

# Hammerwich Station and Railway network

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On October 6th 1846 it was agreed that the South Staffordshire Railway Company would construct a line between Walsall and Lichfield Trent Valley with extensions between Walsall and Bescot (to allow through running to Birmingham), Lichfield Trent Valley and Wychnor Junction (to connect with the Midland Railway).

Local stations were to be provided at Pelsall, Brownhills, Hammerwich, Lichfield City and Alrewas.

A prominent engineer of the time, John Robison McClean was appointed as the engineer in charge of constructing this Railway, and he was to be paid the sum of £350 for each completed mile of track. March 1st 1849 saw the Railway Inspectorate to the Board of Trade giving authority for the new railway to be used.

The official opening of the line took place on the 9th April 1849, when railway directors and civic dignitaries travelled on a special train, running from Walsall to a reception at Lichfield given by the Mayor and Corporation of the city.

The main pedestrian access to the station from the village of Hammerwich was via a public footpath (known locally as station fields) from Church Lane. Vehicular access (horse & cart in early days) to the station and goods yard was via Station Road.

In its hey-day Hammerwich was a prize winner in the best kept railway station competition, due the hard work and attention by the staff to the garden, fish pond, waiting room and general appearance.

Initially only two passenger services were provided daily, except on Tuesdays when there was an extra train, as this was market day at Walsall (and still is). These services were increased at a later date, including a Sunday morning and evening service to Lichfield (known locally as the Cathedral express). As time went by, regular time-tables were introduced, some with through trains to Birmingham and Wolverhampton via Walsall, and Burton and Derby via Lichfield. Extra services were

provided on Bank holidays (especially to Lichfield on Whit Monday for the Bower celebrations) and summer week-ends. Day and half-day excursions were put on to visit holiday resorts such as Blackpool, Llandudno, Rhys, Scarborough and York. There were also special trains for parties such as Sunday School outings.



Another special train was provided for transporting Racing Pigeons to various destinations both north and south. On arrival at the destination the pigeons would be released, with the time of release being recorded on the basket labels before they were returned to the owners.

A daily goods-train service called at Hammerwich, where a siding was available for receiving and dispatching this type of traffic.

This would be used by local farmers who would bring their daily production of milk (in churns) to be transported to the bigger dairies for the various dairy products to be made.

Local coal merchants would receive coal from collieries; they would bag it and deliver locally. Saint Matthew's Hospital collected their supply with a steam driven lorry.

Local farmers would also use the station for collecting or sending cereals, sugar beet, seeds, machinery.

Another freight siding was provided at Anglesey sidings (off Ogle Hay Road) for the exchange of coal traffic from the Cannock Chase Coalfields via South Staffordshire Railways.

The line through Hammerwich was used twenty four hours a day for freight services, mainly coal and steel between the East and West Midlands until the late 1980's.

Efforts are still active to reopen this route to traffic.