



### OLD

Settle Road railway bridge, Newsholme, with work starting on its deck replacement.  
*Video-capture from Brian Eastham. To view Brian's video, type "Third Engineer" into YouTube search.*

### NEW

Settle Road railway bridge, Newsholme, seen on 14 February 2024, with bridge work completed and the dry stone wall on the left restored.

*Photo: Bill Briggs*



# RIBBLE VALLEY RAILNews



### First Class Treatment

Is this the first Class 88 to traverse the Ribble Valley Line?  
 88002 works 3J11, the Carlisle to Carlisle rail-treatment train,  
 through Clitheroe on 4 October 2023.

*Photo: Jeff Dickinson*



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44712 heads 1Z16 *The Statesman* (Hull to Appleby) westbound through P4 at Blackburn Station at 11.41 on 27 September 2023.

*Photo: J Dickinson*

### Heavy haulage miscellany

Nearing journey's end, 66712 with cement empties, 4N00, approaches Horrocksford Jct at 11.46 on 9 June 2023.

*Photo: J Dickinson*



### LANCASHIRE DALESRAIL

The Class 156's naming ceremony at Clitheroe Station on 30 April 2010.  
*Above left:* L-R The late Howard Hammersley (Leader of the Rail Ramblers Assoc.), Matt Beeton (Area Director Northern Rail), Richard Watts (Lancashire County Council Rail Officer).  
*Above right:* The undoubted "architect/progenitor" of the whole DalesRail project, Colin Speakman, looks on.

### Below:

On 30 January 2024 Newsholme bridge deck replacement work nears completion.

*All photos: Bill Briggs*



### ***RAILWAY, TRANSPORT, IND' ARCHAEOLOGYSOCIETY***

This society meets on the third Tuesday of the month at RSR Chain Caul Way, Preston, at 19.30. Lecture presentations are usually accompanied by slides or DVD film.

Anyone attending is asked to donate £3.00 towards the lecturer's fee.

Recent presentations have been: Industrial Steam (1&2); Liverpool Overhead Railway; Swiss Railways +/- trams; Development of the Tornado jet fighter.

#### **Current Programme:**

20 Feb 2024 "6 States, 3 gauges. Australian Rail Travels 2022/23" by Dave Ward

19 Mar 2024 "Crich Tramway" by Alan Judd

16 Apr 2024 "Prince of Wales," Britain's most powerful steam locomotive.

by Graham Nicholas

Suggestions for speakers/topics welcomed.

For further information contact the RTIAS Secretary & Programme Organiser,

Jim Wareing (RVR 608) on 01772 612059

#### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS & DIARY DATES**

**RVR bi-Monthly meetings will be held at The New Inn, Parson Lane, Clitheroe, 7.00 pm on the second Monday of alternate months. Next meetings: 11 March 2024,**

**AGM Sat 23 March, Trinity Church Hall, Parson Lane, Clitheroe, 13.30 for 14.00.**

**Provisional dates for 2024, 13 May, 8 July. If in doubt, check the RVR website.**

#### **RVR WHO'S WHO & OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Hon Life Vice-Presidents: Alan & Sheila Kay

Chairman: Peter Eastham, 79 Rogersfield, Langho, Blackburn, BB6 8HD 01254 240830

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Northern Rail customer helpline 0845 600 1159

Train running information 0870 602 3322

RVR website: www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk

**Community Rail Partnership Website: www.communityrail Lancashire.co.uk**

#### **RVRNews copy dates**

**Start now, and keep contributions coming! RVRN139 needs to be ready by June 2024.**

If submitting **photos** for publication, please send **unreduced** material (if necessary, 1 email per pic) each with **caption** containing information as to **Who took What, Where, and When**.

Photos, taken on a mobile phone and reduced for email don't reproduce very well. *Ed.*

*N.B. Views expressed in RVRNews, ascribed or otherwise, are to be taken as those of the writer and may not represent either the views or policy of Ribble Valley Rail itself, unless otherwise specified.*

### ***Ribble Valley Rail***

www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk

*The User Group of the Ribble Valley Line*

*Hon. Secretary: Pam Corlett*

*37 Bleasdale Avenue, Clitheroe. BB7 2PR*

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The 37th Annual General Meeting of Ribble Valley Rail will be held in the

Trinity Hub, Trinity Church Hall, Parson Lane, Clitheroe

on Saturday 23rd March 2024, commencing at 14.00.

Coffee will be available from 13.30

### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 25 March 2023\*
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report and adoption of accounts
6. Membership Secretary's Report
7. Other Reports
8. Election of Officers and Committee
9. Any other business
10. Date and venue of 38th Annual General Meeting 2025

*\*Published in RVRNews 136 Spring/Summer 2023*

#### **Members are asked to note:**

1. Any member can put forward his/her name to serve on the Committee. Please write to the Secretary at least 7 days prior to the AGM if you wish to serve as an active Committee member. Places not filled by prior nomination will be filled at the AGM.
2. Nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer will not be accepted on the day of the AGM. Please send nominations to the Secretary at least 7 days before the meeting.
3. Any Member wishing to propose a motion for discussion at the AGM should notify the Secretary in writing at least 7 days before the meeting. Matters for discussion not otherwise notified will be considered, at the discretion of the Chairman, under Any Other Business.

