

## *Chapter Five*

### *Repositioning the Outdoors Leisure Market*

As well as ably segmenting the overall holiday market, this chapter argues that photographic marketing allowed the GWR to make itself more relevant to new customers within particular markets. The photographs in this chapter provide evidence of the GWR's take on market repositioning. Market repositioning occurs when a company redesigns its product or service in a comprehensive manner in order to attract an entirely new audience or make itself competitive with other businesses.<sup>1</sup> In modern business parlance, poor sales performance or changing customer tastes may result in a product or service being 'audited' and subsequently 'repositioned'. The auditing process identifies product strengths and weaknesses as well as relevancy to the current market – based on this a company may decide to reposition a product.<sup>2</sup> Repositioning involves shifting target markets by altering the image of the product, but not necessarily the product itself in its essential form.<sup>3</sup> Regarding place marketing, 'psychological repositioning' attempts to alter the beliefs about place.<sup>4</sup> This chapter argues that this process captures how the GWR treated the market for outdoors leisure. Photographic content reveals who the GWR saw as most likely to journey into the countryside and why, but also that this perception shifted over time. These intermittent changes, which commonly referenced popular cultural and social ideas regarding the countryside, provide evidence of periodic reassessment of customers, what they wanted to see and do, which was ultimately used to inform marketing decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> David Jobber and John Fahy, *Foundations of Marketing*, (3<sup>rd</sup> edn., Maidenhead, 2009), pp 123-24.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Kotler, *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation and Control*, (Englewood Cliffs.: NJ, 1991), p. 435.

<sup>3</sup> Jobber and Fahy, *Foundations Of Marketing*, pp. 123-24.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Kotler, Donald Haider and Irving Rein, *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry, and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations*, (New York, 1993), p. 55.

Outdoors leisure as discussed in this chapter represented an altogether different kind of holiday from those already considered. In this case the framing of the countryside differed significantly from the ‘romantic gaze’ examined in Chapter Two. Whilst the romantic gaze constituted a ‘semi-spiritual relationship’ with nature, chiefly consumed at designated sites of historic or picturesque interest, outdoor recreation implied a more vigorous, corporeal consumption. It could happen anywhere where there was space to roam, and encompassed activities such as rambling and camping, but also shooting, hunting and fishing. Although it was not unknown for hikers to seek out historical sites or picturesque vistas, the two kinds of holiday were recognised as having characteristic differences.<sup>5</sup>

Outdoors leisure has not received the attention of the more traditional seaside holiday, although historians have begun to appreciate its importance amongst the parallel shifts in economic and social significance of rural England.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have nevertheless questioned what type of customer constituted this market, and their significance amongst holidaymakers in general.<sup>7</sup> Walking for pleasure became popular in the late-nineteenth century, principally amongst the upper echelons of society, aesthetes, academics and members of the legal profession. The largely southern and predominantly male clubs, such as the Polytechnic Rambling Club (formed 1885) and the London Federation of Rambling Clubs (1901) were bastions of class exclusivity.<sup>8</sup> The bicycle encouraged greater consumption of the rural outdoors, with the National Cyclists’ Union established in 1877 and the Cyclists’ Tourist

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<sup>5</sup> Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper*, (London, 2010), p. 209; Alun Howkins, *The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside Since 1900*, (London, 2003), pp. 72-73.

<sup>6</sup> Howkins, *The Death of Rural England*, pp. 3-10; David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, (London, 1998), pp. 95-100.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Beck, ‘Leisure and Sport in Britain, 1900-1939’, in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A Companion To Early Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Oxford, 2003); John Lowerson, ‘Battles for the countryside’, in Frank Gloversmith (ed.), *Class, Culture, and Social Change: a New View of the 1930s*, (Brighton, 1980), pp. 258-80; Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:4 (2006), p. 596; Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 95-100.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Tomlinson and Helen Walker, ‘Holidays for All: Popular Movements, Collective Leisure, and the Pleasure Industry’, in Alan Tomlinson (ed.), *Consumption, Identity, and Style: Marketing, Meanings, and the Packaging of Pleasure*, (London, 1990), pp. 228-29.

Club (founded in 1878) achieving 60,449 members by 1900.<sup>9</sup> 1930 to 1940 was, however, the boom decade. Estimates suggest that of the fifteen million who enjoyed a holiday of a week or more in 1937,<sup>10</sup> some 500,000 people regularly took part in outdoor recreation.<sup>11</sup> The Youth Hostels Association, established in 1930 in response to the increasing popularity of the countryside as a holiday destination, had 83,419 members by the end of the 1930s.<sup>12</sup> Outdoors recreation now admitted a range of individuals drawn from across the class spectrum.

We know something of the importance of these consumers to railways too. Simmons identifies several attempts to encourage country walkers to travel by rail after 1900: the GWR offered day excursions for walkers from London to the Vale of the White Horse, sixty miles away, in 1905.<sup>13</sup> The London and Brighton Railway offered cheap day return tickets to the North Downs. Before 1905 this represented steady business selling around 80,000 tickets annually but by 1911 this number had grown to 141,822.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the Great Northern Railway negotiated with the London Federation of Rambling Clubs and offered concessionary fares for members.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond these examples the railways' role in shaping and marketing outdoor recreation in the early-twentieth century is still the subject of much debate. Some scholars argue that it became imperative for the companies to encourage people into rural areas as the rural railways, under challenge from cars and local bus services by the end of the 1920s,

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<sup>9</sup> Tomlinson and Walker, 'Holidays for All', p. 231; Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, (London, 1991), p. 305.

<sup>10</sup> John K. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century*, (Manchester, 2000), pp. 58-59.

<sup>11</sup> Lowerson, 'Battles for the Countryside', pp. 258-80.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Mowat, *Britain Between The Wars, 1918-1940*, (Chicago, 1955), pp. 527-28.

<sup>13</sup> Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, pp. 304-06; The London and South Western Railway also released *Pleasant Paths for Rambles*, (1915), targeted at Londoners.

<sup>14</sup> Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 305.

<sup>15</sup> Tomlinson and Walker, 'Holidays for All', p. 228.

neared the point where they did not pay for themselves.<sup>16</sup> But who the railways perceived as the chief consumers, how appeals differed between, say, social classes, and how the railways understood the public motivation to get outdoors, is less clear. A prominent concern in the historiography is how the issues of class-based consumption - the tensions arising from 'claims' on the countryside made by different social classes - played out in terms of marketing. Several scholars identify rambling as a cheap and quick way for the working classes to leave the city, if only for a day; a morally beneficial activity and a way to exercise new rights and leisure time.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, many who campaigned for greater access to the countryside hailed from the working classes,<sup>18</sup> but these people suffered from a reputation associated with their social standing.<sup>19</sup> As a result, Watts argues, in the 1930s the LNER used calculated imagery loaded with signs about 'appropriate' outdoor consumption to persuade the middle-class market that the outdoors was a more socially exclusive leisure form than was commonly thought.<sup>20</sup> It was therefore not a simple fact that different classes enjoyed particular *kinds* of holiday; just as the different classes tended to behave differently as shoppers or, as seen, at the seaside, so too they behaved differently in their consumption of outdoor pursuits.<sup>21</sup> The analysis is further clouded by the neglect of the upper-class sportsmen who held an insatiable interest in expensive and socially exclusive forms of sport and used the railways to transport themselves, their servants and equipment to hunting meets and weekend country getaways.<sup>22</sup>

All of this necessitates a review of marketing activities. This chapter examines three groups targeted by the GWR between 1906 and 1939. It finds that in the Edwardian years,

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<sup>16</sup> Derek H. Aldcroft, *British Railways in Transition: the Economic Problems of Britain's Railways since 1914*, (1968), p. 63.

<sup>17</sup> Howkins, *The Death of Rural England*, pp. 105-08.

<sup>18</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 71.

<sup>20</sup> D.C.H Watts, 'Evaluating British Railway Poster Advertising: The London and North Eastern Railway Between The Wars', *Journal of Transport History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. 25:2 (2004), p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> John Benson, *The Rise Of Consumer Society In Britain, 1880-1980*, (London, 1994), pp. 129-30.

<sup>22</sup> Benson, *The Rise Of Consumer Society in Britain*, pp. 129-30; Mike Huggins, *Horseracing and the British 1919-39*, (Manchester, 2003), pp. 126-27.

outdoor recreation was marketed as an upper-middle class activity, predominantly to huntsmen and aspiring middle-class sportsmen. Responding to changes stimulated by war, the pre-war hunting imagery was abandoned in the 1920s when the GWR saw more value in renegotiating the appeal towards pseudo-military youth organisations such as scouts and guides. In the 1930s, in response to depression, changing fitness fashions, and increased spending power amongst the lower-middle and upper-working classes, the GWR once again transformed the image of the outdoors as a playground for urbanites. This chapter demonstrates that whilst textual sources such as the GWR magazine hint at a rudimentary market repositioning, the photographs are by far the most persuasive evidence of a reassessment of customer desires and how this was acted upon. Change did not, therefore, simply reflect advances in photographic styles or equipment. It shows that visions of what the customer wanted, who they were, and how their consumption differed from others, were important factors in how the GWR conceptualised its overall marketing practices between 1906 and 1939. This counters the impression, held by some scholars,<sup>23</sup> of railway marketers as conservative and unresponsive to change. The neglected photographic sources reveal a preoccupation with communicating the right messages to the right customers.

### ***Section 1: 1906-1915: The Hunter, Sportsman and Weekender***

Extensive rural lines were a relatively late development in Britain's railway system. Initially companies proposed lines where they could guarantee custom, and sparse rural populations did not offer the kind of numbers to make construction viable. But during the late-nineteenth century several factors encouraged Britain's railways to reach out to rural

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<sup>23</sup> David Smith, *The Railway and Its Passengers: A Social History*, (Newton Abbott, 1988), pp. 165-66.

areas. Successive governments promoted rural railways by passing legislation offering a cheaper procedure for acquiring and building on rural land.<sup>24</sup> The aim was to provide comprehensive connections as well as the speedier movement of agricultural produce to urban areas.<sup>25</sup> Another factor was competition. Rival routes which passed through rural areas incidentally offered benefits.<sup>26</sup> As seen, when leisure travel became popular towards the end of the nineteenth century railways such as the GWR recognised a further potential to increase traffic on these lines. This became more important during the twentieth century because of rival bus services.<sup>27</sup> In part the railways counteracted competition through their own road services, but it was too costly in terms of staff and machinery to compete absolutely. It thus became imperative not just to 'grow the market' but to ensure that areas with an inherently low potential for traffic were well-patronised. The romantic gaze encouraged one set of customers to do this. Yet in the Edwardian period the GWR wished to establish a different appeal to those who enjoyed a more vigorous engagement with the countryside.

