

Train Lines



Forth Rail Bridge taken from South Queensferry Pier.

The Forth Rail Bridge was built by 4,600 men, many of them itinerant labourers from across Europe, including Northern Italy, who often moved between industrial projects.

Il Forth Rail Bridge fu costruito da 4.600 uomini, molti dei quali operai itineranti provenienti da tutta Europa, inclusa l'Italia settentrionale, che spesso si spostavano da un cantiere industriale all'altro.



Luisa Fusciardi (left) and Chiara Macari (right) in 1928.



In 1890, Marchioness Candida Bartolucci – the Italian-born daughter of Vincenzo Bartolucci, an exiled Italian patriot, and Clementina Dundas of the Scottish nobility – became the first person to drive a train across the newly completed Forth Rail Bridge.

Some days ago a number of labourers employed at the construction of the Forth Bridge who were receiving 4½d. per hour asked an increase to 5d per hour. This was refused, the men went on strike; all got drunk and were glad to return to work in two days after with their wages reduced to 4d. per hour. An employ  who is a member of the Edinburgh branch of the Democratic Federation lectured the men on the subject, telling them that they must organise themselves if they wished to make a real stand against the masters, and that as long as they remained apathetic upon social questions they must expect to remain in their present degraded condition. Our friend who is an Italian was discharged and told that he must not preach these "foreign notions" to the workmen. It is very likely that a delegate of the Edinburgh branch will be sent to the workers on the Forth Bridge before long to enlarge upon the foreign notions.

Clipping from *Justice*, 26 July 1884, reporting an Italian bridge worker urging fellow labourers to organise after a strike; he was dismissed for "preaching foreign notions."

The Italian labourers were primarily employed on the caissons – large watertight chambers sunk into the riverbed to form the bridge’s foundations – where they worked below water level under extremely hazardous conditions. The construction accident claimed at least seventy-three lives and caused over 350 serious injuries, including several victims believed to be Italian: Angelo Ossi and Giovanni Pordan, who were injured, and Nicolai Liberale, who was killed when struck by a moving crane.

Gli operai italiani erano impiegati principalmente nei cassoni di fondazione - grandi camere a tenuta stagna affondate nel letto del fiume per formare le fondamenta del ponte - lavorando sotto il livello dell'acqua in condizioni estremamente pericolose. La costruzione caus  almeno settantat  vittime e oltre 350 feriti gravi, tra cui i ritenuti italiani Angelo Ossi, Giovanni Pordan e Nicolai Liberale, ucciso da una gru in movimento.



Construction of Caissons, 1885 – South Queensferry.



Caisson Workers, 1885 – South Queensferry.