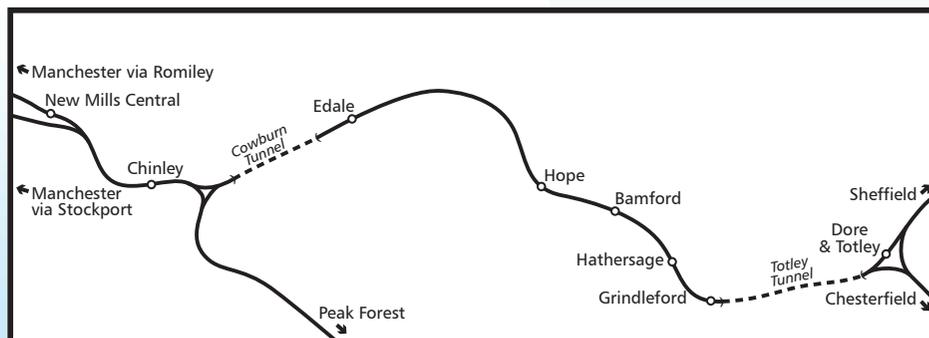


THE HOPE VALLEY LINE: THROUGH THE HEART OF THE PEAK



Paul Salvesson wanders through Edale

We ask a lot from the Hope Valley Line, linking Manchester and Sheffield via the Dark Peak. It's a major inter-regional passenger route for fast services operated by TransPennine Express and East Midlands Trains. It's a busy freight artery, carrying aggregates from the Buxton quarries to the south, as well as nine trains a day from Hope cement works on the line itself. And it manages to squeeze in the popular local trains



operated by Northern, busy with commuters working in Manchester and Sheffield, and also bringing walkers from those cities out into the stunning Peak District countryside. The infrastructure struggles to cope with those competing demands, with traditional mechanical signalling controlling long block sections. To make matters worse, there is a very restrictive section of single line at Dore, before the line joins the Midland Main Line into Sheffield. The Community Rail Partnership's efforts focus mainly on the local train service, but they are very much aware of the larger context and the need for investment to make better use of the route. They are supported by the lobbying of a highly effective rail user group which backs its arguments with detailed research.

The route and its history

The main focus of this feature is the core section between New Mills and Sheffield, though the route nowadays is very much Manchester–Sheffield. And these days it's the only railway between the two cities, following closure of the electrified Woodhead Route in 1981 (passenger trains ceased in January 1970). Trains leave from Piccadilly station, though the traditional gateway to the Peak for Manchester country-lovers, immortalised in the Ewan McColl song "The Manchester Rambler", was Central. The song summed up the love of generations of working class city dwellers for the magnificent countryside on their doorstep:

*"I'm a rambler I'm a rambler from
Manchester way
I get all my pleasure the hard
moorland way
I may be a wage slave on Monday,
But I am a free man on Sunday!"*

The Midland, and particularly the LMS in later years, were keen to exploit the route for weekend walkers. Posters and guide books were published highlighting local beauty spots, detailed some of the best walks and offered cheap day return fares. The CRP continues that tradition, with guided walks and a website which shows some of the most popular rambles. Recently, the CRP actually created a new footpath, linking Edale station with the hamlet of Barber Booth – surely a first for the Community Rail movement.

The Midland Railway originally used Manchester London Road (now Piccadilly) following an agreement with the Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway. From 1866 Midland trains from Derby via Rowsley and Miller's Dale used the MSLR route from New Mills into Manchester London Road via Woodley and Hyde Junction. However facilities at London Road were cramped (nothing changes) and an entirely new terminus was planned – this became Manchester Central and opened in 1877 on a temporary site before the permanent station opened in 1880. It was owned by the Cheshire Lines Committee, of which the Midland held a third share, with the MSLR and Great Northern. Midland trains to London St Pancras, though slightly slower than those of the rival London & North Western Railway from London Road, became a by-word for luxury, with the Midland making much of the splendid Peak District scenery. Central itself was notable for its magnificent arched roof, an echo of St Pancras. The adjoining Midland Hotel (opened in 1903) was for decades the city's finest hotel. Unfortunately the temporary booking office provided in 1880 was never replaced by a more permanent structure, and survived until the station closed in 1969.

