

MID CHESHIRE RAIL REPORT

No. 106

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ISSUED FREE

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 and find us on Facebook by searching for Mid Cheshire Line or by clicking on the link - <https://www.facebook.com/#!/beterrailservicesmidcheshireline?fref=ts>.

PLEASE COME TO OUR PUBLIC MEETING IN KNUTSFORD

MCRUA is holding a public meeting at the Jubilee Room in Knutsford on the evening of Thursday 24th October, starting at 8pm. The speaker will be Chris Jackson, Northern's Regional Director for Central and West Region. The Jubilee Room is a short walk from Knutsford station on Stanley Road (the postcode is WA16 0GP). From the bridge exit from the station you turn right along the busy A50 Toft Road, then cross the road at the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then turn left, continue along Toft Road back towards the station and the turn right into Stanley Road. The Jubilee Room is a short distance down Stanley Road on the right-hand side.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS by John Oates

We are pleased to provide our latest "Rail Report". This would normally coincide with the beginning of the Autumn "Leaf Fall" Mid Cheshire Line timetable. However, since the "temporary" timetable was introduced in May 2018, this remains in place and does not allow for an extra few minutes to be added due to the very tight timetabling on the three single line sections along the line.

You'll see above we have a **Public Meeting in Knutsford** coming up on Thursday 24 October at 8pm. We're delighted that Northern's Regional Director for Central and West Regions, Chris Jackson is coming to speak to us. His intention is to speak for around half an hour, then to take questions. Do please come along if you can – there's lots to discuss.

In our last issue I mentioned about the Community Rail Partnership's (CRP's) new quarterly publication, "**Along Mid Cheshire Lines**". We were delighted that this flew off the racks far faster than expected, so much so that Issue 2 was quickly approved by the CRP. You may have seen it. Entitled "Delightful Delamere" it covers not just Delamere and Mouldsworth, but also the implementation of **Penalty Fares** along the Mid Cheshire Line, the refurbished original bench at Mouldsworth, ticketing options and more. Copies are available at staffed stations along the line. As with the previous issue, it's been produced by CRP volunteers Chris Poole and John Hulme. It looks very professional. We're delighted with it.

Performance on our **Crewe-Liverpool line** has declined with the timetable improvements that came in last May. London Northwestern (LN) have been suffering from driver shortages. The service has also been suffering from being extended to/from London Euston from Birmingham New Street due to disruptions along the southern section of the West Coast Main Line. Nevertheless, the timetable is still a lot better than before last May, so hopefully LN will get on top of these problems shortly.

Performance on The Mid Cheshire Line should have improved after Network Rail spent over £800,000 in June and July removing the “Temporary” Speed Restrictions (TSRs) between Ashley and Hale, known as **The Bleeding Wolf restrictions** (named after the pub that was nearby until around 25 years ago – it’s now apartments). I put “Temporary” as these restrictions have been in place since around 2005. The line speed has now been returned to the 60mph that was previously in place saving our trains 2-3 minutes and freight trains around 5 minutes.

However, despite Network Rail’s work, Northern’s own and other troubles have conspired against the expected improvement, the **Mid Cheshire Line Performance** Moving Annual Average (MAA) now being the worst, we think, since before 1998. Northern have been suffering from driver shortages as mentioned in our previous issue. Indeed in the 4 week period to 17 August to line suffered at least 48 performance failures due to driver/staff shortages, the **worst we can remember**. More recently, and again as mentioned previously, Network Rail are struggling to make the signalling reliable around Delamere and Mouldsworth. These problems have been continuing for over 6 months.

The figures for those interested for the 4 week period to 14 September, Period 6 are a Public Performance Measure (PPM) of 81.11% and an MAA of 76.17% - the target is 92.2% and the best achieved along the line was in 2011 at 91.57%. The MAA was 77.09% when I last wrote about this in May. A long way off the reliability we expect, this unreliability dismayed passengers who are getting to/from work/college/school/childminders/home late and missing connections at Chester, Stockport and Piccadilly.

