



Another successful Dinner at the Roundhouse

Hundreds of people from all over the rail industry converged on Derby for the annual Dinner at the Roundhouse event. Adam Hewitt reports.

The biggest-ever Dinner at the Roundhouse was a fantastic chance to celebrate the best of the rail industry, with networking, great speakers, charity fundraisers and plenty of chances to meet old friends and colleagues.

Event organiser Mainspring says the dinner, now in its fourth year, is the “biggest gathering of its kind outside the capital”.

About 600 people attended this year, enjoying the magnificent surroundings of the Derby Roundhouse – a Grade II listed structure that was built in 1839.

The speakers were Richard Brown, formerly Eurostar chair and now a board member at the Department for Transport and HS2, and Andrew Wolstenholme, chief executive of Crossrail.

The black-tie Dinner at the Roundhouse event on 9 October, for which RTM acts as media partner, was hosted by actor and adventurer Brian Blessed – who was celebrating his 78th birthday.

He welcomed the audience with a rousing

bellow of “THE RAILWAY IS ALIVE!” and went on to explain his own delight in trains and told anecdotes from his career as an actor and traveller – he is the oldest man to climb Everest without oxygen, and the oldest to reach the North Pole, for a start. “I will never stop being a little boy, and going for adventure after adventure,” he said.

He also serenaded the audience with an unexpected blast of opera singing.

Derby 175

The event was also part of the year-long calendar of ‘Derby 175’ celebrations marking 175 years since the railway first arrived in the city.

That series of events, promoted by the Derby & Derbyshire Rail Forum, has also included a recent special civil function at Derby Cathedral, addressed by transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin, on 25 October.

Railway Children

The event is in support of the Railway Children

charity, with a prize draw and presentations amounting to a total of over £25,000 contributed on the night. Dave Ellis from the charity explained more about the organisation’s vital work with the street children of India.

Gifts for the prize draw came from Bombardier Transportation, advance-TRS, Vintage Trains, Railway Children and Derby College.

The open day at East Midlands Trains’ Etches Park depot on Saturday 13 September – also part of the Derby 175 calendar – raised more money for the charity, and David Horne, managing director of East Midland Trains, and Mark Coney, Etches Park depot manager, presented the cheque on the evening.

A near-capacity audience

The event began with a champagne reception hosted by Porterbrook, followed by a four-course meal.

Simon Johnston from Mainspring said: “The event has grown year-on-year, with a near capacity audience in 2014, and networking and reminiscing went on well into the night.”



Crossrail

Wolstenholme told the 600 guests in his keynote speech that he was “personally delighted” that the trains for Crossrail are to be built by Derby-based Bombardier, and gave a wider update on the project.

He first addressed the Dinner back in 2011, when he had been Crossrail’s CEO for just two months, and he remarked at this year’s event on just how much progress has been made since then – with over 80% of the tunnelling works now complete (*more on page 74*), the train manufacturer appointed, and the station works progressing rapidly.

He gave a shout out to Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK) Limited, sat at tables 20 and 26, as the latest Crossrail supplier – its Westinghouse division will provide the platform screen doors, to be designed and built in the UK.

He discussed the railways systems work and fit-out, the complex signalling requirements in fitting a brand new railway into legacy networks, the archaeological and heritage elements, the apprentices and graduates Crossrail has

trained, its environmental agenda, and more besides. He described how important Derby is as a base for Crossrail’s suppliers – not just Bombardier, but also suppliers like Laing O’Rourke, building Custom House station in its facility at Streetley to be transported in sections 130 miles to east London.

Major contribution

The other keynote speaker, Richard Brown, had just received the Sir Robert Lawrence Award for 2014 from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport for his major contribution to the sector.

Brown’s speech ranged widely, covering recent railway successes, Derby’s heritage and CP5 investment, as well as skills and training in the industry.

He also gave a very strong defence of the franchising system and said: “A 3% average profit margin is reasonable.”

Supporters

RTM was once again the media partner for the

event, which was also supported by Bombardier Transportation, Porterbrook, Network Rail, Yellow, VIX Technology and CPET and many other leading rail businesses.

Matt Johnston, managing director of Mainspring, said: “We have found that many companies who started off with a small presence at the event are now taking full tables and more, proving the vibrancy of the rail industry and its importance to the continued prosperity of the country’s economy.

“This year’s Dinner is the biggest to date and we are also particularly proud to be associated with the Derby 175 celebrations; we have had tremendous support from organisations both in Derby and beyond, all of whom have helped make this event the fantastic success it has become. Added to the significance of the support the event generates for the Railway Children charity, we are delighted to see that Dinner at the Roundhouse is now on the calendar for a wider base of the rail and related sectors.”

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