



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

from Tim Calow

20 YEARS OF PROGRESS?

Our fiftieth newsletter (that many!) has prompted me to recall my first journeys after I had moved to Yorkshire in December 1988. I have even managed to unearth some of my ancient notebooks!

Back then service to Leeds was half-hourly as now but most of my journeys were into Bradford which had through services from Skipton only in the peak hours. Our line still had semaphore signals, controlled by a series of traditional signalboxes. This restricted capacity somewhat and on several of

my return trips to Skipton we had to wait at Cononley while the previous service vacated the platform three miles ahead at Skipton (Skipton station box was only open for the morning shift). Steeton & Silsden station had not yet been reopened, together with its ever-expanding car parks.

The local service was operated almost exclusively by Pacers (3 coaches if you were lucky). The line limit was 65 mph between Leeds and Keighley then 75 (but only as far as Cononley). Overcrowding was an issue though it didn't take so many passengers to overcrowd the 2 coach Pacers that

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were used on the 07.23 from Skipton to Leeds on 15 December and on the 08.10 Skipton to Bradford on 31 January. At the other extreme many of the Carlisle trains were formed by 10 coach sets, hauled by class '47' diesels. On 8 February 1989 I caught the 16.33 Leeds to Carlisle train, all stations to Skipton with a 10 coach train and about 570 seats. They didn't worry so much about short platforms then!

So now we travel in modern, 360 seat, electric units at speeds of up to 90 mph. Services run to Bradford every half hour from both Skipton and Leeds (also Ilkley). The Skipton-Leeds trains (while they have three times as many seats as a 2 coach Pacer) are still only half-hourly.

Some bottlenecks have gone – there are now four platforms available at Skipton for a train approaching from Cononley (instead of one) and two platforms at Shipley on the 'main line' curve. Leeds station has been rebuilt and four aspect signalling between Shipley and Leeds enables trains to run at 2 minute headways.

There are still frustrations though. We have the complex of junctions at Shipley where many train services conflict. Then, while trains may be able to run 2 minutes apart and on green signals from Shipley into Leeds, this doesn't help much when the headway necessary to get a clear run into Shipley behind a local train is 7 or 8 minutes!

In the last six months I have travelled into Leeds some nine times on semi-fast diesel trains originating beyond Skipton. All have left Skipton on time and all have been late at Shipley. Only one train was not checked by the preceding local – and that was because it was losing time due to one of its engines repeatedly cutting out.

This record of late running is caused by two factors. The first is the poor design of the signalling approaching

Shipley, the other is the chronic late running of local trains to Shipley. I have timed over 200 '333' local trains from Skipton and am still to arrive on time in Shipley! The trains accelerate consistently well – much faster than the Pacers. However nearly all the time thus saved is lost through slower station approaches ('defensive' or 'professional' driving) and longer station stops.

So where will we go in the next twenty years? I believe that passenger numbers will continue to rise, especially into Leeds. Building more roads is not realistic or sustainable – so we will need more capacity on the railway. This could come from more trains (requiring



improvements to the signalling) or longer trains (requiring some major rebuilding of our stations). Neither will be cheap.

The only other way of improving capacity would be faster local trains. Modern German electric units accelerate from 0 to 90 mph in a minute (class '333' reach 60 mph in that time). Time could be saved with faster station approaches and driver operation of doors. Shorter journey times could give extra train services with the same number of units and more capacity (shorter headways) without resignalling.

I fear the required changes in attitudes might be even harder to achieve than all that expensive engineering work – but who knows?

Passenger Focus – championing the passenger

Rail users on the Northern Rail network can be confident in the knowledge that they have David Sidebottom on their side. Airlines meets the passengers' champion with a steely determination to get train travellers the best possible deal.

Strike up a conversation in a railway carriage and chances are, before long, someone will be complaining. About how we don't have summers like we used to, the government isn't to be trusted, or the railway has gone to pot. But, for train services at least, it seems this simply isn't true.

According to Passenger Focus, latest research shows that four out of five passengers across Great Britain are very or fairly satisfied with their rail journeys.

But what, you may ask, is Passenger Focus? This is the operating name of the Rail Passengers Council, the watchdog for rail passengers, set up by the government in 2005. Prior to this, there were many regional committees and, later, councils, comprised mainly of lay members, with either an interest or, sometimes, an axe to grind. Views on rail travel varied enormously. Enthusiastic they were, but cohesive they often were not: each committee dealt solely with complaints and issues arising within its patch. So it was difficult to get the national perspective.

In contrast, Passenger Focus, as its successor, is an independent national rail watchdog, sponsored by the Department for Transport (DfT), committed to getting "the best deal for Britain's rail passengers through evidence-based campaigning and research". It is this research, particularly the twice-yearly



National Passenger Survey which reveals what we really think about our rail services.

The watchdog employs a dozen managers to keep an eye on the activities and performance of all 21 train operating companies currently holding franchises to run parts of Britain's rail system.

David Sidebottom (*pictured above*) is the Passenger Focus Link Manager for Northern Rail, Merseyrail and Hull Trains. His job is to monitor and analyse a wealth of passenger research and the comments and complaints about services, received directly from passengers and via feedback from the train operator; and initiate action on behalf of passengers if necessary.

He says that Northern Rail is "doing a decent job of recognising the importance of the National Passenger Survey and taking steps to make improvements to the things that really matter most to passengers - customer service, station facilities and rolling stock".



David wants to bring together local groups such as AVRUG on a regular structured basis to agree "local action plans with Northern Rail and others parts of the rail industry to help drive improvements for passengers. Nearly three million people travel by train every day in Britain—there are lots of different ideas."

