

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN

TEACHER'S NOTES

TITLE SLIDE

This lesson will discuss arguments for building the railway but will also discuss arguments against its construction



SLIDE 2

THE IDEA OF CREATING A RAILWAY TO JOIN MANSFIELD WITH THE CANAL AT PINXTON

In February 1803 a group of businessmen from Mansfield asked the Cromford Canal Company Committee if they would extend the canal into Mansfield, to allow coal to be transported into the town to help fuel the factories, as local mines could not satisfy demand. The Company decided against the idea, because of the cost of building locks to manage the flow of water. The Canal Company looked into the idea but extending the canal would involve creating too many locks and also a pumping station to increase the flow of water, which they decided would cost too much. It was also doubtful that there would be enough water available.

John Coke, the owner of Pinxton Colliery, came up with the idea of a railway instead as he was struggling to make a profit and needed to sell more coal in Mansfield. Mansfield needed coal as the factories were starting to convert to steam and heating the malting kilns. At that time the local coalfields could not mine very deep, so were running out of coal.

By 1813 a proposal had been drawn up by John Coke, with the support of the 4th Duke of Portland, an MP and the main landowner in Sutton-in-Ashfield and Mansfield. Other local businessmen also agreed to help pay for the plans if the government gave approval through an Act of Parliament.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

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TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

THE KEY PEOPLE FROM LOCAL HISTORY WHO MADE THE MANSFIELD & PINXTON RAILWAY HAPPEN - AND THEIR BUSINESS INTERESTS (SLIDES 3-5)

SLIDE 3

WILLIAM BENTINCK, THE 4TH DUKE OF PORTLAND

William was the fourth Duke of Portland. He was born in 1768 and took the title in 1809 at the age of 41.

As he owned most of the land around Mansfield he needed to agree with the plan for the railway.

The Duke always tried to do the right thing to support the people who leased land off him and wherever possible he created job opportunities for the unemployed. He made sure that the poor people living around Sutton were given the job of helping to build the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway.

Although the Duke had a social conscience - he cared for people less fortunate than himself - he did also have a financial interest in the railway, as he earned income from leasing out his land and the mineral rights*. That meant that if the mines and quarries in the local area were more profitable, he would also benefit financially. He would also earn interest on his railway shares.

* Mineral rights give you permission to mine for minerals such as coal, clay or gravel. Just because you own a property does not automatically mean you have the mineral rights.

SLIDE 4

JOHN COKE

John Coke owned the coal mine at Pinxton. He was the third son of Reverend D'Ewes Coke, (there was also a daughter) the rector and philanthropist who had inherited Brookhill Hall at Pinxton. D'Ewes built houses for his miners and set up an educational charity in Pinxton, leaving five pounds a year from the profits of his collieries to buy books for poor children.

In 1795 John Coke invested in a porcelain factory with William Billingsley, a porcelain painter from Derby, and Pinxton Porcelain was successfully transported along the canal network. The factory closed in 1813, but Pinxton Porcelain is now a collector's item, and some can be found in Mansfield Museum.

When D'Ewes died in 1811 it became the responsibility of John to manage the family's business interests. John realised that he could make money by mining the deeper coal seams around Pinxton and that a railway would enable him to serve the growing demand for coal in the Mansfield area.

Although there were 35 original subscribers to the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway Company, John Coke gave the third largest amount of money after the Duke of Portland and the Richard Arkwright company of Cromford.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

SLIDE 5

WILLIAM JESSOP AND JOSIAS JESSOP

William Jessop was called the father of civil engineering. He led on the Cromford Canal with Benjamin Outram, who established the Outram iron works in 1791 with the help of William. Benjamin lived at Butterley Hall.

William's third son, also called William, was apprenticed under the iron master William Brunton, who was in charge of Outram's iron works. Between them, the Jessop's and Brunton invented the cast iron fish-bellied edge rail. William (Senior) had first used the design on the wagon railroads in Loughborough.

