

Railway in Moidart.

This is not a historical account about the part of the railway from Fort William to Mallaig which passed through Moidart, but a summary of a selection of documents and letters about the railway which are held at the Highland Archive Centre in Fort William. Numbered documents are held at the Glenuig History House and can be consulted there.

The first plans were that a railway should be extended from Fort William to Roshven, Moidart. But this was opposed by the Blackburn land owners and finally turned down in the House of Lords. Pressure was then put to have the railway go to Mallaig. The archive collections in Fort William have a large scale map of the proposed building of the railway to Roshven. It is dated 1888 but the section from Alisary to Roshven appears to have been cut off. (A copy of this map can be seen in the History House in Glenuig.)

The collection has an article praising the building of the new railway from Fort William to Mallaig:-
"The Mallaig Railway. The West Highland Extension 1897-1901.

Traversing some of the most beautiful scenery - and some of the most difficult terrain - in the British Isles, the 40-mile (64.5km) extension of the West Highland Railway runs from Banavie near Fort William on the shores of Loch Linnhe to the Atlantic seaboard at Mallaig. Built between 1897 and 1901, it was one of the last major railway enterprises in Britain, and the "Iron Road to the Isles", as it is known, ranks among the greatest triumphs of Victorian railway engineering and construction. It was the prospect of a lucrative traffic in sea fish which drove the railway company westward from its 1894 terminus, and it was the pairing of the talented and determined engineering and contracting firms of Simpson & Wilson and Robert McAlpine & Sons which realised that prospect at the formal opening of the line on 1st April 1901, almost one year ahead of schedule.

Alexander Simpson (1832-1922) and Robert McAlpine (1847-1934), heads of their respective firms, were both of Lanarkshire origin and had first become acquainted in 1876, the year in which McAlpine first began to use the building material which earned him the enduring nickname of 'Concrete Bob'. His eldest son, Robert Jnr, assisted by one of his younger sons, Malcolm, was placed in charge of contracting work on the Mallaig extension which provided the perfect opportunity for McAlpines to demonstrate to the world the versatility, strength and relative cheapness of mass concrete used on an extensive scale for major bridge-building purposes.

The results were - and remain - truly spectacular, and six concrete viaducts constitute the line's most outstanding engineering monuments. Designed by W S Wilson and built by Robert McAlpine, they are most famously symbolised by the Glenfinnan Viaduct which sweeps dramatically across the valley at the head of Loch Shiel in a great crescented arc 1,248 feet (380.4m) in length and 100 feet (30.8m) in maximum height of 21 arches of standard 50-foot (15.2m) span, "a thing so delicate that the fairies might have built it", according to the author J J Bell. But in other feats of great technical daring, engineer and contractor together took concrete bridge construction literally to new lengths. One of the arches of the four-arched Morar Viaduct (1897) extended the limit of concrete spans from 60 to 90 feet (18.3 m to 27.4m), and a little later at the Borrodale Burn, confronted by a local laird's insistence on cladding intermediate piers in expensive granite, Wilson and McAlpine decided upon a breathtaking 127 feet 6 inches (38.9m) for a central span of a three-arched viaduct, twice what the world had witnessed prior to the building of this railway.

The mountainous terrain through which this railway was built required no less than 11 tunnels and almost a hundred rock cuttings. The region is made up of some of the world's hardest rock - mica-schist, quartz and gneiss - which, in the engineer's own words, "was admirably suited for concrete, [but] was quite impossible to use ... for masonry on a large scale." Blasting and removing this rock with pneumatic drills was a notoriously difficult operation, made particularly expensive by the fact that the air compressors which powered the drills were driven by steam engines which consumed much coal. Observing a water-powered drill used by his dentist, the young Malcolm McAlpine suddenly saw the considerable advantages of using water as a power source for the compressors. It was more cheaply

available, and the changeover to water turbines immediately brought about a fourfold increase in the rate of drilling, later providing direct power for electric drills. Ironically, in May 1898 Malcolm himself was gravely injured in a blasting accident. The story of his emergency treatment by Glasgow's most distinguished surgeon, Professor Sir William MacEwan, and his subsequent long, slow journey with an escort of navvies to MacEwan's nursing home in Glasgow was the single most dramatic human episode associated with this work. Happily, Malcolm made a complete recovery and lived to the ripe old age of 89. Unfortunately, however, such blast injuries were commonplace among the workforce, but in order to cope with such accidents Robert McAlpine Jnr can claim the credit for the first field hospital to be set up on a construction site in Britain. Using profits from a licensed canteen which he had instituted in an attempt to curb drunkenness, Robert had converted a schoolhouse at Polnish into an eight bed hospital staffed by a doctor and two nurses. This was the place where his own brother Malcolm was taken and first treated by MacEwan.

Bizarre celebrity status has recently been accorded the 51 feet (15.5m) long central pier of the eight-arched Loch-nan-Uamh Viaduct, for here penetrative radar scans have shown that, among the back filled rubble, it contains the entombed skeletal remains of a horse and cart which appear to have fallen backwards during tipping operations. Persistent local legend had long associated this event with the Glenfinnan Viaduct but its piers had failed to reveal any such evidence."

The Archives in Fort William have an article put out in The Scotsman on Saturday May 5th 1894 (D271/B/II/3/ii/d). A complete copy is held at the History House in Glenuig. Here are some extracts from that article :-

"For some days past a contest has been proceeding at Westminster of the highest importance to the Western Highlands. A Committee of the House of Commons has been engaged in considering a proposal for the construction of a line of railway from Fort William, the terminus of the new line from Glasgow to the north-west, which is now about to be opened for traffic to Mallaig, situated at the southern extremity of the Sound of Skye. After five days devoted to hearing evidence and explanations by counsel, the Committee have declared the preamble proved. The project thus sanctioned is of incalculable importance to the whole Western Mainland from Loch Linnhe to Loch Duich, to Skye, the Outer Hebrides, and in a lesser degree to Stornoway. In fact, the whole of the Western Highlands, which have formed the subject of so much distressful debate during the last ten years, will benefit, except, perhaps, the Islands south of Ardnamurchan and the northern mainland shores of Ross and Sutherland.....

Whatever the merits or demerits of agrarian legislation, it was obvious to Highlanders living in the country, and knowing the wants of the people, that reform of land tenure, however far it might be carried out, could not alone suffice to bring prosperity and content. The Western Highlands and Islands is a district vast numbers of people want to get to, and when there they will bring money and work; it also produces sheep by the hundred thousand, cattle, and an unlimited supply of fish, the value of which entirely depends on rapid transit to the great markets.....

The plan of a railway terminating somewhere between Arisaig and Loch Nevis is no new one. The Napier Commission reported in 1884- "We are of opinion that the fishing industry of the Outer Hebrides can never be fully developed until the railway is extended to the sea at some central point on the west of Inverness-shire, and daily communication established between the near terminus and the various fishing stations in the outer isles;" and they pointed out that the way to give effect to this opinions would be to construct a line from near the head of Loch Nevis to Fort William and so to Glasgow. When the Bill to authorise construction of the West Highland Railway was before Parliament the promoters sought power to build a line with a terminus at Roshven. This was refused for various local reasons, and further investigation has shown that Mallaig, with all the drawbacks its worst enemies can allege, is more suitable for the terminus.....

The report showed that the distance from Mallaig to Glasgow is but 165 against 278 miles from Strome Ferry and close on 290 miles from the new Highland terminus at Kyleakin. It has been stated in evidence by the manager of North British Railway that trains will run four hours from Glasgow to Fort William, and even making the extreme allowance of 2 hours for the transit from Fort William to Mallaig, the latter will be within 6 hours' journey of Glasgow; while the quickest train from Strome Ferry takes 10 hours and 25 minutes, and from Kyleakin must take 11 hours. For passengers, live stock, and, above all, fish, to save 5 hours out of 11, and

125 miles out of 290, is of such immense importance that opposition to a line calculated to confer such benefits on the community can hardly be regarded as serious.....

