

# ABERDOUR RAILWAY STATION

*Researched & Remembered*

*by W. T. Cochrane*







Aberdour





# ABERDOUR RAILWAY STATION

## Researched and Remembered

A small plaque on a wall in the castle grounds records that the entrance to the castle was removed from its original position in order to facilitate the construction of the railway line and station at Aberdour. This construction was to mark the start of a new era for the villagers, as indeed it had done for the population of the country as a whole, with the development of the railway system throughout Great Britain.

In Scotland, wagonways were built as early as 1722 which connected the collieries of Tranent and Cockenzie in East Lothian prior to the development of similar 'coal roads' in Fife which, for example, in our area ran from Fordell and Halbeath down to St David's Bay and Inverkeithing port. Sir Robert Henderson built a harbour at St David's harbour and when enlarged and deepened in 1826 with the extension of its south pier, additional sidings, turn-tables and coal hoist, it rapidly developed into a bustling port. In 1845 The Edinburgh, Perth, Dundee Railway established a line from Burntisland across the county, via Ladybank and branches were established to Perth and Dunfermline in 1848, and in 1853 a northward extension of the line was constructed from Fordell to connect with this system. (From its heyday in 1835-44, however, St David's became less used and during World War II the Admiralty was virtually its only customer and in 1946 it ceased to operate.)

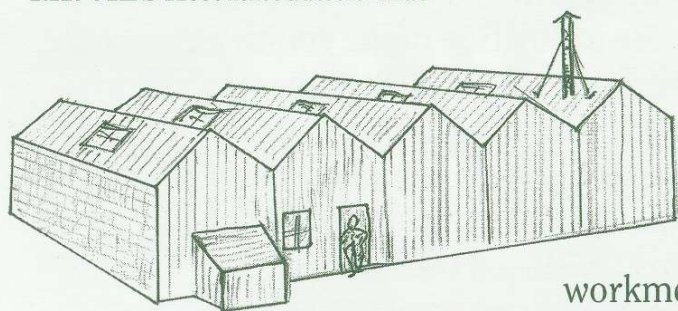
The North British Railway Company (NBR) which originally obtained Parliamentary powers in 1844 to construct a line of railway from Edinburgh to Berwick-on-Tweed, opened the Edinburgh and Northern Railway in 1847 which involved the construction of a railway station at Burntisland, which is now commemorated by a plaque at that station, and a line to Tayport from where a ferry operated to Broughty Ferry on the north side of the Tay river. The ferry over the Forth from Granton to Burntisland became the world's first train ferry. The NBR amalgamated with the Edinburgh, Perth and Dundee Railway, the West Fife Railway and their respective subsidiaries in 1862, and due to competition from The Caledonian Railway Company, and the increasing demands of commerce and industry, the need to construct bridges over the Tay and Forth rivers became a priority. The first attempt on the Tay ended in tragedy in 1879 with the bridge's collapse. Eight years later (1887) a second Tay Bridge was successfully completed which would provide a more direct rail link to Dundee and Aberdeen. It was claimed at that time, that the construction of a Forth Bridge would reduce the distance by 26 miles between Edinburgh and Dundee.

The decision to build a railway bridge over the Forth at Queensferry no doubt was the main reason that our railway station at Aberdour came into existence. The construction of ancillary connecting lines was necessary, and a seven mile stretch between



Inverkeithing junction and the already existing important staging point of Burntisland made very good sense if running times were to be improved, with the bonus of a station at Aberdour conveniently positioned between these places as an established, but somewhat isolated, rural resort to which crowds already travelled by ferry from Granton. Parliamentary authorisation for the construction of a line between Inverkeithing and Burntisland was passed both in 1873 and 1882 and work started on the line in 1887 five years after the start of the construction of the Forth Bridge, which was finally opened by the Prince of Wales (later to become Edward VII) on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1890.

#### **NAVVIES Accommodation Hut**



The construction of this seven mile stretch was contracted to 'John Waddell & Sons' and completed in three years at an overall cost of £145,000. 'Navvies', mostly Irish, were employed to do the work and these

workmen were offered accommodation in wooden huts placed intermittently alongside the line at a cost to them of 4d per night, (*it may be of interest to note that a pint of beer cost 3d, and a plate of soup 1d, at that time*). In October 1888 one of these huts which accommodated approximately 110 men, within a mile of the centre of Aberdour at Little Couston was burned to the ground on a Saturday night with the loss of three lives, and a number of the workmen were injured. Many of the men lost all their possessions, including all their clothes in this fire and several generous villagers contributed clothes for them, leading to the unusual sight of these navvies being dressed in fashionable but ill-fitting tweeds rather than the moleskins and corduroy that were their customary working clothes. It is reported that the injured were first treated by Dr Veitch of Aberdour and later transferred to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The men who perished in this tragedy were James McLaughlan 45, John Ward about 40, and Terrance Martin about 50. As no friends or relations could be found to claim their remains they were interred in Aberdour Churchyard (probably behind the present Church Hall), and the funeral was attended by a very large number of navvies some of whom were obliged to sleep in the fields that night. One positive result of this occurrence and because of the lack of any such facilities for the railway labourers, was the erection of a small wooden hall (location unknown) in Aberdour as a result of the good offices of Mr A Rolland of Aberdour House, Mr Normand of Whitehill, Sheriff Gillespie and the Reverends Brown & Roddick. This building was seated to take 50 people and intended as a reading room during the week, whilst on Sunday religious services would be held there. The total cost for this hall being £45 – paid for by donations.

It is not hard to imagine what an impact the new railway line must have had on the population then. Other than the repositioning of the Castle entrance and gate to its present place near Aberdour House, the deep gully which was between the castle and the three arched bridge over the Dour burn had to be levelled with a strong double culvert constructed underneath, in addition to which the line was required to run



underneath the public road at the west end of the proposed position of the new station and a cutting made for fully half a mile through earth and hard whinstone to a depth of forty five feet beyond that on the way to Otterstone. On the east side of the village the building of the line was to destroy one of "the best walks in the district" along the shore at Whitesands Bay, starting above the "Fairy Dell" and skirting the woods towards Burntisland.

Certainly the Railway Company did not feel that the line construction had disturbed the environment - judging by the romantic style of the North British Guide of 1891:-

***Edinburgh to Aberdeen***

*Via THE TAY BRIDGE AND DUNDEE*

*"Hail to thy waters, softly flowing Dee!  
Hail to their shaded pure transparency!  
Hail to the mountain oak and mountain pine,  
With whose reflected pride thy waters shine!"*

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

*Trains to the North proceed on the Dunfermline route as far as Inverkeithing, whence a new line, begun in 1887 and completed lately at a cost of £145,000, goes off towards Burntisland, thus saving the tourist all the trouble and inconvenience that used to be associated with the disagreeable necessity of changing from train to steamer, and from steamer to train. Our 'iron steed', after it has passed Inverkeithing, steams through a well-cultivated and fair region, then draws nearer the shore, and eventually permeates the beautiful woods of Aberdour. Thus the route possesses attractions calculated to 'draw' all scenery hunting and scenery loving travellers. In addition to the thirty bridges the train must pass over, we bowl across a huge embankment, whose wave washed base is protected from the ravages of the sea by a facing of stone and pitch. At Aberdour the line once more approaches the coast. Thus we have on our left the gently undulating lands of the 'Kingdom' - so called because of its importance during the era of Pictish kings - whose surface is diversified by the Ochil Hills, and 'mine own blue Lomonds'. On the right, we obtain fine views of the Firth of Forth and the numerous islands which encincturing waters clasp in loving or angry embrace being, of course, dependent for its character upon the weather. Aberdour, now a watering place of more than local repute, was in early times the port of Dunfermline where envoys, ambassadors, and courtiers were wont to arrive from the Continent when they purposed to visit royalty in the abbey town. It was for Aberdour, (Sir Walter Scott reads 'Aberdeen') that the 'guid Sir Patrick Spens' steered from 'Noroway owre the faem' on his unfortunate voyage.*

