

**MUNICIPAL POLITICS AND REGIONAL MONOPOLY:
RAILWAYS AND THE PORT OF HULL, 1840-1922.**

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ABSTRACT.

This thesis is a case study of the Humber port of Kingston upon Hull over a period of some eighty years from 1840. It examines the growth of what was perceived by the civic and commercial bodies as a railway and dock monopoly, a monopoly considered prejudicial to the trade of Hull and advantageous to rival ports. The thesis focuses on the strategies employed by the civic and commercial bodies of the port to counteract and defeat the perceived monopoly. It then goes on to explore the evolution of relationships between the parties involved after competition had been established.

The methodology is to analyse the motivations and tactics of all parties and demonstrate that although the overall strategies adopted were a failure in the eyes of the civic body they were ultimately of great benefit to the port.

The existing historiography takes little account of the singular and robust civic involvement in railways and docks at Hull. Therefore no examination has been made of the consequences of the intervention of Hull Corporation and traders in railway and dock development at the port, which this thesis sets out to examine.

CONTENTS.

ABSTRACT.....	2
CONTENTS.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.	8
CHAPTER 1.....	9
TRANSPORT, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT & MUNICIPAL POLITICS.	
1. Introduction.....	9
2. Transport systems.	14
4. Ports with particular reference to the port of Hull.	20
5. Railways and economic development.....	28
6. The relationship between railways, traders and the state.....	31
7. Railways and the port of Hull.	37
8. The traders and Corporation of Hull, 1840-1922.....	41
9. Thesis	44
CHAPTER 2.	47
THE GENESIS OF A RAILWAY MONOPOLY, 1840-1852.	
1. Introduction.....	47
2. The Leeds and Selby Railway.....	48
3. The Hull and Selby Railway.	50
4. Attempts to introduce railway competition to Hull.	56

5. The YNMR and its relationship to the town of Hull.	61
6. From local to regional monopoly - the formation of the North Eastern Railway. .	62
7. Dock development in Hull, 1840-1853.....	65
8. Problems faced by the Hull Dock Company.....	67

CHAPTER 3..... 70

THE EVOLUTION OF MONOPOLY, 1852-1879.

1. Introduction.....	70
2. Railway development in Hull from 1852 to 1866.	71
3. A new dock for Hull and a proposal for a Dock Trust.....	74
4. The NER`s attempts to control and maintain monopoly.....	76
5. The consolidation of the NER monopoly.	79
6. The Hull and Doncaster Railway.	88
7. The calm before the storm, 1865-1872.....	94
8. The crisis of 1872 and the Hull South & West Junction Railway.	96
9. The last years of railway monopoly, 1873-1879.	103
10. The Hull Dock Company and the port to 1879.....	105
11. The seeds of competition.	109

CHAPTER 4..... 111

THE END OF MONOPOLY, 1879-1885.

1. Introduction.....	111
2. The Hull, Barnsley & West Riding Junction Railway & Dock Company.....	112

3. HBR victory and euphoria.	122
4. Financial arrangements for the construction of the HBR.	125
5. Proposals for expansion of the HBR.....	128
6. The crisis years of the HBR, 1883-1884.....	132
7. The completion of the line.	138

CHAPTER 5..... 143

THE EMERGENCE OF COMPETITION, 1885-1890.

1. Introduction.....	143
2. Financial difficulties faced by the HBR, 1885-1886.	143
3. The Sculcoates dispute.....	146
4. Abortive proposals for the sale of the HBR and the Hull Dock Company.....	149
5. The deepening financial crisis affecting the HBR.	152
6. The proposal for the sale of the HBR to the MR.	155
7. New proposals by the Corporation for a Dock and Railway Trust.....	164
8. Warfare among the HBR shareholders.	168
9. The end of warfare and the move towards prosperity, 1889-1890.	174

CHAPTER 6..... 178

THE HULL DOCK COMPANY, 1889-1893 AND THE HULL DOCK STRIKE, 1893.

1. Introduction.....	178
2. Unsuccessful attempts to alleviate the Hull Dock Company crisis.	180

3. The 1892 Bill for amalgamation with the NER	181
4. The 1893 Bill for amalgamation with the NER.	184
5. The Hull dock strike, 1893.....	191
6. The aftermath of the dock strike.	200
CHAPTER 7.....	203
THE RISE OF HULL AS A COAL PORT, 1893-1916.	
1. Introduction.....	203
2. The South Yorkshire Junction Railway.	204
3. The Hull and South Yorkshire Extension Railway.....	212
4. The development of the concealed coalfield.....	216
5. The HBR and GCR Joint Railway.	223
CHAPTER 8.....	226
CO-OPERATION AND OBSTRUCTION, 1893-1908.	
1. Introduction.....	226
2. The proposal for amalgamation of the NER and HBR, 1895.....	226
3. NER proposals for dock improvements, 1897-1899.....	230
4. Disputes between Hull Corporation and the railway companies.....	236
5. Railway company shipping enterprises.	243

CHAPTER 9.....	249
 AMALGAMATION AND OBSTRUCTION AND THE END OF COMPETITION, 1908-1921.	
1. Introduction.....	249
2. Proposed railway amalgamations and their effects on the NER and HBR.....	253
3. The proposal for amalgamation of the NER and HBR, 1909.....	256
4. The Western Reservation dispute, 1911.....	262
5. The Saltend partnership.....	264
6. The Graving Dock dispute, 1913 and the opening of the Joint Dock in 1914.....	266
7. The war years.....	271
8. The Final years of railway competition, 1918-1921.....	273
 CHAPTER 10.....	 281
 CONCLUSIONS.	
1. Introduction.....	281
2. The Corporation and the railway and dock companies.....	282
3. Municipal politics and business influence.....	287
 APPENDICES.....	 292
 GLOSSARY.....	 319
 FIGURES.....	 321
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 351

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CHAPTER 1.

TRANSPORT, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT & MUNICIPAL POLITICS.

1. Introduction.

This thesis is a case study of the Humber port of Kingston upon Hull, at the time the third largest in England, over a period of some eighty years from 1840. It is concerned with the railways serving the port and the interactions between them and the bodies representing its civic and commercial interests. More particularly, it examines the growth of what was perceived by the civic and commercial bodies as a railway monopoly, inimical to the trade of Hull and to the advantage of rival ports, exercised by the North Eastern Railway Company (NER). The thesis focuses on the strategies employed by the Corporation and traders of Hull to counteract and defeat the perceived monopoly, largely by the promotion of an independent railway and dock. The key component of this strategy was what became the Hull Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Company (HBR), the study of which is central to this thesis. The justification for the study lies in the light it sheds on the effect of municipal politics on the close and interdependent relationships between the various modes of transport and systems of distribution in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which are all too often treated in isolation. There is a paucity of academic literature concerning municipal policy regarding the railway-port interface. A rare exception is the case of Liverpool for which Jarvis has produced an analytical history that includes a chapter on the relationship between the port authority, The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, and the railway companies serving the port. He concludes that the dock authority accepted the usefulness of railways but feared and hated the railway companies.¹

¹ A. Jarvis, *Liverpool Central Docks, 1799-1905 – An Illustrated History*, (Stroud, 1991), pp. 91-116.

Some caution must be exercised in drawing more general conclusions from this thesis, as the extent of the civic involvement in the development of the transport infrastructure of Hull during the nineteenth century was a singular one, with the *rôle* of Hull Corporation being pivotal. From the inception of the railway from Leeds to Selby, in 1836, Hull Corporation showed an inclination to give practical, political and, in a few cases, financial support to independent railway schemes, but its greater involvement did not come about until the proposal for the HBR in 1879. In order to counter the NER's perceived monopoly it obtained parliamentary powers to prevent the sale or leasing of the HBR, an independent company which it was instrumental in promoting. The singular circumstances of the railway and dock monopoly at Hull may be established when comparison is made with the ports of Liverpool and Southampton; the essential difference being the degree of involvement by the civic authorities. In Liverpool the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) enjoyed a strong competitive position similar to that of the NER at Hull, but this was more a case of railway monopoly being sustained by the absorption of competing companies, whereas at Hull the NER's strategy was to prevent access by other railway companies except by means of running powers granted by it.²

For fifteen years from the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830 that company, later absorbed into the LNWR, controlled all routes into Liverpool and strenuously opposed attempts by other companies to gain access.³ The Manchester and Leeds Railway (MLR) [the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway (LYR) from 1847] eventually gained access in 1845, followed in 1874 by the Cheshire

² J. R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, (London, 1969), p. 188.

A. Vaughan, *Railway Politics and Money*, (London, 1997), p. 134. Vaughan asserts that 'the NER was ...co-operative with other railways which wished to use its tracks.' This is true but ignores the fact that, because of various agreements, running powers, particularly in the Hull area, were little used.

³ J. Marshall, *The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, Vol. 1*, (Newton Abbot, 1969), p. 128.

J. Simmons & G. Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, (Oxford, 1997), p. 285. The LNWR acquired Garston Dock to the east of Liverpool in 1864 as a rival to the Mersey docks to ship timber and Lancashire coal to Ireland.

Lines Committee made up of the Great Northern Railway (GNR), Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway (MSLR) and Midland Railway (MR).⁴

Liverpool docks were initially constructed in 1715 as a civic enterprise, but because of dissatisfaction with the port's administration Corporation control was removed, and from 1857 the docks were administered by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, described by some historians as the strongest, and possibly most dynamic port administration in England.⁵ Prior to the formation of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board the entire business of the port was the responsibility of the Trustees of the Liverpool Docks who were, in fact, the Borough Council using a different minute book.⁶ The Mersey Docks and Harbour Board consisted of 28 members, of whom 24 were elected by the ratepayers.⁷ The generally held view of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board as energetic and forward-looking has been disputed, although it has been conceded that the Port of London Authority, formed in 1908, flattered Liverpool's administration by imitating it.⁸

At Southampton the docks were in the hands of a private company until 1892 and the London and South Western Railway Company enjoyed a monopoly of access to the port for many years, defeating all attempts by other railway companies to gain entry.⁹ The Dock Company had neither the will nor the capital necessary to make essential improvements to the facilities and the railway company refused to become involved. However, the situation changed completely with the appointment of

⁴ J. Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1913*, (Newton Abbot, 1986), pp. 208-209.

Marshall, *The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 129.

⁵ S. Mountfield, *Western Gateway – A History of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board*, (Liverpool, 1965), pp. 1-15.

⁶ A. Jarvis. Personal communication.

⁷ H. J. Dyos & D. H Aldcroft, *British Transport*, (Leicester, 1971), p. 272.

⁸ A. Jarvis, 'The Members of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board and Their Way of Doing Business', *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 6, (June 1994), p 123.

G. J. Milne, 'Port Politics: Interest, Faction and Port Management in Mid-Victorian Liverpool', in *Harbours and Havens: Essays in Honour of Gordon Jackson*, (St. Johns, Newfoundland, 1999), pp. 35-62

A. Bryant, *Liquid History – Fifty Years of The Port of London Authority*, (London, 1960), pp. 39-64.

⁹ H. P. White, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol. 2, Southern England*, (Newton Abbot, 1970), p. 135.

Charles Scotter as general manager of the railway in 1885.¹⁰ Scotter displayed a dynamism which had previously been lacking. The railway offered the dock company substantial loans for improvement and, in 1892, acquired the docks, initiating a comprehensive programme of investment which secured the future of the port.¹¹

The civic involvement in railways at Hull went further than at Liverpool or Southampton. The Corporation not only encouraged an independent railway and dock company at the port but also obtained Parliamentary powers to safeguard that independence. The existing historiography concerning Hull takes little account of the vigorous civic involvement in the railway situation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That existent concentrates upon the constructional, operational and economic aspects of the railways concerned. No examination has been made of the consequences of the intervention of Hull Corporation in railway development at the port, which this thesis sets out to examine.

Probably the best academic overview of the situation at Hull is given by Simmons. He traces the growth of resentment against the NER at Hull and argues, as does this thesis, that the inadequacies of the port were in no small measure the fault of the Dock Company. He also notes the involvement of the Corporation in the establishment of the HBR and the more co-operative stance of the railway companies from the mid-1890s, themes which are central to this thesis. But his review is concise and precludes the detailed analysis offered here.¹²

The standard work on the NER, a major player in nineteenth century Hull, is Tomlinson's *North Eastern Railway*, published in 1914. This monumental tome charts the history of the NER in great detail. However, Tomlinson was a paid employee of the company who worked with its official blessing, and this may have

¹⁰ J. Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, (London, 1991), p. 264

¹¹ Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1913*, p. 208.

R. A. Williams, *The London and South Western Railway, Vol. 2*, (Newton Abbot, 1973), pp. 134-148.

White, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol. 2*, pp. 136-138.

C. H. Grinling, *The Ways of our Railways*, (London, 1911), pp. 285-290.

¹² Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830-1914*, pp. 204-207.

J. Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales 1830-1913*, (Leicester, 1978), pp. 67 & 91.

affected his objectivity. Writing on the formation of the NER Tomlinson waxed euphoric over the new creation: 'Stretching a well regulated monopoly through the rich mineral and agricultural part of England from which it derives its name, the North Eastern Railway, in 1854, presented one of the most remarkable examples of amalgamation.'¹³ He goes on to state 'The NER could certainly not be charged with indifference to the port [of Hull].'¹⁴ One of the purposes of this study is to assess the degree to which these claims can be substantiated.

A more dispassionate view than that of Tomlinson is given in Brooke's doctoral thesis and subsequent article, which provide an analysis of the various agreements negotiated by the NER to safeguard its trading position, and the company's relationship with the port of Hull. However, the work ends at the crucial date of 1880, when the HBR obtained its Act.¹⁵ The economic history of the NER is more generally examined in Irving's *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914. An Economic History*.¹⁶ This work, however, completely ignores the rôle of the Corporation of Hull and its relationship with the NER.

By comparison the HBR is poorly represented by academic volumes. There are, however, works by lay historians that are of value. *The Hull & Barnsley Railway* appears in two volumes, the first being edited by K. Hoole and the second by B. Hinchliffe.¹⁷ They concentrate mainly on the construction and operation of the railway although there is a short analysis of the relationship between the HBR and Hull Corporation.¹⁸ They are compilations of work by various authors and consequently suffer from a lack of connectivity, engaging with matters of little

¹³ W. W. Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, (Newton Abbot edition, 1967), p. 526.

¹⁴ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 623.

¹⁵ D. Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A study in railway consolidation and competition', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Leeds University, 1971).

D. Brooke. 'The Struggle between Hull and the North Eastern Railway', *Journal of Transport History*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (September 1972), pp. 220-237.

¹⁶ R. J. Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914 An economic history*. (Leicester, 1976).

¹⁷ K. Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, (Newton Abbot, 1972).

B. Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 2*. (Sheffield, 1980).

¹⁸ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, pp.181-197.

interest to academic historians. They are, however useful for the chronological aspect of the thesis. Additionally, there are two small works which consist mainly of descriptions of the line, locomotives and rolling stock.¹⁹

Before proceeding to focus more closely on the singular transport situation in Hull it is appropriate to review transport systems and regional development in a broader context. This will serve to establish the more general relevance of what otherwise may appear to be no more than an isolated study of one urban area, its port and railways.

2. Transport systems.

There is some disagreement among historians concerning the wider significance of the period of increasing industrialisation commencing around the mid-eighteenth century and often known as the Industrial Revolution.²⁰ One school of thought sees it as a broad change in Britain's economy and society. The alternative view perceives a much narrower phenomenon, the result of technical change in only a few industries, particularly cotton and iron. Although the degree is still debated, it is generally agreed that the industrial revolution was dependent on innovation and investment in the transport infrastructure.²¹ Until the arrival of railways in the 1830s the agencies of transport were the road system, inland waterways and coastal shipping.

Roads had provided arteries of transport for centuries and, by 1820, turnpike trusts had achieved an aggregate improvement in the road system of England.²²

¹⁹ G. D. Parkes, *The Hull and Barnsley Railway*, (Lingfield, 1946).

M. Barker, 'The Hull and Barnsley Railway' in D. Goodman (ed.), *Aspects of Hull*, (Barnsley, 1999), pp. 99-112.

²⁰ P. Temin, 'Two views of the Industrial Revolution', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 57, No. 1, (March 1997), pp. 63-68.

²¹ H. J. Dyos & D. H. Aldcroft, *British Transport*, (Leicester, 1971), p. 18.

²² R. Szostak, *The Role of Transport in the Industrial Revolution*, (Montreal, 1991), pp. 60-62.

M. J. Freeman, 'Transport' in J. Langton & R. J. Morris, *Atlas of Industrialising Britain 1780-1914*, (London, 1966), p. 80.

Turnpike roads were established from Hull to York in 1764-5 and to Selby and the West Riding of Yorkshire, in 1793.²³

Inland navigation provided an increasingly important alternative to road transport. In 1699 the undertakers of the Aire and Calder Navigation (ACN), made up mainly of businessmen from Leeds and Wakefield, obtained an Act for the improvement of the rivers from the confluence of the Aire and the Ouse to Leeds and Wakefield. This initial improvement was completed in 1704. Transport by inland waterway had been important to the trade of Hull since its founding, but the movement of water-borne goods between the West Riding of Yorkshire and the port was greatly facilitated by river improvement.²⁴

Coastal shipping was a very important mode during the period covered by this thesis. It was seen as an extension of the canal and river systems.²⁵ Cain notes that in the early 1870s, by which time the railway network was largely complete, it was estimated that three-fifths of all railway rates were influenced by sea competition.²⁶ Coastal shipping was a serious competitor to the railways until the Great War when, in addition to the depredations of German U-boats, the cost of marine transport rose sharply, whereas railway rates were held at lower levels as a result of government control of the railways.²⁷ Armstrong argues that, in the United Kingdom, coastal shipping was crucial to industrialisation, being prominent in the transport of corn and coal, especially the London coal trade.²⁸ Coastal shipping has, however, remained a Cinderella subject so far as most historians are concerned.

²³ J. E. Crowther, 'Turnpike Trusts' in S. Neave & S. Ellis (eds.), *A Historical Atlas of East Yorkshire*, (Hull, 1996), p. 94.

K. J. Allison, *The East Riding of Yorkshire Landscape*, (Howden, 1998), pp. 205-6.

²⁴ C. Hadfield, *The Canals of Yorkshire and North East England*, (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. 19.

²⁵ M. Freeman, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Regional Geography of England', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New series, Vol. 9, No. 4, (1984), p. 508.

²⁶ P. J. Cain, 'Railways and price discrimination in the case of agriculture', *Business History*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (July 1976), p. 2. (From the Report of the Joint Select Committee on Railway Companies' Amalgamations, 1872 XIII Pt. 1 [364] xxix-xx).

²⁷ *The Times*, 29th December 1919.

²⁸ J. Armstrong & A. Kunz, (eds.), *Coastal Shipping and the European Economy 1750-1980*, (Mainz, 2002), pp. 11-23.

There is here a parallel with transport of goods by road.²⁹ Armstrong argues that this is partly because the theoretical literature in economics and economic history has stressed overseas trade rather than internal trade as an instrument of growth.³⁰

An often-neglected aspect of coastal shipping, which is particularly relevant to this study, is the contribution it made to port and harbour development. Bagwell and Lyth point out that railways came to the fore at a time when there was a need for larger ships with quicker turn round times, leading to deepening of docks and harbours and the installation of new infrastructure, particularly for handling coal.³¹ The coming of the railways, in the 1830s, facilitated trade for this traffic at ports such as those on the River Tyne and at Middlesbrough and Hartlepool.³²

As I have implied, the UK transport infrastructure consisted of various modes brought together in a relationship of competition and co-operation. Armstrong notes that whereas it was once customary for scholars to adopt the Whig view of transport history as a process of continuous improvement, seeing each new mode as an improvement over those existing, it is now more widely accepted that faced with competition from new modes, older ones could survive in suitable niches.³³ Adaptation ensured that no mode was totally ousted. Rather there was collaboration. Road hauliers bought into canal companies, as later and for different and less constructive reasons did the railways. Railways bought into shipping businesses. The road carrier Pickford's and the ACN are examples of collaboration, diversification and technological innovation.³⁴ Pickford's became a carrier for the railways and the ACN introduced container boats on its navigation.³⁵ Each mode capitalised on its strengths in providing, as far as possible, the best and most economical service.

²⁹ T. Barker & D. Gerhold, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport 1700-1990*, (London, 1993) p.11.

³⁰ J. Armstrong, *Coastal and Short Sea Shipping*, (Cambridge, 1996), p. xii.

³¹ P. Bagwell & P. Lyth, *Transport in Britain - From Canal Lock to Gridlock*, (London, 2002), p. 31.

³² D. Turnock, *An Historical Geography of Railways in Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 170-176.

³³ J. Armstrong, 'Transport History, 1945-95', *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd Series, Vol. 19, No. 2, (September 1998), p. 114.

³⁴ G. Turnbull, 'The Railway Revolution and Carriers' response.' *Journal of Transport History*, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, (March 1969), p. 48.

³⁵ H. Crabtree, M. Clarke, (ed.). *Railway on the Water*, (Goole, 1993), pp. 18-37.

However, 'economy' and its concomitant, 'efficiency' could be defined in different ways by different interested parties. This thesis in part addresses how various social groups in Hull understood terms such as these and how this helped to shape the ways in which different modes of transport related to each other.

3. Transport and regional economy before the railway age.

As this thesis is concerned with the regional development of the Yorkshire and Humber region, it is appropriate to consider the development of regional economies and, more particularly, the significance of their transport infrastructure. The development of Yorkshire as an industrial centre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was extremely important for the port of Hull, which was the main outlet in the east.³⁶

Although rivers and canals were instrumental in the growth of industry, regional canal systems were slow in developing and a national system took even longer. On a regional scale the industrial belt from Leeds and Bradford to Birmingham and the West Midland manufacturing towns was linked to the port of Hull by improved rivers and canals by 1704, and by 1790 the river basins of the Humber, Mersey, Severn, Thames and Trent were connected by canal systems; albeit in some cases circuitously.³⁷

Hudson argues that the canal system furthered the development of regional economies until the mid-nineteenth century, and that these cohesive regional economies existed throughout much of the period of this study, influencing and being influenced by the growth of transport networks. The long-term consequence of the canal system was a significant increase in the scale and efficiency, if not the technology, of regional economic systems.³⁸ Turnbull contends that since water

³⁶ W. G. East, 'The Port of Hull during the Industrial Revolution', *Economica*, No. 32, (May 1931), pp. 207-212.

³⁷ C. Hadfield, *British Canals*, (London, 1959), p. 80.
G. W. Crompton, 'Canals and the Industrial Revolution', *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd Series, Vol. 14, No. 2, (September 1993), pp. 93-110.

³⁸ P. Hudson, 'The Regional Perspective', in P. Hudson, (ed.), *Regions and Industries*, (Cambridge, 1989) pp.15-38.

transport was no longer restricted to the coastal and riverine periphery. canals materially altered the geography of industrial growth.³⁹ Thus Mathias argues that transport systems assisted the development of industrial regions, stimulating the demand for the bricks, stone, timber and iron required for construction. The provision of transport facilities also generated purchasing power through the relatively high wages paid to the navvies involved in canal, and later railway, construction.⁴⁰

During the development of specialised regional industrial identities up to c.1850 the Midlands became the province of metalwork and hardware trades. Lancashire became the almost exclusive producer of cotton and woollen textiles predominated in West Yorkshire, leading to a corresponding decline in the importance of East Anglia and the South West in this field.⁴¹ The abundant water power and the lime-free character of the water supply and, at a later stage, the proximity of high quality coal deposits, were of salient importance in explaining the initial location and later persistence of the woollen industry in West Yorkshire.⁴² As a result of increasing industrialisation the West Yorkshire share of the UK woollen production rose from 20% to around 60% during the course of the eighteenth century. By 1830 there were 600 mills in West Yorkshire compared with 200 in 1800, and by 1851 most of these employed more than 200 persons and some more than 1,000.⁴³ This was a formation of sectors of production on a scale never seen before, and was particularly relevant to the port of Hull which formed the outlet, not only for much of this woollen production, but also for cotton textiles from Lancashire; for despite Hull's aspirations to be a major coal port it is necessary to be realistic about its major exports. Coal, as a percentage of total exports between 1850 and 1900 was

³⁹ G. Turnbull, 'Canals, Coal and Regional Growth during the Industrial Revolution', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 40, No. 4, (November 1987), pp. 557-558.

⁴⁰ P. Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation - An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914*. (London, 1983), p. 98.

⁴¹ Hudson, 'The Regional Perspective' in *Regions and Industries*, pp. 5-10.

⁴² F. J. Glover, 'The Rise of the Heavy Woollen Trade of the West Riding of Yorkshire in the Nineteenth Century', *Business History*, Vol. 4, 1962, p. 2.

D. T. Jenkins, *The British Wool Textile Industry*. (London 1982), pp.80-89.

⁴³ P. Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution*, (London, 1990), pp. 116-119.

2.7%, whereas during the same period cotton goods formed 17.3% of exports, and woollen goods from the West Riding of Yorkshire amounted to 7.5%.⁴⁴ In the same period there were imports of woollen rags rising from 13,000 lbs. (5,910kg.) in 1860 to 45,480 lbs. (20,673 kg.) in 1901.⁴⁵

Jackson suggests that a factor influencing regional development in Britain was oceanic commerce, which was reflected in the development of provincial ports and an increase in their relative importance. London had always been the major port of England, retaining the East India Company monopoly of Indian trade until 1813 and of Chinese trade until 1833. From the latter date geographical advantage enabled Bristol and Liverpool to capture an increasing amount of transatlantic trade, Liverpool being the port for the Lancashire cotton industry. In the case of Bristol expansion was based very much on the extremely lucrative slave trade.⁴⁶ Hull's development, as a port for cotton and woollen goods, was therefore, part of a more general trend.

A further impetus to regional economic growth was capital invested by landowners in the improvement of inland transport systems, especially where coal or other mineral deposits occurred on their estates. Channon has recently made a strong case for saying that such figures were a majority.⁴⁷ Nevertheless there were some conservative landowners who opposed transport developments that they perceived to be detrimental to their amenity.⁴⁸ Such landowners often held out for large amounts of compensation for such loss, thus delaying and increasing the cost of railways. This occurred in the case of the first railway to Hull, a reason why a comparatively short line over easy country took four years to complete, as will be discussed in chapter 2.

⁴⁴ J. M. Bellamy, *The Trade and Shipping of Nineteenth Century Hull*, (Hull, 1971), p. 64.

⁴⁵ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping statistics, 1907.

⁴⁶ G. Jackson, 'Sea Trade' in J. Langton & R. J. Morris, *Atlas of Industrialising Britain 1780-1914*, (London, 1986), p. 96.

⁴⁷ G. Channon, *Railways in Britain and the United States, 1830-1940*, (Aldershot, 2001). pp. 194-205.

⁴⁸ Turnock, *An Historical Geography of the Railways of Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 7-8.
F. R. Conder, J. Simmons, (ed.), *The Men who Built Railways*, (London, 1868, reprinted 1983), p. 10.

The development of transport infrastructure facilitated the movement of raw materials and products as the economy moved from an agrarian to an industrial basis. The improved transport system lent itself to greater efficiency, particularly in the movement of bulk inorganic materials. Wrigley notes that whereas production of organic materials is areal, the movement of minerals and products is punctiform. The transport problems involved in moving a million tons of coal from pit-heads scattered over an area of a few square miles are quite different from those involved in moving the same weight of grain or timber from an area of several thousand square miles. The former implies heavy tonnage along a small route mileage, whereas the latter implies the reverse.⁴⁹ The canals facilitated the transport revolution, but it was the railways which developed it to its full potential in the nineteenth century. However, before discussing in detail, the effects of the railways it is appropriate to consider the background to and the *rôle* of ports and, in particular, that of Hull.

4. Ports with particular reference to the port of Hull.

The transport system of the 18th and 19th centuries developed in a piecemeal manner and the development of ports was almost entirely a result of the interplay between commercial and political forces at regional or local level. The port of Hull is an example of this manner of development, the question of which agency was to control and improve the docks at Hull being central to this thesis.

Unlike continental ports, which often necessitate long hauls from the hinterland, the British Isles are fortunate in that there is no place more than 90 miles (145 km) from any port.⁵⁰ Although the idea of discrete areas, from which the traffic is derived according to some demonstrable principle, has an attractive simplicity, Sargent argued that this is unlikely to correspond with reality. Indeed, West and

⁴⁹ E. A. Wrigley, 'The Supply of Raw Materials in the Industrial Revolution.' in J. Hoppit & E. A. Wrigley, (eds.), *The Industrial Revolution in Britain, II*, (Oxford, 1994), p. 93.

⁵⁰ L. C. A. Knowles, *The Industrial and Commercial Revolutions in Great Britain during the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1941), p. 258.

South Yorkshire and the North Midlands exemplify this, each with traffic flows to and from ports as far distant as London, Newcastle, Liverpool and Hull.⁵¹

The proximity of ports to industrial facilities was particularly advantageous to trade in the pre-canal era as, despite improvements made by turnpike trusts, haulage was difficult due to the poor condition of the road system. As I have already noted the building of canals in the eighteenth century, in conjunction with improvements to complementary river systems, facilitated transport of bulk goods to the ports.⁵² There was thus a close association between canals and ports of which Hull is a good illustration. It has been suggested that before the coming of the railways Hull's communications with its hinterland were almost entirely by water transport, although in Chapter 2 of this thesis we will see an example of a road carrier switching to rail transport.⁵³

Ports developed slowly until the arrival of railways, whose coming coincided with technical advances in the design of ships in the middle of the nineteenth century. The average tonnage of merchant vessels increased only from 800 to 1,000 in the 100 years to 1830, propulsion being by sail. The almost threefold increase in port tonnage up to 1830 came from a growth in the numbers of ships rather than their increased

⁵¹ A. J. Sargent, *Seaports and Hinterlands* (London, 1938), pp. 4-15.

B. Slack, 'Terminals and Location'. *Transport Geography on the Web*, (January 2005), [<http://people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/index.html>] (3rd August 2005). In recent years the validity of the hinterland concept has been questioned, especially in the context of contemporary containerisation. The mobility provided by the container has greatly facilitated market penetration, so that many ports now compete over the same market areas for business. The notion of discrete hinterlands with well-defined boundaries is therefore questionable. Nevertheless, the concept is still widely employed, and port authorities continue to emphasise their ports' centrality to hinterland areas in their promotional literature.

⁵² Hadfield, *The Canals of Yorkshire and North East England*, pp. 17-43.

B. F. Duckham, *The Yorkshire Ouse*, (Newton Abbot, 1967), pp. 59-85.

⁵³ G. Jackson, 'Port Building on the Humber, c. 1770-1850: A Survey of Local Motivation', *Bulletin of Economic Research*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (May 1971), p. 70. Jackson suggests that before the arrival of the railway Hull's communications with its hinterland were almost entirely by water transport. R. Jones, 'Kingston upon Hull: A Study in Port Development', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol. 35, 1919, p. 163. Jones makes a similar assertion.

capacity.⁵⁴ This led to an increase in the water area upon which ships needed to ride whilst being loaded and unloaded, a laborious process at the time.⁵⁵

When steam-propelled iron ships came into use from the 1830s their size and draught increased and, in the case of river ports, it was necessary to make and maintain a deep channel for access.⁵⁶ This eventually limited the size of ships at ports situated further up-river as the costs of river improvement and conservation became prohibitive. Consequently, ports such as Chester, Lincoln, Norwich and York became decreasingly important.⁵⁷ Additionally, a greater area was required for warehouses to cope with the storage of goods for transshipment. Before the eighteenth century most ports functioned by means of harbours or piers. Many natural harbours had been improved but a major step forward in port development was the wet dock, introduced at Liverpool in 1715, Bristol in 1765, and Hull in 1778.⁵⁸

Jackson argues that while established ports such as Bristol, Hull, Liverpool and London expanded their traditional *rôle*, they did not to any great extent impinge on the commercial and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; the great impetus to expansion occurring after 1840 with the arrival of railways and increasing numbers of steam vessels. This development was not solely confined to existing ports. New ports such as Cardiff, Hartlepool and Seaham were developed for the coal trade. As well as railway involvement a major factor was demand from steam shipping for bunker coal. The ports which enjoyed the greatest success were coal ports, as steamships were reluctant to use those at which coal was unavailable.⁵⁹

The period after 1840 saw a great increase in port facilities and changes in port administration nationally. The development of administration took three main paths. Firstly there was a move from private to municipal control of dock facilities, such as occurred on the Tyne, and much later in London; secondly, towards the

⁵⁴ G. Jackson 'The Ports' in M. J. Freeman & D. H. Aldcroft, (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain*, (Manchester, 1988), p. 218.

⁵⁵ Dyos & Aldcroft, *British Transport*, p. 54.

⁵⁶ F. W. Morgan, *Ports and Harbours*, (London, 1958), pp 14-16.

⁵⁷ A. H. J. Brown, *Port Economics*, (London, 1953), p. 48.

⁵⁸ L. F. Vernon-Harcourt, *Harbours and Docks*, (London, 1885), pp. 381-393.

⁵⁹ G. Jackson, 'Sea Trade', *Atlas of Industrialising Britain*, p. 96

middle of the century, there was a trend to the establishment of trusts in place of civic authorities to take control of docks, examples of which occurred at Liverpool and Glasgow; thirdly, railway companies sought port facilities and entered into the dock business, examples being Hull and Southampton.⁶⁰

This not only facilitated railways' involvement in foreign trade, particularly in the passenger business, but also placed them in both competition and co-operation with coastal shipping, leading to an expansion in the facilities of existing ports and the development of new ones, allowing railways to provide speedy and convenient access to and from the hinterland. Liverpool, whose trade grew by 20% between 1850 and 1914 and Cardiff, which had the third largest export tonnage by 1914, are examples of two such ports.⁶¹ Railways needed large areas of land at such interchanges as a result of the increase of steam navigation and the size of ships.⁶²

The railway companies were far from being in complete control of the development of ports and dock facilities quite apart from the fact that they owned only a minority. They, along with other dock authorities, had to contend with the power of the shipping lines. Indeed, Bird asserts that the struggle of ports to keep up with the increasing size of ships gave rise to a master and servant relationship between ship owners and the providers of dock facilities, driven by the shipping companies.⁶³ The effects of the breakdown of this relationship and its deleterious effect on a port will be illustrated in this thesis by the conduct of the Hull Dock Company in the nineteenth century, when it ignored the need to accommodate larger vessels and suffered from competition in its hinterland which overlapped that of the ports of Hartlepool, Grimsby and Liverpool.

Hull has been a recognised port since the 14th century.⁶⁴ For most of the time, it was the third port in England after London and Liverpool.⁶⁵ In 1369 one of the

⁶⁰ G. Jackson, 'The Shipping Industry', in M. J. Freeman & D. H. Aldcroft, (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain*. p. 268.

⁶¹ I. Friel, *Maritime History of Britain and Ireland*, (London, 2003), p. 220.

⁶² Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830-1914*, p. 215.
Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports*, p. 88.

⁶³ J. Bird, *Seaports and Seaport Terminals*, (London, 1971), p. 195.

⁶⁴ E. Gillett & K. A. MacMahon, *A History of Hull*, (Hull, 1989), p. 4.

continued

most prominent maritime institutions of Hull was founded. This was a fraternity called the Guild of the Holy Trinity, which was to be influential in the provision of dock facilities at Hull.⁶⁶ Hull's only sheltered landing place up to the late eighteenth century was the old harbour, a natural haven at the mouth of the River Hull. The port was unique in Britain in not having a legal quay where goods could be checked and duty assessed by the port's customs officers. This resulted in considerable evasion of duty and loss of revenue by the government, together with increasing hindrance to trade caused by growing congestion in the harbour area.⁶⁷ As a result of loss of revenue the Custom House in Hull was informed, in 1772, that unless the town would co-operate with the Board of Customs, by establishing a legal quay, accommodation would be found elsewhere on the Humber.⁶⁸ Along with this threat the Board of Customs offered a cash subsidy of £15,000.⁶⁹ This carrot and stick approach produced action. The merchants, together with the Trinity House Brethren and the Corporation, formed the Hull Dock Company in 1773 for the purpose of

W. R. Childs, 'Concentration, Dependence and Maritime Activity at the Regional and Community Levels: The Case of Hull, Scarborough and their Yorkshire Hinterlands' in D. J. Starkey & M. Hahn-Pedersen, (eds.), *Concentration, Dependence and the Rôle of Maritime Activity in North Sea Communities, 1299-1999*, (Esbjerg, 1999), pp. 11-16.

⁶⁵ W. R. Childs, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull 1300-1500*, (Hull, 1990), p. 9.

⁶⁶ J. J. Sheahan, *History of Kingston upon Hull*, (London, 1864), p. 465. The Trinity House Brethren obtained many powers over the working of the port of Hull. A charter confirmed by Elizabeth I in 1567 granted power to determine the maritime differences between masters and seamen and to restrain mariners, being examined and not found qualified by the fraternity, from taking charge of vessels. In 1680 Charles II appointed the Corporation of Trinity House to be the curators of the haven at Hull with power to examine and swear witnesses in maritime cases and to levy and receive primage [a percentage on the freight paid to the owner of a ship for care in loading or unloading cargo] for the support of destitute mariners, their wives and widows, together with assistance for shipwrecked mariners. They were also empowered to place buoys on the river to assist navigation and to license pilots. A marine school was founded in 1785 in which initially 140 boys, the sons of mariners, received general and nautical education.

⁶⁷ Gillett & MacMahon, *A History of Hull*, p. 227.

⁶⁸ East, 'The Port of Hull during the Industrial Revolution', p. 194

⁶⁹ G. Jackson, 'Port Building on the Humber, c. 1770-1850: A Survey of Local Motivation', p. 71

making a new dock off the River Hull. An Act of Parliament in 1774 authorised the dock, which was opened on 22nd September 1778.⁷⁰

Under the Act that established it the Dock Company received certain rights. The main privilege was to levy tonnage rates, varying according to the voyage, on all vessels entering the harbour or docks or loading or unloading cargo in any part of Hull, whether using the company's docks or not. However, coasters to or from places on the Trent or Ouse, which did not use the docks, were exempt from these charges. The Dock Company had the right to levy inward wharfage dues on all goods landed or discharged on the quays of the company. It also claimed the right to levy outward wharfage dues on all goods shipped from its quays.⁷¹ These privileges gave the Hull Dock Company a virtual monopoly of the dock business. The traders of the port contended that there was a corresponding obligation to meet the growing needs of the port for increased dock accommodation. This issue was to become a constant source of friction between the Dock Company and the commercial interests of the port.⁷² During the period from the opening of the first dock in 1778 until 1828 the Dock Company levied both inward and outward wharfage on goods which passed across its quays. In 1828 the claim of the company to levy outward wharfage was disputed in the Queen's Bench Division, where the judge ruled that the claim was not justified by the company's Act. No further outward wharfage was charged until 1844.⁷³

The entrance to the original dock was inconvenient because of the crowded condition of the River Hull, and an additional dock was opened in 1809.⁷⁴ It communicated directly with the Humber and was called Humber Dock. The earlier dock, which had previously been known only as 'the dock', now became Old Dock.

⁷⁰ City Archives, Hull, A 12, Hull Dock Act, 1774.

Figure 26. Town Docks, Hull.

City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company AGM, 2nd February 1855. On 13th and 14th October 1854 the Queen in the Royal yacht *Fairy* passed through Victoria, Humber, and Junction Docks. In commemoration of this event the names of Old and Junction Docks were changed to Queen's and Prince's Docks respectively

⁷¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 31, Board of Trade Report, 15th February 1861.

⁷² City Archives, Hull, A 12, Ferry, Dock and Pier Act, 1801.

⁷³ *Hull Advertiser*, 16th & 23rd May 1828.

⁷⁴ Gillett & McMahon, *A History of Hull*, p. 231.

The wharfage rates established under the first Dock Act were extended to Humber Dock.⁷⁵ An increase in trade in the 1820s and 1830s led to controversy between the Dock Company and the users of the port despite a further dock called Junction Dock, leading off Humber Dock and connecting with Old Dock, being added to the system in 1829.⁷⁶ The port was congested and the entrance lock gates were not wide enough for the larger vessels now wishing to use the port.⁷⁷ Town centre docks, such as those at Hull were becoming obsolete. The impending entry of railways into docks by way of town streets was unsatisfactory.⁷⁸ The Dock Company offered to sell the docks to the town and although the Corporation agreed to the conditions, the local press and the public were hostile to the proposal.⁷⁹ This was the first attempt to form a Dock Trust and it failed as the townspeople of Hull, unlike those of Liverpool, were not prepared to shoulder the financial burden of purchasing and then improving the dock accommodation.⁸⁰

Dissatisfaction among the mercantile community with the facilities offered by the Dock Company led to a proposal for an independent dock promoted by local businessmen.⁸¹ There was suspicion that it was a ploy to galvanise the Dock Company into action, rather than a *bona fide* proposal.⁸² It succeeded, initially at least. Alarmed by this threat to its monopoly the Dock Company proposed the building of another dock on the same site as the earlier scheme. The proposals were presented to Parliament in 1840.⁸³ Despite the obvious and urgent need for additional

⁷⁵ Bellamy, *The Trade & Shipping of Nineteenth Century Hull*, p. 10.

⁷⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 31, Board of Trade Report, 15th February 1861.

⁷⁷ *Hull Advertiser*, 19th March 1836.

⁷⁸ Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports*, pp. 73-76.

⁷⁹ *Hull Advertiser*, Editorial 31st March 1837 & 24th November 1837.

⁸⁰ Bellamy. *The Trade & Shipping of Nineteenth Century Hull*, p. 138.

⁸¹ City Archives, Hull. CQP4, Bill for the construction of a dock east of the Citadel.

⁸² City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/1/34, Queen's Dock Company Prospectus, 13th November 1838.

Much of the dock was to be built on land owned by Robert Raikes, a banker of Hull who was one of the promoters of the scheme. Raikes was the owner of the land near Hessle, the negotiations over the purchase of which held up the construction of the Hull and Selby railway. (see chapter 2)

⁸³ City Archives, Hull, TLP 2, Bill for providing a dock and other works connected therewith, in addition to the docks already established at the port of Kingston upon Hull, and for amending the Acts relating to such last-mentioned docks. (1840)

dock accommodation, and evidence to the Commons Committee that the imminent coming of the railway would increase this, the Hull Dock Company objected to amendments made to the Bill by Parliamentary Committees and withdrew it in June 1840.⁸⁴ The dock system at Hull, at the time of the coming of the railway in 1840, comprised three small docks: Humber Dock, Junction Dock and Old Dock together with the Old Harbour in the River Hull. The need for additional accommodation was obvious to all except the Hull Dock Company.

The case of the Hull Dock Company illustrates Jackson's assertion of three key factors concerning the development of ports in the nineteenth century; the continued rise in aggregate tonnage, the evolution of steamships, and the growth of coal exports.⁸⁵ The Hull Dock Company consistently failed to address all these issues, a result being that until 1885, with the opening of the Alexandra Dock of the HBR, Hull was not only overcrowded and inefficient, but lacked a deep-water dock and modern coal-handling appliances. By way of contrast up-river from Hull, in 1828, the ACN had opened its port of Goole, whose well-designed dock system allowed rapid transfer of cargo between barges and ships.⁸⁶ Hull could not match the efficient working of Goole, but its one great advantage was that vessels of deep draught were unable to navigate as far up-river as Goole.⁸⁷

The frustration felt in Hull was intensified by the presence on the other side of the Humber, at Grimsby, of a port which enjoyed the whole-hearted support of the MSLR, which owned the docks and was ready to make large investments in them.⁸⁸ The case of Grimsby illustrates Turnock's argument that a critical factor affecting dock development was capital for improvement. Railways, to be considered in the next section, became a crucial factor in the provision of capital and the expansion of

⁸⁴ Sheahan, *History of Kingston upon Hull*, p. 292.

City Archives, Hull, TLP 2, East Dock Parliamentary proceedings. Thomas Ward, a ship-owner, appearing before the Commons Committee on 15th June 1840 acknowledged that the railway from Selby, to be opened on 1st July, would demonstrate an acute need for increased dock facilities at Hull.

⁸⁵ Jackson, 'The Ports', in *Transport in Victorian Britain*, p. 235.

⁸⁶ J. D. Porteous, *The Company Town of Goole, An Essay in Urban Genesis*, (Hull, 1980), pp. 16-20.

⁸⁷ G. Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports*, p. 63.

⁸⁸ G. Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 1*, (London, 1959), pp. 173-177.

transport facilities at the ports they owned, and the links they provided with the expanding hinterlands, in terms of capacity and speed of service.⁸⁹

5. Railways and economic development.

Until the 1960s historians agreed that railways were crucial to the British economy in the nineteenth century. But in 1964 Fogel's analysis of the American railroad system suggested that that railroads were less important in American economic growth than had been supposed, and in 1970 Hawke came to a similar conclusion in respect of the railways of Britain.⁹⁰ His findings were that railways saved between 7% and 11% of UK national income in 1865, a figure somewhat lower than many had assumed.⁹¹ The debate over the empirical adequacy of this work has continued for more than three decades. Foreman-Peck investigated this question from an alternative viewpoint by posing the question: 'How much lower would the British national income have been without improvements in railway productivity?' His conclusions were that railways, in round terms, were as important to the British economy as contemporaries thought, thus vindicating their supposed contribution to economic growth, a view which still tends to be supported by most historians.⁹²

But a degree of controversy still attaches to the question of how the economic benefit was distributed. At one time historians emphasised the integrated effect of railways on the national economy. Over twenty years ago Freeman argued that the Victorian economy was fragmented and regionalised, and that railways did not necessarily increase national economic integration, pointing out that although they did introduce long-distance traffic flows, in aggregate the balance was on short-haul

⁸⁹ Turnock, *An Historical Geography of Railways in Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, p. 169.

⁹⁰ W. R. Fogel, *Railroads and American Economic Growth*, (Baltimore, 1964).

⁹¹ G. R. Hawke, *Railways and Economic Growth in England and Wales*, (Oxford, 1970), p. 401.

⁹² J. S. Foreman-Peck, *New Perspectives on the Late Victorian Economy: Essays in Quantitative Economic History 1860-1914*, (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 73-95.

T. R. Gourvish, *Railways and the British Economy 1830-1914*, (London, 1980), pp. 33-40.

J. Armstrong, 'Transport history, 1945-95', *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd Series, Vol. 19, No.2, (September 1998), pp. 103-121.

regional traffic, at least until well past the mid-century.⁹³ More recently Turnock has agreed, suggesting that the railways often bolstered economic interests at regional and local levels. He cites the promotion of the HBR as an example of how, as late as the 1880s, local interests sought to strengthen their position.⁹⁴

Contrary to what may have been expected the immediate impact of railways was on passenger, rather than freight transport.⁹⁵ In the first year of operation of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway after its opening in 1830 the revenue derived from passengers was twice that from the transport of goods.⁹⁶ The reasons for the delay in the development of goods traffic were the relative cheapness of transport by inland waterway and the fact that the transport and distribution infrastructure of many companies was adapted to waterways. This was particularly so in the Midlands and Yorkshire, where extensive canal networks existed, and there was a reluctance to abandon the existing infrastructure. Pickford's, for example, had invested much capital in canals.⁹⁷ As has already been noted, Hull benefited from waterway improvements carried out by the ACN.

Another factor was that the great majority of the railway companies of the 1830s were small concerns operating fewer than fifty miles of line.⁹⁸ The use of railways for bulk commodity export was most appropriate in North-east England where, for topographical reasons, canal connections did not exist but waggonways did. This topography gave the river ports of the region an advantage in the transshipment of coal traffic, as the steep banks of the River Tyne allowed the easy

⁹³ M. J. Freeman, 'Introduction', in M. J. Freeman & D. H. Aldcroft, (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain*, p. 52.

M. J. Freeman, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Regional Geography of England', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New series, Vol. 9, No. 4, (1984), p. 510.

⁹⁴ Turnock, *An Historical Geography of Railways in Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, p. 15.

⁹⁵ P. S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770*, (2nd Edition, London, 1988), p.107.

⁹⁶ J. A. Francis, *A History of the English Railway, Its Social, Relations and Revelations 1820-1845*, (London, 1851), p.147.

⁹⁷ G. L. Turnbull, 'The Railway Revolution and Carriers' Response.' *Journal of Transport History*, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, (March 1969), pp. 48-71.

⁹⁸ Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770*, p. 112.

discharge of coal into river craft using gravity alone⁹⁹. This issue was eventually addressed at ports such as Hull, which did not enjoy such advantage, by the use of sophisticated coal handling appliances.¹⁰⁰

Apart from competition from waterway carriers, freight traffic on the railways grew slowly because of problems associated with the management of such traffic by rail. To gain passengers was easy by comparison. They merely presented themselves for transport in accordance with a timetable and if the transport were rapid, efficient and affordable they returned for more. Freight transport, however, required a network of contacts and knowledge of the traffic needs of the various trades in any particular area. This specialised knowledge took time to acquire. Railways were up against existing networks established earlier by other carriers and were too autonomous to appreciate the necessity of working co-operatively to build up such networks for themselves.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, because of the regionally integrated transport system that already existed, railways found it necessary to impose self-restraint in the structure of their freight rates to encourage the trade of the regions they served.¹⁰² Hawke supports such views, arguing that that the reduction in freight transport charges due to the railways was very small in the 1840s but began to increase rapidly thereafter.¹⁰³

However, it was not until 1852 that receipts from goods traffic exceeded those from passengers and, at about the same time, the volume of traffic carried by rail exceeded that carried by waterways.¹⁰⁴ One section of the market where railways had a dramatic effect was on the cost of domestic coal. For almost 250 years the coal cartel of northern England had held a monopoly of both production and the export market in London and at other coastal ports. The opening up of new mining districts by the railways and the transport of coal to London by rail was a major factor in the

⁹⁹ G. Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports*, pp. 100-103.

¹⁰⁰ J. Macaulay, 'The Economics of Dock Administration' J. Macaulay & C. Hull, (eds.), *Modern Railway Working, Vol. 8*, (8 vols. London, 1914), pp. 26-35.

¹⁰¹ H. Pollins, *Britain's Railways: An Industrial History*, (Newton Abbot, 1971), p. 110.

¹⁰² Hudson, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 103.

¹⁰³ Hawke, *Railways and Economic Growth in England and Wales*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁴ Pollins, *Britain's Railways: An Industrial History*, p.113.

breaking up of the cartel in 1844.¹⁰⁵ In 1851 Francis wrote: 'An inestimable blessing which the country owes to the rail is the reduction in the price of coal: the cost of which is one third less, owing to the monopoly of the coal-owners being broken.'¹⁰⁶ Some forty years later the HBR would be formed to break a monopoly in the carrying of coal to the port of Hull, an occasion that marked the start of its *rôle* as a major coal port.

6. The relationship between railways, traders and the state.

It is appropriate at this point to set the perceived monopoly at Hull in the context of the wider debate on railway monopoly and the railway companies' alleged abuse of their monopolistic powers. It is therefore necessary to consider the factors leading to constraints being placed on railway charges by Parliament.

The British government took virtually no part in the planning of a national railway system unlike other European governments such as France, Germany and Belgium, which determined the routes for new railways and, in some cases, paid for them. Foreman-Peck asserts that the British free enterprise system led to increased capital costs.¹⁰⁷ More recently Casson has argued that it led to major inefficiency in both the configuration and operation of the railway network.¹⁰⁸ British commercial interests were strong and were able to treat on equal terms with the government.¹⁰⁹ Although there was a growing and widespread perception among traders that railways were monopolies in need of regulation the government of 1830-1859 took no action.¹¹⁰ In some regions the railways' tactics included buying up canal companies. As this thesis suggests, the development of perceived monopolies, such

¹⁰⁵ H. Levy, *Monopolies, Cartels and Trusts in British Industry*, (London, 1968), pp. 156-166.

¹⁰⁶ J. A. Francis, *A History of the English Railway*, p.171.

¹⁰⁷ J. S. Foreman-Peck, 'Natural Monopoly and Railway Policy in the Nineteenth Century', *Oxford Economic Papers*, New series, Vol. 29, No. 4, (December 1987), pp. 120-121.

¹⁰⁸ M. Casson, 'The Evolution of the British Railway Network, 1825-1914', paper delivered to the Institute of Railway Studies, York, October 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Gourvish, *Railways and the British Economy 1830-1914*, pp. 49-51.

G. Alderman, *The Railway Interest*, (Leicester, 1973), pp. 25-32.

¹¹⁰ H. Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (London, 1965), p. 27.

as those at Hull by the privately owned Dock Company and the NER were, in part, a consequence of such factors.

Although the early days of railway promotion were characterised by the formation of a multiplicity of small companies, from the mid-1840s onwards economies of scale dictated that small undertakings amalgamated or were absorbed by larger companies. Several of the companies relevant to this study were formed in this period. The LYR was formed in 1847 from the MLR and the Wakefield, Pontefract and Goole Railway. The MSLR, (The Great Central Railway [GCR] from 1897) was also formed in 1847 and arose from the amalgamation of the Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester Railway with three other railways and the Grimsby Docks Company.¹¹¹ A key participant in this study, the NER, was formed from an amalgamation of the York, Newcastle & Berwick, the York & North Midland (YNMR), the Leeds Northern and the Malton & Drifffield Junction Railways in 1854.¹¹² But parliamentary opinion on railway amalgamations was ambivalent. In 1844 a Select Committee acknowledged the benefits of amalgamation but by 1853 the reverse was the case although in 1872 the view was once more generally in favour of amalgamation.¹¹³ In the early 1900s Parliament was once more against amalgamations, a situation which will be explored in more detail in chapter 9.

The railway companies' increasing size and bureaucracy, together with their attempts to gain control of competing modes, such as canals, meant that the railways' customers increasingly saw them as monopolistic.¹¹⁴ The companies countered this by insisting that amalgamation reduced duplication of resources leading to improvements in efficiency and, in 1881, managed to convince a Parliamentary Select Committee of this.¹¹⁵ Until 1894, when legislation effectively prevented them,

¹¹¹ G. Dow, *Great Central*, Vol. 2, (London, 1962), p. 221.

¹¹² City Archives, Hull, TLP 77, Act dated 31st July 1854 forming the NER.

¹¹³ F. Dobbin, *Forging Industrial Policy*, (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 200-203.

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, 4th January 1884. 'They [railway companies] have become an Empire within an Empire, or more properly, a number of Empires...In its own district each claims to be supreme and is capable of exercising almost supreme powers...to make or unmake a neighbourhood, to favour a firm or ruin it, to forbid an industry or to give it undue advantage.'

¹¹⁵ R. J. Irving, 'The Profitability and Performance of British Railways, 1870-1914', *The Economic History Review*, New series, Vol. 3, No. 1, (February 1978), pp. 54-55.

railways were in a position to practise price discrimination, a positive aspect of which was that suppliers could reach markets from which they would otherwise be excluded.¹¹⁶

From the mid-1830s onwards traders gradually became organised at a local level into Chambers of Commerce and grew increasingly alarmed at the perceived monopolistic behaviour of railway companies. They clashed in Parliament with the railway interest, represented by railway company chairmen and those with large shareholdings, who had a very strong representation. The Hull Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1837, was particularly vocal on the subject of rates in general and the perceived NER monopoly in particular.¹¹⁷ As prices fell generally in the 1870s railway rates did not, and this cost started to eat into profit margins. Kostal argues that until the 1860s the judiciary entertained a deep-seated suspicion of large corporations and as a result their decisions served to sustain a chaotic and inefficient market served by relatively small railways, which continued to exist because the courts insisted on preserving the *status quo*. Partly as a result of this railways were themselves facing higher costs, and in the 1870s, they increased charges for ‘terminal expenses’ causing further discontent. Although maximum charges for conveyance were prescribed in the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1854 railways could charge what they liked for these so-called terminal services.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ W. W. Sharkey, *The Theory of Natural Monopoly*, (Cambridge, 1982), p. 14. Sharkey quotes an assertion made by Jules Dupuit in 1844 that a monopolist who is able to price discriminate is often led to choose a pricing structure that maximises social welfare. This was how the NER chose to portray itself.

A. J. Arnold & S. Mc Cartney, ‘Rates of return, concentration levels and strategic change in the British railway industry, 1830–1912’ *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd Series, Vol. 26, No. 1, (March 2005), p. 46. The authors quote: The benefits of a unified system were clear, and were exemplified in the committee’s view by the North Eastern Railway, whose ‘system is now the most complete monopoly in the United Kingdom; from the Tyne to the Humber, with one local exception, it has the country to itself, and it has the lowest fares and the highest dividend of any large English railway’.

¹¹⁷ Alderman, *The Railway Interest*, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ R. W. Kostal, *Law and English Railway Capitalism 1825-1875*, (Oxford, 1994), p. 220. Terminal charges were rendered for services at either end of the journey, such as loading, unloading and use of stations and equipment. Although railway companies tried to secure

continued

Complaints from traders continued and as a result Select Committees were appointed in 1881 and 1882 to examine the system of railway charging. They were unable to come to any decisions regarding uniform charges.¹¹⁹ The traders were, however, at a disadvantage compared to the railway companies in that they did not present a united front. Whereas railway companies often quarrelled amongst themselves they stood together on the question of rates. Traders did not. It was in the interests of the large trader to obtain discounts for large quantities but this disadvantaged the small trader. Likewise it was to the benefit of the trader who sent his goods a long distance to receive a lower differential rate while the local trader, paying a higher rate, looked upon this as unfair.¹²⁰ An exhaustive enquiry into railway charges began in 1884, which led to the Board of Trade being ordered to investigate the companies' systems of rates. Companies were required to submit a classification of charges for freight traffic. This caused no great difficulty as the Railway Clearing House had used such a classification for many years.¹²¹ Bills for the regulation of railway rates were introduced in each year between 1884 and 1887 but all failed.¹²² Finally the Railway and Canal Traffic Act became law in 1888, specifying new maximum rates.¹²³

A problem for the railway companies was that hitherto they had, in many cases, charged special reduced rates. Although the companies were prepared to let special rates continue they did not have sufficient time to calculate them under the

parliamentary recognition for terminal charges in return for limits on the amount of these charges, such efforts failed because of the widespread perception among traders that the charges were unjustified.

National Railway Museum Library, York, K7B/34, Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1854.

¹¹⁹ J. B. Pope, *Railway Rates and Radical Rule*, (London, 1884), pp. 38-52. Pope goes on to summarise the evidence given to the Select Committee.

¹²⁰ J. Mavor, 'The English Railway Rates Question', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Vol. 8, No. 3, April 1894, p. 293.

¹²¹ P. S. Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy, 1842-1922*. (London, 1968), pp. 62-89.

¹²² S. J. McLean, 'The English Railway and Canal Commission of 1888', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (November 1905), pp. 1-5.

¹²³ Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth Century Britain*, p. 224.

National Railway Museum Library, York, K7B/34, Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1854.

new regulations so as to come into effect simultaneously with the new maxima. Their response, partly based on a determination to maintain income and partly to wreck the provisions of the Act, was to raise all rates to the new maxima in 1893. Traders found that as a result of agitation for a reduction in railway rates they were compelled to pay more. This caused uproar, especially as the railway companies had raised their rates at a time of commercial depression.¹²⁴ The Conservative MP and member of the Hull Chamber of Commerce, Sir Albert Rollit, was instrumental in introducing a deputation to the President of the Board of Trade, A. J. Mundella, in February 1893, which declared that maximum rates which had been intended as a shield for the traders had become a sword in the hands of the railway companies.¹²⁵

Parliament responded by passing the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1894, giving commissioners the right to peg rates at 1892 levels. Rates could only be increased if the railway companies could prove an increase in costs.¹²⁶ This legislation reduced rates, causing the real cost of transport to fall considerably in the Edwardian period.¹²⁷ Alborn argues that although, superficially, the legislation seemed to be to the disadvantage of the railways it enabled them to shift the blame for higher rates onto political constraints beyond their control.¹²⁸ Parris has argued that the 1894 Act caused charges to be higher than they would otherwise have been, as companies were hesitant to reduce rates because they feared that if they found it

¹²⁴ P. J. Cain, 'Traders versus Railways. The Genesis of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1894', *Journal of Transport History*, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, No. 2, (September 1973), p. 72.

¹²⁵ Alderman, *The Railway Interest*, p. 147.

Rollit was president of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, and of the London (1893–8) and Hull chambers.

¹²⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 177, Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1888. This Act established the Railway and Canal Commission. Section 24 of the Act required companies to submit a schedule of maximum rates. Hull Corporation submitted a notice of objection to both the classification of merchandise and schedule of rates of the HBR and NER on 31st May 1889. The objections were heard in 1890.

National Railway Museum Library, York, K7B/34, Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1854.

¹²⁷ P. J. Cain 'Railways 1870-1914: The Maturity of the Private System', in M. J. Freeman & D. H. Aldcroft, (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain*, p. 106.

¹²⁸ T. L. Alborn, *Conceiving Companies*, (London, 1998), p. 235.

necessary to raise them again the Commission might not allow them to do so.¹²⁹ However, Cain demonstrates that the Act was, indeed, effective in preventing railway companies raising rates. Between 1895 and 1912, out of 136 cases referred to the Railway and Canal Commissioners only 10 were judged wholly or partly in the favour of the companies. The remainder were withdrawn, settled before judgement, dismissed or given against the railway companies.¹³⁰

The foregoing has demonstrated that the long dispute over pricing policy undermined the railways' efforts to present themselves as public utilities acting for the benefit of their customers. They were naturally concerned to avoid the perception that they were abusing their monopoly powers and argued that the aim of the pricing policy was to set charges to realise the largest net profit, due regard being had to the interests of the public.¹³¹ It was the last phrase that was treated with deep cynicism by traders and the general public alike. In the case of the NER Irving describes this public face as a 'political charade'.¹³² As I will show in this study, there can be little doubt that the traders of the port of Hull would have agreed with this sentiment.

One result of the 1894 Act was a reduction of the railway companies profitability. Although angered by its restrictions, they were rendered powerless for many years. But after the national rail strike of 1911 the railway companies conceded recognition of trades unions in return for a pledge by the government that they would be allowed to raise rates if wages increased. After a bitter battle in Parliament between the traders and the railway companies the latter were allowed a general increase in rates, implemented by the Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1913. The increase in rates was met with hostility from traders, and the government set up a Royal Commission to examine the relationship between the railways and state. It was understood that the remit of this commission would include consideration of a proposal to nationalise the railways. The commission was suspended and had not reported when the Great War broke out in 1914 and the government took control of

¹²⁹ Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth Century Britain*, p. 225.

¹³⁰ P. J. Cain, 'The British Railway Rates Problem 1894-1913', *Business History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (January 1978), p. 89

¹³¹ Hawke, *Railways and Economic Growth in England and Wales*, p. 321.

¹³² Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914 An economic history*, p. 137.

the railway system leading to rates being maintained at an artificially low level for the period of hostilities.¹³³

7. Railways and the port of Hull.

The history of railway access to the port of Hull is essentially one of an initial approach by an independent undertaking, swiftly followed by absorption into a regional company culminating in the formation of the NER in 1854. The NER monopoly lasted until the successful promotion of the HBR in 1880.

As will be detailed in chapter 2 the first railway to Hull, the Hull and Selby Railway (HSR), was opened in 1840. It approached from the west keeping to the low ground alongside the River Humber, securing the only level route as, to the west of Hull, the chalk escarpment of the Yorkshire Wolds extends almost to the river.¹³⁴ Until 1880 the NER defeated all attempts to build a railway to Hull from the west. To protect its interests in the port it negotiated a series of rate and pooling agreements, known as the Humber Agreements, with all other railway companies interested in access to Hull, and eventually established control of all rail traffic from Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the North Midlands to all ports between the Humber and Tyne.¹³⁵

These arrangements were not unusual in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Since the opening of the GNR route from London to Edinburgh in 1850, which competed with those of the LNWR and MR, railway companies had tempered competition among themselves by means of rates and pooling agreements. The Octuple Agreement, which regulated the receipts from Anglo-Scottish traffic, and the Six Towns Agreement, relating to traffic between London, York, Leeds, Sheffield, Doncaster and Lincoln, were signed in 1851, setting a precedent for subsequent pooling agreements.¹³⁶ Rate agreements ensured that the companies concerned

¹³³ M. Reed, 'Who Runs the Railways?' *The Journal of the Railway and Canal Historical Society*, Vol.24, Part 8, (May 2004), p. 528.

¹³⁴ Figure 9. Yorkshire and Humberside.

¹³⁵ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880 A study in railway consolidation and competition', pp. 295-296.

¹³⁶ Simmons & Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, p. 7. Bagwell. *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy, 1842-1922*, pp. 250-257.

charged all customers equally for supposedly equal services. The rates were set at regular meetings, known as conferences, between representatives of the companies concerned. A pooling agreement also set rates and fares but went further in providing for the sharing of traffic receipts among companies according to an agreed schedule.¹³⁷

As early as 1845, with the defeat of a scheme for a railway from Hull to Barnsley, resentment was kindled among the mercantile and civic bodies in Hull at the perceived railway monopoly, and thereafter several attempts were made to promote independent railways. These all foundered on the rock of the opposition of the YNMR and subsequently the NER. Feelings were further inflamed when, in 1865, the NER gained control of the northern port of Hartlepool, and agreed to a policy of equal rates from the West Riding to Hull and Hartlepool, thus, in the eyes of Hull traders, denying it its geographical advantage and, as a corollary, showing preference for Hartlepool.¹³⁸

The NER absorbed the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway in 1862, the Stockton and Darlington Railway (SDR) in 1863 and the West Hartlepool Railway in 1865; all companies which preferred to amalgamate with the NER rather than compete with it or assist other companies to compete. The NER was particularly anxious to acquire the SDR because of the latter's ownership of the South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway (SDLUR), which provided a link between the coal and iron industries of Cumberland and Durham. This line had been supported by the LNWR, a potential rival to the NER. In an attempt to gain access to the North-east the LNWR had purchased a dock at Hartlepool, but Parliament had refused running powers over lines linking it with the LNWR. It had, however, given the LNWR running powers over the SDLUR and the connecting Eden Valley Railway.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Channon, *Railways in Britain and the United States, 1830-1940*, pp. 110-112.

¹³⁸ City Archives, Hull. TLP 77, Amalgamation of the West Hartlepool Harbour and Railway Company and the Cleveland Railway Company with the NER. Act dated 5th July 1865.

¹³⁹ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 595.

G. Whittle, *The Railways of Consett and North West Durham*, (Newton Abbot, 1971), pp. 96-98.

In 1861 the LNWR promoted a railway from West Auckland on the SDLUR to Newcastle. This was strongly opposed by the NER, which produced a rival scheme. The LNWR proposal was approved by the Commons Committee but rejected by the Lords. All traffic over the SDLUR was

continued

Thus by 1865 the NER had achieved a regional railway monopoly cemented partly by external threats to the Durham coalfield from Yorkshire and Cumberland in the 1850s, which had stimulated the region's railway companies to form a united front against incursions. This was driven by the fact that there was a general perception in the North-east, that the NER was well managed with a majority of directors being local men in tune with the needs of the region.¹⁴⁰ The economy of the North-east was based on coal and, by 1865, the NER was by far the largest mover of coal among all railway companies with a total of nearly 427 million ton-miles carried in that year.¹⁴¹ Furthermore the NER patronised the local iron industry for the supply of rails, buying only once outside the North-east between 1854 and 1870.¹⁴² This was not due to altruism but to self-interest. The Pease family, associated with the SDR and subsequently the NER, were the owners of more than twenty collieries in County Durham and together with Isaac Lowthian Bell, a former director of the West Hartlepool Company and subsequently deputy chairman of the NER, were heavily involved in the iron industry of the North-east.¹⁴³

Whilst this policy made the NER popular with traders in the North-east it did not improve its standing in Hull because of the impact of its equal rates policy. Hull suffered from an insular attitude. It considered itself superior to the other ports in the region and wished to lay claim to an exclusive hinterland.¹⁴⁴ A problem for the NER at Hull was that it did not control the docks, which made it unwilling to make large investments in them. The docks were in the hands of the Hull Dock Company which, as a private undertaking, was more interested in paying large dividends to shareholders than improving dock facilities.

The monopolistic policy of the NER made it unpopular with Hull Corporation as well as with the traders. As noted above, and detailed in chapters 2, 3 and 5, the Corporation had taken a keen interest in railways to the port from the beginning. In

operated by the SDR and NER. The LNWR running powers were not used as, in 1863, the NER agreed to interchange facilities at Carlisle.

¹⁴⁰ Turnock, *An Historical Geography of Railways in Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 19.

¹⁴¹ Hawke, *Railways and Economic Growth in England and Wales*, p. 184.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁴³ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 619.

¹⁴⁴ J. Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom*, (London, 1963), p. 413.

an attempt to address the shortcomings of the Hull Dock Company it had obtained parliamentary powers to purchase the docks and form a non-profit making dock trust, similar in form to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, to replace the Dock Company. Attempts were made to set up the trust in 1837, 1850, 1861 and 1888, but the ratepayers of the town were not prepared to provide funds for the purchase and improvement of the docks, and the scheme never came to fruition.

As will be detailed in chapter 4 dissatisfaction with the NER led to yet another proposal, in 1879, for a new railway, the HBR; but unlike previous schemes, this included a new dock, which would break the constraints which had previously curtailed investment in Hull docks. The Bill passed through Parliament in 1880 despite the best efforts of the NER to defeat it. It provided a deep-water dock and a direct rail link to South Yorkshire with its hard steam-coal reserves. The Corporation sold land for the dock and railway cheaply to the HBR and contributed £100,000 towards its capital. It also obtained a clause in the HBR Act stipulating that the railway or dock could be not leased or sold to any other undertaking without the consent of the Corporation. In addition it obtained a right for the Town Clerk, or other member of the council, to vote at HBR meetings and for the Corporation to appoint two directors to the HBR board.¹⁴⁵

The opening of the HBR and its dock in 1885 created a potentially strong competitor to the NER and the Hull Dock Company. This was of little consequence to an undertaking of the size of the NER but proved ruinous for the Dock Company and subsequently the HBR, the position of the latter being worsened by rate-cutting on the part of the NER and a boycott by other railway companies. The HBR was unable to pay its debenture interest and creditors, including the contractors who had built the railway and dock, and it was taken into receivership. Attempts to sell the undertaking to the MR, and subsequently the NER were vetoed by the Corporation which, in order to guarantee the independence of the HBR, used the powers contained in the 1880 Act. The situation was exacerbated by furious dissension among HBR shareholders; those from Hull, particularly the Corporation, being prepared to keep the railway independent at all costs; and the London investors and

¹⁴⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 135, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1880.

speculators, who wished to see a return on their investment. The root problem was that the company was hopelessly under-capitalised.

Financial manoeuvring in 1889 allowed the company to increase its capitalisation and move into solvency. By the 1890s it was on the way to becoming a successful undertaking, resulting in an improved relationship with the NER. This was in sharp contrast to the Hull Dock Company, which had reached a state of penury, and in 1893 was absorbed by the NER.

8. The traders and Corporation of Hull, 1840-1922.

The relationship between the traders of Hull and the railway company which served them needs to be considered in the context of the dissatisfaction of the former at a national level, as has been discussed earlier. Furthermore it must be appreciated that Hull was not a monolithic entity and that the commercial and political representation consisted of disparate interest groups.

Throughout the nineteenth century Hull experienced a steady growth in population and trade. The industries of the town were dominated by shipowners, seed merchants and crushers, together with grain and timber merchants. Much of the trade of the port was concerned with the handling and processing of commodities in one way or another, as a result of which the town lacked the wealthier families which were to be found in Manchester and the West Riding of Yorkshire, where manufactory trades had their bases.¹⁴⁶

The owners of the largest privately owned fleet in the world in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the Wilson brothers, Charles and Arthur, were the leading businessmen in the port.¹⁴⁷ They were both of Liberal inclination, Charles being Liberal MP for West Hull for many years. Neither of the brothers took much interest in local politics except where it affected their business interests, being more concerned to be seen as associates of the aristocracy. Charles Wilson became a peer with the title of Lord Nunburnholme in 1905.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ R. Brown, *Waterfront organisation in Hull, 1870-1900*, (Hull, 1972), p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Figures 1 & 2. Charles & Arthur Wilson.

¹⁴⁸ A. G. Credland & M. Thompson, *The Wilson Line of Hull*, (Beverley, 1994), p. 13

At the time of the arrival of the first railway to Hull in 1840 the town council tended to be composed of the middle rank of businessmen and tradesmen of the port. Its political tenor inclined to a Liberal viewpoint, but it was liberalism in a confined context, reflecting the ideology of those of the commercial classes to whom the protection of their own interests was paramount, the ruling clique of middle class businessmen being loyal to the concept of free trade and unionism. The complexion of the council reflected that of the town, which was a tendency to non-conformity, thrift to the point of meanness, and a strong temperance movement. The main virtue of the council, as perceived by those who constituted it, was its parsimony. It had a reputation for frugality and lack of civic enterprise.¹⁴⁹

The Corporation was attracted by the idea of the promotion of an independent railway in which it had an interest. After its initial support for the HSR the Corporation supported three schemes in 1845, including one for a railway from Hull to Barnsley. It then gave support for three schemes for a railway from Hull to Doncaster in 1860-62 and for the Hull South and West Junction Railway, planned to cross the Humber into Lincolnshire and the south, in 1872. All of these proved abortive. However, the proposal for the HBR in 1879 was at last successful.

The successful promotion of the HBR was seen as the panacea for all Hull's ills, which were perceived by the Corporation and traders as arising from the blighting monopoly of the NER. Irving asserts that Hull's attitude was based upon a reluctance to face the facts of economic life.¹⁵⁰ This may be so but this refusal provided a springboard for the HBR in which the councillors who, by and large, represented much of the commercial class of the port, had a vested interest. In the

¹⁴⁹ H. Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections*, (London, 1967), pp. 294-297.

G. R. Park, *Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire*, (Hull, 1886), pp. 108-111.

Statistical Society of Manchester, 'Report of the condition of education in the borough of Kingston upon Hull in 1839', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol.4, No. 2, July 1841, pp. 158-160. The report found that a larger proportion of children attended day schools in Hull than in other places surveyed in Yorkshire and Lancashire and that literary skills were consequently greater.

¹⁵⁰ Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914 An economic history*, p. 121.

case of the local Members of Parliament the scheme for a new railway was supported by Liberals and Conservatives alike.¹⁵¹

When, as detailed in chapter 6, the stevedores and dockers went on strike in 1893 the Corporation panicked. Fear of civil disorder was such that, at the Corporation's request, the military and overwhelming numbers of extra police were called in, and gunboats were stationed on the Humber. The people of Hull were shocked when an allegedly Liberal Corporation took these draconian measures. In the aftermath of the strike this action led directly to a shift among the working classes in Hull away from the Liberals towards Radicalism and the Labour movement. By 1894 there was an active, cohesive group on the council representing labour interests and the trend continued.¹⁵² The dock strike also accelerated a shift of power away from the larger industrialists to the smaller traders of the port. Charles Wilson was initially seen as representing paternalistic Liberalism. However, his activities during and after the strike were perceived as hypocritical, and brought about a change in the mood of those who depended on him for their living, a change which rippled through the social and political fabric of the town. Wilson's problem was the tension inherent in his Liberal-Labour alliance, which boosted his political persona and his position as Hull's leading industrialist, situations that were mutually conflicting.¹⁵³ After almost total capitulation by the strikers, disaffection increased when it was seen that, despite promises made by the employers, particularly Wilson, preference in work was being given to non-unionists in violation of the agreement which had ended the strike.

The result was a shift to the left on the part of the Trades Council. The political make-up of the Corporation shifted too, from conventional liberalism to a more radical liberalism and a bias in favour of those lesser ranks of the traders of the port, who still perceived the NER as the source of all ills. This led to the increasing identification of the Corporation with policies dictated by the Chamber of Trade with its radical Liberal orientation.¹⁵⁴ The Corporation, with increasing Trades Council

¹⁵¹ Park, *The Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire*, p. 111.

¹⁵² Brown, *Waterfront organisation in Hull, 1870-1900*, p. 6.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

representation, began to take a divergent outlook from that of the larger merchants and traders of the port. A manifestation of this was a loosening of the ties between the Corporation and the HBR as the latter began to co-operate with the NER. This co-operation continued and in 1909 the NER and HBR proposed a joint working agreement for their lines in the Hull area. This was welcomed by the larger traders but was defeated by the Corporation using its powers under the 1880 Act.

The Corporation, by these actions and others which will be examined in this thesis, moved to a position of isolation. It failed to recognise that the NER was no longer a threat and that there was now co-operation between the two railway companies, each concentrating on its own particular strengths, which was very much in the interests of the port. Despite this the Corporation continued to harass and obstruct the NER at every opportunity.

The Railways Bill of 1920 proposed the grouping of the railways. It suggested that the NER and HBR should be included in the Eastern group. Despite a petition against it from the Corporation to Parliament the amalgamation went ahead and the HBR ceased to exist as an independent railway on 31st March 1922.¹⁵⁵

9. Thesis

I have suggested that a singular situation developed during the nineteenth century at Hull, leading to a municipal authority being granted unprecedented powers by Parliament. Whereas the powers were initially used for the benefit of the trade of Hull, I will argue that from the mid-1890s onwards the inflexibility of the Corporation became a negative factor and that Hull's success as a port was achieved despite the actions of the Corporation. The events leading up to the Corporation's intervention in railway and dock issues in Hull and its results will be considered in detail.

Chapter 2 discusses the issues surrounding the entry of railways into the port of Hull, making it the easterly point of a cross-country route from the port of Liverpool, passing through the manufacturing districts of the West Riding of

¹⁵⁵ City Archives, Hull, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee meeting minutes, 20th April 1922.

Yorkshire. It examines the motives of those promoting railways forming a link with the port of Hull. Unsuccessful attempts to promote competitive railways are also reviewed. Evidence is produced for the argument that, in the period up to 1852, the seeds of a railway monopoly were sown. This perceived local monopoly and its effect on the traders of Hull forms the theme of the chapter, which probes in detail the attitudes of the traders and Corporation of Hull to the railway company serving the port.

Chapter 3 recounts the change from local to regional railway monopoly with the formation of the NER in 1854, and the subsequent consolidation of that company's hold on Hull. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s the NER repulsed all attempts to penetrate its territory and restricted competition by means of various agreements with other railway companies. Its relationships with these companies is analysed. Evidence is produced for the argument that the NER's complacency was an important precursor to the introduction of competition in the shape of the HBR. The discontent of the traders of Hull with the rates charged by the NER is explored in the context of contemporary national issues regarding railway rates generally. Parallel with the development of railway monopoly was that exercised by the Hull Dock Company, which is also discussed in detail. Until 1878 the Dock Company suffered from a lack of enterprise brought about partly by its inability to raise capital for major improvements and partly by inertia and lack vision on the part of its board. The thesis argues that the Dock Company was the catalyst for the introduction of railway competition.

The arrival of the HBR and its dock, as detailed in Chapter 4, did not prove to be the panacea for all Hull's transport woes. Apart from questionable arrangements regarding the finance of the line it became apparent that the project was hopelessly under-capitalised. This gave rise to a theme, recurrent during the early years of the HBR, of conflict between groups of shareholders representing differing and well-defined interests. The factional split between Hull and London proprietors arose from the fact that although most of the railway's capital had been subscribed in London, the Corporation of Hull exercised control out of all proportion to its investment, and this was the gravamen of the London shareholders to whom the solution appeared to be to sell the HBR to a major railway company, a proposal consistently opposed by the Hull shareholders and ultimately vetoed by the Corporation of Hull using the powers enshrined in the founding Act of the railway.

After ten turbulent years counsels of pragmatism at last prevailed and the HBR began to move towards prosperity. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss and analyse these events in detail probing the motives of the main players.

After an unsuccessful attempt in the previous year the NER absorbed the Hull Dock Company in 1893, bringing about a situation where two railway companies operated competitive docks in the port. This took place against the background of a dock strike, which initiated a polarisation of political interests within the Corporation. This was to have profound effects on the interrelationships of the Corporation, the railway companies and the major traders of the port and, in view of this, the strike and its aftermath are considered in some detail in chapter 6.

One of the objectives of the HBR had been to make Hull into a major coal port, a goal not achieved without difficulty. Chapter 7 probes in detail the manner in which both the HBR and the NER proposed and built lines to collieries in West and South Yorkshire and the nuances of railway politics involved in the projection of joint railways. It was during this period that the antipathy between the NER and HBR cooled and competition between them to gain access to new coalfields was tempered by a realisation that the companies could work successfully together each capitalising on its particular strengths.

Co-operation between the railway companies was apparent from the mid-1890s and the increasing level of this is outlined and examined in chapters 8 and 9. Evidence for the argument that the corollary to this co-operation was the Corporation's obstruction of the NER wherever possible, and a loosening of its ties with the HBR, is provided by examples of specific disputes where the HBR came to be increasingly aligned with the NER against the Corporation. Also discussed are the politics and agendas of the parties involved in the Hull joint dock scheme. Finally, the thesis considers the events leading up to the absorption of the HBR by the NER, an event illustrative of the earlier assertion that the Corporation was no longer a friend of the HBR and, due to its determination to maintain railway competition, had acted against the commercial interests of the port of Hull.

CHAPTER 2.

THE GENESIS OF A RAILWAY MONOPOLY, 1840-1852.

1. Introduction.

The forty years from 1840 were turbulent ones for the railways, docks and traders of Hull. Although the port was initially reluctant to press for railway connections with the West Riding of Yorkshire, the possibility of railway development at other ports on the Humber and Ouse awoke in the traders and Corporation an awareness that Hull could not continue to function as a major port if its competitors overtook it in the race for rail connections. Hull's attitude to railways swung from indifference to enthusiasm within a short period.

The seeds of railway monopoly, with which this chapter is principally concerned, were sown early. Within five years of its opening Hull's railway had become part of an empire, the York and North Midland Railway Company (YNMR), which embraced a strategy of ensuring that other companies did not gain access to its territory. Thus, when the Corporation of Hull supported an independent railway from South Yorkshire to Hull in 1845 it was made clear to them by the chairman of the YNMR that additional railways to the port would be strongly resisted, even if this meant that new hinterlands would not be exploited.

Despite this threat, and experience of the Dock Company's monopoly, informed opinion in the port in 1840 accepted the new monopoly, praising its efficiency. Not so the Corporation. Its campaign against railway monopoly can be said to have started in 1845 and, with an exception made for a railway to Doncaster in the 1860s, was to be pursued with vigour and increasing bitterness for close to eighty years.

Three recurrent themes run through the period between 1840 and 1880. Firstly the perceived monopolistic arrogance of railway companies; secondly, the hostility generated by this in the mercantile and civic bodies of the port and, thirdly, the pusillanimity of the Dock Company, which eventually undermined its position as a monopolistic provider of port facilities.

2. The Leeds and Selby Railway.

An important link in the chain between the ports of Liverpool and Hull via Manchester was the Leeds and Selby Railway (LSR). Prominent among its subscribers were the Marshall and Gott families, cloth manufacturers and merchants of Leeds.¹ It is significant that driving forces behind the first railway in the direction of Hull were West Riding businessmen, illustrating, from the start, that railways were enmeshed with the wider policies of transport in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

The railway received parliamentary approval on 1st June 1830.² It was seen as an interchange point for feeder vessels plying on the Rivers Ouse and Humber with no plans for extension to Hull. The line opened to passengers on 22nd September 1834 and to goods on 15th December.³ Two jetties were built on the River Ouse at Selby for the use of passengers embarking onto the river steamers. A third jetty was erected in 1835 for the transshipment of coal. An immediate effect of the opening of the railway was a reduction in the dues charged by the ACN for water transport, an example of the beneficial effect of competition.⁴

The isolated line soon received the attention of an entrepreneur keen to develop a regional network. George Hudson cherished dreams of making York the centre for all railways in the North.⁵ In December 1833 a meeting of businessmen, including Hudson, was held in York to discuss a proposed railway to connect with the LSR, which was then nearing completion. It was hoped that this would result in a lowering of the price of coal in York and thereby help the depressed economy of the

¹ D. Brooke, 'The Promotion of four Yorkshire Railways and the Share Capital Market', *Transport History*, Vol.5, No. 3, (November 1972), p. 246. The Gott and Marshall families subscribed £10,000 and £6,000 respectively.

² MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 34.

³ W. W. Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, (Newton Abbot edition, 1967), p. 256.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁵ A. J. Peacock, *George Hudson, 1800-1871, The Railway King*, (2 Vols. York, 1988 & 1989).

R. S. Lambert, *The Railway King, 1800-1871*, (London, 1964).

R. Beaumont, *The Railway King*, (London, 2002).

A. J. Arnold & S. McCartney, *The Rise and Fall of the Railway King*, (London, 2004).

city, which was falling behind Leeds and Sheffield.⁶ However, when the North Midland Railway was formed in September 1835 to run from Derby to Leeds, Hudson and his associates changed their plans. They decided to connect York with the North Midland Railway, as this could provide a route *via* Derby and Birmingham to London.⁷ The YNMR was formed in October 1835 to link York with the North Midland Railway at Normanton and provide a through route to the capital. The chairman of the company was George Hudson. The North Midland Railway opened from Derby to Leeds on 30th June 1840 and on the following day the YNMR opened throughout.⁸

The LSR had not connected with any other railway at its inception but it was joined by a connection from the YNMR at Milford Junction in May 1839. Further sections of the YNMR were completed in 1840, including a connection to the North Midland at Methley to allow through running to Leeds. This connection gave the YNMR a chance to compete with the LSR for Leeds traffic, although the latter's was the shorter route by some 4 miles (6½ km). Hudson proposed that trains should run alternately on his route and the LSR, more direct, route. The LSR directors understandably declined this. Hudson realised that the LSR could prove a serious competitor to the YNMR and therefore attempted to neutralise possible opposition by offering the former's proprietors a tempting 31-year lease at £17,000 per annum. It was an offer too good to refuse, especially as the LSR was suffering severely as a result of waterway competition from the ACN. On 9th November 1840 the LSR was added to George Hudson's growing empire.⁹ The consequences were important for Hull as another railway, the line from Hull to Selby had opened in July 1840. The foundations of a railway monopoly were already in place.

⁶ B. Bailey, *George Hudson, The Rise and Fall of the Railway King*, (Stroud, 1995), p. 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

⁸ L. James, *A Chronology of the Construction of Britain's Railways*, (London, 1983), pp. 32-33.

⁹ K. Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol. 4. The North East*, (Newton Abbot, 1978), p. 31. See also: Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 341.

3. The Hull and Selby Railway.

As noted above, the LSR was seen as a feeder service for steam packet boats to Hull.¹⁰ Passengers were transported on steamships, which had appeared on the Humber in 1814, eventually plying to Gainsborough, Thorne, Selby, York and Grimsby.¹¹ The passage by steam packet was slow, the trip from Hull to Selby took, at best, five hours. At Selby the service connected with trains to Leeds.¹² By 1834 it was possible, by leaving Hull at seven or eight a.m. according to the tide, taking the packet to Selby and the train over the newly opened LSR, to be in Leeds by one or two p.m. Furthermore it was practicable to reach Liverpool by evening time on Tuesdays and Thursdays, although the line over the Pennines was at that date unfinished.¹³

This use of the river for transport was a significant factor in delaying the extension of the cross-country railway to Hull. For as long as the river provided a satisfactory artery of conveyance it was considered unnecessary to duplicate it with a railway. This outlook was typical of the conservatism of the East Riding of Yorkshire and particularly of the port of Hull at the time.¹⁴ A further factor was that Hull enjoyed the status of being an overside port, where goods discharged from shipping to river craft without coming ashore did not attract duty, whereas goods discharged at docks from railway vehicles, did so.¹⁵

¹⁰ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/1/29/225, Prospectus for Leeds and Selby Railway.

¹¹ F. H. Pearson. *The Early History of Hull Steam Shipping*, (Hull, 1896), p. 2.

¹² *Hull Advertiser*, 26th August 1815.

¹³ *Hull Rockingham*, 3rd October 1834.

¹⁴ An example of the backwardness of Hull appears in *White's Directory of 1838* (Leeds, 1838), which states that: 'Telegraphs have been long established at Liverpool and found highly beneficial to the mercantile and shipping interests, but the port of Hull did not avail itself of such a facility until 1838.'

¹⁵ Dating back to ancient times Hull had enjoyed the privilege of being an overside port. This meant that duties were not levied on goods discharged from ships to river craft. This right was perpetuated in the Hull Docks Act of 1774 and the HBR Act of 1880, which allowed river carriers to use the HBR docks free from wharfage charges.

Hull had always looked to the river and the sea for its trade.¹⁶ Its geographical location, remote from any large centre of population, bred a parochialism that required the influence of outside factors, more particularly the imminent rise of rivals such as Grimsby and Goole, to provide the spur for a railway to Hull. This insularity was manifested in an initial unwillingness for a railway connection from the west.¹⁷ However, river travel had its disadvantages, especially for those unfortunate enough to be fare paying passengers. The duration of the trip from Selby to Hull could be up to nine hours when the wind or tide was against the vessel or, as particularly occurred at neap tides, the vessel ran aground. On such occasions travellers were called upon to assist in keeping the craft moving rather than settling in the mud. The passengers at the cry, 'rowl 'er' walked across the deck, treading on each other's heels and suffering much inconvenience. At the same time they hauled on a rope previously put ashore and made fast to a post or tree.¹⁸

This inconvenience to passengers was not the only factor in the decision that a rail link to Selby would be of advantage. Hull was casting anxious eyes up-river to the port of Goole, which had been established by the ACN in 1826. Railways had already been projected from Goole to the West Riding, and if Hull were left behind in the race to have a railway it was likely that it would lose much trade to Goole. Furthermore, the distance between Hull and Selby was 55 miles (88 km) by river against 31 miles (50 km) by rail.¹⁹

There were some in Hull campaigning for a railway. In December 1833, in a letter to the *Hull Rockingham*, John Exley, a customs officer, put forward the

¹⁶ Statistical Society of Manchester, 'Report of the condition of the working-classes in the borough of Kingston upon Hull in 1842', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol.5, No. 2, July 1842, pp. 212-219. Hull's preference for river and sea transport was not surprising considering that almost 20% of the male population gained their livelihood as sailors or dock workers. Furthermore Hull was a settled community with over 70% of the male population having been resident for more than 10 years. More than 95% of the population of the town was English, compared with less than 80% in Manchester.

¹⁷ E. Gillett & K. A. MacMahon, *A History of Hull*, (Hull, 1989), p. 302.

¹⁸ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 257.

¹⁹ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 42.

advantages of a railway to Hull.²⁰ In February 1834 the Hull Guardian Society pressed for a railway from Selby to Hull stating that its absence would be injurious to the business of the port.²¹ A prospectus was published pointing out that it would take less time to travel from Hull to Leeds by train than it did from Hull to Selby by water.²² A pamphlet, published by John Malam, an Alderman of the town, in support of a railway to Selby, made great play of the disadvantages of river travel, particularly storms, fog and groundings, pointing out that there were many wrecks each year of vessels carrying merchandise.²³

However, because of Hull's bias towards river transport the proposal for a railway did not initially achieve a satisfactory response and in March 1835 it was suggested that application to Parliament be delayed for a year. There had been intense lobbying by the steam packet operators, who were doing all they could to discourage the proposed railway, and the mercantile community was not convinced that investment in the railway was justified.²⁴

Events soon changed this opinion. In 1835 the port of Hartlepool in County Durham acquired its railway and became a possible future rival to Hull, but a cause for more immediate concern was a railway projected from Goole to join the North Midland Railway at Burton Salmon.²⁵ In view of these threats to its position the mood in Hull quickly changed and the railway scheme gathered momentum. George

²⁰ Gillett & MacMahon, *A History of Hull*, p. 302.

²¹ *Hull Rockingham*, 8th February 1834.

N. Arnold, 'The Press in Social Context - A Study of York and Hull, 1815-1855', (Unpublished MPhil Thesis, University of York, 1987), p. 25. The Hull Guardian Society was founded on 3rd May 1827, 'for mutual protection of shopkeepers against swindlers, sharpers and common informants, and taking cognisance of other matters affecting the general interests of trade.' It was avowedly a non-political body but it provided a meeting place for a number of radical shopkeepers.

²² City Archives, Hull, DXR 5/2. Report dated 28th July 1834 by J. Walker and A Burges, Engineers for the Hull and Selby Railway.

²³ City Archives, Hull. DXR5/2, John. Malam, *Considerations on railways proving their utility with explanatory remarks demonstrating great advantages to the agricultural and commercial and manufacturing interests from the projected line between Hull and Selby*.

²⁴ *Hull Rockingham*, 16th March 1835.

²⁵ J. D. Porteous, 'Urban Genesis and development; the case of canal created river ports of the industrial revolution', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hull, 1967), Figure 7.5.

Liddell and James Henwood, bankers of Hull, took the initiative by raising the £20,000 required prior to the submission of a Bill to Parliament.²⁶ The town demonstrated its new-found enthusiasm by signing for 45% of the share capital on the Parliamentary subscription list. The people of Hull and the neighbouring areas subscribed for shares worth more than £150,000. A significant investment of £4,000 was made by Hull Corporation, thus beginning its involvement in railways serving the port. Benjamin Gott and John Marshall, mill-owners from Leeds who had subscribed to the LSR subscribed £1,000 and £6,500 respectively.²⁷ Their motives were presumably to obtain a cheaper and more reliable outlet for their exports. The Act authorising the railway received the Royal Assent on 21st June 1836.²⁸

Despite the easy nature of the terrain there were legal problems concerned with land purchase and the railway was not opened formally until 1st July 1840, making an end-on junction with the LSR.²⁹ Public traffic began the following day.³⁰ The railway had its Hull terminus on the western side of Humber Dock, a position which was to be of significance later when additional docks were projected to the east of the River Hull. The facilities included a passenger shed, offices, workshops and a warehouse, together with a wharf.³¹ The coming of the railway changed the pattern of freight transport into Hull, particularly from North and East Yorkshire.

²⁶ Gillett & MacMahon, *A History of Hull*, p. 302.

²⁷ Brooke, 'The Promotion of four Yorkshire Railways and the Share Capital Market', pp. 252-253.

²⁸ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 48.

²⁹ F. Wishaw, *Railways of Great Britain and Ireland 1842*, (London 1842, Newton Abbot edition, 1969), p.164. The extra borrowing was accounted for by additional compensation to Mr. Raikes and others to save the Bill in Parliament together with the purchase of additional land at Hull, construction of warping drains and other works for the accommodation of individuals, and the introduction of heavier rails. Raikes, a Hull banker, was a landowner at Welton, on the route of the line.

Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway* p. 338.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

³¹ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 73. See also Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 340.

Within six months at least one major road carrier had switched business to rail and was offering reduced rates.³²

Despite forming the final link in a railway route from Hull to Manchester the HSR's relations with the YNMR were not good. In the course of negotiations with the YNMR in 1840, which led to its absorption, the LSR had looked to the HSR for support, which had not been forthcoming. Unlike the LSR, the HSR directors were not prepared to lease their line and considered that the rates which the other participants in the Manchester to Hull railway route thought necessary to keep traffic were too low. The question of coercing the HSR into harmony with the other companies was discussed at York and it was proposed that the steam vessels plying between Selby and Hull should be retained as competition to the HSR. Although never noted for their willingness to put ethics above business advantage, two of the companies involved, the MLR and the North Midland, declined to take shares in the shipping company. But Hudson, representing the YNMR, arranged to purchase and operate steam vessels although this action was in direct contravention of an agreement between the HSR and LSR that such operations would cease when the HSR was opened. The HSR had no means of retaliation. It faced strong competition from the ACN in the transport of bulk goods and was now bound to suffer a further loss of trade to unexpected river competition from steam packet boats.³³ This was part of Hudson's strategy to eventually acquire the HSR.³⁴

The HSR did, however, have a good relationship with the MLR, cemented by the interchange of cross-Pennine traffic. An agreement was concluded in December 1843 on the basis that the MLR was to have a share of 83¾ percent of the total net profits, with the balance to the HSR. However, it was not possible to comply with parliamentary standing orders, making it necessary to submit the Bill containing the agreement in the next session. Despite this setback the two railways continued to

³² *Hull Advertiser*, 29th January 1841. 'Superior conveyance of goods from Hull to York. Mary Newcombe & Son have discontinued their York-Hull waggons and have entered into agreement with the Hull & Selby and York and North Midland Railways to forward goods daily at very reduced rates. Their new address is: M. Newcombe & Son, Railway Offices, Hull.'

³³ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*: p. 342. See also Bailey, *George Hudson, The Rise and fall of the Railway King*, p. 24.

³⁴ Peacock, *George Hudson, 1800-1871, The Railway King, Vol. 1*, p.142.

work together under an informal agreement and meetings of shareholders were held to sanction another application to Parliament.³⁵

This was, however, not to be the end of the matter, as two dissident shareholders, Messrs. Mayleston and MacTurk, argued that the HSR should be guaranteed a dividend no less than when it was trading as an independent company, which was as much as 7%. The chairman of the MLR objected to the principle of a guarantee and support for the amalgamation from the HSR proprietors faded away. Subsequently, and to the chagrin of the HSR directors, the proposal for amalgamation was rejected.³⁶ The dissidents decided instead to approach the YNMR to seek an alliance. This fell in entirely with the machinations of George Hudson. He offered a perpetual lease of the HSR by the YNMR, at an annual rent of 10% of the original capital, and from 1st July 1845 the HSR was leased to the YNMR.³⁷

Reaction in Hull varied. The local press was delighted by the new arrangement and extolled Hudson's virtues: 'The people of Hull will be glad to hear of the leasing of the HSR to the YNMR. Mr. Hudson's method of beating down all competition is by cheapness, expedition and superior accommodation. This is a true system for the proprietary and the public.'³⁸ However, Hull Corporation, conscious of its obligations to the port, was not among those rejoicing. It was already sensing the dangers of a railway monopoly as the tentacles of Hudson's empire ensnared more railways. Indeed, it had petitioned against the proposed lease on the grounds that the YNMR arrangements for the working of the HSR, and the tolls charged, could be used injuriously to the interests of the port.³⁹ The petition was prophetic, but ineffective, as it was the one dissenting voice among the many which lauded Hudson's action.

Whereas Hudson's offer appeared to be generous, he was influenced by the fact that an amalgamation of the HSR and MLR would be a threat to his planned

³⁵ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 80.

³⁶ *Railway Chronicle*, 15th March 1845.

³⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 8, 1845 Bill enabling the Hull and Selby Railway to sell their railway to the YNMR and MLR.

³⁸ *Hull Advertiser*, 4th July 1845.

³⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 8, Petition of Hull Corporation against 1845 Agreement between HSR, YNMR and MLR railways.

regional network. The threat was exacerbated by a proposal from the HSR to build a line from Hull to Bridlington, a town and fishing port some 30 miles (48 km) north of Hull which the YNMR had also decided to connect to its system, by means of a branch from Scarborough, some 20 miles (32 km) further north.⁴⁰ This was bad enough in itself but the real threat came from the HSR's projection of a line from Beverley on the Hull-Bridlington branch to connect with the YNMR at or near York.⁴¹ Hudson was not prepared to let the Hull-Bridlington railway fall into the hands of a company whose interests could conflict with those of the YNMR, as would be the case if it were acquired by the MLR. The Hull-Bridlington railway was opened throughout on 2nd October 1846 by which time it was firmly within Hudson's fold and a railway monopoly at Hull had been created.⁴²

4. Attempts to introduce railway competition to Hull.

So far the analysis has concentrated on railways which were built, but a full picture of Hull's attitude to railways can only be achieved by looking at unsuccessful proposals. More particularly, the attempts to bring new railways to Hull need to be considered in the context of the so-called 'railway mania' of 1844-1847, during which period, throughout the UK, parliamentary powers were obtained for the building of more than 9,000 route miles (14,400 km) of railways and the raising of over £500 million of capital.⁴³ Although it may be tempting to dismiss the schemes

⁴⁰ *Herepath's Journal*, 25th May 1845. 'A special meeting of the YNMR chaired by George Hudson was held on 17th May to pass resolutions for lines including a railway from near Scarborough (Seamer) to Bridlington.'

⁴¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 7, York & North Midland Railway Bill, 1846.

⁴² City Archives, Hull, TLP 6, Hull and Selby (Bridlington Branch) Railway Act, 1845.
MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 113.

James, *A Chronology of the Construction of Britain's Railways*, p. 50. The Railway from Seamer to Bridlington was opened on 20th October 1847.

Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol. 4*, p. 54. The through route from Bridlington via Market Weighton to York was not opened until 1865.

⁴³ H. G. Lewin, *The Railway Mania and its Aftermath*, (London, 1936), pp. 46-48.

H. J. Dyos & D. H. Aldcroft, *British Transport*, (Leicester, 1971), pp. 132-139.

J. A. Francis, *A History of the English Railway*, (London, 1851), pp. 143-154.

continued

relating to Hull as feverish speculation a closer examination reveals the existence of a growing dissatisfaction with the town's dependence on the YNMR.

One proposal, the Hull and Gainsborough Railway of 1844, would have given Hull direct access to the south. The line was to run from Gainsborough to either Barton-upon-Humber or New Holland on the south bank of the Humber with a ferry connection to either Hessle or Hull. It was opposed by the landowners and there was little support from the communities in the mainly rural area through which it was to pass. The Board of Trade reported against the scheme and effectively ended its chances.⁴⁴

A more serious threat to Hudson came when the railway mania was at its height in 1845. A scheme promoted by the MLR, and supported by Hull Corporation, was the York, Hull and East and West Yorkshire Junction Railway, running from York to Hull by way of Pocklington, Market Weighton and Beverley with branches to Driffield and Selby.⁴⁵ If this railway fell into the hands of the MLR, it would pose a serious threat to traffic on the HSR. However the MLR was at the time under pressure from competitive schemes in its own area and an agreement to reduce the possibility of competition in the East Riding was concluded with the YNMR in October 1845. The essence of the agreement was that the MLR, which had taken shares to the value of £125,000 in the York, Hull and East and West Yorkshire Junction Railway and another competing scheme, should withdraw its support in return for being admitted as a joint lessee of the HSR. All traffic between Hull and Manchester should be sent, as far as possible over the lines of the two companies with traffic from Manchester to Goole being sent over the Wakefield, Pontefract and Goole Railway, a satellite company of the MLR, construction of which had started in

J. Simmons & G. Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, (Oxford, 1997), p. 311.

⁴⁴ *Railway Chronicle*, 23rd November 1844 & 15th March 1845. A letter to the *Railway Chronicle* of 22nd February 1845 alleged that 80% of the population along the route of the line opposed it.

⁴⁵ *Railway Chronicle*, 18th October 1845, carried a report of Hull Town Council passing a resolution of support for the Hull, York and West Yorkshire Railway and the Hull and Barnsley Railway.

1846.⁴⁶ Implicit in the agreement was that there would not be railway competition between Hull and Goole. This suited the railway companies involved and preserved the railway monopoly of the YNMR although waterway competition was still provided by the ACN.

In August 1845 a provisional committee, which included the Mayor of Hull together with Messrs. MacTurk and Mayleston, promoted yet another new railway from Hull. The scheme called the Hull and Barnsley Junction Railway ran from the HSR at Howden, opening a connection to South Yorkshire, and it stood a good chance of commercial success. Because of this, it was perceived as a threat by the YNMR. Hudson was so opposed to it that he said that he was 'prepared to carry goods for nothing for ten years' rather than lose the HSR traffic.⁴⁷ Whether Hudson had the power to carry out this threat is debatable, but his rhetoric was persuasive enough to set back the Hull and Barnsley scheme. The Bill foundered on non-compliance with parliamentary standing orders, and lack of support led to its not being re-submitted.⁴⁸

Hull Corporation, in association with the Guardian Society, had supported the Hull and Barnsley scheme and had corresponded with Hudson on the subject of a more direct communication between Hull, Sheffield and Barnsley. Hudson made clear his opposition to any railway proposed to serve Hull which he did not control, stating:

The opinion expressed by so influential a body as the Corporation of Hull has, I assure you, great weight with me, as it ought to have, but I must say, as I now view the matter, it appears to me that we can always afford to carry goods between the two districts at a cheaper rate, even if taken 10 or 12 miles round, by having only the capital of one railway employed...I feel quite sure that the

⁴⁶ J. Marshall, *The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway, Vol. 1*, (Newton Abbot, 1969), p. 204. The MLR became the LYR in 1847 and absorbed the Wakefield, Pontefract and Goole Railway on its opening in 1848.

⁴⁷ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 466.

⁴⁸ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 107.

communication now existing and in course of construction at Hull is quite commensurate with the present means of transacting business at the port.⁴⁹

Hudson was perhaps being disingenuous for he was at the time attempting to secure a route from Hull to the south, similar to the failed Hull and Gainsborough scheme of 1844. The Bill was for powers to make a line from the HSR at Hessle to or near the city of Lincoln, with a ferry across the Humber. The existing ferry from Hessle to Barton-upon-Humber was to be bought and improved. The railway was to be called the Hull and Lincoln Direct Railway.⁵⁰ It was a defensive measure to counter the possible diversion of traffic when the new docks at Grimsby and the proposed railway from Grimsby to the West Riding were built. Hull Corporation, anxious to open new railway connections to the port, petitioned in favour of the Bill.⁵¹

However, the scheme was overtaken by events on the south bank of the River Humber. On 28th October 1844 the Great Grimsby and Sheffield Junction Railway (GGSJR) was launched. The promoters included directors of the Grimsby Dock Company. The GGSJR quickly came to an arrangement with the Grimsby Dock Company that the latter would present a Bill to Parliament to extend the docks at Grimsby, and the GGSJR would deposit a Bill for its incorporation.⁵²

It was at this point that the promoters of the GGSJR heard of Hudson's interest in a line across the Humber into Lincolnshire. They were determined to prevent incursion into Lincolnshire by the YNMR and acted at once to secure one or more ferry routes across the Humber by beginning negotiations for the purchase of all ferries on the south bank of the Humber. The price agreed was £10,300. The purchase was, in fact, a private arrangement by the promoters who took over all the ferries except Barton-upon-Humber. The GGSJR Bill received the Royal assent on

⁴⁹ *Railway Chronicle*, 7th November 1846.

⁵⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 9, Hull & Lincoln Direct Railway Bill, 1846.

⁵¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 9, Petition of the Corporation of Hull.

G. Jackson, 'Port Building on the Humber, c. 1770-1850: A Survey of Local Motivation', *Bulletin of Economic Research*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (May 1971), pp. 78-79.

⁵² A. J. Ludlam, *Railways to New Holland and the Humber Ferries*, (Oxford, 1996), p. 11.

G. Jackson, *Grimsby and the Haven Company*, (Grimsby, 1971), pp. 51-52.

30th June 1845 and the company agreed to buy the ferries from the owners for £21,000, leaving them with a good profit on their speculation.⁵³ The presence of the GGSJR on the south bank of the Humber together with its ownership of the ferry points put an end to any chance of the success of the Hull and Lincoln Direct Railway.⁵⁴ In January 1847 the GGSJR amalgamated with the Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester Railway to become the MSLR.⁵⁵

Other proposals may be dealt with more briefly. The Hull, Sheffield and Midland Direct Railway was proposed in November 1845. It would have run from HSR at Staddlethorpe and then by way of a tunnel under the Ouse near Howden to join the MR at Kilnhurst, giving access to Sheffield. There was a branch to the ACN Ship Dock at Goole.⁵⁶ It failed to arouse interest but it foreshadowed the later Staddlethorpe to Thorne line of the NER, which will be considered in chapter 3, as a route from Hull to South Yorkshire.

An abortive proposal in 1847 was a line from Brough to join with the YNMR line from York at Market Weighton. The leading light was J. S. Egginton, a partner in the Hull banking firm of Samuel Smith, Brothers & Co. Not everybody was in favour of the line. The vicar of South Cave, through which the line would pass, expressed the concern that, 'the scum of Hull would make it one place for their Sunday revels.' In any case, the route was not easy, having to pass through the chalk ridge of the Yorkshire Wolds.⁵⁷

From 1847 to 1854 the YNMR consolidated its position at Hull without threats of penetration of its rail monopoly. In 1850 it reached an important agreement with the ACN by means of which, as far as possible, the navigation took the heavy goods and the railway took the light goods to and from Hull. This brought to an end, at least temporarily, the competition between the companies, which had been

⁵³ Ludlam, *Railways to New Holland and the Humber Ferries*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 9, Great Grimsby and Sheffield Junction Railway (Humber Ferries) Bill, 1846. This Bill gave the GGSJR power to purchase and improve the Humber ferries with the exception of that between Hessle and Barton-upon-Humber.

⁵⁵ G. Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 1*. (London, 1959), p. 76

⁵⁶ East Riding Archives, Beverley, QDP 139. Deposited plans, Hull, Sheffield and Midland Direct Railway, 1845.

⁵⁷ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 132.

detrimental to them but advantageous to the traders of Hull.⁵⁸ However, this agreement demonstrated to the townspeople of Hull that even if the YNMR could not control all transport at Hull it would do all it could to temper any competition.

5. The YNMR and its relationship to the town of Hull.

In 1846 there occurred an event which, in eyes of some in Hull, supported the view that the amalgamation with the YNMR had been advantageous. The passenger facilities at Hull station were inadequate and the commercial centre of the town was developing some distance to the north-east. Furthermore, the site of the station resulted in a failure to attract traffic for Beverley and Bridlington, which still used coaches. As this was resulting in a loss of passenger traffic the YNMR decided to build a new station at Paragon Street in the town centre. In 1846 an Act was obtained for the construction of this new station and an hotel together with 4 miles (6½ km) of railways connecting the station with the Selby and Bridlington lines.⁵⁹ The station was opened on 8th May 1848. It, together with the hotel, covered an area of nearly 2½ acres (1 hectare) with an imposing frontage along its south side containing offices and other accommodation with a train shed behind. It cost the YNMR £51,500. The old station, remodelled and enlarged, was used exclusively for goods.⁶⁰ This was a substantial investment by the YNMR and a sign that it regarded Hull as an important part of its network. It was the first large station built by the YNMR. Newcastle did not get a station on the same scale until 1850 when one was built by the York,

⁵⁸ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 505.

⁵⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 7, York & North Midland Railway Bill, 1846.

East Riding Archives, Beverley, AP/5/1. An Act for enabling the York and North Midland Railway Company to make a station at Hull and certain branch railways connected with their railways and the said station and for other purposes. The Act authorising the station received the Royal Assent on 22nd July 1847 and allowed MLR to subscribe as agreed with the YNMR.

⁶⁰ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 490.

MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 130.

K. Hoole, *Railway Stations of the North East*. (Newton Abbot, 1985), p. 32.

Newcastle and Berwick Railway, and York had to wait until one was built by the NER in 1877.⁶¹

However, the conduct of the YNMR soon nullified the goodwill engendered by the building of the new station. The growth of a proprietary attitude towards Hull by the HSR and its successors, and their cosy arrangements with their water-borne competitors were fuelling resentment. After an auspicious start to the association between Hull and its railway company, relations had reached a defining point by 1850. The civic and commercial bodies in Hull had come to realise that the YNMR would stop at nothing to ensure that it controlled the only railway, which ran to Hull from the west or south. The disaffection resulting from the perceived stranglehold on the port caused by the railway company's monopoly was to increase over the next thirty years.

6. From local to regional monopoly - the formation of the North Eastern Railway.

The formation of the North Eastern Railway in 1854 placed a new perspective on Hull's position as a major port in the north. It meant that it became only one port in a regional network served by a company which controlled railway connections to the coast from the Tweed to the Humber.⁶² Hull was still a large fish, but in a much larger pond. A regional, rather than local, railway monopoly was in the process of creation.

The events leading to the formation of the NER began with a proposal for a railway from Leeds to connect with the newly emerging ports of the North-east. This was a potential threat to Hull as it would give the rival port of Hartlepool direct access to the West Riding of Yorkshire. The first link in this railway was the Leeds and Thirsk Railway which, on 21st July 1845, obtained powers to construct a line from Leeds to connect with the Great North of England Railway at Pilmoor, giving it access over the latter's rails to Thirsk. However, the company's real objective was an extension of the line to join the Stockton and Hartlepool line at Billingham, giving it access to ports in the North-east which were directly in competition with Hull. The

⁶¹ Hoole, *Railway Stations of the North East*, p. 29.

⁶² Figure 10. Railways in North & East Yorkshire & County Durham.

name of the company was changed to the Leeds Northern Railway in 1851 and the through route was opened on 15th May 1852. In anticipation of increased traffic a large development scheme had been carried out at West Hartlepool including the enlargement of the harbour to 44 acres (18 hectares) together with a dock of 14 acres (6 hectares), having a steamship entrance from the harbour. The Act confirming the amalgamation of the dock and railway was passed on 17th May 1853 and created the West Hartlepool Harbour and Railway Company.⁶³

The formation of the West Hartlepool Harbour and Railway Company immediately precipitated a struggle between the Great North of England Railway and the Leeds Northern Railway for traffic between the West Riding and the North-east. Recognising that a rate war would damage both companies, T. E. Harrison, the general manager of the Great North of England Railway, proposed amalgamation. He pointed out that amalgamation with the YNMR would also be necessary, otherwise the two former companies would have held the key to the through traffic of the latter, an arrangement which the YNMR could not be expected to accept. The traffic managers of the respective companies produced proposals that met with general approval, with the exception that the YNMR would not accept that West Hartlepool and Hull should be on an equal footing regarding rates from Leeds. It regarded Hull as its port and feared that the proposal would give advantage to West Hartlepool. The directors of the Leeds and Newcastle companies pressed the YNMR, pointing out the difficulties that would arise if the Stockton and Hartlepool company opposed the amalgamation. This pressure resulted in an agreement that rates from Leeds to Hull and West Hartlepool were to be equal but special rates were to be given to West Hartlepool if it found itself at a disadvantage compared to Hull in any item of traffic. The special rates for West Hartlepool applied only to imports and exports, not to local goods.⁶⁴ This sort of arrangement was becoming quite common nationally, and

⁶³ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 514.

C. Sharpe, *History of Hartlepool*, (Hartlepool, 1851), pp. 9-25 & 129-131.

S. L. Bragg, 'The railways of Hartlepool', *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, Vol. 27, No.9, (July 1983), pp. 276-283.

⁶⁵ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 16.

was a source of grievance to domestic traders whose perception was that railway companies were using their powers to their own advantage and the disbenefit of traders.⁶⁵ The arrangement not only led to a rapid expansion of trade at Hartlepool but also to suspicion and hostility in Hull where it was felt that Hartlepool was being favoured at its expense. However, it ensured that the West Hartlepool company supported the amalgamation.⁶⁶ In order to counteract possible opposition from the recently opened Malton and Drifffield Junction Railway, which was worked by the YNMR, it was arranged that the former should be admitted to the amalgamation.⁶⁷

National politics intervened when the amalgamation Bill was presented to Parliament and withdrawn in April 1853 after the Select Committee on Railway and Canal Bills recommended a delay in all such Bills. At the same time the HSR pointed out that the 1845 lease of its line to the YNMR solely, or jointly with the LYR, had never been executed. The HSR directors threatened to oppose the Bill if the lease were not completed. They intended to use this as a lever by means of which the new company could extract concessions from the LYR, thus restricting future competition from the port of Goole.⁶⁸

The HSR therefore initially appeared as petitioners against the Bill, but withdrew opposition when the YNMR promised to execute the lease within three months of an anticipated court decision that the LYR was not bound to enter into the joint agreement.⁶⁹ The Bill for the amalgamation and the formation of the NER received the Royal Assent on 31st July 1854.⁷⁰ The final piece of the jigsaw fell into

⁶⁵ F. Dobbin, *Forging Industrial Policy*, (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 205-208.

⁶⁶ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 16.

⁶⁷ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 518.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

⁶⁹ *Herepath's Journal*, 3rd March 1855. A report of February HSR shareholders' meeting stated that the LYR was no longer pressing for a half-share of the lease of the HSR.

Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 20.

Ibid., 8th September 1855. 'A lease of the HSR has been negotiated with the NER under which the latter would initially pay £70,000. The lease to be for 1,000 years.

⁷¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 77, Act dated 31st July 1854 forming the NER.

place in December 1854, when the LYR was released from its agreement to join in the HSR lease provided it agreed not to use the port of Goole to compete with Hull.⁷¹ The delay of a year in finalising the amalgamation had worked to the advantage of the companies involved. During the period they had worked traffic under the 1853 agreement and were able to demonstrate that it was to their mutual benefit.⁷²

Thus, a regional railway monopoly had been created which was to sustain for more than a quarter of a century. This, together with the monopoly exercised by the Dock Company, to which I now return, was seen by many in Hull as being detrimental to the development of the port and the Corporation and traders of Hull were to make many unsuccessful attempts to defeat it.

7. Dock development in Hull, 1840-1853.

The boost to Hull's trade from the new railway to the West Riding highlighted the inadequacy of the dock facilities and in 1844, as a result of pressure from commercial interests in the port, the Hull Dock Company successfully promoted a bill for the construction of a branch dock on the western side of Humber Dock to the north of the railway terminus.⁷³ The area of the new dock, however, was only 2¾ acres (1 hectare) and traders expressed the opinion that it, together with the existing dock, would still be too small for the increasing traffic requirements of the port.⁷⁴ The dock was opened for traffic in December 1846 and became known as Railway Dock.

As a result of this concern the Dock Company obtained additional powers in 1844 to build a new dock to the east of the River Hull in the same location as that of the failed 1838 scheme. This represented the first eastward extension of the Hull docks.⁷⁵ The choice of site was not popular with the railway companies, who preferred a new dock on the western side of the town where their facilities were. This

⁷¹ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 31.

⁷² Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 525.

⁷³ Pearson, *The Early History of Hull Steam Shipping*, p. 71.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁷⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 4, Bill for making a dock and other works and for amending previous Acts (1844).

point of view had the support of no less a figure than Robert Stephenson, who had been commissioned by the MSLR, YNMR and HSR in 1842 to prepare a report on proposals for future expansion of dock accommodation at Hull. He came out firmly in favour of docks to the west of the town, which would facilitate railway connections.⁷⁶ However, there was more room for dock development to the east of the River Hull and the proposed new dock had better access to both the Rivers Hull and Humber so, despite Stephenson's recommendations, the Dock Company decided to site the new dock to the east of the town.⁷⁷

Called Victoria Dock, it opened on 3rd July 1850.⁷⁸ The original entrance to the dock was from the River Hull, but an extension constructed on the southern side of the dock with an entrance to the River Humber was opened on 21st March 1853.⁷⁹

The Dock Company initially thought that the provision of Victoria Dock would ease the situation at Hull but within a few years an increase in trade brought agitation for more dock facilities. There was also renewed discontent at the level of dock dues in respect of outward wharfage, which had been a concern for over twenty years.⁸⁰ A problem was that unlike the docks at Goole, Grimsby and West Hartlepool, which were owned by canal and railway companies with multifarious sources of revenue, where lower dock charges could be balanced by increases in those sources, the docks at Hull were owned by an independent company whose only source of revenue was dock dues.

The positioning of Victoria Dock caused problems for the YNMR and the town. The YNMR, whose marshalling and dock facilities were in the west, had to construct 3½ miles (5½ km) of new railway to serve the dock.⁸¹ The line was virtually a semicircle passing round the northern outskirts of the town. It ran on the

⁷⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 4, Report by Robert Stephenson dated 20th October 1842.

⁷⁷ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Report and Accounts 1847-1888.

⁷⁸ J. Sheahan, *History of Kingston upon Hull*, (London, 1864), p. 292.

Figure 27. Victoria Dock and the Old Harbour, Hull.

⁷⁹ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Annual Report and Accounts, AGM, 2nd February 1854.

⁸⁰ *Hull Advertiser*, 31st March 1837. Editorial.

⁸¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 7, York & North Midland Railway, East Riding Branches (No. 1) Bill, 1846.

level with resulting level crossings on every major road out of Hull. Objections were made but were ignored.⁸² As far as the civic authorities were concerned, at the time, the importance of railways completely eclipsed that of roads with the result that the matter was not raised in Parliamentary Committees, a lack of foresight which the Corporation would come to regret, unlike the situation in Liverpool where the Corporation refused to allow the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company to cross streets on the level.⁸³ The line, with its numerous level crossings, was to be the cause of increasing road congestion in Hull for more than a hundred years.⁸⁴ This policy on the part of the Corporation would seem to indicate that although it was prepared to give support to independent lines it was, at the time, generally happy with the YNMR's position in the town.

8. Problems faced by the Hull Dock Company.

Despite the opening of Victoria Dock, by 1852, there was anxiety among commercial interests in Hull that its trade was likely to be affected by rival ports such as Hartlepool, Grimsby and Goole unless dock dues, which were higher than at those ports, were reduced. Hartlepool had railway connections since 1835 and, in 1848, the MSLR had completed its line to Grimsby and opened the Royal Dock in 1852. Also, in 1848, the LYR had gained access to Goole with its existing docks, owned by the ACN. In its report of 1850 the Hull Dock Company was forced to admit that whereas the trade of Hartlepool, Goole, Gainsborough and Grimsby had greatly increased, that of Hull had remained static.⁸⁵

One of Hull's major problems was the lack of return cargoes for ships using the port.⁸⁶ Ships were leaving Hull in ballast to sail to Newcastle and other northern ports to load coal for export. The root cause of this was the failure to develop a direct rail link between the port and the South Yorkshire coalfield with its reserves of hard

⁸² *Hull Advertiser*, 20th February 1852.

⁸³ J. Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914*, (Newton Abbot, 1986), p. 99.

⁸⁴ Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain*, Vol. 4, p. 46.

⁸⁵ City Archives, Hull, DPD '12 '6. Dock Company Annual Report and Accounts, AGM, 3rd February 1851.

bunker coal. Despite this, it was to be almost twenty years before a direct link to South Yorkshire was built, and even then its full potential would not be utilised. The rate of increase in the coal trade was slow. About 10,000 tons of coal was brought in by rail in 1849. This increased to 14,586 in 1850 and 25,215 tons in 1851.⁸⁷

A further problem at Hull was that of high charges. These were levied on the shipping of the port by four organisations; the Commissioners of Pilots, the Hull Dock Company, Hull Corporation, and Trinity House. In 1851 Hull Chamber of Commerce circulated an address to thousands of Hull ratepayers setting out its views on the subject of dock charges. A committee of fifty, including prominent merchants, shopkeepers and shipowners, supported a Bill for a reduction in dock dues. In the face of this general support for reduction of charges, agreement was reached with the Corporation and Trinity House to reduce their dues and the Dock Company accepted that competition meant that the previous high charges at Hull could not be sustained. Hartlepool was quoted as a major competitor, rates at that port being 1½d. (1p.) per ton lower than at Hull on most goods. The Dock Dues Bill of 1852 resulted in Hull Corporation abolishing its water bailiff dues, Trinity House reducing its primage by one third on inward and two thirds on outward goods, and reductions of between 20 and 40 per cent in the Dock Company's dues.⁸⁸

The Bill also contained a radical provision to transfer the docks to the Corporation of Hull.⁸⁹ As far back as 1844 the Corporation had remarked that, 'unfortunately for the port the docks are in the hands of a monopoly, who are always looking for that which will bring them the greatest dividends.'⁹⁰ This was also the perception of the Board of Trade.⁹¹ The Bill allowed the Corporation to purchase the docks, giving one month's notice. To finance the purchase it would have powers to borrow at interest such funds as were necessary, the cost to be borne out of the borough fund. Commercial interests were broadly in favour of the scheme, but when

⁸⁶ J. M. Bellamy, *The Trade and Shipping of Nineteenth Century Hull*, (Hull, 1971), p. 30.

⁸⁷ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Annual report and Accounts, AGM, 3rd February 1851.

⁸⁸ City Archives, Hull, TLP 31, Board of Trade Report, 15th February 1861.

⁸⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 16, Kingston upon Hull Dues and Docks Bill, 1852.

⁹⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 90/6, Pamphlet issued by Hull Corporation in 1844.

⁹¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 31, Board of Trade Report, 15th February 1861.

the general public became aware of the objectives of the Bill, there was an immediate outcry from the ratepayers. A pamphlet launched a bitter attack on the Bill, arguing that: 'The town's committee have most egregiously miscalculated the temper of Parliament as well as their fellow townsmen if they fancy they can place within the grasp of either the Corporation, or body of trustees, powers so arbitrary, so excessive and so capable of being abused as those which have been enumerated.' In view of the hostile public response the plans for the transfer were dropped.⁹²

Although the Corporation failed in its attempt to create a municipally owned dock trust the promotion of the 1852 Bill showed that an alliance of interests could force undertakings as conservative as the Dock Company, Trinity House and the Humber Conservancy to take action when it was shown that their activities were prejudicial to the port.

The next chapter will examine the evolution of the railway and dock monopoly at Hull. It will chart and examine the strategies of those who sought to sustain the monopolies and those whose aim was to defeat them.

⁹² City Archives, Hull, TLP 16, *Seven papers on the port charges and dock question*, Pamphlet published and printed by J. Pulleyn, Silver Street, Hull, 1852.

CHAPTER 3.

THE EVOLUTION OF MONOPOLY, 1852-1879.

1. Introduction.

From 1854 the NER had control of the railway serving the port of Hull. Between that date and 1879 no independent railway proposed for Hull, and there were many, was successful, due in a large part to the opposition of the NER. The only railways connected to Hull were two seaside branches of little consequence and a line to Doncaster, supported by the Corporation and built by the NER, more as a spoiling tactic than a genuine attempt to improve the port's rail connections with the rest of the country. By the mid-1870s it seemed that the NER had come to believe its own rhetoric that it was the only railway Hull needed. The weakness of the alternative railway schemes proposed in this period was that they ignored the inadequacy of the dock accommodation. Additional railways feeding traffic into the port would have exacerbated the problems at the docks. This was to be illustrated by a crisis in 1872.

A crucial development occurred in 1878 when the Dock Company, prompted by the NER, acknowledged the inadequacy of dock accommodation and proposed a new deep-water dock to the east of the port. The Corporation raised objections that wrecked the scheme and, although many probably did not realise it at the time, this was the beginning of the end for both the NER monopoly and the Dock Company. The position of the Corporation moved from merely backing independent railway schemes towards involvement in a strategy whose result was a transformation of the dock and railway infrastructure of the port.

It is clear that the NER was deeply resented in Hull. In particular, the traders of the town were incensed by its policy of charging equal rates from the West Riding to Hartlepool and Hull, but despite an almost continuous battle over the issue the

NER remained adamant.¹ This suggests that the widespread support for the NER, which historians such as Turnock have detected among the region's business interests, did not extend to the Humber.² This chapter will attempt to explain why.

2. Railway development in Hull from 1852 to 1866.

In 1852 there were no railways from Hull to anywhere but Selby to the west and Bridlington to the north. However, this was the period of the emergence of the seaside resort and several railway companies were developing their 'own' seaside resorts.³ The NER was prepared to tolerate railways from Hull serving this need.

In 1852 a prospectus was issued for the Hull and Holderness Railway. It was to run from Hull to Withernsea on the coast. The leading figure behind this scheme was Anthony Bannister, the Mayor and a principal personage in the town, who held considerable coal interests in the West Riding.⁴ The railway opened on 27th June

¹ R. J. Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914 An Economic History*, (Leicester, 1976), p. 12. Between 1854 and 1865 the company's equal rates policy had been discussed on nine occasions by parliamentary committees and upheld on each occasion. It was again upheld in 1872. P. M. Williams, 'Public Opinion and the Railway Rates Question in 1886,' *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 262, (January 1952), pp. 67-71. A challenge to the equal rates policy appeared in the debate on the 1888 Railway and Canal Traffic Bill when the Earl of Jersey proposed an amendment which would have made the practice of equal rates illegal. Although supported by the Hull East MP, Frederick Grotrian, the amendment was defeated by the Lords on 29th April 1887.

² D. Turnock, *An Historical Geography of Railways in Great Britain and Ireland*, (Aldershot, 1998), p. 19.

³ J. Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830-1914*, (Leicester, 1978), pp. 255-259.

⁴ Hull Central Library. *Hessle Local History Society Newsletter*, No. 23, July 1998.

The concept of a railway into South Holderness and the establishment of the seaside resort of Withernsea was the brainchild of Anthony Bannister a Hull fish merchant, shipowner and coal exporter. Bannister was born in 1817. He was apprenticed to John Beadle, a merchant shipowner, and rose to become manager of the Humber Union Steam Shipping Company before striking out in his own merchant business.

In 1845 Bannister became a town councillor for the North Myton Ward and was elected an Alderman in 1855. He served Hull as Sheriff in 1849 and 1850 before becoming Mayor for the first time in 1851. As well as being a Justice of the Peace, he served as Chairman of the Corporation's

continued

1854.⁵ It was too small to be viable and was soon in financial trouble. The shareholders meeting of February 1855 was told that, 'cheap construction is the secret of the company's success...but traffic is thin.'⁶ From 1st January 1860 it was leased to the NER which bought it outright on 1st June 1862.⁷

A railway to the seaside town of Hornsea from Arram on the Hull-Bridlington railway, a distance of 12 miles (19 km), had been authorised in 1846.⁸ However, after the downfall of George Hudson in 1849, the YNMR found itself in a position where expenditure had to be curtailed and the scheme was postponed along with several others.⁹ Two other schemes were projected in 1861, the Beverley and Hornsea and the Hedon and Aldbrough, but neither came before Parliament.¹⁰

A railway from Hull to Hornsea was proposed in 1861 and was authorised on 30th June 1862.¹¹ Powers were granted in the Act for working arrangements with the

committee to see through the project for a new town hall. Bannister's interests included establishing the Hull Working Men's Club in 1864 and building a new theatre in the same year.

Bannister lived at High Paull House in the 1850s and regularly sailed from Paull to his Hull office in his yacht. It would be an exaggeration to say that Withernsea proved to be 'the death of him', but there is some irony in the fact that the last full day of his life was spent in the town he had done so much to promote. He developed a cold whilst taking part in a regatta and, claiming that he was 'about all right', spent the next day at Withernsea. In the evening he made the return journey home by train, first to Hull and then to Hessle where he died on the night of the 18th of July 1878, aged 61. Withernsea named one of its streets after him.

⁵ *Herepath's Journal*, 12th May 1855.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17th February 1855.

⁷ M. Thompson, *The Railways of Hull and East Yorkshire*, (Beverley, 1992), p. 101. See also G. G. MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, (Hull, 1879), p. 137.

Herepath's Journal, 10th March 1860. The Hull and Holderness Railway was sold to the NER on the following terms: The rent to be equal to 3½% of the paid up capital of £106,800 in 1860 and 1861 and 4% in 1862. Thereafter powers were to be sought for the transfer of Hull and Holderness stock to NER 4% preference stock.

⁸ W. W. Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, (Newton Abbot edition, 1967), p. 472.

⁹ A. J. Peacock, *The Railway King, Vol. 2*, (York, 1989), pp.322-392.

R. S. Lambert, *The Railway King*, (London, 1964), pp. 241-250.

Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 499.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 607.

¹¹ Thompson, *The Railways of Hull and East Yorkshire*, p. 107.

NER.¹² Due to unexpected difficulties in construction the line was not opened to traffic until 28th March 1864. Trains were operated by the NER. Like the Withernsea line, the Hornsea branch was soon in financial trouble. In September 1865 its chairman noted that the half-yearly report disclosed 'a barren state of affairs'.¹³ A merger with the NER was sought and a Wharncliffe meeting on 2nd April 1866 approved a proposed amalgamation Bill. The NER was to work the line for 55% of traffic receipts.¹⁴ The transfer occurred on 16th July 1866.¹⁵ Thus, although two railways had been projected from the NER stronghold of Hull, both were terminal branches to the coast and dependent on connections with the NER at their Hull termini. It took only 12 years for both railways to become part of the NER, an outcome which the latter company doubtless foresaw when they were first proposed.

Although the seaside railways presented no threat to the NER, a proposal for an independent railway from Hull to Market Weighton via Brough in September 1856 was a different matter.¹⁶ This was a revival of the 1847 scheme and had the support of the Corporation and the Mayor, Bannister, who promised to use his influence with the NER to gain its support. Evidently his influence was less than he supposed as the NER vigorously opposed the scheme.¹⁷ In view of this opposition the

¹² *Hull Times*, 11th October 1862.

¹³ *Herepath's Journal*, 27th May 1865 & 30th September 1865.

¹⁴ *Railway Times*, 21st April 1866.

J. Simmons & G. Biddle (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, (Oxford, 1997), p. 561. A Wharncliffe meeting was a meeting of proprietors to approve a Bill promoted by a company. It was named after Lord Wharncliffe (1776-1845) under whose influence the Lords made an order requiring the directors of any company wishing to extend its powers to secure the agreement of at least three-fifths of the shareholders at a special meeting before taking the proposal into Parliament. The order went into force in 1846, shortly after his death.

¹⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 98, Hull and Hornsea and NER Bill for amalgamating the undertaking of the Hull and Hornsea Railway Company and the NER. (1866).

¹⁶ East Riding Archives, Beverley, DDMT 649, Poster for Hull - Market Weighton Railway.

Herepath's Journal, 5th July 1856, reported on a proposal for Hull to Market Weighton Railway. It was to run from Brough to Market Weighton, a distance of 10 miles. The cost was estimated at £6,000 per mile.

Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 553.

¹⁷ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 133.

promoters withdrew. The NER opposed the scheme because it wished to connect Market Weighton with Beverley and thus provide a route from York to Hull over its own lines. The YNMR had obtained powers to build the line from Market Weighton to Beverley in 1849 but a committee of investigation had presented the shareholders with an adverse report, with the result that the powers lapsed and the line was not finally built until 1865.¹⁸ This episode clearly illustrates that the NER was prepared to tolerate lines that it did not consider a threat to its monopoly but would energetically oppose those which it did.

3. A new dock for Hull and a proposal for a Dock Trust.

One reason for the lack of enthusiasm for new railways to Hull was that they would feed more traffic into an inadequate dock system. What was required was increased dock accommodation. In 1860, in an attempt to address this problem, the West Dock Company was formed by a group of local businessmen, with the backing of the Corporation, to construct a new dock on the foreshore to the west of the entrance to Humber Dock. Whether the new dock was a serious proposal or a ploy to jolt the Hull Dock Company out of its complacency is open to debate. Nonetheless, the Dock Company was galvanised into action. It introduced a plan for a new dock on the same site as that proposed by the West Dock Company. The rival schemes came before Parliament and it was the scheme of the Hull Dock Company that prevailed, the rival scheme being withdrawn, reinforcing suspicions that it had not been a *bona-fide* proposal.¹⁹

The Bill received the Royal Assent in 1861 but several conditions were imposed.²⁰ The most important of these, in view of subsequent events, was that the Dock Company should consent to the sale and transfer of its undertaking to a public

¹⁸ K. Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain. Vol. 4*, (Newton Abbot, 1978). p. 54.

¹⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 31, West Dock Company Prospectus.
Hull Times, 20th April 1861.

²⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 31, Kingston upon Hull Docks (New Works) Bill, 1861.

body in the event of Hull Corporation bringing a Bill into Parliament for that purpose, and giving security for the payment of the purchase money.

Restrictions were placed on dividends to be paid, which were limited to 5% until the new dock was opened. After the opening 6% could be paid. If the Dock Company was prepared to reduce its rates on shipping and goods by 30% then the dividend could be increased to 7%, which was the maximum to be allowed.²¹ This was an indication of Parliament's opinion that the Dock Company had previously been operated too much to the advantage of the shareholders and to the detriment of traders. Also imposed was a schedule of rates on all goods shipped or discharged.

The shock of the promotion of a rival dock caused the Dock Company to further consider its position, and in 1861 its directors admitted that accommodation had been deficient for some time past, and in addition to the new western dock they had decided to extend Victoria Dock.²² The extension of 12 acres (5 hectares) to the east of Victoria Dock was started in June 1862 and completed in 1864.²³

Work on the new western dock began in 1863 but by 1866 the Dock Company was running short of capital and promoted a Bill to raise a further £350,000. Hull Corporation, wishing to keep alive the idea of a dock trust, petitioned against the Bill on the grounds that the Dock Company had not exercised due diligence under the Act of 1861, and should immediately be vested in a public trust. Despite this the Bill received the Royal Assent on 11th June 1866.²⁴ The new dock, named Albert Dock, finally opened on 22nd July 1869.²⁵

Still determined to pursue its scheme, in 1866 the Corporation introduced a Bill for the vesting of the docks in trustees, giving the borough rate as a security. The Bill was opposed by the Dock Company and the principal ratepayers, who did not want to be saddled with the financial burden of purchasing the docks. They

²¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 31, Board of Trade Report, 15th February 1861.

²² City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Annual report and Accounts, AGM, 3rd February 1862.

²³ *Ibid.*, Dock Company Reports, 2nd February 1863 & 2nd February 1864.

²⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 90, Hull Docks Act, 1866.

²⁵ *Hull Times*, 23rd July 1869.

Figure 28. Albert and William Wright Dock.

considered that the scheme would lead to a massive increase in the borough rate.²⁶ The Dock Company alleged that the Bill in question was unauthorised by the Dock Act of 1861 and so unfair that the directors thought it right to oppose it.²⁷ Parliament agreed and decided not to grant Hull Corporation the powers it sought.²⁸

Having gained this victory the Dock Company strengthened its position *vis-à-vis* the Dock Trust issue when, in 1867, it received a subscription of £9,000 from Trinity House and £50,000 from the LYR. After this subscription George Wilson, the chairman of the LYR, was appointed as its representative and took a seat on the Dock Company board.²⁹ This increase in railway representation on the board was to be extremely significant when the Dock Company was invited to construct a new dock in 1879.

4. The NER's attempts to control and maintain monopoly.

By 1854 the NER had secured sole access to the port of Hull by rail, but was concerned about possible competition from the LYR and MSLR. As we have seen the LYR port of Goole was a rival to Hull and since the late 1840s the LYR and the ACN had been co-operating to send traffic from West Yorkshire. This was causing concern to the NER as not only were the ACN rates lower than those charged by the railway for some traffic, but also the goods were loaded into sea-going vessels from river craft, thus escaping the payment of dock dues. However, as mentioned earlier, as part of the 1854 agreement for ending the joint lease of the HSR, the NER had obtained an undertaking from the LYR that it would not use the port of Goole to compete for traffic going to Hull.³⁰

²⁶ *Hull Times*, 21st & 28th April 1866.

²⁷ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Annual report and Accounts, AGM, 3rd February 1866.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Dock Company Annual report and Accounts, AGM, 2nd February 1867.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Dock Company Annual report and Accounts, AGM, 3rd February 1868.

³⁰ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 551. See also. D. Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', (Unpublished PhD Thesis. Leeds University, 1971), p. 31.

The MSLR had opened its own dock across the River Humber at Grimsby and was competing for traffic from South Yorkshire and the North Midlands. It had two screw-driven steam lighters plying between New Holland and a goods depot in Hull on land owned by the NER.³¹ However, the MSLR found the use of ferries to sustain the competition expensive and its long-term strategy was to coerce the NER into a suitable agreement. The first step towards this was the giving up, in December 1854, by the NER of its relatively unimportant passenger ferry service from Hessle to Barton-upon-Humber, leaving the MSLR in sole charge of Humber passenger ferries.³²

There followed an important series of agreements over rates. As Channon has shown, railway companies in the mid-nineteenth century were keen to maximise their returns by way of such collusion.³³ A rate and pooling agreement, known as the first Humber Agreement, was concluded in January 1855 between the NER, MSLR, LYR and LNWR. Under this the signatories divided receipts on certain goods from places in Lancashire, including Manchester and Liverpool, to Hull and Grimsby. This effectively ended the competition which had previously existed between the companies for the carriage of goods from Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire and the North Midlands to the ports of Hull, Grimsby and Goole. In December 1855 representatives of the LNWR, MR, NER and MSLR met at Derby to discuss traffic arrangements between Sheffield and Hull, and for traffic which the MR collected on its own lines and those of other railways including the LNWR. This was, in fact, all traffic from South Yorkshire and the Midlands. The subsequent agreement, known as the Midland Agreement, was for an equal division of traffic between the NER Normanton route and the MSLR New Holland route on traffic from south of Sheffield, and for the division of Sheffield traffic in the proportions of 60% to the

³¹ G. Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 1*, (London, 1959), p. 171.

Central Library, Hull. Chamber of Commerce and Shipping Report, 19th May 1848.

³² Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 224.

³³ G. Channon, *Railways in Britain and the United States, 1830-1940*, (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 110-123.

NER and 40% to the MSLR. MR traffic from Bradford to Hull was to go by either route for the same rates. These arrangements came into force on 1st January 1856.³⁴

This was not the total extent of collusion among the railways serving Hull. At the same time another agreement, the second Humber Agreement, was being drawn up between the MSLR, the NER and the LYR to divide receipts from traffic between Hull and Grimsby and Manchester, Liverpool, Stalybridge and Ashton-under-Lyne. Receipts were to be split between the MSLR on the one side and the NER and LYR on the other. In addition it was agreed that neither Goole nor any other port on the North East Coast was to compete unduly with Hull and Grimsby.³⁵ The agreement was extended by the Hartlepool Agreement in 1856 to include all the ports between the Tees and Tyne. The negotiation was an ongoing process. the final agreement being produced in 1870.³⁶

Representatives from all the companies involved in the agreements met at regular intervals in what became known as the Humber Conference. By this means they were able to regulate the traffic to all the ports between the Humber and the Tyne and monitor rates charged by ship owners to ensure that these had a minimal effect on railway charges.³⁷

Together with the control of rates came a predictability of receipts. Companies were enabled to send goods by other companies' routes, if they found this to be more advantageous or remunerative. The division of receipts allowed by the agreements worked to the advantage of the railway companies but not necessarily to the merchants and shipowners of Hull, who felt that this restriction of competition was a disadvantage to the expansion of their businesses. In Hull apprehension was

³⁴ Channon, *Railways in Britain and the United States*, pp. 110-112.

³⁵ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 222.

³⁶ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 527/568, NER agreements with MSLR, etc.

Agreement dated 02/01/1865 with MSLR, LNWR and LYR.

Agreement dated 02/01/1870 with MSLR.

Agreement dated 02/01/1870 with MSLR, LNWR and LYR.

Appendix 2. Extract from the Humber Agreement 1870.

³⁷ P. S. Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy, 1842-1922*, (London, 1968), pp. 160-163.

caused by two factors: firstly, the rapid expansion of Goole, Grimsby and West Hartlepool and secondly, problems due to the perceived inefficiency of the Dock Company. The only opposition to the NER at Hull was from the ACN and coastal shipping. Railway competition had been eliminated.

Even water-borne competition was under threat. Competition with railway companies was crippling the ACN. Total tonnage carried had fallen from 32,000 in 1850 to less than 23,000 in 1854.³⁸ In 1856 talks began on a proposal for the NER and LYR to jointly purchase the ACN. Agreement could not be reached and the LYR withdrew from the negotiations in 1857. The NER offered to take a lease of the ACN alone, but the proprietors refused to allow the ACN to become part of the NER. They were no doubt influenced by the hold the NER had on Hull. Had the NER withdrawn from the negotiations it is likely that the ACN would have been absorbed by the LYR. The result was, ironically, a strengthening of the ACN's position. The navigation managed to struggle on and negotiated new agreements with the NER regarding the coal trade in 1862.³⁹ In 1864 the ACN introduced container boats for the bulk carriage of coal and other goods, and thereafter was able to compete on equal terms with the railway companies.⁴⁰ By 1875 it was carrying more than 200,000 tons annually.⁴¹ However, this was competition between two modes which were careful not to enter into ruinous rate-cutting.

5. The consolidation of the NER monopoly.

Despite the NER's near monopoly it was still open to competition from established railway companies seeking to enter its territory. The LNWR's designs on West Hartlepool in the mid-1860s threatened a challenge to the NER's regional monopoly. In 1863 the NER absorbed the SDR, which left only one independent railway system

³⁸ M. Clarke, personal communication, Aire & Calder Navigation statistics.

³⁹ J. D. Porteous. 'A New Canal Port in the Railway Age: Railway Projection to Goole, 1830-1914'. *Transport History*, 1st Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, (March 1969), p. 43.

⁴⁰ H. Crabtree, M. Clarke, (ed), *Railway on the Water*, (Goole, 1993), pp. 18-29.
London & North Eastern Railway Magazine, (August 1935), pp. 442-444.

⁴¹ M. Clarke, personal communication, Aire & Calder Navigation statistics.

in the North-east.⁴² This was the West Hartlepool Railway and its ally, the Cleveland Railway. The West Hartlepool Railway was in serious financial difficulties and had approached the LNWR for help, offering running powers to West Hartlepool and its dock. Although they had initially approached the LNWR the directors subsequently decided that amalgamation with the NER would be advantageous, a sentiment reciprocated by the latter.⁴³

The West Hartlepool Company had been formed in 1852. Its business affairs had been run in a scandalous manner. The company exceeded its borrowing powers by at least £2,380,000. As security for a loan of £100,000 made to the company by the LNWR in 1862, one side of the dock was illegally conveyed to that company, in contravention of parliamentary standing orders. So serious were these events that a report by a Lords Select Committee charged to investigate the affairs of the West Hartlepool Company concluded that if the chairman, Ralph Ward Jackson, or his co-directors were found guilty of charges brought against them, the authority of the House should be exercised to ensure their prosecution.⁴⁴

Contemporary opinion judged that these activities at West Hartlepool amounted to unfair competition. In 1863 a letter accused the Hartlepool Railway and Dock Company of, 'landing and delivering merchandise for nothing merely to injure Hull, and issuing illegal bonds to finance this system.'⁴⁵

It was clear that amalgamation was the only way forward. Even Jackson, who had been forced to resign, suggested in a letter to the *Railway Times* that the time had

⁴² City Archives, Hull, TLP 77, Act for the amalgamation of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company with the North Eastern Railway Company dated 13th July 1863.

⁴³ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 614.

⁴⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 77, Select Committee of House of Lords Report dated 1st June 1863. Darlington Local Studies Library, Pease Papers No. 6, contains a letter dated 30th August 1871 from Ralph Ward Jackson to the NER in which he refutes a charge by the latter that he appropriated £15,615 2s. 6d. (£1516.12) from the West Hartlepool Company for his own use. He complains of harassment by the NER. The case had been filed in Chancery by the NER on 27th November 1866.

Darlington Local Studies Library, V415J, NER v. R. W. Jackson. Judgement of Lord Chancellor Bacon on 3rd December 1870 found that Jackson had appropriated £8,000 of Dock Company funds. The NER also sued for a further £5,800 paid by the company to Jackson.

⁴⁵ *Herepath's Journal*, 4th July 1863.

come for amalgamation. The periodical agreed with him on the subject of amalgamation, but not with the LNWR, saying: 'somebody must act in defence of West Hartlepool and if the directors will not do so then they must submit to the uncalled-for intrusion of Mr. Jackson. However, the NER would heartily appreciate West Hartlepool inasmuch it would give them their own port.'⁴⁶ By 14th November 1864 terms had been agreed with the NER. Part of the agreement was that equal traffic rates would apply to all the ports served by the NER.⁴⁷

As a result of this the Bill for the proposed amalgamation met with stiff opposition from commercial interests in Hull. A deputation from the port opposing the Bill appeared before the Commons Committee. But not all in Hull were against the scheme. William Wright, deputy chairman of the Hull Dock Company, which had recently received a subscription of £50,000 from the NER, and Anthony Bannister, a Hull coal merchant with substantial interests in collieries served by the NER, and a member of Hull Corporation, both supported the Bill.⁴⁸ The opposing deputation thought that they had got protective clauses inserted when the chairman of the committee said that they had the committee's decision. However, on the following morning he changed this to 'the committee had noted the opinion expressed'. Whether this was the result of a misunderstanding or a case of the chairman having second thoughts is not clear. The opposing deputation announced that they would pursue their case in the Lords since it was clear that majority opinion in Hull continued to be steadfastly opposed to the Bill, at least on the terms proposed. The conduct of Bannister in giving evidence against the Hull deputation led to him being censured by the Chamber of Commerce and forced to resign from the Parliamentary Committee of Hull Corporation.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Railway Times*, 30th April 1864.

⁴⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 77, Act for the amalgamation of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company with the North Eastern Railway Company dated 13th July 1863.

⁴⁸ G. R. Hawke, *Railways and Economic Growth in England and Wales*, (Oxford, 1970), p. 329. Hawke states: In 1863 the NER noted, 'Mr. Anthony Bannister, having asked the company to reduce the rates between Silkestone and Haigh Moor coal to Withernsea in order to enable him to compete with water borne coal, it is resolved that a reduction of 1/- (5p.) per ton be made on condition that Mr. Bannister makes a proportionate reduction in the selling price of the coal'.

⁴⁹ *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 18th May 1865.

continued

Hull Corporation, with the backing of the Chamber of Commerce and local merchants and traders, continued to allege that the NER's equal rates policy would be injurious to Hull. The Corporation argued publicly that the NER's subscription of £50,000 to the Hull Dock Company had been to neutralise its opposition to the scheme. A public meeting held in Hull on 7th May 1865 unanimously resolved to petition the Lords. The petition was scathing regarding the Dock Company's position with regard to the NER. It pointed out that in consideration of the NER's £50,000 subscription either Wright, or the secretary, William Huffam, would be available to give evidence in favour of the Bill. It went on to allege that although Wright would do as the NER wished it was unlikely that Huffam would do so as he was a man of principle. The inference regarding Wright was unstated, but obvious. Although the Corporation did not do so it might have pointed out that Wright had appeared supporting the opposite side of the argument in May 1862, when he had given evidence before the Commons Committee examining the Hull Doncaster Railway Bill. Then he had complained of the NER favouring Hartlepool over Hull with regard to rates.⁵⁰

The NER was prepared to pay a high price to secure a monopoly of the North-east. The West Hartlepool Company's half-yearly report of 25th February 1865 stated that from July 1865, the NER would guarantee a dividend of 4%. The West Hartlepool directors had found that for the company to attain such a rate of dividend independently, the past rate of increase in traffic would have to be maintained for many years. However, a considerable portion of the increase had been derived from

The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 527/1275. The NER kept a file of cuttings of newspaper articles which reported the enmity caused by the equal rates policy toward Hartlepool. The *Hull Packet* of 12th May 1865 carried reports of the defection of Bannister and Wright and blamed them for the failure of the protective clauses. Wright confessed he had changed his opinions but the article pointed out that Bannister originally opposed the policy and then appeared before Parliament supporting it. He had even led a deputation to York opposing equal rates. It was suggested that if the NER got the Bill he could have his coal carried more cheaply, an allegation that Bannister denied.

⁵⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 36, Hull Doncaster Railway Bill Parliamentary Proceedings, 27th May 1862.

sources no longer capable of growth. In the circumstances the board considered that a guaranteed dividend of 4% could not be rejected.⁵¹

Whatever the reasons for the NER's position it could not expect support from Hull Corporation, nor from traders who demanded not only that the NER should charge a uniform mileage rate from all its ports to the Lancashire manufacturing districts but also that the dues and other charges levied on shipping at West Hartlepool should not be less than those levied at Hull. At the Commons stage clauses embodying these demands were inserted in the amalgamation Bill.⁵² They were opposed not only by the two railway companies but also by Wright, representing the Hull Dock Company, and Bannister, on the grounds that he was representing the coal interest and did not want West Hartlepool to fall into the hands of the LNWR.⁵³

The Hull interests assumed that they had been successful in having the protective clauses inserted in the Bill but the clauses finally inserted were diluted to the extent that they did nothing to safeguard Hull's position. Hull secured only a promise that the NER would not charge more for any services rendered at Hull than it would for the like services rendered at West Hartlepool.⁵⁴

When this news reached Hull meetings were held with a view to continuing opposition to the Bill in the House of Lords.⁵⁵ Bannister's faction argued against this, saying that if West Hartlepool fell into the hands of the LNWR this would provide

⁵¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 77, West Hartlepool Harbour and Railway Company half-yearly report dated 24th February 1865.

⁵² *Ibid.*, The main protective clause suggested by the Hull interests was as follows: 'And in order to secure the impartial treatment of ports and places on or near the railways of the company. Be it enacted that all tolls, rates, and charges upon or in respect of the railways of the company shall be charged equally to each class of traffic in proportion to the mileage passed over by the traffic and the terminal charges at all stations and termini shall be alike for like traffic under like circumstances and no reduction or advance in any such tolls, rates, charges or terminal charges shall be made either directly or indirectly in favour of or against any particular port or place or in favour of or against traffic pursuing or destined for any particular route'.

⁵³ *Eastern Morning News*, 16th May 1865.

⁵⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 77, Act for the amalgamation of the West Hartlepool Harbour and Railway Company and the Cleveland Railway Company with the NER dated 5th July 1865.

⁵⁵ *Eastern Morning News*, 29th May 1865.

competition to Hull. Furthermore they asserted that Hull enjoyed the same advantage over Liverpool in Lancashire traffic as the amalgamation would give West Hartlepool in traffic from the West Riding. The problem, they argued, was not monopoly pricing but lack of coal traffic and poor dock facilities. There was some truth in this assertion, yet the Hull traders and the Corporation expressed support for a petition to the Lords. Although the Dock Company did not oppose the Bill in the Lords, one of its directors, later to become its chairman, did. E. P. Maxsted, a corn merchant of Hull, drew attention to a report by the NER's own chairman which stated that in order to pay the 4% dividend guaranteed to the West Hartlepool shareholders, it would be necessary for the company to double its traffic to that port, extra traffic which could only be gained at the expense of Hull.⁵⁶ It was all in vain as the Lords rejected the petition for the protective clauses.⁵⁷

The NER had now achieved a complete railway monopoly extending from the Humber to the Tyne. Almost all railways east of the Pennines were in its ownership. It had overcome challenges from the LYR, MSLR and various independent schemes. The accommodations it had negotiated with possible rival companies had removed the threat of effective competition within its geographical area of control. It had, in the process of achieving this position, made implacable enemies of most of the merchants, ship owners and the Corporation of Hull. That the NER had, in the eyes of the last, aligned itself with West Hartlepool, the port that represented the greatest threat to Hull, was seen as an act of base treachery. Hull was very conscious of its position as the third port of the country and resented what was seen as an attempt by the NER to give advantage to the upstart port of Hartlepool, both by its policy of equal rates and its amalgamation with the West Hartlepool Railway.⁵⁸ On the other hand the NER argued that it had done its best for Hull and

⁵⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 77, Amalgamation of the Undertaking of the West Hartlepool Harbour and Railway Company and the Cleveland Railway Company with that of the NER. Lords Parliamentary Committee proceedings, 3rd June 1865.

Figure 7. Edward Philip Maxsted.

⁵⁷ *Eastern Morning News*, 4th July 1865.

⁵⁸ D. J. Starkey, *Shipping Movements in the Ports of the United Kingdom, 1871-1913*, (Exeter, 1999), p. 18. Objectively, Hartlepool could never be seen as a rival to Hull. In 1881 it handled less than half the tonnage of Hull and this had fallen to less than one quarter by 1906.

that the problems it faced were largely on account of the inadequacy of the dock facilities and management of the Hull Dock Company. Nonetheless feelings ran high in Hull. Letters to the newspapers condemned the NER. One signed, 'A Merchant' asked: 'Is there no way open for this town to assert its rights against the gigantic monopoly of the NER? Is it right that a town should be sold and handed over to the tender mercies of the NER and trade sacrificed to Hartlepool?'⁵⁹ Such perceptions carried far more weight than any conclusions drawn by disinterested observers.

From 1865 onwards the NER was to be subject to constant harassment by demands for an independent railway to Hull. Rather than diminish as time passed, the level of protest against the NER from merchants, shipowners and the Corporation increased. The mood was not improved by the Royal Commission on Railways of 1865-67, which vindicated the position of the NER, despite attacks on the railway policy of the latter given in evidence by Hull businessmen.⁶⁰

The fact was that the NER was part of a transport oligopoly rather than a monopoly as far as Hull and, indeed, the other ports of North-east England were concerned. Specific to Hull was the waterway competition offered by the ACN which, after 1864, was able to compete very successfully with the railway, particularly in bulk goods, and was a cause of lower rates on the railway between Hull and the industrial West Riding. But the main source of competition, at all of the NER ports, was coastal shipping. This remained an expanding industry until 1913, after which it declined by almost 50% at the end of the Great War.⁶¹ It was in most cases a more economical means of bulk transport than the railways as it offered economies of scale. In Britain in 1910, for example, the ton-mileage of freight traffic

⁵⁹ *Eastern Morning News*, 16th May 1865.

⁶⁰ D. Brooke. 'The Struggle between Hull and the North Eastern Railway', *Journal of Transport History*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (September 1972), p. 224.

⁶¹ P. Ford & J. A. Bound, *Coastwise shipping and the Small Ports*, (Oxford, 1951), p. 2.
J. Armstrong, *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd Series, Vol. 8, No. 2, (September 1987), p. 176.
Armstrong compares the coastal trade in 1910 with that of canals and railways, showing that coastal shipping carried about 25 percent of the tonnage of the railways and more than twice as much as canals.

carried by coastal shipping was 59%, by railways 39%, and canals 2%.⁶² Significantly, some of the strongest competition was over the flows of coal from the ports of the North-east.⁶³

The perceived monopoly was more diffuse at Hull as the NER were not masters of the docks. But even so, the NER's policy towards the Dock Company, however understandable from a business perspective, did nothing to improve its standing with the town's commercial interests. The NER subscription in 1865 of £50,000 to the Dock Company presaged negotiations regarding a lease or amalgamation.⁶⁴ This heightened fears of monopoly. Although it had been assumed that Hull Corporation would put aside its grievances in the interests of the port and support the NER in its negotiations with the Dock Company, this was not so. The Corporation still favoured a dock trust and had rights under the Dock Act of 1861 to be informed of negotiations concerning amalgamation. A meeting of representatives of the NER, Hull Chamber of Commerce and Hull Corporation was held on 25th September 1865, but agreement could not be reached as onerous clauses, imposed by the Corporation, resulted in NER withdrawal from negotiations with the bodies representing civic and commercial interests in Hull.⁶⁵

The question of rates became increasingly entangled in national debates on the issue. Hull Chamber of Commerce vainly attacked the NER rates policy at Hull in evidence to the Royal Commission on railways on several occasions in the 1860s and 1870s. In October 1867 the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, Stephen West, drew attention to the position of the port with respect to the NER. He said that they had laid before the Railway Commissioners their case and stated their grievances, which seemed to be thoroughly understood by the Commission. It was

⁶² P. S. Bagwell & P. Lyth, *Transport in Britain - From Canal Lock to Gridlock*, (London, 2002), p. 59.

⁶³ J. Armstrong & A. Kunz, *Coastal Shipping and the European Economy, 1750-1980*, (Mainz, 2002), p. 14.

⁶⁴ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 250.

⁶⁵ *Eastern Morning News*, 9th October 1865.

therefore regretted all the more by the traders that the decision of the Commission had gone against them.⁶⁶

The problem was not peculiar to Hull. By 1872 a Joint Select Committee of Parliament found that: 'It may be taken as a general rule that there is now no active competition between different railways in the matter of rates and fares.'⁶⁷ The complaints rumbled on and developed into a more general discontent with the whole system of railway price fixing, which was considered by many traders to be detrimental to commerce generally. The railway companies' reaction in many cases was to assume a 'public service' stance.⁶⁸

The NER could be described as a discriminating railway monopolist in that its rates were determined by reference to the charges that traffic would bear.⁶⁹ This represented the maximum figure the company could get for its services taking account of the competitive position it faced in different areas of business.⁷⁰ This is a valid argument but it does not take account of the fact that by means of agreements with other railway companies the NER was part of a cartel, created to safeguard its position and to stifle competition from railways and inland waterways.

None of this, however, helped the Hull traders because most of the movement of their traffic, with the exception of that carried by the ACN, occurred in areas where the railway company was not subject to competition. In June 1885, just before the imposition of rates on a national scale under the 1888 Act, Hull Chamber of

⁶⁶ Central Library, Hull. Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM, 10th October 1867.

⁶⁷ Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy*, p. 263.

⁶⁸ Channon, *Railways in Britain and the USA*, p. 126.

⁶⁹ G. R. Hawke, 'Pricing policy of railways in England and Wales before 1881', in M. C. Reed, (ed.), *Railways in the Victorian Economy*, (Newton Abbot, 1969), pp. 76-110.

City Archives, Hull, TLP 177. The note appended to the list of rates submitted by the NER to the Railway Commission in 1888 stated: 'Charges are not regulated by a mileage charge, nor solely according to distance. Within the limits of the company's legal powers they are determined by the considerations in the special circumstances of each case, of what will fairly remunerate the company for their current and capital expenditure, and of what the traffic is able to bear'.

⁷⁰ Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914. An Economic History*. p. 128.

Commerce was still arguing that the NER showed undue preference to the northern ports.⁷¹

6. The Hull and Doncaster Railway.

One way in which Hull might have redressed the alleged preference shown by the NER was to develop railway connections with the south, where it held a geographical advantage over the northern ports. But until the opening of the Hull to Doncaster railway in 1869, it suffered from poor railway connections with the south. There was a route by way of the ferry across the Humber, and then by the MSLR or GNR to London. However, to avoid crossing the Humber the circuitous route was by the NER to Milford Junction, then over the LYR and GNR to London. Milford Junction had been notorious for its poor connections since Hudson's days. What was needed was a direct link from Hull to South Yorkshire, with its vast coal reserves, and on to the capital, which would greatly benefit both goods and passenger traffic.

In 1855 a scheme was proposed for the Hull, Goole and Doncaster Railway which hoped to raise Hull to the position of a major coal shipping port.⁷² The scheme met with little support and nothing came of it.⁷³ In 1860, ever anxious to open another railway route to Hull, the Corporation supported a proposal for a railway from Staddlethorpe on the Hull-Selby railway to Doncaster. This would not only provide a more convenient route to London but would give South Yorkshire coal a direct route to Hull. Despite the backing of the Corporation the scheme received little financial support as, at this time, Hull was preoccupied with proposals for the construction of the new dock on the western side of the town. Predictably the NER opposed the railway scheme saying that money would be better spent on the provision of increased dock facilities.⁷⁴ This was a valid point, but raised suspicions in Hull that the NER was attempting to thwart the scheme and was using the dock question as a pretext for this.

⁷¹ Central Library, Hull. Chamber of Commerce Report and AGM, 30th October 1885.

⁷² Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 553.

⁷³ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 141.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

The South Yorkshire Railway (SYR) promised financial support for the new railway but supporters were few. The scheme collapsed in April 1861 but not before it was discovered that the SYR had been conducting *sub rosa* negotiations with the MSLR to work the line.⁷⁵ This galvanised the NER into action. It had opposed the earlier independent line as a matter of principle, not taking it seriously, but with the threat from the MSLR, a major competitor, it felt compelled to safeguard its interests and announced that it would promote a new line in the next parliamentary session and, in order to reduce the chances of the revival of the 1860 scheme, would defray the parliamentary expenses of its promoters.⁷⁶ Thus, in the autumn of 1861 the NER proposed a line from Staddlethorpe to Rawcliffe on the LYR Wakefield-Goole line and on to the GNR at Askern Junction. The Chamber of Commerce opposed the NER proposal on the grounds that it considered that Hull needed an independent railway.⁷⁷

In order to forestall opposition from other railway companies the NER began negotiations with the MSLR and LYR. However, both latter companies saw the opportunity of a route to Hull and required any new line to be a joint promotion. The NER would not acquiesce and failure to reach agreement led to four proposals to Parliament for lines from South Yorkshire to Hull, one from each of the companies and one independent scheme.⁷⁸

The independent line was the Hull and West Riding Junction Railway, which ran from Cottingham on the NER Hull to Bridlington line some 4 miles (6½ km) north of Hull to a junction with the GNR near Doncaster. Independently promoted railways had received little support in the past and this was no exception. It was withdrawn in March 1862.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 236.

⁷⁶ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 144.

⁷⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 35, North Eastern Railway (Hull and Doncaster Branch) Act, 1862.

⁷⁸ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 606.

⁷⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 40, Hull and West Riding Junction Railway Bill.

The proposal by the SYR was for a line from Thorne, by way of Rawcliffe, to Howden on the Hull to Selby line whence it paralleled the NER line for some 20 miles (32 km.) to a station at Hessle Road in Hull.⁸⁰

The LYR line was in two sections. The first section from Askern Junction connected with the LYR line at Rawcliffe. The second ran from Goole to join the Hull to Selby line at Cave Sands, near the existing station of Broomfleet, 14 miles (22½ km.) west of Hull. The Corporation petitioned against this as the NER had produced a similar proposal. The Hull Dock Company supported the LYR proposal as it suspected that the NER was desirous of conducting the timber trade, previously carried on at Hull, at the port of Hartlepool. Although the LYR route offered the prospect of alternative business, the LYR had Goole as its main eastern outlet and had not applied for running powers over the NER Hull to Selby line. This gave the impression that its proposal was merely a spoiling tactic to force the NER into a compromise.⁸¹

The merchants and the Corporation of Hull recognised that they needed a railway connection with the south. The question was which scheme should they support? There was suspicion of the SYR scheme because of that company's close relationship with the MSLR, the owners of Grimsby Docks. They suspected that the scheme was not for the betterment of Hull, but rather to enhance the position of the MSLR as a supplier of coal to the Humber ports.⁸²

Hull Chamber of Commerce decided not to support the LYR scheme. However, the equal rates policy of the NER still rankled and the chamber could not bring itself to support the NER. It distrusted the SYR because of its close relationship with the MSLR, and decided not to endorse any of the schemes.⁸³

The Corporation, for once, was more pragmatic. Despite its antipathy to the NER, it considered that support for its railway would secure the best chance of a connection from Hull to South Yorkshire and therefore decided to support the NER

⁸⁰ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 237.

⁸¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 36, LYR Doncaster, Goole and Hull Junction Lines Bill, 1862.

⁸² Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 238.

proposal.⁸⁴ Many of the Hull shipowners were also in favour. Only the Dock Company showed outright opposition to the NER scheme, arguing that the town needed an independent railway.⁸⁵

When the proposal came before the Commons Committee the NER, in order to allay suspicions in Hull that it was not a *bona fide* proposal, gave an undertaking that if it received permission it would not let its powers lapse. The Committee decided in favour of the NER on 14th June 1862.⁸⁶ However, when the proposal went to the Lords it was opposed by the LYR and the SYR, which both argued that a better line would be built if the scheme were delayed for a year. The Lords agreed and the Bill was rejected.⁸⁷

The NER set out to prevent a repetition of the previous dispute. It proposed a new line, based on the 1860 scheme, with a route from Staddlethorpe to Thorne with connections to the LYR at Goole.⁸⁸ The NER began negotiations with the LYR, MSLR and SYR. Those with the LYR centred on an equal rates policy for Hull traffic whether sent by Goole or Normanton. The NER guaranteed use of its proposed new station at Goole to the LYR together with running powers to Hull.⁸⁹ The agreement with the SYR required the latter to improve its railway from Thorne to Doncaster and grant running powers to the NER when the Staddlethorpe-Thorne railway was constructed. In return the SYR received running powers over the Hull-Selby line.⁹⁰ These negotiations took time and an agreement was not drawn up until

⁸³ *Hull Advertiser*, 15th March 1862.

⁸⁴ *Hull Advertiser*, 22nd March 1862.

⁸⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 35, Petition of Hull Dock Company against the 1862 NER Hull-Doncaster Railway Bill.

⁸⁶ *Hull Advertiser*, 28th June 1862.

⁸⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 35-36, North Eastern Railway (Hull and Doncaster Branch) Act, 1862.

⁸⁸ *Hull Times*, 16th August 1862.

⁸⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 50, Agreement dated 28th March 1863 between NER & LYR.

The LYR began using the NER station at Goole for its passenger traffic as soon as it was completed in 1869. The LYR station of 1848 which was within the ACN estate remained open for goods until 1879 when it was demolished to make way for the construction of a new dock.

