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A personal view of the railway scene from your Branch Chairman

The only certain comment I can say about the current railway scene is that the future is uncertain.

Passenger numbers are slowly increasing, but most of these are leisure passengers with commuting still nowhere near pre-Covid levels. The government are still spending

considerable sums keeping the railway solvent (£8.5bn). It is clear this cannot continue indefinitely and the time will soon come when H.M. Treasury starts looking for savings.

At the time I am writing this, we know that DfT have told TOCs to reduce



workers.

These Class 90 electric locomotives at Ipswich waiting to haul freight trains from Felixstowe Port must think they are being discriminated against when there is no overhead line equipment on the Joint Line! (Acknowledgement to Rev. W. Awdry)

costs and that staff reductions are on the agenda, but no more detail. Scotrail and South West Trains have already published proposals for service revisions to better match future demand, so we can expect similar revisions in our area. The one factor we have in our favour is that we don't have extra peak hour commuter services, so there are none to cut. Our peak hour services have a high

complicated, but DfT show no urgency to do anything about them. All they have done so far is introduced flexible season tickets which are themselves a poor deal for many commuters.

Something else where there is an ominous silence is rail electrification. It is universally acknowledged that if our government are to meet their climate change target of reducing emissions by ►

detail we do know is that franchises are finished and in future train operators will h а v е concessions where they are paid to operate the services specified by GBR and revenue will go tо the

LINCOLNSHIRE

Newsletter

proportion of student passengers and

these are already getting back to pre-Covid levels, unlike services into big cities

which have a high proportion of office

operate are still very sketchy. The only

Details of what powers Great British Railways (GBR) will have and how they will

> government. think L everyone would agree that fares are too

78% by 2035 and net zero carbon by 2050 we need a rolling programme of rail electrification but so far there is plenty of talk about carbon reduction but precious little action. Let us hope that everything is on hold so there is something big to announce at the forthcoming COP26 summit.

Moving on to internal Railfuture matters, committee members have been kept busy during the last 4 months. Alongside taking up queries and complaints with TOCs on behalf of members, we have contributed to the ECML timetable consultation. House of Lord's enquiry into fares reform and a Transport Focus consultation on proposed changes to LNER ticket office opening hours. Alongside North East, North West and Yorkshire branches we have contributed to the Northern Trains Accessibility for All Strategic Programme which is looking at what improvements are needed to make stations more accessible.

Personally I have been contributing to the South Humber Rail Link bid under the Restoring Your Railway scheme and by the time you read this, the Strategic Outline Business Case should have been submitted to DfT.

If I can finish on a personal note, I would like to thank members who heard about my illness and spell in hospital and sent me their good wishes. I am now recovered and hopefully back to my normal active self.

David Harby, Branch Chairman

Since the photograph and comments on page 1 were prepared, we learn that Freightliner are using diesel locomotives in preference to electric traction because of the recent imposition of higher charges for electricity! *Ed.*

Future timetable uncertainty

Passenger numbers and, more importantly to HM Treasury, revenues are increasing but not evenly over all routes and markets. The leisure market recovered well over summer with revenue on the Poacher Line reported to be higher than in 2019, but overall East Midlands Railway (EMR) are reporting that by August overall revenue had only reached 55% of pre Covid levels.

The mid September figure we had from Northern was customer numbers at 75% of pre Covid with the bulk of these being the leisure market. Commuting is improving but still in the doldrums at 35%.

LNER have not been so forthcoming with their passenger and revenue figures, so all we can say is that we have observed some very well loaded Edinburgh and Newcastle services, but the shorter distance Leeds and Lincoln trains don't seem to be as busy.

For the long term, the potential commuter market is very uncertain. Some predictions are that it will reach no more than 40% of pre Covid levels. If this is the outcome, then the pre Covid timetables, with extra services for commuters in the morning and evening peaks, will no longer be appropriate. We understand train operators (and DfT *Ed.*) are already making tentative plans with this in mind.

Details we have for future timetables are as follows:

EMR – 22 services reinstated from December 21 including all Liverpool to Norwich, some Newark Castle to Crewe and more morning and evening peak between Nottingham and Mansfield Woodhouse. All these are services where there is a need for extra capacity. As mentioned earlier, Poacher Line services were protected for the summer but now demand is expected to be less the 08:46 & 13:46 Nottingham to Skegness and 11:14 & 16:14 Skegness to Nottingham are cancelled. However these will be reviewed on a weekly basis and either reinstated or supplemented if the need arises.

