



Up for the long haul, DOWN for the Long Drag

Ex-LNER A4 4498 *Sir Nigel Gresley* hauls a Sir Nigel Gresley Locomotive Trust special through Horrocksford Jct on 21 May 2022. No stranger to RVL metals, SNG, fresh from a major overhaul hauled the “Clitheroe Parish Church” special in 1986.

Ex-LNER and Ex-LMS

Black 5, 45231, creating some human interest, hauls the second Fellsman of the season through Clitheroe station on 7 June 2023.

Photos: Graham Dudley



RIBBLE VALLEY RAILNews



Ready for Action

Accompanied by Brian Haworth, Kathryn Spencer, and Lauren Hall, young gardeners from Chatburn Primary School make ready to plant the Clitheroe Station gardens in memory of Marjorie Birch on 8 March 2023.

Photo: Courtesy of Lauren Hall



RVRNews
136

Spring/
Summer
2023



Cement Workings

Above: Working light-engine from Bescot to Clitheroe Castle Cement on 21 Feb 2023, 66734 arrives at Horrocksford Jct prior to reversing onto the UP main to gain entry to the branch, to take the loaded cement to Avonmouth, next day.

Below: On 21 Feb 2023, 60076 *Dunbar* arrives at Horrocksford Jct having worked down from Carlisle NY to Tuebrook the previous night. The tanks had been stored since the October 2022 derailment at Petteril Bridge Jct.
Photos: S Moore



Photos and info: Peter Eastham



Page 23: Top:

Towards the end of May, 200 litres of compost and 100 litres of top soil were purchased to top up the station planters, especially at Clitheroe where they had become very low. At the time, there wasn't much point in planting them out as the North West was experiencing prolonged hot dry weather which would have necessitated regular watering. The long-term forecast was for this to persist until well into June, whereas the South could expect a "degging" and Milton Keynes would find out what the weather is usually like, Oop North!

On the evening of Wednesday 24 May, Pam Corlett and Joan Moore are seen filling one of Clitheroe's planters.

Page 23: Bottom:

On 29 May, the 18.48 departs Langho to Whalley and Clitheroe. A 2-car 150 heads a 2-car 156 (156408). This colourful, yellow, red, and dark blue 156 is the latest addition to Ribble Valley trains. It is the latest, and possible the last, of the CI 156 sets to be transferred from the East Midlands Railway Co's East Midlands Trains fleet to that of Northern. The process, begun three years ago, saw the first ones initially transferred to replace all Northern's single-car CI 153 units which were transferred to other parts of England and to Scotland.

From published fleet lists, all CI 156 units now appear to be shared between Northern and ScotRail, with a handful off-lease from their Owing Company and stored at Ely.

This set is still in EMR livery but will soon be in Northern's blue & grey, although the fitting of wi-fi and other upgrades seems to be taking longer.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS & DIARY DATES 2022

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 meeting: 10 July 2023

If in doubt, check the RVR website.

RVR WHO'S WHO & OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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FoWS: Alan Scholfield	01254 823140
FoCS: <i>situation vacant</i>	
BT Police: Railwatch Freephone	0800 40 50 40
Network Rail National Helpline	08457 11 41 41
Network Rail NW Press Office, Square One, 4 Travis Street, Manchester, M1 2NY	0161 880 3142
Northern Rail customer helpline	0845 600 1159
Train running information	0870 602 3322
RVR website:	www.ribbonvalleyrail.co.uk
Community Rail Partnership Website:	www.communityrail Lancashire.co.uk

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.

From the Chair

If not always in the past, we are certainly now living in times of change, disruption and uncertainty in the world of rail travel.

As reported in RVRN135, discussions were then underway concerning the suspension of the DalesRail service for summer 2023, and its disappearance from the timetable.

Over the previous two years, this service suffered very poor and unreliable performance with many cancellations, sometimes advised as late as on the morning of the timetabled service. Frequent reasons were found to be a lack of qualified drivers and train crew with necessary route-knowledge of the Clitheroe - Hellifield - Settle & Carlisle section of the route. Many crews with historical "knowledge" had retired, or moved onto other jobs and, to save money and have drivers available for other services, replacements had not been trained. At a time when the railways in general are short of train staff and there are many cancellations on other routes, taking drivers off their regular routes for additional training deprives their original route(s) of a driver for several days during the training/route-experience period. On top of this, Northern drivers on the West of the Pennines have a voluntary Sunday working agreement so, even if qualified, Sunday DalesRail depended on volunteers for them to operate.

Very concerned DalesRail users and user-representative bodies held joint discussions to express their concern and to press for action for reinstatement of the service for 2024, which had only been hinted at. The Rail Ramblers Group, Ribble Valley Rail, the Settle & Carlisle organisations, and national and local Rail User organisations held meetings with, and wrote letters to, the authorities and MPs to make their points. These reached the DfT and ministerial level and replies revealed that there was no intention to permanently remove passenger services over the route, and that work with Northern was on-going to form a new service for 2024. This may well be different from previous, possibly running from a different origin, possibly not running the full length of the route, and even running on a different day of the week. We understand that Northern have already trained a considerable number of additional drivers, as instructed by the DfT. The DfT had instructed Northern to suspend the service because of its problematic and appalling unreliability. We await an announcement.

