

Sunshine and smiles mark an historic day for Walkden !



Stalls and visitors crowd the station's Booking Hall. Courtesy of Daniel Eden at Eden Photography.

There were unprecedented scenes at Walkden station as hundreds gathered to enjoy the sunshine and entertainment on offer at the FOWS station gala.

The gala was organised to celebrate the return of Sunday train services after a 41-year gap - and with more than 20 local businesses, schools and community organisations involved it was a true community affair.

To the sound of the Beau Brass Band there was a party atmosphere on the platform, and when a train arrived bearing a commemorative headboard the crowd burst into spontaneous applause and cheering !

Special guests included Councillor George Wilson the newly appointed Mayor of Salford, Councillor Keith Whitmore the Chair of GMITA, and Mark Barker of Northern Rail.

During a short ceremony held on the platform the guests praised the new train service, remarked on its importance to people in the area, and complimented FOWS on their successful campaign to restore the service.



Peter Aust (FOWS), the Mayoress and Mayor of Salford, and Cllr Keith Whitmore (GMITA) gather to cut a cake to commemorate the new Sunday service. Courtesy of Daniel Eden at Eden Photography.

Cllr Whitmore described the occasion as a “true historic landmark” and spoke of the opportunities the new service will afford for business and leisure travel. He also affirmed GMITA’s hope and aspiration that the 1-year trial will be so popular that its conversion to a permanent fixture can be achieved.

Early indications are that the services will indeed be popular as all trains on the first day were busy and some approached “standing-room only” status. In the two hours that the Ticket Office was open there were queues at the window for local and long-distance tickets to destinations including Southport, Darlington and London. And among the first arrivals was a passenger who had flown to Manchester Airport from Germany, exemplifying another valuable market for the service.

Northern Rail and GMPTTE played a full part in the celebrations by producing commemorative train headboards and publicity leaflets respectively.

Among the many organisations who helped to make the gala such a success were Café Chino who did a roaring trade with a refreshments stall, the Master of Ceremonies Derek Timmins-Jones, and Abracadabra Party Organisers who built a fabulous balloon arch in Northern Rail colours. All these, and many more, businesses kindly gave their time and services for free.

The Walkden station gala was complemented by civic receptions at Atherton and Hindley stations, plus a music train and gardening day organised by the Friends of Hindley Station.

The gala was made possible with a grant from the Little Hulton and Walkden Community Committee.

About the Friends of Walkden Station (FOWS)

FOWS is a community volunteer group that campaigns for improved services and facilities at Walkden station in Greater Manchester. The group perform voluntary activities such as gardening, litter collections, and cleaning to improve the station environment.

FOWS works in partnership with Salford City Council, Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority, and Northern Rail.

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