

ART. XIV.—*North-West Coast Railway Politics in the Eighteen-Sixties.* By SIDNEY POLLARD, B.Sc. (Econ.), Ph.D.

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THE plan of a through railway route to Scotland along the Furness-Cumberland coast has haunted the minds of many local promoters since the 1830's.¹ It is not, perhaps, surprising that this idea should re-appear in a recent work by two noted local historians,² this time as an historical retrospect on what might have been. The specific reference is to a supposed Midland Railway scheme of the mid-1860's for unifying the short coastal lines to form a route to the North-West and to Glasgow, by-passing the existing Lancaster-Carlisle link. An attempt is here made to examine this problem in its contemporary setting.

The preference shown by the Parliamentary Commission of 1839³ for an inland route as the Western approach to Scotland had frustrated, for the time being, any plans for a coastal through line. The actual building of the Lancaster-Carlisle line, the improvements in locomotives to deal with the gradients of the inland route, and the comparative poverty of the coastal districts made a further pursuit of the through plan unlikely. Developments in the next twenty years were gradual: the railways that were built in the North-Western counties were short lines, laid out for mineral traffic from the mines to the

¹ Thanks are due to Mr Francis Thompson, F.S.A., for his kind permission to use the Devonshire MSS at Chatsworth, to Mr J. M. Campbell for his untiring assistance in searching through the railway records at Euston, as well as to the British Transport Commission for permission to quote from them.

² J. Melville and J. L. Hobbs, *Early Railway History in Furness*, 1951 (= this Society's Tract Series, no. XIV).

³ *B. Parl. Papers*, 1840, XLV; Melville & Hobbs, pp. 8-11.

coast or to link with the main line system in the East.⁴ As the lines were extended and joined together, harbours were laid out and the first furnaces erected; but the district remained in a backwater, ignored in the turbulent railway strategy which covered the rest of the country with its networks.

It was not until the 'sixties that the district emerged into national prominence: the Bessemer process had overcome its initial difficulties; the new works were expanding at a prodigious rate, crying out for non-phosphoric ore which only the West Coast could supply in this country, while no efficient steamships and foreign railways yet existed to disturb seriously its local advantage. The ore and the coke, two bulky commodities, had to be taken across country to the new iron and steel works. And so the buoyant prosperity of the mine owners in the haematite districts was reflected in the affairs of the local railways. At the same time, the latent rivalry between the Midland and the London and North-Western railways was coming to a head on the question of the crucial North-Western outlet to Scotland, involving the district in a costly and prolonged struggle. The history of the North-West Coast railways in the eighteen-sixties has to be studied in the light of those two developments.

In this, the golden age of haematite ore, before Spiegel-eisen, the Gilchrist Thomas process and the compound marine engine had made their inroads, the local railways were, as a group, easily the most prosperous in the country, despite their gradients and despite the small population served by them (see Table 1). Their dividends remained high in spite of their rapidly expanding capital, as nearly every one of the boards invested large sums in extensions and in dock and harbour works. It was scarcely surprising that such prosperity should

⁴ See map.

lead to talks of amalgamations or sales of lines, particularly since the temptation to "tap" the area of neighbouring lines could not easily be resisted.

One of the most pressing needs was the link to the East, with the railway network of the rest of the country *via* the Lancaster-Carlisle line, and with the coke districts of Durham and Yorkshire in particular. An early beginning had been made in the mid-'forties, in the northernmost corner of the area, by the Maryport-Carlisle line, which connected eastward from Carlisle, but this was essentially a link with the Cumberland coal field, leaving the two haematite ore districts untouched.

It was only in the next decade that a second link was established in the South, by the steady expansion of the Furness Railway. The building of the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway, promoted in 1851 and completed in 1857, to connect the eastern terminus of the F.R. with the L. & C. line at Carnforth, was the first step. Though nominally independent, the U. & L. was from the first associated with the Furness Railway Company, using the services of some of its chief officials, relying on its rolling stock, and (as a consequence of the difficulties and cost of the construction of two long embankments) heavily mortgaged to the F.R. on its opening.⁵ Despite brave attempts to repay the loans and become independent, the U. & L. was completely absorbed by the F.R. in 1862. The opening of the U. & L., forming the first contact with the L. & C. line, led directly to the establishment of iron furnaces in Barrow, which later became the giant Barrow Haematite Steel Co.⁶

⁵ In December 1856, the directors of the U. & L. had mortgaged £150,000 of their authorised share capital of £220,000 for a loan of £50,000 from the duke of Buccleuch and the earl of Burlington (acting for the F.R., which had no powers of lending money itself); at the end of the year the U. & L. asked for a further loan of £100,000, to be secured by a further £100,000 of preference shares and £50,000 of debentures, but negotiations fell through and parliamentary powers for increases in capital were obtained instead. *Dir. Min. U. & L.R.* (MS) 21/10, 22/10/1857; *F.R.*, (MS), 11/12/1856, 20/1/1857.

⁶ Melville & Hobbs, p. 48.

