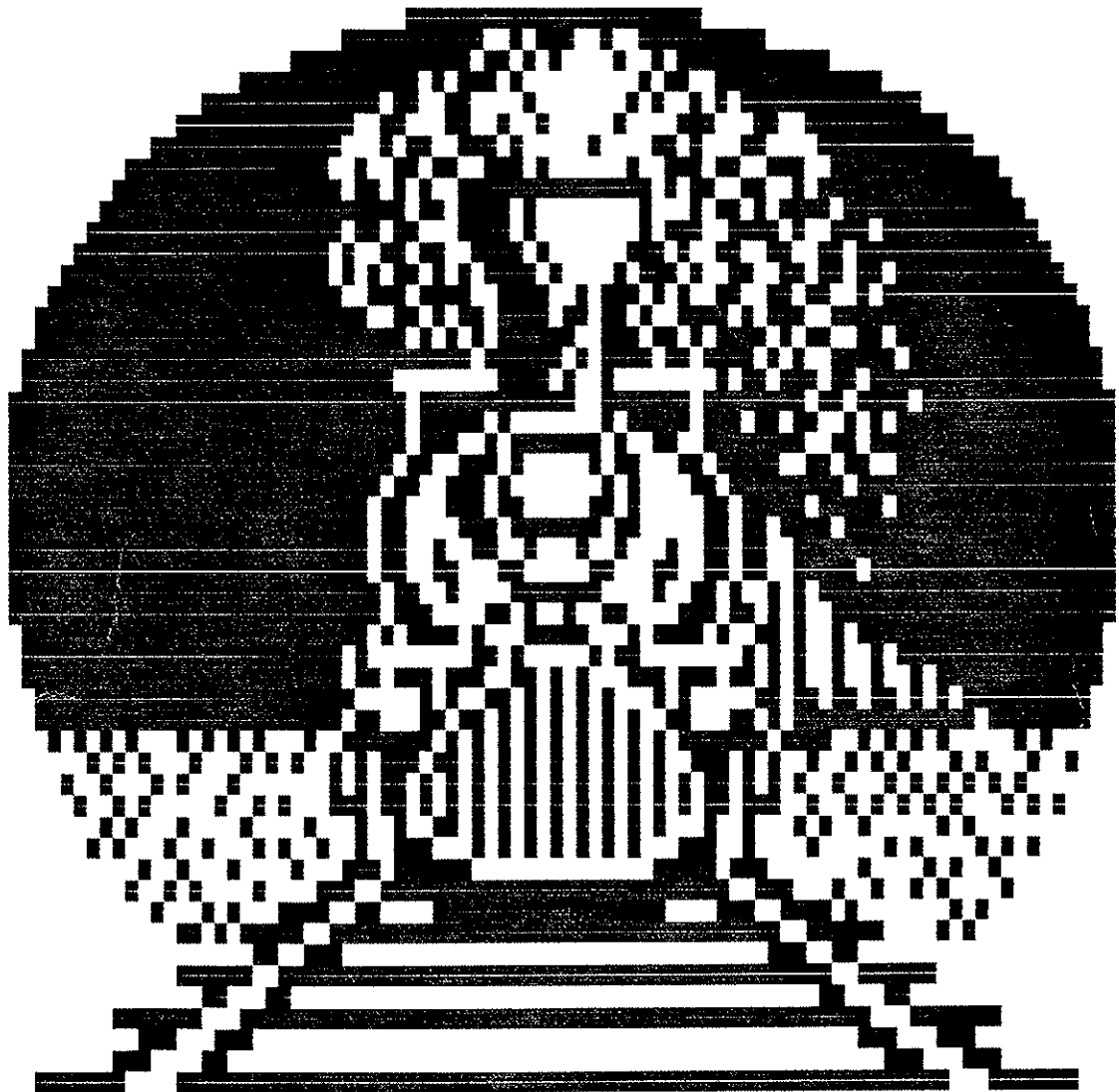


COCK O' THE NORTH



NO. 117

SPRING 1990

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ANGUS RAILWAY GROUP
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STEAM ALBUMS (Price £3.60 each plus 40p p & p)

VOLUME 1 Recently reprinted, with improved print quality, this 48 page book contains a synopsis of railway developments in and around Dundee, along with a fine selection of photographs taken in the area, showing the wide variety of motive power to be seen over the 30 year period since 1947.

VOLUME 2 The 64 pages of this volume are packed with photographs covering services in a triangle between Dundee, Stanley Junction and Kinnaber Junction. Also included is a chronology of rail associated events in the area, while loco allocations and various station track plans will prove useful to researchers and modellers.

VOLUME 3 The choice of area for volume 3 was Perthshire, and this collection of photographs is the most comprehensive ever published covering this area. Fascinating shots of the inside of Perth Works, coupled with panoramic views of the reconstruction of Perth General in the 1880's make this a valuable addition to the available publications covering Scottish railways.

COMMERATIVE COVERS

Dundee & Newtyle Railway - 150 years - 1981	£1.50
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EDITORIAL

1990 is the centenary year of the Forth Bridge. When it was opened by the Prince of Wales on March 4th, Errol Station was already approaching its 43rd Birthday. Since closure to passenger traffic several years ago, Errol has acquired a face-lift. As readers of the Winter '89 COTN will be aware, members of Errol Station Trust have completely restored the station to resemble a scene from its Victoria heyday. On Thursday May 24th, to mark the 143rd anniversary of the opening of the Dundee & Perth Railway and Errol, it is hoped Grampian Television cameras will be at the station to record members of the Trust, dressed in Victorian costume, meeting a train which they have asked Scotrail to stop especially for the occasion. A special commemorative postal cover will be issued. The official opening of the Errol Station Heritage Centre will be celebrated two days later on Saturday 26th May when it is hoped as many members as possible with their friends will come along and join in the festivities.

