

“After all we did not stop at Glasson on the outward journey; the passenger neatly skipped from his seat beside the engineer onto the lonely platform; the engine preferred to keep on the move. On the return journey, a few days later, the Dandy was full inside, for it was market day in Carlisle. When we reached Glasson there was a crowd of perhaps half a dozen waiting on the platform, and whilst the driver attended to the receipt of fares the engine left the metals and browsed contentedly on the bank. Perhaps there were a couple of dozen passengers in all, inside and out, but in summer there are at times as many as fifty; the overflow sits with the luggage on the top.”

When this was written the days of the Dandy were numbered. On Saturday, 4th April 1914 the Dandy made its last trip. On the Monday it was replaced by a steam engine. The first engine was decorated with flags, with the Scottish Standard to the fore, while all along the route the houses flaunted streamers in honour of the occasion. A public luncheon was held in the Hope and Anchor Hotel in Port Carlisle. Speakers expressed little regret at the passing of the Dandy. One speaker said “The Dandy was unique in the whole of England, and was unique”, he believed, “in its absolute discomfort.” There were cheers when he said he was delighted to hail the train once more. The **Carlisle Journal** said “Few will feel much regret even on sentimental grounds at the disappearance of this relic of antiquity.” The **Cumberland News** said that Port Carlisle and Bowness had been sadly handicapped in their material development by this primitive means of communication with the outside world. So the Dandy passed with few tears. Mr. John Black, a representative from the

North British, sounded a more cautious note amidst the general good cheer. He told the people of Port Carlisle that it cost a great deal to run an engine and he suggested that they make the place attractive to visitors. With a bowling green but no safe bathing and no golf course Port Carlisle was never set to be a seaside resort.

Less than 20 years later the scenes at Port Carlisle were in sombre contrast to the celebrations of 1914. On 31st May 1932 the last train, the Sentinel coach “Flower of Yarrow”, pulled out from the port. One lady on the platform said “I have come to pay my last respects. What a tragedy this is!” Some of the residents on the front street drew their blinds as the train passed along. Others frankly admitted that to see the last train go would have been too much for them. After the train had gone the residents gathered in the bower at the bowling green to make a final protest. They unanimously passed a motion that “the line had been closed because of the poor and inadequate service offered to the public.”

The story of the Silloth line runs into calmer waters following the leasing of the railway to the North British in 1862. From 1st July 1864 Silloth and Port Carlisle trains began to arrive at and depart from Citadel Station, instead of the old Canal Station. This was welcomed as a great convenience, as it saved the long trudge through Caldewgate. All the Carlisle railways now met at Citadel Station. High tolls charged by the Caledonian for running rights over a part of their line into Citadel Station had kept the Port Carlisle and Silloth railways as “outsiders”.