All this is in the background of the on-going industrial action by rail unions and more strike days have been announced for July, as I write.

In other news, just announced, is the intended closure of virtually all ticket/booking offices. The Rail Delivery Group, which represents the train operators, says this will modernise the railways as only 12% of tickets are now obtained from that source, the rest being bought via TVMs (ticket-vending machines) or on mobile phones. Another change made possible by the internet and modern technology, and another step towards the demise of cash and paperwork, and movement towards the digital world. *[Alright for some, especially if working from "an office in Milton Keynes"! Ed.]*

On a more positive note, not necessarily for Ribble Valley Line passengers, the number of freight trains using the RVL continues to increase. The cement trains from Clitheroe, (north to Carlisle and Scotland, south to Gloucester and Avonmouth), continue to run as they have done from the early days. The weekday log trains from Carlisle to the Kronospan wood products factory at Chirk, Shropshire, have returned following their diversion via the West Coast route when it was less busy during and following the COVID crisis.

In addition, there are regular flows of small limestone from Ribblehead to Tuebrook (Liverpool) and Ashton-in-Makerfield, and from Rylstone Quarry, via Skipton, to new sidings which have been laid in the former railway yard of Leyland Motors at Leyland.

Also still running is the afternoon Network Rail engineers' train, 6K05, carrying materials and equipment, and also used for repositioning additional locomotives. The kaolin (china clay) train from Antwerp, via Wembley, to Irvine paper mill runs as required.

Steam- and diesel-hauled special excursion and dining trains continue to operate quite frequently to and from the Settle-Carlisle line and beyond.

All this traffic serves to increase the sustainability of the Ribble Valley Line.

Peter Eastham

Membership

ATTENTION ALL RVR MEMBERS!

If you are reading this RVRNews as a member, your subscription is NOT overdue, but I have a job for each of you!

After taking over as Membership Secretary in November 1988, I inherited a Membership of 101 which rose quite rapidly to a peak of around 150 by the end of 1989. This was, of course, in our campaigning days when we were all desperate to save the S&C and to have a passenger service restored to the Blackburn - Hellifield line. After we regained a service to Clitheroe, we lost a number of members whose forte was campaigning rather than maintaining, as a user-group. From those heady days we have seen a slow but steady decline in membership, alleviated by occasional successful membership campaigns but dogged, especially of recent years, by that horrible phrase "natural wastage" *i.e.* resignations (mostly age-related) and, unfortunately but inevitably, deaths. However, 25 of the 101 are still very much with us and a further four taken over by relatives of deceased members. Currently, RVR has 114 subscribing members. Having "set the scene", now to the "action"!

As should be obvious from this RVRNews, we have a campaign to restore DalesRail to the timetable, hopefully by the May 2024 version. Strength in numbers is key, just as it was with the successful petition against closure of the S&C. So, it's time for another RVR membership campaign and, to that end, a Membership application form (with GDPR permissions) is included with this magazine. One joining member each and we've doubled the membership. Give it to a friend or acquaintance. Give it to someone on the train who may be interested. Give a Membership as a raffle prize. If you need back copies of RVRNews, I can supply them, singly or in bulk! Success needs you!

Bill Briggs (RVR Membership Secretary)

Clitheroe Stations

< **Clitheroe Police Station** exterior, looking not much different from when it was built. The entrance is now on the King Street side [L of pic] complete with "disabled" ramp whereas, in days of yore, it was up the steps, just behind where the police car is, on the right of picture.



Clitheroe Fire Station (1)

< The 1934 Fire Station, off Princess Avenue, minus hose-drying tower and siren, and now a veterinary practice. The ambulance station was round the back on the right hand side of the picture.



Clitheroe Fire Station (2)

< The current Fire Station on the opposite side of Princess Avenue, showing the new-style hose-drying tower which, in these electronic days, doesn't need a siren!



Photos: W Briggs

RVRNews copy dates

Start now, and keep contributions coming! RVRN137 needs to be ready by November

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.*

In the days before electronic communication, when a call was received the firemen were summoned by the siren which could be heard all over town, and the sound of which rose and fell twice. As kids, in the early '50s, we were told that was so that it couldn't be confused with an air-raid siren when, in actual fact, it was so it wasn't confused with the Ribble Cement siren which would be sounded *once* when blasting was about to take place at Lanehead Quarry.

In the 1980s the Fire Station was moved to its present position at the top and opposite side of Princess Avenue. The original building was taken over by Myerscough Veterinary practice and the hose-drying tower, together with the siren, was demolished.

Behind the 1934 Fire Station was the Ambulance Station. The original ambulance service for Clitheroe had been provided by Tomlinson's Taxis of Back York Street. The Ambulance Station remained behind the Vet practice until the new Clitheroe Hospital was built and the station was moved there.

Acknowledgements:

Police Station - Tony Prince

Fire & Ambulance Stations - Alan Clarke BEM (RVR 105), Clitheroe Reference Library

Letters:

RVR Tea Room

I can shed some light on a couple of items in RVRN135.