***Pam Corlett, Hon Secretary***

## From the Chair

As reported, previously, over the past few years, the expansion of the passenger service north of Clitheroe, (an “AIM” of the RVR Constitution) has been investigated and proposals submitted. The “Restore Your Railway” Government initiative, with a bid submitted by Ribble Valley Borough Council and sponsored by Nigel Evans MP, successfully progressed through the necessary stages. The final stage of Department for Transport approval was achieved, but central funding was not available, the alternative of more local funding being suggested.

In the last edition of RVRNews I reported that funds released from the cancellation of HS2 beyond Birmingham were, according to the PM, to be redirected to improving rail services in the North. I also reported a further meeting of RVBC, Nigel Evans, the DfT, and other Lancashire Local Authorities to put forward the case for the improvements in social, economic, and transport which would which would result from extending the Ribble Valley rail service into Yorkshire.

This momentum continues with Northern Trains Ltd, our Train Operating Company, producing a report commissioned and funded by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, and Ribble Valley Borough Council, into how their services could feasibly be improved across East Lancashire though service uplifts, with the focus on three existing routes which have experienced growth in demand over the last decade. These routes are; York - Blackpool North, Blackburn - Kirkby (via Burnley and Todmorden), and Clitheroe - Rochdale.

The report, “Lancashire Service Uplifts”, is very positive and has the aspiration to operate a half-hourly frequency of trains in the Ribble Valley. It acknowledges that there is sufficient capacity to extend services northwards to Hellifield and details how this could be done, in terms of train and operational capacity, with little additional funding costs. “Extending services to Clitheroe and Hellifield sees a demand forecast of upto 133,000 passengers per annum, with an industry revenue uplift of £0.7m per annum.” the socio-economic context and supporting data are included, producing a strong case for resultant significant social, economic, and environmental benefits.

So, it’s over to the Government and Department for Transport to put the money in for their promised improvements to rail services in the North!

The cancelling of the summer DalesRail service into the Yorkshire Dales by the DfT in 2023, because of Northern’s appalling previous service performance, and the later petitioning by its Rail Groups, Rambler Groups, together with authorities and politicians, resulted in a promise to look at reintroducing DalesRail in a different format in 2024. At recent conferences and meetings we hear that this is very much being worked on and an improved, feasible option has been worked out.

Fingers crossed we hear an announcement, soon!

## Newsholme Railway Bridge

At relatively short [11 days!] notice, Network Rail commenced the safety critical DJH/103 Settle Road No.2 bridge deck replacement over the A682, Settle Road, Newsholme.

The planned start date was Monday 16 October 2023, with Mon-Fri 08.00 - 16.00 and Saturday night working 21.30 - 08.00. The main work, which included replacing the bridge, was carried out throughout a 54-hr working weekend between Friday 1 and Monday 4 December, when the line was closed to all traffic.

Two-way traffic management, to allow half road closure, was scheduled to operate between Friday 16 October 2023 and Sunday 26 November, and between Friday 8 December 2023 and Friday 19 January 2024, with a full road closure between Monday 27 November 2023 and Thursday 7 December 2023.

Three compounds were set up close by, alongside the A683:

“Welfare”: site welfare; generators and Saturday night lighting; parking, materials storage, and access point to the railway for machinery.

“Crane”: Crane position and operating point and new bridge assembly location.

“Trestles”: trestles stored on a stone pad and the old bridge deck dismantled there.

Preparation and follow-up work was carried out on either side. Rail vehicles were used for track works, including removal and reinstatement of the track over the bridge deck and carrying out preparation and follow-up work.

The existing bridge deck had to be removed and, after preparation work, it was lifted by crane and transported to the nearby “Trestle” compound, where it was dismantled.

The new deck was put together in the “Crane” compound, before being lifted and transported into position for installation. The existing masonry abutments remained in place.

Completion was expected by Friday 19 January 2024. Work was in-progress on 28 November when Brian Eastham’s video was taken [*Back Page upper photo*], with the new bridge due to be installed on the weekend, as planned. In the event, some work was still in-progress when I first viewed the new bridge on 30 January, but was certainly finished before 14 February [*Back Page lower photo*], with the dry-stone wall rebuilt and the Crane and Trestle compounds’ field ploughed.

