

From the editor...

Welcome to this new look AVRUG newsletter, with a new editor as well!

Your rail user group is expanding its activities and developing new initiatives, or which *airlines* is just one aspect. And thanks to generous support from our train operator, Northern Rail, we can now print more copies and have more pages than before, enabling us to spread more news more widely.

Editorial independence will, of course, remain with AVRUG and while we have one of the best, if not the best, rail services outside of the London commuter belt, we shall always be critical when necessary.

Personally, I am delighted to be welcomed back on to the AVRUG committee and to be taking over the editorial chair from Jenny Whiteside, who is concentrating now on our publicity. I have been creating magazines and newsletters for over 20 years, a business which all started when I was asked edit a railway newsletter in 1986, and turned to the girl who soon became my wife for advice on how to design it!

I plan to bring a wide range of Aire Valley line information in this quarterly publication, but I (and indeed the whole committee) are always keen to hear your views, see the back page for contact details.

Steve Broadbent

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

The Northern Rail Review

The Aire Valley Rail Users Group welcomes the report of the *Northern Rail Review*. After long and careful study the report has concluded that there is no case for line closures, service cuts or widespread fare increases for rail services in Northern England. Services between Skipton and Lancaster were subject to particularly close scrutiny, but the case for closing the line was dismissed.

The report has concluded that even where there may be the potential for marginal cost savings the wider economic losses would outweigh the money saved. It also notes that cuts to rail services would be contrary to the government's aims of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by discouraging growth in road traffic.

This report should change the terms of the debate about rail services in Northern England. It dismisses the case for cut backs. Instead we should be looking to invest further in rail services.

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

continued overleaf...

Along the line

notes by Tim Calow

June timetable change

There are only a very few changes to train times along the Aire Valley which started with the new timetable on June 12. The earlier departure times of Carlisle to Leeds services (introduced from last December to allow for temporary speed restrictions on the line) continue. These modified departure times are still not fully recognised in the national printed timetable. However, Northern Rail and Metro timetable leaflets should be showing the correct times. On the Lancaster line, the 08.19 from Leeds to Morecambe still runs direct to Morecambe with a connection at Carnforth for Lancaster.

On Sundays the usual Summer only services have resumed – both the morning trains from Leeds to Morecambe and the services from Preston and Blackpool to Carlisle which allow Lancastrians to visit the Settle-Carlisle line.

And there are minor changes to Bradford-Ilkley trains in the evenings to

Northern Rail Review, from page 1

the local economy of the high quality rail service is widely acknowledged.

More recently, modest investment in the new Leeds to Sheffield semi-fast rail service has seen substantial growth in patronage. Yorkshire Forward (the Regional Development Agency) has also recognised the need to invest in additional trains which will provide extra capacity on the Calder Valley and Harrogate lines to cope with growing demand.

AVRUG looks forward to a debate about how our rail network can be developed to serve the transport needs of the 21st Century. *Tim Calow*

allow better connections into Airedale line services at Shipley.

Engineering works

There have recently been a couple of Sundays where services have been diverted from Shipley to Leeds via Guiseley. 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 a further blockade of the Settle-Carlisle line, and buses will be replacing trains between Settle and Carlisle from July 16 to July 30.

Ribblehead music train

There are four music trains this Summer, with the dates arranged to fit between the blockades. Once again AVRUG has been providing wine and soft drinks, while the usual combination of live music and real ale has kept passengers entertained.

On June 17, the musicians were on overtime as the train did not arrive back in Skipton until just after midnight. A freight train had failed near Settle, blocking the line, and we were stuck at Blea Moor until a pilotman arrived from Appleby to allow the train safely to proceed “wrong line” southwards. A party from Gargrave kept us entertained with their Conga, and Northern Rail made sure that everyone could get home.

There is one more music train this year, on Saturday August 5. Special discounted tickets are available, priced at £5.00 adult and £2.50 child from Skipton to Ribbleshead and back. These have to be purchased through Northern Rail’s Specialist Sales Department on 0113 247 9659 (payment can be with a debit or credit card over the phone), or from Specialist Sales at Leeds Station.

