

Cumbrian coast Rail Users' Group

Newsletter Autumn 2018

CRUG meetings - all are welcome.

Dates for next meetings

Saturday 15 September in

St Cuthbert's church Seascale at 1350

13 October 10 November 8 December

in Seascale Methodist church hall

all at 1305 (note changed time)



Rocket was in Cumbria in 1836 pulling coal trains near Brampton
This summer it has been at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle upon Tyne
before moving to the National Railway Museum in York

Not such a grown up railway

Our last issue gave details of the timetable from May this year and suggested it was looking good on the evidence of the first five days. Unfortunately the next day as the issue went to print it went downhill rapidly along with most Northern and many TransPennine services locally.

The reasons have been rehearsed elsewhere and blame has been ascribed to Northern, Network Rail and the Department for Transport in varying degrees along with the collapse of Carillion. We have made our representations to the inquiry into what went wrong here and in the south east.

It looks at present as if things are improving but they are certainly not right. Sunday operation depends on overtime working and especially in the current industrial relations climate many staff are not willing to do that. Surely railways should not depend on such practices but have enough staff to cover seven day a week working at normal times.

The evidence since 20 May is that there has not been a weekend with all trains running – one Saturday and four Sundays have had no cancellations. Weekdays have been a little better with cancellations on half of the days although the situation was worse in July and August. To be fair the last four days (Sunday 19 to Wednesday 2 August) have not had one cancellation although there have been some on the Furness line. The great majority of cancellations are because of crew shortages.

There were also some significant cancellations of last trains which is particularly bad south of Whitehaven where there is no other public transport and alternative rail replacement buses are hard to provide.

All this means that many people have lost confidence in the reliability of the train service. We hear of people driving part of their journey to be sure of getting home at the end of the day, commuters who have given up on the trains and others saying they will not catch trains in future. At a time when train use is falling slightly this does not bode well for this line at least. Add to this continuing strikes and who can blame people for deserting the railway?

If we get back a reliable service in the near future it will take a lot of good publicity and persuasion to get passengers back using trains confidently.

It is such a shame that when we have got the Sunday service for which we have been campaigning for many years together with improvements to weekday timetables that it all seems to be thrown away..

As a rail user group we aim to support and encourage train use but it is very difficult to do that at present. The announcement of a 3.2% fare increase for many journeys from January does not help. There will need to be a massive effort to run a reliable service and provide incentives for people to come back.

Potts' points – a summary of Tony's blogs

On 4 June Arriva Rail North's Managing Director David Brown was interviewed on BBC TV Breakfast about the problems caused by the new timetable. Unfortunately, he couldn't answer the interviewer's question as to why there were still short-notice cancellations even after the emergency timetable had been instituted, simply saying that it would take two or three days to "bed in".

Also that day, I saw on Look North that the new Maryport transport hub (car park and steps to the platform) was to be officially opened in the afternoon. On arrival at Maryport by train, I noticed that both shelters were strewn with litter which had been caused by large birds such as seagulls and jackdaws pecking the bottoms of the polythene litter bags, causing the contents to fall out and be scattered. Joining the others in the car park, I noticed Chris Cutts, who is now the Deputy Chairman of the Community Rail Partnership, along with the Mayor of Maryport, a Maryport Councillor and Flimby Councillor Keith Little who holds the transport portfolio for the county.

On 14 June I attended the TravelWatch North West meeting at Blackpool's Solaris Centre. Although no-one from Arriva was there, I took the opportunity to ask the Network Rail (NR) representative about the situation here in west Cumbria. He replied that the Cumbrian coast is very dear to him as he was involved with both Arnside and Harrington viaduct replacements. NR is working with the local enterprise partnership and Direct Rail Services (DRS) and the Energy Coast is doing well. When I asked about the news that DRS are wanting to invest in the line but that NR wasn't interested, he replied that that is not the case.

