

MID CHESHIRE RAIL REPORT

No. 78

WINTER 2009-2010

ONLINE 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.

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

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS by John Oates

We appear to be going through a period of consolidation following the upheaval of the December 2008 WCML timetable with its significant reduction of commuter services on our line. **Passenger patronage** having initially reduced by 30% for Manchester/Stockport commuters and the schools traffic from Stockport to Altrincham and South Trafford to Knutsford then stabilised at around 22% down. We recommenced our **passenger counts** in October. These seem to be showing us that most services are seeing increases of around 5% when compared to the counts taken in spring 2009. This includes the daytime services on the line and those into/out of Chester, which suggests our annual **passenger increase** is continuing at around 10%, apart from the big hit we took with the introduction of the December 2008 timetable. The details are now confirmed for our railtour next May, **The Great Western Express on Saturday 8 May, 2010**. As you'll see from the enclosed, we're going to Bristol with options for Oxford and Bath, and also an option for a coach transfer to the **East Somerset Railway**. We've sent you a poster as well as a booking form. If you can find somewhere locally to put up the poster, (your local shop, post office, notice board, church, pub or similar), we will be very appreciative. This time our **web booking** is already open via our **web site** – www.mcrua.org.uk. If you don't mind paying with a Mastercard or Visa credit card or a debit card, booking this way makes life much simpler for us administratively. Of course, we're still very happy to receive your bookings by post!

Talking about the web, we launched our **Chairman's Blog** through my last Chairman's Letter in late September. This was a bit of a leap into the dark at the suggestion of one of our committee members with a lot of experience in this field, John Hulme. John and his son, Ian, put a lot of work into setting up the blog and even wrote the first few articles whilst I was away on holiday in August so as to try it out. The whole idea behind the Blog is to provide a medium for our many e-connected members to keep up to date with us in between our *Rail Reports* and *Chairman's Letters* and also to provide a forum for discussion on emerging topics. The Blog's usage has been much more than we'd been expecting. The most number of "hits" in a day currently stands at 92 on Tuesday 17 November (we get detailed statistics of number of hits, where users are being referred from, what is read, etc.), with the current daily rate at around 70. Comments on Blog Posts are coming in at around one every week or two, similar to the experience of other blog sites. Subjects covered have included:

- Stockport station gets share of £50m DfT fund
- Volunteers make a difference on the Mid-Cheshire Line (our first with a picture!)
- Mid-Cheshire 2010 timetable aspirations
- Network Rail Action Stations (and win an annual season ticket!)
- New Northern Franchise – no improvements again?
- The North Wales Coast Railway Noticeboard

- Leaves on the line - this will make you smile!, and
- Signalling problems in the Plumley area.

Depending on space in this issue, Andrew may include a selection of these items in this Rail Report. For those of you who have internet access, have a look on www.mcrua.org.uk/chairmansblog. You can contribute to the blog directly if you want, or if you want to let us know your views, but don't want to put them on the blog, you can email me on john.oates@mcrua.org.uk

The mention of the signalling problems at Plumley last week leads nicely into **Train Running Performance**. This continues to be the best we have had since we started keeping records in 1998, but our monitoring team (from MCRUA, Northern and Network Rail) is not getting complacent, since we want it even better! We've had the usual dip at this time of year with leaf fall, though no worse than last year. Running the Railhead Treatment Train (RHTT) every day except Saturdays has led to good performance except on Sundays which goes to show how effective the machine is. It currently cannot run on Saturdays as they need Saturdays to maintain the machine. We have been discussing whether a way can be found to do something on Saturday afternoons so Sunday performance is better (as I write this, many of the previous Sunday trains had been over 20 minutes late due to slipping and sliding, but Monday was fine). Of late, the main train running problems have been a period of rostering errors, which seem to have reduced in the last few weeks, and a variety of unit failures particularly in the diagrams that require coupling of units. This is currently being looked at in detail to see if the coupling can either be avoided, or else carried out in a way, which is more likely to lead to a successful outcome. And the aforementioned signalling problems at Plumley? – this was due to power supply problems and took over a week to finally sort out. Network Rail are very apologetic about this. A project was agreed late last week to provide a much more resilient power supply solution for both Plumley and the adjoining signalbox at Greenbank.

