

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

(incorporating Railway Invigoration Society
and Railway Development Association)

EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH NEWSLETTER NO. 29

January/February 1979

Branch Secretary: Mr. T.J. Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ
(Tel: 81721; or at work, Norwich 28181 ex. 44)

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A RAILBORNE NEW YEAR!

Saturday February 3rd: RDS East Anglian Branch Annual General Meeting, Ipswich Town Hall, 2.15 p.m. Followed by talk by John Ogilvie (Hon. Technical Adviser to the RDS)

Saturday February 10th: RDS National Committee meeting in London.

Saturday February 3rd - March 3rd: RDS Exhibition, Bury St. Edmunds Library.

Monday March 3rd - Thursday April 5th: RDS Exhibition, Histon Library.

Saturday March 10th: Branch Committee meeting, Lowestoft.

Saturday March 31st: SPECIAL PASSENGER TRAIN ON ST. IVES LINE. The RDS has chartered a 2 x 2 diesel multiple unit to leave Cambridge between 11.30 and 12.00 and make two return trips along the St. Ives line as far as Swavesey. Fares: £1.00 return Cambridge - Swavesey or Longstanton; 70p return Cambridge - Histon or Oakington. Full details from our Vice-Chairman, Mr. S.F. Wilkinson, who is also responsible for bookings. (52 Manor Park, Histon, Cambridge)

Saturday April 7th: RDS National Committee meeting in London.

Saturday April 21st: FAKENHAM, HERE WE COME! The RDS, in conjunction with WyDFRAC and the F&DRS, has chartered a 2 x 2 d.m.u. to run what is believed to be the first passenger train through to Fakenham since the closure of the Dereham - Fakenham section to passengers in 1964.

Departure will be from Norwich at about 11.00, returning by 19.40. Stops will be made at all stations except Hardingham; it is hoped to arrange a coach trip and/or another attraction at Fakenham while the train shuttles from there to Dereham and back before returning to Norwich.

Details and bookings: Mr. J.S. Hull, Cydonia Cottage, Station Road, Yaxham, Dereham, Norfolk.

Return fares: Norwich - Fakenham £2; Norwich - Dereham or Fakenham - Dereham £1.

May - RDS exhibition at Ipswich Central Library.

Saturday May 5th: RDS National AGM, Westgate Church Hall, Westgate, Peterborough, starting at 2.00 p.m.

Saturday May 19th: RDS/WAMRAC special train service: March - Wisbech - Cambridge - Wisbech - March; enabling Wisbech people to spend an afternoon in Cambridge. The RDS National Committee will also meet that afternoon at Cambridge.

Saturday June 2nd: RDS East Anglian Branch Spring Meeting: Kennedy Room, Cambridge Union Society. 2.00 p.m.

Saturday July 7th: RDS National Committee meeting, London.

Saturday July 14th: Branch Committee meeting, Felixstowe.

Sunday July 22nd: RDS/WyDFRAC special train, Dereham - Lowestoft.

Sunday September 2nd: RDS/WAMRAC special train, Wisbech - Lowestoft.

Saturday September 8th: RDS National Committee meeting, Birmingham.

Saturday September 29th: RDS Autumn Branch Meeting, Norwich.

Saturday October 6th or 13th: RDS/ADRAC special train Norwich - Lenwade and return; then Norwich - Reepham and return.

Saturday October 27th: Branch Committee meeting, Histon.

Saturday November 10th: RDS National Committee meeting, London.

Please send stamped addressed envelope with bookings for special trains.

THE DIESEL MULTIPLE UNITS - GETTING FEWER AND OLDER

There are very few spare DMU sets in East Anglia at the moment, which means that if any units break down, BR are sometimes forced to cancel trains or put on hauled stock.

Before Christmas, a number of instances of cancelled trains were experienced on the Cambridge - Ipswich service; while the 17.15 Norwich - Ipswich was occasionally cut, the 17.42 Inter City making extra stops at Diss, Stowmarket and Needham Market instead. The 17.12 Norwich - Yarmouth has been a hauled train instead of a DMU on several occasions; while a DMU failure of December 2nd meant that the 09.37 Lowestoft - Norwich was run by a class 31 with the stock of an overnight mail train, giving the rare sight of a travelling post office in Lowestoft station, but because of the complex shunting necessary running 30 minutes late.

