



The Seafield Dock and Railway Company



From time to time comments and photographs surface on local social media platforms in relation to the ruins at Seafield of the proposed deep water harbour. The project never came to fruition but significant portions remain standing as a memorial to what might have been. The recent storms have done further damage to the remaining edifice and this month we look at the reasons for its construction and, probably more importantly, why it was never completed.

For centuries Ravenscraig Castle and Seafield Tower have stood sentinel at each end of Kirkcaldy Bay. The dock, which does not have such a lengthy history, has nevertheless stood for well over 120 years in close proximity to the tower. Both the tower and the dock now appear to be in a perilous condition which does not bode well for their continuing existence over the medium to long term.

It is one of these coincidences that the proposed dock stands close to the site of the housing complex at Seafield. The housing is, of course, built on what was Seafield Colliery and the motivation behind the proposed dock was coal, especially its transportation. It was a bold and audacious move to build a deep water harbour which was intended to be the deepest on Scotland's east coast. The theory was then to connect it, via a railway, to the central coalfields of Fife and challenge the docks at Burntisland and, to a lesser degree, Methil for the exporting of “King Coal”.

As with many of Kirkcaldy's schemes of the late Victorian era it was a case of start – then stop - then start again, before finally coming to a full stop. The first tram car project was an obvious case in point. The story of that scheme was recounted in Object 35.

As far as can be ascertained, there has been no previous attempt to recount the story of Seafield dock, therefore there has been no skeleton or guidelines to follow. This has led to the information being unearthed primarily by research of newspaper articles which has the result of making the reading rather staccato. We hope that this will not dilute the enjoyment. Please bear in mind that when the Bills passed through the Commons/Lords this was in relation to the construction of railways. The Seafield dock was a matter for the Board of Trade.

Our research travelled back as far as 1839 to find the first mention of a proposed harbour at Seafield. It is the *Fife Herald*, of the 7th March 1839, where research commences. Unfortunately, the two principal Kirkcaldy newspapers did not carry the story as the *Fifeshire Advertiser* had only started publication late the previous year and the *Fife Free Press* did not see the light of day until 1871.

From the benevolent support is also claimed on behalf of the poor and industrious classes, to whom the indispensable article of coal will be made available at an easy rate. When, therefore, the prospectus of the "Seafield Harbour and Railway Company" shall be submitted to the public, it is hoped these classes will unite in giving every assistance in their power to carry through an object which presents so many claims to their attention.

I am, &c.,
Kirkcaldy, March 2, 1839.

JAMES PETTY.

The *Fife Herald* article was in the shape of a lengthy and detailed letter from a James Petty who gave his address as Kirkcaldy but nothing more. Whoever he was, he had gone by the 1841 Census – no Petty could

be traced in Fife never mind Kirkcaldy. From the detailed calculations which appeared in the letter there would seem little doubt that Mr Petty, it that was his name, was close to the promoters of the new dock.

His letter would appear to be as a direct result of an advertisement which appeared in *The Scotsman* on the 13th February 1839. The item in question was a resolution for the part payment of shares in the *Burntisland Pier and Ferry Company*. The advertisement is reproduced here but in essence it was a £2 per share call to get the company underway plus meet some initial expenses relating

THE BURNTISLAND PIER AND FERRY COMPANY.

CAPITAL £32,000, IN SHARES OF £20 EACH.

AT a GENERAL MEETING of the COMPANY, held this day, it was resolved that the sum of Two Pounds per share of deposit shall be paid into the Royal Bank, on or before MONDAY the 18th of February current, being the five per cent. required at the formation of this Company, in terms of the Resolutions of the Meeting of 23d January last, and an additional five per cent., to carry into effect the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

Edinburgh, 11th Feb. 1839.

Applications for Shares will be received by JAMES NAIRNE, Esq., W.S., 12, Nelson Street; MESSRS ROLLAND & THOMSON, W.S., 9, North St David Street; and at the Royal Bank in Edinburgh. At the Offices of the British Linen Company and Commercial Banks in Cupar; and at the Offices of the several Banks in Kirkcaldy, St Andrew's, Perth, Dundee, Forfar, Montrose, Arbroath, Brechin, and Aberdeen.

to the passing of the Bill in the House of Commons. We learn that the capital of the company was to be £32,000, broken into shares of £20 each. The article mentions a previous meeting on the 23rd of January and some further research led to the *Fife Herald* of the 31st January 1839.

AT A NUMEROUS MEETING
OF
GENTLEMEN OF HIGH RESPECTABILITY,
INTERESTED IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE
FIFE AND MID-LOTHIAN FERRIES,
Held within the Royal Hotel, Edinburgh,
on 23d January 1839,
The Hon. JAMES BRUCE in the Chair,
THE following Resolutions were unanimously
carried:—
I. That the following PROSPECTUS be approved
of, and forthwith advertised, and extensively circulated,
viz.:—
FIFE AND MID-LOTHIAN FERRIES.
The Public being well acquainted with the present
state of the great national line of communication by *The
Fife and Mid-Lothian Ferry*, it seems unnecessary to
point out its very defective and inefficient condition, and
how inadequate it is to give that accommodation to the
Public which is required. Neither is it necessary to
dwell on the great advantages which must arise, not
only to Fife and Mid-Lothian, but also to the more re-
mote Counties, from an increased facility of communica-
tion.

There it was disclosed that a meeting of “Gentlemen of High Respectability” who were interested in the improvement to the *Fife and Mid-Lothian Ferries* had been held in the Royal Hotel Edinburgh on the 23rd. High respectability was in evidence from the off as the chairman was James Bruce, the Earl of Elgin.

In brief, the idea was to create the ability to sail in all tides by building a low-water pier on the north side of the Firth of Forth. Burntisland was seen as the best site due to the difficulties and expense which, it was suggested, would be incurred in building any further eastwards. It was envisaged that steam vessels could land and depart no matter the position of the tide. On the other side of the Forth another deep water dock would be constructed, “no further east than Leith and no further west than Granton”. It transpired that Granton was the eventual choice.

The intention was to bring a Bill before Parliament to form the *Burntisland Pier and Ferry Company* which would be an amalgam of the gentlemen who subscribed to the shares and the existing *Fife and Mid-Lothian Ferries*. In addition the monies raised would allow completion of the coast road from Burntisland to Kinghorn. The costs which, as mentioned earlier, were in total £32,000 but broken down as:-

- | | |
|--|---------|
| • Cost of the construction of the pier | £15,000 |
| • Cost of road and contingencies | £ 5,000 |
| • Steam boats and other craft | £12,000 |
| • Total | £32,000 |

The projected annual operational income was based on 100,000 passengers plus horses, cattle, sheep, carriages and goods carried would accrue £6,975. The expenditure was estimated to be £3,671 leaving a return of £3,304.

The venture certainly appeared to attract the cream of society and here is a list of the gentlemen who would act as an Interim Committee until the Chairman and Directors were appointed after flotation.

Even before the Prospectus had been issued the article reveals that the following had all invested £500 each:-

- His Grace, The Duke of Buccleuch.
- Colonel Lindsay of Balcarres.
- John Balfour Esq., of Balbirnie.
- O. Tyndal Bruce, Esq., of Falkland.
- John Gladstone, Esq., of Fasque.

A raft of others followed at lesser sums but £6,280 in total had been subscribed before the Prospectus ever saw the light of day. Most of the names on the list are recognisable but we were intrigued by John Gladstone, Esq., of Fasque.

It transpires that Fasque is in Kincardine and John Gladstone was the father of long time British politician and Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone. John Gladstone was, in his day, one of the wealthiest men in Britain making much of his money from sugar plantations in the West Indies. On the abolition of slavery in 1833, John Gladstone received the largest payout from the *Slave Compensation Commission* of £106,769 in respect of his 2,508 slaves over his 9 plantations. William Ewart Gladstone himself was born in 1809 in Liverpool which was the port which his father was

III. That the following Noblemen and Gentlemen be appointed an Interim Committee, for the purpose of carrying these Resolutions into effect, and of conducting all the other details of the business until the Chairman and Directors of the Company be appointed, viz. :—
The Earl of Leven and Melville,
The Hon. Lord William Douglas of Denino,
Sir David Erskine of Canbo, Bart.,
Sir John Oswald of Dannikier, K.C.B.,
Sir Robert Mowbray of Cockairney,
John Gladstone, Esq. of Fasque,
Colonel Lindsay of Balcarres,
John Balfour, Esq. of Balbirnie,
P. B. Ainslie, Esq. of St Colue House,
J. A. Cheyne, Esq. of Kilmaron,
John Whyte Melville, Esq. of Strathkiunes,
Major-General Bethune of Blebo,
Captain J. D. Boswall of Wardie,
John Learmonth, Esq. of Dean,
David Hunter, Esq. of Blackness,
William Young, Esq. of Duncarn,
Alexander M'Niell, Esq., advocate, and
John Gibson, jun., Esq., W S.
John Learmonth, Esq., to be Convener, and three to be a quorum, with power to the Committee to add to their number.
JAMES BRUCE, Preses.

most involved with. Gladstone Snr., lived in the City for 43 years before returning to Scotland.

We can now examine the thrust of Mr Petty's arguments where his opening statement was that; “The public generally, but particularly the inhabitants in the vicinity of the Fife ferries and the towns of Dundee, Perth, and the whole of the north of Scotland, who have occasion to cross this ferry on their way to Edinburgh and the south, are much interested in a suitable place being fixed on where they could land and embark from the ferry steamers without using small boats”. He went on to say that the Burntisland proposal was in the main for passenger traffic which would not alone contribute in any significant manner to the cost and upkeep of the low water pier. His argument in favour of having a low water pier at Seafield was that it could easily be connected to an adjacent deep water harbour meaning that a great amount of cheap and superior coals could be exported. At this stage Burntisland was not looking at meaningful coal exports. The increased income, from this source, would result in lesser charges being made in respect of passenger landing fees at Seafield.

Petty then claimed that he had genuinely believed that the choice of Burntisland had been already discounted following a report from a Dundee engineer, Mr Leslie, that Seafield was superior. He made the added claim that Mr Leslie's findings had been supported by a number of eminent Scottish and English engineers.

The letter went on to make claims which he had gleaned from the February edition of the *Kirkcaldy Monthly Advertiser* :-

- In the 5 years ending on the 20th December 1836 the average loss on the ferries using Burntisland was £3598:7:4 while the average surplus for Kirkcaldy was £6,868:11:7.
- Burntisland carried average annual passenger numbers of 16,278 with Kirkcaldy showing a higher figure of 57,743.

- The split at Burntisland between steerage and cabin was 10,239 and 6039. At Kirkcaldy it was 23,916 as opposed to 33,832. This suggested that those sailing from Kirkcaldy were “a better quality of passengers” as the percentage of travellers using cabin facilities was higher in Kirkcaldy than Burntisland.
- Could Burntisland really expect to carry 100,000 passengers? At present the total was 16,278 plus 57,743 = 74,021 and then add 30,000 to that figure.

The letter moved on to inform readers that a “Mr Milne from Edinburgh had prepared a plan for a low water pier and harbour at Seafield with a line of road and railway* from it to Kirkcaldy. The harbour will be well sheltered, have 10 feet of water at the lowest spring ebbs, and, when fully completed, will have upwards of 4,000 feet of wharfage”. It was estimated that the cost would be circa £22,000 and that “a number of influential mercantile gentlemen have already taken up the subject, and the formation of a company to erect the harbour may soon be expected. What, it may be asked, will then become of Burntisland low water pier?”

*The railway was intended to branch off at the West Burn (Tiel) and head northwards to reach the coalfields near Lochgelly, a distance of some 6 miles.

Before concluding, it is proper to shew to what extent the communities may be benefited who shall obtain coals by means of the contemplated harbour and railway.

The consumption of Edinburgh and Leith amounts to about 350,000 tons annually. Suppose then the average price to be reduced 3s. per ton, there will be a saving to that city of L.51,000; and even if the price of Fife-shire coals rise, and the saving is only 1s. 6d. per ton, it will still be a saving of L.26,500 per annum.

From the great extent of steam power in Dundee and surrounding district, it may be assumed that the difference there will not be much less.

If I might presume to offer an advice to the subscribers to “The Burntisland Pier Company,” I would earnestly recommend them to pause before commencing their building operations, and weigh well the facts now stated. The person who thus addresses them has no personal or pecuniary interest at stake in this question, and certainly no local prejudices, otherwise his wishes would have been in unison with those who prefer risking money on the improvements of Kirkcaldy harbour.

The article then carried a number of calculations in relation to the cost and carriage of the coal and saw huge advantages in carrying coal to Edinburgh. It was estimated that Edinburgh used 350,000 tons of coal per annum and this market, plus Dundee and Montrose, would become potential targets. By using rail and ferry it was anticipated there

would be a significant reduction of the cost to Edinburgh for its coal provision.

His message was that the gentlemen promoting the Burntisland project would do well to reconsider and switch to the soon to be formed *Seafield Harbour and Railway Company*. In summing up our writer “claims to have no personal or pecuniary interest in the matter but his comments are based on his avocations having caused him for many years to be a frequent passenger on the ferry, and it is the experience thus derived, coupled with the opportunities of hearing the opinions of both engineers and nautical men, which so strongly induces him to recommend Seafield as a ferry station”. Somehow or other this disclaimer does not easily sit with the immense detail and his impassioned pleas but it has to be accepted at face value.

His letter did make mention that many in Kirkcaldy were not particularly in favour of the idea – many preferred to see an extension to the town's existing harbour. Despite its current disadvantages that harbour might/would be further injured if Seafield became a reality. Mr Petty had an answer to that in stating “ little support may be looked for from persons who entertain such opinions; but the completion of Seafield harbour, it is hoped, will not depend on them”.

Notwithstanding the physical disadvantages under which that harbour labours, some of the inhabitants cannot see how the public good will be promoted by a harbour at Seafield, where it is likely to injure the local interests of the town. Little support may be looked for to any great improvement from persons who entertain such opinions; but the completion of Seafield harbour will not, it is hoped, depend on them.

Of course the Seafield dock did not come to pass and Burntisland went from strength to strength. Their harbour also had had many issues as was pointed out by no less an engineer than Thomas Telford in 1828. However, as explained above, Burntisland became considered to be the ideal ferry station on the north side of the Forth. Not only that but the town became the northern terminal for the first train ferry in the world. It was operated initially by the *Edinburgh, Perth and Dundee Railway Company* and then by the *North British Railway*.

It was Sir Thomas Bouch, the designer of the ill fated Tay Bridge, who designed the *Leviathan* ferry which could load and carry 30/40 wagons and a locomotive from Granton to Burntisland. The passengers did not travel in their railway carriages but were carried over the Firth in a separate steamer. The ferries operated from 1849 until 1880 when the Forth Bridge opened.

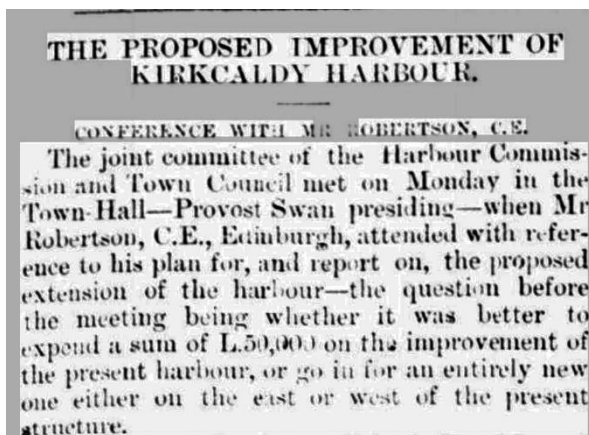
It was the good Sir John Gladstone who funded the low water pier. This was followed by *The Prince Albert Pier* in 1844 and then in 1876 the 5 acre *West Dock* opened for the export of coal which was followed by the *East Dock* in 1900. So, there we have it – how serious were the attempts to promote Seafield as a ferry station to Leith with a direct access to the coalfields of central Fife? Who were the gentlemen behind the *Seafield Dock and Harbour Company*? It certainly came to nothing so, if the proposal was ever a real one, it has to be put down as a potential lost opportunity.

There was another brief mention of the potential of Seafield to be developed as a harbour in the 1870s but in reality it was little more than a mention. The *Fife Free Press* in the months of September and October of 1875 were very much exercised by the existing Kirkcaldy harbour which had been connected to the main railway line in 1849. In its edition of the 18th September it is revealed that under a heading – **Extension to the Harbour** - the Council, at their meeting on the 13th, had received a report on the proposed extension to the harbour prepared by Mr Robertson, C.E. The report was to be the subject of a meeting between the Council and The Harbour Commissioners.

