

Centre for Lifelong Learning

Assessment Cover Sheet for Anonymous Marking

Short assignment: **A review of the sources that I would use if I were writing a long assignment on how the arrival of the railways contributed to the development of Reading from 1830-60**

Module title: 15/16 RS T1 - The Coming of the Railways to Britain, 1825-1900
Module code: CED00007M
Module level: M
Tutor: David Turner

Tutor's comments:

General Comments

A very good first effort here. You should have left much of what was in introduction to the actual body of the piece. The introduction should say clearly what you will do and how you are going to do it. The work shows a very good understanding of the materials available and their strengths and weaknesses, and I feel you understand what would be required were you to write this essay. Indeed, the range of reading is to be commended. It would have been nice to have more reference to the general authors, and an explanation more clearly of how their arguments link with the local suggestions. Referencing format is good, but could be slightly improved.

Actions to improve

- Make sure the introduction states what exactly what you will be doing.
- Try and show your knowledge of the general literature.
- Slightly improve the referencing.

2nd Marker's comments:

A good, critical start. What is particularly good is the way that you look at what has been written about individual businesses in Reading and how the railway provided them with opportunities. There is also an impressively close engagement with the sources. An excellent piece of work, well done.

Signature: D A Turner (1 st marker)	Mark/Grade: 72	Date: 10/12/2015
Signature: K D Tennent (2 nd marker)	Mark/Grade: 72	Date: 03/01/2016

A review of the sources that I would use if I were writing a long assignment on how the arrival of the railways contributed to the development of Reading from 1830-60

In 1821 Reading, with a population of around 13,000, was a market town that competed in Berkshire with Wallingford and the county town of Abingdon (population 17,000), but it had the asset of being on the Great West Road and on the point where the Kennet joined the Thames. (The populace had opposed the building of the Kennet Navigation in the 1720s, sometimes violently, but the prospect of the Kennet & Avon Canal in the 1790s, and the railways in the 1830s, were welcomed¹ – perhaps a lesson had been learned?²) By 1861 its population had doubled³, and by becoming an industrial town as well as a transport hub, it was well on its way to leaving its former competitors behind and superseding Abingdon as the official county town in 1867, and became Berkshire's only County Borough in 1888⁴. The assignment could show how the arrival of the railways in Reading contributed to this process during the period 1830 to 1860. Was it a transformative effect for Reading, as it was for Swindon, or was it much more modest? Evidence from both national and local sources points towards a nuanced conclusion.

Commented [KT1]: Or times and attitudes were different.

Commented [DT2]: A bit too casual

Commented [DT3]: Good point.

The Great Western Railway connected Reading with London in March 1840, using Brunel's peculiarly-badly designed station, and with through trains to Bristol in 1841. Lines were then completed to Hungerford by 1847, Basingstoke by 1848, London Bridge via Reigate by 1850, Birmingham by 1852, and direct to

Commented [KT4]: How so? Was this a strategic error that impeded the later development of railways in Reading? Avoid dropping in comments without developing them.

Commented [DT5]: Is this relevant to what you are supposed to be doing?

¹ Stuart Hylton, *A History of Reading*, (Chichester: Phillimore 2007), 82

² But although Abingdon benefited from Somerset coal on the Wilts & Berks canal joining the Thames there, they opposed the arrival of rail in the 1830s as a threat to the canal: Nigel Hammond, *The Book of Abingdon* (Buckingham: Barracuda 1979), 96. Also mentioned in Stuart Hylton, *The Grand Experiment: The Birth of the Railway Age* (Hersham: Ian Allan 2007), 172

³ Census figures, accessed 19/10/15 via National Archives and University of Essex at <http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/> differ from figures gleaned from ostensibly the same census sources by the University of Portsmouth at GB Historical GIS / University of Portsmouth, "Reading UA through time | Population Statistics | Total Population", *A Vision of Britain through Time*. URL: http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10197211/cube/TOT_POP Date accessed: 20/10/15. This is principally due to the variety of different local boundaries referenced – but the broad picture is clear.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading,_Berkshire#cite_ref-QuarterSessions_28-1 citing "Berkshire Quarter Sessions". *Jackson's Oxford Journal*. 4 July 1868. Reading took over the summer Assizes; the letters patent were issued by the Privy Council in 1868, cited by P.H. Ditchfield & William Page (eds) *The Victoria history of Berkshire Volume 3* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall for University of London, Institute of Historical Research, 1972), 363.

