

BRITAIN'S LEADING HISTORICAL RAILWAY JOURNAL

BackTrack

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IN THIS ISSUE

A4s ON THE CALEDONIAN ROUTE IN COLOUR

CHELSEA BOX AND BASIN

BARBARA CASTLE AND THE RAILWAYS 1965-8

THE CENTRAL WALES LINE IN COLOUR

FLAGS, TRADE AND TRACTION - THE 1,500kV ERA

LYR LOCOMOTIVES IN COLOUR



RECORDING THE HISTORY OF BRITAIN'S RAILWAYS

THE COMPREHENSIVE VOICE OF RAILWAY HISTORY

BackTrack



CROSSING AT ARDLUI

LNER B1 4-6-0 No.61197 enters Ardlui from Glen Falloch with a West Highland Line train from Fort William to Glasgow on 3rd July 1957. An LMS Class 5 waits for the single line to clear to head off on the fifteen-mile climb, broken only briefly at Crianlarich, to the County March Summit at Tyndrum. (T.J. Edgington)

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NBR Class J37 0-6-0 No.64598, running tender first, calls at Balfron on 18th September 1951 while working the Blanehead–Aberfoyle passenger shuttle service. Parcels are being unloaded from the single Gresley brake composite non-corridor suburban coach. (G. H. Robin)

THE FORTH & CLYDE JUN

and trout stream, which long suffered from industrial pollution, was then crossed on the 296-ft-long Leven Viaduct, known locally as the 'Stirling, or Stuckie, Bridge'. Built in 1874 to replace a timber trestle, its three iron latticed-girder spans rested on two sets of iron columns and stone abutments. A 10mph speed restriction applied on it and double-heading was prohibited.

On reaching the river's east bank Archibald Orr Ewing & Co.'s (UTR Co. from 1897) Levenbank Print Works siding was passed on the left and Milton Print Works on the right. Archibald Orr Ewing (later Sir Archibald) leased Levenbank in 1845 and bought Milton in 1850. He was MP for Dunbartonshire, Deputy Lieutenant of

the Counties of Dunbarton, Stirling and Lanark, and was created a Baronet in 1886. He was also a F&C director until 1854, when he resigned in pique over construction beginning at the Stirling end. Orr Ewing built most of Jamestown's housing for his large workforce, many of whom were women and children. In 1886 he had a huge Scottish baronial mansion called Ballikinrain Castle built near Balfron and travelled thence on the F&C line. At his death, in November 1893, his estate amounted to over a million pounds. A special train taking mourners to his funeral was run up the F&C line from Balloch to Gartness Junction and then down the Blane Valley line to Killearn, where the new Parish Church had been gifted by him in 1882 to commemorate his daughter Ella.

Immediately beyond the works Jamestown station (1m 22ch), the only one on the line that was actually in the village it purported to serve, was entered over a busy level crossing on the main Dumbarton–Stirling road. As 2,000 workers and schoolchildren crossed there daily and a fatal accident had occurred in 1885, a signal box was erected in 1892 and a footbridge in 1898.

A feature common to all the Forth & Clyde stations with passing loops – Jamestown, Drymen, Balfron, Buchlyvie, Port of Menteith, Kippen and Gargunnoch – was that the loop extended beyond a double-gated level crossing, controlled from a NB-style signal box. Apart from Gargunnoch, these stations also had a big, red sandstone, station house to accommodate the station master's family and booking office. However, Caldaran and Gartness had only a single platform and small, red sandstone, agent's cottage. Apart from Buchlyvie, Port of Menteith and Kippen, all the station houses were on the up side, with adjacent public sidings, except at Gargunnoch, where they were nearby.

On leaving Jamestown the Dalmonach branch curved off sharply to the right from the end of the down passing loop. This steeply graded, 67 chain-long branch served Archibald Orr Ewing & Co.'s (Calico Printers' Association from 1899)

The route described

On leaving Balloch station (0.4 chains from Balloch Pier) Forth & Clyde trains whistled twice and traversed the double-tracked Balloch branch for 15 chains, before forking left at Forth & Clyde Junction. The castellated towers of early nineteenth century Tullichewan Castle, the imposing country seat of William Campbell, Glasgow drapery magnate, local laird and F&C director until his death in 1864, appeared on a wooded height to the west.

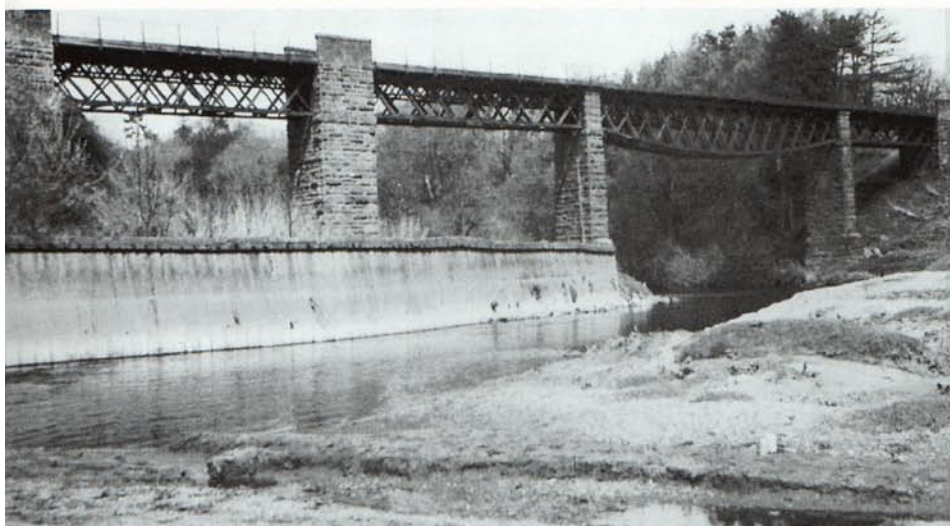
At the passing loop which fronted the North British-style Forth & Clyde Junction signal box enginememen received an NB 'Old Pattern' single line tablet for the section to Jamestown. In 1912 a new engine shed was proposed in the fork of the junction here, to replace the NB shed at Balloch station which had burnt down in 1904, but nothing was ever done. In 1948 British Railways finally provided the existing, supposed 'shed' with a roof – but no walls! From about 1900 Rosehead Siding followed the main line to the Croftengea branch junction. This siding and branch (worked by tablet lock) served John Orr Ewing & Co.'s (United Turkey Red Co., or UTR Co., from 1897) extensive Croftengea/Levenfield, or Alexandria, Works.

