



## Newsletter - September 2017



A new-look Northern Class 150 DMU No 275 standing at Mytholmroyd (Bentham's twin) with a service from Leeds to Manchester Victoria, on 12th June 2017. The unit has also visited the Bentham Line.  
© Gerald Townson

In this issue we consider Northern's progress with their new franchise, examine the background to the current strikes, take lessons about new tickets and signalling, and, whilst reflecting sadly on things lost, we are ultimately positive about our latest projects and the developing role of women in the rail industry.

The 2017 LASRUG AGM takes place at Bentham Town Hall at 7:30pm on Friday 15th September.

## NORTHERN'S PROGRESS

Transport Focus's research reported on in the National Rail Passenger Survey earlier this year indicates an overall satisfaction score among passengers of 83% (2% up on last year). In the specific areas of information on stations, train cleanliness and punctuality the survey records a 4% improvement.

Northern has set out on what it calls its 'journey to modernise rail travel by 2020' and has targeted several areas in which it assures passengers they will be noticing improvements.

Refurbished trains, freshly painted both outside and inside, with more spacious, comfortable seating and new flooring are beginning to appear. Pacers should be removed by the end of 2019.

Stations are to become safer and more useful and helpful to passengers by the addition of better waiting facilities, information screens and ticket vending machines and, at the bigger stations, ticket gates and CCTV. Security of travel will increase with the introduction of 80 new Travel Safe officers to help passengers especially in the evening.

Northern aims to deliver over 2,000 extra services a week on its system. Most importantly for us on the Bentham Line are the timetable improvements expected next May.

Promised improvements in ticketing have already been introduced including off-peak day return and advance-purchase tickets.

We welcome the fact that Northern is putting more money into community rail and is keen to develop station adoption groups.

Northern is certainly ready to listen to its passengers to help it in its drive towards a better rail system for the north. Alan Chaplin, the Managing Director, urges you to have your say by joining the Customer Digital Forum on the [northernrailway.co.uk](http://northernrailway.co.uk) website. You can, of course, also direct your comments to the company through LASRUG.



*Inside the refurbished Class 150, which has a much lighter-coloured interior, brighter lighting and toilet facilities for the disabled.*

## ONGOING INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE ABOUT TRAIN-MANNING

At the time of writing there is an unresolved industrial dispute between the RMT union and Arriva Rail North about the future manning of passenger trains and in particular the role of the conductor/guard. You may well have also read about other disputes involving Merseyrail – very similar - and Southern – somewhat more complex. The Northern dispute has resulted in several days of strikes and consequent disruption to train services including our own and each side has so far not seemed able to stray far from their original entrenched positions. Some background to this dispute may therefore be of interest to members – if some of what follows might seem archaic it nevertheless will hopefully help to inform the current situation.

Over the past 70 years or so there have been many changes in the way the railways are operated and several of these changes have not been implemented without industrial disputes along the road. At the time British Railways was formed in 1948 virtually every station was manned and every (non-electric) passenger train carried a crew of three. Steam locomotives required a driver and a fireman whilst the carriages they hauled were the province of the guard. Station staff would issue and check tickets, give assistance to arriving and departing passengers, exchange any parcels or pouches with the guard, and, together with the guard, check that all carriage doors were secure before giving the right away to depart - communicating with the signal box where necessary at busy stations. The guard having checked the time of departure then gave the green signal, flag or lamp, to the driver who took the train away if the signals were clear. As the guard would often board the train at the last moment, the guard's van door was designed to open inwards. Even today, with modern trains and signalling this is a recognisable scenario for train departures at main stations such as Lancaster Castle.

The guard was responsible for the safety of the train and its passengers and the security of parcels, mail and luggage in the guard's van. He was responsible for dealing with any communication cord and other emergency incidents and would ensure the rear of the train was protected in the event of an accident or breakdown. There was also an emergency brake in the guard's van, which could be used in limited circumstances. The guard would communicate information about problems to his passengers where possible – not all trains had corridors, and inter-com/PA equipment took many years to become commonplace. Revenue protection was however the responsibility of travelling ticket inspectors. Communication with signal boxes in the event of delays en route was the responsibility of the driver who was also responsible for observing temporary permanent way instructions working practices.



The railway industry was heavily unionised and proud of its professionalism and 'craft' structure. This was reflected in the union structure - drivers and fireman were usually members of ASLEF, guards, porters and signalmen were members of the NUR (now RMT), booking office and administrative staff were members of TSSA. There have understandably been several demarcation disputes over the years as management sought to implement less costly and more flexible working practices.

