

History and heritage commemorated at Aberdeen station

April 24, 2023



History and heritage have been commemorated at Aberdeen railway station, with hundreds of pounds given to a local charity.

The restoration of a First World War artillery shell, as well as a plaque to mark the station's recent award were officially unveiled on Tuesday, 18 April.

The historic First World War shell, which has been a feature in Aberdeen station since 1918, was restored as part of the station's redevelopment and has been moved to a new prominent location on the concourse.

During the restoration works, carried out by JPS Restoration, £889 was collected from the bottom, with a cheque presented to the Aberdeen YMCA at the unveiling.

The Railway Heritage Trust provided funding to restore the shell, which was manufactured by Mackinnon's foundry in Aberdeen.

It was originally positioned in the station to collect for the Red Cross, and has been a traditional meeting point for people for more than 100 years. During the Second World War it became a collecting vessel for YMCA when the charity was providing aid at the station during the war.

Railway Heritage Trust and The Arch Company also marked a recent award for urban heritage at the National Railway Heritage Awards 2022 with a plaque unveiling on the station's North Corner Pavilion.

The Arch Company Award for Urban Heritage was presented to ScotRail at the National Railway Heritage Awards in London in December 2022 for the restoration of the station's North Corner Pavilion, as part of the £8million redevelopment of Aberdeen railway station.

ScotRail worked in partnership with the Railway Heritage Trust to restore the North Corner Pavilion Building – a significant A-listed building and a link to the classic age of rail and the days of steam locomotives – which had fallen into disrepair.

Repair work was sympathetic in order to keep the look of the pavilion as close as possible to that of the original building. Some pre-existing materials were recycled and the solid granite treads in the Guild Street entrance were removed and modified to allow the granite to be used on the new stairs.

The station redevelopment work – which was funded by Transport Scotland, ScotRail, Network Rail, the Railway Heritage Trust, and Serco – has seen other significant changes to the look and feel of the station, which has sat in the heart of Aberdeen city centre for more than 150 years.

Andy Savage, MBE, Chair of the Railway Heritage Trust and Chairman of the National Railway Heritage Awards, said: “The Railway Heritage Trust has been pleased to support the restoration of the North Corner Building at Aberdeen, and the restoration of the historic artillery shell.

“The two projects demonstrate the breadth of projects which we support that all contribute to our railway heritage.”

Kirsty Devlin, ScotRail Head of Projects & PMO, said: “I was delighted to receive the award on behalf of ScotRail in recognition of the work completed on this beautiful, listed building in the heart of Aberdeen as part of the station redevelopment.

“Our engineers, contractors, project, and station teams have done an excellent job in delivering better facilities for customers and railway staff.

“Their work has helped modernise this historic and iconic station whilst retaining original features and character, recognised by our success at the National Railway Heritage Awards.

“We were also delighted to restore the First World War shell, which has since been designated by the Board of Trustees due to its historical significance, and to present YMCA Aberdeen with the more than £880 worth of funds which were discovered.”

Mike Will, Executive Chair of Aberdeen YMCA and President YMCA Scotland, said: “On behalf of the

children, young people and families that access YMCA programmes, we are grateful to everyone involved in this project.

“The donations made via the ‘shell’ in Aberdeen station help support developing young people in body and mind. The restoration of the shell to its former glory recognise the heritage and history of its link to YMCA service in the city of Aberdeen.

“Taking pride of place in the revamped station concourse ensures that travellers to and from Aberdeen can continue supporting young people with their donations in these challenging economic times.

“YMCA is thankful to Railway Heritage Trust and ScotRail for investing in the heritage associated with the shell and investing in empowering young people for their futures.”

Photo credit: ScotRail