

LASRUG

**Lancaster and Skipton
Rail User Group**



Newsletter - September 2015



The mid-afternoon service to Morecambe calls at Wennington, July 2015. A combination of a Class 153 unit and a 2-coach Class 150 DMU. © Gerald Townson

LASRUG

**The Annual General Meeting will be held in the
Lower Hall, Bentham Town Hall
at 7.30pm on Friday, 18th September 2015**

**Guest Speaker: Pete Myers,
Client and Stake Holder Manager at Northern Rail Ltd**

TIMETABLES ON THE LEEDS-MORECAMBE LINE

6. Nationalisation

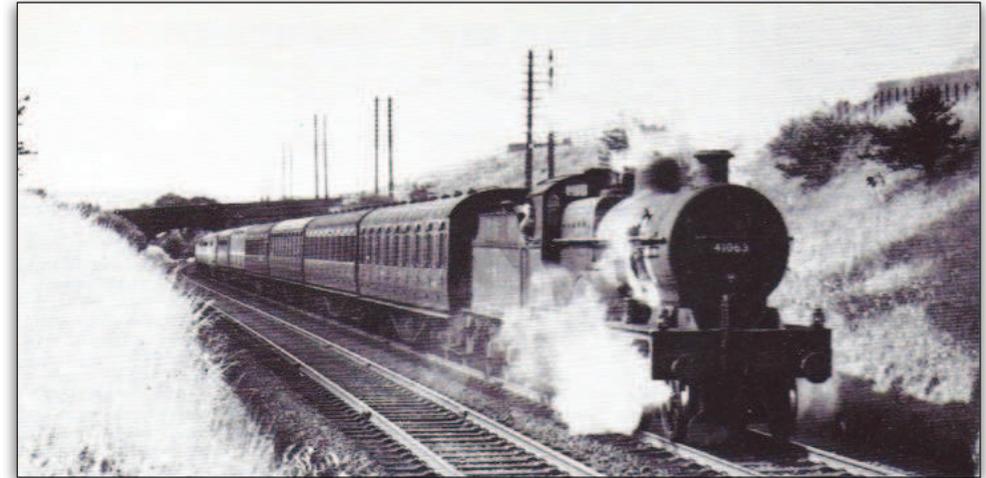
The end of the Second World War saw the Heysham boat trains reappear in the LMS timetable, following the wartime secrecy about sailings to Belfast. The trains ran Tuesdays to Saturdays, and left Heysham for Leeds at 06.00, and Leeds for Heysham at 20.10. Each took just over two hours for the journey, with stops at Keighley, Skipton, Hellifield and Lancaster. (Green Ayre).

The March 1946 Bradshaw shows other train times much as in wartime years - six trains each way on weekdays, two semi-fast and four stoppers, and three trains out and two back on Sundays. Though no longer carrying its title, the "Residential" continued to run. Of interest is the description of the 10.40 train from Leeds as "Express Nottingham-Morecambe". This left Nottingham at 07.08 and called at Trent, Derby, Chesterfield and then Sheffield, where it was attached to another "express", from Birmingham to Leeds; it called at Rotherham, Cudworth, and Normanton before arriving at Leeds at 10.22. Eighteen minutes later (after reversal) it was racing off to call at Apperley Bridge, Keighley, Steeton & Silsden, Kildwick & Cross Hills, Cononley, Skipton, Hellifield and Lancaster, finally arriving at Morecambe at 12.22. Any through passengers would probably have been too weary to enjoy the sea air as they stepped out on to the prom.

On 1 January 1948 the twenty-five year history of the LMS and the other three railway companies came to an end, and British Railways was born. Train services were unaffected, though our line from Leeds as far as to Snaygill (just south of Skipton) fell into the North Eastern Region, and from there was in the London Midland Region. Tangerine signs gradually appeared on the stations between Leeds and Cononley, and maroon signs from Skipton to Morecambe.