*Half owre, half owre to Aberdour,  
It's fifty fathoms deep,  
And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spens,  
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet."*

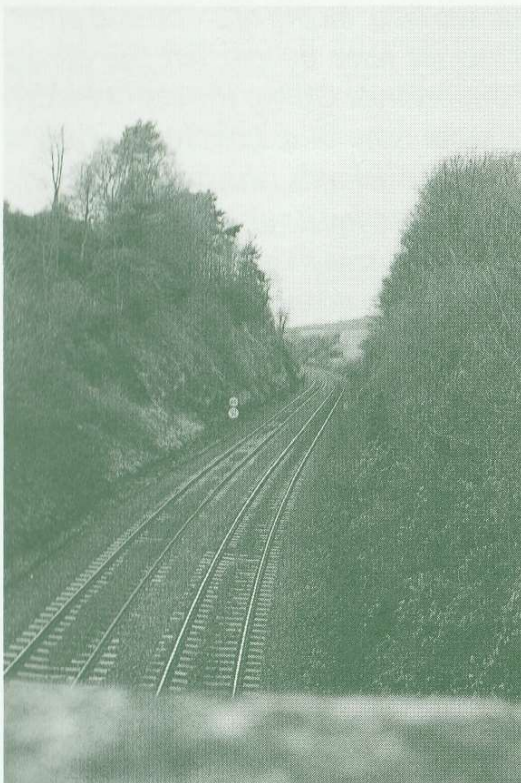
*"They hadna sailed a league, a league,  
A league but barely three,  
When the lift grew dark, and the wind blew loud,  
And gurly grew the sea.*



*Adjoining Aberdour is Donibristle Castle, the scene of the murder of that 'braw callant' the 'bonnie Earl of Moray' whose personal gifts and graces had fascinated the impressionable heart of Anne of Denmark. Such is the reason assigned by the ballad for the murder. According to Bishop Percy the reason was political.*

*The Island of Inchcolm lies off the coast, and contains the ruins of an Augustinian monastery founded by Alexander 1 in gratitude for the shelter the island afforded him in a tempest that imperilled his life while crossing the Forth. Adjacent to the village is Aberdour Castle, a possession of the Earl of Morton.*

Before our station became operational the line had first to pass the Board of Trade examination, which it did on the 16th April 1890. On that day Major Marindin, representing the Board of Trade, Mr McLaren, superintendent of the NBR, Lord Dalrymple, Mr Waddell, the contractor and 'several other gentlemen' commenced their inspection at the junction at Inverkeithing and continued it along the line to Burntisland where a new replacement station had been nearly completed on a new site. Between these points the contractor had experienced arduous work in the shape of excavations of thousands of tons of rock, the construction of bridges, and the formation of embankments capable of resisting the action of the sea. In preparation for this inspection the workers had been engaged in day and night shifts completing the signals and other accessories. The actual station buildings at both Burntisland and Aberdour required some final finishing, but this did not prevent the inspector and his entourage having lunch in the booking hall at Aberdour that day.



*Typical cutting which navvies cut to lay the line*

Mr John McDonald, an experienced railway employee at the age of 58 years, was appointed as the first Station Master with which position a Station House was provided at 1 High Street, and was connected with the station from the back door by a path, the wooden hand rail (or something similar) can still be seen running down to the 'up' (south) platform.

The line was opened for freight only on 24<sup>th</sup> April but it was not until the beginning of June that main line *passenger* trains commenced to use the Forth Bridge and our station, now complete, opened for business on the 2nd June 1890. This fact now marked by a small centennial plaque on a bench outside the station.

With this new facility for travel it was considered that a nine hole golf course would add to the attraction and popularity of the village and, perhaps more significantly, assist with summer lettings which were a major source of income for the local inhabitants. The golf course at Couston was opened for play in 1896.



September of 1896 also marked the visitation to Great Britain of Czar Nicholas and Czarina Alexandra of Russia following their coronation in May of that year, who disembarked at Leith from their royal yacht 'Standart' to travel by train from "*Junction Road Station to Aberdeen en route to Ballater (for Balmoral) - Monday 21st September*". (It should be noted that the rail journey was actually taken the next day on Tuesday 22nd September.) This scenic rail journey took four and a half hours to complete, starting at 2.30 pm and finishing at 7.00 pm with the 'Imperial Train' passing through Aberdour at five minutes past three in the afternoon. It was expected that the newly crowned monarch should travel after his coronation and this the couple did :

*"Nicholas and Alexandra went to Vienna to visit the aging Emperor of Austria-Hungary, Franz Joseph, called on the Kaiser (Wilhelm II) at Breslau and spent ten quiet days in Copenhagen with Nicholas's grandparents, King Christian IX and Queen Louise of Denmark. In September, taking with them ten month old Olga, they sailed to visit Queen Victoria". The Queen was in Scotland...."In driving rain the Russian Imperial yacht 'Standart' anchored in the roadstead at Leith and Uncle Bertie (later Edward VII) the Prince of Wales, came aboard to escort the Russian guests"...(by train to Ballater)... "through the wild mountains. Thoroughly drenched from riding in open carriages, they arrived at Balmoral after dark. The Queen was waiting for them on the castle steps, surrounded by Highlanders holding flaming torches."*

Aberdour Railway Station was once more in the news on the 31st August 1901 when a fire broke out at 4pm in the oil room which contained a barrel of paraffin and numerous cans of other oils as well as lamps, and quickly spread to the porters' room. The flames soon started to emerge through the roof. The fire was finally extinguished by the Dunfermline Fire Brigade at 7pm after considerable damage had occurred. One of the firemen sustained a broken leg as a result of the fire engine wheel passing over it after he had attempted to get on board after holding the horses.

