



THE INSTITUTION OF
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Bridge of Oich opening, September 1997

THE BRIDGE OF OICH SALTIRE AWARD based on Historic Scotland's News Release

Award for Major Bridge Conservation Project

Historic Scotland's £385,000 conservation project of the Bridge of Oich has been awarded a national civil engineering commendation in the 1998 Saltire Awards announced last year.

The Saltire Society which seeks to preserve all that is best in Scottish tradition, makes a number of annual Civil Engineering Awards in association with the Institution of Civil Engineers. The Panel contributes to the adjudication process of conservation awards through the Scottish Group of PHEW Awards Panel comprising Panel Chairman Roland Paxton, Ted Ruddock and Scottish Group Secretary, Sandra Purves.

As reported in *Newsletter No.76, 1997*, following a twelve month conservation project. The A-Listed bridge, which is also protected as a scheduled ancient monument, was taken into the care of Historic Scotland in May 1996 after many years of deterioration. At the time, the 150-foot long structure was unsafe to walk on.

Historic Scotland Director and Chief Executive, Graeme Munro, said he was delighted that The Saltire

Society and the Institution of Civil Engineers chose to commend the work carried out on the Bridge of Oich.

The project receives a special commendation for projects designed primarily to restore or conserve a work of historical engineering importance.

Mr Munro said:

"The Bridge of Oich project exemplifies how modern day engineering skills can overcome the technical challenges of conserving a 143-year-old bridge yet still retain as much of the original fabric as possible".

"The project was completed in 1997 - the Year of Engineering Success - and has now been recognised as just that: a great success indeed."

The work was carried out over four phases by Morrison Construction Limited Civil Engineering Division and The Highland Smiddy. Consultant engineers for the project were Halcrow Crouch. Masonry work and reinstatement of the timber deck was carried out by Historic Scotland and the provision of a car park, access path and signage was carried out by IF Construction, of Kiltarlity, Inverness-shire.

EARLESTOWN STATION BUILDING by Paul Dunkerley

The roof of the disused HEW 946 Earlestown Station Building, though repaired in 1990, has been removed, as the walls are reportedly bulging. Adrian Jarvis, Chairman of the Merseyside Industrial Heritage Society and Area Panel Member Paul Dunkerley have both written to St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council Planning Department to urge them to enforce protection of this listed building, considered by Pevsner to be the only building in Earlestown of any architectural merit. The single storey Tudor style waiting room with its attractive awning is on an island platform where the 1831 branch line to Warrington, engineered by Robert Stephenson, joins the 1830 Liverpool and Manchester Railway, engineered by George Stephenson. The branch line also served the Vulcan Foundry.

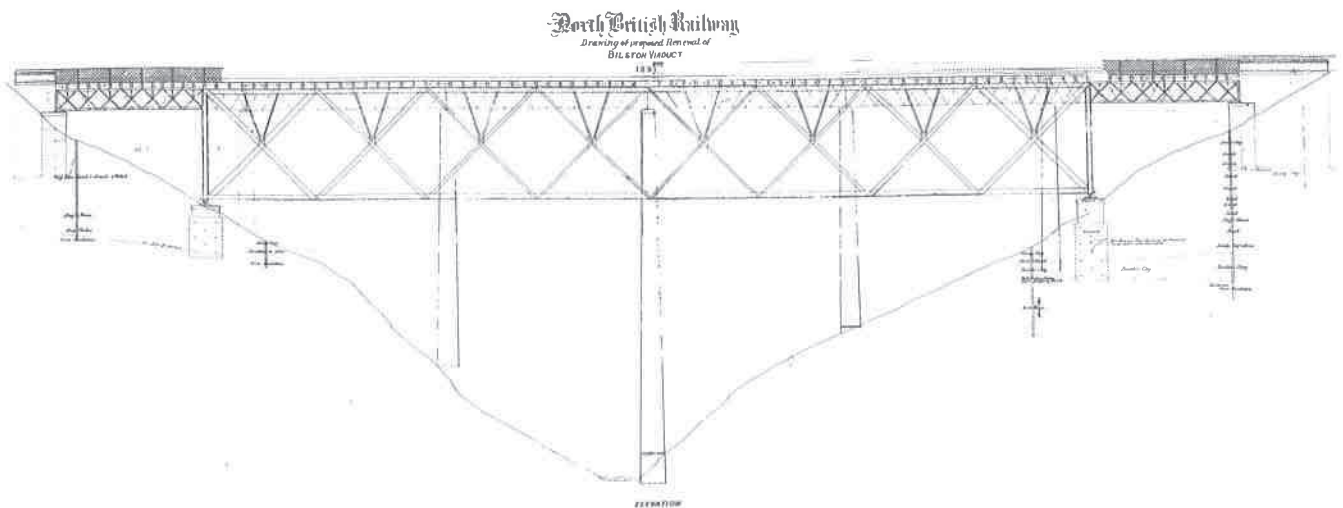


Earlestown Station, 1979
Photograph by Paul Dunkerley

THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN by Professor Roland Paxton