On 23 June the Community Rail Fair was held at Carlisle and we had a stall. Unfortunately it was also a strike day, so very few people from west Cumbria were passing through the station. Originally the rail users' groups' tables were located on platform 3, which was isolated from the main display and hidden behind a Pendolino, so Dawn McGough arranged for us all to be moved onto the main side, which was far better. Some interest was shown, and all the newsletters went, but that was all.

An article in the *News and Star* on 22 June giving details of leaked emails from the Department for Transport (DfT) which showed how they had "written off Northern" prompted me to write to them so say that I have held the view for some time that all the current problems are the responsibility of the DfT. I also said that, due to a West Coast Main Line blockage north of Oxenholme on 14 June which caused trains to Carlisle to be cancelled, I was able to return home from the TravelWatch meeting via Barrow, something which would not have been possible under the previous timetable. According to a *News and Star* report on 20 June Trudy Harrison MP has written to Northern complaining about the omission of some stations from some trains in the new timetable. However, since then, it has been announced that the timetable changes planned for December will no longer take place.

The cancelling of all trains on the Lakes Line was mitigated by West Coast Railways at Carnforth who ran their own shuttle train for two weeks to provide a service which supplemented the rail replacement buses. To help with the situation regarding schoolchildren, Northern's buses took them to the school, rather than just leaving them at the station.

All this has led to calls for Northern to be stripped of its franchise and for the Cumbrian lines to be made into a "microfranchise". This sort of thing is nothing new, as a similar view was being expressed early this century when the franchisee was First North Western. A former railway employee writing in the *Daily Mail* on 8 June said that while this might seem an attractive proposition, it wouldn't solve anything.

On 4 July a number of people from the Lakes Line Action Group went to London to a meeting with, inter alia, rail minister Jo Johnson to ask for a solution to the problems throughout Cumbria. Although the meeting was timed to take two hours, Mr Johnson left after 40 or so minutes.

The RMT strike planned for 21 July was suspended pending talks with Northern about a process for reconvening talks around proposals to set up a joint working party to consider a range of proposals on the deployment of on-board staff, including a specific option of retaining a second safety-critical person on board all Arriva Rail Northern (ARN) trains.

There were some cancellations, especially of Sunday trains, due to the fact that train crews are not rostered to work on Sundays.

Workington station friends

The volunteer Friends of Workington Station are drawn from local train crew and members of Workington Transport Heritage Trust who also staff the shop on the station. With permission from the station manager they have made great progress in recent months to create a more welcoming atmosphere at the station.

Workington is the only remaining "proper" station building on the coast line still in full railway use. The Friends are painting the station in LMS style maroon and cream rather than the corporate blue and white Northern colours. The southbound platform 1 is substantially complete with platform 2 to follow. Painting the footbridge may be a bit more problematic as a track possession would be required, which is why it is still green instead of corporate blue!

Signs have been created in black and white using embossed wooden lettering on the bigger signs. Even the public toilet sign has had this treatment, and many doors are also marked. The "Fish Dock" door will probably raise a few questions among travellers.

The large Northern Connecting the North sign on platform 2 is no more. It has now become a running-in station name board with vinyl lettering on a black painted background, as shown in the picture. In front of this is an expanded sleeper flower bed.

This has just recently been put into place and three tons of topsoil laboriously carted into place using wheelbarrows. It is sparsely planted at present, but with more plants to be added.

The number of hanging baskets and flower tubs continues to increase. They are currently in full flower and make an excellent show. Watering is made easier by the installation of an irrigation system.

The judges from Cumbria in Bloom who visited in July were very impressed with the displays, and even more impressed by the fact that this has all been achieved by staff and others in their spare time. We await the results of judging.

Photographic displays of old Workington industry adorn the walls in both waiting areas. Much bigger photographs are planned for installation in the recesses on the back wall of platform 2. Also being developed is a mini-museum which will house a number of railway signs and artefacts.



So take a few moments to look at the improvements when you pass through Workington, and if you stop off there, call in to the shop where you can get hot and cold drinks and light refreshments to help you on your way.

