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Mind, Body and Soul:

An investigation into the architectural and ideological functions of the Great Western Railway's Swindon Railway Village

Abstract

Located at the centre of Swindon, the Swindon Railway Village (SRV) was a residential and social hub for Swindon and its Great Western Railway (GWR) locomotive and carriage works. The SRV was established in 1841 to the designs of the famous engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel and expanded throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century to serve the GWR's needs. By 1891, it comprised of around 287 cottages, a large mechanics' institute, a market, a cottage hospital, an expansive company park, an Anglican church, a Methodist chapel, swimming baths and a medical dispensary. The SRV was a complex multi-functional space that could support a railway worker from cradle to grave.

This report aims to reinvigorate an understudied area and to answer the central research question— what were the architectural and ideological functions of the SRV? Unlike the more easily understood and studied benevolent-industrialist and worker relationships present at high-profile model villages such as Saltaire, SRV is a complex product of a natural monopoly transport provider and its various actors. To elucidate the nature of the SRV, this report relies heavily on a broad range of historical and theoretical literature and archival material. Primary research encompasses—minutes from meetings, letters, popular journals, retrospectives, and most importantly, plans.

Due to the GWR's complexity, this report will establish an ideological review of the company, which it will use to inform its later argumentation. The remaining chapters will focus on three of SRV's architectural forms whose functions aim to support its workers' bodies in separate ways. Housing will look at the cottages; Mind will explore the Mechanics' Institution; Body will look at the swimming baths, and all three of these chapters will investigate how their use built into the GWR's ideology.

Introduction

First established in 1841, the Swindon Railway Village (SRV) was a residential and social hub for Swindon and its Great Western Railway (GWR) locomotive and carriage works (Figs. 1-3). It was an iterative project that was extended and redesigned to serve the GWR's changing economic and social needs. At the height of its building, in 1891, it comprised of: around 287 houses,[1] a large mechanics' institute, a market with capacity for 'thirty-two shops and standings for thirty stalls,'[2] a cottage hospital, an expansive company park, an Anglican church, a Methodist chapel,[3] swimming baths and a medical dispensary. Due to its visibility, as Swindon's *New Town*, SRV cemented the GWR's material and symbolic place at the heart of Swindon. The village also reflected the company's ideology, and its mix of functional architectures produced a lasting societal impact. Aneurin Bevan praised its Medical Fund for inspiring the National Health Service's creation. He said of the village: "There it was, a complete health service […] all we had to do was to expand it to embrace the whole country!"[4]

This report will explore the SRV's architectural and ideological significance. After disambiguating the company's ideology for analytic purposes, I will approach the buildings through the divisions of housing, body, and mind. This will enable me to isolate and dissect

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[1] The number of cottages quoted to have existed in the village varies widely in the literature. This is because of the village's regular revisions and its wide variety of cottages. For example, the double cottages, which were designed to have the upstairs and downstairs leased separately despite having a façade that suggests single occupancy. Most individuals choose to state there were around three hundred cottages, whereas I have used my workings in combination with maps available in Cattell and Falconer's work to come to this number; see John Cattell and Keith Falconer, *Swindon: The Legacy of a Railway Town* (Swindon: English Heritage, 1995), 45.

[2] The Builder, "A Visit to Swindon New Town," *The Builder* 12, no. 591 (June 3, 1854): 290.

[3] This building was initially designed by Brunel for use as a single working man's barracks but was converted into a Methodist chapel in 1867; Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon,* 162.

[4] "The NHS: Born in Swindon," Local History, BBC, last modified November 13, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/wiltshire/content/articles/2008/06/27/nhs_swindon_60th_feature.shtml.

a range of the settlement's most important built forms, helping to answer my central research question: what were the architectural and ideological functions of the SRV?

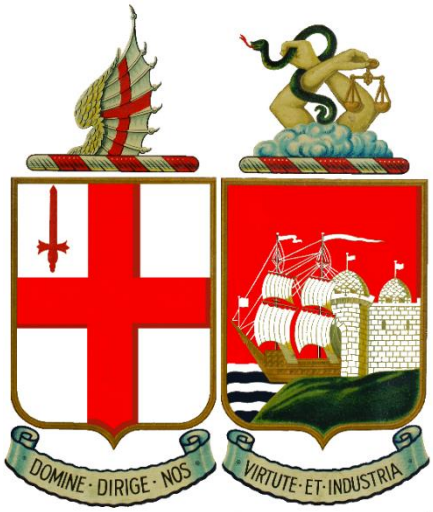
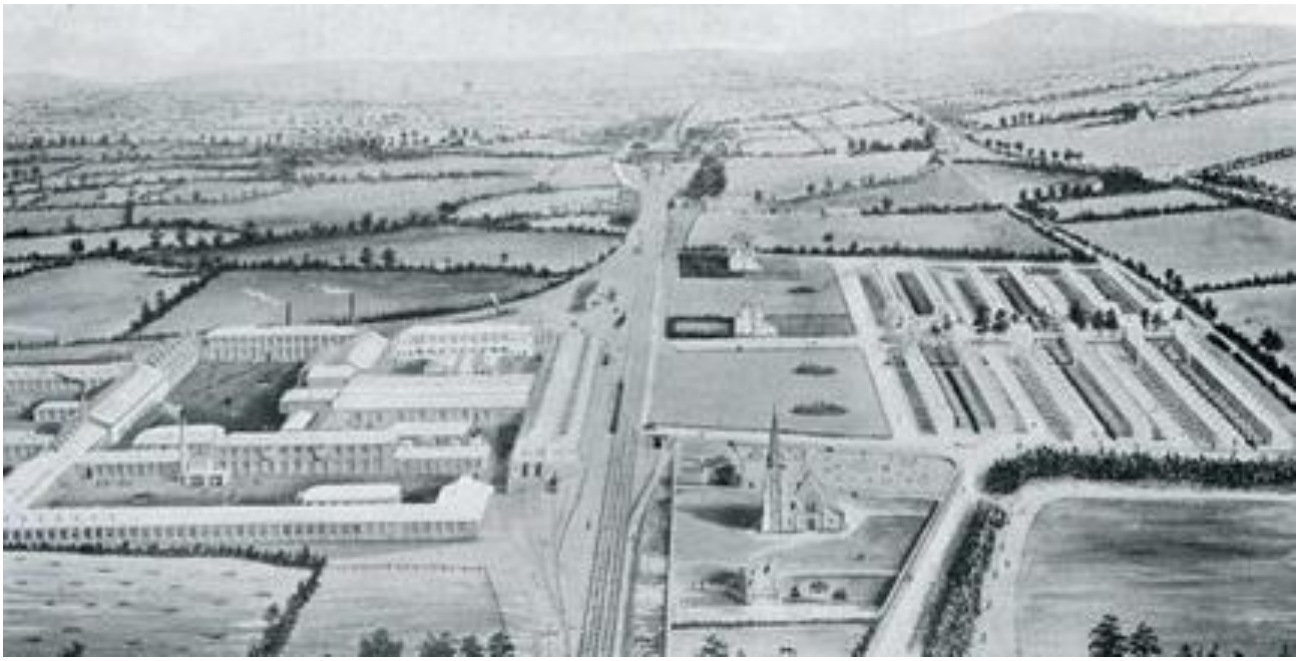


Fig. 1 *(Top Left) Coat of Arms of the Great Western Railway.*

Fig. 2 *(Top Right) Postcard of New Swindon (1847).*

Fig. 3 *(Below) Edward Snell, 'New Swindon' (1846); the early cottage rows are on the right, while the Swindon works are on the left.*



This report focuses on the years between 1841 and 1891. To contextualise the period, I will expound a timeline of the GWR's operations. On the 30th of July 1833, a meeting of leading Bristol businessmen decided to form a company that would establish 'railway communication between Bristol and London.'[5] After two years of wrangling against opponents, the GWR, led in parliament by their Chief Engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, succeeded in getting their railway between Bristol and St. Pancras approved.[6] Their act of incorporation received royal assent on the 31st of August, 1835.[7] In 1851 the GWR operated 272 miles of track. However, by 1891 the network had reached 2,405 miles of track, having grown to cover the entire south-west, parts of the west midlands, and much of south Wales.[8] Being home to the company's Locomotive and Carriage works, Swindon blossomed with the company. In 1831 Swindon's population was 1,742,[9] but by 1891 it had ballooned to 33,001.[10] The company was Swindon's revolutionary catalyst. Swindon and the company would continue to proliferate into the twenty-first century before the company's post-war nationalisation and subsequent dissolution.

In late 1840 Brunel and Daniel Gooch (the GWR's Superintendent of Locomotives) established their new works in Swindon. They chose a greenfield site 1.6 kilometres north of

[5] E. T. MacDermot, *History of the Great Western Railway, vol. 1* (London: Ian Allan, 1964), 3.
[6] Ibid, 13. The GWR did not decide to establish their own station at Paddington until 1836, after negotiations with the London & Birmingham Railway Company to have a shared St. Pancras location fell through, cited from Ibid, 20.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid, Appendix I.
[9] *The Parliamentary Gazetteer of England and Wales 1840-1843* (London: A. Fullerton & Co., 1843); "Swindon AP/CP," A Vision Through Time, University of Portsmouth, Accessed August 20, 2021, https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10412675/cube/TOT_POP.
[10] University of Portsmouth, "Swindon AP/CP."

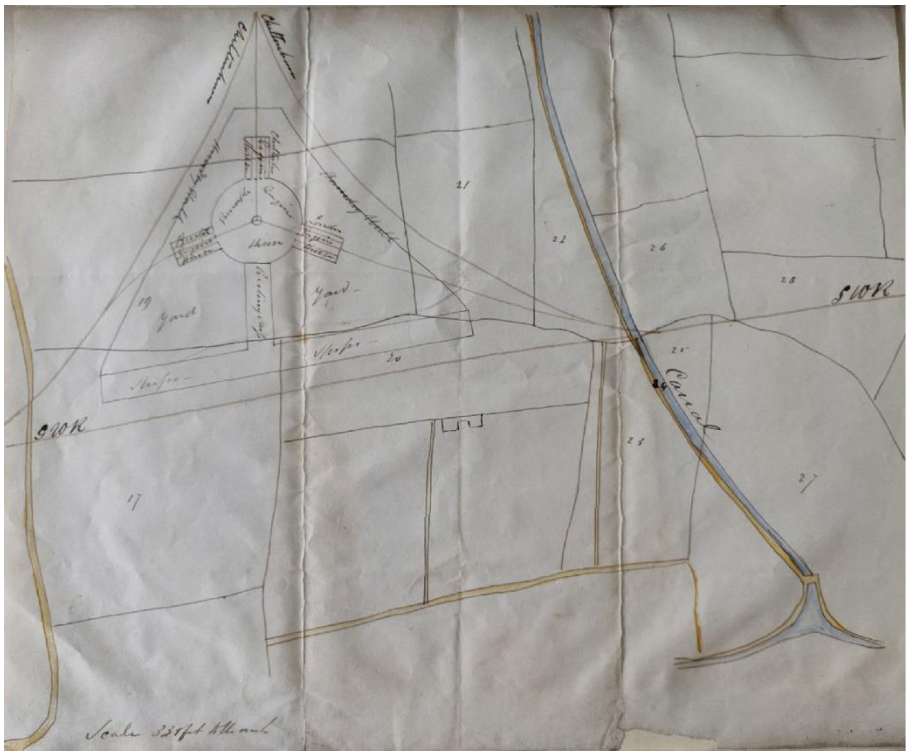
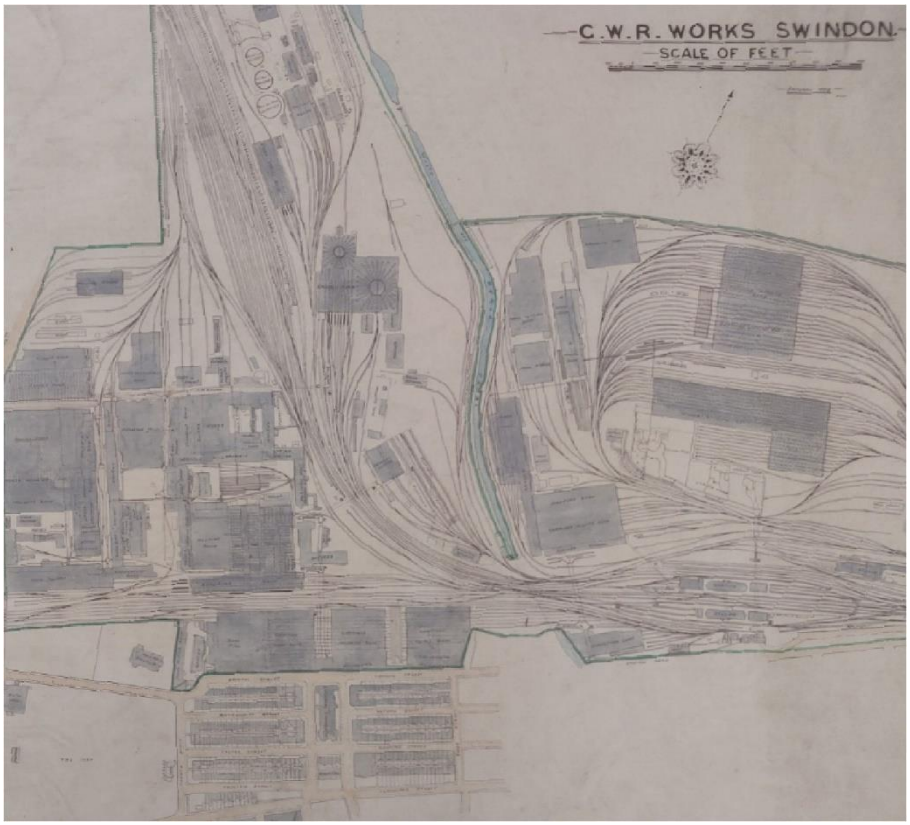


Fig. 4 *(Above) Gooch's diagram of Swindon sent to Brunel on 13th of September 1840; part of the letter showing the town's viability.*

Fig. 5 *(Below) Cropped section of plans of GWR works with SRV displayed at the bottom of the image (1901).*



the pre-existing town (fig. 4). Constrained by engineering concerns, they chose the site in a few months, but their choice redefined the town indefinitely. Within fifty years, just another Wiltshire market town grew into the county's primary settlement, replete with technical industry otherwise absent from the west country (fig. 5). Thus, we must review the events preceding the locomotive work's establishment. On the 13th of September 1840, Gooch wrote a letter to Brunel of unparalleled consequence to Swindon.[11] Gooch explained Swindon was 'the only place adapted for' the junction of the 'Cheltenham and Great Western' lines.[12] His argument was elementary. Because of Swindon's position between London and Bristol; its position on the Wilts & Berks canal and the Cheltenham railway; and its low position above sea-level, Gooch argued that it was the perfect place for locomotives to stop before the mechanically challenging climb towards Bath.[13] The GWR mainline runs southwest through Swindon as it dissects a stretch of the Wilts and Berks canal. North of the line, Gooch proposed four engine-houses to serve the Cheltenham, Bristol, and London lines. Gooch's designs would go ahead, despite their very rough nature. And on the 6th of October 1840, the GWR board of directors agreed to establish the 'principal Locomotive Station and Repairing Shops […] at Swindon.'[14]

It was into this context that the SRV developed to house and serve the company's men. The SRV is extraordinary, and its study will expand the episteme surrounding Victorian industrial communities. We can divide the most comparable communities into two

[11] 'Letters of D Gooch, C A Saunders and member of his family, and F G Saunders,' 1839-1878, RAIL 1008/82, RAIL Collection, The National Archives.
[12] Ibid.
[13] The changing of "pilot engines," and the replacement of wheels with those of varying diameters was needed in early trains so that they were able to climb hills. After tracing a relatively flat route from London to Swindon, these changes would have to be made to engines before they moved uphill towards Bristol; Ibid.
[14] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 8.

groups. The first group is Britain's other railway villages. Notably, Midland Railway's Derby railway "terrace"[15] and, London and North Western Railway's Crewe "colony" (fig. 6 and 7).[16] Although these communities share their purpose, SRV's size, cohesive layout and historic social services set it apart. For these reasons, it is better to compare it to the second group— contemporaneous industrial model villages. I define these as mid-nineteenth century planned industrial settlements which provided residents with public services. Examples include Bolton's Barrow Bridge,[17] the Wirral's Bromborough Pool[18] and Bradford's Saltaire (fig. 9 and 10).[19] Significantly the SRV predates these better-studied sites by at least ten years.[20] This report reaffixes SRV into this context. Doing this enriches the episteme by showing that public companies, like the GWR, played similar roles to enlightened industrialists who planned villages for their employees.