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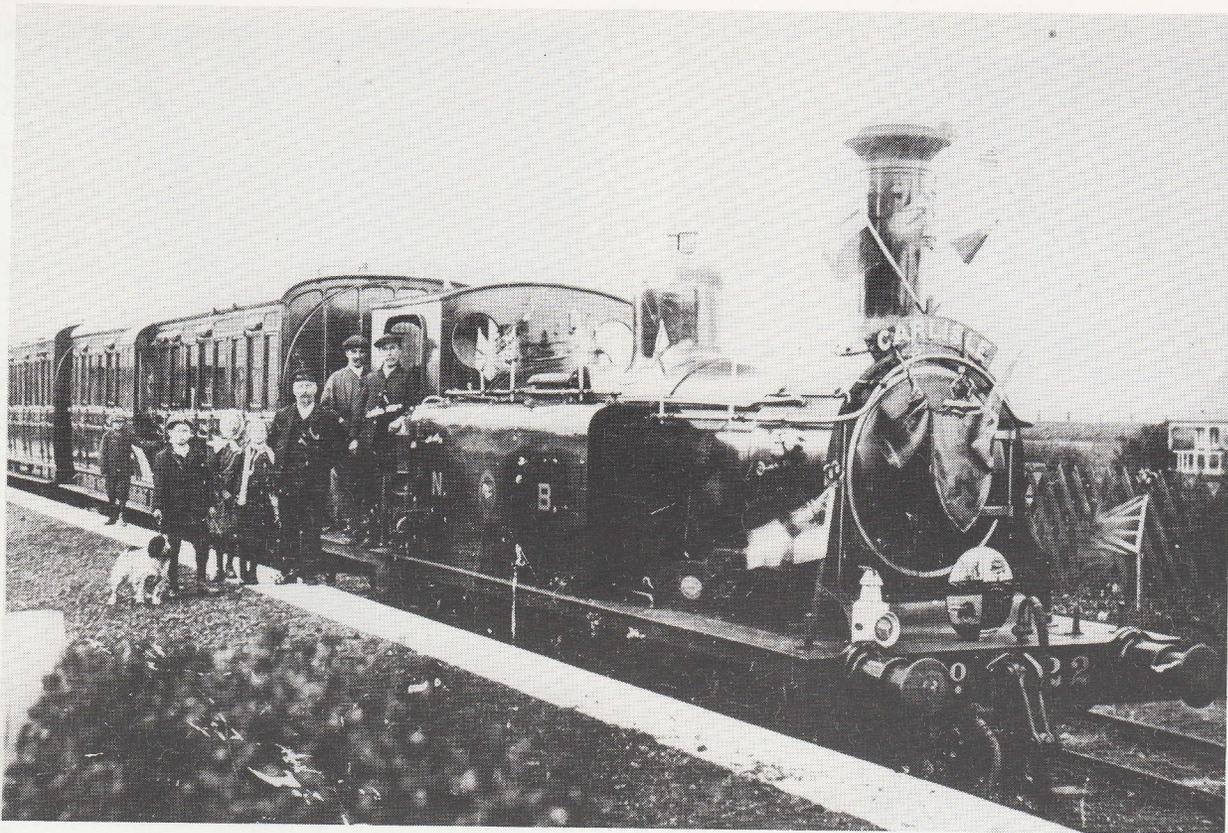
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*6th April 1914; steampower replaces horsepower on the Port Carlisle branch. This first train was hauled by 0-6-0 North British tank engine number 22. The guard on the platform is Isaac Hickson, the former driver of "The Dandy."* (Photo courtesy of Carlisle Museum).



August 1962; Birmingham-Sulzer 1-500 twin units head a Sillioth — Carlisle special. This 3,000 horsepower combination was the most powerful seen on the branch.

(Photo courtesy of Peter Brock).



June 1960, Engine 64895, a J39 class 0-6-0 type, leaves Burgh-by-Sands with the 6.20 p.m. Sillioth to Carlisle local.

(Photo courtesy of Peter Brock).

bride and Abbey. West Cumbrian iron ore was carried to the Ayrshire and Lanarkshire iron works over the Solway Viaduct. The viaduct, linking Bowness-on-Solway with Kirtlebridge on the main Caledonian line, meant freight from the west coast of Cumberland could be routed directly to the west coast of Scotland, so by-passing Carlisle. Kirkbride Junction, half a mile west of Kirkbride, and Abbey Junction, half a mile east of Abbey, were the two Silloth line links in this new England/Scotland chain. The Solway Viaduct was closed for traffic in 1921.

On 6th April 1879 a misfortune struck the Silloth docks when the dock wall collapsed bringing with it the dock gates. It was nearly a fortnight before the entrance was sufficiently cleared to allow the imprisoned vessels to escape. It was decided to construct a new docks further inland. This was entered from the old dock. The new dock opened for traffic in 1885.

In 1880 the Silloth and Port Carlisle lines were merged with the North British. Succeeding reorganisations made them a part of the L.N.E.R. network from 1923 to 1947 and finally British Rail property in 1948.