*It would appear that the Network Rail lads have done a fine job and let’s hope we’ll be able to travel over the bridge as rail passengers, very soon! The only “blot on the landscape” is unlikely to be NetR’s responsibility but that of the local highways authority. Under the bridge, the only safe route for pedestrians is through a mud bath! The speed of traffic under the bridge has to be witnessed to be believed!*

*Bill Briggs*



**Above:** 45716 *Swiftsure* seen in the carriage siding alongside Platform 7 at Blackburn in August 1963 collecting its express passenger train which could well have been train 1J09, by which date it started from Blackburn rather than Hellifield. *Photo: Bert Holland*

**Below:** 45717 *Dauntless* heading north, rounding the curve at Brownhill and approaching the summit just before Wilpshire, with a mid-week Manchester to Hellifield train in the 1950s. This train departed Manchester Victoria at 9.20am, Blackburn at 10.19am, and arrived Hellifield at 10.58am. A short train on mid-week days, it became a much longer “intercity” train on Saturdays, coded 1S48, continuing via Settle and Carlisle to Glasgow by way of Dumfries and the former Glasgow & South Western route to Glasgow (St Enoch). *Photo: Ken Roberts*

Note the flat-sided, narrow, Fowler tender on each of these locos. These tenders, carried by the un-rebuilt Patriots, were of smaller capacity than the Stanier tenders designed for the Jubilees.



The cancelling of the summer DalesRail service into the Yorkshire Dales by the DfT in 2023, because of Northern’s appalling previous service performance, and the later petitioning by its Rail Groups, and Rambler Groups, together with authorities and politicians, resulted in a promise to look at reintroducing DalesRail in a different format in 2024. At recent conferences and meetings we hear that this is very much being worked on and an improved, feasible option has been worked out.

Fingers crossed we hear an announcement, soon!

In the last few months, RVR representatives have attended our Clitheroe and East Lancashire Lines Community Rail Partnership meetings, Community Rail Network AGM and other meetings, and Northern’s Community Rail and Stakeholder meetings. Some outcomes have been that there has been reported progress with the RMT and ASLEF agreements and, whilst there has been much progress, there is still some way to go with the on-going industrial action.

The trains which operate the Ribble Valley Line services are approaching 50years old. Northern are replacing these (a total of 367 trains in Northern’s fleet) by multi-modal (electrical/battery and bio/clean diesel), with the first of them due to enter service in 2028/29.

Meanwhile, out of our four local services (Manchester - Clitheroe, Preston Colne, Leeds - Blackpool, and Manchester - Todmorden - Blackburn), the Clitheroe service has shown the highest post-COVID travel recovery rate, with an average of over 25% over four performance periods from August to December 2023.

Finally (for now!), a reminder that at 13.30 for 14.00 on 23 March, at the Trinity Hub, Trinity Methodist Church Hall, Parson Lane, Clitheroe, the RVR 2024 AGM will take place. All members are urged to attend. The Agenda, and instructions appear on Page3 of this RVRNews.

*Peter Eastham*

*Remember, the AGM is your chance to say your piece; to question the Officers and Committee; to submit a prior nomination of someone for an Officer’s position; to put your own name forward for the Committee.*

*You can do most of this at any of the bi-monthly meetings but, above all, the AGM is your chance to VOTE! Ed.*

### **Friends of Stations**

Annual Reports will be given at the AGM and will appear in RVRN139 in June.

## Northern document, “Improving Local Rail Services”

The link below is to an executive summary document resulting from Northern’s study into possible upgrades to local services in Lancashire.

I think it is self-explanatory and is the result of all our partners in Community Rail Lancashire, including Lancashire County Council and Local Authorities including RVBC, working with Northern. Much of the work done earlier for the “Restoring Your Railway” bid has been included - all coming together and produced by Northern, with an eye on the future.

Key features affecting the RV line would be a move to 2 trains per hour and the possibility, and social and economic justification, for a Clitheroe - Hellifield service, both of which are included.

The next steps are listed at the end of the document and this now means that these plans will be on the table should the Department for Transport and the Government decide to improve local transport in the North, as stated as an intention by the Prime Minister, using funding available following the cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham.

<<https://communityraillancashire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Lancs-Study-Technical-Document-Executive-Summary-Final.pdf>>

*Peter Eastham*

*[As far as the Ribble Valley is concerned, this is a very positive document in many respects. However, there is no mention of a Clitheroe (or from north of Clitheroe) - Preston service which would be very useful, given the current “connection” time at Blackburn, mentioned below by David Butterworth. Ed.]*

*Alan Scholfield comments:*

DalesRail is mentioned but no reference to the withdrawal of the service. It reads very positively about Clitheroe to Hellifield. What are the signalling infrastructure changes required? Disappointing that there is no mention of a Clitheroe - Preston (or Blackpool North) service. Did anybody think of a circular route from Preston, Carnforth, Hellifield, Clitheroe ....?

*David Butterworth:*

The issue at Hellifield is that it is not possible to return from the same platform from which one arrives, as the facing points are not fitted with locking mechanisms. OK when used as trailing points. An ECS trip to Settle Jct is required for turnback.

The introduction of a half-hourly service could, with good timetabling, allow a same platform interchange at Blackburn onto or from the Preston trains. It seems that the introduction of another discrete Preston train is not currently possible due to alleged saturation at Preston.

It would be useful if the demand forecast for “our line” could be split between passengers to/from Clitheroe (and stations to the south) and, separately, the assessed

Startled by pain, a spontaneous reaction resulted in him momentarily loosening his grip on the shovel handle. The shovel, not just the coal, continued on its trajectory deep into the firebox. By the time an attempt to grab a fire-iron to retrieve the shovel had been made, the shovel handle had been well and truly incinerated. The diver was unaware of what had just occurred as he was still looking back down the train, awaiting the tip from the guard.

