

## Editorial Comment

### *Traffic soars, but...*

I hope readers will notice various contrasts in this issue of *airelines*. Last time, I reported that passenger numbers on the Leeds Northwest group of services, that is the electrified lines linking Leeds, Bradford Forster Square, Skipton and Ilkley, had topped the 10 million mark for the first time in the railway's history – up from 9.6 million passenger journeys in calendar year 2004 to almost 11 million in 2005.

Now, preliminary figures indicate that this stunning growth in patronage is continuing – year on year growth is over 15%, with the passenger numbers for 2006 expected to top 12 million.

Performance – as measured by the industry standard public performance measure – is also continuing at levels above the contracted figure: after having climbed steadily during last winter, the trend has continued upwards with the figures for both

*continued on page 2*

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

### *To shorten our trains??*

In my last *Chairman's Report* I said "The success of the Airedale line over the last decade shows what can be achieved with investment in new trains and electrification. The positive effect on the local economy of the high quality rail service is widely acknowledged". It would seem not widely enough – especially, it might seem, in the Department for Transport!

At the moment we are still waiting for resolution of the deadlock over the financing of eight of the coaches in our electric trains. As fully reported on page 3, the lease runs out on 31 March 2007 – and negotiations to secure the coaches should have been concluded by 30 September. While all parties involved in the negotiations appear to be 'hopeful' that differences will be resolved there is still no conclusion.

*continued on page 2*

## Quick 1? Quiz

**In which area** of the British Isles is a new railway being built, on which a fleet of 140mph trains, costing over £8 million each, will operate from 2009, one reason for this expenditure given being economic regeneration and social inclusion benefits in the area served?

a/ Downtrodden southern Ireland? b/ depressed Durham Coast, c/ decaying Merseyside, d/ derelict former coalfield areas of Yorkshire, e/ delightful Aire Valley, or f/ someplace else?

Answer on the back page!!

**Chairman's Report**, *continued from page 1*

Meanwhile, passenger numbers continue to grow rapidly. We already regularly have over 500 passengers on peak trains in and out of Leeds. Some of the peak Bradford to Skipton trains are full and standing. Some 'off peak' trains carry over 300 passengers. In this context the prospect of reducing the seating capacity of half of the fleet from 360 to 260 makes no sense. We are stuck in the middle of the wrong

debate, a debate that was never mentioned in the recently published *Northern Rail review*.

All the energies of staff in the DfT, Northern Rail and Network Rail should be focused on plans to increase the capacity of the route. Passenger and freight traffic is booming. Studies, like the *Airedale Masterplan* identify the need for new and improved stations. We need more trains – not less.

*Tim Calow*

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**Editorial Comment**, *continued from page 1*

Leeds-Skipton and Bradford-Skipton being well above 90% during the summer of 2006. The Aire Valley's moving annual average is very close to 90%, against a contracted target figure of 85%. At the time of writing, early November, the exceptionally mild autumn has led to a very late leaf-fall, and it will be interesting to see how this, and the efforts made by Network Rail to counter the notorious effects of leaves on the line, will reflect on the performance over the winter.

As readers will know, our Class 333 electric trains are relatively new, and the reliability of such complex pieces of engineering can often be an issue until the equipment is properly bedded in and problem areas identified and rectified. But here again there is good news, **airlines** understands that the average miles between failures of the 333s has increased from 6,000 to 18,000 over the last 2-3 years, which contributes significantly to the overall performance figures.

That is not to say all is rosy, for the good performance and the subsequent very high levels of traffic growth is leading to ever more crowded trains, especially to and from Leeds, yet there is no sign whatsoever of anything being actually done to alleviate this situation, nor to encourage further use of the railway so as to rid the corridor

of its even more congested roads and associated pollution. There is more on this theme on other pages.

