

THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY  
AND THE CELEBRATION OF  
ENGLISHNESS

D.Phil. RAILWAY STUDIES I.R.S.

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ALAN DAVID BENNETT M.A.

D.Phil. RAILWAY STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis identifies the literary work of the Great Western Railway as marking a significant contribution to the discourse of cultural representation over the first four decades of the twentieth century and particularly so for the inter-war era. The company's work is considered in the context of definitive and invariably complex cultural perspectives of its day, as mediated through the examination of the primary literature, company works and other related sources, together with the historiographical focus of latter-day analysis. G.W.R. literary perspectives - historical, political, commercial-industrial and aesthetic - are thus compared and contrasted with both rival and convergent representations and contextualised within the process of historical development and ideological differentiations.

Within this perspective of inter-war society, the G.W.R. literature is considered according to four principal themes: the rural-traditional representation and related historical-cultural identification in the perceived sense of inheritance and providential mission; the company's extensive industrial interests, wherein regional, national and international perspectives engaged a commercial-cultural construction of Empire; the 'Ocean Coast' imagery - the cultural formulation of the seashore in terms of a taxonomy of landscapes and resorts according to the structural principles of protocol, expectation and clientele and, finally, that of Anglo-Saxon-Celtic cultural characterisations with its agenda of ethnicity and gender, central in the context of this work to the definition of Englishness and community.

This thematic structure directly engages the then, as now, controversial discussion of the properties of past and present, continuity and change and urban and rural identifications. In also engaging the wider and necessary themes of the cultural history of railways generally, of place marketing and of the nature and principles of nationalism in the construction of cultural identity, this thesis locates the literary work of the G.W.R. in an historical, cultural context that contributes to ongoing discussion of the character and definition of Englishness.

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## Introduction

This work examines the extensive literature produced by the Great Western Railway over the first forty years of the twentieth century, with particular reference to the inter-war era when the output was most prolific and the content and style at its most challenging and dynamic. The thesis contributes to several debates in the field of cultural history, more particularly those about railways and notions of Englishness, namely: the cultural history of railways, the role of place marketing, the cultural construction of Englishness in terms of representations of landscape and identity and historical-cultural considerations of nationalism and ethnicity.

Michael Freeman has recently called for historians to situate their railway research “within the wider cultural frame of which it is indissolubly part<sup>1</sup>...” and of their need to locate work “more clearly within their cultural milieux [and] to think more carefully about the intellectual frame within which their studies are cast.”<sup>2</sup> Freeman’s own work, ‘Railways and the Victorian Imagination’, 1999,<sup>3</sup> in line with earlier studies addressing the cultural theme - Wolfgang Schivelbusch, 1977,<sup>4</sup> the even earlier work by Harold Perkin, 1970<sup>5</sup> or Jack Simmons, 1991<sup>6</sup> - focused on the long nineteenth century and to 1914. The thematic focus is, perhaps, summarised by Nicholas Faith: “The modern world began with the coming of the railway. They turned the known universe upside-down. They made a greater and more immediate impact than any other mechanical or industrial innovation before or since.”<sup>7</sup>

Freeman notes the dearth of literature on the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> An exception is J. Richards and J.M. MacKenzie’s ‘The Railway Station: a social history’, 1986,<sup>9</sup> a study of great range which engages with the inter-war and post-1945 periods. But generally

works on the cultural history of railways in the inter-war era are conspicuous by their absence. This thesis addresses that theme in an analysis of the substantive works of the Great Western and, in counterpoint, those of the Southern Railway. The subject has not been entirely neglected. Roger Burdett Wilson's 'Go Great Western. A History of G.W.R. Publicity' 1970<sup>10</sup> offers an anthology of the literature, poster work and miscellaneous promotory materials produced by the company but there is no discussion of content nor of any thematic development of cross-company comparisons in content, style or of general cultural contextualisation of railway and society.

Other studies have attempted this in a different context. Alan R. Jackson, 1973/1991<sup>11</sup> for example, identifies the railways as central to the development of [the character, structure and style] suburban lifestyle. In so doing, Jackson correlates the wider cultural history of railways with that of place marketing, a factor emphasised by John Beckerson.<sup>12</sup>

Place marketing is integral within this historiographical perspective. Stephen Ward identifies this concept as "a broad entrepreneurial ethos or ideology"<sup>13</sup> that effectively synchronises the commercial and cultural representations of locations, regions, people, experiences and events. This process relates directly to the G.W.R.'s practices. Looking particularly at tourism, the place marketing principle is reflected in the company's identification of cultural themes and the process of social differentiation that defined them. For example, the railway created a taxonomy of resorts, historical sites and landscape. This is expressed in terms of 'English' and 'Celtic' representations which are only comprehensible by reference to the particular locations and the related ensemble of received cultural, political and ideological identifications, expectations and protocol; to the essential social and cultural differentiations that defined them.<sup>14</sup> John Urry's work on the objects of the tourist gaze and the "variety of discourses"<sup>15</sup> therein is significant here, but will be considered below.

Stephen Ward's 'Selling Places', has included the railway companies' contributions to place marketing, identifying the differentiated status and character of the holiday resort in a broad national and international context. He has also dealt with the railways' initiatives in terms of suburban development and industrial interests. But railway-focused place marketing has not been extensively or systematically analysed. In particular, no-one has carried out a detailed study of a specific railway company such as this one of the G.W.R. It is needed because, until the Second World War, the railways were the major providers of inland transport over any but the shortest of distances and, hence, one of the most significant institutions to be involved in place marketing. The G.W.R. was one of the most important and enterprising of the railway companies. Its record also serves as a basis for comparison and contrast with other railway companies, other forms of transport and, indeed, for comparative studies of other countries and their relative achievements - although these tasks are not attempted here.

Some idea of the G.W.R.'s importance may be had from its role in the Travel Association of Great Britain. Beckerson argues that the 'Come To Britain Movement', dating from 1926,<sup>16</sup> and, later, reformulated as 'The Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland' was "one of the first groups to draw attention to the economic benefits of foreign visitors to the U.K.... It was a key plank in the strategy of the Travel Association."<sup>17</sup> The role of the railway companies and, specifically, the contribution of the G.W.R., in developing the potential of the Travel Association through innovative marketing, was considerable and should be noted. Felix Pole was the only general manager from the four railway companies to attend the first meeting of the provisional committee of the Travel Association on 26 February 1929.<sup>18</sup> The company, for example, played a prominent role in the campaign for fiscal reform in terms of prohibitive taxes on visitors to Britain and advocated the extension of rateable levies, nationally and locally, to provide for increased tourist marketing and amenities.<sup>19</sup>

The Travel Association's efforts to encourage foreign tourists, particularly

Americans, to visit Britain were directed at the impact of the historical-cultural experience and encounter which was particularly celebrated in the G.W.R.'s literature.

Place marketing identifies and develops various aspects of tourists' cultural experience and expectations. In developing the notion of 'the tourist gaze', John Urry, for example, argues that tourists experience places through the lens of various cultural formulations. He categorises these in binary form: "romantic/collective; historical/modern; and authentic/inauthentic."<sup>20</sup> These oppositions are developed further in particular discourses. A discourse of education, for example, identifies cultural sites with their directed gaze; health - as in the restorative and recreational properties of environment, hiking, camping, golfing, fishing and the whole panoply of sporting activities with their attendant social and cultural delineations - and organised party or individual encounters, as in the pursuit of the contemplative gaze. Urry also stresses the distinction between the tourist gaze and that of his/her 'normal' or 'non-tourist' activities, which is identified in the concept of 'departure'.<sup>21</sup> The tourist's expectations were central to the entire holiday experience, looking to participation in various 'special' activities identified in organised events, encounters and places. Place marketing thus anticipates and prefigures the desired experience in its provision of appropriate imagery and representation.

The G.W.R.'s literary and visual representations drew heavily upon the concept of 'departure'. Departure could assume an historical form, an aesthetic experience, (as with the Celtic sublime) or the hedonistic pleasures of the seaside, for example. G.W.R. marketing also stressed the experience of the journey itself in its various forms, as a spectacle, an adventure and often as a unique and glamorous event, in the general context of service, en-route as reflected in matters of speed, safety, efficiency and modernity. These were brought together in "prestige advertising",<sup>22</sup> a dimension of place marketing not widely recognised by historians beyond the present-day context of nostalgic representation or that as evidence for technical-engineering interests. The broader social and cultural significance of the experience and impact of the journey itself has not been



developed to any considerable extent, despite the fact that railway literature generally, and, indeed, poster work, drew particular attention to this essential element of company identity.

Extended and serious consideration of issues such as those indicated above, can, however, be seen in the literature relating to railway posters. Here analysis focuses on questions of imagery, composition, style, etc., looking beyond the popular, present-day agenda of nostalgia and whimsy. For example, Beverley Cole and Richard Durack, 1992,<sup>23</sup> and Tony Hillman and Beverley Cole, 1999<sup>24</sup> analyse poster work in its historical, social and cultural context, seeing it as a dynamic expression of specific periods, places and, indeed, the projected and desired miseen scene. Ralph Harrington's 'Perceptions of the locomotive driver', 1997,<sup>25</sup> enlists various literary formats and visual representations to convey the differing imagery and perception of the driver in historical and social, cultural terms. The interactive relationship of railway and society is directly engaged.

Historical-cultural considerations of the nature and structure of Englishness were central to the G.W.R.'s literature. They have been the subject of considerable debate amongst historians but not, of course, in the context of this company. the G.W.R.'s literary focus was primarily that of a celebration of English cultural achievements defined in terms of historical progression, rooted in the ethnic properties of an Anglo-Saxon inheritance and manifested in a statement of a determined mission. This required the definition of a community as a 'nation' conforming and corresponding to certain images and associations - historic, locational, political, aesthetic, linguistic - that were readily identifiable by all in membership. The work of E.J. Hobsbawm and Ernest Gellner,<sup>26</sup> for example, Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' and Anthony Smith's analysis of 'poetic spaces' and 'golden ages'<sup>27</sup> are particularly useful in understanding these cultural formulations.

Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>28</sup> He emphasises the impact of ‘print capitalism’ - English as “a language of power”,<sup>29</sup> for example, which, when formulated and projected as “a national print-language”<sup>30</sup> celebrated the collective, structural properties shaping the nation. Anderson identifies material progress-print capitalism, railways and steamships, the motor car, aviation and mass education as “the fruits of industrial capitalism.”<sup>31</sup> These were the agents both of unification “which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves and relate themselves to others in profoundly new ways”<sup>32</sup> and of differentiation. The community, imagined, “is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship”<sup>33</sup> identified in the collective and exclusive language of “us, we, ours”, as distinguished from “them, they” and “theirs”. But within his broad terms of reference, Anderson can only indicate the role of railways as vital agents in the process of national unification, integration and cultural representation. This thesis thus supplements Anderson’s analysis by examining the G.W.R.’s contribution to the development of the imagined community. This is particularly so, in the case of the company’s Anglo-American orientation and the historical-cultural imagery and associations of the “Mother Country”, “Mother England”, the “Brethren Of The Mystic Tie”,<sup>34</sup> and the sustained reference to heritage as, “ours”, for example.

Anthony Smith focuses more on the role of the past - place and event - in shaping notions of national identity. He analyses the structured, composite representations, reflecting modern, organised industrial society - the ‘garden culture’, in a carefully nurtured and directed sense - and that of the ‘wild cultures’ - “pre-modern epochs, names, memories, territories, cultures, identities.”<sup>35</sup> Smith argues that the wild and garden cultures are both essential components forming “the foundations and plan on which the national edifice is constructed and without which it would lack political definition.”<sup>36</sup> His concepts of ‘poetic space’ and ‘golden ages’ emphasise the construction of the nation around the sense of “an ancient core” and, with this, the role of history and land-

scape as “essential vehicles and moulds for nation building.”<sup>37</sup> Smith’s focus upon “the fusion of community and terrain through the identification of natural with historical sties,”<sup>38</sup> likewise, his emphasis on the need to recognise and understand “the ways in which myths and symbols, values and memories shape the nation-to-be”<sup>39</sup> are essential elements in the structural development of the G.W.R.’s historical-cultural representation of Englishness as complex and dynamic.

The discovery of rural England in its various cultural forms, literary, visual, recreational and, perhaps, most immediate, yet elusive, in musical representation, Revill, 2000<sup>40</sup>, was a development closely associated with the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was a process which gathered momentum during the inter-war years to become widespread and substantial, cultural focus. Moreover, it was a ‘discovery’ that, in style and theme, took many forms, being driven by complex and often competing political, social, economic and aesthetic perspectives, as Patrick Wright 1985,1996, David Matless, 1998 and Philip Wilkinson, 1999<sup>41</sup>, for example, demonstrate. The G.W.R.’s work was by no means specialised or unique in its literary or visual imagery; it drew upon popular, recognised cultural symbols and, in this sense, was but one of many constructions. Its distinctive character, however, lay in the company’s collective impact - its binary representation of urban-rural, past-present and regional/national-international formulations. But these apparently stark opposites were always represented as capable of mutual assimilation and fusion. Harmony - social and natural - was a key theme.

In contrast with the G.W.R.’s approach, anti-industrial perspectives were also widespread, particularly in the literature of the inter-war period and in many later works relating to that era. An urban-rural juxtaposition was variously mediated through the properties of style and structure and in explicit statement. This representation is most famously and extensively analysed in Martin Weiner’s work, ‘English Culture and the

Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1981,<sup>42</sup> This work, together with Correlli Barnett's 'The Audit Of War', 1986 and, subsequently, 'The Lost Victory', 1995<sup>43</sup> have been identified as central to the analysis of English cultural identity over the last two decades: Keith Robbins, 1990<sup>44</sup> and George Revill, 2000<sup>45</sup>. Two particular themes from the Weiner-Barnett thesis bear directly on this present work.

Weiner asserts that Englishness was identified in the pastoral vision - "the green and pleasant land" - and that linked with industrialism - "the dark satanic mills"<sup>46</sup> - represented a cultural polarity. Furthermore he states: "The English nation even became ill at ease with its progeny to deny its legitimacy by adopting a conception of Englishness that virtually excluded industrialism."<sup>47</sup> Barnett, identifying a profoundly pre-industrial conservative and nostalgic set of values and world view amongst the British ruling class, argues similarly that the educational system reinforced anti-industrial inclination, precipitating a climate of economic decline. This perspective, however, has been subject to detailed challenges. Philip Williamson, 1999<sup>48</sup> for example, counters Weiner's dismissal of Stanley Baldwin as a retrospective thinker. Wilkinson emphasises Baldwin's concern for a dialogue between past and present, rural and urban perspectives and those of continuity and change. But further to this, Baldwin was also closely associated with the G.W.R. in terms of its management and values. Alfred Baldwin, his father, had been a director from 1901-1905 and chairman from 1905-1908. Stanley Baldwin held a directorship from 1908-1917.<sup>49</sup> In this context, and as counter-argument to Weiner, W.D. Rubenstein, 1993<sup>50</sup>, poses a question of sufficient resonance to encompass the G.W.R. thematically. Far from demonstrating a nostalgic, misplaced outlook, Rubenstein asks:

..... was it not far more plausible that Baldwin was quite deliberately signalling to a Britain undergoing enormous and unsettling political, social and economic change, that the Conservative Party, at least, understood and remembered England's great and glorious traditions and appreciated its time-honoured values and heritage?<sup>51</sup>

In a thematic focus that embraces the G.W.R.'s position, Rubenstein identifies parallels between Baldwin's regard for the past and that of Calvin Coolidge and his identification with the American West, declaring: "Certainly there is nothing whatever in any actual policy pursued by either man to suggest that they confused symbol and reality in any facet of economics or social life."<sup>52</sup> Anthony Smith's analysis of 'golden ages' - "part of an elaborate nationalist mythology which sought to reconstruct out of received motifs a complete national trajectory" ...<sup>53</sup> has significance here and, again, no return to a golden age or imitation was envisaged, or attempted. Rubenstein identified not a process of retreat, refuge or decline, but, instead, "the successful unification of traditional aristocracy and the business and professional middle classes, especially in the south of England."<sup>54</sup>

The interactive theme, the accommodation between urban and rural and national and international perspectives, was a process that can be traced back to, at least, the eighteenth century as Harold Perkin shows.<sup>55</sup> His work details the process described by F.M.L. Thompson as the fusion of "old nobility" with "the new, industrial England".<sup>56</sup> Identified as a period of significant adaptation and change, "an aristocracy of business and professional talents"<sup>57</sup> emerged and, as Perkin indicates, countering Weiner's perspective, this was driven by "the most economically progressive and profit-orientated ruling class in Europe."<sup>58</sup>

Geoffrey Channon's analysis of the G.W.R. has, similarly, detailed extensive aristocratic participation in railway boardrooms.<sup>59</sup> Emphasising the synthesis of middle class and aristocratic interest, Channon observes that "between 1880 and 1940 a new upper class seems to have emerged."<sup>60</sup> Channon identifies the railway boardroom as playing an especially important role in this synthesis.<sup>61</sup> This underlines the significance of railway interests and their ongoing impact upon social, economic, political and cultural development both prior to, and throughout, the period of study for this thesis. Channon's research identifies the various influences and representations between landed

interests and those of finance and industry, defining the composition of the G.W.R. directorate into the twentieth century. In the context of vital synthesis and, in his assessment, that in the inter-war era, the distinction between the City and the landed and industrial elites had tended to diminish. Channon signals the contribution of railway-related interests to the historiographical focus in this period of significant adjustment and change.

Moreover, consistent with the synthesis of commerce, industry and politics, the G.W.R.'s perspective reconciles the process of imperial development with other superficially antagonistic elements of its cultural perspectives. Far removed from a retrospective, insular representation of Englishness, such as that levelled by Weiner at Baldwin, the G.W.R. reconciled rural-traditional England with the dynamics of empire. Raymond Williams<sup>62</sup> has addressed the industrial-imperial network of interest and enterprise in terms of trade, manufactures and investment and the ways in which this enlisted a rural mode of display, emphasising the "cultural importance of rural ideas"<sup>63</sup> Rural England in the G.W.R. literature fulfils a symbiotic relationship with Empire as indicated and implied in the Cotswold reference earlier. On Baldwin's representation of rural England and Empire, Wilkinson states: "there was nothing paradoxical in saying that rural England had helped to generate an overseas empire."<sup>64</sup> In a similar vein, Bill Schwarz<sup>65</sup> identifies the larger context of empire and, in doing so, highlights a further area of weakness and omission in Weiner's thesis and of the anti-industrial representation generally.

As we argue . . . that elusive, displaced notion of Englishness, apparently so insular and self-contained, cannot be grasped without seeing its intimate and complex connections to the wider imperial world.

England alone is a myth: potent, but false.<sup>66</sup>

This thesis develops this perspective.

David Matless offers further perspectives on Englishness and the theme of anti-industrialism. His work deserves some considerable attention because it demonstrates the historiographical pitfalls of ignoring the railway's contribution to the shaping of

Englishness.

Matless identifies H.V. Morton's work, particularly, 'In Search Of England', 1927<sup>67</sup> as a definitive literary development, arguing that it "can be credited as establishing a motoring pastoral genre..."<sup>68</sup> Identifying Morton's focus "on social and aesthetic distinctions, concerning how to look and who could see the countryside"<sup>69</sup> Matless declares Morton's particular distinction to be that of providing the perspective "of seeing on a national scale. Searching for England becomes a national movement with an equivalent of travel, literary format and scale of meaning."<sup>70</sup>

Morton may well be identified with the perspective of the motor car - "England through the rear mirror,"<sup>71</sup> as Patrick Wright puts it - but the railway companies, and particularly the G.W.R., had long before established an extensive literature celebrating rural-traditional England. This literature differentiated between regions and nations, emphasising their particularly characteristics - historical, aesthetic, geo-cultural, ethnic, for example, whilst also integrating them structurally within the G.W.R.'s fold. The company thus reflected diversity within its collective identification. Moreover, the literary style and content varied depending on the intended audience. Thus, for example, as a prominent influence within the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland, the G.W.R., along with all the other railway companies, developed representations of Britain designed to appeal to the widest international audiences.

Matless argues that Morton's was a national context but this is also problematic: likewise, the claim to the latter's 'modern' credentials. The G.W.R.'s much earlier claim to an extensive 'literary format and scale of meaning' has to be recognised but it is also evident that Matless' emphasis upon literary format and scale of meaning is questionable. An analysis of Morton's imagery, style, sentence construction, structure and thematic juxtaposition across the entirety of his work, reveals a decidedly nostalgic perspective. Morton's English landscapes are essentially stereotypes. The only appreciable differentiation in both content and style is that between the rural and industrial

representations. Rural Warwickshire, for example, is interchangeable with Herefordshire; Somerset with Shropshire. Similarly, Morton collapsed the entirety of industrial Britain into a mantra of disbelief and despair - ugliness, unrelieved: alienation, deformity, deprivation and gloom.

These points, taken together with Matless' identification of Morton's "harder racial edge,"<sup>72</sup> of rural England, "ready to give its new blood to the towns, guarding the traditions of the race,"<sup>73</sup> indicates "a scale of meaning" that conforms more to a nostalgic, retrospective aesthetically-inspired construction of Englishness than that reflected in the social and economic circumstances of the rural England of the inter-war period. The G.W.R.'s literary perspective was in this respect more sophisticated and complex than Morton's or, at least, in Matless' presentation of Morton. These particular examples indicate the ways in which a study of the G.W.R.'s record can inform the historiographical perspective of inter-war literary work on Englishness, setting it in wider terms of reference, engaging and augmenting existing historiographies.

Matless, together with others, Paul Fussell, 1975<sup>74</sup> and Jay Winter, 1995<sup>75</sup>, notes the impact of the First World War as a 'great divide' in cultural, political, social and economic perspectives on Englishness. Anti-industrial sentiments, heavily accentuated by the experience of the Great War, resonated through inter-war society, nationally and internationally. Rural England as a refuge and as solace from war and all its associations was a compelling theme during this period, but the recognition and accommodation of the First World War in particular was a complex cultural experience. Again, detailed study of the G.W.R.'s travel literature reveals a subtler picture of the effects of that conflict than that provided by some other historians. Take, for example, Matless' portrayal of H.J. Massingham.

The Organic Movement as represented by Massingham was defined in the context of 'great divide', the 'Machine Age' and its predicted, inevitable outcome: World War. Matless considers the organicist perspective as portrayed by Massingham as emphasising



the themes of peace, harmony and continuity; of man with nature, and of his relationship to the soil. At one level Massingham's 'Cotswold Country'. 1937,<sup>76</sup> seems to address very similar themes and images as the G.W.R.'s literature on the Cotswolds. Both presented the qualities of harmony and continuity and, likewise, engaged the theme of World War One and its impact. But a more careful reading reveals their particular representations of landscape, society and development, past and present, to be sharply divergent. Whilst the G.W.R. literature shared Massingham's focus on harmony, it was formulated according to a different set of principles and standards which commemorated and, crucially, accommodated World War One. The G.W.R.'s Cotswold material projected a much more nationalistic representation of the landscape, imagined (after the manner of Benedict Anderson) in terms of duty, respect, memory, reverence and patriotic purpose. This, of course, engages nationalistic perspectives as examined by Hobsbawm, 1990 and Smith, 1996 and was fundamental to Fussell's and Winter's work on the cultural impact of the Great War.

These works indicate the various ways in which rural representations of Englishness related to Flanders and the Somme. They also show how the rural-historical tradition was accommodated with that of modern industrial-based experience. Fussell and Winter convey the deep psychological impact of World War One and in the G.W.R.'s literature the significance of the war is expressed in the imagery and stylistic presentation and, not least, in terms of a carefully constructed, historical discourse. This theme also exemplifies a further expression of rural-urban dialogue. Perceived as a landscape reflecting the properties of harmony and tradition, with the attendant associations of remembrance and commemoration, the war memorials of town and village sustain a dialogue of national resonance with the Cenotaph in both formal state ceremonial and in terms of instinctive identifications after the manner of form of Smith's "garden" and "wild cultures". The deeply historical representation of the G.W.R.'s work in reference to the theme of warfare and national imagery thus goes to the core of Englishness and

therein engages Linda Colley's<sup>77</sup> analysis of the constituent features of national identification and, indeed, its European and internationally focused perspectives.

Images and representations of Englishness were and still are closely associated with the landscape and historical, cultural perspectives of Southern England - the South Country; the Southern Metaphor. This is a well-rehearsed representation. Matless examines it<sup>78</sup> and, long before, Edward Thomas, 1909<sup>79</sup>, presented his hymn of praise, 'The South Country'. This metaphor was also extensively employed by Weiner to construct a north-south divide, culturally. Important as it undoubtedly was, the north-south axis was not, however, the principal orientation in terms of the G.W.R.'s construction of Englishness. The east-west juxtaposition, that is between the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic characterisations, was arguably more prominent. There is, of course, a considerable body of literature which examines the construction of Celtic identity in terms of a relationship between a cultural 'centre' and that of a subordinate 'periphery'. Recent research by Simon James, 1999, Murray G.H. Pittock, 1999 or David Brett, 1996,<sup>80</sup> for example, locates the Celtic representation within a discourse of Anglo-Saxon-formulated cultural authority. Hugh Kearney, 1989,<sup>81</sup> considers Wales in terms of an English colony, a perspective that, with the particular exception of industrial South Wales<sup>82</sup>, was closely paralleled in the G.W.R.'s work. Pittock, likewise, addresses this colonial construction, observing: "There are too many tempting parallels to the imperial experience elsewhere to dismiss the argument."<sup>83</sup> Gwyneth Tyson Roberts' 'Under The Hatches. Views of People and Language of Mid-nineteenth century Wales', 1996<sup>84</sup> examines the work of English Parliamentary Commissioners in terms of 'cultures of progress' and 'cultures of survival' wherein creativity and authority were ascribed to English influence.

A discourse of ethnicity and gendering identified the respective Anglo-Saxon and Celtic characterisations, designating the former as 'masculine', the latter as 'feminine'.

Malcolm Chapman, 1992<sup>85</sup> and, more recently, Pittock, 1999, have emphasised the importance of the mid and late eighteenth century discovery of the Celtic sublime and the crucial contributions of Ernest Renans' *Poesic de Race Celtique*, 1860<sup>86</sup> and Matthew Arnold's 'The Study Of Celtic Literature' 1867<sup>87</sup> in framing the distinctions between and, therein, the relationship between, Anglo-Saxon and Celt. The Anglo-Saxon, 'masculine' construction was that of the historically-defined, dynamic, political and commercially-minded practitioner; the Celt, by contrast, was the exemplification of feminine attributes, defined as ahistorical, aesthetically-composed, mysterious and essentially 'natural', imbued with properties of 'otherness'. Anglo-Saxon energy and worldly mission was juxtaposed with the Celtic heritage of a poetic, mythical, ancient past.

Whilst this perspective generally has been the subject of recent critical reappraisal, Hale and Payton Ed, 2000,<sup>88</sup> it was very largely the context for the G.W.R.'s Celtic representation. Structurally and thematically, the Celtic characterisation stood in counterpoint to the Anglo-Saxon, English agenda and thereby signalled dimensions of Englishness, by comparison. But for all the indications of English hegemony, it is clear that the Celtic heritage was prized and extensively celebrated by the G.W.R. The suggestion of ambivalence here might well refer us to Matthew Arnold's plea for the unification of the best qualities of Anglo-Saxon and Celt, or, indeed, to imagery of the 'borderland' between upland and lowland England and Wales. Celtic 'myth' and English 'history' that contesting versions of 'Englishness' find the space to define themselves so fully. Revill, 2000.<sup>89</sup> In this context we, again, engage with the theme of accommodation and reconciliation pursued throughout this work.

This historiographical survey has indicated the ways in which the literature and role of railways, generally, and the G.W.R., specifically, reflect cultural interests and developments through the first four decades of the twentieth century. It also identifies areas where railway enterprise has been largely overlooked and, likewise, others where its

influence and impact was decisive. This study demonstrates that a detailed analysis of the G.W.R.'s travel literature leads to a subtler appreciation of key issues in the construction of Englishness - the rural-industrial and past-present configurations, the resonances of World War One, the perspectives of empire in terms of a 'Little England' retrospect and that of the dynamics of 'Greater Britain', and, not least, the signification of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic lexicon of ethnicity and gendering. In content and style the literature offers challenging perspectives indicative of the company's identification with the wider community in cultural, political, historical and commercial terms. The G.W.R.'s regional-national-international credentials, taken together with its direct and necessary involvement with events great and small, particularly through a period when railways were in the forefront of economic, cultural and social life, means that an analysis of the G.W.R.'s record provides a worthwhile contribution to the literature on English cultural identity.

## References

## Introduction

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- 49/ Ibid PP92-99.
- 50/ W.D. Rubenstein. *Capitalism, Culture and Decline in Britain*. Routledge, London. 1993.

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Routledge, London. 1989.

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See also Geoffrey Channon. As unpublished paper, (1998) 'Railways And English Landed Society', presented, Institute Of Railway Studies, York, 1998. P3 Channon developed his theme accordingly. The association of the landed class with commercial activities was not of course new in Britain and it was one feature which sharply distinguished it from the aristocracies of much of continental Europe. There was a long tradition of aristocratic involvement in their own estates for purposes other than agriculture in Britain. The extraction of minerals, the building of a local transport infrastructure and urban development, had long claimed the attention and the capital of the landed class and, in particular cases, these sources had made a very significant contribution to estate income. The owners of mineral royalties were the outstanding examples. Whether they engaged directly in these activities, leased their resources to others, or contributed as shareholders, many landowners had played a part. They were necessarily brought into contact with what F.M.L. Thompson has usefully called the "gentrified" middle class. That is with those engaged in closely linked areas - heavy industry and transport and the professions that serviced land and property. These professionals, he argues, worked with rather than against the aristocracy, infecting the landed class with market values and methods and the means therefore of their long-term economic survival. What was new in the late nineteenth century was not the commitment to non-agricultural pursuits. Rather it was a receptiveness, as in earlier times, to the opportunities offered at a particular point in capitalist development, in this instance to the proliferation of the public company, onto whose boards patricians were assimilated in large numbers.

59/ Geoffrey Channon. *Railways And English Landed Society: The Case Of The Great Western* P2.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Imagery and Enterprise

The Great Western Railway began as a project to link London and Bristol. Authorised on 31 August 1835 the railway opened in stages to Bristol, where through services operated on the broad gauge, 7'.0<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, began on 30 June 1841. Isambard Kingdom Brunel was appointed as engineer. Together with his specific duties as railway engineer Brunel also envisaged a related, innovative scheme to link the G.W.R. with wider international perspectives. He suggested that the company could take advantage of the dramatic potential in steamship development, as exemplified in his own vessel, the Great Western, to promote associated maritime interests. Under Brunel's scheme, Bristol could become the railhead for Atlantic passenger traffic; in effect, a prestigious London-New York service.<sup>1</sup> On the railway itself the Bristol and Exeter company extended westward, once again, opening in stages to Exeter on 1 May 1844. Thereafter, moving west over much more difficult terrain, the South Devon Railway linked Exeter and Plymouth, opening throughout in April 1849. From Plymouth westward, the Cornwall Railway ran to Truro, opening in May 1859, where it met the standard gauge West Cornwall Railway opened between Truro and Penzance in August 1852. This network became the G.W.R. main line from Paddington to Penzance which by 1889 had been incorporated into the Great Western fold and was thereafter gradually improved and, in terms of company policy and identity, clearly Great Westernised.

Elsewhere, Birmingham was reached from Paddington, via Oxford and Banbury by 1852; Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury, in 1854. South Wales was linked with London in 1850 but this entailed a circuitous route via Gloucester and thence to Swindon, midway between Paddington and Bristol. The opening of the Severn Tunnel in January 1886 transformed this situation, offering direct communication between Bristol, Newport and

Cardiff. The 1890s saw considerable development in G.W.R. affairs. Identified as 'The Great Awakening,'<sup>2</sup> these included the removal of the broad gauge in May 1892, the introduction of improved train services and plans for several new routes, identified here in Chapter One. In a further related form, 1904 marked the beginning of the company's distinctive publicity drive with the publication of the 'The Cornish Riviera'<sup>3</sup> and, with the lucrative North American market a priority, 'Historic Sites and Scenes of England.'<sup>4</sup>

The early years of the twentieth century also saw extensive progress in terms of technical expertise and the creation of a modern, highly efficient railway network. Prior to World War One the management invested heavily in the development of its trunk routes.<sup>5</sup> The major initiatives here comprised: the Badminton, South Wales Direct Line, avoiding Bath and Bristol, this being in conjunction with the development of Fishguard Harbour and then lucrative Trans-Atlantic and Irish traffic, the Badminton line opening in 1903; the new route from Reading to Taunton - the West of England main line - opening in 1906, directly improving access and overall standards of service in tourist traffic to the West of England; the Birmingham-Cheltenham line, opened in 1908 giving direct access from the South Wales ports to the Midlands; and the Great Western/Great Central Joint Railway (1910) providing a much improved direct link between Paddington and Birmingham via High Wycombe and Bicester. All such investment contributed directly to the interests of tourism and operational efficiency as in the enlargement and extensive rebuilding of key stations, for example, Westbury, Newbury, Bristol Temple Meads, Taunton, Newton Abbot, Cardiff, helping consolidate the essential corporate identity and the attendant prestige vital to the G.W.R.'s public image - as a progressive, self-confident organisation. The Great Western's commercial and operational ascendancy in the West of England had been effectively acknowledged by the rival London and South-Western Railway in 1909. Minutes of a meeting between the G.W.R. Chairman, Viscount Churchill, and Sir Charles Scotter, Chairman, L.S.W.R., recorded the latter's considered pursuit of "amalgamation and total absorption" with and by the G.W.R. . . .

“that the G.W.R. should in other words, buy them up and manage the whole concern from Paddington.”<sup>6</sup> Set against the L.S.W.R.’s static commercial returns over the five-year period to 1910, the G.W.R. enjoyed an annual increase of five per-cent at competitive points on their respective systems.

There were also major achievements in terms of mechanical engineering. G.J. Churchward, Chief Mechanical Engineer to the Company, 1902-1922, gave the Great Western a fleet of modern standardised locomotives, the product of advanced, innovative designs that put the G.W.R. to the forefront of performance. Churchward also gave Great Western locomotive design an almost instant ‘family’ identity that the layman could easily recognise thus underlining the crucial concept of corporate identity. Combining efficiency with elegance, the Swindon tapered boiler, copper-tapped chimney, gleaming, polished brasswork and brunswick green livery was calculated to give G.W.R. locomotives a dignity and overall sense of distinction that was vital to the promotion of public image.

Churchward set the pattern for future development. His successors, C.B. Collett in 1922, and F.W. Hawksworth in 1944, followed his example, producing modified designs based on trusted Churchward principles. The best known locomotives of the G.W.R. between the World Wars - the ‘Castles’, ‘Kings’, ‘Halls’, ‘Granges’, ‘Manors’ and, post-war, the ‘Counties’ - exemplified the essential Churchward design, with their unmistakable Swindon parentage, much enhanced by means of a carefully considered naming policy. Resonant of order, authority and prestige, the class names were intended to reflect a hierarchically-inspired celebration of Englishness, a perspective exploited in the company’s sale publications, as in ‘G.W.R. Engines, Names, Numbers, Types and Classes’ 1938. ‘The “King” of Railway Locomotives’, 1928, ‘Caerphilly Castle’, 1924 or ‘Locomotives of the Great Western Railway’, 1929.<sup>7</sup> A range of jigsaw puzzles reinforced the thematic focus. But in as far as the G.W.R. relied on its essentially tried and trusted Churchward principles into the 1940’s, locomotive design and development

clearly reflected the company's essentially conservative nature, very different from that of the L.M.S., L.N.E.R. and the S.R., who were much more innovative in this specific area. Collett's rolling stock, however, gave the G.W.R. such definitive designs as the Ocean Liner saloons of 1931, named after members of the Royal Family, and the famous Centenary Stock of 1935. Both were redolent of confidence, authority and prestige in their dimension and luxurious interiors. There was also the considerable technological achievement, together with the attendant publicity, of the famous 'Cheltenham Flyer' of 1932. Culturally, this train was important, conferring substantial international acclaim upon the G.W.R., as W.G. Chapman recorded in the company's publication 'The Cheltenham Flyer', 1934:

I need not tell you that 'Cheltenham Flyer' has made a name for herself all over the world. Americans, Chinese, Frenchmen, Germans, Indians and visitors from other countries have made a great point of including a trip on the world's fastest train in their itineraries.<sup>8</sup>

The details here of Great Western enterprise in engineering achievement and standards of service indicate the extent to which the company was aware of the need to consistently integrate technology and public image. It was this recognition and achievement, when allied to a received rural, historical imagery, the effective marriage of technology and historic cultural identity, that gave the G.W.R. its most powerful and enduring appeal in terms of its public perception. This conflation of technology and the literary, historical and aesthetic qualities of Great Western experience was implicit and, often, conspicuously explicit, as in the literary perspective of the 'Through the Window' trilogy of 1924-1926.<sup>9</sup> These books offered a unique experience of landscape, tradition, aesthetic perception and G.W.R. enterprise, in the collective concept of 'The Journey.'<sup>10</sup>

'Through the Window' focused on the spectacular attraction of the landscape, the history and cultural heritage that could be enjoyed from the passing train, as in the

Paddington-Penzance journey. The journey westward was described as “an adventure and experience . . . having something of the fascination of foreign travel.”<sup>11</sup> The content and style of the ‘Through the Window’ trilogy represented a real attempt to link different locations and larger regions, South-West with North-West and Wales and Southern Ireland with London. Overall, a metropolitan-provincial-rural configuration. ‘Through the Window’ served to identify the specific character of a given region/county whilst relating it structurally to the many other, similar or contrasting, locations across the G.W.R. system. The constituent parts of the network were, thereby, presented in terms indicative of an organic relationship with Paddington, as Head Office and the company’s commercial, organisational hub.

### The Literary Record

Of the four railway companies in the inter-war era - the Great Western Railway, the Southern Railway, the London and North Eastern Railway and the London Midland Scottish Railway - and amongst the numerous pre-grouped companies in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Great Western was the most prolific and the most innovative in terms of the literary record. It was also a prime mover in the development of joint publicity schemes between railway and resort, and between companies for national and, particularly, international trade. At this point, however, it is necessary to stress that the literary work formed part of the G.W.R.’s much larger, comprehensive publicity initiative wherein all means at its disposal were employed to enhance its public image. As will be examined, below, the guiding principle was, as one senior official remarked in 1929, “to create in the minds of the public a desire to visit the places situated on our system.”<sup>12</sup> Press reports, posters and works of literature were devoted to that end but, whilst the literature, in particular, suggested an identifiable thematic focus and imagery, no formal statement identifying a systematic company policy on content and style is evident.

The literary record began, effectively, in 1904 with the publication of three books:

'The Cornish Riviera', the company's first major work, 'Historic Sites and Scenes of England' directed expressly at the American market and 'Southern Ireland, Its Lakes and Landscapes' directed at an Anglo-American audience. Many more regional and county-based works followed: 'South Wales, The Country of Castles', 1905; 'North Wales, The British Tyrol', 1906; 'Devon, The Shore of the Sea Kings', 1906; 'Wilts, Somerset and Dorset, Wonderful Wessex', 1908; 'Rural London, The Chalfont Country and the Thames Valley', 1909; and 'Beautiful Brittany', also 1909. These works went into many editions and remained largely unaltered until the late twenties when they were replaced by new titles with evidently up-dated perspectives, written by popular, modern authors of the day.

All these early publications were written by A.M. Broadley, whose work was informed by an extremely detailed and informed literary reference. Broadley related landscape to the Classical And English literary tradition evoking the perspectives of Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, for example in a construction of received 'High Culture', a projection aimed at confirming the exclusive nature of its educated, informed audience. The perspective was, accordingly, that of a prevailing metropolitan-urban provenance, as in the company's clear identification with the prestigious ambience and protocol of the winter health resort: the English and, particularly, the Cornish Riviera. The initial representation of Cornwall was primarily that of the National Winter Health and Pleasure Resort.<sup>13</sup> Its principal focus was with its equable climate and restorative properties. Numerous references to climate and to comparative statistics with Mediterranean locations, including a complete chapter on meteorological data and medical endorsements from reputable doctors set the agenda and focus, underlining Cornwall's detailed and practical advantages as a winter resort over foreign locations. Similarly, Broadley's 'Devon. The Shire Of The Sea Kings' identified that county as "one of the great holiday haunts of the Empire."<sup>14</sup>

Broadley's works from the pre-World War One era, were the basis, indeed, the texts,



for a series of 'Handy Aid' booklets covering all regional locations and perspectives across the G.W.R. system. Looking to celebrate outstanding literary, historical or aesthetic attractions, these publications were pocket-editions to inform the visitor en-route or on location and included such titles as: 'Sunny Cornwall, England's Mediterranean Region; Devon, The Lovely Land of the Mayflower; The Wye Valley (two volumes), Shakespeare-Land' and 'Places of Pilgrimage for American Travellers'. The 'Handy Aids' series, although an adaptation of Broadley's early works, was essentially an initiative of the inter-war era. Selected titles did appear as early as 1913 but the full range was closely identified with the managerial initiatives of the Great Western's Managing Director, Felix Pole, who headed the company from 1921 to 1929.

Formerly the editor of the G.W.R. Magazine for ten years up to 1919, Pole, as General Manager, identified publicity as fundamental to the G.W.R.'s interests. It was during his term of management that the company made its most significant progress in relation to content, style and focus within the literary work and achieved its greatest output and sales. Literary works, however, were by no means the only vehicle of publicity. Poster production, in particular, was prolific, if essentially conservative in its style and thematic range.<sup>15</sup> There were also official photographs celebrating the company's identification with historic sites, the landscape of rural-traditional England and the romantic, sublime perspectives of Cornwall, Wales and Southern Ireland. Lantern-slides and film-strips were also available for hire, often carrying the familiar titles marking the best known literary works, listed above. The lantern slides were estimated to comprise more than one hundred sets and were accompanied by printed lecture notes. Given the estimated 1200 to 1500 applications from libraries, clubs and educational interests generally, the G.W.R. observed, "as every class of person is a potential traveller, we have taken full advantage of this form of publicity."<sup>16</sup>

This was said as part of an authoritative statement on the work and the role of the Publicity Department was delivered in October 1934. Under the Proceedings of the

Great Western Railway (London) Lecture and Debating Society, Mr. G.E. Orton, Commercial Assistant To The Superintendent Of The Line, gave a lecture entitled: "Railway Publicity."<sup>17</sup> This was one of several papers on publicity presented to the Debating Society during the inter-war period and, as in Orton's case, the papers were the work of well-regarded authorities. Orton had been with the G.W.R. for some thirty years. His responsibilities included those of Assistant Publicity Agent and, in 1929, General Agent in the U.S.A. and Canada; in 1932, Assistant Commercial Advertising and Publicity Agent; in 1933, G.W.R. Publicity Agent and, in 1934, Commercial Assistant to the Superintendent of the Line.<sup>18</sup>

Orton began by stressing the differences between railway publicity and that of any other business, large or small. His was not the position "of the publicity manager of a commodity who has but a single and well-defined product to advertise."<sup>19</sup> He therefore emphasised that it was the duty of the publicity officer to prioritise and that, given the G.W.R.'s focus on press advertisements, almost 50 per cent of the expenditure in the Press went to advertising excursion arrangements. Newspaper advertisements were always central to the company's policy and practice, a factor underlined by Felix Pole, who, as General Manager, identified press coverage as one source of invaluable 'propaganda'. Orton revealed that the G.W.R. ran some "25,000 [excursions] per annum, necessitating the regular weekly use of about 250 newspapers."<sup>21</sup> This "essential excursion advertising" was distinguished from what was termed "general advertising."<sup>20</sup> The latter comprised: "Train Service, Territory" - the popular holiday locations - "Travel Literature, Special Services" - season-holiday tickets, parcels, freight, docks interests - and "Prestige Advertising", as in high standards of infrastructure, rolling stock, signalling and safety measures "giving us an undertaking second to none in efficiency."<sup>22</sup> Moreover "no fewer than 41 varieties of illustrated folders, totalling in numbers printed, 1,142,000, which are in addition to 38 varieties of menus, totalling 440,000, advertising our holiday season tickets, are distributed to hotels in the districts where the

tickets applied.”<sup>23</sup> Distribution and general dissemination of information covered hotels, libraries, railway agents, local/regional authorities and, indeed, all incoming liners (see Chapter Five).

A significant organisational feature, distinct to the G.W.R., was also underlined. Passenger enquiries were handled by the public information bureau which was attached to the publicity department. Orton considered this arrangement to offer the best possible service and, therefore, publicity. Detailed replies to enquiries, supplemented by information on wider-related publicity initiatives, represented advantages for all concerned which, in Orton’s opinion, could not be over-estimated. He also drew attention to the work of the Press Bureau. The latter, operating within the Publicity Department, gathered newsworthy items from across the company for effective free publication in the national or regional press. There were also arrangements within the divisions whereby the divisional officers supplied their local papers with useful news items and engaged with correspondence columns on the company’s behalf. This was intended to underline the presence and active role of the railway within the community.

In its range of marketing initiatives the G.W.R. reflects parallels with the Empire Marketing Board, to which it gave considerable support. Indeed, Major M.J.M. Dewar, appointed as G.W.R. Publicity Officer in 1934, had been head of outdoor publicity for the E.M.B. and, previously, on the headquarters staff of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, 1924-25.<sup>24</sup> The broadly educational agenda revealed by both parties in the provision of jigsaws and games, puzzles, competitions, visits, films and exhibitions, had considerable commercial-cultural resonance which was intended to encourage an active sense of participation in, and identification with, their respective interests. Both were well aware of the potential in fostering a sense of citizenship amongst children. The G.W.R. utilised its extensive supply of network and regional maps which, correlated with the commercial and topographical detail - ports, industries, histories and topography - in the unifying factor of transport, were recommended to schools. Such amenities

were also available to community outlets, as in the broad educational context of newspapers, illustrated talks and the populist company handbooks and brochures which were distributed free of charge. Orton's identification of the central role of the national and regional-local press in reaching a mass-market readership and his recognition of the immediate and dramatic properties of the poster, suggests that the overall impact of these dimensions of marketing was always likely to be greater than that of the formal literary works. Reference to the twenties and to the later thirties confirms this perspective. Details from lecture papers for 1925 and 1929 are considered below, whilst for the latter half of the 1930s, the G.W.R. produced no substantial literary works. Focussing instead upon booklets, standardised brochures and press announcements, the Coronation Year, 1937, occasioned an intense distribution of these various forms of advertising.

Publicity had been a prominent issue for the G.W.R. Lecture and Debating Society during the twenties. At the meeting of 5th February 1925, Mr. D. Richards presented a paper: "Advertising - with Special Reference to Railway Publicity"<sup>25</sup> As a former employee of the G.W.R., Richards went on to become Assistant to the General Manager of the Isle of Wight Central Railway. Thereafter, he pursued a career in commercial advertising and, as an advertising consultant with a railway background, Richards was recognised as an authoritative contributor to the G.W.R. Society. He identified the national and regional/local press as the central vehicle for publicity, stressing this in relation to the poster, as a matter of record. "The poster in any field of advertising must always be complementary to the press", as the latter was considered to deliver a much larger measure of real and useful publicity."<sup>26</sup> Orton, however, (in 1925) whilst endorsing the Press as "first in importance every time,"<sup>27</sup> and conceding that the G.W.R.'s poster work in some cases was "not of much advertising value", did consider that the poster was improving considerably. He also pointed out that poster campaigns were invariably accompanied by Press announcements<sup>28</sup> but also observed that the G.W.R. could and should do more to advertise freight services, to bring them more in line with

passenger promotions. (This latter dimension was addressed in the creation of the Commercial Advertising Department, in January 1931,<sup>29</sup> leading to the publication of 'The Best Location', in 1932. See Chapter Two).

Mr. Goodricke of the L.N.E.R. publicity department, likewise, endorsed the pre-eminent role of the Press but also identified literary works and, specifically, those of the G.W.R., as "one of three fundamental items in any scheme."<sup>30</sup>

With regard to literature, an extensive series of books is issued by every railway company; the Great Western excel themselves in that respect and I am sure that it has proved a most profitable investment from the railway standpoint. The books do good in clubs and enquiry offices and those highly-rented establishments we have in large cities like London. Literature is the backbone of our efforts.<sup>31</sup>

The 1929 document: "Railway Advertising. Is it on the right lines?" - G.W.R. (London) Lecture and Debating Society, January 1929 - took the form of a debate between C.S. Lock, Press Officer in the Publicity Department (Affirmative) and A.C. Pickford of the Goods Department, Pontypridd (Negative).<sup>32</sup> Lock offered useful statements of policy, beginning here with the emphasis upon literature and its context as developed from the 1925 paper. Under the heading; 'Development Of Territory Served By The Company,' he emphasised the press/poster campaign and, subsequently, the literary initiatives.

... in order to stimulate travel it has been the policy of the Company for a quarter of a century to endeavour to create in the minds of the public a desire to visit the places situated upon our system.... It was obviously to the Company's advantage to encourage this desire, especially in relation to the holiday habit and, in doing so, to encourage as great a part of this new traffic as possible to its system ...

