

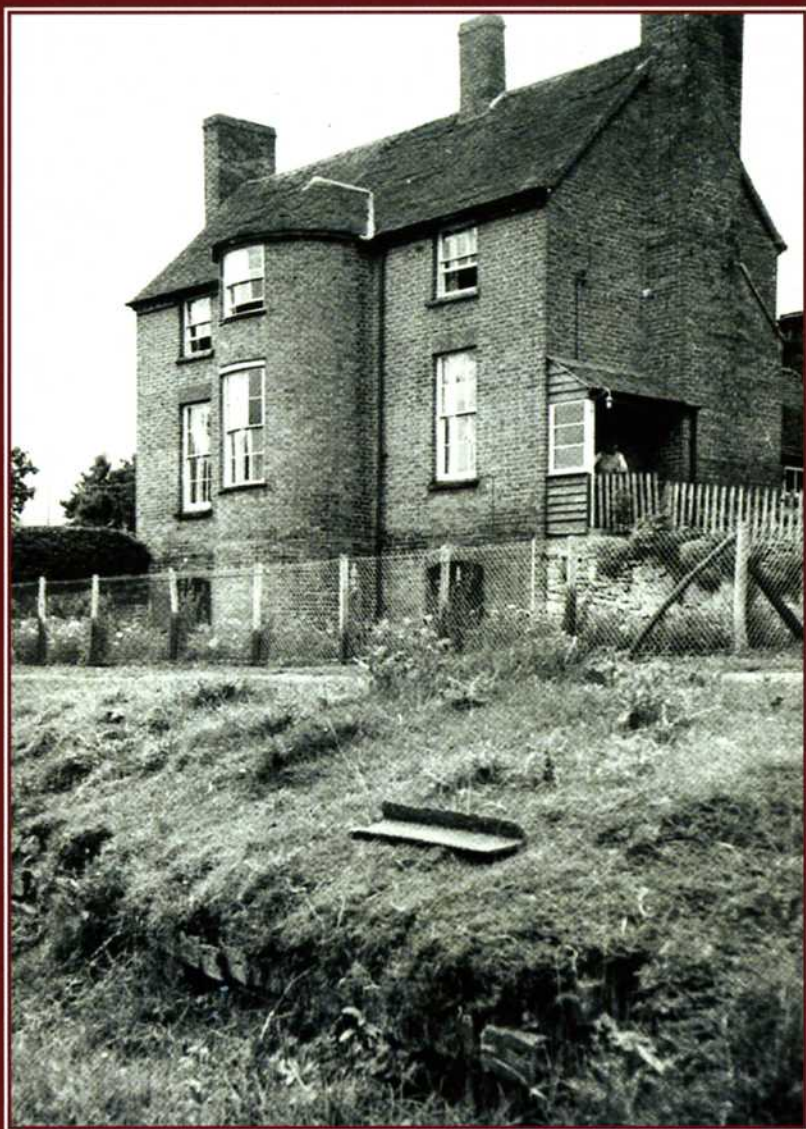


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Front : Remains of Southnet wharf at the eastern end of the Leominster Canal, with the Wharf House (1963 photograph). The canal was drained in 1859 but this portion does not appear to have been formally closed (see pp. 510–513). © Richard Dean

Back : Cambridge station at the present day. Platform 1 looking north near scissors crossover (upper); View south along platforms 7 and 8 (lower) (see pp. 498–509). © Rob Shorland-Ball

A prime minister and his constituency : Sir Robert Peel and Tamworth railways

David Hodgkins

This note examines the links between a prime minister, Sir Robert Peel, and railways in his constituency. His association with Tamworth is perhaps best known to historians through the Tamworth manifesto which, after discussion in the Cabinet, he issued as an address to his constituents in the run-up to the 1834 general election, though it was clearly intended as a document for the national electorate, if not a party programme as we would understand it today.

The Peels and Tamworth

Though a member of Parliament since 1809 when he was only 21, Peel was first elected MP for Tamworth in 1830 following the death of his father, the first baronet, also Sir Robert Peel. The latter had represented the constituency since 1790

when, on moving from Bury, where Peel, Yates & Co had become the undisputed leaders of the Lancashire calico printing industry, he bought some 4,000 acres of the Marquess of Bath's estates, including a half-share in the two parliamentary seats of the borough of Tamworth, where he purchased property including 120 houses. As early as 1780 he had opened a mill in Burton-on-Trent and later in the decade established cotton and bleaching mills and a calico printing works in the Tamworth area. Tamworth was a centre of the old woollen cloth industry and was by then near an important canal junction.¹ By 1796 he had purchased Drayton Manor, some three miles south-west of Tamworth.² His son Robert, even before his father's death when he inherited Drayton, had become a Staffordshire landowner by purchasing Lord George Cavendish's estate at Tamhorn, north-west of



*Fig.1. View of Drayton Manor in 1842, the home of Sir Robert Peel.
Unknown engraver, published by J & E Harwood, London.*

Tamworth near Hopwas.³ When the Lady Bridge over the Anker at Tamworth needed widening in 1840 after several accidents Peel gave £500 towards the cost.⁴ Edmund, the only one of his brothers who continued in calico printing, lived at Bonehill between Drayton Manor and Tamworth.

The Birmingham & Derby Junction Railway

The first railway to reach Tamworth was the Birmingham & Derby Junction, a largely Birmingham-

based company, though three Burton brewers were listed among the principal shareholders in the Act.⁵ Sir Eardley Wilmot of Berkswell Hall and MP for North Warwickshire took the lead in enabling the Bill's passage through the House of Commons. The railway crossed some of Peel's land, particularly at Bole Hall where a 19-arch viaduct was built over the River Anker. The company quickly came to an agreement with Peel's tenants for compensation for the possession of their lands at Bole Hall.⁶

The line was opened for public traffic on 12 August

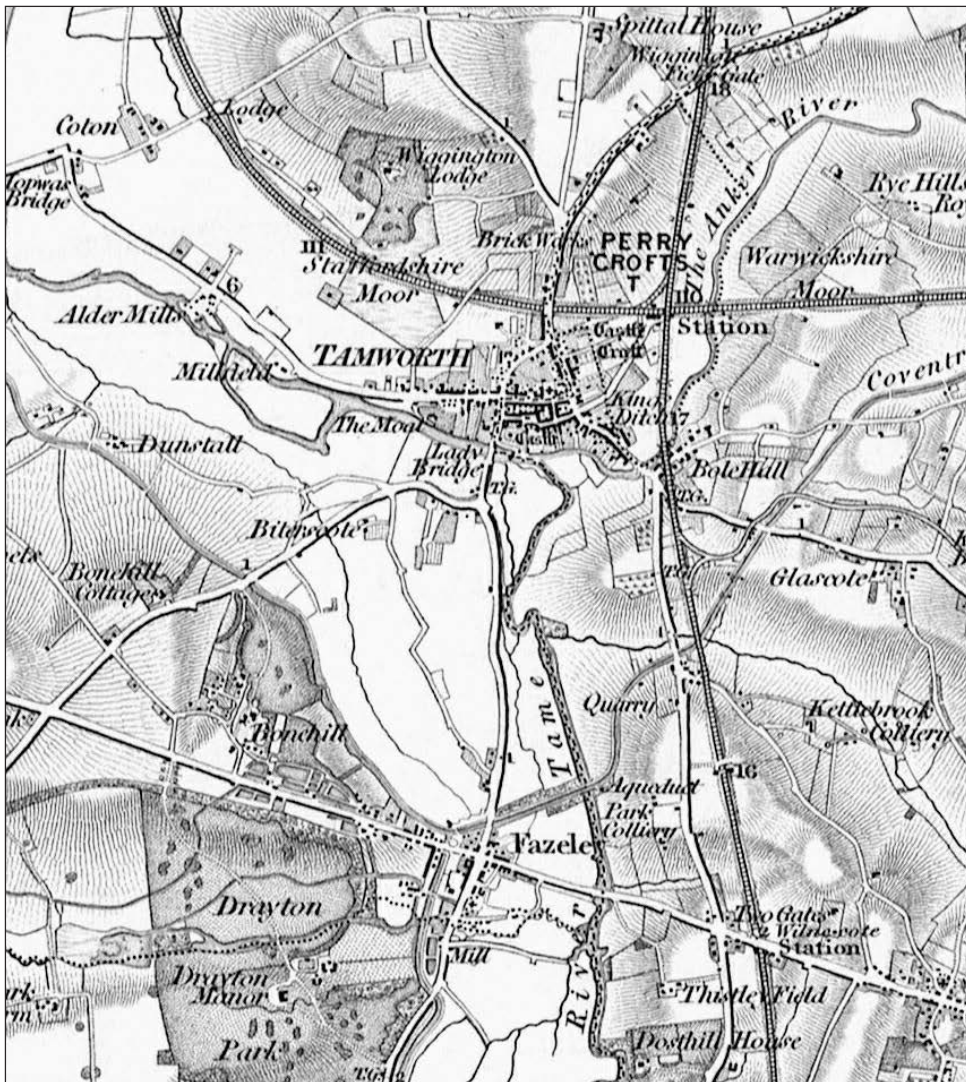


Fig. 2. An enlarged extract from the 1 inch Ordnance Survey Old Series published in 1834, showing a number of places associated with Peel mentioned in the text. Both the Birmingham & Derby and the Trent Valley line of LNWR with Tamworth, and Wilnecote and Fazeley stations were added to the map later.

1839, immediately linking Euston with Derby via Hampton Junction, so providing Tamworth with its first station. In 1842 the B&DJR traffic committee agreed to Peel's request that the down trains could be stopped at Kingsbury to set him down.⁷

Peel's correspondence contains a number of references to this line. When he formed his second government in 1841,⁸ George Carr Glyn, the chairman of London & Birmingham Railway, wrote to the new Prime Minister to inform him that the 11 o'clock down train from Euston now stopped at Hampton where it met a Birmingham to Derby train and thus he would have a communication with Tamworth after the receipt of letters in London. He added that should Peel from any cause require at any time a special train the directors had instructed the officers to attend to his wishes, whenever they could be carried out without interfering with the general line.⁹

Queen Victoria's visit

Queen Victoria made her first railway journey in June 1842 from Windsor to London 'in half an hour free from dust and crowd and heat, and I am quite charmed with it'¹⁰ but her other journeys later in 1842 to Scotland and Walmer Castle, near Deal, were undertaken by sea and road respectively. In November and December 1843 the Queen visited in turn Peel at Drayton Manor, the duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth and the duke of Rutland at Belvoir Castle. On 27 November she travelled for the first time on the L&BR. Before the event Peel asked Glyn how the Queen would leave Tamworth station as it was on an embankment.¹¹ Consequently the L&BR wrote to the chairman of the B&DJR, Samuel Beale.¹² The directors inspected Tamworth station and ordered alterations to be made to the south end of the station and that a temporary staircase be erected there, covered over with crimson druggat.¹³

On 27 November the Queen and her party travelled by road to Watford station from Windsor in three carriages. She was met by Glyn and Richard Creed, the secretary of the L&BR, the station having been decorated under the supervision of Hardwick, the L&BR's architect. The Queen boarded the recently constructed luxurious royal four-wheel carriage, but the royal road vehicles were placed on trucks and attached to the special train which conveyed them to Tamworth station, used rather than Wilnecote and Fazeley which was slightly nearer Drayton Manor, so that the inhabitants of the town would have an opportunity to greet the Queen before she went on to Drayton. Although following the opening of the



Fig. 3. Sir Robert Peel, 2nd Bt, by John Linnell, 1838, reproduced by courtesy of the McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Inverclyde Council.

B&DJR's line from Whitacre to Birmingham in 1842, the line from Whitacre to Hampton had been converted to single track, it was used by two trains daily each way conveying through Euston coaches, and the royal train took this route.¹⁴ The journey with stops at Wolverton and Hampton took 2 hours 20 minutes. *The Times* commented on the remarkable speed of the train from Hampton to Tamworth. While staying at Drayton Manor, 'certainly the most comfortable house I ever saw', the Queen visited Lichfield.¹⁵ Prince Albert went to Birmingham, despite Peel's warning that the mayor, Thomas Weston, was a hosiery of extreme political opinions, in fact a Chartist. Peel had earlier sent Prince Albert 'a little book which is published every month giving very useful information as to distances, or at least times, on all the railways'.¹⁶

On 1 December the royal couple went on from Tamworth to Chesterfield for Chatsworth. With Matthew Kirtley, the locomotive superintendent of the B&DJR, driving, 'at 5 minutes to 11 the train started from Tamworth. The distance to Burton, 13 miles, was performed in 13 minutes' reported *The Times*. The train did not stop at Burton, but 'the cheering as the train shot by was very great'. This

would seem to be the first statement that a train travelled at 60 miles an hour for any distance and seems to have gone unremarked by historians, but since the newspaper also reported that Derby station, only 11 miles further, was reached at 11.30 it is doubtful whether the time stated to have been taken to reach Burton can be accurate. George Hudson and other North Midland directors were at Derby where the train stopped for ten minutes before going on to Chesterfield for Chatsworth on the North Midland rails. The NMR were permitted to use the carriage prepared for the Queen by the L&BR for the journey to Chesterfield.¹⁷ John Herepath, anxious to gain publicity for railways, complained to Creed at the lack of publicity for this journey.¹⁸ The grandeur of Chatsworth took the royal couple's breath away. Mr Paxton was quite a genius, not only laying out the gardens but also planning all the buildings including that 'mass of glass' in the conservatory, which must have been in the Prince's mind when planning for the Great Exhibition of 1851.¹⁹ Later the Queen travelled from Chesterfield to Nottingham to reach Belvoir and on 8 December returned from Belvoir by train from Leicester, Edward Bury driving from Rugby to Watford, the LBR's royal carriage being used on both occasions.

The Trent Valley Railway

When the Trent Valley Railway was projected Peel was careful not to get involved with the various parties involved. Edward Tootal, the Manchester textile magnate who was the power behind the project and who was to give up cotton for railways, wrote to complain about the L&BR not honouring its commitments to the TVR, but Peel replied to Tootal that he had not the leisure to enter into the details of the subject about which Tootal had written and added that Glyn had wished him to interfere on behalf of L&BR but he had declined. He reiterated his neutrality when declining an invitation from Glyn to attend the consecration of the church which the L&BR had erected for their workers at Wolverton, saying that he had interfered in no way with the Trent Valley line except that he had declined to sanction a survey by the government of any new line from London to Manchester and said that any line from Rugby to Stone or Stafford should be made in concert with the existing companies. He had abstained from picking upon any particular proposal, but pointed out that Telford had wanted to remake Watling Street as a turnpike road and he certainly had a strong conviction that the Trent Valley line must shortly be made.²⁰

Peel's refusal to take up the cause of any of the parties vying for the leading role in the TVR did not prevent him from supporting the company once it was formed and the project was under way. His brother Edmund was the chairman, no doubt to encourage local support. Edward Tootal was the deputy chairman but normally chaired board meetings. Sir Robert Peel cut the first sod at a ceremony in a field called Caunt's Close, adjoining Staffordshire Moor, northwest of Tamworth which was followed by a substantial lunch in the old town hall. The previous evening there had been a dinner at Edmund Peel's house in honour of the Prime Minister. The substantial lunch did not prevent a dinner at Drayton Park that evening when Peel made clear his support for the line as the local MP, but warned that the company would be exposed to formidable competition and if it were not the best and most direct railway between London and Manchester no consideration of local benefit would prevent him from giving his support to another. He added that if the privileges of the railway companies were to continue, they had to show that they combined the greatest degree of velocity in travelling with the greatest degree of safety to the traveller; that they had neglected no precaution which would tend to diminish the risk of accidents, the frequent occurrence of which could shake confidence in railway travelling; and that they must make sacrifices of pecuniary gain for the sake of taking those precautions.²¹

Glyn was not able to attend but in sending his apologies he warned Peel that he contemplated applying to Parliament for a line from Hampton by Warwick to Cheltenham and also for a line from Hampton to Banbury and Buckingham and to 'our main line' which would pass through Peel's property near Hampton. He offered to call on Peel to explain it.²² The following year Glyn again told him of the proposal for a line from Hampton which would intersect his estate there and asked Peel if he could agree to this. Peel replied:

I am very sorry it is required to intersect my estate at Hampton by this line. I settled it at the time of its purchase on my second son with the view to enabling him to make it a future residence.²³ I am unwilling however to appear as an opponent of the projected line and will therefore authorise you to add my name to the assents.²⁴

However the Hampton line was repeatedly deferred by the L&NWR after the amalgamation in 1846 and in the end came to nothing.

Tamworth station

Peel intervened much more directly over the approach to Tamworth station. He wrote to the mayor, Francis Hunter:²⁵

I am informed that questions are still pending as to the line of approach to the station of the Trent Valley Railway Co, particularly as to the Northern side of the Town. I have been requested to write to the directors of the railway on this subject by parties whose sole object is to promote the interests of the town and the general convenience of travellers by the Railway. The subject is however of such local importance that I am unwilling to make any appeal to the Directors without a previous communication with you as Chief Magistrate of the Town.

It appears to me that there ought to be two levels of approach to the Railway Station, the one through George Street as at present – the other from the Northern extremity of Aldergate. It is clear that the general welfare of the Town will be promoted by facilitating in every way access to the railway station and that all personal and purely local interests should give way to this paramount consideration.

If I understand from you that this opinion is in conformity with that of the Corporation and the leading inhabitants of this Town, I will with pleasure take any steps either by representation to or personal communication with the Directors of the Trent Valley Company that may be likely to promote the arrangements in question.²⁶

In fact the approach from George Street had only been constructed when the B&DJR was built and it was this road which Queen Victoria used on her way to and from Drayton Manor, following which it was named Victoria Road.²⁷ There was an omnibus from the *King's Arms* to the station and a fly from the *Waggon and Horses* to meet the trains.²⁸ The mayor, after putting the matter to the council, replied that it was their unanimous opinion that the town would be much benefited by Peel's facilitating that which appeared so very important and that the approach to the station in line with the northeastern extremity of Aldergate would be by far the most convenient and advantageous. Peel immediately wrote to Glyn emphasising that for the accommodation of a great part of the town and of the adjoining country the proper line of access to the new station should be by means of a road leading directly from the northeastern extremity of Aldergate to the station. He believed there was not a single house or building between those two points and the distance could not exceed 400 yards. He recommended immediate enquiries by the directors and if his suggestions were approved

immediate measures should be taken to secure the land required. Glyn replied that there was every disposition on the company's part to do what Peel proposed, but they possessed no powers under their Act to take the land. Perhaps that difficulty might be overcome.²⁹

Peel passed this on to the mayor adding that though the railway company might not have the power to take the land he thought that the proprietors of the land would be disposed to facilitate by voluntary agreement the acquisition by the company of the land required. The mayor then told Peel that he thought that there would not be any difficulty in obtaining the land, as it was the property of three parties, two of whom were members of the Town Council and the other was a working man who no doubt would be glad to sell to a railway company.³⁰

Tootal then wrote to Peel to say that they had examined the ground. The approach 'would be a great improvement to the Town and make a much better approach to the station. It will of course be costly, but I shall give it all my support at the board.' He added that the extremely handsome manner in which Peel had dealt with the Company entitled him to every request he might make which lay within the power of the company to grant.³¹

Meanwhile the Trent Committee of the L&NWR, which had replaced the board of the TVR following the L&NWR's purchase of the line, set up a sub-committee to consider with the Midland Railway (which now incorporated the B&DJR) the station, the junction and the approaches at Tamworth. Thomas Gooch, the engineer, produced a ground plan at the next meeting when Glyn himself took the chair. A letter from the mayor to Peel was read concerning the communication required from Tamworth to the station. It was agreed that this could go ahead if cleared with the Midland. On 11 June it was reported that joint management of Tamworth station had been agreed with the Midland. Decisions on whether the mineral yard should be jointly owned were left to Robert Stephenson who also had to approve the plans for the joint station and who had to decide on the proportion of expenses which fell to each company.³²

The voluntary approach to land purchase was not without difficulty. On 4 March 1847 the Trent Committee asked for an estimate of the actual value of the lands taken by the proposed new road at Tamworth and what amount was to be offered to the owners. If they refused the solicitor should be instructed to prepare a clause for insertion in one of the company's bills for compulsory purchase. At

the next meeting it was reported that the landowner had refused the offer and Tootal was asked to communicate with Peel. In September Edward Watkin reported that Hall, who was one of the two members of the council from whom the mayor had thought there would not be any difficulty, was demanding £630 per acre for the land required for the station and £500 per acre for the road. He had offered £420, the rate asked for some time ago. The committee approved.³³ When opened the new road was named Albert Road.

Tamworth, a centre for postal traffic

There was also another issue which Peel himself seems to have encouraged the Town Council to pursue. In his letter to the mayor of 6 May he suggested for the consideration of the council whether it might not be expedient for them to address

a memorial to the Postmaster General, the Earl of St Germans, setting forth

... the new position in which Tamworth would be placed by the completion of the Trent Valley. It would be the point of intersection of two great lines of railway communication, the one leading from London to Liverpool and the manufacturing districts of the North West of England and Scotland, and to Dublin, the other connecting Birmingham and Derby and all the districts to the North East of Derby; that it is probable that other lines of railway may be executed (that from Hampton to Warwick and Leamington for instance) which will add to the importance of Tamworth as a central point of internal communication.

For these reasons he suggested that the Postmaster General should be asked to consider whether there might not be public advantages in establishing a large sorting office at Tamworth and



Fig. 4. Map of Tamworth showing the joint LNWR and Midland station with Victoria Road and Albert Road which were built to serve the station and also George Street. (Extracted from Warwickshire II.SE, 6 inch Ordnance Survey, surveyed 1882 to 1883 and published 1884.)

making it a central point for the dispatch of letters to those parts of the interior with which it would possess such facilities for communication.³⁴

Not content with lining up the mayor, Peel wrote next day directly to St Germans, adopting the tone one might expect from a Prime Minister pressing for a benefit for his constituents but not wanting to overbear the national interest. He passed on a letter from Glyn in which he said he wished to consult Peel about the new station and the arrangements which might be required if the supposed intention of the Post Office to make a large sorting office were to be carried out. Peel reminded St Germans that Tamworth would be the point of intersection of two important lines of railway communication. He concluded by saying that he had no other wish than that, if such an establishment were to be made, the place should be that which would be the most conducive to the public convenience and the interests of the public service. He only asked that in considering the comparative advantages of different sites those of Tamworth might be duly weighed.

Peel also passed on the memorial from the Town Council. However it had no immediate effect as the Postmaster General told Glyn that the Post Office did not consider a sorting office at Tamworth necessary as the sorting office at Birmingham and the travelling post office supplied the measure of efficiency to maintain the requisite communication between the several great lines of railways. In response to an enquiry of Glyn's, Peel replied that he saw no advantage in further communication with the Post Office.³⁵ Later, however, Tamworth did become a hub for postal services with travelling post offices from Gloucester, Lincoln and Shrewsbury established within the next twenty years.³⁶

Peel made his position clear to the mayor. In transmitting the council's resolutions on the Post Office it would not have been consistent with his public duty to make any other request than that the claims of Tamworth be fully and impartially considered. On the other hand he was much gratified by the resolution of the council acknowledging those efforts which 'my duty to my constituents and strong feeling of local attachment must always prompt me to make for the advancement of the welfare of Tamworth and its neighbourhood.'³⁷ This was demonstrated at the formal opening of the TVR on 26 June 1847 when Peel made 'the speech of the day' at a lunch in a building 'run up for the purpose'.³⁸

Conclusion

Peel was Prime Minister in what was arguably the most crucial period in the development of the British railway system, when the main lines constructed in the 1830s were added to in a very unsystematic way, largely as a result of the Railway Mania. He played little part in these national issues, not favouring government intervention. He is remembered as being much less enthusiastic than Gladstone for the proposals which, in an attenuated form, became the Railways Regulation Act of 1844. He also landed the blow which effectively killed off Dalhousie's Railway Board by supporting at report stage in the House of Commons the report of the select committee which rejected the recommendations of the Railway Board in the case of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton.³⁹ Yet as this article shows, Peel, like other politicians in the 1840s, could not escape the impact of railways in his role as landowner or as constituency MP, but as Prime Minister he had to balance his constituency interests with his national responsibilities.