When Benjamin Outram died prematurely in 1805 William Jessop (Junior) took over the running of the ironworks - then changed its name to the Butterley Company - and the family moved from Newark to Butterley Hall.

In 1813, the Butterley Company invented the L-section edge rails but Josias used the fish belly edge rail pioneered by his father on the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway.

Josias Jessop, born in 1781, was a canal engineer and second son of William Jessop (Senior). Josias Jessop was appointed chief engineer on the Mansfield to Pinxton Railroad.

Josias' career began when he was only 17 years old. He was trained by his father in canal engineering and worked under him on his early projects. He accompanied Benjamin Outram to survey the line at Merthyr Tydfil to Newport. He proved himself a great engineer in his own right when he constructed Bristol Harbour. He became an independent consulting engineer from 1811. He died in 1826 at the age of 45.

The three Jessop brothers were: John born 1779, Josias born 1781 and William born 1783.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

SLIDE 6

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE MANSFIELD AND PINXTON RAILWAY

- Mansfield lawyer, George Walkden wrote to the Duke of Devonshire asking him to support the proposal for a railway connecting Mansfield and Pinxton. His argument was that the canals were damaging Mansfield's main industry of malting due to competition on the vastly growing canal network. This was important to the Duke as he was entitled to tithes from Sutton-in-Ashfield and Mansfield. A tithe was historically one tenth of the sale of produce from land.
- George Walkden also wrote that the people of Mansfield would benefit from the transport of stone and lime and other cheap goods which towns close to the canals and other railways needed.
- George also argued that the construction of the Mansfield and Pinxton line would provide work for people who didn't have jobs. When the railway was eventually given the go-ahead with an Act of Parliament the Duke of Portland insisted that jobs were offered to very poor people in liaison with the Overseers of the Poor (the person in the Parish responsible for giving money, food and clothing to the destitute).
- A new gasworks was planned for Mansfield, which would require a regular supply of coal – more than the collieries close to Mansfield could provide at that time, as they were only able to mine the seams directly beneath the ground, rather than deep under the ground.

SLIDE 7

OPPOSITION TO THE MANSFIELD AND PINXTON RAILWAY PROPOSAL

- Some of the local colliery owners were worried that it would enable Pinxton Colliery to sell their coal at a better price to their customers in Mansfield, and they would lose business as a result.

George Canning, Howard Molyneux and Mr Chambers, colliery owners close to Mansfield, tried to raise a party in Parliament. In other words, they tried to get the House of Lords or House of Commons to debate the proposal, officially oppose it and ultimately, get it thrown out, as they believed that it would destroy their collieries.
- John Coke actually asked the Duke of Portland to wait a year before taking the proposal to Parliament to give him time to open up new mines around Pinxton so that he would have lots of coal available to sell to the industries in Mansfield when the line was opened. The Duke of Portland agreed to wait.
- The Cromford Canal Company were never enthused about the proposal and wouldn't get involved in the construction, although they would be happy to accommodate any further business, if and when it arrived.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

SLIDE 8

THE DOWNSIDES OF THE RAILWAY FOR JOHN COKE

- The wharf (where goods were loaded onto the canal) at Pinxton was found to be inadequate for the amount of business it received. The Cromford Canal Company ordered that the Coke brothers, John Wright, Ironmaster at the Butterley Company, and William Jessop Junior pay half the expenses for its alterations while they paid the other half. Jessop refused to pay anything.
- In the long term, the railway would bring prosperity to Mansfield, but initially it caused a great deal of distress to the horse dealers and wagon masters whose job was to move coal around and many of whom lost their livelihood when the railway was created.
- The cost of creating the railway increased throughout the construction and created a lot of stress and worry for John Coke in particular. He backed the railway to help him sell coal from his land in Pinxton further afield but as the price was restricted he would have to sell double the amount of coal in the first year to make the money he needed to recoup costs. His brother (D'Ewes senior died in 1811) D'Ewes Coke sent him money towards the venture, but John was so sick of it by the time it was completed he could not face attending the official opening and celebrations in Mansfield.

