

Rambling about Dundurn Parish



Loch Earn 1898

*From articles first published
In the Villagers*

*By
The Old Crock*

Part 2

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Great Rainstorm – Floods in Strathearn – August 1910

Serious damage on Loch Earn Side – Public Road closed to traffic.

A rainstorm of unparalleled severity was experienced on Wednesday 24th August 1910. After a dull but fine day on Tuesday, rain began falling heavily overnight, and with only brief intervals, all the following day, coming down in perfect deluges resulting in extensive damages not only to grain crops, but also roadways, houses and other property; several cows were nearly drowned, while a large number of sheep and lambs were lost, and large quantities of hayricks swept away. The rainstorm and flooding were experienced in great severity on both sides of Loch Earn – the water level rose by two foot in under an hour – in fact, it was reported that such disastrous flooding had never been recorded in this region before. The public roads on both sides of the loch being torn up and encumbered with masses of debris pouring down from the hillside, that they have been closed to vehicular traffic, with travelling vans having to be put up at Lochearnhead until the road reopened. On the north road, which is the principal thoroughfare from east to west, the flooding was of a disastrous character, owing largely to the innumerable hill burns that flow down from the adjoining hillsides into Loch Earn. These burns were speedily choked to an enormous extent with stones and gravel and overflowed all around. Several bridges on the roadway spanning the mountain streams got filled up with the result that the water rushed over the top leaving behind masses of debris level with the parapets. Probably the most serious destruction occurred at the Derry Farm where the debris carried down by the burn amounted to several hundred tons, sweeping everything in front of it away – including the wall at the roadside, tearing up and rendering the carriageway impassable by a formidable barricade – spreading over the adjoining arable land and causing considerable damage.



Derry Farmhouse

At Ardveich the Beich Burn was in full spate spreading its waters over the fields, tearing up the ground, leaving great holes and masses of stones in its wake. Some of the cottages there were badly flooded.

Fortunately, the railway culverts on the St Fillans to Lochearnhead line proved equal to carrying down the immense volume of water from the hills, or the loss to property and perhaps to life, might have been greater.

On the south side road, at a point about a mile west of the village, a usually peaceful stream came down with alarming force, carrying down roots of trees, large boulders, gravel, and sand, completely submerging the road to a depth of several feet for a distance of thirty yards. A field of ten acres of oats belonging to Mr James Carmichael of the St Fillans Hotel was rendered completely useless, being covered with stones. A stone bridge was swept away at Ardrostan Farmhouse, the enormous flow of water here brought down large stones which lodged in the arch, and the water rushed over the parapets breaking down the bridge.



Ardrostan Farmhouse

Two servant girls narrow escape from drowning.

During the height of the flood two servant girls at Findoglen farmhouse had a terrible experience. The house belonging to Colonel Stewart of Ardvorlich, and occupied by Mr Arkwright's shooting party, is situated some distance above the south side road. The hill burns above the house came down like an avalanche. So great was the flood that the debris was piled up as high as the house, and it seems miraculous that it was not swept away. The two servants seeing the danger as the water poured in the back door, rushed out, thinking to avoid the deluge, but were caught in the flood, one of them got hold of a fence, and shouted for help, but the other was carried away by the flood in the direction of the loch and was only stopped by a reaping machine which lay in the course of the water. Fortunately, Mr James McIntyre, a neighbouring shepherd, witnessed her perilous predicament and rescued her just in time. She suffered considerable shock, as well as from injuries received.

The Shooting party had to be accommodated in the St Fillans Hotel.

At a special reception in the Sandison Hall on the 10th of October Mr McIntyre was presented with an award from the Carnegie Hero Fund, for his participation in the girl's rescue.



Findoglen After the Flood 1910

Curiously the Balquhidder, Strathyre, Lubnaig and Venacher watersheds practically escaped the worst of the storms. Which is more than can be said for Callander; here the burn from Leny Hill burst its banks, and after throwing down a dyke, swept over the beautiful gardens at Callander Lodge belonging

to Colonel Robertson, causing serious devastation. The river Teith overflowed its banks causing damage to crop and owing to the town's conduits being insufficient to carry of the extra rainwater, many houses were flooded. On Thursday afternoon the new wing of a building nearing completion was struck by lightning and almost destroyed. On a later examination of the building, which is connected to the McLaren High School, it was estimated that it would cost £750 to make good the repairs. Fortunately, Mr McLaren, Clerk to the School Board had the building insured against accident.

The Old Crock –February 2020

Life in a Perthshire Village 1939-1945

Writing from Edinburgh in 1996, Janey G Bryce gives an interesting insight into life in wartime St Fillans, for both her family and people of the village. Here are some of her recollections of that time.

On her 12th birthday in February 1939 with war clouds gathering and the threat of mass destruction of our cities from the air, she set off from Edinburgh with her father by car in search of a suitable venue that they could be evacuated to in the event of war.

They were off to Callander, Lochearnhead and St Fillans, where there were two properties available, 'Allt-an-Fhionn' and 'Port Mohr.' While her mother Jean loved the garden at Allt-an-Fhionn, her father John Gavin was more practical and Port Mohr with a large garden, electricity from its own generator and a solid fuel central heating system was purchased.

The family settled in during the summer of 1939, along with Bruce the Cocker Spaniel, a cat, two rabbits and within a few months, four hens. Rationing came in immediately and they had to register with a Grocer and Butcher. Chicken, rabbit, and sausages were not rationed and they grew a lot of vegetables and fruit, and, of course, the hens kept them in eggs – mostly! Vans from Comrie, called regularly around the village, Baker – twice a week,

Butcher – twice a week, Fishmonger- once a week, Greengrocer – twice a week, and milk – daily.



John & Jean Gavin

Very soon the L.D.V. (Local Defence Volunteers), later named the Home Guard, were mobilised in the village under Major MacGregor-Whitton. He lived at 'Ardchoille' with his mother. He seemed a real eccentric, marching round the village in a shabby kilt and deerstalker with shepherd's crook. His mother only appeared rarely to post a letter at the lane – she was always dressed in black – widow weeds – and looked just like Queen Victoria. Among the troops was Mr McLaren the minister and they all used to practise rifle shooting at Ardchoille. In March 1941 there was a Parade Service, and the Home Guard was to have been there, but they were called to duty. The Major turned up to read the lesson – closed the Bible and said, "Your men were to have been with you today, but with the threat of invasion they have been called to their posts, BUT DO NOT PANIC." Everyone imagined the Germans were at the top of the hill and felt very panic-stricken. Mr McLaren was caught unawares by these stupid remarks but somehow the service continued amidst much speculation and fury at the Major's misleading statement.



Major McGregor Whitton

Mr Cockburn – ‘Beaconsfield’ was appointed Air Raid Warden, he would walk from the west end of the village, as far as the Hotel checking and if he saw a chink of light, blow his whistle and shout “put that light out” – his was the only boat on the loch with an outboard motor – in those days this boat was a great disturber of the peace and tranquillity”.

Anxious to do her bit, her mother Jean Gavin sought permission from Lady Matilda Dundas, ‘Comrie House’ and Commandant of the Red Cross, and by June 1940 a work party was started in the Billiard Room at Port Mohr to do Red Cross Work. This enthusiastic group continued meeting up until July 17th 1945, making such things as triangular bandages – field dressing abdominal bandages which included cycling over to the fourth tee on the golf course to gather sphagnum moss which was hand cleaned and packed in sacks and sent off to be used for dressing wounds.

