

MID CHESHIRE RAIL REPORT

No. 76

WINTER 2008-2009

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 new, improved website at www.mcrua.org.uk.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

NEW TWO-HOURLY SUNDAY SERVICE TO AND FROM MANCHESTER (AND SOUTHPORT!)

The start of the new timetable on 14th December brings some mixed news but by far the best improvement is the introduction of a two-hourly Sunday service between Chester, Northwich, Altrincham, Stockport, Manchester Piccadilly, Bolton, Wigan and Southport. This will be the first all year round Sunday service from the mid-Cheshire line to and from Manchester since October 1992. MCRUA will be doing its best to spread the news about this new service and members can help by informing family and friends. We welcome the large posters about the new timetable, which Northern has provided at stations along the line. The new timetable also sees an hourly service to and from Chester in the morning peak, a welcome improvement. On the other hand two morning peak services from Chester will terminate at Stockport and two evening peak services to Chester will start from Stockport. This leaves just a basic hourly service to and from Manchester at peak periods. Trains will leave Manchester Piccadilly for the mid-Cheshire line at 17 minutes past the hour in the new timetable with the exception of what would be the 17.17, which leaves instead at 17.09. This is clearly too early for those who work 9 to 5 unless their place of employment is very close to Piccadilly station. Some good news is that from the start of the new timetable we will be able to use the Manchester-London Euston service to travel between Manchester Piccadilly and Stockport. The 16.35 and 17.35 Piccadilly to Euston services will provide connections at Stockport with our trains, which start from there. The December National Rail Timetable is available on the Network Rail website (www.networkrail.co.uk). The mid-Cheshire line is Table 88.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS by John Oates

As I write this in mid-November, we're feeling the effects of the worst of leaf fall on the line, but so far thanks to careful driving and the regular running of Network Rail's Rail Head Treatment Trains (RHTTs) **performance** seems to be holding up well when compared to previous years (always a dangerous statement to make at this stage!) Hopefully, this will have continued to be the case by the time you read this. The big **timetable change** for the line comes on Sunday 14 December. This is the biggest timetable change we will have had on the line since the early 1990s. Much has been written about this both here and elsewhere, so I'm just going to summarise the main changes. As you'll see from the enclosed timetable, the service is becoming a "standard pattern" hourly service between Chester and Piccadilly leaving Chester at 7 minutes past the hour (slightly different in early mornings and for the last train) and arriving into Altrincham at 4 minutes past and Piccadilly at 35 minutes past. Coming the other way, the standard departure pattern is 17 minutes past from Piccadilly, 46 minutes past from Altrincham and arriving into Chester at 45 minutes past.

Those of you who are used to standing at Chester awaiting a late-running inbound service to form the return will immediately realise that this gives a 22 minutes turnaround at Chester, a vast improvement on the current arrangements and which should make the service from Chester far more reliable. We also have a much better service to and from Chester in the mornings with an earlier arrival and the nasty two hour gap between 0805 and 1005 departures plugged. We're also losing our through services to and from the Fylde Coast, which given these are some of the most unpunctual on the line should much improve performance. The 17 minutes past departure from Piccadilly varies only once, that's in the evening peak with the 1709, which will run 11 minutes ahead of standard pattern from Altrincham. **Watch out for this one!** Apparently the 1717 slot had to be pinched for a stopping service to Stoke, otherwise that would have delayed a London service. As previously mentioned, the peak hour Manchester commuter extras are only to run to or from Stockport as the Department for Transport has handed extra space from Stockport to Piccadilly to trains from London, meaning there is no space left for our extras. Passengers to/from Piccadilly on these trains will need to change at Stockport. Whilst there is no doubt this is a seriously backward step in service for Manchester commuters, at least from 14 December we will be allowed to use trains to/from London between Stockport and Piccadilly, something not allowed at the moment. It does leave one wondering though how many other population centres of 50,000+ (Northwich, Knutsford, etc. combined) only have an hourly peak connection to their regional centre less than 30 miles away. Answers by email welcome!

