



LASRUG

**Lancaster and Skipton
Rail User Group**



Newsletter - September 2014



Bev Sim of the Friends of Bentham Station and Gerald Townson, Chairman of FOBS, discussing the adoption of Bentham Station with Alex Hynes, Managing Director of Northern Rail Ltd.
© *Simon Clarke*

MD of Northern Rail Visits Bentham Line

Following an invitation from the Friends of Bentham Station, Alex Hynes, Managing Director of Northern Rail Ltd visited Bentham and took a return trip on the Bentham Line between Leeds and Lancaster on Friday, 15th August 2014.

He was accompanied throughout his visit by Gerald and Simon Clarke, the community rail development officer for the Bentham Line.

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LASRUG president, John Bearpark, and joint chairman, Hugh Turner discuss the next franchise with Alex Hynes.

Photograph courtesy of Simon Clarke.

Members of LASRUG and the LLMCRP were kindly invited to meet Alex during his morning stopover in Bentham and to raise whatever railway issues particularly concerned them. He was in no doubt about our thoughts of the subject of ‘Pacers’ on the Bentham Line, thoughts which were reinforced for him by his having to ride over the old jointed track in one of the aged ‘nodding donkeys’ on both outward and return journeys. He indicated that he would like to see more suitable rolling stock used on our scenic line with greater comfort and spaces for more bicycles, and added that one of the biggest challenges in the next franchise will be the replacement of the well worn ‘Pacers’.

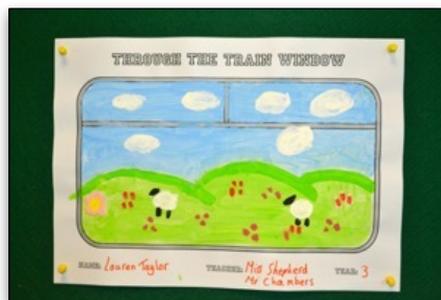
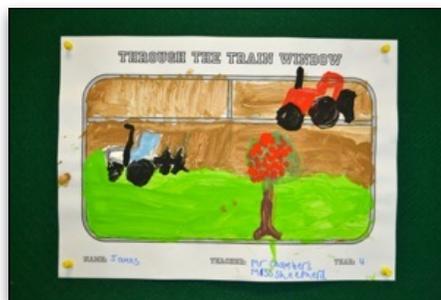
A presentation was made to Alex before his onward journey to Lancaster to mark his visit.

Alex, who was immediately recognised by his staff throughout the visit, made a particular point of speaking with all of them and listening carefully to their suggestions and concerns. This was something which impressed us all along with his knowledge and questioning about the line.

‘Training’ Bentham Primary School

The office walls at the Bentham station are currently adorned with the school children’s splendid ‘through the train window’ and train design paintings which they produced last term at the station and in school. These are currently being photographed by FOBS and turned into posters.

Paul Ellis and Harriet Steventon, Craven District Council officers, along with FOBS and CRP members met with Brian Haworth of Community Rail Lancashire at their headquarters in Accrington eco station on 20th June to discuss the development of a railway-based education programme for all primary schools in the Craven communities served by the Bentham Line. Brian has worked extensively with schools in East Lancashire and the HQ is bedecked with examples of the colourful original work the children have produced.



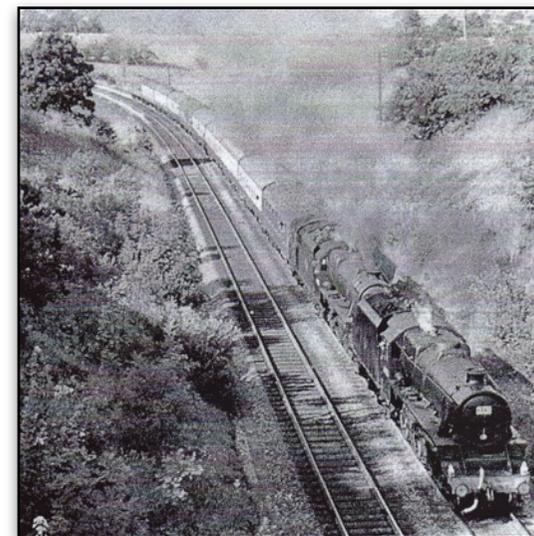
Obituary: Mr. C.E. “Charlie” Wilson

Members who recall our secretary’s humorous posters advertising our coffee mornings will remember that each has a speech bubble supposedly of the fireman speaking to the driver and urging him, “Charlie”, to get a move on in order not to miss the coffee and cakes. Those familiar with local personalities knew well enough that this referred to retired local engine driver Charlie Wilson of Low Bentham, who sadly died last month at the age of 92.

