

# Lakes Line Bulletin

## Spring 2017

Issue No 126



News from the Line  
Strikes  
Community Rail Cumbria  
How reliable are our trains?  
The February Survey

£1



## **The Lakes Line Rail User Group is the User Group for Oxenholme Station and the Oxenholme - Windermere Line**

### **Officers**

**Chairman** Robert Talbot, 10 Sunnyside, KENDAL LA9 7DJ  
(01539 729817) e-mail: chairman@llrug.co.uk

**Vice-Chairman** Phil Wearing, 9 Thornleigh Road, KENDAL LA9 5HQ  
(01539 724767)

**Secretary** Malcolm Conway, 58 Greengate Lane, KENDAL LA9 5LL  
and Railfuture rep (01539 725995) e-mail: secretary@llrug.co.uk

**Assistant Sec.** Dick Smith, 191 Windermere Road, KENDAL LA9 5EY  
(01539 730590) e-mail: info@llrug.co.uk

**Treasurer** Ian Conway, 30 Chambers Close, KENDAL LA9 5JE  
(01539 733844) e-mail: iandkconway@tiscali.co.uk

### **Passenger Numbers Survey**

Malcolm Thompson, 7 Landsdown Close, KENDAL LA9 7SB  
(01539 727896)

### **Windermere Contact**

Jenny Borer, Wynbeck, Rayrigg Rd., WINDERMERE  
LA23 1EY (015394 44995)

### **Bulletin Editorial Team:**

Dick Smith, Robert Talbot

### **Membership Secretary**

Phil Bell, 9 Vicars Hill, KENDAL, LA9 5DA.

## **Corporate Members and Partners:**

Bowness and Windermere Chamber of Trade  
Burneside Parish Council  
Cumbria Association of Voluntary Organisations  
Cumbria County Council  
Friends of the Lake District  
Kendal Town Council  
Kirkby Lonsdale Town Council  
Lakes Parish Council  
South Lakeland District Council  
Staveley with Ings Parish Council  
Windermere Lake Cruises  
Windermere Town Council

Individual Membership costs £5 per year, Family membership £7, and Corporate membership £13. Payment by standing order is available. The Group welcomes members from outside the line's area as well as local members.

The **Lakes Line Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Lakes Line Rail User Group, but views expressed in it are those of contributors and not necessarily representative of the Group as a whole.

Information provided is published in good faith but the Group can accept no responsibility for any loss or damage arising therefrom.

## Editorial

April 1st, 2017. The day passengers can start to compare the new Northern with the old and, in our case, TransPennine Express.



Northern's MD, Alex Hynes, invited stakeholders to do when he addressed the Community Rail Conference in Manchester in November last year. He pointed out, quite reasonably, that for its first year the new franchise could only work with the resources it inherited, but from April we should expect things to improve.

Since then Alex has been appointed as MD of Scotrail, leaving an (unknown as we go to press) successor to see this promise through. So there's the invitation. Compare, contrast, and expect things to get better.

---

### The recent strikes affecting Arriva Rail North

The new Northern franchise has been in the news for the wrong reason: trouble. This piece attempts to give the background to the strikes.

For years it was compulsory for main line passenger-carrying trains in Britain to have a guard on the train, who was responsible for the safety of passengers. As stations lost their staff, the post was renamed conductor, as the job also involved selling tickets to passengers. However, the safety responsibilities remained. In recent years some commuter lines in the south east have followed London Transport's tube trains in being allowed to run with just the driver in charge of the train. To ensure safety at stations, especially when closing doors, stations on these lines have been equipped with mirrors and/or closed-circuit TV, placed by the stop board where the driver can see them. The driver uses these aids to check there is no danger to passengers from the doors closing. Thus, the railway company can reduce the running cost of the trains at the expense of investment in kit at stations. With the industry under constant pressure to reduce recurring costs, it's obviously an attractive idea.

However, one thing that became clear in early franchise days was that passengers value having railway staff visible and approachable. People complained they felt insecure and without access to information in the absence of staff. This was a big

Front cover: a Windermere-bound train approaches Plantation Bridge on the morning of 29th April 2014.

driver behind the ‘Secure Stations’ programme, which has seen huge investment in cctv and information links on stations.



The traditional role – as seen on the Mid-Norfolk Railway

As we have learnt from the publicity about strikes on Southern Railway, there is a move to extend the practice where the driver is in control of the doors, leaving the second staff member on the train to concentrate on the passengers, either checking and selling tickets, or providing information.