Before the report could be discussed in October, the September meeting of the Harbour Commissioners reveals that Kirkcaldy was now starting to look at the transportation of coal in a far more serious manner than hitherto. This was allied to the proposed extension to the harbour. In essence, there was a proposal to purchase a steam crane and lifting cradle capable of lifting 18 tons

at the approximate cost of £1,000. It was believed that such a crane could be fitted on the East Pier and a fee of 6d could be charged per ton of coal loaded. Some members were optimistic that there might be a demand reaching 40,000 tons which would bring in an income of £1,000. Others thought 12,000 tons would be a more realistic figure. This would give an income of £300 but after costs were deducted the surplus would be nearer £120.

There could be no way of telling how accurate the estimates were, but Provost Swan made the point that it would require the Railway Company to treat Kirkcaldy and Burntisland on an equal footing. It seems that at the time it cost 6d less per ton to deliver coals to Burntisland than Kirkcaldy. Also, some of the coal masters would have to be convinced to use Kirkcaldy instead of Burntisland.



The Harbour Commissioner's meeting which is of interest to this narrative was held on Monday, the 18th October 1875, with Provost Swan in the chair. Mr Robertson, the author of the report, was also in attendance. The Provost set the scene stating that the purpose of the meeting was to determine if

improvements of £50,000 should be made to the existing harbour “or for an entirely new one to the east or the west of the present structure to be constructed?”

Mr Robertson's plans amounted to an extension to the East Pier which would be a substantial erection of concrete mixed with broken down whinstone to give increased strength. The West Pier would be constructed from greenheart timber (used in marine construction) and filled with stones. When questioned about other options Mr Robertson remained resolute that the design he had put forward was the best available for the budget he was constrained by.

The question of a new harbour came up with the rocks below Ravenscraig and those at Seafield being mentioned as potential sites. The Provost was quite vocal in saying that “his friend John Sang had said that the best position for harbour purposes – especially for railway purposes - would be Seafield”. John Sang was a prominent and well respected engineer with a body of work at national level and the Provost did mention that if the railway and the coal masters had been onside in 1839 – the harbour might well have been sited there. Sang was of course the man who, during Swan's Provostship, supervised the construction of the town's water supply from the Lothrie near Leslie.

Provost Swan remarked that he had heard a good deal said about going elsewhere with the harbour—he had heard both Seafield and the rocks at Ravenscraig mentioned as sites; and long ago his friend, Mr Sang, said that the best position for a harbour—especially for railway purposes—would have been at Seafield. There, a much better entrance would be got than at Burntisland, and if the railway company and the coal masters had taken up the matter, he had no doubt but the harbour would have been there. They could not, however, go and put a harbour down at Seafield for the convenience of the railway and the coalmasters, but if those parties had gone into the matter the harbour might have suited all parties.

That said, without question there seemed to be an appetite to look at building a pier out from the Ravenscraig Rocks which would also allow the present harbour to be utilised. The problem was that the likely cost would be well over £100,000. There was a lengthy discussion around how to proceed, with Michael B. Nairn making the point that money was being frittered away by the continual tinkering with the existing harbour. It came down to Mr Robertson being very firm in what could be achieved with £50,000 – these he listed as:-1) extended pierage, 2) a better entrance – 3) greater shelter and deeper water.

This however is Kirkcaldy and the meeting closed with Mr Stocks moving that “in the meantime they should approve of Mr Robertson's plan as being the best plan suitable for the extension of the present harbour; and that they delay applying for powers until the Boundaries Bill has passed through Parliament.

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what happened although in fairness the bringing together of Pathhead, St.Clairtown, Gallatown and the Links had to be consuming much of the civic father's time and energy.

Kirkcaldy was a strong manufacturing base and both raw materials inwards and finished goods outwards needed a harbour deep enough and spacious enough to take the increasing size of steam ships. If there were also to be new opportunities for the movement of minerals from the centre of Fife via Kirkcaldy – then the status quo could not be a short term option.

So, yet again, Seafield remained virgin land between the Tyrie Bleachfield and the Tower. Would that ever change and fulfil John Sang's 1839 prediction that Seafield was the best site, with the best entrance and the deepest water for a new harbour? Sang was still alive at this time and, as the attached advertisement shows, in April of 1875, he was engaged in the deepening of Kirkcaldy Harbour. However, by the October he was the resident engineer for the line to carry coal from the Central Fife coalfields to Burntisland!

TO CONTRACTORS.

ESTIMATES Wanted for deepening the Harbour of Kirkcaldy, conform to Plan and Specification by Mr John Sang, C.E.

Copies of Specification may be had, and the Plan seen on application to W. Millie Dow, Clerk to the Harbour Commissioners. Offers (marked "Offer for deepening Kirkcaldy Harbour") to be lodged with Mr Dow on or before 28th current.

The Commissioners will not be bound to accept the lowest or any offer.

Fifeshire Advertiser.

— VIGILANDO MUNIO. —

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 1882.

THE PROPOSED NEW DOCKS AND RAILWAY.

It is now a fortnight since the public received through these columns the first intimation of the proposal to construct a new harbour near the west end of the town, with a line of rails attached. The great and undoubted importance of the matter to the town of Kirkcaldy has led to much speculation regarding the project, and the paragraphs which have appeared since then in the daily prints, giving more or less correct guesses as to the scheme, have been eagerly read. It should be understood, however, that the scheme is not sufficiently advanced to be laid before the public as yet, and any attempt to give a description of it would be premature and misleading. All that need be known is that such a proposal has certainly been taken up in influential quarters, and should an investigation of the circumstances of the case justify such a course, the scheme will not only be entertained, but certainly carried out.

The next important mention was unearthed on the 19th August 1882, again via the columns of the *Fifeshire Advertiser*. The article records that “the idea has been taken up in *influential quarters* and should an investigation of the circumstances of the case justify such a course, the scheme will not only be entertained, but carried out”.

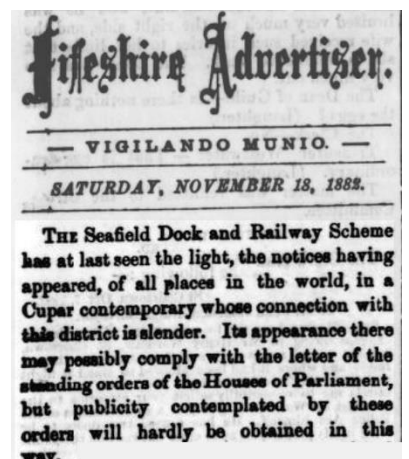
The plan was to construct the dock at Seafield and then add a line up the Tiel Valley as far as Auchtertool. The dock

was on Raith land and the proposed railway line covered ground owned by the Earl of Rosslyn and Mr Ferguson. There was no plan to take the line further than Auchtertool but the promoters were not against the Caledonian Railway Company coming in and continuing the line westwards. For that matter, it was felt that even the North British Railway Company might like to extend the line to join up with their existing track somewhere between Lochgelly and Dunfermline.

One of the chief objections/concerns in Kirkcaldy was the distance to Seafield which in fact was outside the town boundary, being situated in Kinghorn parish. A more pressing issue to some in Kirkcaldy and Pathhead was concern over their own harbour and what its fate may be if the new dock was constructed. To allay these fears there was a suggestions that a railway line could be run between Seafield and Kirkcaldy harbour, via the Sands Road (Promenade). This would give the existing harbour a measure of the proposed coal trade via the smaller craft which could be accommodated there.

The article ended with a summing up which most assuredly supported the project:- “it would give Kirkcaldy all the advantages of a first class seaport, it would give an immense impetus to all our industries, it would open up more fully the coalfields in the neighbourhood and it would open a more direct communication with the west of Scotland. For these and many other reasons the project has our best wishes”.

The same newspaper in its edition of the 18th November 1882 was able to confirm that the statutory notices of the impending submission of the Parliamentary Bill were now published. Their noses however seemed a little out of joint in that they were not one of the newspapers selected to carry the notice:- “the notice has



appeared, of all the places in the world, in a Cupar contemporary whose connection with this district is slender". The article carried a little more detail of the railway line which was going to be mineral only. It would run up the Tiel Valley – crossing the Auchtertool Road and then going under the North British Railway near Cardenden. It would terminate in Auchterderran Parish, some 500 yards north-west of the Bow Bridge over the River Ore, between Lochgelly and Auchterderran. This route it was claimed would serve most of the Raith Collieries in the vicinity and some of Inchdairnie Estate.

In Parliament, Session 1883]

SEAFIELD DOCK AND RAILWAY.
(INCORPORATION OF COMPANY; CONSTRUCTION OF DOCK, PIERS, EMBANKMENTS, AND OTHER WORKS AT TYRIE, IN THE PARISH OF KINGHORN, IN THE COUNTY OF FIFE, RAILWAYS FROM TYRIE TO PITCAIRN, IN THE COUNTY OF FIFE; COMPULSORY PURCHASE OF LANDS, TOLLS, RATES, &c.; SPECIAL POWERS TO LIMITED OWNERS; AND AS TO SALE AND LEASE OF LANDS, BYELAWS, AND OTHER POWERS; PAYMENT OF INTEREST OUT OF CAPITAL, &c.)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,—That application is intended to be made to Parliament in the ensuing Session for leave to bring in a Bill for effecting the purposes, or some of the purposes following, that is to say:—

To incorporate a Company and to enable the Company so to be incorporated (who are in this Notice referred to as "the Company") to make and maintain the Dock, Embankments, Piers, Railways, and other Works, hereinafter mentioned, or some of them, or some part or parts thereof respectively

The Fife News of Saturday the 25th November 1882 carried the Bill and the heading is shown here for interest. Notice was also given that the plans, lines and levels, would be on display for public examination at the offices of the Principal Sheriff-Clerk in his offices in Cupar, Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline, on or before the 30th November. Printed copies of the Bill were to be presented to the Private Bill Office of the House of Commons prior to, or on the 21st December. The agents were the well established Edinburgh legal firm of Dundas & Wilson with the Parliamentary Agent being one J.C. Rees.

The Fifehire Advertiser had amongst the pages of its edition of the 20th December 1882 a *Retrospective of the Year*. It was most concerned with public health and the fact that contagious diseases had been prevalent during the year in the form of scarlet fever and measles. The number of deaths in the town had risen significantly from the previous year. Industry had made a comeback with improvements in trade – especially in the staple industries of floorcloth and linoleum. Linen still seemed to be in a slightly depressed state but the engineering firms and foundries were busy. Shipbuilding at Abden was so busy that work was continuing throughout the night – thanks to the advent of electric lighting.

However, when it came to the subheading;- **Tramway, Railway and Dock Schemes**, it was a very upbeat message commenting that “If for nothing else 1882 should be remembered for the birth of three great projects affecting both the town and the neighbourhood”. These were:-

- *The Kirkcaldy and District Tramway* running from Linktown to Dysart with a branch to the railway station.
- *The Alloa, Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy Railway* line running directly from the Port Brae to Alloa.
- *The Seafield Dock and Railway Company* – with the purpose of carrying coal and other minerals from the Parish of Auchterderran and other places to the new deep water dock at Seafield.

The newspaper was full of hope but sadly, none of these three schemes came to pass. Certainly in the early years of the 20th century trams did indeed come to Kirkcaldy but not through a private concern but thanks to the efforts of the Town Council themselves. Looking back in retrospect, which is always a dangerous thing to do, the town would certainly have been much enhanced had they succeeded.

The early months of 1883 had little to report other than the *Seafield Dock and Railway Company* and the *Alloa, Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy Railway* were by no means great friends. This is disclosed by an article in the *Fife Advertiser* of the 10th March where those petitioning against the Alloa Bill were disclosed. They included both Ronald Crawford Munro Ferguson of Raith and the *Seafield Dock and Railway Company*. The petitioners both for and against are shown here.

MARCH 10, 1883.

THE ALLOA, DUNFERMLINE, AND KIRKCALDY RAILWAY BILL	PETITIONS IN FAVOUR OF THE BILL
<p>The following have presented petitions to the House of Commons against the above Bill:-</p> <p>James Alexander Hunt, Great Northern Railway Company, Great Eastern Railway Company, Earl of Mar and Kellie, Ronald Crawford Munro Ferguson, of Raith, Promoters of Seafield Dock and Railway Bill, Fife County Road Trustees, Erskine Beveridge, Alloa Coal Company, Clackmannan Coal Company, James Calder, James Calder & Co.,</p>	<p>The following petitions have been lodged in favour of the Bill. Petitions from—</p> <p>Kirkcaldy Town Council, Dysart Town Council, Dunfermline Town Council, Alloa Burgh Commissioners of Police, Culross Town Council, Kirkcaldy Harbour Commissioners, Merchants, traders, &c., of Dysart, " " " " Kirkcaldy, " " " " Auchtertool, " " " " Alloa, " " " " Dunfermline, Traders in neighbourhood of Dunfermline, Artisans, tradesmen, &c., of Kirkcaldy, Inhabitants of Cairneyhill and Crossford, " " Culross and Torryburn, " " Kinross-on-Forth and district.</p>

In the same edition it was pointed out that two petitions had been presented against the *Seafield Dock and Railway Scheme*. Not unexpectedly, one was the *North British Railway Company* while the other was the *Alloa, Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy Railway*. The above is the basis for the suggestion they were not great friends!

**THE ALLOA, DUNFERMLINE, AND
KIRKCALDY RAILWAY BILL.**

**THE SEAFIELD DOCK AND
RAILWAY BILL.**

The Committee of the House of Commons on the above Bills is to sit next week, and as the subject is one of absorbing interest throughout this district,

A DETAILED REPORT
OF THE
EVIDENCE AND THE DEBATE
will appear in the *Fifeshire Advertiser*, supplied by
OUR OWN REPORTER.

See the *Advertiser* of next week.

In its edition of the 7th April 1883 the *Fifeshire Advertiser* carried a notice to say that the Bills would be going before the Committee of the House of Commons the following week. It was also disclosed that the newspaper's "own reporter would be there to give a detailed report of the evidence submitted and the debate". The Committee stages were the real battleground after Bills passed through the floor of the House

of Commons – this would be where those in favour and those against would have the opportunity to make their cases. Would Kirkcaldy's industries get the desired rail link to drive an expansion of business and would the Fife monopoly of the *North British Railway* finally be broken.

The newspaper was as good as its word and lengthy and detailed reports on the Bills were carried in the columns. Many of the major players in Kirkcaldy threw their weight behind the *Alloa, Dunfermline & Kirkcaldy Bill* with very impressive supporting evidence provided by Michael B. Nairn and Mr J.T. Oswald. In particular Nairn's evidence painted a very strong picture of the burgeoning Lang Toun but of course this was not just about Kirkcaldy and sadly the hoped for connection to Alloa and then on to the west was rejected by the Committee. It was one thing having a Bill read in the House – it was another matter altogether when it was examined in depth by a Committee! That said a significant number of important figures and landowners had been marshalled by the North British to maintain their monopoly.

The Fifeshire Advertiser of the 28th April 1883 was philosophical in its article on the failure:-

“The result is not at all a surprise, for although there was abundant room for hope, even the most sanguine of the promoters of the Bill could not but have fears that the North British Railway Company's influence and that of the landowner's on the route, would prove too strong, and that the Bill for this year, at least, would be lost. The worst forebodings, however, have been realised, and after a fortnight's assiduous labour, and an enormous expenditure of money, Kirkcaldy and the district's interests stand exactly where they were, as far as railway accommodation is concerned”.



The article did offer hope for the future with “No great effort has been successful all at once – efforts again and again renewed have had to be put forth for the successful accomplishment of a great object, and the experience of other communities needs to be shared by Kirkcaldy and district before their wants can be met and their needs supplied”. This was a direct reference to the battle fought by Dunfermline to get a railway link to Edinburgh via Queensferry. “Time works wonders, and it may be sooner than is at present hoped for, that Fife's commercial interests will be more effectually attended to”. This link with the west had been seen as a game-changer – hence the disappointment.

The other notable feature in the evidence of the opposition witnesses was the appeal to the compassion and tender mercies of the Committee. “It would be unfair,” they virtuously and almost bitterly cried, “to allow a competing Bill to be passed when the North British Railway Company have undertaken such vast and costly works as the Forth and Tay Bridges with their connecting lines.” Such pleading was scarcely worthy of a great company. Did it not simply mean that because the North British Railway Company are spending so much money upon such works that, therefore, they must have a special protection granted them? And this, too, not-

The leader writer went on to suggest that “The other notable feature in the evidence of the opposition witnesses was an appeal to the compassion and tender mercies of the Committee:-

“It would be unfair they, virtuously and almost bitterly cried, to allow a competing Bill to be passed when the North British Railway

Company have undertaken such vast and costly works as the Forth and Tay Bridges and their connecting lines. Does that simply mean that because the *North British Railway Company* are spending so much money on works that, therefore, they must have special protection granted to them”?

