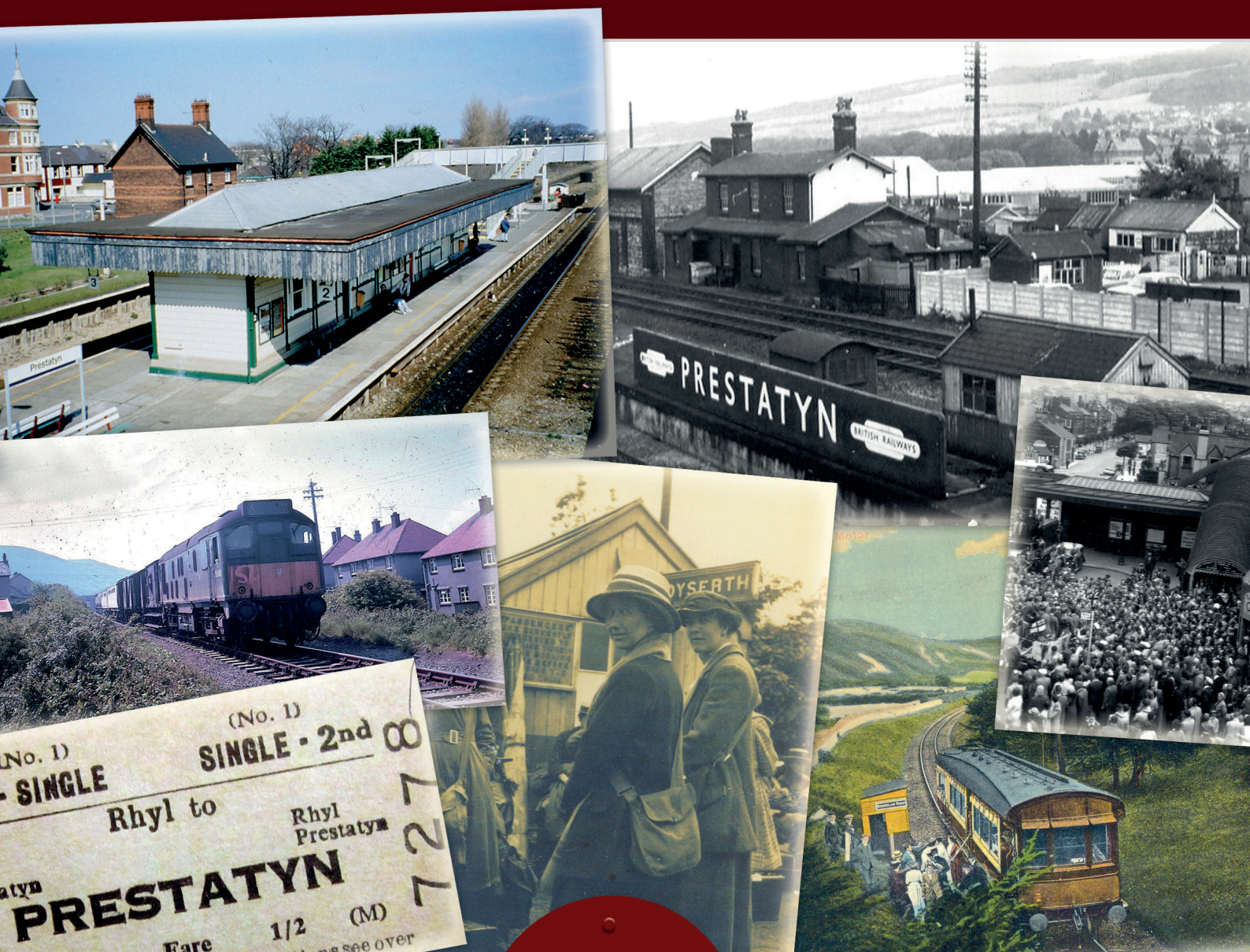


PRESTATYN

• Railway Station •



• Celebrating its **175th** Anniversary •

PRESTATYN RAILWAY STATION

Celebrating its 175th Anniversary

This book is dedicated to: –

The pioneers who helped establish the railway line
between Chester and Holyhead in 1848

The campaigners who prevented the closure of Prestatyn Station
as part of the Beeching cuts in 1963

Transport for Wales, Network Rail and the dedicated staff at the station

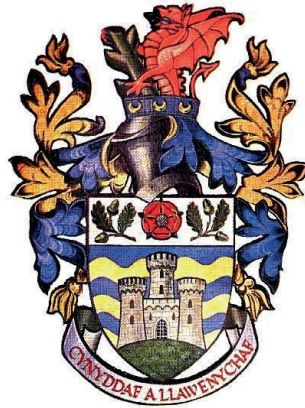
The hundreds of volunteers over the years who have helped to
make the station an attractive destination.

GREAT THINGS HAPPEN WHEN PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER

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2 PRESTATYN TOWN COUNCIL



The opening of Prestatyn Railway Station on the 1 May 1848 marked an important turning point for the town and transformed a quiet little village into what has become a vibrant, bustling, busy town, popular with visitors who enjoy our golden beaches, a centre for walkers to explore the surrounding countryside, unique local shops to browse in, and a variety of wonderful venues to eat delicious locally cooked food. Our wooded hillside is a site of Special Scientific Interest, forms part of a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and borders on the proposals for Wales' Fourth National Park and incorporates Offa's Dyke National Trail.

Prestatyn Town Council has consistently supported Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station who work throughout the year to enhance the natural environment at the station, giving much pleasure to our residents, businesses, visitors, and the local community. We are pleased to sponsor this book which details the history of our station over the past 175 years, and the many people and groups who have been involved over the years. A special thanks must be acknowledged to all the volunteers who have and continue to work tirelessly.

PRESTATYN BUSINESS FORUM

Prestatyn Business Forum are delighted to support this book which marks the 175th anniversary of our railway station and the important part it has played in the growth and prosperity of our busy town. The links established between the private and public sectors and our vibrant voluntary groups are obvious to travellers when they arrive at our award winning station and admire the beautiful floral displays and to the millions of rail passengers as they travel along the North Wales Coast each year. Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station regard the station as the town's shop window and we are delighted with the promotion of the town as a centre for walking.