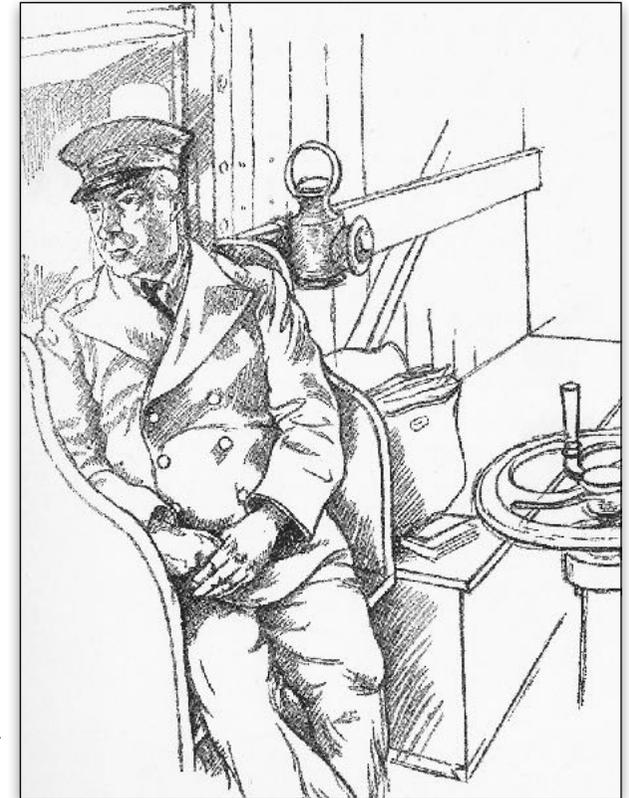
The modernisation and cost reduction programmes of the 1960's and 1970's saw the progressive introduction of diesel and electric multiple units on many services, the reduction or removal of station staff on many secondary lines and the decline in the conveyance of merchandise in passenger trains. The railway unions, reeling from the reductions in the network accepted that the future survival of many provincial local services demanded the acceptance of some revised working methods - although, and this need not detain us now, there was protracted resistance on safety grounds to manning proposals for inter-city and freight trains. DMU and EMU drivers, therefore, had to accept they were on their own, with no need for a 'second man', whilst the guards had to accept fare-issuing/ticket-checking responsibilities. Jointly, guards and drivers had to ensure safe departure of trains from unmanned stations. Bell/buzzer/inter-com communication between drivers and guards helped the process. As slam-shut doors began to disappear in the 1980's, the central electrical operation of doors fell naturally to the guard under previous demarcation guidelines, just as they had accepted their role to use PA systems to keep passengers informed.

The fragmentation of railway operations in the 1990's and the availability of even more advanced technology led to some changes of thinking on traditional roles. For example, the Manchester Metrolink LRV's, operating partly over former BR routes, were driver-only operated from the start, the automatic Docklands Light Railway trains had no drivers but carried Passenger Liaison Officers, whilst London Underground, following their experience on the Victoria Line, introduced driver operation of doors. As new rolling stock began to appear again on the national heavy rail network, some operating companies took up the option of fitting the new trains with equipment enabling drivers to open and close train doors - including the essential CCTV components - and obtained union agreement to driver control on some routes. The inconvenience of conductor/ guards having to break off fare collection and other duties to deal with train doors and the potential delays to train punctuality this could cause were factors in this change of approach. At least one company has gone for a 'half way house' approach whereby the driver opens the doors and the conductor/guard closes them. It is quite possible that over time widespread change would have evolved anyway on a company-by-company, route-by-route approach. The trade unions, post-privatisation, had indeed often shown themselves well able to negotiate reasonably lucrative deals in return for changed working practices.

Enter the DfT who thought it would be a good idea to force the process of driver operation of doors and included it as a franchise requirement in both the Northern and other recent bid processes. They considered there was sufficient evidence that there would be no operational downside, all trains were going to be refurbished/replaced in any case, and the conductors would be better able to concentrate on passenger interface duties.

The RMT, however - who currently have a fairly hard line leadership - were not at all happy about what they saw as a centralised political attempt effectively to abolish the role of the guards on secondary routes. They obtained a mandate from their members for strike action even though no detailed proposals have yet emerged from the operating company. The railway company state that they have a contractual duty to put proposals for the changed working arrangements at the appropriate time and stress that there will be no job losses as they intend to continue with a conductor on board each train. It is noteworthy that the union representing the majority of drivers on Northern have not made any adverse comment so far. The DfT, having obtained the operator's agreement to act via the franchise letting process, have said the dispute is a matter for the operator.

The union has played the safety card and obtained some sympathy from the travelling public as a result. They have made the point that there is a world of difference in respect of driver control of doors between routes with standardised modern rolling stock, standardised train lengths and standardised platforms - often staffed - and Northern's notoriously heterogeneous situation. They also strongly suspect that the new on-board staff will in time not receive the full operational training that conductor guards receive and that this could result eventually in lower pay. Management have continued to emphasise that there could be no change in operating practices with current rolling stock, that there will still be staff on trains and that points of detail will be up for discussion.



So the RMT union has essentially been carrying out a pre-emptive strike in defence of what it sees as the guard's traditional role and passenger safety - inconveniencing the passenger in the process. The operating company with all its 'in hand' multiple tasks could well do without a bitter industrial dispute at this juncture. One can only hope that a common sense negotiating approach to the management of change for which the railways used to be acclaimed will return before serious damage is done.

