



LASRUG

**Lancaster and Skipton
Rail User Group**



Newsletter - December 2014



A 'lesser-spotted' Class 158 DMU № 816 waits at Skipton with the 10.34 Morecambe to Leeds service on 5th November 2014. © Gerald Townson

As we reach the end of LASRUG's 25th Anniversary year, it's fair to suggest that there is a strong sense of optimism about the way things are developing. The government now insists that community rail has to have a much greater priority in the considerations of the train companies as they approach bidding for the new franchises, and the train companies themselves are also willing that it be so. At last we have the will; now we, the CRP and the train companies must find the way that will more quickly achieve what we have been patiently working towards for so long.

Meanwhile the committee of LASRUG wish you all the Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for 2015.

NEWS FROM GARGRAVE

Back in the early 1990s, in the latter days of British Rail, the original car park adjacent to the Leeds-bound platform was sold to the owner of the adjacent stone yard.

Users of Gargrave station will have noticed that Gargrave Parish Council has recently provided a footpath between the top of the steps to the down platform and the new car park, south of the station, which North Yorkshire County Council recently provided (at the behest of the Parish Council).

It is hoped that a layer of tarmac will soon be installed over the present chipping finish to the path. Our further ambition



is for two solar-powered street lights to be installed, one to illuminate the footpath and the other to light the car park itself. The onset of dark winter evenings has added to the urgency with which this is being pursued.

Hugh Turner



Those were the Days ...

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a leaflet advertising for sale three railway prints by local artist John Robinson. These are splendid individually signed and numbered prints. John has kindly offered proceeds from the sale of these prints to support LASRUG. We hope there will be a good response to this generous offer.

Annual Subscriptions Reminder

The AGM approved the increase of the annual subscription to £7 per annum outlined on page 5 of the September newsletter. Subscriptions are now due and, for members who have been awaiting confirmation of the increase, a renewal form is enclosed.

THE NEXT NORTHERN FRANCHISE - LASRUG Consults with Arriva Rail North Ltd

In early November, Railfuture arranged for Arriva, one of the bidders for the next Northern franchise, to spend time with those Rail User Groups who were interested in putting their case for service improvements in the new franchise.

Naturally we at LASRUG were keen to make the most of the opportunity, and Richard Rollins, Gerald Townson and I duly took up the half-hour slot allotted to us at the meeting in Leeds on 4th November.

We were impressed with the Arriva representatives. They had clearly read the LASRUG consultation response, travelled the line several times, understood many of the issues which our current timetable and rolling stock present and clearly reflected on the discussion held earlier in the year with the LLMCRP. We were able to emphasise the key points made in the responses of LASRUG and the LLMCRP to the Department for Transport and Rail North joint consultation, as well as highlighting possible joint developments to increase passenger numbers on the Bentham line.

Arrangements are also being made for Rail User Groups in the North to meet the other two bidders, Abellio and Govia, and we are eager to speak with them too.

Hugh Turner

MICHAEL WILLIAMS - A Steaming Success

Railway author and journalist, Michael Williams, returned to Bentham on 8th October to talk to members of LASRUG and the Ewecross Historical Society and members of the general public about his most recent book 'Steaming to Victory'.

Using striking illustrations and some evocative period photographs he revealed just how vital was the part played by the railways in winning the war, not only in maintaining the necessary movement of goods, vital materials, troops and weapons but also in keeping the country together socially to sustain the will and morale of the British people.

Michael recalled his interviews of a number of people still alive, who had worked on the railways through the war. These interviews add considerably to the human interest of the book, so that its appeal is wider than that of many railway books targeted simply at the railway buff.

Michael also gave us a tantalising preview of his latest book to be published next May with the working title 'The Trains Now Departed' and the subtitle 'Sixteen excursions into the lost delights of Britain's railways'. In it he will visit Blackpool's Golden Mile, famous named trains, dining cars, the Stainmore line, the Night Ferry to Paris and, as they say, much much more.

The wide appeal both of his material and of Michael Williams' presentation was evident in the warm reception given by the very mixed audience.

