

COMMUNITY RAIL VISITORS



Kirsten Firth of Sussex Community Rail Partnership, Clyde Raine and Tony Ashurst of Friends of Heaton Chapel Station (Manchester) and Daniel Wright, Community Rail Support Officer at ACoRP.

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships held its annual Awards Ceremony in Glasgow on 4th October. In connection with this ScotRail organised an ambitious programme of visits to community rail projects, including Wemyss Bay. Over thirty community rail volunteers, from stations throughout Britain, visited on Friday 5th October to find out more about the Friends of Wemyss Bay Station and our remarkable station.

It had been raining all week and there were gales a few days later, but Friday 5th was fine and sunny. The station looked at its best, assisted by a special visit by the ScotRail cleaning squad the previous day. Cathy Galbraith had done sterling work in keeping the floral displays looking good late in the season.

The visitors were given a tour of the station and told about our work by Sheena Inglis, Cathy Galbraith and Greg Beecroft. ScotRail hosted a buffet lunch in the station cafe. It was interesting to talk to our visitors about their experiences. Some look after stations in quite challenging circumstances in urban locations. Community Rail Partnerships can cover an extensive area, such as all the way along the Cumbrian coast, from Carlisle to Carnforth via Workington and Barrow-in-Furness.

It being a fine afternoon, quite a few visitors took a trip on the ferry to Rothesay, to admire the scenery. Their reaction to the station and its setting was a refreshing reminder of how special this place is.

There were many complimentary comments from visitors.

'The Friends of Wemyss Bay Station have done great things and the station is magnificent.'

'Wemyss Bay was stunning in the sunshine this morning. The Friends dedicated care and perseverance have transformed this rail heritage gem. Lovely bookshop.'

'I was extremely impressed with your group's volunteering efforts and projects.'



Sarah Wells and Rowena Chantler from Penistone Line Partnership meet Bobby.

ON TOUR WITH ACoRP

We did not have an entry for the ACoRP awards this year, but Sue Hothersall and Brian Balmain represented the Friends at the event, so took part in some supporting activities as well. They report.....



Sponsored by Abellio ScotRail, this year's event was a lavish programme of hospitality and excursions. It began on Wednesday evening, 3rd October, with a reception by Glasgow City Council welcoming delegates to the city and held in the grand surroundings of the City Chambers.

"Mr ScotRail", John Yellowlees at Glasgow City Chambers

On Thursday morning participants had a choice of excursions: we chose the excellent tour of the hidden parts of Glasgow Central Station. In the afternoon we attended a seminar at ScotRail's offices in Waterloo Street where, after an excellent (and unexpected) buffet lunch, we heard presentations from a number of speakers representing groups who were competing for this year's ACoRP awards. This gave us some idea of the varied and ambitious projects taking place in the rail network: from art events on board trains, to improving stations using the labour of offenders serving community service sentences.

In the evening all the participants, 480 in total, were present at the 'gala dinner', preceded by a drinks reception, at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel in Glasgow. After the meal came the awards ceremony, at which Jools Townsend, Chief Executive of ACoRP, presented awards to the first, second and third placed entries in twelve categories: these included 'Involving Diverse Groups', 'Community Art Schemes', 'Most Enhanced Station Buildings and Surroundings', and 'Outstanding Volunteer Contributions'. We were pleased to see some Scottish winners: the Rail 74 Community Rail Partnership for its Hamilton West Totem Pole Project, Largs Community Garden for the garden at Largs Station, and West Highland Community Rail Partnership for 'Brief Encounters on the West Highland Line', among others. Together with speeches, including one by John Swinney, Scotland's Deputy First Minister, this made for a long evening, and the ceilidh which followed did not begin until 11 o'clock!

On Friday attendees had a choice of excursions. We opted to travel on the new Borders Railway, which runs from Edinburgh to Tweedbank. We were lucky to have a (mostly) sunny day to enjoy the 31-mile journey via nine shiny new stations, passing through very attractive scenery.

