

Ferry from Wemyss Bay to Rothesay on the Isle of Bute by Ray Pearce

Several years ago I was given an illustrated book “BRITAIN’S 100 Best RAILWAY STATIONS” by Simon Jenkins. On the front cover is a photo of Wemyss (pronounced Weems) Bay railway station and I resolved to visit it if



the opportunity arose. It is on the coast 26 miles west of Glasgow and there is an hourly train service from Glasgow Central station and in my view the finest station in Britain It was built in 1865 by the Caledonian Railway and rebuilt in 1903 to a design by James Miller, an architect from Glasgow. This was to meet the increased demand by passengers requiring the ferry to the Isle of Bute.

My trip took place seven weeks after coming out of hospital and I felt I was now strong enough to have two nights away from home. My travelling companion was my old school pal Keith. We first met at Waterloo Grammar School in 1946 and have been friends all our lives. I was best man at Keith’s wedding and he wrote to me regularly when I was overseas in the army. Keith was a brilliant marine engineer being retained by the Dutch and Singapore navies as a consultant.



There are several trains a day from Birmingham International station to Glasgow Central but most mean having to change at either Preston or Carlisle however I chose the 10.38 which arrives in Glasgow at 3:17pm without having to change. It stops at Preston where Keith joined me. The following morning we

took the 9:50 from Glasgow, via Paisley and Port Glasgow to Wemyss Bay to arrive at 10:38 for the ferry across the Firth of Clyde to Rothesay on the Isle of Bute.

It was a warm, sunny day and we took an open-top tourist bus round the whole of the island. It is very agricultural and, being mid August, the farmers were busy bringing in the sheaves. The bus took us through the grounds of Mount Stuart House a neo-Gothic

mansion. In 2003 Stella McCartney was married in the mansion's chapel. In the grounds are planted trees from many overseas places.

The island has a rich bird life as well as deer, wild goats with curved horns and at Scalpsie Bay there is



a colony of over 200 seals. The bus tour finished at the harbour and we found a restaurant overlooking the harbour when I had a super haddock meal then the 4:00 ferry back to the mainland.

In the morning the train back home was the 9:36 to Euston and I had to change at Preston from where I arrived back at Birmingham International station at 2:30pm and home by 3:00pm. I had had enough by then but proved to myself that I had recovered, after a fashion, from my spell in hospital.

Ray Pearce 29th August 2023.