

RAIL EAST

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25p Free to
members

Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of the Railway Development Society

BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT

The Branch was pleased to be invited to the celebratory events at Kings Lynn on Tuesday July 28th; it was recognition by NSE of the contribution made by the Branch to the case for electrifying the route from Cambridge. It was pleasing to see the Queen Mother looking both so well, and genuinely interested in Kings Lynn's beautifully refurbished station. Naming a gleaming Cl.317 'Kings Lynn Festival', the Queen Mother also pronounced its seating "very comfortable....". Maybe, but roll on ThamesLink 2000's trains whose seats will, hopefully, be "even more so". BRB Chairman Sir Bob Reid, with NSE Director John Nelson and Route Manager Bob Breakwell, toured the line seeing for themselves the transformation of a neglected railway to one of which we can all be proud. Congratulations to everybody concerned!

Although August 24th saw the official start of the new electric service, the first revenue earning train ran two days earlier, as the 07.08 from Cambridge to Kings Lynn. It arrived 6 minutes early having 'waited time' at every stop! The new schedules, though, are somewhat sharper, with the fastest time to London (Kings Cross) down to a commendable 100 minutes. Less commendable is the absence of a commuter all-stations train from Cambridge to Kings Lynn between 17.45 and 18.15. NSE Public Affairs Manager, Mike Lampert, acknowledges the oversight but offers no change until the May 1993 timetable. Long trains and short platforms is part of the problem.

INTERCITY AT HUNTINGDON

The May 1992 timetable saw an increase in the number of IC trains calling at Huntingdon. The Branch wrote to IC welcoming the changes, but complaining about the lack of publicity for them. It was also suggested that, northwards, the pattern of stops should be the same in both directions. In his reply, Route Director Brian Birdsall agreed to review this aspect in next year's timetable, as well as accepting the advertising shortcoming. The latter had not improved, though, by September.

GREAT EASTERN LINE NEWS

Unsurprisingly, commuters on the Clacton/Walton line are unhappy about the replacement of their 30 year old Cl.309 electric trains by the frugal modernity of Cl.321. They claim that lack of tables, 2+3 seating, and reduced toilet facilities render the newcomer unacceptable. A 300 signature petition and formal complaints from local councils have left NSE in no doubt about opinion on the subject.

The need for attractive rolling stock was also high on the agenda at a meeting the Branch had in June with NSE Public Affairs Manager, Peter Northfield. Apparently NSE intend to keep some Cl. 309 units in service until the end of the decade, with new traction motors being installed to improve reliability. But quite what is to succeed them is far from clear. On the face of it, another candidate for the ThamesLink 2000 design. Treasury mandarins please note!

Work has started on a £80m project to replace 40 year old signalling equipment on the Colchester main line. Included are additional crossovers, bi-directional signalling, a central information system at Liverpool Street, and a long-line public address system. Sadly, exorbitant cost ruled out an additional track between Colchester and Shenfield.

The lack of coordination between the Sectors is highlighted again; this time it is the problems attending the introduction of Penalty Fares. If NSE/ Great Eastern Line adopt the scheme, should InterCity trains from Colchester also be included? And, if so, ought it not to embrace IC and Regional Railways services from Ipswich and Norwich ?

NSE's Peter Northfield was also handed copies of the Meldreth rail promotion leaflet, which triggered the suggestion that, as the Harwich line does not have its own user group, it might benefit from similar treatment. Offers of help, please, to Nick Dibben!

RAIL DEVELOPMENT IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The Branch has recently met with Mr Macklin, Cambridgeshire County Council's Public Transportation Officer, to discuss our Rail Strategy proposals.

The £70m Light Rail Scheme has been dropped by the CC as too costly. They are also looking to reduce the projected £30m cost of the substituted guided busway system, running from Oakington to Trumpington on a similar route, alongside which a single track railway could continue to exist. The terminus and large Park & Ride facility at Oakington require a new road from the A604. We believe that a BR scheme would be cheaper, not least because existing rolling stock would suffice, and that the line could be extended to St Ives, considerably broadening its market! Apparently the CC have not considered the commercial potential of through services to, say, Stansted, London or Peterborough. However, they have agreed to give RDS detailed data on predicted traffic flows so that we can review the importance of city centre access for any scheme. A review of the Wisbech line is scheduled for 1993.