The upper photo on p2: The date is Sunday 7 June 1987. Following "Clitheroe 800" the previous year, a Heritage Fayre was put on for the celebrations. The Fayre opened at noon, and the RVR Tea Room won £50 for the best stall and a picture was taken by the *Advertiser & Times*. RVR made £169, before deductions. As for the group picture, there is every possibility that it was taken by me, but I cannot be certain.

To add some detail to Peter's last paragraph on p17: Following a public meeting in St Mary's Centre on Saturday 1 September 1986, a group met in the front room on the right-hand side of the Swan & Royal on the evening of Monday 1 December 1986, from which Ribble Valley Rail was born.

Steve Houlker (RVR 015)

Re: RVRN135

Many thanks for RVRNews 135. It is very much appreciated. It's so interesting to see how the line continues to serve passenger, along with the special charters and, of course, the freight traffic. Hard to believe that it was to be a single line from Daisyfield Jcn to Horrocksford Jcn for freight services, under the original Preston re-signalling plans.

You and your colleagues must be very proud of your achievements.

Regards

Ron Herbert

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Ribble Valley Rail
Saturday 25 March 2023 at Trinity Church Hall, Parson Lane, Clitheroe at 2.00 pm**

Present: P Eastham, P White, A Scholfield, J Moore, A Bowles, B Haworth, G Dudley, DJ Butterworth, W A Briggs, P M Corlett.

Apologies for absence: A & S Kay, L Hall, K Roberts, N Weaver

Minutes of Previous AGM: Prop: B Haworth, Sec: W Briggs. Carried unanimously.

Matters arising: Car parking available at Whalley until 2025, as per sign.

Chairman's Report: "At the 2022 AGM I reported that the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), which had operated within franchises granted by the Government had had them taken away because some of them were beginning to collapse financially just before the COVID outbreak. Government-owned companies had been created to operate them under contract, with our own Northern operator becoming Northern Trains Ltd. In essence, the Department of Transport, on behalf of the Government, was now operating trains through these companies, with Network Rail (also Govt-owned) still maintaining the infrastructure - track, signals, and stations. The Govt had just announced plans to create a new entity entitled Great British Railways to combine all the operating and infrastructure under one body (exceptions being Transport for London, Merseyrail, and some minor railways).

So, where are we up to 12 months later? Not very far! The only progress appears to be that, of the various towns and cities invited to bid for the new headquarters of GBR, Derby was announced (a couple of days ago) as the successful bidder. Other than that, only delay and any Parliamentary Bill to permit progress will not be presented in this parliamentary session. Transport Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan told the Commons that GBR would not now go ahead in 2024 owing to the scrapping of the proposed Transport Bill. It was being abolished because of the need to prioritise other legislation to deal with the energy crisis. Dame Bernadette Kelly (DfT Permanent Secretary) to the Transport Select Committee, "There are key elements of structural change and the establishment of GBR which require legislation that we can't do structurally without legislation and without these powers."

So, the railways struggle on with the current industrial action affecting the operation of trains, (although it looks like some agreement has been reached of pay and working conditions with Network Rail), and under Govt control through the DfT.

This control has recently become apparent to Ribble Valley Rail with recent notification that the summer Sundays' DalesRail service between Blackpool North and Carlisle via the Ribble Valley would not be appearing in the forthcoming May 2023 timetable. This service, which has operated continuously for much longer than RVR has existed, has provided a valued service to walkers, ramblers, and leisure travellers, and its withdrawal has caused much consternation in many other groups as well as our own. A joint letter from and these partner organisations has been sent to local MPs and other authorities and we await their response. There has still been no official statement on the reasons for the withdrawal of the service but, from what we can gather, the DfT has put pressure on Northern to save 10% from their budget and DalesRail is classed as a financially poorly-performing service. This comes as no surprise to our Committee given the extremely poor performance/reliability with many cancellations (often at short notice) over the past two years. Many of these have been caused by train crews' voluntary Sunday working agreement, a failure to train new crews to give them the necessary route-knowledge, and problems from other local union agreements.

Northern have stated that a change from from the Sunday voluntary working agreement is part of the current discussions in the current industrial dispute, and a reinstatement of the DalesRail service in 2024 might be possible.

The Restoring Your Railway initiative, launched by the Govt under Boris Johnson's premiership, also appears to have stalled. Ribbles Valley Borough Council's bid to restore a regular service between Clitheroe and Hellifield, which was approved for further investigation as one of the first ten bids accepted nationally, was referred back with a recommendation that it could proceed but only if funding, other than from Central Government, could be found. Lancashire County Council, other councils, and bodies are aware of this. We will see what develops.

Another DfT decision has been to redeploy the 3-car units, reported last year, that had been specially formed for RVL services, to East of the Pennines. These units had coped well with passenger capacities, even south of Blackburn. Their replacements have been mainly 4-car sets which, while providing additional capacity, are too long for some of the station platforms. Thus, passengers are moved to the front two cars, in both directions north of Ramsgrave & Wilpshire, causing delays and inconvenience to passengers. Northern, Network Rail, and Lancashire County Council are well-aware of this and have been strongly urged to complete the programme of platform extensions at Langho, Whalley, and Clitheroe. Upto last year, this programme had progressed well as far as Ramsgrave & Wilpshire from Hall 'th Wood at the Bolton end. Meanwhile, the normal hourly service between Clitheroe and Rochdale has performed well with very few cancellations, certainly when compared with other local routes. Passenger figures continue to improve but are still not back to pre-COVID levels.