When I took over as Newsletter Editor last year, I inherited some interesting photocopied articles for possible inclusion in future issues. The following snippet from one of them I think epitomizes all that is Errol. Good luck to the Trust members. May they have many happy and successful years ahead.

"Another interesting incident is worthy of notice. The King and Queen visited Dundee on Friday, 10th July 1914, for the purpose of laying the foundation stones for the new Town Hall, which Sir James Caird so generously gifted to that City. On leaving Dundee from the Dundee West Station, the Royal train proceeded through the Carse, where hundreds of the inhabitants abandoned their work, going to the lineside, to pay homage to their Majesties, who appreciated the demonstration of the country folk."

"At no part is the Carse so beautiful as just beyond the station at Errol, and it was here the Royal train stopped for ten minutes or so in order that Their Majesties might appreciate to the full the matchless beauty of the countryside. It is small wonder that Their Royal Highnesses and Princes Mary (now Princess Royal) should have spoken as appreciatively of the wonderful beauty of the Carse."

-----oO-----

Forfar resembled organised chaos to-day when three 10 coach football specials arrived from Glasgow conveying 'cattle' for the Scottish Cup between Celtic and the "Sky Blues", 5x'er himself with 47467 arrived at 13.10, followed by 47715. The third train was delayed somewhat by the unusual failure of 91006 on a preceding Paris-Aberdeen Freightliner.....

Damn, that's the bloody alarm - 04.45 - time to get up - just when it was getting interesting!!

Craigentiny to-day resembled a train-set operated on the "Zero-1" principle. I swear at one point there were five loco's/trains on the move at the same time - really fascinating to watch, from an enthusiasts point-of-view - I try to look totally disinterested on such occasions! Things weren't helped a great deal by a loupin' pilot (0-6-0 variety). The Railfreight liveried machine (in an Inter-City depot, shunting Provincial stock - so much for sectorisation) had contactor problems - which meant that every time the Driver put the power handle in the "On" position (the lowest power position) the loco 'went' to full power. The result was that the Loco driver, shunter leapt about 6 feet in the air. Not very handy for shunting and dangerous as well. As the rather flustered driver said, when he appeared in the bothy "that f..... thing should be at Turnhouse, not bloody Craigentiny!!!" Anyway the peasants were on the point of revolting when the gaffer 'phoned someone to request a fitter, a wrench and a can of WD-40. The loco was eventually repaired after hitting the aforementioned electrical contractors with the wrench, but not before drowning them in the said WD-40. Repaired..... until the next time.....

Talking of sectorisation (yawn....) rumours are flying about that the Inter-City drivers at Waverley will be moving to Craigentiny, and the Provincial lower forms of life are moving back to Haymarket. If this is true that means that Haymarket T&RSD will once again become home to locomen, although it has to be said that working with Strathtay Scottish cast-offs (Sprinters) is hardly the same as working with macho-machines like A.3's, A.4's and the immortal "Deltics".

5x'er is not a fan of "sprinters", otherwise I wouldn't be singing the praises of N.B. workshop's offspring, so don't get too carried away Jointy Jim....

The severe flooding brought moments of delightful chaos to ScotRail to-day (06.02.90). The Caledonian's branch to Dundee West is closed at Perth to all traffic due to -

1) The battering that the Tay Street viaduct is taking - engineers are apparently awaiting the services of a diver to inspect the piers, and

2) the unwanted intimate attention that the driver of a double decker bus gave to the bridge in St. Leonards Street.

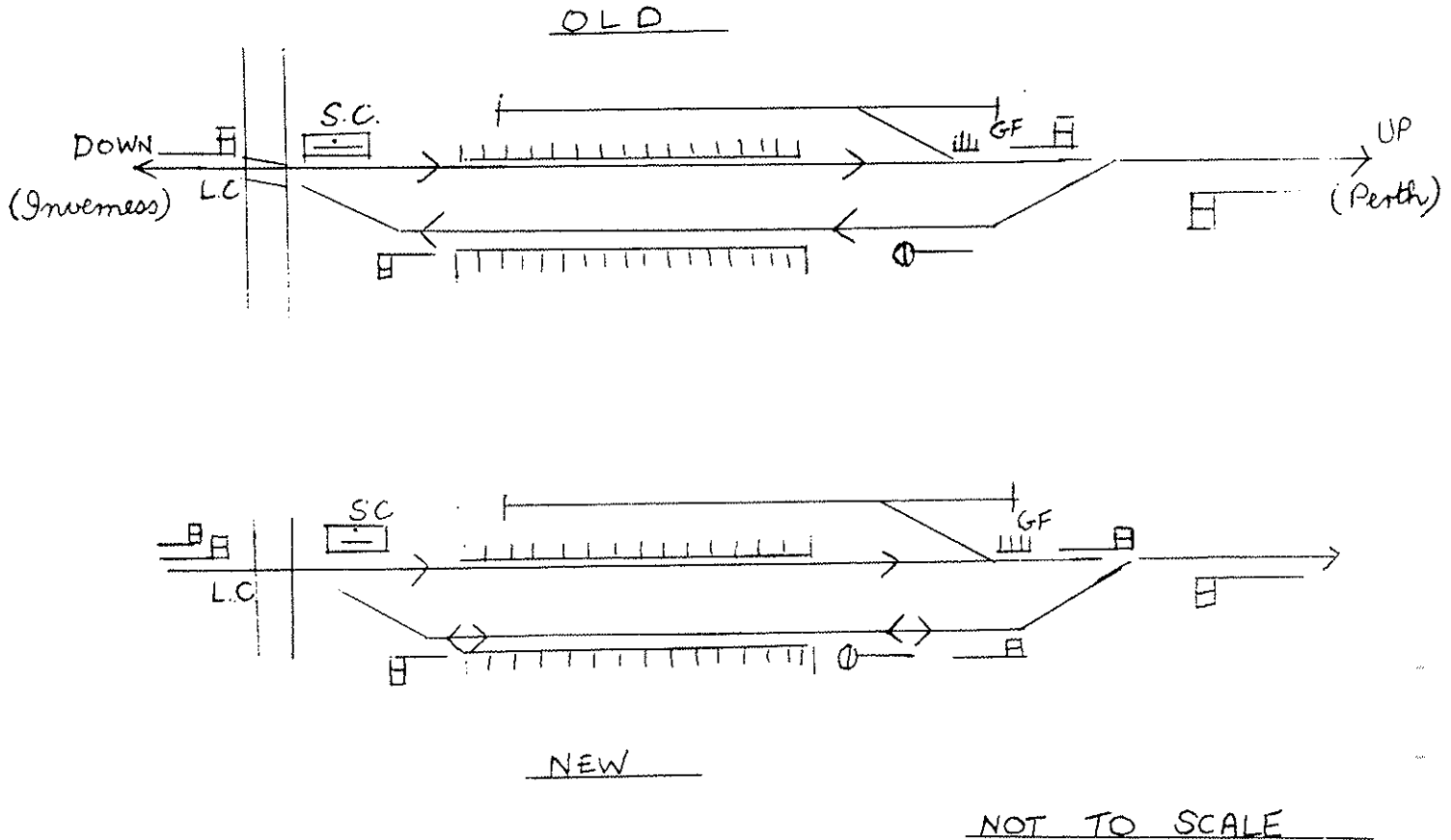
He should join the Provincial sector and drive one of those infernal "Sprinter" things - at least they're all single deckers.