A wee green UTR company 'pug' uplifted inwards traffic, mainly grey cloths and yarns for printing and dyeing, dyestuffs and coals, from sidings on the Balloch branch and hauled outwards traffic, mainly dyed and printed textiles, mineral empties and boiler ashes, up to Rosehead Siding for collection by the Balloch pilot. An incline brake truck stationed at the foot of the steep Croftengea branch had to be the last vehicle on all lifts. Only F&C down trains were allowed to shunt the branch, with the engine at the Balloch end.

The main line crossed the works' 'lade' (water supply canal) on a latticed girder bridge. The fast-flowing River Leven, Loch Lomond's only outlet and a noted salmon



John Orr Ewing (1809–1878) owned the extensive Croftengea and Levenfield, or Alexandria, textile dyeing and printing works in the Vale of Leven. A leading promoter and director of the Caledonian & Dumbartonshire Junction Railway, he later became a director of the North British Railway, which served the Vale of Leven from 1865. His firm contributed much traffic to the Forth & Clyde line, particularly between Croftengea and Balloch.



The four iron girder spans of the Endrick Viaduct in the 1950s. The viaduct had been out of use since closure of the line between Drymen and Gartness in August 1949. The substantial retaining wall protected it from the flash floods to which the Endrick Water is prone. (J. L. Stevenson)

CTION RAILWAY **PART TWO** BY ROBERT D. CAMPBELL

Dalmonach Print Works. A UTR Co. 'pug' roamed freely between Milton and Levenbank Works. The branch was worked by 'one engine in steam', using a train staff.

As the terminus had no rounding loop, rakes of up to twelve loaded wagons, or equivalent, were propelled down the branch, with the brake van leading and sufficient wagon brakes pinned down in inclement weather. A like number of loaded wagons could be brought back up with the brake van at the rear. The latter provision probably resulted from an accident in June 1872, when some wagons broke loose from a train which was being propelled down the branch, hit three wagons lying in Bonhill public siding and drove them right through a stone wall on to the main road – which was then blocked! In LNER days a 15mph speed limit also applied on the branch.

Returning to the main line, the line curved to head north east and the smoke and bustle of the industrialised Vale of Leven were forsaken for pleasant, rolling countryside. Climbing steadily at 1 in 74 up the valley of the Carrochan Burn, the Dunbartonshire Territorials' rifle range at Auchincarroch (known as 'the targets') was passed on the right. In the 1890s kitted Territorials of the 3rd Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders would arrive by special train from Stirling each summer to pitch camp and practice musketry skills there. Auchincarroch Quarry siding, also on the right, was opened in 1891 to handle red sandstone for building purposes, but it was out of use by 1921. The stone was brought down by tramway from Nairn's Quarry, 500ft up on Auchincarroch Hill.

The stiff climb ended at rural Caldervan

station (4m 17ch) some 210ft above sea level and 160ft above Balloch. Originally called Kilmarnock after the local parish, Mr. R. D. MacKenzie of Caldervan House requested that it be renamed in 1874. Gartocharn, the nearest village, lay just 2½ miles away! Its single platform was on the north side, opposite the public sidings. In 1858 a siding and workers' camp were opened nearby for despatching locally quarried stone to Glasgow's Loch Katrine Water Works project. In 1894 George Eyre-Todd, a noted historical author and magazine editor, had a country house called Auchenlarich built nearby and many famous writers and artists of the day visited him there. When F&C passenger trains were axed in 1934 his son Adrian, a Glasgow solicitor, petitioned for their reinstatement – but it was to no avail.

Continuing on easier grades, pretty little Duncryne hill, Caldervan House and the Highland hills around Loch Lomond appeared to the north, with the volcanic, flat-topped, Kilpatrick Hills and Campsie Fells to the south. Caldervan House was long home to Robert D. MacKenzie, head of a leading Glasgow law firm, a promoter of the first Forth & Clyde project of 1845 and Secretary of the C&D Railway. His son Robert served as the F&C's deputy chairman and then as its last chairman from 1911 until 1923. Caldervan House was rebuilt after a fire in 1905 and occupied by the MacKenzies until 1948.

Gallangad Siding (right) was opened in 1901 to serve a Dunbartonshire County Council refuse cowp (tip), after a new Public Health Act came into force in January 1898. John Christie, Chairman and Managing Director of the UTR company, was also Chairman of the Western District of Dunbartonshire County Council and owned the Gallangad estate. He therefore offered the Council this site for refuse disposal purposes on reasonable terms.

Drymen station (7m 28ch), which adjoined the main Glasgow-Drymen road, was actually in Croftamie village and 1½ miles distant from the pretty village of Drymen, an old agricultural service centre. A nearby sawmill, lint mill and red sandstone quarry all contributed goods traffic. Railway carriages bringing VIPs to stay with the Duke and Duchess of Montrose at Buchanan Castle were often stabled in its sidings. On 17th July 1889 the Shah of Persia's special train arrived from Manchester via Stirling, proceeded to Glasgow Queen Street via the Blane Valley line next day and returned later from Clydebank's Kilbowie station. The Shah left for Ballater, via Stirling, on the 19th. In May or June each year great crowds of excursionists arrived to visit the Strathendrick Agricultural Society's Annual Show at nearby Drymen Bridge.