**airlines** is also well aware there have been some bad days during the past few months. The complex nature of the timetable, necessary to serve all routes with 2-trains-per-hour with the minimum number of units (there are also staffing considerations), means that when there is a failure on one part of the Leeds Northwest network, the knock-on effect elsewhere is both severe and rapid – a signal failure at Burley can lead to no trains through Bingley. Given the tight nature of the operation and the large and consistent growth in traffic, there could well be a benefit if the Ilkley services to be 'de-coupled' from those to Skipton to avoid cross-over effects. That would probably require one extra train to be available, and there lies the problem.

**NOTE:** The diagram followed by the Leeds Northwest trains is, typically Leeds-Ilkley-Bradford-Skipton-Leeds-Bradford-Leeds-Skipton-Bradford-Ilkley-Leeds-Bradford-Leeds. This takes seven hours to complete, and with two trains per hour, 14 trains are needed to fulfil the services, plus one in each peak. There are 16 Class 333s in the fleet, but a diesel unit is often used off-peak. *Steve Broadbent*

# Fancy SHORTER trains?? *by Steve Broadbent*

So important is this topic to AVRUG that both the Editorial and the Chairman's Report in this issue contrast how fast passenger numbers are growing on our line, (well over 10% year and year for some time now, thanks, in no small part, to the excellent quality of our Class 333 electric trains) with the distinct possibility that some of those trains may soon lose one carriage, or 100 of the 360 seats.

It's a long saga. The 333s, owned by Angel Trains, the train leasing company itself owned by The Royal Bank of Scotland, were originally specified as 3-car trains. Then, shortly after, funds were found to allow eight of the 16 to be extended to 4-cars, by the addition of a 100-seat 'trailer car'.

Going further back in time, in 1998, when John Prescott's 10-year rail plan looked for considerable growth and investment, a scheme, the Rail Passenger Partnership (RPP) was launched as a quick and simple way for funding to be found for qualifying projects. One hundred million pounds, chicken feed in railway terms, was made available over the first three years, and the RPP, highly successful as it was in producing 'quick wins', was relaunched in summer 2003 with an enhanced remit.

In the meantime, WYPTE and the then train operator, Arriva Trains Northern, were quick off the mark, and in 2001 a successful RPP bid was submitted, with £2,858,900 being secured to help fund the remaining eight trailer cars, bringing all 16 333s to 4-cars.

Then, in 2004, the Strategic Rail Authority suddenly withdrew the RPP scheme, in an attempt to save every penny regardless of the benefits, and it became obvious that with RPP funding



*A four-car Class 333 stands in the autumn sunlight at Skipton station. Tim Calow*

ceasing, the continuing funding of these trailers cars could not be guaranteed after the RPP contract ran out, on 31 March 2007, a fact that was later written into the Northern franchise agreement.

And so it proved to be, for we are in danger of these cars being withdrawn from service from that date, because the various parties - the DfT, Northern Rail, WYPTE and Angel Trains - cannot agree, as we go to press, on how the lease charges, broadly £1 million per year, can be met.

Negotiations between the parties have been taking place for some time, and the deadline for the lease to be formally terminated has become very elastic. Everyone is well aware that the removal of these carriages (from our trains and most likely to a siding) would cause many Aire Valley (and Wharfedale line) commuters to have to stand in sardine-like conditions, resulting, as exasperation grows, in even greater road congestion....

At the beginning of November Northern Rail formally terminated the lease, as it was bound to do. Is there time for a face saving solution to be found? Sources say that the PTE, Northern Rail and other bodies have all offered to contribute money towards

the lease costs, and Angel has reduced the asking price, but there is still a gap, and, of course, the DfT is said to be holding out for every penny.

It is a scandal the situation has been allowed to get this far, this close to the wire, even though it may well be political brinkmanship and a solution will be found at a minute to midnight. I can only echo Tim Calow's words, that with passenger numbers growing so fast and the continued economic growth of the Leeds-Bradford area heavily dependent on rail, more should be being spent on new trains and services in our region as a whole. As **airlines** closes for press, the WYPTE assures AVRUG that negotiations are continuing in a positive spirit, with everyone wanting to see a solution, but, as with all business negotiations, the parties are coming to the table from different directions.

