

A master whose heart is in the land : picturing the tourist utopia of the Great Western Railway 1897-1947

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Abstract

This thesis examines the images of landscapes and locations used by the Great Western Railway Company (GWR) in their advertising and publicity material from 1897 to 1947. It argues that the GWR made sophisticated use of such images and used landscape imagery as a way, not only to appeal to a wide and varied audience of tourists and potential travellers, but also to construct a deep historical context for the company; this historical context reinforced the company's authority and echoed their paternalistic management practices at the time. The research challenges the idea that the 'motoring pastoral' of the inter-war period and beyond was a unique phenomenon by demonstrating that the GWR landscape imagery can be viewed as a 'railway pastoral'. Such a notion pre-dates the widespread introduction of the motor-car and influenced the imagery associated with motoring that was to become so popular from the 1920s on. It argues that the motoring pastoral owes a significant debt to the railway's picturing of landscapes that came before it. The thesis puts forward the concept of the 'tourist utopia' whereby landscapes and locations were portrayed in a highly idealised manner thus highlighting the difference between the experiences on offer to the tourist and the everyday world of work. The tourist utopia of the GWR was characterised by a marked heterogeneity insofar as several differing portrayals of landscapes such as rural, historical or technological, could co-exist within the same geographical location. Such heterogeneity, it is argued, reflects the marketing practice of market segmentation and demonstrates that the marketing of mobility in Great Britain was well developed in the years prior to 1914 and continued to develop during the inter-war period.

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The first Locomotives of the Great Western Railway (GWR) were specified by Isambard Kingdom Brunel but Daniel Gooch was soon appointed as the railway's Locomotive Superintendent. He designed several different 7 ft 1/4 in (2,140 mm) broad gauge types for the growing railway, such as the Firefly and later Iron Duke Class 2-2-2s. To replace some of the earlier locomotives, he put broad gauge wheels on his standard gauge locomotives and from this time on all locomotives were given numbers, including the broad gauge ones that had previously carried just names. Joseph Armstrong's early death in 1877 meant that the next phase of motive power design was the responsibility of William Dean, his assistant and successor. Most of the people were either convicts or former convicts who had finished their sentences. In the 1830s, more migrants arrived in Australia from Britain looking for a new life. Sheep farming had already developed and many people found jobs on farms. New colonies appeared called Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland. They later became the States of the Commonwealth of Australia. Match the paragraphs of the text with the topics below.