Let us hope that LASRUG can find similar common ground with other local groups for future events enabling us to widen railway interest in the community.



BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

In its annual report for 2013/14 the BTP reports a significant fall in crime, but opportunist theft and drunkenness on trains and stations continue to take up most police time. Vehicles on level crossings in the path of trains keep recurring. The incident below occurred at Silverdale earlier this year.



Cases of violent behaviour also continue to concern BTP. An assault on a Virgin train manager at Oxenholme in August, who was punched, knocked to the ground and kicked, was particularly serious.

However, the offence that LASRUG members probably witness most (and certainly report to us) is most prevalent: fare evasion. It is pleasing to note that such cases as can be pursued to court and result in substantial fines. Fewer passengers might try this, however, if train guards and conductors were more thorough in issuing and checking tickets.

AGM 2014

Our guest speaker this year was Chris Beet, whose father Dr. Peter Beet, it will be remembered, helped found both Steamtown and the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway. Chris's upbringing was, therefore, against the background of railways and so he has had steam coursing through his veins from infancy.

He began with his early years, when he and his sister were truly railway children, more at home in the shadow of the coaling stage at Carnforth than on a garden swing. Then he took us to his work as an engineer at the National Railway Museum and a fascinating episode in Ecuador, when he was sent out to offer help and advice to an embryonic heritage railway movement there. Finally we heard about his most recent work at West Coast Railways at Carnforth.

All the members of the Beet family have owned steam locomotives and Chris himself owns five, or at least he thinks it was five at the last count! And he ended his talk by telling us about the recent restoration of his Jubilee, 'Leander', work done by himself and a few trusted friends.

Our President, John Bearpark thanked Chris on behalf of an appreciative audience.

In the business half of the meeting, our officials presented their annual reports. Both the Chairmen's report (enclosed with this newsletter) and the Treasurer's report were upbeat. The Treasurer, David Alder, stepped down this year after long service – for which we are all very grateful – and Gareth Adams was elected to replace him. Tim Parker has left the committee as he has moved from the area.

The committee felt that it was necessary to increase the annual subscription to £7 and the meeting was asked to approve such an increase, which they did unanimously.

THE SECRETARY'S RAMBLINGS

During the past year I have lost track of the number of miles I have travelled on behalf of the organisations associated with the Bentham Line; however, the diverse destinations and venues stay in mind.

On a number of occasions this year I have visited The Old Water Tower at Huddersfield, the home of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, a beautifully restored and very 'green' building housing modern offices. The roof-top water tank now disguises arrays of solar panels and water-recycling facilities.

The building lies within a Grade-I Listed conservation area which includes the magnificent neo-classical station building, which opened in 1850, and the splendidly renovated St. George's Square, with a very lifelike statue of Sir Harold Wilson.

Other destinations for meetings have included Preston, Accrington, York, Leeds and Scarborough, as well as many other venues along the Bentham Line.

Be the meetings in grand hotels, council chambers, railway offices or company headquarters, the main theme has been the development of the line for the future, to ensure it plays its fullest part in serving the residents of the local communities and bringing in visitors to enjoy this scenic line and the nearby natural attractions, whilst at the same time promoting greener travel and outdoor activities.

In recent weeks, (and in the coming months), many meetings have been related to the new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises to be let in February 2016. LASRUG and Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership representatives have already met with bidders to state the case for improved services, station facilities and better rolling stock whilst outlining the positive role we can play alongside them in the future of the line.

With an increased emphasis on 'Community Rail' coming from the Department for Transport the incoming franchisee can expect to be required to put far more resources and finance into that part of their business and develop even closer links with the rail groups on designated lines, such as ours, which in return will have to 'up their game'.



FOBS - Celebrates Four Anniversaries

Around 30 people gathered at Bentham station on Friday 12th September 2014 to celebrate not one, but four events! September 12th was the third anniversary of the formation of the Friends of Bentham Station (FoBS), a group of volunteers that have been working on the station since 2011. Guests were treated to light refreshments and a buffet lunch courtesy of the volunteers.