The other extra trains that ran in the peaks are withdrawn, that is the morning train from St Annes on Sea to Greenbank and the afternoon semi-fast 1545 from Chester. This presents a particular problem for the 200+ scholars who use the train from Stockport to Altrincham/Hale and from Navigation Road/Altrincham/Hale/Ashley/Mobberley to Knutsford and Greenbank, since it gets them to school/college far too early and the following train is an hour, rather than half an hour later. I have seen a letter from the Department of Transport in London saying there is nothing can be done about this. This sounds more like "can't be bothered" to me, but since these decisions are not made locally, but rather by people in London who aren't personally affected by them, it's probably quite an easy response. **Sunday services** though are being vastly improved – we think someone must have taken pity on us! Rather than the Chester to Altrincham shuttle 5 times a day that we've suffered since the early 1990s after "temporary" GMPTE budget cuts, we've returned to a service every two hours AND running all the way to Piccadilly (and indeed on to Southport). This will be much appreciated and should massively increase Sunday patronage on the line. Many of you will know we were carrying out **passenger counts**, these being co-ordinated by Roy Beacham. We know that Northern and GMPTE have found these very useful, and indeed Northern have worked closely with us helping us to produce these. We restarted these counts last September so that we can get a good idea of loadings both before and after the timetable change and can quickly pick up where trains are heavily "crowded". Interestingly, last month DfT changed the definition of "**overcrowding**". Rather than being where there are 10% more passengers than seats, it is now 30%. Since it is virtually impossible to get more than 30% more passengers on a "Merseytravel" yellow-seated class 142 than there are seats, this means trains on our line will no longer be "overcrowded" – it's just we'll be leaving passengers behind at stations..... Hmmm!

Knowing of the poorer service for Manchester commuters proposed from December, we asked last Spring that GMPTE and Northern arrange for tickets from the line be **inter-available with Metrolink** such that for example users could change onto Metrolink at Altrincham to get the tram into Manchester getting a seat, but come back on the train from Piccadilly getting a seat, all on a return ticket and similar to what happens in many other parts of the country between routes. Unfortunately, this is still being looked at, since GMPTE and Northern need to agree on a share of revenue for these tickets and this has yet to happen meaning it will not be in place for the timetable change despite suggestions it would be. The sooner the better, please! **The replacement bus services** we've had recently in late evenings and on Sundays seem to be running better, but are far from perfect yet. We're still working on Northern and First re this! And lastly, and you should read about this elsewhere, we are launching our **new web site**. If you're internet enabled, log onto www.mcrua.org.uk and let us know what you think.

MCRUA SPECIAL TRAINS

The association plans to run a special train from the line on Saturday 9th May but the destination has not yet been finalised. A booking form will be sent out to members and supporters on our wider mailing list as soon as the details have been confirmed. There will not be a Mid-Cheshire Steam Train in 2009; the next one is scheduled for May 2010.

STOP PRESS - MCRUA LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE by John Hulme

MCRUA is pleased to announce the launch of its new website on Saturday 22nd November 2008. Still at the same address, www.mcrua.org.uk, we urge all members to take a look at the site. Whilst MCRUA will continue to publish its successful newsletter, the website will provide timely breaking news on Mid Cheshire line developments. This will include the Mid Cheshire Line and the Crewe to Liverpool line. The website covers all MCRUA business and includes a host of other useful tools for those travelling by train. This includes downloadable timetables, access to engineering works, live departures for each station etc etc. In early 2009, the site will be enhanced to allow on-line payment of membership and on-line booking of MCRUA's popular excursions. We welcome constructive comment and also content for the site. This should be sent to Harry Boardman via the Contact Page on the website.