TIMELINE

- 1800 Act of Union Great Britain and Ireland
- 1845 Work commenced on the Chester to Holyhead Rail Line
- 1848 Prestatyn and other stations along the North Wales Coast opened.
- 1859 London and North Western Railway took over the line
- 1863 Prestatyn Parish Church Consecrated.
- 1863 Mentioned in Bradshaw's Guide Railways of Wales.
- 1866 The LNWR obtained authority to build a branch line to Dyserth.
- 1868 Started construction of the Prestatyn/Dyserth branch line
- 1869 Branch line opened to goods and mineral traffic
- 1896 Prestatyn Urban District Council Formed
- 1897 New station building and station expanded and road bridge opened
- 1898 Royal Victoria Hotel opened
- 1901 Queen Victoria died
- 1901 Further alterations to the station
- 1902 Edward VII's Coronation
- 1905 Introduction of passenger service to Dyserth
- 1911 George V's Coronation and Coronation gardens established.
1914-18 First World War. 1939-45 Second World War
- 1930 Last passenger train to Dyserth
- 1939 Opening of Tower Beach Holiday Camp
- 1948 Railways nationalised and given the name British Rail, PM Clement Attlee
- 1951 Prestatyn/Dyserth line closed to parcels traffic
- 1963 Beeching Cuts threatened closure of station
- 1964 Prestatyn/Dyserth line closed to transport of coal
- 1968 The last BR mainline steam train
- 1969 Man walked on the moon.
- 1973 Prestatyn/Dyserth line closed completely
- 1979 Station rebuilt
- 1993 Railways privatised, Prime Minister John Major
- 1994 Railtrack took over all British Rail's land, track and signalling.
- 1997 New railway operatives North Western Trains & Richard Branson's Virgin Group.
- 2001 Railtrack went into administration
- 2002 Network Rail was established in October
- 2003 Arriva Trains Wales took over
- 2011 Access footbridge and lift installed
- 2012 Station buildings refurbished
- 2013 Re-launch Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station
- 2018 Prestatyn Signal Box closed
- 2020 Welsh Government nationalised the railways and it became Transport for Wales
- 2020 Covid restrictions introduced
- 2021 Conducted a public consultation re the future of Coronation Gardens
- 2021 Conducted a public consultation and conducted a survey re a mural

PRESTATYN STATION 1848 - 2023

Under the terms of the Act of Union which came into effect on the 1 January 1801 and created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Irish Parliament was abolished and Ireland was given 100 MPs at Westminster. The Irish peerage were represented in the House of Lords by 28 of their number who served for life. These Irish Members demanded better communication between Holyhead and London, and eventually a scheme, put forward by the famous railway engineer George Stephenson, was agreed. It was to be called the Chester and Holyhead Railway and was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in July 1844 and Robert Stephenson accepted the commission. Work commenced on the 1 March 1845. It was not only an expensive line to build but also very difficult, and construction went ahead very slowly and not without incident - in May 1846, three hundred Welshmen fought a pitched battle with the Irish Navvies building the line in Penmaenmawr.

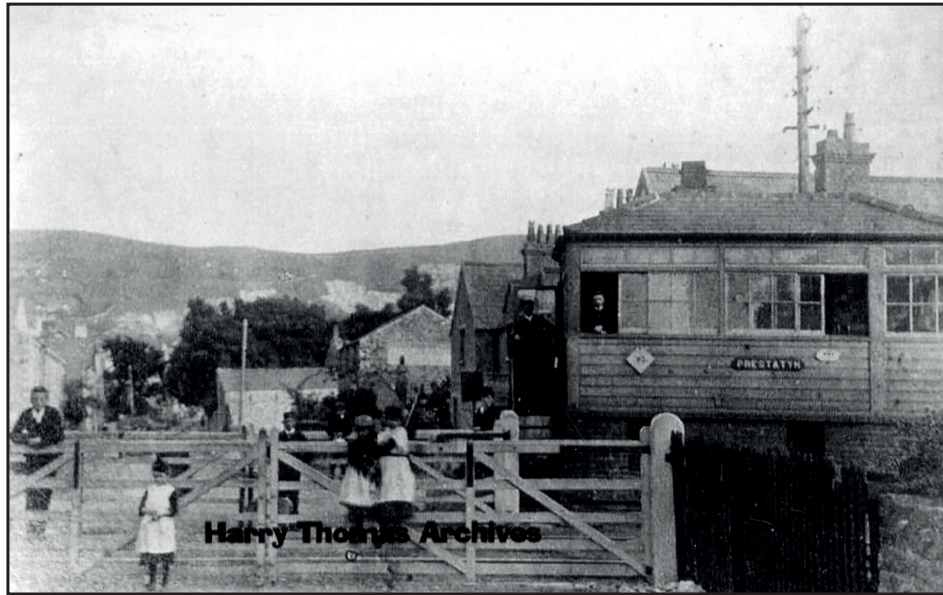
Initially the Chester and Holyhead Railway Board omitted to include a station at Prestatyn in the agreed schedule of wayside stations, although the Board was advised that a station at Prestatyn would likely be required. This advice was evidently observed, and in March 1847 a committee was established to agree the station elevations for the first C&HR stations. The design of the station buildings was entrusted to the Architect Francis Thompson. On 9th June 1847, Thomas Hughes' tender was accepted to construct the station building at Prestatyn, at a price of £1,113. The identical station at Aber, some 28 miles further west was also constructed by Hughes. Similar station buildings were constructed at Bodorgan and Valley on Anglesey in 1849, and at Broughton & Bretton, Hope & Pen-y-Ffordd and Llong on the Mold Railway, also in 1849.



Prestatyn's very first Railway station opened on the 1 May 1848 at a cost of £1113 and designed by the Chester and Holyhead Railway architect Francis Thompson, and said to be the finest existing example of his work in North Wales.

Prestatyn's first railway station was opened on the 1st May 1848, located immediately to the east of the present-day station. At the time of opening, a double line of tracks passed through the station, with a platform to the north and south, and the main station building constructed on the southern platform. The station building itself is representative of the wayside stations designed for the lesser populated areas along the Chester & Holyhead Railway, comprising of a two-storey central block with low pitched gabled slate roof, surrounded by single storey projecting wings supporting an overall awning to the street and platform elevations. Staff and passenger facilities were provided at ground floor level, with private accommodation above.