Record traffic and continuing good performance!

Northern Rail (our Train Operating Company) has released data which shows that the traffic on the Leeds and Bradford to Ilkley and Skipton group of services, which includes the Aire Valley line, has exceeded ten million passengers in the past year for the first time ever.

In the calendar year 2005 the routes recorded 10,968,000 passenger journeys, compared to 9,636,000 in the previous 12 months, a rise of 13.8%, way above the national average for rail growth (presently about 7.5%), indeed ten times the annual growth being forecast by the government for the national network over the next ten years. The lines account for about 15% of all Northern Rail's passenger journeys.

The Aire and Wharfe Valley lines do have some of the very best rolling stock, and most attractive fares, in the country, facts which are simply reflected in these figures - give passengers the type of service they require and substantial growth follows, as road congestion and environmental concerns grow. And only with consistent growth like this will the government be persuaded to allow us an even better service to cope with the increasing crowding we see in peak hours and the demand for extra trains, for example on Sundays.

Performance

While performance (see explanation below) on the Airedale line has its ups and downs, the overall trend is an improving one as noted in the latest figures released by the Department for Transport.

Against a contractual target of 85%, the figures for the Airedale line for each four-week period in the 12 months to April 2006 were:-

Period	PPM%	MAA%
2005/1	92.7	
2	94.4	94.0
3	85.5	91.2
4	89.2	90.7
5	91.2	90.8
6	89.8	90.6
7	88.7	90.4
8	82.1	89.3
9	79.1	88.2
10	86.0	88.0
11	89.3	88.1
12	89.4	88.2
13	91.8	88.5
2006/1	92.6	88.8

The dip in performance in period 9, around November 2005, was the traditional "leaf fall" season and work continues across the network to minimise this effect.

Jargon Buster:

Period = successive four-week periods starting from early-April 2005.

MAA = Moving Annual Average

PPM = Public Performance Measure which combines figures for punctuality and reliability into a single performance measure. PPM replaced the Passenger's Charter as the main means of measuring passenger train performance. PPM is the percentage of trains that run 'on time' compared to the total number of trains planned, where 'on time' means within five minutes of the scheduled arrival time for Regional operators like Northern.*SB*

A night out in Manchester

Marten Lougee gets to know the British Transport Police

You may remember that last year I included a card with your newsletter for volunteers to become members of the British Transport Police North Western Area Citizens' Panel. I decided to follow this up, and on March 1, 2006, I attended a meeting in Manchester on 'Anti-social behaviour on the railways'.

Full details were sent about how to get their car from London, Birmingham, Preston, Leeds, Liverpool and even the NCP car park 50 metres away but somehow nobody thought about anybody venturing by train!!

Another interesting fact was that some people thought Transport Police dealt with buses and taxis as well, so perhaps the term 'Rail Cops' isn't so bad (it has aided recruitment).

This was a 'trail blazing' meeting – the first of its type in the country. About 50 people listened to an excellent presentation by Area Commander Martyn Ripley O.B.E (North West, ex-Leeds City Station) who recognised me.

The BTP force objectives are to tackle theft, violent assaults on passengers and staff, reduce the threat of terrorism, investigate/manage fatalities, hate crimes and graffiti (tackled through ASBOs - anti-social behaviour orders).

The focus on anti-social behaviour included public order offences, drunkenness, begging, breaches of the peace and breaches of ASBOs. All these impact on the feeling of safety of passengers, staff and the community. Problems are caused by unstaffed stations, proximity of off-licences, poor security features (town centre CCTV systems had encouraged youths to move to stations with no CCTV), infrequency of services, and proximity of schools,

geographical spread and secluded locations.

So many intelligence-led tactics had been used. For example, the stations at Seaforth, Blundellsands and Waterloo had been tackled by 'Section 30' dispersal orders. All this had had to be done with an annual budget of £15.1 million, which pays for 271 police officers, 13 special constables, 25 PCSOs and 60 police support staff.

