

Great Malvern Station Caps, Sept 1970 referring to Centenary 1961.

Great Malvern Station on the occasion of colours caps being designed,

Sept 1970

(transcript of notebook of Miss Catherine Moody)

The design for the colour scheme for the capitals of GM station by Miss CM are now on show at MP lib (Malvern public library). The painting of the station has recently been completed from these designs.

There was nothing anaemic about the colour used in the 19C. Red plush and rich colouring is characteristic of the Victorian interior. Outside the fairground flourished with gaily painted roundabouts and fruity colour is typical of the lithographic printing that embellished the Christmas cards and scrap books of the Victorian era. It was with this in mind that research for the finding of the original colours of the capitals of the columns of GM sta was carried out.

Early this year Miss CM was asked by Mr J E Tyrer, District Civil Engineer of BR Western Region, if she could advise on finding the original colour scheme. Miss M had already gone some way into this subject when doing some research on the centenary of GM station in 1961.

Mr Coombs the station master and his predecessor both recalled that bright colours such as green and scarlet and gold predominated.

To make certain of this Miss M treated it as an archaeological problem and dug or rather filed down the layers of paint on several samples and came to the first layers which were revealed to be bright green, scarlet, gold and blue and plum colour.

In order to make satisfactory designs for the painters to work from in repainting the caps in these colours she made detailed drawings of each of the capitals. There are 12 different arrangements of foliage and fruit, buds and flowers. The caps are gradually deteriorating so that some are almost denuded. However there are enough complete parts for drawings and this is a useful record for the BR railway archives and is more complete than photographs would now be. These drawings were then coloured and key numbers marked on them so that the water colours could be related to the paint used on the station.

Why was Malvern quite such a richly embellished station?

One needs to look back to the years preceding the arrival of the railway. Q Victoria as a child had visited Malvern and her richer subjects followed her here not only as visitors but as residents. Many important houses were built. The water cure was established; doctors, hotel keepers, shop keepers and the numbers of schools were anxious that travel to Malvern should be facilitated. The trickle of visitors could become a stream as soon as the railway arrived. A stream, - but not a flood of common

people; that would not do. The common people it was arranged would alight at Malvern Link and a hotel was provided for them there. (It became the Link school and has recently been demolished)

It is no coincidence that Dr Gulley was one of the members of the Midland railway Board. He must have determined that the station would be worthy of the class of people he would expect to come as patients.

An architect was instructed who was not a regular railway architect but one who had established himself in Malvern. He was E W Elmslie. He was an imaginative man and was fortunate in being able to design the station, the bridge, the station approach and the large Imperial hotel now the MGC. (Malvern St James girls' school). He builds walls and planted shrubberies so that even now with the new needs of motor traffic, the trim and cultured surroundings of the sta are unchanged.

Malvern had its Priory Church when the station was built so Gothic was chosen as the style but of course the station belongs to the machine age and it is interesting to find contrasts as well as similarities between true and mock gothic. Where the medieval mason would have carved columns of Purbeck marble, Elmslie inserted iron pipes. Where the medieval column was topped with a carved stone capital, Malvern capitals are thickly clustered with cast metal. Elegantly and efficiently, they convey rainwater to the drainage system under the line.

These capitals are now in their original colours except perhaps that they lack gilding which they may formerly have had but this was omitted because, when the caps are incomplete, gilding might emphasise this deterioration rather than enhance it. In the public library is the set of coloured drawings showing not only the colour scheme but also the designs of foliage in a complete form to record the ingenuity of the original designer and the unknown craftsmen who build the station in 1861.