

**ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS
ON THE SUBJECT OF THE
RIVER SHANNON TO THE
REPORTS PUBLISHED IN 1831**

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Additional Statements on the Subject of the River Shannon to the Reports Published in 1831 by
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RIVER SHANNON

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REPORTS PUBLISHED IN 1831.

By THOMAS BERMINGHAM, Esq.

OF CARAMANA, KILCONNEL, COUNTY GALWAY, IRELAND.

London :

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1834.

A LETTER, &c.

*To the Hon. Members of the United Parliament,
on the subject of the River Shannon.*

IN 1831, when Parliament was engaged, exclusively, with the Reform Bill, I got some of the principal landed proprietors to meet at the Thatched House Tavern to consider the state of this River, and the means of improving the Navigation, and the taking of the waters off the adjoining lands: after repeated meetings (having obtained the best opinions within reach at the time,) the Marquis of Downshire in the chair, we determined to wait on Mr. Stanley, the then Secretary for Ireland, with our Report.

This Report, and documents on which it was founded, were published at my expense, by S. W. Fores, 41, Piccadilly; many Members of the House were supplied by me with copies. Mr. Stanley admitted the value of the suggestions in this Report, and allowed the Chairman of the Board of Works, Colonel Burgoyne, who was about to be appointed

to that situation, to accompany me along the line of the Shannon. We did so in the autumn of that year, and the consequence has been, that Mr. Rhodes, an Engineer of high eminence, has made a survey of the line from Limerick to Lough Allan, whilst Captain Mudge, R. N. was employed to survey from the mouth of the river to Limerick.

The able survey of Mr. Rhodes is accompanied with an estimate for executing the proposed improvements, amounting to £153,000. The survey made by Captain Mudge is, unfortunately, not accompanied by any estimate. It is most desirable that the estimated cost should be ascertained without delay of this essential part of the navigation.

So far back as 1794, there appears on the face of an old map, now in my possession, made by John Cowan, these memorandums:—

“ At the summer assizes, 1794, the High Sheriffs and Grand Juries of the counties of Roscommon, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kings, and Tipperary, resolved, that the completing of the navigation of the River Shannon, and the great rivers adjoining thereto, from Lough Allan to Limerick, would tend effectually to improve and open the home and foreign markets to the produce of more than two millions of acres of land in the heart of the kingdom; and that the execution of this great navigation will effectually advance the commerce, manufacture, agriculture, and population of this kingdom.”

SLIEVE NEREN MOUNTAIN.

"This mountain is situated on the east side of Lough Allan, nearly opposite Munterkenny Colliery, and is also pregnant with a very good kind of coal, similar to the above, which, by sinking, may be procured on as easy terms as those on the west side of the said Lough. Here are likewise iron ore in abundance, and several slate quarries."

MUNTERKENNY COLLIERY.

"July 2, 1792—Two pits open; the one eight, the other fifteen yards deep—the vein of coal about two feet thick, the upper part of which being large, round coal, beds upon a small dusty kind—the former sold at the pit's mouth at 8*s.* 8*d.* a ton, and the latter at 5*s.*

"N. B.—These coals being very pleasant, are extremely good for families and smiths. Were the navigation complete to Lough Allan, the whole country down to Limerick may be supplied on easier terms than we purchase from English vessels." Surely this statement should be sufficient, and that no more delay should be allowed to take place in the completing of so desirable a work. But further evidence has been obtained; Mr. Grantham has reported on the benefit of letting off the superfluous waters.

All the bog Reports are filled with statements as to the amount of bog and waste lands kept, from

various causes, unimproved, but principally by the action of the water of the River Shannon and its tributary streams. Mr. Rhodes' survey, however, is the best and most able that I have seen; and I have consulted professional men, who all approve of his plan of *weirs* at the Falls, to keep the water all through at a more even level, and preventing the washing away (at these Falls) of the bottom of the river, which extraordinary floods are constantly doing; but when stone weirs are once established, the water can have no effect in wearing away their surface—the effect of these weirs being the keeping the water in summer up to some defined height, and thereby preserving this valuable line of navigation. It is a great mistake to suppose lands very much benefited by water remaining fully six months on them; they would be much more benefited by irrigation for a short period of time, which would be the effect of Mr. Rhodes' recommended improvement.

To the labouring classes in England who (whether right or wrong, I will not now stop to enquire,) conceive that my countrymen, coming as they do (principally from the counties bordering on this river) to labour here, do them an injury by increasing the number of labourers in this market, here is an opportunity afforded of at once employing them at home, and permanently too, as the six millions seven hundred thousand acres, which the ten counties bordering on this river contain, will be more capable of culti-

vation, after the improvements are effected on this river, and consequently and naturally will absorb in those improvements and cultivation many labourers who now, having no employment in the dead season of the year at home, come over to a better market, which this country affords. But let us attend to the circumstances of this river.

Part of it was in the hands of the Limerick navigation, but now I find that portion is transferred to the Dublin and Liverpool Steam Company; part in the hands of the Grand Canal Company; and part in the hands of Government. There are two canals from the metropolis to this river; one, I believe the Royal, is fallen into the hands of Government—and one in the hands of the Grand Canal Company. There is but one canal uniting with this river on the western side, a distance of about ten or twelve miles, to Ballinasloe. This fact alone is a convincing proof that the present state of the river offers no advantages for communicating with it.

Nor can this be any matter of surprise, when the circumstances of the river, in its present neglected state, is considered. Hear what Lieut. John Tully states in his Report in the printed document before-mentioned:—

“He started with three boats from Killaloe, in June 1821, with about thirty tons each of wheat—*about two-thirds what they could have taken provided there was no want of water, or the navigation had*

been in good order—encountered some difficulties between Shannon Harbour and Athlone, such as bad fords, innumerable detached rocks lying in the very centre of the cut;—he got to Athlone, however, *after a long passage from the state of the river*;—on his arrival at Athlone the three boats (though only drawing three feet six inches) stuck fast in the canal; he had to lighten them considerably to get into Lough Rea; the steamer had to lighten also: at Lanesboro' his troubles only commenced. The canal is filling up fast, the very walls on its banks falling into it. He was obliged to haul out into the lake, to tranship, with great difficulty—and after six days' hard labour he got his boats to Drumsna, where he had to hire two boats to take forty tons out of the boat which was left behind at Lanesboro'; he had to hire a store for a few days at Richmond harbour: he thinks the Government or Directors-General should be called on to pay the expenses incurred. They had a drudge-boat at work last January, when the water was high, now they have none when the water is low, and it might be useful."

Mr. Rhodes details the difficulties his boat met with, with all the advantages of her being well manned: in page 31, in his second Report, printed by order of the House, 10th June, 1833, he says he met a vessel stuck in the canal, belonging to Mr. Farrell, of Cloondrah, bound to Killalloe. Here follows some account of the difficulties this vessel encountered,