[15] 'People began moving into […] the 92 houses […] in the railway terrace […] from November 1841 and they were fully occupied by 1843. Together they form […] one of the earliest examples of a village for railway workers, narrowly predating the renowned Swindon Railway Village,' cited from "Railway Conservation Area Appraisal," Conservation Areas, Derby City Council, last modified March, 2009, https://www.derby.gov.uk/media/derbycitycouncil/contentassets/documents/conservationareas/DerbyCityCouncil-Railway-ConservationArea-Masterplan.pdf.

[16] 'By 1843, 221 houses had been built, with the company's housing stock doubling by 1852' cited from "Crewe: Archaeological Survey," Cheshire Historic Towns Survey, Cheshire County Council and English Heritage, Accessed August 20, 2021, http://www.cheshirearchaeology.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/HTS_Arch_Assess_Crewe.pdf.

[17] "Barrow Bridge Conservation Area," Conservation Areas, Bolton Council, Accessed August 8, 2021, https://www.bolton.gov.uk/downloads/download/198/conservation_areas.

[18] "Bromborough pool conservation area," Conservation Areas, Wirral Council, Accessed August 8, 2021, https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/built-conservation/conservation-areas/bromborough-pool-conservation-area.

[19] 'Saltaire is an exceptionally complete and well-preserved industrial village of the second half of the 19th century, located on the river Aire. Its textile mills, public buildings, and workers' housing are built in a harmonious style of high architectural quality and the urban plan survives intact, giving a vivid impression of the philanthropic approach to industrial management' cited from '"Saltaire," World Heritage List, UNESCO, Accessed August 8, 2021, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1028.

[20] Gillian Darley, *Villages of Vision: A Study of Strange Utopias* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2007), 130.

Fig. 6 *(Top Left) Midland Railway's Railway Terrace,* Derby.

Fig. 7 *(Top Right) Dorfold Street, part of London and North-western Railway's Crewe "colony."*

Fig. 8 *(Left) Exeter Street, Swindon Railway Village.*

Fig. 9 *(Bottom Left) Barrow Bridge Road, Barrow Bridge, Bolton.*

Fig. 10 *(Bottom Right) George Street, Saltaire, Bradford.*

Furthermore, this study could not be timelier. In 2019, a joint initiative between Swindon Borough Council and Historic England defined the SRV as a 'heritage action zone.'[21] This designation has become increasingly necessary. The 35 years that have elapsed since the railway work's closure in 1986 have not been kind to this important place. Due to this initiative, money is finally being mobilised to repair many of the village's redundant and derelict structures.[22] However, we must temper this necessary repair, revitalisation, and capitalisation with investigations like this. Otherwise, Swindon's leaders might well sanitise its history and repeat the mistakes made recently in the Liverpool docklands where contemporary developments undermined the area's historical nature and led to its delisting from the UN's world heritage list.[23]

I will now display this piece's literature review. Due to the SRV's imposing size, this report will not consider all the buildings in the village. Cattell and Falconer's *Swindon: The Legacy of a Railway Town* has already done this sufficiently.[24] Their thorough exploration provided an invaluable jumping-off point for my research. However, its academic usefulness is fundamentally undermined by its lack of argument, theory, and overall contextualisation. So, I will reapproach Swindon to repair the disconnect between writing on the SRV and the critical discussions surrounding subjects like utopic productive settlements. This report's renewed method will purposely leave out many buildings in order to better

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[21] "Swindon Heritage Action Zone," Heritage Action Zones, Historic England, Accessed 20 August 2021, https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/swindon/.
[22] Aled Thomas, "£24.5m masterplan to transform Mechanics' Institute," *Swindon Advertiser*, September 2, 2021, https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/19551070.24-5m-masterplan-transform-mechanics-institute/?fbclid=IwAR1L1arEiL0XA6JUB9a3fDyMtcy6cR2JpelOv1kkMT_T7kid-HjMz2UMUA8.
[23] "World Heritage Committee deletes Liverpool - Maritime Mercantile City from UNESCO's World Heritage List," News & Events, UNESCO, Accessed 20 August 2021, https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2314/.
[24] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon.*

distil information on the architectures crucial to the workers and the village's overall identity.

Before focusing on SRV's critical architectures, it was essential to understand Swindon and the GWR. Monographs like E. T. MacDermot's authoritative two-volume *History of the GWR, 1833-1921* proved critical.[25] However, archival work has been even more indispensable. The lion's share of this mostly visual material came from the National Archives' Rail collection and the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre. Latent Covid-19 restrictions rendered materials held at the Brunel Institute, Swindon Library's local studies collection, and the STEAM archive unreachable. The abundance of primary sources I did retrieve was enough to supplement this piece, and the remaining archives provide a promising and obvious route for future research.

To contextualise my archival knowledge, I researched model villages. Revisiting old research on Bristol's Blaise Hamlet became crucial to this work; I discovered Brunel was directly connected to the hamlet's owner. This will be explained in my 'housing' chapter. Equally helpful was Gillian Darley's *Villages of Vision*.[26] Darley's account of the historical development of model villages, and her prescient questionings, has remained useful throughout this paper's development.[27] However, Darley does not engage with capitalism's

[25] Rather than using MacDermot's 1927 edition, I chose to use the C. R. Clinker's revised edition from 1964, which is both more accessible and more complete, see E. T. MacDermot, *History of the Great Western Railway, vol. 1* (London: Ian Allan, 1964).
[26] Darley, *Villages of Vision.*
[27] For example, this question that Darley posed about industrials remained at the forefront of my mind through the development of this writing. 'It is hard to disentangle the motives of the early industrialist who provided better housing and facilities for his workers. If he was merely concerned with expediency, why was he so rare?' cited from Darley, *Villages of Vision,* 123-124.

relationship with model villages. Dolores Hayden's *Seven American Utopias*[28] and Thomas Markus's *Buildings and Power*[29] filled this void and built my understanding of space and power. However, my central theoretical engagement, which underlies my understanding of the GWR's ideology, has been drawn from my understanding of Michel Foucault's writings and lectures, particularly the 'Birth of Biopolitics.'[30]

I will investigate my chosen critical architectures through four chapters. The first chapter- 'Ideology'- is this work's argumentative lynchpin. Terry Eagleton states that ideology's value 'lies in its capacity to discriminate between those power struggles which are somehow central to a whole form of social life and those which are not.'[31] In essence, an ideological analysis will provide a stable vision of the GWR. This will help explain the village's envisionment and intended use. However, there is some inner turmoil. Although Foucault's enshrinement of a "bodily" focus in his oeuvre inspired this report's approach, I will not use Foucault's preferred 'discourse analysis' method because of this work's restricted length and focus.

Applied Foucauldian analyses like Meredith TenHoor's 'Biopolitics at Les Halles' inspired the following three thematic chapters.[32] Generally, these chapters have been structured around understanding how buildings play a role in controlling what Foucault describes as 'the body as a machine: […] the optimization of its capabilities […] [and] its

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[28] Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976).
[29] Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993).
[30] Michel Foucault, *The birth of biopolitics: lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 320.
[31] Terry Eagleton, *Introduction to Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1991), 8.
[32] Meredith TenHoor, "Architecture and Biopolitics at Les Halles," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 25, no. 2 (2007): 73-92.

integration into systems of efficient and economic controls.'[33] The first of these three chapters - 'Housing' - will inspect the housing that the GWR created for workers. To understand cottage housing, I have supplemented previous Blaise Hamlet research by examining the precedents of urban workers' housing. The second of these chapters - 'Mind'- scrutinises SRV's Mechanics' Institution. Pieces like Historic England's *Mechanics' Institutes*[34] and Trevor Cockbill's lecture on the SRV Mechanics' Institution[35] have shaped my understanding of working-class educational institutions. The final chapter - 'Body' - will consider the effects of the GWR Swimming Baths and Medical Dispensary on SRV's railway workers. Elucidating information for this chapter came from Adam Busby's thesis on the GWR Medical Fund Society[36] and Harriet Richardson's *English Hospitals*.[37] Having established the most critical literature, I will move onto my next chapter.

[33] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, volume 1* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 139.
[34] Historic England, *Mechanics' Institutes: Introduction to Heritage Assets* (Swindon: Historic England, 2017).
[35] Trevor Cockbill, "This is Our Heritage," Mechanics' Institution Trust, Accessed August 20, 2021, https://mechanics-trust.org.uk/2003/07/this-is-our-heritage/.
[36] Adam Busby, "The Great Western Railway Medical Fund Society: Self-Help and Paternalism in Swindon 1880-1914," BA diss., University of Oxford, 2019.
[37] Harriet Richardson, ed., *English Hospitals 1660-1948: A Survey of their Architecture and Design* (Swindon: Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1998).

It was they who: ate meat, vegetables, fruit, and dairy produce, lived in the best and newest cottages and filled them with furniture and knick-knacks, bought books and newspapers, supported mechanics institutes and friendly societies, and paid the heavy subscriptions to the craft trade unions.[38]

—Harold Perkin (1969)

1 Ideology

Ideology is a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group that help to legitimate a dominant political power. Viewing the GWR's Swindon workforce as the social group in question and the GWR leadership as the dominant political power, this chapter will answer the question: what ideas and convictions formed GWR ideology, in the second half of the nineteenth century?

The GWR was founded into a context of unprecedented economic liberalisation. Foucault states that early nineteenth-century Britain was a radical experimenting ground for a Liberal 'governmentality' which saw successive governments cede industries to the private sector for the 'optimal development of the econom[y].'[39] The Georgian legislature began to sell monopoly rights to create 'good roads, canals, and navigable rivers' to private companies in what Adam Smith called 'the greatest of all improvements.'[40] The resulting turnpike trusts and canal companies shrank the journey between London and Shrewsbury from four days in 1753 to around thirteen hours in 1835.[41]

[38] Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 144.
[39] Foucault, *birth of biopolitics*, 320.
[40] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1977), 207.
[41] Edward Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-2011* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 16.

The railway industry, emerging in the 1830s and 1840s, benefitted from the same liberalisation and saw a sustained boom called the "railway mania."[42] Countless railway companies emerged in this period of inventiveness, competition, and expansion. Simon Ville posits that the Liverpool and Manchester Railway's (opened 1830) success 'initiated a period of intense railway construction in Britain' between 1837 and 1866 (fig. 12).[43] J. M. W. Turner's 'Rain, Steam and Speed' (fig. 11) provokes railway mania's essence— railways' ceaseless dynamism driving forward an economy. Britain's railways grew quickly through to the century's end; annual passenger numbers soared from 24.7 million people in 1842 to 796.3 million people in 1890.[44] Critically, railways were also highly invested in. Railway stocks represented 18.5% of the London Stock Exchange in 1853, a figure which rose to 49% by 1893.[45]

The GWR seized upon this, seeing the value in becoming a monopoly train provider that would vie for railway supremacy. Following parliament's passing of GWR's act of incorporation in 1835, the company went public and was listed on the London Stock Exchange.[46] In this sense, the GWR was a clear product of Britain's unprecedented belief in *laissez-faire* economics. Throughout the nineteenth century, the company's main priorities were profit and market-share growth. However, its allegiance to liberal economics led to financial difficulties as well as successes. Such difficulties can be seen during the aftermath of the European recession of 1848. Being at the whim of the market, the directors forced

[42] G. Guilcher, "Railway Mania and Press Mania in 1844-45," *Cahiers Victoriens & édouardiens* 55 (2002): 81.
[43] Simon Ville, "Transport," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain*, ed. Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 305.
[44] Ibid, 307.
[45] Ranald Michie, *The London Stock Exchange: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 89.
[46] Ibid, 65.

Fig. 11 *(Above) J. M. W. Turner, 'Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway.'*

Fig. 12 *(Bottom Left) A.B. Clayton, 'Inaugural journey of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway' (1830).*

Fig. 13 *(Bottom Right) Photograph of a man reading at SRV's Mechanics' Institution's Reading Rooms (c. 1891-1925).*

Daniel Gooch to cut Swindon's workforce from '1,800 to 618 within two years.'[47] It was now clear that the GWR was a major company in the modern sense— profit came first.

Despite this, the profit motive was a boon for the company, especially considering the financial benefits of holding monopoly status. Even though 'discipline was severe and the hours long and arduous,'[48] the company's economic success created a novel class of privileged railway workers. Rule states that these workers earned between '50 to 100 percent' more than the average unskilled labourer in the early-Victorian era.[49] With this affluence came a system of shared ideas and experiences held by Swindon's railway workers. This blended ideology was embedded into the buildings which this essay surveys. And, in turn, these embedded ideals would inform the beliefs of the railwaymen who lived in and used the SRV. It is therefore essential to explore this further.

The ideals of a late-nineteenth-century Swindon railway worker stretched beyond a desire to work hard for the company. Their complex ideology mixed worker radicalism, self-help, religiosity, conservativism, and localism. I will now knot these threads together, starting with the railwaymen's radicalism. Most of the GWR workforce's freethinking did not develop from the study of socialist literature. Instead, scientific innovation, which led them to develop exemplary social institutions and ingenious locomotives, characterised their radicalism (fig. 13). For example, Brindle writes that Brunel was driven by an intention to 'giv[e] mankind the benefits latent in the inspired application of new technology.'[50] Although Brindle is referring to Brunel, this attitude characterised many of the Swindon

[47] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 64.
[48] J. Silto, *A Swindon History, 1840-1901* (Swindon, 1981), 20.
[49] John Rule, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England, 1750-1850* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1986), 37.
[50] Stephen Brindle, *Brunel: The man who built the world* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 8.

railwaymen's conduct— if they were to evolve the potentialities of transport, they would not allow their community to stagnate.[51] This mentality will be explored in 'Mind' and 'Body.' However, their pioneering progressive societies needed leadership. As hardworking equals under the same employer, it was natural that their social services would become democratised. It is hard to overstate this situation's progressive nature. SRV's health, education, and banking services were democratically operated decades before universal male suffrage.[52] However, a company man's rights to these services came with the responsibility of keeping them running.

This idea of *self-help* and responsibility was popular throughout the country due to the success of books like Samuel Smiles' *Self-help* (1859).[53] However, this mantra ran deeper in the SRV than elsewhere. Not only did Smiles write a biography of George Stephenson (widely known as the "father of the railways") in 1857 that established him as the epitome of self-help, but the stoic Daniel Gooch, the GWR's first leader in Swindon, would go onto pin his successes onto his 'steady perseverance in the face of duty.'[54] The ideology of self-help's

[51] The engineers at Swindon not only developed leading trains like the famous Iron Duke class but would also establish and run social organisations like the Mechanics' Institution and Medical Fund Society, which will be addressed later in this essay. They also addressed other social needs with organisations that this essay cannot successfully approach such as the GWR and Swindon Permanent Building Society which is looked at in depth in: Malcolm Harvey, "the GWR and Swindon Permanent Building Society," *Back Track* 8, no.2 (March-April 1994):102-104.

[52] Most men did not receive the right to vote in national elections until 1867, however in Swindon democratically run organisations such as the Mechanics' Institution, The Medical Fund Society, and the GWR and Swindon Permanent Building Society intervened in the community to improve living conditions, see "Key Dates," Chartists, UK Parliament, Accessed August 24, 2021, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/chartists/keydates/.

[53] "Self-Help by Samuel Smiles," collection items, British Library, accessed August 21, 2021, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/self-help-by-samuel-smiles.

[54] Daniel Gooch, *Diaries of Sir Daniel Gooch, Baronet* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & co., ltd., 1892), 2.

two most visible reflections on SRV was the educative self-improvement at the Mechanics' Institution and the essence of self-reliance practised by the GWR Medical Fund.

