

RAIL EAST

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH
NEWSLETTER no. 53

Winter 1985

Chairman: Steve Wilkinson, 52 Manor Park,
Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4JT (Tel: 3981)
Secretary: Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road,
Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ (Tel: 81721;
or at work, Norwich 28181 ex 44)

RAIL STRATEGY FOR EAST ANGLIA

A new Railway Development Society pamphlet, RAIL STRATEGY FOR EAST ANGLIA was launched on November 19th, 1984, and the Society's views in it have gained wide press, radio and television coverage.

2000 copies of the 6-page illustrated pamphlet were paid for out of the profits from sales of our railguide, EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL, Branch Chairman Steve Wilkinson told the launch meeting at the Hotel Nelson, Norwich. It was not intended as a detailed blueprint, but as a summary of users' views on how the network should develop over the rest of the 1980s and beyond.

(A copy is enclosed with this newsletter for members who have not already received one.)

Mr. Wilkinson was interviewed on BBC Television "Look East", while BBC Radio Cambridgeshire broadcast an interview with Branch Secretary Trevor Garrod. Almost all local newspapers carried stories on RAIL STRATEGY FOR EAST ANGLIA and the "Daily Telegraph" gave it 11 column inches.

Copies of the pamphlet have gone to British Rail, local MPs and MEPs, selected peers, County Councillors, Chambers of Commerce, trade unions and many local voluntary bodies. Thanks to Geoffrey Roper, Peter Lawrence, John Brodribb, Chris Lee and Louis Hipperson for sharing the substantial task of sending these out.

Representatives of three of our affiliated local groups in Norfolk also spoke at the launch meeting.

Steve Hewitt (East Norfolk Travellers' Association) outlined ENTA's plans to fight the closure of the Reedham - Yarmouth section, should a closure proposal actually be published; while also working to promote the Norwich - Yarmouth services.

Ray Davies (North East Norfolk Travellers' Association) reported on their successful series of special trains from North Walsham this year - as a result of which they had offered BR £1500 to help refurbish the station there; and North Walsham Town Council had offered a further £500.

Chris Pearson (Wymondham - Dereham Rail Action Committee), whose group, in collaboration with RDS, had now run 14 special trains on this freight-only line, stressed the case for a regular restored passenger service to Dereham which, with neighbouring Toftwood, now had a population of some 15,000. Road journeys to Norwich could take 70 minutes at busy times and the train, even though covering slightly more mileage, would take considerably less. UKF freight traffic to Dereham was secure until at least 1990-1 and the current grain contract to North Elmham, north of Dereham, would last to 1993.

THINGS ARE HAPPENING

Our STRATEGY pamphlet calls for electrification of the short north London link from Stratford to Camden, to permit through working of freight from the growing Haven Ports to the Midlands - and the Government has now given the go-ahead to this scheme!

Arlesey, between Hitchin and Biggleswade, is one of 20 stations that we recommend for possible reopening - and we now learn that BR have made informal approaches about this to Bedfordshire County Council. The Branch Secretary will be meeting Mr. John Tizard, County Councillor for Arlesey, to discuss this further on January 12th.

*EXTRA COPIES of the STRATEGY leaflet are obtainable from John Brodribb, 12 Kemps Lane, Beccles, NR34 9XA. (SAE appreciated)

- 2 - Special Trains

Members of RDS and its affiliated groups are planning a number of special trains for 1985 - but in some cases the date has not yet been finalised because BR have not yet been able to confirm that suitable stock will be available. A stamped addressed envelope to the organiser will ensure that you receive full details as soon as these are printed; and these will also be in our next newsletter, due out at the beginning of April.

Saturday April 13th: Fakenham & Dereham Railway Company special from Kings Lynn to York, picking up at Magdalen Rd, Downham, Littleport, Manea, March and Whittlesey. Fare: £10-75 (children £6-75) Dep. Lynn 08.00, dep. York 17.00 For Lynn line stations, book with Brian Cope, 56 Gaskell Way, Kings Lynn, PE30 3SG. (Tel: 674886). For other stations: Colin Warnes, 7 Gayton Court, Westwood, Peterborough, PE3 7DB (Tel: 263956)

NORTH EAST NORFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION are running from North Walsham and usual pick-up points to HARROGATE AND YORK on Saturday April 6th; and to HAWORTH AND GARLICK (including steam trip on North Valley) on Saturday April 20th. For details of both trips, and WENTA's trips later in the year to Aberystwyth and the West Highland Line, contact Ray Davies, 36 Lighthouse Close, Happisburgh, Norwich (Tel: Walcott 650715).