Alongside the station was a shed where freight to or from the Prestatyn area was transferred between railway wagons and local road transport. It was close to a 20 feet wide level crossing controlled by a signal box which allowed easy access between the High Street and Bastion Road.



Prestatyn's signal box and level crossing looking in 1890 up the High Street from where the CookHouse Pub and Carvery is now.

Signalman Joseph Davies keeps a stern eye on the children playing on the crossing gates.

This level crossing was abolished in 1897 for road access and when the road bridge over the railway was built it was known as the 'Cart Bridge' due to the number of horse drawn carts crossing the bridge.

The drawback of this first station was that the platforms, which predated the standardisation of platform heights, were too low for passengers alighting, and short step ladders were provided for passengers' use. This caused delays and inconvenience as they had to be moved several times as passengers stepped off the train and resulted in numerous accidents. The original station building is now said to be the best surviving example of Francis Thompson's work. It escaped demolition and has been put to various uses, including residential in the 1970s and 1980s. On the 31st January 1997 it was granted Grade II listed status by Cadw, thanks to the efforts of local historian Harry Thomas and Prestatyn Town Council. It was derelict for many years until 2013, when it and the goods shed reopened as the showroom of David Jones Furniture Craftsmen.

Initially there were four trains in each direction per day and goods trains began a month later. On 1 January 1859, the Chester and Holyhead Railway and its stations became a part of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), who placed a great emphasis on the strategic importance of the line between London and Ireland via Holyhead. New mail timings set by the Post Office meant that trains had to run non-stop from Chester to Holyhead and there were difficulties in providing enough water for the engines. There were water tanks at Holywell, Rhyl and Conwy and an intermediate tank in Prestatyn. In 1860 John Ramsbottom patented a design for water troughs which meant that engines could be replenished without stopping. Storm damage by the sea was reported at Talacre, Mostyn, Rhyl and Abergele amongst other places along the coast, but there were no reports of flooding in Prestatyn.

Prestatyn has a very cursory mention in Bradshaw's 1863 Guide to the Railways of Wales 'here the ground is flat, but extremely fertile', but St Melyd Church, the Talargoch Lead Mines, Dyserth Castle and Bodrhyddan Hall are all mentioned.

Following a horrific accident in Abergele in 1868 when the Irish Mail was involved in a collision with a goods train loaded with paraffin which led to the death of 33 people and after a similar, though less severe accident in Holywell a month later the sidings arrangements were remodelled at other stations along the coast including Prestatyn.

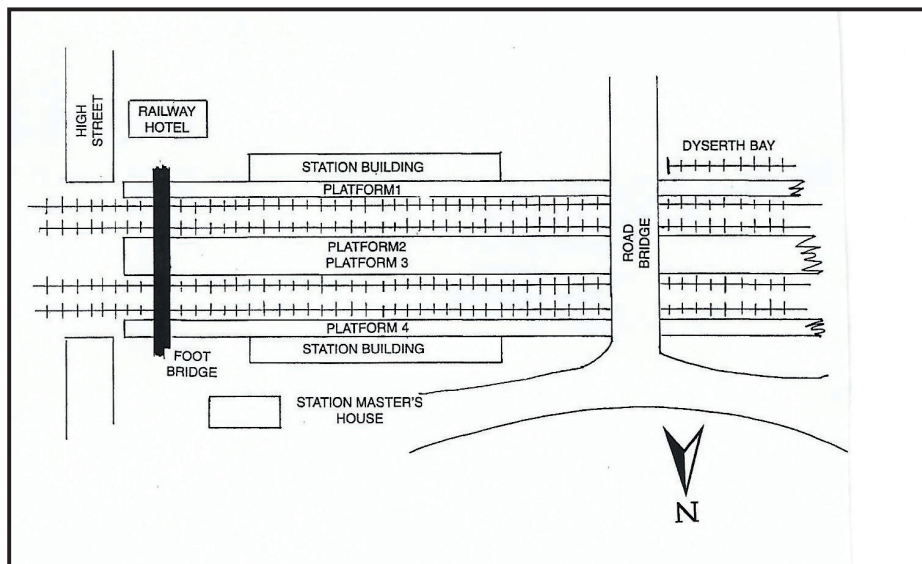
In the late 1800s Prestatyn, with a growing population (1,261 in 1901 and now almost 20,000), was becoming firmly established as a tourist resort. A number of significant developments occurred including the consecration of Prestatyn Parish Church in 1863. A footbridge was installed over the railway in 1871 to improve safety and in 1866 the LNWR obtained parliamentary authority to build a branch line from its main line at Prestatyn to Dyserth. Prestatyn Urban District Council was formed in 1896 and in 1898 the Royal Victoria Hotel opened.



When the original railway station closed it was replaced by a more modern and larger building in 1897, pictured here in 1909.

This station was enlarged and modernised in 1971.

By 1897 rail traffic had increased dramatically and the LNWR doubled the number of tracks at Prestatyn and built a new station, housing all the usual facilities, to the west of the level crossing. There were originally three buildings but two have since been demolished, leaving just one of the original buildings which is still in use today on the main platform. A footbridge at the eastern end of the station provided a link to the 4 platforms (platforms 1 and 2 for westbound trains and 3 and 4 for eastbound).



Source - A Short History of Prestatyn, Francis Phillips, 1997

The new station was opened on the 28th February 1897. Stone and ballast from the Meliden Quarry was transported down the Dyserth line to build the new road bridge which opened in 1897.

In 1901 the former 'up' platform was redeveloped into an island platform between the railway tracks and a timber canopy was installed on the station's buildings. By 1920 the low level platform for the Dyserth branch line had been replaced with a bay platform adjacent to the west side of the road bridge on the western side of Platform 1. On the 1st January 1923 the LNWR became part of the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS) who discontinued the Dyserth Branch passenger service in 1930. The main station was busy with a regular service of trains, and in 1948 it became part of the nationalised British Railways London Midland Region. The timber platforms were later replaced by concrete structures

A destination for many rail passengers - Thomas Cook opened Prestatyn Holiday Camp in 1939, offering one week 'all in' stays for the sum of £3/3/6d (£3.17pence). It was opened by Lord Stamp, chairman of the LMS railway, who jointly controlled it with Thomas Cook by way of a subsidiary company, British Holiday Estates Ltd. In its heyday, the 58-acre camp - also known as Tower Beach or the Chalet Village by the Sea - attracted thousands of families.