Here an issue arises. It would be an over-simplification to pin all of SRV's moralism on these earthly figures, for religious factors were also at work. By the 1851 census, 40% of England and Wales's population attended church on Sundays.[55] A contemporary, Richard Jefferies, wrote that in New Swindon, 'every denomination from the Plymouth Brethren to the Roman Catholics, had their place of worship.'[56] Along with St. Mark's Anglican Church[57] (fig. 14) and the Methodist chapel's[58] presence in SRV, this quote displays that Christianity guided the village's development from within. Hugh McLeod's statement that early nineteenth-century artisans (like the railwaymen) made up 'about 75 percent' of nonconformists, deepens this religious connection.[59]

Despite the existence of dissenting faith in SRV, *conservative* values still held some sway. In his *Swindon Retrospect* (1932), Frederick Large recounts the 'worst rioting in Swindon' that followed the 1880 general election.[60] Daniel Gooch (fig. 15) became the second (Conservative) MP for Swindon's local constituency (Cricklade). However, the news that he

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[55] This percentage was arrived at by: $\left(\frac{7{,}261{,}032\ *}{17{,}927{,}385\dagger}\right) \text{x } 100$

* Horace Mann, "Religious Worship in England and Wales," in *Census of Great Britain, 1851* (London: George Routledge and co., 1854), 89.

† The total population of England and Wales was arrived at by subtracting the population of Scotland in 1851 from the total population of Great Britain (excluding Ireland); census data from "Great Britain Dep," A Vision Through Time, University of Portsmouth, Accessed August 20, 2021, https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10090283/cube/TOT_POP; "History of Scotland's Census," About, Scotland's Census, Accessed August 20, 2021, https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/about/history-of-scotland-s-census/.

[56] Richard Jefferies, "The story of Swindon," *Fraser's Magazine* 11, vol. 71 (May 1875): 570.

[57] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 164.

[58] Ibid, 162.

[59] Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: MacMillan, 1984), 14.

[60] Frederick Large, *A Swindon Retrospect 1855-1930* (Swindon: The Borough Press, 1932), 89.

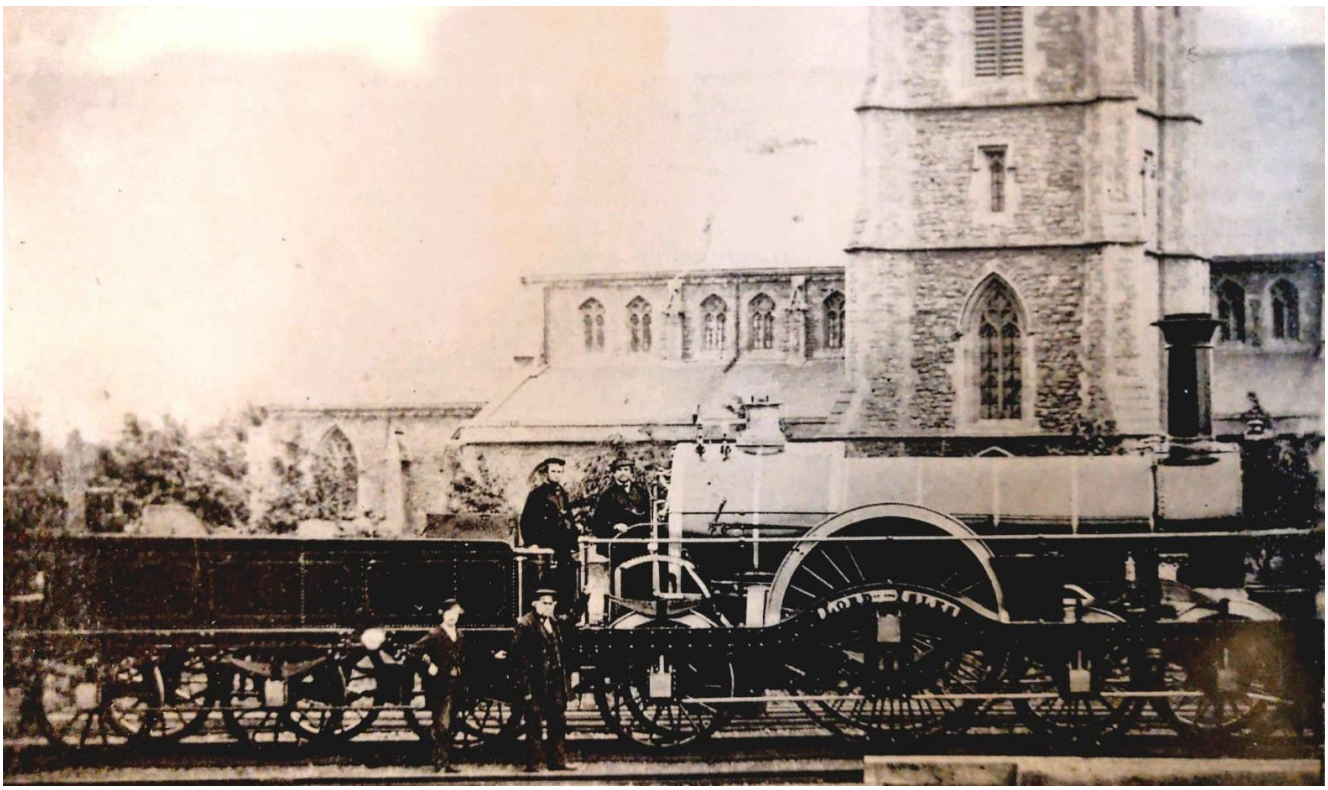
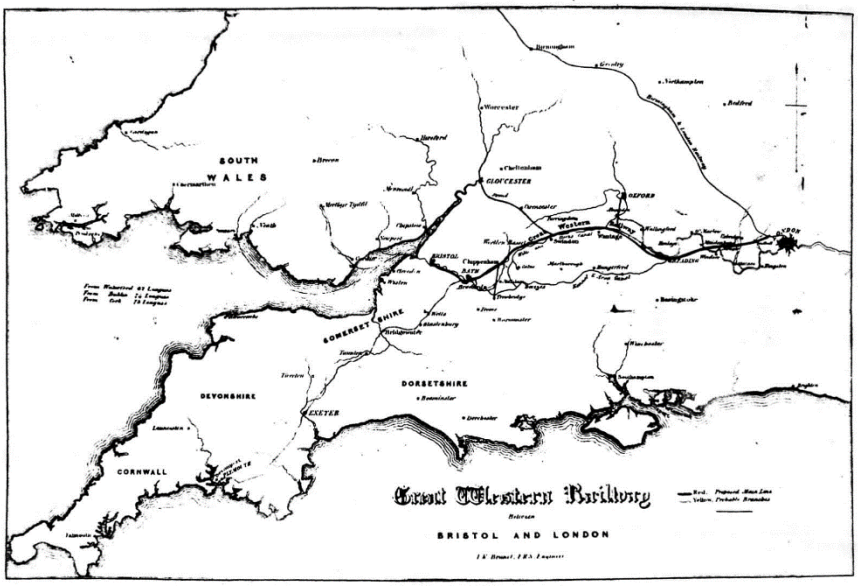


Fig. 14 *(Above) Lord of the Isles locomotive in front of SRV's St. Mark's Church (c. 1855-1870).*

Fig. 15 *(Bottom Right) Sir Francis Grant, 'Sir Daniel Gooch, 1st Bt' (1872).*

Fig. 16 *(Bottom Left) Proposed route of GWR mainline that accompanied a prospectus from September 1834.*



had been beaten in the polls by the Liberal candidate was 'bitterly received'[61] by SRV's loyal men, who ignited a bi-partisan riot that 'cost the county many thousands of pounds.'[62] Gooch remained MP for twenty years (1865-1885) and projected his staunch conservatism onto the subordinate railwaymen. Similarly, the towering figure of Brunel, who had appointed Gooch as Superintendent of Locomotives, was also an unwaveringly class-conscious conservative.[63]

The Engineer's 1889 obituary for Gooch, states 'his career is another proof that genius is […] independent of opportunity.'[64] Like Gooch, many of Swindon's railwaymen migrated to Swindon from humble beginnings. When the Swindon works opened in 1843,[65] most recruits had migrated from Britain's industrial heartlands (Appendix C). Gooch himself grew up at ironworks in Northumberland and South Wales.[66] Countless families had moved to a growing Swindon, abandoning their culture while simultaneously distancing Swindon from its surrounding Wiltshire. Large powerfully paints a scene from his childhood in the 1850s when he and his friends visited the Welsh families housed in the company barracks and were delighted by their alien language.[67] Swindon's railwayman ideology, having

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid, 91.
[63] Brindle reminds us that Brunel's father, Marc, had been a French royalist in exile and writes of Brunel: 'He was class conscious, decidedly authoritarian with those he considered his social inferiors, supported conservative social values- Brunel served as a special constable in Bristol during the riots of 1831 provoked by the slow passage of the Reform Bill and in Westminster in 1848 during the Chartist protests- believed in the gentlemanlike conduct in all his dealings, and cherished the status of being an English gentleman and readily accepted the obligations that went with it.' cited from Brindle, *Brunel*, 15.
[64] The Engineer, 'Sir Daniel Gooch,' 18th October 1889, cited in Alan Platt, *The Life and Times of Daniel Gooch* (Gloucester: Alan Platt, 1987), 195.
[65] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 19.
[66] Platt, *Daniel Gooch,* 4-9.
[67] Large, *Swindon Retrospect, 23.*

grown from disparate origins, was concentrated down, and solidified by the Swindon work's unshakable geographic permanence.

The GWR and its railway works were fixed in the geographies it was built to serve (fig 16). This created a feedback loop. Like other places on the line, changes to Swindon would reflect on the GWR, and changes to the GWR would reflect on Swindon. The GWR's leadership were acutely aware of this. The company had both a Bristol and a London board to represent each area's interests.[68] The GWR's architectural vision touched the entire region. Brindle writes that Brunel believed that the 'railway could be rooted in the landscape […] to become the grandest landscaped drive in the world and travelling along it was to offer a picturesque tour through the west of England.'[69] This tour included Swindon, and the architectures explored in this report disseminated the GWR's ideological facets which I have expounded.

[68] MacDermot, *Great Western Railway, vol. 1*, 15.
[69] Brindle, *Brunel*, 20.

Swindon is one of those towns which are created rather than developed, owing to their selection by a company […] as the scene of its operations.[70]

—Board of Trade Enquiry (1908)

2 Housing

After establishing the Railway works in 1840, Brunel and Gooch set about creating workers housing on the main railway line's opposite side. In around fifteen years, sporadic building had transformed the area. Before construction, Richard Jefferies called the area: 'the poorest in the neighbourhood, low-lying, shallow soil on top of an endless depth of stiff clay, worthless for arable purposes, of small value for pasture, covered with furze, rushes and rowen [sic].'[71] Nevertheless, in just a few years, the company had created a new village with 287 houses.[72] Its influence is hard to understate. The people of *Old Swindon*— located a mile away atop the Swindon hill— termed the railway village *New Swindon.* In many ways, the SRV was new; its regimented streets, centralised facilities and migrant population would have been genuinely novel. This chapter will investigate SRV's housing provision. I will answer the questions: *Why* did the GWR build housing in SRV? *How* was it built? How was it *used,* and how did this use build into the company's *ideology*?

2.1 Why?

I will now explain why the GWR built largescale company housing in the early 1840s. Silto establishes the issue's initial impetus:

[70] Leslie Grinsell, H. B. Wells, H. S. Tallamy, John Betjeman and David Douglas. *Studies in the History of Swindon* (Swindon: Swindon Borough Council, 1950), 93.
[71] Jefferies, "Story of Swindon," 569-70.
[72] See page 4, footnote 1 for working.

> The Railway Age had moved at express speed all over Britain, and as […] the Great Western Railway system spread, so more and more railway engineering work was required, and most of it found its way to Swindon.[73]

Swindon 'was chosen for purely operational and engineering reasons,' and Old Swindon's population size and skillset were of minor importance.[74] However, the company still needed skilled tradesmen like iron puddlers and engineers (fig. 17). These jobs' high wages provided Swindonians with a considerable step-up, given that Wiltshire farmers earned the lowest wage in the country of 7s. 35p a week while living 'in unbelievable poverty and squalor.'[75] However, *The Parliamentary Gazetteer of England and Wales 1840-1843* shows that the old Swindonians were insufficiently skilled for the work:

> No particular manufacture is carried on in the town […] extensive quarries are wrought […] which, together with agricultural pursuits, afford employment to the greater part of the working population of the town.[76]

To fill these roles in Swindon, the GWR had to bring in workers from 'Bristol, London, northern England and Scotland.'[77] However, due to the Swindon work's rural and undeveloped state, the company had to rapidly develop new housing.

2.2 How?

I will now quickly explain the village's construction process before outlining the housing's overall effect. Around January 1841, the company purchased land from the local brewer John Sheppard (for £400 per acre) and began establishing the village.[78] Despite the GWR's acute need for a workforce, they struggled with cash-flow issues, having spent nearly twice

[73] Silto, *A Swindon History*, 41.
[74] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 1.
[75] Rule, *The Labouring Classes*, 38.
[76] *The Parliamentary Gazetteer of England and Wales 1840-1843* (London: A. Fullerton & Co., 1843).
[77] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 11.
[78] Ibid, 41.

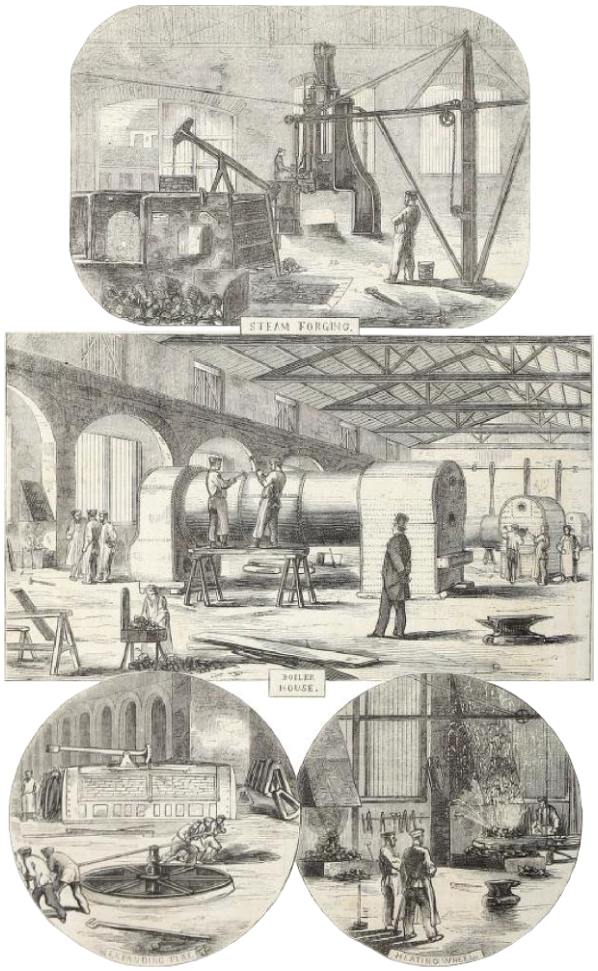


Fig. 17 *(Above) 'The Great Western Railway company's works at Swindon,' from the Illustrated Exhibitor (1852).*