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION is running from Lowestoft to York via the East Suffolk Line on Saturday May 4th, subject to confirmation. The fare will be £14 (children half fare) and there will be a buffet. Details: Trevor Garrod. DERBYSHIRE ADVENTURER: The team of RDS members who last summer brought you the Yorkshire Adventurer is this year getting together again for a special train from Colchester, Ipswich, Bury St. Edmunds and intermediate stations, to the beautiful MALLOCK LINE. The fare is likely to be £13 (children half price) and the date either Sunday June 30th or July 7th. Details, and offers to help, to Trevor Garrod.

FREIGHT-ONLY LINES

As most members will know, we are allowed to run two excursions per year from the freight-only lines in the Eastern Region. We'd like to run more, but BR presently restrict us to two.

This year, we are delighted to be able to offer an excursion again from Swavesey, Longstanton, Oakington, Histon and Cambridge, to PORTSMOUTH. The fare will probably be £8-50 and we hope to run on Spring Bank Holiday Monday (May 27th) or, if this is not possible another spring date. Details and offers of help to Steve Wilkinson.

Together with MyDRAC, we are also running an excursion from Dereham to Chester and Llandudno on (subject to confirmation) Saturday May 10th. This will leave Dereham quite early (between 06.30 and 07.00) and allow up to 6 hours in North Wales. The fare is likely to be about £15. Details and offers of help to Colin Newman, 2 Ascot Gardens, Dereham, Norfolk.

PUBLICATIONS: EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL, 2nd edition, is to be published for us by Jarrolds, at the end of March. It will be bigger, and we hope better!, and will cost £1-95.

LINCOLNSHIRE BY RAIL will be published by the Lincolnshire Branch of RDS at the same time. It will be 48 pages and cost £1-80 (£1-60 to members if ordered before March 30th) from John Saunders, Stockwell Gate, Whaplode, Spalding.

- TRY THE TRAIN AGAIN! -

An important new 4-page RDS leaflet putting the case for Tony Speller's Amendment to be tried, for experimental line reopenings. The leaflet will be launched on January 26th. Order your copy NOW by sending a large SAE to John Page, 34 Hereward Close, Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4LS.

EAST NORFOLK & SUFFOLK RAIL ALLIANCE: RDS has accepted an invitation to join this body, formed on the initiative of Gt. Yarmouth Borough Council and involving most other local authorities (but not Norfolk CCI) to safeguard both rail links to Yarmouth. Trevor Garrod is attending its meetings on behalf of RDS.

For Your Diary

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RDS BRANCH WINTER MEETING - TUESDAY JANUARY 15TH 7.30 pm

This meeting will be in the Coffee Lounge, YMCA, Gonville Place, Cambridge. (10 mins. from rail station - along Station Rd. and Hills Rd then turn right into Gonville Place at traffic lights.)

There will be a short business meeting, to deal with:

- (i) National Report (ii) Future activities
- (iii) Local issues not covered in this newsletter.

We shall then welcome as guest speaker Mr. Mike Foulkes, BR's Project Manager for Anglia East Electrification, who will talk in particular about the Bishops Stortford - Cambridge electrification scheme and what it will mean for local users.

Mr. Foulkes' talk on a similar topic at our Ipswich meeting last January proved very informative and very popular - we look forward to an equally successful meeting in Cambridge.

January 26th - February 16th: Breckland Line Users' Association exhibition at the Public Library, Brandon.

Saturday February 9th: RDS Special General Meeting at the National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London, 11.00 a.m. (see also p. 8)

RDS EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 23RD, 2.00 PM in the Conference Room, Central Library, BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

The Library is 5 minutes' walk from the station. Turn right then right again along Parkway, then first on left. Lunch can be obtained in the Library's Coffee Shop.

The first half of the meeting will be devoted to the usual AGM business: reports, balance sheet, election of officers and committee, discussion of policy and strategy.

Our original speaker for the second half, Mr. Eldon Griffiths MP, has unfortunately had to cancel as he now has to go to America at that time. We hope to invite him to a future meeting.

