



Newsletter - September 2019



Approaching Bentham, No. 60103 Flying Scotsman heads the Northern Belle on the first of two visits to our line, on 20th July 2019
© Gerald Townson

LASRUG is 30 years old this year, and in this issue we remember our earlier years and the efforts of those without whom recent advances would not have been possible. We welcome some new trains and anticipate saying farewell to some old 'friends'. We hear of new ways of taking babies on trains and of teaching them when they are older how to travel safely by train. We hear of an excursion to beat all excursions. We offer more advice to disabled passengers. And a new member waxes nostalgic for his school by the railway, and a curate's wife reflects with a smile on her rail-mad husband.

NEW EMUs ENTER SERVICE IN THE AIRE VALLEY



Following swiftly on the heels of the new Class 195 DMUs, which entered into service in July this year on the Barrow-in-Furness to Manchester Airport route, are the Class 331 EMUs. These entered service on Monday 9th September between Skipton, Bradford Forster Square, Ilkley and Leeds. Both types of 3 and 4-car units, which look similar externally, have been designed and built by CAF (Construcciones y Auxillar de Ferrocarriles). CAF is manufacturing the new trains in Spain and Wales.

In total Northern's new fleet will consist of 101 trains. There will be 43 new electric trains, (31 three-car and 12 four-car), and 58 new diesel units, (25 two-car and 33 three-car), which will travel across their network. All the new units have free on-board wifi, at-seat power sockets and passenger displays providing real-time running information. All are fully accessible to passengers in wheelchairs, including the toilet, and there are spaces to store bicycles and pushchairs.

Northern is also well on the way with the refurbishment of 243 units of its current fleet and Pacers are beginning to be removed from service.

Northern ran a special preview service between Bradford Forster Square and Skipton, (*top left*), on 3rd September which gave local stakeholders, such as the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership, the chance to view and take a ride aboard a new Class 331 unit.

The units are much brighter and roomier with 4 seats across the carriage, one less than the present stock in use on these routes. Groups of 4 seats with a table are spread throughout the train, (*left*). There are extensive customer information screens in all sections of the carriages and a closed-circuit television system which monitors both the inside and outside of the unit. It was possible to view the CCTV in action along with the other controls in the driving cab (*lower left*).



ARRIVA RAIL NORTH COMMUNITY RAIL CONFERENCE 2019

This was held at Leeds on 9th September and was attended by representatives from CRP's, Station Partnerships, Northern, the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, the Department for Transport, Network Rail, British Transport Police and other organisations involved in community rail projects.

Speakers included Northern's Managing Director, David Brown who spoke of his commitment to continue the work of improving the experience of rail passengers in the North.

The delayed rolling stock improvement programme was now beginning to bear fruit with 20 new train units already in service, a further 21 being used for training, and 60% of scheduled refurbishments of existing or cascaded units completed. The process of improving service patterns, including the *Northern Connect* services, would soon reach a conclusion apart from a few timetable proposals in areas affected by line capacity issues – more work still needed to be done here. There were admittedly some continuing problems with overcrowding, because of the delays in the rolling stock programme and its associated training requirements, and with cancellations in Northern's West area, because of ongoing negotiations with the drivers' union, ASLEF, about rest day working.

Marketing of advance and off-peak tickets was underway and, helped by enhanced revenue protection initiatives, passenger numbers and revenue were up compared to last year. Station improvement programmes were continuing.

Both Kulvinder Bassi of DfT and other Northern managers stressed the importance of the recently re-launched Community Rail movement to the railway industry and to the inclusive provision of public transport to the community. Several other speakers presented strikingly varied examples of successful community rail initiatives throughout the north. These encompassed projects for station enhancement, marketing the use of the railway, community outreach, and inclusivity. A positive day which paid tribute to the huge amount of volunteer time expended on linking the railways and communities together in an improving way.

FRANCHISES

As a result of the ongoing review into the railway industry, including the franchising process, LNER will continue to operate the East Coast Main Line in public hands for the foreseeable future whilst Arriva CrossCountry Trains (which also operate to Leeds) has been given a further extension to its franchise. The transfer of East Midland trains (running Inter-City services on the former Midland Main Line) from Stagecoach to Abellio took place as scheduled in mid-August. Virgin Trains (Virgin/Stagecoach) will cease to run the West Coast Line in December. The new operator of the West Coast Main Line Services (from Lancaster and elsewhere) will be First Trenitalia.

Virgin took over WCML services from British Rail Inter-City and has overseen great changes on the route. Whatever one's views on some of Virgin's idiosyncracies over the years they have bequeathed a reliable, comfortable and frequent express service to the capital and could be said to have completed BR's aborted APT project with their introduction of the technically superb Pendolinos – which will be retained and refurbished by the new operator (creating a fortunate Italian connection!). The relatively less successful cross-country Voyagers, will be replaced by new units. The new franchisee is also intended to be the shadow integrated (track/stock) operator of HS services but, as reported elsewhere, that at the very least will have slipped back in time.