In 1904, Mr John Nicholson who had previously served at Rumbling Bridge station, replaced Mr McDonald (on his retiral) as Station Master, and as Aberdour was classified as a Class 3 station, it is noted in the records that the staff consisted of two porters and one carter at the goods yard. The staff was enhanced by the arrival of Peter Jamieson in 1906 who was appointed



*circa 1906 with Station Master Nicholson standing 2nd from right, the bearded Clerk Peter Jamieson on left and others*



# TIME TABLE

FOR REGULATING THE PROGRESS OF

## "THE IMPERIAL TRAIN,"

From JUNCTION ROAD to ABERDEEN,

*En Route TO BALLATER (FOR BALMORAL)*

**On MONDAY, 21st SEPTEMBER 1896.**

Distance from Junction Road.	STATIONS.	Arrive.	Pass.	Depart.	Distance from Junction Road.	STATIONS.	Arrive.	Pass.	Depart.
MILES.		P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	MILES.		P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
—	Junction Road . . .	...	...	2 30	62½	Dundee (by Bridge Station) .	3 53	...	3 56
¼	Bonnington . . .	...	2 32	..	63	Camperdown Junction . . .	...	3 58	...
½	Powderhall . . .	...	2 33	...	65½	West Ferry . . .	...	4 2	...
1¼	Leith Walk . . .	...	2 34	...	66½	Broughty Ferry . . .	...	4 3	...
1½	Easter Road . . .	...	2 35	...	68½	Monifieth . . .	...	4 6	...
2	Abbeyhill . . .	...	2 37	...	71½	Barry . . .	...	4 9	...
3	Edinburgh (Main Down Platform) . . .	...	2 40	...	73½	Carnoustie . . .	...	4 11	...
4½	Haymarket . . .	...	2 43	...	74½	Easthaven . . .	...	4 13	...
6¼	Corstorphine Junction . . .	...	2 46	...	77½	Elliot Junction . . .	...	4 17	...
12½	Dalmeny . . .	..	2 53	...	79½	Arbroath . . .	...	4 19	...
14½	North Queensferry } Forth Bridge North }	...	2 57	...	79½	St Vigean Junction . . .	...	4 21	...
16½	Inverkeithing . . .	...	3 0	...	82½	Letham Grange . . .	...	4 24	...
20½	Aberdour . . .	...	3 3	...	84½	Cauldcoats . . .	...	4 27	...
23½	Burntisland . . .	...	3 8	...	85½	Inverkeilor . . .	...	4 29	...
25½	Kinghorn . . .	...	3 11	...	88½	Lunan Bay . . .	...	4 33	...
28½	Kirkcaldy . . .	...	3 14	...	93	Montrose . . .	...	4 40	...
30½	Sinclairtown . . .	...	3 16	...	95½	Hillside . . .	...	4 43	...
31	Dysart . . .	...	3 17	...	95½	Kinnaber Junction . . .	...	4 44	...
33½	Thornton Junction . . .	...	3 20	...	97½	Craig . . .	...	4 47	.
36½	Markinch Junction . . .	...	3 23	...	99½	Marykirk . . .	...	4 51	...
39½	Falkland Road . . .	...	3 26	..	103	Laurencekirk . . .	...	4 55	...
41½	Kingskettle . . .	...	3 28	...	106½	Fordoun . . .	...	4 59	...
42½	Ladybank Junction . . .	...	3 29	..	110½	Drumlithie . . .	...	5 3	...
45½	Springfield . . .	...	3 32	...	112	Newmill . . .	...	5 5	...
47½	Cupar . . .	...	3 35	...	117½	Stonehaven . . .	...	5 11	...
50½	Dairsie . . .	...	3 38	...	122	Muchalls . . .	...	5 16	...
53½	Leuchars Junction . . .	...	3 41	...	123½	Newtonhill . . .	...	5 18	...
57½	St Fort . . .	...	3 44	...	125½	Portlethen . . .	...	5 21	...
59½	Tay Bridge (South) . . .	...	3 46	...	128½	Cove . . .	...	5 25	...
61½	Tay Bridge (North) } Esplanade Station }	...	3 51	...	133	Aberdeen } Ferryhill Junction }	5 31	...	5 50
					175½	Ballater . . .	7 0	...	...

\* Engines to be changed.

**J. CONACHER,**  
GENERAL MANAGER.

11NUNGH, 16th September 1896.

(8-M)

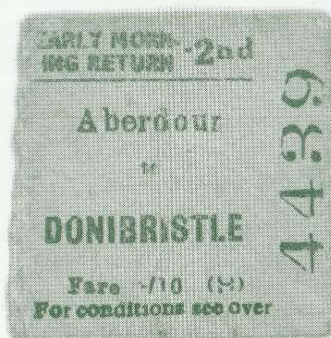


as a clerk (his grand-daughter Mrs Catherine Duncan is now a very active member of our community). He had moved from Gateside where he had held the position of Station Master, and he was to remain in Aberdour for the rest of his life. He died on Hogmanay 1916.

His son James was also to become a railway clerk in his time and died tragically at Aberdour in an accident when, as he stood on the buffer of a wagon checking goods, the train moved away and he was fatally crushed between the wagon and the embankment as a result.

It is worth noting that in 1909 a female porter was appointed named Marjory Davidson. Mr Nicholson was to remain in his position until 1926, became the father of three daughters, one of whom later became a railway clerk, and he retired after 40 years service with the railway.

During the First World War (1914-1918), guns were delivered to Aberdour by rail for use in the fortifications near at hand, to guard the Forth river and strengthen defences due to the on-going construction of the Naval Base and dockyard at Rosyth. Such fortifications near our village were sited at Braefoot Bay, Hawkcraig Point (where for many years afterwards stood a wooden observation post – complete with a wooden model sailor standing on the balcony as a decoy to observant enemy aircraft!), and near the Bell Rock where now stands the present Golf Club building. As late as the 1990's during the construction of the putting green adjoining the first tee, the remaining very solid base of a gun emplacement was uncovered. In 1917 these fortifications were closed down when coastal defences were switched further out to the mouth of the Forth estuary. In the same year Donibristle Airfield was opened by the Royal Flying Corps for experimental work as the Earl of Moray had been persuaded to donate land for this purpose by his son, and later was developed into a repair base for the Royal Naval Air Service with it's own private railway running to the Inverkeithing harbour area. Many years later (1953-59) when Donibristle Airfield (HMS Merlin) had eventually become a Naval repair yard (HMS Cochrane) it is of interest to note that the carriages used for transporting workers and apprentices from Edinburgh in the morning, were parked for the day in the elevated siding in front of the castle at Aberdour until required for the return journey to Edinburgh in the evening.



*Return portion of ticket  
Aberdour to Donibristle Halt 1958*

Also, during the First World War years (in 1915) the Carlingnose Granite Company (CGC), who quarried whinstone from the Hawkcraig Quarry until the middle 'thirties', successfully applied for special sidings and "tramways" to take the stone by rail away from their site. The loading bank and siding were positioned just opposite Murray Place on the south side of the line, and the tramways for the stone laden trollies, dragged by



horses from the quarry, were laid along what is now known as the Hawkcraig Road which at that time was a country lane with no houses adjoining it other than the gable end of one of the houses in Home Park and a potato hut, located near to where now No. 19 stands, and which was later removed to be used as the back hall of the "Institute" in Shore Road. The total cost for these works and screen fencing, which amounted to £628, along with total responsibility for satisfactory completion to the satisfaction of the authorities and the railway company, was to be borne by the applicant.

In 1924 relationships between the CGC and the now newly formed London North Eastern Railway (LNER) reached a pretty low ebb when CGC endeavoured to obtain a more convenient arrangement for their workmen to return home to North Queensferry after their work which ended at 5.00 pm. The normal railway schedule meant that the earliest train they could catch at Aberdour was the 6.12 pm, however an earlier train stopped at Aberdour at 5.32 pm but did not stop at North Queensferry. This request for the 5.32 pm to stop at North Queensferry was eventually refused as the LNER could not afford the four minutes additional journey time if passengers on the train were to successfully catch connections at Waverley station for onward journeys. After increasingly acrimonious correspondence between the companies, communication on this issue ended with the general manager of LNER expressing great scepticism that CGC could arrange sufficiently economic alternative and more convenient transport by bus "*as the workers concerned would be unwilling to pay the fare*".