Consequently, Press announcements backed up by poster displays

were undertaken, calling attention to the advantages of Cornwall, for example, as a holiday resort, and so successful was this effort that later Devon, Somerset, North and South Wales and other districts were given representation and a stimulus given to holiday traffic in general. This advertising created a big demand for literature and consequently a number of publications dealing with the various districts were issued.<sup>33</sup>

Lock identified excursion traffic as advertised in the Press as a source of much enhanced revenue: He also emphasised 'Overseas Advertising' principally the U.S.A. and the representation of the Summer and Winter Resorts in England as valuable revenue earners, the latter countering the strenuous efforts on the part of Continental resorts. Of the excursion traffic, figures were given from 1923 to 1927, inclusive: "1923, total figure, 26 million; 1924, total figure 30 million; 1924, total figure, 39 million; 1926, total figure, 38 million; 1927, total figure, 49 million. Comparative figures for the thirties reflect 'peaks', in 1936 and 1937, of 48 and 49 million respectively.<sup>34</sup>

The American market (See Chapter Five) was considered essential as this statement of development in the twenties reveals.

It is computed that half a million Americans visited England last year, an increase of 25 per cent on the 1927 figure. Their interests are, of course, centred in the historic and beauty spots of this country and the Company is indeed fortunate in having a number of the most important of these on its system. We have thus a very direct interest in going "all out" for this traffic. We expend considerable sums on Press advertising and literature distributed in America and we have good reason to say that the results are on the upgrade. An index of some value is given by passengers landing at Plymouth.

In 1913, the great boom year before the war, the total number of passengers disembarking at Plymouth was 27,000; in 1925 the number was 27,000; in 1927, 34,000; in 1928, over 36,000. This shows an increase of 2,000 in 1928 over 1927 - and 9,000 over both 1925 and 1913.<sup>35</sup>

Felix Pole put great emphasis upon the American market and duly despatched company representatives to the U.S.A. in 1925 to promote 'The Historic and Scenic Line of England.' 'The Handbook for Travellers from Overseas', 1926<sup>36</sup> effectively, the U.S.A. and Canada, advertised its General Agent at 315 Fifth Avenue, New York, highlighting "particulars of the railway arrangements for the convenience of overseas travellers arriving and departing from the Ports of Plymouth, Bristol, Liverpool and Cobh (Queenstown)"<sup>37</sup>. The handbook also included details of G.W.R. literary works - both the free guidebooks and the larger retail selection, these, of course, being available aboard ship, en-route to England.

Pickford, however, whilst acknowledging these developments, identified various shortcomings. He called for more detailed and dynamic presentation in the Press, stressing the need to "attract attention, arouse interest and compel action."<sup>38</sup> His verdict on the current practice was that it "lacks appeal and directness; and neglects opportunities."<sup>39</sup> On passenger services he concluded: "The people we must influence are those who seldom, if ever, travel."<sup>40</sup> Pickford called for an extension of excursion fares "and other privileges"<sup>41</sup>, that is the identification of particular types of passenger service - business, personal or pleasure - and of the real need to publicise them more effectively. Railway posters he considered to be "either too scenic or overloaded with detail,"<sup>42</sup> but Holiday Haunts was singled out for praise, not least, for the fact, as he saw it, of comparative performance - "Its excellence serves but to exemplify the weakness of other phases, for it must not be forgotten that no part of advertising is complete in itself. Each is dependent upon, and complementary to, the other."<sup>43</sup> The G.W.R. Magazine, by

comparison, whilst having “a very appreciable public demand apart from the circulation amongst employees”<sup>44</sup> was subject to a severe handicap. Pickford posed the question: “Could one conceive of a more dull, lifeless-looking cover for such an interesting book?”<sup>45</sup> His question serves to bring us back to the company’s concern to up-date and generally overhaul the presentation, style and format of its literature during the early post-Grouping period.

During the twenties, under the direction of Felix Pole, the company had begun to revise its literary work, particularly the early material by A.M. Broadley, with its exclusive, literary agenda, and to introduce new publications reflecting shifting perspectives in matters of recreation and leisure - the expectations and protocol of the holiday. This was reflected in the G.W.R.’s literary style, its content and presentation. ‘Sunny Cornwall, England’s Mediterranean Region,’<sup>46</sup> provides an example. “A Wonderful Summerland: England’s Atlantic Seaboard”, a section within this book, emphasised the theme of choice and, therein, the distinctive variety of experience. It expressed the infinitive: to go, to see, to feel, to smell, etc., highlighting the role of the senses and of active participation - a characteristically Great Western approach of the inter-war years, and the conflation of cultural-commercial interests. The content represented something of a bridge between the older concept of the holiday as a structured, formalised educational experience and the later, more relaxed, recreational emphasis, based around more varied, active pursuits. The inter-war years saw considerable evidence of the shifting perspective towards the more democratic and much less formal style of tourism to meet all requirements, consistent with the progressive context of ‘citizenship’ and reflected in the increasing range of participatory activities available.<sup>47</sup>

‘The Cornish Riviera’ and ‘Glorious Devon’, totally new publications in an equally new format, appeared in 1928. They comprised 167 pages and 151 pages respectively: ‘Somerset’ comprised 186 pages, with all three publications celebrating the rural-historical, aesthetic and seaside perspectives. They were also lavishly illustrated and, like



the photographic plates in the company's 'Holiday Haunts' annual handbook, were the work of the Engineering Department. These new books were the work of S.P.B. Mais, an extremely popular travel-writer of the period, who also wrote for the Southern Railway.<sup>48</sup> These two volumes, together with Maxwell Fraser's 'Somerset', 1934, became major literary works of G.W.R. literature and definitive reference books for the West of England.<sup>49</sup> All three were published in hardback format initially and in paperback by the mid-thirties. Mais, with his experience as leader-writer to the Daily Telegraph, was considered a good choice for these books. As a free-lance writer he had many books to his credit with various publishing houses on historical-topographical studies relating to British, European and overseas locations. His popular and partisanly narrative style, deeply descriptive and historically inclined, was totally removed from what by that time was Broadley's ponderous, remote terms of reference. The G.W.R. also benefitted in its association with Mais, given his work with the BBC as a broadcaster. Mais' evening presentations of an historical-topographical character enhanced his reputation, nationally and, as indeed Stanley Baldwin had found, the apparently direct, seemingly personal contact with the listener paid dividends in terms of communication and 'message'.

Maxwell Fraser was the G.W.R.'s most accomplished and prolific author. Appointed to the G.W.R. by Felix Pole, she was the daughter of W.H. Fraser, who had been the company's publicity agent from 1924 to 1931 and, previously, a long-term member of staff. Maxwell Fraser was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and, from 1930, was the editor of the company handbook, 'Holiday Haunts'. She undertook the task of extensively rewriting it to reflect changing styles and interests and, significantly, reorganised its format. 'Holiday Haunts' had previously listed each county within the company's system in alphabetical order. Fraser introduced a regional format comprising seven sections: 'London and the Southern Counties; The Cornish Riviera; Glorious Devon; Somerset, Dorset and the Channel Islands; North Wales; South Wales

and Monmouthshire; the Midland Counties and the Isle of Man.’ This had the effect of enhancing the regional identities whilst clearly contextualising them within the overall Great Western system, making the handbook much easier to consult. Within the individual county-based entries there was also an extensive register of accommodation, covering the full range of hotels and boarding houses, together with details on amenities, ‘remarks’ as to disposition and service and the distance from the nearest station. Advertisements for specific towns, generally, full-page format, were incorporated with the participation of the resorts - Town Clerk, Information Bureau or the G.W.R.’s own contact point, as at Teignmouth, for example.

In its comprehensive character the company handbook represented a commercial-cultural document, the latter being established in terms of Maxwell Fraser’s literary style and historical-aesthetic perspectives. Tenby, in Pembrokeshire offers a fitting illustration.

Few seaside towns so large and popular as Tenby have such charm and individuality. Great cliffs stretch out on either hand, their recesses stained with deep purple shadows and their buttresses picked out by golden sunlight. Beyond the Northern cliff a great headland, nebulous in the distance, colours the horizon with a darker shade of blue and defines the meeting of azure sky with sapphire sea. Tenby stands on a headland above two great bays. The vast sweep of the tawny gold North Sands, cradled in the encircling cliffs, stretches with a satiating smoothness only broken by a fantastically shaped rock, which becomes an island at high tide. The South Sands stretch for miles along the coast, which is indented with countless caves and bathing coves.<sup>56</sup>

This extract is interesting in that it functioned on various levels. It was, simultane-

ously, a commercial, cultural, aesthetic and political statement. Tenby is recognised as a 'large and popular' resort, thus fulfilling its commercial role within the G.W.R.'s context of 'care-free democracies', but the aesthetic structuring of landscape incorporates a more complex and, within the inclusive agenda of 'Holiday Haunts', a paradoxically differentiated yet graduated cultural representation. The various 'levels' in appreciation are apparent in the structure and imagery of the passage and, as such, represent the concept of progressive revelation as understood in citizenship and identification of landscape in relation to personal and national-cultural identity. Conceived in broad terms as an educative context, as discussed, above, the political dimension is apparent. As an aesthetic statement, the passage reflects the company's concern for literary credentials. Fraser offered the experience of colour and the perspectives of proximity, distance and of lateral and vertical perceptions. Shapes, structure and forms, textures and tones convey shifting definitions within the range of light and shadow which, collectively, present the scene as one of studied, structured, landscape of harmony and order. In the conventions of the picturesque, Fraser, here, guides the observer in constructing and appreciating the experience.

Maxwell Fraser gave insight into G.W.R. practice by way of an article published in the company magazine in March 1930 entitled, 'The Production of Holiday Haunts'.<sup>50</sup> It included the following statement concerning the company's policy on the composition and style of photographic material and emphasises that, within the overall context of increasing modernity and challenging perspectives, which also included the literature, the G.W.R. was by no means as progressive or experimental as the Southern Railway, or the London and North Eastern company in their openly democratic perspectives. (See Chapter Seven).

The chief view observed in obtaining new photographs is that each view must indicate the character of the scenery of the individual 'Holiday Haunt', and be free from the allurements of holiday sea-

sons. If some resorts are peopled with gay bathing parties in the height of summer the picture leaves this to the imagination, or to a mention in the text - a wise rule when many of the glorious summer holiday haunts served by the G.W.R. are scarcely less famous as winter resorts.<sup>51</sup>

This distinction between the Winter and Summer seasons was an important marketing feature in both the G.W.R. literature and that of the Southern Railway. The G.W.R. slogan, 'Winter in the West' from Maxwell Fraser's 'Winter Resorts', 1935,<sup>52</sup> was a marketing strategy formulated around the ideas of exclusive location, health-giving, restorative climate and the sensation of difference, as indicated earlier in the concept of 'departure', whilst, in respect of service and amenities, there was the reassurance of familiarity. 'Winter Resorts' stressed that passports and customs inconveniences were removed; that there were no barriers to understanding and communication from foreign languages; that English meals were readily available - "It is notorious that English people are so set in their "mad" ways that, instead of adapting themselves to foreign ideas, they frequently demand all the amenities of home life wherever they happen to be" ... [and that] "with the supreme attraction of equability of climate ... English resorts can anticipate the needs of English people far more readily and successfully than any Continental resort can do."<sup>53</sup> The 'Winter' representation was clearly intended to underline the G.W.R.'s exclusive, hierarchical credentials in terms of protocol and expectation, as Fraser's reference to Winter and Summer protocols and imagery reflects.

Looking further to comparisons in stylistic, thematic focus between the company's photographic policy and its literary work, the latter can be seen to be largely consistent with that of the studied landscape photography; of the distanced spectator relating to an historical or aesthetic spectacle or encounter wherein the only figures to be seen are usually thematic stereotypes, as in much of the poster work - fishermen, farmworkers, boatmen - defined by their work and, therefore, differentiated culturally. Maxwell Fraser's

depiction of Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo, in South Devon<sup>54</sup> provides a good example of this, as comparable thematically with the company's photograph of the same location in 'Glorious Devon'<sup>55</sup>

Maxwell Fraser also wrote 'Southern Ireland', 1932, which was a replacement for A.M. Broadley's earlier work, 'Southern Ireland, Its Lakes and Landscapes', 1904. In its style and thematic focus Fraser's book was much more accessible generally than that from Broadley. Contemporaneous and closely comparable with H.V. Morton's, 'In Search Of Ireland', 1930,<sup>57</sup> Fraser's work acknowledged the changed political and cultural circumstances in Anglo-Irish relations through explicit statement and the nuances of theme and style. "Since the creation of the Irish Free State, Southern Ireland has been invested with the irresistible charm of a foreign country".<sup>58</sup> Morton also emphasised that visitors should experience Ireland as a foreign country. Co-operation between Ireland's and Britain's railways, in the formation of the 'Travel Association of the Railways of Great Britain and Ireland', 1929,<sup>59</sup> encouraged working links between the two states, a practice which the G.W.R. had developed with the Great Southern and Western of Ireland Railway three decades earlier.

Fraser also prepared the joint Great Western Railway and Southern Railway publication, 'England And Why' <sup>60</sup> for the Travel Association. Dating from the 1930 season onward it was directed at the North American tourist market, at a time when Britain, in common with the United States, was undergoing extreme economic hardship. A 'Come To Britain' promotion had been launched in 1927 and, perhaps identifying a patriotic duty, in the early thirties, the G.W.R. promoted 'Holidays at Home' and the 'Buy British Holidays', 1931 <sup>61</sup> for example. In an expression of active citizenship it was asserted:

It is a reproach that so many English people travel abroad without  
having first visited any of the English beauty spots . . . every  
English man and woman should realise the glory of our land.<sup>62</sup>

The focus of 'England And Why', indeed, all the North-American orientated liter-

ature, was that of England and Wales as a treasure-house of historical, cultural and aesthetic experience. Visitors' interest was directed to representations of historic development, of authority, continuity and architectural and aesthetic excellence. These were combined thematically and in literary terms in three prestige commissions from the mid-twenties: the trilogy, 'Cathedrals', 'Abbeys' and 'Castles'.<sup>63</sup> These books exemplified the company's historical, political and cultural affiliations, whilst also proving extremely successful commercially. 'Cathedrals', published in 1924, in hardback and soft cover editions was written by G.E. Beer, in close consultation with the individual Sees themselves and carried a letter, by way of a Foreword, from the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace to Viscount Churchill, Chairman of the G.W.R. 'Abbeys', published in 1925, was written by Dr. M.R. James, Provost of Eton College, whilst 'Castles', dating from 1926, was the work of Sir Charles Oman Chichele, Professor of Modern History and M.P. for Oxford University.

Another dimension of the G.W.R.'s participation in, and appreciation of, landscape and tradition came in the form of the 'Rambles'<sup>64</sup> series written by Hugh E. Page. As Secretary of the North Finchley Rambling Club, Page undertook all the routes covered in his series and, within this genre, did for the G.W.R. what S.P.B. Mais offered for the Southern Railway's hikers. All four railway companies produced this literature, including London Transport, Underground and Omnibus services. The G.W.R. titles comprised: 'Rambles in the Chiltern Country, 1931, . . . in Shakespeare Land and the Cotswolds, 1933, . . . in South Devon, 1933, Rambles and Walking Tours in Somerset, 1935, Rambles Around the Cambrian Coast, 1936, Rambles in the Wye Valley', 1938 and 'Walks around St. Ives, Cornwall', 1946. A re-worked version for South Devon also appeared in 1938. Contemporaneous with the Youth Hostels Association 1930 and the Ramblers Association of 1935, the G.W.R. (see also Chapter Eight for the Southern Railway's contribution) was well in line with contemporary perspectives on the value of outdoor pursuits. The 'Rambles' series reflected the pronounced character of citizenship

and community by specific and detailed directions as to protocol, both practical and aesthetic.<sup>65</sup>

The G.W.R. Magazine, initiated in 1888 and running through to nationalisation in 1948, expressed the comprehensive, collective imagery of the company in a family-orientated focus and format. All dimensions of company business were included. - Commercial, industrial, social, historical and recreational interests were reported together with issues ranging from administrative items to developments in individual or group welfare projects. In the 1934 edition, for example, the October entries<sup>66</sup> included a detailed essay on archaeological excavations at Maiden Castle, Dorchester, followed by an article on welding technology and the maintenance of the permanent way which, in turn, preceded a survey on the Henrican castles of Pendennis and St. Mawes on Cornwall's south coast. Likewise, the 1938 editions<sup>67</sup> included essays on the origins of historic place-names, details of new ventilated freight wagons for the transit of fruit and vegetables, a report on new industries in South Wales, notes on the hotel gardens at the company's hotels and correspondence on its convalescent homes.

As part of the standardised format - official statements of revenue and train-working and reports from each department (annually), the 'interest' articles, the careers structure and staff changes and the broader category of staff welfare and enterprise - the magazine also incorporated full-plate photographs of company projects, of staff-orientated interests and, significantly, large plates of rural landscapes entitled 'Through Great Western Countryside', one for each monthly edition. Within this collective format the rural theme was thus emphasised. Structurally, and thematically, the G.W.R. Magazine exemplified the company's rural-urban, past-present representation, reconciling continuity with progress.

The impact of the G.W.R. literature might well be seen in terms of the popularity of the work, as reflected in sales returns and public reception generally. Broadley's early works, pre-World War One, were exceptionally popular and were the best selling

editions of the company's overall list. 'The Cornish Riviera', and 'Devon. The Shire of the Sea Kings', each completed six editions between 1904 and 1926. The 1904 editions of 'The Cornish Riviera' exhausted its print run of 250,000 within the year. By June 1914 the book had run to four editions - 1904, 1905, 1908, 1914. Recording this success, the Preface to the 1914 editions observed:

Nearly ten years have passed away since the publication of 'The Cornish Riviera Express.' . . . The second and third editions enjoyed the same popularity and are now entirely exhausted.<sup>68</sup>

Totally new editions of 'The Cornish Riviera' and 'Glorious Devon' both by S.P.B. Mais sold their complete print run of 20,000 editions each, from publication in August 1928 to January 1929. With regard to 'Holiday Haunts', 1927 was the first year that the book exceeded 1000 pages when the G.W.R. offered 1018 pages. The following year, 1928, saw the first edition of 200,000 copies, a significant increase on the first post-war edition in 1921, numbering 40,000 copies. This 1921 edition, however, was extremely popular with the initial 20,000 copies being sold in one month, thus requiring a repeated print run of a further 20,000. From 1928 to 1931 production was maintained at approximately the 200,000 figure but fell thereafter as victim to the Depression and to outside competition, 1938 marking the best performance, latterly, with 172,000 copies at 976 pages. The 1934 edition was the largest, at 1054 pages.<sup>69</sup>

As indicated, sales returns over the range of publications indicate the commercial success of the literature, but it is much more difficult to say how this translated into effective communicating. The G.W.R. literature engaged various commercial and cultural perspectives that are difficult to isolate and convert into detailed quantifiable impact. Commercially, tourism and particular kinds of freight traffic were profitable as returns (see Chapter Two) indicate. But it is not possible to gauge, accurately, how much impact the company's projection of particular imagery of rural-historical England or that of the Celtic Sublime had on readers.



The G.W.R. certainly acted as though all dimensions of publicity mattered a great deal, particularly during the inter-war period, with the enhanced level of competition from road traffic being apparent. Wherever possible, it co-operated with individual resorts, local authorities and district and county representations, as in the 'Come To Cornwall' initiative. Felix Pole personally visited local chambers of commerce with both warm words and bad tidings as the company saw fit. Newquay, for example, declared that the G.W.R. has "taught them the meaning of advertising."<sup>70</sup> Substantial investment in the various resorts was acknowledged by all concerned and, in terms of marketing initiatives, the company involved itself directly in issues of public health - water supply, drainage, sewerage projects - town and street planning, hotel and boarding house amenities. Detailed accounts of such work were presented in the local newspapers, to the satisfaction of both railway and resort. Richards was unequivocal on the particular contribution of the railway companies in this process:

I believe the railways of this country have, generally speaking, done more for many resorts than those resorts have done for themselves and undoubtedly from a railway point of view it is a very difficult subject. [See Chapter Six]<sup>71</sup>

Presentations of increasing tourist traffic during the mid-thirties, reflected in the campaigns for earlier and later, off-season holidays, indicated the need for closely structured holiday planning. 'Holiday Haunts' in 1939 carried the article: 'Popularising Earlier Holidays'. Considering the context and impact of the legislation and quoting Ministry of Labour figures on holidays with pay, it observed:

... that of the 18,500,000 people employed in Great Britain, 7,750,000 will this year get paid holidays - an increase of a million over 1938, and of more than two-and-a-half millions over 1937 ...

The question is not one that concerns the railway companies alone. It affects all forms of transport holiday resorts, the hotel and catering

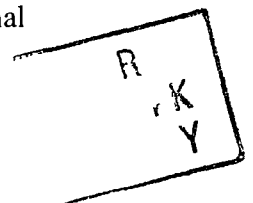
industry, the entertainment profession, and, in fact every industry or person providing for the requirements of holiday makers, right down to the beach-chair attendant and the donkey man.<sup>72</sup>

This was a significant statement on the structural role, impact and scope of organisation and marketing in tourism, indicating the detailed development in terms of its scale and diversity from the early, pre-1914 era and thereafter in the achievements of the inter-war period generally. G.W.R. identification with the West of England, for example, reached back well into the nineteenth century. Its presence effectively bridged the ‘great divide’ of 1914 and World War One, whilst the railway grouping in 1923 had minimal disruptive impact on the G.W.R. generally. This endowed it with a considerable sense of historic continuity and identification with its communities that was not so apparent with the other companies, who lacked such an established, coherent identity. This was evident in the structure, style and focus of the company’s commissioned history: ‘The History of the Great Western Railway.’ Vol I 1927; Vol II, 1931, by E.T. MacDermot.<sup>73</sup> Inspired by Felix Pole to emphasise the G.W.R.’s historical credentials and its progressive development since 1935, MacDermot’s work clearly celebrated the company’s special distinction of retaining its historic structure and identity and, indeed, enhancing it by the Railways Act of 1921. This gave the G.W.R.’s commissioned history an added resonance in terms of this genre, the obligatory company history being an essential element in the overall representation of railway companies, large and small.<sup>74</sup>

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- 59/ P.R.O. Rail 1080: 583 min 166. This also reveals the detailed differences in style and focus between the four British companies. There was a specific recognition of the difficulties involved in sinking individualities and agreeing points of interest, emphasis and presentation when called upon to work jointly, as in the integrated approach to the American market.
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## CHAPTER TWO

### Industrial Interests

The G.W.R. handbook, 'Holiday Haunts' for the centenary year, 1935, carried an explicit statement with reference to the company's popular identity: that its 'Holiday Line' image, "has completely overshadowed in the minds of the general public that of its extensive industrial interests."<sup>1</sup> Given that such a statement was surely an outstanding instance of the G.W.R.'s carefully considered and creative promotional policy, it cannot be taken at face value and must be contextualised by reference to relative performances and returns and to the commercial expediency of specific image-building. It is significant therefore to note that the company's own records for revenue in 1934, as published in the January 1935 edition of the G.W.R. Magazine declared its respective returns indicating higher earnings from freight traffic than from the passenger business. Passenger Train Receipt: 46 weeks to Nov 18, 1934: £9,356,000. Overall freight traffic: 46 weeks to Nov 18, 1934: £12,798,000. Likewise, the statement in January 1938 for the previous year - to December 12: Passenger Receipts - £10,603,000 (+ £217,000 on 1936) Overall freight: £15,462,000 (+ £979,000).<sup>2</sup> Emphasis upon the would-be primacy of holiday-orientated imagery was seen as commercially expedient in terms of its traffic potential as a means of offsetting considerable losses in respect of the older, heavy industries, particularly coal, which, up to the early 1920s, had been a major revenue earner. Moreover, throughout the inter-war era, whenever possible and particularly in the thirties, the company presented industrial interests in dramatic imagery, as no less than the contemporary urban, industrial and, indeed, internationally orientated equivalent of the G.W.R.'s historical-cultural presentation. Paddington thereby ensured that the company was projected and perceived as constituting and fulfilling the identity of all things to all people. To this end, 'Glorious Devon' or 'Shakespeare Land' were effect-



ively no more quintessentially Great Western than was the 'Black Country' or the docklands and coalfields of South Wales. The guiding principle was that of an integrated identity.

In many ways, the company employed the stylistically inspired characterisation definitive of so much of its tourist identity to dramatise and mythologise industrial and mercantile interests. Above all, the company was determined to present both a progressive and, specifically, an international context in all its promotional activities, with particular emphasis upon Imperial identifications. This much was apparent in the 1924 publication, 'Commerce and the Great Western Railway', with its recognition of the fundamental structural changes that were taking shape at that time and of the need to accommodate them.

The supreme importance of the area [G.W.R. network] served does not lie so much in its constituting the present hub of British industrial life, as in the fact that, with its well-placed sites for new works, factories and warehouses, this part of Great Britain is naturally marked out as the home of the new and intense development of our commerce and history which must be forthcoming in the immediate future ...

It will naturally follow that, if this country is to maintain its position as 'The World's Trader', manufacturers must give particular attention to the location of their works.<sup>3</sup>

Although the industrial identity, publicly, was of a lower key than that of tourism, works such as 'Through the Window. Paddington to Birkenhead', 1925, considered the 'Black Country', "as vital to England as the works are to a watch."<sup>4</sup> Heavy industry became, "commercial power stations of the Empire and the world",<sup>5</sup> essential to the overall English imperial representations. "Machinery", that which "makes the difference between barbarism and civilisation",<sup>6</sup> was the special creative achievement of 'Black

Country' England - At night it was "the lurid glow of furnaces and blaze of light"<sup>7</sup> at West Bromwich that inspired the nocturnal traveller, offering challenging perspectives on vital industrial activity.

Mindful of the widest international context and of the commercial imperative of celebrating modern, dynamic perspectives, the Great Western produced a range of requisite promotional works. "Build Your Works on the G.W.R. The Best Location",<sup>8</sup> was an early thirties brochure designed to attract industry to Great Western locations with their "valuable transport facilities for the delivery of raw materials and swift despatch of finished products."<sup>9</sup> Its designation, "Great Western Railway of England," indicated the direct appeal to prospective North American business. Particular emphasis was given to modern sites in the London area and to the modern concept of the factory site and means of production as exemplified in the Hoover building at Slough. Products from the new factory locations were listed to underline the modern character - "margarine, motor cars, radio equipment, dairy machinery and appliances, confectionery, tins for the canning industry, wallpaper, lamps etc."<sup>10</sup>

'The Best Location', 1932, stressed that the facilities and sites offered by the G.W.R. appealed to the modern businessman and throughout this publication the focus was that of modernity, efficiency and service. Direct contrasts were drawn with the older nineteenth century industrial locations, emphasising, again, the modernity, the sense of transformation and direct reference to contemporary technology.

Observers who have paid a first visit to the factory areas which have come into being in recent years in the western suburbs of London have been struck by the remarkable contrast between the cleanliness and brightness of these localities as compared with the grime and squalor associated with the older industrial areas of Great Britain. This attributable partly to the use of electricity instead of raw fuel and partly to other important factors which have contributed to the

transformation.<sup>11</sup>

Amongst these contributing factors was that of the specially selected site “where the atmosphere is as free as possible from smoke and dirt which emanates from every large city.”<sup>12</sup> Low rates were also essential and were forthcoming in Middlesex and, in consequence:

Low rates attract not only factory promoters but also home seekers from the Metropolis; and the garden cities of the suburbs assure to the manufacturer a constant supply of labour of the best type.<sup>13</sup>

In an apparent reversal of the rural myth, ‘The Best Location’, commented upon the rapid transformation of the landscape, registering its endorsement of industrial enterprise.

A passenger travelling by the Great Western Railway from Paddington to the West of England or by direct line to Birmingham, today sees from the carriage window modern factories pulsating with industrial energy, where a few years ago cows and sheep grazed placidly.<sup>14</sup>

The positive perspective on industry was fully consistent with established G.W.R. practice in the pursuit of a collective identity. Modern industrial sites and conveniently-located contemporary suburban housing developments such as that advertised in ‘Holiday Haunts’, 1931, for Ritchings Park Estate, Iver, engaged progressive perspectives in social, economic and cultural terms, augmenting the concept of Englishness as the advertisement in ‘Holiday Haunts’ suggested.

Live amid the Parklands of Buckinghamshire in a modern house with modern conveniences. Electric lighting, heating and cooking. Live healthy in a county well to the windward of London smoke and fog. Palatial cinemas, nine acres of Recreation Grounds, Hard Tennis Courts, Golf Links within easy reach, vicinity of Stoke

Poges, Burnham Beeches, Windsor, Taplow and Maidenhead for the River.<sup>15</sup>

The G.W.R. projected decidedly contemporary, fashionable imagery in its perceived close association with the British film industry. In an article from the company magazine in 1936, entitled, 'The British Film Industry Grows Around the Great Western Railway',<sup>16</sup> it portrayed itself as being in the vanguard of dynamic innovation by celebrating its direct identification with the Denham studio of the 'London Film Productions,' which the G.W.R. proclaimed as "the biggest in the empire;"<sup>17</sup> with the newly opened Pinewood Studios at Iver Heath; the 'Associated Talking Pictures' studios at Ealing Common and the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation at Shepherds Bush. Thus, the unreserved statements of distinction and dynamic characterisation: the vital projection of image:

The development of the [film] industry has been rapid, particularly so on the west side of London in the past twelve months, with the result that Paddington now finds itself in the very heart of Britain's Hollywood. With the growth of the film industry, Paddington has gradually and unconsciously assumed a film complex. Film stars, directors, employees, cameramen and buyers - those who scout around the world to bring the right atmosphere and properties to the set - are now part of its everyday life, passing to and fro between the terminus and the studio stations ...<sup>18</sup>

The West London locations at Denham and Iver were pronounced as offering film producers, "as nearly ideal conditions as they are likely to get in this country"<sup>19</sup> ... and, in so doing, also spelled out the G.W.R.'s own definition of the contemporary ideal, in its complete and graduated form, of rural, aesthetic excellence in combination with the best of modern amenities to make access and availability no problem at all. The dialectic of country and city and all the cultural significance that this entailed was thus

expressed through the film industry. Detailing “the ideal conditions” the G.W.R. continued:

.... beautiful surroundings, varied scenery at hand, quiet of the countryside, freedom from the suburbia, room to develop and complete isolation for their self-contained communities, yet within rapid communication with London - the main source of supply for artists and material, which now pass in increasing volume.<sup>20</sup>

Reporting the opening of the Pinewood Studios on 30 September 1936, the G.W.R. offered every evidence stylistically of its association with the ethos and imagery of this potent symbol of modernity, celebrating its obviously exclusive, chic status.

For the official opening of Pinewood Studios on September 30 last, a special train was run from Paddington to some of the 1,200 guests who attended the luncheon. In design, the studios are the most advanced yet seen in movie architecture. They stand in a hundred acres of grounds which includes a deer park, a swimming pool, acres of ornamental gardens, woods and the former residence of Colonel Grant Morden, which has been converted into Britain’s most exclusive film club, having a limited membership confined to people with outstanding reputations in films.<sup>21</sup>

Progressive indicators such as these were intended to reflect the resolute achievement of a contemporary railway company claiming the vanguard of economic enterprise. Such developments were all the more welcome in view of the rapidly declining prospects for the company’s hitherto lucrative trade in the export of coal from the South Wales field. The long-term and severe downturn in traffic hit hard at the docks trade.

South Wales, in the thirties, was in the grip of a serious depression in trade and industry. Two detailed statements on the industrial crisis, principally related to the considerable decline of the export trade in coal, but also addressing wider, systemic problems,

were presented in the company magazine in August 1936 and July 1938.<sup>22</sup> The former, relating the circumstances of the formation of the South Wales Trade Recovery and Expansion System, described South Wales as “a mere simulacrum of its previous self”<sup>23</sup>. Warnings of widespread social and political disaffection and “dangers to the interests of the State as a whole”<sup>24</sup> were given as a spur to action, thus, industrial enterprise in the form of new and diverse industries in South Wales was identified by the Great Western as a social and commercial imperative. This was the theme of ‘New Industries for South Wales’, 1938, an article underlining the necessary economic and social identification between Paddington and South Wales. The agenda was of development and change and of citizenship and common cause. It offered imagery of warfare - the conflict between prosperity and unemployment, “the country’s greatest enemy”<sup>25</sup> - with its reference to a large-scale campaign and policy map indicating investment in South Wales, which was prominent in both the General Manager’s office and that of the Chief Goods Manager at Paddington.

In working with the Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act of 1934 and the Amendment Act of 1937, the G.W.R. looked to the revitalisation and re-structuring of industrial activity in South Wales. Noting the social impact that characterised economic decline, the company recorded the ailing condition of the established heavy industries

“Most of the collieries were idle; the ironworks, if not entirely closed down, were working only part time; shops were closed and empty; in the valleys property was derelict; “ men in their scores hung around street corners and - most depressing of all things - one could only see the older people and children; there seemed to be very few youths.”<sup>26</sup>

It was stressed that the Chief Goods Officer’s department had worked with potential business interests, nationally and internationally. Foreign investors were encouraged by the G.W.R.’s provision of linguists and with community-based strategies to find

appropriate industrial sites, domestic housing, schools, religious and retail amenities. As a matter of policy the company looked to a new industrial structure - "For the first time in its history, South Wales is relinquishing its dependence upon coal"<sup>27</sup> - and, as in the London area, the new, light industries were identified with progress and prosperity. They also, significantly, broke with the close connection of the particular industrial traditions of coal and iron with recognised regionals; the new industries exemplified ubiquity.

The G.W.R. article, identified "a new era for the region"<sup>28</sup> and included the familiar recital of wide-ranging products - 'sewing machines, glass, biscuits, paper, gloves, toys, electrical goods, sweets, chemicals, paints' and so on<sup>29</sup> - and, in conclusion, linked these directly with wider social and economic development: the context of community.

When these attractive new industries become productive we shall see fewer idle men and women reflecting poverty and gloom in the valleys ... but as we hope, happy people, bright shops, crowded passenger trains, fully loaded goods trains, busy seaside resorts, well-nourished children and other signs of trade activity<sup>30</sup>

In cultivating a decidedly contemporary, dynamic representation, the G.W.R.'s industrial-orientated literature looked to concepts of regeneration and reinvention, in production, commodities and communities. Both large and small-scale industries were involved, particularly those dealing with merchandising and processing, as in the example of a newly commissioned flour mill and factory at Cardiff, featured in the G.W.R. Magazine in March 1935. General merchandise traffic was the most lucrative within the freight sector and within this category the G.W.,R. outperformed the L.M.S., L.N.E.R. and the S.R. throughout the inter-war period.<sup>31</sup> The numerous articles and press statements covering new factories emphasised the collectively inspirational properties inherent in design, function and image-building, as here, in the new mill in Cardiff.

Impressions left upon the visitor are those of the dignity of modern large-scale industry when seen at its best, of skill and ingenuity in

design of the buildings and of their equipment and efficiency, thoroughness and cleanliness in all the production processes.<sup>32</sup>

'Commerce and the Great Western Railway,' as mentioned, set trade in an international and imperial context and the company, therefore, made much of the role of its various docks, principally in South Wales - "Britain's Western Gateways." This was a policy carried through to the last days of the company in 1947.

Britain to a very great extent lives by the sea-borne traffic that flows into and from her thriving ports. There is scarcely a trade that does not look out over the boundaries of these islands, either in viewing the markets that are to consume a portion of its industry or in search of the raw materials that go to the making of the finished products upon which its livelihood depends. It is therefore important to study in detail the actual facilities that the Great Western Railway has to offer on the quayside for that import and export trade which of necessity plays such an important part in the commercial life of our nation.<sup>33</sup>

The Centenary publication in association with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, 1927,<sup>34</sup> gave the G.W.R. the opportunity for valuable promotional work in the U.S.A. This volume informed American readers that by 1927 the G.W.R. had invested over five million dollars in improvements with an overall predicted further investment in excess of fifteen million dollars.<sup>35</sup> Looking forward to 1945 and thereby indicating continuity of policy and practice, G.W.R. publicity was directed immediately to economic recovery from World War Two. With foreign trade a priority, booklets in Russian, French and Spanish editions entitled 'The Ports of South Wales and Their Development, During And After The War' were issued in December that year.<sup>36</sup>

'Twixt Rail and Sea',<sup>37</sup> from 1927, was one of a series of books by W.G. Chapman dealing with various dimensions of Great Western engineering and commercial



enterprise. The foreword to this popularist expression of enterprise within the Docks Department was explicit.

It seems fitting that as the Great Western Railway - this railway of records - now owns the largest and most important group of docks in the world, the next volume in the series should deal with that vital link in modern commerce between land and sea.<sup>38</sup>

Looking here for the character and imagery of this important dimension of G.W.R. enterprise as opposed to specific details, we can refer to a general statement on the South Wales docks, reflecting the high levels of investment and ongoing achievement. The repetition of the word, "new" indicated something of the scale of modern development.

Wherever we go in the South Wales docks we see signs of new works either recently completed or under construction - new joists, new power stations, miles of additional sidings, new machinery, new hydraulic mains, new transit sheds, new warehouses and new quayside cranes. All around us is evidence that the Great Western Railway Company has been very busy improving the docks since they became part of its vast undertaking.<sup>39</sup>

Elsewhere, Chapman consistently pointed the reader to the dynamic, cosmopolitan context of Great Western trade and commerce. As a thriving passenger port, Plymouth has been proclaimed, 'the Gateway into England from the Atlantic.'<sup>40</sup> At Cardiff the context widened.

Look at the names and signs over the (dockland) shop fronts. The names are those of the shopkeepers who are of many nationalities and the signs indicate that their customers speak a variety of languages - Greek, German, Italian, Spanish, Turkish, Chinese, Scandinavian, Dutch; in fact all the maritime countries are catered for. The people we now pass are largely men of colour - black, brown or yellow.<sup>41</sup>

This was an ethos far removed from the 'haunts of ancient peace' in deepest rural England, but it was a definitive dimension of Great Western enterprise. Chapman's delight in relating the scale and variety of goods, trade and activities - the commonplace commodities together with the more unusual and exotic - was clearly apparent. Inspecting Cardiff's Queen Alexandra Dock, Chapman described the contents of the transit sheds and cold stores with some relish, the range of goods and, equally, the cosmopolitan context, conferred a sense of glamour and confident achievement on the company.

This great stack of cases contains butter from New Zealand. Nearby you can see veritable mountains of cheese and these are boxes of apples from Canada and the Antipodes. Now we come to oranges from Spain and Jaffa, dried fruits, sultanas, raisins, currants etc. from the Middle East and those chests containing tea from India, Ceylon and the Far East.<sup>42</sup>

Imperial and international perspectives, always important to the overall G.W.R. identity, were always a feature of the company's promotion of commerce and trade, again asserting the Greater Britain identity. Consistent with the literature and film material promoted by The Empire Marketing Board, 1926-1933,<sup>43</sup> the G.W.R. drew upon 'family' imagery in its reference to the Empire and, significantly, to the shifting perception away from militarist, territorial dimensions to those of the empire of trade and the expression and structural process of interdependence. This was evident in the company's endorsement of 'The Fellowship of the British Empire Association' featured in the Magazine in 1925.

One of the main ideas is to encourage a 'family feeling' in all the peoples of the Empire and it is felt that this must go a long way towards the betterment of Empire trade and the promotion of Empire development.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, the Foreword to ‘Commerce and The Great Western Railway.’

Every Business Man, whether from Overseas, or representing industry in this country, during his visit to the British Empire Exhibition, will have uppermost in his mind how he can best develop trade between Britain and Overseas in order to secure the fullest advantage of the great markets of the Empire.<sup>45</sup>

The ‘family feeling’ of the British Empire Association accorded with Stanley Baldwin’s representation of Empire and Imperialism in terms of duties and ideas of a “Commonwealth of British Nations”<sup>46</sup> John Mackenzie, however, cautions that, within popular perceptions and for all its international idealism and economic harmony, “it was an Empire of stereotypes, climactic, national and racial, which bore little relation to the colonial reality of the thirties...”<sup>47</sup> But, he also recognises that “it seems to have won considerable support across the political spectrum.”<sup>48</sup> Stephen Constantine, in developing Mackenzie’s reference, also signals parallel perspectives on the part of the G.W.R. in its identification with imperial interests.

The business of extracting economic benefits for Britain from imperial connections involved British ministers in obsessive concern with migration, tariff and colonial development policies. Such an agenda, though with different emphases, was adopted by Labour and Liberal parties as well as by the Conservatives (and the British Union of Fascists) and was endorsed consistently by such organisations of industry and commerce as the Federation of British Industries and not infrequently by the Trades Union Congress. Moreover, the period shows no diminution but, if anything, an increase in the amount of propaganda, which pressed upon the British public through a wider range of media, the virtues and values of Empire.<sup>49</sup>

Considered in these terms of reference, the British Empire Exhibition of 1924-25 and the G.W.R.'s commemorative literature thereof, or events such as the ceremonial departure of 'The Cornish Riviera Express' from Paddington with the locomotive displaying the "Empire Marketing Board/Great Western Railway" commemorative head-board on Monday November 23, 1931,<sup>50</sup> suggested a popular, practical perception of empire, contrasting with that of the suggested illusionary semblance of the "white empire on the cigarette cards and souvenir biscuit-tins," in children's scrap-books "and the minds of men" as argued by Correlli Barnett.<sup>51</sup> The Paddington ceremony, part of the "buy British From The Empire At Home And Overseas Campaign," was attended by G.W.R. dignitaries, The Secretary of State for the Dominions and Chairman of the Empire Marketing Board together with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of London. It was an unequivocal statement of imperial identification and orientation at both national and company levels, according directly with the G.W.R. policy of the creative integration of commercial and cultural identities. This relationship was further reflected in the re-naming of 'The Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland', itself, one part of the 'Come To Britain Movement' of 1926. From February 1932 The Travel Association became 'The Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland.'<sup>52</sup>

As with international, imperial perspectives, so similarly, 'Next Station', G.W.R., 1947,<sup>53</sup> celebrated the range of perishable produce originating from the various regional sources within its territory. The passage here from the chapter, 'The Freight Service', reinforced the sense of organic identity and considerably enhanced the Great Western's reputation through its close association with its many productive horticultural districts, resonant of the imagery of genial climate and the general sense of abundance. Urban/rural and cultural/commercial representations were again apparent.

To people in London and other great cities, the flower expresses from Cornwall which ran again for the first time in April 1946, brought the

pleasantest of reminders that peace had indeed returned to this hard-pressed land. In that year's season, express freight trains carried for distribution throughout the country 175,000 tons of fruit and vegetables - broccoli and early potatoes from West Wales, plums, apples, beans, peas, brussel sprouts, asparagus and other delicacies from the Vale of Evesham and tomatoes from the Channel Islands (over four-and-a-half million packages from Guernsey and Jersey were handled at Weymouth). To ensure that these highly perishable goods reached the market as soon after harvesting as possible, over a thousand special trains were run, not counting the fifteen special expresses which ran daily to distribute the plum crops of the short Worcester season.<sup>54</sup>

Such images had a long pedigree. Many years earlier, in 1904, no less than the G.W.R. General Manager, James C. Inglis, presented a company article entitled, 'A New Railway Through the Garden of England.'<sup>55</sup> With reference to the new line linking Birmingham to Cheltenham, Inglis focused upon the horticultural trade centred around Toddington, Again evoking the Great Western identity by association with the rich, rural and historical imagery of England and, therein, the commercial potential in traffic. Thus, again, the evidence for the commercial-cultural interaction.

The cultivation of plums of all kinds received considerable attention. Plum trees adapt themselves to the soil in the situation while the space between the trees is utilised for strawberries, gooseberries and raspberries etc., as well as vegetables of all description ... The finer kinds of fruit - peach, nectarine, apricot, etc. - are grown under glass on a wholesale scale, the earliest peaches commanding high prices at Covent Garden market.<sup>56</sup>

Whilst these various forms of perishables were undoubtedly the most attractive and

appealing of merchandise traffic, they also contributed substantially to the 56 per cent of mileage in freight run by the G.W.R. on a weekly basis, as compared with 44 per cent for passenger trains.<sup>57</sup> Merchandise freight, as noted, had been one of the G.W.R.'s most sustained and lucrative sources of traffic during the inter-war years, thus progress was geared to efficient administration and detailed modern investment. As expressed in the 'Next Station,' 1947. "It is object of the management to reap all the advantages of centralised control, but to combine them with the intimate grasp of local conditions...."<sup>58</sup>

Investment covered many dimensions, evident through the thirties, from the provision of new goods sheds for efficient handling and dispersal, to modern refrigerated and ventilated freight vans, particularly for perishable traffic. The company also invested in research projects as in the work carried out in horticulture in West Cornwall, particularly the flower traffic.<sup>59</sup> The imagery of the land of early flowers was exploited by the G.W.R. for potential tourist traffic. Early anemones, for example, were displayed in London's Oxford Street and Charing Cross Road with the invitation to "See the Flower Fields." Publicity for the Cornish Riviera Express was incorporated into the enterprise<sup>60</sup>

The G.W.R.'s industrial imagery was characterised by its thematic structuring of international-national; national-regional and, therein, commercial-cultural interactions. In its literary presentation the company looked to locate its industrial interests within what it perceived to be the collective, organic representation of the nation, engaging cultural and commercial perspectives on as many levels of appreciation as possible.

## References

## Chapter Two

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- 3/ G.W.R. Commerce and the Great Western Railway, April, 1924, P19
- 4/ G.W.R. Through The Window, Paddington To Birkenhead, P51
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- 31/ John W.E. Helm. The Grouping Years (1923-1938). A comparative Study Of The Railways In Crisis. PART TWO. TRAFFIC RESULTS [Back Track](#) Vol XI P19, February, 1997 P75-76
- 32/ G.W.R. Magazine, December 1935 P147. See also for example, G.W.R. Magazine, Oct 1924, P385, 'The Chocolate Traffic'. (Fry's at Bristol) with its imagery of "truck loads of chocolate" and the context of "the River Avon with its willow-hung banks [which] flows very near." Likewise, 'The World's Largest Milk Depot.' G.W.R. Magazine, Feb. 1935, P75. "Equipped with the most modern plant for processing by pasteurization, homogenisation and sterilization and with a laboratory for bacteriological and chemical control, the depot is one of the marvels of the milk industry."  
The depot at Wood Lane in West London was the focus for milk traffic from all parts of the company's system. The article included a structural reference indicative of the metropolitan perspective and city-country dialectic. Noting "the scattered farms" - the first stage - the milk was then transferred to 'concentration depots' in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire, Somerset and West Wales, for example, the intermediate stage, and thence to London's Wood Lane in the specially designed glass-lined tankers, for its treatment - the final stage. Thus, again, the organic, interactive structure is expressed. Other such intended wholesome identifications came with the fruit, vegetable, flower and fish traffic from the various representative regions of the G.W.R. This 'wholesome' imagery was also utilised in several instances of poster work.
- 33/ G.W.R. Commerce and the Great Western Railway. 1924. P9
- 34/ G.W.R. Great Western Railway of England 1837-1927, Souvenir published by G.W.R. of England in connection with the Centenary Exhibition and Pageant of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A. Sept 24 - Oct 8, 1927.



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- 36/ G.W.R. The Ports of South Wales And Their Development During And After The War. Acknowledged Chief Docks Manager, Leslie Ford G.W.R. Cardiff. December 1945.  
This was a policy closely linked with that of the British Travel Association's initiative begun earlier, in 1937: British Travel Association 1929-1969, British Travel Authority, London. 1970. P10.
- 37/ W.G. Chapman. Twixt Rail And Sea, G.W.R. 1927
- 38/ Ibid Foreword
- 39/ Ibid P73
- 40/ G.W.R. Great Western Railway Ports. (Plymouth), 1937, P71
- 41/ Chapman Twixt Rail And Sea, P61
- 42/ Ibid P64. Chapman's general reference here drew upon an extensive literature of the celebration literature of the celebration and interaction of empire, trade and cultural identity. From Classical representations of Alexandria or Ostia or the sixteenth and seventeenth century geo-political relationship of Europe to the Orient and the New World in the art and literature of Portugal, Italy, Spain and the Low Countries; likewise, the colonial-mercantile interests of Britain and France in the eighteenth century and through the self-conscious Crown-Imperial perspectives of Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cultural authority was paramount. The Baedeker Guides to Britain through the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries likewise reflect the international, cosmopolitan credentials of political, economic and cultural authority. See also Alain Corbin. Lure Of The Sea. Chapter Seven: The Visit To The Harbour, PP187-97
- 43/ See John M. Mackenzie, ed. Imperialism And Popular Culture, Chapter Nine, Stephen Constantine. 'Bringing The Empire Alive.' The Empire Marketing Board And Imperial Propaganda, 1926-33, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1986
- 44/ G.W.R. Magazine April, 1925. P147
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- 46/ Stanley Baldwin. On England, Penguin ed. 1939 PPs 187-88 Philip Wilkinson 'Stanley Baldwin' P264.
- 47/ John M. Mackenzie, ed. Imperialism And Popular Culture. In Touch with the Infinite, P186

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- 49/ Stephen Constantine. *Bringing the Empire Alive*, John Mackenzie ed. Imperialism And Popular Culture P192  
See also Raphael Samuel. *Island Stories. Unravelling Britain*. Versa, London, 1998. *Empire Stories: The Imperial and the Domestic*. PPs 84-93  
*London Underground*. *London Guide No. 3*, 1924. P133. Kew Gardens in context of commercial welfare of Empire.
- 50/ G.W.R. Magazine, December, 1931. P507
- 51/ Correlli Barnett. *The Collapse Of British Power*, Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1984 P211. Barnett's sustained critique of what he considered the disingenuous 'Little England' perceptions of Empire are evident in his chosen imagery and, specifically, in his representation of Stanley Baldwin (PP65-68). This, together with what he considered was Britain's misplaced faith in any Anglo-American 'special relationship', indicated something of his impatience and barely concealed contempt for the domesticated, commercial perspectives and sentimentally inspired imperial policies that he derides throughout his work.
- 52/ G.W.R. Magazine, February, 1932, P96
- 53/ Christian Barman. *Next Station. A Railway Plans For The Future*, George Allen and Unwin, London for the G.W.R. 1947.
- 54/ Ibid P19
- 55/ James C. Inglis. 'A New Railway Through The Garden of England', G.,W.R. Magazine, October 1904. Inglis also incorporated a considerable historical-cultural dimension in this work, celebrating perspectives of landscape, tradition and cultural identity.
- 56/ Ibid P168
- 57/ John W.E. Helm. *The Grouping Years (1923-1938 P74/75)*
- 58/ Christian Barman. *Next Station*, P18
- 59/ G.W.R. Magazine. *The Spring Harvest of the West Country*, April, 1938 PPs 141-143
- 60/ Ibid *Cornish Anemones Come to Town* December 1938. P493

## CHAPTER THREE

### Landscape, Literature and Stylistic Differentials

#### THE WYE VALLEY: PANORAMIC PERSPECTIVES AND THE POETRY OF RAPID MOTION

#### THE COTSWOLDS: THE REFLECTIVE GAZE

As a fundamental principle in the formulation and perception of cultural imagery Anthony D. Smith ‘The Ethnic Origins of Nations’, 1986, emphasised “the fusion of community and terrain through the identification of natural with historic sites.”<sup>1</sup> Relating examples from Europe, the Middle and Far East, Smith identifies natural features - rivers, mountains, lakes, wetlands and so on, likewise, castles, abbeys, monasteries and variously formulated civic and religious sites, personalities and events - as “symbols of the sources of national genius and creativity...”<sup>2</sup> This perspective has been addressed in the previous chapter in terms of Alain Corbin’s representation of the harbour and the co-ordinates of trade, industry and national or civic prestige; the following three chapters examine the G.W.R.’s handling of this ‘Fusion’ principle and the symbolic properties of landscape in engaging three definitive areas of the company’s cultural expression. This chapter looks to the representation of the Wye Valley (the lower reaches, from Hereford) and the Cotswolds as landscapes of Englishness; Chapter Five examines the G.W.R.’s Celtic construction and Chapter Six, that of England as constructed within the political, historical and aesthetic agenda of cultural inheritance and mission directed at American interests.