John Coke wrote to his brother (D'Ewes) just prior to the opening:
"It is impossible that you can be more anxious than I am to avoid the Dinner, the very thought of it and the necessity of conforming to custom have affected my nerves to such a degree as to make me quite unwell, and so much so as to occasion a doubt whether I can venture out of the house - I would readily give £10 that the whole business was over, but my staying away would never be overlooked or forgiven and it is the consciousness of this that annoys me..."

This letter doesn't really say whether it was the M&P saga that caused his anxiety; it could be that he simply didn't like the idea of pomp and ceremony. In fact, he could easily be suffering from clinical anxiety. It's doubtful that we will ever know the truth.

- John Coke received a threatening letter demanding that he did not increase the price of his coal (31 January 1831), signed by "Swing". Swing was the name of a group of angry farmers in the south of England. This was thought to be a reaction to the planned introduction of another toll (charge) between Mansfield and Skegby, which would raise the cost of coal coming into Mansfield via that route. The letter was most likely written by colliery owners in Teversal and Skegby who were possibly still struggling to sell their coal into Mansfield and fearing that their prices would have to go even higher if extra tolls were introduced.
- It states that 'If you do not abandon your villainous attempt upon advancing the coal at this place, your house and everything belonging you shall be burned to the ground'.
- The Swing riots were a reaction against laws which were affecting farmers' livelihood including the introduction of the Enclosures Act which meant that the rich landowners claimed back a large amount of common land depriving the common people the ancient rights to graze their animals and grow their own produce. Farmers were unable to make a living, feed their families - they were hungry and angry.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

SLIDE 9

APPROVAL FOR THE RAILWAY PROPOSAL

John Coke and the Duke of Portland forged on and the scheme was presented to Parliament as a Bill on 1 April 1817. A Bill is a request for an Act of Parliament. Private companies needed an Act of Parliament, or in other words permission from the government, to construct a canal, road or railway. If granted it enabled the company to compulsory purchase land to create the railway if the owner refused to sell their land. However, the company had to present a very good reason why that railway would be beneficial to society and the economy before permission would be granted.

By 1817 the list of subscribers to the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway included colliery owners, lace manufacturers, a maltster, a bleacher, and an iron founder who saw the business benefit of a railway and were supportive of the plan. The scheme was also endorsed by the Richard Arkwright company, pioneering millers at Cromford and George Stevenson, the Scottish lighthouse engineer.

The new railroad was approved on 16 June, but the opposition effort had resulted in a clause preventing coal to Mansfield being transported for no less than 2s per ton – which meant that Mansfield coal prices would remain high.¹

SLIDE 10

HOW THE RAILWAY HELPED MANSFIELD AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS

- Goods, especially from the quarries, transported further afield – boosting the local economy.
- Coal brought into Mansfield to serve the factories and to fuel steam-powered manufacture. With the advent of the steam engine coal mining also became more advanced with deeper seams being mined around the area.
- The production of malt grew from a small scale, often village-based industry to a large-scale urban manufacture. The new big maltings of the nineteenth century were focussed on transport routes, in particular water and rail.
- As the industries around Mansfield flourished jobs would have been created, which would have attracted families from the outlying villages to move into the town and consequently boost the local economy and strengthen Mansfield as a leading market town and as an emerging industrial centre.
- Passenger transport was introduced, initially just on a Thursday allowing people to attend to the Mansfield market, thus boosting sales for market traders as well as attracting additional traders from the villages along the line.