The 900 chalets could hold a total of 2,000 guests and was meant to be an up- market, last word in luxurious chalets by the sea. Thomas Cook had planned to open a string of others around the country but Prestatyn Holiday Camp remained the entrepreneur's first and last family destination. It was requisitioned as a military camp until after the Second World War and reopened as a holiday camp in the early 1950s. It was eventually demolished and cleared between February and March 2001 and is now a private housing estate of over 400 homes.



Crowds gather at Prestatyn Railway Station in 1939 to welcome 1,500 war evacuees who subsequently relocated to homes in the town by the W.R.V.S and Civil Defence who set up a marquee in a field in Nant Hall Road under the direction of the Chairman of Prestatyn Council, Councillor Eleanor Evans.

Francis Phillips (deceased) wrote a book 'A Short History of Prestatyn' and mentions the famous people who have passed through Prestatyn Station including the Right Honourable Stanley Baldwin in 1932, the Empress of Austria in 1879 and King Charles in the Royal Train on his way to his investiture as Prince of Wales in Caernarfon in 1969. The book was published by the North Wales Heritage Group in 1997 who had campaigned for a railway museum for the town and to set up a narrow gauge railway on what is now the Prestatyn to Dyserth Way.

Growing competition from road vehicles in the 1960s affected both passenger and goods traffic and the goods yard closed in May 1964. In fact, in 1963 the station itself was threatened with closure under the Beeching Cuts and only local protests saved it. By 1971 Platform 4 had lost its track, platform 1 had few passengers and the buildings on both platforms were demolished. By 1980 Prestatyn had become a two platform station on a double-track line, with only the island platform left in use.

In autumn 2011, after many complaints from travellers with mobility problems Prestatyn was the first of six stations in Wales to receive an access footbridge and lift, with repaved accessible platforms, as part of Network Rail's 'Access for All' programme. In 2012, the station buildings were refurbished. During the first half of 2018, new signalling systems were installed along the North Wales Coast Line leading to the closure of the nearby signal box when control was centralised to the Wales Rail Operating Centre.



Prestatyn station taken during the installation of ramps and lifts in 2011. Photo Dr James Davies MP

The railway network plays an important role both economically and socially in our lives and it is therefore unsurprising that COVID 19, a worldwide pandemic resulting in millions of deaths, which circulated in the UK in 2020 would have an impact on rail travel. In March 2020 the government introduced restrictions and widespread public health measures in an attempt to stop the spread of the disease. Schools closed, travel restrictions were introduced, people were advised to work from home if possible and rail travel was severely affected. Passenger journeys fell to historically low levels. There were further outbreaks in the autumn of 2020 and again in August 2021 but with the introduction of a vaccination programme gradually life returned to normal, and passengers returned to the station.

The opening of the railway station in Prestatyn has had an enormous impact on the growth and prosperity of the town – long may this mutually beneficial partnership continue.



Prestatyn station showing the steps from the bridge onto the main platform and the ramps for people with mobility issues.

Photo taken By Tony Griffiths

PRESTATYN TO DYSERTH BRANCH LINE

Following the opening of Prestatyn Railway Station in 1848 a meeting was held in Prestatyn in November 1860 to consider the possibility of constructing a branch line to Dyserth and Cwm to transport minerals from the mines and quarries in the area to connect with the Chester and Holyhead Railway at Prestatyn. After much deliberation a preferred route from Prestatyn to Dyserth, with a stop in Meliden, was chosen and the London and North Western Railway were given parliamentary authority to build the 2.75 mile long branch line in July 1866. Construction started in the summer of 1868 after delays in land acquisition and the line was finally opened for freight traffic on the 1 September 1869 – the final construction cost was £29,878.



Passengers waiting at Prestatyn branch line sidings in 1910. Photograph Harry Thomas

The line was steeply graded and had sharp curves with speed limits of 20mph for the upward journey to Dyserth and 25mph back to Prestatyn, 15mph over level crossings and 10mph when approaching the junction with the main line. In practice the heavy loads, curves, visibility and gradients confined speeds to a leisurely 10mph. An intermediate goods station at Meliden was opened and a similar one was built at Dyserth to cater for non-mineral traffic.

In 1896 a petition asking for a passenger service received around 2000 signatures, and with the rise in tourism a passenger service was eventually introduced on the 26 August 1905 using a steam railmotor (a single carriage with a steam engine located at one end). Initially there were two intermediate stations - Rhuddlan Road (later renamed Woodland Park) and Meliden - both with basic platform accommodation, but with more residential developments and higher demand further stops were added – Chapel Street (opened 29 January 1906), St Melyd Golf Links (opened 1 October 1923) and Allt-y-Graig (opened 1 February 1929). In the later years of the passenger service Dyserth station had a ticket office, waiting room, toilets and general store situated in two wooden huts.



Passengers awaiting the train at Meliden in 1913. Folding steps were used for passengers to embark on the train.

Photograph Harry Thomas

The railmotor services were popular and in 1911 a trailer car was added. Reputedly this branch line was the first to use the new railmotor and following their success here they were introduced elsewhere. Initially there were eight trains daily each way, reduced to five in the winter and extra late evening trips on Saturdays. There was no service on a Sunday. By the summer of 1911 there were 16 trains daily each way, reduced to nine in the winter, and eventually there were 16 or 17 trains daily in the summer and 13 or 14 during the winter right up to the closure in 1930. Nearly 30,000 passengers were recorded by the end of the first year of operation.



Dyserth station 1930.