The G.W.R.’s literary works ‘The Wye Valley’, Volumes One and Two, 1924, part of the company’s ‘Handy-Aid’ series, were, superficially, routine guide books celebrating that specific landscape and its aesthetic and historical attractions. Volume One covered

the Upper Wye; Volume Two, the lower reaches from Hereford to Chepstow. But these works were also distinctive in that their particular literary focus and stylistic form set them somewhat apart from most G.W.R. works. Of all the 'Handy Aid' publications, 'The Wye Valley', 1924, Volumes One and Two, were the only examples that incorporated the railway route and journey directly into the text, integrating it as a thematic feature and focus. The 'Through The Window' series - Paddington To Penzance, Birkenhead and Killarney, 1924, 25 and 26, respectively, had a similar style but operated in terms of a thematic link with Paddington.

Sub-titled, 'Its Stately Castles, Matchless Ruins, Old-World Towns and Lovely Scenery', 'The Wye Valley' delivered its historical, aesthetic and cultural agenda by means of its challenging and dynamic adaptation of two literary perspectives on landscape and perception. The first of these addressed the tradition of the picturesque journey - the Introduction to 'Volume Two' acknowledged William Gilpin's, 'Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, etc., relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty', 1782 - wherein, the desired aesthetic experience was carefully identified and thence composed in terms of elevation, perspective, backdrop and so on, and was thus celebrated through the received stylistic conventions of this literary genre. The second, and seemingly contradictory perspective, was that of Panoramic Travel. This was the experience of landscape as seen from the moving train; a perceptual process different in its subject - object orientation from that of close, detailed observation, as explained by Wolfgang Schivelbusch in "The Railway Journey".

Panoramic perception, in contrast to traditional perception, no longer belonged to the same space as the perceived objects: the traveller saw the objects, landscapes, etc. through the apparatus that moved him through the world. That machine and the motion it created became integrated into his visual perception: thus he could only see things in motion. That mobility of vision - for a traditionally orientated

sensorium, such as Ruskin's, an agent for the dissolution of reality - became a prerequisite for the normality of panoramic vision. This vision no longer experienced evanescence: evanescent reality had become the new reality.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Schivelbusch observed:

The railroad choreographed the landscape. The motion of the train shrank space, and thus displayed in immediate succession objects and pieces of scenery that in their original spatiality belonged to separate realms. The traveller who gazed through the compartment window at such successive scenes, acquired a novel ability that Gastineau calls "la philosophie synthétique du comp d oeil," (the synthetic philosophy of the glance).<sup>4</sup>

It was this perspective of dynamic impact, that characterised the Paddington-Birkenhead volume of 'Through the Window', G.W.R., 1925, in its celebrations of the progressive and dramatically contrasting choreography of Shakespeare's Warwickshire and the industrial sublime of the Birmingham-West Bromwich districts seen from the train in a relatively short space of time. Thus in encompassing urban, industrial and deeply rural landscapes in somewhat rapid and seemingly random procession, the panoramic vision further reinforced the collective imagery of the G.W.R. landscape and territory - the dialogue between country and city.

Looking specifically to the Wye Valley itinerary, the G.W.R. offered three particular experiential elements: the pleasures of a landscape structured and articulated through the received literary convention of the picturesque; the choreographed spectacle of the panoramic vision and the accompanying dimension of effortless access and service - the convenience offered by the train, combining comfort and efficiency with the singular, exclusive angle of vision that was the gift of the railway journey. All Great Western literature relating to the Wye Valley emphasised the role of the railway in presenting the

most dramatically challenging, panoramic perspectives. 'Historic Sites and Scenes' declared: "For the traveller who has little time at his disposal there is no better way of seeing the beauty of the sylvan Wye than from the carriage of a Great Western train."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, 'The Wye Valley', Vol II, eagerly assured its readers: "The Great Western Railway holds the keys to the Wye Valley, as it does that of almost all famous holiday-haunts of the West."<sup>6</sup> 'The Wye Valley'. Vol I noted that, "the Cambrian railroad [G.W.R., following the Railway's Act, 1921 as noted earlier] is on more consistently intimate terms with the river than the road."<sup>7</sup>

By way of a further and final stylistic reference within this introductory context, both volumes of 'The Wye Valley' focused upon the sense of spectacle and aesthetic distinction but it is also evident that the literary style was directly expressive of sensation and movement as reflected in the constant references to successive challenging angles of vision, the extensive recourse to active verbs - "climbing, rushing, falling, running," - in the interactive presentation of the movement of the train within the landscape. Thus, the thematic focus of journeying and of progressive discovery was not simply stated but was conveyed through stylistic participation, after the manner of the panoramic vision and R.G. Bradley's "poetry of rapid motion through rural England"<sup>8</sup>

This overall perspective on the Wye Valley inevitably sharpened the commercial potential of the line, not least, in terms of the North American market, given the stylised focus of aesthetic, historical encounter. As always, the G.W.R. stressed the easy access to the Wye Valley and the various, convenient starting points. It offered three particular gateways, each one linked to Paddington, to underline this convenience and to promote cultural and collective identity. Llanidloes marked the northern approach, with Hereford and Ross-on-Wye offering access to the lower reaches. Through trains from Paddington served each of these three 'gateways' whilst Moat Lane Junction, for Llanidloes, also catered for valuable trade from Liverpool, Manchester and the North generally. This survey concentrates on 'The Wye Valley,' Vol II.

The second volume covered the better known and easily accessible lower districts along the river, from Hereford to Chepstow, where it met the Severn. This entire stretch of the River Wye was presented in the literary context of the picturesque and the sublime, given the numerous opportunities en-route, to celebrate the dramatic combinations of landscape, historical interest and challenging aesthetic perspectives.

Hereford was the key location in every sense. It was presented in terms of its distinguished historical identity which was paramount, but the overall cultural context was significantly enhanced through the specific interaction of the historical imagery - the iconography of cathedral, castle and city, - with the rich, rural landscape that characterised the wider social and political identity. Together, they evoked Englishness, as in the resonant cultural imagery of “the English cathedral city that has stood for more than a thousand years on the banks of the Wye. [in a landscape] largely made up of tree-clad hills, and meadows dotted with pollard oaks.”<sup>9</sup> The G.W.R. was forthright in asserting historical identity, as in ‘Holiday Haunts’.

Hereford was one of the great towns of Saxon England and was the capital of the Mercian Kings, who founded the cathedral, which in its present form, is chiefly from the eleventh century. Apart from the fine Norman work, Hereford Cathedral is rich in treasures and curiosities. The Mappa Mundi, a great wall map dating from 1300, is unique and the chained library contains over 2000 rare and beautiful books.<sup>10</sup>

Attention was also drawn to the Cathedral School, endowed in 1382; The Bishop’s Palace, the castle, “built by Harold in 1055 . . . completely demolished by Cromwell’s soldiers,” and “some beautiful half-timbered houses to link the town with its long and troubled past.”<sup>11</sup> The emphasis in this literary celebration was clearly that of a distinguished cultural heritage celebrated in a clearly formulated past-present spectrum.

In maintaining the stylistic presentation of ‘the journey’, however, ‘The Wye

Valley' created the spatial dimension and the sensation of onward progress by defining the landscape between Hereford and Ross-on-Wye thematically, as the 'prelude' to ever-more impressive experience.

The portion of the Wye Valley that lies between Hereford and Ross must be regarded as a prelude to that supremely impressive scenery which is to be found on either side of "the bounteous river" between Ross and its junction with the great tidal stream, "the Severn Sea." You no sooner quit the capital of Pomonia than you find yourself amongst verdant meadows and fruitful orchards, traversing some of the richest pasture land in all England.<sup>12</sup>

The sensation of movement, surprise, discovery and, significantly, expectation is evident here. It was also significant that this landscape "between Hereford and Ross" represented the fitting 'prelude', hence the thematic, preparatory imagery of prosperity, abundance and stability as conveyed in the celebration of verdant meadows, fruitful orchards and 'richest pasture'.

The Great Western designated Ross-on-Wye, "The Gate of the Wye".<sup>13</sup> The imagery of gateways again offered with the sensation of movement; that of entry and exit, of moving from one area to another with all the attendant associations of demarcation, differentiation and hierarchical categorisation that constituted the ongoing sub-text. 'The Wye Valley', Vol II, offered an unequivocal statement of the superlative landscape of the Wye from Ross to Chepstow on almost every page. Having offered a short, historically-defined reference to Ross, the G.W.R. went on to intensify its 'gateway' imagery. Goodrich Castle was celebrated as an aesthetic experience every bit the equal of its historical impact: the one, in effect, informing the other. Both dimensions were celebrated in the G.W.R.'s acclamation that the site represented, "The Inner Gate of the Wye". Thus, 'The Wye Valley'.<sup>14</sup>

The castle as well as the neighbouring church, seem to guard as



sentinels the deep gorge at the entrance of which they stand . . . the stream almost surrounds three sides of the ancient fortress which reminds one forcibly of the far-famed castles of the Rhineland.<sup>15</sup>

Favourable comparisons of English landscape and architecture with European sites, evident here, enhanced the G.W.R.'s English cultural agenda of historical and aesthetic congruence. 'The Wye Valley' also identified Goodrich Castle as 'A Saxon Stronghold'.<sup>16</sup> Looking to perceived cultural credentials, ethnic identification was proclaimed. "Experts pronounce the windows of the river-front to be as Saxon as they can be."<sup>17</sup> The G.W.R.'s own commissioned expert, however, thought otherwise. Charles Oman in 'Castles', G.W.R. 1926, declared the keep, the oldest part of the castle, to date from the time of Henry I and was, therefore, clearly Norman.<sup>18</sup>

Having entered the 'Inner Gate', the Great Western's survey then focused on what it considered a definitive location for the entire Wye Valley: the experience of Symonds Yat. Great Western literature in respect of Symonds Yat left no room for misrepresentation. It was a statement of total identity and celebration. 'The Wye Valley' included two particularly significant observations: one, proclaiming the pre-eminent status of Symond's Yat in the hierarchy of aesthetic experience, and the other, recognising the role of the railway in directly contributing to creative perspective.

Symonds Yat may very well claim to be the most picturesque spot in all England, and the gem of the inland scenery of the National Holiday Line . . . You are now in the very heart of the Wye Valley.<sup>19</sup>

From the perspective of the valley floor it was argued that, "full justice to the wonderful views can only be obtained from the railway."<sup>20</sup> A.G. Bradley's *Rivers and Streams of England*, 1909, was enlisted by the G.W.R. for 'The Wye Valley', Vol II.

The railway with the help of tunnelling has broken through all barriers, and for a long distance gives the passenger an admirable passing view one cliff or the other.<sup>21</sup>

The G.W.R.'s 'Rambles in the Wye Valley'<sup>22</sup> also informed visitors that the path to the summit at Yat Rock began from the northern end of the station platform. Maxwell Fraser's contribution for 'Holiday Haunts' offered sublime proportions, setting the location into relationship with the surrounding landscape, near and far; from the panoramic heights to the intimacy of riverside detail. It was a powerfully-charged, emotional encounter with landscape, laden with the imagery of harmony and received resonances of an inheritance of fragile form, but vitally of ownership.

People come from all over the world to see Symonds Yat . . . Great orchards, shady woods and fantastically shaped rocks alternate with lush flower-decked pasture lands, tiny cottages of old-world beauty and ancient, lichen-clad churches, backed by the shapely wall of the Welsh Mountains, intensely blue with the magical haze of distance to form the setting for the peerless River, which, as though reluctant to leave such matchless loveliness, sweeps around in a magnificent bend almost forming itself into a circle. Whether seen from the summit of Symonds Yat Rock, or from the waterside, it is a view to remember with joy as long as life lasts.<sup>23</sup>

Moving on to Monmouth the Great Western again celebrated the town's history and, in particular, historical and literary figures of recognised cultural resonance. It was the perspective of 'England Triumphant,' a definitively Great Western characterisation. 'The Wye Valley' set the larger rural context; 'Holiday Haunts' provided the historic literary heritage. Thus, 'The Wye Valley' declared of Monmouth:

It lies embowered among gentle hills, diversified by wood, corn and pasture and rises from the river with considerable stateliness in the form of an ampitheatre.<sup>24</sup>

'Holiday Haunts' built upon this with the historical dimension.

From the time a Norman castle replaced the ancient Saxon fortress

a constant succession of glittering personalities and notable events has ever woven into the splendid fabric of the city's history. In this tiny walled and moated medieval town, Geoffrey of Monmouth was born to enrich the literature of the world by his fabulous histories.<sup>25</sup>

A litany of English cultural achievement followed in 'Holiday Haunts' with the literary legacy of the 'hero' as bequeathed by Geoffrey, Shakespeare, Sir Thomas Malory and Tennyson, but the survey culminated in the celebration of Monmouth's most famous son, King Henry V. Great Western literature proclaimed him, "the most brilliant warrior in the history of our land, the one English king who never knew defeat."<sup>26</sup> Nelson was also linked with the town and, like the Town Gateway and Bridge, commemorating Henry V, so also, Monmouth was host to what 'Holiday Haunts' described as "the finest collection [of Nelsonian relics] of its kind in the world."<sup>27</sup> Collectively, the Great Western's presentation of Monmouth marked the sustained celebration of Englishness integrating rural imagery with the historical and literary record into dramatic experiential encounter by close reference to personage, place and event - an overall expression of cultural authority.

Southward from Monmouth, the Great Western literature focused upon Tintern, setting the location into an overall context of the larger Wye Valley and, beyond that, to an international dimension. The focus was primarily cultural, drawing on a powerful aesthetic and historical perspective as it had been generally throughout the course of the Valley. But Tintern was perceived to be distinct, in as far as 'The Wye Valley' called it, "the great architectural treasure, not only of the Wye Valley, but of the whole of the Welsh Marches. There is nothing quite like Tintern in all England ..."<sup>28</sup> In wider-ranging reference, 'The Wye Valley' continued:

Can one wonder at the spell which glorious Tintern has exercised over countless generations of travellers and poets? It must help very materially to make the Wye Valley a travel shrine to every member

of the Anglo-Saxon race all over the world.<sup>29</sup>

'Holiday Haunts' sustained, indeed, intensified the magical element in the depiction of Tintern and, in doing so, underlined the sense of privileged awareness; informed perception. It was primarily an emotive, aesthetic perspective of encounter within the discourse of citizenship.

Tintern has such a sublime beauty that it is forever a thing apart in the memory of all who have been there.<sup>30</sup>

Celebrating "the supreme fact of its overwhelming beauty."<sup>31</sup> 'Holiday Haunts' went for heightened sensitivity, akin to the fragility definitive of Symonds Yat. The exclusive, initiate perspective, defining and differentiating "people with spiritual vision", was explicit.

But if Tintern is fair in the sunshine, there are no words to express its strange and magic beauty in the silvery rays of the moon and during the Harvest Moon period, this ethereal charm culminates in a tradition which draws people from all over the world. The great, Honey-coloured moon then shines through a particular window with weird effect and people with spiritual vision can see the shades of monks who once lived in the Abbey, stealing through the radiant light.<sup>32</sup>

Below Tintern, the River Wye became tidal and the last great landmark was the town of Chepstow. The castle was acclaimed for its superlative situation and, likewise, the efforts of the community "to retain the atmosphere of the Middle Ages."<sup>33</sup> Having offered the panoramic perspective over the course of the railway journey southward through the Wye Valley, 'Holiday Haunts' included one further notable example. This concerned the Wyndcliffe, 800 feet above the river at Chepstow. In the structured presentation of this dramatic landscape, as defined by the vantage point of the observer and their relationship to it, the G.W.R. provided a further expression of thematic integration;

that of harmonious relationship between landscape and people, a perspective discussed by David Matless as that of “outlook geography” and an expression of citizenship.

From the summit of the cliff, the varied beauties of the counties of Gloucester, Somerset, Wilts, Devon, Glamorgan, Hereford, Monmouth, Brecon and Worcester can be seen spread out like a vast and exquisitely coloured contour map and threaded by the silvery lines of the Wye, the Usk and the mighty Severn.<sup>34</sup>

The G.W.R.’s literature on the Wye Valley was in many respects an innovative exercise in literary representation, within the context of railway-based publications in Britain. It exemplified the panoramic vision. It also included sustained representations of picturesque perspectives organised around a range of challenging angles of vision - a perceptual process which, like the principle of panoramic vision, shared the pursuit of dramatic, novel spectacle in landscape. This conceptual structure - of distance and proximity, and of high-line and low level projection delivered in the progress of the train - presented a heightened appreciation of landscape and, in the cultural agenda of the G.W.R., sealed the relationship between historical process, its setting and its evaluation. Tintern Abbey, or Goodrich Castle, within the carefully composed rural-historical environment that similarly contextualised the likes of Hereford and Monmouth, all served to reflect the G.W.R.’s appreciation of the need to deliver distinctive, dynamic literary perspectives of both open and subliminal cultural and political resonance. Thus, ‘The Wye Valley’, in exemplifying these qualities, can be said to directly challenge any suggestion that G.W.R. literature was stylistically and thematically unadventurous, instinctively conservative in policy and practice and, in terms of its wider reference, no more than that of guide-book status.

Whilst the Great Western’s chosen approach in the presentation of the Wye Valley was that of the panoramic perspective, its presentation of the Cotswolds, whilst thematically consistent, pursued a very different focus. In doing so, the company clearly

demonstrated its policy of differentiating and stylistically infusing its numerous regional and county locations with what were considered to be their distinctive aesthetic and cultural characteristics. The G.W.R.'s literary perspective thus contrasted with, for example, H.V. Morton, considered earlier, or that of Edward Thomas' celebration of rural England: 'The South Country', 1909. Unlike the G.W.R.'s clearly differentiated landscapes, Thomas declared:

In a sense this country is all 'carved out of the carver's brain' and has not a name . . . As often as not I have no doubt mingled parts of Kent with my Wiltshire and so on.<sup>35</sup>

Comparing the Great Western's presentation of the Wye Valley with that of the Cotswolds, the latter focused upon a landscape largely beyond railways, as was clear from the company's article: 'The Unknown Cotswolds', 1935.<sup>36</sup> Far removed from kaleidoscopic perspectives, this work pronounced:

Life in the Cotswolds is peaceful. Its quiet culture and harmonious beauty can only be taken in long, slow draughts, and not gulped at fifty miles an hour -- travel by rail to the fringe of the Cotswolds and then go quietly through the peaceful lanes with no thought of anything so soul-destroying as a mileage schedule.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, the earlier 'Cotswolds Ways' declared:

If Campden should be invaded by the multitude, its charm and sanctity would flee. Fortunately, its beauties cannot be seen by motoring or rushing through it. It needs careful preparation and humble entry on foot. There is no entertainment other than for modest visitors.<sup>38</sup>

This statement, unequivocal in its statement of citizenship, directly countered the motorist-led discovery of rural England, exemplified by H.V. Morton's "In Search Of" series and as represented in J.B. Priestley's 'English Journey', 1934 and his Introduction to 'The Beauty of Britain', 1935.

### Cotswolds' Perspectives

The Great Western's literature on the Cotswolds -- 'Cotswolds Ways', 1924, 'The Cotswold Country', 1936, detailed articles, as in 'The Unknown Cotswolds', G.W.R. Magazine, 1934, and the extensive entries in 'Holiday Haunts', - indicated the significance of this particular region for the projection of company imagery and cultural representation. For Great Western purposes, the Cotswolds were definitive of rural England as the organic community, quintessentially pastoral and rooted in aesthetic harmony and historic continuity. This perspective, common to the G.W.R. literature and to topographical literature generally, incorporated a further characteristic dimension: that of an intuitive, metaphysical property - a quasi-religious context of authentication embracing an initiate context of communion and encounter, witness and identity. The literature and the experience of the Cotswolds conformed to, and confirmed, the properties of pilgrimage and received protocol of participation, as indicated in the earlier reference to Chipping Campden - to 'special preparation' and 'humble entry on foot.'

The Cotswolds accommodated a broad agenda of variously defined socio-political, aesthetic and cultural appropriations, as illustrated elsewhere in Patrick Wright's detailed thematic focus, 'The Village That Died For England', his specific Dorsetshire study.<sup>39</sup> Looking to the Cotswolds, it was evident that they accommodated perspectives as diverse as those of John Ruskin and William Morris<sup>40</sup> - 'News from Nowhere' and the celebration of Medieval ideals delivered via the Arts and Crafts movement, likewise, the social, economic and political aspirations of professional society in the urban-orientated, celebration of rural Picturesque, through to those of Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Rosebury enlisting rural England into the complex expression of imperial destiny.<sup>41</sup> The agenda likewise addressed various representations of 'Imperial Sunset' - the broad thematic spectrum of the retreat to rural values, be it the retrospective, elegaic, essentially rural perspective of Martin Weiner or of Colls and Dodd ('Englishness'),<sup>42</sup> or of the near eschatological cast of Correlli Barnet.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the indeterminate climate of political,

economic and industrial affairs, both nationally and internationally and, not least, the perceived threat of rapid urbanisation, were all reflected in rural-national representations. Furthermore, and in close correlation psychologically, as Paul Fussell, in 'The Great War and Modern Memory',<sup>44</sup> and, alternatively, Jay Winter's, 'Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning'<sup>45</sup> have shown, there was always the massive, inestimable legacy of the Great War resonating at every level of experience. Winter's analysis of the concepts of identity, memory and commemoration in both personal and communal contexts, have particular significance. Memory and the subject - object orientation in relation to person, place, experience, event and time was a repeated, thematic element of the Cotswold literature, rarely overtly formulated, but an essential element within the mystically-charged presentation. In the qualities of ancient peace, continuity and harmony expressed through its aesthetic properties, the Cotswold landscape effectively embodied commemoration and, definitively, cultural identity, celebrated, not least, in its demarcatory dimensions. Thus the thematic parallels with Winter's reference to the local-national-international designations and those of Anthony Smith's 'high' and 'low' cultural identifications.

After August, 1914, commemoration was an act of citizenship. To remember was to affirm community, to assert its moral character, and to exclude from it those values, groups or individuals that placed it under threat. This form of collective affirmation in wartime identified individuals and their families with the community at large understood both in terms of a localised landscape and a broader and a more vaguely defined national entity under siege or threat.<sup>46</sup>

Anglo-American perspectives, addressing a cultural-commercial spectrum of common identity and orientation reflected a further, related celebration of this Cotswold agenda. (See Chapter Six) Rural England thus engaged the historical-political agenda of Greater Britain and Empire and the industrial-commercial structure that sustained it.



Looking directly to the literary record, J.B. Priestley's cultural set-piece, his well known 'English Journey', 1934,<sup>47</sup> characterised the region as, "the most English and least spoiled of our countrysides."<sup>48</sup> Priestley extolled the qualities of ancient peace and rural continuity, he wrote of one Cotswold valley as "looking as if it had decided to detach itself from the rest of England about the time of the Civil War."<sup>49</sup> In lyrical tone he evoked a thematically fragile aesthetic, of special place,

The day was brilliant above but below there was a very faint haze over everything, so that the hillsides and trees and walls had that gauzy gleaming look which belongs to the unreality and enchantment of the theatre.<sup>50</sup>

As evidently far more than the listed iconography of field, farm, hamlet and church, this was the inspirational landscape of privileged, access and heritage.

Burford, as presented in the G.W.R.'s 'Unknown Cotswolds', was defined by similar, aesthetically focused and specifically structured perceptions. It thus took its allotted place in terms of the hierarchy of Englishness.

Burford must be included even if it does not come within the class of the unknown. But it is one of these temperamental places that must be approached with infinite tact. Firstly you must come to it from the top end - it is a tragic waste to see it for the first time from the bottom of the hill - and you will be entranced by the sheer magic of the scene.<sup>51</sup>

The picturesque perception of stylised aesthetic etiquette was apparent here and was intensified in a specifically detailed reference thereafter.

Uneven rows of houses, many of them typical of the gabled grace of the fifteenth century, flank the wide street with the noble church and river bridge standing proudly at the foot of the hill. It is a tone picture of grey and brown, here and there brightened by a flash of red

or blue from a sign swinging outside a house or shop, the whole set off by the broad green verge running down the hill. The magic of Burford is most potent on a misty day for then the haze and the pennons of gently rising smoke soften the scene into one of harmonious loveliness. In any case, Burford cannot be overlooked if only because of its church, which could provide an object lesson for almost every page of British history since the Saxons.<sup>52</sup>

Englishness, here was expressed through the two-fold reference to aesthetic structuring drawing on the received imagery of architecture and historic context and continuity, and that of the mystical, sublime characterisation inherent in the diffuse rendering of colour, texture and perspective, conferring such ethereal qualities, as in the presentation of Killarney in Southern Ireland, for example.

Chipping Campden was a further and, for the G.W.R., the finest exemplar of the Cotswold character. As with Burford there was the subtle blend of aesthetics and harmony. Maxwell Fraser's, 'The Cotswold Country', declared:

Nowhere can the Cotswold style of architecture, with its mullioned windows, grey slate roofs weathered to mellowness, dormered gables and graceful doorheads be seen to such perfection as at Chipping Campden where no jarring note of modernity has been allowed to mar the gracious beauty of the wide main street or the picturesque grouping of the alms-houses and great gateway of the magnificent church.<sup>53</sup>

Chipping Campden, in the Great Western literature, also embodied Maxwell Fraser's favourite theme, as expressed in her earlier works, 'Southern Ireland', 1932 and 'Somerset', 1934: that of identifying locations of outstanding aesthetic appeal with the atmosphere of the haunts of ancient peace, resisting any and every expression of modernity. Thus, again, the primacy of aesthetic harmony and historic continuity.

Outwardly Chipping Campden shows but little sign of the three hundred years and more since the majority of these lovely houses were first built, for it lies in the fold of the hills, away from the main roads. It has escaped the modern craze for change and has chosen the better part of peaceful contentment and enduring beauty.<sup>54</sup>

Thereafter, Fraser detailed the fourteenth and fifteenth century architectural heritage of the town, making particular reference to the church.

The church is a magnificent example of Perpendicular work with one of the loveliest of all noble Cotswold church towers and is well worthy of the wealthy and important town it was designed to serve.<sup>55</sup>

Paradoxically, given the historical thrust explicit within this last extract, but thematically consistent in terms of Maxwell Fraser's specific cultural agenda, she went on to state:

Apart from the Civil War, history has passed by the town as completely as modern industrialism has done.<sup>56</sup>

In these two seemingly contradictory and, thus, problematic statements the Great Western's appeal to aesthetic perceptions subsumed the historically-defined community. Whilst appealing to the process and results of historical development e.g. the church and the community generally, as here in the case of Chipping Campden, the contemporary focus of Cotswold harmony and continuity suggested the fulfillment of a role as a cultural foil within the G.W.R.'s collective representations. The community was not presented in terms of the dynamics of the commercial, political, social and cultural context of development that shaped and defined the Cotswold wool trade of the later Medieval or Tudor periods, as this, in both explaining and contextualising the historical and, therefore, the relative nature of the community, would serve to weaken or undermine the complex cultural agenda that defined much, but not all, in the Great Western's Cotswold perspective. This would effectively compromise the perceptual basis of the rural identification and its lyrical, elusive, mystical properties, thereby threatening the process of

participatory encounter in a personal or collective sense. A focused historical analysis would, effectively, de-mythologise the Cotswold experience but, paradoxically, it was an historically-structured representation in that it was thematically congruent with the G.W.R.'s collective cultural imagery. These representations of Chipping Campden alone, indicate the complex configuration of historical, aesthetic and implicit political identification that characterised the G.W.R.'s construction of Englishness.

The sense of cultural encounter within the Cotswold literature was reinforced stylistically in the company's consistent reference to value-enhanced adjectives fulfilling an evident normative function. Thus, "the noble church"; "graceful doorheads", "gracious beauty of the main street". Together with related reference to "dignified" and "stately" representations of regal provenance, there were also those celebrating homely, familiar continuity - "mellow, time-worn, weathered" with, of course, the obligatory reference to "picturesque" and "ancient". Given this 'special' perspective, enhanced by the fact that the literature was devoted almost entirely to imagery and associations linked to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - as was the case with the company's work on the Severn Valley and much more elsewhere - it is clear that the Cotswold presentation exemplified the 'culturally-loaded' properties of rural England. It was a perspective of communion and confirmation, not one of critical analysis, but for the G.W.R. it was always directly related to the political and cultural considerations central to the company's Anglo-American imagery. (See Chapter Six).

Reference to one further location, that of Broadway, allows us to broaden and sharpen the Cotswold focus. The Ward-Lock guide to the Cotswolds in the mid-fifties described Broadway as:

A pleasant place which has the misfortune to be popular, but which is nevertheless a place to be seen and to be enjoyed.<sup>57</sup>

Exclusive perspectives confronted popularist dimensions at Broadway and the prospective tension therein was reflected in the Great Western's representation as in the following

statement from a promotional work in the company magazine for May, 1934. Entitled, 'Half-Day Summer Holidays',<sup>58</sup> it was aimed at those, "who from lack of time, money and other considerations are prevented from enjoying the usual annual holiday."<sup>59</sup> But its specific theme in relation to the Cotswold agenda was of cultural focus: the celebration of Englishness, relative to the particular experience of the participant - and, therein, a statement of differentiation, but, crucially, of citizenship.

No-one who calls himself a true Englishman can ever tire of the  
Cotswold country.<sup>60</sup>

Broadway was served directly by the G.W.R.'s Birmingham-Cheltenham main line which consequently offered access to Cotswold communities in the vicinity of the line. Prior to its opening in 1908, James Inglis, General Manager, G.W.R., helped popularise the region in an article, entitled, 'A Railway Through the Garden of England', published in the company magazine, in 1904.<sup>61</sup> Thus Broadway, also situated on a main road route, represented something of a culturally perceived 'frontier'. The village had much to commend it in terms of aesthetic properties and historic associations, as was reflected in 'Cotswold Ways', 1924. The church was presented in terms of an experiential encounter with the past and, significantly, that of the American visitor whose reactions, in contrast with the assumed familiarity of English-based perceptions, would be more sharply focused. The thematic agenda of American-orientated circumstances of cultural appropriation, inheritance and accommodation is evident. Drawing on the perceived qualities of informed identification with the English cultural tradition, 'Cotswold Ways', quoting Nathaniel Hawthorne, delivered an American perspective on past-present identification and the recurrent celebration of historic continuity. The imagery of the tree - of roots, branches, growth and longevity - had deep resonance in Anglo-American relations, and the properties of personal encounter and participation, generally, are evident.

But while you are still new in the old country, it thrills you with a  
strange emotion to think that this little church . . . humble as it seems,

stood for ages under the Catholic faith, and has not materially changed since Wycliffe's days, and that it looked as grey as now in Bloody Mary's time, and that Cromwell's troopers broke off the stone noses of those same gargoyles that are now grinning in your face. So, too, with the immemorial yew tree: you see its great roots grasping hold of the earth like gigantic claws clinging so sturdily that no effort of time can wrench them away; and there being life in the old tree, you feel all the more as if a contemporary witness were telling you of things that have been.<sup>62</sup>

Broadway also presented a somewhat different perspective on the theme of identity addressing a revised definition of exclusivity and continuity. 'The Cotswold Country' proclaimed:

. . . no other Cotswold village can point to so many wealthy and celebrated people as owners of its time-worn gabled houses . . . these comparative newcomers have used their wealth to restore the ancient houses with care and discretion and they are to be congratulated accordingly upon the work they have done to maintain the old-world beauty of Broadway.<sup>63</sup>

The reference here to the maintenance of old-world beauty in restoration work by the wealthy and "celebrated" engaged the perspectives of urban-rural fusion, Raymond Williams' identification of "a rural mode developed as a cultural superstructure on the profits of industrial and imperial development."<sup>64</sup> In this, as in the related context of Anglo-American interests and the shifting perspectives of Empire, the G.W.R.'s presentation of the Cotswolds informed the distinctive, interactive agenda of national and international affairs and that of fundamental relationships between past and present; continuity and change. Furthermore, and as thematically consistent with the G.W.R.'s perspectives, the Introduction to the Ward Lock Guide, 'The Cotswolds',<sup>65</sup> offers a fitting

summative statement. In terms of time, early post-World War Two, place and event, the writing reflected a powerful expression of the interaction of past and present and the wider national and international context within which the cultural identity of the Cotswolds and their celebrated qualities of inspiration, harmony and continuity were substantiated. In the tradition and style of the Great Western's literary work, this was an unreserved and potent affirmation of Englishness.

There is no kindlier country in Britain than the Cotswolds. It is significant that, during the period before the war when peace and harmony were increasingly needed and increasingly difficult of attainment, the district became more widely known. Now that peace has been hard-won we may seek harmony with lighter heart, and it is here our search ends, for harmony is, in fact, the very keynote of the Cotswolds. Hills roll on to hill, valley succeeds valley, with effortless undulation: even the bold edges of the western boundary have an air of playful boast as though demonstrating to their mountainous neighbours of Wales that a sense of height and wide outlook need not be a matter of grim, bar rocks. And in no part of Britain is there such an absence of discord.<sup>66</sup>

The Cotswold imagery definitive of historical tradition and rural-aesthetic perspectives embodied the received expressions of essential Englishness. But the foregoing analysis has also attempted to contextualise this evident cultural characterisation within the much wider reference of imperial and international proportions. One final reference to this theme can again affirm the sense of the integral nature of Englishness.

'Cotswold Ways', in company with all such literature on that district, celebrated the symbolism associated with the source of the River Thames, despite the rival claims of Seven Springs and Thamesmead to that distinction. This G.W.R. publication tapped an historic, literary tradition that set the Seven Springs location near Cheltenham into the

expansive political, cultural and, indeed, imperial context of national identity. Drawing on John Taylor's seventeenth century narrative of the rivers Thames and Isis.<sup>67</sup> 'Cotswold Ways' suggested that Taylor's work could well provide a fitting thematic model within which its now narrative might be set.<sup>68</sup> From its source, deep in Cotswold country, the Thames, fed by its tributaries, flowed eastward through rural England, through Oxford, Windsor and London and thereafter to the sea and the world beyond. Taylor represented the Thames thematically in terms of a stately procession but, significantly, one of growth and power - commercial, political and cultural. The river thus embraced rural, literary, regal, metropolitan and imperial-international definitions: a comprehensive construction.

As with the Great Western's 'Through the Window' series, wherein all locations, landscapes and representations were defined in relation to one-another and, significantly, to Paddington as the focal centre, so Taylor's 'Thames and Isis' united or reconciled all seemingly disparate cultural characterisations. The perspective was evident, indeed, explicit in the company's work, 'The Glories of the Thames', 1923.<sup>69</sup>

There is, too, much for the mind to ponder over in following the peregrinations of the silvery stream. From its very source to its mouth the Thames is inextricably linked with British history.<sup>70</sup>

Thereafter, the account drew upon ideals of harmony and thematic continuity linking Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon Dorchester, ecclesiastical and literary Oxford, Windsor and Runnymede with London - the Pool and Great Metropolis. As with the literature on the Severn and Wye Valleys, the intention was to present a detailed cultural statement constructed according to clearly defined historiographical principles. Thus, again, the Cotswold presentation can be seen to have fulfilled a significant role in the overall formulation of English imagery and identity as mediated through the sustained expression of integration and harmony.



## References

## Chapter Three

## The Wye Valley and The Cotswolds

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- 3/ Wolfgang Schivelbusch. *The Railway Journey*, Berg Publishing, Leamington, Hamburg, New York. 1977. P64
- 4/ Ibid P60
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- 5/ G.W.R. *Wye Valley*, Vol Two, 1924. P5
- 7/ G.W.R. *Wye Valley*, Vol One, 1924, P3
- 8/ A.G. Bradley. *The Rivers and Streams Of England*. A and C Black. London. 1909  
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- 32/ Ibid P854
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- 34/ David Matless. Landscape and Englishness PPs 73-79. Holiday Haunts 1936  
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- 35/ Edwards Thomas. The South Country, Hutchinson, London. 1909 Re-print  
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- 37/ Ibid P365
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P23. See also P19, same volume - "The old church at Oddington";  
its silence and "its quiet communion with the dead" ... Where those  
who "burst upon it unexpectedly stand fettered by the sudden  
spell."

- 39/ Patrick Wright. *The Village That Died For England*, Vintage, London. 1996. In analysing the perspectives of rural-historical tradition which Wright considers here in the substance and symbolism of the Dorset village of Tyneham, there is the fundamental rejection of the latter-day heritage movement. Likewise, earlier constructions - Arthur Bryant, Stanley Baldwin and topographical-cultural writers such as H.J. Massingham - variously represent atrophy and the distinctly hierarchical, exclusive appreciation defining the cultural ownership of the past. Wright specifically quotes Arthur Bryant and his 'English Saga', 1940, as indicative of the perspective of timeless values which here and, specifically, elsewhere, in 'On Living In An Old Country', Verso, 1985, he (Wright) denigrates as "timeless when it has been frozen solid, closed down and limited to what can be exhibited as a fully accomplished 'historical past' which demands only appreciation and protection." 'On Living In An Old Country,' P78. Elsewhere in this volume, Deep England is presented as "an indivisible heritage - a kind of sacrament", P83, and of demonstrating "a narcissism that underpins and resonates at the heart of an innermost being that also happens to be secretly shared by others of the same formation." On Living Old Country. P86
- 40/ John Ruskin, 'Inaugural Lecture' (1870), *The Works of John Ruskin*, Vol XX. E.T. Cook and Alexander Weddenburg, George Allen, London, 1905. PP41-43. Ruskin correlated the imagery and substance of "a sceptred isle, source of light" and centre of peace with that of "a destiny - the highest ever set before a nation" . . . [a nation] "rich in an inheritance of honour bequeathed to us through a thousand years of noble history . . ." This was clearly an inspirational forerunner of the G.W.R.'s dialectical construction of the cultural properties of Cotswold Deep England with those of wider industrial, commercial and imperial perspectives. The context of mission and authority was a shared feature. William Morris: *News from Nowhere*, 1890, Penguin Classics edition, 1993. Morris was a dedicated disciple of Ruskin and in the celebration of Medieval society - the pastoral setting and artisan culture of the organic society - The Arts and Crafts Movement looked to an idealised pastoral England which, in its Cotswold context, was identified and celebrated in the G.W.R.'s 'Cotswold Ways' - See P41
- 41/ M.G. Jessett. F.R.G.S. *The Bond Of Empire*, Sampson Low Marston, London, 1902.
- 42/ R. Colls and P. Dodd ed, *Englishness. Politics and Culture 1880-1920*, Croom Holm. 1986. See particularly Jeremy Crump PP164-186 'The Identity of English Music'. *The Reception Of Elgar 1898-1935*. - "The changing reception of Elgar illustrates a major shift in ideas of Englishness between the wars, from assertive if insecure imperial pride to introspection and retreat". Drawing on perspectives of

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- 44/ Paul Fussell. *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1975.
- 45/ Jay Winter. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History*, Canto, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1995.
- 46/ Ibid P80. See also ref 51 for thematic impact. Also Anthony Smith, *History, Modernity and Nationalism in Representing The Nation: A Reader*. Ed David Boswell and Jessica Evans, Routledge, London. 1999 PPs 45-60
- 47/ J.B. Priestley. *English Journey*, Heinemann, London. 1934. Penguin ed, London. 1977.
- 48/ Ibid P50
- 49/ Ibid P60
- 50/ Ibid P60
- 51/ Unknown Cotswolds, *G.W.R. Magazine*, 1935, P268. Burford’s war memorial, 1914-18, dominated the photographs of the town taken from this position during the inter-war era, thus adding thematic impact here.
- 52/ Ibid P268
- 53/ *Cotswold Country* P48
- 54/ Ibid P48. See Fraser’s ‘Somerset’ *G.W.R.* for almost identical thematic reference and imagery, particularly her portrayal of Wells - ‘Somerset’, P80-85. Also ‘Holiday Haunts’, 1934, P613 - “Wells sheltered from the world by green hills, breathes the very spirit of Pre-Reformation days”.
- 55/ Ibid P498
- 56/ Ibid P50

- 57/ Ward-Lock Guide. The Cotswolds, 1950, London. P2
- 58/ G.W.R. Half-Day Summer Holidays, G.W.R. Magazine, May, 1934
- 59/ Ibid P229
- 60/ Ibid P229
- 61/ James Inglis. G.W.R. Magazine, October, 1904. PP167/170
- 62/ Cotswold Ways. P30
- 63/ Cotswold Country. P51
- 64/ Raymond Williams. The Country and the City, 1973. Hogarth, London. 1993  
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- 66/ Ibid P9
- 67/ Ed John Chandler. Travels Through Stuart Britain. The Adventures of John Taylor. The Water Poet, Sutton, Stroud, 1999 P129. From John Taylor, Description of the two famous rivers of Thames and Isis, John Haviland, London. 1632.
- 68/ FVM. Cotswold Ways, 1924, P41
- 69/ G.W.R. The Glories of the Thames. From Letchlade To Kingston. 1923.
- 70/ Ibid P2

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Celtic Sublime

The G.W.R.'s construction of Anglo-Saxon, English identification, revealed in its political, historical and aesthetic characterisations as the cultural landscape of Englishness and authority, was reinforced by reference to the company's 'Celtic' representation. Similarly constructed in terms of the thematic structure of landscape, people and event, indicated earlier, the Celtic characterisation, however, fulfilled a contrapuntal role to English-orientated perspectives.

Despite close and widely-ranging commercial and industrial associations with Cornwall, Wales, Southern Ireland and Brittany, their apparent, perceived Celtic qualities were formulated in terms of cultural difference and sense of otherness and were thus defined by their contrasts with Englishness, therein signalling, in content and style, the dominant properties of the latter. In short, the projected Celtic imagery corresponded in its various forms to a prescriptive, fundamentally metropolitan agenda. Summarising the Celtic experience, as presented in the G.W.R.'s concept of creative encounter, the role of landscape, mood and a broad consensus of appropriate attitudes and identification carried far more impact than any academically-referenced ethnology or socio-political analysis addressing verifiable notions of origin and development of cultural differentiation or, indeed, assimilation. As Stuart Piggott observes in terms of the popular perception of the Druids:

The Druids have in fact achieved a place in the average Englishman's mind as part of his heritage, set with Magna Carta, or Cavaliers and Roundheads in a misty perspective where Hampton Court, Stonehenge or Chatsworth can act as a back-cloth as required.<sup>1</sup>

David Brett's study of Irish dimensions of the modern Celtic cultural heritage, 'The

Construction of Heritage',<sup>2</sup> 1996, examines the role of language and imagery in the literary/visual stylistic conventions characterising the Celtic identity, which he contextualises within a subordinate geo-political and cultural register. Brett argues that the categories of the 'sublime' and the 'picturesque' - fundamental stylistic features of G.W.R. work - aestheticised historical experience and, in the case of Celtic inspired identifications, gave rise to an "ahistorical national heritage,"<sup>3</sup> wherein cultural authority was identified elsewhere: the eastern and western metaphors. Brett draws on Irish and Scottish sources for his particular purposes, but the Great Western Railway's literature of the inter-war era on Southern Ireland itself and on Cornwall, Wales or Brittany, has equal validity, given the determinedly uniform imagery and representational associations employed. With reference to 'Centre' and 'Periphery', in the context of political, economic and cultural hegemony, we read:

The process whereby a region or country is aestheticised is not of course, an innocent process; it implies that the power of designation has passed from one nexus of command to another. The relationship between the tourist and the toured is always based on what Edward Said has called "an uneven exchange." Typically, a peripheral area or country is designated as picturesque or sublime by visitors from a metropolitan 'centre' to whom the local inhabitants are economically and politically sub-ordinate; the locals then take on, with greater or lesser degrees of complicity, aspects of the roles assigned them in order to profit from visitors.<sup>4</sup>

It is also evident that, in the G.W.R.'s representative agenda of ethnicity in the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic identifications, as revealed in its literary style and thematic focus, the Saxon, English characterisation prevailed in incontestably 'Celtic' (Iron and Bronze Age, Romano-British) sites of immense cultural resonance. Where the location presented a rival identification, as, for example, the Berkshire and Wiltshire Downs, the

White Horse of Uffington, Avebury, the Dorset Downs and, as the historical identification of Glastonbury within Saxon documentation reflects, the company's consistent theme of directing attention to Anglo-Saxon credentials applied.

The G.W.R.'s presentation of Wales, beyond, that is, the heavily industrialised coastal strip of South Wales, was decisively that of romantic spectacle. 'Cardigan Bay Resorts', 1925 set the style for Ossian-inspired adventure; differentiating the observer and the observed.

With all this glamour of history, song, sea, wild romantic scenery, of cromlech, castle cray and Ilyn, there is all that we moderns demand for either recreation or residence.<sup>5</sup>

'Through The Window. Paddington To Birkenhead', 1925 drew an even more explicit distinction underlining English cultural authority. Subtitled, 'The Welsh Marches', this section of the book included the company's perspective on King Edward I and the conquest of Wales in the thirteenth century. There was also, perhaps, a certain parallel, contemporary resonance for the G.W.R. in terms of its recent acquisition of the extensive Cambrian Railway, through the company Groupings, in the Railway Act of 1921.<sup>6</sup>

The rugged landscape with its natural fortresses and vantage points, sheltering valleys and excellent possibilities for ambushing tactics, helps imagination to conjure up a vivid picture of the long and bitter struggle between a valiant, turbulent and almost unconquerable race with its home in the mountains and the greater nation advancing across the eastern lowlands to force upon its troublesome neighbour a measure of subjection which time has happily turned into a bond of union. Here is stage worthy of the drama played out upon it - but we may think of King Edward the First of England as something much better than a stage hero. He was every inch a statesman who saw through conflict to the ultimate good.<sup>7</sup>



Structurally, the passage was organised around contrasts - England; eastern lowlands, civilisation and progressive order; Wales, that of western wild freedom; of romantically-perceived mountain people committed to a tribal, warrior culture, ultimately doomed to extinction. The great Edwardian castles that ringed Wales which were later so enthusiastically celebrated in G.W.R. promotional literature - 'The Country of Castles' - were powerful symbols of English military, economic and cultural supremacy.

Hugh Kearney, in his recent work, 'The British Isles',<sup>8</sup> has drawn attention to the political dimension with regard to perceptions of Norman castles, cathedrals, abbeys and towns. Collectively, they embodied the clearest statement of power and authority in the context of their own society.

In all parts of the British Isles, the instruments of empire, were the castle, the Church and the borough.<sup>9</sup>

It is not altogether fanciful, therefore, to suggest that, in the specific G.W.R. presentation of its three prestigious publications - 'Cathedrals' published in 1924, 'Abbeys' in 1925 and 'Castles' in 1926 - that there was a degree of historical association and correlated political perception. Although each of these works covered extensive historical, architectural and aesthetic features in great detail, their symbolic, political significance, within the Medieval society that established them, and also for the Great Western Railway that identified with all their historic imagery, would be difficult to dismiss.

Finally, and with reference again to Wales, Pembrokeshire, promoted as an attractive holiday prospect, was also of historic and political significance in line with the argument set out here. This important Welsh county offered abundant evidence of the powerful political triumvirate of castle, Church and borough and, in its identification as 'Little England Beyond Wales',<sup>10</sup> underlined the inherent English supremacy. Indeed, as Kearney also reminds us:

To live in a town during the Norman period was a sign of belonging to an English colony. The Welsh were in fact excluded from them.<sup>11</sup>

Pembroke Castle, St. David's Cathedral, with its ruins of the Bishop's Palace, formerly protected by sturdy walls and gated entrance and the walled town of Pembroke itself and of nearby Tenby, underlined English authority and differentiation. 'Holiday Haunts' included a specific reference to this within its geo-cultural context of 'Little England Beyond Wales'.