In Scotrail, management and unions have agreed a compromise solution: the driver opens the doors when (s)he is sure the train is at a standstill, and the guard

closes them after checking there is no danger to passengers.

However, the Department for Transport’s (DfT) Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the ‘new’ North of England franchises stated:

‘5.4.1.6 The Department requires a Franchisee who, during each Reporting Period from the first such period that commences on or after 1 January 2020 until the end of the Franchise Term, will operate a minimum of 50 per cent of all passenger train mileage under the driver’s full operational control. For the avoidance of doubt this means that the train must be fitted with the necessary equipment, the driver must be suitably trained, and all other necessary steps must have been taken to enable the train to be operated in passenger Service without the need for a second member of staff on board. This requirement does not oblige the Franchisee to reduce levels of on-train staffing, and Delivery Plan 4.1 specifies requirements regarding the continued provision of trained customer-facing staff.’

This is a clear indication of the DfT belief that operation by a driver alone is to be encouraged *in certain circumstances*. The relevant part of Delivery Plan 4.1 states:

‘ix. Planning to deploy a trained and knowledgeable member of staff to provide information and customer assistance in a prompt and civil manner, in both normal and disrupted operation on-board every train in addition to the driver, except on routes and services where:

- All passengers boarding the train, including young people and others without access to a card that allows them access to funds immediately and electronically,

will have had an opportunity to buy their ticket at the station prior to boarding, or will have such an opportunity on board the train;

- The effective collection of revenue, in particular from travel between stations other than the start and finish points of the service, will not be adversely affected;
- The characteristics of the service in question are such that the absence of a second member of staff will have no material impact on passenger perceptions of security, including anti-social behaviour; and
- All passengers on board are able to receive appropriate information about the train service.'

According to a quotation from the Rail North website in an article in 'Rail Technology Magazine' (<http://www.railtechnologymagazine.com>) Rail North has stated: "There will be a gradual introduction of DCO on parts of the Northern franchise, with the driver being responsible for all safety aspects of the train, including operating the train doors.

This will free up the second member of staff on board to focus on customer service – including by helping those with mobility impairments or other disabilities – selling and checking tickets and providing a sense of security."



Double check:  
driver and guard at  
Kendal in  
September 2016.

With this background of uncertainty about the role of the second staff member on a train the RMT announced a further strike for April 8th,

Grand National Day, and on 21st March issued another statement, beginning:

"RAIL UNION RMT confirmed further strike action by guards and driver members on Arriva Rail North as the company continues to fail to give clear guarantees on the future safety-critical role of their guards."

Although the RMT maintains that this is a strike about passengers' safety, it has been suggested another motivation is the worry that, if running a train without a second staff member on board is allowed in certain circumstances, this will be the start of a slippery slope leading to the permanent loss of the second crew member.



## Golden Spanners



It's good news for TPE – and morning and evening services to Windermere. TransPennine Express' fleet of class 185 diesels has won its 3rd Golden

Spanner as the most reliable post-privatisation diesel unit on Britain's railways. The fleet of 51 trains managed a moving annual average (MAA) of 23,052 miles per technical incident (MTIN), despite a drop from 23,600 from 2015-16. In this

context a 'technical incident' is any mechanical problem which stops a train for three minutes or more. The annual 'Golden Spanners' awards are organised by monthly magazine 'Modern Railways', with industry support from the Rail Delivery Group. Their aim is to encourage better reliability of trains, and indeed over the years the mileage between breakdowns has gone up.



Another to add for 2017?



Left:

Our regular weekday daytime combo: single car class 153 (nearest the camera) and 2-car class 156, at Windermere on 14th September last year.

Our other Lakes Line mainstays, Northern's classes 153 and 156 both showed improvements. The single car class 153 was up from 7,746 MTIN to 9,314, and the 2-car 156 from 8,877 MTIN to 10,106. These trains have, on average, a harder life than the class 185, often operating routes with frequent stops, where the accelerating, braking, and door use introduces more chances of faults than cruising steadily along.

On the West Coast Main Line TPE's class 350/4 electrics came in mid-table at 49,601 MTIN, up a creditable 75% on last year's 28,230. In part, this shows that any statistics need care. With just 10 trains in the fleet, one which suffers a series of even minor niggles will spoil the average more than in a larger group.