Hawk Craig Point from the Silver Sands, Aberdour.

*Note whinestone being loaded onto ship and in the background the observation post*

In later years, the whinestone was also to be taken off by ship from a pier at Hawkcraig Point. After this quarry had been 'worked out' the Carlingnose Granite Company transferred their operations up to the 'Goat Quarry', and the disused Hawkcraig quarry was used for a time during the *second* world war as a rifle range by the army. The quarry was filled in

during the 'sixties' and converted into the present car park and walk.

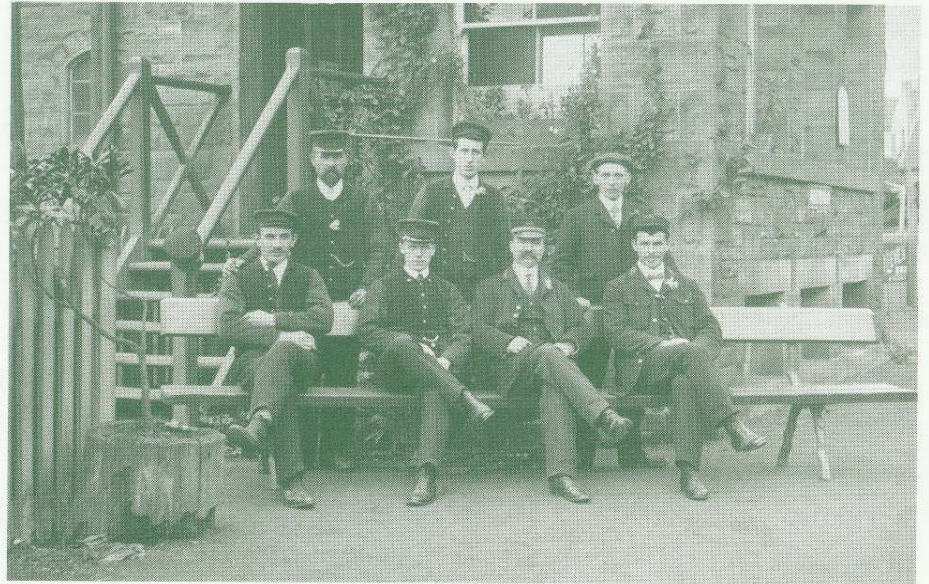
During the Great War, Mr Nicholson and his team gained an NBR award for a 'Best Kept' Class 3 Station, and possibly as a result of this, the station was recategorised to Class 2, and one could not be blamed for reflecting that this award was a prediction of the future successes that Aberdour gained over the years following for neatness and beauty. In 1919, consent was gained to extend the 'down' platform (north side) to an overall length of 600ft to facilitate the longer trains to stop without being required to



first come to a halt and then move forward a short distance and stop again to allow passengers at the end of the train to embark/disembark safely.

The same improvement was never extended to the “up” (south side) platform, due probably because any such extension would interfere with the branch siding lines connecting with the goods yard on that side, and the practice of double stopping continued on that platform when required.

During this same year Mr David Cook was appointed as a clerk to Aberdour Station. Whether as a result of the extended platform, the increased volume of holiday traffic in peacetime, or a combination of both, the station was recategorised to a Class 1 station in 1920, as a result of which doubtless the status of the Station Master increased. His pay then was £260 per annum with a



*circa 1916 at signal box with Station Master Nicholson, Clerk Jamieson and others*

deduction of £90 each year for the rent of the Station House, situated as mentioned above, next to the bridge on the High Street – or Station Place as it is now named. It is of interest to note what was said of working conditions, even for office staff, prior to negotiations between workers and employers in 1919:

*“Hours of duty were usually unspecified, and much more generally, very long indeed. There was a job to be done and the clerk had to do it no matter how long it took him. Eight am to 8.00pm was quite common. Station Masters were never off duty. One sometimes heard of people who had been paid overtime, but they were never discovered.*

*Perhaps the meanest of all was unpaid Sunday duty. It was very hard work. Men took long turns to give their mates a Sunday off, and in booking offices excursion and enquiry work was very heavy indeed. But the companies insisted on regrading it as part of the normal week’s work”.*

In addition to the Station Master, and the clerks there were on the staff two porters (with one additional during the summer) a junior and a carter at the goods yard. Signalmens’ and linesmens’ operations were also the Station Masters responsibility and these numbers varied from time to time to reflect the requirements of our station.





*circa 1924 Station Master Nicholson with new clerk Edward Borthwick on his left and standing immediately behind 'Ned' Archie Redpath Signalman*

In 1923 the North British Railway Company became the Southern Scottish Area of the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) under the North East, East and East Scottish Group Amalgamation Scheme. Shortly following this landmark in British Railway history, on the 19th May 1924 at Aberdour Station, Edward Borthwick joined the office staff as station clerk, which in retrospect

was as much a landmark for Aberdour as the amalgamation was for the railway system as a whole. Edward, or "Ned" as he became affectionately known throughout our village was just 23 years old when he took up his new position having previously worked at Kirkcaldy Station and at Falkland Road Station, Freuchie and he was to remain as clerk here until he retired in the sixties. As mentioned above Mr John Nicholson the Station Master who had brought Aberdour station from Class 3 to Class 1 in his time, retired in 1926 to be replaced by Mr Hossacks.

During the 'thirties' the facilities at the station were somewhat different to those of today. A special waiting room was provided for the first class passengers and there was a bookstall selling books, cigarettes, and tobacco in the booking hall, manned by Ruby Cunningham and Lizzie Hepburn. All



*circa 1932 Mr Hossacks Station Master, Ned Borthwick (2nd from right) Lizzie Hepburn and others. Note garden and goods shed behind*

the interior accommodation, office, hall and waiting rooms were heated by open fires, and, of course, porters were constantly at hand to assist passengers with luggage. The whole place was full of activity with the goods yard and sidings in constant use producing steam and noise with all the 'comings and goings' of engines, tenders, and trucks etc. which contained mostly coal and whinstone. In those days the two main means of travel other than local, were rail and sea with only the wealthy able to afford motor cars



or travel by air in an airship - or even rarer an aeroplane. During that time many 'honeymooners' travelled by train, and 'Ned' the clerk had the habit of carefully selecting an empty compartment for them and quietly locking them in to preserve their privacy, as in those days the compartments had no corridors – or at least, Ned ensured that there were none for the ones he found for 'his' newly-weds!

Owen Strudley joined Ned as a clerk in the "thirties", and he was to be promoted later to become a relief Station Master elsewhere. He eventually became our District Councillor, remaining so until the 'sixties'. Ned Borthwick, on the other hand, resisted such offers of advancement preferring to remain in Aberdour.

Shortly before World War Two (WW2) was to break upon us, Mr Hossacks was replaced as Station Master by Mr Proudfoot who stayed at Aberdour for about five years before being transferred to Anstruther.

Mr Alex R Milne then became Station Master in 1942 having entered the service of the old "Great North" as a clerk at Glassel twenty seven years previously. He had held a number of clerical positions at various stations before being appointed Station Master at Udney immediately prior to his move to Aberdour.