The single platform Gartmore station on the Aberfoyle branch, looking towards Buchlyvie Junction, on 28th July 1957. Despite having been closed to passengers from 2nd January 1950, it later featured as 'Drumfechan' in the film *Geordie*, starring Bill Travers, which was shot around Aberfoyle in 1954. (J. L. Stevenson)





An LNER Sentinel steam railcar calls at Port of Menteith c1930 while working between Balloch, or possibly Aberfoyle, and Stirling. (J. L. Stevenson Collection)

On leaving Drymen, Dalnair House, an imposing mansion built for Glasgow merchant Thomas Brown in 1886, was passed on the right. The line then crossed the meandering Endrick Water, heading towards Loch Lomond, on the 320ft-long Endrick Viaduct and passed from Dunbartonshire into Stirlingshire. Built in 1872 to replace a timber trestle, the viaduct's four iron latticed girder spans, which also carried a public footway, rested on red sandstone piers and abutments. A 10mph speed restriction applied on it and double-heading was prohibited. Looking north the fine view included Buchanan Castle, the Duke of Montrose's grand new mansion completed in 1857, with lofty Ben Lomond as backdrop. Back in the early eighteenth century the Duke's tenant farmers about here were frequently subjected to raids, or the payment of 'blackmail' (protection money), by the famous Highland outlaw Rob Roy MacGregor, who had become the first Duke's sworn enemy.

Approaching rural Gartness the pretty hillside village of Killearn, nestling in the lee of the Campsie Fells, was briefly glimpsed, with its tall obelisk to local luminary George Buchanan, historian and tutor to King James VI (1st of Great Britain). Gartness station (8m 61ch), which served the nearby hamlet, farms and (before the Blane Valley line opened) Killearn village, had a single platform and public siding on the north side. John Napier (1550–1617), the inventor of logarithms, once occupied Gartness Castle. By the late eighteenth century tiny Gartness had two woollen mills, a corn and a lint mill on the Endrick Water. A salmon leap at the nearby Pots of Gartness waterfall later attracted many visitors in season.

Some 600 yards to the north, at Gartness Junction (9m 14ch), the Blane Valley line came in from the south. The signal box there was in the 'V' of the junction and controlled a crossing loop on the BV line, which was worked by North British No.6 tablet. Special workings from Balloch for picnics, etc. were run on to the Blane Valley line, with the engine running

round at the loop. In September 1899 Sir Archibald Edmonstone of Duntreath's VIP house party, which included Edward, Prince of Wales, and his nephew the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, travelled by special train from Blanefield station to Balloch Pier and back, via Gartness Junction, for a steamer trip on Loch Lomond.

Continuing east, Drumquhurn Siding (right) served a brick, drain-tile and drain-pipe works and, later, farmers on Blackburn's Killearn estate. The Glasgow–Stirling/Aberfoyle highway was then crossed by a level crossing, which was replaced by an overbridge in 1929. Balfron station (10m 75ch) had the only locomotive water columns en route, at the platform ends. Two aqueducts, dating from 1858 and 1893, which spanned the line just beyond the station, conveyed 110,000,000 gallons of

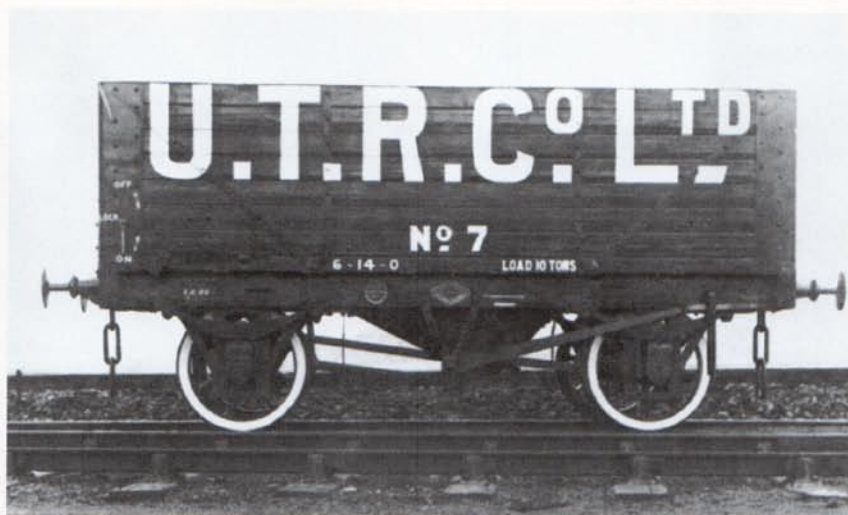
water per day from Loch Katrine to Glasgow. Balfron village, some 1½ miles away, flourished after a water-powered cotton mill was built there in 1789. However, when steam power caused industries to relocate to larger, more convenient, centres the mill declined and was gone by 1898.

At Ballat, a most boggy spot, the main Balloch–Stirling highway was crossed by level crossing and the 240ft-high summit of the line was reached a short way beyond at the Forth–Clyde watershed. Descending through a sylvan vale and past Balwill agricultural siding (right) Buchlyvie station (15m 8ch), just ½-mile from the village, was soon reached. As the station had become a busy interchange for the Aberfoyle branch, in 1895 the Board of Trade required that a second platform and loop be provided on the down side (ie down for Aberfoyle line trains, but up for F&C line trains!). The point of junction east of the station was also brought closer; the junction box closed from 4th August 1895 and the station box then controlled the junction.

At this point some description of the Aberfoyle branch is required. Worked by NB No.6 tablet, the branch forked left at Buchlyvie Junction, immediately beyond Buchlyvie's passing loop, followed the main line to the former point of junction and then headed north west across Flanders Moss, a vast peat bog. As the line had been floated across the moss on a bed of old sleepers, brush-wood and cinders, with drainage trenches cut on either side, a 30mph speed limit applied on it as far as Gartmore. The bog's treacherous nature was confirmed when, on 1st October 1929, an embankment near Barbadoes siding subsided after heavy rain and the 10.32am passenger train from Aberfoyle to Glasgow, headed by N2 0-6-2T No.2690, was

J37 No.64598 pauses at Buchlyvie before taking the Aberfoyle branch at Buchlyvie Junction with the local passenger shuttle from Blanefield on 18th September 1951. The line between Lennoxtown and Aberfoyle was closed to passenger traffic just two weeks later, from 1st October 1951. (G. H. Robin)





In 1897 William Stirling & Sons, John Orr Ewing & Co. and Archibald Orr Ewing & Co. amalgamated to form the United Turkey Red Co.Ltd. (the UTR Co.) which owned seven large textile printing and dyeing works in the Vale of Leven. Three of these works, Croftengea/Levenfield, Levenbank and Milton, were served by the Forth & Clyde line. The company also owned a large fleet of mineral wagons for bringing coal to the works from Lanarkshire pits. This particular example was built by R. Y. Pickering & Co. of Wishaw. (Author's Collection)

derailed. The engine plunged into the moss, two horse boxes containing six coach horses bound from Inversnaid Hotel to Glasgow were smashed to pieces and three coaches derailed. One horse was killed and another had to be destroyed.

