

**The Chester and Holyhead Railway and its
political impact on North Wales and British
policy towards Ireland, 1835-1900**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between technology and politics, and then applies it to the use made of railways by successive British governments in their Irish policies between 1835 and 1850. It questions why the Chester and Holyhead Railway was chosen over its rivals in 1844, and what political influence government applied to ensure its success against a technically superior alternative. The thesis also examines the interaction between politics and technology between 1850 and 1900 in North Wales by assessing the political implications of the London and North Western Railway monopoly, including the Holyhead line.

Uniquely, the study shows that successive governments between 1835 and 1850 included railways in their Irish policies, but did not achieve the required results. Politicians failed to implement the impressive 1839 Irish Railway Commission proposals, and then did not focus sufficiently on reducing journey time between London and Dublin. Government allowed regional and personal interests in Britain to guide its decision-making, rather than technical advice. Railways produced paradoxical political results in North Wales between 1850 and 1900. They assisted both Anglicisation and Welsh nationalism, and the thesis adds to knowledge by showing that railways featured on the nationalist agenda of the region, particularly after 1867.

By exploring railways and politics in North Wales and Ireland, this thesis enhances knowledge about their role in day to day governance, nation-building and larger imperial ambitions. These novel findings are based on a thorough review of the literature, an extensive use of primary sources and a range of research methods, including mathematical calculation. The thesis suggests that technological solutions to political problems produce more of the intended results when expertise, public priorities and political leadership are aligned so that projects are not, in Henry Thoreau's words, merely: 'an improved means to an unimproved end.'

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Preface

The interface between railways and politics is currently apparent as the case for a high speed railway link between London and the north of England is debated and arguments focus on the correct route and most important outcomes from the project. This research covers similar ground but from over a century and a half ago using the example of the Chester and Holyhead Railway. The challenge of using railways to deal with the persistent problem of integrating Ireland into the United Kingdom was addressed from the mid-1830s, and railway technology was deployed in different ways according to the philosophy of the politicians in charge of the process. There was also a significant impact on communities and individuals in the vicinity of the new railway in North Wales, even though that was no part of the intention of its creators. The interface between technology and politics is explored in this study that demonstrates how both the nature of politics and the way technology is used are changed as a result of their interaction.

Acknowledgements

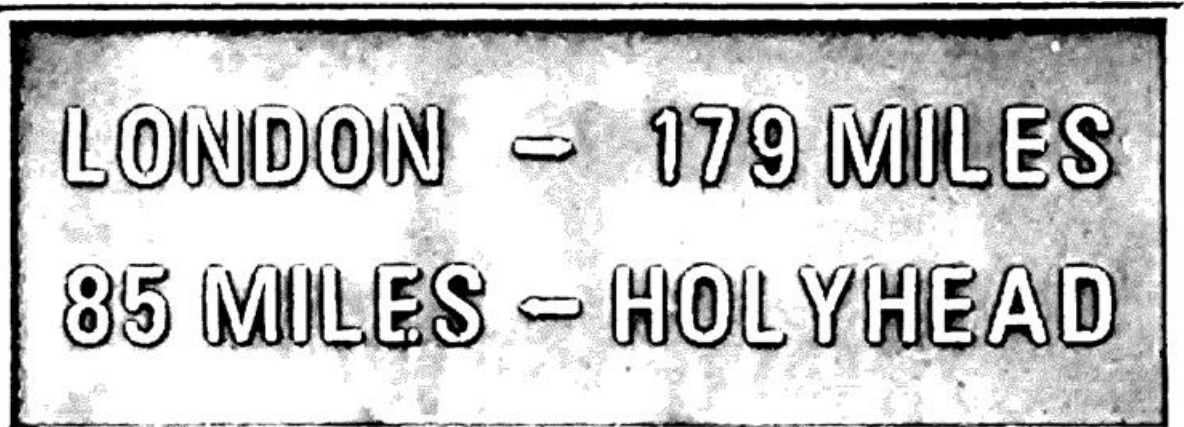
The author is pleased to acknowledge, with sincere thanks, the opportunity provided to me to undertake this thesis by Professor Colin Divall, who had more than enough to do without taking on my supervision, as he was approaching his well-earned retirement. His advice and guidance during the research and in commenting on an earlier draft of the thesis was much appreciated. I am grateful too for the supervision provided by Dr Henrice Altink, who agreed to take over the supervision of the thesis and has been most supportive. Dr Hugo Service has also given excellent advice and comments as a member of my Thesis Advisory Panel. I also used the resources of the Maths Skills Centre at York which was most valuable.

I have benefited greatly from the material provided by the British Library, both in London and in its extensive on-line newspaper archive. Staff at the National Archives in London, and at the Flintshire Record Office, were also most helpful in finding relevant material. The resources available through the University of York library, both electronically and in hard copy, are exceptionally good, including those stored at the National Railway Museum.

My wife Ceri was supportive throughout the four years that I have worked on the thesis, and has learned a lot more about nineteenth-century railways than she probably would have wished.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.



1. London 179 Miles: 85 Miles Holyhead

The old sign shown above appears opposite the Holyhead bound platform on Chester Station to this day. Such signs are not usual at railway stations and this thesis will explain why the sign was put there. In particular, it explains the 85-mile railway from Chester to Holyhead: why it was built; what forces created it; who supported and opposed it; what impact was intended; what impact it had, and where that impact was felt most. The answers to these questions shed light on the political integrity of the United Kingdom (UK) in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹ The thesis will examine the role and purpose of the Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR) in respect of both Ireland and North Wales by answering three interlinked research questions:

1. Was the construction of a railway and sea link between London and Dublin part of the Whig and Tory governments' policies towards Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s?
2. Did Sir Robert Peel's Government of 1841-46 express a preference about the Welsh element of a railway route between London and Dublin and if so, did it take any political action in support of that preference?
3. What political impact and implications did the experience of the CHR and its branch lines have in North Wales between 1850 and 1900

The answers provided to the first two questions will show whether the issue of a rail and sea link between London and Dublin was an element of UK government policy towards Ireland from 1835 until 1850. Successive governments believed that a rapid railway link had the potential to assist in

¹ Throughout this thesis the term United Kingdom or UK refers to the product of the Act of Union passed in August 1800 and implemented from January 1801 that created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland governed from London.

governing Ireland more effectively – although what amounted to effective government of Ireland varied according to the policies of the ruling administration in London. The CHR was the railway that was eventually chosen to make the link between London and Dublin along the North Wales coast instead of the rival route to Porth Dinllaen (PDR) that took a more inland route from the West Midlands of England. The process by which that choice was made was complicated, and it reveals much about the profile of the political forces in the UK in the 1830s and 1840s. The CHR, as a major addition to the infrastructure of North Wales, had the potential to impact on the politics of the region, even though its construction was not intended to address any such issues in North Wales.² It was controlled by the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) which absorbed the CHR in 1859, but had operated its trains from the opening of the line in 1848.³ The connection of London and Dublin by rail and steamer is an example of how major infrastructure projects have an impact beyond the intentions of those who plan and finance them. This thesis therefore identifies a paradox: the CHR was intended to strengthen Ireland's position within the UK but that was not achieved; while it had no stated aims for North Wales, but strongly influenced the politics of that region in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This introduction is divided into four parts. The first considers the interface of technology and politics and it thereby provides a theoretical framework for the whole thesis. The second section focuses on existing scholarship on the application of technology to the improvement of communication between Ireland and London that aimed to strengthen the political connection between the two. It places that project within the historical context of the construction of railways in the 1830s and 1840s. The third section outlines the sources used and methodology adopted in order to answer the three main research questions, while the last section offers a breakdown of the following seven chapters.

² In this study 'North Wales' covers the counties of Flintshire, Caernarfonshire, Anglesey and Denbighshire. Some aspects of the study stray into Merionethshire but that is not part of the core area. The spelling of towns is that used in the current Ordnance Survey maps, though the contemporary spelling is used in quotations.

³ In this thesis the terms CHR and LNWR are used interchangeably, apart from the period before 1846 when the LNWR was created. Before that time, the CHR was promoted by the London and Birmingham Railway that formed the largest part of the LNWR amalgamation. The Manchester and Birmingham Railway and the Grand Junction Railway (Liverpool to Birmingham and Manchester) were the other elements of the LNWR in its 1846 form. It connected the four named cities that together formed the core of the UK industrial economy in the 1840s.

1.1 Politics and technology: a theoretical framework.⁴

Research on the interaction between politics and technology began with Lewis Mumford, whose 1934 study was 'alone in its field'.⁵ According to Mumford, technology had passed through three phases: the 'eotechnic' that ended around 1750, based on naturally-occurring forces and materials – wind and wood for example; the 'paleotechnic', from 1750 to 1900 and characterised by extractive industries and humanly created power, especially steam; and the 'neotechnical' period, from 1901 to the present, characterised by the use of electricity.⁶ For Mumford, these periods had contrasting social and political characteristics, with the paleotechnic (industrial revolution) being one of: 'competition, struggle for existence: domination and submission: extinction'.⁷ Considering Mumford's suggested link between technology and political impact, it is understandable that Winner asked in 1980: 'Do artifacts [sic] have politics?'⁸ At issue was whether technology has autonomous force to change society, whether it only did so with political direction, or whether the relationship between the two varied according to the context. For Winner, technological determinism was untenable.⁹ He was more sympathetic to the alternative: 'social determination [...] what matters is not technology itself, but the social or economic system in which it is embedded'.¹⁰ But Winner went further and argued that a technology can be political *in itself*, and appear to: 'require, or to be strongly compatible with, particular kinds of political relationships'.¹¹ As an example of the inherent political potential of some technology, he

⁴ The definition of technology is that used by Headrick: 'all the ways in which humans use materials and energy in the environment for their own ends, beyond what they can do with their bodies.' Daniel R Headrick, *Power over Peoples: Technology, Environments and Western Imperialism 1400 to the present day* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 3.

Politics is defined in the title of the book by Harold Dwight Lasswell, *Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1936).

⁵ Lewis Mumford, *An Appraisal of Lewis Mumford's "Technics and Civilization" (1934)*, *Daedalus*, Vol. 88, No. 3, Current Work and Controversies (Summer, 1959), pp. 527-536.

⁶ Thomas Kaiserfeld, *Beyond Innovation: Technology, Institution and Change as Categories* (London: Palgrave, 2015), 97-8.

⁷ Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization: With a new foreword by Langdon Winner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 195.

⁸ Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus* 109, no. 1 (1980): 121-36.

⁹ Technical determinism: 'Technical forces determine social and cultural change'. See Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx, *Does Technology Drive History?: The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 102.

¹⁰ Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 21.

¹¹ Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?"

mentioned the New York bridges that were set too low for the buses carrying black people to access certain districts.¹²

Joerges did not wholly accept Winner's argument. According to him, it did not take sufficient account of the fact that technology is *owned* and it is the political processes: 'by which authorizations are built, maintained, contested and changed which are at issue in any social study of [...] technology'.¹³ Kaiserfeld's 2015 study brought many of these issues and questions together by suggesting that technology is the: 'result of social relations and political actions, historically developed and used to dominate others [and both] mirrors and strengthens a certain social and political order'.¹⁴ Kaiserfeld largely echoed Street's claim that technology is not passive and does not have the same results in all contexts. He emphasised the crucial importance of politics in determining the results of the application of technology.¹⁵ Hecht took this further by identifying a specific form of politics based on technology - 'technopolitics [...] the strategic practice of designing or using technology to constitute, embody or enact political goals'.¹⁶

As Kaplan has suggested, the issues that arise for the citizen from the relationship between technology and politics are political rights and liberties, the regulation and design of technology, and how the advantages and disadvantages of technology should be distributed.¹⁷ Consistent with Kaplan's approach, Leo Marx has proposed two important questions to analyse the interface between technology and politics:

(1) How, and by whom, is the technology controlled? What form of social organization determines the use of the apparatus and its product?

(2) To what ends is that control exercised? What system of belief characteristically shapes the goals to which the apparatus is directed?¹⁸

¹² Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?"

¹³ Bernward Joerges, "Do politics have artifacts?" *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jun., 1999), 411-431.

¹⁴ Kaiserfeld, *Beyond Innovation*, 105.

¹⁵ James Street, *Politics and Technology* (Guildford: Guildford Press, 1992), 4.

¹⁶ Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and national identity after World War II* (London: MIT Press, 2009), 91.

¹⁷ David M. Kaplan (ed) *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), xiv.

¹⁸ Leo Marx, "On Heidegger's Conception of 'Technology' and Its Historical Validity." *The Massachusetts Review* 25, no. 4 (1984), 638-52.

The answers to these questions may not provide evidence of collusion between politicians and the owners of technology, or what Street calls 'conscious conspiracies or malicious intentions'. Major technologies, as Winner argues, have political consequences that: 'transcend the simple categories of "intended" and "unintended" altogether [and] regularly produce results counted as wonderful breakthroughs by some social interests and crushing setbacks by others'.¹⁹

Despite these complexities, politicians continue to believe that technology is a useful tool for the solution of social and political problems.²⁰ Or, as Barry suggested in 2001, it can at least provide a politically neutral means of reducing social and economic tensions.²¹ However, the attractiveness of technical solutions is often superficial because technology may perform in unexpected ways in a new environment and politicians must wait until 'the results are in' before knowing exactly what the consequences are of the deployment of technology.²² The technology may: 'establish new functions and practices, which in turn generate new forms of participation and control' that change the nature of the relationship between government and people.²³ One possible result of a major technological change is dependency, so that what was once a promising new technology becomes a standard requirement for the population, who react negatively if it is withdrawn or the standard of delivery is deemed inadequate.²⁴ Politicians may then need to become involved in managing, regulating or even owning the technology in order to ensure greater fairness in the distribution of profits and benefits.

It is clear from the foregoing that technology in its various forms affects the everyday operation of government and the relationship between politicians and people. Leo Marx has noted that the nineteenth century, which is the focus of this study's exploration of the interaction of technology and politics, was characterised by a different view of technology than had existed in the earlier eotechnic (using Mumford's description) period. Technology during the eotechnic period had been widely regarded as useful to assist in the development of a more just and democratic society, with no intrinsic value beyond its capacity to serve humanity.²⁵ As the nineteenth century progressed, technical improvement acquired greater significance and was deemed to be, in *itself*, a marker of human progress because it was considered by some to

¹⁹ Langdon Winner, "Do artifacts have politics?" in David M. Kaplan (ed) *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 254.

²⁰ Street, *Politics and Technology*, 27.

²¹ Andrew Barry, *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society* (London: Athlone Press, 2001), 8.

²² Street, *Politics and Technology*, 118.

²³ Street, *Politics and Technology*, 104.

²⁴ Street, *Politics and Technology*, 93.

²⁵ Leo Marx, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept." *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2010): 561-77.

guarantee social advance and economic prosperity.²⁶ This change was not accepted by all commentators, Thoreau, for instance, concluded in 1854 that: 'Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. *They are but improved means to an unimproved end*'.²⁷ Nonetheless, as Michael Adas amongst others has observed, from the end of the eighteenth century science and technology were at the forefront of European thought and its 'civilizing mission'.²⁸ In other words, the possession of an advanced technology became synonymous with having a superior position in the world order.

Certain technologies were more powerful than others. Marxist economists Baran and Sweezy considered that railways were 'epoch-making'. They argued that from 1830 to 1914 large parts of the world had experienced a form of technological determinism that they termed 'railwayisation'.²⁹ Lee's study of the colonial engineer John Whitton suggested more political input to such a process and a: 'right of the strong to dominate the weak' that was assumed by imperial powers and activated by 'technical and organisational superiority' - notably railways, steamships and the electric telegraph.³⁰ The railway particularly served as an imperial technology. It symbolised Western superiority and provided the practical means to enact the presumed superiority, being an: 'essential strategic, defensive, subjugatory and administrative "tool"'.³¹ According to Revill, railways were particularly powerful because they were themselves: 'a state in microcosm [and potentially] a "war machine" and [...] a tool of imperialism'.³² As already noted, this process was not necessarily the result of formal collusion between administrators and politicians. For den Otter, the 'aura of distinctiveness and arrogance' created by technical superiority led Britons to consider that they must share their 'superior civilisation' in an unofficial

²⁶ Leo Marx, "Technology The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept".

²⁷ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (New York: Cosimo Books, 2009), 34 [originally published in 1854, my emphasis].

²⁸ Michael Adas, *Machines as the measure of man: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (London: Ithaca, 1989), 3-4.

²⁹ Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital: An essay on the American Economic and Social Order* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1966), 223.

³⁰ Robert Lee, *Colonial Engineer: John Whitton 1819-1898 and the Building of Australia's Railways* (Sidney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), 28.

³¹ Ian Derbyshire, "The Building of India's Railways: The Application of Western Technology in the Colonial Periphery 1850-1920" in Rory Macleod and Deepak Kumar (eds) *Technology and the Raj: Western Technology and Technical Transfers in India 1700-1947* (London: Sage Publications 1995), 178.

³² Revill, George. *3000 Words On Politics, Technology, Railways, Empire Etc.* 2017. E-mail.

mission that was a 'moral rather than an economic statement' as part of the creation of empire.³³ And some scholars have suggested that railways were in fact: 'a synonym for "civilisation" [...] in the political discourse of colonial legitimacy'.³⁴

Mattelart and Mattelart argued that the mechanism by which the superiority of the owners of technology was to be conveyed to those in need of improvement lay in the 'science of communication' that developed from the early nineteenth century. Advocates of that view considered that society was an organism with separate parts that fulfilled important functions and were connected by the improved means of communication to form a whole.³⁵ The railway was a "nervous system" that provided a particularly fast and effective connection between the "heart" and the "limbs" of this organism and thereby integrated the distinct parts into a single political entity that enabled day to day governance of increasingly complex societies and empires. Railways were able to do so because of the use to which they were put by politicians and others, rather than through their technological power alone.³⁶ Simmons' suggestion that 'politics was the midwife of railways' therefore seems rather limited.³⁷ It would be more accurate to argue, as Street has done, that the relationship between politics, technology and its owners is dialectical.³⁸

Considering the various real and potential consequences of the use of a major technology, its ownership, became a political issue, particularly in the case of railways in the UK and the United States (US) in the nineteenth century, which were privately owned and operated. The emergence of large corporations that owned railways in the US aroused suspicion. The prominent contemporary commentator Charles Francis Adams saw them as an example of: 'institutions and organisations beyond the control of the community, state or federal nation' - with a power over human thought and experience similar to that of a major religion.³⁹ He stressed that privately-owned corporations focused on profit and ignored any sense of holding a great technology such

³³ A. A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways: The transcontinental railway idea in British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 19.

³⁴ Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann (eds) *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 96.

³⁵ Armand and Michele Mattelart, *Theories of Communication: A short introduction* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 5.

³⁶ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), xix.

³⁷ Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, *The Oxford companion to British railway history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 383.

³⁸ Street, *Politics and Technology*, 16. The 'railway age' in Britain was 1830-1914, Simmons and Biddle, *The Oxford companion to British railway history*, 412.

³⁹ Ben Marsden and Crosbie Smith, *Engineering Empires: A cultural history of Technology in nineteenth-century Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2005), 165.

as railways 'in trust' for the wider community.⁴⁰ The hesitancy of government to take robust action on behalf of the community may not have been a matter of neglect, but rather part of a belief that government intervention in technological, as in other issues, was more than likely to make matters worse.⁴¹ Government engagement in British railways was explored by Parris in 1965. He showed how politicians struggled initially to cope with the demands of a technology that increasingly dominated British life from 1830. But as the franchise extended after 1867 and MPs became more dependent upon their constituencies, government was more willing and able to challenge the power of the 'railway interest'.⁴² Nonetheless, the railway interest was a powerful political force in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Alderman has shown.⁴³

Much work has been done on the relationship between railways and government in the context of (formal and informal) empire, leading to the rise of the idea of 'railway imperialism'.⁴⁴ More recently, Colin Divall has noted six types of railway imperialism, ranging from 'formal control' in India, through 'sub imperial/expansive', for example in Canada and South Africa; to 'economic satellite, proto-national integrative' in Argentina and Brazil; 'private', in places like Cuba and Chile; 'penetrating' in China and Mexico; and finally 'competitive and strategic', for example in the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵ These varying types of 'railway imperialism' – even without examining them in detail - demonstrate the earlier point that a technology is open to a variety of applications according to economic and political conditions. 'Railway imperialism', then, refers to both the power of the technology itself and the ability of politicians to use it for political purposes.

⁴⁰ Marsden and Smith, *Engineering Empires*, 170. British railway corporations also achieved 'unimaginable size', and there is no reason to suppose that their impact was any less than their American counterparts though it has been less studied in the former country. See George Revill, 'Perception, reception and representation: Wolfgang Schivelbusch and the cultural history of travel and transport,' in: Norton, Peter; Mom, Gijis; Milward, Liz and Flonneau, Mathieu eds. *Mobility in History: reviews and reflections. Yearbook of Transport, Travel and Mobility (T2M)*. The London and North Western Railway Company was the largest industrial corporation in the world, see Malcolm Reed, *London and North Western Railway: A History* (Cornwall: Atlantic 1996), 1.

⁴¹ Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 59.

⁴² Henry Parris, *Government and the Railways in nineteenth century Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 214.

⁴³ Geoffrey Alderman, *The Railway Interest* (Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 1973).

⁴⁴ Clarence B. Davis, Kenneth E. Wilburn, Jr., and Ronald E. Robinson, eds., *Railway Imperialism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991). For Robinson see Andrew S. Thompson, 'Gallagher, John Andrew (1919–1980)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/72344>, accessed 29 March 2017].

⁴⁵ Colin Divall, "Railway imperialisms, railway nationalisms" in Monika Burri; Kilian T. Elsasser; David Gugerli. (Eds) *Die Internationalität der Eisenbahn 1850-1970* (Zurich : Chronos, 2003), 201.

The most prominent case study in 'railway imperialism' is India, which saw the largest and most expensive colonial projects anywhere in the world during the nineteenth century – and they were at the heart of the creation of modern India.⁴⁶ But in the manner already noted, the impact of railways was not the same in all places and at all times. As Kerr has shown, the significance of railways in any location was determined by who controlled them and for what purpose. In the case of India, the impact of railways was: 'mediated by colonial administrators and their political masters'.⁴⁷ In other words, for Kerr it was politics and technology *together* that determined the outcomes of railways for India and which ensured that those with wealth became even wealthier.⁴⁸

Divall's classification suggests that 'railway imperialism' only applied to non-European countries, but this may over-simplify the concept. For example, Lee has claimed that the line through the Semmering Pass from Vienna to Italy, which was built in 1854, was the *first imperial railway* - designed to integrate the provinces of Italy into Austro-Hungarian Empire. While Lee is careful to distinguish that railway from later efforts, such as those in India, which aimed : 'to extend the economic and political reach of new and dynamic empires', his work suggests that railways may have had "imperial" purposes before European imperial expansion into other continents on a large scale.⁴⁹ This is in line with Kenny's argument relating to Ireland that: 'European colonialism *originated as an internal rather than an external process*; only when dominion had been established did overseas empires gradually emerge'.⁵⁰ As such, it is useful to examine the role of railways in securing quasi-imperial control in the day to day governance of the home territories of the European powers in the nineteenth century, including Ireland, as an early example of what happened later in places like India. The next three chapters examine the efforts undertaken by the UK government to use railways in association with other technologies to strengthen the governance of Ireland as part of the UK. So railways might be said to have been

⁴⁶ Daniel Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress, Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 53. Ian J Kerr (ed), *Railways in Modern India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

⁴⁷ Kerr (ed), *Railways in Modern India*, 12.

⁴⁸ Kerr (ed), *Railways in Modern India*, 12.

⁴⁹ Robert Lee, *Colonial Engineer: John Whitton 1819-1898 and the Building of Australia's Railways* (Sidney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), 21.

⁵⁰ Kevin Kenny, "1: Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction," in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6 [My emphasis].

used to 'assist the infrastructure of political rule' in Ireland, and because of Ireland's relationship with the rest of the UK, to have 'served formal empire'.⁵¹

Railways were certainly important in the process of nation-building before imperial expansion into Africa and Asia in the late nineteenth century. As Greet de Block has shown, once Belgium achieved independence from the Netherlands in 1830, politicians began to use railways to create and define their new nation.⁵² This approach in Belgium worked because it was nation-building that started with a "clean slate". There was a sense of purpose and a clear political direction so that the application of technology was better equipped to deliver what was required. In contrast with Thoreau's remark about technology at the head of this chapter, the Belgian case is an example of both a reformed means (railways) and a reformed end (independence from the Netherlands).

An examination of some other examples of the use of railways in nation or empire-building further demonstrates the variable results achieved in the application of a technology in different political and cultural settings. Bismarck aimed to use railways to integrate the states that made up the new German nation created in 1871. He encountered fierce opposition from the individual German states who resisted the creation of a publicly-owned railway and its role in forging a centralised state.⁵³ This amply demonstrates that technology may provoke a reaction and may be used by those affected for ends that are very different from the ones originally intended by railway promoters. In India, nationalism grew with the railways, although such growth was surely not intended by those who financed railways in the sub-continent.⁵⁴ And in South Africa, railways were used by British imperialists and Boer republicans in their respective, competing and aggressive attempts to dominate the region in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁵ These apparently contradictory results of railway development are examples of what Kubicek noted in respect of technology and empire - that technology: 'empowered the metropole but also to some degree, strengthened the periphery'.⁵⁶ That notion is present also in Hechter's analysis of

⁵¹ Kenneth Wilburn in Benjamin, Thomas (editor) *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450*. Vol. 3. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 943-945. *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450*, Vol. 3, 2007, 944.

⁵² Greet de Block, "Designing the Nation: The Belgian Railway Project 1830-1837", *Technology and Culture* Vol. 52, No. 4 (October 2011), pp. 703-732.

⁵³ Allan Mitchell, *The Great Train Race: Railways and the Franco-German Rivalry, 1815-1914* (New York and Oxford: Berhahn Books, 2006), 35.

⁵⁴ Clarence B. Davis, Kenneth E. Wilburn, Jr., and Ronald E. Robinson, eds., *Railway Imperialism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 38.

⁵⁶ Robert Kubicek, "British Expansion, Empire and Technological Change" in William Roger Louis, Andrew Porter, and Elaine M. Low, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 247.

‘internal colonialism’ in which peripheral regions may respond to heightened contact with the metropolis by asserting their own identity rather than absorbing the culture of the metropole. Hechter applied his concept to the Celtic fringe of the UK, which makes it a potentially relevant concept to this study of railways and the increased contact they facilitated between England, Ireland and Wales.⁵⁷

In North America, Canada provides the clearest example of a specific technological project - the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) – being used as a defined act of nation-building by an imperial power. The CPR brought together the geographically distant and culturally distinct east and west of the British territories in North America to create Canada. This was an act of ‘technological nationalism’ but according to den Otter, it showed that technology was an insubstantial basis for the creation of a nation because it is difficult to control the impact of technology, especially if that technology is also being used by a powerful neighbour such as the US that was ‘culturally dominant and technologically more experienced’.⁵⁸ The result was that the CPR became as much an extension of the US railway network as it was a discreetly Canadian national railway line within the British Empire.

Thus, in the politics of nation-building and imperial relationships, railways were, as Divall has suggested: ‘necessary *if not sufficient*, for both the creation and extension of centralised forms of state authority, and of the circulation of goods, ideas, and people needed to develop [the] nation to be’.⁵⁹ Drawing upon Benedict Anderson’s work on nationalism, Revill too has argued that railways in and of themselves were not enough for nation-building. Culture, history and language were vitally important because nation-building was: ‘about more than institutions and infrastructure’.⁶⁰ For railways to be effective in nation-building, the national identity, the means and the ends had to be aligned, as was the case in Belgium.

Nye’s study of the use of technology as the means of securing a ‘Second Creation’ in the US demonstrates that technology also caused outright opposition as well as being used by opponents for their own purposes. In that study, Nye shows that pioneers heading west in the US in the second half of the nineteenth century thought their ‘Manifest Destiny’ was secured by railway technology that was a God-given means to improve on the original creation of the lands

⁵⁷ Michael Hechter *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1975).

⁵⁸ den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways*, 30-31.

⁵⁹ Divall, *Railway imperialisms*, 197 [My emphasis].

⁶⁰ George Revill, *Railway* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 96.

that they acquired, often at the expense of native populations.⁶¹ Opponents did not try to use the railway for their own purposes, as in the examples of India and South Africa, but denounced the new technology by creating 'counter narratives' that challenged the notion of Manifest Destiny. Those counter narratives argued that railways produced: 'new forms of political power, class conflict, accidents, land swindles, pollution, and unfamiliar environmental problems' and were in fact a 'route of superior desolation'.⁶² Such opposition was more in the spirit of Thoreau's critique of technology and tended to question the assumptions behind ideas of progress and human superiority based on the possession of new technologies.

This survey of the literature on technology, politics and railways has particularly focused on the larger ambitions of railways, such as the creation of nations and the control of empires. Yet the notion of the 'railway age' to denote the second half of the nineteenth century is suggestive of a technological influence that extended far beyond those grander political objectives and reached the everyday routine processes of governance. This all-embracing sense of the railways and their importance in day to day politics is well summarised by Revill:

If politics is basically a matter of how we decide who gets what, when and where, then railways clearly play an important part in the process both within and between nation-states, enabling movement and providing access for citizens gathering and distributing the resources, goods and services which make modern life possible and represent our material stake in the national collectivity.⁶³

Railways, then, provided both the mobility that was essential to the exercise of the greater freedoms that replaced feudalism - and the connectivity within which those freedoms were exercised. The two questions posed by Leo Marx concerning who controls a technology, and to what ends, offer a useful framework for a historical understanding of the intentions of the promoters of a railway; and of the politics of those whose lives were, intentionally or unintentionally, affected by its construction and operation. Many factors were at work when technology was applied to a political issue such as the governance of Ireland. As noted above, the intentions, philosophy and ambitions of the politicians and the owners of the technology may not be aligned; the people affected by the introduction of a technology may react in a different way than expected; the technology may not perform in the way it was designed to; and it may even serve ends that directly contradict the priorities of the politicians and the owners of the technology. Guided by Leo Marx's two overarching questions that cover many of these points, and focussing on Ireland and North Wales and the connection between London and Dublin

⁶¹ David E. Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings* (London: MIT Press, 2003), 37.

⁶² Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 194.

⁶³ Revill, *Railway*, 83.

created by the Chester and Holyhead Railway, this study examines the complex relationship between technology and politics and the potential for railways to serve purposes that were not intended or anticipated by those who authorised, constructed and paid for them.

1.2 The historical and historiographical context

In the next four chapters this thesis focuses on the attempts of the government in London in the 1830s to absorb Ireland into the UK following the Act of Union of 1801. The nature of the relationship between the UK government and Ireland after 1801 is contested among historians but most agree that it was different from the other countries that made up the UK. For Nasson, Union with Ireland was 'annexation with a Parliamentary gloss' and Ireland was more troublesome to the London government than many of its more distant colonies.⁶⁴ Morgan's 1991 comparison with Wales in British politics is clear about the existence of a discrete Irish nation, not least because of its physical separation by the Irish Sea. But there was much more that marked Ireland out from the rest of the UK: 'a distinct social structure, a fundamental cleavage in religious affiliation, a nationally articulate public opinion, and a tragically insoluble problem of economic subsistence'.⁶⁵ Its remoteness from London was an important reason why governing Ireland was particularly difficult in the nineteenth century and required a separate administration at Dublin Castle. That administration was headed by the Lord Lieutenant, supported by the chief secretary - a senior politician who spent much time in London - and an under-secretary, a civil servant who was, in practice, often the face of UK government in Ireland.⁶⁶ The need for local control was seen to depend in part on the speed of communication between London and Dublin: the faster the communication, the more power could be exercised from London; a very clear example of the interface of politics and technology.

Estimations of Ireland's position within the UK in the nineteenth century often miss the point that it was *time* not distance that was the issue. Kenny, for example, focused on the issue of distance in his pertinent assessment of Ireland's status:

Ireland was too near England to be left alone, but this very proximity helps explain why the country's status within the Empire has been so frequently ignored, questioned, or at best defensively asserted. The term 'colony' brings to mind far-flung 'exotic' possessions, often marked

⁶⁴ Bill Nasson, *Britannia's Empire: Making a British World* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2004), 123.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 6.

⁶⁶ Brian Jenkins, *Era of Emancipation: British Government of Ireland, 1812-1830* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988), 56.

by extreme racial subjugation. Although the Irish were frequently cast as racially inferior, they lacked the requisite quality of *distance*.⁶⁷

The socially volatile situation of Ireland, as evidenced amongst other examples by the Terry Alt movement in the late 1820s, required a more rapid connection between the capitals than could be obtained by the available means of communication, even after Telford's highly efficient London to Holyhead Road was completed in 1826. It reduced the journey time between London and Dublin via stagecoach significantly - but not enough to enable direct rule from London.⁶⁸ It belonged to Mumford's eotechnic era when speed on land could not exceed the biological power of the horse. Thus, the ultimate aim of abolishing the Dublin Castle administration that was expressed by people like Henry Parnell (the Irish MP, who had pioneered the new road) could not be accomplished.⁶⁹ Telford's achievement simply did not have sufficient impact on the issue of *time*.⁷⁰

In her study of Irish newspapers, McDonald has shown that the ambitions of politicians to improve transit time to Ireland had subtler objectives than simply opening the prospect of direct administrative rule from London. By analysing the period before the Union of 1801, she has illustrated that the speed of communication could affect the value of news, and thereby the potential Anglicising influence of newspapers in Dublin.⁷¹ That point is reinforced in Street's examination of the interface between technology and news in which speed proves influential in establishing the required message because urgency (speed) tends to limit analysis and reduce accuracy.⁷² Communication time was clearly an issue for policy-makers in London, who were frustrated at the failure to change the relationship of Ireland within the UK and saw the example of Scottish integration as a model for Ireland.⁷³ In practice, the comparison with Scotland was not a useful one for the reasons outlined by Morgan above. Scotland's relationship within the UK was much less complex than that of Ireland. It was not Roman Catholic, it was not separated by a sea

⁶⁷ Kevin Kenny, "1: Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction," in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2 [My emphasis].

⁶⁸ Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 21.

⁶⁹ G. F. R. Barker, 'Parnell, Henry Brooke, first Baron Congleton (1776–1842)', rev. Peter Gray, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21386, accessed 6 April 2016]

⁷⁰ Jenkins, *Era of Emancipation*, 249.

⁷¹ Sarah McDonald, "'Freshest Advices': The currency of London News in Dublin City newspapers, 1790-1801" *Library and Information Research* (2010) Volume 34, Number 108.

⁷² Street, *Politics and Technology*, 192.

⁷³ John Kendle, *Federal Britain: A History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 10.

crossing, and it had integrated into the UK both politically and economically by the nineteenth century.

Thus, the problem of Ireland was a 'central theme in British political life' in the nineteenth century for the British government.⁷⁴ The arrival of railways from 1830 was considered by politicians to have the potential to transform the neighbouring island's governance, as it had transformed much else in the social, economic and political life of the UK in that period.⁷⁵ For Schivelbusch, railways were more than just another technological development: 'every history of the nineteenth century presents it as the central character – a kind of technological "Napoleon" – in the epic of early industrialization'.⁷⁶ It was no surprise therefore that this 'Napoleon' was deployed to tackle the 'central theme in British political life' - Ireland. Schivelbusch also showed *how* the railway might achieve that political change by cutting distance by one-third.⁷⁷ That meant that the 267 miles from London to Holyhead effectively became 89 miles by steam railway and boat – and brought the Welsh port as close to London as Rugby was before the railway age. But as the works discussed in the previous section have suggested, faster transit did not *guarantee* a change in a political relationship – the technology was bound to be mediated by politics.⁷⁸ Various issues put Dublin in a different relationship with London from that of other major UK cities and it needed a *political decision* to deploy railways to tackle those issues.

The relationship between Britain and Ireland was so different from others in the UK that it is considered by some historians to have been imperial in nature. As such, the use of a railway to secure Ireland within the UK might be considered in the same way as railways in India from the 1850s - as an example of "railway imperialism". Railways were a technology that was available to government in London at a time when it was politically important to secure greater integration of Ireland within the UK. Yet Ireland cannot be considered in the same way as India or British activity in Africa. As Kenny has noted: 'If India represented one form of colony, Nigeria a second, and Australia a third, then Ireland represented yet another, combining some aspects of these three with highly particular characteristics of its own'.⁷⁹ And he also stressed that Ireland tended to be excluded from discourses on imperialism because it was too close to London.⁸⁰ But despite the

⁷⁴ Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, 6.

⁷⁵ Kenneth Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, 6.

⁷⁶ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), xix.

⁷⁷ Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 34.

⁷⁸ Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, 6.

⁷⁹ Kenny, *Ireland and the British Empire*, 3,

⁸⁰ Kenny, *Ireland and the British Empire*, 2.

absence of Ireland from the work of major commentators on imperialism, such as Robinson and Gallagher, there is sufficient consensus about its imperial status for it to have a chapter dedicated to it within the Oxford History of the British Empire.⁸¹ In that chapter Fitzpatrick argues that the administrative arrangements in Ireland were:

Distinctively colonial in both form and function, despite the legislative Union [...] Irish unrest provoked measures of repression and coercion unthinkable in Britain; Irish poverty justified welfare experiments and state intervention to a degree shocking to orthodox political economists. In these respects *Ireland was not only exceptional within the United Kingdom but akin to a colony, efficiency in government being valued above liberty and the sanctity of property...*⁸²

It was precisely the 'efficiency of government' that the political use of railways was designed to address and this may be seen, in Fitzpatrick's terms, as contributing to Ireland's status as a colony. Whether the regime in Ireland was coercive or sympathetic, those who administered it, according to Fitzpatrick, regarded the Irish as: 'a separate and subject native population rather than an integrated element of a united people'.⁸³

This dissertation, then, will examine how the arrival of railways and associated technologies, such as the steamship and electric telegraph, provided a new opportunity for government in London to attempt to answer the persistent Irish question by the creation of a greater 'efficiency in government' through improved communication between London and Dublin provided. In the Mattelarts' terms, it was an attempt to create a whole body from a series of separate organs. So the Irish question can be regarded as a quasi-imperial issue but a distinctly different issue from other examples such as India, Nigeria and Australia.

So far few studies on the governance of Ireland in the early nineteenth century have suggested that technology had a role to play in either reinforcing or changing the relationship between Ireland and the rest of the UK. In a book that directly addresses the question of whether Ireland was a colony, Gray has suggested that Sir Robert Peel supported the abolition of the Lord Lieutenancy in 1850 because of 'the communications revolution' - but by then Peel was out of office.⁸⁴ Gray does not specify the CHR as part of that revolution and does not suggest that

⁸¹ David Fitzpatrick, "Ireland and the Empire" in William Roger Louis, Andrew Porter, and Alaine M. Low, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 501.

⁸² David Fitzpatrick, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 495-6 [My emphasis].

⁸³ David Fitzpatrick, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 498.

⁸⁴ John Prest, 'Peel, Sir Robert, second baronet (1788–1850)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21764>, accessed 29 March 2016].

Russell's Government that succeeded Peel's administration in 1846 agreed with him.⁸⁵ Similarly, few studies on the CHR have pointed to its political intentions or impact. Baughen's 1972 study is the only extensive history of the CHR, though it only takes that history up to 1880.⁸⁶ He makes many useful points about the origin of the line, but not all of those are referenced, and there is no core argument in the book about the purpose of the railway. It belongs to the older type of railway history that has been slowly superseded by a more analytical approach that places railways at the centre of social, economic and political change in nineteenth-century Britain. Nonetheless, even the detailed work of Casson presents the CHR in terms of the transport of MPs and troops *between* the UK and Ireland, rather than influencing the actual governance of Ireland *from* London as this study will do.⁸⁷

The application of railways to improve communication with Ireland began soon after the railway age commenced with the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830.⁸⁸ The reduced journey time from London to Liverpool that resulted from the opening of the Grand Junction and London and Birmingham Railways in 1837-38 resulted in the main route of communications between Britain and Ireland switching from road to rail via Liverpool, so that the role of places like Holyhead (and its state-funded road) began to decline.⁸⁹ The shift from road to rail was not just a change in the mode of transport, it was also one of *ownership* – and as noted in the questions posed by Leo Marx in the previous section, the ownership of a technology is a vital factor in its application and the impact that it makes. The London to Holyhead Road was funded by the state, and the steamers that sailed to Dublin from Liverpool, Holyhead and Milford Haven were also owned by the state, so the communication between London and Dublin in 1830 was a state-owned and operated system.⁹⁰ The emerging railway system was developed privately, but its role in carrying the vital communication between London and Dublin required the owners of private capital and the state to forge a relationship that was of mutual benefit. Such a change meant that senior politicians, such as Sir Robert Peel, had to modify their commitment to *laissez-*

⁸⁵ Peter Gray, "Ireland's last fetter struck off": The Lord Lieutenancy Debate 1800-1867, in Terence MacDonough, ed. *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, Politics and Culture in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), 97.

⁸⁶ Peter Baughen, *The Chester and Holyhead Railway, Volume I: The Main Line up to 1880* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972).

⁸⁷ Mark Casson, *The World's First Railway System: Enterprise, Competition and Regulation on the Railway Network in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27.

⁸⁸ Jack Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales 1830-1914 Volume I The System and Its Working* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 17.

⁸⁹ D Lloyd Hughes and Dorothy M Williams, *Holyhead: The Story of a Port* (Denbigh: Published by the Authors, 1981), 79.

⁹⁰ Hughes and Williams, *Holyhead*, 68 and 73-74.

faire economics in order to apply private capital to a public purpose. This was part of the wider struggle between the state and private railway companies over the ownership and regulation of the most powerful and rapid form of communication that had ever been known, as analysed by Parris in 1965.⁹¹ More recently, Casson has explored the extent to which that struggle in the 1830s and 1840s produced an irrational rail system. This was in part due to the competition between towns and cities to gain access to the rail system in order to sustain or create their own economic advantage over rivals - without much concern for the operation of railways as an overall *system*.⁹² This competition between towns also played an important role in the development of the CHR because it distorted some of the debate about the communication between London and Dublin into an argument about the *route* of that communication, alongside its ultimate objective of connecting the two cities as rapidly as possible.

The engineering and other technical aspects of the proposed routes of the railway lines from London towards Dublin have been extensively studied and generally recorded in a manner that suggests that the CHR was the only serious contender.⁹³ This consensus reflects the fact that existing studies of the CHR tend to look at history from the perspective of the victor – the CHR – rather than working from 1835 onwards and examining what happened *at the time* to produce the CHR's success. Much analysis of the CHR has produced a classic Whig-style narrative of an: 'overtly optimistic [account] of the role of progress in the history of science'.⁹⁴ The CHR has been portrayed as an example of scientific triumph over an unfriendly environment by the forces of progress that led to a successful project delivered by the heroic figures of George Stephenson and his son Robert.⁹⁵ Such a reading of history has the potential to deliver wrong conclusions, particularly in railway development, where there is the danger of committing the classic error noted by Fleming in respect of near contemporary Argentinian railways: 'taking the results of complicated historical events and imposing pursuit of the results on those who acted to invest in, build, and operate the lines'.⁹⁶

Railway history has progressed from such Whiggish approaches to show that the impact of railway developments did not fit into an unbroken process of improvement. The impact was

⁹¹ Henry Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), particularly Chapter 1 "The Need for Government Action" 1-27.

⁹² Casson, *The World's First Railway System*, 17-18.

⁹³ Jack Simmons, *The System and Its Working*, 45.

⁹⁴ Lars Magnusson, *The Tradition of Free Trade* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

⁹⁵ For example, Baughen, *The Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 89.

⁹⁶ William J. Fleming, "4: Profits and Visions: British Capital and Railway Construction in Argentina, 1854-1886," in *Railway Imperialism*, ed. Clarence B. Davis, Kenneth E. Wilburn, Jr., and Ronald E. Robinson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 73.

immense, often unplanned and generally unconcerned with the consequences for poor and powerless people. That emerges clearly in more recent analyses, such as those of Simmons, Schivelbusch, Casson and Revill, which have demonstrated that railways cannot be viewed in isolation as technical developments but must be seen as both products of the industrial age and creators of that age within the framework of laissez-faire politics and economics. Simmons was one of the first to show the full extent of the impact of railways, Schivelbusch demonstrated that impact at an individual level, Casson showed how laissez-faire economics and politics delivered an almost chaotic form of railway implementation, while Revill demonstrated how railways provided both the model and the means to achieve the creation and integration of the nation state.⁹⁷ All those approaches are relevant to this study of the CHR's role in British Irish policy from 1835-60, and its largely unplanned political impact and implications in North Wales in the period from 1835 to 1900.

Few historians have departed from the account of the CHR typified by Baughen, whose history of the line up to 1880 assumes that the eventual success of the CHR was inevitable. But Dodd echoed the doubts about the CHR expressed by contemporaries such as Charles Vignoles, who surveyed the PDR in 1836 and again in 1846.⁹⁸ Vignoles thought the CHR was risky, expensive and offered few benefits to North Wales. Based in part on that view, Dodd has drawn an unusual, important and damning conclusion about early railway development – effectively the CHR - in North Wales: 'The railway, which elsewhere brought with it a period of feverish expansion, in North Wales helped to *nip the Industrial Revolution in the bud*'.⁹⁹ While Dodd has given us a Welsh perspective on the CHR, there is no similar account of the Irish view. That omission is corrected by this study, which explores the role of Daniel O'Connell, the leader of Irish nationalism from the later 1820s until his death in 1847, in the issue of railway communication within Ireland and between Dublin and London.¹⁰⁰

The lack of rapid communication between London and Dublin, combined with Ireland's distinctiveness, ensured that the administration in Ireland differed from that of Scotland or Wales. Dublin's remoteness from London enabled the relatively radical Whig regime at Dublin Castle to

⁹⁷ Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*, Mark Casson, *The World's First Railway System*, George Revill, *Railway* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

⁹⁸ K. R. Fairclough, 'Vignoles, Charles Blacker (1793–1875)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28282>, [accessed 10 May 2016]].

⁹⁹ A. H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1951), 119 [My emphasis].

¹⁰⁰ R. V. Comerford, 'O'Connell, Daniel (1775–1847)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20501>, accessed 29 March 2016].

implement significant change. That was in line with the 1835 Lichfield House Compact with O'Connell, which aimed to equalize the treatment of Ireland with that of the rest of the UK.¹⁰¹ The role of the under-secretary at Dublin Castle was vital, and the appointment of Thomas Drummond to the post in 1835 delivered governance that was the most sympathetic to the Irish Catholic majority of any administration since 1801. Drummond challenged the protestant ascendancy in an approach that is best summarised by his most famous phrase: 'Property has its duties as well as its rights'.¹⁰² Drummond was a thoroughly modern administrator who understood that railways were at the heart of social and economic change. He led the Irish Railway Commission (IRC) that produced a report in 1838 on the potential for railways in Ireland, which this study will examine in detail. The analysis places the IRC report within a wider context of the attempt to use railway technology to redefine Ireland's political relationship with the rest of the UK in the 1830s and 1840s.

In practice, the IRC's achievements are difficult to assess because its proposed lines were not built in 1840 as it had hoped, largely because of the opposition of Sir Robert Peel. He represented the forces that favoured laissez-faire economics and a view of Union with Ireland that differed from that of Drummond and the Whig Government that left office in August 1841.¹⁰³ Peel had sacrificed 'express' communication between London and Dublin in 1817 as part of budget savings in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars when he was chief secretary in Ireland.¹⁰⁴ This study will consider whether his later opposition to the IRC was because he objected to its philosophy on the development of the Irish economy and railways rather than the use of technology for faster communication between London and Dublin.¹⁰⁵ Peel was not consistently opposed to Irish interests; he promoted Catholic Emancipation in 1829, which demonstrated a pragmatic approach to the governance of Ireland and a conciliatory stance in the light of political circumstances, as he did later in relation to the CHR.¹⁰⁶ He failed to back that railway in 1840 but by 1842 supported the project to connect London and Dublin via Holyhead using steam

¹⁰¹ Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity, 1789-2006* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 143.

¹⁰² Stanley H. Palmer, 'Drummond, Thomas (1797-1840)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8084>, accessed 6 April 2016].

¹⁰³ Laissez-faire is regarded as "abstention by governments from interfering in the workings of the free market" throughout this thesis. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/laissez-faire> [Accessed 4 September 2016]

¹⁰⁴ Jenkins, *Era of Emancipation*, 119.

¹⁰⁵ K.H. Vignoles, *Charles Blacker Vignoles: romantic engineer*: (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 66.

¹⁰⁶ Prest, *Peel*.

technology.¹⁰⁷ The study considers whether Peel's later change of stance on faster communication reflected a shift in political events in Ireland, which caused Peel to deploy railways and steam ships to increase government efficiency in Ireland after the period of relative calm in Irish affairs between 1841 and 1843, had ended.¹⁰⁸

Peel's administration made the CHR into a political railway once it was directly involved in the decisions about the route towards Dublin by rail – an occasional departure from Peel's general commitment to laissez-faire economics, particularly as they applied to railways.¹⁰⁹ Baughen has shown that government took the unusual step of appointing a minister to the committee considering the CHR's private bill - a clear indication that the CHR was sufficiently important to Peel to warrant a departure from his insistence on minimal state intervention.¹¹⁰ The contest with the alternative route was not over once the CHR's private Bill was passed by parliament. Baughen mentioned the revival of an amended PDR in 1845, which he regarded as far from a viable proposition. According to him, the PDR had inadequate financial backing and was eventually frustrated by the creation of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) and the Government's decision to restrict the spread of the wider gauge lines of the Great Western Railway (GWR) – which sponsored the PDR in 1846 - as far north as Porth Dinllaen.¹¹¹ The influential railway scholar Jack Simmons has similarly dismissed the PDR in its 1845 form.¹¹² Neither Baughen nor Simmons made any connection between the creation of the LNWR, the restriction of the GWR broad gauge, and the defeat of the PDR – all of which occurred in quick succession in 1846. This thesis will argue that those events represent an important interface of politics and technology that influenced the use of railways within the British government's Irish policy.

There is evidence from other studies that suggests that the decision on the preferred gauge of railway was a political as much as a technical one. Alborn for example, argues that the broad gauge attracted hostility because it represented a different view of the future of the British economy from the one offered by its opponents.¹¹³ The broad gauge was centred on Bristol – a

¹⁰⁷ Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 41.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity, 1789-2006* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 153.

¹⁰⁹ Timothy L. Alborn, *Conceiving Companies: Joint-Stock Politics in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 1998), 187.

¹¹⁰ Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 45.

¹¹¹ Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 61-63.

¹¹² Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales*, 45.

¹¹³ Alborn, *Conceiving Companies*, 179.

city that aimed to revive its fortunes to what they had been in the late eighteenth century.¹¹⁴ The decisions made in 1846 on the gauge and railway company amalgamation handed a clear advantage to economic interests based on Manchester (and served by the LNWR) because they favoured their railway gauge, unified their lines under one management and gave them a monopoly of rapid access to Dublin via the CHR. That places the decision between the CHR and the PDR in a very different light – as much a choice between two regional economies and political philosophies as one between two geographical routes.

The LNWR was the largest industrial enterprise in the world and has therefore received some attention in terms to its political significance.¹¹⁵ Gourvish has analysed the LNWR as an early example of the creation of a large corporation with more modern methods of management, typified by its first operational manager Captain Mark Huish.¹¹⁶ And it has also been considered in detail by Alborn in his study of how joint stock companies engaged with the politics of the Victorian era.¹¹⁷ As the LNWR was a major player in the Victorian economy it had a serious interest in the route to Ireland. But it also deserves attention because, as a company based in the English industrial core, it was not culturally neutral.¹¹⁸ This also relates to the questions raised by Leo Marx in considering the relationship between politics and technology, and particularly his argument that the culture of the owners of a technology is important to its political impact. The LNWR ensured that it built or acquired every line in North Wales that connected to the CHR in order to protect its route to Dublin, and thereby created a monopoly of rapid transport in the wider region, which Simmons considered had benefited North Wales.¹¹⁹ Such monopolies were powerful actors in the economics and politics of regions such as North Wales, where they dominated rapid transport, as Freeman has argued.¹²⁰ Railways were a complex economic

¹¹⁴ C. Knick Harley, "Trade: discovery, mercantilism and technology". In: Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (eds.) *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 175.

¹¹⁵ M.C. Reed, *The London and North Western Railway* (Cornwall: Atlantic, 1996), 1 and 37. Its status as the largest industrial enterprise in the world see, Taylor, James, "Business in Pictures: Representations of Railway Enterprise in the Satirical Press in Britain 1845-1870", *Past & Present*, No. 189 (Nov., 2005), pp. 111-145.

¹¹⁶ Terence Gourvish, *Mark Huish and the London & North Western Railway: A Study of Management* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972)

¹¹⁷ Alborn, *Conceiving Companies*.

¹¹⁸ Diane Drummond, *Crewe, Railway Town, Company and People, 1840-1914* (Hants: Scolar Press, 1995), 134 and 154.

¹¹⁹ Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, *Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 555.

¹²⁰ Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 155.

organisation requiring significant resources that affected all levels of society from landowner to labourer. Headrick shows that it is difficult to see where a railway starts and ends, so extensive is its impact on the areas through which it travels.¹²¹ A railway was a significant feature of a local economy and therefore the local political landscape, particularly one in the early stages of political and economic development such as North Wales.

While the British state aimed to tighten its control of Ireland, it had no specific intentions for North Wales from the creation of the CHR. Vernon points out in his discussion on unintended consequences that: 'new uses arise for practices originally intended for simpler and more limited purposes'.¹²² And this was true in the case of the CHR in North Wales. North Wales was a region unlike any other that had acquired a main line railway with a direct link to London by 1850, and a comprehensive network of branch lines by 1880, not least because it was a region in which two out of three people spoke only Welsh.¹²³ The priorities of the LNWR were to connect London with Dublin by the CHR, and to build or buy branch lines to the CHR to prevent other railway companies from sharing that Irish traffic; it was not initially concerned with North Wales itself.¹²⁴ Historians of Wales are clear about the major impact that railways had in the country by enabling extractive industries to develop and by creating opportunities for its religious, cultural and political activities to flourish.¹²⁵ So railways simultaneously exposed Wales to external influence and strengthened the sense of national identity of the Welsh people, demonstrating that technology is capable of supporting apparently conflicting political movements. This study is different from many others concerning aspects of Welsh history as it focuses on North Wales, which was distinct from South Wales in its profile and importance in the mid-nineteenth century. Those differences grew as the nineteenth century progressed and may have been exacerbated by railway developments.¹²⁶

The major milestones of existing railway history in North Wales in the nineteenth century were the construction between 1848 and 1850 of the bridges that span the River Conwy and the Menai Straits, the catastrophic railway accident at Abergele in 1868, and the creation of the vast

¹²¹ Headrick, *Tentacles of Progress*, 52.

¹²² Richard Vernon, "Unintended Consequences." *Political Theory*, (1979) no. 1 57-73.

¹²³ John Davies, *A History of Wales*, (London: Penguin, 1993), 399.

¹²⁴ Peter Baughen, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Volume 11 North and Mid Wales*, (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1980), especially Chapters II, IV, V, VI, VII and VIII.

¹²⁵ John Davies, *Wales*, 404-410.

¹²⁶ John Grigg, *Lloyd George: The Young Lloyd George*, (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 22.

breakwater at Holyhead, completed in 1880.¹²⁷ More recently, Jones has opened up a different area of interest with her consideration of railways and the Welsh language that has highlighted a dispute between the LNWR and its Welsh employees in North Wales in 1894-95, which became an overtly political dispute. Her study has illuminated the tense relationship between the LNWR and the people of North Wales, and she has shown that local politicians and national figures such as David Lloyd George became involved, and that other major UK politicians were engaged as the issue moved from North Wales to the Houses of Parliament.¹²⁸ But that was not the full extent of political involvement in railway matters in North Wales in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, as this study will demonstrate. Diane Drummond has shown that the LNWR was in dispute with staff at Crewe in the 1880s – a town that was largely controlled by the LNWR and where employees were subjected to paternalistic and even bullying behaviour. She suggests that the LNWR had an metropolitan profile – English, Conservative, Church of England and brewing industry - that contrasted with many of its workforce – Liberal, non-conformist and teetotal in Crewe. This study considers whether there was a similar political and religious identity in North Wales as in Crewe - which might provide more background to the tensions between the region and the LNWR discussed by Jones and noted above. The cultural difference between the LNWR and North Wales in terms of religious affiliation and metropolitan character certainly led to tension between them as shown by Jones and by Grigg in his study of Lloyd George.¹²⁹ That analysis is extended by this study that examines the levels of tension between the LNWR and the people of North Wales from the inception of the CHR, and puts the findings of other scholars in a wider context that includes the politics of local government.

As noted in the previous section, large railway corporations had a tendency to promote a metropolitan uniformity at the expense of regional identity, even if that was not their intention. Large railway corporations did not just act *within* a society, town or geographical region; they acted *upon* it with a tendency to: 'promote national unity and degrade local diversity'.¹³⁰ This study will consider whether the presence of the LNWR and its operation of a major technology in North Wales produced similarly dramatic impact on the politics of the region. Informed by the earlier analysis of the relationship between politics and technology, through a careful examination

¹²⁷ Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, Chapter 5 for Conwy Bridge, 6 for Menai Bridge, 278-283 for Abergele and 221-242. for the breakwater.

¹²⁸ Dot Jones, "The Coming of the Railways and Language Change in North Wales 1850–1900," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000).

¹²⁹ Grigg, *Lloyd George*, 204.

¹³⁰ Ben Marsden and Crosbie Smith, *Engineering Empires: A Cultural History of Technology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London : Palgrave, 2005), 165.

of the work of Diane Drummond and Jones, and by considering the most relevant primary source material, this study will provide further evidence on how the interface of politics and technology affected Britain's Irish policy. It will also examine whether railways were at the centre of political developments in North Wales alongside issues such as the Welsh language, religion, land and education.

1.3. Methodology

This thesis is based on a wide range of primary sources such as newspapers, parliamentary papers, and private letters of leading politicians and officials engaged in the important debates that it covers. It deploys an equally wide range of methods in using these sources, including mathematical analysis, and visual representations in the form of tables and maps.

The thesis makes significant use of local and national newspapers as primary sources. The national papers offer important economic or political perspectives; *The Times* tended to support London city investors; the *Manchester Guardian* was a free trade paper; the *Morning Post* was Conservative, and the *Morning Chronicle* backed the Whigs. The local papers, on the other hand, offered crucial regional political perspectives. The Chester papers favoured the CHR, while papers from Shrewsbury or Worcester supported the PDR. The *Chester Chronicle* was a Liberal/Whig voice while the *North Wales Chronicle* was a Conservative/Tory one. The local papers have the advantage of including detailed and often verbatim accounts of debates, which provide a good insight into people's views. Welsh language papers were not consulted for the study - not only because of the author's lack of knowledge of the language, but also because of the comparative sparsity of Welsh language papers in early years covered by the study. Extensive analysis of the speeches and papers of senior Welsh politicians such as David Lloyd George, a radical Welsh speaker, have remedied this deficit to some degree.

Parliamentary reports and debates were also important as primary sources for this thesis. As the online record of Hansard is incomplete, newspapers were used to discover the detail of missing debates. The official reports of the issues covered in the thesis are characterised by a lack of consensus. Even apparently technical issues, such as the best harbour or choice of railway route or gauge, were subject to controversy. Technical and scientific material was used to support political perspectives and was ignored by politicians when it did not fit with the view that a person wished to present. It is the politicians' views of the technical reports - rather than the reports themselves - that were more important in this political analysis.

Chapter 3 uses mathematical analysis to test whether the work of the Irish Railway Commission was advanced in its approach to railway development. This is important because the struggle between the two rival routes towards Dublin was also about two different approaches to

how railways should develop; how Ireland should be governed; whether the interests of North Wales should be considered, and which UK region should have priority access to Ireland. Chapters 5 and 7 also employ mathematical methods, both to measure the performance of the CHR in speeding communication with Ireland, and to analyse the LNWR as a landowner in North Wales. The data from the latter analysis is at Appendix A.

Private papers have also been used extensively, in particular the papers of Peel and Gladstone at the British Library and those of Gladstone at the Flintshire Record Office. This material offers a view that the writers of letters did not expect to become public, and which may be more reliable than their public statements. The National Archives (TNA) also provided much original material, particularly the minutes of meetings of significant railway companies. And finally, this thesis has also benefited from fieldwork, particularly from walking much of the route of the railway from Chester to Holyhead in order to understand the logistical issues and particularly the scale of the project (such as the bridges and immense breakwater at Holyhead) and the nature of the towns through which it passed. A most useful discovery was the old mileage sign at Chester that heads this chapter.

1.4 Overview

This thesis moves beyond the existing historiography by considering the extent to which the CHR functioned as a tool in Irish policy between 1835 and 1850. The thesis engages with multiple sets of overlapping historiography, such as the history of science and technology; the relationship between politics and technology; railway history; Irish and Welsh political history, and the wider political (and economic) history of Britain and its empire. It adopts a broadly chronological approach but the focus moves from a UK national and strategic perspective in Ireland in Chapters 2 – 5 (covering the period from 1835 to 1860) to regional and local political issues in North Wales in Chapters 6 and 7 (spanning the period from 1845 to 1880). It returns to a UK perspective in Chapter 8 to reflect the greater political importance of North Wales in UK politics in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 2 discusses the origins of the scheme for a rail and sea route to Dublin via Porth Dinllaen to compete with the one established at Liverpool in the early 1830s, and the subsequent emergence of another scheme via Chester to Holyhead. It focuses on powerful landowners in the region who supported the competing schemes according to their own interests, and shows the developing relationship between the politicians of North Wales and the owners of Irish capital and their political representatives in Dublin. This underlines the importance of the issue of the ownership of technology and the political philosophy of its owners, as outlined by Leo Marx in chapter 1. It demonstrates that politicians made a connection between the speed of

communication and the efficiency of governance in Ireland in the aftermath of the Union of 1801, and that issue became part of the Irish policies that flowed from the agreement between Melbourne's Government and the Irish leader Daniel O'Connell in 1835 that was sustained until 1841.

The creation of the Irish Railway Commission (IRC) in 1836, whose work included the London and Dublin link, is the subject of Chapter 3. The detailed examination of its report and important work places it more clearly within Irish and railway historiography and as a good example of the relationship between politics and technology. The chapter demonstrates that the IRC report gave priority to the economic and social needs of Ireland and showed how they were capable of being met by railways. It made clear that those railways had to be connected to the UK rail network and be operated in the interests of the Irish people and economy rather than for private profit. The chapter considers whether the IRC's pro-Irish stance and its political naivety contributed to its failure, and how far the very different laissez-faire philosophy of Sir Robert Peel and those he represented was crucial to the defeat of the IRC. In doing so, it adds to the extensive historiography of Peel's career.

Chapter 4 shows how the CHR used the political vacuum created by the collapse of the IRC report to build technical and political support for its own route in 1840. Peel favoured the CHR so the chapter considers whether it was an example of the use of technology for a political purpose within Peel's Irish policy from 1843 – and how different it was to that of the IRC. The chapter also explores how Peel modified his laissez-faire principles in the case of the CHR, and assesses whether the CHR was so important to Peel that he made an exception to his usual stance on the role of the state in railway development.

Chapter 5 examines the attempt to change the governance of Ireland within the UK, based on the completion of the CHR – an important issue that is given little coverage in existing scholarship. The chapter also adds to the work of those who have shown how technology and politics are related – as considered in the earlier section of this chapter. It examines whether the CHR delivered improved communication times between London and Dublin by 1850, and explores whether the Great Famine 1845-47 had so alienated Ireland within the UK that technology was seen by some as part of the problem rather than part of the solution – a possible 'counter narrative' similar to those developed by opponents of Manifest Destiny, analysed by Nye in the US and discussed in section 1.1 of this chapter.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the question of the ownership of technology which Leo Marx identified as a factor in its relationship with politics. The chapter shows that railways were under the monopoly ownership of the LNWR in North Wales – a company that protected its route to Dublin by purchasing and operating most of the lines that connected to it in North Wales. The manner in which it did so is also relevant to its political relationship with the region. The chapter

considers the political implications of this monopoly for North Wales, and it adds to the historiography of the region by exploring the extent to which the attitude and intentions of Victorian modernisers, such as the Education Commission for Wales of 1847, were expressed through railway development. It sets that approach in a wider context by considering whether that approach to Welsh society was similar to the findings of Headrick and others, in which owners of modern technology often regarded those without it as inherently inferior. The attitudes of both the creators and owners of railways in North Wales were clearly relevant to how they interacted with local people and how their political relationship developed.

While chapter 6 concentrates on the railway side of the politics/technology equation, chapter 7 considers the political context of North Wales. The chapter shows, through an innovative study of land ownership patterns, how significant the LNWR was as a landowner in North Wales. Its land ownership incurred the need for the LNWR to pay poor rates to local bodies and so engaged it directly in the emerging politics of the region at the same time as more men were given the vote. So the potential for local opposition to the LNWR was increased. These, and the charges that the railway in turn imposed on the local population, were important components in the political relationship between the LNWR and the people and politicians of North Wales between 1850 and 1880. The study examines the extent to which local people felt that the LNWR was abusing the power of its technology, both in its interactions with the population to achieve profit and in its failure to address the needs of the region. The response of the population is analysed, including the way people reacted to railway power in a quasi-political manner. The chapter shows that the political balance between the railway and the region began to shift by 1880, as the franchise was extended and powerful, locally-based, figures such as William Gladstone joined the challenge to the LNWR monopoly. Gladstone was a senior figure in the UK state, had personal financial interests in North Wales and needed to secure the support of the large intake of Welsh Liberal MPs. Such factors had the potential to enhance the political status of railways in North Wales in a manner that Gladstone could use for his own purposes from the 1860s onwards.

Chapter 8 analyses the growing challenge to the LNWR from local MPs such as David Lloyd George, whose group of Welsh Liberal MPs was supported by nationalist MPs from Ireland in a joint attack on the LNWR that went much further than Gladstone's efforts. The chapter examines how far those Irish and Welsh nationalist MPs considered the LNWR to be an extension of the state, and whether local Welsh politicians aimed to use railways in support of a nationalist political agenda. In doing so, the study extends the work of Jones on railways and politics in North Wales. In response to this challenge, the LNWR slowly changed its stance, secured a greater understanding between itself and the people and politicians of North Wales and finally resolved some of the tension between the use of technology for private profit and the need to adapt to the

aspirations of the host community – evidence of the dialectical nature of the relationship between politics and technology. The chapter concludes by assessing the status of the LNWR as an informal political power in the region alongside landowners, educators and the established church – and one with whom local politicians had to negotiate.

2. The origins of faster communication in Britain's Irish policies 1801-36

'...so let us now overcome these few intervening miles of sea, and make the islands one land'.¹

The decision of the British Government to incorporate Ireland into the United Kingdom (UK) in 1801 was a controversial one. Arguments continue about whether the decision was a response to a particular set of circumstances at the time, a considered decision made on the balance of interests of all parties - or a cynical act of sabotage of a rival economy.² There is also debate about whether or not the aim was for Ireland to become an equal member within the 1801 UK.³ There were clearly strategic considerations for the UK governments in the first quarter of the nineteenth century because an independent Ireland could have compromised UK security, given the hostility of both France and the United States.⁴ That explains the process that began after 1801 that aimed to create Ireland as a country with the same relationship to London that Scotland had within the UK.⁵ In practice, Ireland was a very different proposition to Scotland because it had a distinct religion, a large and growing rural population that mostly subsisted on a single crop, and it was fiercely aware of its separate nationality.⁶ It was also separated from the British mainland by the Irish Sea. That ensured that improved communication had a place in Irish policy.