This Anglo-Flemish settlement, cut off from the homeland by hostile neighbours, clung tenaciously to the speech and customs of their ancestors and, though the enmity between this colony and their Welsh neighbours has long since died out, the contrast between the peoples of North and South Pembrokeshire is as clearly defined today, as ever.<sup>12</sup>

The commonly accepted designation, 'Little England Beyond Wales' was in itself a statement of cultural demarcation. Pembrokeshire and 'Little England' was given considerable coverage in terms of the overall account of Wales in Maxwell Fraser's work. 'England and Why', a joint G.W.R. and Southern Railway publication, 1932,<sup>13</sup> aimed at the North American market in tourism.

### The Cornish Riviera

Cornwall was projected as a unique possession of the G.W.R. for its mild, equable climate and medicinal properties, its location and, crucially, for its Celtic cultural identity. The essential focus and thrust of the literature as delivered in its confident, committee style, was with the attempt to portray the profound sense of difference, culturally and geographically, of the Cornish experience. Exotic imagery and dramatic associations were plentiful, as the following examples reveal. Celebrating the "Mysterious Gift of the Gulf Stream", 'Sunny Cornwall. England's Mediterranean Region', 1924, announced: "Herodotus said Egypt was "the gift of the Nile." The equable, gentle, comfortable climate of the Cornish Riviera as the gift of the Gulf Stream.<sup>14</sup>

Twenty years earlier, 'The Cornish Riviera' offered incentives to 'the pilgrim to

Penzance:’ declaring that, when he or she walked in the Morrab Gardens, its wealth of sub-tropical vegetation , the envy of Nice or Monte-Carlo, they might easily think themselves to be in Algiers. Similar, exclusive imagery applied to St. Ives, where “Gulf Stream and West Indian associations”<sup>15</sup> were offered.

‘The Scenery Attractions and Historical Associations of the Cornish Riviera’, 1913, was explicit as to special identity, which engaged both Mediterranean properties and extensive Ossian perspectives.

The Cornish Riviera possesses all the climate advantages once considered the attribute of Madeira, Southern France and Italy, Algeria and still more distant Delta of the Nile, while the ‘Delectable Duchy’ generally has been more than once described as “the playground par excellence of the British Empire.” The beauty and variety of its scenery are as remarkable as the richness of its historical associations, which go back to times even more remote than those in which the Pheonicians came from Carthage to Cornwall in quest of tin.

Cornwall is not only celebrated for the picturesqueness of its indented coastline and rugged beauty of its rocks, cliffs and uplands, but at every turn the traveller finds himself face to face with venerable cairns and cromlechs, with ancient wells and moss-grown crosses and with churches and other buildings, the origin of which is often shrouded in mystery. It is in Cornwall only that the memorials of our Celtic ancestors can be satisfactorily explored and the recent development of railway travel carried out by the ‘Holiday Line of England’ enables holiday-makers to do in a few days or hours more than could formerly be accomplished in weeks or even months.<sup>16</sup>

Cultural and commercial interests worked in tandem here as indicated through the decisive alignment and identification of Celtic Cornwall with the Great Western’s provision

of the very latest engineering excellence. With its distinct cultural heritage and the exclusive service offered by 'The Cornish Riviera Express', it was impressed upon the traveller that, "With the Cornish Riviera practically at our doors, the necessity for costly and fatiguing foreign travel exists no longer.<sup>17</sup>

'The Homeland Handbook' for West Cornwall also conveyed the exclusive, initiate theme as in the context of the unique Celtic character celebrated by the G.W.R. In referring initially to the development of universal travel, the substance and focus of the writing thereafter was that of the long-term threat of mass tourism and its superficial or, as implied, its pseudo-sophisticated character overwhelming the more subtle and culturally-authoritative appreciation of informed initiates - those of requisite sensitivity, attuned, historically and aesthetically, in expectation and protocol.

In these days of universal travel, thousands of people visit the "Delightable Duchy' every year. They climb the Cheesewring, picnic amongst the ruins of Tintagel's hoary keep, explore the sylvan beauties of the Fal and stand on Old Bolerian (West Penwith) and strain their eyes to catch a glimpse of the long, low, uneven silhouette of the Scillies. Then when their holidays are over, they go home to tell their friends of a land of vivid colouring and rocky grandeur. They speak enthusiastically of palm trees and geraniums, twenty feet high, of fuschias that grow like large shrubs, of wild asparagus and other vegetarian wonders. They compare with a sneer the pea-green water of the English Channel to the sapphire rollers of the Atlantic and assert that, after the pinnacled headlands of the west, the chalk cliffs of the south coast look like neatly cut white cheese.<sup>18</sup>

So far, so good: Cornwall was manifestly different:

But now many of these people know the real uniqueness of Cornwall? Very few. For this land of primeval solitudes and prehistoric

monuments is not to be discovered in a few weeks of sight-seeing. Its true spirit does not reveal itself on the sea-fronts of its watering places or in the show spots of the guide books.

In order to know Cornwall, it is necessary to leave the beaten tracks and follow the less trodden paths of her moors and cliffs to trace the little moorland streams from source to sea, to discover those quaint grey villages that nestle in the hollow of hills and to make the acquaintance of warm-hearted, quick-witted Celtic inhabitants. To this day, England may be said to terminate on the shores of the Tamar. Beyond this river is a land of legend and mystery, eloquent silence and Homeric storms ...<sup>19</sup>

'Holiday Haunts' echoed this theme in its material on Land's End:

Thousands of people visit Land's End every year and stand upon the wave-beaten cliffs looking across the great expanse of ocean now tossing above the lost land of Lyonesse to the distant Scilly Islands. The majority of these visitors pay a flying visit to the Logan Rock and then return with the comfortable reflection that they have "done" Land's End. They have no conception of the real glory of Land's End.<sup>20</sup>

As with all the Great Western's writers and the range of 'Homeland Handbooks', for example, the style was that of an invitation to indulge in an encounter with special landscape and atmosphere. As Maxwell Fraser put it, choosing her words carefully to convey such emotionally charged experiences, it was; "bewitchingly lovely."<sup>21</sup> The classic location of St. Michael's Mount fulfilled all the criteria; legendary site, ancient port, monastery and fortress. It occupied a special place in G.W.R. literature and was the subject of several posters. Mais called it "one of the Seven Wonders of England,"<sup>22</sup> and wrote enthusiastically of it in "The Cornish Riviera", presenting it in the dramatic,

romantic form of contrasting manner and mood.

From far and near in whatever weather, at whatever time of day, St. Michael's Mount stands out as one of the Seven Wonders of England, mysterious, exquisitely beautiful, a citadel or romance on which to base the castle of dreams. I had myself, the great good fortune to see it first at midnight under a harvest moon with the lights in its high walls flashing over the sea. I have seen it emerge above a sea-mist like a magic place on the clouds. I have seen it with the storms beating great waves against its granite sides and I have seen it shimmering in the noon-day heat of a perfect midsummer day. Each time it has seemed beyond compare, the most exquisite gem of all England's homes.<sup>23</sup>

'Beautiful Brittany', 1909 had celebrated Mont Saint-Michel along similar lines, whilst G.W.R. poster work offered close physical comparisons between the two sites. Overall, Cornish and Breton landscapes and cultural traditions bore close resemblances, thus the iconography and thematic structure of literature, legend and art work reflected shared perspectives, best expressed in the celebrations of their antiquities, dramatic coastal cliff-scapes and the numerous fishing communities.<sup>24</sup>

St. Michael's Mount provided a classic example of a famous and extremely popular location that leant itself to various presentational forms. The full reference to the site from S.P.B. Mais reflected two literary techniques; that of the carefully composed aesthetic perspective demanded within this dramatic agenda and the equally required historic and mythical recital, intended to lead one back from the present day through the accumulated screens of historical time and event to remote and romantic ancient times of heroic myth.<sup>25</sup> Alain Corbin, 'The Lure of the Sea', 1994, describes this perspective in the context of Mont Saint Michel, tracing this sensibility and expression back to the eighteenth century. Just as in Mais' historical chronicle, Corbin writes of Mont Saint

Michel:

The growing prestige of Mont Saint Michel was due to the ease with which the travellers there could imagine the many filters standing between the Druids and the industrial age.<sup>26</sup>

This concept of experimental encounter, beloved of the G.W.R., resonated various levels of appreciation. David Lowenthal, in 'The Past is a Foreign Country', argues that artefacts and special places enabled the celebrant to participate in both the past and the present. As Lowenthal observes, "Because artefacts are at once, past and present, their historical and modern roles interact."<sup>27</sup> Whilst existing in the present they are vital agencies in terms of access to the past. Moreover, a close focus on place and artefact also has the effect of enhancing the literary element and, ultimately, the overall experience. "The historian who sees for himself the locale of his work heightens its impact for his audience."<sup>28</sup>

This approach to the past sees historical experience as a much more complex process than that of direct textual study alone. Raphael Samuel's 'Theatres of Memory',<sup>29</sup> although developed in the context of the contemporary 'heritage' debate, has some distinct points of contact with the G.W.R.'s overall presentation:

There is no reason to think that people are more passive when looking at old photographs or film footage or handling a souvenir, than when reading a book. People do not simply 'consume' images in the way in which, say, they buy a bar of chocolate. As in reading, they assimilate them as best they can to pre-existing images and narratives. The pleasures of the gaze are different in kind from those of the written word but not necessarily less taxing on historical reflections and thought.<sup>30</sup>

But literature was a vital dimension for, as Lowenthal argued, the fullest expression came in combined form:

Memory, history and relics offer routes to the past best traversed in combination. Each route required the others for the journey to be significant and credible. Relics trigger recollection which history affirms and extends backward in time. History in isolation is barren and lifeless; relics mean only what history and memory convey.<sup>31</sup>

It was this combination of literature and the sense of personal encounter with special place, event and historical reference that characterised the context and style of the Great Western Railway's literary work. The emphasis upon the rich historical traditions and the quality and diversity of the aesthetic experience was evident throughout its entire body of literature.

The company's overall presentation of Cornwall and its particular cultural perspective was also influenced by the art work of the late nineteenth-century 'Newlyn School' of painters, best known in the canvases of its founder Stanhope-Forbes.<sup>32</sup> In pre-dating the G.W.R.'s earliest promotional literature on Cornwall and shaping a specific perception of the Cornish landscape and culture, the work of the Newlyn School of painters was a valuable source for ideas and imagery. Active during the later years of the last century and the early part of the twentieth, the 'Newlyn School' concerned itself with various subjects and themes popular at the time, which were to become central to the G.W.R.'s cultural construction of the county. This was particularly so with regard to poster production where the imagery of the fishing communities was widely adopted.

The Newlyn School focused upon the fishing communities, centering upon Newlyn and the rural landscape of the West Penwith, notably the Lamorna district. Forbes' work, significantly, exhibited at the Royal Academy, celebrated the working environment and the people and culture of the fishing communities. There was also interest in Cornish folklore and mythology as popularised at the time by Robert Hunt in his anthology, 'Popular Romances of the West Country'.<sup>33</sup> but the essential focus was the community in the local landscape. The overall impression was one of a sense of order, of continuity



and harmony underlining a strong sense of identity and purpose within the community. The paintings reflected a strong representational, if romanticised, style in the depiction of simple, dignified working people, a popular theme in literature and painting at that time. Forbes wrote of Newlyn in 1900;

every corner was a picture, and more important from the point of view of the figure painter, the people seemed to fall naturally into place and harmonise with the surroundings.<sup>34</sup>

In offering up vivid images of landscape and people, the Newlyn School caught the imagination of large numbers of people, thereby helping to shape the perception of the area as one of infinite charm and romantic appeal. Great Western promotional work in poster form and in the literature drew upon this in its portrayal of Cornwall, yet again, reinforcing the sense of special place and people. A decisive factor here in terms of perception and identity, however, was the fact that both the G.W.R. and the Newlyn School of Painters were evidently outside interests coming into Cornwall, with direct interests and affiliations elsewhere i.e. Paddington and The Royal Academy of Art. Thus, their relationship with Cornwall represents the country/city dialectic in a further manifestation. Corbin's 'The Lure of the Sea', offers useful perspective with reference to the presentation of people and place in literature and artwork devoted to apparent simple yet 'noble' Celtic seaboard communities. The context of privileged perception is evident; likewise, the definitive demarcation within the process of encounter.

The idyllic representation of the shore-dwelling peoples played a function in the social portrait drawn by those who transformed them into a spectacle. The crowd of fishermen on foot and the small-time fishermen - less frightening than the sailors' world - offered an image of good folk. Gatherers on the shores were not affected by social mobility, which had not yet made its way into their midst. These workers of the shore, toughened by contact with the elements,

reasonably hopeful of enjoying their lives, made fertile by their diet of fish, attached to the religion by regular recourse to its consolation, were reassuring to city-dwellers who felt the contestation of social hierarchy rising in their midst. The sailors' piety and the solid faith found in these coastal parishes, in which the seafarers' families were united with the 'shore community' through empathy, were in keeping with this serene interpretation. Age-old stereotypes reinforced this idyllic perception which stimulated both the tourists longing for the shore and the pleasure they found there ... The delight procured by this spectacle was all the more freely enjoyed since there was no need to fear in this setting that the social distance would be removed.<sup>35</sup>

Even the most cursory glance at G.W.R. presentations of Cornish fishing villages - Sennen, Mousehole, St. Ives, Looe, Polperro, Mevagissey, for example - thoroughly endorses Corbin's analysis. The G.W.R. Magazine, June 1938, 'A Picturesque Cornish Fish Market', for example, describes the summer morning market in the context of a tourist spectacle.<sup>36</sup> Sennen, in the far west, also offered the multiple features of history, aesthetics and seaside amusement that, for Mais, reflected the many dimensions of a Cornish Holiday. His observation, here, indicated the concept of qualitative levels of sensibility and perception and cumulative levels of historical time and experience.

Here, where children now build sandcastles, artists set up their easels and all the world bathes, Athelstan once landed after his conquest of the Scillies and later, Perkin Warbeck in 1497.<sup>37</sup>

Hayle, on Cornwall's north coast, was presented in similar style. 'Holiday Haunts' set out the various perspectives: ancient lineage, legend, leisure and aesthetic appreciation - the context of encounter.

As early as the fifth century Hayle was a flourishing town which

served as a centre for the missionaries sent from Irish monasteries to convert the Cornish. Today it serves equally well as a centre for a far different purpose - holiday making. It is almost the only stretch of coast in Cornwall where precipitous granite cliffs give way to an expanse of breezy towans. These undulating sand dunes stretch westward to St. Ives and eastward to Godrevy Point in a great semi-circle only broken by the Hayle estuary and are a delightful playground for bathing, picnicking and camping. Although Hayle has no ancient buildings, the whole district abounds in historic associations and fascinating legends.<sup>38</sup>

This particular reference has further interest, however, not only for what it revealed, but also for what it specifically ignored. Hayle, in the eighteenth and, particularly, the nineteenth century, played a leading role in the Cornish mining industry and in related industrial and mercantile interests. Hayle, therefore, provided a useful example of the Great Western Railway's determined practice of re-inventing Cornwall to reflect a predominantly Celtic-inspired, pre-industrial identity.<sup>39</sup> Fowey presented another such case. Whilst celebrated for its historic, picturesque qualities as the traditional fishing community, Fowey was also the county's principal china-clay port. Served by the G.W.R., the docks handled a vast export trade, mainly to Europe and North America. Penzance and Falmouth also sustained extensive mercantile and industrial interests, independent of tourism.

The Isles of Scilly, however, offered further scope for exotic, exclusive imagery in terms of their unique setting and aesthetic qualities. But in promotional terms the G.W.R. had, as ever, to incorporate the necessary assurance that access was easy. The emphasis was placed on high standards of service, smooth efficiency and every consideration for the travellers. Thus, this "Garden of Eden",<sup>40</sup> as S.P.B. Mais called it in 'Isles of the Island', 1934, was readily available. The 1908 edition of 'The Cornish

Riviera' confirmed the exclusive context; the fundamentally metropolitan perspective in imagery and expectation, not least, for the journey itself.

If you are in a hurry, leave Paddington at 9 pm, enjoy a comfortable night's rest in the sleeping car and wake up in time to catch a passing glance of "Majestic Michael." Breakfast at your leisure in Penzance in a sunny room overlooking Mounts Bay; go on board and lunch luxuriantly on the S.S. Lyonesse.<sup>41</sup>

The Abbey Gardens on the island of Tresco, famous for their exotic plants from all parts of the world, underlined the unique climate and setting of the Islands. Mais referred to the 'Japanese banana, Australian lobsterclaw plant, Mexican yucca, Chilean paya, Burmese honeysuckle and Himalayan ginger.'<sup>42</sup> The overall impact of the Islands as celebrated in 'The Cornish Riviera' was "as a place taking such a hold of the imagination and the affections that it can never be lost or forgotten."<sup>43</sup> A final reference to the Islands, from the 1910 edition of "historic Sites and Scenes of England", combined themes of legend, romance and the significance of special place. Concluding the section on the Isles was a typically Celtic theme of the far West - the imagery of mystic islands and the sea and of ancient communities lost beneath the waves.

It is in the fitness of things that the great romance of the days of chivalry should end amongst its rocks, its sapphire sea and fields of narcissi, even if the echoes of the fabled bells of the churches lying buried fathoms deep below the waves do not actually reach the ear.<sup>44</sup>

Kynance Cove, much photographed by the G.W.R. Publicity Department, the subject matter for several posters and the inspiration for many more, provided another location for the initiated. The G.W.R.'s literary celebration of Kynance Cove drew stylistically from the Ossian-inspired, genre of dramatic and romantic encounter with awesome Nature. Filtered through this perspective dating from the mid eighteenth century and

through popularist accounts of a century later - as in Wilkie Collins' 'Rambles Beyond Railways', 1861 and his "perfect palace of rocks",<sup>45</sup> 'Holiday Haunts' evoked the sense of special place. Exclusivity was expressed in the imagery of "the initiated" and of "rarer loveliness". It was also reflected in the structural contrast offered between those who make the "casual visit" and those who "thoroughly explore." In effect, it was an open statement of demarcation, enhanced in the geo-cultural context of "this peerless bay."

Though it is impossible to pay even a casual visit to Kynance Cove without being impressed by its beauty, only the initiated, with plenty of time at their disposal are able to find and rejoice in the rarer loveliness which rewards those who thoroughly explore the caves in this peerless bay.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the extensive and determined formulations of the Riviera imagery and that of pre-industrial Celtic Cornwall, it is difficult not to be aware of the considerable element of selective presentation - Raymond Williams' concept of 'foreshortening'<sup>47</sup> - in the Great Western's portrayal of Cornwall. This was, as detailed earlier, the effective expression of the Great Western's corporate identity wherein the Cornish experience was formulated and contextualised in accord with the overall directives from Paddington. In identifying the progressive re-invention of Cornwall, culturally, Bernard Deacon and Philip Payton - 'Re-inventing Cornwall' (Cornish Studies, 1993)<sup>48</sup> - inevitably acknowledged the impact of the G.W.R.'s concept of the corporate identity although the latter was not identified specifically.

As the development of tourism was controlled largely outside Cornwall and written about by people outside the Cornish cultural identity, those aspects of 'difference', re-emphasised and articulated, were often figments of the suburban Englishman's imagination rather than pre-existing elements in Cornish culture. The Cornish began to be

viewed through an exaggerated prism of romantic bourgeois sensibilities ...

... Cornwall was being re-defined in the interests of tourism. It was becoming picturesque, its towns and villages quaint, its people moody, mystical, superstitious and child-like by turns.<sup>49</sup>

Paddington was no less energetic and inventive in terms of its literary presentation of Southern Ireland. Here, the pursuit of corporate identity was responsible for what emerged as a decidedly Anglicised perspective.

### Southern Ireland

The Great Western's portrayal of Southern Ireland shared close similarities in terms of content and style with that for Cornwall, but in certain of its Irish portraits, Killarney for example, the company blended elements of the imagery of the dramatic 'difference' in Celtic identity, with that of the reassuring aesthetics and harmony consistent with the pastoral imagery of 'Deep England'. Maxwell Fraser's 'Southern Ireland', G.W.R., 1932, presented a magical country of infinite beauty, celebrated historical tradition and an endless source of legend and myth relating to the ancient landscape and to the sea. Southern Ireland was:

A country of glorious lakes and mountains and exquisite valleys  
drenched in history, rich in folk-lore and filled with poetic fancies...

In such a land it is impossible not to believe in fairies.<sup>50</sup>

Throughout its portrait of Southern Ireland the G.W.R. carefully focused its attention upon the country's ancient history and the aesthetic and mystical properties of the landscape. Maxwell Fraser could, therefore, celebrate the important historical dimension without reference to the infinitely more controversial and intensely painful pattern of Ireland's more recent past, explicitly, that of the ongoing religious, political and economic conflicts since the Tudor period. Thus we read:

Ireland can boast one of the oldest civilisations in the world - her

culture ranks with that of Greece and Rome, in splendour and antiquity and her kings were reigning in Tara two thousand years before the birth of Christ.<sup>51</sup>

It was this cultural tradition and perspective that attracted Great Western interest as the celebration of ancient culture and landscape was well in line with the company's aspirations, offering a 'safe' Irish identity that could be readily assimilated into the corporation imagery of the G.W.R., as in Wales and Cornwall. We therefore find common reference in all the Celtic orientated literature to familiar content and style focusing upon the dramatic qualities of landscape, to a mysterious, mystical, rural people and to a rich vein of legend and mythology. This was, in effect, the cultural identity projected by the Irish people from the 1880s onward. Terence Brown, 'Ireland. A Social and Cultural History, 1922-1985',<sup>52</sup> identifies the rural perspective as being definitive of the national character. From the literary tradition of the 1880s and 1890s, celebrating the heroic and mythological deeds of ancient times to the later rural writing of the 1920s, Brown notes:

They celebrated a version of Irish pastoral where rural life as a condition of virtue in as much as it remained an expression of an ancient civilisation uncontaminated by commercialism and progress. In so doing they helped to confirm Irish society in a belief that rural life constituted an essential element of unchanging Irish identity.<sup>53</sup>

H.V. Morton's 'In Search of Ireland',<sup>54</sup> a vastly popular work that went through thirteen editions between 1930 and 1938, presented Ireland in much the same manner and style as that of the G.W.R. and illustrated Brown's later assessment of the projected Irish identity. Morton's Ireland was a mystical, aesthetic and historical experience that seduced the visitor into the deepest of sensuous pleasures. As with so many of the Great Western locations, Ireland was a series of dramatic and emotional encounters demanding the total surrender to experience and sensation, not the engagement of the intellect nor of analysis. Morton was very clear about this. In Chapter Seven we read:

Killarney is not a holiday resort: it is an opium den. The only desire left in the vacant mind is to drift slowly about the lakes in a boat ... The lakes of Killarney are a vast cradle: sleep has come for ever to the sunny hills, to the woods and the high banked lanes. Why has no-one gone into literary hysterics about the lanes of Killarney? They are as lovely as the lakes. They are the most luscious I have ever seen: they are Warwickshire transferred to the tropics.<sup>55</sup>

Morton continued his celebration with reference to the flora, giving the impression that it was gathered in such profusion as to overwhelm him.

Flowers pile themselves on the grey stone walls; great hedges of fuschia hand their blood-red tassels over battalions of six foot fox-gloves, trim and stalwart as fuschia and there are Canterbury Bells by the million, snapdragons: pale pink sheets of wild roses ashake with bees; tropic palms and flowers whose names I am too tired to remember ...

... I have no energy to fight the beauty of Killarney.<sup>56</sup>

Elsewhere, Morton wrote enthusiastically about Connemara. He asked: "How can it exist in the modern world? In years of travel I have seen nothing like it."<sup>57</sup>

Connemara could not be more astonishing than the discovery in England of a forgotten country in which men spoke the language of Bede or Alfred the Great, wore Saxon clothes and prayed to Saxon saints. Connemara is the most surprising thing in the British Isles. It is nearer to St. Patrick than it is to Dublin.<sup>58</sup>

Looking to the elemental simplicity, the primitive rural quality of the region, Morton enthused: "There are no railways, no shops, no motor cars, no telegraph poles."<sup>59</sup> To Morton this was a perspective of positive rural delight, not one of deprivation in the social, economic and political context of the 'Periphery.' He expressed the idealistic



character of such communities; a construction and delineation, defined totally in terms of the aesthetic gaze, the spiritual celebrations of the Gaelic League and even the various representations of ‘the holiday playground’.

Decades later, Terence Brown pointed to the structural cultural symbolism of this western Gaelic Region.

the vision of an heroic rural life in the Gaeltacht (Gaelic speaking areas) or on a western island served as a metaphor of social cohesion and an earnest of a cultural unity that transcended class, politics and history. Islands of Gaelic speaking people in a sea of anglicisation, the Gaeltacht and western island represented that ideal unity which nationalist ideologues had envisaged and prophesied but which reality had failed to provide.<sup>60</sup>

But if this was the ideal, the reality took on a different character, approximating more to Morton’s sub-text of the urban celebration of rural society as Brown observed in the urban-rural dialectic that prevailed in this context.

A pastoral myth, important to Irish self-understanding might celebrate the countryside of the western island as a national Eden, but visits there were made from the anglicised towns and from the villas and streets of semi-detached houses in the cities that were advertised in the weekly and daily papers in terms of a suburban felicity indistinguishable from that which tempted city dwellers throughout the United Kingdom to invest in home ownership.<sup>61</sup>

Thus Brown identifies the deliberate preference of the middle-class “to love a comfortable petit-bourgeois life that bore a closer relationship to the life of similarly placed people in Britain than to any vision of special destiny.”<sup>62</sup>

The mainstream Great Western presentation left no room for qualification. It adhered totally to the pastoral and popularist historical perspective as noted by Brown

and detailed here by Maxwell Fraser. The romantic presentation of people and place was unmistakable, projecting both into the realms of fantasy.

The quiet dignity of her humblest peasants, who each and every one, have a regal bearing and innate good manners which would grace the greatest noble in the land whilst a vein of imaginative poetry and keen perception of natural forces gives them a vividness and forcefulness of speech which is an eternal riddle to those foreigners who do not realise the centuries of culture which have gone to the making of Ireland.<sup>63</sup>

Ireland's ancient Celtic cultural heritage was mystical, elusive and, above all, romantic.

Everywhere in Ireland there are picturesque castles hinting at stirring deeds and high romance whilst in the monastic ruins may be read the story of innumerable Irish saints who spread the gospel far and wide. Christianising many districts of England and penetrating far into Europe, Ireland's monks were so famed for learning in the early days of Christianity that people came from all over the known world to study in the great Irish monasteries.<sup>64</sup>

Together with its cultural links, Ireland also shared close similarities in terms of landscape and literary definition with both Wales and Cornwall. Southern Ireland's "Grand Atlantic Coast Route" from Killarney to Caragh Lake, Valencia, Waterville, Parknasilla and Kenmare, a distance of over eighty miles along the far South West, was a much larger version of the 'Atlantic Drive', a feature of West Cornwall extending from Land's End to St. Ives, as promoted in 'The Cornish Riviera'. The imagery and associations of both the Irish and Cornish locations were of the same order. Parknasilla was reminiscent of the character and climate of Cornwall's southern coast. Here was a "veritable jungle of colour and fragrance."<sup>65</sup>

Subtropical flowers and plants are not alien but flourish happily like

natives in the warm and sunny atmosphere. Through the tangle of palms and brilliant tropical flowers, the translucent water of the bay creeps into many unexpected creeks and bays, which penetrate far into the gardens.

In point of climate and subtropical vegetation, Parknasilla is the culminate triumph of Ireland's Riviera for its mean annual temperature is higher than that of Torquay or Ventnor.<sup>66</sup>

Southern Ireland, like Cornwall, was also distinct, in as far as they each possessed "the irresistible charm of a foreign country,"<sup>67</sup> whilst retaining sufficient features of recognised customs, values and, significantly, language. Maxwell Fraser described this as "the English tongue and customs with a difference."<sup>68</sup> Two further identifiable links between these two Celtic lands were also apparent. Southern Ireland and Cornwall, given their clear differences from English urban society, offered a great sense of release from the pressures of modern life. Chapter Two of 'Southern Ireland', stressed the sense of solace and retreat into leisure and rejuvenation that characterised its landscape and history. Closely associated with this was the direct emphasis, on the part of the G.W.R., in offering easy access to Ireland via its Fishguard to Rossclare crossing. This was consistent with the theme and content of 'The Ocean Coast' focusing largely upon Cornwall. The Lakes of Killarney were especially popular as a place of pilgrimage and were the subject of numerous picturesque celebrations defining the district. Fraser considered that, for most people, Killarney "has become almost a synonym for Ireland itself"<sup>69</sup> and that, in view of "the praise lavished on it so constantly for the last two centuries... it is no less 'compulsory' for those who visit Ireland in the present day than it was in the Victorian era when every writer of note made the pilgrimage..."<sup>70</sup> The earlier company literature on this district 'Southern Ireland. Its Lakes and Landscapes', 1904 and 1924, emphasised the high standards of service provided and the prominent commercial perspective of tourism, particularly in terms of the American market.

To the average American visitor, Killarney is to Ireland what Stratford Upon Avon or Oxford are to the sister kingdom...

The once rollocking old-world town of which Thackeray drew so diverting a picture, may nowadays be said to consist almost entirely of hotels and boarding houses, while the greater part of its population is made up of boatmen, guides and carvers of arbutus wood.<sup>71</sup>

In completing her introduction to Killarney, Maxwell Fraser offered an unmistakable rendering of the rural myth, incorporating landscape, legend and the emotional relationship of time and place; past and present. Nature and Man were in complete harmony and, significantly, it was an uncompromised, pre-industrial context, a landscape that appeared to owe nothing to the twentieth century. Amongst the silver birch, limes, chestnuts and lakes cradled by the mountains, Killarney was “more fitted to be the haunt of fairies than mortals.”<sup>72</sup>

Gracious ruins mellowing in the sunshine which floods the valleys with golden light point to man’s activity there in past ages, but the story of Ross Castle, of Aghadoc, of Muckross Abbey and of Innisfallen is laid on pleasant lines, as though the peace of Killarney soothed even the angry passions of the fierce restless Irish warriors. Few people take the trouble to inquire into even such history as there is, preferring to rejoice in the sheer loveliness of these ruins and their enchanting setting. That is the true magic of Killarney. Its beauty is so triumphant that nothing else seems to matter. It is a beauty so incredibly, ravishingly lavish that it almost seems unreal and the beholder is consumed by a desire to gaze and gaze before some mystic spell dissolves it for ever.<sup>73</sup>

This was pre-eminently a landscape and experience of solace and deep peace; a mystical perspective, definitively ahistorical in explicit statement and in style. Totally

rural and pre-industrial, there was always the implied contrast with modern, urban life. Killarney, as presented by Maxwell Fraser, was fundamentally an emotional experience and a definitive statement by the G.W.R. of the rural myth. Retrospective and romantically melancholy, two defining features of all culturally inspired 'Celtic' locations, this work gained its impact not least by reference to positive associations and intense imagery drawn from the careful use of appealing adjectives - "gracious, mellow, golden, enchanting, lavish and mystic." The mystical dimension was definitive of all Celtic culture, recurring almost endlessly in reference to pre-industrial Ireland, Wales and Cornwall.

Cashel, reached from the railway line from Waterford to Clonmel, was an excellent example of an historic Celtic cultural shrine, after the manner of Tintagel in Cornwall, or Glastonbury in Somerset, with their close associations with Arthurian legend. It was "a place of memories and splendid ruins, set in scenery which is fittingly wild and magnificent."<sup>74</sup> Maxwell Fraser outlined its historical and cultural significance.

... Cashel became the most sanctified spot in all Ireland. Linked at first with the remote days of Munster's earliest kings, with the coming of St. Patrick in 450 it became one of the principal seats of Christianity in Ireland.<sup>75</sup>

Compared favourably to Tara, in Northern Ireland, Cashel offered a more stirring visual impact:

... for whereas Tara is a bare hilltop whose soul-stirring memories have to be conjured up in the mind of the imaginative, Cashel has magnificent buildings to arrest the eye and inspire interest in the fascinating story their grey old stones can tell.<sup>76</sup>

To conclude this outline survey we can refer to Maxwell Fraser's opening paragraph of Chapter Three: 'Southern Ireland'. It revealed definite similarities of style and content with her well known, 'Somerset', G.W.R., 1934. It also indicated real contrasts

of landscape and soil, again features of both Ireland and Cornwall. It was a portrait of harmony, stability, prosperity and contentment, which in this instance emphasised the comparative element, always apparent in her work.

The railway from Clonmel to Castle Connell and Killaloe runs through a smiling and gracious countryside of lush pasture lands and clear rivers, where every village is prosperous and contented and even the ruins hold no hint of sadness, seemingly only to speak of the greatness of the past, without regret for the lawless cruelty that is gone for ever. This south-western corner of Ireland has some of the richest and fertile soil in the whole country and its people do not have to contend with the extreme poverty which is so apparent in the wild, unproductive loveliness of the far west coast.<sup>77</sup>

In its English equivalent, it was the pastoral prosperity of Somerset contrasted with the economic plight, but noted aesthetic appeal of Cornwall. But once again, like the experience of Cornwall, the portrait of Southern Ireland offered extensive evidence of the principle of accommodation in almost every paragraph. The carefully selected content and style here reflects a deep conservatism and a sense of well being and security which is seen to reflect in the serenity, harmony and general aesthetic experience of the landscape. Conflict was clearly consigned to the distant past and was therefore tamed and romanticised. It was the landscape and experience of the comfortable observer, drawing upon an assumed system of values - social, political, economic, cultural - albeit essentially English in origin and nature and fundamentally class-orientated. The landscape was essentially passive, there to be observed, enjoyed, celebrated, for its given qualities of reassurance.

This perspective could not have been better exemplified than in the final section of A.M. Broadley's 'Southern Ireland, Its Lakes and Landscapes', July 1904. Setting the scene of the homeward journey - "the morning express bearing you swiftly eastward ...

ample leisure over a capital breakfast admirably served in one of the luxurious corridor coaches ... the exchange of ideas, impressions and reminiscences”<sup>78</sup> - the definitive context, the cultural agenda is revealed: “One returns to England” from one of the “playgrounds of Empire”.

One returns to England with a profound conviction that nothing could possibly be brighter than the prospects of South and South-Western Ireland as one of the great playgrounds of the British Empire.<sup>79</sup>

The classifications were, likewise, indicative of leisured, affluent status:

For the sportsman, be he angler, golfer, cyclist or pedestrian...

To the historian, the antiquarian and the thoughtful [in] pilgrimage to the historic sites, scenes and shrines...<sup>80</sup>

Cornwall had, likewise, been designated, a ‘playground of empire’ and, with this perspective in mind, it is interesting to note that both in Cornwall and Southern Ireland this celebration of pre-industrial, ethnic characterisation took place against a history and an on-going process of large-scale emigration by the native population.<sup>81</sup> Whilst Maxwell Fraser rejoiced over Ireland’s sublime, mystical landscape and H.V. Morton contemplated “the only eternal figure the world has known: the man who guides a plough...”<sup>82</sup> and again, conjured visions of St. Patrick, “rising up over the mound of Tara, his hand uplifted”,<sup>83</sup> Queenstown and embarkation on board ship for a new land and a new life was the more familiar, and sharply contrasting, final experience of Ireland for vast numbers of its inhabitants.

Southern Ireland and Cornwall served the G.W.R. well in terms of their designated, accommodatory role, conforming to ancient, mystically inspired Celtic cultures. The foregoing discussion has made clear Paddington’s extensive and determined projection of these communities as culturally differentiated from mainstream, traditional English identity and has also indicated the wider literary context (eg, H.V. Morton) within which the G.W.R.’s contribution was defined.

In conforming to Paddington's presentation of cultural differentiation, Southern Ireland and Cornwall were subject to detailed, almost total reinvention, that is, in the context of the company's literary enterprise. But it was a process and product which, in celebrating definitively aesthetic, mystical and sublime qualities, discounted many key points of close, historically-grounded comparison. Despite the primacy of the desired pre-industrial, ethnic, aesthetic-sublime identity, the social, economic, political and religious perspectives of Southern Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those of Cornwall over the same period, with its international industrial identity, albeit fated to decline and destruction, testified to sharply contrasting circumstances. Both communities, despite their historical-cultural identifications, witnessed extensive depression and emigration, factors that, under the circumstances, brought out a certain sense of irony in terms of the fulsome statements and celebrations of a cultural tradition.

Celtic revivalists within Southern Ireland and in Cornwall clearly embraced the differentiated identification of their respective communities - a perspective addressed by Anthony Smith, distinguishing between the formulation and focus of 'high' and 'low' cultures<sup>84</sup> - W.B. Yeats and the Gaelic Revival being a prominent example in later nineteenth century Ireland, whilst the institution of the Cornish Gorsedd with its Bardic ceremonies, dating from 1928 and the earlier 'Cornish Celtic Society', 1901, marked similarly inspired moves in Cornwall.<sup>85</sup> In both cases, however, the revival, whatever their motive and focus, was clearly subsumed into the broader-based process of re-invention as characterised by the Great Western Railway's literary focus. Declan Kiberd, in his essay, 'Irish Literature and Irish History' in 'The Oxford History of Ireland', addresses this revivalist perspective:

Whereas the English had called backward, superstitious and uncivilised, the Yeatsian revivalists created an idealised counter-image which saw the land as pastoral, mystical and admirably primitive. Yet such a counter-image was false, if only because it elevated a single aspect



of Ireland into a type of the whole. "Connaught for me is Ireland," said Yeats; but Ireland was not Connaught - rather she was a patchwork-quilt of cultures and fiefdoms, as indeed before the Normans invaded. George Watson has elaborated this point, showing how the folklorism of Yeats confirmed the traditional image of the Irish as subservient and menial - except that now they were deemed menial in colourful and interesting new ways.<sup>86</sup>

The Great Western Railway's re-invention of Southern Ireland, Cornwall, Wales and Brittany as characteristically pre-industrial, aesthetically defined communities was undoubtedly confirmed and assimilated both in English representations and, significantly, amongst large sections of the given Irish and Cornish - the Celtic communities generally. And in as far as the latter consented to, and identified with, this characterisation, we return to David Brett's point: that these communities had been effectively de-historicised. Moreover, as Declan Kiberd asserted above, the reinvented community was thus politically subservient; commercially dependent. The consolation was the possession of the differentiated identity - indicated by Foster in the Gaelic League's spiritual, mystical Irish heritage, in Brett's periphery, or, in alternative perceptual terms, the 'object' of the initiate gaze, clearly distinguished from that of the 'subject', the carefully distanced, culturally exclusive observer defining the orientation, identity and experience.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## The Celtic Sublime

- 1/ Stuart Piggott. *The Druids*, Penguin ed, London, 1974. P1. Thames and Hudson, London, 1968. Penguin Books, 1974. P1.  
See also Simon James 'The Atlantic Celts. Ancient People Or Modern Invention', British Museum Press, London, 1999. The author offers one representation of 'Celtic' as "a general adjective for almost any thing to do with the distant, insular past . . . Ancient Celts may be rooted in a remote ahistorical dream-time evoked especially by earth-work monuments and standing stones." P20. Likewise, Murray G.H. Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image*. Introduction, 'Defining Terms', Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999.
- 2/ David Brett. *The Construction of Heritage*, Cork University Press, Cork. 1996
- 3/ Ibid P57
- 4/ Ibid P38. See also James, Chapter Five, here. Also, Pittock, P5 'Save to some extent in the case of Northern Ireland, with its virulent politics, Celticism remains a concept marketed at an ahistorical and depoliticised distance from the contemporary.'
- 5/ G.W.R. *Cardigan Bay Resorts*, 1925 P5
- 6/ E.T. MacDermot. *History of the Great Western Railway*, G.W.R. 1931 Revised, C.R. Clinker, Ian Allan, London, 1964 PPs 243-44
- 7/ G.W.R. *Through The Window. Paddington To Birkenhead*, 1925 P73
- 8/ Hugh Kearney. *The British Isles. A History of Four Nations*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.
- 9/ Ibid P872
- 10/ G.W.R. *Holiday Haunts, Pembrokeshire*, 1937. P861
- 11/ Kearney. *British Isles* P94
- 12/ G.W.R. *Holiday Haunts*, 1937 P861
- 13/ Maxwell Fraser. *England And Why. Great Western and Southern Railways of England*. 1932 PPs 27 and 31
- 14/ G.W.R. *Sunny Cornwall. England's Mediterranean Region*. 1924

- 15/ A.M. Broadley. *The Cornish Riviera*, G.W.R. (1904) 1908 ed P61
- 16/ G.W.R. *The Scenery Attractions and Historical Associations of the Cornish Riviera*, 1913. P1
- 17/ Broadley. *Cornish Riviera* P5
- 18/ Homeland Association. *Homeland Handbook: Vol 85, 'Penzance'*, Homeland Association, London, 1924, P33
- 18/ Ibid P34
- 20/ G.W.R. *Holiday Haunts*, 1936, P168
- 21/ Ibid P170
- 23/ S.P.B. Mais. *The Cornish Riviera*, G.W.R. 1928 ed, P75
- 23/ Ibid P75
- 24/ G.W.R. *Beautiful Brittany. La Belle Bretagne*, May, 1909.  
 This work drew close parallels between Cornish and Breton landscape and culture. Subtitled: 'An Ideal New Holiday Ground' its comparisons included, for example, Pointe du Raz: "the resemblance of the Pointe du Raz to the English Lands End will at once be apparent.' (P111). Likewise, Isle De Sein - "burial place of the Druids of Cornovaille ... the rugged coastline scenery reminds one forcibly of the Isles of Scilly" (P112). There were also the numerous instances of inundations - towns and villages lost to the sea - of mythopeic creatures, numinous landscapes and personages definitive of Celtic mythology. Close comparisons here, served to enhance the differentiation of both locations from English metropolitan perspectives making Cornwall and Brittany equally mysterious and alluring but, vitally, accessible.
- 25/ Alain Corbin. *The Lure Of The Sea*, Penguin, London. 1995  
 See especially his Chapter Nine "A World of Transparent Characters" for a detailed exposition of the figures, forces and imagery generally that has provided the subject matter and reference for the romantic celebration of Celticism in its maritime context - that which clearly inspired the G.W.R.'s work and, indeed, the modern-day heritage movement in Cornwall.
- 26/ Ibid P221
- 27/ David Lowenthal. *The Past Is A Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985. P246. See also Anthony D. Smith. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986 - Romantic nationalism as an 'historical drama' PPs 179-183

- 28/ David Lowenthal. P246
- 29/ Raphael Samuel. *Theatres Of Memory*, Verso, London, New York. 1994
- 30/ Ibid P271
- 31/ Lowenthal. *The Past Is A Foreign Country*. P249.  
 A distinction between what we might term the English 'historical' and the Celtic ahistorical perspectives needs to be noted here. In many ways Lowenthal's reference applies more effectively to the former category. In many respects the Celtic experience, defined by David Brett as ahistorical, found its most powerful resonance in the dimensions described by Corbin as that of "a topography of legends anchored in accounts of this space [the coast that] reinforced the indeterminate, vacuous nature of the territory. It imposed an image of a cultureless place over which an unchanging nature reigned." 'Lure of the Sea' (P221.) He also spoke of romantics who, "peopled the solitary shores with a succession of dreamy characters who gave an intermittent meaning to the ruins, the mossy rocks or the seagulls cry." (P220). "Here, the delight in bygone eras could only be found through their evocation or resurrection," P130. Stonehenge, of course, like Glastonbury, inspired romantic Arthurian imagery and associations. In particular see 'Wonderful Wessex', G.W.R., 1908. P40/41
- 32/ Caroline Fox and Frances Greenacre. *Artists Of The Newlyn School, 1880-1900*, Newlyn Orion Gallery, Newlyn, 1979  
 Caroline Fox. *Painting In Newlyn*, Newlyn Orion, Penzance, 1985  
 Caroline Fox. *Stanhope Forbes And The Newlyn School*, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1993.
- 33/ Robert Hunt. *Popular Romances Of The West Of England*, (1871) Chatto and Windus, London, 1923. This collection was the basis and inspiration for the G.W.R.'s 'Legend Land' series published in four volumes from 1923
- 34/ Quoted: Caroline Fox, *Painting In Newlyn, 1900-1930*, Newlyn Orion, 1985. P14
- 34/ Alain Corbin. *Lure of the Sea*. P211
- 36/ G.W.R. Magazine. June, 1938. PPs 237-38
- 37/ Mais. *Cornish Riviera*, 1934 ed P94
- 38/ *Holiday Haunts*, 1934 P159

- 39/ See Ref. Corbin, *Lure of the Sea*. P221  
 “Clearly this work of the imagination required a denial of the appropriation or the working of these places ... the shores, like the moors and marshes, created an opportunity for a discourse rejecting modernity.”
- 40/ S.P.B. Mais. *Isles Of The Island*, Putnam, London, 1934. P266
- 41/ A.M. Broadley. *Cornish Riviera*, 1908 ed. P68/69
- 42/ S.P.B. Mais. *Isles Of The Island*. P256
- 43/ A.M. Broadley. *Cornish Riviera*, 1908 ed. P71
- 44/ A.M. Broadley. *Historic Sites and Scenes of England*, G.W.R. (10904) 1910 ed P131
- 45/ See Wilkie Collins: *Rambles Beyond Railways*. Notes in Cornwall taken afoot, Richard Bentley, London. 1851 and the much earlier and highly acclaimed, *A Journey To The Western Islands of Scotland And The Journal Of A Tour To The Hebrides*, Samuel Johnson And James Boswell, 1775/1786, Penguin Classics ed, London. 1984. See esp. PPs 138-143
- 46/ *Holiday Haunts*, 1934 ed. P160
- 47/ Raymond Williams. *The Country and the City*, Chatto and Windus, London. 1973. The Hogarth Press, London 1993 - See Chapter Sixteen, ‘Knowable Communities’, PPs 165-181
- 48/ Bernard Deacon and Philip Payton, ‘*Cornish Studies*’ One, Exeter, 1993. P71
- 49/ *Ibid* P71
- 50/ Maxwell Fraser. *Southern Ireland*, G.W.R. 1932. P3
- 51/ *Ibid* P4
- 52/ Terence Brown. *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-1985*, Fontana, London. 1981.
- 53/ *Ibid* P84
- 54/ H.V. Morton. *In Search Of Ireland*, Methuen, London. 1930
- 55/ *Ibid* P135
- 56/ *Ibid* P136

57/ Ibid P173

58/ Ibid P173

59/ Ibid P173

60/ Terence Brown. *Ireland. Cultural History*, P92. See also R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, Allen Lane, Penguin, London, 1988. P448. Discussing the Gaelic League's thematic 'idealisation of the lifestyle of the west' Foster observed: "where Balfour's administration saw an economic disaster area, the League saw the remnants of a Celtic civilisation that implied a spiritual empire far greater than England's tawdry industrialised hegemony." Also supporting Brown's conclusions, Foster again observed, P449, "The barefoot children, turf fires and unrelieved diet of the west were romantically approved by the Gaelicist intelligentsia who felt accordingly let down by the Cannacht people's propensity to emigrate."

61/ Ibid P135. See also R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland*. P538

62/ Ibid P136

63/ Maxwell Fraser. *Southern Ireland*. P4

64/ Ibid P4

65/ Ibid P29

66/ Ibid P29

67/ Ibid P5

68/ Ibid P5

69/ Ibid P19

70/ Ibid P19

71/ A.M. Broadley. *Southern Ireland. Its Lakes And Landscapes*, G.W.R. Handy Aids series, No. 10, May, 1927. P17

72/ Fraser. *Southern Ireland*, P20. See also Morton's depiction of the Connemaran seaweed gatherer, a girl, "perhaps eighteen years of age" whom he describes in terms of the archetypal child of nature, primitive but alluring, endowed with both "her massive ignorance" and "queer smothered nobility." Morton drew heavily, here, upon the received feminine gendering of Celtic identity and upon the concomitant imagery of the seashore as a place of desire and danger. Elsewhere, he speculates:

“How on earth do these wild children settle down in America?” In Search Of Ireland. PPs 185-192. Also PPs 193, 197/98

73/ Ibid P20

74/ Ibid P11

75/ Ibid P12

76/ Ibid P12

77/ Ibid P14

78/ A.M. Broadley. Southern Ireland: Its Lakes And Landscapes, G.W.R. July, 1904. P88

79/ Ibid P88

80/§ Ibid P88

81/ Philip Payton. The Making Of Modern Cornwall, Dyllansow, Truro, 1993. See particularly Chapter Five, ‘Decline And Diaspora.’ P99-118  
R.F. Foster. Modern Ireland, 1988 “Emigration is the great fact of Irish social history from the early nineteenth century. It cannot be seen simply as part of the disruptions attendant upon the Famine: a large-scale exodus began long before it and continued long afterwards.” P345  
F.S.L. Lyons, ‘Ireland Since The Famine’, Fontana, London, 1963, P609

82/ Morton P273

83/ Ibid P273

84/ Anthony Smith. History And Modernity, 1996, from Representing The Nation. A Reader. Ed David Boswell and Jessica Evans. Routledge, London. 1999 PPs 45-58

85/ Declan Kibard. Irish Literature and Irish History, Oxford History of Ireland, Ed R.F. Foster, Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1992, P265  
Philip Payton. The Making Of Modern Cornwall, especially Chapter Six, ‘The Great Paralysis’, PPs 199-138

86/ Declan Kiberd. Irish Literature and Irish History, Oxford History of Ireland. P265. Hugh Kearney also emphasises the localised or tribal nature of the ‘Celtic’ landscapes. Kearney, The British Isles, 1989. PPs 21-24

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Anglo-American Perspectives

“I had long been convinced that this country could and should attract many visitors from America and elsewhere and, being a keen advocate of a good understanding with America, I was an enthusiastic supporter of Sir Frances Towle when he started what was known as the Come To Britain movement.”<sup>1</sup>

*Felix Pole, General Manager, G.W.R. 1924-29*

The historical dimension was a consistent and, indeed, definitive feature of the G.W.R.'s literary record. It was delivered in the broadest context of both national and international orientation and was thematically led by close reference to the principles of the Anglo-Saxon inheritance - the historiographical context of providential mission and manifest destiny. This was evident in both detail and general statement and, as such, informed all related representations consistent with the desired historical identification and expression, as in the political and aesthetic-emotional properties of landscape, for example, central to perspectives of the imagined Anglo-American community. The dialogue between homeland and overseas territories was reinforced by such perceptions infusing cumulative cultural resonance into images of the 'Mother Country' and her extended 'family' as in various imperially-inspired formulations of a 'Greater Britain', after J.R. Seeley's closely defined 'Expansion Of England', 1883,<sup>2</sup> and the specific identification of the English Speaking Peoples. Thus, the determinedly international projection of English imagery and identity as formulated and symbolised in the celebration of 'Shakespeare Land' or in the received resonance of Warwickshire and 'The Green Heart of England'. Proclaimed in G.W.R. literature as 'The World's Greatest Travel Shrine', Shakespeare's England, as an obvious example, constituted an unqualified statement of



cultural authority, grounded in the matrix of the rural, historical identification.