Undoubtedly the project has been actively promoted by proprietors. Locheil has taken the lead on behalf of landowners in regard to this extension, as he did it in the case of the larger undertaking from Glasgow to Fort William, and has been principally instrumental in the success of both. For several years the scheme has been fostered by all the landowners of consequence on the mainland and in the Islands, but they have done so because it was evident from countless meetings in all parts of the country interested that the people of all degrees, crofters quite as much as landowners, believed the railway was conducive to their welfare..... It may now be hoped that the objecting companies will be satisfied by the decision of the Committee of the House of Commons, and will refrain from exposing themselves and the promoters to the expense of a repetition of the contest in the House of Lords."

Estimates were made of the cost of building a new railway from Corpach to Mallaig and results were published in 1893. (D271/B/II/3/ii/d at the Archives in Fort William) :-

"West Highland Railway. Estimate of Expense

Length of Line 39miles 3f 1.60chs. Single track.

Earthworks :-

Rock cuttings of 495,500 cubic yards were to be carried out at a cost of	£86,712
Soft Soil cuttings of 181,690 cubic yards were to cost	£9,084
Roads of 2,000 cubic yards were to cost	£150
Embankments, including roads (748,650 cubic yards) were to cost	£3,000.
8 bridges were to cost	£4,000
Accommodation Bridges and Works	£14,000.
Viaducts	£35,000
Culverts and drains	£14,300
Metallings of Roads and Level Crossings	£250
Gatekeepers' Houses at Level Crossings	£450
Permanent Way, including fencing 39 miles 3F CHS 1.60. Cost per mile £1,800	£70,911
Permanent Way for Sidings, and cost of Junctions	£2,000
Stations	<u>£6,000</u>
	£266,700
<u>Contingencies (10%)</u>	<u>£26,670</u>
	£293,370
<u>Land and Buildings</u>	<u>£14,370</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>£308,240</u>

Signed :- Simon & Wilson, Engineers"

Book "West Highland Railway (Mallaig Extension) Bill 1894".

This book at the Archives in Fort William is a binding together of various Parliament meetings about the building of the railway to Mallaig. (D271/B/II/3/ii/d). It has five different sections.

In the first section the Cameron-Heads were opposing the creation of a railway from Fort William to Mallaig.

The first page is labelled "In the House of Commons, Session 1894. West Highland Railway (Mallaig Extension). Petition Against, on Merits, Praying to be heard by Council. To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of Christine Helen Jane Head, Wife of Captain James Head, of Inverailort, in the County of Inverness". Handwriting at the top says "Presented 21st March 1894".

"A Bill has been introduced into, and is now pending in, your Honourable House intituled "A Bill to empower the West Highland Railway Company to construct an Extension of their Railway from Banavie to Mallaig with a pier and other works in connection therewith and for other purposes".

The next section (page 2), then states " Your Petitioner respectfully submits that, as regards the opening up of a district now devoid of railway communication and the benefit and advantage of the

inhabitants of the districts and islands in the Bill mentioned, the allegations of the Preamble are wholly without foundation, and asserts, on the contrary, that the district in question is a wild, mountainous, and very sparsely populated district, having no need whatever of railways and quite unable to furnish a traffic even if railways should be constructed through it as proposed. It is, moreover, a district which is now and in the nature of things always must be better and more cheaply served by water carriage."

The railway company were also proposing to contribute £3,000 towards the building of a road from Kinlochmoidart Pier to Kinlochailort station (page 3, section 6), so that there would be good access to a railway from Atharacle and from Ardnamurchan.

Section 10, page 4, says "The Estate, which is upwards of ten miles in length and contains about 18,000 acres, consists of pasture, arable, and forest land, together with a mansion house and grounds, shooting lodge, shepherds' cottages, and other buildings connected with the various sheep farms into which the property is divided, and there are also upon the estate many valuable burns and streams of water. The property has the further advantage of being washed by the waters of Loch Eilt in which there is an abundance of salmon and trout. The land is all under sheep, but there are deer upon it, and the sporting rights are of considerable value to your Petitioner".

"It appears ... that the railway is so laid out to pass right in front of the mansion house and to intersect the property in the most injurious and destructive manner by cuttings, viaducts and tunnels almost from end to end, entirely destroying the amenities of the mansion house by passing in full view of the windows, and your Petitioner objects thereto, and confidently alleges that no case of public necessity or advantage can be made out in favour of the line at all commensurate with the wanton injury which would be inflicted upon the property, rights, and interests of your Petitioner and other landowners affected by the Bill." (Section 11, page 4)).

"Clause 51 is objectionable as tending to facilitate the construction of a public highway past the mansion house and within forty yards of it which would inflict great injury upon your Petitioner by destroying the privacy which your Petitioner now enjoys." (Section 15, page 5)

The petitioner objected also because "the Company have not the financial ability for the raising of the capital", "there cannot possibly be such bulk of traffic as would justify the line, which must, if ever made, be worked at an annual loss." "the so-termed fisheries do not exist who would create paying traffic on the line"; "any heavy traffic, such as coal or wool, can be carried more cheaply by steamers"; "movements of cattle and sheep can be carried out more cheaply and with less risk on foot"; "fish traffic would be unprofitable". "The line would seriously damage your Petitioner's sheep farms, as it is designed to pass through and destroy the crofts"; "it will be ruinous to your Petitioner in relation to the sporting value of the estate, as everything will quit the glen and go over the sky-line and be lost to the Petitioner, and this would not happen merely during the construction of the line but for all time so long as platelayers and workmen are engaged on the maintenance and repair of the line"; "there would also be destruction of the forest land and the sheep fanks, and the blasting of the rocks and disturbance of the surface of the hill-side would choke and destroy the spawning beds in the numerous streams and render it impossible to find a tenant either for shooting or fishing. The construction of the line would frustrate your Petitioner's intention of forming a deer forest and thus improving the value of her property." "The damage and injury sought to be inflicted upon your Petitioner is of such a nature that no adequate compensation or other satisfaction can be obtained or awarded to her under the general law." (Section 16, page 5).

The next section of the collection has 16 pages on the West Highland Railway (Mallaig Extension) Bill on Friday 27th April 1894 with Sir Richard Paget in the Chair.

In the first section there is a list of "Names of Limited Owners. Mallaig Extension" :- Donald Cameron of Locheil, The Earl of Morton, John Andrew Macdonald of Glenalladale, Christine Helen Jane Head of Inverailort, Gertrude Susan Nicholson of Arisaig and Lord Lovat.

"The plan included their scheme for an extension of the line to a place called Roshven. There had been great discussions and representations and reports of commissions as to the great disadvantage which all the west coast of Scotland - particularly the fishery there - suffered from having no railway whatever; and in consequence of that the Promoters of the West Highland line included in their proposals a scheme for a line to Roshven with a harbour at Roshven.

Now, Sir, I need not tell you that the whole proposal was bitterly fought - fought with a bitterness of which only the Scotchmen and Welshmen are capable - by the opponents, namely, the Caledonian Railway and the Highland Railway - on the ground of competition. There the opposition was unsuccessful, and the line was sanctioned from Craighendran to Fort William; but as regards the piece between Fort William and Roshven there was the opposition of a landowner - Mr. Blackburn - who owned the property which he alleged was very seriously interfered with, and who had a substantial case, and there was also considerable opposition on the ground that Roshven was a very unsuitable place for providing harbour accommodation; and the Committee, while passing the West Highland line, rejected that proposal to Roshven, mainly, I think I may say, because of the landowner's opposition, and because they were not satisfied with the harbour accommodation at Roshven". (page 2).

