

## SHANNON NAVIGATION.

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COPY of the REPORT of the COMMISSIONERS appointed pursuant to the Act 5 & 6 WILLIAM IV. c. 67, for the IMPROVEMENT of the NAVIGATION of the River *Shannon*.

Whitehall, Treasury Chambers, }  
28 March 1836.

T. BARING.

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### TO THE LORDS OF HIS MAJESTY'S TREASURY.

May it please your Lordships,

THE undersigned Commissioners of the Shannon Navigation, appointed by a Treasury Minute on the 24th of November 1835, and acting under the powers vested in them by 5 & 6 William IV. c. 67, have to report as follows:—

That in pursuance of Instructions contained in the aforesaid Treasury Minute, they have lost no time in inquiring into and making themselves acquainted with the important subject committed to their investigation, by taking a personal view of the whole of the River Shannon from the Sea at its mouth, to its source in Lough Allen, in order to observe the general state of navigation, and the flooded lands on each side during the winter season.

The result of this inspection in the minds of the Commissioners has been, that it will require at least one entire season to enable them to complete a detailed investigation on the several points connected with the inquiry; but from what they have seen, and referring to the matter which has been so ably set forth, and on such correct principles, by Captain Mudge and Mr. Rhodes, it appears to them that the subject may be fairly brought under five separate and distinct heads for consideration, each of which would form an entire subject of itself, and would make a perfect and useful whole independent of the others; and if allowed to treat the subject in this manner, the Commissioners hope to be able to investigate into the detail of any one (and perhaps the most important) division, so as to be ready to present a definite report and recommendation on it during the present Session of Parliament.

The necessity for the proposed subdivision originates in the peculiarity of the River Shannon, which in different parts presents characters so distinct, that it will be necessary to vary the scale and description of the navigations to be proposed, so as to suit them to the circumstances of each particular portion.

That part of the River Shannon comprehended between the Western Headlands at its mouth and the City of Limerick, and also the River Fergus to Ennis, will naturally form the first division; these are tide rivers, and partake more of the character of great sea estuaries than of rivers.

Above Limerick and as far as Killaloe, the River is comparatively rapid, and its breadth is less imposing than in the upper portions; the distance between these points is 15 miles, and the fall is 88 feet 8 inches; the navigation is effected partly by the river and partly by side canals with locks.

But above Killaloe and as far as Tarmunbarry, in the county of Longford, a distance of 85 miles, the fall is but 16 feet 8 inches; here the Shannon rather presents the character of a chain of large and deep inland lakes than of an ordinary river. This is, perhaps, the most interesting and important part, inasmuch as it passes through the centre of the country, and can be rendered navigable for steam vessels of a large class at a comparatively moderate expense. This portion comprehends the great Lakes of Lough Derg and Lough Rhee, and receives the tributary streams of the Scariff, Woodford, Ballyshrule, Brusna and Suck, forming together a vast

extent of waters, which at present, with the exception of Lough Derg, is very deficient, either as a medium of navigation or of drainage.

Above Tarmunbarry and as far as Leitrim, a distance of thirty miles, though the River still preserves the same character, still the lakes are smaller, the connecting river narrower, and the fall more rapid than in the foregoing division; while above Leitrim and as far as Lough Allen the River becomes still smaller and more rapid, and in these respects resembles the second portion, or that between Limerick and Killaloe; in this part an imperfect Canal has been formed to avoid the rapids of the River.

In order to bring the whole subject into view, it may be well to state as briefly as possible the nature and circumstances of each of the above divisions of the River; for although the Reports of Captain Mudge and Mr. Rhodes give a very correct description of the state of the navigation from one end to the other, yet as they are too long to transcribe, and as it has been proved by experience that whenever new means of intercourse have been opened, whether by roads or navigation, an increase in agriculture and commerce has followed in a proportion far exceeding what could have been anticipated from the expense incurred, the Commissioners deem it best to set forth the state of the navigation, &c. as it appeared to them on a primary view, with their ideas generally as to the best mode and scale of improvement, referring to the Reports above mentioned, for the plans and more detailed information on the subject. And—

1st.—Of DIVISION No. 1, on the *Lower Shannon*, from the Sea to *Limerick*, including the River *Fergus* to *Clare* and *Ennis*.

The state of these Rivers is very minutely described by Captain Mudge, in his Reports of 1831; the navigable channels are good, with the exception of a few points, which can be improved at a comparatively small expense; but they are exceedingly deficient in beacons, buoys and marks to guide vessels in navigating them; neither is there any conservation of the navigation, nor any funds applicable for its improvement and maintenance.