Of Virgin Trains' two fleets, the diesel class 221 Voyagers managed 19,108 MTIN, down from 20,002 last year. Unusually, VT's diesels beat their electric counterparts, the Pendolino fleet, which averaged 15,622 MTIN, down from 16,522 in 2015-16.

Regular users of the Cumbrian Coast line would be surprised to learn that the 'Inter City' Silver Spanner for most improved performance went to ... DRS' class 37 diesel locos + coaches providing extra capacity in the west. Even so the MTIN of 3,315 equals just 39 trips between Barrow and Carlisle. Again, the statistics need interpreting. Firstly, the most improved (98%) in this class was Greater Anglia's class 90 electric loco + coaches, but since that also won the Golden Spanner for the highest MTIN, the Silver had to go to the second placed improver. On the other hand, the DRS and Northern technicians deserve recognition for getting their 50+ year old locos to improve by 37%, and actually come close to Great Western Railway's much newer class 180 diesel units, which came into service in 2002.



Community Rail Cumbria comprises the Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) for the three designated lines in Cumbria, Cumbrian Coast Line, Furness Line and Lakes Line. The team is made up of myself, Dawn McGough, Community Rail Manager, Jim Trotman and Laurence Hilland, Community Rail Partnership Officers and Claire Bradshaw, Community Rail Assistant.

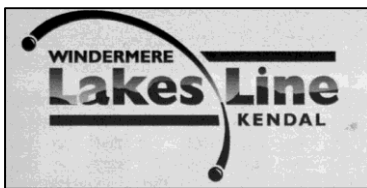
Our priority is to act as a catalyst for and contribute to the economic wellbeing and growth of all areas served by the Cumbrian railway network through the operation, services and facilities of the lines.

We are involved in a wide range of rail related matters – everything from station adoption to major scheme developments – and work closely with the train operating companies helping them to improve our local train services and provide an enjoyable passenger experience.



As you know, Northern is the train operating company providing services on all our local lines. Community Rail is high on their list of priorities with a committed obligation under the new franchise for funding and support for Community Rail Partnerships and Station Adoption Groups.

A regional management approach is emerging with Cumbria sitting in the West region together with some of Lancashire, Merseyside and North Cheshire. Part of my job is to represent the West region at the Community Rail Executive Group (ComREG) which was set up for purposes which include fostering collaboration between CRPs and the Franchisee, and providing guidance to the Franchisee in respect of its policies and plans for developing and furthering the success of CRPs.



ComREG also approves the allocation of a pot of money called Seedcorn Funding. It was with great delight that I was present when the Board approved the allocation of funding towards the Lakes Line feasibility study. The study will consider the options for a passing loop and the re-location of Burneside and Staveley stations. Work is now underway to secure match funding to ensure the full cost of the study is met and our grateful thanks go to the Lakes Line Rail User Group which has offered to make a contribution to this work.

We have a wide range of community projects on the go at the moment with the latest very seasonal one being a Santa Special train running from Maryport to Carlisle! Providing fun and cheer for disadvantaged families, this has been a superb collaboration between local councillors, Northern, DRS, the Cumbrian Coast CRP, Cumbria County Council's Children's Services team and the Rotary Club.

One of our more ambitious projects is taking place within the Discovery Centre at Millom Station. Here, a fantastic educational resource centre is being developed utilising large-scale funding from the Heritage Lottery and Copeland Community Fund. Once complete, this will enable school children from across the county and beyond to visit a bespoke facility designed to teach core curriculum subjects using rail-related activities. The project includes the creation of an exhibition-standard model railway depicting the local line, a hologram and a range of interactive visual and audio experiences. Scheduled to open in 2017 this project not only provides an exciting education programme but has also enabled job creation and secures the longer term sustainability of the Discovery Centre.



Other projects include:



- ‘The Rail Journey to Recovery’ – a collaborative venture involving Turning Point, a national charity engaged in the rehabilitation of people undergoing structured programmes to assist recovery from substance and alcohol abuse;
- Bio Diversity Schemes – working with Northern to enhance natural habitats at stations;
- Access schemes – working with Morecambe Bay Partnership to develop a pedestrian and cycle path across the Arnside viaduct;
- Station Adoption – supporting new and existing groups signposting them to sources of funding and other resources – our thanks again to colleagues in the Lakes Line Rail User Group who have formed the Friends of Lakes Line Group;
- Website review – an over haul of the three existing CRP websites which will include amazing new drone footage capturing the ease of rail travel together with outstanding Cumbrian views.