There is an intention to reinstate the rest of the EMR services in May 22, but this is dependant on satisfactory progress with crew training and sufficient rolling stock transferring from the West Midlands and Wales. We have not yet had any indication from EMR about the hourly services between Lincoln and Grimsby and Lincoln and Doncaster, which were in the original franchise commitment.

Northern have modified timetables during the summer to reflect increased demand on tourist routes. Peak hour Gainsborough Central to Sheffield services have already been reinstated. The only change expected for December 21 in our area, is that Lincoln to Leeds services return, instead of just Lincoln to Sheffield as now. Northern expect to reinstate more services in May 22 though exact details are not yet available.

TransPennine Express (TPE) are not planning any changes in our area in December 21 or May 22. Whether services from Cleethorpes will ultimately be reinstated between Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport is still unclear, however, the likelihood is that the option selected will be Cleethorpes to Liverpool.

East Coast Main Line (ECML) – The major timetable revision planned for May 22 has officially been deferred to May 23 at the earliest but, given that there was almost universal objection to the draft timetable, this one year deferral may well be optimistic. There were over 5,000 responses including a comprehensive negative response from Railfuture. The draft timetable did include some extension to Grimsby of the Kings Cross to Lincoln service, but on the other hand there was only one service all day between Newark Northgate and Retford. LNER were suggesting that passengers wanting to travel between Newark and Retford should take a train to Doncaster then catch another train in the opposite direction to Retford!

Beyond May 23, the expectation is that there will be a much more collaborative approach with an end to wasteful competition between operators and a timetable that puts passenger needs before TOC profits. David Harby

EMR Timetable Calamities

No sooner had the last edition of *Rail Lincs*, explaining the new East Midlands Railway (EMR) Regional timetable, been despatched than the timetable collapsed and EMR were introducing an emergency timetable on 19 June. There were a number of issues affecting EMR behind this decision.

Covid was a factor with not just train crew being tested positive for Covid but also an unprecedented number of crew who were 'pinged' as contacts and so had to self isolate. EMR were also struggling to train enough crew to operate the extra services. We must remember that there was a 12 month period where driver training was either banned or very restricted due to Covid distancing. During this period, crew were reaching retirement age as normal but were not able to be replaced, so before training drivers for the extra services EMR have had to train drivers to replace those who retired.

The planned transfer of Class 170 units from the West Midlands has been delayed due to delays in introducing new Class 196 trains to the West Midlands, so the 30+ year old current rolling stock is being worked harder than ever. As anyone with an old car will know they break down more often than new ones and the same **>** applies to old rolling stock.

The branch officers knew in advance that there would have to be timetable reductions and successfully lobbied to ensure that services to Skegness were not reduced. As to other routes affecting this branch, the Lincoln to Newark Northgate shuttles were reduced to peak services only, some Liverpool to Norwich services were removed from the timetable and Newark Castle to Crewe reduced to every other hour.

To add to these woes, EMR are still suffering industrial action from Senior Conductor members of RMT which means that many Sunday services are only operating thanks to EMR managers covering the shifts normally worked by Senior Conductors. David Harby

Exploring East Anglia

During September, I had my first break away from home since Covid struck us. An enjoyable few days with an excellent value Anglia Plus Rover exploring some branch lines I hadn't visited since childhood holidays. The Stadler Flirt Bi-modes in East Anglia are superb trains. With the engines in a separate unit (mini power cars) they are much quieter and without engines under the floor, they can have lower floors which make getting on or off much easier. This is made even better by them having steps which move out from under the vehicle at every stop so there is no gap between train and platform. Much more user friendly on curved platforms like Gainsborough Lea Road than the new CAF trains Northern are using.

If I have any criticism it is the tip up seats in the doorways. On a packed train from Norwich to Great Yarmouth passengers sitting on these seats blocked the doors and made getting on and off difficult. Even these cannot be blamed on Stadler or Greater Anglia – DfT insisted on a seating capacity which could only be met by fitting these tip up seats.

If you get the opportunity I can recommend giving East Anglia a try using the Anglia Plus one or three day Rover.

