

# MID CHESHIRE RAIL REPORT

No. 74

SUMMER 2008

ON-LINE EDITION

The Newsletter of the Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Association, the Voice for Users of the Manchester-Stockport-Altrincham-Knutsford-Northwich-Chester and Crewe-Winsford-Hartford-Liverpool Lines.

Visit our website at [www.mcrua.org.uk](http://www.mcrua.org.uk).

**\*\*\* BUSES REPLACE TRAINS ON SATURDAY 21 JUNE AND SUNDAYS 8, 15 AND 22 JUNE \*\*\***  
**\*\*\* PLEASE SEE PAGE TWO FOR DETAILS \*\*\***

**\*\*\*\* STOP PRESS \*\*\*\* SUNDAY SERVICE TO RUN TO AND FROM PICCADILLY FOR RHS FLOWER SHOW ON SUNDAY 27 JULY. TRAINS WILL DEPART PICCADILLY AT 09.30, 13.03, 16.01, 18.05 and 21.01 AND WILL ALSO CALL AT STOCKPORT.**

**From the Secretary's Desk by Arthur Sancto.**

## **NOTICE of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The 2008 Annual General Meeting of the Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Association will be held in the Tatton Room of Knutsford Civic Centre on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008, commencing at 7.45pm. This is an important meeting in the life of the Association and it is hoped that as many members as possible will be able to come. As is usual this will be a meeting open to the general public (who will of course not be allowed to vote). Suitable trains in connection with this are the 19.04 arrival from the Manchester direction and the 19.37 arrival from Chester. The Civic Centre is about 50 yards from the station in the town direction and on the same side of the road. The meeting is expected to last about an hour and a half; suitable return trains run at 21.40 to Manchester and 22.04 to Chester. The Knutsford Civic Centre is being used again, not because MCRUA wants to give an impression of being totally Knutsford centred, but because it is a suitable venue and convenient to the station and contrary to previous reports available for hire on this occasion. The committee are investigating possibilities for the future, but nowhere convenient has been found on this occasion.

**....and after the formal business MARK WILLCOX, the COMMUNITY RAIL OFFICER is to be the speaker**

No excuse is made for asking Mark Willcox, the Mid-Cheshire Community Rail Partnership Officer to address the meeting this year after the formal AGM business is over. In the period since he was appointed, Mark has given much consideration to the promotion of the mid-Cheshire line. His talk will include the MCCRPA Annual Report to MCRUA members and how flowers at stations can make both a contribution to the *Cheshire Year of the Garden* as well as enhancing the mid-Cheshire line generally.

## **PERSONAL**

Members may know that I have been indisposed part of the year having suffered a heart attack in August. I am pleased to say that I am now recovered. However, the event has led me to reassess my immediate life priorities and as a consequence I have decided that I cannot at present devote so much time to MCRUA activities and

therefore will resign from the position of Secretary, effective from the AGM. I am offering my services to continue as Webmaster, either on or off the committee if that is desired. As a consequence of my resignation, a replacement Secretary will have to be appointed at the meeting.

## **ELECTIONS to the COMMITTEE**

This brings me on to the committee elections. You are reminded that under the constitution, nominations for the committee must have a proposer and seconder and the signed consent of the candidate (all of whom naturally must be current members) and must be received by me not less than one week before the Annual General Meeting of the Association. This is to give time for voting papers to be prepared if a ballot is necessary.

## **BUSES REPLACE TRAINS ON THREE DAYS IN JUNE**

Network Rail is carrying out engineering work on the line all day on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June, **Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June** and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> June, trains will be replaced by buses between Altrincham and Northwich, connecting into trains from Northwich to Chester. The buses will leave Altrincham **earlier** than the scheduled train time to connect into trains leaving Northwich at the scheduled time. The bus departure times from Altrincham (platform 4 car park side) are: 09.31, 12.58, 15.51, 18.01, 20.51 and 21.30. Bus departure times from Northwich (station car park) to Altrincham are: 09.22, 12.36, 15.54, 18.05 and 20.44. On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June buses will replace trains between Altrincham and Chester. Buses will leave Altrincham 5 minutes after the arrival of trains from Manchester and they will leave Chester generally at 43 minutes past each hour except in the early morning when buses will depart from Chester at 04.36, 05.36, 06.13, 06.45, 07.44 and 08.46. On Sundays 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June buses will operate between Altrincham and Chester, departing from each end at the scheduled train time but of course taking longer than the train to do the journey. The work may be in connection with the renovation of the King Street bridge at Knutsford.