During the summer months passengers would take the opportunity to walk from Dyserth station to Marian Mills where afternoon tea and home made buttered scones were served, and a visit to the 60ft Dyserth waterfalls would be an added treat. Photograph Harry Thomas

By 1920 the railmotor service to Dyserth had been superseded by a motor train with a locomotive and one or two carriages, but although the train services were popular, by the mid 1920s the road bus services were considered more convenient and the last timetabled passenger train ran on the 20th September 1930. The line was closed to parcels traffic on the 3rd December 1951, but coal continued

to be hauled until the 4th May 1964. Lime and limestone traffic continued until 8 September 1973. Three enthusiasts' special trains used the line – the 'North Wales Rail Tour' took three coaches to Dyserth in October 1955 and 'The Welshman' run by the Wirral Railway Circle took a six coach diesel train up the branch on 22 March 1969. The very last passenger train to Dyserth was another enthusiasts' special on 11th October 1969.

The branch finally closed completely on 8 September 1973 and despite the best efforts of local rail enthusiasts to convert the line into a heritage railway the track was lifted during February and March of 1980. It was acquired by the former Rhuddlan Borough Council, and was turned into a walkway and cycle route. The old goods shed in Meliden has been transformed in the last few years and is known as Y Shed where walkers and cyclists can stop in the little cafe and have a drink or a bite to eat or browse in the gift shop which sells beautifully handmade products.



Dyserth station in 1971. Photograph Trefor Thompson



Train from Dyserth approaching Bryn Rhosyn crossing and passing gasworks 1970 Photograph Trefor Thompson



Woodland Park 1968 Photograph Trefor Thompson



Junction with main line, Prestatyn 1970 Photograph Trefor Thompson



Departing Prestatyn for Dyserth with empty wagons. 1971 Photograph Trefor Thompson



Woodland Park bridge 1969 Photograph Trefor Thompson



Weedkilling train at Bryn Rhosyn 1971 Photograph Trefor Thompson

PRESTATYN SIGNAL BOX

In March 2018 the £50 million North Wales Railway Upgrade led to the closure of Prestatyn signal box along with five other mechanical signal boxes between Talacre and Holywell and the introduction of new colour light signalling controlled by the Railway Operating Centre in Cardiff. The very last train operated from Prestatyn was from Cardiff heading to Holyhead and passed through the town at 23.24 on the 23 March 2018



Signal Box immediately before decommissioning in 2018 - Photograph Tony Griffiths

The station's original signal box also controlled the level crossing at the bottom of the High Street. When the line was widened and the new station built in 1897 this box was abolished and two new boxes were provided. Prestatyn No 1 was located a little to the east of the present station and controlled access to the goods yard. It was relatively short-lived and appears to have been closed by 1930. Prestatyn No 2 was just west of the station and controlled access to the Dyserth branch. When No 1 box closed, No 2 assumed control of the whole of the station area and became known simply as Prestatyn.



Showing train on the branch line signal box in the distance. Photograph Trefor Thompson

In 2018 the signal box which had been in operation for 120 years, was decommissioned by Network Rail, and there were plans to knock it down. The community stepped in, a group was formed and there were campaigns to save the box with ambitious plans to use it as a visitor centre and a link with the old railway line to Dyserth. Network Rail pledged their support.



Photo taken in the 1980s at the time when the branch track was taken up.. Photograph David Francis

For the sake of completeness there was also a very small signal box known as Nant Hall which was located about one quarter of a mile east of Bodnant Bridge. This was a later addition and only controlled the west bound lines. It was used at busy periods to break up the section between Talacre and Prestatyn and was taken out of use in the 1980s. Similarly there was another seasonal box between Rhyl and Prestatyn. Although known as Rhyl Sands this was located just inside the Prestatyn area. Although controlling the lines in both directions it was normally only used on summer Saturdays and was closed in the late 1960s.

Trefor Thompson May 2023

WALKING TOURISM



Photograph Malcolm Wilkinson

It could be said that walking tourism commenced on the opening of Prestatyn Railway Station in 1848 when holiday makers started to arrive in numbers and walk to the beach. They would also have been walking in the surrounding countryside on unmarked tracks and footpaths used by local people. The 1949 National Parks and Access to Countryside Act started a process of recording/claiming public rights of way and in the 1950's Prestatyn & Meliden finished up with 49 official public rights of way footpaths. This helped open-up the area attracting even more walkers in search of coastal views and countryside adventures.

Prestatyn is uniquely positioned offering good access to the Offa's Dyke National Trail, Wales Coast Path and in 1985 the Clwydian Range was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and in 2011 the area was extended to include the Dee Valley and is just a 15-minute walk up the High Street from the railway station. An important milestone was the opening of the 177-mile-long Offa's Dyke Path National Trail in 1971 which links Prestatyn and Chepstow. Thousands of walkers from all over the world attempt this linear walk every year and many utilise the train to arrive or depart Prestatyn.

The Wales Coast Path, which passes along Prestatyn's sea front was launched on the 5 May 2012. It is 870 miles and was proclaimed as the first dedicated coast path in the world to cover the entire length of a country's coastline. In 2007 the community of Prestatyn & Meliden were awarded the coveted Walkers are Welcome status. We were the first town in Wales to receive this accreditation and our application was strengthened by having a railway station on the national network.

The first Prestatyn Walking Festival took place in 2005 attracting over one hundred walkers. It proved such a success over subsequent years that in 2012 Denbighshire County Council invited us to expand the festival, and it became known as the Prestatyn & Clwydian Range Walking Festival. Since its inception the event has attracted over 10,000 walkers from all over the U.K. and sometimes from overseas yielding valuable economic benefits for urban and rural communities. We continue to build on our Walkers are Welcome community status by reaching out to walkers around the U.K. and have been delighted to support the work of Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station to further signify the importance of Prestatyn as a centre for walking to the millions of rail passengers who travel along the North Wales Line each year.

Malcolm Wilkinson
Prestatyn and District Festival of Walking

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID!

Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser... 14th April 1887

PRESTATYN. THE STATION PLATFORM.— It is a well-known fact writes a correspondent, that the Station at the above-named place, is a disgrace to the London and North-Western Railway Company, slight accidents occur from time to time in consequence of the platforms being so short, that if a train of extra length is drawn up to them, passengers in compartments at either end of the train have.....

Rhyl Record and Advertiser 16th February 1888

... evidenced by the sale of land for building purposes, the building of new houses, the commencement of a new bridge across the railway, and the prospect of new railway station being at the same time built. The natural advantages of the place, with sheltered position, bright and warm aspect and climate, and low rainfall (the lowest in Wales)—besides the attractive country inland—are such that it may soon...

Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser... 18th October 1888

...PRESTATYN. AT LAST —The London and North-Western Railway Company have decided to erect a new station at Prestatyn, in the place of the dingy building and inconvenient platform which has hitherto done duty. The site will be a little to the west of the village....

Rhyl Record and Advertiser 27th September 1890

NEW STATION AND BRIDGE.— The Railway Company have at last recognized the great necessity that has existed for some time for a new railway station at Prestatyn. There is, we think, no more inconvenient or unsightly station than that at Prestatyn from Chester to Holyhead; and in view of the development and increase of traffic that has taken place at...

Rhyl Journal 23rd December 1893

...PRESTATYN. NOTES FROM THE STEEPLE-TOP. There was a grand illuminated exhibition of the railway-station the other Sunday night. It was all on account of the new station-master, I suppose. No less than ten lamps were alight on the platform, a thing which has possibly never before been seen at Prestatyn. Several citizens witnessed the display. On Sunday last a porter was on duty and the...

Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser... 11th April 1895

... railway and it is expected that shortly after Easter seven or eight trains a day will be running from the Talargoch Mine at Meliden, with gravel. As soon as the bridge is completed it is reported that the new station will be commenced. This is very much wanted for the station accommodation has undoubtedly choked the progress of Prestatyn, while the danger attending the narrow platforms when crowded...

Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser... 6th June 1895 -

PRESTATYN. BANK HOLIDAY.—Probably there have never before been so many visitors here for Whitsuntide, and the railway officials state that the influx has been equal to that which has usually occurred on the occasion of the August bank holiday. At eleven o'clock on Monday night the station presented an animated scene, not to say one of great danger, the diminutive platforms were crowded to excess...

Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser... 5th November 1896

... *PRESTATYN, THE NEW STATION*,—On Thursday, Lord Stalybridge (chairman of the London and North Western Railway Company), together with Mr Dawson, the District Engineer, and several other gentlemen connected with the company, arrived from Chester in the directors' "special." They proceeded to inspect the new work carried out at the station, and were engaged for some time over various matters...

Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser... 18th February 1897

PRESTATYN. THE RAILWAY IMPROVEMENTS.—At the Prestatyn Petty Sessions, on Tuesday, Mr J. Walter Jones barrister, applied on behalf of the L. and N. W Railway Company, for the justices' certificate declaring that a diverted road and new bridge at Prestatyn had been made in accordance with their act of Parliament, and for closing a level crossing at the Station.

The North Wales Times 20th February 1897

The members of the Prestatyn District... (instructed by Mr. Hinton, from the office of Mr. Mason, Solicitor to the London and North Western Railway Company), applied for a certificate to enable the Railway Company to close the present level crossing at Prestatyn Station, and to declare the approaches to the new bridge erected in lieu of the crossing a road repairable by the public. Mr. Robert Davies (Chairman), Dr. Townshend, Messrs... .

The North Wales Times 10th April 1897

... *Mr. Charles McLaren, M.P., on the subject of the celebration. Mr. McLaren desired to thank the Council for their kindness in consulting Mrs. McLaren and himself on the question of a suitable commemoration of Her Majesty's Jubilee. They thought it would be an advantage to Prestatyn if the waste land on the north side of the railway, near the station, could be properly laid out as a public garden...*

Flintshire Observer Mining Journal and General Advertiser... 3rd June 1897

PRESTATYN. THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE. In addition to the treating of the aged and children, it has been suggested that a piece of waste land by the railway station should be laid out as a public recreation ground and a shelter erected on the foreshore. Towards these objects a gentleman from Liverpool has offered to contribute £25, and nearly £76 in addition has been promised. Mrs M'Laren (wife of Mr O...

Rhyl Journal, 22nd September 1900

PRESTATYN. FOR some time past the Council have been endeavouring to get the London and North Western Railway Company to give residents at Prestatyn a better service of trains. Letters to the Company do not appear to have had much weight, and when in London recently the Chair man of the Council (Mr John Jones) and the Town Clerk (Mr John Hughes) interviewed Mr Turnbull at Euston Station with the...

Rhyl Journal 3rd November 1900.

RAILWAY WIDENING.—This week the railway officials have been pegging out the land required for the widening of the line through Prestatyn, and it stated that the work of laying an additional set of rails on the north side of the station will be proceeded with at once. Many persons will be sorry to see demolished some of the trees which at present grow on the...

Rhyl Journal, 23rd February 1901

PRESTATYN. THE RAILWAY STATION.—Extensive additions are being made to the railway station, and arrangements are being made for the erection of a new platform on the north side of the recently-erected buildings, provision having been made in the new station for further extensions. A large gang of men are employed on the works, and it is expected that within a few weeks the new platform will be - - -

The Welsh Coast Pioneer and Review for North Cambria 17th October 1902

... various Parish Councils in order to approach the railway company. The mountain villages, such as Cwm, Newmarket, Gronant, Llanasa, Dyserth, where the working-class population, in consequence of mine extensions in the district, is increasing, are situated several miles away from the nearest station, and the inconvenience to a large area bereft of any railway accommodation is great. At the last - - -

The Welsh Coast Pioneer and Review for North Cambria 10th November 1905

... testimonial on his retirement from that post. THE RAILWAY VAN.—several complaints are being made that the residents of Prestatyn are not treated alike with respect to the cartage of luggage and goods from the station. It has been decided by the residents in and around Linden Walk to petition the railway company to allow the luggage van and goods wagon to deliver at that point. They state that whilst the - - -

Rhyl Record and Advertiser 24th August 1907

The London and North Western Railway Company also looked upon Prestatyn as a place of the future as they stopped no less than 50 trains a day at the station, and had put Leeds within 3 hours' run of the town, Manchester 2 hours, and Liverpool in 4 hours. There was no place along the coast which could compare with Prestatyn for residential purposes and the position of the - - -

Rhyl Record and Advertiser 18th July 1908

...Prestatyn. THE SEASON. Prestatyn is doing very well with visitors and reports show that the season will be a very good one. NEW PLEASURE GARDENS. It is stated that every effort is being made by the Council to secure possession of the piece of ground to the north of the railway station in order to lay it out as a pleasure garden At present it is a dreary sandy waste, and it is hoped that the - - -

Source: Welsh Newspapers on Line – National Library for Wales

FRIENDS OF PRESTATYN RAILWAY STATION

In the 1980s

In the 1980s Prestatyn Station had notable success in the Wales in Bloom competition and won the best kept station in 1987 and 1988. It started as a joint venture between the Town Council and the Manpower Services Commission, with organisations in the town and local residents lending a hand. Members of Prestatyn WI brought hundreds of daffodil bulbs which were planted on the railway embankment. British Rail staff got involved. The traffic manager chose the plants and designs and Steve Crocombe (recently retired) tended the plants. They laid chippings to cover barren areas, tended hanging baskets, placed flower tubs along the length of the platform and even re-painted outbuildings.