This chapter therefore explores the interest expressed by the British governments in improved communication with Dublin as part of its policy to deal with the political, economic and social challenges that Ireland presented to UK politicians in the nineteenth century. The improvement of communication between London and Dublin remained a concern even after the completion in 1826 of the state-funded road from London to Holyhead that had reduced the time taken by road and sea from around six days to under four days. It was hoped that the road would provide sufficiently rapid communication to enable direct rule from London, the abolition of the administrative and political structure based on Dublin Castle, and particularly the office of Lord Lieutenant. But even the reduced journey time from London to Dublin was not fast enough to

¹ Henry Fairbairn, "Project for Land Communication with Ireland", *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine* (1832) Part 1, 209-13.

² Chris Williams, "14: The United Kingdom," in *What Is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 288.

³ Kevin Kenny, "1: Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction," in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

⁴ Mike Cronin, *A History of Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 114.

⁵ John Kendle, *Federal Britain: A History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 10.

⁶ Kenneth Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 6.

achieve that change.⁷ The railways that were built from 1830 were not designed to address particular political issues like Irish rule, but rather to meet the needs of private capital. Nonetheless, early schemes provided the prospect of shorter journey time between London and Dublin so that postal communication was soon switched from road to rail via Liverpool as described in Baughen's 1972 study of the Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR).⁸ That had the potential to disadvantage landowners and communities that had benefited from the road route from London to Holyhead. Major towns and cities competed for new rail routes and this chapter examines whether civic rivalry was demonstrated in the various proposals to shorten the time taken for the post to travel between London and Dublin. Rail competition was at an early stage in the mid-1830s but Irish traffic was bound to be considered lucrative and likely to spark rivalry between potential carriers. Irish political and economic interests were also likely to follow closely any proposals to improve communication with Dublin with a view to ensuring that such communication benefited them as well as the mainland UK. Overall control of the communication between London and Dublin was of vital interest to government as demonstrated by its willingness to fund the London to Holyhead road and the steamships that plied between Holyhead and Dublin. It raised the question of whether a railway link should be vested in private individuals and companies or in the state. That in turn made the issue part of wider public concerns about government's role in the development and regulation of railways in the 1830s, and how that related to the predominant *laissez-faire* economics in Britain.

The debate about a more direct rail route to Dublin emerged in the 1830s when Irish politicians at Westminster were exercising significant authority because of the extension of the vote to Catholics in 1829 that was secured by the effective leadership of Irish nationalism by Daniel O'Connell. If railway communication was an important component in Anglo-Irish relations at that time, it is reasonable to suppose that it would be a feature of the work of senior Irish political figures like O'Connell. This chapter explores a range of contemporary sources including newspapers, government reports and parliamentary proceedings to explore whether improved communication between London and Dublin was an issue that interested him. That is an important point in assessing the role of railways in Irish policy, and particularly its relevance to the Lichfield House Compact that was concluded in 1835 between the Whig Government of Melbourne and the Irish nationalists led by O'Connell.⁹ The compact offered Ireland equal social,

⁷ Brian Jenkins, *Era of Emancipation: British Government of Ireland, 1812-1830* (Kingston, Ont: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988), 249.

⁸ Peter Baughen, *The Chester and Holyhead Railway, Volume I: The Main Line up to 1880* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972), 22.

⁹ R. V. Comerford, 'O'Connell, Daniel (1775-1847)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20501>, accessed 29

economic and political treatment within the UK in return for O'Connell agreeing to cease campaigning to repeal the Union between the two countries, and to support government in parliament against the Tory opposition led by Sir Robert Peel.¹⁰

2.1 Improvements in communications between Britain and Ireland before 1840

Having brought Ireland into the Union in 1801, the Government in London had to give practical effect to the decision - and particularly the element that abolished the Irish Parliament and required Irish MPs and Lords to attend parliament in London. That required better transport between London and Dublin, as did directing the devolved administration at Dublin Castle that was headed by the Lord Lieutenant and supported by a chief secretary and an under-secretary. The only form of communication between London and that administration was the Royal Mail so government was alert to any potential to increase its speed. A report in 1810 stated that the roads through Wales from Dublin to London were unsuitable for rapid travel because of the terrain and the need to cross the Menai Straits – the short but difficult crossing from mainland Wales to the Isle of Anglesey and its port of Holyhead. It also considered that whatever the cost of dealing with these difficulties, it was a sound investment in securing: 'the freedom of intercourse between the two islands of the United Kingdom'.¹¹ A subsequent committee went further and articulated the likely benefits of a rapid road to Holyhead that included improved links between government in London and Dublin; better attendance by Irish MPs in London; improved jurisdiction over Irish courts; benefits to British industry, and less tangibly; improvement in the: 'intimate acquaintance between inhabitants of both countries'¹² All those benefits favoured mainland Britain and presented a rather subtle ambition towards Ireland that appeared more concerned with assimilation than military conquest.¹³ That was confirmed in 1823 during a debate about the ending of the direct government of Ireland from London and how it related to the speed of communication:

March 2016] and Sean O'Faolain, *King of the Beggars: A Life of Daniel O'Connell, the Irish Liberator in a study of the rise of the modern Irish democracy 1775-1847* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1980).

¹⁰ John Prest, 'Peel, Sir Robert, second baronet (1788–1850)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21764>, accessed 11 Sept 2016].

¹¹ The Second Report from the Committee on Holyhead Roads and Harbour, 2-3, 1810 (352) IV.41.

¹² First Report of the Select Committee on Roads from Holyhead to London &c. 7-8, 1817 (411) III.203.

¹³ 'Assimilation [...] a colonial policy [that] sought the integration of colonized peoples into the colonizer's cultural, social, and political institutions'. See, Mark E. Caprio, in Benjamin, Thomas (editor) *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450*. Vol. 1 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 104.

The difficulty of communication between this country and Ireland might, formerly, have been a reason for continuing the vice-regal government, but that reason can no longer be urged, as the time of communication between London and Dublin was shorter than between London and Edinburgh.¹⁴

Sir Robert Peel, the Home Secretary, was clear in his support for continued separate government in Ireland in 1823 because: ‘a local executive was an essential and necessary check upon a country *so remote*, which was an ancient kingdom, and till the last twenty years, had a separate legislature’.¹⁵ His conclusion indicated that he was not against the *principle* of direct rule from London but rather that it was not appropriate, ‘in the present circumstances’ – a phrase that he used twice in his response.¹⁶ That suggested that there might be circumstances in which he *would* support a change, and subsequently he would be very well placed to do so.

It was the arrival of railways from 1830 that reopened the debate about the speed of communication with Ireland. An 1832 select committee commented in similar terms to its predecessors in respect of the importance of rapid communication and the value of a large investment by the state in improving it.¹⁷ Its report did not suggest that railways could necessarily take over the role of the stagecoach immediately because they regarded the investment in Holyhead and its road as: ‘scientifically and well expended’.¹⁸ One of the first discussions of railways to communicate more rapidly with Ireland occurred in June 1830, even before the Liverpool to Manchester railway had opened. George Stephenson, the foremost engineer of the early railway age, was at a meeting in the Mansion House in Dublin.¹⁹ Attendees expressed great dissatisfaction with communication between London and Dublin and urged the authorities at Dublin Castle to secure an improvement.²⁰ Soon afterwards there was a more concrete proposal

¹⁴ House of Commons Debate 25 June 1823 vol. 9 c1223 – for the rest of the thesis the form ‘HC Deb’ will be used for House of Commons Debate.

¹⁵ HC Deb 25 June 1823 vol. 9 c1223.

¹⁶ HC Deb 25 June 1823 vol. 9 c1233 and c1235. [My emphasis]

¹⁷ Report from the Select Committee on Post Communication with Ireland: with the minutes of evidence, and appendix, 3-4, 1831-32 (716) XVII.1.

¹⁸ Report from the Select Committee on Post Communication with Ireland, 1832, 4.

¹⁹ “Intended Railway between Galway and Loughrea”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 June 1831, 4. For George Stephenson see M. W. Kirby, ‘Stephenson, George (1781–1848)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26397>, accessed 11 Sept 2016].

²⁰ “Intended Railway between Galway and Loughrea” *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 June 1831, 4.

for a railway bridge across the narrowest point between Scotland and Ireland, giving a rather long overall distance from London to Dublin of 480 miles. The author's proposal may have been unrealistic, but he articulated the strategic value of establishing a railway connection:

Allowing [...] that Ireland is a separate land, with sufficient territory, trade, and population, to form a right to an independent stand amongst the nations, still it is placed by nature too contiguous to England for a separate government, with different foreign alliances, and another religion [...]. To divide is to destroy, and as we possess similar languages, natural productions, and channels of trade, so let us now overcome these few intervening miles of sea, and *make the islands one land*.²¹

Soon afterwards there were reports of a shorter connecting railway between Ireland and London via Waterford and South Wales in 1833.²² By then, the *Cambrian Quarterly* had already identified the strategic position of Wales in linking London and Dublin by railway. In 1832, it looked ahead to the construction of the London and Birmingham Railway (LBR) and its role as a spine for the whole British railway network, including the creation of a branch from it through Wales to Aberystwyth. The journal considered that such a branch would counter the generally low priority of Wales in national politics: 'half representation, half administration of justice compensated for by double abuse of church patronage – anything will do for us'.²³ The matter was an urgent one for Welsh political and economic interests because the *Cambrian Quarterly* also noted that if a railway was not built in Wales, it would soon be disadvantaged by the proposed railway link between London and Liverpool that potentially rendered Telford's Holyhead Road obsolete.²⁴ There was also a risk to Wales from Bristol as a possible rail gateway to Ireland. It was in that context that Daniel O'Connell, the effective leader of the Catholic Irish, made his first appearance within debates about railway connections between Britain and Ireland.²⁵ He identified the need for cheap food in Britain and he thought that Ireland could supply it via Bristol to London on the proposed Great Western Railway (GWR).²⁶

²¹ Henry Fairbairn, "Project for Land Communication with Ireland", *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine*. Part 1 (1832): 209-13. [My emphasis]

²² "From the Southern Reporter", *Freeman's Journal*, 19 November 1833, 4.

²³ "The London and Birmingham Railway", *The Cambrian Quarterly Magazine and Celtic Repertory*, Vol. 4, No 16 (1832): 423–432.

²⁴ The London and Birmingham Railway, *The Cambrian Quarterly* 1832.

²⁵ R. V. Comerford, O'Connell, Daniel.

²⁶ HC Deb 10 March 1834 vol. 21 c1358.

Despite these larger projects, the first practical response to the issue of a railway connection between Britain and Ireland through Wales was in north-west Wales, where railways were being developed to improve the transport of slate. The Ffestiniog Railway (FR) from Porthmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog (see Figure 2.1 below) was envisaged as part of a potential link between Dublin and London. Although it was based in Wales, the FR was funded by Irish capital, and Henry Archer from Dublin eventually ensured its success. The plans to build the FR had the approval of Robert Stephenson (son of George) a railway engineer whose influence and status its owners welcomed in 1832 - but would regret later when Stephenson was involved in the rival Chester and Holyhead Railway.²⁷ The opening of the FR in April 1836 was given relatively little coverage because by then the debate about railways in North Wales and the link to Ireland had moved on - and larger schemes attracted Robert Stephenson.²⁸ Just two months after the visit to Porthmadog, the London and Birmingham Railway (LBR) Bill – that was to be engineered by Robert Stephenson - was rejected by the House of Lords after objections from landowners.²⁹ Its intended traffic extended beyond the two cities it connected and included Ireland.³⁰ The assumption at that early stage was that Liverpool would be the port for faster rail communication with Dublin. The LBR was able to reach that port from London via the Liverpool and Manchester Railway (LMR), the Grand Junction Railway from Liverpool to Birmingham (GJR) that opened in 1838, and its own line, which had also opened by 1838.³¹ There did not then appear any need to tackle the difficulties presented by building a railway through the centre of Wales, and there was no financial incentive to do so. But the route via Liverpool was longer than the road journey to Holyhead, and the Mersey was notoriously difficult for shipping because of its tides and sandbanks. A partial solution was to open up the port of Birkenhead, across the Mersey from Liverpool, which provided a shorter rail route from London via Crewe on the GJR - and by 1841 the Chester and Birkenhead Railway (CBR) and the Crewe and Chester Railway (CCR) completed the connection between Birkenhead and London.³² But even though that shortened the route from London to the Mersey, it did not tackle the long and difficult voyage from there to Dublin.

²⁷ "Ffestiniog Railway", *North Wales Chronicle*, 14 August. 1832. 3. For Robert Stephenson see M. W. Kirby, 'Stephenson, Robert (1803–1859)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26400>, accessed 11 Sept 2016]

²⁸ "Ffestiniog [sic] Railway", *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 April 1836. 3.

²⁹ L.T.C. Rolt, *George and Robert Stephenson: The Railway Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1988), 222.

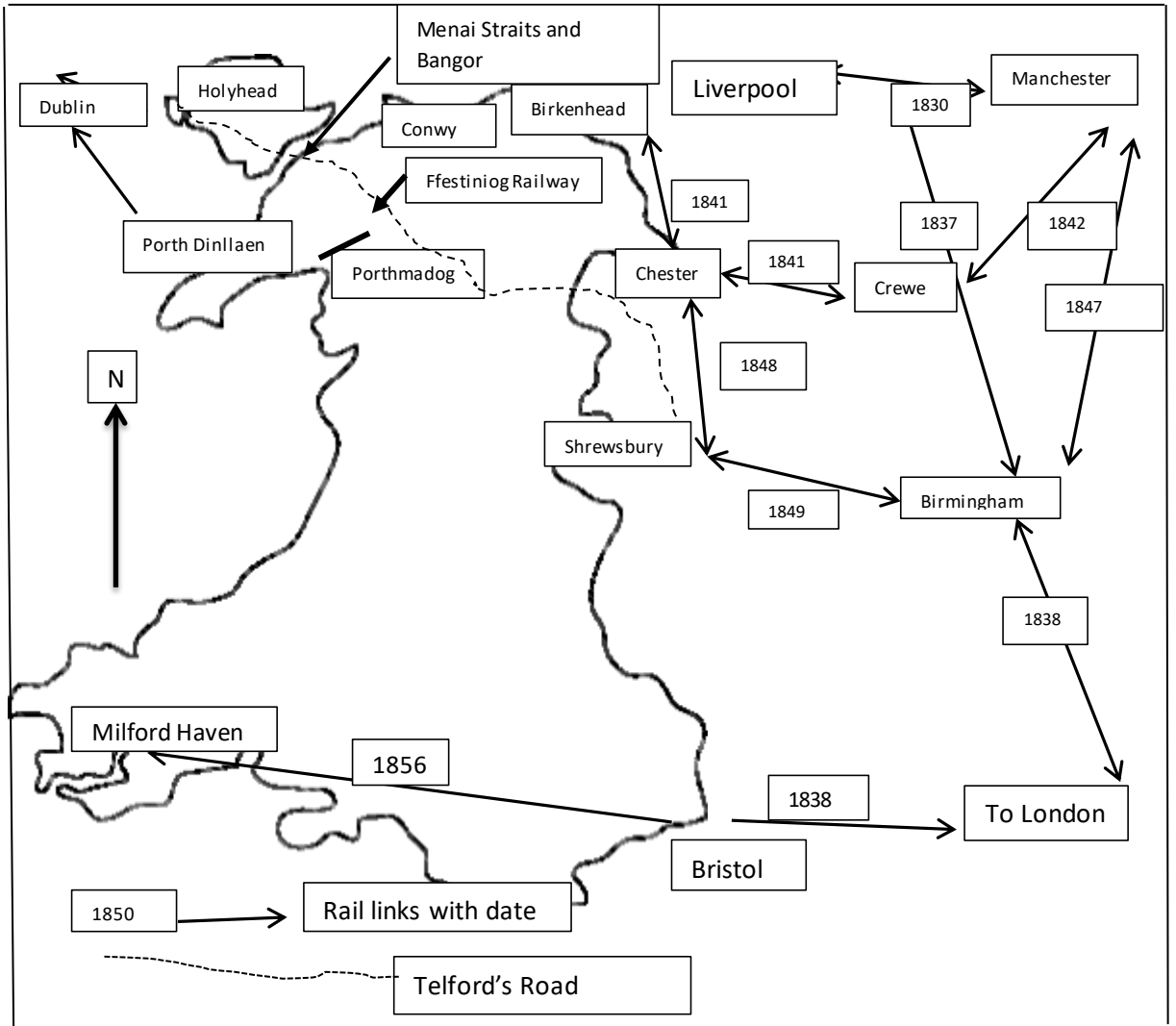
³⁰ London and Birmingham Railway, *Extracts from the Minutes of Evidence given before the Committee of the Lords on the London and Birmingham Railway Bill* (London: 1832), 33, 64 and 36.

³¹ Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, Eds. *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 187.

³² Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 30.

North Wales still offered the opportunity of a shorter sea route that avoided the Mersey if there was the will and the money to create a scheme that tackled the Welsh mountains to reach a new port, or crossed of the Menai Straits to Holyhead.

Figure 2.1: Map of early railway developments that were relevant to improved communications with Ireland from 1830



2.2 The Porth Dinllaen Railway (PDR)

Irish interests were active in the thriving North Wales slate towns and especially at Porthmadog, through the development of the FR as noted earlier.³³ The notion of Ireland as a market for slate was clear, and a port closer to Ireland than Porthmadog with a railway connection was attractive to landed interests in the north-west of North Wales. But that was a limited objective compared to making a connection from Dublin to London via Porthmadog. Henry Archer overcame the obstacles to establishing the FR, and it appears from evidence that he gave at a select committee in 1840 that it was he who then considered making Porthmadog the centre of a much larger project to connect London and Dublin.³⁴ His proposed project connected Porth Dinllaen, a west facing bay on the north-west coast of Wales (Figure 2.1 above), to the main line from Liverpool to London via Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton. In doing so, it revived an older notion of putting Porthmadog on the main road from London towards Dublin that had been defeated when Holyhead was chosen as the departure port for Dublin at the terminus of Telford's road.³⁵ Archer's proposal provided a direct challenge to the supremacy of Liverpool in the early railway age, as he outlined in a pamphlet in December 1835 that marked the formal launch of the competition to operate a rail and sea link between London to Dublin through North Wales rather than Liverpool. Archer recalled the process to the 1840 select committee when he told its members that he had been concerned about the lack of a railway in North Wales to compete with Liverpool in 1835 - the same concerns noted earlier in the *Cambrian Quarterly*. He confirmed those concerns in his conversations with Post Office officials in Dublin and concluded that North Wales needed a rival proposal to Liverpool and Birkenhead. Archer recorded his initial progress in securing support in Dublin and Caernarfonshire and that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Thomas Spring Rice. The meeting with Spring Rice thereby established the London to Dublin connection by rail as a possible element of UK state policy towards Ireland and one that it was willing to fund.³⁶

One of Archer's priorities was securing a main line railway *for Wales* as well as benefiting Ireland - a commitment to Welsh economic interests that marked out his proposal from its rivals. Archer's meeting with Spring Rice appeared to include the offer of government money from the

³³ J.I.C. Boyd, *The Festiniog Railway Volume 1* (Lingfield: Oakwood Press, 1965), 11.

³⁴ See, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Archer [Accessed 24 September 2017].

³⁵ M Ellis-Williams, *Packet to Ireland* (Caernarfon: Gwynedd Archives Service, 1984), 46.

³⁶ Third Report of the Select Committee on Private Business, 17, **1840** (503) XV.213. For Spring Rice see Ellis Archer Wasson, 'Rice, Thomas Spring, first Baron Monteagle of Brandon (1790–1866)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26179>, accessed 6 Sept 2015].

latter for railway building on the British mainland, which was an unusual development but one that was consistent with state support for construction of the Holyhead Road, which had had a similar objective. It is important to evaluate Archer's recollections because he had a vested interest in the outcome of the select committee in 1840, and may have slanted his answers accordingly. However, reference to other sources does tend to validate much of his evidence to the select committee. The report of 1832 that he relied on did note that: 'superior vessels and superior Accommodation [are] gradually inducing the public to abandon the Holyhead Line'.³⁷ Archer was also correct in reporting the meetings in Wales and Dublin and the support given for his proposals.³⁸ Records also show that Spring Rice appeared to offer financial support for Archer's proposal as the latter had claimed.³⁹

The Caernarfonshire meeting mentioned by Archer took place soon after the issue of his pamphlet early in 1836. It involved people with a clear interest in the development of a railway in North Wales, though not necessarily Archer's line. For example, Lord Newborough and Lloyd-Edwards, with widespread landed interests in North Wales, were likely to consider which part of their estates would benefit most from a railway before offering support to any particular scheme.⁴⁰ Others such as Lord Mostyn, had interests further east between Chester and Conwy and were unlikely to sustain support for the PDR if there was an alternative route closer to their estates.⁴¹ The key to their allegiance was the viability of a railway across the Menai Straits towards Holyhead.⁴² If that were possible then it opened up the prospect of a line from Chester and along the north coast of Wales, rather than via Shrewsbury or Worcester and the mountainous interior of North Wales – and that was more attractive to landowners in Anglesey and east of Bangor – see Figure 2.1 above. Other members of the group were solidly behind the line to PDR - Assheton Smith was one of the largest slate owners (and a considerable landowner) in North Wales, and the location of his quarries, adjacent to north-west coast of Caernarfonshire,

³⁷ Report from the Select Committee on Post Communication with Ireland, 1832, 1.

³⁸ Henry Archer, *A brief sketch of a proposed new line of communication between Dublin and London via Portdynllaen (Carnarvonshire,) Worcester, and Oxford, Capable of being travelled in Twelve Hours, by means of Steam Packets and Railways* (Dublin: Millikin and Sons, 1836), viii-ix.

³⁹ "Direct Communication between London and Dublin", *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 February 1836, 3.

⁴⁰ John Burke and Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain* (London: Henry Colburn, 1849), 114.

⁴¹ History of Parliament on line, "Sir Edward Lloyd Pryce" [accessed 6 September 2015] <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1790-1820/member/lloyd-sir-edward-pryce-1768-1854>

⁴² For the location of the Menai Straits see Figure 2.1 below.

ensured that he continued to advocate strongly for the PDR.⁴³ William Ormsby Gore had particular reason to support the PDR, being a landowner at either end of the proposed line, and he also had estates in Ireland.⁴⁴ He remained a strong advocate of the PDR even in the most unpromising circumstances. Griffiths Wynn completed a local triumvirate of Tory politicians, with his cousin Assheton Smith and with Ormsby Gore.⁴⁵ In the absence of those two in parliament, Wynn had taken the lead in ensuring that the Ffestiniog Railway Bill received parliamentary approval in 1832.⁴⁶ Together, they formed the political and landowning core of the PDR bid. Though local interests were at the fore, the Caernarfon meeting was aware of the need to relate the project to national concerns if it was to attract state funding. Great claims were made for it - notably that: 'any part of Ireland may be communicated with from London [...] within twenty-four hours [...] introducing into Ireland what Ireland wants [...] the capital and enterprise [and] the mind of England'.⁴⁷ Local papers did not report the presence of Daniel O'Connell at the meeting - reflecting a desire not to tarnish the image of the project in local eyes, given his high profile challenges to government before his agreement with the Whigs in 1835.⁴⁸ But he was present according to reports in Sheffield and: 'strongly enforced the necessity and utility of the project' to connect London and Dublin.⁴⁹ Thus, it is clear that O'Connell, the acknowledged leader of Irish nationalism in the 1830s, was directly involved in the campaign to create a railway link between London and Dublin via a suitable port in North Wales from the outset. That made the project into a political one and also a potential item on the joint agenda of the British government and O'Connell's Irish nationalists under the Lichfield House Compact.

⁴³ G. C. Boase, 'Smith, Thomas Assheton (1776-1858)', rev. Jean Lindsay, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25915>, [accessed 6 Sept 2015]]

⁴⁴ History of Parliament on line "William Ormsby Gore" [accessed 4 March 2014] <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/ormsby-gore-william-1779-1860>

⁴⁵ History of Parliament on line "Griffiths Wynne" [accessed 11 March 2014] <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/griffith-wynne-charles-1780-1865>

⁴⁶ History of Parliament on line "William Ormsby Gore" [Accessed 4.3.2014]

⁴⁷ "Carnarvon", *Chester Chronicle*, 15 January 1836, 3.

⁴⁸ A. H. Graham, "Lichfield House Compact", *Irish Historical Studies* (1961) Vol. 12, No. 47, 209-225.

⁴⁹ "Carnarvon Railroad", *Sheffield Independent*, 30 January 1836, 4.

2.3 The organisation of the Irish political and economic interests

The Irish counterpart of the meeting at Caernarfon that is discussed above involved rather different interests including merchants and bankers rather than landowners.

Table 2.1: Profile of key people known to have attended the Dublin meeting about the London to Dublin railway link, 22 January 1836

Name	Designation	Nature of Interest
*John Barton ⁵⁰	Gov. of Bank of Ireland,	Board of D&K Rly and Grand Canal Co
*Leland Crosthwaite	Merchant, philanthropist.	Financial supporter of O'Connell
*James Ferrier	MP	Direct Dublin Steamship Co.
Arthur Guinness ⁵¹	Brewer, bank director	Banker
*Arthur Hume	Civil servant	The Exchequer, Dublin Castle
*James Jameson	Distiller	Bank director, also Dublin Steamship Co
Daniel O'Connell	M.P.	Leader of Irish Nationalism
E.S. Ruthven ⁵²	M.P.	O'Connell supporter
W Ponsonby ⁵³	M.P. Whig with links to power and also a later pro-Irish Viceroy in 1846	MP. In 1835 Sec of State for Woods and Forests- a key dept. for railway development.
*J. Perry	Quaker, Railway Director	Banker, did much to establish Irish railways
*James Pim	Quaker, Director DKR Rly	Banker, major figure in Irish railways
*Henry Roe	Secretary to the Committee	Banker, railway director
Lalor Sheil ⁵⁴	M.P.	Linked to O'Connell and to Whigs
Arthur Morrison ⁵⁵	Lord Mayor Dublin	Philanthropist

Data from "Direct Communication between London and Dublin", *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 February 1836, 3

*those marked with asterisk are Members of the Royal Dublin Society; details on their website as per the first marked member.

⁵⁰ John Barton, <http://www.rds.ie/> [Accessed 16.3.2014].

⁵¹ "Guinness, Arthur (1768–1855)," R. G. Wilson in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/61601> accessed March 3, 2014].

⁵² History of Parliament on line s.v. "Ruthven" [accessed 4 March 2014] <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1790-1820/member/ruthven-edward-southwell-1772-1836>

⁵³ History of Parliament on line s.v. "Ponsonby" accessed 11 March 2014, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/ponsonby-john-1781-1847>

⁵⁴ History of Parliament on line s.v. "Lalor Sheil" accessed 11 March 2014, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/sheil-richard-1791-1851>

⁵⁵ Danny Parkinson, "Arthur Morrison, 1765-1837, Lord Mayor of Dublin 1835", *Dublin Historical Record* (1994), Vol. 47, No. 2, 183-186.

By far the most significant member of this group, just as in Caernarfon, was Daniel O'Connell. His attendance at both meetings was a measure of his personal political transformation in support of railways compared to what he had said in 1830:

The times are big with mighty events, [...] this is the age of improvements and invention, but not in arts and mechanics; it is not in making roads through the ocean, or constructing rail-ways, on which the passenger may travel with expedition [...] 'tis not in such [...] that people are becoming most skilled, but in the art of resistance to oppression, and in learning how to burst asunder the trammels of power and oppression...⁵⁶

By the time of the meeting in Dublin in February 1836, O'Connell supported railways and the Whig regime at Dublin Castle that was: 'alive with the mission of bringing good government to Ireland'. The Irish administration most notably involved Thomas Drummond, under-secretary for Ireland from 1835 to 1840.⁵⁷ O'Connell's perceived power was sufficient for *The Times* to refer to the: 'Government of which O'Connell is the head'.⁵⁸ The presence of a large number of members of the Royal Dublin Society (RDS), a society: 'for the promotion of literature and science, and the encouragement of agriculture, manufactures, and the arts' is of particular interest. It was a source of both strength and weakness for the consortium.⁵⁹ It brought together the banking and business community, but it had caused some political embarrassment to government by refusing membership to O'Connell and to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, while receiving state funding.⁶⁰ Despite that problem with the RDS, O'Connell and his supporters were notable attendees at the Dublin meeting to discuss the railway link to accelerate communication between London and the Irish capital.

While the Welsh attendees provided the land, the Irish contingent was clearly linked to the financial and political support of the project and may be regarded as an influential gathering of Irish economic and political interests. The degree of banking support suggests that O'Connell's later claim that the PDR consortium could commence work on the link at once with some guarantee of government underwriting was sustainable - though the link to the RDS presented a possible problem in securing state funding. The priority of the Dublin meeting was railways *for Ireland* and a link to London. The exact route through the British mainland to the capital was likely

⁵⁶ "Public Dinner to Mr O'Connell in Cork – The Union", *Freeman's Journal*, 16 October 1830, 3.

⁵⁷ Comerford, *O'Connell*.

⁵⁸ Editorial, *The Times*, 20 November 1835, 2.

⁵⁹ HC Deb 23 March 1836 vol. 32 cc533-44.

⁶⁰ HC Deb 23 March 1836 vol. 32 cc533-44.

to matter less to them than to their Caernarfon counterparts, who had a distinct landed interest. O'Connell was well aware of the potential power of the opposition, and pointed out that at Holyhead: 'a very considerable quantity of property belonging to individuals is vested in facilitating the conveyance from one country to the other [and each owner of this property] would not wish his interest to be meddled with lightly'.⁶¹ While he considered that Holyhead was not suitable for a railway, he confirmed that the Irish contingent was not wedded solely to the PDR: 'if there was speculation to make a railroad to Holyhead, and another to Portdynllaen, so much the better for Ireland'.⁶² However, O'Connell's earlier support for the GWR suggests that his sympathies may have been with the PDR that travelled towards its territory between Bristol and London, rather than a rival that linked to Birmingham and north-west England. The opposing forces at Holyhead identified by O'Connell soon gathered - attracted by the issue of government funding, and concerned about the impact of the PDR on their own financial interests in Anglesey as O'Connell had warned. In the same issue of the newspaper in which the Dublin meeting was reported, a correspondent noted that: 'the Station of Holyhead is already adapted for a vast additional intercourse without the outlay of a single penny'.⁶³ That was not the last word in defence of Holyhead.

However, with a high level and variety of support on both sides of the Irish Sea, the prospect of government funding and a head start over the opposition, the PDR seemed well placed to win the lucrative mail contract between London and Dublin that would guarantee its financial viability. It was with that support that the PDR supporters met the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Thomas Spring Rice, in March 1836 in order to put their case to government. O'Connell introduced the project to Spring Rice, and noted that the object of the meeting was to brief the chancellor on the means of reducing London to Dublin communications to twelve hours. He suggested that Holyhead should be abandoned as the port of departure for Dublin and superseded by Porth Dinllaen, where the 'largest class of vessels' could be accommodated. He dealt with the financing of the new project by pointing out that the cost of the mail contract on the PDR could be met from savings on the several routes to Ireland then in use by the Royal Mail that were funded by government, and asserted that important parties in Dublin would fund the project if those savings were committed to meeting its running costs.⁶⁴ In his response, the Chancellor confirmed that he regarded the project to connect London and Dublin more rapidly as one of great national importance that might be considered for state support to the extent that:

⁶¹ "Direct Communication between London and Dublin", *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 February 1836, 3.

⁶² "Direct Communication between London and Dublin", *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 February 1836, 3.

⁶³ "Direct Communication between London and Dublin", *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 February 1836, 3.

⁶⁴ "Direct Communication between London and Dublin", *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 February 1836, 3.

‘even so large a sum as two millions, [might not] be considered excessive’.⁶⁵ Further, in a passage that anticipated the Whig Government’s thinking in respect of Irish railways, Spring Rice urged the delegation to take a wider view of the project and include the development of railways *within Ireland* as part of their project. He had in mind something that had not been attempted in England - a railway *system* in which:

leading lines of railway should if possible, be laid out at once, the whole progress of which be carefully considered, and the extreme termini fixed on in the first instance [so that] towns and places adjacent could, by forming branch lines, not only communicate directly with [Dublin] but also with every other place along the line [thereby providing] an immense amount of public accommodation [...] at a comparatively small cost...⁶⁶

That response suggested that government was interested in the scheme as part of a policy to tackle Ireland’s economy and pacify its politics – in addition to the benefits for Wales that Henry Archer had articulated, and that were noted earlier.

There were important points in the exchange between Spring Rice and the PDR that became more significant as time progressed. O’Connell emphasised the *largest class of vessels* in his presentation and that issue featured in the later debates about the harbour because of the limitations of Holyhead that had already weakened its ability to compete with Liverpool. O’Connell also established the foundation of funding for the railway by government through the *concentration of all postal traffic into one port*, so that the savings could be used to fund a railway connection by enhancing the contract to carry the mail on the line. The exchanges show that it was Spring Rice who made the connection between the PDR and the development of railways *within* Ireland. Later critics claimed that the Irish Railway Commission (IRC) exceeded its brief by considering the line between London and Dublin alongside railway developments in Ireland. It is clear from this exchange that *the Government itself* made that connection initially – even if it did not follow it up so clearly.

2.4 The Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR)

O’Connell had suggested that the PDR supporters should expect a strong response from economic and political interests at Holyhead, and he was correct in that assessment. Within two weeks of the PDR gathering at Caernarfon (but before its meeting with Spring Rice) a meeting was called in the North Wales city of Bangor that was chaired by Sir Richard Bulkeley, an MP and a major

⁶⁵ “Direct Communication between London and Dublin”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 February 1836, 3.

⁶⁶ “Dublin and London: Direct Communication through Wales”, *Chester Chronicle*, 25 March 1836, 3.

landowner in Anglesey, and a man who will feature regularly in the analysis of the CHR.⁶⁷ Sir Richard was blunt in his assessment and determined about the response. He suggested that the main objection to the PDR was that it had sought funding from the state, and he was certain that government would not repeat the example of the Holyhead Road by funding the PDR. But he was concerned at O'Connell's hold on government and felt that the best way to counter the PDR was to present a scheme to government that was: 'more feasible and superior in every respect'.⁶⁸ He then outlined the coastal route from Chester through Conwy and Bangor to Holyhead as an alternative to the PDR. He also pointed out that a large part of that route would be completed for them by the proposals of the George's Harbour and Railway Company (GHR) whose representative was present.⁶⁹ Bulkeley's position was backed by other Anglesey landowners, for example W.O. Stanley MP, who had substantial land at Holyhead.⁷⁰ However, Mr Pym's presence on behalf of the GHR was challenged, as one attendee suggested that he should not consider that the meeting supported the idea of his railway and a new harbour at Llandudno that challenged Holyhead. Pym retreated immediately and indicated that the GHR foresaw its project only as a coal station.⁷¹ The Bangor meeting did not appear to be as influential as the earlier ones in Caernarfon and Dublin described above but it was called at short notice, and it was only a starting point for landed interests in Anglesey. The group had a common interest in significant land ownership - among prominent landowners was the Paget family of Plas Newydd in Anglesey, headed by the Marquis of Anglesey, who had been one of Wellington's most senior officers at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.⁷² He was well connected nationally, as the Duke had served as Prime Minister between 1828 and 1830 and briefly in 1834.⁷³ The Bangor group needed to build up its support in order to challenge its opponents effectively but it had members with formidable

⁶⁷ History of Parliament on line Sir Richard Bulkeley, Accessed 14 June 2015
<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/williams-bulkeley-sir-richard-1801-1875>

⁶⁸ "Public Meeting – Holyhead Harbour", *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 February 1836. Port Wrexham, Ormeshead and George's Harbour were also names for what is now Llandudno. For simplicity Llandudno will be used unless other names are used in the original documents.

⁶⁹ St George's Harbour and Railway Company, *Report and Evidence before the Select Committees of the House of Commons on Harbours of Refuge and Shipwrecks, Port Charges of Liverpool &c.* (London: Effingham Wilson 1836), 40.

⁷⁰ Wiki s.v. "Stanley", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Owen_Stanley [Accessed 25 April 2016]

⁷¹ "Public Meeting – Holyhead Harbour", *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 February 1836, 3.

⁷² History of Parliament on line, s.v. "Paget" [Accessed 2 April 2016].
<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1790-1820/member/paget-henry-william-1768-1854>

⁷³ Norman Gash, 'Wellesley, Arthur, first duke of Wellington (1769–1852)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011.
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29001>, accessed 18 July 2016]

political status. Given the potentially fragile nature of some of the support for the PDR as noted earlier, there was plenty of potential for additional growth in the power of the supporters of the Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR) consortium. That consortium was backed immediately by the Bangor-based and Tory *North Wales Chronicle*, which wanted the railway to pass through its home city and called upon the PDR to see the: ‘impracticability of that undertaking [i.e. the PDR] give up with good grace, and unite their acknowledged ability and industry with the influence now about to be exerted in favour of the further improvement of the old established channel and line of communication’ - Holyhead.⁷⁴

Table 2.2: Significant attendees at the Bangor meeting about the London to Dublin railway link, 12 February 1836

Name	Home Area	Designation	Nature of Interest
Sir Richard Bulkeley ⁷⁵	Anglesey	Landowner AC, Politician	Land
W. O. Stanley ⁷⁶	Anglesey/Chester	Landowner A/Politician	Land
Capt. Evans	Holyhead	Harbourmaster	Holyhead
J Pym	Not Known	Agent for railway company	St George’s Harbour
Capt. Carden RN ⁷⁷	Not Known	Royal Navy senior officer	Shipping
Captain Paget ⁷⁸	Anglesey,	Brother of Marquis of Anglesey. A/Politician	Land
T P Williams ⁷⁹	Craig y Don, Anglesey	A/Landowner	Land

Landowner in C= Caernarfonshire; A=Anglesey; M=Merionethshire; F=Flintshire; D-Denbighshire

Data on attendees taken from *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 February 1836, 3.

⁷⁴ “Public Meeting – Holyhead Harbour”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 February 1836, 3.

⁷⁵ <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/williams-bulkeley-sir-richard-1801-1875> [Accessed 30 April 2015].

⁷⁶ http://www.archiveswales.org.uk/anw/get_collection.php?inst_id=39&coll_id=10886&expand= [Accessed 30 April 2015].

⁷⁷ Wiki, s.v. “Carden”, accessed 16 March 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Surman_Carden.

⁷⁸ J. K. Laughton, “Paget, Sir Charles (1778–1839),” rev. Andrew Lambert, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/21104> accessed March 16, 2014].

⁷⁹ Parliament on line, s.v. Paget, accessed 16 March 2014, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/williams-thomas-peers-1795-1875>

2.5 St. Georges Harbour and Railway (GHR)

The struggle for the London to Dublin railway route was complicated by the presence of the GHR, whose representative attended the Bangor meeting discussed above and offered Llandudno as a rival port for ships to Ireland, alongside the alternatives of Holyhead and Porth Dinllaen. The origins of the GHR scheme show that the railway was not the primary consideration. There had been government concern about high shipping losses in the Irish Sea, especially ships to and from Liverpool. There was a perceived need for better harbour facilities for larger vessels than Holyhead could accommodate, and an asylum harbour in which ships could shelter in a storm. It was a logical progression from this to connect any such a harbour to the railway system and use it as a port to Ireland. The GHR apparently had powerful support - its advertised patrons being four Admirals, the Lord Mayor of London and three of the largest landowners in North Wales, including two who had already shown, directly or indirectly, support for the rival schemes - Thomas Assheton Smith for the PDR and the Marquis of Anglesey for the CHR. The third landowner mentioned in the GHR prospectus was the largest in the whole of Wales – Sir Watkins Williams Wynn, a Tory MP.⁸⁰ These apparently inconsistent patterns of support for competing schemes can be explained by the uncertainty over exactly which railways parliament would endorse and which would be built. There was a particular concern for Anglesey's landowners that it might not be possible or affordable for a railway to cross the Menai Straits.

There was also good reason to doubt the credibility and honesty of the GHR consortium. Pym's statement to the meeting at Bangor that the GHR terminus at Llandudno was a coal port was duplicitous and was contradicted in the GHR prospectus that suggested the GHR would be an asylum harbour.⁸¹ Llandudno had more significant support in the form of the Select Committee on Harbours and Refuges that sat a few months after the debate about routes had opened and concluded that Llandudno was a credible option for an asylum harbour.⁸² The GHR prospectus dismissed the CHR and PDR and mocked their respective claims that it was practical to cross the Menai Straits or the interior of Wales by rail. The alleged impracticality of the rival schemes formed the foundation of the GHR case for a line from Chester to Llandudno with a port for

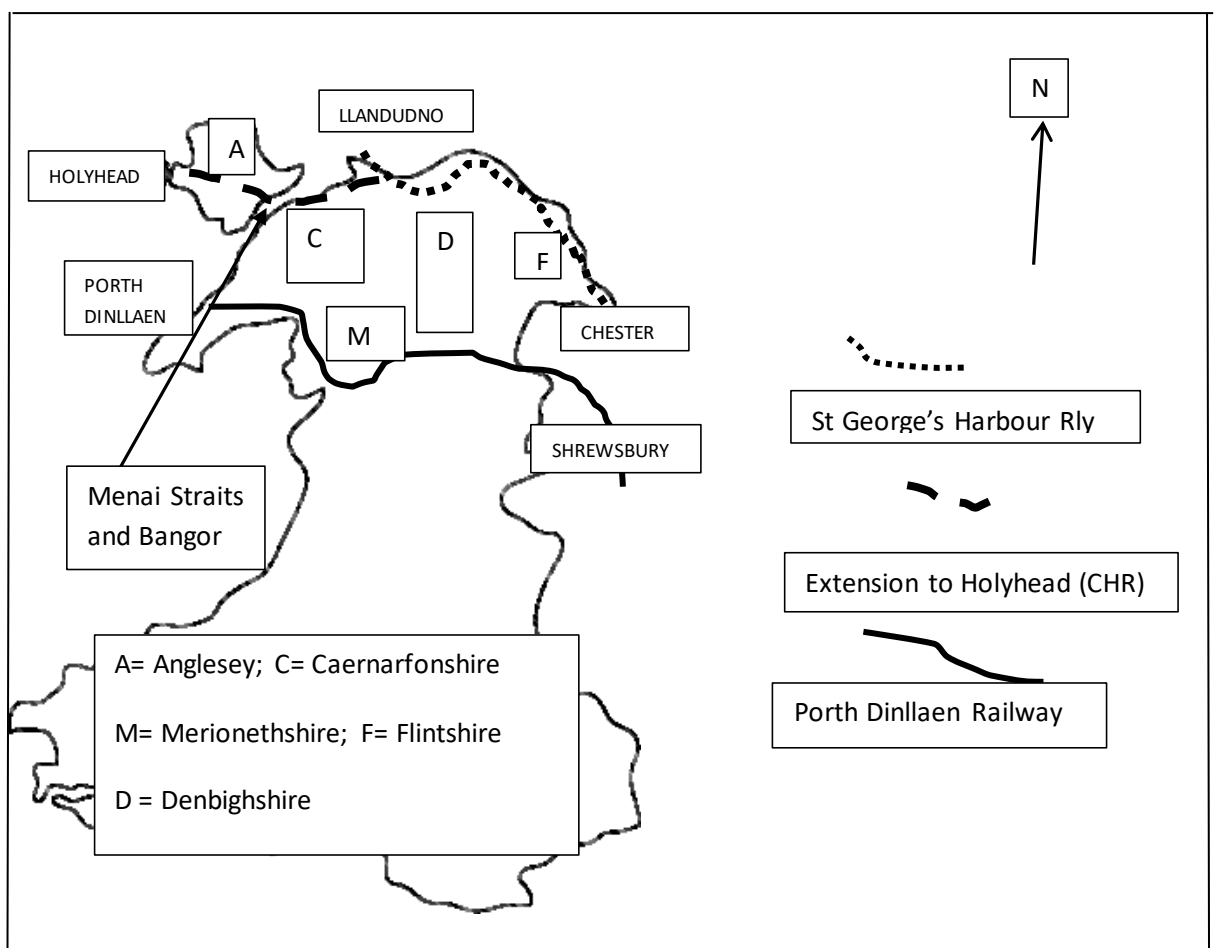
⁸⁰ Parliament on line, "Watkin Williams Wynne", accessed 16 March 2014, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/williams-wynn-sir-watkin-1772-1840>

⁸¹ St George's Harbour and Railway Company, *George's Harbour and Railway, Report and Evidence before the Select Committee* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1836), 3.

⁸² *George's Harbour and Railway, Report and Evidence*, 22.
The present day town of Llandudno was variously known as Ormeshead or Port Wrexham in the 1830s but unless it is described as such in a quotation it will be referred as Llandudno.

Ireland at the latter place.⁸³ The prospectus presented a confident argument from a consortium that appeared to have strong support for an affordable project. The directors of the GHR anticipated a favourable outcome from an enquiry into the best route between London and Dublin undertaken by a select committee chaired by Daniel O’Connell, and so they invited subscribers to deposit £2 per share to their scheme in October 1836.⁸⁴ Thus, by the end of 1836, there were three proposals for railways towards Dublin – two via Chester and one via Shrewsbury as seen in Figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2 Map showing location of counties and railways proposed for North Wales section of the London – Dublin railway link by October 1836



⁸³ George's Harbour and Railway, *Report and Evidence*, 38.

⁸⁴ George's Harbour and Railway, *Report and Evidence*, 53. [£170 at 2015 prices] <https://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/relativevalue.php> accessed 16 April 2016. [That website is used for all subsequent such calculations in the thesis]

The GHR was given a positive reception in Chester, even if it had suffered a rebuff in Bangor. In January 1837 the *Chester Chronicle* maintained that Holyhead harbour was not capable of improvement, while the PDR would have no local traffic from the sparse countryside through which it passed.⁸⁵

The GHR was a more difficult target or CHR supporters to attack than the PDR because it followed the route of the CHR without the complication and cost of crossing the Menai Straits. One approach to counter those apparent advantages of the GHR was to suggest that a railway across the Menai Straits was not actually necessary because the quality of Telford's road meant that only an extra two hours would be needed to get to Holyhead by road from a railway terminus near to the road bridge. The GHR was also vulnerable to attack because the time saved in getting to Llandudno as compared to Holyhead was lost by the extra time and cost of the longer sea crossing to Dublin from Llandudno compared to Holyhead. Unperturbed, GHR notices appeared early in 1837 outlining its intention to introduce a Bill.⁸⁶

2.6 The United Kingdom government response to the competing schemes

By the end of 1836 it had become difficult for government to avoid political involvement in the future direction of the project to reduce journey time between London and Dublin by expressing a preference for one of the three rival schemes. Spring Rice had indicated that government was interested in a scheme to accelerate communication between London and Dublin, while O'Connell's interest suggested that a rail link could be part of government's agreement with the Irish leader. The task of selecting which scheme was one for which government was apparently ill-suited in the period before the Railway Department was established in 1840. Prime Minister Lord Melbourne, for example, demonstrated distaste for the modernity that railways brought and indicated to Queen Victoria that he simply disliked them.⁸⁷ The novelty of the issues presented by railways, such as their ownership and regulation, also led to uncertainty in the minds of the politicians who had to oversee them, and could not decide between control of railways and laissez-faire economics. In practice that meant that government had no railway policy proposals until the report of the Irish Railway Commission in 1838.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ "St. George's Harbour", *Chester Chronicle*, 6 January 1837, 2.

⁸⁶ "St George's Harbour and Railway", *North Wales Chronicle* 21 February 1837, 2.

⁸⁷ L. G. Mitchell, *Lord Melbourne, 1779-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24.

⁸⁸ Henry Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 26.

O'Connell's select committee, mentioned in relation to the GHR above, had secured agreement by the House of Commons for its request for a survey of harbours at Liverpool, Porth Dinllaen and Holyhead via a Treasury Minute of 14 October 1836.⁸⁹ That showed an early success for the CHR because Thomas Spring Rice endorsed what Bulkeley had told the Bangor meeting when he made clear that there would be *no government money* forthcoming, even for a survey of railway lines and outlined its philosophical objection to such an approach. The Whig Government was by: 'no means prepared to recommend any survey of a line of railroad [...] any interposition on the part of the State, even if limited to the single object of a survey, would have a tendency of interfering with private enterprise' – but government did agree to pay for a survey of the harbours.⁹⁰ That was a remarkable change in position by the Chancellor who, just a few months earlier, had suggested that an outlay of £2 million was not excessive to secure faster access to Dublin from London. Some significant words in the Minute suggested that the progress of railway building, from London towards Birmingham and Liverpool, was sufficient for government to be confident that private capital was interested in funding a connection with Dublin, unaided by the state.⁹¹ The political change of mind appeared to be an early victory for railway lobby in parliament that opposed government involvement in railway network development.⁹² It is also possible that Spring Rice acted without authority in mentioning the possibility of state funding in the earlier meeting - he was not a strong or particularly competent minister, on his own admission.⁹³

Despite this government stance, the survey of harbours for which it paid was likely to determine the fate of the rival railway schemes because, as O'Connell had observed, the choice of harbour effectively decided the line of railway that served it.⁹⁴ When the answer from the appointed experts came back to the Lords of the Treasury on 21 February 1837, it contained an unequivocal statement in favour of Porth Dinllaen as the packet station - i.e. a port that handled the mail - and noted that its conclusion was reached *without the need for further survey*.⁹⁵ The authority of the report could not have been higher, as it was written by Sir Francis Beaufort, a

⁸⁹ Report and Survey of Harbours of Holyhead, Liverpool and Port-Dynllaen; and Correspondence, 1, 1837 (113), L.259.

⁹⁰ Report and Survey of Holyhead, 1837, 1.

⁹¹ Report and Survey of Holyhead, 1837, 1. [£170M at 2015 prices.]

⁹² Geoffrey Alderman, *The Railway Interest* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1973), 13.

⁹³ Wasson, *Rice*.

⁹⁴ "Direct Communication between London and Dublin", *North Wales Chronicle*, 2 February 1836, 3.

⁹⁵ Report and Survey of Holyhead, 1837, 2. [My emphasis]

naval hero whose achievement as a hydrographer was later 'remembered with awe'.⁹⁶ He noted that Holyhead was the best option so long as the mails were carried by road. However, if the mail switched to rail, as seemed bound to happen, then Holyhead was excluded because Beaufort thought it was impossible to take a line over the Menai Straits at a reasonable cost. Beaufort then compared Porth Dinllaen and Llandudno, both of which he thought could be reached by a railway - and concluded that the former was the better of the two.⁹⁷ Although no further survey was suggested, the Government did order one on the narrower point of Holyhead's fitness as an asylum harbour - i.e. a harbour to provide shelter for ships in a storm - as it wished to provide that as well as a packet station. The answer to that question added further weight to the case against Holyhead as Lieutenant Sheringham from the Royal Navy reported that Holyhead could *never* be considered suitable as an asylum harbour.⁹⁸

Those judgements from Beaufort and Sheringham realised the worst fears of the Holyhead supporters. The GHR was discounted because it did not deliver sufficient advantage over Liverpool to warrant the additional investment in a packet station. If there was a problem for the PDR it lay in the notion that its line had to connect to: 'the great trunk railroad now constructing from London to Liverpool'. The routes of the CHR and GHR involved a more direct connection to that trunk line (via Chester and Crewe) and thereby fulfilled a requirement of the Treasury Minute that the route should aim for railways in 'contemplation' or 'already undertaken'.⁹⁹ The reports also seemed to suggest that if a railway *were* possible to Holyhead, then that was the best harbour. The Government did not act immediately on these harbour proposals but opted instead to subsume the decision under the wider policy issue of a railway system for Ireland, as Spring Rice had hinted that they might when he met the PDR delegation in March 1836. In November 1836, the Treasury ministers had produced another official minute that established the Irish Railway Commission (IRC). That minute re-emphasised the role of private capital as outlined in the earlier Treasury Minute, and absolutely discounted Spring Rice's suggestion of public funding. It was the:

⁹⁶ J. K. Laughton, "Beaufort, Sir Francis (1774–1857)," rev. N. A. M. Rodger, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1857> accessed April 8, 2014].

⁹⁷ Royal Com. on General System of Railways in Ireland, Second Report, Appendices, Index, Atlas, Plans and Sections. 1837-38 (145) XXXV.449, Appendix A No. 3, 40.

⁹⁸ Report on Harbour of Holyhead, in pursuance of Report of Select Committee to inquire into existing Communication between London and Dublin, 1, 1837-38 (264) XLV.175.

⁹⁹ Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 29.

Duty of Government to guard against any inference that it is their intention to interfere with private enterprise, [sic] in its legitimate application to the purposes either of local or general improvement; they also feel that it should be distinctly understood that [...] no intention or pledge is either expressed or implied that works of this description should be undertaken at the public expense...¹⁰⁰

The Minute did not specify that a route from London to a port with a direct route to Ireland would be part of the remit of the Irish Railway Commission (IRC), although one section did give some grounds for pursuing this line of enquiry as it suggested that the commission should examine the means of: 'cheap, rapid and certain intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland'.¹⁰¹ However, as noted earlier, Spring Rice had urged Irish Members to work together to agree on the best lines in Ireland and avoid as much expense as possible in legal and surveying costs. He had done that in the context of his discussion with the PDR in 1835 and so had effectively put the choice of route from London to Dublin, including the choice of port, into the hands of the IRC. He had thereby made these items in the Government's Irish policy. The Government had used expert opinion to avoid a difficult decision at a time of political vulnerability because of its uncertain majority in the House of Commons and the complexity of the coalition of interests that kept it in power.¹⁰² Government handed the immediate future of the aspects of Irish policy concerned with railways, harbours and their connection to mainland Britain to the IRC, in the hope that it could chart a way forward for railways in Ireland and for the Irish economy more generally, including connecting it to mainland Britain by a rapid railway link, without creating a political storm. It was an approach that was consistent with Barry's description in chapter 1 of how government sometimes uses technical expertise to avoid difficult political decisions.¹⁰³

The apparent weakness of the Melbourne Government that replaced a brief Tory Ministry under Sir Robert Peel in 1835 turned out to be its strength. The major political groups in parliament in the years 1835-41 were Radicals to Melbourne's left, Tories to his right and the overall threat of the newly enfranchised Irish led by O'Connell. To all of these, Melbourne was 'the alternative to something worse'- a status that kept him in power until 1841.¹⁰⁴ The support of the Irish contingent was crucial to the survival of the Whig Government. O'Connell had pressed for repeal of the Union with Ireland between 1831 and 1834 but after the Lichfield House Compact of 1835 he agreed to suspend that campaign if steps were taken to produce: 'an identity

¹⁰⁰ Treasury Minute, November 1836, respecting Railroad Com. for Ireland, 1, 1837-38 (654) XLVI.481.

¹⁰¹ Treasury Minute, November 1836, respecting Railroad Com. for Ireland, 1, 1837-38 (654) XLVI.481.

¹⁰² Mitchell, *Melbourne*, 166.

¹⁰³ Andrew Barry, *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society* (London: Athlone Press, 2001), 8.

¹⁰⁴ Mitchell, *Melbourne*, 167.

of laws, an identity of institutions, and an identity of liberties [and] no distinction between Yorkshire and Carlow'.¹⁰⁵ The integration of Ireland into the UK depended in part upon the ability of Irish MPs to attend parliament regularly and deliver their votes for the Government, which generally they could not afford to do.¹⁰⁶ This may underline the interest on both sides of the Irish Sea to improve communications in 1836 that was noted earlier in this chapter. In order to meet the ambition of O'Connell in the shorter term it was possible to work through the administration at Dublin Castle and avoid the blocking power of Tories in the House of Lords. That was the approach of Lord John Russell, the Whig leader in the House of Commons, in order to secure his relationship with the O'Connell.¹⁰⁷ In particular, he appointed Thomas Drummond as Irish under-secretary to Lord Normanby. The impact was such that, for the first time, UK membership became acceptable to the Catholic population of Ireland.¹⁰⁸ The Government's policy on Ireland was not just for the benefit of the Irish, as Chancellor Spring Rice told a meeting in Cambridge in 1837: 'If there was a danger [to] this mighty empire it was to be looked to from that quarter. It was for the benefit, not of the people of Ireland alone but likewise for the people of England [...] that the Government had adopted the policy.'¹⁰⁹ The creation of the IRC showed that the policy included railways as a link with Ireland and within Ireland for its economic and social development, and crucially for its political pacification.

The IRC was led by Drummond who was an engineer by background. He supported and promoted administrative and political reforms but also wanted pragmatic and practical measures to develop Ireland and tie it more closely to the UK in support of Russell's policy of: 'integration and assimilation into the mainstream of English life'.¹¹⁰ Drummond particularly emphasised the lack of railway development in Ireland and believed that railways provided the key to the full integration of Ireland into the Union as an equal partner. He had applied his mathematical skills previously to causes such as the decisions to disenfranchise rotten boroughs in the period before the Great Reform Act of 1832 – an endeavour in which he had been extensively supported by Sir

¹⁰⁵ Peter Jupp, "8: Government, Parliament and Politics in Ireland, 1801–41," in *Parliaments, Nations, and Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660-1850*, ed. Julian Hoppit, Ucl/Neale Series on British History (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2003), 151.

¹⁰⁶ Jupp, *Government, Parliament and Politics in Ireland*, 152.

¹⁰⁷ Donal A. Kerr, *A Nation of Beggars? Priests, People, and Politics in Famine Ireland, 1846-1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 11.

¹⁰⁸ Kerr, *A Nation of Beggars*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ "Great Reform Dinner at Cambridge", *Freeman's Journal*, 28 December 1837, 4.

¹¹⁰ Kerr, *A Nation of Beggars*, 12.

Francis Beaufort whose involvement in the choice of harbour is discussed above.¹¹¹ In 1836, Drummond wished to ensure a similarly rational approach to the application of railway technology to Ireland to prevent it being 'handed over to private railway companies'.¹¹²

The Irish policy of the Tory opposition led by Sir Robert Peel was complex. Peel had been chief secretary to Ireland for six years from 1812, when he relied: 'upon penal laws and the protestant ascendancy [and] opposed every proposal for relief'.¹¹³ Nonetheless, when O'Connell was elected to the reformed House of Commons but unable to take his place because of his religion, both Peel and the Duke of Wellington reluctantly used their status to secure Catholic Emancipation in 1829.¹¹⁴ Thus, Peel's approach was generally antagonistic towards Ireland and the Irish but tempered by pragmatism. The contrasting approaches to Ireland represented by Russell and Peel were tested by the work of Drummond and the IRC, whose job it was to implement the Treasury Minute of 3 November 1836.

The issue of rapid communication between London and Dublin had thus developed quickly just ten years after Telford's state-funded road seemed to have brought it to its best possible solution. The potential of rail travel was bound to be applied to such a strategically significant route, but the decision as to exactly which route was not straightforward. The interests of landowners, major towns and cities, and of Ireland itself, were at stake and ensured that the issue was contested. Additionally, the emerging power of the railway companies was a factor to be taken into account. This chapter has examined the emergence of rivals to Liverpool as the focus of government communication with Ireland from London in the early railway age. The establishment of the IRC provided a mechanism to gather evidence on the value of railways in the development of Ireland, but it also ventured into the issue of how those railways might best connect to the network as it emerged in England and Wales. In doing so, it energised political advocacy of rival schemes, as government struggled towards its decisions. It is that process that is examined in the next chapter.

¹¹¹ John McLennan, *Memoir of Thomas Drummond R.E. F.R.A.S. Under-Secretary to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, 1835-1840* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1868), 134-161.

¹¹² McLennan, *Drummond*, 344.

¹¹³ "Peel, Sir Robert, second baronet (1788–1850)," John Prest in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1857> accessed April 8, 2014].

¹¹⁴ Prest, *Peel*.

3. The Irish Railway Commission 1836-39

*'These are imperial works, and worthy kings!'*¹

This chapter focuses on the work of the Irish Railway Commission (IRC) as an element of the Irish policy of the Whig Government of 1835-41. Railways had the potential to provide a tangible expression of the political connection between Ireland and the rest of the UK because they were faster and had more capacity than the road completed by Telford in 1826. But railways had not developed to any extent in Ireland by 1836 - so the IRC had the opportunity to learn from experience in England and create a system without the high costs and extensive legislative process that had featured there. The tension between the economic and social needs of Ireland identified by the IRC and the vested interests that supported the traditional method of constructing railways (and governing Ireland) in 1836, provide the context for the work of the IRC, and for the political contest that its proposals created that is explored in this chapter.

Nineteenth-century Irish railways have received relatively little coverage among railway historians. Freeman concentrated on English railways in 1999: 'at the expense of Wales, Scotland and even more especially, Ireland'.² In 2009, Simmons made passing reference to Ireland in *The Victorian Railway*, but only in the context of the rail link to Ireland.³ Casson's study of railway development in 2009 excluded Ireland because it is geographically separate and because he considers that the: 'factors that impinged on railway development there were very different'.⁴ An earlier study by Alderman in 1973 suggested the opposite in the example of the possible state purchase of railways in Ireland in 1873, which was opposed by British railway companies because it might establish a principle that could be applied to the whole UK network.⁵ That suggests that there were connections between British and Irish railways in the nineteenth century. Biddle and Doyle's contribution to the *Oxford Companion to British Railway History* in 1997 confirmed that by noting the extent of investment by larger English railway companies in their Irish counterparts.⁶ In a much earlier and more comprehensive 1968 study, Lee was quite specific in his assertion that

¹ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1081.

² Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 25.

³ Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), 223-4.

⁴ Mark Casson, *The World's First Railway System: Enterprise, Competition and Regulation on the Railway Network in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1.

⁵ Geoffrey Alderman, *The Railway Interest* (Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 1973), 230.

⁶ Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, eds. *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 230-1.

being part of the English investment cycle made Irish railways: 'an integral part of the English railway world'.⁷ This chapter will consider whether Casson or Lee is correct in their assessment of whether Irish railway developments were quite separate, or were an integral part of the overall UK rail network. That is an important point because it highlights whether the aim of the IRC was to connect London to Dublin via a rapid rail and sea link for political purposes, *and* to connect Ireland to the mainland railway network for the economic and social benefits it could deliver as part of the constructive Irish policy of Lord Melbourne's Whig Government of 1835-41.

There seems to have been little examination of the work of the IRC, even though Lee suggested that its main findings were 'too well known to need recounting'; and there does not seem to be a consensus about what happened to its work.⁸ Simmons and Doyle noted that its findings were 'rejected by Westminster'.⁹ Could suggested in 1990 that the IRC report was accepted by the House of Commons but rejected by the Lords.¹⁰ Casserley's 1974 outline history of Irish railways has no index entry at all for the IRC.¹¹ Collison Black regarded it in 1960 as a 'valuable survey of the whole Irish economy' – which provides an important reason for analysing the IRC report in the context of the Irish policy of the Melbourne's Government, as does Vaughan's assertion that the IRC report was a 'stupendous attainment'.¹² That might also explain why Sir Robert Peel was so determined to defeat the IRC in line with his opposition to the Whig Government policy towards Ireland and: 'in the interests of Irish self-reliance and British capital' as noted by Vignoles in 1982.¹³ This chapter analyses the IRC's report and the comments about it in the newspapers and parliamentary debates in order to consider how potentially threatening it was to contemporary laissez-faire economic interests and their political advocates, who objected to government interference such as that proposed by the IRC.

In the previous chapter it was noted that the Whig Government reached an agreement with O'Connell in return for a more constructive approach to the governance of Ireland. O'Connell was aiming for something very different than had been experienced, for example when Sir Robert

⁷ Joseph Lee "The Provision of Capital for Early Irish Railways, 1830-53", *Irish Historical Studies* (1968) Vol. 16, No. 61, 33-63.

⁸ Lee, *The Provision of Capital for Early Irish Railways*.

⁹ Simmons and Biddle, *Oxford Companion to Railway History*, 230.

¹⁰ Michael Henry Could, "The Effect of Government Policy on Railway Building in Ireland", *Transactions of the Newcomen Society* (1990) Volume 62, No. 1, 81-96.

¹¹ H. C. Casserley, *Outline of Irish Railway History* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1974), Index.

¹² W. E. Vaughan (ed) *A New History of Ireland, Volume V: Ireland under the Union 1801 -1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 208.

¹³ K.H. Vignoles, *Charles Blacker Vignoles: romantic engineer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 66.

Peel was Irish secretary as noted in chapter 2. The IRC report shows that railways and the government of Ireland were intertwined within a few years of the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830 that marked the start of the nineteenth century railway age. The reasons for the rejection of the IRC report were also important. The analysis will show that powerful economic and political interests combined to defeat the IRC report, and thereby shaped the eventual form of the London to Dublin railway link, and the nature of the connection between Ireland and the rest of the UK. Its defeat frustrated supporters of the railway to Porth Dinllaen (PDR) and encouraged those who favoured the Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR). That was not just a choice of route - the nature of support for the competing railway links broadly reflected rival views about Ireland's relationship with London, and who should benefit most from that relationship.

3.1 The work of the Irish Railway Commission (IRC)

Thomas Drummond, Irish under-secretary from 1835, was an important figure in the IRC, and was the face of Whig policy in Ireland between 1835 and 1840. He wanted the railway system in Ireland to serve a number of purposes that included immediate employment for the peasantry on railways to promote social order, and private investment that created employment for those eventually released from construction of the lines.¹⁴ The ultimate aim was to sever the connection between a significant proportion of Irish labour and the land they occupied for subsistence farming. As will become clear, the IRC identified population congestion and underemployment as vital social and economic issues in the west of Ireland seven years before those areas were struck by famine, and it offered a scheme to resolve those problems using railways. The IRC approach to railway building was similar to near contemporary developments in Belgium.¹⁵ Between 1834 and 1837 the work of state engineers Pierre Simons and Gustave De Ridder delivered the twin goals of: 'facilitating regional industrialization and positioning Belgium economically and politically within Europe'.¹⁶ The twin aims of the IRC were similar - industrial development of Ireland and securing its economic and political position *within* the UK. As in Belgium, the IRC was a political initiative to use railways within government policy – which was not consistent with how railways developed within the UK in the 1830s. That explains why it was challenged by the Tory opposition,

¹⁴ Daniel Madden, *Ireland and its Rulers since 1829* (London: T.C. Newby, 1844), 56.

¹⁵ *Second Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the manner in which Railway Communications can be most advantageously promoted in Ireland*. Minor Edition (London: Clowes and Sons, 1838), 147.

¹⁶ Greet De Block, "Land and Labour: Rails, Workers and Commuting in South-West Flanders, Belgium, 1830-1930, in Colin Divall, ed. *Cultural histories of sociabilities, spaces and mobilities* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 55.

which had reluctantly granted greater political equality to Ireland when in government in 1829 through Catholic Emancipation - but remained antagonistic to those like O'Connell, who promoted Irish interests and even repeal of the Union of 1801.

