

A Walsall Timeline

Date	Event
1086	The Domesday Book mentions Aldridge, Bescot, Shelfield, Pelsall, Bloxwich, Great Barr and Rushall. Walsall is omitted, probably due to a clerical error. The town is first mentioned in 1159.
1200	St Matthew's Church recorded.
1220	King Henry III grants right to hold a weekly market and annual fair.
c.1225	Grant of Borough charter gives the burgesses of Walsall exemption from most feudal tolls and customs.
c.1300	First reference to coal and iron ore being worked in Walsall: Margery Le Rousse, owner of one half of the manor, agrees to share the profits of any coal and iron ore raised.
1377	The Burgess Roll commences, listing the town's burgesses. First mention of mayor and town council.
1386	Market cross mentioned.
1416	Guildhall in the High Street mentioned.
c.1540	Walsall described by John Leland as a little market town with many smiths and bit-makers, and coal, lime and ironstone pits.
1553	Nicholas and George Hawe petition Queen Mary for the establishment of a grammar school, to be endowed with former chantry lands.
1616	The Fishley Charity (still operating today) is established with money given by William Parker. It pays for the apprenticeships of poor boys.
1643	English Civil War. Rushall Hall is besieged and taken by Prince Rupert and Royalist forces. Queen Henrietta Maria stays briefly in Caldmore.
1653	New enclosures in the town's common fields are destroyed by rioters.
1651	King Charles II is hidden by the Lane family of Bentley Hall following the disastrous battle of Worcester. He escapes to Bristol disguised as Jane Lane's manservant.
1680	Walsall is a flourishing centre of the lornery trade: Dr Plot says the towns metalworkers "chiefly relate to somewhat of horsemanship" such as bits, stirrups and spurs.
1700	Population of the Borough and Foreign estimated at 5,500.
1743	John Wesley attacked by the Walsall mob on the Bridge - he escapes over the fields via the mill dam, minus part of his coat.
1748	First Turnpike Act passed, enabling improvement of some local roads.
1777	Horse racing starts on the Long Meadow. Annual race meetings are held until 1876.
1799	Walsall Canal opened, with terminus at Town End.
1801	Population of Walsall 10,399 (including the Foreign).

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1819-21	St Matthew's church is extensively rebuilt.
1830	Lichfield Street is constructed, replacing Rushall Street as the main road to Lichfield.
1832	Serious cholera epidemic. The Great Reform Act gives Walsall parliamentary representation for the first time. Walsall's first MP, Charles Forster, is elected.
1836	Walsall Poor Law Union set up. A new workhouse opens in 1838 on the Pleck Road.
1837	Grand Junction Railway opens with a station at Bescot Bridge.
1847	Walsall railway station opens in Bridgeman Place, replaced by one in Station Street in 1849.
1851	Population 26,816.
1859	Jerome K. Jerome born in Walsall on May 2 nd . Free Library opens in Goodall Street.
1863	First cottage hospital established.
1865	Sister Dora comes to Walsall.
1866	Walsall is described as "the chief seat of saddlery manufacture in the kingdom".
1870	The Education Act makes schooling compulsory and free. It enables setting up of local school boards. Walsall School Board builds 8 new schools by 1884.
1871-2	Smallpox epidemic kills 433.
1872	Pelsall Hall colliery disaster kills 22, and 45 children are orphaned.
1874	Grand Opening of the Arboretum on 4 th May.
1875	There are 59 collieries in Walsall .
1877	Walsall Swifts football club is founded.
1878	New Cottage Hospital opens. Sister Dora dies a month later, aged 46.
1880	Explosion at Birchills kills 22 men.
1884	The Council buys the Arboretum, to ensure free access
1886	Walsall and District Co-op society is established. The Sister Dora statue, reputedly the UK's first public statue of a woman not of royal blood, is erected.
1890	Grand Theatre built in Park Street.
1892	Walsall Anarchist 'bomb plot' uncovered.
1892	Electric tram service is introduced, only the second overhead system in the country.

Date	Event
1896	Two football clubs, Walsall Swifts and Walsall Town, merge to become Walsall Football Club.
1900	<i>Her Majesty's Theatre</i> opens at Town End. Local leather trades at their peak, employing about 10,000 people.
1901	Population rises to nearly 90,000- a ninefold increase since 1801.
1904	First car to be registered with a Walsall registration number, DH1.
1908	First cinema, <i>The Imperial</i> , opens.
1905	The new Council House and Town Hall open on Lichfield Street.
1906	The new library opens on Lichfield Street.
1916	Zeppelin raid on Walsall causes panic. Several people are injured and a number of buildings destroyed. The mayoress later dies from her injuries.
1914-1918	Over 2,000 Walsall men are killed serving in the First World War.
1920	First council house built.
1931	New ring road, The Broadway, opens. Unemployment reaches 30%
1933	Tram services withdrawn, largely replaced by trolley buses.
1935	5,000 th council house built and slum clearance takes place around Church Hill. Municipal airfield opens near Aldridge.
1939-1945	Second World War. Walsall factories work flat out manufacturing items such as steel helmets, Anderson shelters, and bomb components for the war effort.
Mid-1960s	Much of Walsall's historic High Street is demolished and replaced by new concrete and glass piazza. Many terraced streets are cleared (such as in The Chuckery and The Butts) and replaced by tower blocks.
1964	Walsall Wood colliery closes, ending the town's 700 year history of coal mining .
1966	Willenhall and Darlaston become part of Walsall Borough as a result of local government reorganisation.
1968	Walsall section of the M6 opened.
1970	Walsall's last tannery, the historic Lower Rushall Street site, closes after three hundred years.
1974	Local government reorganisation. The Borough's boundaries are extended to include Aldridge and Brownhills. Population now 270,000.
1979	Demolition of one of Walsall's finest buildings, the George Hotel on the Bridge.
1980	Opening of Saddlers' shopping centre, and a new railway station.
1988	Opening of Walsall Leather Museum

Date	Event
2000	Opening of New Art Gallery at Town Wharf
2007	Walsall's population estimated at 253,000. Walsall still the leading centre in Europe for the making of saddlery and related horse equipment.

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