With thoughts of the futility of trying to keep a fire going and steam pressure for the, very imminent, long fast run by throwing one lump of coal at a time into the fire, a vision of a large number of angry passengers being late for work, and the resultant questions from railway management, our young fireman decided it was time for confessing to his driver. The latter remained completely calm and, just having seen the green flag, now set off from Bolton station.

A short distance from the station was Burden Junction signalbox where the driver brought the train to a halt, had a word with the signalman, and set off again. A further short distance was Bolton shed, on the other side of the line. Once again the driver stopped the train. A shed labourer was already crossing the adjacent down line to hand up a replacement shovel into the cab. The message had got through!

However, during the short run from the signalbox to the shed, word had obviously got round among the shed staff and off-duty locomotive crews, probably having breakfast in the shed’s mess room at the time, who turned out *en masse* and now lined the trackside with gesticulations and not-very-helpful comments. After all, in terms of usefulness, a steam loco fireman without a shovel could possibly bear comparison with a chocolate fireguard!

## Locomotives & photographers.

**Upper:** 45716 *Swiftsure* photographed by the late Bert Holland in August 1963. Bert was a highly-respected railway photographer who later emigrated to North America to take up an academic position at a university. I was very fortunate to be given some of his collection, of photographs of Blackburn and Lower Darwen railway scenes, by someone to whom he had bequeathed them.

**Lower:** 45717 *Dauntless*, climbing towards the summit at Ramsgreave, with a Manchester to Hellifield train sometime in the 1950s, photographed by RVR Founder Member, Ken Roberts (RVR 016) who sends his best wishes to Committee Members and RVR Members alike, thanking all for their continued support for RVR.

*Peter Eastham*

## An embarrassing accident

*Peter Eastham*

For just under my first forty years, my home was on the outskirts of Blackburn and within sight sound and smell of trains passing on the Ribble Valley line. After leaving Daisyfield Junction, heavy trains climbing the 1 in 127 gradient heading north towards Wilpshire and onward to Hellifield, certainly made a lot of noise. Whilst getting ready for school between the late '50s and until September 1962 (when the RV passenger service was withdrawn), just before 8 am on weekday mornings, a fast, lengthy express passenger train could be seen heading down the gradient towards Blackburn.

The train was sometimes headed by an ubiquitous mixed-traffic "Black 5" but, also quite frequently by a green express passenger "Jubilee" class or an un-rebuilt "Patriot" class engine; quite impressive compared with the plodding freight trains or the short stopping passenger trains.

The train (Report Code 1J09) left Hellifield at 7.09am and would arrive at Platform 7 of the old Blackburn station. It would then leave at 8.05am and call at Darwen, Bolton, and Salford on its way to Manchester Victoria. After the Blackburn - Hellifield service was withdrawn, this train continued to run but now starting from Blackburn, still steam-hauled until 1964, even when diesel multiple units had, by then, taken over virtually all East Lancashire services.

A recent conversation with a former fireman (who shall be nameless!) from Blackburn's Lower Darwen steam shed revealed an incident that occurred one morning when, as part of the loco crew, he had relieved the incoming Hellifield fireman at Blackburn. His first job on climbing onto the footplate would be to check the water level in the boiler and the steam pressure on the boiler gauge. The fire would have been allowed to die down on the downhill run from Wilpshire. Much shovelling of coal was now needed to build up the fire and steam pressure for the hard climb to Darwen which continued to the summit just beyond Sough tunnel. Once that was reached, as well as getting some fresh air after breathing in the thick fumes in the almost mile-long tunnel, he could relax for the long downhill run into Bolton. During the stop at Bolton, the strenuous shovelling would begin again to create steam for the fast sprint onwards to Salford and Manchester.

Bolton was where the accident occurred. The locomotive involved was of the Jubilee class and had the smaller, flat-sided, Fowler-designed tender and was either 45716 *Swiftsure* or 45717 *Dauntless*, he recalls.

His driver had crossed the cab from his seat to stand and look out, back along Platform 1, to look out for the guard's "right away" green flag at the rear of the long train. In the meantime, our fireman was swinging heavy shovelfuls of coal through the firehole and aiming them at the distant front end of the firebox. This requires some momentum in the swing. On this occasion, all was going well but, as one load was entering the firebox, a stream of boiling water, from a leaking control valve on the boiler backplate above, fell on his wrist and hand!

demand northwards to Hellifield. I'm still not convinced there's a business case for that section, but I will be happy to be proved wrong.

It would help all round if the line speed between Blackburn and Clitheroe could be raised from 45mph to 60mph. The track is fit for it. If it weren't, they would not allow the log train, *et al.*

*Alan Scholfield:*

I remember one Sunday morning on the Ribble Valley Rambler we did actually reverse out of the Carlisle platform back towards Clitheroe and across the crossing. Presumably, they were able to use manual locking on the points.

