

# Growth potential

By John Ginns

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Like all heritage railways the Embay and Bolton Abbey Railway deserves the attention of Railfuture members.

It took me the best part of an hour to walk the two uphill miles from the Northern Rail train at Skipton to Embay station but it was worth the walk.

I found friendly, welcoming and dedicated heritage railway people and inviting shops and tea rooms at both of their main stations.

No impressive rows of ex-main line steam locomotives here, but a large, cared-for collection of steam and diesel "industrials", plus their Class 107 diesel multiple unit sets. But this is still a working railway.

This four-mile standard gauge railway is based on the former Skipton-Ilkley line. The western end of the present line is a stone's throw from reconnection with the former Grassington branch which still serves Swinden limestone quarries, giving direct access into Skipton station. I understand there is local support in principle for this re-connection but no definite plans.

It would require the go-ahead for volunteer-operated-and-driven trains running on working Network Rail tracks, albeit in this case a mile or so over a freight-only line.

Bolton Abbey Station, at the other end of the line, is just three miles short of Ilkley, with its direct electric train service from Leeds.

An extension from Bolton Abbey on to Addingham, about two miles, may be achievable, given the funding, but there are no current plans to undertake such a project.

Beyond Addingham into Ilkley the former track bed is blocked by removed bridges, housing, extended gardens, and finally, by a solid brick, concrete and tarmac town centre redevelopment.

So that's that. But is it? There may well be a potential alternative route into a separate Ilkley tourist station. One day perhaps, as bicycles and feet take on a new, wider respectability, and motoring sinks to a sober level, why not a Skipton-



**EMBAY: A heritage diesel unit in July 2006, 'a stone's throw away' from reconnection to Skipton if only the former Grassington branch could be reopened**

Picture: John Ginns

Ilkley tourist line at 25 mph? But these things have to be made to happen one small step at a time. The Embay line has a diesel gala from 28-29 October. After the end of October the E&BA line runs every Sunday throughout the winter. More information: [www.pogo.org.uk/railway/](http://www.pogo.org.uk/railway/)

## Winter work

I would appeal to Railfuture members and branches to make contact with their local heritage railways.

With well over 100 heritage railways and related railway centres in the UK it is quite impossible for one person (me) to communicate effectively on a personal basis with all these centres.

Autumn is here but the heritage railway season never ends. Many of these railways run a skeleton service at weekends through the winter. So when you next visit your local heritage railway please liaise with your Railfuture branch secretary, and unless someone else has already done it, leave some Railfuture leaflets and spare copies of *Railwatch* with a responsible

person, and diplomatically ask for them to be put on display. Why not also leave your name and a contact 'phone number or address?

At the same time take some of their calendar/timetable leaflets and distribute them at your next Railfuture meeting.

Don't leave it to somebody else. There may not be anybody else. Railfuture depends on YOU.

## Nene Valley stories

*Along these Lines* is a different kind of railway book. Written by Railfuture's heritage railways liaison officer, and Nene Valley Railway member John Ginns, it is a compendium of articles written over a 14-year period for the Nene Valley Railway's magazine *Nene Steam*. But the book doesn't dwell on the past nor become engulfed in steam and smoke.

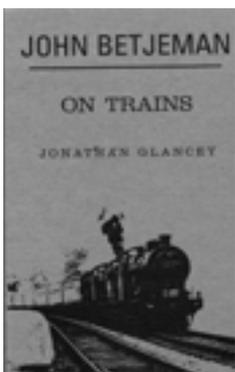
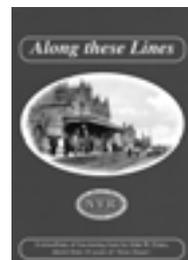
The articles cover a wide range of topics from descriptions of simple train journeys along the NVR line to basic engineering

features of railway machinery to be found on that railway. Of particular interest to Railfuture members is a series of articles describing the author's perception of the NVR-Railworld relationship concerning the Crescent Rail Link concept, a multi-million pound project which, if built, would bring NVR heritage trains closer to or right into Peterborough's main line station.

It must be emphasised that this idea, together with thoughts on the NVR extending south-west to Oundle, also covered in the book, form no part of any current plans for the future, but nevertheless make for thought-provoking reading.

The ideal Christmas present, or own-buy for the railway reader

who sees more in heritage railways than yesterday, steam and fun rides. It has 96 pages with black and white photographs. Price £5.48, including post and packing, from the Nene Valley Railway, Wansford Station, Stibington, Peterborough, PE8 6LR. Tel: 01780 784444.



**Railfuture grew out of a 1950s creation – the Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines.**

**The society was founded when it became clear that short-sighted politicians and bureaucrats planned an assault on the most civilised form of transport, railways.**

**The attack began on branch lines and poet John Betjeman, who loved them, joined the battle to save what were to him national**

**treasures. Now 100 years after Betjeman's birth, his daughter Candida Lycett Green and journalist Jonathan Glancy have produced John Betjeman On Trains.**

**Among many other fascinating insights, the book tells us how Betjeman advised Nigel Watt, one of the leaders of Railfuture's precursor, to search for a less clumsy title for the movement.**

**As Mr Glancy reveals, rail campaigners have a lot to thank**

**Betjeman for. He helped save from demolition the gothic masterpiece of St Pancras station, soon to be the gateway to Europe.**

**Unfortunately Betjeman and his allies were unable to save the 1837 Doric arch at nearby Euston and many branch lines.**

**"This delightful little book is a celebration of his love of railways and rail travel".**

**It is published by Methuen and costs £8.**