Mid Cheshire’s December 2017 Promised “Two Trains an Hour” Service still appears no nearer to being delivered. We are still awaiting for the Department for Transport to come up with what it’s going to do about better connecting Mid Cheshire by rail in the way it was prior to 1990. Lots of fine words being spoken (and some not so fine), but no light that we can see at the end of this long tunnel. Mid Cheshire is still stuck with a far worse service than prior to 1990, and with Knutsford the only station in Great Britain with a footfall of over 500,000 to only have a daytime hourly service, two hourly on Sundays.

The **Marvellous Days Out touring exhibition** is now at the **Crewe Heritage Centre** and has been so successful the CRP is preparing a further exhibition such that it can be in two places at once. Virgin at Stockport want it back where it drew lots of interest this summer and other venues want it, too. A great way to promote the Mid Cheshire Line and the wonderful attractions we have. The Crewe Heritage Centre has also kindly agreed to sell **CRP posters, postcards, etc.** by post from its own website - <https://crewehc.org/product-category/mid-cheshire-line-posters-and-postcards> (They are also available from the existing outlets as well – Chester Visitor Centre, Chester Zoo, Lion Salt Works, Northwich Information Centre, Knutsford Heritage Centre and the Stockport Information Centre at the Staircase House Museum). We’re delighted. Please have a look and tell your friends for Christmas presents! Many thanks are due to our member, Mike Lenz, who manages the Centre as well as to Michael Ross, our member and CRP volunteer who as well as running the Music Trains programme, managed the complicated move of the stock to Crewe in conjunction with our friends at Northwich Town Council.

At the **CRP** meeting in mid-September it was agreed the CRP would set up a **Community Interest Company (CIC)** to take over as “Accountable Body” from Cheshire West & Chester Council. The plan is to establish this during October. Agreement was also given to recruit a **replacement Community Rail Officer (CRO)** once the CIC is established. The CRP has been without a CRO since 1 February – it’s a tribute to the large number of dedicated active volunteers along the line that so much has still been achieved without a CRO. It was also agreed the new CRO position would be a **5-day a week post** (it was 4 days previously) as the CRP has recently heard that from 8 December it will also be receiving monies from the new West Coast Partnership.

I was invited to **Northern's Community Rail Conference** on 9 September in Leeds. David Brown, Northern's Managing Director gave a presentation, discussing not just the new trains (which we're not getting) and new timetables (are we getting them?), but also concentrating on getting the "**day to day**" **job** delivered well. I had a number of questions for him, but time conspired against there being a question and answer session. Afterwards I discussed in outline the questions I had with David. We agreed I'd write to him with my questions. I've done this, the subjects covered including Train Running Performance, Penalty Fares / Promise to Pay (P2P) Vouchers, the franchise commitment to upgrade and provide new Customer Information Screens at Stations, Tickets not sold by our Ticket Vending Machines and the complicated process for those that are, as well as the Continuing Saga over the lack of facilities at Greenbank Station, a station with a footfall of over 200,000. Our intention is to publish my letter with David's reply in our forthcoming December issue.

We were very pleased a few months ago when **Morris Homes**, who have a development at **Bridgewater Park at Winnington Village, Northwich** asked if they could use several of the Marvellous Days Out posters in their "Anderton" show house which overlooks the River Weaver. Of course, the CRP agreed and are very proud that the posters are now being used in this way. This provides another way that our Line is being marketed to our local communities.

If you check out the Chester-bound platform of **Greenbank** railway station you will notice a **Garden of Peace and Reflection** to those lost in wars and conflicts. This was dedicated by Rev Dimitri Aldridge, the minister of Christ Church, Greenbank, on Friday 27th September with the Mayor of Northwich in attendance. Well done to the Friends of Greenbank Station who have brought this garden back to life after many years of dereliction.

In September, Richard Stead of BBC Radio Manchester contacted me as MCRUA Chairman. We had an interesting discussion about rail in the North West. I was pleasantly surprised at how much he knew about it. This led to an invitation for me to visit him in Salford Quays where he interviewed me on a variety of topics. I won't spoil it by saying which at this stage – Richard said there could be enough material there for 3-4 items. The first came out in the last week of September – you can hear it by clicking on this link - <http://www.mcrua.org.uk/files/rail.mp3>

Lastly, the **historic clock at Northwich Station** has been mended after 4½ years and following Chris Jackson intervening. Many thanks, Chris. This made the front page of the *Northwich Guardian* - <https://www.northwichguardian.co.uk/news/17893333.landmark-clock-back-historic-best/> We're delighted, as no doubt are our Northwich users where it's been 23 minutes past 11 for years.

