

What the impact of the first passenger railway?

1825 was an important year in history. In the September, the world's first steam powered passenger railway was born. It could carry passengers and goods but its main cargo was coal. Coal was really important all around Britain and Europe to power machines, heat homes and cook food. Durham had a lot of coal mines and the railway allowed coal to move quickly to the port at Stockton on the River Tees. That made people lots of money. They could sell more coal and much faster than before. The towns that were connected by the first railway became much richer because goods could pass through them faster. The technology of the railways also created new jobs. The local towns, like Middlesbrough, grew quickly. It was just a few farms before the railway came.

The railway grew and changed over time. The engines became more reliable and also more powerful. New types of carriage were invented for the passengers to ride in. Lots of other places also wanted railways and they started to appear all over Britain, Europe and the World.

The railways also created other inventions that we use today. How do you start the fire in a steam engine on a cold winter's day? The first engine's boiler was lit by a magnifying glass using the sun. This was not much use if it was cloudy or dark! John Walker, a chemist in Stockton saw the problem and invented matches. We now use matches for lots of different reasons but they were invented to start steam engines.

Even something as simple as 'time' was affected by the railways. Days change in length at different times of the year and also how far North and South you go. Hundreds of years ago it didn't really matter. You couldn't move from place to another very quickly in a day so you were always in the same time zone. The railways changed that. You could travel hundreds of miles in a day. Timetables didn't make sense in different places. The people who ran the railways decided to make London the main time zone and everywhere else had to work out the time from there. For the first time, it was the same time everywhere in Britain, no matter where you lived.

- 1) In what year did the first steam powered passenger railway run?
- 2) What did the first railway mainly carry from Durham to Stockton?
- 3) Which town grew from just few farms before the railway came?
- 4) What did they use to light the boiler for the first steam engine?
- 5) What job did John Walker do?
- 6) Which city became the centre for time measurement in Britain?

