

THE STOCKTON & DARLINGTON RAILWAY

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Exploring the history of their locality helps students develop a sense of identity and place in the world. Delving into the past can reveal fascinating stories of the people and events that shaped their area and their own lives, fostering pride in their roots and a sense of what they can achieve. The birth of the railways is just one of the many remarkable histories from the Tees Valley.

Today we take it for granted that we can board a train and travel anywhere in the country, but in the early 1800s, inland transport was limited to horse drawn carriages and canal boats. Rail travel as we know it today began in Darlington, in 1825, where Edward Pease founded the now famous Stockton & Darlington Railway. This was the first public railway in the world.

Edward originally intended the Railway to transport coal from the collieries near Darlington to the port on the River Tees at Stockton, and planned for it to be hauled by horses. A brilliant local engineer called George Stephenson convinced him that steam locomotives could pull loads up to 50 times heavier than horses and could travel at faster speeds. Edward appointed George as his company's chief engineer and, together with his son Robert, George designed and built the Stockton & Darlington Railway's first engine: *Locomotion 1*



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Crowds of 40,000 people turned out to witness the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway on 27 September 1825. Driven by George Stephenson himself, *Locomotion 1* not only hauled wagons of coal and flour, but a special carriage for passengers called *Experiment*. The train is thought to have reached speeds of 15 mph. The first steam powered passenger railway was born.

The early days of the Stockton & Darlington Railway were not without difficulty. The locomotives were not always reliable and *Locomotion 1*'s driver was killed in 1828, when its boiler exploded. Despite setbacks, the Company ensured the Railway succeeded, reducing the cost of transporting coal, transporting thousands of people and turning a profit for its owners and investors. The line was extended to Middlesbrough in 1830 and to Redcar in 1845.

Not everyone welcomed the railways. Farmers and landowners protested that they would blight the land, and could frighten the livestock, turning milk sour and stopping hens from laying. Others were concerned that the free movement of the lower classes would threaten the country's very moral fibre!

The success of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, coupled with demand around Britain for improved transport, led to the emergence of a national network of railways. In 1844, the Railway Act ensured all railways included third class carriages and sold cheap tickets. Now people from all classes could travel further than ever before.

The railways transformed Britain and soon began to stretch around the world – much of it built from iron mined and processed in the Tees Valley. Quick, affordable transport led to the development of new industries and towns. Goods could be easily transported and people from all walks of life travelled for work, business and pleasure. The Great Exhibition in London in 1851 attracted thousands of visitors, many of them travelling on special excursion trains and, by the end of the 1800s, rail travel had opened up opportunities for day trips to football matches or out into the country, and to holidays at newly emerging seaside resorts.



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Edward Pease's Stockton & Darlington Railway was pivotal in the development of the Tees Valley as an industrial powerhouse and sparked a transport revolution that transformed the lives and fortunes of the people across the region, the country and the wider world.



Use the **Image gallery** and **Classroom activities** in the resource to explore this history and make links with students' lives today.

Explore these themes further at:

[Head of Steam – Darlington Railway Museum](#)



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