In February 1941, a Territorial Army Bren carrier Platoon of C Company Glasgow Highlanders arrived in the village under the command of Lieutenant Mark Darward-Dykes. Nissan Huts were built on the land behind Ardchoille and Lake Cottage and there were soon tearing up the grounds of the golf course and Wester Dundurn with their Jeeps. At one point an army lorry slipped into the loch at Woodend and the body of a soldier was never recovered. In May of the same year a sea plane made an emergency landing on the loch near Neish Island, having run out of fuel. Lieutenant E Goddard, R.N. was brought ashore and Janey’s grandmother Mrs Willis, who loved a

little excitement, invited him to tea, he was eventually able to re-fuel and take off for his base, but not before he signed the visitor book.

With the arrival of the Army a number of properties were requisitioned including 'Lake Cottage' – 'Rathearn' and 'Glengoyan' which was used as a mess for Polish officers stationed at Cultybraggan. As the men had nowhere to go the ladies of the village decided to open a church canteen for them in the Sandison Hall, Miss Blair, 'Cruachan', who had worked with the Huts and Canteens in France in the last war, was given the task of organising the helpers and everything was to run on the same strict lines. Blue caps and overalls for all the helpers and the young kept at a discreet distance in the kitchen filling rolls and washing up! The canteen was open every morning and evening. On many occasions Mrs Cairns 'Holly' – would play the piano and sing, and the men would join in. She had been a very talented entertainer, knowing all the favourite songs of the time she could play most of the soldiers' requests.



The Canteen Ladies

Back Row:

Miss Hood, Miss McLaren, Miss Phillips, Miss Campbell, Miss Langden, Miss Marr, Mrs McNiven & Miss Hope

Sitting

Mrs Watson, Miss McCaig, Miss White, Miss Blair, Rev D McLaren, Mrs Willis, Mrs Gavin, unknown

This war effort along with others throughout the kingdom was called “The Home Front” and contributed in no small way to ultimate Victory.

A soldier writing to the Rev David McLaren in 1944 thanking him for the many happy times he had spent in the church canteen at this lovely little Perthshire village, explained that the appearance of a portable canteen near the front lines in Italy had reminded the men of their home from home at St Fillans. The men were preparing for an important action, and the company to which the writer of the letter was attached decided to take “St Fillans” as their battle cry.

The Old Crock – March 2020

The Roaring Game

St Fillans Curling Club 1880 – 1984

Club records – 27th December 1879

A meeting of all those favourable to the formation of a curling club here was held in the St Fillans Hotel on Saturday evening.

C. H. Dundas, Dunira was unanimously elected President of the club. A number of persons gave their names in as members, and it is expected that many more will join when arrangements are fully carried out. A large and commodious pond has been formed at Dundurn, in the immediate vicinity of the village, and everything is ready for the commencement of play as soon as ice suits.

Alexander Porteous – Neish House described the pond as ‘a piece of marshy ground on the south side of the loch through which a burn from the Birran flowed, the burn being dammed up during the winter and regulated by means of a sluice.’



Curling on the loch 1977

The Royal Caledonian Curling Club Annual for 1881-82 indicates that there were 449 associated clubs in Scotland. Perthshire had the highest number with eighty-two clubs followed by Fife with forty-seven and Stirling with forty-four. Aberdeen was well down the list with seven clubs.

The St Fillans Entry for that year.

The Right Hon. Lord Aveland – Patron

Right Hon. the Baroness Willoughby D'Eresby – Patroness

Captain Charles Henry Dundas of Dunira - President

Alexander Sandison, Ardchoille – Vice President

C H Dundas and the Rev J W Blake, Rose Cottage – Represent members

Rev Thos, Armstrong, Chaplain – Treasurer / Secretary

A committee or council of management, comprising six members. There were fifteen ordinary and four occasional members.

Peter Dochart – Braehead Cottages was appointed as the first Pond Keeper at remunerations of 27/- per annum.

Subscriptions were set at 2/6 per annum and remained the same until 1943. New members wishing to join were installed at the club's annual dinner and curling court. In symbolic style, having paid a fee of 5/- they were ritualistically enrolled into the Brotherhood of Keen, Keen Curlers.



Curling Club 1880

The Club's first match took place at Dundurn on Saturday 31st January 1880. It was a friendly match between eight members of the Edinchip Club and a like number of the St Fillans Club. The day was everything that could be desired, but the ice was dull. As was to be expected a local reporter commented – 'seeing that the St Fillans Club is but newly formed, and has little practise, the Edinchip Club gained by a considerable majority' – Edinchip – 46 – St Fillans – 18.

On February 12th, 1889, a committee of the St Fillans & Edinchip curlers met with Colonel Stewart of Ardvorlich to discuss the conditions he wished the Ardvorlich Quaich played. The conditions were that the two clubs meet and at the end of the days play, the winning club secures the trophy, and the members of the said club afterwards play a game of points, the highest scorer to hold the trophy until such time the committee fix for the playing again of the trophy, until one man shall have won it twice. The match took place at Dundurn on 27th January 1890, after 3 hours of spirited play St Fillans was declared the winners by twenty-one points. It appears that the Quaich was never won twice by the same person as it was still shown on the Clubs insurance policy in 1874.

Alexander Porteous recounts in the annals of St Fillans that on Saturday 13th March 1909 'Several of the more enthusiastic curlers from St Fillans and Dunira, despairing of getting ice on their pond, ascended to Loch Boltachan, where they spent a few hours at their favourite pastime, waking the echoes

around this lonesome tarn, in all probability for the first time. St Fillans won the day by four points. The stones had been taken up on ponies the previous day. On the Tuesday and Wednesday following, they again ascended to the loch, and enjoyed a repetition of the novelty.'



Curling pond 1969

At the start of the 1969 season half a dozen curlers were standing, some holding the proverbial 'dram' pretty near the edge of the pond when all of a sudden, the ice broke and one by one 'glasses' and all, they slipped quietly into the pond.

By now, due mainly to the milder winters, the club's fixtures were mainly played at Perth Ice Rink, with only the occasional friendly match played when ice was available on the pond. In 1980 the club held its centenary dinner and court at the Drummond Arms.

The Clubs listing for that year in the Royal Caledonian Curling Club Annual: Honorary President – Major John Stewart of Ardvorlich – President R J Phillips, Dalchonzie – Representative Members J McPhee & R J Phillips, Secretary James McPhee, Station Road Treasurer Iain M Rankin, Achray. In addition, there were sixteen regular members listed with Archie McNaughton the last recorded Pond Keeper.

It would appear that in 1985 the club decided to hang up its brooms and sweep no more (Possibly due to no new members coming forward, to support the old guard). All that remains now are the outline of the banks surrounding the rinks and the remnants of the sluice gullies.

The Old Crock – April 2020

Another Tale from the Post Office

'Postmistress Alarmed by late caller.'

The sequel to a roadman's disturbance of the quiet routine of life at the Post Office in the little village of St Fillans at a late hour last night was heard in Perth Sheriff Court today, 16th February 1925.

Thomas MacLauchlan, roadman, Elmbank, St Fillans was charged with behaving in a disorderly manner, attempting to burst open the door, and creating a breach of the peace, at the Post office, St Fillan, occupied by Mrs Margaret Ferguson or Scott.



Swans at the Post Office

He pleaded guilty, and Mr R Scott-Dempster. W. S., who appeared on his behalf, remarked that he did not think that it was a very aggravated case.