The Irish Railway Commissioners were Colonel John Fox Burgoyne of the Royal Engineers¹⁷, the mathematician Peter Barlow¹⁸ and Sir Richard Griffiths¹⁹ - but the driving force was Drummond himself. Its first appointment was Charles Vignoles as engineer, which was not an impartial selection because Vignoles had well-developed railway interests, including the Dublin and Kingstown Railway (DKR) and the Porth Dinllaen Railway (PDR) noted in Chapter 2. Unsurprisingly, his appointment was not well received by those competing with him for the right to build railways in Ireland. One furious commentator remarked that the appointment was a 'daring indiscretion' that cast doubt on the impartiality of the IRC.²⁰ The IRC therefore began its work with a strong sense that it was not sympathetic to existing railway interests and practices in England, and might be predisposed to support the PDR rather than the CHR. However, given the clear support for the PDR from Beaufort's report noted in Chapter 2, it was reasonable that the IRC should then ask its engineer to join the commission. If the Treasury Minute of 3 November 1836 had been followed to the letter by the IRC, it may not have considered the PDR at all. The appointment of Vignoles was a sign that it would, and that it would prove favourable to that London to Dublin rail route.

The IRC report was both radical and thorough. The opening sections gave a quantitative overview of Ireland - distribution of population, employment profile, and an account of imports and exports – the comprehensive survey of the whole Irish economy noted earlier by Collison Black. In order to determine its railway proposals, it gave detailed statistics on road and canal use and the amount of post carried. The IRC report used detailed data to determine the relative importance of various large towns in Ireland that might warrant connection by railway. Its approach was historical, financial, sociological, topographical, geological, scientific, mathematical and above all, political. The IRC's overall objective was to drive a government policy that would generate the process of industrialisation which it perceived had transformed the rest of the UK.

¹⁷ "Burgoyne, Sir John Fox, baronet (1782–1871)," John Sweetman in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4014> accessed April 8, 2014].

¹⁸ A. M. Clerke, "Barlow, Peter (1776–1862)," rev. Iwan Rhys Morus, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2005, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1435> accessed April 8, 2014].

¹⁹ Britannica on line, s.v. "Richard Griffiths", Accessed 7 April 2014. [<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/246100/Sir-Richard-John-Griffith-1st-Baronet>].

²⁰ George Smyth, *Railways and Public Works in Ireland, Observations upon the Report of the Irish Railway Commissioners with a Review of Failures which have already occurred under the different Government Boards and Commissions connected with Public Works in Ireland* (London: Henry Cooper, 1839), 22-3.

By contrast, it considered that the lack of industrialisation had made Ireland socially vulnerable, politically dangerous and expensive to manage. The IRC's conclusions are supported in more modern analysis of Ireland's circumstances in the 1830s and 1840s. For example, in 1972 Lane suggested that the Irish economy in the pre-famine years faced no greater problem than the large-scale redundancy of its agricultural workforce.²¹ The IRC aimed to tackle that problem by replacing the pauperised rural peasantry with a modern industrial workforce, dependent upon wages rather than subsistence crops. The IRC recorded what it saw as the urgency of the problem and argued that in the interests of national security alone, the solution could not be delayed.²² It demonstrated that the cause of pauperisation was the explosion in the Irish population which had risen from 4.2 million in 1791 to an estimated 8.5 million in 1838.²³ For the IRC, this was: 'perpetually and powerfully acting to depress [wages]'.²⁴ It did not blame the Irish people for that and exhibited a positive view of Irish labour and Irish produce, noted an increase in the quality and quantity of the latter - and that the centres of investment, production and distribution beyond Dublin were Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Belfast.²⁵ It calculated that the area bounded by Dublin and the first three named cities enclosed a third of the Irish population.²⁶ For that reason the IRC considered that the main line in the new system of railways should pass through the centre of that district, with an additional line between Dublin and Belfast for passenger traffic.²⁷ Its report provided a mass of evidence on the growth of both imports and exports and observed that Irish agricultural products flowed east and British cotton, wool, tea and coffee were the main imports to Ireland from mainland Britain. Poor Irish people apparently had little access to those products that were consumed by: 'the superior class of landholders, and the inhabitants of the towns'.²⁸

The IRC's work represented a wholly new approach to railway development in the 1830s as it deployed railways as part of an explicit government policy – a direct challenge to the laissez-faire approach to railways in England. For example, the IRC opposed the private proposal for a line

²¹ Padraig G. Lane, "The General Impact of the Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 on Counties Galway and Mayo" *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* (1972), No. 33, 44–74.

²² *Second Report Minor Edition*, 118.

²³ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 115.

²⁴ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 9.

²⁵ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 7.

²⁶ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 17.

²⁷ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 17.

²⁸ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 21.

from Dublin to Galway at £20,000 per mile that included grandiose plans for a transatlantic harbour and a total outlay of £2 million.²⁹ It demonstrated that such a line was unnecessary as it duplicated previous government investments in canals, and would not pay. The IRC also showed that the notion of replacing Liverpool and Bristol as the main ports of departure for transatlantic travel and trade was chimerical.³⁰ The IRC challenged a powerful collection of interests - landlords, lawyers, engineers and politicians - whom it felt had benefited most from railways in England - and were attempting to do so in Ireland.³¹

The IRC avoided advocating the expensive methods used by private investors to build railways in the 1830s in the UK, for example it accepted slightly steeper gradients that reduced construction costs.³² It thought railways should be built to integrate with existing road and canal facilities and thereby avoid the waste of previous investment, and be built on a scale that reflected the modest levels of traffic to be expected within a developing economy.³³ As an example, the IRC differed from privately promoted proposals by suggesting that Killarney did not warrant its own railway line in 1838. It considered that passengers could travel by road from the new railway to Killarney because the IRC line to Cork passed so close to the town.³⁴ At the heart of this 'combined system' was the use of branch lines rather than separate direct lines, and the IRC illustrated the difference by providing a table that compared its work to that of the 'Kilkenny system' for south-east Ireland as offered by private promoters. The IRC adopted an approach that was systematic, logical, and focused on gaining the best results *for Ireland* rather than the best returns for shareholders of individual companies. That was a radical approach in 1838 and a serious challenge to those developing railways in the rest of the UK. The IRC promoted a *policy* for railway building in part of the UK that could be applied more widely - which suggests that Parris's 1965 view that the Whigs had no railway policy in the 1830s should be modified.³⁵ The impact of applying this rational approach to railway construction may be seen by the reduction in the total length of railway lines that would have resulted from the IRC's approach.

²⁹ "Railway proposed from Dublin to Galway, to form a line of communication between the Irish Sea and the Atlantic Ocean", *Liverpool Mercury*, 9 October 1835, 2. [£1.8M at 2015 prices]

³⁰ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 100.

³¹ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 86.

³² *Second Report Minor Edition*, 56.

³³ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 59.

³⁴ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 107.

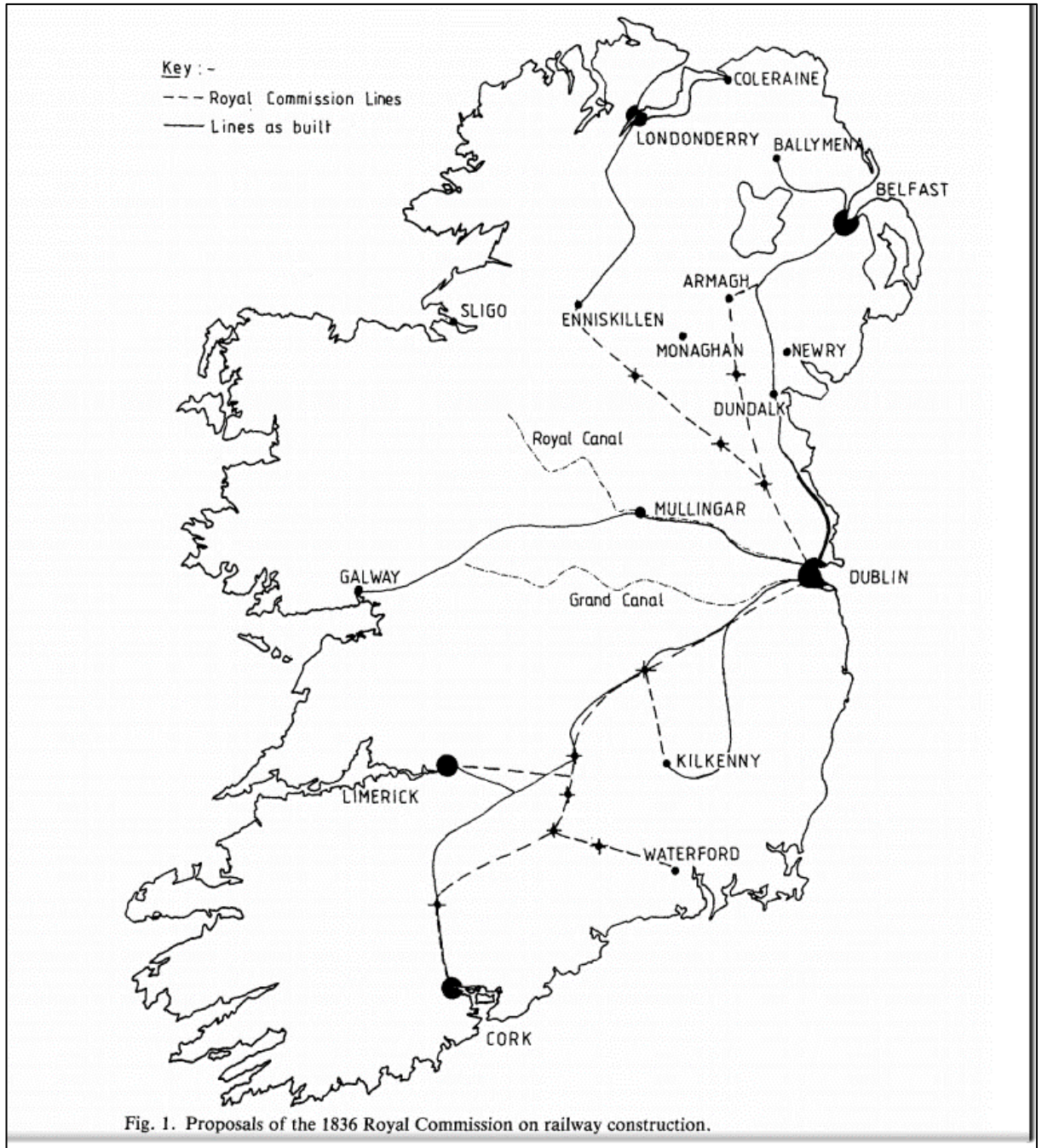
³⁵ Henry Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1965), 25.

Table 3.1: Comparison of the IRC route mileages and those of lines proposed by joint stock companies in Ireland 1838

IRC System	Distances common to more than one place (miles. furlongs)	Miles of railway required to be made (miles. furlongs)
Dublin by Maryborough to Cork	166. 5	166. 5
Dublin to Limerick	125. 4	35. 6
Dublin to Waterford	141. 2	37
Dublin to Kilkenny	79	26. 4
Limerick to Waterford	73	13
Totals	585. 3	278. 7
Kilkenny System		
Dublin to Kilkenny	73. 4	73. 4
Dublin by Kilkenny to Cork	170. 5	97. 1
Dublin by Sallins and Roscrea to Limerick	112	94
Dublin to Waterford	139	32
Limerick to Waterford	73	41
Totals	568. 7	337. 5

Source: Second Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the manner in which Railway Communications can be most advantageously promoted in Ireland. Minor Edition (London: Clowes and Sons, 1838), 59.

Figure 3.1 Proposals of the Irish Railway Commissioners and lines as built in Ireland



Map copied from Michael Henry Could, "The Effect of Government Policy on Railway Building in Ireland" *Transactions of the Newcomen Society*, Volume 62, Issue 1, 1990, 81-96.

The IRC admitted that its lines required an extra 16.5 miles travel to reach all the destinations on the Kilkenny system when compared to the use of the privately promoted lines. However, its approach involved the construction of around 58 fewer miles of railway which, at the earlier Galway line estimate of £20,000 per mile saved £1 million.³⁶ The point is well illustrated in Figure

³⁶ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 60. [A saving of £89M at 2015 prices]

3.1 by noting how much longer the Dublin to Kilkenny line is when compared to the short branch from the IRC's main Dublin to Cork line. The respective amounts of railway building to connect Kilkenny to Dublin are 26.4 miles under the IRC proposals and 73.4 miles under the private proposal (Table 3.1). The IRC summarised its approach in the report, indicating that they wished to achieve: 'the greatest amount of accommodation at the least expense of construction and maintenance'.³⁷ The IRC proposals are similar to the 'main line with branches' approach suggested by Casson as the 'general solution' in his model of a rational British railway system.³⁸ Drummond's approach, though logical, challenged railway practice that was to connect each place separately by the most direct route. The latter practice had high level support, most notably from Sir Robert Peel, who continued to advocate 'direct lines'.³⁹ Peel and other advocates of laissez-faire economics constituted a powerful source of opposition to the work of the IRC – which if established in Ireland might have threatened the freedom of private capital investment in railways in the rest of the UK.

The IRC report addressed and calculated almost every aspect of railway operation and no evidence emerged in the course of this research that any other person or group with a senior role in railway development had done anything similar in the 1830s. Parris suggests that there was 'no systematic public enquiry' before the creation of the Railway Department in 1845, which appears to ignore the work of the IRC.⁴⁰ The IRC provided a blueprint for extending railways beyond the largest conurbations in a manner that enabled them to develop local economies without imposing costs associated with what the IRC called the practice of: 'aiming at a degree of perfection [which] can only be repaid on a line of very extensive traffic'.⁴¹ The IRC proposals were in stark contrast to the: 'monuments to empire and testaments to personal engineering skill' on the English system noted by Casson.⁴²

The Commission reserved its most damning criticism for the promoters, financiers, lawyers, landowners and parliamentarians associated with railway development, whom it considered had hampered railway development in Ireland. According to the IRC, those interests were the greatest source of unnecessary cost. It was particularly critical of over-optimistic cost

³⁷ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 59.

³⁸ Casson, *World's First Railway*, 73.

³⁹ HC Deb 20 March 1845 vol. 78 c1231.

⁴⁰ Parris, *Government and the Railways*, 12. He may be referring here to the subject of foreign railways, but this was covered in the IRC report.

⁴¹ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 83.

⁴² Casson, *The World's First Railway System*, 25.

estimates - and singled out the powerful London and Birmingham Railway (LBR) for having far exceeded its estimated costs of construction.⁴³ The IRC seemed remarkably unconcerned about vested economic and political interests when it attacked existing railway construction practice in the UK.⁴⁴ It did not consider that the approach to railway development in England, driven by the private sector, could be applied in Ireland if the latter was to have a viable railway network: 'We have no hesitation in stating that if these great and absorbing expenses cannot be avoided in Ireland, there is but little prospect of a general Railway system being attended with either private or national advantage.'⁴⁵ A reasonable conclusion from analysing its report is that the IRC was more concerned with the latter advantage for Ireland than the former.

3.2 The IRC approach to railway management and regulation

The most controversial and challenging policy suggestion of the IRC was that oversight of the Irish railway system should be a responsibility of the state. The IRC went further and threatened private railway investment by its suggestion that its methods in Ireland should apply generally in the UK because:

The essential difference between railways and any other description of public works has been overlooked, and that power and privileges have been conceded to private companies, which should be exercised only under the direct authority of the State or under regulations enforced by effective superintendence and control...⁴⁶

There had been concern about the economic power of railways in 1836 when James Morrison, a prominent critic, spoke in parliament on the subject and received support from others - including the Duke of Wellington - although Sir Robert Peel opposed them and no effective action was taken.⁴⁷ No evidence was found that showed that any other official case was made to parliament for the exercise of state control over railways as early as 1838. The IRC proposal for such a scheme in Ireland suggested an effective approach to many of the known abuses of power by railway companies at that time. The IRC went further, and proposed state funding and the potential for

⁴³ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 84.

⁴⁴ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 85-6.

⁴⁵ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 86.

⁴⁶ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 139.

⁴⁷ Parris, *Government and Railways*, 22-3. For Morrison see Charles Jones, 'Morrison, James (1789–1857)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19326>, accessed 12 Sept 2016]

powerful local control by authorities *within* Ireland.⁴⁸ That was a direct challenge to the principles of laissez-faire economics that left railway development to private capital and allowed that capital to reap its rewards. It also had echoes of the scheme to build railways in Belgium as part of a nation-building exercise noted earlier. The IRC opposition to private control of railways was such that in Ireland it considered that even railways built with private capital should be managed by the state.⁴⁹ Behind that approach was the radical notion that railways should be created and managed as a *single system* in Ireland - not as a series of independent operations as applied in England.⁵⁰ The IRC proposed railways as: 'one interest, and under one management and control, [and] treated according to the same principle, and considered as one concern'.⁵¹ Casson ascribes a similar but less radical approach to the later Board of Trade Railway Committee in 1845.⁵² Bagwell maintained in 1988 that viewing railway developments in the context of the whole system was a notion that originated with Gladstone in 1844.⁵³ Neither of them acknowledges that the IRC had reached that conclusion by 1838 as part of a radical policy for railways to deliver economic advance in Ireland - and to transform railway policy in the rest of the UK. The IRC was clear that whoever funded the system, it should be relieved of major development and construction costs. The act of parliament should be free, land compensation charges should be fixed, legal costs should be remitted and a competent body should be created to manage changes to railway acts without further expensive recourse to parliament whose committees, when faced with a complex railway issue were not: 'competent to examine or decide upon it' in the opinion of the IRC.⁵⁴ In the 1830s parliament had acted as an umpire in a contest between private parties rather than being 'the guardian of the public interest'.⁵⁵ That assessment of this period by Parris would have been even stronger with an acknowledgement of the detailed work of the IRC and its proposals to address many of the weaknesses in railway administration and development that he identified. In

⁴⁸ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 138.

⁴⁹ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 138.

⁵⁰ They illustrated this point with an attack on the two largest companies in England, the Grand Junction and the London and Birmingham, and the huge inconvenience they created for the public by their unwillingness to co-ordinate their services at Birmingham. *Second Report Minor Edition*, 141.

⁵¹ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 137.

⁵² Casson, *World's First Railway*, 27.

⁵³ Philip S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1988), 160.

⁵⁴ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 141. The Commissioners were confident of the support of landowners because the Irish Poor Law of 1838 placed a financial burden that railways might relieve through the creation of employment, both directly and indirectly.

⁵⁵ Parris, *Government and the Railways*, 21.

its conclusion the IRC assessed the future consequences of ignoring its suggestions for a wholesale change in railway policy in the UK:

We believe that railway travelling will continue to maintain a superiority over that which it has superseded; but there is reason to fear that it will be far below what the country might have derived under better regulations; when this is perceived and understood, the satisfaction which is now felt will give way to discontent and complaint, and retrospective legislation will supply but a partial and imperfect remedy...⁵⁶

The IRC report challenged many of the practices and assumptions that had emerged in the early years of railway building. Its report offered a radical railway policy to be applied to a country whose rule had caused many problems to the London government. The IRC had taken the initial interest in a London to Dublin railway and sea link and developed it into comprehensive proposal that took railways beyond Dublin so that they served the Irish economy – tackling the economic under-development and over-population that were the portents of a serious social and economic problem in Ireland. In doing so, the IRC presented a challenge to powerful political and economic interests, which then ensured that its work was challenged very strongly.

However, the IRC itself did not strengthen its cause by some of its own actions. For example, the decision to include details of the Porth Dinllaen Railway (PDR) from London towards Dublin in the IRC report provided political ammunition for its opponents. The Treasury Minute of November 1836 had specified that the work of the IRC covered railways in Ireland rather than railways between Ireland and London.⁵⁷ However, the Minute had arisen in part from the need to resolve the controversy over the best route towards Dublin from London. Chancellor Spring Rice had given some scope to extend that remit in his comments to the delegation in 1836 when he made a connection between the link with Dublin and a system of railways for the whole of Ireland, as discussed in chapter 2.⁵⁸

There is evidence that Vignoles attempted to apply some of the philosophy of the IRC to the PDR route to London that was included as an appendix in the IRC report.⁵⁹ He suggested that if public money was to be spent on the line then there was some requirement to provide benefits to areas such as the remote parts of North Wales that would not otherwise be served by

⁵⁶ *Second Report Minor Edition*, 142.

⁵⁷ Treasury Minute, November 1836, respecting Railroad Com. for Ireland, 1, 1837-38 (654) XLVI.481.

⁵⁸ "Dublin and London: Direct Communication through Wales", *Chester Chronicle*, 25 March 1836,3.

⁵⁹ Second report of the commissioners appointed to consider and recommend a general system of railways for Ireland 1837-38, 42 [145] XXXV 449, Appendix A, No 3.

railways.⁶⁰ Similarly, he adopted the approach of the IRC to North Wales by limiting expense through accepting steeper gradients, suggesting a single line with passing points initially and thereby reckoning to save £5000 per mile on the connecting line from Porth Dinllaen to London.⁶¹ He was; however, clear that the main purpose of the PDR was to enable rapid communication between London and Dublin, and he calculated that it would save an hour in the overall time of the journey compared to the CHR. That enabled letters to be answered on the same day they were received, which he considered to be the main purpose of the PDR and its rival. If that could not be accomplished: ‘the packets might as well sail from Liverpool’ in Vignoles’ view.⁶² The inclusion of Vignoles’ proposals for the PDR within the IRC report ensured that the IRC approach was comprehensive - because Ireland needed both an *internal* system of railways and an *external* connection to the emerging railway network of the UK. Without that, the IRC proposals would not have provided maximum benefit to Ireland, or supported Irish political and economic integration within the UK. It was an approach that was entirely consistent with the Whig Government policy for Ireland of making Ireland indistinct from other parts of the UK.

Although the IRC attempted to be even-handed in its comments, the fact that its report included extensive details of the PDR but relatively little on the CHR, showed probable support for the PDR. It is no surprise that an opponent of the IRC, George Lewis Smyth, published material that pointed out, in colourful language and with some justification, the ‘pertinacious contumacy’ of the way the IRC had drifted from its remit so that: ‘Commissioners appointed to report how Railway communications might best be promoted *in Ireland*, also allowed themselves to report how Railways may best be carried *across Wales*’.⁶³ The IRC did have Beaufort’s unequivocal support for the PDR as an argument against Smyth’s comments, but the IRC was still tainted by a sense that it had not been even-handed. Vignoles did partially contradict those assertions when he declined to give any opinion on the relative merits of the PDR and its rivals – noting that the: ‘reflections which arise are of the highest order but are to be embodied in language by the statesman, rather than by the engineer’ – in other word it was a political rather than a technological judgement. But the fact remained that there were details of his scheme to link to London in the IRC report and not as much on those of his rivals.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Second report of the commissioners, Appendix A, 42,

⁶¹ Second report of the commissioners, Appendix A, 44.

⁶² Second report of the commissioners, Appendix A, No 3, 41.

⁶³ George Lewis Smyth, *Railways and Public Works in Ireland: Observations on the report of the Irish Railway Commissions* (London: Henry Hooper, 1839), 20.

⁶⁴ Second report of the commissioners, Appendix A, No 3, 44.

The IRC logic was clear - Ireland should be an integral part of the UK and its proposed railway system needed the best possible connection to the UK and its capital. The purpose of such a connection was entirely in line with the policy endorsed by O'Connell and the Whigs of removing all difference between Ireland and the rest of the UK. The report showed that larger purpose clearly in an important passage:

Connected as they are by the same laws and identified in interests, any proposal to *cement this union*, by drawing their inhabitants closer together [...] claims general attention, and if it is calculated to promote that end, should command general support.⁶⁵

The elements of the report that prevented 'general support' were its challenges to powerful economic interests that supported a laissez-faire approach to railway construction and to the development of the Irish economy, and to political supporters of that approach who also resented the Whigs' more generous treatment of Ireland in the years 1835-41.

3.3 The Irish Railway Commission report in the press and parliament 1838-39

The IRC report was a significant contribution to the debate about railways which Parris shows were in 'crisis' in 1836 when the IRC was established.⁶⁶ Morrison had delivered a measured and incisive speech that identified the issue that the IRC later addressed in its report - the danger of conferring:

Peculiar power and privileges on the subscribers to the joint stock companies that owned the railways [that allowed an] incommunicable privilege and a substantial monopoly [to railway owners, while the measures to control them were] singularly ill-fitted for the attainment of their professed object.⁶⁷

That language reflected Drummond's later assertion that: 'property has its duties as well as its rights'.⁶⁸ Morrison proposed regulation, while the IRC proposed state ownership and

⁶⁵ Second report of the commissioners appointed to consider and recommend a general system of railways for Ireland, 92, 1837-38 (145) XXXV.449.

⁶⁶ Parris, *Government and the Railways*, 25.

⁶⁷ HC Deb 17 May 1836 vol. 33 cc977-94.

⁶⁸ "Drummond, Thomas (1797–1840)," Stanley H. Palmer in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8084> accessed May 31, 2014].

management, as parliament sought to resolve the: ‘dilemma of finding some formula which would curb the abuse of commercial power without disturbing the sanctity of private property’, identified by Dyos and Aldcroft.⁶⁹ The suggestion from the IRC appeared to have been the first official advocacy of state control of railways in the UK and it is significant because the IRC actually induced government to propose legislation to that effect for the first time. The Railway Department prepared reports in 1845 that took into account commercial, industrial and landed interests and were much praised by Casson as already noted. However, those reports took rather less account of the needs of the wider populace, and especially the poor, compared to those of the IRC.⁷⁰ An exception is the Railway Department report on the South of Ireland, which admitted to a heavy dependence on the work of the IRC.⁷¹ Those reports did not go so far, and were not so comprehensive, as that of the IRC. The IRC report challenges Simmons’ 1978 assertion that in railway policy ‘no Whig’ made any mark in that field.⁷² Arguably, the Whig IRC made *too much* of a mark too early in the debate on railway policy, and created such fierce opposition that the railway policy that it proposed was rejected.

Drummond’s wife anticipated the extent and the source of opposition to the IRC report in an undated letter to her mother-in-law about the ‘horrid Railroad Report’. She feared that its authors: ‘will be assailed with all sorts of abuse, as they bear rather hard on the private railroad companies’ - and she was right.⁷³ Some of the initial criticism was unexpected, such as that of Daniel O’Connell, who took particular exception to: ‘half a page of puff – plain and palpable puff – on the Provincial Bank’, perhaps for its strong links to government and its competition with his own Irish bank.⁷⁴ O’Connell may also have thought that any support from him for the IRC might inhibit the report’s acceptance by Peel and the opposition, as it might be seen as another example of government trying to placate him.⁷⁵ By March 1839, O’Connell was more concerned that any negative comments from him could harm the overall prospects for Irish railways, so he retracted

⁶⁹ H J Dyos and D H Aldcroft, *British Transport: An Economic Survey from the Seventeenth Century to the Twentieth* (London: Pelican, 1974), 141.

⁷⁰ For example, Railways. Report of the Railway Department of the Board of Trade on the schemes for extending railway communication in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. 1845 (88) XXXIX.345

⁷¹ Report of the Railway Department on the schemes for extending railway communication in the south of Ireland, 1845; (154) XXXIX.435, 1.

⁷² Jack Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales, 1830-1914, Volume 1 The System and its Working* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 53.

⁷³ Maria Drummond undated letter to Mrs Drummond, quoted in McLennan, *Drummond*, 413.

⁷⁴ Comerford, O’Connell.

⁷⁵ *The Times*, 27 March 1839 – job or jobbery meant “the practice of using a public office or position of trust for one’s own gain” <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/jobbery> accessed 3.6.2014.

his initial criticisms.⁷⁶ The nationalist *Freeman's Journal* also considered that the IRC report contained 'many suggestions well worthy of adoption'.⁷⁷ Not all Irish papers supported the IRC, and the Tory *Dublin Evening Mail* preferred to focus on what it considered to be a corrupt arrangement to give all the work on the proposed lines to Mr Pierce Mahoney, a Whig supporter in Ireland. It discovered an early copy of the IRC report that had mistakenly included his name as the contractor - even before the schemes were approved.⁷⁸ There was considerable embarrassment in government when this point was raised in parliament.⁷⁹ It was another example of the political indiscretions of the IRC that tended to undermine its good work and give its opponents ample material to weaken its powerful focus on the needs of Ireland.

Those weaknesses were exploited by opponents of the IRC approach such as *The Times*, which maintained its opposition throughout the last quarter of 1838. The paper particularly objected to state funding of railways to create a system rather than a collection of privately - funded lines.⁸⁰ *The Times* did not confine its criticism to the reports proposals but also attacked its principal author Thomas Drummond personally.⁸¹ That was a continuation of its resentment of the approach the Whigs had taken in Ireland and particularly the work of Drummond, who had refused the use of the police to collect tithes, taxes paid to the official Anglican Church which the majority did not attend.⁸² Thus, the attacks on the IRC were part of a more general opposition to the Whig approach to government in Ireland from 1835, which had challenged the Irish landowners and the established Irish church. In December 1838, *The Times* continued its objection to government investment in Irish railways but found the IRC comments on the need for general regulation of railways useful and interesting. The paper couldn't help noting with satisfaction that the problems of railway coordination at Birmingham (highlighted by the IRC) were resolved - to show how responsive private railways could be. But the paper stayed firm in its anti-Irish conclusion that the IRC report was: 'the most barefaced attempt at an unprincipled job ever perpetrated, even in Ireland'.⁸³ *The Times* stance seemed to reflect a wider view from powerful economic interests such as those in Manchester, the capital of English manufacturing

⁷⁶ "Mr O'Connell at Cork - Irish Railways", *Freeman's Journal*, 14 November 1838, 3.

⁷⁷ "Railways in Ireland", *Freeman's Journal*, 28, March 1838, 2.

⁷⁸ "The Railway Report", *Dublin Evening Mail*, 20 August 1838, 4.

⁷⁹ HC Deb 03 August 1838 vol. 44 cc978-9.

⁸⁰ Leading Article, *The Times*, 20 October 1839, 4.

⁸¹ Leading Article, *The Times*, 15 November 1839, 4.

⁸² Leading Article, "Ireland", *The Times*, 1 October 1838, 3.

⁸³ Leading Article, *The Times*, 11 December 1838, 4.

districts and home of laissez-faire economics, where the *Manchester Guardian* noted its 'unqualified dissent and opposition' to the proposals of the IRC.⁸⁴

Supporters of the IRC and the Whigs' Irish policies responded on its behalf. The *Morning Chronicle* was favourable, and particularly emphasised the political context of the report and its generous references to Ireland. Nonetheless, opposition to the IRC report increased steadily so that in December 1838 there was a meeting between Lord Morpeth, the Secretary for Ireland (to whom Drummond reported) and the General Railway Committee of Ireland (GRC), an association of private railway interests.⁸⁵ Among its members were Thomas Bermingham (promoter of the Galway line which the IRC had rejected) and G. A. Hamilton, who had stood against Daniel O'Connell at the Dublin election of 1835 – so its opposition to the IRC was no surprise.⁸⁶ The GRC considered that its members had invested in schemes that had been dismissed by the IRC and they argued that private investment should prevail against the logic of the IRC report and especially its advocacy of state funding for railways.⁸⁷ However, closer examination of the GRC report revealed that this group, like the IRC, wanted public funding for its projects. The GRC thought there was 'every reason in justice and policy' to extend public aid to private Irish railways and offered £1 million of additional private investment in return.⁸⁸ In spite of that offer, the meeting with Lord Morpeth was not successful for the GRC, and the deputation concluded that the scheme for building railways in Ireland at public expense had been abandoned.⁸⁹ The Government responded slowly to the IRC report, which suggested some discomfort on its part with its proposals. It was also concerned about how the scheme might be funded, and briefly considered a suggestion from Drummond that money from the tithes charged by the established church in Ireland, a tax that was hated by the Catholic majority, might be used. That was too radical a proposal and was eventually rejected by government.⁹⁰ However, having also rejected

⁸⁴ "Second Report of the Irish Railway Commissioners", *Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1838, 3.

⁸⁵ The General Railway Committee (GRC), *First Report and Proceedings* (Dublin: William Warren, 1838). For Morpeth see Ian Machin, 'Howard, George William Frederick, seventh earl of Carlisle (1802–1864)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13902>, accessed 12 Sept 2016]

⁸⁶ G. C. Boase, "Hamilton, George Alexander (1802–1871)," rev. David W. Miller, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2009, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12071> accessed May 14, 2014]. He lost the vote, but subsequently removed O'Connell on a petition to parliament.

⁸⁷ GRC, *Report and Proceedings*, 6.

⁸⁸ GRC, *Report and Proceedings*, 20. [£81.2M at 2015 prices]

⁸⁹ *The Times*, "Irish Railways", 12 December 1838, 5.

⁹⁰ R.D. Collison Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 192.

the offer from the GRC to take forward railways in Ireland by conventional methods, the Government needed to resolve the continuing uncertainty and maintain the support of Irish members - and especially Daniel O'Connell - on which it depended.

Morpeth eventually committed government to support Drummond and the IRC and early in 1839 gave notice of his intention to request £2.5 million from parliament to implement part of the IRC report - the line from Dublin to Cork that formed the spine of the IRC system.⁹¹ The debate about the report divided opinion on important issues of Irish policy and the overall management and regulation of railways. Thus, the parliamentary debate of 1 March 1839, though unremarked by historians of railway regulation such as Parris, was an important test of principle that attracted contributions from senior political figures. The debate on the IRC report was also a test of the Government's Irish policy because it faced accusations that its approach was driven by Daniel O'Connell, and was: 'one species of justice to this country, and another [...] for Ireland'.⁹² O'Connell insisted rather unconvincingly that he had not been consulted in any way by government.⁹³ That was not an easy case for him to make because Drummond worked so closely with O'Connell and was reported in 1835 as spending: 'two or three hours daily in close conference with Mr Drummond'.⁹⁴ Lord John Russell - home secretary with overall responsibility for the government of Ireland⁹⁵ - then defended the Government's approach, the integrity of the IRC and especially of Drummond: 'whose scientific attainments, whatever might be his politics, would not be denied'.⁹⁶ That comment suggested that Russell thought that Drummond's political approach to the IRC report made the government vulnerable to accusations of malpractice. Another MP reinforced the attack on Drummond when he queried why the role of private enterprise had been emphasised in the original remit of the IRC, but was then omitted when IRC was renewed after the death of the king in 1837 – a point that embarrassed Russell who confessed that he could not answer that question.⁹⁷ It was a further example of the way the IRC had tended to follow its own agenda without much reference to the wishes of government in London, an approach that gave opponents the opportunity to taint them with allegations of favouritism towards Ireland.

⁹¹ £198.4M at 2015 prices

⁹² HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1056.

⁹³ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1057.

⁹⁴ W. J. Fitzpatrick, *The Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell: The Liberator* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1888), 43.

⁹⁵ Prest, *Russell*.

⁹⁶ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1058.

⁹⁷ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1060.

There was also a sense that the Government was rather half-hearted about its support for the IRC, as when Morpeth admitted that he had only been able to grant ‘the gleanings of scanty leisure’ to reading the IRC report.⁹⁸ With regard to O’Connell, Morpeth noted the latter’s initial opposition to the report, which he considered to be an adequate answer to claims that the report was done at O’Connell’s bidding. He suggested rather optimistically that the report had become more popular since its publication, and particularly noted the support of the Irish peers who submitted a Loyal Address to the Queen in support of the IRC. For Morpeth, there was sufficient cause for the Government to accept the IRC report as: ‘sound and just, and proper and politic’, though he seemed uncomfortably aware that the IRC had drifted a long way from the principles of laissez-faire economics.⁹⁹ He took comfort from the way railways had developed in Europe and especially in Belgium, where a similar approach to that of the IRC had been taken.¹⁰⁰ That was a potentially controversial comparison in the eyes of supporters of Union with Ireland, given that Belgium had acquired independence from Holland in 1830 - and had used railways to show that they could survive without Dutch oversight and finance, as noted by Revill.¹⁰¹ Morpeth then committed government to constructing the Dublin to Cork line with branches to Limerick and Clonmel, and a state investment of £2.5 million. Morpeth appeared to warm in his support for the IRC as his speech concluded, so that he closed with an indictment of the self-interested motives of private companies as stated by the IRC.¹⁰² Morpeth also hinted at a wider Irish policy of pacification of Ireland and its integration within the UK of which the proposals of the IRC were an important part. In doing so he quoted the poet Alexander Pope’s words in support of munificent public spending for a good cause:

*Back to his bounds, the subject sea command,
And roll obedient rivers through the land,
These honours peace to happy Britain brings;
These are imperial works, and worthy kings!*¹⁰³

⁹⁸ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1061.

⁹⁹ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 cc1061-3.

¹⁰⁰ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1068-72.

¹⁰¹ George Revill, *Railway* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 91-92.

¹⁰² HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1080.

¹⁰³ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1081. Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was an English poet. These words are from the poem *An Epistle to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington*. It addresses, ‘what are the proper objects of Magnificence, and a proper field for the expense of great men [...] the great and public works which

In contrast to the rather ambiguous support for the IRC offered by the Government, Sir Robert Peel, the Leader of the Opposition, delivered an understated but destructive speech that reflected a clear ideology in respect of railway development in Ireland. He avoided direct personal attacks or suggestions of favouritism, but objected to the IRC proposals because he believed that they exposed government to uncontrollable demands for additional lines that it could not fulfil. He cited the examples of the west of Ireland and Ulster as areas likely to have such a complaint; and he also questioned whether such areas should bear the cost of railways for the rest of Ireland.¹⁰⁴ But his main criticism was that the IRC had provided much useful technical information but ignored the fact that there were profitable railways in Ireland for which private capital was available - and where the state had no business to interfere. Peel simply could not support such a direct contradiction of the principle of *laissez-faire*. As a supporter of direct lines, he ignored the notion of the proposals as a *whole system* and argued instead that private capital should be given its chance on those lines where entrepreneurs were willing to invest - and he wondered: 'why [...] should not Irish gentlemen and capitalists undertake their own works and trust to their own intelligence and enterprise for their natural reward' – rather than rely on the state? He thus underlined his support for *laissez-faire* and dismissed the idea that a systematic overall approach was needed and that railways were a special form of industrial development, totally contradicting the views of the IRC. In support of this point he suggested that all the IRC report arguments for a state system of railways applied equally to the creation of cotton mills in Ireland.¹⁰⁵ Finally, he mocked the Government for underrating the capacity of the Irish people. It had offered increased independence through local government reform, and yet through the measure on railways it was: 'proceeding on the old assumption, much deprecated on the other side of the House, that the inhabitants of Ireland are [...] inferior'.¹⁰⁶ In short, he suggested an entirely *laissez-faire* approach to railway building in Ireland – as he had advocated in the rest of Britain.

Peel's position was sharply attacked by Daniel O'Connell who insisted that a railway could not be compared to a cotton factory.¹⁰⁷ When another MP questioned the likelihood of repayment of any loan to build railways in Ireland, O'Connell used his ultimate threat of a campaign for the repeal of the Union by pledging to make repayment a: 'clause [in] the Repeal Bill

become a Prince.' <http://www.berfrois.com/2016/07/of-taste-the-use-of-riches-alexander-pope/> [Accessed 21 September 2016].

¹⁰⁴ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 cc1083.

¹⁰⁵ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1085.

¹⁰⁶ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1088.

¹⁰⁷ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 cc1096-8.

– making it a debt on the Irish nation’.¹⁰⁸ That certainly demonstrated his belief in the centrality of railways in Irish politics. The Whig Government was very weak at this time and briefly lost power to Peel during the Bedchamber Crisis of May 1839, just a few weeks after this debate, so Peel’s opposition was critical to the progress of the IRC report.¹⁰⁹ Lord John Russell – who led the Government in the House of Commons - wanted to avoid a division on party lines and hoped the measure would be supported because it improved the social and economic conditions of Ireland. Sir Edward Knatchbull closed for the Opposition and denied that there was any party feeling. But he would not offer support as it might commit his side to backing any future measure on Irish railways.¹¹⁰ The House divided and the measure was agreed by 144 votes to 100. Thus, despite the claims of scholars such as Parris that the Whigs had no railway policy, the Whig Government actually secured a successful vote allowing the state to run railways in a large part of the UK in 1839. It was an important moment in railway history in the UK and in the use of railways as a policy instrument in Ireland. But despite winning the vote, the Government was still a long way from actually implementing the IRC report.

3.4 The end of the IRC initiative 1839-40

Drummond was satisfied with the vote but feared: ‘there has been a great cabal formed against it, and [he dreaded] defeat’.¹¹¹ The politically-sophisticated O’Connell was in no doubt that Peel’s opposition to the measure would prove fatal to it, as he noted only ten days after the debate in a letter to the Irish people, when he suggested that: ‘the Government scheme will be abandoned as hopeless’.¹¹² Peel reacted quickly after the debate with a question to Morpeth about the future of the IRC report and received an evasive answer that suggested a lack of government commitment.¹¹³ *The Times* agreed with this analysis by noting: ‘the evident signs of the coming discomfiture’ of the IRC and its report.¹¹⁴ The newspaper celebrated the defeat of the potentially open-ended notion of state management of railways and its implications for wider railway policy: ‘once recognise such a principle and it will be *impossible* to limit its application’.¹¹⁵ Two days later,

¹⁰⁸ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1113.

¹⁰⁹ “The manoeuvres of the Queen’s anti-chamber”, *The Times*, 16 May 1839, 4.

¹¹⁰ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1122.

¹¹¹ McLennan, *Drummond*, 417.

¹¹² “Letter from Mr O’Connell”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 March 1839, 4.

¹¹³ “Imperial Parliament”, *Morning Chronicle*, 7 March 1839, 1.

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, 27 March 1839, 4.

The Times exhibited the full extent of its opposition by likening the IRC proposals to some road measures in Canada as a scheme to: ‘vest large expenditure in Republican commissioners for revolutionary purposes’.¹¹⁶ While that may appear to be a rather overstated sentiment, there was some sense in the notion that the IRC’s proposals had the potential to weaken the Union – even if that was not the intention. Drummond made overt reference to Belgium, where railways were clearly linked to creating an identifiable and independent political entity – a new nation - after its separation from the Netherlands in 1830.

There was fury in Ireland at O’Connell’s prediction of the loss of the IRC proposals. The *Freeman’s Journal* was hardly surprised by the Tory opposition, but it was still moved to denounce Peel and his party as ‘crawling and venomous things’.¹¹⁷ But Irish nationalists seemed genuinely puzzled by the opposition of some Whig radicals. Competing loyalties explained some of that opposition, for example Sir John Jervis was a radical Chester MP and supported the CHR, a scheme that would not have benefited from the IRC proposals.¹¹⁸ The journal was not; however, surprised to publish a letter from Sir Robert Peel to the ‘Commercial Buildings Committee’ (an alternative name for the GRC whose views were noted earlier) that had sought his support in opposition to the IRC.¹¹⁹ Peel reconfirmed the principle at the centre of his rejection of the IRC report when he noted that there was no: ‘better test of what is required, or what is likely to become useful, than the prospect of remuneration’.¹²⁰ In other words, laissez-faire economics must prevail.

The formal end of the IRC report was noted on 30 May 1839, when it was listed among the ‘dropped orders’ that the Government could not pursue in its weakened state.¹²¹ Thus, the measure was not lost in the House of Lords as suggested by Could in 1990, it was lost because government simply did not have sufficient political support to drive the measure through parliament.¹²² On 28 June, Morpeth explained the IRC failure when he told an MP that: ‘if he had

¹¹⁵ *The Times*, 27 March 1839, 4. [Emphasis in the original]

¹¹⁶ *The Times*, 29 March 1839, 4.

¹¹⁷ “Railways in Ireland”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 March 1839, 2.

¹¹⁸ “Chester and Holyhead Railway”, *Chester Chronicle*, 2 November 1838, 3.

¹¹⁹ This Committee appears to be identical to the General Railway Committee that had met Morpeth in December 1838. See, Railroads (Ireland) Copy of all resolutions and memorials presented to the Lord Lieutenant or Chief Secretary of Ireland, or to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, respecting railroads in that country, 7, 1839 (154), XLVI.379.

¹²⁰ “Railways in Ireland”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 March 1839, 2.

¹²¹ Leading Article, *The Times*, 30 May 1839, 4.

¹²² Could, “Railway Building in Ireland”, 1990, 81-96.

been allowed to prosecute the measure, he was sure he could have [shown] that *any notion of patronage was [...] unfounded*'.¹²³ That suggested that government had found it difficult to counter the allegation that Pierce Mahoney was already identified as the contractor for the state-funded work of the IRC as noted earlier. Despite the loss of the IRC proposals, the Government maintained an interest in developing the Irish railway system. In July 1839, Irish landowners initiated a debate in support of the IRC and Morpeth showed how much he had conceded to opponents when he admitted that private funding was then the preferred option for Irish railway development.¹²⁴ In 1841, Morpeth also requested leave to introduce a bill for general public information with a view to longer term action on railways in Ireland and suggested that opinion had shifted towards the original proposals of the IRC and: 'his late excellent and lamented friend, Mr. Drummond'.¹²⁵ Sir Robert Peel thought Morpeth's proposal was mere electioneering.¹²⁶ The defeat of the Government at the polls in August 1841 effectively ended the IRC initiative, while Peel's victory gave him the opportunity to shift the policy on the development of railways in Ireland (and the London to Dublin link) in a direction that was less favourable to Irish interests.

The IRC provided a blueprint six years before Gladstone: 'evolved a set of principles [to] guide railway policy' as noted by Casson.¹²⁷ That later example is probably explained by the fact that Rawson, a civil servant who later assisted Gladstone at the Board of Trade, had written very positively about the IRC at the time of its report and appeared to build on its work in the 1844 Railway Act.¹²⁸ However, Gladstone himself had followed Peel's lead and voted against the IRC in the 1839 division on the Government's Irish railway policy.¹²⁹ If that policy had passed, the IRC proposals may have paved the way for the more general approach to railways articulated in its: 'Suggestions on the powers to be given to the Railway Companies and the restrictions to which they should be subjected' - which amounted to a comprehensive reform of railways and the system for developing and regulating them in the whole of the UK.¹³⁰

¹²³ HC Deb 28 June 1839 vol. 48 cc1015-9 [My emphasis].

¹²⁴ HC Deb 23 July 1839 vol. 49 cc707-16.

¹²⁵ HC Deb 08 June 1841 vol. 58 cc1347-5. Drummond died, apparently of overwork, in April 1840. See, McLennan, *Drummond*, 426-7.

¹²⁶ HC Deb 04 June 1841 vol. 58 cc1121-247.

¹²⁷ Casson, *World's First Railway System*, 232.

¹²⁸ Rawson Rawson, "On Railways in Belgium", *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* (1839) Vol. II, 47-62. For Rawson, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rawson_W._Rawson [accessed 12 November 2015].

¹²⁹ HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol 45 c1124. Despite his destructive speech against the IRC report, Peel did not actually vote in the division.

¹³⁰ Royal Commission on General System of Railways in Ireland, Appendix II, "*Suggestions on the powers to be given to the Railway Companies and the restrictions to which they should be subjected*", 24-32.

The IRC was systematic, scientific and even holistic in its selection of railway routes - and it used an imaginative range of sources and types of information to support its conclusions. It proposed a railway system for Ireland that challenged the plans of private enterprise over 150 years before Casson did the same for the rest of the UK - including the same mathematical approach to the subject as he adopted 171 years later. Casson praised the later reporting on railway schemes by the Railway Department for its logical approach, but those reports were distinctly limited compared to the IRC report. The notion of a *system* was central to the IRC – every line should be built as part of a whole system, not simply to serve the various towns through which it passed and the profit motives of its investors.

Ultimately, this well-argued report failed to deliver the changes that it advocated and its achievements were largely ignored by historians - and especially railway historians. That is because the IRC report had significant weaknesses that prevented its adoption. Above all, the document undermined its mathematical, scientific, sociological and economic arguments by its *ideological* approach and political bias. It addressed and attacked the laissez-faire economic policies of the age and the impact that those policies had delivered in Ireland, without regard for the power of the political and economic forces that supported laissez-faire. The IRC also attacked the attitudes and behaviour of the Irish landowners that reflected an older form of economic relationship between labour and capital than laissez-faire, but were powerful nevertheless. In any political context those weaknesses in the report and the attitudes of its authors would have presented problems; at a time when the Whig Government was very weak and the Opposition was so well led by Sir Robert Peel, the shortcomings in the report were fatal. Peel's success in wrecking the IRC report marked the end of the effort instigated by Henry Archer in 1836 to create a scheme that was designed to deliver benefits to Ireland and (to a lesser extent) North Wales. That initiative was adopted by government and developed by the IRC into a comprehensive plan to regenerate Ireland's economy.

The defeat of the IRC hampered the reform agenda in Ireland and contributed to O'Connell disillusionment with the Lichfield House compact. It was a factor mentioned by O'Connell in his return to a campaign for repeal of the Union, as he despaired of securing lasting reform of the relationship with the rest of the UK. It was more important, and certainly so in the context of this study, that the defeat of the IRC was also a defeat for a possible new philosophy of railway building – a different relationship between a new technology and the politics of the state. That philosophy emphasised the connection between building railways and delivering benefits to the whole population, rather than just narrower industrial and commercial interests. It emphasised economy in railway construction, integration with existing infrastructure and centres

of population, construction based on evidence rather than assertion and speculation; and above all, strong regulation - even state control - to ensure that benefits were shared fairly.

Despite its radical approach, the IRC members were not 'Republican commissioners [with] revolutionary purposes' as *The Times* had asserted¹³¹. The IRC aimed to deal with population congestion by encouraging people to move from the land to work on railways and other public works, and ultimately gain employment in the factories and extractive industries that the IRC believed would emerge after the railways were built. The IRC aimed to modernise Ireland through the power of railways as the best means to deal with its social, economic and political issues and cement its place in the UK. Although the proposed lines were to be managed and owned by the state that was hardly republicanism. Rather, it was part of an overall policy to build better governance of Ireland within the UK by ensuring that the Irish economy delivered wealth and opportunity to its population, and was connected to the rest of the UK by the most powerful communication technology ever known. The aim of the government in using the IRC to guide its Irish policy in 1839 was to integrate Ireland within the UK and to secure equality for the former. Peel led the successful attack on that approach and was aided by the claims of patronage and partiality that tainted the work of the IRC. Once in government in 1841, Peel had the opportunity to apply a very different approach to the London – Dublin railway route - and its use in the government of Ireland that is analysed in the next chapter.

¹³¹ *The Times*, 29 March 1839, 4.

4. The final decision on the London to Dublin railway link 1840-46

*'...a line which affects significant public interests in respect of the communication between England [sic] and Ireland. ...'*¹

This chapter addresses the progress of the quest by government for a railway line towards Dublin from London after the collapse of the Irish Railway Commission (IRC) proposals in 1839. It analyses the period 1840-46, during which decisions by government assisted the Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR) to secure its Act of Parliament, public financial aid and the prospect of a virtual monopoly of Dublin rail traffic. Baughen's study of the CHR in 1972 covered this period and concluded that: 'during the previous Whig administration there had been much talk and no action; [Peel] felt that it was time to move'.² Baughen also noted that Peel had voted *against* the proposal to build the CHR in 1840, so it is difficult to see how his estimate of Peel's involvement could be justified. The evidence of Chapter 3 of this study is that Peel was the architect of the failure of the Whigs to make progress with the IRC report (that included a London-Dublin railway link) in 1839 as part of its Irish policy. Some 12 years after Baughen, Ellis-Williams offered a different view when he suggested that the Whig government had given 'veiled support' for the CHR in 1840.³ Through an examination of Parliamentary debates, select committee and newspapers reports this thesis will provide a more detailed analysis than either Baughen or Ellis-Williams. It will show that Peel rejected the IRC's approach to railways in Ireland and the London to Dublin rail and sea link but incorporated the latter into his government's Irish policy primarily in the interests of sustaining the UK as a political entity, and he did so without the support O'Connell on whom the previous Whig Government had relied. The difference was that Peel backed the CHR while the IRC had supported the alternative route to Porth Dinllaen, the PDR.

Ireland was not a priority for Peel for the first two years of his administration from 1841 as Gash makes clear.⁴ Chartist unrest on mainland Britain consumed most of his domestic attention until 1843.⁵ However, from that year Daniel O'Connell took his campaign for repeal of the Union

¹ BL MSS 44275: 1834-1850, Gladstone Papers Vol. CXC 9 (ff.321), Letter from Peel to Gladstone 30 March 1844.

² Peter Baughen, *The Chester and Holyhead Railway, Volume I: The Main Line up to 1880* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972), 41.

³ M Ellis-Williams, *Packet to Ireland* (Caernarfon: Gwynedd Archives Service, 1984), 70.

⁴ Norman Gash, *Sir Robert Peel: The Life of Sir Robert Peel after 1830* (London: Longman, 1986), 393-394.

⁵ Gash, *Peel*, 330.

to the streets.⁶ In order to assess whether the railway was specifically part of Peel's Irish policy in response to O'Connell, the chronology of the railway development is analysed in this chapter alongside events in Ireland. Gash's account of Peel's response to that upsurge does not suggest any direct connection between O'Connell's campaign and the revival of the CHR in 1843.⁷ It was established in previous chapters that Peel had a clear view that railways should be built and funded independently of the state; and that was underlined in 2016 by Hodgkin's estimate of Peel's relationship with railways in which he suggested that Peel took no interest in national railway policy and did not favour state intervention.⁸ If Peel departed from that latter approach in respect of the CHR, it would tend to show that the CHR was an item of government policy that was more important than Peel's ideological commitment to laissez-faire economics. Having agreed to fund the CHR, government had to deal with an unexpected re-emergence of a rival in the form of a broad gauge line to Porth Dinllaen proposed by the Great Western Railway (GWR): a project that Simmons thought was not credible.⁹ However, the seriousness of the challenge to the CHR in 1846 is worthy of reconsideration in this chapter because the revived PDR passed through Porthmadog, which was identified by Dodd as the centre of a 'regional development scheme'; and the new PDR was also sponsored by a large railway company unlike the original proposal from Henry Archer.¹⁰ The chapter explores how Peel's Government reached its decision, taking into account Ellis-Williams' 1984 conclusion on the contest between Holyhead and Porth Dinllaen that: 'there is nothing more striking than the flat contradictions in the professional evidence' about which port was superior as a packet station and refuge harbour.¹¹ The study will examine the influences that were brought to bear in the process of creating the railway link towards Dublin and compare the part that professional advice and technical evidence played in the decision, and whether it was as influential as the political and economic power of those who contested the argument about the best rail and sea route. This chapter explores official reports to show that the decisions that were made by government in 1846 effectively prevented the GWR from competing with the CHR, and guaranteed the latter's monopoly of the rail route towards Dublin.

⁶ Gash, *Peel*, 402.

⁷ Gash, *Peel*, 411 -413 and John Prest, 'Peel, Sir Robert, second baronet (1788–1850)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21764, accessed 17 April 2016].

⁸ David Hodgkins, "A prime minister and his constituency: Sir Robert Peel and Tamworth Railways", *Journal of the Railway and Canal Historical Society* (2016) Vol. 38 Part 6, 226, 478-485.

⁹ Jack Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales, 1830-1914, Volume 1 The System and its Working* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 45.

¹⁰ A. H. Dodd, *A History of Caernarvonshire 1284-1900* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 1990), 275.

¹¹ Ellis-Williams, *Packet to Ireland*, 69.

4.1 Establishing the credibility of the Chester and Holyhead Railway 1838-40

The IRC was critical of the whole direction of railway policy in England and resistant to its adoption in Ireland as noted in the previous chapter – so the defeat of the IRC in March 1839 gave heart to those who supported the laissez-faire approach to railway building that was rejected by the IRC. In the period before the debate on the IRC proposals, the CHR endeavoured to strengthen its position and criticised the PDR for its request for state funding. Once the IRC was defeated, the initiative to revive the CHR gathered pace through the Chester and Crewe Railway (CCR) which formed a link from the main Liverpool to London line towards Chester, and provided the starting point for a railway along the North Wales coast to Holyhead. The CCR was optimistic about the project because it perceived that it was potentially an important item in the UK government policy towards Ireland – or as it rather elaborately called it: ‘a measure so imperiously called for to facilitate intercourse between England and Ireland’.¹² The CCR board met the engineer Francis Giles in November 1838, and he outlined a scheme for a route from Chester to Holyhead that followed the northern North Wales coast and crossed the Menai Straits to Anglesey - the main obstacle to its progress.¹³ He planned to tackle the crossing by use of a stationary engine to haul carriages over Telford’s 1826 road bridge.¹⁴

In order to boost the political credentials of the CHR, the CCR then commissioned a report from George Stephenson on the relative merits of Vignoles’ PDR route and the CHR.¹⁵ The CCR had powerful connections - Stephenson’s assistant was Murray Gladstone, a member of a prominent family of Liverpool merchants, who had been strong advocates (and financial backers) of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. (LMR)¹⁶ The chairman of the CCR was John Uniacke, Mayor of Chester, who reflected the importance to the city of connecting with the main line between London and Liverpool. Chester Town Council was reluctant to see its link with Irish traffic lost to the PDR, which aimed to secure a shorter sea crossing to Dublin than the one from Birkenhead which was accessed by rail through its city. George Stephenson was the most prominent railway engineer in 1838, and it was his status rather than his judgement that was

¹² “Chester and Crewe Railway”, *Chester Chronicle*, 16 November 1838, 3.

¹³ “Giles, Francis John William Thomas (1787–1847),” Mike Chrimes in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10721 accessed September 21, 2014].

¹⁴ “Chester and Holyhead Railway”, *Chester Chronicle*, 2 November 1838, 3.

¹⁵ “Ffestiniog Railway”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 14 August 1832, 3.

¹⁶ History of Parliament online, s.v. “John Gladstone” accessed 14 June 2014. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/Volume/1820-1832/member/gladstone-john-1764-1851>

needed because of the problems the CHR had in showing that it could take a railway over the Menai Straits to Holyhead. Beaufort's 1836 report, as noted in the last chapter, was sceptical about that possibility, and he had rejected the CHR because it also had to cross a wide river at Conwy and pass the large rocky promontory at Penmaenmawr before even reaching the Menai Straits. The CHR promoters needed a new report that made light of such problems, restored confidence in the CHR and galvanised supporters, financiers and the political powers in London. George Stephenson provided exactly what was needed in December 1838, just as the IRC report was being considered by politicians in London. Stephenson made the CHR appear easy and inexpensive; he proposed to cross the River Dee at Chester with a wooden bridge; regarded the threat from the sea along the coast as insignificant; considered the crossing of the rivers at Rhyl and Conwy as minor matters, and dismissed the idea that a tunnel was needed to take the line beyond the rocky headland at Penmaenmawr. He also agreed with Giles that Telford's road bridge was adequate to carry a railway over the Menai Straits to Anglesey. Crucially, he dismissed the rival PDR by observing that the mountainous terrain through which it travelled made it 'impracticable for a line of railway'.¹⁷ The value of Stephenson's report in engineering terms may be evaluated by subsequent events. The bridge at Chester (iron rather than wood as he originally suggested) collapsed a few weeks after opening in 1847, killing 5 occupants of a train.¹⁸ The line between Chester and Abergele was breached by the sea.¹⁹ Extensive works, including a tunnel, were needed at Penmaenmawr - and even these were destroyed by waves soon after opening.²⁰ Above all, crossing the Conwy River and the Menai Straits required expensive tubular bridges. Those difficulties were fully understood in 1839 when Stephenson was writing his report. The *Railway Magazine*, for example, described the plan to use Telford's suspension bridge for trains as: 'perfectly absurd; in fact, it is monstrous'.²¹

The political impact of Stephenson's report was impressive, even though it was a privately commissioned report that would hardly dash the hopes of those who ordered it. The *Chester*

¹⁷ "Railway Communications with Ireland", *Chester Chronicle*, 4 January 1839.

¹⁸ "The Fatal Railway Accident", *Chester Chronicle*, 4 June 1847, 3.

¹⁹ Engineers Report, Minutes of the Meeting of the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company, 7 September 1853, TNA, PRO, RAIL 113.

²⁰ Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 67-69, 273-275 for details of the extent of sea damage along the line. When the Prince of Wales opened the breakwater at Holyhead in 1880 Richard Moon, Chairman of the LNWR, referred to the expense of maintaining the line from Chester to Holyhead because of the, 'continuous damage done by storms on the North Wales coast' and the massive cost of replacing one viaduct that had been washed away at Llanddulas in 1879. See "The Royal Visit to Holyhead: the Opening of the new Harbour Works", *Liverpool Mercury*, 18 June 1880, 6.

²¹ John Herapath, *The Railway Magazine and Steam Navigation Journal*, Volume 6 (London: James Wyld, 1839), 345.

Chronicle had advocated the St George's Harbour Railway (GHR) from Chester to Llandudno until it failed to gain substantial financial or political support in 1839 and was discredited by 1841.²² With the advent of Stephenson's report, the *Chester Chronicle* switched support to the CHR and argued for its importance as 'the great imperial line'.²³ In January 1839, the CHR supporters met in Chester and were led by the Marquis of Westminster, head of one of the richest families in England and very influential both locally and nationally.²⁴ The meeting was adamant that Stephenson's judgement on the utility of the Menai Bridge was entirely credible and they resolved to take the project forward.²⁵

Irish views were also important to the CHR lobby, especially the influential merchants and bankers of Dublin who had previously backed the PDR, as noted in the last chapter. Stephenson's report also provided the catalyst for a meeting of those interests in January 1839 (two weeks after the Chester meeting) that was attended by lobbyists from Chester, Shrewsbury and North Wales. It was a tense meeting because of the conflicting views of those present and the imminent debate on the proposals of the IRC. Daniel O'Connell, the Irish leader, had a difficult role to perform. Parliament had still not considered the IRC report and O'Connell was broadly sympathetic to it. That report supported the PDR by implication but O'Connell tried to keep all his options open, including any new proposals from the CHR supporters. The 'Liberator', as O'Connell was known, emphasised the need for a route from London towards Dublin, but felt that the meeting should not express a preference because the committee he chaired in 1837 had received insufficient information to reach a conclusion. In that way, O'Connell was able to support the IRC position indirectly but not rule out the CHR.²⁶ The Irish leader was not concerned about which route succeeded so long as communication was improved in order to give Ireland: 'the influence which the increase of facility can afford' – thereby making clear that the London and Dublin link was a technological contribution to his own political ambitions.²⁷ The meeting eventually agreed to urge the Government to institute an enquiry to determine the best route. The CHR was frustrated that it did not secure clearer Irish support but the PDR lobby was disappointed with the rather neutral

²² By August 1841 a court found against two of its Directors for failing to pay a solicitor's bill. *Chester Chronicle* 13 August 1841, 4.

²³ Editorial, *Chester Chronicle*, 18 January 1839, 3. [My emphasis]

²⁴ H. R. Tedder, "Grosvenor, Robert, first Marquess of Westminster (1767–1845)," rev. H. C. G. Matthew, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11672> accessed September 21, 2014].

²⁵ "Communication between London and Dublin", *Chester Chronicle*, 11 January 1839, 3.

²⁶ "Meeting in Dublin", *Chester Chronicle*, 25 January 1839, 3.

²⁷ "Meeting in Dublin", *Chester Chronicle*, 25 January 1839, 3.

conclusions of the Dublin meeting. As the *Chester Chronicle* pointed out, the PDR had been well placed in 1836 with considerable Irish support in Dublin, but the failure to get their endorsement for the scheme in 1839 changed the issue from: ‘one prejudged to one open [...] the game is safe for Chester’.²⁸ Vignoles had not helped the PDR by failing to attend the Dublin meeting, apparently because the prospect of challenging George Stephenson (who did attend) had intimidated him; as Vignoles noted: ‘it is almost “bearding the lion in his den” to enter into a professional contest with such a high authority’.²⁹ That underlined the political value of Stephenson to the CHR – he was able to silence opposition by his reputation alone. There was optimism in Chester because political interests in the city considered that the Dublin link would pass through its city irrespective of whether the terminus was Holyhead or Porth Dinllaen - because the coastal route could potentially serve either port, as shown in Figure 4.1 below.³⁰ The CHR gained further ground from the support of Anglesey landowners such as Sir Richard Bulkeley, who assured a Holyhead meeting that he had the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s word that there would be no public funding for the PDR. As for the CHR, he reported that he had solid information that major railway companies in England were ready to fund it. All it needed was landowner support - and the CHR got that at the meeting.³¹ It seems likely that Bulkeley had the London and Birmingham Railway (LBR) in mind when he spoke of the support of railway companies, thus confirming that the CHR was backed by the most powerful English railway.³² That was sufficient for the *Mining Journal* to conclude that the CHR could not fail.³³

O’Connell knew the IRC proposals and the PDR were doomed after Peel’s opposition in Parliament in March 1839 as noted in the last chapter.³⁴ Nevertheless, he did not abandon his hope of a railway link to Dublin, and within two weeks of the parliamentary vote on the IRC the issue of the railway connection with London was raised at the Dublin Chamber of Commerce meeting. The chamber was impressed by Stephenson’s claim that the CHR was £1 million cheaper than the PDR, and that the confidence created by his views had led to a company being established to build the line.³⁵ The chamber considered that Holyhead provided faster

²⁸ “Railway Communication between London & Dublin”, *Chester Chronicle*, 25 January 1839, 2.

²⁹ “Copy of Mr Vignoles’ Observations on Mr Stephenson’s Report to the Chester and Crewe Railway Directors”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 19 January 1839, 4.

³⁰ “Railway Communication between London & Dublin”, *Chester Chronicle*, 25 January 1839, 2.

³¹ “Holyhead and Chester Railway” [sic], *North Wales Chronicle*, 5 February 1839, 3.

³² “Chester and Holyhead Railway”, *Chester Chronicle*, 8, February 1839, 2-3.

³³ “Imperial and Arterial Railway System (from the *Mining Journal*)”, *Chester Chronicle*, 15 February 1839, 4.

³⁴ “Letter from Mr O’Connell”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 March 1839, 4.

³⁵ “London and Dublin Direct Communication”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 March 1839, 2.

communication with London than Liverpool and decided unanimously to petition the Government in favour of the CHR if the 'work is practicable'- a comment that suggested that there was still concern about whether crossing the Menai Straits by railway was possible.³⁶ That overturned resolutions of the chamber in 1838, when it had doubted that the CHR was feasible.³⁷ Thus, O'Connell cleverly switched his commitment to the CHR and abandoned the PDR without any personal intervention. He also delivered the Irish lobby to the CHR and thereby added to its political momentum. The *Chester Chronicle* was jubilant: 'No longer is it a matter admitting of further controversy, as to either the principle or the details. Those are settled in favour of [the CHR]. One thing is certain; the [PDR] is *gone-gone*'.³⁸ The CHR was thus well placed to go to Westminster with the Irish business community and major Anglesey landowners behind it; and with the vital political support of Daniel O'Connell on whom the Whig Government still relied. Peel had defeated the radical IRC and its linked PDR scheme in 1839 - and created a new opportunity for the CHR; all the CHR needed to proceed in 1840 was political support in parliament – and money.