Our new joint historic bridge award scheme with the County Surveyors Society (*New Civil Engineer* 19 December 1998 and the last *Newsletter* refer) has attracted interest in Japan and I was delighted to comply with a request from Dr Hiroshi Isohata to write a leading article on the awards for the JSCE Committee on Historical Studies in Civil Engineering Newsletter. Drs Isohata and Onoda were particularly interested to know the origin of the Panel's involvement with conservation awards in association with the Saltire Society, the reasons for and the value of introducing such awards and the methodology behind award-making decisions. It was gratifying to be able to say that the organisers were sufficiently convinced of the potential benefit of award schemes to re-embark on the considerable effort and hard work required to repeat the process in 1999!

I never cease to be surprised at the interest this *Newsletter* evokes in many and varied quarters and was pleased to receive what I regard as a compliment in a letter regarding my photograph of Mr Tony Blair at the Forth Bridge. My correspondent, who shall be nameless, but who is very definitely genuine, is clearly less enthusiastic than Railtrack about the neon tube accretion to the top of the central cantilever visible from his house. He wrote: 'I was so glad to see that in your photograph of the Prime Minister switching on of the Forth Bridge Millennium Clock, you managed not to incorporate this ghastly monstrosity.' Suggestions mooted by the public on the day of this event were that perhaps when the millennium arrives the clock will begin a **count-up** to 3000, or, that the clock will self-destruct. I suspect that my correspondent would prefer the latter!



Bilston Glen Viaduct. Elevation of 1891 plan.
The main girder is unsupported between the bearings. The columns are those of the 1874 viaduct.
Illustration courtesy RHT Annual Report 1996/1997

The Panel through its involvement in the Scottish Viaducts Committee convened by Rail Property Ltd has strongly supported the £1.5m refurbishment of the A-Listed Bilston Glen Viaduct near Loanhead by Midlothian Council and the Edinburgh Green Belt Trust (EGBT) with financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Railway Heritage Trust (RHT) and Historic Scotland. Work is expected to be completed in April when the structure will form part of Midlothian's strategic footpath and cycleway network. This 1892 wrought iron truss viaduct, one of the most remarkable of its kind, with a main span of just over 100m and nearly 50m from its top down to the bed of the burn, replaced a 6-span iron truss viaduct of 1874 designed by Thomas Bouch. Arrangements have been made with EGBT for the structure's fascinating rocker and rocker-slider bearings weighing 7-tons (now seized up and costing £147,000 to replace) to become part of the ICE's Local Association Museum at Heriot-Watt University as a campus feature.

There are still a few places left on Scottish PHEW's visit to Galloway on 3-4 July. The event includes an overnight stay at the Downshire Arms, Portpatrick and visits are planned to the Water of Fleet Canal, Garlieston harbour, Rennie's Cree Bridge, a Stevenson lighthouse (Kilantringan or Corsewall Point) and Portpatrick and Stranraer harbours. Any reader wishing to attend please contact Sandra Purves (0131 556 4503).



Bilston Glen Viaduct
 Alan Heatley of Blyth & Blyth (centre-front)
 Jim Cornell RHT (right) and others near the base of the 47ft
 deep main span. October 1998
 Photograph by Professor Roland Paxton



Bilston Glen Viaduct. Alan Heatley of Blyth & Blyth pointing out repairs to corroded lattice parapet on cross beam

Photograph by Professor Roland Paxton

“AMID THE ETERNAL HILLS, MAN’S WORK ALAS, IS MORTAL”

by Jim Shipway

In the mid-1950s, more than forty years ago, a letter appeared in the correspondence columns of *The Scotsman* newspaper. It commented on a previous article which had told of the difficulties of railway construction and maintenance in remote areas. The letter was from the retired deputy chief engineer of the LNER, a Mr J G MacGregor. In his letter he spoke of the humility of the civil engineer in the midst of his demanding work, and quoted an inscription in Latin on the pilaster of a high viaduct which, when translated, read - *“Amid the eternal hills, man’s work alas, is mortal”*. I later got to know Mr MacGregor quite well, and when he died in 1963, aged eighty-four, I wrote his obituary for *The Scotsman*.

Over the years I often thought of this Latin inscription and wondered where it was. Mr MacGregor had told me in the passing, but somehow it failed to register with me and I could not remember. I had an idea it was on a railway viaduct, but where? I made inquiry of various people including Mary Murphy, ICE Archivist; Mike Chrimes, ICE Head Librarian; Professor Roland Paxton, Chairman of the Panel for Historical Engineering Works (PHEW); Professor Jack Simmons, doyen of railway historians, and many others. None knew of the quotation or the viaduct. I also contacted the chief bridge inspector of the West