North American interests were always prominent in the celebrations of this historical perspective, not least for the fact that, within definitions of common cultural heritage, the thematic focus of the imagined community, the United States was clearly the company's principal overseas market. Every effort was made to accommodate American interests, with the result that cultural and commercial perspectives, the thrust of place marketing, were very closely identified. Direct reference to the company's work at this stage can serve to illustrate the central thematic focus.

The Introduction to the company's 1904 publication, 'Historic Sites and Scenes of England', engaged American interests in what was a statement of citizenship and internationally-orientated mission.

Throughout the ages movements have found their birth in this beloved country of ours which have made for the betterment of our peoples and the peoples of other climes. Briefly it can be said that England has been the birthplace of much that has had and will continue to have a beneficent influence upon the world. It is because of that, that she still is "Mother England."<sup>3</sup>

This was the general expression of the Anglo-Saxon inheritance and in the following two extracts from the G.W.R.'s extensive Stratford reference, four defining themes delineating the character of the company's specifically Anglo-American representation are evident. In summary, they comprise a clearly defined historical focus in content and style; the iconography of 'pilgrimage' and 'shrine'; detailed contextual reference to the rural-pastoral tradition and an overall commercial dimension incorporating promotion/publicity and exclusive service, thereafter.

Within a few miles of the centre of England, Stratford is the very heart's core of England's artistic life and rightfully venerated as a precious shrine which draws pilgrims from the four corners of the

earth, no less than every town and village of the British Isles - an ancient, tranquil and unspeakably beautiful town in the true pastoral scenery of Merry England - fit setting for the lovely heritage Shakespeare gave to his country.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, in normative tone:

The homeland of Shakespeare has ever been, and always must be, regarded in the light of a place of pilgrimage by every member of the great Anglo-Saxon race and it is, moreover, a sacred spot, the key to the gates of which is firmly held by the Great Western Railway.<sup>5</sup>

'England and Why', (Maxwell Fraser, 1932 edition) articulated the American orientation presenting the sense of intimate, shared heritage in fulsome and unproblematic manner. Subtitled, 'Where American History Was Born', her work revealed a determinedly atavistic character, accessing or historicising the American people within the mainstream Anglo-Saxon tradition as reflected in the intended impact of the terms, "home", "true-born American", "common origin", and "English Speaking Nations".

England is as much "home" to every true-born American as the United States itself, for the ancestors of present day Americans and Englishmen worked, fought and played side-by-side all through the ages until the discovery of America in 1492, and even then the colonisation of the New World was spread over such a long period that the history of the two nations was still practically merged until the Declaration of Independence three centuries later.<sup>6</sup>

Seeking to assert the primacy of the common heritage over the single and, significantly, unqualified reference to Independence, Maxwell Fraser stressed the sense of community.

It is the common origin and community of interest, more than anything else which binds together the two great English-speaking

nationals so closely and makes such poets as Chaucer and Shakespeare no less national to America than to England and the kings and heroes of the past, a precious joint heritage.<sup>7</sup>

Fraser's representation was by no means a simple description of events. It embodied a complex, culturally-loaded agenda, which applied throughout the G.W.R.'s American representations specifically, addressing the issues of cultural orientation and accommodation, as in the problematic delineation of authority in terms of centre and periphery; and, not least, how this was to be defined. The celebration of a "previous joint heritage" might well suggest - in the context of deliberately including and celebrating North America, as here - that the latter was essentially a beneficiary. So also, it is important to note the G.W.R.'s stipulative definition of the United States as, effectively, New England writ large. "True-born Americans" within the G.W.R.'s cultural perspective conspicuously ignored the substantial Spanish and French influences of the early and formative colonial era, and, likewise, the mass immigration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the vast influx of Irish, Italian, Jewish and Eastern European peoples, indeed, the substantial Irish influence within New England itself, surely challenged the 'common origin and community of interest'. In as far as this overall perspective indicated an English cultural centre, the United States, as conceived in G.W.R. terms, reflected the formative features, therefore, of a decisively English, Anglo-Saxon construct, historically defined. To this end, within the collective appellation of the 'English Speaking Peoples' it was always clear that the trans-Atlantic identification - 'The Brethren of the Mystic Tie'<sup>8</sup> - was predominant within the Great Western's presentation.

Looking to the specifically American orientated literature, there was little doubt that, although the subject matter was decisively English, the essential focus was American. This was evident in the depiction of 'Historic Oxford' in the 1931 edition of 'England And Why'. Whilst evoking imperial perspectives in the person of Cecil

Rhodes, Maxwell Fraser integrated latter-day American scholars into the overall, inclusive ambience of the likes of Sir Thomas More. Oxford was Alma Mater to future Anglo-American statesmen.

Oxford claims to rank with Rome as a City of Palaces and, if anything could strengthen the feelings of love and admiration with which Oxford is always regarded by the cultured citizens of the great transatlantic Republic, it is the princely munificence of the late Mr. Cecil Rhodes, whose well endowed scholarships are now bringing many earnest students from the United States to the colleges which in times gone by witnessed the early training of such men of mark and merit as Thomas More, Bishop Butler and Tom Hughes...<sup>9</sup>

The subtle nexus of tradition and authority, of continuity, initiation and inheritance apparent here confirms the process and procedure of assimilation and differentiation. It also acknowledges and incorporates the fact of American independence and, in the historical context of the inter-war era in particular, adds edge to the crucial question in Anglo-American relations: who was accommodating whom?

Like Oxford, Chester was also endowed with special, historic and cultural significance. "North Wales. The British Tyrol" declared:

Its time-honoured relics present an extraordinary fascination for English-speaking peoples and especially for the citizens of the New World, many thousands of whom visit it every year. To them it is the visible record of many centuries inseparably bound up with the history of the country and the race.<sup>10</sup>

In a further appeal to focus and maintain American interest in Britain, favourable comparisons were offered with rival European cultural centres:

The red sandstone of Cheshire is to Chester what the French lime-

stone is to Paris, the sparkling marble to Athens and the grey peperino to early Rome.<sup>11</sup>

Salisbury Cathedral was a further definitive expression of English cultural identity; of aesthetic excellence and the expression of national achievement:

Salisbury Cathedral is not only endowed with surpassing beauty, but there is no trace of foreign influence perceptible in its design. It remains what it was on the day the spire was finally completed - the most perfect realisation of pure English Gothic.<sup>12</sup>

'Wonderful Wessex' also set its tribute in comparative mode. Drawing upon imperial and continental contexts, the G.W.R. emphasised Salisbury's cultural significance and impact. The thirteenth century structure was acclaimed as:

the most uniform, harmonious and beautifully proportioned Cathedral of the British Empire . . . The pilgrim from the other side of the Atlantic, Continental visitors from across the Channel as well as English antiquarians, ecclesiologists and holiday-makers generally, are fast realising that it is at Salisbury and Salisbury only that one can hope to realise the rare beauty and strange fascination of past and present home-life in the shadow of a mighty minster.<sup>13</sup>

In further thematic reference to harmony in the past-present interaction and the definitive context wherein, "the history of the Church and City are conterminious,"<sup>14</sup> 'Holiday Haunts', almost thirty years after this tribute from 'Wonderful Wessex', sustained the imagery of harmony and continuity.

There is a complete harmony between the old-world peace of the Close and the lovely Cathedral and the whole town is permeated with an atmosphere of serenity enhanced by its ancient buildings.<sup>15</sup>

There was also the broader context of aesthetic harmony - that of the town and its rural setting, of which it was asserted:

. . . no description, however well drawn, can do justice to the charm of this ancient town and the countryside in which it is set - those lovely meads which are endued with the peaceful beauty of the English countryside at its best.<sup>16</sup>

Harmony and continuity as celebrated here in their historic and aesthetic contexts were no less decisive for their contemporary political significance in enhancing the Anglo-American relationship.

Looking to concepts of possession, and the expression of cultural authority, the historic, aesthetic and implicit political construction evident in the foregoing examples, would seem to indicate an English centre. But the Great Western's presentation left the issue open, indicating thematically the wider international context of inheritance and the process of cultural transfer and appropriation - the recognition of an ongoing, assumed assimilation. In formulating its appeal to North America in terms of a cultural pilgrimage and evoking the imagery and associations of shrines and remembrance - of the sacred and the protocol of veneration, awe and obligation, the G.W.R. could be said to have recognised and, in effect, formalised the sense of the American inheritance as achieved. In pilgrimage as in the case elsewhere - to Jerusalem or Rome, for example - the pilgrim journeyed back to the formative site, given that it may no longer constitute the active, ongoing centre of that culture or experience in an overt social, economic or political sense. An American focus, looking to that continent as the authentic heir to the perceived Anglo-Saxon inheritance and mission by virtue of its authority as the leading industrial, commercial and political power, would thus recognise a substantially reorientated relationship with England. The latter would effectively legitimise the inheritance structurally and thematically as the inevitable historical development. Thus the imagery and symbolism of pilgrimage and shrine and the principle that the Anglo-Saxon inheritance was its history. It was definitive of progressive adaptation and fulfilment as David Lowenthal argues in his considerations of the concept of Presentism and as American

policy had both declared and demonstrated.<sup>17</sup>

In evoking the values and rhetoric of the Anglo-Saxon supremacy but, crucially, implementing them within the context of the Republican Constitution, American interests pursued imperially-inspired credentials similar to those of the British Empire, as evident in reference to the Spanish-American War of 1898. American policy in the immediate context of its victory in that war, and the matrix of political, economic and strategic factors that defined development thereafter, was instructive as to orientations in cultural authority and mission.

Military governments in Cuba and the Phillipines after the Spanish-American War gave American leaders the confidence that they could bring order to the rest of the world. General Leonard Wood proudly declared that “for the first time probably in its history, Havana has an honest and efficient government clean of bribery and speculation.” An American reporter praised “the establishment in a little over three years, in a Latin military colony in one of the most unhealthy countries of the world, of a republic made closely upon the lines of our own great Anglo-Saxon republic.”<sup>18</sup>

Drawing upon a wider context and, again, paralleling European and, specifically, British, experience in an imperial perspective, the definitive agenda of authority, order and citizenship was asserted.

Thus, for the new corporate and political elites, their success in organising rational space in American cities, in controlling the millions of European peasants who had come to these cities, in educating these masses in the efficient ways of industry, according to the discipline of linear time, could be repeated throughout the entire world.<sup>19</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt’s conviction: “Peace cannot be held until the civilised nations have

expanded in some shape over the barbarous nations.”<sup>20</sup> or indeed, Wilson’s proclamation: “I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men.”<sup>21</sup> reflected the confident declarations of Cecil Rhodes, Joseph Chamberlain or Arthur Balfour; the imperial perspectives of Lord Rosebury: “It is our history, our tradition, our race. It is to us a matter of influence, of peace, of commerce, of civilisation, above all, a question of faith.”<sup>22</sup>

Elevated statements of principle and historiographical resonance as entertained by Lord Rosebury, however, were subject to extensive readjustment during the inter-war era in line with the climate of international uncertainty and the shifting spectrum of geo-politics. As an indicator, the Imperial Conferences revealed a distancing of allegiance and identity with regard to Britain and expectations of Imperial Federation on the part of the latter found no appropriate echo in the Dominions. In the American context, Correlli Barnett and D. Cameron-Watt have agreed that, in political and diplomatic terms, there was, during the twenties, a climate of hostility towards Britain. Barnett, referring to what he considered to be Britain’s illusionary formulation of “a mythical America,”<sup>23</sup> wrote:

Except, again, for unrepresentative circles on the East Coast, America did not reciprocate British sentiments towards her.<sup>24</sup>

D. Cameron-Watt’s ‘Succeeding John Bull’, 1984, drew on Foreign Office files from 1927 to assert:

From 1920 onwards, however, a growing conviction can be found among those in search of a “possible America” that the United States, in reality, was hostile, inimical and, above all, Foreign!<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the implications of a ‘mythical’ or ‘possible America’ in formal diplomacy, the G.W.R. pursued an ever-increasing commitment to tourism. In its self-designation, formulated in the American-orientated literature, as ‘The National Holiday Line’, ‘The Holiday Line of the British Empire’, ‘The English Speaking Peoples’ and ‘The



Line of the American Pilgrim', the company, in line with the British Travel Association generally, was increasingly driven to court American favour, harnessing commercial expediency to cultural reference or, indeed, vice-versa given the depressed (and limited) domestic economy. And, like the Southern Railway, the G.W.R. had every incentive to do so. The American tourist agenda was ideally served by the Great Western and Southern Railways, who made more effort to do so than did the L.M.S. and the L.N.E.R. G.W.R. interests, cognisant of the commercial potential of tourism, advocated government involvement through the Travel Association to enhance international tourism, calling repeatedly for increased funding in advertising and direct fiscal reform in the form of the repeal of the visa charge of ten dollars per person on American visitors to Britain. Elsewhere in Europe visas were either not required or issued on a nominal sum of up to two dollars maximum. The American market represented a far more valuable source of tourist revenue than that of the Empire as the thrust of the joint schemes under the 'Associated Companies' indicated. The Minutes of Meetings of Advertising (Publicity) Representatives - Railway Clearing House across the entire inter-war era reflected the overall primacy of trans-Atlantic considerations and, on occasion, registered them in almost open preference to clearly defined imperial interests. Perspectives of 'Crown Imperial' and 'Greater Britain' were central to tourist marketing schemes, indicating, in the climate of early thirties depression, the necessity of economic expediency. This was indicated in the somewhat desperate rallying cry of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, Patron of the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland, in January 1932: "This is the moment when we want to impress upon the world that our country is still alive; that it means to go forward again"<sup>26</sup>. It was also echoed in Felix Pole's plea in accord with the Travel Association for vital Government assistance to promote overseas markets and again, later, in 1946, in a blunt admission from the Minister for Overseas Trade - "We so badly want their dollars."<sup>27</sup> Both the G.W.R. and the Travel Association issued what was, in terms of its imagery and theme, an almost identical statement recognising the

relative importance of tourism for the British economy by the mid thirties. In October 1935 the G.W.R. recorded the total income from tourism for 1934 to be £25,573,000, “a figure that compares very favourably with the revenue of £28,846,000 and £31,854,000 from woollen and coal exports respectively”<sup>28</sup>. The Travel Association’s official history notes that visitors to the United Kingdom by 1938 numbered 720,429, from 475,088 in 1932. It concluded that, with an income, 1938, of £28,981,000, this was a figure that “compared with the revenue accruing from the nation’s exports, at that time, of wool or of coal”<sup>29</sup>

Literary perspectives during the inter-war years, and increasingly so during the thirties, reflected the intensification of cultural-commercial themes defining the Anglo-American identity. Partial parallels might also be offered with the increasingly common reference to ‘family’ imagery in terms of Empire where geo-political considerations became particularly important during the thirties. The ‘Come To Britain’ campaign dating from 1926 and the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland, 1929, closely involved with the Railway Clearing House in its efforts to co-ordinate the railway companies into joint or preferred centralised initiatives and, again, the participation of the International Hotels Association, reflected both the promotional efforts and the projected character and style of the British experience. The G.W.R. Magazine carried a detailed article on the Travel Association in November 1931, presenting Britain’s cultural heritage as a vibrant, living experience, making direct appeal to a past-present interaction in the style of a cultural encounter. But, within the substance of this appeal, the sense of commercially driven urgency was apparent as, indeed, was the implicit recognition of competition elsewhere and, consequently, the need to offer active events, as in the reference to “these islands as far than dead territory.”<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, it is not ‘dead’ territory that we offer our visitors. These islands pulsate with life and activity. Castles, if no longer inhabited, are backgrounds for pageants recalling the thrilling scenes of their

histories; cathedrals hold their services interspersed with music festivals; county towns have their fairs and historic galas; rivers and seaside places have their regattas and industrial tours have their exhibitions. Everywhere there are events as well as places of interest.<sup>31</sup>

The Travel Association here, in evoking the idea of living heritage, was however careful to maintain the traditionalist agenda definitive of both British formulation and American expectations, culturally. This much was apparent in the joint company arrangements for the American Tourist Agents' Tour of October 1929.<sup>32</sup> With an itinerary comprising Oxford, Leamington, York, Edinburgh, Melrose, The English Lakeland, Chester and Bath, thence Bournemouth, via the Somerset and Dorset route - a classic railway of rural England - the central theme of historical tradition and of common cultural identity was uppermost. Further inducements agreed between the companies included various gratuities as in the provision of first class travel, meals, wines and cigars en-route, also the inclusion of a number of extra guided tours. Whilst this was considered expedient, commercially, if not generous on the part of the hosts, it was, however, recognised practice in continental terms.

Together with newspaper coverage and the supply of promotional films, the joint advertising strategy included a series of talks on Britain, broadcast from some 500 wireless stations across North America whilst, earlier, in April 1931, the Travel Association opened an office in Paris. Commercial enterprise was deemed a vital factor, but for all such efforts, publicity generally was considered small-scale by American and Continental standards as confirmed in the following statements by the American Ambassador to Great Britain and the General Manager of The Tourist Association of Great Britain and Ireland, respectively. Offering the wider, international context, the Ambassador observed:

Possessing one of the loveliest bits of the whole world, you are not

very willing to admit the fact and you are most unwilling to proclaim it from the housetops. People go to those lands whose attractions have been most persuasively and directly brought to their notice. Hence the hurried rush of American visitors in three or four days through England if they come at all and their weeks elsewhere.<sup>33</sup>

Likewise, L.A.L. de Meredith for the Travel Association on the vital issue of publicity:

Confess it to your shame, you must admit that the term (publicity) is new to you. That is the trouble. On the continent it is not unfamiliar to anyone. In America it is equally well known. But within our shores we have yet to realise its significance and its possibilities.<sup>34</sup>

For its part, the Railway Clearing House, in January 1926, had proposed a detailed, joint approach to the promotion of Britain and Ireland in America, arguing the comprehensive coverage of that country could only be achieved collectively; that a corporate central office in New York was required and that the four companies should agree to 'sink existing individualities.'<sup>35</sup> But two years later this, and a G.W.R. proposal that the Big Four companies should establish railway offices on board trans-Atlantic liners for the advanced distribution of promotional literature, itineraries and railway tickets en route, was formally rejected. Administrative difficulties, liaison and differing priorities as in perceived individual styles, reference and imagery, were given against the collective initiative.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst it was clearly committed to the joint approach to publicity, delivered through the Railway Clearing House and the Tourist Association, the G.W.R. was always the most prolific of the four companies in addressing and developing the American tourist market. One such strategy was that of the pilgrimage, as indicated earlier.

The G.W.R.'s concept of pilgrimage - broad, in the sense that there were differentiated categories both of interests and encounter - was an extremely successful synthesis of cultural and commercial interests. At every stage in the promotion of cultural

heritage, the company stressed the provision of the highest standards of service. This was by no means confined to material comfort alone, although this was a vital factor. As with the perceived agenda of the Travel Association generally, the Great Western made every effort to present a detailed literary guide that addressed all dimensions of received protocol, determining not only what was to be seen or experienced but also the perspective - aesthetic, literary or historical, for example - that contextualised the location, experience or event. The company literature invariably presented the maximum American-orientated perspective wherein English history was contextualised within an American agenda. Englishness served to define an American identity celebratory of the increasingly dominant Anglo-Saxon republic. Content, historically, was therefore crucial to the projected identity - effectively, the celebration of the Anglo-Saxon period and, thereafter, the thematically formative sixteenth and seventeenth century narrative - and was delivered in an uncompromising historiographical context of progressive development that, in turn, drove the Manifest Destiny.

In many respects the G.W.R. literature presented the English landscape as one of numerous shrines to early American founders, the language and imagery of commemoration being to the forefront. Thus, 'Rural London' and its depiction of the Chalfont Country (1924 edition).

Although the average Londoner has shown a greater interest in recent years in the Chalfont Country, its historic sites have for many years held high rank in the majority of intelligent American travellers as places of interest - to the shrine of Thomas Gray at Stoke Poges and thence past Jordans, the last resting-place of William Penn, Founder and Proprietor of Pennsylvania ...<sup>37</sup>

This reference is significant for its differentiation; the juxtaposition of "average Londoners" and "intelligent Americans", likewise, the "recent" interest of the former and the established presence of the latter. Not surprisingly, the sub-text of the American

pilgrim as being more sensitive and aware than the native population in terms of England's historic and aesthetic heritage is apparent throughout the Great Western's literature.

As a landscape of commemoration, Jordans demanded the appropriate representation, as reflected in the definitive imagery and literary style apparent here. 'Places of Pilgrimage' quoted from the report by the Pennsylvania Society of the Penn Commemoration in 1911.

The little brick building has no external aspect of ecclesiastical character; nor has the burial ground beside it any of the dismal monumentation that is so generally distinctive of such places. It is a small green field, bordered by lofty trees, standing as silent sentinels in solemn crowded rows watching day and night the hallowed ground within.<sup>38</sup>

'Rural London' characterised Jordans as "embossed in forest trees and overrun with jasmine", whilst the surrounding countryside was that of,

luxuriant woods, expansive commons, limpid streams and fruitful cornfield, where ancient churches, timbered houses and village greens form, as it were, a living link between the twentieth century and the old-world days of "Great Elizabeth."<sup>39</sup>

In the received imagery of dissent and of commemoration, this depiction of Jordans corresponded to the Great Western's overall presentation of England to America. 'Rural London' was defined, thematically and stylistically according to the determinants of historical-cultural legacy, rural identification and accessibility.

To complete the reference to pilgrimage and shrine we can refer to two very different styles and representations.

Whitchurch Canonorum, a small West Dorsetshire village, was featured in all the American-orientated literature. It was:

beyond doubt the only place in the whole world which can claim the distinction of giving shelter to the remains of a British Saint (St. Gwen; the Breton St. Blanche) as well as to those of a great American coloniser.<sup>40</sup>

The latter was Sir George Somers, coloniser of Virginia, in the reign of James I. The teleological context, the given lineal consistency, sealed in effect by latter day Americans visiting the site, enhances the sense of providence and destiny, definitive of the Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

Plymouth, as a final and sharply contrasting example, had special significance, not only historically but also in terms of past-present interaction. All the appropriate Great Western literature, particularly 'Glorious Devon', 1928, celebrated the city's identity. It was the supreme example of the gateway to the New World.

Plymouth Sound has the capacity to awaken more memories than any other place in the world ... It was from here that Martin Frobisher set out to explore Labrador, and Drake to sail around the world. It was from here that Raleigh set out for Virginia and the first Puritans in 1607 sailed to find a new land. The stone still stands, and Americans flock to it, which marks the departure of 101 pilgrims on their sixty days voyage into the unknown to found the New England.<sup>41</sup>

Mais emphasised the significance of place and event with his repetition of the phrase, "It was from here." But, whilst the Anglo-Saxon credentials here required no supplement, Plymouth provided, yet again, a problematic location in terms of cultural ownership. To re-state the issue: who was accommodating whom? This question has particular resonance when, as here, the Anglo-American relationship is presented in the context of former disputation between the Established Church and that of the dominant interests of dissent in North America, exemplified here by Sir George Somers and William Penn amongst others. The pilgrimage to England was undertaken in order to commemorate

traditions which formerly were antithetical to the Anglican-inspired political and religious tradition and which assumed great significance at Plymouth itself. As a vital feature in its Anglo-American appeal, the G.W.R. proudly proclaimed modern Plymouth as the "Gateway into England from the Atlantic Ocean."<sup>42</sup> As the first port of call for many of the prestigious trans-Atlantic shipping companies in the inter-war era, Plymouth was the railhead for vast numbers of American tourists eager to get to London in order to embark upon their various pilgrimages: to effectively assert or reclaim their cultural identity, not least on the grounds of their international standing, politically and economically. This was a process intensified substantially in the context of World War Two - the New World coming to the assistance of the Old - a highly charged and complex cultural configuration of decisive importance, historically.

In thematic development we now consider the G.W.R.'s focus upon service within the overall context of pilgrimage.

'Historic Sites and Scenes of England' 1924 edition, the G.W.R.'s first and largest work for the American market, read as a cultural litany, with Paddington as the gateway to a priceless heritage; in fact, to an England effectively presented after the manner of a comprehensive itinerary. The full reference is appropriate here so as to convey the desired effect - the total commitment to service and the wealth of cultural experience offered: two definitive characteristics of Great Western Railway identity. London as the metropolitan centre was also clearly defined.

It is from Paddington that the traveller must start for Royal Windsor or Oxford, or Bath, or that delightful expedition into Shakespeare's country which is destined hereafter to become one of the most cherished and agreeable memories of this never-to-be-forgotten English tour. The very names of Windsor, Oxford, Stratford Upon Avon and Bath suffice to conjure up visions of those glories and traditions of which the American and the Englishman are today equally proud.



If our visitor has a fancy for the folk-lore to remote antiquity, he can investigate Arthurian Legend in situ, either on the cliffs of Cornwall, in South Wales, or amidst the rocks of Scilly or in Avalonian Glastonbury itself. The student of ecclesiastical history or Medieval architecture will be able to compress a visit to many of the famous Cathedrals of England into a fortnight or even less. Possibly the traveller is specially interested in the battlefields of history. If this is so, he will be grateful for the information that in many instances the Great Western Railway passed in close proximity to notable British, Roman and Saxon earthworks . . . to such celebrated scenes of Medieval contest as Shrewsbury and Evesham and to spots which witnessed the fierce fights and sieges of the Civil War, such as Worcester, Gloucester, Newbury, Oxford and elsewhere.<sup>43</sup>

Maxwell Fraser's work, 'Shakespeare Lane', (1933 edition) was, together with the literature of London, the most popular of all the G.W.R., works both as an independent company publication and as a joint initiative distributed through the Four Companies and the Tourist Association in the thirties. It was also an early choice as the subject for the "radio broadcasts" across the U.S.A. and Canada.<sup>44</sup> 'Shakespeare Lane' was in every sense directed at the North American market. Stratford is quoted here again, not in repetition, but to show, in this instance, the range of quality of service offered - the process being very much part of the overall cultural product. Having asserted the unique cultural legacy of Stratford and its greatest son, Fraser then continued:

The Great Western Railway of England have arranged combined rail and road tours from London Paddington Station to the Stratford Upon Avon district, via Leamington Spa, to enable tourists with but little time at their disposal to see all the chief places of interest in Shakespeare's Country in one day . . . The whole tour only takes ten hours

. . . Motor coaches a`wait the tour passengers at Leamington Spa Station and the journey is continued by road, passing through the wide tree-lined streets of this delightful Spa. Though completely modern, Leamington stands on the site of a Saxon village which must have been visited frequently by Shakespeare in his rambles through the countryside.<sup>45</sup>

This was England from the express train and luxury motor coach, with an emphasis upon close organisation and efficiency, ease of access and the highest standards of service. Fraser assured her readers that departure from Paddington guaranteed them the fastest and nearest access to rural England. Moreover, as with the ‘Through the Window’ series, the glories of the pastoral English landscape offered added enjoyment, but in one telling paragraph, Fraser set out an interesting, if unintentional contrast, in her evocative rendering of the rural/historical heritage celebrating apparent continuity, she wrote of the view from the train:

Every mile of the way between Paddington and Leamington Spa there are fertile pasturelands and low-lying, wooded hills . . . a graciously lovely landscape, typical of the scenes which Shakespeare loved, traversed by Roman and British roadways which were ancient in his day, and giving glimpses of time-worn churches, no less familiar to his eyes than the names of the old-world towns and villages through which the train rushes were to his ears.<sup>46</sup>

In this deliberate marketing strategy of the journey, noted in Chapter One as ‘prestige advertising’ Fraser registered no note of irony in the juxtaposition of ancient roadways, time worn churches and the impact and speed of the train itself within such a setting. The express was, by definition, the epitome of modern engineering achievement. This perspective applied equally to the Great Western’s concept of the ‘Land Cruise’ employing first class train travel, luxury motor coaches and the best of hotels, en-route, in the

determined quest for rural, historic England. It was the recurrent theme of the interaction of historic community and modern, progressive service, thus London, Oxford and Stratford were obvious destinations for members of the International Hotel Alliance, visiting England from New York in April 1926. 'The Great Western Railway of England: Souvenir',<sup>47</sup> recorded the event with commemorative copies being presented to the visitors. As in all such prestigious initiatives, dedicated to progressive cosmopolitan reference, two special trains met the S.S. France on its arrival at Plymouth thereby confirming luxury travel throughout, from New York to London. The G.W.R.'s own hotels, likewise, conformed to American expectations and general perceptions of England in their intended combination of the traditional and modern as at Tregenna Castle Hotel, St. Ives.

[Tregenna] unites all the old-world charm of the higher class English mansion with modern improvements which tend to make hotel life comfortable and attractive.<sup>48</sup>

For the trans-Atlantic professional society, increasingly prominent from the later nineteenth century onward, the G.W.R.'s Whig-inspired celebration of the common community of interest and inheritance had considerable cultural resonance. In the comfortable and confident metropolitan perspectives of the 'pilgrim' to England, the shared Anglo-Saxon tradition could be celebrated, historically, for the qualities of its creative energies and diversities without compromising its dynamic contemporary formulation. David Lowenthal's presentation of the Whig perspective contextualises the G.W.R.'s ideological stance and underlines Herbert Butterfield's emphasis upon the Whig technique of substituting historical agency for process.<sup>49</sup>

Whig historians . . . remade the past into a copy or uplifting simulacrum of the present. Unlike nostalgic medievalists, they merged their chosen period with modern times emphasising points of presumed resemblance rather than the differences and relishing the enduring continuities . . . Rather than praising the past at the expense of the

present, they respected it but were not confined by their heritage, cherished the past while denying it any binding force; they married belief in continuity with faith in progress. Compromise between tradition and change was their leitmotiv: change occurring within the confines of tradition and hence controllable, tradition made malleable by change and hence progressive. The assumed continuity of English institutions allowed the incorporation even of the most extensive transformations.<sup>50</sup>

In constructing its Anglo-Saxon agenda, the G.W.R. literature located the basis of national identity within a closely defined presentation of Tudor (particularly Elizabethan) and Stuart perspectives carefully correlated with company aspirations and identity and with perceived American expectations.

To refer again to Lowenthal: “To project present experience back magnifies it: to evoke the past makes it over as our own.”<sup>51</sup> In the cultural construction of the Anglo-American relationship, this observation can be seen to apply to both parties. They could simultaneously claim the past as constructed within the Tudor and Stuart context as thematically consistent with the principles of the shared Anglo-Saxon inheritance.

The Southern Metaphor, expressed in its political, social and economic or aesthetic sense, was central to the G.W.R.’s construction of Tudor and Stuart England. Two particular representations - clearly integrated thematically and in terms of progressive historic identity - were decisive in conveying the appropriate imagery and resonance. These comprised the celebration of a prosperous and pastoral Merrie England and its thematic and structural counterpart, the presentation of England as an expansive, confident maritime nation. The G.W.R. equated the Elizabethan era in particular with that of a ‘golden age’, of ‘Merrie England’ when “the world was young”<sup>52</sup> G.M. Trevelyan, likewise, extolled an Elizabethan golden age in his ‘English Social History.’

Shakespeare chanced upon the best time and country in which to live

in order to exercise with least distraction and most encouragement, the highest faculties of man. The forest, the field and city were there in perfection and all three are needed to perfect the fact . . . And during these same fruitful years of Elizabeth, the narrowing seas amid whose tempests English mariners had for centuries been trained, expanded into the oceans of the world . . . Young, light-hearted England became conscious of itself as an island with an ocean destiny.<sup>53</sup>

This construction of the specific English identity as the nation-state was celebrated by the G.W.R. in its definitive Protestant form in the Act of Supremacy, the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Henrican castles in line of defence along the south coast against a hostile France and Spain; in Foxe's Book of Martyrs, the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the Elizabethan Settlement in religion. The moderation of the Elizabethan Church was then, and thereafter, contrasted with the perceived fanaticism of Catholic Europe. Moreover, Protestant England and the institution of the Established Church became a definitive symbol of overall English cultural identity. The Anglican Church was consistently characterised as a principal expression of the community; of continuity and stability and, not least, as a profound emotional-aesthetic experience in the celebration of landscape.

Together with the expression of harmony and continuity, the English Church also provided the overall climate that allowed for the growth of Puritanism and its various constructions of the godly society. In the New England ideal of "The City Upon A Hill"<sup>54</sup> Puritan and Anglican interests in the binary projection of the New World and the Old contextualised the perceived reforming mission inherent within the Anglo-Saxon identity. In its challenge to the English Church, Puritanism confronted the given structure of authority and governance and, as the history of dissent reveals, it carried serious political and cultural resonance in England as, indeed, it did in America. As indicated

earlier, definitive themes of the dissenting tradition - most famously the celebration of the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth - were given central significance in the G.W.R.'s American-orientated literature. Likewise, the company ensured that the English Revolution - the context of the Civil War with all its political and constitutional resonance on both sides of the Atlantic - was presented in an open accommodatory perspective in which all concerned could identify. This explains the equivocal representation of Crown and Parliament when addressing the issues, events, personalities and locations involved in the literary coverage of the Civil War.

The context and style of the Anglo-American literature was therefore directed by important cultural and commercial considerations. The cultural matrix of politics, law, religion and constitutional issues evident in the historical focus of Tudor and Stuart considerations, indicated both the broad and dynamic historical framework and the G.W.R.'s related inclusive spectrum of ideological perspectives. The company stressed the common tradition. The dynamics of the Crown, landed interests, merchant adventurers and the decisive role of dissent - which ultimately became orthodoxy in American terms - were thematically structured to present the Anglo-American identity as that of a shared tradition subject to the process of accommodation and progressive development. Within this context it can be seen that, from the Puritan protest early in seventeenth century England to the wider political, constitutional struggle that brought American independence in the later eighteenth century, there was an identifiable thematic continuity. The binary structures of Church and Dissent and Crown and Republic set the terms within which the G.W.R.'s celebration of the Anglo-Saxon identity, mission and destiny was defined.

R.B. Nye and J.E. Morpurgo in 'A History of the United States', 1955,<sup>55</sup> addressed the key themes of this chapter in the formulation of a set of questions defining the structural approach here. Their Introduction refers to Americans as "seeing through the eyes of proud heirs..." [that] appears as the glorious flower which has sprung from the

wonderful seed of the Thirteen Colonies.”<sup>56</sup> The imagery here is constructed in terms of a relationship with Britain and thus poses the question of authority and accommodation, appropriation and destiny. Nye and Morpurgo address definitive themes:

How far was America the child of sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain? How much was its thought, its social habits, its economic and political progress conditioned by Cisatlantic events and the predominantly Anglo-Saxon ancestry of the early settlers? How much was the eventual break with Britain a rebellion against British control, or how much was the very Britishness of the ideas and culture of the Americans responsible for their rebellion against tyranny which they regarded as incompatible with their Anglo-Saxon heritage?<sup>57</sup>

Thus, the central issue in the Anglo-American relationship is again confronted: who was accommodating whom?

Tudor England and the Protestant mission in religious and constitutional issues in the seventeenth century, in turn, looked to Anglo-Saxon precedents for political and cultural authority.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, the G.W.R.’s literature drew heavily upon this cultural configuration, putting its shire counties, towns and villages into character parts on almost every page of ‘Holiday Haunts’, celebrating its Anglo-Saxon heritage, not least, for the gratification of trans-Atlantic interests and for the iconography of the Sons and Daughters of Empire. Hence the Cotswold material of Chapter Five and Somerset, as Deep England, in Chapter Nine.

Maxwell Fraser’s portrait of Taunton, for example, included all the essential imagery and associations of historic community - harmony, continuity and, thus, a deep sense of identity, that were calculated to appeal to an American market, eager for Anglo-Saxon credentials.

Founded by King Ina of Wessex in 720 . . . it [Taunton] retains to

an extraordinary degree a Saxon atmosphere, for even in modern times it is essentially an agricultural town . . . It suggests the sturdy independence and placid love of simple, yet ample comfort which was so marked a characteristic of its Saxon founders and is one of the friendliest and loveable towns in the Kingdom, welcoming the visitor and pouring its offering at their feet with al the traditional hospitality of the Saxon.<sup>59</sup>

Looking back beyond the Anglo-Saxons, the G.W.R. also offered prehistoric and Roman dimensions. ‘Wessex White Horses’<sup>60</sup> and ‘From Caveman to Romans’<sup>61</sup> were two examples of literary works covering the ancient landscape. With the home and American markets in mind, particularly the latter, ‘Through the Window. Paddington to Killarney’, 1926, celebrated Berkshire’s Vale Of The White Horse:

The Downs abound in burial mounds, ancient trackways and other evidences of remote occupation. The railway runs almost parallel with pre-Roman RIDGE WAY. Such dramatic contrasts of ancient and modern give us a sense of the wonderful continuity of history and pre-history in England.<sup>62</sup>

The Celtic cultural perspective introduced here, and as discussed in Chapter Four, was also incorporated into the G.W.R.’s American-orientated work, the main focus being the celebration of Southern Ireland. Wales and Cornwall were presented as landscapes of dramatic, legendary proportions; of King Arthur and Camelot but, collectively, the Celtic representation in the American-orientated works was always something of a problematic, complex, cultural configuration, despite its obvious appeal for large numbers of American visitors. Cultural authority resided in the English-centred literature and was defined, consistently by its concentrated historical identity. The most cursory reference to Maxwell Fraser’s ‘Somerset’, 1934 and ‘Southern Ireland’, 1932, reveals the respective historical and ahistorical differentiations.



This survey has considered the G.W.R.'s historiographical stance, its imperialist orientation and sympathies and has correlated rural English perspectives with those of imperial, international focus. The Anglo-American identity has also presented evidence to indicate that, in the company's literature, England and Englishness are frequently defined in relation to other, outside identities and influences. It also would seem to show, paradoxically, that Englishness, as defined in G.W.R. terms, was essentially international, both in the sense of its inspirational qualities - the rural, aesthetic, historical tradition and the interaction with the politics and administration of Empire - and, in relation to American perspectives, for its role historically - the process wherein the Anglo-Saxon inheritance is its history - hence, the Anglo-Saxon republic.

Finally, in the definitive context of the historical-cultural community, it might be argued that the Anglo-American relationship, as offered by the G.W.R., was itself an exemplification of a form of corporate cultural identity: Macmillan's 'Greeks' to Kennedy's 'Romans'<sup>63</sup> - a re-working of Hellenist perspectives?

The London North Eastern Railway's Anglo-America literature offers a comparative perspective with that of the G.W.R. 'Notes for American Visitors', c 1930,<sup>64</sup> and 'Enjoying England', subtitled, 'A Book About An Enchanted Island, By an American in London', 1931.<sup>65</sup> celebrated what were considered the timeless and picturesque qualities of the English landscape, presenting a would-be historical characterisation and, crucially, the sense of shared traditions and heritage driving the Anglo-American identity. England was defined for American sensibilities.

... for thousands of tourists who cross the Atlantic to old England one or another of these counties has additional attraction of their being their ancestral homeland. Within their borders there are found quaint and picturesque old towns and villages whose aspect has undergone little alteration since the days when the earliest English colonists settled in New England and, in some of these places, the visitors

from overseas may even find the ancient homesteads of their forefathers still standing amid the golden cornfields, russet moors or murmurous woodlands... The visitor from Massachusetts or Virginia may tread the same old country roads his ancestors trod and worship, if he will, in the picturesque old churches in which they prayed.<sup>66</sup>

This was similar in its thematic focus and imagery to the G.W.R.'s Anglo-American literature in looking to the overall agenda of inheritance and identity and was pursued, further, in 'Enjoying England'. This book explored the circumstances of what it termed, 'The Happy Paradox'.<sup>67</sup> England was "the ancient island ... a strange and unexpected world ... and yet your first voyage to England is a voyage home."<sup>68</sup> The opening pages established and indulged this seemingly paradoxical configuration and, as such, like the G.W.R., addressed the agenda of cultural ownership, authority, appropriation and fulfilment. There were however, two particular differentiating factors that distinguished the L.N.E.R.'s perspective from that of the G.W.R.

The L.N.E.R. literature was largely impressionistic and fundamentally ahistorical, engaging the sense of spectacle. It veered between a catalogue of worthy sites - historical and aesthetic - and a kaleidoscope of people, places and events presented in terms of dramatic, emotional experience. In many respects, the L.N.E.R.'s stylistic focus in 'Enjoying England' shared similarities with the G.W.R.'s representation of Southern Ireland and the Celtic construction generally in Mid and South Wales, Cornwall and Brittany. In both cases - England to an American audience, and Ireland to an English or Anglo-American readership - the ahistorical focus and the aestheticisation of history, served notice of an agenda of assumed cultural authority wherein the subordinated ahistorical categorisation nullified alternative challenging representations of identity, as in political, social or economic activity. Whereas, in the G.W.R.'s material, there was a clearly defined historical perspective with, albeit, an ambiguous declaration of cultural

authority, the L.N.E.R. work, particularly 'Enjoying England', was constructural and thereby endorsed a landscape of romance, spectacle and pageant,

a different, a fantastic world, full of brave echoes of the past. Full of unbelievable castles and cathedrals, of inns and lanes and villages that seem as brightly unreal as a romantic stage setting ... where the ancient lovely things have made so long a truce with time; where the scarlet pageant of Romance sweeps so unashamedly through the smart procession of modern fashionable life.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, the cultural perspectives of the Christian tradition in architecture, history and ceremony were reduced to spectacle:

No producer in the world could stage anything more dramatic than Evensong at Kings College in Cambridge ...<sup>70</sup>

The "different, ancient, brightly unreal pageant of Romance, the Enchanted Island," was thus carefully contextualised within a structured, stylised subordination - an inheritance defined in terms of an American agenda.

Most of us in America are stirred by the first soft breeze of England because in our blood a hundred adventurous ancestors shout their recognition of the forgotten Homeland. And even apart from that obscure, racial thrill - why, all of us have lived in England, whether or not we have been there. London Bridge has fallen down, skylarks and nightingales have sung. Falstaff and Pickwick have rollicked, in the brains of us all. ... We know what flowers fringe the Avon at Stratford, what glades echoed Robin Hood's horn, what winds 'wuther' on the Yorkshire moors. We know our dream - England well enough!<sup>71</sup>

As a final reference in this brief survey we can consider the L.N.E.R.'s presentation of Colchester; wherein the structure and style - the eclectic content, the compressed and

undifferentiated ahistorical treatment with the imagery and associations of the treasure house of uncoordinated artefacts - denoted the emphasis upon spectacle and immediate sensation. It was a construction that shares close similarities with heritage presentations today, not least for its anticipation of post-modern perspectives.<sup>72</sup>

I once spent nearly two thousand years in Colchester Castle, though the clock struck only twice; for I found (imagine it!) that the old walled Roman Forum had served as a basis for the grim Norman Keep with its dungeons and stone staircases and, on climbing one of these, I found myself in a treasure-house of a museum. Roman toys and jewels, a sinister Viking idol, Saxon slave-rings, medieval paintings, relics of the Bloody Siege during Cromwell's time - you can read romances from this Lost Property Office of History.<sup>73</sup>

The imagery of the Lost Property Office with all its attendant associations of piecemeal collection and the thematic dislocation, the seemingly random, undifferentiated encounter, contrasted with the G.W.R.'s more carefully-structured appeal to American interests.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## Anglo-American Perspectives

- 1/ Felix Pole 'His Book', Private Circulation, 1954. Town and Country Press, 1968. P204. For an interesting thematic comparison see Stanley Baldwin's Address: "Anglo-American Friendship," April 1925, Published in 'On England And Other Addresses'. PP230-233, particularly P233, Penguin, London. 1939 ed.
- 2/ J.R. Seeley. The Expansion of England, Macmillan, London. 1883.
- 3/ A.M. Broadley. Historic Sites and Scenes of England, G.W.R. 1924. ed. P3.
- 4/ G.W.R. Holiday Haunts, 1937 ed. P994.
- 5/ G.W.R. Shakespeare-Land, 1924, ed. P1.
- 6/ Maxwell Fraser. 'England Any Why' G.W.R./S.R. 1932 P1.
- 7/ Ibid P1
- 8/ Broadley. Historic Sites/Scenes P9. See John Baylis, 'Anglo-American relations since 1939. The enduring alliance,' Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997. In particular, his Introduction, 'Issues of epistemology, methodology and ideology,' PP1-5, wherein the G.W.R.'s perspective is defined in historiographical terms as "Evangelical." This attitude to Anglo-American relations involves 'a sense of mission'. "It is characterised by emphasis upon the sentimental and cultural dimensions of the relationship" P8. Baylis does not, however, offer any detail on the nature and scope of the cultural constructions.
- 9/ Fraser. England Any Why, 1931 ed. P21.
- 10/ G.W.R. North Wales. The British Tyrol 1924 ed. P41.
- 11/ Ibid P45.
- 12/ G.W.R. Wonderful Wessex, 1908. P14.  
Celebrations of English national identity as evident here could also be considered in the cultural perspective of, for example, the rival claims to the provenance and architectural superiority of Gothic cathedrals in England and France. Looking back into the early nineteenth century and the existing and ongoing rival claims, the Rev. C.D. Whittington,

1811, pronounced on the superiority of the French. "An Historical Survey of the Ecclesiastical Antiquities of France with a view to illustrate The Rise And Progress Of Gothic Architecture in Europe." A direct comparison was offered between Amiens and Salisbury, these being of contemporaneous date and style. Westminster was also included. "That it is a more light and beautiful specimen of Gothic architecture than either Salisbury or Westminster will be allowed by all who have seen it". P192. See also Rheims, P178. Rev. G.D. Whittington. London 1811.

13/ Ibid P12.

14/ Ibid P13.

15/ G.W.R. Holiday Haunts, 1936 ed. P122.

16/ Ibid P122.

17/ David Lowenthal. *The Heritage Crusade*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1998. "Presentism is seemed integral to England's national legacy. Long accretion proves this heritage was formed with a wish to deal with Englishmen as they are, not just as they were, historian-cleric Mandell Creighton assured readers. What endears the heritage is not its finished form but the long process of forging it. Its potency derives from being both ancient and responsive to present needs." P151. The dialectics of past and present, continuity and adaptation are thus pivotal in terms of the Anglo-American perspectives of cultural authority, identity, assimilation and appropriation. They define the concepts of 'inheritance' and 'mission'. The presentist perspective contextualises Ritchie Ovendale's survey of the theme and literature of 'Rapprochement.' See Ritchie Ovendale, *Anglo-American Relations In The Twentieth Century*, Macmillan Press, London. 1998.

18/ Peter Carroll/David Noble. *The Free And The Unfree*, Penguin, London. 1977. P309.

19/ Ibid P309 ) In correlating the evident G.W.R. imperialist-inspired principles

20/ Ibid P310 ) here, it is worth noting Felix Pole's - *General Manager* - assertion

21/ Ibid P310 ) that he was "a great admirer of Cecil Rhodes." 'His Book', P213.

22/ M.G. Jessett F.R.G.S. *The Bond Of Empire*, Sampson, Low, Marston, London, 1902. Introduction XIV. For a more focused American perspective see also Richard Hofstadter, 'Social In Darwinism In American Thought', Chapter Nine: 'Racism And Imperialism' passim - *American Historical Association*, 1944. Beacon Press, Boston, 1992.

- 23/ Correlli Barnet. 'The Collapse Of British Power'. Sutton Publishing, Stroud. 1984, P262. See also P287: "By 1929, however, relations between the British and American branches of the great Anglo-Saxon family had deteriorated to the stage of Christmas cards only."
- 24/ Ibid P262.
- 25/ D. Cameron-Watt. Succeeding John Bull. America In Britain's Place. 1900-1975 Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1984. P50.
- 26/ G.W.R. Magazine, January, 1932. P8.
- 27/ Lord Hacking. Quoted, Felix Pole, His Book, P205. Douglas Hacking, M.P., Secretary of the Department of Overseas Trade became Chairman of the Association's Executive Committee in February 1929, holding this office until 1950.
- 28/ G.W.R. Magazine, October, 1935, P560.
- 29/ British Tourist Authority. The British Travel Association, 1929-1969, London, 1970. P11.
- 30/ G.W.R. Magazine November, 1931. P469.
- 31/ Ibid P469.
- 32/ P.R.O. Rail 1080: 585. 12-9-29.
- 33/ G.W.R. Magazine June, 1927. P218.
- 34/ G.W.R. Magazine November, 1931. P469.
- 35/ P.R.O. Rail 1080-583 5-1-26.
- 36/ P.R.O. Rail 1080-584 15-5-28.
- 37/ G.W.R. Rural London, 1924 ed. P16. See also Anthony D. Smith. The Ethnic Origins of Nationals. Blackwell, Oxford, 1986. Chapter Eight: Legends and Landscapes.
- 38/ G.W.R. Places Of Pilgrimage For American Travellers, 1925 ed. P7.
- 39/ G.W.R. Rural London, 1924. P6.
- 40/ G.W.R. Places of Pilgrimage, 1924. P34.