FARES NEWS

Firstly a couple of corrections to items mentioned in the last issue. Cross Country now specify the fares between Manchester and Stoke and so an Off-Peak Day return cannot be used for that journey between 15.30 and 18.15 on Monday to Friday, even on Northern services. Secondly not all Train Operators levy a charge for the use of credit/debit cards when buying tickets over the Internet. National Express East Coast does not, for example. As members may well have heard, the swingeing fare increases predicted in the last issue will in fact happen as from Friday 2nd January. This is due to the Government's RPI + 1% formula whereby regulated fares increase by the rate of inflation (the **Retail Price Index**) plus 1%. Unfortunately the RPI is measured in July, when inflation was at a high of 5%. In line with other Train Operating Companies Northern and Virgin will be increasing their regulated fares (walk-on singles, Off-Peak Returns (formerly known as Savers) and season tickets) by 6%. Northern and Virgin's unregulated fares will increase by 7%. Cross Country's unregulated fares will increase by a whopping 11%. In contrast London Midland, the operators of the Liverpool-Hartford-Crewe-Birmingham service, will not be increasing its unregulated fares at all. Unregulated fares include Off-Peak Day Returns and Advance purchase singles. An £8 Advance purchase single fare is to be introduced by Virgin from Manchester to London and vice versa from the December timetable change. Members may wish to note an alternative 01 phone number for National Rail Enquiries (kindly supplied by a member). This is 01709-768621. Channel Five recently ran a programme on saving money on rail fares and they recommended the website www.raileasy.co.uk. Likewise the *Manchester Evening News* very recently ran an article on paying less for your rail journey and their recommended website is www.moneysavingexpert.com/traindeals. The Mid-Cheshire PM Return ticket from Northwich has been officially withdrawn after very low sales. It would have helped enormously if the ticket had been available on the train.

THROUGH TICKETING WITH METROLINK

In the light of the changes in the December timetable more members may decide to use Metrolink to reach Manchester. Through tickets are available from any National Rail station to any Metrolink station. There are through fares (including season tickets) from stations on the mid-Cheshire line to Metrolink stations changing at Altrincham. Metrolink stations between G-Mex, Piccadilly and Victoria are grouped together as the destination "Metrolink City". The only proviso is that if you travel to Manchester by changing onto Metrolink at Altrincham **you must return by the same route**. Return tickets to Metrolink City are not valid for return travel on the train from Piccadilly via Stockport. Likewise if you travel to Manchester on the train via Stockport you

must return via Stockport. Tickets between the mid-Cheshire line and Manchester via Stockport (to destinations “Manchester Stns” or “Manchester Central Zone”) are not valid for return on Metrolink services via Sale. All tickets to Manchester from Knutsford, Mobberley, Ashley, Hale, Altrincham and Navigation Road via Stockport show “Manchester Central Zone” as the destination. This means that the ticket can be used for onward travel on the Metrolink from Piccadilly to Victoria or G-Mex (only). Tickets to Manchester Stns (e.g. from Northwich) can be used for onward travel from Piccadilly to Oxford Road and Deansgate rail stations (only).

If you have a railcard it will be cheaper to buy a railcard-discounted ticket to Altrincham and to then buy an adult return on Metrolink (the off-peak return from Altrincham to Manchester is currently £3.70). Railcard discounts are not available on through fares between National Rail stations and Metrolink stations. Only Greater Manchester residents who hold the National Concessionary pass for the over 60s or the Disabled can travel free on Metrolink services after 09.30 on Monday to Friday and all day on Saturdays and Sundays. Another option, which will already be known to many members living in Cheshire, is to buy a Concessionary Wayfarer ticket. These tickets can be used from stations from Northwich towards Manchester, cost £4.60 and can be used on train, bus and Metrolink services after 09.30 on Monday to Friday and all day at weekends in a very large area. This area stretches from Northwich, Holmes Chapel and Warrington (both stations) to include the whole of Greater Manchester and a large chunk of the Peak District. Wayfarer is a scratch card ticket, which is dated by the user. Tickets can be obtained from the Northwich bus station kiosk and from staffed rail stations. Further information can be found on the GMPTE website at www.gmpite.com or by ringing 0161-228-7811.

