

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
(incorporating RIS and RDA)

EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH NEWSLETTER No. 32

October/November 1979

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(Tel: 81721; or at work, Norwich 28181, ex. 44)

1700 USE OUR SPECIAL TRAINS - AND MORE TO COME

1700 passengers have used the five special trains on freight-only lines in East Anglia this year, chartered by the Railway Development Society and its associated local groups. Nearly all those 1700 made return journeys.

The fourth train in the series, from Dereham to Lowestoft and back on Sunday June 22nd, carried a full load of 330 from the branch. The 6-car DMU (increased from 4 because of demand) also carried 22 members of a local cycling club, plus their machines (which filled the three guard's compartments) out from Norwich to Dereham, where some 260 were waiting on the platform. The platforms at Yaxham and Thuxton were also full, with a further small number at Kimberley Park.

The train made good time, travelling via the Wensum Curve and reaching Lowestoft just after mid day, where passengers enjoyed 5 hours by the sea.

A similar market was catered for 6 weeks later on September 2nd, when 270 Wisbech people assembled on the goods depot platform shortly after eight in the morning. This was the largest number so far carried by one of our specials from Wisbech - only five of the train's six coaches could fit into the bay.

The front unit of the train was a refurbished one, which carried a blue and yellow headboard with "Seaside Special" on it. After taking 39 minutes to run along the branch to March, we had to endure single line working for much of the way to Ely, because of engineering work. This was not too good an advertisement for BR, but things improved as the train was put through its paces on the Breckland Line - Ely North Junction to Trowse was covered in 52½ minutes - virtually one mile per minute, including a brief stop at Thetford. By now, the early morning damp had also given way to sunny periods, and on arrival at Lowestoft, passengers had four hours of sunshine beside the sea before the return journey; which was accomplished a few minutes ahead of schedule, in three hours.

What should have been the last special in this year's series, on the Lenwade line on October 13th, has been postponed until next spring because of timetabling problems - mainly arising from the impossibility of running a passenger train on the branch after dark.

Dereham - Norwich Shoppers' Special: one more special has, however, been chartered to run on a freight-only line this year. A DMU will work out to Dereham as empty carriage stock early in the morning of Saturday December 1st to run a shoppers' excursion to Norwich; arriving back in Dereham at about 16.00. The return fare will be £1.30 for adults, £1 for children (with a small reduction for WyDRAC members), and tickets can be obtained from Mr. J.S. Hull, Cydonia Cottage, Station Road, Yaxham, Dereham, Norfolk (Tel: Dereham 5154)

RDS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the East Anglian Branch of the RDS will take place on Saturday, January 19th, 1980, in room 2 at Ipswich Town Hall, starting at 2.00 p.m. After the business part of the meeting, we shall be welcoming British Rail's Divisional Manager, Mr. Gordon Clarke, who has accepted an invitation to speak on PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS FOR BRITISH RAIL IN THE 1980s.

As this will be our first meeting of the new decade, it was felt that this would be a very appropriate topic.

Non-members will be very welcome at this meeting, which will be a public one, but will not, of course, be able to vote.

If travelling to Ipswich by train from most parts of East Anglia, you will be able to do so on a £2.50 One-Day Anglia Ranger.

"TAKE A NEW LOOK AT YOUR LOCAL RAIL NETWORK"

This is the slogan being used for a welcome new campaign by BR's Norwich Division to publicise the East Anglian paytrain lines in particular. Network maps have appeared in large advertisements in the local press (which the RDS urged last spring - see Newsletter No. 30) and on special leaflets. On October 23rd-25th, half fares were to be charged on all journeys in the Division after 08.45. The Branch Secretary has had letters in the major local newspapers, welcoming this experiment.

Also part of the package is the very welcome extension of the £2.50 One-Day Ranger to all Saturdays from November to February inclusive. Many of us will find it cheaper to get to our meetings this winter! Shoppers and football fans will also obviously benefit.