David and Northern Rail have teamed up recently to use passenger feedback and experiences to drive through improvements at three stations on Northern Rail's network—Harrogate, Rochdale and Blackpool North. "The work with Northern Rail over the last few months was done as a trial to see what passengers wanted from their local station facilities and how they felt after the work was completed. The initial trial was a success and more improvements are in the pipeline at other stations. It's important that Northern Rail listen to passenger and the National Passenger Survey is a good way of doing this."

So how does David manage to keep tabs on Northern Rail, one of the largest train operating companies, both geographically, the number of services it operates and in the number of passengers it carries each year? "I keep in touch with the rail user groups such as AVRUG and, where no such group exists, I have a network of passenger 'champions' – people who want to be involved in making the railways better, and who keep me informed."

He would like to see better co-ordination and discussion between the 60+ rail user groups across Northern Rail's network – "otherwise they can become too parochial."

But while 79% of Northern Rail passengers say they are happy with their overall rail travel experience, nearly 40% say they are unhappy with fares. Passenger Focus research shows that, while leisure travellers are generally more satisfied with the cost of tickets than commuters or business travellers, there is a widespread feeling that the fares structure is too complex. It reveals many potential passengers decide against travelling by train because of the perceived cost, yet they are often unaware of the fare options. "Passengers lack sufficient information to enable or encourage them to access more favourable ticket options".

And it seems many regular commuters who buy tickets on a daily basis grossly underestimate how much cheaper pro rata Season Tickets are. "But for some people, Season Tickets are too expensive to pay for upfront and are not flexible enough. However, our research shows that a discounted 10-ticket carnet would be very popular among commuters as would the ability to spread the cost of an annual season ticket over the course of a year" says David.

The research also shows that passengers believe buying tickets at stations, from staff on trains or

via the internet provides best value for money, whereas ticket machines are perceived as the "least trusted" method of purchase.

Another of David's concerns is the impact on passengers when planned engineering work is not handled effectively by Northern Rail and Network Rail. "The Aire Valley Rail Users Group is particularly worried" he says, having recently met with Tim Calow to talk about AVRUG's experience of disruption on your line. David believes that Network Rail should be doing more to ensure a rail service is provided seven days a week. This is an issue likely to loom large on his agenda in the next few months.

One area David believes Northern Rail and Network Rail could still do better in is information provision, especially during times of disruption. He acknowledges and welcomes the fact, however, that the company has improved its satisfaction rating among passengers for how well it deals with delays to 34%, but at times of crisis, he adds, all too often the usually reliable information screens go blank – at the very time you need them. And information on the trains themselves is often of little help.

David believes that better planning, communication and staff training will help; he says "The big problem is one of the inconsistent ways in which Northern Rail and Network Rail deliver information and advice to passengers. I hear about some fantastic examples where

railway staff have gone out of their way to help passengers, but sadly I hear some shocking stories about passengers being stranded".

Passenger Focus is keen to see the level of information both improved and standardised across the entire railway network. Surprisingly, the DfT gives no lead in this, leaving it to the individual train operating companies to decide. "Information must be as simple and seamless as possible," says David. "Why should the level of information available to the traveller at, say, Leeds, be any different from Skipton or much smaller and remote stations?"

There's clearly much effort going into keeping passengers satisfied, by both Northern Rail and the newly strengthened watchdog. The latest National Passenger Survey shows that overall satisfaction with Northern Rail is rising again after a dip the previous year at a respectable 81%. But if you do have a complaint, comment or suggestion, first contact Northern Rail. If then you are unhappy, you can take it up with Passenger Focus.

You can contact David via his email David.Sidebottom@PassengerFocus.org.uk or look at the Passenger Focus website for more information on their work www.passengerfocus.org.uk



Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe CRP

Report of latest Executive Group meeting by Rod Tickner

The latest meeting of the L+M Community Rail Partnership EG was held on Wednesday 6 February at Lancaster.

The line now has a specific new identity: the Bentham Line. This will be used for marketing purposes. A new logo which uses a representation of Ingleborough has been prepared and as soon as we have an electronic copy I shall incorporate it in the reports. However the logo also includes the Leeds-Lancaster-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership title so that the actual route is incorporated into the publicity.

The contract to refurbish Bentham Station has been let and it is hoped that this will be complete by May 2008.

There is a revamped website: www.lmr.co.uk which I would suggest is worth a visit. A new 'walks from the line' leaflet is available and copies will be left at staffed stations along the Aire Valley.

The proposals to augment the existing service are still being considered but it is unlikely that this will happen before 2009. Pacer units continued to be the main provision, although both diagrams used the single car 153 units on the day of the meeting.

The 08.19 service from Leeds on which I travelled was a single car 153 giving a ride quality was considerably enhanced compared to a Pacer.

This train was full from Bentham onwards: there seemed to be at least one group of walkers who disembarked at Carnforth and who were making a connection there. Another large group left the train at Lancaster, but there was still a substantial number going on to either Morecambe or Bare Lane. No doubt the very sunny day – the first for some time – may have helped make up peoples' minds about leisure trips but it was heartening to see a well patronised service with a variety of destinations being used by people from the Aire Valley – only a handful joining the train after Long Preston. Possibly the special £7 offer was an incentive. One wonders how many more would use the service if it were more frequent.

The return trip was also on a 153 unit and still reasonably well loaded.