Waterloo by 1856. The establishment of a triangular junction near Reading West during this period, together with the building of the South Eastern station adjacent to the GWR station, established Reading as a railway hub for both goods and passengers – and incidentally helped show up the unsustainability of Brunel’s anomalous broad gauge. Where Wallingford and Abingdon, served only by branch lines, remained modest market towns, Reading became a substantial industrial town although it does not even achieve a mention in Kellett’s book.⁵ So given that the main impact of the arrival of the railways was the obvious one of displacing the coach service through Reading⁶ (in 1844), and halving the revenues of the Kennet & Avon canal from 1841⁷ (the GWR taking it over in 1851), what were the other effects of the railways on Reading?

Commented [DT6]: Well no, but is Reading really a city, which Kellet was talking about?

It is both disappointing and reassuring to be told by Jack Simmons that the effect of railways on the development of different towns differed, and that it is ‘unanswerable in a finally satisfactory form’ to identify precisely the contribution made by the railway for any particular town⁸. Similarly, my findings at this stage do not indicate a straightforward linear connection between the arrival of a railway and its impact on Reading and its surroundings, though the flattening of Abingdon’s and Wallingford’s population, in contrast to Reading, is consistent with Mark Casson’s econometric analysis of neighbouring Oxfordshire⁹.

Commented [DT7]: This is unnecessary.

Commented [DT8]: I would avoid saying this. This is a literature review, not a summary of findings.

Unsurprisingly, enthusiast writers about Reading and/or local railways during this period are mainly stronger on description than analysis, and they tend to imply linkages. Sowan¹⁰ reports the population increases during the early nineteenth century, while Phillips cites that Reading, being on the main line,

Commented [DT9]: Which is? State his argument.

Commented [DT10]: Good!

⁵ John R Kellett, *Railways and Victorian Cities* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969)

⁶ William MacBride Childs, *The Town of Reading during the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century* (Reading: University College 1910), 21, referencing the *Reading Mercury*

⁷ Lawrence Waters, *Rail Centres: Reading*, (London: Ian Allan 1990)

⁸ Jack Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country, 1830-1914*. (London: Faber 2008), 17

⁹ Mark Casson, “The determinants of local population growth: A study of Oxfordshire in the nineteenth century,” *Explorations in Economic History* 50, no.1 (2013): 42 Accessed on 27/10/2015 at

<http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/science/article/pii/S0014498312000769>

¹⁰ Adam Sowan, *All Change at Reading: The Railway and the Station 1840-2013*, (Reading: Two Rivers Press 2013), and John Russell, *The Kennet & Avon Canal, A journey from Newbury to Bath in 1964* (Bath: Millstream Books 1997), 9 who reports that from 1840 to 1850 the revenue dropped from £59k to £31k.

attracted industry and the population to work there, while Wallingford and Abingdon on branch lines remained peaceful market towns¹¹. She has a point, and I return to the population issue later, but the industry connection is hard to make, as Reading's main industrial concerns almost all started before 1830. Reading Ironworks Company was founded in 1818, and folded in 1890, and made principally agricultural machinery; although it exhibited in 1851 there seems to have been no obvious connection between it and the railway industry¹², though it made steam engines for agricultural use. Hylton reports that Simonds' Brewery was founded in 1785, but only took off after the Beer Act of 1835¹³; and implies that the railways clearly facilitated their imaginative marketing and distribution, including in LSWR and SER refreshment rooms, but no more than that. His account of Suttons Seeds, founded in 1806, is that they flourished from establishing a reputation for non-adulteration and efficient distribution using the postal system¹⁴ (facilitated by the railways of course). The Earley History Group also confirm that Suttons was quick to exploit the Penny Post and the railway from 1840¹⁵.

Commented [DT11]: All good here.

A slightly closer relationship with the railways can be traced from Corley's and Hylton's narratives¹⁶ of Reading's onetime famous biscuit company, Huntley & Palmer, from its 1822 origin. This Quaker enterprise was established as a formal partnership in 1841, after having for some years sold biscuits not only locally but also to coach travellers at the Crown Hotel on the Bath Road while their horses were being changed. From 1832 biscuits were packed in tin boxes, and from 1846 there was mechanised production in the new factory close to the railway and the canal. The factory's own goods yard, including even its own "smokeless"

¹¹ Daphne Phillips, *The Story of Reading*, (Newbury: Countryside Books 1992), 122

¹² Tony Corley, "Reading in the Eighteenth Century and Victorian Times" in Petyt, Malcolm (ed) *The Growth of Reading*. (Stroud: Alan Sutton 1993), 99, claims that the Ironworks benefited from rail at first, but they then went out of business in 1887. Also http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Reading_Ironworks_Co Accessed 27/10/2015, which gives the 1890 date of closure.

