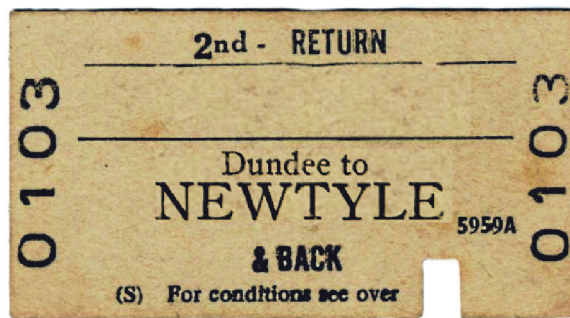


Grand plan that went off the rails

It's 60 years since passenger trains were withdrawn from the Dundee and Newtyle Railway. **Gayle Ritchie** finds out what happened to one of the first railways in Scotland



A RAILWAY CARRIAGE propelled by a sail hoisted aloft on a pole. To those of us rather more au fait with the high-speed, mega-powered trains of the 21st century, it seems almost unthinkable. Yet in 1831 it was ingenious.

The brain behind the sail-driven train was William Whitelaw, the man in charge of the horse which took up haulage if the wind failed or was in the wrong direction. He made the sail out of a canvas wagon sheet and attached it to a stick on top of the carriage to speed things up to around 20mph and lighten the strain on the horse. However, the locomotive engine, made two years after the Dundee and Newtyle Railway opened in 1831, took the wind out of William's sails.

With the introduction of railways in the first half of the 19th century, small lines had sprung up all over the UK. Their main purpose was usually the transportation of coal to nearby towns or industrial areas.

The Dundee and Newtyle Railway Company was formed in 1826 and in the following years tenders were invited for engineering works. It was the first railway

to be built in the north of Scotland and the first not to rely on coalfields for the bulk of its traffic.

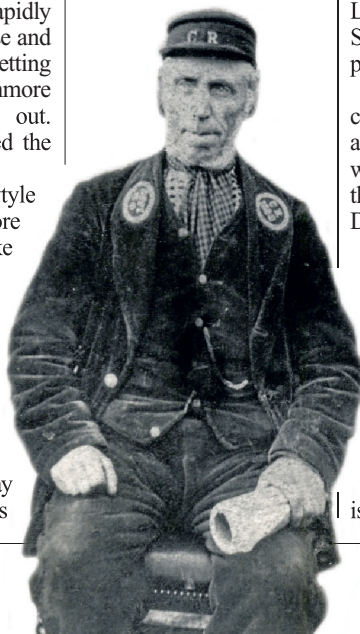
"It was a link between the manufacturing, industrial city of Dundee and the agricultural hinterland of Strathmore," says railway enthusiast and keen historian Dr David Martin. "Using horse and cart to deliver goods by road took too long. The city was rapidly expanding with jute mills on the rise and rail was a cost-effective way of getting goods like coal and lime in to Strathmore and agricultural produce back out. However, passengers soon provided the majority of the income."

The line terminated at Newtyle which, at that time, was little more than a mill and a few houses, unlike Forfar or larger Strathmore towns.

It was built with a 4 feet 6½ inches gauge, there being no accepted standard gauge at that time — and this led to problems connecting it with later lines coming in from Perth and Arbroath, which were different sizes.

The Dundee and Newtyle Railway had several unusual features in its

Below: Robbie Anderson, level crossing keeper. Picture: Angus Council.



journey across the considerable heights of the Sidlaw hills. Rather than going round them, engineer Charles Landale decided on a policy of 'up and over', and this resulted in three inclines, at the Law, Balbeuchly and Hatton. The inclines were worked by stationary steam engines while coaches and wagons were pulled by horses over level stretches of line. Later, steam locomotives — the first in Scotland — were used although horses provided back-up if they broke down.

The construction of the railway was complicated by the decision to build a tunnel through Dundee Law, which was finally completed in 1829, allowing the 11-mile line to open to traffic on December 16 1831.

An extract from *The Dundee Courier* at the time stated: "The Railway betwixt this town and Newtyle has at length been opened. On Friday last (16th) carriages started for the first time for the conveyance of goods and passengers. The distance from Newtyle to the temporary place of starting (it would later move from Dundee's Ward Road to the harbour) is nearly 11 miles, and was gone over in