Strategically, we work closely with local authorities in developing their rail plans, locally and nationally; contributing to Section 106 planning applications and transport strategies; advising on rail consultation responses and generally encouraging a wider and more

consistent perspective about rail matters. Electrification is clearly a hot topic locally and CRC continues to press DfT for early delivery. The impact of the delays to the national electrification programme will have repercussions on the promises for the December 2017 timetables and we look forward to further dialogue with Northern on this.

More generally, CRC aims to provide a sustainable future for Community Rail in Cumbria promoting the railway as a first choice of travel and encouraging communities to take part in developing their local stations. We look forward to continuing the work already underway in and around the Lakes Line and developing new schemes and projects relevant to the area.

## **User Group News**

The Sales Stand has had a couple of very profitable outings this winter. The two days at the Kendal Model Railway Show were busier than usual. We took over £300, had lots of good conversations with members, and even signed up some new ones. The Conways and the two Phils (Bell and Wearing) then took the Stand to the Preston MRC show. It's a bit off our patch, but still a good chance to publicise the Lakes Line and increase the Group's funds. Its next outing will be at the Group's coffee morning in Staveley on 17th June.

In early March, Malcolm and Ian Conway organised a meeting in Kendal Town Hall with Jane Murray and Martin Keating from Northern to discuss Station Adoption, and other matters. CRP Officer Jim Trotman and Dawn McGough from Cumbria CC were also at the meeting. Jane Murray had already run a training session for volunteers on Station Adoption on 8th February, and the scheme is go live in April. We have a team already, and plans for work at Kendal, Burneside and Staveley, but more volunteers would be welcome. Contact Ian or Malcolm Conway for more information.

Kendal Town Council asked the Group for help in contacting various parts of the railway industry over their concerns about local services. Mainly these relate to Northern and councillors' worries that our services are not as good as they were, but also included Virgin Trains over the price of car parking at Oxenholme. The Environment & Highways Committee has invited Robert and Dick to attend their next meeting to discuss the replies, and concerns, further.

Easter will soon be upon us. This means two things, one good, one bad.

The good one is the Group's welcome programme, when we shall have a team on the busiest trains over Easter weekend, to give out tourist information to visitors. Robert is co-ordinating this once again, and Martin Keating has already arranged our travel passes.

The bad is that being a bank holiday, Network Rail will be busy closing parts of the railway for engineering work. As ever we recommend that, if you are going to travel over the holiday weekend, you check your journey on line or at a staffed station, but to give you a flavour, here is a summary:

TransPennine Express, Manchester – Scotland.

Saturday 15th: after 08:30, services between Manchester Airport and Carlisle only.

Sunday 16th: services between Manchester Airport and Lancaster only.

Monday 17th: services between Manchester Airport and Carlisle only.

Virgin Trains. Full amended timetables (LLRUG welcomes this) are on their website.

Saturday 15th: buses replace trains north of Carlisle. The 17:00 from Euston terminates at Oxenholme, with a bus from there, the 18:00 terminates at Preston (then bus, but the timetable doesn't show it stopping at Oxenholme) and there's a bus from Lancaster to Oxenholme at 21:30, reachable by taking Northern's Manchester – Barrow service from Preston at 20:58. Southbound our first train is 07:24, then generally hourly at around 23 minutes past the hour.

Sunday 16th: Northbound, an hourly bus service from Oxenholme at 40 minutes after the hour till 14:40, then slightly irregular times till 22:35, but if you want to go



further north you change buses at Carlisle. Southbound the first 'train' is a bus at 09:05 to Preston, then from 11:20 there's a train south at about 15 or 20 minutes after the hour, till 19:18, a bus to Lancaster at 20:35 and a train to Crewe at 22:03.

Monday 17th: Northbound there's a train at 07:09, then 08:45 then from 10:10 hourly at around 10 minutes past the hour, till 21:10, then a bus at 23:00. Again, only to Carlisle. Southbound, Oxenholme has a bus at 06:40, then trains at about 23 minutes past the hour 20:24, then nothing till 22:03 to Crewe.

At the time of going to press Northern had not announced any changes to the normal Lakes Line timetable over the bank holiday.