BTP sees the role of citizens panels as helping to provide value for the travelling public, be a constructive critic of BTP, agents for improving railway policing, provision of links/contacts for BTP, highlighting areas of concern/good practise, provide practical assistance for BTP by providing good quality accurate reporting of any incidents seen.

After the presentation there was a question and answer session which covered the usual topics such as racial abuse, violence and fare evasion. The meeting lasted twice as long as had been foreseen, and the food provided was very welcoming!

All this information was about the North West, but the idea is to be rolled out across the country. Various groups were formed to cover the whole of the NW area. The North East? Watch this space and for the posters that might appear on railway stations.

● BTP has established a new base in previously disused offices on platform 5 at Shipley station, where four officers and a fast response vehicle will be based. With its central location on the Airebale/Wharfedale network, the new base, will allow officers to combat anti-social behaviour on the railway that much more effectively.

Rail franchise news

A major re-organisation of some franchises got underway in June when the Department for Transport announced the start of re-tendering process on three new franchises. These only marginally affect travellers in and from West Yorkshire, so here is a brief outline of the plan. Full details can be found on the DfT's web site at <http://www.dft.gov.uk>

Four existing franchises will be replaced by three new ones from November 11, 2007. Out go Cross Country (presently operated by Virgin Trains) and Silverlink, Central Trains and Midland Mainline (MML) - all these are operated by National Express. Cross Country will be considerably re-mapped, losing the Manchester-Scotland route to Trans-Pennine Express, and Birmingham-Scotland to West Coast, but gaining services presently operated by Central Trains (CT). A new West Midlands franchise will include most of CT's present services and those of Silverlink, while the new East Midlands franchise incorporates the MML route along with CT's services in the east Midlands and Lincolnshire. In addition, Silverlink's 'Metro' services in London will be franchised separately by Transport for London.

The effects for West Yorkshire passengers will be, assuming the present outline plan survives through to the new franchises's contracts, that the hourly Cross Country trains through Leeds, will, from December 2008, operate to/from Edinburgh and Plymouth, with some extended to Aberdeen and Penzance, that is there will be no direct trains from Leeds to Oxford, Reading and the line to Bournemouth. The XC trains which run on the alternate half hour between York and Sheffield via Doncaster will start/end at Newcastle and Reading.

The plan for the East Midlands

franchise states that the new operator, if it chooses not to have its High Speed Trains serviced at the Leeds Neville Hill depot (the one just to the east of Leeds on the way to York and Selby), then it can, if it wishes, withdraw the direct service MML presently operates between Leeds and London St Pancras.

In addition, it is hoped that Northern Rail will be able to start the long-awaited new service between Leeds and Nottingham from December 2008: this will be an extension of the recently-introduced Leeds-Barnsley-Sheffield service which has proved to be very popular.

Along the east coast main line

Elsewhere, at a rail conference in mid-June, the Network Rail speaker indicated that the full half-hourly GNER service from Leeds to London Kings Cross may yet start from December 2006: this is a GNER franchise commitment fully supported by the DfT, but congestion along the route has made it difficult for paths to be found for the extra services, which are largely off-peak.

Grand Central, the proposed new open access (that is not franchised) operation, has been given the all clear, subject to some final legal discussions, to start its services between Sunderland and London Kings Cross in December 2006. The GC trains will be the only direct rail service from Sunderland and the Durham coast to York, making travel between that area and Leeds that much easier. GC will stop at Northallerton and also give Thirsk its only direct trains to London

GC's plans for a Bradford-Halifax-Doncaster-Kings Cross service are on hold, until such times as suitable paths can be agreed with Network Rail, and/or GC can acquire trains, and the necessary

continued on back page

New ticket machines offer benefits all round

You may have noticed the conductors on our trains are carrying new-style ticket machines, known as Avantix, which are gradually replacing the ever-more-outdated Sportis machines.

Avantix takes advantage of modern electronics technology to offer a number of benefits to the train operator, not least vastly improved reliability and more, and more useful, downloadable revenue and travel information, but they also offer something for passengers, too.