The London Midland Region timetable for May to September 1949 shows the same pattern of services, but with extra, faster trains on summer Saturdays. The 1950s saw services steadily increase, especially on summer Saturdays, as the British seaside holiday reached its zenith. On Mondays to Fridays in 1958 there were six stopping trains each way, two limited stop and the 'Residential'. Commuters were better provided for than now; the 06.03 from Leeds called at all stations and arrived in Lancaster at 08.44; evening departures from Lancaster for local stations were less convenient, at 16.29 and 19.05. Into Leeds, the 'Residential' was preceded by a 06.57 all stations train from Lancaster, arriving at 09.10. Returning, the 'Residential' was followed by 17.45 and 20.30 departures from Leeds. The Heysham boat trains left Leeds at 21.25 on weekdays, and Heysham at 05.55.

On Saturdays in the summer peak there were six additional limited-stop trains for holiday-makers. These included a train in each direction linking Leeds with Windermere and Barrow via Carnforth, and one from Morecambe to Sheffield, which took the Holbeck curve avoiding Leeds station. Nottingham enjoyed a train each way, considerably faster than the daily train in 1946; these trains took the direct routes from Nottingham to Chesterfield, and from Chesterfield to Rotherham, as well as the Leeds



A typical train of the period, hauled by one of the workhorses of the line, a Midland Compound 4-4-0, pictured west of Long Preston. *Courtesy of J. E. Porter.*

avoiding line. On Saturday evenings there were two late trains from Morecambe calling at all stations to Skipton, to cater for those returning from dancing in the Central Pier ballroom and other revelries.

In 1959 diesel multiple units took over an enhanced railway timetable in Airedale and Wharfedale, leading to the first ever regular interval service between Leeds and Morecambe. In the same year Ernest Marples became Minister of Transport and in 1961 he appointed Dr. Richard Beeching as Chairman of the British Railways Board.

Much to discuss next time.

John Bearpark

GARGRAVE AND BENTHAM COFFEE MORNINGS

The aim of our coffee mornings is three-fold: to enable members to socialise and air current issues; to raise the profile of the group in the local communities; and to raise money for our work. The two recent occasions were successful on all counts: they were both agreeable, useful and profitable.



At Gargrave £190 was raised, whilst the Bentham event added £280 to LASRUG funds. Our sincere thanks go to all who supported the events.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions fall due on the date of the LASRUG AGM, 18th September. The annual subscription rate will remain at £7 for 2015/16.

Please send your subscription to the Membership Secretary or you may care to renew your membership at the AGM. Your membership renewal form is enclosed.

INTER CITY WEST COAST FRANCHISE RENEWAL

The franchise for operating Inter City West Coast (ICWC) services between London and Scotland on the West Coast Mail line (WCML) is due for renewal in April 2017. The process for letting the new franchise has now started and the Department for Transport Rail Executive, has released a leaflet outlining the process and also referring readers to the website, icwc@railexecutive.gsi.gov.uk

The information from the Rail Executive shows that the ICWC services, currently operated by Virgin Trains (West Coast) extend as far as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and London. In 2014/15 these services carried 34.5 million passengers and travelled 4.3 billion miles - an amazing figure. Over the past year the ICWC services saw 10.8% growth in passenger numbers and this has been reflected by Virgin Trains converting 21 first-class carriages in their 9-car Pendolinos to standard class.

The franchise leaflet shows that 60% of all journeys on ICWC services are for leisure purposes but more local research has shown that north of Preston, this is closer to 90%. Even though this is good news for our tourist economy, the leaflet also calls for the new franchise to enhance journey speed. That may be fine for business people travelling into London but it poses a danger for the Preston - Carlisle stretch of the line if the faster services cut out more stops in order to have quicker end-to-end journeys.

From a Community Rail Partnership point of view, a number of us will be pressing for the new franchise to provide more, rather than fewer, station stops north of Preston. Already there are long gaps in train services between neighbouring stations due to "skip stopping" and all of our stations between Preston and Carlisle serve local communities as well as the very valuable tourist market, which is now worth over £2 billion every year to Cumbria. Growth in passenger numbers and services is great news but the trains need to stop at our stations.