Our guest speaker will now be a member of ASLEF, who will put his union's view on how rail services in East Anglia can be improved. Subject to final confirmation, the speaker will be Mr. L.D. Adams, a member of the ASLEF National Executive. This will, in fact, be the first time that we had have a speaker from this particular rail union at a Branch Meeting.

Saturday April 20th: RDS NATIONAL AGM, Unity Hall, Wakefield, 2.00 pm

Saturday April 27th: East Suffolk Travellers' Association AGM, Saxmundham.

Saturday June 8th: RDS SPRING MEETING at Ipswich Town Hall, 2.00 p.m.

Our guest speaker will be BR's Assistant General Manager, Eastern Region, John Ellis, speaking just **four** weeks after the first electric trains run into Ipswich.

Saturday June 15th: RDS National Conference of Rail Users' Groups, in London, with Jimmy Knapp (General Secretary, NUR) as main speaker.

Saturday September 21st: RDS AUTUMN MEETING in Assembly House, Norwich (subject to final confirmation). Guest speaker: Susan Hoyle (Executive Director, Transport 2000) on the current transport scene.

OPEN AIR ACTIVITIES??

The days are now starting to lengthen, and RDS is starting to plan outdoor activities. A stall at a fête or other large outdoor gathering is often a good way of publicising ourselves. We are considering, for example, having a stall in May at Spalding, for the Flower Parade, jointly with our Lincolnshire Branch. Any ideas or offers of help at this or any other outdoor event would be gratefully received by the Branch Secretary.

That also applies for a possible Sponsored Cycle Ride (Peterborough - Corbridge on Sunday May 12th?) in this year's National Bike Week. Or an evening bike - and - train event on Thursday May 16th?

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

ESTA has been studying the proposed new timetable for the East Suffolk Line and, following correspondence with BR, is seeking a meeting with them to discuss it further.

It is proposed to run ten weekday trains from Lowestoft to Ipswich but only eight in the opposite direction. There are also to be two additional workings from Ipswich to Saxmundham and return, and one from Ipswich to Halesworth and return. ESTA and RDS have for some time urged the case for a connection off the 20.30 ex Liverpool Street, and one is indeed proposed - but only as far as Saxmundham!

It is proposed that all trains will call at all stations - so Westerfield will have, possibly, its best ever service of 23 trains in each direction (including all the Felixstowe ones.) However, the inclusion of stops at every station on every train brings the journey time from Lowestoft to Ipswich to 1 hour 27 minutes, which is quite a lot for 49 miles.

ESTA has also voiced concern that BR are not now proposing to run a service on Sunday mornings in the winter, only in the summer.

In reply, BR have said that, under electronic token signalling, all trains will have to stop at Westerfield, to establish or relinquish radio contact. The imbalance between the up and down trains is explained by temporary operating constraints - there will be single-line working north of Halesworth until the Beccles loop becomes available in 1986.

The new late night (21.48) Ipswich - Saxmundham train may be extended to Lowestoft in 1986 when radio signalling is complete throughout the line - apparently it will not now be complete this year, thanks to delays in supply of equipment. BR have also said that they would be prepared to consider an extended winter Sunday service in 1986-7.

Meanwhile, a small group of ESTA members have started work on tidying the gardens on the up platform at Beccles, with BR permission. Weeds have been cleared away and bushes trimmed, and it is hoped to have some flowers blooming in the spring. Beccles station is more in the public eye since the opening of the by-pass access road to the west of it, and is not a good advert for the town.

BRECKLAND LINE USERS' ASSOCIATION

BLUA held its Annual General Meeting in Attleborough on October 26th, when a paid-up membership of 33 was reported. Officers elected included Eustace Partridge, Chairman; Gordon Knott, Secretary; Fred Perley, Treasurer; Gary Mutton, Publicity Officer.

Mr. Knott, in his report, said that BLUA's stall at the Norfolk Games in Thetford had attracted a good response; and that BLUA could claim some credit for the setting up of BR's Customer Care Panel for the Norwich Area - but the effectiveness of the Association in 1985 would depend on members' participation. The first major activity in the New Year is, in fact, to be an exhibition at Brandon Library (see p. 3)

Guest speaker was Mr. Stephen Rattue, BR's recently appointed Area Passenger Manager at Norwich. He reported on BR's discussions with South Norfolk District Council about environmental improvements at Wymondham station being undertaken as a job creation scheme. Vandal-resistant poster-boards were also being erected at unstaffed halts in the area.