The accused had been to Lochearnhead, he said, and was cycling home when he had difficulty with his lamp. At St Fillans he saw a light in the Post Office window, and knowing the place well, he stopped at the house to ask for a match, it was a late hour of night, however, and Mrs Scott got "panicky," and went out to get another man. Mr Dempster did not think the circumstances of the case were at all serious and the accused had previously borne a perfectly clean record.

Mr M L Howman, procurator-fiscal, explained that Mrs Scott was a widow and lived alone. She was in bed upstairs when the accused knocked on the door. He made certain suggestions and she had to go for assistance outside.

It was a class of breach of the peace which was very objectionable, and the disturbance lasted for nearly an hour. The Fiscal did not believe the story about a match, as the accused lived about one hundred yards from the Post Office. Sheriff Boswell imposed a fine of £2 with the option of fourteen days imprisonment, and in addition ordered the accused to find £1 caution for his good behaviour for the next six months or suffer additional 7 days imprisonment.



'Elmbank' at the bottom of Station Road

Lantern search for missing roadman 29th October 1929

The pretty Perthshire village of St Fillans was the scene of a drowning tragedy during the weekend. Thomas MacLauchlan, a roadman, who lived alone in the village, went fishing on Saturday afternoon. His absence was not noticed by his neighbours Mr and Mrs Ferguson, Sunnybrae, Station Road, until Sunday evening, when it was seen that there was no light in his house.

A constable was notified, and he organised a small search party, who went along the banks of the Earn with lanterns. At East Dundurn House, about a mile east of St Fillans, they found a gaff lying on the riverbank. Owing to the darkness the search was given up for the night. The following morning a party again went out, and part of a fishing rod was discovered near where the gaff had been found the previous evening. About three-quarters of a mile further down the road, at Kindrochat Dam they discovered the body of the unfortunate man. It is the general theory in the village that McLaughlin's fishing tackle had become fixed in some obstruction, and that, in attempting to disentangle it, he had stumbled and fallen into a deep pool.

The Old Crock – May 2020

Claim against Perthshire Farmer

A strange case from 1942 wartime St Fillans

A claim by the Department of Agriculture has been upheld by Sheriff-Substitute Valentine in a case involving loss to a farmer following a compulsory ploughing order.

The action was raised by the Secretary of State for Scotland against Mr John McNee, Easter Dundurn, St Fillans, for payment of the sum of £149 8s 6d. Pursuer sued as representing the Department of Agriculture. Between 10th June and 12th November 1942, defendant incurred to the Department of agriculture an account equal to the sum claimed in respect of tractor and other work, consisting of manure distributing, rolling, drilling, etc, on his farm. The work was carried out in accordance with instructions given by defender and on his suggestion. Defender had been called upon to pay but had not done so.



Dundurn House

Defender who says he is the owner of Dundurn and was the occupier of the estate of Easter Dundurn, stated that when war broke out, he was forced to cut down his poultry stock, partly on the recommendation of the Department of Agriculture and partly that he could not get the necessary foodstuffs. By the end of 1941 he had disposed of all his poultry and his sheep as he found they were not paying. He was instructed by the West Perthshire Agricultural Executive Committee to put forty-four acres under cultivation. He had no implements or the necessary labour to carry out the work and applied to the

executive committee to do the necessary cultivation for him, which they agreed to do.

Through no fault of the defender, the Agricultural Executive committee did not commence cultivation of the land until 10th June 1942, which he says was far too late in the season for sowing oats and planting potatoes. McNee also stated 'it was unsound policy on the part of the committee to insist on lime and manure to be applied to land, which had so long been laid down in pasture.' On account of the late sowing the crops were late in maturing and the oat crop was not harvested until October, and the potatoes until November. Both crops turned out financial failures and he sustained considerable financial loss.

The Sheriff finds for the pursuer with expenses, pointing out that defender's inability to make immediate payment of the sum sued for is not due to circumstances directly or indirectly attributed to the present war, arising subsequently to 25th March 1942.

John McNee was also the owner of the Strathearn Preserve Works in Crieff.



Easter Dundurn

The history of Easter Dundurn can be traced back as far as 1480 when 'The fermes or rents of Dundurn were let for a period of three years to Finlay Philipsonne – he was also the first Miller of Dundurn Mill.' By 1729 the rent for the land was £18 5s 6d and an extract from the annexed estates tells us that there were eleven families living on the land, owning twenty horses – 40 black cattle – one hundred sheep – 24 goats, and growing nine acres flax seed

and eight acres potatoes. In 1740 Hugh Campbell held the lease along with ten sub-tenants and cotters.

John McNee drowned in 1946 after falling into the Earn whilst the river was in full spate.

The Old Crock – June 2020

Tales from Wester Dundurn & Cachladow

The commissary rolls for Dunblane from 1663 indicates that there were five families on Wester Dundurn – Donald McNeil & Janet Buchanan – Donald Drummond & Catherine McKessock – John McGregor, Patrick McKessock & Dougal McCaus. By 1729, according to the report of the annexed estates, there were twelve families now living on Wester Dundurn, a farm of five hundred acres of hill pasture and seventy acres arable at a rent of £20 13s 4p. with – 17 horses – 52 black cattle – 108 sheep – 64 goats – 8.5-acre flax seed 51-acre potatoes

On the 28th of November 1801 – a case was raised at the Scottish Court of Session: *Macgregor and Campbell v. Campbell*

The case was an action for declaration of marriage and legitimacy. The pursuer Katharine Macgregor had lived with Lieutenant Duncan Campbell, late Tackman of Western Dundurn for a number of years prior to his death, and the two had a son. Macgregor initially served as Campbell's housekeeper, but she alleged that during the year before his death, they travelled to Kinghorn and were married. Macgregor produced depositions from a number of witnesses who testified that people in the couple's neighbourhood commonly believed they were married. However, the defendants, who were relatives of Lieutenant Campbell, argued that his statements to that effect were unserious, and that Macgregor had not required others – especially Campbell's servants – to address her as lady of the house. William Baillie, Lord Polkemmet – found in favour of the defendants. Duncan Campbell was a brother of Patrick Campbell – Edinchip and Katharine Macgregor was a daughter of John Macgregor – tenant in Cachladow.

In 1823 John Brown described Wester Dundurn as follows: - This snug, warm recess would be seen too much greater advantage, were it not for a few clumsy, straggling trees, which, with wretched bad taste, are suffered to grow betwixt the hill and the house, marring the otherwise agreeable prospect. The present possessor of this considerable farm, is Mr. Duncan McIntyre, better known in the Highlands and islands of Scotland, and borders of England, by the title of 'Benmore,' - with which honorary epithet are associated the ideas of an extensive, skilful, and liberal-minded Highland drover. The hill pasture reaches beyond the bold peak, or pinnacle, soaring in bleak majesty to the height of 2000 feet above the plain immediately south of the dwelling-house. The level or arable ground of this farm, has been so much improved, has undergone a process of such rigid cultivation within these few years, as to vie at length, in the variety and abundance of its produce, with the richest and most fertile land in the west of Strathearn. From 1841 to 1911 the farm was tenanted by three generations of the McAra family, first Andrew then Donald followed by Andrew. In 1902 the farm lost a substantial amount of arable land, when the golf course was laid out. The tenancy was then taken over by Peter Kay and his family who remained there until about 1960 when the McNicols took over. Like the McAra's they also lost a portion of arable ground when the village sewage works was built. The last Tenants were the late Jimmy Small and his wife Mary. Jimmy liked to describe himself as 'just a poor crofter and not a gentleman farmer like some of his neighbours'! A stalwart of the farmers dance committee, as well as running his farm, he tended to the maintenance of the old graveyard, and could often be seen on his aged tractor, mowing the fairways on the golf course.



