

Borders Railway officially opened by The Queen



On the day that Her Majesty the Queen became the longest reigning British monarch, she broke off from her annual holiday at Balmoral to officially open the Borders Railway by boarding a steam train in Waverley Station.

Accompanied by The Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, the Rt Hon Donald Wilson, The Queen walked along the platform to board the train guarded by The Royal Company of Archers who act as her official bodyguard in Scotland.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and 150 other guests joined Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh on an iconic steam train journey from Edinburgh to mark the official route opening, before a special plaque was unveiled in front of thousands of spectators at Tweedbank station.

During the journey, the steam locomotive – Union of South Africa – made a stop at Newtongrange for a Royal plaque unveiling, before conducting a slow pass through Galashiels to allow the thousands gathered in the town to celebrate the line's opening.

The Borders Rail project, which was constructed on time and on budget, is the longest new domestic railway to be constructed in Britain for more than 100 years, and connects communities in the Borders and Midlothian to the rail network for the first time in more than 40 years.

The First Minister said: “I want to start by acknowledging the milestone which makes this a historic day for many people far beyond the Scottish Borders. Her Majesty today becomes the longest serving monarch in Scottish and UK history.

“Throughout Her reign – supported at all times by the Duke of Edinburgh – She has carried out Her duties with dedication, wisdom and an exemplary sense of public service. As a result, Her Majesty is admired and held in affection across the Commonwealth and around the world. The reception She has received today, demonstrates that that admiration and affection is certainly felt here in Scotland.

“The very first public opening Her Majesty performed, as Princess Elizabeth, was in Scotland – at the Aberdeen Sailors’ Home in 1944. Perhaps the proudest possession of the new Scottish Parliament is the mace She presented to us when we reconvened in 1999. Her Majesty has undertaken thousands of engagements across this nation including – last year – the opening of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. And of course, Her affection for Scotland was shared by Queen Victoria, whose memory She respects so much. In fact, when Queen Victoria became the longest-serving monarch, she was also in Scotland – staying at Balmoral.

“So it is fitting that Her Majesty has chosen to mark today’s milestone here. And all of us are delighted to be able to share some of this day with Her. By being here, She is adding a special touch to what is already a special day – for the Scottish Borders, for Midlothian, and for Scotland as a whole.

Photograph courtesy of The Scottish Government via [Flickr](#).