Flanders Moss, which is said to owe its name to Flemish immigrants who settled locally, was once an inlet of the sea. During the nineteenth century the underlying carse clay spawned the local brick and tile-making industry, while its peat covering was used as domestic fuel. Despite having been much-reclaimed from the late eighteenth century the moss remains the largest area of raised bog in Britain.

En route to Gartmore the line left

Stirlingshire for Perthshire at a girder bridge over the Kelly Water. Then, beyond Barbadoes public siding (left), the infant River Forth was crossed on a 75ft-long bowstring girder bridge. Gartmore House, the late eighteenth century seat of the Cunninghame Grahams, stood on a height to the west. In 1853 Robert Cunninghame Graham served briefly as the F&C's first chairman and then as deputy chairman until his death in 1863. A descendant, the noted traveller and author Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham (1852-1936), sold Gartmore in 1900 to shipping magnate Sir Charles Cayzer, who enlarged the house and improved the estate. In 1910 Sir Charles hired a special train to bring some

LNER Sentinel steam railcar No.31073 *Quicksilver*, formerly No.311, at Balloch c1930. Officially allocated to Glasgow's Eastfield shed, *Quicksilver* worked out of Balloch subshed from 1929 until 1934 on Balloch-Stirling services or on certain runs to Aberfoyle. (G. H. Langmuir)



guests out from Glasgow! The Cayzers owned Gartmore until 1948.

The Duke of Montrose's vast estates in The Trossachs district extended far beyond the other 'Forth Bridge'. Gartmore station (4m 5ch) lay a mile from the village, alongside the main Glasgow-Aberfoyle road. Located on a curve, it had a wooden building, a single platform on the east side and a passing loop with loading bank and cattle pen. Both railway and road then followed the Forth, heading briefly north and then north west, constricted between the steep Menteith Hills, which marked the Highland edge, and the river.

Aberfoyle station (5m 55ch) stood on the north side and had a long single platform with a wooden, canopied, building which included a 'dry' (non-alcoholic!) refreshment room. It had a run-round loop, signal box, adjacent public sidings and goods shed. The Aberfoyle Slate Quarries Co.'s private siding and loading bank was directly opposite the station and accessed from the loop. The quarries closed in 1958, a year before the Aberfoyle branch. A brick-built, single road, engine shed with a 45ft turntable was located east of the station.

Returning to the Forth & Clyde line, the low-lying Carse of Stirling was entered beyond Buchlyvie and the line followed the southern edge of Flanders Moss en route to Kippen. The magnificent panorama of Highland peaks here included Bens Lomond, Venue, Ledi, Vorlich and Stuc a' Chroin. Passing Mye siding (left), yet another farm siding, the tortuously meandering River Forth flowed in from the Highlands and, though rarely visible, was followed more or less all the way to Stirling.

Port of Menteith station (17m 67ch) lay a mile and three miles respectively from the hamlets of Arnprior and Port of Menteith. The 'port' bordered the Lake of Menteith, one of Scotland's few 'lakes' as opposed to 'lochs', and had once been an unlikely Royal Burgh at the heart of the Earls of Menteith's great fiefdom, which later passed to the Grahams, Dukes of Montrose. Initially called Cardross, after nearby Cardross House, the station was renamed Port of Monteith in May 1858, as the new Helensburgh line also had a Cardross. In June 1880 'Monteith' was corrected to 'Menteith'. A neighbouring sawmill contributed much goods traffic. During the Second World War the road between station and lake was declared a 'restricted' area, as much ammunition was being transferred from rail to road at the station yard and then taken by boat to historic Inchmahome Island for storage.

Beyond port of Menteith the line turned east and passed Ladylands Farm Siding (19m 39ch, left), which had a passenger halt for a Fridays (later Thursdays) only service for farmers attending Stirling's weekly market. A half-mile beyond lay Fairfield Siding, another farm siding. It was at Middle Kerse farm, just south of the line about here, that heavy-cropping timothy hay was first planted on the Carse in 1890 and was soon widely adopted throughout the district. The hay was railed to stables in Glasgow, where many cart horses were



based, and so for years hay carts setting out from farms in the early morning bound for the local railway station became a familiar sight.

Kippen station (21m 56ch) lay a mile from Kippen and three from Thornhill, both agricultural service villages. Goods traffic originated from two creameries, a red sandstone quarry and the Boquhan (ie 'Bowhan') brick and tile works, which had a private siding on the up side. Between 1891 and 1964 grape-growing in heated greenhouses was also undertaken, coal being carted up to the hillside village from the station. Vine leaves were also treated to make much-desired table decorations and sent to London. One huge vine, said to be the world's largest, attracted around 20,000 visitors each year.

The Colville steel-making family of Motherwell and the Glasgow tobacco manufacturer Stephen Mitchell (whose forebear founded Glasgow's Mitchell Library, whose 'Mitchell's Prize Crop' cigarettes adverts graced Glasgow's tramcars and who converted Boquhan brick and tile works into a sawmill) had large country houses near Kippen, which they reached by train until motor cars became available. In 1913 Forth & Clyde passenger bookings totalled 156,753, of which Kippen's 23,610 were second only to Stirling's 43,342.