LASRUG was formed in 1989. Richard Watts, until recently the County Rail Officer for the Lancashire County Council and then a young History teacher and enthusiastic member of the Railway Development Society, warned at a meeting in Bentham that, unless action was taken, the line would more than likely be closed. At that time the Settle-Carlisle line was just about winning its fight to stay alive and our case seemed equally urgent if not more so.

The Settle-Carlisle's cause attracted national even international attention and support, but the old 'Little' North Western line to Morecambe had to rely, at least at first, on support of a more local nature. Our earliest membership was drawn from Craven and Lancaster and Morecambe area residents, who, responding to reports of threats of closure in the local press, sought to preserve a line which had historic significance, linking West Yorkshire to 'Bradford-by-the-Sea' (Morecambe).

We were very fortunate quite early on to have the active support of North Yorkshire Councillor Ralph Atkinson, who fought hard for our cause at various levels. We were also supported by friends who were members of the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line and had been involved in their own struggle to prevent closure.

And struggle it was. British Rail continued to pursue its policy of retrenchment as the front cover of our August 1991 Newsletter illustrates. However, the existence of a very committed and active group regularly campaigning to maintain and develop the service and to keep letters and articles about the line on the desks of BR's managers was a determining factor in its remaining open.

It was Councillor Ralph Atkinson who led the way to the formation in 1991 of the Lancaster and Skipton Railway Joint Action Group (LASJAG). This organisation brought together representatives of all the county and district councils through which the line runs, the Transport Users Consultative Committee (NW) and LASRUG. There was now a more authoritative body, in which LASRUG played a much stronger role than it ever could have done separately, and which railway and government could not ignore.

After privatisation between 1994 and 1997 the scene began to look different. Although it brought its own problems in fragmentation and inexperience, some of the difficulties we had had of dealing with BR 'at arm's length' eased. As our membership increased and LASJAG's influence began to bear fruit, the service increased to 5 trains per day each way.

The committee was assisted at this time in no small measure by the presence of Robin Morris. Robin was a charismatic figure whose knowledge of all forms of transport and especially of timetables and operational practices was encyclopaedic. He had begun his working life in the booking office at Morecambe Euston Road station and had latterly worked as the general manager of BEA in New York, before becoming a transport consultant much used by BR's timetablers. We also had an outstanding secretary in Pauline Hill, who, as a veteran train traveller, viewed railway operations through critical but humorous eyes.

Throughout the nineties when progress in securing improvements to the service was slow, LASRUG gained strength and confidence from its association with adjoining campaigning rail groups. The Friends of Settle-Carlisle clearly had a common cause geographically and operationally but meetings were also held with the Furness Line Action Group (FLAG) and the Lakes Line Rail User Group (LLRUG) to discuss common problems and strategies. The TUCC (NW) – later adulterated by government - was also a vital forum through which the voice of user groups could be amplified and transmitted to government level.

However, things were to develop more rapidly after the millennium when the idea of Community Rail, the brain-child of Paul Salveson and others, began to take hold in the minds of those who were keen to see a regeneration of more rural parts of the network.

INFORMATION SCREENS AT MORECAMBE

Northern has experienced difficulties in maintaining a wifi connection to the customer information screens on the platforms at Morecambe for sometime. With the limited opening hours at the ticket office the screens are vital to keep passengers up-to-date with train-running information. Funding has now been found to enable the installation of permanent wiring to the screens to ensure passenger have continuous stream of real-time information.

NEW BENTHAM LINE GUIDE

In response to many requests from passengers, LASRUG and the CRP have recently produced a new up- dated, pocket-sized, fold-out line guide containing a brief history of the route, a route map and details of attractions along our dementia-friendly railway.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions fall due on the date of the LASRUG AGM, 20th September 2019. The annual subscription rate will remain at £7.00 for 2019/20.

Please send your subscription to the Membership Secretary at the address in the Contacts section on page 15 or you may care to renew your membership at the AGM. Your membership renewal form is enclosed.

YEAR-IN-INDUSTRY STUDENTS ENGAGE WITH CONONLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Towards the end of the summer term, Northern's Year-in-Industry students arranged an educational day out for the Silver Birch Class at Cononley Primary School to Salts Mill and Saltaire. The elements of the day included learning about rail safety, the history of the mill, and viewing David Hockney's 'The Arrival of Spring' exhibition (*below*), before creating their own 'Sheep on the Line' safety mural (*bottom*)



with a nod to the Hockney style.

