

# *Transportation of Sand*

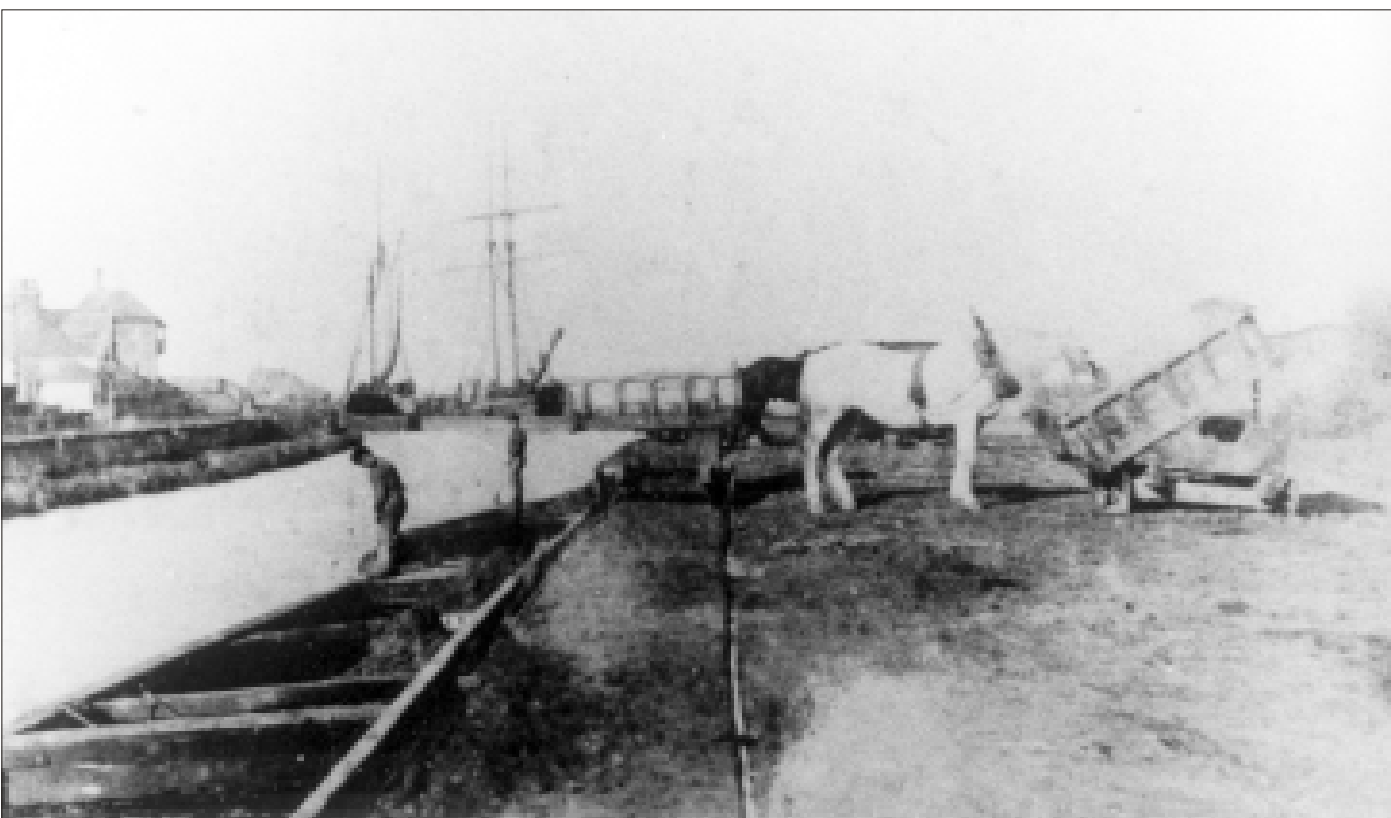
At the very first trial on 21st April 1821, it was obvious to Lord Stanhope that James Green's system was not going to work. The concept of filling large barges with sand from Summerleaze beach and then floating them into the lock chamber of the Sea Lock and thence into the canal needed a radical rethink.

The 4th Earl of Stanhope was a leading proprietor of the canal company and maintained his family's interest in civil engineering concepts and practices. His father, the 3rd Earl, had many ideas about inclined planes and had corresponded with Robert Fulton, the American artist and self-taught engineer who was the originator of the "Bucket in the well" system of water propulsion for inclined planes.



Very early photograph taken from Castle Hill shows the plateway running beside the canal edge with the wooden wagons that tipped longitudinally directly into the barges or tub boats. Photo: J. Stedwell

Lord Stanhope's idea was to construct a 4'0" plateway from the beach to the canal side near the Lower Basin. This required the addition of a gradual shelf on which the plateway ran from the beach and included the construction of a bridge over the River Strat, to link the beach with the shelf. The bridge was built in 1823 of cast iron and may be unique in Cornwall.



Shows the plateway and how close it was to the edge of the wharf. Also seen are tub boats being loaded. Photo: J. Stedwell

The plateway carried tip wagons pulled by horses, each wagon held 2 tons of sand. The plateway, on reaching the canal ran along the edge of the canal, thus allowing the wagons to tip their contents into the waiting tub boats; it operated until the 1920's.



Shows the tramway laid in 1923. Also seen bottom centre is the start of the raised ramp to allow the trucks to be emptied into the adjacent railway wagons. Photo: J. Stedwell

When the tramway came into being, there had evolved two sidings, one ran on top of a stone wall about 20' high, to allow tipping directly into railway wagons.

This was constructed in 1907. The other allowed surplus sand to be tipped as a reserve ballast mound. This was in the area of where Sampson's boat house is now located.



Shows the same vessel as above which is being loaded with sand as ballast. Note the wagon has the swivel side-tipping body. Photo: J. Stedwell



# *Transportation of Sand (Contd)*

After construction of the Recreation Grounds at Bude, in the early 1920's, a 2'0" tramway was constructed to take sand from the beach across the river to infill the reclaimed land.



Shows a circa 1923 steel wagon being pulled across Iron Bridge laden with sand. It also shows the bridge with its original hand rails. Photo: B. Bartlett

This was then acquired by the Town Council and used to replace the aged 1823 plateway. The tramway used steel tipping wagons again pulled by horses and was operational by 1924.

Sand continued to be exported by rail until 1942, and the last boat to be ballasted with sand was the 'Lilla' in the late 1930's.

And so the peace returned to Summerleaze Beach as this trade died, aided by lack of railway wagons, labour and the emergence of motor lorries, allowing hauliers to offer a door to door service and recoup the costs and profit from their customers.

The only signs of the original plateway, are the granite sets which can be seen below the canal embankment, near the Sea Lock.



Shows the tramway tracks leading towards Iron Bridge and then onwards to Summerleaze Beach. Photo: C. Jewell 2008

There are some of the tramway rails remaining along this same section and occasionally storms will reveal sections of the tramway and its sleepers on Summerleaze Beach. The following photographs show these exposed parts of the former tramway.

1) A close up of the 1923 tramway turntable on Summerleaze Beach. This enabled sections of track to be laid in various directions to gather the valuable sea sand.

2) An exposed section of the tramway as laid across Summerleaze Beach. In the background can be seen the Iron Bridge, together with the Sea Lock of the Bude Canal.



Shows the 1923 turntable which gave access to the various tramway routes across the beach. Photo: A. E. Aylmer 2000



Section of 1923 tramway rails on Summerleaze Beach having been exposed by storms. Photo: J. Stoar 1999

The whole subject of the plateway and tramway is expertly described in the book 'The Atlantic Coast Express : The Bude Branch' by David J Wroe.