⁹⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 50, Agreement dated 20th October 1862 between NER & SYR.

1863 by which time the SYR had been absorbed by the MSLR. The NER then presented a Bill for the line. The MSLR and LYR took the precautionary measure of applying for lines over the same route but later withdrew their Bills.⁹¹ The only serious opposition came from the Hull Dock Company, which objected on the grounds that the NER controlled all railway access to Hull and an independent company should control the proposed line. Despite this the Bill received the Royal Assent on 28th July 1863.⁹²

This was not the end of the matter, however. In 1864 the NER applied for an Act to construct a railway from York, via Selby to join the GNR at Askern Junction with connections to the LYR at Hensall and the West Riding and Grimsby Joint Line (GNR & MSLR) at Joan Croft Junction, near Doncaster.⁹³ Commercial interests in Hull immediately suspected that this was a plan by the NER to send traffic from Hull via Selby to Doncaster and thus give an excuse for not completing the Hull to Doncaster railway. This suspicion was reinforced when H. S. Thompson, the chairman of the NER, appearing before a Lords Committee on 11th May 1864, was asked if he had said that if the NER got this Bill, instead of carrying traffic by way of Thorne it would carry it by its own railway via Selby to Hull. Thompson replied that he had not said that it would do so but that it could do so, as this would avoid the MSLR. As a result of petitions from Hull, initiated by Thompson's response, a clause was incorporated in the subsequent Act which stipulated that it should not be lawful for the NER to open the railway until it had opened the Hull and Doncaster Branch. The York to Doncaster line was not finally opened until 1871.⁹⁴

This was partly because owing to delays in land acquisition and construction the Hull-Doncaster line had not opened until 30th July 1869.⁹⁵ The delays gave rise to further suspicions in Hull that the NER was deliberately delaying construction of a line that it had not wanted in the first place. These suspicions were reinforced when, on the opening of the line, the NER continued to send timber and heavy goods for the

⁹¹ Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 1*, p. 248.

⁹² City Archives, Hull, TLP 50, NER Hull - Doncaster Railway Act, 1863.

⁹³ City Archives, Hull, TLP 73, NER York and Doncaster Railway Act, 1864.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, NER York and Doncaster Railway. Lords Committee proceedings.

⁹⁵ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 634.

Midlands via Milford Junction and Normanton. Critics alleged that this was done to obtain maximum mileage charges.⁹⁶ There may have been some truth in this but there was a genuine reason for the delay in building the line. The NER had lost nearly a year of construction time in the Thorne area as it was unable to obtain possession of the land whilst warping was being carried out.⁹⁷ Delays due to warping were reported to shareholders meetings throughout 1868.⁹⁸

It was a fact that the NER had never wanted to build the line to Thorne. It had been done as a spoiling tactic aimed at the LYR and MSLR, rather than as a project carried out for the benefit of Hull. It appeared to many that the NER failed to use the line to its full potential because it wished to prove that it had been unnecessary, rather than for sound economic reasons. The line was not used by the NER to tap the South Yorkshire coalfield for forty years, until it eventually formed a jumping-off point for the South Yorkshire Joint Railway in 1909. (The South Yorkshire Joint Railway will be considered in chapter 7 of this thesis). However, a more satisfactory explanation may be found when the business interests of the NER directors are considered. The NER was not anxious to develop the South Yorkshire coalfield in the 1860s. as several of the directors, notably Joseph Pease and Isaac Lowthian Bell, had considerable interests in the Durham coalfield. The coal produced from the Durham collieries was shipped from Newcastle, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough.⁹⁹ The NER had inherited the links to the West Yorkshire collieries with its absorption of the YNMR. Any increased exploitation of coal from South Yorkshire collieries would result in more coal being shipped through Hull, to the detriment of the Durham coalfield and those members of the NER board who had interests there.

Thus, the NER continued to transport mainly the soft West Yorkshire coal to Hull. This was unsuitable as bunker coal compared with the hard South Yorkshire

⁹⁶ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 244.

⁹⁷ W. B. Stonehouse, *The History and Topography of the Isle of Axholme*, (London, 1839), pp. 39-41. Warping was the process of allowing the land to flood with silt laden river water. The silt was deposited on the land and the water allowed to drain away. This raised the level and provided fertile agricultural land.

⁹⁸ *Railway News*, 22nd February & 22nd August 1868.

⁹⁹ G. Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports*, (Tadworth, 1983), p. 131.

variety. In defence of this policy it may be argued that the NER continued to suffer from the lack of facilities for handling coal at Hull Docks due to the deficiency of equipment provided by the Dock Company, which would have been unable to handle a large increase in the tonnage of coal brought to Hull.

7. The calm before the storm, 1865-1872.

The desire for an independent railway to Hull was still strong. In September 1865 a proposal appeared in the local press for a new railway to be known as the Hull, Lancashire and Midland Counties Railway.¹⁰⁰ The line would cross the River Humber at Hessle by means of a bridge of 1½ miles (2½ km.) in length and connect with the MSLR. To be viable the scheme relied on obtaining running powers over the MSLR and the GNR. This, however, was a minor weakness compared with the engineering difficulties involved in the construction of a bridge over the Humber which had to allow river navigation. There was opposition from the Humber Conservancy, Trinity House and the port of Goole, and little support in Hull.¹⁰¹ No more was heard of it. Almost immediately another scheme, the Hull, West Yorkshire and Lancashire Railway, was advertised.¹⁰² This ran from Hull *via* Kirkella and South Cave to join the Hull-Selby line at Staddlethorpe, whence Goole and Doncaster would be reached by means of running powers.¹⁰³ This proposal was seen as a means of putting pressure on the NER to provide better service by quadrupling its lines between Hull and Staddlethorpe rather than as a genuine scheme. It paralleled the NER line, taking a northerly route to Staddlethorpe. In doing so it passed through the chalk ridge of the Yorkshire Wolds and would require considerable engineering works. It obtained little support and was abandoned.¹⁰⁴

By the mid-1860s the NER was on the crest of a wave of confidence and complacency. At the shareholders' meeting in February 1866 the chairman noted that

¹⁰⁰ *Eastern Morning News*, 8th September 1865.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 12th September 1865.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 16th November 1865.

¹⁰³ City Archives, Hull, TLP 302, West Yorkshire and Lancashire Railway Bill.

¹⁰⁴ *Hull Times*, 20th January 1866.

the most remarkable feature of 1865 was the successful result of the parliamentary session. The company had never applied for a new line or amalgamation where they had not succeeded and no attempt to invade their district had been successful.¹⁰⁵ Nor was the NER averse to making investments. The trade of the Hartlepoons had outgrown the facilities and a Bill was introduced for improvements at those ports.¹⁰⁶ Further investment occurred at Middlesbrough. When the SDR had been incorporated into the NER in 1863 the latter had acquired Middlesbrough docks and in 1869 it embarked on a programme of dock improvements at a cost of £120,000.¹⁰⁷ This news was hardly calculated to raise the prestige of the NER in Hull, but its development of the northern ports demonstrated the advantages it enjoyed where it had ownership of a port at which it was prepared and able to make large investments, as against the situation at Hull where it did not own the docks and was thereby constrained in its investment policy.

The NER was, though, willing to spend money on maintaining its hold on the railway access to Hull and, in August 1871, gave notice of its intention to complete the purchase of the HSR by 1st March 1872.¹⁰⁸ The NER and its predecessor had held powers to buy the railway for 25 years but it was only in 1871 that the directors finally decided they could afford the outlay. The cost was £1,880,000.¹⁰⁹ It was money well spent, as the NER was keen to confirm its hold on East Yorkshire.

There was a lacuna in new railway proposals. This was due largely to the opening in 1869 of Albert Dock and the Hull-Doncaster Railway. Both the civic and commercial bodies in Hull had co-operated with the NER in the Hull-Doncaster Railway, and although it would be incorrect to say that an atmosphere of goodwill existed, relations with the NER were slightly less acrimonious for a while. The new railway and dock initially alleviated Hull's transport problems.

The NER permitted itself a little self-congratulation and basked in the warm glow of its rectitude. At the shareholders' meeting in August 1871 the chairman, in a

¹⁰⁵ *Railway Times*, 24th February 1866.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 18th February 1871.

¹⁰⁷ J. H. Proud, *The History of Middlesbrough Dock*, (Hartlepool, 2000), p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Railway Times*, 26th August 1871.

¹⁰⁹ *Railway News*, 9th September 1871.

homiletic address, asserted that there was no place which the NER had fostered or stimulated to the prejudice of any other place. The company was the owners of docks at Newcastle and Hartlepool, but notwithstanding that had subscribed large sums towards the enlargement of docks at Middlesbrough and Hull, and had demonstrated the advantage of the amalgamation of a number of small companies by putting all the ports on the North East coast, with which it was connected, onto a level and equal footing. This panegyric was spoilt somewhat when a shareholder complained about the crowded state of Tyne Dock and the want of greater facilities for carrying out trade. Complaints were frequent and merchants were anxious that the directors should consider the matter. The chairman replied that the directors were aware of the congestion at Tyne Dock and were making efforts to work traffic in the best way they could. The same situation applied at Hull, although the state of affairs had been kept under control.¹¹⁰

8. The crisis of 1872 and the Hull South & West Junction Railway.

The interval of serenity in relations between Hull and the NER ended abruptly in October 1872. Suddenly there was chaos and it became obvious to all that the NER had most signally failed to keep the situation at Hull under control. In the autumn of that year the lines from the docks as far as Ferriby, some 7 miles (11 km.) west of Hull were blocked with wagons, both empty and loaded. Passengers were compelled to leave their railway carriages and walk into the town. Letters of complaint appeared in the local press from those who signed themselves 'Victim' and 'One of the discontented.'¹¹¹ The newspaper editors were outraged and the familiar refrain began, an exemplar of which was the *Eastern Morning News* editorial, which, dramatically and in a mixture of metaphors, cried:

Slavery! Slavery! Slavery! - Such is the penalty that Hull suffers for selling its own offspring into bondage. The Hull and Selby Railway was the key of the port,

¹¹⁰ *Railway Times*, 26th August 1871.

¹¹¹ *Hull Times*, 26th October 1872. For extracts from the correspondence see MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 151.

the last thing which Hull men should have allowed to be snatched away from them. In it they sold their mess of pottage and have been bondsmen ever since. A new railway Hull must and will have. The NER have only shown themselves as an enemy to the trade of the port!¹¹²

This was in contrast to the state of affairs some twenty-seven years previously when, as noted earlier, the press had vociferously supported of the handing over of the HSR to the YNMR.

The cause of the delays, according to the NER, was a sudden unexpected increase of trade at Hull and the failure of the Dock Company to provide enough quay and shed accommodation. The public perception was that the NER through complacency, lack of forethought, planning and management had precipitated the crisis and was now seeking to blame the Dock Company for its shortcomings. The Dock Company, wisely, said nothing.¹¹³

The crisis was serious enough for a deputation of NER directors to visit Hull on 6th November. They insisted that the NER desired to do whatever further was required to advance the trade of Hull, although they did point out that it had already spent large amounts of money on the port.¹¹⁴ The directors visited the Princes, Humber and Albert Docks and expressed disappointment with arrangements for conducting the coal trade. There was, however, some doubt that the visit had achieved the desired effect as an anonymous correspondent who wrote to the *Railway News* commented:

I may mention that the NER directors have come to Hull today, having at last become conscious that such a place as Hull exists...myself and several others invited (indirectly) decline the honour of conferring with the NER. They have treated us with contemptuous indifference for too long.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Eastern Morning News*, 26th October 1872.

¹¹³ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, pp. 151-153.

¹¹⁴ *Railway News*, 9th November 1872.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*,

It seems that the damage limitation exercise by the NER had come to naught, at least in the case of the correspondent above. Its failure to deal satisfactorily with the transport needs of the port was to increase the disenchantment of the traders of Hull with the NER.

A meeting of the Hull Chamber of Commerce was held on 23rd October 1872 to discuss the transport crisis. Frederick Brent Grotrian, a leading merchant and ship owner, proposed a new railway to Hull.¹¹⁶ He had obtained two subscriptions of £20,000 each, which he asserted was a dramatic refutation of the charge of apathy. Alderman Lumsden, who had been elected a director of the NER in June 1872, made a statement of monumental hubris, when he said that the company was perfectly able to deal with the business of the port and he believed that it was better for Hull that one company should handle the business rather than two or three, to which there were cries of No! No! He said that despite the complaints, there were 27 miles (43 km.) of sidings at Hull, whereupon the chairman pointed out that Cardiff had 36 miles (58 km.) and despite the NER promising more siding accommodation at Hull for several years, nothing had been done.¹¹⁷

The earlier rail crisis and the NER's response convinced the Chamber of Commerce that an alternative railway was needed and on 28th October a committee, which included all the leading merchants, shipowners and traders in the port, was formed to consider an independent railway.¹¹⁸ On 1st November a proposal was put forward for a railway, commencing on the east side of Hull and passing through a

¹¹⁶ *Yorkshire Leaders, Social and Political, Vol. 1*, (Leeds, 1892), pp. 204-207.

‘Frederick Brent Grotrian [1838-1905] of West Hill House, Hessle, Hull and Gilling Castle, North Yorkshire was the only son of F. L. C. Grotrian of London. He was the head of the firm of Messrs. F. B. Grotrian & Company, Russia and India merchants and shipowners of Hull. For many years he took an extremely active and prominent part in the political life of Hull and the East Riding and worked to popularise the Conservative cause in Hull and district. In 1886 he took the parliamentary seat of Hull Eastern Division from the Liberals and held it until 1892. He was instrumental in establishing a Conservative Club in Hull. He was active in the Hull Chamber of Commerce and Shipping and took a keen interest in the promotion of an independent railway to Hull. He was chairman of the Humber Conservancy from 1886 to 1903’.

Figure 6. Frederick Brent Grotrian.

¹¹⁷ Central Library, Hull. Chamber of Commerce & Shipping Report dated 18th October 1872.

¹¹⁸ *Hull Times*, 9th November 1872.

tunnel in the chalk strata beneath the river to join the MSLR near Brigg, thus giving access to Doncaster and the south.¹¹⁹ The committee recommended that John Fowler, a leading consultant, be appointed as the engineer for the line.¹²⁰

The line was to be known as the Hull South and West Junction Railway.¹²¹ Directors included leading businessmen such as Charles H. Wilson, Arthur Wilson and Frederick Grotrian representing the shipping interest.¹²² C. H. Wilson gave evidence in support to the Commons Committee and his company subscribed £20,000 towards the scheme. He indicated that his company was prepared to double the subscription to get the line going.¹²³ The shipping firm of Bailey and Leetham, later to be taken over by Wilson's, also contributed £20,000. The Bill allowed Hull Corporation to contribute up to £10,000 out of its funds or to hold shares

¹¹⁹ Figure 16. Proposed Hull South and West Junction Railway.

¹²⁰ MacTurk, *A History of the Hull Railways*, p. 155.

M. Chrimes, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (2004).

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10011?docPos=19>], (February 2005). Sir John Fowler, first baronet (1817-1898), civil engineer, was born in Sheffield on 15th July 1817.

In 1837 Fowler began working on various railway schemes, including the London-Brighton line and surveys for the West Cumberland and Furness Railway. When the latter scheme failed he accepted an invitation to act as resident engineer on the Stockton and Hartlepool Railway. When the line opened in March 1841 Fowler was appointed engineer to the company.

Fowler established his practice in the Yorkshire/Lincolnshire area. In 1844 he moved to London and set up his offices and home at 2 Queen Square Place, Westminster.

In Britain there was hardly a significant railway company which did not seek his advice. At various times he acted as consultant to the Great Western (in succession to I. K. Brunel), Great Northern, Highland, Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire and Cheshire Lines railways. This involved him in the design of major stations such as St Enoch's, in Glasgow, Liverpool Central, and Manchester Central. He rapidly rose to the top of the profession, becoming president of the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1865 at the unprecedented age of forty-eight.

Fowler appreciated the value of research, and encouraged innovative design in his practice. He was one of the leading advocates of the use of steel, and was a member of the committee of civil engineers set up in 1868 to investigate its engineering properties. He was also a pioneer in the use of concrete.

¹²¹ *Eastern Morning News*, 7th November 1872.

¹²² S. Lee, (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography 1901-1911*, (Oxford 1912), p. 685.

¹²³ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives. DEW 4.3. Memo by Mr. J. North, Department of History, University of Hull.

accordingly. The success of the railway depended on obtaining running powers over the MSLR, GNR, NER and LYR.¹²⁴ The *Eastern Morning News*, somewhat prematurely, regarded the new railway as an accomplished fact.¹²⁵ It subsequently asserted that the immediate result would be to release the town from the effects of a blighting monopoly.¹²⁶

The proposal for the new railway alarmed the NER. In February 1873 George Leeman, the deputy chairman, in a speech which was by turns fractious and patronising, pointed out the ingratitude of Hull.¹²⁷ He claimed that that the NER had made one of its most expensive lines from Hull to Doncaster and Hull showed its gratitude by promoting a rival scheme. If the people of Hull chose to throw money away on a useless scheme, the cruellest thing the NER could do would be to let them have their Bill and involve themselves in the misery of getting together the money. However, this may not be the wisest course for the NER, which would strenuously oppose the Bill.¹²⁸

The NER immediately took steps to ensure the defeat of the Bill. Its efforts included lending the Hull Dock Company £50,000 and purchasing land near Albert Dock for new grain warehouses for £30,000. But the NER's report in February 1873 showed spending of £353,624 on improvements at Hartlepool, Tyne Dock and Middlesbrough; news that was hardly calculated to silence dissenting voices in Hull.¹²⁹

As a matter of course the NER opposed the Bill for the Hull, South and West Junction Railway in Parliament but, despite this, the Commons Committee passed it on 23rd May 1873. The promoters hoped that the NER would withdraw gracefully so

¹²⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 309, Hull South and West Junction Railway Bill, 1873.

¹²⁵ *Eastern Morning News*, 17th November 1872.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 28th November 1872.

¹²⁷ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 753. George Leeman was a bitter rival and political opponent of George Hudson and assisted in his deposition. He took over Hudson's chairmanship of the York, Newcastle and Berwick Railway. He transferred to the NER Board in 1854 and became deputy chairman in 1855 and chairman in 1874. He resigned his chairmanship due to ill health in 1880 but remained on the Board until he died in 1882.

¹²⁸ *Railway News*, 15th February 1873.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15th February 1873.

that some goodwill could be retained.¹³⁰ The NER, however, had no such intentions. The MSLR, together with the LYR had petitioned against running powers over their lines contained in the Bill but the promoters had pointed out that the new line would be of advantage to the MSLR, and the latter had moved towards a more neutral position regarding the line. The NER set out to reinvigorate opposition from the MSLR. Firstly it signed an agreement with the MSLR which amended the latter's contingent running powers to Hull to full running powers. Secondly it supported proposals by the MSLR to build its own goods station in Hull.¹³¹

These measures were unnecessary, for when the Bill came before the Lords Committee on 3rd July the NER concentrated its attack on the major engineering feature, the Humber tunnel. Fowler had produced a design for a brick tunnel in the mud about 10 feet (3 m.) below the riverbed. He decided to use a pneumatic caisson to construct the tunnel.¹³² This method had not previously been used for the construction of an underwater tunnel. Sir John Hawkshaw appeared for the NER.¹³³

¹³⁰ *Eastern Morning News*, 26th May 1873.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 25th March 1874.

¹³² D. Beckett, *Brunel's Britain*. (Newton Abbot, 1988), pp. 109-110.

¹³³ M. Chrimes, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12690?docPos=2>], (February 2005).

Sir John Hawkshaw (1811-1891) was born at Leeds and became a pupil of Charles Fowler, a local road surveyor. In 1830 he helped survey a railway from Liverpool to the Humber via Leeds.

In July 1832 Hawkshaw became engineer to the Bolivar Mining Association in Venezuela, where he lived until mid-1834, when ill health forced him to return. Back in England, Hawkshaw worked for James Walker. For Walker he surveyed the Leipzig-Dresden Railway, and the Hull and Selby Railway, giving parliamentary evidence for the first time on this line in March 1836.

In 1838 Hawkshaw wrote his famous report to the directors of the Great Western Railway, which was critical of the broad gauge, particularly for the inconvenience of the break of gauge. This brought him to national prominence for the first time. He maintained his hostility to the break of gauge when giving evidence to the gauge commission in 1845.

In the 1840s Hawkshaw was engineer to a series of railways in the Lancashire-Yorkshire area and in 1845 became the engineer to the Manchester and Leeds Railway, the nucleus of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, with which he was to remain associated until his retirement. He was knighted in 1873.

Hawkshaw's practice was particularly noted for its dock and harbour works and his approach to engineering was essentially a practical one. This is reflected in his reports and professional papers.

continued

He asserted that it would be impossible to lay watertight brickwork in those circumstances.¹³⁴ The Lords felt that the scheme was too experimental and, on 23rd July 1873, rejected the Bill.¹³⁵

The supporters were aghast. Again their plans for an independent railway to Hull had been thwarted. They obtained little consolation from the fact that the NER had been forced to concede full running powers into Hull to the MSLR. Although the NER had won this battle the war went on. The local press exclaimed, 'The dragon of York must be destroyed!'¹³⁶

However, if the railway had been constructed it would have exacerbated the situation rather than address the cause, which was a deficiency in dock facilities and accommodation. It would have allowed more traffic to flow into a system that was demonstrably unable to cope with it.

The NER permitted itself a little quiet congratulation and felt able to patronise the promoters of the railway in particular and Hull in general. George Leeman remarked that the NER board had expressed a confident opinion that the new railway was not necessary, and that there was no difficulty on the part of the NER in dealing with Hull traffic. Some who promoted the Bill seemed to think that the NER fostered the Hartlepoons at the expense of Hull. No greater mistake could be made. The NER had now granted running powers to the MSLR over the NER lines between Thorne and Hull and the company would be prepared to entertain any similar proposition by any other company that might desire to enter Hull.¹³⁷

He was heavily involved in the activities of the Institution of Civil Engineers. He was president 1862-3, and was one of the most prolific contributors to its discussions. He was a member of other learned societies including the Royal Society (elected 1855), the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Royal Geographical Society, and the Geological Society. .

He formally retired on 31st December 1888.

¹³⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 309, Evidence of Sir John Hawkshaw, 18th July 1873.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, Hull South and West Junction Railway, Parliamentary proceedings, July 1873.

¹³⁶ *Eastern Morning News*, 23rd July 1873.

¹³⁷ *Railway Times*, 21st August 1873.

9. The last years of railway monopoly, 1873-1879.

As a consequence of the 1873 agreement between the NER and the MSLR, in 1874 the latter decided to build its own goods station in Hull. This was to be reached by a short branch from the NER line, but involved the construction of a level crossing. When Hull Corporation heard of this they informed the MSLR that if this was a genuine attempt to compete with the NER in Hull, then they would do all they could to help, but if not, they would not make things easy for the MSLR. This placed the latter in a difficult position because of its friendly relationship with the NER, and a compromise was reached when the NER agreed to build a large warehouse on its own land for the sole use of the MSLR, which would pay the interest on the capital expended by way of a fixed rental.¹³⁸ The result was that MSLR obtained a goods station in Hull for which it paid rent of £7,200 per annum.¹³⁹ The MSLR exercised its running powers and began working passenger traffic through to Hull on 1st August 1874 and goods traffic on 1st August 1879.¹⁴⁰ The fact that five years elapsed between the running of passenger and goods traffic reinforces the argument that, because of the Humber agreements, no real competition existed between the NER and MSLR, at least in the case of goods traffic. In addition to this, yet more small concessions had been wrung from the NER. It intended, occasionally, to hold NER board meetings at

¹³⁸ Brooke, 'The North Eastern Railway 1854-1880. A Study in Railway consolidation and competition', p. 244.

G. Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 2*. (London, 1962), p. 70.

¹³⁹ *Eastern Morning News*, 14th July 1882. Evidence of Robert G. Underdown, traffic manager of the MSLR, in Commons Committee proceedings opposing the HBR Extension Bill, 1882. Underdown was a member of the Humber Conservancy from 1868 to 1885.

¹⁴⁰ Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 2*, p. 70.

Hull.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, in order to get the major shipowners on its side Charles H. Wilson was appointed to the NER board in February 1874.¹⁴²

In 1873, as an additional step to discourage further incursions of independent railways into Hull, the NER conducted a survey for a line from Hull through Kirkella to join its existing line at Staddlethorpe. This was the same route as the Hull, West Yorkshire and Lancashire Railway proposal of 1865.¹⁴³ In 1874 an Omnibus Bill, including the line to Kirkella, came before Parliament. Hull Corporation was immediately suspicious that it was merely a ploy to occupy ground so as to place further obstacles in the path of any proposed independent railway. The Corporation also alleged that the line would give rise to further level crossings in the town. Public meetings were held on 30th March and 1st April 1874 at which it was resolved to petition against the Kirkella proposal.¹⁴⁴

The Chamber of Commerce harboured similar suspicions and pointed out that if the NER wished to improve capacity, as it implied, a simpler way to achieve this would be to quadruple the lines on the Hull-Selby branch. The Bill went before the Commons Committee on 30th April 1874. Anthony Bannister and E. P. Maxsted appeared in support of the Bill. T. E. Harrison the chief engineer of the NER admitted that there was nothing at present to warrant the expenditure on the line and that its purpose was to induce building along its length. F. B. Grotrian, opposing the scheme, said that in 1873 there had been a challenge to the NER monopoly which had nearly succeeded and he was convinced that the Kirkella scheme was a block to

¹⁴¹ Central Library, Hull. Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM, 1st November 1873.

The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 527/252, NER Directors' Minute Book 1873-1874. The first board meeting was held in Hull on 5th December 1873.

¹⁴² Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, pp. 768-770. Wilson resigned from the NER in December 1879. His brother, Arthur was appointed to the NER board in October 1893. The constitution of the NER board overwhelmingly represented the North-east of England.

The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 527/252, NER Directors' Minute Book 1873-1874. C. H. Wilson attended his first meeting on 20th August 1873.

¹⁴³ *Railway Times*, 21st August 1873.

¹⁴⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 119, North Eastern Railway (New Lines) Bill, 1874. Petition against Bill by Hull Corporation.

secure the continuation of the NER monopoly. On 1st May the Committee rejected the Kirkella branch.¹⁴⁵

Despite what it saw as a minor setback, by 1876, the NER thought it had solved its problems at Hull. In February George Leeman argued that, contrary to local opinion, the NER had increased the tonnage handled at Hull which, in the last half-year, was more than that of all the northern ports combined. He said that the NER knew better than to quarrel with its customers and had long been ready to aid any legitimate efforts for extending the shipping or other facilities of Hull.¹⁴⁶

So that was it. According to its chairman the NER was the panacea for all Hull's ills and no further railway development was necessary. This would have been admirable if only the civic authorities and the mercantile community in the port had believed one word of the chairman's remarks. They were soon to demonstrate, in no uncertain manner, just how ungrateful they could be to the all-providing NER.

10. The Hull Dock Company and the port to 1879.

As this thesis has argued throughout, the provision of railway access to Hull cannot be fully understood without also considering the issue of dock accommodation. It is therefore appropriate to return once more to this subject.

In 1869, at the time of the opening of Albert Dock, C. H. Wilson became a director of the Hull Dock Company and began to press for increased dock accommodation. As he was the largest shipowner in the port the directors of the Dock Company commissioned a report from their resident engineer, which recommended that a dock be constructed to the west of Albert Dock at an estimated cost of £212,000. The new dock was to communicate with Albert Dock and would have an area of 10 acres (4 hectares). The dock was opened on 24th May 1873 and named William Wright Dock after the chairman of the company.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 119, North Eastern Railway (New Lines) Bill, 1874. Parliamentary proceedings, April-May 1874.

¹⁴⁶ *Railway News*, 19th February 1876.

¹⁴⁷ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6. Dock Company Annual report and Accounts, AGM, 3rd February 1874.

continued

It was at about this time that relations between Wilson's and the Dock Company began to deteriorate. C. H. Wilson, in particular, had felt for some time that the Dock Company exercised a negative influence on the development of the port and that interests within that undertaking had been instrumental in the defeat of the Hull South and West Junction Railway Bill, of which he had been a leading supporter. Although it was necessary to show a public face of harmony and co-operation Wilson was prepared to argue privately that the existing docks were neither deep nor wide enough for the new ships coming into service, and lost no opportunity to criticise the Dock Company management.¹⁴⁸

In 1874, in order to strengthen their positions in the Dock Company, the NER and LYR obtained parliamentary powers to subscribe a further £50,000 each towards its share capital. The MSLR also subscribed £50,000 and in return was allowed to appoint a representative to the Dock Company board.¹⁴⁹ This gave the NER, MSLR and LYR considerable influence within the Dock Company.

The Dock Company, under pressure from the traders of the port, had been considering an eastward extension of Hull docks for some time, and in 1878, promoted a Bill to purchase some 400 acres (162 hectares) of land and construct a deep-water dock at Saltend, outside the town boundary, with an entrance to the Humber, and to dredge the river to keep the dock entrance open.¹⁵⁰

The Corporation, with its usual suspicion of any scheme of the Dock Company, was anxious about the proposal to compulsorily acquire a large area of land and concerned that the new docks would be outside the town boundary. Bannister spoke in favour of the Bill but the majority voted to petition against it to establish the *locus standi* of the Corporation.¹⁵¹

On the 11th March the Corporation held a vote of 56 members of the council of whom 38 voted; 22 against the Bill and 16 for, yet there was little support among

Figure 28. Albert and William Wright Dock.

¹⁴⁸ E. Gillett & K. A. MacMahon, *A History of Hull*, (Hull, 1989), p. 398.

¹⁴⁹ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Annual report and Accounts, AGM, 3rd February 1875.

¹⁵⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 132, Hull Docks Bill, 1878.

¹⁵¹ *Hull News*, 2nd February 1878.

Locus standi - Recognised and authorised position in court or before a parliamentary committee.

the commercial and wider community for this action by the Corporation.¹⁵² A letter to the *Eastern Morning News* summarised the general feeling. It asked the newspaper:

Will you oblige by inserting the enclosed list of those members of the Corporation who, on 11th March, failed to do their duty by absenting themselves? If these gentlemen had attended I am sure that the vote would not have been in favour of wasting the ratepayers' money in useless opposition to the laudable efforts of the Dock Company.¹⁵³

Considering public sentiment the Corporation agreed not to oppose the Bill, provided that land it owned would be offered to the Dock Company who would then withdraw the proposal for taking the foreshore outside the town and make a dock on land offered by the Corporation. The Dock Company would not agree to this, nor would it abandon the Bill.¹⁵⁴

When the Bill came before the Commons Committee, counsel for the Dock Company pointed out that although the Corporation had been given power by the 1861 Act to take up to £32,000 in the Dock Company it had never taken any share and had shown indifference or opposition to all of its plans. By way of contrast the Dock Company was a key source of income for the Corporation paying high rents, an example being £3,600 *per annum* for Albert Dock. To buy land from the Corporation for a western extension would be very costly. The Corporation was likely to ask up to £3,000 per acre for land at the western side of the town. The cost of the land for the eastern dock would be £100 per acre for the green land and £60 per acre for the other land. The Dock Company argued that the greatest deficiency in Hull at the present time was the lack of quay accommodation.¹⁵⁵

In cross-examination Wright, the Dock Company chairman, admitted that the docks were overcrowded and extra land was needed, but stressed that it must be at a competitive price. He said that the NER had initiated the scheme for the eastern

¹⁵² *Hull and Eastern Counties Herald*, 21st February 1878.

¹⁵³ *Eastern Morning News*, 13th March 1878.

¹⁵⁴ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Annual Report, 2nd February 1879.

¹⁵⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 132, 1878 Docks Bill Parliamentary Proceedings.

dock. Supporting the proposal E. P. Maxsted, the deputy chairman, said if the company got its Bill, it intended to construct a large dock chiefly for the shipment of coal. The Dock Company's engineer said that the accommodation was at present very bad, especially for the coal traffic. George Leeman, of the NER, stressed the need for additional accommodation, particularly for coal traffic.¹⁵⁶

The preamble of the Bill was proved but due to the opposition of Hull Corporation onerous conditions were imposed. The Dock Company hoped for a relaxation of these conditions in the Lords. However, the Corporation continued its opposition and the Dock Company proposed to withdraw the proposal for the eastern docks from the Bill, but the Corporation would only agree to this if its costs were paid. The effect of all this was to cause dissension within the Dock Company. When the Bill was finally considered in its complete form Lt. Colonel Gerard Smith, a director, moved that it be referred to the shareholders.¹⁵⁷ W. T. Dibb successfully opposed this. Smith then withdrew his resolution and the Dock Company directors decided, without consulting the shareholders, to withdraw the entire Bill.¹⁵⁸

On 2nd February 1879 Wright resigned as the chairman of the Dock Company and was succeeded by Joseph Walker Pease, a Conservative in all respects.¹⁵⁹ The

¹⁵⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 132, 1878 Docks Bill Parliamentary Proceedings.

¹⁵⁷ Lt. Colonel Gerard Smith was the chairman of the HBR from September 1880 to October 1895 with the exception of the period from February to July 1889. He was a partner in the Hull banking firm of Samuel Smith, Brothers & Co. and was MP for High Wycombe from 1883 to 1885. He was knighted in 1895 on the occasion of his appointment as Governor of Western Australia. He relinquished this post in 1900 and returned to England. He took no further active part in the affairs of the HBR and died in 1920.

Figure 3. Gerard Smith.

¹⁵⁸ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Annual Report, 2nd February 1879.

¹⁵⁹ *Hull Daily Mail*, 9th May 1997. Joseph Walker Pease (1820-1882) was elected Conservative MP for Hull in a by-election in October 1873. However, before he could take his seat Parliament was dissolved in January 1874. In the ensuing general election in February 1874 Pease suffered the misfortune of standing against the Liberal candidates Charles Henry Wilson and Charles Morgan Norwood, and was bottom of the poll. He was an MP for only three months and never sat in Parliament.

G. R. Parke, *Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire*, (Hull, 1886), p. 110.

continued

policy of the Dock Company under Wright's chairmanship had been of advocating the purchase of additional land and endeavouring to anticipate the needs of the port. This policy was to change radically and instead of taking advantage of a temporary depression of trade to press on with improvements all new work was suspended, despite the overwhelming amount of evidence presented to Parliament that better facilities were required.

The resignation of Wright brought about a political change in the constitution of the Dock Company board. Wright, together with C. H. Wilson and Gerard Smith formed the caucus of a Liberal group, which had a majority on the board. Wright's resignation, and subsequently that of Wilson and Smith, who supported a new dock, weakened this and changed the balance of power.¹⁶⁰ If the 1878 proposal for a deep-water dock at Saltend had succeeded, it could have proved to be the saviour of the undertaking. As will be seen, the Dock Company was to have one more chance in 1880 to build a deep-water dock but, with a conservative majority and representatives of railway companies hostile to the proposal on the board, the opportunity was to be missed. The defection of Wilson and Smith, and the part they subsequently played in bringing a new railway and dock to Hull, sealed the fate of the Hull Dock Company.

11. The seeds of competition.

The year of 1879 was momentous for the port of Hull. Early in the year it seemed that the Dock Company was at last showing initiative by proposing the construction of a deep-water dock to the east of the port with coaling facilities. This had been prompted by Wilson and the NER, whose railway would have served the new dock. The NER was triumphant, having seen off the proposal for the Hull South and West Junction Railway. However, in doing so it had alienated Wilson, who had been a keen supporter of the scheme. It had failed in its attempt to block the possibility of an

T. Tindall Wilding, *Old and New Hull*. (Hull, 1884), p. 157. By an ironic coincidence Pease's town house in Charlotte Street, Hull became the head office of the HBR.

¹⁶⁰ City Archives, Hull, DPD 12/6. Dock Company Report 1879.

independent route to Hull via Kirkella when a parliamentary committee had seen through the company's sophistry in proposing the scheme. The consequences of the NER's failure here were enormous and would soon become apparent.

By the end of the year the plans for a new dock were in ruins. The Corporation was the principal agent in wrecking the Bill. It is possible to speculate, although there is no evidence to support such conjecture, whether the agenda of the Corporation, after the failure of the Hull South and West Junction Railway Bill, was to obstruct the Dock Company in the hope that the failure of the 1878 Dock Bill would lead to an independent railway and dock for Hull. If so, it was to be a spectacularly successful strategy and the Dock Company played into its opponent's hands.

The facts, obvious to all, were that the progressive liberals on the Dock Company board, Smith, the wealthiest banker in Hull and Wilson, the largest shipowner, were both strongly in favour of a new dock. Had Wright stayed at the helm the dock scheme may have been resurrected, but the appointment of Pease estranged both Smith and Wilson and took the Dock Company back to the days of complacency and inertia. The NER could do little but stand by and watch the Dock Company commit commercial suicide. An era of railway and dock monopoly was about to end.

CHAPTER 4.

THE END OF MONOPOLY, 1879-1885.

1. Introduction.

The years between 1879 and 1885 saw great changes in transport at Hull. In 1879 it was served by what were perceived as a monopolistic railway company and an inefficient and grasping dock company. By 1885 it was served by two railways, one of which owned a deep-water dock. This latter circumstance was not achieved without much tribulation. Initially the Dock Company was the catalyst. The failure of the 1878 dock scheme and the subsequent change of policy by the Dock Company led directly to the proposal for a new railway and deep-water dock for the port. Disaffection increased when the Dock Company directors, with stunning hubris, stated that they considered no further dock accommodation was required in total contradiction of evidence presented to Parliament by their own chairman, deputy chairman and engineer. The result was the successful promotion of the HBR despite the best efforts of the NER to thwart it. The new company was the product of an alliance of financial and commercial interests, led by the largest shipowner and the wealthiest banker in the town.

After initial jubilation and heady plans for expansion the years between parliamentary sanction for the line and its completion were difficult ones. The signs of under-capitalisation of the enterprise were soon apparent, resulting in a temporary suspension of the works when there was insufficient money to pay the contractors, the financial arrangements with whom were dubious to say the least. The period also saw the splitting into factions of the proprietors, a result of the conflict between those who saw the railway as an investment and those, including the Corporation, who thought of it as a symbol of the port of Hull. This conflict was to dog the HBR for many years after the completion of the line in 1885.

2. The Hull, Barnsley & West Riding Junction Railway & Dock Company.

After the Commons threw out the NER Bill for the railway to Kirkella in 1874 relations between the municipal and commercial interests and the NER remained in a state of antagonism manifested by the former and indifference by the latter. Thus, for example, when in 1879 the Hull Board of Health requested the NER to build a station at Newington, a rapidly growing area on the western outskirts of the town, it declined, saying that the cost of some £500 could not be justified by the expected volume of customers. Critical letters appeared in the press, where an editorial was quick to point out that the NER would readily spend the money if it were at Hartlepool.¹

A more significant problem was the high cost and deficiency of coal transported to the port. The NER had supported the 1878 Dock Company proposal and had submitted a Bill for powers to construct a line to the dock. The Bill allowed the NER and the Dock Company to enter into agreement with respect to the maintenance, management and use of any works in connection with the operation of the railway, and the fixing of tolls to be levied in respect of traffic.² It is clear, therefore, that the NER was sincere about co-operating to improve the situation, but the failure to improve the docks stimulated interest in an independent line to Hull together with the provision of increased dock facilities.

In 1873 Lieutenant-Colonel Gerard Smith, after serving with the Scots Fusilier Guards, came to Hull and, as noted in the previous chapter, joined the family banking firm and became a director of the Hull Dock Company in which he was a large shareholder. From 1875 onwards Smith discussed with other interested persons the idea of an alternative railway into Hull and, in May, 1879 an announcement appeared in the local press that a scheme was being contemplated to afford increased facilities for the shipment of coal by means of a dock to be constructed on land belonging to Hull Corporation.³

¹ *Eastern Morning News*, 15th May 1879.

² City Archives, Hull, TLP 131, NER Various Powers Bill, 1878.

³ *Eastern Morning News*, 16th May 1879.

It soon became apparent who was behind this. At a meeting of the Dock Company on 8th June Smith, without having previously consulted his fellow directors, intimated that he and others were in association to construct a railway from Barnsley to Hull, with a dock on land to be purchased from the Corporation.⁴ A new dock of 46 acres (19 hectares), to the east of Victoria Dock, and 66 miles (106 km) of railway from Hull to Barnsley were proposed. The connecting railway would pass round the north of the town on an embankment with a passenger station at Kingston Square and would run by way of South Cave and Howden to Cudworth, near Barnsley. There would be junctions with the LYR at Hensall, the GNR & MSLR joint line at Hemsworth and the MR at Cudworth.⁵ The estimated cost of the scheme was almost £3 million, which included £900,000 for the dock. On 15th December the Corporation agreed to sell to Gerard Smith, Henry Hodge and Henry Briggs, on behalf of the new railway and dock company, 126 acres (51 hectares) of land, for the sum of £51,300.⁶ At an average of just over £400 per acre this was a very favourable price considering that the Corporation had been asking the Dock Company something over £3,000 per acre for land needed for its 1878 scheme.⁷ It emphasised the Corporation's support for the new scheme.

⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 135. The founding committee of the HBR was: Colonel Gerard Smith, (Banker) Chairman; William Rayment (Ships Chandler) Secretary; Henry Briggs (Shipowner); Edward Leetham, (Shipowner); John Fisher, (Timber Merchant); T. Reckitt, (Merchant and Manufacturer); C. Wells, (Auctioneer); C. Copland, (Merchant); Dr. K. King, (Mayor of Hull); Colonel Brooshooft, (Landowner); W. Day, (Colliery proprietor); A. Eggington, (Banker); J. S. Eggington, (Banker); W. Field, (Merchant); W. A. Massey, (Shipowner and Coal Merchant); J. B. Pope, (Colliery Proprietor); L. Stephenson, (Silk Mercer); J. Stuart, (Seed Crusher); J. C. Thompson, (Engineer); C. Wells, (Coal Merchant and Shipowner); G. Whitehead, (Engineer and Forge Owner); R. Willows, (Silk Mercer) and W. E. Woolf, (Shipowner and Coal Merchant).

⁵ Hoole Archives, Darlington, KH 1161. There were to be extensive interchange sidings at the connection with the LYR at Hensall, which were subject to an agreement dated 19th June 1885. Figures 17 & 18. The proposed Hull & Barnsley Railway.

⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 135, Sale of land by Corporation to HBR 1879.

⁷ G. D. Parkes, *The Hull and Barnsley Railway*, (Lingfield, 1946), p. 2. Parkes states that the land for the dock was sold for £400 per acre. In fact, the bill of sale for the land (City Archives, Hull, TLP 135) shows that the land was sold as follows: 39 acres (15½ hectares) at £900 = £35,100; 21 acres

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In November 1879 these proposals were put to the Hull Dock Company, which was invited to participate in the project. The directors decided not only against participation, but also to oppose the scheme. The reasons given were: firstly, they believed that the Dock Company already had works in hand nearly approaching completion which, when open, would meet any increase of trade which was likely to arise in the next few years; secondly, they believed that the construction of the proposed dock would entail an outlay of at least a million pounds or more, and they did not feel justified in taking this on; thirdly, they objected to the reservation of land on either side of that sold by the Corporation and were dissatisfied with the land and water access to the proposed dock from existing docks; and fourthly, they were concerned about the doubtful title to the foreshore between high and low water mark and the general terms of the agreement. They considered by a unanimous vote (Smith not being present) that it would be undesirable for the Dock Company to be saddled with such an undertaking and that the promotion of a rival dock would not be profitable to its promoters and would be detrimental to the interests of the Dock Company.⁸

The Dock Company's support was elsewhere. In autumn 1879 another scheme had been proposed for an independent railway to Hull. This was the Hull, Huddersfield and West Riding Railway. It was to begin at Victoria Dock, with a branch to Albert Dock, then follow the HBR route as far as Hemsworth whence it would run to Huddersfield. It was, in the words of its promoters, a line, 'unencumbered with a dock', a feature that they obviously did not consider a weakness and which was likely to endear it to the Dock Company. Furthermore, comments about the HBR being 'a railway on stilts' indicated that the new line was to be at ground level, meaning even more level crossings. As well as the Dock Company, the railway had the support of the Corporation of Huddersfield and the

(8½ hectares) at £300 = £6,300 and 66 acres (26½ hectares) at £150 = £9,900 making a total purchase price of £51,300.

⁸ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6. Hull Dock Company Annual Report, 2nd February 1880.

LNWR.⁹ Its leading promoter was A. K. Rollit, a well-known local solicitor and member of Hull Corporation.¹⁰

In November 1897 a meeting was held between the promoters of the HBR and of the Hull and Huddersfield railway at which the latter proposed an amalgamation of the two schemes, with railways to both Huddersfield and Barnsley, and abandonment of the dock scheme.¹¹ Smith, for the HBR, dismissed the Huddersfield proposal, saying that Rollit had been 'unpatriotic' in proposing an alternative scheme. This caused a rift between the two men resulting in acrimonious correspondence in the local press as a result of which Rollit withdrew the scheme.¹² Despite the friction between Smith and Rollit the latter was to become an enthusiastic supporter of the HBR by the time of its opening. It seems likely that Rollit, a leading figure in the town, felt that he had been upstaged by Smith and wished to have some of the credit for bringing an independent railway to Hull.

⁹ *Eastern Morning News*, 3rd October 1879.

¹⁰ *Hull Times*, 18th October 1879.

P. A. Hunt, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (Oxford 2004),

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47087>] (November 2004).

'Sir Albert Kaye Rollit, (1842-1922), businessman and politician, was born at Hull. Rollit was admitted as a solicitor in 1863, practising in Hull in partnership with his father and later with his brother, Arthur Rollit. He later had a City of London practice. He became a steamship owner in Hull, where he was mayor on two occasions. A leading provincial Conservative, Rollit was knighted in 1885 during Lord Salisbury's administration. He sat as Unionist MP for Islington South from 1886 to 1906, describing himself as 'a progressive and independent conservative'. His support for free trade led to his defeat by a tariff reformer in 1906, and he joined the Liberal Party, standing without success for Surrey (Epsom) in 1910. On leaving Parliament, Rollit worked for British participation in international commercial expositions and travelled in southern Europe, where his work in the Balkans was recognised by the governments and monarchs who received him. He obtained the order of Francis Joseph from Austria-Hungary (with whom he urged commercial co-operation), received the grand cross of the order of St. Sava in 1907 from Serbia, and was consul general for Romania in London from 1911. As a supporter of commercial arbitration, Rollit was trusted by both sides of industry. He arbitrated in the London Dock strike of 1911, when he upheld the dockers' claim for improved pay'.

Figure 8. Albert Kaye Rollit.

¹¹ *Hull Times*, 8th November 1879.

¹² *Ibid.*, 15th & 22nd November 1879.

However, he backed the wrong railway, missing the points that the dock was the essence of the HBR scheme and that more level crossings over major roads in Hull would dismay the Corporation, traders and general public alike.

On 8th November the Dock Company announced that the option to construct the dock had been declined as it was convinced, 'that there was no necessity for its construction.'¹³ This *volte-face* seems incredible when less than two years earlier the same company was promoting a scheme for eastern docks in order to relieve congestion and improve coal-handling facilities.¹⁴

The Dock Company management's judgement was equally poor. The chairman, Pease, said that he would not put one penny of his own money into the new dock. In any case the Dock Company believed it had quite enough land in its own estate without buying any more. It could supply the whole system of docks for years to come. The new dock was jokingly referred to as 'Colonel Snipe Pond'. The directors were complacent, expressing total satisfaction with the existing docks and their operation.¹⁵ This opinion was not widely shared. The *Railway Times*, for example, was unimpressed by the Dock Company's arguments, pointing out that:

Hull suffers to no slight degree by lack of dock accommodation which is illustrated very forcibly by the fact that while the Mersey Dock Board in 1873 satisfied Parliament that its best dock, by accommodating in the previous year 20,700 tons of shipping to the acre, was more than 'fully utilised', yet in 1869 - a year of no great commercial activity - the Hull docks accommodated nearly 30,000 tons of shipping to the acre, or almost 50% more than the Mersey docks, whose space was declared to be fully utilised.¹⁶

On 16th December the Bill for the new railway and dock was deposited before Parliament. This precipitated an upheaval in the senior ranks of the Dock Company. At the Annual General Meeting, on 2nd February 1880, Smith was accused of

¹³ *Railway News*, 13th November 1880.

¹⁴ K. Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. 50.

¹⁵ *Railway News*, 13th November 1880.

¹⁶ *Railway Times*, 20th November 1880.

promoting a rival dock company, the opposition being led by E. P. Maxsted, with support which included directors appointed by the NER, MSLR and LYR, who held £150,000 of Dock Company stock, and had interests in Grimsby and Goole, as well as in maintaining the NER monopoly in Hull. This was the same Maxsted who had urged before the Commons Committee, a year ago, that more dock accommodation in Hull was 'absolutely necessary'.¹⁷ Smith was due for re-election and Maxsted succeeded in having him rejected by one vote.¹⁸ It was, however, to be a Pyrrhic victory for the Maxsted faction. Smith was now free to gather support for the new railway and dock and he set about this with a vengeance. Significantly, at the same time, C. H. Wilson resigned from the boards of both the Dock Company and the NER, and was prepared to throw his considerable influence behind Smith in his agitation for the new railway and dock.¹⁹ Other prominent figures, including Christopher Sykes, the Conservative MP for Beverley also supported the scheme.²⁰

Support also came from coal owners and miners' associations, who had been complaining for years about the high charges of the NER. These were some 30% higher for South Yorkshire collieries than for those in the Leeds and Bradford area.²¹ At a meeting held in Mexborough on 26th March 1880, presided over by J. Buckingham Pope, the chairman of the Denaby Colliery Company, Smith alleged that the railway rate for coal from South Yorkshire to Hull was 3s. 6d. (17½p.) as against 2s. 3d. (12p.) for coal from Normanton.²² A factor here was the competition in the carriage of West Yorkshire coal from the ACN, which did not apply to South Yorkshire coal. The Dock Company levied similar high rates. The South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Miners' Associations were told that the Hull Dock Company's dues on coal were 1s. (5p.) per ton as against 8d. (3½p.) per ton at Grimsby and 6d. (2½p.) per ton at Hartlepool. Not surprisingly, on 28th October the South Yorkshire

¹⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 132, Hull Docks Bill, Proceedings of Commons Committee 28th March 1878.

¹⁸ *Hull News*, 7th February 1880.

¹⁹ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/6, Dock Company Report 1880. Lt. Col. Saner was elected as a director in place of Smith and C. H. Wilson's brother, David, took his place.

²⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 135, Meetings in support of the HBR.

²¹ *Eastern Morning News*, 21st June 1879.

²² City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, Reports of HBR meetings.

Steam Coal Owners Association. meeting at Barnsley. unanimously carried a motion in favour of the new railway.²³

Most importantly, on 12th November, Hull Corporation unanimously passed a resolution that: 'United action on the part of the ratepayers and inhabitants is desirable in support of the scheme. fraught as it is with consequences of the highest importance to the inhabitants and calculated to materially benefit the interests of the town and port.' This was followed by meetings in various wards of the town. which expressed more support for the proposal. Nowhere was this more vociferous than in the Newington ward where Alderman Massey moved the resolution in support.²⁴ In November 1879 Smith, no doubt bolstered by his promotion of the new railway, was formally installed as Sheriff of Hull.²⁵

There could be no doubting what the NER thought of the new railway. At the shareholders' meeting in February 1880 James Kitson, presiding, said:

It is proposed to incorporate a new company for making a railway from Hull to the neighbourhood of Barnsley. The same company proposes to construct a dock at Hull. The capital to be expended on this scheme appears to be, with borrowing powers, some four million pounds. The directors [of the NER] feel that there is no necessity for the expenditure of any capital in the construction of railways in the district. The NER have supplied ample railway accommodation in connection with Hull. Every town and district of importance can be reached from Hull by means of railways already established. The scheme is one which, in the interests of this company, the directors consider it necessary to oppose. The board is unanimous that it is their duty to oppose this railway.²⁶

It may have been significant that although Kitson said that no further railways were necessary he made no comment about dock accommodation. At this time the hidebound attitude of the NER was being criticised by the press even in its own

²³ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, Reports of HBR meetings.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Notices and minutes of HBR meetings, 1879.

²⁵ *Hull News*, 22nd November 1879.

²⁶ *Railway Times*, 12th February 1880.

heartland. The *Northern Echo* opined: 'There are those who do not hesitate to say that there is a need for new blood on the NER Board. Some of the directors have given good service but their ideas have become antiquated. It has been described as grasping, arbitrary and repellent on the one hand and tardy, timid and short sighted on the other.'²⁷

The scene was set for a hard parliamentary battle. On 8th June 1880 the Select Committee of the House of Commons began to take evidence concerning the proposed Hull and Barnsley railway. Hull Corporation sought a large amount of control over the new railway, which could not lease or enter into any joint purse agreement without the written consent of the Corporation. The Corporation was to appoint two directors to the board. In addition, the Town Clerk, or other council officer, would be allowed to vote at HBR meetings²⁸

The NER and the Dock Company vehemently opposed the new railway. The NER objections were predictable. It protested that it had always looked after the interests of Hull and not only was a new railway unnecessary but it would not be financially viable. It also denied that the NER represented a monopoly, citing the running powers had been granted to the MSLR, GNR, MR and the LYR. Indeed, it pointed out that the running powers of the three latter companies had not been exercised, arguing that its operations at Hull were so efficient that access by the other companies had proved unnecessary. The NER's detractors argued that this was far from being the case and these allies of the NER had a vested interest in continuing their cosy cartel. This, to a great extent undermined the public rhetoric of the NER, as there was much truth in the assertion that the Humber Agreements and other arrangements had, for many years, stifled railway competition as far as Hull was concerned. This was widely believed, although Henry Tennant, the general manager of the NER defended the agreements, arguing that their aim was to remove any objection on the part of other companies to making the most use of Hull.²⁹

The NER pointed out that it had received little or no financial benefit from the construction of the Hull-Doncaster line, which had cost £½ million. It alleged

²⁷ *Railway Times*, 26th July 1879. (Reproduced from the *Northern Echo*).

²⁸ Hoole, (ed.). *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p.31.

²⁹ *Eastern Morning News*, 26th February 1880.

that, as a coal route, this was superior to the HBR line with easier access to more collieries and that the HBR line tapped no area of commercial or industrial significance and would rely to a large extent on traffic from other companies. This was a completely spurious argument as the HBR tapped an area of South Yorkshire where many collieries could be reached by arrangement with the MR. Counsel for the HBR refuted the claims of the NER and asserted that the HBR was primarily a coal line and would become a very successful one. The estimate of the reserves to be tapped by collieries initially served by the HBR was 1,501,500 tons of steam coal and 1,630,600 tons of house and engine coal making a total of 3,132,100 tons. This, it was argued, fell far short of the total potential tonnage which could be achieved by the line. The total estimate of coal within a mile of the line was 683,370,300 tons including 34,502,418 tons of Barnsley hard coal.³⁰

The NER was not the only railway to oppose the HBR. The MSLR was the only company to exercise its running powers to Hull and so it opposed the scheme, as it would break that company's virtual monopoly of the transport of South Yorkshire coal to the Humber via the Don Navigation, which it owned.³¹

The Dock Company's attack on the Bill was extremely difficult to sustain. It was unable to provide a convincing argument to show why it was opposing a new dock when shortly before it had been seeking to extend dock accommodation in the same area of Hull. Henry Dibb, for the company, was forced to admit, under cross examination, that Hull Corporation had offered land to the Dock Company a short time previously. He tried to explain this away by saying that, at the time, the directors were in no mood to risk the outlay on new docks.³²

Another witness stated that Hull had very little coal traffic compared with other ports and great expansion of this trade was possible.³³ There was also the problem of what were seen as extortionate dock charges at Hull compared with those

³⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 135, Coal Reserves Report, Wakefield, 13th May 1880.

E. Maule Cole, *Notes on the Geology of the Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock*, (Hull, 1886), pp. 5-12.

³¹ *Eastern Morning News*, 26th February 1880.

³² *Eastern Morning News*, 22nd June 1880.

³³ *Eastern Morning News*, 24th June 1880. Evidence of P. Williamson, railway valuer, supporting the HBR.

at Grimsby. In 1879 the charges per ton of coal at Hull were between 1s. 3d. (6½p.) and 1s. 7½d. (8p.) compared with 3d. (1½p.) at Grimsby. However, we should note that according to Smith's evidence to the Miners' Associations cited above, the difference was for 1880. Not only coal was affected. The dock dues at Grimsby were lower on the great majority of traffic.³⁴ To make matters worse the Hull Dock Company had introduced regulations in 1876 making it compulsory for coal to be loaded into hopper waggons. Although this made for easier discharge at the docks, it made extensive alterations to the waggons necessary and reduced their capacity by something like 25%. There were no such restrictions at Grimsby. As a result of the inadequacy of the dock facilities and the high rates, combined with a lack of coal traffic from South Yorkshire over the NER, many ships were forced to leave Hull in ballast and look for coal from other ports.³⁵ For the shipowners, C. H. Wilson spoke strongly in favour of the Bill, stressing the need for a deep-water dock.³⁶

The closing speech by Sir Edmund Beckett for the NER was a bitter denunciation of the scheme and was considered to have made a poor impression on the committee. He used phrases such as, 'the HBR propose to live by robbery of the NER' and, 'did any man in his senses suppose that anything was to be gained by promoting another railway to Hull?' Beckett went on to allege that the Corporation's strategy was to run down the Dock Company so that it could be sold at a low price and the promotion of the new line was a part of this plan.³⁷

The Bill passed the Commons Committee on 9th July 1880.³⁸ It then went before the Lords Committee on 23rd July and passed through quickly but, taking account of representations by the MSLR, the running powers over the MR to

³⁴ *Eastern Morning News*, 11th December 1879.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15th June 1880.

City Archives, Hull, TLP 36. This same complaint had been made as far back as 1862 when John Lumsden, a member of the firm of Brownlow and Lumsden, steamship owners and president of the Chamber of Commerce, in evidence before the Parliamentary Committee for the 1862 LYR Doncaster, Goole and Hull Junction Lines Bill, said that many ships left Hull in ballast owing to coal not being obtainable.

³⁶ *Eastern Morning News*, 17th June 1880.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2nd August 1880.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10th & 12th July 1880.

Barnsley were disallowed leaving them intact only to Cudworth.³⁹ Furthermore, a clause was inserted whereby the Dock Company was to be given an opportunity to adopt the dock part of the scheme if it so desired. The Bill received the Royal Assent on 26th August 1880.⁴⁰

3. HBR victory and euphoria.

There was jubilation in Hull at what was seen as a breaking of the NER monopoly.⁴¹ The prospectus made clear who was behind the company. There were to be fourteen directors, two of whom were to be appointed by Hull Corporation. The majority of the directors represented the merchants and ship owners of the port.⁴² The coal interest was represented by William Day, of Monk Bretton colliery. The authorised capital was £3,000,000 in shares of £10 with powers to borrow a further £1,000,000. According to the prospectus the projected yearly earnings were £6,000 per mile and a dividend of 8% was expected as against an average of 7.18% paid by the NER. The dock earnings were estimated at £105,110 per year, this being based on a figure of £2,285 per acre per year which had been earned by the Albert Dock. The line connected either directly or via the MR with 13 collieries and would make Hull a major coal port.⁴³

³⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 135, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1880. The original Bill contained running powers over the MR and MSLR to Barnsley, the MSLR to Manchester, the Cheshire Lines Committee to Liverpool, the West Riding & Grimsby (GNR & MSLR Joint) to Wakefield, the LYR and LNWR to Huddersfield, the LYR to Pontefract, the Methley Joint (GNR, LYR & NER) to Lofthouse, the MR to Sheffield and the Swinton & Knottingley Joint (MR & NER) from Moorthorpe to Swinton. The Commons committee rejected all these with the exception of the MR from Cudworth to Barnsley, which was then disallowed by the Lords Committee.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 132, Programme for 'Great Demonstration' in Pearson's Park on 19th August 1880.

⁴² The original board contained five from the mercantile and banking interests of Hull and three ship-owners.

⁴³ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/10, HBR Prospectus.

Such prospects were enough to ensure that initial enthusiasm among investors was high and at the close of subscriptions on 9th December the total number of applicants was 9,838. The number of shares payable by instalment applied for were 639,834. and those to be paid up in full, 87,369, a total of 727,203 shares representing capital of £7,272,030. Investors from London applied for 501,592 shares representing a capital of over £5,000,000. a fact which was to prove of great significance in a short time. Applied for in Hull were 148,323 shares, which meant that Hull had subscribed almost £1½ million towards the new railway. Many of the Hull subscriptions came from the middle and working classes.⁴⁴ The costs of promoting the Bill had been about £58,000.⁴⁵

The enthusiasm of the major shipowner in the port may be gauged from the fact that at the first shareholders meeting of the HBR, C. H. Wilson contributed £2,500 to help with promoters' expenses.⁴⁶ The railway press was enthusiastic. The *Railway News* proclaimed:

The people of Hull may congratulate themselves in having secured the passage of a Bill which should tend to increase the wealth and prosperity of the town and they owe a debt of gratitude to Colonel Smith and Mr. Lawrence, whose experience of railway matters gained in the service of the MSLR has been of great value to the supporters of the scheme, for their exertions on their behalf.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Eastern Morning News*, 26th February 1881.

City Archives, Hull, TLP 322, HBR Proprietors Address Book, December 1888 (with manuscript amendments to 13th February 1889). A sample analysis shows that almost 20% of those listed as shareholders came from the working class.

⁴⁵ *Railway Times*, 5th March 1881.

⁴⁶ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, Rhoda Lamb, Diploma in Social Studies, University of Hull, 1974. p. 46.

The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/7, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1880-1886. C. H. Wilson was appointed as a director of the HBR on 29th December 1880 and on 2nd February 1881 expressed a wish to retire owing to pressure from parliamentary activities.

⁴⁷ *Railway News*, 14th August 1880.

Joseph Lawrence was the HBR Company Secretary from its inception until 1881.

The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312 7. HBR Directors' Minute Book 1880-1886. Lawrence retired on 21st January 1881 and was replaced by James Daniell.

The success of the HBR was seen in Hull as the culmination of battles with the NER over railway monopoly and the first time that the NER had been defeated on its home ground. The new railway was to be extremely expensive and it may be conjectured that if it had been promoted as a coal line only, it would not have succeeded in Parliament. The crucial ingredient in the scheme was the new dock, which Hull desperately needed. It was supposed, especially in Hull, that the railway would enter into healthy competition with the NER. Indeed, the Lords made the assumption that the new dock would be profitable when it gave the existing Dock Company powers to take over the scheme.⁴⁸

The euphoria in Hull was such that few, other than supporters of the NER, questioned the viability of the project. The pride engendered by the success of the scheme masked some of the negative aspects of the operation of the new line and dock. The net revenue of £6,000 per mile per annum, yielding a dividend of 8% was wildly over optimistic. It certainly made no allowance for likely retaliatory action by the NER and the Dock Company. The HBR was alone among railways. It had no allies in the area among larger railway companies who saw no reason to abandon existing arrangements, which worked well for them. The general manager of the NER had, as might have been expected, made the gloomy but accurate prediction to the Commons Committee that even if the HBR secured the whole of the freight revenue into Hull then accruing to the NER, together with that of the Dock Company, it would still not be able to pay an adequate dividend on the proposed capital.⁴⁹ There were certainly no congratulations from the NER. At the shareholders' meeting in August 1880 it was announced that £6,000 had been spent opposing the HBR Bill. The Mayor had stated that Hull had been under the thumb of one company for 21 years. The NER did not agree with that but grudgingly admitted that Hull now had its victory - a victory which would cost upwards of five million pounds.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ City Archives, Hull, TLP 135, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1880.

⁴⁹ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 35.

⁵⁰ *Railway News*, 7th August 1880.

4. Financial arrangements for the construction of the HBR.

The cutting of the first sod by the HBR chairman, Colonel Smith, took place on 15th January 1881. The ceremony was carried out on a bleak winter day in front of an enormous crowd and was followed by the usual banquet for the dignitaries.⁵¹ A correspondent in the *Hull Daily Mail* later opined, ‘One would think by the number of people present that the HBR was going to carry people to heaven.’⁵²

The contractors for the construction of the line were Lucas & Aird, whose partnership dated from 1860, and who had already been responsible for much railway and dock construction.⁵³ The circumstances of their appointment were curious. At a meeting on 3rd November 1880 the directors had decided that tenders were to be invited from ‘selected contractors of high standing’, not fewer than five in number. On 15th November 1880 this was rescinded and Smith was authorised to proceed to London and arrange a draft contract with Lucas & Aird on the basis of a verbal understanding already existing between Smith and Charles Lucas.⁵⁴

Some hints of what was going on were offered by the anonymous writer of a manuscript history of the HBR, probably a disgruntled London shareholder, in a diatribe against the HBR board and the Hull directors in particular. This alleges that James Staats Forbes, later to become a managing director of the HBR, admitted that he was present at the Westminster Palace Hotel in London on 3rd December 1880 when the contract was signed between the HBR and Lucas & Aird. Forbes was alleged to have assisted the company with the prospectus and contract. The contract was not for a lump sum but for a schedule of prices.⁵⁵ Lucas & Aird had been

⁵¹ *Eastern Morning News*, 16th January 1881.

⁵² Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p. 43.

⁵³ R. S. Joby, *The Railway Builders*, (Newton Abbot, 1983), p. 131. The Lucas & Aird partnership comprised three undertakings. John Aird & Son dealt with gas and water construction, Lucas Bros. were more concerned with public and general building, and the railway construction arm was Lucas & Aird which specialised in major railway work. Contracts included the Tilbury and London Docks, the West Highland Railway and the Manton to Kettering line of the Midland Railway.

⁵⁴ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/7, HBR Directors’ Minute Book 1880-1886.

⁵⁵ East Riding Archives, DDML 11/7, Anonymous manuscript history of the HBR, 1886. This manuscript covers the period from 1880 to 1886.

involved between 1876 and 1880 in works on the Metropolitan & District, and London, Chatham and Dover railways. Forbes was associated with both of these companies, being chairman and managing director of both in 1872-1901 and 1873-1898 respectively.⁵⁶

This was not the only questionable provision entered into by the HBR. An unusual inclusion in the contract was that Lucas & Aird would guarantee to pay 5% interest on the paid-up amounts until 31st December 1884 when it was anticipated that the work would be complete.⁵⁷ This was an inducement, designed to attract investors. Several applications were received for payment in advance of calls, which the directors refused. On 4th March 1881, Robert Fisher of Manchester, an auditor with the MSLR, who held 100 shares in the HBR, brought an action in Chancery to restrain payment, alleging that the HBR was not entitled to pay interest out of capital. He further alleged that the contract entered into with Lucas & Aird was illegal, as provisions for such payment breached parliamentary standing orders.⁵⁸ An injunction to restrain the HBR was subsequently granted by the Master of the Rolls and the Standing Orders Committee subsequently decided that the orders could not be

⁵⁶ J. Simmons & G. Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, (Oxford, 1997), p. 167.

T.R. Gourvish, *Dictionary of Business Biography*, (London, 1984), p. 392.

‘James Staats Forbes (1823-1904) trained as an engineer with the Great Western Railway becoming goods superintendent at Paddington. He next became manager of the Dutch Rhenish Railway, which gave him an insight ‘into methods of railway management less purely traditional than in this country.’ In 1861 he was appointed general manager of the London, Chatham & Dover Railway. He joined the Board in 1871 and in 1874 became chairman. He became chairman of the Metropolitan District Railway in 1872. He held positions in other railways (including the HBR) and in electricity and telephone companies. By 1884 he was reported to be earning £15,000 per year. A man of taste and discernment, he sometimes lacked conviction; this he made up for with a charm and eloquence which made him a shrewd negotiator’.

T. R. Gourvish, ‘The performance of British railway management after 1860: The Railways of Watkin and Forbes’, *Business History*, Vol. 20, No.2, July 1978, pp. 186-200.

Figure 5. James Staats Forbes.

⁵⁷ *Railway News*, 4th December 1880.

⁵⁸ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/7, HBR Directors’ Minute Book 1880-1886, 4th April 1881.

dispensed with.⁵⁹ Fisher alleged that Lucas & Aird's prices were excessive because in order to recoup interest, which they had guaranteed to pay, they had added £350,000 to the contract price together with £100,000 for 'expedition in construction'. He also accused the HBR of misleading its shareholders, who did not understand that a concealed arrangement with the contractors meant that they were receiving interest out of their own capital. This was, in his view, an attempt by the HBR board to extricate themselves from difficulties arising from promises made in the prospectus, which could not be fulfilled.⁶⁰

If he was acting in a personal capacity it is difficult to guess at Fisher's motives, as by bringing the action he was depriving himself of interest on his shares, but it may be significant that he was employed by the MSLR, a company strongly opposed to the HBR, which it saw as a threat to its South Yorkshire trade. In any case the HBR announced that it would apply for a Bill to enable it to pay interest out of capital.⁶¹ By February 1882 the HBR had paid Fisher's costs and part of the settlement had been an undertaking from Fisher that he would not oppose the Bill.⁶² The upshot was that when, in August 1882, a call of £2 per share was made, Lucas & Aird, voluntarily consented to pay the interest on the money.⁶³ Work proceeded apace and by the end of the year 3,000 men were employed in building the line and 1,000 on the dock. In a leading article the *Railway Times* opined:

From our point of view and that of the public it is of importance to note the gratifying circumstances that in every way the work of the company appears to have progressed so far in a businesslike and expeditious manner, and that by its undertakings, so far as they have been completed, the company has given every earnest of the realisation of the expectations which were the original basis of its formulation.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ East Riding Archives, Beverley, DDML 11/7, Anonymous manuscript history of the HBR, 1886.

⁶⁰ *Eastern Morning News*, 2nd April 1881.

⁶¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 139, HBR Capital Bill, 1882.

⁶² *Railway News*, 4th March 1882.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9th September 1882.

⁶⁴ *Railway Times*, 7th January 1882.

In August, 1881 Col. Brooshoft and C. J. Newbald, the latter being a representative of the Wilson shipping line, resigned from the HBR board and their places as directors were filled by W. A. Massey and Lord Beaumont.⁶⁵ These replacement members, particularly Massey, were to be very significant in the future conduct of the HBR as will be seen in chapter 5.⁶⁶

The HBR had got off to an auspicious start with little or no sign of the troubles ahead.

5. Proposals for expansion of the HBR.

Intoxicated by their success the directors decided to implement a proposal for an extension from the main line to Halifax and Huddersfield, providing a direct connection with the LNWR. A Bill was promoted for this together with a fish dock of approximately 13 acres (5 hectares) at Marfleet, to the east of Alexandra Dock, with a canal or cut connecting the fish dock with Alexandra Dock. Surprisingly, considering the antipathy of the NER, the Bill was unopposed and received the Royal Assent on 18th August 1882.⁶⁷

The proposed extension of the HBR to Huddersfield and Halifax attracted the attention of the MR which only touched the lucrative area of the West Riding at Leeds and Bradford. The MR would find running powers over the proposed extension line a convenient way of expanding its network and agreement to these powers by the HBR could gain it a useful ally among the large railway companies. In February 1882 the MR board agreed to an exchange station at Cudworth. In 1883, when calls for capital were about to be made, Smith asked the MR for reassurance that the company would use its running powers over the new extension. The MR

⁶⁵ *Railway Times*, 3rd September 1881.

University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, DEW 2/9/37. C. J. Newbald was the General Manager of Thomas Wilson, Sons & Co.

⁶⁶ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, Half Yearly and other HBR Meetings.

Figure 4. Watson Arton Massey.

⁶⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 323, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Co. Act, 1882.

assured him that it would. In January 1884 the MR agreed that the HBR might publish the MR intention to use the new line in order to help raise capital.⁶⁸

Also promoted in 1882 was a railway called the East and West Yorkshire Union Railways which ran from the GNR at Ardsley, south of Leeds, to a junction with the HBR at Drax.⁶⁹ The scheme was promoted by coal owners and landowners in the West Riding who were dissatisfied with the transport facilities to the port of Hull provided by the NER and ACN. The first chairman of the company was Lord Beaumont, a director of the HBR, who owned the estate of Carlton Towers, close to Drax. The secretary was Sebastian Meyer, who had been assistant secretary to the HBR from 1881.⁷⁰ The company sought running powers over the GNR, MR, NER & HBR.⁷¹ On 8th December a deputation representing the promoters asked Hull Corporation to petition Parliament in favour of the Bill, as a result of which petitions in support were sent to the Commons and Lords.⁷² It was stated that, based on only two thirds of the proposed traffic of the HBR, the line would pay 10%.⁷³ The promoters of the railway hoped that it would do for West Yorkshire what the HBR would do for South Yorkshire. Although it was described in the Hull press as ‘the railway from nowhere to nowhere’, it was supported by commercial interests in the port.⁷⁴ C. H. Wilson was reported as saying, ‘what they have to look forward to in Hull is the relief they may expect when the HBR and its new deep water dock are opened, and when the HBR and this new railway are brought into connection with the other great railway systems, the LYR, GNR, MR and others.’⁷⁵

The HBR initially offered financial support for the scheme, but later, because of its own problems, found itself unable to help. Thus, in April 1884 the HBR informed the East and West Yorkshire Union Railways that it could not enter into any

⁶⁸ P. E. Baughan, *The Midland Railway North of Leeds*, (London, 1987), pp. 281-282.

⁶⁹ Hoole Archives, Darlington, KH 1785, East & West Yorkshire Union Railways Act, 1883.

⁷⁰ A. L. Barnett, *The Light Railway King of the North*, (London, 1992), p. 13.

⁷¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 301, East and West Yorkshire Union Railways Bill.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Letter dated 9th December, 1881 and petitions by Hull Corporation.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, East and West Yorkshire Union Railways prospectus, October 1882.

⁷⁴ *Eastern Morning News*, 10th June 1882.

⁷⁵ *Yorkshire Post*, 11th November 1881.

further financial obligations until its own railway and dock were completed.⁷⁶ Despite preliminary optimism the scheme for the railway was abandoned in 1889.⁷⁷

There had already been other schemes trying to exploit traffic opportunities opened up by the HBR. In 1879 the Church Fenton, Cawood and Wistow Railway had obtained an Act for a line 5½ miles (9 km.) long. However, with the passing of the HBR Act in 1880 the promoters applied for a Bill to extend their railway a further 8 miles (13 km.) from the terminus at Wistow to a junction with the HBR at Drax. Initially the NER and HBR opposed the Bill but, after negotiations, the latter agreed to work the line for 50% of the profits, hoping to gain access to York and Harrogate.⁷⁸ Despite a change of name in 1883 to the Selby and Mid-Yorkshire Union Railway, the line was not built.⁷⁹ In the same year another railway with similar aims called the Leeds, Church Fenton and Hull Junction Railway was proposed from Leeds to a junction with the Church Fenton, Cawood and Wistow Railway, hoping to obtain running powers over that line and the HBR.⁸⁰ The line passed mainly through agricultural country serving no settlements of any size. It failed to obtain its Act. These failures brought to an end any possible foray by the HBR in the direction of York and Harrogate.

In 1883 an even more unlikely proposal would have taken the HBR into Lincolnshire. The Hull and Lincoln Railway ran from a connection with the HBR at Kirk Ella, just outside Hull, crossed the Humber by means of a bridge carried on 36 piers and formed a junction with the GNR at Lincoln. Gerard Smith and C. H. Wilson joined forces in support of it when it came before the Commons Committee. Wilson's company was a shareholder in Shireoaks Colliery in north Nottinghamshire and was a consumer of the coal it produced. This was presently shipped to Hull via New Holland in lighters. Furthermore, Wilson's carried agricultural machinery from Hull to the Baltic. This came from Lincoln, Grantham and Gainsborough, and

⁷⁶ A. L. Barnett, *The Light Railway King of the North*, p. 14.

⁷⁷ Hoole Archives, Darlington, KH1785, East and West Yorkshire Union Railways Extension of Time Act, 1888.

City Archives, Hull, TLP 170. East and West Yorkshire Union Railways Act, 1889.

⁷⁸ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meetings.

⁷⁹ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 153.

⁸⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 313, Leeds, Church Fenton and Hull Junction Railway prospectus.

transport would be much eased by the proposed railway.⁸¹ The scheme was also supported by Frederick Grotrian and John Witty, a dye manufacturer who was the Mayor of Hull

Predictably the scheme aroused much opposition from the NER, the users of the Humber and the port of Goole, whose river traffic would be adversely affected by the bridge. Henry Tennant, the general manager of the NER was dismissive of the railway's prospects. He reiterated that the Hull-Doncaster branch of the NER, which had cost £½ million to build, had brought little extra traffic, as there was considerable competition from water traffic for the Hull to London trade.⁸²

Fierce opposition also came from the Dock Company and the Humber Conservancy concerning the hazard to navigation caused by placing the piers in the river. The ACN, which owned eight vessels trading out of Goole, objected that the proposed headroom would seriously hamper their activities. The ACN had been preparing plans to allow ships of up to 3,000 tons to reach Goole and in 1884 took over the *rôle* of conservator of the lower Ouse from York Corporation. The company's scheme to improve the navigation to Goole, to be called the Ouse Seaway, was ambitious and was to take ten years.⁸³ Being prepared to deepen the river to accommodate larger vessels the last thing the ACN wanted was the obstruction caused by a bridge. Against all this opposition the Bill for the railway had little chance of success and the Parliamentary Committee rejected it on 22nd June 1883.⁸⁴ There was great rejoicing in Goole. The editorial in the *Eastern Morning*

⁸¹ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, memo by J. North, Department of History, University of Hull.

⁸² Simmons & Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, p. 504. 'Henry Tennant (1823-1910) entered railway service with the Brandling Junction railway in 1844 and held the combined posts of traffic superintendent and accountant on the Leeds & Thirsk and Leeds Northern Railways. He was involved in the formation of the NER in 1854 and was its accountant until 1871 when he became general manager. In 1891 he retired and took a seat on the NER Board. He knew little of the world outside North-east England and from his position on the Board obstructed the reforms of his successor George Gibb. He was elected deputy chairman at the age of 81 and remained on the Board until his death at the age of 86'.

⁸³ B. F. Duckham, *The Yorkshire Ouse*, (Newton Abbot, 1967), p. 136.

⁸⁴ City Archives, Hull, DXR 21, Hull & Lincoln Railway Bill, Parliamentary proceedings.

News called the Bill, ‘a calamity opposed by the Dock Company and Humber Conservancy against their own town’.⁸⁵

As the only company apart from the NER with a goods station in Hull, the MSLR had been neutral in its attitude to the Hull and Lincoln Railway Bill. The chairman, Edward Watkin, thought that it would not get enough support to succeed, but said that if the line were connected to other railways and the MSLR could have running powers, his company would not oppose it.⁸⁶ The Bill’s failure revived interest in a crossing of the Humber and the MSLR invited the NER to co-operate in a survey into the feasibility of a tunnel under the river. Powers were obtained in 1883 for trial borings and by mid-1885 sufficient data had been obtained for an estimate to be prepared. However, Henry Tennant of the NER was not prepared to support the scheme. As a result of this the MSLR abandoned the Humber tunnel project for the time being. Watkin revived the idea in 1891, only to receive a further rebuff from the NER.⁸⁷ Thus ended the scheme for a Humber tunnel.

6. The crisis years of the HBR, 1883-1884.

The fact that the HBR was heading for a financial crisis was first signalled in August 1883. Smith reported that he had travelled to Hull from Stairfoot Junction and found the railway complete except for the Ouse crossing and some half-mile of track. He anticipated that it would be possible to partially open the railway by the following spring.⁸⁸ That was to be the only good news for some time. On a gloomier note came news that the company’s borrowing powers were almost exhausted and £960,000 had been spent. A Bill had been brought forward with a view to compensating Lucas & Aird for the amount they had advanced on behalf of the HBR. The company had hoped that after the fight over the HBR Act of 1880 the NER have been less obstructive, but it had opposed the Bill after saying that it would support it. In an

⁸⁵ *Eastern Morning News*, 23rd June 1883.

⁸⁶ D. Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King. The Life and Times of Sir Edward Watkin 1819-1901*. (Cardiff, 2002), p. 492.

⁸⁷ G. Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 2*. (London, 1962), p. 186.

⁸⁸ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1. HBR Shareholders’ meeting, 25th August 1883.

acrimonious speech, Joseph Whitwell Pease of the NER had accused the HBR of everything short of dishonesty in its financial dealings. Smith said that the manager of the GNR had told him that promises had been obtained from 136 railway directors, who were also MPs, to vote against the HBR Bill. He hoped, however, that it would be possible to negotiate with Lucas & Aird and prevent further litigation.⁸⁹

The issue began to take on a political dimension when J. Buckingham Pope, at that time a strong supporter of the HBR and one of the members of the founding committee, argued that the provisions preventing the payment of interest out of capital militated against the promotion of new railway companies such as the HBR, whilst protecting the interests of existing companies.⁹⁰ The opposition of the railway interest in Parliament was perfectly consistent with this analysis.

Closer to Hull, Smith argued that it might be necessary to consider the financial viability of the Halifax and Huddersfield extension lines.⁹¹ Yet despite this financial crisis it had been decided, at extra expense, to site the passenger terminus nearer to the town centre at Charlotte Street, the site of the company's offices.⁹²

Deteriorating finances generated a damaging split among the shareholders. On 19th February London shareholders formed themselves into a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Francis Head. They demanded economies. The London faction contained bankers and speculators alarmed by a lack of return on their investments. These were the larger shareholders and debenture holders and included the contractors who had become involuntary shareholders because of the way the railway had been financed rather than by choice.⁹³ They had increased their voting power by the simple expedient of stock splitting, a common tactic at the time.⁹⁴ The

⁸⁹ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 25th August 1883.

⁹⁰ J. B. Pope, *Railway Rates and Radical Rule*, (London, 1884), p. 310.

⁹¹ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 25th August 1883.

⁹² East Riding Archives, Beverley, DDML/11/3 Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1883.

⁹³ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/7, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1880-1886, 10th March 1884.

⁹⁴ T. Alborn, *Conceiving Companies*, (London, 1998), p. 205.

In a stock split, the price of the stock will decrease, but the number of shares will increase proportionately. For example, if a shareholder owns 100 shares of a company at £100, in a stock

continued

financial situation was critical. The railway works had been more expensive than anticipated. Against an estimate of £1,619,000 for the railway, £1,582,000 had already been spent.⁹⁵

However, one voice was raised in support of the directors. C. H. Wilson said that remarks had been made which tried to show that the board of directors consisted of dummies, in the hands of their chairman. However, he felt it his duty as one largely interested in the welfare of the port of Hull to support the HBR and urged opposition to the London faction. His firm was the largest payer of dock dues in the port of Hull and he had full confidence in the HBR directors. This was a very significant and brave show of faith in what was becoming a distinctly shaky enterprise.⁹⁶

This was not the end of the matter, however. Sustained pressure from the London shareholders forced an agreement, in March, that expenditure should be curtailed.⁹⁷ The London faction was only temporarily appeased by the proposed cutbacks. Their attitude was that the directors had got the company into a mess and must get the company out of it. However, the directors acknowledged their faults and agreed that capital expenditure should be curtailed as much as practicable.⁹⁸ The *Railway Times* applauded Smith's diplomacy. In a leading article it opined:

An honourable capitulation is often indicative of greater moral courage than stubborn resistance. Thus, we are inclined to regard the arrangement between the proprietors and directorate of the HBR, as one which under all circumstances must be accepted with satisfaction.⁹⁹

split situation, the same shareholder will own a total of 200 shares at £50 a share after the split. A stock split has no effect on the value of what shareholders own. If the company pays a dividend, the dividends paid per share will also fall proportionately.

⁹⁵ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 25th February 1884.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 25th February 1884.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 4th March 1884.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 19th March 1884.

⁹⁹ *Railway News*, 15th March 1884.