The last words of the article were ones that seemed to raise even more concern. These suggested it was understood that when, or possibly even before, the Forth Bridge was completed that the *North British Railway* were to propose a new route to the north using the Glenfarg valley and on to Perth. The suggestion being that the main route north would then be via Dunfermline – Perth and onwards. It was submitted this proposal would leave important places like Kirkcaldy on what they termed a branch line. Without question the newspaper was less than pleased with the turn of events and the disappointing outcome.

So, one of the Bills had fallen but in a perverse way its failure removed one of the petitioners against the *Seafield Dock and Railway Bill*. In an extension to the above mentioned leader the writer turned his attention to the fate of that particular Bill:-

”The Committee, however, made what reparations they could for the injury thus done to the Kirkcaldy district by granting the Seafield Bill”. The article went on to disclose that the *North British Railway Company* had dropped their opposition in the Commons but, ominously, there was an intention to put their strongest efforts before the House of Lords Committee when the time came. The article indicated that despite these potential threats the promoters were confident in progress being achieved for the very good reason that, on this line, the proprietors of the railway were either the land owners themselves or consenting parties. The newspaper saw great justice in that while *The North British* had succeeded in keeping the Caledonian Railway out – they could now find themselves with a new line and a new dock appearing which, without doubt, “would

very considerably affect their coal traffic”.

The whole article ended with another barbed comment - “There does seem to be

but there does seem to be some poetic justice in the defeat of the great Railway Company, so soon after they assisted in giving the *coup de grace* to the pet scheme of Kirkcaldy.

some poetic justice in the defeat of the great Railway Company, so soon after they assisted in giving the *coup de grace* to the pet scheme of Kirkcaldy”.

The following month was quieter with *The Fifeshire Advertiser* on the 5th May 1883 quoting Mr John Walker, the Manager of the North British Railway, that their opposition to the scheme would continue. The item ended by avowing that there was no truth in the rumour than when the dock and railway were completed – the railway workings might be given to the North British Railway – no matter how well that would suit them. Impossible to tell where that rumour emanated from.

Harbour Commission.—A special meeting of the Harbour Commission was held on Monday, when were present — Provost Paterson, Bailie M’Intosh, Treasurer Erskine, Councillor Philp, Mr John Walker, and Mr A. Johnstone. Mr Walker occupied the chair. The Chairman stated that the meeting, as they were aware, had been called for the purpose of considering as to whether the Commission should concur with the North British Railway Company in petitioning against the Seafield Dock and Railway Bill. He thought that the Commission should do something in the matter, and it was a question whether it would be advisable to petition separately or conjointly with the Company.

However, if things were quiet in Kirkcaldy, there was certainly some rising of temperatures in the Burntisland Harbour Commission. The commission held a special meeting on the 21st May to discuss the position Burntisland found themselves in. The report of the meeting was carried in the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 26th. We find

that the chairman of the Burntisland Harbour Commission is none other than the self same Mr Walker. It is little wonder then that the purpose of the meeting was to determine whether they should petition the House of Lords separately or conjointly with the Railway Company. Walker's comment on the situation was that:- “If the scheme were to pass, it would divert the trade which legitimately belonged to Burntisland from it, and as the dock had

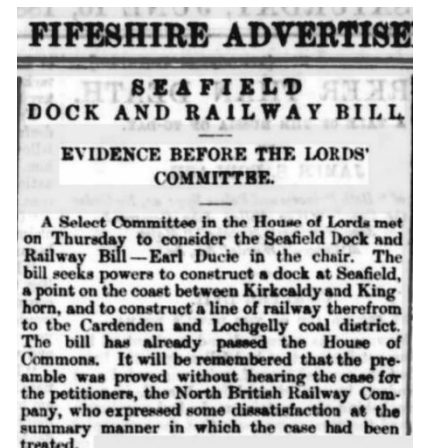
been made for the benefit of the Fife coal trade, he thought it unfair that those who had been so anxious to get a dock made here, should now seek to have an opposition scheme started". This would seem to be a swipe at the coal-owners who were now supporting the Seafield scheme.

There were arguments over the next steps between Walker and Treasurer Erskine. Erskine believed that the town's traders wished to see an extended dock and if they would not carry out the scheme – they could hardly protest at the Seafield project. Erskine was of the opinion that they should offer, in their petition, that they were prepared to extend their dock which he believed would be a winning statement of intent. Walker was against this, believing that if the demand was there they would certainly consider acting – but not until then. Walker certainly appears to have had a major influence on decisions and Treasurer Kilgour could not find a seconder. It was decided that Burntisland Harbour Commission would petition against the Bill, either separately or conjointly, as their Parliamentary Agent determined. Once again Walker remarked that he believed that the Seafield scheme was “ an attempt to get cheap carriage rates and nothing to do with a dock at all”.

Early in June the Bill was passed as complying with standing orders which confirmed that its layout complied with the rules of the House of Lords. It was now onto the committee stage where it was believed that the *North British Railway Company* would make use of its resources and influence to attempt to bring the Bill to a halt. In many ways this was the make or break time for the project.

Space does not permit a full disclosure of the three days of evidence. However, a flavour has to be given of some of the individuals involved and their viewpoints. The evidence given would determine the fate of the project, so, it is worthwhile to reveal some salient points from the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 16th which can be abbreviated as follows:-

The hearing took place on Thursday the 14th June 1883 with Earl Ducie in the chair. Counsel for the promoters were Mr Littler, O.C., Mr O'Hara and Mr Baggallay. Mr Clerk, Q.C. appeared for the *North British Railway Company*. The first witnesses called were for the promoters and included on the first day:-



- David Thomson – Managing Partner of the Denend Coal Company. The new dock could accommodate a coalfield of 7,000 acres. The Lochgelly coalfield was some 4,000 acres and much more could be mined with proper railway facilities. Seafield would offer vessels a minimum of 30 feet of water to work in which was a huge advantage over Burntisland. Arrangements would be made to connect all the collieries to the new line if required.
- James Jamieson, W.S., who was the Commissioner for the Lochgelly Estate of Lord Minto. Lord Minto was in favour of the scheme which would enhance his workings and he may well open new pits. He was also prepared to give ground to link the Lochgelly and Cowdenbeath pits.
- Alexander Naysmith whose company were the lessees of the Dundonald Mine. He believed if the dock and railway were constructed he could double his output.
- Mr R.C. Munro - Ferguson whose land would carry four miles of the track. He accepted the line would be to his material advantage and was taking shares in the company for the value of his land.
- George William Constable, whose father was the proprietor of Glencraig Estate. An abundance of ironstone and coal could be worked with the proposed new line. Differing levels had prevented their making a connection with the North British Railway – but the new line would not present such difficulties.

Mr R. C. M. Ferguson, proprietor of the estates of Raith and Novar, gave evidence to the effect that the proposed line ran four miles through his property, which would be very materially advantaged. He was prepared to take shares in the railway for the value of his land.

He calculated that 10 million tons of minerals could be worked if they had the new scheme in place.

- Mr Robert Glass - the proprietor of Kininmonth Estate intimated that coal and ironstone could be worked profitably with the new line. While, at the moment, he could get a connection to the North British line, he would have to pay a way-leave of one third of the value of the minerals carried to the proprietor of the estate this link would pass through. The proposed line would eliminate that need.
 - Mr William Goodall – colliery owner in the Parish of Auchterderran. The area had an abundance of coal and the line was planned to be of immense advantage over the North British line. If constructed he would use the line and docks.
 - Mr G.H. Geddes – mining engineer. “Knew the area well. In his judgement the line afforded a reasonable prospect of being a paying concern”.
- Mr G. H. Geddes, mining engineer, who said he was intimately acquainted with the district, gave evidence as to the abundance of the minerals and the advantage which would accrue from a ready access to the sea. In his judgment the proposed railway afforded a reasonable prospect of being a being a paying concern.
- Mr Davidson – partner in the ship-owning and coal exporting firm J. & A. Davidson of Aberdeen. Exported 200,000 tons annually with 35,000 tons from Burntisland. Steamers were frequently delayed there due to insufficiency of dock accommodation. Delays cost £15 per day per vessel.
 - Mr Richard Mackie – coal exporter, Leith. Exported 70,000 tons per annum from Burntisland. Often had issues with delays.
 - Captain James Angus – captain of the S.S. St. Nicholas which trades between the Forth, Aberdeen and Wick. In his opinion the proposed harbour was very suitable, would provide good shelter and was “the very thing needed”.
 - Mr James Alysbury – been at sea for 35 years with 25 of them navigating the Forth. The site would present no difficulties in entering bar in the most severe of easterly storms.
 - Captain Poole – a master mariner for 35 years trading from the Forth for over 20 years. Agreed with Mr Alysbury.
 - William Lawson – a pilot on the Forth for many years. “The

proposed dock was suitable and sufficient. Present arrangements were unsatisfactory”.

- Mr Peter Penny – the contractor for the west-breakwater at Burntisland. He viewed Burntisland harbour as unsafe for vessels drawing over 26 feet.
- John Lockhart, a Town Councillor from Kirkcaldy. He indicated that there had been a need for a harbour for 50 years.

There had been a movement to construct a new harbour at public cost but in a referendum, the public had voted against it as it would add significantly to the rates burden. He firmly believed the town would only get an adequate harbour via private enterprise.

Mr John Lockhart, one of the Town Councillors of Kirkcaldy, believed the proposed works would be a great advantage to Kirkcaldy. There had been a cry for a harbour for more than fifty years. There had been a movement to proceed with the construction of a harbour at the public cost, but the ratepayers had declared against that, and there was no hope of a harbour unless it was made by public enterprise.

Cross-examined—The dock would be only 600 yards from the boundary of the Royal Burgh of Kirkcaldy. There was plenty of room for the Burntisland Harbour and this proposed dock. The committee adjourned till yesterday.

The proceedings moved on to the second day and again a full report was carried in the same edition of the *Fifeshire Advertiser* (16th June 1883). This second day started off with evidence from Mr G.A. Key of the Abden Shipyard. The story of that shipyard was covered in Object 26.

- Mr Key probably knew the area better than most having his shipyard in Kinghorn a mile west of the Seafield site. He viewed the site of the proposed dock as a good one and that in the area there was no current worth speaking about. He had built a breakwater 180 feet long at Abden and it was standing up well and it was as equally exposed as Seafield would be. He built iron ships of up to 4,000 tons used Leith or Kirkcaldy for fitting them out. The largest vessels he built, when fully loaded, would be too big for Burntisland. His smaller vessels, which could be fitted out in Kirkcaldy, were unfortunately unable to load coal at Kirkcaldy. Seafield seemed the ideal answer to all these difficulties.

YESTERDAY'S PROCEEDINGS.

(Specially Telegraphed.)

House of Lords, Friday.

The Committee met at eleven o'clock today—Lord Ducie presiding.

Mr G. A. Key, shipbuilder, of the firm of Messrs John Key & Sons, said that for many years his firm had carried on business at Kinghorn, about a mile west of the proposed dock. They employed about 1000 men. He considered the site of the dock was a very good one. There was no current at Seafield worth speaking of. His firm had lately constructed a breakwater at Abden Shipyard 180 feet long, which had stood well, and which was as much exposed as Seafield.

- Bailie Daniel Hendry of Kirkcaldy, the owner of a significant floorcloth and linoleum business, imported his flax via Kirkcaldy harbour. The harbour could not accommodate the new larger steamers and a dock at Seafield would offer the opportunity for larger vessels, carrying a greater cargo, to dock. A halt in Linktown on the proposed railway would allow flax to be delivered almost to his factory door.
- John Macrae, C.E. was the consulting engineer for the tramway but he had also laid out the plans for the railway. He

Mr John Macrae, civil engineer, Edinburgh (consulting engineer for Kirkcaldy Tramways), had had thirty years experience as an engineer. He drew up the Parliamentary plans and sections of this scheme. It was as short a line as could be made between the coalfields and the sea coast, and in addition to accommodating the existing collieries, it would be the means of opening out new ones. The railway would not interfere with the North British in passing through the viaduct at Inveriel. There were no engineering difficulties at all, the steepest gradient being one in fifty, which was a common one for passenger and goods lines. The estimated cost of the dock was £175,307, and of the two railways, £66,135, which was a fair estimate. He knew the county, and believed the dock and railway would prove remunerative.

had 30 year's experience and saw no issues with the line, especially as the steepest gradient was 1 in 50. The proposed line offered the shortest route from the coalfields to the sea coast. He believed that the dock could be built at the estimated cost of £175,307. The two railways were costed at £66,135. One railway was from the dock to the Links, with the second, then heading up

the Tiel valley to Auchtertool. The new line would not interfere with the existing North British line as it would pass through the Inveriel Viaduct which carried that line.

- Mr A.C. Boothby, C.E., indicated that Mr Macrae had laid out the railway line and he and Mr Robertson (previously mentioned) had laid out the docks. “He had taken soundings and measured the tides, and was satisfied that the dock could be so constructed as to be reached, without difficulty or danger, even in the coarsest of weather”.
- Mr Blythe, C.E., was a partner in the firm, Blythe and Blythe, who were the engineers to the *Caledonian and Great North of Scotland Railways*. He indicated that there was no great difficulty in constructing the railway line and he did not think that the dock would be seriously exposed to the elements. His firm were currently constructing a dock at Methil – which would be more exposed than Seafield.

- Mr G. Robertson, C.E. indicated that he had been involved in all the construction work at Leith docks over the past 25 years. He had designed the proposed docks and intended to make use of the natural advantages of the Vous Rocks in order that there might be almost complete shelter from the east winds. The proposal was to give 30 feet of water at high tide and 13 feet at low tide. This was 5 feet more than Leith, 8 feet more than Burntisland and 15 feet more than Kirkcaldy. It would be the deepest harbour on the east coast of Scotland. He admitted that the construction of the breakwaters would be expensive but while Leith required significant dredging there would be no build up of silt at Seafield.

Mr G. Robertson, C.E., said he had constructed all the works at Leith for 25 years. He had designed the docks at Seafield, and the two-fathom line came close to the shore there. They would avail themselves of the natural advantages of the Vous Rocks, which they proposed to heighten, so that behind

That ended the evidence of those supporting the project and it was now the turn of the petitioners against the dock to have their say. Unsurprisingly, they brought out their biggest gun first in the shape of Mr John Walker. As well as being the Manager of the railway company, Walker was an accountant and his early remarks were finance based.

He believed that the return on the money expended on the scheme would be very low. "The scheme would do no good to no one, and

The proper thing for the district would be to improve the Kirkcaldy dock, and so please the Kirkcaldy people. If this were done the North British Railway would give the same rates and facilities to Kirkcaldy as they gave to Burntisland. He had declined the scheme as the wildest thing he had ever heard of, and that was the general opinion of the district. Cross-examined, Mr Walker

when asked to take it up he had said it would never pay. It would be better for the district if Kirkcaldy dock were improved, and that the *North British Railway* would then give equal rates

and facilities to Kirkcaldy as to Burntisland. The scheme was one of the wildest he had ever heard of". Strangely, he had no recollection of stating that the *North British Railway* might go on

with the dock and short railway if the Tiel Valley route was abandoned. Mr Campbell, a clerk in the offices of Dundas and Wilson W.S., affirmed that Mr Walker had said this and, in fact, Mr Dundas was called to provide support for his clerk's evidence. The assumption must be that the line from the dock would merge with the existing North British line but the same circuitous route from the coalfields to Burntisland would still remain. Shown here is a comparative table of the distances of a number of collieries delivering to Burntisland/Methil against Seafield.

	N. B. R.				K. & D. R.	
	to Burntisland.		Methil.		Seafield.	
	MLS.	CHS.	MLS.	CHS.	MLS.	CHS.
Lochgelly colliery	19	11	12	46	8	48
Cowdenbeath	16	27	15	29	7	59
Donibristle	15	59	15	77	7	72
Denend	20	66	10	70	7	10
Cardenden	21	17	10	39	7	4
Dundonald.....	20	49	11	7	7	0

This was followed by several west of Fife coal-masters giving evidence to support the *North British* before proceedings ended for the day.

The Committee met for a final time on Monday the 16th June 1883 with the *Fifeshire Advertiser* covering proceedings in its edition of the 23rd.