*David Alder*

## WOMEN IN RAILWAYS - Part 2

The Equal Pay Act of 1970 gave employers five years' notice before it had to be implemented. Railway workshop women received equal pay on 29th December 1975 – just two days before the legal deadline! But equal pay was of no benefit to women doing so called 'women's work' since they had no man to be equal with.



On the other hand the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 meant that women could enter any railway occupation on the same terms as men. From that year a few women applied to be trained as guards, drivers, trackworkers, ticket collectors, supervisors, managers, fitters and engineers.

However, since there were so few of them in a workforce that was still overwhelmingly male, they often had to fight lone battles to secure equal and fair employment conditions. They faced prejudice, ignorance and hostility. The degree of support they got, in what was then a very difficult environment, from colleagues and union officials often left much to be desired.

It was often left to the individual woman to take up issues such as staff toilets, uniforms and maternity against a background of harassment, verbal and sexual abuse and a generally unhelpful climate. (A ground-breaking book on the subject is 'Railway Women, Exploitation, Betrayal and Triumph in the Workplace' by Helena Wojtczak.)

Happily, as the word 'triumph' in the title of this book suggests, circumstances for women working in railways has significantly improved, not least because the numbers employed in the industry have grown significantly. And yet Elizabeth Louise Williams, an ex-army Project Manager in Construction could still report in 2011 of the rail industry that 'compared to other industries it is still dominated by men and has made little progress in welcoming women. In fact there is an astonishing brusque, domineering, arrogant, dismissive and sexist culture which seems to revel in bullying women'.

ASLEF's 2011 Women in Railways survey found terms, conditions, facilities and equipment lacking and, horrifically, more than 1 in 5 women felt that they had been bullied or harassed in the previous year.

Network Rail as a company is taking positive steps towards recruiting more women but the culture needs to change more quickly. Its senior management is working to change the 'militaristic' culture it admits has prevailed in the past.

The trade unions ought to be the natural way to help matters improve and ASLEF's survey was the first ever on the subject. It looked at why women come into the industry, their backgrounds and how they feel about working in the industry as women. It was delivered by the Labour Research Department and reported to ASLEF's executive committee. Cultural problems were considered the key issue. Recruiting female union members is also a problem, since many said they were reluctant to become active as the union felt like a 'boys' club'. Nevertheless the women surveyed did believe that ASLEF was doing all it could to bring about change.

As far as flexible working patterns are concerned - of particular relevance to women workers - it seems that the rail industry is reluctantly embracing the law rather than seeking to champion it.

How does the position stand now regarding women in railways? Addressing the Women in Rail conference at the end of 2015 the then Under-Secretary of State for Transport, Claire Perry, having praised the rail industry in general for its doubling of passenger numbers and increasing its freight traffic by 75%, observed that the industry held out great opportunities for women. However, the sector was not, she declared, hiring or promoting sufficient numbers of women. Women form 47% of the national workforce but only 15% of the rail workforce (13,500 out of 87,000 – about the same number as were working on the railways in 1914). Most of those employed work in the operational, customer-facing parts of the industry such as catering, ticketing and station retail. Only 19% of women in rail are in managerial roles and only 4% of engineers are women. Only 0.6% of women progress to director or executive level. Women are missing out economically and the industry, especially at the highest levels, is missing the skills and broader perspectives that they can offer.

The rail industry is lagging behind the other major industries in this regard. Ms Perry concluded that it was vital to teach girls the value of transport and engineering qualifications and how the rail renaissance could provide them with fantastic lifelong careers.

She must have been heartened this year by the celebration by Network Rail and Stagecoach on International Women's Day of the fact that their two managing directors were women. Becky Lumlock, (*below right*), Route Managing Director for Network Rail's Wessex route and Margaret Kay, (*below left*), the newly appointed Managing Director of South West Trains, part of the Stagecoach group, are now working in partnership to deliver rail services between London and the south west, one of the busiest sections of the network with around 230 million passenger journeys each year. Pictured below, the stated aims of both women were to bring track and train closer together and to continue trying to boost the number of women employed on the railway. The aim is to increase the percentage of women in rail from 15% to 20% by 2020.

JSW



## A JOINT LASRUG and EWECROSS HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENT

### A Magic Lantern and Slide Show

Presented by Simon Clarke

## BICYCLES, FOX FURS AND BUNCHES OF LEAVES

Bentham Town Hall

7:30pm on Wednesday, 18th October 2017

Open to all members of the public

### 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, Alan Wilson. Telephone: 01539 725100. Secretary, Eric Bartlett. Email: [ericbartlett@btinternet.com](mailto:ericbartlett@btinternet.com) or look on the website: [www.stephensonloco.org.uk](http://www.stephensonloco.org.uk)

**5/10/17 - Flying Scotsman: Simon Holroyd**  
Re-assembling the Flying Scotsman.

**2/11/17 - Rail Tours: Ian Clark**  
The evolution of rail tours from an SLS perspective.

**7/12/17 - Christmas Social Evening**

#### The Railway Correspondence and Travel Society

RCTS

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](http://www.rcts.org.uk)