On the Sheringham and Felixstowe lines, of course, it is not even possible to replace a DMU with a hauled train, thanks to the simplified layout of the terminus. Indeed, the six RDS charter specials listed on the front of this newsletter will run subject to stock being available.

The tight margin of DMU stock in the Norwich Division is really a symptom of a wider problem facing BR: that of an ageing fleet of diesel railcars (most are 20 years old or more) which is going to need replacement during the 1980s. The Chairman of the Central Transport Consultative Committee, Mr. Frank Higgins, told the Financial Times (16.11.78) that the Government should urgently find an extra £25-30 million to replace the DMUs. Our Society, and the rail unions, have for some time pointed out the need for such investment.

The RDS National Committee has decided to write to selected MPs on the matter; and to produce a report on the next generation of DMUs - why we urge investment in these now; how we think the designs of the 1950s and 1960s can be improved upon; and the possible role of lightweight vehicles like the Leyland one (see last Newsletters).

The East Anglian Branch has also sent a letter to all East Anglian MPs, urging their support; and pointing out that future energy problems, and the proposed phasing out of road tax and raising of petrol tax (which we advocated consideration of two years ago), make the need for public transport investment all the more pressing.

The Eastern Evening News published an editorial in support of our letter on 5.1.79, concluding, "The Railway Development Society's case for investment in public transport is gaining in strength all the time."

AWAYDAYS ON SALE AT 4 CHURCHILL AVENUE, NEWMARKET

For Saturdays this winter, Mr. D. Maudlin, Secretary of the Newmarket & District Rail Users' Association, has been selling Day Return tickets from Newmarket to London, at his home. During three Saturdays in December, 129 adults and 32 children took advantage of this special offer, of a trip to London for £2.80, bringing in £406 in revenue.

This arrangement could set a useful precedent for other towns and villages which, like Newmarket, have unstaffed stations and therefore normally only paytrain single fares available. The special facility is advertised in the N&DRUA's latest newsletter, which, as well as publicising other services and facilities, keeps local people up to date with changes on their line. The old awning at Newmarket station has been dismantled and replaced by three new shelters and a cycle shed. New colour light signals enable the same services to operate on a single track through the station as previously on double track. The station is also to get a Tannoy announcements system controlled from Chippenham Junction signal box.

SUDBURY IMPROVEMENTS: Our colleagues in SMTRUA have succeeded in getting the platform resurfaced and the approach road repaired, plus a sign on the station telling people about the BR agents in the town. Better signposting has also been promised. A leaflet is being prepared for the Marks Tey area, to entice shoppers to Sudbury by train. It is hoped to finance it by selling advertising space in the centre fold to Sudbury shopkeepers.

NORTH EAST NORFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

There was an attendance of over 30 at the AGM of NENTA at Cromer on November 1st, when the existing officers and most of the committee were re-elected. The association had increased its membership by 23 during the course of the year and was in a satisfactory state financially.

Mr. T.J. Garrod gave a report on behalf of the RDS, describing the Society's role as a regional and national back-up to the work of local bodies like NENTA; and drawing special attention to the apparent reluctance, at that time, of Norfolk County Council to produce a Public Transport Plan.

Mr. Kerry, Assistant Area Manager of BR at Norwich, gave an interesting talk on signalling systems and what the operating staff had to do when there was a breakdown on the line. He also spoke of future timetable changes being investigated, including advancing the 21.35 ex Norwich to 21.05. In the May 1980 timetable, they were also considering ways of closing the long afternoon gap in trains to and from Sheringham.

Mr. Kerry was shown a copy of the Newbury - Pewsey pocket timetable, which included details of the local line users' association, and was asked if similar details could be included for East Anglian lines. He promised to investigate.

Mr. Saxby, of Eastern Counties Omnibus Co., explained some of their current problems, notably with vehicles - last year's order of new ones from Leyland had not yet arrived, for example. They also suffered waits of up to 18 months for spare parts.