It may be the end of summer, but there's plenty to do this autumn, whether it's taking advantage of London Northwestern's very good value advance purchase fares from Acton Bridge, Hartford and Winsford, or using Mid Cheshire Line trains for Autumn Walks or trips to nearby towns and cities. We look forward to seeing you riding our trains.

MID CHESHIRE & MIDDLEWICH RAIL STUDY UPDATE by Simon Barber and Stephen Dent

Regular readers may remember that a formal study has been under way into the long-hoped for re-opening to passenger services of the Mid Cheshire Rail Link, also known as the Middlewich Line. This was commissioned jointly by the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council to assess the options for re-opening the line with two new stations at Middlewich and Gadbrook Park. It also looked, in less detail, at the proposal to complete the Manchester Airport Western Link – the three mile proposed railway which would link the existing Manchester Airport station to a junction near Mobberley on the Mid Cheshire Line.

Why are these so important? Middlewich is the largest community in Cheshire without a railway station. Gadbrook Park is the fast-growing business park at Rudheath, south of Northwich, which needs better access and is adjacent to the railway. The study forecasts that both stations would have more than 140,000 users per annum – big numbers. Re-opening the line to passengers with these two new stations will link these places and the other towns on the Mid Cheshire line directly with Crewe and Sandbach. In the other direction trains could run through to Altrincham or Manchester, depending on availability of train paths, or even to Warrington and Preston. The Manchester Airport Western Link would link the Mid Cheshire towns with the Airport and it would also give a much faster route to Manchester than the current route via Stockport. Of course the existing route will continue to be served too. Chester and North Wales would also get much shorter journeys to the Airport by using this link than their existing indirect services.

The campaign to re-open the Middlewich line has been under way for many years and the commissioning of this study was a big moment. The report from the consultants WSP is now published and available on the LEP's website at: <http://www.871candwep.co.uk/latest-news/initial-findings-of-the-mid-cheshire-and-middlewich-rail-study-now-available/>. You'll find a summary there and two very lengthy supporting documents. As the saying goes, MCRUA has read all these so that you don't have to! It is a pleasure to report that the conclusions are all positive. It looks as if there will be a good business case for the re-opening. Both the new stations look viable and even the Airport Western Link, on which less work has been done, looks sufficiently promising for work to continue on this too.

This is not the end of the process. Even re-opening a railway line that is actually still in use (for freight) is neither quick nor easy. The work done so far is simply the initial assessment. But this is bigger than it sounds; a lot of thorough and wide-ranging work has been done. The work has investigated not just the line to be re-opened, but also the interactions with other lines nearby; the economic prospects for the district; the plans for HS2; the strategic transport plans of nearby authorities and of Transport for the North; possible station sites and train service options. The outcome is sufficiently positive that work has already started on the next stage, developing the business cases, and the aim now is to do two of these – for the Mid Cheshire Rail Link and for the Manchester Airport Western Link – for submission to the Department for Transport.

The Mid Cheshire Rail Link Campaign team and MCRUA have been involved with this work as stakeholders. In a world where the massive rail projects of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail make the headlines, we will keep attention focussed on these two Cheshire projects which have much wider benefits than just to our towns, and we'll try to find ways to get 'our' projects moving without letting the bigger projects get in the way.

AN MBE FOR SALLY, THE MID CHESHIRE LINE'S OWN AMAZING WOMAN

Earlier this year, Sally Buttifant stepped down as Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership officer, a role she held for almost ten years. She has moved to a position in Chester West and Chester Council's Housing Strategy Team, where she is working to support people at risk of becoming homeless. In recognition of her services to the railway and community, Sally was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June. Sally's considerable legacy includes securing promises of extra services on the Mid Cheshire Line, working with the Samaritans to boost support for people following incidents on the railway, and bringing together projects such as *Marvellous Days Out – The Mid Cheshire Line* and *Discover Amazing Women by Rail*. Sally said: "I really have loved every minute of my time in community rail. I've had the opportunity to make such a difference and take forward great projects, while working with the most brilliant people, many of them volunteers. I'm very proud to have been a part of it".

