



RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH NEWSLETTER
no. 50

Spring 1984

Chairman: Steve Wilkinson, 52 Manor Park,
Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4JT (Tel:3981)
Secretary: Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road,
Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ (Tel:61721; or
at work, Norwich 28181 ex.44)

EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL

East Anglia By Rail, the 56-page illustrated guidebook to our region, has just been published by the East Anglian Branch of the Railway Development Society. It was launched at a reception in the Limes Hotel, Needham Market, on April 7th, attended by 42 people. Those present included most of the members who wrote the book, plus representatives of British Rail, Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Women's Institutes, Cyclists' Touring Club and other voluntary bodies.

Branch Chairman Steve Wilkinson described the aim of the book as "to get people off the road and on to the railways - and that can only be good for the environment."

3000 copies have been printed of our book which, in the words of the Eastern Evening News (9.4.84) "brings rail routes to life." It costs £1-50 from Peter Lawrence, 75 Marlpit Lane, Norwich, NR5 8XN and from many bookshops.

BISHOPS STORTFORD - CAMBRIDGE ELECTRIFICATION: ANOTHER VICTORY

The Government has at last given the go-ahead for BR to electrify the 39 km. of route from Bishops Stortford to Cambridge, at a cost of £10 million.

RDS has campaigned for several years for this project. In the autumn of 1981, we collected 4,500 signatures in four weeks on a petition calling for the routes to Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge to be electrified.

The Department of Transport has, however, refused permission for electrification between Cambridge (Shepreth Branch Junction) and Royston - 21 km. which would cost £2 million and link the Great Northern and Great Eastern schemes. RDS has voiced its concern to the Secretary of State about this, adding: "We hope that, upon completion of the Bishops Stortford scheme, BR will be able to proceed with electrification between Royston and Shepreth Branch Junction."

NEW NORFOLK RAIL HALT STARTED

Work has started on a halt at Roughton Road, to serve the southern part of Cromer, thanks to financial support from North Norfolk District Council and a job creation scheme. The new halt should be open in October.

Our Society first suggested a halt for this area in 1975 (cf. Newsletter no. 16) and subsequently offered a token donation to start an appeal fund for it. We have taken every opportunity since then to put the case for it and are delighted that it is, at last, taking shape.

RDS SPECIAL TO CARLISLE

318 people filled an all-first class train behind locomotive 47 416 chartered by RDS on April 7th, for an excursion from Watton-at-Stone, Stevenage, and Hitchin to Carlisle via the scenic and threatened Settle route.

The train was smartly turned out and arrangements with Travellers' Fare to provide pre-packed tray meals worked very satisfactorily. An enjoyable day out was had by all, and our member Mike Hadley, who has now organised four successful excursions from North Hertfordshire, would like to thank those local members who acted as stewards on the train for the smooth way in which everything went.

This train was fully booked weeks beforehand and many would-be passengers had to be disappointed - showing that there is a ready market for convenient attractively-priced rail travel.

RDS BRANCH AGM: FEBRUARY 25th, LOWESTOFT CENTRAL LIBRARY LECTURE ROOM

There was an attendance of 35 at the Branch Annual General Meeting - held for the first time at Lowestoft.

Branch Chairman Steve Wilkinson began by recounting some of the causes for optimism on the rail scene locally - notably, that we had been assured by BR that Lowestoft coal depot would remain open for the foreseeable future, handling some 30,000 tones of freight a year. Causes for concern, however, were threats of closures and privatisation and BR's problem in maintaining its ageing structures, especially when these were damaged by ships or lorries!

The Treasurer reported an income over the past year of £644.13, of which the largest items were capitation on membership fees (£174.88) and sales of pens, labels and posters (£171.56). The largest single item of expenditure was postage (£170.16) and the Branch ended 1983 with a balance of £228.22. There was, in addition, £200 in the chartered train account and £138.78 in the publications account.

The Secretary presented the Annual Report, which showed an overall increase in membership of 22%, giving a total of 233 at the end of 1983. While RDS co-operated with many bodies with which it shared common ground, Mr. Garrod said that it was also important to stress our particular identity to people: "We are interested primarily in the present day rail system, and in the people who use it; and we don't just observe and talk about trains - we try to do something about them."