There were complaints that there was neither a train or a bus from Cromer and Sheringham to Norwich on Sunday mornings in winter (except a very early bus). Mr. Saxby said he would look at possible solutions.

BRECKLAND LINE USERS' ASSOCIATION

The association held its AGM at Attleborough on November 8th, when the officers and committee were re-elected. It was agreed to write to Norfolk County Council asking that BLUA be consulted over the Public Transport Plan and expressing concern about the Council's failure, so far, to form a Transport Users' Advisory Committee. Discussion also took place on the state of rolling stock, including overcrowding on the first morning train into Norwich; and on the need for a shelter on the down platform at Spooner Row, following the almost complete demolition of the station building after a fire.

BLUA is also very conscious of the problems of towns with unstaffed stations (Wymondham, Attleborough and Brandon), which cannot take full advantage of Anglia Rangers and similar offers. A travel agent in Wymondham had been approached but was not interested in becoming a BR agent.

BRECKLAND TIMETABLE

Breckland District Council agreed in November to publish a timetable of bus services in the area, at a cost of £1,000. The Council has also assured the RDS that, "in addition to the regular bus services... and details of firms operating coach tours, the Council intend to include train times and related information. In this way it is hoped that a comprehensive document on public transport to, from and through the Breckland District can be produced."

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

On January 1st, Waveney Travel, Beccles, became a BR agent - good news for ESTA, which has been pressing for some time for agents who can sell Inter-City tickets etc. in all towns along the line. Four members of the ESTA committee had a meeting with BR officials in Norwich during November, to discuss this and other issues. ESTA members are now maintaining the display board at the busy Ingate crossing, Beccles, and have also been given the use of a small notice-board on Ipswich station. 4,000 copies of East Suffolk Travel No. 5 were printed and distributed during November.

THINGS ARE BEGINNING TO HAPPEN AT FAKENHAM

Over 40 people filled the Methodist Church Room at Fakenham on October 21st, for the first public meeting called by the Fakenham & Dereham Railway Society. Mr. P.R. Lawrence, Chairman of the new society, explained how it had come into being, following the efforts of the RDS and WyDFRAC for more than four years to get a restored passenger service to the town. Indications that BR might withdraw the freight service over the last 2½ miles, from Ryburgh to Fakenham (see newsletters 25 and 26) had prompted a group of people active in the reopening campaign to form a special society to attempt to buy and operate this section in the event of a closure. "Whatever happens," he said, "the track must not be removed. It is in the interests of people and industry in the Fakenham area to ensure this."

Secretary Mr. B.D. Woodgett said that the F&DRS only envisaged a modest start to any operations, concentrating at first on freight for its "bread and butter", plus possible steam passenger trains at weekends. They had had offers of help from people with technical knowledge, as volunteers; but would ultimately hope to take on paid employees.

WyDFRAC secretary Mr. J.S. Hull said that his organisation would work with the new society, as its success would bring WyDFRAC's own goal nearer: "We don't mind who runs the railway provided we get a passenger rail service."

F&DRS membership at the time of the meeting stood at 42, but by the New Year had risen to over 75.

The Society has plans for a museum and railway centre at Fakenham, and has already raised enough money to purchase a 1907 Great Eastern coach body which is in surprisingly good condition; and wishes to thank all RDS members who helped raise this. It will cost up to £350 to transport the coach body to Fakenham, so further donations, however small, will be welcome; as will offers of sheets of glass to be used in one or both of the ex-Dereham signal boxes which have been donated by Potters Ltd., the local builders. Mr. Potter has also offered a number of railway relics for the museum, at £5 each. The F&DRS is seeking sponsors for these items, and would also be interested to hear from anyone else with items which they could lend or sell the society for the museum.

The establishment of the museum is seen as a considerable step forward in providing the F&DRS with a regular source of income and providing a presence on the line. The society has also received a very generous offer of a 0-6-0 industrial locomotive for £2,000 and sponsors are being sought for its purchase.