SERVICE CHANGES AT WINSFORD, HARTFORD AND ACTON BRIDGE

The December timetable change brings a wholesale change to services from these stations. **Winsford** gains virtually an hourly service in each direction, a significant improvement. Trains will depart at 06 minutes past each hour towards Liverpool and at 08 past each hour towards Crewe and Birmingham. The only exceptions to this pattern are that there is no 09.08 or 13.08 towards Crewe and there is gap between the 16.08 and the 17.38 towards Crewe. There is also a major improvement to Sunday services from Winsford and Hartford with the introduction of an **hourly service** from late morning. Sunday trains will depart from Hartford towards Liverpool at 10.50, 11.50, 12.50, 13.43 and then at 43 minutes past each hour. **Acton Bridge** sees trains to Liverpool at 06.18 SX, 06.51, 07.14 SX, 07.51 SX, 07.53 SO, 08.14 SX, 08.16 SO, 10.14, 12.14, 16.15 SO, 18.50 SX, 19.57 SO and 22.48 SX. Trains leave Acton Bridge for Crewe and Birmingham at 06.57 SX, 07.32, 08.34, 09.00 SX, 09.01 SO, 13.01, 17.01, 18.01, 19.36 SO, 19.40 SX, 23.02 SX and 00.03 SX. There is still no Sunday service from Acton Bridge and the 10.46 Hartford to London Euston service is withdrawn.

NEWS FROM THE LINE

The later start of the first Sunday train from Chester in the new timetable allows a connection from the Merseyrail Wirral line for the first time for a number of years. The hourly through service between **Chester** and London Euston has been deferred to start as from Monday 26th January. A Chester-Crewe shuttle will operate until that date with connections at Crewe into and out of the Liverpool-Euston service, which will continue to call at Crewe until the Chester-Euston services begins. The new 07.00 Wrexham General-London Euston Virgin Trains service via Chester will however be starting with the December timetable change. The train arrives into Euston at 09.38. For those who wish to travel from the mid-Cheshire line to London Euston via Chester after 26th January, the connection is not particularly good. The mid-Cheshire line service arrives into Chester at 45 minutes past each hour and the Virgin train to London Euston departs from Chester at 35 minutes past each hour. Volunteers have replaced frost-damaged plants at **Cuddington** with a contribution from Vale Royal Borough Council. Knutsford High School is to take on **Knutsford** station with a view to maintaining and improving the gardens and the appearance of the station. David Maclean, one of the two developers involved with the vast Altair development on the car park behind platform 4 at **Altrincham**, has gone bust. Nikal, the

principal partner, says that it is “business as usual” and is seeking a new partner. GMPTE is holding a “drop in” session for passengers to meet public transport providers at Altrincham library (across the road from the station) on Thursday 22nd January between 10 am and 1pm.

METROLINK NEWS

The city centre track relaying was completed on time and the line between the delta junction at Piccadilly Gardens and Piccadilly Station reopened on schedule on Friday 21st November. The work included the removal of the scissors crossover on London Road and the trailing crossover on Aytoun Street. The journey is now noticeably quicker when going into the Undercroft. Piccadilly Undercroft station has been redecorated in the new yellow house colour and large advertising panels now adorn the wall opposite the departure platform. There has as yet been no improvement to the inadequate passenger information system nor to the failure-prone ticket machines. New ticket machines are due to be installed across the system from June 2009. Vehicle 1007 is to be fitted with CCTV and it is also to be modified to enable it to operate anywhere on the system. All trams are due to be fitted with CCTV by May/June 2009.