I thought all my dreams had come true when an Aberdeen bound train once again, rolled up Platform 4 in Perth General - Strathmore bound - but it was not to be.

The engine ran round and then away to Ladybank Junction, round about again, and off to Aberdeen via Cupar, etc. (O.K.) I admit it, the N.B. came to the rescue of a Caley failure!)

"Engine ran round", "couple off, couple on", "round about", "engine release road" - imagine a railway without these 150 year old terms, but another few months and that'll be the case - BORING!!!!

As mentioned in previous columns of this masochistic drivel, the signalling arrangements at Kingussie have changed slightly - compare these two drawings (it saves me writing it..... you may think this column is boring and you're only reading this because the wife wants to do the shopping, wash the dishes, kids are screaming, you put water in your car's sump. LAC Home has just 'phoned and you're now feeling decidedly suicidal, but remember I've got to write this stuff).



Basically, the former Down Loop is now bi-directional.

Work is starting on a new power box at Larbert. Portacabins have been erected ready for their use by S & T staff. Details are rather sketchy but as I acquired the information from a Union Official then I suppose it could be relied on. The work will be done in stages and when completed (a couple of years perhaps) the "fringe" boxes will be: Perth P.S.B., Cowlares P.S.B., Motherwell P.S.B., Edinburgh P.S.B. It will, of course, mean the removal of the wonderful, beautiful, smashing, fantastic, over-friendly

Caley boxes in the area, and the pile of bricks that the N.B.threw together. Here's a list of names to forget about in a couple of years: Hilton-Jcn. Dunning, Auchterarder, Blackford, Greenloaning, Dunblane (whose lever frame, up until recently as far as I know, still had the levers marked for the Callander road), Stirling North, Stirling Middle, Polmaise, Plean Jcn., Larbert North, Larbert Jcn., Carmuir West, Cumbernauld, Greenfoot, Garqueen Nth. Jcn., Garqueen Sth. Jcn., Gartsherrie South, Fouldubs Jcn., (Grangemouth) - these are all ex-Caley (or at least LMS rebuilds, when was Dunning box built, anyone???), and the following N.B. - LNE efforts:- Carmuir East, Swing Bridge East, Grangemouth Jcn., Greenhill Jcn., Cadder Yard.

A lot of traditional boxes and a lot of signalmen's jobs - please get the camera out, swing the lens around and point it at the buildings, you won't regret it in five years time - honest!!!

Perth Carriage Servicing Depot is in the process of a refurbishment. The original shed which dates back to at least early Caley days, is green at the sides but will be fully enclosed with better lighting and even heating(!) - or so they tell me.

I've been listening to the radio recently (during the terrible storms etc.) especially Radio One F.M. - which to any oldies reading this, is an English concern which denotes it's air-time to playing such musical dross as Jason Donovan, Bros., and LAC's sweetheart Kylie "Squeaky clean" Minogue (what you doing on the first Saturday in June, Love?)*

*The *in*-joke amongst the Errol rail buffs - ask Lindsay.

Anyway, to the point of these meanderings - I always make a point of listening to a show between 3 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. every weekday - hosted by one Steve Wright. This show is usually pretty wonderful, with one exception. During the recently mentioned storms, Radio One, seemed more concerned with Mrs. Piggott-Bottom's washing getting blown away in Lower Pendlebury-by-the-Sea. NOT for them the tedium of mentioning TWO main-lines (admittedly one is an EX-branch-line) closed completely in Scotland. To be fair, Grampian TV haven't been much better, concentrating almost entirely on the roads. This really annoyed me, as railwaymen were (and still are) knocking their pan in trying to get the railway re-built, working 24 hours - Lucky beggars - think of the overtime!!!!

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NEW TRAVEL FACILITIES ON THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY

Each year the City Man in all parts of the United Kingdom realises more and more the advantages of being able to reside as far removed from his place of business as possible. Many railways recognize this, and meet the demand by running express trains to suit business hours for what may be termed 'OUTER outer suburban services.' Nor do we find the Scotch Railways behindhand in these matters.