BUYING YOUR TICKET; A BRIEF GUIDE by John Hulme

There are now ticket machines at all stations along the Line (except Lostock Gralam and Mobberley). They will issue most types of ticket, and accept payment by debit or credit card. They can also issue a 'Promise to Pay Notice' (which can later be used to verify at which station you joined the train) if the type of ticket you want is unavailable, or if you want to pay for your ticket using cash. If you have a Promise to Pay Notice (or if you get on at Lostock Gralam or Mobberley) then you can buy any ticket you need from the conductor. Otherwise, if you do not have a ticket, the conductor can only sell you a full price single ticket for your journey. Since the introduction of Penalty Fares on the Line on 30th June, teams of ticket inspectors now visit trains and stations at random, and may check any ticket, right up to the point at which a passenger leaves the train. If you do not have a ticket, or a Promise to Pay Notice, then you are liable to pay a Penalty Fare of £20 or twice the full single fare to the next station, whichever is the greater. Inspectors have some discretion (for example if mobility problems make it difficult for you to access a ticket machine or, of course, if there is no booking office open, or no working ticket machine, on the station at which you boarded the train).

BUSES REPLACE LATE EVENING TRAINS IN LATE OCTOBER AND EARLY DECEMBER

Due to planned engineering work from Monday 28th October to Thursday 31st October (inclusive) and from Monday 9th December to Thursday 12th December (inclusive) the 23.41 Piccadilly to Chester and 22.52 Chester to Piccadilly trains are replaced by buses. There are two buses replacing each train. A bus runs from Piccadilly to Chester, setting down only from Knutsford onwards and another bus runs from Knutsford to Chester calling at or near all stations. Similarly a bus runs from Chester to Piccadilly, setting down only from Knutsford onwards whilst an earlier bus runs from Knutsford to Piccadilly calling at or near all stations. The actual bus times can be found in the Journey Planner on the National Rail website or by ringing National Rail Enquiries on 0345 48 49 50.

CHANGE OF BUS STOPPING POINT AT LOSTOCK GRALAM

There has been a change to the calling point for rail replacement buses at Lostock Gralam. It is now at the bus stops on either side of the main road at the Slow & Easy pub.

METROLINK NEWS by Andrew Macfarlane

Contactless payment began on Metrolink on Monday 15th July. You can scan your bank card at the reader (the yellow hoods on poles on each platform) before boarding the tram and after you leave the tram (not at interchange points) and the system calculates the fare for your journey and debits your account overnight. Those with Greater Manchester National Concessionary Travel Passes need to be careful not to carry their bank cards in the same wallet as their pass because otherwise the system will debit your bank card when you scan your pass at the reader. The points which take trams into platform 1 at Altrincham (points 605) have finally been repaired by Network Rail but a 5mph speed restriction remains on the track in platform 2 due to its condition. The new extension from Pomona to the Trafford Centre is due to open at some stage in 2020. 27 new trams are to be delivered in 2020 bringing the fleet size up to 147. Once these have all been delivered it should mean that all trams on the Altrincham line will be formed of "doubles" (two trams coupled together),

NEWS FROM THE LINE by Andrew Macfarlane

As mentioned above, Penalty Fares started on the line on Sunday 30th June even though Mobberley and Lostock Gralam stations do not have ticket machines. Many stations only have ticket machines on one platform, notably Plumley, where the ticket machine is on the Chester-bound side, not the platform from which most users of the station begin their journeys. The introduction of Penalty Fares on Northern was a requirement by the Department for Transport under the new franchise to reduce ticketless travel.