The shores on either side abound with suitable places for small harbours, piers or landing quays, which would be very beneficial to the country, and more particularly since the establishment of daily steam packets up and down the Shannon, which by opening an easy, cheap and expeditious intercourse between Limerick and the country on both sides, are calculated to give a great stimulus to internal commerce; but the means of landing and shipping goods and passengers at important stations on either side are very deficient, and no considerable trade can be carried on until suitable piers and landing wharfs shall have been erected.

The present feeling of the Commissioners from the first view of the locality is, that to propose and lay down any definite plan which should comprise all that is necessary to be done to complete the Navigation of the Lower Shannon and Fergus at any given expense would be totally impossible, as the operations must, from their nature and causes, be progressive; although there is no doubt that a moderate sum might be most usefully laid out in improving the Navigation and Harbours of these rivers below Limerick and Ennis.

As regards the question of raising the necessary funds for the above purposes, it appears to the Commissioners that as far as the Navigation of the River is concerned in the erection and maintenance of beacons and buoys, &c., let the first cost come from what source it may, whether by public grant, general or local district assessments, or a combination of all, the conservancy and maintenance thereof at least should be defrayed by a fair and equitable tax upon all and every vessel navigating the River.

For this purpose it would appear advisable to place the conservation of the River Shannon below Limerick in the hands of the Limerick Dock Commissioners, giving them the power to punish offenders, and authorizing them to levy dues, according to a fixed graduated scale, from all vessels navigating the River; and that similar powers be granted to the Commissioners at Ennis respecting the River Fergus.

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With respect to the question of Harbours, Piers and Landing Places, the Commissioners are of opinion, that although it would be necessary and publicly useful to establish such at several important situations, yet as all other places but those chosen would think themselves equally entitled, and as local and individual enterprise should lead in these matters, it appears desirable to establish some just regulations for most cases, namely, that as soon as any individual landed proprietor or commercial body, or local subscription, or all together, shall come forward with a fund, calling upon the Commissioners to form a harbour or erect any pier or landing place under the powers of this Act, they will decide on the measure, and apportion such additional funds, by way of grant or district assessment, as may seem best adapted to the case, under certain rules and regulations, which the Commissioners could frame for the purpose.

2d.—Of DIVISION No. 2, or the Navigation of the *Shannon* from *Limerick* to *Killaloe*.

In this division a navigation of fifteen miles is effected by means of artificial side cuts or canals, with locks capable of passing boats of fifty tons burden, such as navigate the Grand and Royal Canals, and being part river and part canal, is subject to all the difficulties and delays of a river navigation; and it appears a question with the Commissioners, whether it would not be better to complete it as a canal navigation for the whole distance, rather than to improve the present river and cuts; but as some surveys are requisite to ascertain these facts, and as the subject does not require the immediate decision which is called for respecting the other parts of the River, the question must stand over till plans and estimates can be prepared, and a detailed recommendation given on the subject.

DIVISION No. 3, comprising the River *Shannon* from *Killaloe* to *Tarmunbarry*.

This division of the Shannon, in a direct course of eighty-five miles, includes the two great inland lakes of Lough Derg and Lough Rhee, and comprises above two hundred miles of coast, with the entrances to the Grand and Royal Canals, and the mouths of several rivers, either navigable or capable of being easily made so; it is by far the most important division of the whole, and is worthy of immediate and distinct consideration. The Commissioners are decidedly of opinion that its navigation may be improved, and the drainage of the adjoining lands effected, upon the principle so ably set forth and explained by Mr. Rhodes in his Reports on the subject in 1832, with very little alteration or modification of the particular plans laid down by him for each point, but which modification will require some additional surveys and researches. To prove the great importance of this portion of the Navigation, a return is inserted in the Appendix, showing the great increase of trade and produce brought from the Shannon, *viâ* Dublin, to Liverpool, during the last three years, being in the half-year ending in the present month, more than twelve times the quantity during the half-year ending in February 1833, viz. 3,434 sacks of oatmeal and wheat-flour in the half-year ending in February 1833; and 44,486 sacks of the same in the half-year ending in February 1836. The City of Dublin Steam Navigation Company have several small steam boats which can navigate from Portumna Bridge to Athlow (a part of the Navigation at present under the control of the Grand Canal Company), and included in this division, but they are not fitted for the navigation of the large lakes and broad waters; they have also one steamer in Lough Derg, the "Lady Lansdowne," a very fine vessel of nearly three hundred tons burden, and impelled by engines of one hundred horse power; this vessel can navigate Lough Derg from Killaloe to Portumna Bridge in all weathers, and draw after her four large barges each of fifty tons burden, collecting them at the various stations and little harbours along the Lough, and delivering them either at Portumna, on their way to the Grand Canal, or at Killaloe, on their way to Limerick, as the case may be; and were this division of the River improved as proposed, the same class of steam vessels and the same means for facilitating trade and intercourse would be extended from Killaloe to the entrance of the Royal Canal near Tarmunbarry, and thus bring into immediate and improved action all the navigations of the River above and below those points, even in their present defective state. To effect this great object would require two locks only,

three weirs, four swing bridges, and the river to be cleared from obstructions; in doing which, many thousand acres of valuable land could be secured from floods, and the agriculture, trade, navigation and intercourse of a vast extent of country greatly improved.

