



NEWSLETTER

October 2021

WELCOME TO WEMYSS BAY



This summer we have met a large number of visitors who have come to Wemyss Bay especially to see the station. Some of them had travelled a considerable distance. Maybe the wish to holiday in Britain this year instead of going abroad has something to do with this. Most visitors had seen the station on television, on *World's Most Beautiful Railway* or *The Architecture the Railways Built*, and have been inspired to come and look for themselves. Comments to volunteers in the shop and postings on social media demonstrate how impressed and delighted visitors are. The station is reviewed on Tripadvisor, with a top score of 5/5. Those of us who live near the station are familiar with it and with its stunning setting. We appreciate this very much, but it is always refreshing to be reminded by visitors, especially those here for the first time, just what a special place it is. More TV exposure is coming, because Michael Portillo was filming at the station in July. Look out for his series of Coastal Journeys.

Doors Open Day was able to take place in real life this year, though rather more cautiously than in the past. The station is open to view every day, except Christmas and Ne'er Day, but on Doors Open Day Saturday we have traditionally provided guided tours of the station. We did so this year, but required participants to book a time slot in advance, in order to keep groups to a small size. Social media and email made this quite easy to arrange. Five parties were shown round and appreciated the tour.

Business at the shop has remained brisk, but the flood and ceiling collapse that we suffered in August have been a set back. Fortunately, investigations by Network Rail have revealed what went wrong and we hope that repairs will be carried out soon.

Gutters around the concourse that are difficult to access became blocked, so water came off the roof into the shop when there was heavy rain. After water started coming through the ceiling of the room containing fiction and children's books, we moved all stock clear of the affected area. A small amount of stock was lost due to water damage, but there was nothing on the shelves when part of the ceiling collapsed. However, the shelves will need some attention before they can be brought back into use.



The ceiling before a temporary repair was carried out.

With half of the fiction room out of use, the shop has had to be re-ordered, with temporary displays in the gallery, which was previously given over to the historical displays and transport books.

Network Rail's contractors, CPMS, attended promptly to remove the debris and loose material hanging from the ceiling. Subsequently, they carried out a temporary repair to the ceiling. We have decided not to move books back into this area, because they would all have to be moved out again when the permanent work is done. That will be quite skilled, including reinstatement of a substantial section of cornice.

Network Rail intends to undertake work to the offending gutter, to make it more accessible for cleaning and to improve its capacity to deal with torrential downpours. Among the problems at Wemyss Bay is the volume of debris that gathers on the roof and gets washed into the gutters. This is caused by seabirds dropping shellfish onto the roof in order to break open the shells for a tasty meal. That is also why so many of the panes of glass in the concourse roof are cracked.

As well as investigating the flood, Network Rail has also looked at the long-standing problem of damp in the chimney breasts in the shop. This caused a section of the cornice in our main room to collapse earlier in the summer. It appears that water is penetrating the external sandstone capping to the chimney stack and percolating down through the masonry. While the fireplaces were in use the chimneys were kept warm, so the masonry would have been dried out. Network Rail intends to undertake work to the chimney stack, including putting in a damp proof course, to deal with the problem. The ceiling repairs will take place after that is done, and we hope the work will be carried out during our normal winter closure.



We have had some large donations of railway books, with more to come. There is no point in sitting on stock, particularly if it is of a somewhat specialist nature, so there are bargains to be had. Some very happy enthusiasts have been leaving the shop with an ample stock of reading material. We also have a good collection of books on shipping – so if transport is your thing, please do call in!

Fiction bargains. When we re-opened after lockdown we significantly increased the number of books that could be purchased self-service from racks outside the shop. Buyers place the money in 'honesty boxes'. This has proved to be highly popular and a feature we plan to make permanent. The books on display are 50p bargains – mostly crime and romance – and our volunteers are having to top up the racks frequently. It is pleasing to report that people do act honestly and the money that is left has been proportionate to the number of books sold.