At this point, I must pay tribute to Marjorie Birch, who passed away suddenly just before Christmas. To lose our devoted and energetic Chairman was a great shock to all who knew her as a friend and colleague. I shall not list all her involvements, not only with RVR, but with national railway organisations such as the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, and Women in Community Rail, plus many other community roles detailed in her obituary and articles in our magazine. Many of us were honoured to attend Marje's funeral and also a recent event and also a recent event in her memory in the old Clitheroe station building, organised by Women in Community Rail and her granddaughter (and RVR Ctee Member) Lauren who continues to carry on the family support for RVR going back to her late grandfather, Ron, who was a founder member of RVR.

RVR continues to work with our partners within Community Rail Lancashire where concerns, operating and other matters are discussed with the train-operating and infrastructure companies. Of course, last but not least, a big thanks to all Officers and Committee for your support through the past year. Friends of Stations have worked hard and conscientiously on maintaining and keeping the stations tidy, and reporting faults. We had the best planting and floral displays, possibly ever, at all the stations thanks to a concerted effort by our volunteers. As ever, thanks to the local Parish Councils for their financial support for stations' planting. Bill has maintained a high standard with the magazine production, despite battles with the necessary upgrades to computer publishing programs. Membership and RVRN distribution are also in Bill's domain, necessitating more transition into the digital age. Neil, despite health problems, has maintained our website, which now acts as a link with the outside world in terms of generating enquiries and questions. The replies always generate thanks and praise from senders and have also produced a few new members.

Other Clitheroe Stations

Bill Briggs

Clitheroe has a long history of being second. The town has the proud distinction of having the second smallest Norman keep in England (the smallest being at Christchurch in Hampshire) and, having received its Charter of Incorporation in 1174, being the second oldest municipal borough in the County Palatine of Lancaster (the oldest, so I understand, being Wigan). The Clitheroe railway station we know today, was the second to be built in Clitheroe, the original having been constructed about 100yds to the south.

The other stations, still present in Clitheroe, are the Police Station situated near the bottom of King Street, about 100yds from the railway station (today's Platform Gallery) and, off Princess Avenue, the Fire Station which once also housed the Ambulance Station.

In 1850, when the railway has already arrived in Clitheroe, three County police officers and a constable were employed by the Parish of Clitheroe and this arrangement continued until January 1883 when the Borough Police Force, consisting of one Chief Constable, three sergeants, and five PCs, was formed. In 1900 the strength of the force was two sergeants and eight constables who wore broad leather belts from which were suspended the oil lamps used on night patrols. The belt was fastened by a large buckle bearing the town's crest. The cast iron mould for making the buckles can be seen in the Castle Museum. From 1917 to 1937, in summertime, the police officers wore caps instead of the standard helmets.

The Borough force continued until it was merged with Lancashire Constabulary in May 1947 and became a section of the Accrington Division (F Division). [In August 1954 my grandfather became the eleventh School Crossing Patrolman to be appointed in F Division, hence his number F11. He looked after the schoolchildren at the busy corner of Pimlico Road and Well Terrace until his death in February 1963.] At the time of the merger the Clitheroe Borough Force, consisting of 14 officers, was believed to be the third smallest in the country.

PS John Crabtree (Clitheroe's own "Dixon of Dock Green") was the last survivor of the Clitheroe Borough Police Force. In the late '50s to early '60s Sergeant Crabtree had, one might call, a "grandfatherly influence" over us teenage lads. The last time I saw him to speak to was back in the 2000s, when we got into conversation after we'd both been shopping in Tesco. When we said our cheery goodbyes, he shoehorned his shopping and himself into his car which was not, as in the funny story, a BMW, but a Porsche! And, he must have been in his nineties!

The original Fire Service was provided by a horse-drawn pump kept behind Castlegate. The first proper Fire Station was built in 1934 and stood back from Princess Avenue almost opposite Pendle Junior School. Clitheroe's Fire Brigade was/is staffed by Retained Firemen of which Alan Clarke BEM (RVR105) was in-charge for over 30 years.

Notes & News

Platform Gallery Celebration

[see Front Page picture]

On Wednesday 8 March, pupils from Chatburn Primary School visited Clitheroe Railway Station to take part in tidying-up and planting flowers. All the children did an excellent job and were extremely proud of their contribution to the station, bringing their families to view their hard work, after the event. Afterwards, in the Platform Gallery, we celebrated the life and legacy of Marjorie Birch with friends and colleagues from Women in Community Rail, RVR, TransPennine Express, Network Rail, and so many more. It was a special presentation and a joyous occasion, sharing food, drinks, and stories. A fitting tribute to a marvelous woman on International Women's Day.

Lauren Hall

Exhibition at Clitheroe Castle Museum

On 9 March 2023 Peter Eastham, Brian Haworth, Alan Scholfield, and Craig Ward attended the unveiling of Community Rail Lancashire's and Castle Museum's "By Train To Clitheroe" exhibition in the Stewards Gallery at Clitheroe Castle. The display of artwork included children's art, railway artifacts and model trains (courtesy Brian H) and many historic local railway photographs from the Lancashire County Museum archives. The exhibition ran until June.

