

Carlisle Citadel railway station

Because Carlisle station is close to the border of England and Scotland, it has a uniquely complicated history which can be traced even today by a stroll around this fine building.

It opened on September 10, 1847, and, after the Midland Railway reached Carlisle with the Settle-Carlisle line in 1876, it was rebuilt and enlarged in 1878-80. It was served by seven different railway companies and, because of the complexity of its management, it had its own Act of Parliament of 1861 which established the Citadel Station Joint Committee (CCSC). You can still see the badge of the CCSC today in etched windows.

The architect was Sir William Tite who also designed the London Stock Exchange. He included decorated Gothic fireplaces, a charming clock tower and linen-fold wood panelled doors, which still exist: nothing but the best for the Citadel station.

The seven companies were the London & North Western Railway, London North Eastern Railway, Midland Railway, Caledonian Railway, North British Railway, Glasgow & South Western Railway and the Maryport & Carlisle Railway. The companies had their own booking and parcels offices which made life complicated for through passengers. The enormous through goods traffic was so intense and potentially dangerous that, following the 1873 Carlisle Citadel Act, a goods avoiding line was built to divert freight traffic around the station. This closed, after an accident on May 1, 1984, but, with the modern revival of freight traffic, its reopening would relieve congestion.

The rebuilt 1880 extensions created an elaborate building. It had a 7 acre [2.83 hec] glass roof with giant Gothic wood screens at each end. After neglect during World War Two (the glass was painted over black as an air raid precaution) the whole roof was rotten, unpainted, and hazardous in gales so large parts of it, including the Gothic screens, were demolished in 1957.

In their prime in 1901 the railways and other transport trades employed 22% of the working population of Carlisle. The station itself, in 1910, had a staff of 230, all under the control of the CSCC Superintendent who lived, with his family, above the station's entrance. The 1880s building had a network of service rooms and passageways in its undercroft: the butcher's store – still today with original meat hooks, cold store, old buffet room, lamp rooms, foot warmer room (you could hire foot warmers to use in unheated carriages), garages, staff

accommodation, locker room and signing on point. Today there are occasional 'ghost' tours of the Undercroft for charity. Details are at www.carlisleundercroft.co.uk.

One surprising quirk of Anglo-Scottish history is that the two countries had different excise tax rates even after the Union. This led to whisky smuggling between Scotland and England. Carlisle station had a customs post where passengers were checked for carrying illegal whisky, The Tullie House Museum has a metal flask which 'pregnant' women smugglers could strap around their waist, under their skirts, to carry contraband liquor over the border. Locomotive drivers could enjoy a nice illicit perk by carrying bottles of spirits across the border in their cabs!

It's not often that architectural historians become lyrical about a building but Matthew Hyde, the editor of the 2010 *Buildings of England: Cumbria* 'Pevsner', does get carried away with Carlisle station. He wrote: "The glory days of Citadel station have departed, when four English and three Scottish companies, each with its own distinctive personality and livery, met under its seven-acre roof; but it is a place of romance still, especially on a winter's night when rain-streaked trains rumble in from the outer darkness, pause briefly in the great lighted room, and after a short space vanish out of sight."

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