As this link was nearing completion, it became possible to lay plans for a direct line to the East across the Pennines. The promoters, apart from some Westmorland gentry, were Joseph Pease of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, and representatives of North-Eastern and Furness iron and steel firms, such as John Vaughan, Robert Hannay and H. W. Schneider. The "South Durham & Lancashire Union Railway", running from the Hagger Leases branch of the Stockton and Darlington to Tebay on the L. & C., was begun in 1857 and completed in 1861.⁷ This gave the Furness ore district a direct means of communication with the North-East, enabling it to obtain coke and to supply ore easily and cheaply. The benefits of that link are clearly reflected in the sudden upward movement of the output figures of Furness ore and of the Barrow furnaces in 1862-3.

There remained the task of providing the Cumberland ore field, too, with an outlet to the coke ovens and the steelworks of Durham by a third route, near the centre of the district. The scheme to break through the mountain barrier of Cumberland and Westmorland was, technically, the most difficult, but it laid the basis of the subsequent prosperity of Cumberland, and was behind much of the railway development in the following years.

As early as 1858 some of the leading spirits of the S.D. & L.U.R. had decided to push northwards, and a branch from Kirkby Stephen to Clifton, along the Eden Valley, was planned. "It was expected that the Eden Valley would be the route by which the haematite ore from the Whitehaven district would travel to the Tees, and on this account some of the Ulverston shareholders of the S.D. & L.U. Co. had tried to prevent that company

⁷ It was from the first closely allied to the St. & D.R., which absorbed it in 1862, cf. W. W. Tomlinson, *The North Eastern Railway*, p. 561; S.D. & L.U.R. *Promoters' Minutes*, (MS). I am indebted for all information on the S.D. & L.U.R. to Mr J. D. Marshall.

from encouraging the scheme."⁸ The Furness interests, in fact, had attended in force at the extraordinary general meeting on 9 April 1858, to frustrate the hopes of their competitors in Cumberland, but the joint assault of J. Ramsden (for the duke of Devonshire), E. Wadham (for the duke of Buccleuch), Thomas Roper, H. W. Schneider and Robert Hannay⁹ had been unable to prevent the formation of a separate concern, the Eden Valley Railway Co., to build the line in conjunction with the S.D. & L.U., the L. & C. and the St. & D. Railways.

With the completion of the Eden Valley branch in 1862, only the gap between Cockermouth and the L. & C. line remained to be bridged (see map), and the Cockermouth, Keswick and Penrith line was at last completed in 1864-5.¹⁰ This line, also, had among its sponsors the Stockton-Darlington Railway and some of the North-Eastern steel interests, and it proved at least as important to the West Cumberland ore field as the completion of the Ulverston-Lancaster line in 1857 had been to Furness and to the Barrow Ironworks.

From Cockermouth, the western terminus of this new East-West connection, it was the tiny Cockermouth and Workington Railway which formed the link with the rest of the Cumberland railway system, and even before the C.K. & P. had been completed, much activity went on behind the scenes to acquire control over the C. & W., which would, in turn, give control over the life line to Darlington.

⁸ Tomlinson, p. 568.

⁹ *S.D. & L.U. Minutes* (MS).

¹⁰ The C.K. & P. joined the Lancaster and Carlisle line at Penrith (later more conveniently at Eamont Junction) whence the ore trucks, after running over the L. & C. for a short stretch to the Eden Valley Junction, continued down the Eden Valley branch of the North-Eastern (formerly S.D. & L.U.R.) to Durham and Darlington. Whoever controlled the L. & C., therefore, could exert a strong pull over the C.K. & P., which partly explains the ease with which the C.K. & P.R. fell into the hands of the L. & N.W.R. As far back as 1863 it had arranged to have all its passenger traffic worked by the L. & N.W.R., and the mineral traffic by the St. & D.; W. M. Gradon, *History of the C.K. & P. Railway*, pp. 1-3.

On 1 April 1864, already, the directors of the Whitehaven Junction Railway made a definite offer of amalgamation to the C. & W. on equal terms as regards original share capital, or alternatively to lease the line at a fixed rental of 8 per cent. on the capital issued. At a joint directors' meeting in May, however, the terms of the counter-proposals made by the C. & W. on the basis of its enhanced value as a link with the (almost completed) C.K. & P. Railway were found too stiff, and negotiations were broken off. Undeterred, the Wh. J. proposed amalgamation to the Whitehaven, Cleator & Egremont Railway but met with a rebuff from that quarter as well.¹¹ Meanwhile, the Stockton & Darlington (later N.E.R.) itself had proposed as early as 18 March to work its mineral traffic over the C. & W. line on the same terms as over the C.K. & P., but no agreement could be reached, as the C. & W. was still discussing amalgamation proposals with the Wh.J.R. As soon as these became known, the C.K. & P. directors decided (on 2 April) that, in the interest of East-West trade from Durham to W. Cumberland, the C. & W. had best be "identified" with the new line, and when the latter (the C.K. & P.) was completed and showed its value its directors would be willing to lease or amalgamate with the C. & W., offering them better terms than the Wh.J. could give. In September the directors of the C. & W. declared themselves willing to listen to such proposals.