Charlie began his railway career in 1937 at Hellifield shed where he worked until its closure in 1963. He was a regular on workings on the Morecambe-Leeds line and had scores of anecdotes to tell of life on the footplate in those years. As, for example, when he was working the last train back from Morecambe to Hellifield on a Saturday night, he would regularly be stopped by the communication cord being pulled at Low Bentham by local lads who would then jump off the train, as they did not fancy having to walk the mile and a half back from the station in High Bentham. That would have taken the edge off a good night out in Morecambe!

The tale on which Charlie dined out most after 1968, however, was the account of his driving the last steam working from a British Rail depot. On August 11th 1968, together with his fireman, another footplate crew and an inspector, he left Carnforth shed, where he was then based, with the last two locomotives, Black Fives 44871 and 44781 (*right*), to haul a BR steam passenger train. They worked light-engine, tender-first to Settle Junction and thence to Carlisle to haul the famous final special steam train to Manchester. Driving DMUs never quite lived up to that occasion.

Charlie was a proud railwayman who retired in 1985 after 48 years loyal service.



New Chairman for LLMCRP

At the AGM of the Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership held at Carnforth in June, Gerald Townson, our secretary, was elected as chairman in succession to Richard Rollins, our joint chairman, who stepped down after three years in the driving seat.

One of Gerald’s first challenges as chairman will be to lead the CRP’s discussions with the bidders for the next Northern franchise having just recently completed consultations with the bidders for the new East Coast main line franchise, which is soon to be let.

DfT/Rail North Consultation on the next Northern and TPE Franchises

On 9th June the Department for Transport published the prospectuses for the new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises which will begin in February 2016. At the same time the DfT began a public consultation on the franchises and later in the month gave presentations in Preston and York, which members of LASRUG and the LLMCRP attended.

After joint discussions, the LLMCRP and LASRUG submitted detailed responses to the DfT in August, focusing on the Bentham Line and neighbouring lines. Both groups see the new franchise as a clear opportunity to move the line forward and improve the timetable and rolling stock used to meet the needs of the local communities and visitors to the area. The responses contained detailed arguments for a seven-train-each-way weekday timetable with trains at regular intervals over a longer period of the day. The timetable must enable commuting to Leeds and Lancaster for both business and education and later services from Leeds for both commuting and leisure. Emphasis was also placed on operating the line from both ends to offer greater flexibility, on a better fare structure, on improved connections and on better promotion of the line as a scenic trans-pennine route. The present timetable and rolling stock are clearly suppressing demand.

The responses from all interested stakeholders will now be considered by the DfT in their preparation of their Invitation to Tender documents for the short-listed bidders.



When will we see the end of the 'Pacer'? Northern Rail Class 142 DMU № 096 bathed in sunlight at Long Preston on 12th March 2014.

Shortlisted Bidders

The day after the consultation on the next Northern and TransPennine Express franchises ended on 18th August, the short-listed bidders for the franchises were announced by the Department for Transport.

In competition for the Northern franchise are Abellio Northern Ltd, Arriva Rail North Ltd and Govia Northern Ltd, whilst First Trans Pennine Ltd, Keolis Go-Ahead Ltd and Stagecoach Trans Pennine Express Trains Ltd will battle it out for the TransPennine Exxpress franchise.

Bidders will be expected to show how they will make the most of the government's £1 billion investment programme for the rail network in the north of England, to provide faster and more reliable journeys, more capacity, better trains and improved connections for passengers across the region.

The new operators will also be expected to work closely with Rail North, which represents the region's local authorities, to ensure local rail users will have more influence in how their train services are run.

The bidders will now develop their proposals and will receive the Invitation to Tender documents from the DfT in December 2014.

Subscriptions

The annual LASRUG subscription rate has been held at £5 for a number of years. In order to cover the increasing cost of production and postage of the quarterly Newsletter (which takes up all of the present £5) and to leave us funds for our other work, the committee has proposed that for the year 2014-15 the subscription rate should rise to £7 and for the year 2015-16 to £8.