*David Butterworth:*

Many moons ago [15 October 1988, actually. Ed.] we ran a charter train from Preston [Preston - Skipton - B'pool North - Skipton - Preston. It was very well supported from Preston, Blackburn, and Clitheroe but very poorly so from Skipton where some of the traders refused, point blank, to carry our advertising! Ed.] It, too, reversed from the arrival platform at Hellifield, with the points being locked by hand. OK for a one-off trip but out of the question (therefore not permitted) for a regular timetabled service. Far too costly in manpower, for one thing.

However, I cannot see the sense in having an extension of the Clitheroe service just to Hellifield. There isn't even a shred of a business case to do that. Colne to Skipton is financially a better option but even that is debatable.

A connection into the Leeds - Carlisle service would help but such a connection must be almost immediate, in each direction, as there is absolutely no sheltered waiting space at Hellifield. An "immediate" connection would, however, be impossible as the train from Clitheroe would be in the way. A shunt onto the adjoining line would be time-consuming (even if possible). [For a frequent user of the "Lanky" to/from Hellifield and beyond (for over 15 years upto September 1962), the solution is simple: re-instate the bay! No shuffling about, necessary! Ed.]

The only sensible route for a service beyond Clitheroe would be a) all the way to Carlisle (in addition to the existing Leeds - Carlisle service) or b) via Carnforth to Lancaster/Morecambe.

If NetR were to change the signalling etc it would be possible to run the ex-Clitheroe train to Skipton but the cost of such resignalling would run into £millions. Again, would there be a worthwhile passenger take-up, throughout the day, in all seasons, to/from Skipton onto the RV Line? I doubt it, as there is already an hourly bus between Clitheroe and Skipton and that is light-loaded, off-peak.

[NB. The last bus from Skipton to Clitheroe is 18.20 (Mon-Fri) and 18.15 (Sat) and takes 55 mins. Any later than that means catching the bus to Burnley (last available 20.55, arr Burnley 22.02) and a 56min wait for the C'oe (22.58) arr C'oe 23.41. Total journey time 2h 40min! Ed.]

*DJB continues:*

I am convinced that our immediate focus should be on supporting a half-hourly service to Manchester with at least one of those trains per hour offering a sensible connection into and out of trains to Preston. Preston has got to be a more reachable destination than at present. It's our nearest city, with a notable university, a business centre, good for shopping, and an easy means of connection into trains to the North. The present 33 minute "connection" is a train travel killer! No worthwhile connection should exceed 10 minutes. In Switzerland it's five!

Additionally, we must press for a linespeed uplift to 60mph, as previously noted. The track is well up to coping with that.

And finally, we need better trains! My recent return trip from Bolton, in a Class 156, was chilly - very chilly, even though every window was closed.

*Peter Eastham:*

Manual locking of facing points/crossovers, using a clamp by a man on the ground, is a normal procedure where passenger trains encounter those which do not have mechanically-, or electrically-operated facing point locks. When RVR ran the trip to Skipton via Hellifield, the train had to wait while this was done before it could proceed.

Some years ago, when 28 sets of points, and other trackwork, which had become life-expired, were being renewed at Hellifield, I wrote to Network Rail to suggest that the crossover points from the arrival platform at Hellifield (from the Blackburn direction) could, during this work, be fitted with locking controlled from the signal box. This would remove the need to travel to Settle Jct to cross over for the return journey. We received a positive reply from a lady Director of Network Rail saying that it was a good idea but the contract for the above renewal work had already been let, at the necessary materials obtained. It was, therefore, not possible to add to the scheduled work at the then late stage, but the suggestion had been looked into and would have been relatively inexpensive, as it only effected using spare levers in the signal box and fitting additional mechanical point rodding. Much simpler than having to connect into electrical control systems, as used on modernised/electrified routes with power boxes involved.

A similar repair/renewal scheme of the pointwork at both ends of Blackburn station has been carried out during a recent weekend engineering possession when no trains ran.

*Information gained from a NetR friend is that any speed enhancement would require a business case, led by the TOC and FOCs and, ultimately, funding. A modest increase of 15mph probably wouldn't have much benefit, as the stops, and need to brake for lower speed PSRs, may not bring much reduction on running times. Ed.*

service from Lancashire. The result was that we discussed the project and had the 1991 programme "on the road" by 2 June, a programme which incorporated many of the most successful aspects of the Rail Rambler programme into "Lancashire DalesRail", something which is unique in the UK, and a programme which now has upto 41/42 trains to Carlisle on 25/26 Sundays each year and has continued uninterrupted into the era of privatisation.

So, I was asked, "When did you start on Lancashire DalesRail?"

1977 with Yorkshire Dales National Park.

1991 with the present series with Lancashire County Council and, for good measure, we ran two "Rail Ramblers" a year over the line when there was no DalesRail from Lancashire.

### **Letter from Colin Speakman to Paul Bunting, 25 February 1991**

Dear Paul

#### LANCASHIRE SUNDAY RAIL PROGRAMME

Following our meeting on 31 January, I have since had a meeting the Alan Howard, national Vice-Chairman of the Ramblers' Association, and Howard Hammersley of Lancashire Rail Ramblers. Alan and Howard confirm my own view that the success of the projected 1991 Lancashire programme depends critically on the programme being a genuine countryside recreational package, which includes a programme of guided walks from the trains.