Notes and references

1. S D Chapman, 'The Peels in the early English cotton industry', *Business History*, 11 (1969), pp. 66, 77–78
2. Norman Gash, *Mr. Secretary Peel: the life of Sir Robert Peel to 1860* (London: Longman, 1961), pp. 15–16
3. Norman Gash, *Sir Robert Peel: the life of Sir Robert Peel after 1830* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 166
4. William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire ...* (Sheffield: Leader, 1851), p. 615
5. 6 William IV, c. xxxv. The Burton brewers were not on the board elected at the first meeting of proprietors after the Act was passed which was very Birmingham-dominated.
6. The National Archives (TNA) RAIL 36/4, sub-committee on works and compensation, 21 August 1837
7. Kingsbury is the station named in the Traffic Committee minutes of 13 May 1842 (TNA RAIL 36/5), but Wilnecote and Fazeley, which was opened three days later, was nearer to Drayton Manor and on a direct road so the reference to Kingsbury may be an error.
8. Peel was Home Secretary from 1822 until 1830 (except for eight months in 1827) and Prime Minister from December 1834 to April 1835 and from 1841 to 1846.
9. British Library (BL) Add Mss 40488, 13 September 1841

10. Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians, 14 June 1842, *The Letters of Queen Victoria ... between the years 1837 and 1861*, ed. A C Benson and Viscount Esher (London: John Murray, 1907), vol. 1, p. 507
11. BL Add Mss 40536, Peel to Glyn, 22 November 1843. The Trent valley line was subsequently built to pass under the B&DJR line, so there were adjacent stations at the lower and upper levels.
12. Samuel Beale, an iron manufacturer, was mayor of Birmingham in 1841, a founder of the Birmingham and Midland Bank, later the Midland Bank, and a future chairman of the Midland Railway.
13. TNA RAIL 36/3, special meeting of the board, 21 November 1843
14. *The Times*, 25 and 29 November, *Illustrated London News*, 2 December 1843; C R Clinker, *The Birmingham & Derby Junction Railway* (Weston-super-Mare: Avon-Anglia, 1982), p. 20
15. Gash (1972), p. 170
16. Peel to Prince Albert, 12 November 1843, *The Letters of Queen Victoria* (1907), vol. 1, pp. 632, 634–5. ‘Bradshaw’s Railway Guide’ became a monthly in 1842.
17. TNA RAIL 1008/104, William Newton, chairman of the NMR, to Glyn, thanking him for this, 8 December 1843
18. TNA RAIL 1008/104, Herepath to Creed, 2 December 1843
19. Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria RI* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), pp. 219–20 (citing Queen Victoria’s Journal, 3 December 1843)
20. BL Add Mss 40454, Peel to Glyn, 15 May 1844
21. *Railway Times*, 15 November 1845
22. BL Add Mss 40578, 7 November 1845
23. Peel’s second son, Frederick, born 1823, later lived in the manor house at Hampton-in-Arden. Liberal MP for Lichfield, 1849–57 and 1859–65. Member of the Railway Commission from 1873 until his death in 1906.
24. BL Add Mss 40591, Peel to Glyn, 6 May 1846
25. A plumber and glazier of Cole Hill, Tamworth, *Post Office Directory of Birmingham with Staffordshire and Worcestershire*, (London: Kelly, 1850), p. 334
26. BL Add Mss 40591, 1 May 1844
27. Charles Ferrers Palmer, *The History of the Town and Castle of Tamworth* (London: Nichols, 1845), p. 193
28. White (1851), p. 632
29. BL Add Mss 40591, Mayor to Peel, 6 May; Peel to Glyn, 7 May 1846
30. BL Add Mss 40591, Mayor to Peel, 18 May 1846
31. BL Add Mss 40591, Tootal to Peel, 26 May 1846
32. TNA, RAIL 699/2, 6 and 21 May, 11 June 1846
33. TNA, RAIL 699/2, 4 March, 8 April and 10 September 1847. Watkin was appointed secretary of the TVR in September 1845 and continued in that role on the L&NWR’s TVR Committee. Alderman John Hall was a fellmonger and tallow chandler of George Street (*Post Office Directory* (1850), pp. 333–4).
34. BL Add Mss 40591, Peel to Mayor, 7 May 1846
35. BL Add Mss 40591, Peel to St Germans, 8 May; Peel to Mayor, 13 May; Glyn to Peel, 24 June 1846. The TPO from London to Preston operated from late 1838.
36. H S Wilson, *T.P.O. A history of the travelling post offices of Great Britain. Part 1* (Railway Philatelic Group, 1971), pp. 31–37
37. BL Add Mss 40591, Peel to Mayor, 13 and 17 May 1846
38. The description of Peel’s speech is from *The Diaries of Absalom Watkin*, ed. Magdalen Goffin (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1995), p. 264. Watkin, father of Edward, the secretary of the TVR, contrasted Peel’s speech and behaviour with that of George Hudson ‘a greasy butcher looking fellow with a tremendous bump of self-esteem, who made an attempt at a speech and behaved very badly, talking frequently while others were speaking’.
39. Henry Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965, pp. 85–6)

An illegal Beeching-era closure in Dorset

Colin Divall

In 1956 the British Transport Commission (BTC) famously fell foul of the law when the courts ruled that the closure of the Lewes–East Grinstead railway was contrary to the line’s original act: the BTC was forced to secure parliamentary approval before it could finally withdraw the passenger trains.¹ While these legal shenanigans were but a footnote to the more serious political manoeuvrings in the late 1950s over the railways’ mounting deficit, they do serve as a reminder that the statutory closure procedures introduced by the 1947 Transport Act were not definitive. Indeed the messy division of responsibilities between the BTC, the Minister of Transport (MoT) and the consumer bodies established by the act – the Central Transport Consultative Committee (CTCC) and the regional Transport Users’ Consultative Committees (TUCCs) – had left plenty of scope for objectors to seriously hinder cuts to the network by attempting to turn the committees’ public hearings into full-blown legal tribunals.² As an essential prelude to Beeching’s sweeping reforms, the 1962 Transport Act was in part intended to prevent such tactics: section 56 (7) spelt out the British Railways Board’s responsibility to publicise all proposed passenger closures while other provisions specified the minister’s sole responsibility for deciding whether a closure should proceed and restricted the TUCC hearings to matters of individual ‘hardship’ that might follow withdrawal.³ This did not, of course, prevent controversy over subsequent proposals once the floodgates opened in the wake of the Beeching Report. Nevertheless despite the extensive and often critical commentary – not all of it very well-informed – on the Beeching-inspired closure programme up to the mid 1970s, I have not found many suggestion that a line was closed without having been put through the statutory process.⁴ This note argues that in the case of the withdrawal of passenger services between Broadstone and Hamworthy Junction in Dorset the process was not followed and that therefore the line’s effective closure in May 1964 was, strictly speaking, illegal.

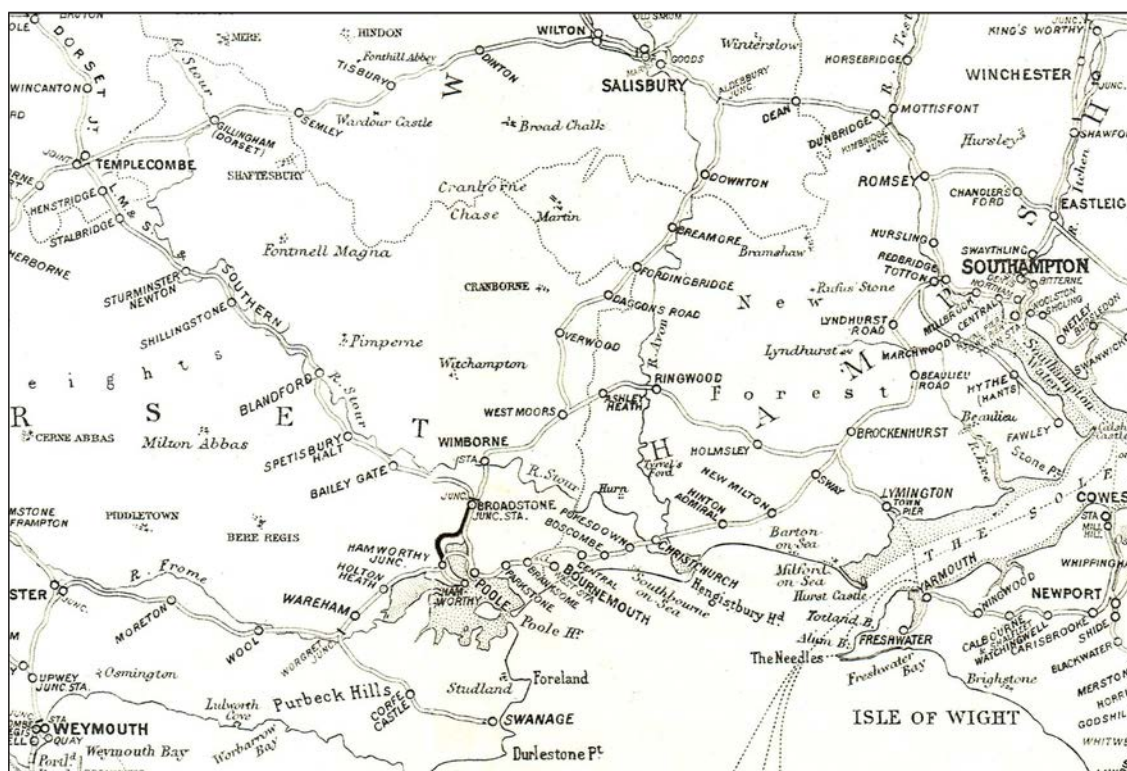
The route and its services

By the early 1960s this 3¼-mile section of the original route from Southampton to Dorchester –

Castleman’s Corkscrew or Snake – was very much a backwater, although since it carried a weekday passenger service it fell squarely within the remit of the 1962 act. Opened as a single line in 1847 and then doubled in 1863, the Hamworthy loop had lost its mainline status in 1893 when the LSWR opened the Holes Bay curve, the last link in the direct route from Brockenhurst through Bournemouth and Poole and on to Hamworthy Junction and beyond.⁵ Nevertheless before the First World War a handful of through passenger trains continued to run via the Old Road through Broadstone and Wimborne to Brockenhurst; since the gradients were less severe, goods traffic also tended to pass this way.⁶ In 1932 the volume of through traffic was so small that the Southern singled the Hamworthy Junction–Broadstone section; by January 1935 the advertised weekday passenger service was down to one train in each direction and the following year closure was apparently considered. The line survived, largely for diversions and goods and by summer 1939 only the up train was running.⁷ Passenger trains were now rare enough for special workings to be noticed occasionally by railway enthusiasts, although matters picked up a little in the 1950s as the line proved useful in the busy holiday season for bypassing Bournemouth; the concentration of Channel Islands boat trains on the ex-LSWR route also meant a little extra traffic, although not enough for specials to go unremarked.⁸ Crucially, in 1963 there was an advertised weekday down passenger train, the 3.17 am Salisbury to Weymouth, and an up train, the 6.35 am Weymouth to Brockenhurst: these called respectively at Broadstone, and Hamworthy Junction and Broadstone. In high summer, a daily (Sundays excepted) service between Salisbury and Weymouth used the route in both directions (calling at Broadstone) as did the non-stop SO Channel Islands boat train; Saturdays also saw two down and one up Waterloo–Swanage services. There were no regular trains from the Somerset and Dorset.⁹

The closure

The Beeching Report listed the three main sets of passenger services through Broadstone for closure along with the station and, not surprisingly given



Part of the Railway Clearing House map with the Hamworthy Loop highlighted

that all had been under investigation for some years, the Southern Region lost no time in issuing closure proposals in June and early July 1963. North of Broadstone these services ran over the Somerset and Dorset, the Salisbury & Dorset Junction and the Old Road via Wimborne.¹⁰ South of Broadstone (and as the proposals stated) these trains ran to and from Bournemouth (West or Central), using the line opened in 1872–74, although a handful terminated at Poole. Conspicuous (in retrospect) by its absence was any mention of services over the Hamworthy loop: indeed a map of the lines under consideration provided by the Southern Region to the TUCC and the MoT showed the route as unaffected.¹¹

Although the Southern Region had prepared these three proposals separately the Salisbury and Old Road services were dealt with as one by the South Eastern TUCC and the MoT; the Somerset and Dorset was more complicated (it involved both the South Eastern and South Western TUCCs) and, as it proved, much more controversial and drawn out. The SE TUCC knew about the daily trains over the Hamworthy loop (it even had details of the loadings),

and the TUCC/MoT were aware of the local importance of the summer-dated trains to the coast.¹² But public opposition, which in any case was not very marked, was never going to dissuade Ernest Marples from relieving what were by any reckoning heavy loss makers, and on 12 March 1964 the Southern Region gave public notice in accordance with the Minister's letter of consent of the withdrawal of 'all railway passenger services between Brockenhurst and Bournemouth via Ringwood and between Salisbury and Bournemouth via Fordingbridge'.¹³ Broadstone was to remain open for the time being since it was served by Somerset and Dorset trains and the Minister had yet to decide about this proposal.¹⁴ Closure was set for 4 May 1964.

There was however no mention of withdrawing trains over the Hamworthy loop. Of course the Southern Region had no intention of continuing to run passenger trains over the line: managers had made it clear from the start that any surviving long-distance holiday trains would be diverted. But what about the local trains? As the relevant files have not

survived (at least at Kew) it is impossible to say how managers regarded these services. The high-summer trains from Salisbury were not due to start running for some weeks (they were included in that summer's public timetable), and if any consideration was given to the legality of withdrawing the two weekday services one can only assume that managers thought they were covered by the ministerial consent.¹⁵ It is also quite likely that they were simply overlooked until the last minute: on Tuesday 28 April 1964 – just four days before the last trains were due to run – the Southern Region issued a press release announcing that closure of the Bournemouth services would 'also affect some trains from other routes in the area that normally run over these lines'; among other changes the 3.17 am from Salisbury was withdrawn and the 6.35 am from Weymouth diverted to Bournemouth West.¹⁶ The last regular passenger trains thus ran over the Hamworthy loop on Saturday 2 May.

The withdrawal of these lightly used trains did not attract any local comment, at least in newspapers, and there was certainly no legal attempt to restore services. Nor was the MoT concerned, although civil servants had been worried enough about legalities to question whether the Minister had the power to defer closure of Broadstone station until a decision was taken about the Somerset and Dorset.¹⁷ But it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Hamworthy loop's closure to passenger trains was strictly speaking illegal, particularly given that the stations at each end – Hamworthy Junction and Broadstone – remained open, the latter until 6 March 1966. The procedures required by the 1962 act had simply not been followed: no notice had been given of the proposed withdrawals and no ministerial consent given.¹⁸

The line existed in something of a limbo for the next two years. It was still shown in the working timetables as open to passenger-rated traffic until at least April 1966, although without any scheduled trains.¹⁹ It is possible that excursions off the Somerset and Dorset used the line until that route closed in March 1966, although there is no record of this happening.²⁰ Not even this closure regularized the situation: the minister's letter of consent in September 1965 did not mention the Hamworthy loop, although Broadstone station was finally closed at the same time as the Somerset and Dorset under the authority of the Old Road procedure.²¹ Even the date of the Hamworthy loop's closure as a through route is not entirely clear: the line's historian suggests

that the track was severed '[t]owards the end of April 1965' but was only taken out of use on 5 June 1966!²² Given the evidence of the working timetables and other authorities, the 1966 date seems more likely, although by then the only trains were local freight trips.²³ For such a lightly used railway one more surprise awaits: Terry Gourvish notes that it was the subject of a rare informal request to British Railways by the MoT (probably in 1966) to close a goods line in order to reduce the cost of highway construction.²⁴

Conclusion

The illegality of the withdrawal of passenger trains over the Broadstone–Hamworthy Junction route was obviously not as significant as that regarding the Bluebell line: nothing happened. Yet the episode does remind us that even the apparently straightforward provisions of the 1962 Transport Act were not always properly followed and adds further grist to the mill of the argument that Beeching-era railway managers made numerous errors in preparing closure cases.²⁵ Whitehall needs to be added to that charge sheet. And as Charles Loft has observed, the 'sad irony of the Beeching years is that having struggled with a [pre-1962] closure procedure that made mountains out of molehills, the government abandoned it just as it got to the mountains', denying adequate scrutiny of proposals 'that really did deserve the sort of in-depth analysis objectors called for.'²⁶ This was arguably true of the wider set of services of which the Hamworthy loop was but a small part; and in any case a later generation of objectors, notably those to the Settle–Carlisle proposal in the 1980s, would become adept at using the provisions of the 1962 act, including mounting or threatening legal challenges when it was not strictly followed, to widen the terms of debate.²⁷ There is a huge quantity of material accessible at Kew about individual line closures, including the ministerial files to which Gourvish was refused access in the 1980s: who knows what else might be discovered if we look more thoroughly?²⁸

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8. E g *Railway Magazine*, vol. 78 (Apr. 1936), p. 307; vol. 98 (Dec. 1952), p. 850; D W Winkworth, 'Summer Saturdays at Broadstone', *British Railways Illustrated*, vol. 2(1) (Oct.-Nov. 1992), pp. 11–16
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11. TNA, MT124/775; MT124/777
12. TNA, MT124/777
13. *Bournemouth Evening Echo* (12 March 1963)
14. TNA, MT124/777
15. Southern Region, *Passenger Services Timetable: main line and suburban* (15 Jun. to 6 Sep. 1964), table 34
16. Press release (28 Apr. 1964), TNA MT124 775
17. TNA, MT124/775
18. I am grateful to Dr Simon Gibbs for guidance on the legal position.
19. Southern Region, *Working Time Table of Passenger Trains Main Lines* Section A (11 Jun. 1964 UFN; 14 Jun. 1965–4 Sep. 1966; 18 Apr.–11 Jun. 1967)
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Boat and ship building in nineteenth-century Wakefield

John Goodchild

Wakefield was an inland town where sea-going schooners, river and sea coastal keels, sloops and billyboys, and even short narrow boats were built and repaired. The town lies almost midway between the North Sea to the east (some 70 miles by river from Hull) and the Irish Sea to the west. It was served from the east by the Aire & Calder Navigation which reached the town in about 1702. From the 1770s its locks were sufficiently large to take estuarial and even coastal vessels of increasing size. Westwards of Wakefield two lines of inland waterway stretched across the Pennines, whilst southwards from 1804 there was the Barnsley Canal, making a connection via the Dearne & Dove Canal with the Don Navigation and the major towns on its banks and ultimately reaching the Trent.

Wakefield was thus placed at the hub of a group of waterways, some of which were wholly or in part enlarged to take vessels with larger dimensions than those originally envisaged. Its situation led to its growth to become eventually the largest corn market outside London and also a major market in raw wool. In addition there was a rapidly growing trade in coal, all commodities which in major part utilised the cheap form of transport represented by the waterways.

Boat builders in Wakefield

Short, wide boats were built on the river or canal sides both above and below Wakefield, but there was a concentration of ship and boat building and repair in the town itself. Boat building was taking place as early as 1802 and five at least were built during the one year 1805. No builders' names are recorded, although John Bedale of Wakefield was described as a 'ship carpenter' in a directory of 1805.

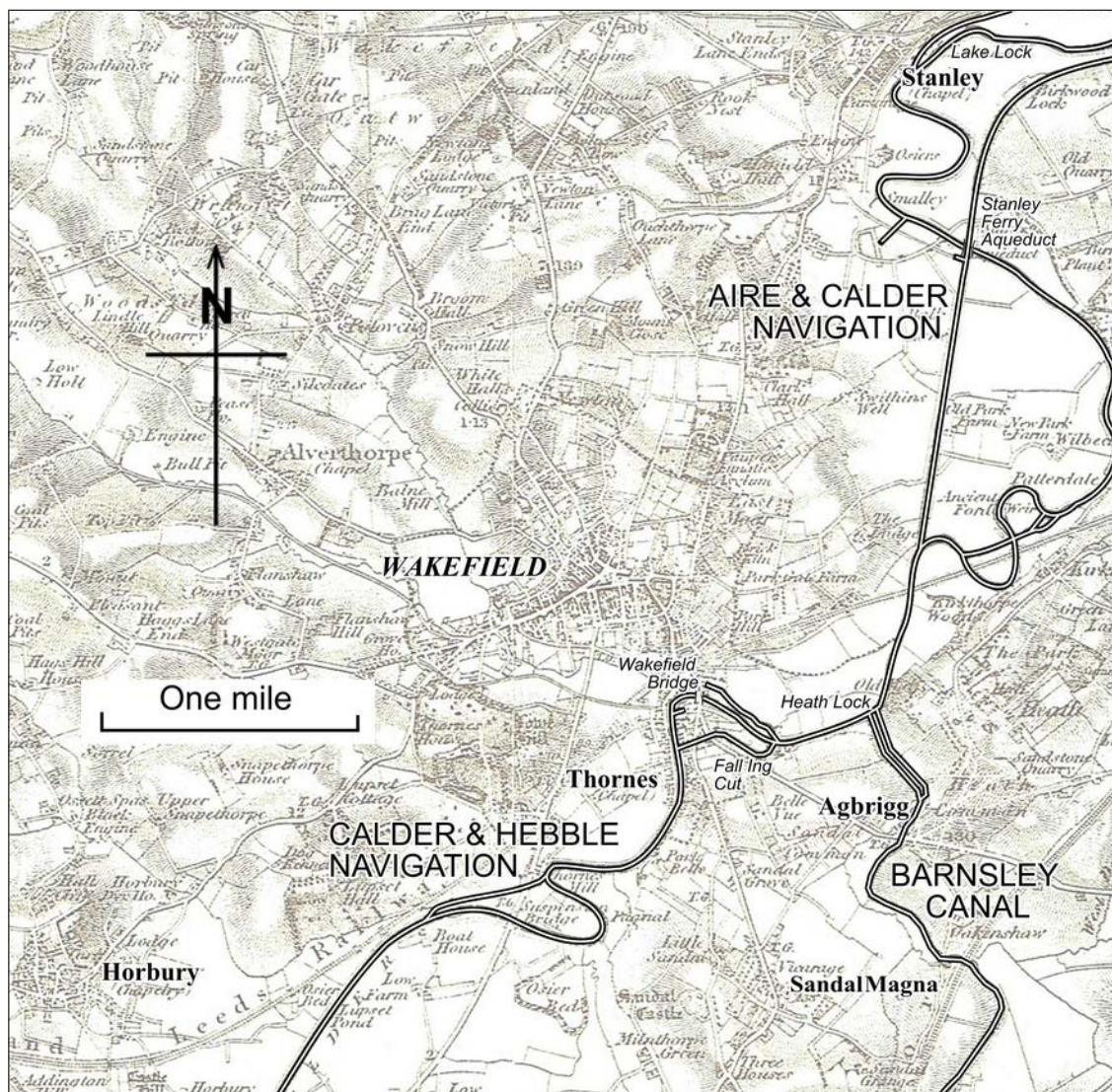
John Collinson is the sole such tradesman named in 1811 when he was located at the New Cut (the Fall Ing Cut of 1761, which first allowed boats to navigate above Wakefield bridge). In a directory of 1822 he was described as 'sloop and boat builder' at Wakefield Bridge End, a different location (of which a drawing showing boatbuilding survives). He also seems to have been boat building at Huddersfield in

1813 and at Mirfield in 1822. In 1822 the Calder & Hebble Navigation arranged for payment by Collinson for his timber yard and slip at Fall Ing Cut. Between 1822 and 1827 he is known to have built six vessels which were registered at Hull, whilst an Abraham Collinson was building boats at Bottomboat below Wakefield on the Calder between 1815 and 1817 and was still a boat builder there in 1842. A James Collinson, a mast and block maker, was declared a bankrupt at Wakefield in 1829.

Also active in boat building at this period were Joseph Teale, who was building vessels at Agbrigg between 1812 and 1822 (see below) and then at Wakefield from 1823 to 1829, and William Smith who built a solitary vessel in 1823. An 1834 trade directory lists two sloop and boat builders (Thomas Collinson and James Craven) and one boat and sloop repairer, Edward Ward of Thornes Lane. There were also two builders at Horbury Bridge (John Hartley and John Martin) where boats had been built since at least 1798; Martin had been in business here since 1813 or earlier.

Thomas Collinson, the son of John Collinson, was born in about 1800. He first appears in the record in 1832 when, described as a 'ship carpenter', he delivered the hull of a sloop, to be called the *Hope*, to a Beverley waterman who in return delivered up the hull of a vessel called the *Miller* and agreed to pay £210. He is also referred to as a mast and block maker. Between 1832 and 1839 Collinson built four vessels which were registered at Hull and the local newspaper refers to Collinson & Co launching a new keel from their Wakefield yard at the end of 1838 and to the launching of the new sloop *Ellen* which they had built in 1840. Collinson was declared bankrupt in 1841 although he helped to set up another boatyard near Horbury Bridge above Wakefield early in 1843. There was also a Thomas Collinson who was a boat builder at York in the 1850s.

Another important boat builder, who took over both of the Wakefield yards of the Collinsons, was James Craven, born at Baildon in about 1785 and who began building in Wakefield by 1825. The 1830 trade



Canals and navigations around Wakefield overlaid on an 1841 Ordnance Survey base map

directory refers to him as a ‘sloop & boat builder’ and James Craven & Co are also listed as mast and block makers, in both cases at Wakefield Bridge End. Much of what is known of his work comes from occasional newspaper reports. In 1837 the new sloop the *Magnet* was launched at his yard and in 1839 what was described at a splendid schooner, the *James*, built for Harrison & Rhodes and of 190 tons burden, was also launched there. It was said to be intended primarily for the coasting trade but also for foreign and inland work and it was the first vessel to pass down the Aire & Calder Navigation’s new cut

from just below Wakefield, including the new Stanley Ferry aqueduct, when it was opened in 1839. Seven of his vessels built between 1825 and 1849 were registered at Hull and in 1845 he built a sloop, the *Major of Lynn*, registered as of King’s Lynn, a vessel some 16 feet by 15 feet.

Like several other Wakefield men with waterway interests, between 1840 and 1851 Craven employed the young Thomas Ramsden as his lawyer and from Ramsden’s surviving papers a little more is learnt of him. In January 1843 he sold the keel of the *Hopewell* to a Wakefield waterman who was to pay a total of

£108 12s in monthly instalments over two years. In 1847 Craven was among those who formed the Wakefield Marine Insurance Company as one of the 'owners or part owners of vessels employed in the carrying trade'; he was thus a boat owner as well as a boat builder. In his draft will of 1846, Craven (described as a 'ship Builder') refers to his shares in the *Cupid* and the *Capital*, and in the sloop *Catherine & Elizabeth*. In an 1857 trade directory he is listed as one of the 29 boat and barge owners in Wakefield and its immediate vicinity.

By 1846 Craven had two boatyards at Wakefield, one adjoining the Upper Mill with its own canal and dock, two smithies, a saw pit and a large boat builder's shop, the other alongside Fall Ing Cut on its south side and adjoining the Barnsley Road. The Barnsley Road site also had a saw pit, a stove for shaping timbers and several buildings. By the time of the 1851 census, Craven, then aged 66, was sufficiently opulent to be able to live in the substantial Bridge House, close to the Barnsley Road yard, and to employ 26 labourers.

He gave up the Upper Mill yard, canal and dock in 1856 or 1857 to Thomas Stead who was recorded as its tenant in 1868 and 1872. Stead both built and owned vessels. He was born in about 1806 at Church Fenton and in 1851 he employed only two men in his ship-carpentering business at Wakefield. By 1861 this had increased to thirteen men and two boys but in 1871 he employed only seven hands.

The local press carried occasional references to the activities of R S Stead who was presumably related in some way to Thomas Stead, although how is not known. In May 1868 the following news item appeared in the *Wakefield Express* (8 May 1868). It will be noticed that the event was regarded as a public attraction in Wakefield.

LAUNCH OF A SCHOONER

On Monday afternoon a schooner, made by Mr. R.S. Stead, was launched from his boatyard at Bridge-end. About 2,000 persons witnessed the ceremony. The schooner, which has been made for Messrs. Wilby (Bottomboat) and Campbell (Brotherton), is of 100 tons burthen, and has cost £1,000. It is built for the coasting trade. "Village Flower" is its name, and it and the other vessels on the river were decorated for the occasion. An unusual delay was occasioned in the launch from the lowness of the water. After the event from 30 to 40 men sat down to a supper at the White Swan Inn, jointly provided for them by the owners and the maker; Mrs. Stead provided tea for about 20 of their wives and sweethearts.

A week later Stead placed the following advertisement, again in the *Wakefield Express* (15 May 1868):

SALE BY PRIVATE CONTRACT

Bridge Dock-Yard, has for disposal a good second-hand SLOOP or BILLYBOY (from 80 to 85 tons burthen), with all on board fit for sea. Price and particulars on application to Mr. STEAD.

Another member of the Stead family was Joseph S Stead who was born in about 1851. He was a barge, keel and boat builder at the Old Bridge Dock – as he called it – for 25 years. By 1887 he had additionally become a coal merchant and retired from the business in 1911. He was subsequently reduced to applying for financial assistance from the Wakefield Tradesmen's Benevolent Institution.