## **SUMMER TIMETABLE**

The summer timetable begins on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May and the new pocket timetable for the mid-Cheshire line is enclosed with this newsletter. There is virtually no change to the train service except that on Saturdays from 13<sup>th</sup> September the last train from Manchester Piccadilly to Chester will depart at 23.16 rather than at 23.09. Also the usual leaf-fall timetable will apply from 6<sup>th</sup> October and trains will generally leave Chester 4 minutes earlier apart from from 17.56 onwards. The 06.54 from Chester is retimed to depart at 06.53, the 07.30 is retimed to depart at 07.22 and the 08.05 from Chester remains unchanged. The 09.33 from Northwich to Blackpool North is retimed to depart at 09.29 (Wayfarer tickets will unfortunately probably not be valid on this train from Northwich on Monday to Friday from 6<sup>th</sup> October). As John Oates mentions below, there will be a completely different timetable from 14<sup>th</sup> December and we will hopefully be able to provide full details in the next newsletter. Merseyrail departures from Chester to Liverpool Central are retimed to 00 and 30 minutes past the hour from 18<sup>th</sup> May, improving connections from the mid-Cheshire line. The Cheap Day Return fare from Northwich, Greenbank and Cuddington to Liverpool via Chester is a very reasonable £8.30 (this may increase slightly from 18<sup>th</sup> May).

## **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS** by John Oates

I am writing just before the Steam Day and our railtour to Minehead. More about those later. Last time I mentioned our great concern that in the **proposed timetable recast in December 2008** we would lose half of our commuter services to/from Manchester, the proposals being that these would terminate at / start from Stockport. This, as I said at the time, was in my view because it seems the Department for Transport (DfT) is determined to get more and faster long distance trains to run to Manchester, but since they are not willing to invest in improving the infrastructure on the section between Stockport and Piccadilly and it is already full,

this means local services have again to be thinned out. At a presentation last week the proposed Monday to Friday timetables were provided to us. We are told these are drafts for discussion and will be firmed up in July and have been asked not to circulate details. What I can tell you is that there are elements of the proposals that please us, some of which solve some of the disadvantages in the current timetable that we have been lobbying for some years to have changed. These include providing a reasonable arrival into Chester for morning commuters (currently 0802 or 0906 – pretty useless for a 9am start!) and plugging the two hour gap in the morning departures from Chester (currently 0805, then 1005).

However, as you'll have guessed by now, there are some elements that we are very unhappy about. Through our committee member **Roy Beacham**, who has been co-ordinating passenger counts on the line since last August, we have a very good idea of loadings on each of our trains at each of the points along the line. We are close to completing a document setting out for each of the proposed trains the likely loadings and where we foresee problems, quantifying these, as well as difficulties with some of the timings proposed for current users. We will be discussing this with Northern next week, and thereafter with others with influence over transport policy in the North West. As you can guess, there is still much to do on this and we're trying hard to get the worst mitigated. All rather bizarre really when you hear the politicians saying they want more people to use public transport, but then we get presented again with worse services for Manchester commuters!

As most of you know, the **Steam Day** is a Mid-Cheshire Community Rail Partnership (MCCRP) initiative which we very strongly support. As I write this a few days before the trains run, it looks like being very successful indeed. Both **Mark Willcox**, the CRP Officer and our own **John Hulme** have done a stunning job in promoting the day. Train 2 (from Altrincham to Chester) is well and truly full and all the other 5 trains well loaded. Sponsorship received and promised has been very good (this helps keep the fares down and makes the whole event more attractive). Apart from Mark and John, many others including our members have put a lot of effort into supporting the day. Even though I'm writing this before the trains have run, I'd particularly like to single out **Vale Royal Borough Council** for not only being sponsors, but also for the significant effort they have put into the administration behind the running of the trains and in providing publicity leaflets. The other sponsors involved include **Visit Chester and Cheshire** (the local tourism board), **Cheshire County Council**, **Macclesfield Borough Council**, **Chester City Council**, **Northern Rail**, **Cheshire FM** and the **Crewe to Manchester CRP**, all of whom have been very supportive.