The following were elected: Chairman: Steve Wilkinson; Vice-Chairman: Charles Taylor; Secretary: Trevor Garrod; Treasurer: Ian Carter; Minutes Secretary: Peter Wakefield; Sales Officer: Peter Lawrence; Committee: John Brodribb, Lewis Buckingham, John Page, Geoffrey Roper. Two members of the outgoing committee did not stand for re-election - Mike Farahar and Louis Hipperson - and both were thanked for their services. They will, however, continue to be active in the Society in other ways - Mike as National Treasurer and Louis as Branch Archivist and Membership Officer. The Hon. Auditor, Nigel Baylen, was thanked for his work and re-appointed.

We welcomed as guest speaker Don Mathew, National Transport Campaigner of Friends of the Earth, who gave a stimulating talk on national transport issues, and the role of his organisation (with which RDS has often fruitfully worked).

After campaigning in the mid-70s against motorway expansion and the power of the road lobby, FoE had then placed great emphasis on pressing for low-energy transport, especially cyclists and pedestrians, and had persuaded the Government to take these more seriously. It was especially important to argue for safer transport; against irresponsible speeding on the roads; and against lenient treatment of offenders.

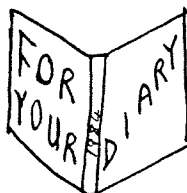
There was unfairness in the way roads and railways were financed - and those in favour of privatisation might like to note that Spain's private motorways had just gone bankrupt!

In London, the GLC's travelcard had been successful in encouraging public transport usage - with 11% more passengers on the Tube, and 9% less in private cars in the central area. Abolition of the GLC could lead to more motorways being built, however. Indeed, the Department of Transport and the National Economic Development Office were working on plans whereby objectors could no longer question the need for a new road at a public inquiry - this would be decided for them by the Secretary of State!

In conclusion, Mr. Mathew said that transport was "very much about how we're using up our resources" - and the numbers of pro-public transport pressure groups needed to continue to grow.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RAIL USERS' GROUPS - BIGGEST EVER!

Over 100 delegates attended the RDS' sixth conference in London on March 24th - including a dozen from East Anglia. Junior Transport Minister David Mitchell MP was the main speaker. A full report of the conference is available at 60p (inc. postage) from Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx. TW11 0DN.



Saturday April 28th: RDS National Annual General Meeting at 2.00 p.m. in the Maltings, Ely, Cambs. The Maltings are on the waterfront, 5 minutes walk from Ely station. This is the Society's most important meeting of the year and is your chance to help formulate its tactics and policy, and decide its leadership, for the coming 12 months. It is held in a different part of the country each year, and this year it is the turn of the East Anglian Branch to host it. (NB: This is not a public meeting - RDS members only.)

April 21st and May 5th: NENTA specials from North Walsham to Settle and Carlisle - BOTH FULLY BOOKED. Any RDS member who is travelling on the second of these trains, and would be willing to sell RDS books and pens on it, should contact the Branch Secretary.

Saturday May 5th: RDS Branch Committee Meeting, Beccles.

Saturday May 19th: SPONSORED CYCLE RIDE - as the RDS contribution to National Bike Week, we are organising sponsored cycle rides to a reopened station on each BR Region. For the Eastern Region, the destination is METHERINGHAM - the station between Lincoln and Sleaford which was reopened in 1975. The cyclists taking part invite anyone - whether or not an RDS member - to sponsor them at whatever sum they wish, per mile. Full details are given on the enclosed form. Please help us gain publicity for reopenings, the train + bike combination and the rail cause in general - as well as raising money to further the Society's aims.

On yer bike!



Saturday June 2nd: RDS SPRING MEETING 2.00 p.m.

The Spring Meeting of the East Anglian Branch - which will be open to the public - will be held in the YMCA, Gonville Place, Cambridge. From the rail station, walk along Station Road and Hills Road as far as the Catholic Church and traffic lights, then turn right and along Gonville Place. The YMCA is a modern building on your right. It has a cafeteria for meals and light refreshments.

The first half of the meeting will deal with Branch business - including reports about, and discussion of, rail matters around the region.

The second half will be a talk on BR's future plans for the area by Kings Cross Divisional Manager Mr. Bill Parker. Mr. Parker will answer questions afterwards.

East Suffolk... 125 years young!

From June 1st to 10th, our corporate member the East Suffolk Travellers' Association will be celebrating the 125th anniversary of the East Suffolk Line from Ipswich to Lowestoft.

The first train ran over the entire route on June 1st 1859. On the day of the anniversary, ESTA will hold an evening reception in St. Marks Church Hall, next to Oulton Broad South Station. The following day, there will be a stall on Lowestoft station, with suitable leaflets, books and some exhibition material about the line.