Limited by the technology of its ageing electronics, Sportis could only be programmed for a very limited, mainly local, range of fares. Thus, if you were travelling from, say, Cononley to Norwich, and needed to buy a ticket on the train, you would have had to queue at Leeds ticket office to buy your Leeds-Norwich ticket because the conductor's Sportis was not programmed with the Cononley-Norwich fare. (Yes, he could have gone to his fares manual and hand-written you a ticket, or programmed Sportis manually, but that would have taken him most of the journey!!)

Now, with Avantix, the conductor can sell you any "walk on" ticket - that is any single, day or open return or Saver ticket, types which you do not have to buy in advance and can "buy and walk on". And, since Avantix also takes all major credit and debit cards, payment is easy. Avantix issues conventional thin-card tickets with the magnetic strip on the back, as against Sportis's paper ones, which are compatible with automatic ticket barriers, another advantage.

So, while passengers are always obliged to buy their travel tickets at their local station booking office (if their station is staffed and open, and if the ticket has

not been purchased beforehand, for example over the internet or through telesales), those travelling from unstaffed stations are no longer disadvantaged by often having to spend time, and maybe risk missing a connection, re-booking at an intermediate staffed station such as Leeds.

And you might even save money. Take these two sample journeys, picked purely at random, and using information supplied on June 22 by the National Rail web site.

Travelling from Cononley mid-week for a weekend-stay in Norwich and returning on the Monday: if the conductor has 'Sportis' two single tickets may well have to be purchased Cononley to Leeds and back, total £10.40, and then a Leeds-Norwich Saver would have to be bought at Leeds ticket office for £63.20, total £73.60.

But, with Avantix, a Cononley-Norwich Saver can be bought on the train, for £67.50, saving £6.10.

Or, from Saltaire to Chester, at similar times. Singles from Saltaire to Leeds and return cost £4.40, and the Leeds-Chester Saver is £33.40. But a Saltaire-Chester Saver is also £33.40, a saving of £4.40.

And even the conductor benefits. The Trade Union has negotiated a pay increase to operate the new technology, and he/she gets commission on all ticket sales!!

(But always check, if you can, rail fares before you set off, especially on an unfamiliar journey. Booking ahead may save more, and the rail fares manual is a jungle!)

Rail Partnership Launch *by John Bearpark*

On Saturday May 20, events at Carnforth and Bentham stations marked the inauguration of the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership. Guests from the various local authorities along the route, Northern Rail, tourism bodies and rail user groups assembled at the superbly restored Carnforth station. The Mayor of Lancaster, Councillor Janie Kirkman, formally launched the Partnership, speaking about the line's importance as a through link between Yorkshire and Lancashire and as a lifeline for the towns and villages it served on the way.

After a buffet lunch all boarded the 13-19 Leeds train, carrying a special headboard, for the journey to Bentham. There the party was met by Lin Barrington of the Bentham Development Trust, who described its plans for leasing

and renovating the station building in order to make it a resource for the local community.

Refreshments in Bentham Town Hall were accompanied by an entertaining talk from Bill Mitchell about the history of the line, with colourful memories of local characters and incidents from the line's 156-year history. The guests then returned by train to Carnforth.

The Community Rail Partnership is the latest of many now being created throughout the country. It aims to promote the line and to seek improvements to the service, and hopes to have a part-time officer in post later this summer. Funding has come from Northern Rail, the Lancashire and North Yorkshire County Councils and Lancaster City Council.

New Rail+Bus Tickets

Tickets allowing through travel by train and bus into Wharfedale are now available. The new 'Ilkley DalesBus' and 'Skipton DalesBus' tickets allow a day return by train to Ilkley or Skipton, then unlimited travel on the Wharfedale area buses, as far north as Buckden. The tickets cost just £3.00 on top of the Cheap Day Return (CDR) fare to your chosen station.

The new tickets have been masterminded by Northern Rail and North Yorkshire County Council, with assistance from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, and are one of the first initiatives of the Yorkshire Dales Sustainable Travel Partnership.