CHESTER STATION IMPROVEMENTS by Michael Ross

The latest stage in the modernisation and renovation of Chester Station was opened at the end of October. The modernised concourse has seen a £1.76m investment in new facilities, primarily by Arriva Trains Wales. It takes advantage of Network Rail’s recent investment of over £4m in repairing and cleaning the platform roofs. The layout is different so that passengers are encouraged to use the ticket machines rather than the ticket office. Two machines by the barriers allow passengers to buy tickets and collect pre-booked tickets. There is a new ticket office and travel centre providing better conditions than before for passengers and staff. The modernised concourse includes a Costa coffee shop, a coffee bar and two shops. Information displays have been modernised throughout the station. There are now stands for 70 cycles, with more to follow. The current phase of construction is not yet complete, however, and some work is still in progress. Installation of the new information displays for the Mid-Cheshire line platforms 5 and 6 has had to be delayed to allow for the construction of stronger support columns. Completion of the concourse work follows the improvement to the Station Square completed last year. The Gateway project continues and is working on plans for improvements to the overbridge and island platforms to be carried out during 2009/10.

The station is managed by Arriva Trains Wales who led the concourse improvements. Other partners are Cheshire County Council, Chester City Council, Network Rail, North West Development Agency, Merseyrail, Merseytravel and Virgin Trains. The projects have been funded by the partners plus English Heritage and the Lottery Heritage Fund.

NEWS FROM THE MIDDLEWICH LINE by Harry Boardman

A very positive meeting was held on the 12 September attended by members of the Steering Group sub Committee, Cheshire County Council and the Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance with Brian Welch of the DfT. A copy of the draft Feasibility Study had previously been forwarded to Brian Welch and he came along and gave an honest and forthright view of its contents along with recommendations on which points to concentrate on if we still planned to go forward. Additionally he gave very clear indications of the roles of both the DfT and Network Rail in the process and stressed the importance of having the full support of Cheshire County Council. Throughout September and October the Steering Group sub-Committee with the support of Cheshire County Council and the CWEA amended the Feasibility Study to, amongst other things, incorporate the recommendations of the DfT. Finally on the 30 October an *“Invitation to Quote for the Middlewich Railway Line Feasibility Study”* was sent to nine consultancies. Proposals followed by presentations by the short listed consultancies will be held in late November or early December after which a meeting with the appointed consultancy will take place to agree a programme leading to a presentation of the final report to relevant stakeholders in February 2009. The monthly MRLC meetings, held on the last Tuesday

of the month, continue to be well attended and provide a good supporting link into the Steering Group. All who have an interest in seeing the line reopened are welcome to attend. Details can be obtained from the dedicated email address for the campaign, which is stationcampaign@aol.com

NEWS FROM THE CAMPAIGN TO OPEN A STATION AT WYTHENSHAW by Eugene Ring

The Baguley Halt has now been included in the Greater Manchester Future Transport Plan review process. The campaign has also recently received support from Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council, North West MEP Brian Simpson and Felicity Goodey, Chairman of the University Hospital of South Manchester Trust (Wythenshawe Hospital). The campaign has its own website with access to its on line petition which currently has more than 1400 signatories. Please have a look at the website and go to the petition and add your signature. <http://www.wythenshawrailway.blogspot.com>

MUSIC ON THE MID-CHESHIRE LINE by Michael Ross

Summer 2008 – a successful first season. Four music trains were run in the summer (June, July, August and September) with an average of over 40 people on each train. Numbers built up, particularly from Chester, as marketing improved and word-of-mouth has kicked in. June and August ran Chester-Mobberley and July and September ran Manchester-Plumley. The musicians worked hard and gave excellent performances. There was a lot of positive feedback plus a good article on the Manchester Evening News website. Train conductors and drivers were been very helpful. The first objective of the project was achieved – a lot of people enjoyed themselves. The second objective - more business for the line and the pubs – was also been achieved. On the August train we at last got it organised so that the conductor checked all tickets both ways and collected all fares – even though both carriages were full. The pubs were satisfied with business on July and August trains – June was a disappointment all round, not helped by train being delayed (through no fault of Northern). September was less well attended. Third objective is to raise line awareness and this also seems to have worked - certainly with the August train, which had about 90 customers. Marketing has developed, helped by ideas from MCRUA members, and become station specific - still much room for improvement - suggestions and ideas welcome. It was based on separate exercises for each month's train because the alternating routes made it difficult to promote a continuous programme.