The question of connections mentioned the last time is a fraught one: Tim Calow reminds me "that after much pressure (via Northern Rail) we have achieved a better connection to Windermere, now the 08.19 Leeds-Morecambe runs via Lancaster again, where it connects into the 10.23 Windermere train (arrive 11.01). Returning, the 18.09 from Windermere connects into the 19.19 from Lancaster to Skipton & Leeds. This leaves scope for a reasonable day out."

There are reasonable connections

at Carnforth for the Barrow line.

The next meeting is to be held at Carnforth on Wednesday 7 May. Any items you wish to comment on please let me know.

A diesel moment at Bingley - 144 020 is substitute for a '333' on the 12.42 Bradford to Skipton - while 144 007 is half an hour late on the 10.43 Morecambe to Leeds train.



Rail News 1

More rolling stock... and Leeds grows fastest!



A new “Rolling Stock Strategy” for England was announced by the Department for Transport at the end of January. The government has said that “1300 extra” coaches will be brought into service to cope with their forecasts for increased demand in the period 2009-2014, and this new Strategy lists, rather vaguely it has to be said, where these carriages are to be allocated.

“1300 extra” means that some lines will get brand new trains (notably Thameslink in London), releasing older ones to become “extras” on other lines. But, while it is probable that relatively few brand new coaches will be seen outside of London, and the list is very vague as to what is happening, there is some hope, as reported in *Modern Railways*, that brand new electric and diesel trains could be coming to the north.

Soaring demand

But before going into a bit more depth on what might be, the Rolling Stock Strategy also includes detail of the expected growth in rail usage in

the major conurbations in the years to 2014, and Leeds is easily the highest.

Proportionately, Leeds’s peak hour rail patronage is forecast to grow faster than Birmingham, Cardiff and Manchester, and higher than the average of “other urban areas”. And our trains are forecast to be fuller – in the high peak time Leeds’s trains will be 70% full, the other places all 55% or less.

But back to the DfT’s strategy itself. As an example, despite being listed in the Strategy, repeated attempts by both Trans Pennine Express (which serves Leeds, etc) and Virgin West Coast (which runs to Manchester, Preston, etc., from London Euston) to be allowed to acquire extra coaches to cope with demand now, have been rejected by the DfT, so it is unclear here what is to happen.

This is the bright, fresh livery of National Express East Coast, the new operator of trains along the east coast main line to London Kings Cross, which will be seen more and more at Leeds, and on our daily return London train from Skipton.



Looking at the franchises which operate into Leeds, which readers might use:

National Express East Coast (NXEC, the new operator of what was GNER), has an allocation in the Strategy of nil, whereas 40 extra coaches, many years old and retired to store some time ago, are to be brought back into service in December 2010 to make up five "new" trains" to allow extra services to run between London and Yorkshire.

But NXEC will still be the first operator of the new Inter-City Express Project (IEP) trains, due to start entering service in 2013. These are not counted in the Strategy as they will replace existing stock, not be additional carriages.

Trans Pennine Express, which operates on the Manchester-Leeds-York axis, wants to lengthen some of its 51 Class 185 trains to four cars long, which request the DfT has so far rejected. Due to new EU diesel engine emission rules, there are a very few engines available which could be fitted to these new carriages, and no new ones can be built, so time is short. The Strategy says TPE will get 42 additional coaches.

Cross Country, now operated by Arriva (Newcastle-Leeds-Birmingham, etc), is down for six new carriages, which are for local services in the Midlands. In addition, like NXEC, Cross Country is refurbishing old trains to bolster capacity through Leeds.

Finally, **Northern Rail**, which, of course, operates our services and all local services across the north of England, is down to receive 24 extra

electric cars and 158 extra diesel carriages, for a total of 182.

Some of the electrics are needed for the revised Aire Valley services when Kirkstall Forge and Apperley Bridge stations open from 2011, and there is also a need to lengthen some '333s' from 4 to 5 cars, but that will be a very big task given that platforms will also need to be extended to suit.

Heavy demand also means more carriages are needed elsewhere across the franchise, notably in Manchester - one rail journalist has written that our 16 4-car '333s' may go to Manchester and we will get new five-car sets. *Modern Railways* magazine says that both the diesel and electric units could be of a brand new design with Northern being the first to bring them into service.

We shall see, but remember that this total of 182 is vague, without detail and is spread across the franchise. Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield will all be shouting for an allocation, too.

And then, just to confuse matters even further, Rosie Winterton, MP, Transport Minister and Minister for Yorkshire and the Humber, wrote in the Yorkshire Post on February 7: "about 300 carriages will be brought onto the rail network in the region. Far from taking ten years, the first of these will arrive next year".

Of course, Northern has had some extra carriages already, as demand soars, but will we get 182 spread across the north, or "about 300" for the Yorkshire and the Humber region?... time will tell!

Rail News 2 Engineering work in May

Further work is planned for the May Day Bank Holiday weekend when a bridge replacement at Kirkstall will block the Airedale/Wharfedale Lines all day Saturday and Sunday 3/4 May 2008. On both days Leeds-Bradford Forster Square trains will be replaced by buses throughout departing originating station at advertised times with extended journey times.

Leeds-Skipton trains will start from platform 2 at Shipley at advertised times with the Leeds-Bradford Forster Square buses connecting with these trains at Shipley. Additional buses will run from Leeds to Shipley starting at advertised times connecting with Bradford Forster Square-Skipton trains at Shipley. Skipton-Leeds trains will terminate at platform 2 at Shipley with connecting buses to Leeds.

Bradford Forster Square-Skipton trains will run normally. Overall journey times to and from Leeds will be extended.

Leeds-Morecambe/Carlisle trains on Saturday will start from Skipton.