For a fortnight from Tuesday May 29th, there will be exhibitions in Beccles and Halesworth Libraries; and one in Woodbridge Library which will last until June 30th.

The celebrations will culminate in a SPECIAL TRAIN FROM LOWESTOFT TO BRISTOL on Sunday June 10th. This will be a 600-seat locomotive-hauled train with a buffet, picking up at each East Suffolk Line station and calling at Didcot, Bath and Bristol. The fare will be £12 return from any station (children £6). For details and bookings, send a stamped addressed envelope to Branch Secretary.

ESTA is also publishing a 12-page illustrated booklet to mark the anniversary and give full details of events. This will cost 40p (plus 15p postage) and will be available in mid May from the Branch Secretary.

PUBLIC MEETING AT REEDHAM OPPOSES CLOSURE

70 people filled the Primary School at Reedham on the evening of Monday February 13th for a public meeting called by the East Norfolk Travellers' Association (a corporate member of RDS).

The meeting was called following British Rail's announcement that the Reedham - Yarmouth line could close by 1988.

Opening the meeting, ENTA Chairman James Apsey stressed that the Association had always tried to build a constructive relationship with BR; to think out reasonable suggestions for improvements and then put them to BR. He stressed that there was as yet no formal closure proposal, but that there was also "no smoke without fire." The track would need to be renewed by 1988 and the future of the route was certainly under review. "Figures have been drawn up and are at BR Regional headquarters in York," said Mr. Apsey. "There is no time for complacency."

RDS Branch Secretary Trevor Garrod then spoke, and announced that the Society would not only oppose this closure proposal, but would also encourage users' groups from other areas to do so - for Yarmouth received visitors from all over the country who, if this route closed, would all be forced over a single-track bottleneck.

Mr. Garrod explained that our rail system was run "on the cheap" - Sir Peter Parker had called it the "bargain basement of Europe" - with diesel railcars over 25 years old and a backlog of track maintenance. BR had to keep the system going with less money, in real terms, than in the mid-1970s; and it was to their credit that the network in East Anglia had remained stable, with no passenger station closures since 1970. However, if present Government policies continued, he warned, "Sooner or later, something's got to give - and it could be this line."

We must therefore be prepared to fight the closure through the TUCC procedure; while working in the meantime to convince the politicians of the value of rail transport and campaigning for improvements to services and increased off-peak revenue.

Many useful points were raised in questions and comments from the floor. Several people called for a more convenient service between Cantley, Reedham and Yarmouth - especially during the afternoon. Some suggested that fare evasion was distorting the travel statistics. There were complaints that BR publicity was not effective enough in the area, especially when timetable changes were brought in. BR had lost some of the workers' traffic to Cantley Beet Sugar Factory - partly because coaches were now being run; but partly because, with modernisation in the factory, it now employed fewer staff.

34 of those present said they were regular users of the service into Yarmouth and 20 said they would be "seriously inconvenienced if the line closed. Indeed, 18 considered that they could lose their jobs if they had no reliable and quick means of getting to Yarmouth.

It was resolved unanimously, "This meeting rejects any suggestions by BR that the rail service between Cantley, Reedham and Great Yarmouth be withdrawn, in view of the hardship this would cause, and considers that BR should not pursue the matter further under any circumstances."

The resolution was sent to the two local MPs, British Rail and other interested bodies.

Meanwhile, any member willing to help the anti-closure campaign, or willing to lodge a personal objection if and when the time comes, is invited to write to Steve Hewitt, 103 Century Road, Cobholm, Gt. Yarmouth, NR31 0BS.

NORFOLK PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLAN 1984/5; RDS submitted comments on this Plan at the end of March - having had a mere three weeks in which to study it. We urge Norfolk County Council to express opposition, rather than just "concern" to the possible Reedham - Yarmouth closure; to do something concrete to publicise rail services in the county; to consider the possible effects of line singling in the county; and to support rail experiments as well as bus experiments - such as the experimental reopening of the Dereham line.

MORE FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday June 24th: YORKSHIRE ADVENTURER

An RDS special train seating 500 people will run from Colchester to York, Malton and Scarborough, calling at all stations Manningtree - Ely inclusive. This will be the first time for several years that stations like Needham Market, Elmswell, Thurston and Kennett have had an excursion. Subject to confirmation, the train will also have a buffet. The fare will be £10 for adults, £5 for children; with a supplement of £4.25 (children £2.60) if you would like to ride on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. Tickets are obtainable from Russell Whipps, 42, Derby Road, Ipswich, IP3 8DN (Tel:73366) and three other outlets - full details on enclosed leaflet.