The opening of the C.K. & P. was delayed for some months, however, and in October it was the Whitehaven Junction Railway which again offered amalgamation or lease to the C. & W. The latter, emboldened by the rival offers, held out for 10 per cent., which was finally agreed to by the Wh.J.¹² Encouraged by this success, the

¹¹ *Dir. Min. Wh. J.*, 1/4, 25/5, 1/7, 8/7/1864; *C. & W.*, 5/4, 17/5, 31/5/1864; *W.C. & E.*, 23/6/1864.

¹² The provisional agreement was for a 999 years' lease, at 10% for the ordinary capital of £100,000, the preference and debenture capital to continue at existing rates. The agreement was to come into force on 1 January 1865.

Wh.J. proceeded to negotiate for the lease of the Whitehaven, Cleator & Egremont line on a similar basis of 10 per cent., when, like a bolt from the blue, the bill incorporating the earlier lease proposal of the C. & W. was thrown out in Committee in March 1865.¹³

It was at this stage that the L. & N.W.R., which had meanwhile obtained complete control over the vital L. & C. (see below), showed its hand openly by bidding for the acquisition of the C. & W. itself. On 6 June the first (verbal) offer by the L. & N.W.R. was discussed by the directors of the C. & W. The Wh.J. did not give up without a struggle: its directors prepared another bill for leasing the C. & W., on the same terms, to be submitted to Parliament in the next session, but they could not stand up to the blandishments of the L. & N.W.R., which finally absorbed not only the C. & W., but also the Wh.J.R. itself, in July 1865.¹⁴

The imminent completion of the C.K. & P. Railway also affected the outlook of the Maryport & Carlisle Railway, the northernmost of the existing coastal lines, built during the "Railway Mania" of the mid-'forties to open up the West Cumberland coalfield. It immediately set about to promote the "Derwent Branch" line from Bullgill to Brigham, to form a link from its own line to the C. & W. and to connect with the Marron Branch of the "Cleator" line (see map). As long as the C. & W. was independent, and largely in the power of its big northern neighbour, the directors of the C. & W. were only too willing to support this scheme in which they were allowed to participate, as they feared the implied threat of the M. & C. to by-pass them altogether.¹⁵ As soon as the C. & W. came under the control of the

¹³ *Dir. Min. Wh. J.*, 14/10, 28/10, 23/12/1864, 31/3/1865; *C. & W.*, 20/9, 18/10, 1/11/1864, 28/3, 9/5/1865; *W.C. & E.*, 2/2/1865.

¹⁴ *Dir. Min. Wh. J.*, 7/4, 28/4, 30/5, 20/6, 7/7/1865; *C. & W.*, 6/6, 12/6, 28/7/1865.

¹⁵ *Dir. Min. C. & W.*, 28/6, 9/8/1864, 17/3, 24/10/1865; *M. & C.*, 16/12/1864; *Wh. C. & E.*, 15/9, 21/9/1864.

L. & N.W.R., however, it was the turn of the M. & C. to feel threatened by the larger company, which had lent its support to the Solway Junction's plan of an independent extension to Maryport in 1865. This scheme seemed likely to offer a second through route to Scotland—via Cockermouth and Maryport for the L. & N.W.R.—so isolating the M. & C. completely between its two branches. The M. & C., however, was fortunate enough to come to an agreement with the L. & N.W.R. and the Solway J.R. in February 1866, defeating the latter's attempt to reach Maryport and granting it running powers instead.¹⁶

The L. & N.W.R., it will be seen, had emerged in an impregnable position, as far as the West route to Scotland was concerned, controlling both prongs of the rail fork northward from Lancaster. This represented the peak of its supremacy over the Midland Railway, an opponent which, apparently, had neglected all opportunities of obtaining an independent rail link to the North.

From the first, the Midland Railway seems to have trusted without hesitation to its control over the vital Lancaster-Carlisle link, exercised jointly with the L. & N.W.R., and to have given no thought to the possibility of out-flanking it in case of need.

Its co-operation with the Furness Railway by the establishment of the Furness-Midland Committee, the joint building of the connecting line between Carnforth and Wennington, and the transfer of the Midland steamer terminus to the F.R.'s new harbour at Barrow, far from representing an out-flanking manoeuvre on the part of the Midland Railway, was merely a reluctant concession

¹⁶ The threat of the M. & C. to refuse running powers over its Derwent branch to the C. & W. (and its proprietors, the L. & N.W.R.) in December 1865 may have helped its bargaining position. The Board minutes confirm Prof. Jack Simmons's view that the rumours of the amalgamation of the M. & C. with the L. & N.W.R. in 1866 were in fact unfounded. *Dir. Min. C. & W.*, 19/12/1865; *M. & C.*, 20/2, 11/12/1865, 22/1, 7/2, 19/2, 21/5/1866; *Wh. J.*, 22/12/1865, 19/1, 16/2/1866; J. Simmons, *The Maryport-Carlisle Railway*, 1947, pp. 18, 20; *Heraopath's*, 10/3, 18/8/1866; *Railway Times*, 1/4/1865; Board of Trade, *Report on Railway Bills*, 1866, Nos. 202, 286.