Alistair Grey

Trip to South Wales

My wife and I like to see her sisters in the South Wales valleys occasionally. Last December we decided to visit them once winter had passed. For cheapness we booked specific trains, for early March. The weather in January and February was fine, but on the day of our departure we awoke to a white West Cumbria - snow everywhere and the same forecast for the whole of Britain. My wife was extra nervous because she had broken her ankle just weeks before and was still using a crutch. A kind friend braved the treacherous conditions to take us to Whitehaven station.

The train was on time all the way to Carlisle, with snow all around. Heavier snowfalls on the Southern Uplands had severely disrupted services south from Scotland. Staff at Citadel station helped us a lot, led us to the only Virgin train which came (not the one we were booked on) and told us it would make an extra stop at Crewe where we were to change. We waited in it for an hour while fitters fixed a problem with the brakes, caused by the heavy snow. Then it set off, much slower than usual over Shap, and we arrived safely but very late at Crewe only to find that no Arriva Trains Wales units were running. This was a completely separate issue from the snow - one unit had experienced a safety issue so all had been grounded for inspection. We caught the next train to Birmingham New Street, crossed a couple of platforms for another to Cardiff (all different companies but staff accepted our Arriva Trains Wales tickets), finally on the Valleys Line to our destination of Mountain Ash. We got there little more than one hour later than originally planned - a good achievement considering everything.

Returning to Cumbria the following week we left Wales much earlier than our booked train because of the risk of continued weather disruption. Again our tickets were accepted all the way because of the conditions.

My wife thought I was brilliant getting alternate routes to circumvent problems. Eventually I confessed that it was the Trainline app on my phone. It kept me updated on live train running and which train to catch next. It even told me which platform our trains would arrive at and depart from at Birmingham New Street, making that change extremely easy. (Note that for some journeys you can change at Wolverhampton instead of Birmingham - much simpler.)

Throughout both journeys the railway staff were extremely good and helpful in dealing with very many people with lots of problems, caused by conditions beyond their control.

Two lessons

1. If you haven't already got a Trainline app or equivalent I recommend you do - it will ease your journey, and impress your partner!
2. Give credit where it's due to the many railway front-line staff who often 'work their socks off' doing their very best to help the travelling public, often in difficult circumstances, and seldom get thanked for it.

Incidentals

1. For the four days we stayed in Wales we were nearly completely house-bound because of severe weather conditions. Many shops were closed because staff could not get to work and the few deliveries of food left many supermarket shelves bare. We phoned West Cumbria to be told that the snow left the same day as us. We thought, "We should have stayed at home!"
2. Different people have different perceptions of the same thing. To me the journey south was interesting and exciting. My wife described it as horrendous - I might have too had I been recovering from a broken ankle.

Doug McDevitte

Ratty 2018

2018 has so far, been a year of changes. New General Manager Peter Brendling; new structure in engineering, with the Assistant General Manager Martin Cookman overseeing day to day activities in the workshop as well as operation of the railway and Alex Sharphouse and his team from John Fowler Engineering at Old Hall Farm, Bouth providing additional support and engineering expertise.



For the first time, the railway has five operational steam locomotives. River Irt, River Mite and Northern Rock continue to haul trains while the Train from Spain was launched into service, named at Whillan Beck on the 5 May and has performed almost faultlessly since. In July River Esk also returned to service after a very major rebuild.

Again, apart from minor issues, she has performed almost faultlessly 'straight out of the box'. If you observe her closely, you will notice that her exhaust forms a very different pattern to the other locomotives as it leaves the chimney. This is due to her Lempur blast pipe arrangement, which results in her generating steam more easily and much more quietly.

The story on the diesel front is not so happy. The railway has managed with Lady Wakefield in sole charge, despite needing drive train overhaul. Fortunately, steam locomotives have handled the first train on a number of occasions, to ease the burden.

Douglas Ferreira has been out of traffic for major overhaul since 2 January and should have returned before Easter. However, major and totally unexpected issues with wheels have delayed the return, which we now hope will be later in September.



Perkins is now a running chassis – indeed, she has shunted the workshop yard. Her rebuild is progressing and she is hoped to be available in the winter.