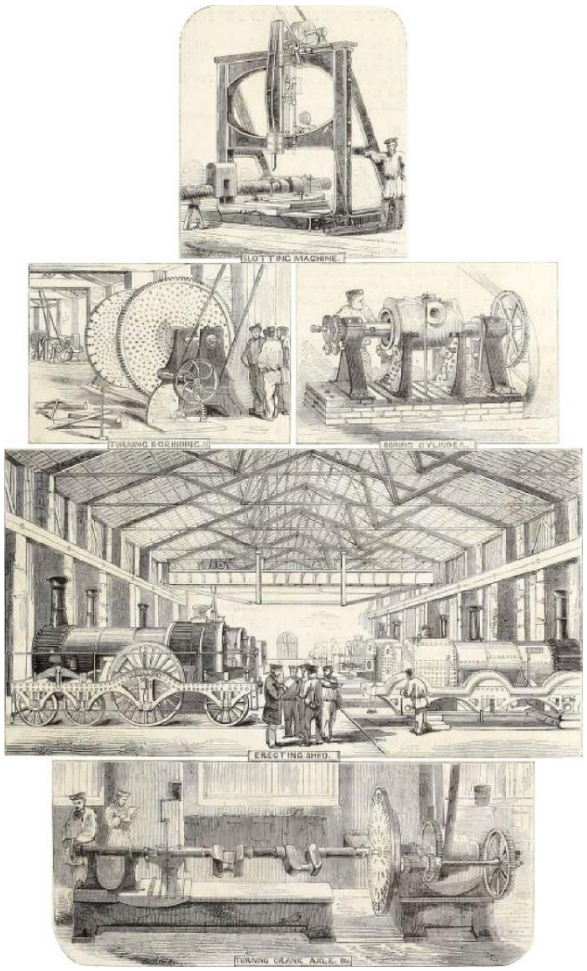
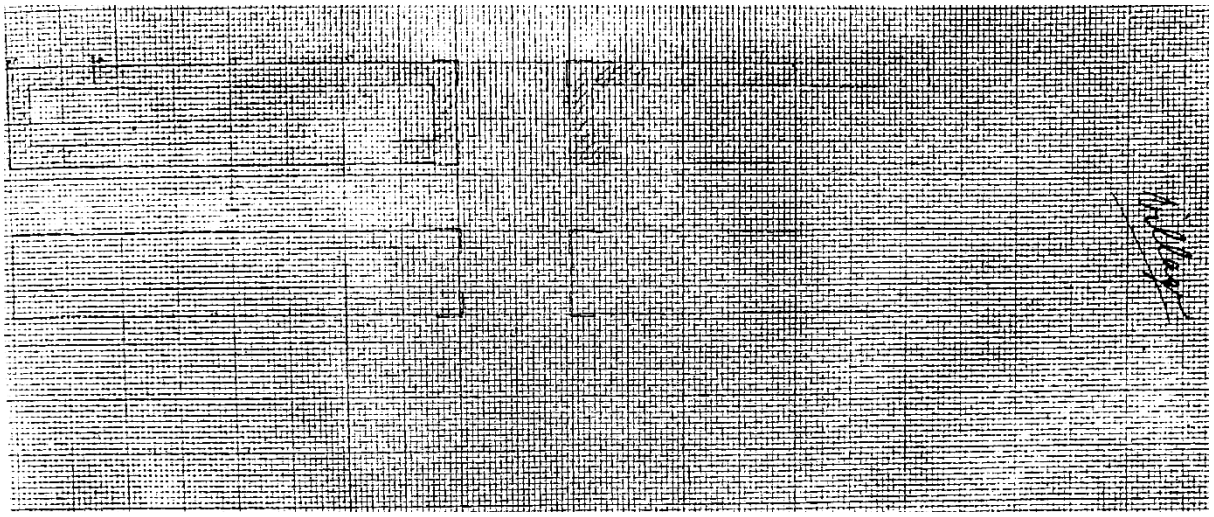


Fig. 18 *(Below) Sketch by Brunel entitled "village," showing the for initial cottage blocks planned around a central avenue (1840).*



the £3,333,333 sanctioned by their Act of incorporation.[79] The contract that they had local contractors J D & C Rigby sign on the 14th of October 1841 shows their solution.[80] Rigbys were to construct 300 cottages, at an average cost of £116 per cottage, for the GWR in return for an annual rent equal to 6% of their construction cost.[81] For the settlement, Brunel originally planned to establish four cottage blocks around a large, open and pedestrianised High Street. His sketch of 1840 shows four blocks, with hatched areas on each blocks' end, to display the allocated space for shops (fig. 18).[82]

I will now detail the first cottage block, which was built in 1842 (fig. 19). Because this block represents the only cottages built according to Brunel's designs, it is ideologically potent. A letter sent by Brunel to the Rigbys on 18th of March 1842, giving them close instruction on how to follow his plans, shows this.[83] This block straddles Bristol and Bathampton Street and is constituted by two back-to-back rows of 22 two-storey cottages.[84] Each floor formed one tenement, and they have reasonably generous front and back gardens. Each pair of cottages has a central porch that shelters two entrances set at a 45-degree angle. This means each two cottages appear as one larger cottage. Each porch is surrounded by a projected wall that houses two square windows with minute quoins on both storeys. Between each first-floor window is a decorative œillet, and upon the gabled rooves are stacks of four diamond-shaped Elizabethan-style chimneys. In 1846 an unknown

[79] MacDermot, *Great Western Railway, vol. 1*, 72.
[80] *Swindon Advertiser*, 16 June 1877, 1, cited in Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 42.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid, 15.
[83] 'Letter books of I K Brunel, 1839-1842,' RAIL 253/107, RAIL Collection, The National Archives.
[84] Bathampton Street was originally named Bath Street, in recognition of Bath being a major stop on the GWR line. However, because Old Swindon's main road was called Bath Road, it was later changed.

contractor added kitchen extensions out back, due to the original design's lack of cooking space.[85] This original block is the most striking, and I will return to it for ideological analysis.

When building the rest of the village, the GWR abandoned the ornateness of the first cottage block. The likely causes were the expense of exterior decorations, J D & C Rigby's ongoing financial issues,[86] and the 1843 post-railway-mania crash.[87] These issues compounded to slow the village's construction. By late 1843, with only three out of six cottage blocks complete, J D & C Rigby were clearly incapable of finishing. Moreover, on the 28th of August 1845, when work on the village recommenced, they were not considered for tendering.[88] After the contract lapsed, SRV developed sporadically as the GWR hired contractors whenever it served their needs. For example, on the 26th of October 1847, the GWR's secretary, Charles Saunders, ordered Gooch to cut spending in Swindon 'until better times appear.'[89] Soon after, the building in SRV was halted. This financially minded ad-hoc approach led to a significant variance in SRV's cottage design. It also meant that it took fifteen years to finish SRV's housing, with the building of Park House in 1876 rendering the village complete.[90]

I will now outline the building of the five remaining cottage blocks. The next block on Bathampton and Exeter Street (built 1842-3) went without a covered porch, drop

[85] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 47.
[86] On the 31st of August 1842, Brunel wrote a blunt letter to the Rigbys complaining of their slow progress. These difficulties would compound as the contractors came up against continuing financial difficulties, cited from 'Letter books of I K Brunel, 1839-1842,' RAIL 253/107, RAIL Collection, The National Archives.
[87] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 64.
[88] Ibid, 51.
[89] Letter dated 26th October 1847 cited from 'Great Western Railway Company: selected papers, 1842-1853,' RAIL 1008/34, RAIL Collection, The National Archives.
[90] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon,* 113.

Fig. 19 *(Top Left) Cottages on Bristol Street's North-Side.*

Fig. 20 *(Top Right) Cottages on Bathampton Street's south side.*

Fig. 21 *(Bottom Left) Shop units and tenements on the corner of Emlyn Square and Bathampton Street.*

Fig. 22 *(Bottom Right) Double cottages on Oxford Street's North Side.*

mouldings, projected wall surfaces and window quoins (fig. 20).[91] Then a block on Exeter and Taunton Street (1843) was built to similar principles but slightly enlarged (fig. 8). Next, grand tenements and shops (fig. 21) were built on the first two blocks eastern end's (1845-6). After this, development took place on the village's eastern side.

Onto the village's Eastern half. Built between 1845 and 1846, London and Oxford Street significantly departed from the village's cottage design (fig. 22). This is the only block entirely comprised of "double cottages," which were twice the size of a regular cottage.[92] The front door provided access to a ground floor tenement, while a garden staircase gave first-storey access. This flexible design accommodated up to four families in their own private spaces. Next, another rather ordinary cottage block on Oxford and Reading Street was constructed (1846-7). The final cottage block built on Reading and Faringdon Street (1846-7) returned to SRV's basic cottage design. Ending the housing's construction as it began.

2.3 Use and Ideology

It is now vital to analyse the cottage forms to see how they built into GWR ideology. SRV signalled the GWR's successful embrace of laissez-faire economics. Silto echoes this sentiment; the SRV 'was the creation of the Great Western Railway, and a product of the Industrial Revolution.'[93] While, in 1867, Richard Jefferies called SRV an 'emporium of North

[91] There is no clear reason why this decision was made, but it is consistent with the literature to suggest it was done to save money and speed up the already slow building process resulting from issues with the Rigbys.

[92] Although there were five "double" cottages built amongst the regular cottages on the village's west side, this was the first block to comprise entirely of double cottages, see Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 48.

[93] Silto, *A Swindon History*, 1.

Wiltshire,' a veritable 'Chicago of the western counties.'[94] The company's successes were evident to anyone who walked near SRV.

The SRV's social stratification signalled its reliance on laissez-faire economics. Writing as a contemporary to the developing village, Karl Marx saw increasing divisions in companies' labour forces as a hallmark of modern capitalism. He writes that companies 'continually seek […] to get the best of competition by restlessly introducing further subdivision of labour.'[95] For the lowest-paid workers, overcrowding was endemic. An 1847 document signed by Archibald Sturrock (Superintendent of the Works) shows this by calculating that on average 7.5 people lived in each cottage.[96] Given that many of the cottages had only two rooms, the lowest-paid workers evidently struggled with a lack of space. On the other hand, Cattell and Falconer argue that the village's skilled workers had a vastly different experience. Referencing the 1851 census, they write that singular families occupied 'six of the eleven [eight-roomed] houses on London Street.'[97] This housing stratification meant that lower-paid workers would continually be reminded of their place within the company hierarchy. With local governments playing a minimal role in this period, companies like the GWR were free to establish social hierarchies as they saw fit.

Significantly, the village's layout also perpetuated spatial hierarchies. Its 287 cottages are set within a strict 13-acre grid layout (Appendix B).[98] Each row was orientated to run parallel with the railway line, and a nearby tunnel entrance on the village's northern extent

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[94] Ibid, 65.
[95] Karl Marx, *Wage-Labour and Capital & Value, Price and Profit* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 44.
[96] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 36.
[97] Ibid, 75.
[98] Area measured using Digimaps area-measurement software cited from "Aerial Roam," Aerial, Digimaps, last modified September 3, 2021, https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/map/aerial.

took workers to the GWR works. Markus explains that housing grids were commonplace in historic industrial settlements. Siting a settlement near a workplace and equipping it with direct access routes maximised the efficiency of the commuting worker and enabled workplace managers to surveil the housing. Markus writes:

> The grid is ubiquitous - used throughout Rome, sixteenth century Latin American colonies, North American settlements, nineteenth century cities of Europe, and the new town of Milton Keynes. […] to form civil urban space, the grid is deformed to accommodate social structure, that is asymmetries of power. At key crossings large holes, such as the forum, are made. Variations of street width and of plot size are introduced, and axes are created.[99]

In Markus's words, SRV's 'key crossing' was the High Street.[100] This crossing acted as a 'forum.'[101] Here, the Mechanic's Institution, the larger cottages, and the market reinforced the GWR's presence, ensuring the resident's good conduct.

Though the rental of cottages in the SRV usually followed market forces, the railway workers' radical beneficence still seeped through. Instead of providing 'wretched hovels,' which were common across Wiltshire,[102] the GWR provided sturdy and hygienic housing. Significantly this happened around fifteen years before hygiene reform pattern books like James Hole's *Homes for the working classes* (1860) were published.[103] Darley credits Hole for shifting industrialists towards providing better housing.[104]

Additionally, the company's paternalism led it to secure housing for all its workers. For example, after the 1848 financial crisis, Daniel Gooch intervened on behalf of the lowest-

[99] Markus, *Buildings and Power*, 260.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] William Cobbett, *Weekly Register, vol. 102* (London, 1824) 301.
[103] Darley, *Villages of Vision*, 128
[104] Ibid.

paid workers and bolstered company rental revenue. On the 22nd of September 1849, Gooch, who 'ruled New Swindon like a Patriarch,'[105] wrote to the GWR board and argued that the village's 23 empty and 17 partially occupied cottages were costing the company £11.20 per week.[106] He successfully arranged a rental reduction of around one shilling per house— approximately half a day's pay. The size of the reductions varied according to the worker's affluence.

However, authoritarian conservatism tempered this benevolence. New Swindon was not peaceful, and by the mid-1850s, its population had swelled considerably. With this growth came problems that were intolerable to the GWR's leadership. The young migrant workforce 'enjoyed an unpleasant notoriety for mischief and drunkenness.'[107] Silto writes, 'affrays and disturbances were not unusual in 1854. […] The houses in which they lived were so overcrowded, and the available leisure activities so limited, that the rough and ready conviviality of the beer houses and inns of New Swindon made a great appeal.'[108] The GWR leadership detested this reputation and involved themselves to control what they saw as misbehaving railwaymen. For example, when Daniel Gooch's brother William became works manager in 1857, he decreed a ban on snowballing in the village. He wrote, 'any person detected throwing snowballs into or about the entrance to the Works will be discharged.'[109]

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[105] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 65.
[106] Letter dated 22nd of October 1849 cited from 'Letters to Gooch from locomotive engineers and others, of other railway companies,' RAIL 1008/18, RAIL Collection, The National Archives, Kew, London, England.
[107] Grinsell, at al, *History of Swindon*, 104-105.
[108] Silto, *A Swindon History,* 49-50.
[109] "Notices to Foremen and Workmen from the Manager, Swindon Works 1853-1880," 3 February 1858, cited in Silto, *A Swindon History,* 39.

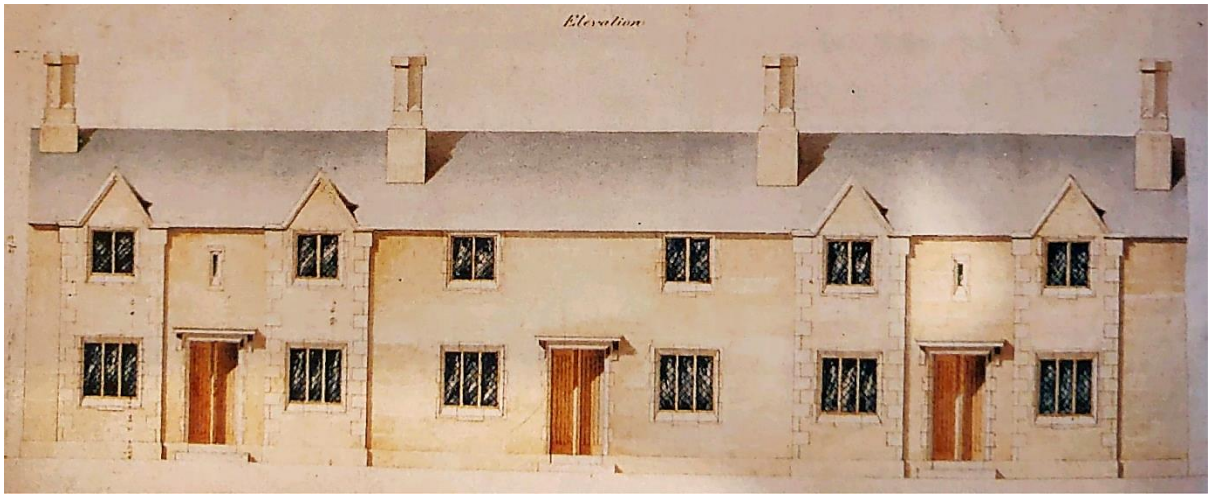

Fig. 23 *(Above) Sketch from Brunel's office showing Bristol Street Façade; it displays original latticed windows.*

Brunel's initial cottage designs were laden with meaning (fig. 23). Their Jacobethan tropes[110] should have been expected from Brunel. Dan Cruickshank writes that Brunel loved 'eclectically ornamental architecture' and 'remained a Regency buck until his dying day.'[111] While this partly explains the SRV's ornamental cottages, the regency obsession with landscape and architectural *improvement* also helps explain Brunel's design.[112] During my research, I connected Brunel with Blaise Castle Estate, one of England's leading gardens at the time. Brunel's appointment as the company engineer in 1833 was a pivotal moment in his career, and it provided the twenty-seven-year-old with 'regular income for the first time.'[113] Until now, the person who selected Brunel for the GWR, John Harford, has not been mentioned in relation to Swindon.[114] Yet, regarding the design of these cottages, he was