"We recommend that a sum of £15,000 should be placed at the disposal of the Company as a contribution towards the construction of a harbour which should be accessible to all vessels on payment of reasonable dues. The mode of constructing the harbour, which is a matter of great importance, should be subject beforehand to the approval of the Board of Trade. At present Mallaig Bay is open to the north, and a breakwater of considerable length, extending along a reef of rocks on the west of the bay, and bent eastward, at its northern extremity, will be required. The distance from Mallaig to Glasgow will not exceed 165 miles as compared with 278 miles from Stromeferry, and the route thus saves upwards of 100 miles to most of the important southern markets".

"The effect of the construction of the Mallaig line would be to place the West coast fisheries on more equal terms as to time of transport to the southern markets with the fishing stations on the east coast."

"The promoters have estimated the cost of this line at 260,000 l, and that of the harbour works at 45,000 l (sums which we consider likely to prove inadequate). They think that if the Government would make a grant of 100,000 l towards the railway, together with a contribution towards the harbour works, the remainder of the capital could probably be raised."

The collection at Fort William Archives then has a section of 300 pages about House of Commons meetings from Friday 27th April 1894 till Thursday 3rd May. The section begins with a second meeting made on Friday the 27th and it was also chaired by Sir Richard Paget. Donald Cameron of Locheil was examined (pp1 -18) and Robert Stewart (pp68 - 73). Donald Cameron was lord-lieutenant of Inverness County, chairman of the County Council and served on Lord Napier's Commission. " I think you were one of the Promoters of the West Highland Railway in 1889 - I was in conjunction with Lord Abinger and as originally proposed that the line was intended to reach the coast at Roshven". "I was very much disappointed with the Roshven part of the line being thrown out by the House of Lords and for my own part I may say that ever since I have been doing all in my power to obtain an extension to the west coast in some shape or form.

There was an influential deputation for the purpose of supporting the extension to Mallaig and the creation of a harbour or the making of an improved harbour there. I may say that I considered it of vast, of great, and paramount importance to all the crofters and fishermen, as well as to the proprietors and farmers in the Western Highlands, that they should have speedier and cheaper communication with the southern markets; and when I was on Lord Napier's Commission I was very much struck by a great deal of the poverty which I found existing there, and the only alleviation that I, and I may say, all the other members of that commission, thought was likely to be of permanent benefit was that they should be brought more into connection with the outer world, and find a greater outlet for their produce, and so bring themselves more in connection with those who live in the south parts of the country".

Asked about population of Fort William where the railway stopped he replied "It is a small town - a comparatively little town with a population of about 1,700, and it is quite unsuitable for the terminus of an important railway like that. The Promoters originally wished to extend the West Highland to Roshven and to the west coast of Scotland, and as I mentioned before, we were greatly disappointed when the Roshven line was thrown out by the House of Lords. That was the West Highland Bill of 1889". (Page 3, entry 20).

He then pointed out how the value of property was greatly increased by the appearance of railway connections and he pointed out how a railway at Mallaig would make connections from Skye much easier than the connection they had then to Oban railway. "Coming from Skye they have to go round the point of Ardnamurchan; it is one of the stormiest points on the coast, and in dealing with cattle and sheep it is of great importance not to expose them to rough weather such as you encounter passing the Point of Ardnamurchan." (page 4, entry 33).

Asked if there were any other possible harbours, he said that there probably were, for example in Loch Nevis, but that a railway connection would not be possible to them. Asked if the Mallaig railway would be of advantages to the islanders, Donald Cameron said that sending goods to Glasgow would be 100 miles shorter from Mallaig than from Strome Ferry. (page 5, entry 52).

He was asked if the proposed railway seen from Mrs Head's house would be in her property. He replied that it was not. It was in the property of Mrs Nicholson, 5 furlongs away from her house. "I could not see that the railway did any harm; on the contrary, anybody taking their shooting, or hiring their shooting lodge for the season, would prefer having a station with access from Fort William." (entry 69, page 7).

Asked if there would be any traffic apart from fish and goods traffic between Mallaig and Fort William, he replied "There is fair traffic for a Highland District - a considerable traffic - not the same as you would have on the underground Metropolitan Line here." (Entry 89, page 8).

Pages 28 to 31 have a curious list of charges that would be made at a new pier at Mallaig e.g.:- Vessels 0/2^d per ton, herring boats 0/4^d per boat, passengers 0/4^d each, cattle 0/4^d each, cheese 0/4^d per cwt, eggs 0/1^d per cwt., hares & rabbits 0/2^d per dozen, iron 0/4^d per ton, kelp 0/8^d per ton, meat 0/2^d per cwt., oysters 0/2^d per cwt, peats 0/4^d per ton, sugar 0/1^d per cwt., tea 0/6^d per cwt., turpentine 0/1^d per cwt., tobacco 2/6^d per ton, whisky 0/1^d per cwt.

Some landowners received compensation for a railway going through their land, "There is no reason why Mrs Head should not have got compensation, instead of which she chooses to file a petition opposing the Bill". (Entry 158, page 13).

Entries 161 to 165, page 14, suggest that the railway will not interfere with deer shooting. "It will pay far better as a deer forest than as a sheep farm? Yes, I believe that to be so; but the habits of deer, I maintain, are such that the railway will not do them any harm. You frighten deer more by showing your cap over a skyline. I will be bound to say Mrs Head's shepherd would send deer frightened much further away with his dog on the skyline, than all the engines of the North British altogether. I would ask any person accustomed to stalking deer, and you would not find one who would not support me.

162. The shepherd will frighten more than the blast of an engine, you say? - Yes, if the deer get the wind of a shepherd it is far worse than the railway.

163. Which would you consider more likely to frighten a deer, one shepherd or 400 or 500 navvies? - It depends on the position of the shepherd, and the position of the navvies. If the navvies were attending to their business, making the railway, and the shepherd gets behind a knoll, and the deer get a puff of the wind, I say the shepherd will frighten the deer more than the navvies.

164. Is it the smell of the shepherd? - No, it is the smell of you or me, or anybody, it is when the deer gets the wind of a human being, he flies.

165. If these men were blasting, to say nothing of the noise, if these men who are making this railway, and afterwards maintaining the railway, get to windward of these deer, surely, they will smell them? - I do not mean to say for one moment that the deer would stay in the neighbourhood of navvies making a railway.

CHAIRMAN. That must be very obvious to everybody."

In discussing a new road to go past the Mansion house are these statements (174 - 183, page 15):- "You spoke of the path that comes round the shores of Loch Ailort. You spoke of that as a public road already? Yes.

But you take powers to make it into a public road, do you not? No, we take powers to make it into a good road from a bad road.

Are you aware it is only a bridle path? Yes.

There is only a right of way along a bridle path, that is all there is now? - Yes, a very bad path.

Therefore under the powers of this Bill you propose to turn a bridle path into a public road.

How far will that road pass from the mansion house of the estate? - It will pass quite close to the mansion house.

Would you like a bridle path turned into a public road quite close to your own mansion house? - I am under the impression that the idea was that 3,000l. would not make a road. To begin with, somebody would have to supplement that 3,000l., and the impression was that the County Council would take a share of it, and that the landowners would take a share of it, and that the third portion of it would be paid by the railway company, in consideration of the traffic they could get. If I am right in that the County Council, I believe, cannot take land compulsorily from a landowner, and therefore Mrs. Head could always object to the road being made, and the road will not be made, and our powers, therefore, would be of no avail.