THE ENTA EXPRESS TO LONDON

As part of its campaign to encourage greater usage of the Yarmouth services, the East Norfolk Travellers' Association is chartering a hauled train from Yarmouth to London on Saturday December 15th. It will leave Yarmouth at about 08.00 and return about 22.00, calling at Acle, Lingwood and Brundall, then non-stop to Liverpool St. There will be DMU connections from the Reedham route and Lowestoft. The fare is £4 (£2 for children under 16) and there will be refreshments on the train. At less than 2p a mile, this trip is a real bargain. Tickets are available from the Branch Secretary.

PRIOR WARNING FOR 1980

Discussions are now taking place between our Society and BR about the possibility of running special trains in 1980, and we hope to publish a list of these, with dates, in the next newsletter (which should be ready at the AGM)

The National RDS AGM has been fixed for Saturday April 26th, 2.00 p.m. in the BRSA headquarters at Bristol.

The RDS National Committee will be meeting on the following dates: January 12th, March 8th, May 10th, July 12th, September 13th and November 8th.

RDS PENS

As part of our fund-raising activities, we shall be selling pens with the name and address of the RDS East Anglian Branch printed on them. These are retractable ball-point pens, costing 15p each. They will be on sale at meetings, but can also be obtained from the Chairman or Secretary (address on p. 1) or the Treasurer, Mr. F.I.S. Carter, 1 Oak Green, Halesworth, IP19 8EA. (Minimum of 5 for orders sent through post.)

RDS MEMBERS TO MEET EURO-MP

A meeting has been arranged with the Member of the European Parliament for Suffolk, Mr. A. Turner, at his home in Westleton, on Saturday December 8th, to discuss transport matters relevant to the EEC. Messrs. S.F. Wilkinson, T.J. Garrod, F.I.S. Carter, P.R. Lawrence and F.R. Melvin hope to be present. If any other member would like to attend, or has any particular matter to be raised, please contact Mr. Garrod. We shall discuss in detail with Mr. Turner the points raised in our letter to the then Euro-candidates last May.

TRANSPORT USERS' CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

All those members of the East Anglian TUCC whose terms of office came to an end this year have been re-appointed. The RDS' nomination of Mr. P.R. Lawrence was never acknowledged by the Department of Trade's Consumer Affairs Division, which appoints these representatives of the travelling public. However, upon approaching the Department, we finally received a letter from a Mr. J. Miller saying that "because of the considerable competition for places", it had not been possible to offer Mr. Lawrence an appointment.

The RDS Branch Meeting considered this reply on September 29th and agreed to ask that Mr. Lawrence's name remain on the list of nominees for the next review of TUCC members.

At this meeting, Mr. Lawrence - who had been on a "sabbatical" with the Fakenham and Dereham Railway Society - was also co-opted back on to the RDS Branch Committee.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN

During the Examination in Public of this Plan, Messrs. S.F. Wilkinson, H. Wakefield and T.J. Garrod represented the RDS at the discussion on Communications on October 3rd.

The morning session was largely devoted to roads, with the Road Haulage Association saying how much they approved of the County Council's policy, and the latter saying they had not "seriously considered" rail investment as an alternative to road investment. When we raised the question of section 8 grants, the County Council gave an assurance that they had never failed to support applications for these by firms within the county. We also brought up the question of Transport and General Workers' Union blacking of firms wanting to send more freight by rail; and received a public pledge from the Cambridge Trades Council representative that there would be no such blacking in that county.

Representatives of the Road Haulage Association, Fenland District Council and Huntingdon District Council were not present for the afternoon session, which discussed public transport. The RDS was backed by Friends of the Earth and Cambridge Labour Party in calling for a greater share of investment for trains and buses. As examples of this, we explained and illustrated the case for restoring regular passenger services to Wisbech and St. Ives.

We expressed support for a bus station adjacent to Cambridge railway station and for proposals to develop Whittlesford station as a park-and-ride station and bus/rail interchange. However, we also stressed that we would oppose any closure of neighbouring stations (which has been rumoured) as a result - though these might be suitable candidates for de-staffing.