This proposal will, of course, be put before the members at the forthcoming AGM. The confirmation of the increase (or otherwise!) will be announced on line at www.lasrug.btck.co.uk You may wish to wait for that announcement before renewing. Your membership renewal form is enclosed.

Bentham Coffee Morning

The coffee morning on the 16th August in Bentham Town Hall was again an agreeable and profitable occasion. A number of regular patrons and members were on holiday, but others rallied and made it as successful as usual. £250 was made.

Particular thanks to Kay Craven, Michael Marshall, Dorothy Bearpark and Thelma Holland, who produced bread and cakes for the produce stall and to Pam Warbrick for her dependably doughty work on the plant stall and the tombola.

We have 'exported' our coffee morning to Gargrave each year for the past three years but would be pleased if any other groups of members would like to host one at another venue.



BARE NO LONGER

Very quietly something splendid has been happening at Bare Lane station.

LASRUG and the CRP have been working towards the establishment of station friends groups on the Bentham Line to help confirm stations in their communities as attractive centres to stimulate rail use on the line.

However, at Bare Lane, without any help or prompting from either LASRUG or the CRP, a group of volunteers with exactly that community spirit has started work to re-establish the station as a centre for the village of Bare. The group, drawn from the Lancaster and District Conservation Volunteers, LDCV, is led by LASRUG supporters David and Liz Alexander. Their website www.ldcv.org.uk explains about the variety of volunteer work they have been doing.



Following the sad closure and demolition of Bare Lane signal box, which had provided a long-standing physical presence at the station, and to help counter any feeling that the very soul of the station might be lost, LDCV have taken on the role of Level 2 Station Adopter - Community Volunteers.

Working closely with Northern Rail as both station lessee and train operating company, and alongside Northern's own adopter, who checks the fixtures and fittings regularly, LDCV have concentrated on getting the platform tubs and gardens back into shape. They had previously been looked after by a local person and were in need of renewal.

The Alexanders offer this account of their recent work.

"Starting last autumn and with the help of ISS who are contracted by Northern Rail to clean and manage the station, the existing platform tubs were emptied, inappropriate plants removed, and a number of new tubs added. A cycle of bulb and shrub planting was introduced that would not only keep the tubs refreshed through the seasons, but also provide plants reasonably tolerant of dry conditions and attractive to wildlife such as bees and butterflies. They are part of the local green infrastructure network and our wider remit across the district as a whole.



The poppy has been popular this year on the centenary of World War One."

"A shady bed adjacent to the slope to Platform 1 has also been replanted with seasonal bulbs and shrubs, together with a start made on the car park bed, which is a much more natural site where native trees and wildflowers contribute to the mix and where once an old coal siding thrived!"

"The problems that we have encountered include: watering, given that any supplies remain locked within the Network Rail compound; working more effectively with Network Rail over weed killing on the tracks in the station and with the owner of the station house; and litter, including cigarette ends which cover the platform approaches!"



"Progress has been deliberately slow and steady, in part to maintain a lower profile that will deter vandalism and theft at the unmanned station. Passenger reaction has been very positive and supportive. On a lovely summer morning there is still some of the feeling of a country station that would probably be recognised by former rail staff and passengers who collectively spent many hours working or waiting for their next train. Now the only official noises to be heard come from the public address system as it broadcasts train information."

At a presentation by the LLMCRP and FOBS in Morecambe Town Hall on 30th June 2014, members of the Bare Lane working group were able to meet a representative of the Bare Traders' Association, the kind of link that has worked so well at Bentham. (See page 11.)

We look forward with anticipation to watching the project at Bare Lane develop. It is a challenge, but the volunteers there certainly seem to have a vision of what they want to achieve and the determination and stamina to attain it. Best wishes and thanks to them from all at LASRUG, LLMCRP and FOBS.

If you are interested in helping the group, further details can be obtained from David and Liz Alexander on 01524 412938.