to the determined application of the Furness Railway Co. It had been clear to the directors of the F.R. in 1862 that not only would the success of its planned giant docks and harbour works at Barrow depend on the patronage of the Midland steamers, but that part of the outlay itself would have to come from the M.R.¹⁷ At the first meeting of the joint Furness-Midland Committee, the Midland members tried to put off their participation, "but when they were told that we intended to go on with the Barrow Docks forthwith, they agreed that it would be well to lose no time, and they will bring it before their Board immediately."¹⁸ In February 1864 the Midland directors again showed signs of abandoning the joint project, "we however strongly objected (to the abandonment)" the duke of Devonshire noted on 18 February 1864, "and the Midland Directors acquiesced."¹⁹

The Midland Railway not only remained lukewarm in its association with the Furness Company, but seemed also to take no interest in the later extension and amalgamation bids among the North-West Coast lines. Instead, it calmly proceeded with the preparations for joint control over the L. & C.R. On 4 November 1863, its directors resolved to give the legal notices required for participating, jointly with the L. & N.W.R., in the L. & C. line; on 18 October 1864 its solicitors were instructed to obtain the necessary powers for the joint management of the line; and on 7 December the directors affixed their seal to the provisional agreement with the L. & N.W.R.²⁰ It was at this point that the L. & N.W.R.

¹⁷ *Duke of Devonshire's Diary*, (MS) 26/8/1862; 'the Midland directors agreed to the scheme on 1/10/1862; *Dir. Min. Mid. R.*, (MS).

¹⁸ *D. Diary*, 9/9/1863; *Minutes of F.-M.R.*, (MS), 8/9/1863. On the same day the Furness directors examined the tenders for building the Barrow Docks. *Dir. Min., F.R.*, 8/9/1863.

¹⁹ *D. Diary*; *Dir. Min. F.-M.R.*, 18/2/1864. In any case, the L. & N.W.R. had secured, by clever parliamentary tactics in 1863, "a clause placing them in reference to our line on the same footing as the Midland." *D. Diary*, 11-12/3/1863.

²⁰ *Dir. Min. Mid. R.*

sprung its surprise by refusing to ratify the agreement unless it were made on terms which clearly excluded the Midland from actual control of fares along the joint line,²¹ leaving the Midland without any route to Scotland, and forcing it to build the costly and wasteful Settle-Carlisle connection across some of the most difficult terrain in the country.²²

It was, perhaps, sheer incredulity at the astonishing omission of the Midland to try and extend its rights over the Furness line to the lines to the North of it, in case the negotiations with the L. & N.W.R. fell through, which was the cause of the rumour current at the time that the Midland Company had, in fact, tried to unite the coastal lines into one through railway to the North. The promotion of the Solway Junction Railway and the projected Duddon crossing of the Whitehaven and Furness Railway seemed to furnish concrete evidence²³ in support of the rumour. The records, however, lend no support to that theory, and both these schemes were planned before December 1864, when the Mid. R. for the first time had cause to seek an independent coastal line to the North.

Had the Mid. R., in fact, attempted an amalgamation of the Cumberland lines, it would probably have met the same insurmountable obstacles in the jealousy, the conflicting plans and the suspicions of the other lines as were met by the Maryport and Carlisle Railway, the one line which did try to bring about such an amalgamation. This proposal of the M. & C. appears to have been kept confidential and to have escaped even the historian of the

²¹ The reasons for the disagreement are set out in *Dir. Min. Mid. R.*, 1/2/1865.

²² The Mid. R.'s engineers were instructed to prepare the survey of the Settle-Carlisle route on 2 August 1865, *Dir. Min.*; cf. also F. W. Houghton & W. H. Foster, *Story of the Settle-Carlisle Line*, 1948; C. E. Stretton, *History of the Midland Railway*, 1901, p. 209.

²³ Melville & Hobbs, pp. 53-4. The account is based on the notes of W. B. Kendall, who joined the Furness Railway staff some years after these events.

Railway, Prof. Jack Simmons,²⁴ despite the determined efforts of the Board to have it put into practice.

