



Newsletter - December 2017



A recent regular visitor to lines across the North, the rail-head cleaning train speeds through Bentham on the morning of 17th November 2017 top-and-tailed by two, not so clean, Class 66 locomotives, with 66 302 leading for this leg of its long journey. © *Simon Clarke*

In this Christmas issue we encounter the author of 'A Christmas Carol' facing up not to ghosts but to railways and Lewis Carroll, a railway enthusiast, looking at railway operation through a mirror. We are reminded of a ghost of a line that might well come back to life. We continue our stories concerning dementia-friendliness and women in railways. And we conclude our long survey of timetables on the Leeds-Morecambe Line.

The committee of LASRUG wish you all the Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for 2018.



Photograph courtesy of Alison Murray.

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! DID YOU SAY 97?

Bentham station had its busiest day, in a very long time on Saturday, 14th October. Ninety-seven passengers boarded the 11:39 service to Heysham Port to attend the now annual Lancaster Music Festival.

The all-day festival, which takes place at venues throughout the city, has proved to be increasingly popular with Benthamers for the past few years. However, this was by far the biggest number to have travelled by train to the event.

The music (and beer lovers) returned in good humour, after a good day out on the last train at 19:25 and continued their musical adventures in the local hostelrys.

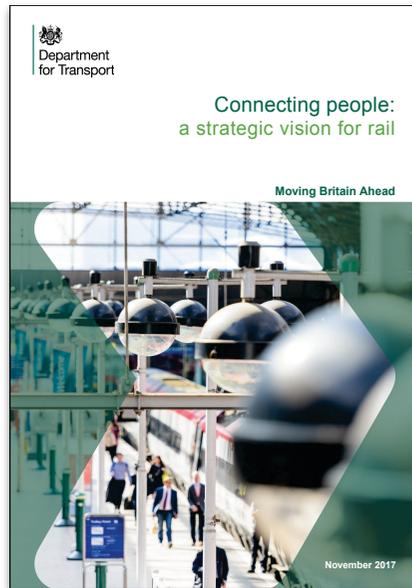
It is worth noting that, with the introduction of the enhanced timetable scheduled for May 2018, they will be able to enjoy the festival for over two hours longer next October.

STRATEGIC VISION FOR RAIL

On 29th November, the Transport Secretary, Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling, set out a new vision for our railways, including plans to end the operational divide between track and train and an evolution of the franchising system. The sweeping proposals are aimed at creating joined up teams running track and train and at making the railway more reliable for passengers.

The Strategic Vision for Rail sets out four main aims:

- the next phase for rail with a new way of operating train and track - bringing them closer together,
- creating a railway fit for the 21st century and the huge volumes of passengers it now carries,



- government to explore opportunities to increase railway capacity to drive economic and housing growth,
- modernising the railway by bringing forward digital technologies to dramatically improve services for passengers.

The vision commits to exploring opportunities to restoring capacity lost under the Beeching and British Rail cuts in the 1960s and 1970s

Also included in the vision is a new and stronger role for Community Rail, which currently has its own strategy consultation underway. (See page 18).

For full details visit: www.gov.uk/government/news/strategic-vision-for-rail

On the same day the consultation on 'The Future of the Great Western Franchise' and Invitations to Tender for the South Eastern franchise were also launched by the Secretary.

BICYCLES, FOX FURS AND BUNCHES OF LEAVES

On the 18th October members of LASRUG came together with members of the Ewecross Historical Society in Bentham Town Hall to enjoy a slide show with a difference.

The speaker was Simon Clarke, Community Rail Lancashire's Development Officer, who spoke about his great grandfather, John Robinson, a pioneer in Carlisle in the field of bicycles at the turn of the last century. He was also an enthusiastic photographer, who shot subjects of all kinds in the wider area around Carlisle from the 1880s to the 1920s. Simon brought along the magic lantern through which the 3" sq. glass slides would have been originally shown, though he projected them in a modern digital form to view them better. The photographs gave an exquisite taste of the less hectic life of the world before the First World War. The programme was enjoyed by members of both groups present.



One of the slides - the Port Carlisle Dandy which is now in the National Railway Museum at York. Courtesy of Simon Clarke.

CHARLES DICKENS AND THE RAILWAYS

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) lived at a time of the greatest transport revolution Britain and, in due course, the world had ever seen - the development of railways. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that he, foremost social observer and communicator that he was, was drawn to introduce them into his fiction (and non-fiction), remarking on both their positive and negative aspects.

He wasn't the only writer to do so. As early as 1832 railways appear in George Eliot's novel 'Middlemarch' as intrusive and in Mrs Gaskell's 'North and South' (1855) as useful but dangerous. But no great writer's imagination has been stirred by railways quite like his. The railways played a significant role in his life – increasingly with all his journeyings – and in his work. The railway features in a number of short stories and essays, but nowhere more extensively than in his great novel 'Dombey and Son' (1846-48), created at the height of the Victorian railway boom.

