

## CHAPTER V

### THE LIVERPOOL TO MANCHESTER RAILWAY

"At the time of my cross examination by the Commons Committee I had no-one to tell my tale to but Mr. Sanders of Liverpool. He did listen and keep my spirits up."

George Stephenson remembered the frustrations of persuading Parliament to authorise the construction of the world's first public railway when he wrote these words. He was then looking back many years later from his hard-won position as one of the country's most respected engineers, but at the time Stephenson, who was unknown outside his native Northumberland and had no formal education, was nearly broken by the subtle arguments of the powerful opponents of the project and their learned Counsel. They knew nothing of the potential miracles his steam engine would ultimately perform, but were merely concerned to protect themselves and the old order.

At the end of the eighteenth century Liverpool was a town of the same size as say, present-day Dorking, with about 26,000 inhabitants and little industry. The surrounding area was still largely farming country and the city was unrepresented in Parliament, as much of it was owned, and consequently ruled, by its hereditary land-owning peers such as the Earl of Sefton and Lord Derby. The industry which the new century was to bring had not yet transformed the area and the canals could still handle the raw materials for what little industry there was.

But twenty-five years later the town and port of Liverpool as well as the whole county, were utterly transformed. Nearly

four times the tonnage of shipping was using the port, coal-mining, the cotton trade and manufacturing industries had each multiplied several times. Cotton imports rose from a few hundred to half a million bags per year, as the surrounding Lancashire towns rapidly developed into the greatest manufacturing complex in the world. Trade of all kinds made rich men of many Liverpool citizens. But by 1820 imports exceeded the capacity of the old canal systems and delays became longer and longer. Imports were swamping the town.

Goods reached Liverpool in twenty days from America, but sometimes took longer to travel the remaining thirty-five miles from there to their destination in Manchester. Although Liverpool itself processed and used part of the goods arriving by sea, the majority of goods were in transit to the inland cities, most often Manchester. To get there they had to be carried by the "water-carriers" - the canal owners: this meant transshipment into barges at Liverpool then river and canal to the wharves at Manchester. Loading and unloading were quickly effected as labour was plentiful, but the canals, run by the Old Quay Company and the Duke of Bridgewater's Trustees, were not only in the habit of drying up in the summer and freezing in the winter but were closed shop run for the profit of the owners and not the convenience of their customers. Their proprietors' shares, bought originally for £70 each, were now worth £1250 each. So an alternative method of transport had to be provided as quickly as possible. The main roads in their mediaeval state were incapable of carrying the heavy loads, and in winter often became impassable. Horses could not pull more than the lightest loads on their steep rutted surfaces.

In coal mining districts, where very

heavy loads had to be carried, it had been discovered that by laying parallel wooden tracks onto which the carts' wheels fitted, a horse could draw a load ten times the weight it could pull on ordinary roads. In Durham and Northumberland these tramways were quite widely used in transporting heavy loads of coal from the mines to the ports. So it appeared to businessmen in Liverpool and Manchester who were being inconvenienced by the inefficiency of the canal monopoly, that a tramway of this kind, but on a larger scale, could be the best way of by-passing the Water Carriers.

One of the Liverpool businessmen who realised this need, both from his business requirements, and also from the point of view of a public service in the neighbourhood, was Joseph Sandars. Joseph was the son of another Joseph Sandars, a merchant who lived in Derby, and was a nephew of Samuel Sandars who first established the family at Gainsborough in the last years of the eighteenth century. Joseph's father had moved the short distance from Mackworth to Derby and there his son was brought up. Mackworth is only just outside Derby and at this time the family was very thick on the ground in this area. The young Joseph was born in 1780, three years before his brother Samuel who later married Mary Collett of Lockers, Hemel Hempstead. Being an elder brother's son, he was nearly twenty-five years older than his cousin George the M.P.