5000 leaflets have been printed to advertise this train - thanks to Steven Binks for the very effective artwork. We need to distribute as many as possible during April and May. If you can help, please order your leaflets from Steven Binks, Auberies Farm Cottage, Bulmer, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 7DY. (Tel:0737-73252). Some leafletting has already taken place. If you would be willing to do some door-to-door leafletting in Stowmarket or Needham Market, please contact Mrs. Jennifer Adams, 53 Lime Tree Place, Stowmarket, to find which places have already been done. If you could leaflet in Elmswell, Thurston or Ely, please contact Bryan Moss, 8 Bennett Avenue, Elmswell, Bury St. Edmunds, IP30 9DW, to check what has already been done.

Sunday July 1st DOUBLE BILL

1. NORFOLK EXPLORER: RDS/SMTRUA joint special train from Sudbury to Sheringham, picking up at all stations to Colchester, setting down at Norwich, Wroxham, Cromer and Sheringham. This will be a DMU with refreshments and "party spirit" on board. Tickets are expected to be £7.25 for adults and £3 for children. Details and bookings: Mike Davies, 45 Elm Road, Sudbury (Tel:72844)

2. YORKSHIRE ADVENTURER no. 2 - From Wisbech, March, Whittlesey and Peterborough to York and Scarborough. This RDS special will be the first excursion from Wisbech for two years and the first locomotive-hauled special from the town since the withdrawal of the passenger service 16 years ago. There will also be a 'Travellers' Fayre buffet - and all for just £12 (children £5). Details and tickets: John Goose, Homefield Farm, Cants Drove, Murrow, Wisbech, Cambs, PE13 4HN. Leaflets are being printed to advertise this train, and volunteers have already come forward to do Wisbech and Whittlesey. However, we should also like to do some door-to-door leafletting in March, and any member willing to help in this should contact the Branch Secretary.

Saturday July 21st: Branch Committee Meeting, Felixstowe.

Sunday July 22nd: ESTA special train from Lowestoft and all East Suffolk Line stations to Clacton. This DMU special will also call at Thorpe-le-Soken, and passengers will be able to change there for the shuttle to Frinton and Walton-on-Naze at no extra charge. Fares: £5 from stations Lowestoft - Darshan; £4 from stations ~~Saxmundham~~ - Ipswich. Children half fare. Details from Branch Secretary.

Sunday August 26th: NEMTA Special from North Walsham, Worstead, Wroxham, Salhouse, Norwich, Wymondham, Attleborough, Thetford and Ely to Bath, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare. Adults £14.50; children £10.50. Bookings: Ray Davies, 36 Lighthouse Close, Happisburgh, Norwich, NR12 0QE.

Saturday October 15th: NEMTA special from North Walsham to Blackpool Illuminations. Adults: £11.75; children £9.25. Bookings again with Mr. Davies.

Saturday September 22nd: RDS AUTUMN MEETING.

This will be held in the Edmund Bacon Room, Assembly House, Norwich at 2.00p. After the usual business session, our member Nicholas Hammond will show his video recording of the recent BRASS TACKS television programme on juggernaut. This programme created widespread interest for its revelations about lorry taxes and the costs of road transport. After the video, we shall have a discussion of the issues raised.

It would not be very easy for Nicholas to bring his own video player from Huntingdon - so does any member in or near Norwich have one which could be used at the meeting? If so, please let the Branch Secretary know.

TRAFFIC NEWS

BR are pressing ahead with their plans to close Yarmouth freight depot in May, despite local authority pressure. Ten miles down the coast at Lowestoft, however, an invention was tried out at the end of March which could make many smaller coal depots more viable and thus reduce lorry movements. A hopper un-loader has been built by the local engineering firm of Small & Co. and was demonstrated on March 22nd. The machine costs £15,000, fits on the rails under the coal hopper and, by a conveyor belt system, transfers to coal on to a lorry. It is designed for smaller coal depots (taking up to 15,000 tons a year) and may also be adapted for gravel and stone traffic.

