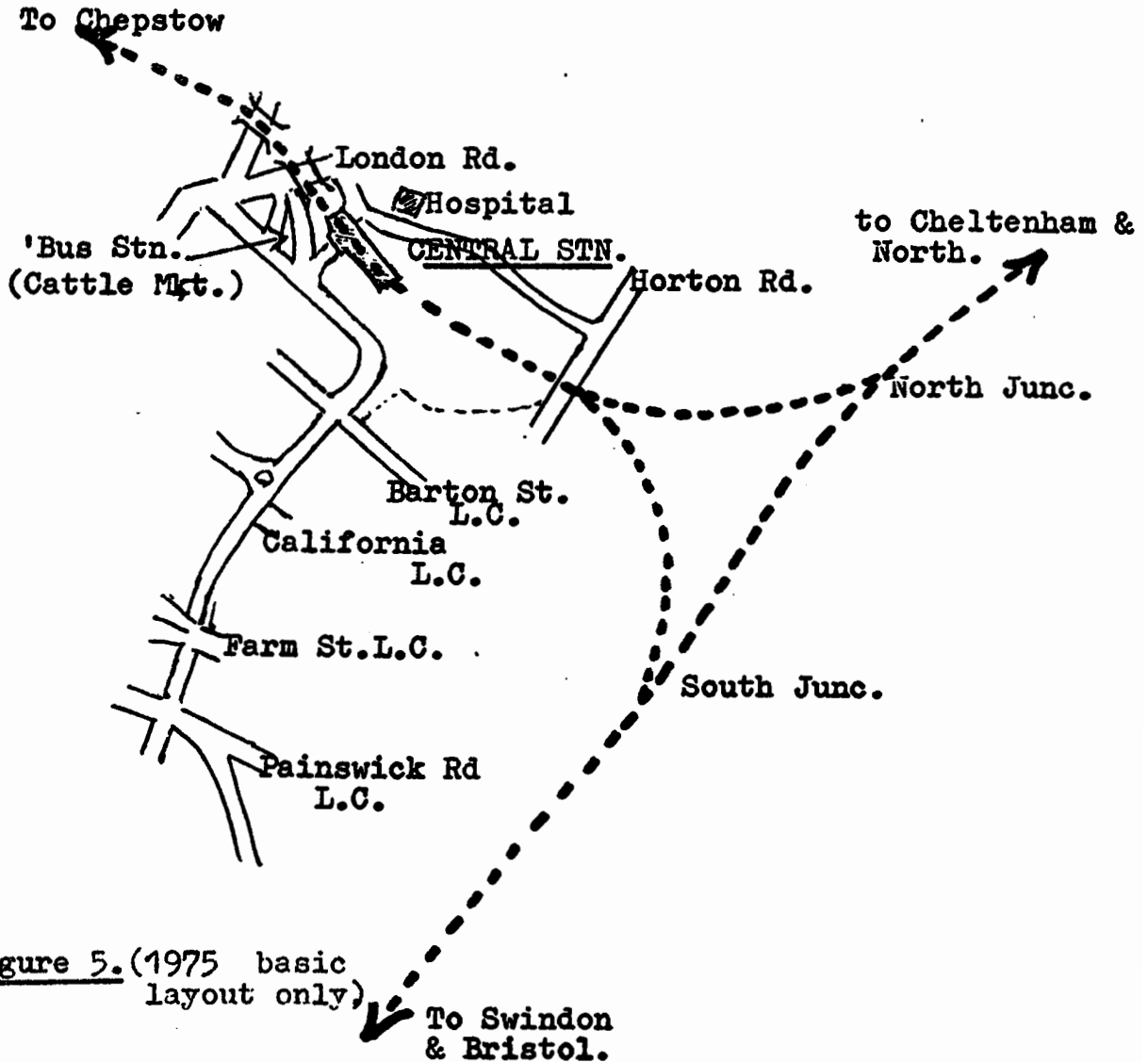


Figure 5. (1975 basic layout only)

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Thanks are due to the following gentlemen for permission to study and copy Gloucester station plans of various dates in their possession.

R.A. Pullan Esq. City Engineer, Glos. (1851)

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G. Cottell Esq. Sutton Coldfield. (1839, 1843, 1852, 1881, and 1914)