Stead was followed successively in the Upper Mill yard from the 1880s by William Rider, Richard Ledger (perhaps also of the Shepley Bridge boatyard some miles upstream) and Robert L Tasker, the last of whom was building there when in 1908 he described himself as a 'barge and boat builder & repairer, also ladder maker, &c., Stennard dock yard'. His speciality was the building of coal boats to carry 60 tons on a draught of 4 feet, 57 feet. 6 inches long and of 14 feet 2 inches beam. He was also a general smith and offered 'pleasure boats built to order'. His surname suggests that he was related to Henry Tasker who was a boat builder at the old Agbrigg yard below Heath Common in 1887.

Another Wakefield boat builder was John Metcalf. In 1867 he bought the boatyard, where he had already been working for some years previously, for the substantial sum of £1,217 14s. He mortgaged it, with its slips, sheds and buildings, for £1,100. He did not last very long, for in 1869 the mortgagee sold the boatyard, described as being 'late in Metcalf's occupation'. The property was advertised as including a 'slip with the crabs, carriage and chains attached thereto, sheds, outhouses and buildings'. They were all sold to a Wakefield maltster and the site ceased to be used as a boatyard.

Boat builders in Agbrigg

The one-time village of Agbrigg has now been absorbed into the city of Wakefield and forms one of its southern suburbs. It lay on the line of the Barnsley Canal which was opened in 1799. Vessels intended for use in estuarial waters as well as sea-going vessels were being built here from at least 1803. The apparent lack of a dry dock at the time strongly suggests that

they were being built on the canal side. Ships intended for tideway and sea work were rigged as sloops, i.e. fore and aft, but no names of their builders are known before 1812. The length of the 16 sea-going sloops known to have been built there up to 1823 ranged from 55 feet 2 inches to 57 feet 7 inches and their burthen from 45 to 51 tons.

The sole builder whose name is recorded between 1812 and 1822 was Joseph Teale (or Teall). He was described as a boat builder of Agbrigg in 1820 when his daughter was drowned in the Calder in 1820; another daughter married in 1830. He was in partnership with one Wordsworth as ropemakers at Agbrigg until 1816 when the partnership was dissolved leaving Teale to carry on by himself. He had a timber yard at the bottom of Kirkgate in Wakefield, near the bridge, in 1827 and in 1831, when he was made bankrupt, the sale of his 31 houses was advertised. His eldest son, William (1808–1882), after a good education at Heath and Enoch Harrison's academy in Wakefield, spent some time working on a boat before becoming a marine store dealer and ultimately a master ironfounder and a leading industrialist (and freemason) in Wakefield and a pillar of the Conservative party and St Mary's church.

Only four of the sloops which Teale built at Agbrigg were described further than as being wooden, round-stemmed sailing ships with single masts and sloop-rigged; the exceptions were the *Marys* of 1813, described as clinker-built, the *Providence* of 1822, clinker-built with a topping-up bowsprit, and the *Friendship* 1823, carvel- and clench-built and also with a topping-up bowsprit; the last of these was lost on the Lincolnshire coast in 1849. An earlier *Friendship*, built at Agbrigg in 1810, was clinker-built with a topping-up bowsprit; she was registered at Grimsby in 1810.

The sizes of vessels built at Agbrigg increased slightly as time passed although the original size of locks on the Barnsley Canal had not increased beyond the original 58 feet by 14 feet 10 inches which was only enlarged in length to 79 feet in 1881; presumably the new Heath lock of 1816 was of the original size. However, the bridges on the Barnsley Canal were all raised, where necessary, in 1828 and 1829 to allow the passage of the higher-sided Billy Boys. In 1846 Samuel Womack built the round-stemmed sloop *Industry* at Agbrigg which was 60 feet by 15 feet 2 inches; she must have been got out of the boatyard and into the river Calder without passing through the intervening canal entrance lock

at Heath. Another vessel, the *Three Brothers*, rigged as a ketch, was built at Agbrigg in 1852; she was 48 feet by 14 feet 9 inches and of 47 tons burthen and would just have passed through Heath lock. Downstream, at Stanley Ferry yard, the locks to be passed were longer and wider – from 1813, 70 feet by 18 feet – so it was possible for the sloop *Friendship*, built there by Edward Teall in 1866, to be 60 feet 3 inches by 16 feet in size with 49 tons burthen. The sloop *Hope*, built by Thomas Collinson at Wakefield in 1832, was 59 feet 5 inches by 16 feet 5 inches. The hull of an older vessel, the *Miller*, which Collinson received in 1832, had the much more substantial size of over 70 tons.

The Womack family of boat builders

The accounts of one boat-building firm whose accounts happen to have survived allow a fairly detailed study to be made of the industry in the mid nineteenth century. These were the Womacks of Agbrigg boatyard and later also of Stanley Ferry. Their yard lay in the township of Warmfield cum Heath and closely adjoined the new line of the Barnsley Canal. The local landowners, the Smyths of Heath Hall, had a dockyard in the township in 1812, and when the new line of the canal was completed down to the river Calder in about 1816, the old and now disused lock site became available, with its higher and lower water levels, for use as a dry dock. The adjoining house presumably continued to be used as a toll office until a new one close to the river and the new entrance lock were completed in 1830. Joseph Teall had this yard for many years and James Worfolk also built boats here between 1820 and 1824, possibly in Teall's yard.

The Womack family was in the area before the start of the nineteenth century. Joseph Womack was described in 1812 as a waterman living in Wakefield and Richard Womack, a tailor, had moved to Heath by 1824, dying there in 1842. Samuel Womack was born in the township in 1797 and his son, Young Womack, in about 1833, the son ultimately taking over the business in partnership with his brother Edward. Edward died in 1854 and Young Womack then worked briefly in partnership with Edward's widow Harriet.

Much detail of the business of the Womacks in the period from 1848 until its collapse in 1859 is contained in the two surviving account books. At Agbrigg the yard was held under the Smyth estate, initially at a rent of £73 10s *per annum* although when

the last payment was made in January 1859 it had been reduced to £18 17s 6d for the half year. A new and additional yard at Stanley Ferry was opened in 1854: rent was first paid to the Navigation in October 1854. In 1855 the Navigation's engineer estimated the cost of building a dry dock at Stanley Ferry at £800 and in October 1857 it was reported that the dock was complete, having actually cost some £1,000. It was then let to Womack at an increased rent of £82 a year.

The new dock lay on a piece of land bordered by the Navigation, the river Calder and the road between Stanley and Altofts, and close to the ferry; no buildings were shown on the site at the time of the Ordnance Survey of 1848–51. When the new dock was open, the chairman of the Navigation noted that 'it appears to be answering well for the tenants' – the Womacks-of course.

In 1848 the business was owned and run by the brothers Edward and Samuel Womack; they paid themselves wages weekly of between 24s and 30s. From the end of 1848 Samuel's son Young also received wages and in 1848 a Christmas box of 1s. He also kept the books for which he received £5 a year. By 1850 Edward was no longer receiving anything, but wages were being paid to Samuel Womack, Young Womack and an aunt.

After Edward's death in 1854 the partnership at Agbrigg was dissolved with Samuel ultimately taking control of the assets. It may well be that possession of the business also led to his taking over the tenancy of the land beside the Navigation and the new basin at Stanley Ferry. Judging from the ledgers, it appears that from 1854 he started to provide much more in the way of a repair service for boats – little had been done in that line at Agbrigg. Indeed, one might question whether before the depression in the fortunes of both waterways and boatmen, which was so marked from the early 1850s, much had ever been spent on repairing boats: they seem to have been regarded earlier as more expendable than they were from the early 1850s.

When the accounts commence in 1848 the Agbrigg yard was worked with six regular employees – Woodhead, Illingworth, Smith, Wainwright, George and Heald – who were paid between 2s 4d and 3s 2d daily. The men worked six, six and a half and sometime seven days a week. Work at the yard seems to have been kept going with occasional administrations of ale whilst the firm also paid for various quantities of gin and rum. The timber for shipbuilding was cut by

two sawyers who were paid according to-the work done – for example, £1 18s 1d was paid for 305 yards' cutting. The business allowed the two Womack partners 10s each in December 1848 'to pay Club with': was this a friendly or sick society, or perhaps the Wakefield Marine Insurance Society which had been established in 1847? The total amount of wages gradually increased although the names of the men ceased to be given. From some £8 a week (for six men and the management) in the late 1840s the total wages bill rose to £19 1s 0½d at its highest in August 1859.

The working of the yards involved the purchase and use of large quantities of timber, tar and pitch (bought by the barrel), nails (many from the Mapplewell district near Barnsley), spikes, gimlets and augurs, some bought at Holdsworth & Sons in Wakefield, where large sums were also spent on files, paint, oil, resin, thrums, scrapers, etc. There was of necessity a forge, whose bellows needed repair and which required coal and slack (as too did the steam chest). Oakum was needed in large quantities for calking the vessels – white oakum, hemp for oakum are specified – and a kettle. Lamp oil for illumination was bought; the horse required hay, corn, beans and oats. It was provided with grazing on the nearby common for £1 a year; when it was ill oil and medicine were needed. The horse doubtless worked the timber wheels but a pony was also kept and in 1849 a spring cart with two cushions was bought, costing £5 15s; it also had to be painted and varnished. The pony required the vet and horse duty had to be paid, whilst each time a visit was made into nearby Wakefield, the bar ticket at Agbrigg bar cost 6d. The business had to pay its church rates, poor rates and highway rates, and also its tithes. When a new grindstone was needed for sharpening the tools one was bought from Samuel Seal who lived nearby and worked at one of his many quarries, that on Heath common: it was a 4 feet 1 inch stone and cost 16s.

Occasionally there was special work to do: the gear for emptying the dry dock at Agbrigg required repair; 3,000 bricks were bought (at 2s 6d per 1,000); the employees were provided with a Christmas box (apparently 6d each – and the man at Holdsworths' shops, Billy, got 6d too); an allowance of 1s 6d was made for making a sawpit. Each time a new vessel was launched, a supper was provided for the workmen; half of the cost was paid by the builders, half by their customer.

Timber for boat building was needed in large and expensive quantities. An occasional tree would be

bought – a Dutch elm for £3 13s; 75 feet of Dutch elm from Samuel Seal for £3 15s; an oak from Worsbrough; 9d to Ben Shillito for 41½ feet of willow; and a 45 feet beech from J G Smyth of Heath Hall. But most timber was imported via Hull and Goole: elm, oak and willow, but also much lower quality imported timber described as raff and deals. Some mahogany was needed too, perhaps largely for cabin work, and by 1853 some timber came by train to the nearby Oakenshaw station on the Midland main line.

The surviving ledgers show that 19 new vessels were built over a period of nearly twelve years from 1848:

January 1849 (Launching supper)

March 1849

August 1849

January 1850

July 1850

May 1851

August 1851

January 1852

August 1852

July 1853

February 1854 (Vessel for Thos. Woodall, Swinton, paid £344)

October 1854 (Vessel for Geo. Wearley, paid £470)

August 1855 (Vessel for Ed. Crossland, paid £405)

1856 (Vessel for Ro. Patrick, Wakefield, paid £490)

1857 (Vessel for Martin Wormald, Wakefield, paid £390)

1858/59 (Vessel for Ro. Hodgson, Stanley Ferry, paid £322 2s 11d)

1858 (Vessel for Hibbard & Francis, Leeds, paid £176 6s)

1858/59 (The *Lissie* for J W Richardson, Wakefield, paid £290)

1859 (Vessel for Lindley, Altofts, paid £345 4s 2d)

One of these, the *Lissie*, was to survive in active service far into the twentieth century.

Apart from the accounts, a few documents survive which illustrate the Womack brothers' methods of dealing with customers; the earliest of these is dated 1838. It is an agreement for the building of a new

ship for Thomas Wright, landlord of the *Jolly Sailor*, Wakefield, in which Edward and Samuel Womack are described as ship carpenters of Agbrigg. They agreed to build a new keel barge of 14 feet 2 inches beam and 5 feet 6 inches height with a carvel bottom 2½ inches thick and the decks to be of red pine. The agreement is dated 8 December 1838 and the new vessel was to be 'built and finished in a good workmanlike manner' before 1 March 1839, allowing a building period of almost eight months. One hundred pounds were to be paid on the signing of the agreement, and another £100 'on the launching and delivery of the said Keel or Vessel'. Wright was to deliver in part payment for the new keel, another named as the *Royal Oak* when the new vessel was completed and launched.

In 1842 the two Womacks, still described as ship carpenters of Agbrigg and as co-partners, agreed to sell the keel *Elizabeth* of 45 tons burthen, Thomas Downes the late master and now lying at Agbrigg, to a Knottingley waterman for £50 to be paid in four equal quarterly instalments from 24 March 1843 with interest upon unpaid monies at 5 per cent. If the purchase monies and interest were unpaid, the Womacks had power to recover the vessel and sell her. This type of hire purchase agreement for vessels was common at this period although it was not apparently used after 1854, vessels being built to order and paid for before delivery.

Both keels (inland trade) and sloops (estuarial and sea work) were provided at the builders' expense with toll-free passes which cost 2s 6d whilst a certificate was sometimes paid for. Launching suppers to mark the launch of new vessel seem to have been augmented to an extent latterly and in February 1859 (for the *Lissie*?) the men received a 5s allowance 'when the new Ship went away from the Yard' and an expensive 4 guinea launching supper was held too.

Samuel Womack's business at Heath (an alternative name for Agbrigg) and Stanley Ferry failed at the end of 1859 and he was made a bankrupt. His assets were quickly sold in a sale at Stanley Ferry in November 1859 to John Ward, a Wakefield timber merchant, who also bought the shell of the vessel *John & Susannah* and a quantity of timber, for £135 13s 6d. The timber comprised:

- 8 x 20 ft deal boards, 7 in by 1 in
- 6 x 20 ft deal boards, 9 in by 1½ in
- 5 x 20 ft deal boards, 7 in by 2 in
- 1 x 23 ft deal board, 14 in by ¾ in

3 x 45 ft deal boards, 15 in by 1 in
 8 x various oak boards, 5 in by 1 in
 1 x 18 ft beam, 11 in square
 2 x 21 ft beams, 11 in square
 11 x 21 ft deal boards, 'sundries'
 1 x 22 ft deal board, 11 in by 2 in
 53 sundry oak and other trees, various lengths
 and girths and branches cut from them
 1 large tree
 1 pair timber drag wheels.

There were numerous amounts outstanding, both owing to and due from Womack, and winding up took until 1861. The debts owed to Womack were for small sums, almost all under £20 and presumably for repairs rather than new builds. The area covered by his creditors' residences was wide including the Aire and Calder valleys (Wakefield, Goole, Kirkstall, Brighouse), the Ouse basin (Newport, York, Beverley, Hull, Malton, Howden, Selby) and farther afield (Rotherham, Yarmouth, Holme in Norfolk,

Woodbridge in Suffolk). Meanwhile Womack was dependant for support upon his family. Dividends totalling at least 10s 9d in the pound were paid with a final dividend of 1s 9d paid seven years after the business failed.

After Womack's bankruptcy the 'ship yard' at Agbrigg (as it was described in 1859) seems to have remained unused for some years although by 1887 Richard Illingworth and Henry Tasker are described in a trade directory as boat builders there. In the 1890s it was occupied by Joseph Naylor, 'boat builder', who remained there until at least 1908. The subsequent history of the Stanley Ferry yard is uncertain. In 1866 Edward Teal, an established boat builder at the canal wharf in Water Lane, Leeds, was repairing vessels at both Leeds and Stanley Ferry and in 1866 he is reported to have built a boat at Stanley Ferry. Ultimately the Aire & Calder Navigation, which had been considering the removal of its repair shops from Lake Lock in 1864, moved to Stanley Ferry and built the present workshops there.



Wakefield waterfront.

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The Oldham family of railway contractors : a further note

Brian Lewis

Following publication of my article on the Oldham family of railway contractors in the March 2015 issue of the Journal¹ some further information on Elisha Oldham's eldest son Thomas has come to light. My article was concerned with the work of the family in Great Britain so I did not pursue leads abroad. However, I was subsequently contacted by a gentleman who purchased, and conducted a pharmacy business from, a very old building in Upton on Severn once occupied by Elisha Oldham. He had decided to research the history of the property² and later came across my article.

In view of this, it may be of interest to readers that Thomas Oldham (b.1812), having assisted his father on a number of UK contracts, emigrated to Australia in September 1852 together with two of Elisha Oldham's younger sons who had only been involved in their father's work in a minor capacity. These three sons all made their mark and the Australian colonial government was evidently impressed by Thomas, with his experience as an engineer from England, and between late 1852 and 1857 he was called upon to give expert evidence on government committees of investigation into railways, water supply and drainage systems being planned for the State of Victoria. In 1857 he overreached himself in taking on government contracts and became insolvent, spending a short time in prison. In about 1861 he moved to the Brisbane area of Queensland where he set up in business as Thomas Oldham & Son, Civil &

Hydraulic Engineers,³ where he was involved with a reservoir scheme and in 1864 designed an iron bridge in Brisbane. He died in 1867.

Of the two younger sons of Elisha who also emigrated, Ryton (1827–1895) was involved in some railway, tramway and dock work before moving to Tasmania where he designed a bridge and wharves. Simon (1828–?) did not undertake any railway work in Australia, becoming involved in road building and other municipal works.

It has also emerged that Elisha Oldham's son John Bingham Oldham was jointly awarded a small contract on the Tewkesbury & Malvern Railway in about 1862 for the building of some bridges on the line. John Bingham also managed to fall foul of the law in this instance as he and his co-contractor removed sand and gravel from private land without permission, resulting in a court appearance for them both.⁴

Notes and references

1. Brian Lewis, 'The Oldham family of railway contractors', *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, no 222 (March 2015), pp. 235–241.
2. Max Harris, *The Unremembered Inn: four hundred years of social history* (Studley, Warwicks : Brewin Books, 2015)
3. The son being Thomas Caleb Oldham (1838–?)
4. *Worcester Chronicle* 5 February 1862

The single-sided Cambridge station and the railway companies it served : history and operation

Rob Shorland-Ball, BA, FMA, CertEd

The 2015 Clinker Lecture presented on 17 October 2015 at the Birmingham and Midland Institute

I grew up in Cambridge and Mr George Docking, Chief Controller for the Cambridge District lived across Cherry Hinton Road from where I lived. Mr Docking – described by Gerald Fiennes in *I Tried to Run a Railway*¹ as a man of ‘resource and sagacity’ – was looking for young men (and some young women) who might join the railway as traffic apprentices after completing university. As a near neighbour, Mr Docking knew I was very interested in railways so suggested I should ‘start at the bottom and learn how the railway worked’ before, perhaps, becoming a traffic apprentice. For seven years I worked on Cambridge station as a goods porter during every VI Form and then (Nottingham) University long vacation from 1958 to 1965 when Mr Baxter was station master. It was shift work, and I variously worked all three of the shifts – 06.00 to 14.00, 14.00 to 22.00 and sometimes 22.00 to 06.00, ‘the night shift’ – so I saw a great deal of Cambridge as a working station. Particularly interesting for me were the additional jobs that the down and up end inspectors required. They included:

Walking nearly 2 miles along the cess north of the station (and back) to deliver notices to signal boxes, shunters’ bothies, carriage cleaners’ bothies, permanent way bothies when repairs or maintenance were in progress and Coldham Lane Diesel Depot.

Re-painting the white lines along the platform edges (night shift only).

Cleaning up on the platform and the station yard after Chipperfield’s circus elephants had de-trained at platform 3 and walked, trunk-to-tail, away to Midsummer Common.

Checking that HM the Queen’s ice-packed fish boxes bound for Sandringham were in good order and surrounded by sufficient sawdust to absorb any leaking moisture.

I was indeed seeing the working railway from the bottom, as Mr Docking intended, and it was fascinating; it encouraged me to research the history of Cambridge station and some of the results are here.

I read geography at university and my geographical mind-set encouraged me to ask why railway companies would choose to build railways to Cambridge and beyond. I always thought of Cambridge as the front door to East Anglia and a map of UK regions around Cambridge illustrates this (Fig 1). Cambridge, in the 19th century was a bridging-point on the River Cam, had water connections via the Cam and the Ouse to King’s Lynn and the North Sea, was a flourishing market town and had a university which was a major seat of learning – and of influence.

Several railway companies were interested in reaching Cambridge and beyond – eastward and



Fig. 1. Cambridge and surrounding regions

north-eastward into East Anglia's rich agricultural products; north and north-westward, especially for coal; and south-ward to London.

An early railway company whose name advertised their interest in East Anglia was the Eastern Counties Railway (ECR), incorporated on 4 July 1836. On the same date the Northern & Eastern Railway was given parliamentary authority for a 53-mile railway from from Islington, then a separate parish on the northern fringe of London, to Cambridge. A subsequent lease to the ECR took these conjoined companies to Cambridge and Brandon in Norfolk; train services began on 29 July 1845.

In 1851 the ECR published *The Eastern Counties Railway Illustrated Guide*.² It explained to shareholders, and any other interested readers, the railway system that the ECR now managed and their *raison d'être*. I quote a little of their florid prose.

First, the market for passenger traffic and the attraction of Cambridge as a seat of learning:

Among the numerous causes which have, of late years, given such an impetus to the trade, commerce and still increasing prosperity of Great Britain, few have contributed more largely than the invention and construction of Railroads. By the heretofore unprecedented facilities they offer to locomotion, they have induced nearly all classes to travel, and have thus, through the increased opportunities afforded of acquiring information, the more general dissemination of knowledge, and the improved tone and expansiveness of thought so produced, been obviously one of the principal means of gaining for England her proud pre-eminence as possessing probably the most intelligent population in the world.

Second, the geographical attractions of the Cambridge route and of railway development in East Anglia:

Upon glancing over the map of England, it will be immediately perceived that the country naturally divides itself into three distinct and characteristic provinces: from west to east they are i) the mountainous, ii) the hilly, and iii) the flat.

The flat, or eastern portion, has neither mountains nor hills, and even its trifling elevations sink at length into the immense marshes [the Fens] ... This district is inhabited solely by an agricultural population.

... the level nature of this flat district offered the greatest facilities for the construction of railways so, early as 1836, Acts of Parliament were obtained for the formation of two distinct lines; one, in a northerly direction, towards Cambridge, called the Northern and Eastern; and the other, easterly, towards Colchester, called the Eastern Counties.

Thirdly, the traffic which the railway generates:

Passengers: 1,734,390 persons were carried in the six months ending January 4th 1851 [over the 326 miles of railway which the company possesses]. The classification and revenue arising from this one and three-fourths of a million of passengers were as follows:—

	Number	£	s	d
1st Class Passengers	226,714	63,386	9	5
2nd Class Passengers	801,541	83,733	19	1
3rd Class Passengers	706,135	54,360	10	8

Goods: In Cambridgeshire alone ... the soil is exceedingly diversified – a strong black earth in the Fen districts and on the uplands gravel, loam, or clay [which] produce excellent wheat, yielding ... 24 bushels per acre and on the Fen lands ... 40 bushels per acre.

[Elsewhere] ... the dairy is the most important object of attention. Cottenham [parish] ... feeds upwards of 1,800 cows ... Willingham 1,200 ... and Ely [is celebrated] for its garden vegetables.

Considerable quantities of cattle and sheep are annually sent to the London market ... as are also vast numbers of wild-fowl ... thus furnishing the Metropolis with an article considered very luxurious.

The ECR had already leased the Northern & Eastern Railway and extended it to Cambridge. They took over the Norfolk Railway; absorbed the East Anglian Railway from 1 January 1852, assumed the working of the Eastern Union Railway, and absorbed the Newmarket Railway with its branch to Cambridge.

By 1856 the ECR controlled 617½ miles of track and by 1860 700¾ but it was not a financially stable or an efficient railway company and the complex railway politics which had brought about the successive amalgamations listed above had not yet brought about holistic management. Harry Paar and Adrian Gray, in *The Life and Times of the Great Eastern Railway 1839–1922*³ illustrate the sort of micro-management which often wasted the time of the board. For instance, meeting in July 1859, the Traffic & Permanent Way Committee debated the number of rats killed at various stations in June. Kennett on the Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich line recorded 150 deaths so at least the company was taking care of their 'excellent wheat' traffic as some passed through Kennett station.

The same ECR chairman, Horatio Love, who was concerned about rat infestations, remained chairman when the ECR and its constituent companies morphed into the Great Eastern Railway Company (GER) under the powers of the Great Eastern Railway

Act 1862. The company built on the extensive foundations of their constituent companies so that by 1913 the GER system of just over 1,000 track-miles extended from London Liverpool Street Station through the north-eastern suburbs of London to the whole of East Anglia. The ECR/GER directors' northerly and north-westerly ambitions were met by a GER and Great Northern Railway (GNR) joint line to Doncaster, via Spalding, Lincoln and Gainsborough.

On 1 January 1923 the GER became part of the London & North Eastern Railway Company (LNER). The sketch plan (Fig 2) illustrates the extent of the area served by GER trains and the position of Cambridge station as an important *entrepôt* (which is defined by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 6th edition of 2007, as 'a commercial centre to which goods are brought for import and export, and for collection and distribution'). If passengers may be regarded as a



Fig. 2. Sketch plan of the Great Eastern Railway at its fullest extent (1922)

form of 'goods' – which, for railway companies, they are – this lecture can now explore and explain Cambridge station in the geographical and railway context outlined above.

The ECR – with the Northern & Eastern Railway – had parliamentary authority to build a railway to Cambridge and beyond into Norfolk, but an early problem in Cambridge was where to site the new station. The ECR was anxious that it should be as central as possible. However, the town had grown around a central market place and the university owned a great deal of land in and immediately around the town so a central station site might be difficult to secure. A recent 'alternative guide' to Cambridge⁴ illustrates the lop-sided development of the built-up areas in a map (Fig 3).

The ECR, in seeking a Cambridge station site, was faced with a town that by 1845 lay almost wholly to

the west of the railway so the prospect of a really central station site was remote. It has often been stated that the university was opposed to railway development. I do not believe that the university was, *per se*, opposed to the railway development but it was an influential and powerful body in the town and in the country. Its power led to the insertion of several restrictive clauses in several local railway Acts which are frequently quoted as examples of university opposition. There is, however, little evidence that many of the clauses were enforced and some may be seen as contemporaneous concern for undergraduate morals and Sunday observance.