Under his management Aberdour was once more to regain its reputation for its general cleanliness and floral displays. Mr Milne took up his post when the country as a whole was an austere place. Amongst all sorts of other measures to confuse the enemy, town names and station names were removed and shortages of all types were commonplace, leading to the slogan of the time 'Make do and Mend'.



*Aberdour Station during World War II. Note no place signs*

The authorities hoped that by removing signs enemy spies, prisoners of war attempting to escape, or even invading forces would not know where they were!! In common with all other stations, therefore, Aberdour lost all its name signs. Railway porters in Fife entered into the spirit and to ensure full security replaced their usual announcement of their station to the passengers by shouting:

*"Here ye are, for whaur yer gaun, a' for here get aff".*

One cannot but wonder how many of the English servicemen travelling to unknown destinations arrived on their first attempt!



Although many women were employed on the railways as clerks and porters, and as noted above Aberdour was no exception to this, their numbers increased considerably during the war years. In 1944 reports indicated that the employment of women in **signal boxes** depended not so much upon their ability to pull the heavy signal levers but rather upon the provision of adequate toilet facilities.

The inspector's report (1944) from the cabin at Dalgety, Aberdour was typical :

*"This cabin is suitable for the employment of women. It is only three minutes walk from the road, with a bus service to Aberdour every thirty minutes. The work is not heavy, but I would suggest that the hours of duty for staff to change shifts, say 9 pm instead of 11 pm to allow women home before midnight. I would also suggest that an Elsan lavatory be provided".*

The report (1944) from the Donibristle Cabin was similar:

*"I suggest a flush or Elsan lavatory be erected adjoining the present coal bunker. If the latter, there is available space on the embankment for disposal purposes. The cabin is suitable for the employment of women."*

The report (1944) from the Naval Base Junction cabin had further problems:

*"This box is suitable for the employment of women. I suggest however owing to the proximity of water and sewage pipes, that a flush lavatory be installed and water put into the cabin. It was stated that coal stove smokes very badly, and it seems a new elbow pipe is required to prevent the smoke from blowing back"*

In Dalmuir (1944) there appeared to be a different problem :

*"I understand that previously there was gas lighting provided in the signalbox but the corporation removed the meter because of the small quantity of gas being used".*

Whilst at Kilsyth (1945) returned to the popular theme throughout these reports adding what must be construed as a cry for help!!:

*"The signalwoman has had to have medical attention owing to the inaccessibility of the lavatory."*

It is worth bearing in mind that some signal boxes, especially in Scotland, were remote, were lit only with oil lamps and lacked any security, in spite of which the staff including women walked up to seven miles to do duty **alone** in what now would be called 'unsocial hours'.



In Aberdour in those days there were no women signal box staff at the station. George Lamb, Ed Nurse, Archie Redpath and later Tom McLaren (his daughter lives in the village) and Sandy Milne (no relation to the Station Master) were duty signalmen amongst others at the station box.

After the second World War the LNER inaugurated a competition in 1946 for the Best Kept Station in which in 1947 Aberdour promptly won a 1<sup>st</sup> Class prize. This particular prize was for smartness and cleanliness of the station and it's surroundings, but as was reported in the 'Dunfermline Press' at the time:

*"It will be remembered that the station was also awarded a first class prize for floral decoration"*

This was to be the image of Aberdour Railway Station for the future with prizes being awarded in 1949, 1950 and following in 1951 not only with the prize again but also with a radio programme devoted to our station in the series 'Scottish Gardens' which was popular before television arrived here. The success of our gardens had therefore continued unabated throughout the nationalisation of the railways in 1948. In that year LNER became British Railways (BR).



**Station Master A R Milne 1942-1952.**

*Note new BR badge on hat*

In 1952 Mr Alexander R Milne was to leave Aberdour on promotion to become Station Master at Manuel, near Linlithgow just a month following the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the throne and somewhat ironically just four months before Aberdour's first flower show. (He was later to become Station Master at Ballater – the 'Royal Station' – a position he held until his retirement). On his departure he was presented with a "wallet of treasury notes" from a grateful Kirk who were losing a popular Session clerk. In his comparatively short time at Aberdour Mr Milne had made a huge impression with him and his station team returning a war weary station to it's former glory and laying the foundation for many garden prizes to be won in the future.

During all these events, in common with many other schoolchildren, I travelled each day from Aberdour to school in Edinburgh. It cost £3.12.6d for a schoolboy season ticket per term, the journey took forty minutes and the carriages at the front of these trains had corridors whilst the ones at the back did not. Probably much to the relief of the other adult passengers a good proportion of us schoolboys and girls preferred the back compartments. Many lasting friendships with boys and girls from other schools and places were made on those regular journeys. The train left Aberdour Station at 7.56 am and I usually caught the return train from Waverley after school at 3.43 pm or





*Everyday Work Train*

the 5.10 pm. On the days I took the earlier train I generally popped into the institute for a game of pool before going home. The billiard table was in the back hall and this converted potato hut (mentioned above) was a real social centre with a 'brag school' going on in the corner and us lads playing pool on the table. It was there that I came to know Ned Borthwick the Station Clerk who used to visit between

trains for a game. I can't remember ever winning against him and it cost 6d. to lose!

During those few years we saw the station change before our very eyes in that the bank near the road bridge on the 'down' line was covered with conifer trees and rocks then over a couple of years it was transformed into a bank of flowers. Under the guidance and example of their Station Master A. R Milne the staff did a fine job. In the mornings whilst waiting for our train we sometimes saw the squad of linesmen set out from the station to ensure the safety and maintenance of the track with their hammers to knock in the chocks. Minnie Nurse the signalman's daughter, Andy Paton and Bob Gordon were porters. Some of the linesmen who can be remembered among that squad were Willie Dryburgh, whose grandson lives in Rose Cottage and is now a member of the Community Council, Lawrence Moir, whose son David became a signalman in his time, Tom Watterson, Duncan Clark and Geordie Currie. Meanwhile in the office Dorothy Cant and Margaret Little assisted Ned Borthwick and Mr MacBeth was to succeed Mr Milne as Station Master in 1952 and remained until his retirement in 1965 during which time the complexion of the railway system throughout the land was to change radically.



*circa 1955*  
*Ned Borthwick*

In the sixties these changes began with the start of the closure of collieries and continued with the building of the Forth Road Bridge and its opening in 1964; the increasing usage by the general public of the car and the dramatic rise in the use of roads to transport freight; the increase of air travel; the development of new towns such as Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Livingston, Glenrothes and Dalgety Bay without their own rail facilities (at the time), which lead to the most significant which was the 'Beeching Report' in 1963 - officially 'The Reshaping of British Railways'. In the 'Beeching Report' the Chairman of the British Railways Board recommended the



reduction of 29000 km/17800 m of route open for traffic by more than 50% and the closure of 2300 stations out of more than 6000. All of these developments contributed to the reduction of the rail network in spite of the Beeching proposals not being implemented in full, and in the early 1990's there remained only 16500 km/10250 m of route open for passenger traffic and some 2500 stations.

Although at Aberdour the interior of the main building had been renovated and redecorated in a modern style in the late fifties, the 'down' side which was known as the 'excursion siding' (it was used for carriages carrying trippers) and 'elevated' siding together with the access siding from the 'up' line to the goods yard were closed in 1961, due most probably to the previous closure of HMS Cochrane.