David Harby

The Greater Anglia (GA) franchise dates back before our EMR franchise and when they are compared we are very much second class citizens in Lincolnshire. With the GA franchise came a fleet of brand new rolling stock whereas all we are getting is second hand trains which are mainly over 20 years old with a handful only 16 years old.



Extended step and tip-up seats on a FLIRT

Rail Lincs 91 - 4

Be wary at Grantham station car park

As reported in Rail Lincs 90, Grantham station has received a £1.5million car park improvement scheme providing easier and safer access for motorists and pedestrians. Parking is now charged using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras. Users have to make payment at machines prior to leaving and are encouraged to make contactless payments, but cash can also be used on payment machines and at the booking office. The introduction of ANPR is cause for customers to be wary. The controlled area is denoted by signage. which is basically from the zebra crossing on Station Approach (Station Road West) past the station entrance to the boundary of railway land at the top of Station Road East. Any vehicle spending more than 20 minutes in this area will activate the charging system. In effect this allows 20 minutes free parking for dropping-off and picking-up, but then a scale of charging is imposed, starting at up to two hours, with off-peak charges during the daytime culminating in a £12 charge for 24 hours. A £5 Summertime offer has been available. The above charges apply to the LNER operated car parks and the two NCP car parks, under ANPR control, offer a £5 for 24 hours deal, but signage on the actual payment machines is not very clear.

Of concern to passengers wishing to use public transport, is the re-location of the bus stop to a position several metres further down Station Approach from the station entrance. The stop is used by the Stagecoach hourly Lincoln-Grantham service, which serves the large Manthorpe Road housing estate and villages on the Lincoln route. The bus stop has no shelter and lacks any signage from the station entrance, even timetable information is in hard to read small type in a scruffy frame. This is far from being a good example of integrated public transport. It is not known if buses remain at the stop for any length of time between inward and outgoing services, which is probably why the stop is outside the ANPR zone, otherwise every bus used on the route would need to be registered with the parking operator.

Railway employees' vehicles need to be individually registered to be exempt from being charged. There is scepticism as to the chaos that could ensue if there are major disruptions to train services. An LNER employee travelling from Grantham, who is occasionally picked-up by a family member rather than using a 'registered' vehicle, asked about this likely scenario and was advised to tell the car driver to 'drive around outside the charging zone rather than remain waiting in the area and be charged'!

Phil Mason



Grantham station in the distance and the exposed bus stop. Not somewhere to wait on a rainy day when this photo was taken.

Editor's Mail



COMPULSORY TICKETING

In regard to Chris Brown's article about compulsory pre-booked ticketing (Rail Lincs 90), this is likely to be something many potential rail passengers will only become aware of once they apply for tickets after Covid restrictions end. Even so, passenger numbers are likely to reduce permanently because of an increase in home working, something which may be driven by the growth in unwanted attention that women now receive in streets and on public transport. Although I would normally be in favour of a nationalised rail network, it is evident that a level of insularity has now crept into the senior management of some companies such as LNER who seem to have no conception of the needs of rail passengers. Traffic hold ups, cancelled trains, breakdowns and accidents leading to missed connections and stranded passengers are just some of the things which can happen. If passengers can only use one particular train or they miss a connection there will be no point waiting for another one. Opposition to restrictions on rail travel has been raised by articles in Railwatch as well as being of great concern to members in our own region. I think that this matter needs to be assessed by the Department for Transport and if necessary by government ministers. People need to be encouraged to use railways, not deterred from using them. Tom Rookes. Lincoln

SUGGITT'S LANE CROSSING

At long last it seems that the saga of Suggitt's Lane crossing is coming to an end.

Network Rail closed the level crossing several years ago, causing protests among residents who faced a lengthy detour to get to Cleethorpes' sea front.

Campaigners managed to get the issue raised in Parliament, with the Prime Minister pledging his support for a replacement bridge.

Planning officials however rejected the designs after objectors had said the bridge would not only obstruct their properties, but lead to potential problems on match days: Grimsby Town's Blundell Park ground is situated nearby.

So it was up to us councillors on the Planning Committee to come to a decision one way or another. We took part in a lengthy debate, agreeing that further discussions should take place between officials and Network Rail to try and accommodate the needs of neighbouring residents. We also accepted that a gate should be closed when Town were playing at home.

