

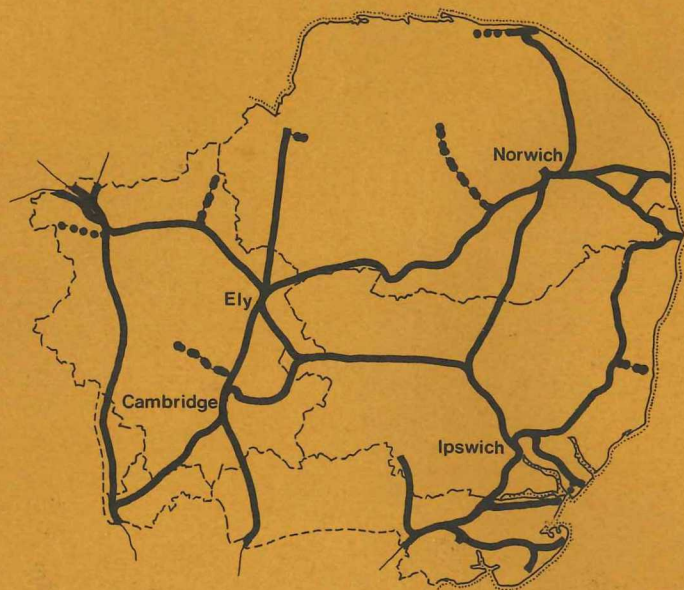
**RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY**



# Rail East

**A Voice for Rail Users**

No 59 Summer 1986



Trains to Dereham

Users' Groups News

Radio Signalling in Suffolk

Newsletter of the

**EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH**

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY  
EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH

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Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ  
(tel. 81721)

The full Branch Committee meets at least four times a year.

The Printing & Publications Sub-committee is appointed by the Branch Committee, and presently consists of Bryan Davy (Secretary, 88 St George's road, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 9YA), Peter Lawrence, Peter Wakefield, Louis Hipperson and Trevor Garrod, with the Chairman and Secretary *ex officio*.

Lewis Buckingham is responsible for the Branch exhibition material, and is always pleased to hear from members with suggestions for places where it can be displayed, such as local libraries and building societies.

Peter Lawrence, as Branch Membership Secretary, keeps up-to-date records of paid-up members, addresses, etc. The coding on the label on the envelope containing this issue of *Rail East* tells you when your subscription is due. For instance, "86.03" means that you were due to renew on 1 March 1986.

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The Railway Development Society is a national, independent, voluntary body representing rail users and campaigning for the retention, modernisation and greater use of rail transport for both passengers and freight.

The East Anglian Branch covers Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, plus north Essex (as far south as Kelvedon and Bishops Stortford), north Hertfordshire (as far south as Hitchin) and east Bedfordshire (Arlesey, Biggleswade and Sandy).

# RAIL EAST

No 59

SUMMER 1986

Editor: John Brodribb, 12 Kemp's Lane, BECCLES, Suffolk NR34 9XA (0502) 716961

## BRITISH RAIL MANAGEMENT CHANGES

Graham Eccles, Area Manager at Norwich, left at the end of April to take up an appointment as Area Manager at London Bridge. Mr Eccles was in charge during a period of considerable change in the area, and we wish him well in his new job. Malcolm Coles, Area Operating Manager at Norwich, also left in May.

On the incoming side, Peter Koning is now Traffic Manager at Ipswich. David Jones replaces Graham Eccles as Area Manager at Norwich, and Charles Devereux fills the new post of "Provincial Manager Anglia" from 30 June. He is also based at Norwich.

## SPONSORED CYCLE RIDES

The Chairman of Histon Parish Council, Steve Wilkinson, was on the platform of the village station to greet those RDS members who completed the sponsored cycle ride on a wet Saturday afternoon on 31 May.

Trevor Garrod cycled 41 miles from Brandon and raised £60.28, half of which will go to the RDS Anti-Closure Fund, the other half to the Wymondham-Dereham Rail Action Committee.