- The North British had clearly intended to argue/de-stabilise the project by using a number of Kirkcaldy based witnesses. To this end, Mr Henderson - Harbour-master, Kirkcaldy, Mr Craig – retired shipmaster, Archibald Ritchie - a mariner who plied between Leith and Kirkcaldy along with a Dysart shipbuilder, Mr Watt, all deponed that Seafield was an unsuitable site.
- Mr P. W. Meek, C.E., Edinburgh, did however provide strong evidence against the site. He had experience in building docks at Sunderland, Burntisland, Ayr, Peterhead and other places. He knew the site well as it had been mentioned when Burntisland's major expansion had first been proposed He

Mr P. W. Meek, C.E., Edinburgh, member of the Institute of Civil engineers, said he had large experience of dock construction at Sunderland, Burntisland, Bo'ness, Ayr, Peterhead, and other places, his firm having designed works at these places. He knew well the site of the proposed dock at Seafield. It was mentioned when the question of Burntisland Harbour was opened—he had to consider it then. It had great depth of water, but though it appeared a favourable site for a dock, its disadvantages were greater than its advantages. First of all, there was its exposed situation; then it was entirely isolated from any town, and the excavations would be almost entirely rock. To have a dock in the district proposed it would be necessary to make breakwaters of the Vons rocks.

accepted it had deep water but felt that its disadvantages outweighed the advantages. These were, firstly, the exposed position and secondly, the isolation from the town. Thirdly, the excavations would be almost entirely through rock which would be difficult and costly. He also had reservations regarding the breakwaters which he believed would have to be stronger. He was concerned that they were detached from the shore which “was not only a peculiarity but a distinct disadvantage”. They would create a cross sea right in front of the entrance. A vessel entering at certain states of the wind could have trouble with this cross sea. He also felt there was insufficient room in the dock for large vessels of over 300 feet. He believed that they would be unable to turn if any other vessel was berthed. Finally, he could not accept that the cost could be contained at £175,000. He believed a more accurate figure would be £225,000 with it possibly reaching £300,000.

- Further evidence, which corroborated Mr Meek's views, came from a Mr Abernethy, C.E., who had drawn up plans for the Manchester Ship Canal and Alfred Giles, C.E., the designer of docks at Southampton.
- Finally George Lowson, a contractor, who had worked on docks at Leith, Bo'ness and Peterhead, gave an estimate that the works would certainly come to around £270,000.

That concluded the evidence and Mr Clerk, Q.C., proceeded to address the commissioners on behalf of the *North British Railway*.

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At the conclusion of his speech, the Committee, without calling on Mr Littler, Q.C., to reply, and without clearing the room to allow private deliberation, announced that they found the preamble of the Bill proved.

At the conclusion of his speech an unexpected and swift end came to proceedings - “The Committee

without calling on Mr Littler, Q.C., to reply, and without clearing the room to allow private deliberation, announced that they found the preamble of the Bill proved”. In other words the reasons for and the intended effects of the proposed legislation were approved. The petitioners against, including the might of the North British, had

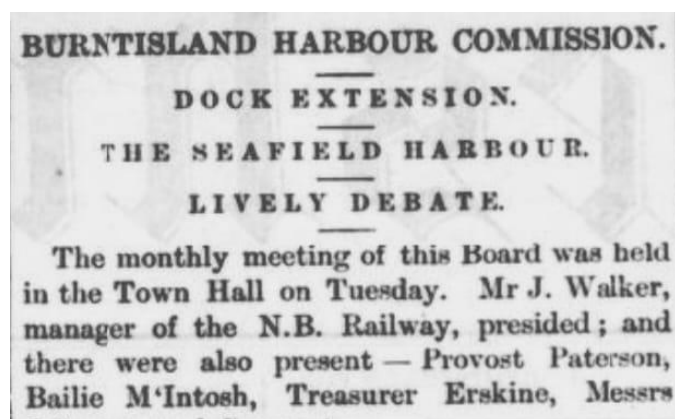
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failed.

The Dundee Advertiser of the 17th July 1883 brought the earliest notice we could trace that the Royal Assent had been granted to the *Seafield Dock and Railway Company Bill*. The article made mention that the previous day, the Royal Commission had given consent to 53 private and public Bills with Seafield included in the number. Interestingly, the *Anstruther and St Andrew's Railway Act* was included together with the *Kirkcaldy and District Tramway Act*. Two of the Bills involving Kirkcaldy had successfully negotiated Parliament although another had sadly been a casualty

The passing of the Bill led to much consternation in both Burntisland and Kirkcaldy - with Messrs Walker and Erskine once again airing their different opinions.

The report of the Burntisland Harbour Commissioner's meeting held on the 3rd was contained in the *Fifeshire Advertiser's* edition of the 7th July. 1883. Treasurer Erskine was seriously animated and blamed his fellow commissioners for



failing to take action over his motion to extend their own docks. He felt that it was out of their hands now that Seafield would certainly receive Royal Assent. He claimed that they had believed that the passing of the Bill was only a myth – that it would probably never be lodged and, even if it were, it would not be passed – and now here it was! He saw little point in raising the question of a dock extension again but rather that “seeing that the *Seafield Dock and Railway Bill* has been sanctioned by the Houses of Lords and Commons, the Commissioners agree to resolve themselves into a committee to agree the steps which should be taken to protect the interests of Burntisland harbour”.

Once again Walker – wearing two hats, was having none of it. He

reminded all, that bar Erskine, the commissioners had been in favour of leaving the dock as it was instead looking to increase traffic. He then hit out at the Burntisland harbour-master for allowing the practice of leaving ships outside the harbour – unless the coal was ready to load – even when they could be berthed inside”. I think this is a very objectionable thing for the harbour-master to do”. This practice had been stopped but clearly despite the fact he was the Chairman of the Harbour Commissioners – he felt that he was in no way to blame for the practice – that was the fault of someone else!

He then argued that everyone, including the coal-masters, accepted that Burntisland was the best and most natural harbour for shipping coals. He turned on the Seafield scheme indicating that the promoters believed they could ship more cheaply, would have deeper water and that there was insufficient accommodation at Burntisland. However, above all, he again returned to the costs which he believed Seafield would charge indicating that “if the dock was built tomorrow, and the dues levied there on which they say their estimate is founded, they would not get a single vessel to come to Seafield. The dues at Burntisland on the registered tonnage are only 4½d on the average of steam and sailing vessels throughout the year. The Seafield people have intimated that they will be charging 10½d per ton. On the face of it, if they expect to export 400,000 tons of coal a year; how can they expect any vessel to come to Seafield at these rates I am quite at a loss to say”. Walker was quite happy to consider the motion to form a committee to determine a way forward.

Erskine was nonplussed and surprised at Walker's standpoint. He pointed out “that the House of Lords Committee was impartial – they had heard the evidence and then decided on the evidence without even bothering to hear the counsel for the promoters to reply”. He genuinely believed that Walker would have seen that he was wrong in opposing the dock extension.

At this point Walker returned to his oft used theme that Seafield was merely a threat to reduce the railway rates and nothing more. Erskine responded that “ we have heard it before” which drew the Chairman's response, ”yes, and that is really the bottom of it”.

The Chairman has said that he is quite willing to have the matter discussed now. I am not sure that we are in a position to do so, but if the Chairman will indicate what line of policy the Railway Company are likely to adopt in the circumstances, we will be in better position to discuss it. I am told on very good authority that the Caledonian Railway Company are likely to work this new railway and dock at Seafield. That means that the North British hold on the coal traffic of Fife is gone.

The Chairman--We will look after our own interests. You can attend to those of Burntisland Dock.

Treasurer Erskine--Well, you tried to look after your own interests and failed.

It was, as the newspaper said, a lively debate with neither man giving ground. When asked what the stance of the North British Railway would be, Mr Erskine was told to look after the interest of the docks and he, John Walker, would look after those of the railway. There appeared to be very little input from the other

members but the fact was – Burntisland could stand to lose exports of 400,000 tons of coal and minerals. A plan which was estimated to cost around £6,000 for improvements and deepening the harbour entrance was to be remitted to a committee for enquiry and report.

Walker had been a busy man as, in the same edition, the newspaper reported that John Walker had suggested he would be happy to provide £75,000 towards the cost of improving Kirkcaldy Harbour, as long as the town provided a similar sum based on the security of the rates. The problem with this was of course, on completion, the harbour would then be owned jointly by the burgh and the railway company. Was this another effort by Walker to stop the proposed dock and line?

As mentioned above, Kirkcaldy also had concerns over her own harbour and a thoughtful leader was written by the *Fife Free Press* on the 18th August:- the theme of the article was inaction, in that, “the Harbour Commissioners appeared quite in love with the

present position – the very dust of its surroundings, the sand that threatens to cut the harbour off from the sea (silt), the weeds that give a verdant tint to the quay-tops, seem all too dear to them”. They were accused of “having for many years been generally adverse to carrying out any great improvements, or entertaining what might be classed as radical change. While Kirkcaldy is standing still, other places are advancing and the trade which should flow naturally to Kirkcaldy was, as a consequence, flowing past it. It is beyond dispute that our shallow and antiquated harbour is simply a closed door to vessels of deep draught and modern construction; and we may expect that year by year the little coasters will get fewer, and the bigger vessels more numerous, till the former disappears”. Kirkcaldy was then compared with Burntisland, where the need for substantial docks had long been recognised and taken up, then with Methil where it was believed that their soon to be constructed dock would provide a fresh lease of life for that area.

The Fife Free Press.

KIRKCALDY, SATURDAY, AUGUST 18, 1883.

THE HARBOUR QUESTION.

THE question of the condition of the harbour is now forcing itself upon the attention of the Harbour Commissioners, but we cannot say as yet that it has thereby been advanced a stage. Like a man who has fallen deeply in love with his old clothes, and discards a better garment, the Harbour Commissioners appear quite in love with their present possession; indeed, the very dust of its surroundings, the sand that threatens to cut off the fair-way from the sea, and the weeds that give a verdant tint to the quay-tops, seem all alike dear to them.

Once again, the fall of the *Alloa, Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy Bill* was bemoaned as, almost certainly, it would have led to immediate work on a new harbour and docks on an extensive scale. There was hope that the Bill might be tried again the following year, in the same form, as, without question, the *Caledonian Railway* were determined to get into Fife. The article suggested that the Caledonian might even work the Seafield railway if the Alloa connection was ever secured. A further suggestion was that an extension be built along the Sands Road to the harbour with a station constructed opposite the Corn Exchange.

There followed a clear call for thought, planning and action from “those who guard the maritime interests of the first town in the

county, and the only port on the Fife seaboard which, despite all its disadvantages, can claim any imports worthy of the name”.

As 1883 drew towards its close the town still had two Bills, which had been mentioned at the start of the year, still active. These were the *Kirkcaldy Tramway Bill* and of course the *Seafield Dock and Railway Bill*. Matters were quiet on the Seafield project but the *Fifeshire Advertiser* on the 29th December, in its retrospect of the year, could not help but once again make mention of the fall of the Alloa Bill which was viewed as “The most important of these was the opening of a new railway between Alloa and Kirkcaldy, touching at Dunfermline, and putting this area in direct connection with the west of Scotland. The Bill having been duly lodged, was examined by a Parliamentary Committee in April, and under the persistent opposition of the *North British Railway*, and various proprietors, who were induced by the Company to lend themselves for this purpose, the preamble was found not proved, to the great disappointment of the public, both in Kirkcaldy, and all along the proposed route”. The item also mentioned that January should see a prospectus for both the Seafield scheme and the Tramway project being issued.

With the launch of the Prospectus in the offing – John Walker spoke at length on the Seafield project at the Burntisland Harbour Commissioners meeting on the 8th January 1884. A report of the meeting was carried in the *Scotsman* the following day. It was certainly uncommon for that

An important discussion took place in regard to the proposed new dock and railway at Seafield. The CHAIRMAN, in referring to the prospectus, asked a series of questions as to the North British Railway Company's intention in regard to the proposed new scheme. He stated that the issue of the prospectus had brought the Seafield scheme prominently before them, and he thought it would be in the interests of Burntisland that some notice should be taken of the prospectus. He found that the present route to Burnt-

paper to carry reports on these meetings – in fact, not another such report could be traced in the previous five years. It is probably fair to say that the intention was to injure the prospects of the Prospectus. A reasonable question is, did Mr Walker deliberately set out to get his thoughts carried by this influential newspaper – it would seem

so! All his old arguments were wheeled out again – the unsuitability of the site, to spend between £200,000 and £300,000 could only end in financial disappointment and at the projected rates to be charged where would they find 400,000 tons of coal to export? Great play was made of the new routes to be opened up by the North British in relation to the Forth Bridge and, in general terms, the operators of the various collieries were happy with the North British service and the arrangements at Burntisland for export. Making use of his accountancy background several calculations were included which suggested there was little hope of the projected return of 6%.

Mr Meek, C.E., who attended the meeting, once again cast doubt on the Seafield site. A Fife colliery owner, a Mr Spowart, who was in attendance, waxed lyrical about the North British service. Possibly one of the most damning remarks made by John Walker was that if the capital expenditure proposed at Seafield had been made at Burntisland – the dock would have been a financial failure.

A response to the Scotsman was drawn from David Thomson of Craigderran House in Lochgelly. It transpires that Thomson was in fact a promoter of the Seafield scheme and, although he gave a spirited defence, that is exactly all it was, given his own scheme had been attacked. Also, Mr Walker's observations had been in the form of an article whilst the response was only carried in the letters column. To give Thomson credit he did respond to each of Walker's points but they were responses as opposed to carrying the fight to the North British. He did manage to land quite a heavy blow on Spowart - "It may be interesting for the shareholders of the North British Railway and the public generally to know that Mr Spowart's rates to Burntisland are little more than ½d per ton per mile, as compared with 2¼d, charged to his neighbours, although the coal wrought by him usually brings 1/-

In the same manner as to the rates, it may be interesting to the shareholders of the North British Railway and the public generally to know that Mr Spowart's rates to Burntisland are little more than ½d. per ton per mile, as compared with 2¼d. charged to his neighbours, although the coal wrought by him usually brings 1s. per ton more in the market than the less favourably situated collieries as regards rates. There need be no wonder that he wishes to prolong the North British Railway monopoly in Fife. Mr Spowart is one of the nominees of the North British Railway Company at the Burntisland Harbour Board, so perhaps I need say no more to show his disinterestedness. Trusting you will grant the same publicity to the above statement of facts as you gave to Mr Walker's—I am, &c. D. THOMSON.

per ton more than the less favourably situated collieries". He also disclosed that Mr Spowart was one of the North British Railway nominees for the Burntisland Harbour Board.

It might have been helpful if Thomson had met fire with fire in terms of the proposed charges to be levied. While Walker had been throwing figures about, suggesting that Seafield rates would be twice those of Burntisland, Thomson merely pointed out that the Seafield rates were framed on the lines of the rates contained in the *Burntisland Harbour Act*. He added "in no instances are they higher and in some instances they were less" – surely he should have capitalised on that?



The prospectus had been issued in early January and a copy is detailed here – this one taken from the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 5th January 1884. Some of the salient points were that the share capital would be £300,000 made up of 30,000 shares of £10 each. 10/- would be paid per share on application with a further 10/- on allotment. The balance would be made up of calls of not more than £2 and no less than two months apart. Although there were

borrowing powers of £100,000, it was not envisaged they would be required. The directors were listed as:-

- Ronald Crauford Munro Ferguson of Raith and Novar (Chairman).
- Roger Sinclair Aytoun of Inchdairnie.
- David Thomson of the Denend Coal Company.
- George W. Constable of Glencraig.

The Engineers for the dock were; George Robertson and Alexander Boothby. The Engineers for the railway; were Alexander Boothby

and John Macrae.

The Prospectus suggested that many of the proprietors of the land involved had taken the value of their land in shares. “A considerable portion of the capital has already been subscribed for by the Directors and their friends”. The closing date for the applications was set at the 16th January.

It is normally not a great sign to see a closing date extended – but that is exactly what happened – the *Fifeshire Advertiser* carried a notice in its edition of the 19th to say that the new closing date was the 23rd of the month.

The strangest thing then occurred in that while there is ample evidence of substantial articles, albeit mostly the Prospectus, appearing in newspapers in the January. That changed dramatically. From then on, for the remainder of the year – the subject fell off a cliff – and that includes both major Kirkcaldy papers. Never did we anticipate such a paucity of information on the result of the flotation but on the 2nd February 1884 the *Fife Free Press* published a poem by *Pinchbeck* from Burntisland – which was a very humorous, if sneering, take on the results of the flotation. The poem suggests that of the £300,000 sought, less than £40,000 had been taken up.