Summer 2009 – six music trains. Following this successful pilot season we are now planning six music trains for summer 2009 from April to September. Based on last summer's experience there will be four from Chester and two from Manchester (it has proved more difficult to attract people from Manchester and Stockport because there are other competing music train programmes on the High Peak and Crewe lines). The full programme will be promoted as well as individual trips. And there will be a range of types of music, too.

LOCAL RAIL NEWS

Northern has acquired 3 class 180 diesel trains on an 18-month sub-lease from Virgin Trains until the arrival of class 150 Sprinter trains cascaded from the London Midland franchise. The 5-coach 125mph trains will be used on the new Manchester Victoria-Blackpool North and Hazel Grove-Preston services and they will provide much-needed extra seats at peak periods. Northern needs 5 more units to operate the December timetable than the present one and 5 class 142 *Pacer* units are returning from First Great Western to Northern in time for the timetable change. The famous once-weekly Stockport-Stalybridge service is retimed to depart from Stockport at 09.22 on Fridays only in the December timetable. A free *Metroshuttle* bus service has recently begun operation for a 12-month trial period from **Bolton** railway station around the town centre including calling at the main Moor Lane bus station. A similar service started running from **Stockport** station on 22nd November. The third platform at **Manchester Airport** station will be open in time for the December timetable change. There is a large gap between the existing island platform and the new platform indicating

that room has been left for the additional fourth track required for the Manchester Airport Western Link from Mobberley (if it is ever built). **Chelford** station gains a two-hourly Sunday service from the December timetable change but the peak hour service is reduced to hourly. There is a project to install CCTV on all Northern trains. The Manchester-Birmingham-Bristol service is confirmed as not calling at **Stockport** from December (except for one early morning train). The Liverpool-Norwich East Midlands Trains service of sardine fame is to call additionally at **Liverpool South Parkway** from the December timetable. The reinstated **Olive Mount Chord** is to be brought into use from 15th December. The chord will enable freight trains to and from Liverpool Docks to avoid having to reverse at Edge Hill.

FREIGHT ON THE MID-CESHIRE LINE

The level of freight traffic on the line is only a shadow of its former self but members may be interested in a summary of what currently operates:

1. 11 limestone trains per week from Tunstead in the Peak District to Northwich (Lostock and Winnington) and the corresponding empty workings. Two return trains are scheduled to run each day apart from Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, when only one train is scheduled to operate (although there are paths for two trains each way on Tuesdays and Thursdays if required). The trains run every day of the year except Christmas Day. The limestone is for the manufacture of soda ash and the traffic has used the line on a regular basis since 1874. Each of the present trains normally conveys 24 wagons, each of which weighs 102 tonnes when loaded making a trailing load of 2,448 tonnes. Motive power is a class 60 diesel locomotive, 100 of which were built by Brush for British Rail in the early 1990s. In steam days there were 8 return trips per day because each train only conveyed 16 wagons with a smaller carrying capacity plus a brake van. There was also a third works at Northwich (Wallerescote) until 1984.
2. On Tuesday and sometimes Thursday a return train operates between Warrington Arpley and Dowlow in the Peak District. This train conveys powdered limestone from Dowlow bound for Mossend (Scotland). The wagons are attached to an *Enterprise* freight working to Mossend at Warrington. The Dowlow train also conveys tanks of locomotive fuel to and from Peak Forest and empty wagons to and from repair. Motive power for this train is currently an aged class 37 diesel locomotive from the 1960s.
3. Coal traffic uses the line on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays on its way from Scottish opencast sites to Earles Sidings near Hope on the Manchester-Sheffield line for the manufacture of cement. The empty train is often seen returning through Altrincham at around 07.00.
4. Compacted domestic refuse is taken by rail from Northenden Junction to Roxby near Scunthorpe. This traffic ran 5 days a week until recently but now often only operates on two or three days a week, presumably due to the increased recycling of refuse.
5. Freightliner operates a stone train between Dowlow and Garston (Merseyside) via the Hartford curve on an occasional basis.
6. Stone is occasionally conveyed by rail on a Wednesday evening from Dowlow to Northenden.
7. Trains between Runcorn and Warrington Arpley travel via Northwich Sidings to run round (reverse).
8. Freightliner Heavy Haul light engines between Crewe Basford Hall and Earles Sidings.

