

# CORNWALL'S NEW LINE

## BERE ALSTON TO CALLINGTON- ROAD OVER THE TAMAR

### PASSENGER TRAFFIC BEGUN

What has not unfairly been described as one of the most charming sections of railway line in the kingdom was opened for passenger traffic yesterday. It is to be known as the Plymouth Devonport, and South Western Junction Railway, or, alternatively, as the Bere Alston and Calstock Light Railway, its connection being between Bere Alston on the main line of the L. & S.W. Railway and Kelly Bray, a cluster of houses at the foot of the famed Kit-hill, one mile from the market town of Callington.

By following a circuitous route, it also joins up Calstock, Gunnislake, Latchley and Monk's Corner (known as Stokeclimsland on the timetables). Further it forms one more link with Devon by reason of an elegant viaduct over the Tamar at Calstock. The new terminus will be known as Callington-road, and a bus service will make it easy to reach the town speedily. Yesterday opened gloriously, and continued fine until the evening, a generous sun considerably tempered the cold wind, and throwing into glowing colour the charming scenery of the upper Tamar valley, along which so much of the line winds. When russet and drab presently gives way to green and gold this trip will be delightful.

The first train out of Bere Alston left before half-eight with a goodly complement aboard. The neat and comfortable carriages were duly admired, as well as the green enamelled woodwork of them, and the trim engines, of which A. S. Harris had the honour of being the pioneer. Uniforms of invisible green, with gold thread lettering, also looked quite smart. Although the hour was early, there were crowds at all the bijou stations on the route, and the juveniles had a particularly good time, shouting out the names of the station and generally fussing about.

The adults were more serious, yet took evident pleasure in the proceedings. Work stopped momentarily all along the line for a look at the new iron horse, and from nearly every cottage handkerchiefs were waved and signs of joy exhibited. Those travelling by the second train, at noon, were similarly greeted, and had the privilege of enjoying the brightest hours of the day during a journey which was generally voted an unusual and unexpected treat.

### AT THE NEW TERMINUS

The arrival of the second train at the terminus was greeted with enthusiasm, a huge crowd quite filling the station platform, and cheering lustily. A band was playing and there was a fair display of bunting. In a siding stood another train, with the engine "Lord St. Leven" coupled but neither train was in anyway dressed for the occasion. The station proved the most substantial of the series, and is fully equipped. Its

approach will be improved in time. It is long since Kelly Bray was so full of life, and the children enjoyed their finest day so far. There were buns for them. open air music, a moderate amount of license, and sport in the afternoon in the "Waterloo Recreation Ground" for all manner of prizes. There was a more or less impromptu entertainment in the Public Rooms in the evening, a public tea being sandwiched in between. There was nothing really official in these rejoicing, for unfortunately, the directors were not represented, a variety of circumstances accounting for the fact, and the intention having apparently been to dispense with ceremony. Kelly Bray folk, however would have been vastly disappointed had nothing been done. It a little known place, destined soon to lose that reputation. Houses have sprung up rapidly in recent years and more lots are laid out. Private enterprise mainly accounts for this, and also for the luncheon in the new Public Rooms, which was the chief item in the celebration. It would have been more imposing had the public life of Callington been more largely represented. The "Trafalgar-square Public Rooms" are not designed on an ambitious scale, and at present are in a very unfinished condition, although the spacious upper room was advances enough to accommodate a company of about fifty at luncheon. When complete this building should be of great service to Kelly Bray, especially during the winter months. Stabling provision is made, and catering for parties in the summer should be a simple matter. There was some attempt at decoration, a number of small flags and the motto. "Welcome to the railway" frequently repeated. The Public Rooms' dog even had one fastened to his back. The Callington brass band played lively selections during the repast. Mr. S. J. Rattenbury, C.C., presided supported by the Rev. E. V. Stephens, Messers, N. Coad, C.C., J. Venning, H. B. Vittle, N. R. Rosekilly, R.K. Elford, and others.

### THE VALUE OF THE LINE

The Chairman read a few letters from absent sympathisers with the scheme, including the Rev. C. A. Manley, rector of Stokeclimsland who regretted a long standing engagement prevented him being present. He added: "This new enterprise, at length completed, will be to our parish and the neighbourhood at large an immense advantage (here here). May the railway prove a success to all concerned, and bring increased prosperity to this part of the county of Cornwall." Mr J. W. Burchell (secretary to the railway) and Mr. Rawling (Launceston) were both ill and Mr Lewis Foster (Liskeard), a director had written that he could not be present. Lastly, there was the following telegram: "Hearty congratulations on opening of the railway, for which I Surveyed many years ago. - John Dawe."