Replacement bus running performance appears to have been very good of late, though we've had little of it recently thankfully. We did have a problem in early October with a failed railhead treatment train at Stockport, which meant invoking what is known as the "Emergency Bus Plan" (meaning unplanned replacement services). This proved not to work well (this is me being polite!), such that it was agreed this would be revised. Northern together with First Rail Support have produced the initial drafts of a revised plan, and we are working through these with them with a view to these new plans being in place before 2010. Lots going on as you can see. Please book on our railtour if you can. Also, if you have comments on anything to do with MCRUA or the line, please write or send an email to me or Harry, our Secretary – contact details are on the back page. Thank you for supporting us through your membership.

WIN A PAIR OF FREE GREAT WESTERN RAILTOUR TICKETS

We are offering you the opportunity of winning a pair of Great Western Railtour Tickets in the Great Western Draw. At MCRUA it is a formidable task keeping our database of members up to date. So here is an offer you cannot refuse and you will be helping our Membership Secretary at the same time. If you use email, we would prefer to keep you informed of Special Events by email. By confirming your details, you will be automatically entered in the draw. The Railtour (details enclosed) runs on Saturday 8th May 2010 and its destination is Oxford, Bath and Bristol. To enter the draw simply:

- 1) Visit www.mcrua.org.uk
- 2) Click on **Win a Pair of Free Great Western Railtour Tickets**
- 3) Confirm your details

You will then be automatically entered into the Great Western Draw. Our Great Western Draw closes at midnight on Friday 15th January 2010. Note we do NOT share our database with anyone else. NOR will we write to you unless we have something important to tell you. By telling us your email address, you will still receive a postal copy of the Rail Report, Timetables etc.

PLEASE NOTE: Our Booking Office is now open for The Great Western Express. If you book before 15th January 2010, EITHER by post OR via our online booking office, you will also be automatically entered into the Great Western Draw. Our booking form is enclosed or you can book online at www.mcrua.org.uk

AN INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW COMMUNITY RAIL OFFICER

My name is Sally Buttifant and I am the new Community Rail Officer. Now two months into the role, I hope that I am “steaming ahead”! I am certainly enjoying myself – the line and the role are as exciting and as full of opportunities as I thought when I applied for the post. I hadn’t appreciated the lovely Cheshire scenery that the line passes through and the amount of pheasants along the line! The line appears very popular and a real service for locals in the towns and villages near the line. My first few weeks have been spent talking to the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership about their priorities, getting to know the line and meeting and working with key community contacts on the line. One of the key tasks has been to put together a draft action plan for the Partnership to discuss and agree and to look at appropriate priorities for the next few months. My role involves promoting the line and increasing the numbers who use it, encouraging communities to get involved with their stations and working with the Partners to achieve their priorities for the line. I am also looking for funding in order to run the Mid Cheshire Steam Train in 2010 – watch this space!

If you want to know more about my role or you want to volunteer at your local station, please get in touch:

Sally Buttifant, Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership Officer (3 days per week)

Tel: 01244 976788 or 0773 652 3863

Email: railofficer@midcheshirerail.org.uk

Location: Backford Hall, Backford, Chester

Visit: <http://www.midcheshirerail.org.uk>

HELP WANTED

I am compiling information re attractions from our Mid Cheshire Line & would appreciate some help:

Mid Cheshire Line Walks

It would be good to promote walks to & from stations along the Mid Cheshire Line but help will be needed to check routes & directions, so if you know any good walks connected to our stations or you would be prepared to check out paths/routes once available - please get in touch.

Mid Cheshire Line real ale & excellent food

If you know any good pubs, restaurants, cafes that you can get to easily from our line please let me know (ones you have used recently) - it would be good to compile an eating & drinking guide centred on the line. Menu info would be good too sorry no expenses paid!!

Days out on the Mid Cheshire Line

If you have favourite days out using our line to get there, please let me know - info re the attraction, the train times suggested & the itinerary for a perfect Mid Cheshire train day out would be appreciated.