Probably due to the lack of colliery business and the resultant down-turn in requirements and the Beeching Report, in 1964 the goods yard was closed also, with the demolition of the goods shed, removal of the loading gauge, a 5cwt weighing machine, and a three ton hand crane. Fortunately this is far as the closures extended for us, and our station itself avoided closure and the goods yard was converted later into the present car park.



*Sidings and goods yard circa 1948  
Note the old school in background*

This period of change marked the end of an era for our station in that the position of Station Master was abolished and Mr McBeth retired in the middle sixties and the Station House was sold off to private buyers. In 1966, the gas lighting was removed and the gas piping dug up and disposed of from the platforms whilst Ned Borthwick, our longest serving Aberdour employee, also retired after completing over 40 years service at Aberdour and the village honoured this event with a small presentation ceremony at the station. As from the 1st May 1967 all Scottish Region steam working ceased giving way to the faster, quieter, and apparently more reliable diesel trains.

Leading Railwaymen (none of whom came to live in our community) were appointed to take over the day-to-day running of the station and in the seventies "ScotRail" became the designation of the Scottish Division of British Rail. It seemed as if Aberdour was in danger of losing its individuality until Leading Railwayman Bob Dickson arrived.





*'Blue Peter' July 1966.  
Note gas pipes removal on platform.*

Mr Dickson had been employed with British Rail for 25 years before his appointment to Aberdour in 1975. As soon as he came he started work – mostly on Sundays – to bring the garden and station up to the standard to achieve the Best Kept Station award in 1979, 1980, and 1981 with special prizes for the garden. His gardening expertise was gained at first as regimental gardener in Singapore with the 2nd Gordon

Highlanders. Mr Dickson first worked on the railway as a Japanese prisoner of war on the notorious 'Burma Railway' also known as the 'Railway of Death' as no less than 96,000 prisoners died during its construction at the hands of their Japanese captors. Mr Dickson weighed only eight stones when repatriated and spent a year in Birmingham Military hospital before returning home to his native Burntisland. When presenting the 'Top Gardening' prize on the third occasion to Bob Dickson, Sir Robin MacLennan (former member of the Scottish Railways Board) described Aberdour Station as: *"a little package of pleasure"*.

Mr Dickson retired in early 1982 and died on Christmas Day 1989 aged 72 years. He is survived by his wife, and three sons.

Whilst Bob Dickson was busy restoring Aberdour to its former glorious individuality, the electrification of signals took place in 1981. Full colour light signalling was put into service covering most of Fife and controlled from the Edinburgh signalling centre.



*With kind permission of Dunfermline Press*

**Bob Dickson**

Mr Andrew Philip succeeded Mr Dickson as Leading Railwayman in Aberdour in 1982. Andrew was also a keen gardener and it was under his care and management that our station was to ascend to hitherto inconceivable heights! Andrew came from Markinch and immediately 'celebrated' his transfer by winning an award for 'Top Gardener' in 1982. His run of achievement of winning awards for our station (all of which are faithfully





**Leading Railwayman  
A. Philip**

recorded in the 'Dunfermline Press') was to last throughout his service here each and every year until his retirement in 1993, and he received the British Empire Medal in recognition of this achievement.

In 1986, for the first and only time a reigning monarch visited Aberdour, when Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth and His Royal Highness Prince Philip arrived by train at the station on their way for the official inauguration and to view the new and controversial Shell/Esso Ethylene cracker plant at Mossmoran on Friday June the sixth. The Royal party were greeted at Aberdour Station by the Lord Lieutenant of Fife, and amongst the others on the platform to greet and be presented to the Queen was the future Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown in his capacity of local Member of Parliament.

There were no Aberdour residents permitted on the platforms to meet the Queen or the Duke of Edinburgh that day (one assumes as a security measure), but that omission was well compensated for just outside where the Royal couple were greeted by large crowds.

The Queen was presented with a posy of flowers by Sarah Taddei whilst Kathryn Cochrane was asked by the Duke if all Aberdour Primary School pupils were clever!!.

The Royal party left Aberdour for a brief view of the Essochem marine terminal at Braefoot Bay before continuing their short journey by car via Bernard's Smiddy to Mossmoran.



With the kind permission of the 'Dunfermline Press'.

***HM The Queen and HRH Prince Phillip arrive in 1986***

*(As a matter of interest the Queen wore a burgundy coat and a crimson hat, and enjoyed a lunch at Mossmoran consisting of fresh Scotch salmon, Roast beef, & Crème Brulee or sliced oranges in 'Cointreau'. Wines served at this Royal occasion were Vouvray, Choyer 1984/85; Chateau La Rose, Puy Blanquet & St Emilion 1981/82).*



# Court Circular

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

June 6

The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh arrived at Aberdour Station in the Royal Train this morning and were received by Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Fife (Colonel Sir John Gilmore, Bt.).

*Court Circular from Daily Telegraph 1986*

In 1986, after all the excitement of the Queens visit, on the 29th September it was announced that 'single manning' would be introduced to Aberdour, Markinch, Ladybank, Kinghorn, Rosyth, and Burntisland stations. This meant that these stations would only be manned between the hours of 6.00 am and 2.00pm. Whilst North Queensferry would become completely unmanned.

The village has always had a fine appreciation of our railway station and the service it has provided over

the years, and especially during the times when the various railwaymen have worked to make it so attractive. Through the years and running up to 1990 the Flower Show Committee regularly made contributions to assist in the maintenance of the garden, and the Community Council in addition to other support have arranged for volunteers to maintain the banks on the approaches. It was this continuous demonstration of concern for the upkeep of the station which encouraged "ScotRail" to assist the Community Council to stage a 'Victorian Day' on June the second to mark the centenary

of the station and provide celebrations throughout the village as a whole. On that day everyone was encouraged

to dress in Victorian clothes and 'The Osprey' an A4 Pacific locomotive No. 60009 owned by John Cameron, Chairman of the British Railways Board arrived at the station at 1.00 pm pulling a carriage of VIPs. This locomotive was the one which was used by Lord Elgin and guests on the 4th March Forth Rail Bridge centenary event.



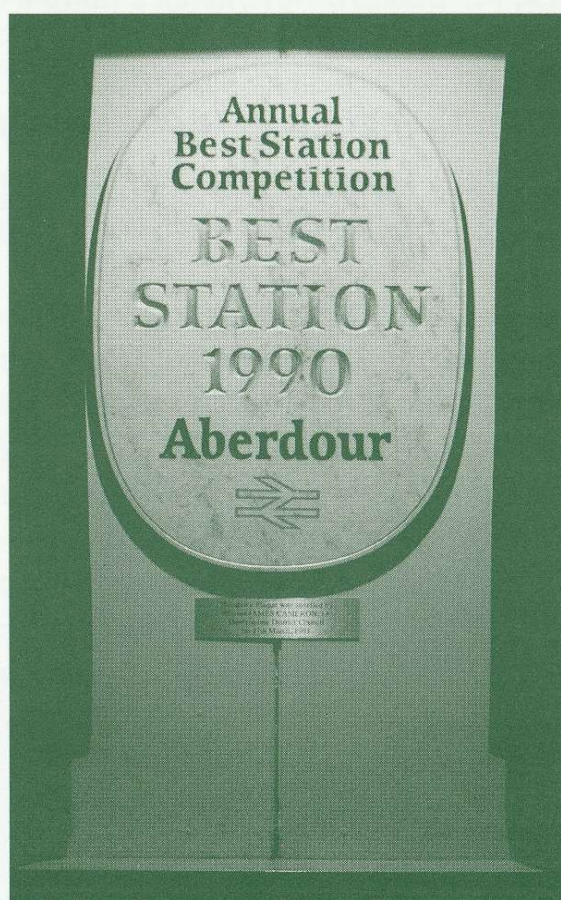
*The Osprey*

In the Institute (somewhat modernised since I played pool against Ned Borthwick!) a model train exhibition was displayed with models provided by the SEEB Association from Edinburgh and Dundee Model Railway Society.



