



The Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust

Caring for Historic Railway Buildings along the Line

All about the Station Clocks

Background

Each station building on the Midland Railway's Settle-Carlisle Extension once sported its own clock. Normally they were located in the ticket office facing out onto the platform, with a pendulum dial faced clock on the inside driving a larger slave dial fixed to the outside wall. Most, if not all, were supplied by Potts and Sons of Leeds.

With the decline of the line in the sixties culminating in the closure of all but two of the stations in 1970, most of the clocks disappeared without trace.



Before restoration, the clock at Kirby Stephen



Finished – the rebuilt clock at Kirby Stephen

Kirkby Stephen Clock

When the Trust acquired Kirkby Stephen station building early in 2004, a feature of the renovation work was to restore the station clock. Although the original pendulum clock had long since disappeared, the external dial face, mechanism, hands and bezel had survived, although the original wooden dial surround had been replaced with a piece of plywood. These were removed for inspection at the start of the work to restore the station building in March 2004.

Sadly, the original dial face proved to be too badly corroded for re-use. An exact replica was ordered from Smith of Derby who, incidentally, had merged with Potts and Sons in the 1930's.

The mechanism and hands could be restored, along with the original bezel (the circular metal frame that holds the glass cover). In the absence of the original pendulum clock to drive the external dial, an internal wall-mounted electric clock drive would provide the motion. An order was placed for a replica dial surround made in oak for durability, made to the same pattern as the original.

The new clock was completed and re-instated in early March 2005, in time for the visit by the Prince of Wales.

More Station Clocks?

The Kirkby Stephen project provided the impetus for a broader scheme to re-instate clocks at other stations along the line. Initially the Trust proposed to restore the clocks at Ribbleshead and Horton-in-Ribblesdale as both these buildings were in the Trust's ownership.

Of course, it would have been wonderful to see the original clocks restored to their former location. Realistically this was unlikely to happen as their whereabouts was unknown, if they still existed at all.

The scheme, therefore, involved a completely new build replicating the original design, though with an internal electric drive. The electric drive was designed to facilitate conversion to mechanical drive so, should we ever be fortunate enough to locate and acquire an original pendulum clock, it would be a simple process to replace the electric drive with clockwork.

Unlike the Kirkby Stephen clock, where some original parts were reusable, these would have to be built up from scratch, adding to the cost. Based on the Kirkby Stephen project each new clock was estimated to cost in excess of £1,000 (plus VAT).

Appeal Launched

In February 2005 an appeal was launched to raise money for the project. The response was rapid and overwhelming. Two large donations from private individuals, along with numerous smaller donations saw over £5,000 raised within weeks. The Railway Heritage Trust's pledge to match donations up to £5,000 saw the figure doubled to in excess of £10,000.

This meant that there was a real possibility of restoring clocks to every station on the line.



The Project Comes to Fruition

Orders were placed for five clocks during the Spring of 2005 and delivery of the component parts took place over the following summer.

In addition to Ribblehead and Horton already mentioned, other potential locations were Dent, Garsdale, Langwathby, Lazonby and Armathwaite.

Garsdale was excluded due to a lack of power to the buildings, and Armathwaite due to alterations to the building that made reinstatement difficult. Dent station building was then up for sale, so a decision was postponed until the sale was completed.

This left Langwathby and Lazonby, both in private ownership. The respective owners were approached and both kindly granted permission for the clocks to be installed. Work took place spring 2006 to install these four clocks and, after ironing out a few minor glitches, they are now working reliably.

The sale of Dent station building subsequently went ahead and the new owner kindly agreed to the installation of the fifth clock. This was completed in April 2007.

Future Clocks

The problems facing Armathwaite and Garsdale are still under review and if they can be overcome then two more clocks will be duly installed. With the recent restoration of the sole remaining original clock at Appleby this would mean every station along the route would have its own clock.

A word of thanks to all those who gave so generously. In particular Mrs M. Carter, Mr A. Gould and the Railway Heritage Trust. Thanks also to the suppliers; John Smith & Co, Derby; Smith & Co, South Shields; Hopleys, Settle; L.P. Harrison, Clitheroe, all of whom have done a superb job in supplying products of such high quality. Thanks are due to Mr Bell, Mr Edgar and Mr Hughes for permission to fit clocks at Lazonby, Langwathby and Dent respectively and also to Mr Neil Ambrose for kindly loaning the Keighley clock to use as a template. Thanks to FoSCL for publishing the appeal in their magazine.

Finally, last but not least, thanks to Andrew Horton whose skill and patience as an electrician was instrumental in fixing the clocks at Horton and Ribblehead in weather conditions that were trying to say the least! Also to David Moss, the ever-present gardener at Horton, for lending a much-needed extra pair of hands. Equally similar thanks to Adrian Alderson, who took on the task at Kirkby Stephen, Langwathby and Lazonby.

Of course, the Trust would still welcome any news as to the whereabouts of, or information relating to any of the original clocks. Any information supplied will be treated in the strictest confidence. Information should be forwarded to Rachel Griffiths at Kikrby Stephen Station email: rachel@sandctrust.org.uk