Indeed, Jesus College archives reveal a reason why a college, if not the university, might welcome the ECR's need to purchase land for a station site and a wayleave for the railway to continue northwards and eastwards. Jesus College owned much of the land

east of the present railway including an area called Radegund Manor in the vicinity of 'Coleridge' (Fig 3). The college website includes some history drawn from the college archives which shows that a 19th-century Master, Dr William French (formerly Fellow and Tutor of Pembroke College, Vicar of Cretingham, Suffolk, Rector of Moor Monkton, Yorkshire, and Canon of Ely, some or all of which offices he may have continued to hold while Master), negotiated the sale of part of the Radegund Manor land to the ECR in 1846. Dr French was anxious to have the station where it is because the sale afforded an opportunity to develop college land still in agricultural use. A condition of the sale of the station site was the construction of Station Road and the opening up of new housing sites on the road frontage: after Dr French's death in 1849 building leases were granted in Station Road and Hills Road. There were further sales in the 1850s and the 1870s to both the GER and the GNR. The total sales proceeds were £18,903 17s 6d, or approximately £24,880M

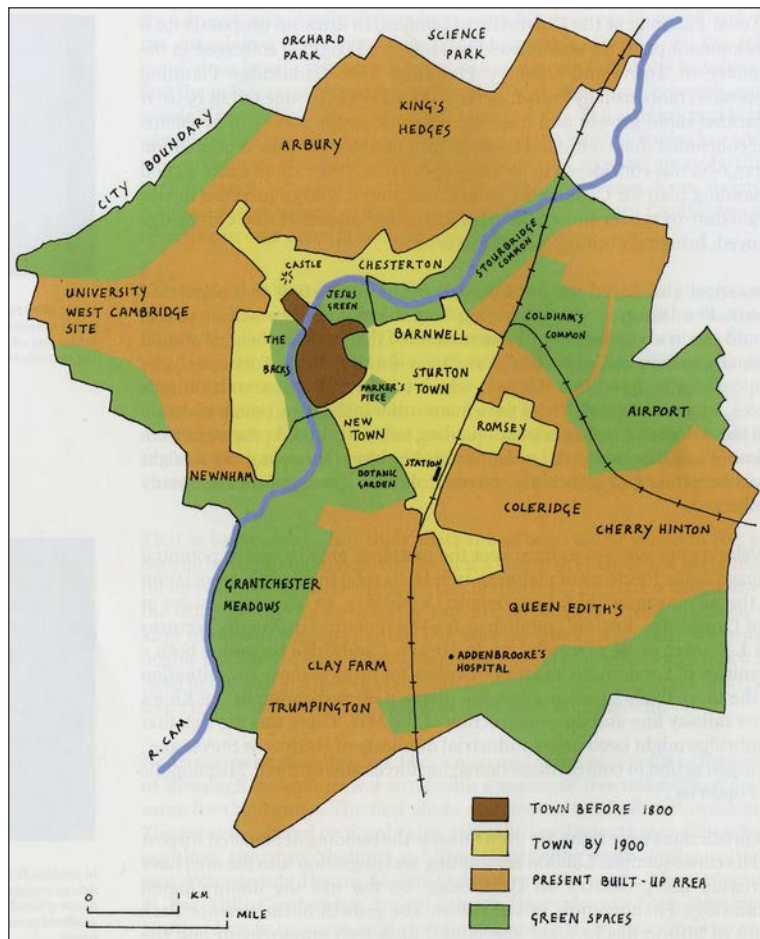


Fig. 3. Cambridge: the present-day built-up area

economic prestige value in 2016 money so Dr French had secured a very good deal.

The new station, perhaps to ensure that it was architecturally appropriate to Dr French's proposed developments, was an impressive building and the *Illustrated London News* of the time praised it: 'The general effect is exceedingly chaste and appropriate'.⁵ The building is described in Gordon Biddle's magisterial *Gazetteer*⁶ thus:

Although the design of Cambridge is attributed to [Francis] Thompson, Sancton Wood and Henry Hunt also played a part. The precise extent of their contributions has not been fully established. The building is in buff brick with stone dressings, and the frontage comprises an elegant colonnade of fifteen Romanesque arches, like an Italian loggia, on square columns with plain capitals beneath an ornamental frieze and a deep dentilled cornice. Originally pantiles on the shallow-pitched roof peeped over the edge. The arch spandrels contain roundels bearing the arms of the university and its colleges, seemingly in random order.

The design was continued around each end of the building, where road vehicles could enter and leave the colonnade by a broad, matching arch, and pedestrians by a narrower one alongside. The back

incorporated a long, narrow trainshed under the same roof, covering the single track and narrow platform which extended out at each end through similar pairs of arches. There was no colonnade, however; the rear elevation comprised a plain brick wall relieved by blind arcading and doorways, matching the front only in number.

Fig 4 from the *Illustrated London News* illustrates the track-side of the station and includes an up train but the artist, perhaps anxious to illustrate the train as well as the new station building, placed the train on a through road and incorrectly showed the up end water-crane off the platform and where the platform track should be passing through the colonnade arch as Biddle describes.

The paragraphs and diagrams which follow explain the operation of the new station but first it is relevant to remember some of the changes which the railway brought to the town. The coming of the railway developed the town plan more extensively but the new 'railway town' buildings were less architecturally handsome than the university buildings and much of the post-medieval town. Originally Cambridge grew around the Cam bridging-point onto the slightly higher land north and west of the river and along the river Cam itself – the 'Backs' of many of the colleges. The river was an important route-way to and from

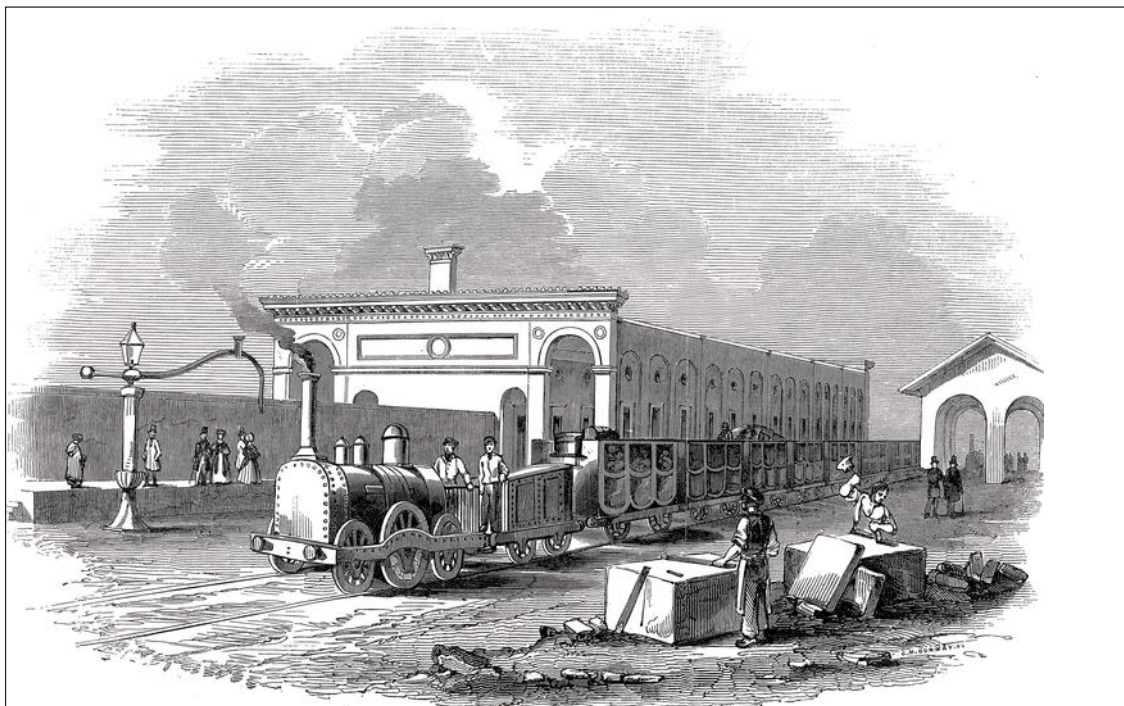


Fig. 4. Cambridge station in 1844 (from The Illustrated London News)

King's Lynn and although the railway promoters argued that the railway would feed the Cam and the Cam the railway, the water-men soon found that trade deserted their river. In the census report of 1861 a footnote states that in St Michael's parish 'many families have left as the Eastern Counties Railway is absorbing the trade of the Cam'. The decline of population in the riverside parishes of the old town was, however, more than balanced by the rise in new areas to the east of the railway. Fig 3 shows some of the early development and names Romsey Town which, along Mill Road north and west-east of the station, was where many of the numerous staff required for the developing railway lived.⁷ Much of this eastern area was ready for rebuilding in the 1960s. The original 'railway' houses were run up as quickly and as cheaply as possible; they were not built to last, and they have proved to be weak structures rapidly outmoded. In some parts reconstruction on modern lines has begun but progress has been slow. A pertinent conclusion to this part of the Clinker Lecture is a quotation from 'Poem for Railway House' by Dean Parkin, poet to the HLF-grant-aided Mill Road History Project of 2013–2015:

Engine cleaner, railway servant, shunter, railway porter,
Platelayer, bricklayer, signalman, engine fitter's foreman,
All lived here ...

And they all worked on the railway so, with staff in mind, we can segue into the operation of the station. Biddle comments:

In the early years a number of important stations had one very long single platform on what otherwise was a double line. Cross-over points at the centre in effect divided the platform into halves, thereby enabling two trains running in opposite directions to use it simultaneously ... Cambridge is the only station to have retained this feature, although British Rail redesigned or adapted several in this way, but later reverted to the conventional two platforms at most of them.⁶

However, the first Cambridge station, as in the engraving in the *Illustrated London News* (Fig 4), was much simpler than the more complex track-pattern that later evolved. The design of the principal building only allowed for a single track to pass through the track-side arches to the platform, especially inside the building, was narrow and did not extend much outside the central building.

In the 1840s trains were still relatively short, and usually composed of 4-wheel carriages drawn by quite small engines like the 2–2–2 in the *ILN*

engraving. But Cambridge station opened in the heart of the 'Railway Mania' when speculation was rife and railways were news. As the ECR told its shareholders in the 1851 *Illustrated Guide*, railways gave 'heretofore unprecedented facilities [for] locomotion [and] have induced nearly all classes to travel'. Cambridge station was very soon inadequate for the passenger traffic it attracted and operating up and down trains from a single short platform was potentially dangerous and very slow. During 1848, perhaps during repairs to the main platform, a wooden island platform was constructed for up trains at a cost of £273 18s 6d. In 1849 an ECR report referred to it as 'now removed' but public complaints and the increasing difficulty of operating more trains required its restoration in 1850. We know it was joined to the main platform by a steep footbridge and luggage was moved to it by portage through a narrow, low and rather noisome subway.⁸

No pictures have survived of this island platform or the footbridge, but when I worked as a goods porter at the station one of my extra jobs was up-end carriage-tail-lamp-man. The carriage lamps, and the paraffin for re-filling them, were kept in a small timber-built lamp-room with a sloping roof against the wall at the end of bay platforms 3 and 4. I enquired about the sloping roof and was assured by several long-



Fig. 5. Outline of former steps to island platform

serving porters that 'that is where the old footbridge was'. On a field-work visit to Cambridge station last year I was not surprised to find the lamp-room gone but delighted to find a pitch-painted black wall still partly visible behind 21st-century additions (Fig 5). I am always cautious about oral history evidence but I enquired separately and of several older men who all gave me the same answer so perhaps my picture re-captures a little past history.

The footbridge and luggage subway continued in use until 1863 when the GER removed them and re-modelled the station. The main platform was extended to 1,250 feet and widened, the arcaded brick wall enclosing the single-track was demolished, a new roof was built over the platform, the north and south bay platforms were put in place and both up and

down trains used the single, lengthened, platform.

This extensive re-modelling was necessary because, as Foxwell and Farrer⁹ memorably phrased it, the station's somewhat constricted track layout hosted 'four rival companies ... in a tangle of mutual inconvenience'. To illustrate this robust phrase I cannot improve on the map (Fig 6) from Geoffrey Skelsey's 2-part article in *BackTrack*, August 2005.¹⁰

The tangled history of the different railway companies which embraced Cambridge in their route plans has been detailed in several studies, including those by Cecil J Allen^{11, 12} and D I Gordon⁸ but Cambridge station's development as an *entrepôt* can be briefly summarised here. The 'via' references are to stations marked on the Fig 6 map:

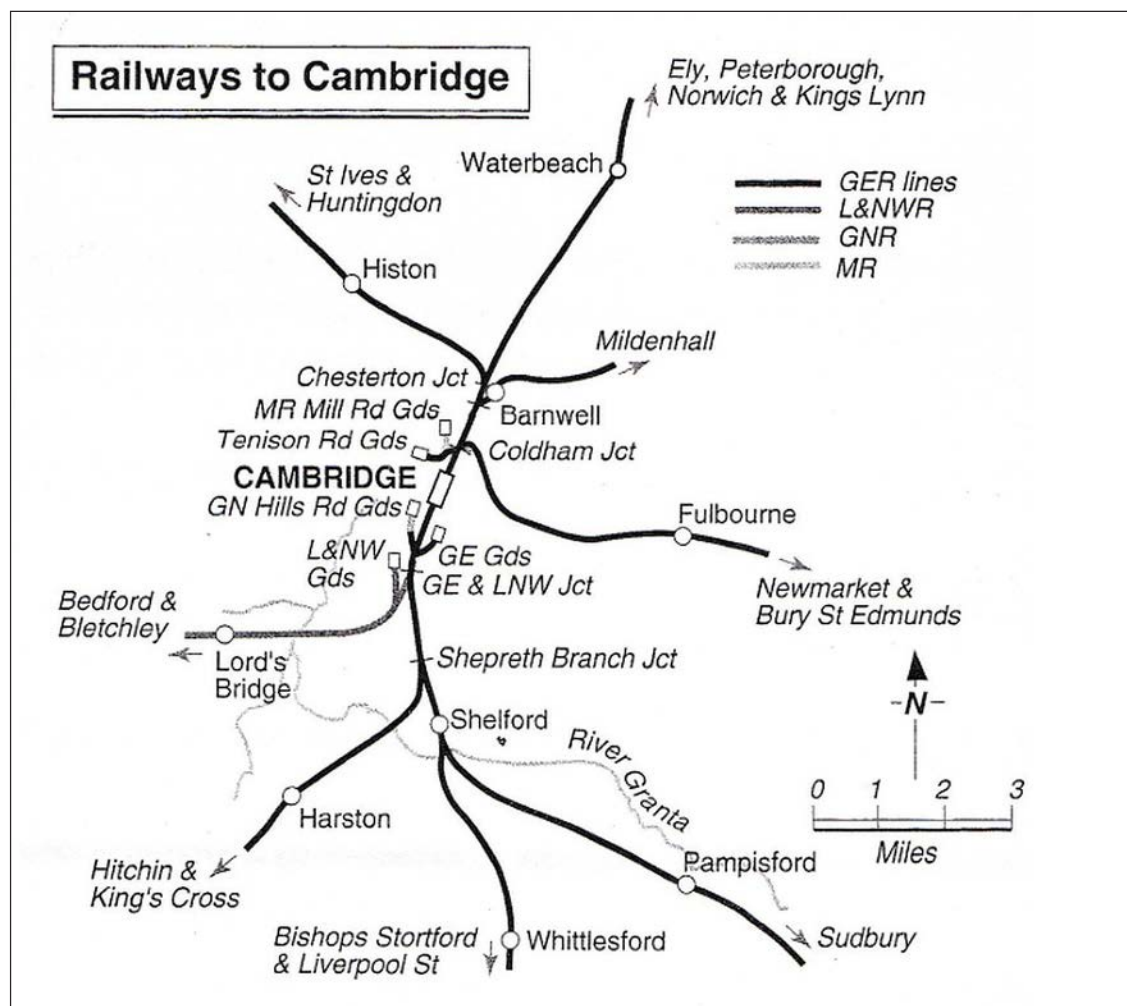


Fig. 6. The fully developed network of railways serving Cambridge

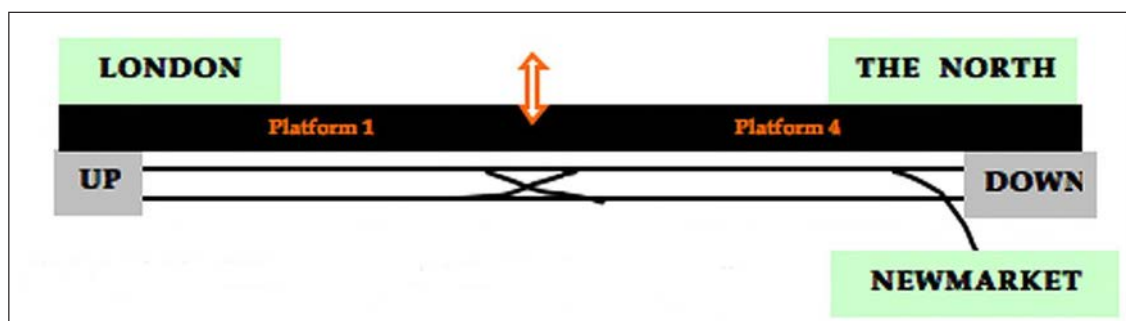


Fig. 7. Cambridge station track layout, excluding the bay platforms

1. ECR/GER from London via Bishops Stortford and onwards to Ely, Norwich, Yarmouth
2. Cambridge branch of the Newmarket Railway via Fulbourne and Cherry Hinton
3. GNR, jointly with ECR/GER, from London via Hitchin
4. ECR/GER to St Ives and Huntingdon via Histon
5. L&NWR to Bedford, Bletchley [and Oxford] via Lords Bridge
6. ECR/GER to Haverhill Sudbury, Marks Tey and Ipswich via Shelford and Pampisford
7. GER to Mildenhall via Barnwell Junction and Fordham

Operating such a ‘tangled’ station was never easy but a significant addition to the track-work during the 1863 re-modelling was the insertion of a scissors crossing at the centre of the lengthened single platform. The sketch plan of the track-work alongside the main platform (Fig 7) is a useful reminder of the complexities of working the station.

A useful reminder of double-track running in the UK is that up lines are on the left-hand side, facing forward in direction of travel so down lines are on the right-hand side, facing forward. Before the scissors crossing was built at Cambridge an up train approaching Cambridge from the north had to be crossed to the down line for wrong-line working when approaching the platform. The train usually worked to the up end of the long platform and, when departing, had to be crossed over again to the up line. Meanwhile a down train approaching Cambridge had to be held at the south end of the station layout until the up train had departed and crossed over, before the down train worked to the down end of the long platform.

The insertion of the scissors crossing enabled a more space- and time-efficient working of the long

platform so that up trains worked over the scissors to platform 1 and down trains, likewise, to platform 4. Passengers still faced a long walk but those familiar with the station knew in which direction to walk from the central booking hall and platform entrance.

A track-work problem which was only finally resolved in 1896 was the branch of the Newmarket Railway Company which arrived in Cambridge in 1851. It approached Cambridge station almost at a right angle and was sharply turned across all the running lines and sidings in an 8 chain radius curve to the down end of the station platform. Surviving records show that the GER was working to secure a deviation of the Newmarket branch approach but negotiations were long and slow. The intention, as shown on Skelsey’s ‘Railways to Cambridge’ map (Fig 6) was to go north from the station to a new junction at Coldham Common and then across the Common to re-join the branch west of Cherry Hinton station. Co-incidentally Jesus College owned much of the land required and were party to the negotiations but the GER’s first recourse to Parliament for a deviation was rejected and it was only in 1896 that the company was successful.

At either end of the station were bay platforms serving London King’s Cross and Oxford trains at the up end and GER branches including the Newmarket line (after 1896) and the branch to Mildenhall, as the map in Fig 6 illustrates. Cecil J Allen provided a sketch plan to accompany his 1908 *Railway Magazine* article (Fig 8).¹²

Controlling Cambridge station traffic with mechanical signalling required five signal boxes, in order from the London end of the layout: Hills Road (beside the road over-bridge) controlling the L&NWR route to Oxford; Cambridge South, Central and North boxes and Mill Road Junction (beside the road over-bridge) controlling the Midland Railway Mill Road yard for goods traffic and a junction which

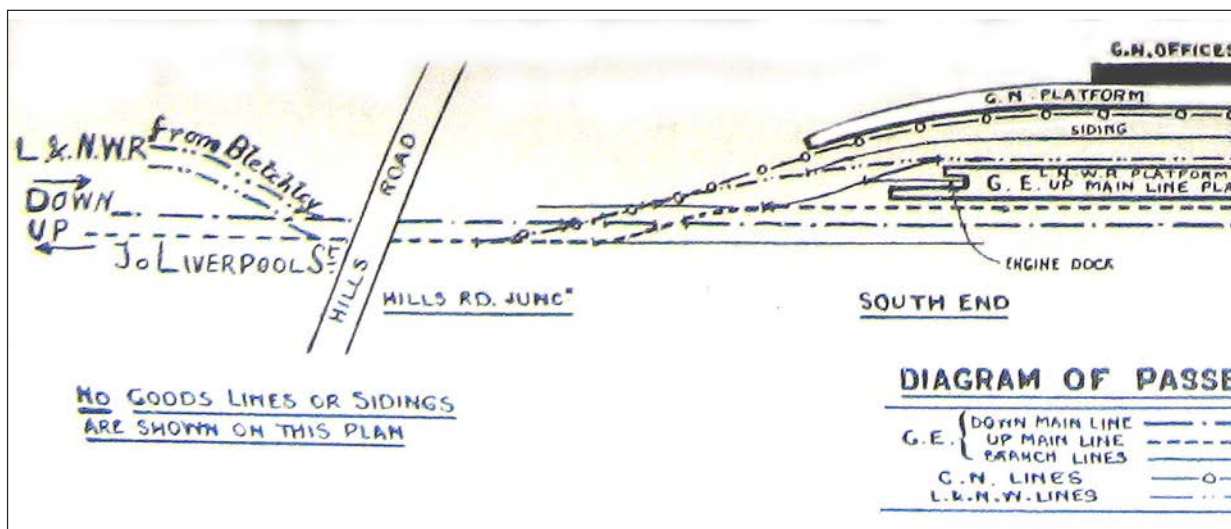


Fig. 8. Diagram of passenger lines

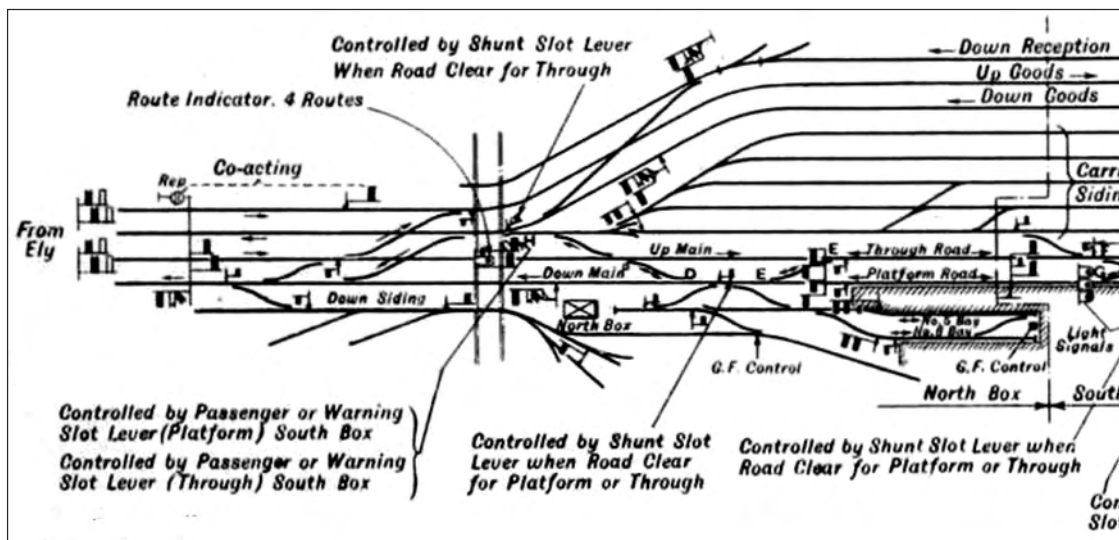
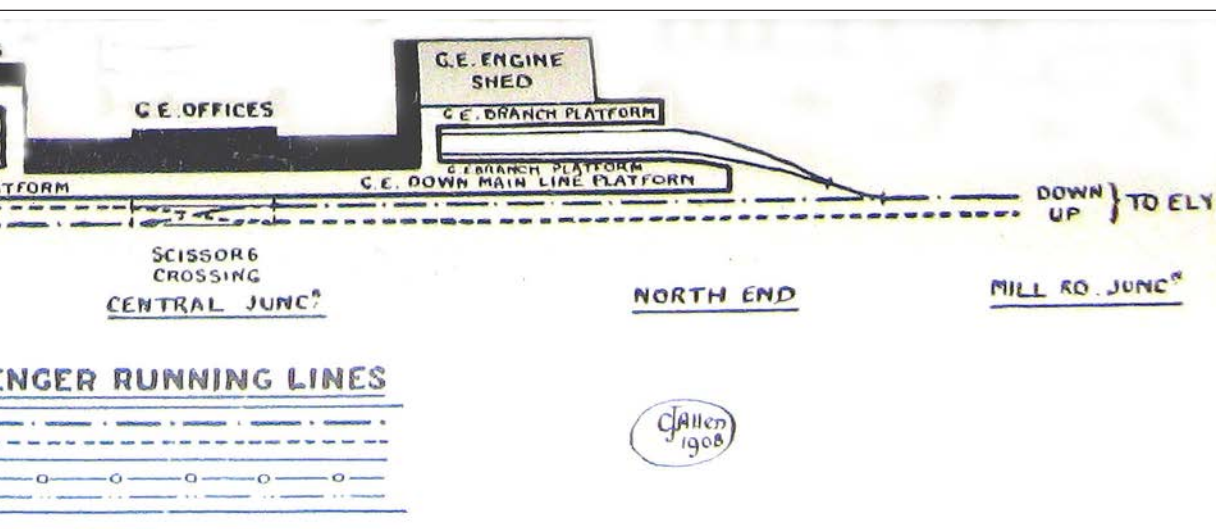


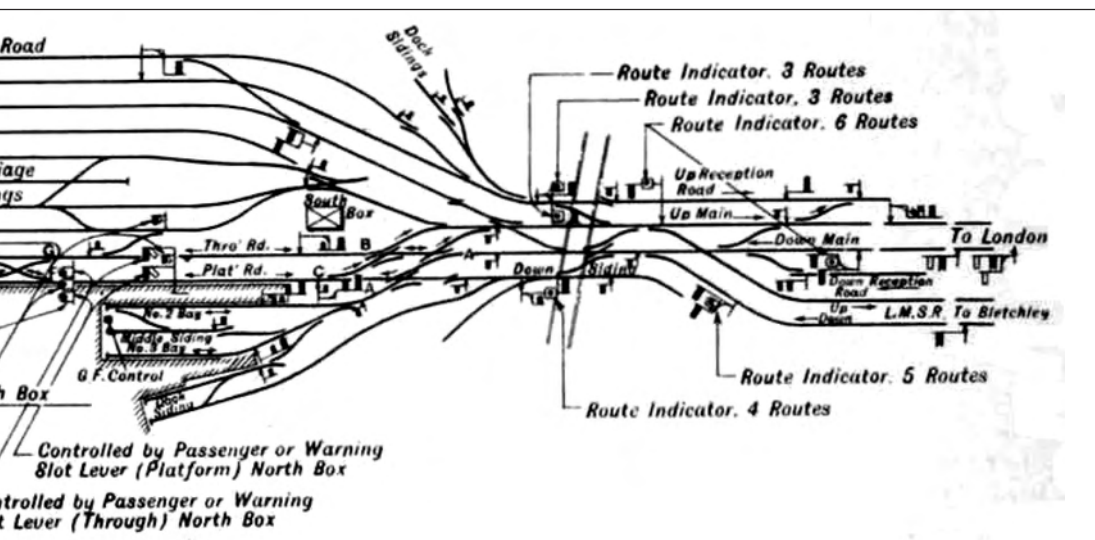
Fig. 9. Cambridge station layout

involved all four running lines on the down or 'country' side of the station layout. The GER, and subsequently the LNER, found this arrangement very labour-intensive, both as regarded manning the signal boxes which were all open 24 hours per day and seven days per week, and for the maintenance of the signal wires and point rodding as well as of the interlocked frames in the signal boxes. In 1926 *The Engineer* reported the installation of an all-electric system (Fig 9).¹³ The article is a useful source of reference for the interested reader who is not a signal engineer and is worth quoting:

The platform at Cambridge is 600 yards and ... it is served by a platform road which is common to both up and down trains. Down trains pass through the through road ... just south of the South Box, whilst up trains enter on to the platform road by the crossover road ... just south of the North Box. Up trains depart by way of the through road ... and enter on to what becomes the up main line. Paralleling the platform road is a through road which is a continuation of the up main line. It, like the platform road, is common to up and down ... In addition, there is a scissors crossover road ... [at the centre of the long platform].



passenger running lines, 1908



signalling plan, 1926

There are also two bay lines at each end of the station: Nos. 2 and 3 at the south end and Nos. 5 and 6 at the north end. All these bay [platform roads] are signalled for both arrival and departure.