Around 1908 the GWR christened itself *The Sportsman's Line*. This slogan, but more importantly the pictorial content within *Holiday Haunts*, suggests that the company saw the fin de siècle market for outdoors leisure dominated by upper middle-class males. This was well-justified. The social reference point for the upper-middle classes was the gentry, but their spending power was decidedly lower.<sup>28</sup> Historians of the middle classes argue that men from a range of professions, stockbrokers, bankers and other careers connected to industry, provided a decent market for outdoors leisure.<sup>29</sup> They were moderately prosperous but their

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<sup>24</sup> Jack Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914*, (London, 1986), p. 313.

<sup>25</sup> P. J. Cain, 'Railways 1870-1914: The Maturity of Private Enterprise', in Michael Freeman and Derek Aldcroft (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain*, (Manchester, 1988), pp. 93-95; Smith, *The Railway and Its Passengers*, p. 76.

<sup>26</sup> Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914*, p. 313.

<sup>27</sup> Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914*, pp. 318-22.

<sup>28</sup> John Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870-1914*, (Manchester, 1993), p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870-1914*, p. 9; James Mangan and James Walvin, 'Introduction', in James Mangan and James Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in*

social ambiguity, as well as their need to bond with potential clients, meant that sports and ‘appropriate’ leisure were key to their social and working life.<sup>30</sup> Physical health was a further important consideration; physical refreshment helped alleviate the mental demands of working in the city.<sup>31</sup> Sport therefore acquired a double value, and by calling itself *The Sportsman’s Line* the GWR did not see itself catering fundamentally to aristocratic hunting circles: it was a further way of segmenting middle-class desires which ranged between the picturesque, family outings, pleasure resorts and more invigorating and socially uplifting relaxation.

To enforce the message of refreshing and appropriate leisure, a range of photographs in *Holiday Haunts* referenced the thrill and adventure of upper-class pursuits. They anticipated and sought to encourage the interest connected with elite practices presented as available to the middle class male. We have already seen that the company’s Edwardian photography provided images grounded in realism, but which also attempted to sell activities in more meaningful ways. The publicity surrounding the outdoors was no different. Dozens of photographs of regional hunts, as well as side-panels of text reiterating the appeal of *The Sportsman’s Line*, appeared frequently throughout the Edwardian period. Beginning with ‘Badminton Hunt’ in 1906, subsequent volumes followed the deeds of the ‘Devon and Somerset Staghounds’, ‘The Bucks Otter Hounds’ (both 1908), and ‘The Bicester Hunt’ (1911). The imagery varied between calmer gatherings outside country seats (Figures 5.1 and 5.2) and those which depicted the thrill of the chase, jumping fences or bounding after hounds (Figure 5.3). The imagery captured a practice heavy with social meaning. Country houses radiated privilege, and the hunting imagery extended this as well as showing male

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*Britain and America 1800-1940*, (Manchester, 1987), pp. 1-6; Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, (Oxford, 1998), pp. 358-62.

<sup>30</sup> Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870-1914*, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870-1914*, pp. 17-18.

pride at a time when manliness was a key factor in sport more generally.<sup>32</sup> It is plausible that, once again, GWR photographers sought to reference established artistic topos as well as contemporary fashions. All manner of artworks and photographs sold well with the hunting community who wished to commemorate their endeavours through iconography. Furthermore, horns, animal skins and antlers adorned public buildings, hotels and middle-class homes.<sup>33</sup> The GWR's marketing appealed to this appetite, and company photography was joined by artistic expressions of the huntsman (Figure 5.4). As in the case of the romantic gaze, the GWR sought to create allusions between its publicity and the more famous imagery to associate itself more closely with the sport. Unlike other areas of GWR marketing however, the appeals to huntsmen appeared more suggestive or inspirational than aspirational. Photographs showed the potential customer, perhaps browsing *Holiday Haunts* for another reason, that a weekend's hunting became an easier prospect if one used the railway. As well as more established holiday appeals, this confirms that in the early years of the twentieth century the company wished to grow the weekend habit by targeting those wealthy enough to contemplate more frequent discretionary travel.

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<sup>32</sup> John Mackenzie, 'The Imperial Pioneer and Hunter and the British Masculine Stereotype in Late Victorian and Edwardian Times', in James Mangan and James Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940*, (Manchester, 1987), pp. 176-79.

<sup>33</sup> Rupert Isaacson, *The Wild Host: The History and Meaning of the Hunt*, (London, 2001), pp. 98-99; Mackenzie, 'The Imperial Pioneer and Hunter and the British Masculine Stereotype', pp. 181-82.





**Figure 5.1: 'Meet of the Warwickshire Hounds', 1910**



**Figure 5.2: 'A Meet at Eaton Hall', 1908**



Figure 5.3: 'Devon and Somerset Staghounds', 1908



Figure 5.4: William Tomkin, *The Hunting Season*, 1903<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Image Courtesy of Science and Society Picture Library Collection.

Posters and photographs emphasised the network's ability to reach fox, otter and deer hunting, but as an additional incentive the company offered favourable rates for huntsmen (first class) and grooms (third class); the return fare at the cost of single fare and a half.<sup>35</sup> Horse transport was similarly reduced.<sup>36</sup> *Holiday Haunts* also carried advertisements from companies offering walking costumes, hunting frocks and riding coats.<sup>37</sup> The presence of these adverts, as well as the dedicated huntsman's rail fares, circumvents a contrasting reading of this imagery as part of the 'romantic gaze' which presented a bucolic vision of Englishness. Although this was probably a desirable consequence, discounted services, advertisements, and the *Sportsman's Line* slogan confirms these photographs as further evidence of the GWR envisaging smaller potential markets. Whilst the information on fares provided a 'reason-why' element, the imagery is visual confirmation of the company's strategy to take holiday selection from a process of 'accident or impulse' to one where potential customers could be manipulated by well directed advertising.<sup>38</sup>

Certainly, hunting imagery was echoed by other elite social events also present in the guide. The elite social season included watching rowing at Henley, yachting at Cowes, cricket at Lords and racing at Ascot and Goodwood.<sup>39</sup> Henley Regatta, for example, was well represented in *Holiday Haunts* throughout the Edwardian years picturing groups of well-turned-out socialites on the river banks (Figure 5.5). This provides further evidence for a more nuanced reading of the use of the 'collective gaze'. Rather than the mass crowd itself connoting lower-class desires, additional meaning, available through signs such as dress and text such as 'reserved', was more important to how contemporary consumption messages were constructed. As with its designation *The Sportsman's Line*, showing that the company gave access to exclusive social activities had the potential to bring a good deal of business

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<sup>35</sup> GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1910).

<sup>36</sup> GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1910).

<sup>37</sup> GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1909), (1910), and (1911).

<sup>38</sup> GWRM, May 1907, p. 99.

<sup>39</sup> Benson, *The Rise Of Consumer Society In Britain*, p. 129.

and prestige to the GWR. In the wake of falling second class numbers and rising third during the early 1900s,<sup>40</sup> upper-middle class families would have been seen as potentially important in increasing the numbers travelling by first class. The GWR showed the upper-middle classes an aristocratic way of life and how to achieve this; in other words, which leisure events should be attended to display one's discerning taste. Such an interpretation is consistent with the GWR's emerging ideas, analysed throughout this thesis, about the psychology of consumers in the Edwardian years.



**Figure 5.5: 'Henley Regatta – The Reserved Enclosure', 1910**

To the hunting and boating imagery one could add numerous photographs which depicted golf, tennis and cricket (Figures 5.6 and 5.7 for example). Again, important activities for building social and business connections, these sports were key elements of middle-class pleasure at the time. They demonstrated that one had the money and access to time-off to pursue a leisured lifestyle, but also that they helped the urbanite to re-energize

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<sup>40</sup> 'A Brief Review of the Company's Hundred Years of Business: The Growth of Traffic Since the Railway Was Opened', GWRM, September 1935, pp. 495-501.

and re-create themselves. In this case the company perceived and championed the idea that the hard-working urbanite deserved a rest:

The week-end spent in the wholesome country air proves infinitely more refreshing and energising than the same period spent in London...if the brain-worker is also a hunting or shooting man, he takes Saturday for his sport, when possible, and on the Sunday he finds he can go to church in the morning and, if he so wishes, take health giving exercise in the afternoon in a way that would not be possible in the town.<sup>41</sup>

The GWR recognised that as well as the longer holiday in the countryside, perhaps to take in some of the more picturesque vistas discussed in Chapter Two, sport could be an inducement to take a weekend holiday. Again the overall aim, ‘to encourage such as would travel a little, to travel more’,<sup>42</sup> is made clearer when one sees the photographs as dedicated and considered marketing rather than simply decorative illustrations.



**Figure 5.6: ‘A Cricket Match at Eton’, 1908**

<sup>41</sup> GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1910).

<sup>42</sup> Douglas Knoop, *Outlines of Railway Economics*, (London, 1913), p. 235.



**Figure 5.7: 'Leckhampton Golf Course', 1915**

What of those lower down the social scale, was any kind of similar experience available to them? Certainly, high cost discouraged many. The annual expense of three days hunting a fortnight, typically around £220,<sup>43</sup> ensured a select clientele. Although the GWR portrayed the outdoors leisure available at Henley or on hunts as indicative of tasteful consumption, this did not obscure the fact that other consumers outside of the upper-middle class would have been impressed by its inclusion. Although the popular clientele was largely confined to the seaside or the larger countryside resorts well-served by rail links, the GWR promoted the 'weekend habit' to those further down the social scale, insinuating that 'not only is this custom firmly ingrained in what is known as the "upper" classes', nearly every walk of life could take advantage of health-giving, invigorating exercise.<sup>44</sup> Although the photographs seen so far were probably inspirational for the upper-classes, the GWR did not discount the idea that they could also be aspirational for those aspiring to a 'better' existence.