He was aware of overcrowding on the first Breckland Line train into Norwich in the mornings, and announced that this was to be strengthened to 4 cars on Mondays and 3 on other days. He hoped to see brand new DMUs in East Anglia by about 1987. In the less distant future, i.e. the beginning of 1985, visual display units should be in operation on Norwich station to give better information about arrivals and departures.

The case was again put to Mr. Rattue for the 22.45 mail train from Norwich to be put back in the passenger timetable; but he said that BR could not guarantee that it would have passenger vehicles on it.

SUDBURY - MARKS TEY RAIL USERS' ASSOCIATION

BR has listened to the Association's views and made some improvements in the new timetable due to start in May. More trains from Sudbury will run through to Colchester's town-centre St. Botolphs station, and connections to London and Clacton will have priority over those to Norwich. The Sunday service on the branch, which gets threatened from time to time, has again been saved from the axe, which should mean that there will again be "Seaside Special" day return fares from the branch to Clacton; these having been judged a qualified success by BR in 1984.

However, it looks doubtful that the late evening train on the branch will survive much longer unless loadings can be increased. Chairman Mike Davies comments, "The present train is too early for pleasure seekers and too late for commuters. If we go for a later service we would run into a second shift and more expense."

The Association produced a second issue of its lively newsletter, "Link Line" in the autumn and arranged for Santa Claus to travel on two trains into Colchester on December 15th, distributing presents to the children.

Finally, it should be noted that the train from Sudbury to Colchester now undercuts the bus by 15p on a return journey!

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Aaaargh!?!
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

RDS has continued to monitor closely any proposals for track singling that we hear about.

On December 11th, Steve Wilkinson and Peter Wakefield were invited to meet the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for East Anglia on this matter. The TUCC has been quite critical of BR's singling policy, and has received assurances from BR that it will be fully consulted before any proposals go ahead.

Meanwhile, we hear through the grapevine that quite drastic proposals for track simplification at Lowestoft have been shelved for at least four years. These would have involved closure of Lowestoft signal box, lifting of one of the tracks in the station and conversion of the other two into parallel single lines from Oulton Broad North.

Incidentally, Norfolk County Council have responded to the RDS paper on singling, "One Way Ahead?" which was sent to them on October 1st (see last Rail East, p5). We received a postcard acknowledgement from them dated 6th December.

Norfolk's draft Public Transport Plan for 1985/6 does state that "It is important that any (singling) proposals should take full account of potential effects on timetables and on reliability of services" - so perhaps our comments were taken some note of?

BR'S LONG TERM STRATEGY

We have been in contact with BR on the rôle they see for remaining diesel-hauled services in our region after completion of the major electrification projects in 1987; and have been promised a detailed reply from the Provincial Services Manager. Meanwhile, we are assured that Kings Lynn trains will still run from Liverpool Street and change locomotives at Cambridge.

Mr. L.W. Foster, of the Sudbury - Marks Tey RUA, has written to put the case for a third, bi-directional, track for part of the way between Colchester and Sheffield, to ease congestion. His proposals are very interesting and ought to be examined by a small group of members who regularly use the line. Would anyone interested please contact the Branch Secretary.

SUFFOLK ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS: Trevor Garrod and John Brodribb had a most useful meeting with officials of SALC in Ipswich on December 20th, as a result of which we hope to strengthen liaison between our two organisations. SALC will be enclosing information about RDS and its views with the next mailing to its members, who comprise 8% of all Parish and Town Councils in Suffolk.

FREIGHT TOPICS

ROCK SALT: The RDS Freight Sub-committee produced a paper early last year advocating the long-distance bulk carriage of rock salt by rail and our Branch Chairman pursued the matter with BR officials in Liverpool. Mr. Wilkinson was therefore pleased to hear from BR, at the beginning of December, that Cambridgeshire County Council were about to have 2000 tonnes of rock salt delivered by rail to St. Neots.

SKODA CARS: Another welcome new rail freight traffic is imported Skoda cars, which have been moved by train from Harwich to Kings Lynn, from where they are distributed to dealers.

STEEL: Considerable coverage was given in the local press in early November to complaints by the management of Lowestoft Container Depot that BR were charging too much to move imported steel from the town to Wolverhampton, and threatening to send the steel by road instead.