On 10 May the **Somerset Coast Express** is running to Minehead the last 22 miles of which is over the privately-owned West Somerset Railway. Much effort has gone into organising this. It shows the strength of MCRUA that we have many active members and a mainly different team with **David Miller** taking the bookings has been working hard on this behind the scenes. We expect this will be a super day out, too. It's a great run down to Taunton, and from there the West Somerset Railway is very scenic. This summer **Michael Ross**, who some of you will remember used to head up Transport Co-ordination at Cheshire County Council before retiring last summer, is leading the organisation of **Folk Trains** over the line. Last year was our first folk train and it was a great success. This year it's better – more on this below. Thanks again for being part of MCRUA. It's great to have the support of well over 600 members. Please let us have your views as well as continuing to support the railway in Mid-Cheshire as part of an improving transport infrastructure, itself there to support a better quality of life for all of us.

### **MUSIC TRAINS ON THE MID-CESHIRE LINE** by Michael Ross

Four music trains have been arranged on the line for this summer. Following last year's popular Chester-Mobberley train there will be two from Chester to the Railway Inn at Mobberley (where we went last year) and two from Manchester which go to the revived Golden Pheasant at Plumley:

## Chester-Mobberley (Railway Inn)

Thursday 19 June and Thursday 21 August

Depart Chester 18.56	Depart Mobberley 21.59
Arrive Mobberley 19.41	Arrive Chester 22.50

## Manchester-Plumley (Golden Pheasant)

Wednesday 23 July and Wednesday 24 September

Depart Piccadilly 18.24	Depart Plumley 21.35
Arrive Plumley 19.09	Arrive Piccadilly 22.26

Both pubs are very welcoming and provide good food. The musicians will play on the train both ways and at the pub. There is no charge for the music train itself - just buy a normal ticket - 25% discount if two people travel together on a Northern Duo. Also if you catch the 18.24 from Piccadilly at stations from Stockport onwards you can buy a cheap evening return, which costs half the price of a cheap day return. There is no need to book in advance for the Music Train or to buy train tickets in advance of the day. If you are boarding the train at Chester, Manchester Piccadilly, Stockport, Altrincham or Knutsford please purchase your train tickets from the station booking office on the night. For further information people can email me on [michael.ross@mross.org.uk](mailto:michael.ross@mross.org.uk).

## **APPEAL FOR HELP WITH CUDDINGTON LEAFLET**

Michael Ross is preparing a leaflet to be delivered to addresses in Cuddington to promote the train service. He has prepared the text but is appealing for help with the production and printing of the leaflet. If you can help please contact Michael on [michael.ross@mross.org.uk](mailto:michael.ross@mross.org.uk).

## **MCRUA SPECIAL TRAINS**

Both the Mid-Cheshire Steam Train on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May and the *Somerset Coast Express* from Altrincham to Minehead on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May ran well on the day. The steam train ran on a day of indifferent weather with much rain but the train did cover the Middlewich line as scheduled, the first steam train to do so since the end of BR steam in 1968. Nameboards had been fixed to the fence at the site of the former Middlewich station saying "Middlewich - Reopen the Station Now!". The Minehead train was blessed with fine weather and the West Somerset Railway was looking its best on a sunny spring day. The train was double-headed by two class 67 locomotives on the return journey and the pair made light work of the 1 in 37 Lickey Incline between Bristol and Birmingham. It is not yet clear whether MCRUA will be running a special train in the autumn. If we do decide to do so, a booking form will be sent out to all members and to everyone on our wider mailing list.