This is only the start of pre-summer engineering work disruption. The West Coast Main Line will be affected in some way every weekend from Easter until at least the Spring Bank Holiday weekend, 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> May. In some cases it is only minor changes, but the bank holidays are likely to be more disrupted. Do check your journey shortly before the date you are due to travel, late changes can happen.

## The February Survey

We carried out our annual low season survey on 8th February this year, the second Wednesday in February. As usual, an LLRUG surveyor (sometimes two) travelled on each train from the 06:45 from Windermere to the 22:45, the final train of the day.



Dave Grime had time between survey trips to photograph the stock we had through the day.

Here, 185 106, resplendent in the new TPE livery, waits at Windermere to form the 09:47 back to Oxenholme.

The train worked all the trains till the 10:56 to the Airport, and came back onto the Lakes Line as the 18:21 from Lancaster.

This year's total was down compared to both 2015 and 2016, and even slightly down on 2014. Yes, we topped the 1100 mark again, but this was still disappointing after noting over 1200 passengers in recent years. The main reason, and a disappointment in itself, was the cancellation of one round trip from

Oxenholme. Not just any round trip, but the 15:34 from Oxenholme, which is the afternoon ‘school train’. Our on-the-platform counter at Kendal noted 152 people waiting for its 15:38 departure from Windermere; when the next train got there at 16:26 just 67 people boarded. This accounts for much of the drop in numbers since 2016.

Once again many of the trains carried passengers with bikes or children’s buggies, and readers will not be surprised that at busy times there were large suitcases stored in doorways and gangways as there was not enough room in the racks. One was so tall it only just fitted into the bike space!

We estimate the proportion of local use compared to long distance by comparing the numbers using only the four Lakes Line stations, with those using Oxenholme. This is *not* exact, as it doesn’t count anyone boarding at Oxenholme station to travel towards Windermere as a local user, but it’s a guide. On ‘up’ trains, from Windermere, the balance was 45:55 for local use:long distance use, but on the ‘down’ trains from Oxenholme it was 35:65. The difference is probably explained by visitors travelling in the area for a holiday, perhaps an early start to a long weekend.



Above: the two ends of the daytime train: on the left, class 153 301 at the Oxenholme end, and right, the front unit, 156 443, wait during the cancellation of the 15:34 round trip.

The cancellation exposed cracks in the organisation. As the previous train arrived at Oxenholme at 15:18, the information screen showed the 15:34 as leaving at 15:48. In fact, it could not leave as there was no guard, and the replacement was at that moment on his way to Oxenholme, but didn’t arrive till nearly 4 pm, so the 15:34 was cancelled. Passengers waiting at Kendal found the information screens took a long time to give them correct information.

The Group wishes to thank Northern for giving us free travel for the survey, and particular thanks go to the conductor/guards, who put up with us so cheerfully.



## **Opinion (comment)**

On my return from a TPE choir practice in Manchester approaching the weekend before the first RMT members' strike, and whilst the passengers were boarding the school train at Kendal, I engaged the conductor in a passing comment that I had asked Northern to announce on the school trains on the Thursday and Friday about Monday's disruption, but that buses would be provided. ... I chose the wrong one!

He said that provision of alternative transport would be strike breaking. Of course it is, but I raised the question of the 150 passengers who need to travel. His reply was off the wall, that had not the pupils misbehaved on the buses, they wouldn't be using the train anyway. I mentioned that I used to teach them and that it wasn't that simple. He said that he could go back further than me. Really! At this point all passengers had loaded and I said that he needed to get off. Had I had time I would have mentioned that when I started teaching in Kendal in 1969, only those few pupils from Staveley and Windermere who preferred a single sex grammar school education to the mixed comprehensive one on offer at the Lakes School travelled into Kendal. The phenomenon of loads of school children using the train was a product of the late 80s, the 90s and early 2000s when Queen Katherine School was perceived as better than the Lakes School, hence to this day around 125 pupils, plus a further 25 regulars (some from the nearby Kendal College Annexe) making the 150 passengers regularly on offer.

So to the real point at issue – the dispute - and that of Driver Controlled Operation (DCO) on the new rolling stock, which will come on stream in the next 2 years or so.

