

Travelling almost directly from north to south the new line crossed several existing railways which ran roughly east to west. Chief among these in our area, at Rugby, was the London & North Western Railway (formerly the London & Birmingham, opened in 1838) whose vast installation was, with the adjoining canal, crossed by a long girder bridge, known locally as ‘the Birdcage’. This so obscured the L.N.W.’s signal gantries that the G.C.R. had to pay for them to be re-sited. The last vestiges of the Birdcage were not removed until Christmas 2006.

The G.C.’s somewhat inappropriately named ‘Central’ Station at Rugby stood a mile or so to the south in Hillmorton Road. As Betjeman put it, in the same poem,

“And quite where Rugby Central is
Does only Rugby know.”

Further south lay Braunston and Willoughby Station, where the L.N.W.’s Leamington – Weedon branch was crossed (so Braunston then had two stations, one on each line). There were viaducts at Willoughby, Staverton and Catesby. At Catesby there was also a tunnel with an 1897 datestone, and this was followed by Charwelton station with its iron-stone quarries, and then by Woodford (originally known as ‘Woodford and Hinton’). Immediately south of Woodford stood a junction with the



Brackley Central Station - opening day 15th March 1899. A civic welcoming party awaits the first south-bound express, hauled by a locomotive decorated for the occasion, which is about to stop at the platform. Note the pristine state of the track, the permanent way wagon in the foreground, and the immensely tall home signal beyond the bridge.