



Headhunters Railway Museum Trustee Report 2024

The objective of the Association is through the provision of a museum to collect, preserve and interpret items of railway heritage for the education of the general public, with a particular focus on the railway companies which served Fermanagh and surrounding areas. In addition, to promote and encourage other forms of social, cultural and recreational activity within the community for the advancement of knowledge and appreciation of our railway heritage. The museum has continued to preserve and interpret items of railway heritage, which has helped educate the general public as to the part they played in the economic and social life Co. Fermanagh and the border counties until their closure in 1957. Positive feedback from visitors has been received through our visitor comments book, Tripadvisor and Social Media. The model railway extends the appeal of the museum to a younger audience and was enhanced during the year. Headhunters Railway Museum prides itself in the way it works with different age groups throughout the entire community in interpreting local railway heritage.


During the year various community & youth organisations have visited the museum for a guided tour. Further outreach work of the museum included delivering illustrated talks on Headhunters Railway Museum to schools and community organisations, as to how it was established, the work it is engaged with and an insight into our local railway heritage. While nurturing a local connection to railway heritage the museum is also engaged in providing an experience for visitors from throughout the world, who enjoy one of the most unusual museums, which has one of the largest collection of small Irish railway items on display.

Headhunter's Museum is supported by a number of volunteers, former railway employees and enthusiasts who continue to promote its development and give of their time freely. A number of railway artefacts were donated to the museum collection and volunteers were involved with their conservation and preparation for display. The most significant was a collection of seven Irish locomotive plates from Roger Bell, a railway enthusiast who was a valued supporter of the museum and sadly passed away in early 2024. Joyce Rankin also donated a silver tea set with inscribed tray, presented to her relation Mrs Bell on appreciation of her leaving the Refreshment Rooms at Bundoran Junction Railway Station in 1923. Her husband had been appointed Station Master of Enniskillen Railway Station. With the assistance of our museum fund we were delighted to be able to purchase several important artefacts which have a significant local connection. In particular, this has included several pieces of GNRI tableware, which are now on display within the museum. Our volunteers have continued to work with Belleek Pottery to promote the connection between railways and the pottery and an exhibition of railway artefacts is displayed within the Belleek Pottery Museum. A small grant from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council enabled us to reprint our museum visitor guide, which is available for free, enhancing the visitor experience. As part of the Lough Erne Landscape Partnership Festival we hosted an illustrated talk by Charles Friel at Mahons Hotel, Irvinestown revisiting the night rail services ended in County Fermanagh 67 years ago! This was complemented by an exhibition by our museum at the festival held at Enniskillen Castle and visit by a Vintage Steam Traction Engine. While at Enniskillen Library a photographic exhibition took place capturing the historic Weirs Bridge, which once carried the Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway across the River Erne.

The museum contributed several articles to the local press and featured on BBC Radio/TV on four occasions.

Headhunters Railway Museum are members of the Heritage Railway Association, NI Museum's Council and Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism Association. It upholds the highest standards and best practice as promoted/outlined by these organisations and continues to hold a four star rating from Tourism NI's Quality Grading Scheme, which reflects

confidence in its ability to operate safely and professionally. Events which the museum have coordinated further its purpose and are in accordance with health and safety guidance, ensuring that we have mitigated any harm or associated risk. The museum is located in a working barbershop and the tour is self-guided. Admission to the railway museum is free and visitors are not required to pay for a haircut in order to view the museum. We recognise that some visitors to the museum may wish to have a haircut and subsequently take a self-guided tour of the museum or vice-versa. However, this is incidental to providing members of the public with an opportunity to learn more about local railway heritage and enhance their appreciation and understanding. Any private benefit received by the owners of the barbershop is purely incidental to the purposes of our work. In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the Trustees gave careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that activities have helped achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.



Selwyn Johnston

Chairman

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