Starting with this issue, **airlines** is being e-mailed to politicians and other relevant bodies in our region, so they will be well aware of our views on this 'interesting' situation. But it would do no harm whatsoever if members reminded their elected representatives

of the need for investment, even on arguably the north's most successful railway services, and the harm done by penny-pinching cuts.

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## S+C travel promotion – and some fares reduced!

Until 16 February 2007 Northern and the WYPTE are combining to offer reduced travel over the Leeds/Bradford-Skipton-Carlisle/Lancaster/Morecambe lines to travellers holding WYPTE Metrocards and Concessionary permits. The maximum day return fare is just £7 and a brochure is available with all the details.

In what may be a first in railway history(!), Northern is to freeze, and even REDUCE, many normal fares along the same lines from January 2007 – For example, a Leeds to Carlisle day return is down by over £5 to £25, while the Appleby to Settle day return is down to £10.70.

Northern says it has also removed all the fares anomalies and has made the lines' fares structure more visible, the same in either direction, and fair.

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## Safety, Security and Support

Northern Rail has introduced high visibility Rail Security Teams, which will work in partnership with British Transport Police, to police parts of the Northern network – including the Aire and Wharfe Valley lines – as a visible deterrent to the small minority of people committing anti-social behaviour on the railway. Their presence, says Northern Rail, should provide support to both passengers and employees at stations and onboard Northern train.

Northern Security Teams have been equipped with response vehicles allowing them speedy access to problem areas of a route. The mobile units are fully equipped with communications and video equipment capable of remotely monitoring stations and car parks while the teams are responding to an incident or patrolling the route by train.

The teams, which have the full support of BTP, including regular joint briefings and intelligence sharing, comprise 14 personnel split into three teams of two covering North Manchester, three teams of two covering NW Leeds and two supervisors.

# Along the line

*notes by Tim Calow*

## December timetable change

**T**here are few changes to our timetable from 10 December. (Members are reminded that the common Europe-wide date for the major annual rail timetable changes is now early-December.) Revised arrangements for stabling the electric units mean that the 06.12 Leeds to Bradford will no longer run. The service was very lightly used and alternative services are available.

The earlier departure times of Carlisle to Leeds services (introduced from last December to allow for temporary speed restrictions on the line) continue. On the Lancaster line the 08.19 from Leeds to Morecambe is still running direct to Morecambe with a connection at Carnforth for Lancaster. As usual on Winter Sundays there are only two return services on the Morecambe line with the first train from Leeds at 15.00 returning from Morecambe at 17.43.

## Engineering work

We are not aware at the moment of any more planned engineering work between Skipton & Bradford/Leeds, which will affect our train, services. There will, however, be further extensive work on the Settle-Carlisle line, which is reported on page 10.

## On the line

Generally services have been reliable. However there have been significant problems on a few days recently.

### **Thursday 12 October**

Services through Skipton were suspended until 14.30 after a service late on Wednesday evening damaged the overhead wires at the Leeds end of Skipton station. A bus shuttle ran between Keighley and Skipton. Four electric trains were stranded at Skipton which is also the base for most of the staff who operate the line. As a result services throughout the Leeds North West area were disrupted.

### **Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 October**

Services to and from Bradford were cancelled due to overhead wire problems in the Frizinghall area.

### **Monday 23 October**

A train failure at Armley caused major disruption to services in the morning peak.

Your Chairman has received favourable comments from several Skipton passengers who were able to complete their journeys on 12 October – albeit with some delay. As ever we would be interested in your feedback (cheers or boos) if your Aire Valley rail journey is affected in any way.

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## British Transport Police, North Eastern Area - Citizens' Panel

Some of you may recall my article in the last airlines about a British Transport Police (BTP) meeting I attended in Manchester, and I said that there would be one for the North East Area. This group is to be launched early in 2007.