I emphasise that it was only because of such a programme that the Dales Rail project was such a success in the 1970s and this success played no small part in the subsequent re-opening of the Settle - Carlisle line. Howard has confirmed that the existing organisation of the Lancashire Rail Ramblers could provide the administrative structure to operate a similar programme of upto four walks (and maybe a town trail) from every train, and to prepare a programme of walks and a team of experienced leaders. This will include the existing Lancashire Dales Rail service for which the YDNP are unable to provide leaders. The Lancashire Rail Ramblers group has unrivalled experience in this area, and I should add that Howard worked closely with me in establishing the guided walks programme for the Lancashire Dales Rail way back in the mid-'70s.

We could also offer assistance in publicity and in some administration through the Countrygoer project, particularly as we are now hopeful that the Ramblers' Association may well be prepared to support the programme as an Associate Member. This might be especially important from the Stockport and Manchester end of the exercise. It is likely that LCC will also help, as they already do, with publicity and distribution of the Rail Ramblers programme using regular services. In my view this whole area represents a very exciting development of the whole concept of using railways for access to the countryside and we shall give it every support.

However, time is of the essence if leaders are to be arranged and publicity produced for the first trains which, I assume, will coincide with BR's summer timetable in May. Can I urge you to arrange an early meeting with Howard Hammersley, then we can get the programme in motion as soon as possible. I have asked that proposals remain confidential for now.

Yours sincerely, **Colin Speakman\***

*Cc: Howard Hamersley\*, Alan Howard, Chris Anslow and Richard Watts\*(LCC) and Keith Pennyfather (Countryside Commission) for information and possible action.*

Thus the Lancashire DalesRail emerged in 1991 with the walks programme prepared and administered by the Lancashire Rail Ramblers Committee. [*\* see photos page 23*]



## DalesRail - The Lancashire Service [continued from RVRN137]

*Extracts from "Dales Rail: Report on 1977 operations and outline programme for 1978" by R J Harvey, National Park Officer for North Yorkshire County Council YDNP Cttee, 10 November 1977.*

1. "Arising out of the unfortunate experience of 1976, when Dales Rail charter services were being considerably undercut by British Rail's own "speculative" trains, the policy in 1977 was not to compete with the charter market but to offer limited wardening and interpretive services on a small number of British Rail's "speculative" ventures. In fact, only one such train operated, from Preston and Blackpool, and this proved unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. It is clear, however, that there is a substantial demand for some form of Dales Rail operation from Lancashire, which is one of the traditional of visitor origin for the National Park, and the Committee's involvement with this market might need to be re-examined."
2. Experience gained over the last three years amply confirms the demand for a Dales Rail link with Lancashire. The lessons of 1977 cast doubt on British Rail's capacity to organise and operate an effective service. The simplest and most effective way of providing such a service would appear to be to operate a 2-car train from Preston and Blackburn to couple with the Leeds - Carlisle Dales Rail train at Hellifield. This would serve a large area of Lancashire at a cost comparable with that of an equivalent size train from Leeds. It would not be feasible to operate this service on Sundays due to engineering work and other constraints, but the additional traffic generated on Saturdays, particularly to destinations north of Appleby, would further strengthen the viability of the Saturday service.

The Lancashire trains called at Clitheroe station, especially re-opened in 1978 to accommodate Dales Rail services. The restoration of simple platforms was commissioned by Ribblesdale District Council at a total cost of £2,800, for which a 50% grant was made by the Countryside Commission with additional support provided by Lancashire County Council and Clitheroe Town Council.

### The Lancashire Rail Ramblers link

*The following is from a copy of a note written by Howard Hammersley\* dated 15 July 2007.*

I started with Yorkshire Dales National Park Dales Rail in 1976, first year of link-ups at Hellifield, on behalf of the project run by Colin Speakman. A small group of us did this until 1984. At the same time we ran an Easter "Rail Rambler" and, latterly, a summer "Rail Rambler" with British Rail over the Settle - Carlisle line. Then, British Rail, who had decided to move our Rail Rambler from Sundays to Saturdays, also decided to virtually double or triple our programme as it was so successful. It was clear that we could not cope with both Dales Rail and Rail Ramblers both being on Saturdays. Fortunately, Lancashire County Council had become involved with Yorkshire Dales National Park and ran the Lancashire Dales Rail as a "charter train". This lasted until 1989. In 1990 the Dales Rail programme became a Sunday programme.

Following the public enquiry into the proposed closure of the Settle - Carlisle line and the subsequent refusal by the Transport Minister, and his surprising decision to specifically support a proposal put forward in the inspector's report that there should be a regular summer train service from Lancashire over the Settle - Carlisle line that, in February 1991, I received a letter from Colin Speakman. With it was a copy of a letter from Paul Bunting (*see below*) Senior Marketing Manager, BR Network North West, on the subject of the Dales Rail

## SWAY - a new way to read RVRNews

SWAY is a new electronic format for RVRNews which is designed to complement, rather than replace, the pdf version of the hard-copy magazine. The content will be broadly the same as the hard-copy but with the added advantage of having high quality colour photographs embedded in the text instead of them having to be grouped together on the colour pages.