**6/10/17 - Green Diesel Era: Steve Fort**

**3/11/17 - Preston to Windermere in the Last Years of Steam : Noel Machell**

**1/12/17 - AGM and Members' Slides**

#### Carnforth Station Heritage Centre

Monthly railway film nights will take place on the 11th September, 9th October, 13th November and 11th December 2017 in the Furness and Midland Hall at 7.30 p.m. Admission £4, including light refreshments. The programme can be viewed on the website: [www.carnforthstation.co.uk](http://www.carnforthstation.co.uk)



## The Annual General Meeting of **LASRUG**

will be held in Bentham Town Hall  
at 7.30pm on Friday, 15th  
September 2017

**Guest Speaker: Richard Isaac**  
Community and Sustainability  
Manager - East  
Arriva Rail North Ltd., (Northern)  
'Working in the Rail Industry'

### COFFEE MORNINGS AT GARGRAVE AND BENTHAM



LASRUG has held two coffee mornings over the summer, both very successful. These are excellent occasions not only for raising money but also for enabling members to meet and for raising the profile of the group in the community. The Saturday coffee morning - with its raffle, tombola and stalls selling produce, plants, books and bric-a-brac is a well established feature of Bentham life and becoming so in Gargrave (*below*). We would be delighted to see more members on these occasions and, if members in any other location would like to organise one, the committee would be please to help.



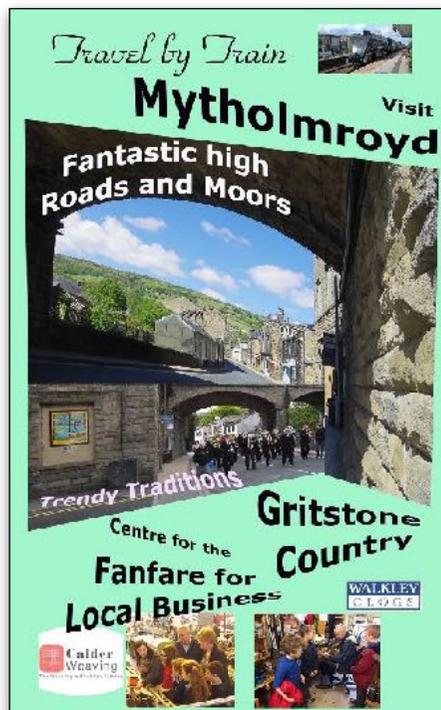
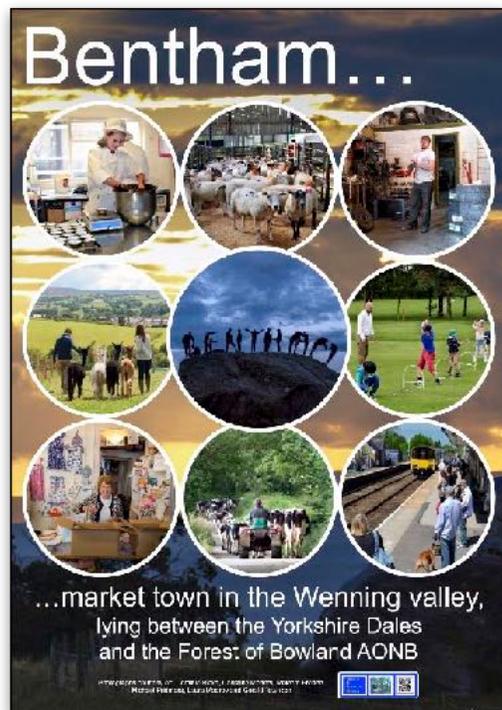
## FOBS 6th ANNIVERSARY AND STATION TO STATION ACROSS YORKSHIRE - BENTHAM AND MYTHOLMROYD

The Friends of Bentham Station voluntary group was formed back in September 2011. They recently celebrated their sixth anniversary with guests from across the north, including representatives from Mytholmroyd Station Partnership (MSP), the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, Northern, Bloomin' Bentham and LASRUG, along with other individuals who have supported the work of the volunteer group.

The event also marked the first anniversary of the twinning of Bentham and Mytholmroyd stations and their station adoption groups. To mark this occasion both groups have designed and had printed new posters about their communities for display on the partner stations and in the towns.

Bentham's poster is based on photographs from the 'A Day in the Life of Bentham' photographic event, whilst Mytholmroyd's poster reflects the station partnership's support for local primary schools and businesses and the Calder valley landscape and history that surrounds the town.

Following the relaunch of Scenic Rail Britain in May this year, the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership, with assistance from the LASRUG membership secretary, has been seeking out the scenic spots along our route. One of the new photographs featured on the cover of the previous newsletter. A scenic Bentham Line campaign featuring posters and postcards was launched at the anniversary event too.



## BENTHAM LINE ACTIVITY PACK



Taking up an initial idea of LASRUG's membership secretary to create an 'I-Spy' leaflet for our line, the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership has expanded his suggestions and produced a colourful activity pack with a supporting grant from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships.