The F&DRS has been in contact with BR, Norfolk County Council, North Norfolk District Council, the Secretary of State for Transport and the Shadow Secretary. Norfolk County Council's Highways & Transportation Sub-committee was due to consider, on January 9th, a suggestion by the County Surveyor that the Council start talks with the F&DRS and other interested parties with a view of buying the track, and thus keep open the option of re-starting a passenger service at a later date, should BR decide to abandon this section.

Advertisements for inclusion in the F&DRS newsletter, together with a suitable donation, should be sent to Mr. B.D. Woodgett, 4 Andover Road, Benson, Oxon; subscriptions to Mr. P.T. Shortland, 8 Great Close, Chapel Bramton, Northampton, NN6 8AH (£1 per year; under-16s 65p). Jonathan Shortland, at the same address, is collecting stamps, preferably on the envelopes, to raise funds. Other inquiries about the Society should be made to Mr. R.G. Hopwood, Publicity Officer, 7 Corton Road, Bracondale, Norwich (Tel: 23275)

WyDFRAC: The reopening issue continues to attract interest further down the line at Dereham, where WyDFRAC held a successful public meeting, on November 25th. Over 40 people attended and saw the RDS film of last April's special train. Several new associate members for WyDFRAC were recruited, bringing the total to over 170.

BRAMFORD STATION REOPENING CAMPAIGN: Thanks to those RDS members who have helped the Action Group at Bramford, which has now completed more than half its survey and, in an interim press release, reports an encouraging response. Help is still welcome - especially at weekends. Contact Jeremy Coles, Dairy Farm House, Somersham Road, Bramford (Tel: Ipswich 830985)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLANS (see also last newsletter)

CAMBRIDGESHIRE: The RDS issued its comments on this Draft Plan on December 1st, sending copies not only to the County Councils but also to BR, the local press and a number of other bodies. Thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. S.F. Wilkinson and Mr. P. Wakefield, who did most of the work on our submission.

We urge promotion of the Cambridge - Ely - March - Peterborough route as a main inter-urban link. The Draft Plan has nothing new to say about the possibility of reopening the St. Ives or Wisbech lines, merely quoting its negative response to earlier "feasibility studies" (carried out 4 - 6 years ago). Our submission therefore explains at some length the changing scene (e.g. the report on Level Crossing Protection, which could make these lines cheaper to reopen to passengers), concluding "We do not ask for instant miracles from the Council... but we do ask for open minds, at the very least." On St. Ives, we suggest a new feasibility study be made; and if the Council has not the staff to do it, an outside body should be invited to do so (cf. Isle of Grain project in Kent).

Our comments on St. Ives have been backed by a considerable number of local people and bodies who have also written to the Council calling for such a study; while on Wisbech, WAMRAC has also sent in a well-argued submission including the set of photographs of the special train service at Wisbech last September.

We deal with many other issues in the 8-page submission (copies available from Mr. Wilkinson), including calling for a Transport Users' Advisory Committee with consumer representation; and for serious consideration to be given to moving Cambridge bus station from the cramped Drummer Street site to land near the railway station.

SUFFOLK: Three weeks' consultation time was allowed for this Draft Plan. The RDS made a submission, as did the Newmarket & District Rail Users' Assn. and the East Suffolk Travellers' Association. Ipswich and Waveney Branches of Friends of the Earth also submitted comments, which make many points similar to our own. We understand that two local authorities, in their comments, have called for an investigation into the reopening of Bealings station - a suggestion made by our Society in 1973 and reiterated in our submission.

We also note with some satisfaction that the County Council, in its Draft Plan, now seems prepared to set down criteria for the introduction of an improved transport facility - which it steadfastly refused to do 4 years ago when we first campaigned for the reopening of a halt at Bentley. We call for a halt at Bentley to be part of the Council's programme and call for "positive action, instead of prevaricating" about providing a halt for Cornard, on the Sudbury line.

The Draft Plan promises a "commitment" to considering bus/rail interchanges, but no action. We stress the need for one at Lowestoft (and received useful local press publicity for this).

Our submission treats with scepticism figures in the Draft Plan that blithely assume car ownership will continue to rise and give the impression that car owners never want to use any other means of transport. Future energy problems receive only the most casual of mentions, in brackets, in the Draft Plan; which also expresses a "hope" that "satisfactory unconventional solutions" to the problems of sparsely populated areas may be solved by "community spirit."

