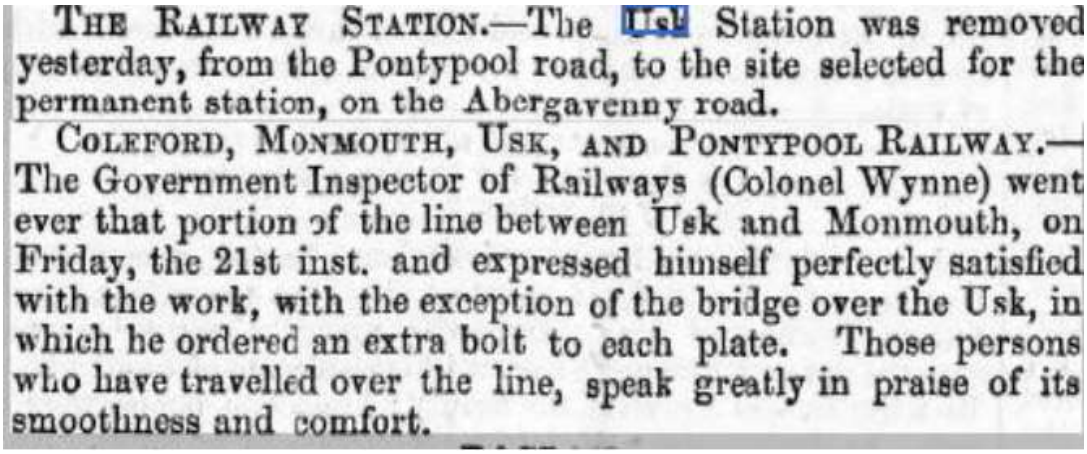
WHEN DID USK TO MONMOUTH OPEN FOR PASSENGERS?

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In considering the opening of the extension from Usk to Monmouth, it might be opportune to recall that the original station at Usk (opened 2 June 1856 – *Monmouthshire Merlin* 7 Jun 1856) – west of the river – had been downgraded to the goods yard and a new passenger station opened from 28 Aug 1857, as reported in *Usk Observer* 29 Aug 1857:

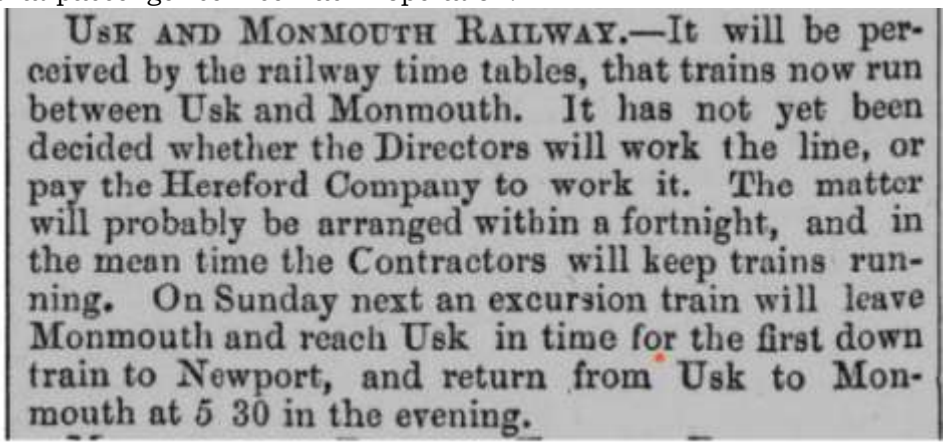


THE RAILWAY STATION.—The Usk Station was removed yesterday, from the Pontypool road, to the site selected for the permanent station, on the Abergavenny road.

COLEFORD, MONMOUTH, USK, AND PONTYPOOL RAILWAY.—The Government Inspector of Railways (Colonel Wynne) went over that portion of the line between Usk and Monmouth, on Friday, the 21st inst. and expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the work, with the exception of the bridge over the Usk, in which he ordered an extra bolt to each plate. Those persons who have travelled over the line, speak greatly in praise of its smoothness and comfort.

The new station was on the east side of the river.