On March 26th and 29th, two container trains ran from Lowestoft to London. Following the diversion of a ship from Harwich, which was strike-bound, the containers were unloaded at Lowestoft's barely-completed road-served container depot, transferred by lorry to nearby sidings and a mobile crane was hired to lift them on to the train. It would be physically possible to run a rail siding into the new container depot - which is what the local NUR would like to see happen; but a BR spokesman said he thought there were probably enough Freightliner depots in East Anglia already.

The firm of FAVOR PARKER has started sending chicken food by rail from Dornham Market to Southampton. This is completely new traffic for our area.

ANGLIA RANGER: This is now available again, for a wider area that includes Sudbury, Harwich, Hitchin, Huntingdon and Spalding. RDS has long pressed BR to include the first three of these destinations in the ticket. It now costs £7.50 for a day - a 50% increase on last year's price, and one of the criticisms that we have made to BR. Their answer is that the increase takes account of inflation and also of a greater route mileage over which the ticket now operates. The weekly ticket costs £16 - a real bargain. BR planned to start this facility in May, but at our suggestion brought it forward to the beginning of April.

SUDBURY: Now that their line is at last on the Anglia Ranger, the Sudbury - Marks Tey Rail Users' Assn. are re-launching their promotional poster and trying to get as many as possible displayed in the rest of East Anglia. SUEVIA is disappointed at the imminent disbanding of the BR Publicity Department at Liverpool St., which has been very co-operative towards them over the years.

The Association has also relaunched its newsletter in an attractive new format, with the new name LINKLINE; and would welcome any special trains, or group travel, on the branch that any other users' group may care to organise. For advice on the attractions, contact Mike Davies, 45 Elm Rd., Sudbury (072844)

EAST SUFFOLK THROUGH TRAIN

BR remain adamant in their refusal to reinstate the Lowestoft - London through service, due to be replaced by a local DMU in May. They have received 2000 messages of protest from local users; RDS has taken the matter up with a series of BR officials up to the Chairman himself; and our affiliated East Suffolk Travellers' Association has enlisted the support of MPs, some local councils and other bodies.

BR have backed down on one thing, however: instead of a DMU journey from Lowestoft to Colchester and a wait of nearly half an hour before changing to an electric from Clacton, with an overall journey time of more than 3 hours to London; passengers will now be able to leave Lowestoft on a DMU at 7.15 and all change at Ipswich, with just a 4-min. connection, into an Inter-City train from Norwich.

It has also been revealed that BR are transferring 20 main line coaches from East Anglia to Yorkshire in May - which will affect other lines as well as the East Suffolk - and we have again made representations at a high level. With all due respect to Yorkshire - but isn't E.Anglia supposed to be the fastest growing region in the country? Is our reward for this to be more overcrowded trains? Clearly we must keep fighting for every service, every train, every coach!

LOWESTOFT & NORTH WAVENEY LOCAL PLAN

Objections made to this Plan last September by RDS and the East Suffolk Travellers' Association (cf. Rail East no.48) have been supported by the Inspector at the Public Inquiry.

Waveney District Council had contended that a "major shopping element" would not be acceptable in any plans for a bus/rail interchange at Lowestoft. We objected to this policy as being unnecessarily restrictive on any future developer. The Inspector's conclusions, in his report published in March, are to accuse the Council of "an over protective attitude to central area shopping... it would be a mistake, in my view, to regard the local commercial climate as so fragile that those interested in major shopping expansion in Lowestoft are prevented from considering the interchange site."

In fact, the day after we appeared at the Inquiry, plans were revealed for a Council-backed new shopping centre elsewhere in the town - plans which have, however, attracted their own share of opposition.

IN THE MEDIA

RDS Branch Secretary Trevor Garrod was interviewed on BBC Television "Look East" on February 27th, about the need for more rail investment in East Anglia.

On March 26th, following an invitation from BR, Steve Wilkinson, Eddie Graves, Herbert Wakefield and Clara Zilahi represented the Society at a press conference in Cambridge at which BR outlined their plans for the region over the next four years.

The following day, Mr. Wilkinson did a 30-minute live broadcast on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, giving the rail users' reactions.

GRAND PAGEANT OF TRANSPORT

RDS has been invited to take part in this event, being organised by the Ipswich Transport Museum on June 16th/17th. We could have a sideshow, stall, display etc.

RDS has taken part in events organised by Ipswich Transport Museum in 1980 and 1983. Whether we take part in this year's event will depend on how many members would be interested in, for example, manning a stall. The Branch Secretary will not be able to do anything that weekend, but would be interested to hear from any member(s) willing to do something, by May 1984.