Two unveilings also took place, the first to mark the official launch of the newly extended Bentham Heritage Trail, which now starts at the station. Pete Myers, Northern Rail's Client & Stakeholder Manager and local resident Jim Mundy were on hand to unveil the colourful board at the entrance to the Morecambe-bound platform.

The party then moved back over the footbridge to the Leeds-bound platform where Brian Barnsley, ACoRP's Operations Manager,



unveiled a plaque to mark the sixtieth birthday of the current station building. The building completed in September 1954 holds the record for a station being built. The time of fifteen weeks to demolish the old buildings and complete the new is outstanding, when one considers how long it would take these days.

The final celebration of the day was to mark the birthday of Gerald Townson, Chair of both FoBS and the Leeds, Lancaster & Morecambe CRP. A cake with a battery operated model railway running round it was made by local councillor Felicity Hey.

Article and photographs courtesy of Simon Clarke



..... and a Double Success at the Community Rail Awards 2014

The tenth anniversary National Community Rail Awards and Dinner were held this year on 2nd October in the grand Victorian setting of the Scarborough Spa. The excellent event was organised by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP). Over 350 guests from Friends Groups, Community Rail Partnerships and rail bodies, located all over England, Scotland and Wales, gathered together to celebrate the best projects, developed over the past year, in the world of Community Rail.

The Friends of Bentham Station (FOBS) and Bloomin' Bentham were nominated by Northern Rail and Community Rail Lancashire in two categories at the Awards this year. We were delighted to receive confirmation that we had been short listed for both awards in August. So four representatives from the two Bentham groups, Brian and Margaret Cowling, David Alder and Gerald Townson, headed off excitedly to Scarborough where they were hosted by the nominees.

FOBS and Bloomin' Bentham were placed first in the Small Projects (Under £500) Award for their innovative 'Annual Planter Sponsorship Scheme'.



Bentham. It has created a valuable resource which has enhanced the rail gateway to this small town and enriched the journeys for passengers on the Bentham Line'.

Gerald Townson's photograph, 'The Platform Entertainers' was placed second in 'The Essence of Community Rail' Photographic Award following a ballot of everyone attending. The photograph, printed on page 11 of our September newsletter, was taken at Bentham station on Carnival day this year.

Full details of all the award-winning projects across the nation can be found on the ACoRP website www.acorp.uk.com



FOBS administers the promotion and funding of the planters scheme and the hard-working volunteers of Bloomin' Bentham, naturally, take charge of the two major planting sessions each year. All of this is possible thanks to the generosity of the members of We Are Bentham, the local business group who sponsor the planting and upkeep of the scheme. Their contributions are acknowledged on the planters and in one of the station windows.

The judges felt that this initiative 'is a simple yet innovative, self-financing scheme which has brought together new groups within

EVENTS

Friends of Hellifield Station - Programme of Film and Slide Shows

The shows are held on Fridays at 7.30pm in the tea room at Hellifield station. Entrance charge of £4 includes tea and biscuits at half time. Contact, Mike Taylor. Telephone 01282 436653.

9/1/15 - 34092 The City of Wells Story: John Sagar and Richard Greenwood

The story of the 'City of Wells' being told by two people who really know what it is like to rescue a steam locomotive from Barry Scrapyard, restore it to steam and run it on British Railways' tracks. A mixture of a digital show, some short unpublished sound recordings, some 16mm film and the official BR film of the parallel running at Salisbury in 1988.

6/2/15 - Video Night - Main Line Steam in 2014: Ted Parker

This is becoming an annual event from Ted, whose prowess as a video recorder is well known, as is his excellent commentary throughout the evening.

6/3/15 - China and Poland: Adrian Freeman

Before you scoff at 'continental steam', you really need to see the approach to steam photography from Adrian who was a co-author of the remarkable book, 'China - the World's Last Steam Railway'. His photographs will make you think twice about that front three-quarter shot.