Two interesting branch lines ran off from the Silloth yard, one to the Convalescent Institution and the other to the Silloth Battery. The Convalescent Institution was built in 1862. A children's ward was added in 1882. The object of the institution was to give poor people who had been stricken with fever the opportunity to convalesce in a healthy and invigorating climate. A coach would be regularly shunted down to the home where the convalescents would detrain at the small wooden platform. The

train would be preceded by a man carrying a red flag as the line was unfenced.

Silloth Battery was erected by Armstrong Whitworth of Elswick in 1886 for the testing of all classes of artillery guns with ranges of up to four miles. Lying a mile south of the station, it was linked by a short stretch of track to the Silloth yard. The site covered one and a half acres. In June 1895 the Nasrulla Khan, the Afghan Prince, visited the Battery. He was keenly interested in the newest implements of war. He was impressed by the deadliness of the Maxim machine gun, which, moving down a line, and firing 600 rounds a minute, was capable of sweeping away a battalion in less time that it took to describe it. The Nasrulla Khan proposed that further tests should be made with the Maxim, with an apple as the target. Before it was clear whether His Highness intended to perform the William Tell exploit on his little page, the Maxim gunner announced he had run out of ammunition. The departure of the train was delayed half an hour as the Prince wished to see the velocity screens in action. A hint was given to the interpreter that other trains would have to be delayed as an order had been issued that everything was to give way to the Prince's special. When the question was raised of keeping the train back the Prince asked "Why cannot the train be kept?" The **Carlisle Journal** commented "In his country, no doubt, an hour or two are neither here nor there." The last tests were held at the Battery in 1928. After this, testing was transferred to Eskmeals, not far from the Vickers works at Barrow.

Warlike foreign princes were infrequent visitors to the Solway shores. Silloth "regulars" were visitors from Edinburgh, Musselburgh and Hawick — the North British

connection. In the summer day-trippers and holiday makers spilled out of every train. There was only one platform at Silloth — still clearly visible today. On busy bank holidays excursion trains were often banked up at Blackdyke, the stop before Silloth, to wait for the train in front to unload its passengers and then be shunted away. The line clear, the next train steamed in.

To Mr. Liddell of Fairford, Gloucestershire I owe the following charming and extraordinarily vivid recollections of the delights of the Silloth line in the 1930's.