As with Cambs, we draw Suffolk C.C.'s attention to the potential of new rail developments (new level crossings; lightweight rail vehicles etc.) in our submission, a few spare copies of which are available from the Branch Secretary.

NORFOLK: This was the last Draft Plan to be received, in the closing days of 1978 and is now being studied. As with Suffolk, only three weeks are allowed for consultation. Out of seven local rail users' or reopening organisations in the county, only two were sent copies; and a letter has gone from the RDS to the County Surveyor, reminding him of the existence of all these bodies which are entitled under the 1978 Transport Act to be consulted. A summary of the RDS submission will be in the next newsletter.

FREIGHT GRANTS: Mr. S.F. Wilkinson has been conducting an investigation into how many grants for private sidings etc. under section 8 of the 1974 Railways Act have been applied for, and how many awarded, in East Anglia and the Midlands, and why some applications have been unsuccessful. He hopes to present a full report to the RDS National Committee in February. More details in next newsletter.

SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

21 people braved the cold weather to attend SELTA's AGM at Skegness on November 25th. The Chairman, Mr. P.B. Jowett, in his report, pointed to some of the association's achievements - connections between the Skegness and Lincoln lines at Sleaford were now "probably the best they've ever been"; while stressing its continued dissatisfaction with the 10-hour shift operating between Boston and Skegness. It remained SELTA's policy to press for an extended service between these two towns, though in the meantime they would pinpoint and try to get remedies for the defects in the "replacement" bus service. There was a need for more advertising, and BR should investigate the use of local traders as ticket agencies in places like Wainfleet, Heckington and Ancaster.

Mr. Jowett was re-elected chairman; Mr. H. Johnson (5 Croft Lane, Croft, Wainfleet) secretary; Mr. R. Waite Treasurer.

Messrs. Hendry and Thorne, of BR management, spoke and answered questions about railways locally. Mr. Hendry called the 10-hour shift "an experiment", and said the trains had been timed "to give Skegness the best chance of continuing to make a living from tourism". In fact, BR had carried more passengers into Skegness this summer in 10 hours per day than they had in 1977 in 14 hours. He predicted that the recent DTp report on Level Crossing Protection could be a great advantage for the line and "within 3-5 years we could see some interesting things happening."

Mr. Thorne explained that it was difficult for BR to close a crossing; as soon as one person objected, a bill had to go through Parliament. For 7 years BR had been trying to close a crossing in Yorkshire which cost them £7-8000 a year to maintain to allow two farmers to cross the line less than 10 times a day!

DONINGTON - WHAT CHANCE OF A NEW HALT?

Mrs. C.J. Dunnington reports that a Lincs. County Council survey into potential usage of a reopened rail halt at Donington, between Spalding and Sleaford, has now taken place. However, she adds, "We do not think the questions were the best ones for this area, and a lot of people were put off by the times of the trains." Only three regular passenger trains (between Cambridge and Doncaster) use this stretch of line in each direction, passing through Donington between 10.28 and 18.01. Unlike the Bentley questionnaire in 1975/6, the Donington one did not attempt to find out how much demand there was for a train at other times of the day. Results of the survey are not yet available.

GRIMSBY: RDS Area Representative for North & East Lincs, Mr. M.J. Savage, has organised an exhibition at Grimsby Library from January 29th onwards; and a public meeting there on Saturday February 10th (starting 10.45) at which it is hoped to form a rail users' association for South Humberside. The exhibition stresses the value of local users' groups, and includes a considerable amount of material about what such groups are doing in East Anglia. Mr. Savage is also in contact with a group of people campaigning for the restoration of the East Lincs Line.

KINGS LYNN & HUNSTANTON RAILWAY RESTORATION SOCIETY

The RDS has decided to support this society, following a meeting between officers of the two bodies on October 28th.

The KL&HRRS envisages a situation on this line not unlike that on the West Somerset Railway, with the local authority buying the land and leasing it to the Society which would operate the trains - though it would also, in this case, have to relay the track first. Some land would have to be bought back from farmers and landowners. The total cost of the project is estimated at £2½ million.