After the loyal toast, Mr. H. B. Vittle proposed "The Ministers of all Denominations." It was one of the cheering signs of the times that they associated matters of religion with public functions of that kind and also that it was possible to propose such a toast as the minister of "all" denominations. The churches were doing excellent work, all of them. He believed there were many avenues which led to Heaven, each in its own capacity appealing to a particular stamp of mind,

and that eventually they would more adequately realise their unity.

The Rev. E. V. Stephens, in reply, thought the churches were trying to recognise their true oneness in Christ to-day more than ever before. When they looked behind the things which appeared on the surface, and went even farther than the Protestant churches if their own country to the Roman Catholic and Greek churches, they would find that they were devout in their reverence and worship of Christ. It was not in externals, names, and ceremonies they met and were really one, but in their love for and devotion to Jesus Christ that they found their true unity. He was persuaded if all of them could get away more and more from that which was merely external, and would be broken down and they would realise that beautiful unity of which Mr. Vittle had spoken. He had looked for that opening of the railway as affording facilities for the transit of goods and materials of various kinds and as affording easy methods of travel (here here). He would be glad when it was further extended than its present length, for there was a big locality not touched by any railway whatever. He was delighted to read that such an extension was contemplated very quickly. Two things most required by agriculturists, market gardeners, commercial men and trades people generally were quick transit and cheap rates (here here). If as was suggested, there was to be another line, it would lead to competition, and they would probably get a preferential tariff. That was a joyous day, for they were realising the hopes entertained for a very long time in that district (here here).

#### THE COUNTY COUNCIL AND EXTENSIONS

Mr. N. Coad proposed "The County Council" and spoke of seeing old Mr. Dawe engaged in survey work quite sixty years ago. He counselled the young men who could not get all they wanted to-day not to be pessimistic but to keep plodding on; they would find success in the end. The railway would be a great advantage to the district north of the line, but an extension would very greatly add to it. There were large tracts of country partially undeveloped which if the railway was brought near would be made fuller use of. Progress was only made with sacrifice, but individuals were called on to make the best of things in the general interest. As to the County Council, it was a body of importance which had a deal of work to do, and made sacrifices innumerable in order to do it. They wanted public spirited men for such bodies, men who spent their time as well as their brains in the common interest. And it was men of a similar stamp who were wanted when enterprises such as that were to be undertaken. Mr. Burchell was entitled to their thanks for his great efforts in getting the money together for the railway, and they would be grateful to gentlemen who helped them to cut the line back. It would be a good time to do it now with so many men out of employment.

Mr N. R. Rosekilly who responded said the Councillors were generally looked upon as spendthrifts (laughter) but that was chiefly because those who so called them did not know the inside workings nor how much they

had to spend as a result of the various directions of Parliament. There was education, which meant £20,000 out of the rates each year and which could not be lessened, and there were the highways which cost now close to £40,000 a year, and which had to be seen to. Folk appeared to think with the extension of railways there would be not so much need for roads, but the reverse was the case as new districts were opened up. But on good roads there was an economy to the users, and the new districts meant new wealth so that matters largely balanced themselves. That line would mean a very great extension of activity all along its route. Only that morning a large number of men who had been idle had been re-started at Pearsons granite quarries at Calstock, and with improved carrying facilities there would be more work done. It would be a most popular move to take this line on to Congdon's Shop if not farther. He would like to see the Altarnun district opened up, and was sure the people there would welcome the line just as Kelly Bray people had done (here here).

#### THE TOAST OF THE AFTERNOON

"Success to the new railway", was proposed from the chair, Mr. Rattenbury saying he had taken a very deep interest in it during the last fifty years, nearly, and had done his best to get it completed. He gave evidence in both Houses of Parliament more than thirty years ago, and more recently had done so at Tavistock, and lastly at Plymouth, in favour of the order necessary for making the line. Had it not been for severe opposition by another company with a rival scheme they would have had a railway to Callington quite thirty years ago. He recalled the mineral line, as at first constructed, and gave some quaint personal reminiscences, chiefly concerning his farther and a cousin of Mr. Venning, who had much to do with the venture. Now they had their railway, and every reason for their rejoicing. It was beautiful for situation (here here). He did not know any line in England so pretty as that between Kelly bray and Plymouth. One of the great barriers in the past had been the crossing of the Tamar, which was thought to be almost impossible, but, thanks to the increased wisdom and engineering ability of to-day that difficulty had been got over. The greatest credit was due to engineers and contractors for the beautiful piece of masonry at Calstock (applause). He had no doubt that the line would be a great success; it ought to be (here here). Everybody should support it, and none more than the Callington people. He tendered the warmest congratulations to Mr. Venning, whose name he coupled with the toast. Musical honours were accorded.