Tea break during 'tattie' picking

The Pendical of Cachladow

In 1886 an oval water-worn stone of white quartz was presented to the museum of antiquities in Edinburgh, it had been used as a charm to resist the evil eye and came from over the lintel of a byre door at the croft of Cachladow, a mile east from St. Fillans, on the south side of the river. The croft was merged into Littleport farm around 1872 and the buildings cleared away. The charm stone had been in the possession of the McGregor family for generations to protect cattle from all kinds of trouble; other appliances, however, had to be resorted to. When the cow was ill, she had to be supplied with water from a stream that was commonly crossed by both the living and the dead, and two or three silver coins were put into a coggie, the water was normally taken from under a bridge. Repeating in Gaelic, “in the name of the Father of the Son and of The Holy Ghost” it was then given to the cow, which sometimes got better and sometimes it did not, but faith in the stone was never lost. It was also customary to place a branch of mountain ash or rowan tree over the byre doors to keep the cattle free from disease.

The Old Crock – July 2020

Removing a fever patient to St. Fillans

Meeting of the Crieff Board of Supervisors: December 1874

A letter from the Board of Supervision, dated 13th November, and a copy of a letter to the Board dated 11th November, from Mr Peter McIntyre, 179 High Street, Edinburgh, complaining of the removal of a domestic servant from Crieff to St Fillans while suffering from scarlet fever, and directing the attention of the Commissioners thereto.

Mr McIntyre’s letter to the Board stated that some time ago John Ingles, Royal Hotel, Crieff, removed one of his servants (Ann McGregor) to her grandmother’s house at St. Fillans, while she was dangerously ill with scarlet fever and that in spite of the protest of her grandmother Mrs McGregor, who was 75 years of age, Ingles forced the girl into her house. The consequence was that a family staying in the same house were seized with the fever. The

Provost, James McRosty, also said he had received the following letter from the gentleman dated 14th October: -

Sir, I have written the inspector of nuisances for the parishes of Crieff and Comrie, calling their attention to the inhuman conduct of John Ingles of the Royal Hotel, Crieff; inasmuch as he removed one of his servants while affected with scarlet fever to St. Fillans, and I now write to you as the Chief Magistrate of Crieff, insisting on a thorough investigation taking place. I assert that he has transgressed the law; and he must be amenable to it. I may at the same time state that a family belonging to Cockenzie was two days staying in the same house with this girl, and now I find that one of the children is seriously affected with scarlet fever.

The provost sent the following reply to the above, dated 16th October 1874

Sir, I received your letter of yesterdays date last night. I have enquired into the circumstances of the case you refer to, and so far, as I have been able to learn, Mr and Mrs Ingles have shown much solicitude for the welfare of the young woman you allude to. When she complained of a sore throat, the Doctor was at once sent for, but he was unable to say what the complaint was. Mr Ingles knew very well that whatever it was she could not receive that attention in a hotel that she would in a private house, and at the girls express wish, Mr Ingles drove her in a covered carriage to St. Fillans, and there placed her in the charge of her grandmother. And not only so, but when the doctor, a day or two after, found it was a case of scarlatina, he drove the doctor to St. Fillans, to visit her, and supplied her with such delicacies as the doctor recommended. You will thus see that there is really no blame to be attached to Mr and Mrs Ingles.

This drew forth the following – Edinburgh 17th October.

Sir; 'yours of the' 16th inst, duly to hand.' I think you are really begging the question and becoming the apologist for Mr Ingles. You state that you have made inquiry into the circumstances. Now sir, I am in daily communication with St. Fillans, and I am not yet advised that you have made any inquiry there. I think you ought to have heard the grandmother's version before exonerating Mr Ingles. My objection to him is why did he not send this girl to her proper relations? And why did he not let them know she was ill?

I assert that Mrs McGregor, St. Fillans, refused point blank to have anything to do with her granddaughter, as she saw that she was dangerously ill with fever; but Mr Ingles, by force carried her into the house against the protests of the grandmother. And more in support of my complaint immediately on Ingles taking the girl into the house, Mrs McGregor went to consult the Rev D.T.K. Drummond, who was then residing at St. Fillans, and he strongly advised her to send the girl back with Ingles, requesting her at the same time to use his name as her advisor. You state that the girl expressed a desire to go to St. Fillans. I can prove that when she saw the state her grandmother was in, pleaded with Mr Ingles to take her back, and whenever he saw the grandmother go away to see Mr Drummond, he immediately made tracks for Crieff.

As to the doctor not knowing what trouble the girl was labouring under, I decline at present to express my candid opinion, but this must also be investigated. From the tenor of your letter, I have little hopes of anything being done. I shall give you time to reply to this merely as a matter of courtesy, but the matter cannot remain in this state.

To this letter the provost said he paid no attention. He had stated this at a meeting of the Parochial Board of Comrie, and they said very properly it was a matter they had no concern with. The medical man did not know what the matter with the girl was when she was removed, and it was only a day or two after when Dr McGregor was driven to St. Fillans by Mr Ingles that they discovered what was wrong. He (the provost) did not see that they as a Board, had anything to do with the matter, nor had poor Mr Ingles anything to do with it either. He and his wife did all they could in the circumstances.

Mr Young – said that what he heard from Mr Ingles about the girl, he did not think the Board had anything to do with the matter. Mr Muir – said supposing Mr Ingles had done such a thing, does it come under the jurisdiction of this Board to inquire into this matter. – The provost considered they had nothing to do with it as a Board. – The matter then dropped, the Board being unanimous of the opinion that there were no circumstances to warrant them to interfere; and that Mr Ingles had done all he could in the matter; and that he appears to have acted in the whole case in the most considered manner.

Readers can make up their own minds as to the right and wrongs of the Boards findings.

Cast of Characters–

Elizabeth McGregor Ms. Carmichael – born 15th January 1802 at Wester Glentarken – Died 6th Oct 1888 at her daughter Janet's home in Cockenzie – lived in a cottage in front of what is now Corranour – she was described in the 1861 and 1871c as a Grocer – (Widow of Duncan McGregor – born 1st Sept 1793 Portmore – Died 28th May 1834 St Fillans).

Ann McGregor her granddaughter – Born 9th Dec 1856 in Edinburgh – Father – Daniel McGregor – her son, Born 10th Sep 1930 – St Fillans – (a Hotel Waiter) who died in 1898 at Traquair, Peeblesshire. Ann's mother Rebecca Robertson died at Glasgow in 1863, and her father remarried in 1869.

Peter McIntyre – Born 15th Feb 1838 in St. Fillans – (Grocer) was Elizabeth's nephew. His father the local shoemaker lived in a cottage at the corner of shoemaker's lane. John McIntyre a Tea Merchant in London inherited the property after his brother Peter's death; he demolished it in 1904 to build Inverearn.

James McRostie was the Provost of Crieff between 1866 and 1878

John Swanston Inglis - Licensee Royal Hotel, Crieff – 1871 -1886 – The Hotel 'Boots' or night porter sued him for loss of commissions amounting to £41.14s3d in 1886 and won his case. Mr Inglis left the area shortly afterwards.