The Rail Executive is calling for continued growth in ICWC services and links that growth to the proposed High Speed 2 (HS2) railway between London and the North via Birmingham. I remain sceptical, especially after the latest and proposed rounds of spending cuts imposed by the Government, that HS2 will get beyond Birmingham. It just may get to Crewe, but I can not envisage HS2 ever extending up the west coast to Scotland. If I were going to build a high speed line to Scotland, I would go up the east coast where there are many more people, in Teesside, Wearside and Tyneside, and far fewer mountains to negotiate.

The current ICWC franchise has already seen rebuilding work at Birmingham New Street station, the redevelopment of Wolverhampton station and new services to Birmingham, Coventry and Shrewsbury. A total of 106 Pendolino carriages has been added to the fleet operated by Virgin Trains and investment is continuing up to the start of the new franchise, with work scheduled for Carlisle station next year.

I have already contributed to the discussions about the new ICWC franchise on behalf of my community rail partnerships and I'm sure that LASRUG and the Bentham Line CRP will be doing so as well. I urge readers to have a look at the website mentioned above and to have a say in the future services on the west coast main line too.

Jim Trotman, Community Rail Partnership Officer, Furness & Lakes Lines.

AGM GUEST - Pete Myers - Client and Stakeholder Manager, West and North Yorkshire and Tyne Tees, for Northern Rail introduces himself

I am your go-to guy when it comes to penetrating the labyrinthine complexity that can be the modern railway.



My job is simple, it is to listen to you and to make it easy for you to do business with us. I hope that I am successful in this; of course I am surrounded by the same red tape as everyone else -we have departments whose sole purpose seems to be to create the stuff - and much of it is necessary because obviously we have a clear duty to operate in a safe and ethical manner. The difference is my default setting should be to say 'yes' then to work out how we will do a thing. Not everyone is the same!

I am 53 years old and have worked on the railway since 1992, after a career in the retail motor trade. I joined the then British Rail as a stopgap and here I am 23 years later still enjoying what I do.

The railway is important, and increasingly so. Hospitals, schools etc are more important, but not much. As this little island gets busier and busier the road network simply can't cope. I don't think that it is a matter of pollution anymore; there simply isn't space for all of the cars.

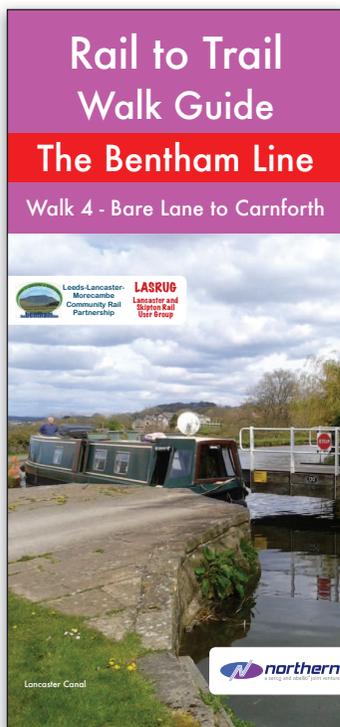
This means what we do in the rail industry drives the economy. People live further away from where they work, and as house prices in the south east reach astronomic proportions, so business will need to move to where there is a ready workforce. It is our job to facilitate this and to make it happen.

Community Rail is a massive part of what I do, I have six CRPs to look after and they are all great in their own way, but the Bentham Line stands out for me, not just because it spans one of the most beautiful parts of our country, nor for the fact that it takes people to some pretty important destinations; for me it is the passion of the local population (not least the CRP's Chairman himself) that makes it special, and so deserving of a much better timetable.

Well that's me. I'm happy to help if I can; I can't be everywhere but I hope that I am here for you. When you need me.

WALKING THE WALK: Rail to Trail - Walk 4

Impressions of our Membership Secretary



When I got off the 10.17 from Leeds at Bare Lane (to test walk Walk No.4 of the new Rail to Trail station to station walks) on one of those lovely days in May, uppermost in my mind the thought that I must simply check the accuracy of the directions laid down by Stuart Ballard, the very experienced walker who has designed all the walks. But business soon became a pleasure.

