

## Brandon celebrates 150 years

Traction engines whistled and 300 children waved their flags as Sir Henry Pets unveiled a plaque on the 30th June to mark 150 years of the railway at Brandon. Central Trains Director, Mark Cusebrook said the event emphasised the company's commitment to both the line and the town.

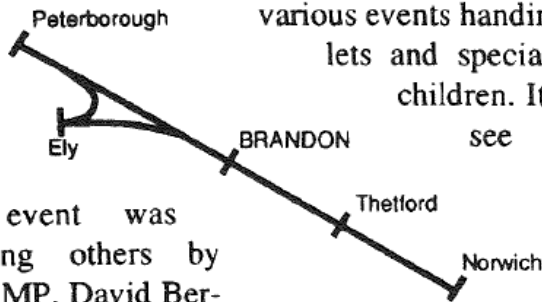
The well advertised event was attended, among others by Richard Spring MP, David Bertram and Grace Taylor from the RUCC, the Chairmen of Breckland District and Brandon Parish councils, retired local railway staff and members of the hard working and highly effective Brandon and Weeting 150 Committee.

Brandon station itself was cleaned and painted in Railtrack green, with the former station

buildings in Regional Railway's blue and white. A tremendous improvement, especially when surrounded by spectacular displays of flowers in tubs and hanging baskets.

The Central Trains' mobile display stand has been at various events handing out leaflets and special packs to children. It is good to see them so active in the area. Special thanks

are due to John Saunders, Ken Burton and Peter Lawrence who coped with the sweltering heat whilst manning the combined Breckland Line Users/RDS stand. The survivors from this day also returned a month later to Brandon Market Square to repeat the exercise in a second event to mark the anniversary.



## New trains on view

The first of the new Networker Express trains intended for use on Kings Cross to Peterborough and Kings Lynn services was on display at Cambridge station during one weekend in June. The trains, being built by ABB in York, will probably be the last to be constructed at the works before in closes due to lack of orders. The new trains offer some considerable improvements including more comfortable 2 + 2 seating, internal information displays and better facilities for the disabled. Drivers also say they offer a smoother ride and better acceleration.

## New policy group

The first meeting of the Cambridgeshire Rail Policy Group took place in July. The aim of the group is to bring together representatives from the County and District Councils, the RUCC and the various railway organisations in order to shape thinking on policy and operational matters. The group is expected to meet twice a year.

Among the issues discussed at the meeting were the St Ives route, the East - West rail link, rail privatisation, Thameslink 2000 and improved freight services from Felixstowe docks.

Although the RDS is not part of the group, it has been agreed that we should be kept informed of the group's activities.

## Branch successes

It is pleasing to be able to report on our successes. The East Anglian branch of RDS has seen two of its requests granted. Anglia now includes the Peterborough - Thetford - Norwich line in its timetable. Further, Central Trains have reinstated saver fares from Thetford - something that RDS had campaigned for.

We will continue to press for further improvements.

## Branch meeting

East Anglian Branch of the RDS will be holding a public meeting at St Giles Rooms, St Giles Street, Norwich, on **Saturday 30th September 1995 at 2pm**. The Guest Speaker will be Brian Stead of Norfolk County Council. St Giles Street is on the left hand side of the City Hall adjacent to the Market Square.

## Fen Line Users' Association

The Association has welcomed the summer timetable. It contains the same frequency of fast trains throughout the off-peak period which form part of the non-stop Cambridge Cruiser service between Cambridge and King's Lynn. The excellent service, which West Anglia Great Northern Railway presently provides on the Fen Line at other times of the day, was virtually unchanged.

Although the new 365 units were originally expected to operate the fast service between King's Lynn and King's Cross during 1995, it has transpired that the first 19 units are going into service on the Kent Coast Line. The last 25 units will operate out of Kings Cross. They will enter service on The

Fen Line during the summer of 1996, and by which time the small adjustments to the platform edges of the stations through which the trains will pass, and in the depots will have been made. We are assured that the through rush hour service to Liverpool Street, operated by the existing but refurbished 317 units, will continue.