But by April the two factions had taken their stands. The Hull shareholders stood squarely behind the existing board and a resolution was passed stating that:

This meeting, having considered the circulars of the board and of Sir Francis Head, is of the opinion that the interests of the shareholders generally will be best consulted by supporting the action of the present board in whom this meeting desires to express the fullest confidence, and pledges itself to take all necessary steps for that purpose.¹⁰⁰

The London faction wanted greater control over the board and Sir Francis Head intimated to Smith that he had a person in mind whom he proposed should be appointed as an observer. Head asked what salary the company would pay, and Smith replied that for a man with railway and financial experience they might give £250-£300 per year. Head said that the committee thought that the remuneration should be at least £500 per year. He then handed in the nomination to which he thought there might be some objection because it was his son, James Head. Smith replied that this would not be an objection but asked about the nominee's railway and financial experience. Head said his son had just returned from America where he had much experience of men and business and would amply carry out the intentions of the proprietors and the committee.¹⁰¹

The attempt to have Head's son appointed as an 'observer', in addition to being blatant nepotism, was designed to secure a greater degree of control by the London faction and it was seen as such by the Hull shareholders.¹⁰² In April Head explained to a stormy meeting of shareholders that there had been misapprehension concerning the appointment of his son. He maintained that it was understood that the gentleman nominated should be the delegate of the London committee but should be appointed not to direct, but to observe. To this there was ironic laughter from the floor. Not only had Head's son only recently become a shareholder but he had little or no experience of railways or financial affairs. Furthermore his remuneration was

¹⁰⁰ *Railway Times*, 19th April 1884.

¹⁰¹ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 6th March 1884.

¹⁰² *Railway Times*, 26th April 1884.

to be greater than other members of the board. From the point of view of the Hull faction there were other costly and inadmissible conditions. The London faction had clearly gone too far by seeking to appoint Head's son. A resolution requiring the directors to act in accordance with the wishes of the London Committee was rejected. The response of the latter was to claim that expenditure on the railway and dock would largely benefit Hull and not the shareholders.¹⁰³

Some way out of this impasse was clearly needed and in an attempt to obtain an independent assessment John Grierson, the general manager of the Great Western Railway, was invited to inspect the works and report on where economies could be effected. Grierson presented his report to the directors on 16th April.¹⁰⁴ He estimated that after making all possible economies the sum of £1,191,648 was required for the completion of the railway and dock. By June an additional £825,000 would be needed for land purchase, rolling stock and payments to the contractors.

More money was desperately needed and a prospectus issued on 16th June 1884 offered the issue of £1,800,000 preference stock and described the company's prospects in glowing terms.¹⁰⁵ Not surprisingly, in view of the widely reported disputes among the shareholders, the public response was poor and only £73,705 of stock was applied for.¹⁰⁶ Although, in the 1880s, more successful railways were drawing in a steady stream of new investors, the HBR, despite promises of good things to come, was not an attractive proposition.¹⁰⁷

The continuing financial crisis allowed Head and the London faction to berate the board at every opportunity. On 16th July, Head complained that they had been told that £4 million pounds would finish the concern, but were now informed that £1½ million more was needed. He further complained about what he saw as Hull's over-representation on the board of management, stating that Hull Corporation, in consideration of their holding of £100,000, had two seats on the board and the right of veto on any arrangement that the HBR might make regarding selling, leasing or

¹⁰³ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 19th April 1884.

¹⁰⁴ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰⁵ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Prospectus, 16th June 1884.

¹⁰⁶ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁷ Alborn, *Conceiving Companies*, pp. 239-240.

working the line. His complaint was that the people of Hull and Yorkshire, although too wise to subscribe to the railway, thought it was brought forward solely in their interests. This policy of identification with Hull had been the ruination of the company and he wished to see its affairs managed in a manner that had at heart the financial interests of the company. He urged that the HBR raise no additional capital until it had freed itself from Hull Corporation and then, if the NER or any other company was willing to take it over and complete the works which they could do at a much less cost than proposed, the HBR would be able to treat. James Stuart, one of the Hull Corporation directors, said in reply that the Corporation would have no objection to the transfer of the HBR to anybody, with the exception of the NER and MSLR.¹⁰⁸

The Corporation, afraid of the re-imposition of monopoly, endorsed Stuart's remarks. It was prepared to consider an amalgamation with the MR or LNWR, provided that the independence of the port could be preserved. This discussion now became irrelevant as the situation was overtaken by events. The contractors had informed the HBR board in February that unless arrangements could be made for meeting monthly payments, they would be obliged to stop work. It was decided in March to issue Lloyds Bonds at six months to meet the HBR's liabilities.¹⁰⁹ These bonds were suspended when the June issue of preference stock failed. The contractors were now owed £420,000 and were becoming the largest creditor of the

¹⁰⁸ *Railway Times*, 19th July 1884.

City Archives, Hull, TLP 322, HBR Proprietors Address Book, December 1888 (with manuscript amendments to 13th February 1889) shows that Francis Head held no ordinary shares in the HBR in December 1888.

¹⁰⁹ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/7, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1880-1886, 14th March 1884.

Simmons & Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, p. 275.

'Lloyd's Bonds were a method devised by J. H. Lloyd (1798-1884), a barrister much involved in railway promotion, to assist railway companies by indirectly enlarging their borrowing powers. In such a bond the railway company acknowledged that a debt of a certain sum was owing to a contractor in order to complete the line, and he agreed to postpone the settlement of it until a date in the future written into the bond, when it would be discharged with interest at a stated rate. On the security of the bond the contractor could expect to raise a loan himself, either from a bank or some other financial house, sufficient for him to finish the work'.

company. It was feared that this might enable them to force an undesirable amalgamation on the HBR. On 1st July the directors ordered that no further payments be made and work on the railway ceased.¹¹⁰

Smith explained the situation at the half-yearly meeting on 30th August. There was no money to pay the company's liabilities and all work had been stopped. Unless further capital could be raised the HBR could not continue. He noted that during the last session of Parliament there had been a proposal to build a railway called the Scarborough and West Riding Railway, which was to run from the HBR at Howden, by way of Market Weighton and Driffield to Scarborough. The Bill had failed, from lack of support and doubts as to whether the HBR would ever open as a functioning railway.¹¹¹ These were dark days for the HBR. However, help was at hand.

7. The completion of the line.

As well as being chairman of the HBR, Smith was also MP for High Wycombe and in this capacity made another approach to Parliament to relax standing orders which prevented the payment of dividends from capital. As £4 million had already been expended and would be irretrievably lost unless new capital were provided,

¹¹⁰ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 30th August 1884.

¹¹¹ *Railway Times*, 3rd November 1883. The following extract from the *Leeds Mercury* appeared:

'There has been a report of a proposed HBR extension from near Staddlethorpe to Scarborough. The route has been surveyed by practical men and all the landowners involved have been approached and have expressed themselves as being favourable to the scheme. It is expected that the official notice will be published in a week or two.' The item was denied in following week's issue of the *Railway Times*.

This proposal led to the formation of the Scarborough and West Riding Junction Railway, which planned a line from Howden on the HBR to Scarborough. The only section completed in 1885 was from Driffield to Market Weighton, which connected to the NER at both ends.

In 1893 the Scarborough, Bridlington and West Riding Junction Railway proposed railways from a junction with the NER near Staddlethorpe to the HBR at North Cave, continuing to a junction with the NER at Market Weighton. The scheme never came to fruition.

application was made to introduce an appropriate Bill. On 13th August 1884 Parliament agreed to a further issue of stock to the value of £1,500,000.¹¹²

The success of this Bill was, to a large extent due to work in the lobbies by James Staats Forbes, who was appointed as joint managing director of the HBR in August 1884 together with Samuel Swarbrick, late general manager of Great Eastern Railway (GER).¹¹³ The extent of the power which Forbes and Swarbrick were to have over the affairs of the HBR may be gauged from a letter written by Smith to Forbes on 20th May 1884, which contained the following: ‘As to control. I surrender it to you and Mr. Swarbrick with the utmost confidence, but I am charged by them [the board] to ask you to concede that I should remain until the opening of the undertaking, and that you and Mr. Swarbrick should join us as joint managing directors.’¹¹⁴ The board had hoped that the reputations of Forbes and Swarbrick would revive the fortunes of the HBR. Until the appointment of these two experienced railway officers the HBR board had lacked credibility as it was composed mainly of people with little experience of running a railway and even less of rescuing it from a difficult situation.

Despite the faith of Smith and others of the HBR board, the appointments provoked a mixed reception. A letter from ‘A Shareholder’ expressed the optimistic view that: ‘Now that Mr. Forbes and Mr. Swarbrick have joined the HBR I hope we will see a better price for our shares. I have increased my holding today by purchasing fifty and I hope this will be the case with others who have bought at higher prices than ruling at present.’¹¹⁵ The *Railway Times*, in less charitable mood, commented, ‘One more string to Mr. J. S. Forbes’ bow - a joint managing director of

¹¹² East Riding Archives, Beverley, DDML/11/3, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1884.

¹¹³ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/7, HBR Directors’ Minute Book 1880-1886, 26th August 1884.

East Riding Archives, DDML 11/7, Anonymous manuscript history of the HBR, 1886. Forbes was appointed as a director in November 1883 and Swarbrick in February 1884 at a salary of £2,500 per year. Their contract was for 5 years and the HBR agreed to pay Forbes £5,000 for giving up other important engagements.

¹¹⁴ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/57, Various correspondence with Forbes, 1884.

¹¹⁵ *Railway News*, 28th May 1884.

the HBR. What next?' In a subsequent issue it went on to point out that since Forbes' appointment to the HBR board the share price had dropped by 10%.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, it seemed that credibility had been restored to the HBR as the issue of the new stock proved a success and, in November, work quickly resumed on the dock and railway.¹¹⁷

In October, 1884 C. H. Wilson addressed the Chamber of Commerce in what was a remarkably prescient speech. He said that had been a keen supporter of the HBR but had become convinced that it could not stand alone. He hoped to see a greater development of the dock system in connection with railways and felt it was vital for Hull that the dock system be connected with important railways. Whether this would end in the HBR becoming connected with the MR, or with a combination of railways, was a matter of vital interest to the port. It followed that the Dock Company would also have to become corporately connected in some way or other. In all probability he imagined that this would be the NER. He hoped that this would enable the Dock Company to reduce dues and enable Hull to compete on better terms than at the present time with all competitive ports.¹¹⁸

In the short-term nothing happened. There was progress elsewhere, however. On 29th May 1885 the directors and members of Hull Corporation made an inspection of the HBR works. At the luncheon, after the tour, the Mayor, Dr. A. K. Rollit, in proposing a toast said that, 'the relations between the Corporation and the company had always been close and good, and that course on the part of the Corporation had been both prudent and patriotic.'¹¹⁹ Subsequent events seemed to prove him right.

The new dock, called Alexandra Dock, was opened on 16th July 1885.¹²⁰ The Corporation, in particular, was jubilant. The Mayor requested in the local press that the inhabitants of the borough observe the day as a public holiday, 'in order that all

¹¹⁶ *Railway Times*, 31st May & 7th June 1884.

¹¹⁷ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p. 72.

¹¹⁸ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM 21st October 1884.

¹¹⁹ *Railway News*, 6th June 1885. Rollit had been called 'unpatriotic' by Smith in 1879 when the former backed the Hull and Huddersfield Railway.

¹²⁰ Figure 30. Alexandra Dock.

may have the opportunity of witnessing the proceedings in connection with the opening of the railway and dock'.¹²¹ The railway was opened to goods traffic on 20th July and to passengers on 27th July.¹²²

The openings were of tremendous significance for the port of Hull. They marked the start of railway competition and gave Hull a sense of having its own railway, no longer being part of an empire controlled from York and with its roots in the North-east, and a perception that Hull had been forced to fight for its position as the premier port on the east coast after London, and had prevailed. Hull was now to be the master of its own destiny, a sentiment reinforced by the close involvement of the Corporation with the HBR.

The struggle to open the railway had been beset by financial problems and bitter fighting over whether the railway existed chiefly for the benefit of Hull or the London-based proprietors. This struggle was, in part, between geographically distinct groups of investors, but this very distinction underpinned another in terms of the type of investment. As a generalisation the London group consisted of investors searching for a profit on the railway business who were, at best, unwilling holders of stock in terms of payment for work performed. Investors in Hull and Yorkshire were far more likely, at least in the case of those with large holdings, to be content with modest or no returns as long as the new railway enabled their businesses to trade more profitably.

It had taken all the skill of entrepreneurs such as Forbes to see the HBR through to completion. Indeed, some of the manoeuvrings of the board and the contractors were at the limits of what could be considered good business practice, even at the time. Especially suspect were the manner in which the contract had been let to Lucas & Aird and the later undertaking to pay interest capital. The hand of Forbes may be seen in these arrangements, although we will probably never know how deep his involvement was. But had it not been for his skill in parliamentary committees and lobbies the HBR may not have come to fruition as most of the other board members were totally out of their depth in dealing with the financial difficulties besetting the HBR.

¹²¹ *Railway News*, 18th July 1885.

¹²² *Hull News*, 1st August 1885.

The appointment of Forbes and Swarbrick to the board was to prove a defining moment in the factional struggle between the proprietors. The new board took a wider view of the part the HBR could play on the railway scene and squabbles between shareholders were to become increasingly irrelevant. As I will show in the next chapter, this was because the HBR, aided by Hull Corporation, was soon to be forced to fight to maintain an independent existence.

The successful promotion of the HBR also had a profound effect on the Dock Company, which became increasingly anxious as progress was made on the construction of the new dock. It was obvious to all that the company had nothing to match the magnificent dock of the HBR, and the future looked bleak. The policy of the Dock Company in this regard will be examined in the next chapter.

Secure in its regional monopoly the NER was little concerned by the opening of the HBR, which it saw as barely more than an irritant. However, it was mindful that the HBR could become more of a threat were it to ally itself with other railways so the NER would initially, by bullying tactics which will be described in the next chapter, attempt to make life difficult for the new company.

In the summer of 1885, however, the battle to beat the monopoly of the NER seemed to be won. This was true in the narrowest sense, but the HBR was soon to become involved in battles, the bitterness of which made the struggle of Hull traders and the Corporation seem as nothing.

CHAPTER 5.

THE EMERGENCE OF COMPETITION, 1885-1890.

1. Introduction.

The years between 1885 and 1890 saw the nadir and the recovery of the fortunes of the HBR. Until 1888 they were marked by financial crises leading to receivership, bitter in-fighting among the directors and shareholders, and a policy by the NER and its allies which could at best be described as uncooperative and at worst outright hostile. There were real take-over bids and imagined ones. Throughout all this the Corporation steadfastly adhered to its *rôle* of the guardian of the independence of the HBR. After all these tribulations the company was re-structured in 1889, leading to its recovery and later success. Meanwhile the Dock Company sank further in the financial mire as a result of a rates-war with the HBR. It offered itself to any railway company which would come to its aid, but was unsuccessful. The idea of a dock trust, including the new HBR dock was once more suggested by the Corporation in 1888. However, it was not the ratepayers who thwarted it on this occasion, but the recalcitrance of the HBR and the Dock Company.

2. Financial difficulties faced by the HBR, 1885-1886.

Things seemed to start well for the HBR. By August 1885, 64 ships had entered Alexandra Dock. The coal rate from South Yorkshire of 3s. 1d. (15½p.) had been reduced to 2s. 2d. (11p.) and Hull was on the way to becoming an important coal port.¹ However, general goods traffic got off to a slow start. By February 1886 much of the enthusiasm had evaporated as the difficult position of the HBR became apparent. In the first five months of operation Neptune Street depot handled 42,972 tons of general goods and 7,853 tons of coal. Sculcoates depot handled approximately 20,000 tons in total. The half-yearly receipts to 31st December 1885

¹ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 26th August 1885.

were £53,280 from a gross tonnage of traffic of 191.198. This was a very poor result and a drastic improvement was needed. When the figures were announced to the shareholders an acrimonious tone emerged, which set the precedent for some time to come. There were complaints of high expenditure and low income.² It was apparent that the HBR was not in a financial position to undertake the Halifax and Huddersfield extension and an Act was obtained for an extension of time.³

It was at this time that the *Railway Times* began its sustained castigation of the management of the HBR in general and Forbes, who appeared to be its *bête-noir*, in particular. Its first salvo came in an ironic leading article published after the results showing a net loss of £68,735 for the first complete half-year trading were announced. The periodical opined that:

It will be a long time before the HBR becomes a rival to the NER. We notice further, notwithstanding that the chairman had the presence of mind to congratulate the shareholders on the 'profit' earned by the concern. Happy Hull in having such a railway and dock, and fortunate the company in possessing a director in the shape of Mr. Forbes who, with characteristic lightness of heart, pledged himself and Mr. Swarbrick that in a short time all reasonable ground for complaint as to the working of the company should be removed.⁴

The arrival of an independent railway upset the terms agreed between the signatories to the Humber Agreements. On 12th April 1886 the LYR began to exercise its long-dormant running powers into Hull, setting up a carting depot, thus competing for traffic and entering the rate war between the NER, HBR and the Dock Company.⁵ Furthermore, the use by the LYR of these running powers reduced the amount of traffic exchanged with the HBR at Hensall, and to make matters even worse for the HBR the NER reduced its rate for coal by 3d. (1½p.) per ton in

² City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1. HBR Shareholders' meeting, 20th February 1886.

³ East Riding Archives, Beverley, DDML/11/3. Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1885.

⁴ *Railway Times*, 27th February 1886.

⁵ J. Marshall, *The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. Vol. 2*, (Newton Abbot, 1970), p. 209.

February 1886 and by a similar amount in August.⁶ In addition, in August 1886, Smith alleged that the HBR was suffering from a boycott by other railway undertakings, citing large discrepancies of tonnages sent to and received from various companies.⁷ The HBR finances also suffered from a rate war with the Dock Company, whose rates had fallen steadily from 8.45d. (3.52p.) in December 1885 to 4.84d. (2.02p.) in June 1886, forcing corresponding decreases at Alexandra Dock.⁸

The *Railway News* pointed out that the half-year results were deplorable. Gross receipts were £66,935, the working expenses were £59,737 or about 90%. The balance was £7,198. Debenture and other charges were £70,931, leaving a deficit of £63,733. The cumulative debit balance was £115,842.⁹ It had become obvious that the company could not afford the passenger station at Charlotte Street as proposed in the 1883 Act and a Bill was proposed for its abandonment.¹⁰

The financial consequences were not only felt by the HBR. In the same half-year the NER had been forced to spend £2,000 carting goods from Alexandra Dock to the NER station. This could have been avoided if a proposed connection at Sculcoates had been operational. The HBR had laid the rails and built the embankment but had not put in the junction. In an attempt to redress the situation the NER submitted a Bill for completion of the junction and running powers to Alexandra Dock.¹¹ John Dent, the NER chairman observed:

⁶ K. Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. I*, (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. 88.

⁷ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 26th August 1886.

Traffic from HBR ('000 tons) to:	Traffic received ('000 tons) from:
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MR	35	10
GNR	16	2
LYR	26	10
MSLR	12	3

⁸ *Ibid.*, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 26th August 1886.

⁹ *Railway News*, 21st August 1886.

¹⁰ East Riding Archives, Beverley, DDML/11/3 Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1886.

¹¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 166, North Eastern Railway Bill, 1887.

We recognise that the HBR exists and if, in the future management of their undertaking, they will conduct its affairs legitimately and with a view to profit, they will not find the NER inconsiderate neighbours; but it will not be safe for them to assume that the NER will permanently hold their hands if other principles of management are persevered in by the HBR. We will treat them fairly, as fair neighbours if they will fight fair. If they do not fight fair then they must take the consequences.¹²

Thus did the mighty NER threaten the puny upstart. However it was to underestimate the HBR, and Forbes in particular, when the companies tangled with each other in the Sculcoates dispute.

3. The Sculcoates dispute.

The Sculcoates dispute represented in microcosm the shifting balance of power between the railway companies and interested parties and so is worthy of examination in some depth.

In accordance with the terms of the HBR Act of 1880 construction had begun of a connection from the HBR at Sculcoates to the NER at Wilmington.¹³ The HBR then realised that this connection could be used by the NER to the disadvantage of the HBR as it gave the former access to Alexandra Dock. The HBR therefore refused to make the connection to the NER. The latter decided to apply to Parliament for permission to acquire and complete the connection and, in 1887, sought powers to construct a railway from a junction with the NER Victoria dock branch to a junction with the HBR.¹⁴

The Corporation petitioned against the proposal, stating that HBR Act of 1880 authorised a railway practically identical with that proposed. The Corporation considered that if the NER were authorised to make this connection to the HBR it would indirectly obtain control over an important part of that company's railway.

¹² *Railway News*, 5th February 1887.

¹³ Figure 19. Proposed connection between the NER and HBR at Sculcoates.

¹⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 166, North Eastern Railway Bill, 1887.

Commercial interests in the town thought along similar lines. At a meeting of representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, merchants, shipowners and traders, resolutions had been passed condemning the NER's proposals and opposing the granting of powers which were seen as inimical to the trade and commerce of the port.¹⁵

The HBR feared that giving the NER access to Alexandra Dock would divert traffic from the HBR line. It was particularly concerned as the Dock Company had a Bill before Parliament to lease or sell its property to the NER. As the Dock Company was a competitor of the HBR the latter feared that if the railway were built and the NER subsequently absorbed the Dock Company, this would effectively end dock competition at Hull. Indeed, it would confer upon the NER the very powers which Parliament had refused to confer upon the HBR in 1880, when it had sought to obtain access to the Hull Dock Company estate.¹⁶

In the Commons Committee on 24th March 1887 enquiring into the NER's Bill, Mr. Bidder QC, appearing for that company, said that it was due to Forbes that the line had not been completed. He alleged that when Forbes had been called in to sort out the HBR financial affairs in 1884 one of his first questions was about the connecting railway to the NER. He asked, 'Why are you making this line? Do you not see that instead of being a feeder to you it will be a sucker? The traffic will come over the NER rails and not those of the HBR. For heaven's sake do not put another rail in!'¹⁷

Henry Tennant, the general manager of the NER said in evidence that he was unaware of this and, in September 1885, had written to the HBR asking when the line was to be completed. Samuel Swarbrick advised him to communicate with Forbes but Forbes proved elusive. Tennant wrote many times but was unable to obtain a written reply from Forbes. Finally, in February 1886, he realised that that the HBR had no intention of making the connection. He went on to say that the HBR was 'a thorn in the side of the NER although it had only been in existence for two years'.

¹⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 166, Papers relating to the North Eastern Railway Bill, 1887.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Petitions against NER Bill, 1887.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Proceedings of Commons Committee, March 1887.

and it was 'boycotted by all the other systems upon which the NER could exercise any influence'.¹⁸

Forbes gave a masterly performance when he appeared before the committee on 25th March. He said he had had innumerable interviews with Tennant on the issue of the connection and although he had not answered Tennant's letters in writing he had always done so verbally. He said that Tennant's point of view was that the HBR must connect the lines, and when the junction was operative the NER would tell the HBR what they were really going to do. Forbes said that if the NER got over the proposed junction and into Alexandra Dock without some kind of limitation it would sweep every ounce of traffic from the HBR. He went on to say that, in his view, the connecting line would be useless without exchange sidings. The cost to the HBR of completing the connection would be £5,000-£6,000, which they were not prepared to spend on a line without a defined use. He alleged that Tennant had been evasive regarding the provision of exchange sidings and, more importantly, under what terms and conditions the connection would be worked. Bidder's cross examination failed to shake Forbes. Indeed, after repeated questioning he was told by the chairman that he was labouring points and that the Committee understood Forbes' point of view and further questioning by Bidder was unnecessary. When the hearing was adjourned it was obvious who had won the contest.¹⁹

Heads of Agreement for the use of the connection had been produced but the NER realised that its cause was lost and the section of the Bill relating to the Sculcoates connection was withdrawn leaving the HBR victorious.²⁰ The HBR was proving a match for the NER, at least in the short-term.

¹⁸ City Archives, Hull, TLP 166, Proceedings of Commons Committee, March 1887.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Proceedings of Commons Committee, March 1887.

²⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 166, Heads of Agreement in respect of connection between NER and HBR lines at Sculcoates, Hull..

City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 26th August 1886.

4. Abortive proposals for the sale of the HBR and the Hull Dock Company.

The long-term prospects for the HBR were not, however, so rosy. Having provoked competition over rates it could not control the subsequent battle. In February 1887 the HBR chairman reported that the Hull Dock Company would not agree to stop the rates war. It wished to acquire Alexandra Dock and institute a joint purse system. This was wholly unacceptable to the HBR, which had once more asked for access to the Dock Company estate and had been refused.²¹

In 1887 the Dock Company, in an attempt to get out of a worsening financial situation, brought a Bill before Parliament to enable it to sell or lease its undertaking to the MSLR, LYR, NER or LNWR, or to one or more of them.²² The Board of Trade queried whether it would be in the public interest that Hull Docks should become the property of one or more of four of the most important railway companies in the kingdom. This had long been a matter of national concern. The Joint Select Committee of the Lords and Commons in 1872 on railway amalgamation had considered the effects that might arise from docks becoming the property of railway companies and had recommended that where effective competition by sea existed it should be safeguarded by preventing railway companies from obtaining control over public harbours. But despite this recommendation, the HBR had been sanctioned by Parliament in 1880 to construct its railway and dock by an amendment of Parliamentary Standing Orders.²³ The policy of Parliament had been one of ambivalence, at least as far as Hull was concerned.²⁴

As it now seemed possible that the Dock Company could be sold to a competing railway the HBR decided against further negotiations about rates. In view of its dire financial position the HBR decided to follow the example of the Dock Company and seek amalgamation with one or other of the more powerful railway companies. But when the Corporation saw that the NER and MSLR were included among the list of companies with which the HBR was prepared to amalgamate it was

²¹ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 26th February 1887.

²² City Archives, Hull, TLP 162, Hull Docks Bill, 1887.

²³ *Ibid.*, Board of Trade report, 1877.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

horrified. The HBR directors were summoned to explain this action. The preliminary meeting was held on 5th January 1887. Samuel Swarbrick, explaining the Bill, said that the situation was very complex and Forbes would explain the position at a subsequent meeting.²⁵

At the next meeting Forbes attempted to explain away the contentious parts of the Bill in terms of legal technicalities. He said that in order for the HBR to have a *locus standi* in opposition to the Dock Company, as to its proposed power to negotiate with the MSLR and the NER, these companies must be included. He denied that he had had any negotiations with the NER, either directly or indirectly and said that the only proper way the MSLR and NER could be removed from the Bill was for them to be struck out by Parliament.²⁶ The Corporation, however, dismissed Forbes' arguments and wished to exclude the NER and MSLR from the list of companies with which the HBR might amalgamate.²⁷

On 25th January deputations from the Chamber of Commerce, the Guardian Society, shipowners and traders attended a meeting with the Corporation. Smith was present representing the HBR. He once again attempted to explain away the inclusion of the NER in the Bill in similar terms to Forbes. Nevertheless the Corporation representatives insisted that all references to the MSLR and NER be struck from the Bill.²⁸

Despite the best efforts of Swarbrick, Forbes and Smith to come up with reasons for offering the HBR to the NER the Corporation remained adamant that it would maintain the independence of the HBR. The sophistry used by the HBR directors may well have increased suspicion on the part of the Corporation that they were prepared to do a deal with the NER or any other railway company if they thought they could get away with it. These suspicions were soon to be confirmed

²⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 166, Minutes of meeting with Hull Corporation, 5th January 1887.

²⁶ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 71. Forbes had written to J. D. Dent, the chairman of the NER as early as 7th July 1884 asking for a meeting so that he could explain why the NER were the 'right people' with whom to come to an arrangement.

²⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 166, Minutes of meeting with Hull Corporation, 15th January 1887.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

when the MR made a bid for the HBR in December 1887 and Smith and Forbes appeared in their true colours. This will be discussed below.

The Corporation held a public meeting on 7th February to sound out opinion concerning its opposition to the Bills proposing the sales of the HBR and the Dock Company. C. H. Wilson, speaking in opposition to the Bills, said that the management of the Dock Company had led to its present impecunious state. He argued that the NER would try to recoup the outlay involved in the purchase of the Dock Company. He further alleged that the policy of the NER had been to profit at the expense of Hull by drawing trade to their northern ports. In connection with the HBR, he referred to the threat issued at the NER half-yearly shareholders' meeting in February 1887, that if the HBR did not attempt to live on good terms with the NER they 'will have to take the consequences.' The only harm the HBR had done to the NER was to break its monopoly, and competition must be preserved. In the interests of the town he therefore felt that the Bills must be opposed. The meeting consented.²⁹ In view of this overwhelming opposition the greater part of the Dock Company's Bill failed, the only sections being retained were those which allowed for the reduction of wharfage rates.³⁰

The competition between the Dock Company and the HBR had been financially advantageous for Wilson, a fact that he acknowledged. Returning to his sniping at the Dock Company he said that such competition had been very injurious to the shareholders but very beneficial to the port of Hull. He went on to say:

We must not forget that every port is reducing its port charges. The old Dock Company cannot maintain their position and cannot pay their shareholders a dividend unless they work harmoniously with the HBR, either by amalgamation, or by agreement with them that they do not go into unnecessary competition and unnecessary expenditure.³¹

²⁹ *Eastern Morning News*, 8th February 1887.

³⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 162, Hull Docks Bill, 1887.

³¹ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, AGM, 14th November 1887.

However, the Dock Company was not working harmoniously with the HBR and amalgamation did not appear to be an option. The financial situation for both these undertakings was to worsen before it improved.

5. The deepening financial crisis affecting the HBR.

In the meantime the HBR was lurching from one financial crisis to another. A special shareholders' meeting was held in June 1886 to consider abandonment of the Halifax and Huddersfield extensions, saving £19,000.³² In July, yet another special meeting was held to authorise the creation of £500,000 preference shares or stock. Smith admitted that the HBR was in a bankrupt condition and heavily in debt, but he hoped that when the extra capital had been raised the company would be able to meet its increasing debt. The motion to raise the capital was carried.³³

These measures were not enough. Claims against the company came thick and fast. The contractors issued an additional writ for £70,754. On 17th December 1886 representatives of the debenture holders applied to the Court of Chancery for writs against the company.³⁴ On 21st December further writs, on behalf of the contractors and the consulting engineers, were issued against the HBR for payments totalling £17,402. The matter was taken to arbitration and £12,078 was awarded. On 22nd December 1886 the company announced that the interest due on 1st January 1887, on the first and second debenture debts of £960,000 and £1,500,000 respectively, could not be paid.³⁵ Perhaps surprisingly Smith and Swarbrick were appointed as judgement receivers on 6th January 1887. Forbes and Fisher were subsequently added. On 21st February Swarbrick and Henry Dever, a chartered accountant, were appointed receivers on behalf of the debenture holders.³⁶

³² *Railway Times*, 5th June 1886.

³³ *Ibid.*, 31st July 1886.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25th December 1886.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1st January 1887.

³⁶ National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/8, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1886-1898, 26th February 1887.

Swift action was taken to reduce liabilities. The Halifax and Huddersfield extensions were abandoned.³⁷ A company called the Hull and North Western Junction Railway was formed to take over construction.³⁸ One of the promoters was William Trotter, who later became chairman of the HBR. The new company paid £10,630 to the HBR for various rights under the Bill, which was predictably opposed by Hull Corporation because it did not prohibit the sale of the new railway to any company other than the HBR. The Corporation wished to exclude the possibility of a sale to the NER or MSLR, which it considered would infringe the Act authorising the HBR.³⁹ This was eventually resolved by an undertaking from the company to sell only to the HBR.⁴⁰ The MR was to have running powers over the line as agreed in 1882. The HBR also sought to give the LNWR running powers. However, all the other major companies except the LNWR petitioned against this and the proposal was dropped.⁴¹

Despite these measures the HBR staggered down the road to financial Armageddon. In February 1887 the *Railway Times*, with the benefit of hindsight, renewed its attack, expressing in no uncertain terms what it thought of the receivers. In a leading article entitled 'The Hull and Barnsley Starveling', it wrote:

When Parliament, with a light heart, sanctioned the duplication of railway and dock facilities at Hull in the interests of this audacious concern it may be assumed that it did not foresee the natural sequel to such a course, which was at the time patent to all those who cared to exercise an independent judgement in the matter. Amongst other matters for consideration at the half-yearly meeting of the company is the proposal to appoint as the receivers ordered on behalf of the

³⁷ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 27th February 1887.

East Riding Archives, Beverley, DDML/11/3, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1887.

³⁸ City Archives, Hull, TLP 163, Hull and North Western Junction Railway Bill.

³⁹ Hull Corporation had originally sold 126 acres of land and subscribed £100,000 to the HBR on the conditions stipulated in clause 26 of the 1880 Act, which required a guarantee of the independence of the railway.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Correspondence between Company's solicitor and Hull Corporation.

⁴¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 164. Hull and Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway Bill, 1887.

debenture holders Colonel Smith and Mr. Swarbrick. These two gentlemen, or the former, at all events, have been responsible for the action which has resulted in the deplorable present state of things, and it is difficult to understand how they can exercise an independent control of their colleagues or over the affairs of the undertaking.⁴²

It was easy for the journal to criticise the appointment of receivers who had been so intimately connected with the company's problems, but it was probably a case of the best from a bad bunch. Smith was the chairman and a banker, Swarbrick was a railway accountant and Forbes had a wide experience of railway management. Moreover, the *Railway Times* seemed to have suffered a convenient attack of amnesia as, in 1881, it had said:

We have already on two occasions during the process of its formation called attention to the HBR, which we have every reason to believe is going to work such beneficial results for the port of Hull and that part of the coal district of South Yorkshire which is practically without railway accommodation.⁴³

It was not surprising that the debenture holders sought to abrogate Forbes' appointment as manager of the undertaking. In dismissing the application Mr. Justice Chitty said that Forbes' special experience was of the utmost value in supporting the company and protecting its interests when attacked before Parliamentary Committees.⁴⁴ He obviously had a higher regard for Forbes' talents than did the railway press.

Competition continued. The NER reduced its rates for South Yorkshire collieries from 2s. 7d. (13p.) to 2s. 4d. (11½p.) per ton. The HBR was obliged to follow suit with a further reduction of 2d. (1p.) per ton for wagons supplied by collieries.⁴⁵ Traffic revenue increased slowly from £98,148 for the half-year ending

⁴² *Railway Times*, 26th February 1887.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 22nd January 1881.

⁴⁴ *Railway News*, 11th June 1887.

⁴⁵ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 19th August 1887.

30th June 1887 to £111.627 for the half-year ending 31st December 1887 but this was still insufficient to pay the debenture holders and the ordinary shareholders received nothing. By February 1888 the company owed £750,000 to creditors, £2½ million to debenture holders and a considerable amount in Lloyds Bonds. It was becoming obvious that an alliance with a more powerful railway company was essential.⁴⁶

In August 1887 the *Railway Times*, still hostile to the HBR, once more dipped its pen in vitriol for another leading article under the title of ‘The Hull and Barnsley Starveling’:

To judge from the tenor of the half-yearly report of the HBR, the position of affairs in that miserable undertaking would seem to be far more satisfactory to the board than to its proprietors, or indeed, to the reading public generally...It even scorns to name the precise and ridiculous amount of its capital indebtedness. An Act has been obtained for abandoning certain extensions. Would not a winding-up Act not have met the case in a simpler and more efficient manner?⁴⁷

The NER was also suffering from this competition but to a lesser degree than the HBR, since it had very considerable reserves to draw upon. Now that the HBR had its own dock the NER was subject to even more severe rivalry but fought hard to maintain its share of the traffic. The company’s rhetoric was that it was anxious to work harmoniously with its ‘old friend’, the Dock Company and sympathised with it in the losses it had sustained.⁴⁸ Thus, the effect of the HBR’s competitive strategy was to force its rival into ever-closer alliance with the Hull Dock Company.

6. The proposal for the sale of the HBR to the MR.

This state of affairs could not continue indefinitely. In early December 1887 rumours began to circulate that the MR were seeking to take over the HBR on very favourable

⁴⁶ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders’ meeting, 17th February 1888.

⁴⁷ *Railway Times*, 13th August 1887.

⁴⁸ *Railway News*, 6th August 1887.

terms. In fact, Forbes and Swarbrick had been authorised to negotiate.⁴⁹ The MR, to which the HBR connected at its western end, was the only company showing any sign of friendly overtures. Acquisition of the HBR would give the MR an advantageous outlet on the East Coast mirroring the port of Heysham on the West Coast, which it already owned. The offer was to be of £40 MR stock for £100 HBR stock. The *Railway Times* was sceptical. From the outset it suspected that the whole exercise was a ploy to increase the value of HBR shares.⁵⁰

In December 1887 the HBR asked for the Corporation's consent to an arrangement whereby the MR should work the railways and docks of the HBR. The Town Clerk asked for further details. The response was that negotiations were still under way and that final details were not yet known. This gave rise to a suspicion on the part of the Corporation, reinforced by the HBR's conduct in 1887, that certain of the directors did not wish to reveal details of the proposal at this early stage in the belief that this would hamper the Corporation's ability to mount effective opposition. The Corporation, therefore, compromised by agreeing to the deposit of the Bill without prejudice to its being able to refuse consent to the Bill itself.⁵¹

On 21st February 1888 the chairman of the Corporation Parliamentary Committee said that he had been told that details of the HBR and MR agreement would not be disclosed until the filled up Bill was carried into committee, and it would be impossible until the last moment for the Corporation to determine how the Bill might affect the independence of the HBR. The Corporation felt it important to prevent the NER obtaining any clauses which might hinder the MR from properly working and developing the HBR and decided, as a precautionary measure, to petition against the Bill. On 13th March Alderman James Stuart, a director of the HBR and member of the Corporation Parliamentary Committee resigned his seat on that committee, further reinforcing the suspicion that underhand dealings were planned by the HBR. In February the HBR directors visited Derby to see the

⁴⁹ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/8, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1886-1898. 6th December 1887.

⁵⁰ *Railway Times*, 10th December 1887.

⁵¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 321. 1888 Bill to empower HBR to enter into a working agreement with the Midland Railway. Agreement with Midland Railway and associated papers.

locomotive and carriage works of the MR.⁵² This suggested that the practicalities of a working agreement were being considered.

The coal owners were concerned about the effects of the amalgamation on the coal trade at Hull. As a result of the opening of the HBR the rate for coal from South Yorkshire to Hull had dropped from 3s. 2d. (16p.) to 2s. 7d. (13p.) per ton. The promoters of the HBR had held out the inducement of a coal trade to London by rail and sea, a plan which had been carried out to a limited extent in the preceding year and was capable of vast expansion. However, this was unlikely to happen if the MR had control of the coal traffic as it had its own expensive route to London to feed and was likely to increase rates to Hull. The colliery owners had been refused any assurance that the existing rate would not be increased and they decided to oppose the Bill.⁵³

However, in an endeavour to come to an agreement on the question of coal rates, a deputation representing the mine owners visited the directors of the HBR and although received with courtesy they were referred to the directors of the MR. They received a very different reception from the MR and were met with marked coldness. The interview did not last half an hour, the MR directors telling the deputation to ask for what they required in a committee of Parliament. This was poor politics on the part of the MR as the deputation discussed the treatment they had received and agreed that this reinforced their opinion that the proposed transfer of the HBR to the MR should be opposed by every legitimate means.⁵⁴

Nor was this the only opposition. When Corporation finally received the draft working agreement on 6th April 1888 it was not reassured by the provisions it contained.⁵⁵ The clauses incorporated in the Bill for the protection of the NER meant that:

⁵² *Railway Times*, 18th February 1888.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4th February 1888.

⁵⁴ *Railway News*, 31st March 1888.

⁵⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 321, MR and HBR Amalgamation Bill, 1888. The HBR was to be worked by the MR at 58% of gross receipts for the years 1889 and 1890, at 56% for the next two years, and at 55% for 1893 and each succeeding year. The whole of the rolling stock, steam vessels and plant were to be vested in the MR at a cost to be fixed by an arbitrator. The MR would issue 3¼% debenture stock to the extent of £3,210,000 in replacement of the loan capital of the HBR.

continued

1. The NER would obtain full access to Alexandra Dock on equal terms with the MR by means of Sculcoates Junction.
2. One half of traffic (except passengers, coal and coke) arising from the MR system would be carried over NER lines.
3. The NER were to be allowed to take what was described as non-competitive traffic from the HBR by means of Sculcoates Junction. Non-competitive traffic was defined as merchandise and mineral traffic of all descriptions between Alexandra Dock and stations and places on the NER which were not reached by any other line of railway independently of the NER, and traffic between Alexandra Dock and the following collieries: Whitwood, West Riding, Lofthouse, and collieries connected with the Methley Joint Railway. These collieries were presently accessible by the HBR independently of the NER.⁵⁶

According to the Town Clerk the result of this would be the collapse of effective competition. He argued that, in practical terms, a merger would:

1. Permanently shut the HBR line to all places which could not presently be reached independently of the NER and secure to the NER all traffic between Hull and such places.
2. Provide nearly equally between the NER and the HBR all traffic from the MR to Hull. It meant an unlimited amount of traffic could be diverted by the NER from the HBR.
3. Put an end to any hopes of Hull becoming a coal port.
4. Restore the railway monopoly existing prior to the opening of the HBR.
5. Place the Dock Company at the complete mercy of the NER.

Under these circumstances the Corporation would oppose the Bill. To seek justification for this and to galvanise further opposition it intended to submit the

City Archives, Hull, TLP 321. 1888 MR & HBR Agreement. Clauses inserted for the protection of the NER.

⁵⁶ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee papers, December 1887 to April 1888.

agreement and clauses to a meeting of HBR shareholders who would realise that their interests had been totally ignored.⁵⁷

The Chamber of Commerce opposed the Bill and agreed with the Corporation but noted that the members would doubtless have welcomed the MR to Hull if it could have been received without attendant clauses for the protection of the NER.⁵⁸ It passed a resolution that the Chamber of Commerce considered the MR agreement detrimental to the interests of the commercial community of the port and the shareholders of the HBR.⁵⁹

A war of circulars now broke out.⁶⁰ On 11th April the London shareholders issued a circular in support of the Midland agreement and the NER clauses. Two days later a copy of the clauses and the Corporation recommendations was sent to each ordinary shareholder. This noted that all the directors disapproved of the proposed agreement except Smith, Forbes and Cope, the last named being the solicitor for Lucas & Aird, widely known to be creditors and debenture holders. Forbes was, of course, a receiver representing largely debenture holders and creditors of the HBR.⁶¹ On 17th April a circular was issued on behalf of a committee formed for the protection of ordinary shareholders, urging rejection of the proposals. On 20th April the Corporation issued another circular re-stating its opposition to the amalgamation and giving preliminary details of its proposals for a dock and railway trust.

C. H. Wilson now threw his weight behind opposition to the scheme despite earlier support. He had come to the conclusion that in the interests of the shareholders of the HBR and the Hull Dock Company, as well as the town of Hull generally, that the agreement should not be carried out. It is likely that Wilson's expressions of concern were motivated by his calculation of the likely effects of the merger on his business interests.⁶²

⁵⁷ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee papers, December 1887 to April 1888.

⁵⁸ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM, 31st October 1888.

⁵⁹ *Railway Times*, 24th April 1888.

⁶⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 321. 1888 circulars to shareholders.

⁶¹ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee papers, December 1887 to April 1888.

⁶² *Railway Times*, 14th April 1888.

There can be little doubt that Forbes was behind the drafting of the NER clauses. As a businessman he saw the amalgamation with the MR and accommodation with the NER as a way out of the HBR's difficulties which would eventually yield a return on capital, thereby silencing the London faction and the debenture holders. However, for as long as the Corporation held the power of veto over arrangements the HBR could make, it was unlikely any agreement containing the NER clauses would be allowed.

On 25th April the motion for the proposed agreement with the MR was put to a meeting of HBR shareholders. The meeting split along predictable lines. Smith spoke for the Bill including the NER clauses and was seconded by Forbes. John Fisher, the deputy chairman, spoke against the Bill, particularly the NER clauses. H. Williams, a London shareholder, supported the resolution in favour of the Bill but J. T. Woodhouse, representing Hull Corporation, opposed it strongly. He pointed out that it was well known that Wilson's had withdrawn their ships from Alexandra Dock because they disapproved of the agreement and the clauses, and upon them depended the dock's future. He went on to say that the Corporation was considering a dock trust but he could not give details because the scheme had not yet been finally approved by the Corporation.⁶³

As C. H. Wilson had been a keen supporter of the HBR and Alexandra Dock it may seem strange that Wilson's had withdrawn their ships. However, Wilson was a man who put his company's interests first and was prepared to use measures that would harm the HBR if it enabled his wider ends to be met. He would no doubt have supported the amalgamation with the MR but for the NER clauses. There can be little doubt of his influence in the town. His political opponents alleged that: 'Messrs. Wilson's have ruthlessly driven their opponents out of their path...and are masters of the situation. They purchase the great bulk of their stores away from Hull, bringing them to their warehouse. Those stores that must be bought in Hull are procured from a small circle of Radical supporters.'⁶⁴ Despite this type of propaganda Wilson retained his popularity in Hull amongst the electorate and his seat as a Gladstonian Liberal until his elevation to the peerage in 1905.

⁶³ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR meeting, 25th April 1888.

⁶⁴ Central Library, Hull, *Hull Critic*, 28th March 1885.

The opposition of others is less easy to explain. H. Lowenfeld, who had been involved in the issue of circulars, was another leading opponent. He explained that initially he was in favour of the agreement, and the circulars issued by him may have given that impression. But he did not then know that there would be any NER clauses which, in his opinion, wiped out every advantage. This was strange behaviour coming from a speculator such as Lowenfeld with control over capital approaching £1,300,000 in the company, as it would appear to have been in his interests to give support to the proposed amalgamation. It seems unlikely that after issuing three circulars in support of the amalgamation he should be convinced by reading the NER clauses to perform such a *volte-face*, the grounds for which are unclear.

Smith announced that the proposal for amalgamation was rejected. Trotter demanded a poll, to be taken as the shareholders left the meeting and the result declared on 27th April.⁶⁵ This was further adjourned until 7th May due to problems with the allocation of proxy votes. The *Railway Times* reported:

Notwithstanding the lapse of several days since the meeting of the shareholders, a very small proportion of the proxies have been examined, and much valuable time has been wasted in disputation. The promoters of the agreement have objected to the proxies given to Mr. Lowenfeld being cast against the agreement, as they contend that they were obtained on the understanding that they were to be used in favour of it. On the other hand a number of Mr. Trotter's proxies have been objected to by other opposing directors and the result of these and other disputes is practically a deadlock.⁶⁶

Whether or not the confusion was the result of deliberate malpractice or a consequence of managerial ineptitude on the part of the HBR board is not clear At

⁶⁵ *Railway Times*, 28th April 1888.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5th May 1888.

the meeting on 7th May Smith announced the result.⁶⁷ The resolution was not carried and the Amalgamation Bill was withdrawn.⁶⁸

The views of the wider community of railway investors, as represented by the periodical press, found all this fairly predictable. The *Railway News*, in a leading article said:

The sole object of the Hull Corporation and the traders is to secure the benefits of competition, and if they are to have their way, this competition must be continued for their benefit, without question of whether the owners of the railway receive - or are not to receive - one farthing of return on the capital which they have invested.⁶⁹

Subsequently it commented, in a similarly critical vein:

Probably no railway expert knows better than Mr. Swarbrick the positions which the leading companies occupy with respect to each other in this matter of

⁶⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 321, Report of scrutineers.

The results were:

Votes against

	No. of Proxies	Stock (£)	Votes
Mr. Woodhouse's List 1	889	89,240	5,085
Mr. Woodhouse's List 2	<u>329</u>	<u>36,990</u>	<u>2,050</u>
	1,218	126,230	7,135
Mr. Fisher's list	552	129,449	5,297
Mr. Lowenfeld's list	457	617,223	11,370
Present and voting against	<u>665</u>	<u>221,840</u>	<u>6,224</u>
	2,892	1,094,742	30,026

Votes for

Mr. Trotters' Proxies	1,080	1,111,514	22,592
Present and voting for	<u>29</u>	<u>312,420</u>	<u>2,443</u>
	1,109	1,423,934	25,035

⁶⁸ *Railway Times*, 12th May 1888.

⁶⁹ *Railway News*, 14th April 1888.

the traffic to and from the town and port of Hull. That gentlemen may perhaps have satisfied himself and his friends in the Hull Corporation that the GNR, LNWR or LYR would, by taking up the HBR, be willing to risk their present friendly relations with each other, and the loss of advantages resulting from the present interchange of traffic. To the uninformed, however, this appears to be very improbable.⁷⁰

Despite this, two months later it saw future prospects for the HBR:

Taking all things into consideration it will be evident that the HBR, at no distant day, must become a most important line for the conveyance of coal to the chief Humber port, connected as it will be with many of the principal mines of the West Riding of Yorkshire.⁷¹

The *Railway Times* was even less charitable in its views on the Corporation and traders of Hull and particularly of the suggestion by the Corporation, in its circular supporting the dock and railway trust, that it could borrow money at 3%. In a leading article it said:

The Hull Corporation has been freely vaunting its ability to borrow on better terms than the MR, a contention hardly supported by market quotations for its various stocks. Be that as it may, the opposition to the proposed agreement would appear to be largely recruited, as we have said, by personal influence, down to the withdrawal of Messrs. Wilsons' ships from Alexandra Dock, owing to the negotiations. It would be curious to be put in possession of the exact causes that have combined to focus so many various and 'independent' interests in fighting a scheme which, to candid minds, offered the best and only chance of rescuing the HBR undertaking from bankruptcy without damaging the interests of the port of Hull.⁷²

⁷⁰ *Railway News*, 28th April 1888.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 30th June 1888.

⁷² *Railway Times*, 28th April 1888.

The *Railway Times* was perhaps being a little naïve, here. The opposing interests were clearly defined and whilst the motives of some were far from transparent the basic confrontation was between those who would benefit financially from the amalgamation, and those who felt that their wider interests were served by the continuance of competition. Wilson wished to have a foot in both camps, urging amalgamation of the HBR with any company but the NER and being prepared to exert any necessary pressure to achieve his aims, even to the extent of damaging the HBR.

7. New proposals by the Corporation for a Dock and Railway Trust.

The tactics of the HBR were paralleled by the Hull Dock Company which, in December 1887, lodged a Bill for its lease or sale.⁷³ For reasons that should now be clear the Corporation opposed the Bill, ostensibly because it breached parliamentary standing orders.⁷⁴ The proposed Bill allowed the Dock Company to lease or sell the undertaking to the GNR, LYR, MSLR, MR, NER or LNWR. The Corporation felt the Bill would undermine its powers in respect of the HBR and could destroy the competition which the latter had created.

In January 1888 a meeting of the Dock Company directors and the Corporation was held to discuss these concerns. The Corporation steadfastly opposed any diminution of its statutory powers and was not even prepared to say that the exclusion of the NER would make the Bill acceptable. It was prepared, however to see the Dock Company sold to any railway company except the HBR, provided that

⁷³ City Archives. Hull, TLP 321, Bill for the leasing, selling of the undertakings of the Dock Company at Hull.

⁷⁴ Parliamentary Standing Order No. 17 states: On or before 21st December immediately preceding the application for a Bill whereby any express statutory provision then in force for the protection of the owner, lessee or occupier of any property, or for the protection or benefit of any trustee or commissioners, corporation or person specifically named in such provision is sought to be altered or repealed, notice in writing of such Bill and of the intention to repeal such provision, shall be served on every such owner, lessee or occupier, public trustees, or commissioners, corporation, or person.

it was satisfied that such sale did not diminish competition.⁷⁵ The Corporation wrote to the parties concerned proposing the following conditions for its support:

1. That all reference to the HBR be omitted from the Dock Company's Bill.
2. That the Corporation be free to oppose the Bill in both Houses of Parliament.
3. That no objection be taken in either House of Parliament to the *locus standi* of the Corporation.⁷⁶

The Dock Company initially rejected these conditions but subsequently realised the weakness of its position. There followed several weeks of tortuous negotiation, which finally resulted in the Dock Company withdrawing the Bill, the principal reason being the steadfast opposition of the Corporation.⁷⁷

The Corporation's opposition to the Dock Company proposals had been based on its proposals for a dock trust. In June 1888 it put forward its plan to form a trust embracing all the docks, making the HBR the main entry to the port. The 1861 Dock Act had stipulated that the Dock Company should not oppose such a trust, but the Corporation had apparently overlooked the fact that this had been repealed in 1883.

A meeting was held on 14th June 1888 between the Corporation, The Dock Company and the HBR to discuss the amalgamation of all the docks and the HBR to form a trust.⁷⁸ Maxsted, for the Dock Company, accepted in principle the creation of a dock trust. But Smith, for the HBR, said that he could not entertain the possibility of amalgamation of the docks without amalgamation of the railways. It was decided that the parties should consider the possibility of a dock trust by 15th August. The main points were:

⁷⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 321, Minutes of meeting held at Dock Company offices, 6th January 1888.

⁷⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 321, 1888 Proposals for Docks Trust, Minutes of meetings.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

1. The HBR and Dock Company to be amalgamated and to be administered as one body.
2. The Corporation to redeem at par, or on such terms as may be arranged. the debentures, debts and fixed charges of both undertakings.
3. The proportions in which the income from the amalgamated properties to be apportioned between the shareholders to be settled by agreement.
4. The governing body to be of shareholders of the amalgamated companies, members of the Corporation and shipowners and merchants interested in the trade of the port of Hull.

The membership of the governing board would be 18; six would be appointed by the Corporation and six each from the Dock Company and the HBR. The board would be constituted in December 1889 and the companies would be amalgamated on 1st January 1890. The Corporation subsequently put its proposals in the form of a Bill.⁷⁹

The Dock Company directors, after discussing the Corporation's proposals, changed their minds and decided that they were not in favour of the trust and found themselves on the same side as the HBR, who did not want to lose control of such a valuable asset as Alexandra Dock. The South Yorkshire coal owners were also much opposed to the scheme and proposed an amalgamation between the HBR and LNWR in order to continue railway competition, arguing that amalgamation with the Dock Company could place them once again at the mercy of the NER monopoly.⁸⁰ The *Railway Times* was unimpressed by the scheme. Under the title 'The Hull and Barnsley Hocus-Pocus,' it opined, 'Hull Corporation is to promote a Bill whereby the HBR and the Hull Dock Company will amalgamate. Whatever may be gained by the HBR it will be a sorry substitute to the Hull Dock Company for the long-expected NER alliance.'⁸¹

Not surprisingly, the proposal collapsed under the weight of opposition. Whereas the Corporation considered that the Bill was a practicable one, which Parliament would entertain, counsel for the HBR and the Dock Company were of a

⁷⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 321, Hull Docks Amalgamation Bill, 1889.

⁸⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 3rd August 1888.

⁸¹ *Railway Times*, 23rd June 1888.

different opinion. Smith said that he could not contemplate the HBR being made a public highway as was envisaged under the proposals and felt obliged to withdraw from the conference. However, rather than abandon the conference totally he felt it should be adjourned *sine die*.⁸² This was effectively the end of the trust Bill.

The HBR was in still in grave financial difficulty and Smith had to justify the directors' stance to the proprietors. In August 1888 he argued that Parliament would be unlikely to allow the Corporation to become the owners of the railway and that the directors thought that they should wait for another potential buyer to come forward. As the HBR still did not have sufficient revenue to pay the debenture debt it was obvious that the company could not stand alone.⁸³

In the absence of a viable proposal for a dock trust, in 1889, the Dock Company, whose financial position was now becoming grave, introduced a Bill for its lease or transfer to the NER and to allow working arrangements with the HBR.⁸⁴ The Corporation was allowed to subscribe up to £100,000 and the NER would work, maintain and manage the Dock Company's property at Hull from 1st July 1889 in perpetuity. The Bill went before the Lords committee on 27th May 1889. Not surprisingly, the issue of monopoly came to the fore. Henry Tennant, the general manager of the NER, was asked whether, if the Bill were sanctioned by Parliament, would the monopoly of the NER at Hull be re-established in all its intensity? Tennant prevaricated, saying that the NER would once again be the owner of the railways leading to Hull. When pressed he said that that he objected to the word 'monopoly' as applied to the carrying trade, but the NER would be the owner of the railways and docks at Hull. The issue was clearly still of some sensitivity and, not surprisingly, given Parliament's policy towards railway amalgamations, the Lords did not favour the reinstatement of NER control, whether it be called monopoly or not. The Bill was modified by the Committee, all references to the transfer to the NER of the Dock

⁸² *Railway Times*, 25th August 1888.

⁸³ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 24th August 1888.

⁸⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 322, Kingston upon Hull Docks Bill, 1889. A Bill to authorise the Dock Company to make railways and other works and to lease or sell their undertaking to the North Eastern Railway Company and to enter into working arrangements with the Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Company, and for other purposes.

Company and working arrangements with the HBR being struck out, leaving only powers to make a deep water entrance to Albert Dock.⁸⁵

Another attempt by the Dock Company to extricate itself from its financial crisis had failed. Parliament was not yet ready to authorise the transfer of the docks to the NER and it was to be another four years before the Dock Company amalgamated with the NER.

8. Warfare among the HBR shareholders.

As we have seen, the earlier financial difficulties of the HBR had caused splits amongst the proprietors. By 1889 they had split into three camps. One comprised the Hull shareholders, led by the Corporation, who were concerned to preserve the independence of the HBR, with its better freight facilities and cheaper rates at Hull, at almost any cost including forfeiture of dividends. The Hull faction included two nominees of the Corporation appointed to the board as required by the 1880 Act. Opposing was the London faction led by William Trotter, which represented the larger and wealthier shareholders and debenture holders, who were uninterested in the politics of Hull and saw only a lack of return on their investments. Between these factions stood the independent shareholders led by J. W. Addyman of Leeds and T. Garnett of Bradford.

The London faction and their supporters saw amalgamation as the only way forward, but when proposals for a combination with the NER had been put before the board in January 1889, only three of the directors had agreed. These were Smith, Forbes and Cope, the solicitor for Lucas & Aird, the contractors, who were major shareholders and creditors.⁸⁶ Cope saw this as a way of getting some of the HBR's debts to Lucas & Aird paid. Forbes was interested in paying off the money due to debenture holders and had been suspected by the Hull faction of being in favour of an amalgamation with the NER for some time, despite his protestations to the contrary. This suspicion was soon to be confirmed.

⁸⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 322, 1889 Dock Bill Parliamentary Committee minutes.

⁸⁶ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312'8, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1886-1898, 11th January 1889.

Rumours began to circulate of a proposed amalgamation between the NER and the HBR. The railway press was sceptical. In a leading article in February 1889 under the heading 'The Hull and Barnsley and its Suitors' the *Railway Times* said, 'for the NER to plunge at once into an arrangement for guaranteeing a dividend on HBR stock under existing circumstances would be a magnanimous indiscretion of which we hardly think that company capable.'⁸⁷ But it was soon to emerge that there was substance to the rumours.

1889 was a turbulent one for the HBR with numerous meetings of shareholders, some disorderly, marked by increasing acrimony and driven by the need to put the company on a sounder financial basis. In February a Bill of an expansive character was submitted which allowed negotiation with many of the great railway companies. It was announced that Forbes had undertaken to sound out the companies. The MR would not renew its offer, but in the course of negotiations Forbes had come into contact with the NER and found a disposition to bury the hatchet. Amalgamation with the NER was clearly a preferred option.⁸⁸

This did not indicate the true situation as Forbes had been negotiating with Henry Tennant of the NER for some time. Indeed, he had reported the results of these negotiations to the HBR board in December 1888.⁸⁹ A letter dated 13th November from Tennant to Forbes noted that an amalgamation of the NER and HBR would be the best way to advance the trade of Hull. Tennant said, 'I have heard this from several sources, including yourself.'⁹⁰ The negotiations had produced a provisional agreement on the following terms:

1. That the NER should satisfy the debenture holders as regards their principal and interest accrued to the date of transfer, and pay the other creditors of the company and satisfy the holders of any rent charges; in short, that they would clear the ordinary stockholders of all prior encumbrances

⁸⁷ *Railway Times*, 16th February 1889.

⁸⁸ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 13th February 1889.

⁸⁹ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/8, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1886-1898, 7th December 1888.

⁹⁰ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/57, Various correspondence with Forbes, 1888.

2. That the NER should secure to the ordinary stockholders a dividend upon their £3,300,000 of capital, commencing with a small payment and increasing to an assured maximum and beyond that, adding something for the increased prosperity of the NER itself.⁹¹

However, the HBR board had been divided on the desirability of presenting it to the proprietors. Smith, who wanted a financial settlement, had suggested that the proposals be submitted to a Wharnccliffe meeting but the board had voted against him by a majority of two. He said that preventing the proposal being placed before the proprietors was wrong, from which we may conclude that he calculated that the shareholders would accept amalgamation. However, John Fisher, the deputy chairman argued that whatever the terms mentioned in Forbes' letter were, they must remember that the NER required from them an offer for their property on those terms and that would depreciate it for all time. He therefore opposed the proposal.⁹²

By his action in backing the amalgamation with the NER Smith had effectively changed camps and now represented the London shareholders and debenture holders rather than the Hull faction. What the Hull shareholder did not, or would not, accept was the view, now embraced by Smith, that in its existing state the company would never get out of the hands of the receivers. However, the HBR had, on many occasions and in no uncertain terms, already been made aware of the attitude of Hull Corporation towards any proposed amalgamation with the NER.

Smith and a group of shareholders led by Basil Pym, a debenture holder, applied to the Court of Chancery for an order restraining the majority of directors from withdrawing the Bill for the agreement with the NER until the proposals had been placed before the proprietors.

⁹¹ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 13th February 1889.

⁹² *Ibid.*, The HBR board believed that the following scale would be acceptable to the board and proprietors of the NER: In 1890 a dividend upon the ordinary stock of ¼%; in 1891 ½%; in 1892 ¾%; in 1893 1% and in 1894 1½%. After that, in 1895, HBR shareholders would receive, in addition to the 1½% an assured bonus of ¼% or the proportion of ¼% if the NER paid over 6% and up to 7% on their consols and a further bonus of ½% or proportion thereof if the NER paid over 7%. With reference to the debentures and other liabilities the intention would be to extinguish these by the issue of a sufficient quantity of NER 3% debenture stock not exceeding £3,500,000.

The subsequent Wharncliffe meeting to approve the NER Bill was held on 12th March. Smith pointed out that the directors who had tried to prevent the proposals being laid before the proprietors held stock amounting to a mere £10,400. At the meeting Smith proposed a motion approving heads of agreement with the NER and Forbes seconded. All the Hull directors except Trotter were against. The resolution was carried.⁹³ The *Railway Times* was unimpressed, Its view was that, 'the HBR was drifting into utter disorder and a chaos of counsels which may be used to demonstrate that the company is incapable of taking care of itself.'⁹⁴

With the directors and shareholders at loggerheads further meetings were inevitable. On 13th April a special meeting was called at the urging of the London shareholders at which a motion was proposed to reduce the number of directors from 14 to 9. Fisher, Massey, Leetham, Rayment and Stuart were proposed for removal. This was a blatant attempt to depose the Hull directors and was moved by Wildey Wright, a barrister of London, a speculator and possibly a nominee shareholder, who had only acquired his holding on 1st April. As a counter the Town Clerk proposed an amendment that the number of directors be reduced from 14 to 13. A poll was demanded and the meeting was adjourned.⁹⁵ On 28th April the amendment proposed by the Town Clerk was lost. W. A. Massey, one of the Corporation directors, launched a bitter attack on the London Committee. He asked,

What fault had they to find with the Hull directors? Was it because they had served them faithfully to the best of their ability, and had placed thousands of tons of traffic and shipping in the docks and had encouraged the trade of the line; or was it that those persons wanted full control to manipulate affairs as they saw fit? The Hull directors would be prepared to retire in favour of some practical Yorkshiremen, but would decline to be removed in the interests of second debenture holders and in defiance of the interests of the old shareholders.

⁹³ *Railway Times*, 16th March 1889.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 23rd February 1889.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20th April 1889.

The Hull faction did not give up the fight easily. Councillor Poole moved that directors be reduced from 14 to 12 and the meeting was again adjourned.⁹⁶ On 11th May the peacemakers attempted to reconcile the Hull and London factions. Addyman proposed that the company be completely restructured, and he was supported in this by Garnett.⁹⁷ He proposed that there should be five London directors, four from Hull plus Smith, and two to be elected by independent shareholders. A poll was demanded and the meeting was adjourned once more. Despite this in-fighting the voice of reason was at last being heard by the shareholders. It had been recognised that the fundamental problem was that the company was hopelessly under capitalised. The costs of construction had been grossly underestimated and the level of debt was such that the company in its present form had no chance of commercial success. Furthermore, despite their initial enthusiastic gestures, the traders of Hull were not giving sufficient support to the HBR.

Meanwhile the London faction had regrouped. At a meeting in London on 3rd June the London shareholders' committee passed a resolution approving the course adopted by the London Committee, and pledging support. The mover of the resolution had once again been Wildey Wright. On 6th June, at Hull, Forbes made a speech in which he stressed that the motion to dismiss the Hull directors was not a personal issue but was merely reflecting the views of the majority of the proprietors, who lived in a world ruled not by sentiment, but by common sense. He said that the NER agreement had not been opposed on principle, but on price, alleging that Stuart had distinctly told him that if the NER were to pay more then they would all agree that the offer should be accepted. But Leak and Stuart, for the Hull faction, hotly disputed Forbes' assertion. Stuart went on to say that if they were retained on the board, common justice would require them to look at the various proposals from the shareholders' point of view and assist the London Committee in negotiating with various companies. But, as Hull men, they absolutely objected to a sale to the NER or any railway company that would be hampered with the NER clauses, even the

⁹⁶ *Railway Times*, 4th May 1889.

⁹⁷ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 11th May 1889.

MR. Smith again put a resolution for the reduction of the board from fourteen to nine and he and his party voted for the resolution to exclamations of ‘The wreckers!’⁹⁸

The London faction won. At the final meeting in this series on 12th June it was announced that the resolution to reduce the number of directors to nine had been carried. Lucas seconded Wildey Wright in his proposal. Fisher, Stuart, Massey, Rayment and Leetham were removed, thus transferring the power-base to London. Emotions ran high. Smith rose and was hissed and booed so that his words were inaudible. When he finally did get a chance to speak he said that the whole question had been one of extreme difficulty, and if he could have seen his way to retain some of his colleagues who had now been voted off, he would gladly have done so. Counter-proposals were put forward for the removal of Lord Beaumont, Forbes, Cope, Smith, Swarbrick and Trotter. A long discussion followed during which the chairman appealed to the shareholders to allow business to be concluded that day. As a result the motion for the removal of Fisher, Stuart, Massey, Rayment and Leetham was carried and that seeking the removal of Lord Beaumont, Forbes, Cope, Smith, Swarbrick and Trotter was lost.⁹⁹ The *Railway Times* fired off an acerbic comment on the meeting:

The upshot of the meeting was a foregone conclusion. A sham fight was set going under cover of which a majority of those present went through the form of ruling out the names of Smith, Trotter, Cope, Lord Beaumont, Forbes and Swarbrick, but it was at once realised that the resolutions would be necessarily abortive in the presence of an overwhelming majority in a poll against them, and they were accordingly withdrawn, Mr. Fisher and his four colleagues being removed from the board.¹⁰⁰

Despite opposition to the directors’ removal from the Corporation of Hull it was considered futile to oppose the wishes of the London shareholders. The London interests had prised control of the HBR from the Hull shareholders. In fact it made

⁹⁸ *Railway Times*, 8th June 1889.

⁹⁹ *Railway Times*, 15th June 1889.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

little difference to the management of the undertaking, as it had always been dependent on London money and London men raising it. But the pride of Hull was still embodied in the HBR and the Corporation, which had prevented the sale of the HBR to the NER, felt obliged to continue its self-ordained task of the preservation of the independence of the line. It was very aware of its obligation under the 1880 Act.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, it saw its duty as the protection of the railway from the machinations of those who wished to exploit it by any means, or to use it as a lever to achieve more favourable terms from more powerful companies, whose final objectives could be construed as the demise of the independent railway.

9. The end of warfare and the move towards prosperity, 1889-1890.

Having gained control of the company the London shareholders' priority was to restructure its finances. On 11th July the new directors resolved to press for the company's release from the Court of Chancery and to petition Parliament for extra funds of £2,000,000 3½% preference debentures, £1,000,000 to be applied to redemption of the first 4 ½% debentures and the other £1,000,000 to paying off the debts of the company.¹⁰² The Bill was initially opposed by Hull Corporation on the grounds that they had not had time to give it consideration. However after discussions it withdrew opposition and the Bill received the Royal Assent on 12th August. This was to be the start of a new era for the fortunes of the HBR.¹⁰³

Optimism was evident at the half-yearly meeting of 16th August 1889. Smith set the tone of the meeting by remarking that the HBR had 'leapt out of bankruptcy...into independence and prosperity'; £1,500,000 had already been raised in first and £2,000,000 in second debentures. The contractors agreed to take their interest in stock.¹⁰⁴ Trotter had been instrumental in raising the capital.¹⁰⁵ Although

¹⁰¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 135, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1880.

¹⁰² City Archives, Hull, Report to Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee dated 26th June 1889.

¹⁰³ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR half-yearly Meeting, 16th August 1889.

¹⁰⁴ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁵ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 100.

the £2,000,000 was in fact merely the exchange of one security for another, it significantly reduced the company's debt problem. Under the Bill the receivers, Forbes and Swarbrick, would no longer be required to carry out such duties. New capital projects were planned at Alexandra Dock. More importantly, Smith said that there would be no more rate war with the NER and that the HBR would charge the same rates as agreed in the Humber Agreement, although not a party to it.¹⁰⁶ The days of cut-throat competition with the NER were over. Forbes referred to a new era of cordiality towards those who had differed in the past.

The arrangements were agreeable to the Corporation. The Town Clerk praised the work of Fisher in securing amendments to the Bill which safeguarded shareholders [including Hull Corporation] by saving them £49,000 per year. He was pleased to note that there no longer seemed to be a danger that the HBR could be transferred to the NER. However, all was not good news. Wilson's had moved their shipping trade from Alexandra Dock to Dock Company wharves; the HBR had lost 24,500 tons and 44,000 tons had been gained by the Dock Company together with a considerable amount of immigrant traffic.¹⁰⁷

The meeting of 16th August marked a watershed in the relationship between the HBR and NER. It continued to be less than cordial but was never again characterised by the confrontational bitterness of the earlier years. This new attitude of conciliation was not reflected among the traders of Hull, as the *Railway Times* noted:

Odd as it may appear there are some people who are never content unless they are miserable. The Hull traders belong to this class. Unless they can at intervals have a growl about their *bête noir*, the NER, life is to them a blank. If there is one thing a Yorkshireman dislikes more than another it is a blank, so in Hull they keep the NER and monopoly on tap to draw upon during the slack times.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Eastern Morning News*, 10th June 1880.

¹⁰⁷ City Archives, Hull, DXR 7/1, HBR Shareholders' meeting, 16th August 1889.

¹⁰⁸ *Railway Times*, 8th February 1890.

A very significant event occurred on 18th November 1889 when Mr. Justice Chitty made an order releasing HBR from Chancery upon affidavits showing payment of the company's debts.¹⁰⁹

The HBR failed to live up to its title because it did not actually reach Barnsley. In 1889 a Bill was brought forward for a railway, to be called the Barnsley Town Railway, to run from the HBR near Monk Bretton to Eldon Street North in Barnsley where a station would be situated. Among the promoters was W. Trotter. Hull Corporation gave notice that it would petition against the Bill unless protective clauses similar to those in the HBR Act were incorporated, which they were. However, the proposal for the railway sank without trace and the Bill never came before Parliament. Presumably, in view of the HBR's recent history, investors could not be found.¹¹⁰

A particular benefit to the company had been the business acumen of Swarbrick and Forbes, who had been vociferous in their view that the HBR must be run as a business and not as an emblem for Hull, even if this meant control by London proprietors and their money. Against this were the Corporation and Massey, who saw the HBR as a symbol of victory in the fight against monopoly rather than a small provincial railway company, and an under-capitalised one at that. However, none of this prevented the Corporation from persevering with its self-imposed task of guaranteeing the independence of the HBR.

By 1890 the HBR had achieved a measure of maturity with the realisation that if the NER was not to be a friend then at least it was better not to have it as an enemy, and an extremely powerful one at that. Unfortunately for the HBR it still suffered from a lack of friends among other railway companies, but had passed through its crisis years and in the future its affairs were to be ruled more by the head than the heart, to the increasing chagrin of the Corporation. Nevertheless it now stood on the threshold of prosperity.

The next move forward for the HBR was to gain access to the collieries of the South Yorkshire coalfield and deliver the promises made at its inception that it would become a successful carrier of coal. Before examining this phase of the company's

¹⁰⁹ *Railway News*, 23rd November 1889.

¹¹⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 182, Barnsley Town Railway Bill, 1889.

expansion it is necessary to examine the progress of the Hull Dock Company which, unlike the HBR, had little or no chance of remaining an independent company.

CHAPTER 6.

THE HULL DOCK COMPANY, 1889-1893 AND THE HULL DOCK STRIKE, 1893.

1. Introduction.

Having considered the early years of railway competition the thesis will now chart the fortunes of the Dock Company in detail. This chapter will analyse the events leading to the amalgamation of the Dock Company and the NER in 1893. This took place at the same time as a dock strike in Hull, which had repercussions on the political tenor of the town.

A point that was not generally accepted by the railway commentators of the time was that although it was acknowledged that the Dock Company needed the intervention of the NER, the need was reciprocal. The 1880s had seen a great demand for South Yorkshire hard steam coal, which assumed an increasing importance in the trade of the Humber ports. The MSLR and LYR had good connections for this trade at Grimsby and Goole respectively. The MSLR had a particular advantage because the close integration of its railways and shipping at Grimsby was facilitated by its ownership of the port, and the fact that it had operated a steamship fleet since 1864.¹ Furthermore, the LYR together with the ACN was subsidising the working of steamships from Goole from 1865 onwards.² As a consequence, Grimsby and Goole had increased their Dutch traffic at the expense of the unsubsidised shipping lines operating out of Hull. Ownership and control of the Hull Docks, with the exception of Alexandra Dock, would enable the NER to greatly

¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 175a, MSLR Steamboats Bill, 1889.

This Bill was to authorise the MSLR to run steam vessels between Grimsby and the Netherlands, Baltic ports, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Hull Corporation initially opposed the Bill but dropped its opposition in the face of apathy from the shipowners of Hull. In addition the MSLR had challenged the *locus standi* of the Corporation.

² B. F. Duckham, 'Railway Steamship Enterprise: The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway's East Coast Fleet 1904 - 1914', *Business History*, Vol. 10, (1968), p. 46.

improve the efficiency of its operations at the port and provide a stepping stone towards more intimate involvement in steamship operation. an area in which it had fallen behind its major competitors on the east coast.

There were other areas which the NER could have tapped more effectively. The railways had opened up markets for fish in the booming industrial centres of the West Riding and Lancashire.³ The resulting expansion of the fishing trade meant that more quay space was needed at Hull, despite the opening of St. Andrew's Dock in 1883 for the sole use of fishing vessels.⁴ Modernisation of fishing vessels led to a need for facilities for bunkering. Between 1890 and 1892 fish landings had almost doubled.⁵

By 1889 the HBR was past its crisis years and on the way to economic recovery. No such bright future awaited the beleaguered Dock Company which did not have, and could not raise, the capital for much-needed improvements. Its financial situation was becoming increasingly dire. Dividends had dropped from 4 percent in 1884 to $\frac{3}{8}$ percent in 1889.⁶ The NER was a welcome suitor. This chapter shows how and why amalgamation was consummated in 1893.

The transfer of the Hull Dock Company to the NER took place against the background of a major strike at the port. Although the railway companies were only marginally affected by the strike its consideration is relevant to this thesis as it marked a turning point in the political complexion of Hull. The change in municipal politics, which the strike set in train, was to establish a new era of commercial co-operation in the port leading, to a diminution of the *rôle* of the civic authorities. This was to have far-reaching consequences regarding the future relationships between the Corporation and the HBR. It marked the start of an ever-increasing divergence of strategic outlook between them.

³ I. Friel, *Maritime History of Britain and Ireland*. (London, 2003), p.220.

B. Hinchliffe (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway, Vol. 2*, (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. 79

⁴ E. Gillett & K. A. MacMahon, *A History of Hull*, (Hull, 1989), p. 349.

Figure 29. St. Andrew's Dock.

⁵ City Archives, Hull, DPD/12/1/23, Notebook of W. T. Huffam, Dock Company Secretary. Fish landings at Hull increased from 34,787 tons in 1890 to 64,557 tons in 1893. By 1898 they had reached 104,064 tons.

⁶ *Ibid.*

2. Unsuccessful attempts to alleviate the Hull Dock Company crisis.

In 1889 the Hull Dock Company was in a poor financial situation. In a desperate, but unsuccessful, attempt to raise extra revenue it proposed to levy fresh dues on lighters, and other river craft. This infringement of Hull's overside status was vehemently opposed by Chamber of Commerce, which alleged that such tolls would militate against water carriage, as the immense transshipment trade at Hull would be driven elsewhere. The Chamber also opposed any accommodation between the Dock Company and the NER because it would give control of water traffic to a railway company.⁷

However, an alliance with the NER was a possible solution to the Dock Company's problems and, in 1889, it introduced a Bill to authorise a working agreement. But this failed in the Lords mainly due to opposition from Hull Corporation on the grounds that it contained no guarantee that the NER would maintain, extend and improve the docks.⁸

In 1891 the Dock Company tried another tack, proposing to ask the NER to provide capital for dock improvements. However the proposal was defeated by the shareholders who, unlike the directors, thought that the Dock Company could manage alone. But the directors realised that it was imperative that something was done to improve the state of the docks.⁹

Despite the failure of the 1889 Bill further informal approaches were made, in June 1891, to ascertain the attitude of the Corporation to an arrangement between the NER and the Dock Company. At a private function the Mayor, J. T. Woodhouse, said that a condition *sine qua non* of obtaining the sympathy of the Corporation to any such arrangement between the NER, HBR and the Dock Company was that the Corporation should feel assured that other railway companies should be *bona fide* partners in the agreement, sharing the advantages which the arrangement would give to the NER and the Dock Company. If such assurance could be obtained, and if C. H. Wilson, representing the large traders, would co-operate, the Mayor said that he

⁷ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM, 6th November 1889.

⁸ W. W. Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*. (Newton Abbot edition, 1967), p. 709.

⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 327, 1893 Amalgamation Bill papers.

would do all in his power to promote the arrangement.¹⁰ This encouraged the Dock Company to consider amalgamation with the NER.

3. The 1892 Bill for amalgamation with the NER.

By the end of 1891 the Dock Company, estimating that at least £60,000 was required for urgent dock improvements, asked the NER for this sum. The NER was unable to oblige as it lacked statutory powers to spend money on an estate it did not own.¹¹ Rather than spend money piecemeal on dock improvements it was decided, after negotiations, to submit two Bills, one for the amalgamation of the NER and the Dock Company and another for powers to construct a new dock at Marfleet, to the east of Alexandra Dock at a cost of £1million.¹² The Bills would also allow dredging and deepening of the Humber.¹³ As well as rescuing the Dock Company the proposal would provide the port with much needed facilities. The Dock Company was pinning all its hopes on rescue by the NER. At a board meeting in January 1892 the directors noted the huge benefits of access to the railway company's capital.¹⁴ But problems arose during the negotiations. The main one, in the eyes of the NER, was that 'the Dock Company had a rather exalted ideas of the value of the docks.'¹⁵

Reaction in the town was mixed. Reversing its position of 1889, Hull Chamber of Commerce supported the proposal for the amalgamation on the grounds that Hull had at last become a coal port and NER investment in the docks would improve facilities for that trade.¹⁶ But the HBR and the Corporation opposed the Bills. The HBR did not want to see the existing docks fall into the hands of the NER

¹⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 319, Memorandum of a private meeting at the home of Sir Bernhard Samuelson, 56 Princes Gate, London, on 23rd June 1891.

¹¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 320, 1892 Dock Bill papers.

¹² Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 711.

¹³ City Archives, Hull, TLP 176, TLP 320, Bills, 1892. (1). For enabling the NER to make new railways and other works and to acquire additional lands, and for other purposes. (2). For Dock improvements and construction of a new dock.

¹⁴ *Railway Times*, 31st January 1892.

¹⁵ *Railway News*, 6th February 1892. Report of NER half-yearly meeting, 5th February 1892.

¹⁶ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM, 11th November 1892.

and was less than eager to have a dock, larger than Alexandra Dock, constructed alongside it. Its petition stated, *inter alia*, that it had expended £6,850,000 on facilities, a large portion of that expenditure being due to the Dock Company's failure to construct Alexandra Dock, and the HBR had as yet received no satisfactory return for its outlay. Its net revenue was insufficient to pay in full the interest on debenture debt and it had only once, in 1891, been able to declare a dividend on ordinary stock for one half year.¹⁷

Despite its earlier promise of support, the Corporation feared the reinstatement of monopoly and petitioned against the Bills. It argued that if the NER obtained permission to build only the dock, this could prejudice the interests of the Dock Company and the traders of Hull, and if it obtained the amalgamation Bill alone, it might have second thoughts about spending large amounts on a new dock. Furthermore, the location of the new dock would prevent any further eastward extension of Alexandra Dock and generate additional traffic over the level crossings in the town. But the Corporation's stance was that opposition would be withdrawn if the NER and the Dock Company would agree that the Bills should stand or fall together. This was agreed and both Bills went before Parliament.¹⁸

Support for the proposals was widespread. Giving evidence before the Lords Committee on 31st March 1892 John Wolfe Barry, consulting engineer to the NER, said that tinkering with the existing docks would be unsatisfactory and he had recommended a new dock. He refuted the claim that it stopped the HBR extending eastwards by pointing out that an additional 200 acres (81 hectares) were available for eastward extension and that the present Alexandra Dock estate covered only 192 acres (78 hectares). The new dock was to be of 32 acres (13 hectares). Barry also insisted that greater capacity for coal was required.¹⁹

The coal interests supported this argument. Thomas Thompson, the manager of Denaby Main Colliery Company, said that present facilities for coal at the Dock Company's docks were unsuitable. The docks were too shallow and the equipment

¹⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 326, Petition to Lords against Amalgamation Bill by HBR.

¹⁸ City Archives, Hull, TLP 211, Bill for amalgamation of Dock Company and NER. TLP 176, TLP 320, Bill for additional Dock accommodation.

¹⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 176, 1892 NER Bill Parliamentary Committee proceedings.

was obsolete. Although Alexandra Dock had been a great boon to the trade of Hull, the dock was now overcrowded and additional facilities were needed. He was sure that there would be enough coal shipped to Hull for both the HBR and NER. At present the Denaby Company sent all its coal for Hull by means of the MSLR.²⁰

Similarly, Arthur Briggs, managing director of Whitwood Colliery laid the blame for delays and losses solely at the door of the Dock Company, due to the lack of appliances for handling coal. He said that at Humber Dock they could ship five waggons of coal per hour, Albert Dock seven or eight, Victoria Dock five and Alexandra Dock, ten to twelve. But at Goole the ACN could easily handle 200 tons (more than 18 wagons) per hour into its compartment boats, being limited only by the time taken to trim the coal.²¹ The South Yorkshire collieries had benefited considerably from the opening of the HBR. In 1881 these collieries sent some 500,000 tons of coal to Hull whereas in 1891 they had sent 1,240,000 tons. In contrast the West Yorkshire collieries had sent about 470,000 tons in 1881 and the tonnage had remained practically constant. He pointed out that most of the collieries that exported coal were not connected to Alexandra Dock.²²

More criticism of the existing position came from David Davy, chairman of Hickleton Colliery. He said that he did not think that the old docks, even in conjunction with Alexandra Dock, would be sufficient, and the proposed NER dock was an absolute necessity. Arthur Wilson, who had interests in collieries at Shirebrook and Glapwell in Nottinghamshire, admitted that the amount of tonnage being sent to Alexandra Dock had been gradually diminishing while the amount sent

²⁰ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping report, 1902. The Hull shipping list shows the following ships registered at Hull and belonging to the Denaby and Cadeby Colliery Company:

Denaby. 1150 tons Registered 1891. Replaced by vessel also named *Denaby* in 1900.