RCTS

The Railway Correspondence and Travel Society Meetings Programme

Meetings are held on Fridays at 7.30pm at the County Hotel, Lancaster Road, Carnforth, LA5 9LD. Secretary, Alan Sattenstall. Telephone: 01524 34840.

9/1/15 - The Furness Railway Trust and its activities: Tim Owen

6/2/15 - Northern Railways in Prospect: Paul Salvesson

6/3/15 - Alpine Adventure: David Bousfield

10/4/15 - The LNWR Coal Tanks: Peter Skellon

8/5/15 - Mystery Photographs from the RCTS Archive: John Broughton



The Stephenson Locomotive Society Meetings Programme

Meetings are held on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the St. John Ambulance Centre, off Sandes Avenue, Kendal, LA9 4LL. Chairman, Alan Wilson. Telephone: 01539 725100.

8/1/15 - Railway Development Around Preston: Mike Norris

An insight into the development of the many lines in the Preston area.

5/3/15 - The Greater Great Central Railway: Martin Wilkinson

Bridging the gap at Loughborough.

9/4/15 - Railways of Barrow: Geoff Holme

1950s and 60s photographs from the Andrews Collection.

A working instruction notice of the Highland Railway c.1920: ALL TRAIN CREWS WORKING THE PERTH ASYLUM BRANCH MUST ENSURE THAT ANY SIGNALS GIVEN TO THEM ARE BY RAILWAY STAFF.

FILM REVIEW: The Railway Man (2013)

Released last year the film is based on the autobiography of Eric Lomax with the same title.

In the screenplay Eric (played by Colin Firth), an army signaller with a passion for railways, finds himself caught up in the surrender of Singapore in 1942. He is taken to a Japanese POW camp and, ironically for him, forced to work on the Thailand - Burma railway, one of the cruellest railway projects ever undertaken using slave labour in inhuman conditions. For secretly constructing a radio transmitter Lomax is sadistically tortured and suffers from the effects long after the war. Years later he discovers that one of his Japanese torturers is still alive and sets off with his wife Patti (played by Nicole Kidman) to confront him..... No more, in case you haven't seen the film or read the book.

The screenplay differs from the book in that it excludes his earlier years in Scotland during which his enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, railways developed. The book is also more openly graphic about his sufferings, although these are presented disturbingly enough in the film, which does not fall short in dramatic conviction.

Firth and Kidman give outstanding performances, as indeed does the entire cast. Jonathan Teplitzky's direction is nicely judged. Definitely recommended. The DVD would make a very acceptable Christmas present, as, indeed, would the original autobiography, reissued in paperback form by Vintage.



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ALONG OTHER LINES

During my summer holiday in Ontario, Canada, I decided to have a day out on the train from Ottawa, the federal capital, and visit the town of Brockville on the St Lawrence river. The return ticket cost CDN \$68 (or about £40) for a distance roughly that of Leeds-Bentham and return.

I had to be at Ottawa station at least half an hour before departure and present photo ID to collect my ticket for VIA Rail Canada train 47. I was asked if I wanted to have any luggage 'checked in' but I only had my camera and escaped that bit of airport-style procedure. My seat in carriage 4 was very comfortable and the seats lined up nicely with the windows. The carriage was one of the LRC (Light, Rapid, Comfortable), but now non-tilting, low-bodied carriages similar to the Swiss Schlieren carriages but with just one door per side. As the platforms are at rail level, there is a flight of four steps to the carriage floor and a trapdoor to the stair-well closes when everybody is aboard and the door has shut.

After a full ticket check we set off at a leisurely pace towards Toronto. The only stops along the route are at Fairview, Barr Haven (where there was a serious accident last year) and Smiths Falls, before the train joins the Montreal-Toronto main line at Brockville. Here was plenty of power for a four-coach train as the locomotive was an EMD, F40PH-2, i.e some 3,200 horsepower. The return train was even lighter with only three LRC carriages behind the same type of locomotive. By contrast, in Canada there are often very heavy freight trains weighing up to 20,000 tons, and I have seen 12 locomotives on such trains, usually 6 at the front end and another 6 in the middle of the train to reduce weight on the couplings.