Dickens observed the massive construction projects that were necessary to bring the railway into the capital and that transformed vast areas, especially the outlying districts of London where property and land could be bought and developed cheaply. In 'Dombey and Son' he creates a fictional location in Camden Town which he calls Stagg's Garden, an area through which the London and Birmingham Railway was built in the 1830s. The impact of the railway construction, which Dickens compares to 'the first shock of a great earthquake' is graphically conveyed in Chapter VI of the novel:

"Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. Here a chaos of carts, overturned and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the bottom of a steep unnatural hill; there, confused treasures of iron soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable; Babel towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; carcasses of ragged tenements and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods, straddling above nothing."

All this, he says, 'changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood' which was 'shy to own the Railroad'. The chaos and mess and deprivation that this cataclysmic change brought, especially to the poorer urban population, was deeply felt by Dickens. But he was also fascinated by the new world that all this constructional chaos brought into being as the Stagg's Gardens of Britain developed:

"There were railway patterns in its drapers' shops, and railway journals in the windows of its newsmen. There were railway hotels, coffee-houses, lodging-houses, boarding-houses; railway plans, maps, views, wrappers, bottles, sandwich-boxes and timetables; railway hackney-coach and cab-stands; railway omnibuses, railway streets and buildings, railway hangers-on and parasites and flatterers out of all calculation. There was even railway time observed in clocks as if the sun itself had given in."

Dickens was not blind to the progress the railways represented: business opportunities for the middle class and new jobs for the working class. Mr Toodle in 'Dombey and Son' works his way up from being a miner to a construction worker and then a loco stoker, finally learning to read from his children who are receiving a proper education.

However, Dickens was also aware of the dangers of the new technology. Railway accidents received plenty of press coverage. Indeed the villain of 'Dombey and Son', Mr Carker, meets his end under the wheels of an express train:

"(Carker) was beaten down, caught up, and whirled away upon a jagged mill, that spun him round and round, and struck him limb from limb, and licked his stream of life up with its fiery heat and cast his mutilated fragments in the air."

Dickens became even more acutely aware of the dangers of rail travel when he was personally involved in a railway accident. On 9th June 1865 he was returning from France on the boat train when it was derailed near Staplehurst in Kent. Ten people were killed and over 40 injured. The track was being repaired but the workmen had not signalled that there was a 42' long gap over a bridge. The driver spotted this too late and the engine and the first part of the train plunged off the bridge into the river bed below. The carriage Dickens was in was left hanging in the air at a steep angle.



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Having rescued himself, Dickens set about helping his fellow passengers, filling his top hat with water and using his flask of brandy to bring what aid and comfort he could to the injured. This he did for three hours and only then did he remember that he had left the manuscript of the latest instalment of his new novel 'Our Mutual Friend' in the carriage and returned to the wreck to retrieve it. He suffered anxieties about train travel for years after that incident.

Dickens also wrote about railways in his journalism. In the August 1851 edition of



‘Household Words’, for example, he reported the discomfort of sitting in a crowded boat train at London Bridge station under the station’s glass canopy on a hot day as being “forced like a cucumber or a melon or a pineapple”.

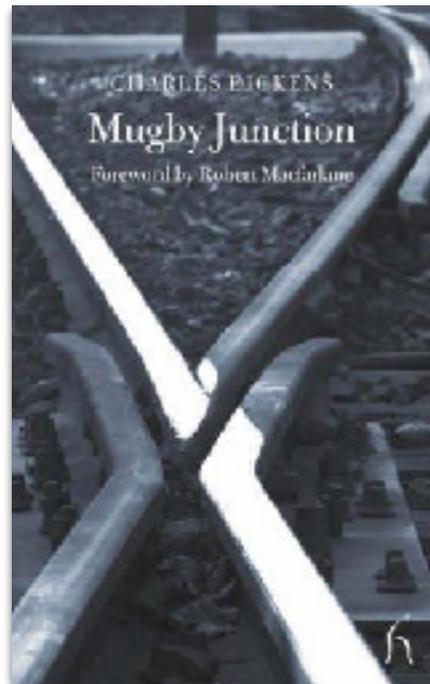
In the 1866 Christmas number of ‘All The Year Round’ Dickens edited a series of stories focusing on a fictional



Mugby Junction, including five branch line stories, the first of which is that great ghost story ‘The Signalman’, which many will remember from the vivid short TV film made in 1976 with Denholm Elliott as the haunted signalman. The tragic outcome must surely have had its origin in Dickens personal experience at Staplehurst: life and art interwoven.

‘Mugby Junction’ is an intriguing collection of tales ranging from horror to realistic portrayal of life around a bustling Victorian railway station. It was reprinted complete in Hesperus classics in 2005 for the first time since 1866.