Joseph, like many of his relations at the time, was soon taking an active interest in the corn trade, and it was a natural move for a corn merchant of ambition to set up in business in a larger centre than Derby. At the age of twenty Joseph moved to Liverpool and within a few years had entered into a profitable partnership with another Liverpool trader named Samuel Blain. The effects of the Napoleonic Wars were

expanding trade during the early years of the century and Liverpool was about to take the lion's share of the resultant expansion in imports and exports in the north west manufacturing area. The firm, Blain and Sandars, soon became known on the Liverpool Exchange and Joseph Sandars's business interests soon outstripped those of his father in Derby. By the end of the war Blain and Sandars was booming and Joseph looking for new outlets for his enterprise and new wealth. He became connected with different ventures trading with Ireland and America, and through these and the corn exchange he became a 'name' in the city. Apart from his business interests he was very much interested in political questions both local and national. He was a Whig and became a prominent speaker in the neighbourhood on all kinds of topics from Health to Slavery. He wrote pamphlets (including one against the abolition of slavery) and, through his friend Egerton-Smith, the proprietor of the Liverpool Mercury, his views and personality became widely known.

In 1821 Joseph Sandars met William James through his firm. James was a surveyor and land-agent, and had a host of other interests and ventures in hand: so many in fact that he became known as the 'speculator in ideas'. Talking to James, Sandars discovered that he had been called in as surveyor and broker for two earlier tramway schemes, at Croydon and Moreton-in-the-Marsh. The meeting was a turning point in the yet unformed plans for the Liverpool rail road, even though James's connection was not to last long.

The latter was engaged to conduct an accurate survey for a possible railroad between the towns of Liverpool and Manchester. Sandars guaranteed the cost of carrying it out. Unfortunately the surveyor's speculations were rapidly exceeding his resources

and the survey was never completed, but William James brought with him one invaluable connection without which the venture would never have succeeded: George Stephenson. The railway fraternity before 1825 was small and James inevitably came to know the remarkable self-instructed colliery engineer from Northumberland and about his schemes for adapting the static steam engine into an engine which would be strong, light and efficient enough to propel itself, on a truck, along a specially constructed 'railway'. Stephenson had more experience of the practical workings of steam engines than anyone in England at the time. It was less than four years before the successful opening of the famous Stockton to Darlington Railway.

Later in 1821 the first practical steps were taken on the project: a preliminary survey was made. Joseph Sandars, together with James and two other friends, made a personal inspection of the lie of the land between Liverpool and Manchester to ensure that before they started the task of raising support for the scheme they would be in a position to explain how and where it was intended to implement it. One of the most important factors noted by them on their various journeys into the country was the names of the landowners through whose land they would need to obtain access.

After this was done, Sandars set about the task of actually selling the idea to the influential men in the two towns and forming a committee to put it to practical effect - a substantial job, as the magnitude of the project he was proposing was unprecedented since the building of the canals. A sum of more than half a million pounds would have to be raised, innumerable opponents placated or bought out and an engineering feat for which there was little obvious skill available at that time,

carried out. Thanks to his connections and his past skill as a propagandist, Sandars was successful in securing the backing of many important citizens of both Liverpool and Manchester despite the idea involving such colossal cost and difficulty. In Liverpool he enlisted the names of his partner, Samuel Blain, the Chairman of the Liverpool Corn Exchange, William Booth, John Gladstone, Ewart, Rathbone, and Mr. Moss of Moss, Rogers & Moss's Bank: John Gladstone was shortly replaced by Robert Gladstone (father of the Prime Minister) who with William Huskisson were Liverpool's two Members of Parliament. In Manchester he interested many of the leading businessmen, one of whom was John Kennedy, whose firm manufactured Crompton's Mules.