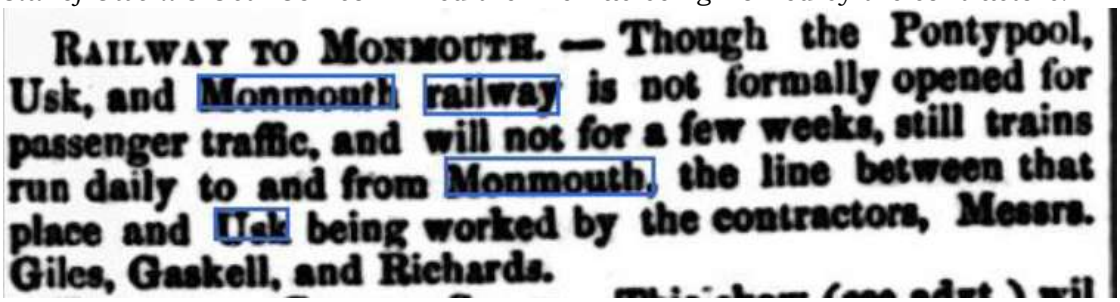
The opening of the line on to Monmouth is less straightforward. Both *Monmouthshire Beacon* and *Monmouthshire Merlin* of 4 Apr 1857 reported that the judiciary had arrived or the Assizes by train in Monmouth on **Sat 28 March 1857**, arriving at a 'temporary platform'. For the next Assizes, another train ran (to the temporary platform) on **Sat 1 Aug 1857**; reporting that event, *Star of Gwent* 8 Aug 1857 added that 'On the subsequent days on which the assizes were held trains were run on the line from Usk for the use of the public.' A letter - dated 10 Sep 1857 - in the *Monmouthshire Beacon* of 12 Sep says: 'Now that railway communication is about to be partially opened to [Monmouth]…' implying that it hadn't yet started but was imminent. *Usk Observer* of 12 and 19 Sep carries a timetable for the line – including stations to Monmouth – but with no timings east of Usk, whereas timings over that section are included in the issue of 26 Sep (no indication given of start date). An advert in *Hereford Times* 12 Sep, for Monmouth Races to be held on 24 and 25 Sep stated '…The Railway is open…to Monmouth from Hereford…'. *Monmouthshire Beacon* 19 Sep in a piece about the forthcoming races said: '…we have no doubt but what the Railway will have its full share of patronages, and the to-and-from excursions [will] be well filled.' And *Star of Gwent* 3 Oct confirmed that a special train had run from Newport, picking up 'considerable accessions' en route. *Usk Observer* (Sat) 26 Sep, carried not only that timetable for the line but also this as first item of **Local Intelligence**, a clear indication that passenger service was in operation:



USK AND MONMOUTH RAILWAY.—It will be perceived by the railway time tables, that trains now run between Usk and Monmouth. It has not yet been decided whether the Directors will work the line, or pay the Hereford Company to work it. The matter will probably be arranged within a fortnight, and in the mean time the Contractors will keep trains running. On Sunday next an excursion train will leave Monmouth and reach Usk in time for the first down train to Newport, and return from Usk to Monmouth at 5 30 in the evening.

Note reference to an excursion on the following day (Sun 27 Sep).

Star of Gwent 3 Oct 1857 confirmed the line was being worked by the contractors:



RAILWAY TO MONMOUTH. — Though the Pontypool, Usk, and Monmouth railway is not formally opened for passenger traffic, and will not for a few weeks, still trains run daily to and from Monmouth, the line between that place and Usk being worked by the contractors, Messrs. Giles, Gaskell, and Richards.

And *Usk Observer* a week later also said line had been worked by contractors for past fortnight but added that the directors would take over on Monday (12 Oct). That paper (and *Hereford Journal* 12 Oct) seems to be the source for 12 Oct 1857 usually being given for **opening**. Indeed, that was the date given in the company's half-yearly report in Sep 1858 (there was no mention in the half-yearly report in Feb 1858) but the report seems only to have related to when the company actually took over operation from the contractors.

All in all, one has to conclude that:

• special trains for the judiciary started 28 Mar 1857
• public excursion services started during the week of 2 Aug 1857
• a regular passenger service to Monmouth started from about 21 Sep 1857 (had there been no trains for the Races, we might have heard about that from the press, whereas the fourth estate confirms trains did indeed run on 24 and 25 Sep 1857)
All the above were run by the contractors on their own account.

• the Coleford, Monmouth, Usk & Pontypool company itself became responsible for passenger operation from 12 Oct 1857.

The Monmouth station acquired the suffix 'Troy' with the appearance of the May Hill station in 1873.

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