The tickets are available to either Ilkley or Skipton Rail Stations from all staffed stations on the Airedale and Wharfedale lines. An added bonus is that the tickets are available anytime. (CDRs

are usually only available after 9.30am on Mondays to Fridays, although there's no time restriction at weekends.)

The tickets are valid on Pride of the Dales bus services 72 and 72R (Skipton-Grassington-Hebden) and service 74 (Ilkley-Grassington-Buckden), on K+D service 67A (Skipton-Grassington) and on Reliance Motor Services/Arriva Yorkshire services 800 and 805 (Ilkley-Grassington-Buckden). One slight limitation is that the Skipton and Ilkley versions of the ticket are not interchangeable, so you need to return home from the same station.

The Skipton DalesBus Ticket from Leeds is £9.35 but note that these tickets can only be combined with CDR fares, not any other type of ticket. A half-price child ticket is available, but the tickets cannot be combined with concessionary fares for MetroPermit holders

Aire Valley Rail Users' Group

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Minutes of the sixteenth AGM held on Saturday 8th April 2006
in the Church Hall, Saltaire Methodist Church.*

PRESENT

Sixteen members were present together with Peter Johnson, Hon Sec WRUG and Sunita Bhatti of the *Telegraph & Argus*.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Keith Preston, Helen Paulger, Mr Whitfield, Gavin Martin, Jackie Wilkes, John Bearpark, Philip Davies, John Peter Buckley and Roger Smith.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 16 APRIL 2005

The minutes of the last AGM were agreed nem con as a correct record, proposed by Marten Lougee and seconded by Peter Allen.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Tim Calow started by thanking the committee for their support – especially long standing members such as Marten Lougee who attends many meetings and campaigns; Rod Tickner as Treasurer who has set up our new web site and Keith Renshaw who keeps our membership records. A welcome was due to Jenny Whiteside who has been helping with the Newsletter.

The committee continues to work hard – and significant meetings have been held with the Airedale partnership, management at Northern Rail and GNER

as well as the Press, where AVRUG tried to present a picture of a successful railway.

For members the newsletter has been supplemented by electronic news. We now have a new web site to publicise ourselves (www.avrug.com). We have continued to support music trains – four last summer and one at Christmas, with four more planned for 2006.

On the railway the key issues have been

- reliability (June problems, December broken rail, January signalling failure)
- popular – over 10m journeys in 2005 on Leeds North West system
- overcrowding – up to 550 on some trains
- car parks full from 08.00.

There has been a debate about car park charging – most respondents were in favour if money raised were to be reinvested in facilities. However other solutions would not be easy such as additional Car Parking, extra seats or better signalling to improve reliability.

There have been specific problems on the Settle–Carlisle route: increased freight which has led to track damage, hence speed restrictions and extra time allowed for journeys from December. There has been a four-week blockade, with two more to follow. AVRUG would look for some innovative work to promote the line hopefully as environmentally friendly tourism! There remain some concerns that similar problems are now

encountered in Airedale as the freight comes this way, too.

On the ECML there are capacity issues with both Grand Central to Bradford and GNER half hourly to Leeds being refused as Network Rail are very wary of taking on extra train services as they feel reliability will be harder to achieve. Plans were developed for increasing capacity but these have been shelved except the Allington Curve (*located near Grantham, this project was completed in 2005 - Ed*).

A Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership has been set up which AVRUG has joined – following on from the reprieve for the line given in the *Northern Rail Review* we want to make the line a success

Tim concluded by reminding the meeting that we have got to make our voice heard. Northern Rail is efficient and social and economic benefits outweigh the subsidy received. He felt that we should be investing to increase the benefits to the community. This success has been recognised by Yorkshire Forward with money for 6 extra two coach trains for the Calder, Harrogate and Sheffield lines.

He believed that the railway is part of the solution – especially lines like ours!