The Caledonian Railway is fortunately situated with regard to residential resorts and serves a large variety of charming spots, both on the coast and inland, in which the business man of Glasgow and Edinburgh, may reside, and yet be within daily reach of 'town'. Such places as Bridge of Allan, Dunblane, Callander, Crieff, etc., have been fostered by the Caledonian Railway, to which line they owe not a little of their popularity. This year the train services to these and other places have been further improved, new trains being run, commencing on May 1st instead of July, so that patrons of the Caledonian Railway will have two additional months of summer services.

In the first place, the Crieff and Auchterarder districts will no longer share their trains with the Dunblane and Callander services, but will revel in the - luxury we were going to call it, but it is more of a necessity nowadays - service of non-stop and express trains entirely their own. The most important train is the present 8.18 a.m. from Crieff. Leaving Crieff three minutes earlier, at 8.15 a.m., and Crieff Junction one minute earlier, at 8.29 a.m. (at which latter place passengers by the 8.0 a.m. ex Perth can join the train) the stops between Crieff Junction and Larbert will be eliminated. At Larbert a stop will be made for ticket collecting and the detaching of the Edinburgh portion. Glasgow will be reached at 9.45 a.m., instead of 10.5 a.m. as at present, a saving of twenty minutes, while on the Edinburgh run the 'Modern Athens' will be reached at 9.55 a.m. This train will be known as the 'Strathearn Express.' On the return journey a train will leave Princes Street Station (Edinburgh) at 4.50 p.m. At Larbert it will join the 5.00 p.m. from Buchanan Street to Dundee and Aberdeen, which will not stop between Larbert and Perth, except at Auchterarder and Dunning, and at Crieff Junction to detach the Crieff portion, which will reach Crieff at 6.35 p.m. The "Strathearn Express" will return from Buchanan Street, Glasgow, at 4.35 p.m., calling only at Crieff Junction at 5.38 p.m., and reaching Crieff at 6.0 p.m.

On Saturdays the "Strathearn Express" will leave Glasgow (Buchanan Street) at 1.10 p.m., and Edinburgh (Princes Street) at 1.0 p.m., the respective portions joining up at Larbert. The train then runs forward to Bridge of Allan, Dunblane and Crieff Junction, and reaches Crieff at 2.50 p.m.

The 'Strathearn Express' is not of course the only fast train serving Crieff. Amongst the others which are convenient for business men is the 7.15 a.m. from Crieff, calling at Crieff Junction at 7.34 a.m. Glasgow is reached by this train at 8.57 a.m. and Edinburgh (Waverley) at 9.45 a.m. In the evening the residents in the bracing Crieff districts will be able to avail themselves of the trains leaving Glasgow at 4.0 and 4.45 p.m. and Princes Street, Edinburgh at 4.25 p.m. as at present.

Of course, the Auchterarder and Crieff districts do not appeal solely to those whose business is conducted in the 'city of ships and engineering' and the 'City of the Seven Hills'. Perth and Dundee are large commercial centres, and claim the working hours of many of the occupants of these delightful resorts. The Caledonian Railway is therefore providing additional facilities for this section of its passengers.

The 8.40 a.m. through express from Crieff will be accelerated to reach Perth at 9.13 a.m., five minutes earlier than usual, and the Dundee timing will also be altered, the arrival at the latter place being at 9.56 a.m. The return train from Dundee will leave at 4.30 p.m. daily, except Saturdays, and on Saturdays at 1.40 p.m. In addition to this, a new express connection from Perth to Crieff, leaving at 5.45 p.m., Saturdays excepted, will be made with the 5.0 p.m. from Dundee.

So far we have dealt solely with the Crieff trains. The 7.40 a.m. Buchanan Street to Dundee corridor express will this year call at Auchterarder at 8.50 a.m., reaching Dundee at 9.56 a.m. A new train will leave Perth at 7.15 p.m. for Auchterarder and Crieff Junction, whilst this summer the 7.0 p.m. Dundee-Glasgow express will call at Crieff Junction. The usual excellent and convenient summer arrangements will come into force on the Dundee, Newtyle, Alyth and Blairgowrie section.

Kirriemuir, being very popular as a summer residential resort with Dundee business men, is to have a new train leaving at 8.45 a.m., calling at Forfar and Monikie, and arriving at Dundee East in the even hour. In the opposite direction a new train will leave Dundee East, Saturdays excepted, at 5.10 p.m., calling at Monikie and Forfar, and reaching Kirriemuir at 6.5 p.m., whilst on Saturdays only the departure from Dundee East is timed for 1.30 p.m.

Brechin and Montrose are two busy centres which are to benefit by improved services. The Elysian retreat in this case is Edzell, whose health-giving air and picturesque surroundings lure many city-dwellers to the North Esk. Many important accelerations and alterations will be made in the train service, chiefly in the direction of running through trains as far as possible. The inconvenience of the change of carriages at Bridge of Dun or Dubton Junction will thus be avoided.

The Granite City is not to be left in the cold. Aberdonians can secure for themselves both seaside and country attractions by migrating for the summer to Stonehaven, whence a new train will leave for Aberdeen at 10.15 a.m., and the 8.45 a.m. train, which proved so popular last season, will be re-introduced. The present 8.55 a.m. train will be accelerated to reach Aberdeen at 9.30 a.m. The daily running of the 8.20 p.m. from Aberdeen, which started at 8.15 last summer, will also be resumed on June 1st, so that it will be seen that, with the present excellent service, Aberdeen will be well served during the coming season.

The 'Upper Ward' of Lanarkshire is too well known to the majority of our readers to need much comment. 'Good wine needs no bush,' and the whole of this district is famed far and wide for its beauty and charm. Particularly is it attractive to Glaswegians and citizens of Edinburgh as a neighbourhood in which the cramped spaces of the city or suburbs may be forgotten, at least for a while. This year, so popular has the district become as a permanent residence, the Caledonian Railway purpose commencing the express business services a month earlier than usual, viz. on the 1st of May.