The Activity Pack is intended to be educational and fun and is aimed at children under 12. It is designed to support families and school groups making journeys on the Bentham Line, to stimulate powers of observation, to encourage individual and family activities and to develop knowledge of the Bentham Line and the railway in general.

The pack will be offered to families travelling on the Bentham Line by ticket and information offices and by volunteers on the trains and at stations. It will also be made available to primary school groups participating in the rail-based educational activities at Bentham Station, to support the journey from their local station to Bentham.

The picture competition also encourages engagement with the LMCRP. The pictures submitted will be included on the website and in station posters and artwork.

The pack also contains postcards from the new Bentham Line series recently published by the partnership.

## ADVANCE FARES AND MOBILE TICKETS

Enjoy a trip out on the Bentham Line for less. Not one, not two, but three pieces of good news about fares and railcards.

### The Introduction of Advance Fares

During the summer Northern introduced advance-purchase fares. Advance tickets are great value off-peak Single (one-way) tickets but have limited availability. Book as far in advance as you can to get the best value. The tickets are available up to 12 weeks ahead of travel and, subject to availability, you can still get a last-minute bargain up to 23:59 on the day before travel. You can buy the tickets at staffed ticket offices or online and have the tickets delivered by first-class post or you can collect them from a ticket machine at larger stations.

Examples of the cheapest Advance fares:

Morecambe-Leeds £9.00, (£5.95 with a national railcard),  
Leeds-Bentham £7.00, (£4.60 with a national railcard).

### Dales Railcard and Winter Offer

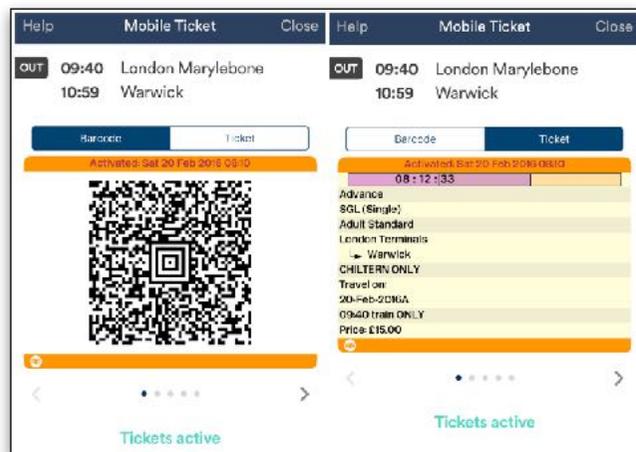
The current price of the Dales Railcard is £10.00, which still represents a £3.00 saving on the full price. Unfortunately, the details of the winter offer for 2017/18 are not yet to hand. At present the Dales Railcard does not offer a discount on Advance tickets.

### The Introduction and use of Mobile Tickets (m-tickets)

It is now possible when purchasing tickets through an app on a tablet or mobile phone to have some types of ticket delivered directly to the app on your device. (*Example ticket below.*) You must remember to ‘activate’ your m-ticket at the start of your journey, however, you do not need an internet connection to do this,

### OUR TREASURER VENTURES INTO THE WORLD OF THE m-TICKET

I’m always reluctant to try something different from what I am used to, unless I am forced into it. The change in tickets issued on the train from the small credit-card-sized



unit to reams of paper prompted me to look at buying electronic tickets, which when used with your smart phone are designated an m-ticket.

To begin with I downloaded The Trainline app(lication) to my smartphone just like any other app. There are others available but I thought I would try this one. Once the app is loaded booking your ticket is straightforward enough.

Basically, as with any other online train ticketing software, you put in your ‘from’ and ‘to’ and select your day and the time of travel. Add a railcard if applicable and the number of passengers.

What I have noticed is that the app remembers your settings, so, if you put in your ‘Dales Railcard’, it remembers it and applies the discount as appropriate to future purchases.

This produces a list of available outward trains which show departure and arrival times, fare, type of ticket and duration. You can click an icon to show you all the stops and the changes, and the times for changes. Once your outward journey is selected, you then select your return. The next screen allows you to select first or standard class and then the type of ticket you require.

A summary is then provided and a ticket option which will get your ticket via barcode to your device. (It is worth noting that not all routes will let you do this and in this case you cannot use the function. The only option is to collect from the station but, since you cannot collect tickets at Bentham, you are snookered, and its back to reams of paper!) Payment can then be made by either debit/credit card or Paypal. The latter is far easier to my mind.

I noticed when I booked my ticket that there was no booking fee, but subsequently this is requested for tickets that are not bought on the day of travel. It’s only 25p, so nothing significant. Once you have paid for your ticket, you need to download it to your device. Again, it’s just a button to press. More importantly you need to activate the ticket where it will change to orange from grey. At every point up to the activate stage you need some form of internet connection. The activation does not.

The outward ticket shows all the valid options as well; which is great if you are early or miss a train. Within the ticket itself there is a barcode and a ticket which is very similar in style to a paper ticket which you show to the guard on request. The return ticket similarly. The barcode is then used to exit at automatic ticket barriers.