MCRUA NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is also available by email. Please contact us at enquiries@mcrua.org.uk if you would like it sent in this form. You may need to have a broadband connection to be able to download it.

FORTHCOMING SPECIAL TRAINS

Past-Time Rail continues to operate its popular “Cotton Mill Express” circular steam excursions from Manchester Victoria. Forthcoming dates are Saturdays 6th December, 13th December and 20th December, 31st January and 14th February and Sunday 22nd March. Bookings can be made by phoning 01543-411971. Compass Tours run a regular programme of rail excursions from the North West. For a brochure please call 01704-840573. Spitfire Railtours also has a regular programme and they can be reached on 0870 879 3675.

ALTRINCHAM WINTER LECTURE SERIES PROGRAMME

The venue for these lectures remains the Altrincham Methodist Church Hall, Barrington Road, Altrincham, 5 minutes' walk from Altrincham bus/rail/Metrolink interchange. To reach the hall turn right outside the bus station side of Altrincham station and continue past Barringtons pub. The church hall is on the left-hand side just before the crossroads with Woodlands Road. Lectures begin at 7.30pm and free tea/coffee and biscuits is included in the admission charge of £3 (free for AERPS members). The remaining programme is:

Friday 12th December “The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway” by Noel Coates.

Friday 9th January “Manchester Railway Stations” by David George.

Friday 13th February “Scottish Branch Line Steam in the 1960s” by John Ryan.

Friday 13th March “Persia – Back Door to Russia in 1942/Steam & Modern Traction in the 1960s” by Robin Patrick.

Friday 3rd April. “Modern Traction in the UK, 1980s to the Present Day” by Phil Taylor.

Further details from Andrew Macfarlane on 0161-928-9394 or andrew@mcrua.fsnet.co.uk.

8E RAILWAY ASSOCIATION PROGRAMME

The 8E Railway Association continues to meet on the second Tuesday of each month at the Gladstone Club, which is off Station Road in Northwich, around 5 minutes' walk from the station in the direction of the town centre. Meetings start at 7.45 for 8pm and the forthcoming programme is listed below. Non-members are welcome.

Tuesday 9th December AGM followed by a presentation to be announced.

Tuesday 13th January Preserved Steam on Video by Karl Jauncey and Dave Richards.

Tuesday 10th February Archive Cine films by Colin White of B & R video.

Tuesday 10th March Quiz Night, questions set by Chris Simon.

STEPHENSON LOCOMOTIVE SOCIETY NORTH WEST AREA PROGRAMME

The North West Area of the SLS continues to meet monthly over the winter on Saturdays at the Friends' Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester (on the other side of the Central Library from St Peters Square Metrolink station), starting at 14.00. The forthcoming programme is:

Saturday 6th December “The Class 185 Introduction Project” by Paul Staples, Commercial Manager, First TransPennine Express.

Saturday 17th January Area AGM followed by “Locomotives of the Highland Railway” by Clive Holden.
Saturday 21st February “Where the Canal Ends, the Railway Begins” by David Frith
Saturday 21st March. Joint Meeting with the Manchester Locomotive Society. “The L & Y 1908-24 – the Photographs of George Smith” by Neville Fields.