Cambridgeshire County Council had expressed some misgivings over the social effects of extending electrification to Cambridge (increase in London commuters etc.) Mr. Wilkinson scotched this one, by saying that he did not recall them expressing such misgivings when the M11 motorway was being built between Cambridge and London. Needless to say, the RDS again stressed the importance of getting the electric wires up to Cambridge, on both routes from London, as soon as possible.

The RDS also mounted a small display of photographs of our special trains on the St. Ives and Wisbech branches - in fact, we were the only participants to produce any visuals for this particular session.

An official summary of the discussion has been ordered and should very shortly be available from the Branch Secretary and Chairman. Unlike the Norfolk Structure Plan, however, no official transcript will be available for this one.

ST IVES TOWN COUNCIL

St. Ives Town Council, who earlier in the year had shown themselves sympathetic to the RDS' campaign for the line's reopening, had second thoughts in September - when one councillor was reported as claiming that, with a new halt on the opposite side of the town to the new relief road, it would take as long to get to the station as to drive up the A604 to Cambridge.

It would of course be preferable for passengers not to have to cross a busy main road to reach the station; but there are plenty of instances in East Anglia where this is necessary: Peterborough, Norwich, Ipswich, Thetford, Lowestoft, Yarmouth (from the north of the town) - and Woodbridge, if and when its planned relief road is completed. A sensible policy would be to provide a footbridge (like the one over Bourges Boulevard at Peterborough) or a subway - or, if this cannot be afforded, at least a pelican crossing.

Our Chairman has had further correspondence with the Town Council over this matter, and has been invited to attend their Planning Committee meeting on October 31st to speak and answer questions about the reopening issue.

QUOTE: Cambs. County Councillor to BR Manager: "I'm concerned about the effect on the environment of all those wires if you electrify the railway - couldn't you put the wires underground?"

WEST NORFOLK PUBLIC TRANSPORT USERS

The Annual General Meeting of WNPTU took place on Saturday October 6th in the interesting setting of the 60-year-old ambulance coach at Kings Lynn station.

Mr. R. Callaby, Miss C. Zilahi and Miss I. McNello were re-elected Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Mr. D. Pitt did not stand for re-election as Vice-Chairman as he is moving away from the area shortly. Mr. C.J. Milnes, Miss J. McNello and Mrs. Hill were also elected as Committee members. Paid-up membership stood at about 40, with some £16 in the funds.

It was reported that Downham Market Amenity Society had offered to beautify the town's station, with baskets of flowers, shrubs etc.

Mr. D. Gibson (BR Divisional Passenger Manager), Mr. D. Dagger (Eastern Counties District Superintendent) and Mr. T.J. Garrod each gave a short talk and answered questions.

Referring to the train cuts forced on BR because of the recent oil shortage, Mr. Gibson said that they had decided to cut the 12.27 and 15.22 Lynn - Ely trains on the basis of "last in, first out". These trains had only been introduced in May, and it was felt that fewer regular passengers would have been relying on them, than on the well-established trains. While acknowledging that there were problems, he felt that BR could "cope with the bulk of the requirements imposed upon them."

Mr. Gibson also drew attention to the work in process on re-laying track in the Downham area, and the transfer of the Norwich - London stock to the Lynn service towards the end of 1980. These moves would improve the quality of service on the line. He also assured members that with electrification to Cambridge (hoped for in 1983 or a little later), Lynn would retain its through trains to London. Locomotives would be changed at Cambridge.

Mr. Dagger spoke of the market research being conducted by ECOC in West Norfolk and said that, in this area at least, they were able to cope with the demands made upon them and had spare capacity. Providing bus connections with trains at Downham station (originally suggested by WNPTU in March 1978) would involve "a fair amount of re-scheduling"; but a high-level meeting of BR and ECOC officials on October 18th was due to look at the problem.

WNPTU held a market stall at Downham Market on Friday October 12th, when a wide range of BR, ECOC and RDS literature was on display and garden produce etc. was sold. This is an idea that other local users' groups may like to consider emulating.