The Borders Railway currently ends at a park and ride at Tweedbank, just beyond Galashiels

The packed car parks at each station demonstrated how well-used the line is, and it is clear that the proposed extension to Hawick would add further value to the route. The Borders Railway has its own Railway Community Partnership which has produced a useful leaflet showing the route



and the various attractions and events which the line serves. There is also a guide-book 'On and Off the Borders Railway' available to purchase, and a website: www.bordersrailwayguide.co.uk



At present the line ends at Tweedbank, and from there it is a short journey by road to Melrose. We were taken by bus to Melrose Rugby Club's headquarters, where a buffet lunch was laid on and we heard about the club's illustrious history in Scottish, and indeed international, rugby.

Friday's excursions marked the end of the formal programme, but Abellio ScotRail had very generously supplied participants with passes for free rail within Scotland until Sunday, so we took advantage of this offer to have a day trip to

Will the station at Melrose see trains again? We hope so!

Inverness on Saturday. It was a beautiful autumn day for travelling (on a very busy train) up into the Highlands, and we were able to look around Inverness and see the plans for refurbishing the station and its surroundings.

The smooth organisation and hospitality arranged throughout the event was outstanding, and thanks are due to Glasgow City Council, ACoRP, Abellio ScotRail, Borders Railway and many individual staff and volunteers for a very enjoyable few days. It was heartening to see the range of community projects involving the railway, and the enthusiastic support of many railway companies. The event also provided an opportunity for networking between the people who run community rail enterprises, and we were pleased to see our old friend and supporter John Yellowlees very much at the heart of things throughout.

Thanks also to the Friends of Wemyss Bay Station for sponsoring our attendance.

Brian Balmain and Sue Hothersall

Glasgow Central tours

Network Rail's highly-recommended tours of Glasgow Central station are open to the public and show visitors areas underneath the tracks, including a disused platform. The knowledgeable guide provides fascinating details about the history of the station and how it is connected with the social history of Glasgow and its people.

The tour costs £13 and can be booked on-line at www.glasgowcentraltours.co.uk.



WEMYSS BAY STATION TIMELINE



New on display on the concourse is the timeline showing the history of Wemyss Bay station and pier. The content was compiled by Nancy Cameron and Greg Beecroft, but the display was professionally designed by Iain McGregor of Bootlace Creative, who is based in Station Road, Skelmorlie. We were very pleased to be able to use a local designer. The timeline is positioned near to platform 1, where railway posters were once displayed, and follows the Caledonian Railway colour scheme of the station.

The timeline was manufactured to a robust specification by Service Graphics, who are based in Glasgow. ScotRail arranged installation by Balloch Contracts.

The photograph shows Iain McGregor (right) and Donald Gillanders of Service Graphics (left), following installation of the timeline on 20 July. We are grateful to both of them for a fine job.



Going, going.....

ScotRail has started withdrawing the old class 314 trains, the ones with low seat backs and no lavatory. We hope they will have stopped running to Wemyss Bay by the time you read this, but a few may linger at peak times a bit longer. All trains should soon be the much more comfortable class 380 type, with air-conditioning, a lavatory and wifi.

THE RAILWAY ADVENTURES

all the
STATIONS



Vicki Pipe and Geoff Marshall have published a book about their All the Stations railway adventure in 2017. They travelled to every station on the national rail network and visited us at Wemyss Bay on 8 August. The YouTube video of their day on the Clyde Coast can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe3y1RMhbRM. It has attracted almost 50,000 views. The book is not so much about trains – though they feature, of course – but the places they went to and the people they met. There is a section on Wemyss Bay and they are very complimentary about the work of the Friends. They also list the

stations that, in their opinion, are the most impressive, and Wemyss Bay is in first place! That is quite something, considering that Geoff and Vicki have personally seen every station in the country.

We have copies of *The Railway Adventures* on sale at the bookshop. Recommended retail price £16.99, but our price is £14.00.



News from the Book Shop

In addition to copies of *The Railway Adventures*, we have several other new items of stock.

- Our book by Jim MacIntosh, *The Caledonian Railway's Wemyss Bay Station*, has been updated and reprinted, but still costs only £5.
- Wemyss Bay fridge magnets, in the design of the British Railways blue enamel station name signs, cost £2.



- Copies of the Firth of Clyde panoramic map are available in two sizes, 320mm x 112mm for £1 and 450mm x 160mm for £2.
- Cotton Wemyss Bay Bookshop tote bags are £3.

The shop will be closed for the customary winter break, for cleaning and maintenance. The last day we shall be open this year is Saturday 15 December – so make sure you call in by then for your winter reading! We plan to re-open in February.