The students along with Brian Haworth, our new Partnership Officer visited the pupils at school, prior to the Saltaire day, to give an introduction to the local railway line and rail safety.

Alastair Nicholson, a local artist helping with the project, guided the pupils through techniques with colourful

modelling materials and was on hand to help the youngsters create their masterpiece at the nearby Victoria Hall in Saltaire.

The pupils and staff enjoyed their lunchtime break in the beautiful surroundings of Roberts Park laid out originally for the benefit of the many mill workers employed by Sir Titus Salt.



Just before then of the summer Northern's Year-in-Industry students presented the Class with their framed safety-sheep artwork for display at Cononley Primary School. The youngsters also unveil copies of their design on both platforms at their local station, to encourage others to take care and stay off the tracks.



BENTHAM LINE WELCOMES NEW PARTNERSHIP OFFICER

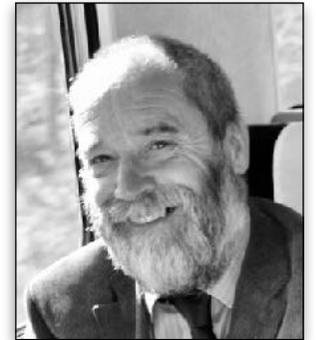
As a result of the increased amount of community activities along the Bentham Line, the community rail partnership has decided to employ a second part-time Community Rail Officer, Brian Haworth, to work alongside Catherine Huddleston, the existing officer, for the next year.

Brian has been with the partnership on a voluntary basis since January 2019, helping with the Northern student and apprentice programmes and assisting with educational developments for engaging local primary schools.

He began working for the partnership formally on 1st July, following his retirement from Community Rail Lancashire with whom he had worked for over 10 years. Whilst there he established a widely successful primary school rail-education programme.

He is a keen and knowledgeable enthusiast of the history of railways with a particular interest in engineering structures, having been a plant engineer for most of his working life, and is a long-standing member of Ribble Valley Rail. Brian's expertise on Irish bog railways has recently been sought by a television production company.

Away from the railway, Brian is a keen gardener and has been supporting Blackburn Rovers for 60 years.



ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED PASSENGERS ON THE LINE

I may be of help to know the following assistance is available to all passengers with particular needs, including those with hidden disabilities, on the Bentham Line and across the railway network.

Disabled Persons Railcard (railcards.co.uk)

If you have a disability which makes travelling by train difficult, you may qualify for this railcard. The railcard gives you 1/3 off rail fares across Britain for you and a friend/carer. The Disabled Persons railcard costs £20 per year or a 3-year card costs £54. Visit the website for further information.

UK Passenger Assist (Freephone 0800 0223720 - 24 hours a day)

For a helping hand when travelling by train use the above number to arrange assistance up to 24 hours in advance of travel. This could include meeting you at the station entrance, navigating the station, accompanying you to your train, helping you on or off your train (with a ramp if necessary) or helping with your transfer between trains.

Boarding and alighting from the train

All trains and staffed stations have ramps to help less able passengers to board and alight from the train and to facilitate the journeys of those passengers in wheelchairs. The conductor-guard is there to help you at unstaffed stations. Larger stations, such as Leeds, have passenger assistance teams.

On board the train

Priority seating for those with additional needs is available on all services near the entrance doors. There is at least one wheelchair space on every service. On Northern's new and refurbished trains this is adjacent to a fully accessible toilet

Specifically, in relation to the Bentham Line

Platform Access

All platforms at the following stations are fully accessible: Leeds, Bradford Forster Square, Shipley, Bingley, Keighley, Skipton, Hellifield, Long Preston, Giggleswick, Bentham, Carnforth, Lancaster, Bare Lane Morecambe and Heysham Port.

At Gargrave, Clapham (N. Yorks) and Wennington the eastbound platforms have level access but access to the westbound services is via a footbridge with steps. If passengers wish to travel westbound to or from these station, they should contact Northern who will provide replacement road transport to or from the nearest accessible station.

Where there are ticket gates to access and exit platforms, Leeds, Bradford Forster Square and Skipton, there will be at least one wide gate to facilitate travel for those passengers in wheelchairs and those with heavy luggage or pushchairs.

Dementia and Community Rail Project

The project has encouraged the front-line staff on the Bentham Line and beyond, both on the trains and at stations to think positively about offering assistance to all, especially those with additional needs whether visible or hidden. Please do not hesitate to ask for assistance before, during or at the end of your journey.

TICKET MACHINES ON THE BENTHAM LINE

Larger stations on our route have received their new ticket machines and similar machines are about to be installed at the smaller stations too. All Bentham Line stations will have ticket machines. The onus will then once again be on the passenger, whenever possible, to purchase a ticket before boarding their intended service. Passengers will need to allow sufficient time, once the machines are in place, to purchase a ticket before joining a train service.