## **FARES NEWS**

The **Wayfarer** ticket has gone up in price to £4.60 for concessions (children aged 5 to 15 and anyone aged 60 or above), £9.20 for adults and £18.40 for groups. The area covered by the ticket (Warrington (both stations), Northwich and Holmes Chapel to Grindleford) remains unchanged. Wayfarer tickets cannot be purchased on the train. They are a scratchcard available from station booking offices, which is dated by the user. The ticket can be used on buses in the area shown in the leaflet at any time but it can only be used after 09.30 on trains (any time on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays). **National Fares Manuals** are no longer available in printed

form as from 18<sup>th</sup> May. The manuals are available for the public to view on the Internet but without the fare tables themselves, a retrograde step.

ATOC (the Association of Train Operating Companies) is simplifying the naming and conditions of advance purchase fares from 18<sup>th</sup> May. All advance purchase fares will be called “Advance” and will have the same conditions. Railcard discounts (one third off standard class fares) will be available on all advance purchase fares (an improvement on the previous position). The renaming of walk-on fares as “Anytime” and “Off-peak” will follow from 7<sup>th</sup> September. Through tickets from many major UK rail stations to **Eurostar** destinations are now available online at [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com) but quotas on Virgin West Coast are small and booking as soon as the three month advance booking window opens is recommended. **Cross Country** are making changes to fares as from 18<sup>th</sup> May. Saver tickets cannot now be used on any Cross Country train scheduled to depart before 09.30 and the offer whereby railcard holders could use any train with a Saver ticket is withdrawn on Cross Country (this offer still applies on Virgin West Coast). Passengers holding Cheap Day Returns will not now be allowed to use Cross Country trains between 15.30 and 18.15 on Monday to Friday. Regular travellers on the mid-Cheshire line can make significant savings by buying a **season ticket**. Basically you only pay for 4 days out of 5 and you get the fifth day free. Season tickets are available between any two stations for seven days, a month or any period longer than a month. A passport-type photograph is required for an identity card if you have not previously had a season ticket.

## NATIONAL TRAVEL PASS FOR ENGLAND

Many members will now be in possession of the new National Travel Pass for England. Two groups qualify for the pass – anyone aged 60 or over and certain categories of disabled people. The pass entitles the holder to free travel on all local buses in England from 09.30 to 23.00 on Monday to Friday and all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. Rail travel is unfortunately not included in the national scheme. Only residents of Greater Manchester are entitled to free travel on local rail and Metrolink services in Greater Manchester and this entitlement ends at the boundaries of Greater Manchester (Hale on our line). We hope that the new national scheme does not lead to significant numbers of passengers deserting the mid-Cheshire line for the (free) bus. Extended journey times and inconvenience will hopefully dictate otherwise.

## NEWS FROM THE LINE

The cafe at **Delamere** station (in the former station building) has been up for sale for some time. Virgin West Coast services between Crewe and Holyhead were diverted via the **Middlewich line** over Easter due to the closure of the Crewe-Chester line for the rebuilding of the Wistaston Road bridge in Crewe. The work over-ran into the Tuesday morning. BR London Midland Region maroon “totem” name signs from **Hale** and **Knutsford** stations fetched the amazingly high prices of £2,100 and £2,800 respectively at the Stafford Railwayana Auction on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The King Street bridge in Knutsford is being repainted for the first time in 25 years. Work was due to start on 12<sup>th</sup> May for 8 weeks. The work will include renovation and essential safety work. The bridge will be grit-blasted and repainted in time for the RHS Flower Show at Tatton Park in July. Work is currently well under way on the new booking office at **Chester** station.

## METROLINK NEWS

The 6-minute frequency service on the Altrincham and Bury lines has been extended to apply up to 20.00 on Monday to Friday. The ML1 bus between Stretford Metrolink station and the Trafford Centre survived the withdrawal of financial support by GMPTE but it now operates every 20 minutes (rather than every 15 minutes)

and the bus no longer serves the *Chill Factore* ski centre. New ticket machines are to be provided at Metrolink stations from June 2009. The new machines will accept credit cards but they will be installed at the same locations at existing stations (i.e still out in the rain at places like Navigation Road where there are two canopies which could shelter the machines). Members are reminded that through tickets (including season tickets) can be purchased for journeys between any National Rail station and any Metrolink station. Railcard discounts are not available on these through fares and so railcard holders should rebook at Altrincham. Passengers who encounter difficulty in getting the Metrolink ticket machines to accept their banknotes can ring 0161-205-2000 and pay by debit card over the phone. There is still a need for Metrolink to operate later on Sunday evenings but we are told that this is not possible due to the need to allow time for engineering work.