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

Mr. A.H. Hadingham, of 55 Fair Close, Beccles, has kindly stepped in as Acting Secretary of ESTA, which continues to be an active watchdog for the Ipswich - Lowestoft line. The Sunday morning working cut because of the oil shortage was re-instated on August 19th. A group of ESTA members were due to meet Mr. Steele of ECOC in Norwich on October 22nd, to discuss bus-rail connections at Halesworth, and some of the serious cuts in services in the Ipswich area.

The seventh issue of ESTA's newsletter, East Suffolk Travel, has just rolled off the presses in 4000 copies. The association's publicity activities have been further augmented by its maintaining of an information board at Victoria Road crossing, Oulton Broad, which had been disused by BR for several years.

SUDBURY - MARKS TEY RAIL USERS' ASSOCIATION

Officers of SMTRUA recently had a most useful on-site meeting with BR's Divisional Passenger Manager, at which constructive progress was made with ideas to boost off-peak usage of the branch.

Babergh District Council have claimed that there is no evidence for the assertions of SMTRUA and the RDS that off-peak travel on the line can be encouraged. The Stour Valley Railway Preservation Society has taken a less negative attitude, however, and, in co-operation with SMTRUA and BR, published a leaflet "Visit Chappel Stream Centre by Public Transport" giving suitable train departure and arrival times from some 120 stations in East Anglia and North East London for visitors to Chappel by rail.

NORWICH - SHERINGHAM: "A THRIVING BRANCH LINE".

The Norwich - Cromer - Sheringham line was "in many ways a thriving branch line", said BR Passenger Sales & Marketing Officer Mr. J.B. Davies when he spoke at the AGM of the North East Norfolk Travellers' Association in Cromer on October 17th.

The line had the highest average load per train in the Norwich Division. Between 1971 and 1976 there had been a gradual drop in the number of passengers using the line; but this had been checked, and 1977 and 1978 showed a growth in passengers. On the evidence of this year's figures so far, 1979 passenger carryings, showing an 8% increase, should exceed those of 1971.

Mr. Davies also spoke about plans to improve the late afternoon service on the line, and to give better summer Sunday morning connections off the Breckland Line. These plans were the subject of staff consultations at the moment and, all being well, should come into force in May 1980.

Cromer station was shortly due to undergo changes, when the present waiting room would be demolished and a new one built. He assured the meeting that this would be more substantial than a mere bus shelter. The platforms would be slightly shortened (but still long enough for a 5-coach train, such as the line's main morning commuter train), to allow for extra car-parking space, and the station better sign-posted.

NETA has 144 paid-up members and a healthy bank balance. It was agreed to continue issuing a twice-yearly members' bulletin and to produce another newsletter for more general distribution. Consideration is also being given to a spring meeting in Sheringham and to the running of a special excursion train. Inquiries are to be made into the possibility of the association maintaining a council-owned notice-board with rail information in the centre of Cromer.

The following were elected: Chairman, Mr. D. Winter; Secretary, Mr. N. Buxton; Treasurer, Mr. C.J. Wheeler; Committee: Miss Wood, Messrs. J. Wyatt, R. Pettitt and S. Coe.

FORNCETT STATION REOPENING CAMPAIGN

Over the past five years our Society has argued the case for selective reopening of stations on the main line between Colchester, Ipswich and Norwich. Evidence of local demand for these has been clear at Bentley and Bramford. More recently have come local demands for the reopening of Fornsett station, halfway between Norwich and Diss. The Parish Council has voiced these demands and, following contacts with the RDS, is now endeavouring to arrange a meeting with neighbouring parish councils, at which Mr. T.J. Garrod will speak.

At present there is only one DMU working per day on this section of line; and BR's reaction has been "wait and see"; arguing that electrification would make it easier, from the operating viewpoint, to provide extra halts. Passenger Manager Mr. D. Gibson added, "We have looked at the cost of operating a paytrain service between Norwich and Ipswich, but it would have to bring in up to £100,000 a year to cover our costs." He also put the cost of providing a halt (which would include buying back car-parking land from the BR Property Board) at £20,000. The Property Board plans to sell part of the former goods yard to a local farming contractor for storing sugar-beet, agricultural equipment etc.