Heath Williams, a railway enthusiast, gave the signposts, electricity boxes and the lamp shed a facelift and decorated the station with red dragons, railway symbols and 'Welcome to Prestatyn' signs. During this period the station building had a revamp costing £1,200 and the station was computerised, but it is said that 12 paraffin lamps were still used.

Elaine O'Connor, a clerical officer also played a part; she said 'I love working on the railways, especially at a station as attractive and friendly as Prestatyn'. A sentiment echoed today by the new Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station formed in 2013.



Flowers Galore – Photograph Steve Grocombe



Beautiful flower beds on the (original Platform 1) CookHouse side of the station. – Photograph Steve Grocombe



View of the railway embankment (original platform 4) in the 1980s - Photograph Steve Grocombe



A very proud and delighted Prestatyn Station staff and volunteers celebrating winning First prize in the 1987 Wales in Bloom Competition, with the town's mayor cllr Alan Cadwalader. Steve Crocombe centre front. Photograph Steve Crocombe

FRIENDS OF PRESTATYN RAILWAY STATION

2000 – 2010

In the mid 2000s, the 'Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station' was set up by a small but active group comprising of Amanda Wiggan, James Davies, Don Clatworthy, Gareth Sandilands, Anne Waller, Richard Phillips and Peter Richardson.



Beautiful floral displays on what was originally platform 1 (the town side of the station)

Meetings were often held in the Offa's Tavern pub. The station was formally adopted by the group via an agreement with Arriva Trains. The disused platforms were weeded and tidied up and impressive floral displays were developed. Signage was obtained through grant funding to promote the town's annual events and banners featuring the town branding were installed on lighting columns along the central island platform. There was much liaison with the railway authorities concerning better maintenance of public and track-side areas.



View of the main platform showing the original steps and bridge in the background on the original platform 3

Efforts were brought to an abrupt end in 2010 when much of the disused platform display areas were dug up to make way for the new footbridge and its ramps. There followed a further period of upheaval when the lower High Street was regenerated alongside the construction of the shopping park. The old listed railway station building and goods shed were renovated, while the operational railway station building was found to be in a poor condition and was reconstructed to match the existing. Beyond this point in time, the group was re-formed and has remained a thriving force to this day.

Dr James Davies, MP



View of the main platform on the original platform 2

All photos provided by Dr Davies

FRIENDS OF PRESTATYN RAILWAY STATION

Celebrating their 10th Anniversary 2023

In February 2013 a meeting was held at the Scala Arts Centre where it was decided to re-launch Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station, and a team of enthusiastic volunteers set to work to transform the station. The new ramps and lift created to provide access for those with mobility issues were regarded as an eyesore by many residents and the steps were regarded as 'too narrow and too steep'.

Ben Davies from Arriva Trains attended the first meeting and invited the group to become an official Arriva Trains Station Adopters' group and promised his help and support. One of our first tasks was to tackle the litter blowing down the High Street and onto the railway line. We purchased six 6ft wooden planters from Meifod Wood Supplies in Denbigh, which is a social enterprise offering work for people with learning disabilities, and we have subsequently used them for all the wooden planters at the station. We placed the planters alongside the station's railings at the foot of the steps in the High Street and each year we plant them up with a mixture of sustainable and seasonal bedding plants and have successfully managed to keep the line side free of litter at this location.



Photograph Sherry Edwards

In 2014, growing in confidence and with the help of Network Rail and Prestatyn Rotary Club we planted thousands of crocus, daffodils, tulips and bluebells on the railway embankment. We also installed 6 two-tiered planters along the length of the main platform, thanks to a grant from the Big Lottery's Awards for All. The installation was overseen by Geraint Morgan and his team from Arriva Trains who also kindly donated the compost. Volunteers and staff from Aberwheeler Nurseries, a social enterprise in Bodfari, came to help us plant them with a mixture of sustainable and seasonal plants to give year-round colour.



Photograph Sherry Edwards

We began negotiations with Network Rail in 2015 for a licence to permit us to work on the disused platform and railway embankment and were grateful for the help and support of Chris Ruane MP. In 2016 we became a Network Rail Community Group and adopted the little garden and planter at the foot of the steps on the Coronation Gardens access to the station. We were also fortunate to receive kind permission from Teddy Bears and Teapots Tea Rooms to place a gate in their garden, which provides safe access for our group onto the embankment. We purchased gates from Richard Jones at Heat and Beat in Meliden thanks to a grant from the Prestatyn and Meliden Community Partnership which finally allowed us safe access to both the disused platform (formally Platform 1) and the embankment.



Photograph Tony Griffiths

In 2017 Network Rail granted us a licence to work on the disused platform and embankment with strict rules regarding the number of people allowed at any one time as well as all the usual regulations to ensure safe working practices on the line side. We purchased three 12 foot raised beds for the disused platform and approached the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for advice. It is not an easy location in which to work, no access to a water supply and open to the elements – our ‘gentle sea breezes’ can often be quite blustery! The raised beds are filled with two thirds sand and then a mixture of top soil and compost and all the plants recommended by the RHS have prospered and give a lovely display throughout the year. Like most things, one thing led to another, and we decided to plant up

a small garden next to the road bridge wall, and much love and sheer hard work has culminated in a delightful country cottage style garden which has now been dedicated to the memory of our chairman at the time – David Gunning, who sadly died in 2022.