At the unstaffed stations the machines will not accept cash, and a credit or debit card will be needed to make a purchase. Passengers without such a card will need to obtain a 'promise-to-pay' slip from the machine before the journey they intend to make. They will then be able to pay the conductor-guard onboard their train.

Only full fares will be available to passengers without tickets or promise-to-pay slips on the train and there is the possibility of having to pay a penalty fare too.

For those people with disabilities which prevent them using the ticket machines, appropriate consideration will be given by the conductor-guard on the train.

One of the main challenges in this franchise will always be for Northern to reduce the large amount of fare evasion across its network. Ticket barriers and ticket machines at stations are two ways in which they are beginning to tackle this problem far more widely. We are all no doubt aware of the ways some people try to avoid paying the due fare: from buying a reduced fare ticket when a full fare or railcard is required to taking screen shots of mobile tickets which have been purchased by others. On shorter journeys between 'open' stations, such as there local services between Lancaster, Bare Lane and Morecambe, it can be a particular challenge to ensure all fares are collected.

COFFEE MORNING THANKS

Our thanks are due once more to those who helped make our summer coffee mornings in Gargrave and Bentham successful. Generous donations were made towards the raffle and sales stalls and volunteers gave freely of their time. Both were profitable from a financial and community point of view. Well done!



BENTHAM LINE STATION DEVELOPMENTS



Over the past few months contractors have been working at a number of the more rural stations on the Bentham Line as Northern continues its programme of enhancements laid down for this franchise.

Bentham (*left*) and Giggleswick have seen the groundworks for and the installation of new and larger 3-bay waiting shelters. The shelters have traditional and perch seating and have wide and sloped entrances to facilitate the accommodation of passengers with and wheel chair or child's buggy. They are internally lit by low-energy LED lighting.

At Hellifield (*bottom left, opposite*) and Gargrave the new customer information screens were installed in August and are due to be commissioned. They will show details of the next services available along with real-time running information. A passenger announcement system is mounted above these screens.

Works have also taken place at Bentham, Giggleswick, Hellifield and Gargrave in preparation for the installation of new closed-circuit television cameras which will be constantly live and monitored centrally. Ducting, control cabinets and foundation posts (*bottom centre and right, opposite*) can be seen at several stations.

At the smaller stations the conversion of the main platform lighting heads to new LED low-energy versions will take place during 2020. Larger stations such as Skipton and Shipley already have their new energy-saving lighting in place.

LASRUG AGM

We are pleased to welcome Pete Myers back to Bentham, as our guest speaker at this year's AGM. He last spoken to LASRUG members over five years ago, during the previous Serco-Abellio joint franchise.

He is no stranger to the Bentham Line and a positive supporter of the work of our Community Rail Partnership especially the Dementia and Community Rail project.

Right: Pete at the new Class 331 EMU launch at Skipton.



**The Annual General Meeting of LASRUG
will be held in the Lower Hall, Bentham Town Hall at 7pm
on Friday 20th September 2019**

**Guest Speaker: Pete Myers, Stakeholder Manager (East)
at Northern**

**'Our Railway in the North'
Please note earlier starting time**

EXCURSION PLUS

Excursion trains have played an enormous role in developing the popularity of rail travel since Thomas Cook's 1841 temperance excursion from Leicester to Loughborough. In the 1950s and 60s I remember how eagerly posters and newspaper adverts were scanned for trips to Bradford from Morecambe or to Morecambe from Leeds or from anywhere to Blackpool Illuminations. Since then such few excursions as there have been have tended to be to major events or sporting occasions.

Perhaps the nearest thing we have now to a traditional excursion is the steam special.

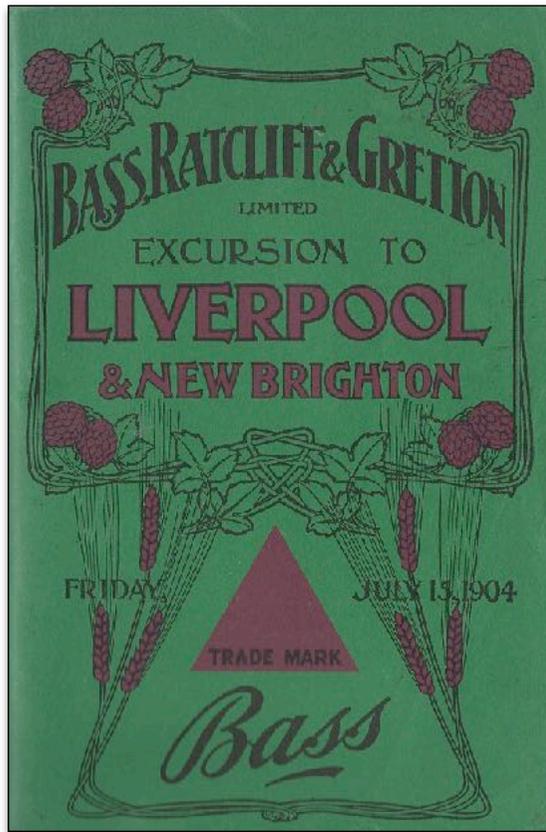
However, recently I came across a publication of an excursion that throws all others into the shade.