Included in these services is a new train from Moffat at 7.45 a.m., calling at Beattock, Crawford, Abington, Symington and Thankerton, and arriving at Glasgow Central at 9.30 a.m. A connection for Edinburgh arrives at Princes Street Station at the same hour, 9.30 a.m. The 1.20 p.m. 'Saturdays only' train from Glasgow Central will be re-timed to reach Peebles at 3.8 p.m. and Moffat at 3.11 p.m. The 8.40 a.m. express from Lanark to Glasgow again makes its appearance, as does the 5.0 p.m. Glasgow-Lanark. The 6.35 a.m. from Crawford will start from Crawford daily at 6.55 a.m., calling at all stations to Carstairs, and daily, except Mondays, will run forward to Law Junction, make a connection there with the 7.55 a.m. ex Lanark, due Glasgow at 8.55 a.m. On Mondays, when it will run through as last season, independently of the Lanark express, it will be due in Glasgow at 8.33 a.m.

East Kilbride and Busby are also to benefit by an improved service, many of the trains now terminating at Busby running forward to East Kilbride, intermediate calls being dispensed with on certain trains, 'local' trains being run to complete the service. On the Clyde-coast lines a new late train will leave Wemyss Bay station at 8.35 p.m., connecting at Port Glasgow with the 9.20 p.m. train from Gourock to Glasgow. A return connection will be made off the 8.30 p.m. train ex the Central Station, Glasgow, leaving Port Glasgow at 9.16 p.m. Eight new trains will run in both directions between Port Glasgow, Greenock, Fort Matilda, and Gourock, which will convert the service into what will to all intents and purposes be a 'bus service.' Nearly forty trains each way will then be running between these places locally, in addition to the through connections.

It will be seen that this summer Mr. Donald A. Matheson, the new General Manager of the Caledonian Railway, ably seconded by his experienced Superintendent of the Line, Mr. T.W. Pettigrew, has liberally catered for the business man residing at a distance from the city in which he toils. Mr. Matheson can be credited with much foresight in holding out these inducements - express trains at business hours, and more frequent trains, etc. - to the busy man, to the end that the worker in the city may have the opportunity of residing with his family in some of the most charming resorts in Bonnie Scotland.

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THROUGH THE AGES

100 YEARS AGO

From the "DUNDEE ADVERTISER", Tuesday 21 January 1890:

"NORTH BRITISH RAILWAY EXTENSION IN DUNDEE

In consequence of the large increase of traffic in the Company's goods department at Dundee and the prospective expansion consequent upon the opening of the Forth Bridge, it has been found necessary to enlarge the siding accommodation at Tay Bridge Station. To enable the additional sidings to be laid down, it has been decided to remove the present temporary engine-shed near the Esplanade. In lieu of it, a permanent engine-shed is to be erected on the ground between the Caledonian Railway and the (N.B.) main line, to accommodate 40 engines. The site of the present engine-shed ... will give accommodation for about 300 waggons."

From the "DUNDEE ADVERTISER", Wednesday 22 January 1890:

"OFFICIAL REPORT Sir John Fowler and Mr. Baker, engineers of the Forth Bridge, have tested the two 1700 feet main spans by placing on the centres two trains, each made up of 50 loaded coal waggons and three of the heaviest engines and tenders, the total load thus massed upon the spans being the enormous weight of 1800 tons, which is more than double what the Bridge will ever be called upon in practice to sustain..."

75 YEARS AGO

From THE COURIER, Friday 26 February 1915

"THE ENLISTMENT OF RAILWAYMEN - WAR OFFICE SCHEME.

...The Railway Executive Committee are working out a scheme in conjunction with the War Office, by which increased opportunities to enlist into the Army will be afforded to men employed by the railways. This scheme will be framed in such a way as not to impair the railways in the best interests of the Government and the trade of the Country. Until the scheme can be put into operation, railwaymen will only be recruited under the regulations which existed previously."

50 YEARS AGO

From THE COURIER & ADVERTISER, Wednesday 3 January 1940

"GREEN TORCH RAILWAY WARNING A passenger who had dimmed his torch with green paper inadvertently gave the "right away" to a train because the driver mistook the green light for the guard's signal.... The incident.... occurred in Kirkcaldy."

From THE COURIER & ADVERTISER, Wednesday 31 January 1940

"RESCUE TRAIN STUCK, SENDS S.O.S. Last night Scotland was still cut off from the South by the West Coast rail route. Services to-day are unlikely.... So bad was the hold up that an L.M.S. rescue train, with railway officials and 150 men, which set out to succour a marooned passenger train, itself got into difficulties and had to send out an S.O.S. for another rescue train to rescue it."

From THE COURIER & ADVERTISER, Wednesday 14 February 1940

"RAIL CHARGES PLEDGE TO PUBLIC Assurance that the Government would not use their control over the railways to impose higher charges.... was given in the Commons by (the) Transport Minister."

25 YEARS AGO

From THE COURIER & ADVERTISER, Tuesday 5 January 1965

"DEARER RAIL TRAVEL NEXT MONTH... Ordinary fares... will now go up from 3d to 3½d a mile second class.... Cheap fares are at present in operation between Dundee and Arbroath - 1/9d to Carnoustie and 2/9d to Arbroath."

From THE COURIER & ADVERTISER, Wednesday 6 January 1965.

"ONLY A GLIMPSE FOR THE SPOTTERS The former L.N.E.R. engine 'Morayshire', all polished and repainted in its original green colour, called at Arbroath and Dundee yesterday on its way to Stevenston, Ayrshire, where it is to be placed in the engine museum on permanent loan. The locomotive is the property of Arbroath rail and steam enthusiast Mr. Ian N. Fraser and had made the journey from Inverurie."