¹³ Stuart Hylton, *A History of Reading*, (Chichester: Phillimore, 2007), 130

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 139

¹⁵ Earley Local History Group, *Sutton's Seeds: A History, 1806-2006*, (Reading: Earley Local History Group 2006), 13

¹⁶ T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits: Huntley & Palmers of Reading 1822-1972* (London: Hutchinson 1972), 35-45, and Stuart Hylton, *A History of Reading* (Chichester: Phillimore 2007), 131-8

steam locomotives within the factory buildings, aided the company's production and distribution, while marketing was promoted by the small packets of biscuits that were said to be given free to first class passengers at Paddington to entice them to purchase a box at Reading¹⁷. Turnover increased from £1,600 per annum in 1837 to £41,100 in 1851, and £105,000 in 1856, states Hylton, who also adds briefly that during the early years the canals were the preferred method of transport, because fewer biscuits were broken¹⁸, while Corley emphasises only their effective use of rail by 1849. A study of any available records might establish what quantity travelled by which method during this period¹⁹, though Corley implies these records are unclear because most transport payments were made to Pickfords²⁰. Corley's account is of a Quaker company that was imaginative in introducing steam mechanisation, and in placing its factory close to both the canal and the railway, and in advertising and distribution.

Commented [DT12]: How?

Commented [DT13]: Good analysis of the literature.

Commented [DT14]: reference

Commented [DT15]: who?

As mentioned by Simmons as well as by local authors, Reading lost out in its bid (as also did Abingdon) for one directly railway-related expansion – the GWR's carriage works – in 1865, when the company decided to consolidate this with the existing Swindon works²¹. However there had already been one small gain, the GWR's signal works that had opened in Reading in 1859, which expanded to 500 workers by 1872²², and continued after nationalisation until "the 1980s"²³.

One social gain for Reading was the GWR's donation of 100 guineas, and a ten guinea annual subscription, for the Royal Berkshire Hospital, whose first patients in 1840 were two injured railworkers. This did not stop the Hospital removing its pharmacy transport contract from the GWR to a road carrier in 1841.²⁴

Commented [DT16]: Was this typical or atypical?

Commented [DT17]: Unnecessary

¹⁷ T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits: Huntley & Palmers of Reading 1822-1972* (London: Hutchinson 1972), 77

¹⁸ Hylton, *A History of Reading*, 134, for this remark and the turnover figures

¹⁹ Possibly achievable by examining the University of Reading's collection of Huntley & Palmer records (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/adlib/Details/archiveSpecial/110014314>)

²⁰ Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 63

²¹ Jack Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country*, 166

²² Lawrence Waters, *Rail Centres: Reading*, (London: Ian Allan 1990)

²³ <https://www.railscot.co.uk/imageenlarge/imagecomplete.php?id=22413> Accessed 27/10/15

²⁴ Margaret Railton and Marshall Barr, *The Royal Berkshire Hospital 1839-1989*, (Reading: Royal Berkshire Hospital 1989), 47 and 35

The expansion of Reading's population continued in the nineteenth century, where Wallingford and Abingdon stalled, faster than the average for southern England but not as fast as the great northern cities or the railway towns, and in keeping with the 'facilitator' findings of Newman for Watford and other rail centres in an adjacent Home Counties rural region²⁵. Newman's thesis is that for many places railways enabled a town to exploit the geographical advantages it already had, and this thesis does seem to fit Reading.

Commented [DT18]: Reference should go here.

Commented [DT19]: Elaborate here on how the arguments link.

Therefore, given that local writers seem to be right in not making excessive claims for the effect of the railways on Reading, the early hypothesis I would draw from the national and local writers together is that the railways 'facilitated' Reading's continued progress arising from its existing position. Reading became the dominant economic town in Berkshire and the Thames Valley during a long-term process that started in the early eighteenth century, and continued through the twentieth, largely because it has been a hub for several modes of transport.

Commented [DT20]: Unnecessary.

The growth related to the arrival of the railways from 1830-60 was a symptomatic episode of this longer-term trend – a part of a 'slow burn' rather than the whole of a unique 'explosion'.

Commented [DT21]: Good.

[1312 words]

²⁵ Friedrich Rudolf Johannes Newman, "The Socio-Economic Impacts of the Coming of the Railways to Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire 1838 – 1900", (PhD Thesis 2015 University of Hertfordshire). 344, & 400 (Appendix V). Accessed 28/10/15

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