A recent high-profile attack on tram passenger Julie Pickford, 46, from Northwich has led to calls for security on Metrolink to be improved in the evenings. The installation of CCTV inside all vehicles would be a good start, as would a much greater staff/police presence. One Metrolink vehicle is to be fitted with Hannover/Sheffield-type destination displays as an experiment to combat the “boards in the window” problem. Metrolink say that spare parts are no longer available for the existing destination displays. Information screens are to be installed on every Metrolink platform as part of the £102 million upgrade scheme, which included the relaying of the track last summer. Stagecoach Metrolink is to appoint an Information Controller. The M-Pact Thales consortium has been chosen as the preferred bidder for the Design, Construct and Maintain contract to build the new extensions to Chorlton, Droylsden and Rochdale via Oldham. The consortium consists of Thales (pronounced “talleess”), Laing O’Rourke and Grant Rail. Final sign-off is required from the Department for Transport. The Oldham Loop will now be closed “all at once” for conversion rather than on a staged basis but trains will continue running well beyond December 2008. The spare track panels currently stored at the site of the second Metrolink depot at Old Trafford are for the expansion of the track layout at the existing Queens Road depot to accommodate the 12 additional vehicles which are on order from Bombardier.

## **LOCAL RAIL NEWS**

Network Rail is 315 hours behind schedule with work to upgrade the West Coast main line in time for the December 2008 timetable and Virgin West Coast, EWS and Freightliner were all in favour of deferring the start of the high-frequency timetable until May 2009 to allow more time for the work to be completed without causing serious inconvenience over the summer. Unfortunately the Office of Rail Regulation has ruled that Network Rail must adhere to the December 2008 deadline. The following measures are to be put in place:

1. Passengers travelling between the North West and London will be able to travel via Leeds (presumably this will apply to passengers using Saver tickets). Saver tickets between Manchester and London Terminals are already valid for travel via Sheffield.
2. East Midlands Trains services between Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield are to be strengthened to cater for additional passengers travelling to and from London via Sheffield.

The former down (northbound) slow line from Hartford Junction to Acton Bridge was reinstated as a 125 mph fast line on 20<sup>th</sup> January. The existing down fast line became a 60 mph slow line. Northern is bidding to lease some of the 125mph class 180 trains, which are currently stored at Oxley, Wolverhampton.

## **THE SANDBACH TO NORTHWICH LINE via MIDDLEWICH** by Harry Boardman

This line was closed to passenger traffic in 1960 along with the closure of the railway station at Middlewich. Since then the line has been used for freight traffic and as a diversionary route for the West Coast main line. With the decline in freight back in the 1990’s the Northwich – Middlewich section of the line was threatened

with total closure. Earlier this year following an initiative by the Middlewich Town Council the Middlewich Railway Steering Group was re-established at a meeting held on 5th February. The broad aims of the Group are to:

- Make out a case to Network Rail and the Department for Transport for the upgrading of the Sandbach to Northwich railway line for passenger use.
- Establish an hourly passenger service to run between Crewe and Manchester (or to Altrincham to link with Metrolink).
- Secure the re-opening of a railway station in Middlewich.
- Support the use of the line for freight.

At present a 'draft' Feasibility Study Brief which will eventually be sent out to prospective consultants is being circulated within the Steering Group for comment. Discussions on funding have also taken place and letters written to local MPs to gain their support for the project. In addition to the Steering Group the Middlewich Rail Link Campaign meeting has formally been re-established and now meets on the last Thursday of each month in the Boars Head Hotel, Kinderton Street, Middlewich at 8.00pm. Although they now have an Agenda and minutes are taken they still retain their friendly open format under Chairman Dave Roberts. All who have an interest in seeing the line reopened are welcome to attend.