Clara Zilahi covered 58 miles on her ride from Downham Market and back to Ely, raising money for the Downham Fitness Centre and the Anti-Closure Fund.

We were also pleased to greet RDS London & Home Counties Branch Member Richard Horsefield and a friend, who cycled from Letchworth to Histon and back to raise money for the Anti-Closure Fund and for the London Cycling Campaign.

## ELECTRIFICATION LIVERPOOL STREET - CAMBRIDGE

It now looks as though a limited through electric service will be running to Cambridge in January 1987, but it will be May 1987 before a full service is in operation. Journey times between London and Cambridge will be cut, with the Stansted stops being withdrawn from many services, but replaced by Whittlesford, where BR is providing a new car park.

## PROPOSED WISBECH SPECIAL TRAIN

We cannot run a locomotive-hauled train from Wisbech (see last *Rail East*) because British Rail Eastern Region management have decided that only diesel multiple units (DMUs) can be allowed on dead-end freight-only lines.

In late April we therefore accepted a BR quotation to charter a DMU special from Wisbech to Lowestoft, and we hoped to run this early in July. As on previous occasions, the local BR management were very co-operative, but by 17 June they were still unable to tell us if the train could go ahead. High-level consultations between the Regional Operating Manager and the Civil Engineer as to whether or not it would be safe to run the train had not reached a conclusion.

At the time of writing we do not know when or if this train will run — but it is unlikely to do so before late August.

## NEW MEMBERS

We welcome:-

Maurice A.E.Challis, 61 Broadmeadow, Sawston, Cambridge, CB2 4EB;  
Gavin Humphries, Cornwallis House, Culford School, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP28 6TX;  
Mr & Mrs B.T.S.Kent, 3 George road, Braintree, Essex, CM7 7RX;  
Francis Lincoln, 1 St Simons Court, Waggon & Horses lane, Norwich, NR3 1JX;  
R.D.Mayes, 15 Gatefield close, Frinton Homelands, Walton-on-Naze, Essex, CO14 8SM;  
John Tennant, Christ's College, Cambridge, CB2 3BU;  
Alan Walker, 3 Birches close, Ely, Cambs, CB7 4TJ;  
D.G.Williams, 9 Raven close, Bradwell, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR31 8JX;  
E.M.Youngs, Anglia Cottage, Hall street, Long Melford, Suffolk, CO10 9JD.

#### FEN LINE USERS' ASSOCIATION

Once again, FLUA made national headlines with the story about the new 0615 Kings Lynn - London service in the *Daily Telegraph* (14 May), backed up by the *Eastern Daily Press* the following day. In fact, the "usual" teething troubles emerged with the new timetable in May, and the new early morning service from Lynn missed the Cambridge hauled connection twice in the first week: hardly an encouraging omen for BR. However, the Association's Chairman, Rodney Collins, met the BR Assistant General Manager, Theo Steel, on 16 May and Mr Steel promised that reliability would be tightened up.

One of the other points discussed with Mr Steel concerned the re-timed connection north to Ely from the 1735 ex-Liverpool Street. Twenty-one members of FLUA contacted either Rodney Collins or Terry Day to complain about the journey time to Ely in the new timetable — 1 hour 57 minutes! It seems that the local management team at Cambridge consider that this is acceptable, given the other direct services to Ely and Waterbeach. FLUA DOES NOT AGREE. Mike Donnelly, Area Manager, Cambridge has written to Terry Day stating that the re-timing is to allow passengers from Bishops Stortford, Royston and Ipswich to travel northwards, with an additional eight minutes over their arrival time for the change. But he has accepted the point that many people travel on the 1735 from Liverpool Street to get home for meetings, classes, etc., and he has undertaken to "investigate an improved connection".

Generally, the May 1986 timetable has been welcomed by most people in the area. The 0615 DMU from Kings Lynn carries more passengers than the old 0640 did, despite the rotten reliability in the first week. The 1435 from Liverpool Street showed a 100% increase in passengers north of Cambridge once it ran direct through to Lynn as a hauled service. One slight moan concerns the catering facilities on the afternoon *Fenman* (1635 from Liverpool Street): the buffet now closes before arrival at Cambridge, which means that many FLUA members who travel from Cambridge on that train cannot get any food or drink on their journey. This is bad, because it is the most heavily loaded train north of Cambridge. We have asked Travellers' Fare to look at the problem. FLUA will maintain the pressure for a buffet service for the whole journey.