RVR E-recipients will still receive the pdf but will also have the option of SWAY, simply by clicking on the box [GO TO SWAY] on the email.

To receive the SWAY version, any RVR Member with an email address, not necessarily one known to the Membership Secretary, is asked to send an email request to <Kathryn.rvrnews@gmail.com>

*Kathryn writes:*

"Welcome to this trial format of RVRNews. In order to read this, you can either scroll down the text (on a computer), swipe upwards (on a mobile device), or go straight to an article by using the menu button (a square with horizontal lines) in the bottom right hand corner of your screen. Clicking on a picture will bring it up in full screen - close this by using the X in the top right corner.

If you would like to download this RVRNews as a pdf file, you can click on the 3 dots on the top right of the screen and "export as pdf" - this will enable you to save this magazine to your device, although the file may not be exactly the same as the printed version.

There is a section towards the end of this edition which, should this format be continued, will contain a link to each previous edition of RVRNews produced in SWAY.

This format of RVRN138 is slightly different from RVRN137, so even if you have already given your feedback, please follow the link to the (very short) survey towards the end of this edition. This opens a new window and the link is a secure one to a Microsoft Forms page. The more feedback we receive, the better able we are to produce to produce a magazine which meets the preferences of the majority of our members."

*I can tell you, it doesn't take much getting used to!*

*Bill Briggs*

### Membership Matters

Thanks you to all those who have renewed RVR Membership, in many cases, with donations. More details at the AGM.

### Death of a Member

Sadly, I have to report the death, in April 2023, of Mr Graham Sowter (RVR 271), a member since 1991. I have no biographical details other than that Graham was a Langho Parish Councillor and a keen supporter of RVR, insisting that we were "too cheap" and always including a donation with his subscription. To his widow, and any other surviving relatives, RVR extends sincere condolences.

*Bill Briggs (Membership Secretary)*

**6J37 aka “The Logs”***Jeff Dickinson*

Kronospan is an Austrian-founded, Welsh-based, international company that first moved to the UK in 1970 with the purchase of Maesgwyn Farm in the small town of Chirk on the England/Wales border. Kronospan’s arrival in Chirk provided much-needed employment in this former mining town. The site was formerly agricultural land and the original old farmhouse still forms part of the offices of Kronospan Limited. The company manufactures and distributes wood-base panels which are used in applications such as flooring, furniture, and timber-framed houses.

The raw material is, of course, timber, some of which is sustainably sourced from the Keilder forest in Northumberland. It is likely that, in the past, timber was also brought from Crianlarich, in Scotland.

Since 2007, timber had been dispatched by road from Keilder to the Colas terminal at Carlisle. There, the timber is loaded onto specialised carriers which are, actually, cut-down box units with the headboards retained and movable bolsters fitted. When it first began, there were also ex-Rover Cars “cube” wagons which would have spent their early lives transporting vehicle body panels.

The train was initially sent down the West Coast Main Line (WCML) to Crewe and then via Chester and Wrexham, to the Kronospan Works at Chirk. However, for several years now, it has departed daily from Carlisle at 12.52 on weekdays as 6J37 and on occasional Saturdays as 6V38. It is routed over the Settle-Carlisle as far as Hellifield where it then swings southwest onto the Ribble Valley line. It continues through Clitheroe and Blackburn, gaining the WCML at Farington Junction, just south of Preston. From there it takes the above-mentioned route to Chirk where it is due at Chirk station, usually at 19.27, but this does vary slightly on some days. The train then reverses into a siding at the Kronospan works, on the up side immediately north of the station. The timber is unloaded for the manufacturing process to start.

At 23.14 (again variable) the empty log carriers begin their return journey to Carlisle as 6C37, and are routed, initially further south to Shrewsbury, then either via Stafford, or on the old LNWR route via Nantwich, to get back to Crewe, then north on the WCML, overnight. The train is due at Carlisle at approximately 04.45, ready to be loaded again for the ensuing 6J37. It reverted, temporarily, to the WCML route throughout, for a few months in autumn 2022 after the Peteril Bridge derailment at Carlisle.

Over the years, the train has been hauled by classes 47, 56, 60, and 66 but, in recent years, as the load has increased (18 log carriers grossing upto 1400 tons), a class 70 has been exclusively used.

Another occasional flow to Chirk has started from Hellifield Goods Loops, which entails a shorter train of nine carriers being loaded there, single 56-hauled via the RVL as 6Z34, and returning empty via the RVL as 6Z33.

*Acknowledgements: I am indebted to Mr Grant Drury, Timber Procurement Executive at Kronospan, for his co-operation and for reviewing the facts of this feature. I would also like to thank Steve Moore for supplyin the older photos. JD*

**Recent Train Performance***as reported by Frank Salt of STORM*

*Not good, but the RV services seem to have fared less badly than the rest of “the patch”. The “Tod Curve” trains are not included in this digest. Owing to the high number of cancellations, only services >20 mins late are listed.*

**24 - 30 Nov 2023:**

Fri 24: 11.29 Bbn - Roch, 23 late. 12.00 Coe - Roch, 20 late. 16.29 Bbn - Roch 25 late. 20.01 Coe - Roch, 20 late. 21.21 Roch - Coe 28 late start.