The five signal boxes listed above were replaced by two, South Box and North Box, and all the systems were operated by power on the all-electric system provided by the British Power Railway Signal Company Ltd. of Caxton House, Westminster, London SW1.

The history and operation of Cambridge station

after this major re-signalling project in 1926 is a story 'for another time', as story-tellers like to promise. Ninety years later Cambridge is still a busy station; it has flourished through nationalisation with BR and now privatisation. A power signal box was installed in 1983/84 and that, too, has just been superseded by the ROC [Railway Operating Centre] at Romford. The ROC and the track layout throughout the station area is responsibility of Network Rail.

Three TOCs [Train Operating Companies] provide electric, and some diesel, services to and through

the station which can be summarised:

Cross Country

Birmingham to Stansted airport via Cambridge

Great Northern

London King's Cross to Cambridge and north to King's Lynn

AbelioGreaterAnglia

London Liverpool Street to Cambridge

Cambridge to Ely and King's Lynn

Cambridge to Norwich

Cambridge to Ipswich.

And finally there is now an island platform again because, although the scissors crossing and the long platform remains and are still used in the 'traditional' way with London-bound up services at the southern end and north-bound down services at the 'country' end, the intensity of services through the station required more platform faces for swift loading and unloading. A substantial new footbridge, with lifts for the less nimble, links the island platform and a sketch plan (Fig 10) shows the station layout today. It is another aspect of today's passengers that provision is being made for the storage of 3,000 cycles in the new station frontage developments.

Sharp-eyed readers may have noticed that the

'Railways to Cambridge' map (Fig 6) shows some of the goods yards around the station area but I have to omit the freight traffic story from this Clinker Lecture because it is another, and very interesting, story which must wait 'for another time' and more space.

I am currently writing a book about Cambridge station from which this lecture has been culled and I hope that there is enough here to encourage interest in the book when it is published by Pen & Sword in 2017. Curiously, there has never been a detailed and fully illustrated book which has told the story of this fascinating station so I shall finish with one of the memories of the station that I am collecting. James Lancelot, Master of the Choristers and organist at Durham cathedral, was an organ scholar at King's College in the 1960s. He recalls:

... the old railway was still represented by GER lower-quadrant signals (albeit electrically operated) – and by needlessly slow and infrequent trains to London. These tended to run in pairs, one to Liverpool Street and one to King's Cross, followed by a long gap. [I remember] the story of a traveller who arrived at the ticket barrier and asked what time the next London train was. 'It's gorn', was the answer. Well, what time is the next one please? 'That one's gorn, too.'

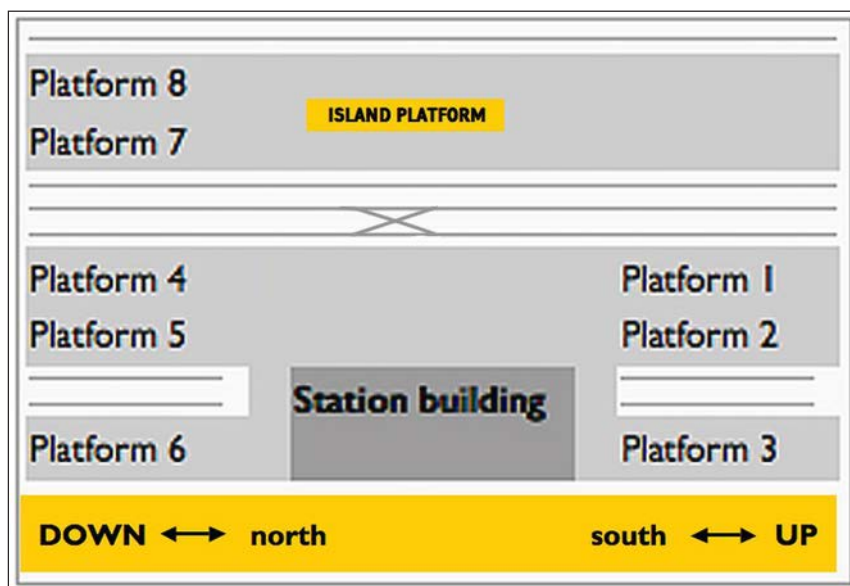


Fig. 10. Sketch plan showing present-day layout of Cambridge station

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All illustrations are from the author's collection.

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10. Geoffrey Skelsey, 'Of great public advantage' : aspects of Cambridge and its railways 1845–2005', *BackTrack*, vol. 19 (July, August 2005), pp. 400–6, 501–6
11. Cecil J Allen, *The Great Eastern Railway* (London : Ian Allan, 3rd ed., 1961)
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DANGERS OF THE RAILWAY

URCHINS IN MISCHIEF

Two very small boys – named Frederick Butler, aged nine years, and John Maclaren, aged eight – were brought before the bench at Arrington, Cambridgeshire, charged with placing an obstruction upon the London and North Western Railway branch line from Cambridge to Bedford, upon which a passenger train was travelling. The facts were that the two youngsters, finding a pair of trolley wheels and an axle (such as railway men use on the line) standing near a crossing, managed to get them on to the rails. Just then a passenger train from Cambridge to Bedford was heard coming and the little fellows, being unable to get the trolley wheels off the line again, were frightened and ran away. The driver was unable to stop the train, and dashed into the obstacle at about 35 miles an hour, smashing it to pieces. No serious damage was done to the train. It was stated that the trolley wheels and axle weighed nearly 1½ cwt, and that while it was astonishing the boys should have succeeded in getting them on the rails, it was no wonder they were unable to get them off again.

Mr. Lambert, solicitor from Euston Station, who appeared for the company, admitted the difficulty of prosecuting such very little boys, but it was thought right to bring the facts before the bench.

Mrs. Butler, a widow, the mother of one of the boys, said the other boy (Maclaren) was an orphan boarded out with her from Camberwell Union. Both lads were well dressed, and evidently well cared for, and both cried bitterly during the hearing of the case. The rector of the parish (Comberton) spoke as to the general good conduct of the boys.

The bench bound Mrs. Butler over to bring the boys up for judgment if called upon, and gave the latter a sever caution upon the dangers of playing on the line.

Daily News 10 December 1898

The Leominster Canal : derelict, abandoned or closed?

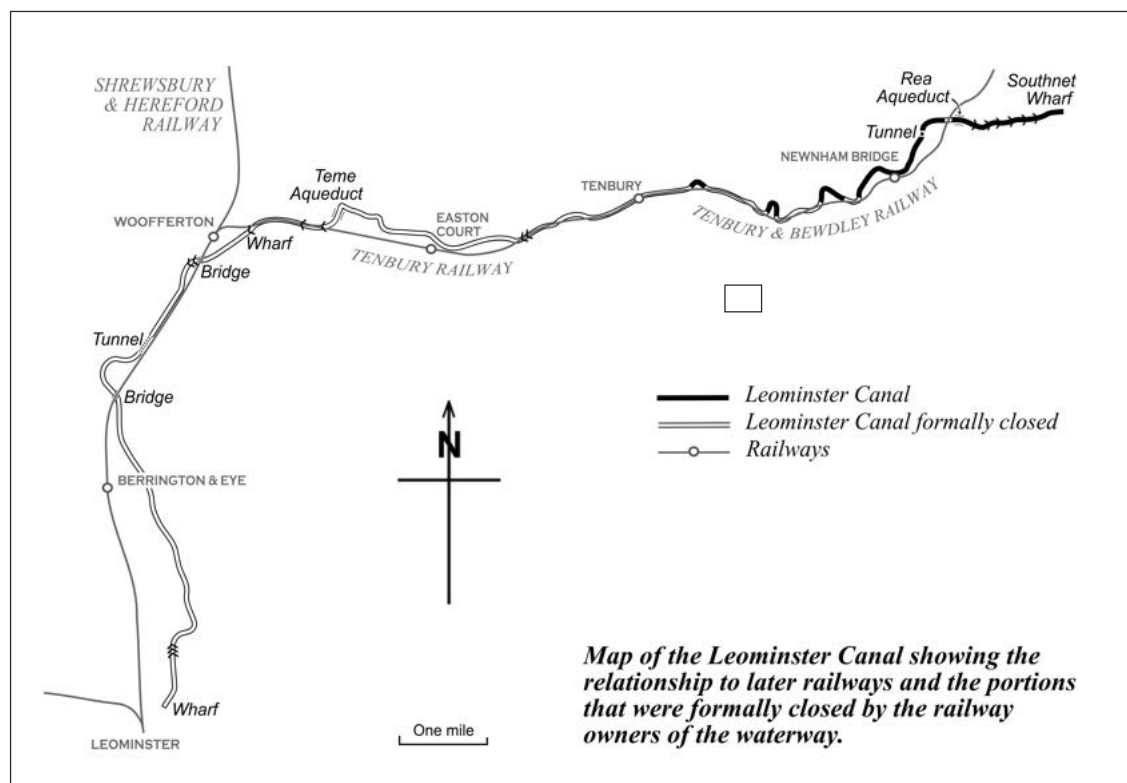
Richard Dean

Transport history is full of references to the to the process of obtaining Acts of Parliament and the problems and cost involved, and a brief examination of the vital importance of this 'statutory authority' may be helpful.

A statutory corporation such as a canal or railway company owes its very existence to Parliament. In a typical case the first Act for a railway or canal will include the power to set up and incorporate a company, giving it authority to raise money for building and operating a route between defined points, involving compulsory acquisition of land, and interference with highways/rivers/other undertakings. Applications for these powers were often bitterly resisted by existing undertakings and the land-owning classes, and in granting these fairly draconian rights Parliament was careful to balance

them with a raft of obligations such as construction of road bridges, compensation for land taken, the provision of fencing, drainage, bridges, level crossings and other accommodation works, and the right for the public to use the new facilities on payment of appropriate fares or tolls.

Everything the company does by way of construction or operation must be within the powers it has been granted by its Act or Acts, and transfer of these rights and obligations to another body can only be done with parliamentary authority. Later successors to the undertaking such as today's Canal & River Trust or Network Rail must always ensure that they comply with their statutory obligations, work only within the limits of their accumulated portfolio of legislation, and seek fresh powers when these are inadequate. But history shows that



transport undertakers, whether by accident or design, were much more attentive to their rights than their obligations.¹

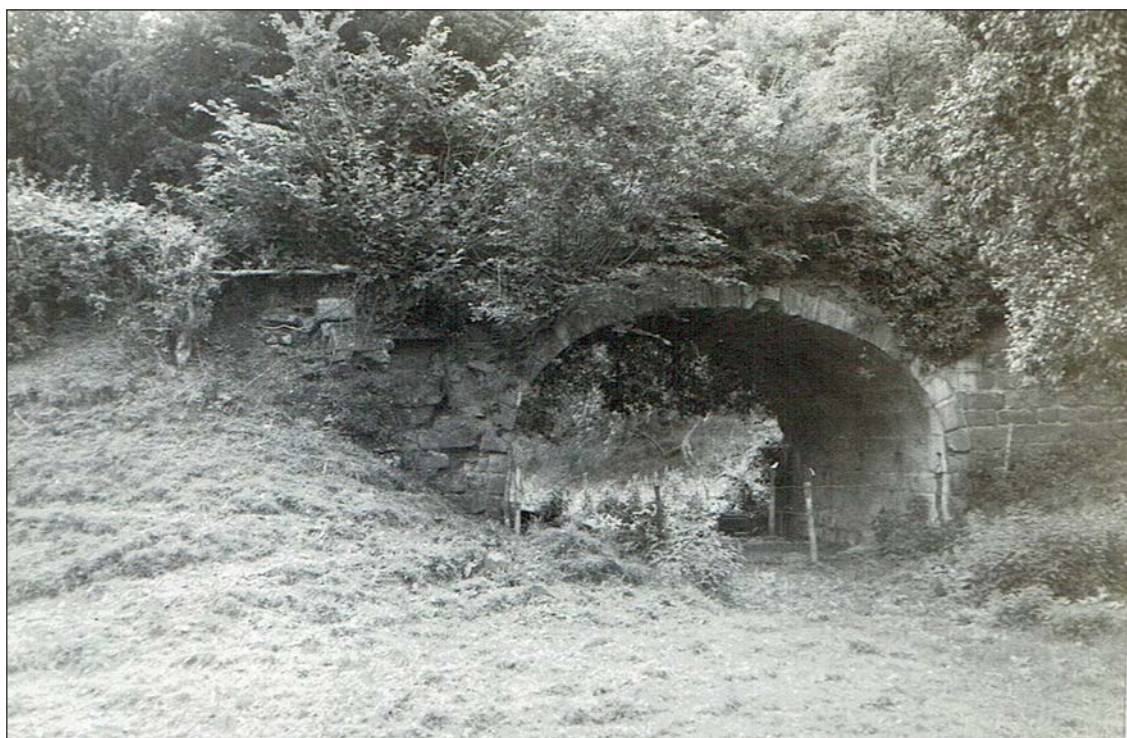
Some of these points are well illustrated by a specific case, that of the ill-fated Leominster Canal.² The Leominster Canal Act of 1791³ authorised a waterway from Kington through Leominster to the River Severn near Stourport, with the proviso that funds raised be first applied to building the section from Stourport to Milton Cross (west of Leominster). Later writers have misinterpreted this as meaning they should have started at Stourport and worked eastwards; the central portion actually built from Southnet wharf to Leominster complied with this provision. Despite several later Acts, no further extension was ever made⁴ and until the railway age this isolated waterway enjoyed a quiet and unspectacular existence, mainly supplying Leominster with coal from the Mamble collieries, although the original shareholders were heavily out of pocket.

The proposal in 1845 for a railway linking Shrewsbury to Hereford (S&HR) did not physically affect the canal, other than the two bridges needed over it between Woofferton and Berrington, but it

was immediately recognised as a threat to the remaining Leominster trade. Rather than pursue any parliamentary opposition the canal company negotiated an agreement with the promoters for sale of the entire waterway, which would give their shareholders some meagre return on their investment. The railway Act was passed in 1846⁵ and the line was duly built including two timber bridges over the canal.⁶ Meanwhile the canal company obtained statutory powers for the sale by a separate Act in 1847,⁷ which specified that all their rights, powers and duties would pass on sale to the railway company who might then close the canal, but only from Leominster to the bridge at Woofferton wharf, and dispose of the site. Formal dissolution of the canal company would then follow.

For over ten years the canal company tried unsuccessfully to enforce the sale agreement, but it was not until 1858 that the S&HR finally completed the conveyance⁸ and paid the purchase money. Closure from Leominster to Woofferton soon ensued in accordance with the 1847 authority, with the canal site being sold or reverting to the adjoining owners.

It was no doubt the prospect of using the canal site for a branch railway from Woofferton to Tenbury

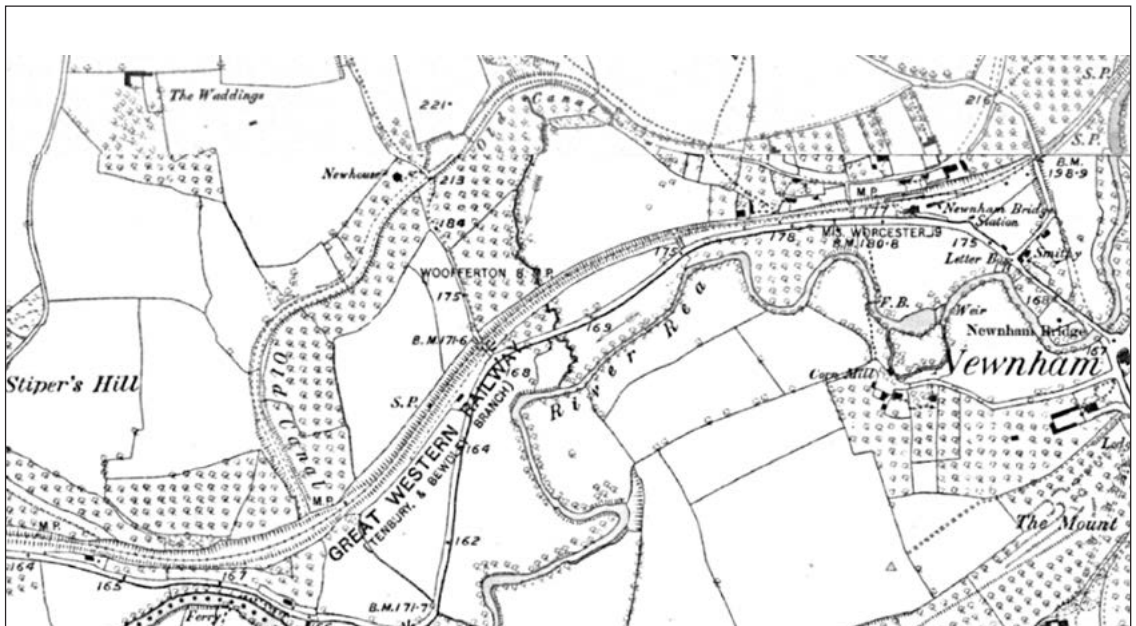


Accommodation bridge near Deepcroft photographed 1964. Later demolished.

that had finally prompted the S&HR to complete the purchase in 1858. This branch was promoted by the Tenbury Railway (TR), a nominally independent concern which obtained its Act in 1859.⁹ The Act permitted the S&HR to sell, and the TR to purchase, any or all of the canal between Woofferton bridge and Southnet wharf (the part that was theoretically still open) and, in respect of the portion acquired, to ‘discontinue the Use of the same for the Purposes of a Canal’. This transaction was duly completed in 1860,¹⁰ covering the canal bed from the head of Woofferton lock to Tenbury bridge. Two lengths were used for the new railway, the remainder including the Teme aqueduct being transferred to adjoining landowners.

these parts were later sold or merely repossessed by adjoining owners.

Such technical niceties may be academic, but with the renewed interest in the future of the waterway and the crumbling structures which remain, the way that the railway companies and their successors have dealt with the canal may yet be subject to further scrutiny.



Notes and references

1. See for example the proposed closure by British Railways of the Lewes–East Grinstead railway which the courts determined was *ultra vires*: outside of the powers which they held.
2. The history of the canal is well covered by Charles Hadfield, *Canals of South Wales and the Border* (Newton Abbot : David & Charles, 1967).
3. Leominster Canal Act 1791, 31 Geo III c. lxix
4. Richard Dean ‘The unfinished Leominster Canal’, *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, no 164 (July 1996), pp. 82–88
5. Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway Act 1846, 9-10 Victoria c. cccxxv
6. After closure of the canal these bridges were later replaced by the present smaller structures.
7. Leominster Canal Sale Act 1847, 10-11 Victoria c. cclxvi
8. Conveyance 25 March 1858, the Leominster Canal Company to the Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway Company
9. Tenbury Railway Act 1859, 22-23 Victoria c. xvi
10. Conveyance 28 August 1860, Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway Company to Tenbury Railway Company
11. Tenbury & Bewdley Railway Act 1860, 23-24 Victoria c. cxxviii
12. Conveyance 1 December 1862, Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway Company to Tenbury & Bewdley Railway Company
13. s. 51 of the 1791 Act states: *All persons shall have free liberty ... to navigate upon the said Canal with any such Boats, Barges, or other Vessels as the Locks thereon will permit ... on payment of the Rates hereinbefore granted.*
14. By various Acts and Statutory Instruments the canal powers and liabilities have passed via the LNWR/LMS/GWR, the BTC, the BRB and its Residuary Body, to the Secretary of State for Transport, acting through the Highways Agency.
15. Regulation of Railways Act 1873, 36-37 Victoria c. 48



The aqueduct over the River Rea on part of the canal which has never been formally abandoned. Photographed in 1964, it has deteriorated since.

The Dulais Railway of 1826 – and why it was never built

Paul Reynolds

Priestley's *Navigable Rivers and Canals* of 1831 contains an entry for the Dulais Railway (p. 213). He describes it as running from 'Aber Dulais' (which is near Neath in West Glamorgan) to the head of the Dulais valley for nearly 9 miles, a route that much later was to be followed by the Neath & Brecon Railway. His description gives every impression that the railway was actually built and in use. But reader, beware! The railway was proposed in 1825; plans were made, a survey was carried out, a company was formed and an Act of Parliament was obtained in 1826. The subscribers to the company met once or twice but no attempt was made to construct the railway and the powers lapsed in 1831 without a stone having been turned. What were the promoters trying to achieve and what went wrong?

The railway was promoted by George Tennant (1765–1832), the builder and owner of the Tennant Canal, and was seen as an extension to that canal. Tennant was an ambitious solicitor from a Lancashire family who moved to London to further his career. In 1792 he became a partner in a firm of attorneys in Gray's Inn and on the death of the senior partner in 1810 he assumed sole control. Among the accounts handled by the practice was that of the earl of Jersey, the owner of the Briton Ferry estate which lay between Neath and Swansea, and this probably made Tennant aware of the possibilities of the district for profitable investment. In 1814 he bought the Rhyddings estate, near Neath, followed by the Cadoxton estate in 1816. The following year he took a lease of the Glanywern Canal which he proceeded to extend westwards to Swansea and east to Red Jacket Pill on the river Neath. In 1820 he started work on a further extension to Aberdulais to join the Neath Canal and this was completed in 1824. The canal was constructed without an Act of Parliament and remained the private property of Tennant and his successors.¹

Early proposals

If the canal was to repay Tennant's investment it was essential for him to attract traffic, and this meant encouraging the coal owners of the Neath valley to ship their coal at Swansea rather than at Briton Ferry

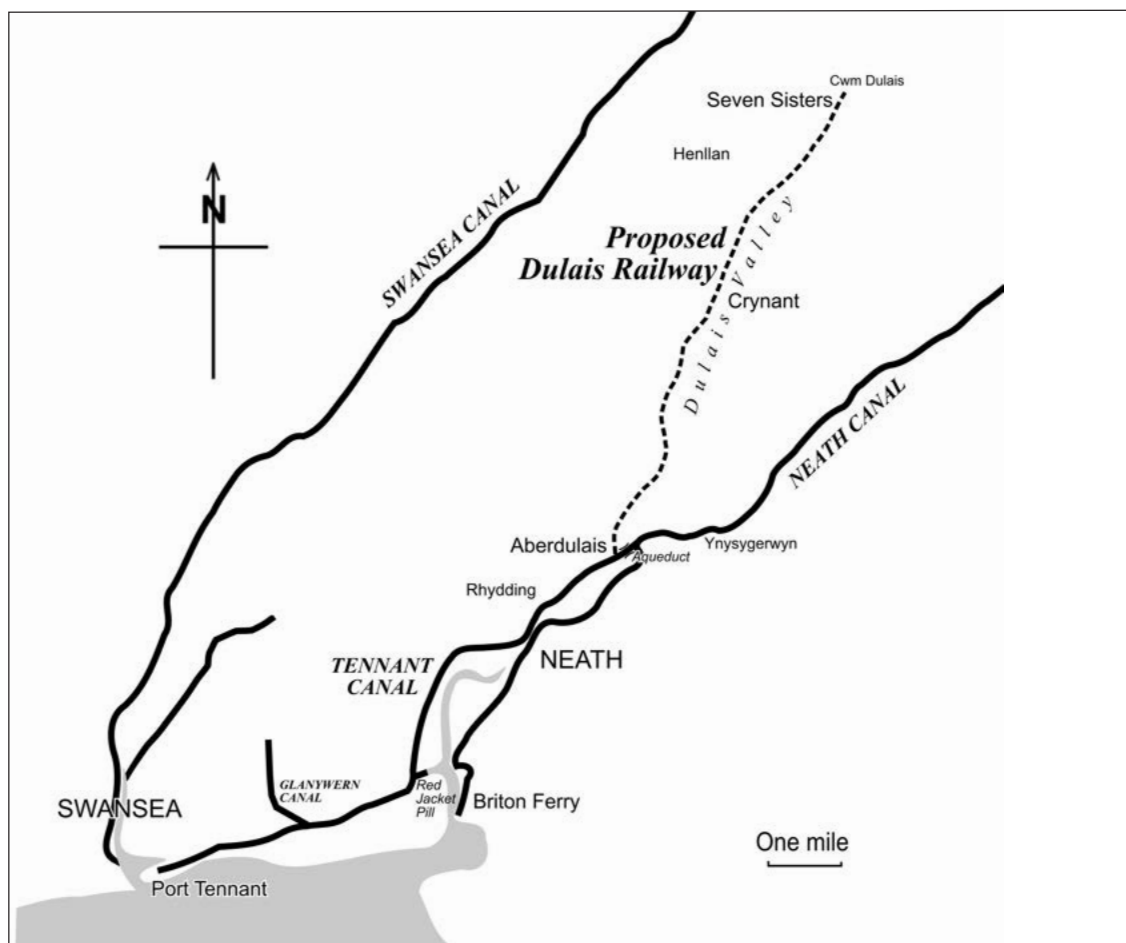
– in other words to transfer their coal from the Neath Canal to Tennant's canal at Aberdulais. One way of doing this was to provide shipping facilities at Swansea, which he did in the form of wharves at Port Tennant. Another was to attempt to extend the reach of the canal by means of a tramroad from Aberdulais up the Neath valley so as to intercept the coal from the collieries on the north-west side of the valley before it had a chance to reach the Neath Canal. Tennant started to consider this idea in 1819/20 at the same time as he was planning the extension of his canal from Red Jacket to Aberdulais but was frustrated in this act of commercial aggression by Lewis Weston Dillwyn, the trustee of the Ynysygerwn estate through which the railway would have had to pass. Dillwyn opposed Tennant's plans on two grounds – first, because by offering additional facilities to rival coalowners in the district the proposed railway would reduce the price at which coal from the Ynysygerwn estate could be sold, and second, because the trade of the Neath Canal would be adversely affected by the railway and so the value of the thirteen shares which the Ynysygerwn trustees held would be devalued. In the coming years there were to be many other issues over which Tennant and Dillwyn disagreed.