#### NORTH EAST NORFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

NENTA has run three successful charter trains so far this year — to the Severn Valley Railway, to Scotland and to the National Garden Festival.

The Association aims to plough part of the profits from such specials back into improvements to the Norwich-Sheringham line; and so it has given £400 (which has been matched "pound for pound" by BR) towards environmental improvements at Hoveton & Wroxham and North Walsham stations, and refurbishing the flower tubs at Cromer station.

Details of NENTA's autumn specials are enclosed with this issue of *Rail East* for Norfolk members.

#### ANTI-CLOSURE FUND

This national RDS fund helps us to fight rail closures anywhere in the country. It will also help us with our contribution towards the upkeep of the Reedham-Yarmouth line, recently threatened with closure but which can now be reckoned to be safe. There is now over £200 in the Fund, which stands at its highest level since January 1985. Further donations are always welcome and

should be sent to the General Secretary, Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ.

### SUDBURY - MARKS TEY RAIL USERS' ASSOCIATION

The Spring newsletter of the Association draws attention to the new peak-hour service on the line, which features departures from Sudbury at 0600, 0650, 0753 and 0906, all connecting to Liverpool Street; the return trains from London are the 1710, 1810, 1900 and 2010 departures. There is a new train on the branch, connecting with the 1610 from Liverpool Street. The latter runs for an experimental period of six months.

Changes at Sudbury include the provision of new shelters, movable to the new station in due course. Both gated level crossings for the branch are due to be replaced by the AOCL (Automatic Open Crossing, Locally-monitored) type; Mount Bures is scheduled for this summer and Cornard for 1987. In common with other East Anglian branches, new multiple-unit trains should be introduced before too long.

Anyone interested in the work of the Association (annual subscription £1) should contact D.Phillips, Lowermead, Lamarsh Road, Alphamstone, Bures, Suffolk.

### TEN YEARS AGO

*From our Newsletter of 19 August 1976:-*

The Norfolk County Surveyor had questioned the value of reopening Magdalen Road station [in May 1975] because fewer people were now using buses from the area to Kings Lynn. BR commented: "We are content with the numbers of passengers using the station". In a letter to the local press, our Branch Secretary pointed out that, with villagers from Magdalen and Watlington now exercising their freedom of choice and many preferring the train, this might be an opportunity to divert certain buses to villages not served by rail, and urged the County Surveyor to "put on his thinking cap".

Our members Steve Wilkinson and Frank Melvin were elected to Histon Parish Council, having stood as independents on a platform which included: "Make efforts to get heavy industrial traffic off the roads and divert transport to the railway wherever possible".

### MARKETING DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST ANGLIA

Saxmundham station, on the East Suffolk line, now has a Red Star parcels service. This is operated by the Station House Restaurant, who also act as ticket agents as well as providing an excellent catering facility. All this is at an unstaffed station!

British Rail are embarking on a joint venture with Pleasurewood Hills American Theme Park at Corton, near Lowestoft. The package on offer, at an all-in discount price, includes return rail travel, coach transfer between Lowestoft Central and the Park, and admission. Inclusive tickets are available at Cambridge, Ely, Thetford, Norwich, Stowmarket and Ipswich stations, as well as BR-appointed travel agents, including Saxmundham station. The offer is available Mondays to Fridays from 23 June to 12 September, on the following trains only:-

0822 Cambridge-Norwich (connects with 1015 to Lowestoft)

0830 Sheringham-Norwich (connects with 1015 to Lowestoft)

1015 Norwich-Lowestoft

0733 Bury St Edmunds-Stowmarket-Ipswich (connects with 0900 to Lowestoft)

0900 Ipswich to Lowestoft

Return trains available are the 1705 and 1845 Lowestoft-Ipswich; and 1625 and 1900 Lowestoft-Norwich.

