



NEWSLETTER

February 2019



OPEN AGAIN

The Bookshop re-opened on 4 February after the annual deep-clean. The CCTV system has been renewed, giving much better pictures than previously. This enables all three rooms to be supervised from the main desk. As before, the bookshop is open from 09:30 to 16:30, Mondays to Saturdays. Donations of books are always welcome.

ANOTHER ACCOLADE

Journalist Ian Jack described his top ten moments of the year in The Guardian newspaper on 29 December 2018. As second on his list, he wrote:

Wemyss Bay has one of Britain's most handsome stations, built to serve the trains and steamers that connected Glasgow to the Firth of Clyde's islands and resorts. A few years ago, a local support group opened a gallery-bookshop in one of its several empty offices. There's always something tempting in stock. I've bought Ruskin there, and Douglas Bader. No station, possibly anywhere in the world, has a more intellectually rewarding place to wait.



More Passengers at Wemyss Bay

The Office of Rail and Road has issued its annual estimate of passenger numbers at each national rail station, showing a welcome increase in traffic at Wemyss Bay. The estimate for the year to 31 March 2018 is 213,748 passenger journeys (arrivals and departures), up from 201,228 the previous year. However, this is slightly fewer than the peak year of 216,030 in 2014/15. There was a drop to 166,472 in 2015/16, because the ferry was diverted to Gourock for half the year, but numbers have been increasing since then. Elsewhere on the branch, use of Inverkip station has almost doubled over the last ten years, largely because of the many new houses built there.

IBM



Trains ceased calling at IBM in December. With hardly anyone using the station, there was no longer any point in stopping. Electricity is saved by not having the platform lights on and by the trains not having to start from the station. ScotRail says that IBM is 'not closed' and that trains can call again, when there is traffic to be had. The station opened in 1978, but did not appear in the public timetable until 1986. Officially, it was to be used only by IBM staff and contractors. The IBM site is identified by Inverclyde Council for mixed residential, employment and leisure use.

A Popular Storm

Brenda Campbell maintains our Facebook page and, with an apartment overlooking the pier, is well-placed to post photographs of the station and pier. Brenda filmed a severe storm lashing the pier in November and posted that on Facebook. In next to no time there were over 21,000 “likes”.



Consultations

The Friends were invited to take part in two recent consultations, which Greg Beecroft attended. Network Rail’s **Railway for Everyone** project is intended to identify and help overcome obstacles to use of rail. This particularly focuses on problems faced by people with disabilities, but measures to help them are likely to be of benefit to everyone. A wide range of people and organisations attended a workshop hosted by Network Rail in Glasgow, to identify issues that need to be addressed. These included availability of information, problems in buying tickets, the reliability of the service and what happens when things go wrong. Issues particularly relevant to Wemyss Bay included making connections if the train or ferry is delayed and provision of lavatories in working order on trains. The session provided a useful reminder that not all disabilities are visible. Somebody suffering from mental illness may find a train journey particularly stressful, even if everything goes to plan.



Inverclyde Council is preparing a **Heritage Strategy**, to look at what can be done over the next ten years to promote the area, and particularly to develop tourism and economic growth. People from a range of heritage, cultural and tourist organisations attended a workshop to identify the most important aspects of Inverclyde’s heritage, which includes Wemyss Bay station, of course. The workshop also considered which heritage assets are under-rated or under-used and what can be done to promote them more. There was general agreement that the

maritime heritage of the area and the Firth of Clyde are key assets that could attract greater local interest and more visitors. That would particularly be the case if a wider area than Inverclyde was included. Can more be done to celebrate the history of going ‘doon the watter’ and to encourage people to follow in the wake of their grandparents’ generation? Could Wemyss Bay be part of a widely promoted maritime heritage trail extending from Port Glasgow to Rothesay, or even further? More information about the project can be found at <http://www.futureheritageinverclyde.org/> where ideas are invited from the general public. Why not give your own opinion?

On the buses

McGills are no longer operating the ‘dial a bus’ service to Inverkip, Wemyss Bay and Upper Skelmorlie on a commercial basis. Strathclyde Partnership for Transport is providing a subsidy of more than £1,000 per week to keep the service going, while they seek to develop, advertise and award a contract for a sustainable replacement. Clearly, greater use of the service would improve its viability. So the message is clear – **use it or lose it!**