

WEMYSS BAY'S RED WHEEL

A plaque noting the importance of Wemyss Bay station has been unveiled on the outside of the building. This has been provided by the Transport Trust, a charity dedicated to the preservation of all modes of transport and its infrastructure. The Trust's Red Wheel plaque scheme promotes transport heritage, by marking noteworthy sites across the UK. Although about one hundred such plaques have been erected, ours is only the third in Scotland. The inscription on the plaque describes the station as *an attractive and effective 1903 facility, by the Caledonian Railway, for the rapid trans-shipment of holiday-makers and their luggage*. It also provides a web link, where visitors can find more information about our transport heritage.



The photograph shows Professor Gordon Masterton, the Deputy Lieutenant of Renfrewshire, who unveiled the Red Wheel on 29 November. He is an eminent engineer, being a past President of the Institution of Civil Engineers and Chair of its Panel on Historical Engineering Works. Professor Masterton spoke of the engineering excellence and architectural beauty of the station, as well as its great practicality as a transport interchange. He also commented on the difficulty architectural writers had had in describing the station, because of its eclectic mix of styles. He suggested that it would have to be known as 'Wemyss Bay style'! Professor Masterton also congratulated the Friends on our work to enhance and promote the station.

The unveiling was organised and introduced by John Yellowlees, on behalf of the Transport Trust. Over thirty guests attended, including senior representatives from Historic Environment Scotland and the National Railway Heritage Awards. We were pleased to welcome Angela Hunter, the sculptor of Bobby, and Archie Clark, author of *Caley to the Coast or Rothesay by Wemyss Bay*. Guests were given a tour of the station by Greg Beecroft and were entertained to tea in the station café. This was a good opportunity to remind people how special our station is, and it was looking its best on a fine, sunny afternoon.

We are grateful to ScotRail's contractor, CPMS, for erecting the Red Wheel free of charge.

WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL RAILWAY



The Channel 4 TV programme featured Wemyss Bay station and the Friends on 23 September. It was most complimentary about the station and our work. Cathy Galbraith featured prominently, managing the floral displays on the concourse. The film makers came to the station several times, so there were sequences showing flowers being planted and later being tended on the Open Day. Others to appear included Sheena Inglis, explaining how the Friends was established. Dugald Cameron spoke about the crowds who used to pass through the station on the way to Rothesay, and how they are commemorated by our statue of Bobby. Rita Carmichael, one of our shop volunteers, recounted how her grandfather drove steam trains to Wemyss Bay.

WORLD CUP OF STATIONS

The Rail Delivery Group, which brings together all the companies operating on the rail network, as part of Stations Day on October 15th, set up a poll (the World Cup of Stations) to find Britain's favourite railway station, as voted for by the Twitter public.

Only four stations were selected for the Scotland heat, but Wemyss Bay received a wildcard entry by the popularity of people's suggestions, along with Corrour (Britain's most remote station), Exeter St Davids and Market Harborough.

Wemyss Bay managed to pip Corrour to the Wild Card entry into the final, polling 35% to Corrour's 29%, with about 770 people voting for Wemyss Bay.

In the final, we were up against some big English stations: Birmingham New Street, Bristol Temple Meads and Huddersfield. Despite gaining somewhere in the region of 2,700 votes we were well beaten into second place by Huddersfield Station, who polled twice that. It turns out their secret weapon are station cats Felix and Bolt, who have over 18,500 followers on Twitter!



The word 'grand' hardly begins to describe Huddersfield station, completed in 1850. Not only does it look like a stately home, but it includes two pubs!

We got lots of support from ScotRail, CalMac Ferries and even a retweet by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

We are very recent converts to Twitter (June 2019), despite having had a website and Facebook page for some time, so we only had 270 followers. As a result of this fun competition we have added over 100 overnight! The only thing we are missing is a cat!

SAVE THE WAVERLEY



Following our initial donation of £100 to the Waverley boiler appeal, made at the Open Day in June, the Committee decided that a larger donation would be appropriate. Paul Semple, the General Manager of Waverley Excursions, visited Wemyss Bay on 22 August to receive a cheque for £1,000.

Following a grant of £1m from the Scottish Government, it is hoped that Waverley will be back in service in summer 2020. Waverley Steam Navigation Company and the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society have the aim of operating the ship until she reaches her centenary in 2047.

Donations are still required to raise the total cost of returning *Waverley* to service. You can donate through website https://www.waverleyexcursions.co.uk/supporting_waverley/donate/, by credit/debit card by calling 0141 243 2224 during office hours or by post to Waverley Steam Navigation Company Ltd, 36 Lancefield Quay, Glasgow G3 8HA. Donations will be acknowledged on a 'donor wall' on the ship and it is possible to make a donation in memory of someone else.

BUTE IN BLOOM

We are also supporting Bute in Bloom, with a £500 donation. This is the group of volunteers who maintain the floral displays in Rothesay. Their work also extends to intricate painting of the ornamental lamp posts, railings and planters in and around the promenade. We purchased a new bowser, used for watering the station flowers, and have given the old one to Bute in Bloom.

Wemyss Bay is, of course, the station for Rothesay, so we are pleased to support this group who do so much to enhance the town.

FAIRLIE FAIRTRADE

Fairlie Fairtrade will be at the station on Saturday 7th December, selling a variety of locally-made goods and fairtrade products – so just the opportunity to buy some distinctive Christmas presents.



WINTER CLOSING

The book shop will be closed for the usual winter break. The last day we are open is Saturday 14th December – so that will be your final chance to stock up for Christmas. Don't miss special offers on our Wemyss Bay Station calendars. The shop will re-open in February.

STATION MAINTENANCE

In recent months there have been problems with significant flooding on the concourse. This is thought to be down to gutters and downpipes being blocked. Seabirds cause a particular problem. They catch shellfish and then drop them, including onto the roof, to break the shells. This is one of the reasons why gutters get blocked with debris and so much of the glass in the roof is cracked or entirely broken. (One of Network Rail's contractors commented "if you think you have a problem here, you should see Aberdeen!"). The gutters and downpipes are being cleaned specially and we hope that they will receive more regular attention in future. Network Rail is planning to replace at least some of the glass in the concourse roof with polycarbonate. There already are some polycarbonate sheets, but they look identical to the glass.

VISITED BY A QUEEN



Cunard liners made no fewer than five visits to Greenock in 2019. *Queen Elizabeth* was seen passing Wemyss Bay on 17th September, making her way from Greenock to Dublin.

AN UNUSUAL VISITOR

CalMac ferry *Hebridean Isles* carried out berthing trials at Wemyss Bay on 5th November. She normally works on the Islay service, but often relieves elsewhere during the winter. We do not expect her to be working from Wemyss Bay on a regular basis. As usual, *Coruisk* replaced *Argyle* and *Bute* while each went for overhaul in turn this autumn.

IBM to re-open?

IBM halt is officially not closed – it's just that no trains stop there! Plans put forward for redevelopment of the IBM site include provision for a park and ride facility that will bring the station back into use. The station car park at Wemyss Bay is often full, and there are just eight spaces at Inverkip. In addition to development at IBM, there are plans for a large number of houses on the power station site, which is likely to result in even more demand for parking at stations.