It was in November 1864 that the Maryport & Carlisle Board sent out its first invitations to a meeting of two directors from each company to discuss terms of amalgamation of all the West Coast lines. No trace of this first decision can be found in its own minutes, but the proposal was discussed by all the other boards: the Whitehaven, Cleator and Egremont on the 24 November, the C. & W. on 15 November, the Whitehaven & Furness Junction on 28 November, and the Whitehaven Junction on 15 November. Their replies were uniformly negative, only the C. & W., at that time still dependent on the goodwill of the sponsors, dutifully enquiring further into the details of the proposed scheme. Undeterred, the M. & C. proposed to draw up a bill for submission to Parliament,²⁵ but its renewed attempt, in January 1865, to arouse interest by asking for a statement of accounts from the other companies in order to fix compensation, again met with blank refusals. A last, determined attempt to gain support for the Bill (which had been filed in December) was made by circulating the following specific proposals among the other companies (except the Solway Junction, which was not yet completed):—

- (1) The leasing Bill of the Wh.J. and the C. & W. to be withdrawn.
- (2) The Derwent Branch Bill of the M. & C. not to be opposed by any other line, even though no running powers were granted to others.
- (3) The Amalgamation Bill to be unopposed.

²⁴ "It (*the M. & C.*) never attempted to expand"—Simmons, *op. cit.* p. 1; on p. 21 Prof. Simmons quotes the attempt of Dr Cowan, a shareholder, to amalgamate the four lines serving Maryport, Whitehaven and Workington, without suspecting how closely the Board tried to follow that advice in 1864-5.

²⁵ M. & C.R., Wh. J. R., C. & W.R., Wh. & F.J.R., Wh. C. & E.R., S.J.R.: Bill for the "Amalgamation, sole transfer, or lease of one or more of the five last-named companies with or to the Maryport & Carlisle; . . . dissolution of all or some of the companies; amendment or repeal and consolidation of their acts, and other purposes." *Bradshaw's Shareholders' Guide*, 1865, Appx., p. 75.

- (4) The Agreement of Amalgamation to be entered into between the five companies (the Solway J.R. again omitted) at once.
- (5) The C. & W. to be guaranteed a 10 per cent. dividend (i.e. the same terms as the Wh.J. had offered).
- (6) The other companies to share the dividends in the following proportions:—

M. & C.R.	10%
Wh.J.R.	12%
Wh.C. & E.R.	12%
Wh. & F.J.R.	6%
- (7) The new combination to have a unified management.

These proposals were so ludicrously favourable to the M. & C. itself that the continued refusal of the other companies to enter into the agreement at that stage is easily understandable. The bill had to be withdrawn, to the great disappointment of the *Railway Times*.²⁶

The hostility shown by the other companies to the scheme from the beginning still remains to be explained. The local railway lines were built and managed chiefly for the local mineral traffic, and the outlook of their boards remained parochial, even where some of the interests, as the earl of Lonsdale's, extended over more than one line. When prosperity overtook the haematite districts in the early 'sixties, the reactions of the railway boards were simple: to extend the lines to new mines and steel works, to tap virgin soil or to invade the areas of neighbouring lines, to link up with other connections and thereby gain better bargaining positions for through rates; above all, not to be outflanked by competing lines on any routes between coal and iron and steel. These boards could visualise nothing higher than to acquire a neighbouring line as cheaply as possible, or to dispose of their own as dearly as they could. Dividends were rising, and future earnings, especially with so many branches under construction, were highly speculative. What attraction

²⁶ "These disjointed associations are now almost entirely hemmed in by closely compacted and united systems, and they must either cohere in self-protection or fall a prey, one by one, to the snare of the fowler." — 25/2/1865, see also *ibid.*, 15/4/1865; *Dir. Min. M. & C.*, 21/1/1865; *C. & W.*, 24/1/1865; *W.C. & E.*, 2/2/1865; *Wh. J.*, 3/2/1865; *Wh. & F.*, 9/1, 23/1, 6/2/1865.

could there have been in attempting to imitate the great trunk lines which paid 5 per cent. or less, when their own lines paid 10 per cent.? The most they could be induced to do was to agree to send all ore to its destination by the shortest route.²⁷

The attempted extension of the Whitehaven & Furness Railway to the South, by the Duddon Viaduct scheme, cannot be described as part of a through route plan, but falls into place among the other extensions of a year of prosperity and large capital investment. In common with the Sellafield extension of the W.C. & E. and the Wh. & F., and the Marron extension of the W.C. & E., the increase in traffic could justify two lines, while the threat of a shorter link might induce the Furness Railway to make a good offer to the Wh. & F.J., as in fact it did. This was simple railway strategy, and behind the whole movement of expansion was the pressure of capital freely and urgently offered, while investment opportunities in local railways remained bright.

Throughout the summer of 1864, the Wh. & F. was engaged in a bitter struggle with its northern neighbour, the W.C. & E., over the latter's proposal to extend southward from Egremont to a junction with the Wh. & F. (later fixed at Sellafield). After some hard and protracted bargaining, the two companies at last came to a provisional agreement (in meetings between 10 and 19 October 1864) on mutual running powers and division of tolls over the new Egremont-Sellafield branch, and on delimitation of their respective territories. A much improved outlet southward for the Cleator ore had been

