

Branch Secretary: Mr. T.J. Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ
Phone 81721.

BETTER TRAINS FROM NORWICH TO BIRMINGHAM

Through trains from Norwich to Birmingham will, from May 2nd, be of locomotive-hauled stock and will be faster.

British Rail are to be congratulated on this improvement - something for which the Railway Invigoration Society has been pressing over a number of years. BR themselves were very conscious of the disadvantages of the diesel multiple units being used on such a long-distance cross-country run.

The introduction of hauled stock now can be seen as an indirect effect of the advent of the High Speed Train on the Western Region, and the subsequent "cascading" of carriages to other services.

As a curtain-raiser, for several weeks recently the 09.55 ex Norwich and the 16.15 ex Birmingham return working have in fact been composed of a 5-coach set hauled by a class 31 locomotive.

NEXT BRANCH MEETING

The next meeting of the East Anglian Branch of the RIS will be held on SATURDAY MAY 14th, commencing at 2.15 p.m. in the Kennedy Room of the Cambridge Union Society. The Union Society is in the centre of Cambridge. From the railway station, walk into the city centre (or take 180 or 181 bus), then along Sidney Street, turning right at the Round Church.

Main items on the Agenda will be:

1. National Report (including discussion on the Government's White Paper on Transport, if it has been published by then.)
2. Reports from Line Users' Associations and Rail Action Committees.
3. Reports and discussion of other RIS activity.
4. Should the Great Northern electrification be extended from Royston to Cambridge? - Mr. S.F. Wilkinson will introduce a discussion.
5. The Work of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee. A talk by Mr. M.D. Cornish, of Great Cornard, Sudbury. Mr. Cornish has been a member of the East Anglian TUCC (which covers Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambs) for nine years and has also actively campaigned for the retention of the Marks Tey - Sudbury line.

NEW LINE USERS' ASSOCIATIONS

Practically every Paytrain line in East Anglia now has a local line users' association in being or planned. Two new ones now coming into being will complete the picture. ~~lot off~~

1. SUDBURY & MARKS TEY RAIL USERS' ASSOCIATION - a group of commuters on this line distributed leaflets on the trains in February and, as a result, attracted a good attendance at a meeting on March 2nd, at which a steering committee was set up. We have been in close contact with them and have been able to advise them about a constitution and the practicalities of running an association. The above name was chosen and a further meeting has been arranged for Wednesday, April 20th at 8.30 p.m. in Sudbury Town Hall. Further information can be obtained from Mr. D. Phillips, Lower Mead, Lamarsh Road, Alphamstone, Sudbury (Phone Bures 7105).
2. EAST NORFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION? The RIS Branch Committee has decided to go ahead with plans to establish an association on the Yarmouth - Norwich line (both Acle and Reedham routes) and the above title is one possible one. We hope to have two representatives of NENTA to give their advice at an inaugural meeting, which it is planned to hold in Brundall on a weekday evening at the end of May. Full details will be sent to RIS members in the area in due course.

SELT: The South East Lincs. Travellers' Association held a meeting in Sleaford on February 12th, with Mr. Hendry, of BR Divisional HQ, when a useful discussion took place. It is understood that the 18.07 Lincoln - Sleaford train will be re-timed, so that it no longer misses the connection to Skegness by 8 minutes - a complaint made by SELTA. Much concern is being expressed about a BR proposal to introduce one 10-hour shift on the Boston - Skegness section, which would mean no trains out of Skegness before 09.50 or in the late evening. Many local councillors, and the local press, are as opposed to this as are SELTA members. The main problem is the number of manned level crossings. One short-term solution suggested is to close certain lightly used crossings to vehicular traffic during the early morning.

WHAT FUTURE FOR LOWESTOFT FREIGHT?

Certain rail freight recently destined for Lowestoft has been taken by rail to Yarmouth and then carried by road the last 10 miles. This is because two sidings were removed south of the Central Station and craneage facilities withdrawn; and because a private siding for the Shell (UK) Ltd. depot, in connection with North Sea Oil exploration, has been closed and partly lifted. A load of 500 tons of steel for Shell was carried this way, followed very recently by three lorry-loads of pipes. About 50 tons of craneage traffic (i.e. goods requiring to be lifted by crane) were carried this way in the six months up to December 1976.

This information was given to the RIS by local railwaymen, and resulted in our having some correspondence with BR. Arising from discussion by the Branch Committee at its meeting on March 19th, it was agreed to send an Open Letter, signed by the three officers of the Branch, to BR, the British Transport Docks Board, the local MP and prospective Parliamentary candidates, the Secretary of State for Transport and Opposition spokesman on Transport.