Thank You! Sally

DECEMBER TIMETABLE

The new National rail timetable begins on Sunday 13th December and ends on Saturday 22nd May. The new pocket timetable for the mid-Cheshire line (guide 17) is enclosed with this newsletter. Basically the timetable is reverting to the one, which applied in the summer, with trains leaving Chester four minutes later on Monday to Saturday, generally at 07 minutes past each hour. Departure times from Manchester Piccadilly are generally unchanged (the 21.17 SO from Piccadilly departs at 21.16 until 30th January). The first Sunday train from Chester departs eight minutes earlier at 08.58 so that a connection from Liverpool

Central via the Merseyrail Wirral line is no longer possible (the first train from Liverpool Central arrives into Chester at 08.56, too late for an official connection). The other Sunday trains will now leave Chester at 07 minutes past the odd hours. The connecting trains from Manchester Piccadilly into the evening peak trains, which start from Stockport, are still shown as the 16.43 and 17.43 from Piccadilly (Liverpool-Norwich services from platform 13). I would personally recommend the 16.38 Piccadilly-Alderley Edge and 17.38 Piccadilly-Crewe trains as being better options because they go from the main station at Piccadilly and use platform 1 at Stockport (the Norwich trains use platform 0). Also the 16.38 and 17.38 are more likely to be punctual as they start from Piccadilly.

NETWORK RAIL STATIONS SURVEY

Members may not have heard of an online survey, which Network Rail is currently carrying out to seek passenger views on stations. The survey, which can be found at: www.networkrail.co.uk/actionstations, enables you to provide comments about two stations which you use on a regular or occasional basis. Issues which members may wish to highlight in their responses (if you haven't already done so) include the need for real-time train running information at every station, passenger help points, CCTV surveillance, enhanced security in station car parks and the need to raise platform heights (e.g. at Northwich). You may also wish to comment on whether you regard the provision of information at Manchester Piccadilly and Chester stations as adequate.

REAL TIME TRAIN RUNNING INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

Members may not be aware that real time train running information is available on the home page of the National Rail website www.nationalrail.co.uk. The relevant box is halfway down the right-hand side of the page under "Live Departures". All you need to do is to enter the station name or three-letter short code and press "Search" and you will receive information on how the next few trains are running (assuming that they have left their starting point).

STOCKPORT STATION AMONGST THE 10 WORST IN BRITAIN

Stockport station has been named amongst the ten worst Category B stations in the country. Car parking and other facilities at the station are to be improved as part of a £50 million funding package for the ten stations, which was recently announced by Transport Secretary Lord Adonis. Manchester Victoria station was voted the worst of the ten.

FARES NEWS

The cost of annual 16-25, Family and Senior Railcards went up to £26 in May. The Disabled Persons Railcard remains at £18 a year. Railcard holders can use a discounted Off-Peak Return ticket (formerly known as a Saver ticket) on any Virgin train (there are no time restrictions on Off-Peak Return fares if you have a Railcard). However Virgin Trains will be amending the restrictions on the use of Off-Peak Return tickets by non-railcard holders on Monday to Friday from 2nd January. Currently Off-Peak returns cannot be used on trains arriving into Euston until 10.55 on Monday to Friday. This becomes 11.30 from 2nd January and departures from Euston will not be allowed before 09.25 (currently 09.05) or between 15.01 and 18.45 (currently between 15.15 and 18.31). Off-Peak Day returns and Duos on the mid-Cheshire line are now valid from 09.00 instead of 09.30 on Monday to Friday (this does not include fares to Liverpool via Chester, which are priced by Merseyrail, or journeys wholly within the GMPTE area). The **Wayfarer** ticket has increased in price to £5 for concessions, £10 for adults and £20 for groups. There has been no change to the area covered by the ticket, which can be purchased from staffed rail stations and from the Northwich bus kiosk. There is a National rail fare increase from 2nd January. Northern unregulated fares (e.g. Off-Peak Day Returns) increase by 0.35%. Northern regulated fares (e.g. singles and season tickets)

go down by 0.4% (because of the link with the Retail Price Index). Virgin unregulated fares go up by an average of 2.8% (although some by 6%). Virgin regulated fares (e.g. Off-Peak Returns) go down by 0.4% but see above for changes to their availability on Monday to Friday (there are no restrictions at weekends).