Prices are: Cambridge £11; Ely, Brandon, Stowmarket or Bury £10; Ipswich, Westerfield, Sheringham, West Runton, Cromer, Roughton Road, Gunton, North Walsham £9; Worstead, Hoveton & Wroxham, Salhouse, Woodbridge, Melton, Wickham Market, Thetford, Attleborough or Wymondham £8; Norwich, Brundall, Buckenham, Cantley, Saxmundham, Darsham or Halesworth £6; Beccles, Brampton or Reedham £5. Accompanied children (5-15) £5 from any of these stations. Senior Citizens qualify for a substantial discount on production of a railcard (but other railcard holders do not).

## RADIO SIGNALLING IN EAST SUFFOLK

Signalling on the East Suffolk Line is now on the "Radio Electronic Token Block" system (RETB), controlled from Saxmundham signal box. Formerly double-track throughout, much of the line has now been singled, with only parts remaining double. One feature of the new system is that the level crossings which were once gated and worked by crossing-keepers have been converted to the AOCL type (Automatic Open Crossing, Locally-monitored). Flashing lights control road traffic, and train drivers are required to see that the crossing is clear before passing over it.

At Halesworth and Woodbridge, the track goes from double to single, and automatic train-activated points are provided. At Saxmundham, similar points are worked from the signal box.

The essence of the RETB system is that each train is in radio contact with Saxmundham control. Each of the nine Class 101 diesel multiple units that work the line is fitted with a device which receives and displays the "electronic token". These "tokens" are issued by the computer at Saxmundham, and, as with the traditional systems which use a physical token, only one can be issued for each block section at a time. The computer also automatically prints out everything that it does, and this takes the place of the old train register.

The procedure for a train leaving Ipswich for Lowestoft is as follows:-

About ten minutes before the scheduled departure time, the driver calls Saxmundham by radio, and the token apparatus is tested. The train leaves Ipswich in the normal way, since that area is controlled by Colchester power box. When the train comes to a standstill at Westerfield, the driver again radios Saxmundham, gives the identity number of his radio set, and asks to be entered into the computer system. On acceptance, the driver then asks for a "radio token" for the Westerfield to Woodbridge section. To receive this he must press the "receive" button on the display unit at the same time as the Saxmundham signalman activates the computer. The driver confirms verbally to the signalman that the token is correctly displayed; at the same time, the train's identification number is shown in the appropriate place on the computer's Visual Display Unit (VDU) — i.e. Westerfield down platform, together with an arrow showing the direction of travel. The driver then asks for permission to pass the "stop" board at the end of the platform, and on receipt of this tells the guard that he is ready by sounding the buzzer twice. The guard can then signal the train away, also by using the buzzer.

A short distance from the station is a marker board consisting of three diagonal blue stripes on a white background: this is the "loop clear" board, and the driver radios when he has passed it. The signalman feeds this into the computer, and the train's position on the VDU is transferred from Westerfield station to the Westerfield-Woodbridge section.

Woodbridge is the next station, and the end of the token section. There is a reflective "distant" board approaching the station, which is white with a horizontal yellow band like an old distant signal. The train must be brought to a stand by the "stop" board at the station, the token given up, and a new one for the Woodbridge-Saxmundham section obtained. The computer will not issue this unless the section is empty, nor will it issue another Westerfield-Woodbridge token until the first train has passed the "loop clear" board on the Melton side of Woodbridge.

Tokens are exchanged at Saxmundham and Halesworth, and eventually the train arrives at Oulton Broad South, where the final token is surrendered, and where control is taken over by Oulton Broad North signal box.

Five Class 37 locomotives are due to be fitted with radios (two were so equipped by June this year), for working the Sizewell freight, engineers' trains and excursions such as the East Suffolk Travellers' Association's Bourne-mouth train on 14 September.