<sup>43</sup> Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066*, (London, 2008), p. 165; Benson, *The Rise Of Consumer Society in Britain*, p. 129.

<sup>44</sup> GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1910).

In the Edwardian years the GWR presented a particular vision of the outdoors and who should consume it. There were no photographs, and little mention generally, of camping or hiking tours despite the increasing popularity of these activities amongst organisations such as the Boy Scouts (established 1907).<sup>45</sup> Indeed, contemporary commentators observed that few people beyond these organisations, and those mentioned earlier, considered walking a pastime. Camping, moreover, was not ‘in Vogue’.<sup>46</sup> For these reasons, and the fact that the middle-class leisure market represented a larger, and more prestigious market, camping was not part of the overall marketing campaign. The only occasions when it appeared in *Holiday Haunts* before the First World War was in advertisements for Cunningham’s ‘Young Men’s Holiday Camp’, a ‘canvas-city’ situated on the Isle of Man.<sup>47</sup> The GWR did not advertise travel to camp sites on its own system. Until the war, leisure in the countryside beyond traditional tourist centres was reserved for and marketed exclusively to the aspirational middle classes who wanted to be invigorated but not physically strained.

We might never know for certain the true importance of the more vigorous consumption of the countryside to the GWR. As suggested, passenger statistics are a problematic source alone.<sup>48</sup> Yet this section has demonstrated that the GWR marked out health-giving and social beneficial outdoor leisure as a significant niche market. Photographic marketing is valuable in suggesting that a more nuanced consideration of potential passengers existed, even if accounting measures or business documents do not reveal this. In styling itself *The Sportsman’s Line*, the GWR lived up to its reputation amongst the population and the industry press as an aristocratic railway, but used the symbolic baggage associated with this to its advantage. However, one must not discount that possibility that the GWR was aware that these appeals extended further down the social scale:

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<sup>45</sup> Allen Warren, ‘Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920’, *The English Historical Review*, 101:399 (1986), pp. 376-98.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Musgrove, *Holidays and How to Use Them*, (Bristol, 1914), pp. 81-82 and p. 121.

<sup>47</sup> Examples of this kind of advertising appear, sporadically, in *Holiday Haunts* between 1908 and 1914.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, *The Railway and Its Passengers*, p. 86.

this was seen in the company's promotions regarding the 'weekend habit'. Photography amplified the message because it could display the means to social emulation more clearly; the allusions to high society, such as the 'reserved' enclosure at Henley, assisted the reading of these photographs as indicative of an experience which could be available to more, albeit discerning and wealthy, consumers. However, the upheavals of wartime lessened the appeal of this decadent and socially exclusive leisure. The interwar years fostered the need to renegotiate the appeal to properly capture the new 'holiday spirit',<sup>49</sup> dramatically influencing how the outdoors market was perceived and marketed to.

### ***Section 2: 1921-1933: The 'Serious Camper': Towards Hiking, Rambling and Camping Guides***

The GWR's perspective on who consumed the countryside, as well as what they did there, shifted after the First World War as the company aligned itself instead with new holidaymaking trends. Several factors had diminished the upper-middle-class market for countryside recreation accessed via the railways. Many hunts closed down between 1914 and 1918 as men and horses were drafted overseas and hounds were put down in numbers.<sup>50</sup> The new rich who moved into the countryside were more interested in shooting than hunting, and many of these could afford the bigger, more comfortable and private interwar cars.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the strengthened voice of animal anti-cruelty movements might have made publicity-conscious firms such as the GWR reconsider their prominent hunting associations.<sup>52</sup> Above all, calling itself *The Sportsman's Line* was less attractive for the GWR after the war

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<sup>49</sup> *The Railway and Travel Monthly*, July 1913, p. 66.

<sup>50</sup> Isaacson, *The Wild Host*, p. 137.

<sup>51</sup> Isaacson, *The Wild Host*, p. 138.

<sup>52</sup> Griffin, *Blood Sport*, 180-81.



as it recognised that some portions of its traffic would be lost forever.<sup>53</sup> Although this thesis has demonstrated that in some cases the GWR was slow to change after the war, the example of outdoors marketing reveals considerable change in that the company went down-market. Now ‘cheap bookings’ and excursion services were increased, in all likelihood a response to the fact that the small elite market held less attraction.<sup>54</sup> This context helps explain why, in *Holiday Haunts* at least, there were no promotional photographs of hunts and no dedicated guides or pamphlets to remedy this lack.

Rather than a rejection of military matters, the war rather stimulated the rise of physical culture and youth organisations, membership of which reached into the hundreds of thousands.<sup>55</sup> The greater interest in camping and hiking was a result of the new attention directed towards public health after the war. Prior to 1914 there had been a greater push, by the government and various philanthropic endeavours, to make the nation healthy.<sup>56</sup> In 1901 seventy-seven per-cent of Britain’s population lived in towns and cities.<sup>57</sup> London comprised four million inhabitants and Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow each boasted over a million.<sup>58</sup> But the popularity of youth groups and outdoor organisations was further enhanced at the beginning of the 1920s thanks to a perceived decline in national prestige attributed to lack of fitness. In 1920 The Ministry of National Service reported that of every nine men of military age only three were fit and healthy. Two were ‘on a definitely infirm plane of health’, ‘three could almost be described as physical wrecks’ and the remaining man was a ‘chronic invalid with a precarious hold on life’.<sup>59</sup> This report reignited the judgment that it

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<sup>53</sup> See for example the debates discussed in Chapter One; The National Archives (TNA), RAIL 258/425, Great Western Railway Traffic Department: Annual Reports 1924-1930.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, RAIL 258/425, Great Western Railway Traffic Department: Annual Reports 1924-1930.

<sup>55</sup> Warren, ‘Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain’, p. 377.

<sup>56</sup> Helen Meller, ‘Housing and Town Planning 1900-1939’, in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Oxford, 2003), p. 390.

<sup>57</sup> Meller, ‘Housing and Town Planning’, pp. 388-90.

<sup>58</sup> Meller, ‘Housing and Town Planning’, p. 390.

<sup>59</sup> Mowat, *Britain Between The Wars, 1918-1940*, p. 512.

was unpatriotic to let one's body fall into decay,<sup>60</sup> and the message found ready acceptance in contemporary youth organisations. Vigorous outdoors recreation remained unpopular amongst middle-class holidaymakers as a whole and thus did not feature prominently in contemporary volumes of *Holiday Haunts*. But whilst holidaymakers returned to the beaches after the war, campers, hikers, Scouts and Guides began to colonise the countryside using new services and facilities supplied and advertised by, amongst others, the GWR.

Although the company's largest guides acknowledged the availability of camping and hiking in information regarding fares and types of excursion,<sup>61</sup> the GWR's capable publicity department recognised the need for dedicated literature to meet the new trends. Therefore, in 1924 the company issued a specialist guide for the more serious outdoorsman, *Camping Holidays*. Describing the intended clientele, the company acknowledged that 'pre-eminently camping is the joy of boys and girls and rollicking companies of scouts and guides', and 'scoutmasters and others who organise community holidays for young people'.<sup>62</sup> This perspective was reinforced by the appointment of Hugh E. Page as author of the camping guides. Page was a 'professional' outdoorsman, head of the North Finchley Rambling Club, and a great champion of the rights of walkers.<sup>63</sup> The inaugural camping and hiking brochures were little more than basic lists of sites and amenities supported by prose extolling the spirit of health and hardiness amongst the 'brotherhood' of campers. *Camping Holidays*,<sup>64</sup> for example, presented an unembellished view of outdoors recreation in opposition to the company's larger and more involved volumes. It included no photographs initially, the title page for each region being illustrated with a simple line drawing of a representative landmark. The company was under no illusions that this was anything but a very specific kind of holiday aimed at 'the activities of the enthusiasts who have banded themselves

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<sup>60</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman', p. 596.

<sup>61</sup> See for example GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1927).

<sup>62</sup> GWRM, May 1927, p. 204.

<sup>63</sup> Roger Wilson, *Go Great Western: A History Of GWR Publicity*, (Newton Abbott, 1987), p. 99.

<sup>64</sup> GWR, *Camping Holidays*, (1924).

into...kindred movements'.<sup>65</sup> However, despite the niche nature of this market, it was deemed to hold sufficient potential to warrant its own guides and later its own dedicated photographic marketing.

Photographic marketing aimed at this market was directed by an understanding of customers. The often basic photographs reflected the spartan conditions which were desired by this group. In this case we can draw parallels to the literature released concerning the company's locomotives and vehicles which gave an interested group information in which photographs played a more educative role.<sup>66</sup> Pictorial content was selected to reflect the serious nature of those consuming the outdoors as well as supporting the information on setting camp, constructing shelters and organising recreation with visual sources. Right up until the early 1930s the content featured either unadorned bland landscapes illustrating that, yes - there was land in which to hike or camp (Figure 5.8), or of people who showed how a hiking holiday should be properly enjoyed. It was not merely the pictorial content that differentiated this recreation from other kinds available, the style differed, increasingly so at the beginning of the 1930s, to that aimed at other markets. In Figure 5.9, 'Camping Bridge Builders', the group participated in strenuous activity which, though making for an intriguing image, did not reflect the company's other guides which portrayed relaxing and restorative holidays. Indeed, despite their light-hearted titles, 'They Always Ask For More', and 'Where Health With Exercise and Freedom Meet' (Figures 5.10 and 5.11), these images confirmed the chief audience of these books, namely, Scouts and boy-groups. The people, though cheerful, were visibly unlike the pleasure seekers who adorned the beaches: clothing, postures and activities communicated that this was an altogether different kind of leisure.