JSW



SELRAP - Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership

As a campaign group working to re-open the Colne to Skipton Line since 2001 the challenge has been to get MPs, the railway industry, councils and businesses to support the scheme and work together. Over the last few years this has been beginning to happen with a series of Output Definition Group meetings taking place with key agencies including SELRAP and the resultant report from its findings being approved by Lancashire County Council. However, the executive committee of SELRAP felt it was crucial that at this stage a meeting be hosted at Westminster to ‘Explore options for fast-tracking the reopening of the Colne-Skipton railway line’, as there was now wide ranging acceptance that this line should be built.

This meeting was hosted jointly by John Grogan, MP for Keighley, and Andrew Stephenson, MP for Pendle, at Portcullis House on the 1st November 2017. MPs for Hyndburn and Skipton and Ripon together with the Parliamentary Private Secretary of the MP for Burnley attended as did representatives from Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Council. West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Transport for the North, Northern and Network Rail also took part, and representatives from Drax Power, Peel Ports, Arup and Skipton Building Society were there too. This very positive one hour meeting was chaired by Peter Bryson from SELRAP. There was broad support from all who were involved and even after the meeting attendees continued to discuss the project.

Since that meeting there has been excellent media coverage in The Yorkshire Post, Telegraph and Argus, Keighley News, Craven Herald and the Nelson Leader/Colne Times series of newspapers.

This line was included in a Channel 4 ‘Dispatches’ programme entitled ‘Trouble on Trains’ on the 6th November and on Sunday 19th it featured on the ITV Calendar News with Chris Grayling MP, Minister for Transport, saying this re-opening was at the top of his list. The Rail Minister, Paul Maynard MP, has also been very supportive of the scheme.

This reinstatement has cross-party support and the Labour Party has now given its backing to this low cost (in rail terms) project which would bring social and economic benefits to the area and really improve connectivity across the North of England. This would be good news for commuters but also potentially for freight by easing congestion on the rail network and on the roads.

Project Development Team meetings continue to be held every month and it is hoped the next step would be funding for a feasibility study after which it could then be included in the Transport for the North strategic transport plan 2018.

For more information please visit our website: www.selrap.org.uk or social media: facebook.com/reopenskiptontocolne and twitter.com/skiptontocolne

Jane Wood
SELRAP Media Officer



One of the stations on the Skipton-Colne line, Earby, in Midland Railway days.

LASRUG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

Attendance at the LASRUG AGM on Friday 15th September in Bentham Town Hall was disappointingly low, but those who attended were able to hear Richard Isaac, Northern's Community and Sustainability Manager (East), speaking about working in the rail industry.

Having moved recently into the rail industry after 20 years in environmental consultancy working for Bradford City Council, he admitted that he was the new kid on the block but was enjoying the challenge. His principal task, he said, was to get communities closer to the railways serving them especially by fostering station adoption groups and he is working closely with the Leeds-Morecambe CRP, LASRUG, the Aire Valley RUG and FOBS to that end. He spoke warmly of the new initiative to develop the Bentham Line as the first dementia-friendly line as a fine example of that collaboration.

He acknowledged the co-operation and help he had received from such groups as ours in this first year of his tenancy, not least from LASRUG Secretary and Chairman of the CRP and FOBS, Gerald Townson. He also mentioned Northern's project to get 16-24-year-olds into apprenticeships in the industry and looked forward to Northern's projected improvements of the next few years.

The Co-Chairman delivered his Annual Report, a copy of which is included with this newsletter. The Treasurer's statement was of a healthy financial situation enabling us to continue with our intended projects for the coming year. The Membership Secretary reported a steady membership with new members joining from different parts of the country.

The meeting ended with general discussion among the members. Member Jim Munday was full of praise for our Newsletter, which he felt was a very good read. It was great to hear that, Jim. Thanks.

LOCAL RAILWAY SOCIETIES' EVENTS

The Stephenson Locomotive Society



Meetings are held on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the St. John Ambulance Centre, off Sandes Avenue, Kendal, LA9 4LL. Chairman, Philip Heyes. Telephone: 01539 725658. Email: Jphilipheyes@aol.com or look on the website: www.stephensonloco.org.uk

4/1/18 - Oxenholme: John Bateson

1/2/18 - How the General Strike was broken: Dr. Robin Smith

1/3/18 - Yorkshire Rail: Peter Fitton

The Railway Correspondence and Travel Society



Meetings are held on Fridays at 7.30pm at the Royal Station Hotel, Market Street, Carnforth, LA5 9BT. Secretary, Alan Sattenstall. Telephone: 01524 34840. Website: www.rcts.org.uk

5/1/18 - Steam and Diesel in the Northern Fells:

2/2/18 - Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway: Peter van Zeller

2/3/18 - The Splendid Years of BR Steam 1958-62: John Sloane

WOMEN IN RAILWAYS - Part 3: Women in Community Rail

'Achieving Change Together'

Our feature on Women in Railways (June and September 2017) ended positively and optimistically. A further positive sign of the increased presence of women within or in association with the railway industry was the formation in 2016 of Women in Community Rail.