- 41/ S.P.B. Mais. *Glorious Devon*. G.W.R. 1934 ed. P73. - See also the earlier 'Devon. The Lovely Land of the Mayflower', G.W.R. 1924. P2. "Much of the history of the Anglo-Saxon race on both sides of the Atlantic is summed up in the inscription inserted in the sea wall at Plymouth." The plaque to the Pilgrim Fathers was dedicated in 1891 - at a time when Anglo-American sentiments of inheritance and destiny were fulsome.
- 42/ G.W.R. *Great Western Railway Docks*, 1937. P76.
- 43/ G.W.R. *Historic Sites and Scenes*, 1910 ed. P14.
- 44/ P.R.O. Rail: 1080-587 Minutes 1211 and 1234. British Tourist Authority. *The British Travel Association 1929-1969*. London. 1970. P5.
- 45/ Maxwell Fraser, *Shakespeare Land*, G.W.R./Associated Companies, 1933. P1.
- 46/ *Ibid* P1.
- 47/ *Great Western Railway of England Souvenir. Log of Special Trains conveying American Members of the International Hotel Alliance from Plymouth to Paddington*. April 9, 1926.
- 48/ G.W.R. *Hotels And Catering Services 1937*. P6.  
 The Hotels literature was instructive in its conspicuous celebration of the professional ideal as detailed, for example, in Harold Perkin's 'The Rise Of Professional Society', Routledge, London. 1989. In all cases, imagery and association reflected the characteristic representations of affluence, hierarchy and authority and, therein, drew heavily upon historical and received rural-aesthetic constructions. Thus, The Manor House Hotel, Moretonhampstead, Devon with all the attendant perceptions of seeing and being seen.  
 "Completed in 1907, to replication, enlarged in 1935, is a Jacobean replica in stone, with stone mullions, oak window frames and stone-tiled roof, built on broad South and West terraces...  
 In every direction are beautiful views across pleasure grounds and rock gardens falling to a lake and to the River Bovey which flows through the property winding through woods and meadow lands. In the distance are vistas of the incomparable moors. Easdon Tor is within two miles of the house." *ibid* P41.  
 Fishguard Bay Hotel was celebrated for its luxuriant, exotic gardens resonant of imperial and international reference generally. The carefully landscaped gardens were host to plants and trees from all parts of the world as the company was anxious to emphasise. See G.W.R. Magazine, May, 1938, P199, and the earlier mission statement. - *Souvenir of British Empire Exhibition*. G.W.R. 1924, P19.



- 49/ Herbert Butterfield. *The Whig Interpretation of History*, Bell, London. 1931, Pelican Books, London. 1973 ed. P42. "The whig historian is interested in discovering agency in history ... It is characteristic of his method that he should be interested in agency rather than in process."
- 50/ David Lowenthal. *The Past Is A Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1985. P101. The concepts of process and agency would appear somewhat problematic given Lowenthal's evident explanation of the whig perspective as set alongside his representation of 'Presentism' and the Anglo-Saxon inheritance as process. See ref 17. See also Simon James, *The Atlantic Celts*. James identifies the Celtic traditions as likewise Whig 'inspired'. "The traditional constructed story of the Celts is an example of 'Whig' history." P140.... "It is an eighteenth and nineteenth century reification of people that never existed" P136.
- 51/ *Ibid* P48. See also, *The Heritage Crusade*. Lowenthal, Cambridge, for his reference to rival constructions of early Puritan organisation - The Mayflower Compact of 1628. P149.
- 52/ Maxwell Fraser, Somerset, G.W.R. 1934. P29.
- 53/ G.M. Trevelyan. *Illustrated English Social History*, Longmans, London, 1942/49, Pelican, London. 1964 ed. P15. See also W.G. Hoskins, *The Making Of The English Landscape*. Pelican, London. 1955. Hoskins' conceptual framework expressed in terms of 'The Flowering Of Rural England', P154, sustained the imagery of a youthful springtime England. Similarly, see S.T. Bindoff, *Tudor England*, Penguin Books, 1950. Bindoff indicates the vibrant, dynamic character of the English language as a unifying and expansive tool of progress internationally. P24/107.
- 54/ Daniel J. Boorstin. *The Americans: The Colonial Experience*, Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 1958, PP3-31.
- 55/ R.B. Nye and J.E. Morpurgo. *A History Of The United States, Two Volumes*. Volume One, *The Birth Of The U.S.A*. Penguin Books, London. 1955.
- 56/ *Ibid* Introduction vii.
- 57/ *Ibid* Introduction viii. These considerations within the broad spectrum of cultural, political, economic and aesthetic authority and reciprocity - the conventions of duties, obligations and affiliations of early American colonial structures, were well documented in the works of Benjamin Franklin, for example, particularly the pre and post-revolutionary perspectives: *The Complete Works in Philosophy, Politics and Morals of the Late Dr. Benjamin Franklin*, Second ed. Three Volumes, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme And Brown. And J. Johnson. London 1804.
- 58/ Lloyd and Jennifer Laing. *Anglo-Saxon England*, Paladin, London. 1979. P11.

- 59/ Maxwell Fraser. Somerset, P43. See also, Introduction: Berkshire, Wiltshire 'Holiday Haunts', 1937. Barbara Yorke's recent work: 'The Most Perfect Man In History?' 'History Today' Volume 49(10), October, 1999, PP8-14 examines the cultural construction of Alfred as the great English king and the impact of the Anglo-Saxon heritage as interpreted and adapted for political and cultural purposes. Her survey covers the role of Alfred as constructed in cultural politics from the Middle Ages, through to the imperial perspective of Lord Rosebury at the end of the nineteenth century.
- 60/ D.V. Levien, Wessex White Horses, G.W.R. September, 1923. Several of the White Horse cuts were appropriated culturally and given Anglo-Saxon provenance to obviously boost the historical-cultural resonance of King Alfred and the triumph of English identity. The White Horse at Westbury and the famous White Horse of Uffington, Berkshire were subject to this treatment within the G.W.R. literature.
- 61/ Edward J. Burrow F.R.G.S. From Caveman to Roman in Britain, G.W.R. C 1924.
- 62/ G.W.R. Through The Window, Paddington to Killarney, 1926. P36.
- 63/ J. Dickie. 'Special' No More - Anglo-American Relations. Rhetoric and Reality, London, 1994. PP130-31.
- 64/ L.N.E.R. Notes for American Visitors. The Holiday Series C. 1930.
- 65/ B.L. Warde. Enjoying England. A Book About An Enchanted Island, By An American in London. London and North Eastern Railway, 1931.
- 66/ Notes for American Visitors PP1-2.
- 67/ Enjoying England PP1-4.
- 68/ Ibid P2.
- 69/ Ibid P1.
- 70/ Ibid P32.
- 71/ Ibid PP203.
- 72/ See Representing The Nation: A Reader, Histories, heritage and museums. Ed. David Boswell and Jessica Evans. Routledge, London 1999. See, particularly, Chris Rojek, "Fatal Attractions" PP185-207; John Urry, 'Gazing On History' PP208-232.
- 73/ Enjoying England P41.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Ocean Coast

'Ocean Coast' and 'Holiday Line' imagery was a firmly established dimension of G.W.R. identity by the mid-thirties. This was clearly affirmed by the company's choice of theme and location for its celebrated Centenary poster - '100 Years of Progress, 1835-1934,' - depicting a west-bound express passenger train running along the shore-line at the variously named Horse or Shell Cove, near Dawlish in South Devon. It was a carefully composed work combining dramatic and contrasting features of land and seascape that characterised the imagery and stylistic focus of the G.W.R.'s seaside representation. Numerous 'official' G.W.R. photographs of this and nearby seaside locations further emphasised the 'Holiday Line' imagery as, indeed, did innumerable other photographers and illustrators at work along this favoured coastal section of the main line to the West. Together with this line between Dawlish Warren and Teignmouth, itself approached from each end by long and dramatic estuary perspectives - the Exe and the Teign - the Great Western also included several additional coastal line sections to further enhance its desired seaside character and associations. These comprised extensive and extremely dramatic sections of the Cambrian Coast, the western end of the Taunton-Minehead line; South Devon's Goodrington Sands and the final approach to the waterside terminus at Kingswear (with its G.W.R. ferry to Dartmouth), Mount's Bay in West Cornwall where, dominated by the spectacle of St. Michael's Mount, the final two miles of the West of England main-line from Paddington to Penzance followed the shoreline to the Great Western's most westerly terminus. Finally, and perhaps most spectacular of all such locations, the branch line from the junction at St. Erth to St. Ives, again, in West Cornwall, exemplified the entire spectrum of Ocean Coast perspectives, from the exhilarating, dramatic spectacle of cliffside, ocean and extensively sandy beaches to the seclusion of

quiet reaches of the Hayle estuary and the historical and aesthetic experience of St. Ives as that of the traditional Cornish fishing port.

The seaside perspective of the G.W.R. had two basic dimensions: that of the fashionable and exclusively styled watering place, perfectly exemplified by Torquay and, by contrast, the more openly democratic family-based resorts as in Paignton and Porthcawl, where there was a premium upon organised entertainments, amusement parks and promenades in close relationship to the pleasures of the beach: sandcastles, sunshine and sea. This latter category could well be sub-divided to distinguish the larger scale, popularist recreational resorts, Weston-Super-Mare, Barry Island or Weymouth, for example, from the small, more traditional and heritage-influenced locations linking fishing and general seaport identity with cultural or aesthetic perspectives in an overall context of the holiday experience. The Celtic properties of the previous chapter are also relevant here. The latter classification, often including dramatic and, importantly, secluded coves and beaches, might best be instanced by the likes of Salcombe or Brixham in South Devon, or Kynance Cove, Sennen or Porthcurno in West Cornwall as contrasted with the bustle and energy of Goodrington Sands or Teignmouth in Devon, and Newquay or St. Ives in Cornwall.

### The English Riviera

The Riviera imagery drew upon Mediterranean, and particularly 'Campanian', associations in terms of climate, landscape and social-cultural characterisation. In its representation of the English Riviera - effectively the South Devon coastal district of Torbay and the South Hams, westward to Salcombe - the G.W.R. literature enlisted the properties of classical aesthetics in the service of commercial-cultural enhancement. As evident in the presentation of Torquay, this construction was also reflected in the representations of South Devon's properties of agricultural abundance and aesthetic harmony.

Great Western literature on Torquay and Torbay generally, like that of all earlier and, then, current guides, closely focused upon its distinguished character in terms of its

location, its facilities and its celebrated aesthetic qualities. Torbay, in William Gilpin's picturesque rendering of 1798 evoked the classical perspective; the model for all consequent works.

Its general form is femilunar, enclosing a circumference of twelve miles. Its winding shores on both sides are screened with grand ramparts of rocks, between which, in the central part, the ground from the country forming a gentle vale, falls easily to the water's edge. Wood grows all round the bay even on its rocky sides where it can get footing and shelter, but in the central part with great luxuriance. In this delicious spot stood formerly Torre Abbey, the ruins of which still remain. Wooded hills descending on every side screened and adorned it both behind and on its flanks. In front the bay opening before it spread its circling rocky cheeks like a vast collonade letting in all the pleasing forms of perspective and receiving all the variety of light and shade which the sun throws upon them.<sup>1</sup>

Torquay also offered a litany of distinguished visitors and residents, past and present, this being vital to the overall characterisation. Lord Nelson, Napoleon, as a captive, Queen Victoria, The Duchess of Sutherland and ~Princess Louise, likewise, Tennyson and Charles Kingsley were listed as distinguished visitors. An early Ward-Lock guide of 1897 wrote of the town as "The Italy of England" and, like Gilpin, drew upon picturesque references for 'Glorious Devon.'

The first view of the town is usually obtained from the road leading from the station. Turning the corner that leads into the marine drive that skirts the waters of Torbay, the scene cannot fail to win admiration and 'lovely' is the adjective that is suggested by the first glimpse of this terraced town, ensconsed, like Rome, on seven hills and embowered in trees and flowers that would do credit to the Pincian

Gardens. Tier above tier rise mansions and villas each in its own grounds and built in excellent taste so that the eye wanders over the scene without being arrested by any jerry-builders folly and takes in at a glance the whole panoramic view.<sup>2</sup>

The 1904 edition of 'Seaside Watering places' described Torquay as the rightful recipient of both "Nature and Art, prodigal in their gifts."<sup>3</sup> Imagery was invariably feminine as in the following extract from Worth's 'Tourist Guide to South Devon.' 1878.

Torquay is regarded as the queen of watering places... Seen from some well chosen eminence under a glowing sky, Torquay is more like a domain in fairy land than any portion of this work-a-day world. Truth to tell, there is a good deal of the lotus-eaters about many of its inhabitants.<sup>4</sup>

The Ward-Lock Guide for 1897 similarly referred to Torquay as:

A lovely queen of some sunny southern land who has been transported from her native environment and set down in a far-off land.<sup>5</sup>

Exclusive imagery prevailed, the essential ethos of the resort being further clarified in the G.W.R.'s 'Devon, Shire of Sea Kings,' 1904.

Minstrel entertainments and other kinds of beach shows find no favour in the eyes of those who are responsible for the social success of Torquay. On the other hand, yachtsmen, golfers, cricketers and oarsmen find themselves in a place where provision has been made for every kind of sport. Hunting is available and anglers can choose between lake, river and sea.<sup>6</sup>

Mais drew upon definitively feminine characterisation in 'Glorious Devon', 1928,<sup>7</sup> emphasising successive revelatory perspectives that progressively ordered or structured the visitor's appreciation of the aesthetic encounter.

Torquay unveils her beauties very gradually. It is not from the rail-

way which is tucked away unobtrusively that her particular glories are to be seen. Built like Bath and Rome on seven hills, her full majesty is not to be realised unless perhaps from the sea or the height of her new reservoir. Each separate arc of beauty is self contained and individual. Here is no hard glittering ruler of a grand promenade, going endlessly, tirelessly on until it emerges into the grander no less straight and tiring promenade of the next resort. Instead you find yourself in the cleft of a vast bay where you may see without being seen. The high rocks stretching down to the front are hidden in a forest of wonderful exotic palms and flowers which seem to flourish nowhere but here.<sup>8</sup>

From the explicit reference here to “her beauties”, Mais presented what was clearly a perspective of carefully organised, but privileged aesthetic revelation. The subtle unveiling, the sense of shared intimacy in an initiate personal encounter, the contrast of sensuous curves - “each separate arc of beauty” - with “hard glittering ruler lines,” elsewhere, the imagery of “exotic palms and flowers” and the romantic association with the seven hills of Rome evoked the unique ethos of this “Queen of Watering Places.”<sup>9</sup> The entire presentation of Torquay as set out here exemplified the collective cultural spectrum of fashionable imagery and its stylistic expression. As Alain Corbin has observed of the exclusive seaside society:

The manner of being together, the complicity amongst tourists, the signs of recognition and the procedures for making distinctions also determined the means of enjoying this place. The ways in which time was used and space constructed were shaped by the forms of sociability that were organised and then spread across the seaboard. The range of distractions, pleasures and obligations that resulted dictated the form of the seaside holiday.<sup>10</sup>

Torquay's overall identity was further enhanced in its status as a winter resort and, in this guise, the Great Western determined upon form Continental parallels, offering an atmosphere of highly privileged and exclusive social and cultural representation. 'Winter Resorts on the G.W.R.', 1925 edition, provided the detail:

In addition to being one of the best pleasure resorts in Europe, Torquay has rapidly come into the forefront as the Premier Marine Spa. The Medical, Electrical, Turkish, Tepid and Salt Water Swimming Baths are replete with all the latest British and Continental methods of Spa Treatments...<sup>11</sup>

As ever in the strictly hierarchical society served by the G.W.R., the clientele were assured of the highest standards of service, commensurate with social distinctions:

The Baths' Staffs of Masseurs and Masseuses are highly trained and patients for whom any form of Treatment has been prescribed can rely on having all their requirements fully met... The Winter visitor need never have a dull moment. All the entertainment houses are open and the Hotel Proprietors are never weary in catering for the absolute comfort and enjoyment of their guests.<sup>12</sup>

The fact that post-war British Railways' editions of 'Holiday Haunts', as recent as 1959, continued to stress the provision of medicinal baths - "Aix and Vichy douches, Navheim vapour," and other such treatments - testified to the substantive character of Torquay as the Great Western's supreme expression of the hierarchically-defined, exclusive resort.<sup>13</sup>

The South Hams district of South Devon, the land bounded on the north by the G.W.R. main line from Totnes to Plymouth and on the south by the Channel coast, offered further exclusive imagery. 'Devon, The Shire of Sea Kings' left the reader in no doubt as to the character and charm of the area with its blend of coastal landscape, winding estuaries and deeply rural inland villages. In its content and style here, the G.W.R.



offered up a litany of Englishness delivered in the commercial-cultural focus of determined place selling.

Rocky Headlands, precipitous cliffs, pleasant coves, strangely shaped creeks often reaching far inland with octopus-like branches, sunlined laps of golden sand, fruitful orchards, giant elms and oaks, hedgerows aglow with wild flowers, smiling meadows and sequestered coombs where lemons and oranges ripen in the open air and blue hydrangeas lie in masses *under the trees* - such are some of the distinctive features of the fertile South Hams. Picturesque villages, interesting churches, creeper-covered cottages and venerable manor houses, old world inns and an abundance of legend and folk-lore add materially to the attractions with which generous nature has endowed this particular portion of the Devon Riviera.<sup>14</sup>

As ever, in conveying the received imagery of rural England, the company also stressed the easy access to the area. The Kingsbridge branch from Brent, on the main line, wandered south through delightful communities such as Loddiswell, Gara Bridge and Avonwick to the small market town of Kingsbridge, described by Mais as a place where “the sea just stops at the foot of the town.”<sup>15</sup> G.W.R. bus services linked the countryside beyond the railway, a popular location being that of Salcombe. ‘The Tourist Guide to South Devon,’ 1878, recommended the river as the best means of reaching Salcombe, adding: “If Salcombe were better known and more readily accessible it would have no lack of visitors.”<sup>16</sup> The Ward-Lock guide of 1897 accounted for the location in forthright manner: “The Englishman’s love of the sea is sufficient explanation of the growth of Salcombe.”<sup>17</sup> “Squeezed between the hillside and the water,”<sup>18</sup> it was presented in terms of Mediterranean perspectives, synonymous with the French or Italian Riviera.

Here the aloe and agave blossom, oranges, lemons and citrons flourish

in the open air, and fushias grow to trees. The dianthus, blue gum tree, myrtle and camelia are common in every garden. No less than eighteen varieties of ferns are found growing wild in the neighbourhood of Salcombe and rare specimens of butterflies are found here.<sup>19</sup>

As with the previous passage from ‘Shire of Sea Kings’, this depiction underlined the strong sensation of colour and variety, making a direct appeal to the senses and the appreciation of rich fertility and abundance. It was such as this that later inspired Maxwell Fraser’s open celebration of Devon’s particular qualities of “pulsating colour and life,” and the prevailing sense of Englishness that defined it in her declaration: “Devon is a state of mind.”<sup>20</sup>

### ‘Care-Free Democracies’

In identifying the popular family resorts, those of the “care-free democracy”<sup>21</sup> as the company put it, Paignton, Porthcawl, Weymouth and Weston-Super Mare were the leading contenders. Whilst focusing upon Paignton and South Devon, it is useful for comparative reference to record Great Western perspectives on these other listed resorts. Weston will be included in the later case study on Somerset.

Weymouth was undoubtedly a family resort. The company brochure of 1934 entitled: ‘Bring Your Children to Weymouth, Queen of the Lovely Dorset Coast’ was perfectly explicit. “Children love Weymouth. There is no ‘stiff and starchiness’ to dry up their spirits”<sup>22</sup> ‘Holiday Haunts’ noted “any new invention for keeping holiday makers happy and amused will speedily find its way to the town.”<sup>23</sup>

Porthcawl, variously regarded as “The Gem of the Severn Sea,” “The Brighton of Wales,” or “The Blackpool of Wales,”<sup>24</sup> devoted itself to tourism and the unrestricted pursuit of diverse recreation. The codified reference in ‘Holiday Haunts’, 1929 declared of the resort: “It has fashioned its resources to modern ideas,”<sup>25</sup> but in less diffident style, the town brochure of the late thirties, entitled, ‘Coney Beach Britain’s Coney Island,’ offered endless scope for modern amusement. Described as, “Bang up to the

minute,”<sup>26</sup> the amusement park comprised some thirty or so special attractions ranging from pleasurable interest to thrilling abandon. ‘Holiday Haunts’ 1939, recorded “Porthcawl’s sole industry is catering for visitors and the indoor and outdoor entertainments and amusements so generously provided are now open on Sundays as well as weekdays.”<sup>27</sup> ‘Holiday Haunts’ also noted considerable investment in promenade amenities, the Grand Pavilion, gardens, sports, pavilion and children’s playground. To supplement the prevailing family imagery of the resort, the G.W.R. also stressed that the sand dunes at Porthcawl were of special interest. Making a familiar reference to European equivalents, ‘Holiday Haunts’ observed: “the sand dunes pile up at some points to over 200 feet and are only rivalled in the whole of Europe by those of Kurische Nehrung in East Prussia.”<sup>28</sup> There were, conspicuously, no Celtic properties of otherness, mystery and the landscape of the sublime attributed to the resort.

Unlike comparable resorts of the South Coast promoted by the Southern Railway, Paignton did not receive any extended coverage in the pre-war ‘Holiday Haunts.’ But through the inter-war era, like Weston-Super-Mare, it had firmly established itself as one of the G.W.R.’s foremost family resorts, clearly distinct from Torquay in its overall character and appeal. One of the best publications on Paignton between the World Wars was the coloured brochure of 1937, ‘Paignton. Glorious South Devon’. It was forthright in the expression of gratuitous enjoyment and of service.

Paignton is tireless in studying the needs of its visitors and residents and endeavouring to anticipate their every want... Holiday makers delight in its many natural attractions and in its continual round of amusements, and especially its constant care for the happiness and safety of the children for, although Paignton has a long history, it takes more pride in its progressiveness than in the events of the past. It has developed into a family resort, meeting the family holiday needs so successfully that its visitors gain the impression that the local

authority must consist of exceptionally amiable and understanding family men.”<sup>29</sup>

The front cover of the brochure, with its curly-haired child in bright red beachwear playing on the sand with a beach ball, has become a potent image of seaside England.

Post-War coverage was enthusiastic and detailed, consolidating the family format. ‘Holiday Haunts’ for 1947, the last edition under Great Western ownership, stressed the attractions on offer, much of it relating to the municipal enterprise of the mid thirties with the development of former marshland at Goodrington.<sup>30</sup> Building on the reputation for its excellent beaches and bathing facilities, Goodrington Park and related developments - gardens, boating lakes, promenade, cafe, car park (a railway halt was opened in 1928 and substantially developed in the post-war years) - were completed in May 1936 at a cost of £54,000. It was ceremonially opened by Sir Robert Horne, Chairman of the Great Western Railway on the 23rd of that month.<sup>31</sup> ‘Holiday Haunts,’ 1947 reported on Paignton, enumerating its many family attractions and underlining the broad, popular appeal of the resort. Two holiday camps were also advertised in ‘Holiday Haunts,’ further reinforcing the image.

It is run on modern lines with fine hotels on the sea front, spacious promenades laid out with lawns and flower beds and long stretches of sand on which there are rows of bathing huts and tents. Preston foreshore continues the main Paignton sands and Preston Green, a pleasure ground of about 10 acres, affords ample space for playing games. A short walk past the harbour beach to the splendid Goodrington Sands. Just prior to the war £54,000 was spent on improvements at Goodrington, which included new cliff gardens, promenades, provision of additional sites for seaside cabins and huts and up-to-date bathing stations, putting greens, a large boating lake, model yacht ponds, a Peter Pan playground, attractive cafes and tea gardens and

beautifully laid out flower and rose gardens and shrubberies.<sup>32</sup>

Paignton also offered a zoo with the added attractions of rare tropical plants and flowers and the inevitable 'toy railway' for children. the L.M.S. also advertised extensively on behalf of the resort, stressing the numerous through trains from the Midlands and the North and emphasising its prestigious "Devonian" service in its holiday manual. 'Holiday by L.M.S.', Torbay being a favoured destination for tourists from the Midlands and North Country.<sup>33</sup>

Torbay was the focus of the 'English Riviera', offering a cross-section of tourist attractions as indicated. This 'English Riviera' of South Devon with its attempted Mediterranean association, was a specific, unified district that made policy, co-ordination and implementation a much easier task than that for the 'Cornish Riviera'. The latter was much less clearly defined, geographically and structurally. Cornwall's Riviera was more of a county concept, a broader based, less co-ordinated conception with a substantially smaller and much less affluent population which also suffered the disadvantage, therefore, of having less resources at its disposal. It was also significantly further away from the principal sources of a visiting population - London, the Midlands and North of England. Travel times were longer and the expenses involved inevitably higher. Moreover, the season itself was more sharply circumscribed than that of its Devonian neighbour. Torquay, in particular, had a long established record as a tourist resort, more so than any of the Cornish locations; it was far more affluent, significantly larger and had enjoyed the patronage of the influential and resident Palk family who, as landowners, had played a large, active and consistent role in cultivating the town as a distinguished, exclusive resort.

Teignmouth provided a useful example of what could be achieved by the smaller coastal resorts of South Devon when the local corporation invested directly in the resort. The active decision of resorts such as Teignmouth and Paignton to invest heavily in the provision of tourist amenities marked a further distinction between the character and

approach of the Devon resorts and those of neighbouring Cornwall. The latter depended very largely upon the natural attractions of the district and the provision of broad based entertainment other than that at Newquay was far less apparent. This situation was a specific and familiar point of contention between the G.W.R.'s Publicity Department and local authorities in Cornwall.

Whilst it criticised the perceived lack of popular entertainments within the Cornish tourist industry, the G.W.R. Magazine, in August 1938, carried a detailed report on the progressive nature of Teignmouth.<sup>34</sup> Together with the installation of a new scheme for mains drainage and new water mains to ensure basic public health, the corporation focused upon attractive tourist amenities. Non-dazzle paving slabs were laid on the promenade, these being in cliff-red and buff to harmonise with the natural landscape. The promenade was supplemented visually by the provision of grassed plots, shrubberies, rockeries and sunken gardens that were floodlit at night. Tennis courts, bowling greens, a pavilion and a model yacht pond were provided to the rear of the promenade. Here, too, were floodlit rockeries and flower beds. Teignmouth was declared to be "particularly suitable for the family man and, with its mild climate, it is especially suitable for permanent residence or for those returning from overseas."<sup>35</sup> It was estimated that the town had invested £100,000 over a five year period in developing tourism. Thus Teignmouth reflected all the style and amenities that characterised the smaller English seaside resort. In not looking to cultivate an exclusive identity, Teignmouth flourished as a moderately sized family resort which, after the style of the Southern Railway's South Coast perspective, pursued the democratic characterisation that defined so much of the myth of inter-war seaside England.

The Cornish experience, by contrast, approximated to a more individualistic style, stressing the unique qualities of its seaside experience in line with the prevailing sense of the county's overall and essentially unique image, nationally. Of all the extensive coastline served by the Great Western, Cornwall was considered to be the Ocean Coast

at its best.

The Ocean Coast climate is most perfectly exemplified in Cornwall because that county is almost entirely surrounded by sea. Unless it comes straight down the one neck of land, every wind must be a sea wind, tempered by the watery expanse over which it has passed.<sup>36</sup>

If Cornwall best represented the company's coastal seaside imagery generally, then Newquay was unique amongst the Great Western's Cornish resorts: it was not only the largest within the county, it was the only one where economy and identity was linked totally to tourism. 'Holiday Haunts' asserted "... with its facilities for sports and amusements, Newquay hardly needs the attraction of history to enhance its already enormous popularity."<sup>37</sup>

'Winter Resorts for the Great Western', 1934, stressed that Newquay had "that air of carefree disregard of more stringent conventions which makes a holiday in Cornwall such a joyous affair",<sup>38</sup> whilst Mais in 'The Cornish Riviera', 1928, had underlined the resort's prevailing family identity.

Day after day in hot weather whole families troup down on to these vast beaches immediately after breakfast laden with bats, balls and luncheon baskets and papers and towels and stay there until the sun has set over the bay. These may lay no claim to know Cornwall, but they may certainly lay claim to getting the best out of Newquay.<sup>39</sup>

In line with its popular, recreational image, totally identified with the sea, Newquay was also celebrated as "one of England's chief centres for surf bathing."<sup>40</sup>

Ocean Coast perspectives were pursued at St. Ives itself and for the G.W.R.'s Tregenna Castle Hotel at the resort. Mais wrote of the town in 'The Cornish Riviera': "It is doubtful whether there is a more popular seaside resort in England. There is an impression of life, colour, movement everywhere."<sup>41</sup> From the palmed surroundings of St. Erth, the junction with the main line, through the waterside station at Lelant and the

cliff-side location of Carbis Bay, to the terminus, immediately above Porthminster Beach, no other railway journey on or beyond the Great Western system, was said to offer such varied and dramatic perspectives of coastline, seascape or seaside itself. In the absence of an official G.W.R. account of the branch line journey, 'The Homeland Handbook: St. Ives, Carbis Bay and Lelant',<sup>42</sup> offered its version, illustrating the text with official Great Western photographs.

This branch line from St. Erth to St. Ives is such as to make the traveller rejoice at the glimpse it affords of the pleasant places among which his days are to be spent. But to get this view in all its beauty, choose a corner seat on the right of the carriage facing the engine.<sup>43</sup>

Carbis Bay was the epitome of the 'Ocean Coast' perspective, the small coastal location dedicated to residential identity and seaside activity. 'Holiday Haunts' noted the increasing numbers of cliffside residences, "built with an appreciation of their setting"<sup>44</sup> and the general contemporary nature of the community - All Saints Church was consecrated in 1929 - all of this reflecting the character and spirit of 'Ocean Coast' ideals.

The numerous references to residential status carried in 'Holiday Haunts', particularly those relating to Cornish and Devonian locations, were developed into a fully focused theme in the G.W.R.'s publication, 'The Ocean Coast', 1924.<sup>45</sup> This book, in many ways a coastal version of 'Metroland',<sup>46</sup> or the G.W.R.'s 'Rural London', put heavy emphasis upon the residential perspective. Ocean Coast imagery was a blend of the ancient or traditional, with modern styles. It was a direct reflection of the urban/rural accommodation prominent in the Great Western literature by the thirties.

Coastal communities - Carbis Bay, Marazion, St. Agnes, Perranporth, Carlyon Bay, Looe, Whitesand Bay, as examples, by no means all - from locations all round the Cornish coast, serve to illustrate from this one county alone, the decisive thrust of this concept. The essential message had two vital dimensions. Firstly, the extremely



positive quality of healthy environment.

To live where the sun and soft air are, imparts a new flavour and relish to the whole of life. We begin again to see life clear and see it whole ... Hand in hand with this comes a physical change every bit as wonderful. Nerves are soothed and steadied, tissues cleared and revitalised by sun and wind. Soon you begin to get that sound sleep each night that you thought belonged to youth alone.

The whole of life becomes as sweet as a hazel nut.<sup>47</sup>

The second dimension was that this quality of life required no sacrifice at all and in this reassurance we find all the salient features of modernity, progress and technology, discussed earlier, that helped define the return to nature in its rural or coastal identity.

Convenience was a key-note:

It must be insisted that there is nothing you have to give up to obtain these benefits. There is no need to sacrifice the hard won spoils of the ages, no need to go back to the simple - but convenient - life, to obtain the manifold blessings of an ocean climate.

On the ocean coast you can live in a town with wide, well-paved streets, where the shops, the restaurants and theatres are as modern as any inland. There are seaside concert halls where the greatest musicians of the day perform.<sup>48</sup>

Continuing the theme of modern convenience, we read:

Today the tiniest hamlet on the Cornish coast is so linked up with the great world ... by railway and bus, by post and newspaper, by telephone and wireless, that you can live there without sacrificing any of the social enjoyment, the culture, or the intelligent interest in the affairs of the world that you rightly set such store by.<sup>49</sup>

In final reference to overwhelmingly comfortable urban perspective defining the

'Ocean Coast', the book offered a scenario of the ideal existence; variously, that of lotus-land or Metroland-By-Sea.

You can enjoy it all in the soft warm air that gently stirs the palm trees in your garden. You sit and watch the changing face of the waters and listen to the calling of the sea birds. Dusk falls but you still sit on in your garden - for it is warm on the ocean coast. The view fades, you turn a switch and over the wireless comes a classic concert, an opera perhaps, as clearly as if you were sitting in the hall where it is being played, with its advantage - you are enjoying the delicious Atlantic air.

Later, the news of all the world is heard. You switch off and, leaving the star-studded canopy of heaven, seek your bed, to sleep the sound sleep of an Ocean Coaster.<sup>50</sup>

This self-consciously suburban perspective, closely identified with the Southern Railway's synthesis of urban and rural dimensions, was a very definite expression by the G.W.R. of a progressive reformulation of the concept of Englishness to include urban imagery, this being particularly so in relation to seaside interests. The seaside or 'Ocean Coast', whatever the designation, was invariably presented in more dynamic, contemporary perspectives than that of rural England and this extract, above, from 'The Ocean Coast' illustrates in its sharp contrast with rural, historical representations, the differentiated nature of Great Western literary expression and style according to subject and expectation. This was manifestly not the case with the Southern Railway in the South East, where the relationship between cultural perspectives - urban and rural, past and present and popular and exclusive - was presented much more so in terms of a synthesis, suggesting a more apparent contemporary characterisation on the part of the Southern. (See further discussion in Chapter Eight.) But the popularist style and presentation of the Southern Railway did not go unnoticed in G.W.R. circles. The 1934/35

session of The G.W.R. (London) Lecturing and Debating Society included a specific criticism of company Style in the debate: "Railway Publicity", 18 October 1934.<sup>51</sup> Responding to G.E. Orton, the Commercial Assistant to the Superintendent of the Line, G.R. Penny called for more lively, dynamic, humorous presentation. He specifically targeted the travel literature.

Take travel literature. Mr. Orton has said that we have produced three new books and I have no wish to criticise these. They are excellent. ['The Cornish Riviera': 'Glorious Devon' - Mais and Somerset', Maxwell Fraser]. There are, however, others which are not so good and which are, to my mind, stodgy. I look around at the travel literature published by other railway companies and find books being written by such men as Leigh-Bennett and Dell Leigh. Somehow their styles are more attractive, more friendly than ours. I do not know if it would be possible to get a little more of that friendliness into our own literature.<sup>52</sup>

The 'friendly', accessible representation advocated here carried considerable, even vital, commercial import which, by the thirties and in the context of evident competition, cautioned the G.W.R. to temper, somewhat, its evident exclusively defined cultural imagery. Cornwall offered an ideal example in terms of challenging perceptions and received identities, not least for the dynamics that defined the relationship of railway with resort.

### Paddington at the Seaside

Whilst the criticism of 'stodginess' might well have applied, by the thirties, to some of the more exclusively focused rural and historical presentations, the Great Western's 'Ocean Coast' perspective, as detailed above, revealed an alternative approach. This was apparent in the details and character of both the advertisements for the progressive development of seaside resorts on the G.W.R. system and the company's direct involve-

ment with the resorts via the local chamber of commerce.

Good relations with the chambers were considered vital by the General Manager himself, Felix Pole was unequivocal. Under his terms of reference, the chambers presented ideal opportunities for 'propaganda' as he defined the concept.

I regard propaganda as the means of promoting good feeling towards the company; of making its good points known by more subtle means than that by advertising or general publicity.<sup>53</sup>

Citing the range of these 'subtle means' - the historically focused literature, jigsaws, newspaper articles etc - Pole continued:

Another most valuable piece of propaganda was provided by meeting Chambers of Commerce, Chambers of Trade, Business Clubs etc...  
.. Chambers were glad to meet the man whose name appeared at the bottom of the posters etc.<sup>54</sup>

The final statement is, again, indicative of the centre-periphery orientation and this theme is pursued here by direct reference to Cornwall, indicating the determinedly contemporary focus of G.W.R. interests in tourism at Newquay and Penzance and the extent to which the local communities co-operated.

The general statement of progress at resorts across the company network carried in the G.W.R. Magazine, July 1935, for example, put the emphasis upon modern attractions, marking an up-beat, popular approach.

Reports from the resorts both large and small, show how extensive and varied are the improvements this year. There are to be more swimming pools, band-stands, sports grounds, parks, illuminations, places of amusement, dance halls, cinemas, tennis courts, bowling greens and golf courses; and the purchase by local councils of beauty spots and open spaces will ensure these being preserved for the benefit of holiday makers.<sup>55</sup>

It was significant that these were active amenities, clearly dedicated to large-scale popular participation and were thus distinguished from the exclusive, initiate perspectives that so often defined the rural, historical presentation. Good relations with the relevant local interests were vital here.

G.W.R. involvement with local chambers of commerce reflected the direct influence of Paddington within the local community and, in particular, the focus and degree of company interest in determining and implementing the particular agenda. Using material from Cornish case studies it is clear that, whilst the G.W.R. pursued a consistent policy in terms of management, focus and commercial objective, the resorts, as exemplified here by Newquay and Penzance, observed no common policy and commitment with regard to tourism. In contrast with the sharp focus and consistency characterising the G.W.R.'s corporate identity, Newquay and Penzance, both significant holiday termini of the G.W.R. reflected contrasting, and in the case of Penzance, ambivalent responses in matters of marketing and commercial investment. Newquay was the more noticeably innovative resort and was, accordingly, more attuned to G.W.R. aspirations and objectives. A study of the proceedings at the annual meetings of the respective chambers of commerce suggests that at Penzance, in particular, the Great Western looked for a considerably stronger commitment to tourism.

A comparison between the two resorts and of the consequent attitude of the G.W.R. was offered in the reports of the Annual Meetings of the chambers of commerce at Penzance and at Newquay in 1928. The former was held in the January, the latter in mid-March. At Newquay it was revealed that, for the 1928 season, 'The Newquay Advertising Committee', formed in 1926, intended to raise from £800 to £1,000 with the G.W.R. contributing an equivalent sum. Advertisements were to be placed in leading Northern, Midland and London based newspapers whilst the resort distributed (1927) 5,000 copies of the 'Homeland Association' handbook, with the aim of doubling this amount in 1928. Furthermore, in a co-production with the G.W.R. the resort commis-

sioned 2,000 “Newquay” posters and produced 20,000 leaflets.<sup>56</sup>

At Penzance there was a somewhat different story. Addressing the Chamber, F.R. Davis, Secretary of the G.W.R. offered the following unequivocal statement;

In 1927, when we launched out on a bigger advertising campaign on the West of England than we have ever done before, we ploughed a lonely furrow, I am told, and had no help from the Penzance Chamber of Commerce. That is regrettable.<sup>57</sup>

It was further stated that, unlike many other resorts and localities on the G.W.R. system, Penzance had not shown any record of seasonal progress and development.

As the guest of Truro, Newquay and Redruth chambers of commerce in March 1929, the G.W.R. General Manager, Sir Felix Pole, demonstrated an evident sense of frustration and impatience with various crucial aspects of the tourist business in Cornwall. He was critical of the obvious competition that characterised the conduct and structure of tourism. Highlighting important continental practice, he called for similar co-operative development within the county and, whilst welcoming the Come to Cornwall Association,<sup>58</sup> formed that year, he nevertheless lamented that it was “twenty years too late.”<sup>59</sup> Pole was also heavily critical of the range and standard of accommodation offered within the county. As part of his general message he declared:

I am aware that many Cornish boarding houses are being enlarged and improved, but it is a pity that many could not be blown up and entirely rebuilt.<sup>60</sup>

Pole further stressed the need of more organised, all-weather amenities and felt that generally the county relied too heavily upon its natural resources, extensive though they were. Newquay’s hotels and their promotion were, however, generally the subject of G.W.R. approval.

Advertising and local enterprise was the consistent message from the Great Western to the Cornish resorts. This was abundantly evident in the proceedings at Newquay and

Penzance. The meeting of the Chamber of Commerce at Penzance in late January, 1938, where F.R. Potter, Superintendent of the G.W.R. and Major Dewar of the Publicity Office were included amongst the distinguished guests, carried specific reference to the subject of publicity. Reporting the meeting, the local newspaper, 'The Cornishman', wrote of the G.W.R. representatives:

They impressed most forcibly, yet in a quiet business-like manner the necessity of Penzance embarking upon an enterprising policy in regard to tourist traffic.<sup>61</sup>

The Superintendent reminded the Chamber that the Great Western had invested £134,000 in connection with the new terminus then under construction and added; "it was for Penzance to respond."<sup>62</sup> Potter went on to make a direct appeal to the local authority and to the chamber of commerce in particular, with directed designations, as in "we" and "you".

With all the potentialities of this district don't you think you might as a Chamber of Commerce arrange it and go for a little more publicity. We are only too anxious to help you and make this extreme part of Cornwall the most popular place in the country ... Over and above all I want to try to instill in your minds, the ideal of development, progress and, in so far as the G.W.R. is able to assist, we are only too happy to do what we can.<sup>63</sup>

The evident repetition of willingness on the part of the G.W.R. to give assistance and advice was, not least, borne out of the impatience felt by the company as to the lack of local initiative, given the potential in West Cornwall. The diplomatic representations here scarcely concealed the thrust of company-directed policy - the Superintendent's message being a clear reference to expectations at Paddington - to the requirement that the resorts fulfil the 'Ocean Coast' identity. At successive annual meetings the G.W.R.'s various representations had invited the chambers of commerce to consider

comparative developments elsewhere, casting less than favourable light upon much of Cornwall's collective record. Bournemouth and Torquay, although obviously much larger than any Cornish resort, were held up as exemplars of modern, dynamic enterprise and it was pointed out, in 1934, that Bexhill-on-Sea, comparable in size to Penzance - but by that time far more affluent and accessible - was spending £100,000 on improvements.<sup>64</sup>

Paddington's priorities were made clear. Major Dewar for the company's publicity department, drew attention to the Great Western's extensive campaign, then underway, to lengthen the holiday season by encouraging earlier holidays in May, June and early July, and in September, to avoid the congestion and difficulties imposed by the traditional recourse to late July and August. The introduction of the Holiday With Pay Act, 1938,<sup>65</sup> added to the call for a more manageable season and for the greater provision of popular entertainment by the resorts themselves. This last point featured heavily in the Superintendent's speech to the Chamber. Combining themes of entertainment and accommodation, he asserted the Great Western's perspective with the definitive 'we' and 'our' - the metropolitan standard of reference and expectation that clearly identified and differentiated centre and periphery.

There is no place I know of in the country which is more amenable to a winter resort than Penzance, but what you lack at the moment is entertainment to attract our visitors. We want to see that your hotels and accommodation are adequate for our visitors.<sup>66</sup>

There were clear echoes here of Felix Pole's earlier criticisms of accommodation and the vital infrastructure of public health - water supply and sanitation to a better than adequate standard.

Messrs. Potter and Dewar were also the guests of the Newquay Chamber of Commerce at the annual meeting at the Headland Hotel in mid February, 1938. They were joined by S.P.B. Mais, known in Cornwall and across the G.W.R. system for his literary work on behalf of the company. He provided the thematic focus and thrust for the



meeting in his emphasis upon the celebration of Cornwall's unique identity and, implication, its significant commercial potential. Set in creative contrast with England and Englishness, Cornwall exemplified the experience of 'difference at your doorstep' - a characterisation which the Great Western had pursued in its literature and in its poster-work since 1904. The normative character and style of Mais' address to the local community was indicative of the G.W.R.'s corporate, centralist perspective, little short of a directive.

There is an intense desire on the part of the public to do something quite different - You must trade on this business of your being half foreign to England. Let this strangeness once you are on the Western side of the Tamar have its place.

It is this very strangeness that you want at the present moment to cater for and allow the English mind to prey upon, not only the coast but the inland part of Cornwall which is so worthwhile exploiting.<sup>67</sup>

In acknowledging the guiding influence and, therein, the dominant role of the Great Western Railway in the development of Newquay, the local Chamber also recorded that the G.W.R. had "taught them the value of advertising."<sup>68</sup> Without doubt, Newquay became the Great Western's most important resort in Cornwall and, as the evidence from the chambers of commerce reveal, of all the Cornish resorts, it was most closely attuned to the Great Western's cultural and commercial concept of the 'Ocean Coast'. The Annual Dinner of Newquay Chamber of Commerce, February 1934, confirmed this with the statement from G.E. Orton. Superintendent G.W.R., declaring "Newquay has proved itself the most progressive resort in Cornwall."<sup>69</sup> With a new guide book, 'Newquay on the Cornish Coast', and a promotional film, 'Newquay', the Superintendent proposed the toast: "Greater Newquay."<sup>70</sup> Newquay was the G.W.R.'s only Cornish resort to commit itself totally to a tourist-based economy (as was the case with Bude, for the Southern Railway) and, therein, reflected the essential thrust of the G.W.R.'s assessment on the

county that the prosperity of the resorts was the effective prosperity progress of Cornwall generally. This was a fundamental expression of the dominance of the metropolitan centre and its influence in terms of shaping and structuring commercial and cultural identity. With their tourist economies and distinctive 'Ocean Coast' and 'Atlantic Coast' identities, Newquay and Bude were the two districts county-wide to return both the lowest unemployment rates. County returns for 1934<sup>71</sup> revealed: Newquay 10.7 and Bude 8.6 per cent, together with the highest percentage increases in population: Newquay, 8.2 and Bude, 9.2 per cent.<sup>72</sup> Returns for 1948 suggest this trend was sustained.<sup>73</sup> By contrast, the traditional mining communities, as in the Gunnislake and Redruth districts, for example, reflected unemployment levels in 1934 of 64.6 and 40.2 per cent respectively.<sup>74</sup> It was also significant that resistance or reluctance to embrace a more committed tourist identity and economy at Penzance was based on the view that the town had wider terms of reference, commercially. It was a busy port, a thriving market town, a centre for horticulture and had large-scale interests in the fishing industry. Falmouth, with its docks, and Looe, with its fishing and agriculture interests, provided further examples of alternative and frequently rival economies, locally.

The G.W.R.'s involvement with the chambers of commerce revealed not only the detailed differences of emphasis that often existed between the company and the local authorities, it further highlighted the basic distinction between the company's policy of presenting Cornwall as an overall experience - a unified, collective identity - and that of the individual resorts that, largely, looked to their own particular circumstances and perceived interests as indicated above. It is in this context that we note Pole's repeated emphasis on the need for co-operative effort. His focus - primarily commercial and administrative - was, nevertheless, directly reflected in the literary presentation. Ultimately, and always in the context of rendering it as a special place with a unique identity, the Great Western literature of the thirties presented Cornwall as an open book, the sense of its being all things to all people. 'Ocean Coast' and ancient Celtic perspec-

tives were uppermost, but Mais in the Preface to 'The Cornish Riviera' also emphasised what he considered was "Cornwall's diversity of riches". Thus we read:

The motto of the Duchy is "One and All", and it may be interpreted in this way, that the visitor who opens his eyes to the wooded loveliness of the Fowey Valley and closes them to the deserted broken down chimneys of old tin mines and the mountainous white pyramids of china clay refuse that litter the hillsides, has no chance whatever of getting to know real Cornwall. It is one and indivisible. You may go to the Duchy with the idea of playing gold and end by exploring tin mines. You may go there with the idea that you are in for a normal English holiday and find yourself in an atmosphere of warlocks and pixies, miracle-working saints and woe-making witches -- You may go there only intent on tennis and find yourself at the end of a fortnight a devotee of holy wells and Celtic crosses.

It is well to go to Cornwall with an open mind.<sup>75</sup>

This was, effectively, the collective characterisation of Cornwall; the Great Western Railway's carefully constructed and, likewise, carefully regulated Cornish cultural identity.

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- 56/ Newquay Advertising Committee/Chamber of Commerce.  
Report: "The Newquay Express", January 19 1928 P7.
- 57/ F.R. Davis Annual Dinner, Chamber of Commerce. Penzance.  
Report: 'The Cornishman' Monday 12 March 1928 P7.
- 58/ Felix Pole. Annual Dinner, Chamber of Commerce, Newquay.  
Report: The Newquay Express, 14 March 1929. P7. The Come To Cornwall Association was the county-wide publicity initiative developed by the various town and district authorities to promote tourism. Whilst, as Pole urged, it looked to the larger county reference for tourism, it nevertheless was at best only loosely integrated, with each town essentially looking to its own interests. Competition, not the co-operation envisaged by the G.W.R., was evident in the format and style of this publication. See also G.W.R. Magazine, 1925. P179.