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<sup>65</sup> GWR, *Camping Holidays*, (1924).

<sup>66</sup> For example, the GWR's 'technical' publications; GWR, *Cheltenham Flyer*, (1932); GWR, *10.30 Limited*, (1923).



**Figure 5.8: 'Camping at Aberdovey', *Camping Holidays* 1930**



**Figure 5.9: 'Camping bridge builders', *Camping and Hiking Holidays* 1933**

Compared to the seaside holiday where relaxation was the goal, the strenuous and regimented activities associated with camping meant that it was unlikely to appeal to a wide market, but neither was it intended to be. To get the best from a camping holiday, Page

described a devoted preparation which required organising and negotiating with farmer and landholder beforehand,<sup>67</sup> attention paid to on-site contours, nearest drinking water supply and, of course, nearest GWR station.<sup>68</sup> The photographs captured the practical nature of the guides which provided advice on selecting the best place to pitch a tent, how to administer first aid, and how to dig an appropriate latrine.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the volumes included large sections on what to wear, but rather than fashion or peer competition as emphasised in later volumes of *Holiday Haunts* and even later camping guides, the advice was directed instead at coping with Britain's weather and selecting the best gear for expeditions.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the accompanying images would not have looked out of place in a scouting manual or military training book (Figures 5.10 and 5.11). One can see why the GWR perceived this to be a holiday for the seasoned 'professional' rather than, say, the family.



Figure 5.10: 'They Always Ask For More', *Camping and Hiking Holidays* 1933

<sup>67</sup> GWR, *Camping Holidays*, (1924).

<sup>68</sup> GWR, *Camping Holidays*, (1924), pp. 4-5.

<sup>69</sup> GWR, *Camping Holidays*, (1930), p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> GWR, *Camping and Hiking Holidays*, (1933), p. 41.



**Figure 5.11: ‘Where Health with Exercise and Freedom Meet’, *Camping Holidays* 1930**

As with the GWR’s photographic marketing in general, these images were heavily authored and influenced by an understanding of the intended market. The difference in intentions is best captured when comparing the *Camping and Hiking Holidays* guides with the parallel developments in *Holiday Haunts* (Figures 5.12 and 5.13). Of course, the individuals’ clothes differ due to the context and any comparison of physical attractiveness beyond conventional notions would be subjective. These issues aside, there is a clear difference in the thrust of each image. An average contemporary might have read the second as being more carefree, relaxing and possibly more fun. This reading is assisted by the demeanour; the people in Figure 5.13 engage the viewer by beckoning and gesturing. Whilst in both images the people are evidently enjoying their activities judging by their facial expression, this enjoyment is qualitatively different. The audience for Figure 5.12 might not have wanted to see people capering around as this would have reminded them of the diluting of their pastime by those who did not share their devotion to the rigours of outdoor exercise. Indeed, the male in Figure 5.13 might have been considered effeminate by the audience of Figure 5.12. This is replicated in the accompanying text which influenced the visual reading.

‘Come and Join Us’ held an entirely different set of connotations to ‘Fresh Air and Sunshine’, the latter indicating that the activity was good for you, the former suggesting you might actually want to do it. The actions and personalities of the people in these, and other camping photographs were, according to the GWR, as important a message as the actual physical content in segmenting audiences.



Figure 5.12: ‘Fresh air and sunshine’, *Camping and Hiking Holidays*, 1933



Figure 5.13: ‘Come and Join Us!’, *Holiday Haunts*, 1933

That these photographs, especially in the early-1930s, were something completely different to the conventional holiday advertising would not have been lost on the average holidaymaker who chanced upon this imagery. In the 1920s youth organisations were eyed with suspicion by the general public for their similarity to German outdoors practices of nudism and human gymnosophy.<sup>71</sup> As David Matless illustrates, Scout and Guide groups faced ridicule from some quarters; the Scouting rhetoric of ‘catching’, ‘holding’ and ‘moulding’ young boys was the subject of numerous lewd jokes.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps for this reason these photographs did not appear in *Holiday Haunts* or *The Cornish Riviera*, kept instead for the niche guides. Yet amongst the groups vociferously seeking the preservation of rural beauty, those seen in Chapter Two such as the Anti-Noise League and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, Scouts were preferable to the bus loads of the ‘wrong sort’ of people invading the countryside by motor-bus. Fears about working-class groups picnicking and dancing to gramophone records were vented in various literature and cartoons. In some, for example, polite middle-class children asked daddy why such intruders could not have done the same at home?<sup>73</sup> The photographs reveal the GWR engaging with a very particular moral discourse on the ‘correct’ consumption of the countryside. The company’s marketing efforts marked out the hiker as a custodian of the land engaging in the right kinds of consumption against the encroachment of undesirable elements.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century the market for outdoor recreation had most definitely been ‘repositioned’. Furthermore, the company’s photographers adopted a central role in telling people what they could find, why they should consume, and who should consume. The photographs therefore provide an excellent insight into how the GWR envisioned different customers in the early twentieth century. From

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<sup>71</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 98.

<sup>72</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 98.

<sup>73</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 69.



centring on hunting and elite recreations up until the First World War, the countryside became pictured as a place for pseudo-military organisations and professional outdoorsmen. The actual image content was more useful to the overarching message of who these activities were for. There was little revolutionary artistry on the photographers' part, but the photographs were clearly guided by a need to capture the right symbolic content as seen in the comparison of Figure 5.12 and 5.13. Nevertheless, the company must have realised the specific appeal of these photographs because there was little attempt to take these to a wider audience between 1921 and 1933.

The perception of the outdoors leisure market as the preserve of professional campers lasted into the 1930s. Although the style and content of *Holiday Haunts* changed before this, *Camping and Hiking Holidays* was not updated in the same way. Yet by including photographs the GWR continued to surpass others who recognised the potential of this market. In 1930 the LNER's volume still featured only a small number of sketches although it recognised the same customer: 'most ramblers are, however, more interested in out-of-door life [than church architecture]'.<sup>74</sup> But change was in the air. This chapter now moves to consider the climate at the beginning of the 1930s which alerted the company to the possibilities of offering this sporting engagement with the outdoors to a larger market. Political marches and demonstrations over access rights,<sup>75</sup> and social ideas about tanning, fitness and the 'superman aesthetic'<sup>76</sup> convinced GWR that there was a wider potential for integrating the outdoors into its much larger appeals for discretionary travel. Although photography had played a crucial role in targeting and enforcing a select clientele of professional outdoorsmen for more than a decade, it once again found a role in dispelling the

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<sup>74</sup> LNER, *Rambles in Buckinghamshire, Oxon and Berkshire*, (1930), p. 7; see also LNER, *Rambles in Epping Forest*, (1930); and LNER, *Walking and Cycling Tours in the Manchester District*, (1931).

<sup>75</sup> Ben Harker, "'The Manchester Rambler': Ewan MacColl and the 1932 Mass Trespass", *History Workshop Journal*, 59:1 (2005), pp. 219-28.

<sup>76</sup> Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Women In Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 188; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman', p. 597.

common beliefs surrounding outdoor leisure and encouraging a mass appeal for hiking rambling and camping amongst the general population.

### ***Section 3: Mystery Tours and Aspirational Lifestyles – Repositioning the Outdoors as an Alternative Holiday Destination in the 1930s***

At the beginning of the 1930s, economic depression led many to reconsider where and how to holiday with the outdoors an immediately attractive alternative because of its lower cost. Amongst the hills and the trees people had to make their own arrangements for food and entertainment, but tent pitches cost a fraction of the price of a hotel or private accommodation and the whole experience could be couched in terms of difference and excitement. Indeed, the desire for spartan yet convenient recreation prompted the formation of the Youth Hostels Association in 1930 and later a National Council of Ramblers' Federation.<sup>77</sup> These organisations encouraged newcomers, but further developments in the fashion and lifestyle surrounding the body beautiful helped to reshape the appeal of the outdoors.<sup>78</sup> As we shall see, considerations regarding national prestige continued to underpin interest surrounding the outdoors, but in the 1930s this was tempered by looking good for personal reasons, an appeal especially amongst young people.<sup>79</sup> The 'Woman's League of Health and Beauty' founded by Mrs Bagot Stack, boasted 170,000 members by 1939, while even greater numbers attended 'keep fit' classes run by the league.<sup>80</sup> The details of how this new idea gained currency are unclear beyond the fact that the body beautiful and a 'superman aesthetic' tied in with contemporary considerations regarding fashion and personal

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<sup>77</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 70-73.

<sup>78</sup> Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Making of a Modern Female Body: Beauty, Health and Fitness in Interwar Britain', *Women's History Review*, 20:2 (2011), pp. 300-01.

<sup>79</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', p. 188.

<sup>80</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', p. 188.

improvement.<sup>81</sup> What is certain, however, is the rapidity of change. Whereas in 1931 people seen wearing rucksacks whilst walking in the countryside had drawn facetious remarks, in 1935 nobody took any notice.<sup>82</sup>

The results of this new discourse on health and fitness may have been popular to look at or read about, but could they actually be used to get people to forgo their beach holiday for a fortnight under canvas? For the GWR, the initial challenge was thus to convince customers that camping and hiking were viable alternatives to the traditional seaside holiday or a quick break at the coast; customers were unlikely to cast aside their assumptions regarding camping simply because it was favourably advertised.<sup>83</sup> We can date the beginning of the GWR's final renegotiation of the outdoors market to around 1932. Although campers had provided steady revenue on all parts of the system for several years, the company was not prepared for the response to its first effort to take this kind of holiday to a wider market. The 'Hikers' Mystery Tour', inaugurated in March of 1932, used an unknown destination as the lure, with the company advertising the excursion heavily in the daily press alongside a discount on the standard return fare. The excursion was an unrivalled success; the company had to call up extra carriages to meet the 2000-strong passenger demand. Its novelty and popularity resulted in an important publicity coup in the national press. Reports claimed that the GWR had solved the common problem associated with walking, its 'insipidity'.<sup>84</sup> The GWR had created outdoors excitement. *The Daily Mirror's* report, for example, expressed surprise that 'pretty maids' had turned up in droves go hiking;

Where are you going to, my pretty maid?" "I'm going a-hiking sir" she said.