Women have only gradually (but steadily and increasingly) moved into traditional jobs within the rail industry; within community rail, a new 'industry' so to speak, they have not had to face old prejudices but have fitted readily into what were in effect new jobs and careers.

Since community rail is, as its name suggests, concerned with connecting railways to their communities and women have traditionally played a leading role in community affairs, many are able to slot into the new roles required of them congenially and naturally.

WiCR was launched in July 2016 with the aim of promoting both women and community rail in a way which would better reflect the communities served by local railways and encourage women and younger people to enter the community rail 'business'.

In this area the Bentham Line was yet again ahead of the field when it appointed the youngest Community Rail Partnership Officer in the country. Catherine Huddleston, (right), was appointed in September 2015 and took to the job like a duck to water. Her personable, easy manner together with computer wizardry and a degree in marketing make her an ideal person to 'sell' the Bentham Line's aims to both the rail industry and its communities.

WiCR is not exclusively open to women but to anyone who is in accord with its aims. It is supported by Northern, GWR, Merseyrail, TransPennine Express, Virgin Trains and Scotrail.

Catherine with Rod Tickner (LMCRP) and Ian Davis of ACoRP at Lancaster station promoting the Bentham Line.



Women in Community Rail
Achieving Change Together



TIMETABLES ON THE LEEDS-MORECAMBE LINE

10: From 1998: Privatisation

In the late 1980s, British Rail created five business sectors. Passenger services were split between (1) Inter City, which was fully self-supporting – indeed profitable; (2) Provincial – which required financial support, usually termed disparagingly “subsidy”; (3) London and South East. Then in 1998 came privatisation. It was the hope of the BR Chairman, Bob Reid, that each sector would be privatised as it stood. However, BR’s views were ignored, and passenger services were instead fragmented into over twenty independent “franchises.” The highly successful Inter City business, embracing all the main lines out of London and Cross Country, was separated into independent units, and its well-established reputation and brand name discarded.



Among Provincial’s new sub-divisions was Regional Railways North East (RRNE), to which the Leeds-Morecambe and Settle-Carlisle lines belonged. The Passenger Service Requirement stipulated the level of service that should be operated, and the times of first and last trains each day. The existing timetable was its basis, and the effect was to set train times in stone. Changes and improvements, other than minor adjustments, became very difficult to bring about.

The RRNE franchise was awarded to Merseyside Travel Ltd (MTL); their management team retained many of the former BR people we had known and with whom we had worked well, like Andy Paterson and Nicola Forsdyke. The company traded under the name ‘Northern Spirit’. After MTL ran into financial difficulties, in 2001 it was succeeded as Train Operator by Arriva Trains Northern. For the next franchise competition in 2004, the Regional Railways North East and North West units were combined, but the TransPennine Express services became a separate franchise. All the trains between Lancaster and Morecambe were now under one operator. Serco and Abellio (Dutch Railways) won the new Northern franchise jointly. In 2014 the winner was again Arriva – now owned by the German national railways (DB).

Throughout this period, the weekday train service has continued to be five trains each way, with only slight variations in timings (except as noted below):

Westbound: 5-50 SX Skipton-Lancaster/5-50 SO Leeds-Lancaster; 8-19, 10-19, 14-19. 16-45 Leeds-Morecambe.

Eastbound: 7-06 SX/8-05 SO Lancaster-Leeds; 10-21, 12-49 Morecambe-Leeds, 16-45 SX Morecambe-Skipton/SO Morecambe- Leeds; 19-07 Morecambe-Leeds.

Readers will recognise that, twenty years on, this is still the basic timetable. The only significant changes have been:

(1) The running from May 2011 of the 10-19 from Leeds, and its return, to and from Heysham, as the Isle of Man boat train, which previously operated from and to Preston.

(2) The “tea-time” train from Morecambe today leaves earlier, at 16-19, but continues through to Leeds each day. In 2008 Northern planned to start it from Lancaster at 18-03 on Mondays to Fridays, with a connection leaving Morecambe at 17-15. Protests from LASRUG and the CRP secured the present timings; this saved the Morecambe link by running the train direct from Bare Lane to Carnforth via the Hest Bank North Curve, so expediting its return to Leeds for the evening peak. However, a well-used train from Lancaster at 17-00 was now lost: and offered in its place was a connection at Carnforth from the 16-15 train from Lancaster to Barrow. This was a highly unreliable TPE train from Manchester, and the connection was frequently missed.