After this had been done, it was no longer either possible or desirable to keep the nature of the proposed scheme under cover. Late in 1822 the Liverpool Mercury reported on the proposed railway, adding, ambitiously, but quite incorrectly, that "it is hardly necessary to add that the use of steam carriages is contemplated". This was far from the case and it was still years before the opening of the first public railway: besides the Liverpool Committee were still firmly in favour of horses being employed to haul the wagons along the rails since this method was already well-tried on many private mine rail-ways. Now that the railway scheme was in the open and being commented on in the Press all over the Country as well as in Lancashire, the forces of opposition took little time to gather their numbers. Among their leaders were Lord Sefton and Lord Derby, who both owned large areas of the county, the latter holding much of Liverpool itself, and whom Randolph Churchill aptly named 'King of Lancashire'. The third large landowner who had in his canal an even larger interest to protect, was the Duke of Bridgewater.

His gargantuan canal profits gave him every incentive to hinder the railway as far and as long as he could. His bailiffs were instructed to prevent the surveyors for the railway committee and their teams from entering the farms on the Bridgewater estates.

Lord Derby argued that the railway, particularly if it employed steam locomotion as the Mercury had suggested, would prevent his cows from grazing and his tenants' hens from laying eggs. He and other opponents said it would set fire to houses along the line and, even worse, would prevent the rearing of pheasants, disrupting all they considered most admirable in English country life. It was widely believed the human frame would not withstand the forces of such travel. Furthermore the morale of the populace would be shattered once and for all.

At the time when the initial survey of the land was being carried out, the opposition created amongst the tenantry of these landed peers almost frustrated the scheme altogether, and Sandars called meetings of the promoters on several occasions, but was determined to keep his supporters behind him. James, doing the actual surveying, encountered such fierce opposition that he was obliged to hire a "noted bruiser" to protect the theodolite carrier from the incensed tenants. (Even so it was broken several times). Ultimately many parts of the route had to be surveyed either at night or during lunch when the landowners could safely be assumed to be in no fit condition to offer resistance. After long delays and some recriminations the survey was completed but not before the speculations and fortunes of Mr. William James were very much on the wane. He had undertaken projects all over the country, at a time when little was known of the cost or long-term effects of large

scale engineering operations. Unluckily these declining interests started to take up so much of his time that the survey was not completed until 1825. As a result the Bill to authorise the new Rail Road was too late for the 1824 session of Parliament and Sandars was obliged to dismiss James. The latter never forgave him this as his descendants revived the controversy long after his death by publishing a book with the object of justifying James's claim to be the originator of the first plan for a Public Railway.

At the time the survey was being carried out, Sandars himself had been engaged in setting up the preparations to obtain legal authorisation for the whole operation. This had to be done by tactful and diplomatic persuasion of the Liverpool Common Council, and then, more important, by procuring a Private Act of Parliament, which was to be a formidable task. Joseph Sandars was no novice at pamphleteering to gain support for causes in which he was interested, and now, in 1824, he published an open letter addressed to members of both Houses of Parliament and to the merchants, manufacturers and others interested in the conveyance of goods between Liverpool and Manchester. He entitled the letter, which is in fact a short booklet, "Letter on the Subject of the proposed Rail Road between Liverpool and Manchester, pointing out the necessity for its adoption and the manifest Advantages it offers to the Public, with an Exposure of the exorbitant and unjust charges of the Water-Carriers". It is a lengthy, detailed but discreet letter of persuasion. Two thirds of its length is devoted to an explanation of the inefficiency and overcharging of the canal proprietors. The letter continues by listing the many advantages to be gained from a railway: its speed and efficiency, safety, convenience to coal owners along its route, and cheapness. Goods would not only be able to travel twice

as cheaply but at ten or twelve miles per hour, taking three hours instead of between three days and three weeks by the water-carriers. Furthermore, it would expedite the trade with America on whose raw materials the country and its trade were about to become more and more dependent. Continuing in a vein which at the present time strikes a surprisingly contemporary note, Sandars writes, "... the country requires the aid of this and every improvement which can be suggested: ... it is loaded with an immense debt and is heavily taxed". It was only nine years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Shortly after the publication of this pamphlet, later editions of which were signed by "150 of the most respectable gentlemen of the town", Sandars and his committee members went to inspect George Stephenson's Killingworth Colliery railway. At this time this afforded the best example of the practical use and power of the steam engine system devised by Stephenson. The Stockton to Darlington Railway had not yet opened. In spite of its many advantages, the Promoters were not easily persuaded. Several visits had to be made to Killingworth by Sandars before they were won over to the idea even of constructing the railway, let alone of using steam locomotives on it, rather than horses. The point was not decided in favour of steam until the railway itself was nearly constructed - only one year before the Duke of Wellington attended the opening Ceremony in September 1830.