Passengers should use alternative train and bus services to connect. On Sunday trains will be diverted to start from Bradford Forster Square going forward from Shipley at advertised times with connecting buses between Leeds and Shipley departing earlier advertised. On Saturday Carlisle/Morecambe - Leeds trains will terminate at Skipton with passengers going forward by alternative train and bus services. On Sunday trains will be diverted to Bradford Forster Square with connecting buses between Shipley and Leeds. Overall journey times to



Track relaying work at Skipton in 1994.

Above, Skipton station signal box can be seen in the background. Signals here are now controlled from York. Below, in the background is the bridge which carries the railway to Rylstone (the former Skipton to Ilkley line).

and from Leeds will be extended.

We recently met with staff from Northern Rail and Network Rail to discuss issues arising from the November bus substitutions and we hope that some lessons can be learnt – especially with regard to the provision of accurate and helpful information about the revised services.



The Worth Valley is 40!!

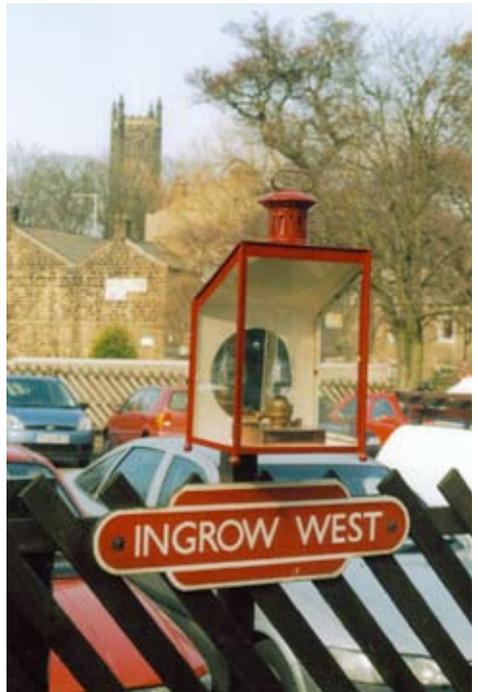
Steve Broadbent looks at this major tourist attraction in our midst



This summer the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, the “other” line in the Aire Valley, celebrates forty years since it was re-opened by a pioneering group of volunteers in 1968. Many events are planned throughout the year, including a special celebration gala on June 27 to 29.

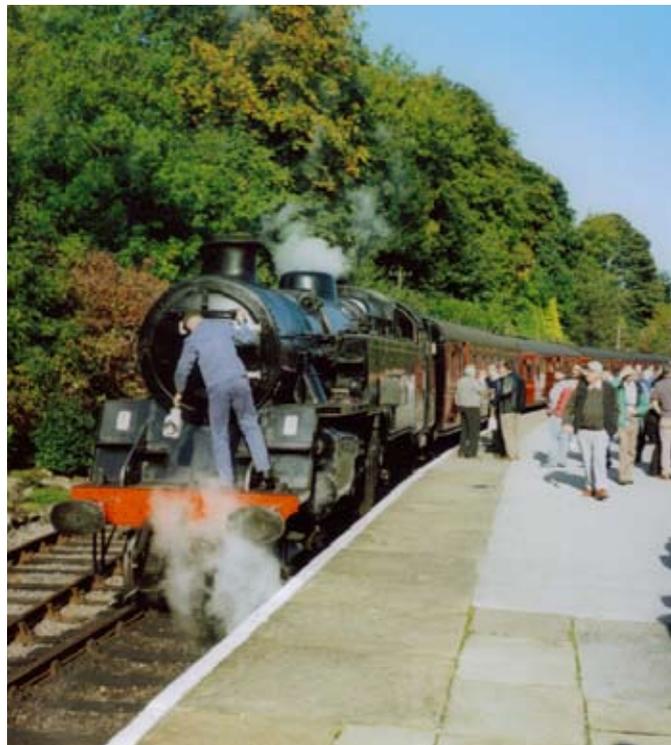
I first visited the newly re-opened line during the Easter holidays of 1969, it was a welcome break from my final year university studies, and since then I have been back frequently, the more so since returning north in 1991.

The Worth Valley is always the same, same high quality customer service, same clean and sparkling stations (Keighley, above), same fantastic scenery, and is always different - the seasons change the views (Ingrow, right), there is usually a “different” steam engine to delight the enthusiast, and always something going on. Very soon after its inception as one of



the country's first restored "heritage" lines, the KWVR became established as one of the best, and it has been thus ever since. Today, the line, predominately operated by steam locomotives hauling lovingly-restored carriages (the terminus at Oxenhope, below right), is one of the area's major tourist attractions. And that's not forgetting that the scenery, trains, stations and staff apart, the line serves Haworth, home of the Brontes!!

The KWVR is not just about timetabled trains hauling tourists or rail enthusiasts. You can also have your own train: the



picture at the top of this page shows the one I hired in February 1992 to celebrate my father's 75th birthday. We travelled in the 'Old Gentleman's Coach' famous for its part in the original 'Railway Children' film, and did two "laps of the track" in superb comfort with a high-class service of food and beverages.

Of course, if you wish you can become involved - the line has a dynamic young management and is, I am sure, always welcoming to new volunteers, whatever your skill.

Happy 40th, Worth Valley, from all AVRUG Members!!



The Yorkshire Dales Railway aims for Skipton

by Steve Broadbent

If the Keighley and Worth Valley is the older and more established of the two steam railways within reach of our line, then the Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway (sometimes referred to as the Yorkshire Dales Railway), based at Embsay to the north east of Skipton, is fast establishing a high class reputation of its own. And with very real ambitions to connect to the main line and gain access to Skipton station, hopefully before too long, it will be as easy an interchange for the E+BASR at Skipton as it is for the KWVR at Keighley. Just a very few yards separate the western terminus of the E+BASR from the Grassington branch and the rest of the national rail network, as can be seen from the picture, below opposite.