En route to Gargunnoch the steep, volcanic, Gargunnoch Hills appeared to the south and seven level crossings were traversed. In the 1880s William Whitelaw, the NBR's last Chairman and the LNER's first, lived at nearby Leckie House and later he often visited relatives there. Gargunnoch station (24m 64ch) lay ¾-mile from the village. The F&C owned the adjacent Bridge Inn and Meiklewood suspension bridge over the Forth, which were leased out, with part of the inn being used as a railway booking and bridge toll office. Only "certain poor people" attending church on



Stirling New Bridge signal box controlled a busy level crossing on the main Stirling to Bridge of Allan road. Single line tablet working ended there and block working applied on the double track section on to Stirling North box and the station. The site is now a busy traffic roundabout, with the ornamental Bridge Clock Tower, presented to the town by Provost David Bayne in 1910, marooned in the centre of it. (Author's Collection)

Sundays and schoolchildren could cross the bridge free of charge. The sidings were located west of the level crossing, on the up side. The Glenfoyle Distillery, a sawmill and the Meiklewood Tile Works provided most of the goods traffic. Although the distillery closed in 1926, the sawmill has greatly expanded and, indeed, now covers the F&C's former trackbed.

The line continued near the Forth, within sight of the southerly Touch Hills, and past Murrayshall Lime Works Siding (right). A standard gauge tramway, opened in 1861, headed south and east from here to serve Murrayshall Lime Company's (still extant) limekilns near Cambusbarron village. Limestone was then much in demand for improving the soil on Carse farms and by 1866 the F&C was carrying

8,000 tons annually from Murrayshall alone. The lime was mined on the lower slopes of Gillies Hill, burnt in the kilns, loaded into wagons and horse-hauled out to the siding. Coal for the kilns was brought in from local coalfields. The tramway continued over the top of the kilns to the mine, passing en route the Parkvale and Hayford Mills which spun, weaved and dyed winceys, cottons and tweeds. The mills, which appear never to have been linked to the tramway, closed in 1896 and the lime works in 1909.

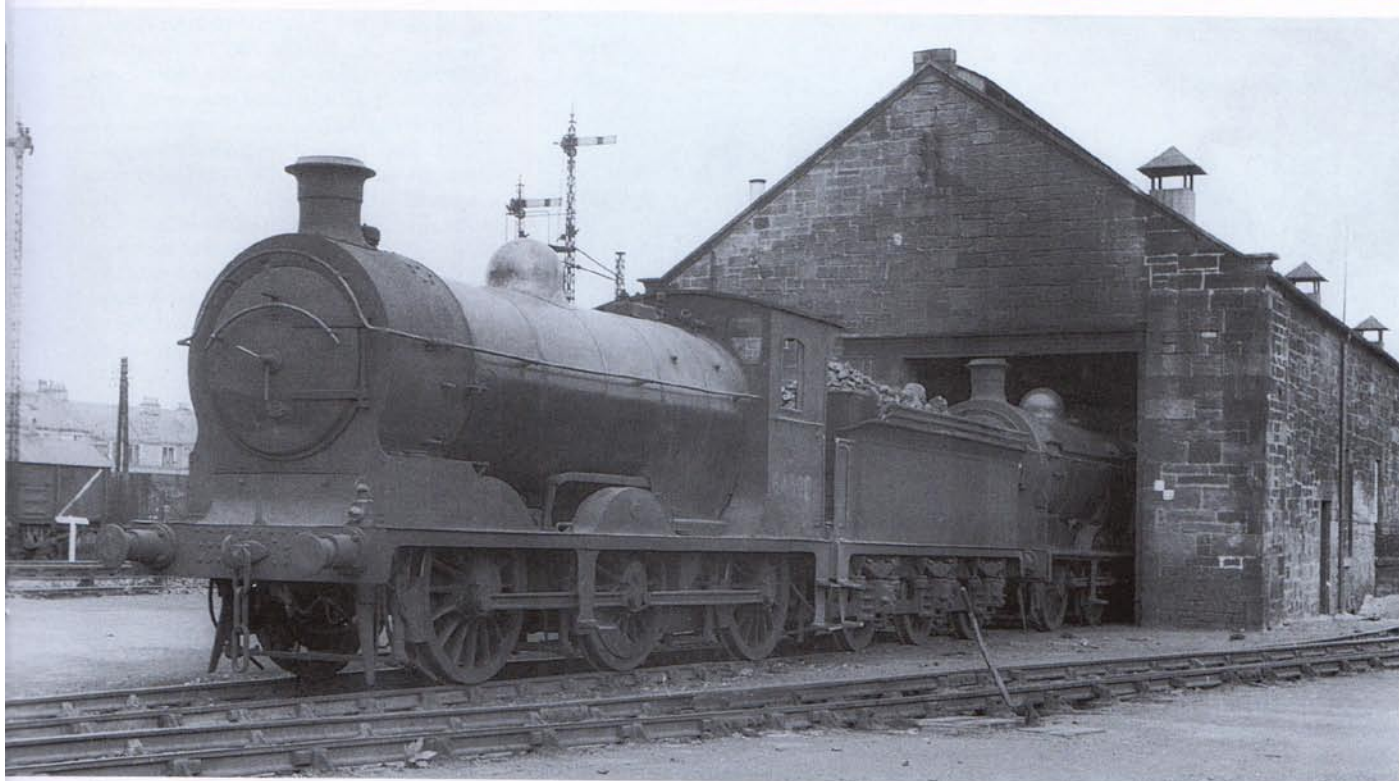
As the F&C line swung sharply north east and then east to run near the main Stirling-Callander road at Raploch, a dramatic view unfolded of historic Stirling Castle perched on its steep volcanic crag. During the First World War the Royal Flying Corps had an aerodrome about here and so the War Office paid to have the railway telegraph wires lowered nearer the ground. By 1921 Shell-Mex had a petrol depot with its own private siding at Raploch and from 1926 a municipal housing estate was built on the surrounding fields.

Approaching Stirling the line passed near Mote Hill, a northerly outlier of the castle crag. While crossing Bridge Street at Old Bridge level crossing a brief glimpse was obtained of Stirling's late fifteenth century Old Bridge over the Forth and the imposing Wallace Monument on the wooded Abbey Craig, erected in 1869. The line then curved sharply south to cross busy Union Street (which once hosted a tramcar service to Bridge of Allan) at New Bridge level crossing, which was controlled from New Bridge signal box. NB old-pattern tablet working ended there and Caledonian block working applied on the double track section on to Stirling North box and Stirling station.