It is a book - the word booklet would demean it - of 96 pages with over 100 photographic illustrations and drawn maps, which was given to every employee of the Bass Brewery of Burton-on-Trent on the occasion of their annual works outing to Liverpool and New Brighton on Friday July 15th, 1904.

Published by the directors the book details everything anyone travelling on the trip might want to know to get the most out of their rail away-day. Each employee had his or her individual train ticket and was allotted to one of the trains - specifically. They are reminded several times of the necessity of keeping to their allotted train. This and numerous other instructions and injunctions remind one of a school outing. The employees are the directors' charges that they are to take care of and instruct and educate.

The instruction begins on the journey from Burton with details of the Midland Railway locos that will haul the trains, details of the Derbyshire landscape and towns traversed - the sort of detail you might need if you were getting off the train and visiting each place rather than simply glimpsing through the window. South of Manchester the trip moves onto the rails of the Cheshire Lines Committee and our trippers get a lovely drawn map of the approaches to Liverpool along the Mersey. And reassurance is given as they enter the big city:

'Wet or fine I am satisfied (says the directorial voice) that Liverpool will be found a most suitable place for a large party like BASS & Co., for even if it should be raining - at the New Brighton Tower; Walker Art Gallery, Museums and other places, the whole of the excursionists can find shelter and plenty of enjoyment all day long'.



Everything beyond the railway journey had been pre-arranged by Bass to ensure the smooth running of the day. For Liverpool the Bass adventurers have every detail about the principal streets, buildings, docks and, in particular, St. George's Hall and the Walker Art Gallery (down to individual works of art to view) and all illustrated. Indispensably there is a full list of all public lavatories! There is a guide to riding the Overhead

Railway and the Mersey Electric Railway, with full fare tables.

Those bold souls who chose to cross the river to New Brighton could take one of the Wallasey Ferries - all listed with tonnage of the boats and timetables. The Tower, the Fort and all the seaside attractions are itemised, but however carried away by all the attractions, you need not worry, for the benevolent bosses of Bass are ready with advice for you even here:

'The following are signs that sea-bathing does not agree with you, or that you have stayed too long in the water :- shivering and blueness of the skin, stiffness in the fingers and chattering of the teeth, giddiness, headache, loss of appetite, and depression of spirits. Dress quickly without dawdling. (Is that after you have lost your appetite?! Ed.) If you can get a pail of hot water for your feet, as you often can do, it very much promotes circulation, and is a great luxury'.

The entertainments at the Tower are given with timings for the band concerts and every piece of music they will play. The more adventurous could fill their visit with a day excursion sail to the Isle of Man. (Details of menus on board, sights on the island, pictures and a map of the mouth of the Mersey.)



If you so wished, it was also possible to extend your day excursion ticket to a week ticket, not at Bass's expense, of course, but they would offer fatherly advice even here.

'Mrs Cowin, Clarendon House, 9, Loch Promenade, receives numerous Burton families in the season and you cannot do better than apply to her - if full she will pass you on to her son, or sister, close by'.

Another option for an extension was Llandudno and North Wales, where again Bass & Co have thought it out, including hotels such as the Belle Vue at Trefrin 'where a glass of 'Bass' and some refreshment will be welcome on a hot day'. Indeed, dotted throughout the book are tips about where Bass beers are to be had - pages 92 and 93 consist of a complete list of where to buy Bass in Liverpool, New Brighton and North Wales.

Station Master Liverpool Central (left) said: "My head-quarters for the day will be at the Adelphi Hotel, room 14, but I shall be on the platform, morning and evening, to answer enquiries, dispose of difficulties owing to loss of tickets, and to endeavour to make things comfortable for all".

Continued overleaf.

In addition to reminders about appropriate liquid refreshment there are also several reminders about the good conduct the management expects from its employees.

This is a remarkable publication, which offers an insight not only into the benevolent paternalistic capitalism of late Victorian/Edwardian Britain but of the way in which businesses could interact freely and easily to enable the holder of the Bass excursion ticket to move smoothly through pre-arrangement from one railway company to another, thence to overhead railway and ferries and public attractions. Nor was it a one-off, since there are references to a previous similar production of 1899. The directors of Bass say in this book that 'It should be an honour and great privilege to be one of the party forming by far the largest excursion organised by a single firm throughout the world'. But more than that, the idea of a day out on the railway with friends and colleagues that is both enjoyable and educational is always attractive. And with a book in your pocket that answers any question you may ask about the day – with or without the stimulation of the company's product, unbeatable.