'Elizabeth McGregor's Cottage' on what became the 'Corranour' Feu

The Old Crock – August 2020

Fishy Stories

A run to loch Earn by Red Hackle 1866

As I was casting my eye over the map the other day, to see where I should next bend my steps, an old friend dropped in – one whose friendship had been a pleasant spot in my experience for many a pleasant year, and whose ringing laugh has often chased a cloud away from my brow. “Well T---,” I said, “Here I am, just wondering where to go a-fishing. I know you are no fisher (I would to heaven you were!), but perhaps you might propose something worth listening to,” “Just the thing I called about,” said he. “A lot of us are off to Loch Earn this day week, and we want you to be one of us. Captain W – is to tool us in his new drag, and they are all your own friends, so don’t refuse.” “Hang if I do.” Said I. “count on me at once; and more opportunely you could not have come” “But further” said T “you must see S -, and Sir D -, and ‘the captain,’ today, and secure them. “All right, I’ll manage it and there will be fun a-going” And there was! We rattled over the road to Crieff at a slashing pace, merry shouts telling now and then where a droll story had fallen like a shell, scattering laughter in all directions.

After a drive of some dozens of miles we pull up sharp at the Drummond Arms Hotel, Crieff, where one of our number with great presence, had ordered breakfast for us, in spite of this we have to wait with raging appetites for nearly half-an-hour ere it makes its appearance, and after does come – well the less said about it the better. Take my word for it that the best of it was the sixteen drops of eau-de-vie with which we laced our last cup of tea. Fresh horses were put to, and we were off like shot through scenery of great beauty. We soon pass the house of Ochertyre, the residence of Sir P Keith Murray, Bart. After Ochertyre, Lawers and lathick come into sight, the former a splendid pile, and commanding magnificent views. We rattle through the village of Comrie, a rare retreat for the angler, in consequence of the numerous streams and lochs which surround it on all sides, and in the waters of which he may dip his line with perfect freedom. The Ruchil and Lednaig are both capital streams, the former an especial favourite for sea

trout, which run through all the Earn to reach its rocky holds. A little further on, and you get your first view of Loch Earn.

It is a splendid sheet of water, extending some eight miles in length, by one and a half or so, in breadth. The mountains rise from the water's edge to a great height, and on the lower slopes are thickly wooded. The river Earn escapes from the loch at the foot, just where the hospitable hotel of St Fillans opens its doors to you.

A little rustic bridge spans the infant Earn, and a tiny stream it is today. I can hardly convince myself that this is the same Earn over whose deep and broad pools I have often, near the Fair City of Perth, wielded my twenty-foot rod; aye, and bagged my salmon too. Yet so it is; and I gaze with admiration, not unmingled with respect, at the pellucid waters of Loch Earn, as they speed over that pebbly shore, and are instantly transformed from loch into river.



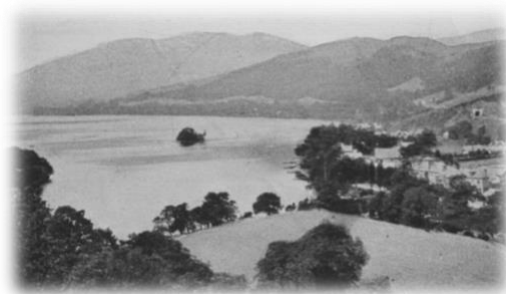
The Foot Bridge 1890s

The Earn is a capital salmon stream and contains better breeding ground than any other tributary of the Tay. But it is a dour river to fish, and unless you get a rattling breeze from the southwest, you may as well not attempt it. Many and many a day I have whipped it with unceasing perseverance and gone home at night lighter than I came. But it is not the river Earn that I mean to speak of at present, although that I hope to do some day; it is Loch Earn, it is indeed useless at present to talk of salmon fishing. The heat has dried up our rivers to burns, where you may as well seek for whales as salmon. And you are fain to turn to the lochs with which Scotland abounds, where you have at

least plenty of water, aye, and plenty of sport too. Loch Earn is not however, a loch very famous on the trout-fishers list, and the salmon-fisher also turns up his nose at it. Very good trout-fishing is got on it, however and any favourable day in summer you will kill from three to seven dozen nice trout.

They run about four to the pound, but many are larger, while 'salmo-ferox' is sometimes met with, but not often. Yellow trout of over 10lbs have been got here – they are, however, like angel's visits.

As we pull up at the door of St Fillans Inn, Mr Davie, the landlord, gives us a hearty highland welcome. He has not been long here, but already the place wears a look of comfort and cleanliness very pleasant to behold. He has three boats on the loch, which his visitors can use free of charge, save the boatman's wages, and they are very moderate. Ere we leave the hotel to divide into parties for the day we indulge in a little 'Athol-Brose' – an innocent and harmless drink brewed by the initiated, in these parts. After that we are off – six of us to the loch, and the remaining two (who don't fish) to drive to the head of the loch.



Loch Earn 1905

My companions in the boat are the same S- who beat me on Loch Monzie last week, and is to beat me on Loch Earn today, and the gallant officer who is better acquainted with the art of war than of angling, but who has no objection to do a vigorous share of the smoking, and take an occasional cast if need be. As the day was anything but favourable to fly, we determined to troll, and for this purpose put out a couple of very small phantom minnows (Brown's). You should have seen the look of disgust with which the old

boatman saw us prefer these lures to the live minnows he had been at the trouble to catch for us. But the result was that the phantom beat the natural, as I believe in nine cases out of ten it always will. I stuck to the natural minnow for a couple of hours by way of experiment, and while both my companions were hooking a fish now and then, I got nothing! After trying to cast for a while, and getting no encouragement to speak of, I asked the boatman to put me ashore, in order that I might try the river for an hour before dinner, and right sorry I was that I had been so long in thinking of it, for almost every cast I had a rise or a trout, some of them nice well fed half-pounders. I made a fairish basket but had to knock off early owing to our long distance from home. When before dinner we weighed our baskets, they were not certainly as heavy as we could have wished, but there were some very pretty trout taken, both from the loch and the river.

Our host had prepared for us a capital dinner, which we speedily hid, and over a tumbler of toddy we spent an hour or two of right pleasant merriment. Our drive home in the cool of the evening was delicious, and a rather novel feature was added in a rubber of whist; the table a railway rug spread on our knees, and each man holding hard his cards lest they should blow away! It was the pursuit of whist under difficulties, no doubt, but none the less pleasant for all that.



The River at Dundurn

As the shades of evening closed around us, we fell back for amusement on the inexhaustible fund of stories to be found amongst us, and so made the journey home pass with a rapidity neither to be palliated nor denied.

The Old Crock – September 2020

Tales from the Railway: 3rd September 1904

Railway Fatality – Mother and Child Killed between Comrie and St Fillans

A most distressing railway fatality, in which a mother died in an effort to save her daughter, occurred last Saturday afternoon on the Comrie to St Fillans section of the Crieff and Lochearnhead railway. The accident occurred about a hundred yards to the east of Dalchonzie siding, and opposite the cottage occupied by Mr Alan Smith, overseer for Dunira Estate. Mr Smith's residence Drumlochlan Cottage is situated on the south side of the railway, and the public road from Comrie to St Fillans is on the north side of the line, whilst a narrow footpath leads from the house across the line to the road. On Saturday afternoon Mrs Catherine Smith accompanied by her little girl, about three years of age, the eldest of her two children, had occasion to cross the line to procure supplies from a bakers van, and whilst speaking to the van man, she noticed that her youngest girl, about twenty month old Helen, had wandered after her. Added to her anxiety about the safety of her child was horror of seeing the 2 p.m. express from Crieff to St Fillans rapidly approaching. The poor woman rushed forward to save the child and had apparently just clutched the infant when the express was upon them. Both were struck down and apparently instantaneously killed, the mother's body being carried along about a dozen yards on the north side of the line. The unfortunate woman's head was frightfully mangled, and the legs of the infant broken and bruised.