In the letter, which was reported in detail in the "Lowestoft Journal" of 25.3.76, we state: "This may seem a relatively small amount of freight, but we are at present in an economic recession. What worries us is the harm which these cuts in rail facilities can do to the future prosperity of Lowestoft, when the economic situation improves and more traffic is available. Will the capacity for it be there on the railway?

Besides, how many more Lowestofts are there? Are there not other places where similar cuts threaten future economic activity? To say nothing of the well-known environmental advantages of moving as much freight as possible, as far as possible, by rail...

It is ultimately the government's responsibility. We therefore ask you to use your influence to ensure the government policy enables British Rail to maintain, and indeed expand, the existing freight network." The letter concludes by stressing points in the RIS' own national policy towards freight, and calling for support for these.

The first reply to be received came from Lowestoft Docks Manager, Mr. C.S. Bradley, stating, "I can assure you that, so far as my Board is concerned..... the preservation of the rail freight facility is considered to be an important part of the total package available for shippers, existing and potential, through this port." Mr. Bradley also said that, partly as a result of the Docks Board's efforts, approximately 4,000 tonnes of steel ingots imported through Lowestoft in 1976 were shipped by rail to inland destinations.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our Branch Committee member, Mr. C.J. Milnes, writes, "At present 177 million tons of freight is moved by rail. With new development, the following traffic could be added:

100 large sidings of 250,000 tons	= 25 million tons.
50 small sidings of 50,000 tons	= 2.5 million tons.
New traffic to express wagons	= 10 million tons.
Freightliner growth	= 8 million tons.
Block train traffic increase	= 20 million tons.

Total - 65.5 million tons.

"This traffic increase will depend on the future of many key industries, especially coal and coke, motor manufacturing and steel-making; though at present we should increase traffic as much as possible, especially siding to siding and container..."

"If lorries were made to pay their full environmental costs, the railway freight traffic would be 240 million tons per year and would show a profit of about £15 million."

CENTRE LINK - A MODEST SUCCESS (see last Newsletter) The Centre Link bus service from Norwich railway station to the hospital via the City centre and bus station carried 245 passengers daily in its first 5 weeks of operation - about 10% more than its predecessor, the "Shopper Hopper", which did not serve the railway station. The real increase was probably more, if one makes allowances for the fact that the "Shopper Hopper" operated during the Christmas shopping period, when one would expect the number of users to be higher than normal.

NORTH EAST NORFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

NESTA's Committee met on 8.3.77 and elected Mr. D. Winter as the new chairman of the association. Other new members of the committee are Miss K. Garwood, Mr. A. Ison and Mr. N. McMorris. Mr. Winter is manager of Baxter Travel, the British Rail agent at Cromer, and Mr. McMorris is an inspector with Eastern Counties, so NETA should be well-provided with first-hand information on rail and bus matters!

NETA had 134 members at the beginning of March, mostly concentrated in the Cromer and Sheringham areas. Increased publicity in Mundesley, North Walsham, Worstead and Wroxham were discussed, in the hope of boosting membership there, as well, of course, as publicising the line.

A Members' Bulletin has been produced and a new Newsletter for mass distribution is being prepared. A members' meeting is planned for Cromer, probably on June 15th, and the possibility of an exhibition in the autumn is being investigated.

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

The Annual General Meeting of ESTA will be on Saturday, May 7th at Saxmundham Church Hall, commencing at 4.00 p.m. It will be open to all members and interested persons. After the business section and, hopefully, light refreshments, two films will be shown: "The Great Highway" (the story of one of Britain's oldest, and now most modern, rail routes) and "Europe by Train" (including Switzerland, the Rhine and Venice).

The meeting has been timed to fit in with the arrivals of the 14.50 train from Lowestoft, the 14.48 from Ipswich and the 14.24 bus from Aldeburgh and Leiston.

The Felixstowe Branch of ESTA will hold its AGM on May 10th. It is also organising a special train from Felixstowe to Lowestoft, including a trip on the freight-only Saxmundham - Leiston - Sizewell branch on Saturday June 25th.