LASRUG committee member Stephen Cross recorded passenger numbers from Lancaster and Carnforth before and after the change. The fall in numbers was immediate, and, understandably, has never recovered. A few years later the TPE timetable changed and the connection at Carnforth disappeared. The 16-19 SX from Morecambe was now advertised as starting at Lancaster at 16-04 – a suggestion we had made at the outset. The Saturday train also moved to depart at 16-19 from Morecambe in 2008, continuing to be routed via Lancaster.

An earlier use of the Hest Bank north curve had caused similar problems. Because of congestion on the main line from Carnforth to Lancaster, for a period the 8-19 train from Leeds was diverted to Morecambe this way, with a connection from Carnforth to Lancaster on a train from Barrow to Manchester Airport. The problem this time lay with the train from Leeds. It was worked by a unit that had come into Leeds in the morning peak from Halifax, and was late leaving Leeds most days. The long signalling section between Settle Junction and Carnforth (the longest in the country) meant that the signaller at Carnforth could not tell where the Leeds train was until it approached his signal at the top of the curve before the station. As a result, if the Barrow train arrived first, which it often did, it was sent straight into the station. Passengers on the Leeds train held at the



signal would see their connection come and go (and with it their flight from Manchester or train from Lancaster.) Network Rail (who operate the signalling) and Northern were sympathetic, and I felt somewhat honoured when, after my campaign to correct this, one e-mail referred to “John Bearpark’s train.” Eventually “my” train reverted to running via Lancaster. By then a change in diagrams at Leeds meant that it was usually on time.

In 2000, the government introduced a national “Rail Passenger Partnership” scheme. This offered funding for additional trains for a 3-year trial period. The Development Group, now embracing both the Leeds-Morecambe and Settle-Carlisle lines, put in a huge amount of work to submit a bid for three extra weekday trains each way. The official response was at first encouraging, and the Craven Herald carried the news of the forthcoming extra trains.



Soon after, the scheme was suddenly terminated, and that was that.

It was the Community Rail movement, and the formation of our own Community Rail Partnership, that led the way to timetable improvements being written into the present franchise.

From 1998, on Sundays between Easter and mid-September trains ran from Leeds to Morecambe at 8-30, 10-30, 15-00 and 16-53, returning at 12-25, 14-36, 17-55 and 20-11. During the “winter” months only the last two trains each way operated. In 2013 the CRP secured the running of the full four-train timetable all the year round – the only, but very welcome, major improvement to the timetable in twenty years.

However, a new chapter in our timetable story is due to open this coming May. We hope to have full details in our March Newsletter.

John Bearpark

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2018

LASRUG Coffee Mornings - All Saturdays from 10 to 11:30am
February 24th in the Lower Hall at Bentham Town Hall,
June 23rd at Gargrave Village Hall and
August 18th in the Upper Hall at Bentham Town Hall

Friends of Bentham Station (FOBS) Coffee Morning
Saturday 27th January in the Upper Hall at Bentham Town Hall.

The 2018 LASRUG AGM will be held in the Lower Hall of Bentham Town Hall at 7:30pm on Friday 21st September.



NEWS IN BRIEF

May 2018 Timetable

Northern has now submitted its proposed timetable to Network Rail for final consideration. This proposed timetable is the result of extensive discussions between Northern’s timetabling team and the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership. LASRUG as a member of the CRP has, of course, made a keen and positive contribution to this.

Electrification

Work has begun on the electrification of the Preston to Blackpool North line. The line will be closed until 25th March. (See: northernrailway.co.uk/news/improvement). Blackpool South will re-open on 29th January 2018. (See also page 16.) Work on the electrification between Manchester Victoria and Bolton and Preston continues in readiness for the May 2018 timetable.

Rolling stock cascades

The cause of the inability of Northern to introduce its new timetable until May 2018 has been the delays and cancellation in electrification programmes in the south which would release the extra rolling stock required for the additional trains.

New Stations

Apperley Bridge, Kirkstall Forge and Low Moor are all open and running successfully. Kirkstall Forge is a rare example of a station built with all its infrastructure before the community it will serve. Horse before the cart for once! The future of the hoped-for station at Crosshills hangs in the balance.

Engineering

We understand that engineering work will take place between Skipton and Leeds on Sundays in the New Year, but, as yet, no details are available.

Strikes

The RMT union is threatening strikes on the Virgin West Coast main line on 15th and 26th December and on the 5th, 8th, 26th and 29th January over pay and conditions.

The Ordsall Chord

This great new project between Salford Central and Deansgate in Manchester involving the construction of an asymmetrical bridge, the world’s first, will link Manchester



Courtesy Mathew Nichol

Victoria and the Calder Valley lines with Manchester Oxford Road, Piccadilly and the Airport and is a part of the Rail North / GMITA rail improvement plan. The engineering work is now complete and the chord is due to become operational on 10th December. It will mean that numerous timetable opportunities will now open up.

