

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
(incorporating RIS and RDA)

EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH

NEWSLETTER No. 33

January/February 1980

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

WHICH WAY FOR LOCAL SERVICES?

THE GOVERNMENT'S WAY?

A report in the Guardian on November 7th suggested that British Rail may have to propose closure of 900 miles of secondary lines, including Norwich - Lowestoft, Norwich - Sheringham, Lowestoft - Ipswich and Marks Tey - Sudbury.

In Parliament, Secretary of State for Transport Norman Fowler repeatedly denied any plans for "Beeching-type cuts" or "substantial cuts."

However, Mr. Fowler's colleague Sir Geoffrey Howe had previously announced a £22 million cut in the Public Service Obligation grant which enables BR to run the secondary services; and we are still waiting for any news of investment in new trains to replace the ageing diesel multiple units working the lines to Sheringham, Lowestoft, Sudbury and many other places in East Anglia.

In November, the Central Transport Consultative Committee published a report Rural Railways, which reiterated the warnings made by the Railway Development Society in "Your Local Trains in the 80s" last June, about the effects of lack of investment under successive governments.

Mr. Fowler and Sir Geoffrey are both members of a government which sat by and did nothing when BR were forced to cut trains - predominantly on secondary lines - because of last summer's oil shortage. It is all very well for Mr. Fowler to utter fine words about not cutting services; those of us who use those services would now like to see some action.

The RDS is, of course, a strictly non-party organisation, and we would make just the same criticisms of a Labour or Liberal government that did not appear to be acting on these matters.

Without adequate support and investment, BR could be forced to consider closures. The Guardian article was, we understand, based on a 1975 study of which routes might be closed if BR's financial support were cut; when the then government was under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to curb public spending. But more recent studies have also shown that similar mileages might have to go unless investment in public transport is taken more seriously (cf. the 700 miles report of last March - see Newsletter 30).

OUR WAY

"WE SHALL FIGHT TOOTH AND NAIL" was what RDS member and East Suffolk Travellers' Association Chairman Mr. A.W. Godfrey told the local press after the Guardian report. The RDS and its associated line users' groups will indeed be in the forefront of objectors to any closure that may be proposed in the 1980s.

The Branch Secretary was interviewed on local BBC radio on November 8th; and the pro-rail case has also been put in letters to the press by, among others, RDS members Messrs. C.W. Taylor, B. Woolsey, G.J. Heathcock, C.J. Milnes, W.W. Boyles and the North East Norfolk Travellers' Association.

The Society feels vindicated in its warnings, throughout the 1970s, that lines receiving financial aid from the government could not be regarded as 100% safe; and that a local users' group should be set up on each line to work for its retention and improvement. All of East Anglia is now covered by such groups, and their numbers are gradually increasing elsewhere in the country.

The RDS is calling a National Conference of Rail Users' Groups in London on March 29th to take stock of the situation and plan for the future.

It is also planned shortly to publish a third edition of our Guide for Rail Users' Groups; as well as stepping up sales of Your Local Trains in the 80s (just reprinted) and Can Bus Replace Train? (just as relevant as when published in 1977.) Both are obtainable from RDS Sales Officer, "Latymer", The Drive, Belmont, Surrey, at 62p and 40p respectively (including postage).

Meanwhile, on individual lines in our region, more passengers are being carried - both on a regular basis and because of special offers. On the three Saturdays up to Christmas, BR extended the 09.34 and 15.34 trains from Sudbury to St. Botolphs station, in the centre of Colchester, and charged a special reduced fare of 70p return (60p from Chappel and Bures). Trains were packed, with passengers standing in the guard's compartment.

The offer was extended to Christmas Eve, when some services loaded to over 200 passengers; and to all Saturdays in January, publicised with the aid of 8000 leaflets produced by BR. As Sudbury - Marks Tey Rail Users' Association Chairman Mr. M.J. Davies put it, "We have proved that, given the right pricing policy, there is a large untapped market for off-peak travel in our area."