4.2 The Chester and Holyhead Railway in Parliament 1840

The process of building political support for the CHR ahead of a Parliamentary debate was led by O'Connell, just as he had led the PDR in 1836. As in 1836, O'Connell led a deputation to Chancellor Spring Rice that included a number of those who were present in Dublin in March 1839. Spring Rice was clear on the need to secure parliamentary support and he urged O'Connell to refer the matter to 'competent and disinterested parties to decide' and thereby remove the element of party dispute.³⁹ That was an implied criticism of the impartiality of the IRC, just three weeks after its report had been debated in Parliament, and it was a classic use of technical expertise to avoid political difficulties in the manner suggested by Barry and discussed in chapter 1.⁴⁰ Robert Stephenson completed his report on behalf of a Provisional Committee of the 'Great Holyhead Railway' in April 1839 - and firmly established the viability of the proposed line.⁴¹ O'Connell then sought clarification from Lord Morpeth on 25 June 1839 on his intentions for Irish railways and

³⁶ "London and Dublin Direct Communication", *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 March 1839, 2.

³⁷ "Meeting at the Chamber of Commerce", *Freeman's Journal*, 22 October 1838, 3.

³⁸ "The Irish Railway Question", *Chester Chronicle*, 15 March 1839, 2. [italics in the original]

³⁹ "London and Dublin Direct Communication", *Chester Chronicle*, 22 March 1839, 2.

⁴⁰ Andrew Barry, *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society* (London: Athlone Press, 2001), 8.

⁴¹ "Great Holyhead Railway", *Chester Chronicle*, 3 May 1839, 3.

the link to London in the wake of the IRC defeat. Morpeth did not follow Spring Rice's example of 1836 and implicate the state in the project; instead he made clear that it was up to *private capital* to fund the CHR and the state would only consider becoming involved if it failed.⁴² These necessary stages towards a bid for the CHR were completed by August 1839, when O'Connell successfully requested a report from experts to be appointed by government to decide between the four competing railway schemes (Giles and Stephenson's versions of the CHR, the PDR and the GHR as described in Chapter 2) and the three possible harbours (Holyhead, Llandudno and Porth Dinllaen) that might complete the London to Dublin railway and sea link.⁴³ The report in 1840 expressed a clear preference for Stephenson's CHR, Vignoles performed weakly in promoting the PDR, suggesting only that his scheme would: 'upon full and detailed and impartial investigation, be found the most desirable'.⁴⁴ Sir Frederic Smith and Professor Barlow (the report's authors) were unimpressed and could not see any reason to support the PDR.⁴⁵ The GHR line that was proposed to terminate at Llandudno was discounted because it did not provide any clear advantage over the Liverpool route or the other two proposals.⁴⁶ The report authors preferred Stephenson's line to Holyhead to that proposed by Giles on grounds of cost.⁴⁷ They also referred to the report prepared by Rear Admiral Sir J. A. Gordon and Captain Beechey, which clearly favoured Holyhead as the best harbour.⁴⁸ That concluded the issue - and Holyhead was chosen for both the harbour and the railway.⁴⁹

Vignoles' approach suggested an attitude of resignation to defeat by the PDR but its supporters continued to argue that Porth Dinllaen was the best harbour, even if the line along the coast was chosen, as it avoided the need to cross the Menai Straits (Figure 4.1). Gordon and Beechey's report merely noted this variation on the CHR and referred it back to government.⁵⁰ Thus, in the short time since the IRC had been debated in March 1839, the PDR had been supported and then dropped, while the CHR had established itself as the favoured route from

⁴² "Imperial Parliament", *Chester Chronicle*, 28 June 1839, 2.

⁴³ HC Deb 12 August 1839 vol. 50 cc213-4.

⁴⁴ Copy of the First Report of Committee, and a Report from Sir James Gordon and Captain Beechey to the Lords of the Admiralty, relative to the best means of communicating between London and Dublin and to relative capacities of the Ports of Holyhead, Ormes Bay and Portdynllaen, 4 **1840** (250) XLV.277.

⁴⁵ Copy of the First Report of the Committee, 1840, 4.

⁴⁶ Copy of the First Report of the Committee, 1840 21.

⁴⁷ Copy of the First Report of the Committee, 1840, 7.

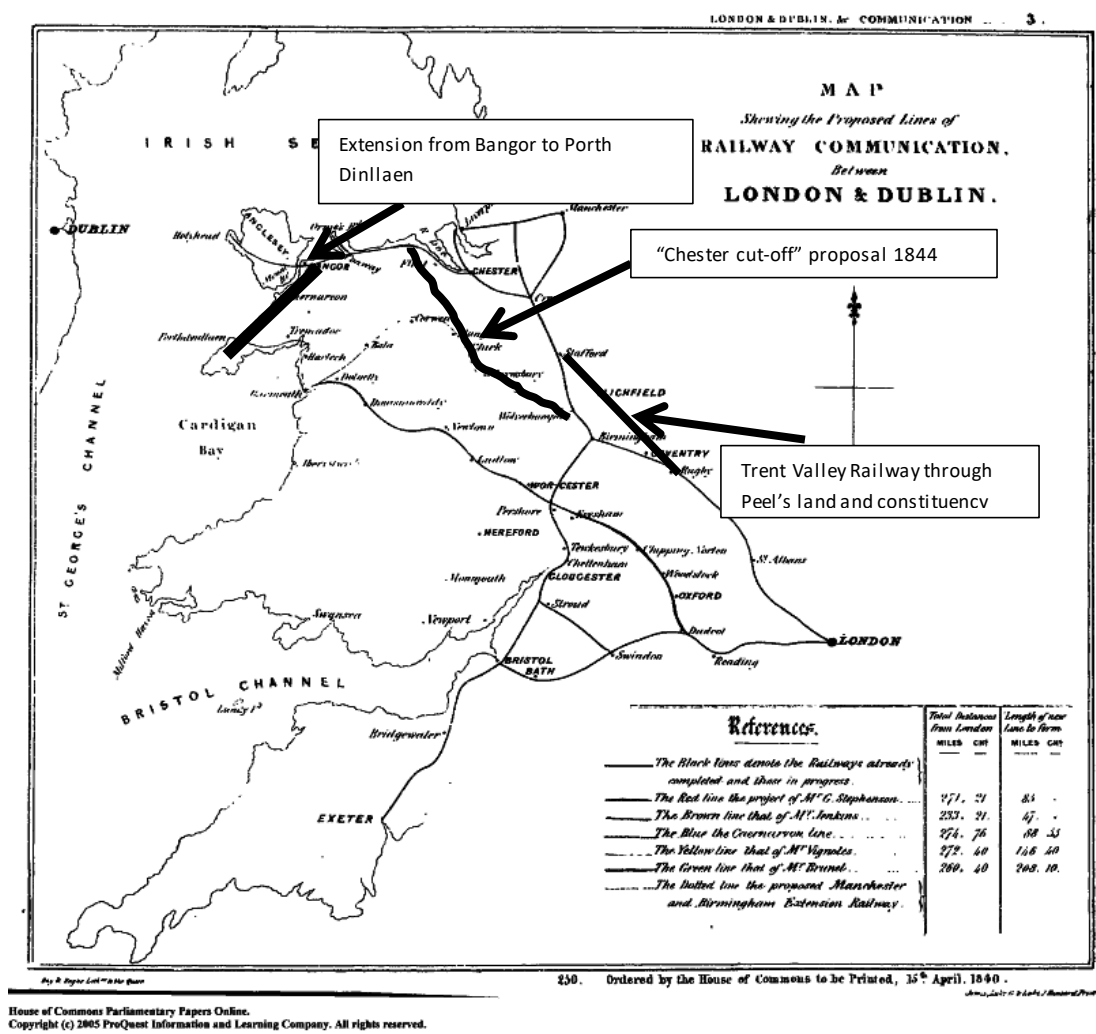
⁴⁸ Copy of the First Report of the Committee, 1840, 21.

⁴⁹ Copy of the First Report of the Committee, 1840, 22.

⁵⁰ Copy of the First Report of the Committee, 1840, 8.

London towards Dublin despite being previously ruled out ahead of the IRC's deliberations. The CHR's rapid political recovery was a tribute to the efforts of its supporters in creating a coalition between Irish and Welsh interests that was backed by Chester Town Council and important railway companies such as the LBR. However, the CHR had not achieved any official status in government policy – and the prospect of money - as the PDR had done through its inclusion in the IRC report. That was to prove a weakness for its supporters.

Figure 4.1 Variations on the original rail routes through Wales



The Original map appeared in 1840, London and Dublin, &c. communication. Reports to the Lords of the Treasury and Admiralty, relative to the best means of communicating between London and Dublin, 54, 1840 (250) XLV.277.

There was powerful support for the CHR nationally, notably from Sir Robert Peel, who had done much to wreck the IRC and its radical approach, and had cleared the way for the CHR in parliament through a question to the Government that confirmed that it did not intend to fund any line towards Dublin.⁵¹ Chester political interests responded quickly and John Uniacke, Mayor

⁵¹ HC Deb 24 January 1840 vol. 51 c547.

of Chester, told the Town Council that he was confident that the projected line from the city to Holyhead would proceed.⁵² A meeting in London in May 1840 was attended by important CHR personnel and chaired by the Marquis of Westminster, who confirmed the confidence expressed by Uniacke. The meeting particularly noted that the LBR and the Dublin Chamber of Commerce supported them, and then unanimously endorsed a proposal to proceed to parliament to obtain approval for the CHR.⁵³ It was Captain Dundas, a Flintshire landowner and former senior naval officer, who rather dampened enthusiasm when he identified a procedural problem.⁵⁴ Parliamentary standing orders stipulated that no scheme could be brought before parliament in the same session in which notification of it had been given; and a deposit of 10 per cent of the total cost of any project was also required.⁵⁵ CHR supporters needed to secure the suspension of those orders if the scheme was to proceed in 1840.⁵⁶ If the CHR failed in 1840 it could not go forward before the session of 1842.⁵⁷ Money was a significant problem because although the CHR had criticised the IRC for requesting state funding for railways, it concluded in 1840 that public money was needed for its own scheme in lieu of the 10 per cent deposit requirement. It argued that it was available through saving £77,953 from the concentration of all Irish mail traffic at Holyhead rather than using Liverpool and Milford Haven as well, giving an effective monopoly of the Irish mail contract to the CHR.⁵⁸ That was the same argument used by O'Connell in his support of the PDR in 1836 as noted in Chapter 2 – but it was enhanced by the CHR which suggested that public money and a monopoly of traffic was justified because completion of the CHR was ‘an imperial question’ – i.e. an item of public policy.⁵⁹

The position was confirmed when the CHR provided the Government with a summary of its case in advance of the Parliamentary debate that it had secured. It argued that the IRC had raised expectations of public funding and that had effectively deterred private investors from coming forward so that according to the CHR's advocates, it was government's duty to provide

⁵² “Town Council”, *Chester Chronicle*, 1 May 1840, 4.

⁵³ “London and Dublin Direct Communication”, *Chester Chronicle*, 22 May 1840, 2.

⁵⁴ J. K. Laughton, “Dundas, Sir James Whitley Deans (1785–1862),” rev. Andrew Lambert, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8254> accessed September 21, 2014].

⁵⁵ “Irish Railway Commission”, *Northern Whig*, 28 June 1838, 1.

⁵⁶ “London and Dublin Direct Communication”, *Chester Chronicle*, 22 May 1840, 2.

⁵⁷ “London and Dublin Direct Communication”, *Chester Chronicle*, 22 May 1840, 2.

⁵⁸ “London and Dublin Direct Communication”, *Chester Chronicle*, 22 May 1840, 3. [£6.3M at 2015 prices]

⁵⁹ “London and Dublin Direct Communication”, *Chester Chronicle*, 22 May 1840, 2.

funds.⁶⁰ Grosvenor (Marquis of Westminster) told Parliament that the CHR case had the support of impartial experts and that no landowners objected; so the normal period of notice for a scheme required by standing orders was unnecessary. On the vital issue of money, the marquis thought the deposit of 10 per cent should be waived because of the national importance of the project, and because the CHR would save the country £70,000 per annum as detailed above. Daniel O'Connell confirmed the support of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and trusted that Irish interests would not be frustrated by a procedural technicality. In response, government ministers acknowledged that the railway had a national status but were unwilling to support a departure from standing orders even in support of O'Connell, which rather suggested that his agreement with government was nearing its end.⁶¹ Sir Robert Peel spoke for the Opposition and although he agreed with government's position, he concluded rather perversely that he would be: 'exceedingly sorry if the standing orders were enforced [...] as they posed an obstacle to the commencement of the work next year [but] *he had the highest interest* in coming to that conclusion'.⁶² The attorney-general encouraged Peel to support the CHR by noting that the proposal was untainted by speculation and was a truly national project.⁶³ Nevertheless, the motion to suspend standing orders was narrowly lost and Peel's intervention was influential, just as it had been in the debate on the IRC proposals in 1839.⁶⁴ All sides agreed that the CHR was a worthy project, but government was not willing to adopt it as part of Irish policy - so the measure was lost.

The explanation for Peel's approach had several elements. There was the suggestion that the scheme might be publicly funded, which was something that he had argued against in respect of the IRC. Peel may also have been unwilling to support Daniel O'Connell, who had sustained the Whigs in power since 1835, and with whom he had a poor relationship. He could also have been suspicious that the Government was hoping to lure him into the trap of supporting a case in which he had 'the highest interest'. Peel had family links to the LBR supporters of the CHR, the Birmingham committee of which was chaired by his brother Edmund Peel.⁶⁵ As recently as 1839, Peel had publicly declared his: 'confidence in the good sense, honour and justice' of the LBR and

⁶⁰ Chester and Holyhead Railway. Copy of memorial of the promoters of the Chester and Holyhead Railway to the Treasury, together with the small outline map, 2-3, **1840** (393) XLV.271.

⁶¹ HC Deb 23 June 1840 vol. 55 cc12-18.

⁶² HC Deb 23 June 1840 vol. 55 c18 [My emphasis]

⁶³ HC Deb 23 June 1840 vol. 55 c18

⁶⁴ HC Deb 23 June 1840 vol. 55 c18

⁶⁵ London and Birmingham Railway, *Extracts from the Minutes of Evidence given before the Committee of the Lords on the London and Birmingham Railway Bill* (London: 1832), 4.

so could hardly have been seen as neutral in a project that favoured its interests.⁶⁶ Additionally, Peel argued for the 'shortest line' which had the potential to build a case for a line through his own land and constituency at Tamworth (see Figure 4.1). Only the CHR could include Tamworth, whereas Birmingham was on (or close to) both the PDR and CHR routes - but Peel needed time to galvanise the Trent Valley Railway that would deliver what he wanted. Peel was also aware that the Whig government was nearing its end, and he may have preferred to see the CHR postponed until he was able to influence its direction, including the Tamworth connection. Even so, the wording of his opposition is such as to suggest that he half-hoped that the measure would pass in 1840.

The defeat of the CHR encouraged PDR supporters, who claimed that the reports in favour of Holyhead contained: 'assertions the most unfounded and recommendations the most mischievous'.⁶⁷ W. O. Stanley, M.P. for Holyhead complained about the slur cast on him and others by the specific claim that he had acted to secure a bias in the reports in favour of the town. That seemed to concern the role of Captain Beechey, who had previously acted for other parties, and had advocated Holyhead before undertaking the supposedly impartial government commission.⁶⁸ The greater problem for the CHR was that it lacked funding in June 1840, as was made clear when a select committee considered the question of the suspension of standing orders for the CHR proposal.⁶⁹ Mayor John Uniacke had to admit that CHR funding was 'very trifling', so that the select committee then confirmed that there were no grounds to suspend standing orders and the CHR was condemned to wait until 1842.⁷⁰

The *Chester Chronicle* expressed its fury at the outcome, especially towards Tory MPs whom it largely blamed for the loss.⁷¹ In parliament meanwhile, the PDR group attacked the idea of public money being spent on the CHR, claiming that both the Menai Bridge and Holyhead Harbour were not fit for purpose - and they demanded a further enquiry to prove that point.⁷² In August 1840, the *Chester Chronicle* noted that: 'scarcely a day passes but produces some additional fact in favour of the Great Holyhead railway project' - but there was little to support its

⁶⁶ "Sir Robert Peel and Railways", *London Evening Standard*, 9 September 1839, 4.

⁶⁷ "House of Commons, Monday, July 13", *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 15 July 1840.

⁶⁸ HC Deb 16 July 1840 vol 55 cc760-1

⁶⁹ The matter was referred to the Select Committee after an application in the House of Commons by Lord Robert Grosvenor, "Latest Intelligence", *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 8 July 1840, 2.

⁷⁰ *Third Report of the Select Committee on Private Business, 1840* (503) XV.213, 8.

⁷¹ "The Local Interests of North Wales", *Chester Chronicle*, 31 July 1840, 3.

⁷² "Holyhead and Portdynllaen Harbours", *Dublin Evening Mail*, 27 July 1840, 2.

optimism.⁷³ The main frustration for its PDR opponents was the lack of a railway between their line and Wolverhampton that would provide the connection to a main line for their scheme similar to that provided for their opponents by the Chester and Crewe line. The PDR supporters urged the local landowners to: 'strenuously co-operate [...] and frustrate the designs of the [CHR] clique'.⁷⁴ In November 1840, the battle continued in Shrewsbury against its: 'wary and vigilant antagonist the *Chester Chronicle* [to demonstrate] the superiority of Port Dynllaen to Holyhead as a Welsh terminus to an Imperial line'. The *Shrewsbury News* praised the Earl of Powis and others for their efforts, but seemed worried by the lack of response from local communities.⁷⁵ The *Chester Chronicle* noted similar 'apathy in the public mind' in December 1840, but also reason to believe that a change was imminent because of discussions between the Grand Junction Railway (GJR), whose line linked Birmingham and Liverpool, and government. The paper was still adamant that: 'the project be taken up on Imperial grounds, and in fact be made an Imperial work'.⁷⁶ In other words it needed to become an element of the UK government's Irish policy and publicly funded, as it had not been when it failed in Parliament in June 1840.

Thus, the rail and sea link to Ireland remained a stubbornly local dispute rather than an item of national policy, as it had potentially been when supported by the IRC report. The prospect of a general election began to overshadow all else politically in London until August 1841 when Peel, the man who had frustrated both schemes for railway communication between London and Dublin, became Prime Minister.⁷⁷ Despite his vote against the CHR in June 1840, the arrival of Peel's Government clearly favoured the CHR - he had made positive references to the scheme in 1840, even as he voted against it. As Prime Minister from 1841 he had the opportunity to give practical support for the CHR by making it part of his Irish policy.

⁷³ "Anglo-Hibernian Railways", *Chester Chronicle*, 21 August 1840, 2.

⁷⁴ *Shrewsbury News* quoted in "Worcester and Port Dynllaen Railway", *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 9 September 1840, 2.

⁷⁵ *Shrewsbury News* quoted in "London and Dublin Railway via Port Dynllaen", *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 11 November 1840, 4.

⁷⁶ "Direct London and Dublin Communication", *Chester Chronicle*, 4 December 1840, 3.

⁷⁷ "London and Dublin Direct Communication", *Chester Chronicle*, 19 February 1841, 2.

4.3 Sir Robert Peel's Irish policy and the Chester and Holyhead Railway 1841-44

In 1841-42 Chartism was at its height and there were other major national security issues that were more of a priority for government than rapid rail access to Ireland.⁷⁸ However, the future value of such a link was strengthened in this period because it became clear that: 'the influence of railroads in securing the peace of the country has been strikingly exemplified. [...] This new power enables Government to make a small force equal in efficiency to a large army.'⁷⁹ The situation in Ireland was less problematic for government than domestic unrest until 1842 because O'Connell's party was reduced from the 39 to 18 in the 1841 election - showing that he had reaped few rewards from his cooperation with Melbourne's Whig Government.⁸⁰ The Irish leader was returned to parliament by Cork but knew that he had a much reduced status with the new government.⁸¹ Peel signalled his intention to undo the work of the Whigs in Ireland when he appointed Earl de Grey as Lord Lieutenant in Ireland – a man who was not in sympathy with the former regime at Dublin Castle.⁸² Peel thereby gave new life to O'Connell's bid to break the Union between Britain and Ireland.⁸³

The first sign of change for the CHR occurred in March 1842 when government ministers were in Caernarfon and the mayor of that town met Home Secretary Graham on a matter of 'important public business'.⁸⁴ While that business was not specified, the same issue of the *North Wales Chronicle* noted that Irish and Welsh MPs had asked for government support for a railway through Bangor to a suitable packet station.⁸⁵ Those representations produced the desired result, and in June 1842 a further select committee was appointed to re-investigate the whole issue of railway connection between London and Dublin - and the period of national inactivity on the rail

⁷⁸ Jack Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales 1830-1914, Volume 1, The System and its Working* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 35.

⁷⁹ "The Riots in the Manufacturing Districts", *The Examiner*, 20 August 1842, 6.

⁸⁰ "O'Connell, Daniel (1775–1847)," R. V. Comerford in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2009, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20501 accessed September 11, 2014].

⁸¹ Comerford, *O'Connell*.

⁸² G. C. Boase, 'Grey, Thomas Philip de, second Earl De Grey (1781–1859)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11565, accessed 15 March 2016.

⁸³ "Peel, Sir Robert, second baronet (1788–1850)," John Prest in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2009, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21764 accessed September 14, 2014].

⁸⁴ "Carnarvon Address to Sir R. Peel", *North Wales Chronicle*, 22 March 1842, 3.

⁸⁵ "Communication between London and Dublin", *North Wales Chronicle*, 22 March 1842, 3.

link that had endured since June 1840 was over. The CHR again suggested that its line should be funded by concentrating all Dublin mail onto one route rather than sharing it between three.⁸⁶ It had a novel additional suggestion that the railway should also manage ships on behalf of government on the route to Dublin.⁸⁷ That approach was supported by the committee in its report which backed the route along the coast from Chester rather than the PDR, but did not reach a conclusion on the best harbour – preferring to urge government to appoint yet another committee to advise on that issue.⁸⁸

O’Connell continued conventional lobbying for a time, and was even a member of the group that petitioned the Government in response to the 1842 select committee that re-examined the London to Dublin railway and sea route. His close supporters were prominent at meetings, as were interested parties from the Great Western Railway (GWR) which supported the PDR, an important development given the status of the GWR as a major national railway which could provide the finance that had been lacking in the earlier PDR scheme. Dublin political and financial interests considered that there was little to choose between Holyhead and Porth Dinllaen in 1842, in contrast to their 1839 support for Holyhead - and their 1836 support for Porth Dinllaen.⁸⁹ Irish landowners were also active and the Earl of Wicklow reported on a meeting in March 1843 at which Peel told him that government would not fund the CHR but were ready to listen to proposals from responsible companies to build the line. If a suitable company came forward he would implement the select committee report of 1842.⁹⁰ Thus Peel signalled that the CHR could become an element of his Irish policy.

That 1843 report from the Earl of Wicklow was greeted with cheers, reflecting growing concern with the state of Ireland that was clearly shared by leading members of government.⁹¹ On 9 May 1843, Viscount Jocelyn posed a convenient question to Peel in Parliament that highlighted worries about security in Ireland. He wished to know whether the Government was:

⁸⁶ “Communication between England and Ireland”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 21 June 1842, 2.

⁸⁷ “Communication between England and Ireland”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 21 June 1842, 2.

⁸⁸ Report from the Select Committee on Post Office Communication with Ireland; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index ii, v, **1842** (373) IX.343.

⁸⁹ “Communication between London and Dublin by Railway and Short Sea”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 17 November 1842, 3.

⁹⁰ “Communication between London and Dublin”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 March 1843, 4.

⁹¹ R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds. *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-52* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), 79.

Aware of the fearful excitement which has prevailed for some weeks past in Ireland [and] whether or not the Government is determined to maintain, at all risks and hazards, the inviolability of the legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland?⁹²

Peel was clear that his Government was:

Fully alive to the evils which arise from the existing agitation [and] that there is no influence, no power, no authority, [...] which shall not be exercised for the purpose of maintaining the Union — the dissolution of which would involve, not merely the repeal of an act of Parliament, but the dismemberment of this great empire.⁹³

Peel clearly thereby confirmed that the issue of the Union was a vital part of government policy - but would railways be counted among the influences, powers and authorities that he would use? The next day he was asked about forming railways in Ireland, but was clear in his response that his priority was to use railways for *English*, rather than Irish, interests. That marked a clear contrast with the IRC, which had taken a decidedly Irish perspective in its work. Peel told parliament that his Government was interested: '*rather to facilitate the communication between England and Ireland than to aid in the construction of railways in the latter country*'.⁹⁴ A further statement by Peel reinforced that interpretation when he refused to address the question of: 'how far an improved communication with Ireland from this country may tend to facilitate the introduction of railroads in the former'? He preferred to focus on: 'the subject of *communication between this country and Ireland with a view to its improvement*'.⁹⁵ It is difficult not to conclude that there was a connection between this use of more rapid railway communication between London and Dublin and Peel's desire to stop the momentum of O'Connell's drive to repeal the Union of Britain and Ireland. Peel had articulated railways as part of his Irish policy at a time when he saw that the Union was in danger.

In 1843 there was a mounting crisis in Ireland, as O'Connell made a direct appeal to the populace which drew financial support and attendance at very large meetings.⁹⁶ Until that moment there had been no clear connection between the building of the line towards Dublin and government concerns over the security of the Union. The lack of progress from 1840 to 1842

⁹² HC Deb 09 May 1843 vol. 69 cc23-5.

⁹³ HC Deb 09 May 1843 vol. 69 cc23-5

⁹⁴ HC Deb 10 May 1843 vol. 69 c101 [My emphasis]

⁹⁵ HC Deb 10 May 1843 vol. 69 c101. [My emphasis]

⁹⁶ Comerford, *O'Connell*.

showed that the CHR was not important enough to gain public funding unless there was a political imperative. Between 1836 and 1839, the IRC had aimed to build the Union through constructive engagement, with O'Connell as a willing collaborator and advocate. Peel's position, as articulated in May 1843, appeared very different. Earlier attempts by Grosvenor and Welsh landowners to secure the CHR for 'imperial purposes' - as they saw it - in May 1840 received very little response from London and as noted above, Peel voted against its scheme. But once O'Connell moved from cooperation with the Whigs to a full challenge to Peel's Tory Government and the Union, the credentials of the CHR as part of Irish policy manifested themselves at a time when: 'the policy of conciliation was [...] exhausted'.⁹⁷ But this was clearly a different Irish policy from that suggested by the IRC. The Home Secretary James Graham was challenged about his opposition to the railway proposals of the IRC.⁹⁸ Unlike the IRC, Graham could see no case for railways in Ireland:

No railways succeed or are in a material degree valuable to the public interest, except those which unite large seats of manufacturing industry with each other, or with the capital, and in the present state of Ireland, a country purely agricultural, the advantage of railways, I am convinced, would not be at all in correspondence with the expense.⁹⁹

Viscount Howick, who had a record of challenging laissez-faire railway developments, emphasised the difference between the 1843 policy of government on railways in Ireland, as expressed by Peel and Graham, and that of the IRC explored in Chapter 3.¹⁰⁰ Howick told parliament that the IRC scheme had been aimed at:

Creating a demand for labour, and causing trade and manufactures to spring up where they had been unknown before [so that] in a certain number of years a demand would have been created for labour, which would have had the effect of *rendering land no longer indispensable to the Irish labourer as a means of existence...*¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ HC Deb 23 June 1843 vol. 70 c323.

⁹⁸ Jonathan Parry, 'Graham, Sir James Robert George, second baronet (1792–1861)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11204, accessed 19 April 2016]

⁹⁹ HC Deb 07 July 1843 vol. 70 c818.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Burroughs, 'Grey, Henry George, third Earl Grey (1802–1894)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11540, accessed 19 April 2016].

¹⁰¹ HC Deb 10 July 1843 vol. 70 c883.

By contrast, the focus of Peel and his government was apparently not to create a viable Irish manufacturing economy as argued by the IRC. That is consistent with the notion that the British Government saw Ireland as a necessary source of cheap food as argued by Kinealy in 1999.¹⁰² That notion was reinforced by the creation of the Devon Commission that examined landlord and tenant relationships rather than attempting to reduce the status of the land issue in Irish politics, which had been an aim of the IRC proposals, as confirmed by Viscount Howick. The Devon Commission provided a summary of important reports from the 1830s but did not include that of the IRC. That is a remarkable omission given the scope of the IRC report, the fact that it addressed the issue of land and that it proposed a solution to that issue.¹⁰³ The Government's priority in 1843 was a railway on the British mainland that accessed Dublin as part of its Irish policy, rather than railways in Ireland to develop the Irish economy, reduce dependence on land and relieve distress there.

The CHR proposal moved quickly under pressure from government, and in a further survey of harbours, Captains Back and Fair were unequivocal in their support for Holyhead. They thought that Porth Dinllaen was unsuitable as a port for Dublin traffic in contrast to previous "expert" advice.¹⁰⁴ Still there was no consensus on the best route. For example, there was a meeting in June 1843 at the London home of Colonel Douglas Pennant, a prominent North Wales slate owner. Attendees were clear that a mere naval report was inadequate because it failed to make a comprehensive case for the CHR. They considered that public confidence required that an eminent civil engineer be appointed in order to give credibility to any decision.¹⁰⁵ James Walker, a prominent engineer, was appointed to provide such a report.¹⁰⁶ In July 1843, *The Times* reported that government supported the CHR, but that the work would have to be funded from the public purse because there would be little local traffic on the line.¹⁰⁷ By October 1843, the matter was urgent as the Repeal movement in Ireland reached its peak with the arrest of O'Connell after his planned 'monster meeting' at Clontarf was banned on Peel's orders.¹⁰⁸ Walker's report did not

¹⁰² Christine Kinealy, "Food Exports from Ireland 1846-47". *History Ireland* Vol. 5 No. 1 (1997) 32-36.

¹⁰³ Royal Com. of Inquiry into State of Law and Practice in respect to Occupation of Land in Ireland. Report; Minutes of Evidence, 11, Part I. 1845 (19) XIX.1, 57.

¹⁰⁴ "Communication with Ireland. Report on Holyhead and Port Dynllaen Harbour by Captain Back and Captain Fair", *The Times*, 25 October 1843.

¹⁰⁵ "Communication between London and Dublin", *The Times*, 17 June 1843, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Denis Smith, 'Walker, James (1781-1862)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45714>, accessed 22 Sept 2016]

¹⁰⁷ "Railway to Holyhead", *Liverpool Times*, quoted in *The Times*, 8 July 1843, 7.

¹⁰⁸ "Editorial", *The Times*, 9 October 1843, 4.

settle the matter of the CHR any more clearly than the previous one had. It appeared in the *Morning Post* in full in October 1843 and included a consideration that had not been a part of previous plans for the CHR but had been mentioned by the IRC - the needs of the Welsh population. Walker noted that if the: 'thinly populated and mountainous part of the country' did not get a railway as part of the line towards Dublin then it would be a long time before they benefited from any railway communication.¹⁰⁹ Like Back and Fair, Walker favoured Holyhead, subject to improvements in the harbour and the provision of a breakwater at a cost of £400,000.¹¹⁰ That appeared to mark significant progress for the CHR.

Walker made a number of technical points about the proposed railway that proved influential in the longer term - and supported Peel's emphasis on speed of communication rather than economy of construction. In contrast to the frugal approach of the IRC, he suggested that the line be: 'made in a good manner, *as a great public work* [...] even if the traffic upon it were for some time small'.¹¹¹ He dispensed with Stephenson's plans for using the Menai suspension bridge in favour of a separate railway bridge, and he concluded controversially that Holyhead might be reached *by an inland route* rather than along the coast – perhaps the inland route of the PDR.¹¹² That provided some encouragement for the PDR that it attempted to use in 1846. It may have been Walker's comments that led William Gladstone, President of the Board of Trade, to write privately to his father in November 1843 about a meeting with John Moss, Chairman of the GJR: 'The scheme of railway communication with Holyhead is on the carpet and he [Moss] seems to contemplate that the L&B [London and Birmingham] and GJR [Grand Junction Railway] companies should make a proposal to Government to undertake it'.¹¹³ That was a measure of the Government's frustration at its failure to accelerate the CHR.

Unsurprisingly, the *Chester Chronicle* thought all debate was at an end.¹¹⁴ The CHR took the same view, and by December 1843 it had deposited Parliamentary notices and books of reference necessary for parliamentary approval.¹¹⁵ In Dublin, while O'Connell was awaiting trial, a

¹⁰⁹ "Report of J. Walker, Civil Engineer, To Sir John Barrow, Secretary to the Admiralty", *Morning Post*, 25 October 1843, 3. The report did not appear within Parliamentary Papers until 1844 - *Communication with Ireland. Copy of report on Holyhead and Port Dynllaen harbours, by Captain Back and Captain Fair, to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. Copy of report of James Walker, Esq., civil engineer, to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.* **1844** (43) (633) XLV. 509.

¹¹⁰ Report of J. Walker, *Morning Post*, 3. [£35M at 2015 prices]

¹¹¹ Report of J. Walker, *Morning Post*, 4. [My emphasis]

¹¹² Report of J. Walker, *Morning Post*, 4.

¹¹³ Flintshire Record Office [FRO], Hawarden, Gladstone Glynne Papers, GG227, Letter from William Gladstone to Sir John Gladstone, 16 November 1843.

¹¹⁴ "Direct Communication between London and Dublin", *Chester Chronicle*, 27 October 1843, 3.

¹¹⁵ "Chester and Holyhead Railway", *Chester Chronicle*, 1 December 1843, 2.

meeting of senior Irish figures pressed government to endorse the CHR and especially the monopoly of postal traffic to the city from mainland Britain. The meeting also heard voices of dissent, especially from those who sympathised with the PDR. They demonstrated an increasing interest in the issue on behalf of the GWR that was beginning to challenge the power of the LBR and GJR in England - but the momentum was firmly with the CHR.¹¹⁶ The *Morning Post* noted the use of the railway, alongside the steamboat, to support the Government policy in Ireland that was focused on law enforcement rather than social and economic reform: 'The steam-boat and the railway are great marplots – and indeed, have afforded practical proof that an Irish insurrection is [...] almost a hopeless thing'.¹¹⁷ The paper (and government) got a practical demonstration of the need to improve the speed of communication in the announcement of the verdict in Dublin against O'Connell at the end of his trial. Its reporter arrived in London on 12 February 1844 at 2 am, having left Dublin at midnight on Saturday: 'by means of a steam-boat engaged for the purpose and a special train on the railway' – a journey of 26 hours.¹¹⁸ Just five days later, Peel received a private letter on the notepaper of the LBR, giving him the news that success for the CHR was finally in prospect as the LBR would support it financially. The letter was from Richard Creed, LBR company secretary - and the tone and private nature of the letter suggested that there was a close friendship between the two men:

As you will probably be desirous of knowing what passed at the last General Meeting [...] on the subject of the [CHR]. I have taken the liberty of sending you one of our reports. I may also venture to hope *from the kindness I have always received at your hands* that a strong and unanimous expression of the meeting in favour of a Testimonial for the Company [i.e. the CHR] to their secretary may gratify you.¹¹⁹

Peel's reply was equally warm and enthusiastic: 'I *rejoice* in the unanimous and well merited testimony in your exertions and services that was shown at the meeting of the proprietors'. The personal connection between them was further emphasised as Peel hoped that Creed had:

¹¹⁶ "Communication between London and Dublin – Great Meeting at the Mansion House", *Freeman's Journal*, 18 December 1843, 3.

¹¹⁷ "Ireland, from our Correspondent, Dublin", Dec 18, *Morning Post*, 20 December 1843, 5. A marplot is a means of defeating a plan or plot.

¹¹⁸ "Conviction of the Irish Conspirators", *Morning Post*, 12 February 1844, 4.

¹¹⁹ The British Library, London [BL] MS 40540. British Library, Private Correspondence of Sir Robert Peel, MSS 40540, Volume CCCLX (ff.418) f227, Letter from Richard Creed to Sir Robert Peel, 18 February 1844. [My emphasis]

'recovered from the indisposition under which you were labouring when I last saw you'.¹²⁰ More practically, that liaison eventually delivered £1 million of capital for the CHR from the LBR - hence Peel's rejoicing - a strong emotion from a notoriously cool character.¹²¹ That settled the logistics of the scheme; government would build the harbour at Holyhead and leave the LBR to make the railway.¹²² Peel had secured the CHR as part of his Irish policy and had not compromised his commitment to the private funding of railways.

The timing of these exchanges between Peel and the LBR is significant. In February 1844, Peel began to articulate a more positive approach to governing Ireland, with less reliance on force and more concessions to the emerging Irish Roman Catholic middle class. But railways were equally useful in that approach, as they had been in Peel's tougher stance in 1843 that had first encouraged him to pursue more rapid access to Dublin. Gash outlined the important parts of Peel's new Irish policy as being maintenance of the Union and the Church of Ireland, equality for Catholics and Protestants in the service of the state, equality in voting rights between Ireland and the rest of the UK, financial support for Catholic clergy, more funds for schools and Irish academic education.¹²³ His account *misses out the substance of this study* – the creation of more rapid communication between London and Dublin. It is no coincidence that Peel's exchange with Creed, the secretary of the LBR, took place *during* a debate about the repeal of the Union in February 1844, and within a few days of O'Connell's release from prison and his re-appearance in the House of Commons after his conviction was overturned.¹²⁴ It was a dangerous moment for the Union between Britain and Ireland. Peel outlined the features noted by Gash as he described his policy towards Ireland – and he added one more that Gash did not mention - just five days after Peel received the favourable reply from Creed. He argued that Ireland could be governed effectively without the use of force and based his case on a technological solution: 'the wonderful applications of science *to bring Dublin nearer to London than many towns in England now are*'.¹²⁵ That statement was the fulfilment of the comments he had made about communication between London and Dublin in 1843 that were noted earlier, albeit the policy in 1844 was more conciliatory than a year before. It shows *specifically* that by early 1844 the building of the CHR

¹²⁰ BL, MSS 40540, Private Correspondence of Sir Robert Peel, Volume CCCLX (ff.418), f229, Letter from Sir Robert Peel to Richard Creed, 18 February 1844.

¹²¹ M.C. Reed, *London and North Western Railway: A History* (Atlantic: Cornwall, 1996), 32. [£88M at 2015 prices]

¹²² "The London and Birmingham Railway Company", *Morning Advertiser*, 10 February 1844, 3.

¹²³ Norman Gash, *Peel*, 419.

¹²⁴ "O'Connell in 'The House'", *Freeman's Journal*, 17 February, 1844, 2.

¹²⁵ HC Deb 23 February 1844 vol. 73 c254. [My emphasis]

was not necessarily about enforcement and the potential to transport troops but was specifically part of a new policy of governing Ireland: ‘by the ordinary rules by which a country should be governed’ – a phrase that Peel linked to improved railway connection in his parliamentary speech.¹²⁶ Railway communication had been trailed in *The Times* in December 1843, where the CHR was noted as part of a more constructive approach to Ireland.¹²⁷ The Duke of Wellington reinforced that element of government policy as he considered that: ‘there could be *no object more interesting* than to render the communication with Ireland as expeditious and convenient as possible’.¹²⁸ No doubt the Duke, as head of the British Army, was interested in the carriage of troops – but that was not the primary purpose for which the CHR was envisaged in Peel’s 1844 Irish policy. Contemporary newspapers understood that the CHR was a feature of Peel’s Irish policy, and one of which they approved. One London paper considered that the CHR was ‘the true way’ to carry out legislative union: ‘spontaneously and silently [with advantages] to the whole empire’.¹²⁹ The *Chester Chronicle* agreed and considered that the revenue from goods and passengers was unimportant, and what mattered was that the CHR was the means to provide a: ‘*mechanical union* of the two kingdoms which nothing less forcible than political disruption can repeal’.¹³⁰

The CHR also had the advantage of serving Peel’s more local constituency interests that he had defined in 1839 as ‘paramount to every other’.¹³¹ Expert opinion was clearly divided between Holyhead and Porth Dinllaen but ‘the great weight of opinion’ favoured Porth Dinllaen according to at least one railway journal.¹³² Any combination of line and port would have improved communication with Ireland in the way that Peel envisaged. But Peel had local political and personal interests in securing the Trent Valley Railway (TVR) through his constituency of Tamworth that connected to the CHR and shortened the distance between London and Holyhead

¹²⁶ HC Deb 23 February 1844 vol. 73 c254.

¹²⁷ “Redress of Irish Grievances”, *The Times*, 6 December 1843, 5.

¹²⁸ HL Deb 19 February 1844 vol. 72 c1103. [My emphasis] For Wellington see, Norman Gash, ‘Wellesley, Arthur, first duke of Wellington (1769–1852)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29001, accessed 18 April 2016]

¹²⁹ Editorial, *London Evening Standard*, 1 March 1844, 2.

¹³⁰ “Chester and Holyhead Railway”, *Chester Chronicle*, 17 May 1844, 2. [My emphasis]. ‘Mechanical’ was the nineteenth century equivalent of the current notion of technological. The word ‘technology’ was not used in the nineteenth century in the way it is today when the equivalent term was ‘machinery’. See, Leo Marx, “Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept.” *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2010): 561-77.

¹³¹ “Sir Robert Peel and Railways”, *London Evening Standard*, 9 September 1839, 4.

¹³² “Harbours of Refuge – Holyhead and Porth-Dynllaen (from the Railway Gazette)”, *Cork Examiner*, 19 February 1845, 1.

compared to the route from London via Birmingham (see figure 4.1). When the TVR eventually opened in 1847, a local newspaper was clear that it was Peel who had revived the scheme that had failed in 1844. He had done so when he had suggested that the line which would contribute most to lessen the distance between London and Dublin and should receive the sanction and support of government.¹³³ In backing the CHR, he also built the case for the TVR and ensured that it was constructed. In addition to the advantages he claimed for it on the Irish route, the TVR also cut the London to Manchester distance. Peel's family had made its money from cotton, and his efforts with the TVR showed that he continued to support the capital city of the cotton industry in Britain by giving it a shorter route to the capital.¹³⁴ His personal engagement in the detail of the CHR was remarkable, given his apparent opposition to government involvement in railway building and the other pressures on his time. In January 1844 he: 'manifested the most perfect acquaintance with the subject'.¹³⁵ James Walker wrote to him directly in September 1844 with a detailed summary of his views on the issues he covered in his CHR report. Among those issues was Walker's concern about the impact of the CHR on the existing London to Holyhead road in Anglesey, where road and rail were close together. Walker wrote: 'surely attention ought to be paid to the safety of those who may prefer travelling by this magnificent road after the Railway shall be opened'.¹³⁶ Peel dismissed this with a marginal note: 'I do not think there is much weight in [this] objection'.¹³⁷ His priority was speed, and was apparently a long way from the IRC concern that railways should be inexpensive and not duplicate state-funded infrastructure.

Peel had done much to promote the CHR during 1843 when it was important to his Irish policy, and he remained closely involved in the following year as the CHR struggled through the Parliamentary process. His commitment appeared to combine a local interest in the railways through his constituency and a strategic interest in reinforcing London's grip on the government of Ireland, with reduced reliance on the use of force. The CHR was quick to build on its political advantage. Lord Grosvenor pressed Peel on his attitude to Holyhead and secured the Government's final decision in favour of the CHR. Peel's answer in parliament showed how much care he had taken to get consensus on the decision after: 'the impartiality of the persons who

¹³³ "Trent Valley Railway", *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 8 May 1847, 5.

¹³⁴ "Meetings of the Trent Valley Railway Company", *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 11 March 1846, 3-4.

¹³⁵ "Railway Communication with Ireland" *London Standard*, 11 January 1844, 3.

¹³⁶ BL MS 40540 Private Papers of Sir Robert Peel, Vol. CCCLX (ff.418) f327. Letter from James Walker to Sir Robert Peel, 7 September 1844.

¹³⁷ BL MS 40540 Private Papers of Sir Robert Peel, Vol. CCCLX (ff.418) f327. Letter from James Walker to Sir Robert Peel, 7 September 1844.

made the report' had been questioned and he asserted government support for Holyhead.¹³⁸ In March 1844, his personal involvement was shown clearly when he wrote privately to William Gladstone, President of the Board of Trade, in previously unpublished correspondence, and asked him to see Walker. He explained that Walker was:

Engaged by the Government to survey the harbour at Holyhead and the line generally; [...] a line which affects significant public interests in respect of the communication between England and Ireland. The Committee has the matter closely watched. The line ought not to pass over the Menai Bridge.¹³⁹

Gladstone clearly responded, and in May 1844 argued for the inclusion of a member of the Government, Sir George Clerk, on the Committee considering the CHR. Gladstone cited public interests to support this approach and Peel backed him because public money was involved.¹⁴⁰ That was unusual because railway bills were private measures and were generally considered by committees consisting of MPs with local interests, who may not have had any particular knowledge of railways. The Government was not usually directly represented on the committees and it did not consider individual railways in the context of national interests.¹⁴¹ That was further evidence of its wish to secure rapid approval of the CHR as its Irish policy developed. The CHR was an exceptional railway – a politically generated railway - so it engaged the attention of the most senior figures in government. Thus, when there were further objections to Holyhead yet another report was commissioned by the Government from engineer James Rendel in May 1844.¹⁴² That report removed the remaining objections to Holyhead. Rendel also quashed a final bid by the Shrewsbury lobby to cut across North Wales via Mold and avoid Chester to reach the coast at

¹³⁸ HC Deb 29 February 1844 vol. 73 c405.

¹³⁹ BL MSS 44275: 1834-1850, Gladstone Papers Vol. CXC 9 (ff.321), Letter from Peel to Gladstone 30 March 1844.

¹⁴⁰ "House of Commons, Tuesday, April 30," *The Times*, 1 May 1844, 3. Gladstone was president of the Board of Trade at this time. For Sir George Clerk see G. F. R. Barker, 'Clerk, Sir George, of Penicuik, sixth baronet (1787–1867)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5613>, accessed 18 April 2016]

¹⁴¹ Henry Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 19.

¹⁴² "Rendel, James Meadows (1799–1856)," Michael R. Lane in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23364> accessed September 23, 2014].

Abergele as advocated by engineer Francis Giles (see Figure 4.1). Rendel thought that route was unsuitable: 'for a line where *great speed* would have to be resorted to'.¹⁴³

The PDR supporters were incensed by Rendel's involvement as he was the engineer of the Birkenhead Dock Company which shared the same promoters, solicitor and agent as the CHR. The PDR alleged that the company also held £70,000 in CHR shares.¹⁴⁴ It was all to no avail. In June 1844, Lord Dalhousie confirmed Holyhead as the favoured port and the grant of money to improve the harbour there - but only when the best line of railway was secured across the Menai Straits.¹⁴⁵ The Duke of Wellington reinforced Peel's private comments to Gladstone and made clear that unless the CHR built a new bridge the line would not be approved.¹⁴⁶ Once that was resolved, the measure cleared Parliament and received the Royal Assent on 4 July 1844.

4.4 Public funding for the Chester and Holyhead Railway

The CHR was unlike other railways in the Victorian period because it was a specific item of government policy and was supported financially and politically by government. That contrasts with Casson's notion of Victorian railways being: 'constructed entirely by private enterprise with minimal state subsidies'.¹⁴⁷ Peel played a crucial role in the development of the line and was generally a strong advocate of *laissez-faire*. As early as 1835, he had made clear that he would support railways: 'on all occasions [if] they will succeed as speculations and prove a profitable investment'.¹⁴⁸ It was against that background that Peel negotiated with the CHR in 1844. By then he had already acquired a reputation for: 'his infidelity to every opinion and principle'.¹⁴⁹ He used those abilities in full by providing government funding for the CHR in support of his Irish policy, while appearing to sustain his commitment to *laissez-faire*. His change in direction did not mean that Peel had abandoned his economic philosophy. Peel was a pragmatist: 'who regarded

¹⁴³ Chester and Holyhead railway. Copy of Mr. Rendel's report to the Admiralty on Chester and Holyhead railway, p12, **1844** (262) XLV. 545 [My emphasis]

¹⁴⁴ Holyhead harbour of refuge. Copy of a letter from Sir Love Parry, in the year 1844, in reference to a proposed harbour of refuge at Holyhead, with a copy of the plan annexed thereto, 1. **1846** (380) XLV.521 [£6.25M at 2015 prices]

¹⁴⁵ Dalhousie had oversight of railway schemes. See David J. Howlett, 'Ramsay, James Andrew Broun, first Marquess of Dalhousie (1812–1860)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/23088>, [Accessed 3 May 2015]

¹⁴⁶ HL Deb 10 June 1844 vol. 75 cc415-9.

¹⁴⁷ Mark Casson, *The World's First Railway System*, 1.

¹⁴⁸ "Sir Robert Peel on Railways", *Western Times*, 26 December 1835, 4.

¹⁴⁹ "Sir Robert Peel and the Speculation Mania", *Morning Post*, 11 November 1845, 3.

government intervention as an *occasionally justified exception* to the general principle of *laissez-faire*.”¹⁵⁰

The negotiation between government and the CHR provided such an ‘occasionally justified exception’. On 11 January 1844 The CHR offered to carry the mail for £40,000 per annum with limitations on the number and speed of trains and excluded the cost of a bridge over the Menai Straits.¹⁵¹ The Government confirmed that it was inclined towards Holyhead rather than Porth Dinllaen but wanted a new bridge rather than using the road bridge.¹⁵² That was a personal decision by Peel, as shown by his letter to Gladstone in March in which he ordered that: ‘the line must not pass over the Menai Bridge’.¹⁵³ On 19 January 1844 the CHR sought confirmation of the Government’s intentions to build a harbour as the parties sought a consensus, apart from the GJR, which was concerned at the costs involved.¹⁵⁴ The GJR dropped out on 8 February 1844.¹⁵⁵ John Moss of the GJR was flattered by the seniority of the ministers involved in the negotiation when he wrote to Gladstone’s father: ‘I ventured to say that I thought we had cause to be proud of having such talent as Peel, Graham and Clerk to meet a set of traders!!!’¹⁵⁶ That was another measure of the importance of the CHR to government.

The negotiations covered issues such as the provision of a harbour at Holyhead at public expense, payment for the bridge over the Menai Straits and whether the traffic on the line would provide a satisfactory return on investment. Eventually, the CHR agreed to meet the cost of the bridge and the Government accepted that it must guarantee: ‘the company a return of five per cent per annum on the capital subscribed’ as the line was unlikely to be commercially viable without that support.¹⁵⁷ That showed the importance of these negotiations, conducted as they were against a background of serious debate in parliament about the governance of Ireland. The 5 per cent guarantee amounted to *public funding of the line* and was very different from Peel’s

¹⁵⁰ Morrow, John. "The Paradox of Peel as Carlylean Hero." *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 1 (1997): 97-110. [My emphasis]

¹⁵¹ Holyhead harbour, &c, 1847-48, 3.

¹⁵² Holyhead harbour, &c, 1847-48, 4-5.

¹⁵³ BL MS 44275 1834-1850, Gladstone Papers Vol. CXC 9, f195, Sir Robert Peel to William Gladstone, 30 March 1843.

¹⁵⁴ Holyhead harbour, &c, 1847-48, 5.

¹⁵⁵ Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 49.

¹⁵⁶ John Moss to Sir John Gladstone, 16 January 1844, Gladstone Glynne Papers, Flintshire Record Office MSS GG298. Clerk was Secretary to the Treasury at this time, see, G. F. R. Barker, ‘Clerk, Sir George, of Penicuik, sixth baronet (1787–1867)’, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5613>, accessed 17 Oct 2014].

¹⁵⁷ Holyhead harbour, &c, 1847-48, 5-14.

stated belief in private construction of the railways. The fact that this was public funding of the LBR was clear at the time – its secretary referred to it as a ‘grant’ in August 1844.¹⁵⁸ That relationship was confirmed by a later select committee that noted the unique position of the CHR, and that its financial support from government was a: ‘sum which amounts in fact to a subvention’¹⁵⁹ i.e. a grant from Government. The same approach was later used to support railway construction in India as part of national policy, where government offered to: ‘guarantee to them [railway companies] an interest of 5 per cent upon the capital invested’.¹⁶⁰ That is almost identical wording to that used in negotiations with the CHR and reinforces the notion that the CHR was part of UK government policy towards Ireland from 1844.¹⁶¹ The CHR’s importance was shown clearly by the involvement of Peel, Gladstone, Dalhousie and Wellington, four of the most senior politicians in Victorian Britain, who ensured its success in Parliament and an arrangement that guaranteed its long-term financial security. It had been a long struggle for a controversial measure but the direct engagement of the Government in a matter that was part of its Irish policy ensured its success. However, if the Government hoped that the passage of the CHR’s private bill was the end of competition for Irish traffic it was mistaken.

4.5 The Great Western Railway challenge 1845-46

The CHR Act in 1844 did not end competition for the railway route towards Dublin, and the CHR’s position remained insecure until 1846.¹⁶² Doubts continued about the technical difficulty and expense of crossing the Menai Straits, so that the unexpected revival of the GWR scheme to Porth Dinllaen (PDR) in 1846 was a worrying proposition for the CHR and its supporters within government. The 1846 GWR scheme was more direct than the 1836 version of the PDR considered in chapters 2 and 3, as it travelled across Wales from Worcester rather than Shrewsbury. Charles Russell, the GWR chairman, was clear that its route was as direct: ‘as if it were made by a ruler’.¹⁶³ Figure 4.2 below illustrates how correct he was in that assertion. It was

¹⁵⁸ “Railway Intelligence”, *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 17 August 1844, 2.

¹⁵⁹ Second report from the Select Committee on railway acts enactments; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index, Index, **1846** (687), XIV.5, 5 and 32. Subvention, “A grant of money especially from a government” <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/subvention> [accessed 2 November 2014]

¹⁶⁰ Papers referring to General Question of Railway Communication in India; Correspondence on proposed Railway between Madras and Arcot, 2. **1850** (522) XLI.179.

¹⁶¹ Holyhead harbour, & 1847-48, 14.

¹⁶² The Act was passed in July 1844, see, Peter Baughen, *The Chester and Holyhead Railway, Vol. 1: The Main Line up to 1880* (David and Charles: Newton Abbot, 1972), 46.

¹⁶³ “Town Council”, *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 3 June 1846, 4.

more difficult for Peel to oppose it, as he was a long-standing advocate of short routes and had argued for Holyhead on those grounds in 1840.¹⁶⁴ The GWR was in a hurry to proceed, and it was also willing to commit significant resources to the project, as shown by the size of the proposed works that included a huge viaduct near Porthmadog.¹⁶⁵ Charles Vignoles, the engineer of this and the earlier PDR scheme, apparently also envisaged direct competition with the CHR and included an option of extending the GWR route to Holyhead (with a second bridge over the Menai Straits) in his survey.¹⁶⁶

The seriousness of the GWR bid was shown by the power of its supporters and their offers of funding, as reported at the Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway (OWW) meeting in March 1846. Attendees heard that the broad gauge PDR was supported by landowners, Irish bankers and other railway companies to a total of £4.2 million.¹⁶⁷ Its more powerful and faster locomotives also threatened to outperform the CHR on the main requirement of the London to Dublin link so that:

The journey between Dublin and London might be performed in eleven hours, leaving four or five hours for the inhabitants of the respective places to answer letters before the return of the post the same day; and *this was impossible to be attained by any other means than by that line.*¹⁶⁸

The decision of the GWR to use broad gauge for its PDR may have given it a technical advantage – but it also provided opponents of the scheme with potential grounds for challenge that were used fully. The issue of railway gauge was fiercely debated in 1845-46 and the Gauge Commission (GC) appointed by government to decide the issue had concluded that the narrow gauge (used by most railways including the CHR) should predominate and that new broad gauge lines should be limited largely to south-west England.¹⁶⁹ But the GWR directors were determined that its PDR would use the broad gauge.¹⁷⁰ The GC's decision on its preferred railway gauge was therefore also a decision

¹⁶⁴ HC Deb 23 June 1840 vol. 55 c18.

¹⁶⁵ BL MS 58204, Diary of Charles Blacker Vignoles, 2 June 1846.

¹⁶⁶ BL MS 58204, Diary of Charles Blacker Vignoles, 2 June 1846.

¹⁶⁷ "Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway – Half-Yearly Meeting", *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 4 March 1846, 8. [Valued at £367M at 2015 prices]

¹⁶⁸ "Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway – Half-Yearly Meeting", *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 4 March 1846. [My emphasis]

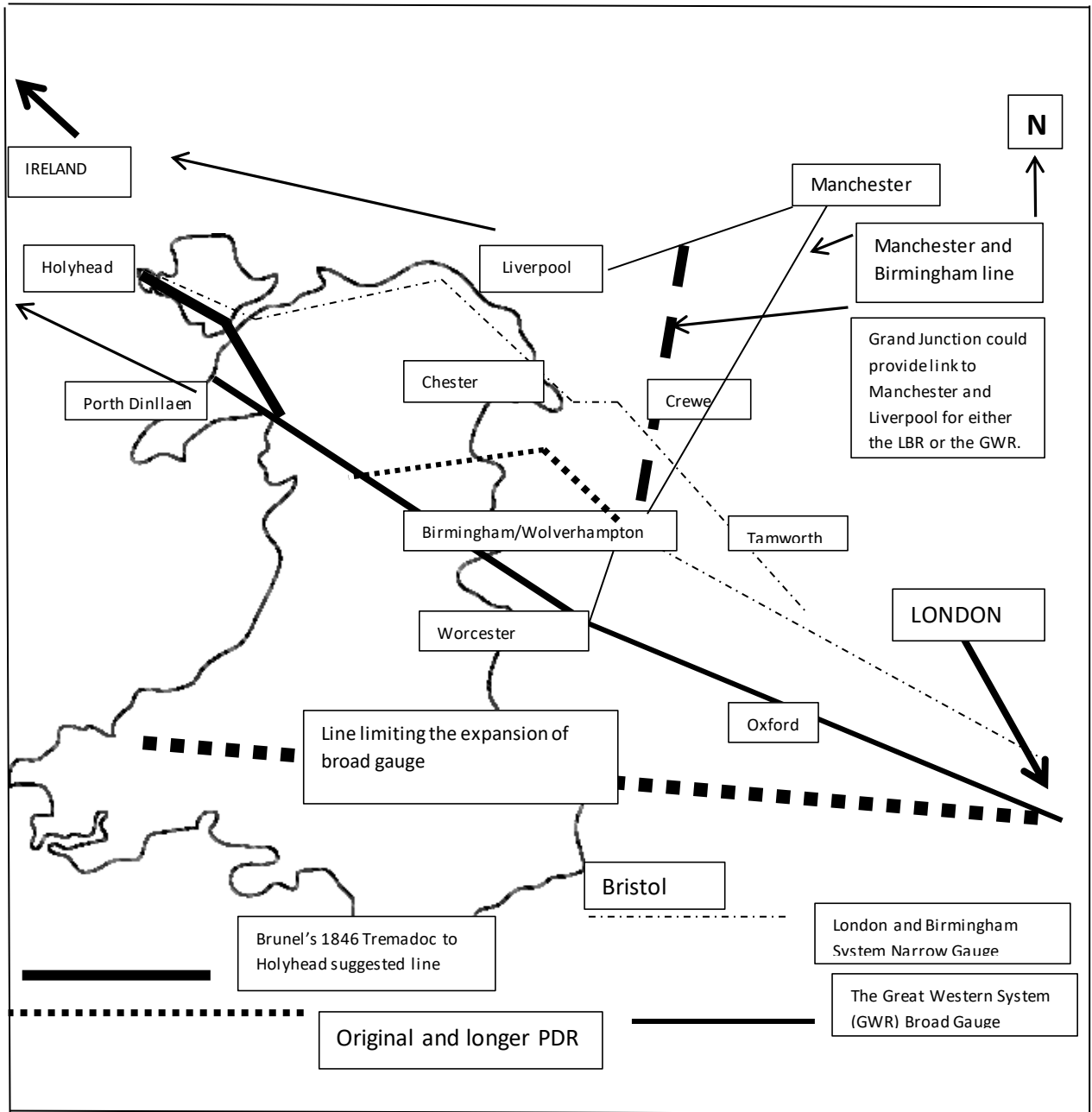
¹⁶⁹ Jack Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales 1830-1914, Volume 1, The System and its Working* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 45-47.

¹⁷⁰ "Railway Notabilia", 1846, 8.

on the PDR and the wider railway schemes of the GWR, especially as it made it difficult to progress any new broad gauge schemes north of Bristol.

It is important to understand the strategic significance of the GWR and its expansionary plans that rivalled the London and Birmingham (LBR) for the traffic between London, the West Midlands, the Mersey estuary, Manchester, Ireland and especially Dublin, as Figure 4.2 shows. The key to success in the struggle between the LBR and the GWR was the line from Birmingham to Liverpool that was operated by the Grand Junction Railway (GJR). If the GJR opted to cooperate with the GWR it deprived the LBR of access to Liverpool: if the GJR joined the LBR it stopped the GWR progressing beyond Birmingham. Resolution of this issue was one of the most critical strategic decisions of the Railway Mania years of 1844-46.

Figure 4.2 Map showing the competing systems for Irish traffic before the decisions of the Gauge Commission of 1846 were implemented



It apparently suited the GJR and its Liverpool supporters better to work with the GWR than to cooperate with the LBR, with whom they had had a difficult relationship. The GJR secretary Mark Huish told the select committee on the OWW Bill that he considered that the larger waggons on the GWR broad gauge enabled compressed goods such as cotton to be carried more cheaply - and revealed that the town to which it carried most cotton was not Manchester but Bristol, the home of the GWR.¹⁷¹ The GJR therefore served a city that rivalled Manchester in its main product. The

¹⁷¹ Select Committee on Oxford, Worcester, Wolverhampton Railway and Oxford and Rugby Railway Bills, Minutes of Evidence, Index, 493 (1845), XI.1, 583.

recommendation of the GC to support the narrow gauge in February 1846 tipped the balance in favour of Manchester's commercial interests and frustrated Bristol as it restricted the broad gauge mostly to south of the line in Figure 4.2. That isolated the Liverpool based GJR because if it persisted in supporting the GWR, it would have no direct route to London without a break of gauge. After the GC's decision the GJR could only achieve a line from Liverpool to London on a single gauge by aligning with the LBR and deserting the GWR. The GC decision also stopped the PDR, which was north of the line that marked the permitted development of the broad gauge. The LBR was therefore handed a monopoly of the route from London to Liverpool and Manchester and the short-sea Dublin traffic through Holyhead by the decision of government to favour the narrow gauge on which the CHR was to be built – and funded in part by the LBR. The CHR route to Ireland was therefore protected from all competition. The position of the narrow gauge operators was further enhanced when government permitted- perhaps even encouraged - an amalgamation between the GJR, LBR and Manchester and Birmingham Railway that created a near-monopoly of railway access to the four main industrial cities in the UK as well as Dublin. They were joined together to form the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) in 1846.¹⁷²

The GWR lost this political struggle despite its advantages of higher speed, shorter mileage and a promise of a more rapid connection between London and Dublin. The decision that delivered that defeat caused controversy in 1846 when James Morrison MP, a prominent critic of railway policy in Britain as discussed in Chapter 3, argued that the process was flawed and possibly corrupt, because the gauge decisions were political ones about power and profit rather than being about the resolution of technical or administrative issues.¹⁷³ Morrison also opposed the creation of the LNWR for the same reasons. He saw that in 1845 the Board of Trade's Railway Department supported the amalgamation of smaller *but not larger* railway companies because that latter reduced competition and might: 'impede the formation of new Railways where they were required' – such as the GWR's competing line towards Dublin.¹⁷⁴ The Railway Department considered that the CHR was 'almost [...] an extension of the [LBR]' and should not amalgamate with the Chester and Birkenhead Railway (CBR) and block access to Birkenhead that was a rival port to Liverpool.¹⁷⁵ Morrison extended the Railway Department argument by making clear his

¹⁷² Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 284.

¹⁷³ "Morrison, James (1789–1857)," Charles Jones in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/19326> accessed October 14, 2014]

¹⁷⁴ Report of the Railway Department of the Board of Trade on proposed amalgamations of railways, 3, **1845** (279) XXXIX.153.

¹⁷⁵ Report on Amalgamations 1845, 7.

view that the real objective of narrow gauge railway companies seeking amalgamation in 1846 was: 'to extend the sphere of monopoly, by uniting in a compact body different companies which, while separate, may interfere with each other's profits'.¹⁷⁶ Advocates of the LNWR were explicit that the argument for creating the large company was to control the traffic in the prosperous north of England under: 'one entire management [and] to get rid of the competition for Holyhead traffic'.¹⁷⁷ It was surprising that such a far-reaching development as the creation of the LNWR – truly an amalgamation of large companies - was permitted by parliament. Morrison saw it as a product of MPs being 'heartily sick' of the subject of railways by the end of the 1846 Parliament, and therefore not as alert as they might have been to schemes that damaged the public interest and benefited powerful economic concerns.¹⁷⁸ But he may have been rather charitable in his assessment.

The creation of LNWR was not celebrated as a great public good despite Reed's view that it was 'widely acknowledged as logical and appropriate'.¹⁷⁹ Ross likewise suggested that there was no objection to the creation of the LNWR.¹⁸⁰ The evidence from this analysis contradicts both statements. There was relatively little publicity for the creation of the LNWR, which tends to suggest that its promoters hoped to avoid attention. For example, in Manchester one newspaper thought that it was not 'generally known' despite the significance of the change.¹⁸¹ This was no small event, and it was certainly noticed in the rival railway city of York, where it was remarked that the area of the country enclosed by London, Manchester and Liverpool: 'the great triangle of its trade' was under the control of one company: 'a phase of affairs hitherto unknown to the constitution of the commerce of this country'.¹⁸² The York paper compared the LNWR monopoly to that of the Corn Laws with a tendency to produce 'dangerous abuses'.¹⁸³ The creation of the LNWR was a controversial development and one that is not easily explained, given the profile of opposition considered above.

¹⁷⁶ James Morrison, *Observations illustrative of the defects of the English System of Railway Legislation and of its injurious operation on the Public Interest with Suggestions for its Improvement* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1846), 36.

¹⁷⁷ "Important Meeting of the London and Birmingham Railway Company", *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 8 November 1845, 5.

¹⁷⁸ Morrison, *Observations*, 37.

¹⁷⁹ Reed, *London and North Western Railway*, 36.

¹⁸⁰ David Ross, *The Caledonian: Scotland's Imperial Railway* (Ayrshire: Stenlake, 2013), 41.

¹⁸¹ "The London and North Western Railway Company" *Manchester Times*, quoted in *Morning Chronicle*, 8 August 1846, 3.

¹⁸² "Grand Amalgamation Meeting" *York Herald*. 15 August 1846, 7.

¹⁸³ "Grand Amalgamation Meeting" *York Herald*. 15 August 1846, 7.