I am not as familiar with the E+BASR as I am with the Worth Valley, it is harder to get to without a car, but I did visit last autumn and was very impressed. Very amiable and helpful staff, a most pleasant ride, if not as dramatic as the Worth Valley and a shop I have visited before, which is a treasure trove of goods, especially rare railway books.

The trains are short and friendly, and are usually hauled by a small 'industrial' locomotive (Monckton No.1, fresh from overhaul, is pictured top, opposite).

And the day I chose to visit there was a vintage commercial vehicle rally on in the station car park, which gave excellent added interest. altogether a very good afternoon out!! As with the Worth Valley there are steam trains



throughout the summer, and many special events, but this year the vehicle rally is being held at Bolton Abbey station on 5 and 12 October. And when you see the lovely station buildings at Bolton Abbey, it is hard to believe they are virtually brand new, and not Victorian originals!!

If this reaches you in time, on Saturday 8 March the railway will be opening its doors for people to come and have a really close look around behind the scenes.

This is an opportunity for you to view what goes on and to see if you would like to come along and offer your skills or services to ensure the future of the railway.

The day will start at Bolton Abbey with a presentation from department managers, followed by a train ride with a full tour of all the departments.

In the afternoon there will be the opportunity for you to revisit departments that interest you and talk to staff. As well as this there will be some demonstrations of tasks not always seen by the public.

This is happening to celebrate the opening of the new shed and would be a good opportunity for new people to come and join our friendly society, the E+BASR tells *airlines*, and achieve something that will last.

And if these words reach you too late for that date, then I am sure the YDR will always welcome volunteers - contact Beth Furness on 01423) 505423 or bethsteam1159@yahoo.co.uk



Fares Fares Fares –

complex, yes, but maybe not as dear as the papers might have you think, by Steve Broadbent!

The rail industry always gets a bleak press when it announces fare increases which always take effect early in January, simply because the announcement is made just before Christmas, and some operators choose to put some fares up by appreciably more than inflation, which seems to me to be very counter-productive, no matter what their franchise agreements say or the government requires by way of payments.

Thus many will be left with the impression that fares are sky high, which, when quotes of £300 for a round trip to London are printed, is not surprising either.

The very good friend of AVRUG and local Saltaire resident Robin Sisson has recently taken over day to day editorship of the 'Today's Railways UK' magazine, and a very fine job he is making, too. In the latest issue (which has an excellent feature on the re-opening proposals for Skipton-Colne, to boot!!), Robin relates that he recently overheard a young lady asking the conductor for a single from Crossflatts to Gnesson, for which she paid £44.50.

Robin was brave enough to ask her if she really was only travelling one way, and she said, no, but she could not afford a two-way fare at twice that price, so she would borrow money at her destination for another single home.

Charming gentleman and rail expert as he is, Robin then went off and asked the conductor to return to the lady's aid, and after some short time the ticket machine showed that the return fare... was just TEN PENCE more than the single, which, all credit to the conductor, the lady was allowed to pay.

So do remember, that while some fares may well seem very high if you are not on expenses (ever noticed the large number of junior health service and other public sector workers who travel to meetings first class when their youth and the public purse surely demands they should go the very cheapest way, if at all?), returns are often very little more



than the single; that fares are cheaper if booked through (that is you can buy a ticket on your Aire Valley train from, say, Cononley to Perth, which will almost certainly be cheaper than buying a ticket to Leeds and re-booking); and that many really good bargains can be had if you are able to book on the internet or by phone even a few days in advance.

A case in point: my wife recently wanted to travel to see her father in Welwyn Garden City, which is on the main Leeds-London line south of Stevenage. When she makes such a journey, father usually drives up to

Stevenage to collect her there, and so I first looked at the fare from Leeds to Stevenage, out on a Friday evening, back Monday morning. Despite this being a very busy time, I found two single fares on acceptable trains for just over £40 total, plus the Burley-Leeds fare, roughly two-thirds of the 'walk on' or undiscounted saver return.

But I then decided to be inquisitive and look for the through Burley-Welwyn fare, just in case - the journey is longer, and involves three train companies, not one, so I expected a far higher fare.

To my surprise, not only was there a greater choice of trains on which advance tickets were available, but the £40+ return fare was reduced to an incredible £19.60. (By contrast, the undiscounted Saver return, on which there are some peak hour time

restrictions, is £79.80, while the first class return, see note above, is a whopping £303!!)

And on the weekend I am spending typing this up, we have just had a day trip to Birmingham, £30.40 return for the two of us, excellent value!

So, a lot is to be gained for a little investigation. Advance tickets cannot be bought on the train, but singles and returns to any GB station can be, cash or credit card. But, if your station has a ticket office which is open as you arrive to board your train, you must buy your ticket there, or from any machine that might be serviceable, or risk paying a penalty.

Complicated, yes it is, hugely, but it can be easier and cheaper than many would believe.

Access for all New information screens and PA arrive soon

The government has a scheme, valued at £370 million over ten years, to bring stations across England into line with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination legislation.

This 'Access for All' scheme falls into two parts, 'Major' and 'Minor', and in February the stations which are to receive upgrades in the 2008 round of spending were announced.

There is very good news for the Aire Valley this time around, for (almost) every station on the route, from Bradford to Skipton, (and including also the Ilkley line) is to have new information screens and long line public address fitted under the 'Minor' category - the cost is around £50,000 per station.