An EDP editorial of 19.10.79 compared Mr. Gibson's caution to "the bearing of an umpire with an eye for property dealing rather than a committed player intent on improving his service."

RDS member Mr. G.H. Reeve, who lives near Fornsett, says that there could be a case for stopping the present semi-fast trains at Fornsett, with travelling ticket inspectors issuing tickets (as they do at present for Diss passengers at certain times of day, when that station's booking office is unmanned.)

Mr. Reeve also suggests that it might be more appropriate to name a reopened halt "South Norfolk Parkway", if view of its potential as a park-and-ride station for quite a wide area. The station is also 2 miles from the expanding village of Long Stratton (population, 1710), which houses the recently-built headquarters of South Norfolk District Council. Simonds' coaches operate past Fornsett station site on their Norwich - Diss service and could possibly run a shuttle between Long Stratton and the new station, perhaps with a minibus.

OVERMANNING?

We often hear that BR are overmanned, and our Society has indeed pointed to certain instances where staffing economies could be effected without endangering the quality of service. However, there is another side of the coin. In some cases BR are undermanned - they do not have enough staff, particularly for relief duties.

For example, from August 4th - 11th, at the height of the holiday season, Thetford station ticket office had to be closed, because of "staffing difficulties which have been accentuated by holiday arrangements." (EDP 4.8.79)

Six weeks later, a party of 15 people turned up at Harwich Town station and enjoyed free rides to Manningtree because there was no one on duty in the booking office - and the Harwich branch trains are not paytrains.

Shortages of conductor-guards in the Cambridge area have also been causing concern, with some passengers getting free rides on local trains.

IS THIS A RECORD?

On September 27th there were 16 bicycles in the guard's compartment of the 08.01 DMU from Lowestoft and Oulton Broad North to Norwich. Usually this train - one of the main commuter services of the day on the line - had been carrying up to 14 bicycles, compared with half-a-dozen or so last year.

More recently, however, conductor-guards have been limiting the number of bicycles they are prepared to carry to 8 or 9 - as they have a right to do, in view of safety factors (bicycles blocking up doors etc.)

Are there any further claims for the most cycle-laden DMU in East Anglia? Does any member have further evidence of demand for cycle facilities outstripping space available? If so, please let the Branch Secretary know.

NOT ENOUGH SPACE

RDS members Mr. and Mrs. D.J. Jasper report that, when they travelled from Norwich to Thetford on September 15th, passengers were left behind at Norwich because of insufficient room on the train - which was only a 2-car DMU. The amount of luggage being carried on the train (many of the passengers being returning holidaymakers) also made it difficult to alight at Thetford.

Mr. Jasper reports experiencing similar problems when on holiday in the Lake District and using the Windermere branch - the DMU operating the service being quite inadequate for peak demands; and apparently no serviceable spare set was available.

It all points to the need for more DMUs, and more investment in secondary services; which underlines the importance of the RDS' campaign around its booklet YOUR LOCAL TRAINS IN THE 80s. Have you bought your copy yet? Have you recommended it to others? Have you badgered your MP about it? Have you made use of the leaflet also produced to promote the booklet and the RDS' campaign?

Copies of the leaflet and the booklet (which has just been reprinted) are available from the Branch Secretary (50p for the latter).

CAMBRIDGE BUS STATION

Shortly before the Structure Plan Hearing, Cambridgeshire County Council's Transport Committee decided to expand Drummer Street Bus Station and against the idea of a bus station by the railway station - but Cambridge City Council say they will still press for the latter.

RDS member Mr. H.C. Wilkins had a letter in the Cambridge Evening News on 21.8.79 in which he also argued for the latter; while Mr. P. Wakefield had succeeded in obtaining from the County Surveyor the results of the public consultation exercise earlier this year. These showed that, while the largest single number of replies had been in favour of improving Drummer St. bus station, 1,280 replies out of 3,355 (about 35%) favoured a bus station of some sort at the railway station - in some cases in addition to a city centre bus station. Mr. Wilkins, in his letter, commented, that siting a bus station near the railway seems "on balance... the wisest choice, and a choice likely to be more objective than an answer obtained from questionnaires".