The RMT union has taken the emotive, but inaccurate stance, that Arriva Rail North (ARN) is proposing Driver Only Operation (DOO), in other words, single manning of trains, that's what DOO stands for. Of course it is the DCO route which ARN is working towards. Rather like the current Virgin Train practice whereby the driver releases the doors at stations because he/she knows when the train has come to a stand and it is safe to do so. ARN is proposing an extension of this for the driver also to close the doors after a station call. This practice is already deployed by some Train Operating Companies (TOCs).

I must state that I strongly defend the right of people to withdraw their labour. However, decisions in the ballot box must be based on fact. How a senior spokesman from RMT can claim unchallenged in a BBC News interview the day before the strike (repeated on the day itself) who said DCO but then without pause or another word switched it to DOO and gets away with it defeats me.

My view is that there must always be a second crew member inside the train, and we hope that both ARN and RMT can sign up to this. The second person needs to:

collect revenue (so essential on the Northern network with many unstaffed stations, including three out of four stations on our line); look after passenger safety; see to customer care; assist passengers with disabilities.

Many trades unions by their nature are militant, but their role should be a responsible one. For the first time in decades, the DfT, Rolling Stock owners and the TOCs are investing billions of pounds in the North West in modern, state of the art rolling stock, and future union practices also need to reflect this. After all, nobody – crew members included - wants the technology of the 80s, in the form of Pacers, to continue beyond the end of 2019.

I must emphasise that this is a personal view and does not necessarily reflect that of the Group.

R. Talbot

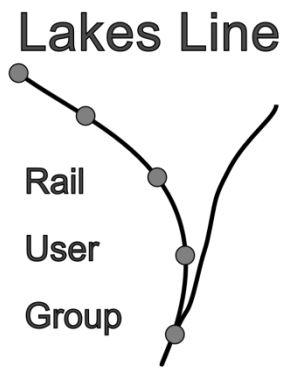
## **News from the Line**

Readers may remember that when we asked Transport Minister Paul Maynard for an update on Lakes Line electrification, he replied that we all, himself included, was waiting for an announcement about this in March 2017. Writing this on 30th March, we are still waiting. The nearest we have is that Andy Griffin, from Network Rail (NR), reported to the Community Rail Partnership (CRP) that NR had done some more work on the project, and in early March submitted the results to the DfT.

Also at the CRP meeting, Martin Keating from Northern reported that the second version of internal refurbishment of a class 156 unit is under way. This isn't just a matter of re-covering the seats, but includes a new, DDA-compliant toilet module and other significant work, as well as a 'new Northern' livery. Maybe they'll send it to us to try out? [Editor's note: DDA-compliant is the shorthand meaning a vehicle which complies with the disability access regulations which will be mandatory from 2020. It's not just a matter of the toilets, but making the whole journey easier for people with reduced mobility or other impairments.]

Northern continues its work with train leasing company Porterbrook to turn some 30 year old electric units from the London area into modern trains with some diesel power, allowing them to operate on non-electrified lines. There's no advertised date yet for seeing these trains, to be called 'class 319 FLEX', in service. However, a Staveley resident reported seeing NR staff measuring the platform there. When asked why, the engineers explained it was preliminary work for lengthening the platform. As the class 319 FLEX is longer than our current trains, does this mean we might see them here? Or is it just preparing for the all-new Northern trains due from 2019?





# We need you!

There are vacancies for more volunteers to help in the work of the Rail User Group. We're looking for people to join us in, for example:

- giving visitors a warm welcome to the Lakes Line during our Easter 'meet and greet' programme;
- keeping our publicity on Oxenholme station up to date;
- baking delicious cakes to sell at the coffee morning in Staveley on 17th June.

**and ...are you a social media whizz? If the answer is yes and if you'd like to help us please get in touch. (Yes, we'd like to reach out to more people by using social media such as Facebook.)**

Can you recruit some new members? Our members are the bedrock of the Group, and the more we have, the greater our influence. If you would like some membership leaflets, contact Malcolm Conway for some.

Remember that you can download a membership form from our website, [www.llrug.co.uk](http://www.llrug.co.uk).



Are you a gardener? Malcolm or Ian Conway would like to hear from you if you would like to help out the Station Adoption gang.



Two winter views. Above, ghostly figures cross from the 07:29 arrival at Oxenholme to catch the 07:33 to Windermere on 8th February.

Below: unusual weather on 28th February saw the morning school train crossing the Kent with frost on the houses, and a thin layer of cloud allowing faint sunshine through in the background.