The book was reprinted by the Bass museum in 1977 and by Merseyside Museums in 1983. It's a fascinating item of Britain's railway and social history. There are a few copies still about on line.

JSW

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: jphilipheyas@aol.com or look on the website: www.stephensonloco.org.uk

03/10/19 - Railways of Western Turkey 1978 - an unexpected journey: Steve King

07/11/19 - An Illustrated History of the British Transport Police: Bill Rogerson M.B.E.

05/12/19 - Christmas Social Evening.

09/01/20 - Two Decades of Progress on the Lakes Line: Dick Smith

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

04/10/19 - A Taste of Japan: Gordon Davies

01/11/19 - More Local Scenes from the 60s: Noel Machell.

06/12/19 - AGM followed by Members' Presentation Evening.

03/01/20 - A History of BR Diesels Types 1 to 5: Steve fort.

Carnforth Station Heritage Centre

A Railwayana Fair will be held on the platform on Sunday 22nd September. The programme can be viewed on the website: www.carnforthstation.co.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

Government Ministerial Changes

The appointment of a new prime minister inevitably brought wholesale changes in personnel amongst the ministers responsible for transport matters. During the period of unstable government which began in 2017 there had already been even more changes than normal amongst the junior ministers in the Department for Transport but the Secretary of State, Chris Grayling had at least remained at the helm (though, as we have noted, steering the boat in all sorts of directions). He finally bailed out at the very last minute (no doubt earning a delay-repay for the rest of us) and his successor is Grant Shapps who has a reputation as an entrepreneur, a straight talker, and a not totally straightforward past political career. He is a regular rail commuter and has already made some eye-catching pronouncements, apparently including one that civil servants should keep briefs to two sheets of A4.

His team consists of: Chris Heaton - Harris (Minister of State (Rail/Brexit) – the fourth holder of this post since 2018!); George Freeman (Minister of State (Technology/Connectivity)); Nusrat Ghani (Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Maritime/Accessibility)); Paul Maynard (Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Aviation/Major Rail Projects) – a North West MP returning to the Department); Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the House of Lords (Roads/Buses)).

Major Infrastructure Projects

Because of serious slippages in the construction timetable and budgetary overspends, a full review into the High Speed Rail 2 and 3 projects (Euston to Birmingham and beyond) has been ordered by the Secretary of State – who has already confirmed that a delay of some 5 years is inevitable even if the project continues as originally envisaged. There have always been a considerable number of critics of the project on a number of grounds (high cost prestige project, environmental impact, routing, other infrastructure needs) whilst its supporters continue to champion its completion as essential on economic, operational, regional and ecological ground.

A review was probably inevitable given the government's nervousness as a result of problems with previous major projects such as electrification schemes, Crossrail and Thameslink, but it adds another layer of uncertainty to transport planning. Conversely, but equally politically, the new Prime Minister has committed the government to a new trans-Pennine rail route between Manchester and Leeds – part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail project. This will also be complex and expensive and needs ultimately to relate to HS2/3 and other ongoing/stalled rail projects in the North.

LASRUG NEWSLETTER CONTACTS

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

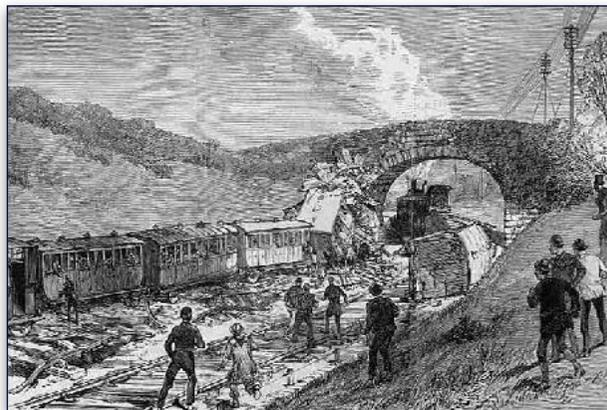
RECOLLECTIONS OF A 'LITTLE' NORTH WESTERN SIGNALMAN - Part Two

The Lancaster newspaper interview with Edward Briscoe, who worked on the line from 1851 to 1891 concludes with two recollections, one curious, the other tragic.