THE ROLE OF THE GUARD: A TAILPIECE OR TALEPIECE

Since September's article on the continuing dispute between the RMT and Arriva Rail North there has been further industrial action and at the time of writing there is still no sign of a speedy end to the disagreement. The train operating company continues to repeat that conductor jobs are secure until the end of the franchise, whilst the trade union maintains that the employer - and the Department for Transport - is still not addressing its concerns about train safety and staff training adequately.

Lewis Carroll might well, had he still been around, have expressed an idiosyncratic view on the matter. He had, however, in 'Through the Looking Glass' (1871) penned an amusing piece which touched on Victorian railway revenue protection and, as this is the Christmas period, we thought members might enjoy a reacquaintance with an extract from it. Bentham Line regulars will note his comments about over-sized tickets.

'Tickets please!' said the Guard, putting his head in at the (carriage) window. In a moment everybody was holding out a ticket; they were about the same size as the people, and quite seemed to fill the carriage. 'Now then! Show your ticket, child!' the Guard went on, looking angrily at Alice. And a great many voices all said together ('like the chorus of a song,' thought Alice), 'Don't keep him waiting, child! Why, his time is worth a thousand pounds a minute!'



'I'm afraid I haven't got one,' Alice said in a frightened tone; 'there wasn't a ticket office where I came from.' And again the chorus of voices went on, 'There wasn't room for one where she came from. The land there is worth a thousand pounds an inch!' 'Don't make excuses,' said the Guard: 'you should have bought one from the engine driver,' and once more the chorus of voices went on with 'The man that drives the engine. Why, the smoke alone is worth a thousand pounds a puff!'

Alice thought to herself, 'Then there's no use in speaking.' The voices didn't join in this time, as she hadn't spoken, but to her great surprise, they all thought in chorus....., 'Better say nothing at all. Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!'

'I shall dream about a thousand pounds tonight, I know I shall!' thought Alice.

All this time the Guard was looking at her, first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass. At last he said, 'You're travelling the wrong way,' and shut up the window and went away.

'So young a child,' said the gentleman sitting opposite to her (he was dressed in white paper), 'ought to know which way she's going, even if she doesn't know her own name!' A Goat, that was sitting next to the gentleman in white, shut his eyes and said in a loud voice, 'She ought to know her way to the ticket office, even if she doesn't know her alphabet!'

There was a Beetle sitting next the Goat (it was a very queer set of passengers altogether), and, as the rule seemed to be that they should all speak in turn, he went on with 'She'll have to go back from here as luggage!..... And after that other voices went on...., saying, 'She must go by post, as she's got a head on her — 'She must be sent as a message by the telegraph — 'She must draw the train herself the rest of the way—' and so on.

But the gentleman dressed in white paper leaned forwards and whispered in her ear, 'Never mind what they all say, my dear, but take a return-ticket every time the train stops.' 'Indeed I shan't' Alice said rather impatiently. 'I don't belong to this railway journey at all - I was in a wood just now — and I wish I could get back there!.....'

Lewis Carroll was the *nom de plume* of the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), an Oxford academic mathematician, pioneer photographer and author who spent some of his formative years in the rectory at Croft on the then Durham/Yorkshire border, not far away from the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Charles took to this new exciting form of transport and even devised a garden railway game for his brothers and sisters. He was to remain always at home travelling on the railways and with new technology - even living with a Bradshaw Railway Guide always at his elbow - but could derive humour from the bureaucratic and social aspects of the steam age as this extract shows.

In the Looking Glass world things are mirror inversions of the norm: thus, to get to somewhere you go away from it, and the guard in order to look at Alice uses an opera glass even though he is next to her. In the recurring expression 'a thousand pounds an inch', Carroll is satirising vogue expressions of the time that put a monetary value on everything, such as 'Beecham's pills worth a guinea a box'. Tennyson referred to the fresh air on the Isle of Wight as 'worth sixpence a pint'. And contemporary references to the building of Brunel's Great Eastern make mention of how many thousands of pounds per foot, per day, etc the great ship had cost.

The Victorians were very fond of visual and verbal puns and there are a couple here. The passenger opposite Alice is clearly the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, and, as he is normally surrounded by parliamentary White Papers, he is dressed in a white paper suit. Alice is told she must go back by post because 'she has a head on her' - like a postage stamp.

David Alder

SIGNALLING ON THE BENTHAM LINE - Part 3

Firstly, please note an addendum to the signalling article in the last newsletter. Two former signal boxes were inadvertently omitted from the list of present and former boxes between Carnforth and Skipton.

As well as Eldroth there was a second deep rural 'block post' box, fulfilling a similar function, at Skew Crossing between Clapham and Bentham - its existence is in fact also referred to in Martin Bairstow's 'Little North Western' mentioned last time. 'Skew' in this case denotes a geographical location, near Hardacre Wood, rather than a geometric diagonal. There is a story attaching to this box which illustrates that the principle of absolute block working could be compromised by unorthodox use of the signalling equipment. One of the signallers was called to Derby to explain how he had accepted an offer of a train before the previous one had cleared his section. Fortunately no accident had resulted and the signaller's apparent defence that it was 'only like slow moving 'buses following one another' was so bizarre that he would appear to have escaped with a warning!

