RAILWAY COMPANY NAMES IN THE CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES OF LOCAL ACTS

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Researchers who have not already happened upon it may be interested to refer to http://www.legislation.gov.uk/changes/chron-tables/local/intro under **3. Listing and Annotation of Acts : Titles of Acts : Place Names** where they will learn that the Chronological Tables of all the Local Acts of Parliament **cannot be relied upon to show the precise title** - for example, of a railway - as shown by its Act of Parliament. For ease of reference, the relevant paragraphs read:

> "The spelling of place names has been modernised and made consistent where necessary. As a result the spelling of place names in the Local Act Table sometimes differs from that in the titles of the officially printed texts of the Acts themselves. The following further rules have been followed in regard to place names:-
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> (a) Where different places have the same name, they have been identified by the addition (in brackets) of the county or other relevant area. Examples are Ely (Cambridgeshire), Ely (Glamorgan); Newport (Isle of Wight), Newport (Monmouthshire), Newport (Salop.). The references given are to the counties mentioned in the Acts themselves and not to counties as reconstituted by later legislation.
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> (b) Where an Act or Order extends to more than one county or place, the relevant counties and places have been identified by the addition of the necessary references in square brackets. An example is the Derwent Valley Water [Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Sheffield] Act 1899 (c.cclxix)."

I have been told by the Managing Legal Editor of The National Archives that the Law Commission was concerned to make the names consistent where there were amending Acts with a different title spelling. He added that there was consultation with the House of Lords Record Office (now Parliamentary Archives) in connection with this.

It is clearly a practice of long standing for I have found such emendations in the Tables produced well before the days of the internet. The Tables can therefore only be used (as they were intended!) as an *index*, rather than as a data source in their own right - taking a short cut is another trap for the unwary.

An example which continues to trip historians who do not go back to original sources is the company which built the Cambrian Coast line. In all its Acts of Parliament it was named the **Aberystwith & Welsh Coast Railway** – as can be seen by following this link to one of its Acts. Nevertheless, present day authors who know better refer to it as the Aberystwyth & Welsh (or even Welch) Coast Railway. (Aberystwith was the then recognised spelling of the town).

Charles Clinker always counselled (*Railway & Canal Historical Society Journal* Vol. XXV, No. 3, September 1979, pp.107-110 and Vol. 34, Part 8, no.188, May 2004, pp.546-548) that historians should consult carefully the Act itself!

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