

Station Staff at Wingfield Station in 1911

Although it was a relatively small semi-rural station within the Midland Railway network, Wingfield station served the wider community, local farmers, manufacturers, and the nearby collieries. Station staffing was needed both in the service of travelling passengers and for the efficient movement of goods.

Alongside the Stationmaster, there were probably three Porters and sometimes a Junior Porter all working shifts, a Booking Clerk and one or more Goods or Sidings Porters. In addition, there would be several Signalmen employed to cover shifts at the Wingfield signal-box. It was not uncommon for railway staff to work a 12 to 14 hours a day.

At the 1911 census, we find a number of Midland Railway employees living in the Wingfield district, most of whom would be working at Wingfield Station. Many of the younger men were living as boarders in local households.

Address	Name	Job	Age	Place of birth	Other household members were:
Birches Lane	Thomas William CHEETHAM	Railway Porter	31	Belper	Wife Lucy + 2 children
Birches Lane	George COWLEY	Railway Platelayer	18	Belper	Boarder in above
South Wingfield	John BOWLZER	Railway Engine Driver (stone quarry)	35	South Wingfield	Mother, sister, wife Sarah and 7 children
South Wingfield	Elfric John CARPENTER	Railway Clerk Midland Claims Dept DSO	44	Norfolk	Wife Ada + 3 children

Oakerthorpe	Walter COLEMAN	Railway Signalman	43	Gaulby, Leics	3 children
Morewood Moor, Crich	Thomas FREARSON	Midland Railway Clerk	61	Derby	Wife Emma
Church Lane	John Bernard GOODWIN	Railway Clerk	20	South Wingfield	Mother + brother + widowed boarder
Church Lane	Charles PERRY	Railway Porter	23	Stafford	Boarder in above
Church Lane	Arthur HEYWORTH	Railway Booking Clerk	25	Manchester	Boarder in home of George Woodcock
South Wingfield	Albert Henry HUMPHRIES	Railway Signalman	53	Gloucs	3 children
Inns Lane	George LONGLEY	Signalman	64	Brierley, Yorkshire	Daughter Melvina
Stationhouses, Oakerthorpe	Thomas ROBINSON	Railway Stationmaster	57	Hinckley, Leics	Wife Mary Ann + 3 children
Stationhouses, Oakerthorpe	Thomas SELBY	Foreman Platelayer	57	Rutland, Market Overton	Wife Rosetta
Shaw Wood	Herbert Alfred WEETMAN	Railway Porter	30	Lincs	Wife Kate + 3 children
Lane Farm	Joseph ASHBEY	Railway Clerk	33	Morton, Derbyshire	Father in law + 4 relatives + wife Mary + 3 children

Let's look more closely at the stories of a few of these men and their families.

[Elfric Carpenter](#)

[Albert Humphries](#)

[George Longley](#)

Hidden stories, missing links - Can you help to complete the picture?

So far, we have been unable to find photographs of these railway staff who worked at Wingfield Station in the period when Thomas Robinson was Stationmaster. Do you have a family photo? Do you know any more about their lives or railway stories? If so, we'd love to hear from you!

Common threads linking the lives of the Wingfield railway workers

What do the stories of these Wingfield railway staff have in common?

- **The Midland Railway provided a route away from low paid and unskilled labour:** Many of these railway staff grew up in families who worked as agricultural or factory labourers. For young men willing and able to leave their communities, a job with the Midland Railway was a route out of poverty and into relatively well-paid employment.
- **The Midland Railway offered a secure job:** The Midland Railway provided these men with a job for life, and they gave long service in return. Men with loyalty and ambition could progress within the Midland Railway. The staff also had much loyalty to one another and many of their sons and son in laws worked for the railway service too.
- **Illness and disease remained a fact of life:** Railway families suffered their share of early deaths before the advent of medical treatments and access to free health services.

- **Midland Railway men and their sons served in WW1:** Where the railway men were too old to be serve in WW1, it was their son's generation who were sent off to battle and their daughters who volunteered as medical support. The remaining staff at Wingfield had the task of keeping the railway running while waiting to hear whether their sons would be casualties of the war.
- **These families valued education:** These railway staff had enough basic education to enable them to take advantage of the clerical and operational roles available. They encouraged their sons and daughters to gain an education at the local Board School and to go on to further study in order to give themselves opportunities for a decent living.
- **Daughters were encouraged:** The daughters of the railway families were encouraged to take advantage of their education and many of these young women became teachers at the local schools. The advent of WW1 gave further opportunities for women to become more actively involved in their community although many returned to "unpaid domestic duties" on marriage or after the war.
- **Railway staff were active and respected citizens:** Railway staff had prominent roles within local churches and Sunday Schools and some of these men sought election into Parish Council roles. These railway families were part of a newly emerging middle class and were gradually becoming local community representatives, taking over from the gentry and landowners in the early part of the 20th century.

Grateful thanks for information provided by:

Philip Smith (South Wingfield Local History Society) for sharing his research notes on Station Staff and for his online materials relating to Florence Humphries available at www.crichparish-ww1.org.uk

The late **Glynn Waite** who provided useful notes about Thomas Robinson and other Midland Railway staff in correspondence received in 2008.

Kathy Farr