The Hope Valley line itself was, in railway terms, a very late opening. The MSLR route from Manchester to Sheffield had opened as early 1845 and it was clear that there was a demand for more freight and passenger



Opposite page, top: The hills pierced by Cowburn Tunnel are covered with snow as 150 276 passes Nether Booth (between Edale and Hope) with the 10.45 Manchester–Sheffield on 8 January 2010. **Robert Pritchard**

Opposite page, bottom: Coming off the line from Hazel Grove, 158 806 passes New Mills South Junction with the 10.52 Liverpool–Norwich on 8 December 2010. **Tom McAtee**

Above: Passengers on a Class 142 approaching New Mills Central on a Manchester train have a good view of the River Goyt on 7 November. **Paul Salvesson**

Right: The Hope Valley CRP's Mike Rose helps a passenger with a pushchair over the footbridge at Chinley on 7 November. The lack of level access to the platforms here is a problem. **Paul Salvesson**

Below: 60074 "Teenage Spirit" climbs from Chinley station to Chinley North Jn with the 09.47 Northwich–Tunstead limestone empties on 24 March 2011. **Oliver Turner**



trains across the Pennines. The only problem was the terrain. Building Woodhead Tunnel was very difficult and took many lives. After their experiences with the Settle–Carlisle line (opened in 1876) one can imagine the directors of the Midland Railway being less than enthusiastic about taking on a major new project through hard, mountainous country. Several routes were considered, but the favoured option was a 21-mile line from Dore, on the Midland Sheffield–Chesterfield line which had opened in 1870, to Chinley and the company's Derby–Manchester main line. Parliamentary powers were granted in 1888 and construction began that same year, promoted by a "special purpose vehicle" in the form of the Dore & Chinley Railway Company. An interesting link with the present day is that James Shuttleworth, Vice-Chairman of the Hope Valley Rail Users' Group, had a relative on the board of the original company, the assets of which passed to the Midland Railway on completion of the work.

The contract was divided into two parts, the first ten miles going to Thomas Oliver, a Horsham-based civil engineer, and the remainder to JP Edwards of Chester. The consulting engineers were Edward Parry and J Somes Story. The route required two lengthy tunnels. The first, under Totley Moor, was over three miles long, making it the second longest in Britain when it was completed: it had particular problems with water ingress and on some days up to five million gallons were pumped out. Cowburn Tunnel, between Edale and Chinley, was another major feat of engineering, being over two miles in length. Between the two tunnels the route threads

the Vale of Edale, the only part of the project which was easy. Over a quarter of the line was in tunnel, and construction took six years. It officially opened on 1 June 1894, though the first freight train ran through Totley Tunnel on 1 December 1893.

Completion of the line allowed the Midland to introduce new passenger services between Sheffield and Manchester, complementing its services on the Miller's Dale route north of Chinley, but the Midland route remained circuitous, trains from Chinley using a link from Romiley onto the CLC route from Godley Junction, then reaching Manchester Central via Stockport Tiviot Dale and Didsbury. A major improvement came in 1902, when the Midland opened a 9-mile cut-off from New Mills South Junction to Heaton Mersey. This included the 2¼-mile Disley Tunnel, and gave the London expresses a much faster route into the city. Local trains continued to run via Romiley and Stockport.

As far as New Mills Central stopping trains use the traditional routes which the Midland shared before its new route into Central opened in 1880. The more direct route through Reddish opened in 1875, providing a faster route into Manchester. A branch from New Mills to Hayfield diverged just south of the station, opened in 1868 it was a great favourite with ramblers but it closed in 1970, and most of the route is now the Sett Valley Trail.

The Hope Valley Line reached its nadir in the 1960s. Services were infrequent, with many trains shuttling between Sheffield and Chinley, for connections to Manchester (Sheffield passengers to Manchester used the electric service from Victoria). The last

regular steam-hauled train from Sheffield was the 09.39 stopper to Chinley, usually hauled by a Buxton-based Ivatt 2MT (typically 46465) until dieselisation in 1966.