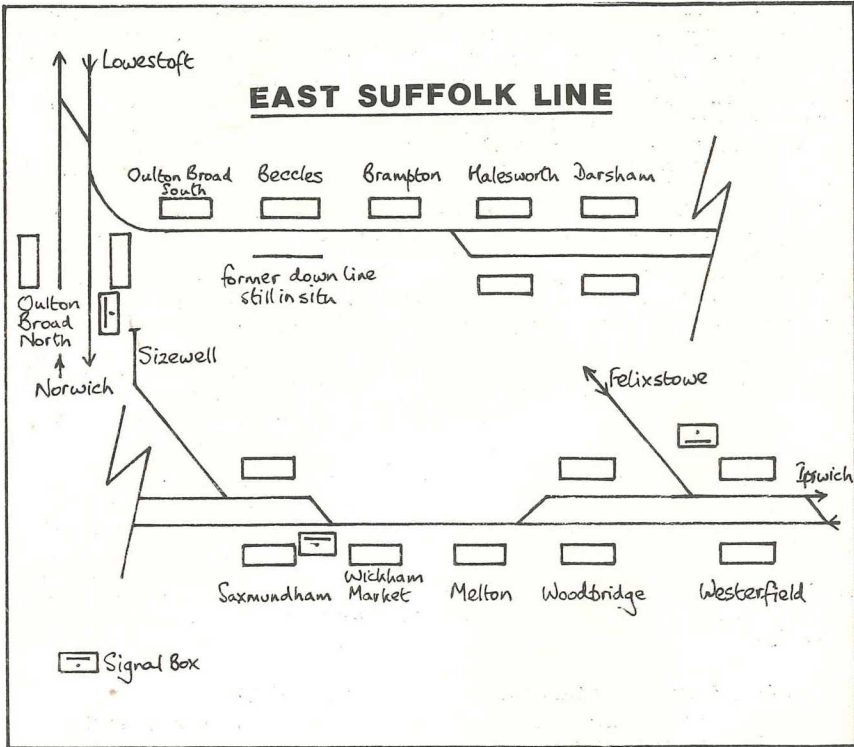
The remaining level crossings with user-operated gates have telephones, so that anyone crossing can check with Saxmundham that the line is clear. All such calls are logged. The double-track sections that remain can have trains working in either direction over both lines, so that if one is blocked, the other can still be used. All the level crossings, including Darsham, work automatically in the "wrong" direction.

Saxmundham box is manned continuously, although there are no scheduled trains on the line between 2305, when the last up train reaches Westerfield, and 0536, when the first reaches Oulton Broad South. This last train (2150 Ipswich-Saxmundham and return) was introduced in May, and Sunday morning trains now run throughout the year. The Halesworth - Oulton Broad section is the second-longest in England on a passenger line (does anyone know the longest?) - and this causes considerable timetable problems. ESTA and RDS continue to press for a passing loop at

Beccles.

For the future, other branches are likely to become radio-signalled. Radio-fitted trains work over the Felixstowe branch, and have been able to summon assistance by calling Saxmundham. Radio contact can be made almost all the way along the main line between Ipswich and Norwich, and over the lines from Norwich to Lowestoft, Yarmouth and Sheringham. Saxmundham has the capability of controlling all these branches, since it is now possible to have radio control of junctions, as at Brundall and Reedham. The biggest problem appears to be the swing-bridges: those at Reedham and Somerleyton both open frequently in the summer.

Anyone interested in the East Suffolk Travellers' Association (annual subscription £1) should contact G.H.B.Cutting, Forge Cottage, Yoxford, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 3JL.



#### ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL RAIL EXCURSION FROM DEREHAM

A full complement of 220 passengers travelled on a special train off the freight-only Wymondham-Dereham branch line on Sunday 25 May.

The 4-car diesel multiple unit train was chartered from British Rail by the Railway Development Society and the Wymondham-Dereham Rail Action Committee (WyDRAC), as part of the Dereham Festival.

Public demand for tickets was so high that bookings had to be closed a few days before the train ran.

