

The Local Impact of the Railway

Who would like to drink milk that is ten days old? Milk that has not been in a fridge? Two hundred years ago most people lived in the countryside so their milk was fresh. But many people started to find well paid jobs in towns. Factories were being built that could make products faster. How would all those people get fresh milk, meat and vegetables? The answer was the railway.

Railways could carry food a lot faster than a horse and cart. In fact a train might have 80 carts on the back of one engine. Milk from a cow could reach a town just a few hours later. This was a revolution in how people lived. You didn't have to live near where your food was made. Towns grew bigger and farms did as well.

Moving things quickly was revolutionary for other things too. Hundreds of years ago an army would have to march to a battlefield. A railway could carry a whole army hundreds of miles in one day. Travelling from one city to another became a lot quicker. Messages travelled faster. You could post a letter and get a reply within a week from someone hundreds of miles away. If you made a product you could get it to your customers much faster and sell more. Towns grew fast, especially the ones on a railway line.

Middlesbrough is a good example. When the railway line was first connected there, it ended at coal staiths. These were wooden frames to allow coal to be tipped straight into ships. People soon realised that they needed a lot more staiths because of the huge amount of coal arriving on the railway. The town was also growing with other trades so they built a new dock for lots of boats. They had to make the dock bigger every few years as trade got busier and busier.

There was a discovery of ironstone near to Middlesbrough in 1850. The mine became the largest in the World. With ironstone and coal, local industry could make iron and steel. Iron and steel were really valuable for making bridges, new railways, boats and buildings. It was a very valuable product. The port and town at Middlesbrough grew even larger.

But it wasn't all about work. Hundreds of years ago the idea of a holiday or day off work was very unusual. The railways allowed people to travel much more easily and cheaply than ever before. Henry Pease wanted to build a seaside resort that people could enjoy. He found a small fishing village and helped build new buildings, hotels and a railway station. It was called Saltburn. The train line from Middlesbrough was extended to Redcar and Saltburn. People from towns and the countryside could have a day at the beach for the first time ever.

- 1) Why did people move from the countryside to the towns?
- 2) How many carts could a steam engine pull?
- 3) What was the name of the frame that tipped coal into ships at Middlesbrough?
- 4) Why did Middlesbrough build a big dock?
- 5) What was discovered near Middlesbrough in 1850?
- 6) What can you make out of steel?
- 7) Who designed and built Saltburn as a holiday resort?