The Beeching Report proposed withdrawing all passenger services between Manchester Central, Chinley and Sheffield, as well as the local service from Piccadilly to Hadfield and Glossop. The Woodhead route would be retained for freight and express passenger services. However a desire to retain the passenger services on the Sheffield–Chinley line meant that Woodhead's passenger services were withdrawn in 1970. The fortunes of the Hope Valley section gradually improved, but the stations were destaffed and quickly became targets for vandals: then all the buildings were replaced by basic shelters. What a contrast to the station buildings on the Settle–Carlisle line – most of which have been put to good use as businesses or homes.

Another big change was the closure of Manchester Central on 5 May 1969. Sheffield services, such as they were by then, had been diverted to Piccadilly a year earlier, returning to their original starting place on the former MSLR (later Great Central and LNER) side of the station. However a positive development came in 1986, when the opening of the Hazel Grove chord between the old LNWR Buxton line and the Midland Disley line of 1902 allowed fast Manchester–Sheffield trains to serve Stockport by using the LNWR main line out of Manchester, then turning up the Buxton line south of Stockport. This has led to the development of a significant commuter traffic from Sheffield to Stockport.

Seen from the Mam Tor ridge on 6 November, the Vale of Edale and the Kinder Scout massif dwarf the Northern Belle luxury train, top-and-tailed by 47790 and 47832. **Valerie Hirst**



The Journey

Today's Manchester ramblers will normally join their train at Piccadilly Platform 1; it is quite likely to be a Northern Class 142 Pacer, although more 150s have been appearing since the cascade of units from London Midland started, and 156s are also sometimes used (150s should hopefully work most services from December). The journey through the suburbs is quite interesting and doesn't take very long; after Romiley the scenery becomes very attractive with the line following the Peak Forest Canal. Romiley signal box (a good example of Midland architecture dating from 1899) controls the junction with the Hyde loop. Marple is a busy commuter station, though like every other station on the route, except Romiley, Reddish North and New Mills Central, its original buildings have long since disappeared. The next station, Strines, once had a particularly fine building and was used in the making of "The Railway Children" film. Not many trains stop, though the station gives access to some superb walking country.

Full of interest, New Mills Central is really the gateway to the Hope Valley. The building on the down side is MSLR, dating from 1864. The staffed booking office was recently refurbished, thanks to the joint efforts of the Community Rail Partnership and Northern, with a wonderful mural in the waiting room by local artist Claire Walker depicting the Kinder Scout mass trespass of 1932 (this highlighted the lack of access to Britain's open countryside, and led to the passing of the 1949 National Parks and Countryside Act, and the Peak District National Park).

Nobody should visit New Mills without a walk along the Torrs Millennium Walkway, completed in 2000. The walk begins right outside the station and is absolutely stunning – an elevated walkway takes you above the raging waters of the River Goyt with superb views of the historic mill buildings (dating back to 1788) across the river. The project was engineered by Derbyshire County Council's Stan Brewster, who tragically lost his life in the London Tube bombings of July 2005. A further poignant memory is that great lover of railways and New Mills resident Sir Martin Doughty, who not only won the funding for the walkway but was instrumental in setting up the CRP. He died, after a long struggle with cancer, in 2009. The walkway is a great monument to them both. Just above The Torrs is the local heritage centre, a great community museum.

Immediately beyond the station the 1924 Midland-pattern signal box once controlled the junction with the Hayfield branch – the branch's tunnel portal is clearly visible on the left, whilst passengers get a superb view of The Torrs if they look to the right before entering the short New Mills Tunnel. The dramatic scenes continue as the train emerges from the tunnel, with more stunning views of the Goyt far below. The line continues to climb towards New Mills South Junction, where the main line carrying TransPennine Express and East Midlands Trains services



158806 rushes through Edale with the 10.52 Liverpool–Norwich on a misty 7 November. **Paul Salvesson**

trains in to the right. The views open up, with the former LNWR Manchester–Buxton line just visible on the opposite side of the valley as it climbs from New Mills Newtown towards Whaley Bridge. Little trace remains of the once-extensive Gowhole sidings, which were on the left about a mile south of the junction, but the old station house at Bugsworth is visible on the right, with its characteristically Midland architecture.