Photograph Sherry Edwards

The staff at the booking office have always been extremely supportive and helpful, Including the very popular Steve Crocombe, who recently retired. Steve was a member of the very successful 1980s Friends group and always kindly offered his encouragement and support as do the other members of the team at the booking office. Alan Griffiths, the Station Environment Officer has built various planters for the disused platform, including the windmill and wheelbarrow. He also ingeniously solved our watering problems, and kindly provided a little bench for us to rest on which has proved so useful. We also enjoy first class support from Denbighshire County Council's Public Realm team who cut back the overgrown grass on the railway embankment, and always lend a hand when we need them, often going above and beyond what we might reasonably expect.

We view the railway station as the town's shop window and hope that our efforts not only provide a pleasant environment for rail passengers, but also encourage people passing through the station to visit the town. Recognising that walking tourism is a lucrative market which attracts people from all over the world throughout the year, we conducted a survey in February 2018, interviewing 529 people. The survey revealed that 44% of our visitors were unaware that Prestatyn is an official Walkers are Welcome Town. We decided to seek permission from Network Rail to erect a large sign on the disused platform and a sculpture of a walker by internationally renowned wood sculptor Simon O'Rourke. Funding was sought and we were pleased to have them both in place by June 2021, much to our delight and our sponsors the Prestatyn and Meliden Community Partnership and Prestatyn Walking Festival, who do so much to promote walking tourism. In August 2021 James Price, CEO of Transport for Wales paid us a visit and congratulated the volunteers on their excellent work and that October 2021 we featured in a news item on ITV Welsh News.

We held a competition in local schools to name the sculpture of the walker and the winner was Jonah Gallego from Ysgol Penmorfa. The committee loved Jonah's choice of name – Rhodri the Rambler. Jim Goodwin, the Wales in Bloom judge presented Jonah with his prize and a plaque whilst he was judging our entry in the It's Your Neighbourhood Competition. We try wherever possible to include young people and were delighted that a local scouts group built bird boxes for the trees on the embankment, and every Christmas we place a tree in the Station Booking Office with the help of local school children who make their own decorations for the tree.



Photograph Sherry Edwards

Our work on the station is ongoing throughout the year and every Sunday morning for the past ten years volunteers meet at the station car park alongside Coronation Gardens to litter pick on the station, Coronation Gardens and play area and the Cookhouse Car park. We meet at 9am for an hour, and have been grateful to have received permission to leave our full bags of litter in the skips in the Cookhouse yard. Throughout this process the help and support from local High Street businesses has been invaluable.

Jim Goodwin our Wales in Bloom judge suggested in his report in 2021 that we should extend our work into Coronation Gardens, but after much discussion it was agreed that we would instead support the creation of a new group. Coronation Gardens opened in 1911 to mark the coronation of King George V on what had previously been waste land. We circulated a questionnaire in the town and had responses from over 120 residents, indicating that there is much support in the town to restore the park to its previous glory. A new group formed and they are already making a big difference with some members from our group helping.

The road bridge, which was erected in 1897, is jointly owned by Denbighshire County Council and Network Rail and one of our projects has been to place a mural against the wall of the road bridge underpass on the disused platform. In late 2021 our Transport for Wales Community Rail Manager, Melanie Lawton (who has always been very supportive and helpful) suggested that we hold a public consultation to indicate public support for the mural and select an artist. It generated a lot of interest and local artists submitted their designs. The winner of this competition was Andy Birch with a striking design depicting the town's attractions. Negotiations are presently underway with Transport for Wales and Network Rail, and we are looking forward to seeing the mural in place.

In March 2022 we placed an information board on the exterior walls of the booking office describing our work at the station thanks to a grant from the Welsh Church Fund and later in the year our new planters leading to the booking office were screwed into place by members of the Network Rail team.

Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station have enjoyed notable success over the years and won various awards including Prestatyn Town Council's Community Champions, the Tidy Towns Best Kept Manned Station in Wales Award and since 2017 have gained level 5 – Outstanding in the Wales in Bloom It's Your Neighbourhood Competition. The station is always included in the route when the town is judged in the Wales in Bloom and Britain in Bloom competitions.



Photograph Ian Lifford

Over the years we have enjoyed tremendous support from Network Rail, Transport for Wales, our sponsors, the travelling public and local residents and it's all down to a dedicated group of people who enjoy working together and making a real difference to their local environment.

"For Wales in Bloom it has been a real delight over the years to witness the way in which Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station have transformed an urban environment into something which brings so much pleasure to so many people, from the early spring flowers on the embankment, the pleasing displays at the entrances to the station, the raised beds on the disused platform and the beautiful displays in the planters on the main platform. They work tirelessly hard to keep the town's station and surrounding area looking its best throughout the seasons. Through Wales in Bloom, by entering the RHS 'It's Your Neighbourhood' Award in promoting cohesive communities by getting people to work together to improve their local environment the group has continually achieved the highest Level 5 'Outstanding' Award year on year. Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station truly add value to the town, for the residents, businesses and visitors alike."

Peter Barton-Price, Chairman Wales in Bloom.



Photo of volunteers: - From left to right: - Moire Turner, David Turner, Sheenagh Roberts, Joan Agnew, Cllr Carol Holliday, Becky Gittins, Dave Baker, Cllr Ian Lifford (Chairman), Neil Whitmore-Potts (Treasurer), Joyce Haddon, Ann Eadie, Lesley Powell (Minutes Secretary), Tony Griffiths, Maureen Roberts, Sherry Edwards (Secretary) and Cllr Gareth Sandilands (Vice Chairman).

Photograph David Francis

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station have produced this book to mark both the 175th Anniversary of Prestatyn Railway Station, and the 10th anniversary of the present 'friends' group. We are grateful for the help, advice and encouragement we have received from so many people, and most especially the book's sponsors – Prestatyn Town Council and Prestatyn Business Forum. All proceeds from the sale of this book will be used to enable us to continue our work at the station.

*Ian Lifford, Chairman,
Sherry Edwards, Secretary*

Thanks

*Most especially to local historians, chroniclers and authors –
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British Transport Police History Group – Martin McKay

Steve Crocombe – Member of Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station in the 1980s

Dr James Davies MP – Chairman of Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station 2000

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Malcolm Wilkinson – Prestatyn and District Walking Festival

Network Rail

Guto Lloyd-Davies, Director at Gwasg Helygain Ltd – for his guidance, help and patience.

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