In the park was a father and son football match, exhibition tennis and a variety of childrens games as they were played 100 years beforehand, and two conducted historical walks with guides provided by Aberdour 'primary seven' pupils. At the station (in addition to all the rest) a pony and cart was provided to ferry 'pretend' luggage for travellers. Also there was free admission to the castle grounds where croquet matches were organised on the lawn of the walled garden. Dancing and further entertainment was to be enjoyed at the Woodside Hotel and in the primary school there was an old time music hall event. The weather was good throughout this centenary day and the shops had entered into the spirit of the day by displaying windows decorated to reflect the mood of the whole event.

It seems appropriate that on completion of its first one hundred years Aberdour Station was to gain the '**Best Station Award**' thus crowning an eventful century with the ultimate accolade for railway stations nationwide. The marble plaque presented by Provost James Cameron J.P., of the Dunfermline District Council on 27th March 1991 commemorating this highest of awards hangs proudly in the booking hall today.





## **Personal Memories:**

*From Mrs Margaret Fail who is Signalman Mr Archie Redpath's daughter:*

*"I remember the station as a bustling place and I used to take my Dad his tea often, making toast at the blazing fire in the signal box! A similar fire would be roaring in the waiting room too. He would say when certain special engines would be due and I'd rush over to see them, especially the elegant, new streamlined ones. These seldom stopped at our station alas, but it was thrilling to see them."*

*From Mrs Sheila Nicol who is Station Master Mr A.R. Milne's daughter:*

*"On a visit to Aberdour a number of years ago we had an interesting conversation with the man in charge; a nostalgic walk along the platforms added to the enjoyment. I was absolutely amazed at the grimy appearance of the exterior of Station House which of course, had been just the same when we lived there".*

*From Mr Stewart Borthwick, Mr Edward Borthwick's (who was Station Clerk for 42 years) son:*

*"I used to enjoy going down to the booking office on a Friday afternoon and seeing the linesmen and others being paid by my Dad. I initially thought they were being generous but it transpired they were paying their Union fees to him.*

*There was a bit of a wind that particular morning (when a group of Welsh rugby supporters arrived to take the train to Edinburgh for the international) and with both waiting room doors open a draught was created and when a passenger tendered a ten shilling note to pay for his ticket the draught somehow took the note and progressed it right into the till. The Welshman thought Aberdour's automation was marvellous and he encouraged others to see it working and this meant that every one of the Welshmen tendered notes and everyone saw their note travel 'automatically' from hand to till !! This resulted in the station office staff, to cope with the sudden demand, having to make a frenzied rush to the bank for change before the train arrived!"*



The information for the above was gathered from the following to which my acknowledgement and appreciation is wholeheartedly extended:

The Dunfermline Library – Local History Department  
The National Archives of Scotland  
The Dunfermline Press  
The Dunfermline Journal  
Historic Scotland

The RCA – It's Growth and Development by George Ridley MP  
The North Eastern Railway by C M Jenkin Jones  
The Scottish Railway Book by John Thomas  
The North British Railway Tourist Guide 1891  
North British Railway by C Hamilton Ellis 1955  
Nicolas and Alexandra by Robert K Massie 1968  
The Railways of Fife by William Scott Bruce 1980  
ScotRail - Best Station Awards 1990  
(with photographic illustrations)  
Fife's Last Days of Steam by W A C Smith 2001  
The Dunfermline Library '2000 Project'  
(Railways Section – Leader: Roger Pedrick)

Some of the photographs have been kindly supplied by:

“The Dunfermline Press”: Mr Trevor Francis: Mr John Taylor: Dr Paul Salveson.  
and the unused portion of ticket was kindly lent by Mr John Cuthill.

My heartfelt thanks is extended to the following for their unstinting assistance - without which it would have been impossible to complete this production – in addition to the supply of photographs:

Mrs Margaret Fail: Mrs Sheila Nicol: Mrs Emily Dickson: Mrs Catherine Duncan:  
and Mr G Stewart Borthwick, all of whom are related to railwaymen who served here.



*W. T. Cochrane*

Another booklet written by the same author is entitled  
‘The Postal Services of Aberdour Post Office’,  
and was published in July 2001.



## Comment

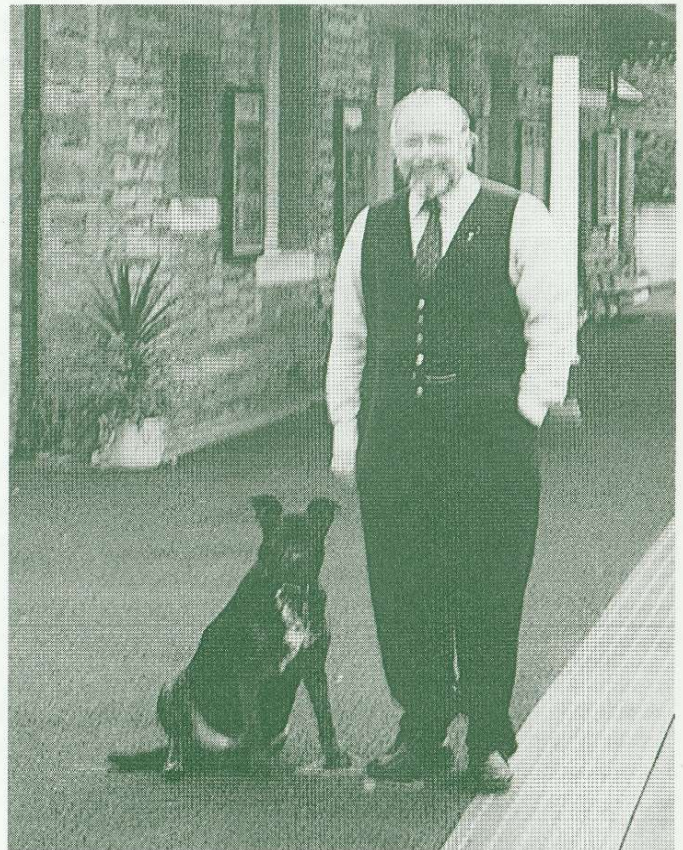
Obviously Aberdour Station still exists to serve our little population and in the years between the centenary and this time of writing, Andrew Philip has retired and been replaced by his successor Trevor Francis. 'Trev' is now a well known and popular figure in the village, added to which he brought something unique to Aberdour Station – a 'railway' dog called 'Buster'. Buster has been known to, absentmindedly and unnoticed, board the train and be returned from Inverkeithing where fortunately he was recognised as travelling without a ticket!!