Chinley was once a busy, 4-platform station with extensive goods facilities, but The Sidings housing development now occupies the former goods yard and the station is a basic island platform connected to the village by a footbridge. It's less than ideal for passengers with reduced mobility, pushchairs or wheelchairs. During my visit with CRP officer Mike Rose we helped a young mum get up the steps with a heavily-laden pushchair: it's not how we should be delivering 21st Century public transport and the CRP wants an accessible footbridge. At least the waiting room is much better than the basic shelter it replaced, and has recently had further modifications to make it windproof. Traffic is growing rapidly, with passenger figures up from 60 000 in 2004 to 91 000 in 2009–10, but car parking is a big local issue: Chinley is developing as a railhead for rural communities as far away as Tideswell. Understandably, residents don't like commuters parking outside their homes, and Mike is working with the local authorities and Northern to find space for more car parking. A new cycle shelter is also being provided at the existing car park.

The gruelling 1 in 90 gradient continues up to Chinley North Junction where the former main line, still heavily used for freight, diverges to the right, towards Peak Forest and Buxton. The signal box is a typical (but less and less common) British Railways flat-roofed type. The Hope Valley line proper now curves away towards the east, passing Chinley East Junction where the chord from the Peak

Forest line trails in, and continuing to climb through fine countryside. The summit of the line is towards the end of Cowburn Tunnel, a big relief for firemen on heavily-loaded freights in the steam era.

Emerging from Cowburn Tunnel the line drops at 1 in 100 for several miles, through Edale and on to Hope. Edale is one of the most popular stations on the line, with nearly 64 000 passengers in 2009–10, including many walkers joining the start of the Pennine Way. The station car park is managed by the CRP which takes all the revenue, a nice little earner which helps fund some of the many projects the CRP is involved. Edale is a lovely village with two great pubs and a National Trust-run café, The Penny Pot, next to the station.

Either side of the line offers tremendous views. To the left are the hills leading to Kinder Scout whilst to the right is the ridge from Mam Tor to Lose Hill (an exhilarating walk which also gives fine views of trains along the Hope Valley line). Shortly before Hope is Earles Sidings, which handles cement traffic from Hope Cement Works. The 1½-mile branch line to the works is busy 24 hours a day, and the sidings handle thousands of tonnes of aggregate each day. Hope station, sadly devoid of its original buildings, is a long walk from the village which is a popular tourist centre. The best that can be said is that it has kept its Midland Railway lattice footbridge, but the eastbound platform suffers from poor access.

The falling gradient ends before Bamford and is followed by a steady climb towards Grindleford. Bamford village is again some way from the station, but worth exploring, not least to sample the delicious Bamford Cakes sold in the local bakery. Hathersage is a busy village with some excellent pubs and cafes. The station is growing nicely, with nearly 49 000 passengers in the last reporting period (2009–10). The eastbound platform is currently being lengthened to accommodate



142 028 and 150 277 arrive at Hope as the 10.45 Manchester–Sheffield on 8 November, this train (and the 12.14 back from Sheffield) being peculiarly diagrammed for a pair of units on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. **David Brewer**

4-car trains, whilst the former scrapyard that did little for the appearance of the area has been cleared. In its place are some modern apartments, whose design divided local opinion but which provide extra traffic for the railway. On the other side of the station on the Grindleford Road is the David Mellor cutlery factory, whose circular design has won national awards and is popular with visitors and locals alike.

Grindleford is a bit of a misnomer. You'd have a stiff walk from the village of Grindleford to the station, which is in Nether Padley. Still, the walk would give you a hearty appetite which you need if planning to dine in the wonderfully eccentric Station Café. This is housed in the former booking office, next to the bridge carrying the track to Padley, with a close-up view of Totley Tunnel. It still sports the BR maroon sign, along with many other notices instructing you what you can and cannot do (like amending the order for all-day breakfast). The somewhat authoritarian style is mid-60s eastern European but none the worse for that – keep to the straight and narrow and you'll be OK. At least it's a change from the bland and often false customer service of the modern age. Just don't ask for anything that's not on the menu, and don't even think about stealing away with one of the pint mugs.

Grindleford station is something of an anti-climax after the unique experience that is the Station Café. CCTV cameras have recently been installed to keep an eye on things and a large sign tells trains emerging from Totley Tunnel that they are now in the Peak Park. Passenger numbers, like all the other local stations, are growing and nearly 54 000 people used the station in 2009–10.