The initial response from W. Norfolk District Council has been negative; but the KL&HRRS, with 4,000 members, some 95% of them local, clearly shows a very significant local demand for a relaid rail link. The growth of the local population - the trackbed runs between two large housing estates in Lynn built since the line closed - the poor road link to Hunstanton and the resort's relative stagnation, give the Society a strong case. Consideration is now being given to the writing of a detailed report setting out the case for reopening. Meanwhile, the RDS is giving support by asking the planning authorities to approve planning applications (e.g. a current one for conversion of an old signal box to a holiday home at Heacham) only on the condition that these in no way obstruct the trackbed.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Welcome to more new members:

Mr. M.I. Brakewell, 20 Broad End Road, Walsoken, Wisbech, Cambs.

Mr. W.W. Boyles, 4 Cliff Avenue, Cromer, Norfolk, NR27 0AN.

Mr. J.E. Palmer, 31 Supple Close, Plumstead Estate, Norwich, NR1 4PP.

Kings Lynn & Hunstanton Railway Restoration Society, Chairmans: Mr. R.A. Duggan; Secretary Mr. D. Bell, 5 Stag Place, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 2LS.

Mr. M.J. Farahar (RDS member and ESTA secretary) has moved to 35 Ashmere Grove, Ipswich, IP4 2RE.

ADRAC secretary Mr. J. Coton is now on the phone: Aylsham 2967.

ARCHIVES: Mr. L.G. Hipperson has now taken charge of the RDS Branch Archives. It is hoped to produce a full list of these, for circulation with the next newsletter (due out at the end of April)

KNOW YOUR FACILITIES

Mr. P. Dunn, who, as a conductor-guard, often has to help passengers find their way around the complexities of railway fares policy, writes, "On the trains I have seen many tickets from Yarmouth, Norwich etc. to places the other side of London, but have never met a passenger who bought a London Transport cross-London ticket. Perhaps you could include this facility in future newsletters.

"Many students think that Student Railcards are not valid on Paytrains. They are on Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and all of July and August 1979; and where the fare is over £1.75 at all times."

NEW IMPROVED AGFRUG!

A Guide for Rail Users' Groups, published by the RDS last October, has gone down well, and a second printing has had to be done. The new AGFRUG, still at 20p, contains an extra section on the powers and responsibilities of County Councils, with suggestions to local users' groups on how to deal with Public Transport Plans and Advisory Committees.

IN BRIEF:

1. Norwich Station looks more attractive after a clean-up of the outside brickwork, and repainting of the inside metalwork, during November and December. Lowestoft station was also partially repainted at the same time. March station now has a drinks vending machine - useful if you're waiting for a connection there on a cold night.
2. Mr. C.W. Taylor represented the RDS at a one-day conference on the European Economic Community in Ipswich on December 12th.
3. Messrs. D. Maudlin and T.J. Garrod have been invited to speak at a meeting of the East Anglian District Council of the NUR in Norwich on February 17th. The RDS is always pleased to provide a speaker, or speakers, for meetings of other organisations.
4. At the end of September, BR arranged a seminar in London, attended by 40 County Council representatives in the Eastern Region, to inform them of what is going on on the railways, and what can be done by County Councils, especially in their Public Transport Plans.
5. Plans to make Lowestoft harbour capable of handling larger ships were announced in December; plus a planning application for more grainsilos. This could mean more rail freight to and from the port. Reports of Ford cars being imported via Lowestoft and continuing their journey by rail were rife during the autumn, and two rows of Motorail transporters appeared in the sidings - but these have now gone again, and no Ford cars have yet been seen.
6. The RDS has decided to publish a leaflet on the theme "Join Your Local Rail Users' Group." The leaflet will also publicise the Society itself, and it is hoped to have it available in February.
7. The RDS is having discussions with Bruce Pearce and Associates, of March, about the possible compilation and publication of a 32-page booklet on Railway Development in the Eastern Counties (which would include Essex and Lincs). The booklet would be illustrated and printed by offset litho. Any offers of help or material to the Branch Secretary, please.