²⁷ The meeting of managers which laid down that rule was held at Furness Abbey on 29 September 1864, significantly on the invitation of the C.K. & P.R. The threat of competition from the newly built C.K. & P.R. had already induced the W.C. & E., the Wh. J., the Wh. & F. and other lines to come to agreements between themselves to lower the through freights of ore, and to send it to Staffordshire etc., by the shortest route, e.g. *Dir. Min. Wh. & F.*, 3/10/1864; *Wh. J.*, 2/9, 16/9, 30/9/1864; *W.C. & E.*, 17/3, 14/7, 17/10/1864. This agreement tended to work against the interests of the Midland R. after the joint Furness-Midland was constructed, and led to complaints by the Mid. R.; *D. Diary*, 8/2/1867.

created (see map). It was only at this moment (10 October) that the directors of the Wh. & F.R. decided to engage Brunless, the engineer, "to report on the practicability and probable cost of a line of railway from Holborn Hill across the Duddon Estuary to join the Furness line at Parkes (*sic*)."²⁸ The simple explanation—that a crossing of the Duddon, instead of the tortuous route via Foxfield, was required for the increased ore traffic southwards—seems more satisfactory than the far-fetched one of hidden Midland Railway influence.²⁹

The reactions of the Furness directors were characteristic: they were not in favour, but if the Wh. & F.R. thought the viaduct necessary, they would co-operate, as long as the needs of the new Barrow Docks, on which they proposed to spend large sums, were borne in mind. In that case, the solicitors and engineers were instructed to apply for the necessary powers (20 October). The Wh. & F. directors, in reply, resolved that "this company will agree to join the Furness Co. in shortening the whole route by a new line from Holborn Hill to Lindal and will agree to apply for power next Session to execute the work from the point of junction to Lindal; but if the Furness Co. decline this proposition, then the Whitehaven and Furness Co. will cross the Duddon themselves at such point as they may deem expedient" (31 October). This was the clear note of an ultimatum: far from making allowance for the new Barrow Docks, the Wh. & F.

²⁸ *Dir. Min. Wh. J. & F.*, 11/7, 14/7, 25/7, 30/8, 10/10, 14/10, 19/10/1864; *W.C. & E.*, 7/7, 21/7, 2/8, 4/8, 29/8, 29/9/1864.

²⁹ In their half-yearly report to the shareholders in February 1867, the Furness directors themselves stated that the Cumberland iron boom made the building of the Duddon crossing (to cost £75,000) "imperative." Curiously enough, Ramsden had approached Edward Wadham, mineral agent of the duke of Buccleuch, and acting mineral agent of Lord Lonsdale, on 26 September, 1864 about the Duddon crossing, but no details are known. Had he received an early wind of the Wh. & F. plan, or was the F.R. intending to link, on its own, the Park and Hodbarrow mines and the Millom Ironworks (then planned)? A great deal of tram and road building had taken place in that area in the course of the previous months. E. Wadham, *Diary* (MS) (by kind permission of Mr H. Slater, F.S.I.), 21/11/1863, 19/2, 29/3, 24/5, 26/9/1864.

invited the Furness Company to throttle the development of Barrow altogether by by-passing the town on a new line from Lindal to Holborn Hill. The Furness directors had no option but to withdraw. A letter from Ramsden, dated 3 November, declined to build the line from Ireleth to Lindal, and gave notice that the F.R. would build a crossing itself from Hodbarrow Point. The issue between the two companies was joined.

The Furness directors clearly saw that the Wh. & F. plan, if carried out, would isolate Barrow and greatly decrease the value of the heavy outlays on the dock and harbour works.³⁰ The town and port of Barrow could prosper only as a terminus, and not as a point on an extended loop of a through route. By trying to keep the Duddon crossing under their own control (it was clear that Parliament would not pass both schemes, and the Furness directors could hope their own would be preferred) the Furness Board could still prevent the isolation of Barrow.

There are indications that the Furness plan for the Duddon crossing represented more than a bargaining counter and was probably designed to bring the Hodbarrow mines within reach of the Furness system³¹: "I think (the Furness scheme) effects the object much more satisfactorily", the duke of Devonshire noted on 20 December 1864. In April 1866, some time after the whole line had come into the possession of the F.R., he visited the Hodbarrow mines and the new furnaces in the company of James Ramsden. The branch line from Holborn Hill Station to the Wh. & F., he stated, would serve for the Duddon crossing as well (as the F.R. had planned), if the parliamentary plan could be altered; 140,000 tons of ore were shipped annually from a pier: "we hope to get most of this carried by railway." In

³⁰ Melville & Hobbs, (p. 55) seem curiously to have underrated this threat to Barrow. The investments in docks and harbour were greatly on the minds of the Furness directors at the time.

³¹ Cf. W. M. Gradon, *The Furness Railway*, 1946.

the following year, when the branch was completed, shipping from the pier still continued, however, and the duke hoped that the projected Duddon viaduct would at last transfer the shipping trade to Barrow Harbour.³² The directors of the Furness Railway, who ultimately invested as much in the Barrow dock and harbour facilities as in their railway network and had large personal investments in Barrow's industries besides, were clearly more interested in providing the port with trade than in fostering a possible through traffic.