The Driver and Fireman of the Train – the tender being run in front – did not observe the woman and child on the line and did not know of the sad occurrence until St Fillans was reached. Meanwhile the Vanman who was supplying goods to Mrs Smith, and some passing cyclists informed Mr Davidson, the Signalman at Dalchonzie sidings, nearby and the neighbours. A Doctor from Comrie, too, happened to come on the scene, but his services were to no avail. The sad calamity has created a painful sensation in the district. The funeral of the deceased and her child took place to Comrie Cemetery on Tuesday afternoon. Writing in the Press after the service her minister The Rev A. Crawford Watt, West United Free Church Comrie –

observed in the sad accident which overtook Mrs Smith and her child on Saturday, the express was running with the engine turned tender first. At St Fillans where this train stops and returns to Glasgow, there is no means of turning an engine, accordingly the engine has to be turned at Comrie, that it might be in the correct position to begin the return journey from St Fillans. There is a curve in the line before the scene of the disaster is approached, yet after leaving a point about two hundred yards from Dunira gates a considerable stretch of railway opens out from which Dalchonzie siding and the overseers house on this side of it can be seen. If the engine had been running with tender coupled to the carriages the driver when operating his engine could frequently have swept the line with his eye and seen the child on the rails where it stood, I am informed, for a considerable time. In that case there was a chance of pulling up and averting this sad fatality.

It may be noted that before the formation of the railway the cottage was situated next to the road but to suit the railway the public road was altered, with the result that the railway is run close to Mr Smiths House, and the public road is on the opposite side of the railway, hence the necessity of a wicker gate and crossing to reach the public highway.

Alan Smith lived on at Drumlochlan Cottage until 1933, when along with his second wife Jessie Ann Kay he retired to Glenlednock Cottage in Comrie, where he died in 1938. During his lifetime he exhibited and won several medals for woodwork at both the Highland and Perthshire shows. He was property convener for St Kessocks in Comrie and a lifetime member of St Fillans Curling Club.



St Fillans Station, Monday 1st October 1921

Railway Smash at St Fillans - Over 400 sheep killed.

A frightful disaster – almost unique in railway history - occurred on the Crieff and Balquhiddar line at St Fillans Station on Monday evening, when a special sheep train from various stations on the Oban Railway, comprising some 37 trucks, carrying about 1800 sheep for the Perth sales, and also to Forfar and Aberdeen &c, was almost completely wrecked. The train left Balquhiddar at 5.45pm and about 6 o'clock approached St Fillans, where it was run into a siding to allow the passenger train from Crieff to enter St Fillans Station. There being a decline of about one in sixty for a considerable distance here. The train was going at rapid speed, and it is supposed that the slippery state of the rails, along with insufficient brake power, failed to stay the progress of the heavy-laden train. Which dashed on to a dead end close to a bridge spanning the line? The result was a fearful smash. The engine and tender were hurled onto the rocky embankment on the north side and fell over broadside on. The driver and fireman were pitched onto the embankment, making a marvellous escape with their lives.

In the smash some 18 or 19 trucks with the sheep were telescoped and piled up, being smashed to atoms, while a scene of indescribable horror resulted to the sheep. Hundreds of the animals being killed outright, and many so dreadfully mangled that they had to be destroyed. The bleating and cries of pain from the animals in the darkness of the night was pitiful in the extreme - those of the stock that escaped were turned out into an adjoining field. Information of the disaster was immediately sent to the railway headquarters, and breakdown gangs arrived by special trains from Perth and Motherwell, along with officials; as well as a number of butchers to deal with the animals killed or injured. Altogether over four hundred sheep were destroyed. The breakdown squads were engaged all night removing the carcasses and wreckage, and the line was cleared by Tuesday afternoon. A large number of the carcasses were buried in the vicinity of the smash, as putrefaction having set in the stench was almost unbearable to the rescuers. The smash occasioned a great sensation in the district, and the scene has been visited by many people. One can but wonder what a future would be archaeologist stumbling over the site sometime in the future will make of it,

will he or she put it down to some pagan ritualistic gathering, or will they think it was just the crazy gang organising yet another village BBQ.

The Old Crock – October 2020

More Tales from the Railway - A shaky Start – 1886-1901

The Comrie St Fillans & Lochearnhead Railway Bill

During 1886 a number of articles appeared in the press opposing this railway bill, both locally and nationally a goodly number of the great and the good expressed their displeasure that this railway should be built in what was being described as an area of national beauty. W Scott Dalgleish a distinguished Edinburgh Scholar stated that one of the loveliest villages in Scotland is threatened by a calamity – in fact, with aesthetic defacement. Referring to St Fillans, at the foot of Loch Earn, as a village which in its peaceful sweetness, and in the beauty of its surroundings, is one of the gems of the highlands, and, indeed, of Scotland. It is now proposed to carry a line of railway from Comrie to Lochearnhead right through the heart of the village; it is true, in the rear of the line of houses, but in cruel proximity to them. Let me say at once that I do not object to the line of railway passing by Lochearnside. It will be a boon to the district; and by establishing a direct route between Dundee and Oban, it will be a boon to Scotland. But why should the projected line, which as surveyed, follows the south side of the Earn from Comrie to St Fillans, be suddenly shifted at the latter place to the north side, and be carried along the north side of Loch Earn to Lochearnhead, where it again turns southwards in order to meet the Callander and Oban Railway? I hope that Sir Donald Currie, the devoted and energetic member for West Perthshire, will interest himself in this question when it comes before Parliament, as it must do soon.

On the 12th of February 1887, a petition was presented against the Bill on the grounds that it would seriously interfere with the holdings of several crofters on the route between St Fillans & Lochearnhead. The Bill would have been read a second time that day but in consequence of the opposition it was postponed for a week. Sir Donald Currie had also expressed his concerns and

had his name removed from the bill – stating that when he agreed to his name being included, he was unaware of the route or the amount of local opposition.

At a meeting in Comrie on Monday 22nd February, Provost Orchard, of Broughty Ferry, one of the promoters of the Comrie – Lochearnhead Railway (and who was also a director of the Crieff – Comrie Railway) informed the local committee charged with looking after the interest of Comrie in connection with the railway scheme that he and the Lord Provost McGrady of Dundee, had sent a joint notice of retrial as promoters of the railway to the secretary the day after the public meeting held in Comrie about the middle of December last. Mr Orchard stated that they had been assured that the inhabitants were in complete sympathy with the route chosen by the engineers, but on hearing of the feeling in Comrie and district they both acted as above mentioned, however on the earnest solicitation of the Secretary (Mr Dempster, Solicitor Perth), they agreed to keep quiet until further progress had been made. One of the main promoters locally was Colonel Williamson of Lawers (also the Managing Director of the Crieff – Comrie Railway), who bulldozed his points through most meetings, as Comrie he stated – that he couldn't understand why some of his tenants were objecting to the loss of part of their kitchen gardens. In St Fillans he accused Mr McAra of the Oaks of self interest and suggested that perhaps they settle the matter outside.