From THE COURIER & ADVERTISER, Friday 8 January 1965

TO STREAMLINE THE RAILWAYS Internal re-organisation of the Scottish Region of British Railways, which has resulted in the elimination of the District Commercial Manager's office in Dundee... means that headquarters in Edinburgh will in future deal direct with stations, thereby speeding up decisions."

(Compiled by GORDON MECHAN)

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TRAVELLING IN TIME
by SUN CHARIOT 62B

As it turns out, I am now making daily sorties along the route taken by my illustrious namesake. (Dundee-Aberdeen) It has to be said, however, that the title of this article is something of a misnomer, as punctual arrival in Aberdeen was not achieved until Friday 23rd February (the only time so far!) and scheduled arrival in Dundee is something of a rarity. This is not meant as a criticism, merely a record of the facts. In mitigation, there have been extensive PW works en route. During January there was a considerable delay northbound at Laurencekirk, (cleared at the beginning of February), and throughout February at Newtonhill. In both directions a seemingly long-term job on the viaduct at Muchalls causes loss of time. These, coupled with a slowing in mid-January at Carnoustie gave even an HST little opportunity for timekeeping. Flood damage at Easthaven on Thursday 25th January (of which more later) made matters even worse.

Travel north has been by the 0640 Edinburgh-Aberdeen HST, (which forms a later Aberdeen-Kings Cross service) and south by the 1708 Aberdeen-Glasgow, (usually a push-pull). The HST is generally immaculate, apart from rare occasions when an un-refurbished set is used. With the push-pull sets, however, the opposite applies. To say that these trains are past their best is something of an understatement!

DIARY OF EVENTS.

Wednesday 3rd January : 17 minutes late at Dundee became 30 minutes late at Aberdeen due to delay at single line section Usan-Montrose.

Thursday 4th January : Points failure at Dundee resulted in further 30 minute late arrival at Aberdeen.

Monday 8th January : Stopped at Broughty Ferry and Carnoustie - no explanation offered - 16 minutes late.

Friday 12th January : 25 minute late arrival at Aberdeen.

Monday 22nd January : 21 minute late arrival following delay at Leuchars (obstruction on line)

Thursday 25th January : Flood damage at Easthaven, when the ballast on the down line (northbound!) was washed away, resulted in disruption in services in both directions. For a time single line service was in operation between Carnoustie and Arbroath. Train held at Montrose for 30 minutes, and again at Arbroath. 47 minutes late at Dundee.

Friday 26th January : Single line working Broughty Ferry-Dundee (using down line) following discovery of a broken rail at Dock Street gave arrival at Dundee 27 minutes late. (At least a dozen people left the train while it was stopped at Broughty Ferry, surely prompting the question why stop at Carnoustie, and not here, - if anyone from BR reads this!!)

Monday 29th January : A lengthy stop at Carnoustie resulted in a 23 minute late arrival at Aberdeen.

Thursday 1st February : Most of the journey home in darkness, the conductor being unable to resolve a lighting problem in a couple of the coaches.

Monday 5th February : The 1708 was the last through train to Glasgow via Perth and Stirling after flooding at Perth caused the bridge to be closed.

Tuesday 6th February : The 1708 terminated at Dundee. (services to Perth were covered by bus, and trains were later routed via Falkirk Grahamston).

Friday 9th February : The 0728 Dundee-Arbroath was announced as cancelled due to engine failure. No more than 30 seconds later the engines burst into life, but the train remained cancelled. At night we had a 40 minute late departure from Aberdeen (and arrival at Dundee) following late arrival of stock from Glasgow. Through services to Glasgow were restored today.

Wednesday 14th February : Stopped at Carnoustie for 15 minutes for no apparent (or announced) reason. Noted class 20's on the cement train today. Maybe the comment in the last issue of COTN was premature!

Monday 19th February : Sprinter in use on the 0728 Dundee-Arbroath. (this continued for 2 weeks before reverting back to DMU's) Noted that work had started on the removal of part of the Forfar line embankment at Barnhill.

Wednesday 21st February : Services delayed by northbound sleepers running 2 hours late. Arrival in Aberdeen 37 minutes late.

Thursday 22nd February : 0730 Dundee-Perth DMU left hauled by a class 26.

Friday 23rd February : A World exclusive! First recorded arrival in Aberdeen on time!

Monday 26th February : Stopped at Grassy Beach - 14 minutes late at Aberdeen. (it couldn't last!)

Tuesday 27th February : 51 minutes late. It transpired that no driver could be found to bring the stock up to Waverley from Craigentenny! This was the worst so far.

STATISTICS.

Forty-one journeys were completed during January and February, and in the process 21 different HST power cars led the trains. I could not, unfortunately, obtain the numbers from the rear power car.

On the journeys home, 37 were 47/7's, (13 different) the most common being 47710 Sir Walter Scott with 10 trips. Of the 37 push pull trains, 20 had the loco at the rear.

LIFE ON THE MOOR

We moved from Sutherland to the Moor of Rannoch in 1953. Father joined the Railway, then the L.M.S., as a young man in his 20's. He started as a porter in Muir of Ord then moved as Signaller to The Mound which was the junction for Dornoch. I was about 8 years old then, and I can remember The Mound platform black with people waiting the North and South bound trains and the branch train to Dornoch. Now all closed - He then moved to Acheild Crossing between Rogart and Lairg, which was specially opened for the war-time traffic. Rumours of closure started coming in the Fifties and Father started to look around for another position. He anxiously scanned the vacancy notices every week, and it was there he read, "Man and woman required to man lonely crossing box on West Highland Railway". I was not employed at the time having to give up my job to come home to look after the family owing to Mother being ill. Father asked me would I go in for it with him, I was thrilled at the thought, as I knew the workings of the box from the time I was a child.