Firshy. Registered 1891.

Cadeby. 1150 tons. Registered. 1892. Withdrawn in 1901.

Scawsby. 2341 tons. Registered 1893.

Reresby. 2961 tons. Registered 1898.

²¹ H. Crabtree, M. Clarke, (ed.), *Railway on the Water*, (Goole, 1993), pp. 18-37. The ACN pioneered the use of compartment boats formed into trains for the carriage of coal on its waterways.

²² City Archives, Hull, TLP 176, 1892 NER Bill Parliamentary Committee proceedings.

to Hull Dock Company docks had been increasing. Although he did not give a reason for this, it was probably significant that the trend had started about the time of the proposed sale of the HBR to the MR, of which Wilson's had disapproved.²³

The Corporation's evidence produced no surprises. J. T. Woodhouse, appearing for the Corporation, expressed a lack of trust in the HBR board, asserting that if they could sell the undertaking to the NER they would. He argued that it was in the interests of the NER to develop Hull but they had not been wise enough to see it. He went on to say that C. H. Wilson had stated that the Corporation had been the cause of the Dock Company's problems, alleging that the HBR, with the assistance of the Corporation, had ruined the Dock Company, thus forcing it into the hands of the NER. Woodhouse completely rejected these allegations.²⁴

The Lords Committee passed the Bill without any major amendments, but when the Bills came before the Commons Committee there was inadequate time for their consideration. The Bills fell and Parliament was dissolved two days later giving no opportunity to send the Bills back.²⁵ Once again the Dock Company had a lifeline snatched from it at the eleventh hour.

4. The 1893 Bill for amalgamation with the NER.

The fundamental problems of the Dock Company remained and it was no surprise when, in 1893, a Bill was re-introduced for amalgamation only.²⁶ The proposal for the dock at Marfleet had been dropped, according to the NER chairman, 'to try to effect more of an understanding with the HBR.'²⁷ The Corporation immediately sensed that this was yet another scheme to restore NER monopoly and gave notice of strenuous opposition. Negotiations between the Corporation and the NER took place

²³ City Archives, Hull, TLP 176, 1892 NER Bill Parliamentary Committee proceedings.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Railway Times*, 2nd July 1892.

²⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 326, A Bill for the amalgamation of the undertaking of the Dock Company at Kingston upon Hull with the undertaking of the North Eastern Railway and for other purposes. 1893

²⁷ *Railway News*, 11th February 1892. Report of NER Half-yearly Shareholders' Meeting. 10th February 1893.

between 25th January and 2nd March 1893. when they were broken off by the NER.²⁸ The Corporation consequently submitted a petition against the Bill.²⁹

The Corporation's support for 1892 Bills had depended on receiving satisfactory assurances concerning the linkage between the NER takeover and the provision of a new dock. All such safeguards had been removed from the 1893 Bill. The Corporation regarded this as a breach of good faith by the NER, and the first step in the acquisition of the HBR and the revival of NER monopoly or, alternatively, that the NER might collude with the HBR to increase rates. It wished for a re-enactment of the Hull Docks Bill of 1861 under which the Dock Company was obliged to consent to sell to a public trust. However, the Hull Docks Act 1883 had repealed these provisions.³⁰

On 15th March 1893 Hull Corporation submitted a proposal to the NER that various additional clauses be inserted in the Bill to protect the interests of the port. Firstly, that the charges levied by the NER at Hull should not be greater than those being charged by the HBR at Hull or the MSLR at Grimsby. Secondly, the NER must undertake to provide a deep-water dock and thirdly, three Hull Corporation representatives should sit on the board. The NER refused outright.³¹ The Corporation went on to make the well-used allegation that the NER had not encouraged Hull's trade, but had systematically fostered that of rival ports. The local press shared the sentiment. One editorial stressed that the attitude of Hull Corporation, 'must be one of absolute and uncompromising hostility until the port of Hull can be safeguarded from monopoly.'³² Letters to the press fuelled the fires of dispute. Rhetoric was used such as: 'The Dock Company has for six years been trying to barter their estate to the benefit of the NER. When the Bill is thrown out the directors can address themselves to bring up the company to prosperity in a proper and legitimate manner.'³³ Hostility was directed equally towards the NER and the Dock Company. By the time the Bill

²⁸ City Archives, Hull, TLP 326, Telegram from NER dated 2nd March 1893 and letter from Corporation.

²⁹ *Eastern Morning News*, 4th March 1893.

³⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 146, Hull Docks Act, 1883.

³¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 326, NER and Dock Company amalgamation papers.

³² *Eastern Morning News*, 10th March 1893, Editorial.

³³ *Ibid.*, 13th March, 1893, Letter.

came before Parliament the press had worked itself into a frenzy of unfounded allegations such as: 'There are rumours of a secret deal between the HBR and NER which would lead to the restoration of the NER monopoly.'³⁴ One fear was that the HBR would sell out to the NER. A further cause for apprehension was that the NER would increase dock charges making Hull more expensive than Grimsby.³⁵

As a result of pressure from the Corporation, clauses were finally inserted into the Bill to safeguard the interests of the HBR and to regulate dock charges. They stated that the NER must not amalgamate or enter into any joint purse agreement with the HBR without the consent of Hull Corporation, and that the NER must not reduce dock charges below those charged by the HBR at Alexandra Dock. This was an important clause as rate cutting had been extremely injurious to the Dock Company and the HBR. The most important clause of all, however, was that the NER was required to give the HBR notice of any intention to construct a dock to the east of Alexandra Dock and the HBR could require this to be a joint undertaking. In order to ensure that the NER would put the docks in order the Lords imposed a condition that the company would, within seven years, expend at least £500,000 in improving the docks.³⁶

Even so, opposition came from Hull Corporation on the grounds that no new dock was included. It also came from the ACN and others as far away as the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board and the Tyne Commissioners. As lessee and tenant, the ACN had the use of wharves, sheds, dock space and other facilities belonging to the Dock Company, and was afraid of losing these if the docks fell into the hands of the NER. The ACN alleged that it suffered at the hands of the present Dock Company as, when material was transhipped at Hull, the ACN was charged both inward and outward wharfage, whereas the railways paid outward wharfage only. Coal brought to Hull by water was charged wharfage at 6d. (2½p) per ton whereas coal brought by rail was only charged 3d. (1½p.) per ton. The ACN feared that with the docks in the hands of a 'hostile competitor' the situation would worsen and the NER would attempt to divert river traffic to Goole to the advantage of its railway system.

³⁴ *Eastern Morning News*, 1st June 1893, Editorial.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14th March 1893.

³⁶ City Archives, Hull, TLP 326, NER and Dock Company amalgamation papers.

Furthermore, if the Bill were passed, the Humber Agreement, by which Hull traffic was divided among the railway companies, could become a more active instrument for the diversion of traffic from water carriers.³⁷

The Tyne Commissioners and Tyne coal owners and merchants petitioned against extension of the NER's monopoly at ports. They feared that the NER would operate Hull docks at the expense of other portions of their system. Similarly, a petition from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, apparently fearing competition from a revived Hull, alleged that the ownership of docks by railway companies was against the public interest.³⁸

When the Bill came before the Lords the Corporation objected that no new dock was included, despite considerable evidence being given before Parliamentary Committees the previous year that a new dock was a necessity. Furthermore, the Bill would destroy the independence and competitive character of the HBR and prove the first step towards its acquisition by the NER, thus reviving its monopoly in Hull. The Corporation alleged that the present favourable rates and dues were a result of competition by the HBR, and sought that the NER should not be authorised to take any higher dues than at present charged by the Dock Company.³⁹

There was, however, evidence of different points of view in certain commercial circles in the town. The division was between large and small concerns. Thus C. H. Wilson, giving evidence in support of the Bill, focused on the threat posed by the Manchester Ship Canal, begun in 1887 and due to open in 1894. He pointed out that it was nearer to many of the West Riding industrial centres than Hull, and could become a centre for the South Yorkshire coal trade upon which Hull depended. He said that the Dock Company could not provide the facilities required by the port of Hull, and that it was time for the NER and HBR to come to an accommodation to stop the 'foolish competition' between them. An important point of Wilson's evidence was that he said that the Corporation was not mainly composed of large traders, but the Chamber of Commerce was, and it supported the Bill. He thought that the Corporation took a small-minded view of the commercial interests of

³⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 326, NER and Dock Company amalgamation papers.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Parliamentary Committee proceedings on NER and Dock Amalgamation Bill, 1893.

the port and alleged that there was a feeling in Hull among the small ratepayers and labouring classes against amalgamation and in favour of municipalisation of the docks. He asserted that those classes of voters were able to exercise pressure on the Corporation.⁴⁰

Further argument along these lines came from Arthur Wilson. Like his brother, he queried whether the Corporation represented the commercial interests of the port. He said that members from the mercantile community were very few indeed but, in his opinion, several of the legal profession decided the policy of the Corporation. Wilson alleged that the Corporation was heavily influenced by the working class vote which caused it to have, what he called, wild dreams of the municipalisation of the port.⁴¹

Whilst it was true that the Corporation was now more influenced by the working class vote it was a *non sequitur* to tie this in with the municipalisation of the docks. In fact the working class ratepayers had, in the past, thwarted plans for a dock trust in the face of enthusiasm for it by the mercantile community.

The NER had gained an ally in the shape of the South Yorkshire Associated Coal Owners who had changed their stance from previous opposition. West Yorkshire had always enjoyed an advantage in the rate for coal to Hull over South Yorkshire, as the NER served the West Yorkshire district alone, but served South Yorkshire in conjunction with the MSLR, over whose lines the coal passed before it reached the NER at Thorne. Some coal also went *via* the MR to the NER. When the coal owners had opposed the 1892 Bill they had feared that without protection the NER might have given further advantage to West Yorkshire. Although the NER still refused to grant equal mileage rates, an agreement had been reached which, in the judgement of the South Yorkshire Coal Owners, secured their position. If the rates charged by the NER for coal from West Yorkshire to Hull were reduced without a corresponding reduction in the rates charged to South Yorkshire collieries, or if any increase in the rates charged to South Yorkshire was not accompanied by a

⁴⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 326, Parliamentary Committee proceedings on NER and Dock Amalgamation Bill, 1893.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

corresponding increase in the rates charged to West Yorkshire collieries. then any South Yorkshire coal trader who felt aggrieved could appeal to the Railway and Canal Commission. The coal owners felt that competition in the carrying of coal from West Yorkshire by the ACN would force the NER to keep its rates low, but as a safeguard the South Yorkshire Coal Owners wished to maintain the independence of the HBR.⁴²

Other support from coal owners turned on the need for modernisation. David Davy, the manager of Manvers Main Colliery complained about the state of coal handling appliances in the old docks. Their condition was such that there was much breakage of coal with consequent loss of value. It would be expensive to equip the old docks with modern coal-handling equipment, such as that installed at Alexandra Dock and he considered that whereas the Dock Company could not afford it, the NER would be able to bring in the improvements needed.⁴³

The importance of the Bill to the NER was demonstrated when George S. Gibb, the general manager appeared in support. He said that the NER owned the coal facilities at Blyth, Tyne Dock, Newcastle, Dunston, Wearmouth Docks at Sunderland and all the docks at Hartlepool, West Hartlepool and Middlesbrough. It also owned railway access to the Tyne Commissioners' Docks on the Tyne, (the Northumberland Docks) and the Albert Edward Dock and the only rail access to the docks at Sunderland, belonging to the River Wear Commissioners. Despite this, he saw no problem in the acquisition of Hull Docks by the NER although, strictly speaking, it was forbidden by parliamentary standing orders. Gibb said that there was no sinister object whatever in the proposals and there was no intention of destroying the HBR as an independent competitive undertaking as they had a common interest in the growth of the trade of Hull.⁴⁴

Corporation opposition to the Bill was led by J. T. Woodhouse. Having recounted the support for the Bill of the previous year he said that the Corporation objected now because no new dock was included, despite overwhelming evidence

⁴² City Archives, Hull, TLP 326. Parliamentary Committee proceedings on NER and Dock Amalgamation Bill, 1893.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the previous year that a new dock was a necessity. At Goole the proportion of tonnage to dock acreage was 20,000 tons per acre; at Hartlepool, 10,000 tons; at Grimsby, 7,000 tons; whereas at Hull, including Alexandra Dock, it was 23,000 tons per acre. Challenged by the promoters with C. H. Wilson's claim that the Corporation did not represent the larger traders of the port Woodhouse retorted that when people agreed with Mr. Wilson, they were everything. When they did not agree he did not spare his expressions. Woodhouse accused the NER of bad faith in its dealings with Hull, but when pressed, could only give an example dating from 1847 when George Hudson was chairman of the YNMR, well before the formation of the NER.⁴⁵

The promoters argued that the overwhelming majority of the bodies with an interest in the scheme supported it. These included the Dock Company, the HBR, the Humber Conservancy, the Pilotage Committee and Trinity House. The Chamber of Commerce was in favour, subject to conditions concerned mainly with overside charges and other charges on river traffic, but agreement had been reached on this issue. Only the Corporation continued to oppose.⁴⁶

However, it became clear in evidence from Alderman Stuart, the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and deputy chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of Hull Corporation that the Chamber's agreement to the proposal was less than wholehearted. The leading supporters had been F. B. Grotrian and C. H. Wilson, the pair who had conducted the negotiations with the NER. He, personally, opposed the proposed Bill and was unhappy with the Chamber's decision which had been opposed by almost a third of those voting. He stressed that it was not an unconditional acceptance of the proposal.⁴⁷

Such a response made it easy for the promoters' counsel in his closing speech to portray the Corporation as backward looking and detached from the business

⁴⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 326, Parliamentary Committee proceedings on NER and Dock Amalgamation Bill, 1893.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Evidence before Lords Committee, June 1893

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

needs of the port, which it was prepared to sacrifice because of a long standing but groundless suspicion and dislike of the NER.⁴⁸

The Select Committee decided to waive standing orders that prohibited the amalgamation of railway and dock companies. They were no doubt influenced by the fact that the alternative was the bankruptcy of the Dock Company. The Bill received the Royal Assent on 24th August 1893.⁴⁹ Hull Chamber of Commerce expressed satisfaction at the success of the Hull Docks Bill, a change from the equivocation before the Parliamentary Committee two months previously.⁵⁰

Thus did the Dock Company end its financial crises, and the NER now hoped to be able to invest in Hull in order to improve the docks and put its facilities on a par with those of the HBR. However, it had not considered the intransigence of the Corporation and the Humber Conservancy, and its goal of a deep-water dock was not to be realised for more than twenty years.

5. The Hull dock strike, 1893.⁵¹

The transfer of the Dock Company to the NER made it clear that the changing mix of political and commercial interests represented by the Corporation was crucial to that body's policy towards the NER and HBR. In 1893 a major re-alignment took place in the constitution of the Corporation as a result of the Hull Dock strike. It is therefore appropriate to consider the strike and its outcome in some detail.

The root cause of the Hull strike went back to the successful London dock strike of 1889. Directly as a result of that strike the Shipping Federation was founded on 2nd September 1890 to counteract the strike weapon.⁵² It soon represented over 80% of British shipping employers. Ostensibly it existed to secure the freedom to

⁴⁸ City Archives, Hull. TLP 326, Evidence before Lords Committee, June 1893.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Dock Amalgamation Act, 1893.

⁵⁰ *Railway Times*, 1st July 1893.

⁵¹ Some of the material in this section is based on the book by Raymond Brown, *Waterfront Organisation in Hull, 1870-1900*, (University of Hull, 1972), and the dissertation from which the book derives: 'The Labour Movement in Hull, 1870-1900 with special reference to new unionism' (Unpublished MSc Dissertation, University of Hull, 1966).

⁵² L. H. Powell, *Shipping Federation - A History of the First Sixty Years*, (London, 1950), p. 7.

work for union members and non-union workers alike.⁵³ The main plank of its strategy was to open so-called 'Free Labour Bureaux' which allowed unionists and non-unionists alike to register. This gave them preference in employment. If sufficient joined at any particular port the result could lead to the defeat of the local branch of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside & General Labourers' Union. However, the challenge to the union did not stop at that. If the local branches operated a closed shop policy the Shipping Federation was prepared to import, lodge and feed groups of non-union labourers to break the closed shop.

In Hull, however, the relationship between the dockers and ship owners was harmonious. Thus, during the 1889 strike C. H. Wilson supported a suggestion from the Hull Trades Council that the workers should organise. By October 1889 two branches of the National Labour Federation were in existence. In November Ben Tillett's Dock, Wharf, Riverside & General Labourers' Union took over and formed three branches.⁵⁴

⁵³ H. Holman, (revised C. Laws), *The Shipping Federation*, (London, 1900). p. 262.

⁵⁴ D. Bythell, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online, (2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36522>], (March 2005). Benjamin Tillett (1860-1943), trade unionist and politician, was born in Bristol. At thirteen he joined the Royal Navy, and at sixteen became a merchant seaman. After serving a few years, he settled in Bethnal Green, London, where he married Jane Tomkins in 1882. He embarked on an eclectic programme of self-education, and became a teetotaller and an active chapel-goer. He worked as a dock labourer in a tea warehouse.

In 1887, Tillett and some fellow workers formed a Tea Operatives and General Labourers Association in an attempt to prevent a wage reduction, but it remained small and ineffective until the sudden outburst of mass discontent among the waterfront workers of London in August 1889 made it the focus for organisation among the unskilled. The great dock strike turned Ben Tillett overnight into a household name, and brought him into contact with leading London socialists and trade unionists such as John Burns and Tom Mann, and prominent public sympathisers such as Cardinal Manning.

In the euphoria which followed the end of the strike, Tillett launched his union as the Dock, Wharf, Riverside, and General Labourers' Union and proceeded to recruit thousands of unskilled workers from a variety of occupations in different parts of the country. In the general election of 1892 he fought an impressive campaign as Independent Labour candidate at Bradford West, and in 1893 he was present at the Bradford conference which resulted in the establishment of the Independent Labour Party (ILP).

continued

The growth of union membership proceeded rapidly and by December 1890 there was 100% membership at Hull docks. Wilson's attitude was vital to this success. Although many ports adopted the Shipping Federation's free labour registry offices, known as the British Labour Exchange, Hull did not. The Shipping Federation urged Hull shipowners to establish an office but recognised that the shipowners were divided with some, particularly Wilson, saying that such a step was unnecessary as long as the dock workers and employers got along together. Indeed, at a dockers' meeting in November 1891 C. H. Wilson said that Ben Tillett was no longer regarded as an enemy by the employers in the port of Hull. It was clear that Wilson recognised Tillett as a moderate and responsible union leader. Tillett responded by praising Wilson's attitude to his workforce.⁵⁵

Despite this, in December 1890 the Shipping Federation established an office at the premises of Joseph Gregson, the secretary of the Hull Chamber of Commerce and Shipping. In April 1892 it attempted to defeat organised labour in Hull. Coal tippers working for the HBR struck after a refusal of their demands for a pay

However, Tillett's union was in reality very weak. The dock strike in Hull in 1893 destroyed the union's main regional stronghold, and, except in the Bristol Channel ports, its waterfront membership elsewhere dwindled. By 1900, it was essentially a small provincial union. Meanwhile, Tillett lost his place on the TUC parliamentary committee as a result of the revision of the standing orders which conservative union leaders engineered in 1895, and he ceased to be active in the ILP after unsuccessfully contesting Bradford West a second time in the same year.

He was present at the famous meeting on 27 February 1900 which set up the Labour Representation Committee, served for a time on its executive, and stood unsuccessfully as its candidate at Eccles in the 1906 general election. His relations with Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald were never easy.

Tillett's career defies easy categorisation, and simple images - a meteor, a chameleon, or a weathercock - fail to capture its complexity. His long-term impact was more limited than that of most of his leading contemporaries in the labour movement, and his personality was less attractive than that of his lifelong associate, Tom Mann. To his admirers, Tillett was a tireless fighter against injustice and an irrepressible champion of the rights and dignity of the working man. To his opponents (inside as well as outside the movement) he was the ultimate agitator: an irresponsible trouble-maker, vain, mercenary, and unprincipled, who was violent in speech but timid in action. Yet despite the many twists and turns of his career, his reputation as one of the most eloquent and inspiring orators of Labour's pioneer generation remained untarnished.

⁵⁵ *Hull News*, 21st November 1891.

increase. The HBR then employed non-union labour, which led to a demand that all workers on Alexandra Dock should be called out.⁵⁶ The union was taken aback by this militancy on the part of the rank and file. Tillett was sent to negotiate with the HBR, and the dispute was settled. This was seen as a victory for Tillett and the strikers as they obtained considerable increases in rates, many of which were backdated by three months.⁵⁷ But this was not the end of the matter. At around the same time the SS *Isis* arrived at Albert Dock with a Shipping Federation crew to load coal. The Hull dockers 'blacked' the vessel with the result that the Federation sent labourers to Hull. However, they were frustrated by the Hull Dock Company, which refused to allow the imported labourers to use its appliances. This made the work so laborious that most of the free labourers gave up. The Shipping Federation was incensed and immediately took action against the Dock Company in the Queens Bench Division. However, the dispute was settled and the vessel sailed. The court case ended inconclusively, being discharged without costs.⁵⁸

By 1893 Hull was a well organised, unionised port, a situation that was anathema to the Shipping Federation. Although the federation liked to portray itself as an alliance of employers interested only in defending their own businesses its strategy was aggressive towards union labour. Its procedure of opening branches of the British Labour Exchange had worked well in the past and it now felt that it must take advantage of the first opportunity to break union power in Hull. The solidarity between the employers and the union had so far proved a stumbling block.

The opportunity came in February 1893 when some men working a coal barge for Wilson's refused to pay arrears of union dues. This was reported to Wilson's who would, in the past, have deducted the arrears from the men's wages. On this occasion they refused to do so. The reason was probably that pressure had been brought on Wilson by the marine insurance companies within the Shipping

⁵⁶ National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/8, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1886-1898.

On 15th May 1893 an agreement was announced between the HBR and the British Labour Exchange and co-operation with the Shipping Federation was promised. The HBR withdrew from British Labour Exchange on 25th June 1895.

⁵⁷ *Hull News*, 30th April 1892.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14th May 1892.

Federation to confront the unions.⁵⁹ As a result union men refused to unload three of Wilson's coal barges. Wilson's retaliated by insisting that their foremen and shipping clerks must leave the union. Adding to the rising tension was the opening, on 20th March 1893, of the Hull Labour Exchange, which promised employment for all who registered. It immediately registered 68 men.⁶⁰ This was a much greater threat to organised unionism in Hull than a trifling dispute with Wilson's. Furthermore, many dock labourers, who were members of the union, had been unemployed for a considerable time and had accrued arrears of union dues. With the promise of work, it was from these men that the bureau would be likely to successfully recruit. The union was alarmed to the extent that Tillett addressed a meeting of Hull dockers at Alexandra Dock warning against hasty action. A resolution was passed opposing the British Labour Exchange.⁶¹ C. H. Wilson responded by alleging that the arrival of the free labour bureau was a consequence of the unions gaining too much power to the extent that the employers were now at their mercy. This, he claimed, had resulted in a diminution of trade and caused unemployment.⁶²

All hope of moderation disappeared on 3rd April when the leader of the National Amalgamated Seamens' and Firemens' Union and MP for Middlesbrough, Joseph Havelock Wilson, made an inflammatory speech calling on dock workers to bring the trade of the port to a stop and urging gas and other unskilled workers to strike.⁶³ The employers, now united, had been waiting for such an event as this to justify a strategy upon which they had already decided, which was that a short, sharp contest with labour would clear the air and be best for all concerned, provided of

⁵⁹ C. Edwards, 'The Hull Shipping Dispute', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 10, (June 1893), p. 347.

⁶⁰ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM, 15th November 1893.

⁶¹ *Hull Daily News*, 23rd March 1893.

⁶² *Eastern Morning News*, 28th March 1893.

⁶³ J. Havelock Wilson, *My Stormy Voyage Through Life*, (Manchester, 1925), p. 274. It is interesting to note that in Havelock Wilson's autobiography he describes himself as well meaning but hailed 'the villain of the piece.' The book was published more than thirty years after the Hull dock strike by which time Havelock Wilson had become very much an establishment figure.

Friel, *Maritime History of Britain and Ireland*, p. 208.

course that the employers emerged victorious.⁶⁴ As a former supporter of labour Wilson's attitude was crucial to this strategy. On 4th April the stakes were further raised when C. H. Wilson decided that his clerks and foremen should not belong to any union.⁶⁵

The dispute quickly escalated. On the following day 400 free labourers arrived in Hull and there were ugly incidents when union members threw stones and a free labourer discharged a revolver. The authorities panicked. On 6th April the Watch Committee authorised the Chief Constable do what he considered advisable to immediately strengthen of the police force. The result was widely perceived as an over-reaction. 160 Royal Scots and 90 Dragoons arrived in the town and two gunboats appeared in the Humber.⁶⁶ Many questioned this level of military force. The *Eastern Morning News*, quoting from the *London Daily News* called it, 'this preposterous display of force in a town, which is as quiet as a Sunday congregation in church.'⁶⁷

By now the dispute had taken on a high national profile. Keir Hardie, the MP for the West Ham South constituency in London's industrial East End and the country's first socialist MP, questioned Asquith, the Home Secretary, in Parliament about the military presence in Hull. The latter said that the military, gunboats and police had been sent at the request of Hull Corporation and Magistrates on the recommendation of the Secretary of State. This action on the part of a Liberal Government came as an unpleasant surprise to many working class Liberal supporters and was a major factor in the securing of two Independent Labour Party seats in Hull in autumn 1893, ultimately affecting the balance of power in the town council.⁶⁸

Events now moved rapidly to an all-out strike which ultimately was to lead to the collapse of the closed shop. A ballot of unionist dockers on 6th April showed 95% support for the strike but their leaders remained cautious and moderate. However,

⁶⁴ *Hull Daily News*, 4th April 1893.

⁶⁵ Edwards, 'The Hull Shipping Dispute', p. 348.

⁶⁶ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Watch Committee Minutes, 6th April 1893.

⁶⁷ *Eastern Morning News*, 11th April 1893.

⁶⁸ Brown, *Waterfront Organisation in Hull, 1870-1900*, p.6.

Havelock Wilson was doing all he could to inflame the situation by promising nation-wide strikes in support of the Hull dockers. On 7th April he made another inflammatory speech at the end of which Shipping Federation cards and an effigy of C. H. Wilson were burned. Wilson was forced into a corner by these activities and any concessions on his part could have been construed as giving in to threats, particularly by his fellow ship-owners in the Shipping Federation who suspected his lack of resolve. It had become clear that many of the employers would accept nothing but the complete capitulation of the strikers and the end of unionised labour in Hull. By 11th April there were approximately 1,000 free labourers in the port. Tillet had originally agreed to work the ships of owners not involved in the dispute but the intervention of Havelock Wilson ended this arrangement and the dispute was extended to cover every ship in the port.⁶⁹

On the following day the Chief Constable was authorised to obtain 50 additional Constables. Local politicians were split. Councillor Millington, a member of the Hull Trades Council, proposed a resolution regretting the importation of the military into the town. The resolution was seconded by Councillor Pool but was narrowly defeated. The Watch Committee received a letter from the Hull Trades and Labour Council deploring the use of military force but took no action.⁷⁰ On 17th April the Corporation passed a resolution that the situation was more serious than ever, and the withdrawal of either the gunboats or the cavalry would result in the most disastrous consequences.⁷¹

Increased support for the strikers came as a result of a tactical blunder by the Shipping Federation. On 11th April its executive council met at York to consider the situation in Hull and a deputation, including C. H. Wilson, was heard. The council unanimously passed a resolution calling off all discussion with the union leaders.⁷² This was seen as completely undermining the principle that disputes must be resolved by discussion. If accepted, it would have diminished the power of unions to

⁶⁹ Brown, *Waterfront Organisation in Hull, 1870-1900*, p.74.

⁷⁰ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Watch Committee Minutes, 13th April 1893.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *The Times*, 12th April 1893.

the point of complete impotence. Its direct consequence was an upsurge in financial and political support for the strikers that strengthened their resolve.

This support came from many quarters. Hull Trades Council organised the collection of some £12,000 and financial support was received from the Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers. The strikers were given a ticket worth 6s. (30p.) per week and their credit at local shops was guaranteed by the union. These appeals, together with other appeals by MPs brought in so much that at the end of the strike there was a shortfall in union funds of only £750.⁷³

The Federated Trade Unions of Hull were, however, prepared to compromise. On 17th April they announced that they would accept the Free Labour Exchange if it were controlled by some independent body, such as the Board of Trade, thus ensuring that non-union labour was not given preference. They were also prepared to accept that foremen and clerks need not belong to the union. But the employers rejected these proposals out of hand. Deadlock had been reached.⁷⁴

The escalation of violence on both sides generated increasing concern at local and national level. On 8th May the town magistrates passed a resolution which concluded that the main points of difference had been conceded, and only matters of detail remained unsettled, and called upon representatives of both sides to meet and endeavour to arrive at an honourable settlement.⁷⁵ The Watch Committee endorsed the resolution and the Town Clerk forwarded copies to the Dockers' Union and the Shipping Federation.

Efforts were also being made in Parliament to end the dispute. A draft agreement had been prepared by A. J. Mundella, the President of the Board of Trade, C. H. Wilson, MP, representing the Hull ship owners, Joseph Havelock Wilson, MP, John Burns, MP, and Tom Mann, President of the General Labourers' Union. (Burns and Mann had been, together with Ben Tillett, the leaders of the London Dock strike of 1889).⁷⁶ Havelock Wilson was in favour of a general strike to bring the issue to a head, but Burns counselled against such action. He considered it too great a risk to

⁷³ Gillett & MacMahon, *A History of Hull*, p. 409.

⁷⁴ *Hull News*, 17th April 1893.

⁷⁵ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Watch Committee Minutes, 9th May 1893.

⁷⁶ C. Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann, 1865-1941- The Challenges of Labour*, (Oxford, 1991), p. 85.

the trade union movement to take such action on so small an issue. Counsels of moderation prevailed. The main points of the draft agreement were very similar to those produced by the Trades Unions of Hull on 17th April, with the exception of a stipulation that Labour Exchange Registry and Shipping Federation tickets should not be forced on the men, and registration with any association should not be a condition for employment or preference.⁷⁷

The Shipping Federation met the proposals with outright hostility. It was reported that the Federation had rebuked C. H. Wilson for his involvement in the draft agreement as a breach of the resolution passed at York on 11th April.⁷⁸ The Federation's opposition was seen by those outside it as unnecessarily prolonging the dispute. The amount of damage being done to the trade of Hull was clear. The tonnage shipped from Hull in 1892 had been 66,738 whereas that for 1893 was 12,827, thus demolishing the claims of the Shipping Federation that free labour would provide a speed and economy superior to that of the closed shop.⁷⁹ The published figures proved what had been evident to the bulk of the traders of Hull for some time, and forced the shipowners to recognise the damage that their stance was causing to the commercial community generally.

The growing opposition of commercial interests to the dispute helped to create a mood for settlement. On 10th May Tom Mann arrived in Hull and immediately began talks with representatives of both sides. Mann succeeded where Tillett had failed. He managed to obtain the agreement of the shipowners that the Free Labour Exchange should not give preference of employment to non-union labour. He went on to address a meeting of 10,000 union members and obtained an agreement from them to end the dispute if the employers agreed that the Labour Bureaux would not be used as a device by the Shipping Federation to weaken the trade union movement. It was reported on 11th May that the Shipping Federation had practically agreed to the terms.⁸⁰ On 12th May a deputation of the Hull employers met the Shipping Federation and stated that the men on strike in Hull were prepared to

⁷⁷ *The Times*, 18th April 1893.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 19th April 1893.

⁷⁹ *Hull Daily News*, 15th May 1893.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11th May 1893.

accept the Federation's York resolution with the addition of the following: 'That neither registration with the British Labour Exchange nor membership of any union shall carry with it either preference or prejudice with regard to any employment.' The conditions were accepted.⁸¹ In terms of the dispute narrowly conceived, the result was thus a compromise. The meeting between the two sides in the dispute to thrash out the final agreement was held on 18th May. The strike was called off and work was to start the next day. It was significant that C. H. Wilson did not appear among the negotiators for the employers' side, leaving that task to his brother Arthur. On 20th May the Lincolnshire, West Riding and Metropolitan police were recalled. Ten days later the York and Leeds police were sent home.

Although the employers tried to portray the outcome a victory for the Shipping Federation, they had been forced to concede a key point which C. H. Wilson had conceded on 17th April for which he had been castigated, and which Ben Tillett, for the union, had conceded even earlier. Although the unions also chose to represent the result as a victory union representation in Hull had been much weakened. The union had to forego its closed shop, allow the foremen and clerks to leave its ranks and suffer the presence of the Free Labour Bureaux.

6. The aftermath of the dock strike.

The strike marked the beginning of a collapse of morale among unionised dockworkers and the transformation of Hull from a closed shop to a major centre for free labour. The Shipping Federation claimed that almost 7,000 free labourers had been imported into Hull.⁸² Immediately after the strike most of these left. A more long-term significance of the strike was that it marked a sharpening of class difference in Hull with consequent changes in the Corporation, which was to be reflected in its relationship with the HBR.

C. H. Wilson provides a good example of how the dispute sharpened class distinctions. In an interview in the *Westminster Gazette*, which was quoted in the *Hull Daily News*, he attempted to explain his position in the dispute. He said that the

⁸¹ *The Times*, 13th May 1893.

⁸² H. Holman, (revised Laws). *The Shipping Federation*, p. 268.

dispute had been against his principles as there was no man in England who had a deeper and truer sympathy with trade unionism. He acknowledged that the other employers had brought pressure to bear on him when he said that it had never been his wish to destroy the dockers' union, although he had been compelled to co-operate with those who had such a wish.⁸³ If Wilson were to be believed, then he had certainly started out as the friend of the trades unions just as he had started out as a friend of the HBR. In each case his friendship cooled rapidly when he felt his business interests threatened. Wilson then attempted to regain his position as the local philanthropist by distributing half-crowns to the unemployed.⁸⁴ However the real strategy of the Shipping Federation was revealed when it was disclosed that Wilson's, together with the NER and HBR dock operations, were giving preference in employment to non-unionists in clear breach of the agreement of 18th May. The Trades and Labour Council asked the Mayor to intervene and give assistance to a further struggle with the employers and the Shipping Federation, but the men had no stomach for another dispute. They rushed to the Free Labour Bureaux in order to obtain tickets as they realised that without them there was little chance of work. By 8th June more than 2,000 had registered.⁸⁵

The strike proved invaluable to the Shipping Federation as it enabled it to smash the closed shop at Hull. The National Free Labour Association in Hull had a larger membership than Tillett's Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union until after the turn of the twentieth century. The union stalwarts felt they had been betrayed. Havelock Wilson recalled that he had a very mixed reception at Hull, many being incensed at what they considered the weak-kneed policy of their leaders.⁸⁶ Tom Mann observed that the union's tactics had played into the hands of the employers and the Shipping Federation. He noted that within five weeks of the end of the strike The Federation and its free labour tickets had triumphed.⁸⁷ The Federation itself endorsed this view. After the strike it noted:

⁸³ *Hull Daily News*, 15th May 1893.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 30th May 1893.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 8th June 1893.

⁸⁶ Havelock Wilson, *My Stormy Voyage Through Life*, p. 275.

⁸⁷ Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann, 1865-1941- The Challenges of Labour*, p. 85.

The strike collapsed by the complete acceptance on the part of the men of the terms laid down by the employers at the commencement of the strike - terms which involved a full recognition of the Free Labour Office, the abandonment on the part of the dockers' union of their claims that none but members of the union should be employed at the docks, and an admission of the full right of an employer to engage any master stevedore he chose, whether connected with the union or not.⁸⁸

Thus did the Shipping Federation define the victory of the employers and the crushing of unionised labour in the port of Hull. The strike made little or no difference to the railway companies directly but it was to have far reaching consequences for the catalyst of their relationship, the Corporation of Hull. The dock strike may be regarded as the defining point whence the relationship between the HBR and the NER became increasingly cordial and that between the Corporation and the HBR increasingly sour.

⁸⁸ Holman, (revised Laws), *The Shipping Federation*, p. 267.

CHAPTER 7.

THE RISE OF HULL AS A COAL PORT, 1893-1916.

1. Introduction.

The period from the NER's take over of the Dock Company in 1893 to the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 was one of great expansion for Hull in which it became a major coal port.¹ The HBR struggled in competition with the NER as a carrier of general freight and only came into its own when it had established better links to the South Yorkshire collieries.² This was not achieved without difficulty, but by the end of the century the HBR was a successful carrier of coal, to the extent that its facilities at Alexandra Dock were proving inadequate.

The rise of Hull as a coal port was, to a large extent, dependent on access to the South Yorkshire coalfield, the development of which progressed in two stages. The first was the opening of collieries in the Barnsley and Doncaster areas but, as coal extraction methods became more sophisticated, the second stage saw new and deeper collieries being sunk to exploit the reserves in the concealed coalfield between Rotherham and Bawtry in the extreme south of Yorkshire. The NER realised that it could not allow itself to fall behind the HBR in the race to reach this coal and this resulted in a proliferation of joint lines to provide feeders for the coal to Hull. This chapter considers the politics leading to the construction of this network and analyses their operation. Although superficially, joint lines may be seen as an economic way of working they were in fact wasteful, given the need to legislate for agreements, and administration by committees drawn from the directors of the joint companies. Biddle argues that they were a significant factor in the high cost of

¹ H. E. C. Newham, *Hull as a Coal Port*, (Hull 1913), pp. 15-24.

² B. J. Turton, 'British Railway Traffic in 1921', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, No. 48, (December 1969), p. 158. The relative sizes of the NER & HBR are indicated by the fact that in 1921 the NER carried 22,406,000 tons of coal (44% of its total freight), whereas the HBR carried 1,190,000 tons (61% of its total freight). Coal as percentage of total freight over the whole railway system was 59%.

running railways in Britain.³ Indeed, none of the joint railways considered in this study was particularly successful. However, it will be argued that this was mainly due to factors outside the control of the railway companies, principally the decline in coal exports after 1913.

As this chapter shows, it was in the new combinations of companies to develop these joint lines that long-standing politics and jealousies changed. After 1900 the cordial relationship between the GCR and the NER cooled, the latter looking to the LYR for support and the former seeking alliance with the MR.⁴ However, unlike earlier times, relations between the NER and HBR remained relatively cordial despite the efforts of Hull Corporation to obstruct co-operation between them.

2. The South Yorkshire Junction Railway.

The first major coal railway serving Hull was the South Yorkshire Junction Railway, (SYJR) authorised in 1890.⁵ It was promoted by colliery interests. The first directors were John Buckingham Pope, the chairman of the Denaby Colliery Company, and three others, all representing colliery interests.⁶ The original proposals were for a network of railways based on a junction near Sprotbrough on the outskirts of Doncaster. The Commons select committee decided that the scheme was too grandiose and threw out all the proposals with the exception of the railways from Wrangbrook to Denaby and from Sprotbrough to Bessacar. In the event only the line from Wrangbrook to Denaby was built.⁷ It ran from the HBR at Wrangbrook Junction to connect with the newly developed Cadeby and Denaby collieries near Conisbrough.⁸ A connection to the MSLR at Denaby was authorised but was not

³ J. Simmons & G. Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, (Oxford, 1997), p.238.

⁴ G. Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 3*, (London, 1965), p. 205.

⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 192, South Yorkshire Junction Railway Act, 1892.

⁶ Pope had been a member of the founding committee of the HBR. (See Chapter 4.)

⁷ Doncaster Archives, BT 356/5276, Proposals for South Yorkshire Junction Railway, 1889.

⁸ City Archives Hull, TLP 192, South Yorkshire Junction Railway Act, 1890.

Figure 23. The South Yorkshire Joint Railway and connecting branches.

made, the SYJR terminating at buffer stops a short distance from the MSLR line.⁹ Barnett suggests that this was because of the colliery owners' dissatisfaction with the service proposed by the MSLR.¹⁰ This is borne out by the fact that Pope, in his treatise *Railway Rates and Radical Rule*, had accused the MSLR of charging excessive rates to a colliery which he did not name, but from the location given it may be inferred that it was Denaby.¹¹ The Denaby Colliery Company had been in dispute with the MSLR over the cost of coal carriage and had challenged the railway's right to charge the same rate from Denaby as from more distant collieries. The case dragged on until 1886 when the colliery company lost.¹²

The proposed line was widely seen as part of the HBR system and in February 1890 Hull Corporation wished to place protective clauses in the SYJR Bill. The SYJR solicitor noted rather sourly that he thought the Corporation would welcome the new railway bringing coal traffic to the HBR, rather than raise objections.¹³ The Corporation was beaten and withdrew.¹⁴ The close connection between the HBR and SYJR was confirmed by an Agreement dated 27th June 1891 under which the HBR was to operate the SYJR for 50% of the coal receipts.¹⁵ The line opened on 8th September 1894. It was expected to turn the HBR into a major mover of coal. But this was not to prove easy. Pope had nominally supported the HBR since its inception, but he was not a man to do any financial favours and had

⁹ B. Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 2*, (Sheffield, 1980), p. 23. A connection was eventually made from the GCR line at Lowfield Junction, Conisbrough, to the SYJR in 1908. The GCR used the SYJR for access to Brodsworth Colliery.

¹⁰ A. L. Barnett, *The Railways of the South Yorkshire Coalfield*, (Railway Correspondence and Travel Society, 1984), p. 11.

¹¹ J. B. Pope, *Railway Rates and Radical Rule*, (London, 1884), p. 28.

¹² D. Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King. The Life and Times of Sir Edward Watkin 1819-1901*, (Cardiff, 2002), p. 485.

¹³ City Archives Hull, TLP 192, South Yorkshire Junction Railway. File of correspondence. Letter of 8th February 1890 from F. Parker Rhodes, solicitor for SYJR, to Hull Corporation. Newham, *Hull as a Coal Port*, p. 32. F. Parker Rhodes was also the secretary of the South Yorkshire Coal Owners Association.

¹⁴ City Archives Hull, TLP 192, South Yorkshire Junction Railway. File of correspondence.

¹⁵ City Archives Hull, TLP 200, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Company and South Yorkshire Junction Railway Company Act, 1891.

driven a hard bargain over rates. His contract with the HBR was for 310,000 tons of coal annually but it was anticipated that up to ½ million tons of coal would eventually pass along the SYJR each year. However the *Railway Times* was less than impressed. Recording an increase of just £315 in the first three weeks of business compared with the same period in the previous year, it argued that: 'either the HBR is doing very badly indeed or the vaunted Denaby connection is proving a delusion and a sham'.¹⁶ This was perhaps a little harsh as three weeks was too short a period in which to assess the future prospects of the line.

The 1891 working agreement gave the HBR a seat on the SYJR board and Pope wanted this to be a reciprocal arrangement. However, the relationship between the two companies was not as close as Pope desired and the HBR would not accede. This thwarting of his ambition frustrated Pope and, although from time to time he denied it, his treatment by the HBR rankled and caused personal animosity towards its directors. His background as a barrister seemed to give him an appetite for litigation. Railways ran deep in his politics. He was a fervent advocate of free trade and, in his treatise *Railway Rates and Radical Rule*, had castigated railway companies for their rates policy, particularly the charging of preferential rates.¹⁷ He had stood as Conservative candidate for West Hull in the 1880 general election against the Liberal candidate C. H. Wilson.¹⁸ Railways had been a key issue here. Pope had been a supporter of the HBR scheme and it was widely thought in Hull that Wilson who, until December 1879, had been a director of the NER, was opposed to it. However, Wilson had come out in support of the HBR with the result that Pope had been defeated and Wilson had been elected. Pope's touchiness regarding the HBR may therefore be readily understood.

In 1895 Pope, by now the chairman of the SYJR, attacked the board of the HBR in a pamphlet, accusing them of mismanagement, neglect and incompetence. He proposed a scheme for a dock at Great Heck, where the HBR crossed the ACN Goole-Knottingley canal, at which point the coal would be transferred to water. The HBR refused to consider this scheme as it would have resulted in the use of only

¹⁶ *Railway Times*, 20th September 1894.

¹⁷ Pope, *Railway Rates and Radical Rule*, pp. 11-37.

¹⁸ G. R. Park, *Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire*, (Hull, 1886), p. 111.

some 7 miles (11 km.) of the HBR main line and would have greatly benefited the ACN and the port of Goole at the expense of Hull.¹⁹ The *Railway Times* described Pope as 'a man who does not conceal his opinion with regard to the incompetence of the present administration; a man of influence and a good customer who has been snubbed by the HBR.'²⁰ Pope was joined in his attack by R. P. Houston, the owner of the Houston Shipping Line of Liverpool, who claimed to have £½ million invested in railway ventures.²¹ Houston castigated the HBR's lack of coal facilities in Hull at Cannon Street.²² The attacks continued when in a further article Pope described the HBR board as 'a bucket-shop group who had manipulated HBR stock so successfully some years ago.' Personal attacks on each of the board members followed.²³ By this time, of course the HBR was firmly under the control of financial interests without particularly strong connections to Hull so these attacks may be interpreted as a continuation of the geographically based divisions of the late 1880s.

In February 1895 Forbes reminded the shareholders of what had happened in the past when they indulged in such conflict. In an attempt to reconcile the parties a Committee of Inquiry was formed to look into the past and present policy and management of the HBR. The committee consisted of six; Houston and two associates, representing the colliery interests, and three independent shareholders to be appointed by the board, but Houston and his associates took exception to this and refused to sit on the committee, describing the exercise as a 'bogus investigation.' Pope also refused to give evidence before the committee.²⁴ The chairman was Henry Lambert, the general manager of the Great Western Railway, and the secretary was R. Dawe-Hill, the Town Clerk of Hull. There were indications of sharp practice. It

¹⁹ K. Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. 157.

²⁰ *Railway Times*, 21st January 1895.

²¹ S. Swiggum & M. Kohli, *The Ships List*, (2004),

[<http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/houston.html>], (October 2004).

R. P. Houston & Company was formed in 1880 in Liverpool as to carry frozen meat from the Argentine to the UK. The company commenced passenger operations in 1885. In 1898 the British & South American Steam Navigation Company was formed and all existing ships transferred to it.

²² *Railway Times*, 26th January 1895.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2nd February 1895.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25th May 1895.

was revealed during the course of the inquiry that a Mr. Ganderton, who represented himself as in the employ of the Cadeby and Denaby Colliery Company, was canvassing traders in Hull in order to obtain complaints against the HBR to lay before the committee of enquiry. A letter of 5th April accused two shareholders who had qualified just before the half-yearly meeting of being spirited up by a trader to join agitation which would bring substantial profits both to the trader and themselves.²⁵

The committee's findings were placed before a meeting on 28th May. It found that the directors of the HBR had acted wisely by discouraging the scheme for a connection to the ACN at Heck, as this would be very likely to lead to a price war between the railway and canal companies. Furthermore, the committee implicitly attacked Pope's credibility. Under the Great Heck proposal he had said he could send 1½ million tons of coal yearly from Denaby. This would have meant raising 5,000 tons per day and no colliery in the UK raised anything like that amount. In fact, from 1st January to 1st May 1895 Pope's colliery had only sent 40,768 tons, although the contract with the HBR allowed 103,000 tons in the same period. The committee considered that Pope was unable to fulfil his expectations, and pointed out that there were already twenty-one coal merchants using Cannon Street and fourteen other firms obtaining consignments of coal from the station. It concluded, 'the present management should not be interfered with and should be allowed to continue its work without being harassed, and as due economies are practised, better results might be confidently expected.'²⁶ Such an unequivocal level of support for the HBR's management was not likely to placate Pope and his associates. Houston, proposed a motion rejecting the report, adding that he did not desire a seat on the HBR board, nor did any friend of his. We may dismiss his claim as disingenuous. The *Railway News* had little time for Pope's machinations. It opined:

The Committee of Inquiry into the affairs of the HBR submitted its report, completely disposing of the charges of mismanagement put forward by certain agitators, some at least of whom were more interested as coal owners in securing

²⁵ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p.111.

²⁶ *Railway News*, 1st June 1895.

the carriage of their traffic at very low rates than in the net earnings of the undertakings as shareholders. The proposals of Mr. Buckingham Pope, the coal-master, who wants to get his traffic carried to a port of shipment at reduced rates, are disposed of in a few trenchant paragraphs which clearly indicate the nature of that gentleman's interest in the agitation for a change of management.²⁷

Pope's response was to abandon the scheme for the dock at Heck, and to use the South Yorkshire and Sheffield Navigation, owned by the MSLR, which passed close to his collieries. This did have some effect on the HBR as by February 1896 there was a deficiency of 127,665 tons sent over the HBR by the colliery company.²⁸

The attacks by Pope irritated the HBR board. In August 1895 the chairman said that he did not find fault with the action of Houston and his friends but what he did object to was the attack by Pope, which was clearly motivated by the business interests of colliery owners. The HBR had recovered from Pope's bite and he did not suppose they would hear very much more of his bark or his bite.²⁹

He was wrong. The Lambert Report did not deter Pope and his allies in the railway press. The *Railway Times*, in an editorial, described the Lambert Report as a 'whitewashing report.'³⁰ Sniping continued, directed particularly at Forbes. Pope issued a pamphlet which was described by the HBR board as an 'unfair and libellous attack on Forbes.' Pope stated, erroneously, that Forbes did not receive fees as a director of the HBR but that his remuneration was solely in respect of unspecified 'extras.' He said that the sale of the HBR to the NER would 'constitute an extra of portentous dimensions.' Pope alleged that the sale of the HBR emanated entirely from Forbes who, 'without consulting his colleagues had entered into negotiations and arranged a scheme with the NER for the sale of the line, and the board were merely summoned by telegraph to confirm Mr. Forbes' arrangement.' Pope went on to allege that Forbes was all-powerful and that the other directors were little better

²⁷ *Railway News*, 1st June 1895.

²⁸ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p. 112.

²⁹ *Railway News*, 17th August 1895.

³⁰ *Railway Times*, 11th January 1896.

than dummies.³¹ The *Railway Times* considered that Forbes should not shelter behind the board's claim that 'the investigations of an impartial and independent committee' had shown that Pope's allegations were baseless.³²

In 1895 Smith, the prime mover behind the HBR, resigned from the board. John Fisher, the deputy chairman took his place. Smith also resigned his seat on the SYJR, his place being taken by Charles Lucas.³³ Smith was knighted, and appointed as Governor of Western Australia. His career from that point on was far from distinguished and he took no further part in the affairs of the HBR.³⁴

³¹ *Railway Times*, 13th August 1898.

³² *Ibid.*, 8th February 1896.

³³ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/8, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1886-1898, 30th October 1895.

³⁴ Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway, Vol. 2*, pp. 272-273.

In 1895 Smith received the KCMG on his appointment as Governor of the Colony of Western Australia. He proved to be, perhaps, the least successful governor the Colony (later State) ever had, and his failure was all the more conspicuous as his term of office coincided with the years immediately before federation, when the advice of a strong and respected man was needed. Smith was involved in three scandals. The first was when he was sued by an hotel in Kalgoorlie over the non-payment of a bill for a reception. He had refused to pay on the grounds that it was exorbitant, but public opinion seemed to think that even if it were true, it was unseemly for the representative of the Crown to be involved in such a sordid quibble. Next, in June 1899, a letter from Smith was read out at the Annual General Meeting of the Park Hill Gold Mining Company, in London, praising the mine. His defence was that it had been a private letter and, in any case, was intended to help the economy of the whole Colony, rather than one particular company. Finally, in October 1899, he and five others, some of doubtful reputation, were sued by the Bank of New South Wales for the repayment of an overdraft of £5,700, which had been advanced to them to finance an hotel in Coolgardie. It was alleged that the local bank manager had been bribed by a gift of shares. Smith was said to have written another letter, whose contents also became public, including the unfortunate comment: 'I am much eased with the balance sheet, showing a profit of fifty per cent per annum. The place is bigger and more commodious than I expected, and it has a big and increasing business'. He was described in the local papers as a vice-regal puffer, and boomster of mines and hotels. The Colonial Office took a very serious, but perhaps lenient, view of these events, deciding that the Governor 'may be considered more of a fool than a knave'. He was told to apply for leave of absence on the grounds of illness (he had, in fact, had pneumonia), and this was granted from November 1899, (brought forward from leave due in April 1900). On his return to England he was told that he must retire, and was asked to make arrangements for this to

continued

The HBR vendetta with Pope continued throughout 1896, the latter alleging that it was impossible for his colliery to send more traffic over the HBR while the latter was managed as at present. Pope insisted that he had no personal wish to be on the HBR board but he implied that he could do the company some good if he were there. In February 1896 he invited Forbes to sue him over the allegedly libellous pamphlet. Forbes replied in a conciliatory fashion and was re-elected as a director.³⁵

Despite Pope's protestations to the contrary, it was clear that he still coveted a seat on the HBR board. The matter came to a head at the HBR half-yearly meeting in August 1896 when it was proposed to increase the number of directors from nine to eleven. The chairman, John Fisher, proposed that one of the extra places be filled by William Shaw Wright. There had been a proposal to fill the other vacant seat on the HBR board by the appointment of Pope. Sensing a possible conflict of interests as the Denaby Company and the SYJR were likely to go to litigation with the HBR over coal contracts, the chairman pointed out that Pope was chairman of the Denaby company and the SYJR. Frederick Greenfield, who had proposed Pope, withdrew his proposal. Greenfield was a stockbroker and one of Pope's supporters in the pamphlet war against the HBR board. Charles Poston of Stevenage was appointed instead. This led to complaints from some shareholders against the introduction of more Stock Exchange and London men on the directorate alleging that all they did was to look after their own interests. Fisher replied that when a future vacancy occurred the board would be glad to consider the claims of the West Riding and Lancashire. He justified Poston's elevation as one of the best men to help them get the money they would shortly want from London to develop the undertaking.³⁶ This demonstrated the maturity of the HBR board as it recognised that connections to capital were essential and took precedence over those to industry.

appear as natural and spontaneous as possible. The resignation took effect from 30th June 1900. He returned to his former commercial activities, but a directorship of the Hull and Barnsley Railway was not amongst them; perhaps the Board had heard of his peccadilloes in Australia. He died on 18th October 1920.

³⁵ *Railway Times*, 15th February 1896.

³⁶ *Railway News*, 22nd August 1896.

After Pope's machinations it is perhaps not surprising that for the half year ending 30th June 1896 the Denaby Company was 210,000 tons short on the amount of coal it ought to have delivered to the HBR. But despite Pope's obstructive efforts the SYJR had turned the HBR into a significant carrier of coal, a prospect which was envisaged at its opening in 1885. The burgeoning coal export trade from Hull was to encourage further feeder railways. But the next coal railway to join the HBR would cause further disputes with Pope and his colliery company.

3. The Hull and South Yorkshire Extension Railway.

In 1897 a competitor to the SYJR appeared in the shape of the Hull & South Yorkshire Extension Railway (HSYER). The first directors included David Davy, the manager of Hickleton Main Colliery, John Fisher, Charles Poston, George Shaw and George Blake Walker, the four latter all being connected with the HBR.³⁷ The HBR agreed to give £1,000, later increased to £2,500, towards the promotion of this railway, which ran from Wrangbrook on the HBR, just to the west of the junction with the SYJR, to Wath and on to a junction with the MSLR.³⁸ However, the connection to the MSLR was not deemed necessary, and was not made despite powers for it being renewed in 1908. The line gave the HBR direct access to Manvers Main, Hickleton, Wath Main and, at a later date, Frickley collieries.³⁹ The close connection with the HBR was confirmed in May 1897 when the HSYER approached the HBR to negotiate an agreement for the latter to work the railway. The HBR took over the railway in 1898.⁴⁰ The Act authorising the construction of the HSYER received the Royal Assent on 2nd July 1897 despite opposition from the NER and MSLR. Construction took almost three years.⁴¹

³⁷ East Riding Archives, Beverley, DDML/11/3, Hull and South Yorkshire Extension Railway Act, 1897.

³⁸ Figure 24. The HBR and associated branches, Wrangbrook - Wath.

³⁹ Hoole Archives, Darlington. The HBR obtained access to Frickley Colliery on 24th July 1908. (From speech to HBR Old Boys reunion dinner by Col. Smith on 19th October 1910).

⁴⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 243, Hull Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Act, 1898.

⁴¹ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p. 160.

Fear of competition from the new route spurred Pope into making fresh complaints against the HBR board, alleging, in a pamphlet, that the HBR main line and its dock facilities at Hull could not cope with the existing traffic, let alone more, and that the HBR suffered from an acute lack of rolling stock. There was some truth in this as the HBR had been forced to borrow wagons from other companies to deal with a glut of traffic and loaded wagons had been left in sidings as they could not be cleared at the dock.⁴² Not surprisingly, the HBR board replied in kind. In August 1896 John Fisher complained that Pope's allegations were aired in public rather than being conducted through more appropriate channels.⁴³ The HBR board also alleged that hundreds of empty wagons were on Pope's lines waiting for loading and delivery.⁴⁴

The threat of the new railway spurred Pope into further unfounded allegations. In September 1896 letters appeared in the *Railway Times* from the Cadeby Colliery Company concerning further delays in handling coal at Hull.⁴⁵ The colliery company said that although 310,000 tons of coal per year were sent as required by the contract, much more could have been transported but for operational shortcomings on the HBR. It went on to allege that the promotion of new coal railways in South Yorkshire, notably the independent Dearne Valley Railway (DVR) and the HSYER could prevent the HBR fulfilling its obligations to the Denaby Company. Any loss suffered by the Denaby Company or the SYJR would result in heavy claims for compensation against the HBR.⁴⁶ The response came quickly from Hickleton Main Colliery, which was to be served by the HSYER, alleging that the Denaby Company had taken fright at the competition it faced and was issuing vague threats for which there was no foundation.⁴⁷ The correspondence continued for a while in the columns of the *Railway Times* but had petered out by the end of the year

⁴² Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 115.

⁴³ John Fisher was the senior partner in the firm of Tealby & Co., timber importers. He became chairman of the HBR in October 1895 when Smith relinquished the post and remained until his death in September 1900.

⁴⁴ *Railway Times*, 22nd August 1896.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5th September 1896.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2nd October 1897.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9th October 1897.

in a series of claims and counter-claims among which the Cadeby Company had emphatically denied that it had objections to additional feeder lines.⁴⁸

The HBR, unable to cope with its increased traffic, found itself in a position similar to that which had occurred on the NER in 1872. However, unlike the latter, it was unable to lay the blame at the door of an inefficient dock operation over which it had no control. Despite the public statements of the directors a real problem existed. The HBR was deficient in wagons and urgent measures were needed to redress the situation. A meeting was held on 27th November 1896 to authorise the issue of new capital to provide much needed rolling stock, a dock extension and other works. It was proposed to raise £300,000 in 4% preference stock. The motion was carried by a large majority.⁴⁹ Hull Corporation agreed to invest £10,000 in the new 4% preference stock issued by the HBR. This was in addition to £100,000 that they already held in ordinary stock.⁵⁰

The HBR was not entirely convincing in its display of managerial competence. At the next shareholders' meeting in February 1897 Trotter, the chairman, tried to gloss over the deficiency in rolling stock.⁵¹ He said he wished to set the record straight regarding the borrowing of wagons from other companies. They had not been borrowed but when the HBR had a large quantity of goods for the MR or GNR they advised those companies and asked them to send wagons to take away the goods. But the HBR recognised that it needed more wagons and had already contracted for 400, which would be delivered in the next six months. This should be sufficient for the time being. It did not seem to occur to anybody at the meeting to ask why, if the HBR had not needed to borrow wagons, they were now ordering 400 more.

None of this was likely to placate Pope *et al.* The Denaby faction objected to the re-election to the HBR board of Walter Bailey of the shipping firm of Bailey &

⁴⁸ *Railway Times*, 24th December 1897.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28th November 1896.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 20th February 1897.

⁵¹ William Trotter was a stockbroker with the firm of James Capel & Co. He took an active part in the work of the London Committee and was instrumental in raising the necessary capital to release the HBR from Chancery. He became chairman in 1900 and resigned because of ill health in August 1907. He died in September 1908.

Leetham, claiming that his firm was 'essentially North Eastern.' Out of 12,000 tons of coal sold by the Denaby Company to Bailey & Leetham the latter had insisted that 10,000 tons were to go over the NER. The Denaby Company also complained that in the last 12 months it had sent 312,000 tons of coal over the HBR but nevertheless was not allowed to have any voice in that company's affairs.⁵² It opposed the HBR's working agreement with the HSYER, as it would place other collieries in a better competitive position. It also threatened the HBR with legal proceedings over an allegation that during the South Wales coal strike of 1896 it did not deal with Denaby coal as expeditiously as possible. In the autumn of 1898 the Denaby Company was still complaining about the election of Poston, and attacked Forbes, intimating that he was an 'arrogant dictator who arranged all meetings where important business was discussed.' There can be little doubt that Pope was behind these attacks which echoed those made previously by him. The Denaby Company went on to allege that Forbes was prepared to sell the HBR to the NER at a price well under its stock market valuation.⁵³ It said of the HSYER that 'the traffic it carries will of necessity divert a similar quantity from the existing railway.' This brought a retort from the HBR chairman who, referring to the circular, said that it showed that the real secret of their opposition was fear of competition.⁵⁴

The charges of operating inefficiency did, however, bring some action. In September 1898 the HBR board authorised the issue of £450,000 additional capital for dock extensions to deal with traffic from HSYER. The HBR extension to Alexandra Dock opened with commendable speed on 25th July 1899. It was 7½ acres (3 hectares) in extent and was designed for the shipment of coal and mining timbers.⁵⁵ However, things had not gone as well as had been hoped for. On 10th August 1899 John Fisher announced that the dock was now available although the coal appliances were very far behind.⁵⁶ By the end of the year two coal hoists had

⁵² *Railway Times*, 13th February 1897.

⁵³ *Railway News*, 1st October 1898.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8th October 1898.

⁵⁵ *Railway Times*, 27th July 1899.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12th August 1899.

been completed and two were still in the course of construction.⁵⁷ Traffic from the SYJR and HSYER now ensured that Hull was on the way to becoming a major coal port.⁵⁸ But it was not to realise its full potential until yet more coalfields were exploited, each colliery needing railway access.

4. The development of the concealed coalfield.

Up to the turn of the twentieth century the coal brought by rail to Hull had come from collieries in West Yorkshire and the Barnsley area of South Yorkshire. However, in the last years of the nineteenth century much interest was being expressed in the development of the concealed coalfield, a roughly triangular area between Selby in the north and Rotherham and Bawtry in the south. It was known as the concealed coalfield for the reason that deep beneath the limestone there were abundant coal measures. This was part of the East Pennine coalfield, which extended from Nottingham to Leeds.⁵⁹ At the western boundary of the coalfield the seams outcropped at the surface but increased in depth further east. Their location had been known about for some time but the capital and technology for extraction from these great depths was not available until the dawn of the twentieth century.⁶⁰

Around 1890 Lord Beaumont (a one-time director of HBR) had a borehole sunk on his estate at Carlton Towers, not far from Drax. After about 1,200 feet (365m.) the work was discontinued, but the boring, as far as it went, was satisfactory, giving the strongest evidence of coal measures being present and similar to those worked further south, but at much greater depth. Beaumont subsequently proposed to sink to the coal at Balne Moor, near to the HBR and the River Aire, at no great distance from Goole and with direct railway connections to Hull. It was estimated that the coal would be found at a depth of between 1,800 feet (550m.) and 2,000 feet (610m.). A committee was formed to consider exploiting these reserves. The local

⁵⁷ *Railway Times*, 3rd February 1900.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 13th August 1898.

⁵⁹ Figure 20. The Yorkshire and East Midlands Coalfield.

⁶⁰ D. Wilmot. 'The Lancashire, Derbyshire and East Coast Railway' (Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of York, 2000), pp. 18-19.

landowners were strongly in favour.⁶¹ However, at the time nothing became of this scheme although the proposed exploitation of this coalfield led to the construction of a joint HBR and GCR line through the area some twenty years later. The exploitation of the southern part of the concealed coalfield began in the early years of the twentieth century.

The development of the concealed coalfield precipitated a race between railway companies to gain access to it. Such development was very significant for the port of Hull. Both the NER and the HBR were exploring the possibilities of obtaining access to the coalfield with outlets to Hull and Goole in the case of the NER, and Hull in the case of the HBR. Although the NER had not competed with the HBR for access to collieries in the Barnsley area it felt it should not be allowed to fall behind the HBR in gaining access to this new coalfield. It was looking into the possibility of creating a route using its existing railway from Hull to Goole and then onward by means of light railways to gain access to South Yorkshire.⁶²

The chairman Sir J. W. Pease confirmed the details at a shareholders' meeting in February 1901. It was proposed to purchase the light railways to Haxey and to construct a new line approximately 25 miles (40 km) long to serve the South Yorkshire collieries. The area to be exploited by the proposed railways extended from Rotherham in the west to Bawtry in the east. Coal would be shipped to Goole and Hull. About £100,000 would have to be spent at Hull.⁶³

But, by the 30th June 1901 the NER had abandoned the schemes for making a railway to connect the South Yorkshire coalfield with the company's railways serving the ports of Hull and Goole. Before the Bill reached its committee stage the NER had ascertained that other railway companies were contemplating the construction of new lines in the same district, and under these circumstances, the directors decided not to proceed with their Bill in the present session, in the hope

⁶¹ *Railway News*, 27th September 1890.

⁶² *Railway Times*, 17th November 1900.

C. W. Judge, *The Axholme Joint Railway*, (Oxford, 1994), pp. 38-57. Construction of the Isle of Axholme Railway, which the NER planned to use, commenced in July 1899 but the line did not open until January 1905. The NER took over the railway in 1901.

⁶³ *Railway Times*, 16th February 1901.

Judge, *The Axholme Joint Railway*, p. 18.

that, by discussion, a scheme might be formulated which would afford the necessary facilities by arrangement with other companies.⁶⁴

The HBR was one reason for the NER's reticence. In February 1901 the new chairman, William Trotter, had continued the HBR policy of making Hull into a coal port. It had been instrumental in the opening of the SYJR and the HSYER and in continuation of its policy of opening feeder lines it had been decided that the company should have direct access to the large coalfield lying between Rotherham and Bawtry.⁶⁵ The HBR had therefore promoted ambitious schemes to reach the new coalfield. As a jumping off point it planned to use the HSYER, which opened for goods and mineral traffic on 16th May 1902.⁶⁶ In November 1901 the HBR had proposed a line from a point near Hickleton and Thurnscoe station, running through Mexborough and across the River Don to Denaby where it divided into three separate branches. One went off in a south-easterly direction through Conisbrough Parks to Braithwell and terminated at a junction near Laughton with the Wales and Laughton Light Railway, over which running powers were sought to Dinnington. A branch to Dinnington Colliery, which was then being sunk, and a branch to Maltby were included. The central line from Denaby went in a southerly direction to terminate at Rotherham. This included a branch to Aldwarke and Silverwood collieries. The westerly of the three lines re-crossed the River Don and joined the MR at Kilnhurst. This line would have given the HBR direct access to Sheffield.⁶⁷

But like the NER, the HBR had second thoughts about its ambitious scheme and duplication of routes and, by February 1902, the HBR (South Yorkshire Extension Lines) Bill, had been scaled down to a line from Thurnscoe to North Anston [Dinnington Colliery].⁶⁸ The HBR had also deposited other Bills to protect its interests. A reason for abandoning the grandiose scheme given publicly, but which appeared to have little foundation, was the failure of the coal trades to give their

⁶⁴ *Railway Times*, 3rd August 1901.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16th February 1901.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24th May and 23rd August 1902.

⁶⁷ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p. 165.

Figure 22. The railways of South Yorkshire.

⁶⁸ City Archives, Hull, TLP 265, Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock (South Yorkshire Extension Lines) Act, 1902,

support. Hull Corporation, aware of its duty to monitor schemes affecting the HBR, decided to petition against the 1902 Bill as a precautionary measure.⁶⁹

Meanwhile the NER and the LYR were pressing ahead with a joint proposal for a railway to connect the new coalfield to their lines. The MR and GCR were proposing similar schemes, but hoped that before the Bills came before Parliament an arrangement would be made between all the companies.⁷⁰ Such was the case. An agreement was arrived at with the MR, GNR and GCR under which the line proposed by the NER and LYR, with slight diversions, was to be made by the five companies jointly.⁷¹ The new line was to be known as the South Yorkshire Joint Railway (SYJt).⁷² The total length was 17 miles (27 km) and the estimated cost £350,000. The line ran from a junction at Kirk Sandall on the GCR Thorne to Doncaster line via Maltby to an end-on junction with the GCR and MR joint line at Dinnington Junction and via that line to a junction with the GCR Sheffield to Worksop line at Brantcliffe, where there were east and west facing junctions. It was opened for mineral traffic on 1st January 1909.⁷³

Despite this success the NER was still to face competition from the HBR. The manner in which the latter finally achieved access to the new coalfield was extremely convoluted and much involved with the wider railway politics of the period.⁷⁴ In 1897 the Dearne Valley Railway (DVR) was incorporated. This railway had been promoted by the proprietors of various collieries in the area, including Houghton Main, Hickleton Main and Carlton Main.⁷⁵ It was planned to connect with the HBR at Brierley Junction near Hemsworth and run past various collieries crossing the River Don at Conisbrough and terminating in junctions with the Great

⁶⁹ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, 27th January 1902.

⁷⁰ *Railway Times*, 22nd February 1902.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 9th September 1902.

⁷² B. J. Elliott, *The South Yorkshire Joint Railway and the Coalfield*, (Usk, 2002), pp. 19-23.

⁷³ D. Joy, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol. 8, South and West Yorkshire*, (Newton Abbot, 1975), p. 233.

Figure 25. Branches around Doncaster.

⁷⁴ Figure 22. The Railways of South Yorkshire.

⁷⁵ J. Marshall, *The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway, Vol. 2*, (Newton Abbott, 1970), p. 139. A connection from the DVR to Denaby Colliery was opened in March 1906.

Northern and Great Eastern Joint Railway (GN&GEJt) at Black Carr Junction south of Doncaster. The GN&GEJt passed through Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, areas with no indigenous coal and but gave the GER access to the South Yorkshire coalfield, thus further heightening railway competition there. The DVR opened in two sections; from Thurnscoe to Cadeby in January 1906 and from Cadeby to Black Carr in May 1909⁷⁶

As the DVR was to connect to the HBR at its western end its promoters initially approached the latter in order to agree reciprocal running powers. In 1897 the DVR had engaged the services of Henry Lambert, formerly of the Great Western Railway, as a consultant. This was the man who had issued the so-called 'whitewashing report' on the HBR in 1895. He suggested that talks should continue with the HBR but that the DVR should try to remain independent. An agreement was concluded with the HBR in 1898 for running powers over the DVR for a period of five years from that date. However, in 1899 the DVR, wishing to connect with as many railways as possible, approached the LYR, asking if it would complete the DVR and purchase it. The LYR was not interested, as the HBR running powers complicated the situation. However, by 1901 the LYR had second thoughts and decided that the DVR could be a useful acquisition, if only to block further expansion by other companies. An agreement was drawn up between the companies, which allowed the LYR to build connections at the western end of the DVR and work the railway with full running powers. The agreement stipulated that the DVR should grant no such further powers without the permission of the LYR, and that it must not renew the running powers of the HBR. An Act of March 1902 allowed the LYR to subscribe to the DVR, at which time the HBR, presumably as a blocking move, said it wished to renew its running powers. The DVR initially refused and the stalemate dragged on until November 1905, when the companies agreed that the HBR could use its running powers under the 1898 agreement, for access to Grimethorpe and Houghton Main collieries.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Barnett, *The Railways of the South Yorkshire Coalfield*, p. 55.

Figure 24. The Hull & Barnsley Railway and connecting branches, Wrangbrook-Wath.

⁷⁷ Marshall, *The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, Vol. 2*, p. 133.

Similarly tortuous negotiations accompanied the promotion of the Shireoaks, Laughton and Maltby Railway, authorised in 1901. The GCR stated its intention was to complete this line northward to Conisbrough.⁷⁸ By 1904 this had not been done and an independent line, the Rotherham, Maltby and Laughton Railway (RML) was promoted by local colliery interests. This line was to have junctions with the MR at Rawmarsh and the GCR at Thrybergh and would take over the privately owned Roundwood and Dalton colliery railway. It would run to the west of and parallel with the route of the HBR line proposed in the Act of 1902. The line was opposed by the HBR on the grounds of unfair competition and for some reason, not readily apparent, as they would have worked it, by the MR and GCR. This episode spurred the GCR into action and it renewed its 1901 scheme. This was viewed with some dismay by the partners of the GCR in the SYJt, *i.e.* the GNR, MR, NER and LYR, as the GCR proposal to a considerable extent duplicated the route of the SYJt.⁷⁹

By the early 1900s the profitability of such duplication was already questionable and it is not surprising to find negotiations opening between the RML, GCR and HBR which resulted in an agreement on 5th April 1904 for the GCR to take over the RML, except the portion between the two junctions, which was to be abandoned, and in lieu thereof the portion of the HBR Thurnscoe to Dinnington line which paralleled it was to be constructed, and become the joint property of the HBR and GCR.⁸⁰ The HBR also agreed that the RML line should be diverted to join the HBR proposal of 1902 at the northern junction, near Braithwell. It then continued as the HBR route to join the railway from Shireoaks, which became the MR and GCR joint railway in 1904. The point where the HBR joined the MR and GCR line was called the southern junction.

Thus, by 1905, something like a spirit of co-operation had developed between the one-time rival railways. In 1905 the HBR submitted a new Bill to Parliament incorporating the RML railway and seeking powers to extend the time limit under the

⁷⁸ Dow, *Great Central*, Vol. 3, p. 205.

⁷⁹ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p. 167.

Figure 22. The railways of South Yorkshire.

⁸⁰ *Railway Times*, 25th May 1905.

1902 Act.⁸¹ In August 1905 the Rotherham and Maltby Bill was authorised.⁸² So was the Bill setting up of the HBR and GCR joint Committee to construct a line from Thurnscoe to the southern junction of the proposed 1902 line at Dinnington. The RML had obtained an Act in 1905 to build a railway from Rawmarsh to Dinnington. This line connected at North Anston with the GCR and MR joint line to Shireoaks. The promoters of the RML agreed to utilise as far as possible the Thurnscoe and Dinnington line. It was agreed that the parties involved should obtain a Bill in the next session of Parliament to transfer powers sought in the RML Bill to the GCR, and to negotiate agreement with the HBR concerning the joint construction and operation of the line from Thurnscoe to Dinnington. Until the line was constructed the HBR was to have running powers over the RML line from its junction with the proposed line and Rawmarsh, and over the GCR to Wath and Stairfoot. These would cease on the completion of the northern section. The HBR would, however, have perpetual running powers to Ravenfield and Silverwood collieries with a north facing connection to the northern section of the HBR line when it was completed. As the RML had not raised capital or carried out any works it was dissolved and vested in the GCR. The GCR had an option for six months after the passing of the Act to take a half share in the northern line, which it did. The MR did not exercise its privilege to take a share in the northern line from Braithwell to Thurnscoe and this section was not constructed. In 1907 the MR exercised its right to take a third share in the southern line which was thenceforward managed by the HBR, GCR and MR Joint Committee. The line was opened for goods and mineral traffic on 1st October 1909.⁸³

On 9th January 1911 the SYJt opened a line approximately ½ mile (¾ km) in length from Laughton East Junction to join the HBR, GCR & MR joint line at Laughton West Junction immediately north of the former Southern Junction. This gave the HBR direct access to Dinnington Colliery by means of running powers over

⁸¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 265, Hull and Barnsley Railway Act, 1905.

⁸² *Railway Times*, 12th August 1905.

⁸³ Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 1, p. 167.

this railway.⁸⁴ Under an agreement of 1911 the HBR was to pay to the SYJt Committee 3d. (1.25p.) per ton on coal and coke conveyed over this line.⁸⁵

Early in the twentieth century more collieries were sunk further north on the concealed coalfield in the Doncaster area at Bullcroft, Bentley and Edlington. The latter colliery became known as Yorkshire Main. It was supposed that coalfield development would extend further north, almost to Selby. Abortive proposals were made for the sinking of pits in the Goole area; at Pollington in 1910 and at Sykehouse in 1916.⁸⁶ This was sufficient to excite the interests of railway companies. The scene was set for the last railway promotion to exploit the concealed coalfield.

5. The HBR and GCR Joint Railway.

The HBR decided that a direct route to South Yorkshire, passing through the area of the proposed new mines, would have great future potential for coal traffic. In 1909 it proposed a railway some 24 miles (38½ km) in length from Aire Junction, near Gowdall, on the HBR main line to join the line authorised in 1902 near the northern junction at Braithwell.⁸⁷ The Bill also contained powers to abandon the 1902 proposal for the completion of the railway from Braithwell to Thurnscoe.⁸⁸ The new line was to have branches to Bentley and Bullcroft collieries in conjunction with the GCR and a terminal spur to a station at Doncaster. To save money the HBR hoped to construct the line jointly with another company.⁸⁹

The GCR and GNR opposed the Bill. The MR initially opposed the Bill but withdrew its opposition when running powers over the line were agreed, in return for which it was to contribute £250,000 towards the cost of construction, estimated at £455,000. The GCR opposition was half-hearted, as its real objective was to obtain a share in the new line. The HBR agreed that if the GCR were to construct the northern

⁸⁴ Dow, *Great Central*, Vol. 3, p. 209.

⁸⁵ Hoole Archives, Darlington, KH 1356, Agreement between SYJt Committee and HBR dated 23rd July 1909.

⁸⁶ Barnett, *The Railways of the South Yorkshire Coalfield*, p. 85.

⁸⁷ Figure 25. Branches around Doncaster.

⁸⁸ Doncaster Archives, DX/ALL/23, Hull and Barnsley Railway Bill, 1909.

⁸⁹ *Railway Times*, 13th February 1909.

part of the proposed line of 1902 the HBR was willing to transfer its interest. However, both the GCR and MR agreed that it would be wasteful to construct this line as it duplicated existing routes. Powers for abandonment were sought but were opposed by the GNR, which alleged that the real object was not to get coal to Hull, but to introduce the MR into the area to send coal to the south in competition with it.

The GNR was to be unsuccessful as the railway was authorised in April 1909. The GCR had more success. The final Act gave the GCR a one-third share in the new line and stipulated control by a Joint Committee, to consist of four directors of the HBR and two of the GCR.⁹⁰ After the passing of the Act the GCR increased its share in the new line to one-half, chiefly to keep the NER out. This situation was regularised by an Act of 1910, which allowed equal numbers of HBR and GCR directors on the Joint Committee. The GNR, LYR, MR and NER enjoyed running powers over the line, which were never exercised.⁹¹ The reason for the interest shown in the line by the large companies was that it passed through the heart of the concealed coalfield.

In 1913 the HBR obtained an Act for a railway to Bentley Colliery in conjunction with GCR, replacing a proposal embodied in the Act of 1909, now to be abandoned. The MR had running powers over the 1909 proposal and claimed them also over the railway to Bentley.⁹² The joint line was opened for traffic on 1st May 1916.⁹³ Despite the fact that almost a million tons of traffic passed over it in the first year of operation, it was never to achieve its potential. The exercise was an expensive luxury for the MR, which paid £250,000 for running powers over a line it never used.⁹⁴

The great misfortune of the HBR & GCR joint line was that it opened too late. The boom in coal transport was curtailed by the war and the anticipated development of the concealed coalfield occurred much too late for the HBR. In any case the new mine was in the Selby area, which was nowhere near the joint line.

⁹⁰ *Railway Times*, 22nd May 1909.

⁹¹ Dow, *Great Central*, Vol. 3, p. 210.

⁹² City Archives, Hull, TLP 287, HBR Act, 1913.

⁹³ Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway*, Vol. 2, p. 204.

⁹⁴ *Railway News*, 16th February 1918.

There can be little doubt that if war had not broken out there could have been considerable exploitation of the concealed coalfield. But even if the railway line came to be regarded as a white elephant, there had been sound financial reasons for its construction at the time. In fact the GCR worked the southern part of the line exclusively from its opening, and the HBR, despite its initial anxiety to gain access to Dinnington Colliery, never worked south of Warmsworth.⁹⁵

More generally, though, as this chapter has shown, the railways serving Hull were an important reason for its success as a coal port. In 1913 the railways of the United Kingdom carried 225 million tons of coal and coke.⁹⁶ This was the peak. In 1913 Hull exported almost 5½ million tons of coal. It had rail connections with over 380 collieries in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.⁹⁷ The amount exported in 1884, the year before the opening of the HBR was a mere 593,000 tons.⁹⁸ This tenfold increase was due in no small measure to the opening of the SYJR, HSYER and the SYJt. Whereas the HBR had initiated the increase in the movement of coal, by 1913 both the HBR and the NER had access to the new super-pits of the concealed coalfield and were engaged in healthy competition. Between them, the two companies had turned Hull into a major coal port. The next chapters will examine the evolution of co-operation between them.

⁹⁵ Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway, Vol. 2*, p. 121.

⁹⁶ Simmons & Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, p. 94.

⁹⁷ Newham, *Hull as a Coal Port*, p. 24.

⁹⁸ Figure 33. Coal exports from Hull.

CHAPTER 8.

CO-OPERATION AND OBSTRUCTION, 1893-1908.

1. Introduction.

The change in the political balance in Hull and the effect it had on the Corporation were important factors underpinning railway politics in the years between 1893 and 1908. The period was characterised by increasing co-operation between the NER and HBR and obstruction of the NER's plans by Hull Corporation. But inter-regional economic competition was also important. A factor influencing the amalgamation of the Hull Dock Company and the NER in 1893 was the threat of competition from the Manchester Ship Canal, construction of which had commenced in 1887, and which was to open in 1894. This focused the minds of the ship owners and traders of Hull. Those such as C. H. Wilson, who had been a keen opponent of NER policy in the town, were influential in the proposal for the dock amalgamation. In November 1893 Wilson said that acquisition of the Hull Dock Company by the NER was in the interests of the town but warned that the Manchester Ship Canal would provide extra competition. Without improvements to dock accommodation at Hull the future looked bleak.¹ Against this background the NER and HBR drew closer together and consequently the links between the HBR and the Corporation began to come under strain.

2. The proposal for amalgamation of the NER and HBR, 1895.

Despite its acquisition of the Dock Company in 1893, a continuing problem for the NER was lack of deep-water facilities at Hull. Under the terms of the 1893 Act it could only construct such facilities by arrangement with the HBR. Negotiations took place, and terms were agreed for an amalgamation of the NER and HBR.

¹ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM, 15th November 1893.

Considering the dividends received so far by HBR shareholders, the terms appeared to be generous.²

However, such a proposal was unlikely to have the support of the Corporation. On 18th November 1895 the NER and the HBR notified the Corporation that they proposed jointly to promote a Bill for amalgamation. The Corporation did not oppose this outright, but asked for an undertaking from the NER that it would withdraw the proposal at any time if the Corporation so wished. Hull's commercial and shipping interests were split, with Wilson's on one side supporting the amalgamation and the other shipowners of the port together with the Chamber of Commerce on the other. All lobbied the Corporation. On 4th December C. H. Wilson wrote to the Corporation alleging that the opposing view of other shipowners did not represent the real shipping interests of the port and urged it to support the proposed amalgamation. However, at the same time, the Corporation received objections to the proposal from the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Trade and many other trade federations.³

The Corporation, NER and HBR met on 10th January 1896. Sir J.W. Pease, the NER chairman made a general case for the merger, pointing out the inefficiency caused by the duplication of facilities. Furthermore, he said that amalgamation would diminish the use of the level crossings on the Victoria Dock branch.⁴ He announced that as there had been insufficient time for discussion the NER proposed to withdraw the Bill. Although the withdrawal came as a surprise to the Corporation, they welcomed it. It may be conjectured that the NER had used the proposal more in the

² W. W. Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, (Newton Abbot edition, 1967), p. 716. First debenture holders of the HBR were to receive £100 and second debenture holders £115 of NER 3% debenture stock for each £100 of their holdings. Ordinary shareholders would change their stock for NER preference stock bearing interest at 1% in the first year after the transfer, 1¼% for the next two years and then 1½% in perpetuity with the addition of a bonus if the dividend on NER consols exceeded 6%.

