

Why were railways invented?

Up until the 1700s most people lived in small towns or villages. There were a few larger cities in the UK such as London but even that was smaller than an average sized modern town of today. People rarely left the area that they were born in. Transport from town to town was done on foot for most people. Roads were often nothing more than mud tracks. People ate local produce and wore clothes made locally.

So what changed?

Technology.

The Industrial Revolution doesn't have an exact start date. It was a time when people began to realise that machines could be invented to produce more things to sell. The machines could make things much faster than people could on their own. Large factories started to be built all over the country as new machines were invented. Factories made everything from fabric to pottery but they needed lots of workers to keep them running. People started to move to towns to make better money in the factories than they could do in the countryside. This created a problem. People need things to keep them alive; food and water. They also need fuel to heat their homes and cook their food. Water wasn't such a problem in Britain with most towns having a river nearby. Food however was a big problem. Food was produced in the countryside but there were no fridges to keep it cool and no trucks to get it to the towns quickly before it went off. The roads were still pretty poor.

Most people used coal as fuel and that didn't go off. However, it was heavy to carry and dug up in places that were not usually near the towns where it was needed. It was hard to get large amounts of it to places where it was needed quickly. People needed it in their homes but the ever growing factories also needed it to power the machines. In a growing town with more and more people this was a problem.

The solution was something that could move lots of food and coal much quicker than a horse and cart. What was the solution?

- 1) Where did most people live up until the 1700s?
- 2) How did people travel from town to town?
- 3) Why did people invent machines in factories?
- 4) What sort of things did factories make?
- 5) What did people need to stay alive?
- 6) Why was it difficult to get lots of coal to the towns?