That was the only answer that any of the hundreds of pretty maids – or their

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<sup>81</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman', p. 596.

<sup>82</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 71.

<sup>83</sup> Benson, *The Rise Of Consumer Society In Britain, 1880-1980*, p. 28.

<sup>84</sup> *The Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1932.

stalwart swains for that matter – could have given yesterday as they crowded into the “Hikers’ Mystery Express” at Paddington station.<sup>85</sup>

Other reports congratulated the GWR not just for its marketing coup but for getting urban dwellers out into the countryside. *The Times* juxtaposed the Mystery Tour to an afternoon’s entertainment in the cinema, citing the Mystery Tours’ ‘spirit of adventure, as rich almost as any of the second-hand stuff that is shown on the screen’.<sup>86</sup> It also hinted at the more discerning customer this service attracted: instead of rushing to their seats on the train like ‘common trippers’, they rushed instead to the engine driver to find out where the mystery destination was going to be.<sup>87</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* reported the excursion’s unparalleled success, recording the comments of a GWR official who proclaimed, ‘we have run out of tickets...We thought we were being optimistic by putting on fourteen coaches!’<sup>88</sup> The fact that all of the major newspapers carried the story was partly down to the company’s favourable relationship with the press, inaugurated under Pole and Fraser in the 1920s.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, the hype which surrounded the Tour enabled the GWR to run several more themed excursions in the subsequent months, each more popular than the last. The innovation also prompted action from other railways: in July 1932 the Southern Railway attracted 1400 ramblers to its ‘Southern Railway Moonlight Walk’ at Chanctonbury Ring.<sup>90</sup> The GWR’s success had convinced the company and others of the potential of a new group of consumers with different wants and ideas about outdoors recreation, but that the current

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<sup>85</sup> *The Daily Mirror*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1932.

<sup>86</sup> *The Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1932.

<sup>87</sup> *The Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1932.

<sup>88</sup> *The Guardian*, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1932.

<sup>89</sup> Felix John Clewett Pole, *His Book*, (London, 1968), p. 84.

<sup>90</sup> Tomlinson and Walker, ‘Holidays for All’, p. 234. In its sales publication the SR advertised ‘Conducted Rambles by the Southern Railway’ at a special fare. The SR also recognised that rambling was increasing popular, ‘no doubt as a reaction to the mechanical age’; SR, *Hints for Holidays*, (1939), p. 943.

publicity - the dull photographs of hiking and camping guides seen above - was probably inadequate to carry this forward.

Thus although the GWR had proved that a latent popular demand existed, another challenge noted in *The Times*, the alleged ‘insipidity’ of walking, had to be met head on. Although the health benefits of walking were well known, this was only one possible element in renegotiating hiking’s appeal. Introducing excitement and mystery into hiking in the form of the Mystery Tour was another; but the GWR seemed aware that there were limits to the repeated effectiveness of this practice. It therefore began to revolutionise its publicity imagery away from stoic campers at dull campsites to a more fashionable vision of the customer. Whilst remembering that the GWR did not create these ideas from scratch, this section argues that the company popularised outdoor leisure by turning it from a strenuous activity endured by hardy young men into one which could be enjoyed by anyone regardless of age or sex. The fact that, for the first time in more than a decade, outdoor recreation featured prominently in *Holiday Haunts* is equally suggestive of the company’s eagerness to convey the charms of the countryside to a new audience. It took outdoors leisure to a wider audience by making it appear healthy, fashionable and above all different. But it also qualified this as respectable consumption by emphasising a narrative of ‘good country manners’, thus helping to differentiate the GWR’s offering from the ostensibly poor behaviour associated with the working class. Once again, well-thought-out photographic narratives played a central role in disseminating new messages, and analysis now moves to consider just how the GWR repositioned its marketing using visions of who was consuming, why they should do so, and what they could expect from this experience.

### 3.1: *Escape from the City*

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, from the early-twentieth century the GWR keenly grasped the idea that holidaymakers sought difference from their everyday lives.<sup>91</sup> The more an experience could make people forget about their daily tasks, the more it was valued. A significant element in defining the market for the outdoors in the 1930s was to ask people how satisfied they were with everyday life, focussing chiefly on their urban surroundings. One of the most frequent ‘imaginings’ of the passenger in this context was that they were tired, overworked and in need of change. It is true that the camping imagery of the 1920s offered this change, but the connotations of work, regimentation, strain and early nights probably reminded people too much of everyday concerns. Thus in the 1930s the GWR returned somewhat to the ploys of the Edwardian years. It proclaimed; ‘Workers leading sedentary lives feel the need of a complete change of habits and environment’.<sup>92</sup> The company sold outdoors recreation as the most refreshing break possible, so invigorating in fact that it warned office workers not to ‘suddenly indulge in violent exercise’ but to ‘take the first few days in a leisurely manner’.<sup>93</sup> The point was to encourage the new middle-classes connected to modern industry, managers, salesmen, engineers, chemists and technicians,<sup>94</sup> above all the ‘tired city worker’,<sup>95</sup> to see the bracing tonic of fresh air as an essential break. The text conjured powerful ideas of needing and deserving a holiday, requesting customers to see something of themselves in the ‘sedentary lives’. This was joined by photography to show that a holiday could make one healthy. The GWR therefore used text and image to

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<sup>91</sup> Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925*, (London, 1991), p. 97; see also Jeffrey Hill, *Sport Leisure and Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain*, (New York, 2002), p. 87; Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, p. 208.

<sup>92</sup> GWR, *Camping and Hiking Holidays*, (1933).

<sup>93</sup> GWR, *Camping and Rambling Holidays*, (1937).

<sup>94</sup> David Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, (London, 2000), pp. 128-29.

<sup>95</sup> GWRM, May 1934, p. 229.

convey a before-and-after narrative, popular with advertisers of a variety of health foods and cosmetics,<sup>96</sup> about the transformative benefits of consumption.

Thus whilst the exhausted office worker or wheezing urbanite was described in text, photographs pictured consumers as the epitome of health and happiness, visual confirmation of the energising outdoors. This technique of offering a purposefully idealised vision, seen time and again throughout the company's aspirational visions of consumers, was intended to bridge the gap between how consumers saw themselves and how they wanted to be seen. The message was simple but attractive; a break in the outdoors could turn people from broken 9-5ers, into athletic, tanned, supermen. Assisted by the social value placed on being physically healthy and looking good, both in exercise and self-help manuals as well as the ideal bodies beamed onto cinema screens,<sup>97</sup> the idea that health was readily available just a few hours from the city centre was a promising offering. Each photograph therefore depicted consumption which was less involved with the emotional attachment to the countryside represented by the picturesque gaze and more so with opportunities for social interaction. Set in definitively rural contexts - rolling hills, wooden fences and woodland - consumers interacted privately with each other. The countryside provided a back-drop to act out social fantasies of friendships and contact with the opposite sex. The GWR therefore embraced a set of techniques which are commonplace today: modern marketing theory and practice stresses that an important way of encouraging potential customers is to first get them to measure themselves against the advertising imagery and thus accept the inference that the advertised product or service is good for them.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Sue Bowden, 'Consumption and Consumer Behaviour', in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A Companion To Early Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Oxford, 2003), pp. 358-60. For an American example, where this type of advertisement was used extensively, see Roland Marchand, *Advertising The American Dream: Making Way For Modernity, 1920-1940*, (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 150-51 and 178.

<sup>97</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Body and Consumer Culture', pp. 184-85.

<sup>98</sup> Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression*, (London, 1991),

Examples of this abound in *Holiday Haunts*. ‘Over the Moors’ (Figure 5.14) expounded the theme of beneficial and friendly recreation as the actors played out a vision of comfortable middle-class relaxation. The three individuals appeared as young, moneyed urbanites, the women sporting smart, feminine suits, and the gentleman making only a passing nod to the outdoor conditions in his attire. Such sartorial considerations were important in reaching a new consumer who might have smirked at the more serious camper. Horwood claims that for the average young man, continuing to look ‘respectable’, by shunning shorts for trousers, was an important concern.<sup>99</sup> One risked being seen as a ‘radical’ if wearing shorts for only a short excursion and a potential subject for ridicule.<sup>100</sup> Thus compared with its imagery of the early 1930s, the GWR now courted popular appeal by showing smart, though still relaxed clothing. ‘A Welcome Halt’ (Figure 5.15) continued these messages and, unlike the camping guides of the 1920s, the actors preferred to unwind rather than take to their bikes. Although presence of the bicycles hinted at physical exertion, these people (most probably professional models posed by the company) took their time; they were in no rush. Once again, the models retained a look of qualified commitment to the outdoors in that they wore relaxed clothing, but the boots and rucksacks of the previous years were nowhere to be seen.

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<sup>99</sup> Catherine Horwood, *Keeping Up Appearances: Fashion and Class Between The Wars*, (Stroud, 2006), pp. 156-58.

<sup>100</sup> Horwood, *Keeping Up Appearances*, pp. 156-58.





Figure 5.14: 'Over the Moors', 1938



Figure 5.15: 'A Welcome Halt', 1937

Figures 5.16 and 5.17 associated outdoors leisure more with convivial recreation, how consumption of the outdoors would make one feel. 'On The Breezy Downs' (Figure 5.16) is a case in point. The active pictorial style of the young ladies in flight matched the visual conventions used time and again to advertise the beach. As well as suggesting that the outdoors holiday had a similar appeal to the more traditional seaside experience, individuals presented a vibrant depiction of the outdoors, supported in the textual message of 'breezy' downs. Although covered up in comparison to the women of the beach, and indeed those of the next image (Figure 5.17), the women's understated attractiveness suggested parallels with the purity and beauty of the physical outdoors. 'Harvesting Good Health' (Figure 5.17) further demonstrated the company moving away from the conventional imagery previously associated with the 'serious' hiker, and to more popular symbols of health and happiness. Although the ultimate message was the same, that good health and vitality were the products

of outdoors consumption, the more popular appeal of sparsely clothed women extended that of 'Breezy Downs'. Those who still practiced the more serious outdoorsmanship were unconvinced by this new appeal; they lamented the arrival in the countryside of 'bathing-belles who had obviously never walked further than the beach before'.<sup>101</sup> 'Harvesting Good Health' was the only occasion that such blatant visual parallels were drawn between the sea nymphs and the new outdoors consumer, but read alongside the aforementioned images it nonetheless emphasises the use of visual style to encourage new types of consumers into rural areas. Above all, the GWR shifted its links from 'health', as in military readiness, in favour of 'vitality', a more privately fulfilling form of consumption. For the tired city worker perhaps unable to afford the time or expense of a seaside holiday, these photographs offered comparable experiences in the now more informal outdoors.



