

A Bit About Brunel's Great Western Railway

Isambard Kingdom Brunel became the chief engineer of the Great Western Railway (GWR) in 1833. He was involved in almost every part of it, designing stations, tunnels and bridges along the route he chose.

Brunel wanted the GWR to be fast, so he spent months on foot and horseback finding the flattest route for his railway.

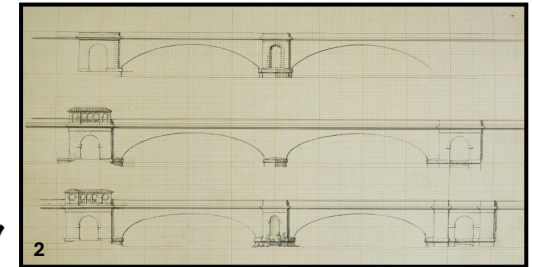
The first journey on the GWR from London to Bristol happened in June 1841, it took 4 hours.

It was the first railway line to link Bristol and London.

To make his railway smooth and comfortable for passengers, Brunel designed wide train tracks, known as broad gauge, for the trains to run on. Unfortunately, these wider tracks couldn't be linked to the standard narrower train tracks on other routes, so the broad-gauge tracks were all replaced by 1892.



Brunel's original Bristol Temple Meads Station opened in 1840. It had everything under one roof, including an engine shed, passenger hall, ticket offices and platforms.

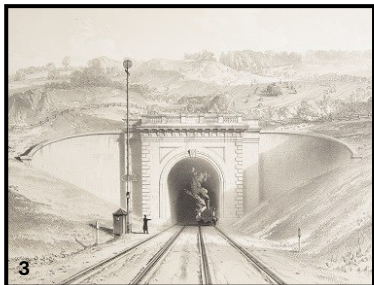


The Maidenhead Bridge had the flattest and widest arches of any bridge when it was opened in 1839. Brunel was made to leave the scaffolding up as people feared it would collapse. It took a flood washing away the scaffolding, leaving the bridge untouched, for his revolutionary design to be completely trusted.

In Swindon, a large railway works was built to help look after the GWR's trains. Brunel also helped design cottages nearby for the workers and their families to live in.



It took five years to build Brunel's Box Tunnel. Workers had to build in from both sides of the hill at the same time. They met in the middle to create a straight tunnel.



Inspired by the Great Exhibition's Crystal Palace, Brunel designed Paddington Station in London to have a glass and iron arched roof which is still used today.