So, I hear you all cry, why bother? Well, the thing that I think is of benefit is on-the-go ticket purchasing, with no need to queue for a ticket. Buy your ticket when you have time. All your tickets are kept on your device, so no more fumbling around or leaving at home. If you choose not to travel refunding the ticket looks easier if you have not activated. You can buy for someone else but from the point at which your name is on the ticket you cannot make further changes. Further benefits are that the app remembers your details, favourite journeys and past searches. You can use a Paypal account.

Downsides? Well, not all routes are available. You still need to carry your railcards to present for inspection. A lack of internet connection on the train may lead to an embarrassing moment. Remember to keep an eye out for booking fees and ultimately fewer staff may be on hand to support at stations.

I don’t suppose I’ll use this every time I travel, particularly from Bentham, where the norm is to buy your ticket on the train, but it will be of use in some situations.

Gareth Adams

(Ed. Gareth will be pleased to hear that Northern’s intention is to install ticket machines on the majority of stations, including Bentham.)

## SIGNALLING ALONG THE BENTHAM LINE - Part 2

As promised in the article in the last newsletter, this is the first of a few short follow-up pieces which hopefully will fill in some gaps and also look to the future.

Mention has been made of the celebratedly long absolute block double track section between Carnforth Station Junction Signal Box and Settle Junction Signal Box. The distance is some 24 miles and a stopping passenger train at current line speeds - maximum 60 mph with some speed restrictions - is scheduled to take some 36 minutes to traverse the section in either direction. There are no signals, no cross-overs, no ground frames, no level crossings, no track circuiting, between the outer limits of the two signal boxes. A modern signalling telecommunication cable still links the two boxes and there are line side telephones at strategic locations. In addition there are relatively new Network Rail wireless communication masts at Borwick, Wennington, Greystonegill and Eldroth. Otherwise the line has little to observe on the signalling front.

A typical train movement for a Morecambe-Leeds train would be as follows. The signaller at Carnforth Station box will offer by telegraphic bell code an east-bound train which has arrived in the station limits to the signaller at Settle Junction. The train will have come from the Preston Power Signal Box area, will have already been offered and accepted electronically and will be showing on the Carnforth box track circuit diagram. If there is no train on the line between Carnforth and Settle Junction, the Settle Junction signaller will accept the offer telegraphically and the Carnforth signaller will clear the appropriate colour light signals to allow the train to proceed. When the train eventually arrives at the approaches to Settle Junction it will pass a distant colour light signal and then an outer home signal and will be registering on the Settle Junction box track circuit diagram before being signalled by semaphore signals across the junction layout on to the main Carlisle-Leeds line if all is clear, having previously been offered telegraphically to Hellifield South Junction signal box. A similar procedure is followed in respect of west bound trains. It is technically possible for Bentham line trains to be held at either junction for over half an hour because a previous train has not cleared the long block section. Because of the sparse timetable this is an extremely rare occurrence usually triggered by incidents such as late running special trains, line obstructions, or break downs.

This minimalist signalling approach was not always the case along this stretch of line. The Midland Railway and their partners invested a good deal of money in improving mechanical signalling provision in this area in the early years of the twentieth century and much of their legacy survived into British Rail days. About 1950 there were also signal boxes at Carnforth East Junction, Borwick, Arkholme, Melling, Wennington Junction, (left), Low Bentham, Bentham, Clapham Junction, Eldroth, and Giggleswick. As explained last time not every box would be open for more than one shift but the signalling of a train from end to end would in those days have been a much less straightforward affair. Many of these boxes served freight facilities which are long gone, just as the three intermediate junctions have disappeared.



Nevertheless the operation of the line was relatively complex with its gradients, junctions and, not always regularly spaced, heavy through passenger and goods traffic as well as local freight and passenger workings. The former Eldroth signal box is a good example of a signal box whose existence was purely as a block post - to reduce the length of a block section and enable the speedier passage of trains. In 1956 it operated on a 24 hour, 3 shift basis and handled in the course of a typical autumn day 35 up (east bound) and 35 down (west bound) trains, with noticeable peaks and troughs in passing patterns. Of these 70 trains, only 11 up and 11 down were passenger highlighting the huge subsequent decline in goods traffic. A night shift in the tiny and fairly remote Eldroth signal box must have been an interesting experience! As the number of trains handled rapidly declined - all local

freight had gone by 1968 - the provision of signalling was simplified and eventually only Wennington Junction and Carnforth East Junction (*above*) were left.

Even with the current lengthy block section, the maximum theoretical capacity of the Carnforth to Settle Junction line in terms of paths is still some 40 trains each way per day - interestingly not much different from actual 1950 traffic levels. It will cope with any known demands - passenger, engineering, occasional freight, excursions and West Coast Carnforth workings. Only in the event of a major diversionary requirement or a remarkable upsurge in freight would the current length of block have posed problems and this was the reason why Wennington signal box was finally decommissioned some years ago having served to break up the block section until the start of the 1990's when further reductions in train services occurred. There was now insufficient traffic to justify stand alone investment in any of the improved signalling methods available, not even track circuiting, and we just have to be thankful that double track working has survived.