I think you have been ill-advised in regard to that. I think the County Council can take land for those purposes? - Somebody is promoting a Bill to give them power to do it. They cannot do it.

The fact remains that you are taking power in this Bill to do this thing? - Yes, but we cannot do it without their assistance, because we only take 3,000l, and the road cannot be made for 3,000l.

Without the Railway Company's assistance you would not do it either as far as it goes, but as you have admitted you are going to turn a bridle path into a public road and to bring it within 40 yards of the windows of this mansion house, I pass from that, because I am going to prove the effect of that. Now, you said just now that so much of the railway as will come within view of the mansion house is not on Mrs. Head's property at all, and in that you are correct, it is on somebody else's property, but it will come within view of the windows of the house, will it not? - Yes

I suppose you will admit that the noise of the trains would be heard in the house? - Yes."

There had been suggestions that the railway should pass along the north side of Loch Eilt. (186, page 16) "I can only say it looks to me - a non-professional man - an extremely difficult bit of ground on which to construct a railway, and that the other side is very much easier. When the line was first proposed and I went to Mr Simpson Wilson, the engineer, I asked him, understanding Mrs Head would prefer to have it on the north side, to see if he could not possibly accommodate her, and I was told it was impossible, it would add so much to the cost that it could not be done. I did all I could to persuade the engineers to take it on the other side in order to avoid the inconvenience to Mrs. Head."

To gain access to the proposed new railway from Atharacle and Ardnamurchan, Lord Howard of Glossop had proposed a new road to be built along the north side of Loch Shiel (195, page 16) :-

"On the question of alarming the deer, are you aware that Lord Howard of Glossop, has offered to construct a public road at his own expense from Glenfinnan right down the shores of the loch to give communication to a very needy district, but that has been refused by Colonel Macdonald because of the danger to the deer forest? - No, I am not aware of that, I should not think it likely."

"196. But you do believe that his wild mountainous district, sparsely populated, a railway should be constructed, and that the little traffic that there may be can be better carried by railway than by water? - Yes."

Sheep farming was widely discussed (201, page 17). "It takes 4 to 5 acres to graze a sheep.

Within the last year or two, in the north has there been a great depression with regard to sheep farms? - Yes, very great, I am sorry to say - a great and growing depression. Do you think a railway coming to a sheep farm would be more likely to improve its lettable value than to depreciate it? - I am afraid I cannot say a railway would improve it much."

Entry 212 says that improvement of a road from Kinlochmoidart to Kinlochailort would cost between 9,000 and 10,000l.

The next person interviewed was Robert Stewart, proprietor of Kinloch Moidart Estate, member of County Council of Inverness and member of the district Council Committee. The first question was (865, page 68) "Do you consider that at present the country in the Moidart district is badly provided with facilities of access?. Yes. The only access at present for the Moidart district is by Mr. MacBrayne's steamer, which comes into Salen, Loch Sunart.

866. I believe when the weather is unsettled the captains are afraid to take their vessels in? That used to be the case, but this last year Mr. MacBrayne has built a very good pier... and that lessens the difficulty."

867 When you require to come to Inverness for the County Council meetings, how long does it take you to get there? - To Inverness it takes about two days and to Fort William it takes an entire day. Two days if you go by Oban, an entire day if you drive 43 miles. On that road you have Corran Ferry, which makes it sometimes extremely difficult to get there."

869. "If you had this railway how long would it take you to get to Inverness?- You would go from Inverailort on to Fort William and then you could get on from there to Inverness by the canal.

871. "And that would be done in one day, I believe. No. It would take longer than that to do it."

879. "Are you of the opinion that the proposed road (from Kinloch Moidart to Lochailort) would be an immense advantage in every way to the inhabitants of the district?- Yes. I feel very strongly about that road. At present it is only a path about 5 feet in breadth. It is kept up by the County Council. On parts of it the gradient is 1 in 3. There is a considerable population between Kinloch Moidart, and Roshven, a very considerable number of crofters, I should think altogether 200 or 250 people, who have no means of access possible except by this road, which, as I say, is only a footpath. In winter it is most difficult to get along there. The only way they can get their goods in easily is by Mr. MacBrayne's steamer which calls once a fortnight in winter or something like that. The people there are unquestionably very badly placed. I think that that road - apart altogether from the railway, is essential to the benefit of the district, as far as I can make out. There is a tremendous desire to get it. Lord Howard and myself have been most anxious to do what we can for it and have agreed to subscribe so as to get it made. There is no doubt the configuration of the country makes the road difficult to make. The gradients are very steep, and it would require a good deal of expense. I have had it so far surveyed, and the cost is estimated at something like about 600l a mile. Should this Bill be carried, it will be essential for the railway Company also, because there is a very considerable population also in the Moidart district. I felt it was essential for the district to have a road, because at present they are shut up so thoroughly. The railway company has agreed to subscribe 3,000l to the road, but that would not be sufficient."

885. "About the harbour of Mallaig, I believe you are very well acquainted with it? - Yes. I have been in there with my yacht several times. It is about 36 acres in extent, I think. The depth of water is quite sufficient for any ordinary purpose. It would undoubtedly be a great advantage to have a breakwater that is proposed just now. If that were made it would, I think, be a fairly good harbour according to its extent, and I think it would be quite possible for MacBrayne's steamers to come in there which would be a tremendous advantage to the district all round.

893-901. What population is there in that part of Moidart? - About 3,000 Or 3,200.. And if you take Ardnamurchan and Moidart together ? About 4,500.

908. I have spoken to Mrs Head about the road being taken away from being in front of her house, as it is at present. With regard to my own estate at present the road stops at Kinloch Moidart Pier. We have the benefit of a road, which is an immense advantage. If this other road were made there would be considerable traffic past me. I do not object to it; in fact, I am most desirous that it should be carried out. For the public advantage there I consider it absolutely essential."

"911. You think the road might be constructed round the edge of the Sea Loch?- Yes."

Evidence was taken on Wednesday 2nd May 1894. Page 179 gives a list of Noblemen and Gentlemen in the North of Scotland who promoted the Highland Railway System e.g.

	Amount of Subscriptions, all paid in full. £
His Grace the Duke of Sutherland	355,545
Right Hon. the Earl of Seaforth	73,370
Right Hon. the Earl of Fife	30,000
Sir Alex. Matheson, Bart., M.P.	73,623
Eneas W. Mackintosh, Esq. of Raigmore	26,500
Sir James Falshaw, Bart.	29,080
Cluny Macpherson	13,064
Right Hon. Lord Lovat	4,500
R.B. Æ. Macleod, Esq. of Cadboll	6,000
J. Grant Peterkin, Esq. of Grange	11,031
James Merry, Esq., M.P. of Belladrum	85,000
Col. Fraser-Tayler, of Aldourie	6,720
Lord Albert Leveson Gower	40,000
Lord Ronald Leveson Gower	40,000
Lord Tweedmouth	18,200
Others	
<u>Total</u>	<u>£843,773.</u>

"The Directors of the Highland Railway System were at one time personally liable for upwards of £1,000,000 of temporary loans that were required to carry out the undertakings, and of this large sum they are still under obligations for £160,000 not yet paid off."

Page 184 shows tables describing the numbers who could use the railway to Mallaig e.g.

