

Transport: Activity 1 - Introducing Victorian Transport **TEACHERS' NOTES**

Learning Objectives

- Gain an overview of the different ways people could travel in early Victorian times
- Understand the rapid development of new forms of transport as new technologies were developed during Victoria's reign

Sources 1-16

These pictures illustrate the various kinds of power used in transport as technology developed throughout the Victorian period:

- muscle-power (the ferry, bath-chair, poles barge, penny-farthing and other bicycles)
- wind (sailing ship and barge)
- horses (coach, gig, wagon, bus, brake, hansom cab, tram)
- steam (boat and train)
- petrol (motor car)

Timeline

- Sailing ships, stage coaches, carts, were all in use long before the 18th century.
- The first bath-chair was developed in 1750 though the name "bath chair" (from Bath spa) was first used in 1823. They were widely used throughout the 19th century and were for hire in spas and seaside resorts.
- Barges were first used on Sussex waterways at the end of the 18th century (the Arun navigation opened in 1787, the Rother navigation in 1794).
- The first successful steamship was developed in America in 1807. Steamships came into wider commercial use in the 1830s-40s.
- The hansom cab was patented in 1834.
- The first steam passenger train was the Liverpool-Manchester Railway in 1830. The railway network developed rapidly in the 1840s and 1850s.
- The first two-decker horse-drawn omnibus appeared in Paris in 1827, the first in London in 1829. They came into more general use in the 1850s-1860s.
- The penny-farthing bicycle was invented in 1870.
- The first steam trams in Sussex came in the mid-1880s.
- The pedal bicycle with chain dates from the mid-1880s.
- The first motor-cars date from the 1880s.

Sources 17 and 18

The red lines on the maps illustrate the rapid expansion of the railway network in the second half of the 19thC. The peak period for railway expansion in Sussex was the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s, when 18 new lines were opened.

The railway provided employment and stimulated the growth of market towns such as Horsham and East Grinstead. On the coast it encouraged the popularity of the seaside resort, resulting in the rapid growth of towns such as Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing.

General facts and figures

- The total population of Sussex doubled from 1841 (300,108) to 1901 (605,202), reflecting the general increase in population throughout the country. This gave rise to the need for public transport that could carry more than a few people at a time, and that covered long distances more quickly than stage-coaches.

- The 1851 census shows that for the first time, more than half of the people in Britain lived in towns and cities, not the countryside. More urban transport was necessary to move people and goods around town, and this transport was mostly horse-powered.

So, although the railways led to a cut in the number of horses used for long distance travel, in 1902, there were 3.5 million working horses in Britain - more than twice as many as in 1850.^{1a}

- In 1851, 502 people in Sussex worked on the railways (not counting construction); in 1901, there were 4,156 - eight times as many.²

- The Wey and Arun Canal carried 23,000 tons of commercial goods in 1839, the highest annual figure. In 1865 the railway line between Guildford and Horsham opened in direct competition with the canal. By 1868 canal traffic had virtually ceased, and in 1871 an Act of Abandonment was passed, closing the canal to commercial traffic.³

- In 1839, there were four horse-drawn coaches a day from Worthing to London and return. The last coach service to London stopped running in October 1845 - one month before the opening of Worthing railway station.

- When Victoria became queen, there were 1,400 miles of railway track in Britain; when she died, there were 20,000 miles of track.^{1b}

^{1a} and ^{1b} P. Hepplewhite, *A Victorian Journey* (History Journeys Series) (Hodder, 2003)

² © Crown copyright 2001 Office for National Statistics www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/bicentenary/pdfs/sussex.pdf

³ The Wey & Arun Canal Trust Website www.weyandarun.co.uk/