(With acknowledgements to Martin Bairstow's book 'The Little North Western Railway' for information about Eldroth Signal Box)

*David Alder*

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions fall due on the date of the LASRUG AGM, 15th September 2017. The annual subscription rate will remain at £7.00 for 2017/18.

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.

## TWO SAD FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARIES – 1967-2017

In the last newsletter, Jack Warbrick celebrated the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Furness and Midland Joint line between Wennington and Carnforth – the route our passenger trains take today. A century later came the final severing of what the Midland Railway had originally intended to be its two main routes to Carlisle and Morecambe.

The Clapham Junction to Low Gill line (the 'Ingleton Branch' of 1849-61) had experienced a generally rather sleepy existence especially once the Settle-Carlisle Railway had opened in 1875-76. It ran through a beautiful but sparsely populated rural area and several of its stations were badly sited. Following the withdrawal of regular local passenger services in 1954, however, it still generated some local freight traffic, and also continued to serve its original purpose as a valuable supplementary through route to Scotland via its connection with the West Coast Main Line at Low Gill. It particularly came into its own as a diversionary route to the Settle and Carlisle line in the severe winter of 1962-63, and was also used regularly by school and ramblers' specials. This was an era when regional railway managers were still prepared to maintain track and station facilities for occasional events even when regular services had ceased – following an integrated network concept. The philosophy of the Macmillan/Home governments (1957-1964), however, was to take a harsher commercial approach to railway operations; this resulted in both a new Transport Act and Dr. Beeching's radical surgery. The momentum for cuts this generated was not halted by the ensuing Wilson government, despite election pledges, until several strategic railway babies had arguably been thrown out with the proverbial bathwater. Local freight on the Ingleton branch was such a casualty and had gone by the spring of 1965 and the line (along with several other diversionary lines throughout the country around this time) was regarded as surplus to requirements by the summer of 1966 - I recall noting the rusting state of the good quality track still in situ when ascending Ingleborough in the spring of that year! From April 1967, work commenced on lifting the 23 miles of double track and this generated several steam-hauled engineering trains over the following months. By the end of the year only the ballast remained and the line's potential, and the North's own Clapham Junction, had been lost for ever.



*On the Clapham Junction to Low Gill route, Barbon station, looking northward, closed to passenger services on 1st February 1954. Courtesy Ben Brooksbank.*

The Wennington to Lancaster Green Ayre and Morecambe line had lost its passenger services in January 1966 - as was commemorated by the 'Green Ayre Rises' exhibition event in Lancaster last year. The route had remained open however for through freight traffic, which was still substantial, and the intended curve to enable trains from the Heysham branch to by-pass Morecambe Promenade station en route to Bare Lane and Carnforth was yet to be built - on my way to Ingleborough in spring 1966 the track in the Lune Valley between Caton and Claughton was shiny and in pristine condition. Very soon, though, it was decided that the Morecambe curve would no longer be necessary after all to cope with the revised forecast traffic, that remaining local freight trains to White Lund Gas Works and Lancaster Power Station could be accommodated on long sidings – from Morecambe and Lancaster Castle respectively - and that abandoning the through route would free up the Greyhound Bridge at Lancaster for conversion to a road, (which was quickly built!) So the direct route from Morecambe to Wennington closed to all traffic from June 1967 and freight trains from Heysham to Yorkshire joined their passenger counterparts in travelling via Carnforth. The line from Lancaster Castle through the site of Green Ayre station and on to the power station remained open for freight until March 1976, necessitating the installation of an ungated level crossing over the new road. Fortunately a good deal of the formation of the direct route has survived with extensive sections in use as cycleways/footpaths but there are gaps – for example the flood damaged bridge over the River Hyndburn at Wray has gone and Hornby station site has been built over. Some have suggested in the interests of reducing road congestion that it would be feasible for a light railway to share the cycleway from Caton to Lancaster/Morecambe but it would appear that this phoenix is still some way off rising.

*David Alder*



*A Leeds-Morecambe service heading west along the Lune valley having just left Wennington, in the early 1960s.*

## STATIONS WE HAVE LOST - No. 7

### BORWICK, ARKHOLME AND MELLING

Following the article marking the 150th anniversary of the Furness and Midland Joint line in our June issue, it seems appropriate to reflect on its lost stations.

The three stations were built by the Furness Railway and were architecturally very similar. The main buildings of all three are still standing and now in private ownership, but the likeness can be seen from the passing train.

**Borwick** station (*right*), served the smallest population of the three, had a main FR building to the east of the line and a modest shelter on the west. There was a signal box and a small goods yard at the west end. The old station house survives as a private residence and portions of the platform can be detected, albeit overgrown, but the rest has gone.