CRL Chmn, Richard Watts commented that "This exhibition shows just how much Lancashire features in railway history and the amount of railway memorabilia is impressive. I am really pleased that some of the local station volunteers have got involved in this project and hope that the exhibition proves popular and encourages young and old to get involved."

[Info: P Eastham and Northern Stakeholder Update]



Above: RVBC Mayor and Leader of the Council, Cllr Stuart Hirst, with the CRL Team and Museum staff and Brian Haworth (partially obscured by the glass display case).

[Photo: P Eastham]

No vouchers for CAT readers

As reported by STORM, Northern's newspaper vouchers are back offering one day's travel for £10 or £17.50 for a weekend ticket. Coupons, collectable from *Reach* newspapers from 8 May, are valid until 23 July. As Alan Scholfield observes: "Northern appears to have moved away from the group which includes the *Clitheroe Advertiser & Times*. The offer seems, therefore, to include no local newspapers in Lancashire and Cumbria. Can Northern not get anything right?"



Above: So this is where they all went! No shortage of guards, here. They just changed their uniforms! See **Performance**, but note the date (5/5/2023).

[Picture courtesy David Butterworth]

This is RVR's 36th AGM. Next year (2024) will mark the 30th Anniversary of the re-introduction of the passenger service. Perhaps the Committee will be discussing some suitable celebration.

Peter Eastham

Letter from the DfT passed to RVR on the morning of the AGM

"Thank you for your email of 26 February to Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities, about the delivery of DalesRail services connecting Blackpool North and Carlisle. Your correspondence has been passed to the DfT's Rail Passenger Services Team for a reply.

We are grateful for your concerns about the continuation of the Dalesrail line [sic]. As users of DalesRail are aware, the service has become increasingly unreliable, due in large part to staffing issues arising from Sunday falling outside the working week in Northern Train's North West region. This means Sunday services are reliant on staff volunteering to work overtime, which given the absence of rest-day working agreements may not have been doing. This in turn has led over time among drivers, further reducing the numbers available to deliver the service. We recognise the potential of DalesRail for tourism, including rambling, but reluctantly we have concluded that with current resources, Northern is simply not able to do the line justice. Accordingly we have concluded that Northern should pause its current DalesRail service between Clitheroe and Hellifield during summer 2023 while it trains more drivers to allow the service potentially to operate more frequently and on routes that might bring more passengers to the Dales.

We are working with Community Rail Lancashire, Lancashire County Council, North Yorkshire County Council and Northern to identify how best to revitalise the Dales line and make the most of its services when these return.

We confirm that passengers can still travel to Clitheroe (from Rochdale) and Hellifield (from Leeds, Morecambe and Carlisle). For avoidance of doubt, we have no plans to permanently withdraw the Dalesrail service or close the line. I hope that this answer reassures you that we are committed to a bright future for DalesRail and the Dales communities.

Thank you again for your correspondence. We hope this reply is helpful.

Treasurer's report and adoption of accounts

The statement of Income and Expenditure was distributed, showing an income of £1,347.00 and an expenditure of £839.35, with total account balances of £5,999.34 at 31 January 2023. The sources of income and reasons for expenditure were explained. There had been an increase in recent donations.

Acceptance proposed by G Dudley, seconded by B Haworth. All in favour.

Membership Secretary's report to AGM - Membership and RVRNews

As of this meeting:

of 123 records: 114 paid-up subscribing members + 4 Hon Members = Total 118

I posted a letter and another subs reminder to all the defaulters, including nine from 2021 from whom I recovered subs from five, two resigned, (both through extreme age) and two remain defaulted and have been removed from the register.

Of the 24 members whose subs were due at the end of Jan 2023; Five paid at the January meeting, One was collected by me, One has resigned.

Four have still to pay and if not paid by RVRN 136 will be removed from the Mailing List. Judging by the twelve renewals recovered, it was worth posting out additional reminders at the end of January.

On the debit side, I had to recover two renewals from the Royal Mail Sorting Office at Bamber Bridge at a cost of £2.50 each. One of those renewals had been sent with a fake First Class stamp. The other had a previously-used stamp stuck on with Sellotape! That member had only paid a £7.50 annual membership.

26 members receive RVRNews exclusively by email, with another six both Post and email. Interestingly, I have email addresses of 39 members. The majority of Rly, Local Authorities, and other useful contacts take RVRNews by email.

I notify the Treasurer regarding those subscribers who informed me that they had paid by BACS and he, in turn, notifies me of any who had paid but from whom I didn't receive a completed Membership Renewal form.

As far as RVRNews is concerned, I'm having great difficulty in getting text into Pagemaker. Apparently, Microsoft has altered the character set and, although I can transfer text to the RVR laptop, Pagemaker will no longer accept it and I have to type in all the text, myself. Fortunately, my granddaughter was able to proof-read RVRN135 for me. I, personally, can't convert the Pagemaker file to pdf, anymore. As a result of all this, I'm investigating Publisher. However, strange as it may seem, it's not as easy to use as Pagemaker.