Our Branch Chairman took this matter up at a high level in BR, and was told, "We would be happy to see imported steel passing by rail via Lowestoft, provided the rate was right and there was a regular and disciplined movement. Until that happens, we will continue to concentrate the specialised wagon supply on Humberside ... It is obviously more expensive to provide resources for a spasmodic movement from Lowestoft than the more regular flows through the Humber."

The importers had complained that BR were charging less per tonne to transport steel over the 117 miles from Boston to Wolverhampton, or the 130 miles from Grimsby than over the 208 miles from Lowestoft. Surprise, surprise! As Branch Secretary Trevor Garrod pointed out in a letter to the Lowestoft Journal, perhaps the importers were being overcharged for the boat journey from Duisburg, Germany, to Lowestoft, compared with that to the Humber. No further comments from the steel importers have appeared to date in the local press.

BREAK-BULK DEPOTS

BR are considering two sites for a bulk aggregates and roadstone depot in the Cambridge area, it was revealed in October, following the success of the depot at the former British Sugar Corporation factory at Ely.

RDS supported the firm of G.G.Papworth in its application for a section 8 grant to help establish the Ely depot in 1982. We were therefore pleased to read the comments of the depot manager that "Traffic is building up very well and I see ourselves needing more labour and storage space."

Papworths are currently using 120,000 square feet of the former factory and are clearing a further 35,000 - 40,000 square feet. Loads currently being handled there include 15,000 tons of molasses sent out in special trains; inwards deliveries of 16,000 tons of soda ash for glass-making; 10,000 tons of magnesium lime fertilizer; and between 6000 and 10,000 tons of potash inwards.

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MORE TRAFFIC

The RDS Freight Sub-committee is always pleased to hear from members with suggestions of firms who could be approached to send more freight by rail. Such leads will be followed up courteously and confidentially - not through the columns of the local press (or at least not until after a deal is made!). Please write to Steve Wilkinson or to Peter Wakefield, 43 High St., Oakington, Cambs., who is also on the Freight Sub-committee.

LESLIE'S COLUMN

Several useful freight leads have also come as a result of an appeal in Leslie Freitag's column in the magazine "Rail Enthusiast". Mr. Freitag, who is a member of the National Committee of RDS, is always pleased to receive comments, suggestions and photographs for his column, which puts across RDS activities and views to a wide audience. Write to him at 22 Cravells Road, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 1BD.

BR'S PROBLEMS - IS IT THE UNIONS' FAULT?

An editorial in the "East Anglian Daily Times" on 30.10.84 suggested that railwaymen's refusal to handle coal trains during the miners' strike "has brought British Rail to its present low state, and ... could yet destroy it completely."

RDS Branch Secretary Trevor Garrod replied to this, in a letter published on 12.11.84, stating, "One could indeed argue that the rail unions have made a mistake in this particular instance"; and pointing out that BR's problems were also the result of "years of Government neglect; the influence of an over-powerful road lobby; and in some cases managerial error."

Mr. Garrod also questioned whether road transport could handle all the coal normally produced in this country; and, even if it could, whether this would be welcomed by people living along, and travelling along, main roads.

This brought a vehement reply from Mr. Geoffrey Simms of the Road Haulage Association (20.11.84), who attacked both the rail unions and our Society (which he described as "a euphemism for adult train spotters"); and contended that "if we had more investment in railways we would be getting even less coal delivered than is getting through at present."

Mr. Simms stated that "the railway employees ... have encouraged the use of lorries by constant interruptions to their own industry."

A further letter from Mr. Garrod (1.12.84) reminded Mr. Simms: "I did not exonerate the unions from all responsibility for the problems - but I contended that they were not the only ones to blame!" He went on to remind Mr. Simms that other transport workers - in docks, airports and, yes, even on the roads - also sometimes went on strike.

Questioning Mr. Simms' reasoning on rail investment, he pointed out that investment in new handling equipment could actually enable smaller coal depots to be reopened.

There has been no further correspondence from Mr. Simms.

RDS SURVEYS

Thank you to all those members who returned survey forms about their local station. Peter Lawrence is analysing these, and would be pleased to receive any more, at 75 Marlpit Lane, Norwich, NR5 8XN. We hope to have produced a report before the next "Rail East".

RDS MEMBERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Have you filled in the questionnaire enclosed with the December issue of "Railway Development News"? If not, please do so before February 7th, as this will greatly help the Society in planning its future strategy.