³ City Archives, Hull, Parliamentary Committee minutes, November 1895 to January 1896.

⁴ 'Edward Pease', *1911Encyclopedia*, (2004).

[http://67.1911encyclopedia.org/P/PE/PEASE_EDWARD.htm], (June 2005).

Joseph Whitwell Pease (1828-1903), was made a baronet in 1882. He was MP for South Durham from 1865 to 1885 and for the Barnard Castle division of Durham from 1885 to 1903.

way of testing the waters, together with an opportunity to put the case for amalgamation, rather than a serious proposal, as they were aware that in the face of opposition from trading interests in Hull there was no possibility of the Corporation giving its consent.⁵

The Corporation's steadfast opposition to the NER continued when, in 1896, the latter submitted a Bill for a connection to the HBR at Walton Street and the substitution of Walton Street level crossing by a bridge.⁶ This would have connected the two railway systems in the event of an amalgamation. The Corporation considered the Bill and surprisingly, in view of its feelings about level crossings on the Victoria Dock branch, told the NER in December 1896 that the proposal for the bridge was 'unnecessary and undesirable'. This was another demonstration that the Corporation opposed any proposal of the NER on principle, ignoring its merits.⁷

C. H. Wilson's support for amalgamation remained as strong as the Corporation's opposition. At the HBR meeting in February 1896 he once again advocated amalgamation with the NER, declaring that an independent HBR had no prospect of ever getting a reasonable dividend. He warned that despite intense competition from Grimsby, Goole, and the Manchester Ship Canal, the company did nothing to conciliate the traders by cutting rates or moving towards the amalgamation needed to achieve these ends.⁸ The NER chairman, Pease, reflected Wilson's views when he told of his company's frustration that it was prevented from making any reduction of dock charges or constructing dock accommodation in certain parts of the river without the consent of the HBR.⁹ This was the big-business view but it failed to take account of the fact that there was still much anti-monopoly feeling among certain traders, especially the smaller businesses, in Hull.

Wilson resigned from the Chamber of Commerce in 1896, ostensibly because that body had opposed the HBR amalgamation scheme. However, amalgamation was

⁵ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, November 1895 to January 1896.

⁶ City Archives, Hull, TRD 31, NER Omnibus Bill, 1896.

⁷ The connection at Walton Street was not made until 1924 by which time the HBR had ceased to exist.

⁸ *Railway Times*, 15th February 1896.

⁹ *Railway News*, 8th February 1896.

only one aspect of inter-regional economic competition, the effects of which were becoming apparent to Hull's traders. There had been personal controversy and bitterness between Wilson and Massey, another ship owner, a Corporation-appointed director of the HBR and chairman of the Chamber of Commerce.¹⁰ Wilson thought that Massey was more interested in the Manchester Ship Canal than in Hull because Massey had once had interests in Manchester, although he had later abandoned them.¹¹ Wilson was not only concerned about the threat from Manchester. In July 1896 the Corporation received a letter from him complaining of competition from subsidised Norwegian steamers which were diverting trade from Hull to Newcastle and asking the Corporation to submit a memorial to Parliament on behalf of

¹⁰ Central Library, Hull, *Men of the Period, 1897*, (Leeds, 1897). 'Watson Arton Massey is the head of the firm of W. A. Massey & Co., steamship owners and brokers, and colliery agents, whose business in this direction is one of the largest in the port. He was born in 1847 at the village of Ellerker, near Hull, the birthplace of his family for three generations past. He received his education partly at Ellerker and partly at Boston Spa, subsequently completing his studies in Germany. Identifying himself in early life with the shipping interest, he entered, in 1859, the office of the firm of ship owners from which he eventually acquired (in 1868), the business he now controls. It is among the leading concerns of its kind on the North-east coast; and he is now assisted in the administration of its affairs by his two sons. His public career began in 1872 as Chairman of the Newington Local Board (a large district in the west of Hull, and now incorporated into Hull), and also at the same time Chairman of the Newington School Board. Subsequently, in 1880, he entered the Hull Town Council as a representative of Lowgate Ward, afterwards named Queens Ward. He was elevated to the Aldermanic Bench in 1895. He is chairman of the Waterworks Committee, deputy chairman of the Parliamentary Committee and a member of the Property Committee.

Alderman Massey's work in the Council has always been marked by an advocacy of measures calculated to accelerate the commercial prosperity of Hull, and he has had not a little to do with the promotion of that activity in trade and shipping circles which has made this the third seaport in the kingdom. He is a member of the Humber Conservancy Commissioners, and a director of the Hull and Barnsley Railway and Dock Company. In 1880 he figured prominently among the first promoters of the new dock and railway'.

Eastern Morning News, 29th September 1909. Massey was a director of the HBR from 1881 until his removal together with the other Hull directors in 1888. He became a Corporation appointed director in 1895 and remained on the Board until his death on 28th September 1909.

¹¹ *Railway Times*, 11th January 1896.

Wilson's. There is no trace of such memorial being submitted.¹² The Corporation was perhaps irked by Wilson's attempts to manipulate it for his own purposes.

3. NER proposals for dock improvements, 1897-1899.

By 1897 the rising importance of the coal trade, detailed in chapter 7. and the threat from improved facilities outside its zone of operation convinced the NER that major dock improvements could no longer be delayed and it submitted proposals for a new dock of 10 acres (4 hectares), west of Victoria Dock, and new entrances to Albert and Humber Docks together with a deep-water lock at Albert Dock and the extension of Victoria Pier.¹³ The estimated cost was £781,000.¹⁴ The NER also undertook to deepen the navigable channel of the Humber and it was this proposal which led to controversy. The Corporation and the Humber Conservancy required clauses in the Bill obliging the NER to maintain a navigable channel. The NER would not accept this and, despite negotiations, agreement could not be reached. In the circumstances the NER had no alternative but to withdraw the Bill for the dock works.¹⁵ The NER's decision disappointed the commercial community of the port. On 14th June 1897 Hull Chamber of Commerce and Shipping informed the Corporation of its unanimous opinion that the withdrawal of the NER Bill would be a 'calamity for the port'.¹⁶ This was extremely significant in that it was the first example of a major difference in policy between the Chamber of Commerce and the Corporation. At the NER meeting in August, 1897 the chairman contrasted the attitude of the Humber Conservancy with similar bodies on the Tees, Wear and Tyne who largely accepted the NER's plans and did not insist on it assuming future responsibilities after dredging work.¹⁷

¹² City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, July 1896.

¹³ City Archives, Hull, TLP 240, NER Hull Docks Bill, 1897.

¹⁴ Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, p. 718.

¹⁵ City Archives Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes. Correspondence between the NER and Hull Corporation from April to June 1897.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Correspondence, June 1897.

¹⁷ *Railway News*, 7th August 1897.

The underlying reasons for dock improvements were, if anything, increasing and in 1898 the NER once again produced a scheme for dock improvements. These included an eastward extension of Victoria Dock. This scheme depended on the acquisition of a piece of Corporation land called the Western Reservation, which lay between Victoria and Alexandra Docks.¹⁸ The NER wished to buy this, and pointed out that whereas the HBR had unlimited land on which to extend east of Alexandra Dock, the NER had only the Western Reservation on which to extend Victoria Dock. The Corporation decided to use this piece of land as a lever to place extra conditions on the NER. These included the construction of a station at Newington, a matter which had been in contention for twenty years, and the abolition of the level crossings round Hull on the Victoria Dock Branch, which were a serious cause of traffic congestion in the city.¹⁹ In response the NER agreed to pay half the cost of replacing the level crossings, estimated at £334,000, but refused to build a station at Newington as demand was insufficient.²⁰ The NER further stipulated that if it bore half the cost of abolishing the level crossings the Corporation must transfer the Western Reservation to them on easy terms. At this point in the negotiations the

¹⁸ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Minutes. Letter dated 16th April 1898 from HBR to Town Clerk.

¹⁹ The Corporation had carried out a census of traffic at the major road level crossings for the week ending 4th January 1898.

Appendix 3. Census of road and rail traffic at level crossings in Hull, 1898 & 1909.

²⁰ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 312/8, HBR Directors' Minute Book 1886-1898. It was not only the NER who considered a station at Newington to be unnecessary. On 7th April 1887 the HBR directors had declined a request for a station at Newington on the same grounds as the NER refusal.

K. Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain*. Vol. 4. The North East, (Newton Abbot, 1978), p. 47. Hoole suggests that the origin of Newington station was in 1896 when Robert Jameson, a wealthy timber merchant, and a good customer of the NER, was given permission to erect a platform at his own expense to enable his wife, who was an invalid, to board and alight from trains close to where she lived. It is unclear when the NER took over the halt but a signal box was erected in 1899 which was reduced in status to a gate-box during the Great War. The Newington Branch was closed in May 1965.

W. B. Yeadon, *Railways of Hull*, (Nottingham, 1995), p. 87. The station did not appear in the public timetable. It was used in conjunction with Hull Fair.

M. E. Quick, *Railway Passenger Stations in England, Scotland & Wales*, (Railway & Canal Historical Society, 2003), p. 167.

Humber Conservancy once again raised the issue of dredging the river channel and subsequent maintenance. This was the last straw for the NER. On 18th March the company notified the Corporation that it was withdrawing the 1898 Dock Bill. The Corporation, anxious not to be seen as party to sabotaging dock improvements, responded by offering further discussion.²¹ But the NER had had enough. The mood at the shareholders' meeting on 11th February had been belligerent and set the tone for the negotiations over the Dock Bill. Sir Isaac Lowthian Bell, the deputy chairman of the NER had said, 'the Corporation and traders of Hull ought to pay the expense of improving their town, and not the shareholders of the NER.' He went on to say that he hoped that the directors would remain firm, 'and if the Hull people would not accept their proposals, let them stop as they are.' This was met with cries of 'Hear, hear' and applause.²² On 1st April the NER general manager wrote to the Corporation saying that no purpose would be served by further discussion.²³

After these two abortive attempts to work alone the NER now realised that the only avenue left was to fall back on the clauses in the 1893 amalgamation Act which authorised the building of a joint dock with the HBR to the east of Alexandra Dock.²⁴ After negotiations with the HBR a Bill was deposited, in February 1899, to construct such a dock at a cost of £1,419,655.²⁵ This did not find favour with the Corporation, which had got wind of the scheme and had discussed it on 10th December 1898 but did not receive formal notice until 28th December. It seems that the NER and HBR dock committee anticipated Corporation's reaction, and was delaying informing that body for as long as possible.²⁶

The Corporation's stance had been indicated by Massey in the previous August, when he said that any absence of comment by the Corporation concerning a joint dock should not be taken as acquiescence, nor the supposition that it would be to the benefit of the HBR.²⁷ But opinion elsewhere was largely favourable. The

²¹ City Archives, Hull. Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, March 1898.

²² *Railway Times*, 19th February 1898.

²³ City Archives, Hull. Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, 12th April 1898.

²⁴ *Railway News*, 26th March 1898.

²⁵ *Railway Times*, 11th February 1899.

²⁶ City Archives, Hull, Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, December 1898.

²⁷ *Railway Times*, 13th August 1898.

Railway News was unimpressed by Massey's attitude, commenting. 'It is really preposterous that petty local jealousies should stand in the way of so great an improvement at this port.'²⁸ Indeed, the proposal was received favourably in Hull by almost the entire commercial community.²⁹

The Corporation's opposition was based on four concerns. Firstly, that the new dock would be unlikely to earn enough to pay the 3½% interest on the loan granted by the NER to the HBR to finance the dock, causing the HBR to become a debtor of the NER and place it in a position where it was in danger of losing its independence. However, the railway companies argued that the increased traffic, resulting from the NER being allowed to use the HBR high level line to the dock, would easily make up the difference. The Corporation was not convinced, but the possibility of increased traffic gave rise to its second concern, which was that the NER would use its low level line for access to the dock, resulting in an increase in rail traffic over its level crossings with consequent disruption to road traffic in the city. Thirdly, the Corporation was concerned that the Bill contained no clauses for the protection of river and coasting traffic regarding dock dues. Such protective clauses had appeared in the 1893 amalgamation Bill but were omitted from the Bill for the joint dock. Fourthly, the Bill stated that a joint committee was to be formed of three representatives from the NER and three from the HBR, and that the chairman was to be from alternating companies each year, the first being from the NER. The Corporation noted, with some dismay, that there was no provision for its representation on the committee.³⁰

The two railway companies, ostensibly rivals, were acting in concert. At a Wharnccliffe meeting, held to discuss the proposal for the joint dock the NER's favourable treatment of the HBR became clear. The NER would obviously become the senior partner. It would advance the HBR share of the cost. If it were able the HBR could repay the whole debt on giving the NER twelve months notice. The HBR

²⁸ *Railway Times*, 4th March 1899.

²⁹ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce and Shipping AGM, 15th November 1899.

On 24th February 1899 the Hull Seed, Oil and Cake Association memorialised the Corporation to give support to the new dock. On 6th March the Chamber of Commerce and Shipping did the same.

³⁰ City Archives, Hull, Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, March 1899.

would have half the net revenue of the dock. The NER was to be allowed to use the high level line for access to the dock giving the HBR a toll over 6 miles (10 km.) of railway for a period of twenty years. But, despite general support for the building of the largest dock in the kingdom the Corporation did not consider that the interests of the HBR and the port were sufficiently safeguarded. It reserved the right to oppose any Bill.³¹

On 9th March 1899, the Corporation wrote separately to the NER and HBR suggesting *inter alia*, that the Corporation should have representation on the Joint Committee, one HBR director being withdrawn. The fact that the Corporation wrote separately to each company and not to the joint committee could be seen as indicating its reluctance to do business with the latter. The committee refused.³² The Corporation then withdrew this demand, hoping to open discussion of other clauses that it wanted inserted. It requested a clause guaranteeing the independence of the HBR and required that overside and wharfage rates be provided for as they had been in the 1893 Bill. In order to prevent excessive rail traffic over the city's level crossings it suggested that between the hours of 08.00 and midnight the NER should not run traffic from the new dock over the low-level line. Discussion was one thing; gaining the acquiescence of the joint committee was quite another. The joint committee now felt that it held the initiative and none of the clauses was accepted. In response the Corporation announced that it would oppose the Bill.³³

The Corporation's opposition was fruitless. On the 18th July a Commons Committee approved the preamble of the Bill, being satisfied that the independence of the HBR was safeguarded, as was shipping in regard to dues and charges for using the dock. The HBR was to have running powers to Hull Paragon Station on terms to be agreed between the two companies. In one regard, however, the Corporation got what it wanted. The hours of restriction of traffic over the level crossings were to be from 05.30, rather than 08.00, to midnight³⁴ In the Lords the Corporation continued

³¹ *Railway Times*, 3rd March 1899.

³² The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 527/416, Hull Joint Dock Committee Directors' Minute Book, 17th March 1899.

³³ City Archives, Hull, Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, April 1899.

³⁴ City Archives, Hull, Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, July 1899.

its opposition, but to no avail. The Bill was passed under the title of the Hull Joint Docks Act, 1899.³⁵

The Corporation had up to now been, if not liked, at least respected as it had been seen to be carrying out its duty to protect the independence of the HBR and, as a corollary, the commercial interests of the port. Its opposition to the joint dock put it at odds with the ship owners and larger traders of the city. The political shift started by the dock strike was now being starkly illustrated in the attitude of the Corporation. It led to a situation unique in the history of the railways of Hull when the HBR aligned itself with the NER and the Chambers of Commerce and Trade against the isolated Corporation.

Competition between the HBR and NER was now all but over. There was still duplication of tracks and other facilities, which gave rise to a small amount of competition but, by and large, the commercial community in the city was glad to see the end of cut-throat competition, which had seen the end of the Dock Company, and very nearly the HBR. The way forward was now seen to be by co-operation between the mighty NER and the lusty infant HBR, with the latter concentrating on areas which did not directly compete with the NER, such as carrying minerals from South Yorkshire. There was a certain irony here, in that the conditions for a rapprochement between the railway companies had been the takeover of the HBR by financiers who were not connected directly with Hull's traders. The victory can be said to have gone to the NER but the spoils, in the form of increased trade, went to the commercial interests in the new city of Hull.

The situation was not, however to everyone's taste. The *Railway Times* gave its usual gloomy prognosis:

The HBR has had to choose between two evils. It had to face competition from the NER or it had to enter into this costly and unremunerative venture. It must be confessed that the prospects for the shareholders are not improved. It must also be said that the prospects of the line just now are not very bright and the NER, if it

³⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 244. Hull Joint Docks Act, 1899.

entertains the idea of absorption again, may be able to strike a better bargain by waiting a few years.’³⁶

It was soon to be proved wrong as the HBR began to flourish.

4. Disputes between Hull Corporation and the railway companies.

The almost complete defeat of the Corporation over the joint dock presaged a lengthy period of disagreement. Incidents in 1900 and 1901 illustrated the worsening relationship between the Corporation and the railway companies. In October 1900 Hull Corporation tried to protect its financial interests in the HBR, by insisting that the new chairman of the company should be a member of the Corporation. Alderman Massey was suggested. This suggestion was quickly rebuffed. The HBR announced that the deputy chairman, William Trotter had been appointed chairman and W. S. Wright as deputy chairman, thus illustrating the widening gulf between the HBR and the Corporation.³⁷ These men were closely connected with commercial and financial interests.

³⁶ *Railway Times*, 22nd April 1899.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6th October 1900.

Central Library, Hull, *Men of the Period - England, 1897*. ‘William Shaw Wright is the present sole proprietor of one of the major firms in the seed crushing industry and corn trade of Hull, the firm of Messrs. Wright Brothers & Co., whose offices are in High Street and whose mills are situated in Wincolmlee. This firm is the oldest in the trade, which has been carried on in direct succession from father to son since its first establishment about sixty years ago. William Shaw Wright was born at Hull and educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated BA in Classical Honours, and subsequently MA. At the termination of his career at the University, he entered his father's business, in the affairs of which he has since played a part of great activity. He is a Director of the Hull and Barnsley Railway and Dock Company, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Hull Corn Trade Association, of which he was President two years ago. Messrs. Wright Brothers & Co. are both seed crushers and corn merchants upon a large scale, and are one of the very few firms in Hull combining these two trades. In Wincolmlee their three mills for seed crushing afford facilities for maintaining a large output, commensurate with the demand existing for the firm's products in seed-oils and oil-cake.

continued

In 1901 the Corporation suffered a minor defeat at the hands of the NER. The latter submitted a Bill for the replacement of the level crossing on Hedon Road by a bridge. This was a fulfilment of its obligation under the Dock Amalgamation Act of 1893, which gave the Corporation power to require the NER to abolish the existing level crossings on Hedon and Hessle Roads. The Corporation wished to double the tramlines in Hedon Road and replace steam trams with electric trams.³⁸ The NER was required to build the bridge with the Corporation bearing one third of the cost.³⁹ The Corporation wanted the bridge on the site of the existing crossing, but in order to lessen engineering difficulties the NER wanted it some distance to the east. After lengthy correspondence between the parties, from October 1900 to January 1901, agreement was reached that the bridge would be where suggested by the NER.⁴⁰

The joint dock continued to provide an opportunity for the Corporation's opposition. By November 1900 the estimated cost of the dock had risen from £1.5 to £2 million. The HBR said it could not afford more than £750,000, half the original estimate of the cost. The proposal was at a standstill and it might be necessary to go back to Parliament.⁴¹ The Corporation's continued opposition to the joint dock caused difficulties within the HBR board, which were exacerbated by Massey's presence on it. At a board meeting in August 1902, at which Massey was not present, William Trotter, presiding, said that a proposal by the Joint Committee to build the

Linseed and rape-seed are imported from Russia, India, North and South America and other sources, and cotton-seed principally from Egypt'.

³⁸ G. A. Lee, 'Hull Tramways', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham, 1968), p. 90.

The tramway in Hedon Road, which was opened in May 1889, was operated by steam trams and owned by a private company until 1900 when Hull Corporation bought the system. The steam trams crossed the NER in Hedon Road by means of a level crossing. The Corporation continued the steam trams until January 1901, when it was decided to change to electric trams, which ran elsewhere in the system. It asked the NER to replace the level crossing by a bridge. However, the dispute over the siting of the bridge delayed the start of the electric trams in Hedon road until 1903.

³⁹ City Archives, Hull, Hull, TLP 251, Correspondence between NER and Hull City Council.

⁴⁰ City Archives, Hull, Hull, TLP 251, NER Bill, 1901.

⁴¹ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 527/416, Hull Joint Dock Committee Directors' Minute Books, 17th December 1901 & 21st March 1902.

dock on a reduced scale had led to disagreement with Massey.⁴² Trotter went on to suggest that Massey's position was anomalous in that in public he had been urging the immediate construction of the joint dock for some time, but on the HBR board he had opposed its construction.⁴³ The response to his remarks soon came. In October 1902, Massey told the Corporation that he shared the view of the Corporation which had elected him onto the HBR board that the joint dock alliance would prove disastrous to the HBR. He still held that opinion, which was strengthened by the proposal to construct a much smaller dock. After discussion the Corporation reaffirmed its opposition to the alliance of the HBR and the NER in the construction and working of a joint dock which was not in the interests of the port nor the HBR and, in view of the proposal to reduce the dock's size, the Corporation considered that the scheme should be abandoned.⁴⁴

In November 1902 the Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution opposing the reduction in size of the dock. There followed a stormy meeting during which the feud between Massey and the Wilsons erupted. Arthur Wilson attacked Massey as one who was leading the opposition to the joint dock. Despite Massey being on the board of the HBR Wilson accused him of not showing trust over the matter. He went on to say that as Massey's interests in the trade of the port were not very extensive, he did not know why he enjoyed so much influence with the Corporation and other interests in the city. Massey retorted that he considered that Wilson was being far too personal and proceeded to make his position clear, saying: 'The NER are there on the top the same as they were in the old dock estate, which was sold to them for a mere song. They will be on the premises and at the top if this agreement is not destroyed. I make no secret of it and I say again to Mr. Wilson, I will do my best to destroy the joint dock bargain as long as I have any strength left.'⁴⁵ Massey was at least consistent in his opposition. He had been one of those alluded to by the *Eastern Morning News* two years earlier when it had said, 'there are those who contend that

⁴² Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce AGM, 15th November 1900.

⁴³ *Railway News*, 14th August 1902.

⁴⁴ City Archives, Hull, Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, 16th October 1903.

⁴⁵ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce AGM, 12th November 1902.

the new proposal is simply a rope which the NER is placing round the neck of the HBR.⁴⁶

In August 1902 the NER defended the reduction of the size of the joint dock on financial grounds, but the wider business community resented the proposal for a smaller dock.⁴⁷ The enterprise recently displayed by the GCR in plans for a new deep-water dock of 45 acres (18 hectares) across the Humber at Immingham had influenced public opinion in Hull on this matter.⁴⁸ At a meeting of the Hull Chamber of Commerce in October 1902 T. R. Ferens, presiding, said that the attenuated dock scheme should not have the support of the Chamber of Commerce.⁴⁹ Massey seconded the proposal. However, Arthur Wilson was able to swing opinion in his favour when he argued that the new dock would be able to accommodate 20 steamers 300 feet long, and that it was ridiculous to allege that it would ruin the HBR. Wilson carried the day when he asserted that the Chamber of Commerce should not be seen to be sabotaging the dock scheme.⁵⁰

But even the reduced scheme could not be built quickly enough for the mercantile community in Hull.⁵¹ In January 1904 the *Railway Times* complained that:

Hull is badly in need of docking facilities. Alexandra Dock is overcrowded and the consequent delay and loss to ship owners is very great. Only a very small portion of the steamers that go into Alexandra Dock can get quay room and the

⁴⁶ *Eastern Morning News*, 6th January 1899.

⁴⁷ *Railway News*, 23rd August 1902.

⁴⁸ *Railway Times*, 25th October 1902.

⁴⁹ J. Markham, *Colourful Characters*, (Beverley, 1992), pp. 50-54. Thomas Robinson Ferens (1847-1930) started his career at the age of 13 in the offices of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company. In 1868 he moved to Hull to take up the post of confidential clerk to James Reckitt, starch manufacturer. In 1874 he was promoted to works manager and eventually worked his way up to chairman. He stood as Liberal candidate for Parliament representing East Hull in 1900 and was defeated, but was successful in 1906. He became a privy councillor in 1912 and continued as an MP until his defeat in 1918. He was active with Sir James Reckitt in promoting a garden village in east Hull for the company's employees, which was opened in 1908.

⁵⁰ *Railway News*, 8th November 1902.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13th February 1904.

consequence is that goods have to be discharged into lighters which have to wait for quay berths.⁵²

On 12th October 1906, Messrs. S. Pearson & Son of London were awarded the contract for the construction of the Hull joint dock.⁵³ The approximate value of the contract was £850,000. The works were to be completed by the summer of 1910. By February 1907, work was under way.⁵⁴ However, the attenuation of the dock scheme and the slow progress put pressure on the NER. In August 1907 John Lloyd Wharton, the NER chairman, in reply to comments that the company would be in a better position at Hull if more rapid progress was made towards the completion of the joint dock, replied that it would not do for the company to spend £1½ million prematurely. He said, 'the Hull friends of the NER should see that they are doing all that could be expected of them.' Their friends, particularly the Wilson's and North Eastern Shipping Company, the formation of which will be discussed in the next section, did not seem to be impressed. A directors' meeting of that company minuted: 'The difficulties of working and increased expenses under the present congested state of the docks and consequent irregular delivery of goods and coals were commented on with a view to avoid in future the consequent delays and losses.'⁵⁵ It had been suggested that as a temporary measure for relief, some of the coal ordered for Hull could be shipped from other ports and, if necessary, the NER were willing to do something in this direction as a temporary expedient.⁵⁶ This measure was not adopted. It would have been highly unpopular in Hull, particularly if coal had been sent to Hartlepool.

Gossip began to circulate in railway circles regarding the future of the HBR. *The Railway Times* reported: 'Negotiations are being undertaken with the LYR, but

⁵² *Railway Times*, 16th January 1904.

⁵³ The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 527/416, Hull Joint Dock Committee Directors' Minute Books, 12th October 1906.

⁵⁴ City Archives, Hull, SRL, NER Half-Yearly reports and Accounts, 8th February 1907.

⁵⁵ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, DEW (2) 41.9, Wilson's and North Eastern Shipping Company, Limited. Directors' Minute Books. Vol.1, 19th November 1907.

⁵⁶ *Railway Times*, 9th August 1907.

nothing definite is forthcoming.⁵⁷ Another report alleged that there was a proposal afoot for the sale of HBR jointly to the LYR and MR.⁵⁸ In fact there was no basis to any of these rumours, but at the Chamber of Commerce AGM in 1904 Massey proposed that a committee be appointed to take such action as they deem fit with the view to obtaining active interest by one or more of the large railway companies, other than the NER, in the development of traffic over the HBR.⁵⁹ The rumours also prompted Hull Chamber of Trade is to appoint a committee.⁶⁰ There is no report of conclusions from either committee.

The continuing antipathy between the Corporation and the NER was illustrated by two case, one concerning level crossings and the other concerning the water supply to Hull docks. In 1905 the NER submitted a Bill which contained, *inter alia*, a proposal for a pier on the Humber foreshore to the east of Hull with a branch railway some 5½ miles (8 km) long connecting with the Hull to Withernsea branch. The Corporation was concerned that extra traffic generated by the pier would pass over the level crossings on the Victoria Dock branch and informed the NER that it would vehemently oppose the proposal. In the face of this opposition the NER dropped the scheme, having been once more thwarted by the Corporation.⁶¹

Hull Corporation supplied water to the NER until 1903 when, in order to obtain additional supplies, the latter began to use water from boreholes on its own land at Hessle. Hull Corporation asked for a declaration that it was *ultra vires* for the NER to do this. Although the Corporation would not undertake to give the necessary supply it sought to restrain the NER from doing so, arguing that the Dock Amalgamation Act of 1893 and the Railway Clauses Consolidation Act prohibited the NER from supplying itself with water as the supply was derived from land acquired for railway purposes only. Mr. Justice Jones decided for the NER in December 1905 and the Court of Appeal came to the same decision in July 1906.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Railway Times*, 19th November 1904.

⁵⁸ *Railroad and Transport Gazette*, 4th October 1904,

⁵⁹ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce AGM, 16th November 1904.

⁶⁰ *Railroad and Transport Gazette*, 16th December 1904.

⁶¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 324, NER Bill, 1905.

⁶² *Railroad and Transport Gazette*, 27th July 1906.

The Corporation's antipathy even encouraged it to try to build alternative facilities for shipping. In 1906 the Corporation proposed the erection of a pier and wharf on the Humber at the Western Reservation, where cargoes could be dealt with at any state of the tide. The cost was estimated at £334,000. The scheme was defeated by a show of hands at a council meeting but a poll of ratepayers was demanded. The results showed 13,065 votes for the scheme and 3,498 against. However, some 33,000 of those eligible did not bother to vote.⁶³ In July the enabling Bill went before Parliament. The NER opposed the Bill on the grounds that it was not the Corporation's business to propose such an enterprise. Although the Bill passed the Commons Committee the Lords rejected it. The provision of low-water accommodation by the Corporation was unnecessary as the NER had powers to provide it at Albert Dock, and the scheme of the Corporation was seen for what it was; an attempt to enter into competition with the NER.⁶⁴ The abortive proposal cost the ratepayers £11,965.17s.0d. (£11,965.85p.)⁶⁵

The Corporation was, however, equally prepared to use public money in support of the HBR. In January 1907 it considered a Bill authorising the HBR to construct a pier in the Humber westward of the entrance to Alexandra Dock at a cost of £153,120.⁶⁶ The pier was connected to HBR lines but not to the NER. The NER raised no objection to the proposal as it was in the process of developing Riverside Quay. The Corporation was empowered to contribute up to £150,000 to the scheme and decided to give a grant of the maximum allowed, but this was opposed by the Local Government Board, whereupon the HBR proposed to raise the capital itself.⁶⁷ Despite a petition against the proposal by Earle's Shipbuilders, on the grounds that the pier would obstruct the entrance to their shipyard, the Bill received the Royal Assent.⁶⁸

⁶³ *Railroad and Transport Gazette*, 26th January and 9th February 1906.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 26th January and 3rd August 1906.

⁶⁵ City Archives, Hull, Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, 19th November 1906.

⁶⁶ *Railway Gazette*, 22nd March 1907.

⁶⁷ City Archives, Hull, Hull Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, 28th January 1907.

⁶⁸ City Archives, Hull, DPD/14/39, Alexandra Dock Pier Act, 1907

The foregoing episodes illustrate the enduring hostility shown by Hull Corporation to the NER, although the former was still prepared to assist the HBR where possible, as exemplified by the case of the Alexandra Dock pier. The Corporation's relationship with the joint dock committee had started badly and deteriorated further. The HBR was inextricably linked with the joint dock scheme and the Corporation's opposition and hostility to it, as exemplified by Massey, was to bode ill for future relations between the two bodies.

5. Railway company shipping enterprises.

As we have seen the developing alliance between the NER and HBR was in no small measure a consequence of the logic of economic competition on a wider scale. Although it was dominant in North-east England the NER was always mindful of competition from ports elsewhere in the country and of threats from the railway companies on its periphery. These other companies were considering how short-sea shipping might be better integrated into their business activities. Indeed, the acquisition of the Hull Docks in 1893 had been the first step by the NER towards closer involvement with shipping activities. Recognising that the MSLR at Grimsby and the LYR at Goole were in a position to jeopardise its interests, it promoted measures designed to increase its part in shipping activity at Hull.⁶⁹ In 1896 it prompted the amalgamation of the firms of Ringrose & Company and Hutchinson & Sons into a reconstructed shipping line under the name of the Hull and Netherlands Steam Shipping Company. The NER secured an interest in the firm and subsidised its operations. Henry Tennant, of the NER, was the company chairman. Although the venture proved unprofitable, the NER decided that its shipping activities should not be abandoned.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ D. J. Starkey & R. Gorski, 'Our Little Company: The Wilsons and North Eastern Railway Shipping Company Limited, 1906-1935', in *Harbours and Havens: Essays in Port History in Honour of Gordon Jackson*, (St. Johns, Newfoundland, 1999), pp. 63-88.

⁷⁰ R. J. Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914. An Economic History*. (Leicester, 1976), p. 172.

Thus, in 1900, the NER sought to subscribe £120,000 to the provision and use of steam vessels for services between Hull and the Netherlands.⁷¹ The service was already being operated by the Hull and Netherlands Steam Shipping Company in conjunction with Dutch Railways. The local press welcomed the NER's attempt to develop the passenger and goods traffic between Hull and the continent, arguing that with the Dutch railways on the one side of the water and the NER on the other, Hull would become a very strong rival to Grimsby and Goole, especially the latter.⁷²

Not everyone was so enthusiastic. Hull Chamber of Commerce and Shipping was concerned about preferential rates on imported foreign produce, a long-standing concern with British traders, and wished the Corporation to press for safeguards.⁷³ The chamber held a meeting to discuss the NER Bill. Arthur Wilson, representing the largest ship owners in Hull with 85 ships, and still a director of the NER, had no objection to the Bill. However, Joseph Atkinson, who owned three ships, said that shipping men thought that Wilson's favoured the scheme because they had a private arrangement with the NER, a claim denied by Wilson.⁷⁴ But Wilson's were under pressure in their European trade from Goole and Grimsby and, although they had no specific agreement at the time, they probably foresaw the prospect of future co-operation with the NER, which came to pass some five years later. As we have seen, Hull Corporation distrusted any proposal by the NER and opposed the Bill, causing the *Railway Times* to comment in exasperation:

The NER only have to present a Bill of any sort and Hull Corporation is up in arms and marches blindly into opposition. Like Paddy, whose politics consisted of being 'agin' the government, so the Hull Corporation and traders, with the exception of Wilson's are 'agin' the NER.⁷⁵

⁷¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 250, North Eastern Railway (Steam Vessels) Bill, 1900.

⁷² *Eastern Morning News*, 18th November 1899.

⁷³ S. J. McLean, 'The English Railway and Canal Commission of 1888'. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (November 1905), pp. 10-27.

⁷⁴ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce meeting, 24th January 1900.

⁷⁵ *Railway Times*, 3rd February 1900.

A problem for the NER at Hull was the lack of co-operation between railways and shipping lines despite its 1900 foray into shipping. Wilsons' difficulties with European trade provided an opportunity to establish a joint Wilson's and NER shipping line, making NER capital available as required but leaving the day to day running of the company to Wilson's.⁷⁶ A 10-year agreement was concluded in 1905 between Wilson's and the NER to run steamships to certain ports. Thereafter the agreement could be concluded by either side giving 12 months notice.⁷⁷ The Wilson's and North Eastern Railway Shipping Company Limited was incorporated 6th March 1906. The company purchased seven ships from the Wilson Line, which would operate continental services from Hull.⁷⁸ On 19th March 1906 Oswald Sanderson, who had been Wilson's continental agent, was elected chairman.⁷⁹

The establishment of the joint shipping line encouraged the HBR to enter the business. All the other railway companies in the area had obtained steamship powers: in fact, the MSLR had obtained them as far back as 1864.⁸⁰ The LYR had obtained

⁷⁶ D. J. Starkey, 'Ownership structures in the British Shipping Industry: The Case of Hull, 1820-1916', *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 8, No. 2, December 1996, pp. 90-95.

⁷⁷ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, DEW (2)/2.2, Thomas Wilson, Sons & Co. Ltd. Directors' Minute Book, 2nd November 1905.

⁷⁸ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, DEW (2) 41/1, Wilson's and North Eastern Railway Shipping Company Limited, Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The subscribers were: C. H. Wilson, Arthur Wilson, Edward Kenneth Wilson and Oswald Sanderson, representing Wilson's, and George S. Gibb, John L. Wharton, David Dale and Henry Tennant, representing the NER. The authorised capital was £250,000.

⁷⁹ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, DEW (2) 41.9, Wilson's and North Eastern Shipping Company, Limited. Directors' Minute Books, Vol. 1.

⁸⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 51, MSLR Steamboats Bill, 1864. A Bill for the establishment of steamboat services between Grimsby and Rotterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg, Bordeaux, Dieppe, Dunkirk, Flushing, Lübek, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Revel, Cronstadt, St. Petersburg and Königsberg. The company was authorised to raise £250,000. Dunkirk, Dieppe and Bordeaux were removed from preamble by the Commons Committee on 23rd June, 1864. Hull Dock Company and Corporation unsuccessfully petitioned against the Bill on the grounds that Hull had much trade with the ports mentioned in the Bill and much damage would be done to this by diverting it to Grimsby.

them in 1904 and the NER in 1900 and 1905.⁸¹ The HBR now wished to receive a share of the trade with the continent. The HBR Steam Vessels Act was backed by Massey, who had shipping interests in Hull, and received the Royal Assent on 20th July 1906. It gave the HBR powers to operate steam vessels either alone or with another company between Hull and continental ports.⁸² Wilson's initially opposed it but in 1907 an agreement was reached that the HBR would not to run steamers to Stettin, Danzig, Copenhagen, Århus or Stockholm for as long as Wilson's ran an efficient and satisfactory service to these ports. In return Wilson's agreed not to give undue preference to any other railway company over the HBR.⁸³ In August, Massey recommended a twice-weekly Hull to Rotterdam service. In November two vessels were chartered at £400 and £430 per month respectively. There were to be sailings every Wednesday and Saturday from Hull and on Thursday and Saturday from Rotterdam.⁸⁴

No records have been found of cargoes but the last entry for operating expenses was for the half-year ending 31st December 1907. All the figures had shown a loss, the total for the three half years of operation being £4,558. The largest loss of £1,913 had been for the half-year ending June 1907. This was put down to the boats having to run light owing to inland navigation on the continent being obstructed by the freezing of the Rhine.⁸⁵ In August the chairman claimed that the losses had been more than offset by extra railway traffic. However, things were not as they seemed. The HBR had begun negotiations with the NER in July 1907 with a view to discontinuing HBR sailings if it were to receive a share of 27½% of imports, excluding local traffic, from the Hull and Netherlands Steamship Company, in which

⁸¹ *Railway Gazette* 21st October 1904. On 17th October 1904 The Goole Steamship Company was transferred to the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway for £26,772. The company had previously been jointly owned with the ACN.

⁸² City Archives, Hull, TLP 267, HBR Steamships Bill, 1905.

⁸³ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, DEW (2)/4.17, Heads of Agreement between the HBR and Thomas Wilson, Sons & Co. Ltd. dated 23rd April 1907.

⁸⁴ *Hull Daily Mail*, 27th November 1906.

⁸⁵ *Railway Times*, 10th August 1907.

the NER had an interest. The NER took over the service in September.⁸⁶ The *Railway Times* reported that in early 1908 a new daily steamship service, in which the NER was interested, (The Hull and Netherlands Steamship Company) would commence between Hull and Rotterdam.⁸⁷

Robbins asserts that the shortness of the venture and Massey's role in the promotion of the enterprise indicate that it was an attempt by the Corporation, through Massey, to wage war against the NER.⁸⁸ Although it did achieve 27½% of the rail haulage of imported goods of the Hull and Netherlands Company, there is no evidence that it was a case of the Corporation using the HBR to place yet another barb in the side of the NER. Indeed, the relations between the HBR and NER had improved to the extent that it was unlikely that the HBR would allow itself be used in this way.

At the half-yearly shareholders meeting of the NER in February 1907 it was announced that the NER would start a steamboat service in conjunction with the LYR between Hull and the new Belgian port of Zeebrugge. The steamers would berth at Riverside Quay, the new NER deep-water pier.⁸⁹ This opened on 11th May 1907. The LYR and NER ran trains to and from the station adjoining the quay, so that passengers and their luggage passed directly from the trains to the steamers.⁹⁰ In July 1908 an agreement was signed between the LYR and Thomas Wilson, Sons & Company for the pooling of Copenhagen traffic to Hull, Goole and Newcastle.⁹¹

After a shaky start the NER's foray into shipping ended successfully with the Hull and Netherlands Company and, subsequently, the NER and Wilson's Company and the Zeebrugge service in conjunction with the LYR. Wilson's difficulties had

⁸⁶ Hoole Archives, Darlington, KH 1334, Agreement between Hull & Holland Joint Committee and HBR.

M. Robbins, 'The Hull & Barnsley at Sea', *Journal of Transport History*, First series, Vol. 4, No. 2, (July 1971), pp. 183-188.

⁸⁷ *Railway Times*, 28th December 1907.

⁸⁸ Robbins, 'The Hull & Barnsley at Sea', p. 187.

⁸⁹ City Archives, Hull. SRL, NER Half-Yearly reports and Accounts, 8th February 1907.

⁹⁰ *Railroad and Transport Gazette*, 11th May 1907.

⁹¹ University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library Archives, DEW (2)/2, Thomas Wilson Sons & Co. Ltd. Directors' Minute Book, 20th July 1908.

been beneficial to the NER, providing a springboard for success and strengthening the links between Wilson's and the NER. The growing rapprochement between the NER and HBR was also furthered by their shared shipping interests.

This chapter has illustrated the shifting relationships and alliances between the players on the railway and shipping scene in Hull. The NER and HBR had moved to a position which, if not friendship, was a recognition of the need to co-operate for their mutual benefit. Wilson's, ever pragmatic and opportunistic, had entered a joint venture with the NER, whom they had once opposed to the extent that C. H. Wilson had been a force behind the formation of the HBR, a company which he had been prepared to damage in 1888 when it suited his business interests. The one enduring feature of the period was the implacable hostility displayed by the Corporation towards the NER. The next six years leading up to the Great War were to be the most successful of all for the Hull railway companies. The Corporation was to become alienated from the HBR and its policies would be perceived as obstruction rather than assistance.

CHAPTER 9.

AMALGAMATION AND OBSTRUCTION AND THE END OF COMPETITION, 1908-1921.

1. Introduction.

Although the years leading up to the Great War were, in many ways, difficult ones for Britain's railways, the period marked the rising fortunes of the NER and HBR.¹ Total tonnage through the docks increased by more than 50% between 1905 and 1913.² As detailed in chapter 7, both the NER and HBR had secured rail links to South Yorkshire and the prosperity of Hull as a major coal port seemed assured. There were problems, however, caused by proposals for amalgamation among other major railway companies, which could threaten the regional rail duopoly of the NER and the HBR.³

Concerns about amalgamations and increased operating costs led the NER and HBR to propose a joint working agreement in 1909, but the Corporation defeated the scheme using its statutory powers, further alienating the HBR. It then continued its programme of obstructing the NER at every opportunity. The hostility shown to the NER by the Corporation is vividly illustrated by the Western Reservation dispute of 1911 and the graving dock dispute of 1913, both of which will be examined in some detail in this chapter. The opening of the joint dock in 1914 marked the high point of NER and HBR co-operation. Unfortunately, the outbreak of war brought an end to these golden days of the railway companies.

The struggle between the Corporation, Hull's business interests and the various transport concerns serving the city had, of course, always taken place in the

¹ R. J. Irving, 'The Profitability and Performance of British Railways, 1870-1914', *The Economic History Review*, New series, Vol. 3, No. 1, (February 1978), pp. 46-47.

² Figure 34. Hull Dock Tonnage, 1848-1912.

³ P. J. Cain, 'Railway Combination and Government', 1900-1914', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 25, No. 4, (November 1972), pp. 623-629.

context of national and regional politics. For much of the nineteenth century policies and debates operating at these levels had for the most part, informed rather than determined local priorities. But the balance of power between Hull's traders, shippers and railway companies was eventually determined by the vote of Parliament. As we have seen in previous chapters national politics began to intrude more systematically as the nineteenth century drew to a close.

Proposals for amalgamation among railway companies brought a consensus that co-operation could provide benefits in the shape of greater efficiency. As we have seen in previous chapters one effect was the growing co-operation between the NER and HBR with regard to Hull and the rapid rationalisation of proposals from these and other companies for new railways to serve South Yorkshire. The logical conclusion to amalgamation was seen by some, and not only those on the left of the political spectrum, as nationalisation of the whole railway system.⁴ The Labour party, from its founding in 1900, had embraced the basic principle of railway nationalisation, and its case was argued in detail in 1906.⁵ The view was re-stated in a pamphlet published in 1912.⁶

The support of some traders for nationalisation, a somewhat neglected aspect of the debate, was a result of the growing dissatisfaction with the existing system of state regulation of freight rates and charges. The problems of the system for the railway companies were made worse by pressure from an increasingly well-organised workforce for higher wages and better conditions. A threatened railway strike was averted in 1907 by the introduction of Conciliation Boards which, in theory, allowed workers to resolve their grievances with their employers.⁷ The system failed and, in August 1911, the leaders of the railway unions called a national

⁴ D. C. H. Watts, 'British Railway Nationalisation: A re-examination of the causes, 1866-1921', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (Summer 2002), pp. 6-8.

⁵ R. W. Cunningham, *Should our Railways be Nationalised?* (Dunfermline, 1906).

⁶ E. Davies, *The Case for Railway Nationalisation*, (1912).

[http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/pamphlets/Transport/transportpamphletpages/the_railways.htm#generated-subheading5], (April 2004).

⁷ D. Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 11-14.

strike.⁸ Within two days the Liberal government secured the end of the strike by putting pressure on the railway companies to increase wages, agreeing that the companies could recoup increased labour costs by raising charges.⁹ This commitment was met by the provisions of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1913.¹⁰

There was an immediate outcry from railway freight customers, as a result of which the government set up a Royal Commission to examine the relationship between the railways and the state. However, the commission was suspended on the outbreak of war, when the government took control of the railways, and it did not report.¹¹ After the war the government retained control of the railways until 1921. The Liberal government stopped short of nationalisation of the system and established four grouped mainline railway companies by the Railways Act of 1921.¹² The NER and HBR became part of the new eastern group, soon to become the London and North Eastern Railway. In terms of railway politics the Great War was a catalyst, crystallising into distinct policies aspects of a debate which had been taking place for well over a decade.

By the time of the Great War relations between the HBR and NER had become very close, symbolised by their co-operation in the joint dock project and the Saltend partnership, which will be described in this chapter. At a local level the power of the Corporation to interfere in the working of the HBR had been much

⁸ P. S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen. The History of the National Union of Railwaymen*, (London, 1963), pp. 275-308.

⁹ N. McKillop, *The Lighted Flame*, (London, 1950), pp. 88-98.

¹⁰ R. K. Webb, *Modern England*, (London, 1969), p. 468.

K. Brooker, *The Hull Strikes of 1911*, (Hull, 1979), pp. 28-34.

¹¹ M. Reed, 'Who Runs the Railways?' *Journal of the Railway and Canal Historical Society*, Vol. 34, Part 8, (Railway & Canal Historical Society, 2004), p. 529.

P. J. Cain, 'Railway Combination and Government', 1900-1914', *The Economic History Review*, Vol.25, No. 4, (November 1972), pp. 637-638.

¹² L. Macassey, 'The Railways Act, 1921', *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, 3rd Series, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1922, pp. 162-175.

K. Greives, 'Sir Eric Geddes, Lloyd George and the Transport Problem, 1918-1921'. *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd Series, Vol. 13, No. 1, (March 1992), pp. 24-36.

Cain, 'Railway Combination and Government', p. 633. Cain argues that the idea of nationalisation could never be expected to find favour in a 'businessman's Parliament'.

reduced by the rebuttal of its claim for representation on the joint dock committee. In fact, the Corporation played virtually no part in the life of the railways of Hull after the Great War until its vain attempt to prevent the merger between the HBR and NER in 1920. By this time it was a lone voice representing small traders, who would not accept that grouping of railways was the way to improve efficiency. Its views were obsolescent.

The joint dock was a mixed blessing for the HBR. Almost on the day of its opening it had been taken over by the military. Furthermore the HBR had to pay for it out of revenue rather than capital. The Great War proved disastrous as receipts from coal exports declined from £390,996 in 1913 to £157,096 in 1918, and never again reached their pre-war levels.¹³ An additional factor was that many of the collieries in the Barnsley area were in decline and the focus had shifted to the concealed coalfield. The line completed by the HBR, in conjunction with the GCR, to tap the new coalfield was not completed until 1916, by which time coal traffic was experiencing an irrecoverable decrease. As the HBR was intrinsically a coal carrying railway it was becoming obvious even to its directors, although they would not admit it publicly, that it was no longer viable as an independent concern. Although the reduction in the coal business affected the NER, its multifarious traffic, including passengers, of whom the HBR had very few, made it much less vulnerable. Working expenses as a proportion of revenue rose sharply on both the NER and HBR after the end of the war.¹⁴ Thus, despite the opposition of the Corporation amalgamation between the HBR and NER was inevitable. It was Eric Geddes, the Minister of Transport who, in his time with the NER, had advocated closer ties between the NER and HBR, who finally achieved what the Corporation had fought against for nearly forty years and brought about the demise of the HBR.

¹³ B. Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway* Vol. 2, (Sheffield, 1980), p. 96.

¹⁴ Figures 35 & 36. Working expenses as a proportion of revenue.

2. Proposed railway amalgamations and their effects on the NER and HBR.

In 1858 the GNR and the MSLR had obtained parliamentary powers for a traffic agreement which was to last for fifty years.¹⁵ By 1908 the agreement was due to expire and the two companies decided to amalgamate.¹⁶ Hull Corporation found itself allied with the NER and HBR when it decided to oppose this on the grounds that the GNR had no docks of its own and therefore no inducement to forward traffic from its own lines in Yorkshire and the Midlands to one Humber port rather than another. After amalgamation the GCR ports of Grimsby and Immingham would effectively become ports of the GNR, thus greatly affecting the favourable position held by Hull. The Railway and Canal Commissioners ruled against the applicants.¹⁷ The GNR and GCR were therefore forced to approach Parliament. One of the objectors had been the GER, which feared the consequences of amalgamation between the GCR and the GER's chief competitor. After talks the GER was invited to join the amalgamation and accepted. But in 1909 the companies' Bill passed through Parliament with a majority of only 25 votes. Alarmed by the smallness of the majority and fearful of the imposition of restrictive amendments the plans for amalgamation were abandoned.¹⁸

Secure in its territorial monopoly, the NER had tried as far as possible to adhere to a policy of neutrality. It had neither the desire nor the need to alienate companies that only competed with it at its margins. However, in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century the balance of trade between the companies in the north of England had begun to change. The LYR, GCR and LNWR had appeared as strong competitors for the industrial traffic of the North and the Midlands. The focus of the struggle as far as the NER was concerned was the Humber ports. As we have seen in preceding chapters, the integration of GCR railway and shipping services, the developments at Goole by the LYR and ACN and the opening of the Manchester

¹⁵ G. Dow, *Great Central. Vol. 1*, (London, 1959), p. 190.

¹⁶ G. Dow, *Great Central. Vol. 3*, (London, 1971), pp. 116-121.

¹⁷ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, February & March 1908.

¹⁸ G. Dow, *Great Central, Vol. 3*, pp.120-121.

Cain, 'Railway Combination and Government', p. 636.

Ship Canal had all been factors influencing the NER's purchase of the Hull Dock Company and its entry into shipping enterprises. But, just as the NER was concluding its shipping agreement with Wilson's in 1904, the LYR and LNWR were negotiating a working agreement as a preliminary step towards fully co-operative working.¹⁹ They produced their proposals in June 1908.²⁰ The gathering ground for traffic had previously been open to any of the companies operating in the region but the LNWR and LYR co-operation shifted the balance in favour of this Lancashire and London combination to the detriment of the North-east ports.²¹

Therefore, in 1906 the NER undertook a comprehensive review of its relationships with competing companies. The person charged with this review was Eric Campbell Geddes, who had joined the NER in 1904 and was the company's commercial agent. Geddes was a product of the NER's progressive policy of management recruitment and training introduced by George Gibb, who had become general manager in 1891.²² Gibb believed that the existing officers of the company were conscientious and experienced but their focus was too narrow, conditioned as it was by their railway training. As part of a strategy of introducing 'fresh blood' he had initiated the traffic apprentice scheme in 1897, mainly for graduates. One non-academic recruit who had particularly impressed Gibb as 'possessing uncommon energy and adaptability' was Geddes, who had previous experience of railways in the United States of America but none in Britain.²³

¹⁹ J. Marshall, *The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway, Vol. 2*, (Newton Abbot, 1970), p. 256.

²⁰ Cain, 'Railway Combination and Government', p. 633.

²¹ R. J. Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914. An Economic History*, (Leicester, 1976), p. 230.

²² J. Simmons & G. Biddle, (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, (Oxford, 1997), p. 176.

K. Greives, *Sir Eric Geddes - Business and Government in War and Peace*, (Manchester, 1989).

Eric Campbell Geddes (1875-1937) joined the NER in 1904 and became general manager in 1914. He was co-opted into Government service during the war and subsequently became Minister of Transport in Lloyd George's coalition Government. He conceived the idea of streamlining and re-organising the railways into large groups and was responsible for the passing of the Railways Act, 1921.

²³ Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914. An Economic History*, p. 216.

continued

Geddes was asked to consider the effect of increased competition on the NER's existing policy of a 'fair exchange' of traffic with other companies. Geddes argued that the NER's policy of not seeking alliances had caused damage to its trading position, particularly at Hull. This damage would become greater as a result of the LYR and LNWR joint initiative, and further development by the GCR at Immingham. Geddes thought the NER was favourably placed in relation to the bilateral exchange of traffic. Despite its presence at Goole, the LYR was seen as a potential ally of the NER, as the latter received more traffic for Hull from it than any other company. He also considered that the NER might wish to contemplate an alliance with the LYR and LNWR. This was a radical step, but one that Geddes said would have two advantages. It would lessen the loss of traffic due to the co-operative working of the LYR and LNWR. But, more importantly, it would be the strongest alliance of large railways as far as Humber traffic was concerned, and would curb the activities of the GCR at Grimsby and Immingham. He recommended that closer relations should be fostered with the HBR. Geddes' advice, with the exception of the fostering of closer relations with the HBR, was not taken, but his findings made the NER more keenly aware of the dangers of amalgamations among other railways, particularly among the other East Coast companies.²⁴

It came as no surprise when, in February 1909, the NER chairman, John Wharton, expressed disquiet about the proposed working agreement between the GNR, GER and GCR. He stressed that care must be taken to ensure that agreements, amounting to an amalgamation, did not damage the interests of existing railways. He reiterated the view that the proposed agreement presented particular danger to the NER's interests in the Humber region. He particularly emphasised the threat posed by the transfer of GNR traffic from the north of the river, where it was worked in co-operation with the NER, to the south, where it would be in direct competition. Added

R. J. Irving, 'British Railway investment and innovation 1900-1914: An analysis with special reference to the North Eastern and London & North Western Railway Companies', *Business History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, January 1971, pp. 58-60.

T. R. Gourvish, 'A British business elite: The chief executive managers of the railway industry 1850-1922', *Business History Review*, Vol. 48, No. 3, August 1973, pp. 289-316.

²⁴ Grieves, *Sir Eric Geddes*, p.6.

to this was the fact that the GCR was constructing a large deep-water dock at Immingham. Until it was satisfied that its interests were safeguarded the NER would oppose any Bills for amalgamation.²⁵ The HBR was similarly concerned. In August 1909 the chairman, Wright, had referred to the proposed GNR, GER and GCR amalgamation and said it would not be to the benefit of the HBR, which had already lost coal traffic to the GNR and GER.²⁶

3. The proposal for amalgamation of the NER and HBR, 1909.

Despite the unfavourable national context symbolised by the defeat of the proposal for the tripartite amalgamation the NER and HBR decided that in view of the common competitive threat facing them from amalgamations of other companies they would seek to work together. They were already bound together in the joint dock project.

In September 1909 the *Railway Times* indulged in prophecy with regard to such an amalgamation. It saw the shared fears of the NER and the HBR as a factor that would draw them closer together, speculating that:

Previous attempts [at amalgamation] have failed because of the opposition of Hull interests. Today such a proposal would be received with a better grace by local interests, because competition between the HBR and NER is rather more nominal than real.²⁷

The same periodical was delighted when, two months later, its prophecy appeared to be on the verge of fulfilment. It proclaimed:

²⁵ *Railway Times*, 13th February 1909.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14th August 1909.

The DVR, which opened through to junctions with the GNR main line and the GNR/GER joint line at Bessacar, near Doncaster in May 1909, took much coal traffic from South Yorkshire which would otherwise have been carried by the HBR.

²⁷ *Railway Times*, 9th September 1909.

The HBR and NER have provisionally adopted a working agreement proposed from January next for fifty years. This has no doubt been brought about in response to triple alliances between other companies, in particular that of the GNR, GCR and GER who are bound to favour Grimsby and, in due course, the new port of Immingham.²⁸

The periodical, no doubt, thought that the merger would be eagerly supported in Hull. This was to prove a mistaken assumption.

At first all went well. Negotiations between the NER and HBR led, on 1st November 1909, to a proposed 50-year agreement between them.²⁹ The key points were:

1. Junctions to be maintained and worked at joint cost to enable traffic to be interchanged between the docks and railways of the two companies.
2. All revenue from traffic commencing or terminating in Hull and from the docks to be divided between the two companies.
3. The revenue to be divided in the proportions of the corresponding revenue derived from the railways and docks during 1908.
4. The cost of new works and of maintaining them to be borne as agreed or settled by arbitration.

In addition the HBR was to be allowed to run passenger trains over NER lines into Paragon Station free of payment.

As suggested above, a factor persuading the companies to consider an agreement was the imminent opening of Immingham Dock. This would particularly impact on the HBR which, in 1909, owned the largest dock on the Humber, Alexandra Dock. A future problem for the HBR, however, was that when the new Hull joint dock opened the NER would have equal facilities to compete for trade which at present could only be handled at Alexandra Dock. The delay in the

²⁸ *Railway Times*, 6th November 1909.

²⁹ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, 1st November 1909. HBR & NER Agreement of 1909.

construction of the joint dock had thus been to the narrow business advantage of the HBR and the company was content that the facilities at that dock were to be attenuated. Nonetheless it foresaw a considerable diminution in the traffic using Alexandra Dock, and this could only be to the benefit of the NER. The NER had lent the HBR its share of the joint dock costs placing the latter in a position of borrowing money to finance a dock which would compete with its own. A pooling arrangement between the HBR and NER could relieve financial pressures that may have otherwise resulted.

An additional problem for the HBR was its poor performance as a passenger carrier. When the line had been promoted it was anticipated that it would become a useful passenger line but, in over twenty years, very little such traffic had been attracted. One reason for this was that the route of the HBR avoided all centres of population. This leads to the suspicion that early promises regarding passengers were more to do with gaining political support for the line than sound business sense. With running powers to Sheffield over the MR, obtained in 1905, it hoped to pick up some longer distance traffic and, nearer home, dormitory suburbs and villages were springing up west of Hull, at places such as Kirk Ella and Willerby, settlements through which the HBR passed.³⁰ However its terminal passenger station at Cannon Street was inconveniently situated some distance from the city centre. To extend the line to a more central point in the city would be prohibitively expensive. The proposed agreement to run trains into the NER's Paragon Station would be of great advantage to the HBR. The lack of interchange points between the two companies had, moreover, been a source of inconvenience to traders and detrimental to the overall to the efficiency of the port. Enhanced facilities would allow traders access to the whole of the dock and railway system of Hull. The new connections would be of particular benefit to the West Yorkshire coal trade, which was unable to use the facilities at Alexandra Dock except by a circuitous route.

It may have been expected that the Hull traders would live up to the *Railway Times*' expectations and welcome the proposed agreement and the Chamber of Commerce did so in December 1909 by way of a resolution supporting the

³⁰ *Railway Times*, 11th March 1905. The MR granted running powers to the HBR from Cudworth Junction to Sheffield on 1st July 1905. A through service commenced on 2nd October 1905.

agreement.³¹ However, the smaller merchants and retailers demurred. The Chamber of Trade, The Hull Fruit Merchants Trade Protection Society, The Hull & District Trades Council, The Humber Coal Exporters and Shippers, The East Hull Progressive Party and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners all condemned the agreement.³² The city traders were split. The Corporation was increasingly dominated by small traders, who feared the reinstatement of railway monopoly at Hull. These smaller traders argued that duplication of resources at Hull gave a measure of flexibility rather than inefficiency. They were unable to accept the business logic increasingly accepted within the railway industry which was that amalgamation would reduce costs by doing away with duplication.

Despite such evidence of opposition from smaller traders and of Hull Corporation's entrenched opposition to the NER, on 27th November the *Railway Times* indulged in some premature speculation noting that the agreement between the HBR and NER did not need parliamentary approval. The assent of Hull Corporation was necessary but the periodical expected that this would be given. The *Railway Gazette* was a little more cautious, announcing:

The two railways which have an interest in Hull have wisely decided to cease their competition in order to enable the port of Hull to compete more effectively with its rivals on the Humber. This consideration should have due weight with Hull Corporation whose agreement is necessary before the arrangement can become operative.³³

In accordance with the Act of 1880 the HBR was required to obtain the consent of the Corporation, and it approached that body in November 1909.³⁴ The Corporation was totally inflexible and, on 3rd December, issued what amounted to an

³¹ *Railway Gazette*, 7th January 1910.

³² City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, November & December 1909.

³³ *Railway Gazette*, 5th November 1909.

³⁴ City Archives, Hull, Letter from HBR to Corporation dated 1st November 1909 with copy agreement.

ultimatum, stipulating that it would only withdraw its opposition subject to the following conditions:

1. The Corporation was to have power to call for a revision of the agreement after an agreed period of years.
2. Its veto was to be preserved as regards any further combination between the two companies.
3. Riverside Quay was to be open for the traffic of all railway companies.
4. The facilities at present enjoyed by the traders of Hull were to be preserved.
5. A Conciliation Board with an independent chairman was to be constituted to resolve any dispute and the Corporation should have the power to terminate the joint agreement.
6. Both railway companies were to co-operate with the Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce in obtaining, if necessary, Parliamentary sanction for the agreement.

The Corporation's stance was supported by the usual interest groups; bodies representing the smaller traders, and the South Yorkshire coal owners. The latter foresaw the possible erosion of their advantageous position on rates *vis à vis* the West Yorkshire collieries, stating: 'Those coal owners whose pits are in South Yorkshire are of relatively greater importance, as far as Hull is concerned, than those situated in West Yorkshire.'³⁵ This was true, as the great majority of hard steam coal came from South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire collieries and little from West Yorkshire.

The railway companies refused to accept the conditions laid down by the Corporation which, in February 1910, refused to recommend the proposed agreement. However, in May the Corporation, aware that it could be cast as the wrecker of the agreement, appeared to have second thoughts and agreed to give the matter further consideration. The NER entertained hopes of a compromise. It also considered mounting a challenge to the Railway and Canal Commissioners on the grounds that that the assent of the Corporation could be said to have been 'unreasonably withheld' as defined in the Act of 1880, but this was unlikely to

³⁵ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, January 1910.

succeed without unanimity between the affected railways.³⁶ However, the HBR was happy with the *status quo*. The company was enjoying good results and it was in no hurry for the completion of the joint dock scheme nor too concerned if the arrangement with the NER fell through. By November 1910 the plans for the working agreement were dead.³⁷ In this way a further opportunity for co-operation between the railway companies at Hull foundered on the rocks of the suspicious conservatism of the small traders and the recalcitrance of the Corporation.

At the HBR shareholders' meeting in February 1910 John Donnell, from the floor, alleged that there was no longer any friendly feeling on the part of the Corporation towards the HBR. The Town Clerk rejected this, saying that the Corporation had always done its best to help and protect the HBR, to the extent that the NER had described the railway as 'the Corporation's pet'.³⁸ This sentiment, superficially at least, did not appear to be reciprocated by the HBR. In November, William Shaw Wright, addressing Hull Chamber of Commerce said that he deeply regretted that the agreement with the NER had not come about and blamed Hull Corporation's negative attitude.³⁹ But Wright was a seed crusher with a large business in the city and prominent in the affairs of the Chamber of Commerce. It is likely that he was expressing a view more likely to be agreeable with that of the Chamber of Commerce than the HBR.

The *Railway Times* gave support to the idea that the HBR was not displeased at the consequences of the Corporation's intransigence:

The HBR and NER agreement is off and it is said that the fact is welcomed, rather than otherwise by the HBR directors who find themselves today in a position of far more advantage and promise than was ever thought possible when the original agreement was mooted.⁴⁰

³⁶ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, May 1910.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes, November 1910.

³⁸ *Railway Times*, 12th February 1910.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19th November 1910.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5th November 1910.

The NER looked to the longer term. In February 1911 the chairman told a shareholders' meeting that he believed that the HBR board agreed with the NER that antagonism between the two companies in the face of competition from other ports was bound to be prejudicial to both Hull and the companies. He hoped that Hull Corporation would, one day, come to see the matter in the same light. To this there were cries of 'Hear Hear.'⁴¹ His hopes were not to be fulfilled. The NER had reckoned without the continued hostility of the Corporation.

4. The Western Reservation dispute, 1911.

The events of 1909-10 had shown that the Corporation still had no intention of co-operating in any way with the NER and this was confirmed in 1911 when a bitter dispute arose over the NER's attempt to acquire 15 acres (3¾ hectares) of the Western Reservation adjoining Victoria Dock for timber storage purposes by introducing an enabling Bill. The Corporation had retained this area when land for Alexandra Dock had been sold to the HBR, and opposed the Bill on the grounds that there was no good reason for the acquisition of the land which contained a public right of way and a sewer vested in the Corporation. This argument was undermined when it was revealed before the Lords Committee that the eastern end of the Western Reservation had been leased to the HBR in 1907 in perpetuity. The NER had tried to obtain the western end in 1897 but had failed. Since 1907 there had been further unsuccessful attempts.

The situation was, however, not quite so straightforward as portrayed. In further evidence it became apparent that in different circumstances the Corporation was quite prepared to consider leasing the land. In 1910 the Anglo-American Oil Company had requested a lease and in April 1911 the Corporation had asked the HBR to confirm that it did not wish to acquire the remaining portion of the Western Reservation. When counsel observed that the Corporation seemed to take a different viewpoint depending on whether it was the NER or HBR that wished to purchase the Western Reservation the Corporation responded that its attitude in regard to the HBR had been established. In relation to the NER it had not, but now would be; and its

⁴¹ *Railway Times*, 11th February 1911.

position was that under no circumstances would the land be sold to the NER. The Lords suggested that the NER should be allowed to acquire the land subject to certain safeguards to the Corporation regarding river frontage. The Corporation would have none of this and its counsel was instructed to take no further part in the discussion.⁴²

The Corporation's policies concerning this land proved to be even more complex. When the Bill came before the Commons Committee counsel for the NER said that when, in 1906, the Corporation found that it was not to be allowed to build its pier it made the HBR an offer that if the latter would make a pier and create competition on the river with the NER, then the Corporation would allow it to have 15 acres (3¾ hectares) of the Western Reservation for that purpose. The NER had raised no objection to the proposed HBR pier as it had its own plans for Riverside Quay [opened in 1907]. The Mayor of Hull had said that at that time it might have been possible to let the NER have use of the land but only on the basis of a short-term lease. The NER pointed out that, by way of contrast, the HBR had its part of the Western Reservation on a 999-year lease.⁴³

Thus, over a period of four years there had been considerable debate about the Western Reservation within Hull Corporation. In its final offer to the NER it sought to impose stringent terms, which were:

- 1) The lease to be for a period of 21 years.
- 2) The annual rent to be £1.250 per annum subject to annual revision.
- 3) All rights across the property to be reserved to the Corporation.
- 4) The Corporation to be at liberty to re-take possession of the land at any time if, in the Corporation's opinion, it was required for any public purpose.
- 5) The proposal in the NER Bill of 1911 regarding the Western Reservation was to be withdrawn.

⁴² City Archives, Hull, TLP 287, Lords Parliamentary Committee proceedings, May 1911.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Commons Parliamentary Committee proceedings, 25th-27th July 1911.

The NER found this unacceptable, leading it to submit the 1911 Bill.⁴⁴ But the Lords decided that no good case had been made with regard to the Western Reservation.⁴⁵ Once again the NER was thwarted by the obfuscation of Hull Corporation, and the episode demonstrated that Parliament was prepared to uphold the rights of democratically elected bodies over the requests of large companies.

5. The Saltend partnership.

Despite the Corporation's belief that the HBR could be maintained as a bulwark against the domination of Hull by the NER, the two railways found it increasingly advantageous to work together. This was illustrated by the Saltend project. In December 1908 the NER decided to construct extensive accommodation for storing petroleum at Saltend, east of Hull. This required a jetty, 300 yards (275m.) in length, into the River Humber to enable large tank steamers to come alongside and discharge into reservoirs on the mainland, 200 acres (81 hectares) having been acquired for this purpose.⁴⁶ In 1909 the NER introduced a Bill for a railway to Saltend Jetty, which involved crossing Hedon Road on the level.⁴⁷ The Bill also proposed a short extension from the Victoria Dock branch at Stoneferry. The Corporation opposed the Stoneferry branch as a matter of course and went on to raise the issue of the level crossing on Hedon Road and the additional traffic over existing level crossings in the city.⁴⁸ It suggested a bridge. The Chamber of Commerce also petitioned against the proposed level crossing. The Board of Trade, suggested that the level crossing should be allowed provided the number of trains using it did not exceed ten per day; if more were to pass then a bridge must be erected. The Corporation disagreed and reserved the right to oppose the Bill. The dispute was clearly more to do with blocking the

⁴⁴ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Property sub-committee minutes.

⁴⁵ City Archives, Hull, TLP 287, Commons Parliamentary Committee proceedings, 25th-27th July 1911.

⁴⁶ *Railway Times*, 12th December 1908.

⁴⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 283, NER Bill for jetty at Saltend and other works, 1909.

⁴⁸ City Archives, Hull, TLP 322. The Corporation carried out a traffic census during the week ending 22nd April 1909.

Appendix 3. Census of road and rail traffic at level crossings in Hull, 1898 & 1909.

NER than a real issue over rail traffic. The Corporation had conducted a survey of traffic on Hedon Road. The results were disappointing from its point of view and demonstrated that Hedon Road at the site of the proposed level crossing was far from busy.⁴⁹

When the Bill came before the parliamentary committee their Lordships were unimpressed by the attitude of the Corporation. They failed to see on what grounds the opposition to the Stoneferry branch was based, as it was open ground in private ownership with no roads at all. In the case of the proposed crossing of Hedon Road, T. R. Ferens, the MP for East Hull appeared as a witness against the proposed level crossing, more out of a sense of duty rather than conviction. Perhaps the same applied to John Henry Fisher representing the Chamber of Commerce, and to become a director of the HBR in 1910, who also appeared against the proposal. It was also opposed by the Hull and District Chamber of Trade. The NER agreed to the Board of Trade conditions and won its case, but despite the victory over the level crossing, the NER did not pursue its advantage. Co-operation with the HBR was preferable to confrontation with the Corporation and it commenced negotiations with the HBR regarding the use of its lines for access to Saltend. The HBR Bill of 1913 conferred various powers on the company, including the joint purchase, with the NER, of Saltend Pasture, where the Anglo-American Oil Company was establishing a refinery. This area had been purchased by the NER in 1908. The Bill also abandoned the proposed level crossing on Hedon Road.⁵⁰

As joint owners of the jetty and connecting railways at Saltend the NER and HBR successfully opposed the LYR claim of running powers to Saltend Pier, which were turned down by the Lords on 2nd May 1913.⁵¹ The era of real co-operation between the companies had arrived.

⁴⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 322, Lords Committee proceedings, 27th April 1909.

Appendix.4. Census of traffic on Hedon Road, April 1909.

⁵⁰ City Archives, Hull, TLP 287, HBR Bill, 1913.

⁵¹ *Eastern Morning News*. 13th May 1913.

6. The Graving Dock dispute, 1913 and the opening of the Joint Dock in 1914.

The relationship between the railway companies and the Corporation entered a new phase in the graving dock dispute, which pitted the NER and HBR as allies directly against the Corporation and Wilson's. In August 1912 the Town Clerk pointed out that twelve years had elapsed since the joint dock was authorised, but it was still far from completion. He contrasted the lack of progress with Immingham dock, which had taken six years from authorisation to opening.⁵² He understood that the HBR was not solely to blame as it did not hold the purse, but it might do its best to facilitate the dock. The HBR chairman said that the character of the works meant that they took longer than Immingham although he did not explain the reason for this.⁵³

Progress was further slowed by a dispute that arose over the proposed graving docks. This resulted in parliamentary scrutiny of the authorising Bill. The case provides an insight into the balance of power in Hull between the Corporation and various commercial interests. The Corporation petitioned against the lease of the graving docks on the grounds that Smith's, the Middlesbrough company to whom they were to be leased, would have a monopoly and could thus charge excessive prices. Hull Chamber of Commerce was also concerned at this proposal which would mean that ship repairing in Hull would be in the hands of an outside company.⁵⁴ This brought the Corporation into conflict with the HBR which, in March 1913, lost a legal battle to have the Corporation's *locus standi* denied.⁵⁵

When the Bill came before the Commons Committee on 23rd April 1913 Mr. Wedderburn KC, appearing for the proposal, said that the issue was the determination between the public interest and the general prosperity of the port and the self-seeking interest of a small number of persons within it. He pointed out that in addition to the three graving docks in railway hands [one NER and two HBR] and the Central

⁵² City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee papers, January 1904. The Humber Commercial Railway and Dock Bill of 1904 replaced a Bill of 1901 to construct docks at Grimsby by a proposal to construct a dock at Immingham. To protect the interests of Hull the Corporation decided to oppose the Bill.

⁵³ *Railway Times*, 17th August 1912.

⁵⁴ *Yorkshire Post*, 14th January 1913.

⁵⁵ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, March 1913.

Graving Dock, there were seven more in private hands, making ten in all. The two new graving docks would give a 4% return on £200,000 and would be leased to Smiths, who undertook to spend £90,000, of which £60,000 was to provide permanent equipment on the dock. As an example counsel cited Immingham, where the graving dock was in the hands of a private company, The Humber Graving Dock and Engineering Company. The company guaranteed the GCR a return of 4% on capital. However, he omitted to say that this company, formed in 1909, was controlled by the GCR, which also owned Immingham Dock.⁵⁶

The NER, represented by Eric Geddes, now deputy general manager, argued that Wilson's and the Chamber of Commerce had pressed the idea of the graving docks upon the joint committee. Geddes went on to assert that graving docks were not profitable in the hands of companies which were not ship repairers, giving figures for NER graving docks at Newcastle and Hartlepool which gave a return on capital of less than 2%, and the HBR obtained a return on capital of only 1.09% on its two graving docks at Alexandra Dock.

Geddes tried to demonstrate that railway ownership did not lead to preferential treatment. He stated that the practice at railway-owned graving docks at William Wright and Alexandra Dock was to allow every ship repairer his turn, to which end, a roster was kept. This was incorrect and in a later session Geddes changed it. It was the ships which went on the roster and which were taken in order, not the repairers. There were several firms of ship repairers in Hull who relied upon the use of railway owned graving docks. Indeed, even those who possessed their own docks still made considerable use of the railway graving docks. Edward Watkin, the general manager of the HBR, said that there was a provisional agreement with Smith's of Middlesbrough for the lease of the graving docks at the joint dock⁵⁷

The Corporation's argument focused on the possibility of preferential treatment. Whilst the graving docks at the joint dock were no longer than those at Alexandra dock, they were 10 feet (3m.) wider, and this would give advantage in the

⁵⁶ Dow, *Great Central*, Vol. 3, p. 260.

⁵⁷ City Archives, Hull, TLP 287. HBR Act, 1913. Commons Parliamentary Committee Minutes.

case of larger ships.⁵⁸ This would accrue to the advantage of the lessees of the docks and to the detriment of local ship repairing firms.⁵⁹

But these firms were split. The chairman of Hull Chamber of Commerce said that it had canvassed opinion from the leading shipowners of the port. Out of sixteen they received nine replies: four against, four for, and one neutral. Those in favour owned 45 ships, those against 115, (which figure included 99 belonging to Wilson's), the neutrals had 5 and those who did not reply represented just 10 ships. The chamber decided to remain neutral. Although Wilson's (99 ships) had asked the Chamber of Commerce to oppose the leasing proposal, Cockerline's (12 ships) were in favour. He went on to say that although Wilson's were now opposing the lease the graving docks were constructed as a result of a resolution brought forward in the chamber by C. H. Wilson.⁶⁰

Counsel for the proposal made much of the fact that in the past the Corporation had encouraged the involvement of private capital in ship repairing, using public finances. The Central Dry Dock in Hull had been built in 1843 and enlarged in 1871. In 1874 it had been let out by the Corporation, and in 1883 sold for a perpetual rent. The Dock passed into the hands of Wilson's in 1886 becoming the Hull Central Dry Dock and Engineering Company Limited, with C. H. Wilson on the board. This paralleled what was happening now and was being opposed by the Corporation, which had previously been instrumental in the Central Dry Dock passing into private ownership. The clear implication was that the threat of monopoly

⁵⁸ The size of the largest graving dock at Alexandra Dock was 550 feet (168 m.) in length and 61 feet (18.6 m.) in width. The largest at the joint dock was 550 feet (168 m.) in length and 72 feet (22 m.) in width.

⁵⁹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 287, HBR Act 1913, Commons Parliamentary Committee Minutes.

⁶⁰ K. Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway Vol. 1*, (Newton Abbot, 1972), p.134.

Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway Vol. 2*, p. 96.

D. Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King. The Life and Times of Sir Edward Watkin 1819-1901*, (Cardiff, 2002), p. 666.

Edward Watkin was the nephew of the Chairman of the MSLR from 1864 to 1894, Sir Edward Watkin, an inveterate opponent of James Staats Forbes. Prior to his appointment as general manager of the HBR in 1905 Edward Watkin was mineral agent for the GCR. He immediately set about strengthening the grip of the HBR on the coal trade and is credited with much of the modest success enjoyed by the company after his appointment.

came not from the proposed lease, but from Wilson's. Apart from the dry dock, two large ship-repairing firms were controlled by Wilson's who had a strong interest in shipbuilding and repairing in Hull.⁶¹ If Wilson's were left out of the opposition to the Bill, then firms representing more ships were for the Bill than were against.

The issue of private ownership continued to dominate the debate. When the Bill came before the Lords Committee, on 24th June 1913, Geddes revealed that Smith's had been approached by the GCR to lease the graving dock at Immingham but refused to deal with this because that were in negotiations for the lease of the graving docks at Hull joint dock. Wilson's had urged the joint committee to construct graving docks in 1907.⁶² When it was remarked that people would be very glad if a crane was erected at Alexandra Dock graving dock, Geddes remarked, 'I have never known a Hull trader who did not desire something that someone else was going to pay for.'

An important point at issue with the existing ship repairers in Hull was that although anyone could inspect a ship in the graving dock and submit a tender for repairs, under the terms of the proposed agreement only Smith's would be able to use the dock. If another repairer obtained the job he would have to remove the ship and carry out the work in another dock. This was seen as an advantage to Smith's and a drawback to other repairers as extra costs were involved in moving the ship and owners were unwilling to move ships unnecessarily because of the attendant risks.

The HBR's case was that it had agreed to the graving docks only under pressure. Edward Watkin said that the HBR had originally been approached by the NER in 1908 but did not feel inclined to construct graving docks. But in a later approach the NER said that it had been negotiating with a large firm of ship repairers in the north, and was satisfied that the ship repairers would either construct docks of their own or take docks built by the Joint Committee at a reasonable rent. On that basis the HBR gave its consent to the construction of the graving docks.

⁶¹ J. M. Bellamy, 'A Hull Shipbuilding Firm', *Business History* Vol. 6, 1964, pp. 37-40. Wilson's took over Earle's Shipbuilders in 1901. Between the launching of their first ship in 1853 and the take-over by Wilson's, Earle's built nearly 40% of Wilson's ships.

⁶² The National Archives, Kew, RAIL 527/416, Hull Joint Dock Committee Directors' Minute Book, 12th July 1907.

The Corporation reaffirmed that it had received resolutions against the leasing of the graving docks from several bodies and had decided to oppose the leasing when 36 councillors voted for opposition with none against.⁶³

Robert Henry Farrah, the secretary of the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers whose union had opposed the lease before the Commons Committee alleged that subsequently he had been approached by Smith's manager, Mr. Armstrong, who asked him not to give evidence before the House of Lords. As an inducement he told Farrah that if Smith's came to Hull they would look to him to find them labour and would prefer to give trade unionists work. Armstrong denied any such pressure had been applied.⁶⁴

The outcome was another victory for the Corporation, Wilsons and the other opponents of the lease. On 1st July the Lords rejected the clause to empower the joint committee to lease the two graving docks at Hull to the Smiths.⁶⁵

This brought to an end a period of confrontation between the Corporation and the NER during which the HBR found itself increasingly siding with the NER against the Corporation. The demeanour of the NER had changed from arrogance to conciliation and co-operation. There had been no reciprocal change in the Corporation's attitude towards the NER. The disputes over the Western Reservation, the spurious objections raised over the Stoneferry branch and the Hedon Road crossing, and its hypocritical opposition to the graving dock lease showed the Corporation had not moved with the times. However, its blighting effect on the commerce of the city was best illustrated when it wrecked the proposed NER and HBR working agreement of 1909 as a result of the narrow horizons of those had risen to power in its ranks. Although it had stood with the HBR and NER in opposing amalgamations among other railway companies which may have affected Hull, it had not been able to see that protection of the independence of the HBR against the NER

⁶³ These bodies included the Hull branch of the Ship Constructive and Shipwrights' Association, the Hull District Committee of the Boilermakers', the Iron and Steel shipbuilders' Society, the East Coast District of the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers, Hull Iron Trades Employers' Association and Hull and District Chamber of Trade.

⁶⁴ City Archives, Hull, TLP 287, HBR Act 1913, Lords Parliamentary Committee Minutes.

⁶⁵ *Railway Times*, 5th July 1913.

monopoly was, by the first decade of the twentieth century, an archaic concept which could only lead to inefficiency and was ultimately to the detriment of the port.

Optimism was high when, on 31st August 1913 water was let into the joint dock.⁶⁶ Such was the dock's importance that it was opened on 26th June 1914 by King George V accompanied by Queen Mary. It was named King George Dock.⁶⁷ In his address the chairman of the Dock Committee, Sir Hugh Bell, said that the dock had access to 400 collieries which annually produced 70 million tons of coal. The dock contained forty separate coaling berths with a capacity of up to 800 tons per hour each and became operational on 1st August 1914.⁶⁸

Three days later the Great War broke out. The new dock was taken over by the military denying the NER and the HBR full use of its facilities. Coal traffic was to decline throughout the war years and would never recover to anything like pre-war levels. Although not foreseen at the outbreak of war this was the beginning of the end for the HBR, an end that would result in resounding defeat for Hull Corporation.

7. The war years.

The Government took over all railways on the outbreak of war. In Hull the joint dock was found to be an excellent area for training troops and was adapted for this purpose with rifle ranges, drill halls, recreation rooms, canteens and dormitories. The dock had an almost ideal situation on the outskirts of Hull from where troops could easily reach the recently built coastal defences.⁶⁹ Shortly after the start of the war the partnership at Saltend between the NER and the HBR came into full operation. 13,000 tons of petroleum were discharged at Saltend jetty. The Anglo-Mexican Petroleum Company secured a site of about 12 acres (5 hectares) nearby and built storage tanks for fuel oil, kerosene and bitumen.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Railway News*, 6th September 1913.

⁶⁷ Figure 31. Hull Joint Dock.

⁶⁸ *Railway News*, 27th June 1914.

⁶⁹ Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway* Vol. 2, p. 199.

⁷⁰ *Railway News*, 31st October & 7th November 1914.