In 1824, however, there still continued the difficult task of winning support for the scheme from the general public, from the landowners and from the canal proprietors themselves. On October 29th, the first prospectus was published. Joseph Sandars was named one of the three Deputy Chairmen.

This prospectus, which later became a precedent on which many later railway companies' promotion documents were based, consisted largely of Joseph Sandars's Letter to Parliament, and in itself constitutes a considerable contribution to the success of the early stages of the project. It is very different from any modern prospectus as it neither offers a high rate of interest nor capital appreciation. The canal proprietors were not impressed, as indeed they would have been unlikely to be beside the £1250 which their £70 shares were now worth. Only The Times received the idea with enthusiasm.

It was not until 1825 that the survey was completed and arrangements could be made to present the Bill to Parliament. Without this nothing could be done. A permanent committee was formed, with the Mayor of Liverpool in the chair, and their first task was to apply for the necessary Parliamentary authority. In February 1825 their deputation went to London to attend the hearings in the House of Commons, based on the first survey and building plan. On 8th February the petition was presented and four weeks later the Bill received an unopposed second reading, completing the preliminaries. On March 21st the committee stage began and Counsel for Sandars and the committee summed up their case six weeks later. Four further weeks were taken up by Lord Derby's counsel opposing the scheme, who closed his evidence on May 30th with the rather patronising assertion that "from considerations of kindness to the Proprietors of so wild and impracticable a scheme, the Bill ought to be rejected by the Honourable Legislature". The pre-amble of the Bill was passed but the next day both the clauses enabling the Company to commence the work and to buy the land compulsorily were defeated.

Undaunted by this defeat, Sandars and his committee at once set about the task of preparing the Bill for re-submission to Parliament in the next year's session: only three days after the Bill was turned down, the Committee met at the Royal Hotel in St. James Street. At that meeting twenty-one Members of Parliament including General Gascoyne, Mr. Huskisson, Lord Forbes, Marcus Beresford and Thomas Spring-Rice, passed a resolution "that an improved means of conveyance between Liverpool and Manchester is expedient".

Before the Bill was submitted to Parliament the second year some early errors were eliminated from the survey, the route altered to avoid crossing Lord Derby's and Lord Sefton's land, Sir John Rennie appointed Engineer (unlike Stephenson he was an accepted establishment figure, which was essential for the Parliamentary Hearings), and the Duke of Bridgewater persuaded to become a proprietor. On the second application the Bill was passed by 30 votes to 2 - Lord Derby and the Earl of Wilton against. The total cost of obtaining the Bill was over £27,000, but at this enormous cost it became a precedent for railway Bills covering thousands of miles over the next decades.

Stephenson was now once again Chief Engineer, (Sir John Rennie having found himself unable to devote the amount of time to the construction that the Committee considered necessary), as well as surveyor, builder and administrator. The way in which the railway track was built is a tribute to a man whose skill with steam engines, let alone the construction of the longest tramway in the world, was acquired largely by trial and error. The works involved two miles of tunnels, sixty three bridges, and the filling in of an apparently bottomless tract of bogland at Chat Moss. One part of the Moss was so soft that

ballast was poured into it for weeks on end and still the track showed no firmness. A Board meeting was held on the site to decide whether to abandon the Chat Moss route altogether but eventually the Board stuck to their original plan; in the end it turned out to be the cheapest part of the whole route, since no compensation had to be paid to any landowners.