The other former signal box used to control access to the former Midland Railway engine shed on the approach to Carnforth - a locomotive depot that was at one time very busy. The depot building still exists and is in use for industrial purposes but its closure in LMS days in the 1940's effectively rendered the signal box redundant..

Acknowledgements to Jennifer and Stephen Lister, Colin Price and Bryan Jackson for this information.

November saw the end of traditional signalling methods on the busy line between Preston and Blackpool North as part of the ongoing Network Rail national modernisation of signalling programme. There were five mechanical signal boxes still in use between Salwick and Blackpool North until their closure on the weekend of 10/11 November - Salwick No 2 (1889), Kirkham North Junction (1903), Poulton No 3 (1896), Carleton Crossing (1924) and Blackpool North No 2 (1896) (*below*). They were of varying designs and size and their operations had been modified over the years with a mixture of semaphore and colour light signals in use. The number of excursionists, holidaymakers and commuters that their signallers have shepherded to and from the coast over the years is phenomenal. For reasons of lack of available capital the early 1970's power signal box at Preston had never controlled the route beyond Salwick.No 2 (a 'fringe' box to Preston since 1973). It now never will as the new electronic signalling equipment will be controlled from one work station at the Manchester Regional Signalling Centre - this will include control of Kirkham Junction and the Blackpool South line, Carleton Level Crossing (by CCTV), and Blackpool North station's terminal platforms and train depot. State of the art colour light signalling on continuously track circuited, re-aligned, rationalised and electrified track is the future for the Preston-Blackpool North route.



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A more economical, more capacious, safer and faster stretch of railway will emerge in March 2018 following a four month blockade, but one cannot help feel a twinge of regret at the total erasure of yet another source of architectural interest and way of working. More will follow about the signalling plans for this area in future articles.

THE ELDROTH ACCIDENT

The recent incident near Eldroth on 25th August this year when the 08.18 passenger train from Leeds to Morecambe became entangled with a plate layer's trolley laden with sleepers illustrates how a failure of communication and lack of training can result in signalling mishaps even under a strict safety regime. Engineering work on the railway can be performed in different ways essentially depending on the complexity of the work and the frequency of scheduled trains. Such work can be carried out with all trains still running, with single line working or with total engineering possession. In this case the track gang had permission to carry out preparatory work for overnight sleeper replacement during the day and were in communication with the signallers as regulations dictate. All British railways are operated on the principle that there is an 'up' and a 'down' direction of travel. 'Up' usually denotes travel towards the capital or other major town or city. In this case the up line denotes the east bound line - towards Leeds - and this is the line that the signallers had cleared for use of the trolleys. Unfortunately the site controllers had authorised use of three trolleys on the down - west bound - line, erroneously thinking this was the up line. Therefore, when the Morecambe bound service - operated by a class 142 Pacer - was approaching the site on the down line the track workers had taken no action to remove their trolleys as they thought no train was due on that line.

The Pacer's driver saw the danger, alerted by a track worker who had realised what was happening, and reduced speed but could not stop in time and hit the trolleys, (one of which became wedged beneath the train), at 34 miles per hour. Fortunately the diesel unit stayed upright and the 28 passengers were unharmed and were eventually taken back to Skipton by the unit rostered for the following service to Heysham. The line was blocked until late afternoon with 'buses substituting for trains'.

The recently released Rail Accident Investigation Branch report commented that similar incidents had occurred previously elsewhere and that by Implication further steps should be taken to reduce the chances for confusion. One would only hope so!
David Alder



LASRUG NEWSLETTER CONTACTS

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

CONSULTATION ON A NEW COMMUNITY RAIL STRATEGY LAUNCHED

The consultation was launched by Rail Minister, Paul Maynard MP, at Burnley Manchester Road station on 6th November and seeks responses relating to how to expand and enhance community partnerships in association with the railway.

The original strategy was published in 2004 by the Strategic Rail Authority and focused on four main themes;

- connecting people to places and opportunities
- supporting communities, diversity and inclusion
- supporting local and regional economies
- suggesting innovative ways to improve the way the railway works.

The consultation runs until 28th January 2018 and the new strategy will be launched in spring next year. For more information see the news story on the DfT website at: www.gov.uk/government/news/community-rail-stations-of-the-future-to-be-shaped-by-new-blueprint-for-success

OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that we report the deaths of the following members:

Robert Starling

Robert had been a member of the LASRUG committee since 2012 and a member since the early years. A botanist by training, Robert had been interested all his life in plants and the natural environment and was a member of numerous environmental research and protection groups. He was a keen walker and an enthusiastic campaigner for public transport. Our group will miss his contributions and humorous personality.