On 9 January 1820 Dillwyn received a letter from Tennant in which he put forward his proposals for a railway in the Neath valley; he recorded his unequivocally negative response in his diary:

I received a letter from Mr. Tennant of Cadoxton asking for my consent to his making a Tram Road from the Vale of Neath to the source of the Dylais river. My answer was that as we have a large quantity of coal in the Vale of Neath to dispose of with a ready access to the Canal it cannot be in our interest to encrease [sic] the competition and the opening into such an extensive new line of mineral would therefore be disadvantageous for the Ynysygerwn Estate.

[By 'source of the Dylais river' Dillwyn means the mouth, the point at which it joins the river Neath.]

Tennant was not to be put off so easily and a few weeks later, on 24 January, Dillwyn had a visit from his son, Henry Tennant, but he had no better success than his father:



Mr. Henry Tennant came by appointment respecting the proposed Tram Road up the Neath Valley, but he failed to convince me that it would be for the interest of this Estate to give him the consent he requires. The Neath Canal in which the Trustees possess 13 shares would be greatly injured by it and this would turn the scale if the matter was otherwise on a balance.²

Tennant seems to have accepted defeat. He let the matter rest, at least for the time being but it clearly rankled. He was probably still thinking of the rebuff he had received from Dillwyn when in a long, self-justificatory and self-pitying letter to a neighbouring landowner, Capel Hanbury Leigh, in February 1826 he wrote that

... it is true that I have experienced little favor [sic] or support from the most important part of Society, I mean the landowners whom I imagined ... I was serving ...

and in the same letter, in a rather confused and disjointed passage, he complains

When I first meditated a communication between the Mineral districts of Dylais Vale and Swansea, I communicated to you my objects – a slight knowledge of the world was sufficient to have alarmed a timid man – for the jealousies of individuals (whether well or ill informed) presented too many obstacles to be overcome by the reasoning of one who would be materially presumed to argue from interested motives. I therefore left it to Time and Reflexion to produce the change I meditated.³

The renewed possibility of a railway up the Neath valley appeared briefly in 1822 when John Edwards of Rheola showed an interest in building a line across his estate to carry coal from the collieries at the head of the valley to the Tennant Canal at Aberdulais. The various individual coalowners would be expected to build their own railways to connect with Edwards' railway. His idea clearly was to benefit from the tolls that he would be able to charge on each ton of coal that crossed his land. Tennant was

naturally interested, but he decided not to take any action until the canal was completed.⁴

The South Wales Mining Company

'Time and Reflexion' failed to produce any change in the attitude of Dillwyn, but in 1825 a promising new opportunity for extending the reach of the canal presented itself, one that would result in the formation of the Dulais Railway. The years 1824 and 1825 were years of financial euphoria; the money market was over-excited, funds were easy to come by and a vast number of speculative companies were formed, some with an honest intent, but many simply as the means by which the unprincipled could extract money from the gullible. A popular promotion was of companies that would supposedly engage in the mining and manufacture of iron and other minerals. One such was the South Wales Mining Company which was promoted by Reginald Blewitt and made public in an advertisement that appeared in the press in January 1825.⁵

Blewitt had an interesting career; he was born in 1799, the second son of Major Edward Blewitt of Llantarnam Abbey in Monmouthshire, in a family that was related to the Morgans of Tredegar Park. He qualified as a solicitor and for a few years practised in London in premises at Lincoln's Inn. It was during this time that he promoted the Mining Company. He gave up the law in 1827 and moved back to Monmouthshire where he established the *Monmouthshire Merlin* in 1829 and edited it for three years. On the death of his father he acquired Llantarnam Abbey after a measure of legal wrangling and had it rebuilt in the Elizabethan style by the architect Thomas Wyatt. He served as an M.P. for the county from 1827 to 1852 and was chairman of the county magistrates at the time of the Chartist rising in 1839. He died in 1878.

Blewitt left no one in any doubt as to the real intentions of his company. The advertisement of January 1825 stated that, 'The object of the South Wales Mining Company is not professed to be one of national utility, but of individual advantage'. In common with other speculative mining companies the first priority of the promoters was to form a company and pull in the subscriptions. The question of what was to be mined or where exactly it was to be found was a secondary consideration, but even without that essential feature having been determined it was claimed that the company's 'success cannot be doubted'. The same advertisement continued: 'Proposals will be immediately received by the

company (through their solicitors) for letting or selling any coal, iron, or other mining concerns in South Wales'.

It is more than likely that within the tight little world of the Inns of Court Tennant and Blewitt were already acquainted. Knowing of Tennant's connections with south Wales, Blewitt invited him to subscribe to the company, which he did, taking 20 shares. Tennant then went on to introduce Blewitt and his partners to one of the largest landowners in the Dulais valley, Capel Hanbury Leigh.⁶ Leigh owned extensive property to the north of Crynant, including an area that was described on the plan of the proposed railway as having 'Coal and iron in great abundance ... extending over many thousands of acres'. Tennant saw this introduction as beneficial to all the parties involved – Leigh would obtain a guaranteed income from a part of his estate that otherwise produced only a modest agricultural rent, the Company would have access to large virgin reserves of iron and coal, and he himself would gain a constant source of traffic for his canal.

The canal had been opened to Aberdulais the year before (1824) and offered a direct communication with the port of Swansea. What was needed was the means of bringing the coal and iron down the Dulais valley to the canal. The nature of the valley made it unsuitable for a canal – the ascent would have required too many locks – but it was ideal for a railway since the gradient would be with the load all the way down. He therefore commissioned a local surveyor, William Brough,⁷ to survey a route for a railway. Brough had started work by April 1825 and unsurprisingly the exact course that the railway would take immediately became a cause of concern to Lewis Weston Dillwyn. Dillwyn met Leigh on several occasions during March and April to discuss the railway and its route and was relieved when the Ynysygerwn agent, Lewis Griffiths, reported that it would be possible for Tennant to make a railway to bring Leigh's coal down to the canal without passing through Dillwyn's estate which lay almost entirely on the south-east side of the river.⁸ Tennant was probably equally relieved. By 24 June Brough had produced his first version of the route, although it did impinge on Dillwyn's property at one point.⁹

Meanwhile the SWMCo had been making progress with its own plans. At a meeting on 9 April 1825 a draft agreement was drawn up between Tennant on behalf of the SWMCo and a Mr Jones who seems to have been acting for Leigh.¹⁰ The company was to work 45,000 tons a year. and pay a

royalty of 1s per ton on iron and 8d per ton on coal with a sleeping rent of £1,500. Leigh was to join with the Mining Company in promoting the railway. At the same time agreement was reached over the extent of the lease and a list of thirty farms was drawn up which would be let to the company.¹¹ By May the Company could announce that it had secured '[s]ome very valuable tracts of mineral property in Glamorganshire, comprising altogether a territory of about 15,000 acres ... on leases for 99 years, at moderate royalties', which it then went on to describe in the most enthusiastic terms.¹² By September it seems that Leigh was ready to agree the form of the lease and there was talk of two of the directors appearing on the scene to oversee the start of operations and settle the final points of the lease.

Meanwhile Brough had re-surveyed the line of the railway. His earlier route followed the north-west bank of the river for about 2½ miles before crossing over to the opposite side and continuing through Crynant to the southern limit of Leigh's property which was about a mile farther north. The revised route, the one which would be authorised by Parliament, started at a junction with the canal a few yards to the west of the aqueduct and stayed on the north-west side all the way to Crynant where it crossed the river and then continued to the farm of

Cwm Dulais at what later became the village of Seven Sisters, a total distance of just over 8½ miles.¹³ The necessary formalities were carried out with the publication in October of the statutory notice of the promoters' intention to introduce a bill into Parliament and the deposit of the plans with the Clerk of the Peace on 30 November.¹⁴

The Dulais Railway Company

By this time Tennant had put together a company to raise funding for the railway. The legal status of the company was that of a joint stock company, but in fact it was just a private syndicate made up of Tennant's friends and relations who formed themselves into a public company in order to enjoy the benefits of limited liability and the right of compulsory purchase. The total capital was £10,000 made up of 200 shares of £50 each. The fifteen subscribers are shown in the accompanying table.¹⁵ Space does not allow a detailed description to be given of each of them but the preponderance of those with legal connections will be immediately obvious, many of whom were distinguished figures in the legal world of the day. Six of the subscribers are named as barristers and one as a Doctor of Laws. Of the six 'gents' three were solicitors and one a barrister, while Paul Harrison was the accountant in George Tennant's

Subscribers to the Dulais Railway, 31 March 1826

Richard Harrison	55 Doughty Street	Gent.	£1000
Henry Tennant	36 Southampton Row and 5 New Sq., Lincoln's Inn	Barrister	£1400
Robert Thomson	19 Old Sq., Lincoln's Inn	Barrister	£500
George Boone Roupell	46 Great Ormond Street	Barrister	£500
John Trenchard Pickard	2 Bedford Place	Dr of Law	£1500
Ann Aspinall	282 Wapping	Widow	£500
Phebe Maria Girdlestone	Kelling Hall, Norfolk	Widow	£500
Richard B. Armstrong	Staple Hill, London	Gent.	£100
Paul Harrison	13 Compton Street, London	Gent.	£500
John Scott	282 Wapping	Biscuit Maker	£500
Peter Erle	Lincoln's Inn	Gent.	£500
George Smith	5 Bedford Row	Gent.	£500
Philip Reeve	4 Lincoln's Inn	Gent.	£500
William Erle	14 Paper Buildings, Temple	Barrister	£500
Wm. Charles Lambert	5 Paper Buildings, Temple	Barrister	£500
Robert Prioleau Roupell	46 Great Ormond Street	Barrister	£500

firm of Tennant & [Richard] Harrison. That leaves the two widows and the biscuit-maker who at first sight seem strangely out of place among the legal fraternity. The only one of these whom it is possible to identify positively is Phebe Girdlestone who was the sister of Tennant's wife, Margaret Elizabeth (*née* Beetson). Ann Aspinall might be another sister-in-law of George Tennant, since his wife is known to have had a sister named Ann. John Scott might possibly be a nephew of Tennant by another of his wife's sisters: a notice appeared in the press in 1816 naming Tennant & Harrison as executors of the late Mrs Scott, widow of James Charles Scott, biscuit baker of 282 Wapping, which suggests a possible family connection.¹⁶ In view of the close connections of the rest of the group it seems plausible that Aspinall and Scott should be relatives of Tennant rather than complete outsiders. Perhaps after she was widowed Ann Aspinall lived with her sister, also a widow, who had married James Charles Scott, and after that sister in turn died in 1816 she remained there with her nephew, John Scott, who carried on the biscuit business. Presumably he produced ships' biscuits not chocolate digestives.

The passage of the bill

However, before the bill could be introduced into Parliament the economic climate had completely changed. The excessive issuing of currency notes by the banks without the reserves to back them resulted in a major banking crisis in December 1825 followed by a severe recession. The speculative companies that had been promoted so freely during the years of euphoria collapsed, or at least suspended operations, among them the South Wales Mining Company. Quite understandably, Leigh was highly indignant to think that he had been taken in by what had turned out to be no more than a bubble company and he put the blame on Tennant for inducing him to become involved with them in the first place. In a long letter written in January 1826 Tennant attempted to mollify Leigh, exculpate himself, and convince Leigh that it was in his own interest to give continued support to the railway, for without it he would have no hope of leasing his minerals at any future date.¹⁷

The bill started its passage through Parliament on 17 February 1826 when permission was granted for its introduction. Its initial progress was uneventful until it entered the committee stage after its second reading on 5 April. By this time nine of the eleven landowners affected had given their consent, Dillwyn refused to do so and Leigh was still nursing his

resentment and refused to give his positive support. As the chief beneficiary of the proposed railway he was in a strong position: if he approved, then the other landowners would take their lead from him because they knew it would be a viable concern, but if he opposed it, there was no reason for them to continue to give their support. Dillwyn and Leigh maintained close contact throughout the period that the bill was before Parliament.

Dillwyn's chief objection to the bill was its failure to make any provision for a connection from the proposed railway to the Neath Canal. Despite his differences with Tennant, Dillwyn was obviously interested in the possibility of using the railway to exploit the coal under his Henllan estate (on the hills between Seven Sisters and Ystradgynlais) but he distrusted a privately owned canal such as Tennant's: what position would Dillwyn and other users of the railway be in in the event of Tennant's bankruptcy or the bankruptcy of his successors? It was essential that the Dulais Railway made a connection with the Neath Canal to guarantee transport to the sea. The issue came to a peak on 24 April at a meeting between Dillwyn, Leigh, Charles Tennant (on behalf of his father) and others. Tennant agreed to insert an additional clause into the bill authorising a junction with the Neath Canal and Dillwyn withdrew his opposition. However, a few days later it transpired that it was too late to modify the bill. Tennant tried to reassure Dillwyn and Leigh by showing that the powers granted under the Neath Canal Company's 'eight-mile clause' (i.e. the clause in their Act enabling owners of land within eight miles of the canal to make connections to it) would give them the security they needed; he went so far as to give an undertaking that if it was subsequently shown that these powers were inadequate, then he would introduce a further bill. Dillwyn was still not satisfied and renewed his opposition. In a letter to Leigh written on 5 May he wrote:

It appears to me, *entre nous*, that the whole of T's conduct respecting the Tram Road has been on a perfect system of finesse & cajolery & if he succeeds he will probably laugh at us ... I shall continue to do all I can to oppose the bill.¹⁸

But while he was negotiating with Dillwyn and Leigh, Tennant was also bringing influence to bear in Parliament; the bill had its third reading in the Commons on 12 May and was referred to the House of Lords without the additional Neath Canal clause. Dillwyn set off for London to try to influence proceedings, but he was too late. On 24 May he wrote in his diary:

Took a very comfortable apartment at No. 26 Jermyn St. Went immediately to Mr Leigh and Mr Tracey respecting the Dylais Tram Road, and was astonished to find that Lord Jersey who is deeply interested had mustered his Friends in the House of Lords and succeeded in pushing the Bill by surprise through the House in 5 days, without the clause for a junction with the Neath Canal which had been agreed to.¹⁹

It will not be forgotten that Tennant had acted as the earl of Jersey's solicitor for many years. There was nothing further that could be done about matters and the Act received the Royal Assent on 26 May 1826.²⁰

Anticlimax

But it turns out that the efforts of Tennant and the opposition of Dillwyn and Leigh had all been rather pointless. The South Wales Mining Company dissolved itself in July²¹ and in the existing financial climate there was no possibility of any other interest being shown in exploiting the iron and coal under Leigh's estate. The purpose for which the railway had been promoted no longer existed. The proprietors of the new company met at Gray's Inn coffee house, London for their first general meeting on 16 August. Only four attended (Peter Erle, Richard Harrison, Pickard and Reeve) and the business transacted was purely formal.²² No attempt was made to start construction, although at their 1827 general meeting the Neath Canal Company granted Tennant permission to make a junction with the canal, which shows that the project was not completely moribund. The last recorded activity of the company was in 1828 when notice was given of the annual general meeting to be held on 18 September. There is no record of the meeting in the official minute book and there must be doubts as to whether it was ever held. Earlier that month Henry Tennant had attempted to interest the Neath Abbey Iron Company in taking the project over in its entirety, clearly in the hope that the company might also lease Leigh's coal and iron ore in the Dulais valley. A proposal to this effect put to Joseph Tregelles Price survives, but there is nothing to indicate that it was ever acted upon and a pencilled note has been added 'Gone by'.²³

The powers granted under the Act expired in 1831 without anything having been achieved. It was to be nearly another forty years before the Dulais valley had a railway when the first stage of the Neath & Brecon Railway opened to Onllwyn in 1864.

Notes and references

1. For Tennant's career and activities, see Keith Tucker, *A Scratch in Glamorganshire* (Neath : Historical Projects, 1998).
2. National Library of Wales (NLW), Lewis Weston Dillwyn's diary, 9, 24 January 1820, quoted in Tucker, *Scratch in Glamorgan*, pp. 103-4
3. West Glamorgan Archive Service (WGAS) NAS Gn/1 8/24
4. Tucker, *Scratch in Glamorgan*, p. 160
5. *Morning Post* 18 January, *The Times* 26 January 1825
6. WGAS NAS Gn/1 4/1, letter of George Tennant dated 5 September 1825: 'It was therefore highly satisfactory to me to have had it in my power to introduce to Mr. Leigh capitalists both able and willing to embark on the speculation'
7. William Brough (1765–1851) was born in Newcastle and worked there for many years as a civil engineer. He moved to Neath in about 1822 (although it might have been much earlier: different sources give different dates) and practised as a surveyor in south Wales until his death at Tenby in 1851.
8. NLW, Dillwyn diary, 16, 28 April, 4, 10 May 1825
9. WGAS NAS Gn/1 3/2
10. WGAS NAS Gn/1 4/1
11. WGAS NAS Gn/1 4/1
12. *Morning Post* 18 May, *The Times* 19 May 1825
13. Joseph Priestley states that the terminus was at 'the lime-works of Cwm-Dulais'. Where Priestley got this from is not clear. There is no mention of lime works in the 1826 Act, and in any case Cwm Dulais is well clear of the limestone belt which does not start until several miles further north.
14. *Cambrian* 11 October 1825; WGAS D/D T2487 (another copy in Glamorgan Archives, Q/D/P 19)
15. WGAS D/D T 1371
16. *Morning Chronicle* 24 May 1816
17. WGAS NAS Gn/1 4/1, Tennant to Leigh, 9 January 1826
18. WGAS NAS Gn/1 4/2, Dillwyn to Leigh, 5 May 1826
19. NLW, Dillwyn diary, 25 May 1826
20. 7 Geo.4, c 102,
21. *Morning Chronicle* 13 July 1826
22. The record of this meeting is the only entry in the company's official minute book, WGAS D/D T1370.
23. WGAS D/D T1374, 1 September 1828

Correspondence

The financial state of Britain's railways in 1913

(*RCHS Journal*, March 2016, pp. 410–426)

I fear Tony Sheward has misinterpreted (on page 411) the response of the Bank of England's inflation calculator <<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/flash/default.aspx>> : the price levels (2015) have increased by over 104 times since 1913. This is very different from having 'increased by over 103 per cent' which would mean just over a doubling. Fortunately, his suggestion of 'adding two noughts to the figures' does give the proper result!

Richard Maund

Waterways history research: an alternative view

(*RCHS Journal*, March 2016, pp. 426–440)

I was disappointed by Philip Riden's long article, much of which attacks my work. He appears to have grasped the wrong end of several sticks, and his contribution is sadly unhelpful. My articles aimed to encourage new entrants to waterways history, and new kinds of history, and certainly made no proposals for policies that the RCHS might follow.

I appreciate the pressure on space, and will amplify some issues in the Waterways History Research Group, within which Mr Riden seems to have been silent. I pick out a few general points here.

1. There are sharp divisions between Mr Riden's vision of the 'university history department', which may not play any significant part in the future, and the many non-historian academics (staff, students, and retired) who may well produce work of pertinence to transport history. I was surprised that he did not mention the work of the new Waterways (Academic) Research Network, which may lower barriers between enthusiast historians and academic researchers from various disciplines. He attended both its first meetings.

2. Mr Riden commends the Waterways History Conferences, but it is unclear whether he has attended any; he commends (rightly) the *RCHS Journal*, in which his previous publication was in 1972, but condemns so much 'amateur' work.

'Amateur' can be used as a pejorative derogatory term, but it usually means unpaid labour carried out voluntarily – even by retired academics!

3. His piece contains inaccuracies and confusions. One example, on p. 432: 'Bouhey does not mention ... the *Waterways Journal*...'. I certainly do – on the second page of my first article. I have now contributed eight long articles to this *Journal*.

4. I certainly made no criticism of the *RCHS Journal* (p. 432, para 2); but a delay in publication is a drawback of print in general. Online journals are not subject to this limitation, and my hope would be that so much new work in waterways and railway history will develop that an online journal will be needed to supplement the *RCHS Journal*!

5. The Canal & River Trust was set up as the 'National Trust of the Waterways', and does not have a 'Record Office', but, quite rightly, hosts longstanding collections that can illuminate the heritage that represents a significant part of its remit.

6. I must repeat my call for 'history being written collaboratively and in collegiate fashion', and I continue to despair at academic work 'where tribalism, rubbishing the opposition, condescension, hostility and aggression' features. The latter is totally counter-productive, as is anything that deters scholars, 'amateur' or otherwise, from researching and writing studies related to the history of transport.

Joseph Bouhey

Philip Riden's commentary upon the writing of canal history, as exemplified by Hadfield's regional series, makes many good and valuable points but is marred by the throwaway remark that the parallel regional railway series is nothing more than 'unreadable cut-and-paste of no academic value.' I find this viewpoint quite astonishing.

The Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain must surely be judged in the context of the period at which it was conceived. At that time, the mid-late 1950s, most railway publishing consisted of pure locomotive histories or company histories that were heavily biased towards steam locomotives and train operating. Occasionally a biography would appear. There were very, very few accounts of railways in a local or regional setting – G H Lake's

Railways of Tottenham being a rare pioneer example. Much more area history of varying quality had been published over the years in *Railway Magazine*, *Trains Illustrated* and *Railway World* but magazine articles were not readily accessible by the book-buying public.

It took the journalist David St John Thomas – then still in his twenties – to recognise that an entirely different approach was required, a set of books covering the entire country, that put the railways in their proper geographical, social and economic setting. He completed the first volume, *The West Country*, in 1958 and it was published by Phoenix House in early 1960. Fourteen more volumes, mainly published by David & Charles, appeared at intervals over the next quarter century, and then an afterthought, *Ireland*, in 1995.

I doubt whether academic rigour, with its time-consuming apparatus of source references, quotations from obscure authorities and bibliographical minutiae, was at the forefront of St John Thomas's mind. Throughout his long life his mission was to inform the widest possible audience. What he wanted, I am convinced, was accurate and workmanlike writing that would appeal to both railway readers and the wider public. It also had to be of a length and at a price that would make the new venture a commercial success. Thirty shillings and 250 pages was about average for a railway book of those days. It was what the public could afford. The provision of 32 pages of photo illustrations was lavish for a non-fiction work at a time when books were intended to be read rather than looked at. Readers then were not deterred by solid blocks of text unadorned by illustrative matter.

As to the charge of cut-and-paste compilation, St John Thomas said in his introduction to the series: 'Complete coverage could not be rushed. The amount of research and distillation involved is far beyond that needed for most other railway books.' Are we now to disbelieve him? And if so what precisely was the origin of this suggested plagiarised material?

The success of the St John Thomas approach can be measured in the longevity of the series, some forty years from start to finish. *West Country* ran to five or six editions and several of the others to three or four. Three volumes also appeared in paperback. By and large they have stood the test of time.

Where did St John Thomas find co-authors to meet the high standards he had set himself? The pool of talent was not large. Several must have been recruited

from the ranks of the RCHS. Professor H P White was the obvious choice for *Southern England*, as were Ken Hoole for the *North-East*, Derek Barrie for *South Wales* and John Thomas for *Scotland*. They were all established writers and the best in their field, even if one or two were not quite so omniscient as they first seemed. Others emerged as the series progressed, such as David Joy who by the late 1960s was making a name for himself as the author of several books under the Dalesman imprint.

The test of the series is its everyday usefulness. Does it perform a worthwhile function or merely occupy valuable parking space in one's overcrowded bookcase? Speaking personally, I bought my first volume (*Southern England*, 2nd ed) in the mid-60s, at the point where I was weaning myself off youthful enthusiasms and beginning to explore railways in a more methodical way. Not only was Pat White readable (*per contra* Mr Riden) but suddenly everything fell into place: why the railway was the way it was, the purpose it served and its place in the rural and urban landscape. There had never been anything like it before. This was a writer who knew what he was talking about and required no footnotes by way of verification. In due course I acquired the rest of the set, updating them as revised editions appeared. Today, when exploring or writing about an unfamiliar district, they are usually the first books that I turn to in order to establish some sort of contextual framework.

Nevertheless the passing years have revealed certain shortcomings. First, they are less than comprehensive, most volumes being less than 300 pages whereas several volumes in the Hadfield series are 400–500 pages for a fundamentally simpler subject. Secondly the knowledge of the authors tends to be uneven, resulting in imbalance. Thirdly, one has to agree with Mr Riden that the prose of some of the later authors does not live up to the standards of St John Thomas and White. Fourthly, all the volumes are now seriously out of date: even the most recent (except *Ireland*) is stuck in the mid-1980s. And all are out of print.

The Regional Railway Histories therefore are in serious need of revision to take account of privatisation, new service patterns, route reopenings, the rebuilding of major stations, new lines such as DLR, Crossrail and HS1, gains and losses of freight traffic, as well as current developments in the writing and presentation of railway history. Equally there are considerable obstacles. Nearly all the original authors are dead or no longer active. David

St John Thomas died last year and after several changes of ownership it is by no means clear where the copyright in the series now rests. Above all where is the publisher with the necessary resources to invest in a long term project of a somewhat uncommercial nature?

Robert Humm

Philip Riden evoked old memories in his interesting retrospective paragraphs on the indifference of academic history departments to transport history. At interview at LSE in November 1962 I was asked what history I was interested in; my response of railway history met with disdain and a question about Dr Beeching. I was not offered a place. However our 18th-century tutor (Derek Jarrett) in the Goldsmiths' Honours History School was sympathetic to industrial history, unlike his 19th/20th-century colleague or the history staff in the Education Department when I came to look into the origins and education of industrial pioneers. By contrast the Goldsmiths' Evening Department had a flourishing Railway Study Group which I was able to join and learnt much.