Nevertheless I had the honour of proposing that we supported the bridge scheme, and my motion was duly passed. It is thus hoped that building work can begin as soon as is practically possible. *Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby.*



RAIL REPLACEMENT

My dad and I decided to take advantage of the Saturday only service to make a trip to Brigg. However, on buying the tickets at Grimsby Town station, he was told that the return journey would be by a replacement bus. This didn't worry us unduly, as the slower bus schedule would mean we'd have a little more time in this Lincolnshire market town.

Anyway, after our meal and a browse through a shop or two, we made our way back to the isolated Brigg station. There was no indication there that the trains were being replaced by buses that day, and we wondered if anyone had turned up for a non-existent service and had waited in vain.

As indeed we did for our bus. You see without any of the Real Time Indicators that have been installed on other stations, we had no idea whether the bus itself had been axed or was simply running exceptionally late.

In the end, after 30 minutes, we decided enough was enough, dad ordering a Taxi to Barnetby where we caught a Grimsby-bound train.

Hardly an experience to encourage people to give up their cars in favour of a more environmentally-friendly alternative.

Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby

COMBINED EAST MIDLANDS & LINCOLNSHIRE NEWSLETTER

Many thanks for the combined East Midlands/Lincolnshire newsletter (*Rail Lincs* 90); in particular the most informative article about rhe DfT's Restoring Your Railway Fund.

With regards to the Maid Marian Line, I would just like to offer a small correction. The connection on to the Erewash Valley Main Line is actually South of Alfreton at Pye Bridge. Perhaps for that reason, I have never personally heard the line described as Ashfield to Alfreton.

Also, I was a little puzzled as to why the proposal to restore services between Shirebrook and Ollerton wasn't mentioned (the so-called Robin Hood Line extension).

Campaigners from the pressure group have certainly been to East Midlands branch meetings these last few years – and I think, at one point did actually join Railfuture (and all being well they still are!)

I hope all this activity does at least keep these schemes alive, and look forward to the day when, some at least come to fruition!

Gordon Bestwick, Sutton in Ashfield

Easy Stations

The response to our Easy Stations survey has been quite good but there are still stations that haven't been surveyed so if you haven't already sent us a survey of your local station please do so.

From the responses already received it is clear that there is a long way to go before all station platforms have tactile paving. Something else frequently missing is good signage pointing to the station. Metheringham is a good example where users of the busy B1188 Sleaford Road which passes the village could be forgiven for thinking it is not rail served as there is no sign whatsoever indicating there is a station. David Harby

(Even important stations on the East Coast Main Line, see page 5, are not 'easy' if you want to connect to a bus service *Ed.*)

An Adopter's day out to Luton

On Tuesday 5 October, I treated myself to a day out with East Midlands Railway (EMR) which got off to a good start with the 09:43 to Leicester arriving on time and an excellent guard checking and selling tickets after every stop. On arrival at Nottingham we, I was travelling with David Harby, noted that the 10:50 to London St. Pancras was cancelled owing to a fault with the train.

We re-boarded our Class 158 and continued on to Leicester, but with a new guard who was heard but never seen, despite numerous passengers boarding at unmanned stations. Arrival at Leicester was on time to connect with the 11:36 to St. Pancras which arrived on time and having been well looked after, including a gluten free vegetarian wrap, and having tickets checked, we arrived at Kettering on time.

After a short wait an 8-car Class 360 electric appeared and we settled down to a swift run to Luton, but without any ticket checks and arrived on time. Luton station! What can you say other than what a dump with shabby paintwork, faulty destination screens, no disabled access to platforms 1-4 and no tactile paving on platform 5 and to cap it all, no toilet paper in the only gents toilet.

We set off back on time in another '360' and had a fast run to Bedford where we sat for guite a long time before setting off at a very sedate pace on the slow line to Wellingborough where we arrived a minute before we should have arrived at Kettering, A short sprint to Kettering then ensued, during which we were overtaken by the London St. Pancras to Nottingham service that was our connection at Kettering. On arrival at Kettering the Nottingham train was still in the platform so we presumed it was waiting for connecting passengers, but as we and half a dozen others reached the stairs down to the platform. Io and behold the

Nottingham train pulled out meaning that passengers for Market Harborough, Leicester and Nottingham had a 30 minute wait, but if they were going to Loughborough, East Midlands Parkway or Beeston had a wait of up to an hour.