Jennifer Lister

Jennifer had been a strong supporter of our work for over 20 years. The daughter of a Bentham railwayman, she loved trains and rail travel and went so far as to secure a BR 'Bentham' totem sign at a railway memorabilia auction to present to Friends of Bentham Station of which she was a keen member.

Nigel Edmondson

Nigel was a member of the founding committee of LASRUG in 1989. Disability limited his activities latterly but his passionate interest in railways was lifelong.

Michael Collins

Michael had been a railway enthusiast all his life. Ill health made travel difficult in recent years but his enthusiasm never waned. His wife, Janet, has generously donated two of his framed railway photographs to LASRUG.

Susan Banks

Susan was a keen supporter of both LASRUG and FoSCL. For the latter she was a popular and often-asked-for guide and indefatigable distributor of leaflets from her inseparable shopping trolley.

OPERATION PIED PIPER

The Leeds, Lancaster & Morecambe Community Rail Partnership (LMCRP) were approached by Anthea Hanson of the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, who was working with Bentham Community Primary School to support a small-scale re-enactment of Operation Pied Piper on the Bentham Line. This operation was the evacuation of young children, during World War II, from the cities to the countryside before the German bombing raids took place.

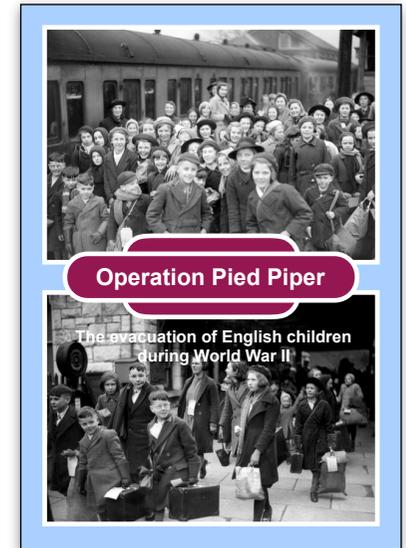
The re-enactment took place on Thursday 30th November 2017 and involved fifty pupils, dressed in appropriate wartime clothes, and ten supporters from the school.

Having gathered together at Bentham Town Hall and been issued with their gas masks (cardboard boxes) and a luggage label with their name on, the group made their way to the station. Once on Platform 1 at the station they boarded a War Department requisitioned carriage on the 11:26 train service to travel from Bentham to Hellifield to meet their 'reception' parents.

Having met their reception parents at Hellifield station (*below*) they adjourned to one of the rooms there to write a postcard home and have a wartime packed lunch. During the preparations for the event, they had been advised about both rationing and the way food was wrapped back then. Even so there were still one or two plastic bags to be seen and the odd banana too.

The group was joined by Gerald Townson and Catherine Huddleston, LMCRP Chairman and Partnership Officer, respectively, for their wartime adventure. Northern kindly offered its support with all the tickets for the experience, whilst the LMCRP provided each child with one of the new Bentham Line activity packs.

All returned safely aboard the 14:15 after their taste of evacuation; somewhat quicker than many of those children evacuated from the cities in 1939-40.



DEMENTIA AND COMMUNITY RAIL PROJECT

News of this innovative project on the Bentham Line being led by the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership, with the full support of Northern, is spreading far and wide and reached the Department for Transport (DfT) at Great Minster House in London in October, (right).

The London event focussed on work taking place in community rail partnerships within Northern's franchise area to support those groups with additional needs.

Dawn McGough of Community Rail Cumbria gave a presentation of their work on 'Rail Journey to Recovery'; a project based at the remote Green Road station on the Cumbrian Coast line where they are providing valuable support for recovering addicts from a nearby retreat. Daisy Chapman-Chamberlain of Community Rail Lancashire also outlined their work to help those with disabilities to travel.

The LMCRP has recently received several requests for further information on their work in this area and asked to give a number of presentations by train operating companies including Grand Central Trains, who operate between the North East and West Yorkshire and London King's Cross, and High Speed 2, the soon-to-be-built fast route from London Euston.

In association with the Alzheimer's Society and Northern, the Partnership is now developing dementia-awareness sessions for all staff and volunteers linked to the Bentham Line. Rod Tickner, Vice Chairman of the LMCRP and a founder member of Dementia Friendly Keighley, has already led sessions with the Friends of Bentham station and We Are Bentham, a local group of businesses and volunteer organisations.

It is good to see so many of those in community rail in the North leading the way in helping the railway to support those with additional needs and encouraging others across the country to do the same.



Gerald Townson, Chairman of LMCRP and General Secretary of LASRUG, addressing a group at the DfT including Peter Wilkinson, the Head of Passenger Services at the DfT, Kulvinder Bassi, Community Rail Lead at the DfT, civil servants and representatives from train operating companies and community rail from across the country.