Metrolink has a form of Penalty Fare but there is at least one ticket machine on every platform (except currently platform 2 at Altrincham). In the event the Carlisle-Chirk log train was not diverted via the Mid Cheshire Line during the Acton Grange blockade in late July/early August but there was a steam-hauled empty coaching stock train which travelled via the Mid Cheshire Line in each direction from Carnforth to Chester and return (outward on 2nd August and return on 3rd August) in connection with a special train from Chester to Blaenau Ffestiniog to mark the reopening of the Conwy Valley line. The locomotives were class 8F 48151 (once a Northwich-based engine) and "Jubilee" 45690 *Leander*. The contract between Northern and Bike & Go has ended and the bikes will be removed from stations (they have already gone from Knutsford). The scheme never really took off and was regarded by many as an over-complicated way of hiring a bike.

A MISTAKE IN THE POCKET TIMETABLE

There is a mistake in the current printed timetable guide 17 for the Mid Cheshire Line. The train shown as leaving Manchester Piccadilly at 16.41 on Monday to Saturday in fact departs two minutes earlier at 16.39 on Monday to Friday (16.41 on Saturdays). Northern have corrected the version of the timetable on their website.

FARES NEWS

If you are booking through to Sale from the Mid Cheshire Line you need a ticket to Metrolink Zones 3 and 4. Sale is in Zone 3 and Altrincham is in Zone 4. Conductors and ticket offices on the line should be able to sell these tickets. A new national railcard, the 16-17 Saver, has been introduced. It provides half-price travel for 16 and 17 year olds at all times (including season tickets). It is accepted by all Train Operating Companies except Scotrail. The national rail fare increase in January 2020 for regulated rail fares will be 2.8%.

TRANSPORT FOR WALES CLUB 50 OFFER by Andrew Macfarlane

This new ticket offer started on 2nd September for outward travel until 24th November for anyone aged 50 or over. The fare is £29 return to anywhere on the Transport for Wales rail network using their services only. It is not available before 09.30 on Monday to Friday and the ticket cannot be used to travel to or from Cardiff on Saturday 30th November due to a rugby match that day (Wales v the Barbarians). Return travel can be up to 8 days after the date of outward travel (the day of outward travel is the first day of the eight). The ticket can be purchased from any ticket office on the day of travel but there are no discounts for railcard holders or any add-ons using the services of other Train Operating Companies. More details are at <https://tfwrail.wales/club50>.

A CHANGE TO GREATER MANCHESTER CONCESSIONARY PASSES

From next year, TfGM is introducing a £10 annual charge for National Concessionary Travel Pass holders (except the Disability ones) if they wish to use tram and train services in Greater Manchester after 09.30. Bus use will remain free. The details of how the payment will be made have yet to be announced.

DECEMBER 2019 TIMETABLE

We had hoped that the Sunday service on the Mid Cheshire Line would become hourly from December this year but Northern have informed us that this will not be happening.

PETITION CALLING FOR INTRODUCTION OF TWO TRAINS PER HOUR BETWEEN MANCHESTER AND GREENBANK

A gentleman called Peter Myers has started an online petition calling for the introduction of two trains per hour between Manchester and Greenbank. MCRUA supports this petition, which can be found at: <https://www.change.org/p/arriva-rail-north-introduce-additional-greenbank-northwich-knutford-altrincham-to-manchester-trains-asap>.

NEW WEST COAST PARTNERSHIP FRANCHISE

A consortium of First Group and Trenitalia UK (a company owned by the Italian government) is to take over the InterCity West Coast franchise on a 70:30 basis as from 8th December 2019. Virgin Trains has operated the franchise since it was privatised in 1997. Stagecoach/Virgin has begun legal proceedings over being disqualified from bidding for the franchise but we understand that the first court hearing into this is not until January. First Trenitalia will be retaining and refurbishing the 56 Pendolino trains but the existing Voyager trains are to be replaced by new trains.

EAST MIDLANDS RAILWAY FRANCHISE

Abellio (Netherlands Railways) took over what is now called “East Midlands Railway” as from Sunday 18th August 2019. They have announced that the Liverpool-Norwich service is to be split at Nottingham from the December 2021 timetable change. A new hourly Liverpool-Nottingham service will begin from that date, operated by First Transpennine Express. What is currently the East Midlands Railway Liverpool-Norwich service will become a Matlock-Norwich service via Derby and Nottingham. It is a shame to lose such a longstanding through service but the split should improve the performance of the Liverpool-Nottingham leg.