At Bare one touches the rural edge of Morecambe, and I was quickly free of streets and onto paths through sun-dappled tunnels of overarching trees skirting the pleasures of Happy Mount Park and the green expanses of Morecambe golf club. After ducking under the west coast main line near fields where peewits were nesting, I was soon on the towpath of the Lancaster Canal walking which would constitute the greater part of the trek. The canal is especially popular with dog walkers and anglers, but I hadn't expected quite so many cyclists to appear suddenly and silently behind me, insisting I get out of the way at the preemptory ring of a bell or be tipped into the still waters of the canal. This was the only minor hazard on a walk of narrow boats, mating mallards, birdsong, long vistas, and people enjoying the beautiful spring weather.

This stretch of the canal is ideal for the walker as it is set for the most part high above the land to its west, affording wonderful views over Morecambe Bay and the Lakeland hills. These vistas can be enjoyed through Hest Bank past Bolton-le-Sands and almost to Carnforth.

Hest Bank, a village that grew as a dormitory addition to Morecambe for the wealthy retiree and the businessmen of Leeds and Bradford, who, in steam days, commuted on the so-called 'residential' trains from Morecambe, has no shortage of fine houses. Many of the gardens of those built more recently by the canal reach indulgently right down to the water's edge. At one of these just ahead of me people appeared to be sunning themselves on a canal-side patio; which seemed a bit early in the year. Closer inspection revealed that these were mannikins and that the garden had several other models of both humans and animals.

Progress on a canal walk is measured in bridges and you begin to count them off - almost like trainspotting! The humanoids were just past bridge No.118 and it was by No.118 also that I heard a blackcap in spite of the west coast main line trains being always in earshot at this point.

Bridge 120 is a swing bridge, and here I fell into conversation with an experienced narrowboat owner, who was negotiating it with his boat, the Dandy. He turned out to be the town crier of Lytham St. Annes and he explained to me - in good clear tones! - the way things were developing re boating on the canal. In his view, there were too many hired leisure craft with their weekend sailors 'gongoozling' - a new word for my vocabulary - and spoiling the 'proper' use of the canal for the regular 'professional' boat owners.

Just before bridge 121 I noticed a gate backing onto the towpath bearing the legend: 'No Entry. Wild Geordie on the loose!' Near bridge 122 I paused to watch a swan building its nest alongside the far canal bank. I was now passing the ancient village of Bolton-le-Sands and looking down on its newer settlements to the west. The name of the Packet Boat Inn (recently closed) reminds you that this canal was built to transport goods, (originally coal northwards and limestone southwards), and in due course people. A short distance further on, as you look westwards, you get a sudden snapshot of the history of transport. Next to the canal is the A6 road, adjacent to that the west coast main line and beyond the sea in Morecambe Bay: all four modes of transportation that in, say, the 1840s would have been in busy competition.

Not much seemed to be biting for the anglers I spoke to on this afternoon; neither the roach nor the tench nor the occasional pike that they might expect. In spite of the increasing noise from the traffic on the A6 there birdsong was still prominently audible, not least from blackbirds in profusion. Between bridges 123 and 125, where wild arum skirts the path, I heard dunnocks and, near some very nice mixed woodland, a warbler. At the entrance to Carnforth a mixed herd of cattle was peacefully drinking from the water of the canal in what seemed a very painterly scene. You might easily turn this walk into the sort of nature walk we used to be taken on by our parents. I'm sure it would appeal to children, and there will be different things to see in each season.

There was lots of activity at the canal basin at Carnforth, where I resisted the temptation of the Canal Turn pub and headed for tea and a toasted teacake in a cafe in the town run by a very obliging Austrian lady, who, with a little warning, will do you a real Wiener Schnitzel. A satisfying end to a wonderful two hours with time to spare before the 16.32 from Carnforth. Did I enjoy it? As my town crier friend would say 'O Yez!'



JSW

LAUNCH WALKS

Early July, saw the beginning of the promotion of the new 'Rail to Trail' collection of walks between neighbouring stations on the line, written by Stuart Ballard. Individual leaflets for the walks have been produced, and branded dispensers are beginning to be installed at stations on the line. The walks can be downloaded from the Bentham Line website (leedslancastermorecambecrp.co.uk), and are also being published in the Dales Life section of the Craven Herald.

