

County's industry was on the move

COALMINING in the Firth of Forth area can trace its beginnings back to the early 1500s with working in the Alloa pit recorded from around 1625.

Pannier transport was one of the earliest methods of conveying the coal from the diggings and where roads were available a horse and cart were used.

The next step was to lay waggon-roads especially where the coal was intended for shipment, and these connected the shipping points from the pits.

Among the earliest waggon-roads laid in the Forth area was the one from Alloa Harbour to

Isobel Grant Stewart takes a trip down Memory Lane to the old waggonways

Alloa Colliery in 1766 and five years later this line was extended to the Collyland Pit.

This was the first waggon-road to be constructed in Clackmannanshire and was two miles in length. The initial rails were made of Scotch Fir fixed to cross sleepers.

This unique method of transport was later improved on with a second wooden rail on top to give better bearing surface, but the cast-iron wheels caused the rails to

splinter. Beech was then substituted and this proved fairly satisfactory as it became smooth and glossy with the continual running of the waggons.

The route of the extension to the Collyland Pit leaves room for conjecture, but an old sketch was unearthed which showed on the plan of the line a self-acting inclined plane with a winding-engine house about half a mile from the northern end. This may have stood in the small patch of wood to the east of the road at the top of the hill.

There were no other physical features illustrated in the sketch, but it could be surmised that the line from Alloa Colliery ran along what is known as the Tinkers' Loan, joining the Alloa-Alva road quite near to the old small-pox hospital.

When the Alloa Coal Company was formed the waggon-road came under its control and was extended to connect various new workings. A good stretch of the waggon-road was in use during World War 1 and the last surviving link was the con-

nection between the standard gauge sidings in Castle Street and the Glass Works and this was still in use in 1926.

The Glassworks actually had a branch line off the original Mar waggon-road in 1766 and this was the first known instance of an industrial concern having a direct rail connection with the pit-head.

Clackmannanshire possessed three other waggonways in addition to the old Mar line and its branches. One ran from the Devon Iron Works to Clackmannan Pow at the mouth of the Black Devon. It opened in 1793 and closed about 1860. There is no definite proof of the actual year of its construction, but it must have been fairly early in the life of the Iron Works as limestone from South Queensferry was conveyed over it for use in the furnaces.

The gauge was the same as that of Alloa and a junction was later installed near Schawpark to enable Iron Works traffic to reach Alloa Harbour.

This waggon-road remained in use after the closing of the Iron Works. Stone from Craigrie Quarry, for the building of the North British Station Hotel, was taken over the line.

The route of this line can still be traced in parts, through Schawpark golf course to an embankment at Beechwood. The line crossed the Black Devon near Clackmannan were one pillar of the old bridge remains.

At Clackmannan Pow, remains of loading joints are visible both on the Black Devon and on the banks of the Forth. To reach the Pow the line ran along the top of an embankment, built originally to prevent flooding.

Another waggon-road connected a pit on the site of Forth Paper Mills, Kilbagie, with the small harbour at Kennetpans having branch-lines running to Kennetpans and Ferryton.

These pits were worked by the Clackmannan Coal Company. Paper Mill traffic is supposed to have used the line.

At Alva a short waggon-road started at a pit close to the banks of the Devon and terminated near what is now Cobblecrook Dyeworks. This line is shown on the 1856 Ordnance Survey Map.

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A waggonway track cuts through Sauchie, seen here at the start of Main Street with the railway bridges in the background.