NEWS FROM THE LINE

Altrincham station footbridge had reopened by 13th November following its lengthy 7-week partial closure for the replacement of the steps to and from platform 1. Work on the booking office has over-run by two weeks but Northern still plans to re-open the office in December. In the meantime tickets are being sold from the office on platform 4 until 16.45 each day. A partition will still be installed in the booking hall as phase 2 of the work. Enhanced CCTV is now in operation covering the whole of Altrincham station and the bus station. This is monitored in the booking office and at 2 Piccadilly Place, the headquarters of GMPTE. Northern installed a “hump” on the platform at Harrington in Cumbria as a low cost means of raising the platform height and there are plans to install a similar hump on the Manchester-bound platform at **Northwich**. MCRUA lobbied for the steps leading down to the booking office at **Knutsford** to be reopened as soon as possible after their recent lengthy closure for refurbishment. On 5th December a well-filled special train from Holyhead to Lincoln organised by Compass Raitours ran via the mid-Cheshire line and Cheadle Heath with class 67 haulage. The train picked up at Chester, Delamere, Northwich, Knutsford and Altrincham. The planned 12th December Rail Blue Charters trip via the mid-Cheshire line with Deltic 55022 was cancelled due to a lack of bookings.

A PARK AND RIDE AT WINSFORD?

Former Grand Central manager Ian Yeowart is planning a new Open Access passenger operation using six-car Polaris Chinese-built hybrid diesel/electric trains and two of his proposed services would call at an upgraded Winsford station, which he is calling Winsford Parkway. Alliance Rail trading as the Great North Western Railway Company is proposing to operate a number of 125 mph services including Carlisle via Barrow-in-Furness and Winsford Parkway to London Euston, Bradford-Halifax-Rochdale-Manchester Victoria-Eccles Parkway-Newton-le-Willows Parkway-Winsford Parkway-Crewe-Tamworth-Nuneaton-Kings Langley Parkway-London Euston and Leeds-Dewsbury-Huddersfield-Guide Bridge Parkway-Stockport-Alderley Edge-Crewe-London Euston. Virgin Trains’ protection from competition expires in 2012 (when their current franchise also ends). It will be interesting to see whether Mr. Yeowart’s plans come to fruition.

GROUPSAVE ON LONDON MIDLAND

Travelling with London Midland (the operator of the Birmingham-Crewe-Winsford-Hartford-Liverpool service) can be better value for money if you are travelling in a group of friends or with family. Three or four adults can travel for the price of two on many off-peak services. Also up to four children can travel with the group for just £1 each (under 5s go free). The GroupSave discount is available on Off-Peak Singles>Returns, Off-Peak Day Singles>Returns and Off-Peak Day Travelcards. At the moment, GroupSave tickets can only be bought at stations but we are told that they'll soon be available online.

METROLINK NEWS

The Metrolink Altrincham line did close down for the whole of August to enable the overhead line equipment to be replaced. Work was also carried out at the stations on the line to provide them with new signage in the new yellow house colour. Canopies were refurbished at Brooklands and Sale but the waiting shelter on the Manchester-bound platform at Timperley was unfortunately demolished. Serious overcrowding occurred on the 17.09 Piccadilly to Chester on the first Monday of the blockade (some passengers were unable to board at Piccadilly) because the train was only formed of a class 142 Pacer as usual. Later in the week Northern swapped this unit with the class 156 used on one of the evening peak

trains, which start from Stockport and this largely solved the problem. It was disappointing that the swap did not take place from the start of the blockade. The Metrolink Altrincham line had been due to reopen on Tuesday 1st September but did not do so despite widespread publicity to that effect. Despite the fact that it was known that the work on the overhead line was running a week late an attempt was made to run trams the following day, Wednesday 2nd September, before adequate testing had been done. A double tram brought the overhead wires down between Deansgate Junction and Navigation Road and the line then remained closed until Monday 7th September while remedial work took place. The car park at Navigation Road station has been greatly expanded and now also includes cycle stands and bike lockers. However as part of the improvement works on Metrolink stations all of the phone boxes have been removed from platforms. MCRUA lobbied to retain the phone box at Navigation Road because that was the only way that Northern passengers without a mobile phone can enquire about train running but this was to no avail. New Metrolink ticket machines are to be installed at stations outside the city centre in the spring and the ones at Navigation Road will be under the main canopy, unlike the present machines. The existing signalling is to be removed from Metrolink north of Timperley with the introduction of Line of Sight running in spring 2010. We are told that this will enable much improved passenger information at stations with the provision of accurate visual displays. Time will tell.....The full Metrolink timetable was reinstated as from Monday 2nd November with the reopening of lines in Manchester city centre. Trams have reverted to their previous timetable. Departures from Altrincham to Piccadilly on Monday to Saturday are at 05, 17, 29, 41 and 53 minutes past each hour. Departures from Altrincham to Bury are at 11, 23, 35, 47 and 59 minutes past each hour. Sunday departures from Altrincham to Piccadilly are at 06.53 then at 08, 23, 38 and 53 past the hour until 10.00 and then every 12 minutes at 00, 12, 24, 36 and 48 minutes past each hour until 17.00 and then at 14, 29, 44 and 59 past each hour. The last Sunday departure from Altrincham is at 23.11. However beware that Metrolink can and does depart up to 2 minutes early. Free days were provided on Saturday 14th November and Thursday 19th November as a thank you for passengers' patience during the summer works and proved popular. Extra substations are to be provided at Bowker Vale and Whitefield to enable double tram operation on the Bury line. GMPTE plans to close Woodlands Road station and to replace it with new stations at Abraham Moss (north of Woodlands Road) and Queens Road (currently the staff halt for the depot). At least six of the new Metrolink vehicles have arrived and testing and driver training is ongoing on the Bury line. Metrolink will operate an Altrincham-Bury direct service on Boxing Day, Saturday 26th December.

