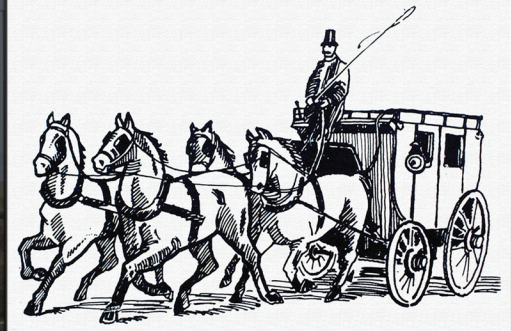


# Black Rock Facts & Features

## Mail Routes

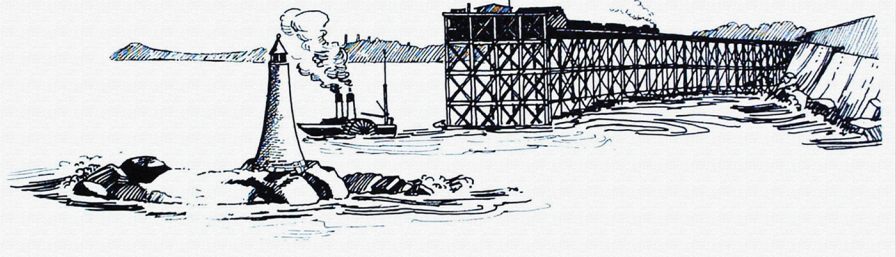
Even greater competition between the two ferry companies developed with the advent of mail coaches. From 1787 the coach from Bristol to Milford Haven and Ireland used the New Passage ferry because it could carry a coach and four. But in 1823 the Postmaster General appointed Thomas Telford to improve the route, and although condemning both crossings, he switched the mail to the Old Passage.

A stone pier 30ft wide and 486ft long brought greater comfort and safety to humans, animals and vehicles and gave the newly formed Old Passage Ferry Association a great advantage over the New Passage. Meticulous book-keeping logs the passage over four months in 1827 of "7,204 passengers, 502 carriages, 30 wagons and carts, 1,387 horses, 673 cattle, 8,181 pigs and 95 dogs".



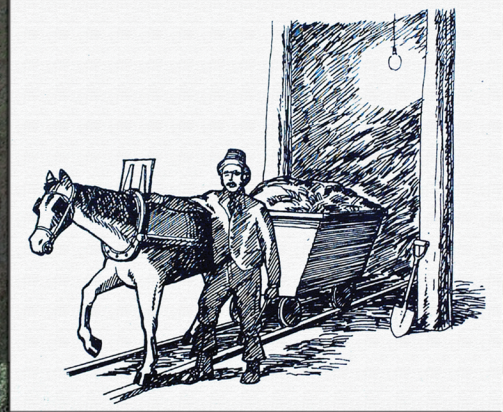
## The Railway

The construction of a railway link between South Wales junction, Bristol and New Passage pier began in 1857. A ferry would link the two sections of line, passengers alighting at Portskewett pier which was 774ft long. The pier at New Passage was twice that length (1,635ft) with stilts driven into solid rock. The line opened in 1863 by which time luxuriously appointed steam vessels were making the two mile crossing.



## The Severn Tunnel

One of the most remarkable feats of Victorian engineering, the tunnel was commenced in 1873 and at the height of its development gave employment to 3,628 men. These included a schoolmaster, caterers, blacksmiths and hospital staff. Some remarkable statistics were recorded. For example, 76,400,000 bricks were used in the tunnel's construction and the water pumped from the specially constructed station at Sudbrook during the excavations would have filled a lake 3 miles square and 10 yards deep. In 1882, the tunnel was lit by 40 electric lights and the English and Welsh sides were connected by telephone! The line was finally opened in 1882 to goods and passenger traffic and subsequent link up between the English and Welsh coast made the ferries redundant. On 1st December 1886, both finally ceased business. Whereas previously the journey from Cardiff to Bristol had taken 2½ hours via the ferry, it was now reduced to 75 minutes, and spared travellers from the cold and dangerous crossing.



## Twentieth Century Ferries

The advancement of the motoring era revived an interest in crossing the Severn at surface level and a ferry service opened once more in August 1931, when Mr Enoch Williams inaugurated a new service. Generations of travellers will remember long waits on both sides of the Estuary, but these were considered greatly preferable to making the circuitous, alternative journey by road via Gloucester.