We applied for the jobs and in due course got word we were accepted for the positions. I travelled to Glasgow for a medical examination and eye sight test, which was satisfactory. That, I think, was the month of March and we just sat waiting to be told to move. We were still in the North in July, and a letter came to our Station Master to say that 120 couples applied for the jobs and our appointments were disputed by more senior staff and all the applications had to go before the Traffic Manager for Scotland. He decided we were the most suitable people for the jobs, owing to Father having already manned quite an isolated crossing box.

We arrived in Gorton Mid September, Father, Mother, self and three younger sisters all in their teens. We knew, of course, what we were coming to, as I had visited the place previously. No road access, which meant my sisters had to go to Fort William High School and lodge there. The Headmaster was very kind and understanding and they were allowed away early on Friday afternoons to catch the train home, returning again on Monday mornings. They settled in well to their different life style. We had no running water and a dry toilet. There was a small kitchen with a sink and run-away drain, and a tank on the roof to catch rain water. It was piped in with a tap which made dish washing etc., easier. The cooking and domestic water came in large containers from Fort William every evening by the passenger train. The water for washing the clothes was caught in a huge water butt off the roof, and built beside it, was a wash-house with a boiler, and two sinks. During the day, if anyone wanted Mother, she was sure to be there stoking up the boiler (with coal from the engines). In the summer time when the water butt ran dry she got out all the baths, pails etc., and the engine would draw up to the wash house door and Mother got boiling hot water ready for the washing. In no time the washing would be out blowing in the breeze on the clothes line which she got installed out on the moor a little bit. What a wonderful person she was, she was so pleased with the simple things in life, and she had her day out every Friday when she went to Fort William for the groceries, butcher meat etc., and paid the milk bill. The milk came every day by the early train, and we lacked for nothing. Although the electric pylons passed a few yards from the Station we had no electricity, but we never thought about it, as we had no electricity in the North of Scotland.

For the first three years we had neighbours. There was a surfaceman's house beside each distant signal which was half a mile on either side of the Station. We all got on well together, but in due course all the men were withdrawn from the Moor cottages and put either to Crianlarich or Tulloch and the maintenance was done by a gang of workers moving from place to place by motor trolley. We were left quite alone, our nearest neighbours, the Smiths, lived eight miles away at Achallander Farm. The distance between us meant very little, Duncan Smith and his wife Cathy came to be among the best friends we ever made. The Moor all around us was let to Duncan. He had thousands of sheep there and there was seldom a day but either himself or his shepherds called in and spent many hours with us. They were very busy men and yet they made it their business to call in and give us all the local news and the friendship they knew we so much appreciated.

After leaving Gorton to come to Perthshire it used to amuse us to hear people say "what a terrible stormy day" when an inch or two of snow would fall. Many times Father said "You don't know what a storm is like" and produced photos taken at Gorton after the blizzard would die down. Gorton lay at the mouth of Glen Lyon and when the blizzard blew up it funnelled down the Glen on to Gorton. The fury of the wind and drifting snow was quite undescrivable, and what was most uncommon, it was freezing and snowing at the same time. The men keeping the points open, would come into the box to get their breath back and a hot cup of tea. Before coming in, we had to take a small axe and cut the frozen snow off their coats to reach the buttons to get them out of their outdoor clothes. The trains entombed in drifts for days, and the derailments are all too many to mention. If the storm went on for several days and nights, tempers got very frayed, partly I think, through want of sleep and extreme tiredness. We had it hard enough, but it was the local officials who really bore the brunt, with their superiors in Glasgow sitting at desks with the 'phone to their ears demanding to know what was the holdup, and why and how couldn't the line be opened immediately. Men who probably never got their feet wet, forbye being out supervising in a raging blizzard. I'll quote one incident which goes to show the stress and strain which was put on these men, and I thank the Good Lord to this day that I wasn't on duty in the box at the time, as I know my judgement would have been over-ruled. We experienced one bad blizzard which had died down but left feet of snow, then another blew up and diesel engines were sent out to run all night sweeping the line between Crianlarich and Tulloch. One left Bridge of Orchy on the way to Gorton. Three hours passed and it never appeared, it now being around 2 a.m. We then heard a knock at the door and here was Albert Turnbull, the second man on the diesel, encrusted with snow, having walked about 5 miles in the howling blizzard to say their engine was stuck and they couldn't get it moved. Father prevailed on him to stay with us until daylight came, but Albert wanted to go right back as he was worried about his mate, left alone on the engine. He set away back at daylight and we heard no more of them, we didn't know exactly what was wrong, an engine failure or just stuck in the snow, or maybe both. Around 11 a.m. an engine was 'belled on' from the North which duly arrived at Gorton. Several officials on board, with the intention of going on to the Gorton - Bridge of Orchy Section to pull out the other engine. One man came up into the box saying "Charlie, we are to proceed into the section with extreme caution to pull out the engine". "Oh, no you are not" was Father's reply. "You will go into the section when Albert returns here to pilot you in". There was a heated argument for about 10 minutes with father refusing to set the road for them. I can remember Father saying, "Sit down gentlemen and make yourselves comfortable. You'll get in when Albert returns though it be midnight". Just as he spoke the "disabled" engine came flying round the curve at the distant signal.

The lads had dug themselves out. There would have been a head-on collision and probably no one left alive to 'hold the baby' but Father.

