

LASRUG

Lancaster and Skipton
Rail User Group



Newsletter - June 2015



Pupils from Bentham Community Primary School head off to York, to visit the National Railway Museum and other attractions.
© Gerald Townson

The Spirit of the Bentham Line Photographic Competition



northern
a sercog and abellio joint venture



The Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe CommunityRail Partnership, in association with Northern Rail, are currently running a competition to capture in photographs the people and the surroundings of the Bentham Line, and the communities it serves. The Partnership would like to invite all LASRUG members, their families and friends, to take part in the competition which will help create a photographic archive of our picturesque line.

Further details about the competition can be found on the Northern Rail website, www.northernrail.org, and you should email your entries to pete.myers@northernrail.org. There are valuable travel prizes to be won. The closing date for entries is 30th September 2015.

FURTHER MEETINGS WITH NORTHERN FRANCHISE BIDDERS

We are now just days away from the three bidders short listed for the next Northern franchise, Abellio, Arriva and Govia having to submit their stacks of final papers. These have to be with the Department for Transport by midnight on 26th June 2015. They will be scrutinised carefully, to ensure they comply with the Invitation to Tender published last November, before the different sections are allocated to scrutiny panels for assessment. The resulting scores will be combined to give the winner.

Over the past twelve months, all three bidders have adopted a very positive approach to consulting with stakeholders on the Bentham Line and have appreciated the detailed responses given and the wealth of information and suggestions put forward by LASRUG and the LLMCRP.

Recently, in a third round of talks with all three bidders the CRP focused on the bringing forward all the elements of the new improved timetable to 2017. The CRP also presented a station facilities audit for our eleven designated stations and 'Supporting the Passenger' papers, to aid the bidders with the station improvement aspects of their bids. With a £500,000 Community Rail pot to be made available each year, the funding and role of the CRP during the next franchise were discussed at length, following the presentation of Partnership plans for the next three years.

Now we must wait, but the bidders will move on to consultations for other franchises. The winning Northern franchise bidder is due to be announced towards the end of this year and the new franchise will start at 00:01 on the 1st April 2016. Which company will it be?



DALES TRAVEL GUIDE - SOUTH WEST DALES

In our March newsletter we reported that two members of the LASRUG committee had attended a meeting in Settle of a new South Dales Transport Action Group.

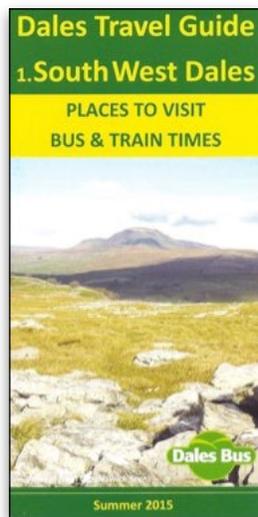
Following on from that meeting the committee agreed to donate £50 towards the production of a proposed new publication, a transport guide that would include details of all public transport services in the south west dales area.

That publication has now appeared as the No.1 South West Dales part of a complete Dales Travel Guide. It gives details of all bus and rail timetables serving all the larger communities in the area, information about concessionary fares, railcards, cycle hire, taxi operators and most helpfully, how to get to Airedale Hospital.

The guide has been distributed to bus and railway stations, tourist offices, and all relevant community buildings (YHAs, pubs, village shops etc) in the South Craven area by numerous volunteers.

It is yet another product of the tireless efforts of Colin Speakman in the cause of public transport in the Dales.

If you would like a copy and cannot get hold of a copy, contact either the Secretary or the Membership Secretary.



WEST YORKSHIRE RAILPLAN: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

On Wednesday 13th May our President John Bearpark and I attended a stakeholder engagement event to learn about the railway development plans for West Yorkshire of those bodies who have the responsibility to do the developing and to express to their representatives our views and aspirations as stakeholders.

Representatives of HS2, Northern Rail etc were present in a market-stall arrangement for consultation and there was a series of short talks on new and ongoing projects.

The main concern expressed by stakeholders to the HS2 representative was the need for a direct interchange from Leeds City station to the new HS2 station.

We were naturally more concerned with issues more pertinent to our line, for example, the development of the two new stations at Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall. I noticed that these were being constructed with platforms adjacent to the current two tracks with no sign of passing loops. At the Network Rail stand I asked if provision was being made for continued rail growth and was advised that, since only the local Leeds-Bradford and Ilkley trains would stop here, even allowing for approved new services, this provision would be adequate until 2041. Hopefully our two new trains promised before 2019 have been allowed for. Our own Northern Manager, Pete Myers, who was at the Northern stand was more positive and advised that there was space for a by-pass of the station, which could be built at a future date, if the need arose.