The long hot spell has created issues and resulted in a ban on reinforcing full trains, in order to ease the strain on locomotives and the attendant risk of throwing sparks. Double

heading with Lady Wakefield for the same reason also happened for a period. Fortunately, apart from two very small fires, nothing untoward occurred, and these were traced to a fault with River Esk's ashpan during testing.

The other thing that has changed is the fare structure between stations. This is still settling down, but is hoped to make selling tickets by the guard easier and quicker.

Graham Worsnop

Ratty tickets

The new Calling All Stations Pass is valid for 24 hours from the first point of entry and can be used to travel up and down the line as many times as you wish! It effectively replaces return tickets with prices from £9.00 to £12.30 depending on the time of year booked online at raven-glass-railway.co.uk/plan-visit/timetables or £10.00 to £15.00 on the day, with other tickets for children and families.

There is also a joint ticket with Muncaster Castle for £24.00 (children £12.00) to be used within a week.

And there are always the joint tickets from any Northern station which generally save around £4.00 on separate tickets, save on car parking and queuing.

Ask not what CRUG can do for you, but what you can do for CRUG

With the current unreliable service and many cancellations, it is imperative that there is a strong rail users' group at the moment to promote the interests of passengers. However CRUG is in urgent need of members to take on some of the administrative tasks of running the group.

The Membership Secretary needs to stand down for health reasons, the Treasurer has moved out of the area, and there has been no newsletter editor since the sad death of Keith Bradshaw.

WE CANNOT EXPECT THE SECRETARY TO RUN THE GROUP BY HIMSELF.

It is the need for a Membership Secretary and Treasurer that are most urgent. You do not have to come to all the meetings to do these jobs; e-mail and online banking are a great help.

I am making a list of all the tasks the Membership Secretary currently performs. It is not particularly time consuming, not even at renewal time. But you do need to have access to a computer and email.

- 1 Maintain a database and email lists of members. Use these to
 - a) send minutes electronically
 - b) send newsletter electronically
 - c) print address labels for posting newsletters
 - d) manage renewals at the end of the year and send reminders
 - e) update the secretary and treasurer as required and present numbers of members at the monthly meeting.
- 2 Receive new member applications, enter on to database, send welcome letter and pass details (and cheque if appropriate) to the treasurer.
- 3 Receive newsletters from the printer, put in envelopes, stick address labels on envelopes and sort into those to be posted (stick on stamps and post!) and those to be taken to the meeting for hand delivery.

If you feel able to do any or all of these tasks please notify the Secretary.

We are also looking for someone to set up a Facebook page – and a Twitter account – Northern have said they can provide assistance.

If you are not able to help with any of these things, please try and contribute words and/or photos for the newsletter.

I am really concerned that CRUG may well have to be like the parrot in the Monty Python sketch and “cease to be” if we do not have some members who will help with running the group. As I have been a member since the group started (and was secretary for ten years – done my bit!) I would be sad if this were to happen and feel it would be disastrous for the train service on the coast line.

Lynette Gilligan

1949

My first memories were around 1949 when I was three. I'd learned to tell the time and announced that it was three o'clock on the station clock as we arrived from Hull into Coventry station on our annual Easter holiday to visit my grandparents. We'd left Hull at 0900, and for an almost three year old that six hours seemed like an eternity. Steam trains from Hull to Sheffield Victoria, walk to the Midland station (which seemed a long way with little legs), another train to Birmingham and then to Coventry. Within a few years the last train turned into a shiny new diesel where you could watch through the window behind the driver.

If I wanted to do the same journey today it would take about 3½ hours, still changing in Sheffield (or Doncaster) and Birmingham though without a change of stations now.

What about locally? The Cumberland 1949 timetable (headed Cumberland Motor Services Limited associated with British Railways) lists a number of trains along with bus timetables. Would that we had kept that association that went with privatisation.

In 1949 very few people had cars so depended on buses and to a lesser extent trains. It was only four years since the end of the Second World War and shortages were if anything worse than they had been five years previously. Fleets were in poor condition.