At Brockville I enjoyed an afternoon strolling about and seeing a Canadian Pacific caboose mounted on a plinth close to the entrance of the old broad-gauge Brockville tunnel. Over lunch I was able to watch boats passing on the St Lawrence river and catch the occasional deep tones of train whistles on the main line about half a mile away.

The return was quite different from the airport-style operation at Ottawa. The one member of VIA rail staff on duty was happy for me to wander around taking pictures and even advised me when a large CN freight train was about to pass a VIA train that had stopped in the station. This passenger train for Toronto had one of the ex-Canadian Pacific Budd stainless steel cars as its end carriage and it did look rather odd coupled to the smaller LRC carriages. VIA also has some ex-BR carriages which look odd behind large Canadian locomotives. These were for the ill-fated Nightstar service and were based on the BR Mark IV design. They were sold to VIA Rail Canada in 2000 for about 30% of their value and Bombardier modified them for Canadian conditions. They now run as part of the VIA's Renaissance fleet and I saw half a dozen of them on an Ottawa- Montreal train last year in VIA's striking new green livery.

I travelled back to Ottawa in the nicely air-conditioned LRC carriage with great window views.

Often at Canadian stations like Brockville there is only one platform for passengers and trains pull off the main line and into the loop that serves the bi-directional platform. In some cases I have seen passenger trains held in the platform loop line until a freight train has passed – often at a very high speed.

At Smiths Falls I managed to photograph CP No. 3053, a GP38-2, in its new bright-red livery. These locos really stand out against the green foliage of summer or the white snow and ice of the Canadian winter.



Just to make me feel at home, the train slowed to a stop just a few miles out of Smiths Falls owing to 'signal problems'; that did sound very familiar! As the line here is single track, we went forward a signal at a time and finally pulled into a loop to await a southbound VIA train. The result was arrival back in Ottawa 25 minutes late, but after a value-for-money day out.

Jim Trotman

DALES RAILCARD WINTER OFFER 2014/15

Great savings for Dales Railcard Holders with an £8.50 flat fare day return ticket. Up to four children can accompany the card holder for £4.25 each.

Available during the following periods;

Saturday, 27th December 2014 to Friday, 13th February 2015

Monday, 23rd February to Saturday, 28th March 2015

Valid on the Bentham and Settle-Carlisle Lines, also includes travel to/from Brampton and Wetheral on the Tyne Valley Line and to/from Clitheroe and Whalley on the Hellifield - Blackburn Line.

Not available before 08.15 Monday to Friday. No time restrictions at weekends or bank holidays. Normal Dales Railcard conditions and area of travel apply.

Purchase tickets from the conductor on the train.



**Coffee Mornings
at Bentham Town Hall
10am to 11.30am**

**Friends of Bentham Station
Saturday, 24th January 2015**

**LASRUG
Saturday, 21st February 2015**



HARMONY AT HELLIFIELD

After some right hand/left hand confusion and disagreement over the appearance and siting of a new Bentham Line poster case and the location of a presentation seat given to the station by Network Rail on the eastern 'working' half of Hellifield station, the matter has been amicably resolved. Some repositioning of two smaller poster cases and a slight change in the shade of red used – to more nearly approach the 'Midland' red of the historic canopy – have left everyone happier and relieved. The new header board also gives a fillip to the campaign for the re-introduction of regular weekday services on the Clitheroe line.



LOCAL CHILDREN MAKE PLANS FOR SPRING

Eight children from Bentham Primary School visited Bentham station on 23rd October to make preparations for their spring bulb display. Having listened to descriptions of the flowering bulbs from LASRUG committee member, Margaret Cowling, the children split into groups and set about planning their arrangements for the two troughs, before heading outside to put them into effect.

After refreshments, the pupils set off back to school to paint what they hoped their display would look like next spring.

The children took away with them a photographic collage to remind them of their visit in June when they created paintings for a poster display at the station adjacent to their planting troughs.