The beautiful summers made up for the rigors of winter. I remember specially the summer of 1955 when the enginemmen went on strike, no trains, - we were completely cut off. The Management quickly made arrangements for the motor trolley to travel every day to Fort William returning with our water supply, milk etc., and all the needs of the Moor people from Gorton to Tulloch. The weather was so dry all the water butts went dry and we got hold of a small hand bogey which went on the rails and we had to push it about a mile to get water from the River Tulla in baths, pails etc., for washing purposes. What fun it was, my sisters were on holiday. We filled the containers, ran with the bogey and when we got it well running, leaped on and sailed down the incline to the Station, fortunately at a certain spot the old bogey slowed down and we all leaped off and grabbed it. It's a miracle we didn't land at Bridge of Orchy with our water!

Since I retired from my shop and Post Office at Glencarse I have time to think back over all the happy years on the Moor of Rannoch, and all the great old characters we got to know and liked so well; most of them trackmen. John Fraser, Neil Maclean, Donald Maclellan and many more who loved to regale us with all the old stories of the West Highland. This all went on in working hours with maybe a quick check up "Did Peter Herd go home on the goods"? This was the permanent Way Inspector, and if it was established that Peter Herd went home to Crianlarich on the 1 o'clock goods, that left them clear for the rest of the day to relax in the signal box, telling stories and some of them snoozing in the corner of an old couch we had in the box. Sometimes Peter Herd would 'phone up to ask if he could speak to one of them, a message maybe instructing them where he wanted them to work next day. We always knew when it was Peter, Father took a quick burl round and stood with the 'phone to his ear looking down the Moor saying "I don't see any sign of your men at the moment but I'll try and get them for you". I has been known for Peter to say "Now Charlie, if you will just look round they are probably sitting round your fire"!!!

Peter Herd was another great friend, he spent hours and hours with us. He dropped off the 11 a.m. passenger train and joined the 1 o'clock goods. There was always a little bit of class distinction, the Inspectors were always ushered into the living room, the visitor took the armchair and Father the other; feet stretched out to the fire; which was our sole means of cooking, and very often or almost always Mother making her daily batch of scones and pancakes etc., stepping over the visitor's feet, and joining in all the news and gossip Peter was delighted to share with us. Sometimes the scones would be shade more browned than meant to be, and Mother would comment "Peter and his news".

Gorton was under Rannoch Station and the Station Master had to visit us once a week. That again was a social occasion, and quite often they took their wives with them, and they all remained life-long friends.

When we arrived in Gorton we were accepted by the train crews rather cautiously. They were all very pleasant but they all believed the story that railwaymen north of Inverness kept very sharp pencils, which was quite true. Father found that out to his cost. How many "Please Explain" letters he had, he couldn't count over train staff reporting trivialities. That doubt was soon removed. The steam engines were on the West Highland when we arrived. An old "Glen" came labouring up the hill into the Station pulling a goods train. It took ages to come from Bridge of Orchy,

and as it came lumbering in we said to each other "what on earth.....". On the tender sitting on the coals was a crowd of hikers, boys and girls and some sitting on the tank at the back, legs dangling over the side. The driver stopped to explain "We had to stop for a blow up, and these kids begged us for a lift. The lassies are tired -" and hastened to add; "no unauthorised people on the footplate -" and Father replied, "Bill, although you had them stuffed down into the funnel I wouldn't care."

Without a doubt it would have been a hard life on the Moor without the kindness and thoughtfulness of the train crews.

I was on steady early shift, the first goods passed about 3.30 a.m. They would slow down and when exchanging the token call "If you need a message taken to the shops put it in the pouch on the way back". That crew took the goods going to Fort William back passing around 6.30 a.m. On their way home they dropped the letter into the grocer or butcher or whatever shop required and the messages would be sent out by the afternoon passenger train. In the fourteen years at Gorton, those lads must have carried hundreds of letters for me.

Our Post Office was at Bridge of Orchy Station, George Walker was Station Master and Post Master. All letters etc., were sent down by train with money for postage and George did the rest. We had no public 'phone, George did all our 'phoning, and at various times when our family had been in hospital, (the stations all closed down around 7.30 p.m.) George would say before going home, "I'll take a turn back to the Station about 10 p.m. 'phone the hospital and let you know how "... whoever was in is., and give you peace of mind for the night'. We experienced kindness on the West Highland that we have't come across since.

Father was around 62 years old when the vague rumours started about the tokenless block system of signalling, and he made up his mind he wasn't to start learning a 'new system at his time of life', and he put into operation what was in his mind for years to get a small shop and Post Office and we started looking around. We looked at several, and decided the Post Office at Glencarse was the one for us, both situation and price was very acceptable. The tokenless block was in operation by the time we left. It was ridden with teething troubles which no doubt would have been all ironed out through time, but we were glad to go, and moved out in December 1967. British Rail never got anyone to man the place. The whole elaborate instruments etc., were pulled out and the house and signal box raised to the ground. Normally we are not emotional people, but when we stepped out the door for the last time, went on to the platform to join the passenger train, and looked back at the little house which was our home for 14 happy years, Mother and I broke down and wept.

Fortunately, we were plunged into such a busy life in the shop and Post Office we didn't have time to look back and get depressed. Most of our friends thought we were mad - a man of 63 learning to run a busy Post Office, and me, a busy a grocery shop and very large newsagency. However we did, and prospered more than we ever could dream of, our turnover increasing every year. Like every other family we had our glad times and sad times. Mother died six years after coming to Glencarse. Father worked in the Post Office until he was 75 and died in his eightieth year. He never really got over the terrible tragedy which happened to our dear friends Cathie and Duncan Smith who were so kind to us on the Moor of Rannoch. They came regularly to visit us, and departing in the darkness to drive home, we were at the door seeing them away, a lot of joking and

laughing going on. They drove away and crossing the carriageway to join the Perth Road was struck by a motor bike which turned their Rover car on its roof, killing Duncan instantly and of course the bike driver as well. Cathie escaped with minor injuries. So like so many families, the dreaded A85 has scarred our memories as well. Apart from that I spent 21 very happy years at Glencarse.

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