IPSWICH BY-PASS

It is now 3 years since a fatal accident caused by a lorry with faulty brakes sparked off a campaign by the road lobby for a prompt start on a £39 million Ipswich Southern By-pass; to which our Society replied by asking how much, if any, of this extravagant road scheme was needed; and for the rail alternative to be properly investigated.

After the Inquiry, Inspector Clinch, who could hardly be said to be favourably disposed towards us, found it difficult to justify all the scheme, and recommended against the Bentley Long Wood - Belstead section. But in August the Department of Transport announced that they would build this anyway.

On October 4th, a further announcement was made, that the section of the by-pass near Nacton would be in a cutting instead of on an embankment - at an extra cost of £300,000.

This decision was hailed by the EADT (5.10.79) as proving "that those protestors who claim that it is impossible for local residents to affect the outcome of a public inquiry into road plans are wrong." However, as Mr. T.J. Garrod pointed out in a letter published a week later, it could also be argued, from this decision, that the Department of Transport's civil servants - who were largely recruited to build roads - would jump at any opportunity to add further extravagance to their schemes and thereby help justify their continued existence. He also recalled that the villagers of Nacton, who naturally wanted to protect themselves from the juggernauts, had originally asked for a northern by-pass. They had not succeeded in getting one - but only "an expensive cosmetic job."

The EADT editorial also made an interesting little admission - that it might have to "eat its words" on road schemes in view of future fuel problems.

Meanwhile, at Cambridge, it is proposed to spend £100,000 of public money on transport. No, not on opening rail halts, or putting on more trains and buses... but on re-signing all the main roads ready for the opening of the Western By-pass.

At Saxmundham there is a proposal for a $3\frac{1}{2}$ mile western by-pass, costing £2.1 million and using 40 acres of agricultural land. The centre of Saxmundham is indeed a bottle-neck, which ought not to have heavy traffic rumbling through it. But this amounts to barely half a mile of road, and an eastern relief road, of no more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, which is also proposed, would seem to be an objective observer to be more sensible.

FREIGHTLINER OVER SHORTER DISTANCES?

The traditional idea that a Freightliner operation was economic for a minimum of about 200 miles was changing, according to Managing Director Mr. Cyril Bleasdale. It was now economic for about 170 miles; and when direct movement in and out of a private rail siding was involved, it was economic down to 110 miles.

Mr. Bleasdale was speaking on the occasion of the hundredth block train of export steel from Shotton (Cheshire) to Ipswich, dealt with by the Ipswich firm of Seawheel Ltd. (Freighting World)

BIGGER TRAIN FERRIES NEEDED

The fuel crisis had brought a resurgence in train ferry business, reported the head of Sealink at Parkeseton Quay, Mr. Colin Crawford, recently (EADT 2.10.79). This lent special importance to BR's plans, just revealed, to spend £26 million on larger train ferries for the Harwich - Zeebrugge service. Their oldest vessel on this run at present was 32 years old and had completed a million miles at sea.

Instead of carrying 26 rail wagons, the new boats would be able to handle up to 55 or 60.

NORTH HERTS RAIL GUIDE:

Our member Mr. M. Hadley has produced 800 copies of an attractive leaflet advertising rail links and bargains from Letchworth, Hitchin and Stevenage, which is now being distributed mainly through colleges and libraries in the area.