¹ The Mansfield to Pinxton Railway 1819 – 1848, John Vanags

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

SLIDE 11

DANGERS OF WORKING ON THE RAILWAY

Although the railways greatly assisted the industrial and economic growth of Mansfield and indeed the country at large, they could be dangerous. Injuries and even reports of death were fairly common. The cause could be as simple as somebody not looking both ways to see if a train was coming, as well as collisions and derailment, as in the accident illustrated in the drawing in the slide shows. This particular rail disaster happened in Staplehurst, Kent on 9 June 1865 at 3:13 pm. Ten people died, and 40 people were injured. Charles Dickens, the author was on the train but survived although he was greatly affected by the accident and was frightened of going on a train afterwards. When the steam engine came along there were also explosions and fires.

Here is a list of railway accidents on wiki here which teachers may reference: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rail_accidents_\(before_1880\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rail_accidents_(before_1880))

The following incident on the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway was reported in the Midland Gazette, 1846: *"On Wednesday Mr Swann held an inquest at Kirkby, on the body of Samuel Dean, aged 45 years, who died in consequence of being run over by some wagons on the above line of rails, having slipped and fallen down while attempting to jump onto a wagon, while it and others behind it were being drawn by two horses which he was driving."*

More recently there was a report of a death on the level crossing at King's Mill: assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/547c8fc8ed915d4c10000149/R012013_130114_Kings_Mill.pdf

Teachers can make the point that although railway health and safety has improved railways are still very dangerous places and children should not go near the rails and respect 'do not enter' signs.

SLIDE 12

THE DECLINE OF CROMFORD CANAL

Originally there were plans to link the Cromford Canal to a trans Pennine canal – connecting the East Midlands with Manchester – but this proved too costly. The High Peak Railway was opened however in 1831, joining the Cromford Canal at High Peak Wharf with the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge.

It took longer to transport goods along the canals than it did by train. From the late 1830s there was a boom in railway construction to accommodate the new steam locomotive trains, known as the period of 'Railway Mania'.

The competition from the railways forced the Cromford Canal company to charge less for transporting goods – tonnage rates (the amount charged per mile) which meant that income fell rapidly – from £12,086 in 1841 to £7,588 in 1850.

Some people thought that the birth of the railways would mean that the canals would stop being used as a major network for freight. However, canals were still being used for a number of years.

In fact, by 1841, the Cromford Canal was carrying double what it had done at the turn of 19th century. Coal carriage had doubled, and the canal now carried substantial quantities of farm produce as well as ironstone, gritstone and limestone, and the amount of iron from Butterley works had increased considerably. Coal was mainly carried down to the Erewash Canal and on to the Soar Navigation, and then to Leicester. Limestone was shipped further south to the West Midlands and London.

Many of these materials were used in the construction of the growing railway network and ultimately the demand for steel to build the railways brought about the death of the Cromford Canal Company.

By the second half of the century the railways had replaced the canals as the primary method of transport in Britain, although canals still moved goods around locally.

In August 1852 the Cromford Canal was sold to the Manchester, Buxton, Matlock & Midlands Junction Railway for £103,500.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

SLIDE 13

THE OPENING CELEBRATIONS OF THE MANSFIELD AND PINXTON RAILWAY

The railway was opened on 13 April 1819 with quite a fanfare, the ringing of bells in the town centre, a procession on foot along Alfreton Road (now known as Sutton Road) to the railway, at the Portland viaduct, where ten wagons laden with coal from Pinxton Colliery was escorted back into the Market Place and ceremoniously burnt.

Around 300 workmen who were employed on the construction of the railroad were provided with a dinner in various public houses by the proprietors, who themselves enjoyed a celebratory meal at the Swan Inn.

John Coke, owner of Pinxton Colliery, who led the railway from concept to reality, is reported to have said that he'd rather pay £10 (about £400 today) to avoid going to the celebrations. This is probably due to the fact that the opposition from local colliers in Sutton had created a lot of problems for him and he also had financial difficulties (see letter under notes for Slide 8).