This experiment resulted from suggestions to BR by SMTRUA and the RDS over a period of time; and we have been promised that, next May, regular off-peak trains from Sudbury will run through to St. Botolphs.

On December 15th, some 700 people from Yarmouth, Acle, Lingwood, Brundall, Reedham and Cantley filled a special train to London, chartered by our corporate member, the East Norfolk Travellers' Association. Locomotive No. 47 118 hauled the 11-coach train direct from Brundall to Liverpool St, via the Wensum Curve, in 2 hours 6 minutes and gave a similar fast run back home in the evening. This highly successful trip has encouraged ENTA to start planning similar ventures for this year.

ENTA has also issued East Norfolk Travel News No. 1, publicising the line and its facilities; while its sister organisation, ESTA, has just produced the seventh edition of its promotional newsletter, East Suffolk Travel.

A further 130 shoppers were carried on the Wymondham, Dereham & Fakenham Rail Action Committee's special DMU from Dereham to Norwich on December 1st - the third passenger train on the freight-only branch in 1979.

BR themselves have been encouraging Saturday travel to London by special offers of between £4.00 and £5.00 day returns, if booked in advance, from most staffed stations in the Norwich Division. The offer continues till February 2nd. Its popularity caused a relief train to be laid on from Norwich to Liverpool St. on December 8th. "This Christmas, go shopping, not parking" was the title of an advert for the facility in the local press.

Passengers from the unstaffed station of Newmarket can also enjoy a cheap £4 fare to London; thanks to RDS member and local rail users' association secretary Mr. D. Maudlin, who has, by special arrangement with BR, been selling these tickets from his home. Mr. Maudlin reports that, after a slow start with only 15-20 tickets sold per Saturday, sales have continued at a greatly increasing rate.

There is plenty of demand for rail services - which can be fostered with imagination, and should be met with adequate support and investment.

"THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE IS TO INVEST"

With these words, a leading article in the Waveney Clarion (December) stressed how investment in new types of level crossing and signalling can ultimately reduce operating costs on East Anglian lines. The article included an interview with the RDS Branch Secretary, who pointed out that £50 million invested in replacing manually operated crossings by automated and simplified ones throughout the country would pay for itself by the end of the 1980s.

On October 15th, Mr. Fowler told the House of Commons that he accepted the main conclusions of the 1978 Level Crossing Protection report (see Newsletter 28), as did the British Railways Board. Mr. Fowler has now thrown the ball into BR's court. They have to go to him with suggestions for replacing existing crossings with automatic barriers or flashing lights.

Welcome news - as far as it goes. No money has actually been promised yet by the government. However, acceptance of the report is a potentially important step forward for the RDS, the users' groups and the reopening campaigns. We must now press the case for new-style crossings on each line; and press for a rolling programme on installation, just as we continue to press for a rolling programme for electrification.

RDS DIARY

Saturday February 23rd: RDS Branch Committee meeting.

Saturday March 8th: RDS National Committee meeting, London.

Saturday March 29th: RDS National Conference of Rail Users' Groups, 11.30 - 16.30 Friends House, Euston Road, London.

Also on this day, our corporate member the Fakenham & Dereham Railway Society hopes to run a special train from Ely to Kings Lynn and back, visiting West Norfolk freight lines. Details from Mr. B.D. Woodgett, 4 Andover Road, Benson, Oxford, OX9 6DB.

Saturday April 12th: Subject to confirmation, the RDS plans to run a special locomotive-hauled train from Swavesey to London. It is hoped to leave Cambridge at about 07.15, departing from Swavesey at 08.30 and calling at Long Stanton, Oakington and Histon before running non-stop to Liverpool St. The departure from Liverpool St. is expected to be at about 17.30.