Morrison clearly saw that the creation of the LNWR was intended to benefit its constituent companies, and he also showed that objections to the break of gauge were really a means of suppressing competition from the GWR.¹⁸⁴ He argued in his 1846 select committee that the process followed by the Gauge Commission (GC) was flawed. Morrison tried to correct that by conducting his own forensic analysis through his select committee and showed that the GC committed a 'very serious and singular mathematical error' to the advantage of the LBR, in overstating the average passenger load on its trains as 84.9 when it was in fact 68.2.¹⁸⁵ The evidence that the GC received had been heard without the opportunity for cross examination in which objections could have been aired.¹⁸⁶ It also failed to consult James Walker, who supported a broad gauge rival to the CHR – a point noted rather bitterly by Morrison:

It would be difficult to suppose that [the GC] were deterred from consulting him, by any impression that his opinions were adverse to those they might have themselves already formed, and yet equally difficult to account for the absence of such testimony.¹⁸⁷

Had they heard from Walker, he would probably have repeated his evidence to the Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway Select Committee in 1845 that supported the PDR as an *additional* line to the CHR, arguing that competition between them was in the interests of both Ireland and North Wales.¹⁸⁸

That had presented a new problem for the Government in its support for the CHR which its decisions on the gauge and railway amalgamation in 1846 resolved for them. The argument in 1845 was not *between* the PDR and CHR – as it had been before 1844 – but for the PDR *in addition* to the CHR, and in direct competition with it. Worryingly for the CHR and its supporters in government, it was a competition that the PDR seemed bound to win, given the technical advantages over its rival. Charles Russell, the GWR chairman, agreed that Ireland and North Wales would benefit from an additional railway, and he confirmed that he was willing to run such a line all the way to Holyhead and compete directly with the CHR.¹⁸⁹ There was support from Irish witnesses for the GWR proposal. James Pim, one of the Irish supporters of the original PDR,

¹⁸⁴ Second report from the Select Committee on railway acts enactments; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index, Index, 372. **1846 (687)**, XIV.5.

¹⁸⁵ Second report from the Select Committee on railway acts enactments 1846, 388.

¹⁸⁶ Second report from the Select Committee on railway acts enactments, 1846, 352.

¹⁸⁷ Second report from the Select Committee on railway acts enactments, 1846, 362.

¹⁸⁸ Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton Railway, 1845, 513.

¹⁸⁹ Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton Railway, 1845, 527.

pointed out that the five hours turnaround time for the mail in Dublin that the CHR offered did not include any time for sorting mail and: 'we would be receiving our letters from the postman just at the time our clerks were leaving our counting houses'.¹⁹⁰ By contrast, the PDR's more rapid route enabled letters to be received and the answer sent on the same day. Pim appeared to understand the Anglo-centric nature of the CHR and the companies associated with them which had not: 'shown themselves particularly desirous to promote Irish interests'.¹⁹¹ He also confirmed the importance of this issue in the Government's Irish policy when he suggested that communication was: 'a matter of *greater importance to Ireland* than all the Irish projects now under the consideration of Parliament'.¹⁹² That is a significant comment as the Maynooth Grant to support the training of Roman Catholic priests was considered in 1845 and has captured most attention from historians.¹⁹³

The case for a *second* railway towards Dublin in 1846 had not been expected by government, but its value was supported by contemporary evidence that Bristol was generating considerable business in finished cotton goods in Wales.¹⁹⁴ Perhaps more significant was its wider success in penetrating markets in London, northern England and especially Ireland.¹⁹⁵ That success reflected Ireland's status as a major market for goods from mainland Britain, comparable to Australia or India.¹⁹⁶ Bristol interests wanted to compete for that market and by 1843 appeared to be successful in doing so. Its decision to revive the PDR was not as absurd as Simmons claimed, and the struggle between the CHR and PDR (in its 1846 form) sponsored by the GWR should be seen in that overall context of a competition between regional economic interests for a large and growing market in Ireland, as well as the competition for the Government mail contract.¹⁹⁷ Decisions about those lines might also be seen as a reflection of the relative power of regional economic interests, and the support given to them by senior politicians. Opponents of the GWR's

¹⁹⁰ Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton Railway, 1845, 533.

¹⁹¹ Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton Railway, 1845, 533.

¹⁹² Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton Railway, 1845, 536. [My emphasis]

¹⁹³ Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity, 1789-2006* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 169.

¹⁹⁴ For Wales see, "Grand Dinner to the Proprietors of the Great Western Cotton-Works", *For Ireland, Bristol Mercury*, 2 May 1840, 4.

¹⁹⁵ Untitled, *Morning Advertiser*, 25 October 1843, 3. [My emphasis]

¹⁹⁶ William Roger Louis, Andrew Porter, and Alaine M. Low, eds. *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol.3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 501.

¹⁹⁷ Jack Simmons, *The System and its Working*, 45.

rival proposal to the CHR could not defeat it on merit since it was technically superior - so they devised other means to frustrate the GWR.¹⁹⁸ The role of government was therefore vital as its political decisions could override technical arguments, and it was clearly not swayed by the advantages in speed and capacity of the broad gauge. Thus, in 1845 the CHR chairman: 'confidently expected *from the support of the Government* etc., they need not fear competition from any quarter' – despite the technical superiority of its broad gauge rival.¹⁹⁹ That underlines the notion of the CHR as a project that was protected by government, consistent with it forming an element of its policy towards Ireland. Morrison's committee attempted to demonstrate how decisions in 1846 had given power to large railway companies at the expense of the public interest – including and perhaps especially in North Wales and Ireland – but logic and science were defeated by economic and regional interests represented in government by capable politicians.

Of course, Morrison might himself have had particular prejudices in this matter. If so they were not evident, and it was known that he did not invest in British railway companies in order to avoid any suggestion of bias.²⁰⁰ Whether the broad or narrow gauge was technically better is not the issue for the current study, though a relevant judgement was given by Lord Dalhousie, a member of Peel's Cabinet in 1846, after he arrived in India as Governor-General and took a direct interest in developing railways in the sub-continent.²⁰¹ He argued for a broader gauge in India and noted that the British narrow gauge was: 'not the best gauge for the general purposes of a railway'.²⁰² That is a remarkable judgement from a man who had actively supported narrow gauge interests in Britain including the CHR. The GWR attempt to spread beyond the corridor between London and Bristol, as noted by Simmons, was effectively halted – and with it the PDR rivalry with the CHR.²⁰³ In 1846 unlike 1836, the PDR had not aimed to be an alternative to the CHR but to *compete* with it as a second line towards Dublin. That would have frustrated Peel's ambitions to guarantee success for the CHR, so government used political means to defeat technical superiority.

¹⁹⁸ Jack Simmons, *The System and its Working*, 27.

¹⁹⁹ "Chester and Holyhead Railway", *London Evening Standard*, 17 August 1845, 2. [My emphasis]

²⁰⁰ Charles Jones, 'Morrison, James (1789–1857)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19326>, Accessed 5 Nov 2014]

²⁰¹ Howlett, Dalhousie.

²⁰² East India (railways). Copies of correspondence between the Government of India and court of directors, relating to the present gauge of five feet six inches of the Indian railways; and of the minutes of Lord Dalhousie and the reports of the consulting engineers on the subject of the gauge, 3, **1873** (122) L.905.

²⁰³ Jack Simmons, *The System and its Working*, 28.

The eventual success of the narrow gauge was assured, simply by the fact that it exceeded the mileage of the broad gauge so significantly.²⁰⁴ But powerful interests also appeared influential. As the scientist Charles Babbage observed, the broad gauge [that he supported] created: 'violent party movements for and against it [because] it bore strongly upon pecuniary interests'.²⁰⁵ The essential point for this study is that the issue of gauge was raised in 1846 largely as a means to defeat the GWR in its attempt to expand, rather than as a technical issue. As a result, GWR competition against schemes supported by the LBR (and its LNWR successor) was prevented - and the CHR was a significant beneficiary.

With hindsight, the success of the CHR in gaining a monopoly of short-sea access to Dublin might have seemed inevitable once the proposals of the IRC were defeated in 1839 - and with it the PDR that had formed part of its report. The reality was very different. The CHR made a strenuous effort to revive its scheme that culminated in the parliamentary debate in June 1840 in which its proposals were defeated for a variety of reasons as discussed in this chapter - but primarily through lack of government support. The CHR supporters maintained that the construction of the line was an 'imperial' question and deserved support from the public purse. That support was only forthcoming after Peel became prime minister and identified the CHR as part of his Irish policy. When Peel declared that the maintenance of the Union was a priority in May 1843 he simultaneously supported the CHR. Peel's inclusion of rapid communication between London and Dublin in his more moderate Irish policy in February 1844 confirmed the status of the CHR as an important component in an approach that depended on constructive engagement in Ireland - with force as a last resort. His approach in 1844, though more constructive than in the period from 1841 to 1843, was still different from that of the IRC discussed in Chapter 3. While the IRC had focused on *Irish* economic development, with the London rail route ancillary to the creation of an Irish railway *system*, Peel favoured a line that supported British political, economic and social interests in sustaining the Union - and his personal interest in his own Tamworth constituency. He was not concerned about an Irish railway network in the way that the IRC had been - and not concerned at all about North Wales. Absolute government support for the CHR was confirmed in 1845-46 when the GWR attempted to revive the PDR. It was defeated by government decisions in support of the narrow gauge for new railways north from Bristol, and by the creation of the LNWR. It is not possible on the evidence discovered for this study to prove that

²⁰⁴ Jack Simmons, *The System and its Working*, 47.

²⁰⁵ Charles Babbage, *Passages from the Life of Philosopher* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1864), 326. The book records that Babbage had undertaken scientific experiments to demonstrate the superiority of the broad gauge. (321) See also Doron Swade, 'Babbage, Charles (1791-1871)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/962, accessed 1 June 2015]

there was active collusion between government and the railway companies that supported the CHR. However, it is clear that the decisions made by government in the years 1842-46 consistently assisted the CHR and obstructed its challengers. It is therefore difficult not to conclude that government intended the CHR to succeed and its rivals to fail, even when those rivals had better technology that offered certain attainment of the single objective of the London to Dublin rail link, as articulated by Peel – that a letter sent from London on Monday would receive a reply from Dublin on Wednesday.

The next chapter examines how the CHR contributed to the implementation of government policy in Ireland after its completion in 1850, and considers whether the political and financial support extended to it by government secured the required result.

5. The Chester and Holyhead Railway and the governance of Ireland 1846-60

*'The time has arrived for placing Ireland upon the same footing as Great Britain, and removing an invidious distinction that was only justified by the difficulties of dilatory and doubtful communication...'*¹

Having secured the success of the CHR as analysed in Chapter 4, this chapter explores whether government then attempted to use it, and associated technologies such as the electric telegraph and steamships, directly to reinforce its control over Ireland. If the claim that the CHR was an element of UK Irish policy is valid then it might be expected that its completion was accompanied by some initiative from government that was intended to change the nature of the relationship between Ireland and the rest of the UK. The study examines political records and public opinion as recorded in the newspapers to show that such an initiative was undertaken by Russell's Government in 1850. It is possible too that the Government in London had politically "softer" ambitions to integrate Irish society and its economy more closely with that of the rest of the UK, so the chapter analyses the 2010 work of McDonald that relates to the period when the Union between Britain and Ireland was established. She shows that speed of communication had been important to the British project to integrate Ireland for many years – but that the interest extended beyond the speed of government communications.² This study collects and analyses data that shows that the CHR did not improve the time taken to deliver the mail between London and Dublin in its first ten years of operation – and therefore could not deliver any of the formal or informal improvements expected from more rapid communication beyond what had been accomplished when the mail was routed via Liverpool.

Finally, the chapter briefly examines the wider context of these developments. The period from 1844 to 1860 saw major developments that affected the relationship between Ireland and the rest of the UK. Ireland suffered a humanitarian catastrophe in the form of the Great Famine of 1845-47 that changed its political landscape. This chapter explores whether that restricted the potential of the CHR to deliver its intended objectives within government policy. In the circumstances created by famine, Irish nationalists' attitude towards railways may have become less positive than they were when O'Connell led them. The chapter explores whether the replacement of the liberalism of O'Connell by the more overtly nationalist, anti-liberal rhetoric of *Young Ireland* – typified by John Mitchel - weakened the project to use the CHR and railways more generally for the political and social integration of Ireland into the UK.

¹ *The Times*, 7 March 1850, 4.

² Sarah McDonald, "'Freshest Advices': The currency of London News in Dublin City newspapers, 1790-1801" *Library and Information Research*, Volume 34, Number 108, 2010.

5.1 The special status of the Chester and Holyhead Railway

By 1847 the relationship between government and the CHR had become so close that ministers asked the directors of the CHR to contribute £200,000 in return for exclusive use of the inner harbour at Holyhead, including the right to run a railway along it.³ That was not popular in Ireland where there was cynicism about the cost of the Holyhead developments - and a suggestion for an alternative use for the money at a meeting in Dublin:

Would to God that there was as much anxiety shown by people in high places to send that money to starving Ireland, as there was to send it for the purpose of accumulating a heap of stones at Holyhead without any feature of public utility.⁴

The CHR agreed to make the contribution but had a significant request in return; government should permit the CHR to run a complete service from London to Dublin, *including the sea crossing*, as Holyhead was only, in Peel's words: 'an intermediate station on a grand route'.⁵ The CHR also argued that the only way to gain full advantage from this route was to make: 'the steam boat interest identical with that of the railway'.⁶ The operation of steamships by railway companies was considered monopolistic in the 1840s, so granting that power to the CHR was an exceptional step.⁷ Initially, the steamship power was rejected by the Select Committee on Holyhead Harbour whose chairman: 'did not think that, *under any circumstances*, Parliament ought to sanction the avowed intention of [the CHR] to become steam-ship proprietors, either directly or indirectly'.⁸ The issue was referred to the Railway Commissioners, alongside a similar bid from the London and South Western Railway for steamship powers to cross the English Channel.⁹ The commissioners' conclusions underline how different the CHR was from other

³ Holyhead harbour, &c. Correspondence, minutes, &c. between Her Majesty's government and the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company, respecting the carrying Her Majesty's mails, and the construction of a packet and refuge harbour at Holyhead; &c. 19. 1847 (339) LXI.77. [£17.5M at 2015 prices].

⁴ "Asylum Harbour on the Welsh Coast for the Channel trade – Meeting at the Music Hall", *Freeman's Journal*, 20 May 1846, 3.

⁵ Holyhead harbour, & c, 1847, 41.

⁶ Holyhead harbour, & c, 1847, 41.

⁷ Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 441.

⁸ Holyhead harbour, & c, 1847, 61. [My emphasis].

⁹ The Railway Commissioners replaced the Railway Department in 1846, see Henry Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 103-128.

railways. They considered that the sea passage in both cases was ‘a portion of the railway enterprise’ and that, although the route from the south coast to France was ‘of considerable public importance’ – it was not as important as the CHR.¹⁰ When the matter was referred to a new committee, the CHR’s opponents were dismayed that Peel, although no longer Prime Minister, was chairman, given his consistent backing for the CHR. Free of his prime ministerial responsibilities, since Lord John Russell replaced him in 1846, he was able to reveal the special status of the CHR for him and his late government. He had:

Always looked upon the railway as a great national undertaking, the terminus of which was not, in fact, Holyhead but Dublin, [so his government] had *departed from the ordinary rules* and granted a sum of money to assist in carrying it out.¹¹

As President of the Board of Trade and custodian of laissez-faire principles, Henry Labouchere admitted his strong inclination to oppose special powers for the CHR but nonetheless assented to the company being given the power to operate steamships from Holyhead to Dublin.¹² The measure was agreed in 1848, even though the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company was willing and able to undertake the work, so that the CHR special powers were not really required.¹³ National security may have been a factor, alongside the special status of the CHR within the policies of both Peel and Russell’s governments, for Ireland was in active rebellion in 1848. In the same issue as the steamboat report, the *Freeman’s Journal* referred to the: ‘reign of Whiggery – the reign of famine, pestilence, and death, with the consummating perfection of military law, of summary tribunals [and] arbitrary hangings and burnings all over the country’.¹⁴ In those circumstances, government probably preferred to have the whole line to Dublin under a single *English* management to secure rapid communication. Irish opinion was as antagonistic to the decision to allow steamship powers as it had been to spending money at Holyhead - and Peel was accused of favouritism. The *Cork Examiner* suggested under a banner of ‘Justice for Ireland’ that

¹⁰ Third report from the Select Committee on Railway Bills, 11-12, **1847-48** (287) XVI.269.

¹¹ “House of Commons – Tuesday May 23” *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 May 1848, 1. [My emphasis]

¹² “House of Commons – Tuesday, May 23” *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 May 1848, 1. For Labouchere see G. F. R. Barker, ‘Labouchere, Henry, Baron Taunton (1798–1869)’, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15838>, accessed 29 Sept 2017]

¹³ Ship Owners Association, *Reasons against conceding to the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company power to become a steam ship company with limited liability*. (London: Hume Tracts, 1846), 7.

¹⁴ “Another ‘Kirwan’ movement – Incitement to Tumult”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 May 1848, 2.

Peel had reached a private agreement while in government with the CHR that guaranteed them a monopoly of Irish traffic.¹⁵ The decision on steamship powers was a further example of the Anglo-centric nature of the decisions that was consistent with Peel's efforts to defeat the IRC proposals in 1839 as analysed in Chapter 3. Peel was at the centre of those decisions as opposition leader and Prime Minister, and his support for the CHR continued in 1848, even when he was out of office and no longer led the Tories.

A further feature that marked out the special relationship of the CHR with government was the electric telegraph. In May 1845, government announced its intention to have the telegraph along the whole route to Dublin in support of: 'closer connection between the metropolis and the sister isle'.¹⁶ At that time the telegraph was regarded along with railways and steamships – and in the way suggested by the Mattelarts and discussed in Chapter 1 – as the nervous system of the British body politic:

The metropolis will instantaneously transmit and receive information from every important point in the island. For every great need or emergency the very farthest point will soon communicate its tidings or its wants and will receive immediate reply. [...] The island will become one nervous system with a scarcely less quick and infallible action than the human frame. The metropolis will become the sensorium of one acutely sensitive and intelligent fabric. [...] The table or the walls of a parlour in Downing Street will become the retina of an empire...¹⁷

By 1850 the Electric Telegraph Company was reported to be in the process of building the crucial link of this "nervous system" from Holyhead to Dublin.¹⁸ In June 1852 that link was completed.¹⁹ Headrick suggested that: 'steamships, railways, and telegraphs allowed the Europeans to control their newly acquired colonies efficiently'.²⁰ However, methods used to strengthen the UK government in respect of Ireland demonstrated above occurred much earlier, as part of UK government policy for Ireland, than they did in places like India. Technological developments

¹⁵ "Justice to Ireland – the Chester and Holyhead Monopoly", *Cork Examiner*, 26 May 1848, 4.

¹⁶ "Electric Telegraph" *Chester Chronicle*, 16 May 1845, 4.

¹⁷ "Use of Electric Telegraphs and Railways against French Invasions" (from *The Times*), *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 6 September 1845, 4.

¹⁸ *Dublin Evening Mail*, "Telegraphic Communication between Holyhead and Liverpool", 20 December 1850, 4.

¹⁹ "Completion of the Submarine Telegraph between Ireland and England", *Freeman's Journal*, 2 June 1852, 2.

²⁰ Daniel Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 6.

could therefore be added to other examples where the government of Ireland provided the: 'prototype for what would later evolve on the imperial periphery' as argued by Jackson.²¹

Thus, the CHR and its virtual owners, the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) had a special position among railway companies. The CHR was given the advantage of a large harbour constructed mostly at public expense, a special power to operate steamships in conjunction with the railway and the application of the electric telegraph. That intense combination of the newest technology deployed on one route by political direction was unique in the late 1840s, and the first time it had involved an underwater cable between two capital cities within UK jurisdiction anywhere in the world.²² It showed the importance of the CHR, not only to the commercial interests of its owners but also in the wider concerns of government to establish firm control over Ireland.

5.2 The Chester and Holyhead Railway in action 1850 – 58

The CHR was begun in March 1845 and construction was underway while the Great Western Railway (GWR) mounted its significant opposition through a revived PDR discussed in Chapter 4. The final stage of construction of the CHR enabled the line to cross the Menai Straits and facilitated through working of the whole railway in March 1850.²³ It was the conclusion of a process that had started in 1836, and had been revived by Peel's government in 1842-43 when the situation in Ireland was deteriorating. It was not completed until after the Great Famine of 1845-47 but remained a part of government strategy in Ireland when Peel left office in 1846. The operating company was the CHR - but engines, rolling stock and other logistical components were provided by the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). The process that created that company enabled it to become the most powerful railway company in the UK and the largest joint stock company of its day.²⁴ It was a creation of the state through the process described previously that brought rival companies in active dispute together, and gave them a monopoly of the most

²¹ Alvin Jackson, "5: Ireland, the Union, and the Empire, 1800–1960," in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. Kevin Kenny (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 125.

²² See George Dodd, *Railways, Steamers, and Telegraphs; a glance at their recent progress and present state* (Edinburgh, 1867). Unpaginated document. http://archive.org/stream/railwayssteamer04doddgoog/railwayssteamer04doddgoog_djvu.txt [Accessed 18 November 2015]

²³ Baughen, *Chester and Holyhead Railway*, 53-142.

²⁴ Terence Gourvish, *Mark Huish and the London & North Western Railway: A Study of Management*. (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972), 108. The LNWR initially consisted of the London and Birmingham Railway, the Grand Junction Railway and Manchester and Birmingham Railway. See Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 284.

lucrative traffic in the UK, including Ireland. In return, the LNWR and the CHR had important services to provide to the state.

Sir Robert Peel had ceased to be prime minister by the time the CHR came to fruition in 1850. Russell's Government did not have the same constructive ambitions for Ireland as Melbourne's Whig Government under the Lichfield House Compact between 1835 and 1841 as discussed in Chapter 3. O'Connell and Drummond were essential to the earlier arrangements but were no longer involved when the CHR opened: Drummond died in 1840 and O'Connell in 1847. Although the important public figures were different, the overall aim of using the CHR to strengthen the governance of Ireland remained as clear in Russell's Government as in Peel's previous administration. There was an early opportunity to show the potential of the CHR even before its formal opening in March 1850. In February 1850, an official in Dublin Castle thanked the CHR in lavish terms for: 'making such arrangements as enabled them to transmit [the Queen's Speech] to Dublin, by the electric telegraph, an express engine, and a special steamer with a rapidity hitherto unexampled.'²⁵ That was the first use of the steamer, telegraph and railway together for government purposes in Ireland, and was entirely consistent with Peel's ambitions for the line noted in Chapter 4. In 1836, the Royal Mail had been congratulated for delivering the King's Speech from London to Dublin by road and sea in 24 hours – by 1850 it was delivered in fewer than 10 hours, albeit with the help of the electric telegraph, which could be used for individual documents but not for bulk communications - a rapid surface postal system was still essential.²⁶

The Government did not wait long to test the efficacy of the apparently improved London-Dublin communication that coincided with the opening of the Britannia Tubular Bridge across the Menai Straits in March 1850. *The Times* identified the political potential of the bridge because of its impact on the issue of the time taken to communicate between London and Dublin, and because it would shortly be combined with the telegraph. The paper was frustrated with the arrangement that maintained a devolved Irish administration in Dublin and considered that:

The little pageant in Dublin Castle has now become a mere burlesque – a ceremony without a meaning, an expense without a result. [...] *The time has arrived for placing Ireland upon the same footing as Great Britain*, and removing an invidious distinction that was only justified by the difficulties of dilatory and doubtful communication...²⁷

²⁵ "The Queen's Speech – The Chester and Holyhead Railway", *Freeman's Journal*, 6 February 1850, 2. The journey of the speech was completed in under ten hours and this was before the bridge over the Menai Straits was opened. The electric telegraph was part of the process.

²⁶ "Royal Mail", *Chester Chronicle*, 19 February 1836, 4.

²⁷ *The Times*, 7 March 1850, 4. [My emphasis]

That was a remarkable development - a proposal for a major constitutional change based solely on the creation of a railway line and associated technologies. *The Times* argued that the CHR could effectively replace the Lord Lieutenant, who was one of the three officials who had the overall direction of Irish affairs.²⁸ Russell confirmed *The Times* account of his intentions when he brought his proposals to parliament in May 1850. He argued that it had been necessary to have a person in authority in Dublin only because of the problems of communication as *The Times* had suggested. He considered that such an arrangement was no longer necessary because of the creation of the CHR – and he produced a novel piece of evidence to support his case in the form of the *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*.²⁹ He suggested that the improved journey times that MPs could find in the guide effectively signalled the end of the Dublin Castle executive in Ireland and the replacement of the Lord Lieutenant by a fourth secretary of state in cabinet.

His proposal was not well received by all MPs.³⁰ Generally there was concern among Irish MPs that the measure would reduce the status of Dublin.³¹ John Reynolds, the MP for Dublin City, dismissed the technical basis of Russell's argument because of its dependence upon the railway and its infrastructure.³² However, there was a clear majority in favour of the motion.³³ The debate resumed on the second reading in June 1850 but the issue remained contentious. Russell could then count on Peel, who offered his broad support and considered that 1850 was the right time for the measure because the railway provided an improved means of conducting the government of Ireland from London. That was no surprise as Russell's proposals were effectively the fulfilment of Peel's own ambitions for the CHR articulated to parliament in 1843 and implemented by the time he left office - as analysed in the last chapter.³⁴ Most interestingly for this study, Edmund Roche MP, saw Russell and Peel as conspirators in a new approach to government based on technology. His was probably the first articulation of the use of railways to reinforce the power of government, which is an important theme in analysing the effectiveness of the CHR:

²⁸ R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds. *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-52* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), 22. The other two were the Chief Secretary and the Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

²⁹ HC Deb 17 May 1850 vol. 111 c176.

³⁰ HC Deb 17 May 1850 vol. 111 c190.

³¹ HC Deb 17 May 1850 vol. 111 c196.

³² HC Deb 17 May 1850 vol. 111 c216.

³³ HC Deb 17 May 1850 vol. 111 c233.

³⁴ HC Deb 17 June 1850 vol. 111 c1410.

[Russell and Peel] seemed to have strange notions of the uses of government. [...] They took a *railway view of the question*, and looked on it as a matter of time and space. [...] Let them but give him a railway, an iron bridge, and a steamboat, and he would do anything in that way.³⁵

Roche's sentiments are similar to those expressed by Headrick in his 1988 study of the use of technology to strengthen governance in the context of European imperial expansion after 1850.³⁶ While it is not the intention of this analysis to claim parity for the CHR with later railway developments in Africa or India, it does appear that the CHR was a clear example of the use of railways to enhance government control in Ireland. And, to the extent that Ireland's relationship with Britain was an imperial one, an early attempt at "railway imperialism". The Government won the vote easily, but it was unable to challenge the crushing authority of the Duke of Wellington's intervention in the House of Lords' debate on the measure.³⁷ Wellington took no comfort from the improved technology available to government through railways and the telegraph but relied on a more old-fashioned version of battlefield command, conducted close to the action and assisted by: 'the superintending direction and assistance of the Lord Lieutenant'.³⁸ The measure to abolish the post of Lord-Lieutenant was dropped by government in July 1850 because of such doubts.³⁹ It was a remarkable initiative by government that had proposed a constitutional change because rapid communication by railway was available. It was the clearest and earliest attempt to use railways, steamships and the telegraph together to alter the nature of the constitutional relationship between an imperial capital and a country that it wished to govern more directly.⁴⁰

In 1850, the CHR was the *explicit* mechanism for that exercise of political control of Ireland, through the plan to dismantle the devolved government in Dublin and govern Ireland from London as an integral part of the UK. Historians have omitted it from their analysis and focused instead on issues such as land reform, the Maynooth grant and the creation of Trinity College in Dublin.⁴¹ This study establishes an important role for railway development in successive

³⁵ HC Deb 17 June 1850 vol. 111 c1418. [My emphasis]

³⁶ Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 6.

³⁷ HC Deb 10 June 1850 vol. 111 c1029.

³⁸ "Parliamentary Intelligence, House of Lords, 27 June 1850" *The Times*, 28 June 1850, 2.

³⁹ Business of the Session – Public Bills, HC Deb 12 August 1850 vol. 113 c1037.

⁴⁰ There was an unsuccessful attempt to abolish the office in 1830 that was *not supported by government*. One of the arguments used was that, Dublin was within 36 hours of London, due to improved roads. See HC Deb 11 May 1830 vol. 24 c562.

⁴¹ See for example, John Prest, 'Peel, Sir Robert, second baronet (1788–1850)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21764, accessed 14 March 2016]

governments' Irish policy from 1843 to 1850. The defeat of the measure to abolish the post of Lord Lieutenant meant that the plan was less successful than government had hoped - but it does not alter the status of the CHR as the first railway in the UK that was planned and built as part of government policy and used explicitly for a political purpose.

5.3 The informal importance of communication time in the governance of Ireland

The failure of Russell's attempt to change Ireland's relationship with the rest of the UK in 1850 by abolishing the post of Lord Lieutenant did not mean that any hope of impact from more rapid communication was lost. Technology has impact at both formal and informal levels – a fact clearly understood by Peel. His aspirations for Ireland were:

Curiously connected with the course of the post [...] other men think of wild lands reclaimed – of a rude multitude civilized [...] of peace, order, and security, where now there is the gloom of dark conspiracy and hatred. [Peel] however, arises in Parliament, and says, "What I want to see is this – I want to see the day when a letter posted in London at eight o'clock on Monday morning, shall be answered from Dublin by Wednesday morning. [...] This would be a great public advantage."⁴²

The *Morning Post* was sceptical: 'However worthy an object of mechanical ambition, [it] is not exactly that upon which the eye of a great politician, anxious for Ireland's good, should be so devotedly fixed'.⁴³

There was more sense behind Peel's 1844 ambition than the paper allowed. Jupp has argued that the growth of newspapers immediately before this period was an important element in influencing opinion in Ireland.⁴⁴ In a study of London-Dublin communication in the period 1790-1801 undertaken in 2010, Sarah McDonald identified that it took between 5 and 6 days for news to reach Dublin from London.⁴⁵ Her work provides a valuable baseline for analysis of the years from 1820 to 1859. Although Peel's comments related to personal correspondence, he appeared to envision a relationship between London and Dublin similar to that of the rest of the UK. In her conclusions, McDonald suggests that this was very important to London, where the

⁴² Untitled, *Morning Post*, 4 May 1844, 5.

⁴³ Untitled, *Morning Post*, 4 May 1844, 5.

⁴⁴ Peter Jupp, "8: Government, Parliament and Politics in Ireland, 1801–41," in Julian Hoppit, ed *Parliaments, Nations, and Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660-1850* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2003), 160.

⁴⁵ Sarah McDonald, "'Freshest Advices': The currency of London News in Dublin City newspapers, 1790-1801" *Library and Information Research*, Volume 34, Number 108 (2010), 13.

Dublin press was regarded as vital to secure the Anglicisation of Ireland.⁴⁶ That approach was consistent with the importance of newspapers and railways from around the middle of the nineteenth century to people in the UK in the 'cooperative effort' of both creating and reflecting public opinion as argued by de Nie in 2004.⁴⁷ Improved communication had the potential to affect the 'time value' of news for the wider public: as McDonald pointed out, as news gets older it changes from information to entertainment.⁴⁸ It is reasonable to suppose that the authorities in London wanted to inform rather than entertain the reading classes in Ireland, so it was important to get London news and opinion to them quickly - this being similar to what Peel meant by a 'great public advantage'.⁴⁹ He and others believed that it was the absence of this British influence in Ireland that was the cause of much of the difficulty in governing that country.⁵⁰ In respect of Dublin newspapers, government 'regarded their copy as influential' and subsidised some of them accordingly.⁵¹ Peel wanted the CHR to increase the speed of communication between London and Dublin to strengthen government and to influence the content of newspapers. But did it deliver that increase in speed?

In order to test the changes in speed of communication, the date of reports of the sessions of the 'Imperial Parliament' included in the *Freeman's Journal* were examined. That paper was the 'principal organ of moderate repeal opinion', the very audience Peel wished to influence.⁵²

⁴⁶ McDonald, *Freshest Advices*, 15.

⁴⁷ Michael de Nie, *History of Ireland & the Irish Diaspora: The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798–1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 29.

⁴⁸ McDonald, "Freshest Advices", 6.

⁴⁹ Untitled, *Morning Post*, 4 May 1844, 5.

⁵⁰ de Nie, *History of Ireland & the Irish Diaspora*, 268.

⁵¹ Jupp, "Government, Parliament and Politics in Ireland, 1801–41", 162.

⁵² R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds. *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-52* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), 169.

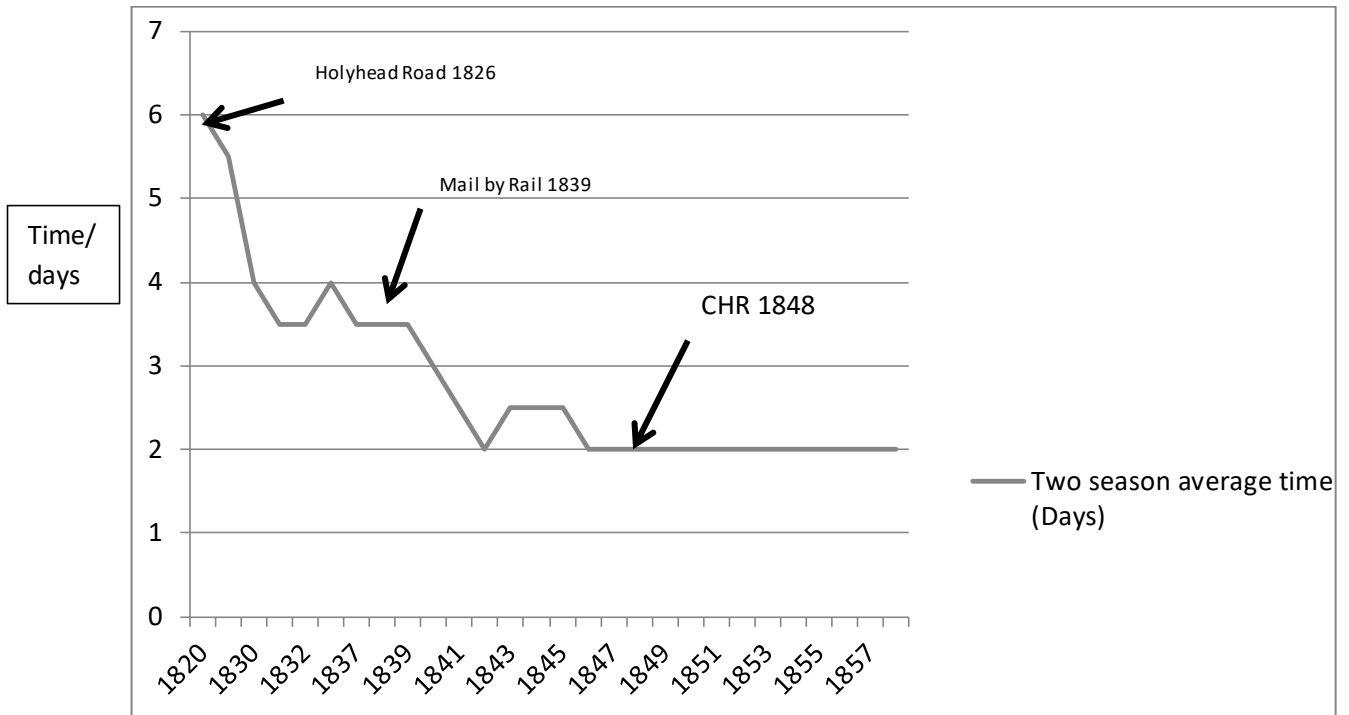
Table 5.1: Time taken for parliamentary reports from London to be published in the *Freeman's Journal* in Dublin for all available years 1820 – 1859

Date of Paper Summer	"Imperial Parliament" Session Reported	Time Lag	Date of Paper Winter	"Imperial Parliament" Session Reported	Time Lag
6 June 1820	31 May 1820	6	24 February	18 February	6
6 June 1821	11 June 1821	5	19 February	13 February	6
1826	OPENING OF		MENAI ROAD	BRIDGE	
30 June 1830	4 June 1830	4	9 December	5 December	4
17 June 1831	14 June 1830	3	16 December	12 December	4
12 June 1832	9 June 1832	3	7 January	3 January	4
4 June 1833	31 May 1833	4	15 February	11 February	4
6 June 1837	2 June 1837	4	16 February	13 February	3
5 June 1838	1 June 1838	4	25 January	22 January	3
24 JANUARY	1839		DUBLIN MAIL	VIA LIVERPOOL	RAILWAY
6 June 1839	3 June 1839	3	11 February	7 February	4
4 June 1840	1 June 1840	3	24 January	21 January	3
6 APRIL	1841		DUBLIN MAIL	VIA BIRKENHEAD	RAILWAY
10 June 1841	7 June 1841	3	28 January	26 January	2
8 June 1842	6 June 1842	2	12 February	10 February	2
14 June 1843	12 June 1843	2	10 February	7 February	3
5 June 1844	3 June 1844	2	22 February	19 February	3
14 June 1845	12 June 1845	2	14 February	11 February	3
20 June 1846	18 June 1846	2	6 February	4 February	2
9 June 1847	7 June 1847	2	19 February	17 February	2
7 June 1848	5 June 1848	2	16 February	14 February	2
1 AUGUST	1848		DUBLIN MAIL	VIA HOLYHEAD	RAILWAY
6 June 1849	4 June 1849	2	23 February	21 February	2
5 MARCH	1850		BRITANNIA	BRIDGE	OPENED
6 June 1850	4 June 1850	2	12 February	10 February	2
4 June 1851	2 June 1851	2	20 February	19 February	2
9 June 1852	7 June 1852	2	14 February	12 February	2
8 June 1853	6 June 1853	2	17 February	15 February	2
16 June 1854	14 June 1854	2	11 February	9 February	2
6 June 1855	4 June 1855	2	28 February	26 February	2
12 June 1856	10 June 1856	2	2 February	31 January	2
25 June 1857	23 June 1857	2	12 February	10 February	2
11 June 1859	9 June 1859	2	22 February	21 February	2*

* Electric Telegraph used to deliver report, so counted as two rather than one as this was the prevailing time taken by rail at the time.

Data gathered from *Freeman's Journal* on the dates given

**Figure 5.1: Speed of London to Dublin Communication:
All years when data available 1820-1859**



Data taken from Table 5.1.

Variables such as the frequency of publication of the journal, weather conditions that affected the sea crossing and frequency of parliamentary sittings are accounted for by avoiding where possible the intervention of weekends, and by choosing dates occurring towards the middle or end of the week. The months of June and February were generally selected because those two months had the most regular sittings of parliament. There were also periods where the publication was not available, for example only 1820 and 1821 were available in the period before the Menai Suspension bridge was opened in 1826. 1834-7 issues were also missing. 1858 had only six months of data and was excluded.

The time-delay data show that the completion of the London to Holyhead road in 1826 reduced the London to Dublin time by two days compared to the time taken in 1820 and 1821. The figure of 6 days in that early period is consistent with McDonald's findings. There was little further change until the mail was switched to rail and concentrated at Liverpool in 1839. It was then sent from Birkenhead in 1841, when a faster rail journey was established to that port. The latter change delivered a steady two-day time delay in summer and a two or three-day delay in winter. During the last three years of this service two days was a consistent performance in both summer and winter.

The data provided above shows clearly that there was *no further improvement when the mail switched to the CHR in 1848*. There was not even any improvement on the opening of the expensive Britannia Tubular Bridge in 1850. This is a remarkable finding, given the immense effort and expense that had been incurred in completing this line. Stephenson's original estimate was £2.1 million,⁵³ but the CHR actually had authorised share capital of £2.75 million and authorised loans of £926,000 – a total of £3.676 million.⁵⁴ Stephenson overspent by 47 per cent and delivered a cost per mile of £44,000, or £10,000 per mile more than average in the period up to 1844.⁵⁵ The bridge to Anglesey alone had cost £674,000, although estimated at only £250,000.⁵⁶ The evidence above suggests that this *investment did not improve the time taken for communication from London to Dublin*, even though that was the only justification for the CHR; it was not intended to deliver any benefit along its route through North Wales. The performance was not capable of delivering Peel's aim of a correspondent receiving a reply on Wednesday to a letter sent from Dublin to London on Monday. His confidence that the CHR would deliver that improvement was misplaced. However, his 1844 suggestion that a failure to deliver that objective would mean that the project was a waste of money is valid.⁵⁷

5.4 The performance of the London – Dublin rail and sea link 1850-60

The failure of the CHR to live up to its purpose of reducing journey time from London to Dublin discovered in this research is not acknowledged in studies of the CHR, which appear to assume that there *was* an improvement. Simmons, for example, defined the CHR as a: 'project to speed up communication with Ireland', but did not say that it failed to do so in its crucial early years when it might have made a difference.⁵⁸ This is surprising because it was certainly noticed at the time. As early as July 1850, there was a report of an apparently unnecessary two-hour rail delay at Chester.⁵⁹ The service did not improve and Henry Herbert addressed parliament on the issue in

⁵³ £189M at 2015 prices.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, *A Letter addressed to the Shareholders in the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company and the London and North Western Railway Company on the doings of Directors in the case of the Chester and Holyhead Railway, and the Mold Railway. By a Shareholder* (London: Effingham Wilson n.d.), 17. [£334M at 2015 prices]

⁵⁵ Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1999), 93. [CHR cost £4M a mile at 2015 prices]

⁵⁶ Anonymous, *A Letter addressed*, 4 [£61M instead of £22.5M at 2015 prices]

⁵⁷ "Communication with Ireland", *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 11 May 1844, 2.

⁵⁸ Simmons and Biddle, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, 81.

⁵⁹ Report from the Select Committee on Kingstown and Holyhead Mails; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and index., 2. 1850 (501) XIV.1.

April 1853 and pointed out that Russell's high hopes for the CHR in 1850 had not been realised.⁶⁰ There were contrasting views on the cause of the problem. A director of the ferry company suggested that the railway journey was the problem, while Sir Richard Bulkeley, a promoter of the CHR, blamed the ferry company. Mr Mangles, a former CHR Director blamed government, and a Dublin MP thought that the problem was simply one of money.⁶¹ In fact, the evidence is that all parties should have known the project would fail even before it was completed. In 1838, Charles Vignoles (the original PDR engineer) had stated in an appendix to the IRC report that the CHR would not improve on the time taken to send the mail via Liverpool because of the length of journey compared to the Porth Dinllaen Railway (PDR).⁶² That assertion was repeated, as noted in Chapter 4, in the 1845 evidence to a select committee, by which time the rival PDR was faster than the original scheme.⁶³ The analysis in Figure 5.1 suggests that those assessments of the likely performance of the CHR were correct. The Government either did not notice, or ignored it because it did not suit their political intentions and the economic interests that supported the CHR. And so, just three years after the completion of this high profile and expensive project, a review of the CHR's performance by select committee was ordered by government based on the critical comments in the House of Commons.

The select committee concluded that the service was actually worse than before 1850.⁶⁴ It blamed the slowness of the rail journey to Holyhead and the low calibre of the vessels between Holyhead and Dublin. It concluded that the journey could be accomplished in 11 hours compared to the 14 hours 25 minutes that the select committee found that it took. 11 hours was the exact time promised by the GWR in return for political approval of the PDR in 1846 as noted above. One witness thought the 'abominations and nastiness' that prevented better performance were so bad that it was not: 'polite to describe [them] in plain English'.⁶⁵ He suggested that lack of competition on the route to Dublin was the problem and argued for a rival broad gauge route to Birkenhead, despite the decision of the Gauge Commission in 1846 that prevented such a

⁶⁰ HC Deb 26 April 1853 vol. 126 c553.

⁶¹ Communication between England and Ireland, HC Deb 26 April 1853 vol. 126 c555-8.

⁶² Second report of the commissioners appointed to consider and recommend a general system of railways for Ireland 1837-38, 41 [145] XXXV 449, Appendix A, No 3.

⁶³ Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Oxford, Worcester, and Wolverhampton Railway, 1845, 536.

⁶⁴ Report from the Select Committee on Communication between London and Dublin; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix, and index, 2, **1852-3** (747) XXIV.611.

⁶⁵ Communication between London and Dublin, 1853, 171.

scheme.⁶⁶ The committee focused on the end to end journey time and the need for larger vessels and did not offer any strategic vision or solutions. It was ‘not advocating any new principle’ but merely a return to a system which it claimed had worked beneficially for the interests of *both* countries’ – North Wales did not seem to feature.⁶⁷ The *Observer*, sister paper to the free trade *Manchester Guardian*, still hoped that Ireland might become fully part of the ‘Integral Empire’ [United Kingdom] via an improved rail link and the abolition of the Lord Lieutenancy, recalling Peel’s notion of the CHR as the ‘consummation of the Union’.⁶⁸ The paper rather betrayed its anti-Irish prejudices by arguing that the solution was to put the shipping route in the hands of the: ‘leading line of railway [and the] ships of this country [and not] any pettifogging, cheese-paring company [uninterested] in the true and perfect union of Her Majesty’s Home Empire’ – a clear reference to the (Irish) Dublin Steam Packet Company that carried the mail between Holyhead and Dublin and the LNWR as the ‘leading line of railway’.⁶⁹

There was no major response from government. The period of grand strategy and high expectations of the rail link to Ireland articulated by Peel and Russell was apparently over. In 1853, the rival parties merely haggled over the details of rail and ferry timings and argued with government about responsibility for the failings. The issue persisted into 1856, when government rejected an offer from the CHR to reduce journey time in return for an increase of subsidy to £70,000. On that occasion (unlike 1844) government understood that the reduction in rail journey time did not deliver a faster postal service, but merely increased the amount of time the post bags were left on the dockside in Dublin or Holyhead. So it insisted instead on arrangements that would save 24 hours ‘for business purposes’ as much as for the essential processes of government.⁷⁰ By 1859, government requirements were very detailed and there were penalties for failure to deliver.⁷¹ Finally, by 1860 – ten years after the CHR opened – there was great celebration when the journey from London to Dublin was performed in 10 hours 44 minutes – 46 minutes faster than required by the contract.⁷² There was also greater reliability, so that in 1860

⁶⁶ Communication between London and Dublin, 1853, 171.

⁶⁷ Communication between London and Dublin, 1853, x [My emphasis].

⁶⁸ Editorial, *Observer*, 28 August 1853, 4.

⁶⁹ Editorial, *Observer*, 28 August 1853, 4.

⁷⁰ Postal, &c., communication with Ireland. Copy of the Treasury minute, made with a view to improve the postal and passenger communication between England and Ireland, under the act of last session.3-4 **1856** (27) LI.343 [£5.9M at 2015 prices].

⁷¹ Contracts for improving Postal and Passenger Communication between England and Ireland via Holyhead, 8, 1859 (138) XIV.177.

⁷² “The First Accelerated Journey from London to Dublin”, *London Evening Standard*, 4 October 1860, 2.

the mail was delayed on only four occasions - with just one counting as an unreasonable delay.⁷³ The grand hopes of Peel that the CHR would revolutionise the relationship with Ireland had been replaced by detailed argument between governments, railway and ferry companies over the reasons for delay in the post. Meanwhile, through the trauma of the Great Famine of 1845-47 and the crisis of the rebellion of 1848, the relationship between Ireland and the rest of the UK had changed dramatically, and effectively ended the hope of politicians like Peel and Russell that faster communication might integrate Ireland into the UK.

5.5 Irish politics and railways 1846 – 1860

O'Connell had tried to work with the British Government in the years 1835-40 but the results were mixed for Ireland. Shortcomings in his agreement with the Whig Government of Melbourne, such as the failure to implement the IRC report, had weakened his influence in Ireland.⁷⁴ When Peel took office in 1841, O'Connell reverted to direct action, culminating in his arrest in October 1843. Throughout this process and his earlier campaigns, it was unclear whether he really wanted repeal of the Union or was just bargaining for position.⁷⁵ His support for initiatives that put Ireland on the same footing as the rest of the UK suggest that he was a supporter of the kind of government favoured by the Whigs and latterly by Peel himself in which, as one MP told Parliament, Ireland: 'instead of being ruled as a colony [was treated like Scotland] and the three countries [sic] render truly a United Kingdom'.⁷⁶

The Great Famine changed everything because as Comerford observed: 'gradualist, co-operative, clientelist politics was no answer to a mounting socio-economic catastrophe'.⁷⁷ Such an approach was replaced by a more confrontational and violent movement of *Young Irelanders* who rejected the approach adopted by O'Connell.⁷⁸ That did not provide a clear way forward for Ireland either, for according to Fieldhouse by 1850:

⁷³ Post Office (Irish mails). Returns of the hours at which the Irish day mails, leaving Euston Station at 7:30 a.m., since 1st October last, were due at Kingstown harbour; and of the exact times of the arrival of the packets at Kingstown harbour, and the occasions when any of the night mail trains left Dublin without the English mails, &c. 3. 1861 (388) XXXV.7.

⁷⁴ R. V. Comerford, 'O'Connell, Daniel (1775–1847)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20501>, [Accessed 23 Oct 2014]]

⁷⁵ Comerford. *O'Connell*.

⁷⁶ "Latest News", *Leeds Times*, 11 May 1844, 5. Wales was clearly not regarded as a separate country in this account – an issue that becomes clearer in subsequent chapters.

⁷⁷ Comerford. *O'Connell*.

⁷⁸ Comerford. *O'Connell*

Ireland was exhausted: emigration doubled to over 100 thousand in 1846 and again to 200 thousand in 1847 [...] But in Ireland there was little support for the abortive attempt of Young Ireland at rebellion in 1848; or, on the other extreme, for Russell's plan to abolish the viceroyalty and separate administration. [...] Neither separation nor integration provided a popular answer. Land remained the over-riding issue...⁷⁹

Thus, any hope of using railways to connect and integrate Ireland within the UK had gone by 1848. Before the Great Famine the IRC approach of establishing state-funded railways might have mitigated that crisis, as the *Morning Chronicle* suggested in 1846:

It has often been a subject of regret that years ago Ireland was not mapped over with railways, when the Irish Railway Commissioners, in 1837 [sic], proposed a comprehensive plan to government for the purpose. Doubtless had this been done, Ireland would have presented a far different prospect. [...] Had this general system been carried out, Ireland would have now been netting a large revenue, and have acquired an increased manufacturing and agricultural character.⁸⁰

While it is not possible to state that this analysis is correct, it is difficult not to conclude that Ireland would at least have been better placed to deal with the famine if it had had a railway system in place by 1845, which the IRC proposals would have delivered. To that extent, the generally more positive view of Peel's handling of the famine compared to the subsequent Whig government might be reconsidered since Peel was clearly the main instrument of the destruction of the IRC.⁸¹ By 1848, the political, social and economic environment had changed so that solutions such as that offered by the IRC were no longer available and probably would not have worked. Within *Young Ireland*, John Mitchel argued for violent action including the use of railway infrastructure for very different purposes. He thought rebels: 'could hardly desire a deadlier ambush than the brinks of a deep railway cutting'.⁸² As Quinn showed in 1983, Mitchel also emphatically rejected the progress of the industrial revolution and political reform and: 'the possibility that modern inventions such as railroads, steamships, and the electric telegraph could improve the general quality of life'.⁸³ Mitchel was equally dismissive of the benefits of free trade,

⁷⁹ David Fieldhouse and Frederick Madden, *The Dependent Empire and Ireland, 1840-1900: Advance and Retreat in Representative Self-Government*, Vol. 5 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 758.

⁸⁰ "Railways in Ireland and the Employment of its People", *Morning Chronicle*, 6 October 1846, 2.

⁸¹ Kinealy, Christine. "Rotten Potatoes and the Politics of Relief." In *A Death-Dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland*, 41-65. Pluto Press, 1997.

⁸² "Prosecution of the *Nation* Newspaper", *Bradford Observer*, 15 January 1846, 3.

⁸³ James Quinn, "John Mitchel and the Rejection of the Nineteenth Century," *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* (2003), Vol 38, No. 3-4

arguing that it produced impoverishment, famine and dependency in Ireland, culminating in his most famous suggestion that the: 'Almighty indeed sent the potato blight but the English created the famine'.⁸⁴ Mitchel's brand of extreme nationalism and anti-liberal rhetoric was not always characteristic of Irish resistance to British rule in the nineteenth century but it left a powerful legacy.⁸⁵ Mitchel himself was arrested, charged and convicted in the course of the 1848 uprising and was transported for fourteen years, taking little further direct part in Irish politics.⁸⁶ He harked back to a time when the people relied on the land rather than industry to survive and this struck a chord, at least in the south of Ireland, in the wake of the Great Famine. It was also a notion that was understood earlier by Drummond and the IRC in its scheme to use railways to shift people away from the land and into industry as the *Morning Chronicle* extract above shows clearly. Eventually, the removal of much of the poorer population was achieved by famine, whether or not that was the intention of the UK government. The issue of the ownership and use of the land then dominated Irish politics, rather than improved industry and communication as the IRC had hoped.⁸⁷ Ireland, in the south at least, was no longer fertile ground for the politics and ambitions of economic liberals like O'Connell, Russell and even Peel, or for their most potent weapon of change – the railways. *The Economist* asserted in 1843 that the extent of Irish nationalism was simply not understood in the UK:

The Scotch [sic] and the Welsh are still extremely national in their feelings, but the Irish are national throughout the whole state of their mind, feelings and physical composition. [They are] as intensely national a people as any race that ever existed.⁸⁸

A similar analysis was given by an Irish MP in 1850 to explain why he considered that the move to abolish the Lord Lieutenantcy and treat Ireland in the same way as the rest of the UK deserved to fail. It simply did not take account of: 'the moral, social, political, and religious differences

⁸⁴ Christine Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland* (Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997), 6.

⁸⁵ Kinealy, *Famine*, 6.

⁸⁶ Brigitte Anton, 'Mitchel, John (1815–1875)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/18828>, accessed 31 Oct 2014].

⁸⁷ See for example John Stuart Mill, *Chapters and Speeches on the Irish Land Question* (London: Longman, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1870).

⁸⁸ "The Repeal of the Union Against The Repeal Of The Corn Laws." *Economist* [London, England] 28 Oct. 1843: 139.

between the two nations. Of these the Channel is but in truth a very inadequate symbol'.⁸⁹ It followed that if the 'channel' (Irish Sea) was an 'inadequate symbol' of the distinction between Ireland and the rest of the UK then the conquest of that channel by railways, steamships and the electric telegraph was not sufficient to counter Ireland's sense of alienation within the UK which increased markedly after the Great Famine.

As for Irish railways, they were slow to develop until the late 1840s but then progress was rapid and the essential parts of the system were completed by 1850.⁹⁰ Ironically, in view of his argument for letting private capital deliver Irish railways, Peel had to intervene to divert capital from continental railways to Ireland.⁹¹ But he ensured that they were English as much as Irish undertakings, since by 1850 half of private capital in Irish railways was from England.⁹² Many of the lines largely followed the design of the system suggested by the IRC, which Peel had been instrumental in defeating.⁹³ A large scheme to put £10 million of public money into Irish railways was promoted in 1847 by Lord George Bentinck, who had led the opposition to repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, and used the issue of Irish railways to challenge Russell's Whig Government. Bentinck planned to deal with hunger but was opposed because Russell judged that the malnourished Irish poor were unfit to work on railways and would not benefit, as Bentinck claimed - and so the measure was lost.⁹⁴

The study of Irish railways suggests that there is at least some truth in Mitchel's notion that Ireland was essentially a market and a source of cheap food for mainland Britain - and railways were the means of extracting that value from the latter country. For example, the Dublin and Drogheda Railway's list of shareholders contained many corn merchants from Manchester.⁹⁵ That company was also chaired by G. A. Hamilton, who had taken part in the Devon Commission that aimed to consolidate agricultural land into larger units even before the Great Famine.⁹⁶ The Secretary of the London and Birmingham Railway had noted in August 1844 that the Dublin and Cashel Railway was essentially an Irish extension of its own lines, as it would: 'concentrate in

⁸⁹ HC Deb 17 June 1850 vol. 111 c1446.

⁹⁰ J. Connolly, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 471.

⁹¹ "Opening of the Great Southern and Western Railway to Limerick", *Cork Examiner*, 5 July 1848, 1.

⁹² Richard Brown, *Society and Economy in Modern Britain, 1700-1850* (London: Routledge, 1991), 234.

⁹³ Railways. Report of the Railway Department on the schemes for extending railway communication in the south of Ireland, 1. **1845** (154) XXXIX.435.

⁹⁴ HC Deb 16 February 1847 vol. 90 cc117-123 [£824M at 2016 prices]

⁹⁵ *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee on the Dublin and Drogheda Railway* (London: J.L Cox. 1836), 23.

⁹⁶ *Handbook to the Dublin and Drogheda Railway* (Dublin: N Walsh, no date), 5.

Dublin the whole of the midland [sic] and south of Ireland [so that] they could not have a more important feeder'.⁹⁷ There is also some support for Mitchel's view in a report to the board of the LNWR in 1849, after the impact of famine was clear. The report anticipated with pleasure an increase in Irish cattle traffic because of: 'the breaking up of a vast number of small-holdings and the conversion of these into larger-sized farms'.⁹⁸ That was a direct result of the famine and the clearance of population and may explain why the LNWR apparently invested £3 million in the line from Dublin to Cork to access that market.⁹⁹ Ireland was also a promising market for English goods so that according to Lee: 'investment by Lancashire businessmen in Irish railways was virtually an investment in the sales sections of their own businesses'.¹⁰⁰ An important point to consider in this analysis is that this benefit to English, particularly Lancashire and Manchester, producers was the result of the *privately commissioned railways* favoured by Peel, rather than the publicly-funded and commissioned railways that the IRC had advocated that would have assisted in developing the productive economy of Ireland rather than it just being a 'feeder' to the British economy. Ireland got abundant railways by the 1860s but the south of the country did not get the development that the IRC had planned. Ireland became in Lee's words an: 'underdeveloped economy with a highly developed transport system'.¹⁰¹ The CHR was the product of a distinctly Anglo-centric approach to railway connection between Ireland and the rest of the UK. Where the IRC approach started with Ireland and then linked it to London (with some intended benefit for North Wales), the CHR started from its connection with London at Chester, largely ignored North Wales and created connections to Ireland's privately-funded railways for the purpose of profit and government policy. Both approaches intended to keep Ireland in the Union - but the CHR (as compared to the IRC proposals) was more clearly a part of government policy that was designed for British economic and political purposes whereas the IRC proposals contained a greater element of Irish economic development.

In the political environment that emerged more clearly in Ireland after O'Connell's death in 1847 and the 1848 rebellion, the relevance of schemes for improved communication between London and Dublin declined. The failure to remove the post of Lord Lieutenant in 1850 also made the issue less critical as it stalled the aim to match economic and political union. However, such

⁹⁷ "Railway Intelligence", *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 17 August 1844, 2.

⁹⁸ *Report on Cattle Traffic for the Year 1849*, London and North Western Railway internal report.

⁹⁹ "Railways in Ireland and the Employment of its People", *Freeman's Journal*, 8 October 1846, 4. [£281M at 2015 prices]

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Lee, "The Provision of Capital for Early Irish Railways, 1830-53," *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. 16, No. 61 (Mar., 1968), pp. 33-63.

¹⁰¹ J Lee, "The Railways in the Irish Economy", in L. M. Cullen, ed. *The Formation of the Irish Economy* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1969), 77-87.

communication remained important for the ‘business purposes’ of economic union (such as LNWR cattle traffic) as government acknowledged in 1856. The CHR continued to carry the mail at least as far as Holyhead - though government gave the contract for the sea passage of the mail to the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company in 1850. That was a strange outcome given the grant to the CHR of powers to operate steamships. Simmons is surely correct in his 1997 suggestion that this was a result of Irish pressure at Westminster.¹⁰² The CHR blamed the change of government and especially the loss of their consistent advocate Peel, who died in 1850.¹⁰³ John Mitchel of *Young Ireland* was transported to Australia for his suggested use of railways for purposes of rebellion, which was not taken up widely. But it had a sequel in 1867 when the CHR and the steamships to Dublin were considered by Irish rebels as part of a plan to transport arms that they intended to steal from Chester Castle. The plot was foiled but it showed just how far Irish nationalism had strayed from O’Connell’s advocacy of a railway link between Dublin and London as a means to cement the Union between Britain and Ireland.¹⁰⁴

Peel defined Ireland as a constitutional question that affected the integrity of the UK. The CHR was an important part of the answer, thereby making the railway political in nature – and it was defined as such in its day. But the need to cross the Irish Sea meant that the link with Dublin was about more than railways. It was a railway plus steamships, and eventually the electric telegraph as well. Thus, it was not only that the CHR was applied to a constitutional question that made it a very different railway from its contemporaries but also its use in conjunction with steamships and the telegraph. The way that the railway was created and supported partly by the state, and given a monopoly of traffic, also added to its unique status.

Surprisingly, the data gathered in Table 5.1 and presented in Figure 5.1 above show that the CHR actually made *no difference* to the communication time between London and Dublin between 1850 and 1860. It failed in its single operational purpose, but that does not detract from the CHR’s status as a specific element in the Government’s Irish policy in the period 1843-50. It is clear from the analysis in this study that the *intention* of Peel’s government, and its Whig successor, was to use the line to control Ireland directly from London. The attempt to change the constitutional relationship between Great Britain and Ireland in 1850 through the abolition of the post of Lord Lieutenant was unique in being explicitly based on the opening of a railway line. The CHR’s special status was underlined by the fact that government guaranteed a five per cent return on capital for the CHR to support its construction - an approach that was used later in India.

¹⁰² Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 223.

¹⁰³ “Chester and Holyhead Railway”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 9 September 1853, 4.

¹⁰⁴ “The Fenian Raid on Chester: Narrow escape of the City from Plunder” *Leeds Times*, 16 February 1867, 7.

In an age when railways were deemed to be the business of private investors, the attitude of government to the CHR was exceptional. And it was Peel, whose consistent pursuit of his Anglo-centric approach to British and Irish political and economic development who created the conditions for the CHR's success. But that was not just a matter of personality as espoused by Carlyle and his view that: 'the history of the world is but the biography of great men'.¹⁰⁵ Peel represented powerful economic and political forces that shaped the economy and the constitution of the UK - and the CHR was ultimately a creation of those forces of laissez-faire economics and free trade politics. The complexities of Ireland, its politics and the trauma of famine – and the performance failures of the CHR itself - brought the experiment in the use of railways as a specific part of policy in Ireland to an early end. The CHR remained important and contentious for the rest of the century, but supported government in Ireland in a secondary role in the rapid transport of the mail and in ensuring that Irish MPs could attend Parliament, the purposes most often recalled and analysed by historians of the line. Thus, the CHR's influence in Ireland declined steadily as the century wore on, even as it increased unexpectedly in North Wales.

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 38.

6. Railways, monopoly and the politics of “progress” in North Wales 1845-80

*‘[The first LNWR chairman, George Carr Glyn] ‘looked upon Railway enterprise with the eye of a statesman [as] a means of extending civilization, commerce, and enlightenment’.*¹

This chapter and the next address how a political relationship developed between the Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR), its London and North Western Railway (LNWR) operators, and the people and politicians of North Wales. The analysis is within the context of Leo Marx’s important questions noted in chapter 1 for assessing the how, why and by whom of the relationship between technology and politics.² In this chapter, the focus is on the ownership of the technology and how its development beyond the CHR into the Welsh-speaking heartlands of North Wales was explained in the absence of any obvious commercial value. The justification for the CHR was a clear national priority to reach Dublin from London quickly – but that was not an argument that applied to the creation of an extensive network of lines within North Wales from 1850 to 1880. Indeed, the additional lines created complications for rapid access to Ireland because they added local traffic to the main line.³ The next chapter considers the reaction of society in North Wales as the railways developed and how that affected the nature of politics in the region. The resulting political contest between North Wales and the owners of the powerful railway technology will be analysed in chapter 8.

The evidence in this chapter will show how the LNWR developed a monopoly of railways in North Wales in order to protect its main line to Ireland. As Simmons has made clear, the rural Welsh railways, including those connected to the CHR, had little commercial value and were generally: ‘bitterly disappointing to the shareholders of the companies concerned’.⁴ In North Wales that meant shareholders of the LNWR. In the absence of any obvious financial advantages, the chapter shows how the social and political interests that backed the construction of the CHR branch lines suggested a cultural purpose that was similar to the ambitions of the Education Commission of 1847 for Wales. It had examined Welsh society and schooling and was highly critical of them - and especially the Welsh language that predominated. It was in: ‘both tone and

¹ “George Carr Glyn, Lord Wolverton” *The Economist*, 27 July 1873, Issue 1561, 899.

² Marx, Leo. "On Heidegger's Conception of "Technology" and Its Historical Validity." *The Massachusetts Review* 25, no. 4 (1984): 638-52.

³ That was most clearly demonstrated in 1868 when a mineral train rolled back onto the main line from a quarry siding and was hit by the Irish Mail train at high speed near Abergele. It was the worst accident on the British railway system up to that time as it killed more than 30 people, including Lord Farnham. See L.T.C. Rolt, *Red for Danger* (London: Pan Books, 1966), 181-4.

⁴ Jack Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales 1830-1914, Volume 1 The System and its Working* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 76.

content [...] anti-Welsh, but this was not a racially based animosity, more a genuine contemporary middle class endorsement of Standard English as the language of civilized society'.⁵ This chapter argues that the attitude in the education report – especially towards the Welsh language - was reflected by those who promoted the smaller railways that linked to the CHR, and then by the LNWR that acquired them. So the LNWR's project to reach Dublin quickly fitted into the broader Anglicising project in Wales that centred on the work of the Education Commission. That is what eventually made railway development and operation so political in North Wales – as will be seen in the subsequent chapters.

In order to set the North Wales research in the broader context of politics and technology discussed in chapter 1, the study looks further afield for a comparable approach to that in North Wales. The notion of a similarity between India and Wales in the challenge to their languages from Victorian “improvers” is suggested by Colley's 2014 analysis of the UK, which draws a parallel between the approaches adopted in each, where English was seen as an essential first step to receiving the “benefits” of progress.⁶ As was seen in chapter 1, the wish to deliver “moral improvement” alongside private profit was part of the political dimension of railway investment in the empire.⁷ This chapter looks for parallels in North Wales, where such improvement was also seen as necessary according to the Education Commission of 1847.

6.1 The establishment of a railway monopoly in North Wales 1845-80

In order to develop the findings of the previous four chapters in respect of the ‘system of beliefs’ of those exercising control over the use of railways, it is helpful to consider the characteristics of the people who led the LNWR. Its first operational manager from 1846 was Mark Huish who: ‘demonstrated managerial capitalism at the proto-corporate stage of Britain's history’.⁸ George Carr Glynn, its first chairman, ran a bank with the largest railway business in Britain.⁹ He saw the LNWR as being more than a mere railway company and: ‘looked upon Railway enterprise with the eye of a statesman [as] a means of extending civilization, commerce, and enlightenment’ – exactly

⁵ Gareth Elwyn Jones and Gordon Wynne Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2003), 59.

⁶ Linda Colley, *Acts of Union and Disunion* (London: Profile Books, 2014), 77.

⁷ A. A. den Otter, *The Philosophy of Railways: The transcontinental railway idea in British North America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 19.

⁸ Terry Gourvish, ‘Huish, Mark (1808–1867)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46519>, [Accessed 7 Dec 2014]

⁹ Michael Reed, ‘Glyn, George Carr, first Baron Wolverton (1797–1873)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41283>, accessed 8 Sept 2016]

the mixture of moral purpose and private profit noted earlier.¹⁰ He was succeeded by Lord Chandos: 'an early example of a member of the high aristocracy entering the world of business'.¹¹ Richard Moon, who chaired the company in the years 1861-91, was a Conservative and devout Anglican.¹² At different times they held important positions in the largest industrial enterprise in the world. The profile of these senior corporate leaders was very different from that of the bulk of the population of North Wales, as this study will show.