They must be fit: the curve through the station means that it's a long way up from the westbound platform onto the train and the CRP is keen to get better access by installing a Harrington Hump. Just west of the station is the 1938 signal box controlling access to a couple of engineers' sidings.

The Hope Valley railway played a key role in the economic and social development of the area. When the Derwent Valley reservoirs around Ladybower were being built, stone for the huge dams was brought in by rail from nearby Padley quarries to exchange sidings at Thornhill, just to the west of Bamford. Grindleford sidings were used for the despatch of fluorspar from mines in the Eyam area nearby (fluorspar is a waste by-product associated with lead mining which was found to be useful in connection with tin smelting and also for use with the new open hearth furnaces coming into use in the USA in the early part of the 20th century). Large quantities of the material were exported to America until high tariffs ended the trade.

If you are able to move after a meal at the station, or perhaps better before having anything – a walk down to Padley is worthwhile. There is an ancient chapel whose origins date back to pre-Norman times and it's a pleasant stroll any time of the year. But there's a dark side to it as well: two Catholic priests became the Padley Martyrs when they were executed in 1588.

The view from the train after leaving Grindleford is very boring as you can't see a thing for over three miles until you emerge from the eastern end of Totley Tunnel. The classic Midland box at Totley Tunnel East controlling the entrance to the tunnel dates from 1893 and is still doing sterling service at

the biggest bottleneck on the route. Absurdly the line becomes single through Dore & Totley station to Dore Junction where it joins the Midland Main Line, whilst another single line chord (mostly used by heavy stone trains from the Peak District) diverges to join the southbound MML. Signalling trains on and off the Hope Valley Line is challenging, made worse by trains stopping at the station, where the empty Midland Railway building was used until recently as an Indian restaurant. After Chinley this is the busiest station on the line, with 85 626 passengers in 2009–10. South Yorkshire PTE is keen to improve car parking facilities and has recently purchased a former garden centre adjacent to the station to extend the car park. Maybe they could get into a bit of horticulture as well.

The busy route into Sheffield drops steadily at 1 in 100, past the former stations at Beauchief (closed 1961), then Millhouses & Ecclesall and Heeley, both of which shut in June 1968. Look out for Wyvern House, home of Platform 5 Publishing and **TR UK**, on the left as you pass Heeley – you might even get a friendly wave from the editorial team. As far as English station names go, Beauchief was perhaps the most difficult to pronounce (other suggestions?), I'm told by my editor that it's "bee-chief", and the editor is always right. Older readers will immediately start thinking in shed-code terms at the mention of Millhouses. The shed (19B then 41C) which once housed a fine stud of LMS Jubilees for the London trains was located on the left-hand side and can still be glimpsed past the supermarket car park.

The entry into Sheffield is invariably a slow one, with trains routinely stopped outside the tunnels on the approach to Midland station: you may spot a Sheffield Supertram above to your right. The station itself is now of course simply "Sheffield", no longer having to differentiate itself from "Victoria", which served the Woodhead route and other LNER services to the east. Hope Valley trains normally arrive at Platform 2C, a short bay at the western end of the station, often difficult for strangers to find. Still, it's nice to have a semi-dedicated platform, though 4-car trains have to use a longer platform (usually 7 or 8). Sheffield station (managed by East Midlands Trains) has had a lot of investment in recent years, with major improvements to the main concourse as well as repairs to the Midland Railway canopies. The excellent Sheffield Tap pub, in the opulent setting of the former Refreshment Rooms on Platform 1, opened last year thanks to help from the Railway Heritage Trust. Within less than a year of opening it won The Publican's national prize as "best cask ale pub". The bar offers a very wide choice of beer sourced from across the globe, dispensed from ten traditional cask hand-pulls and 12 continental swing handled taps, with a modest supply of over 2000 bottled world beers. Further expansion of the pub, again with Trust assistance, will provide space for a dining area: I can't wait. If it's anything like the pub it will be excellent.