If you are interested, please complete the enclosed pre-paid postcard. If this newsletter has been e-mailed to you, you can find out more by phoning 0207 8308911 or e-mail [BTP.citizenspanel@btp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:BTP.citizenspanel@btp.pnn.police.uk)

*Marten Lougee*

# The BIG One!

***Our intrepid Chairman, Tim Calow, does not restrict his travels to the Aire Valley line – he recently voyaged from Skipton to Vladivostok and Beijing , almost entirely by electric trains!!***

On 6 July I set off from Skipton on the 09.48 train – yet another journey to Leeds on the train – well yes and no. As it was our 15th wedding anniversary I continued to London with my wife and we spent the night out in London, but, while Tine returned to Skipton the next day, my journey had barely begun.

The following day I met up with my friend John and we continued to Brussels and Köln. There, after an evening meal we joined the sleeper for Moscow – for a journey that finished another sixteen days later on the evening of 23 July as train T72 – 19 vehicles and 1,000 tonnes – rolled into Beijing West station, two minutes early!!

How to give an impression of all that happened in between, when there were so many people we met and new places seen is all but impossible.

There was the picnic by the still, deep waters of Lake Baikal (by far the largest fresh water lake in the World, with 20% of it fresh water). We couldn't see across to the far side of the lake – through the haze – and especially after three of four glasses of the delicious cedar vodka. What was there to worry about as just down the mud track (no roads here!) our "electric train of high convenience" was waiting to take us slowly along by the rest of the lake?

There were the rappers we met in Vladivostok who insisted that we should drink more of their beer while they questioned us (rather fruitlessly!) about the rap scene back in the UK.



*Friday 7 July and I'm ready to board the 12.40 to Brussels and to leave the UK behind.*

Or our excellent meal in the back streets of Harbin. No menu in English, no staff who spoke English. John got out his Chinese phrasebook, pointed to "What do you recommend?" and we nodded at each suggestion, before eating an excellent and cheap meal!

The trains all ran to time (more or less). They were not all that fast but the average speed of nearly 40mph from Moscow to Vladivostok is as fast as many UK trains. Russia has advanced enormously from the



*Wednesday 12 July and our 1970's Czech-built loco receives a little attention during the 20 minute stop at Kirov - 12 hours from Moscow and only another 136 hours to go till the express will reach Vladivostok!*

economic disintegration of the 1990s, but customer service could best be described as patchy. The trains worked but small details like air-conditioning often didn't. We spent three days and nights in a coach in which the air-conditioning wasn't working and temperatures in the corridor reached 37° C, probably more in our compartment!

China specialises in enormous infrastructure investment. The track quality was excellent and travel in the Soft coaches is very comfortable. Booking tickets can however be a challenge. You can only buy single tickets - and not until five days before the departure day of your train. We discovered how difficult this can be when eight of us wanted to travel from Beijing to Guilin (in southern China).

After five visits to different ticket outlets we eventually got hold of tickets to travel the next morning - some hasty packing was required! While long distance services are excellent the local public transport infrastructure is lacking. Thus Beijing has only two tube lines and neither serves the main station. Suburban train services are

non-existent. People rely on overcrowded and slow buses and the several hundred thousand taxis which operate around the city. Meanwhile to relieve congestion the city authorities are now building the seventh ring road!

All round a fabulous experience. I've come back with around two thousand photos and an enormous store of memories. If any of you fancy repeating my voyage do contact me. It's well worth it!

*We stopped off for two days so we could see Lake Baikal. Here the tourist train pauses for a couple of hours by the lake at Polovinniy while we enjoy lunch - and that lovely cedar vodka.*



# Rail franchise news

*a round-up by Steve Broadbent*

**I**n the last *airlines* I described how four current franchises, that is Central, Silverlink, Cross Country and Midland Mainline, were to be "re-mapped" and re-organised into three new franchises, with West Midlands, East Midlands and Cross Country coming into being on 11 November, 2007, while Transport for London will take over responsibility for some of Silverlink's services.

