

The Station Hotel

Work began on the Station (now the Caledonian) Hotel in August 1879. The hotel was in a prime site and when completed would be the closest to the railway station which was due to open the following year in June 1880.

By May 1881 *The Oban Times* reported that the new hotel at the station is almost ready for occupation, it was described as being very commodious there being upwards of fifty apartments in the building. It is three storeys in height with attics and is built in the baronial style of architecture. From the tower a splendid view will be obtained of the bay and Kerrera. The entrance hall will be laid in mosaic tiles and the stair case is a triumph in stair building. It is all in pitch pine and will be varnished the beautiful shade of the wood being allowed to speak for itself. The kitchen is a commodious apartment with large ovens for cooking purposes and having suitable sculleries adjoining. There is a servants staircase and the whole apartments are fitted up with bells of an improved pattern. The dining room is a noble apartment.

The hotel opened in June just before the opening of the Callander and Oban Railway. In 1882, *The Oban Times* reported that it had had a very successful first season and was full from basement to attics. The hotel was designed in the Scottish Baronial Style and contained 100 apartments. The total cost of the building and furnishings was £20,000. To the south of the hotel was a triangular piece of ground which was connected to the hotel by a rustic bridge where seats and a fountain presented to the town by Mr Lindsay of Dunfermline were located.

Llama Park

Following his bankruptcy in 1820, Thomas Stevenson stayed on in his house at No.1 George Street which was now owned by his son John who lived in Argentina. Thomas was now described as a farmer and in 1830 he was one of the first people in Britain to import alpacas from Peru. His interest in the animals probably stemmed from the time he spent in South America.

Initially 12 alpacas were shipped but only 4 survived the journey from Peru to Liverpool. Two were kept by the ship's captain and the others, one male and one female arrived in Oban.

They were kept with his highland cattle in the field beside his house at the junction of Stevenson Street and George Street, close to where the Caledonian Hotel now stands.

He never used the wool commercially apart from making it into stockings for his family although he did exhibit it at the Stirling Cattle Show in 1833.

In 1834, 12 Llamas were sent from Peru but again only two arrived in Oban, they bred successfully and the animals were sold to other farmers in the area.

Later a viccuna was imported and was bred with one of the llamas but sadly was killed by a local boy just before it gave birth.

Another 8 llamas and 8 alpacas were sent across but all died on the sea voyage

Over 11 llamas were born in Oban but there is no record of what happened to them.