For the time being, however, the Furness scheme was defeated, and the Wh. & F. plan passed by Parliament. The only alternative left to the Furness line now was to buy or lease the Wh. & F. outright—a desperate step in view of the poor state of the latter's permanent way.³³

As early as 23 March 1865 the Furness Board decided to contact the Wh. & F. with a view to reaching an amicable arrangement, or leasing the Wh. & F. outright.³⁴ No proposal had officially reached the Wh. & F. Board when Lord Lonsdale, the chairman, was reported to the Furness Board as holding out for selling the Wh. & F. only on condition that the Wh. J.R. was bought as well, while Mr Furness, vice-chairman of the Wh. & F., who had an interest in the one line only, was willing to let it for seven years at 7 per cent. (2 May 1865). The other directors of the Wh. & F. were at last officially informed of the proposal on 30 May, when they agreed to lease the line in perpetuity at 8 per cent., the Furness Railway also to take on £30,000 outstanding liabilities as capital.³⁵ The detailed arrangements were completed in July.

There appears to be little basis for the suggestion³⁶ that it would have been to the interest of the Furness Railway

³² *D. Diary*, 13/4/1866, 9/8/1867. Building on the Duddon crossing was suspended in the depression of 1867 and ultimately abandoned, *Dir. Min. F.R.*, 7/11/1867, 13/5, 27/10/1868.

³³ Melville & Hobbs, pp. 56, 60.

³⁴ *D. Diary*; *Dir. Min. F.R.*

³⁵ *Dir. Min. F.R.*, 20/6/1865; *Wh. & F.*, 24/7, 2/8/1865.

³⁶ Melville & Hobbs, p. 56.

to acquire the Wh. J. R. also, as Lord Lonsdale suggested. The price was probably equally "preposterous"; the natural interests of the Furness directors lay in the development of their own district; the chance of forming a through line was, as has been shown, remote. To form it in opposition to the L. & N. W. R. was even less feasible as the Wh. & F. was under negotiation with the L. & N. W. R., and the F. R. bought it with the knowledge and *express approval* of the L. & N. W. R.³⁷

The L. & N. W. R., chiefly by its superior parliamentary tactics, had laid its plans well: not only had it acquired running powers over the F.-M. line and, by a threat of parliamentary opposition, enforced joint control with the F. R. over the projected Arnside-Milnthorpe branch,³⁸ but it had also obtained control over the Lancaster-Carlisle Railway and, with it, considerable powers over both the East-West lines from Furness and Cumberland, as both had to use short stretches of the L. & C. Finally, it had rounded off its dominions by acquiring part control (with the N. E. R.) over the C. K. & P., and possession of the C. & W. and Wh. J. Railways, after preventing their independent amalgamation.³⁹

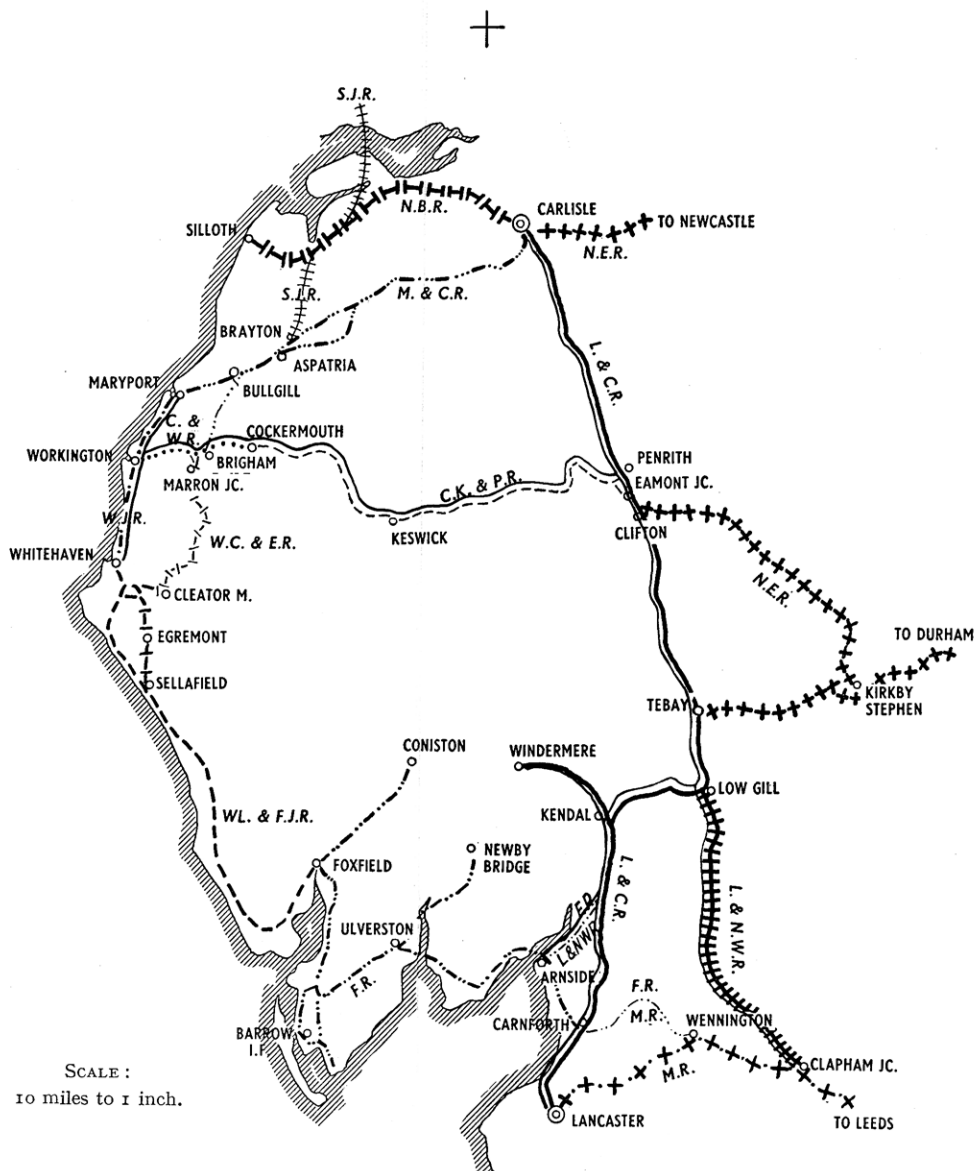
The prosperity of the district was not much affected by this growing dominance by an outside railway, since its chief needs—good communications from the iron mines to the coast, to the blast furnaces and to the coke in the East—were amply secured. In fact, in the following