The new passenger information system on these stations will be

considerably better than the present one, with announcements and displays working from a common computer, and Northern Rail says that the installation needs to be completed during the coming financial year. The exception is Cononley, which is listed as having £10,000 worth of works to give better access and car parking, but AVRUG is sure this station will soon get the same information systems as the others, it would be penny-foolish to omit just one from the project.

Better news still, for Bingley features in the 'Major' list, with full step free access to be provided. From personal experience Bingley is not as bad as some places, but even so improvements will be a great help to many would-be travellers, but the slightly less than good news is that the work may not be done for a year or 3, but at least the funds are allocated!

Rail News 3 Along the line

Tim Calow reports

It's the usual story in Airedale. Services have generally run very well – though a couple of members have commented that the peak hour services tend to lose a few minutes because of the very heavy loading. There also appear to have been a few cancellations in December – attributed to lack of crew.

There was however extensive disruption on the evening of 4th January. Thirty-four cancellations and over 600 minutes of delay were caused by the failure of the '333' unit on the 17.10 Leeds to Bradford. Rescue of the failed train took longer as the service immediately behind (the 17.15 Ilkley) was an incompatible class '321' unit. This had to be returned to Leeds before the 17.20 Skipton service could rescue the failed train. There were further problems when the rescue unit did couple to the failed train and it was nearly two hours before the line was cleared.

The most significant problem was flooding which blocked the line at Kirkstall for 48 hours from Monday 21st January, lunchtime, through to Wednesday. There were replacement buses between Leeds and Shipley but the journey times were much extended and there was clearly not the capacity to carry the normal passenger numbers. Some used the alternative route to Bradford Interchange before walking across Bradford to catch the services from Forster Square. The line has flooded at Kirkstall before and we would hope to see some thought (and cash?) being provided to try and avoid further flooding of this vital piece of transport infrastructure.

There are continuing problems with the customer information systems

– particularly at Skipton and Steeton & Silsden. We hope that the scheme for upgrading the information systems will be progressed rapidly now funding is in place (*see separate article 'Access for All'*).

Skipton Station

Regular users of Skipton station have noticed how the station has gradually become rather shabby. Repairs have taken months (to entrance doors and the customer information system). Paving slabs at the station entrance have been cracked by road vehicles and left unrepaired, creating a hazard particularly for ladies (or men??) wearing high heeled shoes. Cleaning has been less thorough since John (our regular cleaner) ceased to visit on a daily basis.

There is some hope, Marten Lougee and I have just met up with Azlima Bulmer who is on secondment to Craven District Council. She is working on a funding package to refurbish the station and to ensure that it is then maintained in pristine condition. Once that is in place she would like to improve the station as a transport interchange so a smaller proportion of users arrive by car. Watch this space!

March Settle-Carlisle blockade

Once again there have been some problems with the train/bus timetable information for the Settle Carlisle blockade (from 1st to 9th March). Your Chairman has been working away behind the scenes to get errors corrected. Hopefully accurate information will be available before the closure starts.

Station statistics

I have recently been looking at some station usage statistics for 2004/5, writes Rod Tickner.

The busiest is Waterloo with 62,388,929 entrances and exits and the least is Gainsborough Central (2501st out of 2501 in 04/05) with 21 entrances and exits, although there are the way figures are estimated and tickets to groups of stations can skew the figures enormously. Gainsborough has two stations hence it is possible that the present system does not sufficiently differentiate. Fast-growing Leeds is just behind Birmingham New Street and London Cannon Street in the 05/06 rankings.

The information is on the web for those interested: <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1529>

(Rod's original article has been held over for some time and since he wrote it the 2005/6 data has become available. As far as I am aware the numbers are compiled by counting tickets sold, so non-station specific tickets like Metro seasons do not count, nor do the figures below include interchanges, eg a Bingley-Manchester journey does not count in the Leeds, nor Bradford,

totals. - Ed.) Also, If there is a lot of fare evasion then this would skew figures again.

The figures for our stations are shown in the table.

It is interesting that many of our stations are in the top quartile of usage nationally, an indicator of how busy the Aire Valley line is.

Bear in mind that there are other factors such as social needs that influence station patronage – even Dr Richard Beeching in *Reshaping the Railways* accepted that pure economic considerations could not be used always (he particularly commented on the commuter traffic which in the 1960s saw a lot of underused stock and facilities for much of the day).

Those with calculators can work out just how fast their station's growth is!



Ranking Nationally 2004/5	Station	Overall entrances & exits 2004/5	Ranking Nationally 2005/6	Overall entrances & exits 2005/6
15	Leeds	14,733,503	14	16,059,517
274	Keighley	1,087,690	271	1,127,154
351	Shipley	831,332	348	862,724
383	Skipton	760,950	382	794,076
442	Bingley	646,306	434	692,168
571	Steeton & Silsden	463,248	569	479,070
630	Forster Square	403,577	668	394,391
635	Saltaire	396,197	626	418,597
935	Frizinghall	229,912	890	261,107
1069	Crossflatts	176,705	1073	186,571
1084	Baildon	170,826	1090	179,592
1434	Cononley	87,600	1397	99,020
1932	Gargrave	25,057	1815	37,149
2055	Hellifield	16,712	2048	18,462
2179	Long Preston	9,753	2184	10,063



The Airedale line in 2008

Tim Calow packs his Thermos and notebook

In a recent issue of 'Rail' magazine Paul Salvesson (from Northern Rail) recommended taking a thermos and sandwiches to spend a relaxing day watching trains. I did something like this on Wednesday 6 February – my excuse was that we needed some modern digital photos to include in this special colour edition of 'Airlines'. I was out between 10.00 and 15.30 – travelling gradually to Shipley before racing back on the 14.49 Leeds to Carlisle train. What did I see?

