

Thursday 16 November

RAILWAY 98

Hexham		0803	4.05 *
Carlisle	0900	0922	6.90 *
Glasgow Central	1042	1115	6.05
Ardrossan Harbour	1206	1211	
Ardrossan South Beach	1215	1230	
Largs	1248	1310	Bus - 5.50
Wemyss Bay	1325	1356	6.05
Bishopton	1426	1429	3.95
Gourock	1456	1512	
Glasgow Central	1606	1640	7.30 *
Carlisle	1750	1839	4.60 *
Hexham		1934	

I had had a day to Glasgow booked last week, but then didn't go. Yesterday I felt good, and managed to get some cheap tickets at short notice. At Carlisle the first train north is a TransPennine - more expensive than my Aviva. Both were late, the TPE left as the Aviva arrived, which then meant we got delayed every time the TP stopped at an intermediate station. There is a lot of nothing-ness on the way north.





We were at least 20 late into Glasgow, so I was glad I had plenty of time. Out on the Ardrrossan train. Garth used to play “Clyde Cookies” - a Millie’s cookie every time he crossed the Clyde. Millie’s has gone, but Harry had been to Cambridge last weekend - so I played “Clyde Fitzbillie’s”. We came into Ardrrossan beside the yachts, and the Arran ferry was waiting.



Usually the train doesn’t leave until 1248, and thus misses the train north to Largs, so I had expected to have to walk to Ardrrossan South Beach. This train is an exception - presumably because of the ferry’s arrival. Up to Largs, past the dereliction that is Hunterston. Largs station garden remembers the Battle of Largs in 1263.





If I hadn't stopped to get a Viking photo, I could have caught the 1250 bus, but I now had 20 minutes to wait. I had a little wander round, then paid £5.50 for a single to Wemyss Bay - just a fifteen minute ride. The station is almost the first building you come to. The original line, station and pier opened in 1865. I had a smile when I read that the Reverend W. Boyd complained about the refreshment rooms selling spirits and allowing smoking on the Sabbath. Apparently Mr Boyd was no stranger to controversy - he installed one of the first organs to be used in public worship in Scotland. Some of his parishioners named his church "Boyd's Theatre" - I wonder what they would have made of the playing of David Redfern.

By the start of the Twentieth Century the station was a major transport interchange - trains from Glasgow, ferries on to the Isle of Bute and other piers along the Clyde. The Caledonian Railway, who owned the ferries too, invested in these superb facilities. It was built with space, easy interchange for passengers and luggage, and restaurant rooms. Now it has a Friends group and they run an excellent, if small, secondhand bookshop. I had a good shop!

Lovely architecture, a statue of Bobby by Angela Hunter, and a friendly lady in the ticket office sold me a single to Glasgow. I went and joined the train. As we were ready to leave, the lady from the ticket office came out with her green flag and waved us off. Why? The train crew deal with departing from every other station, but it just seemed right.





Down to Bishopton - I could have changed at Port Glasgow, but it would have been a long wait. Gourrock ferry terminal is modern and no where near as nice as WBay. I came here with Gareth and Alex and we ferried across to Kilcreggan and on to Helensburgh, now the Helensburgh but does not run. There is also a ferry from Dunoon (and a ferry terminal with a disabled loo). Back into Glasgow, then a Costa, and south to Carlisle. The train from Glasgow arrives at 1750 in platform 4, the train to Hexham departs at 1753 from platform 5. It is not a guaranteed connection, so you can have the pleasure of watching the train you want leave. By 6 pm every refreshment opportunity on Carlisle station had already closed for the evening - bring back Travellers Fare! I had had such a good day I wouldn't let it be spoilt, so I sat down with a book and waited for the 1839. I was glad that the guard did not try and make me buy a new ticket for my later train.