[110] John Betjeman defines the Jacobethan style as architecture that shares both Jacobean and Elizabethan features in a near equal amount, making it hard to distinguish between the two, see John Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), 41.
[111] Brindle, *Brunel*, 8.
[112] In Regency Britain it was fashionable to invest heavily into your landscaped estate. With an architecturally potent manor house and a novel-designed garden, one would be in the position to advance their social standing and also to take in the pleasures of their surroundings.
[113] Brindle, *Brunel*, 83.
[114] Early in the book, MacDermot writes that Harford had selected Brunel in his capacity as a member of one of the GWR's founding bodies— the Bristol & Gloucester Railway. This makes good sense; not only did the Harford play a central role in Bristol commerce (his father John Scandrett Harford was

critical. In 1815, Harford inherited Blaise Castle Estate on his father's death.[115] Brunel was likely aware of the estate. Not only because of his business relationship with Harford but because it was a tourist attraction. Jane Austen referenced the estate in *Northanger Abbey* (1817),[116] and when Brunel was joining the GWR, it was being reproduced in early postcards and was attracting high-status tourists.[117]

Most importantly, Brunel seems to have learnt from the estate's Blaise Hamlet which Pevsner called, the 'ne plus ultra of picturesque layout and design.'[118] The hamlet's nine cottages, designed by John Nash, had become a reference point for many people attempting to replicate worker accommodation on their estate. The striking mix of vernacular, medievalist and tudoresque features was widely repeated. The features consistent between SRV's cottages and the hamlet are as follows: ornate tudoresque chimney stacks, bay windows, lattice panes, generous gardens, and ornate porches. The hamlet allowed the Harford family to ascend from the middle classes to the aristocracy,[119] which Brunel himself attempted to do in later life by purchasing Devon's Watcombe estate.[120] By relocating some of the hamlet's eclectic tropes in SRV, Brunel was showing his preference towards traditional conservative land-owning values that it represented. These aesthetically pleasing cottages

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elected master of the Bristol Merchant Venturers in 1798), but the families fortunes came from the Bristol and Gloucestershire's Brass and Copper industry. The railway would undoubtedly aid the transport of resources between the two locations; MacDermot, *Great Western Railway*, 3; Harry Lewis, "John Nash, George Stanley Repton, and the Aesthetic Ideals of Blaise Hamlet (1795—1815).," BA diss., (University of Reading, 2019), 13-14.

[115] Alice Harford, *Annals of the Harford Family* (London: Westminster Press, 1909), 71.

[116] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83.

[117] For example, it attracted foreign princes like German Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau; see Hermann Pückler-Muskau, *Tour in England, Ireland, and France, in the Years 1828 & 1829, vol. 1*, (London, 1832), 205.

[118] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 469.

[119] Lewis, "Blaise Hamlet," 20.

[120] Brindle, *Brunel*, 96.

faced the railway line, helping Brunel build the GWR mainline as the 'grandest landscaped drive.'[121]

The GWR also honoured its west country links through the SRV's naming conventions (Appendix A). The street names on the SRV's west side (Bristol, Bathampton, Exeter, and Taunton) are analogous with GWR stations to Swindon's west. In contrast, the streets in the east (London, Oxford, Reading, and Faringdon) align with stations to Swindon's east. Overall, Silto summarises the SRV's diverse ideological functions well:

> This unique settlement, built, almost literally, in the shadow of the G.W.R. Works, was a self-contained unit. Its inhabitants could see and hear the express trains thundering along the main line, which was […] a stone's throw from their cottages. They were completely identified with the Company, insomuch that they worked long hours in the Works and in return were provided with the necessities of life. The Company paid their wages, lit the streets, provided the water supply, educated their children, and gave them recreational facilities.[122]

In conclusion, SRV's housing was established out of business necessity. However, their expedient beginnings did not mean they were built to low standards. Instead, the GWR prided themselves in building sizeable and attractive cottages, through which their ideology broke through. The next chapter will explore the architectures of the mind that the company used to combat this improper conduct.

[121] Ibid, 20.
[122] Silto, *A Swindon History*, 39.

The second quarter of the nineteenth century, when the village games and amusements had not yet been superseded by professionally provided entertainment, leaving a gap which was largely filled by rational recreation and political activism. This tendency was reinforced by the influx into the new industrial towns of rootless immigrants from the countryside seeking substitutes for the culture they had lost and drawn to the strength to be found in co-operative self-help. Many of these people were illiterate and were attracted by the basic education provided by mutual improvement societies.[123]

—Christopher Ratcliffe (1997)

3 Mind

In 1854 GWR employees watched as their grand Mechanics' Institution, built in the gothic perpendicular style, rose in the middle of SRV. The New Swindon Improvement Company had planned the Institution the previous year. Once completed, it would become the SRV's educational and social hub for almost 150 years. The Institution's leisure, educational and social programmes enriched the local citizenry as it became one of the country's most successful mechanics' institutes. At the beginning of this report's focus, in 1841, SRV residents had few options for entertainment, but by 1891, Swindonians had enviable opportunities. Through the Mechanics' Institution, they could learn technical drawing skills, attend lectures, join the gardening club, and watch an opera. Additionally, the railwaymen democratically ran the Institution for thirteen years before the second Representation of the People Act gave them the national vote.[124] Within this period, the Mechanics' Institution came to redefine the SRV.

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[123] Christopher Radcliffe, "Mutual improvement societies and the forging of working-class political consciousness in nineteenth century England," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 143.

[124] "Key Dates," Chartists, UK Parliament, Accessed August 24, 2021, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/chartists/keydates/.

This chapter will consider the opportunities provided by the SRV's Mechanics' Institution. To explore this, I will answer the following questions. Why did the GWR support the building of the Mechanics' Institution? How was it built? And how was it used, and how did this build into the company's ideology?

3.1 Why?

Eleven years before the Mechanics' Institution was built, an organisation sharing the same name was established with the object of 'disseminating useful knowledge and encouraging rational amusement.'[125] The objectives of the founding organisation matched the GWR's reasons for supporting the Mechanics' Institution's construction. I will now explain the two primary reasons for the creation of the Swindon Mechanic's Institution.

First, we must explore how the Institution's construction was instrumental for 'disseminating useful knowledge.'[126] In 1843, fifteen men established the original Mechanics' Institution.[127] Supported by donations from friends, it quickly went from a lending library in the locomotive work's 'O' Shop to an organisation responsible for providing the Swindon railwaymen's technical education.[128] It kept this role until 1888 when Wiltshire County Council took over the region's educational responsibilities.[129] However, when the locomotive work's responsibilities grew so that its workshops were no longer usable by the Institution, the GWR would support building a standalone centre for technical education. This would

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[125] R W Dunning, K H Rogers, P A Spalding, Colin Shrimpton, Janet H Stevenson, and Margaret Tomlinson. *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 9*, Ed. Elizabeth Crittall (London: Victoria County History 1970), 142.
[126] Ibid.
[127] "Report of the Swindon Mechanics' Institution Council, January 13th, 1845," from 'Reports and Accounts: Welfare, Great Western Railway Mechanics' Institution Swindon', 1846-1949, RAIL 1115/15, RAIL Collection, The National Archives.
[128] Dunning, et al, *County of Wiltshire*, 142.
[129] Cockbill, "This is Our Heritage," 16.

enable them to keep cultivating talented engineers who would help the company with profitable design innovations. Trevor Cockbill, a historian of the Institution, argues that a significant minority of Britain's most adept steam locomotive designers had studied at the Institution while working at the GWR.[130] This promotion of education for the company's economic benefit is consistent with theory. Roy Nash writes that Bourdieu believed that educational institutions are 'the most important agency for the reproduction of social classes'[131]— in this case, the Institution would reproduce talented engineers and pass on their social capital. Additionally, Foucault argues that educational institutions are one of the 'disciplines […] centred on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into […] economic controls.'[132]

Next, this report will consider how the Institution benefitted the GWR by 'encouraging rational amusement.'[133] The Victoria County History draws attention to the fact that in 1851 there were several dozen 'inns and beerhouses' around SRV.[134] With a population of only 4,876,[135] drinking was a popular pastime for New Swindonians. A contemporary, Richard Jefferies, observed that 'publicans discovered that steel filings make [railway] men quite as thirsty as hay dust.'[136] This culture of public drunkenness was often

[130] Ibid, 32.
[131] Roy Nash, "Bourdieu on Education and Social and Cultural Reproduction," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 11, no. 4 (1990): 432.
[132] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 139.
[133] Dunning, et al. *County of Wiltshire*, 142.
[134] 'They included […] beerhouses called the 'Old Locomotive,' the 'Wholesome Barrel,' and the Union Railway Inn,' cited from Ibid, 110.
[135] University of Portsmouth, "Swindon AP/CP."
[136] Dunning, et al. *County of Wiltshire*, 110.

met with company discipline like the punishment threatened in this 1859 notice from the Swindon Works manager.

> NOTICE
>
> It having come to my knowledge that many of the boys of New Swindon are very unruly and mischievous in their conduct, especially during the evening when property is frequently damaged and, (as on a recent occasion) life endangered, I hereby give notice that any person in the service of the Company reported to me as being disorderly, firing canon, or making an improper use of firearms in the Village will be discharged.[137]

Before the institution's construction, the Mechanics' Institution organisation desired to pull people away from public houses. In a report sent on January 13th, 1845, to the Mechanics' Institution council, Gooch writes that the Institution was a successful tool for 'introducing a taste for reading, and a distaste for the bad habits hitherto too often indulged in,' to 'young men [and] families.'[138] Built nine years later, the Institution provided a successful alternative to the SRV's beer houses. This chapter will further analyse how these successes came to pass.

3.2 How?

Between 1846 and 1853, the Institution used GWR workshops as a reading room, library, performance area, and lecture theatre.[139] However, it was becoming clear that as the

[137] "Notices to Foremen and Workmen from the Manager, Swindon Works 1853-1880," 10th November 1859, cited in Silto, *A Swindon History*, 40.
[138] "Report of the Swindon Mechanics' Institution Council, January 13th, 1845," from 'Reports and Accounts: Welfare, Great Western Railway Mechanics' Institution Swindon,' 1846-1949, RAIL 1115/15, RAIL Collection, The National Archives.
[139] 'Second Annual Report of the Mechanics' Institution, 6th January 1846,' RAIL 253/334, RAIL Collection, The National Archives.

Swindon Work's obligations grew, they would no longer be able to do so.[140] On the 1st of September 1853, Gooch delivered the solution to the GWR board.[141] The New Swindon Improvement Company would be formed to construct the Mechanics' Institution and an adjoining market-hall. The GWR would contribute in two ways. First, it would supply the company with the empty land in SRV's centre at a yearly peppercorn rent of 5s.[142] Secondly, it would make a yearly contribution to the company on the condition it provided technical lessons and a library.[143] Before construction could begin, The New Swindon Improvement Company turned to SRV's inhabitants to raise the remaining £4,000 from 'the floatation of shares.'[144] Cockbill writes that if every railwayman enrolled at the Institution had contributed equally, each share would have cost '£2 a head.'[145] In reality, £2 was equal to a week and a half of an average skilled worker's salary.[146] Thus, Daniel Gooch's £50 contribution and other 'block' investments were vital to the organisation's success.[147] The architect, Edward Roberts of London, was hired after the money had been raised and 'on Tuesday, 24th May 1854, the foundation stone of the building was laid.'[148]

The Mechanics' Institution (fig. 24) revives perpendicular gothic with solid and straightforward construction that looms over passers-by. Its most striking feature is the northern façade's dual turreted clock towers (fig. 26). Initially, an octagonal market stood on its south side (fig. 25). This appendage, and the main building, were roofed with shingles.

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[140] "A Visit to Swindon New Town," *The Builder* XII, no. 591 (June 3, 1854): 290.
[141] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 79.
[142] Ibid, 80.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Cockbill, "This is Our Heritage," 14.
[145] Ibid.
[146] "Currency converter: 1270–2017," Reading Old Documents, The National Archives, Accessed August 25, 2021, https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/.
[147] Cockbill, "This is Our Heritage," 14.
[148] Ibid.

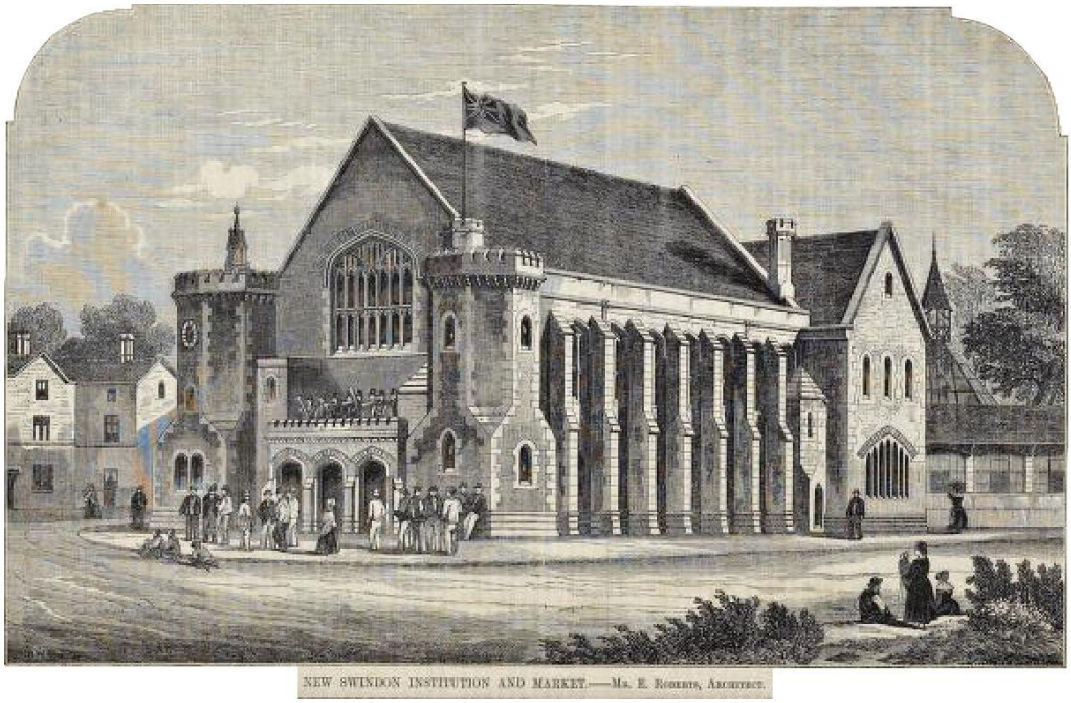
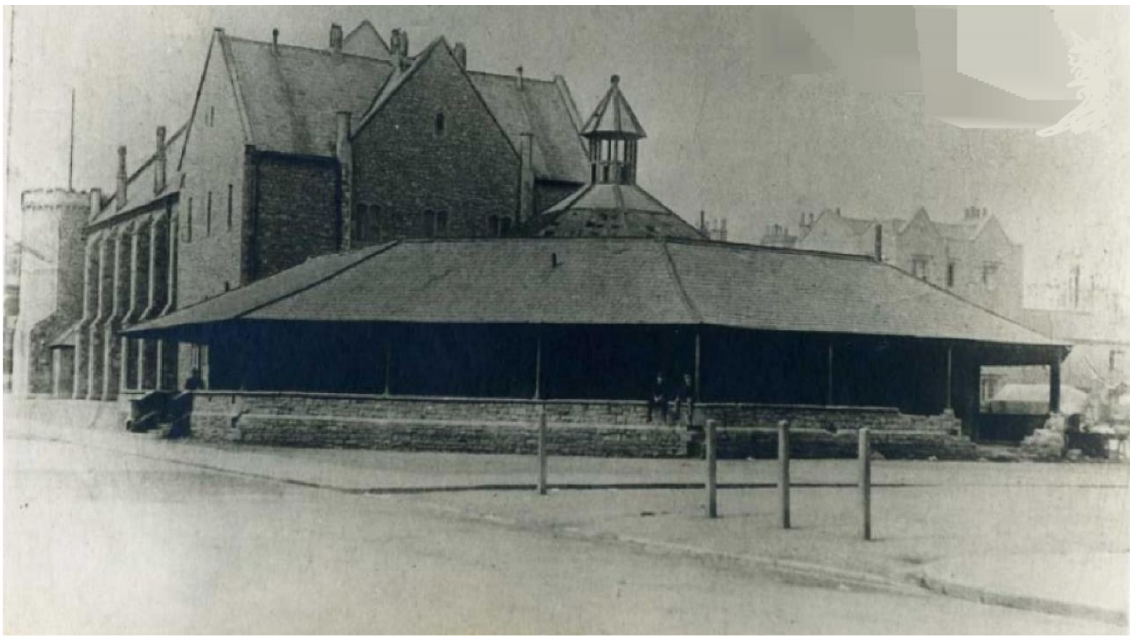


Fig. 24 *(Above) 'New Swindon Institution and Market,' from the Builder (1854).*

Fig. 25 *(Below) Postcard of SRV Market Hall (1890).*



As with many of SRV's cottages, the builders used hardy Swindon stone for exterior walling from the nearby quarry.[149] Dressings were made from Bath stone, while the interior featured Jurassic blue lias for stucco decorations.[150] *The Builder* article of July 1, 1854, provides further details: 'the roof of the hall will be open, the timber stained and varnished. All the woodwork [...] is to be simply stained and varnished (no paint excepting to ironwork), are to be visible, and treated as ornaments.'[151]

The Builder also explains the building's final plan (fig. 27):

> Part is under cover, with a octagonal roof 40 feet in diameter, with a public fountain in the centre. On the lower floor of the main building there is a spacious reading-room, with book-room and coffee-room, or retiring-room, attached. A council-room, dining-hall with hot plates, hot and cold baths, and housekeeper's apartments, are included. There is a spiral staircase in an attached tower leading to the hall, which occupies the entire upper floor, with a gallery and screen at one end: at the other end is a stage for theatrical representations.[152]

3.3 Use and Ideology

It is crucial to analyse the Mechanics' Institution to understand how it was used and how it built into GWR ideology.