Details from Mr. S.F. Wilkinson (address on p.1)

Saturday April 26th: THE BRECKLAND EXPRESS. A special hauled train chartered jointly by the RDS and WyDFRAC from Dereham to London Kings Cross. The train will, it is hoped, leave Dereham at about 07.30, calling at Yaxham, Thuxton and Kimberley Park; leaving Wymondham at about 08.30, calling at Attleborough and Thetford, then running non-stop (except for possible crew change) to Kings Cross via Cambridge and Royston. It is planned to be in London by about 11.00, departing again at 17.00 and arriving back in Dereham by 20.30. This will be our fifth passenger train on the Dereham branch, and the first hauled one. It will link the three main towns of the Breckland District with London, not only providing Dereham people with an opportunity of visiting London by train; but also giving passengers from Wymondham, Attleborough and Thetford the fairly rare chance of a through train to the capital.

Fares will be: £4.90 for adults, £2.90 for children. Details and bookings: Mr. J.S. Hull, Cydonia Cottage, Station Road, Yaxham, Dereham, Norfolk. Please make cheques/postal orders payable to WyDFRAC.

On the same day, the RDS National AGM will take place in Bristol. Members will receive full details with the next issue of Railway Development News. It is being held further away from East Anglia than last year, in keeping with the Society's policy of holding its AGM in a different part of the country each year. However, East Anglian members may find it useful to go in two, and take advantage of the Persil Twosome tickets. The Breckland Express should also get you to London in time to catch the 11.45 or 12.20 from Paddington to Bristol!

Saturday May 3rd: The Locomotive Club of Great Britain are planning a railtour of East Anglia, from Liverpool St. to Cambridge, Ipswich, Harwich, Felixstowe Dock, Lowestoft, Ely, Cambridge and back to Liverpool St. Passengers will be picked up and set down at Cambridge. The train will be a hauled one, and the LCGB have asked for a Deltic locomotive if possible. Details from Mr. J. Mitchell, 16 Westholme Gardens, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 8QJ.

Saturday May 10th: RDS National Committee Meeting, Cambridge.

Saturday June 7th: RDS BRANCH SPRING MEETING, Kennedy Room, Cambridge Union Society starting at 2.00 p.m. Full details will be in the next newsletter - meanwhile, please book the date.

Saturday June 28th: RDS Branch Committee meeting.

Sunday July 13th: RDS and ADRAC joint special train. A 2 x 2 DMU is being chartered to run from Norwich to Reepham, and then to Yarmouth, calling at Cawston, Alysham and, hopefully, Buxton and Coltishall. Details from Mr. J. McCarter, York House, Church Street, Reepham, Norwich, NR10 4JW.

Sunday July 27th: RDS and WyDFRAC joint special train, Dereham - Sheringham, via Wensum curve, calling also at Wroxham, North Walsham and Cromer. Fares: £3 (adults) £1.50 children. Details and bookings: Mr. J.S. Hull (above).

Saturday September 13th: RDS National Committee meeting, Birmingham.

Saturday September 27th: RDS Branch Autumn Meeting, Assembly House, Norwich.

Other Specials we are still considering include Wisbech - London, Wisbech - Peterborough, Sudbury - Sheringham, Swavesey - Felixstowe and, looking further ahead, shoppers' specials for Christmas 1980! Details in next newsletter.

FAKENHAM - NOT DEAD YET

BR is still accepting freight for Fakenham and the $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles of line from Ryburgh is likely to remain open at least till mid February - 6 weeks later than their proposed closure. (see last Newsletter). By mid-December, no consultation had taken place with the rail unions; and it has been pointed out that resolution No. 71 at the last NUR AGM stated that the union would not discuss further closures with management, and that this must apply to Fakenham.

The feeling among local coal merchants is that they would receive coal by road all the way from the pits, instead of accepting it from the railhead at South Lynn, as BR have suggested to them.

When Worsted yard was closed, we understand that BR paid the local coal merchant the cost of moving his coal from North Walsham to Worsted by road! If BR were to pay the cost of the road haul from South Lynn, would they save anything at all by this closure?