## **DISAPPOINTMENT OVER TRAM-TRAIN**

The Department for Transport recently announced that the Huddersfield-Sheffield line is to be the testbed for tram-train operation in the UK. We had hoped that the mid-Cheshire line/Metrolink would be chosen as this would have enabled services from the mid-Cheshire line to reach Manchester via the direct route via Sale (a physical connection between heavy rail and Metrolink already exists at Altrincham and was used during last summer's engineering work). Nevertheless we must hope that the experiment on the Penistone line proves successful and that it will open the door for the wider application of tram-train technology in the UK.

## **DROP IN SESSION AT ALTRINCHAM INTERCHANGE**

Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority will be holding a "drop in" session when public transport users will have the opportunity to discuss issues with representatives from GMPTE, Stagecoach Metrolink, Northern Rail and local bus operators on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July from 07.00 to 09.00. The event will take place in the booking hall.

## **PETITION ON CALLS AT STOCKPORT**

The Department for Transport (DfT) has decreed that the Arriva Cross Country Manchester-Birmingham-Bristol service will not call at Stockport station from December 2008. This will have the effect of reducing the Birmingham service to and from Stockport to hourly. If you wish to register your protest at this madness, a petition has been set up on the No.10 Downing Street website at:

[petitions.pm.gov.uk/stockport-trains](http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/stockport-trains)

The issue shows the folly of the DfT micro-managing the rail system from London without regard to local wishes. Talking of which:

## **LUDICROUS PLAN TO MOVE CREWE STATION**

An announcement is expected in June as to whether Crewe station is to be moved to a new site at Basford Hall (well to the south of the present site). The station is already too far from Crewe town centre and this plan would move it even further away. Also the Manchester-Cardiff service would have to reverse at the new station site. The sensible solution would be to improve the existing Crewe station (as planned by Cheshire County Council). We hope that common sense prevails and that good money is not spent to make matters worse for users of Crewe station.

## **FREIGHT NEWS**

Freightliner took over the Greater Manchester “bin train” contract from EWS as from 1<sup>st</sup> April. The new contract is said to be an interim one (the train plan remains unchanged). The Holyhead to Warrington (-Braunau Am Inn) aluminium traffic has returned to rail after a brief flirtation with East European road hauliers. The Dowlow-Northenden stone train is still occasionally running to the former Northenden station goods yard on Wednesdays only. The sidings at Albion Chemicals, Sandbach, accessed from the Middlewich line, have recently been lifted.

## **STYAL – THE CAMPAIGN TO AWAKEN CHESHIRE’S “GHOST” STATION** by Rob Sawyer

Styal station on the Crewe to Manchester line will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in May 2009. Sadly there is not much cause for celebration as service cuts have rendered Styal a “virtual” station. However local residents and campaigners are now pushing for a revival of this station.

### **The Station’s History**

Styal station opened for business on 01/05/1909 as part of the new rail line from Manchester to Wilmslow. The station boasted brick waiting rooms on both platforms and station staff. 1960 saw electrification of the line and demolition of the original buildings to be replaced with characterless modern buildings. In recent years they have been boarded up. The mid-1990s saw the opening of the airport rail-link and the start of Styal’s decline. Services were chopped back from half-hourly to very erratic.

### **Styal Station Today**

Styal station is unmanned with bricked up buildings. Despite this the station is quite well presented thanks to the work of Simon Lomas, the volunteer station adopter. The current service Monday to Saturday service is shown below:

To Manchester: 18.07

To Wilmslow/Crewe: 08:04 and 18:07

Sunday: No Service

It won't take a genius to calculate that this is a very "limited" service that even precludes a commute to Manchester. In effect Styal has become a ghost station.

## **The Station Campaign**

Local residents have decided that action needs to be taken. Styal village boasts significant visitor generators in the shape of HMP Styal (a large women's prison) and The National Trust Styal Estate (including Quarry Bank Mill). Many local residents travel to Wilmslow and Manchester for work and leisure. With intelligent timetabling (including Sundays!) and promotion we are sure that the station would be well used. The station has level platform access and a small car park suitable for park and ride.