**Figure 5.16: 'On The Breezy Downs', 1938**

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<sup>101</sup> Alfred J. Brown, *Moorland Tramping In West Yorkshire*, (London, 1931), p. 2.



Figure 5.17: ‘Harvesting Good Health In Glorious Devon’, 1936

The GWR’s urban/rural marketing was contemporary with that of promoters of a range of goods and services, from metropolitan railway lines to housing developers. To entice the middle-classes to the suburbs served by its lines for example, the Southern Railway utilised the idea of retreating to an environment that was greener, pleasanter and, by implication, healthier. Throughout the 1930s it assiduously advertised Kent, Sussex and Surrey as rural havens from urban noise. Posters and guidebooks proclaimed ‘Live in Surrey, Free From Worry’ and ‘Live in Kent and Be Content’.<sup>102</sup> For the house building companies, availability of sunlight, fresh air and exercise were all argued as essential for individual

<sup>102</sup> Howkins, *The Death of Rural England*, p. 99.

health, and especially for children.<sup>103</sup> As in the GWR's examples, text and imagery portrayed consumers as happy, healthy, and liberated from urban confines and restrictions. But the GWR's example shows that escape from the city environment was not limited to the purchase of a house; one could travel further than suburbia and get in touch with a more corporeal enjoyment of nature. Escape from the city constituted an important element of the GWR's ploys, but it was joined by many others intending to capture a full spectrum of consumer concerns. As seen in Chapter Two, this was a time of more general concerns about 'Englishness' and the future of the nation. The GWR too showed its concern through its outdoor marketing, but paradoxically looked beyond indigenous borders for inspiration.

### ***3.2: Looking Good for the Nation***

In its outdoor marketing the GWR combined the body beautiful with the body 'useful'. Beginning in the late-Edwardian years and seeing fulfilment in the interwar period, there was a preoccupation, even obsession, with 'supermen' and 'superwomen'; those who possessed exceptional talent or impressive physique became, according to several scholars, a liberal emblem of national leadership.<sup>104</sup> In the 1930s, the GWR referenced this 'Superman' aesthetic,<sup>105</sup> an almost racial element derived from German understandings of the outdoors aesthetic. People in Britain had long been aware of the German outdoors movement, but since the 1920s had ridiculed the German fashions, especially the practice of rambling naked.<sup>106</sup> It was assumed that these approaches would never translate across the channel,<sup>107</sup> but during the 1930s many aspects of the German outdoors movement found increasing

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<sup>103</sup> John Gold and George Revill, *Representing The Environment*, (New York, 2004), p. 201.

<sup>104</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman', pp. 596-610; Lucy Delap, 'The Superwoman': Theories of Gender and Genius in Edwardian Britain', *Historical Journal*, 47:1 (2004), pp. 101-26; Billie Melman, *The English Culture of History: English Uses of the Past 1800-1953*, (Oxford, 2006), p. 250.

<sup>105</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman', pp. 595-610.

<sup>106</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>107</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 97-98.

acceptance in Britain. Although the parallel German outdoors movement of the time, ‘Strength Through Joy’, was created by a totalitarian regime, Baranowski argues that similarly sophisticated sales pitches were needed to entice those whose rising family incomes meant they had a choice in what to do with their leisure and holiday time.<sup>108</sup> Commonly played on newsreels or in newspapers, the British public were well aware of the sort of imagery used by ‘Strength through Joy’, and the 1936 Olympics brought the fitness of the two countries into stark contrast.<sup>109</sup> As a consequence, in Britain national fitness was encouraged in the face of a growing threat from Nazi Germany.<sup>110</sup> Britain’s government at the time did not wish to alarm the public, and therefore couched the need to breed a nation of warriors in pleasanter terms such as the individually beneficial keep-fit regimes.

In the GWR’s marketing of the 1920s cultivating a useful body was presented as lacking sufficient mass appeal: what changed? In one sense the new activities, though strenuous, were sufficiently far from military experience for them possibly to have been seen as enjoyable. They were also taken not quite as seriously; in Figure 5.19 people picnicked and dozed whilst others harvested. Increased artistry on the photographer’s part also helped. The images present a narrative about how consumption should be enacted and by showing children and family settings this was made to look simpler and more attractive than the uniforms and tents of the Scouts. The outdoors movement gained a fillip in this decade, especially amongst men, from Hollywood action stars. Men who admired the stories of Henty and Rider Haggard saw their heroes coming to life on the cinema screen, with films such as *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, *Sanders of the River*, and *Rhodes of Africa* capturing the British public’s imagination.<sup>111</sup> The stylised beauty ideals coincided with the emergence and

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<sup>108</sup> Shelley Baranowski, ‘Selling The “Racial Community”’: Kraft durch Freude and Consumption in the Third Reich’, in Pamela Swett (ed.), *Selling Modernity: Advertising in Twentieth-century Germany*, (Durham, 2007), pp. 135-39.

<sup>109</sup> Juliet Gardiner, *The Thirties: An Intimate History*, (London, 2010), pp. 315-16.

<sup>110</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘Building a British Superman’, pp. 596-607.

<sup>111</sup> Horwood, *Keeping Up Appearances*, p. 96.

expansion of a range of products which supposedly enabled every person to emulate the ideal.<sup>112</sup> A slender, supple and youthful body could be achieved by following beauty and exercise regimes.<sup>113</sup> We saw above, for example, the success of the ‘Woman’s League of Health and Beauty’.<sup>114</sup> Read alongside these developments, one can see the renegotiation in the GWR’s appeals synchronised with the broader social trend less of something which was likely to alarm the public and not to stress the military dimension.

One can see many parallels between these concerns and the GWR’s marketing techniques. For example, the people in *Holiday Haunts* conformed to the German, ‘Gretchen’ style. Their bronzed bodies and flaxen hair were celebrated in images which depicted, for example, harvesting (Figures 5.18 and 5.19). So important in British cultural heritage, harvesting in the traditional way had become a somewhat alien practice, increasingly mechanised since the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>115</sup> Rather, by the interwar decades, the rural labour process had become portrayed as a form of relaxation and entertainment for the suburban middle-classes. Whilst in reality few would have holidayed to take in the harvest, the relaxing, pacifying nature of the images spoke to the urban dweller who wanted to feel ‘natural’ and ‘restored’ whilst reinforcing their ‘Englishness’. The GWR’s imagery portrayed an idealised worldview which would have been increasingly hard to find in reality, yet aligned well with middle-class values of family togetherness in a rural idyll. Everywhere golden sunlight highlighted the scenes, and a simple-life worldview was extolled. Not even children were exempt from this stylisation. ‘Budding Mountaineers’ (Figure 5.20) emulated the photographs of children on the beach, but differed in the depiction of simple rural clothing and location. Whilst elements of the beach imagery were echoed, the playfulness and camaraderie of the children, they were arguably meant to appear strong and

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<sup>112</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘The Body and Consumer Culture’, p. 184.

<sup>113</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘The Body and Consumer Culture’, p. 188.

<sup>114</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘The Body and Consumer Culture’, p. 188.

<sup>115</sup> Howkins, *The Death of Rural England*, p. 2.

physically fit. The subscription to elements of the superman aesthetic demonstrates that the GWR marketed this kind of outdoors leisure as a morally, and indeed nationalistically, loaded lifestyle choice as opposed to simply a means of getting away from it all.



**Figure 5.18: 'Helping With The Harvest', 1938**



**Figure 5.19: 'Haymaking', 1938**



**Figure 5.20: 'Budding Mountaineers', 1939**

As in Chapter Two, national spirit could be found in diverse locations and suggested in nuanced ways, but ultimately the suggestion of a traditional English pastime as seductive yet inspirational and useful held ground for the GWR as a ploy to engage an earthier enjoyment of the outdoors.

### **3.3: *Good Country Manners***

The GWR was also sensitive to the idea that the countryside had to be seen as a place where middle-class values could be acted out without fear of cultural trespassers, the working classes. A great deal of contention accompanied middle and working-class consumption of the countryside. Whilst many more now enjoyed it, some argued that the presence of people, specifically the wrong kind of people, spoiled it. As Matless illustrates, people from the respectable middle classes believed that by using the new bus services, the working-classes would colonise the countryside and ruin it with their inappropriate language, dress and ‘jazzing to gramophones in the meadows’.<sup>116</sup> These commonly held opinions were extended and perpetuated by organisations such as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England as well as eminent contemporary commentators such as John Betjeman and E.M. Joad.<sup>117</sup> Thus in an ostensibly middle-class guidebook the GWR had to be careful with what it presented. To be on the right side of ‘popular’ the GWR needed to associate its customers with ‘good’ outdoor practice rather than the despoliation grumbled about by preservationists. Therefore the GWR’s customers were pictured enjoying the countryside through their good manners, and this relied once again on cultivation of a strict sign-system. There is no evidence in the GWR photographs of the massed ranks of northern working-class ‘trespassers’ who challenged their exclusion from rural landscapes such as Kinder Scout in the 1930s, nor the

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<sup>116</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 66.

<sup>117</sup> Howkins, *The Death of Rural England*, pp. 72-73.



motorised transport or gramophones that violated the ‘moral geography’ of inland rural holiday areas between the wars.<sup>118</sup> The people of GWR photography followed the country codes.