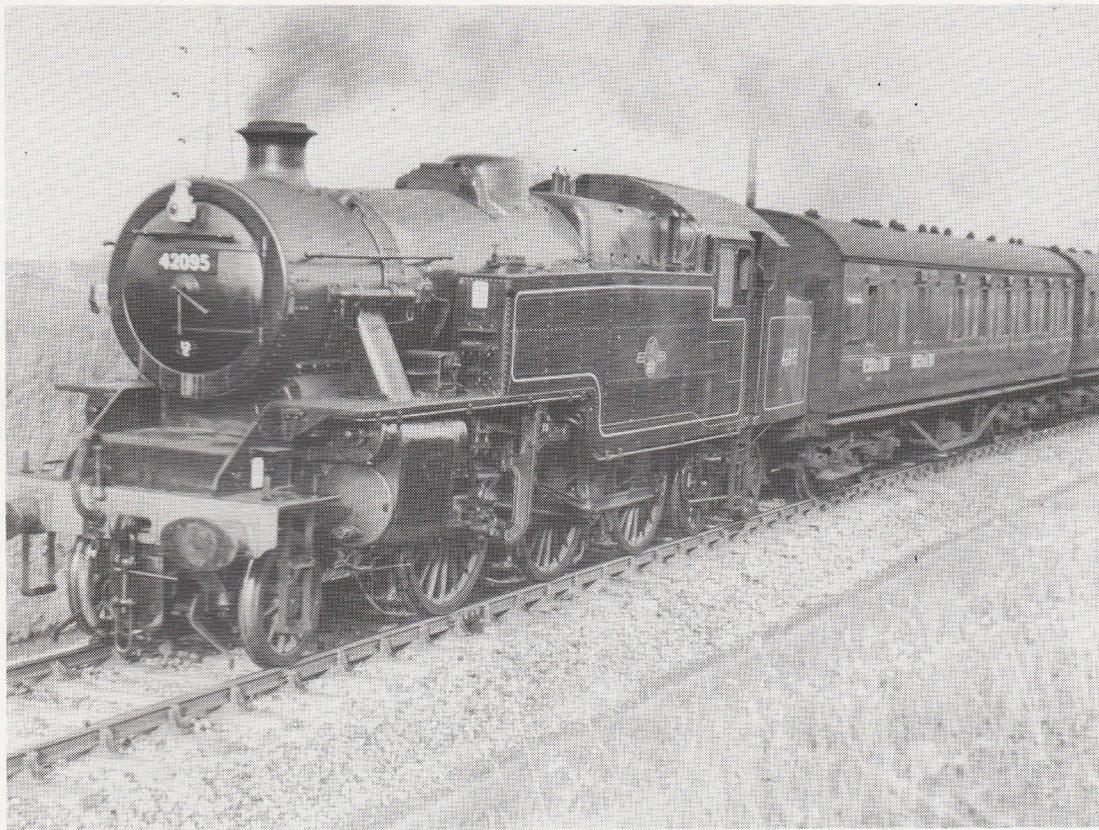
“Any description of a journey on the Silloth line must inevitably start at the Citadel Station. Its high roof seemed to resound permanently to the blasting exhausts of furiously slipping engines, accompanied frequently by the music of ringing side rods — usually from Midland “2P”s — and the fearful din from those accursed “pop” safety valves; while among all the “Royal Scots” and suchlike there was always the chance of seeing something rare such as, on one wonderful occasion, the glistening spectacle of “Midlothian”, the sole surviving N.B.R. Atlantic.

Journeys to Silloth always seemed to start with a late arrival from the south courtesy of the L.M.S., a railway with a rather elastic view of timekeeping. This resulted in an unnecessary dash to the Silloth Bay, where a train of ancient gaslit clerestory stock was waiting: non-corridor of course, the frowsty compartments smelling deliciously of old moquette upholstery and the massive gas pendant an object of great curiosity to us children. At the head would be an antiquated ex-N.B.R. 4-4-0 with a builder's plate dated somewhere about 1890 — 1895, the beat of its

Westinghouse pump subtly mysterious to a young mind from vacuum-braked territory.

Eventually the whole elderly equipage heaved itself into motion, and once past the Canal Junction I suppose the Silloth branch could be said to have truly started. Certainly my main memory is of continual violent curvature for the first few miles as we followed the old canal, accompanied by frequent knocks and much squealing of flanges and an occasional jangling “rigoletto” from the engine's side rods. Due to the high canal banks there was not much to look at so Kirkandrews came as a welcome break. My main memory of this station is that it had a beautiful garden; beds of flowers bordered by low box hedges or white painted stones, well raked gravel paths and a beautiful climbing rose on a pergola. Additionally most stations had their name picked out in large sea shells on a prominent bed.

Always the station name was called out by the staff, in strong local accents not very comprehensible to a southern ear; and always the cadence of that air pump from the front of the train, slowing as the pressure gradually built up. Then after a few minutes the guard's whistle blew and the ancient locomotive heaved itself into motion, to the accompaniment of much rod-jangling and a rain of cinders pattering on the carriage roof. Burgh-by-Sands was another attractive, well-kept little station, the approach to which seemed to run through the back garden of the vicarage; for reasons unknown it seemed to be an approved spot for the fireman to show some activity, as every approach to it, year after year, was marked by the emission of a pungent, evil smelling smoke from the engine, its Tyneside origins giving an aroma



September 1961, Engine 42095, a Stanier 4MT Tanker, approaches Grinsdale Bridge with the 4.40 p.m. local from Carlisle to Silloth.  
(Photo courtesy of Peter Brock).