A website – [www.styal-station.org.uk](http://www.styal-station.org.uk) has been created to spearhead a campaign for a restoration of services and improvements to the station infrastructure. The campaign has already enjoyed coverage in the Manchester Evening News and Channel M TV as well as rail industry magazines. **How you can help:**

Please sign up to the petition calling for:

1. Restoration of a direct morning peak service to Manchester in 2008 to permit commuting.
2. Provision of a 4pm service in 2008 to serve Alderley Edge and Wilmslow High School children living in Styal.
3. Restoration of some daytime (including Sunday) services for Summer 2009 to serve residents, National Trust Estate visitors and HMP Styal.

You can email [mail@styal-station.org.uk](mailto:mail@styal-station.org.uk) or call 07779483713 to register your support. With your help 2009 may yet be a cause for celebration at Styal station.

## **COACH TRIP TO THE SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY**

On Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July the Manchester Locomotive Society is running a coach trip from Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, Sale, Altrincham and Knutsford to the newly-reopened Severn Valley Railway. The fare (including unlimited train travel) is £21 and MCRUA members and their partners and friends are welcome. Full details and booking forms are available from Andrew Macfarlane on 0161-928-9394 or at [andrew@mcrua.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:andrew@mcrua.fsnet.co.uk).

## **FORTHCOMING SPECIAL TRAINS**

Past-Time Rail is running "The Cotton Mill Express and Oldham Looper" on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June. The Cotton Mill Express is a regular monthly steam-hauled special train from Manchester Victoria, which does a circular tour over the Pennines via Huddersfield, the Bradley curve, Brighouse, Copy Pit and Blackburn.

On this date an add-on evening trip will see preserved class 40 diesel do a tour of the Oldham Loop after the Cotton Mill Express has returned to Manchester Victoria. Another date for the Cotton Mill Express is Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July. Details from Past-Time Rail on 01543-411971. Compass Tours run a regular programme of rail excursions from the North West. For a brochure please call 01704-840573.

## COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS

A number of members submitted comments with their subscription renewals and a selection of these may be of interest to members:

“A long standing complaint of mine re unmanned stations is one I raise with each renewal! The need for train running information by tannoy or display screen. I now usually use the bus to Chester, my workplace, rather than the train from Delamere, even though the journey is 25 minutes longer. The service is more reliable and a day ticket costs £3.50 rather than £6.10 return. Keep up the good work!”

“My only big concern about where MCRUA puts almost all of its efforts and energy (i.e the Altrincham, Northwich, Middlewich, Chester area) is that there seems to be a very distinct lack of interest in the Stockport to Altrincham section in any of the campaigning. Where are the reports about the progress on getting Cheadle station reopened, for example? With the size of the population here it should surely be the number one priority for MCRUA in the coming year. It is now 91 years since the station was closed (as a WW1 economy measure) – does MCRUA really intend waiting to “celebrate” such an ignominious centenary? Whilst it is lovely to see hanging baskets at some of the smaller village stations, would it not be even nicer to see some re-openings or even new stations between Stockport and Altrincham at long, long last?”

“Bus connections at Hartford travelling to Liverpool are still very unsatisfactory. The bus arrives 5-10 minutes after the train has departed. The return journey connection is much better now”.

“Please can you keep up your campaigning to keep the peak time trains on the Chester via Northwich route straight through from Piccadilly. I take the journey to and from Hale from Salford Crescent so another change would be most inconvenient and no doubt add more time to the journey. Many thanks for your work”.

“I would like to protest against the two hour gap in the morning service to Manchester [from Greenbank] in particular! If Cheap Day Returns were allowed to use the train from Chester there should be a large leisure market who would appreciate such a service!”

“Are there any plans for a future trip to Edinburgh, Glasgow or Perth?” (Answer– possibly Edinburgh)

“Many thanks for all your work. Very much appreciated and very good value too”.