The train, composed of two refurbished railcar sets, left Dereham on time at 0945 and picked up further passengers at Yaxham, Thuxton and Kimberley Park on the branch, plus Wymondham, before speeding down to Norwich, by-passing the city on the avoiding curve and then heading up to Cromer and Sheringham, where it arrived punctually at 1159.

It was very much a family day out, with considerable numbers of push-chairs accommodated in the guard's compartment; and passengers enjoyed five and a half hours of seaside and sunshine on the north Norfolk coast before an efficient return run to Dereham.

Dereham is the largest Norfolk town without regular passenger trains, having lost its service in 1969. The line has remained open to freight, however, and since 1978 RDS and WyDRAC have run regular excursions from Dereham for local people, this being their sixteenth.

#### **EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION**

Theo Steel, British Rail's Assistant General Manager (Eastern Region), spoke at the ESTA Annual General Meeting on 10 May. The main points of his address were as follows:-

Mr Steel said that he had last been in the area in an official capacity about two years ago, and was very pleased to be back. He was glad of the opportunity to get north of Ipswich! He had been closely involved in the earlier stages of the introduction of radio signalling, and was pleased to see it come to fruition. 60 jobs had been lost, but there had been little fuss. The modernisation was almost completed in East Anglia, only the resignalling and Trowse swing bridge remaining, together with completion of the electrification into Norwich itself. The recent past had been a time of change, and this had adversely affected punctuality, especially on the Liverpool Street - Ipswich line. There had been some awful time-keeping, and communication within the system had to be improved.

With the new timetable coming into operation on 12 May, recovery time had been moved from the Norwich-Ipswich section to the Ipswich-London section. Broad Street was now closed. As part of the redevelopment at Liverpool Street, platforms 1-8 were to be extended towards the Great Eastern Hotel. The glass in the roof was being cleaned, to great effect. He expected improved time-keeping after the scheme was completed early in the next decade; he also expected approval for the proposed resignalling between Liverpool Street and Colchester to be given shortly.

On the East Suffolk Line, he envisaged more trains, at least south of Saxmundham, but passenger usage was essential. There was spare line capacity south of Halesworth, but little flexibility to the north because of the lack of a Beccles loop. Rolling stock was now exclusively 3-car Class 101 diesel multiple units, which had a better reputation than the Craven units which they replaced. Sprinters would be introduced in two years time, with improved journey times. BR were conscious that competing modes of transport offered a cleaner and more modern passenger environment when compared with existing multiple units, and the Sprinters would counteract this. There was a great deal of end-to-end traffic on the line, and he hoped that it might be possible to cater better for it.

Mr Steel thanked ESTA for its work, and remarked that Saxmundham is probably the smartest unstaffed station in the country. He was pleased to see new station signs at Beccles and other places — which he had ordered three years ago! Progress had been made at Melton and Woodbridge.

#### **RDS EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH SPRING MEETING IN IPSWICH**

The guest speaker at the meeting on 20 May was Mr Colin Crawford, manager of Sealink at Parkeston Quay, who began his talk on the future of the port by outlining a little of its past.

It had been opened in 1883 by the Great Eastern Railway and was a bold venture for the Company at that time. It was built because the GER in those days found it very difficult to co-operate with Harwich Borough. In 1924 the train ferry terminal was opened, with machinery first used in 1917 and still in use today — a tribute to the engineers of the time.

The train ferry was run by the now privatised Sealink company to British Rail's specification, and its future was being reviewed. One option was to close it, but they would prefer to keep it going in some form, at least until the new Dover Link Span was brought into operation or until the Channel Tunnel was built.

A large proportion of the business at Parkeston was rail-served. Of the 2.3 million passengers a year, about 50% were "classic", i.e. rail-borne foot passengers. During the 1970s, Prince Line transferred its operation to Parkeston, with additional boat trains; and the Norwegian Fred Olsen Line was now bringing 1000 passengers a time into Parkeston. Many of these people headed into



Colchester on special coaches for shopping trips, and he was now looking at the possibility of running special boat trains from Parkeston to Colchester St. Botolphs for them. The boat trains to Liverpool Street were now all electric, the best ones taking just 67 minutes. Mr Crawford described the attitude of present BR management as "very commercially minded", although they were not always working in ideal conditions.