As stated in our last Newsletter, our Branch Chairman wrote to BRB Chairman Sir Peter Parker (with copies to more than a dozen other people) on the subject of Fakenham. He received a post-card acknowledgement and a note that the letter was being passed to the Eastern Region General Manager to deal with. When the reply eventually came, it was from the Regional Freight Manager, and did not tell us much that we did not already know; beyond intimating that the BR Property Board already had a prospective buyer for Fakenham station site.

Mr. Wilkinson has since written to BR Divisional Manager Mr. Gordon Clarke, stating that certain RDS and WyDFRAC members are prepared to donate to BR the £260 which it is claimed would be the annual saving in maintenance costs by closing these $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles of track.

The Fakenham & Dereham Railway Company Ltd., (formed by the Fakenham & Dereham Railway Society) is busy raising capital in its attempt to take over the line if BR abandon it. Details of shares are obtainable from Mr. P.T. Shortland, 1 Bridge St., Rothwell, Northants. An Appeal Draw has also been organised by Mr. Shortland with tickets at 10p each. Prizes include an oil painting of the "Flying Scotsman", a decanter trip pack and a cutlery set. The draw will take place on March 28th.

ST. IVES TRACK LIFTING

On Sunday January 6th, some track was lifted at the end of the St. Ives line. Members may recall that demolition had been blacked by the local rail unions (cf. Newsletter 29); but the blacking has now been lifted, following promises of increased numbers of trains from Fen Drayton pits, a little further down the line.

The lifting of this track would obviously make it more expensive to reopen the line to passengers (though only a fraction of the cost of a road of comparable length!), but not impossible. The RDS intends to watch locally for any planning applications that may be made regarding this trackbed and to make any necessary representations to the authorities.

BRAINTREE SUNDAY SERVICE A SUCCESS

The experimental Summer Sunday service on the Braintree Branch (which Dr. Beeching wanted to close 17 years ago) was a big success, District Councillors were told on November 1st. It attracted an average of 550 passengers a day - far more than expected. Councillors agreed to recommend that it be provided again next year, provided that Essex County Council agrees.

FELIXSTOWE: Work started in the autumn on a platform in the Docks complex, and we understand that it is hoped to have this ready for next May, so that 2-3 boat trains a day can be run in connection with the sailings to Zeebrugge. Welcome news - our Society has for several years argued for such a service.

ELMSWELL: Our member Mr. B.J. Moss has successfully pressed BR for an extra afternoon train to stop at Elmswell, from next May.

SPOONER ROW: This station now has a shelter erected on the up, as well as the down, platform - something for which our local member Mr. L.J. Howes has been actively pressing for some time.

SUFFOLK PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLAN

The RDS has written to the Suffolk County Surveyor commenting on the draft for the county's next Public Transport Plan - a quite slender document which has little extra to say about rail transport. In fact, the only new mention specifically of the railways is an 8-line paragraph referring to the County Council's "co-operation" with the Railway Technical Centre in its study of possible new technology on the East Suffolk Line.

Our comments seek further information on this, and re-iterate various points that we have made before and of which the Council does not appear to have taken much notice. We also ask for details of the criteria which the Council claimed last year to be drawing up to judge whether to support improvements in public transport.

One proposal which could indirectly affect rail services is the government's proposed de-licensing of bus routes, allowing something of a "free-for-all". The draft Plan gives this a rather cool reception, pointing out that it would probably "undermine the existing operators' chances of achieving viability", by introducing competition on the more financially productive services.

The RDS voices its agreement with Suffolk County Council on this matter, and urges its not to propose to the government any trial areas for a "free-for-all" in the county.

Our opposition to "Freddy Lakers" in rural areas is shared, incidentally, by the magazine "Modern Railways" which, in its January issue, states, "Possibly the Minister has not noticed that Sir Freddy Laker's fare-cutting 'Skytrain' was not exactly a 'green field' operation, but simply provided extra capacity on one of the world's busiest air routes. The basis of Lakerism is the mass market: London - Birmingham rather than Swansea - Shrewsbury."

