

the stables along Colton Road, these now being commercial properties.

Owing to public demand the line to Walsall has reopened to passengers. On the main line trains speed by at 125 m.p.h. In just over 150 years times have certainly changed with increased pressure on our road network and successive governments working hard to encourage people and goods back onto public transport. One wonders what Trent Valley Station at Colton will look like in 2047.

Many Colton residents have found employment both at Trent Valley Station and on the trains themselves ever since the railway has come to Colton. The Census Records of the following 100 years portray the fact. Some of these workers can be seen in this picture taken at the turn of the 19th/20th Century.



Railway workers and their families.

References

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Pictures

Photos Dorothy and David Bradbury. Colton History Society collection.

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The Railway in Colton

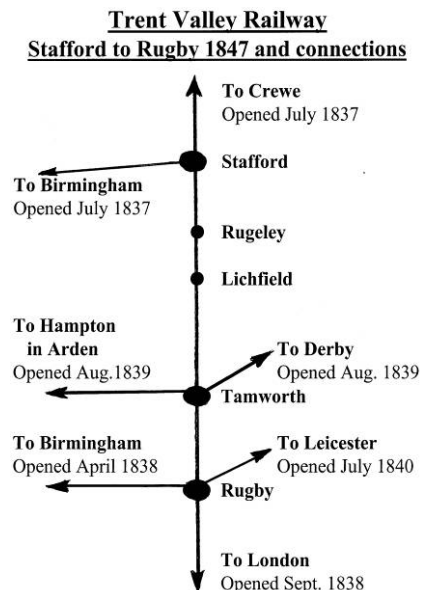
Today travel over long distances is commonplace but during pre-Victorian times very few people ever left the area in which they were born. Therefore the coming of the steam engine transformed many communities offering them both opportunities to travel and new forms of employment. This certainly was the case in Colton.



Trent Valley Circa 1950.

In the spring of 1846 the landscape of the Trent Valley was changing. For centuries the main activity of the valley had been agriculture but now the railway to London was under construction. Hundreds of labourers using picks and shovels were at work building a low embankment across the western edge

of Bellamour Park, Colton, and onwards towards the site of the railway station. The hillside close by Colton Mill Farm would reverberate from explosions of black powder as the sandstone was blasted away. This stone would be fashioned by masons to face the locally made bricks used in building the stations and bridges. Much physical labour was used by the men who worked from dawn until dusk.



The original planned railway of 1841, the Stafford to Rugby Railway, was rejected by Parliament, there had been much opposition from landowners. Sir Charles Wolseley of Wolseley Hall was a noted objector. However in 1845 the Trent Valley Railway Act passed through Parliament successfully. The new company was given powers to raise £1,250,000 in £20 shares and £416,666 in loans for operating purposes. On completion the line would be leased to the London and Birmingham, Grand Junction and Manchester and Birmingham Railways. This became known as "The Premier Line" and took over the Trent Valley Railway when the line opened in 1847.

Sir Robert Peel M.P. for Tamworth performed the first sod cutting at Tamworth on 30th November 1845 and the line was officially opened on 26th June 1847. That day saw great activity at Tamworth. A special train left London Euston conveying company directors, railway officials and public figures. Other trains journeyed there from Birmingham and Derby (that line had operated since 1839) and another train left Stafford calling at the stations along the line to pick up local dignitaries.

There is no record of the numbers attending. As this latter train proc-



Rugeley Trent Valley Station at Colton circa 1895.

ceeded towards Tamworth, it is recorded that at every station brass bands and choirs attended and flags were flown. It can be assumed that James Oldham of Bellamour Hall, whose land the railway company had purchased, attended this gathering.

After the opening ceremony 1,300 people gathered for a feast. The guests included George Stephenson, his son Robert and Robert's assistant engineer George Bidden.

The chief engineer of the railway Thomas Brassey was later to be employed by Edward Charles Blount (born at Bellamour Hall 1805) in the construction of railways in France. Thomas Brassey was a strong disciplinarian who was much loved by his employees. It is of interest to note that when he was constructing railways, there was none of the violence associated with the

railway labourers working for other engineers.

The Rugeley to Cannock line opened on 7th November 1859 whereby people from Colton could travel to Walsall and Birmingham directly. Rugeley Town Station on that line was not built until 1870 and at that time the station in Colton Parish became known in the timetable as Rugeley Trent Valley. The station signs began to portray this on the 15th April 1917. By 1890 the increase in traffic called for a four-track system. Also included in these plans were improved parcel and goods facilities. A new Station Master's house and the row of cottages known as "Fog Cottages" were built and still exist today. "Fog Cottages" earned their nickname from the bells being installed to call out to the men to place detonators on the line in foggy conditions to help the train drivers.



Fog Cottages.

This four-track system between Colwich and Armitage opened on the 31st July 1902.

During the first half of the twentieth century this station was a hive of activity and employed many people. Milk from local farms left the goods yard by train in great quantities. Animals were conveyed to and from all parts of the country. World War I saw many thousands of men arrive at and depart from the war training camps on Cannock Chase.

During World War II Royal Air Force personnel changed trains on their journey from the Brindley Heath Camp otherwise known as R.A.F. Hednesford.

Coal for Rugeley Gas Co. arrived in trucks before being conveyed by lorry to the gasworks. This was needed because the coal mined on Cannock Chase was not a gas producing coal.

Dr. Beeching's Report in the 1960's proposed closing the Trent Valley Station completely but a reduced Stafford to Rugby service was retained. However on the 18th January 1965 the last passenger train travelled to Walsall and goods traffic soon ceased too. In October 1972 the main station buildings were demolished and the station became an unstaffed halt. The goods shed remains and also