Vandalism has regrettably led to the waiting room on the down platform of Downham Market street station being closed. The down side waiting room area at Watlington station is also subject to continued vandalism.

Pressure is being brought to bear to have Littleport Station accessible to every potential customer rather than just ath-

letes. Unfortunately, the alterations required to make the station accessible to all could prove to be extremely costly: quotations are being obtained by West Anglia & Great Northern.

The main car park at Downham Market station has been completely resurfaced and lined-out, making it an attractive alternative to on street parking, especially now that the charges have been reduced - as they also have at the car parks of Cambridge and King's Lynn stations. At the latter station, it is hoped to have the lower (extension) car park resurfaced. It is possible that the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk may contribute to the cost of these works.

Robert Stripe - Chairman .

## Government delays rail projects

### Thameslink 2000

The Thameslink 2000 Consortium, which represents many public and private sector bodies, including the RDS, has expressed its concern about delays to the scheme caused by the Government. The £550 million scheme to improve rail links between north and south London will be funded entirely by the private sector, but needs Government approval before progress can be made. The works for Thameslink 2000 need to be completed before the Channel tunnel rail link approach to St Pancras is constructed. In addition to any improvements to the underground services, Thameslink 2000 is

needed to cope with the additional passengers arriving from Europe or using the domestic services from Kent using the high speed rail link and terminating St Pancras station.

### Ports TEN rail links

The Government is also blocking plans to upgrade rail freight links between Felixstowe and Liverpool/Holyhead. The European Commission has approved the plan as part of its Trans European Network (TEN). It also wants half of all TEN money to spent on railways. The British Government has opposed both ideas, but it does support the upgrading of the parallel roads between the two ports.

### St Ives Line

Finally, the Cambridge to St Ives line re-opening is also being delayed. The County Council has confirmed its preference for a heavy rail scheme and rechecked the figures as requested by the Government. However, the Department of Transport, two years into the study, is still unsure of the funding method and wants the county to look at alternative uses for the line before submitting its proposals.

*Is your MP aware of the delays to these projects? Have you seen these matters reported in the local press? If not, please, write and let them know.*

## A sign of the way ahead

"If you only think roads then you will restrict your ability to expand". This was not a sentiment which road interests had come to expect from a Conservative Transport Secretary and members present at the AGM of East Anglia Roads to Prosperity at Peterborough on May 19 were visibly shaken. Andrew Pharoah, EARP's director, had predictably called for a £1 billion Government commitment to dualling the region's roads within the next ten years. Side-stepping their demands, keynote speaker, the then Transport Secretary, Dr Brian Mawhinney, talked about cycle improvements, opportunities offered by rail privatisation and the need to make more efficient use of the existing road network.

Following the speech, representatives of ALARM UK, who had slipped into the meeting, complimented the Minister on his National Transport Debate initiative and his call for a partnership approach in tackling transport problems. It does

## Branch sales stand brings publicity

The Branch sales stand has been out and about during the summer months. In addition to the Brandon events mentioned elsewhere, we have been to Histon and Colchester. All events proved highly successful in terms of raising the public awareness of rail issues.

There were additional bonuses at the Histon Fayre from the sale of cakes made by Agnes Harknett and a highly controversial win by National

however remain to be seen how far the Government is willing to take the debate in the light of its approval of the Newbury bypass against much local opposition.

A booklet, called "Transport - the way ahead", containing the text of Dr Mawhinney's speeches on future transport options has been produced by the Government's Transport Policy unit. Copies are free and can be obtained by ringing 0171 271 5626.

"Future Transport Strategy and the local Economy" is the subject of a public meeting being organised by the Norwich Road Action Group on Friday 10th November. The meeting will be held at the Friends Meeting House, Upper Goat Street, Norwich starting at 7.30pm. Speakers include Trevor Garrod (RDS), John Stewart (ALARM UK), Andrew Pharoah (EARP) and Jonathan Sisson (Norfolk and Waveney Chamber of Commerce).

Chairman Steve Wilkinson's entry in the duck race. The rules of this new sport make rail privatisation appear simple, but most observers agree that some of the contestants went the wrong way and the finishing line was moved during the race (very much like rail privatisation in fact!).