The Council, along with Suffolk CC, is currently assessing prospects for the Ely/Cambridge to Ipswich line. An hourly service is being considered along with a new station at Cherry Hinton. A new station at Fulbourn is unlikely. We have asked that a station at Soham be considered. In the medium term RDS would very much like to see electrification of this route, and we said so in a Press Release at the beginning of September. Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket have long needed a through service to London since the last one was withdrawn in the early 1980's. An electric 'round-robin' service from London, via Ipswich and Cambridge, seems a sensible and attractive way of achieving this. If the continuation to Peterborough could be implemented the prospects would be better still - especially for freight. But it has to be said that the commercial argument for the Ely to Peterborough segment, is well nigh zero.

Developers of the Peterborough Southern Township project have included a new station in the plan., although who will pay for it is unclear at present. We mentioned the potential for a road/rail depot on the site, highlighting the ease with which building materials could be delivered by rail.

LESLIE HOWES

It is with sadness that we report the death of RDS member Leslie Howes, who first joined us in the 1970s. In his retirement he spent countless hours at Wymondham Station helping David Turner to restore the station and turn it into a place of great interest. A plaque in his memory has been unveiled at the station by his friend, actor Bill Pertwee.

RAIL INFORMATION (OR LACK OF IT) ON LEAFLETS

Thanks to those who have sent examples. A questionnaire has been produced on which each leaflet will be evaluated - marks given will depend upon the level of rail information on offer. The results will be collated and the appropriate organisations will be contacted and given our comments. Any future leaflets forwarded should have completed questionnaires enclosed. Copies are available from Clara Zilhai, or at the forthcoming Norwich and Cambridge meetings.

FUTURE EVENTS

The Norfolk Rail Policy Group, which comprises the County Council, District Councils and BR, have produced a "Mission Statement" declaring their stance towards future countywide rail development. An RDS contribution had been invited, and we are pleased that the final document included many of our ideas. The Branch was also represented at a meeting to discuss the report and explore ways of progressing its proposals. RDS members will have the chance to find out more about this at our Norwich meeting on Saturday 19th September, where Mr Leslie Mogford, Chairman of the Policy Group will be our guest speaker. The meeting is in the Assembly House, Norwich, and starts at 2 pm.

The MISTA AGM will be held at Bury St Edmunds Library on Saturday 26th September, also starting at 2 pm.

The 1992 National Conference of Rail Users is on Saturday 7th November at the St Bride's Institute, Bride Lane, London starting at 11 am. The cost for RDS members and affiliated user groups is £4.50. Details from John Bigny, 15 Plough Walk, Edenbridge, Kent TN6 6DU. Please enclose a SAE.

Our Cambridge meeting is on Saturday 21 November at Little St Mary's Church Hall, Trumpington Street, starting at 2 pm. Mr Barry Flaxman of the TUCC will be Guest Speaker

IN BRIEF

BOOKED! - Charles Taylor, who has been secretary of ESTA Felixstowe since the group was formed in 1972 has been presented with a "this is your life" style book in recognition of his hard work with the group.

USEFUL UNION - The British Railways Board has formed a new subsidiary - Union Railways. The new company will be responsible for developing the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and the new route to Heathrow Airport.

VIEWS SOUGHT - Market researchers have been questioning passengers about the proposed changes to Lowestoft station. The results are awaited with interest.

COLIN GARRETT EXTRAVAGANZA - Having presumably 'run out of steam', well-known photographer, Colin Garrett, has been focusing his attention on Britain's railways in the 1990's. The result is a two hour show of three thousand pictures via twelve projectors! And it is all on view at the Paradise Sports Centre, Ely, on Saturday November 14th. Performances are at 3pm and 7pm with tickets setting you back £4, unless you are a child or OAP in which case the charge drops to £3. Further details from Graham Hill, 5 John Beckett Court, Chappel St, Ely, CB6 1AB (SAE please). Or telephone 0353 661170.

LAST POST Each weekday evening a Royal Mail Lorry leaves Cambridge RM Sorting Office for Peterborough station carrying First Class mail for loading onto the 22.30 Travelling Post Office train to Carlisle. At 20.39 each evening the same train, as empty stock, starts its journey from within a couple of hundred yards of the same Cambridge RM Sorting Office. Might this be the great god 'Efficiency' at work.

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A journal such as this is only as good as its sources of information. So, if you have any relevant items for the next issue, be they news, views, or even a *witty*, but *brief* contribution, do let me, Nick Dibben, have them by October 15th. I would especially like to hear from as many local User-Groups as possible!

DIARY

- Saturday 19 September** Branch Meeting, Assembly House, Norwich, 2pm.
Saturday 7 November Nat. Conf. of Rail Users (see news item).
Saturday 21 November Branch Meeting, Lt. St. Mary's Church Hall,

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