

# Walk 6

## BIRMINGHAM STATIONS



New Street Station



This short walk visits three stations which represent nearly 200 years of railway history. It begins at the world's first piece of monumental railway architecture, then stops off at a recently restored Edwardian station and finally explores our most modern stop on the railway network. From stone, brick and finally to steel and glass its shows how ambitious railway companies have always been at the forefront of fashionable design.



This walk along the city centre's pavements and walkways is relatively flat except for a series of steps around the Bull Ring (you can go through the underpass instead). I have shown it as a simple there and back route which you can enjoy if you want a break from a shopping trip to the city or explore on Google Street View.

**Distance:** 1 mile approx.

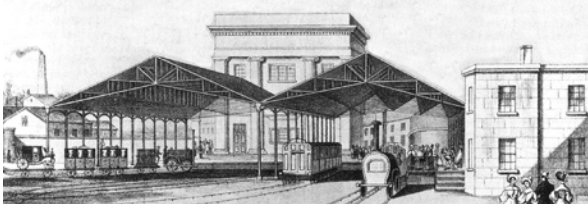
**Parking:** There are numerous car parks in the city centre, the one I used was Curzone on Curzon Street which was around £3-£4. There is some on street parking in this area too.

① **Former Curzon Street Station, B5 5LG.**

*This rather lonely Classical building on waste ground on the edge of the city centre is all that remains of the London to Birmingham Railway's station. This was the first long distance inter city line running from Euston in London to Curzon Street in Birmingham. As a reflection of its importance the Euston Arch designed by the leading architect Philip Hardwick was erected in London (an controversially demolished in the 1960s) while this entrance block was built at the other end in Birmingham and opened in 1838.*



The view below from Wikipedia shows how it looked from the rear when built and the London and Birmingham Railway's coats of arms can still be seen over the door (right). The station was replaced in 1854 by Birmingham New Street and although it now stands locked up the area is earmarked as the terminus of HS2.



London and Birmingham Railway Coat of Arms

From the corner of Curzon Street take the new path on the right side of the Woodsman pub towards the city centre. When you reach the road at the end turn left and walk along it a short way and then cross over and take the next section of path beside the Hotel Latour. At the end of this turn left and walk along the dual carriageway up to Moor Street Station beside the iconic Selfridges building.



Moor Street Station



② **Birmingham Moor Street Station, B4 7UL.**

Moor Street Station was opened in 1914 to relieve pressure on the GWR's Snow Hill Station. It was the last terminus built in the city and is an excellent example of the company's modest but high quality station buildings from the Edwardian period (note the fine brickwork). Sadly under British Railways services were run down and this splendid building became disused and neglected as a new station was built nearby in the 1980s.







Moor Street Station

*Thanks to pressure from local groups and an increase in traffic, Chiltern Railways and the Birmingham Alliance decided to restore this original building and it reopened in 2010. The work included returning it to its Great Western heyday during the inter war years even down to authentic signs and colours.*



Cross over the road in front of Moor Street Station and turn left and go up the steps which take you between the Pavilions and Bull Ring Shopping Centres and beside the Bull Ring Tower. This leads you to the bridge and entrance to New Street Station with its iconic eye.



New Street Station

③ **Birmingham New Street Station, B2 4XJ.**

*Curzon Street station was quickly found to be inconvenient for the city centre so the LNWR who now owned it, opened a new central station along with the Midland Railway in 1854 at New Street (Curzon Street became a goods yard until the 1960s). It had the world's largest single span arched roof until St Pancras opened 1868.*



*The old station roof was badly damaged by bombing during World War 2 and was demolished shortly after, its platforms were then covered with canopies made from scrap materials. It was not until the 1960s as part of the West Coast Line modernisation program that the Victorian station was demolished and a new station opened. This rather unpopular structure with the platforms hidden under tonnes of concrete columns and slabs has recently been replaced by the new Grand Central shopping centre and station concourse. Its bright reflective exterior features huge eye shaped TV screens which make a startling and iconic feature. Their similarity to the 1954 War of the Worlds Martian machines might concern or intimidate some people though!*





④ One part of the 1960s station which has thankfully been retained is the signal box on Navigation Street. This striking Brutalist structure with its zig-zag concrete walls and interlocking rectangular elements is both utilitarian and intimidating. Its bold form represents a short period in Britain when their was confidence in Modernism and this rare example is now Grade II listed. Signal boxes of all ages and size are now under risk as Network Rail plans over the next decade to replace them with a central control system. As most are on railway property and therefore it may not be convenient to convert them other uses some will inevitably be lost.



If you want to find out more details about the area's architecture then look out for the Buildings of England series, originally written by Nicholas Pevsner (in this case the Birmingham City Guide).

If you would like to discover more about railway stations then look out for my books pictured below. They are packed with photos and drawings explaining in an easy to understand manner why they were built, what the different styles were and where you can find some outstanding examples. They are available from Amazon, my publisher's website [www.countrysidebooks.co.uk](http://www.countrysidebooks.co.uk) and your local bookshop (usually less than £10 each). Go to my website [www.trevoryorke.co.uk](http://www.trevoryorke.co.uk) for more details and to take a look inside.