SUDBURY HYPERMARKET ON BR LAND - RDS OBJECTS

The plan by the Co-op to build a hypermarket on the former BR goods depot site (which would be ideal for a bus-rail interchange) reared its head again in December, when a public inquiry took place at Sudbury. The RDS sent in a written objection, pointing to what we considered a much more appropriate use for this particular site.

LYNN - ELY: GETTING READY FOR FASTER SERVICE

Mr. C.J. Milnes reports that work is well under way on improvements to the track, including the laying of 15 miles of continuous welded rail; extensive rebuilding of two bridges, replacement of signals and renewing of cables. Magdalen Road North level crossing has been converted to closed circuit TV supervision, releasing three men. Extra staff have been bussed in from other Divisions to help with the work, which should enable trains to be speeded up from next May.

CAMBRIDGE: ONGOING PROBLEMS...

Councillors have been complaining about the numbers of police needed to escort visiting football supporters from the railway station to Cambridge United's ground, and raised again the question of a rail halt at nearby Coldhams Common. Councillor Mrs. Sergeant argued, "The cost of the railway halt is nothing compared with the cost of providing the police." The RDS, amongst others, has argued in the past for such a halt (cf. Newsletter 27).

The County Council succeeding in having its own way over expansion of Drummer St. bus station rather than a new bus station next to the railway station; but unless its lawyers can sort out a legal tangle involving part of adjacent Christ's Pieces, it may now be forced to carry out a much smaller scheme at Drummer St.

"THE DYNAMICS OF TRAINS" is the title of a talk by Mr. D. Halfpenny of BR at Derby, to a meeting of the Mathematical Association at the Teachers' Centre, Ipswich Road, Norwich, starting at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday March 18th. RDS members would be welcome to attend the talk, which is non-technical and illustrated.

ESTA KEEPS UP PRESSURE

The East Suffolk Travellers' Association issued its first Members' Bulletin at the end of November, and hopes to make this a regular feature of its activity. The Chairman and Secretary have also written jointly to BRB Chairman Sir Peter Parker and Secretary of State Norman Fowler (following the by now infamous *Guardian* report), putting the case for retention of the two lines into Lowestoft.

A poster has been designed advertising both the line and the association, and should be available for distribution by early February. The association has also finally succeeded in getting a display board erected by Bramford Lane bridge, Ipswich; but the large Beccles station sign, covered up by the tenant of the station building with one of his own last summer, has still not been re-instated, despite ESTA pressure.

Following a meeting between ESTA committee members and Eastern Counties managers in October, a morning bus between Shotley and Ipswich has been re-timed to make a better rail connection; and improved publicity for the bus service has been introduced in Yoxford and Peasenhall. None of ESTA's other numerous suggestions - some of which involved re-timing busses by just a few minutes, has so far been acted upon; and it is likely that we shall have to await the outcome of ECOC's recent market research in the Waveney District before any major changes are made.

ESTA has also submitted comments on the Lowestoft & North Waveney Local Plan and the Suffolk County Council Public Transport Plan draft for 1980/1.

LOWESTOFT & NORTH WAVENY LOCAL PLAN - OR: THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US AND "CRACKERJACK".

The RDS submitted its comments on this Plan at the beginning of December. In its Issues Report, Waveney District Council asked people, amongst other things, whether they favoured an £8 million-plus Spine Road through the centre of Lowestoft, whether they considered the present level of public transport provision as satisfactory and what their views were on the often-mooted proposal for a bus/rail interchange in the town.

Our submission questioned the need for a Spine Road (while accepting the case for a third road crossing of Lake Lothing); and re-stated the case for a new combined bus and rail station in the town centre (cf. Newsletters 11, 24 and 29); accepting that this would probably have to be built as part of a shops and office development, and that this in itself could be a good thing. We also stressed the need for promotion of the service, especially for holidaymakers; and put the possible case for more Inter-City trains to and from Lowestoft (which at the moment must be the only Inter-City station on BR with only one regular hauled train per day.)