Another interesting recollection of Mr Briscoe's was of the branch line from Clapham to Ingleton. In the early days the traffic was not heavy and only usually consisted of two carriages which were operated by horse power, two horses being generally employed for this purpose. There is a rising incline of about a mile and a half to two miles from Clapham known as 'The Bank' and from the top of this the line runs down a gentle slope into Ingleton station. The carriages were drawn slowly up this incline to the top of the bank, where the horses were detached, and, whilst the train was stopped for this purpose the horses were put into a sort of loose horse-box used for them and then the whole set in motion and allowed to gently glide down the incline into the station. The brakesman rode on the top of one of the carriage and his wheel was fixed up there so that he could regulate his brake to suit his speed. The horses, which were carried down with the passengers, were used to bring back the carriages again to the top of the bank for the return journey. Here the operation was repeated and the carriages allowed to run back again into Clapham station. The progress was necessarily slow and now has been greatly improved with the rest of the railway service, so that this branch is worked as scientifically as other lines, horse power being long since displaced by steam power.

Mr Briscoe retains a vivid recollection of the notorious Wennington accident of 1880 (*below*), which he describes as the hardest piece of work he had during his long career as a signalman. On this occasion he went into his box at Low Bentham at seven o'clock in the morning, his usual hour, and was on duty until three o'clock the following morning, a period of twenty hours, during which, after the news of the accident spread, he had special trains in from all over the Midland system bringing directors and officials to the scene of the accident. As his box was the nearest to where the accident occurred, this special traffic made things very busy for him inasmuch as the lines were blocked and trains were pouring in with their occupants all anxious to get to the scene of the catastrophe with as little delay as possible. In a few days matters were back to normal but it was certainly to his credit that he was able to meet the demands made upon him by such an unusual and unexpected emergency.

During his long career Mr Briscoe has never been the cause of an accident, even of a trivial nature, and in his forty years of service has only had three periods of illness. He has served the Midland Railway Company long and faithfully, and with him go the best wishes of all connected with the railway service at Bentham, who honour and respect one who has so well and for so long done his duty.



RAILWAY TALK FROM YESTERYEAR

Browsing through an old copy of Steam World from 2002, I came across the following letter. (Ed.)

Recent letters to Steam World bring back memories to many readers of the whole atmosphere surrounding railways in steam days. Indeed, it was not just the sight of engines working or even stationary that made it all worthwhile but a combination of all the senses.

I was at Bentham near Lancaster from 1966-68 as a teenage boarding pupil. Having left home for the first time (my parents were living and working abroad where the schooling was unsatisfactory) and being on the doorstep of the Carnforth – Leeds railway, it was strangely comforting for a young lad to hear the 8Fs, Black Fives and 9Fs working hard up from Wennington at night with their freight trains. There was no smell or sight involved but the sound almost made me feel safe and I could forget for the moment about feeling homesick....corny, I know, but I remain convinced that this helped during my early days in that boarding house.

After some months I was moved to a dormitory from which I could see the line and, even when it was dark, it was fascinating to hear the trains climbing the gradient and then passing by the school almost in silhouette and with brief glimpses of the fire in the firebox. I joined the school's railway society and the best birthday present I received in 1967 was an Ian Allan combined edition from my brother. Then it became almost as enjoyable as experiencing the freight trains passing at night to 'cop' them during the day (where possible between or even during lessons!).

All I would wish now would be to be back on Bentham Grammar School playing fields on a cold winter's day watching the early- morning oil train from Heysham as it gradually made its steady but sure-footed way towards us behind a mighty 9F. There's atmosphere for you!

Ian McCart, Tollerton, York

(Ed. Ian's affection for the Leeds – Heysham line has never dimmed. He is now a member of LASRUG and will be writing us some pieces for this newsletter in due course.)



THE VICAR'S WIFE

Some of you will, I hope, remember an article about railways and the clergy entitled 'Dog-collars on the Footplate' in our March 2016 issue. Browsing some old copies of Railway World from 1968 recently I came upon a lovely piece by a vicar's wife. I offer a few extracts, courtesy of Railway World. (Ed.)

Where there's steam, there's parsons – from bishops (notably Eric Treacy) and writers (the Rev.W.Awdry) to the countless curates, vicars, chaplains and archdeacons who crowd on platforms to see Flying Scotsman pass and then dash off to marry, bury, visit or confer. My husband is of the lowest order (not of husbands, of course, but of clergy) – he's a curate, who since the age of eight has been an ardent railway enthusiast. I remember his surprise on finding that I, too, had once collected train numbers and even understood what 4-4-0 meant. Such knowledge has stood me in good stead. Ever since he put on my engagement ring on Platform 8S of York station (*below*) and immediately dashed off to see an A4, I realised that I might as well share his hobby rather than be left out on his days off.

Not that rail jaunts are limited to days off, for I've been pulled out of bed at 7.00 a.m. to take photographs of special engines before Mattins at 8.00 a.m. I have also been to sheds on the way home from Evensong, feeling somewhat overdressed on the footplate of 'Bittern' in a silky dress, chiffon hat and high heels.