*Assistance is always welcomed. Please let Nick Dibben know if you would like to help with future events.*

## New station

The Branch has given its support to the details announced by Cambridgeshire County Council for a new station at Cherry Hinton on the Cambridge to Newmarket line. The single platform will be located by the level crossing in the High Street making it very convenient for users. Only limited parking for disabled passengers will be provided as most people will be able to walk or cycle to the station. If final approval is obtained, the £360,000 station could be in use by October 1996.

## Thank you

Thank you to Peter Wakefield, John Saunders, Robert Stripe and Denise Carlo for their contributions.

Enclosed with this Rail East is a copy of an Anglia newsletter containing special offers.

## Fare changes

A new range of tickets called Anglia Plus has been introduced by Anglia routes north of Ipswich. Anglia have withdrawn Supersaver fares from most routes. The effect of this is to raise the 'turn-up-and-go' Monday to Thursday off cheap ticket prices by 20%. Ipswich Borough Council were so concerned that a motion was passed protesting at the increase. Prebooked, but cheaper, fares are unaffected.

Network Cards can no longer be used on Intercity trains south of Ipswich.

## Branch launches its proposals for the way west

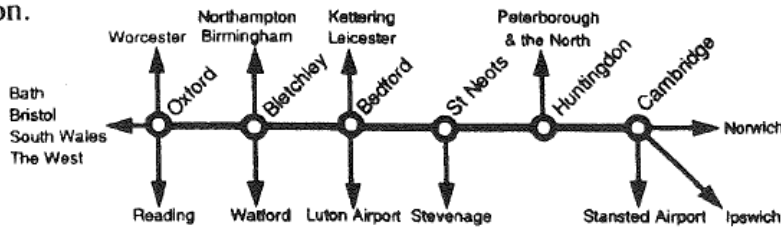
On 7th June, the Branch launched its proposals for a rail route from East Anglia to the West via the South Midlands. A high quality, glossy leaflet - using funds generated by the national re-openings raffle - was sent to every County Councillor in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Avon.

Key Councillors in the appropriate Districts were also targeted.

The Branch Committee decided to opt for a Central Route from Cambridge to St. Ives, Huntingdon, Bedford, Bletchley, Oxford. The report stressed the need for the route to be high quality and high speed. An idea of the type of service was given, as an express every half hour from Cambridge to Oxford, connecting with frequent services at the junctions shown above. The report suggested that every other train could continue to Norwich via Thetford and Ipswich via Bury St Edmunds. West of Oxford through trains were shown on

the Oxford - Swindon - Bath - Bristol route.

Other routes identified and considered were the Northern Route, via Stamford and Corby, and the Southern Route via Braintree and Stansted Airport. The Committee felt that both routes had great potential locally, but neither could match the strategic connections of the



Central Route.

Freight, too, could greatly benefit from any east - west railway. The Committee identified flows of potential freight using piggy-back operation from the ports of Great Yarmouth, Felixstowe, Harwich and Ipswich. The route could be adapted to a large gauge, similar to the proposed Piggyback Consortium's proposed line from the Channel Tunnel to the North. The lines would meet at Bletchley where the trains from East Anglia would access the route to the north.

Various County Councils all the way from Avon to Suffolk have been examining proposals for rail re-openings, extra services, along the Central Route. The Branch's proposals link all these with one package: one core fast service with several local services as well as the use of the route by freight trains.

The response to the proposals has been overwhelmingly positive. Councillors have, without exception, been "for" the scheme, county officials have been

positive, as have Railtrack.

SCEALA (Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities) have set up a consortium of local authorities, mainly along the Central Route. The consortium is being led by Ipswich Borough Council's planning officials. It has given a contract to a consulting engineering group to look into which is the best route west and the general feasibility of the project.

Which way west? Rail East will bring you a further report as we learn of developments.

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### Dates for your diary

**25th November - RDS East Anglian Branch meeting at 2pm in Little St Mary Church Hall, Trumpington Street, Cambridge. The speaker will be Stuart King, Railway Development Officer for Cambridgeshire County Council.**

**24th February 1996 - RDS East Anglian Branch AGM in the Library, Bury St Edmunds.**