This complex process continues, and the short list of bidders for the three new franchises has been announced. We should know the winners next summer, although as always these days it makes little real difference to passengers which parent company is in charge, most of the staff and managers remain unchanged if ownership does change, and the franchise contracts are so prescriptive as to make any entrepreneurship, let alone 'swash buckling' impossible.

Nevertheless, the new franchises will have different routes and/or timetables than exist at present, as the Department for Transport ceaselessly tries to cut the costs of the railways, especially outside of the south east, and I'll keep readers informed of any changes as they are known that would affect travel through Leeds – but don't expect anything new or better from the successors to the present operations in Leeds of Midland Mainline (to be placed in the new East Midlands franchise) or Virgin Cross Country (currently labelled 'New Cross Country'). The winner of the East Midlands franchise is not bound to continue the present Leeds-London St Pancras services, while all 'New Cross Country' trains through Leeds will run from Edinburgh via Newcastle and York to Birmingham, Bristol and Plymouth

(some going on to Penzance), there will be no direct Leeds-Bournemouth trains, for example, after December 2008 when these new franchises' new timetables will start.

## Northern news

One change will definitely happen is a new hourly Leeds-Nottingham service which is to start from the December 2008 timetable change. This will be an additional service, not an extension of the present hourly Leeds-Sheffield semi-fast train as previously noted. The Department for Transport announced that Northern will add this route to its network in late-November.

Meanwhile, the six additional Class 158 trains that are arriving in the Northern fleet, part funded by Yorkshire Forward, will be diagrammed to provide extra peak capacity from 11 December 2006. Surveys at Leeds station have shown that 18,000 passengers alight from 90 trains during the morning peak and of these 13,500 arrive on 65 Northern local services and of these around 2,000 or 15% have to stand. Northern is to add five additional diagrams, concentrated on the Harrogate and Calder Valley Lines where overcrowding is most critical, resulting in an additional 805 seats into Leeds in the morning peak and 884 additional seats from Leeds in the evening peak on Mondays to Fridays. The cascade will also provide 3 car Pacer formations on other critical peak trains to and from Leeds.

One other small item relating to Northern. Just about the only aspect of Leeds station which was not renewed during the Leeds 1st programme of five years ago was the ticket barrier. This was omitted from the re-build as



it is operated by the major franchisee at the station – this was Arriva Trains Northern – but as it was known at the time that this franchise was soon to end the ticket barrier work was deferred until after the new franchisee, whoever it was to be, was in place.

**airlines** understands that the present 'staff in booths' system will be replaced late in 2007 by automated ticket barriers, as are found, for example, at stations like Cardiff and on the London Underground, as a far better way of protecting revenue and also in compiling statistics about travellers' journey patterns.

## **GNER and the east coast**

The saga of Grand Central's attempts to start a Sunderland-York-London service continues. So long did it take to gain permission to run the new service, the company had difficulty in acquiring the trains it needed, so has had to defer the planned start on 10 December until later in 2007. On the plus side, GC has said it wishes to introduce 'open access' services from Bradford to London, via both Huddersfield and Stockport to Euston (using new 140mph trains) and Doncaster to Kings Cross, and also a regular local service from Bradford Interchange to Doncaster via Pontefract.

The troubles surrounding GNER, the company which operates trains between Leeds and London Kings Cross, have been well reported in the national and local press, and it is perhaps too dangerous a minefield for your editor to stray too far into.

GNER's parent, Sea Containers, filed for bankruptcy protection in the USA in October as it was unable to pay its substantial debts. It says this will not affect GNER, but who knows, this saga has many twists yet. At the same time, GNER faces what many observers see

as an over-ambitious amount of money it has to pay the government, by way of premium for its franchise contract (this premium being effectively a £1+ billion tax on fares) but on the other hand GNER knew its business when it compiled its bid last year and thought it could meet the targets it has contracted for – so maybe the 'observers' are being too pessimistic.