Our views were reported in the "Lowestoft Journal" on December 14th. The following week, the newspaper's columnist "Crackerjack" launched into a lengthy and ill-informed attack on the RDS, misquoting us, accusing us of being "slick" etc. - mainly, it appeared, because we had questioned the Spine Road proposal.

A letter the following week from Mr. T.J. Garrod set right "Crackerjacks" distortions and concluded, "Perhaps we shall see some ideas in his column in a future issue, instead of his present misinformed attacks." In an attempt to save face the following week, "Crackerjack" suggested a bus/rail interchange could be built at Culton Broad.

RDS MEETING WITH EURO-MP

A useful meeting took place on December 8th between Mr. Amedee Turner, MEP for Suffolk and Harwich, and RDS members Messrs. F.I.S. Carter, T.J. Garrod and P.R. Lawrence. Mr. Turner showed particular interest in the Society's campaign for a rail-based Channel Tunnel and for investment in the secondary services. He also told us of various ways in which funds from the EEC could possibly be used to improve rail links in this country, especially if there were cases of rural depopulation; and to help transport to and from the ports. Full notes of the meeting are available from the Branch Secretary (Please send stamped addressed envelope.)

BY ROAD OR BY RAIL?

The RDS submitted nearly 6000 words of comments to the Armitage Inquiry on Lorries and their Impact on the Environment. Our comments point out some of the reasons for the growth in heavy lorries, and some of the solutions to the problem, especially the rail alternative.

Several members of the East Anglian Branch helped in the compilation of these comments, which draw considerably on the experience of this part of the country.

This RDS Publicity & Publications Committee has decided to use this submission as the basis for a new booklet, to be entitled Railfreight or Juggernaut? It should be published before the next Branch Newsletter appears, and will be available from the Branch Secretary or the Sales Officer at 30p.

All Improvements: the Eastern Road Construction Unit of the Department of Transport have now replied to the RDS' letter of July 22nd - on November 27th! Rarely can we have waited so long for so little, however, since the reply is largely evasive, and gives no clear indication as to whether the Department has examined the rail alternative as recommended by the Leitch Committee in 1978.

Stowmarket Paint Resin Plant: the choice of Stowmarket for a new ICI paint resin plant was made, according to a spokesman in the local press, because of, amongst other things, its good road access.

The RDS Branch Secretary has written to the planning authority urging that the application to build this plant be granted only on condition that rail is used for transporting the dangerous liquids involved. Safety and energy-saving are two important reasons for this. Rail is well-suited to carrying dangerous substances; whereas proposed new regulations for the transport of such substances by road were recently successfully opposed by the Freight Transport Association (cf. their autumn leaflet, "Some recent achievements") on the alleged grounds of being "unworkable, unjustified and extremely costly."

At Saxmundham, there has been debate over whether a western by-pass or an eastern relief road should be built (see last Newsletter), with various people living along the line of one route campaigning for the other. The RDS has written to the County and District Councils, supporting the shorter, and cheaper eastern route (which will also remove more traffic from the tortuous main street), and pointing out the rail alternative for much longer-distance through traffic. RDS member Mr. R. Adams had a letter in the Cambridge Evening News of 16.11.79 refuting some of the pro-lorry arguments of the Road Haulage Association and putting the rail and waterway alternative.

Our member Mr. P. Wakefield has written to Ciba-Geigy welcoming the start of work on their Duxford railhead (see Newsletter 25); and has received a reply from the firm stating that they intend not only to make full use of this facility, but also to encourage their customers to receive goods by rail.

FREIGHT: An unusual delivery into Histon by rail at the end of October was a Spanish Transfesa wagon containing barrels of orange pulp from Seville. Less exotic has been substantial seed potato traffic mainly to Norwich, Yarmouth and North Walsham. Some have arrived from Scotland in air-braked vans, but most in old van-fits. Air-braked vans can also now be handled at Cantley Beet Sugar Factory, as BSC have removed 6 inches of concrete from the loading bay. Tonnages leaving Cantley by rail are down, but the traffic is all long-distance, to the West Country and Scotland.