As the chapters relating to Irish policy have already demonstrated, there was a close relationship between the state, which provided significant financial backing to the CHR and the LNWR. It is not easy to characterise that relationship because of the laissez-faire economic approach of government which meant that it wished to remain at "arms-length" from private enterprise. The evidence from previous chapters shows the closeness of the relationship between government and the LNWR. For example, the allocation of £1million of capital by the London and Birmingham Railway (LBR) in 1844 - the largest component company of the LNWR - to the CHR was an example of how the public policy of building a railway to Holyhead was implemented in part by private means. It was a decision communicated privately to the prime minister by the LBR, as shown in Chapter 4.¹³ The Government sustained its official line that it did not fund railways and the company was repaid indirectly through enhancements to the mail contract. In like manner, a director of the LBR was requested by Peel to become involved in an Irish railway in support of the latter's notion that private capital was the way forward for railways in Ireland.¹⁴ Another example from the period of the American Civil War 1861-5 showed how an unofficial government policy was supported by the LNWR. The official Government position was neutrality, but individual members of Palmerston's Government, most notably Gladstone, suggested a different policy when he told an audience that the Confederate States of America had 'made a nation'.¹⁵ That informal government position was supported by the LNWR. It sold two Holyhead-based steamers to the Confederacy, which converted them for war purposes in breach of official

¹⁰ "George Carr Glyn, Lord Wolverton" *The Economist*, 27 July 1873, Issue 1561, 899.

¹¹ E. J. Feuchtwanger, 'Grenville, Richard Plantagenet Campbell Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-, third duke of Buckingham and Chandos (1823–1889)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11498>, [Accessed 7 Dec 2014]

¹² "Moon, Sir Richard, first baronet (1814–1899)," Michael Reed in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. David Cannadine, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45712> [Accessed July 16, 2016]

¹³ The British Library, London [BL] MS 40540. British Library, Private Correspondence of Sir Robert Peel, MSS 40540, Volume CCCLX (ff.418) f227, Letter from Richard Creed to Sir Robert Peel, 18 February 1844

¹⁴ "Opening of the Great Southern and Western Railway to Limerick" *Cork Examiner*, 5 July 1848, 1.

¹⁵ David William Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1993), 119.

British policy.¹⁶ In terms of more routine domestic politics, the LNWR also had a virtual monopoly of newsprint that was essential to national communication, and always held two weeks' supply of the material.¹⁷ These examples illustrate the alignment of the LNWR with the state, somewhat elusive in official sources - but tangible in its operation. It was certainly consistent with that relationship that the LNWR Board decided that the company badge: 'should represent the figure of Britannia [sic] encircled by the inscription London and North Western Railway'.¹⁸ Similarly, it decided that London time should be exported to all points on the line and feature in all its timetables, clearly demonstrating its metropolitan focus.¹⁹ That showed that it was a company that represented, according to its first chairman: 'uniformity of system and concentration of authority', which was certainly consistent with a close connection with the state, and was also likely to complicate the relationship with the remote and rather alien political environment in North Wales.²⁰

In North Wales, the LNWR used railways in a monopolistic manner, and established its position to do this in three distinct phases. During the first phase from 1845-60, the LNWR and GWR struggled for ownership of important lines that accessed North Wales and Birkenhead from the direction of Shrewsbury, which became a vital town in railway development in that period.²¹ During the second phase from 1861 to 1875, after money supply became more difficult for the large companies, railways were often built by contractors and then operated independently or sold on to the highest bidder.²² Railways were built in areas where contractors were confident that larger companies would be interested in buying them in order to secure their own position in a region, and to prevent a rival company from doing so. The third phase from 1876 to 1880 was one in which companies began to build lines for themselves once again, and this was reflected in the activities of the LNWR in North Wales. While government had supported the CHR and the LNWR up to 1850, it did not protect them from competition thereafter, and the

¹⁶ Ivor Wynne Jones, *Shipwrecks of North Wales* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973), 80.

¹⁷ Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 241.

¹⁸ TNA, RAIL 410/20, Minutes of the Board of the LNWR 1845-49, Meeting of 11 July 1846.

¹⁹ TNA, RAIL 410/20, Minutes of the Board of the LNWR 1845-49, Meeting of 11 July 1846.

²⁰ Wilfred L Steele, *The History of the London and North Western Railway* (London: Railway and Travel Monthly, 1914), 138.

²¹ Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, *Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 444.

²² Harold Pollins, "Railway Contractors and Finance of Railway Development", in M. C Reed, ed., *Railways in the Victorian Economy: Studies in Finance and Economic Growth*. (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1969), 221.

LNWR's powerful position was slowly eroded, but without seriously affecting its national supremacy among railway companies.²³

Even before the completion of the CHR in 1850, the LNWR and CHR were alert to the dangers of competition in the North Wales region.²⁴ In September 1845, the CHR announced its intention to build lines along most of the access routes to the North Wales coast.²⁵ That was consistent with the LNWR's practice of building or acquiring strategic railway lines after 1847 for no other reason than stifling competition.²⁶ It clearly remained nervous about the Great Western Railway (GWR), even after the defeat of the latter's Porth Dinllaen railway (PDR) in 1846 – and it identified almost the whole of North Wales as an area that it wished to dominate.²⁷ According to the GWR secretary, who gave evidence to a select committee in 1853 about this period, the LNWR was keen to maintain its own monopoly, while preventing any other company developing the capacity to challenge them.²⁸ While it can be assumed that his opinion was not entirely impartial, North Wales provided a case in point. Figure 6.3 below shows the potential directions from which competition for the region might come. Although the CHR and the LNWR were technically separate companies, the former acted in support of the latter as the study will show. By 1880 many branches had been added to the CHR to protect it, so that any analysis of the impact of the CHR should include the branches that connected to it within North Wales.

²³ Gourvish, *Mark Huish and the London and North Western Railway*, Chapter 6, 163-200.

²⁴ Although they were nominally separate companies, the CHR was inextricably linked to the London and Birmingham Railway and later the LNWR. It always had its offices in London (179 miles from Chester), first at Moorgate Street and by 1849 at Euston, the headquarters of the LNWR.

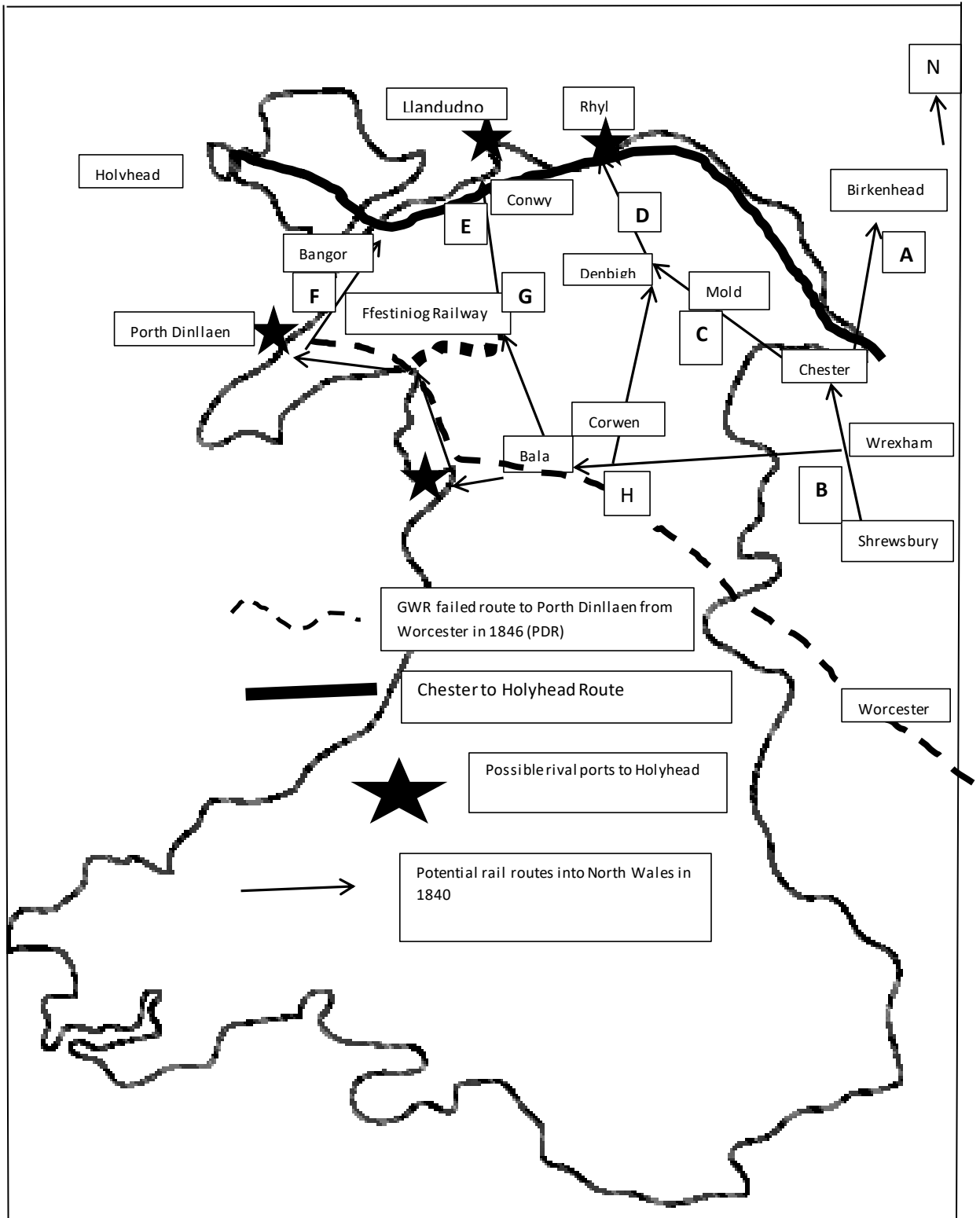
²⁵ "Chester and Holyhead Railway", *The Times*, 13 September 1845, 11.

²⁶ Terry Gourvish, *Mark Huish and the London and North Western Railway: A study of Management* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972), 104.

²⁷ David Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King: The Life and Times of Sir Edward Watkin 1819-1901* (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2002), 107.

²⁸ Second report from the Select Committee on Railway and Canal Bills; together with the minutes of evidence, and appendix from this evidence, 142, 1852 -53 (170) XXXVIII.5

Figure 6.1 Potential competitor routes and ports to the Chester and Holyhead Railway in North Wales in 1840



By comparison, Figure 6.2 below demonstrates the success of the LNWR. It shows that all the potential routes to the CHR and Irish traffic identified in Figure 6.1 were closed to opposition by 1880. The map includes only strategic lines and is not a complete map of railways in the area.

The first priority acquisition for the CHR, even while it was completing its own line between 1844 and 1850, was the Chester and Birkenhead Railway (CBR) that was a potential target for the GWR in its drive northwards. It was a highly strategic line that gave access to the Mersey and the Irish and Atlantic traffic to the west (A in figure 6.1). The CHR was interested in purchasing this line from 1844, but it was dismayed when its offer was rejected in December of that year.²⁹ The arrangement between the CHR and the CBR had created some opposition and the matter remained contentious within the board of the CBR.³⁰ By March 1845, it was apparent that the CHR was committed to extra spending on a bridge over the Menai Straits and that government was offering rather less for the mail contract than it had expected. CBR shareholders were then nervous about a financial connection with the CHR, given its poorer financial prospects. The CHR refused a revised proposal from the CBR to merge with them, and the latter decided to oppose the Bill that contained that amalgamation. A furious row ensued, followed by a vote that committed the CBR to oppose amalgamation with the CHR and become a potential ally of the GWR.³¹ As a result, the CHR and LNWR became vulnerable from the direction of Shrewsbury because that was a missing piece in a GWR route from London to the Mersey.

The loss of the CBR was the first in a series of failures by the CHR (and its parent company the LNWR) to contain that threat from the south of Chester (B in Figure 6.3) as the GWR pressed for an outlet towards Ireland via the Mersey on the narrow gauge, having been prevented by government from using its preferred broad gauge north of Bristol on new lines. The CBR was confident that it could survive without the CHR, and concentrated on the situation south of Chester, where the North Wales Mineral Railway (NWMR) had created a link between Wrexham and Chester in 1844. Chester, like Shrewsbury, became a highly strategic location as it gave access along the NWMR towards Shrewsbury and the West Midlands – and it was soon at the centre of a major dispute. Shrewsbury and Chester Railway (SCR) staff and business were kept out of Chester station by the LNWR using: ‘rails, posts, bolts, chains [...] stretching across the entrance of the road to the station’.³² The LNWR was accused in parliament of being: ‘the leviathan of railway companies, [...] which exercised a huge and unjust monopoly, and lived upon litigation, selfishly and constantly oppressing the smaller companies’.³³

The SCR could not compete unaided with the might of the LNWR and between 1852 and 1854 it joined with the Shrewsbury and Birmingham Railway (SBR) and attempted to combine

²⁹ “Chester and Holyhead Railway”, *The Times*, 7 April 1845, 9.

³⁰ “Chester and Birkenhead Railway Company”, *Chester Chronicle*, 9 August 1844, 1.

³¹ “Chester and Birkenhead Railway Company”, *Chester Chronicle*, 4 April 1845, 4.

³² “Chester General Station”, *Chester Chronicle*, 23 November 1849, 3.

³³ Chester and Holyhead Railway Bill, *HC Deb 27 May 1850 vol. 111 c384*.

with the GWR - the only company capable of resisting the LNWR. By 1854, the LNWR was an amalgamation that had become the 'enemy of amalgamation'.³⁴ But it could not resist competition on that occasion, and by September 1854 the GWR had reached Birkenhead via its connections with its new allies in Shrewsbury, Chester and Birmingham. It was a rare victory for the Shrewsbury and mid-Wales interests that Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, the largest of all Welsh landowners, marked with a great banquet.³⁵ That was an early sign of the LNWR's negative image among some important Welsh economic and political interests. The GWR success in reaching Birkenhead was certainly significant - hence the banquet and a stiff response from the LNWR. A group of LNWR senior directors visited Chester and Holyhead and threatened to build a rival new line to Birkenhead.³⁶ The issue was not resolved until 1860, when the LNWR and GWR were so concerned about the cost of their contest that they agreed joint ownership of the line from Chester to Birkenhead.³⁷

The LNWR and CHR had more success to the west of Chester and the threat of a line towards Mold (C in Figure 6.3) that could have shortened the route to Holyhead from London or served another port towards Ireland such as Rhyl. As early as 1845, the CHR had plans to construct a railway to Mold but progress was not as smooth as it had hoped.³⁸ The increasing costs of construction put pressure on profits, and by March 1849 the CHR were unable to complete the purchase of the Mold Railway (MR) because of shareholder opposition. LNWR Chairman George Glyn was concerned that if the CHR did not buy the Mold line then another railway company would, thereby damaging the LNWR's strategic interest in keeping large rival companies such as the GWR out of North Wales. Glyn persuaded a majority to support the acquisition - a result that suited the LNWR rather more than the CHR and its increasingly worried shareholders.³⁹ The Mold line barely covered its operating costs in 1850, which prompted one shareholder to characterise its acquisition by the CHR as a 'most infamous and impudent

³⁴ "The proposed amalgamation of the Great Western & Shrewsbury Railways", *Chester Chronicle*, 3 June 1854, 6.

³⁵ "Great Western Railway", *Chester Chronicle*, 2 September 1854, 8. Wynn's extensive involvement rather contradicts Simmons' assertion that: 'no member of the Wynn family contributed notably to railway development'. The GWR reaching Birkenhead was certainly significant, hence the banquet and the LNWR response. See, Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle, *Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 554.

³⁶ "London and North Western Railway", *Chester Chronicle*, 2 September 1854, 8.

³⁷ Peter Baughen, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Volume XI, North and Mid Wales* (David and Charles: Newton Abbot, 1980), 42. "Birkenhead Railway", *Liverpool Daily Post*, 19 November 1860, 5.

³⁸ Baughen, *North and Mid Wales*, 48.

³⁹ "Chester and Holyhead", *Morning Post*, 5 April 1849, 3.

robbery'.⁴⁰ The process demonstrated the limited freedom that the CHR had in its operations; in all but the most minor of issues it was in the hands of the LNWR, which was steadily gaining power in North Wales.⁴¹

After this initial phase of activity, attention turned to new railways that were being constructed by independent contractors. In 1854, a line was projected from Wrexham towards Denbigh, with the possibility of reaching the Irish Sea at Rhyl and establishing a port to Ireland that would rival Holyhead. The GWR was reported to be interested in such a line as a foundation for its own network in North Wales to build on its success in gaining access to Shrewsbury, Chester and Birkenhead.⁴² The GWR initiative was blocked by the Vale of Clwyd Railway (VCR) that joined the CHR at Rhyl and potentially closed off access to that town to the LNWR's greatest rival (D in Figure 6.3).⁴³ The VCR was nominally an independent line, which technically left the way open for the GWR to express an interest in it in competition with the LNWR. In 1860, when the contractor Thomas Savin began to seek powers to extend the VCR towards Corwen to the south-west and Mold to the east, the line became central to the battle between the GWR and LNWR.⁴⁴ The GWR announced its intention to run expresses from London to a new station at Rhyl once it acquired the VCR – so the LNWR purchased enough shares to control the VCR and by April 1861 the LNWR's 'empire-building proclivities' had secured the line - and thwarted the GWR once again.⁴⁵

Further west, another private contractor called Edmund Sharpe built the Conway and Llanrwst Railway (CLR) in 1861 that joined the CHR at present day Llandudno Junction (E in Figure 6.3). Comments from Sharpe on the occasion of him leaving the area for Switzerland, after a profitable sale to the LNWR, demonstrated that he knew that the line was at the centre of local railway politics. He told his banquet guests

No one who takes up a map of this part of the country can fail to observe that a continuation of this line to Corwen would *open up to others as ready an access to Llandudno and the Irish Sea* [as at present enjoyed by LNWR at Holyhead, but] to attempt to work this line [...] in connection with

⁴⁰ "Chester and Holyhead Railway", *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 23 March 1850, 4.

⁴¹ "Chester and Holyhead", *Morning Post*, 5 April 1849, 3.

⁴² "Vale of Clwyd Railway", *Wrexham Advertiser*, 7 October 1854, 3.

⁴³ "Vale of Clwyd Railway" *Chester Chronicle*, 23 October 1858, 6.

⁴⁴ Baughen, *North and Mid Wales*, 71.

⁴⁵ Baughen, *North and Mid Wales*, 72.

and in continuation of the Llandudno Railway [against the consent of the LNWR] would have been a somewhat dangerous experiment.⁴⁶

In 1857, Sharpe had written a pamphlet suggesting that no profitable standard gauge railway was possible in the Conwy valley. His solution then was a series of tramways on the opposite side of the valley from that on which he actually built the line.⁴⁷ The calculation changed six years later because the LNWR wanted the line in order to block the route to its rivals; it was not really concerned with Sharpe's analysis that the line might not pay. Once Sharpe and the local landowners understood that, the CLR was built and they made their profit, while the LNWR ensured that its main line was not threatened by the GWR approaching from the south and creating a port at Llandudno to compete with Holyhead. Sharpe's analysis of the LNWR position in North Wales indicated just how powerful it had become, and how far it was prepared to go to maintain its monopoly position in North Wales, even securing branch lines that did not make a profit. This lack of profitability was shown when the line was later extended and local people complained of the 'parsimony' of the LNWR in the delay in opening the extension from Llanrwst to Betws-y-Coed: 'for no other reason than the smallness of the profit likely to be realised by the Company'.⁴⁸

The building of lines west from the Shrewsbury and Chester Railway (H in Figure 6.3) was led by Henry Robertson, another local contractor and promoter of railways who had close connections to the GWR.⁴⁹ He had also exposed Robert Stephenson (the CHR engineer) at the enquiry into the Dee Bridge collapse of 1847, showing that the renowned engineer should have known that a cast iron rail bridge was liable to failure because of the brittleness of the material.⁵⁰ By 1860, Robertson had begun to demonstrate the inaccuracy of George Stephenson's earlier claim about the PDR (noted in Chapter 2) that a railway through the middle of North Wales was 'impracticable'.⁵¹ Robertson was engineer of the line from Ruabon to Llangollen and thence to

⁴⁶ "Llanrwst: Banquet to Edmund Sharpe, esq" *North Wales Chronicle*, 5 September, 1863, 15. [My emphasis]. The reference to the Llandudno Railway is to the short line built from the CHR to Llandudno opened in 1858. See "Llandudno and Conway Railway" *North Wales Chronicle*, 4 September, 1858, 8.

⁴⁷ Edmund Sharpe, *A Letter on branch railways: addressed to the Right Honourable Lord Stanley of Alderley*. (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1857), 34.

⁴⁸ "Llanrwst and Bettwy-y-Coed Railway", *North Wales Chronicle*, 30 November 1867, 2.

⁴⁹ "Railways in North Wales", *North Wales Chronicle*, 27 October 1860, 4. For Robertson see, Ronald M. Birse, 'Robertson, Henry (1816–1888)', rev. Mike Chrimes, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37901>], [Accessed 30 Nov 2014].

⁵⁰ L T C Rolt, *George and Robert Stephenson: The Railway Revolution* (Penguin: London, 1988), 302.

⁵¹ "Imperial Railway", *North Wales Chronicle*, 7 May 1839, 2.

Corwen, and he revealed his strategic ambitions to a meeting at Bala in 1860, when he announced his intention to continue north-west to the slate town of Blaenau Ffestiniog.⁵² Working closely with Benjamin Piercy, he aimed thereby to complete the original PDR scheme discussed in Chapter 2, apart from the final stretch from Pwllheli to Porth Dinllaen itself.⁵³ While the LNWR may have liked to acquire these lines, they were generally peripheral to its core area of interest in North Wales so long as they did not include a port capable of challenging Holyhead, such as Porth Dinllaen. But that possibility continued to concern the LNWR into the 1860s, as shown by Robertson's stated intentions, and by other observations such as those of the *Liverpool Mercury* - that Porth Dinllaen and a route through central Wales remained: 'the shortest and best means of communication between England [sic] and Ireland'.⁵⁴ That comment occurred in one of a series of articles that identified Wales as a national entity, and made the case for a railway system that held it together. As Grigg has observed, the railway lines of Wales are largely Anglo-centric as they travel east to west.⁵⁵ By contrast, the embryonic railway manifesto for Wales in 1864 wanted: 'one if not two lines, extending north to south [...] to render the system complete'.⁵⁶ A further article in the series referred to this as an explicitly political: 'grand task of uniting the whole of the Principality of Wales'.⁵⁷ Although the articles were anonymous, it seems likely that they were authored by Henry Robertson, who was a Liberal MP in Shrewsbury 1862-65, and engineer of many of the lines mentioned in the articles.⁵⁸ The articles showed a frustration at the lack of attention to the needs of North Wales from existing railway operators and offered a very different set of priorities from those of the LNWR. While the LNWR focused on Ireland, the author of these articles took the Welsh perspective that railways were: 'essential to the working of minerals in Wales'.⁵⁹ The articles also observed that public railways had failed the owners of mines and quarries and that more needed to be done on their behalf.

⁵² "Railways in North Wales", *North Wales Chronicle*, 27 October 1860, 4.

⁵³ Stephen Hughes, 'Piercy, Benjamin (1827–1888)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, May 2011; online edn, Sept 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59975>, [Accessed 30 Nov 2014].

⁵⁴ "Extension of the Railway system in Wales", *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 October 1864, 6.

⁵⁵ John Grigg, *Lloyd George; The Young Lloyd George* (London: Penguin, 1997), 22.

⁵⁶ "Extension of the Railway system in Wales", *Liverpool Mercury*, 24 October 1864, 6

⁵⁷ "Extension of the Railway system in Wales: North Wales", *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 October 1864, 6

⁵⁸ Birse, *Robertson*.

⁵⁹ "Extension of the Railway system in Wales: North Wales", *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 October 1864, 6

So the LNWR remained vigilant, and took the opportunity to obstruct the possibility of a line north from the Cambrian coast route towards Porth Dinllaen by acquiring the Carnarvonshire Railway (CR). In February 1869, the LNWR reported that an opportunity had arisen to purchase that line and that it proposed to do so because of the access it gave them to the slate traffic (F in Figure 6.3).⁶⁰ In fact, it was just another in the list of North Wales railways that enjoyed a short independent life before being absorbed by the LNWR, largely for strategic rather than traffic purposes.⁶¹ In its final phase of expansion in North Wales, the LNWR extended the CLR from Llanrwst south to Blaenau Ffestiniog (G in Figure 6.3). The aim was to prevent the GWR from claiming the route, even though little traffic was expected.⁶² It was opened in 1879, ahead of the GWR's arrival in Blaenau Ffestiniog from Bala in 1883 as planned by Robertson and noted above. The LNWR again showed how determined it was to prevent competition by building a line to Blaenau Ffestiniog that included a long and costly tunnel through hard rock.⁶³ This line provides an example of how the interests of the LNWR in preventing competition were not aligned with those of North Wales in the strategic development of its economy,. The Porth Dinllaen railway schemes centred on Porthmadog, which was the focus of the developing regional economy in the 1830s and 1840s because of its extensive slate, shipping and railway facilities.⁶⁴ That was undermined by the CHR, which denied the London traffic to Porthmadog in 1850 - and then in 1879 created a rival outlet for slate along the Conwy valley with its line to Ffestiniog, so that Conwy was then: 'in active rivalry with Portmadoc as a flourishing and important shipping outlet for the slate trade - the staple industry of North Wales'.⁶⁵ Such developments tended to reinforce the notion that the LNWR was not in tune with the region, which made it less likely that it would enjoy a positive position in local politics.

Although this overall process of establishing an LNWR railway monopoly in North Wales appears complex, it aimed to achieve three objectives. First, to secure the monopoly of the short-sea Irish traffic between Holyhead and Dublin, and in that it was wholly successful. Second, it wished to consolidate the regional advantage given to the company by the decision to restrict the spread of the broad gauge. In this respect the LNWR was only partially successful. The GWR did establish a narrow gauge route to the Mersey at Birkenhead and made some progress in mid –

⁶⁰ "London and North Western Railway", *North Wales Chronicle*, 20 February 1869, 2.

⁶¹ Baughen, *North and Mid Wales*, 96.

⁶² Baughen, *North and Mid Wales*, 127.

⁶³ "Railway Communication with Blaenau Ffestiniog: Opening of the New Railway", *Wrexham Advertiser*, 13 October 1883, 3.

⁶⁴ A. H. Dodd, *A History of Caernarvonshire 1284-1900* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 1990), 275

⁶⁵ "Railway Extension in Wales: The Bettws-y-Coed Festiniog [sic] Line", *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 May 1879, 7.

Wales through acquiring the lines built by Robertson. But the dominance of the LNWR in the region was not impaired seriously by these GWR successes. Third, the LNWR aimed to sustain the national momentum it had been given when it was created in 1846 through its early dominance of the prosperous UK cities of Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham from its London base. Its objective was to remain the UK's 'Premier Line'.⁶⁶ It did so in an aggressive manner in the various regions adjacent to its linear system from London northwards – North Wales being but one example, and perhaps the only one where virtually all competition was excluded, apart from on the periphery of the region.⁶⁷

The progress described above might have benefited North Wales more if the purpose of the railway monopoly had been to develop the potential of the region as outlined in the railway manifesto of 1864. But even first advertisement for the CHR in 1848 made clear that the LNWR interest in North Wales was its line to Ireland: 'Chester and Holyhead Railway opened throughout to Holyhead – London to Dublin in 13 hours'.⁶⁸ There was no part of the advertisement devoted to accessing North Wales itself. However, from 1850 there was greater consideration by the CHR of the potential to create profit from within North Wales. It was driven initially by the refusal of Russell's Government to increase funding to the CHR in 1850, which in turn forced the CHR to examine other sources of traffic under the direction of chairman, Samuel Peto.⁶⁹ Peto demanded that CHR managers engage aggressively with local industry and provide access to its main line to quarry and mine owners in order to boost business.⁷⁰ His initiative was not intended to benefit the people of economy of North Wales in the manner that the Irish Railway Commission's proposals might have worked for Ireland. It was an economic necessity and was directed towards what the CHR could *take out* of North Wales in terms of mineral extraction rather than how it could work with local people and businesses to improve the functioning of the North Wales economy. For example, the CHR identified taking business off the local and prosperous coastal shipping concerns in order to boost its own traffic.⁷¹ The CHR also began to identify tourism as a possible source of revenue, although its aim to make Bangor (rather than Llandudno or Rhyl) into the 'Brighton of Wales' was evidence of its limited understanding of the potential of the region -

⁶⁶ Reed, *London and North Western Railway*, 1-2.

⁶⁷ Simmons and Biddle, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, 284-5.

⁶⁸ 'Chester and Holyhead Railway', *Dublin Evening Post*, 5 September 1848, 1.

⁶⁹ M. H. Port, 'Peto, Sir (Samuel) Morton, first baronet (1809–1889)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/article/22042>, [Accessed 27 Jan 2015]

⁷⁰ 'Chester and Holyhead Railway Meeting', *North Wales Chronicle*, 18 September 1851, 3.

⁷¹ 'Chester and Holyhead Railway', *Freeman's Journal*, 31 August 1852, 4.

and that effort failed.⁷² The CHR approach was consistent with Dodd's assertion that railway development in North Wales stunted the local economy as noted in Chapter 1. The problem was perceived at the time, even by those who supported the CHR. Edward Parry, the first chronicler of the line, suggested that better management would improve profits.⁷³ But Parry made one important proviso: 'this cannot be done by *the employment of parties ignorant alike of the language of the people, and the trade of the country*, even in the locality of the stations'.⁷⁴ The CHR addressed the potential for traffic from within North Wales once Peto arrived. However, its overall attitude to the region, articulated by Parry, shows that it was still essentially an *English* company operating in an unfamiliar environment; and the CHR was apparently not prepared to adapt to that environment. That rather Anglo-centric approach to the use of railways in North Wales had the potential to create political tension between the railway company, the people of North Wales and their representatives. In doing so it would forge a new and contentious form of local politics in North Wales with railways forming an important item on the political agenda.

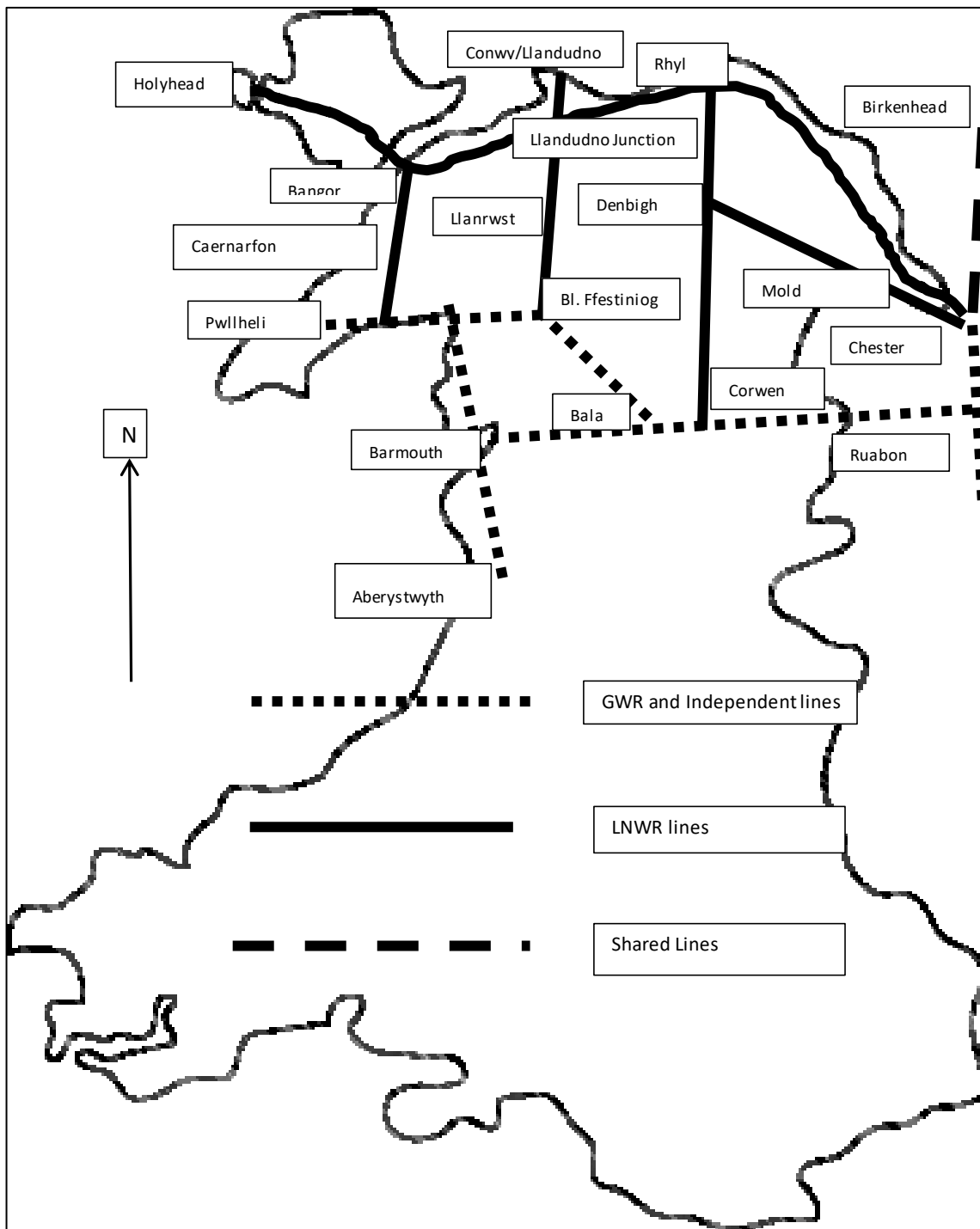
This section has demonstrated the authoritarian character of the LNWR in its approach to railway competition in North Wales and thereby answered Leo Marx's "who" and "how" of technological operation (via railways) in North Wales from 1850. The next section explores the system of beliefs of those who built and operated the lines and explores whether it was similar to any approach to railway development examined in chapter 1. That helps to create the political profile of technological deployment in North Wales in order that its interaction with the people and politicians of the region can be explored in the two succeeding chapters.

⁷² 'Chester and Holyhead Railway', *North Wales Chronicle*, 22 March 1851, 6.

⁷³ "Chester and Holyhead Railway" *Dublin Evening Mail*, 28 August 1850, 2.

⁷⁴ Edward Parry, *The Railway Companion from Chester to Holyhead; containing a Descriptive and Historical account of all objects of interest that present themselves on the Beautifully Picturesque Line* (Chester: Thomas Catherall, 1849), 12. [My emphasis]

Figure 6.2 Significant railway lines completed by 1883 in North Wales



6.2 Railways and a 'system of beliefs' in North Wales 1855-80

At a meeting of the LNWR in 1848 a shareholder was able to state without any sign of dissent that the Welsh were 'simple-minded'.⁷⁵ That sentiment was not an isolated one. The opening of many railways in the UK was an occasion for an elaborate ceremony and the deployment of the language of "cooperation" and "progress", which as Freeman notes: 'endorsed society's governing status quo'.⁷⁶ They were highly political events, and in North Wales the dignitaries referred to the arrival of the railway as being a positive invasion of the country in which the aim was apparently to "civilise" Welsh people in North Wales. An early example was when the Vale Clwyd Railway (VCR) opened in 1858. While the LNWR were viewing it as a strategic acquisition, it was being proposed by its promoters as part of an unofficial mission of social improvement so that: 'When the barrier of language will be removed – *which railways are the most sure means of doing* – the [Welsh person] would be able to stand upon the platform of civilization without a blush'.⁷⁷

It was the invasions of the Saxons, and a comparison with the Crimean War that formed the core of the Chairman's remarks at the opening of the Conwy and Llanrwst Railway (CLR) which was also primarily built as a strategic route for sale to the LNWR or GWR, as noted in the last section:

There were still fortresses in Wales which the Saxons could never storm. These fortresses have fallen today [...] but carried by no murderous thunder of artillery, nor by angry clash of hostile hosts [...] Our Sebastopol has yielded to diplomacy, and *this railway has made a breach* whereby Saxon youth may poise their lances before Celtic beauty...⁷⁸

When the Cambrian Railway along the coast from Aberystwyth to Pwllheli was commenced, one speaker reckoned that its engineers were greater than Owain Glyndwr, the Welsh rebel at the end of the fourteenth century. Glyndwr had driven the English out of Wales, whereas the railways had brought them back again.⁷⁹ When the line was completed in 1867, the same speaker thought it: 'added another and stronger tie connecting England and Wales'.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ 'Meeting of the London and North Western Railway', *Morning Post*, 19 February 1848, 7.

⁷⁶ Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, 228.

⁷⁷ "Public Demonstration upon the Opening of the Vale of Clwyd Railway", *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 October 1858, 5. [My emphasis]

⁷⁸ "The Opening of the Conway and Llanrwst Railway", *North Wales Chronicle*, 20 June 1863, 3. Sebastopol was a violent siege conducted by the British and French in the Crimean War that lasted for one year from September 1854. [My emphasis]

⁷⁹ "Welsh system of Railways – Grand Banquet at Borth" *Wrexham Advertiser*, 8 August 1863, 6.

Were these sentiments replicated at similar events in the UK but outside England? Scotland and Ireland had a more recent history of conquest by English forces than North Wales, but the opening of the Morayshire Railway in Scotland, in the same area as the Battle of Culloden of 1746, did not reflect that history. There was no reference to conquest and the audience was merely provided with a description of the route.⁸¹ Similarly, when the Dublin and Drogheda Railway was opened in Ireland in 1844 - a line that passed the site of the Cromwellian Siege of Drogheda - the Lord Lieutenant was most conciliatory and made no mention of the historic connections, battles or invasions – and did not suggest that the railway would civilise the local people. He simply observed that: ‘the rich man does good to the poor by expending his capital among them’.⁸² The openings of railways seemed to follow a formula that showed the extent to which they were part of the established order. This was the case at the opening of the Conway and Llanrwst Railway in North Wales in 1863 discussed above. The first toast was to ‘The Queen’ and other royals; the next to the ‘Army, Navy and the Volunteers’; ‘the Bishops and the Clergy’; ‘the House of Lords and the House of Commons’; ‘the railway company’; ‘the landed proprietors’, and finally ‘the ladies’.⁸³ Excluding the last, this was the entire paraphernalia of power in the Victorian UK state. The format was no different in North Wales than elsewhere in the UK, which in itself is a significant point.⁸⁴ For in North Wales, the language of the bulk of the population was not the language used on those occasions, and their religion was not the one represented at the openings.⁸⁵

There is greater similarity to the language that was employed at railway openings in North Wales in more in far-flung parts of the British Empire such as India, where the format comparable

⁸⁰ “Completion of the Welsh Coast Railway”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 19 October 1867, 5. Sebastopol was a violent siege conducted by the British and French in the Crimean War that lasted for one year from September 1854.

⁸¹ “Opening of the Railway”, *Elgin Courant and Morayshire Advertiser*, 20 August 1858, 4. The Battle of Culloden was fought near Inverness between the Highlanders of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the English under the Duke of Cumberland in April 1746 and resulted in slaughter of the Scots followed by Highland clearances.

⁸² “Opening of the Dublin and Drogheda Railway”, *Statesman and Dublin Christian Record*, 28 May, 1844, 4. Drogheda was the site of a siege by Cromwell in September 1649 that resulted in terrible slaughter of the Irish.

⁸³ “The Opening of the Conway and Llanrwst Railway”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 20 June 1863, 3.

⁸⁴ For example, “Opening of the Railway to Wells” *Wells Journal*, 5 March 1859, 8.

⁸⁵ See, Chris Harris and Richard Startup, *The Church in Wales: The Sociology of a Traditional Institution* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1999), 8.

to that described above - as shown by Kerr's study.⁸⁶ When the Madras Railway opened in 1856 Lord Harris, the Governor of Madras, told the audience it was:

So close to Arcot, where we may consider ourselves on classic ground. Here Clive first brought himself to prominence and commenced that glorious career from which has resulted [...] the predominance of British power in this country. Let us hope that as great results [...] may be effected by the undertaking we inaugurate here this day.⁸⁷

In December 1864, the Punjab Railway opened in India and the Anglesey Central Railway (ACR) in North Wales. The language at both was similar. At the opening of the latter Sir Richard Bulkeley, a prime mover of the CHR project, told the audience that:

Not until the Saxons of old got possession of the island [of Anglesey] were they ever able to hold and keep possession of the country [of North Wales]; and this railway now penetrated through its very heart. [...] He never saw any country so much in want of civilization as a certain portion of the line through which they came that day.⁸⁸

In India too, hope was expressed that the railways would be a force for Victorian "progress". In both North Wales and India, speeches referred to the railways as coming to an area in need of some form of civilising force. The language in the Punjab reflected that used in Anglesey, with the hopes in India that the: 'various nations and races of the Punjab, as well as the semi-barbarous tribes that girdle its frontier, will all the sooner succumb to its [the railway's] civilising influence'.⁸⁹ There was a sense that both India and Wales were considered by some to be cradles of superstition and antiquated beliefs. The Britannia Tubular Bridge (BTB) of 1850 across the Menai Straits, close to the area that Bulkeley thought needed civilizing, was described by Philp in 1868 within his *History of Progress in Great Britain*:

⁸⁶ Ian J. Kerr, *Building the Railways of the Raj* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29.

⁸⁷ "Opening of the Madras Railway", *Kentish Gazette*, 19 August 1856, 5. The siege of Arcot in 1751 saw forces of the British East India Company victorious over Indian troops supported by the French East India Company. For information on Lord Harris see, Katherine Prior, 'Harris, George Francis Robert, third Baron Harris (1810–1872)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12390>, [Accessed 23 Sept 2015]]

⁸⁸ "Anglesey Central Railway. The opening of the line from Gaerwen to Llangefni", *North Wales Chronicle*, 17 December 1864, 16.

⁸⁹ "The Opening of the Punjab Railway by the Viceroy of India [from *Allen's India Mail*]", *London Daily News*, 29 December 1864, 7.

Near the very spot where the last battle was fought having for its object the extermination of a sanguinary and baneful superstition there now stands a great *monument to the triumphs of progress*. The [BTB] crosses the Menai Straits near the place where the army of Suetonius fought the Britons who had assembled to guard the Druids, whom they revered as a sacred order of men. [...] No longer have we need of extermination; the aim and effort of today is to mingle the families of the human race, and to trust to the peaceful operation of truth to root out error and superstition wherever they may still linger and clog the onward paths of men.⁹⁰

For those in any doubt about the message, Philp provided two illustrations showing the difference between an ancient battle and a modern invasion by the forces of progress in North Wales.



Illustration 6.1: Comparison of the invasion of Anglesey by Seutonius who defeated the Druids by force in 61 AD (left) and the modern invasion of Anglesey on the same spot using Robert Stephenson’s Britannia Tubular Bridge and railway in 1850 (right).

Taken from Robert Philp, *The History of Progress in Great Britain* (London: Houlston and Wright, 1868), and 48-49.

Similarly, in November 1868 the railway at Umballah in the Central Provinces of India was opened and was followed by an account that mocked the supposed superstitions of the locals who:

Crowded round the engine, bewildered and astonished. [...] They had heard of English magic, and of the many inventions and devices we had learned from Satan, but now it seemed that we were outdoing even ourselves, and had got the Evil One bodily amongst us...⁹¹

⁹⁰ Robert Philp, *The History of Progress in Great Britain* (London: Houlston and Wright, 1868), 54.

⁹¹ “Opening a Railway in India”, *Inverness Courier*, 17 December 1868, 5.

In 1863, *The Times* made a direct comparison between Wales and India, and considered the likely impact of railways in an article about the financial importance of the English language to the Welsh, which it considered similar to the benefits to Indians. The paper directly reflected the argument of this thesis that railways in North Wales were seen by their promoters as being on a political mission. They were a modern, progressive invasion and conquest of Wales by the English - with the CHR following the same route from Chester that was taken by Edward I in his conquest of Wales in the thirteenth century:

Not with bow and bills, but with money and locomotives, and the new invaders were more successful than the old ones. The parallel is indeed a curious one. [...] The halts of the British engineer have represented exactly the halts and stages of the Plantagenet Monarch. [...] The railway took up its track but has already exceeded its bounds [...] and will soon cross the very heart of Powysland [North Wales] from east to west.⁹²

Thus, in India and in Wales the railway was seen as an invading force – but one that was modernising and missionary in intent and that would lift local populations to a higher level of what English contemporaries considered to be “civilisation”. In North Wales, it was one very English company – the LNWR – which was in charge of the process after it acquired the branch lines to the CHR. Although missionary activity was not one of its formal intentions for the region, it was noted earlier that the LNWR’s first chairman regarded ‘extending civilization, commerce, and enlightenment’ as among the benefits of railways. That general perspective on the use of railways by the LNWR chairman was made specific by the promoters of the lines that the LNWR acquired in North Wales to secure its overall monopoly. Thus, while the LNWR did not specify political objectives in its activities in North Wales, its whole approach incorporated a metropolitan perspective and was inherently unsympathetic to Welsh culture as the comment from Parry about the work of the CHR noted above makes clear.⁹³

While Ireland may have been the greater political challenge to UK government, Wales was the more alien to metropolitan culture in terms of its language and customs. It was the least English of the countries that made up the UK, though for some it was not a country at all, and its sense of nationality was not as strong as it was in Ireland.⁹⁴ Where Ireland had absentee landlords, Wales had a powerful, English, resident elite.⁹⁵ In North Wales the status of the elite was originally based

⁹² Editorial, *The Times*, 15 September 1863, 8.

⁹³ Edward Parry, *The Railway Companion from Chester to Holyhead*, 12.

⁹⁴ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales 1880-1980: Rebirth of a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3.

⁹⁵ Chris Harris and Richard Startup, *The Church in Wales: The Sociology of a Traditional Institution* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 7.

on the ownership of land and the membership of the established church. The arrival of the LNWR – the largest industrial enterprise in the world in the mid nineteenth century - was, as *The Times* suggested, an invasion on similar scale but greater geographical extent than the incursion of Edward I in the thirteenth century. It added the LNWR as owners of the railway to the existing sources of power, and also to the political elite in North Wales. The older Welsh landowners were personally identifiable to the people but the LNWR was a new form of metropolitan commerce, owned by invisible shareholders and run by a new professional elite.⁹⁶ A remark made by LNWR chairman Richard Moon at Caernarfon (the centre of medieval power in North Wales) in 1870 suggested that he understood the social and economic implications of the LNWR monopoly and the status of the company in North Wales. For Moon, the LNWR was similar to the former feudal landlords, which placed the LNWR in North Wales alongside the region's ruling elite. He told his metropolitan guests: 'from London, Liverpool and Manchester, and other places', who had been invited to the opening of a tunnel under Caernarfon:

The [LNWR] had only accomplished in commerce what they [the landowners] had done in feudalism long ago. They had woven a girdle which now completed the circle round Wales, and they had done so in a manner that would neither disturb artists or tourists. Their object had been to bring coal into North Wales and take back slates.⁹⁷

Moon thus articulated a role for the LNWR in North Wales which extended beyond merely protecting its Irish traffic, and was consistent with the work that Peto had started in 1850 as discussed earlier. The LNWR aimed to bring in the produce of England and take away the mineral resources of the region in a manner that would not compromise the beauty of the area and its promise of traffic from 'artists and tourists'. Moon seemed unconcerned with any impact upon the local population (few of whom seem to have been invited) from the largest change in the area since Edward I had built the castles of the thirteenth century. He regarded the completion of the LNWR monopoly as comparable to the power of feudalism – an order of society that railways had done much to undermine.⁹⁸ Moon's comments illustrate clearly a point made by Revill in 2012 about the feudalistic nature of geographical railway monopolies that were: 'every bit as exploitative and coercive as that of a medieval monarch' – though as noted earlier, *The Times*

⁹⁶ Gourvish, *Huish and the LNWR*, 109-111.

⁹⁷ "A railway under Carnarvon Castle", *Llangollen Advertiser, Denbighshire, Merionethshire, and North Wales Journal*, 15 July 1870, 3.

⁹⁸ For example, consider the views of Thomas Arnold, who saw that railways heralded the end of feudalism. See Colin Ward, *Freedom to Go: After the Motor Age* (London: Freedom Press, 1991), 20.

estimated the power of the railway in North Wales as being much greater than that of Edward I, the region's own medieval monarch.⁹⁹ Such a position in the region was inherently political – the LNWR was a technological force that was bound to challenge the way of life of the region and its political structure.

This chapter has addressed aspects of Leo Marx's questions from chapter 1 in order to show how railways were extended beyond the main line from Chester to Holyhead in a manner that suited the LNWR's strategic interest in keeping out rivals from the region. It also indirectly supported the Anglicising agenda that was articulated by government through the Education Commission of 1847. The evidence in this chapter shows how the LNWR emerged from ferocious railway competition in the mid-nineteenth century to become the most powerful railway company in North Wales.

For the Education Commissioners and railway builders, North Wales was a suitable subject for Victorian improvement. In that sense, North Wales had a similar experience to the much larger example of India, where Victorian improvers were also at work while the railways were being built. Kerr's views on the role of railways as a modernising influencing in India are strikingly replicated by evidence of the analysis of North Wales, and Colley's suggestion that in both cases the imposition of the English language was an important part of the process is also apparent in the evidence provided in this chapter. Richard Moon's comparison of the impact of the railway in North Wales as being similar to that of feudalism – creating a girdle around Wales - is telling. While this chapter has shown that the development of railways in North Wales was a highly political exercise, the next two chapters examine how the local people reacted and how that contributed to the development of the political response as the vote was extended to more men by 1880. After that, new political mechanisms became available to challenge the control of the LNWR over the region's access to railways and how the benefits of that technology were distributed between its owners and the people of North Wales.

⁹⁹ George Revill, *Railway* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 68.

7. The London and North Western Railway and the politics and people of North Wales 1850-80

*'If any Company deserves to be opposed then this great Company certainly does [...] let the whole community take it in hand.'*¹

The LNWR was a formidable political actor in North Wales and its use of technological power occurred at the end of a long period when Wales had been regarded by its powerful English neighbours as 'intellectually backward and politically dormant'.² The arrival of the railway was a factor that transformed the capacity of people to engage in politics by providing both a support for collective action and an object of political interest. This chapter starts with an examination of important factors that affected the response of the Welsh population to the arrival of the railway and considers whether these can be placed in a theoretical framework such as that offered by internal colonialism. It also analyses the interaction of changes within North Wales and those at the UK level that gradually gave political voice to a larger number of people beyond the traditional landed elite. The second part of the chapter traces the development of the political relationship between the railway and the people as the latter struggled to influence the owners of this technology after the initial shock of its arrival in the region. This struggle focused initially on the issue of how much the LNWR was required to pay in local poor rates after it joined the existing North Wales elite as a major owner of land, which had been the source of political power in North Wales for centuries. The other side of the financial relationship was what the LNWR charged for freight and passenger traffic on its network and that is also explored in the second section, along with the attitude of the LNWR to local people and politicians. The third part of the chapter looks for evidence that people other than politicians engaged in a quasi-political challenge to the LNWR in the period before most men had the vote. The chapter identifies the beginning of a change in the power balance between railway and people as the franchise was extended. North Wales lacked national political leadership such as Ireland had enjoyed with Daniel O'Connell, but the region happened to be the home of William Gladstone, the most prominent politician of the Victorian age. He had both personal and political reasons for taking up the issues of railways and Welsh politics by the 1870s, even if he did not make the connection between them until the 1880s - as will be seen in chapter 8.

¹ 'Railway Tyranny at Holyhead', *North Wales Chronicle*, 10 July 1880, 5.

² Kenneth O Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 1.

7.1 Setting the scene: North Wales society and its early reactions to railways 1845 - 65

Existing scholarship has tended to emphasise four issues at the heart of Welsh politics in the period from 1850-1900 – English dominance of land, religion and education and the challenge to the Welsh language.³ This study adds the concern with railways as a feature of political life in North Wales. It was clearly a factor in strengthening distinctly Welsh institutions such as the Eisteddfod and Nonconformist religion through the help it gave in organising large numbers to participate beyond their own towns and villages. At the same time, the railway conducted its business entirely in English and was a conduit for English influence through newspapers, tourism and exposure of North Wales to the products of the English economy. The LNWR also became a major landowner itself and thereby joined the local landed elite and participated in its responsibilities, its privileges - and above all, its politics.

In the 1840s and 1850s, North Wales was virgin territory for main line railways in a way that industrialised areas like Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham were not. It was the least English of the regions penetrated by early railways in Britain – and one of the first where local traffic was initially of little or no interest. The arrival of the railway in North Wales was the biggest event since Edward I had invaded and built an ‘iron ring’ of castles: ‘demonstrating to the Welsh that he had conquered them once and for all’.⁴ Many of those castles were along the same route as the later CHR as noted in Chapter 6 –and had the kind of shock impact that Leo Marx has suggested for remote rural areas receiving a new technology. Even the process of building the Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR) was a major disruption to the people of North Wales. According to a local paper, the CHR had provided: ‘among other “benefits”, an inpouring of confessedly and notoriously the worst of our species, rough and ready for a strike, a shindy, or mischief of any sort’.⁵ The influx of “navvies” to build the line was at least a temporary experience, while the arrival of the trains themselves marked a permanent change for many of the population. The scale of the works on the CHR was sufficiently large to attract Queen Victoria to visit - and the impact of her train on the senses of the local people as it emerged from the enormous tubular rail bridge to Anglesey was recorded in a manner that supports the analysis of Leo Marx:

³ Gwynfor Evans, *Land of My Fathers: 2000 years of Welsh History* (Swansea: John Penry Press, 1974), 400.

⁴ Lise Hull, *Britain's Medieval Castles* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 126.

⁵ “‘Navy’ Outbreak”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 May 1846, 3.

Looking through the Tube you see the fire-box of the engine gleaming as it advances from the other extremity. You hear the throb of the locomotive and the reverberation of the iron: the shriek of the steam whistle startles you with its almost demonical expression and as you listen and gaze, a mass of sound gradually accumulating to a perfect hurricane, swells upon the ear, while the brightening glow of the furnace and the majestic progress of the engine fill the eye and impress the imagination...⁶

A more specific shock effect was also recorded after the first death of an innocent bystander on the CHR. It was an: 'ancient cockle-gatherer [killed by a train] rushing up at full speed [that] crushed life out in an instant [and denied her the chance of] dying in her bed [at the] close of a long and laborious life'.⁷ Here was the clash between old and new in its starkest form and the experience of the local community from this technological death involved: 'sensations of the most painful kind'.⁸ A more general, and less dramatic, example of the domination of the new by the old was the loss of local time. The fact that railways ran to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) was not an easy discipline for some in North Wales to learn in 1848:

We were sorry to observe a car with passengers come full tilt into the railway yard [...] just as the train had started for Chester, [...] the cause of which was the difference set in point of time, the railway clock being set to Greenwich Time, the Town ditto as before....⁹

The report added that the difference in time: 'will no doubt be set to right'.¹⁰ Right time was, of course 'railway time', and it showed where the power lay in this matter that affected how every citizen lived, even if they never used the railway.¹¹ Railways thereby brought to North Wales the: 'punctuality and specific rule-governed behaviour' noted by Revill as the 'ideal for the respectable citizen' in Victorian Britain.¹² As one speaker noted on the opening of the Anglesey Central Railway in 1864, the new railway would bring modern economics to the area as it would: 'undoubtedly teach the farmers of Anglesey a little more punctuality; it would also teach the

⁶ "The Queen's visit to North Wales", *The Welshman*, 22 October 1852, 4.

⁷ "Fatal Railway Accident", *North Wales Chronicle*, 11 July 1848, 3.

⁸ "Fatal Railway Accident", *North Wales Chronicle*, 11 July 1848, 3.

⁹ "Greenwich Time v. Bangor Time" *North Wales Chronicle*, 9 May 1848, 3.

¹⁰ "Greenwich Time v. Bangor Time" *North Wales Chronicle*, 9 May 1848, 3.

¹¹ The LNWR adopted GMT from 1 December 1847, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Railway_time [Accessed 24 September 2017].

¹² George Revill, *Railway* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 11.

value of time, and that “time is money””.¹³ Thus, in the manner described more generally by Revill, Schivelbusch and Leo Marx, the ‘long and laborious’ way of life of Welsh people - subject as it had been to slow change for centuries - rapidly yielded before the most powerful weapon in the armoury of the Victorian improvers. Its politics were bound to change with this impact.

The similarity demonstrated in the previous chapter between the introduction of railways in North Wales and in India does not mean that the relationship of both countries to the British state was similar. The Blue Books of the Education Commissioners made clear that Wales was generally far from being “English” but this had not previously been an issue since Wales had been a settled part of the United Kingdom since 1536. As Williams notes:

Neither the Tudor state nor the Stuart state nor the Hanoverian state were particularly interested in forcing cultural assimilation on Wales and so, notwithstanding certain pejorative attitudes towards the Welsh as a poor, ill-educated, coarse, shifty, garrulous and untrustworthy people, worth mentioning but not worth overstating, Wales became a junior partner in the expanding British state.¹⁴

So, while Wales was not in a colonial relationship such as the one between the UK and India, neither had it become English as the authors of the 1536 legislation had hoped. That is why the promoters of railways felt that there was still an unofficial improvement task to be undertaken in North Wales. But how likely were they to succeed? One possible approach to understanding the Welsh response is in the notion of ‘internal colonialism’, as first advanced by Michael Hechter in 1975.¹⁵ Hechter contrasted internal colonialism with the notion of ‘diffusion’ (similar to that advocated by those railway promoters in North Wales in chapter 6) whereby, with the onset of industrialisation, the characteristics of the ‘core’ - in United Kingdom (UK) terms England and more specifically London - were absorbed by the ‘periphery’, including regions such as Wales.¹⁶ Hechter was interested to understand why this process had worked for some parts of the UK and not others, including Wales. He surmised that significant differences such as language and religion

¹³ “Anglesey Central Railway – Opening the Line from Gaerwen to Llangefni – Dinner at the British Hotel, Bangor”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 December 1864, 11.

¹⁴ Chris Williams, ed., “1: Problematizing Wales: An Exploration in Historiography and Postcoloniality,” in *Postcolonial Wales*, ed. Jone Aaron and Chris Williams (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2005), 5.

¹⁵ Michael Hechter *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1975), xvi. Hechter’s ‘diffusion’ appears to be similar to the concept of assimilation as defined in chapter 2. Hechter’s concept seems to apply to an internal process rather than an external colony and also to be more informal than assimilation. The notion of assimilation has been used to describe England’s approach to Ireland, Scotland and Wales. See, Mark E. Caprio, in Benjamin, Thomas (editor) *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450*. Vol. 1. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, 104.

¹⁶ Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 6-7.

caused a *reaction* rather than ‘diffusion’, and one of the impacts of this reaction was a greater political sense of nationality and a desire to resist absorption of the characteristics of the core.¹⁷ The idea has been sufficiently influential for internal colonialism sometimes to be invoked to explain the history of the Celtic fringe:

The English pursued a policy of internal colonialism toward Wales, Scotland, and Ireland alike. In each case, London ordered a political union consummated to submerge the Celtic people and culture in question: Wales in 1536, Scotland in 1707, and Ireland in 1800. In each case, either a local parliament was abolished (in Scotland and Ireland) in order to shift representation to Westminster or English law was simply imposed by statute, as with Wales.¹⁸

While some historians have embraced the concept of internal colonialism, others such as Williams have argued that Wales, despite its unequal relationship with England, had been a full member of the British state for centuries and was definitely *not* an internal colony.¹⁹ It is beyond the scope of this study to tackle such a controversy, although it is possible to agree with McLean that while it: ‘is only patchily supported by the evidence [...] the idea of internal colonialism remains fruitful’.²⁰ For historians of politics and technology, the most fruitful concept appears to be that of the ‘heightening of interaction’ between periphery and core, the role of the railways in it and the political reaction to it.²¹ Hechter gave a brief description of the rail system in Wales, but suggested that a significant weakness in building contact with the core was there being fewer miles of railway per head of population in Wales than in England.²² Given the extent of railway coverage in North Wales by 1900, the opposite argument has greater force - railways were such a force for change precisely *because* of the intensity of their coverage of North Wales.²³ Even by

¹⁷ Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 9-10.

¹⁸ Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins' Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 576.

¹⁹ Williams, C and Jone A. (2005) *Post-Colonial Wales*, Cardiff, 8

²⁰ Lain McLean, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 245, s.v. “Internal Colonialism”. <http://www.questia.com/read/54855445>

²¹ Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 10. It is also what Peel described as the informal ‘public advantage’ that he saw coming from more rapid communication between the metropole and Ireland as part of the impact of the CHR as discussed in chapter 5 and see also, Untitled, *Morning Post*, 4 May 1844, 5.

²² Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 149.

²³ See Alun Richards, *The Slate Railways of Wales* (Llanrwst: Carreg Gwlach 2001), 26 ; who estimates that the County of Merionethshire (a thinly populated area of North Wales) enjoyed a ratio of 3 miles of railway per 1000 population compared to the UK average of 0.75 miles. This figure would, of course, include many mineral lines but a figure remains four times the UK average.

1866, the *Liverpool Mercury* could comment that: 'there is little danger of the principality [Wales] being left behind in the march of civilization, so far as railway accommodation can promote its progress'.²⁴

The factors tending towards assimilation in North Wales are the well-documented deference of Welsh society, its agricultural nature, and its alleged adherence to superstition. Deference was a feature of the feudal nature of Welsh society as the railway age approached so that: 'By virtue of estate, birth and education [...] the heads of the landed families of Wales had exercised power and exacted deference as their due'.²⁵ In the face of the assumed superiority of the owners of technology as analysed in chapter 1, Welsh people were likely to accept the authority of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) - that held a monopoly in North Wales - and to see a powerful new force such as railways as further proof of the inadequacy of Welsh culture that had been suggested by the Education Commission. The Commission's assessment was both resented by Welsh people and accepted as a stain on their character that they should strive to remove.²⁶ The Education Commission made the Welsh language a political issue and railways reinforced that development by communicating only in English.²⁷ The Education Commissioners underlined their assessment by asserting that Wales was a superstitious country where: "Belief in charms, supernatural appearances, and even in witchcraft, sturdily survives all the civilisation and light which has long ago banished these remnants of the dark ages elsewhere."²⁸ That view was also held by some prominent Welsh people, especially within non-conformist religions.²⁹ These religions were influential and likely to support a force such as railways that they perceived was tending to undermine "pagan" beliefs and promote assimilation.

But perhaps the clearest characteristic of Welsh society that was likely to dispose it towards assimilation and the new technology of railways was the overwhelmingly agricultural nature of North Wales. For, as Leo Marx observed: 'to see a powerful, efficient machine in the

²⁴ "Railways & Other Schemes in North Wales", *Liverpool Mercury*, 18 January 1866, 6.

²⁵ Gareth Elwyn Jones, "15- The Welsh Language in the Blue Books of 1847*," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 431

²⁶ Gwynfor Evans, *Land of My Fathers: 2000 years of Welsh History* (Swansea: John Penry Press, 1974), 372.

²⁷ Geraint H. Jenkins, "'Wales, the Welsh and the Welsh Language'- Introduction," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 7-8.

²⁸ Royal Com. of Inquiry into State of Education in Wales. Report, Part 2, 64. 1847 [870][871][872], XXVII Pt.I.1, XXVII PT.II.1,339.

²⁹ Geraint H. Jenkins, "'Wales, the Welsh and the Welsh Language'- Introduction," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 17.

landscape is to know the superiority of the present to the past' - especially for those with no previous experience of technological development.³⁰ North Wales, particularly away from the English border, had little awareness of advanced technology, having perhaps only two significant experiences of it; Edward I's chain of castles in the thirteenth century and Telford's road to Holyhead completed in 1826. The first was well beyond living memory, while the second had only a limited impact, and did not use any of the advanced technologies that marked the second half of the nineteenth century.

In contrast to the factors assessed above, there were elements of Welsh culture and character that tended to make the people of North Wales less receptive to externally imposed change, and could even lead to outright opposition. Examples were cultural activity, epitomised by the Eisteddfod movement, religious non-conformity and above all, the Welsh language. The last was a uniting factor in Wales that was used extensively in religious and cultural activity in the period before 1885 when many men in Wales were not entitled to vote – so that the Eisteddfod was an important element of Welsh political life.³¹ Over time, the Eisteddfod movement became the weakest of the three; sufficiently weak in its support of the Welsh language for Edwards to suggest that although: 'activated by a strong initial desire to enhance the status of the language [Eisteddfodau] found themselves providing a platform for the "superior" English language at the expense of the mother tongue'.³² That charge could not be made against the religions of nonconformity which mainly used the medium of Welsh in Wales.³³ Henry Richard MP, an early advocate of the emerging Welsh nationalism in the nineteenth century, argued further that the notion of "nonconformity" defined the whole Welsh nation as a feature of a new: 'democratic culture which challenged the power of landlordism and the religious establishment and the politics of deference upon which they depended'.³⁴ The growth of national awareness in Wales was supported by changes at a UK level that progressively extended the right to vote, so that after 1885 almost all adult males in the UK were included. In North Wales that meant that Welsh

³⁰ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 192.

³¹ 'Conway Eisteddfod', *North Wales Chronicle* - Saturday 17 August 1861, 3.

³² Hywel Teifi Edwards, "10- The Welsh Language in the Eisteddfod," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 296.

³³ R Tudur Jones, 'Nonconformity and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century', in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 239.

³⁴ Paul O'Leary, "19- The Languages of Patriotism in Wales 1840–1880," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 550.

became both the language of religion and the language of politics.³⁵ Of course, as noted in the last chapter, it was decidedly *not* the language of railways.

This review of the social and political factors present in North Wales provides the context within which the construction of the CHR and its branches took place between 1850 and 1880 – outlined in chapter 6 - and the political relationship between the railway and the people developed. It has shown that the CHR was an inherently political project because it challenged the way of life of many inhabitants of North Wales, provided them with different choices and experiences and brought them into direct contact with the metropole. They initially struggled to respond because of their lack of experience of large infrastructure projects, but that changed over time and was supported by the way railways enabled people to meet in larger numbers at religious, political and cultural gatherings. There was then the potential for political challenge to the LNWR from the growing sense of nationality of local people that was reinforced by the process of enfranchisement. In the earlier stages of railway development in North Wales those who had status from their ownership of land were the first to engage the railway owners politically, and that is the focus of the next section.

7.2 The LNWR, the landed elite and the growing electorate in North Wales 1850-80

The positive effects of railways were initially felt most directly by the better off, who could afford to use them in the early days of their operation. Thus, when one railway official left the area in 1854 to take up a senior position with the LNWR there was an event in Conwy at which the benefits of railway travel were celebrated extensively.³⁶ By the 1860s the local landed elite were more challenging towards the LNWR. They had become accustomed to railways and wished to shape the system to support their own priorities that included more frequent trains and reasonable charges. They were also more concerned to get additional railways than to worry about the impact on ordinary people. Thus, in November 1862 the local paper protested against the LNWR's reduced winter schedule and the difficulty in holding the company to account. An influential gathering in Bangor followed, including Lord Paget, Colonel Pennant and W. O. Stanley, who had originally supported the CHR. The power of the LNWR was apparent in the meeting's reassurance that it was: 'got up in no hostile feeling for that company' and Lord Paget 'deprecated any spirit of hostility' to the LNWR.³⁷ However, reality was dawning on those present that the

³⁵ Neil Evans and Kate Sullivan, "20- Yn Llawn O Dân Cymreig' (Full of Welsh Fire)- The Language of Politics in Wales 1880–1914," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 563.