Meeting the West Yorkshire rail planners, we learned that a third new local station had been approved for Low Moor on the Bradford – Halifax line, where work would shortly start, and that an additional station on our line nearer Skipton was contemplated, possibly for Crosshills. They also told us that Leeds City station frontage was to be improved and that there were also multi-million-pound schemes to modernise Bradford Forster Square and Interchange stations to give them 'gateway station' status.

Finally, delegates were allowed to suggest further projects they would like to see. Most appeared to want a fast rail/tram link to Leeds-Bradford International Airport. It seems that many people arriving from abroad, surveying the 200 yards of rain-swept concrete they need to rush across to reach the plastic bus shelter and then the all-stops buses to the centre of Leeds or Bradford – a 40-50-minute ride - are not impressed by their first taste of Yorkshire hospitality.

Richard Rollins

West Coast Railways

Network Rail served West Coast Railways (WCR) with a suspension notice effective from midnight on 3rd April 2015. This unprecedented suspension followed on from a steam excursion operated by WCR passing a signal set at danger on March 7, when a 100mph collision with a First Great Western High Speed Train was missed by barely a minute. The SPAD (signal passed at danger) ranked as the most serious this year.



West Coast Railways were given until May 15th, by Network Rail, to take the steps to remedy matters; as they had had concerns about WCR's performance of its safety obligations for some time and recent events had led them to believe that the operations of WCR were a threat to the safe operation of the railway.

Network Rail reinstated WCR's track access on 8th May but the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) - the regulator - has placed WCR in what can be described as 'special measures'. The ORR has issued a mandatory improvement notice to WCR specifying the changes they require with associated compliance timescales. The ORR continues to have concerns over WCR's revised safety management system being fully embedded within the company and over outstanding matters still needing to be addressed.

NORTH LANCASHIRE TRANSPORT PLAN

Lancashire County Council have produced a draft Highways and Transport Masterplan for North Lancashire, which includes suggestions affecting our line from Heysham and Morecambe to Wennington.

Our Secretary, Gerald Townson, and I attended a gathering of local transport bodies, business people and interested individuals convened in the Storey Institute in Lancaster, where county officials explained their plan. One or two individuals were also invited to present their personal, in some cases idiosyncratic visions. A proposal, for example, for a cable-car system linking Scale Hall to Lancaster Castle seemed a long way from our more mundane vision of a decent local rail service.

Fortunately LCC's plans are more down-to-earth and in line with much of our own thinking – that we have been expressing tirelessly for a quarter of a century.

The LCC is looking for an improved rail service on our line that would make commuting possible and reduce car journeys into the city. They would also like to encourage rail journeys from town to countryside, again in line with our and the CRP's aims. The council also envisages the development of an interchange at Wennington by the adjustment of bus times to allow residents of surrounding Lune valley villages to connect with commuter and leisure trains and to use the park-and-ride facility at Wennington rather than drive into Lancaster. In addition an extension of the Lancaster-Caton footpath and cycleway to Wennington would allow leisure walkers and cyclists to return from there by rail.

The council would also like to see services to Windermere calling at Carnforth and new trains from Morecambe to Windermere and Barrow to develop the resort as a centre for the bay area. City councillor Dennison pressed for the electrification of the Lancaster-Morecambe line with a better service and even a frequent service through to Heysham with stops at new intermediate stations to provide access to the extending port and industrial activity in the area.

The council's draft plan is described as a 'vision' with an implementation period up to 2031. Since the plan embraces many things that we have been struggling to achieve for so long, let us hope that their vision does not prove a mirage.

Richard Rollins

THE VALUE OF WENNINGTON

Several LASRUG members attend auctions of railway memorabilia looking out for old enamel signs, signal box equipment, dining car cutlery and tickets, to name but a few items.

The following two items were recently put up for sale in a railwayana auction at the Crewe Heritage Centre.

Item 328. An LMS alloy Hawkseye station sign 'WENNINGTON' in ex-station condition. The photograph on the right shows this type of sign mounted in position in 1964.

Item 28. An LMS alloy Hawkseye station sign 'BORWICK', the former station on the Furness and Midland Joint Line between Wennington and Carnforth. In very good unrestored condition.