NEW OPEN CROSSING: A new open level crossing with flashing lights, activated automatically by trains, was brought into use at the end of November on the freight-only Wissington (formerly Stoke Ferry) branch between Denver and Abbey stations.

MEMBERSHIP

RDS East Anglian Branch Membership on 31.12.79 stood at 155, an increase of 41% over the same time last year.

We welcome the following new members:

1. Ipswich Friends of the Earth, Treasurer: Mr. P.H. Stones, 28 Cheltenham Ave., Ipswich, IP1 4LN.
2. Mr. M.A. Bulkley, 6 Regent Terrace, Cambridge.
3. Mr. T. Higgin, 2A Whitehall Road, Norwich, NR2 3EW.
4. Mr. J.N. Thornton, Abbey Farm, Linstead, Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 0LQ.
5. Mr. S. Hewitt, 103 Century Rd., Gt. Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR31 0BS.
6. Mr. S. Topasma, 20 Winifred Rd., Cobholm, Gt. Yarmouth, Norfolk.
7. Mr. B.J. Moss, 16 Elliston Close, Elmswell, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP30 9DW.
8. Miss J. Grieve, 3 Miriam Close, Caister-on-sea, Gt. Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR30 5PH.
9. Cambridge Rail Action Group, Secretary: Dr. M. Smith, 1 Grange Gardens, Grange Road, Cambridge, CB3 9AT.

Please note change of address: Mr. N.D. Armstrong has moved to 3 St. Andrews Drive, Church Lane, Eaton, Norwich, NR4 6NH.

PENS AND LABELS FOR SALE

Why not buy stationery from us and help RDS funds? RDS East Anglian Branch retractable ball-point pens are available from the Branch Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer at 15p each (minimum of 5 for orders by post.)

We are also selling gummed labels, 11cm x 15cm, with the slogan "Save fuel - use public transport" on the bottom. These are ideal for re-using envelopes with, amongst other things. They are available at 70p per hundred or £3 per 500 (post free) from the Branch Secretary.

SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS AREA

Mr. M.J. Hadley, 39 Holmdale, Letchworth, Herts, SG6 1QQ, has now become RDS Area Representative for the South East Midlands - an area which covers all of Bedfordshire plus North Hertfordshire (north of, but excluding, Hertford, Welwyn Garden City and Harpenden) and the Milton Keynes District of Buckinghamshire. The territory covered by the East Anglian Branch will therefore now end at the western and southern border of Cambridgeshire; but members living in the part of Mr. Hadley's Area covered by the Eastern Region of BR will continue to be sent the East Anglian Branch Newsletter, and will, of course, be welcome at Branch meetings.

Mr. Hadley will also be responsible for all matters concerning the local service between Hitchin and Huntingdon - and at the moment he is in fact planning a second, and more ambitious, edition of his local rail guide, to promote off-peak usage of this service. His ideas, which he is discussing with local BR management, include a local Ranger ticket, and a package deal to encourage visitors to the RSPB sanctuary at Sandy to travel by rail.

The other major RDS activity in the South East Midlands is the launching at the end of December of a survey of local opinion on the Bedford - Bletchley service. Questionnaires have gone out to over 90 local bodies; and, if returns are favourable, it is hoped to form a rail users' group for the line.

NORWICH STATION NOTICE-BOARD: BR have been approached about the possibility of the RDS having a small board at Norwich station (similar to the ESTA board on platform 2 at Ipswich) on which the Society and local users' groups can display details of their activities. The matter is currently under consideration by BR.

CUTS RESTORED: We are pleased to report that, at the beginning of November, two train services from Huntingdon to Hitchin, cut last summer because of the fuel shortage, were restored, giving an hourly service between 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. every day.