By the 9th February the *Fifeshire Advertiser* declared that, despite the small amount raised, the Promoters had no intention of abandoning the scheme. The *Aberdeen People's Journal* and also the Dundee issue carried a brief note on the 23rd February suggesting that the scheme was abandoned in the meantime. To add to that news came mention that they understood that the *Kirkcaldy Tramway* flotation had also failed to find sufficient capital.

On the 1st March 1884 the *Fifeshire Advertiser* indicated that failure to find the funds had stopped progress meantime – but looking on the bright side pointed out that there was still plenty time before the

Bill timed out.

By June the question of Kirkcaldy harbour had once again raised its head and the *Fife Free Press* of the 28th June had some news in that, independently of what was/was not happening at Seafield, several influential gentlemen in town interested in harbour accommodation for the burgh, anxious that Kirkcaldy should continue to be known as a shipping port, had banded together. The result was they had provided funds to have an eminent harbour engineer impartially report on identifying the best site for a harbour from the Tiel Burn to Ravenscraig. Sir John Coode, recognised as a leading authority, was commissioned to provide such a report.

It was on the 15th November 1884 that a further update on the Seafield Dock Project was announced through the columns of the *Fife Free Press*. The article indicated that the *Seafield Dock and Railway Company* were going back to Parliament in the next session to have the railway extended deeper into the coalfields. The idea was to extend the line to Donibristle via Cowdenbeath. A portion of the notice is shown here. We also learn that Sir John Coode had determined that the best site to extend/replace the present harbour was eastwards taking in a large portion of Ravenscraig sands. As we know that idea also failed to materialise!

THE SEAFIELD DOCK AND RAILWAY.—
Application is intended to be made in the ensuing session of Parliament by the Seafield Dock and Railway Company, with the view of carrying out railway extension to Cowdenbeath and Donibristle. The Parliamentary notice, which appears in another column, provides for the compulsory taking of lands, tolls, &c. We commend the notice to the attention of our readers, which we have no doubt it will receive.

It does seem incredible that no formal notice could be traced of the fate of the share issue from its closing date in 1883 to November the following year. Rumour and supposition seems all that was left to determine what was happening. This is almost always an issue with a Private Company where no Minute Book can be traced.

Real progress was reported in the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 28th March 1885 when it was revealed a quantity of boring gear had arrived in Kirkcaldy along with a team of men to carry out work at

Seafield.

The 23rd May 1885 saw the *Fife Free Press* report that Mr Munro-Ferguson and other capitalists, mainly coal-masters, had resolved to carry on with their enterprise. The article also re-mentioned that Mr Coode had come down on the side of Ravenscraig for the site of the new harbour but, were Seafield to be completed, it was considered highly unlikely any work would be undertaken to extend Kirkcaldy Harbour. The newspaper still felt that a line along the Sands Road to an existing/new/extended Kirkcaldy harbour “would meet every requirement for the district”. The new dock at Seafield would accommodate large vessels while the line could carry coal to the existing harbour to load smaller ships.

The Fife Free Press of the 4th July 1885 indicated that the potential contractors for the Seafield project had been whittled down to two. Although their names were not given both had experience in extensive undertakings and one apparently was based in Hull. The article also indicates the belief that some pressure had been brought to bear on Mr Munro-Ferguson, hoping to dissuade him from the Seafield idea, then joining in with the Ravenscraig project. This had not been accepted as the Seafield promoters had spent extensively to get their Bill through Parliament and it would take significant time to get a Bill for the Kirkcaldy harbour to the stage Seafield was currently at. There was always the possibility that such a Bill could fail and Ferguson would be back at stage one, hence his preference to continue with Seafield.

The Fifehire Advertiser on the 1st August 1885 was able to suggest there were signs of activity in that, while rumours that the contract had been signed were premature – there were only some minor obstacles to overcome and the promoters were confident this would be achieved.

Saturday the 12th December 1885 brings, via the *Fife Free Press*, a

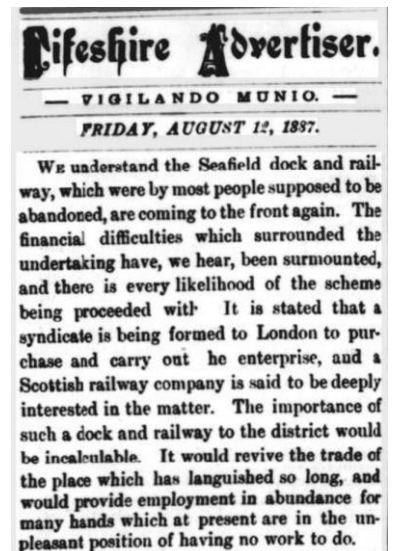
sobering paragraph that “we hear it reported that there is no probability of the Seafield dock scheme being proceeded with.

True to the above suggestion, nothing could be traced on the project in 1886 until, on the 18th December, the Fife Free Press carried a leader under the heading – **Perseverance Overcomes :-**

The article suggested that attention should be paid to the Manchester Ship Canal and then highlighted the difficulties and objections which had been strewn in its path. The point of that article was clearly dredged up in the hope that Manchester's example might galvanise those in, and those with interests in, Kirkcaldy:- “Once and again we have seen good local schemes go to the wall at one stage or another. The proposed new railway from Kirkcaldy to Glasgow via Alloa was slain in committee, not getting a chance, so to speak, while the Kirkcaldy and District Tramway, and the Seafield Docks, both of which survived Parliamentary ordeal, failed to arouse the enthusiasm of the capitalists, who kept their pockets close buttoned, thus dooming pedestrians to continue in their old ways, and preserving intact the harbour until such time as it may become high and dry, for the inhabitants”.

The ensuing plea was that – “It often happens, however, that the very best of schemes are thus thwarted, and when tried again, if faith in them is sufficiently strong, they generally succeed. Viewed in this light, one cannot but admire the pluck and perseverance by the promoters of the Manchester Ship Canal”. Very obviously the newspaper was issuing a rallying cry – yes, there had been three Bills which would have revolutionised Kirkcaldy's communications, both internally and externally, and while none had come to pass – that did not mean further efforts should not be made.

It was not until the 12th August 1887 the following year that some hope appeared on the horizon through the columns of the *Fifeshire Advertiser*. The essence of the article was that the scheme thought to be abandoned was on the way to resurrection. “A syndicate was being formed in London to purchase the enterprise and carry out the works, and a Scottish railway company is said to be deeply interested in the matter. The importance of such a dock and railway to the district would be incalculable. It would revive the trade of the place which has languished so long, and would provide employment in abundance for many hands which are at present in the unpleasant position of having no work to do”.



It was once again via the *Fifeshire Advertiser* of the 16th September 1887 that we can trace the next moves unfolding. At a meeting of the Town Council, the previous Monday, Mr W.R. Spears, the Town Clerk, revealed that he had been privately told that the dock and the rail-line would both proceed. He also learned that there would be a significant coal depot formed close to Bailie Stock's factory. It was almost certain that a line would be built connecting both harbours. This meant that the railway company would probably have to build a sea wall to protect their track. This brought much applause from the Chamber as this step would relieve the Council from carrying out this costly task.

The article reminded readers that the Bill had been secured in 1883 but no advantage had been taken in the intervening four years – so, it had been considered then abandoned due to the failure to raise capital. However, this seemed to now be resolved and the cost was estimated at £241,000 of which £175,000 was the portion needed to construct the dock with £66,000 being the estimated cost of the railway.

The Fife Free Press was in buoyant mood in its leader of the 29th October 1887 when indicating that very soon more details would be available but could meantime report that, “while the Bill had been passed by Parliament in 1883, it had been the difficulties experienced in securing funding which had led to the lengthy hiatus. At last this difficulty had been overcome; not only so, but such an amount of conveying support had been guaranteed by coal-owners that its success as a first class speculation is as good as settled”. The article then waxed lyrical about the depth of water, the dock being roomy and deep, plus its superior equipment would ensure it had no equal on the whole of the east coast of Scotland.

The article accepted that it would have found more favour with the townspeople had it not been so far to the west but the linking of the two harbours by rail would certainly find favour in Kirkcaldy. Once again, it seems that another application would be submitted to Parliament in the hope of having a direct route to Glasgow realised. The article concluded with the hopeful message of a starting date in the Spring and “the construction work, upon which a large staff of men will be employed, will extend over three years, during which time a large sum will fall to be disbursed in wages to be further disbursed amongst shopkeepers and tradesman in the district”.

The Fife News of the 19th of November 1887 advised that the company would be making an application to extend the time allowed for construction. This was necessary as four years had elapsed without one iota of preparation or construction. There was mention that a change of name might well also be considered. Some more detail was carried in the same newspaper on the 31st December 1887. When the Act had been passed in 1883, the period permitted to complete the compulsory purchase of the land etc., was three years and a five year term was

THE SEAFIELD DOCK.—The company formed to promote the Seafield Dock and Railway have given notice of their intention to apply to Parliament to revive the powers granted by the Seafield Dock and Railway Act of 1883, for the purpose of having the time extended, and for other purposes. It will thus be seen that it has been definitely resolved to go on with the work. Though rather late in the day such an undertaking will be of immense advantage to a commercial town like Kirkcaldy, as having a ready exit for its manufactures, as well for the vast store of minerals which lie beneath the fields and waste lands of the south of Fife. Notwithstanding the large amount of money required for the scheme, £281,000, guarantees have been given for the whole amount, the course of the railway marked out, and all that is possible to be done on paper has been accomplished. There is now a strong prospect of the Langtoon being made longer, which, though not a pleasant prospect for pedestrians, is hailed by the people of the west end with pleasure, which may end in profit.

allowed for the construction work itself. An extension of two years was sought for the former, with three years for the latter. There was also a request to alter the name from the *Seafield Dock and Railway Company* to the *Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company*.

The Dundee Courier on the 28th January 1888 confirmed that both the change of name and the extension period had been submitted to Parliament. There were no issues with the Commons but once again the possibility existed of its being examined in the Lords if, as expected, the *North British Railway* raised an objection.

It was thanks to the columns of the *Fife Free Press* on the 28th April 1888 that the result was revealed. It goes without saying that the *North British Railway* did petition against the extension and we find that they also petitioned against the name change. The railway was scheduled to run for 8 miles with 4 of these through the policies of Mr Ferguson of Raith. The promoters held guarantees for the annual movement of 400,000 tons of coal for a seven year period. The proposal was to carry these coals at a rate of 6d per ton in trader's wagons or 1/- per ton if the Company's waggons were utilised. These rates were considerably less than the current rates to Burntisland.

**THE SEAFIELD DOCK AND RAILWAY
B I L L.**

The House of Lords Committee on Scottish private bills, of which Lord Auckland is chairman, met on Tuesday forenoon and began consideration of the Seafield (Kirkcaldy) Dock and Railway Bill.

Mr Littler, Q C, in opening for the promoters, said the present bill was simply for an extension of time for the construction of the line. No question arose with regard to the dock, because the time for its construction had by no means expired. The railway to the dock was essential, especially as the dock was at present purely for the mineral and coal trade, whatever it might come to be hereafter.

The examination of the Bill took place with Mr Littler again acting for the promoters. His view was simply that nothing had materially changed and both requests should be granted. Mr Bidder, acting for the *North British Railway*, confined himself to objecting on the grounds of; the finance, the change of name and the coal-owners guarantee. The committee made it clear that they were not prepared to reopen the case as to whether or not the railway should have been sanctioned – that had been determined in 1883 and all they would look at now was any injury caused to the *North British* by the contents of the amendment.

David Thomson was once again examined and he made it plainly and abundantly clear that, in no small measure, John Walker's speech had had a very profound effect on the outcome of the flotation. "From his undoubted position it had a great influence with the public, and damaged the whole scheme."

The Commissioner of Lord Minto's Lochgelly Estate, and Mr H. Mungall, the Manager of the Cowdenbeath Colliery Company, also spoke in support of the Bill. Mr R. C.M. Ferguson remarked that he was still prepared to support the line materially but did not put a figure on such sum. He restated that the line was as desirable now as it had been in 1883. However, among his comments was one that in hindsight was of material interest. For the first time we discover that in the 1883/84 failed flotation, Mr Ferguson had -"proposed to take up as much of the capital as the public did not subscribe to; for it was a local line and anything he did then, or would do now, would be simply for the benefit of his Estate and the benefit of the neighbourhood. After the failure of the Company prospectus in 1884, he did not feel bound to produce all the capital unsubscribed, and the promoters did not call upon him to do so.

Bidder made play of the fact that the new line was directly competitive with the *North British* and while accepting, in 1883, it secured a period of 5 years to build 8 miles of railway – nothing had happened. The time had elapsed and there was no certainty that the work would now be done and he also questioned if the public appetite would be more supportive under a new name as against the old one. The committee determined that the Bill was proven and it would return to the Commons for its ultimate sanction.

In its leader of the same day the *Fife Free Press* was delighted that the Bill had succeeded. While they would have preferred the site of the harbour to be further eastwards there was no option in the matter. They were delighted that its eventual opening would

coincide with the commencement of mining of large and hitherto unworked mineral fields in the immediate vicinity of the town. They foresaw large numbers of miners moving to the area resulting in houses requiring to be built to accommodate them. They saw the dock allowing vessels to be coaled at Seafield when they could not be accommodated at other ports. The guarantees they saw as a pledge that, for 7 years, a vast quantity of the coal and minerals of the county would be railed to Seafield and then part of it diverted to the old harbour where smaller vessels could be loaded. The article did concede that the last flotation had failed but they believed that the rates on offer and the guarantees given showed that there was a belief that there was a sound investment underlying the undertaking. The paper again hoped for more employment and better wages plus a fresh lease of commercial life for Kirkcaldy.

This was quickly followed by an article in the *Fife Herald* on the 2nd May where we learn that the contract has been won by John Howard of London. There had been some alterations to the plan, the most important being that entry to the harbour would now be from the west.

The article again championed the undisputed fact that currently it was a journey of some 21 miles to get coals from Lochgelly via Thornton to Burntisland. The new line would mean a journey of around 7 miles. The article ended with news that the foremen involved with Howard's firm were already renting property in the town.

The Fife Herald on the 4th July was the first of the local papers to carry the news that the Bill allowing the extension had been passed in the Commons two days earlier.

The Fife Free Press of the 11th August was able to report on a visit by John Howard and John Macrae to the site. They also had a

The Seafield Dock Scheme.

It appears that there is now a strong probability of the Seafield Dock and Railway being proceeded with at no very distant date. The contractor is Mr John Howard, London, and the engineer is Mr M'Rae, Edinburgh. The plans have been considerably altered from those of 1883, especially in regard to the dock entrance, which will now be from the west instead of from the east, as first proposed, and will be protected by a strong breakwater built on the Vans rock.

meeting with “gentleman with a banking interest” and also met with coal-owners to discuss the Guarantee Scheme.

The same newspaper was in an exasperated mood in its edition of the 8th December 1888 and supported the inability of our research of establishing the position as 1889 began. The article started with a condemnation of much of the condition of the Sands Road which it described as “a mixture of soupishlike consistency made up of mud, filth and stagnant water. It accepted that improvements had been delayed by the Seafield dock development and then the possibility of a railway being run along the route – but;- “What about the Seafield Dock? Nobody can tell us anything about it today, far less assure us that it will ever go on”. This certainly seems to be a concerning time.

THE ACQUISITION OF METHIL DOCK BY THE NORTH BRITISH RAILWAY COMPANY.—A correspondent writes:—The coalmasters of Fife are only realising how completely the acquisition of Methil Dock by the North British Railway Coy. has placed them in the hands of the Company. Burntisland and Methil are the two principal outlets of the coal traffic of Fife, and the working of both is now in the hands of the Railway Company.

Matters possibly took a turn for the worse when reference is made in the *Fife Herald* of the 23rd January 1889. *The North British Railway Company* have purchased Methil Docks and now the two principal

exporting harbours are in the same hands. There was now no competition and the rivalry which had a beneficial effect on charges for transit and also the harbour dues had been eliminated at a stroke. In their edition of the 30th, the same newspaper commented that there appeared to be a “ring of confidence” that progress might soon be seen. They did however accept that people were not without reason sceptical of these types of reports, mentioning that “On one or two occasions people, claiming to be small foremen, have appeared, taken houses in the vicinity, paid half a year's rent, and by some strange circumstance never inhabited the houses, but disappeared as mysteriously as they came”.