How much do you think the signs sold for? Have a guess before turning to the bottom of page 9 to find out the sale prices.



Photograph courtesy of P. Tordoff

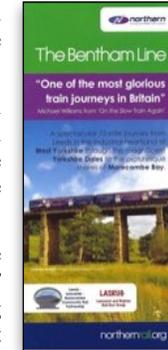
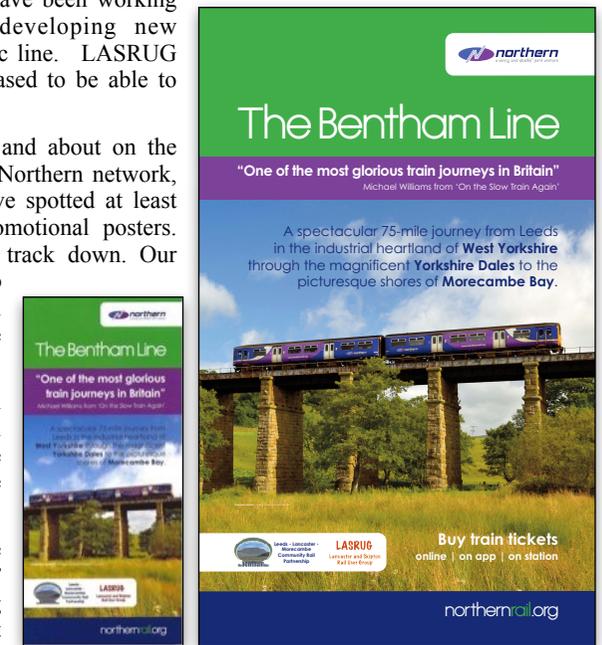
THE BENTHAM LINE - NEW PROMOTIONS

The LLMCRP and Northern Rail have been working closely in recent months on developing new promotional materials for our scenic line. LASRUG committee members have been pleased to be able to support them with this work.

Those of you who have been out and about on the Bentham Line, and throughout the Northern network, in recent weeks, will hopefully have spotted at least one, if not more, of the new promotional posters. There are 100 posters for you to track down. Our secretary would be pleased to receive photographs of the posters in situ, with and indication of the station in the shot.

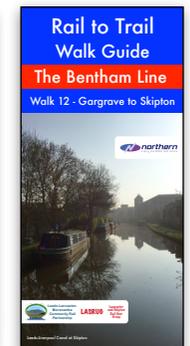
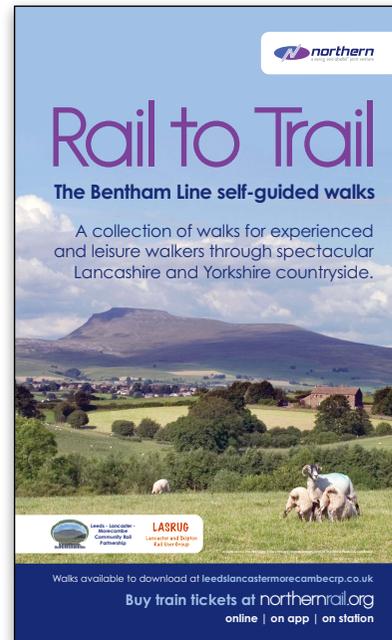
To accompany the poster campaign a new pictorial line guide has been produced, highlighting many of the attractions and sights along the route.

About to go to the printers is the new poster for the 'Rail to Trail' self-guided walks promotion, along with the accompanying main leaflet and the individual walks guides.



The main leaflet outlines the collection of twelve diverse walks linking neighbouring stations along the Bentham Line between Heysham Port and Skipton. The walks were developed and written by Stuart Ballard from Gargrave to whom we offer our sincere thanks for his endeavours.

The initial designs for the literature were put together by the LASRUG secretary, and developed with support from our membership secretary and Abigail Cumberland of the Northern Rail marketing team.



STATIONS WE HAVE LOST - No.2 BELL BUSK

As the 'Little' North Western Railway made its way north-west from Skipton, it headed for the Aire Gap, used from neolithic times as a low-level pass through the Pennines. In the 18th century the Gap was followed by the builders of the Keighley-Kendal turnpike road (now the A65) and the Leeds-Liverpool canal. At Bell Busk the infant river Aire is just four miles from its source at Malham, and here it is joined by the Otterburn Beck, flowing down the Gap from the watershed a mile to the west towards Hellifield.

