



The Levenmouth Rail Campaign Newsletter

"Much More Than a Transport Project!"

**Campaign
Update 58
October 2019
(5th. Series)**

Fiftieth Anniversary of End of Passenger Services

LMRC Look Back on 'Last Train'

**... .. and Look
Ahead to The
Next!!**

"THE BROKEN CLOCK on the platform at Leven Station signalled on Saturday evening [4th. October, 1969], that time had despairingly run out for passenger trains at Leven." **[Up 'til Then! ...]**



◀ "Broken Glass" Clock Image from Microsoft 'Clip-Art' Library and "Flickr". Original Photo.-Credits NOT RECORDED.

"For, at 8.25 p.m., the last passenger train left from a dark and dejected Leven platform on its ultimate journey to Edinburgh."

— So wrote the *East Fife Mail* 'paper on the Wednesday after the withdrawal of passenger services from a station that, barely four years before, had been proclaimed

as the new 'rail-head' for Levenmouth following closure of the bulk of the *East Fife Line* in early-September 1965.

Now this service was gone, too ... just as transport officials were happily *talking-up* "better" bus services. A lack of fore-thought and planning ahead led to anything but. Traffic wardens started operating in Leven on almost the very day the passenger services ended. A bitter, five-week bus strike was about to begin - and, for four wintry months leading into the 'brave new world' of 1970, the vital link that was the A.915 *Standing Stanes* main road to Kirkcaldy was all but completely closed for a major upgrade. A "sizeable crowd" gathered at Leven Station

Original Story and Imagery:

**East Fife Mail – Wednesday,
8th. October, 1969.**

"As the 8.25 p.m. train left the platform at Leven, there were a few waves from passengers."



100 PASSENGERS BOARD THE LAST TRAIN FROM LEVEN (Pre-2020's!)

Archives Courtesy: *Johnston Press, Methil Library [Fife Council / Fife Cultural Trust]*. Original [Uncredited] News Reports and Images reproduced by Alistair Aynsough, LMRC News' editor.

to watch the final passenger train depart that Saturday evening, the 'paper stated. Whether there were devoted railway enthusiasts there; people waving family off on the last service; those just wanting to be on that last journey; or, indeed, people who were working late and happened to need this particular train anyway, around one-hundred passengers boarded the last service to Edinburgh.

"Never has the 8.25 p.m. train been quite so busy as these passengers sit back to enjoy the final run on this line", the news report added, captioning a large photograph of just a few of them in the kind of *diesel multiple-unit* ('D.M.U.') train carriage that was so common at the time. ... -▶

L.M.R.C. News

CREDIBLE Journey: On to Destination ...



No text or photo-credits were given in the original report.

"Never has the 8.25 p.m. train been quite so busy as these passengers sit back to enjoy the final run on this line." *E/F Mail*, Wed., 8th. October, 1969. Archives - including original Photos. and Captions - Courtesy: Johnston Press, Methil Library [Fife Council / Fife Cultural Trust].

◀ Camera flash-bulbs lit up the station (which was then on Station Road, off Commercial Road) as it pulled slowly out of the station. Enthusiasts took their last photographs, their last chance, to picture a passenger train leaving Leven.

Thornton, Kirkcaldy - or Edinburgh ?!

"About 100 people, young and old, had actually boarded the train to make a last, sentimental journey," the report continued; "Most of these only travelled the short distance to Thornton or Kirkcaldy, but a few ventured further along the line". Another large crowd had gathered at the station at Thornton Junction to give the train a wave, as several of the passengers themselves had done at Leven. (The current "Glenrothes with Thornton" did not appear 'til 1992.) The train continued its "journey to Edinburgh, where it would only be gobbled up in the hurly-burly of the busy Waverley Station".

Mr. Andrew Low, of Dundee, who had been a railwayman of 35 years' service [i.e., since 1934], was driving the last train. He commented: "It is not good when a line closes, but these things happen. If it had not been this line that closed, it would just have been some other."

Proud ... But Sad

George A. Mair, who was the train's Guard that night, had begun his rail-days as a porter fifteen years before, said: "Jobs have been lost over the closing of this station, and this cannot be a good thing. I am both proud and sad to be on this last train journey."

John Meldrum, a porter at Leven at the 'finalé', who has worked with the railways for 33 years, and added: "I moved to Leven from St. Monans [in 1963], just two years before the line there closed, and I thought that I could

stay here until my retirement. This was not to be, and I have decided to accept my redundancy. Any other job that the railways could offer would mean too much travelling for me."

Mr. Meldrum had worked in the railways' *Engineering Department* since just after the Second World War - and recalled being a member of the line re-laying team who worked all round the country, saying; "I helped re-lay tracks all the way from the Forth Bridge to the Tay Bridge."