The mainstay was, of course the four local trains in each direction, each hour. 14 units are required in service to cover these 'Triangle' services between Leeds, Bradford, Skipton and Ilkley. I saw 13 class '333' units (333 001, 3-7 & 9-15 – I am still a spotter at heart!). The fourteenth diagram was being covered by a 3 coach Pacer (144 020).

Punctuality was excellent. There was the usual late running of 'up' (Leeds/Bradford bound) trains as they headed towards Shipley.

However only one train, that I saw, appeared likely to arrive at its destination more than 5 minutes late. That was the 13.18 Skipton-Leeds, formed by 144 020. There were two factors in its late running. Firstly the Pacers cannot keep to the electric schedules, because of their inferior acceleration. It was losing time when I caught it from Crossflatts to Saltaire.

Secondly they had performed a unit swap at Skipton. The Pacer had headed to Skipton on the 12.42 from Bradford (due 13.17) but was swapped to form the 13.18 back to Leeds. It was probably a couple of minutes late into Skipton and so was late starting out to Leeds. Presumably it was to be swapped for a '333' on arrival in Leeds, ready to cover evening peak services when the extra seating capacity is needed.

In between all these services the Carlisle trains were running as booked and on time. 158 904 formed the 08.51 from Carlisle & 12.49 return. 158 753, resplendent in Northern livery, was on

the 11.51 from Carlisle and the 14.49 return. It was strengthened as booked on its southbound run by 153 352 (3 coaches are necessary earlier in the diagram when it forms our morning peak train from Ribbleshead). There was a Northern liveried '158' on the 09.47 Leeds to Carlisle and a pair, looking very smart, on the 10.49 Leeds to Carlisle.

There were some problems on the Morecambe route. The 10.19 from Leeds was on time (a 2 car '144'), but the two southbound trains were both late. 144 007 (10.43 from Morecambe) was 30 mins late while 153 324 (12.47 from Morecambe) was nearly 15 minutes late approaching Shipley. There must have been some unexpected unit swap as I would expect the unit on the 10.19 from Leeds to come back on the 12.47 from Morecambe.

In the course of over 5 hours I saw six freight trains, all hauled by the ubiquitous class 66 locomotives. The first, northbound through Bingley at 12.05, was a Freightliner empty coal train – either rescheduled or 4S11, running 2.5 hours late. The next service was a stone train from Rylstone – 66149 on a set of pale blue wagons with the odd 'National Power' logo still visible. It was through Bingley about ten minutes early at 12.45.

I moved back to Crossflatts where I saw the next southbound freight. 66 025 with a loaded coal train (6E85) sped through with its brakes hard on at 13.11. This was to demonstrate the limitations of the signalling. The previous train, a punctual Leeds local was not clear of Saltaire so the freight had a yellow signal at Crossflatts. The progress of the freight was then delayed sufficiently that when the Bradford local followed at 13.21 the signal at Crossflatts had still not cleared to green. The Bradford local will have suffered about two minutes delay – all attributable to the unsuitability of the three aspect signalling for the current mix of all stations passenger trains and heavy freight.

A few minutes later (13.17) 66 103 headed north on a Gypsum train to Kirkby Thore. probably 6M52 running about an hour late. It was followed, 20 minutes later by another EWS class 66 on the empty stone hoppers returning from Hull to Rylstone (6D72).

The final freight seen, through Shipley at 1450, was 66 145 on a train of empty coal hoppers - probably train 4S72 to Ayr, about 15 minutes late and out of its booked path. Hard on its heels was the 14.40 Leeds- Bradford local and in order not to delay that train any more the signalman had to hold the 14.42 Bradford-Skipton at Shipley for 4 minutes. There would have been another tricky decision at Skipton – whether to hold the coal empties for 20 minutes to follow the Carlisle passenger train – or to let it run and hope it kept far enough in front of the passenger train.



I followed on the Carlisle train, to Skipton – 81mph at Steeton before we caught up with the late running local (see above!) but still on time into Skipton.

It was a fascinating day out, watching and using the well-used local trains on our busy stretch of railway. It's nearly 20 years since I moved to the area. The line is now electrified and operated largely by superb modern electric trains. The Carlisle line has moved forward from threatened closure and must be as busy as it ever has been. I wonder what will have happened in another twenty years!



AVRUG – the early days

Committee stalwart Rod Tickner looks back in time

AVRUG began in 1991 and some of the original committee are still with us – The original line up was:

Keith Preston – Chair
Paul Hatton – Secretary
Tim Calow – Treasurer
Ray Wilkes
Malcolm Riley

Keith was the first chair and carried out this duty until 1998 when Tim took over. Marten joined us in 1995 and became Treasurer in 1996 after Tim before becoming vice chair in 1999, at which point I became Treasurer.

I became secretary in 1996 having been on the committee since 1994 but relinquished that role about 2003 to Howard Blackie. As you may know there is still a vacancy – volunteers please!

Tim was the original editor of the newsletter until 1996 when the late-Alan Bradley took over and began a process of enlargement of the newsletter. Alan had to step down when he secured employment on the railways but his place was taken by Mary and Neville Davies who carried on the good work until 2004 when they moved out of the area. As you know the newsletter has

developed since with help from Steve Broadbent and is now standing at issue number 50. My own copies include all but numbers 4 (autumn 1992) and 6 (either summer or autumn 1993) which have helped me piece together this report.