As already established, the Mechanics' Institution promoted the economic interests of the GWR. In doing this, it reinforced the company's deep reliance and embrace of liberal economics. Another *Builder* article from the 3rd of June 1854 confirmed the company's

[149] Today Swindon's Old Town Gardens have replaced the old Quarry. The Garden's which were laid out in the in 1894, also represent the prosperity of late-Victorian Swindon.
[150] "New Swindon Institution and Market," *The Builder* XII, no. 595 (July 1, 1854): 346.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

interest in the Institution. It writes that at the Mechanics' Institution's opening ceremony 'Mr. Simonds,' a company director, pronounced that the board 'especially studied in all things the convenience and advantage of the company.'[153] Cockbill summarises the advantages provided by the Institution; 'it was a unique organisation [...] as it made an exceptional contribution to the development of a mode of transport that has […] proved invaluable to our civilization.'[154]

Although it served the GWR's interests, the Institution is still part of the radical tradition of Mechanics' Institutes. Professor George Birkbeck laid the foundations of this movement. In 1799 he gave free lectures to Glasgow's working classes, and by 1824 he had established Britain's first Mechanic's Institute.[155] Although Swindon's Institution opened thirty years later, it still owed much to Birkbeck's original. Mechanics' Institutes fundamentally changed the nature of British education. By relying on 'public subscription or wealthy benefactors' to provide working people with a 'basic technical education' and lessons on 'literacy and numeracy,' they directly challenged the middle-class educational hegemony.[156] SRV's Institution also shared many similar architectural features with the 12,000 Mechanics' Institutes estimated to have been extant around 1900.[157] Like in Swindon, most institutes owned premises with 'a large hall for lectures and demonstrations, a library and reading room' (fig. 28 and 29).[158]

While Mechanics' Institutes blatantly inspired SRV's Institution, there are other influences. Markus shows that SRV was far from the first industrial village to establish

[153] The Builder, "A Visit to Swindon New Town," 290.
[154] Cockbill, "This is Our Heritage," 1.
[155] Ibid, 2.
[156] Historic England, *Mechanics' Institutes*, 1.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Historic England. *Mechanics' Institutes*, 1.

Fig. 26 (*Left*) *Turreted clocktowers on the Northern side of Mechanics' Institution.*

Fig. 27 *(Below) 'Plan of New Swindon Institution and Market,' from the Builder (1854).*

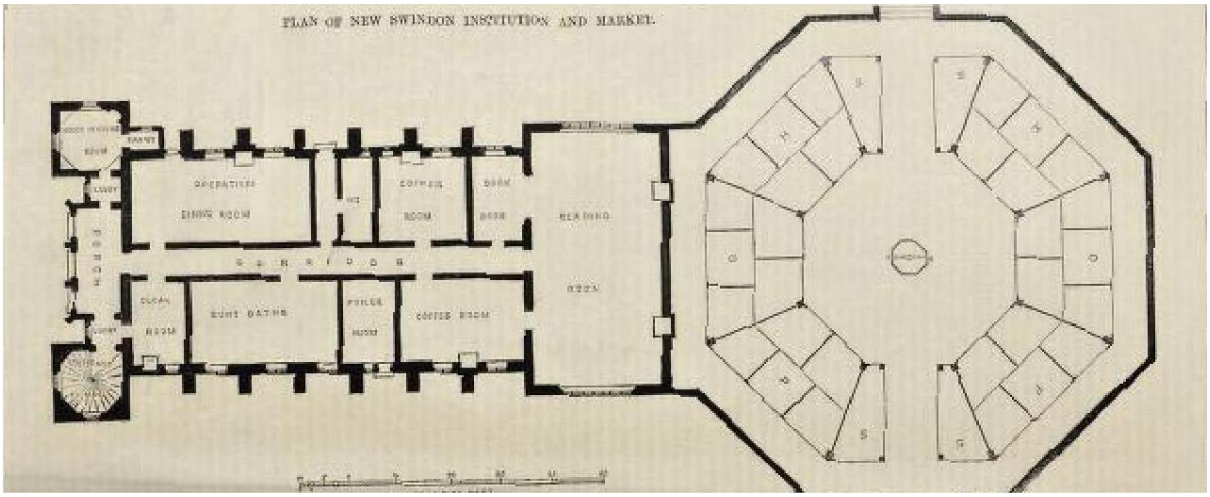


Fig. 28 *(Bottom Left) Photograph of the Mechanics' Institution's Hall (c. 1891-1925).*

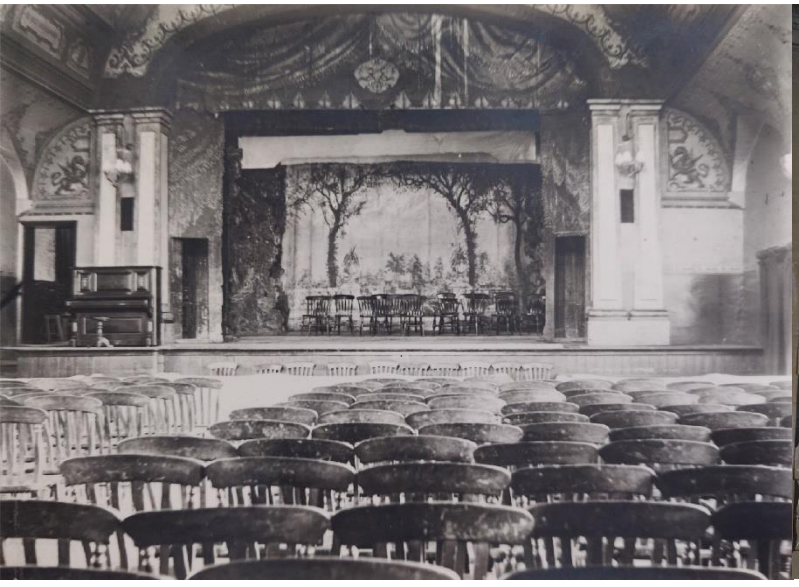


Fig. 29 *(Bottom Right) Photograph of the Mechanics' Institution's Lending Library (c. 1891-1925).*

education in its centre. He argues that by centring education within their utopian cotton mill community at New Lanark, Robert Owen fulfilled 'his radical utopianism [of] work, education, social interaction, and leisure,' first promoted in his *New View of Society* (1813).[159]

Nevertheless, the main difference between Owen's teaching facilities and SRV's Institution was the people who owned and ran them. Markus posits 'power was the key for Owen [who] saw himself as exercising a rational, just, and benevolent omnipotence to choose both the means and the ends.'[160] While Cockbill writes that 'Mechanics' Institutes […] pioneered […] the principle of one member, one vote, and, usually, where a poll was necessary, voting by secret ballot.'[161] So, unlike the dictatorial nature of Owen's educational centres, the Mechanics' Institution instead operated a 'one member, one vote'[162] system to 'respon[d] to various problems, such as lack of basic education, political impotence, and low social and financial status.'[163] Christopher Radcliffe backs up this interpretation by arguing that institutes 'were the harbingers as well as the agents of democracy.'[164] Overall, the radical engineering culture at the Institution provided a democratic outlet for workers to fulfil their needs thirteen years before they would receive the vote.[165] This democracy still had its limits. Although the 'sensationally radical' Superintendent of the Works at the time of the Institution's building — Minard Rea— tried wherever possible to sponsor women's participation, voting rights were restricted to New Swindon's male population.[166]

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[159] Markus, *Buildings and Power*, 289.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Cockbill, "This is Our Heritage," 6.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Radcliffe, "Mutual improvement societies," 154.
[164] Ibid.
[165] UK Parliament, "Key Dates."
[166] Cockbill, "This is Our Heritage," 12.

Beyond its democratic role, the Institution provided Swindon's railwaymen with an opportunity for self-improvement. One way to improve their character was to administer a successful society within the Institution. Cockbill writes that 'the Mechanics' Institutes encouraged […] the large-scale involvement of ordinary people in a series of collective operations of self-help, […] introducing many of them to methods of organisation which led to an avalanche of successful societies.'[167] Starting societies at the Institution became so widespread that within twenty years, there were 'horticultural societies, amateur dramatic groups, literary and reading societies, dancing classes; bands, choirs, orchestras; [and] sporting associations.'[168]

SRV's inhabitants also used the Institution as a place to advance their social standing and financial position. Cockbill displays this in his writing:

> As respectable as Divine Service at the established church, or the devotional exercises at dissenting chapels, the lectures and other entertainments at the local Mechanics' Institute became the place where the respectable and the socially aspiring […] needed to be seen.[169]

The most obvious way for workers to help themselves at the Institution was to improve their lot. Robert Owen's 1812 business pamphlet shows how the connection between education and improvement became rooted in mechanics' institutes.[170] He writes that 'any characters, from savage to the sage or intelligent man, might be formed by applying the proper means.'[171] The Mechanics' Institution facilitated such advancement

[167] Ibid, 2-3.
[168] Ibid, 7.
[169] Ibid, 4.
[170] Thomas Markus, *Buildings and Power*, 289.
[171] Ibid.

through its library, reading rooms, and public lectures. Alongside its collection of non-fiction books, the Institution committee was proud of supplying a unique selection of serial publications. The Institution's 33rd annual report (distributed 1877) shows that newspapers like the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph,* and periodicals such as the *Builder, Christian World,* and the *Popular Science Review* were available amongst many others.[172] Also, its lecture series went beyond providing essential technical education. The Institution's 18th annual report shows that in 1861 speakers gave addresses on subjects ranging from slavery's role in the American civil war to artificial memory.[173]

Despite the Institution's educative radicalism, many contemporary commentators believed that Mechanics' Institutes distracted working people from reformist movements.[174] This might explain the otherwise conservative Daniel Gooch's presidency of the Institution. Gooch clearly shows his distaste for workers demonstration when recalling unpleasant recollections of the Merthyr Tydfil uprisings of 1831 in his diary.[175] By supporting anything that would salve potential disagreements, he was lessening the possibility of a similar disruption.

I will now outline how the Institution's spatial elements built into the company's ideology. As the Institution's leading force, Minard Rea always intended to use SRV's central High Street (Appendix A).[176] With its placement of the market and Institution, the GWR succeeded in establishing a commercial and social hub at the heart of its community.

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[172] "33rd annual report" from 'Reports and Accounts: Welfare, Great Western Railway Mechanics' Institution, Swindon, 1846-1949,' RAIL 1115/15, RAIL Collection, The National Archives
[173] "18th annual report" from Ibid.
[174] Cockbill, "This is Our Heritage," 5
[175] Daniel Gooch, *Diaries of Sir Daniel Gooch, Baronet*, ed., Theodore Martin (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd, 1982), 22-24.
[176] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 88.

One can see the Institution's dominating power when combining it with surrounding shops and the village's closed exterior façades. This was a common practice in the period. Markus uses the mill owner, 'reform supporter and philanthropist,' Titus Salt, as an example.[177] His productive settlement, Saltaire, was like SRV. While a long walk up a hill separated SRV from Old Swindon, the river Aire separated Saltaire from Bradford.[178] Additionally, Salt 'strung out' the settlement's 'mill dining room, shops, Sunday and day schools, Institute, almhouses and hospital' along its central axis to assuage the lack of social facilities.[179]

At this juncture, one must go beyond the Institution's local significance. Swindon's Institute vastly outlasted many comparable institutions. Opened in 1854, like Swindon's Institution, Bromborough Pool's learning library and lecture hall had mainly closed by 1936.[180] SRV's Institution, in comparison, stayed open until 1986.[181] The Institution's significance did not just lay in its relation to other Institutes. By using the Institution to help reduce alcohol use and rowdiness in the SRV the GWR was setting a precedent which would be later adopted by others. In *The Craftsman's* 4th of July 1912 edition, Barry Parker publicises Letchworth Garden City's Skittles Inn which served soft drinks and provided entertainment to promote temperance within the community (Appendix D).[182] Although, Parker's Quakerism likely underpinned the Skittles Inn, as opposed to GWR's productivity

[177] Markus, *Buildings and Power*, 294.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] J. N. Tarn, "The Model Village at Bromborough Pool," *The Town Planning Review* 35, No. 4 (January 1965), 336.
[181] "Swindon Mechanics Institute gets £500,000 funding," News, BBC, last modified April 27, 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-49486853.
[182] Richard Barry Parker, "Modern Country Homes in England: Number Twenty-Six," *The Craftsman* 22, no. 4 (4 July 1912): 428-429.

concerns, both the Institution and the Inn, to put it in Parker's words, aimed to 'formulate the higher standards of thought.'[183]

This chapter has shown how Swindon's democratic Mechanics' Institution successfully worked in the interests of the Company's management and its workers. I will now move onto my penultimate chapter.

[183] Ibid, 434.

The Fund's relationship with GWR was complex and mutually beneficial. The Fund secured financial support from the company, respectability, and legitimacy from the company's association with it […] The GWR, however, also gained the deference and respect of the workers, took credit for the work of the Fund, and […] placed the responsibility of the social conditions of the workers on themselves.[184]

—Adam Busby (2019)

4 Body

In 1892, the Great Western Railway's Medical Fund Society (MFS) opened its architecturally notable "Swimming Baths and Medical Dispensary."[185] In 1847, with the GWR's support, the MFS opened to mitigate the widespread injuries sustained in the dangerous railway works. In 1948 the NHS took over the MFS's responsibilities.[186] Today, the building is called the 'Health Hydro' and is Britain's longest continuously open Turkish Baths.[187] The building's civic and GWR pride can still be felt today because many of its period features remain despite several extensions.[188]

This chapter will investigate the healthcare provided by the MFS's Swimming Baths and Medical Dispensary. To explore this, I will answer the following questions. Why did the GWR support the swimming baths and dispensary's establishment? How was it built? Moreover, how was it used, and how did this use build into company ideology?