However I bridled at his disparaging remarks regarding the D&C *Regional Railway History* series, specifically 'little more than a scissors-and-paste compilation from published sources, with no references' and 'so unreadable as to be of little general interest'. Both comments are far from the truth, certainly as far as *East Midlands* (vol. 9) was concerned. Taking the latter point first, the concept of the series was David St J Thomas's and in his instructions he specifically enjoined us to write for an intelligent general audience, wider than just railway enthusiasts or academics. (References detract from the story so were discouraged.) I was happy to do so and judging by the supportive comments then and later, many from totally unknown readers, I succeeded. David Thomas himself commented that although the East Midlands was hardly a 'sexy area' (his words) I had made it interesting and intelligible. A grudging comment from H V Borley ('in the interests of accuracy ...') was only to be expected but a warm one from Charles E Lee was welcomed. I think that running to a second edition speaks for itself.

Turning to the origins of the series, in the late '50s and early '60s, railway books tended to be about locomotives or trains; company histories, mainly by the likes of O S Nock, Cecil J Allen or C Hamilton

Ellis, tended to rush through planning and building the main lines so that they could get onto locomotives and performance, etc. (George Dow's magisterial three volumes on the Great Central were a race apart.) The impact of the railway, let alone its penetration into remoter areas, effect on industry, society etc received scant attention. This was before the days of Harold Perkins *The Age of the Railway* (1970) and even Terry Coleman's *The Railway Navvies* (1965); Michael Robbins's *The Railway Age* (1962) pointed a way ahead but in a lonely furrow. So it was with pleasure that I came across the early *RRH* books (vols 1-4, 1960-65) with their analysis of the economic and social effects of the region's railways.

By the end of the decade D&C as a publishing house was firmly established and in its monthly advertisement on the back cover of *Railway Magazine* David Thomas was calling for more authors. As I had already done work on Northamptonshire's railways I offered that to him as local railway histories were beginning to appear. He responded by offering *East Midlands* as his booked author had just withdrawn. To an extent the book's area is artificial, but then so is the East Midlands as an economic or geographical area; does it properly include Lincolnshire? A salient down to outside London was necessary (it had to go somewhere) but 'Three Main Lines' made a useful introduction to the area as a whole. My editor was Allan Patmore who was senior in the Geography Department at Hull; he too was of great help when going over each chapter and encouraged me to model the book on *East Anglia* (vol 5). (This is why there is no chronology, unlike in some later volumes. There is some skill in weaving essential dates into the text without boring readers, but then we were properly taught English composition at school.)

The book took some years to complete and involved lengthy visits to libraries, museums and record offices throughout the region (2nd ed, page 257) where I consulted a range of original sources (page 251). The region at that time had not been well covered by railway literature or even local urban histories. Nevertheless my bibliography runs into five pages (2nd ed) and includes a list of nine journals ranging from *Transport History* to *Railway World* which then contained a wealth of good historical articles. (Among the monographs cited was one by P Riden on the Butterley Company.)

'Scissors-and-paste' and 'unreadable'? I don't think so. Let the *Lloyd's List* review of the first edition have the last word: 'Scholarly analysis A history

which has academic value far beyond that of railway history alone. ... a work of wide appeal’.

Robin Leleux

I am not sure whether Philip Riden is entirely serious in his strictures about the Society in the first section of his paper, or whether he is just being mischievous. Surely he cannot really believe that Michael Robbins’ address to the Society on ‘What kind of railway history do we want?’ has been ‘completely ignored by RCHS members interested in railway history’ (p. 427) and that ‘it certainly did not deserve to be ignored in the way in which it was by his original audience and has been by their successors’ (p. 428). It would be invidious to list present members who have produced work that disproves these contentions. I will, therefore, just mention our late members Alan A Jackson, Howard Mallinson and Peter Braine, who certainly extended their subjects well beyond what would be required for academic recognition.

Grahame Boyes

The articles by Joseph Boughey and Philip Riden make for thought-provoking reading but both suffer from the same unfortunate presumption – that there is a fixed and virtually unbridgeable gulf between amateur and academic authors, and the quality of work they are capable of producing.

After decades of reading, reviewing, and in a modest way writing, in a number of fields of historical research (military, social, local, philatelic, even transport) I am confident that academic historians can write just as badly, if not more so, than amateur historians, and vice versa. Systematic and thorough research, logical analysis, plain lucid writing, a proper apparatus of presentation (notes, bibliography, index, etc.) are the necessities, whatever one’s educational or working background.

The days of the Gentlemen versus Players annual cricket match at Lord’s are long past and it is time to consign the equally misleading titles of academic and amateur historian to what might be termed a ‘Bonfire of the Vanities’.

Bill Featherstone

[Any further contributions to this discussion should be made through other appropriate forums. Ed.]

The importance of fieldwork in researching railway history

(RCHS Journal, March 2016, p. 457)

Mr Featherstone is incorrect in saying that the Battle of the Falkland Islands (8 December 1914) was the first naval battle of the Great War. It was preceded by the Battle of Coronel (1 November 1914) during which the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sank the British armoured cruisers *Monmouth* and *Good Hope*. Both were preceded by the Battle of Heligoland Bight (28 August 1914) in which a fleet of British cruisers and destroyers under Commodores Tyrwhitt and Keyes sank three German light cruisers and a destroyer.

It is unlikely that the Battle of the Falklands was visible from land as Mr Featherstone claims. *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were sunk approximately 75 miles south east of the Falklands. The light cruisers *Nürnberg* and *Leipzig* were sunk approximately 115 miles away in a separate action later the same day.

Robert Humm

Mr Humm has caught me out in trying to simplify a maritime event for a non maritime audience – the word ‘battle’ is difficult enough to define on land but is far harder on the water! Perhaps I should have said the Battle of the Falkland Islands was the first major naval engagement of the Great War (Coronel and Heligoland Bight have been enhanced by being called battles but I am not sure they merit that term when analysed) – it was certainly so regarded at the time, and was, of course, the first significant British naval success.

In making his second point Mr Humm seems to be equating the points at which German warships were sunk with the site of the battle. This took place over a much wider area, as is common with many naval engagements, and the initial phases of the battle took place well within sight of the Islands. In fact the first shots fired in the battle were fired from within Port Stanley harbour.

It maybe worth noting that ‘approximately 75 miles’ is still far too accurate an estimate of where the denouement of the battle took place.

William Featherstone

Reviews

***Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers in Great Britain and Ireland, Volume 3, 1890–1920* — Robert McWilliam & Mike Chrimes (editors)**

xxxii+743pp, 230x165mm, approximately 250 illustrations, hardback, Institution of Civil Engineers, 1 Great George Street, London SW1P 1AA, 2014, ISBN 978 0 7277 5834 7, £200

This is the final volume of a work which was begun in 2002 by covering the period 1500 to 1830, followed by a volume which covered 1830 to 1890 (published in 2008). The first volume was produced under the chairmanship of Sir Alec Skempton and the secretaryship of Mike Chrimes, but Sir Alec died prior to its publication. Even the most superficial examination shows that the Secretary has performed an immense amount of work.

There is a relatively brief survey of the state of civil engineering and professional activity which contains nine illustrations; otherwise all the illustrative material is portraits for less than a third of the 800 biographies. All the biographies are signed and vary in length from little more than a paragraph to several pages. There are a few ‘family entries’. The previous volume contains many entries for railway and canal engineers; there are proportionately rather fewer in this volume. Road engineering is beginning to show up and river control and water supply is important.

Mechanical engineers, even if they were members of the Institution of Civil Engineers, tend to be

excluded with a few exceptions: there are excellent biographies of Francis Webb and Sir John Aspinall, the latter being vastly superior to the poor effort in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Most entries list significant works in which the subjects were involved and some of their publications. Families and private interests are usually mentioned.

It is only when one actually uses a reference book that it is possible to verify its true worth. Having encountered the name Sir Peter Tempest, previously unknown to me, in an old magazine I checked in the *Biographical Dictionary* and found in a model concise entry by Mike Chrimes that Tempest was the engineer of the Channel Tunnel Company during the post First World War period of modest optimism.

There are indexes of people and of places, but there is a lack of cumulative indexes to all the volumes, although this lack will disappear once the promised online version becomes available. Sometimes it is difficult to find the items referenced and it is to be hoped that hypertext will be employed in the online version, but these are trivial comments on a superb work.

KEVIN JONES

***Civil Engineering Heritage: East Midlands* — Barry Barton**

142pp, 245x170mm, 91 colour photographs, 5 maps, softback, Ruddocks Publishing, 56 Great Northern Terrace, Lincoln LN5 8HL, 2016, ISBN 978 0 904327 24 3, £17.95

This is the fourth in the new series of ‘Civil Engineering Heritage’ books produced in association with the Institution of Civil Engineers. It has a different publisher and is slightly different in size and style to the earlier volumes – the paper quality is better and the photographs are in colour but the print is a point smaller so is less comfortable to read.

As with the previous volumes, the first half is a general introduction to the engineering works in the area, followed by a gazetteer section dealing with 185 specific sites, over half of which concern transport. Derbyshire has 50% of the 34 entries relating to railways; Northamptonshire has 41% of the 32 canal entries (including several reservoirs, an often forgotten feature of canal engineering); and Lincolnshire has 34% of the 41 road entries (mainly

bridges). The other two counties covered are Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

There is much here besides transport. Two examples for which the Dukes of Devonshire were responsible are Britain’s largest dome supported only at its rim, the Devonshire Royal Hospital dome at Buxton (1881), and the Emperor Fountain at Chatsworth (1844) which can send water up 296 feet. Particularly pleasing is the inclusion of much late 20th century ‘heritage’. Examples: the hyperbolic-paraboloid concrete canopy roof at Markham Moor, formerly over a filling station on the A1 (1961), Belmont TV mast (1965), Express Lifts’ testing tower near Northampton (1978), Manton Water Tower (also 1978) and Carsington Reservoir (1991)

PETER BROWN

***Early Victorian Railway Excursions: 'the million go forth'* — Susan Major**

195pp, 253x178mm, 17 figures, 8 colour plates, hardback, Pen & Sword Transport, 48 Church Street, Barnsley S70 2AS, 2015, ISBN 978 1 47383 528 3, £25

Since publication of Arthur and Elisabeth Jordan's 1991 book *Away for the Day* there has been a need for further systematic study of railway excursions. That book covered the period 1830 to 1990 and much of it concerned developments in the twentieth century. Based on her doctoral thesis, Major's book is an in-depth study of the early development of the excursion train through to the 1860s. This was the period when, despite the discomforts of the rolling stock provided, the opportunity of cheap travel on a new form of transport was grasped by the working classes. It is this aspect that forms the core of her work.

Archive sources for early excursions are somewhat limited, but the availability of many contemporary newspapers online in searchable form has provided a rich hunting ground which the author has interpreted carefully and methodically. The chapters are thematic and include coverage of the organisation of excursion trains by railway companies, voluntary societies and church groups, the positive role of

excursion agents and the negative role of Sabbatarians. Factory outings warrant only brief investigation. There is a valuable examination of the travel experiences of excursion passengers, the fact and fiction of crowd disorderliness, and the influence of the growth in excursion traffic on the development of tourism. However, there is a bias towards northern England in the regional coverage.

The text is indexed and is fully referenced via end-notes, but there is no bibliography, so references must be extracted from the notes. Figures and plates are sparse but relevant; all are reproductions of contemporary documents, including newspaper advertisements, flyers, posters, paintings and maps.

This book gives a vivid picture of the nature of those early excursion trains, who organised them, what it was like to travel on them and the impact they had both on those travelling and the communities at their destinations. It is a significant contribution to our knowledge of early railway travel and is recommended.

TIM EDMONDS

Sir John Hawkshaw, 1811–1891: The life and work of an eminent Victorian engineer

— Martin Beaumont

160pp, A4, 56 illustrations, maps & plans (many in colour), hardback, Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Society, 11 Waveney Close, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6QH, 2015, ISBN 978 0 9449467 7 6, £18 (post free from <www.lyrs.org.uk>)

Hawkshaw was one of the nineteenth century's most prolific and inventive engineers. As well as executing numerous major civil engineering projects, he designed several locomotives. For over fifty years he was closely associated with the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway and its subsidiaries; for a period he also acted as general manager. A strong advocate of standard gauge throughout Britain, he was opposed to Brunel's broad gauge and gave evidence to the Gauge Commission against extending it.

Hawkshaw began his career in Venezuela, and later worked in Russia, Ceylon, Mauritius, Brazil, Argentina and Jamaica, and designed a notable bridge in India. His works in the United Kingdom were many and varied, including dock and harbour works at Holyhead, Hull and Dover, and London's West India Docks. He was much sought-after as a consulting engineer and was responsible for various drainage and sewerage schemes. He was closely associated with building the Suez Canal, and attended

its opening. He correctly opposed early but impracticable Panama Canal projects. He designed and supervised the building of the South Eastern Railway's West End and City extensions from London Bridge to Charing Cross and Cannon Street, including the Thames bridges and the stations with their great arched roofs. His greatest achievement at home was the Severn Tunnel. In 1872 he formed the Channel Tunnel Company, but in that was before its time. Amongst his many honours were the presidencies of the Institution of Civil Engineers and the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

The research has been done well, although it is incorrect to say that the Preston & Wyre Railway was absorbed into the L&YR in 1847; despite bearing many of that company's characteristics, it was in fact absorbed jointly with the London & North Western in 1849. The book is well produced, with an extensive bibliography and a comprehensive index. It is a credit to the L&YR Society.

GORDON BIDDLE

***Matthew Murray 1765–1826 and the firm of Fenton, Murray and Co, 1795–1844* — Paul Murray Thompson**

498pp, A4, 100 b&w illustrations, softback, privately published in a limited edition of 500 by Paul Murray Thompson, <paulmurray@btinternet.com>, 2015, ISBN 978 0 9934835 0 9, £30 (p&p £5.00 extra from the author)

Matthew Murray is best known for being too brilliant a technical engineer for the liking of Boulton and Watt. From specialising in manufacturing flax spinning machinery, Murray took an interest in improving the steam engines that powered his linen mills and naturally started installing them elsewhere in successful competition. Boulton and Watt recognised his talent and purchased land adjacent to Murray's works in Leeds to stop the business expanding. His other claim to fame is for designing and manufacturing the steam locomotives from 1812–16 to operate with John Blenkinsop's patent rack railway. Meanwhile, he was the pioneer in supplying structural iron for many fireproof mills. He also supplied engines and machinery to Marc Brunel for the Navy's saw mills at Chatham. Murray was nervous of high pressure steam and, claiming a full order book, declined the Stockton & Darlington Railway's 1825 invitation to supply an improved sister for *Locomotion*. Even so, he openly offered the railway a suggested design that would spread the weight on the track and prevent rail breakage. After Murray's death his company re-entered the business of locomotive making with an order from the Liverpool & Manchester Railway. Through the 1830s customers included some twenty English and French railways culminating in 1840–42 with 23 locomotives for the Great Western Railway. I K Brunel, with his father's fulsome recommendation of Murray's company, insisted on their acceptance of his broad gauge order.

These were interesting years before railway companies came to establish their own in-house mechanical engineering departments, but Fenton, Murray & Co overreached themselves during the railway mania and in 1844 they were finished.

In Paul Murray Thompson's massive (1.9 kilos) book there is no introduction like the above to encourage the general reader. It is directed solely at those who already know of Matthew Murray and without doubt it is a valuable resource for them. The history of Murray's well-respected company is presented chronologically through fully-referenced, sometimes lengthy, transcriptions from contemporary documents and newspapers. This timeline approach and the sheer wealth of material (mixing concurrent accounts of orders for marine engines, dredgers, stationary steam engines and flax-spinning machines) prevents the author from too much interpretation which would have compared the company with its rivals: foundries such as Tayleur & Co and Chapman are frequently mentioned yet are not even included in the consequently inadequate index. Again, there are surprisingly few references to secondary sources and no bibliography that might have offered the reader a wider view of what was a fascinating period of engineering history. These are perhaps unfair criticisms because what Paul Thompson has achieved is to publish the fruits of many years collecting contemporary references and stories relating to a particularly influential foundry. STEPHEN ROWSON

A Rural Revolution: the history of a Staffordshire family and their village

— David R Roberts

176 pages, 234x157mm, softback, 11 photographs, 3 maps, Troubador Publishing, 9 Priory Business Park, Wistow Road, Kibworth, Leicester LE8 0RX, 2016, ISBN 978 1 78462 520 7, £13.95

This is an account of the lives of five generations of the Sproston family, taking them from the Rode Heath area of south Cheshire to Little Haywood, between Stafford and Rugeley. Job Sproston (1763–1823) was a boat-builder; his son Thomas (1789–1848) followed him in his trade but later became a boatman. Thomas's son William (1822–1896) is the pivotal character in the story. He settled in Little Haywood, ran the 'Navigation Inn', operated canal boats, ran a coal distribution business and farmed land, mainly rented from the Anson's Shugborough Estate. After his death the transport content is minimal, with just one

of the fifth generation working on the railways. The family is placed in the context of the local history, itself placed in the context of the national history – the last sometimes straying beyond what is relevant to an understanding of what was happening in rural Staffordshire.

The author has a way with words, and, unlike too many self-published books, one does not wish that there had been a proof-reader. Pleasingly, the book is extensively annotated with sources and includes an extensive bibliography. PETER BROWN

***Ferries across the Humber: the story of the Humber ferries and the last coal-burning paddle steamers in regular service in Britain* — Kirk Martin**

166pp, 285x220mm, 177 illustrations, 32 facsimile documents, 2 maps, hardback, Pen & Sword, 47 Church Street, Barnsley S70 2AS, 2014, ISBN 978 1 78383 102 9, £25

The author is especially qualified to write this book, having worked as a fireman on the Humber paddle steamers when he was a history student at Hull University in the 1970s. The first chapter describes the author's encounters with the three surviving paddle steamers on the railway-owned service between New Holland and Hull in 1972, and his work on them from 1974 to 1976. The next chapters put these in historical context, describing known ferry crossings on the Humber from the pre-Roman period through to 1981, when the paddle steamer service ceased on the opening of the Humber Bridge. The experiences of those working and travelling on the paddle steamers are covered next, followed by descriptions of various cruises that were a popular feature in later years. The story is completed with the building of the bridge and the fate of the paddle steamers. Two survive, a museum-piece at Hartlepool and a restaurant conversion on the Thames in

London, but the attempts to preserve the last paddle steamer, *Lincoln Castle*, were ultimately unsuccessful and she was scrapped at Grimsby in 2010.

There is an excellent and wide-ranging selection of photographs and other illustrations. Appendices cover aspects of timetables and ticket prices, and there is a table of paddle steamers and other craft from 1841 to 1981. The only maps are facsimiles of Hull c1640 and the Humber region in the early twentieth century – it would have been helpful to have included a map showing locations of all the ferries mentioned in the text, particularly the more obscure ones. There is a bibliography but no index.

This is a well-produced book and is good value. Its subject matter is of relevance to maritime, road and railway history. By combining thorough research and personal experience it makes for an engaging read and is highly recommended. TIM EDMONDS

***Disconnected! : Broken links in Britain's rail policy* — Chris Austin & Richard Faulkner**

160pp, 278x210mm, 67 b&w and 18 colour illustrations, 67 maps, hardback, Oxford Publishing (an imprint of Ian Allan Publishing), Heritage House, Hamm Moor Lane, Addlestone KT15 2SF, 2015, ISBN 978 0 86093 664 0, £25

The joint authors of *Holding the Line*, reviewed in the July 2013 *Journal*, have now turned their attention to an assessment of lines and stations which could usefully have been saved from the onslaught of the Beeching Report (and certain subsequent additions to its litany of recommended closures) and how practicable it might still be to revive some of them.

Before this topic is considered in detail, though, the first two chapters, with the aid of newly-available material, reveal more about the sometimes clandestine attempts by government to close further sections of the rail network in the years following the Beeching closures. These included the compilation of several unpublished reports such as the high-security 'Railway Policy Review' of 1972, whose unauthorised copying triggered a police investigation, and the 1982 Serpell Report, almost immediately discredited.

Six of the book's 14 chapters then categorise the routes concerned (main lines, link lines, freight lines and so on) and look at the consequences – social as

well as financial – of their loss. A further four chapters examine misjudgements relating to particular stations and towns excised from the national network, sometimes resulting – notably in Birmingham – in subsequent lack of capacity. The sharply declining market for sleeping car services – resulting in substantial over-provision of new sleeping cars in the early 1980s – is also considered. The main text concludes with some ideas and proposals for the future.

The book is authoritatively written but very readable, and sheds further light on a remarkably cloudy period in the history of this country's railway policy. Appendices include, inter alia, details of closed lines which have subsequently been reopened and those which could – with varying degrees of difficulty – still be restored; a 'Project Diary' of the Oxford–Cambridge line reopening campaign; and extracts from a secret notebook on Cabinet discussions of rail closures. It is rounded off by a bibliography and index. GRAHAM BIRD

***Rails along the Fathew: the story of the Talyllyn Railway* — Ian Drummond**

224pp, A4, over 400 photographs, 2 maps, 21 plans, 1 gradient profile, ephemera & timetables, hardback, Holne Publishing, PO Box 343, Leeds LS19 9FW, 2015, ISBN 978 0 09563317 8 6, £25.95 (plus £3 p&p)

The Talyllyn Railway's 150th anniversary in 2015 has revitalised its members' interest in its history. This is the fourth book to be published in 12 months. The TR was the first narrow gauge (2ft 3in) railway authorised to use steam locomotives to carry passengers in its Act of Parliament and, in 1951, the first railway to be preserved and operated with volunteer support.

This book has a historical account that ends with the anniversary celebrations of July 2015 but a good part of it is taken up with a travelogue and other matter. Historically, there is perhaps too much speculation about things that are unknown; in some cases it would have been better to have simply said so. Although previously unpublished material relating to the railway's construction was uncovered, little use was made of the Board of Trade material at The National Archives and none of original source material covering the preservation era. There are, for example, tables of passengers carried from 1920 to

1939 and goods tonnages from 1867 until 1910 and 1919 until 1938 but nothing about passengers carried or revenue earned since 1951. There is no reference to the post-1951 management structure and the appointment of one of the general managers is overlooked. Considering it gave its name to the book, a paragraph or two about the Fathew valley would have been useful. I would not expect footnotes in a book of this nature but sadly it is limited by not having an index. Perhaps one could be made available as a download.

The design is good, in the modern style, although I am not a fan of overlapping illustrations. There is an extraordinarily wide range of well-chosen photographs. The plans and maps are gems.

On balance, I like the book. The author has an easy style and his proof reading is exemplary. The railway's supporters and passengers will like it too, which is perhaps the most important thing.

PETER JOHNSON

***The Stations & Structures of the Midland & Great Northern Joint Railway, Volume 2: Norwich to Peterborough and Little Bytham* — Nigel J L Digby**

329pp, 275x215mm, many photographic illustrations & drawings, hardback, Lightmoor Press, Unit 144B, Lydney Trading Estate, Harbour Road, Lydney GL15 5EJ, 2015, ISBN 978 1 91038 01 6, £30

This is a continuation from Volume 1 (reviewed in November 2014) and is paginated in sequence with it. One possibly unexpected feature is that the oldest part of the line (the Lynn & Fakenham Railway), and what was regarded as the main line, is not considered until this volume. The same high standard of recording the former railway, much of which has now disappeared, is maintained. It is to be hoped that someone may record with similar care the subsequent uses of the railway as long distance pathways and modern highways: one of the extraordinary aspects of the stretch of A149 between Stalham and Potter Heigham which uses the former alignment is that it

has been rigged up with average speed cameras to detect speeding.

It should be stressed that although the two volumes are available separately, their structure dictates that both need to be acquired to acquire a full picture including that small section between Holt and Cromer which still functions albeit in two different forms of operation: heritage railway and national network. The whole remains a remarkable record of a railway which with some notable exceptions, such as Sutton Bridge, is gradually disappearing.

KEVIN JONES

***Lincolnshire Railways* — Alan Stennett**

160pp, 250x185mm, 185 photos, 18 maps and diagrams, softback, Crowood Press, The Stable Block, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury, Marlborough SN8 2HR, 2016, ISBN 978 1 78500 082 9, £16.99

This is an interesting and attractive attempt to provide a summary of the railway history of a large and diverse county, written by a reputable local historian. Faced with how to tell a complex story so that it will

appeal to a broad readership, the author has created a balance between chronological and thematic approaches that provides a pleasant and interesting read. Some 'call out' boxes are used to intersperse

the main text with coverage of some minor but illuminating topics that add variety to the book which include a lonely trip on the Horncastle branch or clearing snow in 1947.

The author uses his local history background to advantage in setting the railways within the local landscape and economy. So we have a chapter on Lincolnshire before the railways, as well as explanations of the railways' links to events such as horse and sheep fairs. Even some minor railways receive attention – such as Lord Willoughby's line at Edenham.

There is the occasional unproved assertion that it would be interesting to know more about, for example that railways 'assisted in the improvement of the education of children' by making it easier for them to get to secondary schools. Of course most Lincolnshire villages never had a station, even in the peak

years before 1914, and late attempts to 'fill the gaps' in places such as Axholme had little impact on passengers.

The author has chosen his pictures well. Many are not commonly used in railway books and he has included a personal favourite, the print from *The Illustrated London News* of 1848 which powerfully communicates the realities of travel at that time. In contrast, another *ILN* print of a scene between Lincoln and Sleaford manages to make Lincolnshire look like Switzerland – no mean feat! The author has also clearly used some of his local contacts to turn up some intriguing photos, such as of a special trip to Horncastle or a permanent way gang at Goxhill. There are some good archive maps and most of the others are RCH junction diagrams, which at least help to illustrate some of the complexities.

ADRIAN GRAY

***The London T Types* — Ken Blacker**

216pp, 271x210mm, 323 monochrome and 4 colour illus, 3 diagrams, hardback, Capital Transport, Ground Floor, 117 Old Roar Road, St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 7HD, 2015, ISBN 978 1 85414 395 2, £32

For much of the 1930s the recently-established London Transport was occupied with integrating the varied fleets of road vehicles which it had absorbed, and at the same time with establishing consistent standards of operation and maintenance. Scarcely had these objectives been achieved when the Second World War led to the loss of many newer vehicles, either through enemy action or by compulsory transfer to the military.

The code letter 'T' referred to a range of single deck buses and coaches based on the AEC 'Regal' chassis. The earliest examples entered service in 1929 and the last was withdrawn in 1963. The book

includes one chapter on each of the 17 sub-types, with two more dealing with Chiswick Works and with vehicles sold to other operators. As well as examining the relevant technical details, the book well illustrates the effects of the operational changes of the mid-1930s, meaning that vehicles were frequently and sometimes repeatedly moved from one location to another. Much of the more detailed information is clearly based on LT internal records but their location is, unfortunately, not disclosed.

The book is well produced and illustrated, but its usefulness is limited by the lack of an index or bibliography.