Our numbers have been about 100 for quite a few years now which makes us one of the larger RUGs although no where near the Southend Rail Travellers Association which published its first newsletter as long ago as 1948 I understand.

What were the main topics of our first newsletter? As I understand it was mainly the effort of Tim Calow in those early days. A two-page affair with the emphasis on whether or not electrification would happen. It is interesting to recall that 1991 was when I started commuting regularly by rail and semaphore signals were quite common along the route, with a splitting distant for Apperley Junction, one of the few remaining examples on the BR network at the time. Much of the infrastructure would have been similar to that in Victorian times.

Platforms had been lengthened at Saltaire and Crossflatts to enable four coach sprinter units to call at these stations as well as allowing five coach Pacer trains to also call. The big news

was the new 158 units being delivered for the Calderdale line allowing additional Pacer units (these are the units

was the new 158 units being delivered for the Calderdale line allowing additional Pacer units (these are the units with four wheel coaches that we often only now see on the Morecambe services) to be used to strengthen the service; many services were small two car Pacer units in the early 1990s and even when meant to be strengthened

could not always be so. In those days it was possible to be unable to get on the Leeds bound train from Bingley onwards as the capacity was quite limited. We have much to be thankful for our modern class 333 units.

One interesting fact was that 1991 was the last year services to and from Bradford regularly terminated at Keighley; although there was a fast 0730 train from Leeds calling at Keighley only in order to get a unit back in time for another service.

We have to remember that much of the service at that time would not have been feasible without the Pacer units. Since those days they have had new engines, gearboxes and the seating is better and I am not entirely sure if something has also been done to their suspension. However they are still fundamentally a freight chassis with a bus derived body on top.

I have personally been part of the



Class 308s were the first electric units on our line (top), while the trains to Carlisle used to be diesel-hauled (above). Below, a short freight train approaches Shipley some years ago

with four wheel coaches that we often only now see on the Morecambe services) to be used to strengthen the service; many services were small two car Pacer units in the early 1990s and even when meant to be strengthened could not always be so. In those days it was possible to be unable to get on the Leeds bound train from Bingley onwards as the capacity was quite limited. We have much to be thankful for our modern class 333 units.

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The *airlines*

Fiftieth Issue Special Quiz

With a grand prize generously donated by Northern Rail!!

We expect that you all know everything about the Airedale line!! Just to check this out we have a special quiz competition to celebrate our Fiftieth edition. And yes, it is hard (Tim has set it!!) but the prize will make the reserach worthwhile!

The prize for the best entry (perhaps we shall not get a all-correct entry?) of a ticket giving ONE MONTH's free travel across the Northern Rail network for TWO people. AVRUG is very grateful to Northern for once again supporting us so generously.

The entries will be judged by your committee, who are NOT permitted to enter – but all readers of this page may. In the event of more than one entry tying for 'top' marks, those entries will be 'placed in a hat' and a winner will be drawn out

So, here we go...

1. When was the railway from Shipley to Keighley opened to the public?
2. On what date (during a flood!) did Apperley Viaduct collapse into the River Aire?
3. How long did it take to rebuild the viaduct and reopen the railway?
4. Which stretches of the Leeds to Skipton line have had more than two tracks?
5. How long is Apperley Tunnel (yards or metres are acceptable)?
6. On what date was the original station at Steeton & Silsden shut?
7. When was Saltaire station reopened?

8. In what year was the first platform on the 'main line' curve at Shipley opened?

9. In which year was the Skipton to Colne line closed?

10. And in which year will it re-open?

11. When was the reprieve of the Settle-Carlisle line announced?

12. On what date was the launch run of the first class '333' unit?

13. Which unit operated the launch run?

14. On what date did a pair of 'Hastings' diesel-electric multiple units (class 202 & 203) travel along the Airedale line (on their way from London to Carlisle)?

15. How far (according to the milepost) is Cononley from St. Pancras station?

The closing date for entries to be received is 31 March 2008. Entries to be sent to Tim Calow, by post or e-mail, see page 24 for details.

All the usual competition caveats apply, judges' decision is final, and the winner will be announced at our AGM and in the next *airlines* (where the answers will also be given).

The prize ticket will be valid ONLY for travel on Northern Rail services, not with any other train operator, and there is no cash, or any other alternative prize.

The winner can choose which period of one calendar month the ticket will be valid in, which must be during 2008.

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group

www.avrug.org.uk

Affiliated to Railfuture

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at Saltaire Methodist Church Hall

**Saturday 19 April 2008
commencing at 2.00pm**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 17th AGM held on 21 April 2007
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of committee officers and members:

The present committee is listed overleaf and it is presently understood all are willing to continue to stand in the coming year.

But we are still short of a Secretary, and we always welcome new faces onto the committee in whatever role. This item is always handled informally at our AGMs, there are no formal candidate lists or ballots, but if you would like to be involved please do contact a committee member at any time, or simply come along to the AGM and put your hand up!!

The officers are: Chair, Vice chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter editor, Membership secretary.

7. Any other competent business

**Light refreshments will be served at 2.45pm
before a talk from our guest speaker,
Chief Inspector Dave Oram of the British Transport Police**

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.

Our web site...

www.avrug.org.uk, is continually being developed, and includes more travel news – especially news of local engineering works. Do keep an eye on it!!

Next Newsletter...

...is due to be published in June 2008, and every quarter. Very final copy date is 15 May.

Thanks to...

...Northern Rail, for generous sponsorship which makes publication to this standard possible. and to all who have helped with words, pictures and design.

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