On many occasions I myself have returned to Aberdour - but only once without a ticket; on that occasion, as a schoolboy, I had, by mistake, boarded the wrong train at Waverley to find myself in Glasgow. I presented myself to the policeman on the platform who 'passed me down the beat' to Glasgow City Police Headquarters where I spent the night in a cell!!. The next morning just like 'Buster' I was returned to Aberdour.

That return was the same as many others in some respect because as I alighted, at last, onto the platform, I heard the cry "Aberdour, Aberdour" – always given twice by a portly gentleman sporting a trilby hat called Ned Borthwick. Looking back I have come to realise that call meant that I was home once more.

The railway is our pathway to the world but the return journey to Aberdour is the one I have always preferred.

**Bill Cochrane**  
**February 2002**





## Chronology of Events

- 1887-1890 Inverkeithing to Burntisland line constructed
- 1890 Opening of Aberdour Station
- 1890 Mr John McDonald appointed as Station Master
- 1896 Golf Course opened
- 1896 Czar & Czarina's visit to Scotland
- 1901 Fire at Aberdour Station
- 1904 Mr John Nicholson appointed as Station Master
- 1914 Outbreak of Great War
- 1915 Carlingnose Granite Company apply for siding
- 1917 Aberdour Station awarded '**Best Kept Station**' award
- 1919 Consent given to extend 'down' platform
- 1923 NBR becomes Scottish section of LNER
- 1924 Ned Borthwick appointed as Station Clerk
- 1926 Mr Hossacks appointed as Station Master
- 1937 Mr Proudfoot appointed as Station Master
- 1939 Outbreak of World War Two
- 1942 Mr Milne appointed as Station Master
- 1944 Signal box survey (suitability for women)
- 1947 Aberdour wins '**Best Kept Station**' award
- 1948 LNER nationalised to become BR
- 1949 Aberdour wins '**Best Kept Station**' award
- 1950 Aberdour wins '**Best Kept Station**' award
- 1951 Aberdour wins '**Best Kept Station**' award
- 1952 Mr McBeth appointed as Station Master
- 1961 Sidings closed
- 1963 'Beeching Report'
- 1964 Goods yard dismantled
- 1965 Mr McBeth retires with discontinuation of Station Masters
- 1966 Gas pipes and lamp standards removed
- 1967 End of Steam – Diesel takes over
- 1975 Mr Dickson, 'Leading Railwayman' (LR) arrives
- 1979 Aberdour wins '**Best Kept Station**' award
- 1980 Aberdour wins '**Best Kept Station**' award
- 1981 Aberdour wins '**Best Kept Station**' award
- 1982 Mr Dickson retires
- 1982-1993 Mr Philip,LR, arrives (personal and '**Best Kept Station**' awards 1982-1993)
- 1986 HM The Queen Elizabeth & HRH Prince Philip visit
- 1990 Centenary of Railway Station celebration with 'Victoria Day' by village
- 1990 Single manning introduced
- 1990 Aberdour wins **Best Station Award**



# BEST STATION COMPETITION

## Best Station for 1990

### ABERDOUR

#### Fife

ScotRail/Regional Railways  
Rotary District 101

*At this small station, there is colour and visual interest in overwhelming abundance. Creative imagination achieves expression through simple hard work. And that effort is being matched by results.*

*Few BR stations can claim to be tourist attractions in their own right. Our Best Station this year fully justifies this claim. From something of a local eccentricity, Aberdour now promotes a wider message of quality for British Rail and for ScotRail, having featured on radio and national television, and many hundreds come each year to see its gardens and flowers.*

*But the effort on the gardens by no means eclipses the business role of the station as a focal point for this part of the line. For the*

*rail customer, the highest standards of personal, friendly service easily compensate for the somewhat limited facilities. In fact, the booking hall continues to be a high spot with carpets, soft seats, magazines, flowers (of course) and displays of drawings and letters of appreciation from schoolchildren who have visited the station.*

*The local community, too, are now recognising their station as an asset, and are investing in its improvement.*

*Here, then, is individual effort and commitment on a remarkable scale – not only by the station's single member of staff, but also by the members of his small 'team' including his wife! – and is surely the stuff of which award winners are made.*

#### JUDGES' COMMENTS

*"In 5 years judging, this the best yet"*

*"An absolute delight – I can't find fault"*

*"Overall, it is a credit to ScotRail and BR"*

*"An outstanding example"*

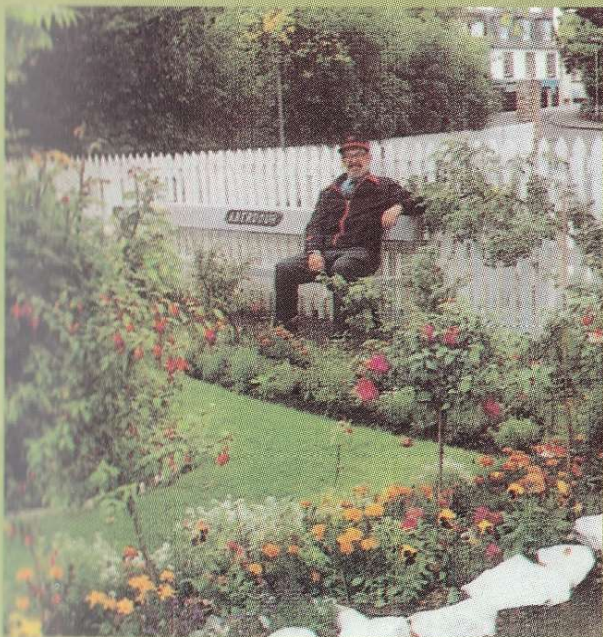
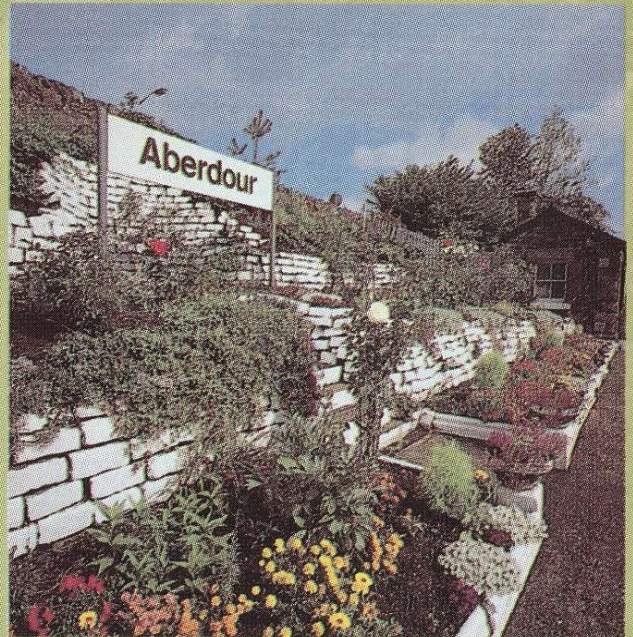
*"The Station is a credit both to the single member of staff and to the community of Aberdour"*

*"I arrived expecting everything to be top grade and my expectations were realised"*

The above citation was given in the 'Best Station Awards 1990' Booklet, and Andrew Philip Leading Railwayman at Aberdour received the award in the Grand Hall, New Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, London on Wednesday 23 January, 1991 from HRH The Princess Royal.



# ABERDOUR RAILWAY STATION





*Railway Station, Aberdour*