Our earliest start on a rail-inspired trip was at 4.30 a.m. one June morning, when, I was assured, it would be a glorious journey through the Yorkshire Dales to Shap, and that we would arrive there just in time to see a good deal of steam. Sitting in the sun by Scout Green signal box four hours later, stuffing cornflakes into our then one-year-old son, I must admit it was worth it.

Railway relics are my husband's passion now that steam has gone. The purchase of an A3 nameplate four days before our wedding made me think twice about marriage when I heard the cost. I was assured it was an investment and I relented. From its first wobbly home on the window sill it has now moved to a position par excellence in our large hall. No one can doubt which room in our house is which. A huge orange 'Refreshments' sign hangs over the dining room door and 'General Room and Booking Office' over the study. In the toilet we are reminded that 'passengers should not flush it while the train is standing in the station'. The piece de resistance, however, is the smokebox door of an 8F 2-8-0 pinned into the wall by the side of the front door. Some mistake it for a central heating installation, others a security safe, and one lady thought it was part of a submarine. Its arrival coincided with the arrival of bridal guests for a wedding, who were understandably perturbed to see their parson in boiler suit and beret poring over scrap metal only 20 minutes before he was to marry their daughter. A few days later it was hammered into place, duly painted black and silver with the number plate in white. The lamp is placed on it when we are in residence.

'It's like living in a train' say some. Well....



MUMS WITH SLINGS

A group of mums had a day out with their babies on 15th May by train from Lancaster to Clapham on the Bentham Line. But not a single pram or push chair was in evidence.

Morecambe Bay Sling Library collaborated with Community Rail Lancashire to plan an outing on a train for baby-wearing mums. This library loans baby carriers to families and provides support in how to use the sling.

Community Rail Lancashire's Education Officer, Karen Bennett, said: "Travelling by train is a lot easier with a sling than with a pram. I had my son, Laurie, in a sling until he was three and I appreciate all the benefits. I want to encourage more parents to use slings rather than prams on a train."

She added "a sling makes it easier to negotiate station steps, board the train, and not having to find somewhere to keep the pram.

Baby-wearing encourages healthy mental and emotional development and research shows babies who are worn cry less."

Travel was kindly provided by Northern, for the trip. The group enjoyed chatting on the journey and got speaking to other passengers whilst en route. Some of the older children completed the Bentham Line's activity pack passed on to them by Catherine Huddleston, the Bentham Line's Community Rail Partnership Officer.

On arrival at Clapham, the group took the mile-and-a-quarter walk up to the village passing sheep, cows and even a week-old foal on the way. In the village they went for tea and cake in the Reading Room Café. As the sun shone down the outside terrace, they exchanged baby-wearing tips and Abi and Tamsin, sling consultants advised how best to position baby. Many of the group commented how they had not thought of travelling to The Dales by train and were keen to return – especially with a sling.

NORTHERN AND CRP SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Again this year, the railway helped youngsters from SELFA, (Skipton Extended Learning For All), a charity which supports vulnerable, disadvantaged and disabled young people to experience a sense of happiness and belonging by taking them to the seaside at Morecambe. Rail travel was provided by Northern and support on the journey and in Morecambe by the CRP's community rail officers.

The group was a credit to SELFA and benefited greatly from the day out.



NOW YOU SEE THEM



Twin Class 142 'Pacers' in platforms 1 and 2 at Lancaster. The first Northern Pacer has now been permanently retired, others have gone into 'warm storage', just in case they are needed as stand-ins this autumn at leaf-fall time.

UPDATE ON THE PACERS

The first 'unforced' withdrawal of a class 142 'Pacer' unit has taken place as a symbolic gesture of Northern's good faith towards its commitment to cease deploying 142 and 144 units. Because of operational, technical and training needs, however, the franchise commitment and statutory deadlines of withdrawal of Pacers by December 2019 is unlikely to be completely met. Our line continues to see regular use of both 142 and 144 units alongside Sprinters/Super Sprinters from classes 150, 153 and 158 and this will most likely continue until December to fully enable new train units to be bedded in and staff training to be completed.

In an amendment of a previous decision to withdraw them first, some class 144 units will then continue in operation in a limited way into the first quarter of the New Year in South Yorkshire. A good number of photographers have been observed locally catching the Pacers whilst they can. Three Pacer carriages have been offered by the Department for Transport and the rolling stock leasing company as prizes in a competition for conversion to community use, marking their significant contribution to the local transport scene over the last 35 years.

What type of rolling stock will there be on the Bentham Line from the December 2019 timetable? Let's hope for at least the refurbished air-conditioned Class 158 units which will all have tables, accessible toilets, information screens and will be equipped with wifi.