Until last year, 65% of the container business was rail-borne, but much had been transferred to other ports and virtually no container traffic went through by rail at the moment. They were, however, confident of obtaining new flows, a large proportion of which should be by rail.

On the other hand, roll on / roll off traffic was unlikely to go by rail, at least in the foreseeable future. This was a growth area, as was the carriage of accompanied passenger vehicles.

Mr Crawford then explained in some detail, with the aid of maps, Sealink's plans to reclaim Bathside Bay, between Parkeston and Harwich, and build four deep-sea berths there. They would then be able to deal with the largest foreseeable container vessels in the world. The main channel would be dredged, as it had been at Felixstowe, and the spoil would be mainly pumped ashore to reclaim land — as had already been done on a small scale in 1984.

The Bathside terminal could ultimately deal with twice as many containers as Felixstowe, and a large proportion of these could go out by rail. The development could create 500 new Sealink jobs and up to 700 in back-up industries, services, etc. This project could be completed in as little as ten years, but much would depend on the strength of the British economy and competition from other ports.

Our speaker also explained that the privatisation of Sealink had been followed by decentralisation, with local business managers given responsibility for achieving targets and a lot of authority for small investment projects — though a large project like Bathside would have to be authorised by the Chairman, Mr Sherwood.

Mr Crawford replied to questions and comments on a variety of topics. There was local controversy over the filling in of Gas House Creek, which Harwich Town Council opposed; but Sealink needed to obtain a parliamentary Bill enabling them to reclaim a maximum area, even if they did not do it all at once. There was also some local controversy over a possible extra level crossing at Dovercourt, but this might be solved by the closure of another little-used crossing.

As an example of BR's co-operative attitude, he cited the introduction of the *Essex Continental* boat train — an electric multiple unit calling at Manningtree, Colchester, Marks Tey, Kelvedon, Chelmsford and Shenfield, which was designed to attract people who would previously have driven to Harwich from various parts of Essex.

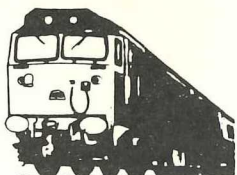
On the Channel Tunnel, his company was against it *per se*, and felt it would be "a disaster for Dover". Sealink was therefore funding part of the Flexilink campaign and was investigating faster alternatives for the Channel crossing, like catamarans which could do the crossing in 30 minutes. Already, catamarans had cut the Isle of Wight crossing to 10 minutes.

While we in RDS differ from Sealink on this particular issue, it was nevertheless encouraging to hear of the development of one of our region's major ports, and of the ways in which British Rail can benefit from that development. All of us felt we had learned a lot from Mr Crawford's talk, and we shall doubtless await with great interest news of further developments at Harwich and Parkeston.

It was also agreed to follow up the Parkeston - St Botolphs service idea with letters to Colchester Borough Council, the BR Area Manager and the Colchester Chamber of Commerce.

## NEW BRANCH SECRETARY

Now that Trevor Garrod has been elected General Secretary of RDS, John Brodribb has taken over as East Anglian Branch Secretary. Please address general Branch correspondence to John, and also material for *Rail East*. Final copy date for the next *Rail East* will be 11 October 1986.



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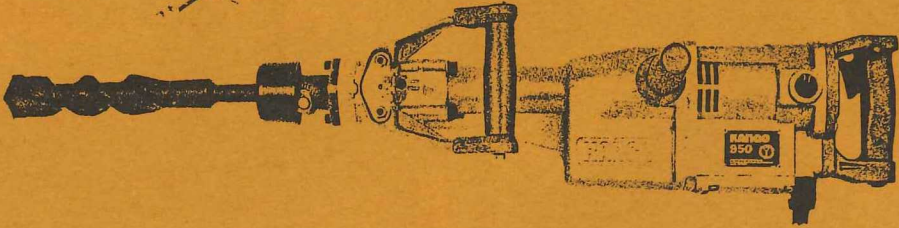
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