What RVRNews really needs at present is a greater number of contributors, particularly of articles and columns such as Railway Cuttings, On The Line, Rambles, and relevant local news. I now have two regular contributors of photographs, from whom I am very grateful. Any contributions are appreciated but, please, sooner rather than later.

Bill Briggs

There followed a discussion on possible ways to encourage new members to join RVR.

Website;

Neil would appreciate contributions for the website regarding ongoing works etc.

Fairly recent Train Performance

as reported by Frank Salt of STORM

In the week upto Sun 19 March, Clitheroe had no cancellations.

As previously, there were some cancellations at the M/c to/from Rochdale end of the service (where passengers can transfer to Calder Valley services for that part of the journey beyond Man Vic). This is presumed to have been to allow redeployment of train crews to other services. Some intermediate B'burn - Rochdale and B'burn -Wigan/Kirby services were cancelled. So, again the RV service has performed well, with only a C'oe - Roch 20-min late departure (reason not given) on 13 March.

Friday 10 March was a day of numerous cancellations owing to heavy snow. Specific late-runnings were not reported, that day but 87 (unspecified) lates and 16 cancellations were listed, making 106 performance incidents in the area, that day.

Performance, as affects Clitheroe:

Mon 13 Mar: 12.00 C'oe - Rochdale 20 late, start

Sat 29 Apr: 17.01 C'oe - Roch cancelled at Vic (no guard)

17.21 Roch - C'oe ditto

21.52 Roch - C'oe ditto

BH Mon 1 May: 15.01 C'oe - Roch 15 late

Wed 3 May: 11.01 C'oe - Roch cancelled at Vic 21 late from B'burn

16.01 C'oe - Roch cancelled at Vic (person ill at Bolton)

20.01 C'oe - Roch cancelled at B'burn (no guard)

21.01 C'oe - Roch 19 late

21.21 Roch - C'oe cancelled (no guard)

Thurs 4 May bridge strike at B'burn 10.00

10.01 C'oe - Roch 12 late

11.01 C'oe - Roch 16 late

13.01 C'oe - Roch 20 late

Improvement works at Salford Central

from an email sent on 9 March by David Butterworth to Northern's Chris Jackson

The improvement works at Salford Central are welcome[but] intending passengers, particularly infrequent users, are being misinformed on both National Rail and Northern journey planners. The NR planner states that "This journey is not available". The reasons given were vague and did not explain that [Salford Central stn] was closed and no explanation that alternative travel plans were available. [Passengers] want immediate guidance.

Northern's app/website is no better. The identical journey search returns: "No tickets available, please refine your search." Another reply states; "We're sorry we can't find train tickets for this time. Please change your search and try again, later." I did!

There should be a message stating that the station is closed temporarily [for improvement work] and emphasise that the local area can be reached by bus from Salford Crescent or Manchester Victoria. The messages being given now, and perhaps through to the completion date, are a guaranteed way to put people off the thought of using the train. Regular users can cope as they've already been advised. I'm concerned, as always, with the needs of the naive travellers - the very people the railway industry should be desperate to reach.

Kind regards, *David*

[That's Artificial Intelligence for you. They should have left AI for what it was originally intended - getting heifers in-calf! Ed.]

DalesRail correspondence

Final draft of letter from Craig Ward (Chr Lancashire Rail Ramblers), Alison Cosgrave (Chr FoSCL), John Moorhouse (CEO S&C Development Co.), Peter Eastham (Chr RVR), David Butterworth (Chr Railwatch NW)

It is with great regret and dismay that we learn that DalesRail will not be operating this year and that consideration has been given to its permanent withdrawal.

DalesRail is a fantastic service that is probably unique in England. DalesRail links areas of high population in Lancashire to the Settle - Carlisle corridor and therefore offers unparalleled opportunities for outdoor recreation or simply a great day out on public transport. At a time when leisure travel is driving the recovery of the railway from the pandemic we believe that Northern should be looking to develop DalesRail not curtail it.

It is appreciated that there have been performance issues in recent years, and this had an impact on passenger confidence. However, with an imaginative can-do approach there are solutions available. One simple solution would be to look at operating DalesRail on a different day, such as Saturday.

DalesRail is supported by a large number of volunteer walk leaders who devote considerable time and energy into planning and implementing one of the largest guided walk programmes in England. They also plan a series of dedicated coach links to extend the reach of DalesRail into scenic areas such as Dentdale, Swaledale, and Wensleydale.

It must also be remembered the role DalesRail played in securing the future of both the Blackburn to Hellifield and Settle to Carlisle lines. The words of the decision letter in 1989 made the following pertinent point, written by Michael Portillo, then Rail Transport Minister, on behalf of the Secretary of State, *“He [the Minister] now looks to all interested parties to ensure that the line has a successful future and so that the case for closure will not re-emerge”*. This is precisely what a large number of organisations have been doing over the last 34 years with considerable success. Yet, withdrawing DalesRail takes away the only regular public, passenger service between Clitheroe and Hellifield and will undoubtedly invoke closure processes set out in the 2005 Railways Act. A situation the Minister wanted to avoid.

