



Downpatrick & County Down Railway Society

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PRESS RELEASE

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Ghostly Apparitions at Railway – And it's Not Even Halloween!

The Downpatrick & Co. Down Railway is no stranger to taking visitors back to the past, but not in a literal sense.

So the volunteers were quite surprised to hear from a recent school trip to Inch Abbey that the monk that showed them around the ruins of the 12th Century Monastery was very good.

Michael Collins, chairman of Downpatrick's heritage railway says it remains a bit of mystery.

"The school trip came back and one of our volunteers, John Henry, who knows the teacher leading the group asked if they enjoyed it," he says.

"They apparently did, but then came the bit about the Monk," he adds.

Mr Collins then says, "Of course, it's not exactly what you expect to hear so John asked a bit more. Turns out they got a guided tour from a person dressed in full monk regalia, and seemed quite happy to show them round".

"We aren't aware of any rips in time, and no blue police boxes were seen in the area, so we were quite stumped!" exclaims Mr. Collins.

Could the railway, which runs it's very own Ghost Trains at Halloween, have it's very own pet poltergeist? One apparition is unexpected first time, but no-one predicted a second materialisation.

"Last Sunday passengers were travelling on our steam trains to the Abbey," Mr Collins says, "When another of our volunteers, Oliver Rogers, said he saw John De Courcey – the founder of the Abbey – at the site."

"Apparently he's looking well for his age," Mr Collins states, "Oliver says he had his wife with him and that he got to swing De Courcey's broadsword – which, he says, is quite heavy"

"Obviously we couldn't just put this down to something funny in the Holy Water, or spectres roaming the ruins, so we've had to do some digging.

"We've been in touch with the Environment and Heritage Service, and these apparitions appear to have a much more worldly explanation," he states.

Mr Collins explains that the folks in the Environment Service were able to tell him that some groups hire living history re-enactors for guided tours. In the first appearance of the monk, he was expecting a visit from another school – but wasn't expecting another school group to arrive by rail!

However, the re-appearance of John De Courcey after nearly 800 years remains a mystery.

But because of these apparitions, the Downpatrick & County Down Railway and the Environment and Heritage Service are hopeful of creating some form of combined package, possibly in 2007, incorporating a steam train trip between the Abbey and Downpatrick town centre and guided tours of the Abbey site by some more earth-bound monks.