

## Modern technology at last solves a 100-year-old Highland mystery

# Radars hit a nag

By Hugh Jarvis

FOR more than 100 years the incredible story of a horse and cart entombed in the pillars of a railway viaduct had been treated as a myth.

No one knew what the truth was until a 75-year-old man remembered what his father had told him as a boy.

Now, after a 17-year search on the West Highland Line between Fort William and Mallaig, Inverness-shire, the mystery has been solved.

Using state-of-the-art technology to produce images, Professor Roland Paxton has discovered the remains of the horse and cart entombed in a pillar of the famous eight-span Loch-nan-Uamh rail viaduct near Mallaig.

Local legend told of an accident as an extension of the rail line was being constructed in 1899. This was believed to have happened at the Glenfinnan viaduct, several miles to the west.

Prof Paxton, of the department of civil engineering at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, was fascinated after reading about it in a book in 1984. But he switched his search from Glenfinnan to

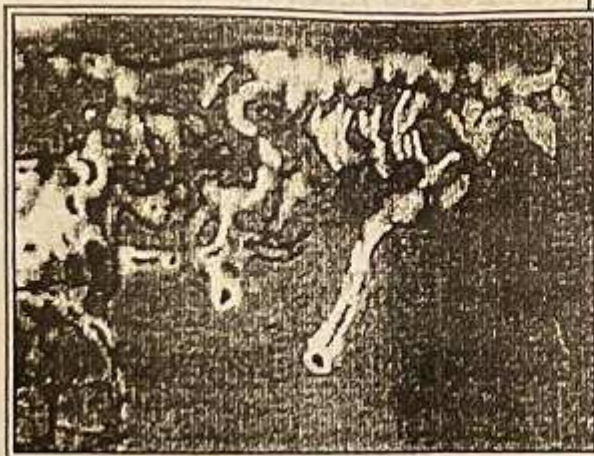
Loch-nan-Uamh after speaking to Ewen Macmillan, 75, from Arisaig.

At the weekend, following a sponsorship deal with Sir William McAlpine, whose great grandfather was a contractor at the time, Prof Paxton discovered the skeletal remains of the horse and the cart almost intact.

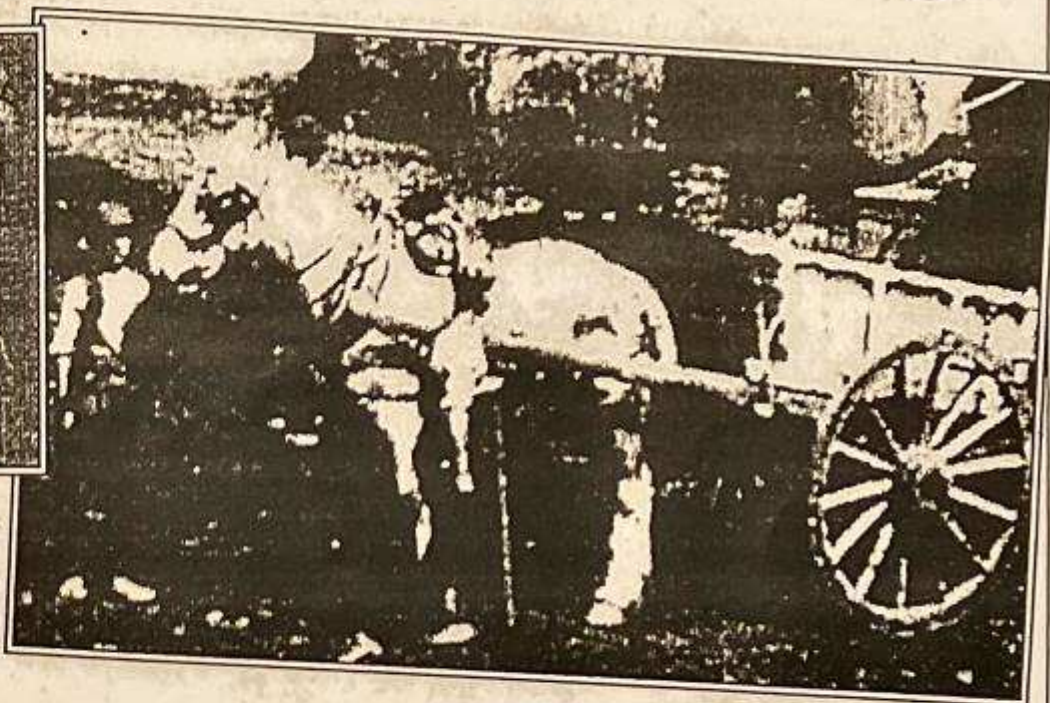
His team used the latest radar equipment to probe inside the viaduct's huge 9ft-thick concrete pillars.

He said: 'It's an amazing sight. The cart is at the bottom of the 40ft pillar with the horse sitting vertically on top, as though they had fallen in backwards.'

Prof Paxton believes the accident happened as builders began pouring stone into the pillar's cavity. He said: 'They would reverse the cart to the edge of the hole before tipping it up. It looks as if the cart went over the edge, dragging the poor horse after it.'



Final solution: The outline of the horse and cart is revealed and, right, at work in the 1890s



Yesterday Mr Macmillan said: 'My father and an old farmer told me about the accident. It has stuck in my head ever since. I told the searchers they should look at Loch-nan-Uamh.'

Prof Paxton tackled the project in a joint venture

with a company called Radar World.

A radar transmitter was placed at one end of the wide central pillar of the viaduct with a receiver at the other end.

Dr Colin Stove, chief scientific consultant for

Radar World, was able to identify the different materials inside the pier with the receiver. Finally he picked out the horse and cart.

Sir William McAlpine will today unveil a plaque to mark the centenary of the 41-mile rail extension.