Watch this clip about the 200-year commemoration of the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway line broadcast on ITV feature broadcast in April 2019.

www.itv.com/news/central/2019-04-13/oldest-running-railway-in-england-turns-200-years-old-in-mansfield/

HANDOUTS

- M&P_L2HO1** The three key figures behind the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway
- M&P_L2HO2i** The arguments for the creation of the railway
- M&P_L2HO2ii** Opposition to the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway proposal
- M&P_L2HO2iii** The downsides of the railway for John Coke
- M&P_L2HO3** Newspapers reports of accidents and injury on the Mansfield and Pinxton line
- M&P_L2HO4i** Depiction of the celebrations by graphic designer - ceremonial burning of coal and revelry?
- M&P_L2HO4ii** Map showing the route from the wharf to the marketplace made by superimposing a Buxton sketch of the ancient marketplace over a later O/S map.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Class discussion (10-15 minutes)

Explore some of the key themes arising from the teacher's slides, such as wealth and power and the connection between transport and the local business success. Here are a few prompts as a starting point:

In what ways was the Duke of Portland a powerful man?

ANSWER:

He owned most of the land around Sutton; he was an MP; and he would have socialised with lots of powerful people (such as business owners).

Was it only the rich business people who would benefit from the railway?

ANSWER:

No - if businesses did well they could create jobs which would mean more people would be better off; it also meant people would have more money to spend, so local shops would do better.

In what way was the railway better than the canal network? And did the canals stop being used when the railway was built?

ANSWER:

The railway only helped to get goods to the canals better than on wagons pulled on the roads. They were faster and could carry heavier loads. To begin with the canals were still very much needed. It was only when more railways were built that the canals started losing money.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

2. Team Presentations (2 hours)

Working in teams of three pupils, each team is charged with creating a presentation to make the case for erecting a monument that will be located at the Mill Waters' site to commemorate one of the three people who were pivotal to the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway: John Coke, the 4th Duke of Portland or Josias Jessop.

The presentation will be delivered to representative of the Mill Waters Heritage Centre and Ashfield District Council as well as local interest groups and the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

The first hour should be spent doing secondary research i.e. online searches or visiting the local studies library in Sutton-in-Ashfield or Mansfield to further their knowledge of their chosen individual.

Some questions you might try and answer as part of your historic research.

1. What date were they born and did they die?
2. Were they married?
3. What were their most notable achievements?
4. Are there any other interesting facts about your person from history?

Write down where you found your answers; in other words, which websites did you visit, or books did you get the information from?

The second hour should be spent producing your presentation. Decide whether you are going to create a PowerPoint, or perhaps you might produce a video or even go back in time and interview the person himself!?

Remember to build a picture of each person including their professional role and personal characteristics. How did they support their local community and the wider area? Include any evidence or 'killer facts' that will dazzle your audience.

Each group could give their presentations and at the end the class could decide which person deserves to be commemorated based on the presentations.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

3. Letter writing task (30 mins - 1 hour)

Pupils should imagine that they are either a local colliery owner in Teversal or Kirkby or one of the businesses that would benefit from the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway line.

Using Handouts 2i, 2ii and 2iii as background they should write a letter to the Duke of Portland and their local MP stating why they are either in favour of the proposal or in opposition of it going ahead.

They should clearly state their arguments for or against the proposal, bearing in mind how they make a living and presenting their arguments in a persuasive way.

Mansfield and Pinxton Railway

What were the arguments for the creation of the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway?

TN
TEACHER'S NOTES

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

3. Letter writing task (30 mins – 1 hour)

Ask pupils to write an article in the style of a local news reporter in 1819.

What did the event involve, who attended and perhaps – who was notable by their absence?

Before starting to write pupils should review the coverage of the opening celebrations published in John Vanags' book, as a guide to the style in which newspapers were written at that time.

The piece could reflect on the benefits that the new railway will bring to the town and its economy.

Pupils should use lots of adjectives to conjure up the excitement that must have been in the air that day.