	<u>Houses</u>	<u>People</u>
Glenfinnon (sic) and Glenoladale (sic) between Lochshiel & Lochbeoraid	17	86
Inverailort, Kinlochailort, Polish, Roshven	39	202
Meoble and south side of Loch Morar	11	62
Arisaig, Rhue, Keppoch	79	293
Back of Keppoch to River Morar	58	286
North Morar, Tarbert Inn to Mallaig	67	370
North Morar (Tarbert Inn to Kinlochmorar	16	74
Knoydart, Inverie, Barrisdale, Carnoch	94	417
Total	<u>381</u>	<u>1,790</u>
Eigg	50	283
Rum	11	53
Muck	10	48
Canna	<u>21</u>	<u>433</u>
Total	<u>92</u>	<u>433(sic)</u>

Page 186 - 192 show details of the proposed railway from Banavie to Mallaig and makes comparisons with the details about the line from Kyle of Lochalsh. It shows for example that there would be 28

curves between Banavie and Mallaig with a radius of 10 Chains, out of a total of 130 Curves with a radius shorter than 40 Chains. There would be 1½ miles of 1 in 48, 6¾ miles of 1 in 50, 3½ miles of 1 in 60, 7 miles of 1 in 70, 75, and 80. Ascents were longer going from Mallaig to Banavie than going in the opposite direction.

A table suggests (page 192) that savings could be made by using the railway from Mallaig instead of Kyle:-

	<u>Distance saving</u>	<u>Time saving</u>
	<u>miles</u>	<u>hours</u>
Stornoway to Glasgow	76	1½
Portree to Glasgow	76	1½
Stornoway, or Portree, to Edinburgh	17	3
Stornoway, or Portree, to King's Cross	17	3
Stornoway, or Portree, to Euston	63	1¾

On Wednesday 2nd May 1894 Captain James Head was also examined.

"2787. Will the proposed railway run through the very limited portion of low ground on the estate? - It will

2788. What effect do you anticipate that will have upon your sheep farms? - It will take away all the low ground where the sheep are in the habit of moving down in stormy weather and in the winter.

2789. May I take it that it will practically destroy the only arable land belonging to the farms? It will.

2792. The sheep would have to be wintered in some other part of Scotland? - Yes, at great expense.

2795. Will the proposed line destroy what are called in Scotland the fank of the cottage of Esau (sic) - the sheep folds? It will destroy the fank undoubtedly.

2799. Have you found that the farms are practically unlettable for fear of what the railway will mean? - They are.

2801. I believe the only applicant ... has offered a decrease of a very large sum of money from the last rent. Very large indeed. He offered about a third of the original rent that we used to have.

2808. What effect do you expect upon your deer - the deer you have now, and upon the forest which you are about to construct, from the construction of the railway?- It will render the construction of the forest impossible, and as regards the deer that are already on the ground it will undoubtedly drive them over the sky line on to my neighbours' ground.

2809. Deer being wild animals, of course there is no such thing as ownership in them?- There is no ownership in deer.

2826. Will the proposed railway interfere with your spawning beds? Most distinctly.

2827. The principal spawning beds are on the south side of the loch along which this railway is proposed to be constructed. If culverts are made they will undoubtedly create a scour which will disturb the spawn and probably sweep it all back into the loch.

2832. It has been suggested to various witnesses for the Promoters that there should be a diversion of this railway across your loch somewhere in the middle of it at the point described as the island, on to Mr. Nicholson's property. What do you think of this proposal?- I would rather it were on the north side than on the south side of the loch. It would do me less damage.

2844, page 235. Under the powers sought by this Bill what would be the effect in your opinion on the privacy of the Mansion House of Inverailort?- It would be destroyed."

In entry 2845, Mr head was asked to give an account of the bridle path which passed his house and was to be turned into a public road. - "The road, from the Arisaig to Banavie road, was constructed to Inverailort House by the late Mr. Duncan Cameron, Mrs Head's father, at his own expense. He built it on past the house as far as the pier, so as to be able to drive to the pier. In course of time, having constructed it, he handed it over to the county, who have since maintained it. Running into this road,

but not necessarily a part of it, is this bridle path, which under this Bill the Company takes power to subscribe towards turning into a carriage road. If that were done, the public carriage road opening up the whole of Ardnamurchan and Moidart, a large population would be necessarily taken past, and within forty yards of our dining-room windows. They would all be going towards the railway undoubtedly. Their cattle would go; all the tramps of the district would go through, and we should in fact be reduced from being a comfortable highland house, enjoying a certain amount of seclusion, to the position of a suburb. I maintain that that would destroy the amenities most completely.

2847, page 235. "I thought you spoke of tramps passing? From Moidart and Ardnamurchan it opens up an enormous country.... It was stated there were 4,500 people in Ardnamurchan and Moidart who expected to benefit from this railroad.

2848. The number of tramps would not be very large, I take it? - Oh yes. At present we do not get a tramp a month. We should get two or three a day."

In entries 2853 to 2871, there is discussion of the road from Lochailort to Glenfinnan. "Is that road now dangerous? - Very. Have there been any accidents on that road? - Yes. Is that road very dangerous? - Very. Take your own family: what percentage of your family have had accidents on it? - Mrs Head has been very nearly killed twice. Her mother, Mrs. Cameron, received very serious injuries, and her uncle met with an accident through which he lost his leg. That out of five is pretty good. That is 70 per cent of family? - Yes. Do you consider that a railway alongside it will probably carry off the rest of the family? - We hope not. It will certainly make it much more dangerous."

2878, page 237. "In your opinion, looking at this case as one who has local knowledge, is the railway required for any traffic which could possibly justify its construction? - None that I have been able to discover. but it would be in your opinion a great disaster to your property? ~ Undoubtedly.

2880. If the railway is to be constructed it is in your opinion absolutely necessary that there should be a proper harbour at the end of it? ~ Most certainly. The only hope for any traffic on the railroad is what it can get from the islands outside the mainland. The mainland itself will supply no traffic whatever that I know of.

2881. It is not suggested that there will be any benefit to the people living along the line? ~ None, except possibly at Arasaig. There is a certain amount of population there who may want to get out of the country.

2882. How many people live along this line on your eight or nine miles of it? ~ There are only three between Glenfinnan and the Inn ~ that is ten miles."

2887 says that they "possessed the land from the beginning of this century". "When did they last lease it? ~ I think the last tenant left in 1886 or 1887. He had it for about 5 years. The rent was 300 l. Was the tenant when he left bankrupt? ~ Yes. Paid too much rent? ~ No, I do not think that. Not necessarily. He may have drunk too much whisky."

The next section of the collection is the meeting made on Thursday, 3rd May 1894. James Barr, a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers, was questioned about the proposed railway and the effect it would have on the estate. "The effect upon the estate by the construction of the railway will be, in my mind, to destroy very largely the value of the sporting rights during the construction of the railway, and will, to a very great extent, disturb the shootings during that same period. I think after the railway is constructed that would be minimised to a large extent in a year or two - in fact would disappear very nearly. I do not think while the railway is in course of construction, and the glen filled with workmen, and the blasting go on, the shootings or fishings will be lettable at all, and the revenues from that source will be largely lost."

2988 says "The property carries, does it not, at present a sheep stock of 4,000 to 5,000 in five separate flocks? It does. And they are wrought from Inverailort, and one each from Essan, Rannochan, and Mouie - the shepherd's houses on the property? Two of the flocks are from Inverailort and the other three from some shepherd's houses on the property.

He was then asked (3035, page 252) "Do you attach great importance to the suggestion that I made to the engineer of the Bill, and which he said he could carry out, of placing the station in such a position as not to be in view of the mansion house windows of Inverailort? That can be easily done, and I understand, has been agreed to."

In question 3086, page 255, Barr was asked "You do not admit the possibility of Mallaig growing, and making a market to some extent?~ But there is nothing to market.

3087. But if a population grows there will be something to market, will there not?~ There is just only the clipping of the ship, which is taken away from the foreshore by vessels which bring them coals, and it costs them nothing. There is positively nothing to market."