The exterior of the station is magnificent. Instead of the incessant stream of traffic that

once greeted you, there's a great piece of public art in the form of a long strip of metal, reflecting the city's steel tradition (in case it's not obvious) with a constant stream of water running down it. Trams serve the station from the south side of the station complex, reached by a footbridge made controversial by a recent proposal to install ticket barriers and block public access to the tram stop from the city centre and the bus station.

Operating the line

Passenger services through the Hope Valley comprise three distinct flows. TransPennine Express runs hourly from Manchester Airport via Piccadilly to Sheffield, Doncaster and Cleethorpes. East Midlands Trains operates hourly trains from Liverpool via Manchester to Sheffield, Nottingham and Norwich, so there are two fast trains hourly between Manchester and Sheffield via Stockport, TPE using 185s and 170s whilst EMT currently uses 158s. Trains are well filled throughout the day, and EMT is currently receiving extra units to strengthen most of its services to 4-cars. Northern runs the local trains, though some TPE and EMT services do call at Chinley or Dore & Totley during the peak periods. In an ideal world the stopping service would be hourly; indeed, it is on Saturdays. Pathing problems during the week mean that the basic pattern is every two hours though the December 2011 timetable change sees an additional early evening departure from Sheffield at 18.14. This was matched by improvements at the Manchester end: instead

of just one 17.18 departure followed by a long gap, there is now a 16.45, 17.48 and 18.48 departure to Sheffield. The 17.18 now runs as far as New Mills Central, and the existing 17.23 Manchester Piccadilly–Hazel Grove is extended to Chinley because the 17.20 TPE Cleethorpes train, which had a Chinley stop, now has to run fast to Dore & Totley. A TPE train from Sheffield in the evening peak has also lost its Chinley stop, leaving some local commuters less than happy.

Freight operations through the valley are extensive and complex. The cement works at Hope, now owned by Lafarge, sends out considerable tonnages each day. The branch from the works to the main line, Earles Sidings, is 1½ miles long and owned by the cement works, which dates back to 1929. The original company was G and T Earle, who constructed the branch to the main line, including a rather splendid concrete bridge over Castleton Road. For many years the branch was steam-worked, including now-preserved Hudswell-Clarke side-tank "Nunlow". In more recent years Sentinel diesels have been used, and in 1989 the company took delivery of a powerful Hunslet-Barclay loco which was named "Blue John" after the nearby gemstone. The firm also hires a Class 20 from Harry Needle Railroad Company – 20168 which is named "Sir George Earle". The works passed to Blue Circle, then in 2001 the international cement firm Lafarge took over. The company has continued the pro-rail policy of its predecessors and a £20 million investment a few years ago improved the rail link and bought 48 high-capacity wagons. A typical cement train weighs in at around 1780 tonnes, the equivalent of 59 road tankers.

The works produces about 750 000 tonnes of cement each year, and around half of which goes out by rail on nine trains a day. Production is planned to increase to 1.3 million tonnes over the next few years and

most of this increase, in agreement with the Peak Park, will go out by rail. In addition a small amount of fuel comes into the plant by rail to heat the cement kilns. Traditionally this has been coal, but a variety of more eco-friendly fuels are now being used.

As well as the growing tonnage from Hope, the line also carries much of the rail-hauled aggregates from the quarries around Buxton – Dowlow, Dove Holes and Hindlow. This is a massive output, up to 17 trains per day from the Buxton area using the Hope Valley route challenging the already stretched infrastructure. This dense mix of express and local passenger trains and heavy haul freight uses a route whose signalling has changed little for a century. From New Mills South Junction there are signal boxes at Chinley (formerly Chinley South Jn), Edale, Earles Sidings, Grindleford and Totley Tunnel East. The line is double-track except for the section of single line between Totley Tunnel East and Dore Station Jn, as we've seen earlier, whilst there is a westbound goods loop at Earles Sidings which is frequently used.