Provisional timings are:

Felixstowe	09.30	Lowestoft	4.00
Ipswich	10.00	Oulton Broad South	4.05
Woodbridge	10.15	Woodbridge	4.50
Oulton Broad South	12.00	Westerfield - reverse	
Lowestoft	12.15	Felixstowe	5.30
		Ipswich	6.00

The train will be a diesel multiple unit, travelling over the Sizewell line on the outward journey. Return fares are very reasonable, at £2.50 (child £2.00) from Felixstowe and Ipswich, £2.00 (child £1.25) from Woodbridge. If you would like to go, contact Mr. C.W. Taylor, 15 Gainsborough Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk, IP11 7HT (Phone 70612)

BY PLANE OR BY TRAIN?

The objections by the RIS and British Rail to a proposed Norwich - London scheduled air service (see last newsletter) were unsuccessful, in that the Civil Aviation Authority has granted permission for Air Anglia to operate up to 20 flights weekly in either direction.

Peters Aviation, whose application was turned down, have however appealed against the CAA's decision and so the matter is as yet by no means resolved.

HOW ABOUT SOME DELTICS?

The transfer of some "Deltic" diesel locomotives from the East Coast Main Line to the Norwich - Liverpool St. route following the advent of the High Speed Train, was a suggestion we made to BR in November (see last Newsletter).

A reply from Eastern Region Acting General Manager Mr. G. Myers, has been received, setting out reasons why BR would be against such a move. The "Deltics" were designed for use on long sections of easily-graded line with few intermediate stops; the Norwich route, with sharper gradients and several intermediate stops, "would prevent the full potential of these locomotives from being exploited."

Mr. Myers also points out that most "Deltics" will be retained to operate Kings Cross - Cleethorpes/Hull/York services in the late 70s and early 80s, and that by 1982 they will be life-expired.

He concludes, "I do appreciate your having written to me in such a helpful and constructive manner, and please be assured that it is not in any mood of 'negative' response that we are unable to adopt your suggestion... but that only serious consideration leads me to the conclusions outlined."

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RAIL BARGAINS!!!

1. Merrymakers BR are again offering a wide range of attractive Merrymaker special trains from our area to places like Torquay, Scarborough, the Clyde, Bournemouth, Snowdonia, the Cheddar Gorge, Longleat, Blackpool and Edinburgh, mostly from April to October. A leaflet and booking form are enclosed with this newsletter. You are advised to book in good time - experience has shown that these trips are usually very popular.
2. Anglia Ranger Ticket For £5.50 (children £2.75) you can have seven days' unlimited travel in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambs. Even if you only make 3 or 4, or in some cases only 2, day trips in a week, this ticket can still save you money.
3. East Anglia Rover Tickets give seven days' unlimited travel in an area bounded by London, Cambridge, Peterborough and Spalding for £13.90 (child £6.95), second class, with special rates for families.
4. Senior Citizen Railcards we are pleased to report that the prices of these popular railcards remain unchanged (at £6 and £3) and that they are now valid for a whole year from the date of purchase.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

We welcome more new members to the RIS:

1. Mrs A.P. Moon, 26 Lancaster Road, IPSWICH, Suffolk.
2. Mrs O.F. Bridger, 8 Cross Street, LEISTON, Suffolk.
3. Mr. D.G. Durrant, 69 Blackheath Road, LOWESTOFT, Suffolk.
4. Mr. K. Benjamin, 17 Camberley Road, IPSWICH, Suffolk.
5. Mr. J.W. Page, 25 Jannys Close, AYLSHAM, Norfolk, NR11 6DL.
6. Mr. J.H. Greenacre, 80-81 Salisbury Road, GT. YARMOUTH, Norfolk.

BENTLEY BUSES - HOW MUCH CHANCE?

A better bus service to Bentley instead of a reopened station - that, as members will recall, was what Suffolk County Council promised to consider. The County Surveyor also promised to inform the RIS, as well as the Bentley Station Action Committee, when progress was made. To date, we have heard nothing. Sounds a bit like a repetition of Wisbech??

The omens for better buses are certainly not good at present. The EADT (9.3.77) under a headline "Bus services in Suffolk face new threat of cutbacks" was not optimistic in its report of discussions between the County Council and Eastern Counties over the level of subsidies.

Yet some people in the corridors of power are talking of more "assured bus services" to replace rail links...

UNFAIR FARES?

In recent years, BR have moved away from charging fares on a mileage balance, and this policy - which certainly has many good points - has also led to anomalies. One of these is that the fare over a very short distance (say, 3-4 miles) can work out at much more per mile than that over a medium distance. Our member Mr. L.J. Howes points out, for instance, that the fare from his local station of Spooner Row to Wymondham (3½ miles) come to 6p per mile, whereas the 15½ mile trip from Spooner Row to Norwich come to only 3½p per mile.