There were also important changes to the HBR board in the early years of the war. William Shaw Wright, the chairman, died on 1st November 1914 and Colonel Charles William Trotter was elected in his place.⁷¹ He took over at a bad time in the company's fortunes. The HBR had suffered a net loss of income as a result of the opening of the joint dock. This was because of the nature of the agreement with the state regarding losses sustained through wartime controls. Before the opening the HBR had been paying the interest on the cost of construction out of capital, but from the date of opening it became a revenue expense. In normal circumstances there would have been income to cover this but the outbreak of war had arrested all development. The arrangements did not cover capital which was unproductive, which hit the HBR hard as King George Dock was classed as unproductive capital. The HBR's share of this was about £1¼ million, a substantial proportion of its total capital. Although the NER was similarly affected, it was a relatively small proportion of its capital. Representations to the Government proved unsuccessful. Even in the last few weeks of peace the HBR had not done well with the Joint Dock. It lost money due to a miners' strike in April 1914 which lasted about a month. This was followed by a seven week strike at Alexandra Dock in May and June.⁷²

The situation remained serious throughout 1915 and 1916. The use of the joint dock by the government limited accommodation for normal trade. The HBR share of capital expended on the dock up to 31st December 1915 was £1,358,898 and the interest charges for the year 1915 were £346,931. The HBR share of construction costs of the HBR and GCR joint line for 1915 was £33,250 Interest charges were £9,687.⁷³ But in February 1917 a change of government policy brought better news. The Railway Executive agreed to allow interest on HBR capital on works brought into use since 31st December 1912. However, the amount of the HBR claim for interest on the capital was not yet settled. In view of the reduction in revenue the directors restricted capital expenditure to works that were absolutely necessary. Due to the depletion of staff because of the war the HBR was compelled to reduce work on rolling stock and permanent way to a minimum with the result that repairs and

⁷¹ Colonel Charles William Trotter was a son of the former chairman, William Trotter.

⁷² *Railway News*, 20th February 1915.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 19th February 1916.

renewals had fallen into arrears.⁷⁴ Owing to the war the output of the collieries connected with the HBR was greatly curtailed.⁷⁵ The overall effect of the war on HBR finances was therefore extremely adverse. Government compensation proved both tardy and inadequate and problems were exacerbated by staff shortages both during and after the war, leading to cutbacks in maintenance and renewals. In February 1918 Trotter indulged in a little speculation regarding the future of railways after the war. Presciently he predicted a continuance of Government control of railways for a considerable period after peace has been concluded.⁷⁶

8. The Final years of railway competition, 1918-1921.

After the war Hull initially benefited from the shipping boom of 1919-20. The state regulation of coal freight charges, introduced during hostilities to shift trade from short-sea shipping to the railways, ended in July 1919, and in August the Government introduced restrictions on the forwarding of coal to Liverpool and other Lancashire ports for bunkering purposes. In addition, the sudden lifting of wartime restrictions on non-essential goods caused commodities to pour into the country.⁷⁷ This provided brief, but welcome, relief for the railway companies serving Hull.

However, re-organisation of the whole railway industry was more or less inevitable. A Select Committee on Transport, set up in 1918, concluded that railways had benefited from unified operation during the war and full nationalisation was contemplated. Subsequently, the cabinet rejected the idea of nationalisation on the grounds of cost and the belief that it would not be popular with an electorate weary of wartime government regulations. The railway companies also opposed nationalisation. The 1919 Act setting up the Ministry of Transport continued the government's control of railways until August 1921 giving the first Minister of Transport, Sir Eric Geddes, time to re-organise the industry. The Railways Bill,

⁷⁴ *Railway News*, 23rd February 1917.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 16th February 1917.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 16th February 1918.

⁷⁷ D. H. Aldcroft, 'Port congestion and the shipping boom of 1919-20', *Business History*, Vol. 3, No.2, July 1961, pp. 97-106.

introduced in May 1921, gave rise to long and controversial debate and finally became law on 19th August 1921. It amalgamated 120 railway undertakings into four large groups.⁷⁸ The main objective of the grouping was to reduce inter-company rivalry and remove the duplication of facilities, which in the past had led to inefficiency and increased costs. An additional aim was to introduce a revised railway charging policy. The Minister of Transport estimated that economies would be in the region of £20 million per annum.⁷⁹

The NER had misgivings about the proposals. The original scheme had been to group only the NER and HBR, but by May 1920 the GCR, GNR, GER, North British Railway and Great North of Scotland Railway had been added. The NER's directors thought that the earlier proposal was better. However, on financial grounds they recognised that the proposed North Eastern Group would be able to compete for the traffic of a large area, and had agreed to the later proposal subject to certain safeguards for the NER. Their first concern was that the financial deficiencies in other companies, particularly the Scottish ones, should not be shouldered by NER shareholders in the shape of reduced compensation. Since for the financial purposes of amalgamation the Minister intended to place the Scottish companies in groups by themselves, this removed one of the major concerns of the NER. Furthermore, companies were to be valued on their net revenue earning prospects. Had these concessions not been made then the NER would have had no alternative but to oppose the Bill.⁸⁰

There was also a good deal of difficulty reconciling the different financial structures of the companies to be merged. One problem was the variation in prior charges (debentures, etc.) incurred by the different companies. For instance the whole of the GCR income for 1913 was paid away in prior charges; the GER paid over 80% and the GNR figure was 65%. In the case of the NER it was only 44%. Thus, on the basis of the 1913 accounts, the NER would add somewhere near £1.3

⁷⁸ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee papers, 16th July 1920. Railway Grouping proposals.

⁷⁹ H. J. Dyos & D. H. Aldcroft, *British Transport*, (Leicester, 1971), p. 308.

M. Bonavia, *Railway Policy between the Wars*, (Manchester, 1981), p. 1.

⁸⁰ *Railway Gazette*, 3rd June 1920.

million to the amount available for dividends on ordinary stock, while no less than £5½ million would be added to the amount for prior charges due to the weaker financial state of other companies. Considering the NER and the HBR, the net income would have to be reduced by some 56% before the dividend on ordinary stocks would disappear, whereas in the Eastern Group as a whole, a reduction of only 17% of net income would mean that there was no dividend for ordinary shareholders. Arranging terms, which would be fair to all shareholders would be difficult. The NER's view was that amalgamation should be by agreement and that any question of compulsion should stand over until experience had been gained of the results of voluntary amalgamation.⁸¹

The NER was also strongly opposed to government regulation of the railways. It argued that the public would be best served and the railways most economically run if companies were left to do their own business. Moreover, the new groupings would upset long-standing alliances between companies. The NER's chairman remarked: 'We have become directly competitive with all our old friends in the North Western Group (the MR, LYR and LNWR) and I hope that under the proposed system of grouping we shall continue to be friends. There is no denying the fact that the old links will be broken and we must become rivals.'⁸² However, some shareholders were not impressed with the NER's attitude to weaker companies. One wrote to the *Railway Gazette* stating that he did not like 'the face of the NER'. He went on to say, 'The characteristics displayed are not attractive, for there is just a tinge of arrogance and self-righteousness without any display of sympathy to less fortunate companies'.⁸³

In November 1920 the HBR and NER considered a merger proposal. This was in advance of the Bill authorising the grouping, which was to allow the companies to formulate their own proposals that were then to be approved by a tribunal. The HBR and NER had come together very closely by this time. The only Hull representatives now on the HBR board were the deputy chairman, J. H. Fisher, and the two Corporation nominees. On 15th December a provisional agreement was

⁸¹ *Railway Gazette*, 3rd June 1920.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 3rd June 1920.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3rd June 1920.

reached, despite the fact that Fisher, the deputy chairman of the HBR, had indicated that any proposal for the absorption of the HBR would be vigorously opposed.⁸⁴ This was, no doubt, a negotiating ploy to obtain better terms from the NER. If so, the tactic worked. Under the proposals debenture holders and preference shareholders were to receive the same income as previously. The holders of HBR £100 ordinary stock were to receive £55 in NER consols, which was a fairly generous offer. The new company would absorb the joint dock and the Saltend complex, whilst Trotter and Fisher were to be given seats on the board.⁸⁵

Hull Corporation seemed determined to stand against the tide of opinion in favour of rationalisation. Although the Minister of Transport intended to discuss the proposals with representatives of the railway companies and labour, no mention was made of the Corporation.⁸⁶ But the Corporation had statutory powers regarding the HBR, and as a consequence the Minister agreed to receive a deputation before submitting Government proposals.

At the meeting the Corporation stressed the intimate connection between itself and the HBR and that it had always sought to preserve the independence of the latter. It argued that the efforts of the Corporation should not now be swept away. Geddes rejected this, arguing that the benefits of competition among railways were becoming more and more illusory. He pointed out that in 1910 there had been a general feeling in Hull that the time was ripe for an understanding between the two companies but, due to Corporation opposition, nothing had come of it. The case for amalgamation was now much stronger than it had been then. Whilst he accepted that Hull, as a community, had fathered and mothered the HBR, he thought that the Act

⁸⁴ *Railway Gazette*, 2nd July 1920.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 3rd March 1922.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 9th July 1920. Lt. Commander. Kenworthy asked the Minister of Transport whether he had consulted, or intended to consult, the municipal authorities in Hull and the representatives of commerce and of organised labour in that city with regard to the proposed amalgamation of the HBR with the NER. Mr. Neal, for the Minister of Transport, said 'The proposals of the Government outlined in the Command Paper 787 do not represent a final or detailed scheme incapable of modification, and I intend to discuss these proposals with the representatives of the railway companies, commerce and labour'.

for amalgamation contained sufficient safeguards against possible oppression by a monopolistic railway.⁸⁷

The Chamber of Commerce also entertained hopes of a different and, from their point of view, more satisfactory outcome to the grouping proposals. But Geddes made it clear that the railway companies were to be grouped together. However, the Minister admitted that Hull was in an exceptional position and could, under the circumstances, be entitled to exceptional treatment. He accepted that there was a feeling in the city that if the mild form of competition which existed between the NER and HBR were to be abolished altogether, trade would not develop at the rate which was expected.⁸⁸

However, such local and regional interests were to be subsumed under what the government regarded as being in the national interest. On 15th December 1920 the expectations of Hull Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce were dashed when news of the provisional agreement between the HBR with the NER was announced. Despite this the Corporation still continued its opposition and suggested that the HBR be included in the North Western and Midland Group. This was clearly a last-ditch attempt to maintain railway competition in Hull. Copies of a petition that had been sent to Parliament were circulated to the members of the Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, the Hull and District Chamber of Trade, the Hull Corn Association and to various public bodies and associations in other parts of the country.⁸⁹ A public meeting was held in Hull on 6th June 1921, convened by the Lord Mayor, to protest against the proposed grouping and had a large attendance. A resolution was passed at the meeting, protesting at the proposed grouping and was forwarded to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Transport and local Members of Parliament.⁹⁰

It was all in vain. The Government gave up control of the railways on 15th August, 1921 and the Railways Act, 1921 received the Royal Assent on 19th August. It was a quirk of fate that Geddes, the Minister who had conceived the scheme for the

⁸⁷ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, July and November 1920.

⁸⁸ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce AGM, 17th November 1920.

⁸⁹ Appendix 5. Petition of Hull Corporation to Parliament.

⁹⁰ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee papers, July 1920 to June 1921.

grouping, leading to the demise of the HBR, was an ex-deputy general manager of the NER. It is interesting to recall that Geddes, in his NER days, had been an advocate of energetically pursuing closer relations with the HBR.⁹¹

The consequences of the amalgamation were soon to be felt. The *Railway Gazette* anticipated that HBR passenger services would quickly be diverted from Cannon Street to Paragon Station providing villages as Willerby, Kirk Ella, South Cave and North Cave, regarded as suburbs of Hull, with a more convenient service. It also predicted that Cannon Street Station would be used exclusively for goods traffic⁹². So it proved.

Generally speaking the attitude of Hull's traders and commercial interests was one of resignation. The Chamber of Commerce, in particular, was in a philosophical mood over the amalgamation. The chairman, B. E. Maxsted, in his address to the Annual General Meeting in November 1921, reflected on the harmonious character of the efforts made by the Corporation and the Chamber to retain the independence of the HBR. Regretting the loss of competition brought about by the merger, he expressed the hope that the NER would do its best in the interests of Hull by assisting to promote trade thereby bringing the port back to its pre-war standard and, incidentally, thus benefiting the shareholders.⁹³ In the event, however, such hopes were to be subsumed into the much wider struggle for survival faced by the NER's successor, the London and North Eastern Railway, as railways faced the onslaught of road competition and economic uncertainty in the 1920s.

In February 1922 arrangements were announced for the exchange of HBR for NER stock: £100 HBR stock would become £55 NER consols. The share of the HBR debt on King George Dock of £1,581,617 was automatically cancelled. There were complaints that HBR shareholders were doing well out of the transfer at the expense of the NER, but one shareholder, Mr. Nuttall, was vocal in his support. The chairman of the meeting argued that it was extremely advantageous to conclude the amalgamation as soon as possible. He stressed that the NER was not a public

⁹¹ K. Grieves, *Sir Eric Geddes - Business and Government in War and Peace*, p. 6.

⁹² *Railway Gazette*, 26th August 1921.

⁹³ Central Library, Hull, Chamber of Commerce AGM, 23rd November 1921.

authority dealing with other people's money. This could be taken as a reference to the amount of public money the Corporation had spent opposing the NER.

But Hull's ratepayers had little to complain about. The original investment of £100,000 in the HBR had now become £55,000 NER consols.⁹⁴ Although this was a good financial deal the Corporation was left holding stock in a company which over the years it had so bitterly opposed. The agreement for amalgamation with the NER was approved by the proprietors of the HBR at a half-yearly meeting in February 1921. Amongst other items agreed it provided for the payment of compensation to the directors for loss of office.⁹⁵

The last HBR board meeting took place on 28th March 1922, when the directors voted themselves £10,000 compensation for loss of office, although two seats had been reserved for them on the board of the new NER. Then, at midnight on 31st March the HBR ceased to exist. The HBR network consisted of a total single line mileage of 369½ whereas that of the NER was just over 5,000. The new NER, which emerged on 1st April 1922, had capital of £89,899,455.⁹⁶

The merger, driven largely by policies at national level, removed any prospect of railway competition in Hull and thus forced the Corporation to adapt to new circumstances. It brought to an end the period of distrust entertained by the Corporation and traders of Hull that was maintained up to and during the passage of the Railways Bill through Parliament. Times had changed, and, on 11th March, Ralph L. Wedgwood, soon to be the general manager of the new NER, speaking at Hull, said that the company which was about to come into existence would not be the old NER any more than it will be the old HBR. Wedgwood expressed the fullest confidence that the change would be for the benefit of the port of Hull.⁹⁷ If this speech was meant as a sop to the fears of the commercial community of Hull it was hardly likely to allay their anxiety and, in the case of the Corporation, its bitterness, at what it considered had been its treacherous betrayal. But as future research will perhaps demonstrate, such attitudes, rooted in the commercial and railway politics of

⁹⁴ City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee meeting minutes, 20th April 1922.

⁹⁵ *Railway Gazette*, 10th March 1922.

⁹⁶ City Archives, Hull, SRL, HBR and NER Annual Reports, 1921.

⁹⁷ *Railway Gazette*, 31st March 1922.

an era in which railways dominated inland transport, were no more adequate in the succeeding era of growing road competition as the legislation which had brought about the enforced merger of the NER and HBR.

CHAPTER 10.

CONCLUSIONS.

1. Introduction.

This thesis has examined the relationship between the Corporation of Hull and the railway companies serving the port in the context of the macro-economic and political environments of the period between 1840 and 1922. More specifically, it has analysed the *rôle* of the HBR in breaking the perceived NER monopoly. It has been argued that the Corporation's intransigence was a major factor in its change of status, at least as far as the railway situation was concerned, from protector of the port of Hull to reactionary stumbling block and that, arguably, from the 1890s, and certainly in the twentieth century, the Corporation's political complexion became an increasing hindrance to the development of transport facilities in the port.

A facile view of the association between the NER and Hull Corporation may be corporate greed in conflict with civic rectitude. An equally superficial interpretation of the actions of the Corporation with regard to the HBR would be to adduce that it played a useful part in breaking the NER monopoly by encouraging the founding of the HBR, but subsequent inflexibility led to its alienation from the very body it was trying to protect. As this thesis has shown, the reality was considerably more complex and finely nuanced than this. The Corporation represented diverse interests in Hull, the disparate strengths of which varied over the decades, depending on factors such as the fluid political situation and the organisational evolution of commercial concerns influenced by external commercial threats. Hence, although the Corporation's support for the HBR and its antagonism towards the NER were immutable, the reasons for this stance, and the effectiveness of the policies thereby predicated, varied during the period covered by the study. In such a context the Corporation's actions can be understood as representing the political will of only certain of the citizens of the port.

Similarly the relationship between the NER and HBR may be seen as bully and victim but this, again, over-simplifies the position. The thesis has demonstrated

that the situation must be considered as an evolutionary process driven by commercial necessity, the changing constitution of the HBR's controlling interests and, after 1900, the NER and HBR's shared fears of amalgamations among competing railway companies, which could damage their financial interests. The end result of these factors was co-operation and a not unwelcome merger, at least on the part of the HBR.

2. The Corporation and the railway and dock companies.

Hull Corporation was central to the development of the port throughout the nineteenth century although it never enjoyed the degree of influence of similar bodies in ports such as Liverpool, where municipal politics more closely controlled the docks. The thesis has illustrated, on several occasions, awareness on the part of Hull Corporation of the desirability of taking control of the docks. Although the Corporation attempted to restrain what it perceived as the greed and inertia of the Dock Company with the 1861 Act restricting that company's dividends to 5%, its plans take over the latter and run it as a public trust remained unachieved because agreement between traders, other commercial interests, and the ratepayers of the port could not be reached. But Hull Corporation was, at least, an early advocate of good railway connections. In 1836 it subscribed to the HSR and it supported the abortive Hull and Barnsley railway scheme in 1845. However, Corporation support for the HBR in 1879 went far beyond mere financial backing, although there was a considerable amount of this.

There can be little doubt that the Corporation acted as it did in what it perceived to be the best interests of Hull, subject always to the proviso that those perceptions were refracted through the prism of particular class and business interests, although some of its actions, particularly its opposition to the joint dock scheme, may be construed as misguided. For the most part it displayed a pellucidity lacking in the actions of the railway and dock companies, which was unsurprising, as their objective was to make profits for their shareholders. But the duplicity of the railway companies went further. The NER showed that it was prepared to use underhand tactics such as bribing the Dock Company to prevent opposition to its Bills, and promoting spurious railway schemes such as that to Kirkella. The HBR used similar sophistry when it delayed giving details of the proposed 1888 MR

amalgamation and subsequently tried, through its wordsmith Forbes, to bamboozle the Corporation into letting it sell out to the NER, an action which Forbes had privately favoured for many years despite his repeated denials. At the same time the Corporation and the Hull interests were losing their grip in the HBR board, as the realities of business life dictated that the HBR could not exist merely as a symbol of Hull's independence. It had to look to London for finance and the price of this was control by London interests. The Corporation was kept in the dark over the proposed joint dock scheme and the final treachery was the HBR directors' supposed opposition to the amalgamation with the NER, when they were in fact discussing terms, including a handsome payoff to themselves. Throughout all this chicanery the Corporation remained steadfast to the principles of corporate independence enshrined in the 1880 Act incorporating the HBR.

The thesis has produced much evidence for the assertion that, from the late 1850s, the Corporation did all it could to make life at Hull as difficult as possible for the NER. It was an article of faith with the Corporation that any contact it had with the NER was the equivalent of supping with the devil. Their relationship was marked by a growing antipathy as a result of an increasingly aggressive posture on the part of the Corporation fuelled, in part, by the arrogance and complacency of the NER. However, in the early years of the twentieth century the relationship between the HBR and the Corporation was cooling and the former began to see the efforts of the Corporation as obstruction rather than protection. The idea of the HBR as 'Hull's railway' was dear to the hearts of the Corporation members, some of the proprietors of the HBR and many of the inhabitants of Hull, but this concept did not accord with reality. These groups beatified the HBR, elevating it to the status of an emblem for Hull, rather than seeing it for what it really was; a commercial undertaking, and not a particularly successful one at that. The fact was that in the difficult early years of the HBR the traders of Hull were manifesting gross hypocrisy by asserting that the railway must be preserved at all costs, whilst giving it insufficient support by way of traffic.

Two problems for the HBR have been examined in this thesis. Firstly, that although the HBR had been conceived as a coal line, it was not such for the first fifteen years of its existence, and during this period it faced a Herculean task in building up revenue against existing competition. Many of the trains run in the earlier years were mixed freight and it was here that the HBR faced stiff

competition.¹ The second problem was its ostracism by other railway companies, especially the NER and MSLR. Until the opening of the HBR, the MSLR and the Don Navigation, which it owned, enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the transport of South Yorkshire coal to the Humber ports. This made the MSLR unwilling to do any favours for the HBR, which found itself isolated.²

Counter-factual history is a risky business but it is reasonable to conclude that the situation could have been very different if the 1878 Hull Docks Bill proposing the new deep-water dock at Marfleet had been successful and had the dock been served by the NER as was proposed. For once the Hull Dock Company showed initiative and enterprise, but it surrendered as a result of opposition to its Bill. Such pusillanimity in the face of resistance was bad enough, but by 1879 the Dock Company had a new chairman, conservative in all respects, whose policy was to suspend progress and express total satisfaction with the existing dock accommodation notwithstanding overwhelming evidence that more was required.

This lack of resolve eventually worked to the benefit of the port, although the accomplishment of this took more than twenty-five years. Had it not been for the failure of the 1878 Dock Company Bill and Corporation support, the HBR would not have come into existence, nor would Alexandra Dock have been built. Without Alexandra Dock the NER would have been compelled to provide deep-water facilities. However, with the later construction of the joint dock, the port enjoyed the considerable advantage of two large deep-water docks, directly as a result of the provisions of the Act transferring the Dock Company to the NER. The irony was that although the joint dock brought greater prosperity to Hull the Corporation alone carried on a vigorous and sustained campaign against it.

It is almost certain that without the intervention of the Corporation the HBR would have amalgamated with the MR in 1888 and the clauses placed in the agreement for the protection of the NER would have effectively reinstated its monopoly. The monopoly would, in fact, have been more complete, as it would have given the NER access to Alexandra Dock, at the time the largest deep-water dock on

¹ See Chapter 7.

B. Hinchliffe, (ed.), *The Hull and Barnsley Railway, Vol. 2*, (Sheffield, 1980). p. 50.

² See Chapter 5.

the East Coast. The proposal for a sale of the HBR to the NER in 1889 was a gross error of judgement by Smith and Forbes. It should have been obvious to them that the Corporation would never countenance such a proposal despite the eloquence of Forbes and the removal of the Hull directors from the board. The remedy for the HBR's difficulties was the obtaining of capital from proprietors rather than other railway companies, and it was this course which eventually resulted in the company being released from Chancery with a subsequent steady growth in prosperity.

A problem faced by the traders, and the HBR in particular, was that of turning Hull into a major coal port. The thesis has pointed out on several occasions that Hull had great difficulty in obtaining hard steam coal for bunkering and export due to the NER policy of charging a considerably higher rate for South Yorkshire coal as opposed to the softer West Yorkshire coal. This made it particularly difficult for Hull to compete with Grimsby, to which the MSLR carried South Yorkshire coal at lower rates. A factor inducing the NER to join the HBR in the joint dock scheme was the emergence of Hull as a coal port. With the opening of the SYJR in 1894, the HBR acquisition of the HSYER in 1898 and the opening of Alexandra Dock extension in 1899 coal exports from Hull rose sharply, most being handled by Alexandra Dock.³ The NER, by this time, realised that if it wished to participate in the exploitation of the South Yorkshire coalfield it would need a new dock with modern coal handling appliances.

When the Dock Company passed into the hands of the NER in 1893 it was assumed at the time, by informed opinion in Hull, that the former could not survive without the capital injected by the NER, which was correct. However, the NER had an urgent need for improved facilities, particularly deep-water access at Hull, to enable it to compete with Alexandra Dock, and it realised that the Dock Company would never be able to fulfil these requirements. The purchase of the Dock Company by the NER brought into focus problems that had built up over the years as a result of poor management and lack of foresight. Four of the docks, Humber, Railway, Princes and Queens were obsolete by contemporary standards, being town centre docks, with access railways running inconveniently through the streets, and the lock entrances of those docks were inadequate. Although in 1893 the NER had possession of some 149

³ Figure 33. Hull Coal exports.

acres (62 hectares) of docks against 46 acres (19 hectares) owned by the HBR the share of trade of the old docks continued to fall, year by year.⁴

A major step forward in 1899 was the agreement between the NER and HBR to build the joint dock. However, it should not be assumed that this proposal was driven by a mutual feeling of goodwill between the companies. After several unsuccessful attempts to obtain its own deep water facilities at Hull, thwarted mainly by the Corporation and the Humber Conservancy, the NER reluctantly concluded that its only option was to fall back on the 1893 clauses for construction of a joint dock with the HBR. The situation was also unsatisfactory for the HBR, which found that because of the 1893 Dock Amalgamation Bill it was now being forced to partake in the construction of a dock which would be a rival to Alexandra Dock and to which the NER would have access. It is little wonder that the scheme progressed so slowly. The joint dock proposal was received favourably by the entire business community and endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Trade. Only the Corporation opposed the scheme for reasons examined in chapter 8. Its proposal to appoint directors to the joint dock board and to impose other conditions was smartly rebuffed and the success of the Bill left it completely isolated.

The early years of the twentieth century were marked by a series of quarrels between the Corporation and the NER, where it seemed that the former would spare no efforts to irritate and frustrate the latter. The case which, above all, illustrated the intransigence of the Corporation and its uncompromising hostility towards the NER, was the latter's attempt to purchase or lease the western reservation in 1911, when the Corporation made it clear that it would not sell land to the NER and would only lease on stringent conditions. However, it was, at the same time, inviting the HBR to purchase land there. It is little wonder that relations between the NER and the Corporation reached their nadir.

But within two years a radical change had taken place. The NER and HBR, initially brought together by fears of amalgamation among competing railway companies, were co-operating in the Saltend project, and in the graving dock dispute of 1913 the HBR, alongside the NER, found itself opposing the Corporation. Although the Corporation emerged as the victor in the dispute it had become clear

⁴ Figure 34. Hull Docks tonnage.

that in its choice of allies the HBR now found the NER preferable to the Corporation, whose conservatism it considered to be a hindrance to progress.

3. Municipal politics and business influence.

Irving asserts that the merchants of Hull failed to realise that they did not have a divine right to trade with the West Riding, and that although early rates had been based on a mileage principle, by the time of the formation of the NER in 1854 it had become apparent that the system was detrimental to the economy of the railway industry.⁵ This argument would certainly not have been accepted by the traders of Hull, who, for the larger part of the second half of the nineteenth century, perceived the NER's equal rates policy as being detrimental to their businesses. I have argued that the disputes over charges need to be seen in the context of the general perception of traders throughout the country, that railway companies were monopolies in need of regulation.

The thesis has demonstrated the importance of the attitude of business interests in the relationship between Hull Corporation, the docks and the railways. It has also argued that the posture of the business interests was both fractured and fluid. The most powerful businessmen in the port, the Wilson brothers were a paradigm for this contention, moving from initial support for the HBR to a stance where they were prepared to damage it by taking trade from Alexandra Dock. Furthermore, Charles Wilson moved from a position of hostility to the NER over its opposition to the Hull South and West Junction Railway to one of co-operation with the Wilson's and NER shipping company. Initially the 1879 scheme for the HBR was supported by the entire business community, which encompassed both Liberals such as the Wilson brothers and Smith, and Conservatives such as Pope, Grotrian and Massey. But the critical point was reached in the 1880 parliamentary elections when the Conservatives put up Pope, an energetic advocate of free trade, against C. H. Wilson. Wilson left the board of the NER and threw his considerable commercial and political influence behind the new railway, winning the seat by a large majority.⁶ Not

⁵ R. J. Irving, *The North Eastern Railway Company 1870-1914*, (Leicester, 1976), p.121.

⁶ G. R. Parkes, *The Parliamentary Representation of Yorkshire*, (Hull, 1886), p.111.

all of this support came from the business community. of course, but the wave of popular opinion in favour of Wilson and the HBR was a significant factor in shaping the Corporation's attitude to Hull's railways.

For much of the 1880s and early 1890s benevolent liberalism, as personified by Charles Wilson, dominated the politics of Hull shipping and stevedoring businesses. Indeed Wilson had encouraged his dock workers to join a trade union with the result that Hull docks were, to all intents and purposes, a closed shop, albeit a closed shop that, by and large, fell in with Wilson's way of working. Alongside this increase in unionisation of mainly unskilled workers there occurred a growth of the Hull Trades Council, which had been reformed in 1881. A result of this was a steady increase of working class representation in local government. By 1894 there were eight Trades Council representatives on the Corporation.⁷

The Hull dock strike of 1893 accelerated this shift of local political power from the larger industrialists to the smaller traders of the port and the organised working-class. Wilson's activities during and after the strike brought about a change in the mood of those who depended on him for their living, a change that rippled through the social and political fabric of the town. Wilson was an unwilling figurehead for the employers and the Shipping Federation, but figurehead he was. The problem was the dichotomy of Wilson's Liberal-Labour alliance, which boosted both his political persona and his position as Hull's leading industrialist, situations that were mutually conflicting. Wilson's actions in the dock strike dented his reputation as a Radical Liberal and in the 1895 general election he was opposed by Hull's first Labour candidate, Tom McCarthy. However, the voters were not yet ready for such radical change. Despite the effect of the strike Wilson won the seat, defeating McCarthy by 6,637 votes to 1,400.⁸ This conservatism, in terms of local politics was reflected in the balance of power at the local level, although here the issue was partly one of a lack of organisation by working-class radicals.

In 1894 the Trades Council had formed a progressive party which incorporated radical Liberals, but from 1895 onwards it moved to the left and its initial energy was dissipated as attitudes hardened towards Socialist groups. This

⁷ R. Brown, *Waterfront Organisation in Hull*, (Hull, 1972), p. 6.

⁸ J. Markham, *Colourful Characters*, (Beverley, 1992), p. 105.

resulted in a shift from conventional liberalism to a more radical liberal view in the constitution of the Corporation and a bias in favour of those lesser ranks of the traders of the port who, although radical politically, remained conservative in their business perspective, and still perceived the NER as the ogre who brought all ills. After 1895 the Liberal-Labour supporters on the Corporation were uncoordinated and undisciplined and there was no effective and organised left-wing caucus to balance the increasing identification of the Corporation with policies determined by the Chamber of Trade. All of these shifts had an influence on Hull's attitude towards its railways.

A factor focusing the minds of the major commercial interests in Hull during the 1890s was the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. C. H. Wilson had used the threat of competition from Manchester as justification for an amalgamation of the NER and HBR. His view was that of a major businessman and was diametrically opposed to that of the smaller traders of the port, the very people who had an increasing representation on the council. By 1897 there were three distinct viewpoints being expressed among Hull's business and political interests. C. H. Wilson was advocating amalgamation of the NER and HBR; the Chamber of Commerce was opposed to amalgamation but recognised the need for better dock facilities and was quite happy for them to be supplied by the NER; and the Corporation opposed an amalgamation and anything else involving the NER, blinkered by its hostility to that company.

There is a similarity between the business pathways of Wilson's and the HBR. Although the Wilson brothers dominated the economic and social networks of the town their business suffered in the long-term as a result of its structure. It was a family firm rooted in the economy of Hull and, until 1891, a family partnership. Even when it became a private limited company in 1891 financial control remained vested in the family. This led to an inability to raise capital to compete with other joint-stock shipping companies. Under-capitalisation led to stagnation. Starkey asserts that the Wilson enterprise bore the stamp of the merchant world of the mid-nineteenth century, a major factor leading to its absorption by the Ellerman Line in 1916, six years before the HBR ceased to exist. Nonetheless this business structure did not inhibit the expansion of Wilson's into the largest privately-owned shipping company in the world for much of the nineteenth century. Its weakness was that it could not sustain growth in the face of competition from joint-stock shipping

companies⁹. Similarly, the HBR suffered from the small scale of its conception, being tied largely in terms of trade, and therefore revenue, to the micro-economy of the region in which it operated. It was under-capitalised and even its access to London money at a later stage could not overcome the basic weakness that it was too small to be viable as a long-term railway company. The grouping of railways accelerated its amalgamation with the NER, but even without government intervention the HBR could not have survived on its own.

As the thesis has shown the factors leading to the demise of the HBR should be considered in the wider context of the national railway situation which developed in the early years of the twentieth century. Proposals for amalgamations between railway companies in the drive for greater efficiency, from which the NER and HBR were not immune, made closer co-operation between the two companies inevitable. But the small traders and municipal authorities of Hull existed in a micro-economic world totally at odds with the outlook of big business, which included the railway companies. The zealotry of local government could not save the HBR when local influence came into conflict with the policy of railway grouping decided upon by national government. Although we may conclude that the HBR served its purpose as an instrument by which local monopoly was challenged, it outlived that purpose, a fact which its protector and benefactor, the Corporation of Hull, could not or would not accept.

By the time of the NER and HBR merger in 1922 the wheel had turned full-circle. The new NER had a more total monopoly than its predecessor had ever achieved. It provided the only railway access to Hull and owned all the docks. But monopoly was no longer an issue. The importance of coal exports was declining and competition was not to be from other railways, but from the emerging road haulage industry. Another chapter had opened in the history of Hull as a major seaport.

This thesis thus contributes to the wider historiography of railways and ports and also that of regional economic development. As I noted in the introduction the historiography of railways is vast and that of ports somewhat less so. But academic works dealing with railway and port interfaces and the attendant municipal politics

⁹ D. J. Starkey, 'Ownership structures in the British Shipping Industry: The Case of Hull, 1820-1916', *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 8, No. 2, December 1996, pp. 86-95.

are few, and although Simmons and Jackson have addressed the subject to a limited extent. I have argued that theirs is a broad-brush approach, which precludes specific case studies.¹⁰ Detailed studies of railway and port interfaces are extremely rare, and although Jarvis has produced analytical studies of the situation in Liverpool, there is scope for more academic research with regard to the situation at other major ports, London, Southampton and Bristol being suitable candidates.¹¹ This would enable us to move towards a greater understanding of the interplay between the various bodies involved in port development and to identify factors influencing the policy making process in this important field of transport history.

¹⁰ J. Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1913*. (Newton Abbot, 1986), pp. 196-224.

G. Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports*, (Tadworth, 1983), pp. 78-124.

¹¹ A. Jarvis, *Liverpool Central Docks, 1799-1905 – An Illustrated History*, (Stroud, 1991).

A. Jarvis, 'The Members of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board and Their Way of Doing Business', *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 6, (June 1994), p 123.

APPENDICES.

1. Chronology, 1744-1922.
2. Extract from the Humber Agreement, 1870.
3. Census of traffic at road/rail crossings in Hull, 1898 & 1909.
4. Census of traffic on Hedon Road on 17th, 19th & 20th April 1909.
5. Petition of the Corporation of the City and County of Kingston upon Hull against the amalgamation of the HBR and NER, 1921.
6. HBR directors and officers.
7. Proposed railways affecting Hull.
8. Area of Hull docks.

APPENDIX 1.

CHRONOLOGY, 1774-1922.

- 1774 Hull Dock Act obtained.
- 1778 Hull Dock opened.
- 1801 Corporation empowered to make a ferry and pier.
- 1802 Powers obtained for a further dock at Hull (Humber Dock).
- 1809 Humber Dock opened.
- 1814 Steamships arrive on Humber.
- 1824 Leeds and Hull Railroad Company proposed.
- 1825 London Northern Railroad planned.
Leeds and Selby Railway surveyed.
- 1826 Port of Goole opened by ACN.
- 1829 Junction Dock opened.
- 1830 Leeds & Selby Railway Bill receives Royal Assent.

- 1834 Leeds & Selby Railway opened.
- 1835 York and North Midland Railway Company formed.
Hull and Selby Railway proposed.
- 1836 Hull and Selby Railway Bill receives Royal Assent.
- 1838 Prospectus issued for Queen's Dock Company.
- 1839 YNMR reaches Milford Junction.
- 1840 Leeds & Selby Railway taken over by George Hudson.
Hull and Selby Railway opened.
- 1845 Hull and Selby Railway leased by YNMR.
Hull - Bridlington Railway authorised.
York, Hull and East and West Yorkshire Junction Railway proposed.
Hull and Barnsley Junction Railway proposed.
Leeds and Thirsk Railway Act receives Royal Assent.
- 1846 Railway Dock opened.
Hull-Bridlington Railway opened.
Act obtained for construction of Paragon Station.
Hull and Lincoln Direct Railway proposed.
Hull-Hornsea Railway proposed.

- 1847 Manchester & Leeds Railway becomes LYR.
- 1848 Paragon Station opened.
LYR absorbs Wakefield, Pontefract and Goole Railway.
- 1850 Victoria Dock opened.
- 1851 Leeds and Thirsk Railway name changed to Leeds Northern Railway.
- 1852 Act for establishment of Humber Conservancy obtained.
YNMR obtains powers to construct railway to Victoria Dock.
Leeds Northern Railway opened.
Prospectus issued for Hull-Holderness Railway.
- 1853 Victoria Dock Harbour entrance opened.
Victoria Dock Branch Railway opened.
Proposal for amalgamations to form NER.
West Hartlepool Harbour and Railway Company Act receives Royal Assent.
Hull-Holderness Railway Act obtained.
- 1854 Bill for Dock Company to raise £1,500,000.
Old Dock and Junction Docks renamed Queen's and Prince's Docks respectively.
North Eastern Railway Company (NER) Bill received Royal Assent.
Hull-Holderness Railway opened.
NER gives up Barton ferry.

- 1855 First Humber Agreement concluded.
- 1856 Midland Agreement concluded.
Hartlepool Agreement concluded.
- 1859 Dock Company introduces Bill for dock on the Citadel site.
- 1860 West Dock Company formed.
Hull & Holderness Railway leased to NER.
Proposal for railway from Staddlethorpe to Thorne.
- 1861 Dock Company Bill for Western Dock receives Royal Assent.
Beverley and Hornsea railway proposed.
Hedon and Aldbrough railway proposed.
NER proposes line from Staddlethorpe to Rawcliffe and Askern.
LYR proposes railway from Hull to South Yorkshire.
MSLR proposes railway from Hull to South Yorkshire.
Proposal for Hull and West Riding Junction Railway.
- 1862 Victoria Dock extension commenced.
Hull & Holderness Railway purchased by NER.
Hull-Hornsea Railway Act authorised.
NER proposal for railway to Thorne rejected.
- 1863 NER absorbs Stockton and Darlington Railway Company.

- 1863 NER obtains Act for Hull-Doncaster railway.
- 1864 Victoria Dock extension completed.
Victoria Dock branch railway doubled.
Hull & Holderness railway trains run to Paragon Station.
Hull-Hornsea railway opened.
Hartlepool Railway absorbed by NER.
- 1865 Second Humber Agreement Concluded.
NER subscribes £50,000 to the Dock Company and opens negotiations regarding a lease or amalgamation. No agreement reached.
Proposal for Hull, Lancashire and Midland Counties Railway.
Proposal for Hull, West Yorkshire and Lancashire Railway.
- 1866 Corporation introduces Bill for a Dock Trust.
Hull-Hornsea railway transferred to NER.
- 1867 Royal Commission on Railways vindicates NER rates policy.
- 1869 Albert Dock opened.
C. H. Wilson becomes a director of the Dock Company.
Hull-Doncaster railway opened.
- 1870 Final Humber agreement concluded.
- 1872 Recommendation for a dock to the west of Albert Dock.

- 1872 NER purchases Hull-Selby Railway.
Blockage of railways and docks at Hull.
Proposal for Hull, South and West Junction Railway.
- 1873 William Wright Dock opened.
Hull, South and West Junction Railway Bill fails.
C. H. Wilson appointed director of NER.
- 1874 MS&LR proposal for independent goods station at Hull.
MS&LR exercises running powers to Hull for passenger traffic.
NER proposal for line to Kirkella rejected.
NER and LYR subscribe £50,000 to Hull Dock Company.
- 1878 Dock Company, with NER support, introduces Bill for docks at
Saltend.
Dock Company withdraws Bill for new dock.
- 1879 William Wright resigns as Chairman of Dock Company. Succeeded
by J. W. Pease.
Proposal put forward for HBR and new dock.
Dock Company invited to participate in construction of new dock.
Bill for HBR goes before Parliament.
Proposal for Hull, Huddersfield and West Riding Railway.
Church Fenton, Cawood and Wistow Railway obtains Act.
- 1880 Dock Company refuses to participate in new dock scheme.
Smith removed from Dock Company board.

- 1880 Smith installed as Sheriff of Hull.
HBR Bill receives royal Assent.
Prospectus issued for HBR.
Church Fenton, Cawood and Wistow Railway proposes extension to HBR at Drax.
- 1881 Cutting of first sod of HBR.
Action brought in Chancery against HBR to restrain payments out of capital.
- 1882 Act obtained by HBR to legalise payments from capital.
Act obtained by HBR for Huddersfield and Halifax extension and fish dock at Marfleet.
Promotion of East and West Yorkshire Union Railways.
- 1883 Church Fenton, Cawood and Wistow Railway name changed to Selby and Mid-Yorkshire Union Railway.
Proposal for Leeds, Church Fenton and Hull Junction Railway.
Proposal for Hull and Lincoln Railway.
- 1884 London Committee of HBR shareholders formed by Sir Francis Head.
Grierson called in to report on HBR management.
HBR attempts to raise further £1,800,000 preference stock.
Lloyds Bonds issued.
HBR construction stops.
Act obtained to raise further £1,500,000 stock.

- 1884 Proposal for Scarborough and West Riding Railway.
Forbes and Swarbrick appointed as joint managing directors of HBR.
HBR construction restarts.
- 1885 Alexandra Dock opened.
HBR opened.
LYR exercise running powers to Hull.
War of rates breaks out between HBR and Dock Company.
- 1886 Huddersfield and Halifax extension abandoned.
Writs issued against HBR by creditors.
- 1887 Dock Company introduces a Bill to make further provision with
respect to rates and dues and to enable it to sell or lease and to transfer
its undertaking to the MS&LR, the LYR, the NER or the LNWR or to
one or more of them.
Start of Sculcoates dispute.
NER fails in Sculcoates dispute.
Writs issued against HBR by debenture holders.
Hull and North Western Junction Railway formed to take over part of
original HBR extension railways.
NER reduces rates.
Proposed MR and HBR amalgamation.
- 1888 MR Amalgamation Bill withdrawn.
Corporation introduces scheme for a Dock Trust.

- 1888 HBR and Dock Company turn down Dock Trust scheme.
Dock Company introduces Bill for power to lease or sell its undertaking to the NER. This to proceed concurrently with a Bill introduced by the HBR for the same purpose.
HBR Bill and Dock Bill fail.
- 1889 Abortive proposal for amalgamation of HBR and NER.
Dock Company introduces abortive Bill for the purposes of empowering the sale and transfer of its estate to the NER, giving tit powers to levy dues on lighters in the River Humber and enabling it to construct a deep-water entrance to Albert Dock.
Hull directors removed from HBR board.
HBR Act obtained to raise extra £2,000,000.
HBR released from Chancery.
- 1891 Dock Company asks NER to provide capital for dock improvements.
Proposal defeated by shareholders at a Wharnccliffe meeting.
HBR pays first dividend.
- 1892 Proposal for SYJR.
Swarbrick resigns from HBR board.
Act obtained for SYJR.
Bill introduced by Dock Company for amalgamation with NER.
Bill introduced by NER for new dock at Marfleet.
Both Bills fail.
- 1893 NER introduces Bill for amalgamation with Dock Company.

- 1893 Amalgamation Bill receives Royal Assent.
Hull dock strike.
- 1894 SYJR opened.
- 1895 Buckingham Pope attacks HBR board.
Lambert Committee appointed to look into HBR management.
Committee exonerates HBR management.
Smith resigns from HBR board.
NER proposes amalgamation with HBR.
- 1896 HBR board increased from nine to eleven.
HBR raises £300,000 extra capital.
NER and HBR Amalgamation Bill withdrawn.
NER prompts the Hull and Netherlands Steam Shipping Company.
- 1897 HSYER Bill receives Royal Assent.
NER introduces dock improvement Bill.
NER withdraws Bill for dock improvements.
Dearne Valley Railway incorporated.
Gibb initiates traffic apprentice scheme on NER.
- 1898 HBR takes over HSYER.
NER introduces dock improvement Bill.
NER withdraws Bill because of opposition from Corporation and Humber Conservancy.

- 1898 HBR raises £450,000 additional capital for infrastructure to deal with traffic from HSYER.
NER & HBR deposit Bill for Joint Dock.
- 1899 Joint Dock Bill receives Royal Assent.
Cadeby Colliery Company sues HBR.
Alexandra Dock extension opened.
- 1900 NER Steamships Bill receives royal Assent.
John Fisher (Chairman HBR) dies. Massey proposed. Wright appointed.
- 1901 Shireoaks, Laughton and Maltby Railway obtains Act.
NER replace Hedon Road level crossing by a bridge.
- 1902 HSYER opened.
HBR (South Yorkshire Extension Lines) Bill introduced.
NER Joint Railway with MR, GCR, LYR and GNR (South Yorkshire Joint Railway) proposed.
Proposal to reduce size of Joint Dock.
NER Bankers (J. & W. Pease) became insolvent.
- 1903 NER introduce Bill for new swing bridge at Wilmington.
Strike at Denaby Colliery.
- 1904 NER quadruples Selby branch from Hessle to Brough and doubles Withernsea Branch.

- 1905 NER concludes agreement with Wilson shipping line.
NER submits Bill for pier at Sunk Island.
HBR changes name from Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Company to Hull and Barnsley Railway Company.
HBR granted running powers into Sheffield.
Hull and Barnsley Railway (Steam Vessels) Bill presented.
- 1906 Wilson's and North Eastern Railway Shipping Company Limited incorporated.
Contract awarded for Joint Dock.
Hull and Barnsley Railway (Steam Vessels) Bill receives Royal Assent.
Hull Corporation introduces Bill for pier and wharf.
- 1907 Hull and Barnsley Railway sailings discontinued.
Riverside Quay opened.
HBR obtains act for construction of a pier at Alexandra Dock.
- 1908 Curtailed of HBR passenger services announced.
Proposal for Nottingham - Hull Railway.
NER proposes construction of oil terminal at Saltend.
- 1909 South Yorkshire Joint Railway opened.
HBR, GC & MR Joint Line from Braithwell to Dinnington opened.
Act obtained for construction of Gowdall and Braithwell (HBR & GC Joint).

- 1909 HBR resumes full passenger services.
NER and HBR propose working agreement.
NER Bill for railway to Saltend.
- 1910 Proposal for Lincoln - Hull Railway.
NER and HBR working agreement fails due to Corporation
opposition.
- 1913 Bill introduced for joint NER and HBR ownership of Saltend.
NER and HBR agree access to Saltend over high level route.
- 1914 Joint dock opened.
- 1916 Gowdall & Braithwell Joint Line (HBR & GCR) opened.
- 1920 Transport Bill proposes amalgamation of NER and HBR.
- 1921 HBR approves amalgamation with NER.
- 1922 HBR amalgamated with NER.

APPENDIX 2.

EXTRACT FROM THE HUMBER AGREEMENT, 1870.

Articles of agreement made the first day of February between the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway Company, the London and North Western Railway Company, the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company and the North Eastern Railway Company with the object (without prejudice to other agreements) of developing the traffic of Hull and Grimsby with Manchester, Liverpool, Ashton and Staleybridge and for the purpose of providing for a division of receipts arising from goods traffic and for making certain arrangements respecting all traffic between the above named places :-

That for the purposes of this agreement the term "Manchester" shall include Cross lane, Victoria, Longsight, Liverpool road, London road, Ashbury's, Ardwick, Openshaw, Oldham road, Salford, Oldfield road, Pendleton, Miles Platting, Newton Heath, Beswick and all present and future stations between any of these places and Manchester including all stations in Manchester used or owned by the companies parties to this agreement or any of them.

That the term "Liverpool" shall include Broad Green, Preston road, Walton Junction, Mossley Hill, St. Michaels, Otters Pool, Mersey road and all present and future stations between any of these places and Liverpool including all stations in Liverpool used or owned by the companies parties to this agreement or any of them.

That the term "Hull" shall include New Holland and all stations in Hull on the North Eastern Railway Company's Victoria Dock branch used or owned by the companies parties to this agreement or any of them and "Grimsby" shall include Grimsby, Grimsby Docks and Cleethorpes.

That the term "goods" shall include cattle and all items carried by goods trains except coals and coke.

That the term "passenger traffic" shall include horses, carriages, dogs, parcels, yeast, fish and all other things by passenger trains. Mails are not included in this agreement.

That the passenger traffic between Liverpool, Manchester, Ashton and Staleybridge and Hull and Grimsby shall be carried by the various routes at equal rates and fares.

such rates being fixed and settled from time to time at the meetings of the Conference of Managers.

That the receipts derived from goods traffic passing between Manchester, Ashton and Staleybridge on the one hand and Hull and Grimsby on the other hand shall be divided in the following proportions. viz:- to the Leeds route 27½%; to the Normanton route 13¾%; to the Goole route 13¾%; to the Sheffield or Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire route 45%; and the companies party to this agreement agree to forward and receive traffic not otherwise consigned by the routes above-mentioned, subject to such alterations as the Conference may from time to time determine`.

Source: The National Archives, Kew, RAIL527/568.

APPENDIX 3.

ROAD AND RAIL TRAFFIC AT LEVEL CROSSINGS IN HULL, 1898 & 1909.

The Corporation of Hull carried out a census of traffic at the major road level crossings for the week ending 4th January 1898. The census was taken daily between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m.

	No. of Trains	Time gates closed	Pedestrians	Vehicles other than trams	Trams
Anlaby Rd.	704	20 h. 20 m. 12 s.	45,726	14,098	884
Beverley Rd.	505	16 h. 46 m. 45 s.	98,430	19,854	995
Hessle Rd.	774	27 h. 13 m. 0 s.	7,732	1,632	----
Holderness Rd.	330	9 h. 44 m. 30 s.	59,496	20,068	677
Hedon Rd.	913	23 h. 11 m. 30 s.	47,411	10,249	923

Source: City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee Minutes 12th January 1898.

A further census was taken during the week ending 22nd April 1909 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 11 p.m.

	No. of trains	Time gates closed	Pedestrians	Vehicles other than trams	Trams
Anlaby Rd.	868	22 h. 56 m. 0 s.	73,526	28,952	4,860
Beverley Rd.	503	14 h. 1 m. 0 s.	107,585	36,158	3,572
Hessle Rd.	1,016	34 h. 59 m. 30 s.	32,559	588	-----
Holderness Rd.	304	8 h. 23 m. 45 s.	170,566	32,500	4,323

Source: City Archives, Hull, TLP 283.

APPENDIX 4.

CENSUS OF TRAFFIC ON HEDON ROAD ON 17th, 19th & 20th APRIL 1909.

6 a.m. to 7 p.m. 17th April (Saturday).

			Total
Foot Passengers	Inward	60	
	Outward	<u>95</u>	155
Cyclists	Inward	150	
	Outward	<u>244</u>	394
Passenger vehicles	Inward	14	
	Outward	<u>18</u>	32
Carts and Rullies	Inward	90	
	Outward	<u>93</u>	183

6 a.m. to 7 p.m. 19th April (Monday).

Foot Passengers	Inward	60	
	Outward	<u>50</u>	110
Cyclists	Inward	151	
	Outward	<u>137</u>	288

			Total
Passenger vehicles	Inward	5	
	Outward	<u>9</u>	14
Carts and Rullies	Inward	99	
	Outward	<u>110</u>	209
Beasts, 4: Sheep, 150.			

6 a.m. to 7 p.m. 20th April (Tuesday).

			Total
Foot Passengers	Inward	59	
	Outward	<u>74</u>	133
Cyclists	Inward	70	
	Outward	<u>74</u>	144
Passenger vehicles	Inward	3	
	Outward	<u>4</u>	7
Carts and Rullies	Inward	128	
	Outward	<u>132</u>	260

Beasts, 68; Sheep, 120.

Source: City Archives, Hull, TLP 283.

APPENDIX 5.

PETITION OF THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF KINGSTON UPON HULL AGAINST THE AMALGAMATION OF THE HBR AND NER, 1921.

1. The HBR was promoted in 1880, with the avowed object of breaking down the monopoly in Hull of the NER.
2. The Hull Corporation was actively associated with the promotion and
 - (a) invested £100.000 in ordinary shares, which statute forbids their parting with;
 - (b) sold the promoters the land for their dock on easy terms;
 - (c) were given by statute a right of veto upon any infringement of the independence of the HBR;
 - (d) have the right to and do appoint two directors on the HBR Board.
3. The railway was opened in 1885, and since that time there have been numerous attempts to unite in greater or less degree the HBR with the NER. The Hull Corporation have on every occasion successfully resisted these attempts at the cost of both money and effort.
4. The right of veto was repeated in an Act of 1893, under which the NER acquired the Hull Docks (other than the HBR dock), and in 1899 when the NER and HBR were by statute authorised to construct jointly a new dock.
5. The veto of the Corporation was subject to an appeal to the Railway and Canal Commissioners or the Board of Trade. No party has ever ventured to make such appeal.
6. The present Bill still leaves the other large ports heretofore enjoying railway competition. (e.g., Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol).
7. The Bill entirely deprives Hull of any railway or dock competition and utterly ignores the rights granted to the Corporation by Parliament, so hardly fought for and so consistently and strenuously sustained.

8. The Bill is grossly unfair to Hull therefore. If “grouping” must take place the only fair course is to group the HBR with the Midland Group (Group 3), and thus leave Hull with competition, as in the case of Liverpool, Manchester &c.
9. This would only be fair, quite apart from the unique position of the Hull Corporation relatively to the railway position in the city. The existence of their statutory rights outlined in brief above brings into stronger relief the soundness of their claim that the Bill as it stands is unjust and should not receive the support of Parliament.
10. The HBR is physically joined to the MR at Cudworth and the Corporation deny that the indebtedness of the HBR to the NER in connection with the jointly-owned King George Dock is any insuperable or serious barrier in the way of the alternative grouping suggested. The money was borrowed by the HBR from the NER upon terms which another group could readily take over with the “partnership” in the dock.
11. The Minister of Transport must admit that the case of the Hull Corporation is unique and indeed a strong one, but the Bill discloses no attempt to acknowledge this and the port is relegated to the mercies of an even more complete monopoly than in 1880, when at least the docks were in the hands of a separate company.
12. Every section of the trading and corporate community in Hull is bitterly opposed to the proposals of the Bill as to the HBR.

Source: City Archives, Hull, Corporation Parliamentary Committee minutes, 10th June 1921.

APPENDIX 6.

DIRECTORS AND GENERAL MANAGERS OF THE HULL AND BARNESLEY RAILWAY COMPANY.

Directors

Anstruther Henry Torrens	1908-1922	
Bailey Walter Samuel	1895-1910	
Beaumont Lord	1881-1890	
Briggs Henry	1880-1895	
Brooshooft E.	1880-1881	
Cope John Alexander	1884-1892	
Dent Villiers Francis	1889-1909	
Fisher John	1880-1900	D/Chair 1880-1888 & 1889-1895. Chair 1895-1900.
Fisher John Henry	1910-1922	D/Chair 1914-1922.
Forbes James Staats	1884-1904	D/Chair 1889.
Garnett Thomas	1901-1916	
Hamilton Lord	1919-1922	
Hargreaves John Henry (C)	1916-1922	
Head John Francis	1880-1883	
Joshua Samuel	1884-1886	
Keighley Edward Ernest (C)	1918-1922	
Larard Frederick (C)	1909-1918	
Leak John (C)	1880-1895	
Leetham Edward	1880-1889	
Lucas Arthur Charles	1892-1915	

Massey Watson Arton	1881-1888	
Massey Watson Arton (C)	1895-1909	
Micks Robert Henry	1914-1922	
Newbald Charles James	1880-1881	
Plunket Lord	1915-1919	
Poston Charles	1896-1913	D/Chair 1907-1913.
Rayment William	1880-1888	
Rollit Albert (C)	1906-1916	
Smith Gerard	1880-1895	Chair 1880-1895.
Smith Gerard Hamilton	1913-1922	
Stephenson Lawrence	1880-1884	
Stuart James	1880-1888	D/Chair Feb - July 1889.
Swarbrick Samuel	1883-1890	
Trotter Charles William	1908-1922	D/Chair 1913-1914 Chair 1919-1922.
Trotter William	1887-1907	D/Chair 1895-1900. Chair 1900-1907.
Walker George Blake	1896-1922	
Watkin Edward	1921-1922	
Witty Thomas (C)	1880-1895	
Woodhouse James (C)	1895-1906	
Wright William Shaw	1896-1914	D/Chair 1900-1907. Chair 1907-1913.

(C) Indicates a director appointed by Hull Corporation.

General Managers

Hill Vincent	1884-1900	
Wood Walter	1900-1905	
Watkin Edward	1905-1922	Appointed Director in 1921.

APPENDIX 7.

PROPOSED RAILWAYS CONNECTED WITH OR AFFECTING HULL.

1824 *Leeds & Hull.*

1825 *London Northern.*

1840 **Hull - Selby.**

1844 *Hull & Gainsborough.*

1845 *Hull & Barnsley Junction.*

1845 *Hull, Sheffield and Midland Direct.*

1846 **Hull - Bridlington.**

1846 *Hull and Lincoln Direct.*

1846 *Arram - Hornsea.*

1847 *Brough - Market Weighton.*

1853 **Victoria Dock.**

1854 **Hull & Holderness.**

1855 *Hull, Goole & Doncaster.*

1856 *Hull, Brough and Market Weighton.*

1860 *Staddlethorpe - Thorne.*

1861 *Beverley - Hornsea.*

1861 *Hedon - Aldbrough.*

1861 *Staddlethorpe - Thorne - Askern.*

1861 *Hull & West Riding Junction.*

1861 *Hull - Thorne (SYR).*

1861 *Askern - Rawcliffe - Broomfleet (LYR).*

1864 **Hull-Hornsea.**

1865 *Hull, Lancashire & Midland Counties.*

1865 *Hull, West Yorkshire & Lancashire.*

1869 **Hull - Doncaster.**

1872 *Hull South & West Junction.*

1873 *Hull, Victoria Dock - Kirkella.*

1879 *Hull, Huddersfield & West Riding.*

1879 *Church Fenton, Cawood and Wistow.*

1882 *East & West Yorkshire Union.*

1883 *Selby and Mid-Yorkshire Union.*

1883 *Hull & Lincoln.*

1883 *Scarborough & West Riding.*

1885 **Hull, Barnsley & West Riding Junction Railway & Dock.**

1887 *Hull & North Western Junction.*

1893 *Scarborough, Bridlington and West Riding Junction Railway.*

1894 **South Yorkshire Junction.**

1902 **Hull & South Yorkshire Extension.**

1902 *Railways at Dinnington and Thurnscoe.*

1908 *Hull & Nottingham Railway.*

1909 **Railways at Dinnington and Thurnscoe (HBR, GCR & MR).**

1909 **South Yorkshire Joint (NER, GNR, GCR, LYR & MR).**

1910 *Hull & Lincoln Railway.*

1913 *Hull, Lincoln & Nottingham Railway.*

1914 **Hull Joint Dock.**

1916 **Aire Junction - Braithwell (HBR & GCR).**

Notes:

1). Lines shown in Italics were not constructed and the date shown is that of the proposal.

2). Lines constructed are shown in bold type on the date of their opening.

APPENDIX 8.**AREA OF HULL DOCKS 1921.**

Name	Area			
	Acres	Roods	Poles	(Hectares)
Queens	9	3	29	3.73
Queens Tidal Basin	0	1	22	0.15
Humber	7	0	24	2.83
Humber Extension	2	1	19	0.93
Princes	6	0	5	2.42
Railway	2	3	9	1.12
Victoria	20	0	4	8.10
Victoria Humber Half Tide Basin	3	0	0	1.23
Victoria Tidal Basin	2	3	7	1.13
Drypool Half Tide Basin	1	0	8	0.43
Drypool Tidal Basin	0	1	32	0.12
Albert	24	2	28	9.87
Albert Tidal Basin	1	3	37	0.73
Albert Channel	0	3	4	0.32
William Wright	5	3	37	2.36
St. Andrews Dock	10	2	10	4.29
St. Andrews Dock Extension	8	3	11	3.56
St. Andrews Tidal Basin	0	2	0	0.21
No. 1 Timber Pond	14	0	4	5.67
No. 2 Timber Pond	11	1	1	4.58

	Acres	Roods	Poles	(Hectares)
No. 2 Timber Pond Extension	14	2	20	5.90
Alexandra Dock	46	2	0	18.80
Alexandra Dock Extension	7	0	0	2.85
King George Dock	53	0	0	21.41
Total	255	2	31	102.74

Sources: City Archives, Hull, TLP 264, Plan of Hull Dock Company Estate 1891.

Central Library, Hull. Chamber of Commerce Annual Report, 1921.

GLOSSARY.

The following abbreviations are used :

ACN	Aire and Calder Navigation.
DVR	Dearne Valley Railway.
GCR	Great Central Railway.
GER	Great Eastern Railway.
GGSJr	Great Grimsby and Sheffield Junction Railway.
GN&GEJt	Great Northern and Great Eastern Joint Railway.
GNR	Great Northern Railway.
HBR	Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Company. [In 1905 the name of the company was changed to the Hull and Barnsley Railway Company.] ¹
HSR	Hull and Selby Railway.
HSYER	Hull and South Yorkshire Extension Railway.
LNWR	London and North Western Railway.
LSR	Leeds and Selby Railway.
LYR	Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.
MLR	Manchester and Leeds Railway.
MR	Midland Railway.
MSLR	Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway.
RML	Rotherham, Maltby and Laughton Railway.
SDLUR	South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway.
SDR	Stockton and Darlington Railway.
SYJR	South Yorkshire Junction Railway.
SYJt	South Yorkshire Joint Railway.
SYR	South Yorkshire Railway.
YNMR	York and North Midland Railway.

¹ City Archives, Hull, TLP 265, Hull and Barnsley Railway Act, 1905.

On 1st August 1897 the name of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway was changed to the Great Central Railway.

Kingston upon Hull became a city in 1897.

FIGURES.

1. Charles Henry Wilson.
2. Arthur Wilson.
3. Gerard Smith.
4. Watson Arton Massey.
5. James Staats Forbes.
6. Frederick Brent Grotrian.
7. Edward Philip Maxsted.
8. Albert Kaye Rollit.
9. Yorkshire and Humberside.
10. Railways in North & East Yorkshire & County Durham.
11. The NER in Yorkshire – 1921.
12. The HBR – 1921.
13. The HBR in East Yorkshire - 1921.
14. The HBR in West Yorkshire - 1921.
15. NER Railways in Hull – 1921.
16. Proposed Hull South & West Junction Railway – 1872.
17. Proposed Hull & Barnsley and connecting railways.
18. Proposed Hull & Barnsley Railway – 1880.
19. Proposed connection between NER and HBR at Sculcoates.
20. The Yorkshire and East Midlands coalfield.
21. Yorkshire collieries – c.1960.
22. The Railways of South Yorkshire.

23. The South Yorkshire Joint Railway and connecting branches.
24. The HBR and associated branches, Wrangbrook – Wath.
25. Branches around Doncaster.
26. Hull Town Docks.
27. Victoria Dock and The Old Harbour.
28. Albert & William Wright Docks.
29. St. Andrew's Dock.
30. Alexandra Dock.
31. Hull Joint Dock.
32. Alexandra Dock and King George Dock.
33. Coal exports from Hull, 1875-1913.
34. Hull docks tonnage, 1848-1912.
35. HBR expenses as a percentage of revenue, 1875-1921.
36. NER expenses as a percentage of revenue, 1854-1921.

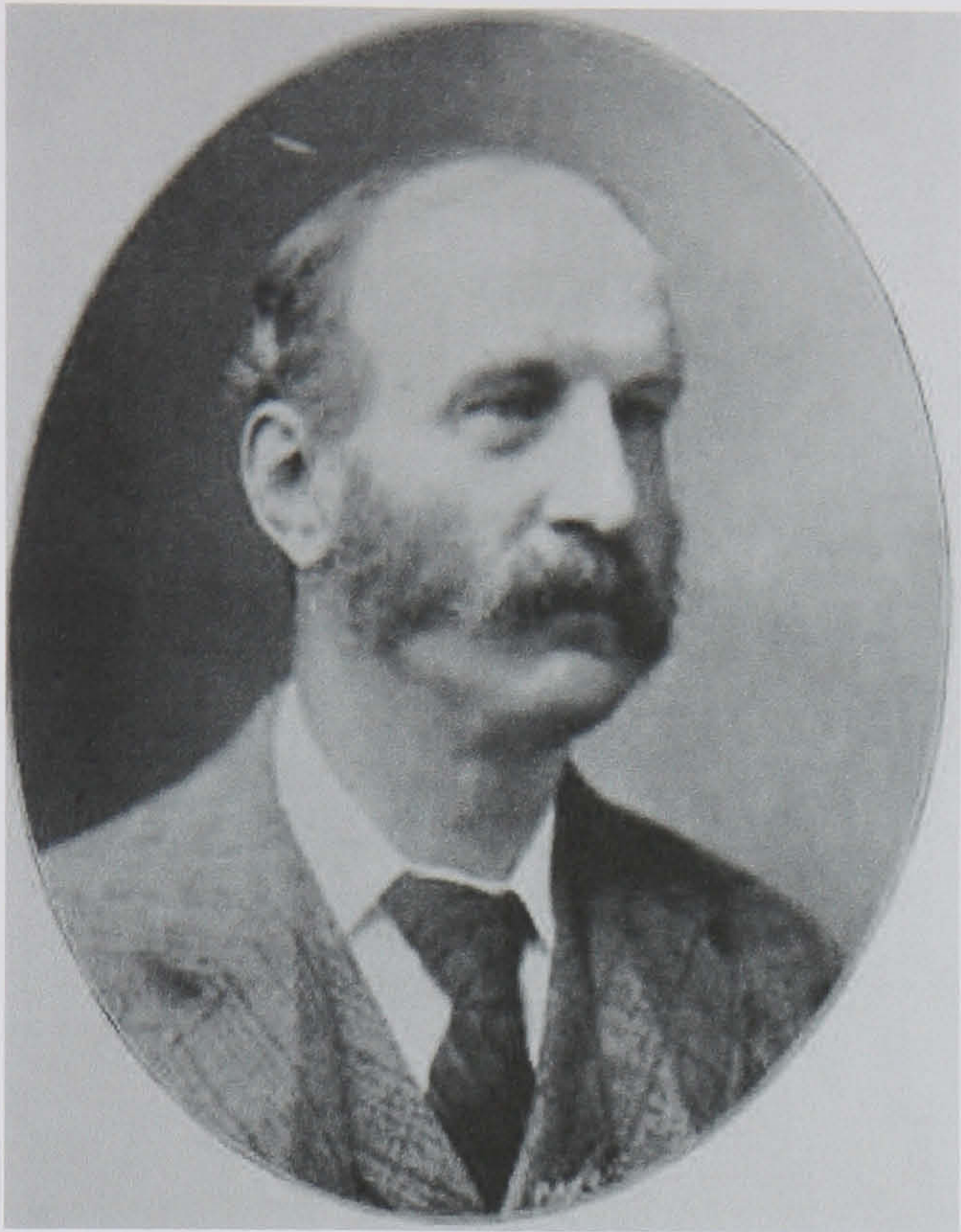


Fig. 1. Charles Henry Wilson.
(Central Library, Hull.)



Fig. 2. Arthur Wilson.
(Central Library, Hull.)



Fig. 3. Gerard Smith.
(Central Library, Hull.)



Fig. 4. Watson Arton Massey.
(Central Library, Hull.)

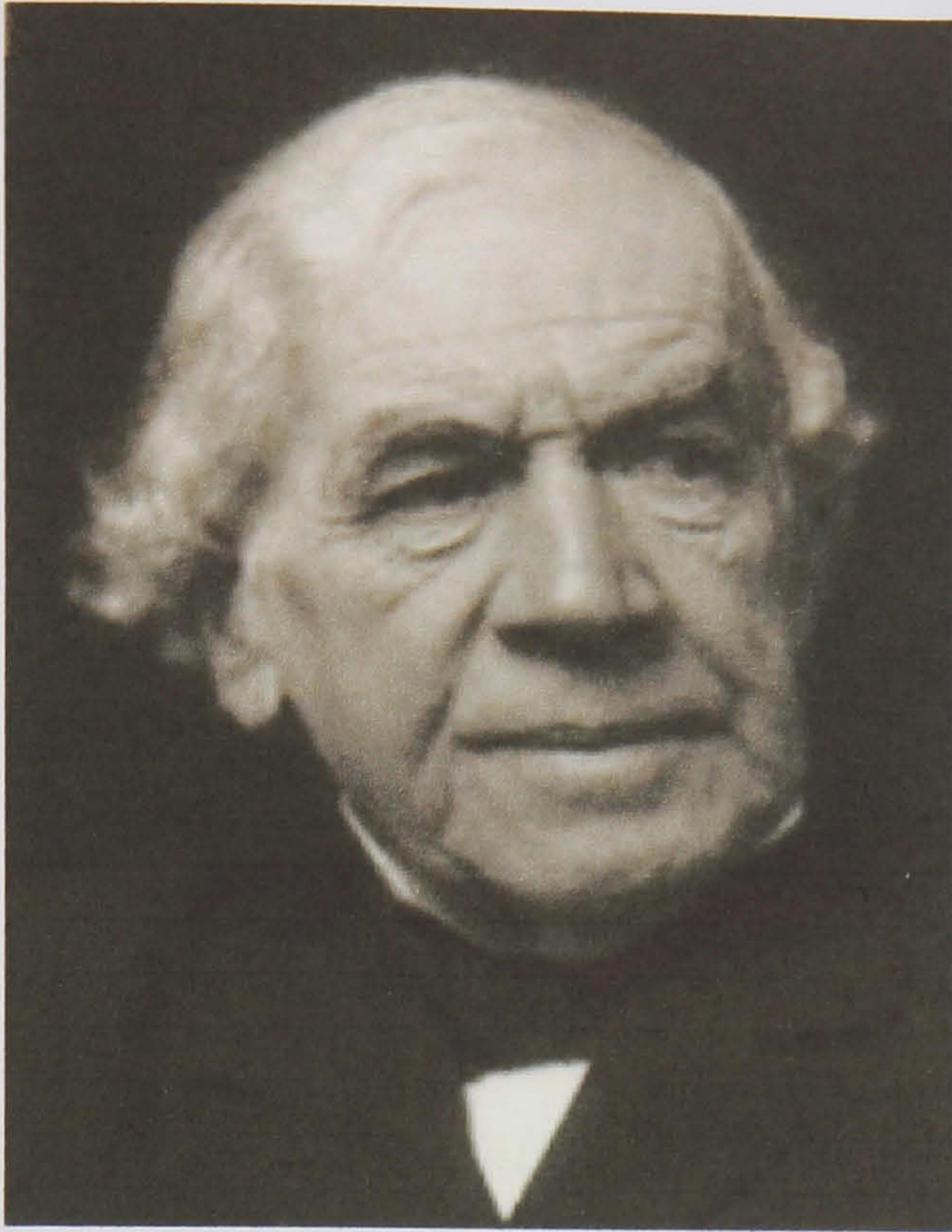


Fig. 5. James Staats Forbes.
(National Portrait Gallery.)



Fig. 6. Frederick Brent Grotrian.
(Central Library, Hull.)

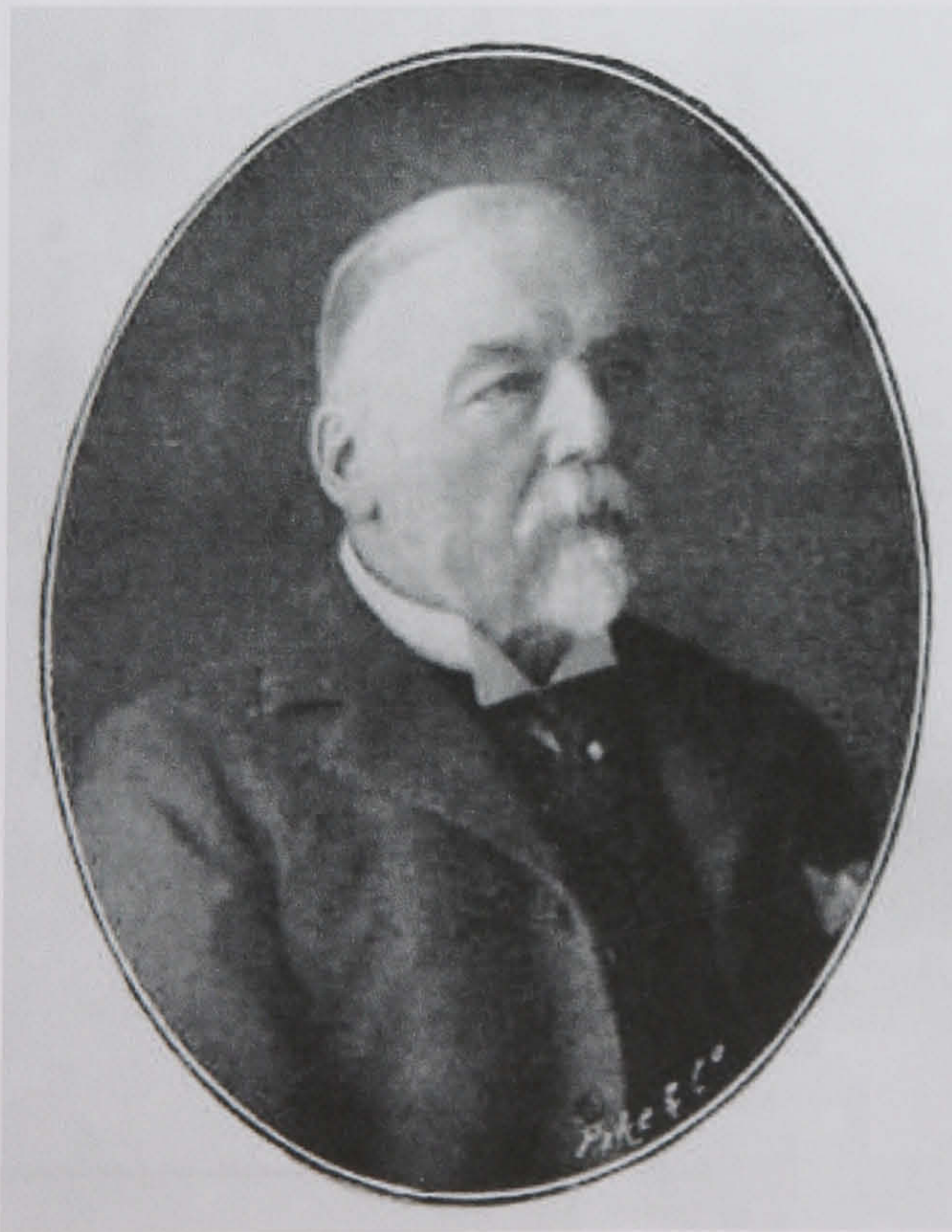


Fig. 7. Edward Philip Maxsted.
(Central Library, Hull.)



Fig. 8. Albert Kaye Rollit.
(Central Library, Hull.)

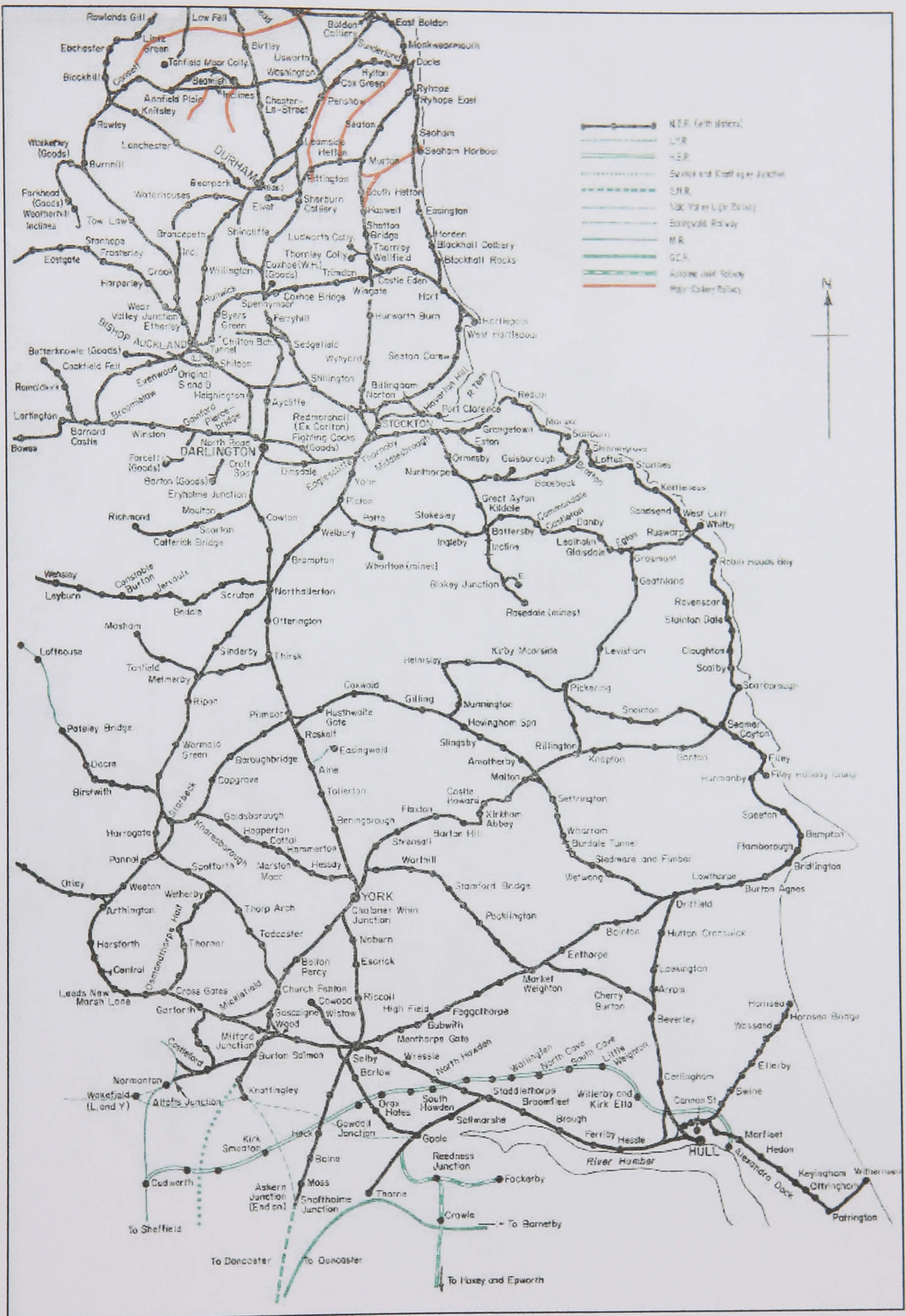


Fig. 10. Railways in North and East Yorkshire and County Durham.

(K. Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol. 4, The North East.*)

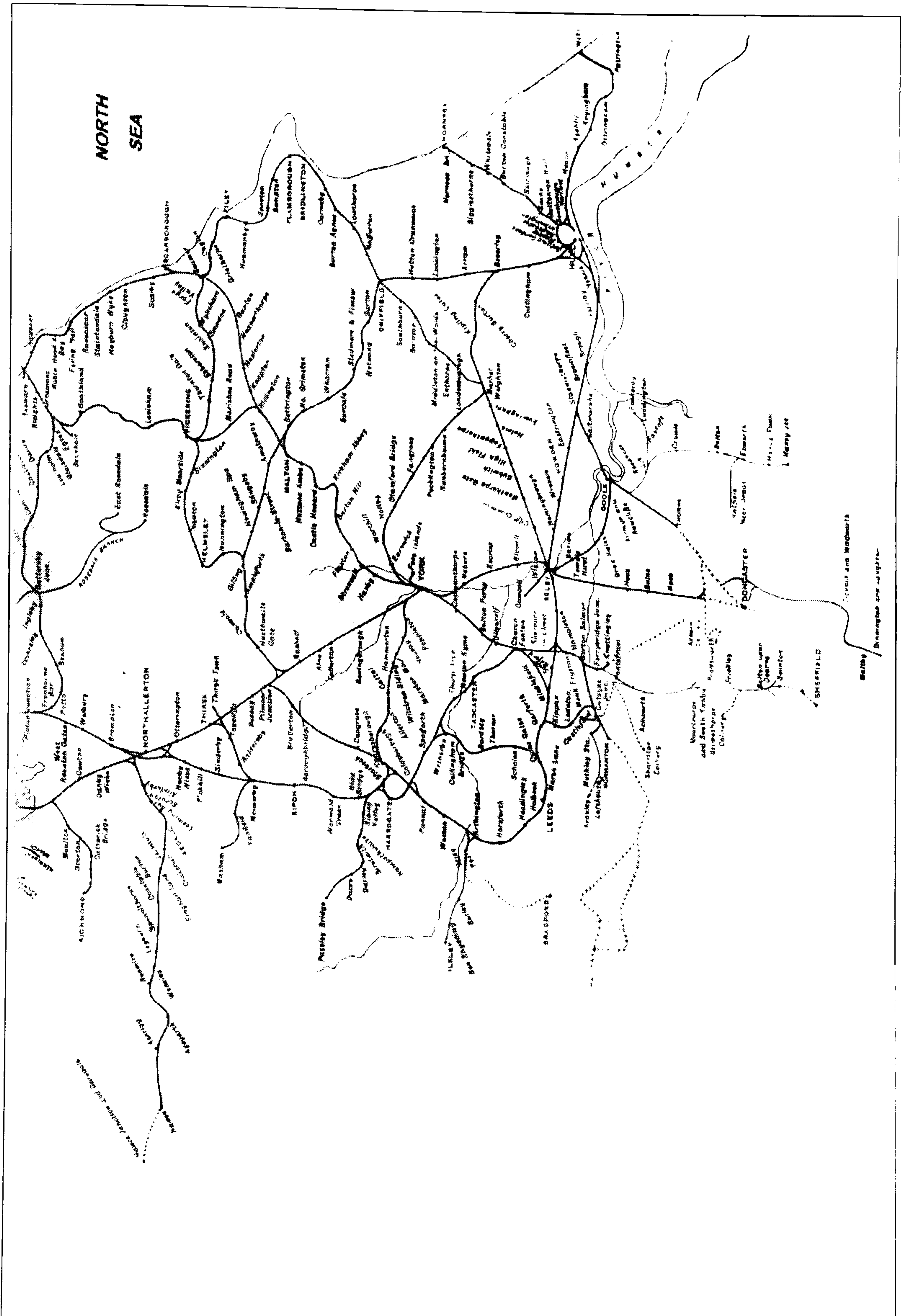


Fig. 11. The North Eastern Railway in Yorkshire - 1921.

(City Archives, Hull.)