3116-3133, pages 258,9 show an examination made on Dudley Macdonald, gamekeeper employed by Mr. Head. He had been under-gamekeeper with his father at Invergarry. "Do you think generally that the construction of this railway would be a most serious damage, and entail grievous loss to the sporting value of Inverailort?~ It would, both as to shooting and fishing.

3139. What have you shot of late years?~ Last year we shot 17 stags on the one side; but we could kill many more".

The next person sworn in was Mr. Andrew Weir. He had been farm manager at Inverailort for 5 years in 1894. Before that he had managed Kinloch Farm for 7 years and he had worked before that with his father who was manager to Mr. Cameron of Lochshiel.

3145, page 260 asks "What effect do you think the proposed railway will have on the sheep farms of the estate?~ I think it would have a very serious effect to take away the low ground entirely, and a greater proportion of the sheep would have to be sent to wintering and very possibly they would never come within 400 or 500 yards of each side of the proposed railway to graze."

3147 - "Do you mean now, immediately, within the next year or so, or ever?~ During the construction, when there would be 4,000 to 5,000 navvies at work".

3156,7 "Do you expect that you would have to send away some 700 others to winter?~ I expect we would. What does it cost to winter a sheep?~ From 7^s 6^d to 8^s 6^d.

3159, page 261. "Therefore if you winter 700 sheep it would mean something like £300?~ Yes."

3171, page 262. "We sent them to a place called Inverary where the railway passes through, and before the railway we only had 80 deaths, and now we have three times that".

Asked how much the wintering cost, he eventually replied. "We paid 107 £ for the wintering, and 15 £ for the shepherd."

" 107 £ for wintering 900 lambs. I think you will be able to see that the sum is about 2^s3^d a head. I think my learned friend said 10^s6^d."

Page 295 has a table comparing the time to travel between Barra and Glasgow via Oban and via Mallaig. "Ferry Barra to Oban 8h 50m; train Oban to Glasgow 4h 25m; total 13h 15m.

Ferry Barra to Mallaig 6h 30m; train Mallaig to Glasgow 6h 30m; total 13h 0m."

The last of this meeting states (pages 299 -300) "Mr. Reader Harris. May I say now that an arrangement has been come to on behalf of Mrs. Head which has enabled us to withdraw our opposition to the Preamble of this Bill?

The Chairman. The Committee are very glad to hear that such an arrangement has been come to. Mr. Bidder. I have reason to believe that Mrs. Head's opposition is on the high road to withdrawal. The Chairman. It is absolutely withdrawn, I understand."

The last of the meetings took place on Friday 4th May 1894 and has a long discussion (50 pages) about various Highland Railways still possible. It finishes with an estimate of the Pier and Breakwater at Mallaig as £45,000 including the purchase of land and all contingencies. It is dated 15th day of March 1893 and signed by Simpson & Wilson, Engineers. Dated the same day is a summary of the Total cost ~ Railway £308,240; Pier and Breakwater ~ £45,000. Total ~£353,240.

There is then a breakdown of the £308,240 expense. e.g.

Rock cuttings (495,500 cubic yards)	£86,712/10/0
Soft Soil (181,690 cubic yards)	£9,084/10/0
Roads (2,000 cubic yards)	<u>£150/0/0</u>
	<u>£95,947/0/0</u>
Embankments, including roads (748,650 cubic yards)	£3,000.
Bridges - Public Roads (number 8)	£4,000
Accommodation Bridges and Works	£14,000
Viaducts	£35,000
Tunnels	£20,842
Culverts and drains	£14,300
Metallings of Roads and Level Crossings	£250
Gatekeepers' Houses at Level Crossings	£450
Permanent Way, including Fencing (39 Miles, 3 F 1.60 CHS £1,800 per mile)	£70,911
Permanent Way for Sidings and Cost of Junctions Stations	<u>£2,000</u> <u>£6,000</u>
Contingencies 10%	<u>£26,670</u>
Total	£293,370
Land and Buildings	<u>£14,870</u>
Total	<u>£308,240</u>

A new estimate was made on 14th October 1899 for altering the road near the proposed station at Kinlochailort.

"Estimate of proposed road near Kinlochailort"

Cutting - 2310 yds. Banking 3285 yds.	£825/5/-
<u>Bridge over Burn</u> Excavation 20yds.	£2/10/-
Concrete	£187/10/-
Drystone Wall (15 yds)	£1/17/6
<u>Culverts and drains</u> Excavations (15 yds)	£1/17/6
Rubble Masonry (30 yds)	£30/0/0
Side Ditches (630 yds)	£47/12/6
Road Metalling (630 yds)	£283/10/0
Pier at Cambusdriseach (288yds)	£432/0/0
Road to Pier (108 yds.)	<u>£486/0/0</u>
	£1915/17/6

(Signed) Simpson & Wilson.

Mrs Cameron-Head did not wish Lochailort station to be in her own property and a letter of 31 September 1898 says:-

"Inverailort West Highland Railway"

..... We understand from Messrs. Macrae Flett Mennie the agents of the Company that General Hutchison has been appointed the Arbitrator who is to decide the point at which the station near to Inverailort should be constructed. We have however no official intimation of the appointment of General Hutchison."

The collection has a letter dated 22 August 1889:-

"Dear Mrs Head

Mallaig Railway

..... The loss of your fishing net is in my opinion a good claim against the Railway Company and there will be no difficulty in getting independent witnesses to speak to the General Disturbance and risk to life of fishing on Loch Eilt owing to rock blasting along the whole length of the loch.

George Gordon, Queensgate, Inverness."

In 1899 the Cameron-Heads requested a private railway platform to be built on the south side of Loch Eilt :-
"North British Railway Company

Private Platform Ranachan

I have pleasure in agreeing to Mrs Head's request that we should erect a short platform at a point 17 miles and two furlongs from commencement of the Mallaig Railway to be used only to set down and take up "deer stalking parties" from Kinlochailort on condition that the fares to be paid shall be the same as these from Kinlochailort to Glenfinnan single or return as the case may be and that previous notice is given to the Station Master at Kinlochailort that a train is required to be stopped at the proposed platform to set such parties down or pick them up.

Yours faithfully
(Signed) J. Conacher."

In the School records for Glenfinnan School (GB3218/C1/L/5/3/142a, held at Highland Archives Centre, Fort William), there are a number of teacher's entries between October and December 1946, expressing how children were unable to get to school, because the railway system had been changed so that trains would not stop between Arisaig and Glenfinnan Stations.

There is a letter from District Engineer, British Railways, Glasgow dated 11th April 1949 to A.K. MacDonald , District Surveyor in Fort William (Photocopies 1298 &9)

"Lochailort Section

From my own experience of difficulty in maintaining the manning of the Railway in these isolated parts, I can only sympathise with your position.

I am afraid, however, that in the circumstances I am not in a position to comply with your suggestion for the following reasons :-

Ganger James MacDonald is due to retire under the age limit on 22nd current. The house which he occupies at Polish is attached to this particular post i.e. the Ganger of the Length is expected to occupy that house.

I have already had communication from both James MacDonald and Lachlan MacPherson regarding the proposed exchange of houses, but I am unable to agree to the suggestion for the following reasons.

In accordance with procedure agreed with the Trade Unions, positions such as that being vacated by MacDonald require to be advertised among the men in certain Grades in our employment. After allowing for suitability, the order of seniority in which the applicants are to be selected is strictly laid down.

McPherson had no claim to special consideration on the grounds of suitability, while other applicants had appreciable seniority over him.

The man who has been appointed to succeed MacDonald is R.L. Meek from Loch Treigsidhe. Meek's present house is very isolated and he has a young boy, who will require to attend school shortly. This would be very difficult from his present place of residence.