LASRUG

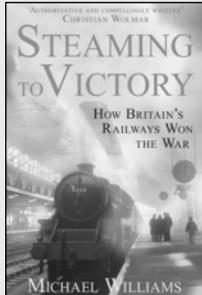
**Lancaster and Skipton
Rail User Group**

**The Annual General Meeting will be held in Bentham Town Hall at
7.30pm on Friday, 19th September 2014**

**Guest Speaker: Chris Beet of West Coast Railways Ltd
(Previously with the National Railway Museum at York)**

'A Railway Life'

Author, Michael Williams Returns to Bentham



Michael who joined us for the LASRUG AGM a few years ago will be returning on **Wednesday, 8th October 2014 at 7.30pm to Bentham Town Hall** to give an insight into his recent book, about the part the railways played during The Second World War, entitled 'Steaming to Victory'.

He will also be talking about his forthcoming book, 'The Trains We Have Lost', which includes a chapter on the Stainmore Line.

The event is being promoted jointly by LASRUG and the Ewcross Historical Society.

10/10/14 - Paul Shackcloth: A Tribute to Tom Lewis - Steam Cameraman 1947-68.

Tom was a member of both the Manchester Locomotive Society and the RCTS. He took his hobby very seriously and his high quality work regularly appeared in the 1950s and 60s issues of 'Trains Illustrated' and The Railway Magazine. The content of the show draws largely on photographs taken in the north of England.

7/11/14 - Steve Armitage: The Great Railway Machine, Vol. 3 - On Northern Rails.

Featuring scenes from the Victorian era to the end of BR steam covering York, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham, Doncaster, Darlington and Hellifield, all restored from original prints, celluloid and glass plate, most images unseen for generations.

5/12/14 - John Cooper Smith: BR Steam from 1962 Onwards.

The name says it all for this show. Well known for his superb images of main-line steam which regularly appear in 'Steam railway Magazine', John has been slowly digitising his images of BR steam taken during 1962-68 to the point where we can now see, for the first time, the results of his time-consuming and painstaking work to produce the best images possible.

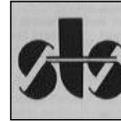
The Railway Correspondence and Travel Society Meetings Programme

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

3/10/14 - Clive Majonnier: The Story of Lizzie (6201 Princess Elizabeth).

7/11/14 - Gordon Davies: My USA Tour 2014.

5/12/14 - AGM followed by a quiz.



The Stephenson Locomotive Society Meetings Programme

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

2/10/14 - Robert Talbot and Dick Smith: Counting Heads, Not Taking Numbers.

Passenger surveys on the Lakes Line and engineering work implications.

6/11/14 - Bernard Bond: The North Lancashire Loop Line.

A history of the "other" route from Blackburn to Burnley.

4/12/14 - David Alison: Recent Railway Rambles.

David's latest travels with something for everyone.

Gargrave Coffee Morning

Our sincere thanks to the Gargrave 'branch' of LASRUG for organising and making such a success of our third Coffee Morning at the Village Hall on Saturday, 21st June.

It was a cheery occasion, busier than last year's and the raffle, with its large number of prizes, went especially well. £200 was raised to assist with our promotion of the Bentham Line and other activities.



CONTACTS FOR LASRUG

President and Press Officer - John Bearpark, 31, Northfield Crescent, Settle, North Yorkshire, BD24 9JP - Tel: 01729 822712 e-mail johnbearpark@gmail.com

Joint Chairman - Richard Rollins, The Eyrie, 29, Waterside, Lancaster, LA1 1AY
Tel: 01524 61090 e-mail richard.rollins3@googlemail.com

Joint Chairman - Hugh Turner, Kirk Syke, High Street, Gargrave, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 3RA - Tel: 01756 748117 e-mail hught@uwclub.net

Meetings Secretary - Kay Craven, 12, South Street, Gargrave, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 3RT - Tel: 01756 749748 e-mail cravenpk@aol.com

General Secretary and Publications Co-ordinator - *To whom all items for the Newsletter should be sent* - Gerald Townson, 5, Wenning Avenue, High Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7LR Tel: 015242 61885 e-mail gerald.townson@btinternet.com

Membership Secretary and Newsletter Editor - Jack Warbrick, Lakeber House, Robin Lane, Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7AF - Tel: 015242 62031 e-mail jsmazeppa@yahoo.co.uk

Treasurer - David Alder, 28, Main Street, Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7HL
Tel: 015242 61650 e-mail david.alder1@btinternet.com

Committee Members - Tim Parker, Stephen Cross, Jim Trotman, Margaret Cowling, Simon Clark, Marion Armstrong, Robert Starling, Gareth Adams, Lin Barrington, Paul Gardner.

