

Way to the Isles'



economically viable due to Oban's geographical distance from the main source of fuel – coal. When the railway forged a link from Callendar to Oban in 1880 the floodgates opened on a tourist route that saw affluent Victorian visitors move west in large numbers. During the summer of 1881, from the beginning of June until the end of September, the number of rail travellers booked to Oban (remember population just 4,000) was an incredible 29,363. Queen Victoria herself gave the rapidly expand-



John Anderson (1830-1911) Secretary of the Callander and Oban Railway Company.

ing town a seal of approval by remarking that it was 'one of the finest spots we've seen,' as she and Prince Albert toured the west coast onboard the Royal Yacht.

Rail, and a rising tide of seas-going steam ships on the Clyde and coastal routes saw Oban gain popular favour – and gain the title 'The Gateway to the Isles'.

Goods traffic leaving Oban by rail increased four times in the first 15 months that the railway was in operation with many laden west coast fishing boats making Oban Bay their destination as a faster transport link to the markets of the south for their catch meant better prices.

So Oban, a town that had never had a large fishing fleet of its own, became a major fishing port as a result of a railway.