These factors conditioned the photographs of the late 1930s. In ‘Let’s See Where We Are’ (Figure 5.21) and ‘The Devil’s Chimney’ (Figure 5.22), the GWR combined the fantastical with the apparently more measured experiences of the countryside. The individuals depicted, whilst still being free of the restrictions of the serious hiker, engaged in activities and wore clothes that showed their awareness of tasteful countryside practice. Their gazes were seemingly regimented, the first by the map and the second by the use of binoculars. They connoted a meaningful access to the countryside which heightened the cultural divide between consumers from the middle-classes and the trippers portrayed popularly as cultural grotesques with their litter, noise, flower-picking and ‘disobedient bathing’.<sup>119</sup> The GWR’s photographs built on and enforced an emerging informal Country Code which included a ‘passion for closing gates’ and hunting litter ‘like sleuths’.<sup>120</sup> By couching its appeals in ways that connoted these good manners the GWR joined the LNER’s poster advertising in attempting to dispel fears about participating in an overly popular or grotesque pastime,<sup>121</sup> ensuring that the target market’s sensibilities were not offended.

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<sup>118</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>119</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 68.

<sup>120</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 70.

<sup>121</sup> Watts, ‘Evaluating British Railway Poster Advertising’, pp. 29-39.



Figure 5.21: 'Let's See Where We Are', 1938



Figure 5.22: 'The Devil's Chimney', 1937

Reflecting further the move from a 'serious' camper to the popular market, the GWR recognised the apprehension of not wanting to inadvertently violate the 'country code' be it by littering, trespassing or breaking a more obscure rule. The GWR's imagery played many important roles in the imaginings of landscape; however, in this context it had a large impact on the picture of ownership, who had 'right of way'. Solnit claims that walking is the antithesis of ownership which connotes a 'shareable' experience of the land.<sup>122</sup> 'Riverside Ramble' (Figure 5.23) spoke of a more relaxed, as well as attractive, piece of advertising which conformed to the ideas of beauty and liberation described above, whilst appearing to assuage fears of crossing boundaries. The two women sit confidently astride the stile, sharing a joke, seemingly without fear of reprisals from gamekeepers, who were known to shoot at trespassers, or landowners. The company's *Glorious Devon* highlighted that:

<sup>122</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, (New York, 2001), p. 162.

‘The average man accustomed to towns and suburbs is not accustomed to braking [sic] his way through brambles and bracken. The fear of the law is heavy on him. The word “trespass” which only makes a countryman laugh, is as awe-inspiring to him as the word ‘policeman’ is to a small boy’.<sup>123</sup>

Photography was thus not only important in illustrating the cachet and fun that travelling to the countryside connoted, it also played a role in assuaging the uncertainty surrounding such trips in interwar Britain and showing consumers how to act ‘properly’.



**Figure 5.23: ‘Riverside Ramble’, 1935**

Through this imagery the GWR posited the railway passenger’s role almost as a custodian of the land, being careful to close gates and pick up litter, as well as having a genuine interest in the countryside. This was in opposition to the motorist, who was still

<sup>123</sup> GWR, *Glorious Devon*, (1934), p. 5.

commonly perceived as one who sped through country lanes depositing litter, kicking up dust and disturbing local wildlife.<sup>124</sup> Although Shell's poster art attributed to the motorist a custodian role,<sup>125</sup> C.M. Joad denigrated motorists who had disrupted many relaxing country walks.<sup>126</sup> There was thus a battle between the marketing images associated with cars and the image in the popular consciousness. The GWR used its particular relationship with the outdoors as a means of access to try to gain competitive advantage against cars. It tried to make a virtue out of the fact that the train offered only limited access to the countryside; once at the station, one *had* to walk:

‘Some people have an idea that – given a fast car, well sprung – they own the countryside. Well, my answer to this is that these speed-merchants go so fast that they can't even see the countryside. You get to know and love the countryside by two methods, one rambling, the other camping’.<sup>127</sup>

It is to camping, and more specifically the camping guides, which we now turn. Spartan in appearance until the early-1930s, the guides intended for the specialist niche were retained but similarly modernised by the company to reflect a different set of standards operating within the market.

### ***3.4: Repositioning the Camping Guides***

In the mid-1930s, the GWR's visual turn towards a wider market for the outdoors was epitomised in modified terminology, from ‘hiking’ to the more relaxed ‘rambling’. This

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<sup>124</sup> Sean O'Connell, *The Car In British Society*, (Manchester, 1998), pp. 158-70.

<sup>125</sup> David Jeremiah, ‘Motoring and the British Countryside’, *Rural History*, 21:2 (2010), pp. 233-39.

<sup>126</sup> O'Connell, *The Car in British Society*, p. 159.

<sup>127</sup> GWR, *Camping and Rambling Holidays*, (1938).

reflected a change in the entire outlook of the guides. Whereas previously the guides contained mainly detailed information connected to the site and local conditions,<sup>128</sup> in the late 1930s this was left to marginal footnotes. Instead, they emphasised a new relaxed and healthful lifestyle associated with camping. Similarly, in terms of clothing, instead of dictating what the consumer should wear in terms of stout boots and shorts, the later guides stipulated that the rambler should wear whatever they felt comfortable in. Compared to the militaristic uniforms and didactic tone of older editions, the 1937 brochure claimed that ‘the individual is the best choice of his personal needs, and if he feels more comfortable in a pair of flannel ‘bags’ than shorts then let that be his choice.’<sup>129</sup> Thus in marketing camping holidays fashion arguably began to supplant the sartorial practicalities determined by older and more established groups of consumers.

Photography offered a prominent and convincing method of reinforcing the change in consumer appeal. The photographs of the early brochures were banished in favour of images matching the lifestyle portrayed in *Holiday Haunts*. In Figures 5.24 and 5.25 for example, the couples cast off their hiking gear to reveal the shape of their bodies. Where previously captions blandly described the scene, ‘Camping at Aberdovey’ and ‘Camping Bridge Builders’ for example,<sup>130</sup> now they appeared as if a speech bubble, framing the reading of the photograph in a more relaxed and enjoyable tone and hinting at more sociable activities. The activities pictured were also now much more diverse than simply camping and hiking, ‘A Welcome Halt’, for example, formed part of a narrative depicting various stages of a day’s riding through woodland. Figure 5.26, ‘A View Worth the Climb’, offered relaxation and ‘taking in the view’ as an incentive. The perspective, looking over the shoulders of the individuals and out towards the vista, encouraged the viewer to imagine themselves on the hilltop rather than looking at professional campers who ‘educated’ potential customers.

<sup>128</sup> GWR, *Camping Holidays*, (1930).

<sup>129</sup> GWR, *Camping and Rambling Holidays*, (1937).

<sup>130</sup> GWR, *Camping Holidays*, (1930); GWR, *Camping and Hiking Holidays*, (1933).

These photographs showed how to consume the destination in a more inspirational or suggestive account of what a camping holiday could offer, particularly as an adjunct to the more conventional holiday.



Figure 5.24: 'Have you forgotten anything?' *Camping and Rambling Holidays* 1937



Figure 5.25: 'A welcome halt', *Camping and Rambling Holidays* 1937



**Figure 5.26: ‘A View Worth the Climb’, *Camping and Rambling Holidays* 1938**

In the images above the models were most probably from the Fox Model Agency; the fair-haired lady in Figure 5.23 and 5.24 reappeared in the company’s camping coaches (see below) and also in the company’s carriages (see next chapter). Using models, as in the case of the female market, was a further attempt to associate camping with a different clientele. Some of the more serious information was retained, that concerning choosing the correct pitch, gaining access and sourcing food was deemed essential, yet the overall tone was much more of a carefree experience. As a niche publication aimed at a particular audience the repositioning of the camping and hiking guides from the early 1930s points to further reassessment by the GWR of what types of consumer it could attract. The company was devoted to overturning popularly perceived insipidity associated with these activities, and suggesting it as a potentially pleasing alternative to the more traditional beach holiday.

### 3.5: *Camping Coaches*

For those seeking a more comfortable outdoors experience the GWR offered holidaymakers, from 1934, camping coaches for hire. These were railway carriages which, having served their useful existence, were refitted as static camping facilities. The carriages were equipped with water, cooking and sleeping amenities and were sited at beauty spots on the GWR's system. They were designed to lure those who wanted to try camping but were unsure of staying in the open. Indeed, in the first guidebook the author, C.J. Cutcliffe-Hyne, described how it took the seasoned camper years to perfect his strategies, but the camping coach allowed the 'raw amateur' to 'skip this unprofitable educational period'.<sup>131</sup> The camping coach was intended more for the GWR's vision of a carefree consumer with perhaps more money to spend, as opposed to the serious camper. This was reflected in the light-hearted sales pitch, 'Dismal Jane or Doleful Jimmie can put a sour into the sweetest party that ever ran together...they should be firmly directed to take the downward path on another line'.<sup>132</sup> Photographs did not depict Dismal Jane or Doleful Jimmie, but rather the happy, youthful adventurer which the GWR tried to equate as synonymous with the new outdoors.

There was tremendous appetite for the novel camping coaches; 800 people in 1934 and 3000 by 1937.<sup>133</sup> It would be imprudent to suggest that this popularity was entirely down to the publicity campaigns, but the GWR certainly worked hard to present the coaches as attractive yet exclusive hideaways. Fenton argues that the GWR desired a discerning clientele who wanted a quiet yet unique vacation away from the crowds.<sup>134</sup> Certainly, the GWR used its model and studio imagery to suggest camping as an aspirational experience to potential consumers. This photography highlighted the consumption context rather than the

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<sup>131</sup> GWR, *Camp-Coach Holidays: Novel and Economical Camping in Comfort*, (1934), p. 1.