Giving the final Green Light to a passenger service on the line - until the 1992 "Methil Special" at least - was Mr. George Watson, who was busy in the Leven Station signal-box that night. He pointed out that "It is too late now for all the 'bally-hoo'. All the shouting should have been done earlier, when no final decision had yet been made about the line and the station [-s]."

"Leven is Gateway to The Coast - Last Stopping-Place"

On that "sentimental", final journey to Edinburgh was Mrs. June Clegg, who had visited her mother that day in Lemon Terrace, in Leven. She commented: "In a way, it is sad that the station is being closed. Leven is the gateway to the coast - this was the last stopping-place before the coast. Many people who do not have cars used the railway, in both Summer and Winter, to come to Leven, and from there travel further into the East Neuk.

"It will not be handy for some of them - especially older folk - to have to get off at Kirkcaldy, and then get [bus] connections from there"

Mr. R. Milne, of 8, Bayview, in Kinghorn, called the closure "sad but inevitable" in a 'laconic but poignant' media interview. Mr. and Mrs. James Spalding, of 16, Livingston Drive, Burntisland, stated they will "definitely"

miss the trains from Leven. Mr. Spalding told the *Press*: "My wife and I have left on this train every Saturday night for eleven years. We visit my wife's mother in Leven, but travelling to see her will not be so handy in the future as it has been for all these years.

"It takes about double the time on the buses."

The Problems That *Still* Persist - Fifty Years On

Ironically, *that* is one of the many concerns that the *LevenMouth Rail Campaign* has been lobbying on for five years and more. Two other, *very different*, issues that they have been campaigning on are mirrored in some of the next paragraphs – despite them being written half-a-century ago. Car ownership in Levenmouth was (*and still is*) a long way below the national average..., yet, in 1969, there were already, we are told, *too many* cars on the local roads - hence that upgrade on the A.915 to Kirkcaldy, which authorities realised would be carrying more road traffic now that the railway had closed to passengers.

The trains were, well, *missed*: Miss. Mary Swain, of 'Stovie', Coaltown of Balgonie, said, in 1969: "It is a pity, because not everybody has a car, and the station was very handy for some people in this position. I suppose there were not enough people using the trains."

Another passenger on the last train, Mrs. Brown, of 'Woodend', Station Road, Thornton (who had worked on the railways for 25 years) had said: "The trains will be missed by some people, now that they have stopped.

"The people who have regularly been using the trains will probably be at a loss, but, unfortunately, there are too few regular train users - *now that there are so many cars on the road*". Mrs. Garvie, of 32, Gallacher Avenue, Leven, another passenger in 1969 had commented that she thought the closure was a "backward step" - and also a "very sad occasion". ... "I think it is a tragedy. However, I suppose *the line must not have been patronised*".

There is again, a sense of *déjà-vu* in this. ... In the *East Fife Mail* on Wednesday, 9th., of this month - precisely a half-century *and a day on* - the regular *LevenMouth Rail Campaign* column, on the Community Pinboard pages, includes this cautionary passage: "... Once up-and-running, [the Rail Link] will prove a real success, but that will depend on Levenmouth's residents making full use of the myriad opportunities that this national connectivity brings".

Adverse Affects on Environment and Peoples' Health

That, *LMRC News* senses, is a way of encouraging extra passenger trade; a way of drumming-up business for when the Rail Link *is* put back in action. For now, we can surely believe that the new "Climate Emergency" catchphrase will have its own effect. Adverse affects from road traffic on the environment and peoples' health will surely encourage more use of rail services. Even the advent of electric or "hybrid" roadsters is likely only to increase traffic as people believe they are no longer contributing to health and climate hazards and they feel it's OK to just drive on.

The fact is that a sizeable amount of electricity is *still* needed to recharge the batteries of all the new electric or hybrid road vehicles, and even the rail industry is witnessing the arrival of hybrid locomotives; just as it is on the roads, the year of 2040 has been set as the absolute target for the withdrawal of all diesel-only engines or multiple-unit trains.

Anyway, *we wander* (up either the tracks or the *Tarmac*), so should finish our story of the last regular passenger

trains to Leven just over fifty years ago. Three more 'old characters' were interviewed. They had plenty to tell – *and* plenty of experience of the railways to back that up.

Three Veteran Signalmen

On board that night also were three retired railwaymen, who had 134 years' service between them. They opted for the last compartment of the six-carriage train.

All resplendent in his best kilt and bonnet was Mr. Hugh MacGregor, of Wellesley Road, Methil, in the south-west part of Levenmouth. Similarly attired were brothers Alex and William Davidson, from Kirkcaldy, near where two more stations - Sinclairtown and Dysart - were also closed down that night. They were once signalmen with *North British Railways*, before the 'grouping' of no less than 120 rail companies into the "big four" at the start of 1923, and all three started their careers in Edinburgh, where that company was based. [[Wikipedia website.](#)]

The father of the Davidson brothers was also employed on the railways, serving for fifty years. In 1933, William Davidson had opened a new signal-box at the Thornton Junction - these had now just been closed, by Alex, on 20th. September, 1969. William recalled the huge task of moving 138 steam locomotives from the old sheds to the new ones 36 years before. Mr. MacGregor said: "I think it is a tragedy that the station is closing".