FREIGHT NEWS

Brunner Mond had a successful spell using Freightliner locomotives (class 66/6s) on the Tunstead-Northwich "hoppers" in early autumn but haulage has now reverted to DB Schenker. On 21st October Brunner Mond announced a proposal to build a new power station at their Lostock, Northwich works, which would be fuelled by domestic refuse. Most of the 600,000 tonnes which the power station would burn each year would be brought in by rail. The power station would supply a third of Brunner Mond's energy needs and would be built on the site of a former power station within the works. Planning go-ahead was given for the **Port Salford** scheme on 17th July. This has the potential to replace the three existing rail-served container terminals in Trafford Park and thereby remove container trains from the congested section of line between Piccadilly and Castlefield Junction (Deansgate). Port Salford would be served by a new branch line off the "Chat Moss" line west of Patricroft and trains from the south would reach the terminal via Warrington Bank Quay and Earlestown.

MUSIC TRAINS ON THE MID-CHESHIRE LINE by Michael Ross

In the whole 2009 season we ran nine evening music trains between April and September and another six on the Line Day. People who came on them enjoyed themselves. The musicians were generally superb and gave us plenty of music on the trains there and back and at the pub. The service and food at the pub were excellent. There were a couple of hiccups with return trains to Chester due in both cases to problems on

the line at Stockport. Staff on trains were always positive and helpful. This has been our first full summer season and it has been well received although not all trains were well attended. There were indirect benefits in giving a focus for promoting the line in the absence of a CRO. Publicity improved on 2008 but there is still scope for a good deal more. The main advances were in use of the website and in putting up posters on station notice boards - both attracted new users. We ran an intensive campaign on Cheshire FM for the Line Festival. Word of mouth and an email circulation list were also effective. My thanks to the station adopters and John and Ian Hulme for the work they did in spreading the word and to Harry Boardman and David Miller for looking after trains that ran while I was on holiday. Of the nine music trains seven were 'public' and two were 'private'. Of the publicly advertised trains five were from Chester to Plumley. One of these was linked to Chester Folk Festival and one to Chester Summer Music Festival. Overall the Chester trains worked well although one did not. The two publicly advertised trains from Manchester were not very successful. We developed our links with Alexander's Jazz bar in Chester who had two 'private' trains, which were a success.

The Music Trains have provided a focus for developing publicity for the Line. They have attracted people onto the trains who would not have otherwise used them. There is significant potential for further marketing, especially if they run every month from Chester between April and September. Marketing could make more use of the Visit Chester and Cheshire publications and website; develop more local poster locations; and feed into parish and community group newsletters. For next year we already have two suggestions. One is for another Chester Folk Festival train in April from Chester to Plumley. The other, from Alexander's Music bar in Chester, is for an Altrincham to Chester train linked by pre-arranged taxis to Alexander's. It looks as though Manchester to Plumley trains are not really worthwhile given the timing of the trains and the competition from other longer established folk trains out of Manchester (the train has to be the 18:17 from Piccadilly which is a busy commuter train). Instead we could develop the proposal from Alexander's for a train to Chester from Altrincham (which would still be 'do-able' from Piccadilly but without music until Altrincham). Running to Plumley only from Chester would mean we would have a standard pattern of a train each month, which will help with publicity (there was evidence that momentum started to build up over the season but was disrupted by the gaps in May and July when the trains ran from Manchester). At its meeting on 25 November the CRP agreed that a programme of six Chester-Plumley Music Trains and at least one Altrincham-Chester Music Train be arranged for 2010. *If anyone wishes to be added to the circulation list for emails about Music Trains and other Line Events please email musictrains@midcheshirerail.org.uk*