On the 30th of March Mr Channing gave notice to reject the Bill on its third reading and presented a petition against it from householder's residents and others interested in St Fillans, Comrie and vicinity. On April 7th Mr Channing, Mr Bryce & Mr Weir it is said are all to oppose the Third Reading of the Bill on the grounds of its interference with the scenery and amenity of the district. But it was thought that it would be highly unusual if the house refused to pass a Bill against which all opposition in committee has been withdrawn, and for a reason that is more or less applicable to all railways from an aesthetical point of view. However, on April 12th the House agreed to postpone consideration of the Bill until the 13th of May. On 14th May Mr Bryce moved the committal of the Bill to a select Committee of five members, with an instruction to take evidence as to whither the line would injure the

scenery of the valley and lake upon which it is to pass. The right honourable member said he did not object to the railway, but this particular one on the north bank of the Earn was not necessary. One on the South bank might be constructed with comparative little injury to the scenery. He was obliged to take the unusual course in asking the House to intervene, as the promoter of the Bill by “squaring” some of the opponents, had prevented those on the spot who objected to the railway from having a locus standi. The Lord Advocate opposed the motion as one if which accepted would open the door to most inconvenient procedures. He pointed out that opposition could still be heard in the House of Lords.

The House then divided when the voting for Mr Bryce’s motion was 175 against 159.

The select committee consisted of Sir John Lubbock - Sir U. K. Shuttleworth – Mr Nicol member for Argyllshire – Mr Birrell QC; and Mr Fry the member for north Bristol.

Lochearn Railway; the Parliamentary Enquiry

30th June - A number of the great and good of the village and surrounding district appeared before the select committee to intimate their opposition to the selected route of the railway line; many would have preferred the line to have been built along the south side of the loch and not through their back gardens.

6th August 1897 - The proposals for a railway came to fruition when the Lochearnhead, St Fillans and Comrie Railway Company was authorised by Act of Parliament on 6th August 1897. The share Capital was £165000 the Caledonian Railway Company subscribed half the money on the basis that it would later have the option of absorbing the company. The Caledonian was concerned that its rival in the North British Railway might build a penetrating line into the area, and this motivated their provision of funding. The new company was slow to take action on its new powers and it was not until February 1899 that a prospectus inviting investment was issued. The prospective emphasised the potential of through traffic from the western

highlands to Perth and other central and eastern destinations. Cattle were a particular dominant traffic to be expected.

Comrie and Lochearnhead railway scheme August 1898 it is now considerable over a year since the Bill for the extension of the railway system from Comrie to Lochearnhead received the approval from Parliament, after, it may be remembered, a somewhat extraordinary course of procedure, where the Bill after having passed the preliminary stages of the House, was committed in order to hear evidence from the district through which the line was to traverse. Up till now nothing has been done in the way of proceeding with the construction of the railway. After various negotiations – financial and otherwise – it has now been arranged that the work of construction will be preceded with early next spring. The line will be slightly over fifteen miles in length. And will start from the present station at Comrie westwards over the main street by a high-level bridge afterwards crossing the river Earn four times before reaching St Fillans, then by the back of the village along the north side of Loch Earn to Lochearnhead where another station will be built. The line will then run in a northerly direction towards Lochearnhead station, on the Callander and Oban railway, where it will connect with that line, and thus direct and complete railway communications will be established between Dundee in the east and Oban in the west. – From the Germanic Sea to the Atlantic – On the 14th of May 1899, the Directors of the railway accepted the offer of Messrs John Patton & Co contractors, Glasgow, for the first phase of the railway from Comrie to St Fillans. The contract price was thought to be about £78,130.

During the construction of the St Fillans section there were ten huts, a Mission Hall, and a Bothy, between the West lodge of Dunira and Littleport Farm, housing 183 navvies and their families, all working on the construction of the railway, there were seventeen children included in this number. The village had its own Police Officer Stationed at Earn Grove, and innumerable instances of theft –

Breach of the peace & drunk and disorderly conduct, dealt with by Sheriff Syme at Perth. Including, the theft of twenty-five hens from the Drummond

Arms Hotel - A break in at the Station Booking Office, and the theft of a Collie puppy from the Station Cottages.



Comrie to St Fillans Railway

The opening

On Tuesday 2nd October 1901 a number of gentlemen left Crieff with the early train, the first of three trains to St. Fillans that day. On reaching Comrie somewhat late, another party joined the train for the purpose of making the first run over the new line. Owing to the wet weather the rails were somewhat slippery, and the engine on starting from Comrie Station made little progress until it reached the bridge running over Dundas Street. Many of the inhabitants of Comrie were out to view the first train passing along, and its slow progress at the start gave rise to some little joking and amusement amongst the passengers and onlookers it being freely remarked that some Comrie “wags” had “greased” the rails with “soft soap” as a token of displeasure at the railway passing their doors. However, a rapid spin was made over the rest of the line. Where at St Fillans a large number of inhabitants had gathered to see its arrival, while a considerable number were waiting to take the 8.05 am return journey to Crieff and elsewhere.

By the second train which left Crieff at Noon, and arrived Comrie about 15min later, where a large number boarded including Colonel Williamson of Lawers and a number of well known Ladies and Gentlemen, Colonel Williamson marked the occasion by paying the tickets of a number of Girls and Boys, who enjoyed their trip and will no doubt remember it as a red-letter day in their lives. On Thursday afternoon an unfortunate accident occurred on the new line. Shunting operations were being carried out in the goods yard preparatory to the two thirty goods train to Perth when the engine left the

rails. No one was hurt, but considerable damage was done to the permanent way, and a breakdown squad had to be sent from Perth. They arrived late at night and raised the engine to the rails. No delays took place to passenger traffic.

The Old Crock – November 2020

Tales from the Railway - St Fillans to Balquhiddier

By April of 1901 the line had reached St Fillans, but there still remained the major part of the line to be completed, realizing that there was insufficient funding in place, a deed of agreement to sell the company to the Caledonian Company was executed on 7th May 1901 and it took effect (after Parliament approval) on 1st August 1902

On 4th May 1901, the New Directors of the railway accepted Mr John Patton's bid for the second and final section of the line. The contract price is stated to be above £100,000. The total estimated cost of the railway between Lochearnhead and Comrie was £170,000. About one mile from St Fillans the work of construction had been particularly expensive, several large streams course down the hillside to the loch, and deep gorges had to be bridged; and at one point no fewer than five arches span one of these gorges. Several overhead bridges were also erected. A tunnel extending to about sixty yards was cut through solid rock of such quality that no excavation timbering was found necessary.

Monday 3rd February 1902 (By a Strathearn correspondent)

Death of Rail Contractor

The news of the death of Mr John Paton, railway contractor, came with shocking surprise to the people of Comrie, St. Fillans and Strathearn generally. Only the other day he was the picture of perfect health – tall, handsome of strong build, and in the prime of life. Little less than a week ago he was present at the St. Fillans Curlers Ball – was, indeed, President of the Committee, and acted as chairman at supper. After the dance he went down by the early special train to Comrie, then walked back to St. Fillans and

overheated himself. He left St. Fillans again by the first ordinary train for Glasgow. On that journey he caught a chill, which has held him in its grip literally to the death. Since work on the railway from Comrie was started Mr Paton has stayed more or less in the Comrie and St. Fillans district. He has come into contact with all sorts of conditions of men, and in all sorts of ways; and yet I do not think there is one person in the district but feels his loss as keenly as if he had belonged personally to each.