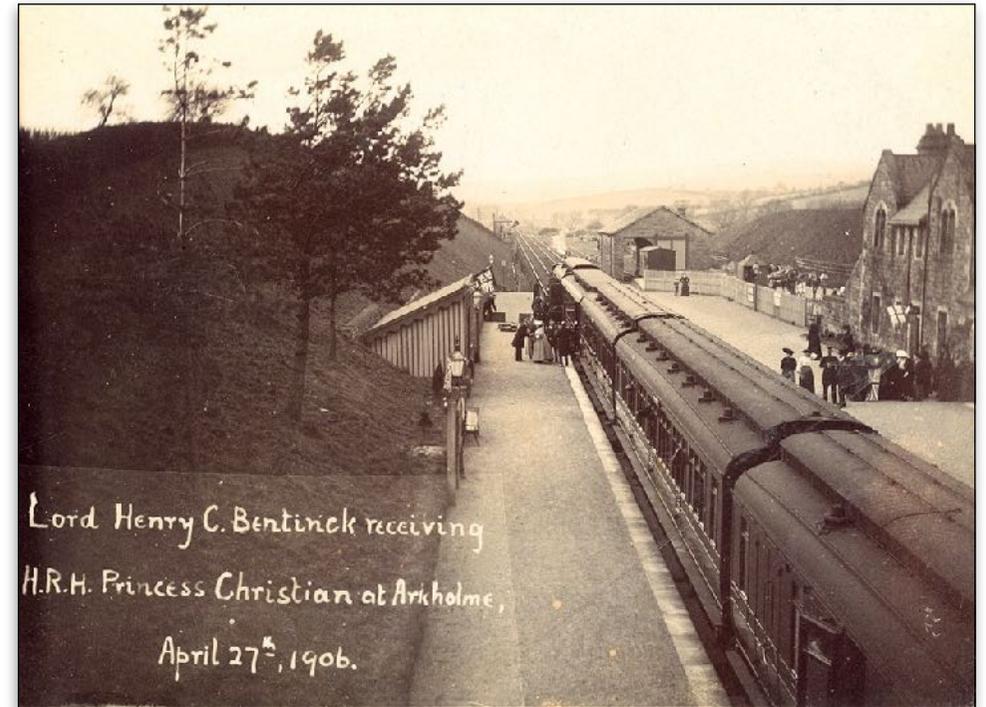


**Arkholme** (or Arkholme for Kirkby Lonsdale as it was quickly renamed in 1869) was opened like the others in 1867 and served the largest population of the three. It too had a main FR building to the east of the up line and a simple waiting shelter on the down platform. It had a goods shed, a cattle dock and sidings, clearly equipped like the Lune Valley stations to cater for the farming community it served. And it was obviously regarded as the most important stop of the three, since certain trains from Cumbria to West Yorkshire had a booked stop there and not at the other two.

A photo from 1906 in Lancaster Museum records a particularly important occasion - a royal visit when Lord Henry Cavendish Bentinck, (a Conservative politician, who lived at Underley Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale) received H.R.H. Princess Christian - actually Princess Helena, the daughter of Queen Victoria, who had married Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein.

After the station closed in 1960 the buildings were sold into private ownership. Probably its best known owner subsequently was the comedian and TV personality, Jim Bowen, the host of 'Bullseye', the quiz show linked with darts. The station house featured in 1989 in another TV programme, 'Through the Keyhole', in which celebrities' houses were visited and other celebrities had to guess who the well-known owner was.

**Melling** station (*opposite right*) served a population of less than 300 when it closed in 1952, eight years before the other two. When the station opened in 1867 the population must have been only around 150, reflecting the economic expectation centred on railways at that time. The station had a goods shed, as had the others, as railways then regarded freight as more important and valuable than passenger traffic. Even in its earlier days Melling only had six trains per day each way and latterly four, a figure which went down to two during the two world wars.



The station buildings became and remain two private residences, externally largely unaltered and even retaining some of the original features internally. The goods shed (*extreme right in the photograph below*) has, however, developed into the headquarters of B4RN, the groundbreaking project Broadband For (4) the Rural North.

B4RN's aim is to improve communication links across the rural areas west of the Pennines, not dissimilar to the aim of the railways who gave us the Carnforth - Wennington and Lune Valley lines.



## NOW YOU SEE, NOW YOU DON'T

If you can't see through the window on your local train this autumn don't get too upset. Things could be a lot worse. Our co-chairman, Richard Rollins, travelled on this train in August from Lisbon to Tomar.



## LAST CHANCE TO ENJOY THE BOWLAND EXPLORER IN 2017

The Bowland Explorer mini-coach service has now been operating successfully on Sundays and Bank Holidays since May. There are just two Sundays left this year, 17th and 24th September, to enjoy this unique and beautiful journey through the AONB.

A feature article on the Explorer service by Mark Sutcliffe, former editor of Country Walking, has appeared in the Craven Herald and Clitheroe Advertiser, as well as on Forest of Bowland AONB, Car Free Walks and Bentham Line websites. The Urban Wanderer, from Manchester, on behalf of Northern, has also written favourably about her walking adventures in this stunning area whilst making use of the Explorer.



Courtesy of Mark Sutcliffe