Below left: Adjacent to the new Rail to Trail dispenser at Morecambe at the start of Walk 3.

Below right: Members of the Bentham Walking Group and LASRUG start out on Walk 6 from Wennington to Bentham.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF BENTHAM - 29th July 2015

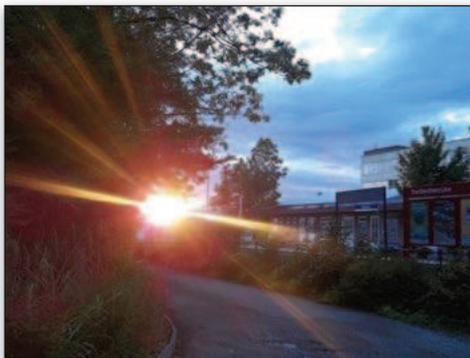
The Friends of Bentham Station (FOBS) had been looking for a way to create two large art panels for the station footbridge on the theme 'A Postcard from Bentham'. This quickly developed into the 'A Day in the Life of Bentham' photographic competition, with the assistance of the Bentham News and Bentham Imaging. The project was funded by Champion Bowland, the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (Small Grants Fund) and We Are Bentham.

240 entries were received from which the judges selected the 'Final 40', for the exhibition and the art panels, and the winners. FOBS now has a great resource for the future and a splendid photographic record of Bentham in 2015.



Left: A week-long exhibition of the 'Final 40' was held in late August at the Bentham Imaging Studio.

Right: The winning photograph, in the junior category was 'Railway Sunset' taken by Howard Hill.



EVENTS

Carnforth Station Heritage Centre

Monthly railway film nights will take place on the 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

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 Bentham, on Saturday, 24th October 2015. Telephone 01524 735165 for details and bookings.

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.

1/10/15 - Carlisle Bridge and all that: David Bousfield

The history of railways in the Lancaster area up to 1860 and routes north.

5/11/15 - Preserved Railways in South America: Martin Elson

Railway preservation in Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador.

3/12/15 - Silloth - The Holiday Line: Brian Irwin

The line and station 'then and now', plus Port Carlisle.

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.

2/10/15 - Lines in Cumbria and Lancashire in the last 10 years of steam:

Noel Machell

6/11/15 - Narrow gauge Railways and industrial locomotives: Tom Heavyside

4/12/15 - Annual Picture Quiz and AGM: John Broughton

Friends of Hellifield Station - Slide and Film Shows

Shows are held on Friday evenings at 7.30pm at Hellifield Station Tea Room. Arrive early! Further details from Mike Taylor. Telephone: 01282 436653. Admission is £4.00, including tea and biscuits at half time.

16/10/15 - British Rail Steam 1960-68 : John Whiteley

20/11/15 - From the Archives of W. Hubert Foster: Vic Drake

MICHAEL WILLIAMS WRITES ABOUT HIS BENTHAM LINE VISIT

Michael recently travelled up from London to join our Secretary for a summer journey on the line. As strong supporter of our community approach to developing the line, Michael has kindly written an article about his day on one of his favourite scenic routes and the people he encountered.

The article can be viewed in his blog on his website: michaelwennwilliams.co.uk

STATIONS WE HAVE LOST - No.3 Low Bentham and Wray

We know that there was a station at Low Bentham, which appeared in 1849 and disappeared in 1853. What form it took we do not know but we know that it was situated on the site of the present public car park. After the station closed the site continued to be a goods yard until 1964 and after that was the local coal yard until the 1990s. It was, however, only a passenger stop by default, when late-Saturday-night revellers from Morecambe would pull the communication cord there in order to be able to jump off and avoid having to walk back the mile and a half from High Bentham, the train's official stop.



There is a well established folk memory in Wray, between Wennington and Hornby, of a station there. According to Donald Binns in his book 'The "Little" North Western' there was a temporary station there in the period 1849-1850, in other words during the period of construction of the railway, but it does not feature in the early timetables. The "Little" NWR crossing keeper's house in the photograph above may have been the building used, but no one seems certain. However, as in the case of the lost Lune valley stations our thoughts inevitably turn to how useful such additional stops might be today.