GRAHAM BIRD

Fishguard & Rosslare Railways & Harbours Company: an illustrated history

— Ernie Shepherd

288pp, 260x210mm, 114 photos, 5 drawings, 11 maps, 7 gradient profiles, 29 tables, Colourpoint, Colourpoint House, Jubilee Business Park, 21 Jubilee Road, Newtownards BT23 4YH, 2015, ISBN 978 1 78073 067 7, £20

Uniform with books from other publishers in which Mr Shepherd has been filling the gaps in full-length histories of Irish lines, this features a company which, surprisingly, still exists as a corporate body. The emphasis is on the hundred miles of track which it owns in Ireland, together with its connections to Cork, but Fishguard Harbour and its connecting lines and steamers get proper coverage too.

Based on original sources, this is a workmanlike narrative of how several struggling lines on both sides of the Irish Sea were melded together primarily under the influence of Paddington, although its heyday was brief. This ably plugs a significant missing link in the written history of the railways of the British Isles.

MATTHEW SEARLE

***Hold on tight: London Transport and the unions* — Martin Eady**

240pp, 240x171mm, 81 illustrations (11 coloured), hardback, Capital Transport, Ground Floor, 117 Old Roar Road, St Leonards-on-Sea TN37 7HD, 2015, ISBN 978 1 85414 393 8, £19.95

Inevitably this is largely an account of some of the more troublesome episodes in London's public transport history over the past one hundred years or so. Although brought together under the unified management of the London Passenger Transport Board in 1933, initially there were four main groups of workers – on the railways, buses, trams and trolleybuses, and country buses – each with their own union representation, rates of pay and conditions of service. It was quite rare for them to work in concert, so there was considerable scope for fractured industrial relations. However, the most interesting of the 21 chapters are the last three, which cover the chaotic results of privatisation, in which the author was personally involved as an employee representative for the National Union of Railwaymen, later Rail Maritime & Transport Union, serving on the National Executive Committee of the NUR in 1988 and 1989.

This might have been an important contribution to transport history. Unfortunately it is told as a series of facts and statements arranged entirely

chronologically, jumping frequently from one topic to another. This is rarely a good approach to the writing of history. For, although the author sometimes inserts a brief personal comment, the format does not allow for the 'whys' and other analytical questions. The key themes only appear in a short postscript which invites readers to draw their own conclusions. The result, unfortunately, is a frustrating read. The text is often peppered with isolated statistics of pay rates, earnings, staff shortages, etc., which are potentially revealing, but on their own have little meaning and cry out for some statistical appendices to pull them together.

This might still have been a useful work of reference if the index were not so inadequate, even omitting references to all of the unions and their constituent sections. The author has been very poorly served here by the publisher. Most of the index entries refer to a selection of those who played a role in the story — all men. One wonders if it might have been less confrontational if there had been more women.

GRAHAME BOYES

***The Birmingham Canal Navigation, 1950 to 1977, as seen through the lens of Philip Weaver* — Mike Harrison**

96 pp, 240x170mm, 154 photos (9 in colour), 13 maps, softback, Historic Narrow Boat Club, Waterwinch, 24 Grindley Brook, Whitchurch SY13 4QJ, <www.hnbc.org.uk>, 2015, ISBN 978 0 9927321 1 0, £12 (plus £1.50 p&p)

The title page of this book reads 'Welcome to a tour of the Birmingham Canal Navigations at a time when some of their magic was still surviving' which sums it up well. The members of the Weaver family were assiduous explorers of the midland canals, even making a Christmas Day visit to the Dudley No 2, and this is the photographic legacy. The particular interest is in the infrastructure and industrial surroundings (much of which have changed drastically);

commercial traffic had already entered its terminal decline on the system.

Well reproduced and nicely presented, with maps amply sufficient to explain whereabouts in the BCN tangle the views were taken, this book reflects great credit on the publishing society. It will be most appreciated by those who knew the waterways during the period in question, but will communicate something of their appeal to those who did not.

MATTHEW SEARLE

***London Transport* — Michael H C Baker**

64pp, A5, 75 illustrations (44 in colour), 1 map, Shire Publications, P O Box 833, Oxford OX1 9PL, 2016, ISBN 978 0 74781 429 0, £7.99

This characteristically concise Shire volume covers its subject from 1933 when the London Passenger Transport Board was created to rationalise the capital's transport, whether by bus, tram, trolleybus or underground and other trains, to today's Transport

for London (TfL). There are seven chapters, a brief bibliography (none of the books are more than twenty years old), a page of places to visit and a small but still useful index.

The 'heroic period' of London Transport was a

mere six years (1933–39) but much was achieved in those six years, thanks to Baron Ashfield, its Chairman, and Frank Pick, its Chief Executive. The next six years saw LT measuring up to the challenges of war, including the children's evacuation of September 1939, shortages and air-raids and call-up of staff. Post-war recovery was complicated by nationalisation and uncertain times. Street trams finished in 1952. Privatisation of bus services brought

problems but better times returned. New enterprises included a new form of tram, the Docklands Light Railway. With the centenary not too distant London Transport seems to be in good heart.

This book is a worthy tribute to it. As always with Shire it is breath-taking in its conciseness, inexpensiveness and well-chosen well-produced illustrations. Strongly recommended.

PHILIP L SCOWCROFT

***The New Railway: the earliest years of the West Highland Line* — John McGregor**

122pp, 230x165mm, 54 b&w pictures, 6 maps, softback, Amberley Publishing, The Hill, Merrywalks, Stroud GL5 4EP, 2015, ISBN 978 1 4456 4732 6, £12.99 (e-book also available)

This book covers the West Highland Railway Company from the earliest proposals to its opening in 1894 and subsequent railway-political machinations, including multi-company agreements delineating rival territories in the north of Scotland to try to avoid provocative schemes. There is an introductory summary, which is partially helpful, but the structure of the text is such that it is difficult to follow any story. For example, the reaction of local landowners to the initial proposals is dealt with in Chapter 9, following chapters dealing with authorisation, building, opening and routine running of the line. There is no chronology (although there is a list of parliamentary applications for powers) or index. This all requires some considerable concentration if you are to follow the 'plot'.

The primary narrative finishes in 1896 with a few extra random details subsequently. For example, there

are two photographs of abandoned trackway and both relate to the Invergarry & Fort Augustus Railway, which fed the Company's main line but was a separate company and never had any direct legal relationship with the West Highland line.

The author makes a point of saying he has used primary sources but gives no references to any of them. There is new material in this relatively short book, including some detailed maps, but comparing the information with John Thomas's *The West Highland Railway* of 1970 and David Ross's recent *The North British Railway* shows it is still not a comprehensive account even of 'the earliest years'. It would be useful to someone with a special interest in the area, and who possessed the other literature, but it is difficult to see its purpose in the general book market.

DAVID PEDLEY

***From the Mendips to the Sea: an imaginary journey through the industrial landscape of north Somerset* — Duncan Harper**

106pp, 210x210mm, 94 full colour illustrations & maps, softback, Lightmoor Press, Unit 144B, Lydney Trading Estate, Harbour Road, Lydney GL15 5EJ, 2015, ISBN 13 978 1 8998 8999 0, £15 (p&p £3.50 extra via publisher's website).

A twenty-first-century narrative of a make-believe nineteenth-century journey illustrated primarily by early twentieth-century photographs might seem a multiple anachronism but it can be left unnoticed in this exceptionally well-designed gem of a book. The author imagines his great-great-grandfather and his eldest son (who were both colliers) following a meandering course from their home in high Mendip through Radstock then down the Cam valley to Bath and the river Avon to Bristol.

Each of these four chapters describes the landscape, weather, light and trackways in self-conscious poetic language whilst the illustrated

material of collieries, coke ovens, stone works, canals, rivers and railways have more straight-forward informative extended captions. All the photographs have been chosen for their definition and the author (who has designed the book himself) has homed in on detailed content in many of them to take us right into the scene by using full double-page spreads with no border. This is a very effective device. A useful two-page bibliography and a two-page index emphasise the seriousness of the exercise.

More family historians could do well to take a similar approach to present the lives of their forebears.

STEPHEN ROWSON

***The Carriage and Wagon Works of the GWR at Swindon* — Ken Gibbs**

208pp, 232x155mm, 151 monochrome illustrations, 97 plans & diagrams, softback, History Press, The Mill, Brimscombe Hill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud GL5 2QG, 2016, ISBN 978 0 7509 6419 7, £18.99

It is good to have a work which throws light on a hitherto little-known aspect of railway history. In this one, an introductory chapter is followed by four others covering respectively the growth and development of the works, carriage and wagon design, the workforce, and a shop-by-shop description. Four appendices deal with braking systems, welding practice, other GWR carriage and wagon works, and the restoration of a Cambrian Railways carriage.

However the author's style, although competent, is somewhat uninspiring; while two near-fatal incidents are briefly mentioned, a few personal recollections and anecdotes would have made for more enjoyable reading. Mr Gibbs comes from a railway family but we learn little about him or his career, although it seems that he once put forward a

proposal for reorganisation which was rejected. But his disillusionment with the gradual rundown of the works following the end of steam is readily apparent; the accompanying industrial relations problems, although mentioned, are not described in any detail.

There are no obvious errors but it is difficult to verify any of the statements made as no references are given and there is no bibliography. However a suggestion that the only real effect of introducing roller and ball bearings was to increase costs is remarkably negative. Among the numerous plans is a useful series showing the growth of the works at 10-year intervals; even so, one appears three times and others would have benefited from a larger scale. Few of the illustrations are credited and there is no index.

GRAHAM BIRD

***The Chiltern Line of the Great Western & Great Central Railways* — Bill Simpson**

160pp, A4, 202 photographs (24 in colour), 10 maps, 6 facsimile documents, paperback, Lamplight Publications, 260 Colwell Drive, Witney OX28 7LW, 2015, ISBN 978 1 899246 59 5, £18.95 (p&p £3).

The 'Chiltern Line' covered by this book comprises more than just the former GW&GC Joint Railway from Northolt Junction to Ashendon Junction and Princes Risborough to Aylesbury. Also included are the GW lines from Ashendon to Banbury and from Princes Risborough to Thame and Watlington, plus the GC lines from Northolt to Marylebone, Ashendon to Calvert and Banbury to Culworth Junction, but not the main line from Calvert to Woodford. A clear system map would have helped to clarify this disparate selection.

The first four chapters provide a broad-brush survey of the history and development of the various railways and chapter six covers the revival of services out of Marylebone in the Network SouthEast and privatisation eras. At 118 pages, chapter five 'Stations Along the Line' forms the bulk of the book,

with text and photographic coverage of most stations on the chosen lines. Text varies from the thin to the over-detailed, but there is a good selection of photographs, over 60 percent by three photographers: the author, Neil Sprinks and H C Casserley. The pictures of the Wembley Exhibition and of Calvert brickworks are particularly interesting. Page design is clear and readable and the photos, although of variable quality, have generally reproduced well. There is a brief guide to further reading, which does not include some of the in-text references, and a good index.

This book does not claim to be a history, only to add 'new data and photographs'. However, its focus is unclear and the text content is patchy in its coverage. The selection of photographs has some value and will attract those with a particular interest in the area, but overall it disappoints.

TIM EDMONDS

***Traffic by Rail* — John Chamney**

56pp, A4, 72 colour and b&w illustrations, map, softback, HMRS Publications, HMRS Museum & Study Centre, Midland Railway Centre, Butterley Railway Station, Ripley DE5 3QZ, 2015, ISBN 978 0 902835 33 7, £10 (plus £2 p&p)

'Historical Model Railway Society Occasional Papers No. 2' is intended to provide guidance to railway modellers on how railways were run and thus enable

operation of realistic services but it is of wider interest beyond that hobby. The twelve chapters look at different aspects of railway operation such as the

goods work at a rural station (Bromyard) and the traffic passing through a station (Llanvihangel) on a busy secondary main line. There are chapters on individual trains such as the Swansea (Victoria) to York mail, the Far North mail and the Paddington to Penzance newspaper service, while special requirements such as the seasonal broccoli traffic from Cornwall are considered. One of the most interesting chapters is on the ocean liner traffic from Plymouth which, before the Second World War,

required special trains to London almost every day for the disembarking passengers and mails. The final chapter addresses the reasons for the many changes in railway traffic since 1946.

The author is clearly writing from his own experiences in the railway industry and his text is supported by many photographs (some of models) and reproductions of official documentation. There is no index or bibliography but there is some guidance on sources of further information.

RICHARD COULTHURST

***Waterways Journal, Volume 18* — Cath Turpin (Editor)**

72pp, 199x210mm, about 100 illustrations including maps, softback, The Boat Museum Society, South Pier Road, Ellesmere Port CH65 4FW, 2015, ISSN 1466 3732, £7.99 (plus £2 p&p from <www.boatmuseumsociety.org.uk/publications>)

The seventeen previous issues of the *Waterways Journal* occupy 3½ inches of shelf-space in my bookcase, and I frequently refer to them. The 2016 issue is a worthy addition, with four articles of exceptional variety, each fully referenced and appropriately illustrated.

Mike Clarke's contribution is particularly interesting for its reproduction of the guidelines for the Leeds & Liverpool Canal setting out how the committee should manage construction and giving detailed job descriptions for the engineer and the inspectors of the works. The management principles are so similar to what is taught today that it is difficult to believe that these were written almost 250 years ago. The article concludes with practical comments about canal maintenance which come from interviews recorded by the BBC in 1939.

Joseph Boughiey writes about the rise of pleasure boating on canals, illustrating it through the experiences of successive owners of *Teal* (later

renamed *Amaryllis*), which was built by J H Taylor & Sons of Chester in 1954 and donated to the National Waterways Museum in 1986. The role of boat clubs is discussed, in particular the Nantwich & Border Counties Yacht Club, founded in 1953 and moving to its current site in the early 1960s.

David Long gives the history of the barges used on the French canals during the First World War to transport injured British soldiers. The first ambulance or hospital barges were largely the initiative of a civilian, Douglas Bernard Hall, MP for the Isle of Wight, and financed by voluntary fund-raising. By the end of the war there were five flotillas each comprising six barges.

Terry Kavanagh outlines the history of commercial steam-powered boats on British canals, prefaced by a discussion of the early attempts to power boats mechanically — a history which goes back more than a century before the well-known *Charlotte Dundas* and *Comet*.

PETER BROWN

***The Hawkhurst Branch Line* — Peter A Harding**

32pp, A5, 53 b&w photographs, 8 maps & diagrams, softback, Peter A Harding, Mossiel, Bagshot Road, Knaphill, Woking GU21 2SG, 2016, ISBN 978 0 9523458 3 1, £4 (or £4.50 including postage) from publisher

Belatedly built in Victorian times to penetrate the difficult High Weald country, the Cranbrook & Paddock Wood Railway left the South Eastern Railway main line and nominally served the villages of Horsmonden, Goudhurst and the town of Cranbrook, petering out at Gills Green hamlet over a mile short of Hawkhurst. This gave it a reputation, not really justified, for inconvenient stations. In truth it was no worse than most other rural lines and well served its hop-growing rural area before the motor

age. Notably, it introduced Holman F Stephens to rural railways as resident engineer, aged 22, shortly before launching his well-known career.

This is a welcome reprint of the 1982 booklet with which Peter Harding commenced his series of self-published branch line booklets. This one, now with corrected text and recently found additional photographs, set and still maintains the standard. It is a succinct and handy work.

BRIAN JANES

***Railways of Telford* — David Clarke**

159pp, 246x190mm, about 200 photographs, 7 maps softback, Crowood Press, The Stable Block, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury, Marlborough SN8 2HR, 2016, ISBN 978 1 78500 094 2, £16.99

This study covers the standard-gauge lines in the area of the former Telford New Town, bounded by Wellington, Donnington, Madeley Junction, Coalport and Buildwas, including those of the Lilleshall Company and its successors. The plateways which preceded them have only a brief mention and one photograph.

Appropriately for an area with a long industrial history, the sidings and the rail-connected industries are comprehensively described and illustrated. So much has changed in the last fifty years – much land has been reshaped, a new road network created, the old factories and mines have been replaced by new industrial estates, tens of thousands of new houses built – that it is often difficult to relate what is pictured with what is there now. The freight workings are described in unusual detail, together with signalling infrastructure which controlled them and the classes

of locomotives which operated them.

Passenger workings are not neglected; in particular they show the importance to the LNWR of the Stafford–Wellington line. Before the First World War some trains divided at Wellington, with Euston/Birmingham to Aberystwyth/Barmouth carriages going on separately from the Swansea carriages. All of the 24 stations which were in the area are illustrated; only two, Wellington and Oakengates, are still open. Telford Central, opened in 1986, is not depicted.

The author was brought up in the area, and his deep knowledge of it is evident. The photographs mainly show the period from 1930 to 1970, more than a third being from the author's collection. All are in black & white and are reasonably well reproduced. There is a bibliography and an index.

PETER BROWN

***Corris Nostalgia* — Gwyn Briwnant Jones**

67pp, 182x220mm, 71 photographs, 4 maps, 1 painting, ephemera & timetables, softback, Gomer Press, Unit 1, Llandysul Enterprise Park, Horeb, Llandysul SA44 4JL, 2015, ISBN 978 1 78562 075 1, £9.99

This is a quirky book, compiled by the son of a 1920s Corris Railway guard, the fifth he has undertaken since 1994. The author's objective was to accompany a collection of previously unpublished photographs, collected from various sources, with reminiscences about the railway's last ten years of operation. There are, however, only sufficient reminiscences for one chapter so there are additional items about the

railway's bus services, a quarry once served by the railway, a description of a trip on the Talyllyn Railway in 1946 and an addendum on recent activities of the revived railway. Anyone already familiar with the railway's history will probably find the chapter on the bus services, and its accompanying illustrations, the most interesting section. The book's design is attractive and it is inexpensive. PETER JOHNSON

***The Light Railways of Britain and Ireland* — Anthony Burton & John Scott-Morgan**

160pp, A4, 176 b&w photographs, hardback, Pen & Sword Transport, 47 Church Street, Barnsley S70 2AS, 2015, ISBN 978 1 47382 706 6, £25

Pen & Sword has republished this 1985 work in a larger format. Its illustrations, some of which are additional, are produced to a far higher standard, making this essentially an attractive picture book with extended captions. A large number of the pictures will be familiar to those with a passing acquaintance with the subject. The captions, however, regrettably contain rather too high a quotient of errors. The little-changed accompanying text comprises essays on aspects of the light railway sector that perhaps too often run close to journalistic whimsy.

Light railways have been increasingly well served in recent years by authors of individual lines who acknowledge them as serious commercial enterprises whose utility passed with the coming of the motor age. A good overview is certainly needed but this work, like its first edition, may only usefully serve as an introduction for a new generation to the byways of the railway system. One looks forward to a serious attempt to assess the utility of light railways and their impact on the rural communities most of them served. BRIAN JANES

***Three Men and a Bradshaw: an original Victorian travel journal* — John George Freeman**

380pp, 222x160mm, 1 photograph, 100 drawings, 5 maps, Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA, 2015, ISBN 978 1 84794 744 4, £16.99

Shaun Sewell has a remarkable record of finding, purchasing and publishing personal journals, and the travel diaries of John Freeman are an interesting and amusing read. They cover the annual holidays of the brothers Freeman (Joseph, John and Charles) from 1873 to 1877 in Jersey, North Devon, North Wales, Scotland and South Wales. The writing style anticipates Grossmith; the illustrations would grace *Punch* and *The Illustrated London News*.

The brothers are remarkable travelling companions – tailors, from a Marylebone tailoring family, Non-conformists, teetotallers, non-smokers, enthusiastic tonic sol-fa choir members, sea-bathers, and puggaree wearers – who used *Bradshaw* (*Black* in Jersey) to meticulously plan their one major holiday of the year.

Walking was the main focus (20 miles a day usually) but this had to be linked by rail and steamer travel with heavy luggage consigned ahead (with a near disaster on the Festiniog Railway when their trunk was given to the wrong Freeman). So the railways feature largely in John's account but rarely to their credit – almost invariably late, crowded (baksheesh to the guard could gain better class seating), and often dirty – nevertheless this is an invaluable eyewitness to nineteenth century rural rail travel.

This volume, edited by Ronnie Scott, is enhanced by the inclusion of appropriate extracts from *Black* and *Bradshaw*, as well as useful marginal page notes, and a full index.

WILLIAM FEATHERSTONE

***The Canal Builders* — Anthony Burton**

192pp, 245x170mm, 43 illustrations, 6 maps, hardback, Pen & Sword, 47 Church Street, Barnsley S70 2AS, 2015, ISBN 978 1 47384 372 1, £19.99

***The Railway Builders* — Anthony Burton**

210pp, 234x155mm, 31 illustrations, Pen & Sword, 2016, ISBN 978 1 47384 370 7, £19.99

A welcome trend is the reprinting of several significant introductory books. Pen & Sword have added these two to *Thomas Telford* (reviewed in the last issue) and *The Light Railways of Britain and Ireland* (reviewed opposite).

Too often popular accounts of transport history give the impression that the only person who mattered was the engineer. *The Canal Builders* corrects this. The promoters had the vision and raised the money, overcame the opposition and brought the proposal through Parliament. The chief engineer led the construction stage but needed the support of the rest of the team – the resident engineer, the superintendents and the administrators. And the navvies, employed by the contractors, did the hard physical work. Each group has a chapter. First published in 1972 and last reviewed in the *RCHS Journal* in July 2000, this fifth edition has only minor

changes from the fourth (2005) edition. Especially welcome is the high production quality: the feel of the paper and the clarity of the printing.

Surprisingly, *The Railway Builders* (reviewed in March 1993) is not in a uniform style: the size is slightly different and, more seriously, the paper and printing markedly inferior; also the illustrations are grouped together in the old-fashioned way, rather than being at the relevant point in the text. This is the second edition, said to be 'substantially the same ... apart from some new illustrations'. The chapters cover a similar range to that of the canal book with a greater emphasis (justifiably) on opposition and (more questionably) on fraudulent promotion. If this volume is less successful it is because the promotion of railways varied significantly from the mid-1840s to the mid-1860 and was different again in the 1890s, making it more difficult to generalise.

PETER BROWN

Brief Notes

***Signalman's Trilogy* — Adrian Vaughan**

446pp, 198x126mm, 79 b&w illustrations, softback, Amberley Publishing, The Hill, Merrywalks, Stroud GL5 4EP, 2016, ISBN 978 1 4456 5622 9, £12.99

Adrian Vaughan's memoirs give a vivid picture of life in various Western Region signalboxes in the 1950s and 1960s, describing the activities, isolation and immense responsibilities which then had been virtually unchanged for over eighty years but which now seem part of distant history.

Originally published in three volumes in the 1980s, they are now brought together in this single softback edition. When republished by Amberley as single volumes in 2011–12 (at a total cost of over £50, which emphasises what good value this combined edition is), they received their first review in the *RCHS Journal*. Perhaps the importance of these books as a valuable operational and social record was not appreciated first time round.

***The Caistor Canal* — Christopher Padley**

60pp, A5, 18 b&w and 8 colour photographs and 14 plans, softback, Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, Jews' Court, 2–3 Steep Hill, Lincoln LN2 1LS, 2015, ISBN 978 0 903582 54 4, £5

The Caistor Canal in Lincolnshire as constructed was only four miles long. Surveyed by William Jessop, it was constructed in 1793–98 and had closed to traffic by the 1870s. It was well built, by whom is not certain, and its line and the masonry of five of the six locks have survived remarkably well. The owning company vanished in the 1850s and its internal records have disappeared. Despite this, the author has put together a remarkably full history, mainly from contemporary references in the *Stamford Mercury*, though inevitably some details are missing. There is a description of the canal today. The booklet is well produced, though without an index.

The following three 'Middleton' books: 96pp, 236x166mm, about 120 photographs plus maps, timetables, tickets etc, hardback, Middleton Press, Easebourne Lane, Midhurst GU29 9AZ, £18.95 (post free)

***Leicester to Burton including the Swadlincote Branch* — Vic Mitchell & Keith Smith**

2016, ISBN 978 1 90817 485 7

As well as the eponymous lines this Midland Lines series book covers those parts of the Leicester and Swannington Railway that survived into the recent past, and a number of the Leicester coalfield colliery lines. Although following the well-established and reliable format of these authors – including some real photographic gems – some captions are facile, some maps ill-chosen for reproduction, and some photographs are dull and lifeless. On the other hand, the insertion, at appropriate points, of extracts from the 1866 *Bradshaw* is a welcome innovation in this series.

***Branch Lines to Skegness and Mablethorpe* — Vic Mitchell & Keith Smith**

2016, ISBN 978 1 90817484 0

Another venture by Middleton Press into the quiet byways of east Lincolnshire. Your reviewer [AG] still has his own work from Skegness Infants' School c1963, which lamented 'Soon there will be no trains at Skegness...'. Of course trains still run to Skegness, but not to most of the other places recorded here

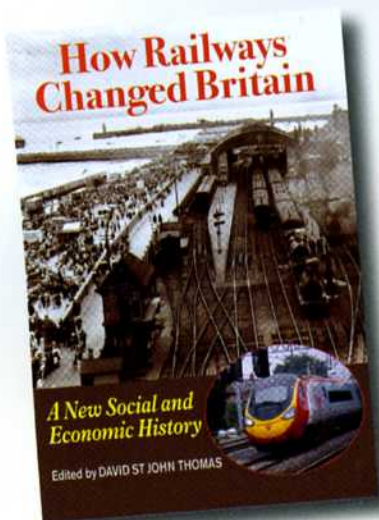
which are depicted in various stages of decline or dereliction. The book covers the loop to Mablethorpe, the 'New Line' via Tumby Woodside and a small number of very interesting pictures of the Spilsby branch. There's a shot of the 'new' Jolly Fisherman, now bereft of his pipe deemed to encourage bad habits!

***Kettering to Nottingham via Melton Mowbray* — Vic Mitchell & Keith Smith**

2015, ISBN 978 1 90817 482 6

Continuing the Midland Lines series this book covers the sinuous former Midland Railway line from Kettering to Nottingham, including the open-closed-open-closed-open Corby station and the Old Dalby test track. There is the usual solid map and photograph coverage of stations and lineside structures. The three rare photographs of the short lived Charterail system in operation at Melton Mowbray are especially striking.

It is sad to note the death, while this volume was in preparation, of Barbara, Vic Mitchell's wife, who typeset the 400 albums produced by this team to date. The fine production standards of this volume are a fitting tribute to this lady, to whom it is dedicated.



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How Railways Changed Britain

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Railways played a pivotal role in changing the nature of Britain and of British life. In a mere 30 years following the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, the country was transformed with astonishing speed and they became the symbol of the age. Travel was no longer at the pace of a horse, few towns of any size were remote from rail communication. Goods could be moved great distances with relative ease. Holidays in once distant resorts became feasible, and innovation replaced stagnation.

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How Railways Changed Britain was conceived and edited by David St John Thomas, author and publisher. It is dedicated to his memory, as sadly he died during the final stages of its preparation.

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