



The Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust

Caring for Historic Railway Buildings along the Line

Kirkby Stephen Station

The Decline and Fall

The fate of Kirkby Stephen station building followed a similar pattern to others on the line, closing on 4th May 1970 when the local stopping service from Skipton to Carlisle was discontinued. The building took on a new role as office and messroom accommodation for Permanent Way staff. Despite this, maintenance was minimal and the building began to suffer as a result.



The introduction of the Dales Rail service in 1974 saw the welcome return of trains to Kirkby Stephen at summer weekends. Permanent reopening to scheduled passenger trains came about from Monday 14th July 1986.

Although the building was in a poor state of repair, unlike most others, Kirkby Stephen had retained many of its original external features, such as bargeboards, windows and some doors. The magnificent glass and iron front to the waiting area had survived, though the wood diagonal batted panels had been replaced with stonework.

However, most of the internal fittings such as bench seating, dado panelling, cupboards and mouldings had either long since gone or were beyond repair.



One interesting feature that had survived was the fitted high-back wooden settle in the former first class waiting room, a facility unique to Kirkby Stephen amongst stations on this line. Likewise the cast iron fireplace and marble surround was still intact in the former Ladies' Waiting Room, as was the small cast iron fireplace in the Booking Hall, and the original stone fire surround also survived in the former Booking Office.

Railtrack Takes Over

Under Railtrack's Backlog Maintenance programme, intended to rejuvenate buildings such as Kirkby Stephen, major work was undertaken in 1998 to make the building weatherproof by renewing the roof and repairing or renewing windows and doors. Much effort and thought went into restoring these features to their original pattern and design, for example replacing the windows with authentic working sashes to the original design.

The interior of the building was replastered throughout and new internal and external doors to original Midland Railway patterns were fitted. Original pattern skirting boards were fitted.

Other work included raising and resurfacing the platforms and installing new platform lighting.



The Trust's Project

Following the successful completion of the Trust's projects at Ribblesdale and Horton-in-Ribblesdale, it was recognised that other projects would have to be developed if the organisation was to maintain its momentum. Furthermore, the successful completion of a further project, particularly at the north end of the Settle - Carlisle line, would encourage greater use of this part of the line.

With this in mind the Trust saw an opportunity to develop a similar project for Kirkby Stephen. As with Horton, Kirkby Stephen had remained unoccupied since the completion of Railtrack's Station Regeneration Programme restoration work.

Once again the Trust successfully negotiated a 125 year lease on the building with Network Rail, this being completed in December 2003. In this case it included only the main station building in its entirety and did not include any of the surrounding land. As with the other two leases, the Trust undertook full maintenance, repair and renewal responsibility for the building.

The Trust found the building to be in a very similar state to Horton inasmuch as the basic structure of the building was sound, with new roof, windows, doors and plasterwork; but much remained to be done to make it a working building again.

Plans were drawn up for submission to Eden District Council's Planning Authority to obtain Planning Permission for the project work and for change of use.

Broadly speaking, the former Booking Office was to become the flat living/dining room and the former toilet block would become the flat entrance and kitchen, together with a store room, services room, and disabled access toilet facility. The two bedrooms and bathroom would be accommodated in the roof void above the former Booking Office and the waiting room.

The old Booking Hall would become a meeting room and the rest of the ground floor rooms would be converted to office accommodation. Additional office space would be created in the roof void above.

These plans in more detail included:-

- creation of a new first floor in the roof void to accommodate additional space for offices and the caretakers' flat;
- a new staircase access to the first floor in the former lamp room;
- new electricity, LPG and water supplies;
- new drainage and telecoms connections;
- installation of power sockets, light fittings, heating and telephone points, with all the attendant wiring;
- installation of damp-proof membranes under the stone and concrete floors in the former First Class and Ladies' Waiting Rooms, Ticket Hall and Waiting Shed;
- creation of toilet and mess room facilities within the office accommodation;
- creating and fitting out a new bathroom facility for the flat;
- new staircase to first floor of the flat from the former Booking Office;
- creating and fitting out a new kitchen for the flat within the former toilet block;
- improved passenger waiting accommodation with lighting and replica MR pattern 'rustic' seats;
- relining the chimney flues in the former Booking Office and installing a period cast iron fireplace to allow real coal fires to be lit;
- new door openings with MR pattern internal doors throughout;
- internal redecoration throughout and fitted carpet tiles in the office accommodation;
- improved passenger waiting accommodation with lighting and heating and replica fitted wooden seats and new diagonal battened panels to the front;
- replica ridge tiles and ornate cast iron rainwater hoppers;
- full external repaint in the maroon, cream and black scheme adopted for the S&C line.

The high-back settle referred to previously was not compatible with the new office use so it was carefully removed and donated to the Worth Valley Railway.

The cast iron fireplace and marble surround was carefully restored, though it was not practical to bring it back into use as a live fire. Similarly the cast iron fireplace in the Booking Hall was cosmetically restored.



The restored waiting room on the up platform

Work Begins

Full Planning Consent was granted on 30th September 2003 by Eden District Council.

As with previous projects a detailed specification was drawn up with the accompanying working drawings. Once the statutory Building Regulations and Network Rail approvals had been obtained, the work was put out to competitive tender and the contract was awarded to G. I. Hopleys Ltd., of Settle. Work commenced on site on Monday 15th March 2004.

Once the enabling works had been carried out, such as setting up the site, work proceeded well with only minor problems.

In order to create the necessary headroom in the roof void for the first floor accommodation it was necessary to remove the existing ceiling and reduce it in height by approximately 1 metre.

Throughout most of the building this did not present any serious problems. However, on the platform elevation the two large window groups on the main gables and the cast iron and glass screen were at such a height to conflict with the new floor level. In order to avoid an unsightly intrusion by the new floor with the top line of the windows the floor was stepped so that it met the wall at a level above the top of the window line.

Major work was required in connection with the utilities. An electricity supply already existed in the building, but given the change of use and ownership it was necessary to install three new supplies to cater for Network Rail's signal box, the Train Operating Company's platform supply and the Trust's own supply to the building. The new meters and distribution boards were to be housed in a designated service room in the old coal store.

Likewise the new central heating boilers were located here, supplied by two new LPG storage tanks near the entrance to the station approach road. The existing mains connected water supply was suitable for adaptation and use.

Work was finally completed in November 2004.

One footnote to this scheme was the restoration of the station clock, whose forlorn remains survived for years after the original pendulum clock that drove it had disappeared. This work provided inspiration for the restoration of other clocks along the line and more information can be found on the Clocks Project pages.



www.sandctrust.org.uk/other_projects.htm