So what about the trains? The timetable just lists the main services – Carlisle to Whitehaven, Barrow, Carnforth and Lancaster and Whitehaven, Workington, Cockermouth and Penrith. Whitehaven to Carlisle had nine trains from 0555 to 2145 with ten returning from 0535 to 2103 and 2311 on Saturdays with three Sunday trains which only stopped at main stations. These took around 1h30 with some faster trains missing out stops in 1h20. There were stations at Dearham Bridge, Bullgill, Brayton, Leagate, Curthwaite and Cummersdale which partly explains why they took longer. Today we have 18 or 19 trains from 0657 to 2209 and 11 to 13 on Sundays in 1h08 (fastest 1h04).

South from Whitehaven nearly all trains went at least as far as Carnforth and several beyond. There were 7 to 9 trains from 0652 to 1858 with a 2042 to Barrow only and three on Sundays. They returned from Carnforth between 0435 and 1940, Carnforth then being a main line station. A few trains only started from Corkickle and not Bransty and one had road transport provided between the two. Today we have 16 or 17 trains to Barrow from 0618 to 2018, five of them extended to Lancaster and the rest with connections in Barrow. On Sundays there are 7 to 9 trains. Timings from Whitehaven to Barrow in 1949 were mostly over 2 hours, now around 1h22 though there used to be an additional station at Eskmeals.

Whitehaven-Penrith had two or three through weekday trains and several others by changing at Workington depending on the day of the week and the season of the year and taking around 2h45 – about what it takes by bus now.

Overall nowadays we have a picture of a generally improved and much quicker (and cleaner) rail service though with the loss of occasional through trains and of course the line through Keswick to Penrith.

Considering the revolution in private car ownership in the last seventy years public transport is standing up quite well.

The London express

I was in the fourth year of my apprenticeship on the railway at York. I was working with the steam maintenance team when my mate came and told me to grab the bag of tools as we had a rush job on the station. On the way he filled me in with the details. A steam heater in one of the compartments on a train had split. A lady had had her legs scalded and they had stopped the train at Darlington so that she could be taken to hospital. Our job was to meet the train and fix the problem.

We had to cross the East Coast main line on foot. Luckily the speed limit in the station is 5 mph so we made it OK. The station staff put us on the right platform and we waited for the train to come in. It was a London express, steam hauled of course.

The guard came bustling up to tell us that we had four minutes to get the job done. As an alternative we could stay on the train, next stop Doncaster, or sign his book to say that we had delayed the London express.

The train pulled out on time and most passengers didn't even know there had been an incident.

Terry Taylor

Email

May I congratulate the team on what I consider to be the best newsletter to date. Clear, relevant photos and concise and varied articles made for a great read.

Further, I was delighted when CRUG became the Cumbrian Coast Rail Users' Group. I live outside Wigton and now feel more inclusive! When time allows I will try to provide copy on the northern portion on the Cumbrian Coast Line and on my more distant explorations by rail.

Mike (Mik) Chappell

Faults line

Please report any faults to faults@northernrailway.co.uk preferably including a photo.

Future events

Tuesday 9 October 1400 **Transport for the North** are speaking at the West Cumbria Bus Users' Group AGM at Lakes College West Cumbria. All welcome.

Saturday-Sunday 13-14 October 1000-1700 **Furness model railway club exhibition** at Barrow Sixth Form College, Rating Lane, Barrow LA13 9LE. Adults £5 seniors £4 children £2.50. Free bus from station.

Tuesday 22 January 1930 **Michael Portillo** is speaking and signing his new book *Sympathetic developments* at the Carnegie Theatre in Workington [Tickets](#) £17.50.



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition.

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Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant
We still need a permanent newsletter editor
Could you consider editing an issue or being the permanent editor?

This issue edited by David Andrews and typeset by Alan Johnstone

The Group welcomes contributions to the Newsletter.

Send articles/photos for next issue

to

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by 17 November 2018

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