A station was built to serve the small hamlet of Bell Busk, with its cotton (later silk) mill, and the many farms in the surrounding area. At its peak the mill employed 100 workers, and there still stand three rows of the houses built for them. The station also acted as what we would now call a railhead for Malhamdale. The line from Skipton to Ingletton opened on 31 July 1849. As well as handling traffic from the mill and the farms, Bell Busk station quickly became a magnet for visitors to the geological and scenic wonders of Malham. A line of ponies and traps awaited arriving passengers.



The main station buildings incorporated a two-storey stationmaster's house, and were constructed in timber and plaster in the Tudor style favoured by the "Little" North Western. They stood on the up (southbound) side. The signal box was located just beyond the level crossing into the goods yard, at the south end of the platform. The two platforms were staggered - the down platform to the north was reached by a foot crossing until 1880, when two passengers were killed while crossing to catch a down train at 7-15 am. The station master had shouted that a goods train was approaching on the up line, due, but the enquiry learnt that both men were deaf, and would not have heard either the verbal warning or the locomotive's whistle. As a result a wooden footbridge was provided.

A goods shed and cattle pen stood on the down side; they and the coal yard were reached from a siding that left the down line immediately south of the platform. The headshunt ended at the footbridge, which in later years was badly damaged in a shunting accident; the board crossing was once again used by passengers until the station closed.

The station employed a station master, two porters and three signalmen. In addition to the station master's house two cottages were provided by the station for railway workers.

They were all kept busy handling the daily mail and newspaper traffic, deliveries of coal, despatch of milk from the farms, materials and finished goods to and from the mill, regular movement of cattle and sheep to the livestock markets in Skipton and Leeds, and annual movement of large numbers of sheep to and from pasture in the Scottish border area. In 1896 16,209 passengers were recorded as boarding trains at the station, giving receipts of £942; parcels, horses, cattle and dogs produced £700.

The Midland Railway's summer 1922 timetable shows seven trains stopping each way on weekdays, with just two on Sundays. These were supplemented at weekends and holiday times by excursion trains for ramblers coming to explore Malhamdale. The service changed little over the years, and at the time of the station's closure in 1959 the number of weekday trains was still the same, though Sunday trains did not begin until Easter.

A frequent visitor to Bell Busk was Hubert Foster of Bingley, who had relatives there. Hubert was a distinguished railway photographer in the 1930s and 40s, and many of his pictures were taken at Bell Busk. One of the best known shows the up "Flying Scotsman" in May 1948, diverted over the Settle-Carlisle line following flooding in Northumberland. The train was made up of its usual LNER carriages, but was double-headed by LMS 2P 4-4-0 and Black 5 locomotives (a disappointment to the photographer and the many spectators, after the LNER A4 *Falcon* had taken the train north the previous day). I came to know Hubert through his model shop by the gates of Bradford Grammar School, where (he once told my parents) I "haunted him".



The photograph is reproduced courtesy of John Holroyd.

In 1951 the station became a shooting location for the opening sequences of the film "Another Man's Poison". It was reported in the Craven Herald that the main star, Bette Davis, was so impressed that she enquired if the station was for sale. By then both passenger and goods traffic had declined substantially. The mill had closed before the 2nd world war. Pennine Motors' buses now ran visitors all the way to Malham village, and many had their own cars. Road transport proved more convenient and more economic for farmers.

(Concluded on page 8.)

Some years before Beeching, the British Transport Commission proposed closure of the station to all traffic. Despite 100 local objections this was effected without ceremony on 2 May 1959.



Although most other traces of the station have vanished, the main buildings remain as Tudor House, a guest house run by Bob and Sheila Marchant, which contains many railway memorabilia. The workmen's cottages have been incorporated into a pair of larger houses.

I am indebted for much of the above information to Jim Metcalfe, a resident of Bell Busk for many

years. Jim's son, Nick, runs the model railway kit business Metcalfe Models from the family home and his workshops in Bell Busk, which we featured in the Newsletter last year. My thanks also to Bob and Sheila Marchant.

John Bearpark

(For more about Tudor House go to: www.malhamdalehotels.co.uk)

Bare Lane Station Adopters

The station adopters at Bare Lane, the Lancaster and District Conservation Volunteers, are continuing their positive work to enhance the station, with gardens and containers on both platforms.

The group recently installed a poster case with a noticeboard to highlight their activities to local passengers and to encourage new volunteers to join the group. They are currently seeking sponsors for their containers.