LOCAL RAIL NEWS by Andrew Macfarlane

Now that trains from Acton Bridge, Hartford and Winsford run through to London Euston via Birmingham, it means that there is a through service from those stations to Birmingham International station for the National Exhibition Centre and Birmingham Airport without needing to change trains in Birmingham. Northern are to keep their 17 class 323 electric trains, which will be joined from 2021 by the class 323s currently operating in the West Midlands. The former Thameslink class 319 electric trains will be returned to the train leasing company. One class 142 Pacer train, no. 142005, has so far been withdrawn by Northern this year (on Monday 12th August). All of the class 142s are supposed to be withdrawn from service by the end of December this year. It remains to be seen if this is achieved.

MUSIC TRAINS ON THE MID CHESHIRE LINE 2019 by Michael Ross

Time Bandits brought the 2019 Music Train programme to a conclusion on 2 October. Lively instrumentals from six musicians with a variety of instruments - and songs led by Katrina Turner. It was an excellent end to a very successful season and, fittingly, the last train was a ‘bus seat’ Pacer (the best layout for music, though the noisiest ride). By next year the Pacers should have gone and we can expect a quieter and smoother ride on modernised 150s all the time...

This year we ran seventeen Music Trains between April and October, with a total audience of over 500 and an average audience of 30. Seven Music Trains were for groups (Hale’s St Peter’s Church, Chester Contact the Elderly, the Grosvenor Society, Hale and Chester U3As and Norley WI) and ten were advertised to everyone. We had a new venue – The Angel at Knutsford to add to our regular venues of the Railway Inn at Mobberley, the Golden Pheasant at Plumley and Alexanders in Chester.

Music Trains are publicised through the website, notices at stations and a mailing list of over 200 names. Passenger numbers were up on 2018. Estimated passenger revenue is also up – it is about 2.5 times the cost to the CRP. Actual revenue will have been increased by the introduction of ticket machines, which have definitely made a difference to the number of tickets bought before boarding.

Music Trains are arranged by MCRUA for the Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership who provided funding support. Each is hosted by a MCRUA member and offers of help would be welcomed (see my email address at the end of the newsletter). A host liaises with the conductor, the band, the venue and the passengers on the night – answers questions, publicises MCRUA and the CRP - and sorts out any problems that may arise.

ALTRINCHAM WINTER LECTURE SERIES

The Altrincham Electric Railway Preservation Society (AERPS) is again holding its annual Winter Lecture Series at Altrincham Methodist Hall on Barrington Road, which is a short walk from Altrincham station in the direction of Manchester. Lectures start at 7.30pm Admission is £3.50 (free for AERPS members) which includes refreshments (tea/coffee and biscuits) at a half-time break. The forthcoming programme is:

Friday 8th November. “Steam in the 1950s and 60s across the UK” by well-known photographer Martin Welch.

Friday 13th December. “Steam across South Africa in 1973 Part 1” by John Sloane.

Friday 10th January 2020. “Locomotive Sheds of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway” by Noel Coates.

STEPHENSON LOCOMOTIVE SOCIETY PROGRAMME

The Stephenson Locomotive Society continues to meet at the Friends’ Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, very near St Peter’s Square Metrolink station. Meetings are generally on Saturdays at 2pm and visitors are welcome. There is a voluntary collection towards the cost of the room hire. The forthcoming programme is:

Saturday 2nd November. “Rebuilding the Welsh Highland Railway” by Geoff Stocker.

Saturday 7th December (at Sale United Reformed Church Lounge, Montague Road, Sale M33 3BU, a short walk from Sale Metrolink station). “Memories of the Woodhead Line” by Owen Russell.

Saturday 25th January. Centre AGM (brief) followed by “21st Century Signalling Control Centre – The Manchester Rail Operations Centre” by Christian Wyatt.

8E RAILWAY ASSOCIATION PROGRAMME

The 8E Railway Association continues to meet at the Gladstone Club, Station Road, Northwich CW9 5RB, which is a short walk from Northwich station in the direction of the town centre. Meetings take place on the second Tuesday of the month and start at 7.45pm. Admission for first-time guests is free. The subsequent meeting entrance fee is £3 for non-members. There is a fully-licensed bar and free sandwiches are provided at the half-time break. The forthcoming programme is:

Tuesday 12th November: “Cornwall (Part 2)” by Stephen Gay.