The navvies who worked for him thought a great deal of him and are deeply and sincerely saddened for his untimely death. To show what they thought of him, let me recall that last summer there was just a little anxiety as to whether Mr Paton was to get the contract for the new section between St. Fillans and Lochearnhead. During the day or two while the matter was still undecided the navvies – at least a large number of them – stopped work. As they told the parish minister ‘they were waiting to see if Paton (or Patton as they pronounced it) was going to get the contract. If he gets it - it’s all right.’ Mr Paton got it and the navvies joyfully resumed work. He certainly was a kind and lenient master to them. But not only did the navvies rejoice over the new contract – the people of Comrie and St. Fillans rejoiced the stream of congratulations which poured in on Mr Paton was testament to his popularity.

He was a keen curler and a strong player for the St. Fillans Club, of which he had become a member, and to which he lately intimated his intention of giving a medal to be played for this season. Mr Paton was a quiet man, but very genial, with a fund of humour about him.

The Scotsman Monday 17th February 1902

The Navvies at St Fillans

3 Dundonald Street, Edinburgh February 15th, 1902

Sir,- Will you be good enough to allow me to draw the attention of your readers to the condition of the navvies at St Fillans, who through the death

of the contractor, Mr Paton, and the severity of the weather, have been unable to work for some time past, as the work has been stopped.

The friends of St Fillans have made an effort to feed these hungry men, and on Sabbath last a collection was taken in the Parish Church, for the purpose of opening a soup kitchen. The men have been supplied with food, but as the frost still continues, it is necessary that something more be done. Surely the friends that have visited the neighbourhood, and are interested in the new railway, and in the men who are making it, will not forget them in their time of hunger and cold.

Contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the parish minister, Rev Thomas Armstrong, St Fillans, W.A.A. Balfour, Esq. C.A. 49 Castle St, Edinburgh, or by, John Frances Taylor,

Superintendent, Scottish Navy Mission

2nd April 1902 - Arrangements have now been made for Mr William Duncan, Glasgow to take over the contract and work was expected to resume imminently.

13th June 1903

Workman's Compensation Claim

On 23rd June 1900, John McLaren a 'nipper' working on the railway being constructed between Comrie and St. Fillans was injured through wagons going over his left arm, with result that the arm had to be amputated a little below the shoulder. The contractor was the late Mr John Paton. McLaren's age was sixteen, and his wage was 11 shillings per week. The compensation payable to him under the act was agreed to be fixed at 5s 6d. The maximum amount (50 per cent) Under the Act and a memorandum to that effect was recorded in the Sheriff Court Books in Perth. About a year after the accident McLaren was able to accept light work and is at present employed as a message boy at a wage of fiveshillings per week. The employer or rather (The Insurance Company with whose the employer had insured his workmen) raised a process by minute in the Sheriff Court in Perth to have the weekly payment of 5s 6d revised and reduced by the Sheriff, averring that McLaren was now able to earn enough to warrant this being done. The sheriff held

that McLaren though doing his best could not bring his income including the 5s 6d from the insurance company to so much per week as he was earning at the time of his accident. He therefore dismissed the case and awarded McLaren expenses.

22nd June 1903

Mr Edward Cox of Cardean, one of the Directors, and Mr Miller, the general manager, and other officials of the Caledonian Railway have just completed an exhaustive inspection of the portion of the railway now in course of construction between St. Fillans and Lochearnhead where it will join the Callander and Oban Railway, thus giving more direct access from Perth and Dundee and other populous districts in the east coast to the West Highlands. The party were accompanied by Mr Hogg, of Messrs Crouch & Hogg C.E., the engineers of the line, and by Mr Duncan, the contractor, who has over four hundred men at work on the new line. The works are well advanced at the St. Fillans end, and the viaduct at Glen Ogle is being built, but a great deal has still to be done at the Lochearnhead of the line.

The Courier Tuesday 29th December 1903

Charge of Train-wrecking Case in Perth Court

A formidable charge was read against an elderly man named James Walsh, who took his seat in the dock of Perth Sheriff Court yesterday before Sheriff Sym.

The indictment set forth that Walsh, on 24th November at the railway being made between St Fillans and Lochearnhead, at a part in Comrie parish about a mile west from St Fillans Railway Station, on which rails were being laid; he wilfully and maliciously placed a railway chair on the south rail of the track, which was then in use, and which he knew to be in use for carrying goods and men employed on the railway to other parts of the works, and fixed the chair at a part of the track in a way which he intended to obstruct the locomotive and to endanger the lives of the engine driver, stokers, labourers, and other persons travelling thereon. It was also alleged that a train of four wagons and engine driven by John Lonie and Andrew Borthwick, stoker, which was travelling along the line on the morning of 26th November, struck the chair

he had fixed, and were put off the rails. He pleaded not guilty, and the sheriff intimated that he would be tried before a Sheriff and Jury Court at Dunblane on 13th January next. There, he was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment.

15th June 1904

The Special Train Party

The new line was formally opened today when a number of prominent railway company officials associated with the Caledonian Railway, and a number of press representatives proceeded in a special train to the present terminus of the line at Lochearnhead. The party included – Mr Calthrop, General Superintendent Caledonian Railway; Mr Pettigrew, Assistant General Superintendent; Mr J D Lang, district superintendent, Perth; Mr Hamilton, assistant chief engineer, Caledonian Railway; Mr Crouch & Mr Hogg, engineers, who carried out the work; Mr William Duncan, contractor, Glasgow; Inspector Fletcher, Perth; &c. Leaving Perth at 9am., the special train picked up the parties from Perth and Dundee district at Crieff, and under favourable weather conditions the new portion of the railway was carefully and critically inspected. The line as formed presently terminates at Lochearnhead, but the intervening portion of about one and a half miles which is to connect it with the Oban Railway is being pushed forward and is expected to be completed by early October.



Lochearnhead Viaduct

The Evening Post Friday 1st July 1904

Opening of Lochearnhead and St Fillans Railway

The new railway from St Fillans to Lochearnhead was opened this morning when the first train over the new line from Lochearnhead to Crieff, Perth and Dundee left at 6.50 a.m. There were a considerable number of passengers to St Fillans, but few beyond that. The first train from Crieff, timed to start at 8.17 a.m., was a few minutes late; only a few passengers travelled with it. The full summer programme of trains came into operation today. There are no fewer than thirty-seven trains going to and from Crieff in a day.

On the opening day, the children of Lochearnhead were entertained by a trip to St Fillans where they were treated to tea and afterwards games before returning to Lochearnhead by train.

1st May 1905

At last, the through line is completed.

Today the remaining portion of the through east and west route from Dundee, Perth, and Aberdeen with the West Highland, Oban, and Callander was formerly opened for passenger traffic.

Several prominent officials and members of the public were in attendance to see the 8.10 am train leave Crieff for Balquhiddier.

Sadly, this thinly populated area brought little traffic to the railway and despite a tourist boost during the 1930s the line never recovered from the events following the Second World War and on the 1st of October 1951 the line was closed to passenger traffic the line remained open during the building of the Hydro-Electric Power Station. The track was eventually uplifted in 1959.

The Old Crock – December 2020