

Magic of steam returns to Dunrobin Castle station

Travel: Train makes most northerly UK journey in more than 70 years

BY DAVID KERR

History was made in the Highlands yesterday as a steam train made the most northerly UK journey in more than 70 years.

The Cathedrals Explorer pulled into Tain at around 10.50am after making a weekend trip from London Victoria over the weekend.

The train then made a loop to Dunrobin Station, which is privately owned by Sutherland Estates, be-

"The engines are changed along the route"

fore returning to the town for an overnight stop.

It is thought to be the first time a steam train has travelled as far north directly from the capital city since World War II.

Operated by rail tour company Steam Dreams, it is on a nine-day tour of the UK, dubbed the Highland Explorer.

The company also offered local people a chance to buy tickets for the trip, with about 65 enthusiasts taking up the offer.

They were joined by



ALL ABOARD: The Cathedrals Explorer steam train was the first steam engine to stop at Dunrobin Castle station since World War II

train fanatic and writer Julian Holland for the once in a lifetime trip.

A large crowd turned up at Dunrobin and Tain stations to welcome the loco-

motive on its journey. The museum at the private station was opened specially for the afternoon so passengers could stretch their legs before the trip back through

Sutherland and Ross-shire. It contains various relics of the Highland Railway Line including the original Act of Parliament granting the Duke of Sutherland permis-

sion to build a railway on his estate. The first leg of the journey was pulled by the 76-year-old Duchess of Sutherland locomotive, before it handed over to a

Stanier Black Five. The engines are changed along the route but the six carriages, containing about 200 passengers, made the entire journey.

Magic keeps visitors coming to steam railway

BY SUE RESTAN

Harry Potter's magic has helped to turn a Lochaber steam railway into a world-renowned visitor attraction.

The Jacobite - otherwise known as the Hogwarts Express - was packed as it left Fort William yesterday for the start of this year's summer season.

The 84-mile round trip, described as "one of the

great railway journeys of the world", takes visitors past Britain's highest mountain, deepest loch, shortest river and most westerly station on its way to the west coast fishing village of Mallaig.

James Shuttleworth, who has been commercial manager of West Coast Railways since it took over the service in 1995, said the train carried about 375 passengers and was frequently booked out well



James Shuttleworth and the Jacobite steam train

in advance with many visitors arranging their holi-

days around it. He said: "Initially, we ran from the

middle of June to the beginning of September. We now start in early May and run right through to the end of British Summer time.

"When we started, it was something to do when you were in Fort William, then it became the reason to come to Fort William and now people come from all over the world to ride on it."

West Coast Railways was contracted by Warner

Bros to provide the engine and the train for all of the Harry Potter films.

Mr Shuttleworth said: "We get a lot of Harry Potter fans who come to see where it was filmed."

The company operates a morning service, Monday to Friday from May 12 to October 24, and on Saturdays and Sundays from June 21 to September 21, with an afternoon service from June 2 to August 29, Monday to Friday.

Man, 70, fined after crashing into parked car

An OAP has admitted causing £1,900 of damage to a car in a hotel car park.

David Morrison pleaded guilty to careless driving by

hitting a parked Ford Focus in the car park of the Smoo Cave Hotel in Durness.

Tain Sheriff Court heard yesterday that Morrison, of

Roseneath, Panmure Road, Dundee, had smashed into the car which was parked at an angle to his own car.

The 70-year-old hit the

tailgate of the car, causing damage to the lights.

The court heard Morrison had not stopped at the scene.

The driver of the damaged vehicle recognised Morrison's car and contacted him.

Morrison has already

paid the bill for repairs. Sheriff Jamie Gilchrist ordered him to pay a £325 fine with seven penalty points.

COURT

Row over soldier's funeral

A grieving mother has spent three years waiting to bury her soldier son after falling out with his widow over the funeral arrangements.

Mark Connolly died in 2011 after a single punch from a fellow member of the Black Watch on a night-out in Germany.

Wife Stacy wants him to have a colourful burial in Forfar but mother Linda McComiskie wants a more sombre affair in Weyss.

The matter is being debated at Forfar Sheriff Court, where Mrs McComiskie yesterday broke down in tears as she described the battle over her son's final wishes. She said: "It was a couple of weeks after Mark passed away and they - Stacy's family - were arranging his funeral. We knew nothing about it.

"They said wear bright clothes and not to wear black. He was to be

"He wanted to be buried beside his grandfather"

buried in Forfar. He said he hated the place. I couldn't understand why he would want to be buried there. It wasn't what Mark wanted. He wanted to be buried beside his grandfather."

Mr Connolly, from Methil in Fife, died after a drunken fight with fellow soldier Paul McKay in 2011. Private McKay was later cleared of manslaughter.

But three years later Mr Connolly's body is still in a morgue due to the legal wrangle.

Mrs Connolly, who has already given evidence, claims her late husband said he had told her he wanted to be buried wherever she would end up.

Sheriff Valerie Johnston will receive written submissions from lawyers for both sides. She is expected to make her decision subsequent to that hearing, which will be held on May 22.