[184] Adam Busby, "The Great Western Railway Medical Fund Society: Self-Help and Paternalism in Swindon 1880-1914." BA diss. (University of Oxford, 2019), 32.
[185] Ibid, 3.
[186] Ibid.
[187] "Health Hydro," Historic England, last modified November 6, 2019, https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1382135.
[188] The Baths and dispensary were altered: in 1898 to add new washing baths to the buildings south-east corner; in 1905 to add an 'extensive suite' of Turkish Baths; in 1911 to increase the size of the dispensary from one to two storeys, from Ibid.

4.1 Why?

I will now explain the two main reasons that the GWR supported creating a new swimming baths and medical dispensary in 1892. First, I will display why the company felt it necessary to treat and rehabilitate workers for productivity reasons. Then I will show how the baths were a valuable tool to help ensure a healthy and disease-free populace in the SRV.

From 1876 the GWR had been Britain's largest train company,[189] and its rapid growth caused Swindon's swift operational upscaling. In November 1890, *The Great Western Railway Magazine* boasted that the Swindon works were 'the largest centre of the railway industry in England, and probably in the world.'[190] Swindon work's employment figures show that 10,050 people worked there in 1892.[191] By 1891, the MFS, established 44 years prior, was coming under strain due to the increase in injuries from the larger works. This situation was not restricted to Swindon. Harriet Richardson writes that medical 'problems were exacerbated in the mid-19th century as the spreading railway network and increasing mechanisation [...] produced a greater number of severe accident cases in rural areas.'[192] By rehabilitating injured workers, the MFS was of clear benefit to the company. Thus, the GWR supported most enlargements of the MFS. The Victoria County History makes clear the indispensability of MFS medical services to the GWR.

> Very severe medical tests were imposed owing to the speeding up already demanded by mechanization; those reporting sick were often discharged by the works doctors and little effort was made to find suitable work for older men or those

[189] E. T. MacDermot, *History of the Great Western Railway, vol. 2* (London: Ian Allan, 1964), 169.
[190] Rosa Matheson, *Swindon Works: the Legend* (Stroud: The History Press, 2016), 17.
[191] Ibid, 37.
[192] Richardson, *Hospitals*, 44.

who had suffered minor disablements. Work still started 6 a.m., and sometimes continued for five hours without a break.[193]

The MFS was significant for another reason. It had, for the first time in the village, combined medical and hygiene services. Medical treatment rehabilitated ill workers, while the hygiene and fitness benefits which the baths supplied were crucial to SRV's ongoing public health. From its inception, SRV suffered the effects of poor drainage and inadequate clean water. These problems were presented to Brunel by Gooch in his initial letter of 1840, which established Swindon as the correct place for the works.[194] SRV's lacking hygiene caused endemic disease, including Victorian Britain's biggest killers— typhoid, smallpox, and tuberculosis. Cattell and Falconer write, 'in 1852 alone, fourteen people in SRV died of these diseases and there were another 400 cases reported.'[195]

4.2 How?

Before the MFS's establishment, there were few options for healthcare in SRV. The early Mechanics Institution supplied some facilities, and generous local doctors treated workers at lower prices.[196] Nevertheless, there was no lasting solution. Gooch's letter to the directors in November 1847 pushed Archibald Sturrock (the work's superintendent) to create a health society.[197] The MFS was established the next month. The fund started by providing lime and brushes to cleanse the railway cottages.[198] And by 1871, a cottage hospital was created in the

[193] Grinsell, et al, *History of Swindon*, 105.
[194] Letter dated 13th of September 1840 from 'Letters of D Gooch, C A Saunders and member of his family, and F G Saunders,' 1839-1878, RAIL 1008/82, RAIL Collection, The National Archives.
[195] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 77.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Busby, "Medical Fund Society,"3.
[198] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 77.

village's old Crimean-era Armoury (fig. 30).[199] By the following year, the hospital was open and provided 'one large ward with four beds, an operating room, a bathroom, a surgery, a mortuary and a nurse's house.'[200] However, the hospital's services quickly became lacking as the Swindon works grew.

To address these issues, the MFS had to expand their facilities, which included public baths, continuously. The pivotal position that baths held in the GWR's health and welfare provisions can be traced back to the company's beginnings. The first GWR secretary, Charles Russell, wrote a letter to Gooch on 17th November 1846, which referred to 'the present mania for baths and washhouses.'[201] Proposed plans dated 29th September 1876 show that the fund felt pressured to enlarge their bathhouse on SRV's south side (fig. 31).[202] But this small bathhouse did not last long. The fund instead decided to establish a sizeable standalone Dispensary and Baths. On 24th February 1891, the MFS put forward a contract to construct new swimming baths and a dispensary on a large site south of Faringdon Road (fig 32).[203] It would face the cottage hospital (Appendix C). The fund chose architect John J Smith and master-builder George Wiltshire to oversee the work.[204] It took eleven months to

[199] Ibid, 82.
[200] Bernard Darwin, *A Century of Medical Service: The Story of the Great Western Railway Medical Fund Society 1847 to 1947* (Swindon: Great Western Medical Fund Society, 1947), 28.
[201] "Letter dated 17th November 1846" from Personal correspondence, mostly of an engineering character, 1836-1865, RAIL 1008/1, RAIL Collection, The National Archives; Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon,* 66.
[202] "Plans dated 29th September 1876," from Turkish Bath House, Faringdon Street, G.W.R. Co, 1876, G24/760/410, Building Regulations Applications and Plans, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.
[203] "Plans of Baths dated 24th February 1891," Swindon G.W.R. Medical Benefit Fund Society, Plan of the baths, dispensary, hospital, and other buildings 1891-1950, J6/163/7PC, Building Regulations Applications and Plans, Wiltshire, and Swindon History Centre.
[204] Ibid.

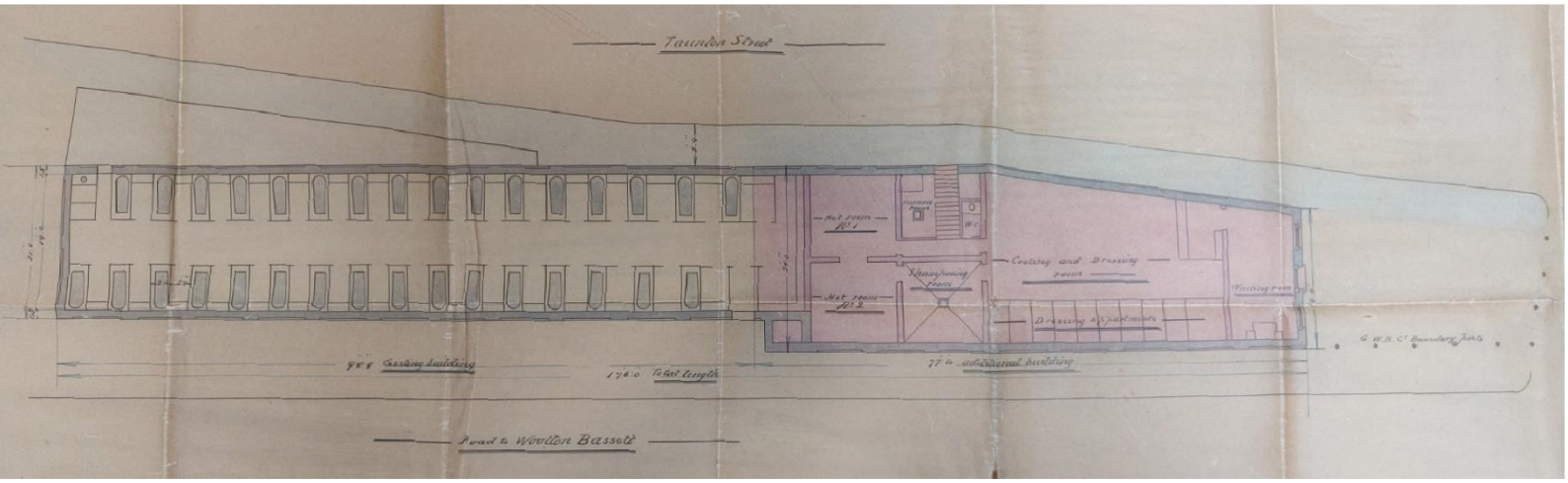
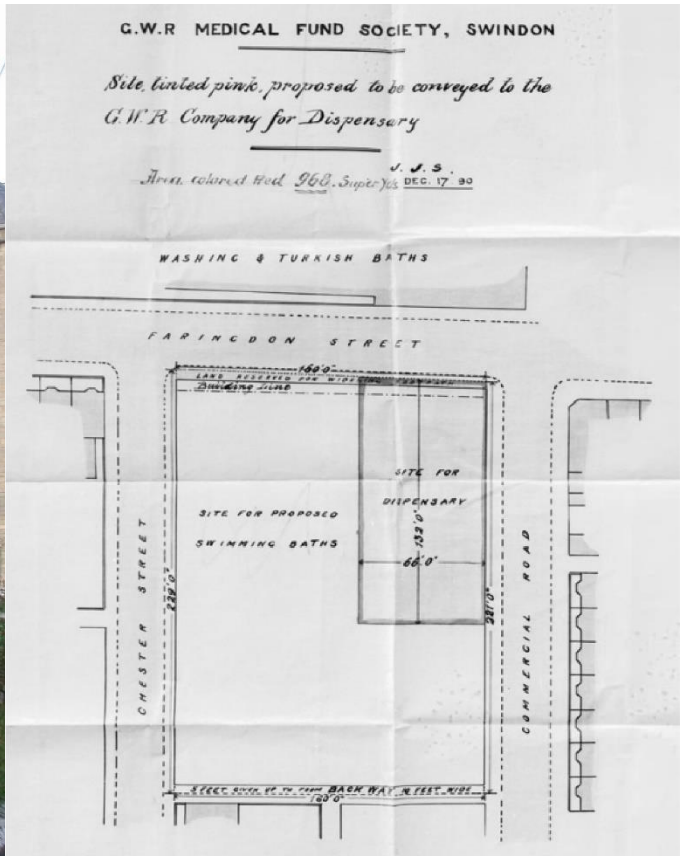


Fig. 30 *(Bottom Left) SRV's cottage hospital; the Baths and Dispensary stand on the opposite-side of Faringdon Road.*

Fig. 31 *(Above) Plans of proposed enlargement to the Baths on SRV's southern border. The Swimming Baths and Dispensary replaced this, and it no longer exists (1876).*

Fig. 32 *(Bottom Right) 'Site Plan of Great Western Railway Medical Fund Dispensary' (1890).*



build and opened in January 1892.[205] Over the next fifty years, the building was extended southward along Milton Road.[206]

The Swindon and Wiltshire archives house an excellent plan of the baths dated January 1891 (fig. 33).[207] The building occupies the ends of Milton Road and Chester Street, which lay to the east and west.[208] The main façade is on the building's north side and faces onto Faringdon Road. The building's southern extent is shrouded from view and has an access road.

Moving through the Faringdon Road entrance, the MFS's secretary's office surrounded the original chamber. To the right of the entrance area, one could access the large swimming bath and three large dressing rooms. Ahead of the entrance area was a smaller swimming bath. From the southern end of the smaller baths was access to several urinals and a wash house. East of the entranceway, there are large rooms set around two big "waiting halls." Each of these rooms housed medical services. For example, seven consulting rooms were planned, along with a large dispensary and a stew room. Historic England provides a brief description of the building's interior features:

> The complex retains many of its original internal decorative features, including panelled doors, door furniture, architraves, glazed internal partitions and coloured glazing.[209]

[205] Cattell and Falconer, *Swindon*, 126.
[206] The Baths and dispensary were altered: in 1898 to add new washing baths to the buildings south-east corner; in 1905 to add an 'extensive suite' of Turkish Baths; in 1911 to increase the size of the dispensary from one to two storeys. From Historic England, "Health Hydro."
[207] "Plans of Baths dated 24th February 1891," J6/163/7PC, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre.
[208] Historic England, "Health Hydro."
[209] Ibid.

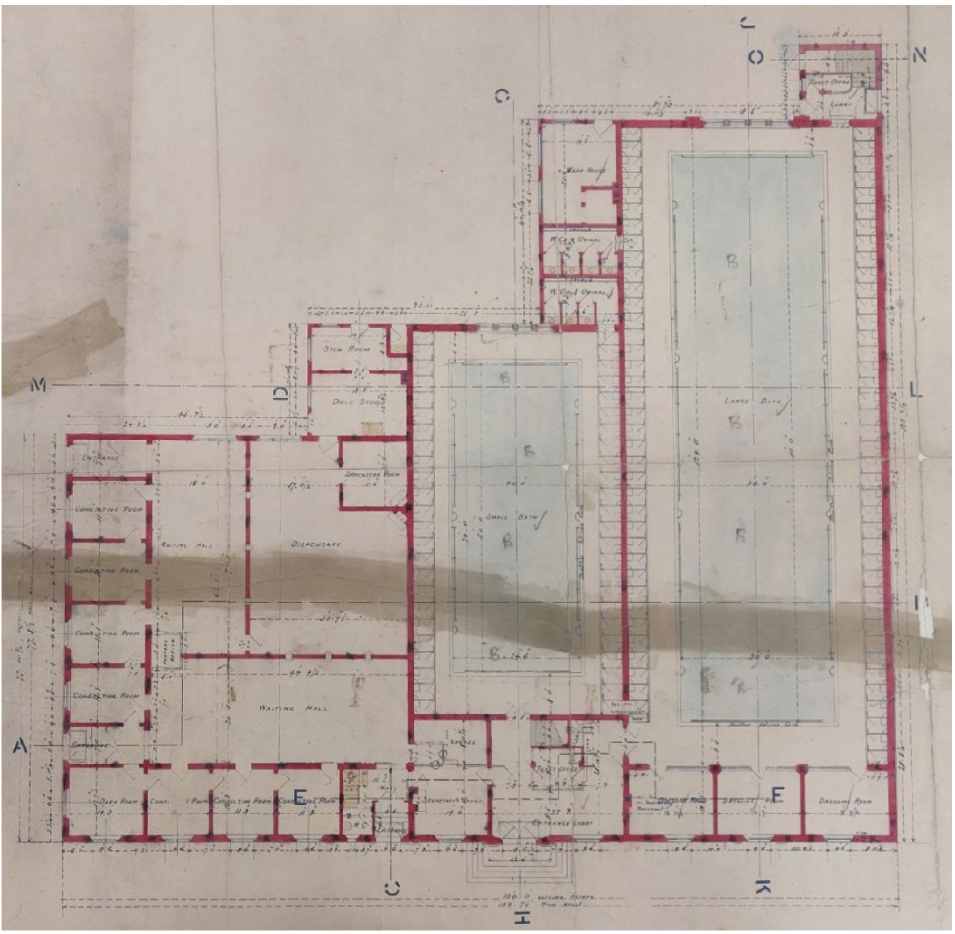


Fig. 33 *(Left) Plans of GWR Swimming Baths and Dispensary (1891); The small and large swimming bath are displayed on the right (west), the entrance way and façade on the bottom (north), and the various medical facilities on the left (east).*

Fig. 34 *(Below) the GWR Swimming Baths and Dispensary's Northern Façade.*

I will briefly describe the building's exterior (fig. 34). The building is in a stripped-down Queen Anne style. The building is primarily dark red brick, while light limestone highlights its aedicula and keystones. Its façade is eleven bays wide and two storeys tall with a 5:3:3 bay rhythm. On the eastern wing, the five bays have an alternating pattern where the second and fourth bays are surrounded by two shallow pilasters, which rise into windowless dormers. The central three bays project outward and have a central aedicule entranceway. The double-panelled doors rest on a six-stepped crepidoma, while simplified Ionic columns surround the doors. The columns' fluting occurs only briefly halfway up, and the volute, rotated on a horizontal plane, extends upwards to create stylised fluted brackets. An engaged square column foils the central projection's symmetry as it rises into an oversized chimney. The frieze and pediment are unadorned besides a central cartouche, in the middle of the tympanum, inscribed with "Swimming Baths/ Entrance."[210]

4.3 Use and Ideology

I note at this venture that the services provided at Swindon's swimming baths and medical dispensary represent the SRV's most radical project— the MFS. This section will explore the bath's uses and how these uses built into the company's ideology.