HAVE YOU WRITTEN TO YOUR MP RECENTLY?

The railways' case needs to be put to many of our local Members of Parliament - especially to those who are newcomers to the region (one of whom has ordered a copy of EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL !)

The recently formed RDS Parliamentary Sub-committee has compiled a seven-point memorandum of issues which should be put to MPs (e.g. investment, road taxes, reopenings, DMU replacement) and Sub-committee Secretary John Lark is in the process of sending this to a number of members around the region, asking them to take up some of the points with their MP.

If you are willing to write to your MP, please contact John at 7, Gloucester Avenue, Gorleston-on-sea, Great Yarmouth, NR31 7LT.

RDS does circularise MPs from time to time; and a small number receive RAIL DEVELOPMENT NEWS. We also have discussions with particular MPs on specific issues; and last year two MPs (one Labour and one Liberal) were in the delegation which presented our 25,000-signature petition to the Prime Minister.

However, the average MP, who may not have an over-riding interest in transport matters, is likely to take most notice of personal letters from his own constituents.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

Enclosed with this issue of RAIL EAST should be a Branch Membership List - if you have not already received one or taken one at the AGM. However, as life has been rather complicated lately, one or two members may have been missed. If, therefore, you do not have the new Membership List (dated 1.1.84), please let the Branch Secretary know. Thanks to Louis Hipperson for his painstaking work in compiling this list.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Welcome to more new members:

Mr. S. Dick, 19 Hugh Dickson Road, Colchester, CO4 5DD

Ms. M. M. Burgess, 24 Langley Road, Cantley, Norwich, NR13 3SR.

Mr. R. Aram has moved to 41 Lackford Close, Brundall, Norwich, NR13 5NL.

Mr. B. J. Moss has moved to 8 Bennett Avenue, Elmswell, Bury St. Edmunds, IP36 9DW.

Mr. M. R. Hicks has moved to 1 Princes Road, Lowestoft, NR32 2NJ.

Our Branch Treasurer, Ian Carter, has just retired from his job at Barclays Bank. We wish him a long and happy retirement. He will, of course, still be handling some money!

Congratulations to our member Stephen Barnes, who has been appointed News Editor of Modern Railways.

TEN YEARS AGO: From Branch Newsletter no. 10, Spring 1974 -

Seventy people attended our Society's Public Meeting in Wisbech on May 18th which was addressed by Clement Freud MP and which agreed to set up an action committee to press for the March - Wisbech line to be reopened to passengers.

BR announced two extra through trains between Norwich and Birmingham - the fastest taking 4 hours 4 minutes. (The trains were only DMUs in those days) The Breckland Line Users' Association was formed.

A fertiliser depot was opened next to Whittlesey station and would receive up to 20,000 tons a year by rail.

WISBECH

The Wisbech by-pass is to cross the railway by an automatic crossing, and work on this is now well advanced. Two other nearby crossings on minor roads - Redmoor and Lewbridge Lane - will also be affected: one will be closed, the other automated.

There will then be only 3 out of the 7 crossings on this freight-only line still manually operated.

Such developments will enable freight workings to save time - and, of course, reduce the capital cost of a future passenger reopening.

THE ELECTRIC RAILWAY IS TAKING SHAPE ...

Mast for electrification are now in position along the main line from Colchester to Manningtree and part of the Harwich branch; while concrete bases for masts extend northwards to the outskirts of Ipswich. Wiring was due to start between Colchester and Manningtree in early April. This summer, work is due to begin on re-laying each track through Ipswich tunnel on a concrete base, lowering the rail slightly to make room for the wires.

We understand that BR are just one week behind schedule with this electrification work - not bad, when you consider that the contractors doing the work had several weeks of industrial action during the winter.

The first electric trains are due to run into Ipswich in just over a year's time. Does any member have suggestions for suitable things for RDS to do to celebrate this event?

BRING BACK THE TRAINS - BIGGER! BETTER!

The second edition of the RDS book on rail reopenings has just been published. It is 68 pages - 12 pages longer than the first edition - including a list of over 400 stations that are potential reopening candidates, new photos updated information in particular lines, a new Foreword and a completely new final chapter on the progress made since the first edition, just over a year ago, and the need to press for experimental line reopenings.

The new edition costs £1.50 plus 30p postage, from Mr. F. J. Hastilow, 21 Norfolk Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B75 6SQ.

HURRY, HURRY - WHILE STOCKS LAST....