

Sunday 5 February

RAILWAY 54

Ciltheroe		0924
Hellifield	0947	1030
Clitheroe	1053	

Passenger trains run from Preston and Blackburn up the valley to Clitheroe, but the next stretch of track through to Hellifield Junction is freight only. The <https://communityraillancashire.co.uk/> website gives the case for reopening this line to passengers, developed in 2020, and suggests it could be done very cheaply (no new infrastructure is required) by May 2023. For many years the only regular passenger train has been a couple of trains on Sundays, part of the Dalesrail plan to encourage people from Lancashire to visit the Yorkshire Dales without their cars. From May 2023 that service is to be withdrawn. A note on the gensheet emails reminded me it is many, many years since I have done this link - so I got up early to drive to Clitheroe to do it.

The Blackburn train was in the platform when I arrived, and then mine in a few minutes later. I was the only passenger to join it, taking the loading to 4. We passed Horrocksford Junction as we left Clitheroe, where the signal box still guards the junction for the cement works (the box is due for abolition in 2026). A lovely ride north through gorgeous scenery.



You know you are approaching Hellifield when you see semaphore signals - are there any other four-way junctions still run by mechanical signalling? - and come into the glorious station. It would have been more glorious if the station café had been open for breakfast! Instead I want for a short amble up the land and back again.



Like most stunning stations it needs a bit more work, and the glass needs a good clean. I was tempted to travel north to Carlisle, but instead

was the only passenger on the return trip. I never saw the guard on either journey. An easy track bash!