“I would very much like to have taken advantage of the Steam Rail Day and the Somerset Coast Express, but unfortunately I am away on holiday that week. I was somewhat surprised to see that you have scheduled the events so close together – it means that as I am on a week’s holiday I can attend neither. I am sure there will be others in the same position and still others who may not be able to afford two events so close together. Might I suggest that in the future you schedule major events significantly more than six days apart”.

## A WARM WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS

The following people have joined MCRUA since the previous issue of the newsletter was published:

Mr Bert Ellery, Chester

Mr K A Cuthbert, Cheadle Hulme

Mrs M Minshull, Lower Peover

Mr J Warrington, Timperley

Mr & Mrs B Ursell, Hartford

Mr & Mrs N Crean, Hale

Mrs S Swithenbank, Hartford

Mr P Black, Chester

Mr A Walsh, Mobberley  
Mrs M Wallace, Knutsford

Mr & Mrs P Carman, Timperley  
Mr & Mrs D Clarke, Broadheath, Altrincham

We very much regret to report the death of MCRUA member **Peter Michie** from Altrincham on 4<sup>th</sup> February. Peter was a familiar face for many users of the mid-Cheshire line as he worked as a booking clerk at Knutsford, Altrincham and other stations for many years. He started his railway career at Sale in 1966 and he had taken early retirement to allow more time to pursue his transport interests. Sadly his retirement was to prove all too short and Peter died at the early age of 60. There was a very large turnout for his funeral at Altrincham Crematorium on 11<sup>th</sup> February with many local railway enthusiasts and a number of Peter's former railway colleagues in attendance. Finally we report that MCRUA member **Geoff Lomas**, until last year a signaller at Mobberley, has moved to Kent and he is now a signaller at Tonbridge signal box.

## MID-CHESHIRE LINE PEOPLE

**Councillor Roger Jones**, the Chair of the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority, lost his seat on Salford Council at the local elections on 1<sup>st</sup> May after his seat was targeted by opponents of the proposed congestion charge in Greater Manchester. Labour retains control of the GMPTA. We very much regret to report the death of **Gwyneth Dunwoody**, MP for Crewe and Nantwich. As well as being a splendid advocate for rail at national level, Gwyneth was a friend of MCRUA who helped us with our campaign to improve the train service from Hartford and Winsford.

## DISCLAIMER

Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the MCRUA committee.

## USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

National Rail Enquiries	08457 48 49 50 (24 hours a day)
The Trainline (bookings by telephone)	08457 222 333
British Transport Police Manchester Control Room	0161 228 5685
Freephone number to report crime on the railway	0800 40 50 40
Network Rail (to report infrastructure faults)	08457 11 41 41
Northern Rail Train Running Information	0800 528 0200
Northern Rail Customer Relations	0845 0000 125
Passenger Focus (complaints appeals)	08453 022 022
Helpline for Manchester Piccadilly station	0845 0000 033
GMPTE Bus, Rail and Metrolink Enquiries	0161 228 7811 (08.00 to 20.00)
Metrolink Enquiries	0161 205 2000
Cheshire Traveline (bus and rail enquiries)	01244 602666 (08.00 to 20.00)
Merseyside PTE Public Transport Enquiry Line	0151 236 7676 (08.00 to 20.00)
National Public Transport Enquiry Line	0871 200 2233

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Email: [stationcampaign@aol.com](mailto:stationcampaign@aol.com)

Hartford & Winsford Sub-Committee. Please contact David Miller (for contact details see above).

#### MID-CHESHIRE COMMUNITY RAIL OFFICER – Mark Willcox

Email: [mwillcox@valeroyal.gov.uk](mailto:mwillcox@valeroyal.gov.uk) Tel: 01606-867534 or (mobile) 07825-681583.

Membership of the association costs £2 for younger persons (under 21), £5 for individuals, £7 for families, £14 for voluntary bodies and £25 for corporate bodies. If you wish to join please return the form below to MCRUA, 53 Acacia Avenue, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 8QY. Please make cheques payable to “Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association”. Please also send any subscription renewals to the same address. MCRUA is affiliated to Railfuture, the national, voluntary body for rail users.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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05/08 \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Family/Individual\*  
New Member/Renewal\*  
\* Please delete  
as appropriate