Another member, Mr. G.R. Burgess, has noted a similar anomaly with regard to Cambridge - Waterbeach and Cambridge - Ely, and wrote to BR pointing this out. In reply to Mr. Burgess, Mr. R.M. Senter, BR's Passenger Commercial Officer for the Norwich Division, wrote, "Whilst I would agree that the amount for the short distance is comparatively high, I think it only fair to remind you that at the last national fares increase on January 2nd, the increase was held down to 8% (Cambridge - Waterbeach) ... whereas in the majority of cases throughout the country, a 12% - 15% increase was charged.

"I do, however, note the point you make and assure you that, if another revision of fares is necessary, which hopefully it will not, your comments will not go unheeded."

SEE THE AYLSHAM LINE!

Your chance to ride in a diesel multiple unit over the line from Wroxham to Lenwade, part of which the Aylsham & District Rail Action Committee are working hard to get reopened to passengers, will come on Saturday, September 17th - 25 years and 2 days after its closure to passengers.

Full details of the special are enclosed with this Newsletter. Send your bookings, and any further queries, to Mr. R.C. Rose, 26 London Road, Downham Market, Norfolk. Book early to avoid disappointment. It looks like being a popular trip that will create a lot of interest in the area.

IPSWICH BY-PASS: THE DEBATE CONTINUES

The campaign against the proposed Ipswich southern by-pass, at least in its present £39 million form, has gathered momentum in recent months. The RIS has played a leading role, putting forward the rail alternative.

Hardly any of the supporters of the proposed road has attempted to answer our points on the case for improving the railways. The only notable attempt was one by Ipswich MP Mr. Ken Weetch, who claimed to have done a study of the railways' potential in East Anglia which, he said, showed that they could never be an alternative to a by-pass.

However, when asked for a copy of his study, for discussion by our members, Mr. Weetch found himself unable to supply us with one. Indeed, he went on to say that all he had was "some notes", on which basis he had spoken to a reporter.

That reporter's write-up (EADT 24.2.77) gives no figures for any road - rail transfer of passengers or freight; nor does it take up any of the specific proposals we made (doubling part of the Felixstowe branch, installation of private sidings, reopening stations, park-and-ride schemes etc. etc.) Indeed, we are not even told if Mr. Weetch's study is based on the capacity of the railways with their present infrastructure; or as they could be, given a greater share of transport investment.

The RIS and Transport 2000 jointly organised a private meeting on March 11th in Ipswich, and invited Mr. Tyme. He was accompanied by Mrs Diane Rudin, of the Archway Improvement Association, London. 30 people crowded into the Coffee Lounge of the Golden Lion and, at the end of the meeting, passed with one abstention a resolution, "That this meeting agrees to ask Mr. Tyme and his associates to contest the validity of the proposed public enquiry."

Full minutes of the meeting have already been sent to all who attended, and a few spare copies are available from the Branch Secretary.

Briefly, Mr. Tyme argued that objectors should prevent the enquiry from opening, until the Department of Transport complied with Statute Law, Administrative Law and natural justice, all of which it was contravening by its present procedures. This was the best way of presenting one's case. He had intervened with good effect in this way in the enquiries at Airedale, Winchester and Archway. To those who argued that this was undemocratic, he would reply that democracy was being undermined by the present system. He described the Department of Transport as not really concerned with all transport but only with roads. It was "a super-bureaucratic machine ... in alliance with the road lobby." "The resources crisis," said Mr. Tyme, "brings us to within an ace of loosing every democratic right we have."

A group of Ipswich industrialists had started a campaign for the new road. Mr. Tyme suggested that they read the OECD report "World Energy Outlook" which recommended shifting freight off roads and on to rail and water. It had, furthermore, been commissioned by industrialists, concerned about future world energy problems. New roads did not necessarily bring prosperity: motorways in Yorkshire and Lancashire had "bled economic activity out of the areas" - they led to fewer manufacturing and distribution centres by major firms. They also generated further congestion.

It was stressed by several people present that we wanted to see less traffic in Ipswich, and safer roads in the town - but we did not see the proposed road as the only, or the proper, answer.

The RIS Branch Committee discussed the matter further at its March 19th meeting and unanimously resolved to invite Mr. Tyme to challenge the validity of the enquiry.

The public enquiry is due to open on TUESDAY MAY 3rd at 10.30 a.m. in the Copdock International Hotel, in the country outside Ipswich.

