



Downpatrick Rail way Museum

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Press Release

Grand Reopening of Downpatrick Railway Museum

Downpatrick Railway Museum reopened the station doors on Saturday following reconstruction work after a devastating arson attack on Boxing Day 2002 that gutted the entire building. The ceremony, conducted by local celebrity Walter Love, and with free train travel all day sees the building returned to use after nine months of reconstruction work, costing in the region of £100,000.

The fire was started when burglars broke into the lower floor of the station and, according to fire investigation officers, started the fire in the railway shop which then spread into the rest of the station and out onto the platform where it destroyed an historic 1920s coach. General Manager, Edwin Gray, stated that following the malicious blaze the volunteers' put all their effort into getting the station back into public use. "At first everyone felt incredibly numb, no-one could quite believe that it had happened". He continues, "However, the next day everyone banded together and resolved to put back what we had. We were not going to be put out of business or discouraged from our preservation work by a small group of hooligans."

With the strong support of Down District Council and public donations, repair work soon started and the railway was soon open again, operating out of a caravan and an undamaged section of platform.

Mr. Gray went on to say, "Over the last few months we have seen the station rise phoenix-like from a burnt-out husk. It is heartening for all of our volunteers to see us back on our feet. We are totally indebted to the local PSNI who spotted the fire for their vigilance on Boxing Day morning and for the professionalism of the local Fire Brigade for undoubtedly saving the railway station from being totally destroyed."

Unfortunately, no person has as yet been caught for this crime. Downpatrick police are still requesting that anyone who has information regarding the fire bombing of the station, no matter how trivial it may seem, to contact detectives at Downpatrick PSNI station or through the Crimestoppers number at 0800 555 111.

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Issued by
Robert Gardiner