Part of the NB's Stirling Shore Road engine shed, which had a small 42ft turntable, was then passed on the left. The old Forth & Clyde shed here was long used for wagon repairs until, in 1929, the F&C began housing its Sentinel steam railcars

Following closure of the ex-NBR engine shed at Stirling Shore Road in September 1957 the former Caledonian Stirling South shed supplied a CR 'Jumbo' 0-6-0 for the daily goods to Port of Menteith. On 11th September 1957 No.57246 trundles west past the overgrown wooden platforms of Gargunnoch station with a featherweight load of two wooden-bodied mineral wagons plus brake van. (R. Crombie)





there. A second part of the shed, which had a 50ft turntable, was located east of the Caledonian main line. In NB days both sheds had locomotive watering facilities, but by late LNER days only the easternmost shed had them.

Wallace Street mineral depot and the auction mart's livestock pens and sidings at Cowpark Goods were passed next, on the right. The Caledonian main line to the north was soon joined at the CR's Stirling North signal box and, in the final eleven chains into Stirling station (30m 66ch), trains passed under Shore Road, where a level crossing had existed in the line's earlier days. After the CR rebuilt Stirling station in 1912-13 Forth & Clyde trains used the north end dock platforms.

LNER and BR days: 1923-1959

The Forth & Clyde line's prospects looked bleak when the LNER acquired it in 1923, for the LNER's 'absorption statement' stated that, "It has been a very bad bargain for the North British Company. It passes through a purely agricultural district and there is little, if any, prospect of future development." Worse still, competing motor buses and lorries, not subject to the railways' onerous legal obligations, were seriously affecting its traffic and revenue, while working expenses had soared. Between 1913 and 1922 passenger bookings fell from 156,753 to 123,672, a 21% decrease; parcels fell from 57,726 to 27,403, a 52.53% decrease, and milk from 498,247 to 390,173 gallons, a 21.7% reduction.

As motor coach and private car touring had become increasingly popular, bookings for the Trossachs Tour via Aberfoyle had slumped by 50.4%, from 22,710 to 5,311. Through corridor carriages from Edinburgh to Aberfoyle and Balloch Pier, via the Forth Bridge and Stirling, nevertheless still ran in connection with the tour each

NBR J35 0-6-0 No.64520 at Stirling Shore Road shed in the early 1950s. The daily goods to Port of Monteith was usually headed by a Class J35 or J37 0-6-0, or a D33 4-4-0, in the final decade before the Forth & Clyde closed. (Author's Collection)

summer until 30th September 1929, leaving Edinburgh at 9.15am and Stirling at 10.37am. The Aberfoyle coach joined a train from Glasgow at Buchlyvie, while the Balloch Pier coach also served the Three Lochs Tour of Lochs Lomond, Long and Goil. Return departures were from Balloch Pier at 6.43pm and Aberfoyle at 6.53pm. During the 1920s most F&C trains comprised just four to six coaches, comprising bogied suburban stock of ex-NBR and LNER Gresley origin.

Freight traffic had also suffered. In May 1923 C. H. Stemp, the LNER's Operating Superintendent, reported to James Calder, General Manager (Scotland), that F&C freight trains were carrying meagre loads. Daily return services operated between Cadder and Stirling, via the Blane Valley; Balloch and Bucklyvie, continuing on to Stirling thrice weekly with livestock traffic; Lennoxton and Balfron, and Aberfoyle and Balfron. The 5.30am Stirling-Cadder and 5.45am Cadder-Stirling trains averaged just fifteen and nineteen wagons respectively, while the Balloch-Bucklyvie train averaged just nine and the Lennoxton-Balfron and Aberfoyle-Balfron trains nine and six respectively, hauled mainly by 0-6-0 engines of Classes J35, J36 and J37.

Even before the war, coal from the Clackmannan coalfield to the Vale of Leven printworks and Dumbarton's Dennystown Forge had slumped to just 504 tons by 1913, routed via Alloa Bridge and Glasgow. Most of the F&C's 7,748 tons of mineral traffic was boiler ashes from Levenbank Works by then. The UTR Co. was then using washed

dross from Lanarkshire pits, as it was cheaper, of better quality, washed, and rail rates were cheaper. Pre-war there had been much traffic in finished textiles between Jamestown and Manchester Ancoats, via Balloch and Glasgow. However, this was all lost when the Scottish industry declined post-war, due to foreign competition, tariffs and failure to adopt new technical advances, such as synthetic dyes.

Working expenses had soared, from £18,827 to £39,869, while drivers' wages had shot up from 30s to 42s to 72s to 90s and signalmen's from 21s to 29s to 48s to 75s, largely resulting from Government control during the war, when an eight-hour day and wage rises were conceded in 1919 against employers' wishes. Revenue had also increased, from £20,290 to £32,688, but only due to greatly increased charges.

Most of the increased costs were due to locomotive annual expenditure of £23,500, compared with £9,662 in 1913. The Glasgow-Aberfoyle service employed mainly Eastfield-based D31, D35, J35, C16 and J36 vacuum-fitted engines, supplemented by Classes D30 ('Scotts'), D34 ('Glens'), D11/2 ('Directors'), J37, J39 and N2. However, due to Aberfoyle's modest turntable, the bigger tender engines had to return tender first.