³⁶ "Dinner to Mr Cropper, late of the Chester and Holyhead Railway, *North Wales Chronicle*, 6 May 1854, 8.

³⁷ "London and North Western Railway. Diminution of Local Trains", *North Wales Chronicle*, 8 November 1862, 4.

interests of the LNWR were in getting *through* North Wales, rather than getting *to or from* the region. The meeting complained that expresses no longer stopped at Bangor and that this was to the detriment of the town.³⁸ That was consistent with what the LNWR's greatest rival – the Great Western Railway (GWR) - had argued to a Select Committee in 1853, when its secretary suggested that a monopolistic operator such as the LNWR tended to run only those trains that maximised its profit.³⁹ There was more evidence of this point in the same month as the dispute at Bangor discussed above. The *North Wales Chronicle* noted: 'The utter contempt with which the [LNWR] treat the inhabitants [...]. They have not even the common courtesy of replying to a letter, and have now added injury to insult by substituting horse for locomotive power [to Llandudno]'⁴⁰

Thus, even the local elite in North Wales had begun to understand that on a high profile railway, where speed is a priority: 'there is much to be gained and lost for those included and those left out'.⁴¹ The influential residents understood that the CHR was built: 'not out of love for [Wales] but in order to get cheaply and quickly to that hotbed of loyalty and treason – Ireland'.⁴² That tension lay at the heart of the initial political struggle between the owners of the technology and those who wished to access it. The priority for the LNWR in the 1860s was Irish traffic, while local people with the power to protest wanted more trains and better stations. The evidence above shows that these were already serious political issues in North Wales by the 1860s, but relatively few people were in a position to challenge the railway monopoly in the region. And those with political power in North Wales had to take care in their relations with the LNWR because the results of railway investment in the region were 'something to astonish the Welsh nation':

Look at the fine houses in those formerly deserted places. [...] now all this prosperity, and the increased trade, travelling accommodation [...] and the yearly rush of tens of thousands of rich visitors into every part of the country, are solely and entirely owing to railways. [...] As railways do so much good we can scarcely have too many of them – the more the merrier say I.⁴³

³⁸ "London and North Western Railway. Diminution of Local Trains", *North Wales Chronicle*, 8 November 1862, 4.

³⁹ Second report from the Select Committee on Railway and Canal Bills; together with the minutes of evidence, and appendix from this evidence, 138, 1852-53 (170) XXXVIII.5.

⁴⁰ "Llandudno", *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 November 1862, 4.

⁴¹ Revill, *Railway*, 142.

⁴² "Talk about Wales and the Welsh; by an Old Mountaineer", *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 December 1863, 8

⁴³ "Talk about Wales and the Welsh; by an Old Mountaineer", 8.

This comment demonstrates the ambiguity in the position of the local political elite. They wanted to challenge the power of the LNWR and make it work better for their own needs, while understanding that they could not afford to alienate the company. The profiles of the LNWR and that of the landowning elite in North Wales were not essentially different – English speaking, conservative and supporters of the established church, so that these early political arguments about railway technology were conducted *within* the dominant powers in North Wales – exemplified by the dispute over the route of a railway to the slate town of Llanberis in 1864. It was described by counsel at the parliamentary hearing as a ‘triangular duel’ between the slate interests of Bangor, those of Caernarfon and the LNWR, which simply wanted sole access to Llanberis alongside its existing monopoly of Bangor. The interests of ordinary members of the public were apparently not important. According to one comment at a political meeting during the 1865 general election in North Wales, Welsh people were: ‘deficient in talent [and] lacking in wealth and intelligence’.⁴⁴ In other words, they were regarded as irrelevant to the politics of their own region by those with political power.

A change of mood, even among the gentry, was apparent by 1869 when a further meeting was held that involved some of the same people who had complained so mildly about LNWR services in 1862. The 1869 meeting was angry about ‘the real torture’ it had witnessed from the need to climb into railway carriages and cross lines at Bangor station. One member of the local gentry had even fallen twice into an LNWR ash pit.⁴⁵ This time the meeting was highly critical of the LNWR and its chairman Richard Moon - and they decided on a political tactic to exert some influence over the company that they regarded as entirely metropolitan: ‘ruled by cotton [...] with headquarters in Manchester [and] no sympathy with this country’.⁴⁶ The LNWR had taken powers in an earlier act to improve Bangor station, but had not even started the building work. The meeting therefore resolved to obstruct LNWR legislation until Bangor station was improved.⁴⁷ The tactic appeared to work because two months later new works had begun at the station – a small political success for local people in their developing struggle with the LNWR.⁴⁸ It was also a tactic that would prove increasingly useful in the political struggle with the LNWR in North Wales.

Thus, by the 1860s the parties to the political relationship between railway and region began to understand their relative status and obligations and develop mechanisms to resolve their differences - but there was a long way to go before anything close to equilibrium between

⁴⁴ ‘The Elections in North Wales’, *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 July 1865, 2.

⁴⁵ “The Bangor Railway Station – Influential Meeting”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 6 February 1869, 5.

⁴⁶ “The Bangor Railway Station – Influential Meeting”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 6 February 1869, 5.

⁴⁷ “The Bangor Railway Station – Influential Meeting”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 6 February 1869, 5.

⁴⁸ “Fatal accident at Bangor Railway Station”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 April 1869, 5.

them could be achieved. The LNWR grew in strength, while the power of landowners in North Wales was in decline after the 1868 election under a wider franchise that disturbed 'the political balance of centuries'.⁴⁹ The new power of an emerging middle class in the region, many of whom had voted with Gladstone in 1868, had still not found full expression. But there were signs that they were becoming more confident – especially when exercising roles in the local governing bodies, such as the Poor Law Guardians. That reflected a wider shift in the balance of power in the UK that resulted in the railways becoming more defensive in the face of the enfranchised population on issues such as safety, fares and freight charges - and the perceived abuse of monopoly power.⁵⁰ An example in North Wales was the prosecution of two Welsh employees of the LNWR in the aftermath of the Abergele railway accident of August 1868. The accident was the worst on Britain's railways up that point and the LNWR seemed content to allow the blame to fall upon its employees. But in March 1869, a high profile jury led by Watkin Williams Wynn, the largest of all Welsh landowners, found the employees not guilty in just ten minutes and issued a statement accusing the LNWR of: 'culpable neglect in not having given more direct instructions to their respective officers, and not having seen that such instructions were carried out'.⁵¹ Their judgement was backed by the findings of the official enquiry.⁵² This was a marked shift compared to the wish not to offend the company that was evident in 1862 and a confirmation of the more assertive approach just a few weeks before the jury verdict, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The first overtly political issue that showed this new confidence in dealing with the LNWR in North Wales was the payment of poor rates by the railway, which the company had resented from its inception.⁵³ Rates were a major burden for them as the analysis of land values of 1876 provided in Appendix A makes clear. It shows that the LNWR held the most highly-rated land in North Wales and had joined the ranks of its largest landowners, if not in the area of land that it owned, then certainly in its value. The LNWR had holdings in each of the four counties of North

⁴⁹ Kenneth Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 1991), 22.

⁵⁰ Jack Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales 1830-1914, Volume 1 The System and its Working* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 82.

⁵¹ "Abergele Catastrophe: Acquittal of the Breaksmen": *North Wales Chronicle*, 27 March 1869, 3. For Watkins Williams Wynn see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Watkin_Williams-Wynn,_6th_Baronet

⁵² Reports of Inspecting Officers of Railway Dept. on Accidents on Railways, June-December 1868, **1868-69** (54) LIV.83, 72. For the Abergele crash see, also see L.T.C. Rolt, *Red for Danger* (London: Pan Books, 1966), 181-4.

⁵³ David Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King: The Life and Times of Sir Edward Watkin 1819-1901* (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2002), 75-9. Poor rates were a precursor to more general local authority rating of property and were used to fund workhouses and other aspects of poor relief under the terms of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. Railways argued that as they only passed through an area they should not pay rates whereas the local Poor Law Unions argued that the railways extracted value from areas they served and should be taxed. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_rate [Accessed 24 August 2017]

Wales and was by far the largest railway landowner with the most valuable land. Appendix A also shows the power of landowners in North Wales with the LNWR among them. The top half of the table lists the Glynne–Gladstone dynasty based at Hawarden; the Mostyn’s who owned Llandudno; the Duke of Westminster - the wealthiest man in Britain; and the slate-owning Pennant and Assheton-Smith families, with estates in Caernarfonshire. But the LNWR clearly heads the list in terms of the value of its holdings, with the next highest value of land held by the LNWR’s rival, the Great Western Railway (GWR). The GWR’s land was valued at £9.7 per acre compared to £77.1 for the LNWR – only 12.6 per cent of the value of the latter’s land holdings. That is clear evidence of which company had succeeded in securing the most lucrative railway traffic in North Wales during the battles for control of the region from the 1840s to 1880 that were discussed in chapter 6.

Simmons’ analysis of the land issue demonstrated that the value of railway company land was very high generally, even though it owned a small percentage of the total. His analysis does not demonstrate fully the status of the LNWR in North Wales in terms of the value of its land in the region. He chose to include Anglesey in his study, with 4.4 per cent of land owned by the LNWR - in the middle of his range. Table 7.1 shows that had he chosen Flintshire, at 14.7 per cent, he would have had an example that far exceeded any of those in his list. Caernarfonshire was also higher than all but six of his examples. Anglesey is therefore not reflective of North Wales, which averaged 7.1 per cent overall – close to the 7 per cent that Simmons selected as a high figure in his study of the issue.⁵⁴

Table 7.1: The Rental Value (RV) of LNWR land holdings in North Wales as a percentage of total RV for each county

	Total Rental Value (£)	LNWR Rental Value (£)	LNWR rental value as a percentage of the total
Anglesey	171259	7372	4.3 per cent
Caernarfonshire	378137	23866	6.3 per cent
Denbighshire	450422	10396	2.3 per cent
Flintshire	382143	56014	14.7 per cent
Total	1381961	97648	7.1 per cent

Information for this table is taken from “The Great Landowners of Wales in 1873”, Brian Ll James, *National Library of Wales journal*, 1966, Summer Volume XIV/3 and from “Landowners in North Wales”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 February 1876, 6, and 4 March 1876, 3.

⁵⁴ Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1986), 302.

Comparison with the established church is relevant because of its status in North Wales as an institution available to all, even though many chose not to use it as shown by Harris and Startup in 1999.⁵⁵ Only that church, like the LNWR, could claim land holdings in all four counties as shown in Appendix A. However, the actual holdings of the church, though similar to that of the railway in acreage, were worth only £1.8 per acre compared to £77.1 per acre for the land held by the LNWR. The railway was also rather more powerful than the church because of its monopolistic control over the rapid movement of people and goods in North Wales. There was no alternative to the LNWR for those who needed to travel or send their goods quickly, while there was a choice of religions - and most Welsh people who attended church were not members of the established church. By comparing the North Wales figure of 7.1% in this study with Simmons estimate of 3% for railways overall, it becomes clear that the holding of valuable land in North Wales by the LNWR far exceeded the average for holdings *by all railway companies* in the 20 rural areas chosen by Simmons.⁵⁶ That serves as an important measure of the LNWR's political prominence North Wales, given that land was the currency of power in the mid-nineteenth century in a region which had, according to Gwyn Alf Williams: 'the most grotesque concentration of landlordism in Britain'.⁵⁷ The LNWR's was a different type of land ownership, corporate rather than personal, and one that secured for it an important place in local politics.

But there was a disadvantage for the LNWR from these valuable land holdings – it had to pay rates on them. It was a local Anglican minister who saw the prospect of reducing the burden on the emerging middle class in the poor rates that they paid - if only the LNWR could be compelled to contribute more of its profits, particularly from the CHR. The Reverend William Venables Williams made it his personal mission to tackle what he perceived as the inadequate contributions made by the LNWR to local poor rates.⁵⁸ The LNWR had previously resisted payment of poor rates in North Wales, for example at Llangefni in Anglesey in 1859.⁵⁹ The Holyhead Union was also evidently in dispute with the company in 1868 over the rating of water pipes.⁶⁰ Matters came to a head in 1871 at Caernarfon Court of Quarter Sessions when an appeal by the LNWR against the assessment of railway property in the Conway Poor Law Union was lost by the

⁵⁵ Chris Harris and Richard Startup, *The Church in Wales: The Sociology of a Traditional Institution* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1999), 4,

⁵⁶ Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country*, 302.

⁵⁷ Gwyn A. Williams, *When was Wales? A History of the Welsh* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1985), 199.

⁵⁸ Colwyn Bay Heritage, s.v. "Venables Williams", <http://colwynbayheritage.org.uk/rev-w-venables-williams/> [Accessed 24 November 2015]

⁵⁹ "Llangefni Monday 20 June." *North Wales Chronicle*, 25 June 1859, 5.

⁶⁰ "Holyhead Union", *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 August 1868, 3.

company and the rateable value of the CHR was fixed at £500 per mile, a large increase on the previous rate and one based on: 'the sum per mile a hypothetical tenant could reasonably be expected to give for the line as rent'.⁶¹ The magnitude of this defeat for the LNWR was demonstrated by the way it was applauded nationally. *The Chamber of Agriculture Journal and Farmers' Chronicle* recorded how the Conway Union had been challenged at a higher court by the LNWR – the 'Leviathan' company according to the report - which appealed with: 'a good deal of bounce and swagger' expecting to defeat the £500 per mile award. The Conway Union took advice and was told to ask for double its original claim. When LNWR witnesses from the original case were examined further: 'some very unwholesome truths leaked out [and the] manifestations of distress became clearly traceable on the countenances of the company's advisers'.⁶² After an adjournment, the LNWR caved in to the new demands and agreed to pay £950 per mile for seven miles of its line and £700 on the remaining six miles through Conwy. It was a very large increase in the LNWR's contribution that saved the local ratepayers six pence in the pound.⁶³

It had been a bitter political struggle that required a great deal of courage from the members of the Conway Union in the face of a wealthy corporation that called on the best legal advice. Venables Williams' comment to the LNWR solicitor in the local paper showed how this was essentially a dispute *within* the political elite in North Wales, albeit an elite that had extended beyond the landed classes. He stated in an open letter to the LNWR that: 'as a ratepayer [...] I am desirous [...] of having the line placed at its proper assessment; as a shareholder in the [LNWR] I am extremely unwilling that it should be charged more than its due'.⁶⁴ The way that the LNWR was both embraced and opposed by local politicians demonstrates its rather ambiguous relationship with North Wales' politics before 1880. Williams became a local celebrity, not least because the LNWR's contribution reduced the financial demand on other ratepayers.⁶⁵ This was an unusual political victory for North Wales, which even the Tory *North Wales Chronicle* had long-reckoned was in need of an O'Connell or a Cobden to lead them.⁶⁶ Williams' success was the best example of local political leadership in the 1870s in North Wales in the period before the extension of the franchise brought a new class of elected local politician into existence. But it was a victory for the emerging political elite rather than for ordinary members of the local Welsh-

⁶¹ "Assessment of the Railways", *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 July 1871, 4.

⁶² 'Railway rating of the Conway Union', *North Wales Chronicle*, 30 March 1872, 5.

⁶³ 'Railway rating of the Conway Union', *North Wales Chronicle*, 30 March 1872, 5.

⁶⁴ "Railway Rating" *North Wales Chronicle*, 27 January 1872, 7.

⁶⁵ "Honour to whom Honour is due" *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 February 1872. 7.

⁶⁶ "The Chronicle", *North Wales Chronicle*, 20 January 1846, 3.

speaking and nonconformist population - against whom Venables Williams was a formidable opponent in later disputes about paying tithes to the established church.⁶⁷

Retaliatory success for the railway came when the LNWR used its parliamentary power to maintain the CHR rates for passengers and freight, which were higher than elsewhere on their network, when it formally absorbed the company in 1879. Local people considered that the LNWR had used its monopoly position in North Wales to compensate for the lower rates it charged in areas where customers had a choice of lines. That marked the start of the political reaction to the monopoly that the LNWR had established in North Wales as analysed in chapter 6.⁶⁸ But local people had no effective representation in parliament to challenge the LNWR – the local landed elite seemed to have been silent on the issue of higher charges, which had progressed a long way through parliament before local interests became aware of them - from England and through Chester Town Council.⁶⁹ Traders in North Wales recognised the power of the LNWR and its tendency to contest any issue that affected its interests, but were limited to a local political campaign against the LNWR's plans.⁷⁰ The importance of that campaign in local politics may be gauged by the plaudits given to those who were involved. For example, Mr Kneeshaw was re-elected to the Chair of the Council in Penmaenmawr largely because of his: 'assiduity in reference to the communication transacted between him and the directors of the [LNWR]'.⁷¹ The reaction from traders in North Wales showed how such issues had begun to forge local politics and national identity in the region - for them this was a 'really *Welsh* commercial grievance'.⁷² A tension was evident because people in North Wales were becoming more conscious of being Welsh at the same time as succumbing to what the President of one Eisteddfod referred to in 1879 as: 'the English tide [that] flowed in too strongly over Wales in our time to be restrained'.⁷³ In North Wales, the main source of that 'English tide' was the LNWR, with its daily flow of visitors, goods, newspapers, letters and business people on its trains, and its unbending use of the English

⁶⁷ "The Tithe Commission", *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser and Cheshire Shropshire and North Wales Register*, 27 August 1887, 8.

⁶⁸ "Rates and Fares on the Chester and Holyhead Railway" *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 10 May 1879, 4.

⁶⁹ "Rates and Fares on the Chester and Holyhead Railway" *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 10 May 1879, 4.

⁷⁰ "Opposition to the London and North Western Railway Bill" (from the *Chester Courant*) *Cheshire Observer*, 10 May 1879, 6.

⁷¹ "Penamenmawr Local Board: Election of Chairman", *North Wales Express*, 9 May 1879, 4.

⁷² "Rates and Fares on the Chester and Holyhead Railway" *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 10 May 1879, 4. [My emphasis]

⁷³ "Eisteddfod Gadeiriol Mon" *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 July 1879, 5.

language in its communications with local people. If they wanted to use the railway they had to speak English.

Although it was a private company, the LNWR was an important part of the social, political and economic landscape of North Wales. In addition to providing the only source of rapid transport in the region, it was crucial to the development of Llandudno from 1849, for example in the creation of Marine Drive that made the resort more attractive to tourists.⁷⁴ But the LNWR was not always in sympathy with local political interests – and it opposed the acquisition of the local gas and water companies by the council in Bangor because it had previously obtained preferential rates from them.⁷⁵ It also contested Conwy's Harbour Bill as it affected its own plans on the other side of the estuary.⁷⁶ There was also some suggestion that the LNWR interfered directly in local politics in North Wales when its interests were at stake, for example at Holyhead in 1880 when it needed local support and local land for its extensive works on the harbour and breakwater. The issue was sufficiently important for it to feature in an account in *The Times* which provided evidence both of the strength of local feeling and the indifference of the LNWR to that opinion: 'Local energy failed to make a successful stand against an all-powerful railway company who can with perfect truth claim that the town was called into being by them and owes what prosperity it enjoys entirely to their enterprise.'⁷⁷ According to one correspondent to the local paper, there was an element of collusion between the LNWR and members of the local council and: 'morbid indifference [had made] Holyhead, Holyhead people and the Holyhead Local Board the catspaw of [the] all-powerful [LNWR]'—a claim made after the Board had apparently gifted land to the company with nothing much offered in return apart from an inaccessible local harbour.⁷⁸ The tension had been brought to a head by the LNWR's behaviour in excluding local people from a royal visit to the town to open the breakwater in 1880, and the evidence suggests that the company did treat local people with contempt:

Loyal citizens feel a little sore that the railway people are going to keep His Royal Highness to themselves, that they will not let him budge beyond their own premises, that they have brought a division of the Metropolitan Police to keep all but a privileged few at arm's length and that they have stuck glass along the surrounding walls to punish enthusiastic persons who may presume to peep over...⁷⁹

⁷⁴ "Proposed Carriage Drive round the Great Orme's Head", *North Wales Chronicle*, 9 December 1871, 4.

⁷⁵ "Bangor Local Board", *North Wales Chronicle*, 9 March 1878, 5.

⁷⁶ "Local Bills", *North Wales Chronicle*, 1 June 1878, 4.

⁷⁷ "The Royal Visit to Wales", *The Times*, 17 June 1880, 10.

⁷⁸ "The London and North Western Railway and the town of Holyhead", *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 July 1880, 3.

⁷⁹ "The New Holyhead Harbour", *Freeman's Journal*, 17 June 1880, 6.

The response from local people to the LNWR's arrangements for the royal visit was predictable:

The oldest inhabitant and his friends were unanimously of the opinion that Holyhead had been badly treated and were proportionately grumpy [as it is] eminently unsatisfying for a loyal Welshman [to be] met at every passage [...] by the dismal Welsh legend "Dim Canytiad" [No Entry] and to be cuffed about on his own streets by London Policemen while strangers from all parts of England and Ireland were being treated with Royal smiles and iced champagne...⁸⁰

The LNWR had at least departed from its usual practice by using the Welsh language – but only to declare its exclusion of local people from the event, so that the impression of contempt was clear. It was reinforced by the LNWR chairman Richard Moon, who used the occasion to boast of the 50 years of railway dominance in the UK by his company since the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, and of the LNWR's supreme power and wealth within the industry. And he showed little concern for local anger at the rates charged by the company in North Wales when he complained of traders who ignored the achievements of railways and: 'thought [the LNWR] ought to carry their traffic for nothing'.⁸¹ He also underlined the exclusion of Wales from the occasion by declaring that the new harbour was: 'a great blessing and a connecting link between the two countries' [England and Ireland].⁸² It appears that none of the responsibility for the way this whole event had been delivered could be ascribed to the royal visitor, the Prince of Wales, who might have been thought capable of influencing the nature of the celebration. When political leaders in Rhyl wrote and asked him to stop at their town on his way home, they were told by his secretary that the prince would have been pleased to do so but that: '*railway arrangements will not allow of the train being stopped [so] it is not in his power to comply with the request*'.⁸³

In the wake of these events, one correspondent issued a rallying cry to local people under the banner of 'Railway Tyranny at Holyhead'. He suggested that: 'If any Company deserves to be opposed then this great Company certainly does [...] let the whole community take it in hand'.⁸⁴ There is no evidence that any effective political action against the company immediately followed this encouragement but local opinion had clearly been galvanised against the LNWR. The

⁸⁰ "The Royal Visit to Holyhead", *Freeman's Journal*, 18 June 1880, 3.

⁸¹ "The Royal Visit to Holyhead", *Liverpool Mercury*, 18 June 1880, 6.

⁸² "The Royal Visit to Holyhead", *Liverpool Mercury*, 18 June 1880, 6. [My emphasis]

⁸³ "The proposed visit of the Prince of Wales to Rhyl", *Rhyl Advertiser*, 19 June 1880, 4.

⁸⁴ 'Railway Tyranny at Holyhead', *North Wales Chronicle*, 10 July 1880, 5. See also "The London and North Western Railway and the town of Holyhead", *North Wales Chronicle*, 17 July 1880, 3.

impression left by these and other exchanges is that the political relationship between railway and region, even after the increase in poor rates paid by the LNWR, was an unequal (and often unhappy) one - a situation that was exacerbated by the focus of the LNWR on its position as an instrument of the British state and its Irish policy, rather than having any serious role in furthering the interests of North Wales. That was articulated clearly in *The Times* in its reflections on the opening of the enlarged harbour at Holyhead when it noted that the '[LNWR] is a trustee for the public [...] and the common good of the public has long been realized in the 275 miles land journey which part London from Dublin'.⁸⁵ It did not appear to consider the implications for the regions in between London and Dublin, of which North Wales was one of the least developed.

The struggle over poor rates, fares, freight charges and the treatment of the people of Holyhead marked a change in the relationship between the region and the railway. The LNWR had gained an early advantage from its success in sustaining its higher rates and fares by using its power virtually unopposed in parliament, but the local people had also tasted success through increasing the poor rates charged to the LNWR. By 1880, Welsh people and politicians were beginning to develop forms of cooperation that at least mitigated the LNWR's 'English tide' in North Wales. The focus of opposition to the LNWR had moved from the landowning classes towards an emerging middle class, whose political power increased with changes in the franchise. They valued railways but wanted to secure greater regard for their interests by the LNWR. Outside formal political channels there was also an increasing sense of the importance of railways in North Wales, but one that was tempered by the sense that their owners were unsympathetic to the Welsh nationalism that they were partially, and inadvertently, responsible for creating.

7.3 Railways, the general population of North Wales and the Welsh language 1845-80

The success of the LNWR in Parliament in 1879 emphasised that it had sufficient national influence, particularly in parliament, to overcome local resistance which was not supported by effective representation in London. However, pressure for political change was growing from the local population, which posed a challenge to the LNWR. Railways were playing their part in building that resistance, albeit unintentionally, by strengthening the ability of groups to meet in larger numbers and thereby foster a greater sense of Welsh nationality.⁸⁶ At an Eisteddfod in

⁸⁵ Editorial, *The Times*, 18 June 1880, 9. The sign at the start of this thesis suggests that the distance was 264 miles!

⁸⁶ Geraint H. Jenkins, "'Wales, the Welsh and the Welsh Language' - Introduction," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 5.

Anglesey, one contributor noted the importance of the gatherings to: 'bring us together as Welshmen, and *unite us as an ancient nationality*' and thanked to the LNWR for making the event possible through its extra trains.⁸⁷ Some idea of the size of the traffic at such events is shown by the train that brought people home from the Pen y Groes Eisteddfod in 1872. The train was 'long and well-filled', hence the extensive injuries caused to fifty people when it was struck by another train.⁸⁸ There had been another accident nearby that involved a train carrying 500 Methodists who had attended a religious convention and six people died. The organisers of the event were so keen to make use of the railway that they had persuaded its owner to run the train on a line that was not certified for public use by the government inspector. Such was the status of the railway owner that the local paper reckoned him deserving of: 'our sympathies in his sore affliction, rather than ill-considered vituperation and unreasoning censure'.⁸⁹ Attendance at Eisteddfodau and religious meetings in North Wales was made possible by the CHR and its branches. As these did much to instil a sense of being 'an ancient nationality', the railway clearly contributed to the emerging sense of Welsh nationalism, even if it did so unintentionally and the results were not necessarily to the advantage of the LNWR.

While commercial and other interests in North Wales did not succeed in overturning the success of the LNWR in Parliament in 1879, there was evidence that in a rather uncoordinated manner, local people attempted to redress the balance when the opportunity arose. The CHR was created as a corporate body with authority to control the actions of individuals on its property. Among its powers was the right to detain people pending appearance before a magistrate, though it was one to be used only in exceptional circumstances.⁹⁰ They were a significant civil power but the LNWR's use of the courts was not always appreciated in North Wales. One defence lawyer admitted that the railways were beneficial to the area but: 'all they knew of it in this quarter was being allowed to contribute to the heavy expense of [LNWR] prosecutions'.⁹¹

When the services of a jury were required, local people could effectively make a statement through their findings even if the evidence didn't justify it. Thus, in July 1875 one judge told the jury in a case brought by the LNWR that they were responsible for a 'great miscarriage of

⁸⁷ "Anglesey Chair Eisteddfod" *North Wales Chronicle*, 5 August 1876, 7. [My emphasis]

⁸⁸ "Frightful Accident on the Carnarvonshire Railway – Fifty Persons Injured", *North Wales Chronicle*, 4 April 1872, 4.

⁸⁹ "The Accident on the Carnarvonshire Railway", *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 September 1866, 5. This railway was later purchased by the LNWR as shown in chapter 6.

⁹⁰ *Rules and regulations for the conduct of the traffic, and for the guidance of the officers and men in the service of the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company, revised and corrected to February 1853*. (London:1853), 48.

⁹¹ "Carnarvonshire", *North Wales Chronicle*, 9 January 1849, 2.

justice' because they had acted against the evidence.⁹² Similarly, William Griffith was acquitted at Beaumaris after comprehensive evidence of his theft of whisky from the LNWR was presented.⁹³ The official report on a fatal railway accident in Anglesey in 1877 had to contradict the local inquest because there was a 'strong impression in the minds of some jurymen that blame was attributable [to the LNWR]'.⁹⁴ Even when the railway pursued a prosecution to deter people from risky behaviour, it was open to criticism, for example when prosecuting a woman who was badly injured trying to join a moving train at Flint. The court heard that this was one of many cases brought by the LNWR in a 'most oppressive and unfair manner'.⁹⁵ When a local supplier of newspapers attempted to challenge the apparent preference given to stationers W H Smith at Denbigh he faced a stiff defence in court from the LNWR. He claimed that his case was: 'really a fight for the trade of the town. We are newsagents and the defendants are common carriers [...] bound to carry goods for everybody upon equal terms'.⁹⁶ The company made clear that W H Smith were offered 'special advantages'. Having won the case, the LNWR then secured costs against its opponent whose words echoed some local sentiment towards the company: 'You always fight every case, whether you are right or wrong'.⁹⁷

While there is no evidence that the litigation of the LNWR in North Wales was different from elsewhere, it was delivered in a context that was different and had the potential to create political opposition. While many of the people who were prosecuted spoke only Welsh, proceedings were in English, which potentially disadvantaged them. They also faced a distinctly hostile judiciary, who assumed that Welsh people were more prone to tell lies than most other people.⁹⁸ Railway proceedings were a case of a powerful English corporation (the LNWR) acting against generally poor, sometimes deferential, Welsh-speaking defendants, while a confident and powerful English judicial process provided the means to conclude the issue. Unsurprisingly, by 1870 the court system had become a target for the emerging Welsh nationalism, which received an impetus with the election of Henry Richard as MP for Merthyr Tydfil in 1868 - after which

⁹² "The Grand Jury Censured", *North Wales Chronicle*, 3 July 1875, 7.

⁹³ "Trinity Quarter Sessions" *North Wales Chronicle*, 3 July 1880, 4.

⁹⁴ "The Llanerchymedd Accident: Report of the Government Inspector", *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 January 1878, 6.

⁹⁵ "The Danger of Boarding Trains whilst in Motion", *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 June 1876, 5.

⁹⁶ "Denbigh County Court" *North Wales Chronicle*, 29 May 1880, 6

⁹⁷ "Denbigh County Court" *North Wales Chronicle*, 29 May 1880, 6. W H Smith had the contract with the LNWR to provide newspapers on their stations. See Simmons, *Victorian Railway*, 245.

⁹⁸ Mark Ellis Jones, "21- 'The Confusion of Babel'? - The Welsh Language, Law Courts and Legislation in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 597.

distinctly Welsh problems began to be brought to the attention of the UK parliament.⁹⁹ When the Lord Chancellor appointed an English-speaking judge to an almost exclusively Welsh-speaking area in 1871 the issue was debated in parliament and was subject to a *Times* leader that asserted that the: ‘ignorance of English is the chief misfortune’ of Wales and noted that education had proved of little value since on leaving school people were ‘apt to resume their Welsh’.¹⁰⁰ The comment provoked a lively debate in the correspondence columns that provided an insight into the impact of railways in Wales in respect of the highly political issue of the Welsh language:

There cannot be a doubt that the Welsh language is rapidly dying out. [A few years ago] my residence was 50 miles from the nearest railway and it was a rare exception to meet anyone [...] who could speak or understand the English language, except in the towns. By degrees during the last ten years, railways have penetrated into every part. [...] *The effect has been magical.* [...] I can assert from my own experience in my district (not an exceptional one) that all the children now speak English, and many adults who were ignorant of it ten years ago have learnt [enough] to be *useful members of the community*...¹⁰¹

This assessment is interesting for the emphasis it places on the role of railways in tackling the “problem” of the Welsh language, and for the sense that without English a person was not ‘useful’.

The LNWR were users of the court system and owners of a powerful technology, and so clearly part of the local English-speaking political establishment alongside landowners, the established church, and the education system. They were also powerful purveyors of the English language to a largely Welsh-speaking population. The significant impact of railways on the language was accepted by prominent Welsh politicians such as Osborne Morgan, who thought that Welsh would survive alongside English as the first language of the people.¹⁰² But his 1876 Eisteddfod analysis, like the earlier one in *The Times*, identified railways as being at the heart of the political challenge to the Welsh language because: ‘*English colonies* have sprung up in the neighbourhood of our railway stations’.¹⁰³ For the president of that event they were not just

⁹⁹ Matthew Cragoe, ‘Richard, Henry (1812–1888)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2014 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23527, accessed 18 Aug 2017]

¹⁰⁰ Leader column, *The Times*, 14 November 1871, 9.

¹⁰¹ Letters to the Editor, *The Times*, 17 November 1871, 4. [My emphasis]

¹⁰² Matthew Cragoe, ‘Morgan, Sir George Osborne, first baronet (1826–1897)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19221, accessed 19 Aug 2017]

¹⁰³ ‘The Wrexham Eisteddfod’, *Wrexham Guardian and Denbighshire and Flintshire Advertiser*, 24 August 1876, 3.

railways they were ‘*English* railways [by which] we are now made to mingle with our English neighbours’.

The occasional overt opposition towards the LNWR, such as in the courtrooms in North Wales, did not mean that their trains were not valued by the people. Simmons has shown how Welsh people were peculiarly attracted to trains because they were an antidote to the centuries of isolation and neglect that the country had experienced.¹⁰⁴ In that sense, the bulk of the population had the same relationship to railways in North Wales as the landowning elite, they wanted more railways and more influence with railway owners, but they did not have any effective means to challenge railway power. So railways were important to all classes in Wales, and as the franchise extended, politicians were alert to the potential success that might come from supporting improved communication by rail – none more so than the most senior of all Victorian UK politicians, William Gladstone.¹⁰⁵

7.4 Gladstone and the politics of railway monopoly in North Wales 1860 - 80

The frustration of the Denbigh newsagent noted earlier was symptomatic of a larger problem in the relationship between the LNWR and North Wales. The railway was bringing English produce into the area, denying opportunities to more local enterprise, except where the product was unique to the area, such as slate. This problem had been foreseen in 1846, when the traders of Conwy concluded that the arrival of the CHR would destroy their market along the coast between Abergele and Bangor. Their solution was to aim to build a new road and open ‘new sources of traffic’ inland towards Porthmadog.¹⁰⁶ Other places along the CHR also suffered. As early as 1848, Holywell, only two miles from the CHR, had become a ‘deserted village’ with tradespeople intending to migrate locally to Rhyl, which was on the CHR, or as far away as America.¹⁰⁷ Local producers found themselves in competition with imports from areas such as Manchester and Liverpool, and the local economy suffered – in part because the large railway companies were not interested in the business of smaller local producers, as will be seen.

While its arrival had created significant turbulence in North Wales, the position of the LNWR seemed secure both nationally and regionally. In 1862, LNWR shareholders heard that recent reductions in dividend were due to erosion of its monopoly in mainland Britain, but that

¹⁰⁴ Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 336-40.

¹⁰⁵ H. C. G. Matthew, ‘Gladstone, William Ewart (1809–1898)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10787>, [Accessed 15 Oct 2015]

¹⁰⁶ “Proposed new road from Llanrwst to Festiniog” *Chester Chronicle*, 27 November 1846, 6.

¹⁰⁷ “One effect of Railways” *Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondent*, 5 September 1848, 4.

better prospects lay ahead from the improved state of the national economy. Not all of them were convinced, and a shareholders revolt demanded: ‘boards to manage local lines [because] the whole line is too large to be effectively managed by any one central board, such local boards to possess independent action, with the exception if matters of general import’.¹⁰⁸ They were not able to secure any delegation from Euston – the LNWR was a centralised metropolitan corporation which was tightly managed from its urban bases. So this shareholder revolt, which coincided with the protests in North Wales about poor levels of service discussed earlier in this chapter, met with a stern response from the chairman Richard Moon.¹⁰⁹ The LNWR was very difficult to challenge, as even the protesting landowners in North Wales had discovered. By comparison, the coal trade in Flintshire and Denbighshire had more influential supporters and the GWR success in reaching Birkenhead by 1860, described in chapter 6, raised hopes of competition against the LNWR that would bring improvements in the level of service in the Wrexham area, and greater sympathy with the local language. There seemed to be a prospect of a different experience of railways in North Wales with:

Two ways to London and as many to Liverpool, with railways to Bangor, Overton and Ellesmere on one side of town, and [...] Mold on the other [and] *a Welsh stationmaster to converse with the people in their own vernacular...*¹¹⁰

Ultimately, such hopes were dashed when the GWR made peace with the LNWR and the two companies opted for greater cooperation and exclusion of smaller companies, rather than competition and expensive duplication. As the *Liverpool Mercury* observed, the relationship of the large to the smaller companies in North Wales was like: ‘the position of Austria and Prussia to the smaller German states. The small companies smile when the great ones smile and tremble when they frown; and the intriguing that goes on is very considerable’.¹¹¹ However, local hopes of challenging the LNWR and GWR in north-east Wales were raised in 1862 when William Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer and a Flintshire landowner, cut the first sod of the Wrexham, Mold and Connah’s Quay Railway (WMCQR) under a banner of ‘Free Trade in Railways’ which indicated the anti-monopolistic nature of local political opposition to railway power.¹¹² He was a major national figure in the 1860s and was also a ‘Flintshire Squire’ with significant financial interests in

¹⁰⁸ “London and North Western Railway”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 22 November 1862, 3.

¹⁰⁹ “London and North Western Railway”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 22 November 1862, 3.

¹¹⁰ “The Rise and Fall of the Wrexham and North Wales Mineral Railway”, *Wrexham Advertiser*, 19 January 1860, 4. [My emphasis]

¹¹¹ “Railways & Other Schemes in North Wales”, *Liverpool Mercury*, 18 January 1866, 6.

¹¹² “Cutting the first sod of the Wrexham, Mold and Connah’s Quay Railway”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 25 October 1862, 4.

north-east Wales.¹¹³ Despite his support, the WMCQR had to engage in a: ‘contest ranging over three sessions, and carried on in the face of the fact that the two most powerful companies in the kingdom [the LNWR and GWR] had coalesced for its defeat’.¹¹⁴

The WMCQR was an example of the movement in the mid-1860s that saw increasing political interest in the behaviour of railway companies and the power of monopolies, particularly the position of companies such as the LNWR and GWR. That concern about railway practice increased as the franchise was extended and the public could apply pressure to their MPs in areas like North Wales that experienced little railway competition.¹¹⁵ North-east Wales provided a case in point, and one where parliament allowed new lines to be built to challenge the trading restrictions applied by the large companies which, according to one local commentator was the only: ‘means of counteracting a system which, in the Welsh mineral districts more especially, bids fair to create a species of monopoly of which, until the past session, faint rumours only had reached the ears either of the legislature or the public’.¹¹⁶ In short, railways were becoming a political issue and Gladstone backed those public concerns for four reasons. He had a long - standing concern about the power of railways that he had challenged in part in his 1844 Railway Act; he had a personal financial interest as a local landowner; he wished to generate Welsh political support for his Liberal Party, and after 1885 he wanted to gather support for his Irish policies from Welsh MPs. From 1865 to 1880 it was the first three of these interests that concerned him. If the WMCQR had stopped at Connah’s Quay it would have been of little benefit to Gladstone. He and other land and coal owners in the area around Wrexham needed rail connection to the River Mersey, Birkenhead and Liverpool to access larger markets. So when the WMCQR went to Parliament for an extension across the Dee to Birkenhead, Gladstone, his powerful neighbour Lord Grosvenor and the shipping magnate John Laird, gave supporting evidence in committee.¹¹⁷

If the WMCQR had limited itself to North Wales, then it would have attracted little attention from the LNWR, which dismissed the North Wales coalfield as a source of traffic because it only supplied Chester and its vicinity with a mere 44,000 tons of coal in 1848. The LNWR was not interested in that compared to the 1,350,000 tons consumed in Liverpool in the

¹¹³ “The Chronicle”, *Chester Chronicle*, 4 December 1869, 8.

¹¹⁴ “Wrexham, Mold and Connah’s Quay Railway”, *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser*, 25 June 1864, 4.

¹¹⁵ Henry Parris, *Government and the Railways in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 214.

¹¹⁶ ‘Railway Legislation and Welsh Railways’, *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent*, 2 September 1865, 4.

¹¹⁷ “Wrexham, Mold and Connah’s Quay Railway – Extension under the Dee” *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser*, 14 April 1866 6,8.

same year.¹¹⁸ However, when the LNWR's position as a carrier of coal to Liverpool and Birkenhead was threatened it took the issue seriously, and it had reason to do so once the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway (MSL), under the chairmanship of Sir Edward Watkin, who was also a leading Liberal politician, reached Chester in 1862 through the salt area of Northwich. Unlike the smaller railways, the MSL had the resources to expand into North Wales.¹¹⁹ That challenge to the LNWR was partly blunted by the depression in railway building caused by the collapse of the Overend Gurney Bank in 1866.¹²⁰ The discovery of new coal seams at Wrexham in 1870 encouraged a revival of interest in new railway lines and Gladstone himself became a coal owner in 1872, and thus had an even more direct political interest in the issue of transport from his successful Aston Hall colliery.¹²¹ A year later, he told a parliamentary committee that he favoured the Mersey tunnel (which was part of the plan to extend railways from North Wales to Liverpool) because: 'railway communication was really a matter of life and death' for the region.¹²² By then he was the Prime Minister and was a potentially formidable political opponent – even for the mighty LNWR.

Gladstone's personal interest in developing railways was not initially linked directly to Welsh politics, but he began to address Welsh matters more directly from the 1870s. In 1871 there was some suggestion that Gladstone had even espoused the cause of Welsh nationalism by suggesting in a speech at Aberdeen that if Ireland were given Home Rule then the same privilege should be extended to Wales and Scotland.¹²³ In a speech he gave at the 1873 Mold Eisteddfod he supported the retention of the Welsh language and acknowledged that his views on Wales had been changed by the arguments of Henry Richard MP. But the only practical result of that change was that he appointed a Welsh-speaking bishop for the first time. But the limits of Gladstone's support for a distinct Welsh nation were clear in his clear argument for the primary use of English, which should be:

Encouraged in the schools [and should not be] discouraged at home. It is most important that the masses of the Welsh people should be acquainted with the English language [...] the tongue that is and must be the prevailing tongue of the country.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Braithwaite Poole, *Report to the Road and Traffic Committee of the Northern Division of Directors of the London and North Western Railway Company*. (LNWR, 1849), 10.

¹¹⁹ Baughen, *North and Mid Wales*, 55.

¹²⁰ Simmons and Biddle, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, 464.

¹²¹ "Mining Notes from North Wales" *North Wales Chronicle*, 11 May 1872, 3.

¹²² "Mr Gladstone on Railway Extension in Wales", *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 April 1873, 7.

¹²³ "Mr Gladstone at Aberdeen", *The Times*, 27 September 1871, 6.

¹²⁴ "Mr Gladstone at Mold", *The Times*, 20 August 1873, 5.

As Gladstone was not a strong advocate of Welsh culture and language like Henry Richard, he needed to offer Wales something that addressed its political priorities and garnered Welsh support in parliament. Gladstone's personal interest in railways, the increasing resentment of the LNWR among the local population and the growing strength of Welsh nationalism provided a fertile environment for railways to emerge as an even greater political issue in the 1880s as the franchise was extended to more of the male population. It clearly had the potential to engage the Welsh population, especially in the hands of a skilled statesman such as Gladstone, who knew and understood railway politics and practice.

Against him, the LNWR appeared to be in a powerful position nationally by 1880 according to its chairman Richard Moon, who reported that it had 9% of the national track mileage in the UK but 15% of the traffic, and that Irish traffic had been doubling every five years.¹²⁵ It was particularly powerful in North Wales with a monopoly over the railway carriage of goods and people in four counties – it was *the railway* in the region and was also beginning to recognise the potential for a huge increase in holiday traffic to seaside towns like Rhyl, Abergele, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno. Powerful landowners could occasionally exert some influence on the LNWR, as could local authorities from time to time - but the company was larger than either, and even its own shareholders struggled to control it. The LNWR was involved in many encounters with the population of North Wales, a sample of the largest of which is recorded in this chapter, but most of which were routine journeys for people or freight – which gradually made the LNWR indispensable to the people of North Wales and thereby placed it at the heart of local politics.

This chapter has provided evidence that those encounters slowly galvanised the towns, traders and public of North Wales, who began to develop a sense of Welsh unity in the region against the LNWR by 1880 – though the company remained stronger than the region and its people. Collective action against the LNWR in North Wales was difficult to organise because of the limited franchise, deferential attitudes, a rather small middle class and the declining power of the land owners. But as the period covered by this chapter came to an end, the political landscape was changing in ways that that could lead to a more serious political challenge to the LNWR in North Wales – if only they could be harnessed effectively. William Gladstone provided the best hope of the leadership that was required to challenge the LNWR once he combined his personal interest in railways to encompass the ambitions of the growing electorate of North Wales. That began a major challenge to the LNWR that continued and grew after Gladstone left the political stage. He was replaced in North Wales by a radical Liberal group of politicians with a nationalist agenda that targeted the LNWR – as will be seen in the next chapter.

¹²⁵ "London and North Western Railway", *London Daily News*, 23 August 1880, 3.

8. The LNWR and politics in North Wales 1880 -1900: 'The Great Railway Problem'

'At last we have men in the House of Commons thoroughly capable of guarding our interests [...] the great railway problem will have to be grappled with sooner or later'.¹

The development of the franchise towards near universal male suffrage by 1885 transformed Welsh politics, and the general election of that year showed a major shift towards the Liberal Party led by Gladstone. In North Wales, the election results effectively ended representation by the old landed gentry, which had been weakening since 1868, and replaced it with a Liberal and radical intake of MPs.² The example set by the Irish in their demands for land reform and disestablishment of the Irish church provided an agenda and a source nationalist parliamentary support for the Welsh Liberals.³ They had the opportunity to promote that agenda with Irish support after 1892 when they effectively held the balance of power at Westminster.⁴ The previous chapter showed that the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) was a powerful political force in North Wales, so this chapter explores whether that status attracted the attention of Welsh Liberal MPs alongside other issues that are covered in the historiography of nineteenth-century North Wales – land, the established church, education and the Welsh language.⁵ Davies' estimate of the extensive impact of railways in Wales suggests that politicians in North Wales would be concerned with the power of railways - or more precisely the LNWR.⁶

Chapter 7 ended with the emergence of William Gladstone as a possible champion of Welsh political interests against the LNWR, both to boost his credentials among Welsh Liberals and further his personal interest in better railway connections to his estate. North Wales was the most distinct part of the LNWR network because of its language, religion and nationalist culture - so that issues such as fares, freight rates, monopoly and industrial relations that were present across the UK had extra political and cultural dimensions in the region. It was also a vital area for the LNWR as North Wales' local holiday traffic began to rival receipts from Irish traffic by the 1890s - over 20,000 people visited Llandudno on each day of August Bank Holiday weekend in 1897, mostly from Liverpool and Manchester.⁷ The LNWR therefore planned to increase most of

¹ "North Wales Railways", *North Wales Express*, 31 July 1891, 5

² Kenneth Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 27.

³ Kenneth Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 1991), 69-70.

⁴ Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, 119.

⁵ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 36.

⁶ John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 1994), 409-410.

⁷ "The Railway Traffic", *Cheshire Observer*, 7 August 1897, 6.

its route from Chester to Llandudno Junction from two tracks to four from 1895 and effectively provided two railways – a fast through route to Ireland and a slower local stopping service.⁸ Its efforts to do so were hampered by its generally poor relationship with the people and politicians in North Wales that culminated in the dispute over dismissal of staff who spoke only Welsh. This chapter shows that the language issue was neither the beginning nor the end of the dispute between the LNWR and the people and politicians of North Wales. It probably marked the low point, after which all sides began to develop a more constructive relationship and the LNWR learned to work better with both national and local politicians. Throughout those changes the LNWR remained largely in control of events and by the end of the nineteenth century secured the extra lines it required in North Wales, and a more positive political environment in which to extract full value from its investment in North Wales.

8.1 Gladstone, North Wales and railways 1880 – 1890

William Gladstone's most prominent connection with railway development is the Railway Act of 1844 that presented a diluted form of many of the reforms suggested by the Irish Railway Commission expounded in chapter 3. However, Gladstone's involvement with railways was a continuous feature of his political life, and had a practical value in serving his estate in north-east Wales. Gladstone's views on the value of railways were similar to those expounded at railway opening ceremonies discussed in chapter 6, but with more of a sense that they would serve the personal needs of people rather than merely 'civilising' them. Gladstone espoused views that came close to those that Nye records from those believing in Manifest Destiny as analysed in chapter 1. Gladstone saw railways as a God-given benefit both to industry and human development that repaid any negative impact on the environment, as he told an audience in Bolton when he opened a public park:

Wordsworth wrote strongly against the proposal to carry a railway into the lake districts [because] the visiting population would not care a pin about nature, and yet [through railways] these improved tastes and feelings had grown up. It was a great purpose, which Providence might well be supposed to have contemplated, that in proportion as commercial and industrial pursuits became more keen and more extended, other faculties and other capacities of human nature in the opposite direction should also be opened and developed, [so] the balance of man and man's mind might be preserved.⁹

He was also aware that railways mattered to people in a political sense of enabling them to achieve changes that impacted on their own lives and those of their communities. And this was

⁸ Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 258.

⁹ "Mr Gladstone in Lancashire", *Newcastle Courant*, 14 October 1864, 5.

the case in North Wales, as shown in the previous chapters in which the importance of the LNWR in community life and politics grew progressively up to 1880. The process did not stop there as was clear when Gladstone concluded one of his regular holidays at Penmaenmawr, and spoke to the crowd at the LNWR station in the town. October 1882 was a time of personal distress to Gladstone because Frederick Cavendish, husband of Gladstone's niece, had been murdered in Phoenix Park Dublin; and it was a time of great national crisis because of the war in Egypt. But the crowds at Penmaenmawr wanted his help with a bridge over the railway to connect the town with the beach. Gladstone addressed those concerns by heaping somewhat disingenuous praise on the LNWR for their 'wisdom' and 'liberality', and expressed the hope that they would grant the wishes of the local Liberal association. It was also an occasion to celebrate Gladstone's intense satisfaction from the: 'harmony in which I stand in my relation to the people of Wales'.¹⁰ Politics and railways were clearly part of the relationship between Gladstone and North Wales.

Gladstone allied with Henry Robertson and Benjamin Piercy in order to develop his earlier personal and political ambitions in North Wales that were bolstered by railway developments in the region. They assisted in the challenge to the LNWR monopoly in North Wales that was helpful in Gladstone's attempt to secure the support and votes of the new intake of Welsh Liberal MPs in 1885 and gain a railway outlet from his Hawarden estate to Liverpool.¹¹ Both Robertson and Piercy died in 1888 and Gladstone then turned to Sir Edward Watkin of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway (MSL) who was: 'highly ambitious, flamboyant, and irascible, a railway imperialist, eager to extend his influence and control into new territories, at home and abroad' – including Wales.¹² Gladstone was careful to link his own interest in railway developments in north-east Wales to wider benefits for North Wales.¹³ That was consistent with his stance that he would abstain in any political matter nationally if 'private interests alone were involved'.¹⁴ The important word for Gladstone was 'alone'. He apparently felt able to pursue private interests if there was also (in his mind) a public dimension, as he felt that there was in North Wales.

He allied himself with Watkin as they both had ambitions in North Wales and particularly a common interest in challenging the LNWR and GWR. Watkin wished to establish a company to rival them at a national level, while Gladstone was frustrated by their intransigence in North

¹⁰ "Mr Gladstone at Penmaenmawr", *Manchester Times*, 7 October 1882, 2.

¹¹ David Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King: The Life and Times of Sir Edward Watkin* (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2002), 583

¹² C. W. Sutton, 'Watkin, Sir Edward William, first baronet (1819–1901)', rev. Philip S. Bagwell, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36762, Accessed 14 May 2016]

¹³ "Mr Gladstone on Railway Enterprise", *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 October 1884, 4.

¹⁴ "Mr Gladstone and Metropolitan Railways", *Morning Post*, 3 July 1871, 6.

Wales. The issues for both of them crystallised into a single aim of completing the access for Welsh traffic to Liverpool and Manchester via a new line from Wrexham that crossed the River Dee north of Chester and accessed Liverpool through a tunnel under the Mersey. Both men rather exaggerated the wider benefits for North Wales by implying that such a line would challenge the LNWR monopoly in the region. That was attractive to politicians and the public in North Wales, for whom the LNWR posed an increasing problem because of its lack of response to local concerns and a perceived lack of sympathy with the population as analysed in the previous chapter.

As Prime Minister, Gladstone had cut the first sod on the northern part of that Wirral route in 1884 and noted that Liverpool was the natural metropolis of North Wales that was isolated from the port by lack of railway connection. He thought the importance of the new railway was such that it was the difference: 'between progress and standing where you are' for North Wales.¹⁵ He dismissed companies such as the LNWR as being mostly concerned with long haul traffic and serving large cities.¹⁶ As the scheme progressed from the Mersey towards Wales and the vital bridge of over the Dee, Watkin explained to the 1888 Eisteddfod that it was a: 'gateway to Wales and hereafter *probably* to Ireland'.¹⁷ Thus Watkin aimed to raise Welsh hopes of breaking the LNWR monopoly in North Wales without promising definitely to do so. Watkin also pointed out that railways in Wales were only 12 per cent of the total capital of the LNWR and GWR and clearly not their central concern. In future he hoped for Welsh railways paid for by Welsh finance and working for Welsh interests. At the same event, Gladstone articulated his support for Welsh nationality, language, religion and economic growth as the modern 'wants of Wales'.¹⁸ The way that Gladstone and Watkin shared an Eisteddfod platform in 1888 cemented the connection between railways and politics in North Wales.

Watkin's efforts eventually produced the grand-sounding Welsh Railways Through Traffic Act 1889, which was an elaborate collaboration between many disparate small railways in Wales to create a through line that linked North and South Wales, and especially the coalfields, to large markets in Lancashire. At least one optimistic Welsh commentator saw benefits for coal, tourism, agriculture and even a revival of Porth Dinllaen to challenge Holyhead.¹⁹ It was a practical response to the manifesto for Welsh railways of 1864 described in chapter 6 that aimed to create

¹⁵ "The Prime Minister at Birkenhead, Imposing Demonstration. Cutting the First Sod of the Wirral Railways" *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 October 1884, 6.

¹⁶ "The Prime Minister at Birkenhead", October 1884.

¹⁷ David Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King: The Life and Times of Sir Edward Watkin* (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2002), 568.

¹⁸ "The National Eisteddfod at Wrexham: Opening Day", *Western Mail*, 5 September 1888, 3.

¹⁹ "The Welsh Railways Union", *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 22 November 1889, 5.

a distinctly Welsh railway system that matched the emerging sense of Welsh identity. It was also seen as having the potential to curb the power of large railway companies like the LNWR which: ‘unlike ordinary cannibals [...] starves the victims it intends to devour’.²⁰ The collaboration in Wales on railway issues had political value to Watkin and Gladstone - and the latter got the link to Liverpool for the bricks and coal produced on his Aston Hall estate – but it did little to challenge the power of the larger companies, especially the LNWR.²¹ And Gladstone’s position was not substantially different from the earlier English railway promoters in Wales whose invasion rhetoric was analysed in chapter 6. That was clear when he opened the bridge over the Dee near his estate in 1889: ‘They were all there [...] gathered from different parts of England and formed into an army, and they had invaded Wales’.²² His comments may have been jocular but there was sufficient similarity to Richard Moon’s 1870 reference to railways as a modern feudalism in North Wales, noted in chapter 6, to suggest that Gladstone was unlikely to deploy a truly Welsh policy on railways. His purposes for railways had more of a human face than Moon’s, but Gladstone was a Victorian improver rather than a Welsh nationalist.

So by 1890 the LNWR still remained as strong in North Wales in the face of Gladstone and Watkin’s rhetoric as it was in 1881 when:

There was not a single valley where a railway could go in this part of the country in which the trains of the [LNWR] were not running [and] each employee should never scruple to bear the mark of the [LNWR] on his collar when he knew it was a passport to society.²³

That statement about the position of the LNWR in North Wales by one of its solicitors was accurate in terms of its articulation of the company’s monopoly of rail traffic, but less so as a description of its social status. The catalogue of court cases and incidents detailed in the previous chapter covering the period up to 1880 showed there were tensions caused by the LNWR’s high-handed behaviour towards the local population and its litigious attitude. The LNWR had been increasingly challenged by individuals and public bodies from around 1868 and that process continued into the 1880s. The jury at an inquest in Holyhead in 1882 indicted senior LNWR officials for the deaths of three passengers walking between ferry and train during reconstruction of the harbour after storm damage. The case showed tension between senior management and

²⁰ “Best Trains of 1889”, *Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers’ Gazette*, 29 November 1889, 7.

²¹ Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King*, 657.

²² “Mr Gladstone’s Golden Wedding: Opening of Hawarden Bridge”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 August 1889, 7.

²³ “Mr Preston on the London and North Western Railway Company”, *Rhyl Advertiser*, 22 January 1881, 2.

junior staff in which the community supported the latter. The coroner at the subsequent inquest was concerned that local bias might affect the jury - and he was clearly surprised when the jury's verdict required the prosecution of senior LNWR managers.²⁴ The company was supported by officialdom and there was an attempt to get the subsequent trial moved to Chester through fear of local feeling prejudicing the result.²⁵ Although all the defendants were eventually acquitted, such incidents showed an increasing unwillingness by the local population to accept without question the LNWR's actions and their consequences.²⁶

In a typical response, the LNWR resisted any suggestion of responsibility for events at Holyhead in 1882 and rather arrogantly considered that the long service of district superintendent Ephraim Wood meant that he was: 'incapable of the culpable negligence of which he was so unjustly accused'.²⁷ There was a spirit of triumphalism about his acquittal when the LNWR officers held their annual dinner in Chester in 1883. They presented Wood with an illuminated congratulatory scroll, commemorating his success in court, despite the 'extraordinary efforts to the contrary' - presumably meaning the efforts of the local populace.²⁸ The notion that this case was part of a wider tension between railway and populace was reinforced by another incident at Holyhead in 1885 that was apparently unreported in North Wales but was publicised in Dublin. A 'Special Reporter' recounted that the LNWR had sent fifteen staff from Chester to replace Welsh employees who were allegedly dismissed for pilfering - on the basis that: 'one Welshman steals therefore all Welshmen are unreliable'.²⁹ The paper alleged that the real reason for the dispute was that the LNWR was engaged in a political initiative and: 'wished to "make a little English town" of Holyhead'.³⁰ It appeared to be a continuation of the tension between the LNWR and the people of Holyhead that had erupted over the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1880, as analysed in the last chapter. The LNWR was also accused in 1885 of under-selling local traders by favouring its own suppliers, who then put local people out of business. It was further reported in Manchester that the Chester employees who were sent to replace the Welshmen had been duped by a story that there were staff shortages at Holyhead. They had returned home when they found out the

²⁴ "The Accident at Holyhead Railway Station - Verdict of Manslaughter", *North Wales Chronicle*, 28 October 1882, 8.

²⁵ "City and Country Chit-Chat" *North Wales Chronicle*, 20 January 1883, 4.

²⁶ "Winter Assizes", *North Wales Chronicle*, 27 January 1883, 5.

²⁷ "The Late Holyhead Accident" *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 February 1883, 5.

²⁸ "London and North Western Railway - Annual Dinner of the Officers of the Chester and Holyhead District" *Cheshire Observer*, 10 February 1883, 8.

²⁹ "The Holyhead Disturbances" *Freeman's Journal*, 20 August 1885, 5.

³⁰ "The Holyhead Disturbances" *Freeman's Journal*, 20 August 1885, 5.

facts - and after two of them were beaten 'very severely'.³¹ That report made clear that local feeling against the LNWR was very intense.³² A further report in Ireland hinted at the emergence of a common feeling between Wales and Ireland in its suggestion that: 'several of the *Saxon invaders* [were given] a sound thrashing' and that a senior manager from London had attended Holyhead to attempt a resolution.³³

That tension at Holyhead may be explained in part by the evidence that the LNWR in North Wales had become part of the local establishment whose profile was generally more English than Welsh – hence the reference to Anglicising Holyhead. Such an attempt would be consistent with the presence of a powerful, English, resident elite in nineteenth century Wales suggested by Harris and Startup.³⁴ There is some evidence that the LNWR had developed that status over many years. One of their solicitors was reported as having: 'taken the mansion of Rhug, near Corwen, and the game above the estate' in 1859.³⁵ Eight years later another was involved in acquiring hotels in the region for the company.³⁶ Senior LNWR officials were involved in official business in North Wales, such as when Bangor Town Council applied to become a corporation in 1883 and the support of the LNWR was seen as essential to its bid.³⁷ When long-serving engineer Hedworth Lee died in 1876, 'a double-light stained glass window' was put in the local Anglican Church in Bangor in his memory.³⁸ Ephraim Wood, superintendent of the North Wales district, married the daughter of a local millionaire from Conwy, clearly having suffered no ill-effects from being blamed by the Holyhead jury for the accident in the town in 1882 as discussed above.³⁹ Wood went on to become a prominent local establishment figure after retirement, a magistrate and High Sheriff of Caernarfonshire.⁴⁰ These examples show that the

³¹ "The Holyhead Disturbances" *Freeman's Journal*, 20 August 1885, 5.

³² "Disaffection among Railway Servants", *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 22 August 1885, 16.

³³ "The Holyhead Disturbances – More Attacks on Englishmen", *Freeman's Journal*, 25 August 1885, 7. [My emphasis]

³⁴ Chris Harris and Richard Startup, *The Church in Wales: The Sociology of a Traditional Institution* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1999), 7.

³⁵ "Rhug" *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 September 1859, 12.

³⁶ "Aberystwyth", *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 March 1867, 2.

³⁷ "The proposed Municipal Incorporation of Bangor – Government Inquiry", *North Wales Chronicle*, 5 May 1883, 6.

³⁸ "Local and District News", *North Wales Chronicle*, 22 July 1876, 5.

³⁹ "Caerhun (Conway)" *North Wales Chronicle*, 17 October 1891, 6.

⁴⁰ "Death of Mr Ephraim Wood: Well-Known Railway Superintendent", *Liverpool Daily Post*, 25 August 1915, 6.

LNWR was an important element of the local establishment in North Wales and that its officials were recognised accordingly. The alignment of the LNWR and officialdom was also demonstrated in 1887 when the authorities struggled to contain a tithe riot in the Mochdre district of North Wales. Soldiers and police were carried to the site of the disturbance by rail but found it difficult to disembark without the help of the LNWR.⁴¹ One witness pointed out that: ‘the [LNWR] stopped a train for [troops and police] I never heard of them stopping for anybody else before’.⁴² In 1890, the company constructed a station at Mochdre, though the local traffic did not warrant it.⁴³ The new station was not even provided with a goods siding that would have assisted local traders.⁴⁴ It is difficult not to conclude that it was constructed largely to aid local policing of the area during the Tithe Wars.

Industrial and social tensions were not the only issues between company and region. There was also the LNWR’s monopoly and the rates it charged. In June 1887 there was a meeting in Rhyl to support a railway to by-pass the LNWR between Chester and Rhyl because the LNWR: ‘had a system not so much to accommodate passengers, as a line of communication between England and Ireland to carry Irish traffic’.⁴⁵ Issues such as rates, fares, monopoly, safety and industrial relations were sources of general tension between the railway companies and communities in Britain in this period.⁴⁶ The extra ingredient in North Wales was Welsh nationality as demonstrated at Holyhead in 1885. As the franchise extended, it became more possible for the Welsh voice to be heard through an emerging group of radical Welsh Liberal MPs. Gladstone tried hard to appear to meet their demands, but the movement was strong and soon became a formidable force on the national stage when it combined with the Irish faction in Parliament. That reflected that fact that the connection between Ireland and Wales became stronger during the 1880s – as seen in Irish coverage of the Holyhead riot above. The Welsh Liberal leader, Stuart

⁴¹ “The Anti-Tithe Disturbances in Wales”, *North Wales Chronicle*, 3 September 1887, 5.

⁴² Tithe rent charge disturbances. Report of an inquiry as to disturbances connected with the levying of tithe rent charge in Wales. 55. (1887) [C.5195] [C.5195-I], XXXVIII.291, 301.

⁴³ Untitled, *North Wales Chronicle*, 15 February 1890, 5.

⁴⁴ “Conway Rural District Council”, *Llandudno Advertiser and List of Visitors*, 8 December 1899, 3.

⁴⁵ “Proposed New Railway to Rhyl – Public Meeting”, *Rhyl Advertiser*, 25 June 1887, 3.

⁴⁶ See for example, Geoffrey Alderman, *The Railway Interest* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1973) especially Chapters 3, 8 and 9.

Rendel, suggested in 1888 that: 'Ireland is the standard bearer of a universal crusade'.⁴⁷ His own priorities for Wales were clear:

By far the most important questions of the future for the happiness of our country are the *abolition of monopolies* in religion, in land, *in railways* in the liquor traffic. [...] We want to reduce the railway rates which oppress and handicap our industries...⁴⁸

That manifesto for change went beyond that of 1864 as it was not just about *which* railways should be built, it was about *how* they should operate. That put the LNWR at the centre of the new political agenda in North Wales and marked a further shift towards a more distinctly Welsh response to the monopoly of the LNWR, which was seen as a being similar to other local English controlled monopolies described in Rendel's comments above. That response, which developed through the 1880s as described above, reflected changes in the confidence and sense of national identity of the population of North Wales and was quickly translated into a tangible political response in Parliament.

8.2 Confrontation in Parliament 1890 – 1900

It appears that there was more to the relationship between Irish and Welsh MPs than the notion of the latter learning from the former as suggested by Morgan.⁴⁹ There was *active collaboration* for a purpose – and at the centre of that purpose was the challenge the LNWR monopoly. The LNWR was already a target of Irish nationalists by 1890, as the company was regarded in its dealings with the Dublin Steam Packet Company (DSPC) as a 'formidable antagonist'.⁵⁰ After a debate about the Irish mail contract, Frank O'Donnell MP, begged: 'to give Notice that [...] legislation promoted by the [LNWR] will obtain the attention of Irish Members for the future'.⁵¹ The tactic appeared to work, as the contract to carry the mail from Holyhead to Dublin was

⁴⁷ "Mr Thomas Ellis M.P. on Welsh Landlordism" *North Wales Express*, 6 July 1888, 5. Rendel was effectively the leader of the Welsh group, see John Grigg, 'Rendel, Stuart, Baron Rendel (1834–1913)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37889>, accessed 13 April 2015].

⁴⁸ "Politics in North Wales: IV. The Carnarvon Boroughs" *North Wales Express*, 6 July 1888, [My emphasis] 5. See also, John Grigg, 'Rendel, Stuart, Baron Rendel (1834–1913)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37889>, accessed 10 May 2015]

⁴⁹ Kenneth Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 117.

⁵⁰ HC Deb 11 August 1882 vol. 273 c1550.