I am anxious to obtain possession of the house at Polish occupied MacDonald in order that I may have Meek transferred.

I regret therefore, that in the circumstances, I am afraid I am not in a position to assist you in the matter.

Yours faithfully, C.B. Glenesk."

The Collection has a letter to the Cameron-Heads about the electrification of railways on 10 November 1952. These are some extracts made from that report:-

"It is estimated that nearly 10 million tons of coal per annum would be saved in Great Britain if the railways were completely electrified i.e. just under 10% of the present output of all the pits in Britain.....In the Area of the North of Scotland Board, the density of population is low, but the compelling reason there for railway electrification is the availability of hydro-electric power and the saving of coal.....It is estimated that nearly 1,750,000 tons of coal are used in the North of Scotland Area, of which 35,000 tons are used in transporting the coal to the area..... With the development of hydro power and consequently greater activity in the north with more trains, it may well be found that some of the single tracks of this line will require to be made into double tracks if steam trains continue. The making of single tracks into double tracks could thus be avoided. During the war the lines were working at full pressure, and the single line caused serious bottlenecks. Electrification

would also reduce the time of the journey by one third to one half..... It is estimated very approximately that the cost of electrification of the Highland lines would be on the average about £50,00 a mile or £5,500,000 in total. Locomotives cost about £60,000 each. It is estimated that about 40,000 tons of coal per annum are used by British Railways in transporting passengers and goods to and from the north over the Highland line, and this amount would be reduced to about 15,000 tons if the line was electrified i.e. a saving of about 25,000 tons per annum - cash saving say £100,000 a year.. The figures in this report are necessarily approximate."

There is an undated demand for Beasdale Station not to be closed. (Photograph 1310).
"From Inverailort, Lochailort, North Britain.

Beasdale Station or Unstaffed Halt

We object to the proposed closure of the Beasdale station on the following grounds :- There is no alternative Public Transport and if the already restricted service is totally withdrawn the people of Borrodale and Beasdale would suffer great hardships on the following grounds :-

- 1) Persons wishing to travel to and from the South.
- 2) Housewives purchasing provisions and household supplies.
- 3) Persons visiting relatives in Hospital.
- 4) Patients attending hospital as Hospital Out-Patients.
- 5) Patients attending Consultant Clinics.
- 6) Persons requiring Dental Treatment.
- 7) Pupils travelling daily to the Secondary School.
- 8) Persons wishing to do business in Fort William.
- 9) Farmers and Agricultural Workers requiring Veterinary and Agricultural Supplies
- 10) Medical Prescriptions and Supplies from Mallaig and Fort William

We would point out that the already restricted service imposed by British Railways some years ago, has in itself caused hardship. Persons do not really apply for agricultural employment in the area and difficulty is experienced in letting houses on a permanent basis."

Local service train stops at Lochailort and Glenfinnan were to be withdrawn. (D271/B/III/1 box 6. Photo 1759).

"The Committee, being a body with representatives from all the villages and townships served by the Railway, wish to lodge a strong objection to the withdrawal of the Local Service on the grounds of hardship.

We are strongly of the opinion that the withdrawal of the Local Service is tantamount to the first step towards the closure of the Line.

We recognise fully the great importance to the Local Residents in the area of travel to and from the South; and its importance also to the rapidly developing Tourist Industry from May to September.

But, for the day to day Domestic, Medical, Business, Educational and social activities, the through GLASGOW/FORT WILLIAM/ MALLAIG service would be inadequate and unsuitable. The Local Service and through GLASGOW/FORT WILLIAM/ MALLAIG service are complementary to each other. People travelling by the one service return on the other or vice versa. Upon scrutiny of the Time Table it will be readily observed that this is beyond dispute.

We hope the Consultative User's Committee will give us an opportunity to support our statement of objections on grounds of hardship by oral evidence."

British Railways had to reply to a letter from Mrs Cameron-Head on 19th January 1960. (Photocopy 1297).

"Lochailort : transport of men across Loch Eilt.

I refer to my letter of the 24th November last regarding the provision of a footbridge across the narrows near Corribuie.

After giving this matter very careful consideration from an engineering point of view, I feel that the job would be simplified greatly if you were to agree to a causeway being constructed from the road to the island, leaving only a single span bridge from the island to the railway side of the Loch. The single span bridge would, of course, be so constructed that the deck level would give ample clearance for a rowing boat to pass underneath. A Paterson, Acting District Engineer."

The summer Timetable proposed for 1963 showed that five train services from Mallaig to Fort William were to be withdrawn – 6.30am train from Mallaig (7.19 am at Lochailort and 8.46 at Fort William), the 12.36 pm, the 3.12 pm, the 5.49 pm and the 6.25pm trains from Mallaig. Only two services from Mallaig were to remain – 7.48 am and 1.27 pm. From Fort William to Mallaig only three services were to remain – 10.28am, 2.45pm and 9.10pm. Three services from Fort William to Mallaig were to be withdrawn – those leaving Fort William at 9.20 am, 9.55 am and 4.40 pm.

The Winter Timetable 1963/1964 showed that the 6.30am and the 5.50pm trains from Mallaig were to be removed, leaving only two trains from Mallaig, at 8.02 am and 1.25 pm. The 4.40pm train from Fort William to Mallaig was to be removed and only trains leaving Fort William at 10.30 am and 9.00 pm were to remain. (Photocopy 1291).

There is a notice in the Fort William Archives dated November 1963 :-

"Memorandum

Consultation between Management and Staff : proposals for line between Fort William and Mallaig.

1 Withdrawal of Local Passenger Train Service

2 Withdrawal of Freight Traffic Facilities at certain sidings

The Reshaping of British Railways Report contains a proposal to withdraw the above passenger train service. It is now the intention to develop this proposal..... In accordance with the requirements of the Act, it is necessary to publicise in two local newspapers details of the proposed withdrawal and to post notices at the stations affected during two successive weeks. These intimations provide for a period of six weeks, during which objections from any user of the service or anybody which represents such users may be sent to the Secretary of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee. The notices will be posted from Monday 25th November 1963. The staff concerned will be dealt with, in due course, under the Agreed Redundancy Arrangements. Every effort will be made to minimise hardship, and at the appropriate time, personal consideration will be given to the individual circumstances of each concerned.

Any objections received from users to these proposals will be subject to consideration by the Transport Users' Consultative Committee in accordance with the Transport Act, 1962. If no such objection is received by the Secretary of the Transport Users Consultative Committee within the stipulated period, the proposal is to withdraw the passenger train service as from Monday 2nd March 1964."

Kate and James MacLean from Glenuig sent a letter on 24/11/1964 to Mrs Cameron-Head (photocopies 1292-3).

"It will be a dreadful ordeal for one of us here in Glenuig if the 7.20 train & the 4.45 will be taken off, as we are so much depending on them. I for one had to attend Hospital for 3 months travelling on the 7.20 train and it was most essential for me to get back on the 4.45p.m. It's really a terrible thought for us all, if we are going to be done out of our only way to attend the Clinic at Fort William. Hope your are keeping well."

"Joint Statement by William MacDonald, Mr. James Kane,
Mr Ronald Macdonald, Mr. James Cameron and Mr. Angus Macdonald
all of Arisaig relative to proposed closure of three railway stations
and withdrawal of local stopping train services between Fort William
and Mallaig.

We are all workmen employed by contractors engaged in the construction of Kinlochmoidart - Lochailort road.