In view of such high costs generally, the LNER introduced single-unit, green and cream-liveried Sentinel Cammell steam railcars (named after old stagecoaches) on certain loss-making routes from 1928, which included Balloch-Stirling and Blanefield-Aberfoyle; the latter shuttle connected at Blanefield with loco-hauled services from Glasgow Queen Street. The former service began on 23rd September 1929 and the latter on 1st May 1930, both being third class only. Certain Balloch services met the Loch Lomond steamers at





On 16th May 1959 Glasgow University ran a special train from Glasgow Queen Street to Aberfoyle and back in connection with an extra-mural course. Comprising Class K2 2-6-0 No.61788 *Loch Rannoch* and three LNER corridors (one being an observation car from a pre-war 'Coronation' set), it is here seen on Ballat level crossing when returning from Aberfoyle. Owing to Aberfoyle's modest terminus, the engine is now running tender first. A line of classic British cars waits patiently on the main A811 Balloch to Stirling road. This was the last passenger train of all to run on the Aberfoyle branch and central section of the Forth & Clyde line. (R. Crombie)

Balloch Pier, while certain through services linked both Stirling and Balloch with Aberfoyle. Eastfield car No.311 (renumbered 31073 in 1931) *Quicksilver* was based at Balloch sub-shed and No.38 *Pearl* at Stirling, with Stirling's No.31 *Flower of Yarrow* and No.32 *Fair Maid* relieving as required. Eastfield's No.312 *Retaliator* was based at Aberfoyle sub-shed for the Blanefield–Aberfoyle shuttle.

The author's father (of the same name) sometimes fired on *Quicksilver* and *Retaliator* and recalled that the Eastfield men called it 'the holiday job', as there was little to do and the scenery was great! Despite the Sentinel company claiming an average coal consumption of just 5–11lb per mile on English lines, the official file reveals that it averaged about 18lb in Scotland!

Railcars on the Forth & Clyde sometimes towed a horse box or van for 'coaching' traffic, while the 6.35am Stirling–Balloch service carried the English mails and towed a milk van for uplifting milk traffic. When the LMS 'Down Night Mail' was running late this service could be held at Stirling for up to five minutes. The second working out of Aberfoyle, the 7.42am to Blanefield, towed two milk vans for picking up milk, one of which was attached at Buchlyvie off the 6.35am ex-Blanefield. The 4.50pm Balloch Pier–Buchlyvie car could refuse to take luggage off the connecting train from Glasgow.

Alas, even the railcars could not compete with motor buses, which passed right through the villages. Fortunately, the LNE and LMS Railways had in 1929 acquired a joint controlling interest in the Scottish Motor Traction (SMT) bus group. The group included Walter Alexander & Sons who had acquired several small local operators and operated the Stirling–Balloch via Drymen and Stirling–Glasgow via Bucklyvie services. Passenger trains therefore ceased running between Balloch

and Stirling from 1st October 1934. With a card marked 'Farewell' attached to its cab front, the last railcar pulled out of Stirling at 6.06pm on 29th September, accompanied by a volley of exploding fog signals; a similar ceremony attending the 8.00pm arrival from Balloch.

A goods service was then substituted, between Stirling and Jamestown and back on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and to Buchlyvie on the other three days, serving Jamestown as required. The Balloch 'pilot' linked Jamestown with Balloch. Conditional livestock workings were also run in connection with the Stirling (Thursdays only) and Glasgow markets; eg the 6.30am livestock from Kippen to Balloch went forward to Bellgrove (the station for Glasgow's livestock market) on the rear of the 8.38am Balloch–Bridgeton Cross passenger service, or ran forward to Bellgrove specially as necessary. A motor lorry service for milk, parcels, etc. was also provided, based on Jamestown, Balfron, Aberfoyle and Stirling stations. Passenger trains from Glasgow to Aberfoyle continued to serve Balfron and Buchlyvie stations, until they too were withdrawn from 1st October 1951. The Aberfoyle branch railcar survived until 4th October 1941, whereupon loco-hauled stock was substituted.

During the economic 'depression' of the 1930s the LNE and LMS economised by introducing 'pooling' arrangements at places where their services overlapped. The LMS accordingly ceased working, and withdrew its staff from, Jamestown and the Dalmonach branch from 1st November 1933. On the latter branch, Milton Works had closed in 1918 and Dalmonach in 1929, leaving only Levenbank (on the main line) which survived until 1939. The Dalmonach branch nevertheless remained open for public use.

In 1936 it was proposed to use the F&C

and Blane Valley lines as an emergency route from Glasgow to the north, or to Edinburgh, with block posts restored and crossing loops lengthened. Although this did not happen, coal trains from Fife to industrial central Scotland and troop and munitions trains often used the F&C during the Second World War. Large caches of shells, high explosives, ammunition and poison gas were also stored near the F&C and Aberfoyle branches and delivered by road to and from the nearest station. Ammunition trains were also stabled at sidings, ready for quick despatch. A large Government store for heavy electrical equipment, with its own siding and 100-ton capacity crane, was built at Kippen station as it was far from central belt industrial towns, which were liable to aerial bombing, and could be easily served by rail and road.

Buchanan Castle became a military hospital during the war when its most famous patient was Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, who had bizarrely parachuted into Scotland, at Eaglesham near Glasgow in 1941, intending to seek terms with the British government to end hostilities. Balloch driver Bobby Love recalled bringing down from Drymen to Balloch covered vans laden with corpses, which had been sent from Buchanan Castle for onward despatch to soldiers' relatives.

Traffic on the Dalmonach branch was boosted when the Royal Army Ordnance Corps began using Dalmonach Works as a temporary barracks, while Levenbank became a Royal Navy victualling depot. Bill Somerville, a Balloch driver, recalled that when many local folk began going about wearing Navy shirts and ties it was discovered that they were being pilfered from vans bound for Levenbank as they lay in Balloch yard! The last mention of the Balloch pilot working the Dalmonach branch and Levenbank Works appeared in British Railways Working Timetables ending 24th September 1950. Around 1952 an ex-LMS 'Black 5' 4-6-0 was observed propelling a demolition train down the branch.

Despite a proposal to continue sending Fife coal traffic over the F&C to relieve the Forth Bridge, decline set in again after the war. When BR took over in 1948 through running ceased from 15th August 1949 and the line was split into three sections: Stirling to Mye Siding, Gartness Junction and station to Buchlyvie Junction, and Balloch to Drymen station; the Mye Siding–Buchlyvie Junction and Drymen–Gartness station sections were then abandoned. One engine in steam working applied from Stirling and Balloch, with tablet working retained on the central section for passenger and goods services to Aberfoyle. Gartness Junction box and Gartness station were closed from 1st November 1950 and Port of Menteith–Mye Siding from 1st December 1952.