⁵¹ HC Deb 06 March 1883 vol. 276 c1603.

returned to the Irish company after the LNWR had apparently secured it and its chairman had argued for the Irish credentials of the LNWR.⁵²

Tom Ellis, a leading light in the new Welsh radicalism, evidently took notice and argued that the Irish tactics and nationalist agenda were a model for Wales.⁵³ Ireland had aroused in Wales ‘a spirit that cannot be extinguished’.⁵⁴ Ellis outlined the national agenda for Wales with railways clearly as prominent on his list of priorities as they had been on Rendel’s:

A Welsh party has been formed in Parliament [that wanted] *its railways unified and worked for the nation's good*, its village industries fostered, and a network of village libraries and halls established. [...] above all we shall work for a Legislature elected by the manhood and the womanhood of Wales, and to them responsible...⁵⁵

This *Cymru Fydd* agenda found practical expression in a failed bill to establish a Secretary of State for Wales and a Council for Wales in 1891 with extensive powers, including the power to deal with all railway bills in the country.⁵⁶ Ellis was inhibited from taking forward this radical vision by his acceptance of the Deputy Whip role in Gladstone’s 1892 Government, which divided Ellis from his Welsh colleagues and especially Lloyd George.⁵⁷ Lloyd George showed no reluctance to promote Ellis’s agenda after his own election to Parliament in 1890 and railways were clearly a priority, as his interventions in Parliament included an early attack on the LNWR on the issue of rates and charges.⁵⁸ That was evidently part of a wider campaign that reflected the concerns of his constituents. He wrote to them in July 1891, and urged them to create ‘a committee [...] to watch

⁵² HC Deb 31 May 1886 vol. 306 c585. The intensity of Irish national feeling against the LNWR was apparent on the occasion of an unofficial race between its ships and those of the Dublin Steam Packet Company. It attracted huge crowds who cheered the success of the latter in March 1883 in Dublin. See “A Trial of Speed”, *Freeman’s Journal*, 29 March 1883, 5.

⁵³ Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘Ellis, Thomas Edward [Tom] (1859–1899)’, rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006

⁵⁴ Presentation to Mr Tom Ellis, M.P. – Interesting Proceedings at Bala”, *North Wales Express*, 26 September 1890, 7.

⁵⁵ “Presentation to Mr Tom Ellis, M.P. – Interesting Proceedings at Bala”, *North Wales Express*, 26 September 1890, 7.

⁵⁶ “Welsh Home Rule”, *Cardiff Times*, 25 July 1891, 6. *Cymru Fydd* [Young Wales] was a Welsh Nationalist party linked closely to the Liberal Party. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymru_Fydd [Accessed 24 September 2017].

⁵⁷ Morgan, *Ellis*.

⁵⁸ HC Deb 01 August 1891 vol. 356 cc1041-3.

the doings of our railway companies [of which, the LNWR had] tremendous power and influence in the House [and the] Government'. The *North Wales Express* reported Lloyd George's comments and rejoiced that: 'at last we have men in the House of Commons thoroughly capable of guarding our interests...the *great railway problem* will have to be grappled with sooner or later'.⁵⁹ The public clearly agreed, as Lloyd George considered that railway rates were among his most successful issues in 1891.⁶⁰ Some of the elements of the 'great railway problem' were therefore apparent early in the 1890s. Ellis had identified the issue of control over railways as a priority for a Welsh legislature and that had been reflected in Lloyd George's comments about the power of railways in Parliament. One of the results of that power was thought to be the high charges for freight and passengers that featured in chapter 7 as a priority for people and businesses in North Wales. That was a particular problem in North Wales because of the success of the LNWR in maintaining the higher rates charged by the CHR once the latter company was dissolved in 1879. The LNWR's ability to charge higher rates was underpinned by its monopoly position in North Wales which was also a concern for Welsh politicians.

Irish MPs had longer-standing grievances that were similar to those expressed by their Welsh colleagues, but had another element that was not present initially in Wales but emerged strongly by 1895. It was the sense that the LNWR was culturally identified with the UK state and inherently antagonistic to any movement that undermined the Union. The link between the Irish and Welsh Nationalists would not have impressed Lord Stalbridge, who took up his post as chairman of the LNWR in April 1891. In his former guise of Lord Richard Grosvenor, he was MP for Flintshire and had been a close friend and neighbour of Gladstone, and chief whip in his government but defected to the Liberal Unionists over Home Rule for Ireland in 1886.⁶¹ Given that background, his appointment to the top position in the LNWR was hardly conducive to better relations between the railway company and the nationalists of Wales and Ireland. Morgan showed that the period after 1886 was: 'the high noon of Welsh radicalism [when] the virus of Home Rule was seen in the mildest of Welsh requests'⁶². Stalbridge was also on record as considering all Irishmen 'without exception' as corrupt.⁶³ In respect of church disestablishment, an important issue for Welsh

⁵⁹ "North Wales Railways", *North Wales Express*, 31 July 1891, 5. [My emphasis]

⁶⁰ Grigg, *The Young Lloyd George*, 174. In a private letter to his brother William, Lloyd George said he was "very busy working on the **Railway Rates Bills**" see William George papers, National Library of Wales, MS (WIAbNL)003366225, Letter 149, 23 July 1891.

⁶¹ A. C. Bell, 'Grosvenor, Richard de Aquila, first Baron Stalbridge (1837–1912)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33593, accessed 19 April 2015]

⁶² Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, 74.

⁶³ Bell, *Grosvenor*.

Liberals, Stalbridge's position was wholly unsympathetic - as shown in his subscription to a fund to 'defend the Church in Wales'.⁶⁴ The LNWR chairman was therefore not a popular figure with many Irish and Welsh MPs, as must have been obvious to the LNWR board that appointed him. That reinforces the sense that the LNWR was almost consciously Unionist in outlook. Tension was certainly apparent in exchanges between Irish MPs and the LNWR in 1891, when an Irish nationalist MP objected to an intervention by Stalbridge, who had frustrated an influential body that was established to review railway rates by securing the dismissal of one of its members.⁶⁵ Stalbridge was accused by Irish MPs of pursuing a personal interest.⁶⁶ Thus, the people and politicians of North Wales on one side (combined with Irish MPs) and the LNWR on the other had taken up positions that had the potential to increase tensions between them in the 1890s.

Given that context and the political importance of the Welsh language noted in the previous chapters, it was hardly surprising that the relationship between the LNWR and North Wales erupted when the LNWR dismissed some employees in North Wales who only spoke Welsh.⁶⁷ Jones explored that issue in some detail and showed that the LNWR had a long-standing policy against workers who only spoke Welsh. It is less clear from her analysis why this policy was only occasionally enforced and why there was no strong reaction to it until 1894.⁶⁸ It is difficult not to conclude that Stalbridge's sensitivity to the 'the virus of Home Rule' at that time played some part in the process. That may not have been the only issue. By linking the work of Drummond on the behaviour of the LNWR towards Liberals in Crewe - 'scandalously bad' according to Gladstone - to the evidence from Jones on its treatment of employees in North Wales a common thread emerges.⁶⁹ The profile of employees at Crewe - Liberal and non-conformist - was the same as for North Wales. Drummond noted a decline in deference from employees in Crewe, and that is apparent in this current study, for example in the events discussed above, where the LNWR was accused of trying to make a "little English town of Holyhead" and the employees reacted angrily. The difference in Crewe was that the LNWR wanted to make that a 'Conservative town' as compared to the priority in Holyhead. In both cases the LNWR objected to aspects of local communities that did not fit in with its own Conservative and Anglican profile.

⁶⁴ "Welsh and Border News", *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser*, 16 January 1892, 7.

⁶⁵ HC Deb 13 April 1891 vol. 352 cc377-82.

⁶⁶ "London Correspondent", *Freeman's Journal*, 11 April 1891, 5.

⁶⁷ HC Deb 16 February 1892 vol. 1 c557

⁶⁸ Dot Jones, "4- The Coming of the Railways and Language Change in North Wales 1850-1900," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 147, Her analysis is examined in Chapter 1.

⁶⁹ "Mr Gladstone and the Crewe Works", *The Times*, 20 December 1889, 7.

Whatever motivated the LNWR in North Wales, its actions in dismissing Welsh-only speakers were offensive, poorly timed – and a perfect issue for a skilled and ambitious politician like Lloyd George. He did not miss his chance. The opportunity to create trouble for the LNWR arose when its private bill was presented on 5 April 1895 and included (among other things) higher rates on lines in North Wales, and two additional lines for much of the distance from Chester to Llandudno Junction. Lloyd George was not content to let it pass, even though the extra lines of railway suited local interests in North Wales. He wanted a full debate on the policies of the LNWR in North Wales.⁷⁰ That was not allowed, but Lloyd George succeeded in postponing the Bill. When the matter returned the LNWR was defended by David Plunket, a director and Dublin based Unionist MP, who struggled to contain a wide ranging attack but suggested that the loss of the Bill would damage North Wales more than the LNWR because it would limit trade. Bryn Roberts, a Welsh MP and LNWR shareholder, demonstrated the anger that he and his colleagues felt, as he was willing to risk any local disadvantage from frustrating the measure in order to obstruct the LNWR: ‘a most arrogant company’.⁷¹ Lloyd George wrote to his brother William George and showed how strong the Welsh feelings were against the LNWR at this time:

Of course we were beaten, but we made a pertinacious protest. I have put down a vote of censure. I got wind of the fact that the [indecipherable] that was down for discussion tomorrow night was going to be withdrawn, so I put down a vote of confidence in the Railway Coy. [...] We will get our fling at them...⁷²

Arthur Balfour for the Conservatives thought that the LNWR had not: ‘broken either the letter or the spirit of the law’ and that the motion against it was invalid.⁷³ That theme was taken up by Plunket, who continued to argue that the debate should not have been held as it challenged laissez-faire economics. He asserted that if the Welsh views were upheld: ‘it would be the right and the established practice, [...] to call for an inquiry into the conduct of the private business of any private Company.’⁷⁴ He denied any antagonism towards Wales or the Welsh but he thought: ‘that a railway company [or other employer] had a perfect right to employ whom he liked’.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ HC Deb 05 April 1895 vol. 32 cc1023-4.

⁷¹ HC Deb 25 April 1895 vol. 32 c1609.

⁷² William George papers, National Library of Wales, MS (WIAbNL) 003366225, Letter 308, 9 May 1895.

⁷³ HC Deb 10 May 1895 vol. 33 c961.

⁷⁴ HC Deb 10 May 1895 vol. 33 c971.

⁷⁵ HC Deb 10 May 1895 vol. 33 c982.

James Bryce, speaking for government, did not object to the matter being debated as he had received widespread complaints from Wales. He urged the LNWR to use its great powers in a 'conciliatory manner'.⁷⁶ With that, Lloyd George withdrew his motion.⁷⁷

An indication of how the LNWR was viewed in North Wales emerged in a letter to Lloyd George from his uncle, after the latter had learned of the debate. Uncle Lloyd considered that the LNWR was as: 'tyrannical as any Tory powers can be, and quite as dishonourable'.⁷⁸ It is relevant to note here that these attacks from Welsh MPs challenged *Liberal* ministers on the issue of railways – showing the extent to which Gladstone's efforts to engage them in support of his earlier government with a railway programme for North Wales had failed. The debate in May 1895 was a few weeks before the fall of Lord Rosebery's own Liberal government.⁷⁹

According to Jones, the Welsh language issue was dropped in May 1895 and Welsh MPs turned to other matters.⁸⁰ In fact, the opposition to the LNWR actually intensified as Irish and Welsh MPs combined to attack other aspects of the operation of the LNWR. The prominent Irish Nationalist MP Timothy Healy made the position clear in February 1896. He suggested that Irish ideas: 'had spread to this country, to Scotland, and to Wales. It [the Government was] paying a big price for keeping up the present system in Ireland'.⁸¹ And he warned that he and his colleagues would: 'harass, attack, and thwart in every way the policy of those who refused to give Home Rule to Ireland'.⁸² Evidently, the LNWR was counted among them. That was hardly surprising, given the views of Lord Stalbridge about Irish nationalist MPs. He considered that: 'their ultimate objective was the thorough dismemberment of the Empire and the separation of Ireland from England'.⁸³ Irish Members continued to press him for a service from Holyhead to London that was more useful to ordinary people. They asked for the addition of third class carriages to *Irish Mail* trains and for a faster service. In response, Stalbridge told an LNWR meeting: 'it has always been difficult for the Government to please them [the Irish MPs] and he supposed that [the LNWR] must give up the attempt'.⁸⁴ His remarks are interesting in their alignment of company and government

⁷⁶ HC Deb 10 May 1895 vol. 33 c990.

⁷⁷ HC Deb 10 May 1895 vol. 33 c996.

⁷⁸ Quoted in George, *Lloyd George – Backbencher*, 165.

⁷⁹ Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, 156.

⁸⁰ Jones, *Railways and Language Change*, 144.

⁸¹ HC Deb 13 February 1896 vol. 37 c263.

⁸² HC Deb 13 February 1896 vol. 37 c260.

⁸³ "Important Speech by Lord Stalbridge" *Western Gazette*, 28 February 1890, 7.

⁸⁴ "The London and North Western Co. and the Irish Members", *Freeman's Journal*, 14 August 1897, 4.

activity in respect of Ireland. The Irish and Welsh Members had already made the connection and hence they directed strong attacks against the LNWR and the government in London that they considered to be a supporter of the railway company.

Lloyd George spoke against another LNWR Bill in April 1896 that was a further attempt to add extra lines along the North Wales coast to accommodate the huge increase in traffic, without reducing its charges. One Irish MP reckoned that the injustices of the LNWR were so serious that he advised his Welsh colleagues: 'to resist this unjust taxation and to oppose every Railway Bill that came before the House'⁸⁵ Defence of the LNWR fell to Sir William Houldsworth, a Conservative cotton magnate from Manchester and an LNWR director.⁸⁶ Lloyd George thought the position of Welsh traders was hopeless because the Board of Trade was unable to resist the LNWR.⁸⁷ When the vote was lost by them, the Irish and Welsh MPs continued their disruptive tactics by attacking Houldsworth's right to vote at all because of his personal financial interest in the matter. Lloyd George wrote to his brother and showed how important it was to attack the LNWR in pursuit of Welsh national aspirations: 'No harm in proving that *Nationalism involves something more substantial than ideals*'⁸⁸ His comment reinforces the status of railways as an important item on the Welsh nationalist political agenda. .

By the time of Lloyd George's attack, the issue of rates and charges on railways was diminished through much greater cooperation between the companies and government, so that the room for alteration of charges in particular cases was limited.⁸⁹ The company maintained a generally more amenable stance under these attacks, perhaps because it knew that Lloyd George was using the issue for personal political reasons. It also thought (as its board minutes show) that he was wrong in fact, and he did not have the support of many Welsh traders.⁹⁰ The LNWR was also rather arrogantly confident of success, as shown by the fact that it was buying up land to add

⁸⁵ HC Deb 14 April 1896 vol. 39 c855.

⁸⁶ A. C. Howe, 'Houldsworth, Sir William Henry, first baronet (1834–1917)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40813>, accessed 15 Oct 2015]

⁸⁷ HC Deb 14 April 1896 vol. 39 c863.

⁸⁸ William George papers, National Library of Wales, MS (WIAbNL) 003366225, Letter 385, 8 May 1895. [My emphasis]

⁸⁹ Alderman, *Railway Interest*, 159.

⁹⁰ The National Archives, London, RAIL 410/35. Minutes of the Board of the London and North Western Railway 1895-97, Board Meeting of 19 June 1896.

to its lines in North Wales some four years before its legislation was actually passed.⁹¹ That is testament to its immense political power in parliament and in North Wales.

For Irish MPs, the periodic renewal of the LNWR's power to operate steam vessels was an important issue. They wished to protect Irish capital from the perceived intention of the UK government to give the contract for the sea passage of the mail between Holyhead and Dublin to the LNWR. They also objected to the LNWR being allowed to escape periodic renewal of the power to operate steamships. One Irish MP believed that railways ruled the legislature, executive and civil service; while another considered that the LNWR had: 'a perfect monopoly [...] between London and Dublin' and remained powerful despite its terrible accident record as a shipping company.⁹² He was correct in that assertion at least, according to Wynn's analysis.⁹³ Nonetheless, Chairman Lord Stalbridge expressed a continuing wish to use the LNWR's trains and ships to serve the 'pacification of Ireland' by attracting English tourists to visit the country in 1897.⁹⁴ Irish MPs, backed by their Welsh colleagues, showed little appreciation for that rather optimistic solution to Ireland's political and social problems by voting against the renewal of the company's power to operate steamships in the following year.⁹⁵ There seemed almost nothing the LNWR could do in parliament that related to Ireland or Wales in the 1890s that did not attract a hostile political reaction from the MPs of both those countries.

Direct cooperation between Welsh and Irish MPs was evident again when the LNWR (Wales) Bill was introduced in 1900 and Welsh MPs pointed out that traffic on the CHR was so high that two tracks were not enough and four were proposed to boost LNWR profits.⁹⁶ They did not object to that but rather to the fact that:

No reduction whatever was made in the maximum rates for carrying goods traffic [...] the [LNWR] got it [the CHR] cheap. No one else could have bought it, and now, with the ruthlessness which pertains to all monopolies, they take advantage of the position and charge exorbitant rates...⁹⁷

⁹¹ TNA RAIL 410/35. Minutes of the Board of the London and North Western Railway 1895-97, Board Meeting of 17 April 1896.

⁹² HC Deb 19 April 1898 vol. 56 cc386-401.

⁹³ Ivor Wynne Jones, *Shipwrecks of North Wales* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973), 81-3, referring to the "extraordinary maritime adventures" of the LNWR.

⁹⁴ "The Provinces", *London Evening Standard*, 9 December 1897, 5.

⁹⁵ HC Deb 19 April 1898 vol. 56 c401.

⁹⁶ HC Deb 28 May 1900 vol. 83 c1458.

⁹⁷ HC Deb 28 May 1900 vol. 83 c1461.

By 1900, the LNWR was beginning to learn the value of a less confrontational approach so it selected the genial Colonel Lockwood to defend its position – a popular figure among MPs and one with Welsh connections.⁹⁸ He hoped that the Bill would not be delayed and assured MPs that he would: ‘always endeavour to bring before the board of directors any question affecting the interests of Wales’.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, an Irish MP advised his Welsh colleagues to: ‘take a leaf out of our book, and [delay the matter] until a satisfactory assurance is given’.¹⁰⁰ Swift McNeill MP confirmed the collaboration between Welsh and Irish MPs against the LNWR when he urged support for: ‘the Welsh Members, inasmuch as *they have supported the Irish Members again and again in their disputations with [the LNWR]*’.¹⁰¹ The attempt to force an adjournment failed, the Bill passed, and left Lloyd George lamenting: ‘a most monstrous system by which a ring of railway directors are enabled to prove themselves more powerful than the Government of the day, and render it absolutely impotent in the face of the great railroad monopoly’.¹⁰² As he told his brother William in a private letter: ‘we went for them hot and strong’.¹⁰³

At the end of the nineteenth century it proved more difficult to attack the LNWR over the rates issue than it had been in 1879. The Land Commission in Wales reported in 1896 and concluded that railway rates were not a factor in the agricultural depression in Wales despite that being a widely-held view among witnesses it had examined.¹⁰⁴ It went further in suggesting that higher railway rates in Wales acted as an import protection to Welsh producers because English competitors faced higher charges to access Welsh markets.¹⁰⁵ They considered that the producers themselves could cut their costs through combining to get lower rates by filling a whole train rather than one or two trucks.¹⁰⁶ The issue of railway rates continued to rumble along but much of the heat had gone from it in North Wales by the end of the century, as it had in the UK as a whole

⁹⁸ Jane Ridley, ‘Lockwood, Amelius Mark Richard, first Baron Lambourne (1847–1928)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34579>, accessed 25 Feb 2016]

⁹⁹ HC Deb 28 May 1900 vol. 83 c1469.

¹⁰⁰ HC Deb 28 May 1900 vol. 83 c1471.

¹⁰¹ HC Deb 28 May 1900 vol. 83 c1465. [My emphasis]

¹⁰² HC Deb 28 May 1900 vol. 83 c1462.

¹⁰³ William George papers, National Library of Wales, MS (WIAbNL) 003366225, Letter 949, 28 May 1900.

¹⁰⁴ Royal commission on land in Wales and Monmouthshire. Report of the Royal commission on land in Wales and Monmouthshire. 854, **1896** (C.8221) XXXIV.1.

¹⁰⁵ Land Commission, 853.

¹⁰⁶ Land Commission, 873.

as the railway companies cooperated more closely with government.¹⁰⁷ The LNWR adopted that approach rather than engaging separately with Welsh politicians. It also weakened the position of those politicians by withdrawing potential benefits, such as more railway lines, in response to political attacks -thereby separating the MPs to some extent from local opinion in North Wales.

The cooperation of Welsh and Irish MPs Parliament analysed above demonstrates that they had a joint agenda, rather than collaboration being just a matter of the Welsh learning from the Irish how to work the parliamentary system to their own advantage. It is important for this study to see that the LNWR was a prime target for that cooperation. It underlines a theme throughout the thesis that the LNWR had an identity with the state, especially when it operated in "alien" environments such as North Wales and Ireland. It was clearly viewed by nationalists in North Wales and Ireland as not serving the interests of either country in its attitude to their respective cultures, in the rates it charged and the facilities that it offered. Its monopoly of traffic was resented, as was the manner in which government either supported or failed to challenge that monopoly. Those issues were not only contested at national level by North Wales MPs in parliament, they were also matters that interested local politicians. They increasingly represented those views in local government as the franchise extended and new local authorities were created that replaced the former power of landowners and the established church in North Wales.

8.3 Local politics and the LNWR in North Wales 1890-1900

Opposition to the LNWR in North Wales was inhibited before 1880 by the lack of democratic machinery, especially at the regional level, as noted previously. However, by 1890 the growth of strong local representation in the form of County Councils (CC) in England and Wales: 'created a social transformation more striking even than the extension of democracy at the national level' according to a contemporary view.¹⁰⁸ That view was expressed in a rather critical commentary from Liverpool that suggested that the CCs in North Wales consisted of: 'non-conformists in religion, Radicals in politics, and communistic agitators in social affairs [...] the Conservatives, the Church, and the landlords have little influence'.¹⁰⁹ Those last three elements were the 'consuming antipathies' of the Welsh Radicals.¹¹⁰ The CCs enabled those radicals to express such views in practical measures as: '1 April 1889 was the day when control of county affairs passed to the

¹⁰⁷ Alderman, *Railway Interest*, 159.

¹⁰⁸ "The County Councils in Wales" *Liverpool Courier*, reported in *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 February 1889, 3.

¹⁰⁹ County Councils in Wales, 1889.

¹¹⁰ County Councils in Wales, 1889.

elected representatives of the people'.¹¹¹ That control was in the hands of Welsh radicals after the Liberal landslide at local elections in 1890.¹¹² As the LNWR's profile contained the three elements that apparently motivated the emerging politics in North Wales, it might be expected that the company was a target for radical politicians in North Wales. The LNWR did not welcome this extension of local democracy – Chairman *Sir* Richard Moon (he was knighted in 1887) thought these new local authorities: 'apparently with little or nothing to do' might add to the burden of local rates on railways – a major preoccupation of the LNWR as noted in chapter 7.¹¹³ Moon's rather grudging statement was not entirely accurate. CCs had a range of powers. They assumed the administrative business of quarter sessions; had certain powers under local Acts; appointed coroners and a medical officer; created byelaws and managed roads, bridges and the police. Significantly the CCs had power to oppose bills in parliament, which was important in their later opposition to the LNWR in North Wales.¹¹⁴ There is little reference to the struggle between County Councils and the LNWR in North Wales in existing scholarship, apart from Jones's analysis of the language dispute of 1895 discussed above. But an examination of newspapers and local democratic proceedings shows that the LNWR monopoly in North Wales *was* a prominent issue locally just as it was nationally.¹¹⁵

As early as February 1890, the Caernarvonshire County Council (CCC) supported a request from Denbighshire County Council (DCC) to form a committee of councils to argue for 'extended railway communication' and the CCC were also frustrated by the response of the UK Railway Rates Commission, which thought the case of Wales was 'trifling'.¹¹⁶ However, the monopoly of the LNWR was the local councils' main preoccupation. Several local authorities met at Mold in November 1891 to argue for a railway from Mold to Prestatyn, by-passing the LNWR, so that the LNWR could not 'perpetuate their present monopoly'. Herbert Lewis, chairman of Flintshire County Council (FCC) and also the local MP insisted on the: 'absolute necessity of having an independent railway'.¹¹⁷ Such proposals flowed from the earlier Watkin and Gladstone railway

¹¹¹ "Flintshire County Council", *North Wales Chronicle*, 6 April 1889, 7.

¹¹² Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, 107.

¹¹³ "London and North Western Railway Meeting", *Derby Mercury*, 20 February 1889, 8.

¹¹⁴ The Local Government Act 1888
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1888/41/pdfs/ukpga_18880041_en.pdf [accessed 16 June 2016]

¹¹⁵ Jones, *Railways and Language Change*, 141.

¹¹⁶ "Railway Communication – Shameful Treatment of Wales by the Railway Rates Commission", *North Wales Express*, 7 February 1890, 8.

¹¹⁷ "Railway Communication – Shameful Treatment of Wales by the Railway Rates Commission", *North Wales Express*, 7 February 1890, 8.

initiative to secure a railway between Wrexham and Liverpool but there was no evidence of their support in the reports.¹¹⁸ Again, while scholars such as Rowland Williams acknowledge that Lewis was a prominent Welsh politician on a range of issues, Lewis's strong position on railways in North Wales does not feature in the analysis of his life.¹¹⁹ Local authorities also used the court to challenge the LNWR, as in the case of the Carnarvon Corporation, which unsuccessfully summonsed the LNWR for smoke pollution in the town.¹²⁰ A local paper noted that: 'towns the size of Carnarvon cannot afford to quarrel with large railway companies which enjoy a monopoly'.¹²¹ The fact that they did so indicated the rising confidence that communities had in dealing with the LNWR. That confidence was shown in another local paper that suggested that:

We are not to be put off by pleasant words, vague promises, and a polite bowing out [...] we will go to London and insist upon the directors listening to our complaints. [It was the job of elected representatives] to rouse public feeling and make it too strong for even "the great London and North Western Railway" to disregard.¹²²

CCC members attended the committee stage of the LNWR Bill in London in 1896 and found that the company had abandoned plans to widen the line along the coast in order to get other clauses through unopposed - and to avoid public discussion of railway rates.¹²³ The LNWR then tried a different approach by reintroducing its proposals piecemeal, starting with Flintshire.¹²⁴ Again it faced calls for opposition from combined local authorities including Holywell, where Herbert Lewis urged continued action against the LNWR's 'giant's strength'.¹²⁵ In February 1897 the FCC and CCC agreed a joint resolution opposing the new Bill.¹²⁶ In the same month, a UK wide article

¹¹⁸ "Proposed railway development in North Wales", *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 6 November 1891, 8.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Rowland Williams, 'Lewis, Sir (John) Herbert (1858–1933)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38467>, accessed 10 May 2015]

¹²⁰ "Carnarvon Corporation and the L&NW Railway Company", *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 3 July 1891, 6.

¹²¹ "Notes and Comments", *North Wales Express*, 3 July 1891, 5.

¹²² "The Railway Company and the Public – Some Benefit Obtained" *Denbighshire Free Press* 25 July 1891, 5.

¹²³ "The London and North Western Railway Bill", *Rhyl Record and Advertiser*, 16 May 1896, 8.

¹²⁴ "London & North Western Railway Extensions in North Wales", *Llandudno Advertiser*, 19 November 1896, 2.

¹²⁵ "The North Western Company and Welsh Traders", *North Wales Times*, 16 January 1897, 2.

¹²⁶ "Railway Rates", *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 5 February 1897, 6.

appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* that was virtually an advertisement for the LNWR widening scheme in North Wales, showing how the LNWR were attempting to challenge local opposition by asserting the national significance of the line through sympathetic journals:

The principal results to accrue from this great enterprise are the improvement of the through traffic to Holyhead for the *Irish Mail* [and] the acceleration of the gigantic holiday traffic to the pleasure resorts. [...] These developments are only to be gained by the separation of the express trains from those that may be termed local, and hence the inevitable demand for four roads instead of two.¹²⁷

By the late 1890s, the LNWR was beginning to learn how to work in the local political environment and appeared to have come to a separate agreement with Rhyl Town Council that met its demands and allowed an extra £1000 per year of rates to be charged against the railway. The result was regarded with 'unmixed satisfaction' by the local authority.¹²⁸ The opposition from Anglesey was weakened by the offer of a new line to the resort of Benllech in October 1898.¹²⁹ In December 1898, Lord Stalbridge visited Bangor in order to open a Railway Institute for the employees.¹³⁰ He also met a deputation of the Town Council.¹³¹ The relationship between company and community appeared to be more cooperative and Welsh unity in local government was breaking down as each authority reached a separate settlement with the LNWR, which granted individual concessions rather than negotiating collectively with local authorities.

There were other factors at work. By 1898 the Welsh nationalist movement was losing its momentum, as a split between South and North Wales' politicians came to a head at Newport in 1895 and left the Welsh national *Cymru Fydd* group moribund.¹³² In 1898 Lloyd George, a leading light in *Cymru Fydd*, did not stand for leadership of the Welsh MPs since he considered that Wales could not provide him with a power base that matched his ambition to become a political leader at the UK level.¹³³ The link with the Irish nationalists was also rather brittle because the Irish MPs

¹²⁷ "The projected railway improvements at Rhyl – Description by a Daily Telegraph Correspondent", *Rhyl Record and Advertiser*, 5 February 1898, 8.

¹²⁸ "Rhyl and the London & North Western Railway Co's Bill. Amicable Settlement: Important Concessions", *Rhyl Record and Advertiser*, 2 April 1898, 5.

¹²⁹ "Railway Extension in Anglesey", *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 28 October 1898, 3.

¹³⁰ "Bangor Railway Institute, Opening by Lord Stalbridge", *North Wales Express*, 9 December 1898.

¹³¹ "The North Wales Railway Service", *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 9 December 1896, 5.

¹³² Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, 163.

¹³³ Grigg, *The Young Lloyd George*, 219.

did not see Welsh nationalism as in any way comparable to their own case. As their leader John Redmond commented in Parliament: ‘Home Rule for Ireland was alone and beyond and before every other question—not merely every domestic question but every question of great Constitutional reform affecting every portion of the Empire’.¹³⁴ There were changes too in the political world of railway companies, as seen by the softening responses of the LNWR in Parliament and in its relations with local authorities in Wales. That reflected what was happening nationally in 1899-1900. Alderman’s 1975 analysis shows that by then: ‘little time was wasted [by railway companies] on arguments, now seen as anachronistic and artificial, which centred on [old] laissez-faire doctrines of political economy’.¹³⁵ That did not mean that the LNWR was not just as intent on dominating North Wales as it had been since 1850. One commentator was clear that the LNWR track widening proposal in North Wales was: ‘intended to maintain their supremacy [in North Wales] for all time’.¹³⁶ The only likely opponent was Watkin’s Great Central Railway which, as demonstrated in the last chapter, had: ‘already got its outworks firmly laid down in the country’¹³⁷ That competition simply did not materialise as Watkin turned his attention to creating a rival line to the other great rail companies between London and Manchester that opened in 1899, when his company changed from its earlier title of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway to become the Great Central.¹³⁸ The LNWR quest for continued supremacy in North Wales was helped by the temptation for local councils to make separate settlements with them - as Rhyl Town Council had done - and thereby weaken any notion of Welsh solidarity. As Herbert Lewis observed:

The public in North Wales had no large and comprehensive organisation to protect their interests in matters of this kind. The railway company, a wealthy and powerful corporation, could fight in detail local bodies. [...] They even went to the length of approaching the witnesses brought to London to give evidence against them, finding out their individual grievances and settling with them. [...] The interests involved were so great that no effort or expense was spared to make the case of the company as complete as possible.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ HC Deb 29 March 1895 vol. 32 c536.

¹³⁵ Alderman, *Railway Interest*, 177.

¹³⁶ “Railway Development in North Wales”, *Chester Courant and Advertiser for North Wales*, 22 February 1899, 6.

¹³⁷ “Railway Development in North Wales”, *Chester Courant and Advertiser for North Wales*, 22 February 1899, 6.

¹³⁸ “The Great Central Railway”, *London Evening Standard*, 15 March 1899, 5.

¹³⁹ HC Deb 28 May 1900 vol. 83 cc1457-76.

His comments made clear that the task facing the newly enfranchised public of North Wales in dealing with the largest industrial enterprise in the world was an unequal one. There were some exceptions. Colwyn Bay continued its struggle with the LNWR into 1900 because its council was concerned that to add to the tracks in front of Colwyn Bay would separate the town completely from the beach and damage the tourist industry.¹⁴⁰ However, by May 1900 the town reported that it had got ‘all that they asked for’ by adopting its tough stance.¹⁴¹ The council was congratulated on its success by Venables Williams, an old antagonist who extracted increases in the local rates charged to the LNWR in 1871 as seen in chapter 7. He considered that it was: ‘perfectly useless to treat with [the LNWR] amicably. [He] really had to bully them’ in order to raise the contribution from £125 per mile to the 1900 figure of £2090 per mile.¹⁴² However, local resistance was weakening to the point where the unity of the councils appeared to have crumbled completely. For example, Flintshire complained of the high charges on the LNWR in 1900, but pointed out that as its stretch of line was cheaper to maintain than the line west of Conwy, the LNWR might: ‘see their way to reducing maximum rates for Flintshire’ separately.¹⁴³ By June 1900, the Council had decided that continued opposition to the LNWR risked ‘throwing away ratepayers’ money’.¹⁴⁴ If the LNWR tactic was “divide and rule”, it seemed to have worked.

Among these many developments of the relationship between North Wales and the LNWR there was a little noticed incident that marked the formal end of any notion of a rival line to the CHR. In contrast to the 1846 broad gauge main line with its promise of rapid access to London and Dublin, a short light railway was proposed to serve Porth Dinllaen in 1900. Some still argued that a light railway should be resisted because it would prevent the chance of a standard gauge railway to the port. Lloyd George dismissed such arguments and urged support for the light railway, and he reflected on the dismal history of the attempts to challenge the LNWR and reach Porth Dinllaen:

[Lloyd George] had heard since the days of his childhood [that] there was a scheme on hand for the development of Lleyn by means of railways. One day, it was the [GWR], and the next the [LNWR], and the next day somebody else. They were told that bills and plans “had been prepared”

¹⁴⁰ “Colwyn Bay”, *Rhyl Journal*, 3 February 1900, 4.

¹⁴¹ “The Railway Question”, *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 18 May 1900, 2.

¹⁴² “Correspondence”, *Welsh Coast Pioneer*, 1 June 1900, 5.

¹⁴³ Flintshire Record Office [FRO], Hawarden, MS FC/3/4, Minutes of the Railway Committee of Flintshire County Council, 8 January 1900.

¹⁴⁴ “Flintshire County Council – The Railway Bill - Opposition Dropped”, *Liverpool Mercury*, 14 June 1900, 8.

and go on, right on to Porthdinlleyn, and that a steamship company was going to run thence to Ireland. Everybody had heard that during the past 30 or 40 years...¹⁴⁵

The nature of the scheme proposed in 1900 showed that the high hopes of 1836 for Porth Dinllaen were finally extinguished. Nonetheless, the County Council passed the resolution to support the light railway to Porth Dinllaen. The LNWR doubled its route to four lines on the north coast of Wales from 1900 but not even a light railway was ever built to Porth Dinllaen. That was the final measure of the complete victory of the Chester and Holyhead Railway between 1836 and 1900.

8.4 The railway in North Wales 1881-1900

It is clear from the examination in this chapter that the lines operated by the LNWR and the company itself were major factors to be taken into account by local politicians and their communities in North Wales. From the early impact of railways and the ambitions of those who constructed them discussed in chapter 6, to the disputes and incidents in chapter 7 and the intense political exchanges in this chapter, there is a sense of the growing political struggle between the LNWR and local people to deploy railways to their own advantage. Welsh politicians did not act alone, but used the experience and expertise of Irish colleagues who had also battled with the LNWR for many years and knew how to disrupt parliamentary procedure to further their cause. The study shows that the LNWR's anti-Liberal profile, as described by Drummond in Crewe, extended to North Wales. This was highlighted by the tensions between the LNWR, its employees and the local population in North Wales in the dispute over the Welsh language that began in 1894. But there were abundant signs of tension before and after the language issue, in which the most prominent Welsh politician of the age – Lloyd George – featured strongly.

This chapter has also shown that railway development was an important item on the agenda of the new local authorities that emerged after 1890, and were influential on the political scene in North Wales. Those local authorities worked closely with their Westminster MPs, but also challenged the LNWR in their own right on issues such as monopoly, freight charges, passenger fares, levels of service and the English culture of the railway. Welsh politicians were not alone in learning how to use political processes effectively. This chapter has provided a case study in how the LNWR worked with local political forces in an increasingly subtle manner in order to secure its twin objectives of accessing Ireland quickly and extracting value from the holiday traffic and mineral deposits of North Wales.

¹⁴⁵ "Carnarvonshire County Council. The Lleyon Light Railway. Important Debate. Mr Lloyd George MP and the Scheme. Loan Granted." *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 3 August 1900, 8.

Is it possible to analyse the relationship of the people of North Wales and the LNWR within a concept taken from the theoretical framework in chapter 1? One possibility is the rather inelegant 1966 notion of *railwayisation*, as expounded by Harvard economists Baran and Sweezy in their examination of monopoly capital and large corporations, including major railway companies, in the United States of America.¹⁴⁶ For them, railways in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries passed the test of an 'epoch-making' technology that was characterised by a 'radical alteration of economic geography, with attendant internal migration, and the building of new communities [that] required or made possible the production of many new goods and services'.¹⁴⁷ That is a description that can be recognised in Dodd's account of internal migration to new towns on the coast of North Wales in the wake of the railways.¹⁴⁸ Railwayisation may also be seen in Simmons' suggestion of the new range of goods and services required to meet the needs of the 'shops and boarding houses' in those new communities towards the end of the period covered in this study.¹⁴⁹ The weakness of the concept of 'railwayisation' in respect of North Wales, and more generally, is its focus on the impact of technology on economics and society, with too little attention to its interface with politics. The evidence from this study is that the LNWR did tend to dominate the techno-political discourse in North Wales, but that it also had to finesse the approach that it adopted because of the strength of political responses to it, especially once the franchise was extended and new democratic institutions were established in the period from 1880 to 1900. Railways were a significant force for change in North Wales and that change included a marked impact on the politics of the region, such that railways should be added to the list of prominent issues with which politicians were concerned in North Wales in the period 1850 to 1900 - church disestablishment, education and the Welsh language. As this chapter has shown clearly, the issue of railways in North Wales – 'the great railway problem' - was especially marked in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital: An essay on the American Economic and Social Order* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1966), 223.

¹⁴⁷ Baran and Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, 216.

¹⁴⁸ A. H. Dodd, *A History of Caernarvonshire 1284-1900* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 1990), 272. Dodd's analysis is confirmed by the more recent work Jones and Smith in 2000. They studied Abergele, a station on the CHR and an area that saw a substantial population increase and the creation of the new community of Pensarn, adjacent to the railway station. They found that around 87% of the population recorded in 1891 – which had increased from previous censuses - were from *within* Wales, a clear internal migration. See David Llewelyn Jones and Robert Smith, "5- Tourism and the Welsh Language in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Welsh Language and Its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, ed. Geraint H. Jenkins, A Social History of the Welsh Language (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 2000), 159

¹⁴⁹ Simmons, *Victorian Railway*, 258.

9 Conclusion : The Chester and Holyhead Railway in Britain's Irish policy and the politics of North Wales 1850-1900

'Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end'.¹

By addressing the three research questions this thesis has shown that technology is often used to assist in the achievement of political ends, and that technology can achieve those ends even when that is not the intention. It has demonstrated that the Chester and Holyhead Railway (CHR) was unique in the UK; a line that emerged from successive governments' determination to use railways in their Irish policies from 1836 to 1850, and one that was specifically backed by Sir Robert Peel in the face of a powerful rival route. Ireland was a major issue in nineteenth-century UK politics, and railways were the century's predominant technology. But a communication technology such as a railway is not easily confined, and the thesis also shows that the CHR had profound implications for the politics of North Wales as a by-product of the London and North Western Railway's (LNWR) determined effort to protect its route to Ireland by establishing a monopoly in the four most northerly counties of Wales. The thesis is a case study of the interface of two great elements of nineteenth-century British politics - Ireland and railways - and the unexpected and even unintended political consequences that flowed from that encounter, understood within the context of the framework for analysing the relationship between technology and politics presented in the introduction.

Railways were the most extraordinary technological development, the 'Napoleon' of nineteenth century history for Schivelbusch; 'epoch-making' according to Baran and Sweezy, and 'a synonym for "civilization"' in the opinion of many Victorian social improvers as argued by Fischer-Tiné and Mann.² The railway disturbed communities, shocked individuals and confounded politicians, all of whom struggled to respond to the changes that it unleashed in society - including the operation of its politics. Railways provided relatively cheap mobility in the United Kingdom (UK), particularly after Gladstone's Railway Act of 1844, and created a more mobile population that increasingly severed its links with the old feudal order that had survived the first wave of industrialization in places like North Wales. As Winner has argued, such powerful technologies can be political *in themselves* because they cause profound changes such as extending the regulatory

¹ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (New York: Cosimo Books, 2009), 34 [originally published in 1854]

² Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), xix; Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital: An essay on the American Economic and Social Order* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1966), 216; Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann (eds) *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 96.

power of the clock from the factory to the whole population – Schivelbusch’s ‘industrialization of time and space’ - a change that was beyond the power of ordinary politics to control.³ Such changes are made because technology requires a different organisation of society to enable it to operate effectively, a more orderly society that worked to “railway time” - to use a common phrase from Victorian Britain.

But as Kaiserfeld and Street have argued, the results of the application of technology are not the same in all contexts. This study underlines that point by examining that interaction in the two countries affected by the operation of the CHR and by providing abundant evidence of the complex relationship between politics and technology. The study began with an apparent example of ‘technological determinism’ - as it was the availability of the power of railways to entrepreneurs that created the call for a shorter route from London to Dublin rather than a political initiative. But politicians quickly understood the implications for their policy in Ireland. Under the terms of the 1835 Lichfield House Compact government challenged the ‘unimproved end’ of quasi-colonial control of Ireland by aiming to give it equality with the rest of the UK. It did so by a range of political, economic, legal and social initiatives, including the creation of the Irish Railway Commission (IRC) that is analysed in chapter 3. The work of the IRC addressed Thoreau’s concerns about the deployment of technology for an unimproved end through a thorough analysis of Irish society and its economy. It considered how railways could best address Ireland’s political alienation from the rest of the UK by tackling underdevelopment, population congestion and mass underemployment. The IRC proposed a whole *system* of railways within Ireland, focused on Dublin and connected to London via steamships over the Irish Sea and a line through North Wales that was designed to serve the Welsh people and their economy as a secondary benefit. The IRC proposed that railways should be constructed in an economical manner in order to minimise the advantages to lawyers, landowners, engineers and politicians and deliver major benefits instead to the whole population of Ireland. That was truly the use of an improved means to an improved end. It answered in 1838 the questions about politics and technology that Leo Marx posed in 1984 - how and by whom technology is controlled, the form of social organization that determines the use of the apparatus and its product, and the ends for which that control is exercised.

The answer to Leo Marx’s further question about what system of belief characteristically shapes the goals to which the apparatus is directed did much to create the opposition that ultimately defeated the IRC’s proposals.⁴ For, in contrast to the way railways had been established

³ Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 21.

⁴ Marx, Leo. "On Heidegger's Conception of "Technology" and Its Historical Validity." *The Massachusetts Review* 25, no. 4 (1984): 638-52.

in England, the IRC position on ownership and philosophy was extraordinarily radical for the 1830s – replacing laissez-faire economics with state ownership of railways for the public good in its proposals for Ireland, and a form of regional political engagement in how they operated in that country. The IRC proposals aimed to deliver a stronger union between Britain and Ireland, but it did so by supporting the indigenous nationalism of Ireland and intended to make that country an equal partner within the UK, and one with a thriving economy, a developing industrial base and more efficient agriculture. The IRC model was founded on the approach that had helped to create Belgium in 1830, and the nation-building potential of that method was not lost on those politicians who were anxious to maintain the union of Ireland and Britain in a form that favoured the latter. Nonetheless, if the IRC had confined to Ireland the advocacy of its approach to railway development it would have been a challenge to the political and railway establishments of the UK – but one that Melbourne’s Whig government might have been able to overcome. But the IRC insisted that *all* new UK railways should be built and managed differently, and that proved too much for the IRC’s political opponents.

Sir Robert Peel led the fierce attack on the IRC that resulted in its defeat in 1838. He was a powerful advocate for laissez-faire economics, and by the 1840s also had a difficult relationship with nationalist Ireland. He had clear ideas about the ownership, philosophy and objectives that the Irish railway system should embrace – and they were almost diametrically opposed to those of the IRC. Peel felt that railways in Ireland should develop piecemeal, as they had in England, and so wanted to leave the choice of routes and the manner of construction to private investors. He ensured that the rail link from London towards Ireland met his own political priorities by linking it to the Trent Valley Railway through his constituency, and by setting a policy priority for the UK government to use the railway route to Dublin to control Ireland rather than to improve it. This was much closer to Thoreau’s ‘improved means to an unimproved end’, at least from an Irish perspective such as that of Daniel O’Connell; and it was O’Connell’s attempt to revive the repeal of the union as a political issue that energised Peel to support the rapid construction of the CHR in 1843-6. While the balance of benefits from the IRC’s proposals favoured Ireland, Peel’s refusal to advocate any structured approach to the issue, beyond insisting on Holyhead (via his Tamworth constituency) as the destination of the line from London, clearly favoured those who considered that Ireland’s economy should remain predominantly agricultural and subservient to the needs of the rest of the UK. The difference between Peel’s approach and that of the IRC lies at the heart of the relationship between politics and technology – the results of its use being largely determined by who owns and directs it. The IRC and Peel both wanted to use railways to reinforce the union between Britain and Ireland, but the IRC use of public ownership would have delivered a different and more equal political relationship between them than the private enterprise model that Peel advocated.

It was Peel who prevailed, but his approach to railway development proved unequal to the task of absorbing Ireland into the UK, particularly after the humanitarian catastrophe of the Great Famine of 1845-47. It was not for the want of trying. When the CHR was completed in 1850, Lord John Russell's Whig government did not revive their commitment to the IRC approach and instead continued Peel's policy by attempting the clearest possible application of technology to a political issue – an early example of Hecht's 'technopolitics' defined in chapter 1.⁵ It proposed that the Dublin Castle regime should be abolished and replaced by direct rule from London, solely because of the assumed increase in the speed of communication provided by the CHR. This was an example of the problem of not knowing the value of a technological solution to a political problem until the 'results are in', to use Street's phrase.⁶ As amply demonstrated by the statistical analysis in chapter 5, the CHR did not deliver *any* improvement at all in the overall journey time. That had been predicted by those who offered the faster broad gauge railway alternative in 1846, the demise of which provided evidence of the ability of politicians to defeat a superior but politically inconvenient technology. The failure of the CHR to speed up communication also meant that Peel's "softer" aims, such as increased Anglicization, could not be realized. Such aims were based on a rather optimistic assessment of what technology could achieve in the face of a powerful sense of Irish nationality that was reinforced by the horrors of the Great Famine. In Ireland railways were, as Divall has argued more generally: 'necessary *if not sufficient* in building centralised state control' and so the quasi-colonial machinery of Dublin Castle survived Russell's attempt to replace it with direct rule of Ireland from London and thereby unify the United Kingdom.⁷

It was not just railways that were deployed in 1850 to strengthen Ireland's relationship with the UK - it was railways, steamships and the electric telegraph. This study has shown that this trinity of imperial technologies was used in Ireland before it was deployed in India, and so can be added to other examples in which Ireland was the model for later imperial practice. But did that make the CHR an "imperial railway"? The findings of this study are consistent with the CHR serving 'the infrastructure of political rule', which was an element of railway imperialism according to Robinson.⁸ When compared to the Semmering Pass railway that Lee claimed as the 'first imperial railway' in 1854, the CHR appears to have a greater claim than that line because

⁵ Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and national identity after World War II* (London: MIT Press, 2009), 91.

⁶ James Street, *Politics and Technology* (Guildford: Guildford Press, 1992), 118.

⁷ Colin Divall, "Railway imperialisms, railway nationalisms" in Monika Burri; Kilian T. Elsasser; David Gugerli. (Eds) *Die Internationalität der Eisenbahn 1850-1970* (Zurich : Chronos, 2003), 197.

⁸ Kenneth Wilburn in Thomas Benjamin (editor) *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450*. Vol. 3. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 943-945.

its purpose was similar to its aim to: 'integrate the provinces of Italy into Austro-Hungarian Empire' and it predated it.⁹ But the CHR's claim to being an "imperial railway", comparable to railways in India, is weakened because Russell's aim to rule Ireland directly from London in 1850, based on the completion of the CHR, was not realised. The CHR strengthened the imperial purpose of maintaining the administration of the union with Ireland, but only in an enhanced form of that which had existed since the Act of Union in 1801. There was no step change in the way Ireland was governed, such as direct rule from London, as a result of the construction of the CHR, and there is little evidence that the CHR, and the Irish railway system to which it was linked, exercised the homogenising effect that was identified by Adams in North America. Ireland was more of an example of how politics can interact negatively with technology; and it did so after 1847 to produce something close to one of Nye's 'counter narratives' in the US.¹⁰ The Young Ireland movement's political manifesto advocated a return to the land rather than a future built around the liberal politics of "improvement" and the economics of laissez-faire. As Quinn demonstrated, John Mitchel, one its leaders, specifically attacked Britain's economic system, liberal values and modern technology that he considered to be destructive of Ireland's essentially rural nature. The chance to use railways to effect social, economic and political change for the benefit of Ireland's population, and the union with Britain, had been lost by 1847 with the collapse of the IRC nine years earlier.

It is beyond the scope of this study to establish whether or not the IRC would have changed the course of Irish history by mitigating the effects of the Great Famine. But the analysis of Peel's role in destroying the work of the IRC might well, on further examination, rebalance the generally positive view of his government's management of the Great Famine compared with the later efforts of Russell's government. The evidence of this study makes it hard not to conclude that Peel's treatment of the IRC was an example of reckless political action to support free market economics in the management of both railways and Ireland - when a more technically proficient and socially progressive alternative was available. The analysis in chapter 3 supports Vaughan's assessment of the IRC report as a 'stupendous attainment' and one worthy of further examination in respect of both Irish history and the history of railways and government.¹¹ The IRC was the first to propose many of the reforms of railway regulation that were contained in legislation such as the 1844 Railway Act, and it used the mathematical methods employed by Casson for his

⁹ Robert Lee, *Colonial Engineer: John Whitton 1819-1898 and the Building of Australia's Railways* (Sidney: University of New South Wales Press, 2000), 21.

¹⁰ David E. Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings*, (London: MIT Press, 2003)

¹¹ W. E. Vaughan (ed) *A New History of Ireland, Volume V: Ireland under the Union 1801 -1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 208.

counterfactual British railway system of 2009 some 170 years before him. Its work provides an excellent model for the rational use of technology by political leaders, but it is significant also that it failed because it was a relentlessly logical assessment of Irish needs that offered a technological solution but ignored political realities. Lord John Russell's assessment of the report author Thomas Drummond that his: 'scientific attainments, whatever might be his politics, would not be denied'- was accurate, and it was Drummond's politics that mattered more than his technological proficiency in the failure of the IRC report.¹² In the choice of route for the London to Dublin railway link; by supporting the narrow gauge over the broad gauge; by choosing Holyhead instead of Porth Dinllaen as the port and refuge harbour, and especially in the failure to support the IRC, politicians provided the examples that showed the limits of technological determinism - and that good technical advice was much less powerful than political ideology – an important finding from this study.

The example of North Wales is more difficult to analyse in terms of the relationship between politics and technology because there was no clear political purpose in North Wales from the construction of the CHR, as there was for Ireland. While the CHR's role in the British policy towards Ireland was explicit and largely ineffective, its relationship to the politics of North Wales was subtle, subversive - and ultimately transformational. There was no overtly imperial or colonial dimension to railway construction in North Wales. The absorption of Wales by England in 1536 was too long-standing to bear comparison with the union of Ireland and Great Britain - as Williams among others has argued. But in some respects, such as its language, Wales was more different from England than either Scotland or Ireland. This study is therefore an example of how the issues of who controls a technology, the form of social organization from which it emerges and the priorities for its use can impact on cultural and linguistic differences with political results. The research in chapter 6 shows that English construction of the branch lines that connected to the CHR brought with it the assumptions of moral superiority that scholars such as Headrick, Adas, Lee and Kerr had found in more distant parts of empire; and which the Welsh people had also experienced at the hands of the Education Commissioners in 1847. But unlike the Education Commission, the railway builders articulated an unofficial mission to improve the local population by giving them access to modern technology in the manner suggested by den Otter in Canada – but a mission that was also consistent with their personal financial gain.

Once those branch lines had been built and acquired by the LNWR, the differences between the railway owners and the local people became more pronounced. The LNWR was a creation of parliament and was strongly aligned with the state through the vital connections it made between London and the largest and most important cities in the UK such as Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Dublin. Because it was English, Conservative and Anglican, the LNWR's

¹² *HC Deb 01 March 1839 vol. 45 c1058.*

relationship with North Wales was destined to be a difficult one. Local people were predominantly Welsh speaking, nonconformist in religion and Liberal in politics once the franchise was extended. The fact that the LNWR was the *only* railway in the four most northerly counties of Wales added to its power and to the frustration of the local population, whose needs it largely ignored. The issue of the distribution of the benefits of technology was as important in North Wales as it had been in work of the IRC in Ireland. The LNWR aimed to make large profits from its Irish traffic, but not to contribute to the local economy to any extent. It lost the battle over paying more poor rates in the 1870s, but by the end of the decade had won back its advantage through its high charges for passengers and freight. In short, the LNWR in North Wales used its monopolistic power primarily for its own benefit and to fulfil its commitments to the state to deliver the mail between Britain and Ireland. It was disdainful of the local population and their language and entirely aligned with informal politics of Victorian English “improvement”.

But as most analysts concede, the relationship between politics and technology is an interactive one with unpredictable results. So the Welsh people benefited from railways, even if that was not the intention of the owners. That was consistent with the findings from studies of railway imperialism in which the railway served indigenous groups as well as imperial powers in places like India and South Africa. Politicians such as William Gladstone, whose family home was in North Wales, were much more sensitive to the changes that were taking place when the franchise was extended after 1868, and Gladstone also had a personal interest in challenging the poor service that large companies like the LNWR provided to local land and mine owners like him. He could also see that, in Street’s terms, railways were creating ‘new forms of participation’ by enabling large religious, cultural and political gatherings in North Wales and exposing the population to more newsprint and opportunities to travel and experience new places and perspectives.¹³ In particular, the railways supported the growth of a greater sense of Welsh national identity, which Gladstone had to harness if he was to retain the support of the new group Liberal MPs that replaced the landed elite of Wales in parliament from 1868 onwards. So railways may have contributed in North Wales to the kind of reaction that is suggested in Hechter’s notion of ‘Internal Colonialism’, in which strong influences from a metropolitan culture actually reinforce local identity rather than destroying it. However, there is no suggestion in this study that railways created a colonial style connection between North Wales and the metropole.¹⁴ But Kubicek’s analysis across the British Empire that technology strengthened both the metropole *and* the periphery appears to apply to the much smaller example of North Wales.

¹³ James Street, *Politics and Technology* (Guildford: Guildford Press, 1992),104.

¹⁴ Michael Hechter *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1975)

More Welsh people articulated their concerns about the LNWR monopoly as the franchise extended, and railways became an important item on the agenda of indigenous political groups such as *Cymru Fydd* that offered a more radical and nationalist approach in North Wales than Gladstone had done. The importance of railways as part of the new Welsh nationalism articulated in chapter 8 is so marked that an important addition to knowledge of this research is that the issue should be added to English dominance in official religion, land and education, which are the current focus of Welsh historians of the period. The stance of the radical Welsh politicians did not impress the LNWR, which chose in 1894 to dismiss employees in North Wales who could only speak Welsh. That action was entirely consistent with the LNWR's imperious approach to North Wales, its impatience with Welsh complaints and its attitude to its employees and local people, for example in Holyhead in the 1880s. The evidence of this study is that the LNWR treated its staff (and the local population) in Holyhead in a manner similar to that found by Diane Drummond in her study. In Crewe it was the Liberalism of the staff that was the focus of the company's attention, while in Holyhead it was their nationality – in both cases it was highly political. The LNWR was metropolitan to its core and could neither understand nor tolerate any lack of commitment to its Anglican conservatism. It was a large railway corporation with the tendency, as noted by Marsden and Smith of such corporations generally, to erode local difference in favour of national homogeneity. After the crisis over the dismissal of its Welsh-speaking employees in 1894, the LNWR was severely challenged in North Wales by an increasingly nationalistic group of MPs from both Wales and Ireland that embarrassed the company nationally and locally. That led indirectly to a more conciliatory approach from the LNWR, since the furore created by their action delayed their plans to add extra lines in tourist areas in order to capture the rapidly expanding market. But there had been a ferocious political battle between nationalism and the LNWR before that position was reached. Ultimately, the interaction of politics and technology had impacted on both the railway company and politicians in North Wales, and by the end of the nineteenth century there was a greater sense of harmony between the LNWR and the Welsh population than at any time in the previous thirty years – a demonstration of the interactive nature of the relationship between politics, technology and its owners described by Street. That paved the way for the LNWR to expand its capacity and profit from the coastal areas, but also gave people in North Wales the local service they had been denied to some extent because of the focus on Irish traffic by the LNWR. Railways had enabled Welsh nationalism to thrive and had been an important item on the nationalist agenda in North Wales, though they were never within the control of Welsh nationalist politicians and could not be defined as being involved in nation-building in Wales in any formal sense – even though that ambition was part of the *Cymru Fydd* agenda. As the example of Belgium showed, for technology to be effective in nation building the improved means provided by railways had to be directed to an improved end,

and one which was supported by a political and popular consensus. This study only concerned *North Wales*, but even in that area there was no agreement between nationalists, the owners of the railway and the UK state that could have generated a successful nationalist agenda. But railways could be said to have contributed to weakening Welsh national identity in North Wales by fusing the region to its more powerful neighbour country of England in the manner described by den Otter in respect of Canada and the United States. The LNWR's close relationship with state, supported through its directors in parliament, had been enough to resist the politics of the periphery and to secure an increased dominance for the company in North Wales. By the end of the century the LNWR had doubled its capacity along the North Wales coast and thereby increased the 'English tide' that had been identified as an irresistible force in 1879.¹⁵ Did that impact on North Wales amount to an 'improved end' in contrast to Thoreau's suggested impact of nineteenth-century technology? Simmons concluded that the LNWR monopoly in North Wales was beneficial, while Dodd, who wrote the only detailed economic history of the region, suggested that railways depressed economic development. Dodd's analysis underlined the point that it was not railways themselves that determined the outcomes for North Wales, it was the political decisions about the route, the operator and the priorities for the line that ensured that line followed the north coast, missed the emerging centre of the industry of North Wales at Porthmadog and created the tension between the railway and the local population. The analysis in this thesis, being focused on politics rather than economics, cannot resolve the difference between the conclusions of Dodd and Simmons – beyond noting that it has shown conclusively and uniquely that, from the 1870 to the end of the century, there was a sustained and occasionally furious political response to the LNWR monopoly from Liberal politicians in North Wales. It is difficult not to conclude that the opposition of those politicians emanated from very negative views from local people about aspects of the attitude and behaviour of the LNWR in North Wales, and the consequences of its operations for the region. That suggests that Simmons conclusion about the benefits of the LNWR monopoly in North Wales warrants further analysis before it can be accepted fully. The notion of railwayisation that was raised in chapter 8 as a possible means of understanding what happened in North Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century cannot be accepted without modification. It is too close to being an example of technological determinism, as it takes insufficient account of the political decisions that created the particular form of railway impact in the region.

The momentous impact of railways on politics, economics and society in the nineteenth century ensured that senior politicians such as Peel, O'Connell, Russell, Gladstone, Lloyd George and others could not afford to ignore them – any more than a politician today can ignore the power of the internet. So politicians did not just react to railways, they actively used them to

¹⁵ "Eisteddfod Gadeiriol Mon" *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 July 1879, 5.

further government policy, their own political ends and the interests of their constituents - as this study has shown. It is surprising that this is not reflected more in the biographies of these prominent figures. No biographies consulted for the figures named above recognised the extent of their engagement with railways, particularly in respect of the politics of Wales and Ireland. Some of the issues that those politicians considered remain relevant today as we begin a new railway age. Arguments about the route of the high speed line from London to the north-west of England proceed much as they did in the 1840s. Politicians still: 'make poor choices on large projects', often through a lack of clarity on overall objectives such as cutting journey time.¹⁶ Similar failings led to Peel's persistence with the CHR, when it was clear that the rival project could deliver the faster journey time between London and Dublin that was its single most important purpose. Technology and technological expertise cannot succeed without informed political support, just as politicians cannot deliver the outcomes they desire without technology and the people who understand it. Irish nationalism ultimately prevailed over the ambitions of British politicians to use roads, railways and steamships in their Irish policies in the first half of the nineteenth century to assimilate Ireland. In North Wales, the LNWR was able to resist the much weaker Welsh nationalism in the second half of the century, when it maintained its monopoly and captured the region's tourist trade. In Ireland it was an "official" encounter between politics and technology, while in North Wales it was "unofficial", showing the different ways in which politics and technology interact. This study suggests that a major technology needs to be deployed with a careful appreciation of its likely impact, while understanding that there will be unexpected outcomes. Those can be managed best by politicians and the owners of technology engaging with each other and with those most affected by their plans, recognising that the application of technology to achieve social and economic results is a complex political exercise that should be negotiated rather than enforced.

The old CHR remains a significant link between Ireland and a larger union today – though now it is the European Union rather than the UK. The line is shown as part of a European network but now: 'we need an underwater train to Ireland' rather than the steamships of the 1850s.¹⁷ And when the UK ceases to be a part of the European Union that link between the Republic of Ireland and Brussels may be just as vital as once was the link between Dublin and London. Even in the modern era of motor car, airplane and internet, the railway survives as a powerful technology that can serve political ends.

¹⁶ "Infrastructure: Ministers 'make poor choices on large projects'", *The I*, 29 June 2017, 11.

¹⁷ "We need an underwater train to Ireland" BBC News Website 12 November 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-west-wales-30014563> [accessed 24 May 2016]

Appendix A: Land ownership in North Wales showing area and value of land owned by large landowners featured in North Wales by County area

D = Denbighshire; F = Flintshire; A = Anglesey; C = Caernarfonshire

OWNER	D acres	D value	F acres	F value (£)	A acres	A value (£)	C acres	C value (£)	TOTAL acres	TOTAL value (£)	Value per acre (£)
LNWR	232	10396	382	56014	130	7372	523	23866	1267	97648	77.1
GWR	522	4676	32	522					554	5198	9.4
Glynne			4773	12636					4773	12636	2.6
Gladstone W.E.			2135	4929					2135	4929	2.3
Church of England	421	853	575	1113	596	575	203	762	1795	3303	1.8
Mostyn	1938	1508	5460	10467			2025	4053	9423	16028	1.7
Westminster	855	1837	3335	4924					4190	6761	1.6
Pennant			1450	1813			41348	62622	42798	64435	1.5
Assheton Smith					730	767	33752	42255	34482	43022	1.2
Hesketh	3086	3654							3086	3654	1.2
W. O. Stanley MP					4697	5086			4697	5086	1.1
Lord Anglesey					8485	9132			8485	9132	1.1
Mainwaring	1816	1822							1816	1822	1.0
Meyrick					16918	13283			16918	13283	0.8
Wynn	33998	25741	299	378					34297	26119	0.8
Newborough					1745	1141	22063	16234	23808	17375	0.7
Lord Stanley					5960	4238			5960	4238	0.7
Bulkeley					16516	17997	13362	3141	29878	21138	0.7
Gore J R O							8570	2769	8570	2769	0.3

Figures taken from "Landowners in North Wales", *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 February 1876, 6, and 4 March 187

Abbreviations

Anglesey Central Railway	(ACR)
Anglesey County Council	(ACC)
Britannia Tubular Bridge	(BTB)
Carnarvonshire County Council	(CCC)
Carnarvonshire Railway	(CR)
Chester and Birkenhead Railway	(CBR)
Chester and Crewe Railway	(CCR)
Chester and Holyhead Railway	(CHR)
Conway and Llanrwst Railway	(CLR)
County Council	(CC)
Denbighshire County Council	(DCC)
Dublin and Kingstown Railway	(DKR)
Ffestiniog Railway	(FR)
Flintshire County Council	(FCC)
Gauge Commission	(GC)
General Railway Committee	(GRC)
George's Harbour Railway	(GHR)
Grand Junction Railway	(GJR)
Great Western Railway	(GWR)
Greenwich Mean Time	(GMT)
House of Commons	(HC)
Irish Railway Commission	(IRC)
Liverpool and Manchester Railway	(LMR)
London and Birmingham Railway	(LBR)
London and North Western Railway	(LNWR)
Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway	(MSL)
Member of Parliament	(MP)
Mold Railway	(MR)
North Wales Mineral Railway	(NWMR)
Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway	(OWW)
Porth Dinllaen Railway	(PDR)
Rental Value	(RV)
Shrewsbury and Birmingham Railway	(SBR)
Shrewsbury and Chester Railway	(SCR)
Trent Valley Railway	(TVR)
United Kingdom	(UK)
Vale of Clwyd Railway	(VCR)
Wrexham, Mold and Connah's Quay Railway	(WMCQR)

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	Dublin Evening Mail	
Cambrian News and		Liverpool Mercury
Welsh Farmers Gazette	Dublin Evening Packet	Liverpool Times
	and Correspondent	Llandudno Advertiser
Cardiff Times	Economist	and List of Visitors
	Elgin Courant and	
Carnarvon and Denbigh	Morayshire Advertiser	Llangollen Advertiser,
Herald		Denbighshire,
	Freeman's Journal	Merionethshire and
Cheshire Observer		North Wales Journal
	Hereford Journal	
Chester Chronicle		London Daily News
	Huddersfield Chronicle	
Chester Courant and		London Standard
Advertiser for North	Inverness Courier	
Wales		London Evening
	Kentish Gazette	Standard
Cork Examiner		
	Leamington Spa Courier	Manchester Examiner
Daily Telegraph		and Lancashire Daily
	Leeds Times	Advertiser

Manchester Guardian		Pioneer
	Salisbury and	
Manchester Times	Winchester Journal	Wells Journal
		Western Gazette
Morning Advertiser	Sheffield Independent	
	Shrewsbury Chronicle	Western Mail
Morning Chronicle		
	Shrewsbury News	Western Times
Morning Post		
	Staffordshire Advertiser	Worcestershire
Newcastle Courant		Chronicle
	Statesman and Dublin	
North Wales Chronicle	Christian Record	Wrexham Advertiser
North Wales Express	The Examiner	Wrexham Guardian
North Wales Times	The Observer	York Herald
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