We all live at Arisaig and travel to our work on the Kinlochmoidart - Lochailort road every day. We are accustomed to travel by means of a van and if this van were not available to use we should be obliged to either go into lodgings in Lochailort or to travel by train. In any case if the road from Arisaig to Lochailort were icy in the winter-time we would be unable to take the van and accordingly we would have to go by train. Therefore the local train service is of vital importance to us and in particular the 6.30 a.m. train ex Mallaig which takes us to our work and the 4.40 p.m. train ex Fort William which takes us back to our lodgings at the end of a working day. We understand that both these trains are to be stopped and we confirm that if these trains were discontinued we would suffer very real hardship.

We also confirm that if our employers are willing we are prepared to attend the hearing in Fort William into the proposed rail closing." (photocopy 1307)

The following collection in the Archives Fort William about the threatened closure of the Mallaig railway is not dated, but was probably made in 1963. (Photocopies 1303 to 1306)

"Threatened Railway Closures

- I At the present stage it is possible for us to put forward a case for retention of only the Fort William/Mallaig railway line, while supporting retention of the Dingwall/Kyle line.
- II In terms of depopulation of the Highlands, closure of our line would have a very adverse effect and cause hardship to people of the Islands, to Mallaig itself, reaching down to Fort William and beyond.
- III For instance, one of the main attractions of visitors from the South to Fort William is its accessibility to Mallaig and the Isles. Tourist trade in Fort William itself would suffer, as would all these other places.
- IV In Mallaig, alone, employment on the railway at present number 60 men and women, so that unemployment would jump to 20% of the working population as a direct result.
- V Indirect results to the tourist trade would be even more serious. It is estimated, for example, tourism is worth over £750,000 to our district per season, a goodly proportion of which is travel. Truncation of the railway could mean a loss of something like 30% of the tourist trade. This takes no account of the £2½ million spent in Fort William district, whose tourists also use our line.
- VI We have been informed that no action regarding closure will be taken before an "A" standard carriageway has been completed. It is believed that such a road will take about 10 years from 1970 to build. In this case, we wonder why the Ministry of Transport has now so much to say concerning closure. In answer to our M.P.'s question in the House of Commons, the Minister of Transport stated that the widening of the Mallaig road for a distance of 32 miles would not commence until 1970 or thereafter.
- VII We are told that the Mallaig line is scheduled for closure because it is uneconomic. The Parliamentary Paper of 1894 declaring intention to build the railway stated clearly that it was recognised the railway line would not be economic. It was built for social reasons.
- VIII These social reasons are far more important in 1967 than they were in 1894. Attempts are being made locally to increase the freight tonnage used. The passenger figures during summer months are an indication of the social significance.
- IX It is felt that the figures are inclined to be weighted against Mallaig, because much of the traffic which would prefer to use our route is being diverted, as a matter of higher policy, away from this line, and using the much longer route to the isles, via Inverness and Kyle.
- X Attention should be drawn to the relative length of railway track for maintenance :-
Dingwall/Kyle – 63½ miles
Corpach/Mallaig – 38 miles
- It should also be stressed that as most of the traffic for Kyle or Mallaig is bound for the islands the relative proximity of these ports to the Hebrides is important. Mallaig, by virtue of its central position, is better placed to serve both the Northern and Southern islands. It is in fact the only port on the West Coast which does serve the Outer Hebrides from South Uist to Lewis, and also Skye and the Inner Isles, all by direct sailings. The population of these islands prefer to use Mallaig as their port, because of the short sea crossing, e.g. Mallaig to South Uist – 3 hours, as against Kyle to South Uist, involving two bus journeys of 40–50 miles each plus a 2 hour ferry crossing. Having arrived at the train terminal the relative distances are as follows :-
- | | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Mallaig - Glasgow | 165 miles |
| Kyle - Glasgow | 251 miles |
- Most of the traffic from the Islands is for Glasgow and the South.
- XI The alternative to railway service, i.e. a bus service, Fort William/Mallaig could never, under any circumstances, cope with current numbers of passengers. It is estimated that thirty buses daily would be required to carry the present number of passengers during the summer, to and from Mallaig. The present condition of the road could not cope with this added traffic. See item 6.
- XII Mrs. Cameron Head's references to intermediate station hardships.
- XIII At a time when the Government is trying to encourage people to stay in the Highlands by setting up industries etc., the closure of our line would seem to be an action against Government policy."

The collection has a letter dated 22nd July 1965 about train fares to be charged for children going to the Childrens' Camp at Lochailort (photocopy 0765).

- (1) Rannoch to Lochailort - Adults - 33/6 return fares; juveniles under 14 years of age - 16/9 return fares
- (2) Connel Ferry to Ballachulish - Adults - 12/6 return fares; juveniles under 18 years of age - 6/3 return fares
- (3) Fort William to Lochailort - Adults - 13/- return fares; juveniles under 18 years of age - 6/6 return fares

The Cameron-Head Collection has an article written in 1972 about the ferry connection between Mallaig, Kyle of Lochalsh and Stornoway. (Photocopy 1295)

"The route provides a link for passengers between Mallaig and Kyle of Lochalsh and Stornoway and operates daily except Sundays: inward from Stornoway in the morning making train connections at Kyle and Mallaig and returning in the afternoon to Stornoway.

It is proposed to discontinue after 30th September, 1972 the service between Mallaig and Kyle and in January 1973, or on completion of the Ullapool terminal, the Kyle of Lochalsh/Stornoway service will be discontinued and replaced by a new service between Ullapool and Stornoway, with a coach service between Ullapool and Inverness connecting with British Rail services to and from Glasgow and the south.

Comparative timetables :-

Stornoway dep. 0600; Kyle arr 1000; Mallaig arr 1215; Mallaig train dep 1300; Glasgow arr 2026.

Glasgow dep 0600; Mallaig arrive 120; Mallaig ferry depart 1230; Arrive Kyle 1345; Depart Kyle 1500; Stornoway arrive 1900.

New timetable :-

Stornoway depart 0530 am; Ullapool coach dep. 0830; Inverness train departure 1125; Arrive Glasgow 1525; Arrive Edinburgh 23.10.

Or Stornoway depart 1300 am; Ullapool coach dep. 1600; Inverness train departure 1900; Arrive Glasgow 0607; Arrive Edinburgh 0607."

Steam trains from Fort William to Mallaig were to be reintroduced in 1985. There is a letter written to "The Manager of British Rail in Fort William" on 1st April 1985 by a lawyer at the West Highland Estates Office, Fort William. The letter was signed on behalf of :- Forestry Commission, West Highland Woodlands, Lochailort Estate, Glenmamie Estate, Ardnish Estate, Lochailort Fishings, Arisaig Estate and Lovat Estate. (Photocopy 1308).

"Fort William Steam Train

I have been in communication with the undernoted list of owners regarding our concern about the possibility of fire from the steam trains which British Rail propose to run from Fort William to Mallaig during the tourist season. At the outset let me be perfectly frank that all the owners welcome the additional tourist facilities and business to British Rail, but our fear is that British Rail have not taken the threat of fire to adjoining properties to heart even although individual owners made their feelings very clear.

What should have happened is that all the scrub on the railway banks should have been cut and burned, that thereafter all the railway banks between Fort William and Mallaig should have been burned under strict control. This has not been done and in consequence fires, as happened last year, may take place again which is frightening. There is valuable timber all along the line which must be protected and hill grazings can be completely ruined at a vital time by fire. The undernoted proprietors have therefore got to give notice to British Rail of our concern and we would be grateful if you would please catalogue in detail what precautions you propose to take so that fire does not spread from British Rail property during the 1985 season.

Could I also suggest that on receipt of your list of proposals that you give us a date at which you could meet a representative body of the neighbouring proprietors.

I look forward to hearing from you, John P.S. Hunter."

G.C. Barr, March 2017.