

Station to Station

A Platform for Station Friends

Pitlochry Station Bookshop

In the spirit of giving credit where it is due, First ScotRail has many enthusiastic supporters in the Pitlochry area of Highland Perthshire. In 2005 in response to the company's Adopt a Station scheme, three local women thought they might sell some used books to train travellers and donate the proceeds to charity.

So, for a few Saturdays in summer and autumn, the women sold books at fifty pence from a box in the waiting room or on the platform. They were delighted that their efforts raised £200.

However, First ScotRail saw potential in the book box and moved the ladies, firstly to the old John Menzies newspaper kiosk then, when they outgrew it, they added two adjoining rooms making a proper bookshop. The bookshop's official opening on 10 October 2006 attracted First ScotRail's managing director as well as the local councillor.

With larger premises came a greater commitment. More volunteers joined, opening hours were extended and the bookshop's takings (and therefore contributions to charity) increased.

Later, the Railway Heritage Trust and Perth and Kinross Council each provided grants for the installation of secondary glazing and repainting.

Since 2006, as more people became aware of the Station Bookshop, the customer base changed. Train travellers still visited but a greater number came from around the local area and it became a tourist attraction too. In summer, North American accents are normal and when a couple from Adelaide, Australia, mentioned how their next door neighbours had recommended a visit, it seemed that an international clientèle was developing.

Perhaps the best measure of progress was the announcement in summer 2013 that the bookshop had raised the milestone sum of £100,000 just seven years after its opening and all from selling second-hand books at fifty pence (later £1) each.

Regarding what had been achieved, bookshop chairman Ken Nichol said, with some surprise, *"We simply opened the shop to give customers the chance to buy a book for their train journey and hand it back on return."*

He acknowledged the help of First ScotRail. *"We are so grateful for its continuing support. Without it we could not have raised so much money."*

John Yellowlees, First ScotRail's external relations manager, has known the bookshop from the beginning and still appears, bringing a volume to donate before purchasing another.

Last year, 2013, First ScotRail marked the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Highland Line with a colourful redecoration of Pitlochry station. For the bookshop volunteers it seemed like a very effective way of celebrating the success of the Station Bookshop.



Brian Toner