- 59/ Ibid P7.
- 60/ Ibid P7.
- 61/ Annual Dinner, Chamber of Commerce, Penzance.  
Report: 'The Cornishman' 26 January, 1938. P7.
- 62/ F.R. Potter. Annual Dinner, C of C, January, 1938 P7.
- 63/ Ibid P7.
- 64/ Ibid P7.
- 65/ Ibid P7.
- 66/ Ibid P7. See also G.W.R. Magazine, 1939. P246.
- 67/ S.P.B. Mais. Annual Dinner, Chamber of Commerce, Newquay. 'The Newquay Express', 17 February, 1938. P2.
- 68/ Ibid P2.
- 69/ G.E. Orton. Annual Dinner, Chamber of Commerce, Newquay. 'The Newquay Express', 22 February, 1934, P6.
- 70/ Ibid P6.
- 71/ Cornwall County Council. Planning Office Maps, No. 5-10.  
H.W.J. Heck, County Planning Officer, 1949.
- 72/ Ibid C.C.C.
- 73/ Ibid C.C.C.
- 74/ Ibid C.C.C.
- 75/ S.P.B. Mais. Cornish Riviera, 1934 ed. P3.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Southern Railway Perspective

This survey of Southern Railway literature and company policy is pursued in terms of thematic counterpoint with that of the G.W.R. Both companies shared the prevailing cultural characterisation of the 'Southern Country', the 'Southern Metaphor', differentiating them from the L.N.E.R. and L.M.S. with their respective northern, industrial orientations and affiliations, but within this designated 'South Country' reference, the G.W.R. and the Southern Railway also reflected detailed and distinctive differences in focus and style.

Great Western policy emphasised images of continuity, tradition and authority communicated through the evocative celebration of historic place and event, linked thematically to the rural tradition of the English landscape and to perspectives of Empire. Southern Railway perspectives, however, whilst reflecting these values, clearly gave precedence to the expression of modernity: to a decidedly contemporary identity that celebrated progress and the present for its own sake without necessarily engaging the past in terms of process or perspective. The Southern Railway literature obviously celebrated the historical tradition, as the record reveals, but it was essentially contextualised and delivered in an accessible, less exclusive, reverential style than that of the G.W.R. This was a perspective broadly characterised by a consistent and stylistic appeal to a synthesis, accommodating past and present, rural and urban experience in an open, eclectic, popularist context. It was a mode of perception and appreciation that was fundamentally inclusive, democratic and far removed from the established protocol and overtly hierarchical representations evident in the G.W.R. literature. With obvious exceptions - Exeter, for example, - the Southern Railway literature rarely indulged in specifically defined, detailed historical expositions. History as mission and inheritance,



the historiographical perspective of Anglo-Saxon destiny, was not a prominent feature.

The specific 'Electric' imagery, in particular, conveyed three important dimensions of Southern Railway identity. Above all, it was perceived as progressive and highly efficient, but it was also closely associated with that of 'garden' imagery which encompassed the majority of its coastal, seaside representations, the suburban dimensions and the rural characterisation. These three elements, integral to the Home Counties and South Coast identification, emphasised the company's essentially urbanised character, dominant in its territory east of Salisbury and Bournemouth.

Structurally and culturally, the system west of Salisbury - the Western counties of Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon and North Cornwall - reflected a dramatically different character and style from that of the Home Counties and South Coast. Whereas, in the South, all aspects of the region were integrated features of an overall urban-orientated perspective variously mediated through the metropolitan matrix, the West of England presented a very different prospect. It was definitively rural, historical, traditionalist construct and, in the case of North Cornwall, unique, as an ancient and mystical Celtic Kingdom, itself differentiated in every sense from its Anglicised, rural, neighbouring county of Devon. The distinction was much more than a simple matter of the physical distance from the metropolitan base. The company's presentation of the South of France, the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts - as Cannes, The Riviera, Biarritz, the literature of 'The Peerless Riviera' and 'Twixt France and Spain' indicated - suggested no cultural discontinuity at all with the largely metropolitan values of South-East England. 'The Great Highway',<sup>1</sup> as the Southern Railway described its continental services, celebrated the cosmopolitan imagery of familiarity and exchange, underlining the company's identification with European perspectives in commercial and cultural terms. Waterloo, however, was the gateway, via 'The Atlantic Coast Express', to something very different.

These contrasting representations indicate something of a dual identity within the Southern Railway system. But, to a certain extent, the distinction between the Southern

Home Counties/South Coast identity and that of the West of England could be attributed, as with the G.W.R., to the concept of comprehensive services and opportunities in tourist enterprise - the provision of alternatives and choice. But there were vital differentiating factors defining the respective approaches of the two companies. The G.W.R. had a much longer established and more extensive presence in the West of England than had its rival. Its investment had been - and continued to be through the inter-war era - substantial. Primarily, however, consistent with its definitively corporate structure, the West of England was specifically identified as the company's premier tourist region, thus benefiting from Paddington's concentrated efforts in celebrating, collectively and individually, the counties of Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. But in terms of commerce, cultural identification and, not least, geographical reference, the Southern's territory west of Salisbury was never as fully integrated with the evidently more prosperous, mobile and urban-orientated South. For all its unique, mystical properties, the West of England could never compete with the authority, the glamour and concentrated cultural resonance of metropolitan and international focus. Thus, Victoria Station and its dynamic character and thrust as conveyed in 'Twixt France and Spain'.

It is on to this platform . . . that there assembles daily throughout the year the most heterogenous and interesting collection of people of any place in Britain. It is the route of Diplomacy, Fashion, Sport, Business, the Stage, and Arts.<sup>2</sup>

Brighton was the South Coast version of this fashionable perspective, much more that of Scott Fitzgerald than of King Arthur; a metropolitan rather than a mystical, moorland perspective, with all the attendant sophisticated, urbane, demarcatory associations that defined the former.

The South-East of England during the inter-war era progressively addressed the imagery, style and character consistent with the cutting edge of innovation and industrial, commercial enterprise. The 'Electric' identity, both in its main-line services to the

South Coast resorts and in the developing suburban network, was the ideal expression of the region's overall character. By way of literary reference to this modern, dynamic ethos, we can refer to the conspicuous celebratory pamphlet, 'Advertise on the Live Line', prepared for the Advertising Exhibition at Olympia in July 1933. Included in the July edition of the Southern Railway Magazine, it read:

Census figures prove conclusively that the South of England is growing much faster than the national rate . . . In the country served by the Southern Railway (1921-1931) the population increased from 11,853,021 to 12,687,189. The increase on the Southern system was 7.04 per cent but in the rest of England and Wales, only 4.71 per cent. Moreover, in less than a quarter of the area, the South of England has nearly one third of the total population. 317,128,899 passengers were carried by the Southern Railway in 1932, against 293,366,360 in 1922 - an increase of over 8 per cent. So in spite of the decrease in trade, the millions on the Southern system are actually travelling more.<sup>3</sup>

Five years later, at the opening of the Chessington branch, the Traffic Manager, Eustace Missenden, proclaimed:

The Southern Railway Company has the most intensive electrified suburban service in the world.<sup>4</sup>

Favourable comparisons with the U.S.A. revealed that in the latter with a route mileage (1936) of 214,882, passenger journeys were 490,000,000: the Southern Railway with a route mileage (1937) of 2,200 recorded its passenger journeys at 378,600,000.<sup>5</sup>

The commercial dynamics celebrated here had their literary and artistic equivalent in the minimalist stylist of much of the company's published material and in the innovative poster work that clearly characterised Southern Railway imagery. In modern parlance, the company's publicity work was essentially lean, inventive and economic, an

approach that contrasted sharply with the more extended and reflectively traditional style of the G.W.R. The company magazine acknowledged the role of Mr. C. Grasemann, Public Relations and Advertising Officer, indicating that he asked artists not to fail to let him have new ideas for posters arguing, stylistically, “the more unorthodox, the better, for he was all out for surprises.”<sup>6</sup> ‘Southern Electric’, extensively celebrated in the company’s poster work, leant itself readily to modern, dramatic representation, given that electrification required detailed related civil and mechanical engineering works. The re-development of stations and colour-light signalling directly accorded with the image of fast, regular, clean and efficient train services. Celebrating the opening of the rebuilt Richmond station the Southern Railway Magazine recorded a very definite statement of policy across the company.

The new station is a thing of efficiency . . . a palatial looking affair ranking in appearance with the most modern town hall, shopping store or super-cinema.<sup>7</sup>

But it was also apparent that, as an important dimension of the progressive identity, the Southern Railway clearly perceived the ‘Electric’ imagery as harmonious with the rural as well as the urban perspective as, indeed, the numerous company photographs of express and stopping trains in deep, rural Hampshire and Sussex or the suburban reaches of Surrey testified. The image of the modern electric train amidst the landscape of rural England with all the latter’s accumulated cultural associations, historical and aesthetic, was widely presented in the company’s literature of the thirties and, particularly so, in terms of the wider residential reference and orientation. The focus and format of the variously named residential publications - ‘Country Homes at London’s Door’ and, later, simply, ‘Southern Homes’<sup>8</sup> - reflected a three-fold representation: that of an initial celebration of the rural-historical setting, - the aesthetic dimension, thence the related statement of the modern amenities - schools, shops, cinemas etc - the collective environment of health and recreation and, definitively, the distance and timings to and from

London, together with the frequency of train service.

In many respects the Southern Railway's urban-rural, past-present dialectical reference was thematically, structurally and stylistically more immediate, inclusive and popularly accessible than that of the G.W.R. The latter clearly differentiated the rural and urban perspectives in respect of style and context throughout its literary work, thereby creating the sense of a prevailing rural, historical character that largely belied the company's sophisticated corporate, commercial, structure. The Southern Railway, however, displayed a definite sense of practical continuity that did not in any way equate adaptation and change, the imagery of progress, with representations of cultural compromise and dissipation - a consistent thematic sub-text for the G.W.R.

Contemporary, progressive imagery was considered as essential to overall attitude and atmosphere as that of the sum total of technical, commercial achievement. Thus the imagery of electrification, modern architecture and dynamic publicity cannot be underestimated. Collectively, this represented a significantly revised sense of perspective across a broad cultural spectrum. Perceptions were challenged; attitudes questioned. The Southern Railway in the South East encouraged and reflected the general process of progressive re-evaluation of hitherto culturally received notions: of landscape, of aesthetic awareness and appreciation, of the relationship between past and present, indeed, of the perception of the past generally; of the directly related theme of urban-rural identifications and that of the opportunities and expectation that defined the holiday experience of the inter-war era in the light of social and economic changes. One of the company's most distinctive features was the desire, as expressed throughout its literature, to reconcile, re-focus actual and potentially conflicting economic and cultural perspectives so as to present the Sunny South Coast as the consummate holiday location: to celebrate, simultaneously and without undue self-conscious effort, Cowes Week and the spontaneous, gratuitous fun of the bumper boats or water-chute rides to be found amongst the miles of seafront entertainments along the South Coast.

An extended reference to the South Coast resorts will be considered later, but the immediate focus here is with the comparative representations of Brighton as indicative of the projected character and styles of the Southern and of the Great Western Railway. As indicated, the essential differentiation was with the G.W.R.'s evident reluctance to celebrate all aspects of popular commercial culture, counterbalanced by its sustained identification with those pursuits conforming to a more traditionally-perceived exclusive status. Across the G.W.R. network itself, as in Paignton, for example, or Weston-Super-Mare, the company's largest commercialised family resorts offered only muted and generalised reference to fun-fairs and amusement parks, although, in Devon and North Cornwall, the Southern Railway, likewise, pursued similar policies. Bude, for example, was the antithesis of Brighton. Direct comparison and contrast was available on the South Coast given that the G.W.R. served the likes of Hastings, Eastbourne, Brighton, Portsmouth, etc. with its numerous cross-country services. 'Holiday Haunts' carried detailed reference to these resorts and for present purposes the comparative approaches with regard to Brighton and Eastbourne are considered.

Southern Railway literature on Brighton was inevitably more extensive and detailed than that offered by the G.W.R. but there were other distinguishing features in their respective styles and presentations. 'Hints for Holidays' (S.R.) reflected the dynamic, progressive imagery of a resort well attuned to contemporary perspectives.

Every year Brighton becomes more popular and with the constant improvements in the way of five new amusement buildings, widened boulevards, gardens, boating pools, etc., it can be truly said that the town is not merely meeting the requirements of the passing moment, but the demands of the future.<sup>9</sup>

The L.M.S. guide, 'Holidays by L.M.S.', likewise noted "the extraordinary diversity of attractions . . . its all embracing entertainments,"<sup>10</sup> and, in pursuit of the open, democratic perspective, also emphasised "the abundant accommodation for all types."<sup>11</sup>

Great Western literature acknowledged that Brighton had its “many imitators who, in spite of their gallant efforts, remain but a shadow of the joyous Sussex resort with its multifarious amusements.”<sup>12</sup> The latter were detailed in an extensive entry for ‘Holiday Haunts’ which surpassed those devoted to its own resorts of Paignton and Weston-Super-Mare. Amongst the reference to ‘Neon Lighting, gay restaurants and cabarets’ etc., were also expressions such as, “the town keeps its guests as happily amused by night as by day,”<sup>13</sup> whilst the cinemas, dance-halls and arcades “ensure that every passing whim can be gratified.”<sup>14</sup> “Happily amused” and “passing whims” suggests a not completely unqualified endorsement of such lavish provision.

The Great Western’s preferred perspective, in line with its presentation of its own resorts, was that of Brighton as an exclusive location of unique character in Britain, clearly differentiated from its many would-be rivals and closely identified with continental attributes.

Brighton has achieved the Continental air so naturally that visitors find it almost impossible to believe that they have not been transported across the Channel. The boulevard habit which in no other resort in Britain has succeeded is part of the very life of the town where the most conventional take their morning coffee in the open air as a matter of course . . . <sup>15</sup>

Eastbourne was given an equally exclusive image but one of a somewhat different emphasis and style. Here, it was not a continental identity that predominated; it was that of essential Englishness. In G.W.R. terms that meant an initiate, exclusive, hierarchical character which, as the following extract reveals, did not attempt to incorporate any element of broad popular appeal.

Unlike most Sussex resorts, Eastbourne has neither a Continental atmosphere nor a complete carefree democracy. The town is essentially dignified and *English* in its atmosphere, a place which is largely

residential, where the majority of visitors take houses for long periods indulging in the sports which are such a feature of the town. . . . A distinctive feature of the front is that there are no shops, one of the many pleasant developments which demonstrates that this resort, although progressive, has no desire for a cheap popularity.<sup>16</sup>

Pursuing the reference to sports, 'Holiday Haunts' also stated that there were probably "more horse-riders to be found in Eastbourne than in any other coastal resort in the Kingdom."<sup>17</sup> It was also significant that 'Holiday Haunts' stressed the word "English" in this passage by printing it in italics.

Southern Railway presentations of Eastbourne also emphasised its dignified, elegant character, but 'Hints for Holidays' focused upon a strong sense of aesthetic distinction and put less explicit emphasis on the social and cultural exclusivity that defined the Great Western's perspective. The 1939 edition of the Southern Railway's guide described Eastbourne as "an example of perfect town planning"<sup>18</sup> and, having clearly established the outstanding aesthetic credentials, it underlined the modern "up-to-date" beach and general recreational amenities and, in one telling sentence, revealed:

In its gayest hours the town never loses its sense of dignity, and consequently it is exceedingly popular with all types of holiday makers.<sup>19</sup>

This was the perspective of harmony wherein the town's focused aesthetic, its garden imagery, was perceived to appeal to a broad social spectrum and thereby express the Southern Railway's recurring theme, within the South Coast identity, of a cultural synthesis.

The Channel Islands, presented in 'Hints for Holidays' as 'The Riviera of Great Britain', perpetuated the 'garden' imagery albeit enhanced by the pervading Anglo-French characterisation. But the overall ethos was that of variety and enjoyment, incorporating 'Jersey's shopping facilities, promenade illuminations and 'abundance of amusements', for example, with that of the aesthetics of landscape and seashore. In



similar thematic focus the company also promoted its provision of 'Day and Short-Break' visits to the Continent through the avuncular figure of "Sunny South Sam" who, in this context, encouraged prospective visitors with the slogan: "Tell your friends you've been abroad."<sup>20</sup> Thus, together with the prestigious delineation for its established continental traffic, the Southern Railway specifically pursued popularist participation.

History and tradition obviously mattered to the Southern Railway, but its role and function in the company's literature indicated a different emphasis and, therefore, presentation from that of the G.W.R. One particularly distinctive feature was, as mentioned, the clearly differentiated presentational perspective on the part of the company in the West of England where it was effectively of identical content and style to that of the G.W.R. Elsewhere, there were the unmistakably different terms of reference but, for its part, the G.W.R.'s rural, historical, cultural reference reflected a clearly defined and structurally thematic approach across its entire network. Given the Southern's particular historical perspective, understood in the context of the company's collective imagery, the presentation of historical tradition and the past appeared to take the form of a stylistic counterpoint or intrinsic quality rather than the set, centre-piece approach of the G.W.R.

Having given some indication of the scope of the Southern Railway's presentational style and approach in the South-East and particularly along the South Coast and, noting its detailed differentiation from the perspective of the West of England and of the G.W.R. generally, some specific reference to the content and stylistic focus of the company literature is necessary.

Amongst the most definitive, powerful perspectives of Southern Railway experience, perhaps its supreme characteristic, was the synthesis that it pursued in terms of rural-urban/industrial and past-present identities. Kenneth H. Johnston, 'British Railways and Economic Recovery',<sup>21</sup> 1949, championed the case for widespread main-

line electrification and, whilst offering critical verdicts on the other three great companies, praised the Southern Railway for its inter-war achievements. Johnston noted the particular contribution of electrified services in their capacity for fast regularised and efficient train services to re-distribute the population with the minimum of inconvenience in terms of the home, work and recreational complex. Contrasting the dense concentration of population in industrial cities and the negative effects with the infinitely healthier environment of the small town or suburb development, he asserted that electrification, in terms of transport alone, could be of great assistance by:

. . . popularising the developments of smaller settlements affording light and air where the settlers could grow vegetables for themselves without any feeling of severance from former interests in the big towns.

In addition there is growing support for the dissemination of industry in smaller productive units throughout the countryside with a view to securing the inter-consolidation of industry and agriculture.<sup>22</sup>

Electricity, generally, was perceived as something akin to a panacea; an indisputable statement of progress.

Just as steam belched forth the spirit of uncoordinated individualism so perhaps does electricity attend this more oxygenated conception of industrial structure establishing the feasibility of the small unit as an independent yet harmonised element of an organic whole.<sup>23</sup>

S.P.B. Mais, 'Southern Rambles for Londoners', and 'Waking at Weekends', both highlighted the rural-urban dialectic, underlining the ease of access and the general efficiency - fast, regular and clean - that allowed the city to visit the country. Residential sites, new and otherwise, at ever increasing distance from London, also encouraged commuter traffic as illustrated below with specific reference to Worthing. With specific reference to 'Southern Rambles for Londoners' however, Mais set the relevant context and

style for popular excursions indicative of the Southern Railway's culturally accommodatory style and the evident agenda of citizenship.

The object of this book is quite simple, it is to remind you of a very precious heritage which has been bequeathed you by countless generations of your ancestors; vistas of loveliness, quiet footpaths through green meadows, dense forest, sunny gorse commons, hidden streams and tiny hamlets lying in amazing profusion almost on your doorstep that can be reached within thirty, forty or sixty minutes by train from Victoria, Charing Cross, London Bridge, Cannon Street or Waterloo.<sup>24</sup>

The juxtaposition of rural delights and the great London termini, with all their dominant urban associations, clearly reflected the urban-rural interaction defining this literary focus. Mais emphasised the open access which, in itself, was a supreme achievement of urban, industrial achievement, whilst the Southern Railway underlined the modern, efficient and, significantly, the marked cleanliness of the new electric services with their conspicuous contribution to the environment generally. As C.T. Moody observed in 'Southern Electric', 1957:

From the passenger's point of view, the electric services were faster, more frequent and ran at regular intervals which could be memorised easily. The trains were cleaner, better lit and more punctual.<sup>25</sup>

Electric trains attracted large numbers of excursionists and the southern Railway offered 'Go As You Please' ticketing with a wide range of Cheap Day, Half-Day and Sunday Tickets. With the railway providing the means, Mais presented the concept of 'The People's Countryside'; the effective complement to urban, city life.

To reach these Elysian Fields you need not wait for your annual holiday. You can find them whenever you have four or five hours to spare . . . All you need is a shilling or two in your purse to pay the

railway fare.<sup>26</sup>

Accessibility, clearly expressed here and in the previous extracts, presented no particular problem; it was inexpensive, regular and highly efficient. Urban and rural, town and country links were sealed, as Mais put it, by a matter of “a shilling or two” and a few odd hours or so to spare. The notion of time ‘to spare’ for the enjoyment of rural England underlines the entire context of townsman, individually, or in large, organised outings, visiting the countryside. It was significant that in ‘Rambles for Londoners’, Mais frequently emphasised, not only the easy access into the countryside, but also the numerous railway routes that guaranteed a swift return to London, as and when required. In his Preface, he noted:

On these walks of mine, though I seldom saw it, there has always been, within a mile or two on my left or right, a railway line and a station so that, in the event of my becoming tired, I could always curtail my tramp.<sup>27</sup>

Looking to comparisons of G.W.R. and Southern Railway identities, the latter reflected the noticeably more dynamic contemporary character that highlighted increasingly popular features, such as convenience, easy and cheap movement, the cleanliness of electric trains and a definite sense in the style and presentation here of open and easy access available to all and everyone.

### The South Coast

The Southern Railway’s dynamic contemporary identity in the South-East, and particularly along the South Coast, to a large extent related to the proximity and influence of London and, specifically, the Southern Railway’s perception of London, which was very different from that of the G.W.R. The latter presented London almost exclusively in terms of the historic, cultural, imperial capital, as Raphael Samuel, ‘Theatres of Memory’, put it, “of sceptre and sword.”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the Great Western’s portrait underlined the intrinsic rural identification within its presentation of the nation’s capital

as expressed in the opening pages of 'Holiday Haunts'. Southern Railway perspectives, however, were evidently more urban-orientated, with a focus upon the capital as the great centre of commercial activity, emphasising the large department stores, the endless variety of entertainments and the sense of London, generally, as an aesthetic experience; an exciting spectacle which included the set-pieces, both past and present. The West End, 'theatreland', 'newspaperland', historic London - St. Pauls, The Tower, Buckingham Palace and Westminster - the famous parks and gardens, museums, the London Zoo, reflected the cultural synthesis of the modern and the traditional; urban and rural, as elsewhere across the South East. It was definitive of the imagery and identity of the Southern Railway and its commitment to the celebration of dynamic, contemporary qualities which, in their particular geographical, geopolitical context, corresponded directly with the South-East of England in its obvious proximity and interaction with London and, significantly, the Continent.

South Coast imagery and identity, fundamentally metropolitan-inspired, given its close geographical, social, economic and cultural links with London, reflected the characteristics of London-By-Sea. This had been observed, in negative terms, early in the nineteenth century, by John Constable. In a letter of August 1824, and with specific reference to Brighton, he wrote:

I am living here but I dislike the place - Brighton is receptacle of the fashion and off-scouring of London - and the beach is only Piccadilly by the seaside.<sup>29</sup>

The proximity and inevitable interaction of London and the South Coast was cast in very different perspective sometime later by 'Black's Watering Places: Where Shall We Go?' 1869. Again, with reference to Brighton, we read:

If one wishes, while leaving London for the seaside, to change as little as possible one's London habits, to see the same kind of people, same kind of ships, enjoy the same kind of luxuries, then Brighton is

the place to be chosen. Or if prolonged absence from the metropolis be out of the question, then again Brighton is the very thing for us; for nothing is easier than to leisurely breakfast there, within the roar and the scent of the sea, be in the office or on the mart at the usual time, to remain the usual hours and then, with equal leisure, return to the family dinner table to spend the evening afterwards in the neighbourhood of chalky cliffs of England's seaside capital.<sup>30</sup>

The suburban perspective was quite clearly evident here and was to be increasingly adopted, particularly so under the Southern Railway and ultimately, with the company's electrification programme, definitive of speed, reliability and progress. 'Hints for Holidays' repeatedly emphasised the easy access to and from London, promoting the South Coast as the ideal location in terms of residential status, holidays of whatever duration and, significantly, of day excursions. The South Coast identity thus incorporated a declared policy of open, democratic proportions with the appeal to broad spectrums of interests. As 'Hints for Holidays', 1931 edition, put it with regard to Hastings, "the town authorities have managed to supply the happy mean . . . their policy being neither "high" nor "low" but catering for the man of average tastes.<sup>31</sup>

Worthing was probably the Southern Railway's closest approximation to the all-round resort for winter and summer seasons: for urban and rural perspectives. 'Winter Holidays in Southern England', 1929/30 declared:

. . . the borough now comprises a combination of seaside and pastoral scenery unsurpassed in the whole country.<sup>32</sup>

'Hints for Holidays', 1934, presented the resort in dynamic mode, emphasising its progressive character in the context of housing development and the newly inaugurated 'Electric Coast' perspectives.

To the attraction of a mild and sunny climate must be added those of its nearness to the Metropolis and splendid electric train service, also

its up-to-date hotels, boarding and apartment houses and villa residences. These have all helped to make Worthing one of the most favoured holiday resorts within a short distance of London.<sup>33</sup>

Further, more detailed reference followed:

The electrification of the Southern Railway brings Worthing within 82 minutes run of London. Luxuriously appointed electric corridor trains give what is practically a suburban service throughout the day. Several new building estates have been laid out during the course of the last few years and others are in the course of development, one estate alone will provide for the erection of 10,000 houses. It is not surprising, therefore, that many City men reside in the borough, taking advantage of the through “business express” trains and the low rate season tickets.<sup>34</sup>

This “Garden Town of the South Coast” as ‘Hints for Holidays’ would have it, offered full provision for family holidays in a modern setting with its beaches and various holiday attractions, but it also combined this with the direct access offered to the nearby South Downs and the appeal of historic villages and dramatic landscapes. Famed also for its abundant horticulture, the miles of glass houses where grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers are cultivated in large numbers locally, recognised as a modern holiday resort and as a rising residential, commuter location and a favoured residence for “ex-Anglo-Indians and Colonials,”<sup>35</sup> and again for its proximity to the South Downs, Worthing collectively symbolised the aspirations, achievements and identity of railway, residents and resort.

The definitively modern image was also becoming increasingly apparent in traditionally historic sites. This was the case at Pevensey. ‘Hints for Holidays’ devoted a detailed paragraph to “ivy-covered remains of the ancient castle”<sup>36</sup> and, given the location’s dramatic links with Roman, Norman and Medieval heritage, the overall historical

perspective was wide-ranging, with suitably incorporated aesthetic elements. What was significant, however, was the particular emphasis, in words and pictures, upon the evolving nature of the location as ‘Hints for Holidays’ noted for Pevensey. “Nowadays it is assuming a fresh identity as a seaside resort and nearly 2000 new bungalows and houses are being built, creating a new town.”<sup>37</sup>

The use of the adjective “fresh” and the opening reference to “Nowadays” sets a perspective of time and change and, as ever in the Southern Railway’s treatment of the South-East, to progressive adaptation. “Fresh” also suggests the new or revitalised element and it was clear that the company intended that the perspective of the past and that of the community’s related rural, aesthetic context was to be augmented rather than diminished or supplanted. The evolving identity, the synthesis of ancient and modern; rural and urban, would thus enhance the general popularity and appeal of this coastal district.

As to the overall popularity of the South Coast in holiday and residential terms, the considerable number of railway halts opened prior to 1914 between Havant in the west and Hastings in the east indicated its obvious attraction. Ten halts were opened between Havant and Brighton and six from the latter point eastward to Hastings.

‘Walking at Weekends’, Southern Railway, S.P.B. Mais, was another evocative title exemplifying the company’s distinctive rural-urban dialectic. In its focus and style, this book made no effort whatever to banish modernity, as was often the case in G.W.R. publications, but instead incorporated particular images to represent the ongoing English tradition. It was further indication of the inclusive harmonising character of much of the Southern Railway’s literary work. Here, Mais considers the village of Southease, near Lewes, and the surrounding spectacle, the occasion being a day-trip from Eastbourne.

As I came to the tiny green, an ancient shepherd in a Sussex smock,  
a tall shepherd’s crook in his hand, his wife by his side and dog following,  
slowly made his way homewards. I turned to see the boat-



train gathering speed as she came up the lovely valley and I wished that all foreign visitors to England could get their first impressions of our land in this valley, for England holds no scene more peaceful or more charming.<sup>38</sup>

Returning to Lewes, Mais was true to formula in indulging in “a mighty tea at a shop in the High Street,”<sup>39</sup> before taking the train back to Eastbourne. Thus, in this brief reference alone, we find what, except for the all-important inclusion of the boat-train and the perspective of foreign visitors, would have otherwise amounted to no more than imitation of distanced sentiments from Gray’s *Elegy* or from Thomas Hardy, for example. The juxtaposition of tradition and modernity, rural England and foreign dimensions, inspired much sharper cultural resonance. The departure from, and return to, England or, as Mais indicated, the visitor’s first or final images, were those of traditional, rural dimensions which, at whatever level of cognitive or emotional engagement, set representations of English cultural identity into an international context of comparison and contrast; a perspective that engaged imperial, commercial, political and military dimensions alike. This was, in turn, supplemented by the tea-shop imagery to effect a characteristically homogenous cultural appeal that, again, addressed itself to various levels of both individualised and communally based recognition. Without doubt, it was a definitive dimension of Southern Railway literature and poster work, reflecting cultural perspectives that, today, can also be seen to have been very much part of the war-time and immediate post-war cinematic tradition, as represented by films such as ‘Mrs. Miniver’, 1941 ‘A Canterbury Tale’, 1944 and ‘Tawny Pippet’ also 1944. In each case, these films addressed, directly, the themes of identity, cultural accommodation, continuity and change.

The company’s presentation of Portsmouth and Southsea was in every sense explicit. ‘Hints for Holidays’ through the thirties was eloquent as to their undoubted attributes as a foremost holiday destination, dedicated to progressive hedonistic perspectives

and, thus, to their unmistakably contemporary character. 'Hints for Holidays', 1934, left no room for misrepresentation. Announcing Southsea's attractions and, specifically, its character, through its would-be "Southsea News Hints", the contrived newspaper led with the headlines: "Deliberate Act of Sun", and "Mrs. Grundy Dies".<sup>40</sup> The latter with its sub-heading, "A Happy Release", reflected the popular clamour for greater freedom of expression and the pursuit of gratuitous pleasure in the release from former perceived conventions and protocol. The essential focus was that of variety of choice, and spontaneity.

Mrs. Grundy died at Southsea last year. On all the tennis courts, bowling greens and golf courses you can now play all day, Sunday. Free bathing is allowed. Free parking along the front and you can fly at the new aerodrome on Sundays.<sup>41</sup>

The newly opened miniature railway, the canoe lake and the children's swimming pool were emphasised as an important element in Southsea's claim to be the 'Kiddies Resort'.<sup>42</sup> Southsea's 'Rock Gardens', landscaped and floodlit in a variety of colours and effects, together with the general sea-front illuminations, offered further opportunity for holiday enjoyment, extensive lighting being a particular expression of modernity and challenging aesthetic perspective.

The holiday and general recreational ethos was powerfully reinforced, indeed symbolically so, by the conversion of former military sites to leisure complexes. Lumps Fort, to the east of South Parade Pier, was purchased by the Corporation in 1931 and thereafter was landscaped to a garden setting with tennis courts and putting greens. On the site of former defences in the northern, Hilsea district of Portsmouth, the city provided a large, new lido. 'Hints for Holidays' provided the details and the prevailing contemporary character.

Hilsea Lido is all that a modern and up-to-date open-air swimming pool should be . . . Spacious sun bathing accommodation, a compound

for physical training, floodlighting by night, a large car park, loudspeakers, a children's paddling pool and cafes for bathers and spectators complete with amenities.<sup>43</sup>

'Hints for Holidays' made it perfectly clear that the company's prevailing imagery and focus at Portsmouth and Southsea was that of the dynamic, contemporary holiday location that focused almost entirely upon the provision of popular entertainment for its visitors. The distinctive historical tradition, mentioned earlier, of which the Ward-Lock Guide gave detailed coverage, was given little scope by the Southern Railway, relative to the detail on Southsea's entertainments. Inland, however, Alfred's great capital of Winchester was the subject of extensive historical reference,<sup>44</sup> a perspective that became increasingly prominent in the literary work relating to the western counties.

### Bournemouth

Comparing Southsea with Bournemouth, it was clear that, with the latter, the Southern presented a more developed concept of modernity, one that, as mentioned earlier, involved an extremely important dimension of the company's imagery and identity: the urban-rural dialogue - the expression of 'rus in urbe.'<sup>45</sup> This particular interaction determined and defined the Southern Railway's aesthetic and cultural perspectives at Bournemouth.

It was a recognised feature of the Southern's literary work on the South Coast that it equated images of sophistication and style with the provision of what it repeatedly referred to as "modern up-to-date" amenities. These were essentially creative landscapes designed to appeal to picturesque appreciations - water courses and the varying perspectives of raised or sunken flower beds and shrubberies - carefully landscaped and, again, invariably illuminated. When combined, as they always were, with fashionable hotels, shopping centres, restaurants and cafes, stylish sporting pursuits - tennis, ice-skating, riding, swimming and water sports - and, again, given the cultural setting of the theatre and the dramatic and musical, orchestral presentations, libraries, art galleries and

winter garden settings, the collective character and ethos was that of an exhilarating, innovative nature, definitive of the Southern Railway on the South Coast. Parallels were thus intended with the character and imagery of the French and Italian Rivas. Character and sense of style were often succinctly expressed in singular sentences or observations as in this from 'Hints for Holidays', 1947.

As you watch the crowds in Landsdowne Square or in the gardens, the shifting pattern will show you every form of feminine chic, from the crisp, clear coloured smartness of summer dresses to the formal grace of the town outfit.<sup>46</sup>

'Chic' was an ideal reference generally. Although seemingly similar in perspective, Torquay, under Great Western treatment, focused more specifically upon the resort's historical/aesthetic imagery and its closely focused, exclusive identity. The survey here of Bournemouth shows how that resort was presented as being equally as fashionable and aesthetically impressive as Torquay, but also how the former avoided the structured, culturally exclusive, hierarchical ethos in its literary presentation.

'Hints for Holidays', 1947, described Bournemouth as "one of the most sophisticated towns in the country."<sup>47</sup> Like Torquay, it was one of the truly national as opposed to regional or local resorts, Brighton being the third. Served by titled trains, 'The Bournemouth Belle', from Waterloo, and 'The Pines Express', from Manchester, Bournemouth was also the destination for numerous holiday trains from the North-West, the North-East, the Midlands and from Bristol and South Wales, reflecting its broad popular appeal.

With its origins in the late nineteenth century Bournemouth had no distinguished history to offer, a fact made clear in the literature. In 1870, with, at best, a poor railway link, it had a population of 5,896; by 1931 this had soared to 116,797.<sup>48</sup> Vast improvements in railway access had taken place by 1890, allowing for rapid growth in holiday and residential terms. Thus, with the combination of extremely favourable natural

resources and the determined efforts of an innovative local authority,<sup>49</sup> Bournemouth progressively aspired to what the Southern Railway called “Nature’s Masterpiece”.<sup>50</sup> ‘Hints for Holidays’, 1939 characterised the resort and indeed the Southern Railway’s definitive South Coast identity.

A modern town planned for health and pleasure interspersed with a thousand acres of beautiful gardens. Here you will find unrivalled facilities for every sport and recreation.<sup>51</sup>

The ‘Garden Town’ imagery was celebrated at every opportunity and, with the added dimension of country meeting coast, the seashore provided yet further opportunity for closely co-ordinated, picturesque perspectives that in each case enhanced the stylish modern character of the resort and the prestige of the railway company serving it.

It is estimated that within the Borough of Bournemouth alone there are over one hundred miles of drives and footpaths through the gardens, beautiful parks, picturesque chines, extensive pinewoods and moorlands and along the magnificent seafront and cliffs.<sup>52</sup>

Elsewhere ‘Hints for Holidays’ noted that Bournemouth, having in excess of one million pines, earned the title, ‘Resort among the Pines,’<sup>53</sup> a feature not overlooked in the naming of ‘The Pines Express’ in 1927. The Ward-Lock Guide, 1934, followed up on the Southern Railway’s celebration of the various landscape, in similar style and intention with its detail of the equally varied and exotic range of flower, shrub and tree to be found.

Palms flourish in the gardens and thickets of bamboo. In their season camellias and azaleas vie with the rhododendron, magnolias, genista and guelder rose. The flowering cherry, the pyrus and the Mexican orange alternate with the lovely ceanothus, or flowering currant, with white and yellow broom. Burberis of choice variety contrast with graceful silver birch, or shining copper beech or many others whose

names would fill this page.<sup>54</sup>

Bournemouth Pier, opened in 1880 and considerably enlarged in 1894, offered seascape perspectives whilst to the east and west along the shore, the Undercliff Promenade and Overcliff Drive reached out to Boscombe in the east and the West Cliff Drive and West Promenade, to Branksome and the chines. The pier and the Pavilion, the latter in the nearby Pleasure Gardens, were the alternating venues for Bournemouth's famous Municipal Orchestra, the largest of its kind. 'Hints for Holidays' 1939, observed that a sum of around one million pounds had been spent on new entertainment facilities and premises during the previous decade, not least to promote Bournemouth as a noted winter resort. These included the Pavilion, 1929 and an indoor swimming pool, 1937, whilst overall the resort could claim "fourteen first-class cinemas", an ice-skating rink and "the finest indoor bowling green in the world."<sup>55</sup> Confident of the all-round chic status, 'Hints for Holidays' completed the credentials: "Shopping facilities here are unexcelled in the south of England."<sup>56</sup>

Nearby Boscombe also claimed a progressive modern identity as the Ward-Lock Guide, 1934, recorded.

In its earliest days Boscombe consisted of a few dilapidated cottages whose dwellers found employment in a neighbouring brickyard and refreshment in an inn - rural but uninviting. As if by the touch of a magic hand, stately hotels took the place of the public house; pleasant villas surrounded by gardens and tree-shaded arose where mud cottages once stood; and where the men of not very ancient Boscombe laboured in the brickfield, people now saunter along the lovely Chine Gardens which must rank high among the lovely corners of this delightful coast.<sup>57</sup>

In keeping with the Southern Railway's perspective, modern improving enterprise was closely identified here with perceptions of beauty, elegance and style. The 'not so very

ancient Boscombe' with its rural inn had no retrospective appeal.

Branksome was also part of the "Bournemouth family" but was, from 1905, included within the municipal boundary of Poole. This district was also celebrated for its aesthetic perspectives and, again, well attuned to the Southern Railway's desired characterisation, the Ward-Lock Guide included significant observations. 'Hints for Holidays' noted in 1939 that Branksome Chine, at its seaward end, had recently been significantly developed. Poole Corporation had purchased the land and had provided a new bathing station there, this being declared the end-result of careful studies of continental sun-bathing establishments.<sup>58</sup> A municipal cafe with roof garden added to the stylish contemporary character as did The Avenue which, according to Ward Lock, "in June, with its wide banks of flaming rhododendrons is more like a New Forest glade than a modern street."<sup>59</sup> The same source summarised the district overall in its statement: "Branksome is able proudly to reverse the common claim to 'rus in urbe' and to typify 'urbe in rus.'<sup>60</sup>

It was by reference to interactive perspectives such as these that the Southern Railway developed its Sunny South Coast identity. The modified version, 'The Sunshine Coast', drew primarily from the company's frequent presentation of the recorded hours of sunshine drawn from the Meteorological Office. A representative year, 1933, revealed that the first 22 places listed were claimed by Southern Railway South Coast resorts.<sup>61</sup> This particular dimension of South Coast imagery, especially when reinforced by all the other assets considered here, was made all the more appealing when, in literature and particularly poster work, the South Coast was directly contrasted with the heavily industrialised areas of the Midlands and the North of England. "The South" was as much a state of mind, a symbol, as it was a geographical location. It evoked the imagery and associations of warmth and light, colour and contrast, vitality and health, with, as Southern Railway literature intended, the all-important dimension of stylish modernity. Garden-town imagery was central to this overall perspective, as was the decisive element of easy mobility and the metropolitan identification, generally - the

collective received imagery of cultivated, but not exclusive society, comfortable in its contemporary focus. As a final reference in this particular representation of Southern Railway identity, we consider the Isle of Wight.

By the late thirties, with considerable evidence of investment in improved transport to the Isle of Wight, Ryde became effectively an extended terminus of the Southern's 'Electric Coast.'<sup>62</sup> Mais celebrated the character of the Island in two informative extracts from his 'Isles of the Island', 1934. "I like the Isle of Wight because it is a delightful chunk of the Garden of England that has drifted far enough away to make an island of its own."<sup>63</sup> Although describing it personally as a "fault", Mais also highlighted the decisive factor of convenience directly orientating his reference to South Coast and South Eastern perspectives generally.

You can cross to it from the mainland in about twenty minutes. It is much too large for a single man to own, but it is just the right size to copy with the summer invasion. I have been all round it in much less than a single day, for the excursion on that occasion started from Brighton at eight o'clock in the morning and by eight o'clock in the evening we were back in Brighton again.<sup>64</sup>

This was, manifestly, the extended suburban perspective pursued elsewhere by Mais as in his 'Southern Rambles for Londoners.'<sup>65</sup> In its emphasis upon sensations of freedom, mobility and convenience, this was a presentation that fell clearly into the mainstream of the Southern Railway's projection of its progressive, contemporary, dynamic character - the synthesis of an urban-rural perspective to which the Isle of Wight neatly conformed. Just as Mais celebrated the convenience in terms of access and the easy movement around the Island, so the landscape and its character was, likewise, presented to reflect the convenience of all things to everyone. The eastern seaboard resorts - Ryde, Sandown, Shanklin and Ventnor - were effectively island equivalents of the 'Sunny South Coast'. The rural hinterland, Carisbrooke, Godshill, for example, were



redolant of historic rural England, whilst the Western Wight - Freshwater, Yarmouth, Totland Bay, The Needles - exemplified the exclusive, initiate character of a district celebrated for its literary associations and aesthetic properties; the landscape of the painter, geologist, yachtsman and golfer. Whilst the Western Wight was endowed with certain qualities of distancing and demarcation, culturally, the Isle of Wight was primarily perceived in terms of an overall metropolitan perspective. The symbolic setting and juxtaposition of imagery marking one further, final reference to Mais' 'Island' celebration is instructive. From his vantage point, in leisurely observation on Ashe Down, above Ryde, Mais revelled in the atmosphere of the chalk upland

... where I have lain through a long summer afternoon with the smell of wild June roses mingling with the scent of wild thyme and watched the slow stately procession of transatlantic liners entering Spithead, the white excursion steamers from Bournemouth and Brighton, and hundreds of small craft running in and out of Southampton Water as if they were bees at the entrance of a hive.<sup>66</sup>

This was the fulsome expression of collective identity and integration.

North Cornwall, by contrast, was defined by its sharp sense of cultural and geographical distance. It is to the company's dramatic presentation of North Cornwall that we now turn and, accordingly, reflect the sense of dual identity that was evident with the Southern Railway.

### North Cornwall

Great Western interests in Cornwall were always far more extensive and carried considerably larger impact, overall, than did the rival L.S.W.R./Southern Railway. The latter, arriving much later than the G.W.R., was confined to the sparsely populated and relatively remote district of North Cornwall, where Padstow and Bude were the Southern Railway's only effective holiday resorts, although Camelford, on the Padstow line, was the railhead for the Arthurian landscapes focused upon Tintagel. Rail services to Bude

commenced in August 1898 and to Padstow in March 1899. Despite its geographically remote and restricted location, however, the Southern Railway's literary presentation of ancient, mystical Cornwall did gain somewhat from its closely concentrated location as it lent a sharper sense of thematic focus. North Cornwall was a landscape of open and dramatic proportions and, being free of large centres of population or industrial development, gave itself admirably to the process of cultural adaptation. The G.W.R. territory, whilst serving a far more widespread, diverse system, also included the compromising and extensive industrial tradition of mining with its widespread ancillary structure, together with the active and large-scale presence of the china-clay industry to contest or compromise its celebration of ancient Celtic characterisation.

Both companies focused upon the unique nature of the Cornish experience but it was the Southern Railway that commissioned the first effective 'modern' literary work on the county - "My Finest Holiday", 1927, S.P.B. Mais,<sup>67</sup> one year before the G.W.R. published its better known work, 'The Cornish Riviera', also written by Mais. Together with 'My Finest Holiday', there was also the earlier 'By Cornish Sea and Moors', 1915 of L.S.W.R. origin, 'The Atlantic Coast Express', Mais; 'Devon and Cornish Days', E.P. Leigh-Bennett, 1935 and the annual editions of 'Hints for Holidays', the company's handbook. In each case these works celebrated pre-industrial Cornwall in much the same manner and style as the G.W.R. Arthurian Tintagel, the seaside at Bude, Medieval Launceston and brooding, primeval Bodmin Moor offered extensive scope for dramatic, romantic perspectives and the fascination for a mythical past in a numinous landscape, unique to Britain.

Reference to 'My Finest Holiday' and 'Devon and Cornish Days' left no doubt as to the essential focus of the Southern Railway literary work. Two extracts from Mais' presentation underlined the sense of a unique perspective. 'My Finest Holiday' included the confident assertion that the North Cornwall coastline represented the fullest and finest experience of dramatic encounter, not only within the county, but nationally.

Focusing on the coastline from Pentire Head, beyond Padstow and looking north-eastward towards Tintagel and Bude, Mais offered up the perspective of the 'sublime'. Combining an awesome coastline, the former haunt of ancient man conveyed in a context of mystery and, therefore, of imaginative, romantic properties beyond the sphere of historical reference and, in the symbolic figure of the solitary shepherd, dramatic images of contrast - time and eternity, man and nature, the primitive and the modern - were summoned to define an atmosphere of deep personal encounter and communion.

Nowhere else in Cornwall and certainly nowhere else in the British Isles is there any scene to compare in majesty or for that matter in extent with that which meets the eye as you round Pentire Head and come onto that strange cliff-castle which the ancients fortified against a foe of whom we now know nothing. Here, if anywhere, beauty becomes absolute as one stands looking out over Port Isaac Bay to Tintagel and, beyond that, forty miles on to Hartland and Lundy. Strangers have come in their hundreds of thousands from the furthest Isles of see the glories of Cornwall at Land's End and the Lizard and turned away sadly disappointed, not by the view which is superb, but the inevitable concomitant of undistinguished houses of refreshment and multitudes of fellow-visitors. No such limitation as yet dims and magnificence of Pentire. There are no houses and, if you meet a fellow mortal, the odds are that he will be a solitary shepherd heightening rather than lessening your sense of solitude.<sup>68</sup>

This was in stark contrast with the imagery and identity of South-East. The latter, built upon both urban and rural perspectives of Englishness, in contemporary form, emphasises the identification with demonstrable, historical development whilst Cornwall primarily embodied the sense and experience of difference, drawing upon properties of the mystical and the sublime, the imaginative, ahistorical identity.

Mais offered further evidence of difference in terms of West Country perspectives, observing detailed differentiation between Devon and Cornwall. He wrote of the contrast in broad cultural terms between the essential rural Englishness of Devon and that of Cornwall - a landscape and cultural tradition presented as that of a distinct realm beyond England.

The strangely compelling atmosphere of the Duchy begins to make itself felt as soon as 'The Atlantic Coast Express' begins to leave Dartmoor in the rear. At one moment you are in comfortable Devon with its terracotta, warm loam, white cottages and thickly wooded coombes, all typically English, the next, you are on strange soil, suddenly thrown back five thousand years in the one British region the successive centuries have failed to efface all trace of legend and romance.<sup>69</sup>

Disdaining "peirrots, jazz-bands, cinemas, boating lakes and promenades,"<sup>70</sup> Mais gloried in the perspectives of Celtic saints who, long ago, undertook their mission to "release wild miners and fisherfolk from the spell of the Druids",<sup>71</sup> and in his celebration of the landscape of "grass covered barrows, the burial grounds of great chieftains."<sup>72</sup>

As a further and closely related expression of Cornwall's unique character, Mais focused upon the nature of the Cornish people themselves. He offered a perspective which, like that adopted by the G.W.R. in its literature on Cornwall and Southern Ireland, portrayed the native population in high romanticised ethnically-constructed manner, as distinctive as the landscape itself and, likewise, endowed with mystical, dramatic dignity.

Different, too, are the people; swarthy, black-haired, handsome, dignified men and women with eyes like glistening great pools, slow-moving, courteous and kindly with voices soft and musical as the soughing of the wood through upland firs.<sup>73</sup>

'Devon and Cornish Days', E.P. Leigh-Bennett,<sup>74</sup> developed the role of unique

sense of place in the closer context of Arthurian legend. He offered a romantic encounter with a magical landscape and past, “the perfect place to let the mind dwell upon the chivalry and mystery of his (Arthur’s) life and deeds and death.”<sup>75</sup>

And what more fitting setting than this Cornish coast for thoughts of battleaxe and mail and the valiant wanderings of “the perfect knight.” You will approach it through a rough land of grass slopes and low walls. The Cornish moors will gloom at you in the distance beyond the gate; and ever and again, you will catch the glances of the glittering water of the sea. And all around much about you will hang that curtain of Cornish romance, the like of which no other county knows.<sup>76</sup>

In this “colony of contentment,” Leigh-Bennett set out the urban-inspired ideal, “with its green clear seas, its coves and caves and cream. We are so beautifully far away from all the thoughts of duties, work, turmoil and office trivialities.”<sup>77</sup> The explicitly stated contrast here was, of course, part of the overall metropolitan agenda driving this literature an, indeed, the intensity of the experience.

A principal component of this essentially urban perspective was the provision of modern transportation. As with the G.W.R.’s presentation of Cornwall and the imagery of ‘The Cornish Riviera Express’, ‘My Finest Holiday’ included specific reference to the high standards of service and efficiency that one would expect from ‘The Atlantic Coast Express’.