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A VISIT TO KUTNA HORA by our Co-Chairman

Whilst visiting Prague with my wife for a concert I decided it would be an interesting experience to take a ride on the Czech railways.

We decided on Kutna Hora, a small city in Central Bohemia - population 20,000 about two thirds the size of Kendal - situated about 50 miles from Prague.

The city is a UNESCO Heritage site being a former silver mining area and home to King Wenceslas's mint and some historic churches.

We purchased tickets at the main Prague station the day before travelling - approximately £5 return each, not bad for a 50-mile, one-hour journey each way and not tied to specific trains. Kutna Hora junction station was served by the trains to Brno which seemed to have a regular hourly service. The stock consisted of an electric locomotive hauling old-fashioned heavy coaching stock with steps to board and the old six-seat compartments common in England many years ago. The journey was largely across flat agricultural land with a few stops at major stations.

I had been a little concerned that only a short time was allowed for the connection to the branch train at the junction but our train was on time and the little yellow branch train pulled out of a siding into a nearby platform immediately, and was loaded and away in 2 to 3 minutes. To my surprise the train had to reverse in a siding to access the single track branch to Kutna Hora town. This manoeuvre is repeated with every arrival and departure on the branch. The trip took about 14 minutes with one intermediate stop. The service to Kutna Hora seems to connect with almost all trains stopping at the junction. The single track line is shown on the map as continuing to Zruc, but our train terminated at Kutna Hora town and we saw no through trains on our visit, although the track is still in place.

Although the town is smaller than Kendal, and the station looked a little dilapidated it boasted a station building with waiting room, staffed booking office, and even a toilet (chargeable) none Kendal a similar UK tourist town has. (*Though Skipton, of comparable size, has. Ed.*) The train stopped on a track some way from the platform but with the lower continental platforms it was easy to climb down from the train and cross an intermediate (hopefully unused) track to access the station platform. (*And our Secretary worries about the barrow crossing at Giggleswick! Ed.*)

The area of Kutna Hora near the station appeared run down but the tourist area in the centre was well maintained although very quiet at the time we visited (February) and we were the only diners in the restaurant we chose for lunch.

On our return journey the local train was again standing one track away from the platform. Just after our arrival at Kutna Hora junction another branch train pulled in heading for Kolin, a station on the main line east out of Prague. This train consisted of an electric locomotive hauling one heavy coach similar to our outward journey and behind that one double decker coach. We took this stopping train to Kolin as it was on the route back to Prague.



At Kolin the next Prague train was an international train with main-line electric locomotive and rolling stock with a similar internal layout to the Virgin mainline stock with announcements and illuminated signage and no stops on the return to Prague.

As Wallace would say 'A grand day out.'

Richard Rollins

Improved Dales Railcard Winter Offer 2015/16 from Northern Rail

Availability: Available for a longer period and can be used on *any* train throughout the offer period between Morecambe and Leeds.

Excluded Dates: Far fewer dates excluded: only December weekends and the 2016 spring half term week.

Flat Fare: Adult and child fares reduced by 19%, (compared to last year's price), to £7 and £3.50 for journeys on the Bentham Line.



Save

with a
Dales Railcard

Only **£13**
for 12 months



northernrail.org

DALES RAILCARD
WINTER OFFER 2015/16

Great savings for Dales Railcard Holders with a £7 flat fare day return ticket on the Bentham Line and a £9 ticket on the Settle-Carlisle Line. Up to four children can accompany the card holder for £3.50 / £4.50 each.

Available during the following period;
 Sunday, 1st November 2015 to Saturday, 19th March 2016

Excluding: Saturday 5th/12th/19th and Sunday 6th/13th/20th
 December 2015 and 13th to 20th February 2016

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 Hellfield - Blackburn Line.

Valid on any train except 05.50 Carlisle to Leeds service
 Monday to Friday. Normal Dales Railcard conditions apply.

Pick up a Dales Railcard leaflet at Carnforth, Bentham, Hellfield, Skipton, or Settle Station.
 You can purchase a Dales Railcard at Carnforth, Settle or Skipton Station, by post, or via the Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company on-line shop, www.scrdc.co.uk