All parties to this letter want to see DalesRail retained and developed as an integral part of the passenger services provided by Northern and commit to help with the promotion and marketing of this iconic, much valued, and well-used service.

We look forward to your early confirmation that DalesRail will be restored in 2024 and would be happy to engage in a meeting to review the situation.

Signed by the above.

Response from The RT Hon Mark Harper MP, Sec of State for Transport to Rt Hon Julian Smith MP. 2 May 2023

Dear Julian,

Thank you for your email 30 March enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Craig Ward, Chair of Lancashire Rail Ramblers, requesting a meeting with the Rail North Partnership and the other signatories to his original letter about DalesRail services.

Rail North Partnership would be pleased to meet Mr Ward and his associates and will contact him to arrange a meeting in late May or early June.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Harper (The RT Hon Mark Harper MP, Sec of State for Transport)

2023 AGM Friends of Stations reports

Clitheroe: The planting done by pupils of Chatburn School on 8 May is looking colourful. There are several advertising posters on the arrival platform. Low Moor level crossing is to be done in April, hopefully to correct the bumps in the road.

Whalley: Whalley in Bloom have been working on the Clitheroe platform. Fencing needs to be renewed.

Langho: Brian Haworth reports that the station has been kept tidy. The plants in the planters did well last summer and the station approaches were planted and swept regularly by Langho in Bloom volunteers. There has been hardly any vandalism or graffiti, this year. Northern's maintenance contractors, ISS, continue to do a very regular and efficient job collecting the litter bags, and keeping the platforms and the subway clean. Unlike our RVR Friends of Stations volunteers who, for insurance safety reasons, are subject to restrictions, ISS workers are permitted to use power tools e.g. strimmers, jetwashers, and leaf-blowers - so they can tackle the larger periodic jobs. The station has received the latest version of the electronic information screens which have white lettering on a black background making them more legible. The subsidence of the platforms' surfaces - a problem which has continued since the new station was built and is due to loose back-fill behind the platform front walls, is becoming noticeable again.

There are developments on both sides of the station. New housing on the field between P2 (Clitheroe), and the A59 is nearing completion. The contractors have built a surfaced path to link with the station subway for access to the station and through it to Whalley New Road. The former stile linking the the subway into the fields has been replaced with a new gate. Some original plans included a proposed car park in the development, immediately behind the station but this did not happen. Instead, a mound of earth, produced by levelling the site, has been formed. This has created a potential flooding problem in the subway since the slope of the former field was reversed. The rail authorities were advised of this for remedial action to be taken.

At the former Spring Mill site on the opposite side of the A666, the Indian restaurant has “gone bust” for the second time and is currently empty. Depending on what happens to the building or site may jeopardise the reserved parking spaces for rail users in the restaurant car park.

Ramsgreave & Wilpshire: This well-used station is the first from Clitheroe and the last from Blackburn where all four cars of the trains can be accessed by passengers. This is just as well, since the number of passengers leaving R&W in a morning and returning in an evening, would exceed the capacity of the two cars available of the R&W - Clitheroe section. Little vandalism or graffiti but lots of litter generated by the large numbers of waiting passengers. ISS are very efficient, removing often full litter bags and picking up stray litter in the shelters and on the platforms. Thanks go to Craig Ward who continues to look after the plants provided by Wilpshire PC.

Blackburn: It was noted that, according to a Press report, Blackburn Improvement District had recently “adopted” the station and was hoping to organise various voluntary community groups in a planting project to make the station more attractive and welcoming to visitors as part of a scheme to make the town centre “greener”.

Entwistle: Simon Abbott, Northern Stations Adoption Manager, had asked RVR if we were happy for a couple who do the planting in Entwistle village, formally to become Station Adopters and planting the station as well. RVR has agreed.

Darwen: (Bi-monthly visits 11.00 to 11.30 Mon-Sat April 2022 to March 2023, G Dudley)
Station remains very clean and tidy. Only one vandalism incident. Plastic litter bags always all in place and being used. Replacement remains as Tues and Thurs mornings. Ticket machines (card only) on both platforms used regularly following introduction of ticket barriers at Blackburn, although many passengers use phone apps. The public address system was reactivated late last year, having been out of action for a few years. CISs have been reliable during visits. The screen on the stairs to the Blackburn platform now indicates all trains for the next two or three hours. Blackburn-terminating trains have been reinstated. All station and platform lights have been off during daytime visits. No information is available for evenings and early mornings. Windows in the station shelters are fairly clean after a thorough clean by contactors a couple of years ago. One pane in the large shelter on the B’burn platform was broken in early March: the first vandalism for many years. A TT-holder is only available on the B’burn platform, that on the Bolton platform having been scrapped due to wear and tear. However, no standard TTs are available, most passenger seeming to rely on phone apps. All briars, trailing foliage and weeds were cut back in November - cuttings were left on the platform and later removed by ISS. Larger shrubs and foliage are under control after major pruning last year. The station continues to look well cared for. Bulbs planted in the large planters by RVR members are still blooming in season, although weeding is now required. Evergreen planters attached to platform benches are in good condition and require no attention. The car park has been reinstated after the removal of the vaccination centre. However its 20 spaces see little use with only 3-5 cars on most weekdays. There is an Amazon collection point on the Blackburn platform.