Website - LASRUG www.lasrug.btck.co.uk

Books and Films and Railways: Continuing Reflections

In previous newsletters JW presented some welcome musings on Emile Zola's fine 'social-realist' novel from 1890 'La Bête Humaine' - which features an engine driver as anti-hero - and also on John Frankenheimer's magnificent 1964 feature film 'The Train' set in France during the later stages of WW2. These works not only share an empathy with railwaymen and a knowledge of railway operations but contain many insights into the complexity of the human condition both in peace and war. The articles inevitably lead one to consider what else with a railway theme might be recommended for reading or viewing in what is a large field of varying quality. So there follow 'for starters' just a few film tasters related directly to JW's themes - the series could, however, run and run especially if we were to include poetry, music and paintings as well.



The classic film version of Zola's 'La Bête Humaine' was made by Jean Renoir in 1938 featuring Jean Gabin and Simone Simon. It contains some spellbinding footage shot on the footplate of French express steam locomotives in their immediately pre-war heyday - the director took the liberty of moving the story forward in time. Several commentators consider this some of the best railway footage ever shot. A slightly less dramatic but still interesting version of the story, 'Human Desire' - transferring the setting to the early Diesel locomotive era in the USA - was made by Fritz Lang in 1954 starring Glenn Ford and Gloria Grahame. Some of you may also remember a British TV serial production more faithful to the novel and made a few years ago.

Railway movies set in wartime had a running start with the American Civil War silent feature 'The General', (1926) one of Buster Keaton's masterpieces. David Lean of 'Brief Encounter' fame incorporated effective railway sequences into his epics set in the time of WW1 and the Russian Revolution, 'Lawrence of Arabia' and 'Dr Zhivago'. Almost contemporary with 'The Train' is a beautifully filmed and acted wartime railway movie 'Closely Observed Trains' directed by the Czech 'New Wave' director Jiri Menzel in 1966. This bitter sweet coming of age tale about a young railwayman (played by Vaclav Neckar) is largely set in a rural Czech railway station during WW2 and some of its imagery lingers long in the memory. It won an Academy Award. A more all-action type of film, also set in wartime Europe, is Mark Robson's 'Von Ryan's Express' with Frank Sinatra aided and abetted by Trevor Howard (also of 'Brief Encounter' fame) playing the hero as a group of Allied POW's commandeering a German train in Italy and take it to safety in Switzerland. Perhaps one has occasionally to suspend disbelief at some elements of the plot but the technicalities of railway operations play a large part in the film and it is worth a viewing.

More delights in the future if space permits - Jack Warner as an engine driver, maybe, or Will Hay as a stationmaster, or travelling with the Beatles on British Rail in the 1960s? Perhaps members might like to let us know their favourites.

David Alder



FOBS Short-Listed for Community Rail Awards

FOBS members will be heading to Scarborough on 2nd October to attend the ACoRP National Community Rail Awards dinner and ceremony at the famous Spa. They have been short-listed in two categories this year. The shot on the right, taken this year on carnival day, is one of the final eight competing in the 'Essence of Community Rail' photographic category. The winner will be chosen by those attending the awards.



'Platform Entertainers'

© Gerald Townson

For the second year running FOBS has been short-listed in the 'Small Projects Under £500' category. This time it is the annual planter sponsorship scheme, developed in association with the Bloomin' Bentham volunteers, which has reached the final six.

On Monday, 10th July 2014, FOBS gave platform party for the members of We Are Bentham who sponsor the planters. The sparkling wine and excellent buffet were enjoyed by all on a warm summer's evening. It also gave the sponsors an opportunity to view the new summer planting and the recently completed extension to the Heritage Trail.



Photograph courtesy of Jon Brook of Bentham Imaging.

When the boat comes in from the Isle of Man

..... so does the 10.19 Leeds to Heysham Port train service to deposit passengers for the 14.00 sailing to Douglas and to collect those arriving at noon aboard the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's flag ship 'Ben-My-Chree'.



The Ben-My-Chree was built in the Netherlands, launched on 4th April 1998 and entered service later that year on 5th July, Tynwald Day. She can carry up to 636 passengers and 275 cars. The Class144 'Pacer' seen here at Heysham Harbour on 3rd April 2014 was launched into service in 1987 and can carry 122 passengers and 2 bicycles.



© Wendy Smith