We must first touch upon how the baths and dispensary supported the GWR's ongoing profitability. The declaration, that the MFS's Director Viscount Emlyn made on the opening of the baths, displays the GWR's dependence on the fund. He said that "the company had at heart the welfare of those surrounding them equally as much as the quality of the work which they turned out."[211] While another GWR representative, Mr Lambert,

[210] Historic England, "Health Hydro."
[211] Busby, "Medical Fund Society," 3.

claimed that the opening showed the shared 'interest[s] existing between the Great Western Railway and their employees.'[212] To him, the baths 'boded the utmost good for the future of both parties.'[213]

Even though the railwaymen were obligated to join the MFS as GWR employees, the company was not the main financial backer. Instead, the fund was a vehicle for self-help. Emlyn's speech of 1892 clarifies this; he said that the firm 'desired in every way to help the people of Swindon in helping themselves.'[214] The workers helped themselves through the fund in two ways. Firstly, they could utilise the MFS Swimming baths and other fitness facilities to promote their wellbeing. Secondly, each member had to contribute from their salary to the MFS before using facilities like the baths. Self-help was central to the original system of cottage hospitals that the Swindon baths supplemented. Richardson writes: 'fee-paying was further justified as conferring dignity upon the poor patient who, by paying his way, would benefit from feelings of self-help and independence.'[215] Busby shows how central self-help was to friendly societies like the MFS:

> Before […] the First World War, the Medical Fund operated within the context of a minimal state and […] friendly societies, voluntary hospitals, charities, informal help from family and the community, and the Poor Law.[216]

Although Swindon's MFS required even its poorest members to pay a subscription fee, it was still a radical organisation. I will establish three reasons for this. First, its extensive services; second, its democratic foundation; and third, its progressive scale of contributions.

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[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Richardson, *Hospitals,* 46.
[216] Busby, "Medical Fund Society," 4.

The facilities the MFS supported in Swindon eclipsed those at comparable model villages. For example, Port Sunlight's cottage hospital, built in 1905, had two wards, a 'small surgery and dispensary, with an equally small waiting-room for the reception of out-patients.'[217] While by 1904, SRV had these amenities as well as 'two swimming baths; Turkish, Russian, and washing baths; […] dental surgeries and dental laboratory; and ophthalmology, chiropody, psychology and physiotherapy departments' (fig. 35 and 36).[218]

SRV's proud democratic engineering culture that had developed at the Mechanics' Institution was also very prominent in the MFS (fig. 37). Busby highlights the 1879 MFS Rule Book, which established that 'the committee of management, Treasurer, and Secretary, shall be elected by ballot, and remain in office one year.'[219] The baths and dispensary were run democratically, but Busby shows the interconnection between its democracy and the GWR. He writes that 'the Fund worked through members voting for representatives for the department of the factory they worked in,' linking 'the Fund's electorate and their representatives.'[220]

The MFS's democratic nature was impressive, but the fund's contribution system established it as a progressive organisation. Busby explains how the MFS democratically established this system:

[217] Richardson, *Hospitals,* 52.
[218] Historic England, "Health Hydro."
[219] 'MFS Minute Book 1900-06, 1905 AGM,' J6/103/5 Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, cited in Busby, "Medical Fund Society," 20.
[220] Busby, "Medical Fund Society," 21.

Fig. 35 *(Above) The GWR Swimming Baths and Dispensary's large Swimming Bath.*

Fig. 36 *(Bottom Left) The Swimming Baths and Dispensary's 'Dental Laboratory' (c. 1925).*

Fig. 37 *(Bottom Right) The MFS 'Committee Room' at the Swimming Baths and Dispensary (c. 1925).*

> A single man earning more than 18 shillings a week paid double the contributions as a single man earning less than 10 shillings a week but was entitled to the same healthcare.[221]

We must briefly attend to the baths and dispensary's wider influence. Just over 100 years after the MFS was established under the GWR's supervision, it would provide the foundation of the National Health Service.'[222] Impressed by the SRV's range of available medical services and the progressive contribution system that supported them, Aneurin Bevan, the 'architect of the NHS, remarked, "There it was, a complete health service. All we had to do was to expand it to embrace the whole country!"'[223]

Before concluding, one must succinctly cover the baths spatial placement. The baths sit separate to the SRV's main grid system (Appendix B). However, by positioning it opposite the more entrenched cottage hospital, the GWR established it as an interconnected feature of the SRV. As such, the Swimming Baths and Dispensary's grandeur still succeeds in displaying the GWR's wealth and caring nature at the SRV's centre. Now I have laid out the GWR's architectural and ideological responses to, the Housing, Minds and Bodies of their workers, I must conclude my argument.

[221] Ibid, 18.
[222] BBC, "The NHS: Born in Swindon."
[223] Historic England, "Health Hydro."

Conclusion

This report has established SRV as a rich and complex Victorian productive community that deserves renewed study. Its long-term economic success, its diversified power, and its reliance on a specialised industry have created a one-of-a-kind historic area, despite the fact it has been left underfunded and underexposed.

Through my argument I have displayed how companies like the GWR could create or destroy communities in the late-nineteenth century. In this period, the story of the SRV is hard to disentangle from both the wider town of Swindon and its parent organisation— the GWR. With this acknowledgement in mind, I have shown how the pervasive power of the GWR developed and sustained an ideology, which in turn pushed it to intervene in the lives of its workers through architectural works.

Although this report was structured around displaying how the GWR used the SRV to assist its rational productive goals, I have also provided insight into how the residents pioneered worker's democracy and cooperative public services while using the village's architectures as a tool. I have also displayed how company ideology pervaded the functional architectures that it produced. The SRV's cottages did not just house workers, they also denoted the village's hierarchies and expressed Brunel's personality; the Mechanics' Institution did not just teach workers' technical skills, but it also performed as a place for a privileged workforce to express their political views and spend their leisure time; and finally, the Swimming Baths and Medical Dispensary healed and supported the workforces' bodies but, it also represented the village's collective pride in its radicalism and generosity. Its funding method remain progressive even to this day.

To conclude, the SRV during the GWR's prime was a complex and multifunctional Social and Residential hub that supported the railway workforce and acted as a catalysing genesis for a regional market-town. Although I have only looked at three architectural forms, I have placed the SRV in its broader academic landscape and have tarmacked a road for its further study. With the ideological foundations I have laid out, it would be easy to hone and extend this study to the SRV's other buildings, including its barracks, its public houses, and its trailblazing hospital, which almost deserves an essay unto itself.

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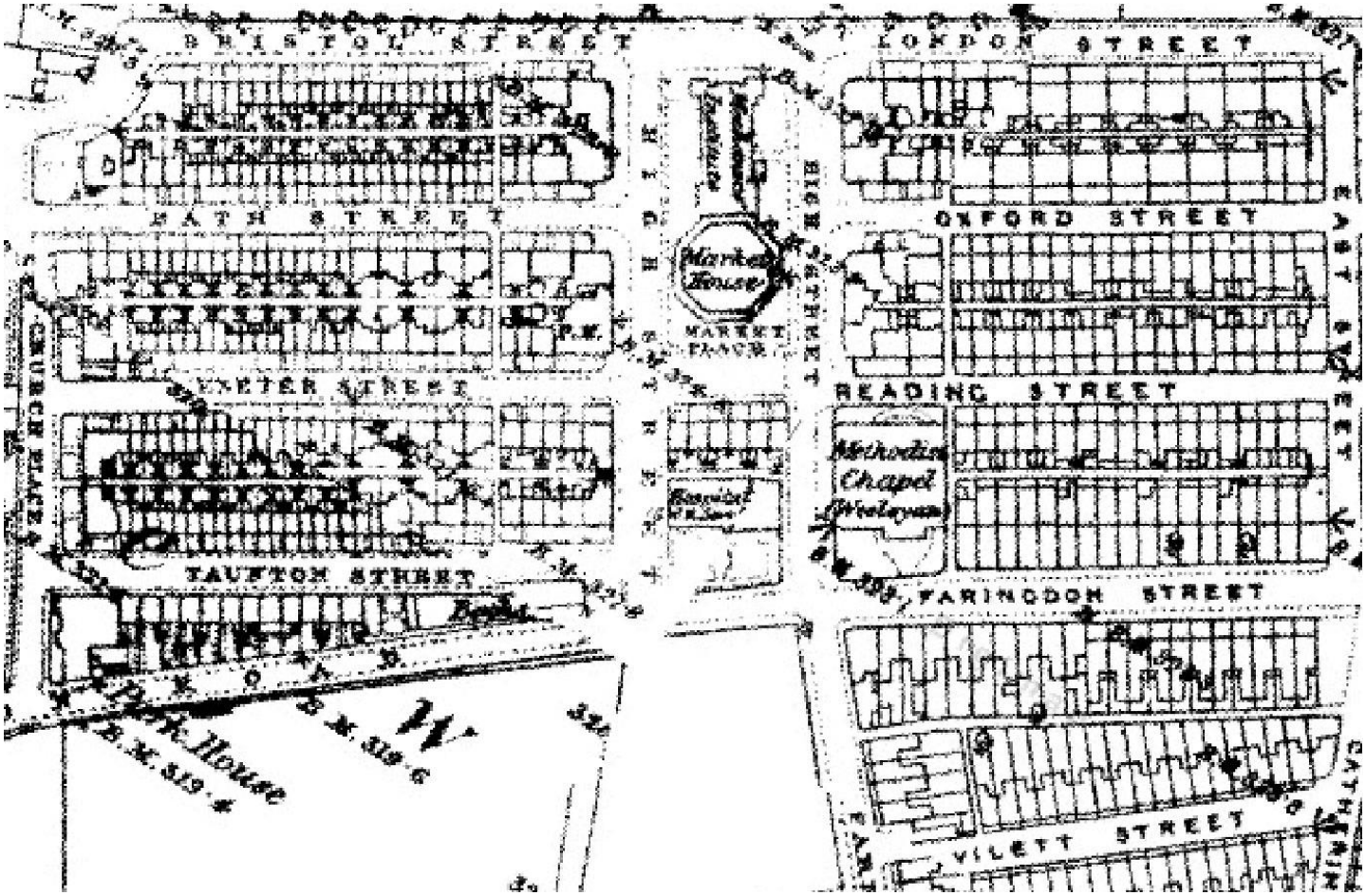
Appendices

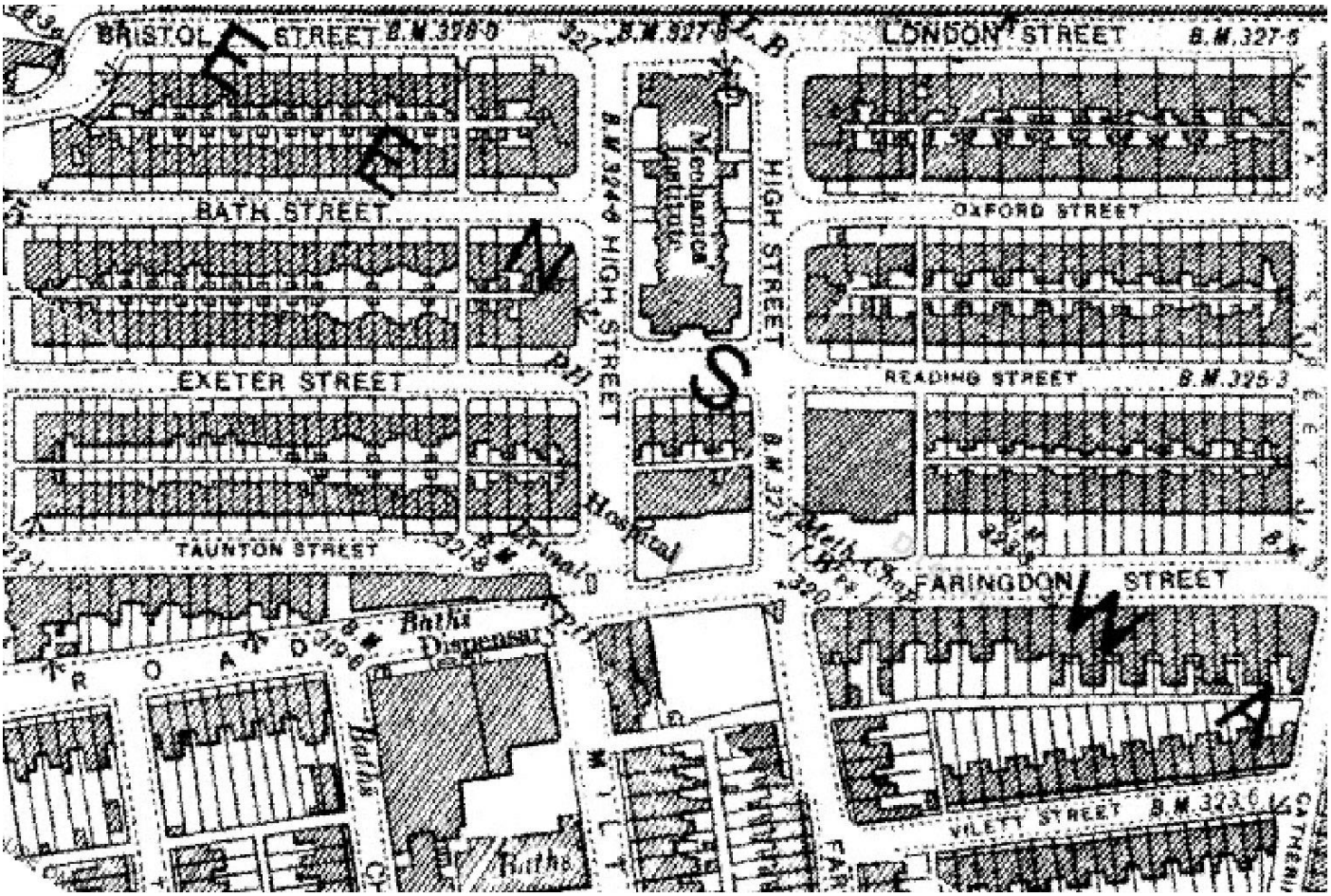
Appendix A:

Map of Swindon Railway Village from 1880s. The grid layout is clearly visible. And the shops, tenements, Market and Mechanics' Institution can all be clearly seen occupying the central Highstreet; from "Historic Roam," Digimaps, Aerial, Accessed September 3, 2021. https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/map/historc.



Appendix B:

Map of Swindon Railway Village from 1890s. The grid layout is clearly visible. This time, the market has been replaced with a Mechanics' Institution and the Medical Fund Society Swimming Baths and Dispensary can be seen opposite Taunton Street near the hospital; from "Historic Roam," Digimaps, Aerial, Accessed September 3, 2021. https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/map/historic.



Appendix C:

A table displaying the birthplaces of men who were living in SRV in 1851. It shows that 92% of the men living in the village came from outside of the county. Compiled from data cited in John Cattell and Keith Falconer, *Swindon: The Legacy of a Railway Town* (Swindon: English Heritage, 1995), 77.

Birthplace	% of men living in SRV in 1851.
Durham, Northumberland, Yorkshire	14%
Scotland	10%
Glouscetershire	10%
Cornwall, Devon, Somerset	10%
Bristol	8%
Greater London	8%
Wiltshire	8%
Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, Cheshire	7%
Ireland	4%
Berkshire	4%
Dorset, Hampshire, Home Counties	4%
Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire	4%
Other	9%

Appendix D:

A two-page spread shows Parker and Unwin's Skittles Inn, which acted as an alcohol-free social hub at Letchworth Garden City, from Richard Barry Parker, "Modern Country Homes in England: Number Twenty-Six," *The Craftsman* 22, no. 4 (4 July 1912): 428-429.

Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, Architects.

THE SKITTLES INN, AN ENGLISH PUBLIC HOUSE WHERE NO ALCOHOL IS SERVED: A PRACTICAL AND PICTURESQUE MODERN BUILDING.

THE COZY LOUNGING ROOM AT THE INN, SHOWING FIREPLACE AND BAR.

Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, Architects.

BILLIARD ROOM IN VILLAGE HALL AT CROFT, NEAR LEICESTER, ENGLAND, ONE OF THE NEW ATTRACTIVE ENGLISH PUBLIC HALLS.

PICTURESQUELY FITTED UP LECTURE ROOM IN THE CROFT VILLAGE HALL.

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