By 1829 the original estimated cost of £460,000 had been spent and it was necessary for Sandars to prepare to obtain further Acts to shorten and improve the route and authorise raising a further £240,000 capital and £100,000 Exchequer loan. Although the very method of locomotion was still undecided, Stephenson from the beginning had regarded the project as his greatest chance to put his locomotive to the proof. The directors were not committed to steam and were in favour of constructing fixed engines at intervals along the track, to haul the wagons along by means of ropes. But Stephenson and Sandars were against this because a single faulty engine would halt the whole system, and as a result a "trial" was arranged to prove whether the various leading locomotives of the time were commercially or technically viable. Engines of six tons and costing not more than £550 were to pull loads of twenty tons at, if possible, ten miles per hour, at not more than a stated boiler pressure. At the Rainhill trial Stephenson's Rocket - which had to be transported by road from Newcastle to Bowness and from there by canal to Liverpool - competed against Ericsson's Novelty, Burstall's Perseverance and an ingenious machine powered by a horse on a treadmill - Brandreth's Cycloped. The Rocket was the only engine to come out of the trials undamaged by its own exertions and achieved an average of fifteen miles per hour over seventy miles, and a top speed of twenty-nine miles per hour. The

directors needed no further proof to decide on steam locomotive power. The effects of their decision were momentous.

The railway was opened in September 1830. The occasion was the climax of nearly nine years of propaganda, public relations, argument, persuasion and engineering difficulties of the greatest magnitude. The Liverpool Mercury says that the Directors (including Joseph Sandars, and, curiously, one of his fellow-Directors, Charles Tayleur, one of whose relatives was later to marry his son) "were determined to give eclat to the occasion and that the elite of the Kingdom should be present at the opening". The Liverpool Mercury's report on 17th September 1830 reflects this clearly:

"From such arrangements we cannot wonder, therefore, that Wednesday morning witnessed the tide of population progressing towards those suburbs through which the procession would pass. At 9 o'clock the Co's yard in Crown St. began to fill. On entering it, attention was arrested by a range of splendid equipage filled with many brilliant parties, among whom we recognised the families of the neighbouring nobility and gentry and some illustrious strangers. At half past 9 the gorgeous car for the reception of the Duke of Wellington and the other noble visitors appeared issuing from the small tunnel, and on its coming into the yard called forth the most marked approbation.

"This carriage was truly magnificent, the sides being beautifully ornamented with superb Grecian scrolls and balustrades, including guilt (sic) supporting a massy handrail all round the carriage, along the whole centre

of which was an Ottoman seat for the company. A grand canopy was placed aloft upon gilded pillars, so contrived as to be lowered when passing through the tunnel. The drapery was of rich crimson cloth and the whole surmounted by the ducal coronet. The floor, 32' long was supported by eight large iron wheels ...

"The engines proceeded at a moderate speed to Wavertree Lane when increased power having been added, they went forward with an arrow-like swiftness and thousands fell back, whom all the previous efforts of a formidable police could not move from the road. Booths were erected at every commanding spot and were most fashionably and respectably attended. Twenty-four miles per hour became the maximum of the speed.

"A grandstand was erected at Sankey embankment, which was crowded in every part and from which the most flattering demonstration of applause proceeded. The viaduct and embankment particularly obtained the Duke's attention and "marvellous" "Stupendous" were frequently heard to pass his lips." He even kissed a baby.

The scene was magnificent, but was unfortunately the tragic scene of Mr. Huskisson's death. He "was singled out by an inscrutable Providence from the midst of the distinguished multitude that surrounded him", so one reads on the tablet erected on the spot where the accident occurred. He was crossing the line to greet the Duke of Wellington, wishing to effect a reconciliation perhaps after Cabinet differences with his Prime Minister, and was knocked down by an oncoming engine, (the party of dignitaries having descended while the engines

refilled with water). The civic authorities rather irrationally feared a disturbance in the town when this became known, and so the inaugural party returned to Liverpool without setting foot in Manchester.