A covered bicycle stand has been installed in the station car park, adjacent to the entrance to Platform 1. The rack is to be covered by a CCTV cameras. These facilities have been provided by Lancaster City Council.

If you would like further information about the group, or to join the volunteers, contact David and Liz Alexander on 01524 412938. Their website www.ldcv.org.uk explains about the variety of volunteer work they have been doing.



EVENTS

Carnforth Station Heritage Centre

Monthly railway film nights will take place on the 15th June, 21st September and 19th October in the Furness and Midland Hall at 7.30 p.m.

The programme can be viewed on the website: www.carnforthstation.co.uk

A railwayana fair will be held on the station on the 20th September. Annual Model Railway Weekend, 22/23rd August.

2015 is the 70th anniversary of the filming of Brief Encounter and an exhibition covering the work of David Lean, the director, will be showing in the Bateman Gallery from July to December. Some of his films will be shown too.

'Brief Encounter' steam special to Chester, picking up at Carnforth, Wennington and Benthams, on Saturday, 24th October 2015. Telephone 01524 735165 for details and bookings.



LASRUG Coffee Mornings
10am to 11.30am

Gargrave Village Hall
Saturday, 20th June 2015

Benthams Town Hall
Saturday, 15th August 2015



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Wennington sign, £860, Borwick sign, £720

Whenever there is a train crash and human life is lost it is front-page news and gives rise to an inquiry, and rightly so. However, there are fatalities on the railway every week of different kinds. A number of deaths, about one a week, occur when people trespass on the railway, often after drinking. A number continue to occur at level crossings. But by far the greatest number are deaths by suicide. In 2013-14 there were 280 deaths by suicide on the rail network, about 4.7% of the total nationally.

There are considerable human, practical and economic costs arising from such events, most obviously to the family and friends of the victim but also to those involved on the railway. Train drivers are the most immediately affected; they generally need counselling to come to terms with the trauma of the incident, and often find it difficult to resume driving. Passengers, too, are affected; many are witnesses to the incident and suffer from shock. And, of course, services are disrupted; which is a matter of concern to Network Rail, whose task it is to keep the network running smoothly.

To help tackle these problems, Network Rail has recently signed a new contract with Samaritans, the charity whose purpose is to counsel those contemplating suicide. Samaritans is to support the rail industry in a suicide and support programme for a further five years. An existing partnership has been working well. Since 2010 Samaritans has trained over 7,500 rail industry personnel (including BT policemen) in its Managing Suicidal Contacts course with 115 reported life-saving interventions to date. Samaritans has also trained a further 1,200 staff in their Trauma Support course, providing rail managers with the skills to recognise and help employees suffering from trauma.

On its part Network Rail, in addition to working closely with Samaritans, is reviewing the design of stations and infrastructure to make locations less attractive to a potential suicide. Benches are being removed, and fences erected, adjacent to fast-line platforms. Anti-trespass guards and fences at platform ends are being installed. Wider use of lighting in the darker spots on platforms, smart cameras and posters and signs raising awareness of the Samaritans' helpline are also new features of Network Rail's campaign. (Japanese railways are trialling the use of blue lighting, which, it is thought, may well have a beneficial effect.)

Around 400,000 minutes of delay were attributed to suicide incidents in 2013-14, an increase of 35% on 2012-13. If this joint programme succeeds in significantly reducing the human and operational cost it is intended to combat, it will be money well spent.

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

Over the last four years we have summarised the contents of the BTP's newsletter about its dealing with railway crime in the area. In the future BTP's news will be available on Twitter. Their account name is: **@BTPLancs**. This has the advantage of being able to keep you up-to-date with developments, court results, incidents attended, etc on a daily basis. They currently have over 700 followers on Twitter and the numbers are increasing steadily.



BTP asked passengers and rail staff in their 'Railway Policing – what matters to you?' questionnaire about their policing priorities and what else they could do to make them feel safe. Anti-social behaviour was the most commonly selected policing priority, followed by providing a greater uniformed presence on evening or late-night trains and increasing the general visibility of uniformed officers. Reducing crime-related disruption on the railway, violent crime and sexual offences were also high priorities.

BOOK REVIEW

The Trains now Departed - Michael Williams

In Michael Williams' last book he took us back to the part the railways played in the last war. His previous books taught us to value leisurely travel on Britain's slow trains – including those on the Bentham line. In his latest railway read he casts a nostalgic glance back at 'the lost delights of Britain's railways' in a series of sixteen essays enticingly named 'excursions'.