The *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* of the 7th May 1889 carried a paragraph stating that Mr Spears, Kirkcaldy's Town Clerk, has

received a letter from the Promoters indicating work would commence in around 10 days time. Unusually the paper inserted a note that “no confidence should be placed in this statement”.

The Fife Free Press of the 15th June reported on yet another attack on the scheme by Mr John Walker, once again at the Burntisland Harbour Commission's monthly meeting. When asked for an update he said that he understood that the Promoters had been trying to raise funds in London – but had failed. Following that they had tried in both Glasgow and Edinburgh – again with no success. He fired another salvo by indicating that anyone who knew anything about the concern would not invest sixpence in it!

By the 6th July 1889 the cynicism and exasperation were taking their toll and the *Fife Free Press* asked the question “When-when alas! - shall we see the making of the Seafield dock”?

On the 9th August the *Fifeshire Advertiser* shared the same viewpoint with :- “It is no longer possible to disguise the fact that in Kirkcaldy district a profound sense of disappointment exists in the delay in proceeding with the *Seafield Dock and Railway Company*, and increasing doubt as to the possibility of the scheme ever being carried out. As weeks and months pass the growth of such a feeling is not to be wondered at, and yet this week we have received confident assurances from the promoters of the Seafield Scheme that work will commence very shortly”.

arrived at Seafield to plot out where the huts etc., were to be sited.

- On Monday the 19th the rail line was being staked out in the field opposite Inveriel Manse and Tyrie.
- Work had started on the foundations of the kilns to burn the lime which would be required in the work.
- A significant amount of timber had been purchased from H. Lindsay for offices and huts.
- The stock of timber was being built up in an area close to the Forth and Clyde Ropeworks.
- The old disused quarry close to Tyrie was selected for the location of the site offices, huts etc., and foundations were being laid for that purpose.
- Squads were at work cutting through the route for the railway and the rock and earth being removed was being wheeled towards where it would be used to start the construction of the embankment we see today.
- Interest was being taken by a considerable number of townspeople who came to see the work commencing. Amongst these were a number of labourers anxious to try and secure employment.

The article was completed by a section of the **Origin and History of the Project**. The team were delighted that as we ploughed our way through the raft of newspaper articles stretching back to 1839 we had seemingly missed very little of the story. What we seem to have missed was, although the cost was estimated at £241,000, the prospectus would seek £300,000. The difference was attributed to a demand for more sidings – such as Auchtertool Distillery which was a significant user of coal. Another point which came out was that to allow Mr Howard to start without delay – the ground for the dock and the early stages of the railway had been paid for in

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE PROJECT.

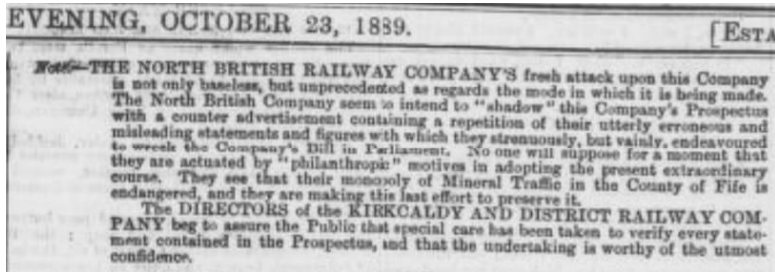
The proposal to form a large deep-water harbour at Seafield, with railway leading thereto, first took definite shape in 1882. The promoters were a number of coal proprietors in Fife, who wished to provide railway and dock accommodation, which could not be provided by the North British so cheaply or expeditiously at Burntisland. Many collieries which were only 8 or 9 miles from the coast had to go from 16 to 17 miles to the sea, and they experienced great inconvenience and delay through the North British having a large traffic at Burntisland.

advance. It can only be assumed that this land would belong to Mr Ferguson of Raith and was sold in exchange for shares.

By the 7th September 1889 The *Fife Free Press* was able to report on more progress being achieved. Some sheds were almost complete and these contained the joiner's and blacksmith's workshops. The office block was also nearing completion and that was divided into three rooms – one was the clerk's office which had a pay window installed for the distribution of wages. Levelling and clearing were continuing with the large boulders/stones being set aside to use in compounding the cement. This time it was suggested that the earth was being used to form a road between the fields and the sand which was apparently known as the “Bents”. The road would be 42 feet wide and would run from the site to St. Clair Place. This street name provides evidence that the Earl of Rosslyn was a landowner in this area along with Mr Ferguson. There were reportedly 60 men at work but many more were expected when the crops in the fields were harvested.

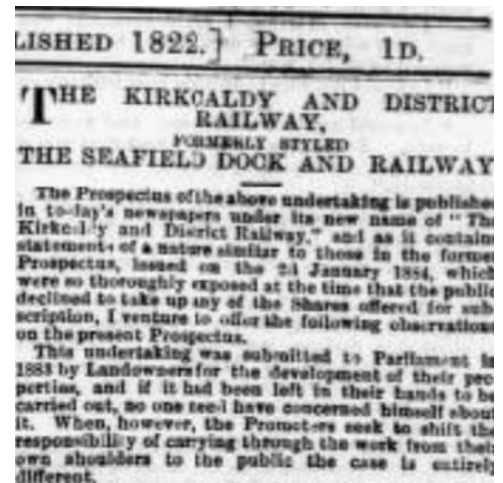
However, we find the first mention of a proposal which, in time, came to play a major part in the eventual outcome. This statement because of its immense importance is worthy of being detailed here:- “since the inauguration of the work persistent rumours have circulated upon the subject on an understanding having been arrived at with the *Caledonian Railway Company* in regard to the new local railway. It is now stated that a Bill is to be promoted in the ensuing session of Parliament for powers to extend the line to Alloa, so as to join the Caledonian system; also, a director from the Caledonian Board of Directors, and one from that of the London and North Western, have agreed to join the directorate of the new company”. Just what is this all about?

connect the collieries to the main line. No mention was made of the Caledonian Railway or a line along the Sands Road. The listing was made in the name of the *Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company*.



Astonishingly, there was a note added at the head of the advertisement indicating that there was another attack being made by the *North British Railway* which was described

as "baseless but unprecedented". The company were in fact 'shadowing' the prospectus with a notice of their own signed by Mr Walker which attempted to once again derail the flotation. The two notices in the *Fife Herald* and some other newspapers actually appeared side by side! The note appended to the prospectus is shown here and a portion of Mr Walker's piece is also included. Certainly questionable tactics, but it seems to have been legal. This was repeated in the *Dundee Advertiser* of the 22nd when Walker's notice was typeset exactly below the prospectus. The North British with their monopoly of Fife and by the funding of the two bridges appear to have inexhaustible clout with newspaper proprietors.



The Edinburgh Evening News on the 31st October intimated that a meeting of influential Kirkcaldy businessmen had taken place the previous evening to discuss the Bill. Most businesses were supportive but it was clear the support would be warmer if a line was run along the Sands Road connecting the two harbours.

Saturday the 16th November 1889 saw the *Fife Free Press* carry a notice showing the Bill which was about to be submitted to

Parliament in 1890. The Bill contained a number of extensions. The earlier map shows the line of the already authorised railway and the sought after extension has been highlighted in red. Over and above the line connecting the new dock and the old harbour was also being applied for. It has to be assumed that as a result of the meeting of the town's businessmen this addition would pay dividends in the take-up of shares.

The same edition made mention that during the past week some further machinery had arrived – “this included a concrete mixing machine which had been awaited for some time”. By the time their edition of the 30th November 1889 had been published much more plant had arrived. In fact Mr Howard had purchased a significant quantity of plant and material from the Inverkeithing Depot of the Forth Bridge Railway Co. Also, a powerful stone crusher and several cranes had been delivered to Seafield. In addition, the S.S. Abden has delivered 100 tons of cement from London.

In Parliament—Session 1890.]

KIRKCALDY AND DISTRICT RAILWAY.

(EXTENSIONS).

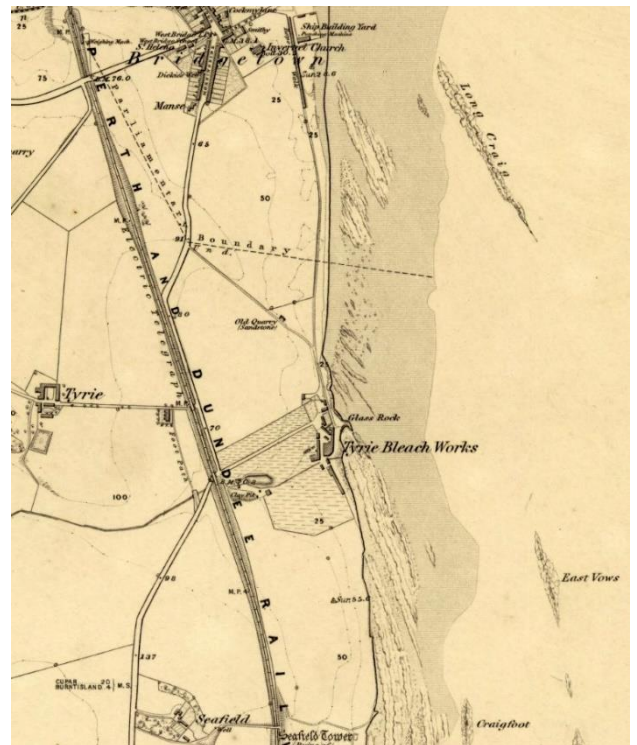
(CONSTRUCTION OF EXTENSION RAILWAYS IN THE COUNTIES OF FIFE AND KINROSS; COMPULSORY PURCHASE AND RECLAMATION OF LAND, TOLLS, &c.; EXEMPTION OF COMPANY FROM CUSTOMS AND DUES; AGREEMENTS WITH AND POWERS TO OWNERS, &c. OF LANDS AND POLICE COMMISSIONERS OF KIRKCALDY; REGULATION OF USE OF FORESHORE OF FIRTH OF FORTH; APPLICATION OF FUNDS; NEW OR ADDITIONAL CAPITAL; INTEREST OUT OF CAPITAL; ALTERATION OF NUMBER OF DIRECTORS; AMENDMENT AND REPEAL OF ACTS, &c., &c.)

It is in the *Fife Free Press* of the 1st February 1890 that the next worthwhile update was unearthed. Plant of every description was arriving and now upwards of 100 men were engaged in the work. “Very shortly the powerful sea wall, which will form the base or keystone of future operations, will be in active progress”. That wall still stands to this day running parallel with the coastal path. The article was also able to reveal that the Bill for the extensions had been safely passed by the Board of Examiners.

While it still had to be considered in the House, work was still being pushed forward in the clear expectation that the extensions would be granted.

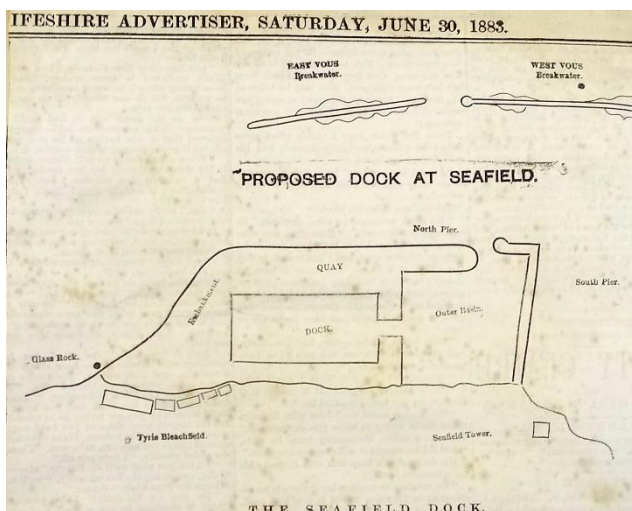
Saturday, May the 24th once again saw a lengthy leader on the subject in page 5 of the *Fife Free Press*. The article commenced with highlighting the advantages the finished article would provide. It then moved to the difficulties the terrain caused but there was confidence that the skilled engineers and workmen would overcome all obstacles. “The site abounds with dangerous reefs and rocks which shelve seawards, together with the ugly jutting crags which intersect the various channels in all directions. The contractors however are making short work of the flinty encumbrances that stand in their way”. Here are some of the works carried out:-

- The *Glass Rock* at Tyrie has been levelled down to practical proportions and will then form part of the eastern sea wall. (This was achieved and the Glass Rock is no more).
- Working parallel to the shoreline proceeds smoothly but work on the eastern sea wall can be difficult and only done during an ebb tide. All too often work has to be repeated as the flow of the tide often fills up the excavations with sand. “The difficulties are being successfully overcome”.
- Improved submarine blasting will allow the dangerous *Long Craigs* and *Vous Rocks* - “on which many a good ship has struck – several within the memory of the younger generation will shortly be reduced to a minimum”. In a small note on page 4 mention was made that there had been extensive blasting taking place over the past week.
- “The rock *Cross Craig* which stands out prominently with the top peaks viable, even at the highest tides, will be levelled altogether.



The article then turned to the fact that, in their eyes, Kirkcaldy's future prosperity was ultimately dependant on a good harbour and railway system. The old inadequate harbour was continually silting up and some of this was down to dumping on the foreshore, despite efforts by the Council to try and restrict the volumes of waste and rubbish disposed of in that manner. The article harked back to the days when ships flying the flags of many nations populated the harbour but that day had gone with the coming of larger vessels and now only modest ships of light draught could use the port.

The article went on to maintain that past generations were responsible for the present condition of the Sands Road – industry had been allowed to spill, almost unchecked, along the shore – engineering works, dye works, spinning mills, joiners' shops and “even a dung depot led to streams of variegated hues mingled with not the most pleasant of odours running towards the sea”. This precluded the idea of summer visitors bathing in the sea. The coming of the railway in 1847 had moved most industries more inland but a railway and a promenade were seen as a way of making a marked improvement to the beach area. The paper hoped that when the Sands Road railway came to pass the need for a promenade would be seen as an essential, returning the beach and the bay to a potential visitor attraction.



In fact, the first sketch which we could trace of the proposal came to hand thanks to the *Fife Advertiser* of the 30th June 1890. The sketch carries a reasonable amount of detail especially of the determined opposition of the *North British Railway*. At the time that company had a monopoly in Fife. The site itself lies between the Tyrie Bleach Fields/Glass

Rock and Seafield Tower with the dock itself covering 5 acres. Protection from the elements would be offered by breakwaters erected on the East and West Vous rocks. It was believed that these breakwaters would shelter the harbour from storms emanating from the east. The east was considered the probable direction storms of any great magnitude would appear from. The sketch also shows the north and south piers which would guard the entrance to the outer dock. It was proposed that the quay would be fitted with three coal hoists which were expected could load 750,000 tons of coal per year. Once again, great play is made of the depth of available water - 30 feet at high tide reducing to 13 feet at low water. It is worth mentioning that the original names of the two Vous Rocks were south and north which is in fact the more accurate directional description.

Moving on to Saturday the 9th August the *Fife Free Press* is able to confirm that the additional powers sought had now been fully granted by Parliament. The newspaper reported that this news had brought increased activity noting that “work on the dock and railway was being carried on with increased vigour”. The seawall, which at first seemed to be a difficult undertaking, was reported as “now being a massive and formidable structure”. Once again the article looked forward to the completion of the works in some two years time offering the deepest port on the Forth and “one into which the largest mercantile or naval craft could steam with ease”. This was something which the article described as “what the travelling public has been fervently anticipating for many long years”.

The Fife Journal of the 14th August 1890 provided an insight in the form of a report on the half-yearly ordinary meeting of the *Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company* held in London. Only three people attended, the chairman, another director and the secretary. The contractor was reported as proceeding vigorously with the work at the dock possibly having the outer wall completed

by the end of the year. The rail line had been completed for almost a mile including the construction of several bridges. The accounts showed that £94,350 of capital had been raised and allotted as at the 30th June. The capital had of course not been taken up in full although further application had been received but not yet allotted. The report made reference to the damage which Mr Walker and the *North British* had caused. It was also reported that “the engineer was sparing no pain to provide very valuable plant to expedite the work”

By the 23rd of the month matters had moved on with the same newspaper reporting that a number of leading gentlemen had submitted a requisition to the Provost with the view of asking him to call a public meeting on the 25th. The purpose was to discuss the propriety of approaching the *Caledonian Railway* with a view to inducing them to join their railway with the now to be extended Kirkcaldy and District line. This would give the long hoped for direct communication with Glasgow. If this was achieved it would give the Caledonian its long sought access into Fife and, at the same time, break the North British monopoly.

