

ALC/D/112

LONDON & BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY

OPENING OF THE RAILWAY IN SECTIONS

Half yearly report: February 1838

LONDON & BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY REPORT.

London, February 15th, 1838

The directors, referring to their last Report, expressed a confident expectation, founded on the Reports of their Engineer, that a further portion of the railway from Box Moor to Tring would be opened in October last, and that by the month of January so much more of it would be completed as would leave an interval of only 35 miles between the Stations at Denbigh Hall and Rugby; this expectation would of course be understood by the Proprietors as contingent on the works not being retarded by causes which it was not in the power of an Engineer to control.

The Railway was open to Tring in the month of October as the Directors anticipated, but a winter of unusual severity and duration, by retarding the remaining works, made the further opening in January impracticable, and still occasions delay. A very few weeks however after the breaking up of the frost will suffice to complete the Road between Tring and Denbigh Hall and between Birmingham and Rugby, and the Proprietors may rely on the earliest day being appointed for the next partial opening which the Directors can venture to name when the works shall have been resumed. The Engineer continues to express his conviction that the entire completion of the Railway may be expected in the Autumn of the year, and the Directors have decided as the course which in their opinion will be most satisfactory to the Proprietors, to annex for their perusal his detailed and very able Reports relative to the unexecuted works of

the Engineering department. The difficulties to which Mr. Stephenson refers, as having prevented the completion of a portion of the works at the exact periods stipulated, cannot fail to have impressed the Proprietors with the idea that an increased expenditure has been rendered unavoidable. Such certainly has been the fact, but the Directors are gratified in being able to state that this increase will not materially affect the results hitherto contemplated, and that the existing Capital of the Company will still suffice to put the whole Railway in full operation for the Passenger traffic from end to end. Any addition to the Capital which may be eventually required must arise out of the further preparations which will probably be necessary for an increased scale of business in the goods department.

In anticipation of the next opening, the Directors have made arrangements for the booking and conveyance of passengers and parcels for the whole distance between London and Birmingham. Messrs. Horne and Chaplin, the coach proprietors, have contracted to provide the requisite means for carrying the Railway passengers and their luggage, on the turnpike road between the two stations, as the trains may successively arrive, at the charge and subject to the regulations of the Company. Passenger will thus have the benefit of Railway travelling for 77 miles of the distance between London and Birmingham, and of greatly reduced prices for the whole 112 miles, with a saving of one third of the time.

The line of the Railway between London and Tring has been found too distant from the Holyhead Road to hold out sufficient inducement to coach proprietors to quit their accustomed track for the chance of a comparatively small saving in time; the certainty also that a few weeks would make a complete alteration in the passenger traffic on all the roads parallel with the Railway, has effectually checked the establishment of new lines of communication for coaches from Tring to the North. Hence it has happened that from the

time when the season for excursion had passed, and the curiosity of the public had been partially gratified, the railway travelling was limited to the purposes and accommodation of the immediate district, and the Directors having had the means of ascertaining practically the effect of the ordinary passenger traffic on that portion of the Railway, are enabled to state with reference to the estimates which they have laid before the Proprietors, that the actual traffic has exceeded the amount upon which they had calculated.

The Directors have no desire to attach undue importance to an isolated case of this nature; but they consider it so far of value, that it tends to establish the fairness of their calculations, and affords encouragement to the proprietors as respects the future prospects of the undertaking. Between the 20th July last and the 14th February, a period of 30 weeks, 162,216 passengers had been conveyed by the railway, without a single accident to any individual passenger.

The Directors, considering it more important that passengers should be able to rely on a certain and safe conveyance to and from the stations where trains stop, than that they should in the first instance travel at the highest attainable speed, have made it their chief aim in the regulation of the trains to ensure a uniform precision of movement on the railway. In this endeavour they have been ably seconded by their contractor for locomotive power, Mr. Bury, and a degree of uniform punctuality in the arrivals and departures has for some time past been attained at all the stations, which, considering the unavoidable imperfections of a road so recently formed, and the many difficulties to be surmounted in every new undertaking, the Directors could scarcely have anticipated, and which they may add has not been accomplished by any other Railway.

The directors can now look with confidence to the extended operations which they are about to enter upon, and are fully convinced, by the successful

experience of the working of their system on a limited scale, that it is even more applicable to a longer line. The arrangements for the carriage of goods, when the company shall be in a condition to undertake it, have occupied much of the attention of the Directors. Aware of the advantages of combining experience with system in the management of a business so extensive and complicated as the future goods traffic of the London and Birmingham Railway, the Directors have much satisfaction in announcing that they have secured the valuable services of Mr. Baxendale, of the firm of Pickford and Co, for the conduct of this department, under an agreement which is to take effect from the opening of the railway for this branch of business.

The Directors are in negotiation (sic) with the Post-master-general for the conveyance of the mails, but the necessary arrangements are not yet finally settled. Desirous as the Directors are to grant to the Post Office all reasonable accommodation not inconsistent with the interests of the company, they claim no more in return than a fair remuneration for the use of the railway.

The Directors request the confirmation by the proprietors of an agreement which has been provisionally entered into with the Aylesbury and Tring Railway Company, in virtue of which this company undertake to rent the railway at £2,500. per annum, being at the rate of five per cent. upon the estimated outlay, for five years certain from the date when it is opened: The proprietors, looking to the importance of the traffic of the fertile vale of Aylesbury, and to the communication which this branch line will open with Oxford and other places, can have no hesitation in adopting an arrangement which is fully in accordance with the suggestion of a former meeting.

The inhabitants of the town of Banbury, having resolved at a general meeting to make a new road to

join the railway at Weedon by the shortest practicable line, on condition that a first class station was established at Weedon, the Directors have given their assent to the proposition.

By the Statement of Accounts now to be laid before the proprietors it will appear that.....

	£.	s.	d
The Receipts to the 31 st Dec.	4,229,136	8	7
The Disbursements.....	<u>3,981,828</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>3</u>

That the balance of Cash in the company's

Hands at the date was.....	<u>247,307</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>4</u>
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And that the amount applicable to the further

Expenditure of the Company...	625,456	1	7
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The Directors, since their last report have removed the London Office from Cornhill to the Euston Station, and made such arrangements as appeared calculated to prevent any delay or inconvenience in the transfer of Shares. By this change the respective departments of the London Establishment are brought more directly in communication with each other.