LOCAL RAIL NEWS

Chassen Road station (between Urmston and Flixton) is currently unstaffed due to the booking office having been destroyed by fire in March. GMPTE and Northern have confirmed that they do plan to reinstate staff at this station. Three ATW North Wales/Chester-Manchester Piccadilly trains will be extended to and from Manchester Airport from the December 2009 timetable change. Northern is installing CCTV inside its class 158s, 323s and 333s only between December 2009 and the middle of 2010. The original plan to install cameras in its entire fleet of trains has been scaled back on cost grounds. The line from Manchester to Liverpool via Newton-le-Willows is to be electrified by 2013. This includes the sections of line from Manchester Victoria to Edge Hill (Liverpool) and also Castlefield Junction (Deansgate) to Ordsall Lane Junction. Manchester Airport-Scotland services will be diverted via Eccles and Parkside Junction to join the West Coast main line at Golborne Junction south of Wigan. These services will be converted to electric operation enabling the existing class 185 diesel trains currently used on the service to be used to strengthen other Trans-Pennine Express services. There is a proposal by the Department for Transport that a new micro-franchise may operate the Manchester Airport-Scotland services from 2013. The Helpline phone number for Manchester Piccadilly station, 0845 00 00 033, is no longer available and the only public phone number for Network Rail is now the National Helpline 08457 11 41 41.

FORTHCOMING SPECIAL TRAINS

As many members will know, Past Time Rail unfortunately went out of business on 4th June 2009 but the good news is that the Railway Touring Company has revived the steam-hauled *Cotton Mill Express* for 2010. The train now starts at Lancaster but then travels to its main pick-up point of Manchester Victoria before doing the familiar circuit via Stalybridge, Huddersfield, Brighouse, Copy Pit, Blackburn (water stop) and back to Manchester Victoria before returning to Lancaster. The first date in 2010 is Saturday 30th January and details can be found at www.railwaytouring.co.uk/index.php/the-cotton-mill-express---300110.html or by ringing 01553 661500. Compass Tours run a regular programme of rail excursions from the North West. For a brochure please call 0151-722-1147. Spitfire Railtours also has a regular programme and they can be reached on 0870 879 3675.

SE RAILWAY ASSOCIATION PROGRAMME

This railway enthusiast group continues to meet at the Gladstone Club, just off Station Road, Northwich, which is around 5 minute's walk from Northwich station. Meetings are open to non-members and start at 7.45 prompt.

Tuesday 12th January. Karl Jauncey and Dave Richards: PSOV (Preserved Steam on Video) Main Line Steam 2009.

Tuesday 9th February. Colin White, B & R Video: Archive cine films from the 50s and 60s.

Tuesday 9th March. Stephen Gay: "Picture Postcard Railway Rambles".

Tuesday 13th April. Chris Banks: "Engine Sheds Part 1".

Tuesday 11th May. David Bathurst: "The Chasewater Railway 50 Years On".

ALTRINCHAM WINTER LECTURE SERIES

The Altrincham Electric Railway Preservation Society is again holding its annual winter lecture series at Altrincham Methodist Church, around 5 minutes' walk from Altrincham station in the direction of Manchester (the church is on the corner of Barrington Road and Woodlands Road). Lectures start at 7.30pm and admission is £3 (free for AERPS members). The admission charge includes tea/coffee and biscuits during the interval. The remaining programme is:

Friday 8th January. "The Great Orme Tramway" by Mike Crabtree.

Friday 12th February. "The Manchester Ship Canal Railways" by Dr Michael Bailey.

Friday 12th March. "The North Staffordshire Railway in the LMS Era" by Basil Jeuda.

Friday 9th April "From the Adriatic to the Danube". A view of the current scene by John Myddelton.