Such are the general reasons (without going into particulars) which induce the Commissioners to look upon this division as the most important part of the inquiry; and further, from the consideration, that if all the other divisions were completed, and this left undone, little or no benefit would be effected; whereas if this were completed, and all the others left in their present state, a great public benefit would be gained.

The DIVISION No. 4, from *Tarmunbarry* to *Leitrim*.

This division of the River, which comprises about thirty miles, the Commissioners recommend to be improved upon the same principles as the foregoing, but on a smaller scale than that laid down by Mr. Rhodes, as a much smaller class of steamers will be capable of conducting the trade through it, and be amply sufficient for all the present and prospective wants of the country; and the same advantages, with regard to the drainage and regulation of the flood waters, would be obtained, as if the Navigation were on a larger scale.

Thus these two divisions will be made available for trade by means of tug steam-vessels to tow fifty-ton barges, similar to those which navigate the Grand and Royal Canals and the other portions of the Shannon.

The DIVISION No. 5, or the Canal Navigation from *Leitrim* to *Lough Allen*.

All that is required in this division, is to put the present work in an improved state of repair, and to regulate the flood waters of Lough Allen, and to clear the River, as proposed by Mr. Rhodes.

Such are the general views taken by the Commissioners in consequence of their first inspection of this important Navigation, the capabilities and extent of which are little known and less understood.

To bring the whole subject to a conclusion, according to the tenor of their Instructions, would be impossible in one season; but with great exertion, and with liberty to turn their attention to and give directions for the immediate prosecution of what they conceive to be the most important division of the works, viz. from Killaloe to Tarmunbarry, they entertain hopes of being able to come to a final report and recommendation on that part before the close of the present Session of Parliament.

(signed) *J. F. Burgoyne.*  
*Harry D. Jones.*  
*Richard Griffiths.*  
*W. Cubitt.*

APPENDIX.

A RETURN of the FLOUR and OATMEAL brought by the COMPANY'S BOATS from the Interior and River *Shannon*, for shipment to *Liverpool* by their Steamers.

DATE.		—	Sacks of OATMEAL.	Sacks of FLOUR.	Total Number of Sacks.	
1833	February 28	Six Months -	1,813	1,621	3,434	
	August - 31		3,268	2,549	5,817	
1834	February 28	- " -	5,563	6,899	12,462	
	August - 31	- " -	5,283	7,327	12,610	
1835	February 28	- " -	2,958	19,990	22,948	
	August - 31	- " -	2,129	18,297	20,426	
			4 Months ending } 31 December. }	6,485	23,173	29,658
1836	February 29	- - -	9,727	34,759	44,486	

A RETURN of TONNAGE and TOLLS of the CITY OF DUBLIN STEAM PACKET COMPANY'S BOATS plying on the *Grand Canal* and *River Shannon*.

DATE.		—	TONNAGE.	Tolls paid to the Grand Canal Company.		
				£.	s.	d.
1829	August - 31	Six Months - -	3,407	737	12	11
1830	February - 28	- " -	4,721	1,022	5	4
	August - 31	- " -	6,549	1,417	17	6
1831	February - 28	- " -	7,020	1,520	1	3
	August - 31	- " -	11,125	2,408	11	10
1832	February - 28	- " -	16,649	3,604	10	5
	August - 31	- " -	9,138	1,978	9	3
1833	February - 28	- " -	12,200	2,641	9	4
	August - 31	- " -	14,119	3,056	14	11
1834	February - 28	- " -	17,134	3,709	13	5
	August - 31	- " -	17,429	3,773	8	7
1835	February - 28	- " -	20,265	4,591	2	9
	August - 31	- " -	20,468	4,996	10	-
			Four Months, ending } 31 December - }	16,318	3,667	15 -
1836	February - 29	- " -	24,477	5,501	12	6

NUMBER of PASSENGERS conveyed in the VESSELS of the CITY OF DUBLIN STEAM PACKET COMPANY on the *River Shannon*.

In 1834	- - - - -	22,295
" 1835	- - - - -	31,562

By Order.

(signed)

P. Howell.

SHANNON NAVIGATION.

COPY of the REPORT of the COMMISSIONERS  
appointed pursuant to the Act 5 & 6 WILT. IV.,  
c. 67, for the Improvement of the Navigation of  
the River Shannon.

(*Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer.*)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,  
28 March 1836.