³⁷ *D. Diary*, 9/5, 18/5/1865.

³⁸ *D. Diary*, 23/3/1865; *Dir. Min. F.R.*, 2/5/1865; the F. R. and the L. & N. W. R. agreed at the same time to consider the L. & C. as the boundary between their respective spheres of interest, the F. R. to remain to the West, and the L. & N. W. R. to the East of the boundary. The Furness R. tried in the depression of 1867-68 to escape its obligations of building the branch from Arnside to Hincaster in its general economy drive, but although Pease and others from Middlesbrough agreed to the abandonment, the local interests made difficulties, and the building was finally begun in 1871 (*not* 1874) and was completed in 1876. *Dir. Min. F.R.*, 13/5/1868, 9/8, 8/12/1869, 11/2, 25/2/1870, 28/2, 26/4, 23/10/1871, 8/5/1874, 10/2, 15/3/1877; Melville & Hobbs, p. 58.

³⁹ The L. & N. W. R. attempted to buy or lease the Wh. C. & E. at the same time, but the offer was refused. *Dir. Min. Wh. C. & E.*, 29/6/1865.

RAILWAY STRATEGY ON THE NORTH-WEST COAST, 1864-6.



LINES IN EXISTENCE ON 1 JAN. 1864: LINES FORMED AND BUILT TO 1870:

London & N. Western R.	.. ..	+++++	Solway Junction R.	.. ..	+++++
Lancaster & Carlisle R.	.. ..	----	Cockermouth,		
North British R.	.. ..	-H-	Keswick & Penrith R.	.. ..	----
Maryport & Carlisle R.	.. ..	----	Derwent Branch (M. & C.)	.. ..	----
Cockermouth & Workington R.	.. ..	----	Marron and Egremont—		
Whitehaven Junction R.	.. ..	----	Sellafield Branches (W.C. & E.)	.. ..	-|-|-
Wh., Cleator & Egremont R.	.. ..	-|-|-	Newby Bridge Branch (F.R.)	.. ..	----
Wh. & Furness Junction R.	.. ..	----	Arnside Branch (F.R.-L.N.W.R.		
Furness R.	.. ..	----	completed 1876)	.. ..	----
Midland R.	.. ..	+++		
North Eastern R.	.. ..	+++	Lines fully or in part under control		
			of the L.&N.W.R. by 1866		

decade a considerable number of smaller extensions, particularly in the Cleator district, were undertaken or planned, as symptoms of renewed prosperity in the haematite mines. It is extremely doubtful, however, whether the Cumberland-Furness district, with the drawback of its geographical outlines and contours and its economic weaknesses, was at any time in the running for the rôle of forming part of a major North-South route.

TABLE I.
ANNUAL DIVIDENDS ON ORDINARY CAPITAL.

Railway.	Average annual dividend on ordinary capital.	
	1863-1866.	1870-1873.
Cockermouth & Workington	... 6½%	10%*
Furness	... 9½%	9½%
Maryport & Carlisle	... 9½	12¼
Whitehaven, Cleator & Egremont	... 9	11½
Whitehaven Junction	... 11¼	10*
Whitehaven & Furness Junction	... 9½	8†
Cockermouth, Keswick & Penrith (opened 1865)	... 1½	3¾
Average of all other British lines listed by Herapath	... 4%	4⅛%

* = paid by the London & North-Western Railway.

† = paid by the Furness Railway.