The *Fife Free Press* covered the meeting in its edition of the 30th August. While it was a lengthy piece the outcome was almost a foregone conclusion. The article opened with the history of trying to establish such a line and all the subsequent disappointments. The meeting was specially convened to gauge the feelings of the district on leaving the line as mineral only with its sole purpose being the shipment of material from the coalfields to the new dock. The other option was to go for a passenger and freight line connecting with the Caledonian Railway at Alloa or some convenient point. The overwhelming opinion was to support the latter option and that a committee should be formed with a view to approaching the directors of the Caledonian to ask them to take the necessary steps to achieve such a connection. The meeting heard only one united opinion from the speakers who included Provost Black, Mr Spears

and ex-Bailie Hendry. All saw nothing but great potential for the town with a new deep water dock plus a railway steaming into the heart of Kirkcaldy which should surely enhance the district's commercial reputation. It was left to the appointed committee to make contact with the railway company.

By the 18th October 1890 the *Fife Free Press* had disclosed that two meetings had already taken place to discuss the merits of the proposal.

SEVERE GALES AND FLOODS.

SHIPPING IN THE FORTH — SEAFIELD WORKS AND THE STORM.

On Monday evening a sharp frost set in, which, by mid-night, had covered the pools with a thin coating of ice. The frost continued with great intensity till an early hour this morning, when the wind veered suddenly to the east, and mingled rain and sleet fell heavily. As the morning advanced the wind rose to the force of a gale, which set up a tremendous sea in the Forth.

Extremely bad news was reported in the *Fife Free Press* on Saturday the 29th November 1890 in relation to the results of a storm the previous Tuesday. A gale force wind had whipped the sea into a frenzy and a great deal

of damage had been sustained at the dock. Much damage had been done to the plant, with a steam crane and a steam digger both being washed into the sea and now submerged. The staging on the pier ultimately gave way and was being tossed about like matchwood. It was discovered that some 30/40 yards of the most recently built portion of the sea wall had been washed down as the backing had not yet been filled in and it became easy prey for the force of the sea. A picture was painted, as the storm abated, of recovery work being carried out with the wooden staging carried to safety and simultaneous attempts being made to recover and secure the plant. “Meantime it is evident that considerable damage has been done, and some time will elapse, with the unsettled weather of the winter season, before the works can occupy their former position”. In its edition of the 13th December the paper was able to report that the last of the plant would be recovered by Monday and work could recommence in earnest.

One of the important things to reflect on at this stage is who is

meeting the cost of the ongoing works at Seafield? The Prospectus had been issued but trying to establish its fate is more difficult. What is clear is that the 'committee' from the meetings in August and October had certainly made contact with the *Caledonian Railway* and without question some arrangement had been entered into. There was certainly authorisation for the extension to Cowdenbeath and a possible line along the Sands Road but had this been enough to entice potential shareholders – the answer looks as if it was in the negative.

**THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY COMPANY
AND FIFE.**

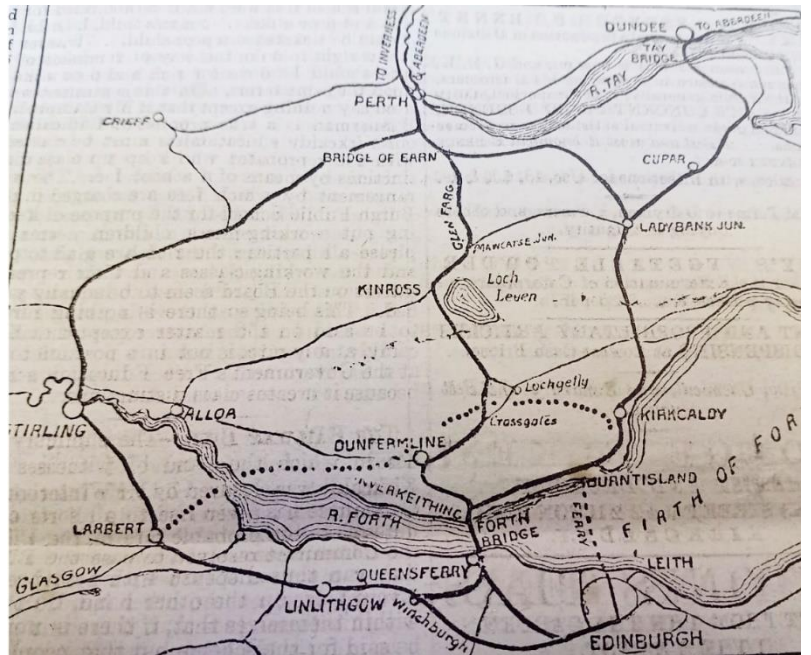
On Tuesday the deputation appointed at the large public meeting held in the Corn Exchange on the 25th August to consider the advisability of asking the Caledonian Railway Company to form a connection between their system and the Kirkcaldy and district railway met with the directors of the Caledonian Railway Company at their head office, Buchanan Street, Glasgow. The members of the deputation present were—Provost Black, Bailies Halliday and Nicol, Councillors A. Westwater, James Lockhart, W. T. Leishman, ex-Bailie Stocks, ex-Treasurer Young, Messrs M. B. Nairn, W. Bartholomew, and W. R. Spears, town-clerk. There were also

There was much more public support in Kirkcaldy and the wider area to secure this direct route to Glasgow and the *St. James's Gazette* of the 1st April 1891 shows that it is intended to petition to allow additional provisions to be added to the Bill which was already going through Parliament. This clearly shows a planned tie up with the *Caledonian Railway*. In addition the Notice which is shown here indicates that the *Caledonian Railway* are prepared to invest £200,000 into the *Kirkcaldy and District Railway* project. It is also stated that an understanding has been reached that the Caledonian Railway will work and maintain the line.

In PARLIAMENT—SESSION 1891.
KIRKCALDY AND DISTRICT RAILWAY BILL.
[Petition for Additional Provision as to Confirmation of Agreement with the Caledonian Railway Company, and Subscription by that Company.)
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that application is intended to be made to Parliament in the present Session, by petition, for additional provision for leave to insert in the Bill now pending in the House of Commons under the above name or short title, clauses and amendments confirming an Agreement between the Caledonian Railway Company and the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company, intended to be scheduled to the said Bill, for the working and maintenance by the Caledonian Railway Company of the undertaking of the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company, and enabling the Caledonian Railway Company to subscribe to the extent of £200,000 towards the share capital in the undertaking of the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company proposed to be raised under the powers of the said Bill.
And notice is hereby further given that the Caledonian Railway Company have consented to the said agreement and subscription at a meeting of the proprietors of that Company, held specially for that purpose on the 24th day of March, 1891, in the same manner and subject to the same provisions as meetings directed to be held under Standing Order 64 of the House of Commons and that such consent was given by such proprietors present in person or by proxy holding at least three-fourths of the paid-up capital of the said Company represented at such meeting, such proprietors being qualified to vote at meetings in right of such capital.
Dated this 24th day of March, 1891.
DUNDAS & WILSON,
16, St. Andrew-square, Edinburgh,
Solicitors for the Bill.
REES & FRERE,
13, Great George-street, Westminster,
Parliamentary Agents.

The Bill had reached the House of Commons Select Committee with Mr Winterbotham in the chair, and the deliberations took three editions of the *Fife Free Press* to cover it in full. Very early in the paper's report on the 13th June we discover the route of the principal extension was to run from Cowdenbeath (1890 extension) and then head towards Dunfermline where the route would diverge with one arm going into the town itself, with the other heading to Townhill.

Shortly after leaving Dunfermline the lines would be reunited before making for Kincardine via Saline. At Kincardine, a tunnel would be constructed under the Forth, and on emerging the line would again divide with one leg terminating at Larbert, the other at Grangemouth. A sketch of the route is shown



here. The line would be Kirkcaldy's holy grail – direct communication making contact with the “Second City of the Empire”. Of course this was a 'pet project' for Kirkcaldy but, make no mistake, there was overwhelming support throughout Fife and along almost the whole route. Some of the petitioners in favour of the project are listed below and that clearly and emphatically makes a bold statement to the Select Committee. The bulk of the petitioners were in the form of civic or county heads and included the following:-

- Kincardine and District.
- Burgh of Cowdenbeath.
- Burgh of Lochgelly.
- Cupar and District.
- Anstruther and District.
- Burgh of Pittenweem.
- Burgh of Leven.
- Kirkcaldy Chamber of Commerce.
- Burgh of Dunfermline.
- Stirling County Council.
- Fife County Council.

10,000 people had signed the petition supporting the project – how

could it fail? Once again Mr Littler Q.C. was acting for the promoters and he began by mentioning the past history, the North British monopoly in Fife and he savaged the attempts and tactics of John Walker in 1889. We learn that John Walker is now 'the late John Walker' but it transpires in 1889 Walker actually had circulars prepared, signed by himself, denouncing the scheme and organised that they be given to members of the Stock Exchange.

The extension had been granted as far as Cowdenbeath and in the interim the Company had completed 400 yards of protection walls at Seaford dock and completed 1½ miles of rail line. What was now wanted was to turn the line into both a passenger and freight line plus carry out the 24 mile extension from Cowdenbeath to Larbert. At Larbert the track would join the main line of the *Caledonian Railway*. The cost was circa £750,000 with the *Caledonian Railway* contributing £200,000 to the project. They would also work the line on the terms which were a favourite of the *North British Railway* – 50% of the gross receipts. As soon as the company was earning dividends of 4%, then, any percentage over that figure would be split between the *Kirkcaldy and District* and the *Caledonian Railway*. The rolling stock would be provided by the *Caledonian Railway*. The coal-owners had guaranteed that as soon as the line was in operation they would ship 500,000 tons of coal per annum.

THE FIFE FREE PRESS, SA

THE KIRKCALDY RAILWAY BILL.

THE CASE for the promoters of the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Bill has been heard, and those who are concerned in thwarting the enterprise, and who had previously sought to wreck the smaller scheme are now impressing upon the Committee that the proposed railway is not needed, inasmuch as their service meets the whole requirements of the district. They further plead that because of the great expenditure in connection with the Forth Bridge, by which means their service to and from Fife has been greatly improved, the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Bill, which will restrict the present traffic of the company, is not entitled to succeed.

Everything seemed set fair and on the 20th the *Fife Free Press* produced a thoughtful leader on the position to date. The starting point was that the case for the project had been heard and it was now the turn of “those concerned in thwarting the enterprise, and who had previously sought to wreck smaller bills are now imposing on the Committee that the new railway is not needed, inasmuch as their own services meet the whole requirement of the district”. Once again they trotted out “the

enormous cost of the Forth Bridge, by which means their services to and from Fife had greatly improved, the *Kirkcaldy and District Railway Bill*, which will restrict the present traffic of the company, is not entitled to succeed”.

The paper maintained its position as “It is not our intention, nor would it be courteous to comment upon the evidence which has been led for the last two days by the opposition, but we certainly hope that the Committee, after a fair review of both sides of the case, will be able to clearly see their way to give effect to the emphatically expressed interests of the district, the county and a large part of Scotland in the matter”.

These views seem to be in tandem with the public feeling but a word of caution was mentioned. It was anticipated the Bill would not leave the Commons until some time the following week and it would probably be July before it would make its appearance in the Lords – which meant the possibility of very little time available to navigate the remaining stages before the summer recess.

The work of the Select Committee continued but great joy erupted on Wednesday the 24th July when the Bill was passed by the Commons. The celebrations were covered by the *Fife Free Press* in its 27th July issue. As soon as the news reached the town – Provost Black gave instructions that the town bell be rung. Very quickly, although the shops had closed – the streets became lively with working people turning out in their thousands – bright – happy – hopeful. A lengthy procession was formed with a band at the head and banners aloft!

PUBLIC REJOICINGS.
RECEIPT OF THE NEWS IN KIRKCALDY.
During the day the receipt of the news was anxiously awaited in the town, and all sort of speculations were rife as to the probable fate of the Bill. Shortly after two o'clock the decision of the Committee arrived in Kirkcaldy, and as the word passed round that the Bill had passed there was a feeling of deep satisfaction. The first public announcement of the success of the measure was that issued from the *Times* Office, and the information supplied attracted large crowds of people. The town bell also rang forth a merry peal in honour of the occasion. The news spread with great rapidity, and the enthusiasm displayed fully demonstrated the popularity of the Committee's decision. In the evening the Trades' Band turned out, and, followed by a procession of several thousand people headed by a large flag, they marched through the principal streets playing lively music.

“As there is a time for everything, the time for rejoicing on the part of the working class had at last come. The employers of the district,

in large numbers had already testified before the Committee regarding the benefits of a competitive line of railway, and the benefits especially which the proposed line would confer on the district in the development of its mining, manufacturing, agricultural and fishing interests”. The article remarked that “on this remarkable occasion capital and labour were in the same boat pulling in the same direction”.

The paper was realistic enough to point out that while there had been success in the Commons, a fight in the Lords was almost inevitable:-

“in which case there will be a full mustering of the forces of the opposition in the hope of blocking further progress. We are somewhat inclined to hope, however, that, after a fair review of the evidence, their Lordships will not seize on the Forth Bridge as a handle wherewith to kill the best interests of a large and growing community. The Forth Bridge is undoubtedly a great boon to the County. At the same time the people of Fife did not put it there, it was not built solely in their interests; and it is clear they would be taxed too heavily for this boon were its existence to remain as a standing interdict against any rival railway ever setting foot in “The Kingdom”. The people of Fife who have been under North British monopoly for half a century will undoubtedly be better served by two lines of railway”. As matters unfolded there was indeed prophetic words contained in the article!

However, it rightly ended on a positive note - “Apart from the great advantage of direct communication with the Caledonian Railway system, which will open out new fields to the tourist, the traveller and the men of business, the sanctioning of the *Kirkcaldy and District Railway* will open up a great future for the town”. The writer could not resist making mention of the Sands Road with “we may hope for a substitution of a splendid promenade for the wreckage of a road stretching along the beach from end to end of

the burgh and which has so disfigured and disgraced the town in the eye of residents and strangers for 40 years”.

On a separate page a note was carried indicating that the Bill was expected to make its appearance in the Lords on the 13th July.

With the passing of the Bill, *The St. James Gazette* carried another notice on the 29th June. While the notice is shown here and can be read – the content was that a special general meeting of the *Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company* would be held in their London Office on the 8th July. The purpose was for the shareholders to ratify or otherwise the intentions contained in the earlier notice.

KIRKCALDY AND DISTRICT RAILWAY COMPANY.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING of the Proprietors of the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company will be held at the Company's offices, No. 16, Finsbury-circus, London, E.C., on WEDNESDAY, the eighth day of July, 1891, at one o'clock in the afternoon, for the purpose of submitting to the proprietors at such meeting a Bill now pending in Parliament, intituled "An Act to authorize the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company to extend their railways and extend the time limited for the completion of their authorized railways, docks, and works, and for other purposes," and an agreement made between the Caledonian Railway Company and the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company scheduled to and proposed to be confirmed by the said Bill, for amongst other things the working and maintenance by the Caledonian Railway Company of the undertaking of the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company.

Dated this 21th day of June, 1891.

W. F. FOWLE, Secretary.

The Select Committee started to take evidence on Tuesday the 13th August. The men who would have the decision to make were the Chairman, Lord Broughman together with Lord Mayo, Lord Digby, Lord Leconfield and the Earl of Radnor. The case for the railway was put first and on reading through the reports, Mr Littler Q.C., was acting once more and he used his experience from the previous hearings to be sure-footed. Once again he homed in on the tactics of the late Mr Walker making a very strong case that it was Walker's antics which had destabilised past efforts to raise the necessary capital. The promoters had certainly put together a large number of supporters to testify the need for the line - local men included W.R. Spears. Mr Young of Methven's Pottery, Bailie Barnet, Adam McPherson of the Kirkcaldy Gas Company A.H. McIntosh and Walter Bartholomew of the Auchtertool Distillery.

SATURDAY, JULY 18, 1891

KIRKCALDY AND DISTRICT RAILWAY.

TUESDAY.

The Kirkcaldy and District Railway Bill, which has passed through the House of Commons, came to-day before a Select Committee of the House of Lords, consisting of Lord Brougham (Chairman), Lord Mayo, Lord Digby, Lord Leconfield, and the Earl of Radnor. The opponents of the bill are the North British Company, the Earl of Mar and Keillie, the Midland Company, the North-Eastern Company, and the Great Northern Company.

Four members of Parliament including Mr Munro-Ferguson also lent their support. The others were Sir George Campbell M.P. for Kirkcaldy Burghs, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman M.P. for Stirling (who rose to become Prime Minister) and Mr Birrell M.P. of Dunfermline. There were many others from all the districts the line would travel through. Three mining engineers and the engineer for the project were also called to provide technical support. Sheep farmers and a zoologist supported the line citing ease of animal movement and the ability to assist the fishing industry.