The Community Rail Partnership and the Rail User Group

The Hope Valley & High Peak Community Rail Partnership was formed back in 1996. It was a joint initiative of Derbyshire County Council and the Peak Park, with the support of Regional Railways North West, and the passenger transport executives for Greater Manchester and South Yorkshire. It was one of the earliest CRPs, and owed much to the dynamic approach of Sir Martin Doughty, who was then leader of Derbyshire County Council. I had a fair amount to do with it, being contracted to help the partners put the organisation together and agree terms of reference. The initial development phase also included several community meetings where people gave their views on the train

The Hope Valley sees steam charters fairly frequently: 5MT 4-6-0 44871 and Jubilee 4-6-0 5690 "Leander" head east from Hathersage on 26 February on a Buxton–Lancaster special operated by West Coast Railway Company.
James Shuttleworth



service, and ways they might be able to help bring railway and community closer together.

The first CRP officer was Becky Flower who brought a strong community and environmental focus to the CRP's work. Becky moved on, and Mike Bishop and Spencer Cooke took over the running of the CRP, from a base in New Mills Town Hall. Today the CRP is managed by Mike Rose, who took the reins in 2008. Initially this was on the basis of a job share with Martin Smith, a permanent feature on the Peak District transport scene as an officer firstly for the Peak Park, then Derbyshire County Council. Martin was recently persuaded to retire but, you can't keep a good man down and he continues to be active in the CRP as a volunteer. Chair of the partnership is Councillor Jean Wharmby, who sits on Derbyshire County Council and is also a member of High Peak Borough Council. Mike paid

tribute to her strong support: "It's great having an experienced and committed politician chairing the partnership; Jean commands a lot of respect across the patch and her support for rail is unflinching".

The partnership covers not only the Hope Valley Line, but also the Buxton and Glossop routes. All the lines benefit from a regular programme of guided walks, co-ordinated by the CRP, as well as some of the liveliest folk trains on the network! They are not quite as old as the nearby Penistone music trains, but certainly stretch back to the early days of the CRP in 1996. The Hope Valley music trains start from either Sheffield or Manchester; the Sheffield trains include a stop-over at the Rambler pub in Edale, whilst the Manchester trains disgorge their folk fans at Hathersage for further entertainment in the Little John pub. Full details are on the CRP website at www.hvhptp.org.uk.

The main funding partners for the CRP today are Derbyshire County Council (which hosts the CRP at its Matlock offices), the Peak Park Planning Board, Northern, Cheshire East Council and Transport for Greater Manchester. High Peak Borough Council is set to become a full partner shortly, and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive is highly supportive of the CRP's work. "We've had a lot of funding from Derbyshire channelled into some important schemes," said Mike. "They have been good at pulling in external funding from schemes such as the South-East Manchester Multi-Modal Studies (SEMMS) which allowed us to fund some station improvement schemes". These have included improved signage, access improvements, better car parks, CCTV, cycle facilities and information. New Mills Central station got a new waiting shelter, CIS and refurbished ticket office, partly through SEMMS funding

(totalling £425 000), which has also paid for improvements on both the Glossop and Buxton lines, with match funding coming from Northern and Network Rail. Unlike many CRPs, most of Hope Valley's meetings are open to the public and frequently attract 25-30 people. "I find the Hope Valley CRP one of the most community-oriented partnerships," Northern's Mark Barker told **TR UK**. "They make a big effort to involve local people in all sorts of ways and their meetings are an example of that".

The CRP works closely with the Hope Valley Rail Users Group (HVRUG). The late Peter Fox, founder of Platform 5 Publishing and **Today's Railways UK**, was an active member of the group and helped steer many of its responses to the railway industry. The ultimately successful suggestions about ways of using existing resources to improve evening peak services owed much to Peter's knowledge of how railways work. Train operators recognise the highly professional approach HVRUG has brought to its campaigning. "They make us look that harder to see what can be achieved," said Mark Barker. "They successfully lobbied Lafarge and the freight operators to get changes to a freight train path, permitting more stopping passenger trains. That's real lateral thinking and everyone was a winner".

Local resident Sarah Roberts chairs the group. She told **TR UK**: "We reconstituted the Hope Valley Rail Users Group in 2008, as we felt that a few changes to the timetable could make a huge difference to the lives of Hope Valley residents and those visiting this beautiful part of the world. The current timetable has had some highly problematic 2-hour gaps which means that many people who would like to use the train can't. It hasn't been easy but we've engaged with everyone involved in the line to see if we can find a solution and we are absolutely delighted that thanks to everyone's hard work and the flexibility of the other users of the line there will now be an hourly evening peak service running in both directions from December".