In the 1950s the Balloch pilot, usually Class J36 No.65227, 65339, or Eastfield's 65296, worked the Balloch–Drymen section as Trip N1. On Mondays to Fridays it worked Jamestown goods yard and Thomas Anderson's sawmill, on the site of Milton

Works and served by a stub of the Dalmonach branch, then collected Croftengea's outward traffic on the return trip. Caldarvan and Drymen were worked on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. As the crossing keepers' cottages at Mavie Mill and Cattermuir had no water supply, the guard and fireman helped the lady keepers there to unload sufficient milk churns of water and coal from the engine's tender to last a week. Before the line was severed, the thrice-weekly 6.30am Stirling-Drymen goods had run forward from Drymen to Caldarvan with a water tender and brake van on Fridays and then propelled them back to Drymen.

The annual engineer's inspection train was usually headed by a 'big' named engine, perhaps an Eastfield Class D34 'Glen' 4-4-0, K2 'Loch' 2-6-0 or D11/2 'Director' 4-4-0. The 'Glens' and 'Lochs' sometimes still sported a small snowplough after service on the West Highland line. In July 1958 Balloch shed's trusty ex-NBR veterans were finally ousted by 350hp 0-6-0 diesel shunter No.D3534 (later 08 419).

The daily goods from Stirling usually employed a J35 or J37 0-6-0, or D33 4-4-0 No.62461, until Shore Road shed closed in September 1957, whereupon Stirling South shed supplied an ex-CR 2F 'Jumbo' 0-6-0. On Tuesdays a water tender was attached to serve stations and crossing keepers' cottages en route, the gates at unstaffed level crossings being operated by the train crew. In the summer of 1949 Class C16 4-4-2T No.67482 and two suburban non-corridors were working the Blanefield-Aberfoyle service. However, it fell to grimy Class J37 No.64639 and a single suburban coach to work the last scheduled passenger train out of Aberfoyle on 29th September 1951. One engine in steam working applied from 7th November

1956. The last passenger train of all to Aberfoyle was a Glasgow University extramural course special on 16th May 1959, comprised of Class K2/2 2-6-0 No.61788 *Loch Rannoch*, two ex-LNER corridors and a 'beaver-tail' observation car from an LNER pre-war 'Coronation' express set.

Despite Gartmore station having closed to passengers from 2nd January 1950, it enjoyed a *Brigadoon*-like renaissance on 28th and 30th September 1954, when scenes for the film *Geordie*, starring Bill Travers, Nora Gersen and Alistair Sim, were shot there. Young Geordie (Bill Travers) was pictured departing from 'Drumfechan' station to compete in the Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia – and then arriving back – behind ex-NBR Class C16 No.67488 hauling two NB compartment carriages.

The Aberfoyle branch and central section of the Forth & Clyde duly closed to passengers from 1st October 1951 and goods from 5th October 1959, while the Stirling New Bridge-Port of Menteith and Jamestown-Drymen sections also closed for goods (ie all) traffic from the latter date. However, the last train of all actually ran after the official closure. On 17th October 1959, a fittingly depressing, dull, wet day, immaculate black J36 No.65315 (a former Balloch engine) pulled out of Balloch Central for a round trip to Drymen, hauling a Branch Line Society special made up of three corridors, one of which was from the BR Scottish Region Television Train.

This left only the Forth & Clyde Junction-Jamestown and Stirling North-New Bridge signal box stubs operational. Forth & Clyde Junction box duly closed from 4th April 1960, when a new box at Balloch station opened. Balloch shed was closed when the 'Glasgow Electrics' commenced on 7th November 1960 – but it

soon reopened temporarily when the electrics failed! The Balloch pilot was the worked by a 350hp diesel shunter from Dumbarton shed. Croftengea Works closed in December 1960, leaving only Anderson's sawmill and a coal merchant's yard at Jamestown. From (at least) 6th January 1964 a Caley 'Jumbo' 2F from Glasgow's Dawsholm shed was booked to work trip N52 from Scotstoun West yard to Jamestown and back on Mondays to Fridays.

Various sources show either 6th July or 1st September 1964 as the closure date for the Balloch-Jamestown stub. However, the latter seems the most likely, as strong protests about local goods station closure were being mounted during September and October 1964. Dunbartonshire Council later purchased the Leven and 'lade viaducts and had them refurbished to form part of a new cross-river footpath.

Stirling New Bridge box closed on 18th August 1963 and the remaining sidings were then worked as a yard until final closure came from 17th October 1966. As the town's auction mart and stock yards had been relocated and served by road Cowpark Goods had already closed, from 1st March 1965. The Stirling Inner Relief Road was then built along the route of the F&C as far as New Bridge and opened for traffic on 11th November 1970. Thus did the lovely wee Forth & Clyde Junction Railway quietly pass into history, having faithfully served this quiet and beautiful part of Scotland for just over a century.

Sources and Acknowledgements

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LNER/LMSR Pooling Arrangements, 1930s, BR/LMLN/1/54 and BR/LMLN/1/65.

Working and Public Timetables of the Forth & Clyde Junction, North British, London & North Eastern and British Railways (ScR).

Appendix to the Book of Rules and Regulations and to the Working Timetables, North British Railway, October 1922; LNER Scottish Area, November 1947.

Ordnance Survey 25 inch to 1 mile map series, 1898, Dunbartonshire, Stirlingshire and Perthshire.

Personal reminiscences of William (Bill) Somerville and Robert (Bobby) Love, drivers, Balloch shed; Donald Campbell, goods and passenger guard, Balloch Central station; William (Willie) Watson, driver, Stirling South shed and Anthony Thornton, signalman, Stirling North box.

Particular thanks are due to Alan Simpson, a fellow member of the North British Railway Study Group, who carried out much initial research.

Raincoats are much in evidence as Class J36 No.65315, having run round its train and now running tender first, prepares to pull out of Drymen for Balloch with the last train of all, a Branch Line Society special on 17th October 1959. Only the station house and corrugated iron goods shed (visible above the engine) have survived. The track bed is now a footpath and cycleway. (R. Crombie)