All that modern engineering ingenuity can do to make fast railway travel pleasant and comfortable has been done. Long corridor coaches, luxuriantly appointed mounted on wonderfully smooth running bogies, little shaded lights over each seat; clean up-to-date lavatories and washing accommodation, comfortable restaurant cars with inexpensive meals efficiently served and the whole train hauled at express speed by a monster green locomotive of ‘Lord Nelson’

or 'King Arthur' class - these are contributions of an enterprising railway management to your holiday pleasures.<sup>78</sup>

The combination of this obvious material comfort and modernity with the celebration of the wild, primitive, mystical North Cornwall landscape, the dramatic coastline and expansive sandy beaches, exemplified the Southern Railway's place-selling Atlantic Coast concept. The seaside experience along the North Cornwall coast was, in keeping with the overall theme, presented as something unique in terms of its character, style and quality of service. Thus in 'Devon and Cornish Days,' Leigh-Bennett wrote:

You can have anything you want here except the pier and bandstand type of holiday. Bude is a place of great character. It bears no resemblance to any other seaside resort.<sup>79</sup>

'Hints for Holidays', 1939, categorised three types of holidaymaker at Bude, these particular delineations conveying the essential character of the resort.

Those who are always active and on the move: those who ask for little else than a deck-chair and a safe spot for the children to play: and those who desire above all else unspoiled scenery of rare beauty.<sup>80</sup>

From the vigours of surfing, tennis, badminton or golf, to the contemplation of "magnificent Atlantic sunsets for which North Cornwall is renowned,"<sup>81</sup> Southern Railway promotional work evoked the sense of a unique experience and location. Indeed, the final edition of 'Hints for Holidays' under Southern Railway ownership (1947) drew a clear distinction between the character of Bude and the type of holiday experience that would not be offered there:

Let it be said at once that Bude has no promenade, no fun fairs, no amusement arcade and that any interfering or so-called "fairy god-mother" who provided these things overnight, would be guilty of a malicious act. To impose artificial developments on Bude would be a cheapening little short of tragic, so rich is its scenic splendour, so

well endowed with opportunities of bathing and sport. Happily, there is small likelihood of its being vulgarised for those in authority are anxious to preserve its particular appeal.<sup>82</sup>

In effect, *bude* and the overall celebration of the sublime within the North Cornwall landscape, whilst representing a perspective vastly removed from that of the South-East, nevertheless served to focus the latter as the cultural and commercial centre. Through the orientation of contrast, the 'periphery' - eg. North Cornwall - perceived as everything that the South East was not, thereby helped define the 'centre'. Thus the distinctive and much celebrated character of North Devon and North Cornwall was extensively promoted in the Southern Railway's literature, their collective contribution to the company's overall image and identity being proportionately greater than that of their commercial value. In terms of geo-social and cultural-thematic reference, the literally and symbolically-distanced West of England locations were not only clearly differentiated from the South-East and South Coast generally, they also revealed their own, individual identities as in the obvious contrasts of North and East Devon, for example. East Devon's genteel and commercially diffident character, as reflected in Sidmouth, or the pastoral-rural English perspectives of the Otter Valley, stood in marked contrast with the dramatic Alpine-inspired associations of the North Devon coastline, while both locations were, again, clearly distinguished from Exeter, the historic and administrative capital of the county.<sup>83</sup>

South-East England, by comparison, with its close and detailed affiliation to London and the expression of a fundamentally metropolitan reference in both its seaside and rural identities, was resonant of proximity, mobility and a collective cultural resonance. Kent, for example, was simultaneously the 'Garden of England', the rural, historic landscape and, indeed, the 'Gateway' to and from the Continent.<sup>84</sup> The county could thus reflect each of these perceived constructions as desired. The Metropolitan perspective was definitive in each instance, thus conferring upon the region a marked

sense of integrated character and reference which, given the progressive extension off the 'Electric' identity during the inter-war era, was considerably enhanced. The latter, in contributing to development and categorisation of the South-East, culturally, also intensified the sense of differentiation from other districts beyond, which, for the Southern Railway, meant the network west of Salisbury and Bournemouth. Indeed, the company's characterisation of its landscape and resorts in the West of England shared an overall identity far closer in character and style to that of the G.W.R. generally than to the South Coast resorts. In certain cases - Bude and Padstow, for example - the presentation was in many respects more conservative than that of the G.W.R. in Cornwall.

Thus, in an overall perspective, the Southern Railway reflected the features of dual identity in its evident structural, commercial and geo-cultural differentiation, east and west of Salisbury, a factor recognised, in operational and administrative terms, by the transfer of all former Southern Region lines west of Salisbury to the control of the Western Region, albeit, by British Railways, from 1 January, 1963.



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- 37/ Ibid P538
- 38/ S.P.B. Mais. *Walking At Weekends*, Southern Railway, 1936, P62. The Southern Railway offered many such images in dramatic juxtaposition as in the radio broadcast to American stations. "The Route Of The Golden Arrow" - The Garden Of England from the 'Window of the Continental Boat Express.' P.R.O. Rail 1080-587 Min. 1211.

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- 54/ Ward-Lock Guide. Bournemouth and District, London, 1934. P44.
- 55/ Hints for Holidays, 1939, P246.
- 56/ Ibid P247.
- 57/ Ward-Lock. Bournemouth, 1934. P47.
- 58/ Hints For Holidays, 1939, P298/199.

- 59/ Ward-Lock Guide, Bournemouth, 1934 P67.
- 60/ Ibid P67: The proximity to the New Forest and to Hardy's Dorset conferred further historical, literary and aesthetic resonance as did the numerous steamer trips to and around the Isle of Wight, the Dorset coast and to Southampton, with all the latter's attendant international associations.
- 61/ S.R. Hints For Holidays, 1934. P453.
- 62/ S.R. Hints For Holidays, 1939. P477.
- 63/ S.P.B. Mais. Isles Of The Island, Putnam, London. 1934, Preface XIII.
- 64/ Ibid Pref. XII.
- 65/ S.P.B. Mais, Southern Rambles For Londoners. Southern Railway c1930.
- 66/ S.P.B. Mais. Isles Of Island Pref. XIII. Similar, thematically, to the earlier references to rural-urban identifications in juxtaposition, Mais was here drawing on earlier literary representations of the Isles of Wight, notably those of the Rev. Gilpin's eighteenth century celebration of the Picturesque perspective and that detailed in Belson's Hand Book To The Isles Of Wight, Nelson, London, 1877. The latter, detailed the panoramic prospect from Ashe Down detailing the widely ranging landscapes of the inland, rural districts resonant of tradition and continuity and those by contrast, of the Solent and the Hampshire coastline in the opposite direction. See Nelson, P117. These works addressed the relationship between the observer and their rural location, and that of the observed. Mais' pivotal and evidently rural setting in relation to the sea and the shipping in the Solent (representing movement, shifting perspectives and notions of distance and travel) whilst clearly differentiated are, nevertheless, thematically integrated through the process of perception, either implicitly, intuitively, or by explicit articulation. This and the various other examples of this culturally constructed dialectical process, reflected the considerable subtlety that characterised what would otherwise be descriptive detail consistent with any such railway guide-book.
- 67/ S.P.B. Mais. My Finest Holiday, Southern Railway. 1927.
- 68/ Ibid P12.
- 69/ Ibid P3.
- 70/ Ibid P4.
- 71/ Ibid P4.

- 72/ Ibid P4.
- 73/ Ibid P4.
- 74/ E.P. Leigh-Bennett. Devon and Cornish Days, Southern Railway, 1934.
- 75/ Ibid P8.
- 76/ Ibid P8.
- 77/ Ibid P8.
- 78/ S.P.B. Mais. Finest Holiday, P19.
- 79/ E.P. Leigh-Bennett. Devon and Cornish Days. P14.
- 80/ Hints For Holidays, 1939. P19.
- 81/ Ibid P20.
- 82/ Ibid 1947 ed P15.
- 83/ Compare the content and style of Mais' works 'Lets Get Out Of Here', S.R. 1937, covering East Devon and the companion volume, 'Walks In North Devon', S.R. 1928.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Somerset: The County Concept

This project has, so far, considered the Great Western's literature from various thematic perspectives: the historical, rural and aesthetic constructions, the seaside context within the overall 'Ocean Coast' identity and the cultural, intellectual and essential commercial dimensions. In its published form, however, the Great Western's literature followed a very clear county and county/regional format. Until 1931, 'Holiday Haunts' presented each county in turn, alphabetically. Thereafter, presentation followed a regional structure that comprised seven sections. The first section, as Chapter One has shown, was devoted principally to London and, thereafter, to the relevant southern counties within the G.W.R.'s operational sphere. The most important section after London itself was, undoubtedly, the West of England and the dominant counties of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. Collectively, this region exemplified the 'Holiday Line' and 'Ocean Coast' ethos, essential to Great Western imagery. Given the country and regionally-based format of the company literature, it is appropriate that this work should reflect that presentational content and style. Thus, the county concept, as in Somerset, wherein the Great Western offered all the various representations of Englishness as examined and pursued in this work overall.

#### The Wider West Country

Given the overwhelming popularity of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset as tourist attractions, the G.W.R. had to ensure that each of them, whilst sharing the same general regional location, did not enter into direct competition with each other. All three had their own definitive characteristics but, essentially, Devon and Somerset had more in common with each other than did either of them with Cornwall. In overall economic, aesthetic and cultural terms, Devon and Somerset were presented as definitively English

in character, whereas Cornwall was perceived to be strongly Celtic and manifestly unique - the end result of a revivalist approach to Cornish history from within the county and from the direct involvement of the G.W.R. in shaping a desired Cornish imagery, as conceived and implemented by Paddington. Thus was created the concept of 'The Cornish Riviera'. Devon and Somerset were, of course, also subject to reinvention but the degree of creative construction was less radical than in the case of Cornwall where, in the eighteenth and, particularly, the nineteenth century, the mining tradition, closely associated with Methodism, established the county as a leading industrial area.<sup>1</sup>

Devon and Somerset did not experience detailed structural change in social, economic and cultural terms. Their traditional rural identities were celebrated by the G.W.R. emphasising the sense of historic continuity with Anglo-Saxon England. Predominantly Anglican and rural, Devon and Somerset reflected very different traditions from both Celtic Cornwall and, indeed, the county's industrial, Methodist cultural background of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The definitive agricultural identity and the related architectural and structural features of Devonian and Somersetshire villages also contrasted sharply with those in Cornwall. Sandstone and limestone, cob and thatch, gave Devon and Somerset their essential Englishness - a softer, pastoral image than that of Cornwall's granite and extensive moorland character. Moreover, even Devon and Somerset's former cottage industries shared distinct similarities of organisation, structure and pursuit, contrasting sharply with the Cornish experience. But, granted their various similarities, Maxwell Fraser was also anxious to show how the two counties differed. In 'The Golden West of England', 1930, we read:

The transition from the pastel shades of Somerset to the vivid colouring of Devon is extraordinarily abrupt. Somerset has a mellow loveliness in keeping with its glorious traditions. Devon pulsates with colour and life, each brilliant colour intensifying the other until it seems that no sea can be so blue, no sands so golden, and no

cliffs or soil so red as those of Devon. Nothing is done by halves.<sup>3</sup>

To the east, and Somerset's border with Wiltshire, 'Through the Window, Paddington-Penzance', drew upon further imagery of landscape and association in order to differentiate:

The [Wiltshire] Plain, magnificently barbaric, makes us think of  
Celts and Druids, the more kindly landscape of Somerset suggests  
dairy farming, creamy milk and fat cheeses.<sup>4</sup>

Like Cornwall, both Devon and Somerset developed their 'Ocean Coast' credentials. Cornwall was considered to be the finest expression of the 'Ocean Coast' whilst Devon, with its distinguished maritime tradition, exploited its obvious advantages over Somerset's more limited potential in this respect. Of the West Country's seaside tradition, Devon's south coast resorts were both the oldest and largest, dating from the Napoleonic era and were much enhanced by the early and prominent presence of the railway, dating from 1846. Early railway development was also the case at Weston-Super-Mare, where, again, the combination of easy access, given the resort's favourable geographical location and the enterprising character of the local authorities, guaranteed the town's reputation as Somerset's leading seaside resort. No such comparable circumstances applied in Cornwall, where tourism developed much later and in a more piecemeal style that was frequently part of a broader mixed economic structure, sharing its development with indigenous trades and industries and not without conflict. Newquay was the G.W.R.'s only Cornish resort dedicated totally to tourism.

### "Smiling Somerset"

In his introduction to 'Somerset and Dorset' in the 1939 edition of 'Holiday Haunts', Mais observed: "Somerset perhaps suffers from her proximity to Devon and Cornwall."<sup>5</sup> But if this suggested that the county was overshadowed by its western neighbours, presenting something of a Cinderella status, he also declared Somerset to be "England in epitome."<sup>6</sup> This was an apt characterisation, clearly corresponding to the



received perspectives as to landscape, history and tradition, and especially for the obvious and declared absence of industrial districts. In its evident celebration of Somerset's rural, traditional character, this perspective was very closely identified, in imagery and thematic acclaim, with that of the Cotswolds. But the G.W.R.'s presentation of the county in the collective county context reflected a much wider, multi-dimensional representation than that celebrated in the Cotswold construction. The rural characterisation was certainly prominent but the cultural agenda and the stylistic perspectives that defined the company's portrait of Somerset confirmed Mais' conclusion. "England in epitome" also serves thematically and structurally, in offering an overview of this project generally.

'Holiday Haunts', 1935, included a statement of the county's essential rural, historical identity which it linked, thematically, with neighbouring Dorset, evoking the collective cultural resonance of 'Wessex:' "a vast pastoral district where a serene peace reigns."

The agricultural pursuits of the ancient Saxon are still the chief livelihood of Wessex men today . . . Industrial centres on a large scale are unknown but rich manor houses, wonderful castles and beautiful cathedrals and abbeys abound. Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon remains delight the antiquarian.<sup>7</sup>

'Somerset Ways' offered abundant traditionally-inspired imagery from every part of the county. Minehead's celebrated Quay Town district, for example, was described in the language of the rural ideal.

. . . a cluster of ancient cottages grouped at the foot and on the lower slopes of North Hill, vividly white and cream, set against the dark green background and sending each of them a spiral of blue peat smoke upward.<sup>8</sup>

Dunster was considered "the village where all the most perfect beauty of the centuries is gathered up preserved and consecrated."<sup>9</sup> The surrounding countryside was equally

evocative, being that of “willow fringed streams, ploughed land where the wheat stands stiff and golden and silver blue oats stir and quiver with every lazy breath of the summer wind.”<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the villages of the orchard and pasture country of the Polden district were “flower-bowered homes of broadest Somerset where the only times of day are sunrise, high-noon and sunset, where the only day of the week is Sunday.”<sup>11</sup>

‘Somerset Ways’ presented a portrait of the Polden district that was very similar in content and style to that of Edward Thomas’ earlier work, ‘The South County,’ 1909.<sup>12</sup> Heavily sensuous, with an extremely hypnotic attention to detail, it was quietly eloquent of a rich tradition of harmony, order and Somerset’s deep peace. It was a presentation which, paradoxically, owed nothing to the twentieth century in terms of its projected imagery and identity and almost everything in terms of the historiographical identity, aesthetics and socio-political perspectives. The detailed, intimate style was part of the G.W.R.’s studied presentation of Somerset landscapes within a structure of contrasting perspectives; here, in close, intimate detail, as against, for example, the broad panoramas of the nearby Polden Hills, the Mendip range or, indeed, the coastal flats and seascapes.

Here is a country of grassland and orchards; a land of quiet lanes leading to bedrowsed farms where deep-eyed glossy cattle stand contemplative in the shade, quiet and motionless save for a head-shake or switching of tail to disturb the tickling flies . . . field paths and styles are here, leading through ripening corn rustling with every fragrant puff of wind, or through luscious knee-high meadow grass sprinkled with yellow gems of buttercups. And all around is the quiet softness of the tree-studded, gently swelling hills.<sup>13</sup>

From grassland to orchard, aesthetic harmony was paramount.

There are nowhere else such orchards as those in the Polden country. With the tall grass, later scythe-mown for hay, between the long lines of rough-barked trunks, snowed under a froth of airy pink and

white or almost breaking beneath the weight of their red and golden harvest, they seem so natural, so part and parcel of the countryside that they do not strike you as of man's planting, it is as if it was Nature's plan to have them so.<sup>14</sup>

Representations of the natural order of things - the stability and harmony of the organic community suggested stylistically in the numerous qualifying adjectives and the extended, close-detailed sentence construction - carried attendant political and cultural dimensions as emotionally compelling as that of the aesthetic experience. This was well exemplified in the G.W.R.'s celebration of the shire counties across the company's network. But the principle of harmony, however alluring, was nevertheless defined by implicit and, indeed, an explicitly hierarchical structure, as in the clearly defined representations of great house, yeoman farmer and cottager; the recognised gradations of the village community or estate, or, in the more subtle portrait of landscape delineated in the cultural lexicon of order and contentment. Thus, Maxwell Fraser's 'Somerset', and the Vale of Taunton Deane:

Mellow old farmhouses and sturdy cottages are trim and picturesque reflecting the prosperity of their owners and everywhere there is happy laughter and contentment.<sup>15</sup>

The Quantocks likewise, reflected "their air of rich contentment", wherein,

Rich manor houses, fine old farms and charming cottages are to be seen, but no factories or even towns to disturb the suggestion of ancient peace and plenty.<sup>16</sup>

Looking to an alternative perspective, the G.W.R. considered the mystical properties of landscape. 'Somerset Ways' offered the Levels at Athelney and the seemingly spartan but essentially sensuous nature of that district in its various seasonal guises celebrating colour, texture, shape and light. The rhythmical properties of the writing here emphasised the qualities of mystery and silence; the mystically-charged landscape

resonant of King Alfred.

A strange land is this, flat marshy meadows, damp in the driest of times, where fine corn and rich grasses mature in the burning earthy summer heat. Few trees are here save for the willows and the sun beats down continually drawing the moisture from the earth and giving a humid growing tang to the still air. Thus in summer, when winter brings mist, rain or sleet, the firmest roads are soft to the foot and the haze of moisture cuts close the view over the pearl laden meadows and along the full black ditches. Here at Athelney are osier beds, wide cultivated marsh pools, shallow and brackish where at harvest time thick forests of head-high reeds, straight, stiff and close packed, stand yellow in the sunlight ready to be cut and shaved for thatch and baskets.<sup>17</sup>

The West Somerset levels also linked Alfred with Arthur; Athelney with Avalon. In the G.W.R.'s characterisation of the county as 'England in epitome', Glastonbury and the Arthurian, 'Celtic' resonance simultaneously affirmed and compromised this appellation.

Glastonbury provided the ideal setting for the expression of the mystical, hierarchical properties of perception, but was of problematic identification in ethnic terms, given its fundamentally 'Celtic' provenance. Glastonbury was the focus of the Celtic Church in Western Britain in the fifth century, a foundation symbolised by King Arthur as defender of that culture against pagan Anglo-Saxon invaders. For Maxwell Fraser, in 'Somerset', 1934, Glastonbury was "a dream come true to most visitors."<sup>18</sup> She also specifically identified and sanctioned them socially and culturally, as eager but informed pilgrims: "Arriving with all the tender and romantic legends of Glastonbury filling their minds."<sup>19</sup> The author of 'Somerset Ways', 1928, likewise declared: ... there is no spot in the world so woven around with mystic webs of fable and romance as this. No spot can hold more wondrous store of legends. . .<sup>20</sup> The town was considered "disappointing",

but the abbey fulfilled all expectations. “Here still lingers the haze of myth and legend;”<sup>21</sup> it was, “the sweet grey ruin set in a sea of green. . .”<sup>22</sup> and, significantly, “a place to muse in, where feeling may well usurp the use of thought.”<sup>23</sup> ‘Somerset Ways’ then invited the reader to indulge in the aesthetic appreciation of the abbey as ruins, but, again significantly, as clearly-defined ruins, carefully contextualised to express received ideals of cultural authority, aesthetic harmony and spectacle. Both the abbey and the Tor, nearby, were superlative examples of historical buildings performing the role of agents or mediators.

No paved mosaic is here, no roof to veil the splendour of the skies. Straight from the close, clean turf the walls rise grey, time ravaged, beautiful, pierced by arch and window space and with great gaps and broken lines where parts have paid the penalty of age. Not even the great undamaged Church could be more beautiful, nor impressive than these fragments, carpeted with great trees to fill the gaps that time and the violence of man have made.<sup>24</sup>

The sentiment and focus here was conclusively aesthetic; the celebration of the sublime - the abbey, as a picturesque ruin, serving as a vehicle for emotional reference and identity. A comparison between Maxwell Fraser’s ‘Somerset,’ 1934, or ‘Somerset Ways’, 1928, and the earlier ‘Abbeys’, G.W.R., 1925 by M.R. James. The latter being a detailed academic work of historical scholarship, clearly reflects the quite distinct perspectives directed at Glastonbury. James acknowledged that the origins of its religious foundation were indeed lost in the mists of antiquity and myth, but he offered no speculation.<sup>25</sup> In all but James’ work, however, the aesthetic and historical setting of the abbey and the ‘Avalonian’ environment, generally, acted as a powerful, inspirational spring, allowing the mind to take an almost completely unfettered flight. Thus, the detailed recourse to Arthurian legend and myth that, in its mystically indefinable and elusive perceptions of landscape and personage, provided the means of gratifying the

experiential encounter with nature and antiquity. It was an experience free of the constraints of history: the recurrent thematic reference to an ostensible apolitical and historical perspective - the aestheticisation of history - a construction that ran counter to the otherwise historicised 'English' imagery.

'Somerset Ways' asserted the primacy of mythopoeic perceptions in shedding, "a far truer light on the thoughts and lives of our ancestors than can any recital of historic fact,"<sup>26</sup> but also included outline historical detail before moving to the central preoccupation: the participation in the spirit of the place and the identification with the past as, in Wright's concept of "a celebration of indivisible heritage as a kind of sacrament."<sup>27</sup> Encouraged to leave aside historical detail, the Great Western advised its readers:

Let us leave such thoughts of art and (historical) periods and in the deep hushed peace that falls around the ruins as the sun declines, let us remember those who have stood here, have knelt in the days now misty with the time between. Here came King Arthur, patten true-knight, here came his bride to him and here they rest even now. Lancelot, Galahad and brave Sir Belverdere and all that gallant company have trod the ground which now we tread. And Merlin cast his spells about the place before those great stone walls were raised - while Avalon's church was a wattle hut, before the name Christian was known, where Winchester and York now stand.<sup>28</sup>

The communion with the landscape and the imagined past was also prominent in reference to other distinguished sites, as in Stonehenge and Maiden Castle, near Dorchester, where, to those of sensitive, discerning disposition, the great Iron Age fortifications "for all their dumbness, speak like sounding brasses to those whose love of antiquity lends their imagination power to re-people these great relics of untold centuries ago."<sup>29</sup>

Looking back much further in time than that of King Alfred's Athelney, or Arthurian Glastonbury, Cheddar offered the experience of the primeval. The Cheddar

Valley was famous for its strawberries and its cheeses, but was best known for the caves in the Cheddar Gorge itself. The Ward-Lock Guide to the area, 1924 edition, considered a visit here to be a priority for all tourists.

Whatever else the tourist in Somerset may leave unseen, it will be a matter of a lifelong regret to him if he misses Cheddar. The cliffs, grand and awe inspiring though they are, may be matched elsewhere, but the caves, with their beauty of form and colouring, are in this country unique.<sup>30</sup>

'Holiday Haunts' offered a broader approach to Cheddar, looking initially at the overall location and setting and introducing the element of contrast in broad aesthetic and cultural contexts. Attention was drawn to the distinction between the character of the Gorge and the surrounding Somerset countryside and to the added sense of interest this offered the visitor.

This vast chasm would be overwhelmingly impressive in any setting, but its strange contrast with the smiling countryside of Somerset, rich in the pastoral charms so essentially English, adds to the impressiveness of the Gorge.<sup>31</sup>

There was further specific contrast. The Gorge had two sets of caves. Cox's Cavern and Gough's Caves. Both were lit by electricity in order to gain the maximum effect from the colours, shapes and textures of stalactites, limestone formations and water effects, but Gough's Caves offered an extra attraction - a strange juxtaposition of the ancient, natural landscape with conspicuously modern development. The Great Western Magazine for August, 1935, gave details in a feature on the new under-water restaurant at the entrance to Gough's Caves, expressing general approval.

The proprietor of Gough's Caves has determined that the enormous appeal of their priceless natural endowments shall be enhanced by modern, mundane amenities and much skill and imagination have

been used in planning a magnificent new restaurant and snack bar which nestle at the base of the gigantic rocks overhanging the caves . . . Everything is modern to the last degree. The buildings are constructed of a special concrete of the same colour as the freshly cut Cheddar rock so that they should age into even greater harmony with their surroundings.

The restaurant is known as the “Cave Man” in honour of the skeleton of a prehistoric man discovered in one of the caves. This skeleton, carefully encased, is open to the inspection of visitors, as are the numerous flints, ancient coins and other antiquities found in the caves. The unique feature of the commodious ‘Cave Man’ restaurant is its roof of glass, holding a foot of water supplied by spray fountains and in this overhead lake are to be seen hundreds of swiftly-gliding goldfish.<sup>32</sup>

At nearby Wookey Hole there were yet more spectacular caves - the ‘Witches Chamber’, 75 feet in height, “where, against a background of rock, is a strange sphinx-like stalagmite formation known as the Witch of Wookey.”<sup>33</sup> There was also the spectacle of the subterranean River Axe and the “Hyena’s Den.” The latter was named as such on account of the discovery there of both animal and human bones estimated to be some 40,000 years old. Wookey was also subject to detailed modern development as the G.W.R. Magazine reported.

Not resting content with these natural and historical features, nor with its excellent situation, the properties have now vastly broadened and enhanced the appeal of Wookey by the provision on the site of the “Witching Water”, a luxurious open-air swimming pool and a “Pixies Pool” (for children and non-swimmers). At night the swimming pool and its surroundings are floodlit while the excellent restaurant is a



fairy land of coloured lights . . .<sup>34</sup>

The contrast of ancient and modern, nature and artifice, was a particular feature at Cheddar, given its growing tourist identity and thus reflected a useful example of the increasing provision of large-scale organised entertainment and modern amenities during the Thirties; not, however, to everyone's liking. Naomi Royd-Smith's 'Pilgrim from Paddington', 1934, asserted: "The most satisfactory place in Cheddar is the railway station."<sup>35</sup> In sharp contrast with the Gorge and its carparks, constant traffic and restless crowds with their "chocolate slabs and Lyons ice-cream in cartons,"<sup>36</sup> Cheddar railway station offered "a peaceful haven from the Gorge." Describing the architectural features of the latter as reminiscent of the secular style of the Eleventh Century, obviously a compliment, she noted that, even in the early thirties, the station has seen better days. "Passengers have ebbed away from the railway; but strawberries remain."<sup>37</sup> Amongst several references to rural railway stations, 'Pilgrim from Paddington' also included the following description of Axbridge on the Cheddar Valley line.

It is not only the Yucca I had seen in passing, that blooms richly at the station at Axbridge - other flowers grow and clamber there; various kinds of rock plants are now in bloom on the hillside platforms and a crimson rambler bearing tiny red single roses, embowers the open-fronted shed of a waiting room. On the booking office and goods-yard side there are more flower beds and, there, a kissing-gate leads into the churchyard.<sup>38</sup>

This was no mere physical description alone: it was statement of Englishness celebrating peace and contentment, definitive of a perceived rural order that clearly included the railway. Stylistically, flowers "clamber" and "bloom" on "hillside platforms," roses "embower" the waiting room and "flower beds" and "a kissing gate" mark the path to the churchyard. This was the iconography of rural-pastoral England that most latterday heritage railway interests are keen to celebrate.

In further dimensions of Somerset as the haunt of ancient peace, Wells was confirmed by the Great Western as the 'City of Peace.' Both 'Somerset Ways', a co-production for the G.W.R. during the mid-twenties and Maxwell Fraser's better known, 'Somerset', published by the company in 1934, reserved the superlatives for this West Country cathedral city. The cathedral defined the community. For Maxwell Fraser it was "a unique and perfect survival of the past; a place where the hand of progress has fallen lightly, respecting the beauty and peace of this living link with our forefathers."<sup>39</sup>

Fraser missed no opportunity to emphasise the sense of perfection expressed through aesthetic harmony and continuity with the past.

During the Middle Ages there were many such cities but wars and spoilation culminating in the Dissolution wrought havoc with all but Wells. Other great cathedrals survive, but only at Wells are the whole of the ecclesiastical buildings still standing.

The builders of this glorious cathedral not only designed one of the greatest and most splendid churches in the kingdom, but enhanced their work by planning a perfect setting of a spacious Close with smooth tree-shaded lawns flanked by buildings which are a perfect complement to the vast and stately minster.<sup>40</sup>

Having heaped praise upon the cathedral, Maxwell Fraser reinforced one of her favourite themes - the celebration of the past as the source of inspiration, contentment and peace, albeit supported sensitively by modern conveniences.

The City of Wells though of ancient foundation is far smaller than many modern towns, a place of ease and contentment refusing to bow to the modern craze for senseless speed and noise, but progressive enough to adopt any modern amenity which adds to the pleasure and comfort of life.<sup>41</sup>

'Wonderful Wessex' (1908) considered Wells to be "the English Bruges."<sup>42</sup>

If Wells was the English Bruges, Bath was “the English Athens.” The city leant itself ideally to the celebration of the rural, historical characterisation of England and Englishness. Great Western promotional work took every opportunity to emphasise the superlatives. ‘Wonderful Wessex’ pronounced Bath the “English Athens; The premier ‘Spa’ of the British Empire,”<sup>43</sup> whilst Maxwell Fraser’s later ‘Somerset’ stressed its “beauty and serenity against a background of history and tradition.”<sup>44</sup> She also directed the cultural characterisation.

There is the Bath of the Britons, that half-legendary town founded by Bladud father of Shakespeare’s King Lear; Bath of the Romans, who left a legacy of the splendid Roman Baths; Bath of the Georgians, with its brilliant social and literary associations and its carefree gaiety; the Bath of Jane Austen with its deliciously shy humour; the Bath of Dickens and Mr. Pickwick with its robust jollity and good cheer, and a hundred other equally engrossing phases of life and history.<sup>45</sup>

Whereas, ‘Somerset’ went on to concentrate upon Bath’s historical development, the much earlier ‘Wonderful Wessex’ indulged in a conspicuous celebration of Bath’s literary identity. ‘Somerset Ways’, however, focused upon the architectural heritage and exquisite, natural setting for the city.

Man has wrought well at Bath, and never was Nature in more bountiful mood than when she moulded this cup among the hills with the Avon wandering across it.<sup>46</sup>

Harmony and natural order prevailed, not least, in the countryside surrounding the city, considered by ‘Somerset Ways’ to be the epitome of rural Englishness - “soft rounded hills, wood and thicket, wide lush meadows fragrant with meadowsweet with the Avon slipping its pallsades of rush and willow herb,”<sup>47</sup> Here, “the meadows were richest, the woods deepest and the world and its worries most distant.”<sup>48</sup>

Historical continuity wedded to aesthetic excellence gave Bath special distinction.

Glorying in the Roman antiquities, the Anglo-Saxon heritage, the Tudor Perpendicular cathedral and, ultimately, the creation of the fashionable Georgian watering place with its Pump Rooms, Baths, its elegant town houses and public parks and gardens, the city expressed the desired features of pre-industrial England that were so clearly celebrated in the G.W.R.'s historical perspective.

Bath was served by three railway companies. In addition to the G.W.R., the most significant of the three, the L.M.S. and Southern Railway also ran services, primarily on the north-south axis from the Midlands and North to the south coast at Bournemouth, via the Somerset and Dorset route. Great Western literature on Bath was inevitably the most detailed and extensive, by comparison with the rival L.M.S. and Southern companies, who gave no special distinction to the city in their literature.

The aesthetic and historic character of Bath was acknowledged by the G.W.R. from the company's earliest days. Brunel's route east-west through the city incorporated particularly distinguished architectural features - over bridges, castellated embankments and tunnels and graceful viaducts for the River Avon to harmonise as closely as possible with both natural landscape and the prevailing Georgian architecture. Also, in keeping with the rural character of the approaches to Bath, east and west - and as a visible expression of the historic character of the city and, no less, of the dignity of the railway company serving it - Brunel provided decorative portals for the west end of Box Tunnel to the east of Bath; likewise, at Middle Hill Tunnel, nearer the city, and at Twerton Tunnel, to the west of the station.

In final reference to the rural, historical identity of Somerset and to sustain the theme of distinctive architecture and history, we can refer to another feature of the landscape celebrated in Great Western literature. An article from the G.W.R. Magazine of August 1934, 'Some Market Crosses in Great Western Territory,'<sup>49</sup> noted the extensive provision of these medieval structures within the county, relative to other counties across the G.W.R. network, generally.

The opening paragraph set the theme of historical and cultural representation:

The market place is one of civilisation's oldest institutions and in our own country has a recorded history of over a thousand years . . . It happens that the territory served by the Great Western Railway is particularly rich in historic market towns.<sup>50</sup>

Having made the identification of railway with community, continuity and place, the author included several notable Somersetshire examples. Dunster's "low gabled building which spreads itself across the High-Street,"<sup>51</sup> was considered the best known picturesque of the market hall version of these structures within the entire G.W.R. territory. Elsewhere, that at Somerton was noted. The stone cross encircled by a stone canopy at Shepton Mallet was described as "decorative and graceful . . . among the most noteworthy in the country."<sup>52</sup> Cheddar's market cross was also considered well worthy of inclusion in the article. More an expression of identity and relationship than a detailed reference to this architectural form, the Great Western was evidently celebrating received symbols of community and Englishness.

This short survey of Somerset has so far focused upon the historical and rural identity. But the county also presented its 'Ocean Coast' credentials in the form of its 'Severn Sea' resorts and it is to the seaside tradition that we turn for final reference.

The seaside identity was most fully expressed in Weston Super Mare, the largest of Somerset's resorts, but was also well represented at Minehead, Burnham-on-Sea, Clevedon and Portishead, each one catering extensively for family holidays. Clevedon was described in the 1937 edition of 'Holiday Haunts' as 'The Brain-Worker's Paradise': 'The Ideal Resort for the City Worker seeking Peaceful and Refreshing Holidays combined with Healthy Recreation.'<sup>53</sup> The urban provenance of the seaside mythology made very clear here, but Clevedon, after the style of a miniature Torquay or Bournemouth, was presented as a resort of "picturesque irregularity" of hills, bay and seafront, a place where "woods invade the very heart of the town."<sup>54</sup> Literary associations - Tennyson,

Thackery and Coleridge - guaranteed its cultural credentials. 'Holiday Haunts', 1936 edition, also evoked the essential mythology of the English seaside in a seemingly routine description of the beach at Burnham-on-Sea, "The Kiddies' Paradise", resonant of the seaside myth in its very simplicity and heavily nostalgic, today.

The seven mile sweep of golden sands and the big paddling pool are the playground of merry children who busily dig and paddle or gleefully indulge in the supreme joy of a donkey ride.<sup>55</sup>

This was clearly the literary counterpart of the numerous poster and photographic prints of children at play - definitive iconography, common to all four railway companies - celebrating the spontaneous delights of the beach. The front-cover of the G.W.R.'s 'Holiday Haunts', 1939 and that of the Southern Railway's 'Hints for Holidays', also 1939, were direct expressions of this seaside perspective.

'Holiday Haunts' stressed the family image of all Somerset's resorts, especially that at Western-Super-Mare. The 1937 edition, for example - with its topical front-cover seaside/Coronation imagery - portrayed Weston as having "the cheerful air of a town that is popular and glories in the fact."<sup>56</sup> Maxwell Fraser's 'Somerset' echoed this:

Gay, friendly Weston Super Mare welcoming all its visitors and proud to be known as the largest holiday resort between Lancashire and Land's End. Instead of angling after exclusiveness, it bends all its energies towards making itself more attractive to holiday makers and to tourists, pursuing the policy indicated in its Civic motto of 'Ever Forward', and ceaselessly endeavouring to anticipate the demands of its guests.<sup>57</sup>

Progressive and democratic in character and style, Weston was praised by the Great Western for its particularly creative response to tourism. 'Holiday Haunts' acknowledged:

. . . the wizardry of the Weston Town Council who are exceedingly

progressive and have courageously undertaken schemes for beautifying the town which have already more than justified the extreme expense incurred.<sup>58</sup>

The spacious and graceful promenade was a nineteenth century investment being constructed between 1883 and 1887 and, thereafter, much extended and developed.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, there was an abundance of park and garden facilities, two piers, - the Grand and Birnbeck Pier, the latter being served by Bristol Channel steamer services to South Wales and the Somerset and North Devon holiday resorts. There was also a fun-fair on the Birnbeck Pier offering the experience of “a water-chute, a switch-back railway, swings and other delirious delights.”<sup>60</sup> July 1927 saw the formal opening of Weston’s famous Pavilion and Cafe with its Italian Gardens, much praised by the G.W.R. Sir Ernest Palmer, Bart, Deputy Chairman of the G.W.R. officiated; Sir Felix Pole, General Manager, G.W.R. was also present, underlining the company’s close relationship with the resort.<sup>61</sup> The 1937 season saw the provision of Weston’s newly completed and lavishly equipped open-air swimming pool, catering for 1,400 swimmers and 5,000 spectators.

Maxwell Fraser reinforced the prevailing sense of a dedicated pleasure resort in ‘Somerset’, again stressing the family image with the accent on fun and unrestricted enjoyment.

Weston’s provision for the amusement of its visitors is on a lavish scale. The Marine Lake has boats of various types with a popular feature in the specially constructed harbour for children’s paddling boats. A paddling pool has also been built . . . Bathing huts and enclosures and a splendid diving raft are also provided. There is a model yacht pond; and a day nursery where parents can leave their children to play under the care of a trained nurse.<sup>62</sup>

Weston Super Mare again co-operated with the G.W.R. in May 1946 to organise and

fund the “Kiddies Express” - the first day excursion from Paddington to the seaside in the post-war era. Hailed as “the Brighton of Bristol,”<sup>63</sup> Weston was identified as the West Country’s equivalent of the London-Brighton, city-seaside relationship on the South Coast. Drawing upon large-scale tourist traffic from Bristol, the Midlands and from Paddington itself, together with both rail and sea links with South Wales, Weston secured its identity and status as a major-league resort.

Further west, Minehead was promoted as “The Garden Paradise of the West . . . Where glorious Exmoor meets the Sea.”<sup>64</sup> Minehead station was situated virtually on the seafront, underlining the Great Western’s ‘Holiday Line’ imagery. The Great Western Magazine, in 1934 and 1936, recorded significant improvements in tourist provision. The Council purchased twelve acres of Pine Woods on the town’s notable landmark on North Hill, whilst new gardens were laid out on the lower slopes of the hill and on the seafront as part of a Jubilee commemoration. In the following year, Sir Robert Horne, Chairman of the G.W.R., opened Minehead’s new open-air swimming pool, also on the seafront. Considered an important modern amenity for the town, the G.W.R. Magazine gave details promoting the modern progressive image.

The pool has a capacity of 400,000 gallons; it is supplied with filtered and purified sea water and there is accommodation for nearly 2,000 spectators. A restaurant and buffet bar add to the general amenities and powerful floodlighting will enable the pool to be used for night swimming and entertainments.<sup>65</sup>

The 1939 edition of ‘Holiday Haunts’ summarised the character of Somerset’s ‘Severn Sea’ coast, reflecting its comprehensive identity.

Somerset’s coastal resorts range from large and cheerful towns to tiny clusters of houses which are the haunt of an infinite peace.<sup>66</sup>

Thus Blue Anchor, the diminutive seaside location, three miles east of Minehead, on the branch line from Taunton, was provided with camping coaches in the thirties in



recognition of the location's potential in terms of a popularist, family seaside identity. But there was also an earlier, contrasting cultural identity for the Blue Anchor district. Turner had painted on this shore line focusing upon Minehead's distant North Hill, whilst William Gilpin, 'Observations on the Western Parts of England,' 1798,<sup>67</sup> described the journey from Blue Anchor to Minehead in the manner of the Picturesque tradition. As with Turner the focus was North Hill. In the shifting perspective of mist, haze, seashore and sky, the hill assumed the sublime magical proportions that Gilpin likened to "Sibyl's temple at Tivoli."<sup>68</sup> Great Western writing reflected such perspectives, explicitly, in reference to Turner's work, in 'Holiday Haunts,' and, implicitly, in the company's detailed aesthetic appreciation of the land and seascapes of the Severn Sea, that were so much a stylistic feature of 'Somerset Ways' in particular, and of wider company reference in general. Chapter Seven, 'The Sea Coast', 'Somerset Ways', 1928, opened with an extensive explanation of the general concept of the picturesque in literature and painting, the detail here being almost a transcript of Gilpin's definition of picturesque perspectives, dating from the late eighteenth century - his 'Observations on the Western Parts of England.'

Of the coastal perspective we read:

There is no land where one can see such sunsets as in the flats. And here the going down is perfected because the sun sinks not into fields or into the smoke of factories, but into the "broad water of the West" itself, or behind that clear-cut mysterious ridge of transparent purple which is Exmoor.<sup>69</sup>

Taking contrasting perspectives to heighten dramatic aesthetic qualities 'Somerset Ways' proclaimed:

But there is beauty in every mile of it, first the beauty of open downland, cliff-footed, wooded in the hollows, sun-browned above; the beauty of little promontories, rocky and bare, or hiding their shapes

beneath a canopy of wind-swept trees and underbush.<sup>70</sup>

Thereafter, the writer embarked upon an unrestricted portrait in the picturesque manner, setting Great Western aesthetic affiliations into clear reference and precedent.

. . . and down the channel is the superlative beauty of the sea flats. . .  
 great stretches of glistening shore ribbed with the long, dark lines of  
 wandering creeks here at sundown the whole world, land and water,  
 swims into a mist of gold backed by the changing glory of the sky . . .  
 transparent red, flecked with clouds black in their bulk, gold-tinged  
 toward their edges and silver and pearl pink where detached whiffs  
 float listlessly across the great clear dome in the still evening air.<sup>71</sup>

The romantic nature of this diffuse spectacle of land, sea and sky presented the contemplative with every opportunity to indulge in the initiate, highly exclusive process of aesthetic appreciation and cultural affiliation. By removing strict definition of land, sea and sky, the resultant diffused perspective opened out the experience to numerous possibilities in terms of its interpretation and significance. Perceived as an aesthetic experience or that of metaphysical dimensions, this was the literature of received reception and exclusive expression. In its celebration of the Blue Anchor of the camping coach and seaside holiday and that of the perspectives of Turner and Gilpin, Somerset, for the G.W.R., represented “all things to all men.”<sup>72</sup> The latter as a statement both of demarcation, indicative of the sub-text of hierarchical delineation and as the celebration of the popularist concept of the carefree democracy, characterised the complex and seemingly paradoxical nature of the G.W.R. literature. Likewise, the Celtic construction of Glastonbury in an otherwise definitive landscape of pastoral, rural England; the convergence of the ‘Southern’ and ‘Western’ metaphors.

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## Conclusion

The G.W.R. literature reveals a complex configuration which, as this thesis argues, was a collective construction engaging central issues within the cultural agenda of the first four decades of the twentieth century. It addresses the historical, political, economic and aesthetic dimensions of national representation and, in so doing, identifies themes of past and present, continuity and change - definitive issues within the inter-war years in particular, given the impact of the Great War and the anxieties and perceived fault-lines of industrial society. The company set its literary focus on that of an overall perspective of Englishness and Empire as defined within the spectrum of past, present and future, indicating its mainstream identification within national representation, not least, for the rival conceptions of Empire that characterised the period.

In constructing a synthesis of past and present and seeking to reconcile continuity and change, the literature inevitably engaged the Little England-Greater Britain debate. This, in the context of the international situation, politically and militarily, drove the issue of essential national imagery and identity, often polarised into that of either a rural or industrial character. This work has emphasised the company's focus on concepts of interaction, assimilation and fusion wherein the rural and industrial characterisations were reconciled. Therein, the central role of place marketing and image building has also been stressed. The thematic link of rural England with industrial progression and, indeed, Empire has been identified with Stanley Baldwin's perspective of accommodation, that of a perceived harmonious, organic development as suggested in an ideal of 'progressive conservatism'. As in Baldwin's outlook, the G.W.R. identified the sense of national mission, inheritance and historic destiny as fundamental to the concept and character of Englishness. Celebrated through historical, political and aesthetic experience, Englishness embraced reflective, elegaic properties but it was essentially robust

and internationally orientated.

The G.W.R.'s American-orientated literature and that of the 'Celtic' construction confirms Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities. In both cases, the language of belonging and authority are paramount. Amongst the innumerable references to "us, we, our, they" and so on, the essential agenda of community defined by demarcation - Anglo-Saxon English Speaking Peoples in the American-orientated works and the evident ethnicised, gendered discourse of the Celtic construction - there was an almost complete disregard of disparate influences considered in terms of rivals or alternative cultural traditions. The 'community', however, was always a relative, conditional creation.

Empire identifications, no matter how enthusiastically pursued, were historically-defined and therefore subject to change. The G.W.R.'s focus upon imagery of the Greater Britain orientation had to reconcile problematic representations of ethnicity and cultural authority. Its North American interests, for example, in underlining a shared inheritance and common cultural tradition - a construction of deeply complex characterisations of English and Celtic identities - were as much expedients, commercially and politically, as expressions of authority and influence. Imperial perspectives of commerce and trade must also be contextualised by reference to losses and decline in international trade and to greater, enforced reliance on Empire. Likewise, the increasing problems over the maintenance of power in the international situation of the thirties, in particular. Richard Overy, 'The Road To War', 1989,<sup>2</sup> noted: "The Empire of the 1920s was perceived as a powerful vindication of the liberal belief in progress and civilisation."<sup>3</sup> This was the Baldwinite agenda but, as Overy also observed: "Peace, the first British interest', was a maxim born not merely of a moral view of foreign policy but of necessity."<sup>4</sup> The G.W.R.'s representation of the Empire in terms of 'family' imagery has been noted and paralleled with that of the Empire Marketing Board but, as John Mackenzie emphasised, it was a construction that propounded stereotypes - "climactic, national and



racial.”<sup>5</sup> Grand imperial ceremonial, as in the Empire Exhibitions of 1924 and 1925 or the Coronation in 1937, for example, provided ideal opportunities for the spectacle and, indeed, rhetoric of Empire but, in the G.W.R. literature, as in British society generally, the character of imperial enterprise was significantly less strident and celebratory than that of the years prior to the Great War.

The American-orientated material reveals this in the form of an increasing American authority within the perceived Anglo-American cultural relationship. As discussed in Chapter Five, the G.W.R. ceded authority - that of the perceived Anglo-Saxon inheritance - to American ownership, an appropriation expressed in the shifting perspectives of theme and style. A comparison of the early A.M. Broadley works for the American market, up to 1914, with later publications, as in Maxwell Fraser’s ‘England And Why’, 1932, reflects this as, indeed, did the explicit statements from the company on the need to attract increased numbers of North American tourists. Maxwell Fraser’s Introduction to her ‘Southern Ireland’ 1932, in turn, addressed an agenda of changing focus, emphasising “the amazing improvements effected even in the short time since the Irish Free State Government was created” and recognised “how sincere and far-seeing are Southern Ireland’s new rulers....” in blending “the best of the ancient and modern worlds.”<sup>6</sup> Progressive, modernised tourist agendas for American visitors to Britain and Ireland were increasingly linked to itineraries that served the North American focus upon its discovery, recovery or appropriation of history and heritage. Fraser’s Introduction, alone, distinguishes her work - politically, culturally, thematically - from that of Broadley’s earlier “Playground of Empire.”<sup>7</sup>

The G.W.R.’s seaside perspectives also reflect the widespread development of the tourist industry to the outbreak of World War Two. They exemplify the highly structured nature of leisure pursuits in terms of location, the ordering and social delineations of person, place and event and, indeed, the increasing role of recreational pursuits and of their character during the inter-war era. The Southern Railway material, incorporated in terms

of thematic counterpoint to the G.W.R., has indicated several distinguishing features between the two companies in respect of focus and style. This, of course, reflects the detailed and complex formulation of the seaside experience, which could be augmented considerably by reference to the two other major companies, the L.N.E.R. and the L.M.S. - a project too ambitious, however, for present purposes.

The G.W.R.'s comprehensive, collective projection of national-imperial representations distinguished its literature amongst the four railway companies. In its style and thematic structure it engaged central questions of national and international resonance, grounded in the perception of historic identity and Empire. In final reference, we can instance the company's imagery of London, which was noticeably different from the other companies in its thematic focus. In a representation that embraces Anthony Smith's work on the imagery of 'high' and 'low' "garden" and "wild" cultures,<sup>8</sup> 'Holiday Haunts', 1936, for example, described London as "more than the hub of the greatest Empire that has ever been; it is the concentrated essence of the centuries and an epitome of British history."<sup>9</sup> In this context of effective citizenship it identified the many dimensions of national experience and imagery exemplified in the city: not least that of the urban-rural dialogue that was so evident throughout the G.W.R. literature in the properties of assimilation and fusion: "... the greatest city in the world breathes the very spirit of the country village in the majority of its place-names, ...." Likewise, "if the visitor has even a slight acquaintance with English history a whole world of interest is opened to his wondering eyes .... its history is so plainly written for all to see that the mere noting of street and place-names yields to the passer-by an infinity of interest."<sup>10</sup> In further emphasising the religious and literary landmarks of the city, 'Holiday Haunts' intensified the sense of a landscape of inheritance and identification comprising a statement of progress and development which united past and present and rural and urban experience within a national-international configuration of cultural authority.

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## Conclusion

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