FIVE COUNTIES BULLETIN: This Branch Newsletter contains no news from Lincolnshire - so much has been happening in East Anglia that coverage of the neighbouring area has been squeezed out! However, to serve the Society's growing membership in Lincs., Humberside, Notts., Derbys. and Yorks., in September the first issue of the RDS Five Counties Bulletin was produced. This will be sent 3 or 4 times a year to all members in those areas. Some spares also available from Branch Secretary.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Welcome to more new members:

1. Mr. C.F. Burton, 79 Tenison Road, Cambridge.
2. East Norfolk Travellers' Association: Hon. Sec., Mr. P.C.W. Warner, 10 Heron Gardens, Stalham, Norfolk, NR12 9PL.
3. Mr. C.H. Leigh, 5 St. Mary's Court, St. Mary's Road, Cromer, Norfolk, NR27 9BX.
4. Mr. P.R. Field, 47 Osprey Road, Biggleswade, Beds.
5. Mr. S. Harman, 9 Rubens Walk, Gunton, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4LR.
6. Mr. T.N. Tipple, 79 Hungate Street, Aylsham, Norfolk, NR11 6EA.
7. Mrs. R.M. Starr, 25 St. Audrey's Close, Histon, Cambridge.
8. Mr. D.A. Sherlock, 5 Swan Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Herts.
9. Mrs. M.M. Styles } 10 Norwich Road, Wymondham, Norfolk, NR18 0NS.
10. Mr. R. F. Styles } 10 Norwich Road, Wymondham, Norfolk, NR18 0NS.
11. Mrs. E.M. Smith, 53 Park Avenue, Histon, Cambridge.
12. Mr. R. Willis, 2 Allens Lane, Newmarket Road, Norwich.
13. Mr. J.A. Plummer, 57 Robin Hood Road, Norwich.
14. Mr. G. G. Lille, 43 The Glebes, Snape, Saxmundham, Suffolk.
15. Mrs. M.E. Hall, 32 Elm Road, Lingwood, Norwich, NR13 4TG.

Please note changes of address:

Mr. G.J. Heathcock, 1 Sterne Close, Cambridge.

Mr. B. Woolsey, 74 Foxhall Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 8HN.

Mr. C. Pearson is now on the phone: Dereham 66479.

FAKENHAM - REPRIEVE RUNS OUT?

In September, a report in the local press confirmed that BR were definitely proposing to close the Ryburgh - Fakenham freight line, the last $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the branch from Wymondham, at the end of the year. Just under two years ago they considered this but, after consultations with various bodies, deferred the decision (see Newsletter No. 26)

Since then, Fakenham has gained some new traffic, in the form of fertiliser coming over from Belgium via train ferry. 23 Ferrywagons have arrived since the end of June, amounting to over 500 tonnes of extra traffic. Total tonnage at Fakenham for the twelve months up to the end of July 1979 was 3527 - coal, scrap and fertiliser. This compared with 16,346 tonnes at Ryburgh; 10,305 at North Elmham and 26,283 at Dereham (Thanks to our member Mr. C. Pearson for his careful compilation of these figures.)

BR would not save anything on staff if the last $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles were closed. Figures that have reached us suggest a saving of £260 per annum over the next ten years on bridge and track maintenance; and, if the Property Board sell the site of Fakenham station, a possible once-off income of £65,000 (including sale of track and equipment). Extra expense would be incurred, since staff facilities would then have to be provided at Ryburgh. The present income from Fakenham freight is £21,249. Would this all be retained?

Following discussion at the last Branch Meeting, our Chairman has written a personal letter to BRB Chairman Sir Peter Parker, explaining the situation and asking BR to reconsider their decision. Copies have also gone to the Divisional Manager, the Secretary of State for Transport and local rail unions.

If, however, the worst comes to the worst, and this section of line does close, our corporate member the Fakenham & Dereham Railway Society hopes to be in a position to take it over.

Further down the line, WyDFRAC has been negotiating with BR for a notice-board to be erected by one of the level crossings in Dereham, for the display of train information; and is pleased that a new tenant has moved into Dereham station building - which will check vandalism that had recently started to occur.

Speakers: Our Chairman has been invited to speak at a meeting of St. Ives Business and Professional Women's Federation on December 11th; while Mr. D. Maudlin will be representing the Society at a debate organised by Cambridge University Railway Society on November 1st. Anyone else requiring a speaker, please contact Mr. Wilkinson, who is co-ordinating this.