The group has more than 70 members and includes some very young supporters. Emily, aged 2½, helped her mother Jenni deliver 420 questionnaires in the Parish of Hope with Aston.



Left: The Grindleford Station Cafe on 7 November – the smoke from the chimney showing that the fire was lit!

Below: The 14.14 Sheffield–Manchester (142 040) collects its passengers from Grindleford on 7 November – the author is boarding the second coach. 142s have recently been replaced by 150s on some trains, whilst the obvious step up here has prompted plans for a Harrington Hump on this platform. **Robert Pritchard (2)**



The Rail Users Group was asking all residents of the Hope Valley how much more they would use their railway if an hourly timetable could be obtained, as part of the on-going campaign for better train services. Parish Clerk Jenni said, "I feel trains are such an important asset to the Valley and Emily really did enjoy delivering the surveys". Emily was rewarded for her efforts by HVRUG with a new picture book by favourite author Julia Donaldson to add to her existing collection. All of the 11 parish councils in the Hope Valley helped with the survey, which involved distributing 3500 questionnaires to 6500 households. HVRUG Chair Stephen Briscoe said: "The analysis should provide the best ever database of local needs, on which to campaign for better services". As well as looking at existing users the survey aims to identify the needs of potential users who might be attracted to use the train if improvements were made. The survey complements an earlier questionnaire done jointly by the CRP and the user group which identified issues facing existing users. The results are on <http://tinyurl.com/6cg6s8g>.

In addition to achieving an hourly frequency, the group wants to improve the rolling stock, focusing particularly on overcrowding during the morning and evening peaks. The group also represents the concerns of members about other aspects of services to the relevant train operators.

The Future

The Hope Valley Line's biggest challenges are how to combine the strategic needs of longer-distance passenger and freight services with those of the stopping service. "Our key aspiration is for an hourly stopping service," says Mike Rose. "But we can't get that without improved infrastructure, including doubling the track at Dore. We know the demand is there. And the second key issue is rolling stock. We don't think Pacers are suitable for this route, where we are trying to attract commuters out of their cars".

Another great challenge is tourism. The Peak Park gets over 22 million visitors a year and over 85% come by car, just 2% by train or bus. There's a huge market out there just waiting to be exploited, but it needs a more frequent train service, better facilities at stations and improved connections with local bus networks.

Freight looks set to continue to expand, with pro-rail policies by the Peak Park ensuring that wherever possible quarry products go out by rail. A long-term solution would be reopening of the former Manchester-Derby main line south of Peak Forest to Rowsley, creating a new route to the south for both freight and passenger trains. The National Park Authority has long supported this on environmental grounds. It would provide new journey opportunities between the North-West and East Midlands, as well as through to St Pancras. The issue is far from dead and



Above: The bottleneck caused by the single line connection from the Hope Valley towards Sheffield at Dore & Totley is clearly shown (with the Midland Main Line on the right) as 142 025 stops with the 12.14 Sheffield-Manchester on 17 November. The other line and the centre island platform were removed in the 1980s – the reinstatement of double track here is one of the most fundamental Northern Hub improvements.

Below: 142 011 passes Totley Tunnel East box on 22 June 2010 as the 07.06 Manchester-Sheffield, very popular with commuters into Sheffield from Dore & Totley. This shot (in sunshine) is only possible around the longest day owing to shadows from the trees and signal box. **Robert Pritchard (2)**



a well-attended meeting in Buxton recently demonstrated the extent of local support for the idea.

There are plans for the Hope Valley. Network Rail wants to resignal the line between 2014 and 2019, and put in additional passing loops around Hope or Grindleford. In addition it proposes to extend the Dore South chord so that longer freight trains will not obstruct lines at either end of the chord. As part of the Northern Hub scheme there is a plan to run three expresses each hour, though the stopping service is shown as remaining every two hours. I can't imagine the well-organised rail users being satisfied

with that. The Community Rail Partnership and its sister rail user group present a vocal, effective and responsible lobby. By working positively with the railway industry, private sector and local government they have already achieved a lot, but nobody would pretend that there isn't a lot more to be done.

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