Whatever, while Sea Containers' troubles are short term, GNER's, in themselves, are much longer term, since the "high" premium payments do not kick in for a few years yet.

But whatever happens, be assured that the service, which is presently carrying record numbers according to GNER's Chief Executive, Jonathan Metcalfe on BBC TV recently, will continue with no marked change in the unlikely event GNER is taken over, or has to cease trading for whatever reason. As with all Train Operating Companies, GNER does not own its trains and they, like all the staff, would transfer to the new operator, and the existing franchise contract would continue, at least for a few years until it could be, if the need were agreed, re-negotiated. This one has a long way to run yet!

Finally, a lot was made during the east coast franchise bidding of a full day-long half-hourly Leeds-London service and of possibly routing some trains to/from Doncaster via the Garforth line rather than Wakefield, the so-called Leeds Horseshoe.

The half-hourly service was dependent on suitable paths being found along the route, and these were identified by Network Rail in the summer – but there is so far no indication of when, or indeed if, GNER will take up these paths to fulfil its strongly expressed ambition. But of the 'Horseshoe' there is no news yet whether this idea is progressing.

# Major work on the Settle-Carlisle line

**R**ight through the winter Network Rail is carrying out engineering work on the Settle Carlisle (S+C) route (that is the continuation of the Aire Valley line north of Skipton). This will result in significant changes to travel times, especially at weekends, from 7 November 2006. Some of these changes are reflected in the new train timetables starting on 10 December, but there are continuing amendments so do check before planning any journey along this route over the winter months.

Specifically, the following (in summary) have been advised to AVRUG:-

\* There will be major track renewals at Appleby and Cumwhinton which will **close the S+C north of Kirkby Stephen from 2135 Saturday 23 December 2006 through to 0500 Tuesday 2 January 2007.**

On Wednesday to Saturday 27 to 30 December 2006, Leeds-Carlisle trains will terminate at Kirkby Stephen with connecting buses on to Carlisle, and vice versa. There will be an additional bus at 1800 from Carlisle to Skipton.

For Sunday 31 December 2006 Leeds-Carlisle trains are withdrawn throughout (except for 0902 Leeds which runs to Skipton) with replacement buses between Skipton and Carlisle, one calling all stations except Dent and one calling only at Settle, Kirkby Stephen town centre and station and Appleby. Connections will be possible out of and into local trains between Leeds and Skipton. Journey times will be extended.

On Monday 1 January 2007 Leeds-Carlisle and Leeds-Lancaster/Morecambe trains will be replaced by buses between Skipton and Carlisle/Lancaster/Morecambe, starting from

Skipton at advertised times (and similarly in the reverse direction). A normal Monday service will be running on the Airedale Line and passengers should use an appropriate earlier train to connect with the buses at Skipton.

\* Due to signalling renewal work at Hellifield from 2120 Sunday 24 December through to 0500 Tuesday 2 January 2007, Leeds-Morecambe/Hellifield trains will be delayed by around 14 minutes in both directions.

\* **The S+C will be closed every Saturday and Sunday for 3 months from 6 January to 25 March 2007.**

On Saturdays in that period north-bound S+C trains will terminate at Hellifield but in some cases Skipton or Long Preston. Replacement buses will run from Skipton to Carlisle with all trains (except 0947 Leeds-Carlisle which will only have an express bus) having two buses, one calling at all advertised stations (except Dent) the other calling only at Settle, Kirkby Stephen town centre and station and Appleby. Similar arrangements will apply in the reverse direction, with buses from Carlisle linking with trains starting from Hellifield, Skipton or Long Preston.

Likewise on Sundays 7 January to 25 March 2007 Leeds-Carlisle trains will be withdrawn throughout and arrangements will be similar to those for Sunday 31 December 2006, above.