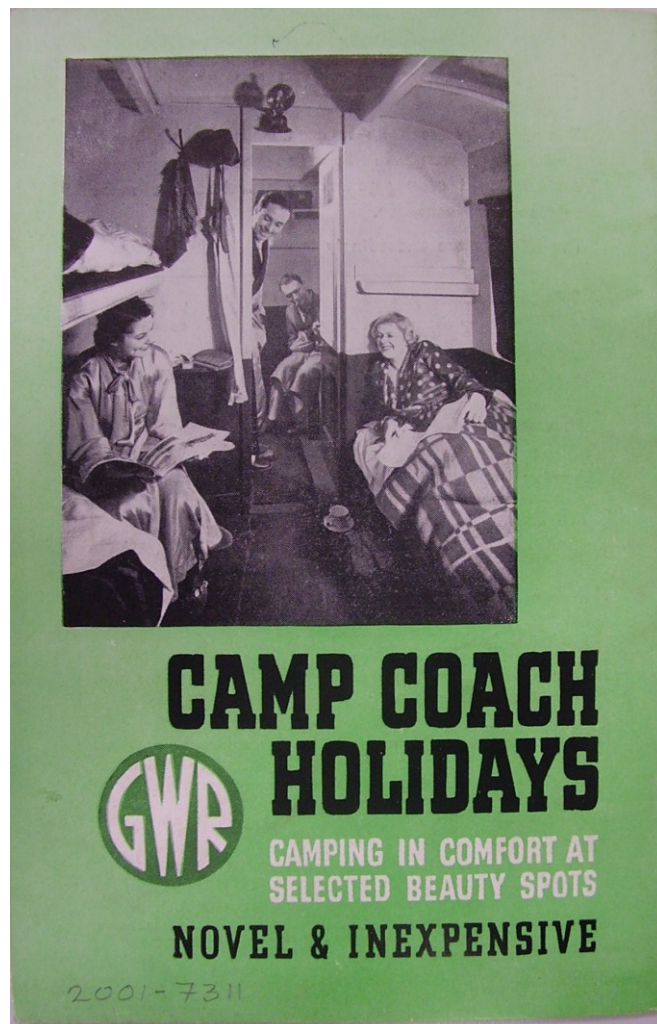
<sup>132</sup> GWR, *Camp-Coach Holidays: Novel and Economical Camping in Comfort*, (1934), p. 5.

<sup>133</sup> Andrew McRae, *British Railway Camping Coach Holidays: The 1930s and British Railways*, (Stockport, 1997), p. 28.

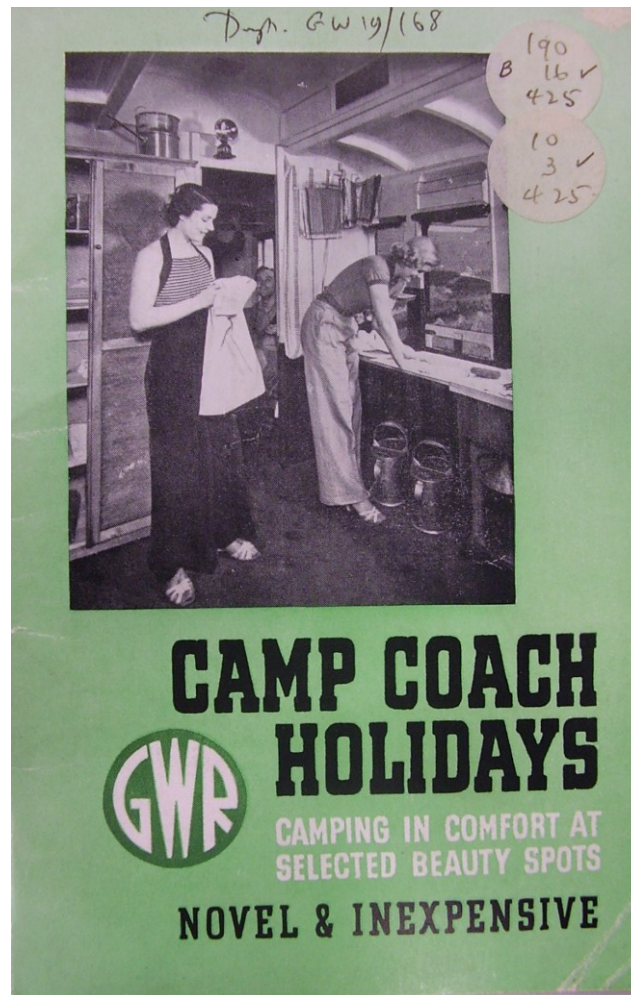
<sup>134</sup> Mike Fenton, *Camp Coach Holidays On the GWR*, (Huddersfield, 1999), p. 9.



countryside itself. Sports equipment connoted people as young, healthy and energetic and encouraged potential consumers to associate these qualities with the experience (Figures 5.27 and 5.28). One could read their own narratives into the photographs which acted in a storyboard fashion showing people enjoying the coach, using it as a base to explore, eating a meal, and preparing for bed.



Figures 5.27 Front cover of *Camp Coach Holidays* 1936



Figures 5.28 Rear cover of *Camp Coach Holidays* 1936

As well as spawning a guidebook series all of its own, the innovation was publicised liberally in *Holiday Haunts*; ‘Just think of the wonderful possibilities of a camp coach holiday! Bathing, boating, surf riding, long walks and explorations through the glorious countryside, golf, tennis, and less pretentious, but none the less jolly, out-door games; or simply doing ‘nowt’ as you feel inclined’.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, a photograph of the interior of a GWR camp coach (Figure 5.29) appeared amongst the first pages of 1936’s volume. The informal arrangement of the chairs, absently placed newspapers, and tennis racquet hint at a leisured and carefree experience. This illustration gives an idea of the spaciousness and convenience

<sup>135</sup> GWR, *Camp Coach Holidays*, (1936).

of the 'living room'.<sup>136</sup> One of the major benefits of photography, as well as selling the experience they could also educate people unfamiliar with the activity.



**Figure 5.29: 'A GWR Camp Coach Party', 1936**

Part of the message was also to persuade the, perhaps reluctant, female camper that it would not be the chore, and certainly not the uncomfortable chore, that camping had a reputation for. Images accompanied by captions such as 'camping is a real joy' aimed to

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<sup>136</sup> GWR, *Camp Coach Holidays*, (1936).

convince potential passengers that they could enjoy more of comfort whilst still experiencing the novelty of the outdoors. To bolster this message the company ran luggage in advance schemes and offered discounted season tickets intended to make the camper's life easier. For those to whom a night under canvas still seemed too much of a departure from home comforts, the camping coach offered a way of making the outdoors the indoors. In this sense the camping coach reflected the essence of the GWR's market repositioning.

Though not the first - the LNER pioneered the idea in 1933 - the GWR quickly caught onto the camping coach's potential. Moreover, it arguably produced superior publicity. Other railways released promotional guides and used photographs and posed scenes. Yet the LNER's offerings were darker, smaller, and less varied. Its front cover still used simple, ink line drawings of tent and walking scenes.<sup>137</sup> Matters did improve for the LNER with a smart, full-photograph pull-out pamphlet in 1937.<sup>138</sup> The GWR created new sets of messages for new consumers by applying an existing visual vocabulary, that is the messages about conspicuous and gregarious consumption found within *Holiday Haunts*, to marketing the outdoors. These themes, expressed diversely in escape from the city, looking good, conforming to countryside codes, and above all relaxing, formed the new campaign, followed up until war, which targeted a modern outdoors consumer.

#### ***Section 4: Conclusions***

This chapter established a different capability amongst GWR publicists. As well as ably defining market segments, when the need arose notions surrounding place were altered

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<sup>137</sup> LNER, *Camping Holidays*, (1935).

<sup>138</sup> LNER, *Camping Coaches for Care-Free Holidays*, (1937); although there was a stylistic reversal in LNER, *Camping Holidays*, (1939) when the same photographs were used once again and the front cover sported an elderly gypsy-style man tending a camp fire in front of a camping coach.

in response to changing market conditions. In varying its appeals to the sportsman, camper and rambler, this chapter showed that the GWR had a good idea of when a change in the market occurred, who its marketing should target and what this should say. Periodically transforming its marketing to suit prevailing trends suggests a more nuanced understanding of the passenger as customer, but also the value of photography to quickly and effectively disseminate these messages. The GWR once again drew upon and developed existing visual conventions and ways of seeing to widen its appeal to new and different sections of the market. The example of the outdoors, which was debated and subject to political and class considerations, shows that the GWR knew well the importance of appropriate visual signs in making customers see services in line with corporate aims. It did not use photographic marketing indiscriminately or merely transfer the imagery of the seaside to the countryside. The company never lost sight of the idea that enjoyment of the countryside necessitated an understanding of the country codes and class conflict that influenced middle-class concerns about the outdoors in the period.

Although the secondary literature focuses predominantly on hikers and ramblers,<sup>139</sup> this chapter demonstrated the value of admitting other groups into the railways' understanding of 'outdoors leisure'. Watts argues that orderly behaviour amongst consumers was a feature of poster advertising.<sup>140</sup> But he neglects the elements of fun, seen in this chapter to be crucial to redefining the appeal of the outdoors. Some conclusions are similar; poster and photographs targeted the customer in search of 'deep' England who might be persuaded to discover it by car.<sup>141</sup> But the photographic rhetoric highlights a broader range of considerations, not least what an outdoors holiday could say about one's fashionability or patriotism. The GWR was probably not unique in targeting the sportsman, and certainly not in the case of golf, but until scholars analyse more deeply the marketing to these groups, it

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<sup>139</sup> Watts, 'Evaluating British Railway Poster Advertising', pp. 29-39.

<sup>140</sup> Watts, 'Evaluating British Railway Poster Advertising', p. 32.

<sup>141</sup> Watts, 'Evaluating British Railway Poster Advertising', pp. 38-39.

will be difficult to draw wider conclusions on the value of this market and when railways changed their appeals. Nevertheless, the photographic evidence in this chapter shows that the GWR was rarely static in its appeals and had a good idea about when to shift its marketing in line with contemporary desires and worldviews.

So far each chapter has examined groups who the company segmented via their wants, beliefs and desires with a specific activity or destination. The next chapter shows how this was applied to the journey. This is important: just as when choosing a holiday destination, the GWR recognised that customers, particularly ones wealthy enough to contemplate car purchase, had a choice in how to get there. They needed to be listened to and appealed to in more nuanced ways to persuade them to go *by rail*.