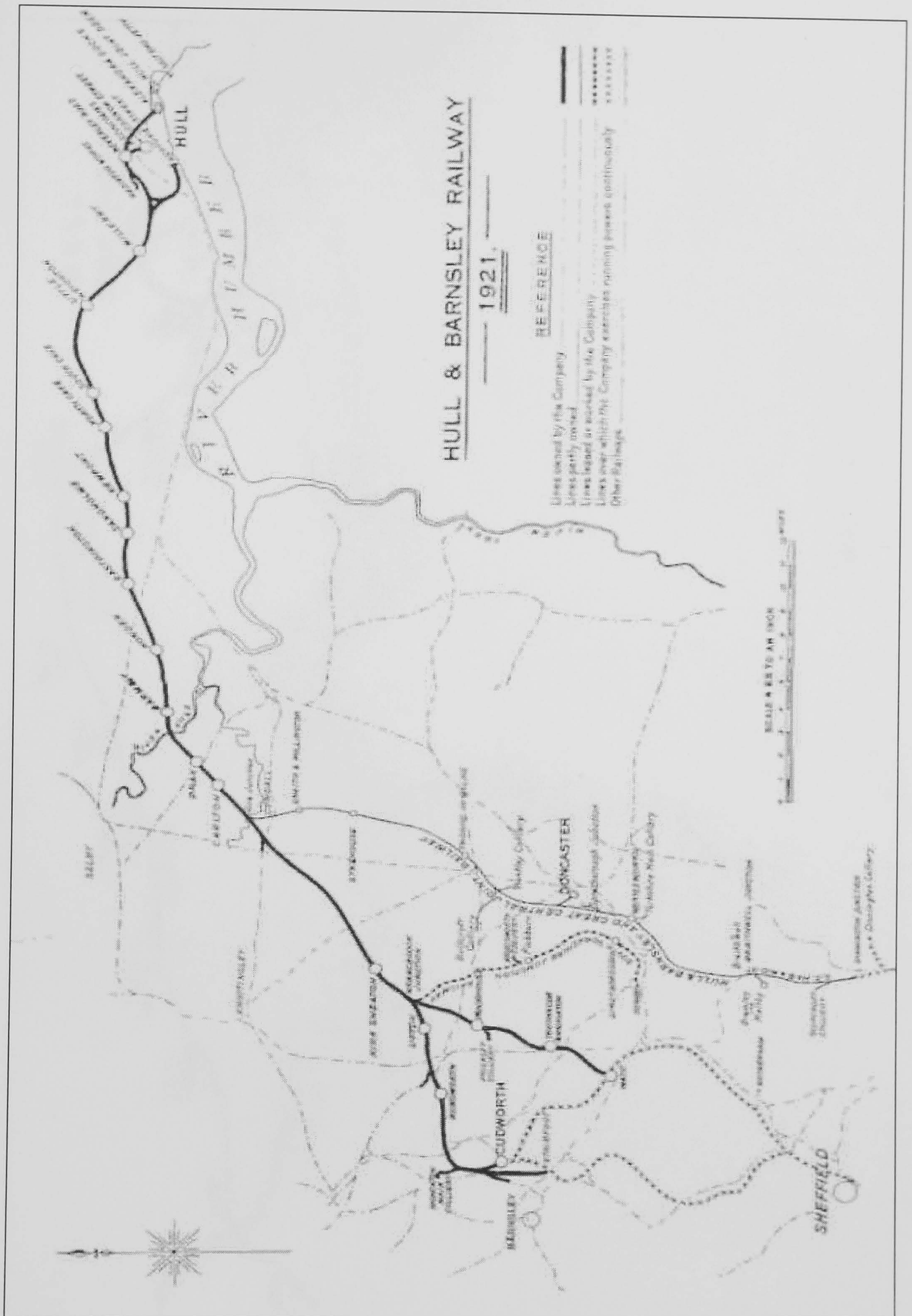


Fig. 12. The Hull & Barnsley Railway - 1921.

(City Archives, Hull.)

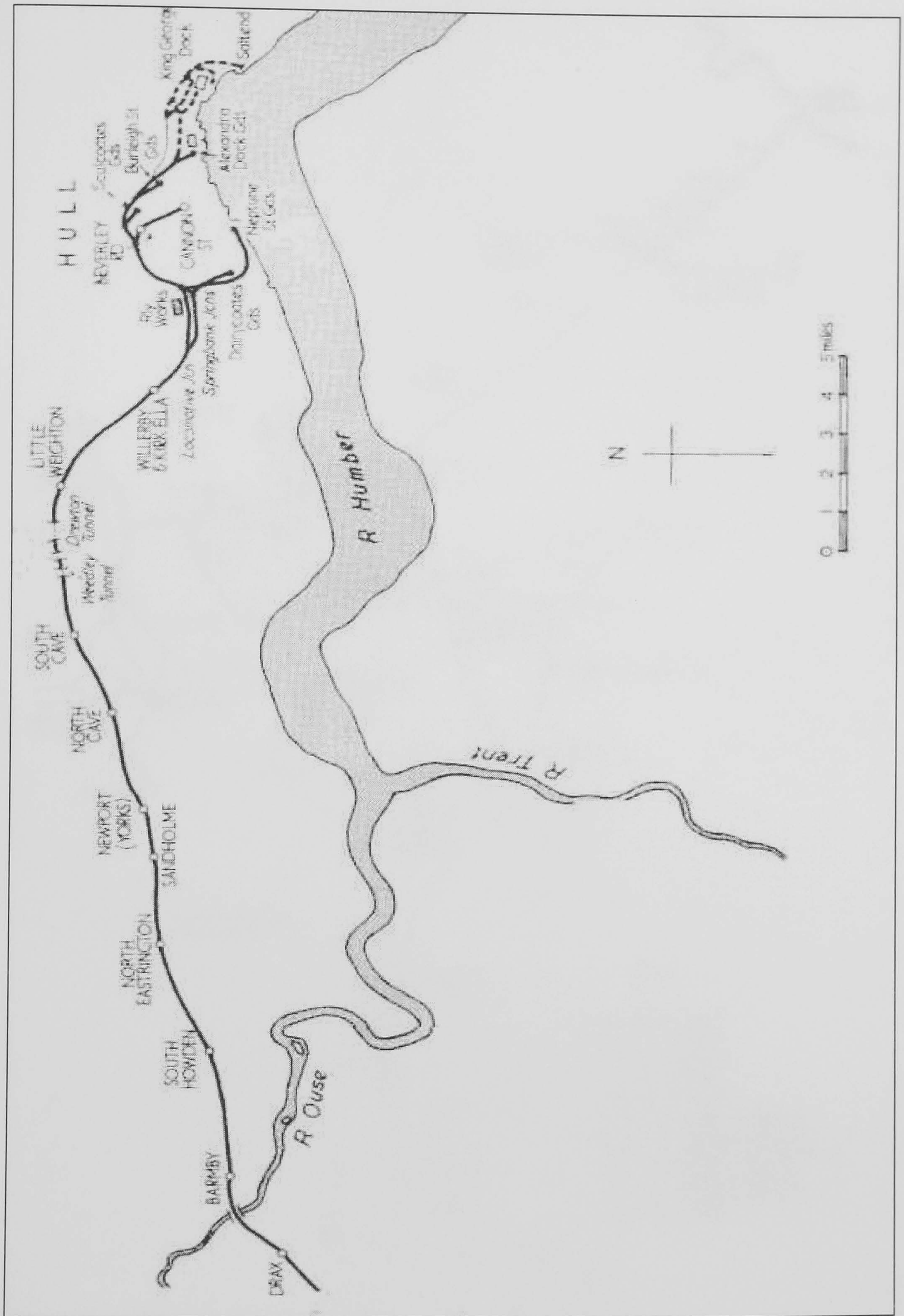


Fig. 13. The Hull & Barnsley Railway in East Yorkshire - 1921.

(City Archives, Hull.)

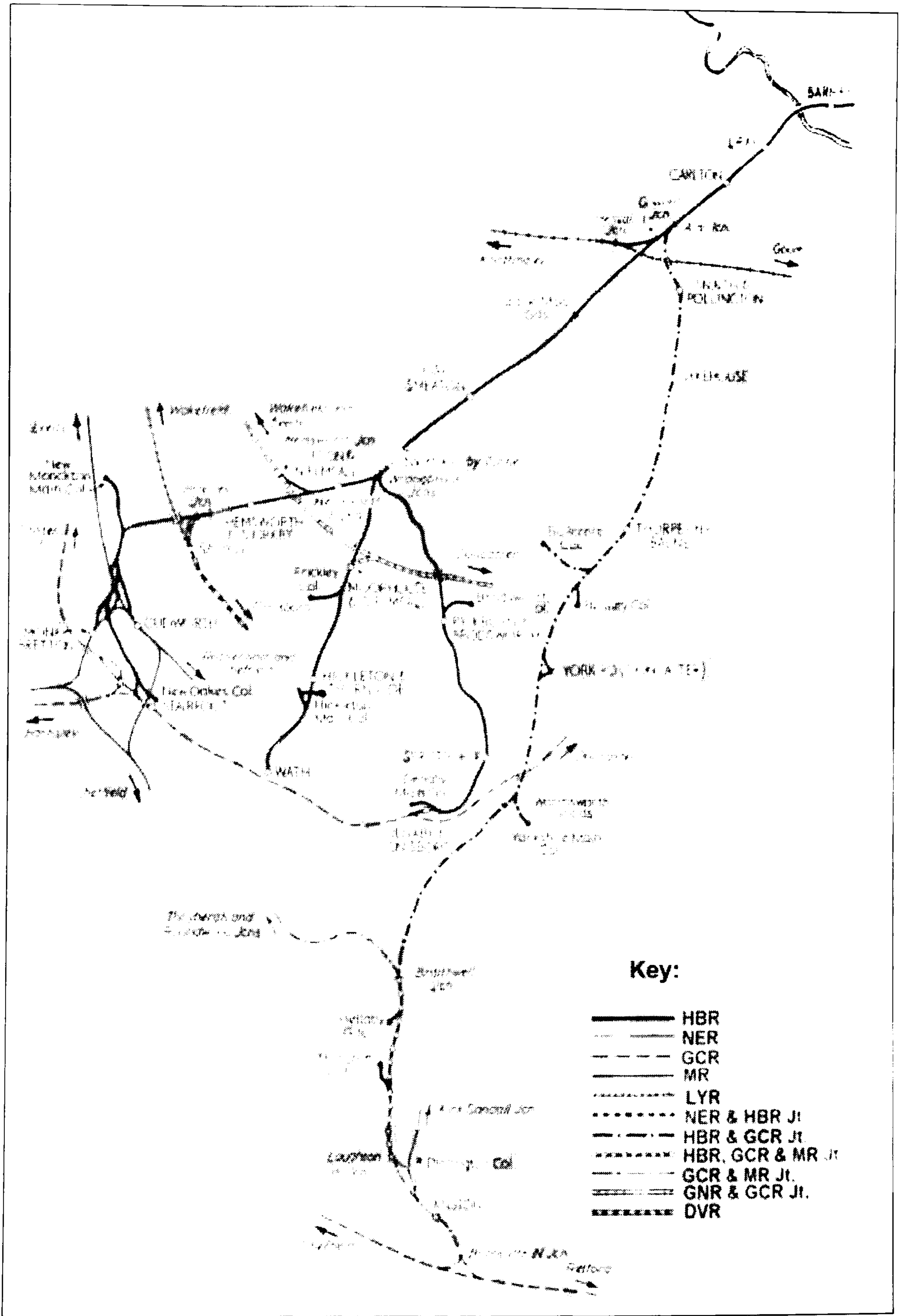


Fig. 14. The Hull & Barnsley Railway and associated railways in West Yorkshire - 1921.

(City Archives, Hull.)

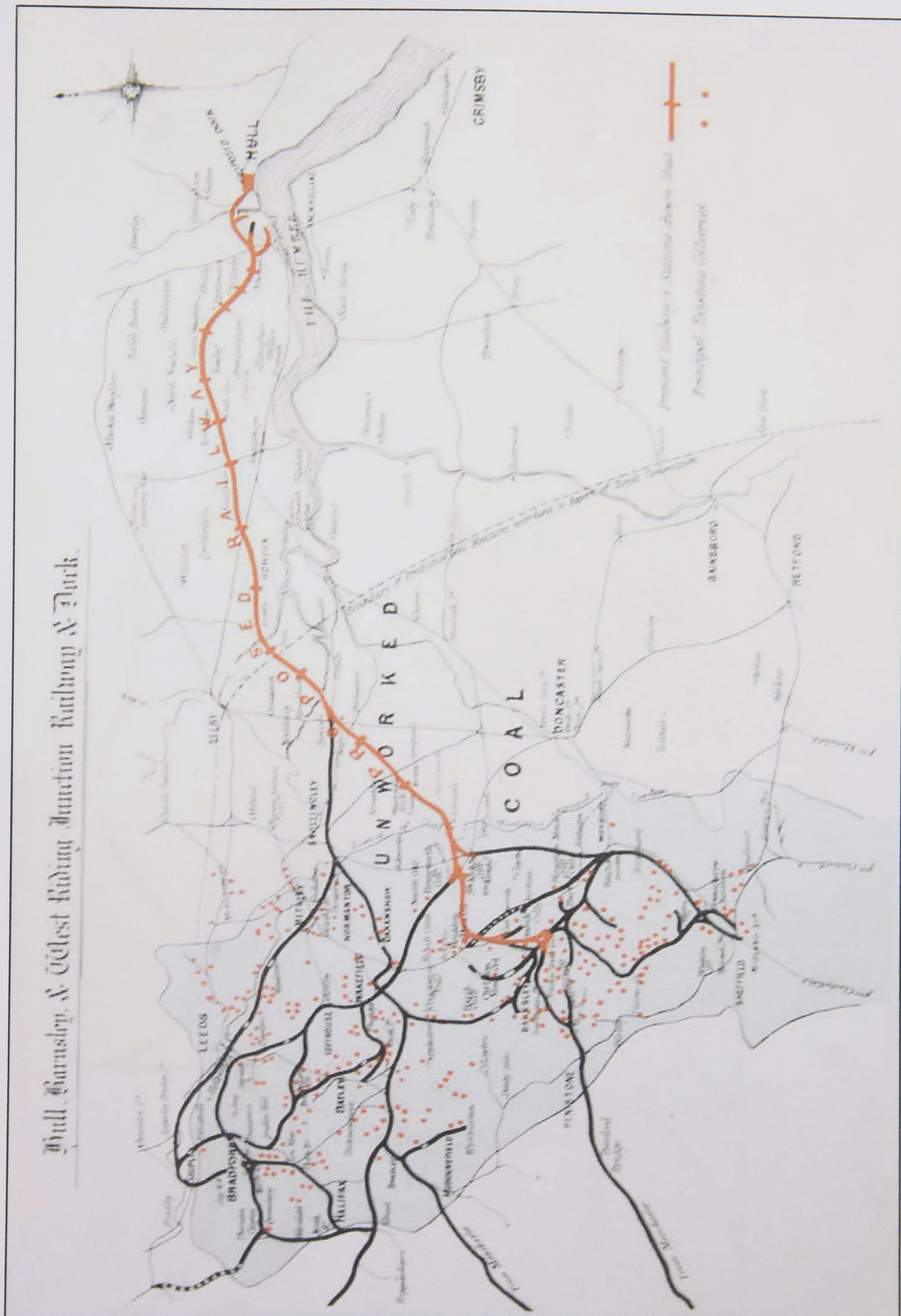


Fig. 17. Proposed Hull & Barnsley Railway and connecting Railways.

(City Archives, Hull.)

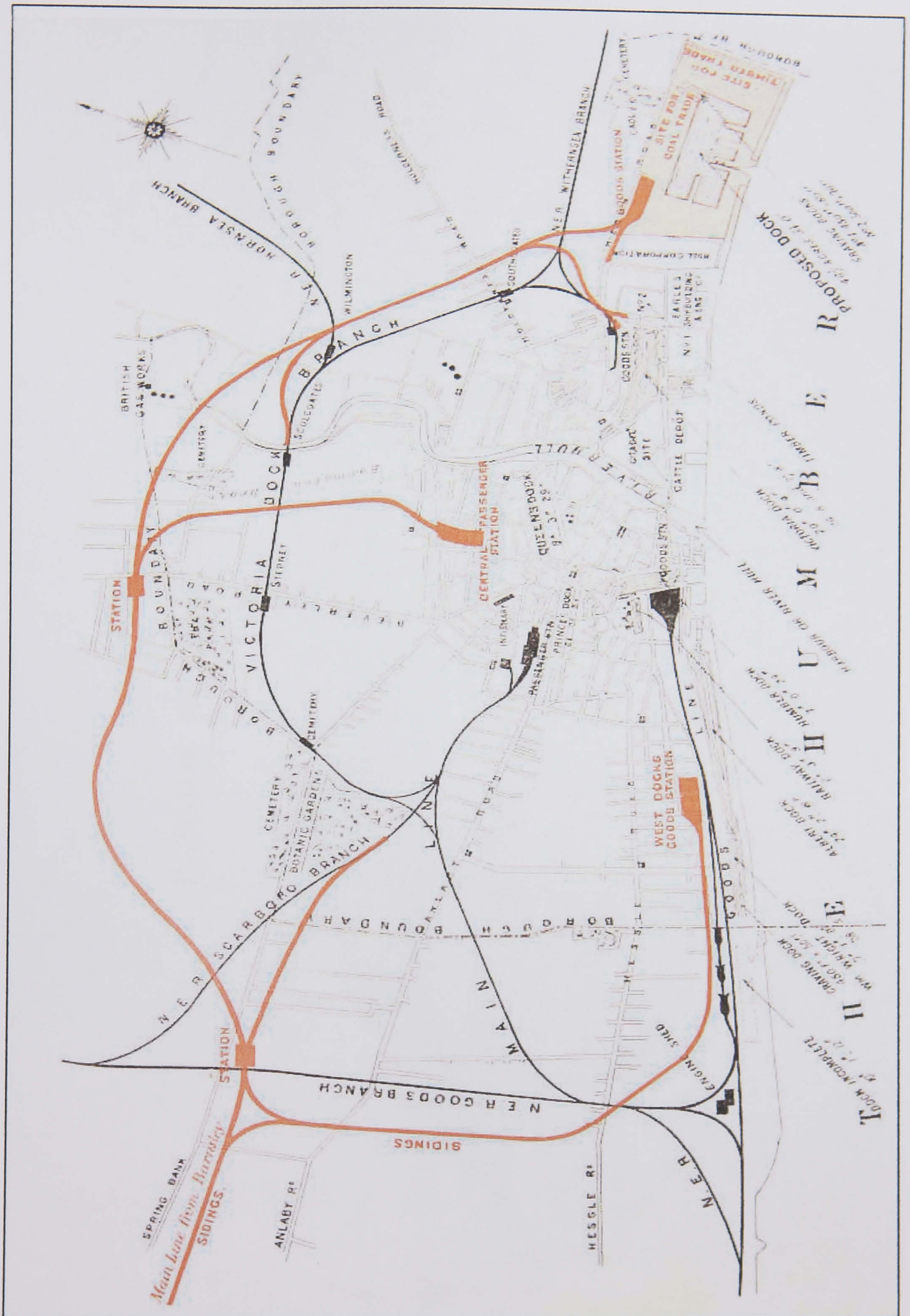


Fig. 18. Proposed Hull & Barnsley Railway in Hull.

(City Archives, Hull.)

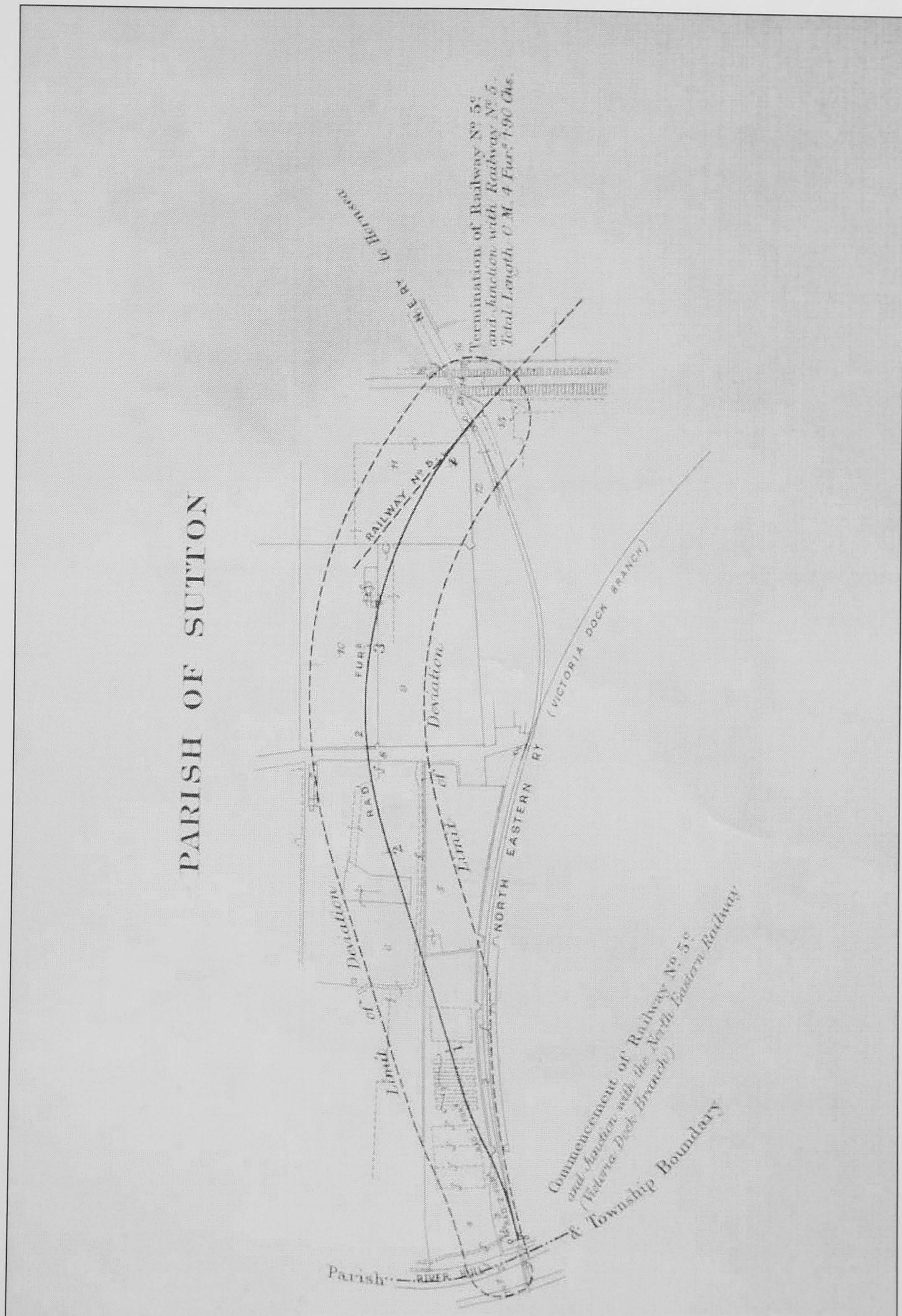


Fig. 19. Proposed connection between NER and HBR at Sculcoates.

(City Archives, Hull.)

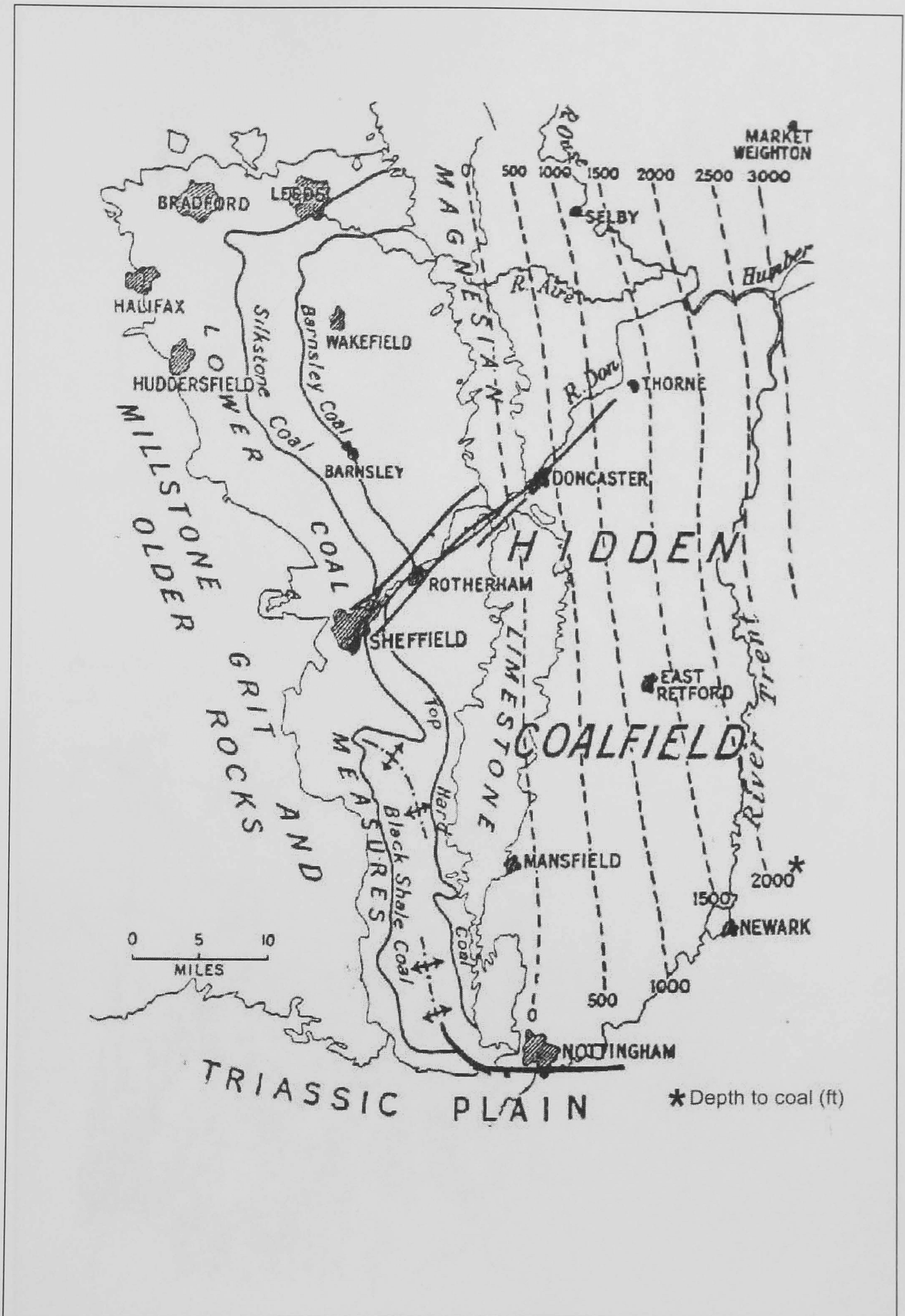


Fig. 20. The Yorkshire and East Midlands Coalfield.

(B. J. Elliott, *The South Yorkshire Joint Railway and the Coalfield*, p. 8.)

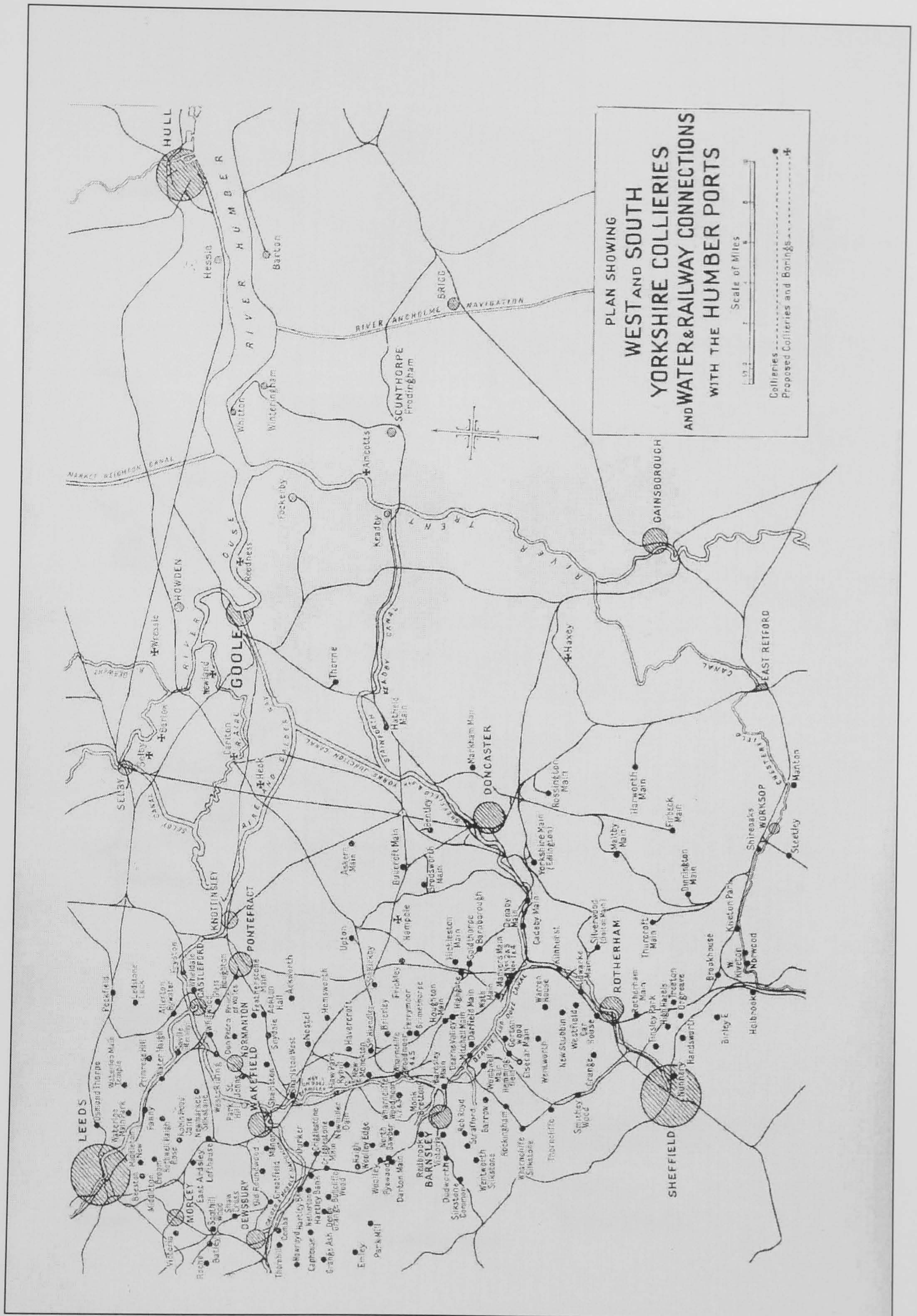


Fig. 21. Yorkshire Collieries – c.1960.

(City Archives, Hull.)

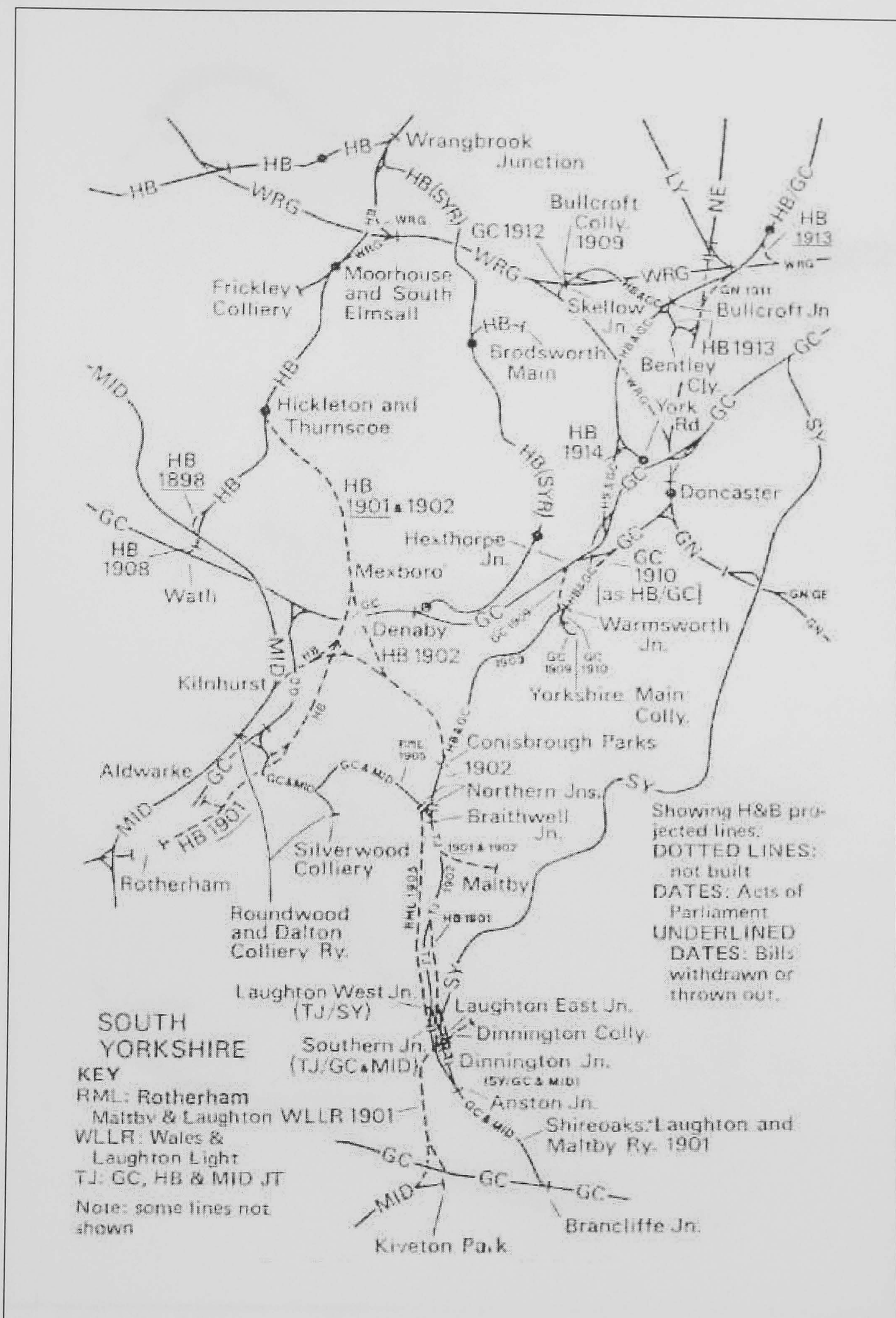


Fig. 22. The Railways of South Yorkshire.

(K. Hoole, (ed.), *The Hull & Barnsley Railway, Vol. 1*, p. 165.)

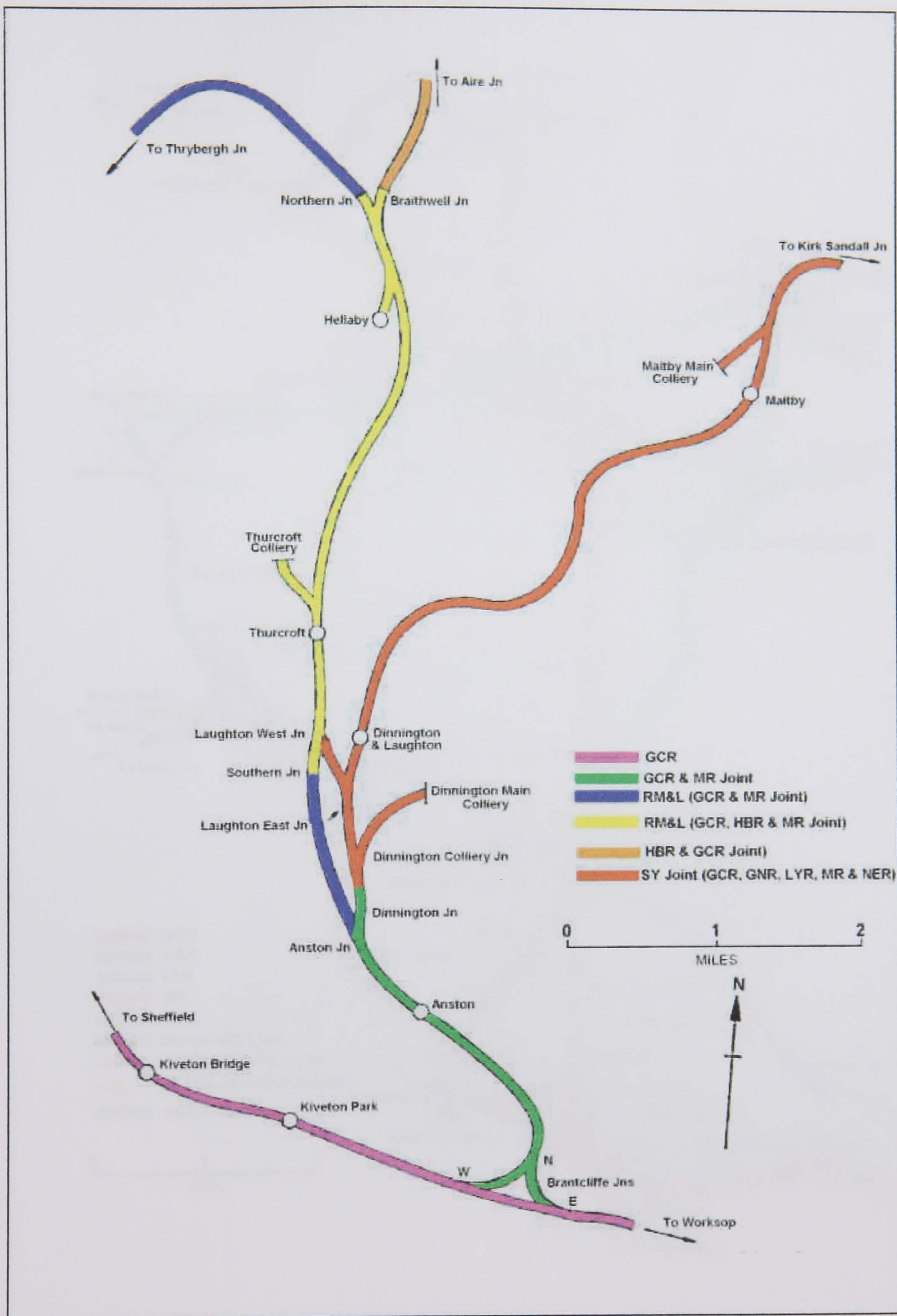


Fig. 23. The South Yorkshire Joint Railway and Connecting Branches.

(D. Joy, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain*, Vol.8, p. 232.)



Fig. 24. The Hull & Barnsley Railway and Associated Branches, Wrangbrook - Wath.

(D. Joy, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain*, Vol.8, p. 224.)

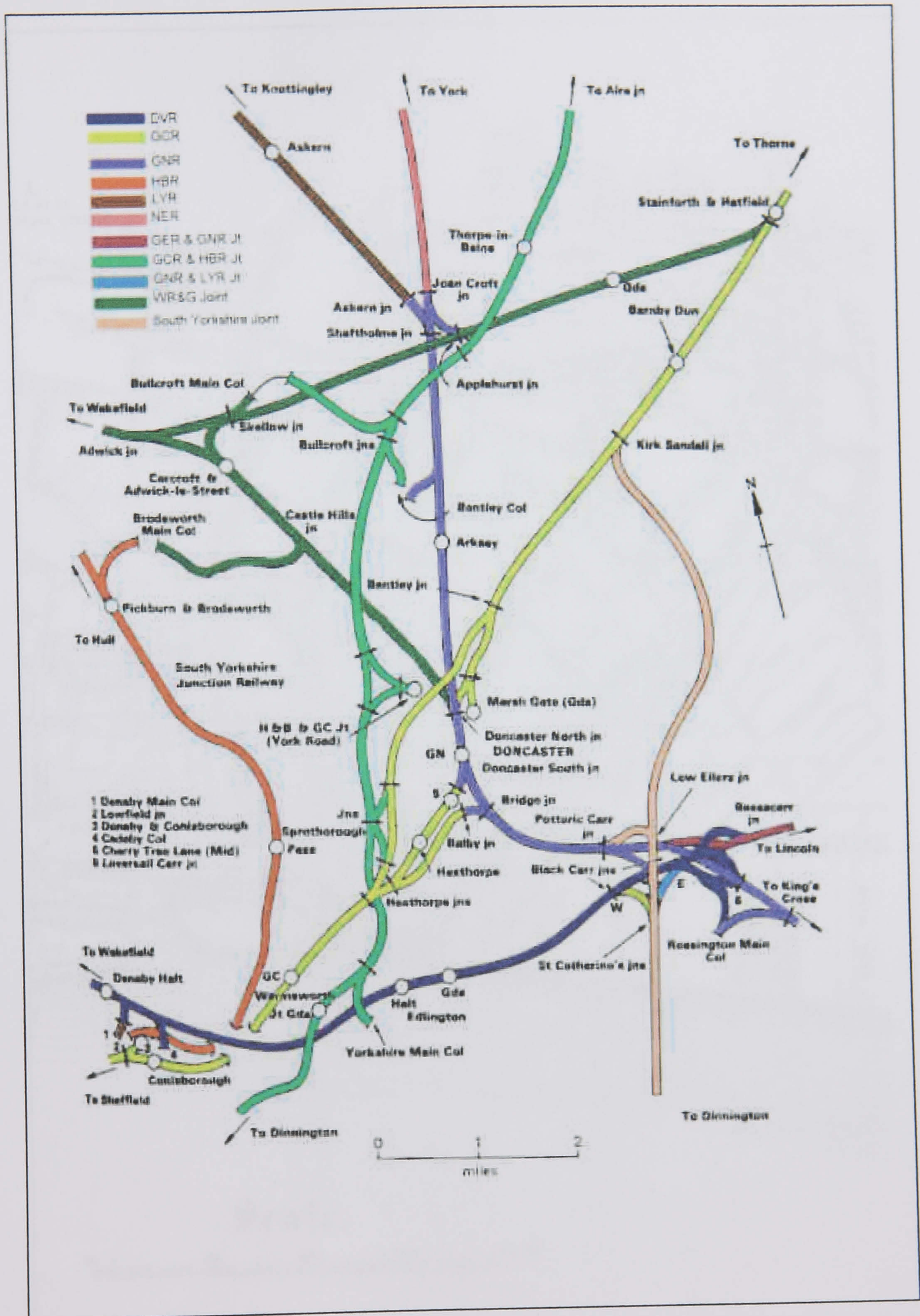


Fig. 25. Branches around Doncaster.

(D. Joy, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain*, Vol.8, p. 207.)

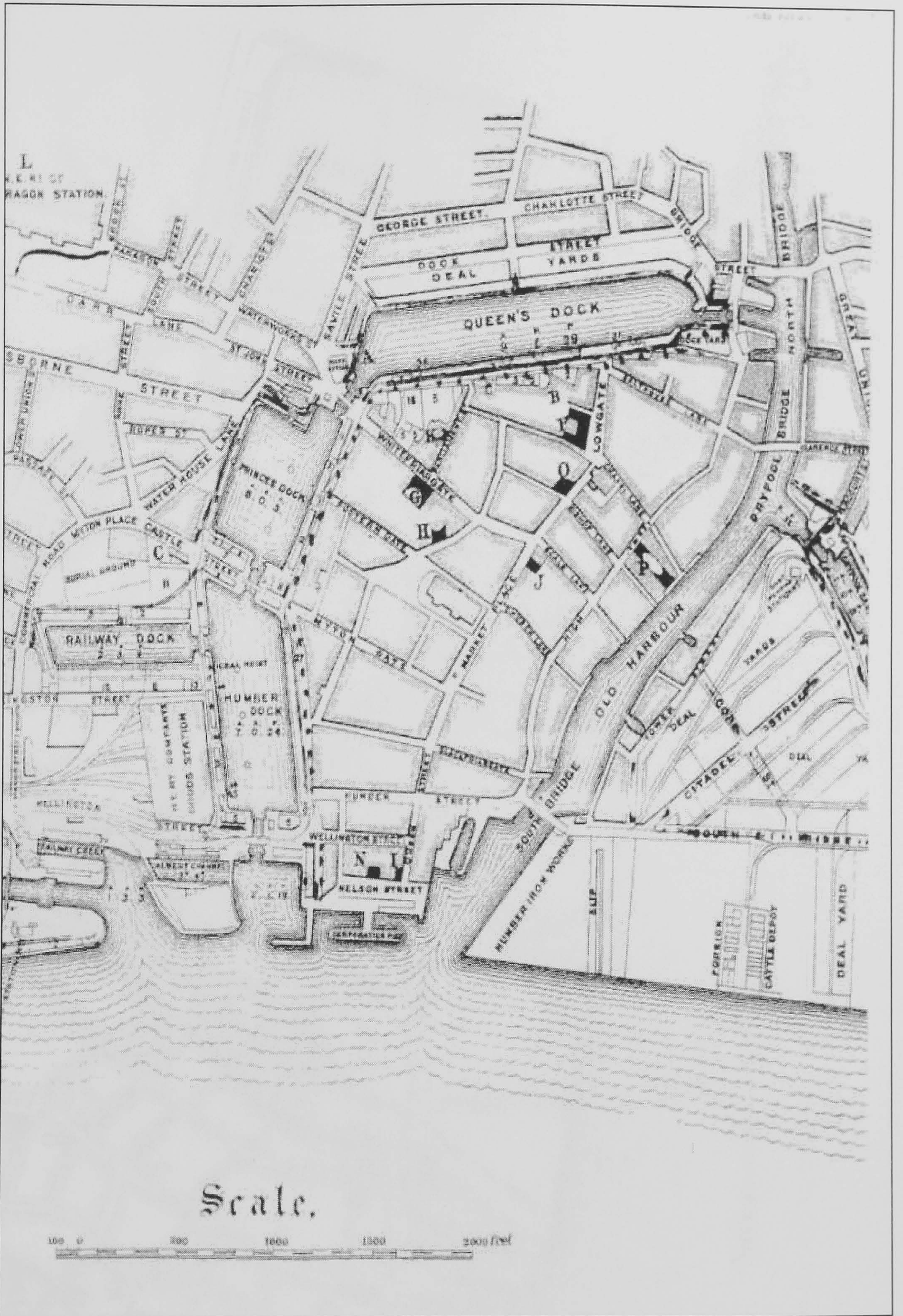


Fig. 26. Town Docks, Hull, in 1883.

(City Archives, Hull.)

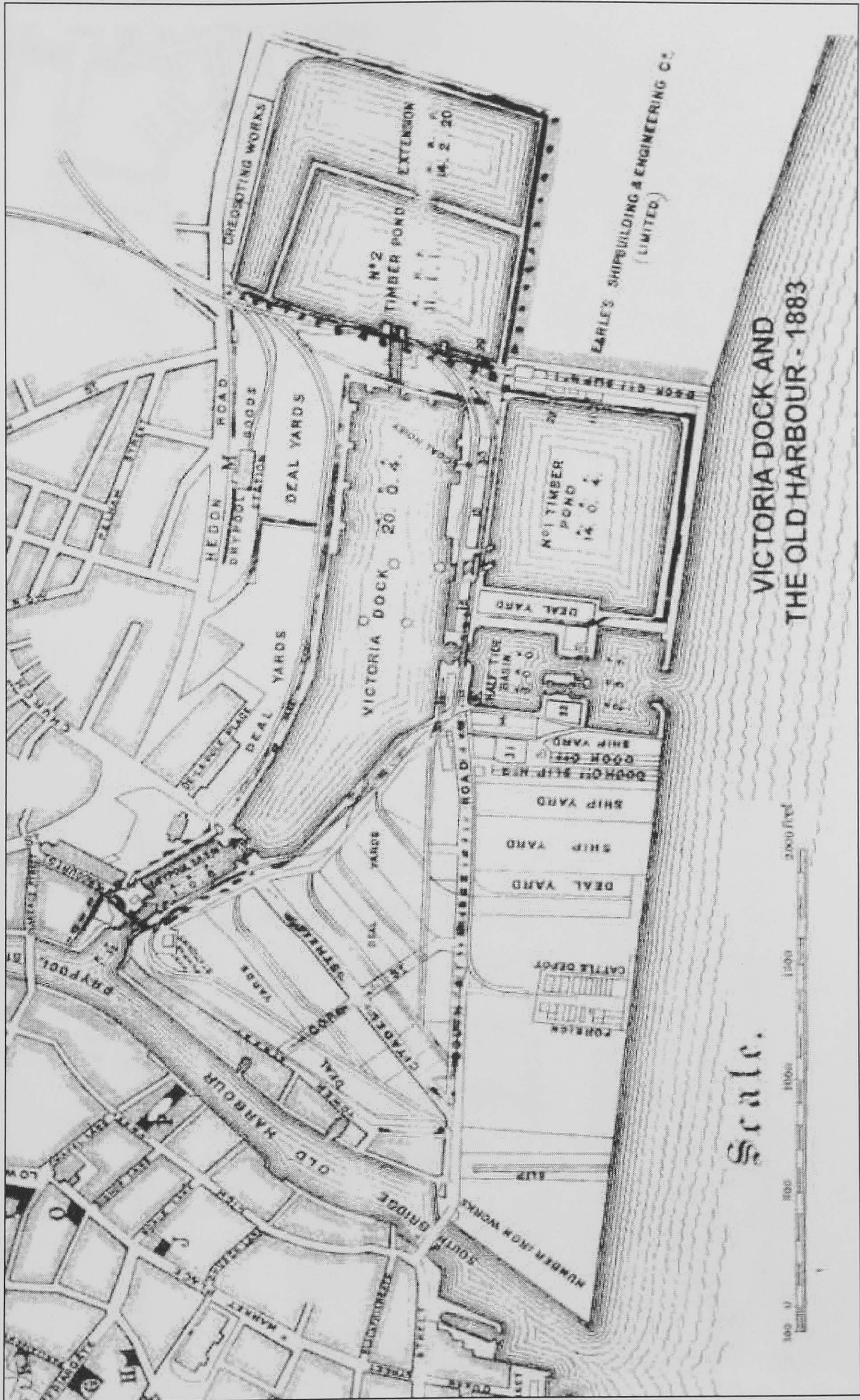


Fig. 27. Victoria Dock and the Old Harbour Hull.

(City Archives, Hull.)

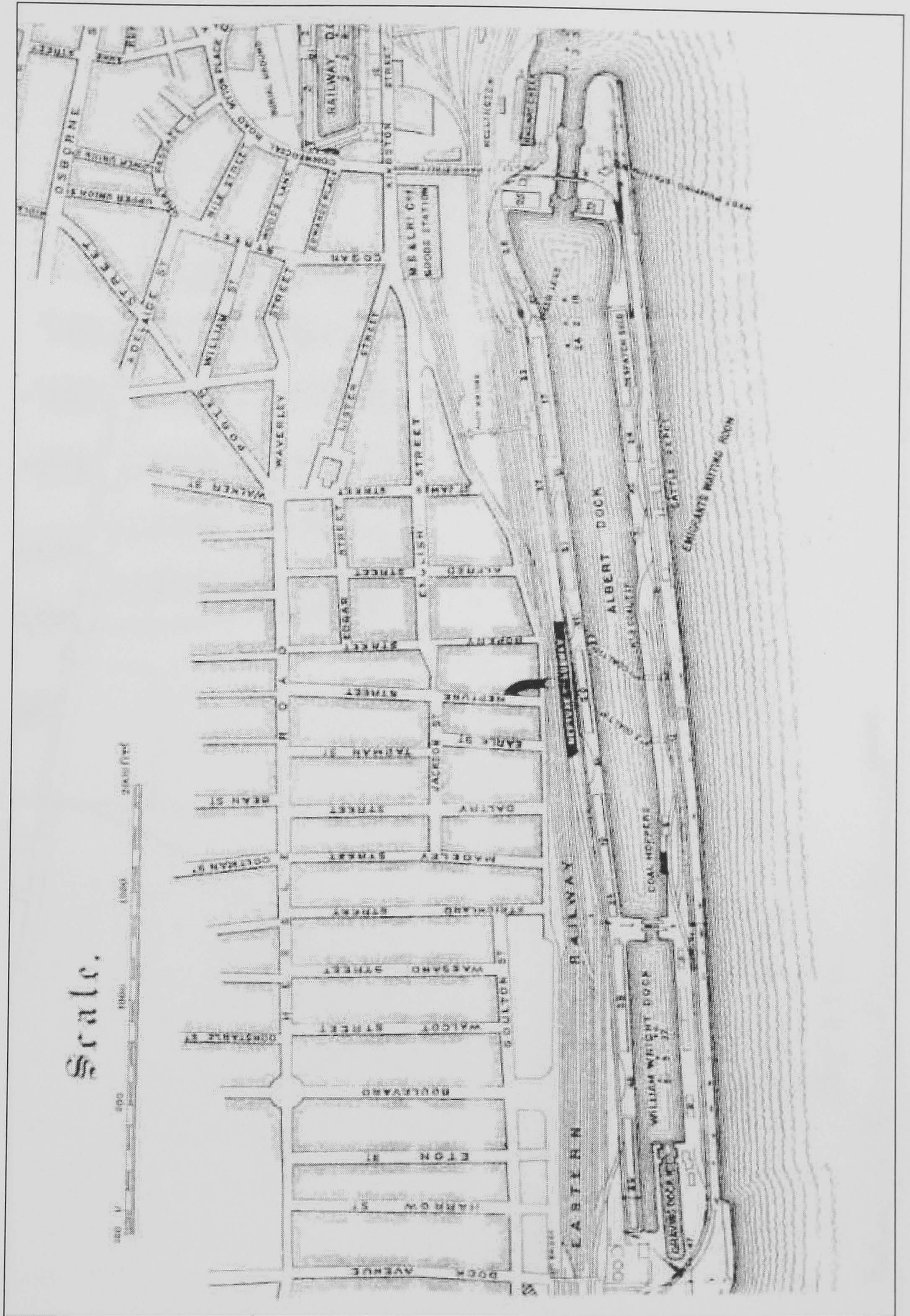


Fig.28. Albert & William Wright Dock in 1893.

(City Archives, Hull.)

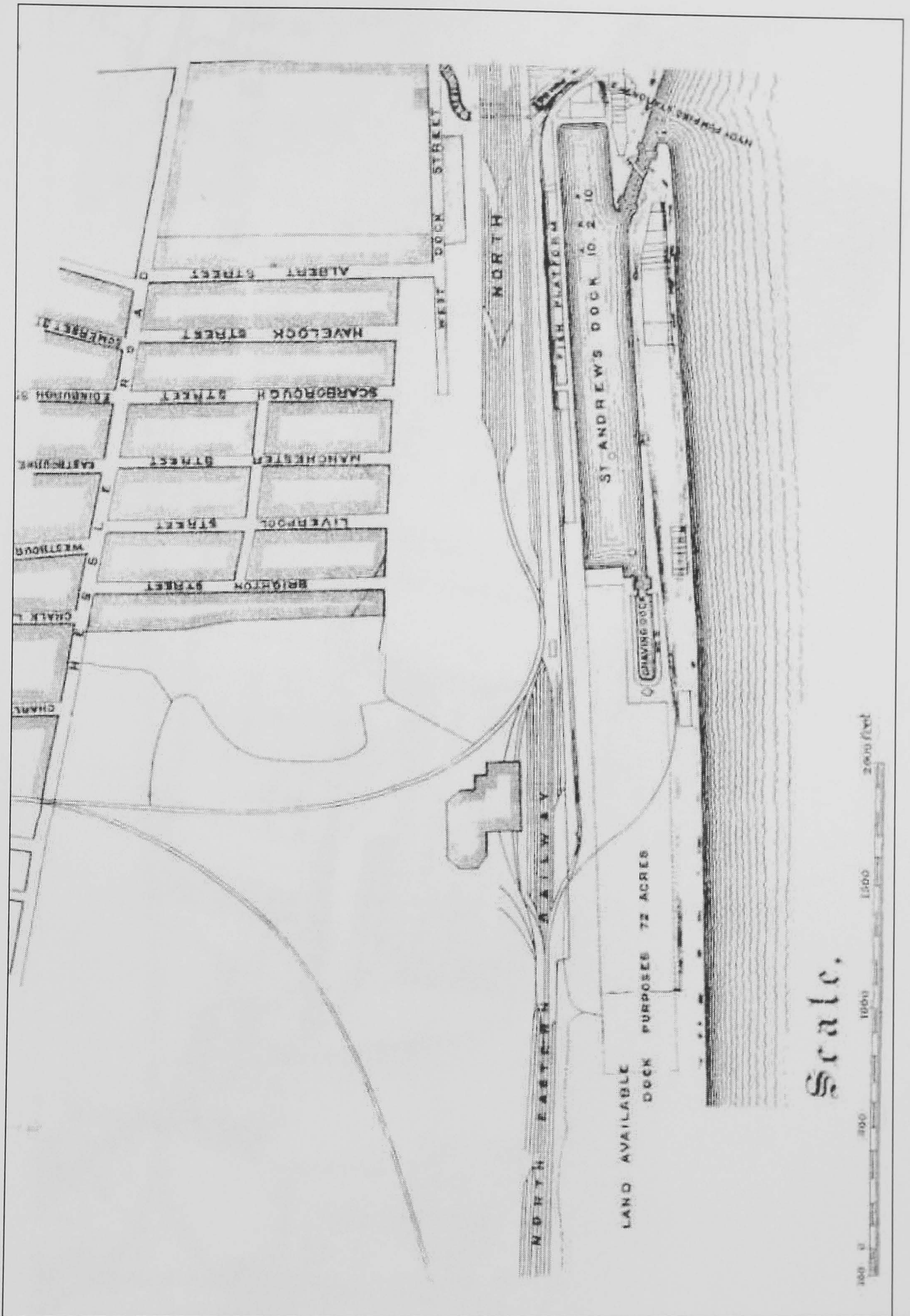


Fig. 29. St. Andrew's Dock in 1883.

(City Archives, Hull.)

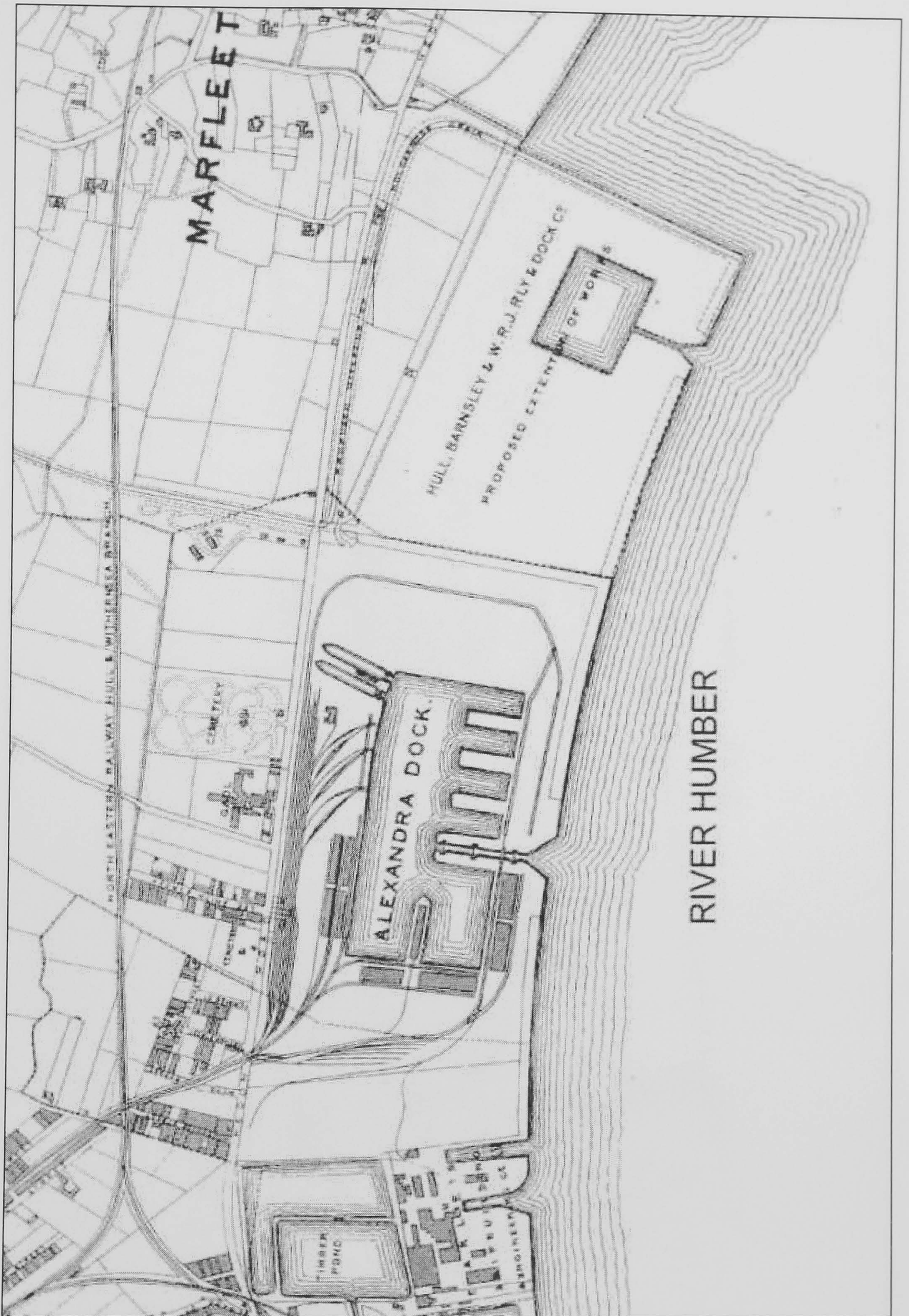


Fig. 30. Alexandra Dock in 1894.

(City Archives, Hull.)

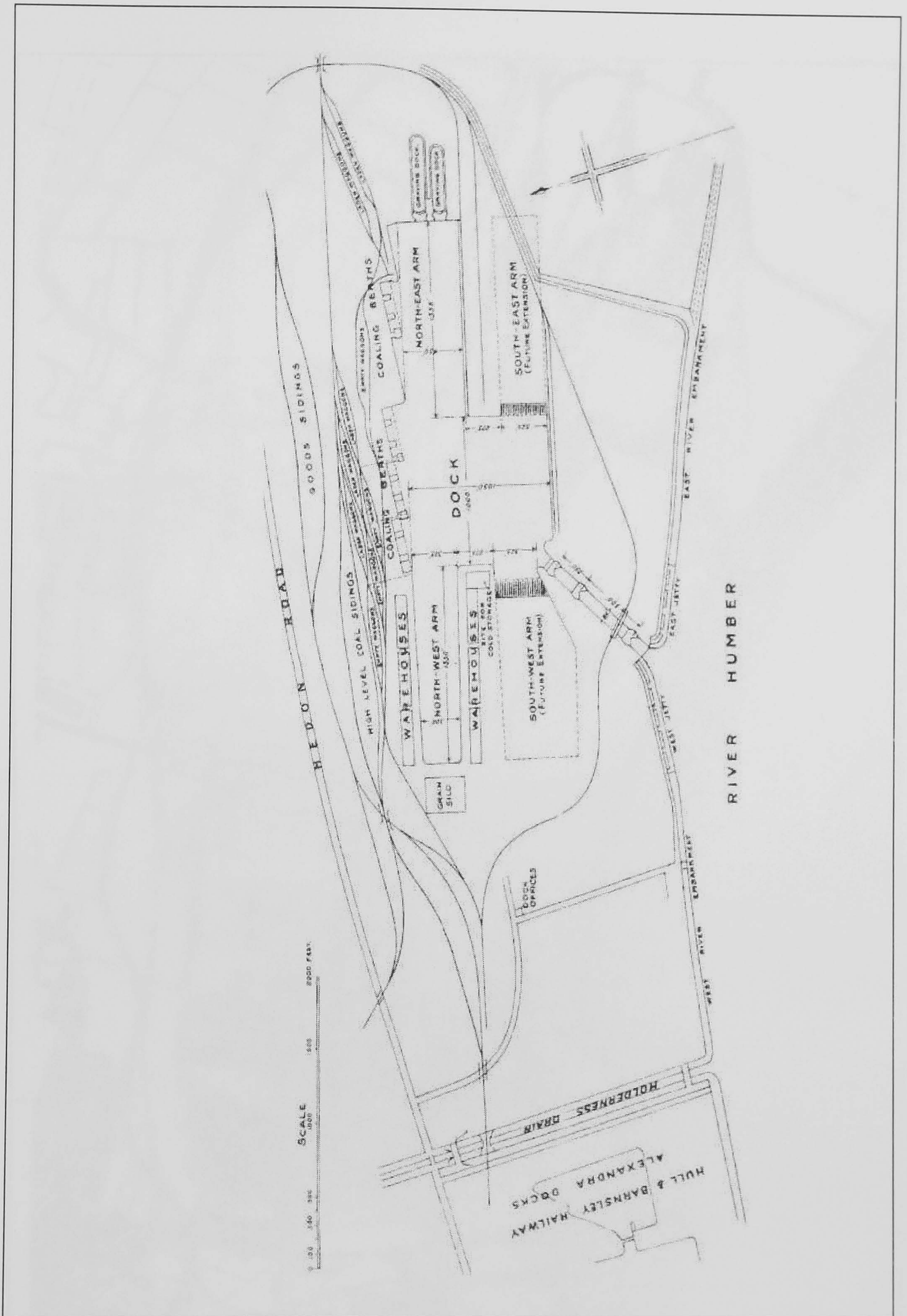


Fig. 31. Hull Joint Dock in 1914.

(City Archives, Hull.)

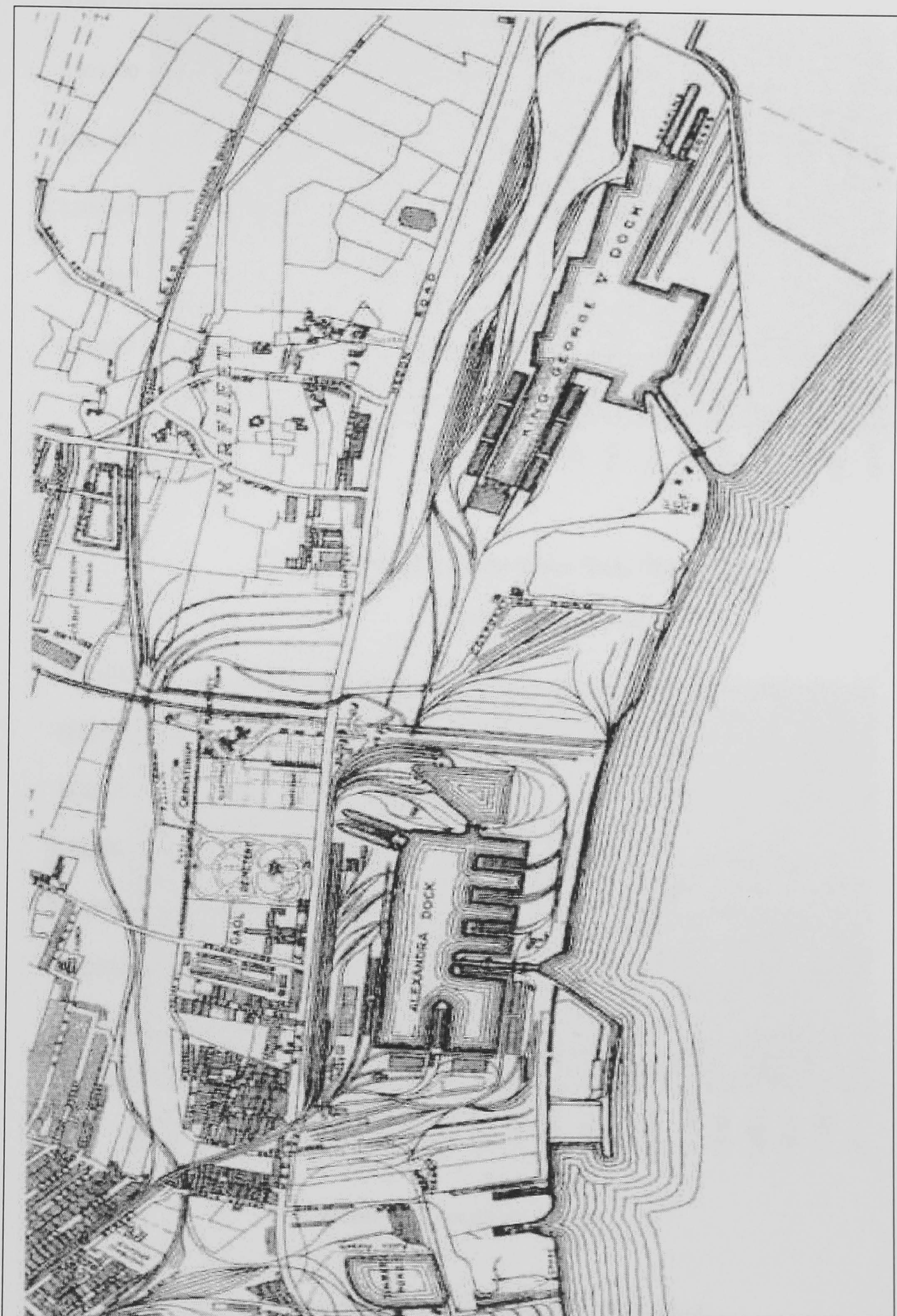


Fig. 32. Alexandra Dock & King George Dock in 1921.

(City Archives, Hull.)

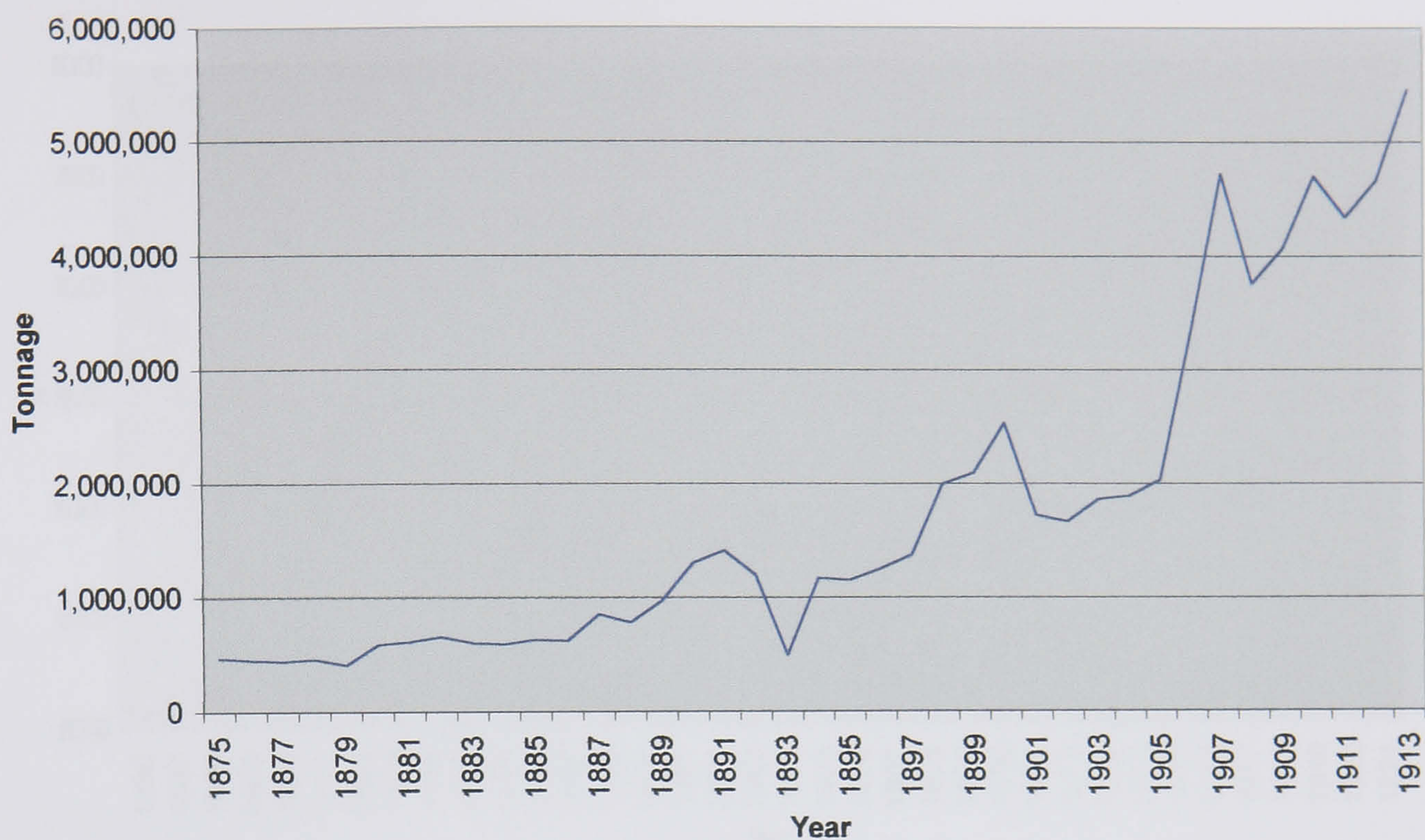


Fig. 33. Coal Exports from Hull, 1875-1913.

(City Archives, Hull.)

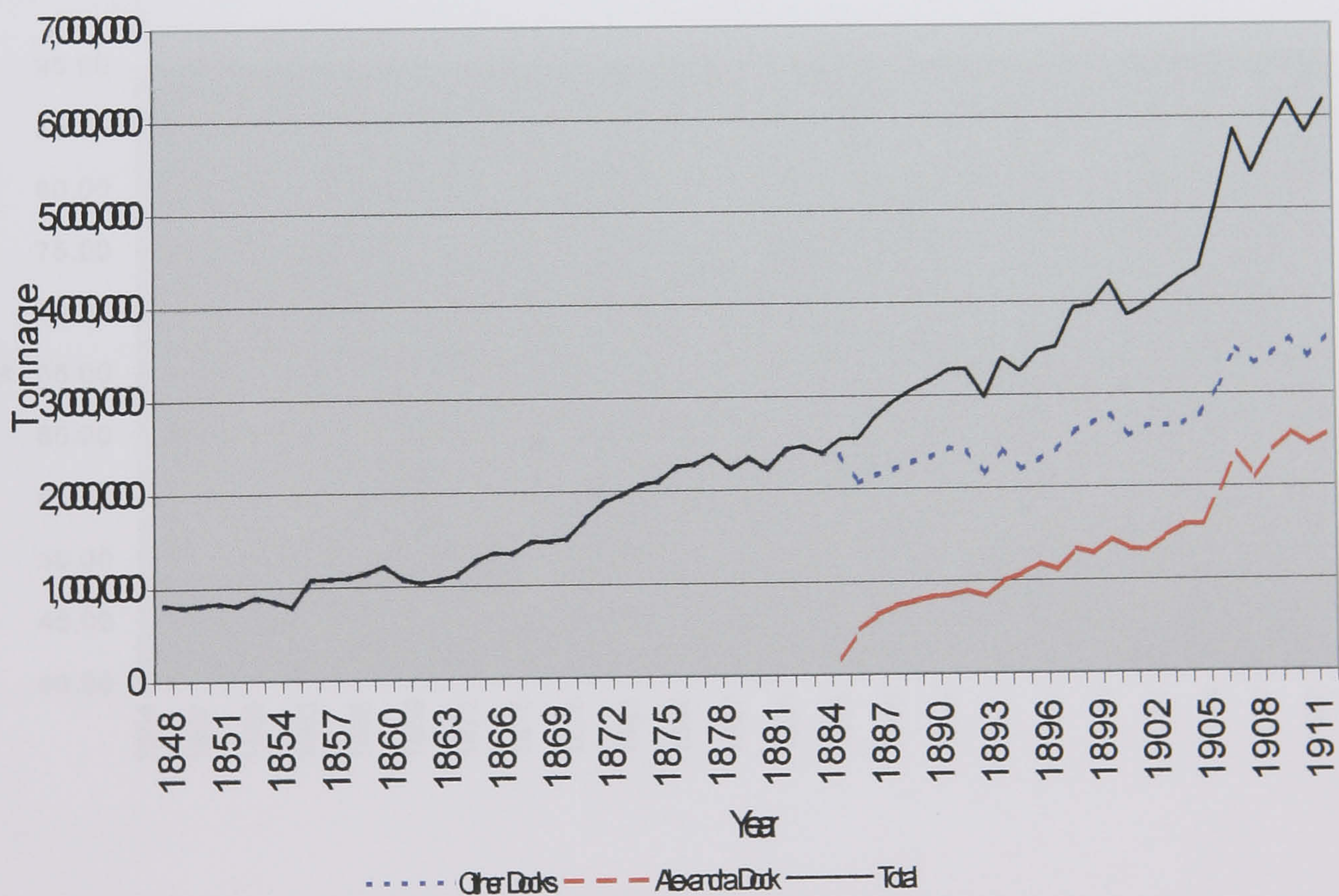


Fig. 34. Hull docks tonnage, 1848-1912.

(City Archives, Hull.)

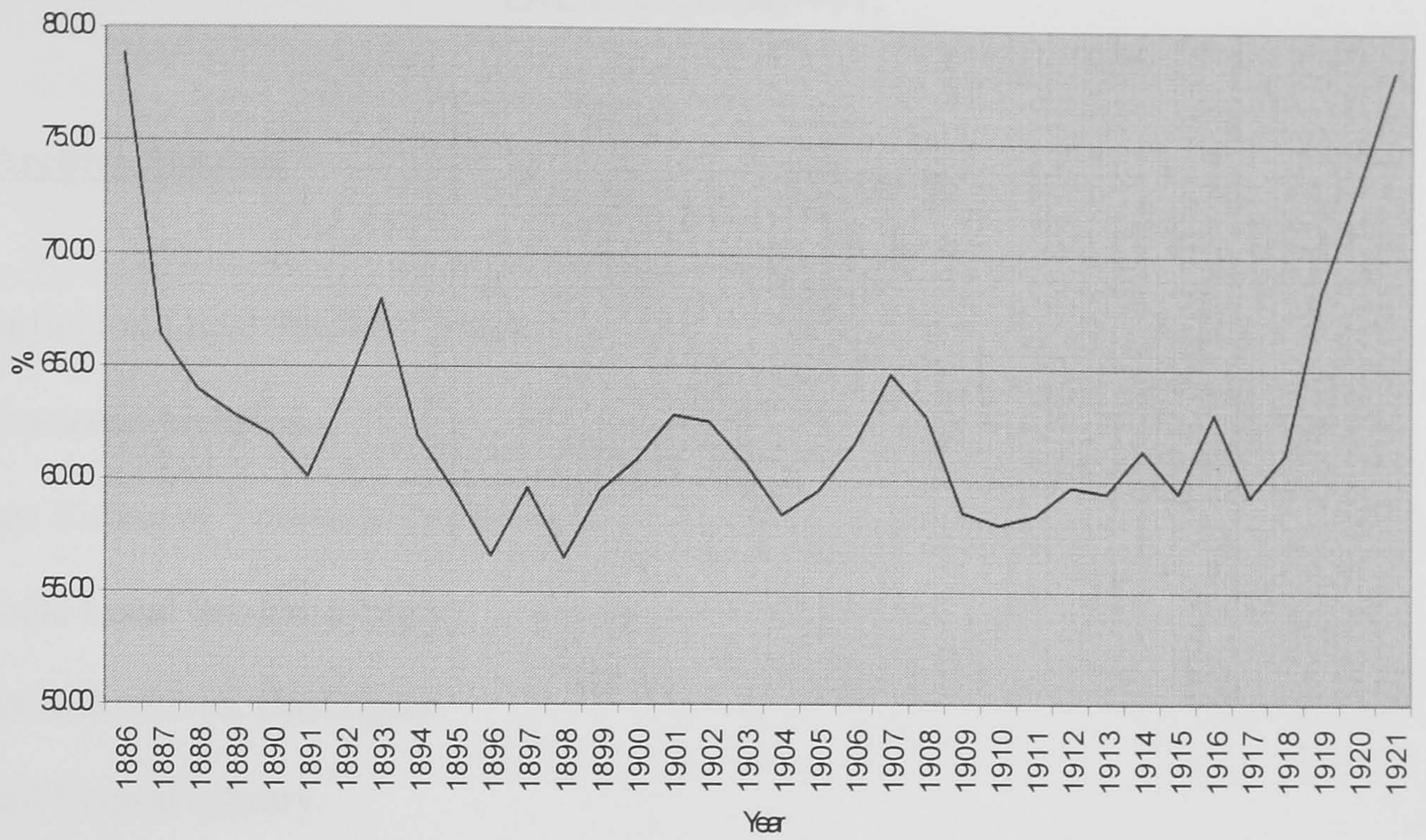


Fig. 35. HBR expenses as a percentage of revenue, 1875-1921.

(City Archives, Hull.)

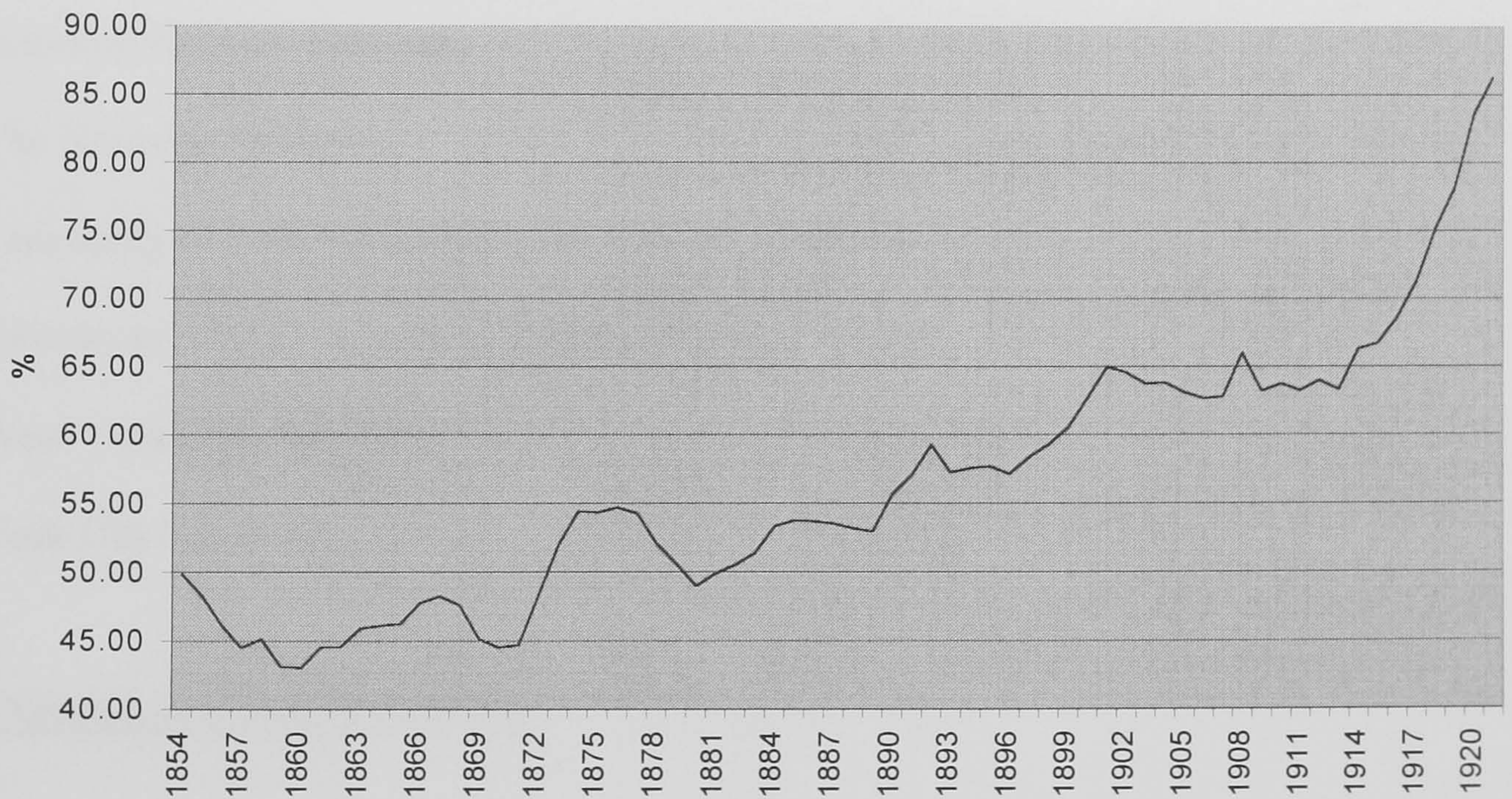


Fig. 36. NER expenses as a percentage of revenue, 1854-1921.

(City Archives, Hull.)

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