Why not in Ipswich itself, you may ask? So did your committee. The only reason given by the authorities was that there was nowhere large enough in Ipswich itself. One would have thought though, that putting an enquiry in a village outside was hardly likely to encourage people to come in thousands...

It is important that as many RIS members and supporters, and other objectors, as possible, do make an effort to attend the first day of the enquiry. Members arriving in Ipswich by train can catch the service 207 bus to Colchester outside Ipswich railway station at 09.19 or 10.34, arriving outside the hotel at approximately 09.35 or 10.46. There is also a bus from Colchester bus station at 09.00, arriving at Copdock at 09.40. Buses run approximately one per hour on this route during the daytime.

Any member with a car and able to give lifts from Ipswich, or anyone requiring a lift, should contact the Secretary who will co-ordinate transport. It may also be possible to share a taxi from Ipswich.

OUR VIEWS ON ROAD ENQUIRIES

As a tacit admission that its present system of road enquiries is not all that it should be, the Government has set up an Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment under Sir George Leitch.

You didn't know? Nor did a lot of other people! It was scantly publicised and the time for submitting evidence was short. Our thanks to Dr. W.R. Jondorf for telling us about it.

Following consultation among the Branch Committee, we sent in a 700-word submission on 13.3.77.

We urged examination of the rail alternative to any major road scheme. This could lead to the conclusion, "either that the proposed road need not be built at all, or that a much more modest scheme will suffice. We favour the rail alternative because it is a civilised alternative: it is safer, quieter, uses less land and encourages more sensible use of fuel."

Inspectors at public enquiries should be genuinely independent. At all stages in planning new roads, the Department of Transport should be required to seek the views of the Department of the Environment, Department of Energy, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food and other transport bodies, especially British Rail.

Objectors to schemes should then have available to them data on direct and indirect costs of the road (e.g. loss of agricultural land), the capacity of the local rail system to take more passengers and freight, with or without extra investment and details of such investment.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN

Several RIS members and supporters in and around Cambridge attended public meetings held in early March to discuss local aspects of the Plan.

Mr. S.F. Wilkinson has pressed the County Council, both orally and in writing, to give a firmer commitment to retaining the present rail system, encouraging more rail freight and the long-term possibility of reopening passenger services on the Cambridge - St. Ives and March - Wisbech lines.

CAMBRIDGE - KINGS CROSS SERVICE

On Thursday March 3rd, RIS members Mr. S.F. and Mrs J.M. Wilkinson carried out a survey on behalf of the Cambridge Rail Action Group. Only passengers travelling the whole section between Cambridge and Kings Cross, on the 11.30 up and 15.30 down train, were asked for information.

87 passengers answered, 13 foreigners were unable to do so, and 3 people refused.

Asked, "Do you realise that, from October 1977, due to a recent BR decision not to electrify between Royston and Cambridge, passengers to and from Kings Cross will have to change at Royston?", 16 said "yes", 71 said, "No". To a further question, 65 said they would be inconvenienced by having to change trains at Royston; 22 said they would not, provided that the journey time was not lengthened.

This information will be among that used by CRAG in its campaign to get the Kings Cross - Royston electrification extended to Cambridge - an idea supported by other local bodies, including the City Council.

IN BRIEF

1. The RIS' suggestion of a plan in Ipswich station entrance, showing people arriving by train where the various country bus stops are, has been put into effect by Eastern Counties, we are pleased to report.
2. On February 17th, Mr. T.J. Garrod gave a talk on transport and the work of the RIS to the AGM of the Oulton Broad Liberals.
3. The new Membership Secretary of the Aylsham & District Rail Action Committee is Mr. J. Gallow of 46 Richmond Rise, Reepham. ADRAC is planning to start a series of surveys of potential usage of a reopened line with a pilot scheme in Buxton.
4. The Wymondham, Dereham & Fakenham Rail Action Committee is to conduct its next survey of potential usage shortly, in the Toftwood area.
5. The Breckland Line Users' Association plans to issue its next Newsletter, coupled with large-scale distribution of BR publicity, in May.
6. West Norfolk Public Transport Users hope to hold the RIS exhibition in Downham Market Town Hall from June 5th till June 12th. WNPTU is campaigning, so far unsuccessfully, for car-parking facilities to be available next to Magdalen Road station.
7. WyDFRAC supporters are being encouraged to write to County Council candidates, putting the case for reopening the Fakenham line. RIS members are reminded of the desirability of writing to candidates about public transport in general. The elections are on May 5th.