Mr. William Davidson shared these sentiments, by adding: "I feel that, as long as the line to Kirkcaldy is being kept open, it would *not* cost very much extra to keep the line to Leven open as well.

"Buses just cannot compete with the trains."

Brother Alex stated, tellingly: "We all took the last carriage so that we could have a back view from the train as it pulled out of Leven station for the last time. *

"It is, indeed, a tragic occasion."

"That just about sums-up the reason why the 'last train' from Leven left at 8.25 p.m. on Saturday, 4th. October, 1969", the news report concluded.

[* On these trains, passengers also had a view directly ahead (or to the rear), courtesy of three large windows in the walls and inner-door, behind the driver's compartment. - "No concern" over plain, blank security barriers in *those* more-innocent days!!]

"Not the only Station in Leven for Very Much Longer!"

Leven Bus Station..., seen from the eastern roundabout at Bawbee Bridge, Leven, on Thursday, 8th. August, — the very day that the Rail Link "Go-Ahead" was given.



'REINSTATE THE LEVEN-EDINBURGH RAIL-LINK NOW!'

LMRC Meetings

Our MAIN PUBLIC ["Action Group"] MEETINGS are Held Monthly - Except in Summer and December - at the ...

Levenmouth Academy Community Use School

Methilhaven Road, Buckhaven, Leven, KY8 1EA.
6.30 p.m., **TUESDAY, 29th.**

Enter the Academy grounds by the Main Gate; go straight on for about 200 metres, or 220 yards; the Community Use School entrance is on the Left. ...

Oct'r..



'I'll Be There for You [All]' *

... at the 'Community Use' School!



* 'Song-Title Arrows'... *The Rembrandts* ('Friends' Theme) [1995 and 1997].

Later LMRC Meetings ...

at the

LEVENMOUTH ACADEMY Community Use School

LMRC Action Group Meeting

— Tuesday, 26th. November, 6.30 p.m.;

There are **NO** Meetings in December,
or July, due to Holidays.

LMRC Action Group Meeting —

Tuesday, 28th. January, **2020**, 6.30 p.m.;

LMRC Action Group Meeting

— Tuesday, 25th. February, 6.30 p.m.;

LMRC Action Group Meeting

— Tuesday, 31st. March, 6.30 p.m.;

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The Future of LMRC News

To Be *Bi-Monthly* after December

WITH THE GO-AHEAD Now Given for re-instatement of the Levenmouth Rail Link, by Transport Minister Michael Matheson this Summer, and other commitments for *LMRC News*' editor Alistair Aynsough, it has been decided to reduce the schedule of the publication to bi-monthly, in the 'even-numbered' months — namely; February, April, June, August, October and December.

This will also fit in with the alternative months, already set for production of other newsletter series that Alistair publishes: 'Sentinel-GateOpener' for *Cumbria Cerebral Palsy* in Carlisle, and 'Brougham Hall News', for a mansion-house restoration project in Penrith, Cumbria - which is, for now, usually issued once-a-fortnight.

"Progress Checks"

After discussions with other *LMRC* members, Alistair actually now plans to widen the "horizons" for *LMRC News*, to provide progress checks with other railway campaigns or projects in Central Scotland - not least pictorial progress reports for the Leven Rail Link and its associated projects.

In Fife, there are campaigns for the re-opening of the station at Newburgh, on the banks of the River Tay and now 'home' to the recently-opened distillery at Lindores Abbey, and the Alloa-to-Dunfermline route, whose backers are in the hope of benefitting from the planned move to the former Longannet Power Station, near Kincardine, by *Talgo*, a Spanish train-building company. This may also be of interest to Levenmouth folks; some *LMRC* members hope and believe this railway connection would offer direct travel from Leven to Alloa, then Stirling and beyond.

It is reported that *Transport Scotland* have recently arranged a STAG report (*Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance*) for this, in respect of the *Talgo* proposals.

Then, of course, there is *StARLink* - the campaign for the Leuchars-to-St. Andrews rail link, which closed at the same time as that for Levenmouth, *officially* 6 Jan'y., '69.

LMRC News will still be issued for November and December, and then there will be a gap from then 'til February, as our new, bi-monthly schedule commences.

CAMPAIGN CALL "LOBBY YOUR MSP!" SAY LMRC

ALTHOUGH, of Course, we have the wonderful news that the Levenmouth Rail Link is to be reinstated, the *LMRC* will still be active, and will continue to keep watch on progress. If anyone has concerns at any stage, they should still write to their MSP, MP or Local Councillor. ...

From The Creator of 'Brougham Hall News'.

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