



Downpatrick & County Down Railway Society

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PRESS RELEASE

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Shamrock Specials Leaving Platform on Friday

The Downpatrick & County Down Railway kicks off this year's train services with the St. Patrick's Day 'Shamrock Specials.'

Organised as part of the town's festival celebrations, the steam train will be used for excursions to and from the parade ground from 1.30pm till 5pm.

And as a special treat this year, Belfast based traditional music group 'The Loch Lao Musicians' will be providing passengers a "Rail Session" on the train.

Band member, Patrick Davey, says that the band is delighted to be playing at the railway.

"It certainly a different venue from the norm on St. Patrick's Day! We know that the railway's trains have always been a key feature of the St. Patrick's festival, and we're please to try and make the day even more special for their passengers."

He continues, "We will be in the ticket office at the start of the day, and then actually on board the train for two hours, from 2:30pm until 4:30pm. Thankfully we're not having to actually fire up the steam engine as well, as I'm not sure how our fingers would bear up!"

Railway Chairman, Michael Collins, says that there'll be plenty of "crack" on board.

"As well as sampling railway travel at its most traditional, there'll be music at it's most traditional!" he says.

The train will be puffing between Downpatrick town's station and Inch Abbey, a ruined 12th Century Cistercian Abbey, which Mr. Collins says is attractive to festival-goers in two ways.

"First of all, why not visit a Christian heritage site while celebrating Ireland's Patron Saint? He adds, "You also get the best view of Down Cathedral, the site of St. Patrick's Grave, from on board the train."

He continues, "Also, the train now acts as a by-pass for the town. We know that many people end up parking as far out as the Abbey Lodge Hotel and the Down Business Park on the Belfast Road and end up having to walk a fair distance into the town centre. Well, if you find yourself having to park out on the Belfast Road – you can save yourself a long walk and follow the brown signs for Inch Abbey and walk onto a vintage steam train that will take you into the heart of the carnival!"

Tickets will be available on board the train, and there are a small number of parking spaces at the Abbey.

Refreshments will be served all day onboard a buffet carriage, parked at the town station, which is open to everyone - including those watching the carnival but not wanting to travel by train.

Return tickets cost £4.50 adult, £3.50 children or senior citizens, while single tickets cost £3.50 adults and £2.50 children and senior citizen, while children aged three years old or below go free.

There's no need to book and for further information go to the railway's website at www.downrail.co.uk or phone 077 9080 2049.

Issued by

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