In summary: no significant problem, with the station being treated with respect by users even after heavy football traffic and holiday periods.

Election of Officers and Committee:

Nominations received: Chairman: Peter Eastham, Vice-Chmn: Brian Haworth, Secretary: Pam Corlett, Treasurer: David Butterworth.

Committee nominations: Alan Bowles, Bill Briggs, Graham Dudley, Lauren Hall, Joan Moore, Alan Scholfield, Neil Weaver, Paul White.

P: DJ Butterworth, S: G Dudley. All elected unopposed.

Any Other Business:

Bunting to be put up for the Coronation on Saturday 6 May.

Date, time & venue of next AGM will be published in RVRNews
Meeting closed at 3.50pm

P Eastham (Chairman)

PM Corlett (Secretary)

DalesRail - not to be consigned to history! A personal reminiscence.

At 17:34 on Sunday 14 May 2023 the last passenger service over the northern end of the Ribble Valley Line departed Hellifield for Blackpool North. This was the RV Rambler, the out-of-season shuttle service which connected the two ends after the DalesRail season finished in mid-September. DalesRail, originally from Leeds and stopping at most of the stations of the S&C, was the brainchild of Colin Speakman and began life much earlier than the Lancashire DalesRail, supported by Lancashire County Council, which began to operate in 1978. It operated on one Saturday per month in the summer and was hugely popular. So much so that it was increased to two trains. The platforms at Clitheroe station had been specially rebuilt to enable DalesRail and other specials to call. Initially, a train from Manchester coupled up to the Blackpool - Carlisle section at Blackburn and the combo then coupled to the rear of the Yorkshire DalesRail at Hellifield. *Vice-versa* on the return.

Such was its popularity with walkers and general day-trippers that, on certain weekends, the service operated on both Saturday and Sunday. These particular weekends were a boon for my late mother who would travel from Clitheroe on the first train on the Saturday, take the train from Carlisle to Newcastle, stay overnight with a former nursing colleague in Jesmond, and return to Clitheroe by the second train on the Sunday. A fact that I was able to bring up at the Public Enquiry at Settle into the proposed closure of the S&C. I was one of the people who walked from Bamber Bridge to Carlisle and back (on the DalesRail, of course!) collecting signatures for the petition against closure. As Ron Herbert remembers in Letters: (page21) the RV line would have become a single track siding from Daisyfield Jct to the Cement Works at Horrocksford.

The day after Michael Portillo MP had revealed to us, in a specially-convened meeting at Clitheroe Conservative Club, that the S&C had been reprieved, the late Peter Moore and I witnessed McAlpines dumping the old ballast off Ribblehead Viaduct - and the rest is history, as they say. The following summer the Lancashire DalesRail operated independently of Yorkshire’s, Sundays only, but every Sunday and still two trains. Unfortunately, the average age of the ramblers was increasing and their patronage of the first/last trains decreasing, so it was decided to reduce the service to one train, retimed. I have to admit that I haven’t been on DalesRail for quite a few years as on Sunday afternoons was cricket and the retiming clashed with church.

In the early years of Lancashire DalesRail, the units were operated by Virgin crews as they signed for the whole of the route and RVR produced a DVD, *To Hellifield and Back (2005)* and a 2-DVD set *DalesRail to Carlisle and DalesRail Return (2006)*. When the Northern crews took over the service the DVDs were used for crew-training. Since then, quite a few things have changed, especially on the S&C. Following COVID, loss of crew with route knowledge, voluntary Sunday working, industrial action, and last-minute cancellations led to unreliability, and a great many disappointed and disaffected passengers. All this, combined with a DfT order to make savings has led to the (we sincerely hope) temporary withdrawal of DalesRail services. Reaction and response, overleaf.

Bill Briggs



Northbound RVL traffic

Above: 66791 passing Ramsgreave & Wilpshire station with 6M90, empty cement tanks from Avonmouth to Horrocksford.

Below: Expecting bad weather? 47593 passes Horrocksford Jct with a Hereford to Appleby special, 1Z63, on 5 April 2023.

Photos: Jeff Dickinson



Specials

Above: On 21 Apr 2023 45690 *Leander* heads “The Great Britain XV” at Hebden Bridge. Though not photographed on RVL metals, the Blackpool to Scarborough special had watered at Blackburn. It should have been double-headed with *Galatea* which had to be taken off at Preston having run a bearing.

Below: On 17 May 2023, 46100 Royal Scot heads north past the jungle alongside the former Coplow Quarry with the first “Fellsman” of the season.

Photos: G Dudley





Southbound freight emerging from RVL tunnels

Above: 60087 leaves Gisburn Tunnel with 6F69 from Ribblehead on 3 Feb 2023.

Below: 68008 has just left Wilpshire Tunnel with (a surprisingly short) 6K05 on 9 March 2023.

Photos: J Dickinson



Southbound freight at Gisburn

Above: 66735 passes the derelict Gisburn signal box with 4M01 from Mossend on 22 March 2023.

Below: 66703 just south of the derelict Gisburn signal box with 6M28 from Rylstone on 18 March 2023.

Photos: J Dickinson