The whole structure of the Midland Mainline Timetable is based on connections at Kettering to/from Wellingborough, Bedford, Luton and Luton Airport Parkway, but if for the sake of 2 minutes these connections are not made then the whole timetable falls apart. We waited 30 minutes for our next Nottingham train which meant that we had to catch the Leicester to Lincoln train at Nottingham, rather than as originally planned at Leicester, to ensure a seat. A good journey to Nottingham ensued with tickets checked and a nice cup of coffee.

On arrival at Nottingham we crossed the footbridge and then walked halfway to Hykeham to wait for our train to arrive at platform 3C. Fortunately it was dry so we did not get wet as we stood and waited for our train to arrive, there being few passenger facilities in the wasteland that is platform 1C, 2, 3C. As we stood waiting the numbers, like Topsy grew and grew. Eventually a Class 156 arrived, but owing to the numbers getting off and the 150+ getting on, the train was late departing with a full seated load and well over 30 passengers standing. The guard made good announcements but until Newark was unable to get down the train. After Newark, still with a 75% load the guard managed to check all tickets and sell to those who did not have them, but of course who knows how many travelled from Nottingham to Newark without paying. We arrived at Hykeham 5 minutes late, a commendable effort from our crew. An interesting day with the good and the bad from EMR and the ugly from Thameslink - Luton.

Repairs to improve reliability at Keadby Canal Bridge



The unique Keadby Canal Bridge in North Lincolnshire will benefit from improved reliability as Network Rail carry out crucial repair work.

A structural fault was located on the bridge in September and the signaller was unable to solve it, triggering disruption for passengers travelling on the busy line between Doncaster and Scunthorpe.

Essential work is now underway to ensure the bridge can continue to operate reliably for the foreseeable future.

Engineers are carrying out a full inspection of the bridge and will install a live monitoring system to obtain further information on the issues. This will allow them to put together detailed designs for long-term repairs, including work to realign some of the equipment.

Keadby Canal Bridge is a fascinating, one-of-a-kind piece of engineering, but when something goes wrong, it can take a little longer to fix. The sophisticated bridge – Vazon railway bridge – slides open, allowing boats travelling on the Stainforth and Keadby canal to pass through and then slides back across so that train services can continue. The bridge is a unique feature on the canal, being part of the rich heritage of the area.

It will be necessary to limit the use of the bridge in order for work to be carried out safely, so Network Rail has planned the work with the Canal and River Trust to minimise as much disruption as possible for canal users and allow train services to continue.

The bridge will remain closed to canal traffic and will open for a short period on alternate days. This work will not impact train services and the level crossing will remain open for locals.

Source Rail Technology Magazine

EDITOR'S COMMENT

As I gathered material together for this edition of Rail Lincs, I became somewhat confused about the current state of the rail industry and its relationship with the government. Most topical at the present time is the forthcoming COP26 climate summit, yet within the railway industry there are examples of conflicting policies. When David Harby sent me photographs of electric locomotives stabled at lpswich. I couldn't resist having a bit of fun on our front page, with acknowledgement to Reverend Wilbert Awdry. For many years, Railfuture and similar organisations have been campaigning for more electrification of the UK rail network. Lincolnshire is no exception, the Joint Line upgrade took place a few years ago for the benefit of rail freight, but trains from Felixstowe to Doncaster and beyond continue to be diesel hauled. Likewise the busy freight corridor to Immingham is not electrified. Further south, the route through Peterborough to Leicester and on to the midlands is reliant on diesel traction. The North London Line is often stated as the electrified option, but pathing must surely be an increasing problem on both the East Coast and West Coast mainlines. There are reports that the new East-West rail line is being built as a non-electrified route. Campaigns for more electrification and Network Rail's plans for more overhead wires are knocked on the head when the railway press reports that due to the recent increases in energy charges, freight train operators are to be charged more for drawing electricity and are, therefore, increasing the use of diesel locomotives to counter this increase, resulting in more polluting machines running under electrified overhead equipment. In parallel to all this, a lot of funding is being used on alternatives such as hydrogen and battery power - shades of the wasted

resources used to experiment with different diesel locomotives at the end of the steam era.

