

Flying Scotsman – Thursday 25th May 2023

I was awoken by a frantic knocking on my door, it was Trevor saying, he was so excited, he had not been able to sleep, 'was it time to go yet.' I told him it was 4.30 in the morning, and to go home and come back in three hours!!!

As I awoke for the second time, and drew back my curtains, I was greeted by a sunny late spring morning. The day had finally arrived – The day the iconic Flying Scotsman was in town and we were booked on the first trip of the day at the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway. Arriving at Haworth Station at 8.30am, we had plenty of time to take in the atmosphere, before our 9.30am departure. The station was a buzz with both passengers and sightseers. The eight intrepid travellers, including Helen our guest walker from the Lakeland group – held our tickets aloft as a badge of honour as we boarded the train by pushing through the hordes of photographers, who had their smart phones at the ready - video running, awaiting the train's departure.

As soon as we had a full head of steam, the whistle sounded and 60103 Flying Scotsman edged out of Haworth station, heading to our first stop lower down the valley at Oxenhope, where we were greeted by a platform full of well-wishers and fellow travellers, waiting to board. After a short delay, while the train turned around, we were soon on the main stretch of the run, back up the valley towards Haworth, where the gradient was against us but the old girl showed no signs of having reached her 100th birthday and arrived into Haworth on time. Heading onwards towards Oakworth, we went through Mytholmes tunnel where we could hear the engine roar and coffee cups on the table started to shake, Fields swept by with cattle and sheep pausing from their daily ritual to stand and stare. Damems and Ingrow West stations faded into the distance, fields were filled with School children, awaiting our arrival and we reached Keighley amid a cacophony of noise. Passengers on the national rail commuter trains, strained to look at the beauty and elegance of the Scotsman. Every station we had arrived at, had a carnival atmosphere, People were waving from the platforms and we waved back, parents were holding their children aloft so they could get a good view of the old lady gleaming in the morning sunshine. We had a chance to stretch our legs on the platform at Keighley station before our return run to Haworth, we had a chat with the engine driver and took our own photographs before re-boarding and heading out into the countryside again for the return leg, passing the same school group as we swept through the stations, before arriving back into Haworth at 10.50am.

We were joined by, Judi, who was waiting our arrival on the platform but there was no sign of Julia & Karen - they were waiting in the First class lounge, having told the stationmaster, they were awaiting the arrival of their husbands, who were travelling first class on the Flying Scotsman - he said come this way, Lady Warman and Lady Pickersgill!!! Souvenir hats and badges purchased, we all looked the part, except Trevor, who had misread the event description and turned up in his Thomas the Tank engine, tee shirt and hat. He was very disappointed that we had not met the fat controller – but said that was his nickname for Chairman Ralph anyway!!! The walking group now totalled eleven and the plan was to walk to each station in turn on the way to Keighley. We headed out of Haworth via St Michaels parish church - the Rev Patrick Bronte being their most famous and longest serving priest.

Our arrival at Oxenhope station appeared to coincide with the arrival of the Duke of Kent, which made it harder for us to access the station platform, despite my question to security on the side gate, 'do you know who I am' we were refused entry!!! So we headed through the main ticket office and took advantage of the station buffet in the Carriage café for an early lunch stop. We went through the exhibition shed before exiting the station and started our much anticipated walk towards Keighley, following the railway line as much as possible, some of which was part of the famous Railway Children walk.

Haworth station was soon reached and was even busier than the morning so we pressed on towards Oakworth station. More famously remembered as the main station in the 1970, film classic, The Railway Children. Who can forget actor Bernard Cribbins as Mr Perks, shouting 'Oakworth' 'Oakworh' as passengers alighted from the train or Jenny Agutter as Bobbie, shouting my daddy, my daddy as she ran along the steam filled platform, in the climax to the film. Oakworth station tea hut was also a welcome sight. Teas and coffees drunk, ice creams eaten, we headed towards the smallest station on the UK rail network, Damems. It only has one platform, which can only fit one carriage. The station garden is also a wonder to behold and a credit to the Stationmaster. From Damems it was a short hop to Ingrow West, where we visited the Carriage Works and the Engine Shed. Checking the time of our last train back to Haworth, it appeared we would have a 60 minute wait in Keighley, so it was decided to cut the walk short and we made the strategic decision to take an earlier train back from Ingrow, arriving into Haworth at 3.30pm. GPS's checked and nine miles agreed, but more importantly a lifetime ambition of a ride on the Flying Scotsman achieved - or at least a tick on our bucket list.

Next Month's Thursday walk is the Saltaire Brewery walk. Put back on by popular demand, after the successful walk from the Brewery held last December, I plan to offer this as a biannual walk, in both June and December. Combining the different seasons and close to both the longest and shortest days of the year. Hopefully we will be able to sit outside in the beer garden for our after walk drink - in the glorious summer sunshine!!!