Mr Forman, C.E., Glasgow, the engineer of the railway, was called, and gave a detailed description of the scheme. He stated this was an extension of the authorised line from Donibristle to Larbert and Grangemouth by way of Dunfermline, Saline, and Kincardine, where there will be a tunnel under the Forth. The total length of the railway, including two or three short branches, would be thirty-one miles. Total estimated cost of the work, including land, was £684,982. It would be a double line, and it was proposed to double the authorised lines at an estimated cost of £35,000. The tunnel would be a single line tunnel, the estimated cost being £194,330, allowing for contingencies. He considered the estimates ample. He expected to be able to make the tunnel for considerably less than the estimate.

Mr. Forman C.E., the engineer for the project gave evidence that the total length of the railway was 31 miles and the estimated cost £684,982 which included the land. The line would be double track and the cost of making the already authorised track double would be £35,000. The tunnel was estimated to cost £194,330. He had done his best to accommodate the landowners

interests when he laid out the line and confirmed the Earl of Mar and Kellie was the only one who opposed the scheme. He believed that after all the attacks launched on the *Kirkcaldy Company* he could not believe it could exist without the financial support of the *Caledonian Railway*. In other words, if the proposed line failed there was little possibility of the already authorised line standing on its own two feet.

Mr James Thomson, the General Manager of the *Caledonian Railway*, indicated he had made a thorough study of the route and was convinced that it would form a very convenient relationship between his company and Fife. He believed that there would be a huge uplift in trade between

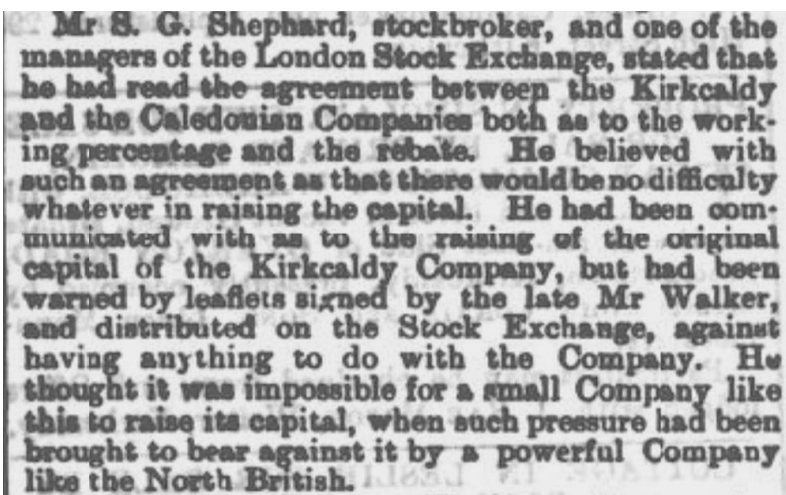
It was of the utmost importance that the Kirkcaldy Company should have a connection with the Caledonian system. They had been very hard hit by the North British Company, and if they did not get assistance from a powerful company like the Caledonian he did not know what would happen. The Caledonian had spent at Grangemouth between £600,000 and £700,000. Grangemouth was the largest port in Scotland for importing timber. If the line was sanctioned he had not the slightest doubt the whole of the capital would be raised.

the manufacturers in Fife and Glasgow. In his view “It was of the utmost importance that the Kirkcaldy Company should have a connection with the Caledonian Railway. They had been very hard hit by the *North British Company*, and if they did not get assistance from a very powerful company, like the Caledonian, he did not know what would happen. If the line was sanctioned he had not the slightest doubt that the whole of the capital would be raised. Again it seems to indicate that it was all or nothing – Walker had severely holed the original authorised line by his past endeavours.

Mr James Young, a Glasgow contractor, indicated that he would be happy to take on the contract at the sums stated. Furthermore he would be happy to take a considerable portion in shares – he had absolute confidence in the project.

Finally, Mr. S.G. Shepherd was called. This gentleman was a stockbroker and a manager of the London Stock Exchange. He had read the agreement between the two companies and was of the opinion there would be no difficulty in raising the capital. He had been communicated with in regard to the earlier failed flotation, but had been warned by Mr Walker's leaflets, which had been distributed in the Stock Exchange, against having anything to do with the scheme. This explains why there was so much difficulty in raising funds previously. Walker had taken his war to the doors of the Stock Exchange. In the words of the broker “he thought it was

impossible for a small company to raise its capital, when such pressure had been brought to bear against it by a powerful company like the North British”. Mr Shepherd indicated that he would be happy to underwrite a portion of the capital.



Mr. S. G. Shephard, stockbroker, and one of the managers of the London Stock Exchange, stated that he had read the agreement between the Kirkcaldy and the Caledonian Companies both as to the working percentage and the rebate. He believed with such an agreement as that there would be no difficulty whatever in raising the capital. He had been communicated with as to the raising of the original capital of the Kirkcaldy Company, but had been warned by leaflets signed by the late Mr Walker, and distributed on the Stock Exchange, against having anything to do with the Company. He thought it was impossible for a small Company like this to raise its capital, when such pressure had been brought to bear against it by a powerful Company like the North British.

The petitioners then had their viewpoint heard. Mr McDougall, the General Goods Manager of the North British, stood in for the late Mr Walker. He testified that the company had spent £10,000,000 in Fife, if the two bridges were included - “after what the North British had done for Fife it was a very hard case when the Forth Bridge had only been open a few months that this line should be promoted”.

A number of mining engineers were called who all cast doubt on the quality of coal between Kincardine and Larbert. Claims were made that the area around Saline was unproven in terms of its quality of coal, and that the Dunfermline/Cowdenbeath areas were well developed and adequately served by the *North British*. The Earl of Mar and Kellie was parochial – he was against the line as it might damage trade at Alloa Docks – in which he had an interest!

However, a big gun in the form of Mr Carlow, of the *Fife Coal Company (at one time the largest coal company in Scotland)* was produced. Again he suggested Methil and Burntisland were far better suited to the export of coal than Grangemouth and the *North British* had well organised ports at Burntisland and Methil – he saw no need for this line.

A number of representatives of smaller firms were called to speak against the line – all suggesting that the service from the *North British* was more than sufficient.

Mr Bidder Q.C. summed up for the North British stating that – there were doubts over the capital being raised and there was no proven need for the line. He did concede that “of course certain colliery owners and traders in the district, would be glad to have a second line, or even a third, always provided that it was constructed at someone else's expense”.

Then the bombshell – “If the Commission felt there was any moral

On the strength of evidence, to which in common fairness they were bound to give effect, the House of Commons responded to the prayer of the promoters, which was joined in by the people of the whole county, excepting, perhaps, some holders of stock in the rival railway. As representatives of the people, with such evidence as was laid before them, their course was clear, and they did their duty. But what has come of the scheme they approved and sanctioned? Why, without any shred of claim to represent the people, and with as little solicitude for the people's wants, desires, and welfare, the Lords have done the utmost they possibly could to wreck it in the interests of the very monopoly under which the inhabitants have been so long crushed, and from the grip of which they were prepared to welcome, in the extended Kirkcaldy railway, the much and long-desired means of relief.

obligation on the *North British* and, having regard to all the circumstances, that they felt the company ought to lend a hand, not in constructing this proposed railway but completing that which was already authorised, then the *North British* directors were prepared to take over and construct this agreed section, and as regarded the dock, they were willing to meet

At the conclusion of Mr Pamber's speech the Chairman ordered the room to be cleared. The Committee having deliberated in private for upwards of half an hour, the doors were thrown open, and the Chairman said—The Committee are of opinion that so much of the preamble of the bill as relates to railways No. 1, No. 2, and No. 4 has not been proved. The Committee have arrived at this decision entirely irrespective of the offer made by the *North British Railway Company* as regards the authorised lines, but the Committee are of opinion that it would be greatly to the advantage of the coalowners in Fife if the authorised lines were completed, and they therefore consider that the proposal of the *North British Company* should be carried into effect.

one half of its cost". Absolutely astonishing that they were prepared to take over a project which they had fought tooth and nail against – even having taken their fight to the heart of the country's financial centre. Clearly they were prepared to go to any lengths to stop the link-up and the *Caledonian's* entry into Fife.

In response the offer was branded as a *deathbed repentance* and was utterly inadequate for the present needs of the people of Fife. The Committee spent half an hour in discussion before returning to say that irrespective of the offer made by the *North British* – they had determined that the Bill was not proved and would not be passed. They were of the opinion that the completion of the authorised line would be of benefit to the coal owners of Fife and that the offer should be brought into effect.

While it all seems and is harsh, prior to 1911, there was no mechanism to return a failed Bill to the Commons for adjustment – it simply fell. *The Fife Free Press* in its editorial on the 1st August were scathing in their opinion of what they termed a travesty. Up until recent days, despite “again and again the forces of the existing monopoly being marshalled against it but up to the present these had been ineffectual. It had safely passed the Commons – as representatives of the people, with such evidence as was laid before

them, their course was clear, and they did their duty. But what has become of the scheme they approved and sanctioned? Why, without any shred of claim to represent the people, and with a little solicitude for the people's wants, desires and welfare, the Lords have done the utmost they possibly could to wreck it in the interests of the monopoly under which the inhabitants have been so long crushed, and from the grip of which they were prepared to welcome, in the form of the extended Kirkcaldy railway, the much and long desired means of relief. And showing how far they were prepared to favour this monopoly and how very little they cared for the interests of the people of an important district, they have prevented the Caledonian Railway in any way from competing for the traffic of Fife, and have told the people of Kirkcaldy and the neighbouring towns that they are to have no other railway service other than the North British. Moreover in order to relieve the promoters of the already authorised lines of railway and harbour from any difficulty in completing their work, they have authorised the monopolising company to buy up the whole business, stock, lock and barrel, and this prevents, for a generation at least, the entry of a rival line into Fife”.

● We just learn, through a source in London likely to be well informed, that the recent decision of the House of Lords against the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Bill was brought about by the slender majority of one vote. The committee consisted of five members, of whom two favoured and three opposed the Bill.

In essence little more requires to be said – The Caledonian wanted no further part in it as they were in effect banned from entering Fife. With the bad publicity generated by Walker it was clear that the likelihood of the promoters raising the funds for the dock and authorised line were minimal.

There was of course a sense of anger and injustice in all the towns on the proposed route with Kirkcaldy holding a packed Indignation Meeting in the Corn Exchange on the 1st August. Bar make noises and consider trying again in the next session of Parliament – there was little which could be done. It was not until the Lords rejected

the 1909 *People's Budget* that the convention that the Lords could reject and kill a bill on their own volition saw steps being taken to remove that power. The first result was that the 1909 Budget was passed in 1911 and the State Pension came into being. It was of course all too late for the *Kirkcaldy and District Railway*.

Under the arrangements now almost completed, the Seafeld Dock will be finished and the railway now under construction connected with it. The mineral lines will be connected with the N.B.R. system, and thus the hopes of extension of the town which were formed when the project was first started are in a fair way of being realised. It would be inopportune in the meantime to say more on the means by which this change has been brought about, but there can be little doubt as to the substantial benefit to the North British Railway Company of finishing the works at Seafeld and connecting them with their main line.

By the 7th November the *Fife Free Press* was in a more positive frame of mind. In the interim the *North British Railway* and the Promoters had been in conversation and the original plan seemed to be saved. The new dock with all that that entailed was progressing and its railway would be connected to the North British Main Line. On top of that the authorised line was making progress to bring coal and minerals to the new dock from Cowdenbeath and district.

By the 21st the same paper was reporting that the Seafeld site was one of great activity. A week later on the 28th the same newspaper carried a lengthier article indicating that the *North British Railway* were planning to borrow capital to complete the dock. In the paper's eyes "there was no likelihood of the scheme being allowed to flag". In addition the contractor, John Howard, had won the contract for and had started work on the Brighton Pier and Palace which gave him added kudos.

The above all seems positive so it must have been a shock when on the 19th December, *The Fife Free Press* contained a short statement that operations at Seafeld Dock are to be abandoned. That same day both the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* and the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported that a large number of the workmen were dismissed and it was believed that the dock would be entirely abandoned. Both reports made mention that the railway up the Tiel Valley was being pushed forward.

On the 26th of the same month the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce* carried a longer snippet which reported that men were now removing the plant and machinery from the site. From that day until this not another addition was made to the edifice on the Coastal Path which stands as a reminder of what could have been.

The work of constructing a large dock at Seafield, near Kirkcaldy, on the Forth, is now completely abandoned, and men are employed in removing plant and material.

At a meeting of the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company the Chairman intimated that unless the feeling in the district "was sufficiently strong to induce them to find the balance of capital required to complete the railway," the directors would be compelled to consider the offer of the North British Railway Company.

The dream of the largest deep water dock on the east coast of Scotland exporting coals and minerals from the expanding central coalfield was lost. The long awaited hope and expectation that passengers and

freight would be carried directly to Glasgow from Kirkcaldy was lost. The opportunity for a huge boost for industry and commerce through shipping and rail was gone.

The Fife Free Press on Saturday the 3rd November 1894 is probably the end of the line for this object. The article was commenting on the opening of the new mineral line from Cowdenbeath to Burntisland via Kirkcaldy. The article gave a lengthy resume of the history of the line and once again the team were relieved that nothing of any great moment had been missed. John Howard had been brought on board in late 1888 and as shown above work only commenced in 1889 before ending in 1891. It is a testimony to the planning and effort that so much was achieved in that short space of time – especially when the work of blasting and cutting rocks both on land and at sea is taken into account.

OPENING OF THE NEW DIRECT RAILWAY FROM COWDENBEATH TO BURNTISLAND VIA KIRKCALDY.

Now that the new mineral line from Kirkcaldy to Cowdenbeath is completed and ready for traffic, it may not be out of place to give a short resume of its history. At one period it was of great local interest, but its course having now been altered, it has given Kirkcaldy the slip, and will bring its mineral store to the harbour of Burntisland, where, before long, we may expect to see considerable extensions to provide for the increasing traffic.

The new line was faithfully completed by the *North British Railway* but of course it did not come near the proposed Seafield Dock – it

was connected to the North British lines both at Inverkeithing Junction and at Cowdenbeath – Burntisland Docks were the victor. The only actual photograph we could trace is that shown here. It was taken when the *North British Railway* were constructing the mineral line. The company did nothing in relation to constructing the dock nor did they seem to have any intention of providing a line along the Sands Road to Kirkcaldy Harbour. They got what they wanted – with only a portion of the promise they made to the Select Committee being kept. They simply froze the Caledonian Railway out of Fife and then completed the mineral railway which they had spent time, effort and money on, despite maintaining, from first to last, that it was unnecessary.

It is appreciated that this is a lengthy narrative on a structure which was never completed. As indicated earlier there is no previous account to work from, so the full details are provided to form a structured starting point for future research. It certainly seems that the three Bills mentioned may well have revolutionised Kirkcaldy had they been granted. It is beyond doubt that when tramcars did arrive they had a huge impact on the town. Is there any reason to believe that the two railway Bills would not have had a similar influence?

John Walker is perhaps painted as the villain and assuredly some of his tactics were unbecoming of such a large organisation – but it can be argued that he was simply protecting his company. Does the result always justify the means?

However, do not lose sight of the fact that Ronald Crauford Munro-Ferguson had indicated that he would take up any unsubscribed capital from the 1883 flotation. There was nothing formal, other than his words and, in the event, neither he nor the promoters felt that he was under any obligation. That said, if he had felt duty bound then it must be assumed that Kirkcaldy would have had its major dock and a profitable line carrying coal and minerals for export –

even if it was in the hands of a private company. How many business and employment opportunities were missed – all to Burntisland's advantage?

When you pass the stark edifice ponder on what might have been and think of the men who died or were severely injured in its construction – there were many – including George Stevens, an engine fitter from Links Street, who died on the 5th July 1890. Bad and bad enough dying as a result of an industrial accident – if the structure is completed – a hundred times worse if it was abandoned before completion.

Acknowledgements

This story has been produced almost solely through researching newspapers. All the individual newspapers used are credited in the text as are the various sketches which have been added into the article. All the newspaper information was obtained from *Findmypast Newspaper Archive in partnership with the British Library*. Without access to this information it would have proved impossible to produce this narrative.

The Photographs of the 6 pages of the Kirkcaldy and District Railway Company Prospectus which appear on page 46 are reproduced thanks to Fife Cultural Trust – Kirkcaldy Library Local Studies Team.

We are indebted to the same Local Studies Team for their unfailing

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