TREASURER'S REPORT

Expenditure remains more than matched by income, although part of that is due to the sale of refreshments on Music Trains. There are plenty of reserves and membership fees should remain as they were. The initial costs of the website have been met from some of the residue of Skipton 150 monies.

The report was accepted nem con, proposed by Keith Renshaw, seconded Chris Young.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following were agreed, proposed

by Ray Wilkes, seconded by Jenny Whiteside.

Chair	Tim Calow
Vice chair	Marten Lougee
Secretary	vacancy
Treasurer	Rod Tickner
Membership Secretary	Keith Renshaw
Newsletter Editor	Jenny Whiteside

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

The following were agreed, proposed by Ray Wilkes, seconded by Alan Sutcliffe:

Keith Preston, Helen Paulger
Peter Bewes, Steve Broadbent

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following issues were raised:

The issue of charging rail users for car parking was discussed, the point being made that there needed to be alternative feeders to train services considered.

Marten Lougee is on one of the British Transport Police Citizens Panels.

Ray Wilkes reminded the meeting about the Yorkshire and Humber Transport Round Table which required financial support, it was important as it represented all public transport.

The promotion of services to further afield was discussed: special cross-boundary fares being available to Manchester. It was felt that Metro could do more to publicise rail travel beyond the immediate locality.

* * *

After an interval for light refreshments Drew Haley of Northern Rail gave an interesting resume of developments anticipated for the area and kindly answered questions relating to various topics such as car parking charges, cleanliness of stock.

Fifteen years of AVRUG newsletters

Rod Tickner looks back in the archives

Fifteen years ago AVRUG published its first newsletter: two A4 pages with no photos – a style that was to remain for some time. It is only in more recent times that issues have grown to four or more pages.

In issue one we were asking for idea for a better title – and we still have not really come up with one..... until now!!

The big news was electrification or not! Members of the fledgling AVRUG were encouraged to write to their MP because of the possibility that while expenditure for infrastructure had been given the previous year the approval to purchase 14 new class 323 electric units from Hunslet TPL had run out in June 1991.

Even the names of the MPs show how much has changed:

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley); Gary Waller (Keighley); David Curry (still sitting for Ripon and Skipton) while Bob Cryer was still with us representing Bradford South.

Brand new class 158 units had just been delivered for the Calder Valley Line allowing Pacers to strengthen Aire Valley services – a four car train consisting of two Pacer units was the best we could hope for. In those days we still had manual signal boxes from Kirkstall Junction onwards complete with semaphore signals in many places; there was what was, by then, a comparatively rare splitting distant signal for Apperley Junction.

Services were often overcrowded when there were delays. It happened to be the year I started commuting to Wakefield each day and the last departure from Leeds was 22.33.

Platforms had been lengthened at Saltaire and Crossflatts to enable the four

coach class 156 Settle–Carlisle trains to call but also allowed for a five car Pacer train to be used, although that was a rarity. Problems with the new Bradford Forster Square Stair and Lift tower meant a depressing and dingy entrance alongside the Midland Hotel.

The services were principally half hourly between Leeds and Skipton and hourly between Bradford and Skipton. Carlisle services were suspended on winter Sundays.

The car park at Shipley was to be extended to accommodate a further 50 vehicles. Keighley's ticket office had been refurbished – some of the station buildings had previously been in use as a second hand furniture shop. Metro was still looking for additional car parking space at Steeton and Silsden, which still had its signal box *in situ* being used as a taxi office.

Trains to Leeds from Skipton were often subject to delay as they had to cross over to use what was then platform 5 (now platform 2) at Shipley there being no what is now platform 1 in those days. The remodeling, as part of the electrification works, really made a difference to the movement of trains through that station.

The committee consisted of five people two of whom are still with us. Keith Preston was the chair and Tim Calow the Treasurer. Donations, however small were stated to be “always welcome” in the first newsletter. In 1998 when Keith stepped down as chair he commented that there were ten members at the start. The subscription was £2 in those days but has been £3 for about ten years now and unlikely to change for some time.

