

THE RAILWAY IN LANGHOLM



In the 1840s, the North British Railway planned to extend the Edinburgh and Hawick railway south, through Teviotdale and Ewesdale, via Langholm to Carlisle. This proposal was objected to by the Caledonian Railway who submitted plans for their own railway to Hawick via Langholm from Carlisle.

The North British Railway countered this proposal for a railway through Liddesdale and Newcastleton to Carlisle.

The railway battle raged before Parliament but in March 1859, it was announced that the Liddesdale scheme had triumphed. One factor had been the inferior quality of the coal at Canonbie compared with that of the North Tyne coal from Plashetts. In many ways, Langholmites felt cheated. But, as a consolation for Langholm not being on the main line, the train fare north of the town to Hawick and beyond was calculated as if the branch line ran directly north to Hawick and not south to Riddings before going north again.

The first train arrived in Langholm on Tuesday, 29th March 1864, carrying the turntable to be installed in the yard. The line was officially inspected the following Monday. The local paper records that passenger and goods traffic started on Monday, 11th April.

The branch line and the successive railway companies, the North British, the London and North Eastern Railway and finally British Railways served the town well during times of peace and times of strife. Everyday traffic included textiles, coal, newspapers, post, whisky (until the distillery closed), general merchandise and parcels.

Unusual traffic included specials to the new munitions factory at Gretna during WWI and, in WWII, double headed trains drawing tanks to and from the Camp on the Castleholm. On occasions the Cornet's horse came by rail. In the early days the station at Langholm had an overall roof, an engine shed and a turntable for the branch locomotive, often "Langholm" or "Gretna". After the engine shed at Langholm closed, single-coach steam railcars, usually "Nettle" or "Protector" were introduced on some services between the wars.

When the Beeching plans were announced in 1962, the Langholm Branch and the Waverley Route were proposed for closure. The Beeching Axe, which meant that the sound of a train would never be heard again in many rural valleys, fell in Eskdale on 15th June 1964, the last passenger train leaving Langholm on Saturday 13th June.

The freight service lasted until September 1967. Soon afterwards the lines were lifted and the Railway to Langholm became just a memory. Almost all that remains in the town, at Townfoot, is a cairn on the site of the station.

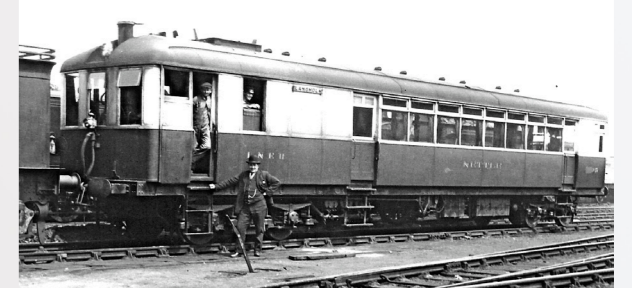
But where else in the world would a Flute Band arrive at a railway station, which doesn't exist, to meet exiles on Summer Fair Night – passengers on a train which hasn't run since the early 1950s, and parade them back to the town?



Langholm Station.



Sunday School excursion to Silloth leaving Langholm.



'Nettle' one of the single-coach steam railcars.



A family about to make their final journey on the last day of the passenger trains.



A goods train about to leave for Carlisle in 1962.



A general view of the station looking north.



Langholm Station 1904.



A diminutive goods train with the mills in the background.



The co-operative membership

The generous support of all involved with this project is gratefully acknowledged. Artwork and design by John Hills. www.johnhills.info