Recently, the Lincolnshire Branch had a stall at the Caistor model railway exhibition. The main purpose was to promote Railfuture by distributing backcopies of the newsletter. Many exhibition attendees were interested in our activities and particularly wanted to know more about the South Humber Rail Link to introduce a 2-hourly service between Gainsborough Central and Barton-on-Humber utilising the freight curve at Ulceby. The other topic attracting local interest, also publicised in the local media in North Lincolnshire, is the proposal by LNER to extend the Kings Cross to Lincoln service on to Grimsby and Cleethorpes. When talking to visitors it was important to impress on those criticising train operating companies. that many of the shortcomings such a timetable frequency and rolling stock availability were the responsibility of the Department for Transport.

I have generally tried to avoid too much mention of classes of locomotives and rolling stock in Rail Lincs as most passengers are more concerned with actual train services. As this is Rail Lincs 91. I make no excuse for mentioning the Class 91 electric locomotives, built by British Rail Engineering Limited, which have been the mainstay of East Coast Main Line services for around thirty years. Earlier I mentioned electric locomotives hauling freight trains and remember when the Class 91 was first introduced, the intention was for the locomotives to haul passenger services during the daytime and freight traffic through the night - another policy which never materialised! Phil Mason



Friends of the Barton Line

• The Group is becoming exasperated at the persistent deterioration of the Barton Line service and was concerned that the very survival of the line was at risk. Members are being encouraged to make use of the TOC's Delay Repay facility at every opportunity if only to ensure that the TOC was aware of the inconvenience which was being caused, and to write as individuals to their MP over the appalling standard of the train service.

• East Midlands Railway (EMR) guards based at Lincoln have been learning the route of the Barton Line in preparation for the proposed replacement of TransPennine Express (TPE) crew from 12 December. Similarly, Freightliner Immingham drivers will be learning the route once Covid restrictions are eased.

• TPE is looking to install improved and additional cycle parking facilities at Cleethorpes station.

• The Barton Lions have generously installed three attractive planters at Barton station and are looking to resume clearing of the old goods platform. A request has been made to Network Rail for the reinstatement of erstwhile buffer stops and it was noted that disused sets are located near Pasture Road crossing and also at New Holland.

Anthony Berridge

RAILFUTURE LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH AGM

Hopefully, the 2022 AGM will be held in March 2022, but because of the current Covid-19 uncertainty, it has not been possible to arrange a date. Depending on current restrictions applying nearer the time, further details will have to be notified later. Branch Officers' reports will be in the next *Rail Lincs*.

The purpose of this notice is to remind members that the posts of Hon. Chairman, Hon Vice Chairman, and Hon Secretary are open to all fully paid up members of the Lincolnshire Branch of Railfuture.

In accordance with the Branch procedures, members wishing to stand for these posts are invited to inform the Hon Secretary in writing before 31 December 2021.

Any person wishing to stand should provide the Hon Secretary with a signed written declaration of willingness to stand along with a 100 word manifesto which will be published in the next *Rail Lincs*. The declaration must be supported in writing by another fully paid up member of the Lincolnshire Branch of Railfuture.

No canvassing for votes is permitted other than the manifesto published in *Rail Lincs* and the question and answer session at the AGM.

Similarly fully paid up members of the Lincolnshire Branch of Railfuture wishing to join the Branch Committee should provide a signed declaration of willingness to stand with signed support by another fully paid up member of the Lincolnshire Branch of Railfuture to the Hon Secretary by 31 December 2021. No manifesto is required for Committee membership.

If there is only one candidate for each of the four executive posts then there will be no election and the meeting will be asked to ratify the selection. In this case the manifestos will not be published. Dr Don Peacock Hon Secretary

CORRECTION

The photograph by Jerry Alderson on page 6 of *Rail Lincs* 90 is Corby station and not Kettering as stated in the caption.



Lack of electrification in Lincolnshire

Photographs Clockwise: Freight passing Barnetby (Tim Mickleburgh); Freight at Lincoln (Graham Lightfoot); at Lincoln (Tim Mickleburgh); Rail Head Treatment Train and an Azuma at Lincoln (Graham Lightfoot).







LINCOLNSHIRE BRANCH

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