Tuesday 10th December: “The Story of the Crewe Heritage Centre” by Mike Lenz.

Tuesday 14th January: AGM and Jon Penn Film Presentation.

Tuesday 11th February: “Preservation through my eyes” by Peter Dixon.

Tuesday 10th March: “American Wanderings – Heading West” by Gordon Davies.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBER

We welcome Andrew Thelwall of Northwich who has recently joined the association.

MID CHESHIRE LINE PEOPLE

We say farewell to **Aline Frantzen**, who left the position of Managing Director of Keolis Amey Metrolink in mid-October. We welcome her successor **Guillaume Chanussot** to the job.

IN MEMORIAM

We regret to report that MCRUA member Eric Povall from Sandiway died last August.

DISCLAIMER

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

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

National Rail Enquiries	03457 48 49 50 or 0207 068 0500
Virgin Trains Ticket Sales (to buy any rail ticket)	0871 977 4222 (08.00 to 22.00 every day)
London Northwestern Railway ticket sales (to buy any rail ticket)	03333110006
Northern ticket sales	0344 241 3454
British Transport Police for non-emergencies	0800 40 50 40 or text 61016.
Network Rail (to report infrastructure faults)	03457 11 41 41 or 0207 557 8000
Train Running Information - TrainTracker	03457 48 49 50 and then Option 1.
Northern Customer Services	0800 200 6060 (0700-2200)
Transport Focus (complaints appeals)	0300 123 2350
TfGM Bus, Rail and Metrolink Enquiries	0161 244 1000 (0700-2000 Mon-Fri, 0800-2000 Sat/Sun)
Metrolink Customer Services	0161 205 2000 (seven days a week)
Merseytravel Public Transport Enquiry Line	0151 236 7676 (08.00 to 20.00 every day)
National Public Transport Enquiry Line	0871 200 22 33 (07.00 to 22.00 every day)

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.nationalrail.co.uk (includes a journey planner which shows times and fares and a facility to obtain real time train running information for any station)

www.northernrailway.co.uk (includes details of forthcoming engineering work under “Travel” and then “Improvement Works”)

www.networkrail.co.uk (includes a link to download the National Rail timetable)

www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk (to buy any GB rail ticket using a credit or debit card)

www.tfgm.com (includes a Journey Planner called “MyTfGM” which shows scheduled tram times if you plan a journey involving Metrolink).

www.metrolink.co.uk (shows any current problems with the tram service and details of future engineering work)

www.traveline.info (a national public transport journey planner).

www.transportfocus.org.uk (the website of Transport Focus, the statutory body for rail and bus users).

www.railfuture.org.uk (the website of Railfuture, the independent, national, voluntary body for rail users)

traintimes.org.uk (an unofficial website which provides rail information derived from official sources in a user-friendly format).

www.uksteam.info (details of steam-hauled special trains on the main line).

www.brfares.com (lists all available fares on the National Rail network).

railwayherald.com/railtours (lists special trains (both steam and modern traction) on the main line).

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MID-CESHIRE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

Email: railofficer@midcheshirerail.org.uk

Postal address: 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port CH65 0BE **Visit:** <http://www.midcheshirerail.org.uk>

FRIENDS OF ALTRINCHAM INTERCHANGE – Please contact Andrew Macfarlane.

MCRUA is affiliated to Railfuture, the national, voluntary body for rail users.

MCRUA MEMBERSHIP There are five classes of membership of the Association:

Individual under 21 years - £2.00, Individual 21 years and over - £8.00, Family - £11.00, Voluntary body - £20.00 and Corporate - £100.00.

You can join online at www.mcrua.org.uk/membership. Alternatively, you may pay by standing order, details available from the Membership Secretary membership@mcrua.org.uk. Standing Orders are fixed price for five years from the start of the payments.

You may also pay by cheque made payable to **Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association** and sent to the **Membership Secretary, 48 Romana Square Altrincham WA14 5QB.**

You can change your mailing option by contacting the Membership Secretary at membership@mcrua.org.uk.