

# GO MILTON KEYNES!

## Old Routes through a New City

### The World's First Railway Town

#### The London & Birmingham Railway



Wolverton Viaduct  
August 1837,  
lithograph by John  
Cooke Bourne

In 1838 the London & Birmingham Railway was opened in direct competition with the Grand Junction Canal. Robert Stephenson was the chief engineer on the project and the 112-mile route cost £5.5 million and took 20,000 men five years to build.

The building of the railway had significant changes on the Milton Keynes area. As the distance between London and Birmingham was considered too great for early locomotives to cover in a single haul, a halfway point was found close to the village of Wolverton. It was here that the central engine sheds and station were built and Wolverton became the world's first railway town with the first central station. By 1860 Wolverton works employed two thousand men and by 1910 five thousand passed through its gates each day.

The opening of the branch line to Bedford in 1847 and its extension as the Oxford to Cambridge link saw Bletchley station develop as an important junction and enabled the further growth of both Bletchley and Fenny Stratford.

This link was one of the main reasons the government based its operations in World War Two at Bletchley Park.

Today the London & Birmingham Railway forms part of the West Coast Main Line run by Virgin Trains and the Bletchley to Bedford line may form part of the proposed East West Rail scheme.

Railway Police  
truncheon used on the London  
& Birmingham Railway at Bletchley