Mon 27: 07.29 Bbn - Roch cancd, n/k, ran non-stop via Copy Pit. 07.52 Roch - Bbn, 36 late start. 08.01 Coe - Roch cancd at Bbn, leaves on line! 08.23 Roch -Coe cancd to MVic, leaves! 08.29 Coe - Roch 36 late start. 09.01 Coe -Roch, 30 late. 09.29 Bbn - Roch, 26 late start. 10.29 Bbn -Roch cancd at MVic, 59 late arrival. 10.52 Roch - Bbn cancd at MVic, late in. 11.29 Bbn - Roch 22 late. 21.31 Roch - Bbn 21 late start.

Tues 28: 11.01 Roch - Bbn 26 late. 20.01 Coe - Roch 26 cancd at MVic, no guard. 21.21 Roch - Coe cancd at MVic, no guard. 23.17 MVic - Bbn 35 late start. 00.10 Bbn - MVic 21 late start. Wed 29: 20.01 Coe - Roch cancd at MVic, no guard. 20.21 Roch - Coe cancd, no guard. 21.52 Coe - Roch 28 late start.

Thurs 30: 07.21 Roch - Coe cancd to MVic, no guard. 20.01 Coe - Roch cancd at MVic, no guard. 22.10 Bbn -MVic cancd, late in. 23.01 Coe - Roch cancd, late in.

**8 -14 Dec 2023:**

Sat 9: Storm ELIN hit around 20.00. From 21.00 only 3 services ran out of 25.

18.29 B’burn - Rochdale 32 late. 20.29 B’burn - Rochdale (reason n/k)

Mon 11: 11.02 C’oe -Roch cancelled at B’burn (no guard). 14.29 B’bn - Roch cancd, late in.

Tues 12: 11.02 Coe - Roch cancd, late in. 11.21 Roch - Coe cancd, late in. 13.01 Coe - Roch cancd, late in. 13.21 Roch - Coe cancd, late in. 14.01 Coe - Roch cancd, no guard. 14.21 Roch - Coe cancd, no guard. 21.52 Roch - Coe cancd, depot issue.

Wed 13: 08.29 Coe - Roch cancd at B’bn, door issue. 08.52 Roch - B’bn cancd MCV, late in. 11.02 Coe - Roch cancd at Bbn, no guard. 13.29 Bbn - Roch cancd, traction issue. 13.52 Roch - Bbn cancd, late in. 14.29 Bbn - Roch cancd, late in. 14.52 Roch - Bbn cancd, traction fault. 15.01 Coe - Roch cancd, service ran ECS via Copy Pit. 15.29 Bbn - Roch, 22 late. 18.01 Coe - Roch cancd at Bbn, no guard. 18.23 Roch - Coe cancd, no guard.

Thurs 14: 08.01 Coe - Roch cancd, no guard. 08.22 Roch -Coe cancd, no guard. 11.29 Bbn - Roch 27 late start. 12.00 Coe - Roch cancd at McV, 49 late. 16.01 Coe - Roch, 29 late start. 19.30 Bbn - Roch cancd, no driver. 19.52 Roch -Bbn cancd, no driver.

At least there’s one bright spot on the route. The Bolton Evening News reports that The Station pub at Bromley Cross has re-opened after a re-furb and the new landlord, Mario, intends to “provide drinks and meals of an affordable standard”.

*[Overheard in a Yorkshire Dales pub -*

*Landlord (pulling a pint for an owd farmer), “Looks like rain, agin.”*

*Farmer, “Aye, an’ th’art chargin’ six quid pint fur it!”*

*Ed.]*



56051 & 56094 arriving at Chirk station with 6J37 at 19.13 on 2 August 2023, prior to reversing the train into the Kronospan siding for unloading.

*Photo: J Dickinson*



44739 approaching Pimlico Link Road bridge with 6J37 on 20 October 2010

*Photo: Steve Moore*

***Above: 6J37 near Journey's End. Below: 6E44 still a way to go.***

At 10.37 on 1 November 2023, 70815 snakes through Blackburn station with 6E44, with Colas Ribble Rail at Preston to Haverton bitumen tanks.

*Photo: J Dickinson*



***6J37 aka "The Logs"***

60087 passing through Clitheroe station with 6J37 on 3 June 2015.

*Photo: Steve Moore*





66841 approaching Bawdlands Bridge, Clitheroe on 23 July 2010  
*Photo: S Moore*

**6J37 aka “The Logs”**

70813 passes through Whalley station with 6J37 26 September 2023  
*Photo: J Dickinson*



56078 on 6Z33, empty return “Hellifield” logs passes Horrocksford Jct on  
 3 November 2023  
*Photo: J Dickinson*

**Just “Logs”**

56087, 47739, 56078 6J37 approaching Horrocksford Jct on 28 April 2014  
*Photo: S Moore*