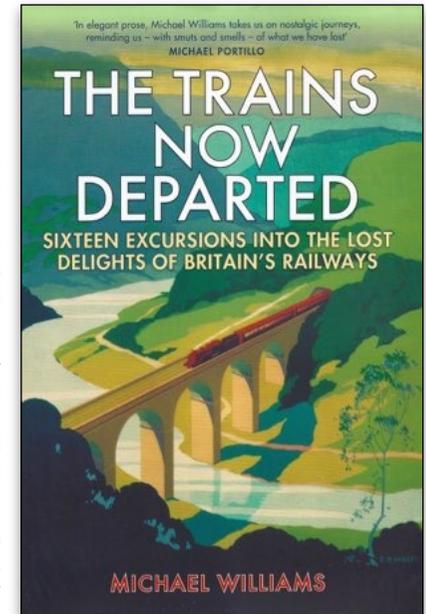
This is a book with no photographs or illustrations – apart from the evocative vignettes that head each 'excursion' – but lots of pictures. The pictures are those created for us by Mr Williams' vivid reconstruction of sixteen lost features of the British railway scene.

There is what you might expect to find in such a book: essays on the much loved Somerset and Dorset railway, on the titled trains, now gone, with their famous headboards, on the Night Ferry to Paris and on the demise of grand stations. (Mr Williams' hackles rise demonstrably when he writes of the vandalism done to Birmingham Snow Hill and London Euston.) However, what I enjoyed particularly were either the 'excursions' that took me into recesses of childhood half-forgotten such as the Liverpool overhead railway and railways that created and fed the seaside resorts or those that induced a nostalgia for railway scenes I had never known, (the story of the S & M.J.R, the 'Slow, Mouldy and Jolting') or that probed the not-lost-but-lost world of 'ghost trains', those lines that the railway powers-that-be would almost rather forget and try not to mention, like Captain Mainwaring's brother.

Mr Williams is wise. He knows we cannot turn the clock back. He most certainly enjoys memories of the bygone, but he is philosophical about the present and positive about the future. And appropriately his final 'excursion' visits the site of the Waverley route, the bitterest of Beeching's closures, and considers its resurrection.

Michael Williams has all the skill of the good journalist. He will please both the anorak and the general reader. He mixes fact and anecdote and moves satisfyingly between the two. But he has not written this book in an ivory signal box so to speak; he has literally got his feet dirty and done the field work, trodden the old tracks, felt the wind on the wild heights of Stainmore and tasted railway food both good and bad in order to report back to us authentically.

The book's dust wrapper carries an endorsement from Michael Portillo, and, like Mr Portillo, Mr Williams manages to reach those of us – probably most of us Brits – who have some Brunellian or Stephensonian genes in our blood, for whom the railways, however much they can disappoint or annoy, are nevertheless 'family' and we have a soft spot for them. So as Alan Bennett touches us with memories of his own family, Michael Williams touches a common nerve as we leaf through his album.



QUEEN AT BENTHAM STATION



Following her arrival at Bentham on the 10.34 Morecambe-Leeds service on Saturday 30th May, the Queen was greeted by the music of Handel and given a red-carpet welcome by the mayor, Mr Tim Stannard. Crowds cheered and applauded her arrival from the platforms and bridge. Local bodyguards had been brought in to protect the Queen during her visit.

Queen Sophie addressed residents and visitors, thanking them for their warm welcome, before declaring Bentham Carnival open and making her way with her entourage into the station building to be entertained by the official town storyteller, Tim Austen.

The Carnival Queen then

made her way into town to head her parade, calling in at local shops on the way to greet her subjects.

The Friends of Bentham Station pop-up café appeared once again both in the station building and on the sunny but breezy platform, and patrons were able to enjoy cakes made by the Friends served on Hyacinth-Bucket-quality paper plates with patriotic napkins and a variety of drinks befitting any such festive occasion. Visitors came from far and wide: tandem cyclists from Hull, the new City of Culture, holidaymakers from Leeds, and one old lady from Zurich. A group of philosophers



seemed oblivious of the less than tropical temperatures on the platform, so distracted were they by good talk and carrot cake.

All in all a splendid day linking the railway and the community, it serves as an example to friends groups and CRPs of how they can play a significant part in local events like Bentham's carnival and raise useful funds towards station enhancements. A large slice of lemon sponge or carrot cake and a cuppa might do wonders for *your* railway.