Further details from Mike Blease on 0161-928-2461 or blease@mighty-micro.co.uk.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

The following people and organisations have joined since the last issue of the newsletter:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A. Harmer, Frodsham | J. McCarthy, Droylsden |
| R. W. Jones, Timperley | R. Tucker, Lymm |
| J. Chase, Offerton, Stockport | P. Dutton, Stretford |
| Wythenshawe Railway Action Group | Dr. A. C. Renfrew, Sale |

We regret to report the death of longstanding MCRUA member **Mike Ellis** of Knutsford in April. We also regret that long-time member **Mr W. G. Miles** of Hartford died earlier this year. A subscription renewal form is enclosed with this issue of the newsletter.

MID-CHESHIRE LINE PEOPLE

We very much regret to report the death of **Jim Renshaw**, a longstanding local railwayman who was a good friend of MCRUA. Jim worked as a Supervisor at Altrincham for a number of years before the Metrolink conversion and he was then based at Wilmslow and Stockport. Jim was a very good troubleshooter when things went wrong on the ground, notably at Stockport, and Network Rail will certainly miss his expertise. Jim died in Edgeley Junction No. 2 signal box and his funeral at Altrincham Crematorium was attended by around 300 colleagues and relatives, the turnout being a measure of the esteem in which he was held. We welcome **Lee Wastidge** as the new Area Director (West) for Northern. Mr Wastidge comes from the soft drinks industry. The West Area of Northern covers the Liverpool and Manchester areas and includes the mid-Cheshire line. **Roger Jones**, until May the Chair of Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority, has found a new job as the Campaign Director of the North West Rail Campaign.

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 or 01709-768621 |
| The Trainline (bookings by telephone) | 08457 222 333 |
| 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 | 0871 200 2233 (08.00 to 20.00) |
| National Public Transport Enquiry Line | 0871 200 2233 |

YOUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

CHAIRMAN John Oates, "Swallowfield", Slade Lane, Mobberley, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 7QN.
Tel: 01565-873059 (home), 07860-513309 (mobile),
Email: john.oates@bakertilly.co.uk

VICE-CHAIRMAN & MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Peter Davies 53 Acacia Avenue, Hale, Altrincham, WA15 8QY.
Tel: 0161-928-2203, Email: peteredavies@hotmail.com

SECRETARY Harry Boardman, 19 Willow Grove, Barnton, Northwich, Cheshire,
CW8 4LZ. Email: harryw.boardman@btopenworld.com

TREASURER John Hanson, 4 Stelfox Avenue, Timperley, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 6UL.
Tel: 0161-283-3384, Email: j.hanson4@ntlworld.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR Andrew Macfarlane, 25 Prestbury Avenue, Timperley, Altrincham
WA15 8HY. Tel: 0161-928-9394, Email: andrew@mcrua.fsnet.co.uk

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Malcolm Roughley, 403a Hale Road, Hale Barns, Altrincham, Cheshire,
WA15 8XX. Tel: 0161-980-2757, Email: CorporalJinja@aol.com

John Hulme, Brow Cottage, Leighs Brow, Barnton, Northwich, Cheshire,
CW8 4HT. Tel 01606-76092, Email: jh@johnhulme.com

David Miller, 16 Primrose Hill, Cuddington, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 2TZ.
Tel: 01606-888093

Roy Beacham, 5 Bracken Way, Comberbach, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 6QF.
Tel: 01606-891957, Email: RyBeacham@aol.com

Michael Ross, 80 Lache Lane, Chester, Cheshire, CH4 7LS.
Email: michael.ross@mross.org.uk.

SUB-COMMITTEES

Middlewich & West Cheshire Sub-Committee. Chairman: Dave Roberts, 5 Whitley
Close, Middlewich, CW10 0NQ. Tel: 01606-833404 (home), 07900-194975 (mobile).
Email: 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 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.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Email address (if any) _____

Family/Individual*

New Member/Renewal*

* Please delete

as appropriate