By issue two (Autumn 1991)

electrification was definitely on but no news on electric trains to run the service. By 1993 there was talk of using ABB class 321s such as had been introduced on the local Doncaster service. This matter was not resolved for some time until the 35 year old class 308s were brought up from Essex to get the service going.

There was a lot of disruption in the early 1990s with services replaced by buses after 2200 hours to give longer possessions to engineers with track lowered through tunnels, bridges raised and platforms altered as at Keighley where we had temporary shelters right along the platform for a few months.

I have most issues of our newsletter so can chart the changes and developments although I am missing issues 4 and 6. While retrospective looks should not be routine it is helpful to see the progress that we enjoy in our service which is what has prompted this article. Some of you know that occasionally I have looked back over the general railway changes – a “now and then” approach – but it is significant that we now can look back over a substantial period of activity which I see as having brought real benefits.

I think looking at the provision of the service then a great deal has been achieved in the last fifteen years: reliability has tremendously improved as well as the time table been augmented although we still have concerns about early trains especially at the week end. The new Gypsum freight service in 1993 was worthy of note as being the first use of the Settle-Carlisle line for freight for a long time. The Leeds Station rebuilding – a more recent event – gave us a much better junction at Wortley where the line diverges from the Harrogate line.

Although much has been done and we should be grateful for our modern line there are still areas where we need to press for improvements.

Settle & Carlisle Steam

There have been changes to the Kingfisher Railtours programme of steam trains to fit in between engineering work and the frequent coal trains. However Dalesman trains will still be running from Hellifield to Carlisle on the following dates: July 8 (with ‘Black 5’ 45407), August 12, August 20 (30777), August 27 (6233) and September 2 (71000). These trains have a ‘bargain’ adult fare of £39. In addition the special with 30777 on Sunday August 6 from York to Carlisle and back calls at Aire Valley stations and the Duchess hauled train on August 19 (Steam Carnforth – Carlisle – Hellifield) is due to pick up and set down passengers at Skipton.

For full details and bookings for these and other trains contact Kingfisher Railtours on 0870 7472983 or at www.kingfisherrailtours.co.uk

In addition, the National Railway Museum is planning steam trains from York to Carlisle – outward with ‘Green Arrow’ on Sunday September 17 (return diesel hauled) and on September 24 outward with a diesel and returning with ‘Green Arrow’. This is in addition to a programme of York to Scarborough steam trains which run on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from July 18 to August 31. Details: tel 0870 421 4472 or at <http://www.nrm.org.uk/events/giantsofsteam.asp>

On the line

Generally services have been reliable. However the week after the end of the Easter holidays was a bad one on our line.

Monday April 24 – An attempted suicide near Steeton caused several hours disruption in the early afternoon

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Tuesday to Thursday, April 25-27

On Tuesday afternoon a container lorry tried to get across Kildwick Crossing as the barriers came down. The barriers hit the lorry and bounced at an angle, shorting the overhead (25,000 V) and causing a small fire. Signalling equipment in a nearby relay box appears to have been damaged. Full services were not restored until Friday morning. We were particularly dissatisfied with the emergency timetable on Wednesday – which had two passenger trains an hour running to and from Skipton – but only to Shipley – where nearly all passengers had to change trains.

We have been pursuing this with Northern Rail and would be interested in your experiences if you were travelling on the three days when the service was affected. TC

Franchise News – continued from page 5

permissions, for a service which can divide/join at Doncaster for Sunderland and Bradford.

The new 3-car 'Class 185' trains being leased by Trains Pennine Express are coming into service, initially on the Manchester-Leeds-Hull service, with the operator's routes from Leeds to Liverpool, Manchester Airport, Newcastle, Middlesbrough and Scarborough following in turn over the next six months. The new units contrast strongly with the present 15-year-old 'Class 158' trains, the 185s have better access and are much more light and airy, but with thinner, harder seats. And ironically, while the 185s started on the Hull-Manchester route, they will soon (it is reported) be replaced there by older 'Class 170s' being exchanged with South West Trains for nine of Trans Pennine's outgoing 3-car 158s.....!! SB

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