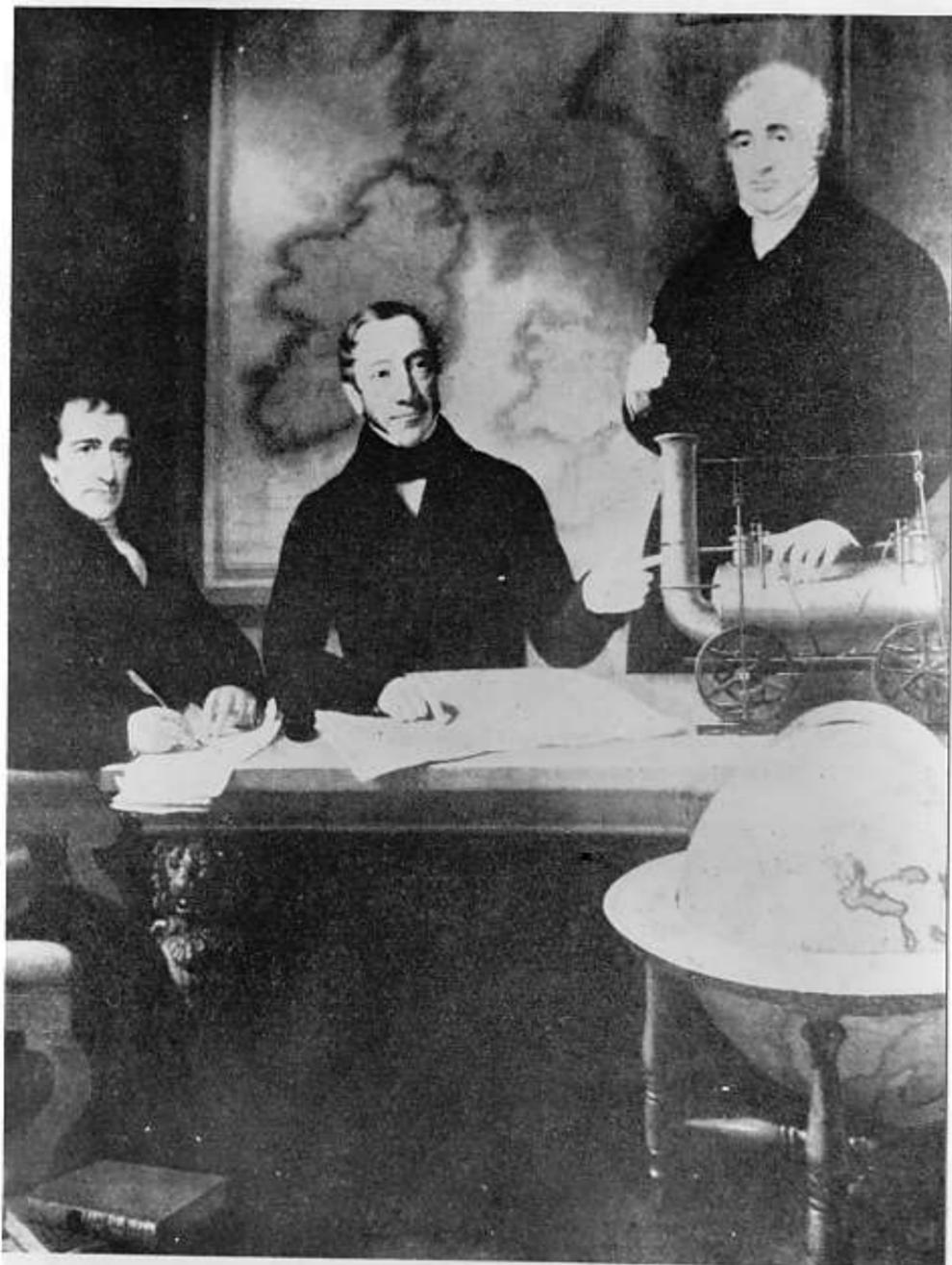
This novel form of transport quickly gained favour, setting on foot far greater repercussions than the originators would ever have considered possible. Soon after, it gained its most stubborn opponents as those who insisted that railways were even essential, to the common good: Lord Derby insisted on having railways and stations on his estates when the Birmingham to London line was built less than ten years later. The railways attracted ten times as many passengers as had originally been estimated and the whole emphasis of the enterprise as primarily a goods-carrying concern was called into question. The benefits to business communities in Liverpool and Manchester were however its greatest effect - for instance the freight rates fell to 2/6d per ton (even though before the line was opened the Company had received a letter from a Mr. Isaac Crewdson of Manchester advocating higher charges than the canal proprietors', since a much better service would be available). The Bridgewater Trustees and Old Quay Company had no option but to reduce their tariffs back to the levels authorised by their original Statutes.