STEPHENSON LOCOMOTIVE SOCIETY PROGRAMME

The North Area of the SLS continues to meet at the Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester (on the other side of the Central Library from St Peters Square Metrolink station). Non-members are welcome at the meetings, which begin at 2pm on Saturdays. The forthcoming programme is:

Saturday 16th January. Area AGM followed by Allan Brackenbury: "Unfinished Railways".

Saturday 27th February. Joe Lloyd: "Beyer Peacock and their Locomotives".

Saturday 20th March. Peter Jordan: "The Darjeeling Himalaya Railway".

Further details can be obtained from the Meetings Secretary Mike Blease on 0161-928 2461 or by email at blease@mighty-micro.co.uk.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

The following people have joined since the last issue of the newsletter and we welcome them to the association:

Mrs. D.P Jolley, Bromborough.
K. P. Jobbins, Crewe.
Mrs.M. L. A.Davies, Hale.
Mr. and Mrs. J.A. Race, Plumley.
Mrs. J.R. Perry, Over Peover.
Mrs. V. Laws, Timperley.
A.R. Dobell, Peover Heath.
I. H. M. Patterson, Knutsford.
K. J. Parkins, Tranmere Hall.
M. McEwan, Timperley.
M. S. Williams, Blacon, Chester.

B. Harvey, Frodsham.
K. Radford, Altrincham
R. Watson, Middlewich.
I.P. Frank, Northwich.
R. A. & J. Dale, Hale
Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Grimwood, Cheadle Hulme
D. Evans, Kelsall
C. A. Histon, Bowdon, Altrincham.
D. Pratt, Winsford
M. A. Kerr, Bowdon, Altrincham.
Mr. and Mrs. N. D. Lomas, Wilmslow.

Longstanding member **Doug Darby** of Sale died at the age of 94 on 15th July. Long-time member **Christopher Bourner** from Reddish Vale, who came with his wife on many MCRUA special trains, sadly died on 30th July.

MID-CHESHIRE LINE PEOPLE

We welcome **Chris Ingham** as the new Northern Rail Line Manager for the mid-Cheshire line in place of **Stephen Bradley**, who has been promoted within the organisation. Chris is based at Manchester Oxford Road station and covers all stations on the mid-Cheshire line between Navigation Road and Mouldsworth (inclusive). **Sally Buttifant** started as the new Community Rail Officer for the mid-Cheshire line on 1st October and we welcome her to the job. Former railwayman **Nick Lavitt** very sadly died around July this year. Nick was a signaller at Hale before becoming a booking clerk, working at Knutsford, Hale, Altrincham and Wilmslow stations (among others). He was a good friend of MCRUA and often supplied us with leaflets. He also produced a leaflet of his own to promote the GM Evening Ranger ticket and he campaigned on local bus issues, helping to secure a return of evening and Sunday services on the 263 route between Altrincham and Manchester. It is thanks to Nick that Altrincham station booking office sells Metrolink tickets. MCRUA Secretary **Harry Boardman** is now the Station Adopter for Greenbank.

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 0207 068 0500
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
Train Running Information - TrainTracker	0871 200 49 15
Northern Rail Customer Relations	0845 00 00 125 or 0113 234 9330
Passenger Focus (complaints appeals)	08453 022 022
GMPTE Bus, Rail and Metrolink Enquiries	0161 228 7811 (08.00 to 20.00)
Stagecoach Metrolink	0161 205 2000
Cheshire Traveline (bus and rail enquiries)	0845 140 2666 (08.00 to 20.00)
Merseyside PTE Public Transport Enquiry Line	0871 200 22 33 (08.00 to 20.00)
National Public Transport Enquiry Line	0871 200 22 33 (08.00 to 20.00)

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Email: michael.ross@mross.org.uk.

Phill Bamford Email: phillip.bamford1@ntlworld.com

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Whitley Close, Middlewich, CW10 0NQ. Tel: 01606-833404 (home), 07900-
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Hartford & Winsford Sub-Committee. Please contact David Miller (for contact
details see above).

MID-CHESHIRE COMMUNITY RAIL OFFICER – Sally Buttifant (for contact details see page 3)

FRIENDS OF ALTRINCHAM INTERCHANGE – Please contact Andrew Macfarlane (see above for
contact details).

Membership of the association costs £2 for younger persons (under 21), £6 for individuals, £8 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

12/09