\* **The S+C route will also be closed continuously from Saturday 17 March until Sunday 25 March 2007 inclusive.** Saturday and Sunday arrangements will be the same as noted above and those for Monday to Friday will be advertised later.

The above is only a summary of some very complex changes, so do check before travelling!

# The Worth Valley line approaches 40!

## *Roger France looks ahead*

**A**ire Valley Rail Users Group members who travel to Keighley or beyond will be well aware that there is 'another' railway that shares Keighley Station, heading up the Worth Valley and linking Keighley, Haworth and Oxenhope.

The fact that this branch still exists, despite closure by British Railways in 1962, is a testament to the determination of local people to try and hang onto their local railway. So as AVRUG works to represent modern rail users in developing and improving rail services on the Aire Valley route, you could say it is a continuation of a local tradition of taking positive action to make sure our local railways serve their communities. Of course in the case of the Keighley & Worth Valley it also means that its members get the chance to operate and manage their own 'railway', a tremendous challenge and responsibility, but one which can also be fun!

The importance of the connection with Aire Valley line services at Keighley is reflected in recent passenger trends on the KWVR. Since the railway opened in 1968, Haworth station became the principal starting point for visitors to the Railway – but Keighley has gradually been catching up! So much so, that a couple of years ago it finally overtook Haworth to become the main entry for passengers – and that remains to be the case today. No doubt in no small part due to the improvements to the Aire Valley rail services?

So, in 2008 the KWVR will be celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the re-opening of the line, and plans are already in hand to ensure that the Railway will be celebrating in style.

Apart from running trains every weekend, bank holidays, half-terms, and weekdays in Summer, the KWVR has Special Events throughout the year, details of which are always on our website [www.kwvr.co.uk](http://www.kwvr.co.uk) – so if you haven't already done so why not use the Aire Valley line to make a connection at Keighley and see what there is on offer?

Better still, we are always eager to welcome new volunteers, so if you have a bit of spare time, or maybe you have retired, but whatever your interests there will be an opportunity to help operate the line; details again on our website.

A feature of the KWVR as a local tourist destination is that services do not stop in Winter. Indeed this is a very busy time for the Railway. December weekends see the line's hugely popular Santa trains operating (advance booking essential), and over the Christmas holiday itself through to New Year's Day there are daily Mince Pie Specials (complete with a 'real ale bar') – just the thing to tempt you out away from the TV and walk off the turkey and Christmas pudding! The coal fires and gas lit stations add that special seasonal atmosphere to a winter's day in Bronte Country or just a walk around the shops and pubs in Haworth village.

Over the weekend of 17 & 18 February we will be having our Spring Steam Gala. These events allow the Railway to show off the whole of its working steam fleet; visiting locos; and a rare opportunity to travel in historic coaches from the Ingrow Carriage Museum – an opportunity to make a fascinating comparison with the modern electric stock you travel in during the week!

## Letters, ?? and !!

**AVRUG** welcomes 'Letters to the Editor', whether questions about our railways or comments on them, for possible inclusion in *airelines*. Please address them to the Editor, as below, and we will do our best to fully answer points raised. Letters will be published as space permits, and may be edited.

Longer contributions to *airelines* are also welcome, but please contact the Editor in advance, to ensure space is available and to agree content and deadlines, etc.

## Subs and £££s

**AVRUG** does its work in lobbying for better and more reliable services along the Aire Valley thanks to its loyal membership, who pay just £3 a year for the privilege!! Donations or sponsorship to allow us to do even more are just as gratefully welcomed!

The address for subscriptions is below, for donations please contact the Treasurer.

## Quick 1? Quiz Answer

**The new line** runs from London St Pancras to towns in North Kent. The rail service, to be operated by 29 Japanese-built trains, will be 'domestic' services using the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link which opens next year. Journey times from Leeds to Dover will be shortened significantly!!

## Next Newsletter...

...is due to be published in Spring 2007.

## Thanks to...

...**Northern Rail**, for generous sponsorship which makes publication to this standard possible.

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