Joseph Sandars had justified his original thinking on pure commercial lines, considering that passenger revenue would be very slight compared with goods dues. He had thought that passengers would have to be tolerated only to convince business customers of the uses of the railway for transporting their goods. Soon passengers had become the biggest source of revenue: later still Her Imperial Majesty used this new form of transport, of which it had

earlier been thought it would be impossible for the human frame to withstand. Queen Victoria's use made railways permissible for Society. In the early days the well-to-do were licensed to use their own locomotives on the railway tracks of the Company, but this had to be discontinued before long.

The effect of railways on the development of the country in the industrial age is not appropriate for inclusion in this essay, but the success of railways was the success of Joseph Sandars' venture - misguided as people had at first thought it to be. He has been variously described "the father of railways" and "the father of the Liverpool and Manchester railway" by contemporary biographers and historians, but almost certainly the latter is right. The inventor of the locomotive itself, which first proved itself by racing against a stage coach and within a few years was so developed as to be capable of attaining a speed of sixty miles per hour, must after all be acclaimed the father of railways. Neither without the other would have succeeded in the venture, and the scheme would have been delayed for many years had it not been for the fortunate introduction of George Stephenson to Sandars by the canny Mr. James.

Joseph Sandars remained in touch with railways, with Liverpool and with Stephenson for the rest of his life. In 1848 he was connected with a colliery venture of Stephenson's at Clay Croft in Derbyshire, and correspondence between the two men took place on many topics. Until its destruction by bombing in 1940 there was a group portrait in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool which showed Joseph Sandars sitting at a heavy mahogany table on which stood a model of the Rocket, maps and papers on his left, standing, was Stephenson,



SYLVESTER

SANDARS

STEPHENSON

evidently explaining the marvellous machine, and on his right the Company secretary, Mr. Sylvester, taking notes. The artist, Gambadella, painted the group to tell the story of this particular piece of history in the style of the time, and although not great art, it is unfortunate that it no longer exists.

Joseph Sandars died in 1857, after returning to his native Midlands, and he was probably the only member of the family to be connected with Liverpool apart from his cousin George Sandars and the latter's grandson, George Russell Sandars, who went to a parish in the area at the end of the century. Joseph's son, another Joseph, became Member of Parliament in 1848, for Great Yarmouth, but remained in the House only up to 1852. He married Lady Virginia Tayleur, daughter of the Marquess of Headfort, and lived at Bosworth Hall, Leicestershire, where he died in 1893 - his wife living on in Chelsea until 1923. She wrote several very long but now forgotten novels - perhaps epics - for one was in three volumes!

Joseph Sandars' son had no successors, but nevertheless other members of the family shared his father's interest in railways. His cousin in Manchester, George Sandars, after retiring from Parliament, in 1857, was a director of various railway companies in this country, and Thomas Collett Sandars combined being a fellow of Oriel College and his work on Justinian's Institutes with the chairmanship for many years of the Mexican Railway. Once again, the latter's son, Horace Sandars, whose business interests took him to Spain and Rumania, was also a director of various railway companies.

The early nineteenth century was the age of the most dynamic expansion in this country's history. The same period marked

the change in the Sandars annals from small Derbyshire landowners to wealthy businessmen. Simultaneously with the growth of Joseph Sandars' business in Liverpool, George Sandars' cornfactor's and shipping business in Manchester and Samuel Sandars' malting business in Gainsborough were thriving and the family spreading throughout the country.