Mr. Venning responded. No one, he said had had more to do with the promotion of schemes for a railway to Callington than he, nor spent more time over the various plans in the last forty five years. He recalled several of the schemes, and the reasons for the abandoning of them, and emphasised the rivalry which had now stopped. They would have secured land in Callington for a station and approaches at a ridiculously small price had they been allowed to go there. Now, after waiting over forty years, after four

years of construction, and after the expenditure of £180,000, they had the line, and they could not permit the day of its opening for passenger traffic to pass without some celebration. He regretted there were not more Callington people there, for the line would bring thousands of people there. However, their line would take visitors to the foot of Kit Hill, which was the birthplace of the United Kingdom (laughter) seeing that on Hingston Down Egbert finally defeated the Danes and attached Cornwall to England. They hoped for big things from the railway and had faith in it.

#### COMPLIMENTS TO PIONEERS

The Rev. E. V. Stephens proposed "The Chairman" to whom they were much indebted, not only for presiding, but for the great interest he had taken with others in promoting the scheme. Mr. R. K. Elford (Oreston) seconded this, and urged a reduction in the fares from Plymouth in the best interest of the line. At present they were too high. Replying, the Chairman said he hoped all such matters would be given time. The affair was quite new yet, and they hardly knew where they were. All necessary amendments and adjustments would come in due course. He proposed "Success to the Public Rooms" and complimented Mr. Venning on his optimism and prompt action. Mr. Venning said a suggestion would be made to the board of directors at their next meeting to the question of excursion fares, but for the moment market tickets (twice a week) were the only provision of that kind. "The Press" closed the toast list.

All through the afternoon the station was crowded, although only three trains were to move - two in and one out - before the arrival of the final in from Bere Alston at 8:25. The liveliest interest was taken in the smart rolling stock and their liveries of the employees were closely scrutinised. The air was rather sharp for Kit Hill, yet many visitors ascended it to admire the wonderful views. The local people found their pleasure in "Waterloo field" or at the new station. It will probably be long before the quaint hamlet is so thickly peopled again until the fine weather sets in, but there is apparently an unexpected future for this latest Cornish railway terminus.

*Western Daily Mercury 3rd March 1908*

#### Follow up notes

##### PROPOSED EXTENSION TO NORTH HILL

At the half-yearly meeting of the Plymouth, Devonport, and South-Western Junction Railway Company held in London on March 18th. 1908 The directors reported 'The directors have made an application to the Light Railway Commissioners to authorise an extension of the light railway to North Hill, and are glad to be able to state that the Commissioners have expressed their intention of granting the order. A resolution approving the draft order will be submitted at the special meeting which will follow to consider a draft order for a light railway in the county of Cornwall from the termination of their authorised line to North Hill'.

The main opposition to the extension of the branch from Kelly Bray to North Hill came from Cornwall County Council who were concerned by the intention to use un-gated (or any) level crossings to cross roads, particularly the main road from Callington to Kelly Bray where an increase in traffic was predicted.

Mr. Rattenbury, for the railway, pointed out that by the provision of a railway a considerable amount of traffic would be taken off the main road.

The engineer, Mr. H. Stephens, A.M.I.C.E., gave details of the construction of the railway. He stated that the trains would cross the proposed level crossing at about five miles an hour. £9,000 would probably cover the cost of the land required.

Mr. Cowlard complained that the promoters had not shown that there was to be a station placed on the seven miles extension line.

Mr. Alans stated that he was authorised to say there would be two or three halts.

In the end Cornwall CC refused to change the level of the road (about 5ft) and the railway could only accommodate a difference in level on 1ft. There were other objectors but with the opposition from CCC the plan never came to fruition.

The main promoters of the branch line extension, the business men of Callington, led by Mr. Nicolls and Mr. Venning had their own ideas. Mr. Venning wrote some years later that they had aspirations to extend the line past North Hill to Altarnun, thence across Davidstowe Moor, right on to Delabole slate quarries, branching off to Boscastle, so as to link up the Tamar with the ocean traffic in coal and other merchandise, but with the failure of the North Hill extension this scheme went into oblivion.

*Bruce Hunt*