If you have not already sent your form to the General Secretary, you can send it direct to Mrs. Lorna Knight, 52 Barnes Close, Sturminster Newton, Dorset, DT10 1BN, as she will be analysing the replies.

RDS COMPUTER APPEAL

Steve Wilkinson reports that this appeal has now passed £900 - and East Anglian Branch members have certainly sent in their fair share of contributions. Any further contributions are still welcome, however, and may be sent to Mr. Wilkinson at 52 Manor Park, Histon, Cambridge. CB4 4JT.

£27,000,000!

That's a lot of money. We could build a lot of new stations for that; or re-equip our local paytrain lines with brand-new trains; or electrify nearly 35 miles of main line.

Actually, that sum is the cost to the public purse of road accidents in Cambridgeshire during 1983 (Cambridge Evening News 1.11.84). 87 people were killed in road accidents in the county and nearly 1000 more had bones broken or sustained injuries severe enough for them to be detained in hospital.

Information like this is useful when we have to argue the comparative cost of road and rail. Press cuttings on these matters should be sent to the RDS Rail & Road Subcommittee, c/o Andrew Oldfield, 14 Long Lane, Worrall, Sheffield. S30 3AF.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Welcome to more new members:

1. Mr.J.E.Farragan, 31 Orchard Avenue, Cambridge, CB4 2AQ.
2. Breckland Line Users' Assn: Chairman, Mr.E.Partridge, 9 Edenside Drive, Attleborough, Norfolk.
3. Mr.D.A.Gifford, 25 Grove Walk, Norwich, NR1 2QF.
4. Mr.R.T.Lawrence, 75 Marlpit Lane, Norwich, NR5 8XN.
5. Mr.J.Thompson, 136 Dell Road, Lowestoft, NR33 9NT.
6. Mr. Christopher Green, 37 London Road, Chatteris, Cambs. PE16 6AS.
7. Mr.Hal Hawkins, 37 Acrefield Drive, Cambridge, CB4 1JW.
8. Mr.D.O.Jones, 50 Bracken Avenue, Overstrand, Cromer, NR27 0NZ.
9. Mr.R.A.King, 18 Heywood Avenue, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 3DW.
10. Mr.S.Thompson, 36 Priory Road, Cambridge, CB5 8HT.

Mr.H.J.Farahar has moved to 6 Whinfield Court, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich, IP5 7JQ.

Rev. Stuart Paston has moved to 14 St. Michael's View, Flordon, Norwich, NR15 1RR.

All RDS members should find enclosed with this newsletter an up-to-date list of Branch members. This has been compiled by Louis Hipperson, who has put many hours of painstaking work into it. Our thanks to him for undertaking this task, which is essential to the effective running of the organisation. If you spot any errors in the list, please let him know.

TEN YEARS AGO. From Branch Newsletter no. 13, February 1975.

At the Branch AGM held in Ipswich on January 18th, it was reported that 14 new members had been gained in 1974, giving a net increase of 5, to a new record total of 52 in the Branch.

Guest speaker at the AGM was our National Vice-Chairman Mr.R.V.Banks who attacked the Government decision, just announced, to abandon the **Channel Tunnel** project.

The meeting unanimously passed a resolution - to be sent to the Secretary of State for the Environment and local MPs, "deploring the apparent abandonment of the project ... especially as this means that the expected increased rail traffic, which would have resulted from the linking of the Continental rail network with British Rail, will be forced to continue to use our already overcrowded roads and, in doing so, use fuel which is becoming increasingly expensive and scarce."

WHAT'S ALL THIS, THEN?

This may have been the reaction of some members of RDS when faced with a list of 12 proposed amendments to the Society's constitution, circulated with Railway Development News just before Christmas.

It may have looked daunting, but please use your right to vote by post, unless you will be at the Special General Meeting.

Item A on the slightly shorter name for the Society is self-explanatory. A **YES** vote for all the other items, en bloc, will help make the Society more efficient and more democratic in future.

Our Constitution was adequate for a small, cosy group, but since the trebling in size of RDS since 1978, an overhaul and tightening up were needed. Pressure to change the constitution began after several members expressed dissatisfaction over the running of the 1984 national AGM (itself one of the best attended ever), Members of the National Committee and others have now given a lot of thought to the matter and produced what should be a good package of reforms. So, if YOU want RDS to be a lively and effective campaigning body - VOTE **YES**.

TJG